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## Colin Chillag's Anti-Realist Paintings Reveal the Hand of the Artist

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A DAY AGO

For decades there has been a tug of war within painting, between those claiming that it should represent the world and those declaring that it shouldn't. Instead of choosing sides, contemporary painter [Colin Chillag](#) takes the middle road, making works that collapse abstraction and representation and get to the heart of how artists translate what they see into color on canvas.

Chillag's second solo exhibition at Los Angeles's [101/Exhibit](#) is called "[Anti-realism](#)." The choice of title is not because the artist resists the tradition of [photorealistic painting](#) (indeed, it is among the influences that inform his work), and not because he isn't capable of executing his subject matter—portraits of friends and family, domestic and urban scenes—in that style. Rather, it is because he sees no point in producing paintings with perfect fidelity to the way things look. He prefers to leave that task to the camera and concentrate instead on the process of painting itself. This results in the hybrid, some might say paradoxical, compositions on view in the exhibition, in which highly finished, photorealistic sections bump up against



Colin Chillag

*Man with Blue Hat*, 2011-2014

101/exhibit

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## 101 / EXHIBIT

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intentionally rough, unfinished patches—which ultimately coalesce into a more complete vision of painting than a finished work could provide.

Chillag begins with the tool that, in his mind, trumps photorealistic painting every time: the camera. With it, he takes casual snapshots of, for example, friends gathered around a swimming pool; his wife taking a “selfie,” her face blocked by her extended smartphone; gas stations and convenience marts, seen in the shifting light of various times of day; and the faces of his grandparents. Back in the studio, he lays out his oils and gets to work. He does color tests, mixes hues to perfectly match skin tones, sketches the images from his snapshots onto the canvas, and writes notes to himself—all on the surfaces of the paintings themselves. Through such interruptions, he stops illusionism short. The parts of his subjects that he does complete are rendered in exacting detail. But they dissipate at the edges, often surrounded by a halo of empty canvas; or they are marred, here and there, by thick globs of paint, smudged brushstrokes, casually spray-painted lines, or scribbled lists of the mundane tasks and reminders that compose so much of our days. It’s as if Chillag aims to pull us back from losing ourselves in the artfulness of the artist’s hand—by making that very hand all too apparent.

—[Karen Kedmey](#)

*“Colin Chillag: Anti-Realism” is on view at 101/Exhibit, Los Angeles, Feb. 28–Apr. 18, 2015.*

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Colin Chillag  
*Being Towards Others (Poolside Therese)*, 2013-2014  
101/exhibit

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Colin Chillag  
*Circle K Dusk*, 2014  
101/exhibit

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Colin Chillag  
*Portrait of Jenna Taking a Self Portrait*, 2014

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Colin Chillag  
*Man with Red Moustache*, 2013-2015  
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COLIN CHILLAG

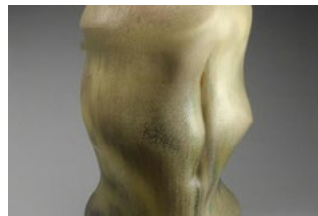
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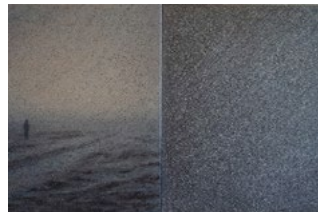
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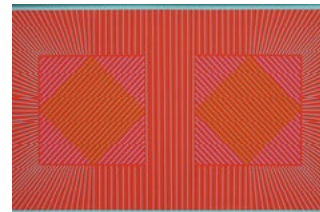
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