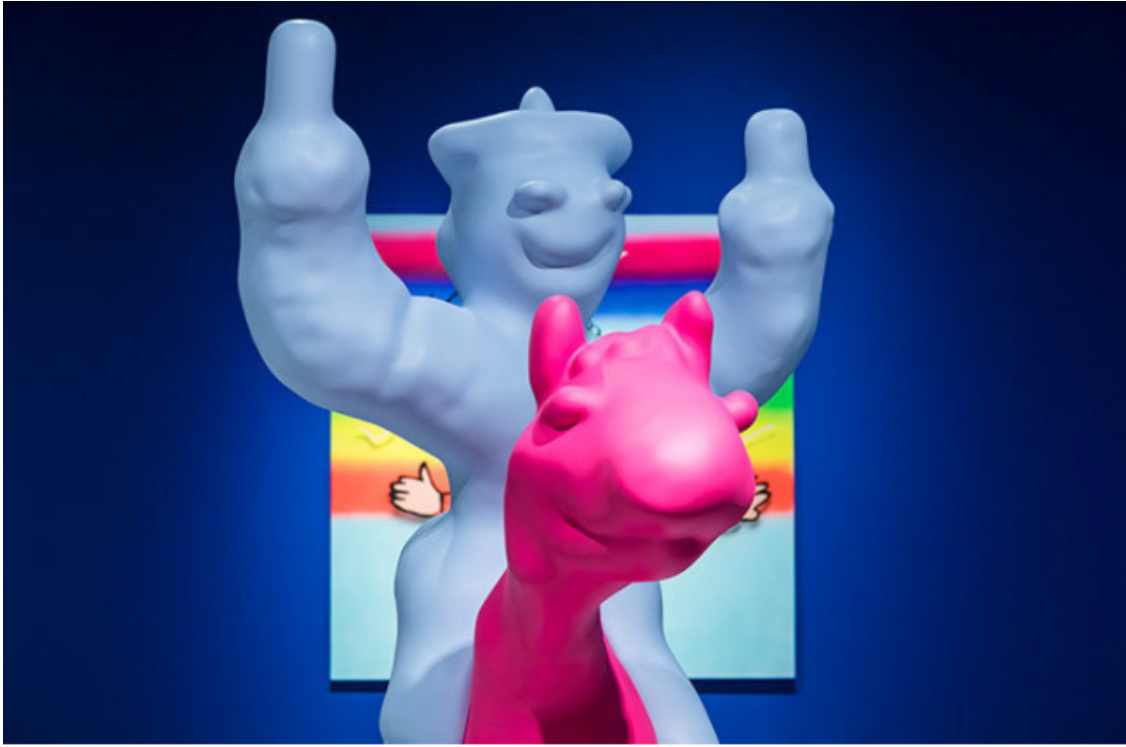


It's Nice That



Exploring physical and digital binaries with Austin Lee's exuberantly animated paintings

Words by Ayla Angelos - Images from Austin Lee

As an American artist who marks his signature in airbrushed acrylics, Austin Lee combines technology with traditional techniques to create bold and playful images. “There is no specific message I am trying to convey, although I’m happy to share my thoughts,” Austin explains when discussing the inspiration behind his work. “I don’t want others to think the same way but I do want others to think.”

“I try to understand the world around me by making artwork – there are messages and meaning as a result,” he says. The unusual faces, bodies and postures found within his work don’t explicitly correlate to any particular influences and, instead, embody the emotion he feels from everyday events. “I think of them as representations of feelings. Somethings they are influenced by real people, sometimes not.”

By mixing various mediums, including acrylic paint, “lots of computers” and a 3D printer, Austin starts off with a modest diagram which he then expands on with impulse. “I often start with a small digital drawing. I will make a large version of it on canvas and hope to maintain the spontaneity and directness of the original...The physical interaction with a work is imperative; I feel like it is important to translate the digital drawing into a painting so that I also have more control of the size and scale.”

This 3D approach is something that was never quite the plan for Austin's work. More so, it was found from an interest and proficiency amongst computerised image-making: "I've been interested in computers and technology for as long as I can remember. I'm curious," he says. "A new program for a computer might come out and I'll experiment with it and see what I can do. I'll start to wonder what this new visual language means and it will eventually find its way into something I've made."

Alongside his large-scale canvas paintings, Austin tends to line-up his artwork in shows decorated with sculpture. "I became interested in sculpture through 3D scanning and printing," says Austin. Drawn to its "magic and presence", the physical nature of sculpture ties in seamlessly to his ethos and means of creating. "If I scan a person as a starting point for a sculpture, what makes that person who they are is in there – even if I drastically change the way it looks. I'm curious about what makes something feel human and it's just another way to figure that out."

