

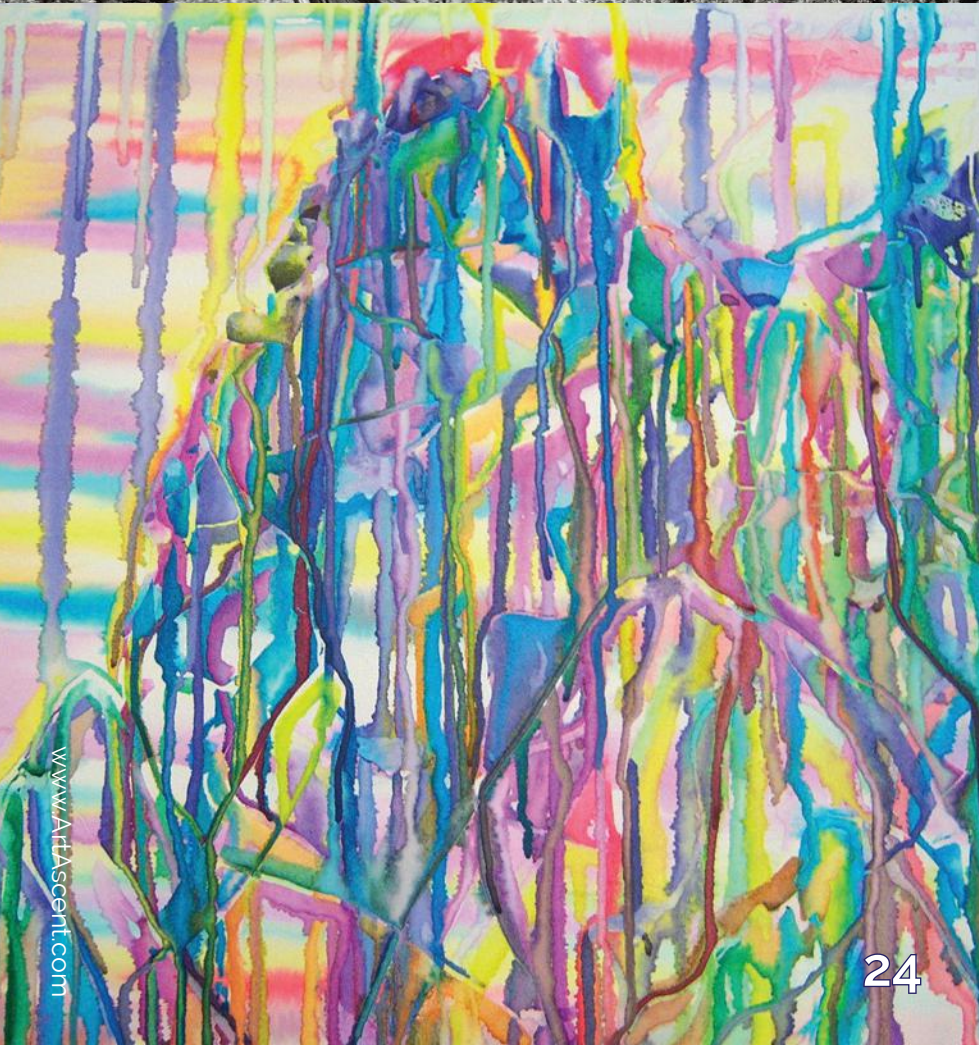
Framing the Masters: Behind the Scenes • Collecting in the Postmodern Context

