

ARTILLERY

GALLERY ROUNDS: DIANE ROSENSTEIN GALLERY

JESSE EDWARDS, MATTHEW SWEESY

by Leanna Robinson
April 10, 2018

Matthew Sweesy's "Nocturnes" and Jesse Edwards' "Hot Town," currently at Diane Rosenstein Gallery, are exercises in nostalgia. The two artists, while working in different mediums and styles, have a strikingly optimistic quality. Whether it's the pop culture references in Edwards' paintings, or the childlike explorations in Sweesy's, the exhibitions have a *je ne sais quoi* that may remind viewers of simpler times.

Sweesy's bright, graphic drawings are the variety that would have art-naysayers complaining, "My kid could do that," which in part seems to be his intention. The compositions are of typical refrigerator fodder—trees, a half-sun, horizons. Upon closer inspection, however, the works unfold into pseudo-psychedelic landscapes that blend eroticism with innocence.



Edwards' still life paintings, which, though steeped in representational techniques, maintain a deeply subjective point of view, transforming basic items—a baseball glove, flags, melons—into statements on current affairs and the human condition. For instance, a painting depicting the flags of Mexico, the U.S., Israel, and Palestine in the same room could lead one to infer a political message, though what exactly the message entails is uncertain. The installation of Edwards' work throughout the exhibition adds a counterpoint, and is particularly exciting with the groupings of paintings alongside sculptures of vintage television sets.

Most emblematic of Edward's ability to blend representational techniques with contemporary subjects are *Card House Galactica* (2018) and *Untitled (Card House #2)* (2016). Each work shows a house of cards, comprised of novelty female nude playing cards—the kind you would find in a gas station bathroom for 25 cents a pack. Edwards' stacks of tawdry cards could be seen as a metaphor for his work. With his painterly techniques and unique eye for content, he can bring any subject matter from the gutter or basic American household and turn it into something grand and impressive.