

Akbari, Ariana. "Disco Beast: Jonathan Monaghan at Bitforms Gallery," *Arte Fuse*, December 4, 2017

ARTE FUSE

Disco Beast: Jonathan Monaghan at Bitforms Gallery

by Ariana Akbari



Jonathan Monaghan, *The Unicorn in Captivity*, 2017, 3D printed 18K gold plated brass, 3D printed porcelain, acrylic, 15 x 23 x 8 in / 38.1 x 58.4 x 20.3 cm, edition of 3.

After excitedly following Jonathan Monaghan's exhibition *Disco Beast* at Bitforms Gallery on Instagram for a few weeks, one morning I found myself walking briskly down Delancy to the sound of fall in the city — cars beeping their horns, people passing and chattering in a mixture of languages I could not distinguish, and orange and russet-colored leaves rustling in the breeze, threatening to fall at any moment.



Jonathan Monaghan, *Pumpkin Spice*, 2017, powder-coated steel, faux fur, MDF, 42 x 42 x 1.5 in / 106.7 x 106.7 x 3.8 cm.

One is greeted at the gallery by a semi-cultivated air of mystery. The opening piece, Pumpkin Spice, is isolated on the front wall, an imposing-yet-enticing, furry (yes, furry) black disk with an insignia seemingly not unlike those used on wax seals for envelopes. However, upon closer inspection, the piece is an upside-down abstraction of the Starbucks emblem, a initial hint at the dystopian-consumerist angle taken by Monaghan throughout the exhibition.



Jonathan Monaghan, Disco Beast, 2016, video (color, sound), media player, screen or projector
dimensions variable, landscape orientation, 18 min, loop, edition of 3, music by Furniteur.

Following the looming Pumpkin Spice, the viewer walks through a curtained partition into a small enclave featuring an 18 minute video installation eponymous to the collection, Disco Beast. In it, we follow the digital evolution in the journey of a unicorn (yes, a unicorn) in an exclusively additive, dreamlike composition littered with the markers of capitalism – names of Airlines and coffee shops, and rows of identical objects, just to name a few.



Jonathan Monaghan, The Unicorn in Bondage, 2017, carrara marble, 3D printed steel,
27 x 13.5 x 15 in / 68.6 x 34.3 x 38.1 cm

In the larger gallery space are the aluminum and 3D printed wall hangings from the series Police State Condo, which depict futuristic scenes with sophisticated use of detail and new-age materials, as

well as the sculptural pieces, *The Unicorn in Bondage* — my favorite of the bunch, an abstracted unicorn caught in splendidly rendered Carrara marble and 3D printed metallic gold steel — and the more literally-depicted, 3D printed porcelain piece, *The Unicorn in Captivity*, along with another miniature media installation, *Dorilton (wind)*.

While the exhibition is superficially enticing, especially to a millennial age captivated by new technology like 3D printing and more superfluous fascinations like unicorns, the ideation behind *Disco Beast* does not seem entirely fresh or new, reading a little too similar to the intent of early pop artists in its stress on consumerist culture, although twinged instead with a darker outlook that removes the levity that made the earlier movement so enjoyable en masse. However, the collection is executed flawlessly with a clear mastery of materiality, and in terms of quirky shock-value it rates quite high – making the exhibition certainly one to see for art lovers and art novices alike.

Disco Beast by Jonathan Monaghan is on at Bitforms Gallery at 131 Allen St. until December 10, 2017.

