

Thomas Erben Gallery



Studio visits, Andrew Ross (left) and Dona Nelson (right).

Dona Nelson + Andrew Ross *New Works*

May 8 – June 14, 2025

Opens Thursday, May 8, 6 – 8:30 p.m.

Thomas Erben is thrilled to present *New Works* by Dona Nelson and Andrew Ross. Though differing in medium – painting and sculpture, respectively – both artists are united by their systematic approach to art-making, unorthodox use of materials, emphasis on and layering of process, and hybridity of outcome.

In his new sculptures, **Andrew Ross** translates the kinetic energy of two men wrestling into clay forms, which are then cast, recombined, scanned, milled by CNC and finished manually. Without discounting the personal imprint of his hand, Ross defines sculpture as a materially invested process – copying and transposing between materials – that nonetheless confirms a human presence in an ever-changing world.

Embracing “not knowing” as a driver of process, Dona Nelson pursues material and hands-on processes to locate her ideas. She uses, for example, paint to stain her canvases, generating an “other side”. Through a continued back and forth, with material fluidity and variation, her paintings interweave – visually and materially – both sides into a unified whole.

In *Meat-er* (2025), titled in a nod to metaphor, Ross uses found footage of two men wrestling as raw material. Of interest here is the “ad hoc arrangement the men created to simulate a stage... a situation that echoes the studio, but is not of the studio”, says Ross. Similarly, what keeps his iterations, or sequence of outcomes from simply being themselves, is their constant repurposing, a process that pushes against the idea of materials as fixed entities.

For example, a ladder and folding chair, which first appear as ad-hoc weapons in the video, are digitally modeled, then evaluated for their weight of gravity against two stacked mattresses to refine their appearance. In the realized work, the ladder and chair – milled in walnut – and aforementioned sculpture are attached to the cast mattresses, reconstituting the original scene.

Nelson pours acrylic paint onto unsized canvas, creating images on the other side which deviate from the original pour. Topographies are added by throwing strips of medium-drenched cheesecloth onto the painting’s surface. These either remain or are removed, leaving ghostly lines where the paint is prevented from penetrating, deep scars when ripped out from under many layers, or “frosting” interrupting or guiding the flow of paint. Nelson’s paintings are produced systematically, yet the controlled unpredictability of how they turn out “on the other side” introduces an element of surprise. The use of mutually enhancing or contradicting acrylics – from flow medium to gels drying into glassy finishes – multiply with Nelson’s initial gestures into a myriad of phantom appearances, overlaps, and moments of mutual exclusion.

In the act of approaching these works, experience happens where Nelson’s sense of impulse aligns with the material in the ongoing present of the physical making of her work, and it is in Ross’ sculptures that reciprocal relationships between history and imagination emerge.

The presentation of Andrew Ross’ work is in collaboration with Kai Matsumiya.

Dona Nelson (b. 1947, Grand Island, Nebraska) is an artist of considerable standing, whose work has been widely written about and exhibited within a gallery as well as institutional context.

She participated in the **2014 Whitney Biennial** and had survey shows at the **Tang Teaching Museum**, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs in 2018, and the **Weatherspoon Art Museum**, Greensboro, NC, in 2000 (accompanied by extensive catalogues).

Significant group shows include *52 Artists: A Feminist Milestone* at the **Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art**, Ridgefield, CT, 2022; *Unpainting*, **Art Gallery of New South Wales**, Sydney, 2017; and *Pretty Raw: After and Around Helen Frankenthaler*, **Rose Art Museum**, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA, 2015.

Her work is part of more than 20 institutional collections, with the **Princeton University Art Museum**, **Des Moines Art Center** and **Carnegie Museum of Art** recently adding her work to their collections.

Andrew Ross (b. 1989, Miami, Florida) is a sculptor, whose work has gained wide critical support since graduating in 2011 from the Cooper Union and having received a Skowhegan Fellowship that same year.

Solo exhibitions with galleries include **Kai Matsumiya**, New York (2023, 2019); **Clima**, Milan (2022, 2019, 2017); **American Medium**, New York (2017); project spaces **False Flag**, Queens (2019, 2017) and **Signal**, Brooklyn (2015); as well as institutionally with **The Richard & Dolly Maass Gallery**, Purchase College (2024); **Sarah Lawrence College**, NY (2020); **Addison Gallery**, Phillips Academy, MA (2018), and **Atelier Riehen**, Basel (2014). Group shows include venues such as **Galeria Jaqueline Martins**, Sao Paulo (2023); **Hessel Museum** at Bard and Drawing Center, NY (both 2020); **MoMA PS1** and **Greene Naftali** (both 2018); and **Studio Museum in Harlem** (2015/16), to name a very few.

Reviews and articles have appeared – often multiple times – in, for example, **The Brooklyn Rail**, **Flash Art**, **Mousse**, **Sculpture Magazine**, **Art in America**, **Artforum**, **Cultured Magazine**, and **Hyperallergic**.