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'MONSALVAT' AT BUREAU

By Andrew Russeth



Bureau, one of the smallest galleries in New York, is currently filled with the work of more than 50 artists, and yet, against all odds, it feels spacious. This group show, organized by Andrea Merx and Nathan Gwynne as part of a longer-term project on the theme of the Arthurian legends, is named after the castle of the Fisher King. Bureau's spatial magic is achieved by a full-room *trompe l'oeil* installation that uses the medieval artistic

innovation of forced perspective to create the illusion of an art-filled, psychedelic castle interior, complete with burning candles. The floor (multicolored vinyl tiles by David Scanavino) and walls (one with abstract patterns by Michael DeLucia) slope toward the center of the back wall, which is painted to look like it extends farther back than it actually does. And many of the show's artists—an interesting mix of emerging and mid-career talents—have created paintings shaped like lopsided trapezoids, so shaped because when they are hung along the wall they produce the illusion of receding into the distance.

Tamara Gonzales and Chris Martin offer a series of painted golden crowns and Matthew Hilshorst a rug emblazoned with a white unicorn. The show's sculptors have the most fun with the Arthurian conceit. On a table in the center of the gallery is a rustic earthenware plate-and-knife set worthy of a king by Tyler Dobson and Rebecca Poland. A painting by Gina Beavers sports three fleshy, textured fish. Matt Hoyt, renowned for his tiny putty sculptures displayed on shelves, steals the show with a tall Holy Grail-esque goblet.

Amid the fun, violence lingers—these are, after all, medieval times. Gavin Kenyon's *Toy Swords* look far deadlier than the child-whittled variety. Lionel Maunz's long spear appears ready for battle. Similarly martial is Davina Semo's sculpture, a kind of hanging mace made with bound-together chain links.

Despite the superficial silliness of its theme, the show's contents are rewarding. It will be well worth seeing the next installment of the legends. (Through Feb. 18, 2013)