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Lorna Williams:
"appositions: still / birth / s-"

DODGEgallery
 15 Rivington St
 (212) 228 5122
 Through June 29

In the front gallery, three assemblage figures, sporting a variety of found elements (teeth, gears, violin parts, wired-together steel nuts), are mounted on vertically bowed slats of wood, which are in turn adhered to parts of old white doors. On an opposite wall, a delicately altered portion of a log contains two small speakers (again, with teeth attached) that emit the sounds of a faintly audible female blues singer. Downstairs, in a more spacious back gallery, a larger-than-life rooster, constructed with, among other things, X-Acto knife blades and fountain-pen points for feathers, stands among a couple of sculptures featuring taxidermied snakes. Lorna Williams (b. 1986), the African-American artist behind all this, has said,, "I want to speak to [the black painter-collagist] Romare Bearden's interests in storytelling, music, roosters, modes of transportation and conjurers." That Ms.



Williams does indeed—and even more, adding allusions to the human digestive tract and, perhaps predictably in her desire to get all of life's viscera symbolically out in the open, female reproductive organs. This kind of anthropomorphic cobbling can be the stuff of which art cliches are made. It all depends on the artist's sincerity, intensity and ability to synthesize them into convincing work. Ms. Williams achieves that impressively,

perhaps in part because one of the snakes downstairs was for a while her pet. She takes in snakes that have been rescued from bad circumstances, and managed to keep this particular reptile alive for a few months. This fierce kindness also shows up in Ms. Williams's work.

Mr. Plagens is an artist and writer in New York.

Image: Lorna Williams, *threefold*, 2013, pains, wasp hive, precious stones and acrylics, Jerusalem Olive wood, speaker, sea urchins, turtle shell, plaster mold, bamboo root, locks, mirror, pin clips, screw anchors, Australian burl, headphone wires, paper, sink strainer, candle holder, light fixture, 55 x 22 x 104 inches