

NEW YORK ACADEMY OF ART

# MEFA 2023 Thesis



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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 2023 MFA Thesis Exhibition

Carlo McCormick

History, perpetually a work in progress, feigns a 20/20 hindsight with the distant past in perfect focus, but with congenital hyperopia fails to read the recent, proximate and contemporary with much clarity. With art it's often easier to see how certain works (or movements) can represent an age than it is to recognize how our own times are represented in art it creates. Much like picture-making it's a problem of perspective, or more simply that the historical perspective is supposed to be situated at the end, when the constant march of time tells us we are forever in the middle of it all. This conundrum comes to mind when we consider the exceptionally diverse subject matter and styles of this year's crop of MFA grads from the New York Academy of Art, as well as the legacy of this dynamic institution itself. We all know the histories of figuration, representation and narrative in fine art, but sometimes we are less certain about how and why this visual language functions today. The breadth and brilliance of this class doesn't so much explain the cause and effect of contemporary figuration than it revels in complications and contradictions of storytelling at this point in time.

For those among us of a certain age it is not hard to remember how the long march of Modernism involved a gradual avant-garde progression into abstraction, and how as recently as fifty years ago to be a representational artist was to be somehow horribly passé and déclassé. In fact, many of the founders of the Academy shared a delirious appreciation for William-Adolphe Bouguereau, the preeminent academic painter who the modernists had relegated to the historical dustbin- the very concept seemed as perversely post-modern as it was traditional. To appreciate why such classically informed work matters now in 2023 is to acknowledge what that break meant, how the entire legacy of this kind of pictorial tradition had seemingly come to a terminus and what it meant to jump back into that unfathomable chasm. It did not mean then, nor does it mean now, to return unchanged to the genres of historical, allegorical, landscape, portraiture and the like, but rather to arrive anew at these tropes and strategies in far more personal ways, as expressions of self and reflections of society. The art these graduating students show us offers subject in the spirit of subjectivity, explores content in a generation where content has become a marketing term, and begins to tell its stories in the wake of a broken narrative.

If we must measure the critical distance between the long history of representations prior and what these artists choose to represent today, time itself is a crucial element. That is, the notion that great art must be timeless is, if not entirely abandoned at least contingent on expressing the complications and confusions of the present. The wide range by which contemporary perspectives can fundamentally shift traditional subjects is evident in the work of Chubb Fellows **Antoinette Legnini**, whose multimedia assemblage tableau, with its cryptic title *I'll Tell You When You're Older II*, at once implies and suspends narrative, and **Audrey Rodriguez**, whose stoic naturalistic depiction of street food vendors at work, *Chalupas Poblanas El Tlecuile* infuses the naturalistic with a monumental grace and dignity. So too can we register the psychology and politics of our age in the isolation and anxiety of **Olivia Chigas** *Sloppy Joe Xanadu*, the emotional and disconnect of **Jiwoo Choi's** *Two Characters*, the emblazoned identity and cultural pride of *Fez* by **Manuel Hernandez Sanchez**, or the richly personal iconography catalogued in the domestic tableau of **Sofiya Kuzmina's** *Self-Portrait in My Room*.

The contemporary is of course not simply our position in time as a way of using the present as a way to look forward from the past but of tracking our situation within broader cultural histories. It is in short an act of memory, a conjuring of lingering legacies, ennobled pasts and historical burdens we sense in *Hats Were Always Worn on Sunday Morning* by **Terry Plater**, and **Kenol Lamour's** satirically revisionist *We Retired Now!* Here too we must think of the manner in which portraiture no longer privileges the few but speaks to the many, embracing a diversity in our body politic that manifests and exteriorizes humanity and love, epitomized by **Barbara Sharp's** family portrait *Doctor, Teacher and Son*, and the sensuously sharing couple in *Untitled* by **Chinedu Victor**.

As we see the return to portraiture, long held somewhat contemptuously as a mercantile art form of commissioned flattery, into an expansive field of psychological investigation and political signification, the ideologically fraught anatomy of the human form itself has offered up the body as a kind of still life, a meditation on being as nature morte. Such is the hushed still, vulnerable yet vital, of *Contained* by **Kirubel Mandefro**, the verdant anthropomorphic hybridity of **Antônia Bara's** *Hand-Flower*, the visceral, almost violent, claustrophobia of *Consumption* by **Ava Bramlett**, the sacro-biologically eviscerated form of **Hope Buzzelli's** *Crucifixion*, and the virtuosic molded paper sculpture, *Paper Study I*, by **Jenny Lula Challa**. At once literal and metaphorical the body in art evinces an emotional elasticity that registers in soul, psyche and soma, extending our understanding of physique into the philosophical be it the

coupled contortions of *Existing Together* by **Alayna Coverly**, the dichotomy of disclosure and reserve in **Rene Grgic-Dakovic's** portrait *Dayna*, the whimsical clay relief sculpture of paper-doll accessories *Summer Outfit* by **Ling Gui**, the emotionally fraught cruciform expressionism of **Jay Peterzell's** *The Two Thieves*, the simmering emotive quietude of *Still* by **Jane Philips**, the stark grace of the silhouetted portrait *(P2)^2* by **Keith Rehm**, or the melancholic poise of **Rin Lee's** *Sunnyeo* (仙女).

