

ANTHONY CUDAHY

Coco Romack, An Artist Who Aims to Be as Eclectic as a Tumblr Feed, The New York Times, 12 March 2024



Anthony Cudahy, Eroded Beach, 2023. Photo by JSP Art Photography.

When the artist Anthony Cudahy, 34, was growing up in Fort Myers, Fla., he received plenty of encouragement from his mother, a painter herself. But he still yearned for creative peers, whom he found on the blogging site LiveJournal, on which he'd spend hours messaging with other artists. Even as his world expanded offline — he moved to Brooklyn in 2007 to study graphic design and illustration at Pratt Institute and later earned an M.F.A. in painting from Hunter College — the internet continued to inform his practice. “When I first started painting, I was thinking about the role of a painter as this collector of images, almost like you’re a Tumblr,” he says.

That idea still defines the paintings he makes today, which appropriate images of all kinds — everything from Titian masterpieces to archival news footage of gay and lesbian people — to which Cudahy adds his own backgrounds or, at times, renderings of his friends and lovers. His 2023 work “Arthur Russell on the Shore,” which was exhibited at Grimm gallery in London last fall, was inspired by a vacation snapshot of the pioneering experimental composer. Russell, who died of AIDS-related complications in 1992, is depicted playing his cello above a current of electric pink paint that flows along the base of the canvas, representing “this continuum that [Russell] tapped into,” says Cudahy.

The painter, who shares a studio in Brooklyn’s Kensington neighborhood with his husband, the photographer Ian Lewandowski, strives to complete the majority of each work in one sitting, using a wet on wet process that results in a lush, loose aesthetic full of rich jewel tones. Lewandowski, 33, is a frequent subject — portrayed in one work reclining in a field and in another standing nude in a bathroom. The couple are also collaborators. “Lineage” (2023), which depicts Cudahy’s cousin as a toddler in his mother’s lap, is from a series based on snapshots taken by his great-uncle, a traveling musician who died in 2002 and whose archive Lewandowski created. Cudahy sees the series, part of which will be included in his first U.S. museum survey, opening next month at the Ogunquit Museum of American Art in Maine, as something of a memorial to his great-uncle, in the same vein as his tribute to Russell. “It feels like a way to think about his legacy,” Cudahy says, “to keep it this fluid, alive thing.