

ARTFORUM

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CRITICS' PICKS

New York

Alessandro Pessoli

ANTON KERN GALLERY

16 East 55th Street

October 12–November 11

For the artist Alessandro Pessoli, as for many of us, 2016 was an *annus horribilis*. The unease he found in the studio pushed him to experiment, discovering archery and creating custom bows and arrows for his new hobby. The artist's solo exhibition here, full of paintings, ceramics, and sculptural installations, functions as the site of an epic battle in which he plays both hero and villain.

Our journey begins on the gallery's first floor, with 2016 *Empty Year*, 2017, a wooden rack carrying the implements of his newfound pastime along with, among other items, a neon sign, a ceramic chicken head, and a small speaker blasting minimal electronic music and techno, ranging from Lee Gamble and Rashad Becker to Angus MacLise and Luciano Cilio—music *View of "Alessandro Pessoli,"* 2017. Pessoli listens to while working. At the far end of the gallery, 2016 *Empty Year* extends to a particularly frenetic shooting session: Masses of arrows pierce a silk-screened panel carrying a picture of the artist. Surrounding this piece and continuing onto the second floor is an array of garishly painted self-portraits with titles such as *Fuck You Alessandro* and *Against Me*, both 2017. (In the latter, the artist's elephantine nose is invaded by two large, green flies).

On the third floor is a reprieve from the conflict: *Trattoria Sandrino*, 2012–17, a little café with whimsically painted brick wainscoting, small seascape paintings, and a Nespresso machine on a large plywood table—a gift to the beleaguered viewer and a rest stop for the artist's troubled ego. Despite Pessoli's illustrations of tormented selfhood, the exhibition is permeated by a celebratory playfulness that seems to indicate he might be winning this existential skirmish after all.

By Tabitha Piseno