

KATE WERBLE

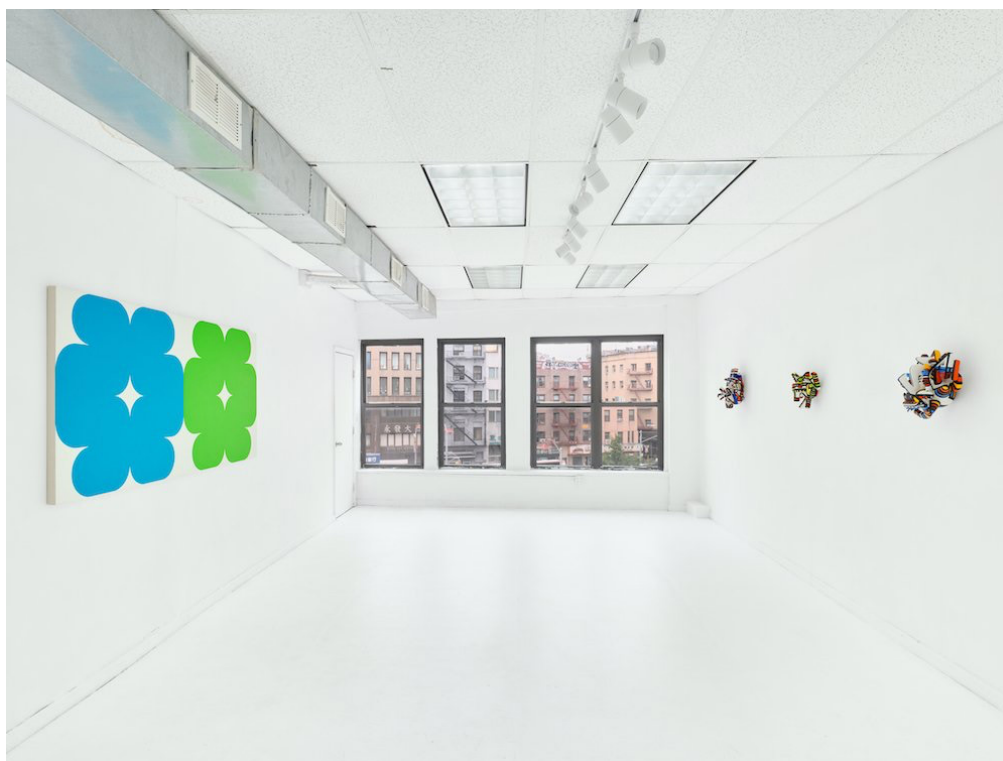
Two Coats of Paint

An award-winning NYC blogazine, primarily about painting

GALLERY SHOWS

We happy few: Band of sisters at Lubov

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Contributed by **Amanda Church** / Happiness is ... three dynamic, joy-producing artists under one roof, a phenomenon realized by curator **José Freire** in the three-person show “Acquaintance” – **Episode One of the Happiness Project** – at **Lubov Gallery** in Chinatown. The show brings together **Linda Daniels**, **Marilyn Lerner**, and **Jill Levine**, all of whom showed at some point with Freire at Fiction/Nonfiction in the East Village in the late 1980s or thereafter after at Team in Soho. This show marks Freire’s first curatorial project since Team closed in 2020, and the spirit is upbeat and sanguine, in line with **Pharrell Williams’** exhortation to “clap along if you know what happiness is to you.”

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Each artist's work radiates palpable exuberance. Commonalities among them include precise lines and edges and a bold color sense. There are also stark differences. Daniels' crisp curvilinear bursts of orange, red, blue, and green on white surfaces, alone or in pairs, are borderline psychedelic. They're like stills of strobe lights pulsing outward – articulated, stylized splats in blazing hues or pared-down, monochromatic **Lichtensteinian** explosions. Titled descriptively for the colors in each painting (e.g., *Orange-Yellow with White*), their impact stems from their flat expanses of color and in-your-face presentation.



Marilyn Lerner, *Science of Fiction*, 2023, oil on wood panel, 32 x 34 inches



Marilyn Lerner, *Butterfly Dreams*, 2021, oil on wood panel, 34 x 8 inches

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Lerner, in contrast, creates complex, taut configurations that bring novel twists to geometric abstraction. In *The Science of Fiction*, for instance, a vertical column of patterns and color traverses the diamond shapes behind it like a garish tie over a subdued shirt. Her juxtapositions are subtle and surprising. They often overhaul expectations, as in *Butterfly Dreams*, the skateboard shape of which consists of interlocking amoeba-esque circles that conjure patterns of human genetics dancing across the surface.

An unabashedly celebratory show like this, in the context of the longstanding connections between the three artists and the curator, is especially welcome in these distinctly unhappy and alienating times. While perhaps art cannot directly effect change, it can at least color our perceptions and, if only temporarily, edify, intrigue, and simply please. With vibrant approaches to abstraction, Daniels, Lerner, and Levine make all that happen.

“The Happiness Project, Episode One: Acquaintance,” Lubov, 5 East Broadway, 4th Floor, New York, NY. Artists: Linda Daniels, Marilyn Lerner, and Jill Levine. Organized by José Freire. Through August 17, 2025.

About the author: **Amanda Church** is a painter and occasional writer living and working in New York City, where she is represented by High Noon Gallery. *Eyelash*, her favorite among the paintings she made in 2023, is included in the New York Studio School’s summer show of Mercedes Matter Award winners.