

The New York Times

Art in Review: Sadie Benning

By MARTHA SCHWENDENER

Published: September 21, 2007

SADIE BENNING

Form of a Waterfall

Orchard

47 Orchard Street, Lower East Side

Through Oct. 7

Sadie Benning first gained recognition as a wunderkind in the early 1990s when she exhibited videos made with a toy Fisher-Price Pixelvision camera. The videos, which drew on Ms. Benning's experiences as a lesbian teenager, fit perfectly into an identity-obsessed moment when young, indie-feminist movements like Riot Grrrl flourished.

In recent years Ms. Benning, now 34, has been distancing herself from the medium with which she is identified. This show includes a single, flickering Pixelvision video: "One Liner," from 2003, is a close shot of a pen drawing a line on a sheet of paper laid over a light box.

Paintings and sculptural work show Ms. Benning heading away from figuration, autobiography and narrative. A series of untitled "paintings" made with colored pencil on bookbinding board are like quirky, washed-out Joseph Albers. A white plaster square filling a void in the wall where a Lawrence Weiner was installed is like a playful Malevich redux.

In the middle of the gallery is a turntable and four vinyl albums in white sleeves from which you can choose your soundtrack for the show. Ms. Benning made the turntablist-style recordings by sampling from her record collection and pressing "play" and "pause" on a cassette recorder.

Modestly scaled, user-friendly and gentle on the eyes and ears, Ms. Benning's current assembly looks different from her earlier efforts. It is more playful and happy. But it is very much in keeping with an approach that navigates between folk authenticity and art-world validation.

This isn't the kind of show that would get an unknown artist noticed. It is, however, an assured demonstration of Ms. Benning's ethos of self-determination, doing what interests her in whatever mode or medium she pleases and keeping art a D. I. Y. process. MARTHA SCHWENDENER