Much as we witness a renewed vitality of portraiture in this work, we also see a similar revisiting of traditional genre painting throughout. Here we find charm in the quotidian as the scrutiny of the artist's gaze and the wilds of their imagination enliven the material world, such as **Norie Morimoto's** elegant *Onions*, the culinary absurdity of *Red Snapper on a Bun* by **Haley Pisciotta**, the nature morte array of a past repast deftly assembled in *What We Left Behind* by **Claudio Cecchetti**, The process-based self-examination of **Alex Hewitt's** *Self-Portrait in Prismacolor Pencil*, or the memory-infused landscape of an illuminated mountainside *Sunshower* by **Lucy Kay Plowe**. Yet, amidst these simple joys in the pleasure of appearances, there is much that complicates representation in the art of those who explore myth and metaphor in their work, evident in the homespun Americana road trip adventure and opportunity of conjured by **Lauren Faulkner's** *Go West*, the dreamy noire of *Wilderness* by **Jackson Hill**, the synaesthetic abstraction of **Yiting Liu's** *The Origin of the Sound*, the self-reflexive reimagining of Narcissus in *See Me, Please* by **Michela Josephine Antonette Roman**, the sacrificially beheaded offering of **Stefania Salles Bruins' All I've Got**, the stunning goddess of birth and death at the center of **Tsilil Tsemet's** *The Prom Queen* and the enigmatically elegiac mindscape of **Darlene Thevenin's** portrait with bubbles *Memento Mori*.

Abstraction itself is never fully abandoned in the figurative and narrative program at the New York Academy of Art, but operates rather as another potent tool of discovery and disclosure. Un-tethered from the formalism of modernist abstraction, still insistently determined to depict an emphatic actuality, this new generation of painters somehow conjures the discrete spectrum of representational dissolve in the various terms of deep space, vestigial traces and overriding patterning, diverse strategies of psychological implication ranging from the shimmering mark making of **Laurel Boeck's** *Chutes*, the dense visceral serpentine baroque of *Ouroboros Knot #2* by **Miriam Carothers**, the distressed picture plane of a kind of digital interference evoked by **Cheyenne Earp's**

*Ritual Glitz*, the dancing flesh-toned miasma of **Stephen Gay's** *Untitled*, the intricate hypnotic cross-hatching around the characters in **Carla Leo's** *Linocut No. 1*, the tempestuous atmospherics of *Fugue* by **Yanqing Low**, as well as the skewed temporality and ruptured vision of **Bo Prather's** *Non-obsession with Non-obsession*.

It is easy to focus on the technical rigor that the Academy brings to traditional academic techniques, as this is a nearly unique attribute among current art schools, but it is equally important to understand how these skills and methodologies serve a wholly contemporary art vernacular. In this there is a genuine pleasure to see how this kind of mastery works to reflect upon the visual languages and expressions that have developed in more than century-long span since the heyday of traditional academic art. Resonant of deeper histories, these artists are similarly engaged in the modes of contemporary communication, infusing their pictures with an array of styles and sensibilities that reflect how we tell stories today, from the cinematic to the comic, along with developments in conceptual practice and radical distortion. The traditional makes a strange but fruitful bedfellow with our collective understanding now that anything is possible, be it the tortured Western of Chubb Fellow **Zachary Lank's** *Destino Camino*, the taught filmic noire of *Citizen Kane* by **Jordan Acosta**, the absurdist cartoon contortions of **Todd Cramer's** *Trampoline*, the patent idiosyncrasy and peculiar voyeurism at play in *Scene at the Pool* by **Marisha Falkovich**, the richly textured intensity and brooding ambiguity of **Jonathan Harmon's** *Kirubel*, the anxious architecturally fragmented comic storyboard narrative of *Page 6* from **Alexia Papavasiliakis**, and the biomorphic mutant humor of *Curiosity* by **Joshua Ramos**.

When emerging generations of artists in that late Seventies and early Eighties disinterred the exquisite corpse of painting- so recently declared as dead- and began foraging again in the possibilities of representational figurative art, it came as a fresh breeze to an art world that was wholly fatigued by the great endeavor of modernism's assault on tradition. We understand that moment now as the genesis of our post-modern condition, but as we celebrated it as an end to the tyranny of perpetual novelty it came with a certain dread that maybe we had run out of anything truly new to say. What we experience now with this latest wave of visual iconoclasts is the earnest comprehension that as long as art continues to speak from the intimate perspective of self, registers the dynamic changes of the world around us and treasures those elusive tendencies of the informal and personal, we will never run out of meaningful stories to tell.

*2023 Chubb Postgraduate Fellows*

Zachary Lank

Antoinette Legnini

Audrey Rodriguez





**Zachary Lank**  
*Destino Camino*, 2022  
oil on canvas  
46 x 46 inches



**Antoinette Legnini**

*I'll Tell You When You're Older II*, 2022

oil, acrylic, pastel, charcoal, pencil, pen, colored pencil, watercolor paper, sandpaper, playing cards, Halls cough drop wrappers, Halls cough drop bag, coin wrappers, Lipton tea foil wrap, iridescent cellophane wrap, and index cards on chipboard

