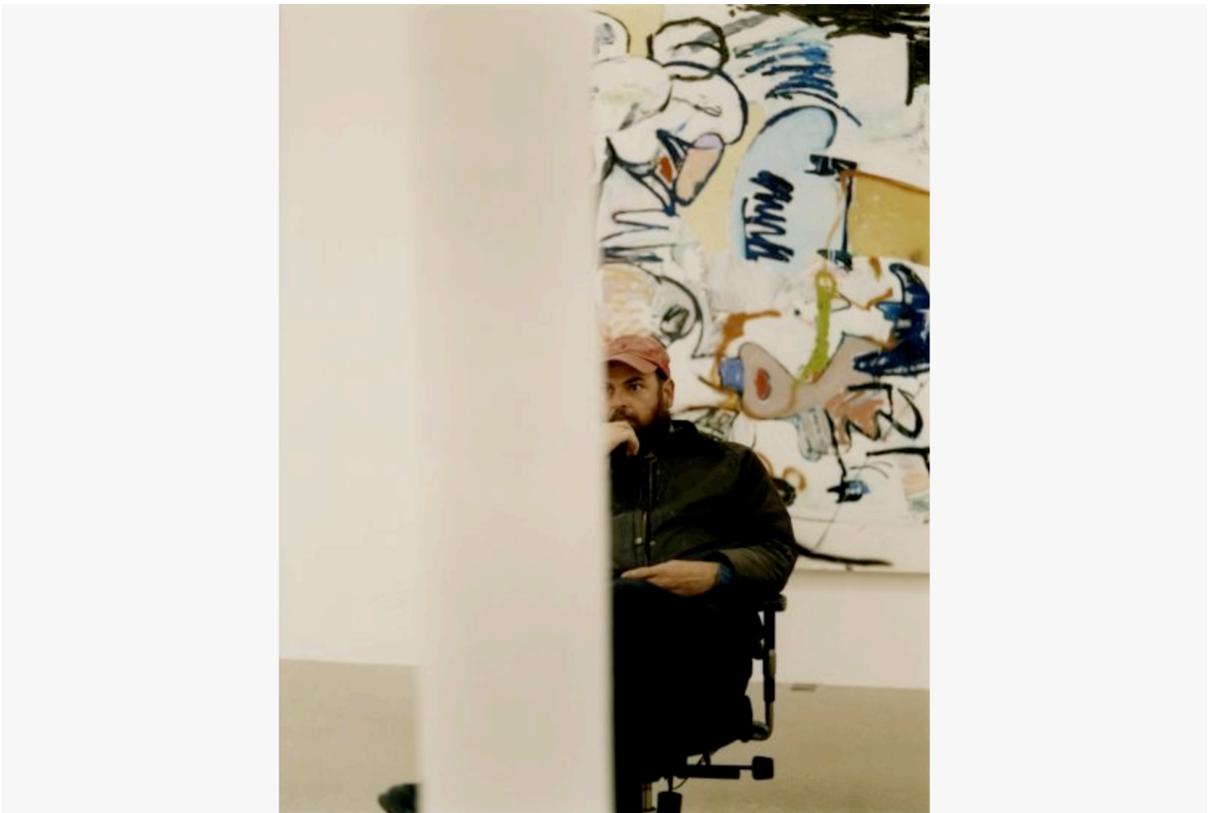


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AN INTERVIEW WITH ARTIST EDDIE MARTINEZ ON HIS LATEST SHOW 'COWBOY TOWN' AT TIMOTHY TAYLOR, LONDON

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“I’m gonna grab my roller chair,” says EDDIE MARTINEZ. Which he does. We’re in *Timothy Taylor* in London looking at his new paintings. The very kind PR who has offered to get me a coffee has returned with it, but there’s nowhere to put it near us, with me standing and holding a phone as a mic, and Eddie sitting in his office roller chair, so the coffee sits slowly cooling on the side of the conversation like a gooseberry while we talk. I drink it on the way out and it’s still a nice temperature. If you get bored at any point reading this, think about the coffee.

