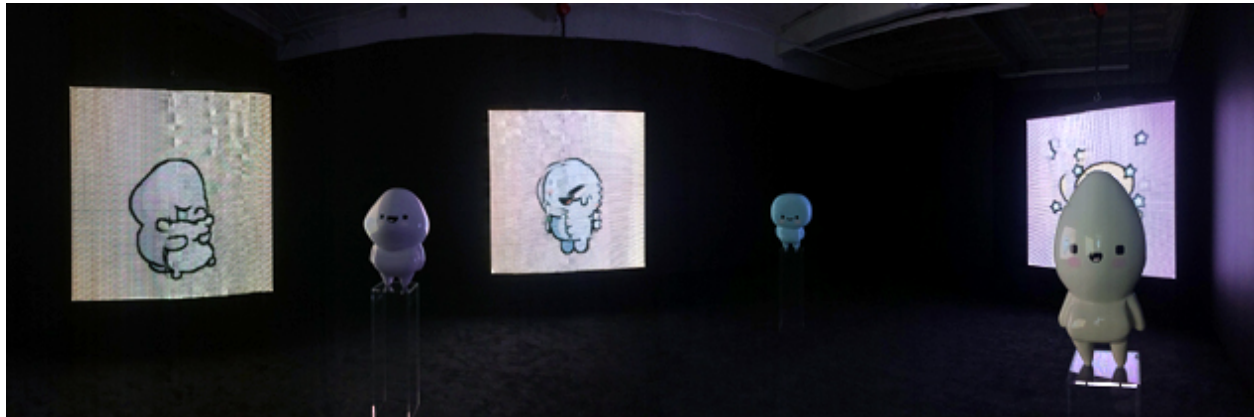


Droste Effect

by Matilde Soligno
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the East Coast
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March 2017 – 20 Gallery Shows in New York



Ed Fornieles: The Finilar. Installation view at Arsenal Contemporary

These days galleries in New York have excellent shows on display: this week everything revolves around New York's most important art fair, the Armory Show. It is Armory Week 2017, and the city is even more filled (if possible) with art professionals and lovers scouting for novelties, inspiration and more in the city.

LOWER EAST SIDE — The most fervent contemporary art scene is well established in the Lower East Side of Manhattan. The gallery spaces here are still big – or, in some cases, punitive – and artists can really take advantage of their flexibility (or character) to create immersive installations. Needless to say, these are the ideal locations for solo shows.

Starting from an artist – a name – like Ed Fornieles (at Arsenal Contemporary through March 26) who was well able to meet the challenge with his *Finiliars*, digital creatures of guaranteed popularity whose cuteness is undeniable. They nevertheless carry – are programmed to react accordingly to – a stream of data sets produced by companies, currencies, and large institutions. Like other artists, Fornieles seems to respond to a generalized call to use complex cultural/popular communication to create an empathetic space in between the viewer and art that carries (socially) relevant content. Meaning, we are at one with what is around us, even when we don't have knowledge of it; the impact is here carried by smiling or sobbing Finiliars.

A common destiny is also sensed while looking at the all-around "pleasant" paintings by Elliott Green on show at Pierogi (through March 26). *Human Nature* is the title of the show – or shouldn't it be just nature, since Green's "4D" strokes imprint a perpetual movement to his (inhuman) subjects, which are seen in their change through time. Green succeeds in really

creating a metaphorical connection between his technique and his base concepts, rather than trying to render a graphic representation of them.



Elliott Green: Human Nature. Installation view at Pierogi

More exhibitions worth visiting for the immersive quality of their installations are Joanna Malinowska's *Not a Metaphorical Forest* at Canada (through March 12), and Dana Yago's *The Lusting Breed* at bodega (through April 2). Joanna Malinowska investigates the beauty of futile endeavors – because aren't they all futile – in a wooden aftermath, be it beavers' creativity or human discards. Dana Yago's tableaus are rendered throughout the intensity of their media – pressed wool dyed and cut with pressurized water. The recognition is challenging, though some tableaus bear reference to classics such as Courbet, and all of them to certain epochs and practices in regard to women labour.



Joanna Malinowska: Not a Metaphorical Forest. Installation view at Canada



Dana Yago: *The Lusting Breed*. Installation view at bodega

A certain regard goes to Kader Attia's *Reason's Oxymorons* at Lehmann Maupin (through March 4). Here "spacial immersion" takes a different direction: restrictive, office-like cubicles colored in dark tones host video stations where different human scientists (ethnographers, psychiatric and philosophical practitioners and theorists) from Europe and Africa discuss topics that bear different universal and cultural value, from "Genocide" to "Trance".

Jos de Gruyter & Harald Thys present different videos grouped as *Xanax Film Festival*, at Gavin Brown's Enterprise through April 30. The depression of the title is a joking reference to some of the themes represented in the videos – "documented" recollections of experiments and findings of human (presence?) remains. Understated offerings to the inscrutability of our intentions – let alone existence – especially when testified by a "final" point.

Another solo show is dedicated by Downs & Ross to Vikki Alexander (through March 12). Her work from 1981-1983 is shown at the two gallerists' new joint location. Just like Alexander appropriated commercial photography, for this Armory week 2017, with their unusually-shaped space Downs & Ross successfully appropriated Alexander's work in turn.

Notable group shows are *Shadow Cabinet* at Cuchifritos Gallery & Project Space (through March 5) and *Heartbreak Hotel* at Invisible-Exports (through April 2). Cuchifritos is a very interesting project space, with a unique location inside the Essex Market, and confirms itself as an active experimenter presenting The Shadow Cabinet project. From the project's website: "we call for the Avant-Garde of the United States, the pioneering thinkers and inventors and visualizers, to not object to what has happened, but to project what could instead happen." *Heartbreak Hotel* at Invisible-Exports carries many names, among which notably Tracey Emin, who defend – and exercise – the right to despair, when times are dark. Which could in fact be the cathartic way to go about this.