

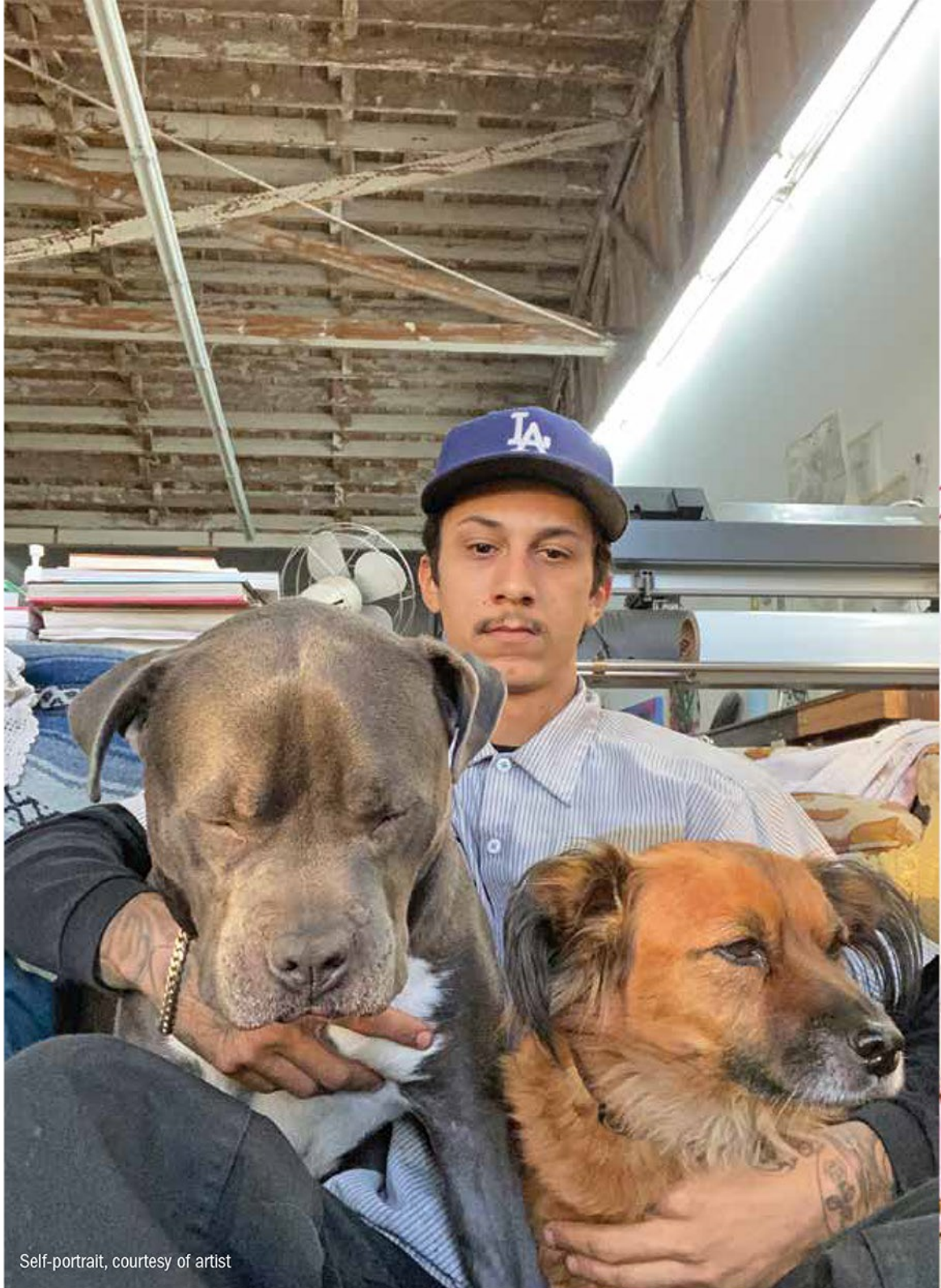
MARIO AYALA

@LOSTBROS

“Back when my family and I lived in LA, my dad would come home late from work with these pen drawings on the back of his delivery receipts, or on loose sketch-pad paper. He’d give them to me once he walked through the door. I think it was the first time I can remember realizing what a drawing was.”

MARIO AYALA USES AIRBRUSH to execute his surrealistic paintings in a mode that invokes the culture of the artist’s native Los Angeles, exploding the iconography and stylistic tendencies outwards into a world uniquely his own. The airbrush signifies something “between being seductive and utilitarian,” the artist explains, noting that it reminds him of the cars and swap meets that occupy his memories of when he was much younger.

His choices of imagery feel both randomized and highly curated, as figures and forms meld into one another amid narrative strategies that offer dexterity and humor, but never lack for sincerity. “I think humor has always been an effective way of communicating and that has always interested me,” he says. His lexicon points to a fluency between worlds, as references to Southern Californian Chicano culture—esthetic elements that recall lowriders, handmade grieving items and storefront signage, for example—seamlessly blend into and butt up against pop culture iconography, creating a fruitful space of tension.



Self-portrait, courtesy of artist

“It’s important for me to have access points in the work to allow a range of people to feel engaged. I’m interested in creating a dialogue and sometimes using familiar imagery can allow that to happen.”

Growing up, Ayala’s first encounters with art came from his father. “Back when my family and I lived in LA, my dad would come home late from work with these pen drawings on the back of his delivery receipts, or on loose sketch-pad paper,” says the artist. “He’d give them to me once he

walked through the door. I think it was the first time I can remember realizing what a drawing was.” This notion that image-making could encapsulate anything, that it is an opportunity not relegated to anyone and an outlet to let the whole world in, proved a catalyst for the supremely complex canvases Ayala makes today. In the near future, Ayala’s work will be featured in the Hammer Museum’s “Made in LA” biennial, a two-person exhibition at Ever Gold Projects and a group show with Jeffrey Deitch slated to open in February.