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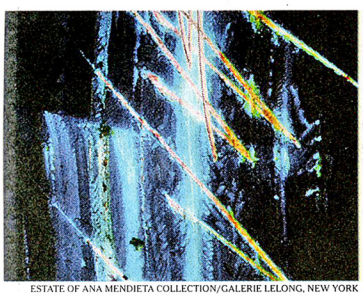
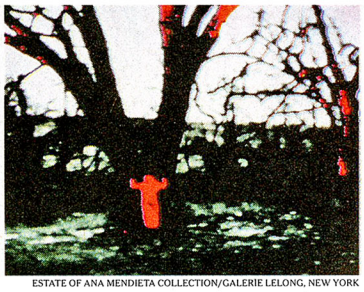
Revered Artist, We Hardly Knew Ye

From sculptures by Max Ernst to Catherine Opie's photographs of Elizabeth Taylor's jewelry, New York galleries this season are mining less familiar work by major figures, revealing new dimensions.



ESTATE OF ANA MENDIETA COLLECTION/GALERIE LELONG, NEW YORK



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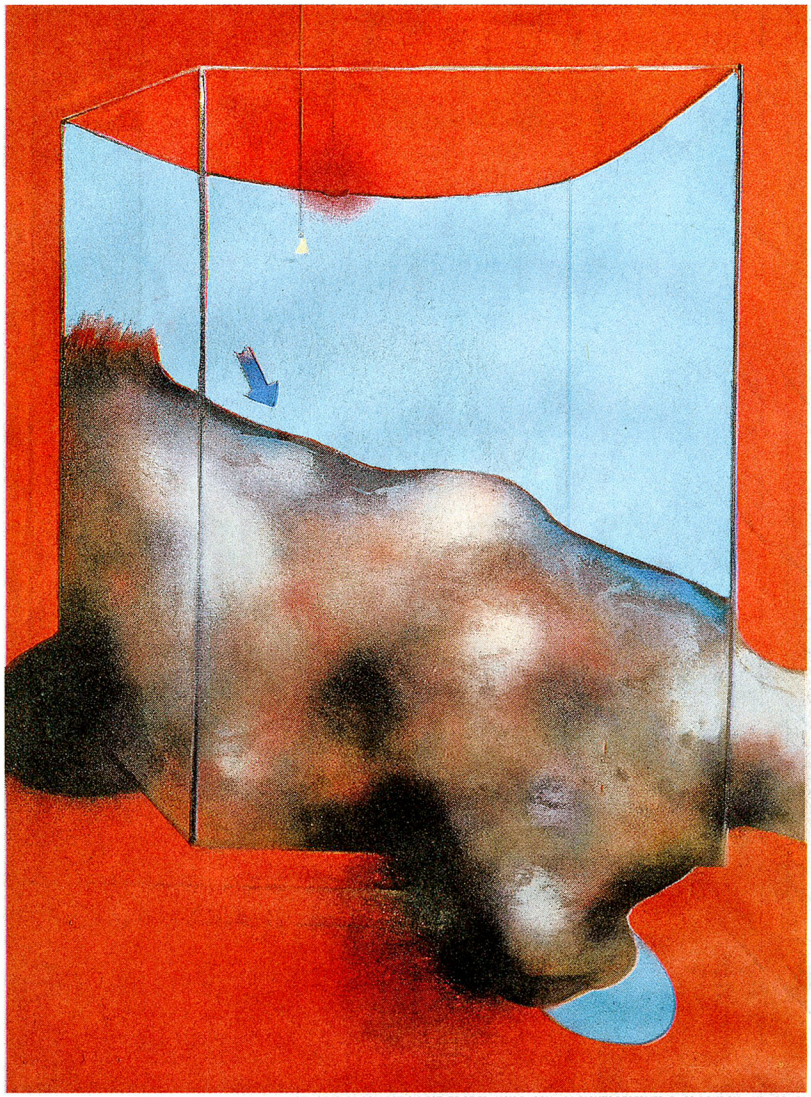

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By DOROTHY SPEARS

Overlooked aspects of established artists' careers are often revelatory. This season, New York dealers seeking fresh material for exhibitions have pulled together Max Ernst's sculptures and David Hockney's early drawings; culled Willem de Kooning's sculpture and Francis Bacon's late paintings; and examined Giorgio Morandi's late paintings and Ana Mendieta's experimental films.

Morandi's midcentury paintings have sometimes been criticized as "too commercial," said David Leiber, a director at the David Zwirner gallery, but "we're trying to strip away that baggage." The word "unsung" is in common use this season, as is its corollary, "re-evaluation." Many of the shows suggest that no stone should ever be left unturned. And the larger subtext, naturally, is money.

