

The New York Times

Sam Anderson

Through Oct. 21. Chapter, 249 East Houston Street, Manhattan; 646-850-7486; chapter-ny.com.



Sam Anderson's installation at Chapter NY, from left: "The King" (2016-18), wood and ceramic; "Paula" (2018), papier-mâché wood and metal; "Two Babies" (2018), papier-mâché, wood, glue and electric tape; and "Sunrise" (2018), tape rolls, acrylic and sunscreen. Dario Lasagni, via Chapter NY

Perched atop five round white pedestals of varying heights, in Sam Anderson's show, "A Flower is a Lovesome Thing," at Chapter, are a slender papier-mâché princess; two grotesque babies with snowball heads and wooden struts for legs; a found ceramic hippo; and a tube of Babyganics sunscreen, its bold graphic sun logo peeking up over a collar of tape rolls. At one end of the gallery, near the door, sits a wooden harp with multicolored strings. At the other side, by the office, two low, armless figures watch a video pastiche of clouds, storks and hippos, accompanied by an eerie voice-over and the Vince Guaraldi Trio's gentle 1957 instrumental take on the Billy Strayhorn song, after which the video and Ms. Anderson's show are named.

To me, this all felt both precious and ad hoc, as if the pieces weren't finished sculptures but props, or even maquettes for props, for some unspecified performance. What I couldn't figure out, at first, was just what that performance would be. But as I looked from the wedding-white princess, with her blank expression and tiny earrings, to the ceramic hippo, and from the yawning hippo to the grimacing, listing baby, and as I struggled to reconcile the chaotic bouquet of sadness, silliness, yearning, dislocation and theatrically exaggerated self-consciousness that Ms. Anderson's work evoked in me, I finally recognized the performance she was going for: It was a long, slow wink, and I was doing it. WILL HEINRICH

Chitra Ganesh

Through Oct. 20. The Kitchen, 512 West 19th Street, Manhattan; 212-255-5793; thekitchen.org.