

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-Ọláléyẹ 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

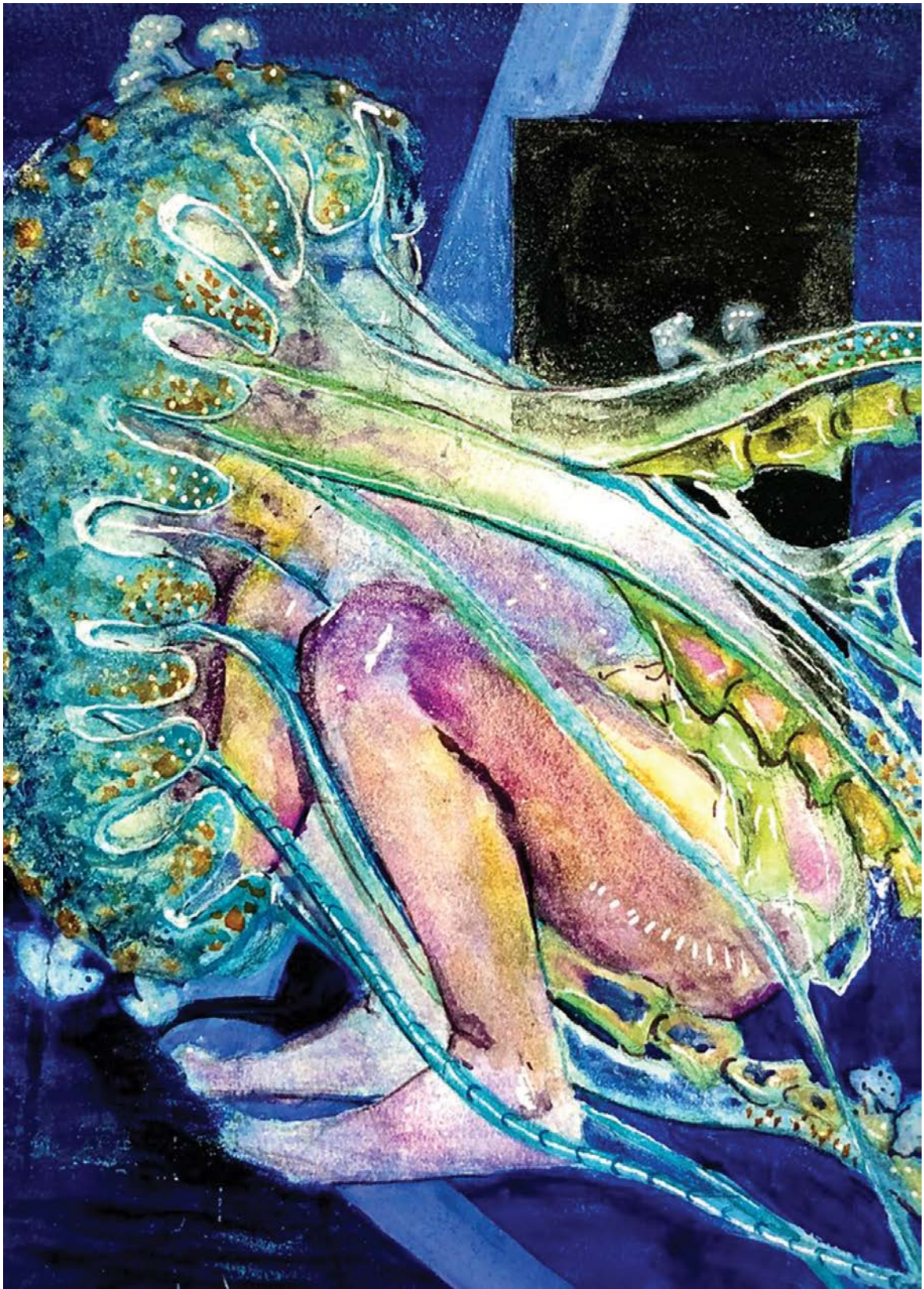
Sarah Levy

Ian Lotto

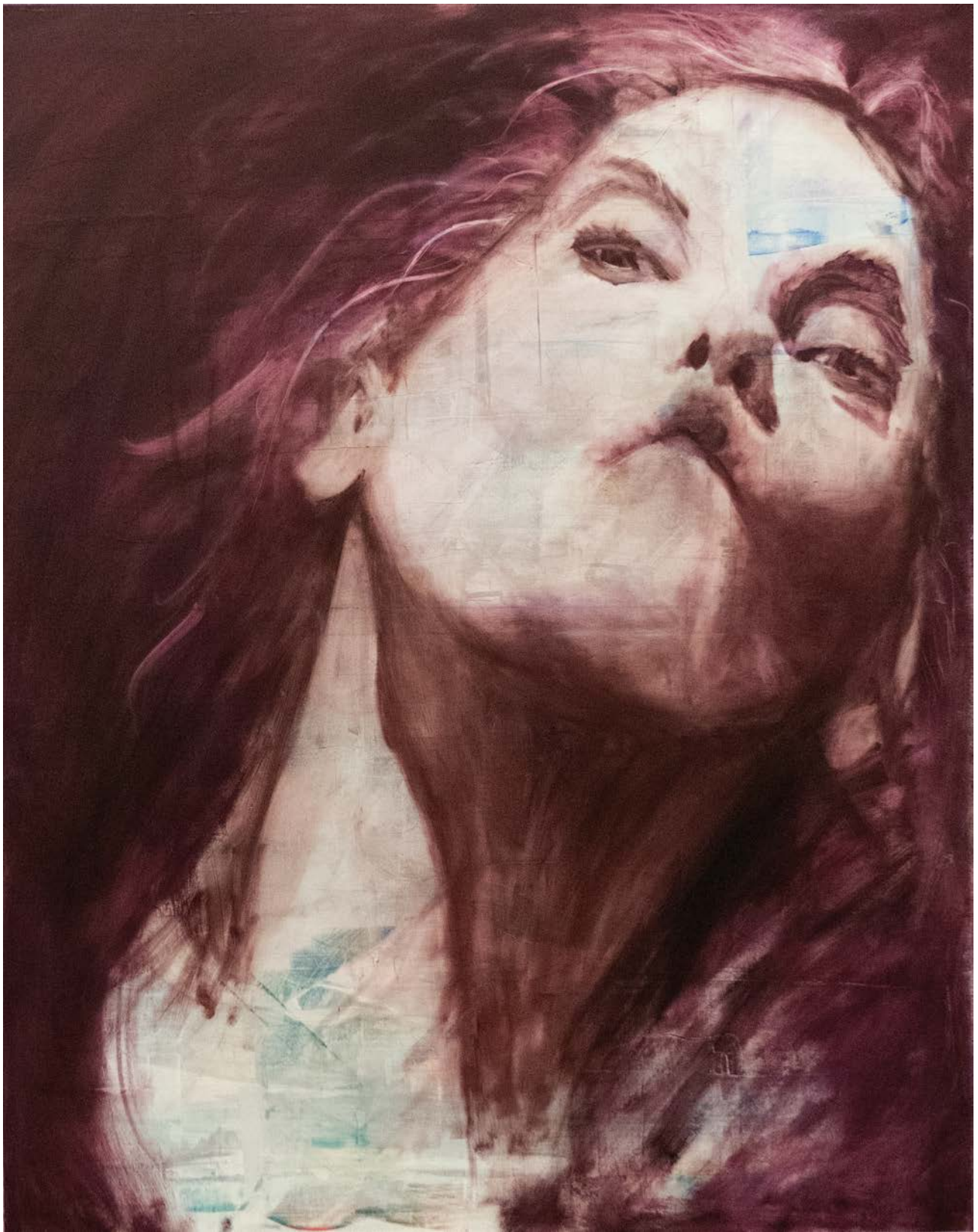
Maud Madsen

Tom Matt

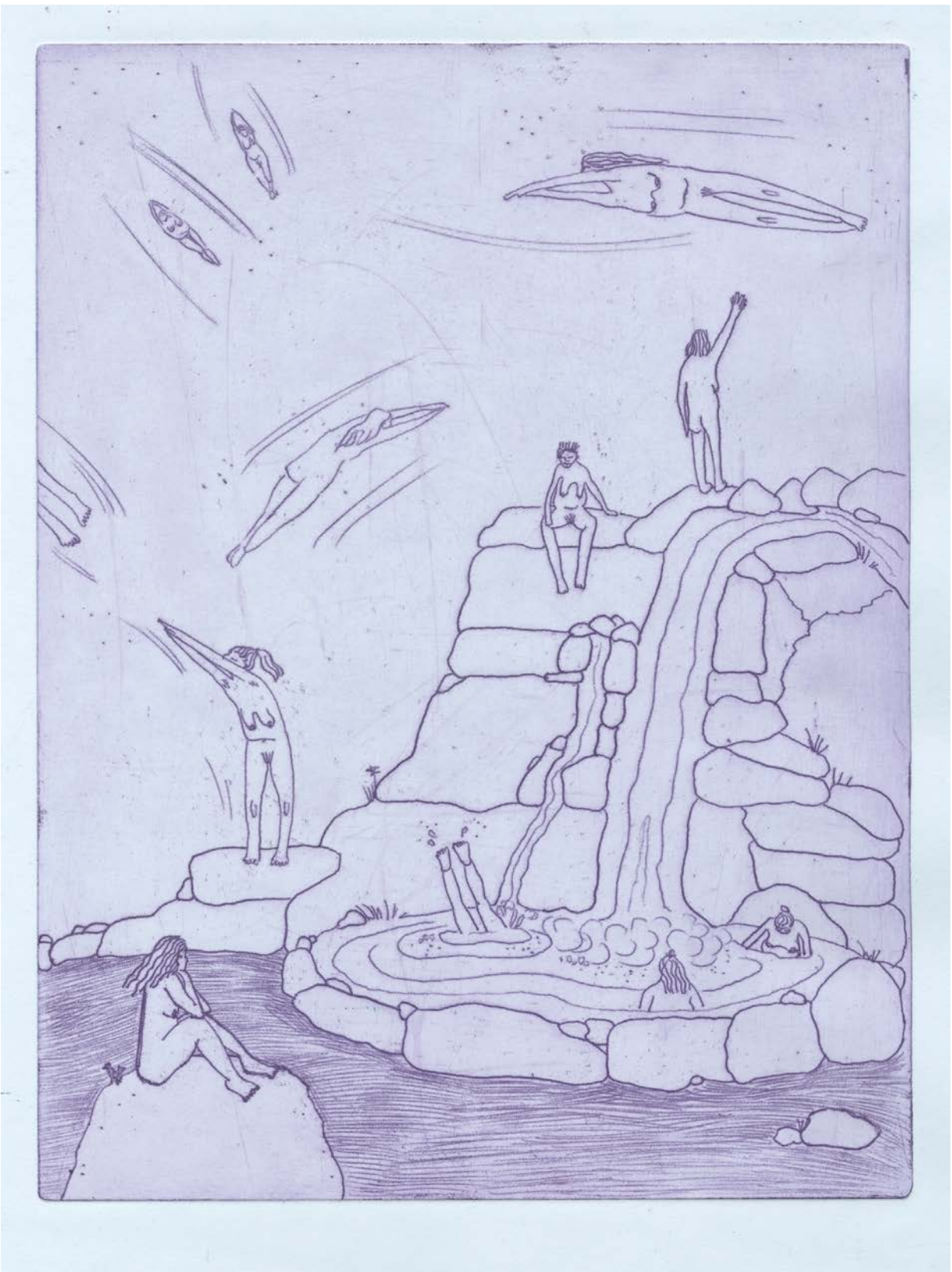
Rebecca Montes
Siobhan O'Connor
Anna Park
Luján Pérez Hernández
Rylie Radtke
Tedore Rekhviashvili
Maxwell Forrest Roath
Kelly Robert
Sandra Reese Roberts
Luis Angel Rodriguez
Meg Rossetti
Johanna Aenderl Ryan
Rosetta Sciacca
Kristina Strunkova
Ivana Štulić
Natalie Terenzini
Julia Tighe
MJ Torrecampo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



