

## Critic's picks - Philip Mueller by Myrna Ayad

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It feels as if you have walked into a dream. The colors in Philip Mueller's new paintings are muted the way they are in a reverie, save for some luminous creatures and plants that glow effervescently. His fantastical imagination comes through at once. But it is the compositions themselves that make this otherworld feel so unreal. Lord Byron's portrait on a surfboard greets viewers at the entrance for *Byron BFSB* (all works 2015). In other works on view, men lounge in the Alpine woods, ride horses, and hunt. Ghosts, dead swans, crosses, and skulls are just some of the symbolic paraphernalia that feature alongside the outlaws. Something about these hedonist-looking fellas seem like they're mocking society. In Mueller's *Bonbonnière Bar BFSB*, a Batman-masked subject grins cheekily, and in *Café Landtmann BFSB* you are made to feel like an intruder.

In the corner of the gallery hangs a solitary black leather jacket with the words **BLACK FLAMINGO SAD BOY**, indeed *BFSB*, on its back in white paint. You come to understand that Mueller has created a fictitious, clandestine gang of debauchees called the Black Flamingos and this jacket seemingly legitimizes their epicurean status. Every gang's got to have one. These outcasts function purely on the pleasure principle and fend for themselves, decked in masks, in the woods. A walk around the gallery confirms that this solo show is a Freudian model of the id rendered artistically. It's got escapism all over it.