



# The-Art-Form

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James Jean

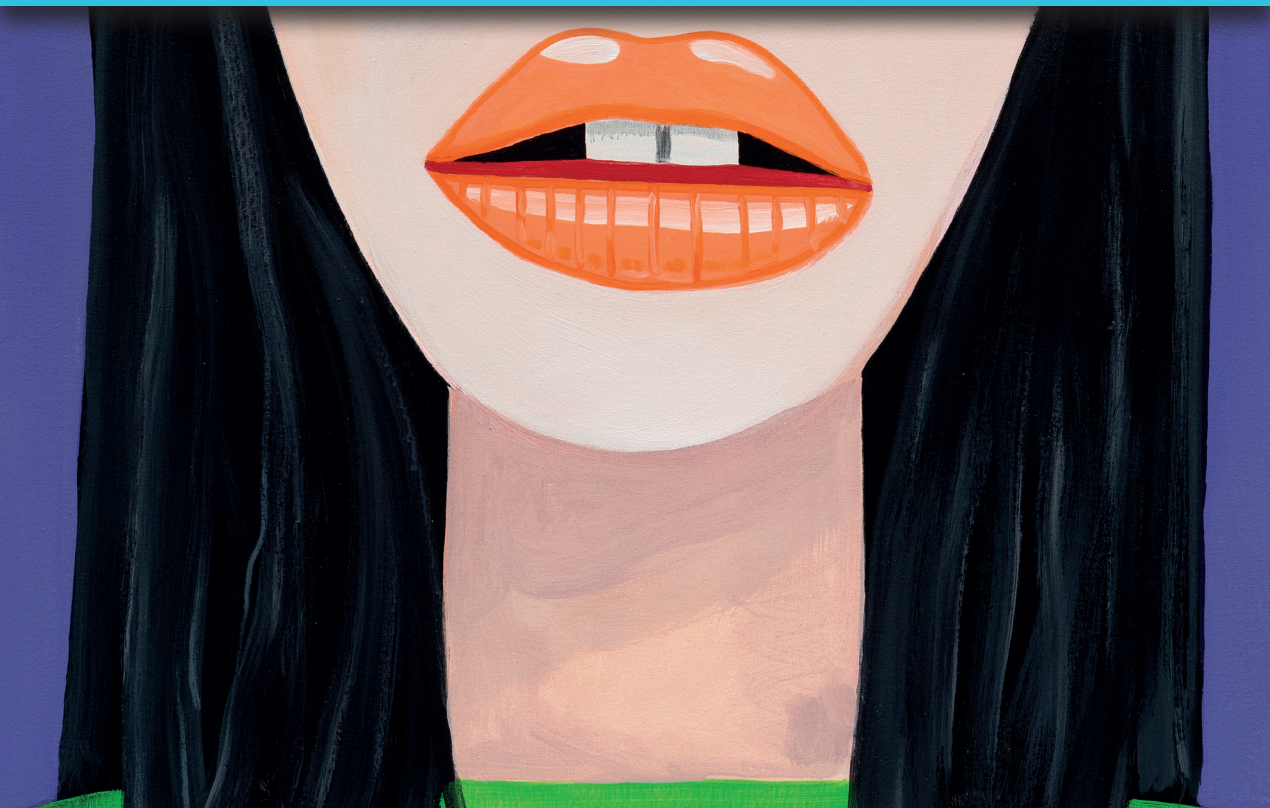
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Mark Whalen