ArtAscent

Art & Literature Journal 18 April 2016



FEATURE:
Heat



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Heat

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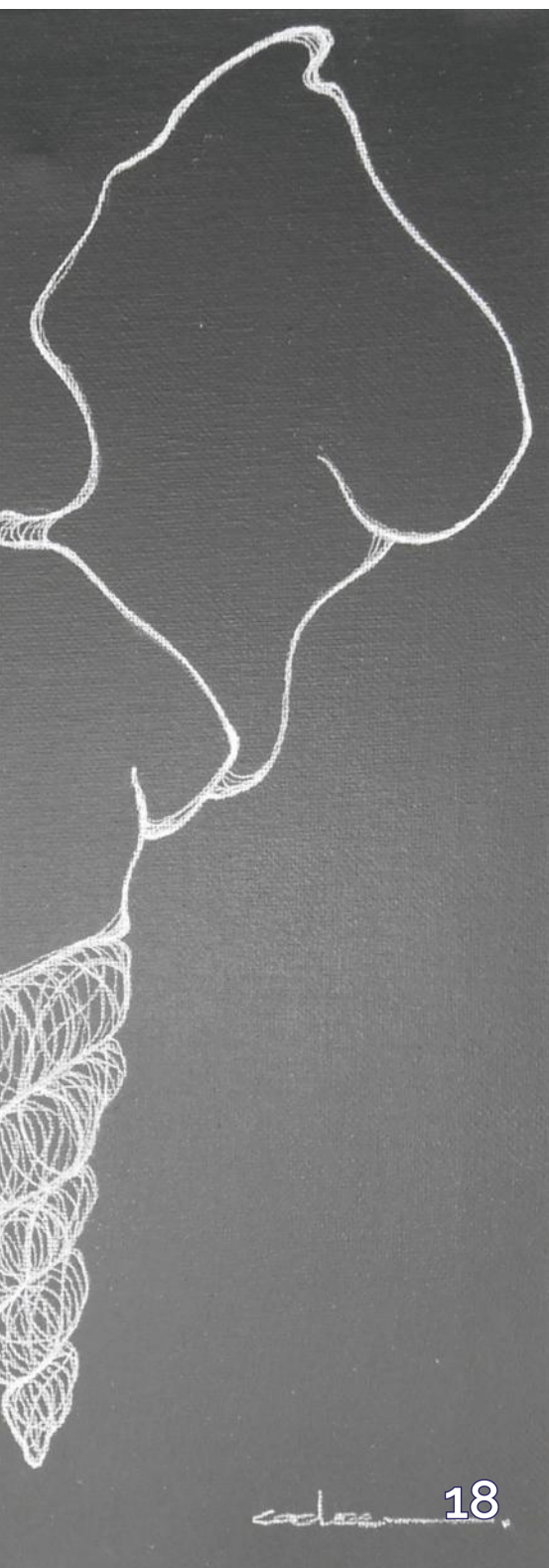
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ArtAscent

Art & Literature Journal

Showcasing outstanding
artists and writers from around the world



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Contributing Editors

Oleksandra Osadcha, Rachel Cohen, LCAT, ATR-BC,
Dr. Alan McNairn, Jennifer K. Hall, Tracy Brown Hamilton

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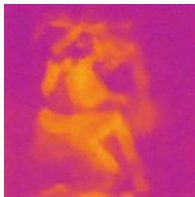
info@ArtAscent.com www.ArtAscent.com

Foreword and Artist Profiles

Oleksandra Osadcha is a freelance art historian and art critic living in Kharkiv, Ukraine. She earned her Master of Art degree in art history at Kharkiv State Academy of Design and Arts, where she is also currently researching her doctoral thesis. An active curator of art exhibitions in her hometown, Oleksandra is interested in the issues concerning visual representation of sacred motifs in contemporary art.

Art Investor Tips

Rachel Cohen received a B.A. in English from Wesleyan University in 2006 and an M.A. in Art Therapy from Pratt Institute in 2012. Currently based in Brooklyn, NY, Rachel is the founder of NA-Plabs, an art advisory service dedicated to researching and promoting work from non-traditional contexts of creation. Previously, she managed a studio and gallery for artists with developmental disabilities. Rachel is also a painter and video artist.



On The Front Cover

Evasive Emissions I
by Lauren C. Sudbrink



On The Back Cover

Paradise
by Michelle Kosak



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ArtAscent

Art & Literature Journal

Showcasing outstanding
artists and writers from around the world

Foreword

Visual art, as well as literature, is based primarily on sensational experiences. When talking about them, it's sometimes difficult to avoid brief excursions into philosophy and physics, as they largely form the background of the artistic vision throughout all the epochs.

Great minds have always been trying to resolve the mystery of the essence of the Universe. Contemporary science considers energy to be its driving force. Heat is one of seven basic forms of energy (along with light, sound, motion and others) and it has been seen as such since the ancient times: our ancestors directly related heat to fire – one of the primordial forces that underlies the substance. For instance, in the Hymn Of Creation from the Vedic Rigveda (c. 1500–1200 BC.), there's a line – "from heat (tapas) was born that one [the universe]."

