

KATE WERBLE GALLERY

83 VANDAM STREET NEW YORK, NY 10013

EVERYTHING'S JUST WONDERFUL / BETTER THAN FINE

Lex Brown, Raque Ford, Daniel Gordon, Xandra Ibarra, Joiri Minaya, Macon Reed, and Ken Tisa

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PRESS RELEASE

Everything's Just Wonderful / Better Than Fine assembles artworks that highlight the fraught relationship between appearance and reality. Employing exuberant color, pattern, ornament, and acerbic humor, these artists' works level critique as contraband.

Looking to the floral patterns commonly known as tropical print, **Joiri Minaya** traces their historical ties with colonialism and consumerism. Identifying the print as a stand-in for a cultural and racial imaginary, Minaya disrupts this projective fantasy via appropriation. Her vinyl wallpaper, *Redecode: a tropical theme is a great way to create a fresh, peaceful, relaxing atmosphere*, pixelates a banana leaf pattern designed in the 1940s alongside increased US-American military intervention in Latin America and the Caribbean. Camouflaged within the pixels, scannable QR codes are activated by viewers' smartphones.

Taking the form of a peep show, **Xandra Ibarra's** *Colonial Peeps* was occasioned by the 500th anniversary of conquistador Juan Ponce de León's claim of Spanish Florida. Despite the voyeuristic possibility suggested by the work's title and format, the video's blurred and flickering frames render this "peep" an unsuccessful one. Ibarra draws on strategies of self-concealment and opacity, inviting the gaze only to refuse it.

Raque Ford's work emerges from a creative writing practice that fuses autobiography and fantasy. Shuffled and then laser cut or incised into acrylic panels, her words act like archaeological fragments or symbols populating a dreamscape. Destabilizing the linearity of narrative, Ford makes the act of reading akin to that of writing, prompting the viewer to assemble scraps and fill in voids. Her work oscillates between disclosure and misdirection, language and sign, decoration and structure, surface and depth.

A hand-sewn beaded work from 1987-80, *It Sounds Good*, by **Ken Tisa** is an ecstatic synesthetic burst of melodious sound. Made at the height of the AIDS epidemic, the work holds up hope as its standard. The glittering allure of its beading and the loudness of its form offer not a denial or panacea but a self-strengthening reprieve: an amplification of voice and soul.

Lex Brown's performance-based video work turns up the dial on the already exaggerated world of content creators and personality-as-commodity, raising it to a fever dream pitch. In her green screen video *Lip Gloss Alurt*, Brown plays a trio of characters: a cyborg automated voice messaging system-cum-personal assistant; a woman decked out in a DIY Snapchat dog filter who hums, dances, and fumbles with her phone and foam cinderblocks; and Mananda, a home shopping host pitching her latest line of Klan Kouture (displayed on a nearby mannequin). By heaping on the hyperbole, Brown strips the syntactic logic of the attention economy down to its structural core.

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The saturated colors, rough-hewn forms, and cartoonish proportions of **Macon Reed**'s works act like disarming dazzle lures. Beneath their charming surfaces, however, her paintings and sculptures probe less innocent themes, such as the torture and execution of witches. In *Brigade*, three cheerleading megaphones—their bellies fire-scorched—stand guard over a pile of singed paper pom poms. Burnt and blown out, the work evokes the dark side of unbridled US-American optimism.

In his photographs, **Daniel Gordon** reimagines the art historical genre of the still life as a palimpsest of material and virtual elements. Bridging analogue and digital imaging technologies, Gordon sources images of common still life subjects online that he prints, cuts out, and arranges in three-dimensional tableaux. The resulting photographs, shot with a large format camera, are both superficial and deep, sharp and soft, their image-objects muddying the line between real and representation.