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## ARTIST TO WATCH

# 10 Artists to Watch this May

By Loney Abrams and Will Fenstermaker

MAY 11, 2017

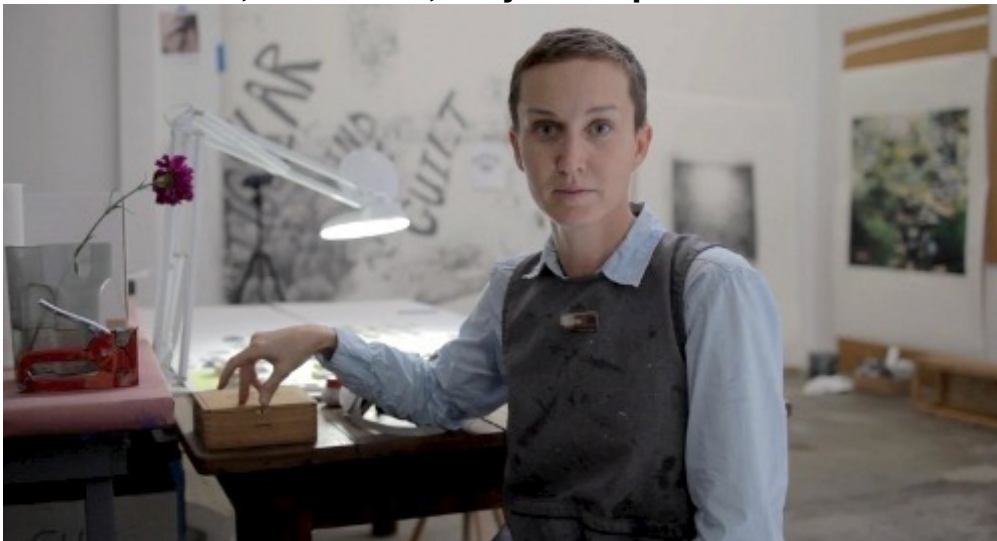


Sara Cwynar

With a slew of great shows opening at the New Museum this month, and some provocative lesser-known artists making their debuts in Chelsea, May is heating up. Here are 10 artists you should certainly have on your radar.

### **Kaari Upson**

**New Museum**, New York, May 3 - September 10



You may remember Kaari Upson from the Whitney Biennial; her large bean bag-like sculptures with colored gradient surfaces occupied almost a full room. But her representation in the Biennial only offered a narrow glimpse into the multifaceted work of the artist, whose solo show at the New Museum opened last week. In terms of the wide range of media employed, the show looks like it could have been made by several different artists: sculptures similar to the

ones shown at the Whitney occupy one gallery; another room boasts huge, scribbly pencil drawings on walls that surround a replica of a hearth (“the traditional focal point of the American home”); in another, stacks of mannequins wearing identical outfits and wigs create a chute through which you can walk to view floor-facing monitors screening videos featuring the real-life character the mannequins seem to be modeled after (the artist’s mother). The exhibition presents a new body of work about a fictional family living in a Las Vegas track house representative of the bulk-manufactured homes that typify the pursuit of an American ideal.



Installation view, "Good Thing You Are Not Alone," New Museum

**Carol Rama**

**New Museum, New York, September 10**



There's a commonly held belief about sexuality: that its representation is becoming increasingly pornographic (exemplified by the proliferation of internet pornography, scantily clad models in advertisements, etc., etc.) With art, though, or at least in the case of Carol Rama's art (the subject of a survey that opened at the New Museum last week), this couldn't be further from the case. The late Italian artist's watercolor drawings from the late '30s and early '40s depict women masturbating with big black snakes or

inspecting headless men with six penises in the place of one. Delicately drawn and hung in ornate, hand-carved frames, the images have retained their shock value through the decades, making the rest of the show—featuring later abstract, material-based works that call to mind Robert Rauschenberg’s assemblages—seem almost dull in comparison. The survey is the largest presentation of the artist’s work in the United States, reflecting an artist who was largely overlooked by institutions during her life, yet has garnered a cult-like following in recent years.





*Dorina*, 1944. Watercolor on paper © Associazione Archivio  
Carol Rama

**Eric Fischl**

**Skarstedt, New York, May 2 - June 24**



In the weeks leading up to the election, Eric Fischl, like many of us, were worried about the future of the nation. But unlike most of us, he channeled that anxiety into a new series of paintings called "Late America." [In an interview with Artspace's editor-in-chief, Eric Fischer told us](#) "Late" in this case refers to "American decline; post-election." You can see this provocative series on view at Skarstedt in Chelsea, while his older work is hung prominently in the

Whitney's "Fast Forward: Painting From the 1980s"  
exhibition up until May 14th.