40 x 36 inches



**Audrey Rodriguez**  
*Chalupas Poblanas El Tlecuile, 2023*  
oil on canvas  
36 x 48 inches

## ***2023 Master of Fine Arts Graduates***

Jordan Acosta

Antônia Bara

Laurel Boeck

Ava Bramlett

Hope Buzzelli

Miriam Carothers

Claudio Cecchetti

Jenny Lula Challa

Olivia Chigas

Jiwoo Choi

Alayna Coverly

Todd Cramer

Cheyenne Earp

Marisha Falkovich

Lauren Faulkner

Stephen Gay

Rene Grgic-Dakovic

Ling Gui

Jonathan Harmon

Manuel Hernandez Sanchez

Alex Hewitt

Jackson Hill

Sofiya Kuzmina

Kenol Lamour

Rin Lee

Carla Leo

Yiting Liu

Yanqing Low

Kirubel Mandefro

Norie Morimoto

Alexia Papavasiliakis

Jay Peterzell

Jane Philips

Haley Pisciotta

Terry Plater

Lucy Kay Plowe

Bo Prather

Joshua Ramos

Keith Rehm

Michela Josephine Antonette Roman

Stefania Salles Bruins

Barbara Sharp

Darlene Thevenin

Tslil Tsemet

Chinedu Victor



**Jordan Acosta**

*Citizen Kane*, 2022

lithograph on Kitakata paper

12 x 15.25 inches

edition 2 of 4



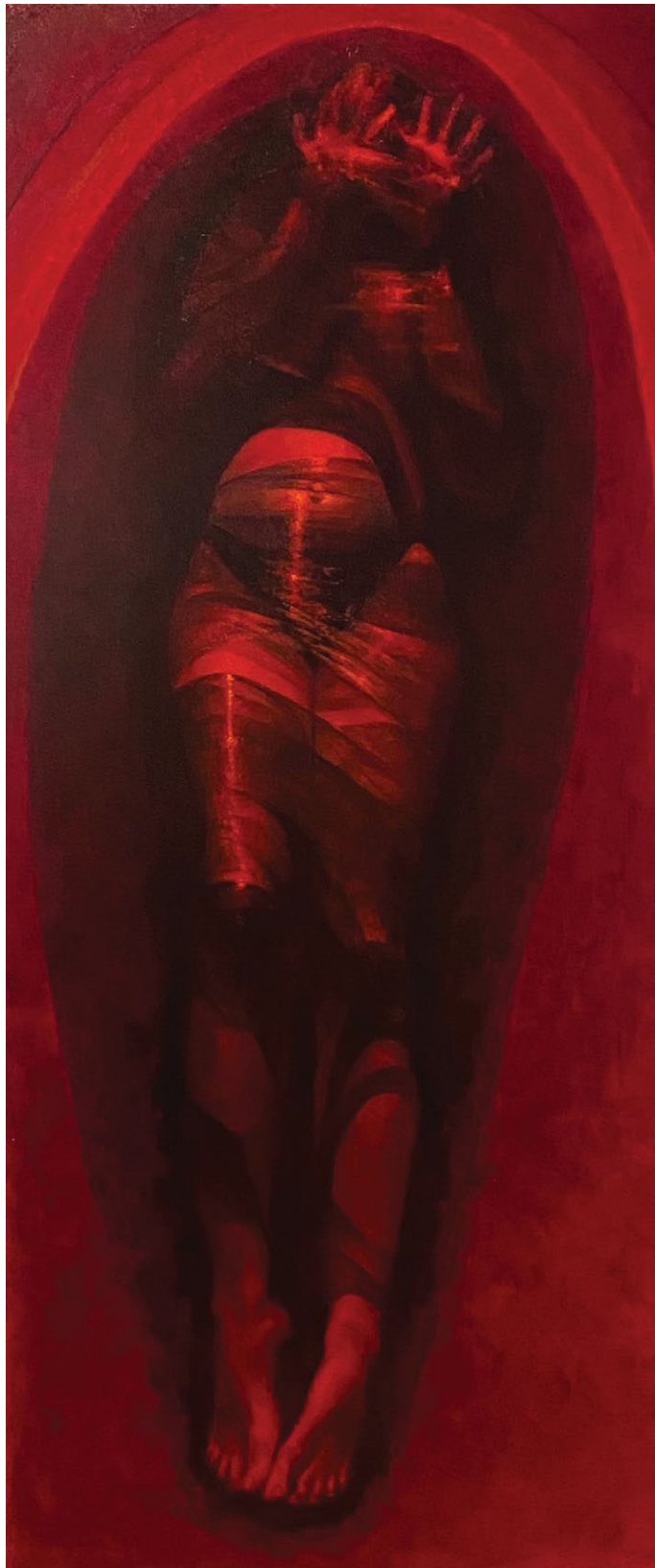
**Antônia Bara**  
*Hand-Flower*, 2023  
graphite on cotton paper  
12 x 12 inches



