

An abstract painting featuring large, textured blocks of color: red, yellow, green, and white. Several bright red circular dots are scattered across the composition. The brushstrokes are visible, giving the work a tactile quality.

# *~~THE BOYS CLUB~~*

Curated by Cortney Connolly

Presenting works by Nina Hartmann, Troy Montes Michie, Marilyn Minter, Natalie Ochoa,  
Erica Rutherford, Beverly Semmes, and Susan Weil.

# ~~THE BOYS CLUB~~

Curated by Cortney Connolly

5 December 2024 - 25 January 2025

Susan Inglett Gallery is pleased to present ~~THE BOYS CLUB~~, an exhibition curated by Cortney Connolly. The exhibition will run from 5 December 2024 through 25 January 2025 and will be closed for the holiday break on 21 December 2024, reopening 2 January 2025.

Please join us for a reception held in conjunction with the launch of *On The Rag's* second edition on 12 December 2024 from 6 to 8 PM.

Nearly seventy years ago, Whitechapel Gallery staged *This is Tomorrow*, a seminal exhibition featuring practitioners of Lawrence Alloway's "fine art/popular culture continuum," better known as the Independent Group. Grappling with post-war industrialism, this continuum reflected a new standardization of culture, one that was disseminated through mass media and realized through commerce.

When soldiers returned home and the baby boom commenced, a culture of consumption was ignited. Driven by post-war optimism, traditionally upper-class products and appliances were marketed as essential commodities. The right home, car, and dishwasher could make identity and personal satisfaction easy to secure. Such commodification of the consumer, as noted by William Leach, established a new measure of individual value:

"The cardinal features of this culture were acquisition and consumption as the means of achieving happiness; the cult of the new; the democratization of desire; and money value as the predominant measure of all value in society."<sup>1</sup>

Shifting towards accessibility and direct engagement, Culture transitioned from the life of the mind as practiced in the salons of the elite and privileged to a mass-produced array of films, print media (specifically comics), radio, and music. These mediums, bolstered by the rise of in-home radios and televisions, became industries— creating a clear contrast to the consumer model of high art. In response, Alloway argued that art should depart from pre-war elitist ideals of high thought and art, promoting a more accessible and directly engaged commentary on culture.

"... Mass production techniques, applied to accurately repeatable words, pictures, and music, have resulted in an expendable multitude of signs and symbols. To approach this exploding field with Renaissance based ideas of the uniqueness of art is crippling. Acceptance of mass media entails a shift in our notion of what culture is. Instead of reserving the word for the highest artifacts and the noblest of thoughts of history's top ten, it needs to be used more widely as the description of what society does."<sup>2</sup>

(cont.)

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Thus, the Independent Group constructed the framework of Pop Art as we know it. As a methodology, Pop Art communicates, reflects, and subverts cultural values through its preexisting signs and symbols driven by mass media. In the words of Richard Hamilton, a founding member of the British boys club, Pop Art is “Popular (designed for a mass audience), Transient (short-term solution), Expendable (easily forgotten), Low cost, Mass-produced, Young (aimed at youth), Witty, Sexy, Gimmicky, Glamorous, Big business.”

Since the baby boom, advertisers have sought opportunities to address the needs and desires of individuals. Traditionally, post-war capital-driven machines have titillated and exploited the masses by promoting archetypal representations of sex, drugs, fame, and wealth. Their reach has evolved far beyond the home TV and radio, advancing exponentially into surveilled mobile devices, making the propelled archetypes hyperstimulating and inescapable.

As we sink deeper into the Information Age, the noise of headlines, bold print, and imagery has led to an exhaustion of mass media.

Generation Z has become a catalyst for a mass withdrawal from the mainstream, co-opting strategies from fiercely gatekept subcultures and niche networks. Nostalgia-obsessed, Generation Z increasingly appropriates punk, indie-sleaze, and Y2K aesthetics (among others), resulting in a surface-level performance of identity. In an attempt to withdraw from consumerist goods and validation, Generation Z’s shift toward socialization and identity has created a new playground for mass marketing.

