

Top 20 art exhibitions of 2019

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Egypt's golden boy and Bridget Riley's dazzling arcs of colour join a towering indictment of empire – this year's stunning art shows hit like a bomb

Frank Bowling, Tate Britain, London



Middle Passage by Frank Bowling, 1970. Photograph:
Courtesy the Artist/© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2017

It's taken this brilliant painter until the age of 85 to get the recognition he deserves, but there was no hint of bitterness in his epic retrospective. On the contrary, it glowed with the sheer pleasure and freedom of a life messing about with paint. Electrifying, acidic splurges and stains of unlikely, jarring colours – orange and magenta, crimson and emerald – blaze in his abstract walls of pigment. Yet the vibrancy is shadowed in his 1970s paintings by maps of global injustice. **JJ**