

The New York Times

The Breakout Stars of 2020

Here are the 12 stars and trends that managed to thrive and shine in an impossible year.



Clockwise from bottom left: Sarah Cooper, Maria Bakalova, the hand of the artist Salman Toor, Jonathan Majors and Radha Blank. Clockwise from bottom left: Lacey Terrell/Netflix; Elizabeth Weinberg for The New York Times; Peter Fisher for The New York Times; Adria Malcolm for The New York Times; Douglas Segars for The New York Times



By Maya Salam

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While plenty of us felt trapped this year, wandering through the same spaces and talking to the same people, it was the artists and entertainers who kicked open windows to new sights, sounds and experiences. Yes, the pandemic dealt a significant hit to the culture world, but nothing could derail its creativity. So, despite the limitations, stars in a variety of disciplines managed to thrive and shine, and by doing so, made a difficult year more tolerable for most everyone. Here are 12 artists and trends who gave us a fresh perspective in 2020.



The artist Christine Sun Kim performing in American Sign Language at the Super Bowl in Miami in February. A J Mast for The New York Times

ART

Christine Sun Kim

In February, just minutes ahead of the Super Bowl in Miami, the artist Christine Sun Kim stood at the 40-yard line performing in American Sign Language as Yolanda Adams sang “America the Beautiful” and Demi Lovato sang the national anthem.

“As a child of immigrants, a grandchild of refugees, a Deaf woman of color, an artist and a mother, I was proud to perform,” she wrote in an Op-Ed for The Times afterward. But because only a fraction of her performance was aired, she called the experience “a huge disappointment — a missed opportunity in the struggle for media inclusiveness on a large scale.”

“Being deaf in America has always been political,” she wrote.

Kim, 40, who was born in California and is now based in Berlin, has spent years channeling this perspective into her art. At the Whitney Biennial in New York last year, she exhibited hand-drawn charcoal drawings from her “Degrees of Deaf Rage in the Art World,” and in 2013, the Museum of Modern Art selected her for its exhibition “Soundings: A Contemporary Score,” dedicated to sound art.

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<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/23/arts/breakout-stars-actors.html>