*Untitled (1998)* is available on Artspace

**Ivana Basic**

**Marlborough, New York, May 25 - July 1**





Emerging artist (and member of Artspace's ["Artist Direct"](#) program), Serbian-born, New York-based artist Ivana Basic will present a solo exhibition of new works at Marlborough Contemporary later this month. Humanoid sculptures made from blown glass, cast silicon, and forged steel take on an eerie, science-fictional form. But for the artist, [who Artspace's editor-in-chief Loney Abrams interviewed in October](#), these sick-looking forms are not in fact sick, but instead reflect society's fetishization of the "beautiful" idealized body. Basic has had a busy year; she exhibited at The Whitney's survey, "Dreamland's: Immersive Cinema and Art, 1905-2016" (the multi-talented artist also makes video), had a solo show at Annka Kultys Gallery in London, and participated in various group shows across the country.



*Stay Inside or Perish* (2016) is available on Artspace

**Lorna Simpson**  
**Hauser & Wirth, Frieze Art Fair, New York**

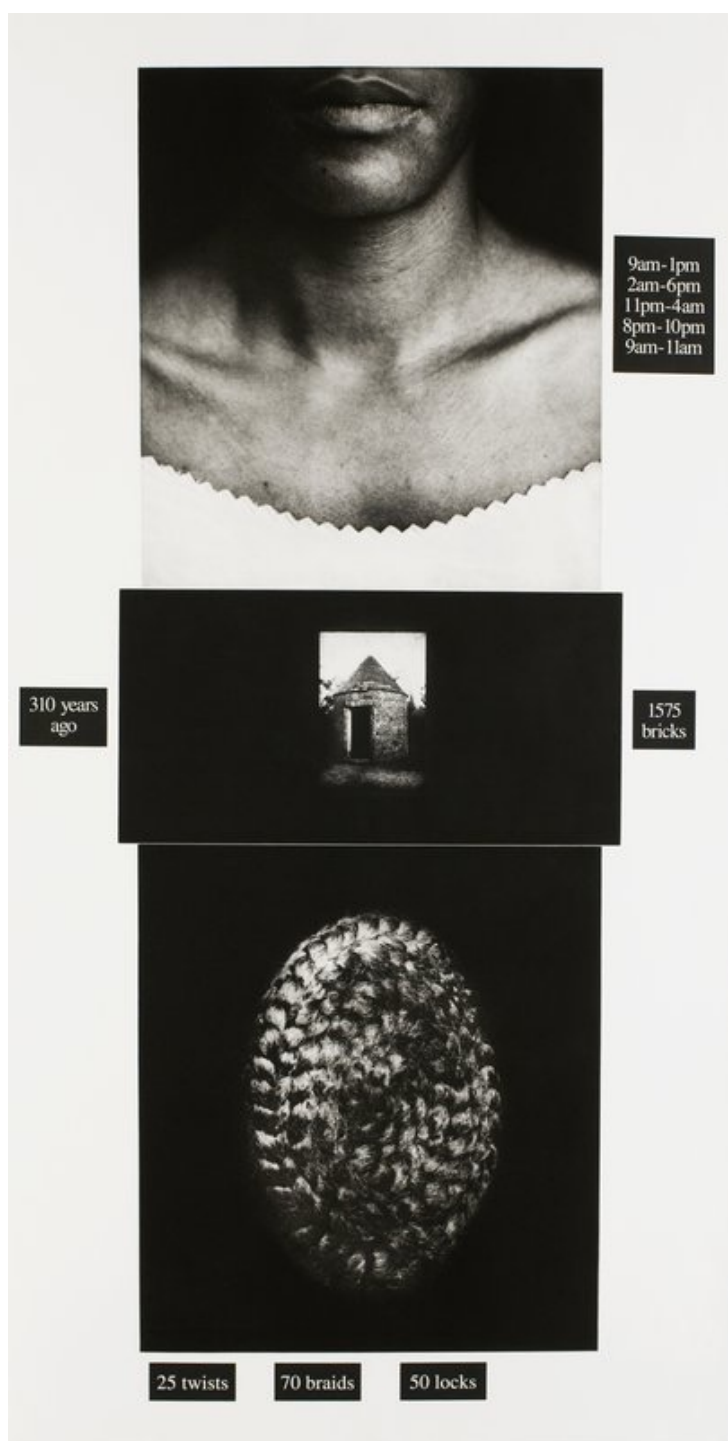


May is a big month for [Lorna Simpson](#), who just became represented by mega-gallery [Hauser & Wirth](#), and who

debuted a new body of work in their booth at Frieze New York this past weekend. By the end of the day on Thursday, many of her large canvases had sold, said a Hauser & Wirth representative. The celebrated artist is known for her provocative explorations of gender and race; her more recent work—that feature African-American models in classic Hollywood poses—is a departure from her earlier pairings of text and photography.



