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What To See in New York Art Galleries This Week

Holland Cotter

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An installation view of Ken Tisa's show at Gordon Robichaux.

Credit Courtesy of the artist and Gregory Carideo, Kate Werble Gallery, New York

The American artist Ken Tisa is a painter, a sculptor and a hunter-gatherer shopper. He likes objects and images, the more culturally varied the better, and what he makes from them are collages nested inside assemblages that are large enough to qualify as installations. His exhilarating show at Gordon Robichaux, "Objects/Time/Offerings," has several installations, though precise borders between them tend to blur.

The best way to describe this show is with a selective inventory. Among hundreds of items, you'll find a Japanese Noh mask; a Hopi kachina; an African power figure; a plastic Virgin Mary from Lourdes; a Mexican glass Christmas ornament in the form of Mickey Mouse; a Chinese hand puppet depicting an American Indian; paired marionettes of two men embracing from India; a carved-wood penis; a snake-vertebrae necklace; and a photograph of a tattoo – of a nude, dancing, madcap angel – that Mr. Tisa designed for the drag performer and playwright Ethyl Eichelberger.

One short gallery wall is papered in magazine and newspaper clips, and a long one is covered with hundreds of small paintings that Mr. Tisa turned out, one a day, in the 1980s and early '90s to maintain psychological balance during the early AIDS crisis. (Many of the paintings have inlaid snapshots of television screens showing advertisements, sitcoms and pornography.)

Future historians tackling Mr. Tisa's career will have their work cut out for them in researching his art, which is both a material flood and a lovingly pieced-together mosaic. They will also have the immense pleasure of interpreting it, and for that they will be indebted to the show's genius catalog, in which the writer and oral historian Svetlana Kitto channels Mr. Tisa's archiving memory and expansive, expressive voice.