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540 WEST 29TH STREET NEW YORK NEW YORK 10001
TEL 212.560.0670 FAX 212.560.0671 MARTOSGALLERY.COM

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BAD FOG: EIGHT ARTISTS IN EDDIE MARTINEZ'S CIRCLE

By RYAN STEADMAN



Eddie Martinez is a chameleon-like artist. His paintings, drawings, prints and sculptures assume the characteristics of artists like DeKooning, Disney, Guston, Basquiat, and Picasso (just to name a few of the heavies). But in “Bad Fog,” an eight-artist show curated by Martinez at [Martos Gallery](#), he reveals some of the outstanding artists within his intimate circle that influence him (and who he, in turn, influences). For the uninitiated, this give and take between artists can be like a contagion that is passed back and forth amongst friends, rivals, and these days, Internet admirers. This idea of a “scene” is often referenced, but rarely are the connectors laid as bare as in this exhibition.



Upon entry, Liz Kraft's ceramic snakes greet you with a tensile energy that mirrors the roiling shapes and lines of Martinez's own hand. Just beyond these, a suite of perfectly calibrated compositions in black, vermillion, and periwinkle by Jesse Littlefield cut even closer to the curator's own jumbled aesthetic. Two large “lighter drawings” on acrylic by Antoniadis and Stone tend to strike a singular note yet share the gestural spirit belonging to this group.



Jennie Jieun Lee, one of the real finds in this show, offers up a group of gleaming and brilliantly hued stoneware masks that bloom into pleasing abstract territories (imagine Picasso dishware blasted through the psychedelic lens of Nolan Hendrickson). They are a brilliant foil to Martinez's own face paintings, both of which explore the artist's gaze through process and subject. A grid of gems by Ross Simonini also surprise with their gestural dance on the line separating abstraction from figuration. All of his loosely hung square works are, upon closer inspection, napkins containing a virtual eruption of food, drink, spices, paint, and ink marks.





Added to this mix is the usual underrated lyricism of Dan McCarthy (in this case, a small, shimmering balloon-face image on paper and a dreamy yet archaic looking ceramic face pot), the color-blast signage of Bill Adams, and the knotted and deeply-felt symbology of painter David Armacost.

Aside from being a visual feast, Martinez's exhibition stands as a harbinger that today's working artists are as inquisitive and exploratory as ever, regardless of art's critical state or currently bloated market.