ANNKA KULTYS GALLERY



*Counting* (1991) is available on Artspace

### Louise Lawler

Museum of Modern Art, New York, April 30 – July 30



A museum photograph of a museum photograph of a  
museum photograph

A member of the [Pictures Generation](#)—a movement named by Douglas Crimp that collects artists like Cindy Sherman, Sherrie Levine, and Barbara Kruger by their witty institutional critiques via the appropriation of pop culture iconography—Louise Lawler is the subject of a newly-open retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art. Aptly titled "Why Pictures Now," after a 1981 photograph by the artist, the exhibition features Lawler's photographic investigations into

how pictures *function*: Charming images of [Jasper Johns](#) paintings adorning the walls of collectors' homes, [Richters](#) being moved from one museum to another, or an in-museum shot of a [Thomas Struth](#) photograph of museum crowds surrounding ruins within a museum (you'll get it once you see it).

Lawler's layered photos not only give insight into the ways museums and collectors operate, but strip away all the white-cube mythologizing that surrounds them, and in this way return them to the people. Such photos are exhibited with artist zines, kitschy trinkets decorated with high art ("Paperweights"), souvenir agitprop (*No Drones*), mural-sized tracings of her own photographs ("Traced"), and JPEGs stretched to span odd-shaped walls ("Adjusted to Fit")—all of which shows Lawler's multifaceted, usually brilliant approach for reclaiming images that have been taken away. (Tongue-in-cheek wall texts list who owns each edition of every work.) "Why Pictures Now" is already on track to be one of the best shows this year; see it to get a sense of the magnitude of debt many of the other people on this list owe this artist.



Louise Lawler's *Untitled (from: Notes on a Room)* (1998) is available on Artspace for \$4,500

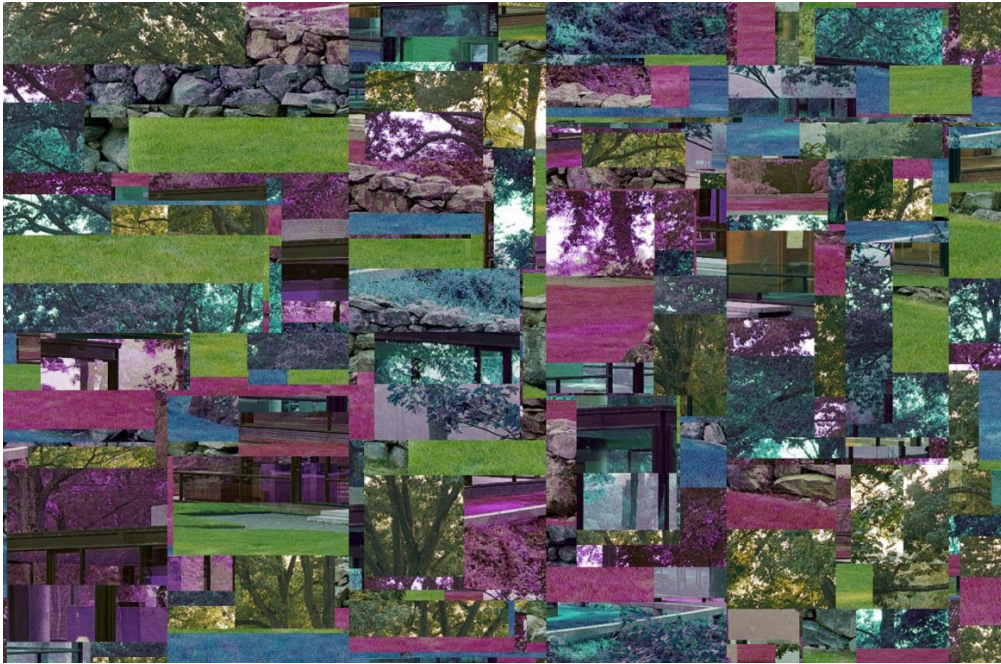
**Walead Beshty**

**Petzel Gallery, New York, April 20 – June 17**





Advocates of Walead Beshty's work include all-stars like [Hans Ulrich Obrist](#) and institutions like the Guggenheim Museum, MoMA, Whitney, SFMOMA, and, well, you get the idea... And yet, Beshty still feels like an insider's pick, as if by looking at his work you're being let in on a shared secret. Beshty's latest show, "Open Source" at Petzel Gallery in New York, contains new works by the Los Angeles-based artist, including large-scale photograms, sculptures made from disemboweled office machines and pierced flatscreens, and new copper works. All of which owes more than a small debt to Lawler (above) in the way they reveal hidden secrets of the art world and the invisible workings of image production writ large.