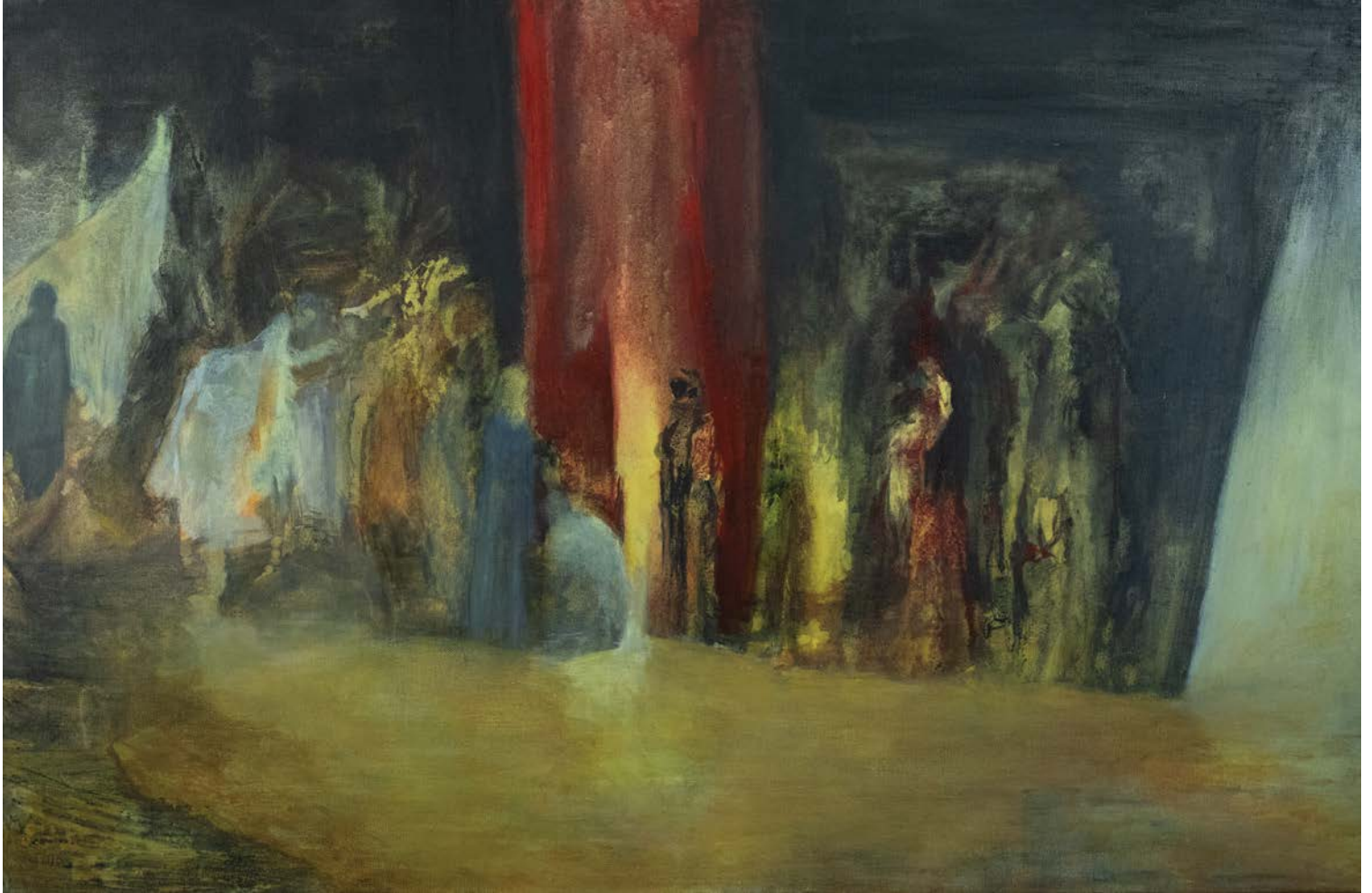
Lydia Baker
Saturday-Sunday, 2020
soft ground etching on Legion Stonehenge paper
16 x 12 inches
edition 1 of 10



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



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



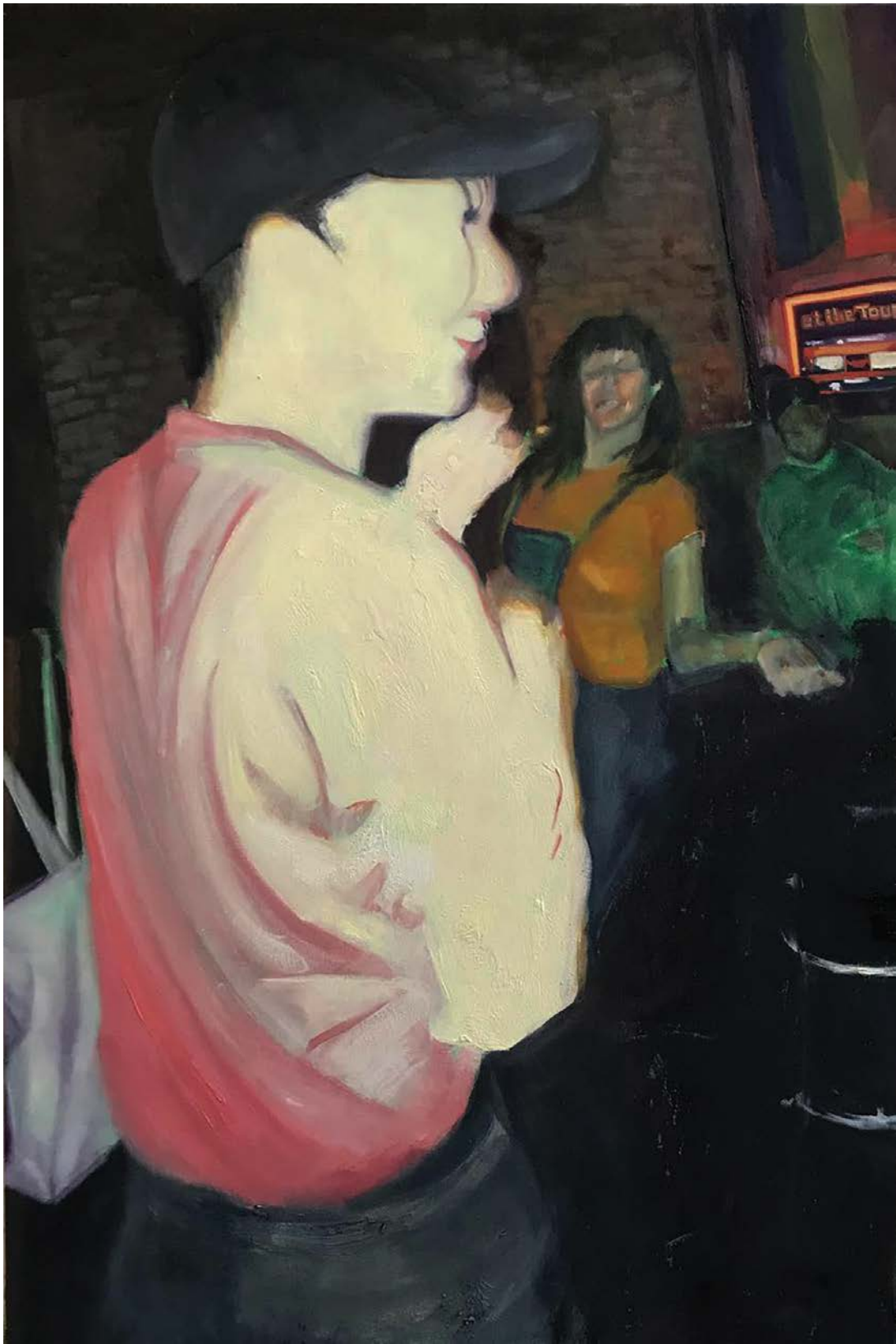
Mariano Cinat
Untitled II, 2020
acrylic and graphite on linen
24 x 36 inches



