

NIGHT GALLERY

2276 E. 16th Street, Los Angeles, California 90021

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Noah Johnson, "Enter Painter Robert Nava's Wild World," **GQ**, January, 2017



PHOTOGRAPHS BY MATTEO MOBILIO

Enter Painter Robert Nava's Wild World of Monsters, Myths and Loud Techno

In the fourth and final installment of "Fresh Paint," meet rising star Robert Nava.

BY NOAH JOHNSON

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATTEO MOBILIO

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Robert Nava's paintings of primordial monsters and myths balance ceremonial seriousness with childlike play. Originally from East

Chicago, Indiana, he received an M.F.A. from Yale University before moving to Brooklyn, where we caught up with him while at work in his studio. Follow Nava on Instagram [here](#), and check out the full series of "Fresh Paint" interviews with young and emerging artists [right here](#).

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GQ Style: How did you arrive at your painting style? What factors influenced your development most?

Robert Nava: Drawing every morning, trying to keep up with my imagination. Looking at a lot of ancient art, mainly Sumerian, Egyptian, Mayan. The mandala. Cave painting. The older artworks have a big impact, and I'm able to see the amount of work put into them, and they feel like they are timeless to a degree. But also they contain so much mystery. There's another level of mindfulness to "care" in them.

What is your latest body of work all about?

Making new myths. Trying to make monsters, angels, ghosts, putting an energy into them.

What's something you'd like to do as an artist but haven't yet?

Make large sculpture with metal.

What do you do when you need a break from making art?

Hang with my cat, Jumanji. Go to rooftops. The beach. Find some live music to enjoy.

What do you wear when you paint?

Usually shorts and headphones. The less the better.



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If you're at a party and a new acquaintance asks what your work is like, what do you say?

I try to show a web page or Instagram.

Who was the first artist that really blew your mind? And who was the most recent?

Van Gogh and Huma Bhabha. Van Gogh: The soul and application of paint. The fearlessness. The paint is very alive—those paintings have an honesty that cannot be denied. Huma Bhabha: An engagement with the realness in materials with immense weight and impact—her works are very “in your face,” with a raw energy.

Beyond the basic tools, what things do you need in order to paint?

Loud music. There are so many artists and moods, but lately: electronic music, often techno, house, disco. Anything that takes you on a journey for hours on end.

What's the best advice you've ever received from another artist?

“There are no mistakes,” from my first-grade art teacher, Mrs. Shaver.



Double Heart-Bean, Courtesy Sorry We're Closed, Brussels/Photo Stan Narten

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Red Tooth, 2017. Courtesy Sorry We're Closed, Brussels/Photo Stan Narten

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