



Lee Friedlander, *New City*, 2003, printed 2005, gelatin silver print, 20" x 16". Janet Borden.

personal environments, such as Friedlander's bookshelves adorned with memorabilia and snapshots of friends and family. It's hard to resist examining the titles on the shelves (by authors ranging from Louis L'Amour to Gertrude Stein) or trying to figure out who the people in the snapshots are. The feeling was far different from what viewers experienced perusing magazines on a newsstand in a 2008 photo or sample haircuts posted in a barbershop window in a 2009 image.

Even farther from the bustle of Friedlander's storefront scenes was a series showing flowers shot from above. Here the artist's mastery of light and shadow combines with his subtle manipulation of

camera angle and focal length to produce pictures that have a near-surreal air while never appearing overly distorted—a refreshing demonstration of how the old-fashioned camera can create a world of its own.

—Steve Barnes

Ida Applebroog

Hauser & Wirth

Still going strong at 81 years old, MacArthur grant-winner Ida Applebroog has long been regarded as an artist's artist, greatly admired for her tough imagery and acerbic wit. She first came to the art world's attention in the '70s, when she mailed miniature books of cartoonlike drawings with vicious punch lines to members of the downtown New York scene, many of whom would soon become supporters of her work. This exhibition illustrated what she was thinking about before she made that sly gesture—namely, drawing more than 100 pictures

of her vagina that were never intended to be shown in public.

Applebroog drew them in notebooks with a quill pen and India ink in the privacy of her bathroom, when she was a young mother struggling to find her artistic voice and vision. She was able to

tease out endless variations on her subject, arranging the images in grids and linear configurations.

In *Group A #9* (1969), the vagina becomes an entrance to a cave, framed by scratchy markings of pubic hair, whereas in *Group G #4* (1969), all that is apparent is a slip of slit, created from a single line. None of the images are lewd or pornographic; none offer the voyeuristic experience of Courbet's *L'Origine du monde*. There was no male gaze here—just the honesty of an emerging feminist artist.

To update these works, Applebroog created an installation, *Monalisa* (2009), digitally transferring dozens of her drawings onto translucent vellum and hanging them on the frame of a wood room-size structure. Through the gaps in the walls of the flimsy construction, viewers could spy a large-scale portrait in bloodred of a rag-doll model peering back at them in horror. In a catalogue essay, the room is compared to Duchamp's *Étant donnés*, in which a woman's crotch can be viewed through a peephole. But here the doll's fearful expression offered a counterpoint to the enticement of Manet's *Olympia*.

—Barbara Pollack

Charles Seliger

Michael Rosenfeld

Windblown gardens of spores, exploding force fields, sinuous webs of nerves: viewing Charles Seliger's paintings is like peering through a high-powered microscope at the DNA of the cosmos. From the early 1940s, when he began exhibiting with the Abstract Expressionists, until his death last year, at the age of 83, Seliger created animated, jewel-bright paintings of biomorphic forms. The 35 works in this memorial exhibition provided an impressive retrospective.

Influenced by the Surrealists and Psychic Automatists, Seliger improvised with color and texture, letting materials go where they would. Invariably they went toward natural forms. In *Orator* (1945), red and blue globules, interlocking chambers, and coiled passageways conjured a dream version of the human heart. *Slate and Moss* (1951), a loamy, impenetrable labyrinth in shades of



Ida Applebroog, *Monalisa*, 2009, mixed media on canvas, 31½" x 37½" x 1½".

Hauser & Wirth.

green, evokes a frightening world moldering just beneath the earth's surface.

Although from a distance Seliger's paintings can sometimes look like slabs of



Charles Seliger, *Deluge*, 1970, acrylic on canvas, 36" x 24".
Michael Rosenfeld.

colored marble or swirling puddles of chromatic oils, up close one can detect the effort he devoted to seemingly impulsive bursts. In *Spring* (1963), yellow, blossomy explosions are surrounded by a vast tracery of thread-thin vermilion lines, painted meticulously with a single-hair brush. *Vortex* (1968) is a meditation in salmons and golds, covered with a complex network of raised designs recalling Indonesian batiks, while in the eye-grabbing *Deluge* (1970), red and yellow gemstone shapes are outlined with a delicate but electric blue that makes the colors pop. Seliger's visions may have welled up spontaneously, but he took exceptional care in recording them. —Mona Molarsky

