

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Banks Violette

April 24 – June 1, 2024

Opening Reception: April 23, 6pm - 8pm

Grote Hertstraat 12 Rue de Grand Cerf

Brussels

Gladstone presents new and recent works by Banks Violette in the artist's first exhibition with the Gallery in Brussels. Organized in collaboration with Rodolphe Janssen, the show is composed of recent sculptures and drawings that reimagine culturally entrenched symbols found across music, art, theatre, and fashion in the artist's stark monochrome and industrial aesthetics. Throughout his career, Violette has sourced inspiration from various subcultures, drawing from his deep involvement and enduring fascination with black metal, gothic and post-punk communities, producing an oeuvre that asserts the formal qualities of minimalist and conceptual art while contending with the dark recesses of American society.

The exhibition includes Violette's latest body of work, *reasons to be cheerful*, a series of 'chandelier structures' recently commissioned for the Celine Art Project, in a continuation of the artist's ongoing collaborations with creative director Hedi Slimane. Composed of industrial white fluorescent tubing, wires, and metal, the sculptures are constructed with attention to form and materiality, deliberately configured in varying states of theatrical collapse. The series title references the British New Wave-punk band, Ian Drury and the Blockheads' 1979 single, "Reasons to be Cheerful, Part 3" inspired by a roadie who had a near-death experience. Recalling the energetic legacy of performance found in his earlier works and the hedonistic art world he moved in, Violette's work contends with the convergence of nihilism and transformation, embodying both darkness and light. First displayed at Celine's flagship boutiques and currently on view in the Gallery's neoclassical townhouse, the industrial sculptures create a striking juxtaposition with the commercial and classical architecture of the settings in which they are exhibited. Violette's anthropomorphized sculptures are assertive of both the space they occupy and their ethos. The artist's distinctive style utilizes repeated modular forms within minimalistic frameworks, negotiating the dissolute with the glamorous, revealing a broken truth rather than the functional ideal. Violette simultaneously recalls the concept of a chandelier while rejecting an explicit representation, thwarting the viewer's expectations of a familiar form with his abstracted deconstructions.

Violette's marked departure from the anticipated norm is further evinced in his graphite drawings and other sculptures. In these works, the artist contrasts the viewer's perception and interpretation of familiar imagery inherent in US popular culture with his commentary on consumption, excess, and violence. Often linked to the New Gothic Art movement, Violette's monochromatic riffs on familiar motifs take formalist approaches to over-exhausted iconography. Violette strips Americana down as he renders a graphite drawing of two horses in *untitled (two horses/inverted)* (2023) capturing their transient bodies in a fleeting moment. Within the negative space of the black and white drawing, Violette creates the illusion of weight and speed, producing an enigmatic physicality in the X-ray-like figures of his recent drawing. Offering insight into cultural consumption through yet another musical reference, Violette's cast sculpture, *age of consent*, reconceptualizes Peter Saville's cover for New Order's 1983 album, *Power Corruption and Lies*. Notably, the album imagery is an appropriation itself of Henri Fantin-Latour's 1890 painting, *Roses in a Basket*. Titled the leading track of the album, Violette's sculptural rendition transposes the two-dimensional imagery of the cover art as a three-dimensional basket with a living floral arrangement that exudes the notion of impermanence. Violette's work draws from the canonical art historical influences of minimalism and conceptualism, apprehending imagery within the cultural zeitgeist in an act of esoteric subversion.

Banks Violette's recent retrospective, *the bees made honey in the lion's skull (2005-2023)*, showcases the artist's new 'chandelier structures' at BPS22 Charleroi through May 5, 2024.

Banks Violette was born in 1973 and lives and works in Ithaca, New York. He received his B.F.A. from the School of Visual Arts, New York and his M.F.A. from Columbia University, New York. His work has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions, including those at BPS22 in Charleroi, Belgium; Museum Dhont-Dhaenens in Deurle, Belgium; Kunsthalle Wien; the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas; Kunsthalle Bergen, Norway; and the Whitney Museum of American Art. He has also participated in group exhibitions at The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zürich; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Palais de Tokyo, Paris; the Royal Academy, London; MoMA P.S. 1, New York; the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam; among others.

For further information, please contact press@gladstonegallery.com

New York gallery hours: Tuesday-Saturday, 10am-6pm

Brussels gallery hours: Tuesday-Friday, 10am-6pm and Saturday, 12pm-8pm

Seoul gallery hours: Tuesday-Saturday, 10am-6pm