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Galleries Being Galleries, but More So

By [ROBERTA SMITH](#)

There are several ways to unpack the first New York Gallery Week, which will take place across the city in 50 art galleries, 5 alternative spaces and a park (the High Line) from Friday to Monday. Most obviously, this four-day “week” — with its coordinated solo exhibitions, special events and extended gallery hours — is a promotional ploy. But it’s also an impressive number of galleries doing what they usually do, only more intensely and overtly, in a legitimate effort to take back the spotlight too often hogged by art fairs and auctions. And it’s a somewhat off-putting assertion of hipness and exclusivity, what with only 50 of the city’s several hundred galleries invited to participate.

But, bottom line, just having so many galleries open on Sunday and Monday — many with intriguing talks and other events on offer — is a luxury that’s nothing to sniff at.

The idea for New York Gallery Week came to Casey Kaplan, the owner of an eponymous gallery on West 21st Street, about a year ago, during the post-bust doldrums. He felt a need to soften what he saw as the “icy veneer” of many art galleries (not least his own, one might point out) and a desire to emphasize the collegial rather than the competitive aspect of the gallery world.

“It seemed like time to put the focus back on artists and their exhibitions,” he said in a telephone interview on Monday, “and to emphasize the educational and curatorial ways that galleries function.”

Mr. Kaplan joined forces with David Zwirner, of the Zwirner gallery on West 19th Street, and they hashed out the details with a core group of other dealers. A few dozen more were invited to participate, and all who agreed were asked to schedule solo shows for the weekend and to try to organize — judging from the list — a related, appropriately elevating event.

The participants cover the gamut of Manhattan gallery neighborhoods, from the Upper to the Lower East Side, and SoHo to the South and West Villages, but roughly two-thirds are concentrated in and near Chelsea. Several of the shows are solo debuts, including (yikes!) that of the white-hot clothing designer [Rick Owens](#) at Salon 94. Others focus on historical material, like Mr. Zwirner’s display of Edward Kienholz’s first environmental tableau, “Roxy’s,” from 1961-62. This emblematic work — a characteristically macabre rendition of a brothel — is owned by a German collector who is now selling it and has not been seen in New York since the artist’s 1996 retrospective at the [Whitney Museum](#). Nyehaus will feature paintings from the 1950s and ’60s by John Altoon (1925-69), a founder of the Los Angeles



Derek Eller Gallery Dominic McGill's “Muqaddimah,” which he will discuss with Murat Cem Menguc, professor of Middle Eastern history at Seton Hall University, at noon on Saturday at the Derek Eller Gallery.

art scene, while Matthew Marks Gallery is devoting its West 24th Street space to the painted wood plinths of the sometime Minimalist Anne Truitt (1921-2004).

A few serendipitous coincidences add bulk: the inauguration of expanded space at Gavin Brown's Enterprise; the opening of the new gallery of Tracy Williams Ltd., which has relocated to West 23rd Street from West Fourth Street and will start things off with a show of the veteran Conceptual tableau-ist Barbara Bloom as well as the unveiling of "Viewing Station," a new site-specific artwork by the British artist Richard Galpin on the High Line.

But the distinguishing attraction is the array of special events, which are all free (though a few require reservations) and include performances, artist talks and interviews, panel discussions, book signings and film screenings. These are of interest in part because they involve so many people — art historians, critics, museum curators — who are not part of the for-profit art trade. A selection of events is below; the full list and other details are at newyorkgalleryweek.com or in brochures available at a participating gallery.

Of course, this particular gallery weekend, however rich and varied, is just one of roughly 52 a year in New York, all of which include worthwhile exhibitions at galleries both within and outside the designated 50. Shows opening at nonparticipating galleries on Saturday, for example, include "[Roy Lichtenstein: Still Lives](#)" at the Gagosian Gallery's West 24th Street space and "David Salle: Some Pictures From the '80s," next door at the Mary Boone Gallery.

Saturday NOON, DEREK ELLER GALLERY Dominic McGill will discuss his latest bravura tangles of word and image inspired by politics and history with Murat Cem Menguc, professor of Middle Eastern history at [Seton Hall University](#), a friend who helped him devise (and even draw) "Muqaddimah," an especially beautiful two-sided circular panorama that provides a biting view of recent world history. 615 West 27th Street, Chelsea; (212) 206-6411.

2 P.M., DAVID NOLAN GALLERY Steve DiBenedetto, David Humphrey and Alexi Worth, smart, articulate painters all, will discuss the work of the venerable Jim Nutt on the occasion of an exhibition of paintings and drawings made from 1967 to the present. 527 West 29th Street, Chelsea; (212) 925-6190.

2 P.M., THE DRAWING CENTER Brett Littman, executive director and curator, will guide a walk-through of "[Leon Golub: Live & Die Like a Lion?](#)," an exhibition of small, vibrantly colored, often sexually charged oil stick-and-ink drawings that Golub (1922-2004) made during the last five years of his life. 35 Wooster Street, near Grand Street, SoHo; (212) 219-2166.

