

**JASON MIDDLEBROOK**  
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**sara meltzer gallery**

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**Season of Change**  
 Chelsea—now  
 with a shiny new  
 Frank Gehry  
 tower—heads into  
 a white-hot fall.

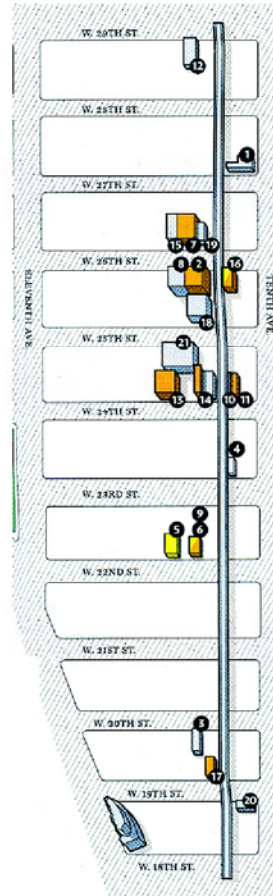
**7 Jason Middlebrook at Sara Meltzer** 525-531 W. 26th St., fourth fl. Environmentally minded sculptures and works on paper, incorporating news photos of New Orleans. 9/8-10/7.



Chelsea itself may be the most interesting show in Chelsea. The neighborhood is undergoing a radical transformation. Traditionally, New York artists, dealers, and collectors like to keep some grit around so that they may retain an illusion, at least, of bohemian toughness, and Chelsea offers exactly the right cocktail. A greasy taxi garage nicely sets off the art-world jewels. In 2005, the decision to turn a piece of true grit—the rusty and serpentine High Line railway—into a floating garden subtly but profoundly changed the mix. And this fall, the most fashionable architect in the world, Frank Gehry, will open a glamorous \$100 million building that faces the dingy West Side Highway.

Chelsea already teems with chic restaurants and boutiques, and architects besides Gehry are hard at work here; Jean Nouvel and Robert A.M. Stern are creating hundreds of condos for the very wealthy. This kind of New York makeover is often thrilling. The city should become more daring visually, and the new Chelsea will help in that regard. Gehry's building, his first in New York, evokes windblown sails. (Its "masts" seem to bend in the wind, challenging New York's strict verticality.) The High Line park is already beloved, and it hasn't even been built.

The Gehry building will be the headquarters of Barry Diller's IAC/InterActiveCorp, a symbol of hot money chasing new media. It opens at a time when the art world itself is stylish and booming. This fall, about 200 galleries will present art to an eager audience. Life, in many ways, has never been better for Chelsea: a browse among the galleries on a fall Saturday is becoming a favorite New York pastime. But those in the art world sometimes sense a tremor in the air, like distant thunder at a picnic. Perhaps the city should landmark those gritty garages. Remember art in Soho? M.S.



**LEGEND**  
 ■ First solo show  
 ■ Expanded or renovated gallery