

# Shoot the Lobster

Henry Curchod  
*Hugging a tree is like kissing a dog*

*I stuff my suitcase with a laundry bag and the bare essentials then trot over to the gallery where I find Henry standing outside, box vape in hand. It's Saturday afternoon and the city is buzzing with summer fever. Once inside, an unveiling of sorts ensues. But first, I scrounge around for something to drink and find exactly one White Claw at the bottom of an otherwise empty box -it's lime flavored.*

There is a figure at the fore of *It has been my doorway to perception and the house that I live in* that underscores Curchod's attunement to the weight of history. He exercises a strong deference to his predecessors, enacting Kirchnerian formalism in composing the horizontal forefigure. Children laze about near the glowing sarcophagus-form, though one tugs his left shoulder. These subjects meet energetic swells in the painting's lower half, which evoke the disquieting landscapes of Edvard Munch.

*We continue looking over the compositions. I take sips out of my room temperature White Claw as he drags the robotic nicotine dispenser. While producing the show, Henry's left hand was virtually out of commission. This inspired a newfound agility in him, one that I sensed as we explored the material together. Knees bent, I survey the largest work in the show. Flat and floorbound now, Henry points out what he plans to change once the painting is stretched. I issue a smile. Whenever I mention a figure from art history, draw a comparison to Henry's work, he smiles too. "It's all in there," he says.*

Per Jacques Lassaigne's assessment, Daumier "had a tremendous faculty, for storing up, retaining and concentrating everything in his head, and he could assimilate it all all until there came into being a work of 'imagination all compact', summoning up anew all outside influences but completely detached from them." What's more, according to the writer, "Daumier, in fact, guided by an infallible instinct, goes straight to the heart of reality, and everything else is for him merely useless and tiresome convention." Daumier offers something vital akin to the work of Curchod: a matter of fact submission to truth. He becomes a spiritual forefather in this way, while also encouraging a specific formal basis for Curchod. The latter systematically implements diabolical faces, harkening back to the former's troubled universe. The French artist's illustrative appeal is here converted to a cruder exercise, though both align on the level of drawing as foundation. Daumier and Curchod further relate as their compositions oscillate between passages and specific linework.

*Together, we look over the handheld Hay bale affair (after Van Gogh). I note the sensibility that it shares with Van Gogh's swirling golden fields - my favorite corner in the artist's oeuvre. This happens and Henry nods, explaining that he, too, shares a love for this specific body of work. I laugh and praise Henry's narrative decisions here: a desirous affair between farmer and alien, set in a pastoral landscape. with a man surveying the scene as he simply passes through...*

In the painting *Town hero*, a swarm of men bind together in order to support an oversized man. This suited figure is the only one for which light is shed on his physiognomic details. Dressed in a suit and tie, his body conorts while his face remains eerily neutral. *Strange love* presents a similarly troubling scene where a crib-bound adolescent lies supine as a duo peers in, their

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expressions inscrutable if not sinister. The child's stomach is adorned with bright colors and the bars of his containment device are protracted as green shadows.

*You see, I've been watching Henry's practice for years now. We've done virtual visits, even met once in Los Angeles during Frieze week. It's all led to this: work in a space, conversation, decisions. The title of this show came from discussions Henry and I have had regarding man's bizarre relationship to nature. Per Henry, "yelling into caves, talking to birds and kissing dogs" are such perverse modes of submitting to ego: man conquers nature. This jumpoff point yielded Henry's landing into a field where he explored selfhood, how we can begin to understand the portals we've invented that funnel into spaces and non-spaces (i.e. hospitals, offices, farms, dreams).*

A suite of sketches become the support staff for the development of Curchod's paintings, while still holding their own against their more "substantial" corollaries. Remaining loyal to this medium, Curchod employs his oil sticks as a means to pay tribute to the conceits of illustration and history of cartoons.

An interplay of discernable lines and sweeping chroma is a mainstay within Curchod's practice. Due to the meandering plot points, his work largely settles into the unknowable, his figures perpetually masked by their refusal to reveal intention. Curchod ultimately composes using his own formula of painterly poetics, refusing the victimhood that befalls one who submits to trend over intuition. These horizon-less compositions offer something beyond any boilerplate representations of experience or fantasy.

*Henry has often spoken to me of his drive to distract the viewer from content by way of form. Color threatens to overwhelm his narrative landscapes, though he maintains a self aware predisposition to turn left when it might be more palatable to turn right. This move produces something that is actually exciting, compositions that require time, but don't deprive the viewer of an instant seduction.*