3 P.M., WALLSPACE In the context of "Seizure," Mark Wyse's solo show of original and borrowed photographs, Anne Ellegood, senior curator of the Hammer Museum, and Johanna Burton, associate director of the Whitney Museum's Independent Study Program, will discuss the postmodern strategy known as appropriation — which is also the subject of an exhibition they are organizing. 619 West 27th Street, Chelsea; (212) 594-9478.

4:30 P.M., CEDAR LAKE One of several women who perform as Donelle Woolford — an artistic entity if not an actual person represented by Wallspace — will stage her interpretation of [Dan Graham](#)'s performance classic, "Performer/Audience/Mirror," from 1975. 547 West 26th Street, Chelsea. No reservations required, but early arrival is recommended. Information: (212) 594-9478.

Sunday 12:30 P.M., FRIEDRICH PETZEL GALLERY The New York-based German painter Thomas Eggerer, whose work oscillates between abstraction and representation, will discuss his show with David Joselit, an art historian at Yale. 537 West 22nd Street, Chelsea; (212) 680-9467.

Lewis Center for the Arts, Princeton An image from the Donelle Woolford interpretation of Dan Graham's "Performer/Audience/Mirror."

1 P.M., ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES Anton Kern Gallery, New York, and Hauser & Wirth, Zurich, present the New York premiere of "Swineherd," the first feature-length film by the Polish painter Wilhelm Sasnal. Completed in 2009, it retells a [Hans Christian Andersen](#) story, here set in a postwar Polish village and shot in black and white reminiscent of 1970s Eastern European realism. (85 minutes, in Polish with English subtitles.) Reservations available by e-mail at nahna@antonkerngallery.com. 32 Second Avenue, at Second Street, East Village; (212) 505-5181.

3 P.M., MITCHELL-INNES & NASH On the occasion of "landscape + object + animal" — an exhibition that, according to the artist, will include paintings "with Negro ideas" and "bas-reliefs of stuffed animals slathered with peanut butter" — the intrepid William Pope.L. will give a combined performance and gallery tour. 534 West 26th Street, Chelsea; (212) 744-7400.

4 P.M., THE KITCHEN In conjunction with her exhibition "On Beauty, Objects and Dissonance," the artist Leslie Hewitt will discuss her work with Bradford Young, the cinematographer who collaborated with her on a film installation in the show. The discussion will be moderated by Rashida Bumbray, the Kitchen's associate curator. 512 West 19th Street, Chelsea; (212) 255-5793.

4-6 P.M., GAVIN BROWN'S ENTERPRISE Nearly tripling its exhibition space, the gallery has taken over the rest of its small building from Pat LaFrieda Meats, the storied purveyor of animal protein. Jonathan Horowitz will use much of the new space — including Mr. LaFrieda's former meat lockers — to restage "Go [Vegan](#)," an installation work that among much else documents animal slaughter and was originally shown at the Greene Naftali Gallery in 2002. Meanwhile, the wonderfully literal-minded Conceptualist Martin Creed will unveil a new video installation in a small portion of the new space. In addition, Mr. Creed, who has in the past filled galleries with balloons, has covered the floor of the old gallery with more than 100 eight-inch-wide planks of marble, each a different color and texture, running wall to wall. The result is a stunning, seemingly encyclopedic testament to nature's beauty and variety. 620 Greenwich Street, at LeRoy Street, West Village; (212) 627-5258.

5 P.M., CANADA After a book signing, the action-imagist painter Katherine Bernhardt — who has turned to depicting Moroccan kilims as a way to sidle up to abstraction — will discuss her current show with Chris Martin, an artist with a similarly offhand, if more visionary, approach to the medium. 55 Chrystie Street, near Hester Street, Lower East Side; (212) 925-4631.

7-9 P.M., PARTICIPANT The opening of "Dead Flowers," a group show of acerbic art typical of this alternative space, will be punctuated starting around 8 p.m. with performances by Tabboo! and Brandon Olson, with a special appearance by Kembra Pfahler of the Voluptuous Horror of [Karen Black](#). 253 East Houston Street, Lower East Side; (212) 254-4334.

Monday 7 P.M., PARTICIPANT A monologue by the legendary Cynthia Plaster Caster. (See previous listing for details.)

10:30 P.M., SANTOS PARTY HOUSE Onward: Taxter & Spengemann presents music and performances by the bands Hex Message and the Union, special guests and D.J.'s. 96 Lafayette Street, Chinatown; (212) 584-5492.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/07/arts/design/07guide.html?sq=tracy%20williams%20td&st=cse&adxnnl=1&scp=1&adxnnlx=1273690809-qSGyqDnom7ZT09Hb75rsjQ>