

CULTURE



Tom (2022). Art by Anthony Le.

Disruptively Weird: Anthony Le's "Golden Looking Hour" Exhibit

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Artist Anthony Le talks accessing identity in art for his new exhibit at Transformer, "Golden Looking Hour."

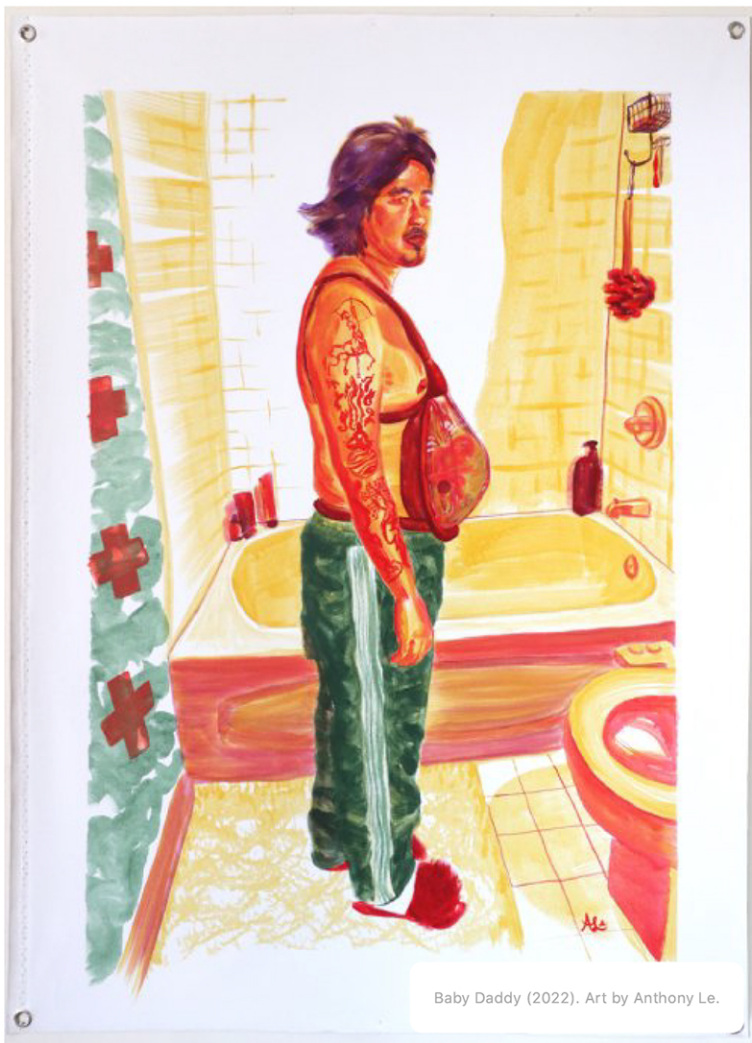
Anthony Le's "Golden Looking Hour" installation at [Transformer](#) is like one of those kitschy lenticular 3D postcards, where the girl winks or the lucky cat waves its paw: You see something different depending on the angle, and it's a mesmerizing phenomenon. That one is lying down, blissfully asleep. No, now he's peering over you, in a power stance.

The baker's dozen of life-sized portraits, casually presented on unframed scrolls against a *trompe-l'œil* backdrop of linocut printed, butcher paper bricks, invite you into their spaces with insouciance. The subjects — a bald, scruffy faced man in Crocs, overalls and sassy glasses holding an equally sassy looking black cat, an androgynous figure whose is face in profile but middle finger fully forward — beckon you to come closer, as if peering out from curtainless windows, while still warning not to jump to conclusions or take them too lightly.

"The engagement is on their own terms," Le says. "You can't fully know what's happening in their world, but if you're receptive to what they want to say, you will find the interaction more enjoyable."

"Golden Looking Hour," the artist's first solo exhibition in D.C., is in part a celebration of "the camaraderie in the art community coming out of the pandemic," Le says. "Society benefits from these artists' energy. They are my heroes and wanted to pass that on."

The artist reached out to fellow creatives and asked for reference photos, the result being a creative mashup of how the portrait subjects wanted to be seen, and Le's own's artistic and personal lens on their likenesses.



Baby Daddy (2022). Art by Anthony Le.

“Joy also comes from some trauma, which has evolved my thinking on permission and consent,” says the self-taught artist. “I make sure my subjects are down for some skewing of their images,”

Le plays with gender, race and identity in his work by the same broad strokes he plays with light and color. The characters in the installation, part of Le’s “golden hour” series, are bathed in painterly sunlight, and yet their skin and eye tones are surreal swirls of reds and greens, features hinting to their ethnic identities but refusing to make them check a box, despite the rectangle they peer out of. At random intervals, cheeky Americana and Asian motifs disrupt the faux linocut brick pattern behind them with phrases like “soft

art boy” that make clear Le is deliberate with his subject matter without taking himself too seriously.

“Art is a way to access identity for me,” says Le, who was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee of Vietnamese heritage. “My perspective on Asian culture is still my own — growing up in the U.S. — but I can still celebrate those cultural elements with a sense of openness and empathy.”

Admiring a personal favorite, which depicts an Asian American friend gazing at his own mirrored reflection in drag, Le says, “It’s the kind of disruptive weirdness I want to see in the world. I want to let people be their own kind of weird.”

Like the golden hour, Le’s exhibit is ephemeral: catch it while you can until April 15. The exhibit is open Wednesday – Saturday from 12-6 p.m. Join the artist and his real-life subjects for teatime in the space on April 1.

Learn more about Le at his website anthonyle.co and follow him on Instagram [@anthonyleart](https://www.instagram.com/anthonyleart).

Transformer: 1404 P St. NW, DC; transformer.org // [@transformerdc](https://www.instagram.com/transformerdc)

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