

The New York Times

© 2014 The New York Times

NEW YORK, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2014

February 7, 2014

'The Age of Small Things'

Dodge Gallery
15 Rivington Street, Lower East Side
Through Feb. 23

All the objects in this absorbing, cheerfully eclectic grab bag of a show have one thing and little else in common: smallness. The show presents more than 50 paintings, drawings and three-dimensional pieces from the mid-17th century to the present by 42 artists. The littlest ones are a watercolor smaller than a postage stamp picturing a human earlobe by Ellen Altfest and a gnomic narrative in watercolor and pastel measuring just $\frac{1}{2}$ by $\frac{5}{8}$ inches by the painter Chuck Webster, who organized the show. Bigger items like a richly colored composition of simple shapes painted by Suzan Frecon and a scary clown head drawn by Chris Martin, hover between paperback and hardcover book size.

With no discernible chronologi-



cal or formal program, perusing the show is like being in a mental pinball machine. So you might bounce around the gallery from a bright blue and pink painting of two nude female torsos by John Wesley to a funky sculpture of a stack of pancakes by Katherine Bradford to a geometric abstraction lovingly penciled by Myron Stout.

Numerous 20th-century bold-face names are represented, including Francis Picabia, Balthus, Philip Guston, Joan Mitchell and Vija Celmins. But some of the most arresting things are by unknown 19th-century creators. They include Victorian mourning paperweights in the form of miniature books and intricate, cut-paper works representing a hand holding a heart. A blue, flower-shaped pin set on blue fabric in the shell of an old pocket watch by Joseph Cornell resonates sweetly with those romantic folk expressions. **KEN JOHNSON**