

Art

## 5 Standout New York Exhibitions to See This April

● Alina Cohen Apr 5, 2019 3:54 pm



### Paul Mpagi Sepuya at Team Gallery

Through April 13th  
83 Grand Street

Paul Mpagi Sepuya's show at Team Gallery is as sexy as it is smart. The artist's new series, "The Conditions," consists of shots taken entirely in his studio, using his friends as models. Simple objects (drop cloths, a mirror, a bench) complicate the compositions. Some shots, such as *Orifice* (2018), connect photography itself to the queer black experience: In the image, hands hold up a rich brown cloth, with a camera lens peeping out from the center. The work seems to remind us that an aperture, after all, is just a hole.

Other pictures are more subtle. *A Portrait* (2017), for example, captures a woman in a blue dress, standing in front of a mirror that reflects Sepuya and his own tripod. Yet strange details—three fabric circles at the mirror's top edge; rogue tripod legs that distort the viewer's sense of space—give the composition an off-kilter aura that becomes more curious the longer you look. A sense of warmth pervades the series, saving it from ever becoming too esoteric. Despite his clearly rigorous process, Sepuya and his friends appear to be playing around as they work, having some (very erudite, very intimate) fun.