

Klara Liden

Reena Spaulings
371 Grand Street, Lower East Side
Through Feb. 7

In her excellent solo debut, the young Swedish artist Klara Liden sings while playing the piano and performs a ballet in a Stockholm subway (both on video). In real space, she builds, from scavenged cardboard and thin iron pipes, a small elevated room that is comfortingly solid (once you get up the ladder), yet wonderfully translucent in the way it filters light.

It doesn't sound like much, but it is. Ms. Liden is the real deal, possessed of a fierce, concentrated energy that infuses everything she does. She is as engaged with her time as she is with form and materials, and approaches both with a very real but elegant sense of economy.

Announcements for this show were printed on squares of old newspaper. Her previous efforts include a bunker-like structure, available for anyone's use, that she surreptitiously built (from materials she found or recycled) on the Spree River in Berlin and an alternate postal service that she created and operated briefly in Stockholm.

On "550 Jamaica Avenue," one of the videos at Spaulings, the singing and piano playing, inept but heartfelt and not unpleasant, are heard as the camera roams through an astounding abandoned apartment that the artist found upstairs from her own in the Bed-Stuy section of Brooklyn. The place is a walk-in collage, full of stuff, rife with intimations of neglect and loss, yet charged with a sense of a full, eccentric, implicitly creative life. Who lived here? A man? A woman? It makes sense that when we briefly see the artist, or at least her bare back, bent over the keyboard, and again as she rides an exercise bike, her sex is unclear. The outpouring music pays tribute.

A similar intensity pervades "Paralyzed," the subway ballet, in which the artist, who took dancing lessons in this case, flings herself about the train car, shedding her outerwear, providing evening entertainment while also protesting the buttoned-down nature of everyday life, which is amply exemplified by her fellow passengers. The final shot, taken from the platform of a station, shows Ms. Liden running through the train as through a field of daisies.

Inside the cozy, carefully built cardboard room five small photographs of buildings and sculptures line the wall. That one structure is easily identified as Ms. Liden's architectural handiwork attests to her clear vision backed by an equally clear style. **ROBERTA SMITH**

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Art in Review



©Klara Liden/Reena Spaulings

Klara Liden playing the piano in one of her videos at Reena Spaulings.

ART FRAGMENTS FROM THE BIG APPLE

Reena Spaulings Fine Art

Klara Liden

Swedish artist Klara Liden collected a hefty stack of cardboard boxes from the trashcans that surround Reena Spaulings Fine Art, a consistently bold gallery on the Lower East Side. A fearless architect, Liden built an elevated loft in the gallery from dense stacks of cardboard supported by an infrastructure of exposed pipes. Gallery visitors climbed a rickety ladder to sit in the sturdy structure, which dimly admitted light through teeny cardboard crevices. Inside the boxy hideaway, Liden hung four snapshots of the surrounding neighborhood and an intact cardboard box. Like sculptors from the '60s, she efficiently reworked the gallery space with plain shapes and industrial materials. But Liden's installation also draws from the social reality of the anarchist squatting subculture, in which enterprising outlaws transform abandoned buildings into functional living spaces. This broad social move-

ment provides an oppositional framework for young squatters to experiment with autonomous lifestyles and economies. Although far from being a social documentarian, Liden expressively conveys the spirit of squatters in her video *550 Jamaica Avenue*. The shirtless artist baroquely pounds on an unmelodic piano in an abandoned Brooklyn apartment that overflows with junky treasure. In another video, *Paralyzed*, Liden performs a raucous ballet in a Stockholm subway car to a grating country score by the Legendary Stardust Cowboy from the late '60s and audio samples from contemporary Swedish protests. Joyfully leaping past stern commuters, Liden, shoeless and ecstatic, fearlessly positions herself against the grain.

—Matt Wolf

KLARA LIDEN, *550 Jamaica Avenue*, 2004. Video, 3 mins. Courtesy of Reena Spaulings Fine Art.