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



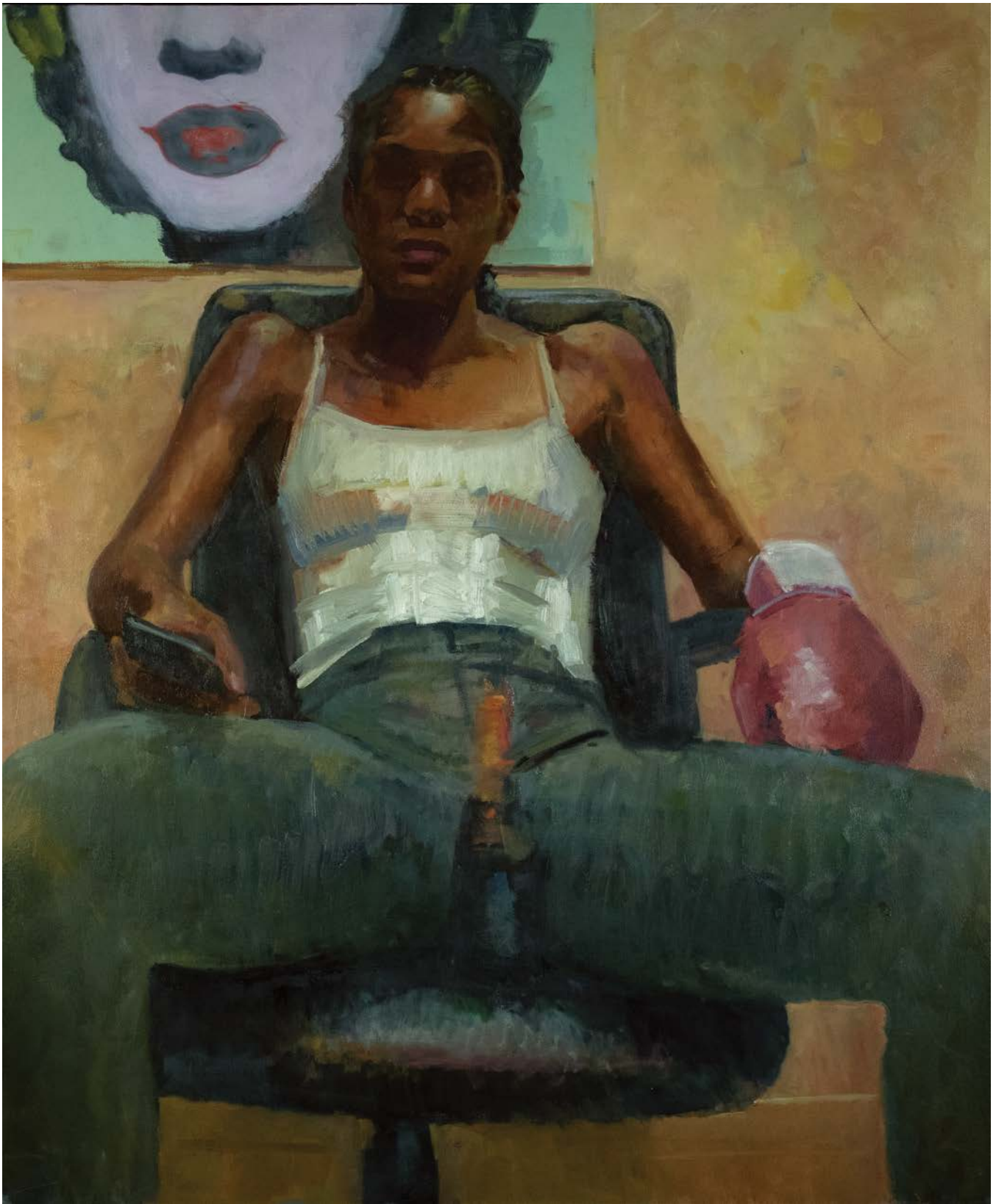
Denis Dalesio
Gather Around, 2019
oil on canvas
40 x 40 inches



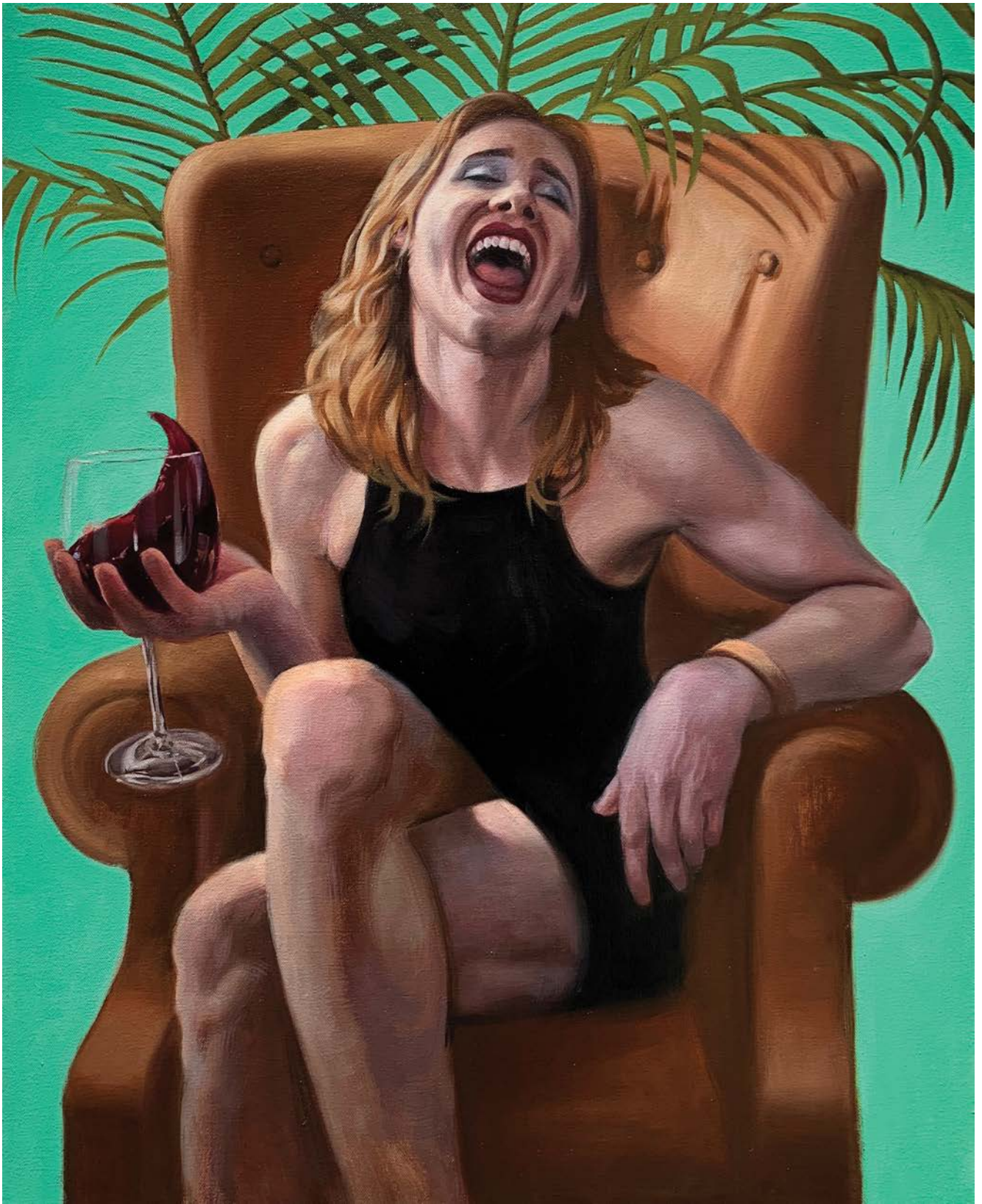
Hanna Rose DeMarco
Birthday Boy, 2019
oil on panel
36 x 24 inches



