

eric firestone gallery

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

By Jillian Steinhauer, Martha Schwendener and Travis Diehl

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This week in Newly Reviewed, Jillian Steinhauer covers “Erotic City,” a group show about jobs, and Carolyn Lazard’s short films on health care.

‘Erotic City’

Through May 2. Eric Firestone Gallery, 40 Great Jones Street; 646-998-3727



Installation view of “Erotic City,” at Eric Firestone Gallery, through May 2, 2025.

Between the onslaught of national news and lingering winter in the northeast, it’s easy to feel drained these days. But when I arrived at Eric Firestone Gallery and saw Helen Beard’s “The principle of pleasure” (2020) hanging in the window, my mood lifted. The painting features blocky shapes of color: a red hand touching a blue and green slit, with an oblong green — uh, cucumber? — hovering in front. It’s a slyly explicit work that makes the fun of deciphering it a stand-in for the action being depicted.

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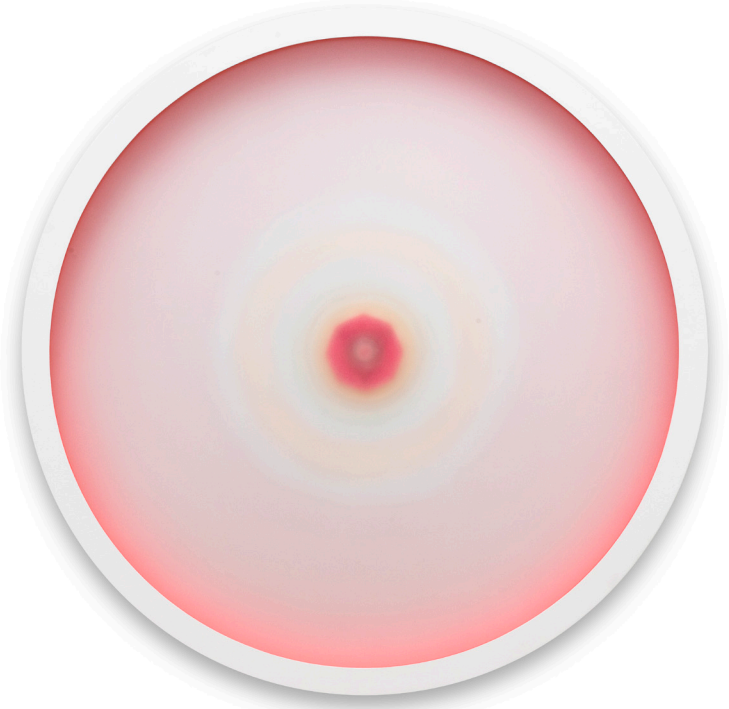
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Many of the pieces in “Erotic City,” which includes more than 40 artists, are like this: intriguing and entertaining as they revel in both physical and aesthetic delight. The show was curated by Martha Edelheit, a 93-year-old artist who has been painting feminist nudes since the 1960s, and more recently quite funny ones, too.

Some of my favorites here are historical discoveries, like Jane Kogan’s painting of a gender-bending mermaid from 1978 and William Christopher’s realist rendering of a debauched sideshow from 1953.

But the contemporary contributions more than hold their own, including psychologically charged textiles by Claudia Renfro, Sal Salandra and Pierre le Riche. And, like any good erotica, there’s work that offers a visual tease, like Letitia Quesenberry’s quasi-meditative breast made from lacquer, plexiglass and resin, and Marcus Leslie Singleton’s carefully cropped and thickly painted bodies.

The show’s sensuality is a release: Amid so much fear and suffering, there’s still plenty of pleasure to be found. *JILLIAN STEINHAUER*



Letitia Quesenberry, “BLSH 22,” 2024 panel, lacquer, plexiglass, film, resin, paint. Letitia Quesenberry, via Eric Firestone Gallery, New York; Photo by Sam Glass

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