

eric firestone gallery

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What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries in June

By **Will Heinrich, Holland Cotter and Yinka Elujoba**

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This week in Newly Reviewed, Will Heinrich covers Pat Oleszko's sassy inflatables, Charles Ray's new white-on-white sculptures and Lauren dela Roche's "No Man's Land."

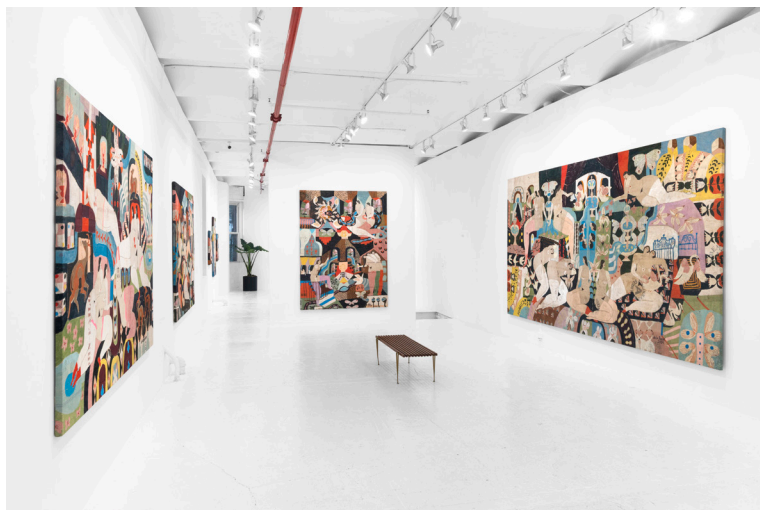
Lauren dela Roche

Through June 29. Eric Firestone Gallery, 40 Great Jones Street, Manhattan; 646-998-3727; ericfirestonegallery.com.

Naked women lounge across cotton feed sacks mounted on stretcher bars in "No Man's Land," the self-taught painter Lauren dela Roche's debut show with the Eric Firestone Gallery. Their heads all have the same dark hair and fine features, as if copied from the cover of a single Victorian calendar, and are two or three sizes too small for their statuesque bodies. An unbroken vista of fountains, butterflies, flowers, shallow tunnels and swans with chili-pepper beaks extends behind them.

Apart from their stockings and socks and the circles of red on their cheeks, the women are left the unpainted color of the sacks, which ranges from nearly white to cream of wheat, sometimes in a single figure. Occasionally one of the women wears an old brand name or farmer's name like a tattoo: "Cincinnati Seamless" on a crotch, "Al Dumdey" on a leg. The feed sacks are also mended here and there, and the backgrounds balance the beige expanses of flesh with plenty of black and dark green.

It's hard not to think of the great outsider artist Henry Darger (1892-1973), despite all the differences in the emotional tone of his and dela Roche's work. She uses the same drifting, dreamy, not quite flat organization of space and a similar kind of 19th-century drawing that has more in common with cartography than figure study. Most of all, though, the chimeric reduplicating woman she keeps returning to suggests an unresolved fixation, like Darger's, on the equally unresolvable incongruity at the heart of human life — that union of the carnal and the ethereal that we call sex.



An installation view of "Lauren dela Roche: No Man's Land" at Eric Firestone Gallery, via Eric Firestone Gallery, New York

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