## Dan Perjovschi at the Museum of Modern Art

Romanian artist Dan Perjovschi brought his "indoor graffiti" to the 110-foot-high atrium wall at the Museum of Modern Art this spring and summer. Dozens of very funny and bitingly satirical line drawings in black permanent marker constituted "WHAT HAPPENED TO US?," the artist's lovingly acid commentary on politics, religion, global warming, art and culture. While Perjovschi has done similar projects elsewhere, this one seemed aimed at an American audience: with the uppercase title, the last word reads as either "us" or "U.S." As documented in two engaging videos on MOMA's Web site, he created the work during public hours, making the project a performance as much as a wall drawing/installation. But the work is so appealing that despite the artist's skeptical take on capitalism it's hard not to envision his witty imagery on T-shirts and postcards.

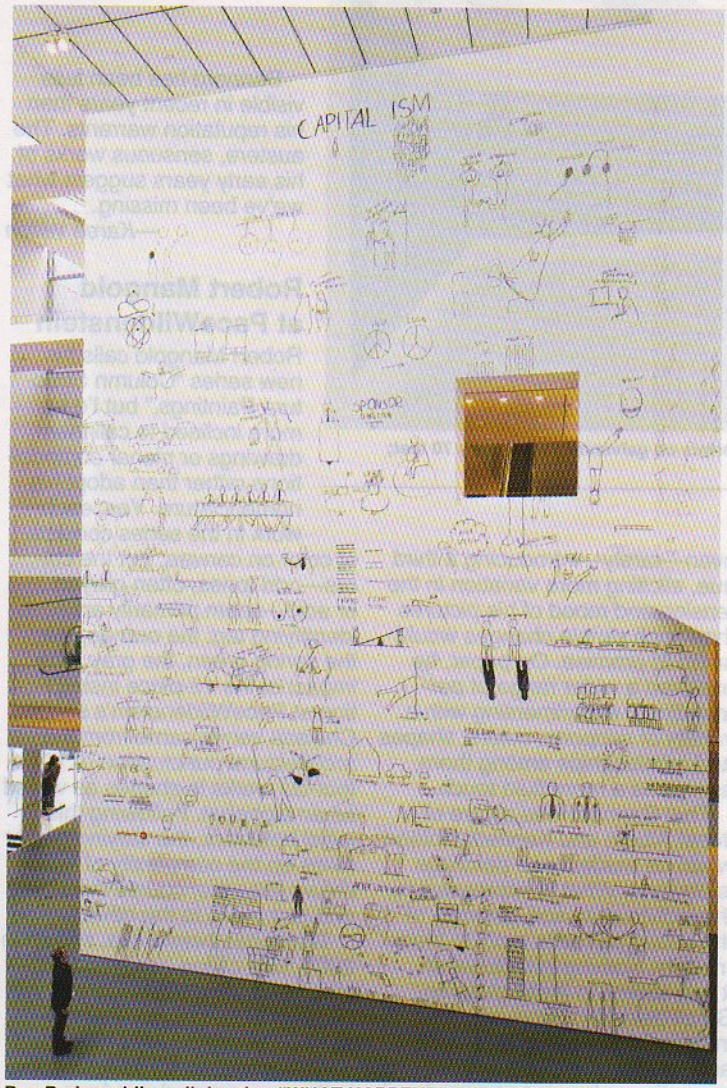
A number of images skewer militarism (antiwar protest sign makers, take note). In one drawing, the Q in IRAQ is a hamster wheel for a tiny soldier. In another, a timeline of alternating periods of war and peace reveals an underground cache of oil beneath each war. A thought bubble coming from a handgun shows that it dreams of being a tank. Another tank is outfitted with a solar panel, a link to a related theme of global warming. At an ice cream stand with a grinning salesman, the word "ice" is X'd out. A before-and-after image shows a man's armpits getting sweatier.

On a related note, Perjovschi lampoons religiosity, sometimes with military imagery. Over the caption "beliefs" are arranged a church steeple, a minaret and an upright rifle barrel. A man says in greeting a woman in a smothering burka, "You look wonderful today."

