



THE NEW YORKER

ART GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Lonnie Holley

Holley's life story, at least as he tells it, would knock you out even if he weren't an artist of exceeding gifts. Born around 1950 in Jim Crow Alabama, at the age of four he was traded for a bottle of whiskey, and was later raised in a family with twenty-six children. (Holley is now a father of fifteen.) He left school after the seventh grade, then dug graves, picked cotton, worked as a short-order cook, and was run over by a car—all before his twenty-ninth birthday. He then began making art of such elegance and economy that even a random pile of garbage bound to a wooden board with plastic netting pleases the eye. Simpler assemblages, such as a lawn jockey in a gas mask or a dress form with four wooden pistols attached to it, are equally powerful. Holley also cuts steel: "The Seer" combines several profile silhouettes into an eight-foot-tall sculpture, a striking vision of consciousness as ad hoc and multifarious.

Through May 28.