Oli Epp





# Brian Calvin

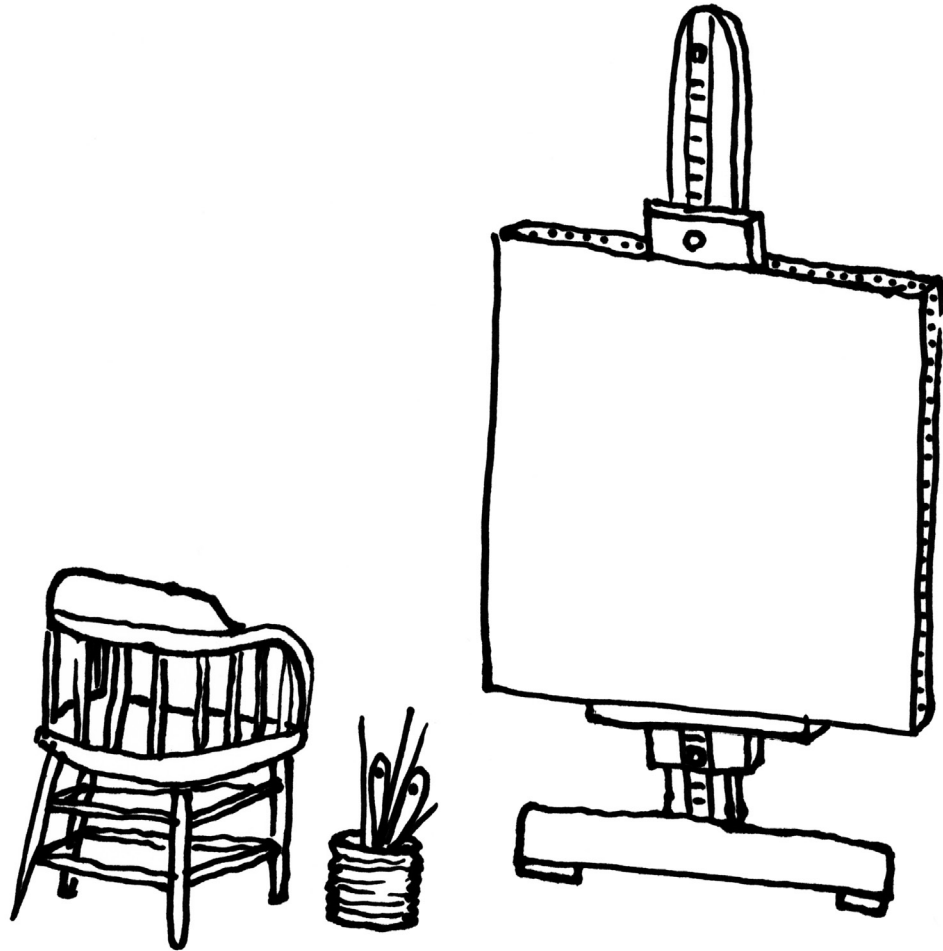
Brian Calvin paints large-scale, stylized portraits that gaze past the viewer. The paintings are cropped and abstracted to various degrees, drawing attention to specific features, such as the eyes, lips and fingernails.

Calvin is unconcerned with representation or narrative, he explores the abstract nature of painting and the history of figuration - from cave paintings, to the Renaissance, to the selfie; tapping into the human desire to create images. He often repeats, morphs and remixes characters and poses from earlier works, creating an evolving dialogue between painter and painting.

REVELATION, 2017  
Acrylic on canvas, 60x48"  
Courtesy: The Artist and Almine Rech  
Photo: Hugard & Vanoverschelde







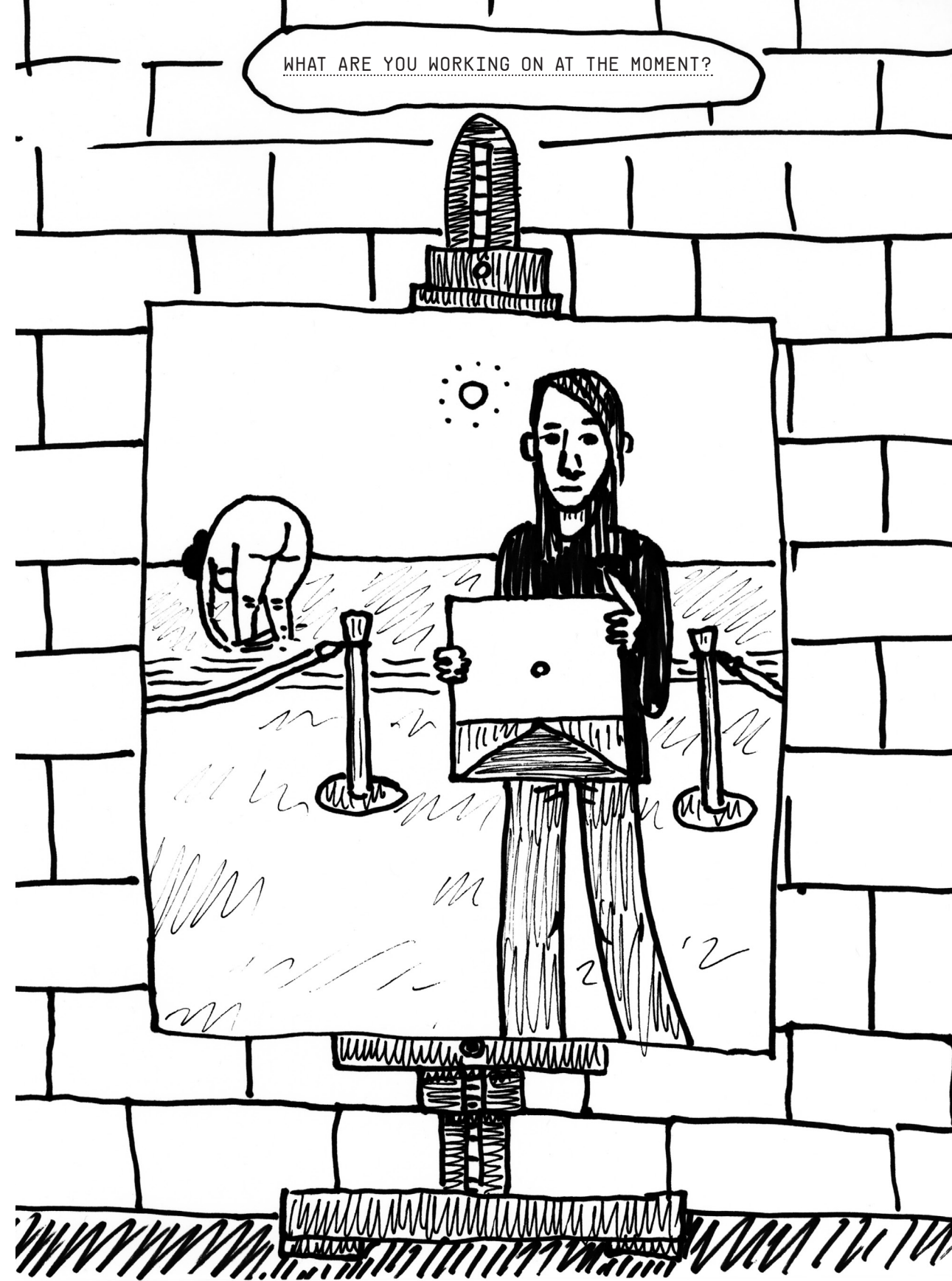
I HAVE AN URGE TO COMMUNICATE WITH OTHERS WHO CAME BEFORE ME AND WITH THOSE YET TO COME. PAINTING IS WHERE I FOUND A MEANS TO COMMUNICATE.