In Bucharest, where he lives, Perjovschi contributes drawings to the alternative newspaper *22*, named for the date of Nicolae Ceausescu's fall from power. With his wife, Lia, Perjovschi founded and maintains an independent contemporary art archive, and his work has been widely exhibited internationally, so his comments on the art world, the media, and on official and unofficial culture come from an informed and perhaps self-consciously implicated position. (In one drawing, two mirror-image dancers are labeled "mainstream" and "alternative," and mercenary museums and artists are joyously speared.) Having grown up under authoritarian communism, Perjovschi seems wryly sympathetic in his view of an America in thrall to concentrated executive power and runaway capitalism. In the cover image for a newsprint publication accompanying the show, a man peers through an American flag as though the stripes were slats in a window blind.

Perjovschi here views late capitalism, perhaps the American value par excellence, with a wary eye. A peace sign labeled 1967 gives way to the Mercedes logo, labeled 2007. In descending order of size, icons identify "my house, my car, my credit card, me"; the latter is a nearly invisible dot. Under the label "capital" appears a lone figure; under "ism" swells a mob. A man at an ATM looks over his shoulder to ask the surveillance camera, "Do you remember my PIN?"

*—Brian Boucher*




**Dan Perjovschi's wall drawing "WHAT HAPPENED TO US?," 2007, 110 feet high; at the Museum of Modern Art.**

## Miles Coolidge at Casey Kaplan

L.A.-based Miles Coolidge, who studied under Bernd and Hilla Becher at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, has in the past taken a cue from them by serially documenting the interiors of various suburban garages in bright, clear color photographs. His latest show included the ominously titled *Wall of Death*. Less exciting than it sounds, the 2006 work takes its name from the large, vertical wooden cylinders that are used by daredevil motorcycle and go-kart riders in performances in which centrifugal force holds them to the inner walls, above the ground, as they speed around inside the structure. For this project, Coolidge tracked down the traveling carnival act "Don Daniel's Wall of Death Motorcycle Thrill Show," run by the Massachusetts-based group known as the California Hellriders, and set about photographing its wall of death on the grounds of the Iron Horse Saloon in Ormond Beach, Fla., during "Biketoberfest 2006."

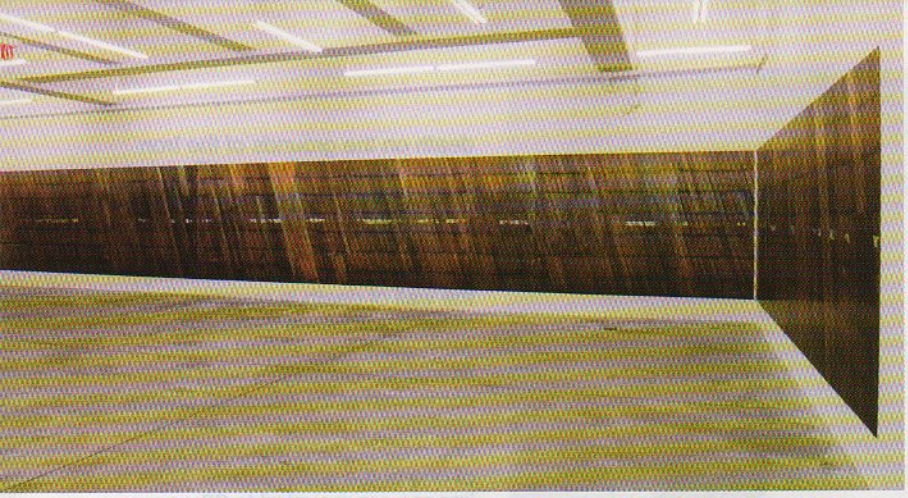
Made from wooden panels bolted together and girded by cables for easy transport and assembly, the wall of death in question has many scratches in it and a time-worn white line painted around its middle. Coolidge's work is composed of 20 7-foot-tall photos stretching a total of 70 feet, each photo a full-scale representation of one of the wall's panels. The images are mounted to 26-gauge galvanized steel plates adhered to the wall about a foot off the ground with flexible magnetic strips. Here the piece ran along two gallery walls and suggested the fake-wood wall paneling found in '70s living rooms, hardly evocative of a death-defying stunt.

