

Austin Lee Strips Away And Finds The Core Of His Subjects

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A portrait tries to capture the essence of a subject. By honing in on a solitary figure usually from the chest up, we're able to delve into the eyes and see beneath the surface. There's some seriousness involved because the traditional portrait is used to capture a visual record which can act as a long standing account of that subject. Taking this and flipping it, painter Austin Lee creates cartoon-like portraits of re-imagined people and animals. Bursting with neon color and loose line, his subjects have nothing to hide and let it all hang out. His work associates with character and gestural expression mostly ending up as vignette laden pictures. With titles like Dunno, Mr. Worry, Facepalm, and Taboo the idea of community and friends surface as the subject for many of his pictures. In one, two figures appear in the front windshield of a car, the anticipation in their faces is that of a destination they are unfamiliar with. In another, "Crush" a Mona Lisa type portrait peers out from a cabinet frame portraying someone the artist has a crush on? Using a similar approach Lee creates heads out of 3D prints and acrylic paint.

These look like self-portraits and capture certain aspects of his personality with the least amount of rendering. To some degree both his painting and prints reference minimalism in their quest to strip away and find the core of its subject.

