

ARTFORUM

SEPTEMBER 1968 \$1.50



NEW YORK

KEITH SONNIER, NEIL JENNEY, DAN CHRISTENSEN, DAVID BUDD, Noah Goldowsky Gallery; SAM GILLIAM, Byron Gallery; DOUG OHLSON, Fischbach Gallery:

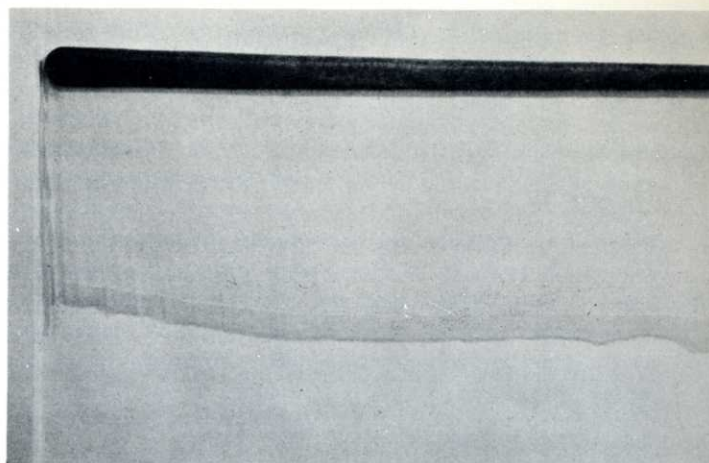
At the Noah Goldowsky Gallery an end of the season (non-) group show included two young sculptors, KEITH SONNIER and NEIL JENNEY, and two painters, DAN CHRISTENSEN and DAVID BUDD.

What Jenney calls his "non-visual sculpture" consists of a number of thoroughly unartistically arranged water-filled troughs of plastic and wood, fed with blurping and bubbling rubber tubes through which air is pumped by an exposed and shaky generator. To one side of this completely unassuming rattletrap and behind a screen in the corner of the room grows some dried-up moss dutifully watered by the ubiquitous Dick Bellamy. In another piece Jenney combines a slanted pan of dirt and plants with water-filled plastic bags held on wooden frames, in which algae scum is meant to form. Around and under these parts some short squiggly fragments of blue, yellow, and white neon are tenuously strung. Earlier works employed swinging screens of light bulbs, or twisted and bent rods covered with a stickily unpleasant green coating, revealing his interest in both internal motions and unorthodox use of materials for mostly non-visual ends. Much of Jenney's still varied and unresolved work — though it does not cater to the viewer nor concern itself with traditional spatial or structural relations of plastic form — must still be attended to in other ways, that is, watered, plugged in, or set in motion to acquire

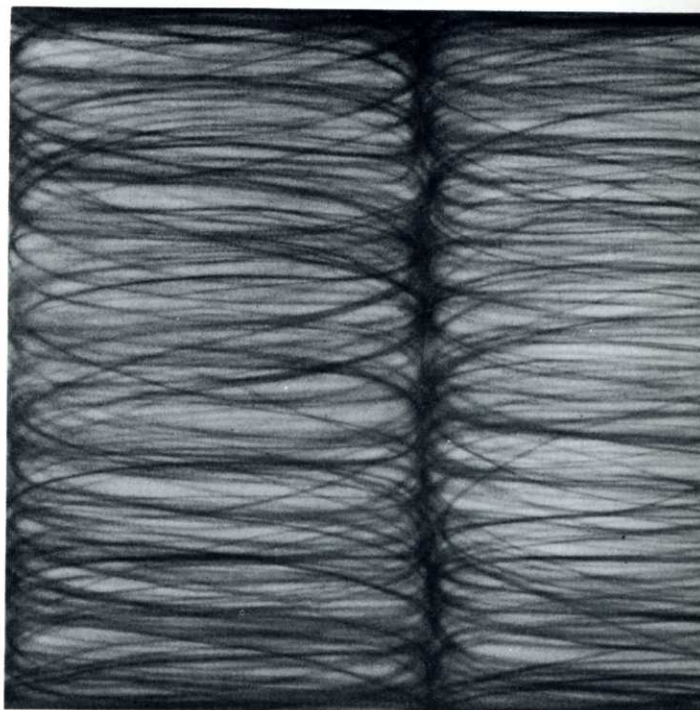
its *actual* presence. In other words, one has to be more involved with the internal processes as they function within these partly playful, mildly lethal-looking Rube Goldberg conglomerations, than with any particular set of external esthetic relations or expectations. Though deliberately less refined than Keith Sonnier's mesh screen pieces, Jenney exhibits an original (and to me) potentially fascinating and quirky sensibility, not without its own seriousness.

Sonnier is a former student of Robert Morris and his use rather than his articulation of the fine mesh material suggests some positive influence. The curving, almost billowing forms he organizes into irregular multi-part wall pieces (on painted wood backing or simply hung against the wall) give the same feeling of ambiguous volume and expanding pressure as in one of Morris's recently exhibited mesh-wedge pieces. Sonnier showed several differently worked sculptures all in copper or silver wire screening (one with a curtain of gauze). His sensitivity to the visual effects of the screen when suspended flatly against a wall surface or molded in convex forms (more patterns and subtle shadows appear), or to the shifting sense of solidity and transparency, rigidity and softness which his oddly shaped and graduated segments take on all together is already rather sophisticated.

Christensen's one canvas, sprayed with pastel loops spiralling endlessly on a white ground had a kind of luminous radiance and a muted lushness quite in contrast to Budd's large two-tone black textured field, roughly halved by a curving white horizontal crag (channel).



Keith Sonnier, *untitled*, brass screen and cheesecloth, 9 x 6', 1968. (Noah Goldowsky Gallery.)



Dan Christensen, *PR*, 100 x 120", 1967. (Noah Goldowsky Gallery.)

The range of invention in the show was certainly disparate enough, but fortunately any one of the works held its own for both the level of imaginative interest and for formal strength.

In his first one-man showing in New York, Washington artist SAM GILLIAM displays a range of touch and sensibility which indicates both his dependence on and divergence from the methods of other Washington painters, Louis and Noland. Although Gilliam takes off from

Louis's technique of spiraling to troughs of canvas, the technique which he obtains from this practice is contrived and more carefully specific of design than it disguises the older artist's. Gilliam prefers to take advantage of surface tactility and attention focused on the accidental textures obtained by the Rorschach-like puddle and blob of paint. Color is used to situate an impression of a particular exterior shape

