

# Postcard-Sized and Eclectic: A Review of Robert Lostutter at Derek Eller Gallery

BY MÁNA TAYLOR | JUNE 20, 2025

In the back of the main gallery at Derek Eller Gallery, there is a small room dedicated to early works by Robert Lostutter. They are small and intricate, nearly postcard-sized. Most of them are untitled, but their smallness makes the bold imagery stand out. Geometric and eclectic, as expected from a Chicago Imagist, Lostutter's cutout figures are reminiscent of his peers such as Christina Ramberg or Ed Paschke. Notably, multiple drawings depict a man wearing a mask that is attached to ropes, extending outward beyond the page, in a marionette-esque fashion with flames and sharp lines pulsing outwardly. In his surrealist fashion, these flames also look like cardboard cutouts or papier-maché, and he alternates between two- and three-dimensional imagery. A shattered body, separated into moments, seemingly not a body and more of a collection of objects and shapes, takes up the space of the paper in tinted shades of watercolor. Much like the Chicago Imagist visual language of torsos, heads and corsets that populate the group's works, the eclectic figures in Lostutter's work are surprisingly comforting to look at even if they are also strange and almost disturbing.

Lostutter is mostly known for his paintings inspired by birds, with figures adorning feathered masks that appear to be half-bird. But, the watercolors at Derek Eller Gallery are more human than the avian creatures of his well-known work. They are amorphous, yet sturdy and strong. And a closer glance at these works makes the puppet-like figures seem as though they are not passively hanging in mid-air, but rather are in charge of their own suspension. Even if they are being held by strings, their poses are commanding and muscular in nature, nearly stoic. The bodies are leading the painting, resembling figureheads (the carved wooden sculptures at the front of a ship).





Robert Rauschenberg, "Untitled," 1970, oil on canvas, 6.5" x 4" (image)/Photo: Derek Eller Gallery, New York

In "Untitled" (1972), the singularly large oil painting, a torso seems to be bursting at its seams. The painting is centered around a blue knife with a snake wrapped around it and a kaleidoscopic rose that altogether resembles the iconography of classic tattoos. The muscles on this figure are almost surreal, and he has no arms or neck, just piercing eyes staring into the distance. Though the works aren't new and they are hidden behind the larger show in the main gallery in Manhattan, Robert Rauschenberg's works are well worth a visit.

Robert Rauschenberg's work is on view at Derek Eller Gallery, 38 Walker Street, New York, through July 11.



Robert Rauschenberg, "Untitled," 1972, oil on canvas, 60" x 49"/Photo: Derek Eller Gallery, New York