The Greek philosopher Heraclitus also saw fire with its permanently changeable nature as the root of all existing things – particularly of soul. This idea of heat as an independent natural element had been so influential, that in the 18th century it transformed into the caloric theory that claimed heat to be a fluid that flows from hotter bodies to colder bodies. It wasn't until the 19th century that heat was defined as a form of energy instead of a material substance. Apart from being a crucial scientific issue, heat became an important cultural category, metaphorically applied, not only to physical phenomena, but also to the emotional sphere as well to describe passion, anger or conflict.

It's hard to image a more "diffuse" theme for the issue. However, our expectations concerning the Heat call were lived up to: the artists and writers featured in the 18th volume of ArtAscent Art & Literature Journal will strike your imagination with the variety and deeply personal character of the subjects' interpretations.

By Oleksandra Osadcha

Ryota Matsumoto

www.ryotamatsumotostudio.blogspot.com



Rapid Gaze Polynomials Embedded in Infinite Variables

Mixed media | 25 x 27" | \$1,700



Chaos usually carries negative connotations. However, it can also be a basis for creating new phenomena. For example, as it's commonly known, heat is the manifestation of molecular motion – the chaotic colliding that transforms matter. Ryota Matsumoto is one of the artists who seeks to turn chaos into new order in his works.

The contemporary world is changing faster than ever before. The hardly controlled chaos that evolves from the countless streams of the various sensory information, forces us to look for any "leading light" to orientate our muddled perception toward. Our brain strives to find familiar patterns in the disorder, and Ryota uses this ability in digital drawing.

His compositions are produced at the meeting point of traditional medias and digital art. The artist starts with a hand-drawn draft, which is consequently constructed using image CAD and 3D modelling. The partial results are further transformed with acrylic, ink or scanned images of found objects superimposed over them. On the final stage, the images are processed using various graphic software and plugins. This hybrid method perfectly fits into the major tendencies of contemporary culture, where artists have to balance between the coldness of objectivity and subjective artistic manner.

Ryota's pieces are defined by non-figurativeness and accent on visually, which makes them look close to the abstract art. However, this similarity is formal. Wassily Kandinsky, one of the pioneers of abstract painting, wrote in his *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, that "One of the first steps in the turning away from material objects into the realm of the abstract was, to use the technical artistic term, the rejection of the third dimension, that is to say, the attempt to keep a picture on a single plane.

Modelling was abandoned. In this way, the material object was made more abstract..." And Ryota's art is grounded on the opposite principles: as a designer, he is especially interested in spatio-temporal correlations that are embodied into the multilayered effect of his drawings.

Moreover, abstract art aims toward distancing from any sphere of reality, approaching toward pure emotionality of music, whereas Ryota refers to absolutely substantial things – like, according to the author's words, "dichotomy of organic and inorganic, structural and amorphous, as well as microscopic objects and large structures." With the help of two-dimensional art, he forces his way into the architecture, bridging up these two fields. Knowledge of human optical perception allows him to convert the chaos of forms into new expressive artistic gestures.

Ryota Matsumoto is a Japanese artist, designer and urban planner. Born in 1972 in Tokyo, he was raised in Hong Kong and Japan. In the 1990s, he studied at the Architectural Association in London and Mackintosh School of Architecture, Glasgow School of Art (UK). In 2007, Ryota obtained his M.Arch. Degree from the University of Pennsylvania. In 2008, he founded the Ryota Matsumoto Studio based in Tokyo, which is known as a participant of international exhibitions and winner of numerous art contests.

By Oleksandra Osadcha

Ryota Matsumoto

The Frozen Air Evoked the Analogical Still of Ephemeral Swarms

Mixed media | 20 x 32" | \$1,500



Artist

ArtAscent 11

Quantized Crackles of Emotional Scales
Mixed media | 24 x 38" | \$1,700



Ryota Matsumoto

The Chronology of Imaginary Scrolls

Mixed media | 26 x 35" | \$1,700



Artist

13

ArtAscent

The Celestial Map of Dream Sequences
Mixed media | 27 x 46" | \$1,500



Entity is filled with contradictions: things that create can easily be turned into the tools of destruction; the warming heat can grow into the scorching flame. In his piece *Fire*, writer Jeff Stone reflects upon this amazing duality of life.