**Laurel Boeck**

*Chutes*, 2023  
oil on panel  
12 x 9 inches





**Ava Bramlett**  
*Consumption*, 2022  
oil on canvas  
66 x 28 inches



**Hope Buzzelli**

*Crucifixion*, 2022

colored graphite and marker on raw canvas

72 x 45 inches



**Miriam Carothers**  
*Ouroboros Knot #2*, 2023  
oil on wood panel  
36 x 36 inches



**Claudio Cecchetti**  
*What We Left Behind*, 2023  
graphite on paper  
44 x 30 inches



**Jenny Lula Challa**  
*Paper Study I*, 2023  
cast paper and pastel  
18 x 6 x 3 inches



**Olivia Chigas**

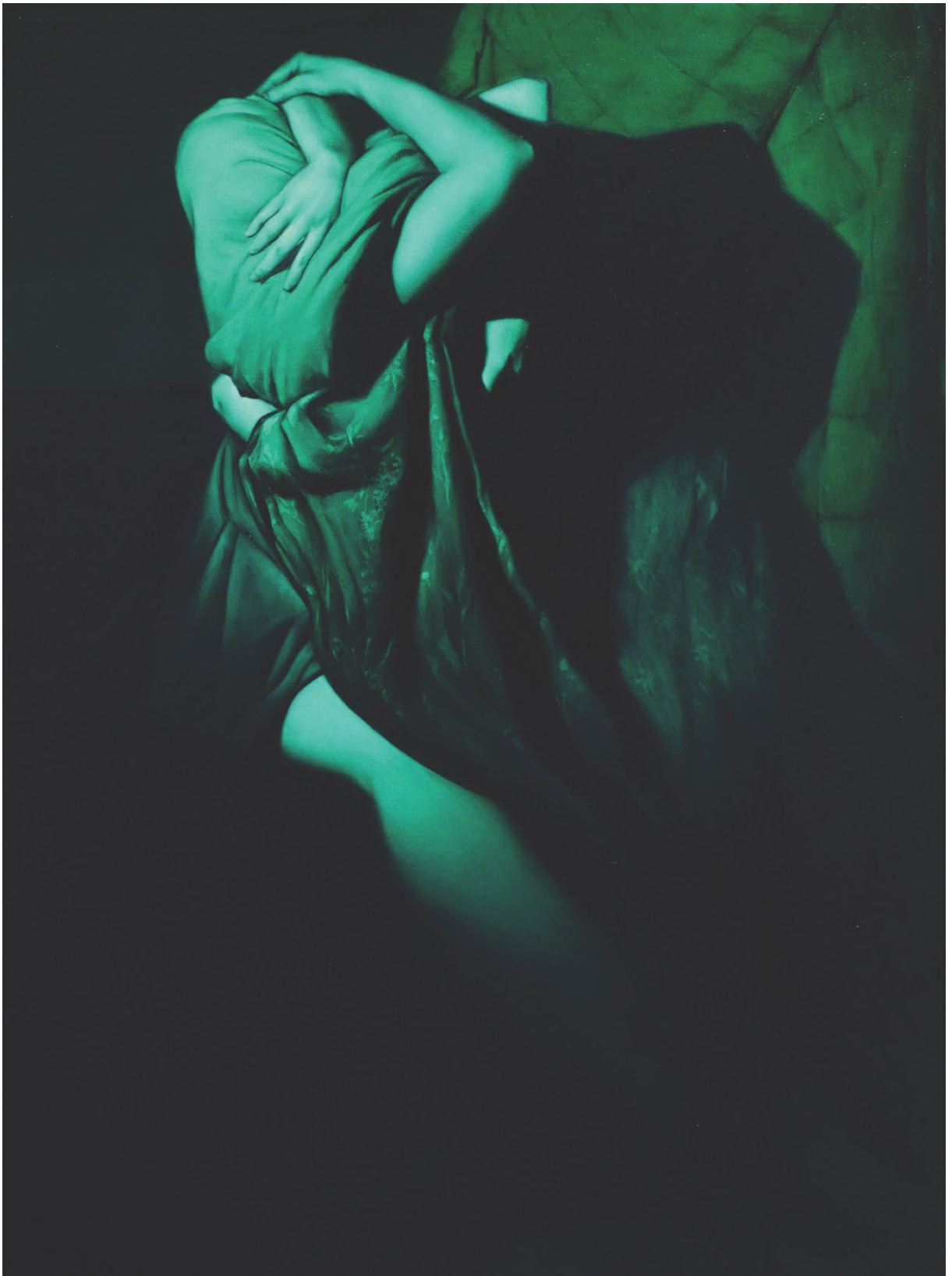
*Sloppy Joe Xanadu, 2022*

oil on canvas

31 x 24 inches



**Jiwoo Choi**  
*Two Characters*, 2022  
oil on canvas  
24 x 40 inches



**Alayna Coverly**  
*Existing Together*, 2022  
oil on canvas  
24 x 18 inches

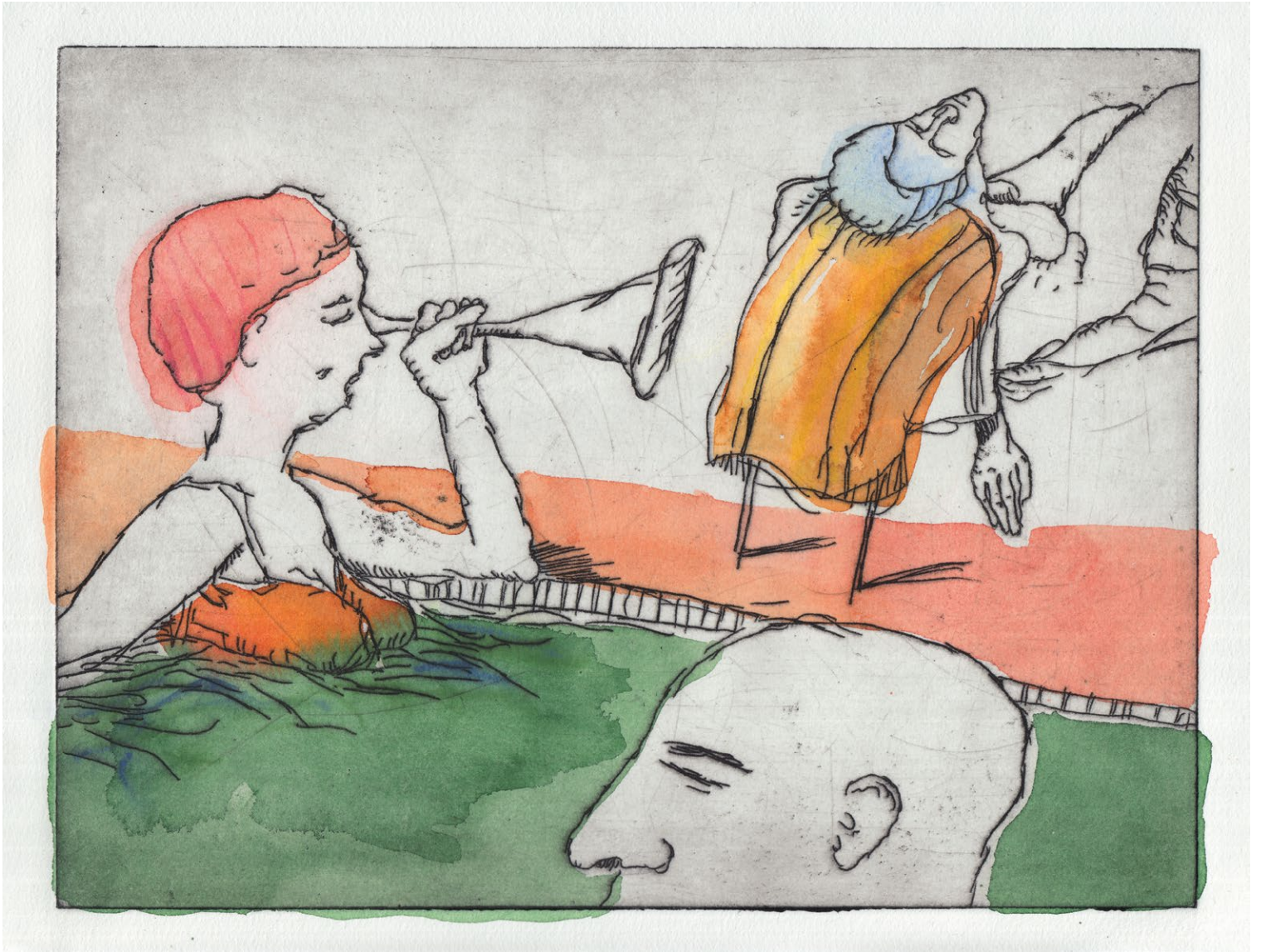