LEAVE THE STUDIO, 2018  
Acrylic on canvas, 35x40"  
Courtesy: The Artist and Anton Kern  
Gallery, New York





GARDEN PARTY, 2018  
 Acrylic on canvas, 70x56"  
 Courtesy: The Artist and Anton Kern  
 Gallery, New York





WHAT ARE YOUR MAIN INFLUENCES? WHAT INSPIRES YOU?



EVERYTHING INFLUENCES ME,  
FEWER THINGS INSPIRE. MY  
MIND IS KEPT MORE OPEN  
THROUGH MUSIC. MUSIC  
INFLUENCES AND INSPIRES ME.

THE HATCHLING 2016  
Acrylic on canvas, 54x54"  
Courtesy: The Artist and Anton Kern  
Gallery, New York

DESCRIBE YOUR WORKING PROCESS WHEN MAKING ART



I PAINT AND DRAW EVERY  
DAY. I ALWAYS WORK ON  
NUMEROUS PAINTINGS, DRAWINGS,  
SCULPTURES, SOMETIMES SONGS...  
THE SECOND THINGS FEEL  
STUCK OR STATIC, I MOVE  
ON TO SOMETHING ELSE.

PUFF 2018  
Acrylic on canvas, 56x70"  
Courtesy: The Artist and Almine Rech  
Photo: Matt Kroening



MAKE ART HERE



SIGNATURE:

Brian Calvin



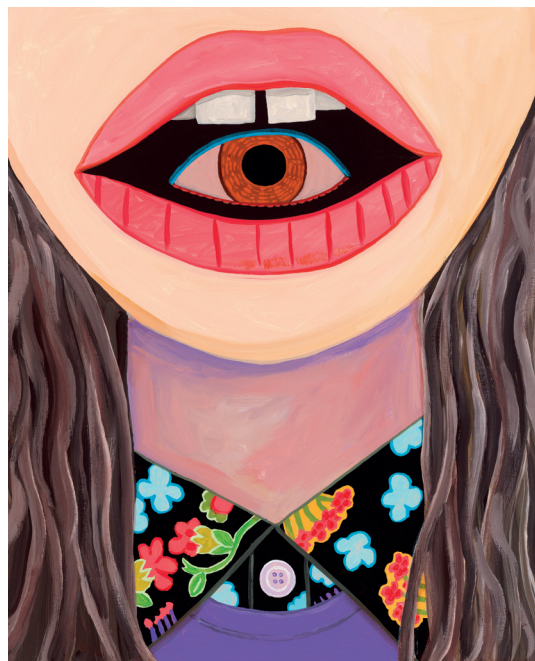
SPLIT INFINITIVE 2016  
Acrylic on canvas, 70x56"  
Courtesy: The Artist and Anton Kern  
Gallery, New York

NEXT PAGE: MOUTHFEEL 2015  
Acrylic on linen, 18x24"  
Courtesy: The Artist and Almine Rech  
Photo: Rebecca Fanuele









YOU WERE ONCE IN A BAND - HOW IMPORTANT IS MUSIC TO YOUR ART PRACTICE? DO YOU LISTEN TO MUSIC WHEN PAINTING? DOES IT HELP YOUR CREATIVITY?