Sun – light – fire – life... This is a symbolical chain around which the whole human culture has been organized for thousands of years. They had been worshipped since the times immemorial, influencing numerous beliefs and religions. Sadly, our epoch of the scientific progress hasn't only shaken the foundations of faith, but destroyed the idea of the sun's eternity. It isn't the center of the universe anymore – now it's just one of the milliards of similar stars, and, what's worse, it's as mortal as those stars. Of course, comparing to human's life, the time left to our sun seems infinite, and it's too early to worry about this inevitable situation. Nevertheless, it became a popular subject for so-called apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic genre in literature – it's enough to mention the final of Herbert Well's *The Time Machine* (1895) that describes a dying Earth beneath a swollen, red sun.

In his short story, Jeff follows the tradition of apocalyptic genre, telling about the final minutes before the most destructive and spectacular show in the universe – the explosion of a supernova. The author masterfully applies the difference in "zoom" of the narration, giving at one moment a detailed description of the situation with the eyes of a heroine and switching to a general plan at another. This creates a profound, panoramic vision, which is strengthened with bright images appealing to our physical senses.

The writing is deprived of terror, panic and grim atmosphere, so typical for such type of subjects. On the contrary, Jeff tries to reveal the sublimity of the moment, which, for sure, exceeds the capacity of humans' imaginations. He shifts the tragedy to a philosophic level, prompting readers to accept the idea that nothing can come from nothing and, thus, can't disappear without a trace, and the end of one thing always means the beginning of another. All in all, as Picasso said, "Every act of creation is first an act of destruction."

Jeff Stone has a solid teaching experience: he worked for two community colleges and a foreign university for 15 years. Since December 2015, he has been running an online blog *Rolling the Stone*, where he publishes some writing sketches that participate in the Flash Fiction Challenge. Jeff's supernatural novel *Lighting Strikes Twice* will soon be released as a series on a digital publishing platform Channillo. Another of his recent novels, *Beyond the Blue*, is an intriguing story of love, loss and baseball. *Well Enough* was published by ArtAscent in the December 2015 *Haunting* issue.

By Oleksandra Osadcha



Fire

Heat had driven the survivors underground. Those who refused to build subterranean dwellings or adapt to cave life were dead. Even the extreme poles had become too hot. Although they'd tapped into aquifers and pumped remaining surface water below, including the desalinated variety, there would never be enough water to put out the fire.

But the dearth of water was less of an immediate problem than the knowledge of it. People understood what was happening, not only with their minds, but with their viscera. The entire planet had become one big prison, filled with lifers waiting for an inevitable last breath. Thinking about the reality of the situation drove many people above ground even when the heat was at lethal levels. Now she was left alone to ponder it all.

Many people speculated that deeply bunkered government officials would pour all their confidential technology into one last desperate grasp at survival. NASA had expedited the colonization of Mars once the reality of the situation became apparent, but then they realized the demise of Mars was also inevitable. Human technology – alternately pushed forward and shoved backward by the passions of innate desires – had reached its limits.

Models suggested the sun would eventually exhaust its fuel reserves and become a ravenous red giant, but those estimates were billions of years away from the event on the horizon. No one had really understood black holes. The greatest scientific minds were beginning to realize they were not only the ultimate destroyers, but also creators. Many scientists had begun to envision white holes, the aptly named inverse of black holes – capable of moulding the matter black holes had rearranged into fantastic new creations. Imagine stuffing the minutes of a dull meeting into a shredder and milliseconds later holding the complete works of William Shakespeare analyzed by someone like Seamus Heaney. Once an element has been sucked through the void and thrust into the light, it is unimaginably transformed, like a bundle of convoluted elements crystallized into a cosmic crown.

Rocky planets were falling into black holes, those magnificent mysteries. It might be reasonable to think those planets were disintegrated, but primitive man had—at the very least—instinctively suspected something important while holding the flesh of fresh prey over an open flame. No matter is ever really destroyed. As primitive man ate charred meat, a building block that connected synaptic pathways of an expanding brain, he viscerally understood a great transformation was unfolding. He could not articulate it, but he did sense it. Humans would later credit Epicurus, Lomonosov, Black, Cavendish, Rey, Stas, Mahavira, Einstein and others with the idea that mass could not be destroyed, but only transformed.

Perhaps there really is nothing completely original under the sun. Perhaps everything conceived as ingenious is merely an inspired rendition of an old refrain, an aesthetically pleasing apology for inertia's tyranny.

As tears filled her eyes, she fingered artifacts of the deceased while recalling their last conversation.

"Why don't you come with us and watch the end?"

"It's already warm enough for me down here."