Eddie is the kind of guy who gets himself a roller chair without asking if I’d like one too, but he also invites me to touch the paintings and explains them, and

it's all nice. He's also apologetic about his self-professed inarticulacy and I should have told him that he didn't need to be.

He rolls up to one of his works and this is where we start talking...

JETHRO TURNER – *This one is called Blue Stump – what kind of relationship do the titles have to the paintings?*

EDDIE MARTINEZ – Sometimes they're super direct. I think *Blue Stump* is pretty direct here. It like a tree stump, just like a stump. Also to be stumped. A stumping.

JETHRO TURNER – *Does painting unblock stumps when you get stumped?*

EDDIE MARTINEZ – I guess it would be unblocking stumps that it caused. Does painting unstump the stumps that are stumped from painting? Yeah.

JETHRO TURNER – *So it's process as well.*

EDDIE MARTINEZ – Yeah.

JETHRO TURNER – *Do you start by putting brush to canvas and working from there.*

EDDIE MARTINEZ – Yeah. These days. I mean a couple of years ago I started silk screening my small drawings onto large scale because I wanted to be able to capture the speed and immediacy and energy of a sharpie drawing. Half of these paintings in the show come from being small drawings that are silkscreened onto canvas and then they come to my studio and I stretch them and then I go from there. There's no rule. If the image works out the way it is then I keep going.

JETHRO TURNER – *Did you draw a lot with sharpies as a kid?*

EDDIE MARTINEZ – Yes.

JETHRO TURNER – *When you're using words and letters in the pieces, there's something very graffiti-inspired in that, and the way the lines move. What makes the words stick in your mind and want to play with them?*

EDDIE MARTINEZ – Generally that would just come off a drawing. Sometimes, when I'm drawing, a title will come to me and then I'll silkscreen that. But the EM is just my initials and it just felt like it made sense in the *Mandala* image. It could have been repeated but I like just having it once. I'm pretty conservative with text. I don't like having text for text's sake. It's got to come super naturally. I don't think about it.

JETHRO TURNER – *How do the paintings in this show sit together?*

EDDIE MARTINEZ – There's an energy behind it. Not a theme. If you wanted to be super literal you could look at the title 'Cowboy Town' which is kind of

talking about unrest and uneasiness. I think maybe the blocked out backgrounds are kind of a response to... I don't know how to articulate it, but it's just how it feels to me. I make several paintings. I don't pick a painting from start to finish for a show. I'm just working all the time and then at the last minute I edit it down.

JETHRO TURNER – *What are the blocked out backgrounds responding to?*

EDDIE MARTINEZ – I think that it gives them a graphic element. Which would make sense with this work because I'm not a super political person, but it just makes sense to me for these to be stark, and kind of what you see is what you get to an extent.

JETHRO TURNER – *When you say unrest, what are you referring to?*

EDDIE MARTINEZ – The United States of America.

JETHRO TURNER – *Your personal experience of the country or something more general?*

EDDIE MARTINEZ – Everyone's fucking shitting themselves. Everyone's upset. Especially in New York. I wouldn't want to dig, but I feel that visually these are a response to what's going on in a sense.

JETHRO TURNER – *There are a lot of quite muscular masculine imagery in there as well?*

EDDIE MARTINEZ – Yeah that's just how I draw them.

JETHRO TURNER – *It seems like it's sort of parodying forms of muscular masochism?*

EDDIE MARTINEZ – That's not intended but it could certainly be read.

JETHRO TURNER – *With Beach Young there's a sort of sea blue in the background and then this detritus of different forms.*

EDDIE MARTINEZ – That just relates to my wife and I spending time on Long Island in the summer. There's a certain youngness you feel when you're living at the beach. Things become a lot more pure and easy. You just get up you go to the beach, you buy some local vegetables and you cook them. It takes away some of the edge of the city. I always feel rejuvenated after being there. It just gives a freshness to things.