Music acts like a lubricant to keep my mind and body from getting stuck. I do listen to a lot of music, but also a good amount of silence.

CAN YOU DESCRIBE YOUR STUDIO SPACE?

It's an industrial cinder block building overflowing with junk.

HOW DOES A PAINTING BEGIN? DO YOU START WITH A SKETCH?

My approach to starting a painting changes all of the time, but drawing is a big part of the process. The actual beginning usually involves prepping the canvas so that I like the feel and tone of the ground. I also tend to work on four or more paintings at a time.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT WHEN PAINTING? HOW DO YOU FEEL?

I try to think as little as possible when painting. How I feel depends on the particulars of the process, or more realistically on how recently I ate.

ARE THE PEOPLE YOU PAINT ENTIRELY IMAGINED, OR ARE THERE SIMILARITIES TO PEOPLE YOU KNOW?

I'd say both. My imagination is firmly rooted in observation and experience, but I'm not trying to capture the likeness or essence of anyone in particular.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE EMOTIONAL STATE OF THE PEOPLE IN YOUR PORTRAITS?

I wouldn't. I'm not interested in expressing emotional extremes, so the viewer is left with something in between. I sense emotion in my work, for sure, but I'll let the paintings do the describing.

OBSERVATION, 2017  
Acrylic on linen, 30x24"  
Courtesy: The Artist and Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago

WHILST PAINTING A PORTRAIT DO YOU START TO FEEL THE PRESENCE OF ANOTHER PERSON IN THE STUDIO?

I absolutely feel the presence in the painting, but I wouldn't say I feel it "in the studio". It's more like the painting starts to generate extra energy, calling attention to itself: something like a portal.

YOU ONCE SAID THAT YOU "PREFER TO EXPERIENCE ABSTRACTION THROUGH THE REPETITIVE TENDING OF IMAGES" CAN YOU TALK ABOUT THIS STATEMENT FURTHER? WHY DO YOU SOMETIMES REPEAT THE SAME PAINTING?

Painting is a never ending series of decisions like forks in the road. Through repetition, I'm de-emphasizing the binary quality of choosing a path. I'll start four paintings from a single sketch or idea just to more fully explore the potential of the image.

FOR THE WORKS 'SITTER[I]' 2015, 'SITTER[II]' 2015 AND 'STROLL' 2017 YOU CREATED 3D, SCULPTURAL, PAINTED OBJECTS - IS THIS SOMETHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO EXPLORE FURTHER IN YOUR WORK? CAN YOU TALK ABOUT THESE PIECES IN MORE DETAIL?

I thought of the Sitter pieces as paintings turned into sculpture. Paintings are objects, of course, and one day it felt like a painting just wanted to stand up and be free of the wall. I suppose it then needed a place to sit back down. I was simultaneously thinking about Richard Artschwager and Egyptian sculpture. Stroll was just a by-product of those initial forays.

THE FASHION DESIGNER RAF SIMONS USED SOME OF YOUR PAINTINGS IN HIS SPRING/SUMMER 2013 MENSWEAR COLLECTION. CAN YOU TALK ABOUT THIS COLLABORATION? IS RAF SIMONS A COLLECTOR OF YOUR WORK?

Raf is a collector of my work but we had been friends for some years beforehand. Our collaboration happened just as Raf was working on his first show for Dior. Raf was reflecting on the previous decade of the Raf Simons label, as he himself was moving into uncharted territory. He asked if I'd open my archive for him to use and I was more than happy to provide full access.



HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN A PAINTING IS FINISHED? WHEN IS THE RIGHT TIME TO PUT DOWN THE PAINTBRUSH?

I just know. It's when the painting no longer needs me.

WHICH ARTISTS DO YOU ADMIRE? HOW HAVE THEY INFLUENCED YOUR WORK?

That's too broad of a question to answer, but I can say that I tend to feel inspiration more strongly than influence. When someone is communicating well through her art- be it painting, music, writing, whatever-I am lifted and my point of view expands. That is a pleasant way to approach your own work afterwards.

WHAT DOES SUCCESS MEAN TO YOU?

