

Looking at Ken Kagami and Trevor Shimizu's work makes me feel the same way I did when trying and failing to become a skater boy as a teen (replete with black Etnies and SpongeBob laces... poser!). Or when, once upon a time, I daydreamed about one day becoming a famous, fancy artist. Paintings by Kagami and Shimizu reveal the humorous ways that masculinity and artistic mastery are performed.

Often, their paintings—which include Shimizu's signature video paintings, and Kagami's paintings that incorporate everyday objects—ask viewers to imagine aspects of the work that aren't real. Kagami does this quite literally in his painting *Please Imagine a Boring Abstract Painting* (2020), which simply has its title—a prompt—painted onto the canvas. Shimizu imagines that his paintings, like *Studio Assistant (Toilet)*, 2013, are created by a fictional studio assistant who does all the work while he simply takes a shit.

Both artists also take on the oeuvres of individual male masters. For Shimizu's *Video Painting (Highlights)*, 2018-19, the artist took a video, using his iPhone, of a computer screen showing various country music videos. Offscreen, artist Dan Graham sings along emphatically. Shimizu recently began making landscape paintings, like *Moss Garden 3* and *Bushes and Trees*, both 2019. They were inspired by Shimizu's recent purchase of the exhibition catalogue for MoMA's 1998 Pierre Bonnard retrospective, a show Shimizu saw when he was in art school studying video and performance. Revisiting the catalogue inspired Shimizu to return to the longstanding painterly tradition of drawing from one's surroundings.

Kagami mocks Yves Klein in both *Garfield Klein* (2017) and *Yves Klein's Underwear* (2018). In the first, Kagami reimagines Klein's notoriously misogynistic *Anthropometry* series of the 1960s, in which Klein smeared his signature blue paint onto the bodies of various nude women, then smushed them against canvases, treating them quite literally as objects. Kagami reimagines the series, but replaces the women's bodies with a plush Garfield toy, undercutting Klein's machismo. For the second Klein work, Kagami adapts a pair of Calvin Klein underwear, replacing "Calvin" on the waistband with "Yves," and smearing a shit stain using paint in Klein's signature blue (or at least, a similar blue). He also created a pair of underwear for Gordon Matta Clark, the "anarchitect" famous for bisecting buildings. Kagami simply cut a pair of underwear in half, seeming to chafe at the ways in which performative machismo is meant to compensate for castration anxiety using the language of teen boy humor. And a Mark Rothko-esque painting is shown on a third pair of underwear: the most prominent color resembles urine.

But of course, by explaining all of these jokes and art historical references, I've risked making them

much less funny.

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