



# NEWCITY Art

Reviews, profiles and news about art in Chicago (BETA)

DEC 30

## Newcity's Top 5 of Everything 2008: Art & Museums

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### Top 5 Art Shows

Jenny Holzer, "Protect, Protect," Museum of Contemporary Art

Edra Soto, "The Chacon-Soto Show," Rowland Contemporary Gallery

Alan Lerner, Art on Armitage

"Made in Chicago: Portraits from the Bank of America," LaSalle Collection/Chicago Cultural Center

"Benin-Kings and Rituals: Court Arts from Nigeria," Art Institute of Chicago

- *Marla Seidell*

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## Galleries & Museums

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### Critic's Choice

**Edra Soto**

Identity art tends to be repetitively earnest -- *my ethnicity is spiritual! my people have suffered!* -- but Edra Soto realizes that putting your tongue in your cheek can stimulate your brain. Though her new show at Rowland Contemporary -- "The Chacon-Soto Show: Featuring 'The Greatest Companions'" -- ostensibly focuses on Iris Chacon, an iconic Puerto Rican TV star, Chacon is almost never glimpsed. A bunch of apelike action figures with painted masks perch on a filing cabinet



*The Greatest Companions #13*

in one corner of the space, while giant, labial paper flowers squat before the gallery attendant's table. The paintings on the wall mostly feature anonymous simians and the occasional fluffy dog, all flamboyantly dressed and gyrating on nightclub stages that vanish into garish abstractions. Everything drips tackiness -- except, surprisingly, the faces of the apes in the paintings, which are sharply and evocatively rendered. Here a she-ape kicks up her hindquarters with a look of exquisite delight, there an apparently adolescent missing link furrows his brow in what looks like constipation. Elsewhere two females bend over provocatively, their faces obscured, while in the background lurks a blurred, masked figure. What would we see if they turned toward us? Are they human or not? In the context of the room, their identity becomes not a celebration or even a statement but a question -- funny, sexy, mysterious, and more than a little uncomfortable. ➡➡ Through 12/13: Fri-Sat 11 AM-5 PM or by appointment, Rowland Contemporary, 1118 W. Fulton, 312-421-6275 or [rowlandcontemporary.com](http://rowlandcontemporary.com). --Noah Berlatsky

## Art

# Karen Lebergott and Edra Soto

<b>When</b>	Nov 7 - Dec 13 Fridays/Saturdays, 11-5
<b>Where</b>	Rowland Contemporary (1118 W Fulton Market, 312.421.6275)
<b>Price</b>	FREE
<b>Details</b>	<a href="http://rowlandcontemporary.com">http://rowlandcontemporary.com</a>



For Karen Lebergott, mapping is a conceptual departure point that sets off multiple trajectories. Her oil paintings suggest Chinese landscapes or city plans stacked up on monochromatic backgrounds, while mixed-media works erupt in vivid swells of painted, cut-up paper that evoke the chaotic growth of cities like Shanghai. It isn't immediately evident that she's exploring notions of identity and memory, but these themes rise to the surface in Edra Soto's paintings in the neighboring gallery. Shaking up Latina archetypes in pop culture, Soto depicts Puerto Rican bombshell Iris Chacón on her '70s TV variety show while campily transmuting her male dancers into gorillas or other hairy beasts.



– *Karsten Lund*



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