**Todd Cramer**  
*Trampoline*, 2023  
ink on watercolor paper  
51 x 80 inches



**Cheyenne Earp**  
*Ritual Glitch*, 2023  
oil on panel  
8 x 8 inches



**Marisha Falkovich**

*Scene at the Pool*, 2023

soft ground etching, ink, and watercolor crayon on paper

7.5 x 10 inches

edition AP



**Lauren Faulkner**

*Go West*, 2022

oil on embossed paper mounted on canvas

14 x 24 inches



**Stephen Gay**  
*Untitled*, 2023  
oil on canvas  
28 x 26 inches



**Rene Grgic-Dakovic**

*Dayna*, 2022

oil on canvas

48 x 24 inches



**Ling Gui**  
*Summer Outfit*, 2022  
water-based clay and glaze  
9 x 6.5 inches



**Jonathan Harmon**  
*Kirubel*, 2023  
oil, coffee, and ink on canvas  
40 x 30 inches



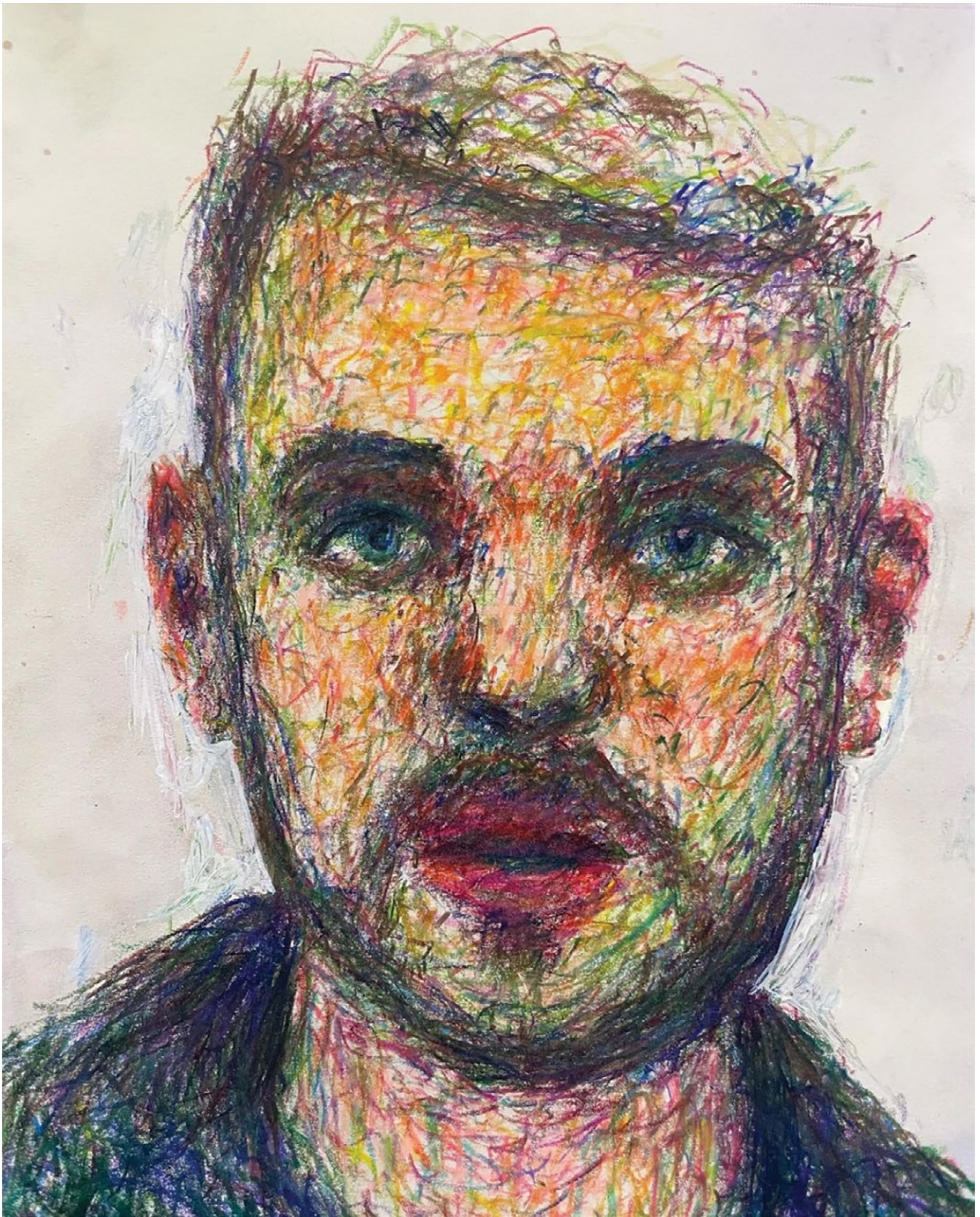


**Manuel Hernandez Sanchez**

*Fez, 2023*

acrylic on shaped canvas

84 x 60 inches



