

THE NEW YORKER

ART GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Through Oct. 21.

Polly Apfelbaum

Alexander Gray
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The mod, pink-orange-and-black cover design of the progressive, if paternalistic, 1963 book “The Potential of Woman” is the template for Apfelbaum’s radiant exhibition, the veteran artist’s first with this gallery. The ground floor is filled with gouache drawings, all made this year, in which the source image—a stylized woman’s face divided in two, with a black bob and black-dot eyes—is rendered in kaleidoscopic compositions in a passel of hues. Womankind becomes a teeming force of endless variation. (The artist cites the recent nationwide Women’s March as one inspiration.) Upstairs, the face appears, enlarged, on the floor, in a series of beautiful hand-dyed wool rugs; here, it becomes a reversible figure, an optical illusion in which the forehead can also be read as the nib of a pen—a succinctly witty icon for a book. On the surrounding walls, dozens of abstract glazed-ceramic reliefs diverge from the puzzlelike geometry everywhere else. They’re executed with a winking panache that suits the tongue-in-cheek tone of the show.