JETHRO TURNER – *Is there a sense of escape in that painting from what's going on politically?*

EDDIE MARTINEZ – Yeah this'll be the first summer under the Fourth Reich or whatever. It's up for you to interpret whether that's in the painting. It does what it does for me and what it does for other people, I have no interest in controlling that.

JETHRO TURNER – *What does it do for you?*

EDDIE MARTINEZ – When I make a painting that I feel really connected to, I just feel momentarily comfortable and settled. I feel like what I'm doing there is something I can't really do verbally. So it makes me feel accomplished I guess. With my painting I'm not trying to force anything down anyone's throat. What I do is put everything I possibly have into the paintings. So that's my form of giving to the situation. I think I put a lot in there for people to grab onto or make up their own narratives and take it from there. But I'm not gonna try and tell anyone anything.

JETHRO TURNER – *So there's a lot of emotional energy?*

EDDIE MARTINEZ – It's definitely biographical. I don't really know how to filter things otherwise.

JETHRO TURNER – *Cowboy Town seems like the focus as you walk in.*

EDDIE MARTINEZ – I feel like that's what it feels like right now. I mean today it's Brexit here. It just feels like a bunch of dicks controlling things. Literally. It's a very white male world right now. It just feels Wild West. I mean from day one with TRUMP it just feels like he doesn't follow any rules. Things are really up in dust. No one knows how it's gonna settle. It's been so anxiety provoking every day. In the beginning with all the executive orders, every day you'd wake up to news that was just shocking.

JETHRO TURNER – *What do you feel you need to show people with your work?*

EDDIE MARTINEZ – I think I need to just do what I've always done which is just put everything into it and not edit anything because I think it should be edited. I'm still interested in making appealing pictures. I just feel a certain amount of resistance in me which is making me more comfortable with these graphic paintings. It's the first time that I've put out a painting right on the bare canvas (Blue Stump) – I did that in like an hour and I think it's one of the best paintings I've done. Elsewhere there's this heavy impasto, but that's very matter of fact, just smacking things down.

JETHRO TURNER – *For the collage, did you pull that off another canvas?*

EDDIE MARTINEZ – Yeah. Really my guy who was stretching the canvas for me cut it too short. And I was not stoked. And then I just said 'fuck', and pasted it on in haste and it worked out. But I didn't draw and silkscreen it with the intention of cutting it up. It was just a reaction to what happened. Kind of like what everything is right now. 'This happened and what am I gonna do with it?' Another thing I've been doing for the last year or so is going around drips and stuff and giving them their own space. I think there's a lot to be said there.

JETHRO TURNER – *It's about putting a bit of attention on the little accidents?*

EDDIE MARTINEZ – Yeah. I either get something immediately or I don't. So if I see it, then it allows me the time to find those things.

JETHRO TURNER – *The impasto is really nice.*

EDDIE MARTINEZ – I think there's a lot you can say with texture. What it takes to make those textures is really physical.

JETHRO TURNER – *Do you get tired painting? Do you paint better at certain times of the day?*

EDDIE MARTINEZ – Yeah. The timing part of it is out of my control. It used to be that I was like a slave to it. Like I felt that I had to be at the studio at all times because I never knew when anything was gonna happen. But that was also trapping myself in there because I was hiding from everything else. Now that I'm not hiding from everything else I'm able to achieve things much quicker. I feel like if I have an inspirational moment I'm able to see what it is and I can carry it with me. If I'm out of the studio and I'm like 'I know what I'm gonna do with that painting', I'm able to bring it in and do it. Instead of feeling like 'I'm not in the studio fuck you'. I would get really anxious and resentful of people who were getting in my way of being in the studio but I feel much more at ease now.

Interview Jethro Turner and photos Daisy Walker