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Sadie Laska

Since emerging onto the New York City art scene in the mid-aughts, Sadie Laska has built an idiosyncratic practice that, while rooted in abstract painting, frequently branches off to include collage elements, if not more elaborate multimedia assemblages that project out from her canvases.

But, when it comes to a new series of wall-based works that Laska created for "EREHWON," her latest solo show at Canada, the pieces do not jut out sharply into the exhibition space—though they can unfurl. Flags, after all, tend to at least have that ability in common. Otherwise, having been conceived by Laska, each of the 20 flags in "EREHWON" flaunts a pattern that is demonstratively one-of-a-kind.

In broad terms, the series represents Laska's reaction to the rise of two seemingly diametrically opposed sentiments—nationalism and the staunch individualism inherent in identity politics—yet both strains are equally embroiled in matters of personal allegiance. The spectacle of flags hoisted up in front of homes across the United States so as to publicly avow the residence's support for a presidential candidate also looms large here.

The title "EREHWON"—much like the symbolism inherent in a given flag—also brims with potential insofar as it invites myriad interpretations: sounding it out phonetically produces a slurred "hey everyone;" written in reverse, it spells out, "nowhere," or alternately, "now here." And so on.

This sense of calculated ambiguity extends to the designs of each flag as well. The titular phrase emblazoned on *Everything is Just Dirt!* (2020) [pictured] appears to hover above a photograph of Earth—which, upon closer inspection, reveals itself to be a manipulated version of the iconic *The Blue Marble* image taken from Apollo 17 in 1972. Emotional reactions to the composition may skew toward cynicism, or wry agreement, or sadness, or alarm, or awe, or melancholy—or something in between, or a combination of, or entirely beyond the scope of these responses. Whether the boundlessness of human subjectivity will prove to be humankind's saving grace or ensure our demise remains to be seen. — Rachel Small



Sadie Laska, *Everything Is Just Dirt!*, 2020. Fabric and paint on flag, 59 × 36 ¼ inches.