

# KATE WERBLE GALLERY

83 VANDAM STREET NEW YORK, NY 10013

## ARTFORUM

**Critic's Pick: Ken Tisa, Gordon Robichaux  
Johanna Fateman  
March 10, 2017**



*View of "Ken Tisa: Objects/Time/Offerings," 2017.*

For "Objects/Time/Offerings," Ken Tisa has transformed the gallery into a magical grotto, decorated with all manner of beautiful and funny things from his extensive collections. Dolls, puppets, masks, devotional objects, trinkets, and artworks from every continent mingle in dense, layered arrangements along with campy ephemera, dollar-store treasures, and the artist's own small colorful paintings from the 1980s and 1990s. A wall-spanning grid of more than three hundred of the paintings, each just eight inches tall, is the result of a long-standing daily practice, reflecting Tisa's sponge-like reverence for diverse styles and cultures, as well as his wry attunement to mass media. The weird, ebullient figuration of artists such as Kiki Kogelnik or Jim Nutt comes to mind, but Tisa's cartoony faces, body parts, and domestic vignettes are more spontaneous and scruffy. In one inspired repeating picture-within-a-picture suite, he inlays a photographic collage element into the screen of a whimsically rendered television set: A Jetsons-ish hot-pink TV on legs displays a spaceship landing; a bright-blue one, placed behind a jack-o'-lantern, is lit up with an extreme close-up of a dick.

These paintings, made in an era of AIDS devastation and Helmsian anti-art crusades, push back obliquely with their droll enjoyment of gay sex and bodies of whatever gender, while the larger installation they inhabit, in all its cacophonous excess, also delivers a message. Glancing around the room, you might spot a Noh mask, an exquisite pair of cardboard sneakers, ornate shadow puppets, carved Makonde figures, a few silver Jenny Holzer stickers, and a red-and-yellow decal that reads "God made me Queer." With his nonhierarchical, loving arrangement of absorbing material, Tisa comes off not as a curatorial mastermind but as a voice in the crowd, happily agitating for more beauty.