

# *MFA Thesis 2020*



NEW YORK  
ACADEMY  
OF ART



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Founded in 1982 by artists, scholars and patrons of the arts, including Andy Warhol, the New York Academy of Art is a graduate school and cultural institution that combines intensive technical training in the fine arts with active critical discourse.

The Academy believes that rigorously trained artists are best able to realize their artistic vision. Academy students are taught traditional methods and techniques and encouraged to use these skills to make vital contemporary art. Through major exhibitions, a lively speaker series and an ambitious curriculum, the Academy serves as a creative and intellectual center for all artists dedicated to highly skilled, conceptually aware figurative and representational art.

## New York Academy of Art 2020 Thesis Exhibition

Eleanor Heartney

“All that is solid melts into air.” Never have these words of Marx and Engels resonated more profoundly. The MFA class of 2020 is emerging into a world that has profoundly changed. In the course of a few months, all the conventions of daily life have been upended. In art, as in life, long held expectations and assumptions no longer seem to apply. What kind of art will be meaningful in a post-Covid world? What kind of art life will be possible?

This year’s graduating class faces extraordinary challenges, but also opportunities. After two years of dedicated work (three years in the case of the three Chubb Postgraduate Fellows) they are leaving school with skills, personal visions and bodies of work that will launch them into this new reality.

This is in keeping with the ruling principle of the New York Academy of Art. The Academy is based on a paradox. It is predicated on the idea that an education steeped in tradition will equip students with the tools to decipher and express contemporary reality.

The results are evident in the work of these 45 grads and three Chubb Fellows. Their works are wildly diverse in style, media and theme. They have internalized their knowledge of traditional genres, techniques and motifs and transformed them into highly personal expressions that illuminate both the world outside and the worlds within. In their hands, realism, representation and figurative art do not simply generate an objective view of the world. Rather, they can be wielded to forge a personal language that reflects the complex nature of contemporary life.

Coronavirus and the attendant lockdown foster introspection. For many of these artists, this new situation simply accentuates directions already underway. It is striking how many of the 2020 graduates create art that explores issues of identity, gender and sexuality. Some focus on the positive and negative aspects of female experience in a still heavily patriarchal society. Maud Madsen celebrates a woman’s world while recalling her childhood search for places of safety and privacy. Juliette Vaissière and Sydney Bowers employ domestic objects, decorative motifs and sexualized fruit as stand-ins for female identity. Meg Rossetti is inspired by the practice of “sexting” to create positive images of female sexuality. Kelly Robert sculpts cubistic figures that affirm female strength. This chimes with the work of Augusto Fanjul, a male artist who pays tribute to the strong women in his life.

Two other male artists examine the tropes of masculinity. Austin Harris' theme is the rigid rituals of male behavior in rural America. Austin Harvey provides a critique of the superhero myth of invincible masculinity. But in today's world the binary division of gender into male and female no longer seems relevant for many artists. Chubb Fellows Chloe Chiasson and Zachary Sitrin both present work that focuses on disjunctions and ruptures that break down any coherent sense of identity. Siobhan O'Connor's fragmented figures and strange juxtapositions produce a similar effect. Meanwhile several of the members of this very international class express the different kind of disruption that comes from the immigrant experience. Luján Pérez Hernández's collage-like image overlays, Luis Angel Rodriguez's touching representations of domestic unease and Tedore Rekhviashvili's tableaux of social disconnect express the immigrant's sense of uncertainty and unfixity. But one could argue that a sense of indeterminacy seems endemic to contemporary life. Chaos and flux dominate the works of many of the artists here. Olúwatósìn Adésànyà-Ọ̀láléyẹ́ presents mutating, surrealist figures that meld into plants and animals. Anna Park's figures dissolve into abstracted shapes. Kristina Strunkova's figures inhabit a shadowy, liquid realm between representation and abstraction.

Even artists who seem firmly attached to the figurative tradition have adapted the art historical language of realism for personal purposes. Anne Herrero, Ivana Štulić and Sarah Vaccariello draw on the chiaroscuro and moody atmospherics of artists like Rembrandt and Caravaggio to create paintings that seem suspended between past and present. David Jalagonia takes a similar approach with art historical references that range from classical Greece to Robert Mapplethorpe. Imaan Dhaliwal, meanwhile, applies a realist approach grounded in the Western tradition to images of rural India. Tovias explores figurative representations in multiple media, allowing his materials to shape his expression. Tom Matt reanimates the still life tradition, as objects become a form of self-portraiture. And Maxwell Forrest Roath draws on modernist art history in his overlays of minimalist and geometric motifs.

Traditionally, the portrait has been seen as a window into the soul. For the artists here it can also be a mask and a mirror. Michelle Alford's distorted faces and Natalie Terenzini's cropped and decentered figures evoke troubled inner realities. Michael Weiss employs a meticulous photorealist style that distances us psychologically from his subjects. Sarah Levy takes the opposite tack, drawing on her journalist background to give attention to ordinarily invisible subjects. Denis Dalesio reminds us that settings themselves can be portraits. And in a move that seems jarringly familiar at this moment, Hannah Lee covers faces with masks.

Another traditional subject reinvented by these artists is the landscape. Brandon Brownlee's imparts strangeness to interior and exterior architecture, while Mariano Cinat paints turbulent Turner-esque dream landscapes. By contrast, Camilla Marie Dahl presents a world of absolute stillness. Ian Lotto's aerial views evoke pre-industrial communities engaged in bee-like activity. Sandra Reese Roberts paints moody dark landscapes filled with blank forbidding buildings. In a very different spirit, Rylie Radtke suggests the solace to be found in nature while Johanna Aenderl Ryan offers a lyrical poem to the coexistence of humanity and the natural world.

Other artists invite us into their private worlds with diaristic narratives. Chubb Fellow Trey Abdella invokes a demonic cartoon childhood patched together from fragmented images and materials. MJ Torrecampo and Young Lim Lee mine similar territory, playfully transforming familiar scenarios with comic inspired characters. David Flick takes inspiration from pop culture, offering images of food and figures that have creepy, horror flick overtones. On a more somber note, Hanna Rose DeMarco presents images of solitude and Rebecca Montes explores dreamlike states of mind. Lydia Baker's linear compositions conjure utopic scenarios with groups of people flying, swimming, meandering and pulling free of the constraints of real life. Rosetta Sciacca harks back in a more literal fashion to childhood memories. And finally, Julia Tighe and Sevil Kaynak use images of dolls and doll houses to create narratives that speak of the pleasures and terrors of childhood.

The rich diversity of the class of 2020 reminds us at this difficult juncture why we turn to art. In a time of national emergency, when everything feels precarious, art remains an important stabilizing force. Each work here distills a unique vision and provides a beacon of hope for a time when we fully engage with the world again.





