

LOHIN·GEDULD·GALLERY

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### Chelsea Explained

Can this season's gallery exhibitions rise above hype? Our critic casts a cold eye on an overheated scene

by Mario Naves

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The new art season is, if not quite in full swing, then getting off the ground. A friend likens it to the start of the school year. Another friend, a painter, rues the return of the usual suspects—fellow artists, critics, curators and collectors, stray curiosity seekers—whom he didn't exactly miss over the summer.

But while detachment is prudent when surveying the overhyped Chelsea gallery scene, so is a modicum of hope. Otherwise, why bother? Here are the exhibits worth taking in, for better and for worse—but mostly better.

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### Odd Couple

Witness the divergent but weirdly compatible work of Sarah Lutz and Laura Battle at Lohin Geduld Gallery: Shell-like forms huddle amid hostile surroundings in Ms. Lutz's moody abstractions. Ms. Battle, on the other hand, draws dizzying constellations of crystalline structure.

Ms. Battle prefers ruled lines, clean surfaces and softly stated rhythms; Ms. Lutz the slur of oil paint, layering and forms that evolve with glacial determination. Reliance on sheer material accumulation links the two artists, as does their common approach to process: Improvisation guides their hands, even as it arrives at recurring imagery.

And both artists tap into nature's fecundity: For Ms. Battle it's the subatomic and the astronomical; for Ms. Lutz it's stuff growing under a rock and an overcast day.

Laura Battle and Sarah Lutz is at Lohin Geduld Gallery, 531 West 25th Street, until October 6.

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