BEST OF THE ARTS 2020

10 memorable museum shows from the year everyone wants to forget

By Murray Whyte Globe Staff, Updated December 18, 2020, 10:00 a.m.

"Six Crimee" by Jean-Michel Basquiat, 1982. COURTESY MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON

The year seemed normal enough when it started, with the typical slate of major openings in January and February and a laundry list of more big things for the year ahead. But who could have imagined a year like this? Over many months of pandemic disruption, museums closed, re-opened, and some closed again this month, pitching in to stanch the rising second wave we were all warned about. Before and in-between, they gave us what we needed: Joy, relief, and reflective moments to consider a world seemingly transformed in a flash — but one that was really festering with discontent all along. In no particular order, my favorites of 2020 were:

Boston

**Tschabalala Self.** Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston

**J.M.W. Turner: Watercolors from the Tate.** Mystic Seaport Museum, Mystic, Conn.

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- None of the above

Next  \( 1/3 \)

**Jacob Lawrence: The American Struggle.** Peabody Essex Museum, Salem
Panel 10 from Jacob Lawrence's "American Struggle" series. This one is titled: "We crossed the River at McKonkey's Ferry 9 miles above Trenton . . . the night was excessively severe . . . which the men bore without the least murmur . . . -Tench Tilghman, 27 December 1776. 1954." © THE JACOB AND GWENDOLYN LAWRENCE FOUNDATION, SEATTLE / ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK

**Walls Turned Sideways: Artists Confront the Justice System.** *Tufts University Art Galleries, Medford*

**Norman Rockwell: Murder in Mississippi.** *Norman Rockwell Museum, Stockbridge*

**Blane de St. Croix: How to Move a Landscape.** *Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams*
Reckoning with ‘The Incident:’ John Wilson’s Studies for a Lynching Mural. Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Conn.

Adam Pendleton: Elements of Me. Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston


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