FOR DECADES, Boston was a backwater when it came to contemporary art. Now, however, some local museums are beefing up their collections of 21st-century works and others are staging more ambitious exhibits. What makes art contemporary? It's not simply a matter of timing. Today's art reflects today's society. Here are 10 of the best new works on view in these parts this summer.
**Navigating the Personal Bubble**

By Wendy Richmond
At the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence
Through November 4
risdmuseum.org

As technology evolves, artists grapple with our new tools and toys and their implications in society. Richmond’s three-channel video installation surrounds viewers with people working on laptops in cafés and libraries; the footage was taped by their computers’ cameras. These people are out in the world, making their own privacy.

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**Island Universe**

By Josie McElheny
“Some Pictures of the Infinite” Exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston
Friday through October 14
ica.boston.org

As life grows increasingly virtual, many artists turn to handcraft to keep a grip on the tangible. Boston-born McElheny is a stellar glass blower, but his work doesn’t rest on the sheer beauty of his medium. This conceptual artist deploys transparency, mirrors, and the gleam of glass to contemplate astronomy, philosophy, infinity, history, and the changing passage of time.

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**Radioactive**

By Gongkar Gyatso
“Seeking Shambhala” Exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Through October 21
mfa.org

Just as Buddhists strive to dissolve dualities, contemporary art often melds polar opposites. This Tibetan artist performs a mash-up of highbrow and lowbrow, spiritual and commercial, detached and grasping. He has covered his cast-resin Buddha with garish decals—hearts, information about condoms, and, at his third eye (be warned), the symbol for radioactivity.

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**Diluvial**

By Cristi Rinkin
At the Currier Museum of Art, Manchester, New Hampshire
Through September 9
currier.org

Rinkin, a Boston painter, has covered floor-to-ceiling windows and adjoining walls with a translucent installation inspired by the Currier’s 19th-century American landscapes. She combines painting with digital techniques in a work that draws on the tools of visual storytelling over the centuries, addressing death and surface representation and abstraction, paint and pixels.
TO SEE NOW

SIGNAL

BY DAN WALSH
“UNCOMMON GROUND” EXHIBITION AT THE MUSEUM OF ART, RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN THROUGH OCTOBER 21
risdmuseum.org

For centuries, artists strove to portray space and volume expertly. These days, they aim to bollix up expectations. Walsh’s paintings blend minimalist grids with a handmade aesthetic and luminous tones. He hangs them in relation to lines of black tape on the wall, toying with viewers’ perceptions of the museum’s space.

BIKING IN BERLIN #37

BY NANCY MURPHY SPICER
“TRAIN IN BERLIN” EXHIBITION AT CARROLL AND SONS GALLERY, BOSTON JULY 4 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 1
karolandsons.net

Blame it on the GPS. As artists attempt to preserve a part of the brain that may become vestigial, mapping in art has burgeoned. Murphy Spicer’s lyrical works on pages from a guidebook trace her travels by bike around Berlin. Her responses to the terrain sport big blocks of color, with collaged bits and cutouts adding texture to the abstracted cityscapes.

CANADA DE FANTAISIE

BY BÉL. LUCASIN BILODEAU, SEBASTIEN GAGIERE, AND NICOLAS LAVERDIERE
“OH, CANADA” EXHIBITION AT MASS Moca, NORTHADAMS
massmoca.org

“Do it yourself” may seem inherent to making art, but the DIY viewpoint is hot these days, and this scrappy self-propelled carousel fits the bill. Pulled together out of old, rusted temporary barricades, it looks like something your kids might try to erect in the backyard—except it’s bigger and better executed. It has another contemporary edge: interactivity. Adults are as eager to play as children.

AXIOM #3: TERRITORY

BY FRANCIS DE COSTER AND TODD ANTONELLI
“ART ON THE MARQUEE” EXHIBITION AT THE BOSTON CONVENTION & EXHIBITION CENTER ONGOING
aonthehgarcue.com

When it comes to public art, Boston still lags. Here’s an exception, in a fast-growing frontier for public art-video. The Massachusetts Convention Center Authority’s 80-foot-tall, seven-screen marquee is showing multiple videos by local artists, curated by Boston Cyberarts. The videos, crafted to the marquee’s odd shape, are short and silent, smart and funny, and range from animation to meditations on landscape.

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