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Photo Booth

The Sly Eroticism of Laundry on the Line

By [Vince Aletti](#)

Sally Gall’s photographs of laundry flapping on a line—which are the subject of a new show, “Aerial,” at the Julie Saul Gallery, in Chelsea—transform a domestic chore into a celebration of color and abstract form. Seen from below against cloudless blue-and-white skies, garments billow and flow, becoming jellyfish, calla lilies, birds in flight. Gall has often peered into intimate, mysterious spaces—caves, grottoes, spiderwebs—as if rediscovering childhood wonder; her pictures of fields of wild flowers were made deep within the grasses, from the point of view of a caterpillar, dreaming of its life as a butterfly. This new work is more expansive but just as sensuous, with a vivid palette of color and a sly undercurrent of eroticism. Much of the wash looks rather anonymous, just streaming scarves or other bits of fabric, but the biggest blossoms—especially the full-blown poppy—are distinctly feminine: skirts that Gall invites us to look up. “I’m searching for poetry in the everyday,” Gall told April Gornik in a recent interview, but she doesn’t mind teasing her viewers along the way. “I’m drawn to abstract painters that reference a landscape just by a few strokes of paint on a canvas,” she continued, and she’s happy when her work “rises to that challenge.” Like the staves of a musical score, the laundry lines provide a framework for bursts of free expression, surprise, and delight, made all the more engaging for being discovered in such a mundane subject.

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