Social media is used by nearly 70% of the population. Platforms like TikTok and Instagram collect user interactions to organize a personalized experience and successfully deploy niche marketing. In this era of data mining, Generation Z interests have dictated the direction of mass media’s expansion.

Technology and commerce have evolved into nanny-cam-esque marketing machines. Yet, such transplantation requires great tact. Forbes noted in a recent guide to effective marketing to Gen Z,

(cont.)

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“Gen-Z is well-known for holding deep convictions and high ethical standards, and gaining their trust is essential. If Gen-Zers pick up on the fact that a business has developed messaging, branding and creative specifically tailored to reach their demographic, the strategy may backfire.”<sup>3</sup>

Carefully adapting their campaigns to mimic the younger generation’s attitude, mass media performs as one of *them*. Think Brat Summer to Kamala Harris, Gossip Girl’s reboot, and Nutter Butter’s TikTok, to name a few.

The allure of being an “individual” has become a consumable product, organizing and progressing the consumerist positive feedback loop. To disrupt this cycle, one must first recognize how body and individual expression are sold back to its performer.

As an act of intervention and reclamation, ~~*THE BOYS CLUB*~~ brings together artists of various generations and disciplines who use the methodologies of Pop Art to interrogate the power systems bolstered by mass communication. Featuring demographics not originally included in the Independent Group (queer and femme), the exhibition presents work by Nina Hartmann, Troy Montes Michie, Marilyn Minter, Natalie Ochoa, Erica Rutherford, Beverly Semmes, and Susan Weil.

- Cortney Connolly

<sup>1</sup> Leach, William R. *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1993

<sup>2</sup> Alloway, Lawrence. “The Long Front of Culture,” 1959, p 1.

<sup>3</sup> Expert Panel. “Council Post: How to Appeal to Gen-Z without Obviously “Marketing to Gen-Z.”” *Forbes*, 12 Aug. 2024, [www.forbes.com/councils/forbescoachescouncil/2022/08/24/how-to-appeal-to-gen-z-without-obviously-marketing-to-gen-z/](https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbescoachescouncil/2022/08/24/how-to-appeal-to-gen-z-without-obviously-marketing-to-gen-z/).

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# NINA HARTMANN

Born in Miami, FL. 1990

School of the Art Institute of Chicago, BFA, 2013

Yale School of Art, MFA, 2023

Lives and Works in Queens, NY

Nina Hartmann's work explores the "operational image," a concept developed by German filmmaker Harun Farocki, whereby an image serves a functional, rather than aesthetic, purpose. Inspired by the study of population control, *Mind Control Image Connectivity (Maze B)* (2024) places images taken from government and media surveillance behind movable metal bars creating a visual maze. By interrogating the forces of today's multivalent society, the work contextualizes the shift in mass media from identity idealization to parody.

"When the world and its institutions move in such mysterious ways, the human imagination dreams up connections that make the lack of sense make sense. Nina Hartmann just picks up the visual language of that sense making."

- Zarina Muhammad, *Elephant Magazine*

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NINA HARTMANN

*Mind Control Image Connectivity (Maze B)*, 2024

Stainless steel, UV print on acrylic

47 x 25 7/16 x 3 in.

Copyright the Artist

Courtesy of Silke Lindner, NYC and Susan Inglett Gallery, NYC.



# TROY MONTES MICHIE

Born in El Paso, TX , 1985  
Yale Summer School of Art and Music, 2008  
University of Texas at El Paso, El Paso, TX, BFA, 2009  
Yale School of Art, MFA, 2011  
Lives and Works in Queens, NY

Troy Montes Michie, using collage as a methodology, explores print media's influence on mass culture and intervenes in modes of consumption. In *Phases* (2020), images from vintage pornography are overlaid with drawn clothing, paint, a wire hanger, and cut textile and paper, assembling queer-coded symbolism to subvert mass media narratives. Through juxtaposition and assemblage, Michie interrogates how the Black male body has been criminalized, fetishized, and marginalized.

