

CRISTIN TIERNEY

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What to See in New York Art Galleries This Week

Maruja Mallo's Surrealist works get a long-overdue survey; Neil Goldberg makes the personal political; and Martha Edelheit's paintings and drawings of the sexually permissive '60s.

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Neil Goldberg

Through Dec. 15. Cristin Tierney Gallery, 540 West 28th Street, Manhattan; 212-594-0550, cristintierney.com.



Image Neil Goldberg's "Inhibited Bites: Vortex Version" (2018), single-channel HD video. Credit Neil Goldberg and Cristin Tierney Gallery, New York

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The video artist Neil Goldberg called his new show at Cristin Tierney gallery “Vote in the Midterm Elections” because, he explains in a handout, “It’s confusing to try to get people to see your art exhibition while the world is going up in flames.” The title’s concession that there may be more important things in the world than art also encapsulates the self-flagellating Jewish guilt and drive to find meaning in daily minutiae that characterize these assembled works of photo, video and installation.

Acting as a comic centerpiece is “Inhibited Bites: (Magic) Box Set,” a revolving glass raffle drum filled with more than a thousand of the index cards the artist has spent decades scrawling with insightful sentence fragments and one-liners like, “How my therapist told me not to trust my gut.” On most Fridays and Saturdays during the show’s run, Mr. Goldberg will be on hand to pull these cards out as prompts for conversation with gallery visitors, but the piece works well without him, too, as a self-deprecating stand-in for an obsessive stream of anxious digressions.

Imbuing that same metaphor with devastating pathos is the short 2001 video “A System for Writing Thank You Notes.” In a close-up, no-frills monologue reminiscent of Claude Lanzmann’s “Shoah,” Mr. Goldberg’s engineer father, Elliott, enumerates into the camera, without visible emotion, the 18 set phrases that he and Neil came up with to streamline responses to people paying condolences to Elliott when his wife died. (“7A: We hope you’ll think of Shirley as she was in the photo.”) It’s a reminder that, however you break it into bite-size pieces or apply a fantastic system of organization to it, there are some kinds of pain that just won’t go away. *WILL HEINRICH*