***2020 Chubb Postgraduate Fellows***

Trey Abdella

Chloe Chiasson

Zachary Sitrin



Trey Abdella  
*Last Call*, 2020  
acrylic, glass, hot glue, fabric, beads, glitter, and thumbtack on canvas  
76 x 68 inches





Chloe Chiasson  
*Falling on Deaf Ears*, 2019  
acrylic, oil, vinyl, inkjet print, charcoal, and tape on canvas  
38 x 48 inches





Zachary Sitrin  
*Camp Song*, 2019  
oil on canvas  
93 x 76 inches

*2020 Master of Fine Arts Graduates*

Olúwatósìn Adésànyà-Ọláléyẹ

Michelle Alford

Lydia Baker

Sydney Bowers

Brandon Brownlee

Mariano Cinat

Camilla Marie Dahl

Denis Dalesio

Hanna Rose DeMarco

Imaan Dhaliwal

Augusto Fanjul

David Flick

Austin Harris

Austin Harvey

Anne Herrero

David Jalagonia

Sevil Kaynak

Hannah Lee

Young Lim Lee

Sarah Levy

Ian Lotto

Maud Madsen

Tom Matt

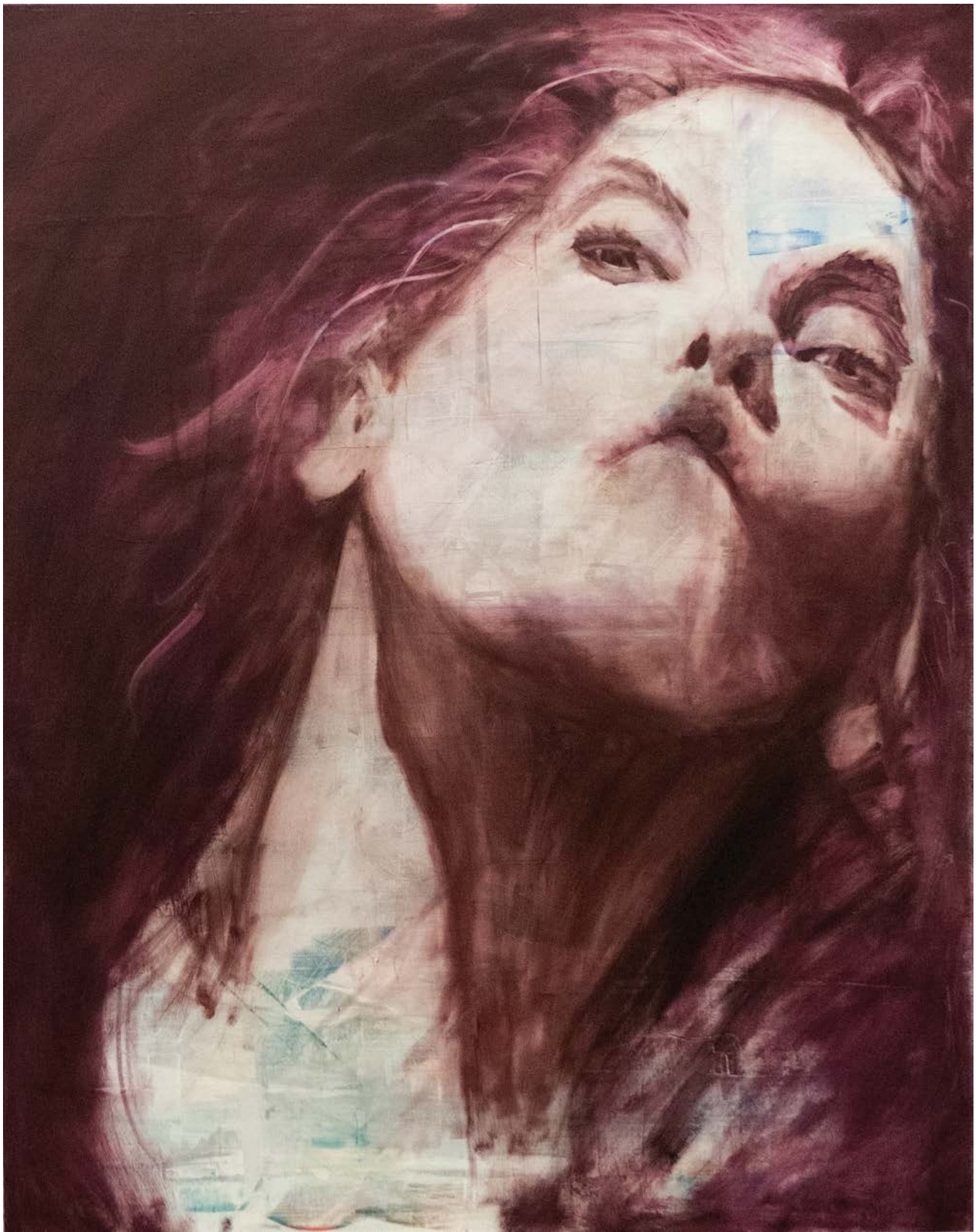
Rebecca Montes  
Siobhan O'Connor  
Anna Park  
Luján Pérez Hernández  
Rylie Radtke  
Tedore Rekhviashvili  
Maxwell Forrest Roath  
Kelly Robert  
Sandra Reese Roberts  
Luis Angel Rodriguez  
Meg Rossetti  
Johanna Aenderl Ryan  
Rosetta Sciacca  
Kristina Strunkova  
Ivana Štulić  
Natalie Terenzini  
Julia Tighe  
MJ Torrecampo  
Tovias  
Sarah Vaccariello  
Juliette Vaissière  
Michael Weiss



