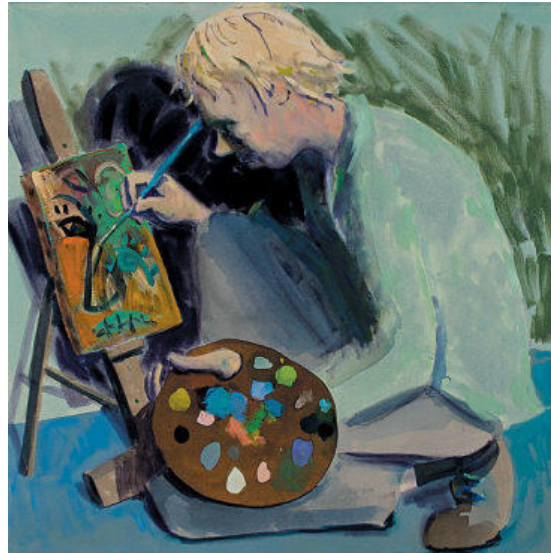




Edgar Bryan

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In his current show of paintings, L.A. artist Edgar Bryan tweaks classical subjects, utilizing flashy colors and round, gestural brushstrokes to describe still lifes and nudes. His works appear naive at first, as if they were a storybook illustrator's rudimentary attempts at canvas painting. But for Bryan (who was an illustrator before enrolling in art school), this loose and comic-book-like technique is a deliberate trope that infuses an old practice with modern character.

A few of his compositions even go so far as to evoke animation: In one untitled still life, eight multicolored pots appear as if they might suddenly spout water. In *The Black Vase*, a female nude reclines behind similar vessels (one just obscuring her groin), and angles her thumb above the vase as if she were about to stick it in à la Little Jack Horner.

Despite their cartoonish associations, Bryan's works are firmly rooted in art-historical tradition, painted in the Mannerist spirit of exaggerating Old Master methods to achieve unique expression on canvas. Take *The Green Vase*: Over a hot-pink underpainting (Venetians favored sepia), Bryan renders a studio scene involving a nude, a draped cloth and a ceramic urn. Notwithstanding this traditional setup, the colorful canvas is much more like a Peter Max painting than one you'd find at St. Peter's in Rome. Nevertheless, this work manages to avoid parody while finding novelty in ancient subject matter—a playful balancing act overall.

—Emily Weiner