



Eddie Martinez

Martinez's painting and works on paper seem as caffeinated as they are cartoony.

BY CLAIRE BARLIANT

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“Bad War”

Eddie Martinez’s paintings, drawings and etchings have a kitchen-sink quality to them: The painter seems to unload his full arsenal of skills, as well as the contents of his brain, onto every one. Composed of an assortment of images that almost add up to a communicable message, though not quite, his works read like rebuses or maniacal maps to lost treasure. In the large-scale *Back Looker*, for instance, an immense comic-book speech bubble emerges from the mouth of a supine daydreamer, with several of Martinez’s favorite motifs, including a duck’s face and a frog’s lips. In the artist’s deft hands, these childish doodles radiate a sinister energy.

Speech bubbles and tabletops often serve as framing devices for Martinez’s mishmash of forms, an approach that gives the compositions room to breathe and allows his virtuosity to stand out. Many works combine meaty brushstrokes with short, quick bursts of paint, giving the canvases a highly caffeinated, Basquiat-style look. This is particularly true of *Empirical Mind State*, another

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large piece that seamlessly incorporates spray paint and ink. The cartoony imagery and a needling undercurrent of darkness, even anger, bring Philip Guston's later work to mind.

These paintings are impressively made, no doubt, yet their subject matter starts to feel repetitive, especially when they're viewed together, and one wishes they had a bit more bite. The drawings tend to be looser, more speculative and unrehearsed. Hopefully, in time, the paintings will catch up.—*Claire Barliant*