

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Landi, Ann, "Banks Violette", *Art News*, April 2010

UP NOW

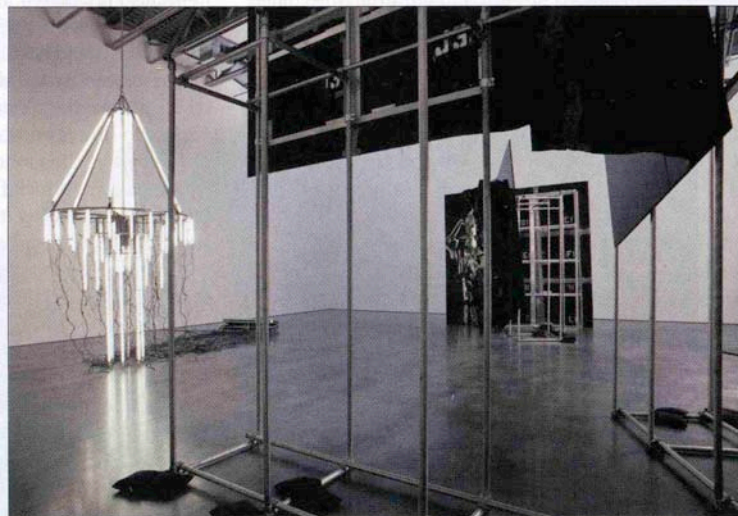
Banks Violette

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 a 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.

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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 scrunched 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*