



PAINTING

TEN POUND HAND: JAMIAN JULIANO-VILLANI'S BIZARRE AND BEAUTIFUL WONDERLAND @ JTT, NYC



Bacon Boy

From the moment we first saw her work, we knew Jamian Juliano-Villani was the real deal (and really happy to have her as a cover artist in May 2017). Her humor, painting skill, irreverence and yet so smartly composed paintings reminded us a bit of Juxtapoz founder Robert Williams, but with a 21st Century spin that results in some of the most original works we get to see being made today.

"The pretentiousness is a small part of what the art world is made of," Villani told us back in mid-2017 for her cover story. "Market, social hierarchies and the elite are all bullshit, but being around creative and interesting people who are pushing the limits is really inspiring. I just try not to get lost in all the hype of art. It's stupid, so I'm not going to compromise myself to maintain face. I'm not afraid of being embarrassed." With this newest solo show at JTT in NYC, Ten Pound Hand, Villani's brilliant, bizarre and at times completely sublime acrylic on canvas works position the viewer in

a weirdly familiar place that also would make a familiar dream-like/nightmare scenario. You are torn between living in the hyper-technological world with also this almost nostalgic and historical perspective.

Take one of our favorite paintings in the show, *Gone With The Wind*, 2018: As the gallery notes, the painting "depicts a firefighter overlooking the recent LA fires. The apocalyptic image is blatantly disrupted by a smaller painting in the upper right corner embedded into the piece. In this smaller painting, a fish playfully pours Coca-Cola into its mouth. The combination of the vibrant, commercial image with one sourced from news media intensifies the unsettling qualities in each."

Or as the gallery notes, "Another child protagonist is found in *Penis Breath*, 2018, a painting based on a storyboard for a cereal commercial. In the illustration, a young boy pours cereal into a bowl beside his sleeping parents who remain unaware of their child's presence. A smaller painting embedded into the stretcher depicts a possum sucking on a rave pacifier. Stylized after a 50s-era illustration, *Penis Breath* juxtaposes the supposed innocence of the nuclear family in post-war America with the raunchiness of the painting's title."

This is where the comparison with Robert Williams rings true. These elements of pop-culture juxtaposed (hey-o!) with a sinister and historical reality that challenges the preconceived ideas of cultural norms and mass-media depictions of family and American life. The paintings are funny but full of stories. They have history if you want to see it and are beautiful and weird and great to look at if you just want that. "Once I stop caring about what could be a good idea/painting is when things get more interesting," Villani told us. "Being conscious of fucking up assassinate creativity."

Villani's show at JTT will be on view through February 24, 2018.

