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ART & DESIGN

What to See in Los Angeles Art Galleries This Week

By WILL HEINRICH AUG. 31, 2017

The Galleries column this week is taking a quick tour of Los Angeles, where several fine shows are now on view. Start at Karma, in the West Adams neighborhood, near [the Underground Museum](#); the others are downtown.



Janiva Ellis's "The Okiest Doke," 2017.

'Prick Up Your Ears'

Through Sept. 9. Karma LA, 4619 West Washington Boulevard; karmainternational.org.

The best way into the [winningly sordid group show](#) that Taylor Trabulus, associate director at Gavin Brown, put together for Karma's new West Adams location is through Reba Maybury's black-and-white cardboard cutout. (This branch of the Zurich-based Karma is unrelated to the East Village gallery of the same name.) The image, which greets visitors with the defiant sang-froid of a swingers' club host, shows Ms. Maybury in nothing but an earring and thigh-high boots. But Ms. Maybury, who also works as a dominatrix, has clothed the cutout with a necklace of 16 color photographs, each showing a submissive, naked male client with the Photoshopped face of a different aging white rock star.

The same kind of aggressive repurposing of commodified sexuality runs through the show's nearly two dozen other pieces, if not always so explicitly. Janiva Ellis's discreetly blistering oil painting "The Okiest Doke" shows the gloved hand of some cartoon character presenting a communion wafer to a distorted image of a black man's face, and an untitled display rack by the experimental fashion label Rottingdean Bazaar holds 96 Yoko Ono-style instructional labels in plastic clamshells. Some of the instructions are too cute, but a few, like "Use the Winnings From a Lottery Scratchcard to Buy a Les Misérables Souvenir T-Shirt," cut through our compulsively consumerist mass-media culture right to its most bitter depths.