



APRIL 3, 2017

ART

lage, was a brilliant precursor to French New Wave cinema, with its stripped-down elegance and merging of narrative and documentary techniques. In this exhibition, Varda is seen exploring her signature themes in other media, over six decades. Breaking waves and elliptical stories figure in nearly every work here. Among the striking black-and-white photographs on view from her first show, in 1954: a mysterious beach shot in which a child gazes at a dead goat in the gravelly foreground, while a man looks out to sea. "Le Triptyque de Noirmoutier," from 2008, an absorbing three-channel video, uses an expanse of sand and water as a foil to the tense silence of a kitchen scene. The installation "Bord de Mer," conceived in 2009, pairs still and moving images with actual sand, bringing the beach—or at least the sense of a beach—indoors. *Through April 15.* (Blum & Poe, 19 E. 66th St. 212-249-2249.)

Lawrence Weiner

Installed in each otherwise empty room of the gallery, as well as in its long hallway, is a single text piece by the great American conceptualist, spanning three decades of his career. (Language is Weiner's medium, but he consid-

ers himself to be a sculptor.) "Inherent Innate Tension" takes possession of the front room, as sans-serif vinyl letters advance across the floor until the final word is stretched in two parts as it proceeds up the wall, the very picture of "tension's" meaning. "The Boulders on Top Rent & Split" has a more stately air in its location between two windows in the back room. Each work here is an incandescent reminder of Weiner's radical gift for rendering thought into form. *Through April 22.* (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Roe Ethridge

The American photographer continues to take the measure of visual culture with a sharp but coolly neutral eye. Ethridge also shoots for commercial clients, and his outtakes here—models staring into space, a snow-capped mountain—translate the manipulative pleasures of advertising into something more honest. A low-res picture of a Jasper Johns flag painting manages to register the disembodied effect of digital photography without attach-

ing critique, suggesting that Ethridge's equanimity is a conviction in its own right. But an image of "Sesame Street's" Cookie Monster grinning at a spread of chocolate-chip cookies expresses a knowingness that's just short of cynicism. *Through April 8.* (Kreps, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-741-8849.)

Albert Oehlen

Two distinct groups of very large abstract paintings face off in the German artist's new show. "Tree Paintings," from 2015-16, feature stark geometric or propulsive black forms, more like power lines than branches, on sparkling white backgrounds broken up by carefully rendered, red-gradient blocks. In contrast, the "Elevator Paintings," which were dashed off earlier this year, are multicolored, gestural works, bearing no resemblance at all to the lifts their title suggests. They are wild, sometimes wildly ugly, all-over compositions: brushy, blurry messes in fiery autumnal or spring-meadow palettes. The show's duelling series demonstrate Oehlen's savvy ability to take the piss out of painting via his non-allegiance to style. His project is more playful than cynical, though, since he has such an uncommon facility for his chosen medium. Each painting here succeeds on its own weird terms. *Through April 15.* (Gagosian, 522 W. 21st St. 212-741-1717.)

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Umar Rashid (Frohawk Two Feathers)

Riotous drawings depict the fictitious eighteenth-century Kingdom of Harlem to get at the dense web of influences and traumas underlying black American culture. Working frenetically on letter-size paper, Rashid throws down references to everything from Yoruba gods and quantum mechanics to Marvel superheroes and the Roman poet Catullus. His drawings have the brisk functionality of a cocktail-napkin diagram inflected with the arch self-consciousness of a comic strip: a bar of gold is surrounded by white dashes to indicate that it shines; a melting white cube is labelled "JUST ICE." But, when tiled together on canvas, the sketches create stunning large compositions. In one, Harlem's royal couple, wearing the crowns of Upper and Lower Egypt, shoot lasers from their eyes to free two kneeling slaves, whose manacles bear the words "BREAK!" and "POP!" *Through March 30.* (Vogt, 55 Chrystie St. 212-226-6966.)

GALLERIES—QUEENS

"Unseen Hand"

Works by fifteen artists in this sprawling, entertaining group show, curated by Nikita Vishnevskiy, suggest the bait-and-switch disappointments of our consumerist techno-utopia. The standout is Tom Butter's sculpture, "Rope Trick," a nine-foot length of paint-stained rope, attached to rotating motors by two steel poles. Press a foot pedal, and the horizon line shimmies—the effect is absurdly pathetic. Providing a warmly nostalgic counterpoint is William McMillin's series of photographs "Migration Found Nesting in Nikon," which he discovered undeveloped in his late father's camera. The pictures themselves are humdrum, but their eerily beautiful violet discoloration suggests the mystery lurking in the mundane. *Through April 9.* (Knechtel, 33-20 21st St. 718-491-1111.)



In 1979, Romare Bearden made twenty-one collages (including "Bayou Fever: The Buzzard and the Snake," above) hoping to inspire Alvin Ailey to conceive a ballet, which he never realized. The works are at DC Moore gallery through April 30.