

The New York Times

Art in Review; Michel François

By ROBERTA SMITH

Published: February 10, 2006

Theater of Operations

Bortolami Dayan

510 West 25th Street, Chelsea

Through tomorrow

The Belgian artist Michel François had two solo shows at the Curt Marcus Gallery in SoHo in the mid-1990's that focused on droll photographs and videotapes, most made in his backyard. Now he's back, with a show that embraces what may be one of the unwritten rules of current hotness: never use the same material or technique twice.

Diversity, of course, signals a lack of interest in a signature style or conventional studio production, but it can still accrue into a look, as Mr. François's elegant, beautifully installed show suggests. Everything is well made, from the white nylon flag blowing in wind emitted by its own flagpole, to the cylinder of barbed wire coated with tiny polystyrene pellets, to a black ice sculpture of an eagle (Saturdays only).

Everything is beautifully arranged. From a certain angle, a thick black line drawn high along a wall (the ball of burnt wood that did the job is still there) intersects perfectly with a long, stringlike bit of white neon dangling from the ceiling. The round divots of beige carpet, cut from the expanse surrounding the flagpole, echo the black digital spheres jostling for space like infected cells on a DVD screen titled "Map of the World." A large circular plug neatly cut from the gallery wall (from exterior brick to interior plaster in about 15 inches) echoes the other circles and cylinders.

There is a completely sincere sweetness to this exhibition. That doesn't stop it from also being familiarly generic, but the show has its compensations. ROBERTA SMITH