

# ALEXANDRE

reviews: new york

## Keith Sonnier

### Pace

This vibrant show demonstrated how Keith Sonnier's neon is not like Dan Flavin's or Chryssa's or Tracey Emin's. It's not hard-core Minimalist or expressionistic or cursive. Rather it's Sonnier's own, growing mostly out of Pop art, animation, music, food, and fun-along-the-Bayou. Here were 12 neon works, dating from his "Ba-O-Ba" (1969 and ongoing), "Neon Wrapping Incandescent" (1969), and "Neon Wrapping Neon" (1969) series to his more recent constructions—*Zig Zag Square*, *Elliptically Lobbed*, and *Schmoo-O.G.V.* (all 2013).

Some of the earliest works were more formal and spare, exemplified by *Neon Wrapping Neon IV* (1969), with citrus-green, blue, red, and yellow lines poised like table legs, and his "Ba-O-Ba," pieces, built on the relations between the sheets of acrylic or glass that, when set before a neon tube, serve as a skin and complicate our perceptions.

During the same period, Sonnier produced his playful, provocative *Neon Wrapping Incandescent* (1969)—an almost narrative piece in which a central white squiggle balances a thin blue line connecting two white circles of incandescent bulbs with black dots looking like eyes and/or breasts. Loose black electrical cords tie the forms together, helping to generate a story line while also showing



Keith Sonnier, *Torso Trunk*, 2013, neon, acrylic, aluminum, electrical wire, and transformer, 114" x 88" x 4". Pace.

the hardware, and linking the real and technological world with the imaginative one.

The recent *Zig Zag Square* is both formal and dynamic with its four accordion shapes, flaunting their extended reach with warming glows: a vertical blue, two horizontals in pink and red, and one diagonal in yellow. All are attached to the glass scaffold whose edges and shadows on the wall behind it create a dance ground for the lights, while the black cords connect the ladderlike forms.

More recent shapes, such as *Torso Trunk* (2013), can be sensual and seductive; or, like *Schmoo*, recalling Al Capp's 1948 comic character, goofy and slightly poignant; or even wittily allusive, like the aptly titled *Lobbed Claw* (2013), which charmingly illuminates Sonnier's Louisiana roots. In the end, all one can say is, Party on! —**Barbara A. MacAdam**

## Lois Dodd

### Alexandre

A gallery full of Lois Dodd's affecting small paintings took viewers through the seasons, often emphasizing winter itself, which, in the artist's hands, holds the greatest possibilities for compositional and atmospheric effects.

A work might start out with a house—personal, familiar, and generic—usually seen against a gray or white sky, like the one in *March Snow* (2013), where the flakes are painted across the roof that surrounds a dormer window. Bare, spidery tree branches on the other side of the house seem to sprout from the roofline. *January House* (2011) also emphasizes a roof, here stretched over two perpendicular wings, with a porch, an entryway, and impoverished little windows providing angular incident. Partly covered with snow and contrasting with shaded bluish areas, the roof and the house beneath it are almost institutional—bleak, plain, and, again, somewhat familiar—like a neighboring structure seen all too often and all too closely all winter long.



Lois Dodd, *January House*, 2011, oil on panel, 12" x 11 1/2". Alexandre.

By contrast, *Composition in White, Brown and Grey* (2000) is a view of a dark pond that Dodd has frequently painted, against snow, with an evergreen to the side and calligraphic foreground branches. The tiny painting looms large, radiating a sense of why artists paint landscapes and how the specific can seem universal and abstract.

Dodd hardly neglects the plant world. In one interior, *Window with Amaryllis Plant* (2012), the leaning plant is shown against the window through which another view to the outdoors presents itself. Here is a hint of the burgeoning, effulgent plant life that Dodd depicts in summertime views. In *Barn and Bean Vines* (2013), for instance, the various greens of unruly late-summer plant life threaten to overwhelm any view of the distant barn.

The simple plant close-up in *Foreshortened View* (2009) portrays a flattened, blue-petaled flower surrounded by green tendrils. This painting provided the perfect foil for the gangly drawing *Mosquito* (ca. 1960) by Dodd's co-exhibitor Anne Arnold, whose head-on drawings of an Afghan hound, Willow, were irresistible.

In Dodd's summer scenes, as well as certain winter ones, there is the sense that something ecstatic or supernatural is about to occur. Her nominally realist paintings have the ability to unleash a whirlwind of sights, memories, and emotions, as when hearing a deceptively simple song cycle performed by a singer and pianist. —**Cynthia Nadelman**