Yet when an artist's best-known paintings and sculptures feel too familiar, work that veers off the beaten path holds an undeniably nuanced power. And the prospect of puzzling over this exception or that crazy experiment — even, say, photographs of Elizabeth Taylor's closets — promises an eye-opening experience that is also immense fun.

Max Ernst is probably best known for his dreamlike, collaged landscape paintings. At the Paul Kasmin Gallery, viewers can now consider how his playful collagist aesthetic plays out in three dimensions.

"Max would take old flowerpots, or cups, or seashells, and build sculptures out of these really humble objects," said Nick Olney, a director at the gallery and the organizer of "**Max Ernst: Paramyths: Sculpture, 1934-1967**." Kasmin's installation includes 14 works in bronze and stone; one of the centerpieces, "La Plus Belle," from 1967, is a life-size limestone piece that Ernst carved as a homage to his wife, Dorothea Tanning.

"We think the sculptures are very classic," Mr. Olney said. "They have a lot to do with contemporary sculpture, too, because they're so process-oriented." *Through Dec. 5, Paul Kasmin Gallery, 515 West 27th Street, Chelsea.*

PHOTO: CHRISTOPHER BURKE STUDIO/PAUL KASMIN GALLERY; SCULPTURE: MAX ERNST, ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK/ADAGP, PARIS

GIORGIO MORANDI, ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK/SIAE, ROME

David Hockney's paintings tend to conjure exuberant celebrations of California from the vantage point of an outsider. But an exhibition at a second Kasmin space presents a more personal take on this British-born artist.

"My father, for a number of years, rented a big house in the Dordogne in France," Mr. Kasmin recalled in an interview. Of the many artists who would come to stay, he said, "Hockney was always one of the most amusing." Including over 50 works on paper from the 1960s and 1970s, **"David Hockney: Early Drawings"** will focus on the artist's gifts as a draftsman. Mr. Hockney often drew his friends, including the poet W. H. Auden. He often fudged feet, "but here you've got Henry's toes, perfectly done," said Mr. Kasmin, referring to a portrait of Mr. Hockney's longtime friend the critic and curator Henry Geldzahler, which appears on the exhibition announcement. "Early Drawings" is full of gems, among them a still life that includes Mr. Kasmin's father's hat. *Nov. 3 through Dec. 1, 297 10th Avenue, near 27th Street, Chelsea.*

While Willem de Kooning is one of the most celebrated Abstract Expressionist painters, less attention has been paid to the five years he spent making sculptures. Then, last fall, his life-size bronze "Clamdigger" (1972), which stood for decades at the entrance of his Long Island studio, fetched a whopping $29.2 million at auction, a record for his work in that medium. In **"Willem de Kooning: Sculpture (1972-74),"** the Skarstedt Gallery will show about a dozen sculptures, ranging from heads that are a foot or so high to life-size torsos and seated figures. Per Skarstedt, the gallery's owner, said that de Kooning's first foray into sculpture came in 1969, when he began molding small clay figures during a stay in Rome.

"He made them more for fun, for family," Mr. Skarstedt said. The bronzes in the show include an entire group of life-size works. The dealer described the "nice dark brown, almost blackish patina," of many of de Kooning's casts. The artist modeled the clay himself, so "you feel his fingers and his hands in the surface," he said. The painter George Condo, who has also worked in bronze, has written a catalog essay for the show. *Nov. 5 through Dec. 19, 20 East 79th Street, Manhattan.*

In setting out to secure loans for the Morandi exhibition at David Zwirner, Mr. Leiber said his goal was to tease out less familiar aspects of this reclusive Italian artist's story. Having seen occasional pairings of Morandi's work with that of American contemporary artists at the Museo Morandi in Bologna, Mr. Leiber began to examine the pared-down vocabulary of paintings from the last two decades of the artist's life. "It was a vastly prolific time, and also the most experimental," he said.

"Giorgio Morandi" will include around 20 landscapes and still-life paintings, many of them rigorous explorations of geometry and light. In his later paintings, the artist investigated how curtains can convey a veiled and luminous quality. Sometimes it's unclear where the light is coming from in these works, and the subjects are slightly blurry. Morandi's focus on producing series in this stage of his career is found in some other artists who show with Zwirner, including On Kawara, Dan Flavin and Donald Judd. Judd once wrote that, like Chardin and Cézanne, Morandi was interested in objects, and "believed that the things themselves had a reality that could be understood and shown." *Friday, Nov. 6, through Dec. 19, 537 West 20th Street, Chelsea; an exhibition of Morandi's paintings from the 1930s is on view through June 25 at the Center for Italian Modern Art, 421 Broome Street, SoHo.*

To accompany **"Francis Bacon: Late Paintings,"** which opens on Saturday, Nov. 7, at its Madison Avenue headquarters, the Gagosian Gallery has published an impressive book. In one of the essays, the author Colm Toibin writes that artists in their later years are commonly less concerned with death than with the discovery of a new form. Such a form "plays stillness against some deep and energetic stirring within the self," he suggests.

