

4 Art Gallery Shows to See Right Now

Cate Giordano

Through Jan. 9. Postmasters, 54 Franklin Street, Manhattan. 212-727-3323; postmastersart.com.

I first encountered [Cate Giordano](#)'s work at the art fair Spring/Break, where the artist (who uses the pronoun "they") created enchanting installations marked by a blend of strangeness and sentiment. In 2016, using accessible, tactile materials like wood, papier-mâché and tape, they constructed a life-size diner filled with patrons. The room seemed caught in a state of suspended animation, and I could feel the artist's devotion to alternate, often bygone worlds.

Those same qualities are evident in "[Rex](#)," Giordano's first exhibition at Postmasters. The subject is King Henry VIII and his brief marriage to Anne of Cleves. The king was urged into the union by his powerful minister, Thomas Cromwell, and agreed to it after commissioning a [portrait](#) of her by Hans Holbein. Once his bride arrived, though, Henry claimed that she looked nothing like the painting and was so unattractive he couldn't consummate the marriage. (Cromwell was later beheaded.)

Giordano conveys this not in linear fashion, but in immersive, multimedia tableaux. Dotting the gallery are sculptures of the king and future queen, guards and banquet food; their purposeful crudeness underlines the messy absurdity of the royal affair. So, too, do the videos, which enact snippets of the story and feature the artist as both Anne and Henry, who converses with Holbein and Cromwell over a video chat. Giordano is magnetic and wickedly funny, particularly as the bumbling, vainglorious king. The artist turns Henry from a despot with world-historical importance into an average man with an outsize ego. There's a lesson to be found in how his behavior doesn't seem unusual but instead, utterly common.

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