

Time Out

New York

Five-star art on the LES

Art

Edited by Howard Halle • art@timeoutny.com

Art

Alice Mackler



Kerry Schuss, through July 26
(see Lower East Side)

Eccentric ceramic figurines by this octogenarian artist were among the highlights of a recent group exhibition at James Fuentes. Now Mackler is having a solo show (her first), which also serves as a mini retrospective. Along with works in clay—many brand-new—are drawings and collages from the past seven years, as well as a group of paintings from 1968. Together they reveal a highly individual sensibility that has remained remarkably consistent over time and across mediums.

Mackler's early paintings set the tone for what followed. Each begins with a contour drawing of a voluptuous woman, which has then been filled in with flat, bright colors. To these otherwise reductive personages, she's added rosy nipples, red lips, riotously curly hair and long eyelashes. They look like Jean Dubuffet nudes with a Pop twist and Cheryl Tiegs allure.



Installation view

A lifelong New Yorker who attended the Art Students League in the 1950s, and received her B.F.A. from the School of Visual Arts in 1988, Mackler took up ceramics in 1999. A cartoonish earthenware head from 2001 suggests other avenues explored, but the bulk of the exhibition continues the theme of the female figure, in lingamlike glazed and fired clay sculptures. Each is under a foot high, and features a woman with an attenuated head and neck (usually

topped with a rounded hat or hairdo), and a swelling, misshapen body. Built up out of many little pats of clay, these sculptures have a superficial crudeness that belies the virtuosity of Mackler's technique, her sense of color and her keen eye for body language. From a simpering blue and pink princess to an oddly graceful creature seemingly inspired by Matisse's odalisques, they radiate personality, vigor and a subversive ambiguity.—*Anne Doran*

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