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



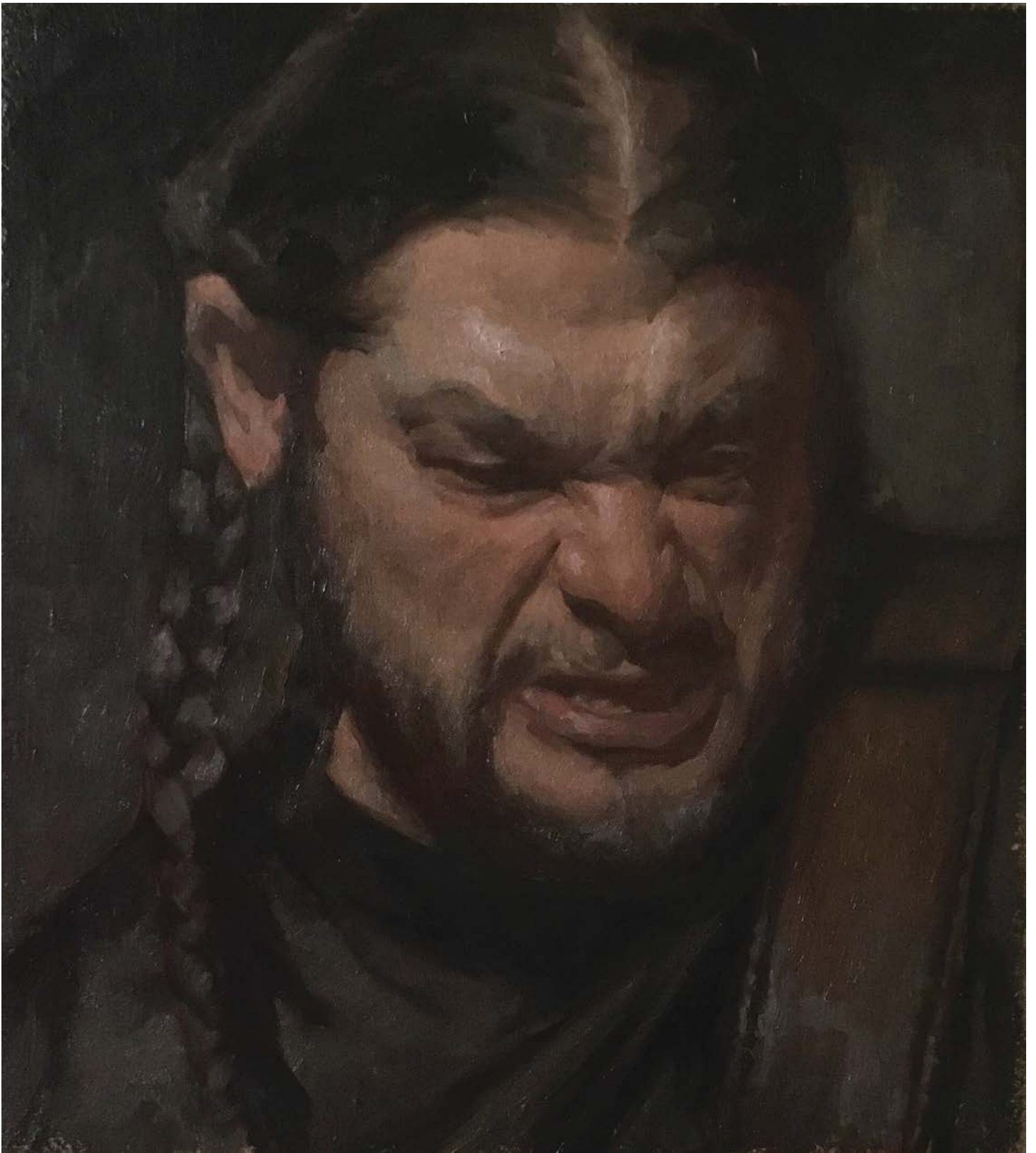
David Flick
Loretta, 2019
oil on canvas
30 x 24 inches



