

Paid Column is a monthly column on exhibition openings at Paid, Seattle

focus at Paid

We were probably never meant to see so many images in our lifetime. Not to sound so aged, but I imagine it is difficult for anyone, not only a digital-born generation, to digest media at a pace other than the usual constant onslaught. My phone shows me things I did not ask to see and I can feel my attention waning on days I don't read. At this point, images are less enjoyed than merely endured. The off chance that something sparks genuine stirrings and breaks through the endless visual routine, it becomes more like an event.

The opening for World Felix was unlike many of the gallery openings that occur in Seattle. This occasion was noticeably filled with newcomers, all drawn to the first irl exhibition of works by focus. Little, if anything, is known about focus. The name, synonymous with Twitter user @qs75834, has amassed a large following through intermittent cryptic image "drops." Each post contains uniquely composed referential drawings (sans textual information) in the form of comics, collaged posters, studies, and oil-like digital paintings. Rover, a well-traveled cat from the game Animal Crossing, frequently stars in the many scenes along with a recurring cast of bi-pedal friends. In each work are remnants of deeply seeded registers within culture. Iykyk. And if you don't know, there is always some hypnotic detail, to latch onto.

With a broad range of scenes, it is easy to get lost in the delirium of the inkjet reproductions, but some morose fiction prevails under the cute veneer of each image. An unlicensed four door Ford leaves a mess of crudely collaged arms, prostrating mascots, and digital artifacts behind in *carcrash* (2021). *web* (2021) takes place at sunset or sunrise, framing a single branch growing from dark waters with spider webs making the shape of a bull with wispy hair and septum nose ring, kneeling with palms stacked. For *bathroom2* (2021), a solitary animal appears slouched forward, as if to grab something that rolled away under its desktop computer, in a room composed of bestrewn possessions. All the elements in these selections point to a joke you will never understand, or a feeling that can't easily be articulated. To be on the outside of focus's insider world is to revel in it—know too much, and you run the risk of allowing the arcane illusion to quickly fade away.

For work that has only been solely released online, the in-person presentation at Paid does not feel so out of place. Paid is first and foremost a garage. Even with recognizable fluorescent lights and (some) white painted walls, the many quarks of a mid-century carport accompany the unpretentious selections in World Felix. The light wood basement door suits the framing of an untitled paper cutout doily and an awkwardly designed window housing one of the few

sculptures seamlessly fits.

On most days, you don't see much excitement at or for an art show. Colleagues of mine have written them off altogether, describing the particular scene in Seattle as "sad." That sense of gloom and doubt evaporated when I saw smiles from strangers who traveled from around the Pacific NorthWest to meet each other for the first time, seeking out their shared interest in focus's art. Their bemused maneuvering around the modest space is perhaps the result of seeing work that is anything but self-serious. While focus politely declined attendance, it should be noted the general energy emanated during the show was aptly spirited.