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ART IN REVIEW

‘Else’

By HOLLAND COTTER

*Tilton Gallery
8 East 76th Street
Manhattan
Through Oct. 23*

Although this stimulatingly textured group show credits the dealer Jack Tilton and the artist Derrick Adams as curators, it was Mr. Adams who made 80 percent of the choices, and they’re good, with a bunch of newish artists and some familiar figures brought in for a further look.

Several pieces by Noel Anderson, recently graduated from Yale, apparently relate to his performance work, but do fine on their own, from an intensively erased and in other ways hand-altered Ebony magazine cover, to a machine-made tapestry portrait combining the features of John F. Kennedy, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and, possibly, the Rev. Al Sharpton.

Yashua Klos, remembered for an intriguing word-piece at Scaramouche on the Lower East Side last summer, makes a strong, different impression here with an unframed, mural-size collage, assembled from woodblock prints, of a man’s bearded face. David Antonio Cruz’s paintings of a nude exploding from clouds of color are on roughly the same scale, as are Diane Wah’s scroll-like photo pieces. With near life-size figures sleeping on nests of broken stones, they bring performance again to mind.

There’s also a helping of small-scale photographic work. Carlos Rigau has two outtakes from a longer photo-narrative, “7 Gables.” From Felandus Thames, last seen at Kravets Wehby in Chelsea, come two lips-only photomontages so visually overloaded they’re almost abstract. Jaret Vadera, also from Yale, mixes a photographic print, a light-box image and a small sculpture in a spare arrangement that hints, but only hints, at a story.

Adler Guerrier made a memorable contribution to the 2008 Whitney Biennial with an installation supposedly by a 1960s African-American collective, but really by Mr. Guerrier himself. At Tilton, he’s showing a couple of subtle, image-concealing transfer prints and two toy-size hutlike sculptures made from cut-up commercial signage. In his seemingly effortless melding of language and image, he’s a poet as much as an artist.

So is Simone Leigh in sculptures that seem to pose metaphors without narrowly defining them. In “Head Piece (Black),” an all but featureless gun-metal-gray bust blossoms into an Afro of white and black ceramic roses. “Brooch (Black),” bristling with ceramic bananas held in place by steel clamps, looks like a cross between a giant flower and a thresher.

And I’m glad to meet three artists new to me.

Langdon Graves, from Virginia, now in Brooklyn, has a pair of elegant, understated drawings here and a spooky, surrealist sculpture. Arjan Zazueta puts unusually low-tech craft mediums — thread and paper towels — to complicated uses in embroidered vignettes based on Western art history and Aztec myth.

That leaves only two last pieces to be accounted for, both fine-lined portraits in ink, acrylic and tea by the young Los Angeles artist Umar Rashid, who also uses the moniker Frohawk Two Feathers, and performs as Kent Cyclone. All I can say at first acquaintance is that the portraits, of fictional 18th-century personages from some Caribbean of the imagination, are terrific. If Mr. Rashid is as good a performer as he is a painter, he must be something. **HOLLAND COTTER**