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Drugs, Porn, and Cartoons: Jesse Edwards' Modern Still-Lifes

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Bong and Twinkies, 2005, Oil on Canvas, 20 x 25 inches

Drug paraphernalia, porn stars, and renowned cartoon characters line the walls of the 6817 gallery in Los Angeles for artist Jesse Edwards' new show, Lets Watch TV All Day. Jam-packed with social commentary, Edwards' new exhibition upholds his unforgiving, explicit, and often controversial reputation through a series of recent paintings and ceramics.

Edwards appropriates images of animated characters from Disney, Looney Toons, and Super Mario onto glazed stoneware ceramic televisions. He frames the paintings on old models that remind viewers of the days when TV really started to become omnipresent in our everyday lives. Working around subject matter that is universally recognizable to the American public, Edwards reflects on our screen-obsessed culture and "contemporary society's obsession with visual stimulation."

In addition to his ceramic televisions, he has developed a series of ceramic smartphones with painted images of 'selfies' and pornographic images. His other works are a playful, almost satirical take on impressionist still life painting. By representing scenes of everyday life in the 21st century, representing objects like soda cans, bongs, junk food, and porno within a traditional still life format, Edwards effectively "historicizes American counterculture." In his figurative works lies a juxtaposition between style and subject matter, showing a side of American culture that we don't necessarily want to see. But if digital media didn't exist right now and the only way we could document contemporary life was through oil paintings, this might be what they'd look like.