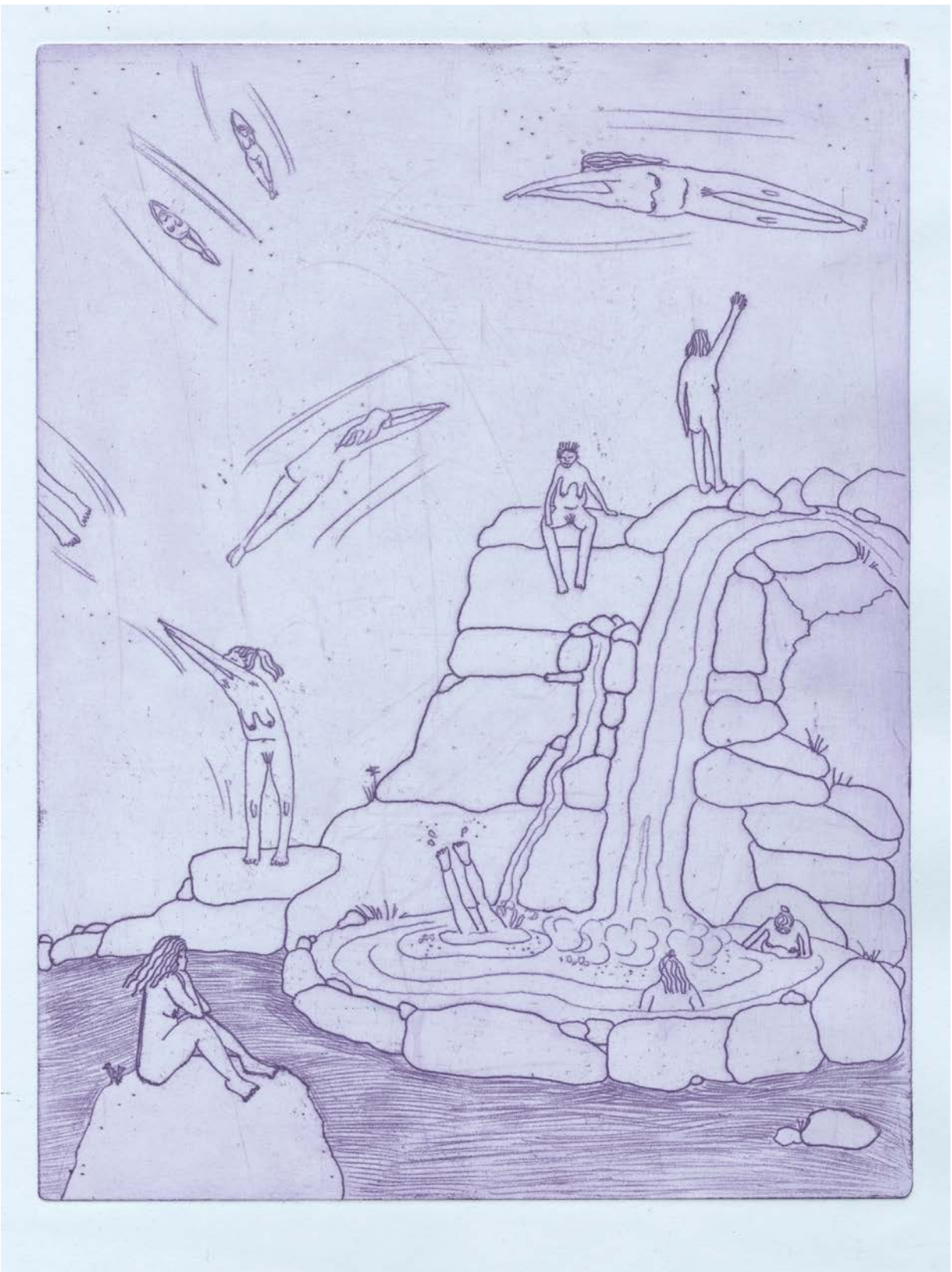


Olúwatósìn Adésànyà-Ọláléyẹ  
*Jellyfish Gobble*, 2019  
watercolor, gouache, and ink on Aquabond  
7 x 5 inches





Michelle Alford  
*Kissy Face*, 2020  
oil and acrylic on canvas  
60 x 48 inches



Lydia Baker  
*Saturday-Sunday*, 2020  
soft ground etching on Legion Stonehenge paper  
16 x 12 inches  
edition 1 of 10



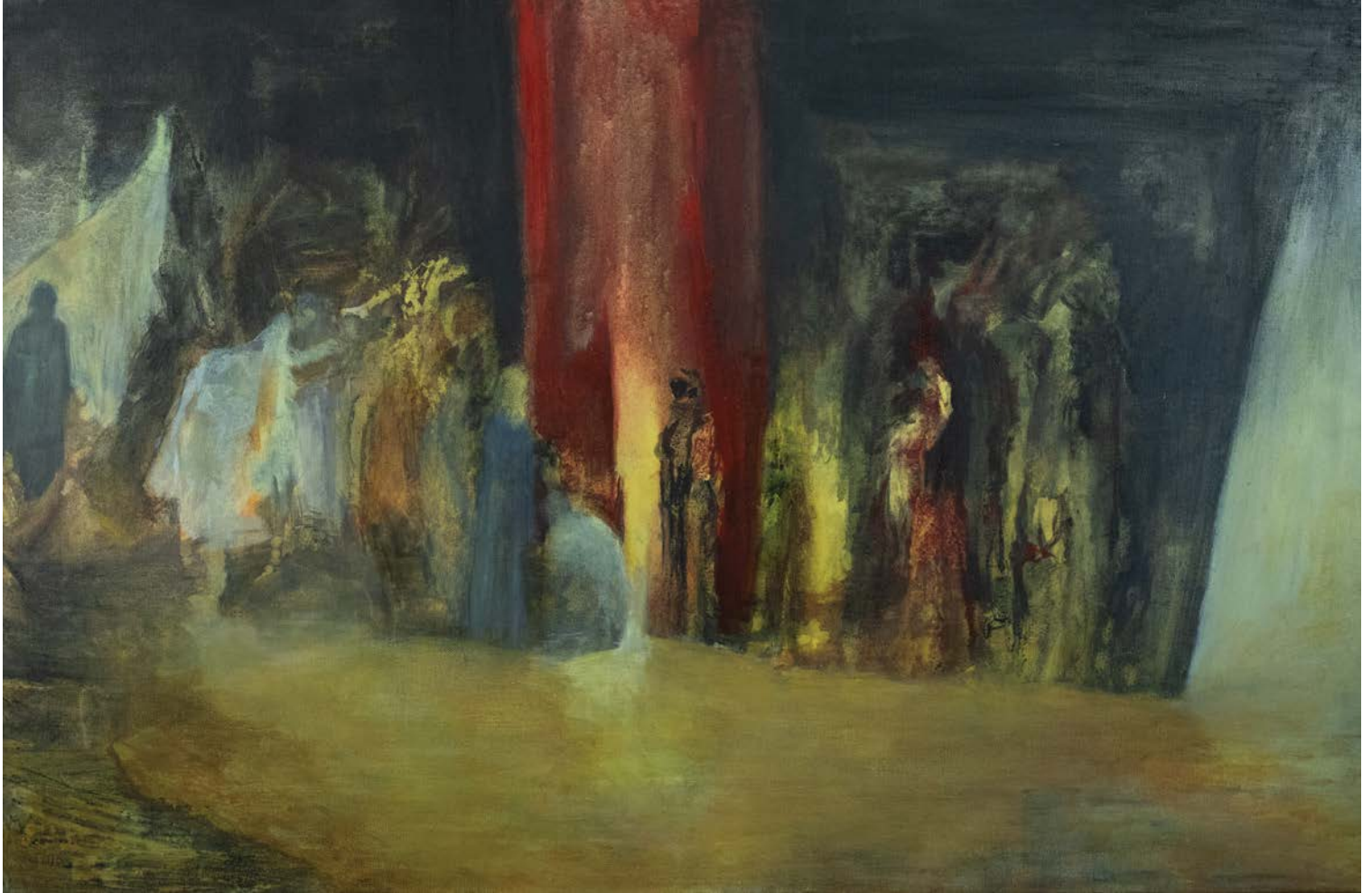


Sydney Bowers  
*Burnout*, 2020  
oil on linen  
40 x 30 inches



Brandon Brownlee  
*Skeletito*, 2019  
oil on canvas  
32 x 48 inches





Mariano Cinat  
*Untitled II*, 2020  
acrylic and graphite on linen  
24 x 36 inches



