

3 Art Gallery Shows to See Right Now

Fausto Melotti's ceramic vases; Susan Weil's paintings and collages; and mail art in "Poema Colectivo Revolución."

By Jason Farago, Holland Cotter and Dawn Chan

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Susan Weil

Through April 24. JDJ, 17 Mandalay Drive, Garrison, N.Y.; 518-339-6913, jdj.world.



Susan Weil's "Color Configurations 2 (Red)," from 1998. Susan Weil and JDJ

After studying at the progressive Black Mountain College in North Carolina (and inspiring her former husband, Robert Rauschenberg, to do the same) Susan Weil returned to New York to continue a long career making a wide range of mixed-media work. Despite the intimate scale of JDJ gallery's rustic, one-room space, this current show provides a broad look at over four decades of output by Weil, who turned 91 this month. It reveals how her sly, inventive use of the figure (especially the feminine figure) evolved and persisted over time.

Her earliest works — spray-painted abstract compositions from the 1970s — have shapes suggestive of human limbs and torsos. Canvas pieces made in the 1980s and '90s hang from walls like strange cloaks. They conjure the body too, if more indirectly, by evoking the folds and pleats of fabric that drape around it. Two collaged grids (from 1998 and 2000) break down the dynamic movements of female nudes into a series of freeze-frame shots, reminiscent of Eadweard Muybridge's stop-motion photography.

Not to be missed: four artist books Weil made with the publisher Vincent Fitzgerald & Co. Texts by James Joyce, Gertrude Stein and the poet Rumi appear alongside Weil's etchings and cut-paper collages. These hand-bound volumes, issued in editions of either 25 or 50, feel like profoundly personal labors of love. When a gloved gallery attendant shows you these books, it'll be all you can do not to reach out and flip through their pages yourself.

DAWN CHAN