Like Morandi's later work, Bacon's late paintings reveal a growing affinity for simplified abstractions. A former interior decorator who also designed furniture, Bacon is probably best known for his stylish portraits of friends and his sometimes violent Cubist-inspired compositions.

"Earlier in his life, he would paint only his friends, but in the late period, he cast the net a little wider, and there are more landscapes," said Stefan Rotibor, a director at Gagosian and one of the show's organizers.

The exhibition includes over 25 paintings, most of them on loan from museums and private collections in New York and Europe. In his essay, Mr. Toibin describes several works that depict a central figure with a shadow. "There is something deeply exciting and dramatic about a second self, a figure waiting for the transfer of energy that will allow it to come to life, however flickeringly," he writes. Saturday, *Nov. 7, through Dec. 12, 980 Madison Avenue, at 76th Street.*

Subjects posing for the Los Angeles-based photographer Catherine Opie have generally tended to meet her clicking shutter with insouciant stares. But in January, when Lehman Maupin opens two exhibitions of her recent work, the overriding feeling will be tenderness. "This time, it's the viewers who get to stare at the images, instead of being stared at," Ms. Opie said in an interview.

At its space on the Lower East Side, Lehman Maupin will present **"700 Nimes Road,"** a new portfolio of 50 photographs that Ms. Opie shot in the Los Angeles mansion of Elizabeth Taylor. The artist sees the project as another way of thinking about portraiture. Taylor put considerable energy into arranging her precious objects, Ms. Opie said. When the actress died in March 2011, three months into the project, she added, "It was very hard." Yet Ms. Opie continued to photograph the belongings as she had left them.

Ms. Opie said that Taylor always wanted to see her jewelry sparkle in a clichéd sort of way. So, on a final day of shooting, Ms. Opie took all of it outside and laid it on a cushion in the sunshine. "In the most sweet and sensitive way," she said, "I was shining her jewelry back up to her." *"700 Nimes Road," Jan. 14 through Feb. 27, 201 Chrystie Street; "Portraits and Landscapes," same dates, 536 West 22nd Street, Chelsea.*

The artist Ana Mendieta, who arrived in the United States from Cuba in 1961 as a refugee child and died at 36 after plummeting from an open window, has long been admired for her transgressive use of her own body in photographs, sculptures and performances. **"The Interactive and Experimental in Ana Mendieta's Films,"** which opens in February at the Galerie Lelong, presents a recently discovered trove of experimental works in which Mendieta was playfully editing, scratching or creating the illusion that she was painting on actual film.

"There's a lot of odd things," said Mary Sabbatino, a partner at the gallery. She said the experimental works were discovered when old film reels were transferred to a high-definition digital format.

The show features about 10 films, projected and on monitors, and in color and in black and white, as well as related photographs and ephemera. In one film, Mendieta enlists students in an elementary school to run while holding the edges of a parachute to make it inflate; in another, there are bright colors all over her body, and it looks as if she has butterfly wings; in yet another, a white balloon bursts in the air to reveal turkey feathers that float to the ground. Some of the films were shot in Cuba. Many reveal a raw sense of wonder; her preference for materials that shape-shift, like exploding gunpowder or fire that consumes objects like cloth, also reveals a poignant preoccupation with the passage of time. *Feb. 6 through March 26, 528 West 26th Street, Chelsea.*

What catapults one influential artist to fame, while another becomes increasingly underrated? This perennial question "remains a mystery to all of us," said Lucy Mitchell-Innes, a founding partner of Mitchell-Innes & Nash, which will host a long-anticipated retrospective of paintings by Tom Wesselmann in April. Mr. Wesselmann, a Pop Art pioneer, was well known in the 1960s and '70s but fell off the radar in later decades. Mitchell-Inness & Nash, which began representing the Wesselmann estate this year, intends to change that.

"Tom Wesselmann" will include a dozen or so significant paintings and wall reliefs that the artist made between 1961 and his death in 2004. Wesselmann deployed an astonishing variety of materials, from molded plastic to cut steel to billboards depicting, say, bikini ads. His still lifes often include real physical objects like a window frame, a clock, a fan or a Hellman's mayonnaise jar; a landscape from 1965 features a life-size collage cutout of a red Volkswagen.

"There are a lot of technical innovations in his work which are of great interest," Ms. Mitchell-Innes said. *April 21 through May 28, 534 West 26th Street, Chelsea.*

Not Your Usual Suspects

Clockwise from top left: Two experimental film stills by Ana Mendieta from the 1970s, transferred to a high-definition digital format; "Sand Dune" (1983) by Francis Bacon; a 1952 still life by Giorgio Morandi; "La Plus Belle," Max Ernst's 1967 homage to his wife, Dorothea Tanning.