

## GLADSTONE GALLERY

Cotter, Holland, "Marisa Merz," *Art in Review*, *The New York Times*, November 10, 2006

# The New York Times

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## Marisa Merz

*Gladstone Gallery  
515 West 24th Street, Chelsea  
Through tomorrow*

Marisa Merz, an important figure in the Arte Povera movement, has a small, chapel-like installation of new work on Gladstone's second floor. The seven pieces are drawings of heads and faces, done in smudgy graphite and washy colors, in a light-touch style that brings to mind Odilon Redon, Medardo Rosso, wispy fashion illustration and Ms. Merz's delicate knitted copper wire work from the 1960s.

Some of the heads evoke African sculptures: one has the bulbous head, arching eyes and curve-patterned surface of Songye dance masks. Others recall Byzantine icons in which the veiled Virgin has the rounded head of a great dove or owl. Ms. Merz enhances the sacerdotal atmosphere by using gold paint in several pieces; by framing one drawing like an altarpiece; and by attaching a small, shattered plaster hand to another, turning it into a kind of reliquary.

It would take very little further pressure in a quasi-religious direction to spoil everything. But this doesn't happen. The private, sequestered, interrupted feeling of the drawing, as if it were done within moments after waking from a dream-filled sleep, makes it persuasive.

HOLLAND COTTER