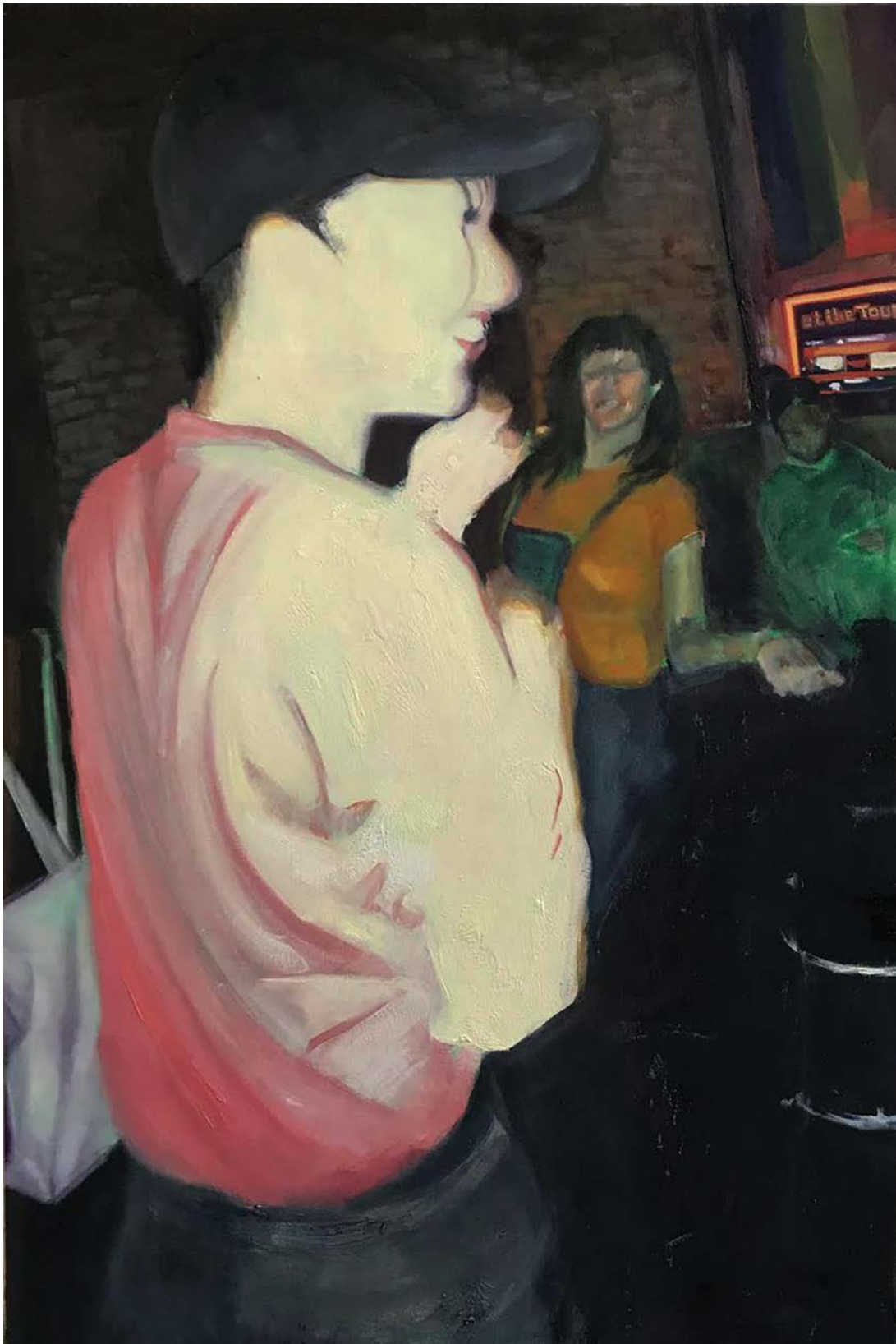


Camilla Marie Dahl  
*Death and Taxes*, 2020  
pumice, acrylic, and oil on panel  
36 x 36 inches





