

## Music

# A Gifted Painter Fills Canvases With Whatever He Wants, Including Dog Poop

By Laura Hutson Hunter July 5, 2017, 4:14pm

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If you think great painters can't also be really fun, you probably haven't seen the work in Todd Bienvenu's *Endless Bummer* exhibit at Harper's Books in East Hampton. In his paintings, Bienvenu uses finely tuned painterly chops to portray scenes of sexy, hilarious, and often ridiculously stupid people hanging tough in the New York sun.

"In art school, I kinda thought I was supposed to be making serious 'Art,'" Bienvenu tells *Creators*. "But after I learned how to make a competent painting, it was boring to just think about formal things without putting stuff that I was interested in in there. Why not have both? It's fun to subvert themes from art history with a dick joke."

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TODD BIENVENU, *PIZZA PUSS*

Dick jokes and all, these paintings aren't trite or ironic — there's an earnest appreciation of his subject matter that the artist paints in Max Beckmann-esque expressionistic swaths. Sure, he's painted a *Home Alone* tattoo onto a bare-chested muscle man. But he does it with the bright-eyed appreciation of someone who remembers being 10 years old in 1990.





TODD BIENVENU, *KURT 2*

Bienvenu's youth is mined again and again, especially in a series of album art paintings on 12-by-12 inch panels, or *Kurt 2*, a large-scale painting of Kurt Cobain. "I've done a few Kurt Cobain paintings," Bienvenu says. "He sort of ushered me into the world of punk music, skateboarding, underground culture, feminism — being a weirdo in your small town."

The whopping 66-by-58 inch oil-on-canvas painting is filled with inside-baseball details like a Daniel Johnston T-shirt and blue Fender guitar — but the tension and wild, tightly wound energy of Cobain's posture is expressed with the simplest of brushstrokes. "It's more important for me for the paintings to feel like something than to look like it," says Bienvenu. "They have to be painted the way I paint — not the way a camera sees."

TODD BIENVENU, *HOT CHICK PICKING UP DOG SHIT*

In *Endless Summer*, Bienvenu captures life in the summer with a black-comedy edge — women pick up dog shit on the sidewalk, a man hauls an enormous laundry bag and an armful of groceries, a well-tanned man with chiseled abs and a chain necklace reclines in a bright red Speedo like he's Burt Reynolds in *Cosmo*. The season is filled with sweat and hilariously sexual outfits — the perfect combo for Bienvenu.



TODD BIENVENU, *POOLSIDE*

“I love summertime in NYC,” he says. “It feels like every day is Saturday. After being cold for nine months, everyone is excited to wear less clothes and stay out late. Summertime is a good device for me to paint people without clothes on, butts creeping out of swimsuits, side boobs, wedgies, and belly flops.

TODD BIENVENU, *TODD'S IMAGINARY TINDER*

“And then I think that the joy implied by summer paintings also contains the darkness of the realization that summer ends. The humor only works if there’s a tragic undertone.”





TODD BIENVENU, *POOLSIDE*



TODD BIENVENU, *TRANSPARENT PANTIES*

TODD BIENVENU, SKYPE

“Endless Bummer” is on view at Harper’s Books in East Hampton through July 19. For more information, click [here](#).

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