It's all relative, but I do what I love.

SITTER [II], 2015  
Acrylic on wood, 91x22x33"  
Courtesy: The Artist and Almine Rech  
Photo: Hugard & Vanoverschelde

WHY DID YOU FIRST BECOME INTERESTED IN ART? DID YOU ALWAYS WANT TO BE A PAINTER?

I don't remember a time when I wasn't drawing and making things. I grew up in the agricultural Central Valley of California in the 70's and 80's, so I had no real conception of becoming an artist, much less a painter. I'd pick up whatever I could through magazines and album covers. I knew something was beckoning but it could have been anything. I moved to Berkeley, California in 1987 for college. It wasn't very long before I started painting and I haven't stopped since.

WHEN DID YOU REALISE YOU COULD MAKE A LIVING FROM BEING AN ARTIST?

That's kind of impossible to pinpoint, particularly since the ability to make a living ebbed and flowed for years. I certainly never expected to make a living making paintings.

CAN YOU REMEMBER THE FIRST PAINTING YOU SOLD?

I sold a painting to a painting professor for \$100 in 1991: three identical Snoopy-esque dogs prancing around a few puddles.





TOGETHER AGAIN, 2018  
Acrylic on canvas, 54x40"  
Courtesy: The Artist and Anton Kern  
Gallery, New York

STROLL, 2017  
Acrylic on wood, 86x7"  
Courtesy: The Artist and Almine Rech  
Photo: Hugard & Vanoverschelde

YOUR WORK IS OFTEN COMPARED TO THE ARTIST ALEX KATZ - HAVE YOU EVER MET KATZ AND SPOKEN TO HIM ABOUT PAINTING?

I have had the lucky opportunity to speak with Alex Katz on a few occasions. I first met him when we were both in "Dear Painter, Paint Me", curated by Alison Gingeras for the Centre Pompidou in 2002. Among other things, he told me something to the effect that I'd have "a nice career". It was a funny thing to say but quite reassuring at the time. A few years ago, I had the pleasure of having him describe aspects of his process and philosophy while standing two feet in front of one of his enormous canvases. He has the lightest touch, like a dancer. The paint floats right on the surface, rather than being forced down into the tooth of the canvas. Laura Owens told me a story about seeing minuscule, dust like flakes of paint on the ground beneath one of his paintings when he had his show at 356 Mission in Los Angeles. Laura was understandably freaked out, but Alex seemed to take no mind. I guess it's a natural consequence when the paint is applied this way.

HOW DO YOU KEEP MOTIVATED?

I paint virtually every day, it's pretty much second nature. I guess I'm internally motivated.

WHAT'S THE BEST THING SOMEBODY HAS SAID TO YOU AFTER LOOKING AT YOUR WORK?

I'm flattered by how many artists have told me that my work inspired or influenced them. Painting is a very solitary act, and yet my work has a life of its own after leaving the studio.

SO FAR - WHAT HAVE BEEN THE HIGHS AND LOWS OF YOUR CAREER AS AN ARTIST?

The previously mentioned show at the Pompidou was a big early high. Last year, I collaborated on a "Cosi fan tutte" exhibition with the Metropolitan Opera in New York which was exhilarating. The lows? Let's just say that the business side of the art world is not always so pleasant.



DO YOU COLLECT ART? WHAT WORK DO YOU HAVE ON THE WALLS AT HOME?

I have a small collection of works by others. The only piece technically "on the wall" is a beautifully strange painting by Forrest Bess that I miraculously came to own a few years ago. We have a handful of work by other artists leaning against the wall.

HOW HAS YOUR WORK EVOLVED OVER THE LAST TEN YEARS? WHERE DO YOU SEE IT GOING IN THE FUTURE?

I don't give it much thought. I started painting in 1990 and quickly discovered it to be my preferred mode of communication, or self-expression. I'll let others decide how I have or haven't evolved. Meanwhile, I'll just be painting.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A YOUNG ARTIST AT THE START OF THEIR CAREER?

Paint because you love to paint, or have to paint. Careers are fleeting.

Unless stated otherwise, all images are courtesy and © Brian Calvin.





The-Art-Form is a limited edition publication about art and artists.

All the artists featured in The-Art-Form have completed a form about art.

Each artist has answered the questions on the form in their own unique way, giving an insight into their work and working practice. Some of the artists have created drawings and original artwork in response to the questions.

COVER BY BRIAN CALVIN

LOOKING [IN AND OUT], 2017

Acrylic on canvas, diptych, 40x30"

Courtesy: The Artist and Almine Rech.

Photo: Hugard & Vanoverschelde

