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Reviews: New York

'Summer Invitational'

OK Harris

This wide-ranging show by 12 artists ran the gamut from factual excess to emotional precision. George Blakely's two-walled mixed-media installation *Encyclopedia Britannica Macropedia Volumes 1–19* (2007), consisting of pictures cut out of encyclopedias, dictionaries, and textbooks, alludes to the inexhaustible—and unfathomable—supply of information that continually confronts us. And James Herbert's large Neo-Expressionist painting *The Ventriloquist* (2006) is strangely, acutely intimate for its size.

In between, there were nine unforgettable gold-toned gelatin silver photographs by Builder Levy spanning some 40 years, documenting lives in New York's inner-city communities, Appalachian coalfields, Mongolia, and Cuba, among many other places. A photojournalist in the grand tradition of Lewis Hine and Dorothea Lange, Levy is not only a compassionate and insightful observer but also an exceptional technician who brings rich tonalities to his prints.

The aggression of Steven Montgomery's ceramic and mixed-media objects contrasted with the coolness of the photographs. The artist's often large-scale pieces simulate machinery and other devices in various stages of decomposition and corrosion. His imposing tan

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and pale green works, which hung on the walls, are especially powerful, albeit indeterminate in nature. Not really machines or even parts of machines, they look like monstrous tools that could easily overwhelm anything human.

The show moved from huge to tiny with Mary Mazziotti's series of diminutive boxes containing very small paintings, each of which tells a story. Somewhat reminiscent of Joseph Cornell's boxes, these were inspired by medieval manuscripts and portrait miniatures, and they have the endearing, whimsical quality of children's toys—treasures to be carried about—adding a note of sweetness to this eclectic show.

—Valerie Gladstone