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New York Galleries: What to See Right Now

'Painters Reply' extends a 1975 debate; Heather Dewey-Hagborg's installations merge science and art; David Kennedy Cutler's brilliant new paintings; and Allan Sekula, a photographer against the grain.

David Kennedy Cutler

July 31, 2019



David Kennedy Cutler's "Climbing Out (Right)," from 2019, in the exhibition "Muscle Memory,"
David Kennedy Cutler and Derek Eller Gallery

God may be dead, but he left behind his miracles. At least, that's my takeaway from "[Muscle Memory](#)," David Kennedy Cutler's suite of brilliant new paintings at Derek Eller Gallery. Each is essentially a brightly colored display box of empty space: the Brooklyn-based artist prints a photo or scan of body parts, clothing or fruit onto two pieces of canvas, sometimes adding some clear acrylic medium to imitate the texture of paint. Then he mounts the first piece on the front of an ordinary stretcher, like any other painting, and the second on the back, and slices open the first to reveal the second.

In "Climbing Out (Right)," scans of Mr. Cutler's wife's feet flop down like lurid flower petals, and it's easy to identify the foot-shaped holes they're falling out of. But more often the riotous color makes it hard to draw this visual connection, so that the potatoes, banana peels and money-green leaves of kale seem to burst forth ex nihilo. It's the first work I've seen in ages that treats the illusions of art with such frank delight. But there's also a larger point: As the heart-shaped pears in "Red Anjou" remind us, the best magic trick is still the human body.

Through Aug. 16. Derek Eller Gallery, 300 Broome Street, Manhattan; 212-206-6411, derekeller.com.

WILL HEINRICH