Denis Dalesio  
*Gather Around*, 2019  
oil on canvas  
40 x 40 inches

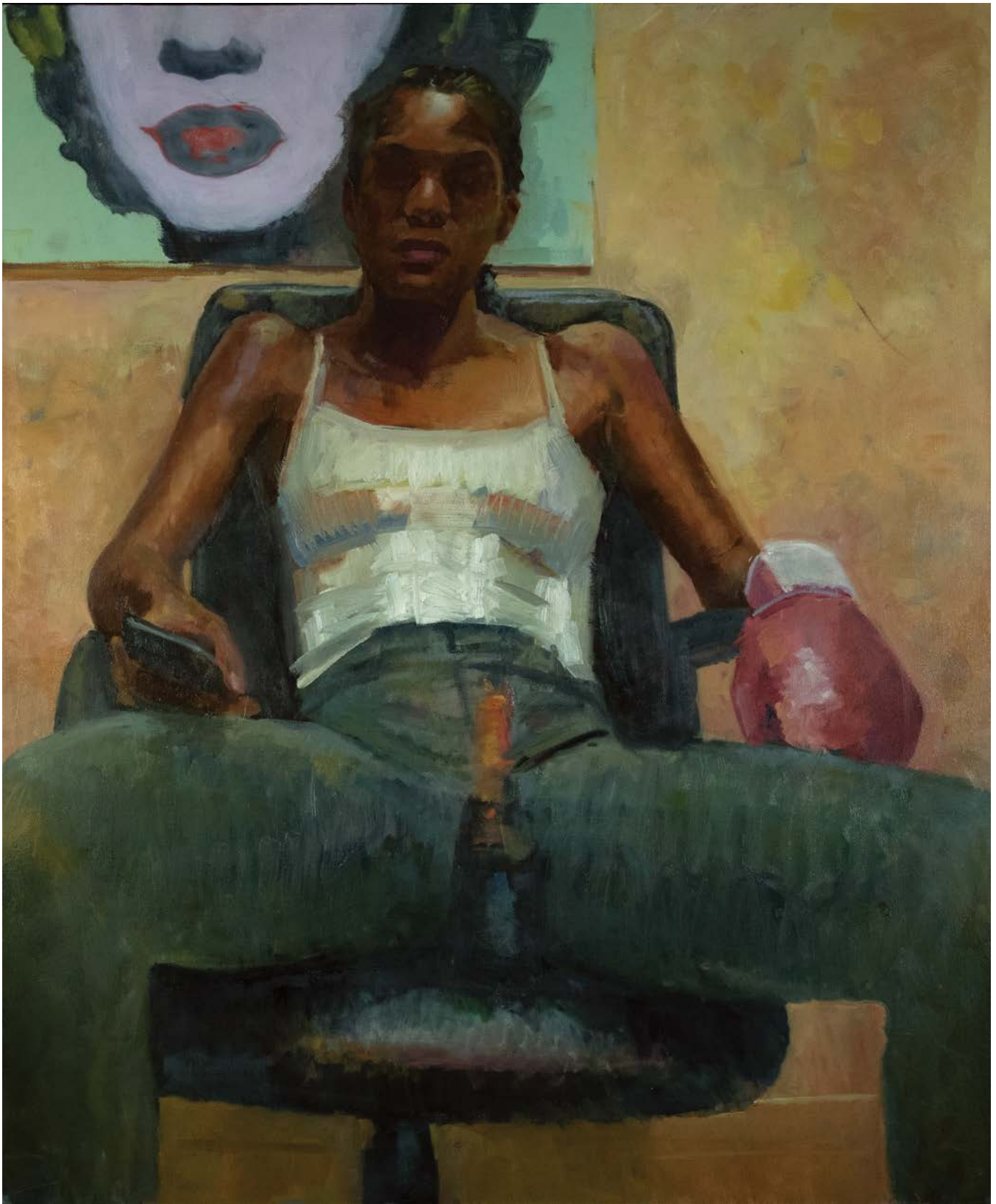


Hanna Rose DeMarco  
*Birthday Boy*, 2019  
oil on panel  
36 x 24 inches



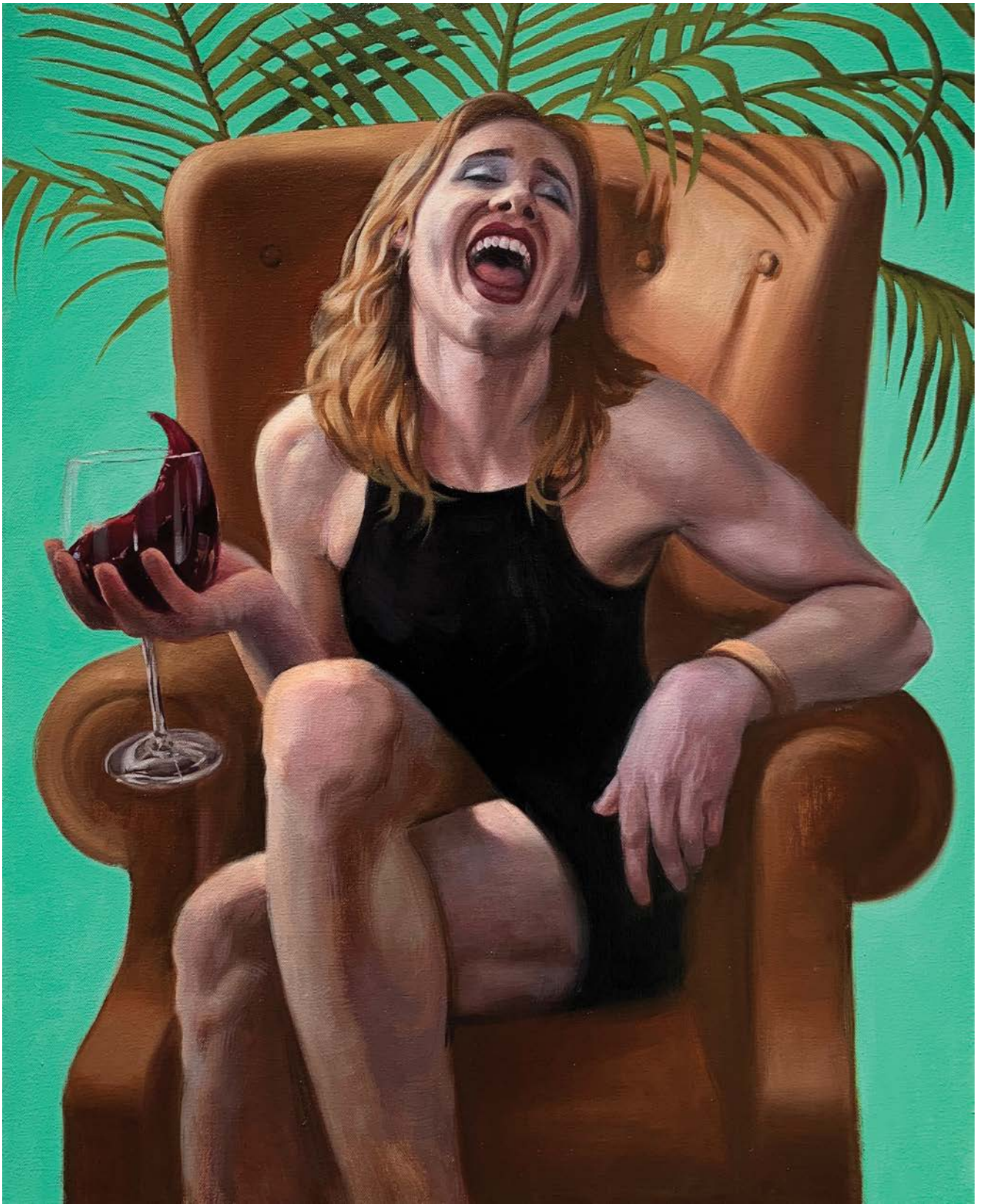


Imaan Dhaliwal  
*Bathinda Fort*, 2019  
oil on canvas  
30 x 40 inches



Augusto Fanjul  
*Eva's Throne*, 2020  
oil on canvas  
48 x 40 inches





David Flick  
*Loretta*, 2019  
oil on canvas  
30 x 24 inches



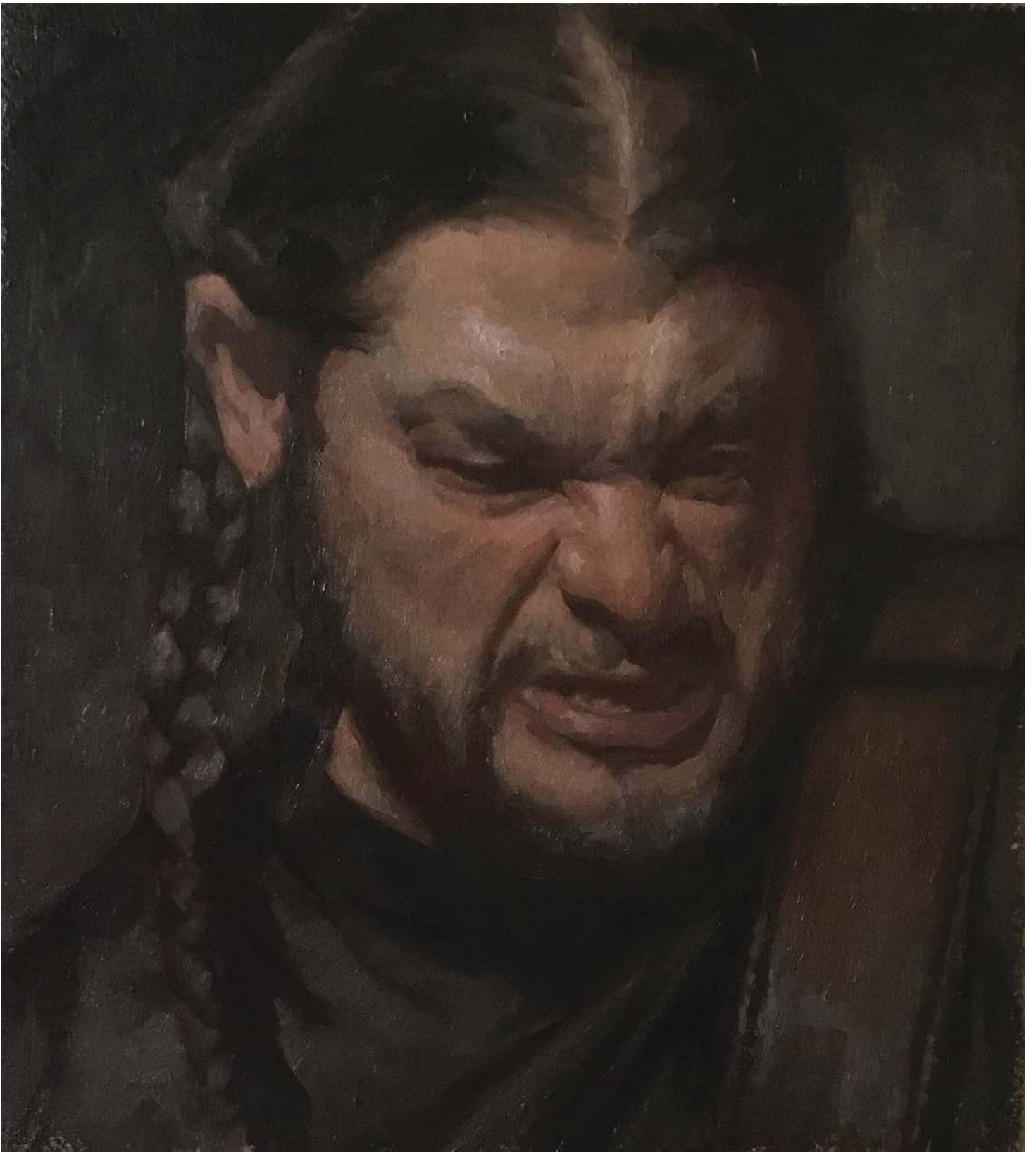


Austin Harris  
