## POSTMASTERS

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## [News from NYC] Austin Lee defies digital painting

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Finally, painting has come full circle. From finger painting on the small screen to "digital" painting on the big canvas, Austin Lee has created a bright new world of portraits and pictures that tease our perception in the realm of representation. If Bitforms gallery remains loyal to the new media label (see "PostPictures"), Postmasters deliberately blurs the digital distinction among artists and artworks, especially since their alternately titled "last picture show". Austin Lee is the perfect pioneer of this particular new-aesthetic trend, literally blurring lines with an airbrush, as if the physical cloth canvas were a giant Photoshop file. It's no surprise that the artist often uses an iPad to sketch out ideas and forms first-hand—and indeed freehand, as technology has become an extension of our minds.

Dropsy, Flashe acrylic on canvas, 2013

Seen from across the room, his wall mosaic of tightly composed, colorfully contrasted, blurred and saturated blocks are visually reminiscent of a Tumblr page or an Instagram feed. This may also explain

why individual photos of each one look so much at home on our digital devices. Yet closer inspection of the gallery paintings allows us to appreciate the unmistakable texture and matte intensity of Flashe acrylic on canvas, which makes viewing them "in the flesh" an entirely different experience. This new brand of



pop-art even pops out into a three-dimensional optical illusion, as digitally inspired, visually distorted cartoon characters are brought to life-size dimensions on flat wooden cut-outs, complete with real-space drop shadow.

The lines and dots may be simple, but the faces are no less expressive of a rich range of emotions, especially in the eyes. Relatively speaking, the multi-faceted 73 "postage-stamp" portraits are offset by the centerpiece: ( depicting the ever-potent sad face emoticon as the expression of a possibly fallen painter. And did we spot a "selfie" by the artist near the bottom right? Call it a sign of our times, but this is the kind of art that you want to put in your pocket and take home with you for your own delight, if only in the disloyal form of a deceptive JPG on your phone.

Austin Lee Postmasters Gallery through March 8, 2014



Mortido, Flashe acrylic on canvas, 2013