

The New York Times

What to See in New York Art Galleries This Week

by Martha Schwendener
May 10, 2018



“May Flower,” Lucy Dodd’s exhibition at David Lewis. David Lewis, New York

In the 1960s and ’70s, artists railed against the white cube gallery space, describing it as sterile and tomblike. Subsequent generations have responded by turning galleries into temporary kitchens, schools or, in the case of Lucy Dodd – in “May Flower,” at David Lewis – a regenerative spiritual space celebrating the beginning of spring.

To enter, you pass through a beaded curtain with an American flag pattern, titled “Father and Daughter’s America” (2018). Ms. Dodd and her father made the curtain, which serves as a rejoinder to, and perhaps a protest against, the current political climate – a reminder of the alliances and relationships that might truly make America great.

Inside, the walls of the white cube space are lined with Ms. Dodd’s gorgeously semiabstract paintings, made with funky materials like cuttlefish ink, black tea, plant and flower extracts and kombucha scoby (a symbiotic colony of bacteria and yeast). In the center is a circle of chair frames covered with shaggy, pigmented strips of cotton. The range of chair types suggests that all kinds of humans – and perhaps all creatures – are welcome at the gathering.

If Ms. Dodd’s exhibition risks being too airily New Age in its presentation, a gallery news release written by Ms. Dodd and David Lewis coaxes the exhibition into more experimental-art territory. The exuberantly florid, delirious text ends with a spiraling calligram quoting James Joyce’s “Finnegans Wake” (1939), in which flower girls represent the colors of the rainbow. Ms. Dodd’s “May Flower” sets the stage for a similar kind of experience. But despite its charms and pleasures, it doesn’t quite achieve the same ecstatic aesthetic liftoff.