

## **William Gary**

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*William Gary is a New York City based painter. He received his BFA from Bard College in 2022 and is currently an MFA Fine Arts candidate at the School of Visual Arts.*

My work confronts the absurdity, anxiety, escapism, and humor of our contemporary life through childlike forms and familiar cartoon characters. My universe of characters, drawn from both popular culture and from my own imagination, are rendered in vibrant, frenetic, and tactile experimental paint-handling techniques that defy conventional compositional structures.

My process for paintings has distinct stages: I begin with large brushes, mops, brooms and other applicators filled with loose acrylic paint and drawing materials to map out the work, move to many thick layers of oil paint, and finally, fervid details – drawing, glopping, carving and etching into the paint – both exploring the paint's material possibilities and establishing a visceral emotional quality through texture.

SpongeBob, a paramount cultural icon for Gen Z, is one of my key figures alongside Popeye and the characters of Charlie Brown – their commonality is the archetype of the innocent, well-intentioned individual, resilient against harsh realities and adversity. These characters represent my peers' blind optimism and detachment amidst crises of our time.

Due to the volume of horrific news and images with which we are constantly bombarded, I'm interested in creating work that may be the one of the only things someone sees on a given day that isn't soul crushing. This idea has become central to my work – emotionally complex, connecting to the material sophistication of modernist painting, while remaining aware of the present moment. Contemporary art can be meaningful, relevant, and funny all at once – a sentiment often lost in the philosophies of today's fine art.

Ultimately, my career goal is to welcome and uplift people through art, connecting viewers with their inner child. I hope to inspire warmth, excitement, humor, and introspection within a frigid art world with universal motifs, while thinking through complex notions of what these symbols mean to us today.