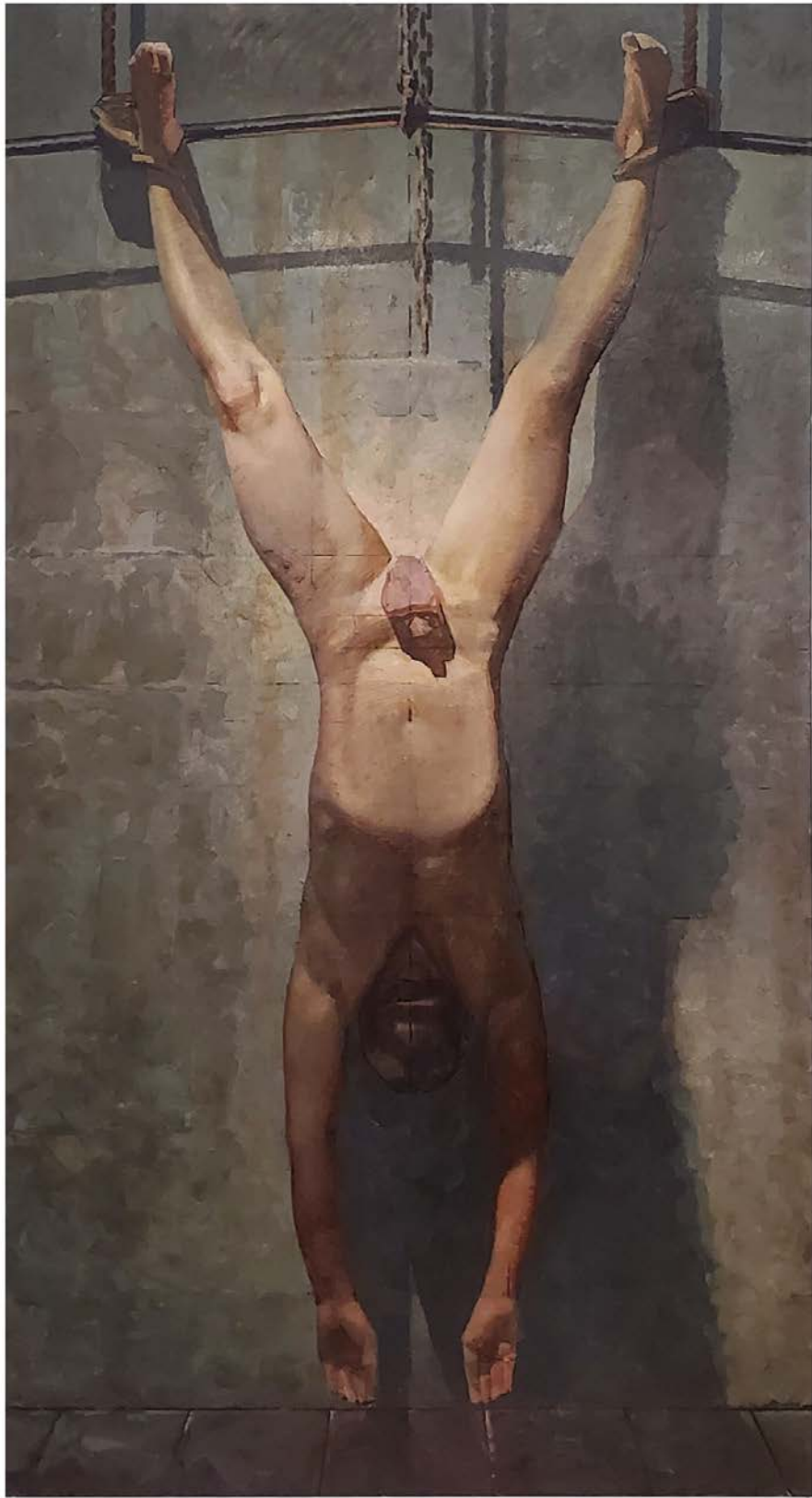
Austin Harris
It Keeps on Burning, 2020
oil on linen
54 x 60 inches



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



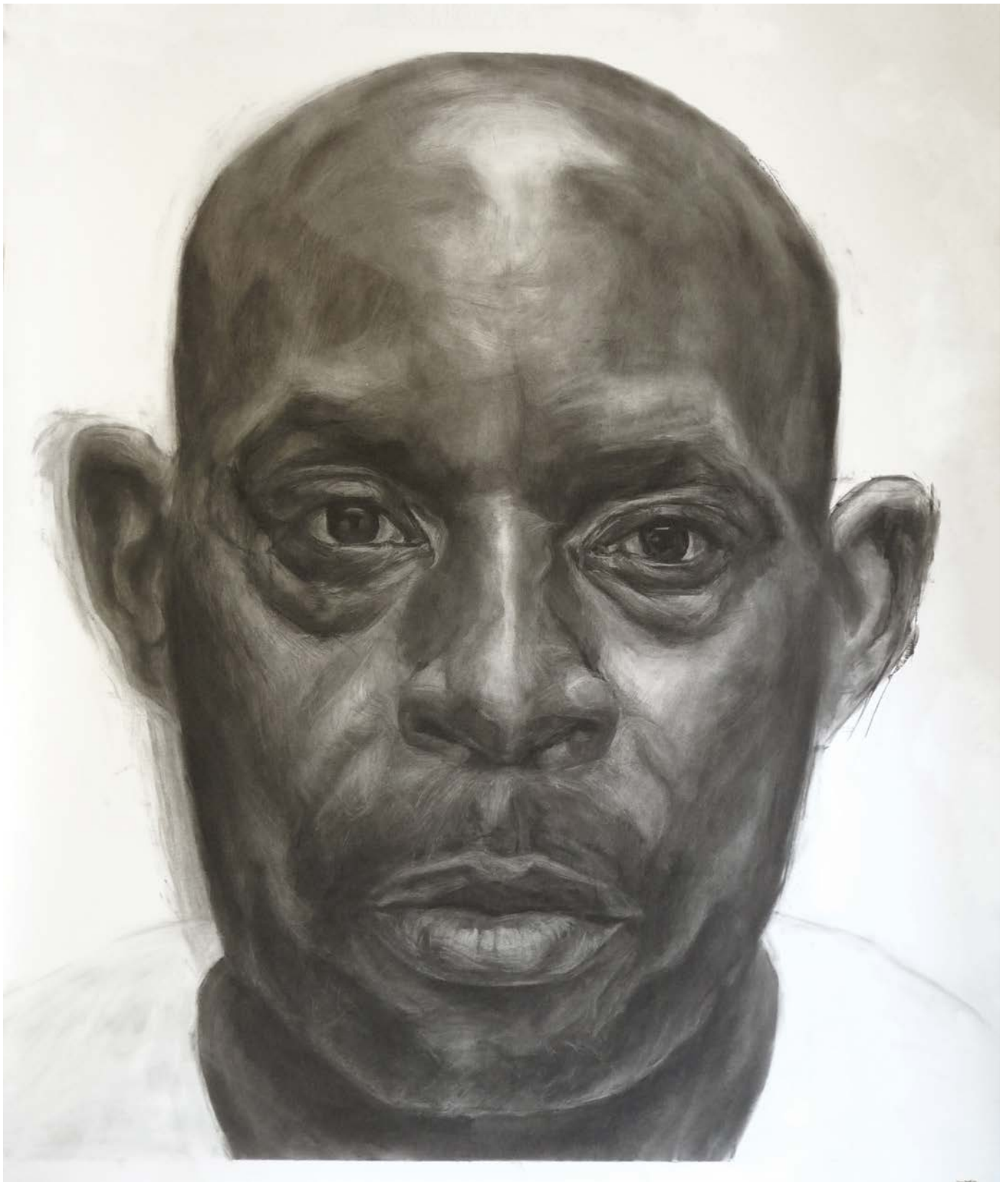
Sevil Kaynak
Distorted 1, 2020
pastel and acrylic on canvas
14 x 11 inches