"Michie's [work] suggests a commonality between tailoring and collaging, attributing to both practices a quality of artistic invention and aesthetic splendor—either on our bodies or on canvas."

- Christian Liclair, The Brooklyn Rail



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TROY MONTES MICHIE  
*Phases*, 2020

Cut Paper, Book Cover, Photographs, Wire Hanger, Cut Clothing,  
Graphite, Grease Pencil, Polyester Thread and Acrylic on Linen  
72 x 48 x 2.13 in

Courtesy of Company Gallery, NYC and Susan Inglett Gallery, NYC.



“Pop appealed widely because, on the surface, it mimicked public language. The public had little idea of the investigative codes of these artists, many antagonistic to illustration and commercial art.”

- Sid Sachs  
Beyond the Surface: Women and  
Pop Art 1958-1968  
Seductive Subversion: Women Pop Artists  
1958-1968  
p. 30

# MARILYN MINTER

Born in Shreveport, LA 1948  
University of Florida, BFA, 1970  
Painting Syracuse University, MFA, 1972  
Lives and Works in New York, NY

"Over the last three decades, Ms. Minter has operated in the gap defined by feminism, painting and popular culture, carving out a place as one of contemporary art's bad girls... While pushing the often denigrated 1960s style of Photo Realism to new extremes, Ms. Minter's paintings invite us to consider the ways women do and do not own their bodies. They contrast their private ideas of pleasure with the external cues – played out in fashion, advertising, burlesque or pornography – that set stereotypes of beauty, behavior and sexuality."

- Roberta Smith

Bodily value, a capitalistic organization, is measured by reproductive capability. In *Nuzzle* (2022), Minter questions the erasure of desire and intimacy among the middle aged and beyond as depicted in the media. Throughout Minter's practice, the artist has raised questions of ownership, feminine idealism versus feminist realism, and bodily autonomy, exploring these ideas via myriad mediums, from photography to paintings, blending the two into her own vibrant yet exacting visual language.

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MARILYN MINTER

*Nuzzle*, 2022

Dye Sublimation Print

Edition 1 of 3 + 2 AP

40 x 30 in.

Copyright the Artist

Courtesy of Salon 94, NYC and Susan Inglett Gallery, NYC.







## NATALIE OCHOA

Born in Miami, FL, 1990  
School of Visual Arts, NYC 2016  
Lives and works in Brooklyn, NY

Natalie Ochoa, a first-generation American, takes inspiration from symbols of American Patriotism that frequently trend across media platforms. Using appropriation and collage, the artist manipulates these images and aesthetics to satirize Americana and its tropes.

Adopting the format of a County Fair Award Ribbon, Ochoa embroiders images from 1950s advertisements on to the central rosette. *Untitled 1* (2023) depicts a stork carrying KOOL cigarettes over text inscribing “for a lifetime of more pleasure,” exploring mid 20th century’s mass marketing approach, which synthesized home, reproduction, and consumption as a means to obtain personal satisfaction.

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NATALIE OCHOA  
*Untitled 1*, 2023  
Digital embroidery on ribbon, digital  
embroidery on canvas  
32 x 12 in.  
Copyright the Artist  
Courtesy of Susan Inglett Gallery, NYC.

# ERICA RUTHERFORD

Born in Edinburgh, Scotland, 1923  
Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, London, UK, 1938  
Slade School of Fine Art, London, UK, 1945  
Central School of Arts and Craft, London, UK, 1945  
l'Académie Julien, Paris, France, 1945  
Died Charlottetown, Canada, 2008

Erica Rutherford was a multifaceted artist with a richly diverse creative background, studying theater arts, costume and set design, illustration, sculpture, and more before settling into a practice consisting of painting and printmaking. Her vibrant and graphic compositions depict everything from landscapes to still lifes, however, her singular experimentation with self-portraiture began when she transitioned in the 70s, demonstrating a simultaneous internal and external exploration of her identity. The anonymous and poised feminine figures speak to embodied discomfort, just as the bold colors and frontal poses force the viewer to pay attention to her work, and by extension, her.

