

MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

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'SO I TRAVELED A GREAT DEAL . . .'

Through Aug. 18. Matthew Marks Gallery, 522 West 22nd Street, Manhattan; 212-243-0200, matthewmarks.com.

The best summer group exhibitions happen when a gallery untethers itself from the market and gives artists the run of a space. And just such laissez-faire conditions have produced a singular show with a long name (partially rendered here as "So I Traveled a Great Deal...") and blessedly unfamiliar art at Matthew Marks.

For the occasion, the artist Vincent Fecteau and the curator Jordan Stein have chosen six artists associated by birth or residency with Northern California. Whether this was a nod to the 50th anniversary of the Summer of Love, I don't know, but it works. All are individualists operating outside any mainstream, past or present.

Jack Mendenhall's photorealistic paintings of mirrored, 1970s and '80s middle-class interiors have an air of precision-built chaos, which is also found in Robert Strini's two wood sculptures made from what looks like disassembled designer furniture.



Isabella Kirkland's "Nudibranchia" (2014) is part of a group exhibition at Matthew Marks.

If Tisa Walden's small photographs of San Francisco look as if they might have been snapped on a laid-back stroll, Isabella Kirkland's oil paintings of marine-life specimens, lined up like hors d'oeuvres on a tray, have a scientific clarity, and more than that, a sense of mescaline-washed wonder. So do ink drawings by the totally interesting filmmaker-mystic Jordan Belson (1926-2011); each one is a controlled explosion of fervid line.

The Belson drawings date from the 1950s, when beatnik was heading toward hippie, and those

cultural impulses would seem to merge in a video by the writer Joanne Kyger (1934-2017). This is the only video that Kyger — a poet, a practicing Buddhist, briefly a Yippie, and a lifelong back-to-the-lander — ever made. In it, she recites her own adaptation of Descartes's "Discourse on Method" and turns it into a personal and spiritual statement, from which the title of the show is drawn. Witty, moving, intellectually lucent, and quite far out, it instantly makes you want to know her better, and it more than justifies a visit to this show.

HOLLAND COTTER