

ARTFORUM



Jeni Spota C., *Coat of Arms with Newlyweds*, 2022, paper collage, 14 × 16".

NEW YORK

Jeni Spota C.

NICELLE BEAUCHENE GALLERY

7 Franklin Place

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One might be misled by the title of Jeni Spota C.'s most recent exhibition, "Works on Paper." A more appropriate name might be "Works *in* Paper" or, even more accurately, "Wonderfully Weird Miniature Bas-Reliefs of Paper, Paint, Cotton, and Foam Core." For this latest show, the artist has conjured thirteen Biblical apparitions from the fastidious manipulation of

detritus.

Consider the fourteen-by-sixteen-inch collage *Coat of Arms with Newlyweds* (all works 2022). Four angels hold the titular shield above a married couple who are flanked by onlookers, including a pope in a miter and tonsured monks. At the top center of the composition, the Virgin Mary cradles baby Jesus, hardly bigger than a peanut. While several of Spota's titles reference Giotto and the early Italian Renaissance tradition, the intimate scale and meticulous assemblage of idiosyncratic materials call to mind the folk traditions of domestic shrines in Mexico. Indeed, the artist's peculiar, obsessive imagination demands an almost forensic mode of scrutiny. Is the implied physiognomy of each face merely the effect of creases in a raisin-sized wad of paper? Could the celestial atmosphere be literally made of cotton? And, wait, why is this skinny-tied groom dressed so much like one of the Beatles?

This is hardly the most psychedelic of Spota's collages. Others, such as *Peace Sign with Body Parts*, depict angels bearing the namesake emblem surrounded by disembodied hands and eyes, and the naked figures of Adam and Eve with visible ribs the size of a baby's fingernail. Floating eyes dominate several compositions, such as *Cross Eyed*, where they are assembled in the form of, you guessed it, a cross. Yes, Spota is funny. But there is also something profound in the suturing of symbols from across eras and contexts that strives to approach the divine.

— Sophia Powers