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Kevin McNamee-Tweed: 'Tableaux Vivant'
More Than Meets the Eye
Steve Turner Los Angeles
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by Jody Zellen



Charming is one of the first words that comes to mind when looking at Kevin McNamee-Tweed's seventeen glazed ceramic tableaux. Yet upon further consideration, charming might not best describe these works as there is more than meets the eye. The pieces, all less than twenty-inches tall, are jam-packed with drawn replicas of framed artworks, everyday objects, anomalies, doodles, texts, as well as personal and art historical references. McNamee-Tweed hand crafts ceramic panels into irregularly shaped or round-edged rectangles and then uses the clay as a drawing surface.

Each piece in the exhibition, *Tableaux Vivant*, features an interior space depicting a fragment of a wall that is hung salon style with a wide array of objects, as well as a table-top or floor (like one might see in an antique shop) cluttered with things. While flat, these still lifes also have dimensionality due to McNamee-Tweed's skillful rendering, shading and glazing of the clay. The drawn line is at once exact and simplistic as if a coloring book illustration. Yet because the works are executed as ceramic, they transcend traditional drawings.

Within the pieces, McNamee-Tweed juxtaposes random objects to weave together quirky narratives that do not always cohere. *Use Side Door* (all works 2020) is a display of more than thirty objects. On a wall are framed artworks and canvases no larger than a few inches each. These include portraits, flowers, a poster of an old-model car sinking in a lake with the letters X O X O... below, a sign for bagels and one that reads: NO NEW / HIPPIES / OLD USE SIDE. On a table at the bottom of the tableau is a lamp or statue, a spray bottle and various other unrelated objects.

Y Corner has ragged edges and feels like a fragment of a fragment. Within the composition, hanging on a brown-toned wall is a calendar with a cartoony image of a blue deer with orange antlers, a poster of an owl that could be a fraternity poster, the letters "F" and "Y," as well as miscellaneous images including a black and white cow and an alien head. On the desk that abuts the wall on the bottom right is a single can of beer, or perhaps soda. *Petrarcha* references

the pre-Renaissance scholar/poet, Francesco Petrarca and is a more oval-shaped tablet with brown shelves on which sits a smiling cat as well as a small television with the image of a red-roofed house surrounded by grass, trees and a cloud filled sky. Two line drawings of interiors are taped to the wall amidst a few other drawings and random objects on a table. While the work is situated in the present, it seems to also reference the past.

There is a lot to look at in McNamee-Tweed's compositions and the looking is pleasurable. Not only is the use of ceramic unusual, but McNamee-Tweed's choice of subject matter is also idiosyncratic. McNamee-Tweed has a knack for combining unrelated elements and making meaning from these seemingly random juxtapositions.

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