

Art Alert! FRIENDLY BRUTES by Andy Siege

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Filmmaker and Author Andy Siege Launches FRIENDLY BRUTES — A Color-Drenched Art Collection to Lighten the Image of Mental Illness

New oil-pastel series uses loud color and open faces to challenge stigma and invite joy into mental health conversations

Andy Siege, the German-Kenyan director of the award-nominated debut *Beti and Amare* and author of eleven novels, releases his first fine art collection, *FRIENDLY BRUTES* now live on Fine Art America: <https://fineartamerica.com/profiles/andy-siege>

The collection is not about darkness. It is about lightening the visual language we use for mental illness.

Made in oil pastel in 2026, *FRIENDLY BRUTES* works in a tight, joyful palette of yellow, green, red, pink and blue, outlined in thick, confident black. Faces pile on top of faces. Mouths are open in a yell, a laugh, a yawn. Eyes are squeezed shut not in pain, but in rest. Forms tip into each other like people on a crowded train.

Siege, who publicly identifies as POC, neurologically diverse, and queer, says the series grew directly from his own experience navigating clinical spaces where mental difference is rendered in grayscale.

"I was tired of the poster in the waiting room. Always a head in hands, always blue and gray," Siege says. "My brain is noisy and colorful. Sometimes it screams, sometimes it giggles, often both at once. I wanted pictures that look like that, so someone seeing them might feel less alone, and less pathologized."

FRIENDLY BRUTES deliberately borrows from Art Brut, the tradition of raw, immediate mark-making outside academic art, but reframes it. Instead of using "brut" to mean broken, Siege uses it to mean honest, and pairs it with "friendly" to remove fear.

The approach mirrors themes in his wider practice. Born Andreas Madjid Siege in Nairobi, Kenya in 1985, he is a director and author known for making work on a human scale. His debut feature *Beti and Amare* (2014), which he directed, wrote, shot, edited and acted in on a €14,000 budget, was nominated for the Golden St. George at the 36th Moscow International Film Festival. His second film, *Barefoot Rasta* (2017), and his books — including the magical-realism novella *Don't Let Me Drown*, the tragicomic *Mohamed In The Stars*, and the climate-fiction novel *Biopunk: Aristotle* released in January 2026 — all center characters living with war trauma, grief, neurodivergence and identity pressure without turning them into cautionary tales.

With *FRIENDLY BRUTES*, Siege brings that same narrative compassion to a single image.

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