

Schwendener, Martha, "Heavy Metal and Light: Always Serve Chilled," The New York Times, August 6, 2007

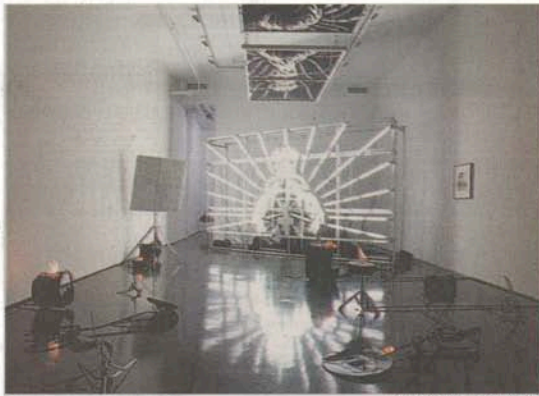
## THE Arts

MONDAY, AUGUST 6, 2007

E1

The New York Times

E6



DAVID REGEN/TEAM GALLERY

Heat and light: Banks Violette's show at Team Gallery in SoHo.

## Heavy Metal and Light: Always Serve Chilled

This is a big show for Banks Violette. It's his first New York gallery exhibition in five years and is split between two locales. In both places he tries an alchemical

### ART REVIEW

MARTHA  
SCHWENDENER

fusion of the heroic, theatrical aspects of 1960s and '70s art with the masculine bombast of heavy metal. The result, if successful, might be a canny contemporary Gesamtkunstwerk, a heavy-metal update of Wagner's total artwork. Instead the visceral heat and rage of heavy metal have been tamed and reduced to nonthreatening levels. (An enthusiast might call it a "formalist" resolution.)

At Team Gallery in SoHo the installation includes relics from Mr. Violette's favored source, heavy-metal music (specifically, the specialist subgenres of black and death metal): an exploded drum kit, its parts painted a charred black, and a stagelike

### Banks Violette

Team Gallery  
Gladstone Gallery

aluminum frame with white lights outlining an abstract version of the Jägermeister liqueur stag's head logo. Propane lines hooked up to the drum kit parts would, in theory, emit flames if they were turned on and lighted. (They weren't during my viewing.)

In the back room candles and a broken Jack Daniel's bottle, all cast in pewter, sit atop a black road case. A refrigeration unit inside the case causes a bit of frost to form on the candles. Graphite drawings of objects like a skull ring and an inverted American flag yield further allusions to metal culture.

At Gladstone Gallery in Chelsea two freestanding walls (one aluminum, one with smashed

*Continued on Page 6*

## Heavy Metal and Light: Always Serve Chilled

From First Arts Page

mirrors) are connected to nitrogen tanks that also create modest amounts of condensation and frost. Amplifier parts and soundproofing panels are cast in salt, and speakers release a solemn Gregorian-influenced chant and a low, droning rumble reminiscent of La Monte Young's "Dream House." Both pieces of music were created in collaboration

ter.

This quoting tendency is most obvious in the Gladstone show's centerpiece, a large sculpture conjuring a collapsed stage, with Flavin-esque fluorescent tubes, connected to dozens of thin black wires, that tumble over a deconstructed Sol LeWitt-type frame. The sculpture sits in what feels like a significant place: just where a large sculpture by Matthew Barney stood last year.

Mr. Violette has been moving increasingly into performance-based (or enhanced) art, and one of the most interesting aspects is how the works in these two shows have unfolded somewhat accidentally over time.

Because of technical problems both exhibitions opened a week late. Then the Gladstone Gallery's air-conditioning system went down, and you had to return a few days later to see if frost had finally materialized. On second viewing the cheesy Gregorian-metal chant was much lower in the mix. (Either Mr. Violette had made some modifications, or I arrived at a better moment in the soundtrack cycle.)

At any rate the new mix worked much better. Even the titles nod toward a time-based model of art making. The works are "Not yet titled," which sounds more provisional than "Untitled."

In experimenting with ways to integrate sculpture, sound and performance — and incorporate, or perhaps replicate, the dark power of heavy metal — Mr. Violette has set his stakes high, and his models, both in visual art and music, aren't known for their humor or subtlety.

Yet unlike Mr. Barney, another artist with outsize ambitions, who appeared at Gladstone more or less fully formed in the early 1990s, Mr. Violette hasn't totally arrived. He nonetheless remains an interesting artist to watch.

### Banks Violette reconfigures art from previous decades.

with Stephen O'Malley from the band Sunn 0)))

Mr. Violette is innovative in the way many younger artists tend to be these days. His work might be judged — or enjoyed — by how effectively he quotes and reconfigures art from previous decades. The minimalist box is turned into a road case; process materials like lead or latex reappear as cast and dripped pew-

"Banks Violette" continues through Aug. 17 at Team Gallery, 83 Grand Street, SoHo, (212) 279-9219, teamgal.com; and at Gladstone Gallery, 515 West 24th Street, Chelsea, (212) 206-9300, gladstonegallery.com.