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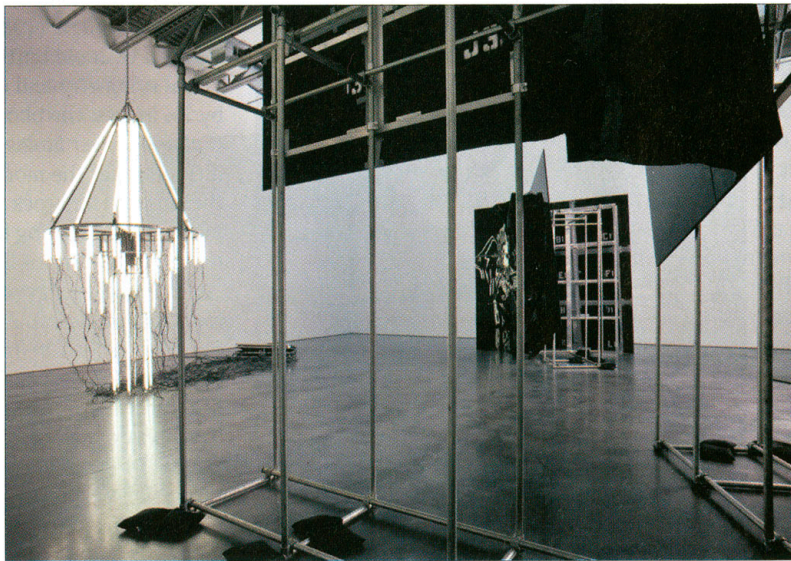
Banks Violette

Gladstone

Through April 17

About ten years ago, Banks Violette emerged as the avatar of a moment, possibly a movement, that some critics pigeonholed as "Goth." His drawings and glossy black sculptures were inspired by murder-suicides; a project at the Whitney Museum featured the skeleton of a burned-out church, cast in salt; and allusions to heavy-metal culture resonated throughout his work (at one show opening, a Hungarian vocalist sang from inside a closed coffin). But his art always contained echoes of more serious influences, like Robert Smithson, Dan Flavin, and Richard Serra.

The last two artists seem especially relevant to this exhibition, which opens with a huge chandelier-like structure of white fluorescent tubes, titled *throne (and over and over again)*. Tangled black cords snake from its central armature to bank of outlets in the kind of case a rock band might use (though the piece is blessedly music free). Opposite this are enormous sheets of crumpled black fiberglass, teamed with metal scaffolding and reflecting the wan light of the chan-



Banks Violette, *throne (and over and over again)*, 2009-10, fluorescent tubes, steel, chain, wire, and road case, 299" x 240" x 108". Gladstone Gallery.

deliers. Called *blackouts/blackholes (and all the things between)/for DS 7.13.09* (2009-10), the work is an homage to Dash Snow, the young downtown artist

who died last July of a heroin overdose. Small sandbags strewn randomly at the base of the sheets might allude to drugs or mortality, as might the mournful color of the plastic bags or the way the sheets collapse as if suddenly crunched up by some giant unseen hand.

But it's probably best not to read too much symbolism into the installation when the antecedents are more fun to contemplate: the gridded surfaces, the love of industrial materials, the band paraphernalia, and a certain insouciance toward the high-mindedness of Minimalism.

—Ann Landi

'30 Seconds off an Inch'

Studio Museum in Harlem

The title of this group exhibition was an oblique reference to a quote by artist David Hammons, observing that when a black person builds something, "everything is a 32nd of an inch off." Consisting of works by an international group of 42 artists ranging in age from their mid-20s to their mid-70s, the show, curated by Naomi Beckwith, revealed a breadth and complexity of artistic concern. Most of the artists either were of color or presented work influenced by black culture,

often featuring texts or urban detritus.

A multimedia event, the show included artworks from several decades. While infused with social awareness, sometimes tinged with resentment, the pieces were mostly more mischievous than accusatory.

Human hair, a classic identity marker in the African American community, served as source material for strong works by John Outterbridge, Stacy-Lynn Waddell, Chris Ofili, and Nadine Robinson. Ofili's sculptural gesture *Shit-head* (1993), a ball of elephant dung with a wig of spiky dreadlocks, is at once comical and poignant while evoking a shrunken head.

Jabu Arnell's giant *Disco Ball #2* (2009), composed of duct tape and packing tape encircling unadorned cardboard and foam that hung from overhead, is