

Josh Agle

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Eight Sades of Drunk

Josh Agle, aka Shag, is a rising star in the art world who creates paintings at his dining room table. He uses only half of the table, as the other half is used for eating. While Agle is painting, the table might have a cut-up apple or his 3-year-old daughter Zoey's lunch on it.

While Shag (his nickname is a contraction of the last letters of his first name and the first letters of his last name) is working, his blond daughter might be running around or playing with toys. The TV might be on. If it is, there are often cartoons on, and some of them, particularly the *Jetsons*, bear a striking resemblance to Shag's paintings. Shag likes having his family and noise around while he works. If his daughter and wife, Glen, are gone, he has the company of his frisky rat terrier, Baxter.



The Silver Years

Shag creates brightly colored acrylic paintings that are inspired by slick ads and cartoons from the '50s and early '60s. His works are carefully drawn and are fun to look at. Filled with sophisticated people who are dining, drinking, flirting, gesturing with cigarette-holding hands, dancing the cha-cha, playing instruments, wearing Dior-style hats, sunglasses, beehive hairdos, pointy bras, string ties, bow ties, Dali-esque mustaches, and walking sophisticated little dogs they could be characters or caricatures out of *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. "Shag's paintings have names such as *The Sky Lounge*, *Three Eligible Bachelors*, *Bourbon Street Funeral* and *The Elegant Thief*.

Shag says '50s culture is a large part of the inspiration for his paintings. "Girlie magazines from the '50s, old *Playboys*, children's books and old beer and cigarette ads all had a lot of great spot illustrations done in the sort of style that appeals to me—a futurist, cubistic, minimalist look. Schlitz and Blatz beer used a lot of that sort of art for their in-store promotional products."



Two Hours Past Bedtime

With his cropped hair, black-rimmed glasses and brightly colored shirt, Shag looks like a person from that period. So does his home, which is filled with authentic furnishings from the '50s that are also inspirations for his paintings. His home has hardwood floors, flatly-woven rugs, Danish Modern sofas, chairs and tables, as well as lamps, dressers and chests that were purchased at flea markets and the Salvation Army. He also has shelves everywhere that are filled with '50s and '60s tiki-style bar glasses. Shag's home is so authentically mid-20th century that it could be a movie set.

With his success, Shag remains unpretentious, cheerful and slightly amazed at his growing fame. He explains that after receiving a degree in graphic design at Cal State Long Beach, he did illustrations for record covers and magazines. His works eventually appeared in publications such as *Time*, *Entertainment Weekly* and *Forbes* magazine.



Predators and Prey

By 1995, his commercial art had become so popular that he decided to paint original works that people could buy. His paintings have been shown in Australia, Canada, Spain, Germany, Sweden and Japan. Original Shag paintings cost up to \$6,000 each and are being snapped up by movie stars and other rich people. Agle also produces less expensive lithographs, serigraphs and drawings for clothing, lamps, posters and other popular items for the rest of us.

"I never planned to show paintings in a gallery setting," he says. "It just didn't seem appropriate for the work I was making; it was much less serious, abstract, intellectual, or haughty than other contemporary paintings." Yet, Shag's paintings have become a new form of pop art. Someday his paintings might be hanging in the Museum of Modern Art next to Andy Warhol's works.



The Refil

Liz Goldner