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Myles Starr

I Can't Read

November 9—December 2, 2025

During our first studio visit, Myles listed a few things he was staunchly against in painting, citing them as frustrating and fruitful bruises to press into. An impassioned ranker, once he has a list of things he likes most to least, he flips it and teases through his dislikes.

One of these things (as Myles established early on in the visit): text paintings... in other words, paintings that you have to read... in other words, paintings with words. The show is titled 'I Can't Read'. I think however, that Myles' paintings demand to be read. He has developed a pictorial language chalk-full of images, inside jokes, and secrets that self-refer into loops: webs of chopped and screwed storytelling. There's so much that I do not know about them.

He moves things around. Organizing, reorganizing, reorganizing seemingly unrelated things until they suddenly start to fall into place—like solving a rubik's cube™ by sorting the warm colors from the cool.

The show emulates moving through a haunted house of sensorial stimulations, where images and faces (Queen Elizabeth (Cate Blanchet)'s cakey porcelain skin, Jutta Koether's fugly toe shoes, groovy dancers from Hype Williams' 1998 'Belly') shift in and out of focus, constantly unsettled. Each element holding equal importance, is masterfully and lovingly composed, but painted with disarming urgency. They're stacked with oppressively bright opaque aquas and yellows that bring out something I can only describe as a mall-like faux brightness: the fakeness, the fluorescence, the dread.

Oil paint is turned materially grotesque, spanning the vast scope of capital P Paint's complexity: brash and stiff and sultry, unusual and temperamental and sensitive and loving. He is using every tool. Sure, they are about material and surface, but more so they attempt to communicate, and in turn be understood...without words... a sense of loathing that has been detangled and tamed into admiration...maybe?

Wit, puzzles, logic, dead pan humor- but no pranks.

— Penelope Stryjewski