*It Keeps on Burning*, 2020  
oil on linen  
54 x 60 inches



Austin Harvey  
*Super Tush*, 2019  
oil on paper mounted to panel  
12 x 12 inches





Anne Herrero  
*Trujillo*, 2019  
oil on linen  
10.5 x 9.5 inches



David Jalagonia  
*Carcass of Beef*, 2020  
oil on canvas  
96 x 52 inches





Sevil Kaynak  
*Distorted 1*, 2020  
pastel and acrylic on canvas  
14 x 11 inches

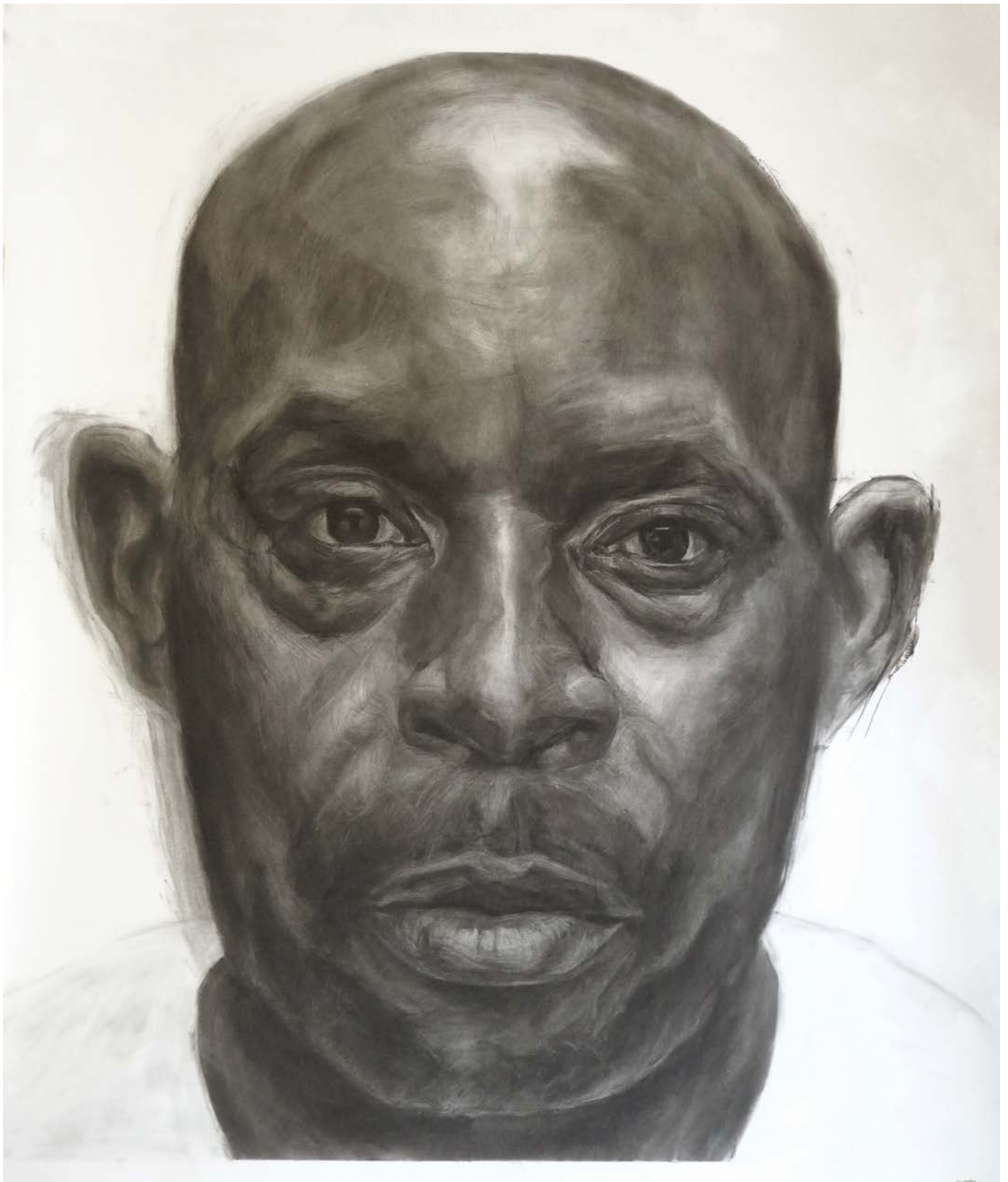


Hannah Lee  
*Take It Easy*, 2020  
etching ink and collagraph on Rives BFK paper  
26 x 20 inches





