

# Flash Art

BRIAN CALVIN

MARC FOXX

Whether the trippy trademark characters that populate Brian Calvin's paintings are stoic or stoned, meditative or medicated, is open for interpretation. In fact, nothing is clear in the seven deceptively simple works in the artist's third solo outing at Marc Foxx, save for the blue skies of Southern California and its relentlessly glowing sun, a recurring circular motif that provides the works with their distinct mood, orientation and stylistic heat.

With overt emulations of the coolly detached portraits of Alex Katz, Calvin has created an enigmatic avatar — a stick-thin androgynous figure who shares the pale, sculptural forms of Katz's socialites. Sporting long, stylishly unkempt hair, hot dog bun lips, doe eyes and fashionable hipster couture, Calvin's hero is a quiet, curious Gen-Xer who can often be found gazing aimlessly or contemplatively at the ocean, sun or moon; the only signs of communication being signifying hand gestures, perhaps the key to unlocking the code of Calvin's narrative inner logic.

A spirit of melancholia permeates these works, with Calvin's figures finding solitude and amusement in the sun. In *Beyond* two impossibly long-fingered hands seek to grasp the sun or focus it like a lens. In *The Other Side of the World* a preppy lad stands on the edge of the coast either saluting or waving at the sun, or possibly just casting shadow puppets on a wall. And in *Another Sundown* two close-cropped mirror-reflection doppelgangers — a blonde and a brunette — cast an eternal gaze like Easter Island monuments, separated only by a setting sun.

Despite the paintings' cartoony imagery, Calvin's work is very painterly, showing prowess for highly-symmetrical classical compositions that fuse elements of art-historical sources ranging from Piero della Francesca, Monet and Matisse to contemporaries Katz and John Wesley, while simultaneously referencing pop culture icons such as the films of Richard Linklater or 1960s Hanna Barbera animations. All of which reflects the influences and distractions of a young artist growing up in contemporary Southern California.

**Alex Worman**