

Julien Ceccaldi

JENNY'S

4220 Sunset Boulevard

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The titular characters of Julien Ceccaldi's exhibition "King and Slave" touch, glance, mutate, and recoil across seven paintings and drawings that use the grammar of manga to hyperbolically depict desire and disgust, confidence and shame—often all at once.

See, for example *Bed*, (all works 2016) one of five drawings that employ animation materials, layering acrylic on acetate and pencil on tracing paper over vinyl on board. In the foreground, a thick-necked hunk kisses the bony cheek of his wizened companion, whose cocked smile and sideward glance signals pleasure. But the background, which functions like a separate panel in a comic book, features the same figures in a different pose. Sunk into an expanse of sheets, they turn away from each other, with the skeletal figure in the fetal position and the powerful man hiding his head below a pillow. Anxiety and affection overlap.



Angst also suffuses a room-dominating acrylic wall mural, *Subway Cumrag*, which depicts a train car with the same scrawny figure from *Bed*, naked and sitting alone on the far right while on the left, three smartly dressed and improbably toned riders withdraw in apparent disgust. Though the line work, proportions, and eyes still recall anime, the theatrical, shallow sense of space and flatly painted cobalt windows puncturing the otherwise muted palette evoke iconic frescoes such as Giotto's *Arena (Scrovegni) Chapel*, 1305, or—with the dramatically posed figures on the left covering their faces and turning away, as if ready to jump out of the picture—Masaccio's *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden*, 1425. Summoning these primal scenes might seem overloaded, but then again, raw emotion can use some muscle in the age of Grindr.

— David Muenzer