Walead Beshty's glasshouse... (2009) is available on  
Artspace for \$6,000

**Leslie Hewitt**

**Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York, April 7 – May 13**



Leslie Hewitt was one of ten artists included in the Guggenheim's *Photo-Poetics: An Anthology* exhibition last year, another group who owes much to the Pictures Generation. [Sikkema Jenkins & Co.](#) is currently showing Hewitt's work, in which the artist turns pop culture on its head by making juxtapositions like magazine spreads and family photoalbums, gesturing toward some space between the zeitgeist and collective memory.





Leslie Hewitt's *Riffs on Real Time* (2008) is available on  
Artspace for \$1,200



**Rodney Graham**

**303 Gallery, New York, April 20 – June 2**



303 Gallery's exhibition of Rodney Graham is yet another example of new work by a heavy-weight being exhibited this summer. Graham's photos, mounted on lightboxes like a [Jeff Wall](#), remind us that artworks are processes before they are objects or decorations, that artists are usually much poorer than collectors, that work in the studio is not leisurely or neat, and that labor determines a space's function far more

than hardware does, all by providing a farcical, beautiful, and sweet portrait of the way artists don't work.



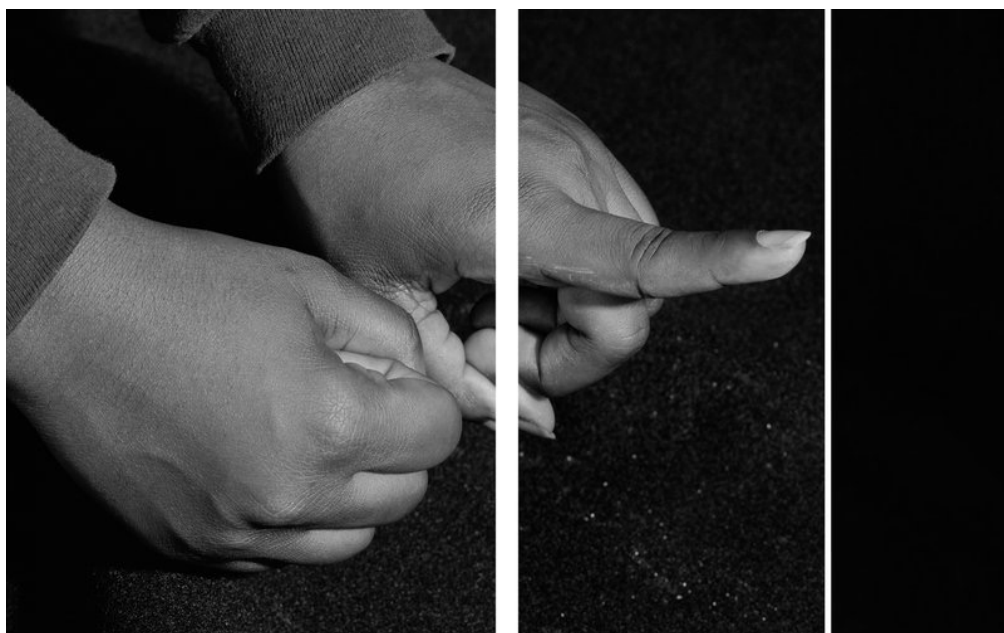
Rodney Graham's *'Tiny Tim Tabs'* (2014) is available on Artspace for \$258

**Sara Cwynar**

**Foxy Production, New York, April 7 – May 14**



To say Sara Cwynar is hot right now would be an incredible understatement. Since receiving an MFA from Yale in 2016, Cwynar has had three solo shows—for a total of nine since 2012. Few other artists her age boast stats above one a year. Add to that a few dozen group shows for good measure. Cwynar's "Rose Gold" at Foxy Production is a great intro to the artist, who burst onto the scene with her 2014 *Kitsch Encyclopedia*. Her new photos take the iPhone as the most supreme object of desire, and from there dive deep into the histories of color and image-making, and their inextricable link to consumer culture. The show closes on May 14th, so see it while you still can.



Sara Cwynar's *Hands (Re-enactment)* (2016) is available on  
[Artspace](#)