

Art in America

Guide to Museums, Galleries, and Artists

Curator Dan Nadel on five shows in New York

“The pictures are funny and cutting and hilariously weird.” June 4, 2018

“**Christopher Forgues: Pin Change**”
through June 8, 2018 ***CLOSING SOON***
[YUI Gallery and Lab](#)

“**Sarah Peters: Figureheads**”
through June 16, 2018
[Van Doren Waxter](#)

“**Carroll Dunham**”
through June 16, 2018
[Gladstone Gallery](#)

“**Laurie Simmons: Clothes Make the Man: Works from 1990-1994**”
through July 27, 2018
[Mary Boone Gallery](#)

“**Laurie Simmons: 2017–The Mess and Some New**”
through June 16, 2018
[Salon 94 Bowery](#)

“**Melissa Brown: Between States**”
through July 6, 2018
[Derek Eller Gallery](#)

Exhibitions on my mind include Christopher Forgues’s solo show at YUI gallery. Christopher is better known as the graphic artist and cartoonist CF. The works here are all based on the idea of pins in locks—locking mechanisms. First there are beautiful ballpoint-pen drawings—the biggest Christopher has ever made—of figures in ambiguous architectonic spaces. Then there are origami-like sculptures on bases made by hanging pieces of paper soaked in resin over stools and letting them harden. And finally, there’s a cast concrete sculpture with lock pins embedded in it that I think is a masterpiece. At first glance, they are three separate bodies of work, but actually they all connect. It’s all about the manipulation of paper and space.



Installation view of "Christopher Forgues: Pin Change" at YUI Gallery, New York, May 18–June 8, 2018. Courtesy of the artist.

I love the Sarah Peters's show at Van Doren Waxter. I think she's making really powerful, dense objects that convey ecstatic, psychedelic, and emotional states. Her bronze busts need to be confronted in person. They are rooted in ancient statuary, but partly as a way to get at certain kinds of universal experiences. If there was a Greco-Roman sculptor working today who had ingested sci-fi and Minimalism, and who was interested in different manifestations of power, you'd have Sarah.



Sarah Peters, *Tripod (Animal)*, 2016, bronze, 11 x 10 x 13 1/2 inches, edition 2 of 5. Courtesy of the artist and Van Doren Waxter.

I also loved Carroll Dunham's new paintings at Barbara Gladstone. When I was a kid, my brother and my grandfather would often say to me, "Be a man!" and I think these works are incredibly profound meditations on what that means now. You can go a zillion different ways with them historically and materially, but I'm most interested in looking at them as reflections on what it is to be a father, a brother, or a son, and the physicality of all those things.



Carroll Dunham, *Green Hills of Earth (1)*, 2017, urethane, acrylic and pencil on linen, 68 x 79 inches (73 1/8 x 84 x 2 1/4 inches framed). Copyright © Carroll Dunham. Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels.

And in a cool bit of timing, I really enjoyed Laurie Simmons's exhibition down the block at Mary Boone. I hadn't seen any of that work before, so it was a welcome surprise. The pictures are funny and cutting and hilariously weird. The sculptural treatment of the dummies makes them inert but somehow still intimidating. It's a very strong, well curated, well laid out, well thought out show. It takes on some of the same ideas as Dunham and Peters, but with a kind of knowing wink.



Laurie Simmons, *Café of the Inner Mind: Men's Room*, 1994, cibachrome print, 41 x 58 inches. Courtesy of Mary Boone Gallery, and Salon 94, New York.

Finally, there is Melissa Brown's show at Derek Eller. Her new paintings are of the American landscape. One shows the view out the window of a Mexican restaurant in a shopping mall. Another is of a huge alligator wrapped around a Florida swamp. They seem to have been influenced equally by the paintings of Roger Brown and Grant Wood, psychedelic art, and the work of H.C. Westermann, and they evince a wonderful sense of the beauty in the ugliness of America. And as objects they are really interesting, with silkscreen passages, stenciled passages, and passages of virtuoso painting. They're invitingly complicated, which I love. It's a killer show.



Melissa Brown, *Swamp*, 2018, oil, acrylic, and Flashe on aluminum panel, 59 x 78 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Derek Eller Gallery, New York.

Dan Nadel is a writer, editor and curator based in Brooklyn. The founder of the Grammy Award-winning publishing company *PictureBox*, Nadel has authored books including *Art Out of Time: Unknown Comic Visionaries, 1900–1969* (2006), *Gary Panter* (2008), and *Chris Martin: Paintings* (2018), as well as curated exhibitions such as “*What Nerve! Alternative Figures in American Art: 1960 to the Present*” (2014–15) and “*Return of the Repressed: Destroy All Monsters 1973–1977*” (2011).