A less labor-intensive, perhaps more Becher-inflected series of C-prints (2006) was also included in the show and had greater resonance. Ranging from 2 to 4 feet on a side, the images depict, at dramatically skewed angles, pieces of discarded furniture that Coolidge has chanced upon in his neighborhood: a table, a mattress, a couch, a desk chair. All tattered and worn, these unwanted furnishings assert a bittersweet and slightly humorous presence in their urban surroundings: they are shown on a sidewalk with a drain, on a scraggly lawn, against a fence, on an asphalt street. These humble images captivate by inviting viewers to investigate the materiality of things and their contexts. And perhaps more significantly, they also encourage consideration of the transformation of waste—which Patti Smith once aptly deemed "the oldest preoccupation of man."

*—Sarah Valdez*

## Darby Bannard at Jacobson Howard

Princeton must have been lively in the mid-1950s, when Frank Stella, Michael Fried and Walter Darby Bannard were art-obsessed undergraduates. Imagine these three ferociously smart young men, devouring Clement Greenberg's criticism, traveling to New York to see the shows he discussed and debating what they'd seen. Bannard's first response to these early stimuli was a group of radically simplified paintings—Minimalism *avant la lettre*—made in the years following his graduation. These prescient works announced both the



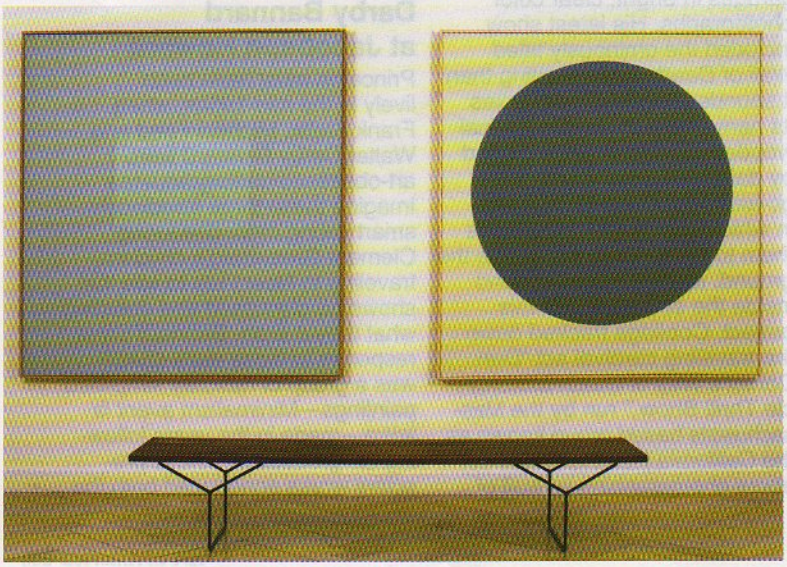
**Miles Coolidge: *Wall of Death*, 2006, inkjet prints on galvanized steel, 7 by 70 feet; at Casey Kaplan. (Review on p. 205.)**

intellectual rigor that marked Bannard's criticism and the idiosyncratic sense of color and structure that have informed his art, up to the present, as a painter associated with the Color Field group. "Darby Bannard: Minimal Paintings 1959-1965" provided evidence that far from showing their age, these intelligent, stripped-down pictures remain some of the freshest, most engaging works to be seen anywhere.

Bannard's large early canvases make us examine the essentials of painting. Proportioned to the body—about 5 feet to a side—the paintings are squares and near-squares that we address head-on, as we do other people. Each demands that we consider a dialogue between a pair of uninflected colors at once luminous and chalky, presented in the form of a confrontational disc or rectangle hovering over a flat matte ground. As the series evolved, Bannard occasionally expanded his vocabulary, using half-circles or quarter-circles and even—rarely—introducing a third hue, eliciting more variation in the tension and mood of his pictures than such simple changes would seem to promise. On paper, he explored a wider range of permutations, experimenting with a variety of supports, colors, shapes and relationships among them, as well as a more fluid touch.