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



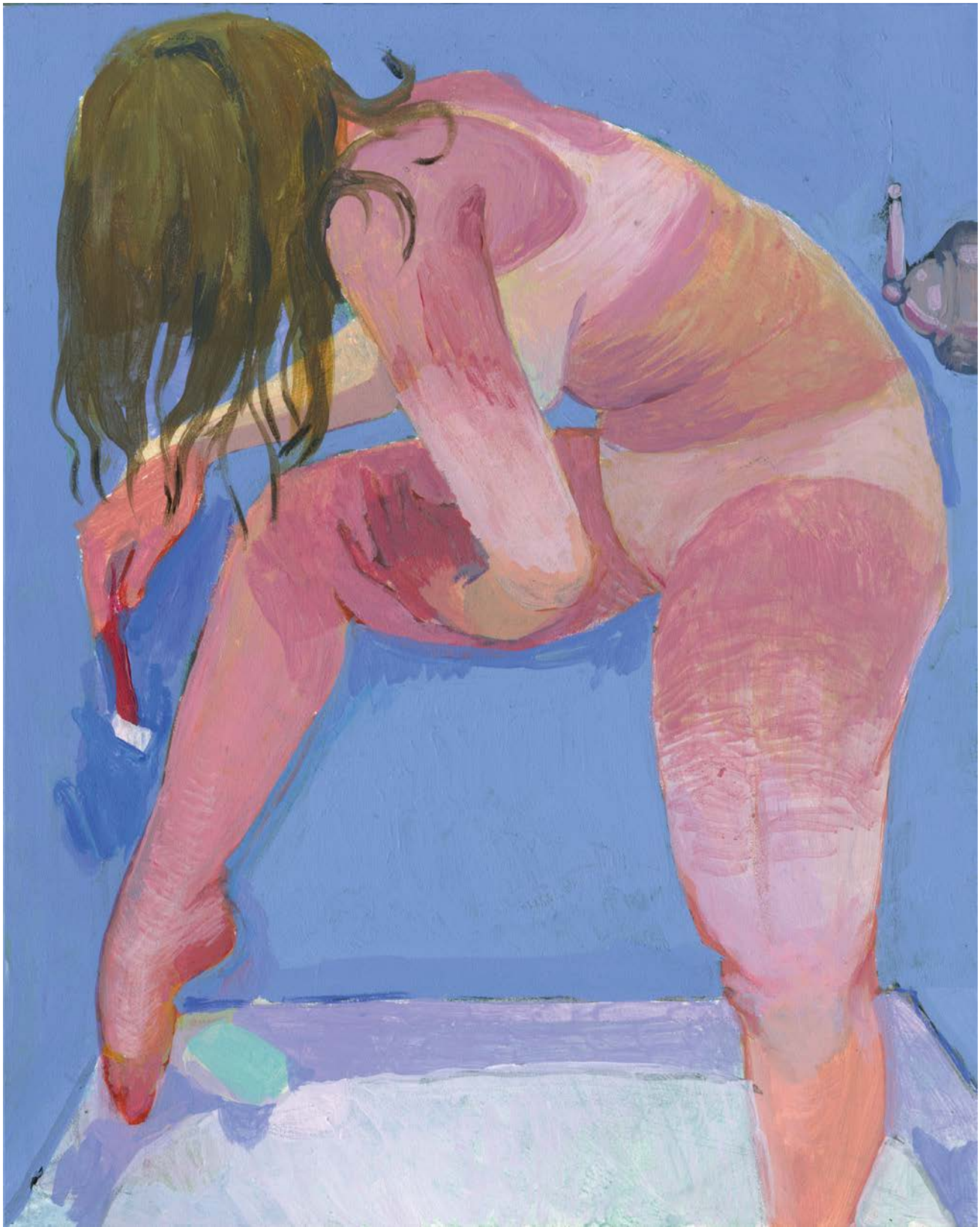
Young Lim Lee
Artist's Studio, 2020
oil on linen
42 x 42 inches



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



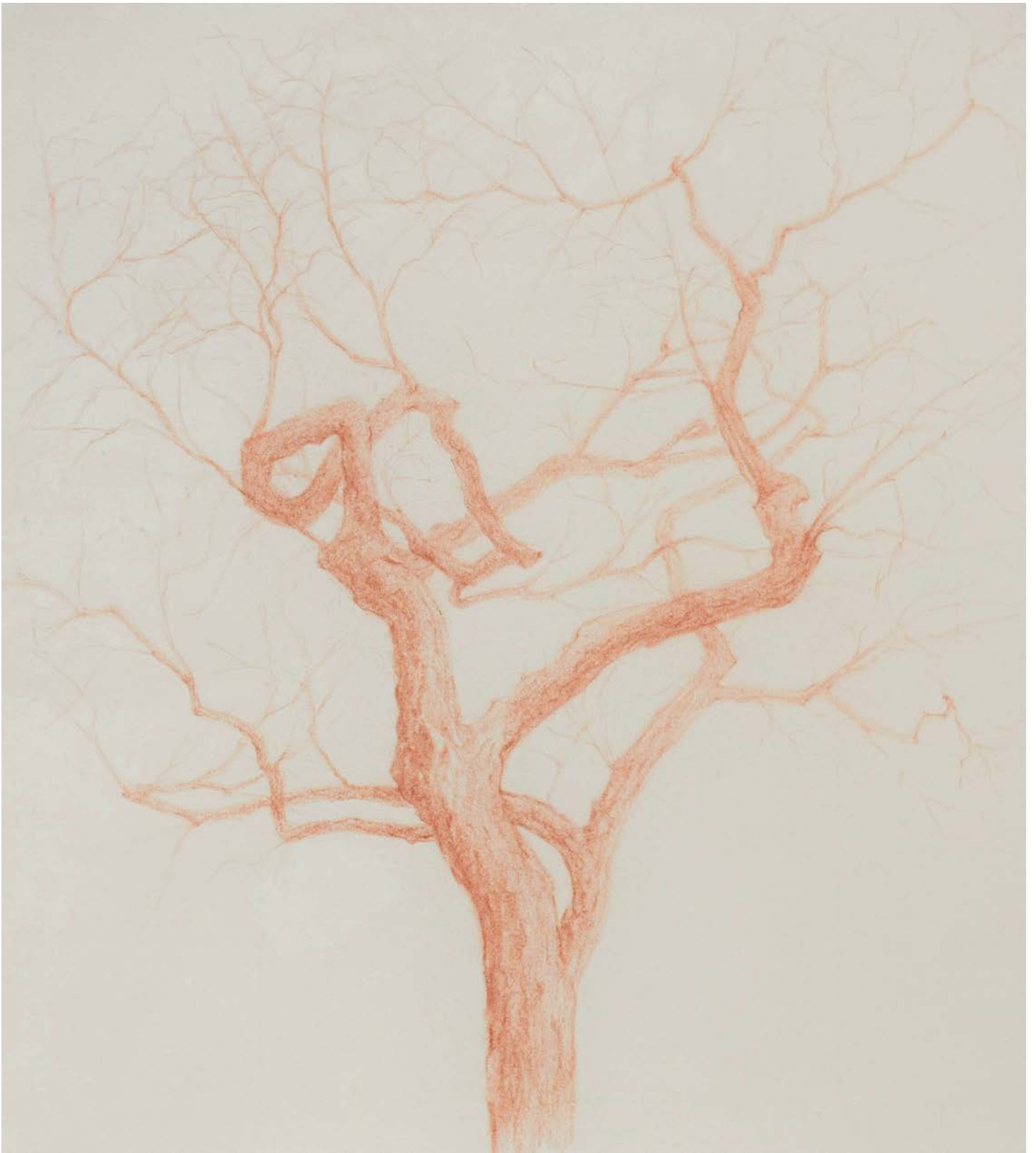
Siobhan O'Connor
Jack of All Trades, 2019
oil on wood panel
30 x 24 inches



