

ARTFORUM

Lena Henke and Max Brand

OFF VENDOME | NEW YORK

254 West 23rd Street, #2

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The exhibition starts in the stairwell, with battered sheets of painted cardboard woven through the banister and collaged with handmade sheets of rough, grody paper—welcome to the gallery, it's been waiting for you. From there you ascend through two floors of discretely installed sculptures and large paintings, interrupted by hallways and landings displaying an array of manic collaborative efforts between Lena Henke and Max Brand, who studied at Frankfurt's Städelschule together. The first floor hallway exhibits a zigzag pattern of shredded paper rectangles adhered directly to the walls with green goo oozing out behind the edges as well as a series of Brand's watercolor, pen, and crayon drawings of cartoon figures and high octane scribbling—all untitled and from 2014—framed and hung on top of the wall collage. Discarding preciousness, this passage delights in its scrappiness while refraining from attitudinizing coolness.

Inside the first floor gallery are a series of hollow wall-mounted resin sculptures, painted sea-foam green on the outside and crisscrossed by thick rubber bands. Their curious, protruding faces are revealed to be the molds for Henke's figures made of sand that recline on metal towers on the second floor. Each work in this series resembles and is titled after iconic specimens of Manhattan architecture, such as the work *Your Flatiron (Female Fatigue Series)* or *Their New Museum (Female Fatigue Series)*, both 2015. These voluptuous mounds of sand repose in stark relief with their unsympathetic environments—the sharp metal corners juxtaposed so near to the soft bodies, evoking vulnerability. Bordered by structure, the figures seem safe, but also trapped.



View of “Lena Henke and Max Brand,” 2015.
From left: Lena Henke, *My Crane Collapse on 57th Street (Female Fatigue Series)*, 2015; Max Brand, *Untitled*, 2014; Lena Henke, *Your Chelsea Hotel (Female Fatigue Series)*, 2015.

— Paige K. Bradley