That Bannard was aware of Josef Albers and Kenneth Noland when he made these paintings is obvious. What is impressive is the individuality and authority of the young painter's reply to these models. Nothing is quite what it first seems in these pictures. Small deviations from symmetry, in proportion and in placement animate the compositions; the appealing colors are at once familiar and strange. The alkyd paint's dry, light-responsive surface is frescolike, but Bannard's palette, far from recalling Renaissance traditions, seems both chemical and domestic, a contradiction intensified as our perception of each hue is subtly altered by its context.

**Darby Bannard: Left, *Blue Parlor (also Ivory Parlor)*, 1960, and right, *The Marriage #3*, 1961, both alkyd on canvas, 65 by 62 inches; at Jacobson Howard.**



Bannard has been less visible in recent years than his reputation warrants. The austere, sensuous works of his early years suggest what we've been missing.

*—Karen Wilkin*

## Robert Mangold at PaceWildenstein

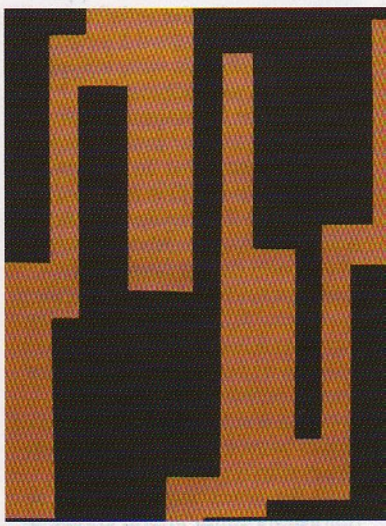
Robert Mangold calls his new series "Column Structure Paintings," but I'd be more inclined to call them drawings or planar compositions rather than adopt his nomenclature. Yes, each work in the series consists of color on canvas. Yet the colors—odd tones, often grayed or acid—seem primarily an identifying tag: the orange one, the spring green, the gray. The impact of the 12-piece installation at PaceWildenstein's second Chelsea venue came from the architectural punctuation of 10-foot-tall works in shapes as varied as an alphabet. Following this initial boldness, the staying power relies on the complexity of fluidly drawn lines that course from one end of a piece to the other.

The series before this, shown in 2004, was called "Column Paintings," and the change here is the addition of some sort of extension to the previously uninflected vertical canvases. The first work in the new group dates from 2005 and the remainder from '06. They are composed of 2-foot-square modules with penciled grids dividing them into halves or quadrants. Supplementary modules give each work a distinctive shape: integers of one square or one and a half may be appended to the "column," or right triangles that result from diagonally splitting a square or half of a square are tacked on. Thus the play of shapes is completely understandable, though neither predictable nor simple to explain. The easiest: *II* has a square attached at the left of the next-to-top canvas; *V* has a diagonally split half square at one side of the top and a diagonally split whole at the other. Overall shapes are never symmetrical.

The drawn lines swish down the columns at a leisurely pace, slow and sinuous against the angularity of the surfaces that almost cage them. Usually there are a single line and a doubled one, and at some point they cross each other. They look like segments of a circle but nearly always turn back upon themselves. When both lines undulate, one has a tighter curve than the other. Their lazy meander seems random, but in fact the drawn lines leave the canvas at significant points—exact corners or seams between squares—and the arc precisely touches the edge of the canvas as it curves.

Here, as in all Mangold's earlier works, everything is measured, contrived, controlled. But now the drawn lines are not closed forms upon closed forms, as was the case with his ellipse works of a decade or so ago. In the previous "Column Painting" series, the lines were no longer closed but they could escape from the regular and repetitive surfaces only at the top and bottom. Now Mangold has opened more doors: the shapes are freer and the flowing lines find many more points of discharge.

*—Janet Koplos*



**Myron Stout: *Untitled, 1952 (April 17)*, oil on canvasboard, 20 by 16 inches; at Washburn.**

## Myron Stout at Washburn

Myron Stout (1908-1987) was a slight, modest man who was known to his more famous and flamboyant friends—Ab-Exers and Pop artists—for the almost compulsively perfectionist quality of his small abstract drawings and paintings. He would work on some pieces for months or even years, making only incremental adjustments, and one wonders if he ever really considered them finished. Many of the organic shapes in his exquisitely rich graphite drawings evoke the sensually rounded sculpture of Brancusi and Arp, while his paintings more often tend toward the geometric. This