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



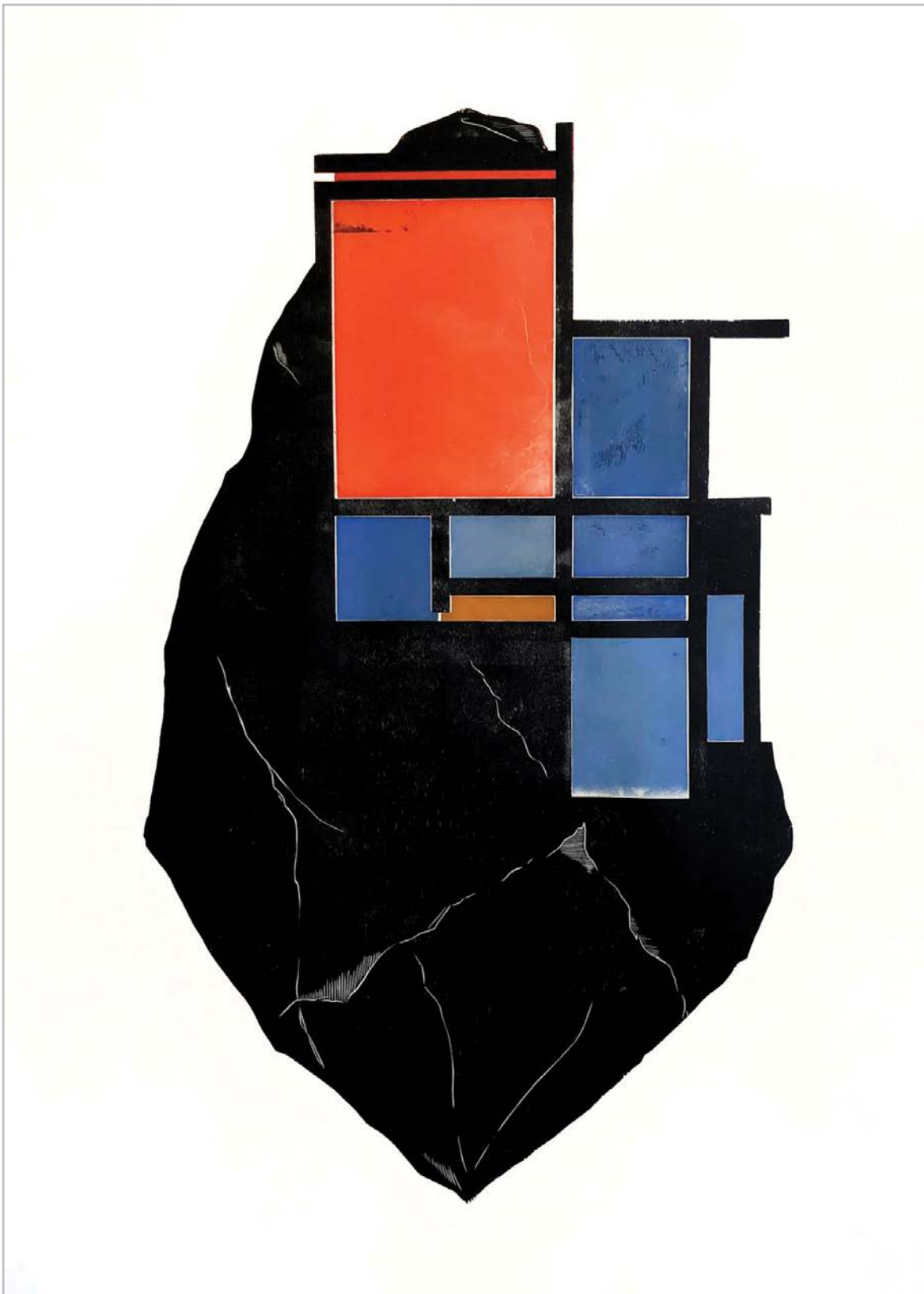
Luján Pérez Hernández
Mother of a Thousand, 2019
multi-block woodcut, oil, mylar, concrete,
Xerox transfer, and graphite on birch plywood
36 x 28 inches



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

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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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Alexi Worth, Critical Studies & Painting

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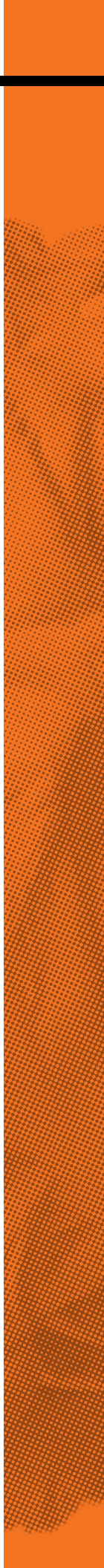
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