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Chelsea Galleries, Like a Box of Chocolates

By **KEN JOHNSON** APRIL 29, 2016



Anne Collier's works in her series "A Woman Crying," at Anton Kern.
Emon Hassan for The New York Times

This article is part of our spring gallery guide.

A TIME traveler from the early 1990s would be astounded to behold the gleaming new city of high-rise condo buildings that's grown up in the formerly industrial neighborhood of Chelsea, where once the only place to see art was the old Dia headquarters on West 22nd Street. He or she would be astonished, as well, by the Whitney Museum of American Art's shiny new edifice in the meatpacking district, just below West 14th Street, and by the hundreds of galleries populating the Chelsea art district's core — from around West 17th to West 29th Streets, and mostly between 10th and 11th Avenues. Things are still in flux here, as rising rents have been squeezing out some galleries and will continue to do so as leases come due for renegotiation; on the other hand, Hauser & Wirth, now on West 18th Street, is constructing its own new building on West 22nd Street. Even if Chelsea has passed its peak of three or so years ago, for viewers who want to see a lot of art in every conceivable contemporary mode and at every level of quality in a short time, it's still the place to go.

ANTON KERN Anne Collier produces large, sumptuous photographs of photographic imagery found on old record album covers, post cards, posters and advertisements, with a gimlet eye for representations of female beauty and sex appeal. The program sounds academic, but in Ms. Collier's hands, it has a personal and mournful, albeit restrained, tenor. In the rear gallery hangs a seven-and-one-half-foot-tall black-and-white photograph of a naked woman, seen from behind, standing in shin-deep ocean waves — it's called "Positive (California)." On an adjacent wall, a framed photograph shows a diary open to a page bearing a simple form titled "Things I Want to Accomplish," with blanks to fill in at six months, five years and 20 years. It's a poignant meditation on existential anxiety and spiritual aspiration.