



Contemporary Artist Builds on Americana Theme

January 29, 2013

If you haven't had your fill of American made fine art, furniture and decorative arts – you'll want to scurry down to Chelsea to see what one emerging artist has done with found Americana objects. Matthew Benedict's *Americana* at Alexander and Bonin Gallery (right next door to Outsider art dealer Andrew Edlin) is both visually entertaining and thought provoking.

The object-based works have been assembled from artifacts sourced in New England. They date from 180 to the present. Rather than strict re-interpretations of old stories and ideas, Mr. Benedict's work is informed by poetry, history, the mythic and the supernatural.

The gallery is using *The Terrible Old Man* as its lead image. Made of found objects – primarily glass bottles on a tri-pod pedestal side table, the composition is based on H.P. Lovecraft's tale of an old sea captain who communicates with the spirits of his dead shipmates while, in reality, thieves plot to rob him.

A less exotic but compelling visual is the wall of office technology – pre-pc – that is a whimsical allusion to the green eye-shade era, which is much before Mr. Benedict's time.

The paintings in the exhibition are the strongest visually, as is evident in the painting "The Monster" – today's homepage image – which looks, on the face of it, a pastoral rendering of New Bedford or similar New England coastal town. The title, however, suggests Mr. Benedict had a slightly more Gothic internal dialog going on at the time he painted the piece.

Historically on the right path, Mr. Benedict takes a painterly tour of New England imagery, as is shown on *Pilgrimage*, which depicts a now lost trade sign directing visitors to the Provincetown, MA Pilgrim Monument and Museum. *Where Tom Died* shows the still-existing corner of Manhattan tavern where it is thought Thomas Paine lived his final moments in 1809.

A native of Rockville, CT, Mr. Benedict is a Brooklyn based artist. He was a 2011 resident at The Versailles Foundation, Inc./Claude Monet, Giverny. His works are included in the permanent collections of the FRAC de Picardie, Amiens, Dallas Museum of Art and Hammer Museum in Los Angeles. He is also represented in MoMA's collection, the Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco and the NASA Art Program in Washington, DC.

For details, please visit the ArtandDesign.com Events page or the Alexander and Bonin website.



Found Americana in a contemporary sculpture.