

# Time Out

## New York

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# Art

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Art

## Welcome to the dollhouse

Laurie Simmons juggles her roles as an artist and the mother of a famous daughter. By **Paul Laster**

Widely known for her photos of dollhouse figures, ventriloquist dummies and objects on legs, Laurie Simmons has been a New York art-scene fixture since the mid-1970s. Now, the Jewish Museum is presenting her latest series, "How We See," featuring models with trompe l'oeil eyes painted on their closed lids—uncanny images that question our assumptions about portraiture. Here, Simmons talks about her art and how it's affected her daughter, Lena Dunham.

**How would you explain your photos at the Jewish Museum?**  
The title "How We See" really

describes it: how we see, what we see, how we present ourselves. I tried to find some way to interfere/interrupt all of that, and the painted eyes gave me just the jolt of artifice I needed.

**“The possibilities for using social media, and stepping in shit, are endless.”**

**How do you get someone with closed eyes to look at the camera?**  
You have to find the sweet spot where they're looking at me, something I couldn't determine

until I was actually editing the pictures and identifying the moments when the model seemed to be engaged with the viewer.

**Does social media impact your thinking?**  
I think the possibilities for using

social media, and inadvertently stepping in shit, are endless. I worry young artists will avoid speaking up because of it.

**I suppose you get asked this a lot, but do you think your art influenced Lena?**

I hope that it's been good for her, growing up around artists. There were no dinner-table conversations about career, so she would've learned by observing. I hope that finding my own voice helped her. She's said that she always assumed she was expected to pick a job she loved.

**How do you deal with the negative criticism directed at her?**  
I've turned off my Google alert—it's really the only sane thing to do.

**"Laurie Simmons: How We See" is on view at the Jewish Museum Fri 13–Aug 9 (see Museums).**

## Critics' picks



### PETER SAUL

Saul's energetic combination of cartoonish satire, Surrealism, Pop Art and Expressionism is one of a kind.  
► *Venus Over Manhattan*; through Apr 18 (see Uptown)

### PIOTR UKLANSKI

A vintage Kodak how-to book for amateur shutterbugs provides fodder for some of the Polish bad-boy's photos on view here.  
► The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Tue 17–Aug 16 (see Museums)

### SHAHROUDY FARMANFARMAIAN

Motifs from Islamic architecture and design find their way into the Iranian artist's mirror and plaster reliefs.  
► Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum; Fri 13–June 3 (see Museums)

### YOU THE BETTER

Ericka Beckman's 1983 film unfolds as an allegory of suburban conformity versus free will: a *Tron*-like scenario where human players are sucked into a (noncomputer) game.  
► Mary Boone Gallery; through Apr 25 (see Chelsea)

### "SCENES FOR A NEW HERITAGE"

MoMA revamps its contemporary art wing with works from its collection.  
► Museum of Modern Art (MoMA); through Dec 31 (see Museums)



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