**Alex Hewitt**

*Self-Portrait in Prismacolor Pencil, 2021*

Prismacolor pencil on paper

11 x 9 inches



**Jackson Hill**  
*Wilderness*, 2023  
oil on canvas  
60 x 48 inches



**Sofiya Kuzmina**  
*Self-Portrait in My Room*, 2022  
oil on canvas  
24 x 20 inches



**Kenol Lamour**

*We Retired Now!*, 2022

acrylic, ink, conte crayon, paper, and cotton cheese cloth collage on canvas

36 x 24 inches



**Rin Lee**  
*Sunnyeo (仙女)*, 2022  
oil on linen  
48 x 36 inches



**Carla Leo**  
*Linocut No. 1*, 2022  
linocut on paper  
27 x 33 inches  
edition AP



**Yiting Liu**

*The Origin of the Sound*, 2023

oil on canvas

60 x 48 inches





**Yanqing Low**  
*Fugue*, 2023  
oil on canvas  
63 x 98.25 inches



**Kirubel Mandefro**

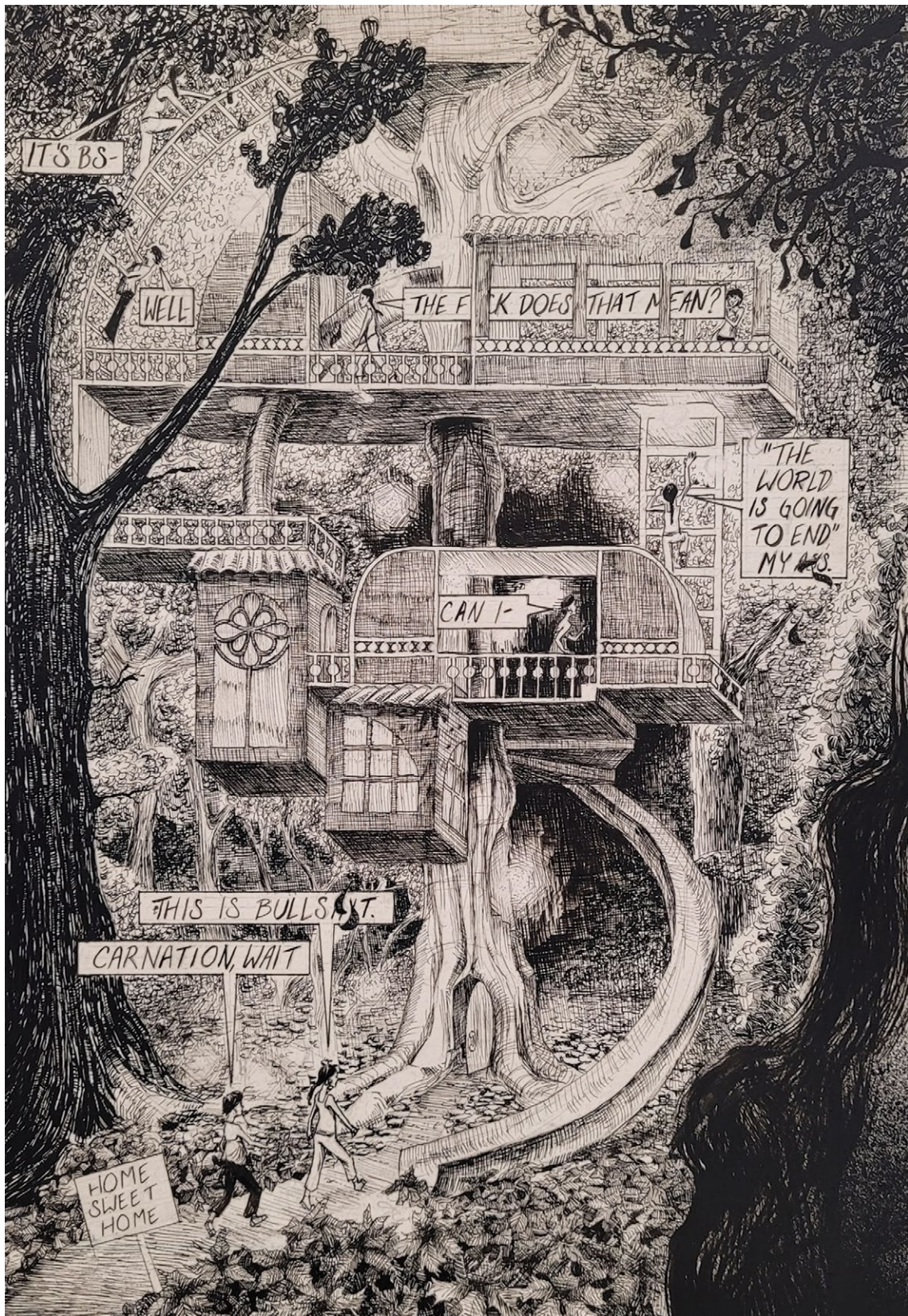
*Contained*, 2022

oil on canvas

30 x 24 inches