Young Lim Lee  
*Artist's Studio*, 2020  
oil on linen  
42 x 42 inches



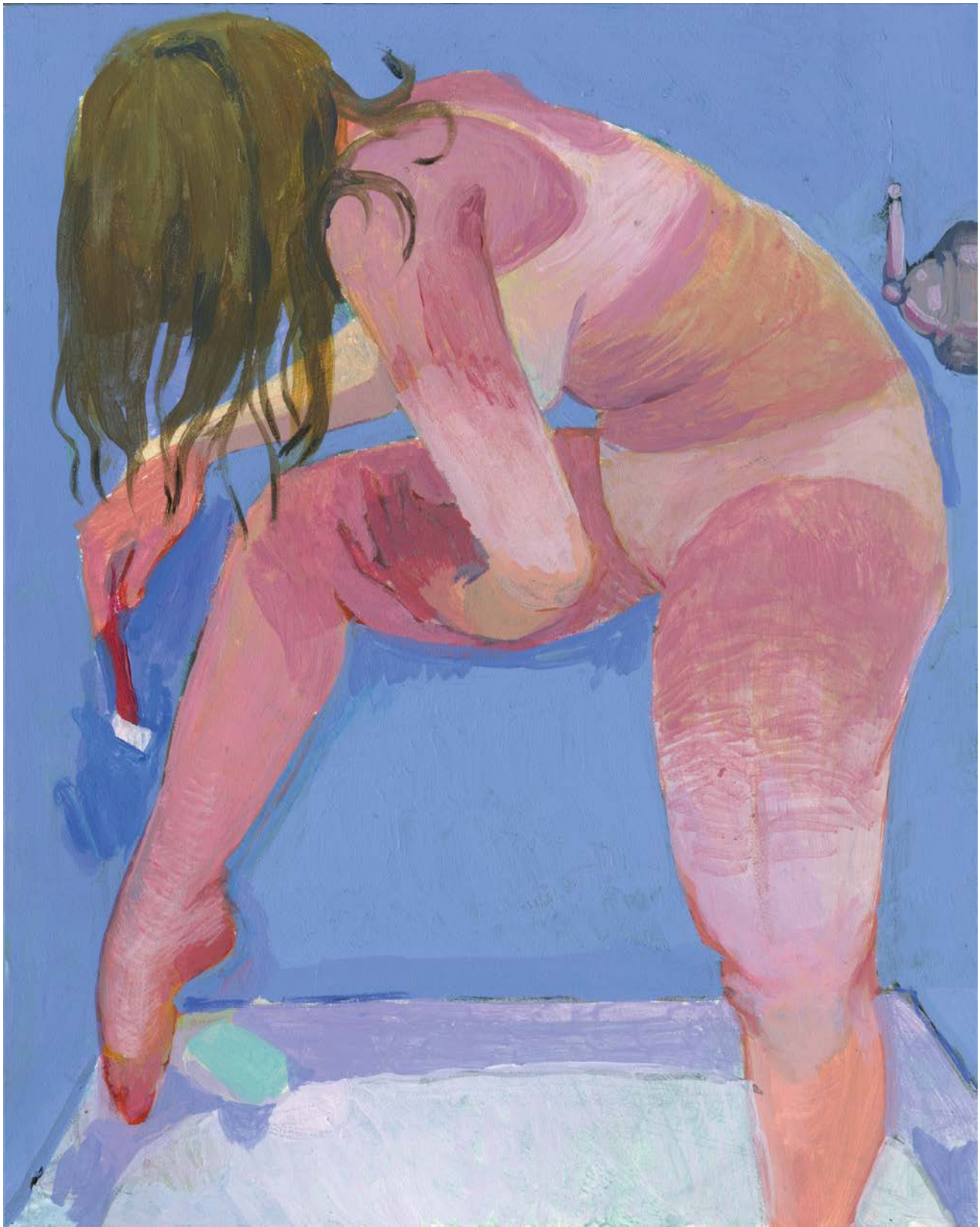
Sarah Levy  
*Antron*, 2019  
charcoal on paper  
41 x 36 inches





Ian Lotto  
*The Hole Diggers*, 2019  
oil on canvas  
30 x 24 inches





Maud Madsen  
*Study for Reveal the Goddess in You*, 2020  
acrylic on panel  
10 x 8 inches



Tom Matt  
*Self-Portrait*, 2018  
oil on Dibond  
16 x 20 inches





Rebecca Montes  
*Valentine*, 2020  
charcoal and graphite on paper  
12 x 12 inches





Siobhan O'Connor  
*Jack of All Trades*, 2019  
oil on wood panel  
30 x 24 inches



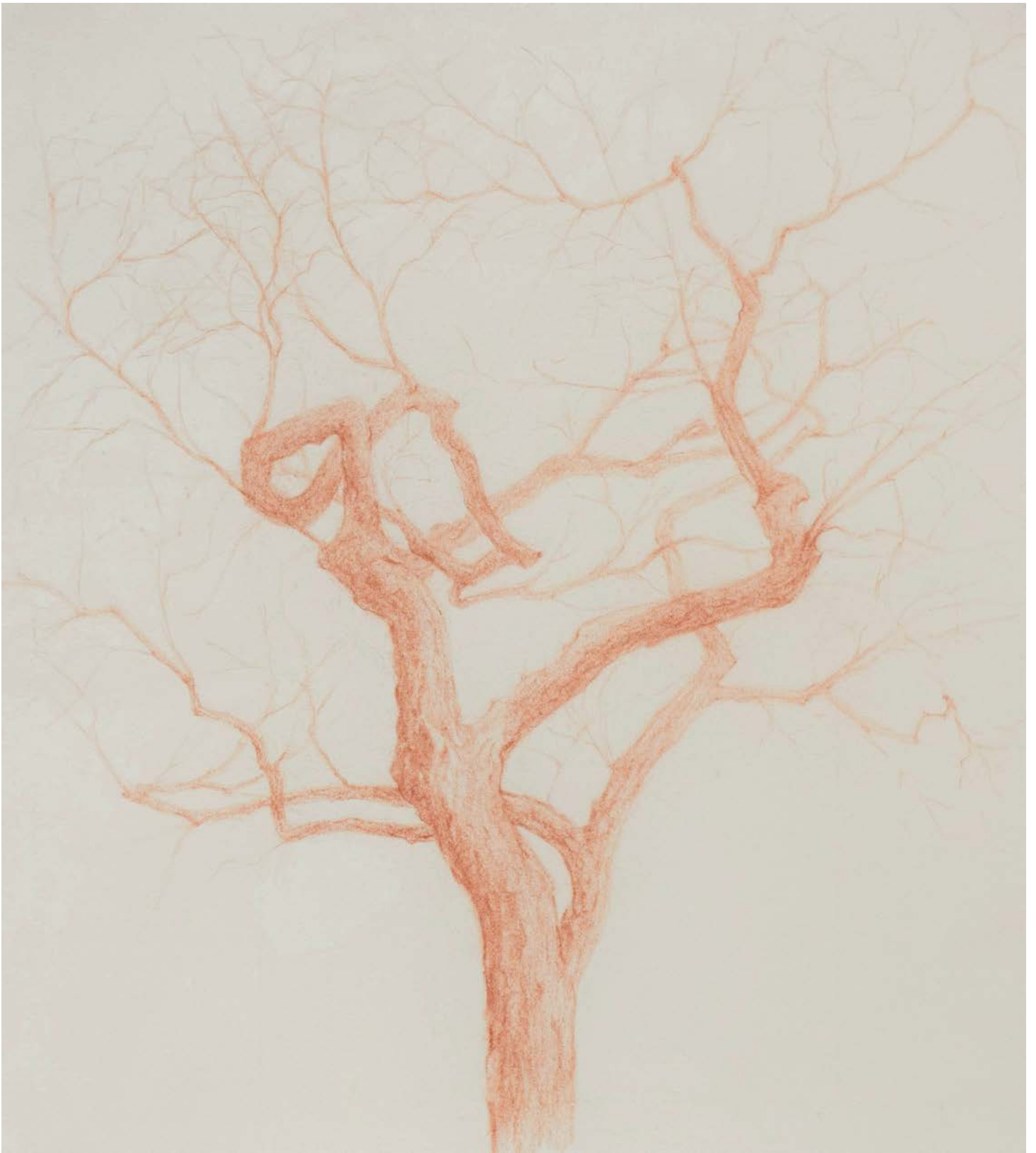
Anna Park  
*Handle With Care*, 2019  
charcoal on paper  
65 x 60 inches





