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Street Poets & Visionaries

Selections from the UbuWeb
Collection

*Oliver Kamm/5BE Gallery
621 West 27th Street, Manhattan
Through Oct. 14*

Poetry readings should be weekly events in Chelsea: say, every Saturday afternoon, to catch maximum art district foot traffic, with various galleries rotating as hosts. New writing would benefit from the new audience, new art would benefit from an infusion of live energy, and Chelsea itself might be lifted from its present lackluster and anodyne condition.

Poetry is the right description for the text-based work that Kenneth Goldsmith has assembled for a group exhibition at Oliver Kamm. About half the show is made up of printed poems by David Daniels, a West Coast artist now in his 70's. The work is narrative and personal, incantatory in tone, and lies within an old tradition of shaped poetry. Imagine a cross of George Herbert's poems in the forms of angels and altars with Burroughs, Blake and the harmonies and fractures of jazz. The poems in the gallery are just a sampling of a much larger body of work that can be found on Mr. Daniels's Web site: www.thegatesofparadise.com.

Most of the rest of the show is anonymous urban "outsider" material picked up over the years by Mr. Goldsmith from the street and digitally archived as the UbuWeb Collection (ubu.com). The original objects are in the show and include funky handmade posters and advertisements, photocopied prophecies and a kind of serial diary that turned up in bits and pieces around the Lower East Side of Manhattan.

Over all the content is idiosyncratic, to say the very least: obsessional, paranoiac, splenetic, militant, millenarian and just plain psychically intense in a way that art in Chelsea almost never feels. That intensity is likely to increase on the afternoon of Sept. 23, when Irwin Chusid gives a lecture in the gallery on outsider music, and to become assaultively rhapsodic a week later when five fine poets — Vijay Seshadri, Shelley Hirsch, Edwin Torres, the stupendous Eileen Myles and Mr. Goldsmith himself — give readings from the texts on the walls.

HOLLAND COTTER