

Team will present an exhibition of new work by Banks Violette from the 28th of June through the 16th of August 2002. Entitled *Arroyo Grande 7.22.95*, the show is made up of four pieces: two paintings and two sculptures. The gallery is located at 527 West 26th Street, between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues, on the ground floor.

Banks Violette is an odd case — something of a cross between Delacroix and Cady Noland. A consummate craftsman equally proficient at painting and sculpture, Violette is a present day history painter rendering the social landscape in which we live and the way the signs of our times breed and contain stories of violence. Violette's installations investigate the truly dark corners of American culture in a vernacular that weds an appreciation of high art forms to a kitsch Gothic sensibility. A consistent bearer of bad news, Violette here explores a recent horrific case with both passionate obsession and clinical detachment.

On July 22nd, 1995, three teenaged boys dragged a classmate, 15 year old Elyse Marie Pahler into a eucalyptus grove in Arroyo Grande, California. The three (Jacob Delashmutt, Royce Casey and Joseph Fiorella), members of an aspiring heavy metal band named "Hatred", wrapped a belt around Pahler's neck and stabbed her twelve times, leaving her body propped on a log in the center of the grove. For eight months, Pahler's body lay there until guilt and paranoia drove Casey to confess to the crime, leading to the arrest and successful prosecution of the three. During that lengthy period, the three boys returned repeatedly to the grove and a consistent assumption in the press coverage was that the boys had "ritually" abused the corpse.

The boys' involvement with heavy metal and their slavish devotion to one band in particular (Slayer), became a central issue in the criminal proceedings following the teenagers' arrest. The lyrics, images and culture surrounding the then ten year long career of Slayer were entered into the trial as evidence of the environment that led to the murder of Elyse Marie Pahler.

The work produced for this show attempts to realize, within the space of the gallery, the central argument of the prosecution: that a fiction can become the space or the engine for the production of trauma. Playing off the divided space of the gallery's architecture, this exhibition is divided into two explorations. The first is a reconstruction of the crime scene itself: the grove that held Elyse for eight months. However, the specificity, or more appropriately, the forensic details of the event are rendered from within the fictive space that Slayer allegedly authored. By incorporating strategies adopted equally from 19th century panoramic pictorial conventions and the language of concert-stage backdrops, the first room presents the viewer

with the rhetorically over-determined space of adolescent masculinity, aggression and death projected outwards and realized physically as an echo of the original eucalyptus grove.

The back room presents a gendered opposite. Whereas the front room is built from the hand-me-down clichés of anger and boyhood, the back room gives us the convention-laden description of its feminine, grief stricken antidote. This second room, however, proves to exist within the same rhetorically mediated straightjacket as the first, for each is bound to an over-determination of sentiment, gender and activity. One is male, one female. One anger, one grief. Each opposite and yet aligned by a logic limned through the lens of a total (and totalizing) media.

In the end, locating the blame for a crime within the arena of purchasable options inexorably binds all other emotions and declarations. If evil author makes evil audience, then the range of existential options is too easily determined and ultimately confined by mediating agencies. During the trial, the prosecution asserted that Slayer's cultural output acted as fuel for the profoundly negative actions of their audience. Working this thesis in the opposite direction, Violette shows that if Slayer can inspire murder, that same murder can, through a reverse process of inspiration, provoke a contemplation of great depth and formal beauty.

When Elyse was finally found, the eucalyptus grove became the site of an impromptu memorial. Violette's installation foregrounds the idea of the grove as a blank slate that became coded in one instance as the declaration of a violent act that had exceeded its script, and on the flip-side as the scene of a rhetorically frozen exclamation of grief. One with its own cadence and shorthand statement of suffering: candles, photographs, letters, ribbons.

Gallery hours for this exhibition are as follows: Tuesday through Saturday, 10am to 6pm through 03 July. Monday through Friday, 10am to 6pm from 08 July through 16 August. The gallery will be closed on the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th of July. For further information and/or photographs, please call the gallery at 212.279.9219.