Luján Pérez Hernández  
*Mother of a Thousand*, 2019  
multi-block woodcut, oil, mylar, concrete,  
Xerox transfer, and graphite on birch plywood  
36 x 28 inches

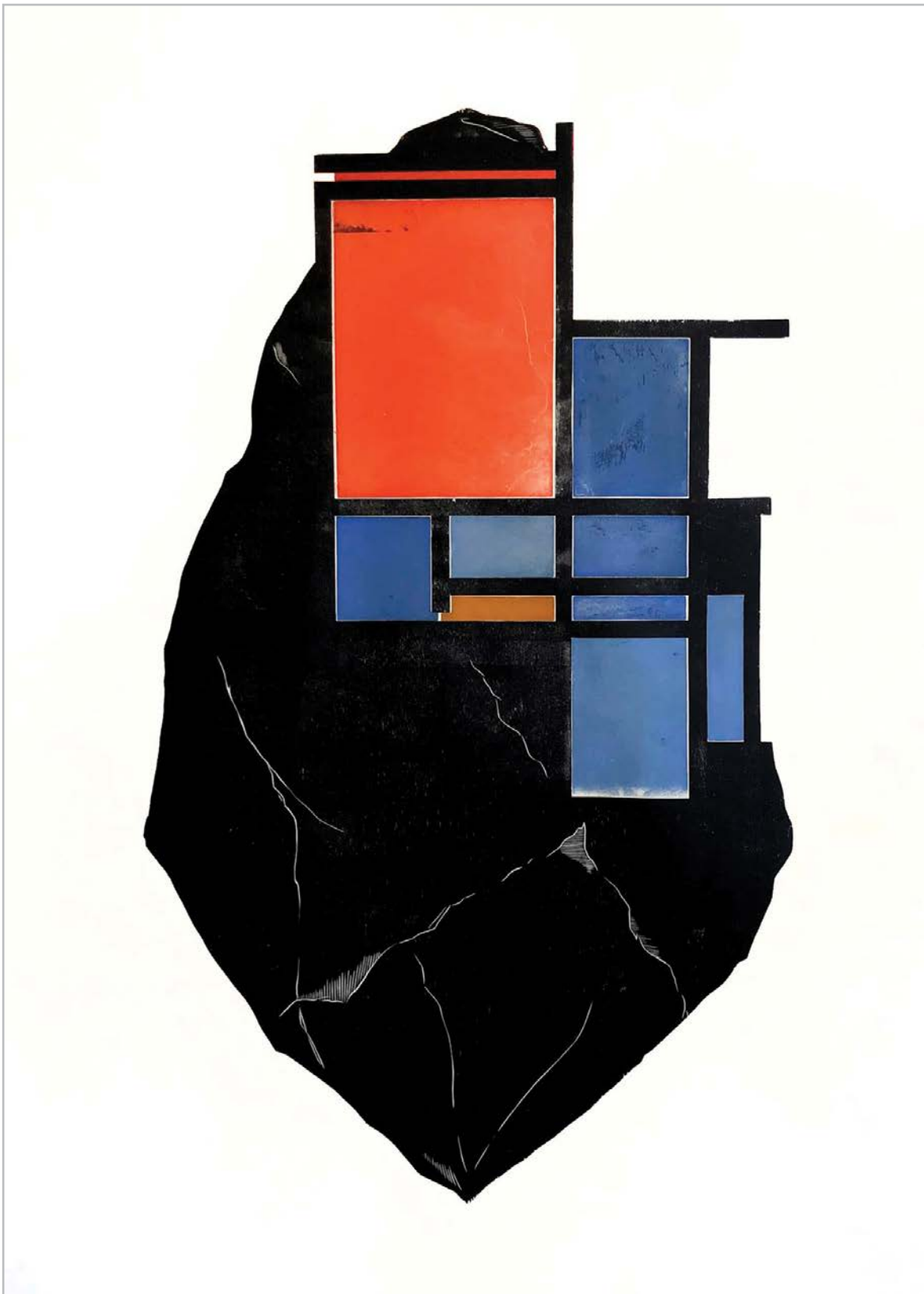




Rylie Radtke  
*In the Park*, 2020  
red pencil on paper  
10 x 8 inches



Tedore Rekhviashvili  
*Am I Surreal?!*, 2019  
tempera, oil, and crayon on canvas  
40 x 40 inches



Maxwell Forrest Roath  
*Monolith (Figure I)*, 2019  
woodcut, etching, and aquatint on paper  
60 x 40 inches  
AP, edition of 5





Kelly Robert  
*The Gift*, 2019  
terra cotta, Flashe, and brass  
11.75 x 8 x 9.75 inches



Sandra Reese Roberts  
*Elegy*, 2019  
acrylic on linen  
24 x 18 inches





Luis Angel Rodriguez  
*Ponytail*, 2019  
charcoal and graphite on paper  
29 x 39 inches



Meg Rossetti  
*KT*, 2020  
oil on canvas  
36 x 36 inches





Johanna Aenderl Ryan  
*Advenire*, 2020  
monotype on paper  
22.25 x 14.75 inches



Rosetta Sciacca  
*Kristin Seated*, 2020  
oil on canvas  
40 x 30 inches





Kristina Strunkova  
*Close Friend*, 2020  
acrylic fluid and tempera on canvas  
60 x 36 inches



Ivana Štulić  
*Gaze*, 2019  
oil on canvas  
40 x 30 inches





Natalie Terenzini  
*Handmade*, 2019  
oil on linen  
54 x 36 inches



Julia Tighe  
*If These Walls Could Talk*, 2019  
ink, acrylic, and Inktense pencil on paper  
47 x 37 inches





MJ Torrecampo  
*My Turn, Your Turn, 'Til it Falls*, 2020  
oil on canvas  
36 x 18 inches each, 36 x 54 inches total



Tovias  
*On Purity and Perception*, 2019  
India ink on fired clay  
15.75 x 10 x 10 inches





Sarah Vaccariello  
*Nightmare*, 2019  
oil on canvas  
36 x 48 inches



Juliette Vaissière  
*Vanitas*, 2019  
oil on linen and panel  
7 x 7 inches





Michael Weiss  
*Love Triangle (Sabrina & Marcus)*, 2019  
oil on panel  
12 x 9 inches each, 12 x 18 inches total





## SENIOR CRITICS

*Some of today's most respected figurative artists serve our students as Senior Critics.*

*They regularly offer Master Classes and special critiques in conjunction with the core MFA curriculum.*

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Will Cotton, Painting

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Judy Fox, Sculpture

Edward Schmidt, Drawing

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Alexi Worth, Critical Studies & Painting

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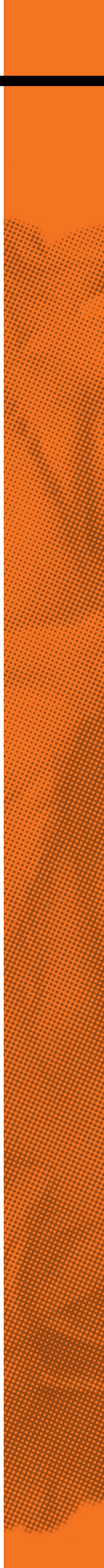
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