**Norie Morimoto**  
*Onions*, 2022  
oil on panel  
12 x 16 inches

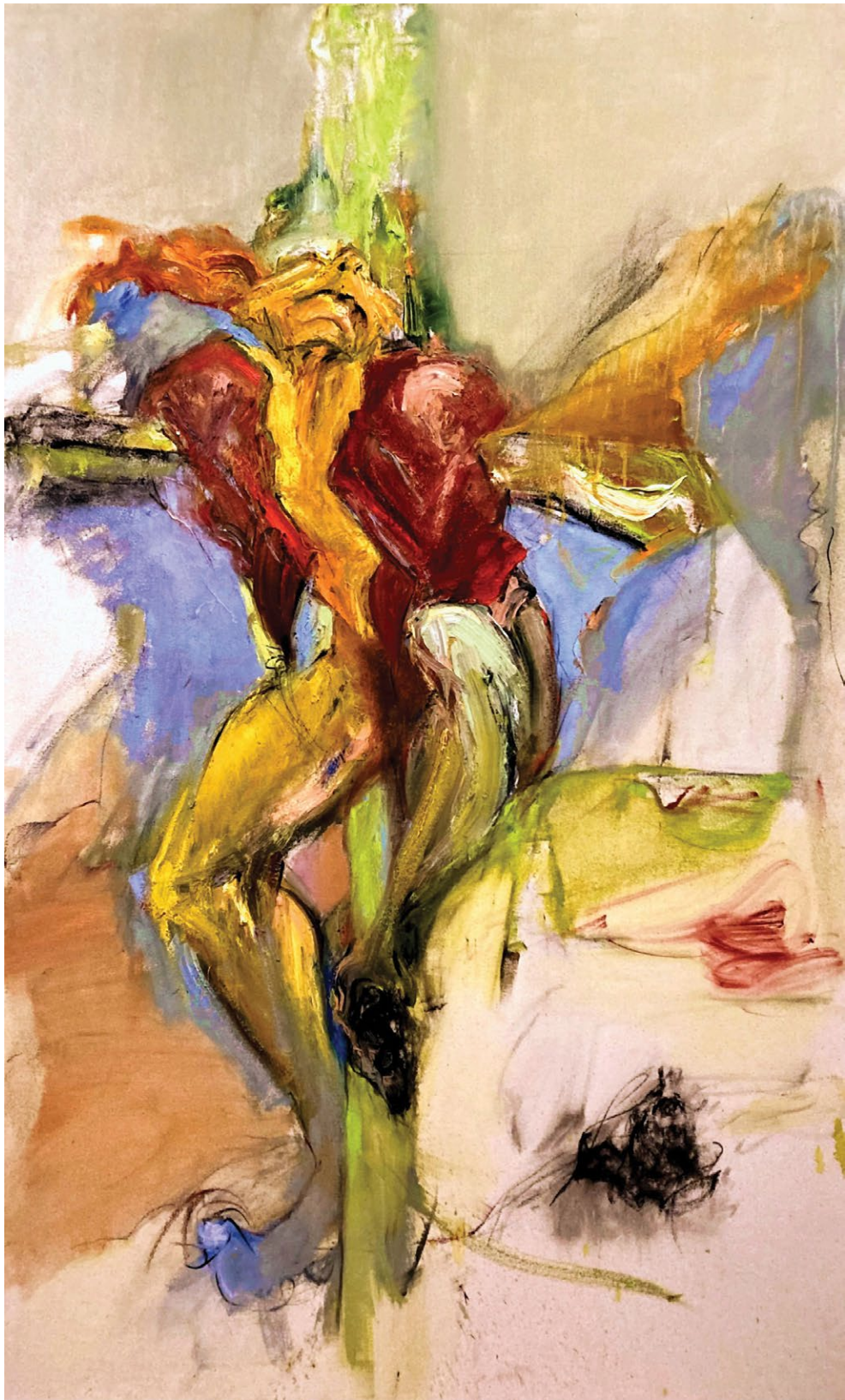


**Alexia Papavasilakis**

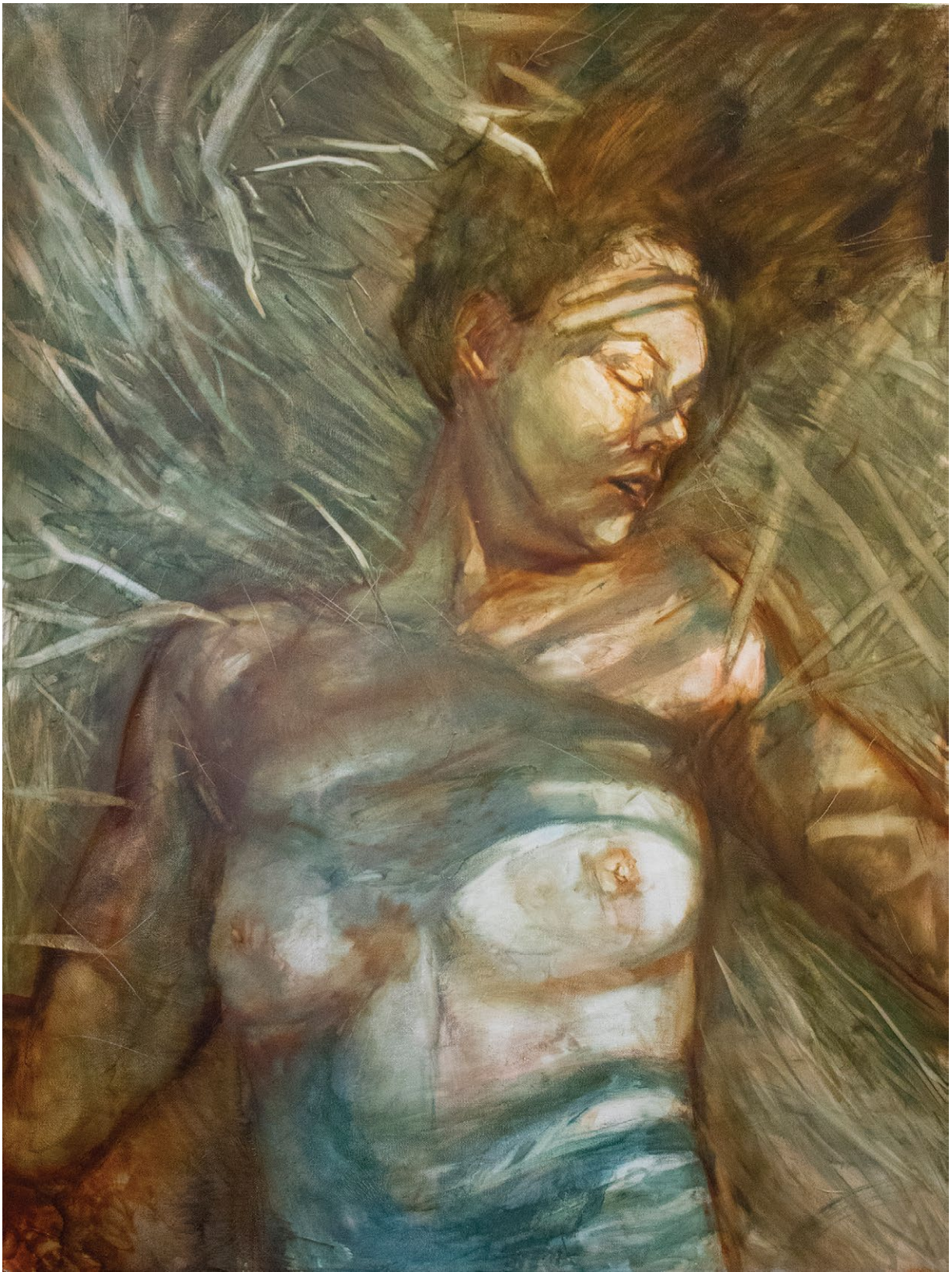
Page 6, 2022

ink on comic book art board

17 x 11 inches



**Jay Peterzell**  
*The Two Thieves*, 2022  
oil and charcoal on canvas  
64 x 39 inches



**Jane Philips**  
*Still*, 2023  
oil on canvas  
40 x 30 inches



**Haley Pesciotta**  
*Red Snapper on a Bun*, 2022  
colored pencil on paper  
7 x 9.5 inches



**Terry Plater**

*Hats Were Always Worn on Sunday Morning, 2023*

oil on prepared paper

47 x 36 inches





**Lucy Kay Plowe**  
*Sunshower*, 2023  
oil, oil stick, and wax on linen  
51 x 62 inches



**Bo Prather**

*Non-obsession with Non-obsession, 2022*

charcoal on paper

30 x 22 inches



**Joshua Ramos**

*Curiosity*, 2022

charcoal, soft pastel, and acrylic on paper mounted on canvas

36 x 48 inches



**Keith Rehm**  
*(P2) 2, 2022*  
oil on panel  
18 x 18 inches



**Michela Josephine Antonette Roman**

*See Me, Please*, 2022

Hydrocal with casein, powdered pigment patina, and mirror

10 x 20 x 17 inches

edition unique



**Stefania Salles Bruins**

*All I've Got*, 2022

oil on aluminum panel

20 x 24 inches



**Barbara Sharp**

*Doctor, Teacher and Son, 2023*

oil on Arches oil paper with hand stamped background

30 x 22 inches



**Darlene Thevenin**

*Memento Mori*, 2022

charcoal and graphite on paper

12.5 x 23 inches





**Tslil Tsemet**  
*The Prom Queen*, 2022  
oil on canvas  
56 x 56 inches



**Chinedu Victor**

*Untitled, 2022*

oil on canvas

60 x 48 inches

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

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