As one of the earliest openly transgender British artists, Erica Rutherford, a Slade School of Fine Art classmate of founding members of the Independent Group, critiques mass media and explores gender construction and agency.

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ERICA RUTHERFORD

*The Startled Model*, 1977

Lithograph on paper

Unnumbered AP from the edition of 6, plus APs

22 3/4 x 17 in.

Copyright the Artist

Courtesy of Richard Saltoun Gallery, London and Susan Inglett Gallery, NYC.





BEVERLY SEMMES

*Green Shoe*, 2024

Acrylic over photograph printed on canvas

73 x 49 1/4 x 2 in.

Copyright the Artist

Courtesy of Susan Inglett Gallery, NYC.

# BEVERLY SEMMES

Born in Washington, D.C., 1958  
Boston Museum School, Tufts University, BA, BFA, 1982  
Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, 1982  
New York Studio School, 1983-84  
Yale School of Art, MFA, 1987  
Lives and Works in New York, NY

Beverly Semmes, collages found pornographic imagery to protect and explore the autonomy of the model. Scaling her FRP's (Feminist Responsibility Project) up from their magazine-sized origins, the paintings dwarf the viewer, adding new layers of power and presence to the compositions. Intimate studies of the female form that graced Penthouse's glossy pages become near-life-sized, forcing the viewer to reconcile their elevation from "low," pornographic beginnings to high-art.

In *Eye on Blue* (2024), Semmes' longtime friend and muse Nikie stares out from this void, a maroon wash of color partially obscuring her identity. Round black sunglasses perch above eyes that meet the gaze of the viewer while a bisected brown eye conceals the lower half of her face, held precariously in place by two scraps of what appears to be Scotch tape. A jutting white shape of painterly origin covers Nikie's décolletage, strategically placed to conceal her exposed breasts while cheekily taunting the viewer with a hint of flesh.

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BEVERLY SEMMES

*Eye on Blue*, 2024

Acrylic over photograph printed on canvas

73 x 56 1/4 x 2 in

Copyright the Artist

Courtesy of Susan Inglett Gallery, NYC.





## SUSAN WEIL

Born in New York, NY, 1930  
Académie Julian, Paris, France  
Académie de la Grande Chaumière, Paris, France  
Black Mountain College, Asheville, North Carolina  
Art Students League, New York, NY  
Lives and Works in New York, NY

Susan Weil, a Black Mountain College alumnus and contemporary of famed American pop artists, was linked by time and proximity to that male-dominated movement where the female body was interchangeable with a bottle of Coca-Cola. Assembling a grid of disjointed limbs, as seen in *Untitled (1998)*, Weil reclaims that body, the fractured surface potentially reflecting the marginalization she experienced as a wife, mother, and artist at the time.

“In her *Configurations* series of collages, the nude female figure is loosely painted on a series of small pieces of paper, collaged together to form a grid. Taken as a whole, these paintings articulate a dynamic sense of fractured movement reminiscent of the 19th century photographer Eadweard Muybridge, who is a touchpoint in her practice.”

- JDJ

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SUSAN WEIL  
*Untitled*, 1998  
Acrylic, charcoal and watercolor on paper  
60 1/2 x 66 1/4 in  
Copyright the Artist  
Courtesy of JDJ, NYC and Susan Inglett Gallery, NYC.

"...[Women] were considered the primary agents of consumerism; ads for hard goods, innovative products, new cleansers, clothes, and cosmetics as well as food and drink were directly aimed at them; on the other hand, women themselves were made into a product in popular culture, or at least product like; passive sexual creatures, mini skirted big-breasted 'dollies' made to be consumed- or thrown away- by hungry male admirers." (15)

- Linda Nochlin  
*Running on Empty*  
Seductive Subversion:  
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p. 15



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Imaging and Information [HERE](#)

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