"Yes, but there's nothing down here."

"There's probably nothing left up there."

"We have to see."

She didn't know how much they saw before their end, but she knew she was alone with only reverberations of those who'd surfaced when the heat was too great, alone with thoughts of those who'd dreamed of a way out. But wasn't out really just a relative perspective? There was out of this world, out of time and the outer limit of reality in all its totality.

She wondered why she kept persisting even while she thought she could be the last living person on the planet. She had books, food and fire – that essential instrument of human progress. A little candle could light a cavernous room down here, but she knew the big fire from above was coming for her. The sun was going to consume earth much sooner than scientists had predicted, but scientists hadn't foreseen the violent collision of black holes that had knocked the sun off course.

Although the cave was no longer cool, she still managed to sleep at times. She still managed to recover all sorts of lost things in her dreams. Mostly she dreamed about the surface, the way it was before fauna and flora began perishing in the heat. It was during one of those dreams that the air she was breathing became like the inside of a furnace.

People were surrounding her in a cacophony of footsteps and jumbled words. Emotions associated with the faces that began suffocating her in a sea of claustrophobia pulsated against every millimeter of her skin. When she opened her mouth to scream everything melted. Features faded from faces, which became a solid landscape – an endless desert offering no oasis. She stared into the endless ochre, waiting for the end of sentient existence. Cracks appeared. A solid black snake slithered toward her. As it struck, it became a flat ribbon, a flat ribbon unwinding in front of her. A ray of sun struck the ribbon, producing a burst of colours she'd never even imagined.

Her human concept of time lost meaning. The movie of her life transpired, as others like it uncoiled all over the planet. Earth was a memory. Stardust which had formed humanity flowed back into the cosmos. She no longer feared the fire.



Latex 2: Nurse

Digital collage, acrylic, ink on paper | 18 x 24" | \$432



In the oriental tradition, Yang is typically associated with masculinity, brightness and heat; whereas Yin's properties are femininity, darkness and coldness. Even Aristotle believed that women generate less heat than men. Has the perception of female/male sexuality changed over the centuries? The artist known as CADOC touches upon this question in his oeuvre.

It occurred that the opposition of heat/cold – male/female is so deeply rooted in common consciousness that even today the creators keep on referring to it constantly, namely CADOC. His artistic style is deeply rooted in surrealist tradition. From the earliest stage, surrealism was chiefly grounded on heterosexuality. As Justin Vicari wrote, "It wasn't just any heterosexuality, but an extreme conception of romantic love, passionate love,"¹ accompanied by rigidly marked gender roles. That's why woman became one of the key motifs of Surrealism. "The problem of woman," André Breton wrote in the Second Manifesto of Surrealism (1929), "is the most marvelous and disturbing problem in all the world."

And like the surrealists, CADOC in essence doesn't depict woman, but rather create her archetype – ideal or idealized, unreal, seductive and scaring at the same time. As the result, he comes up with the artistic mythology of femininity in which woman is always represented through the prism of the male gaze. To convey his message, CADOC works in mixed media technique, amplifying digital collage with charcoal, acrylic paints and/or ink. The artist openly admits his connection with Surrealism, inserting direct quotes from the paintings of its followers, such as arachnid-like legs of Salvador Dali and seashells one can see on the range of Max Ernst's canvases. Furthermore, the latter is regarded as a female symbol in numerous cultures, echoing the "leitmotif" of CADOC's pieces.

However, it would be wrong to consider CADOC a mere epigone of Surrealism, as he, along with absorbing some of the principles of this movement, managed to develop highly recognizable style. The author sticks to a minimalistic, pointedly graphic language, noticeable for smooth, winding lines that are immensely provocative. His images are powerful visual and emotional triggers that appeal to the sensuality (inner heat) of the viewer that is often hidden and oppressed in contemporary society.

CADOC is a British visual artist. He began his creative endeavors with installations in public spaces, believing that art should be widely accessible and intertwined with the surrounding environment. For his projects, CADOC used such public spaces as theatres, subways, libraries, cafés, telephone poles, train stations, government buildings, billboards, public transport and even "pop-up" hangings at Tate, MOMA and Versailles. For the past eight years, the artist has been paying most of his attention to graphic and mixed-media techniques, exhibiting his works in various shows. Recent examples include: Sin City Gallery, Tieton 10x10, Au Naturel, Miami Nude should be mentioned.

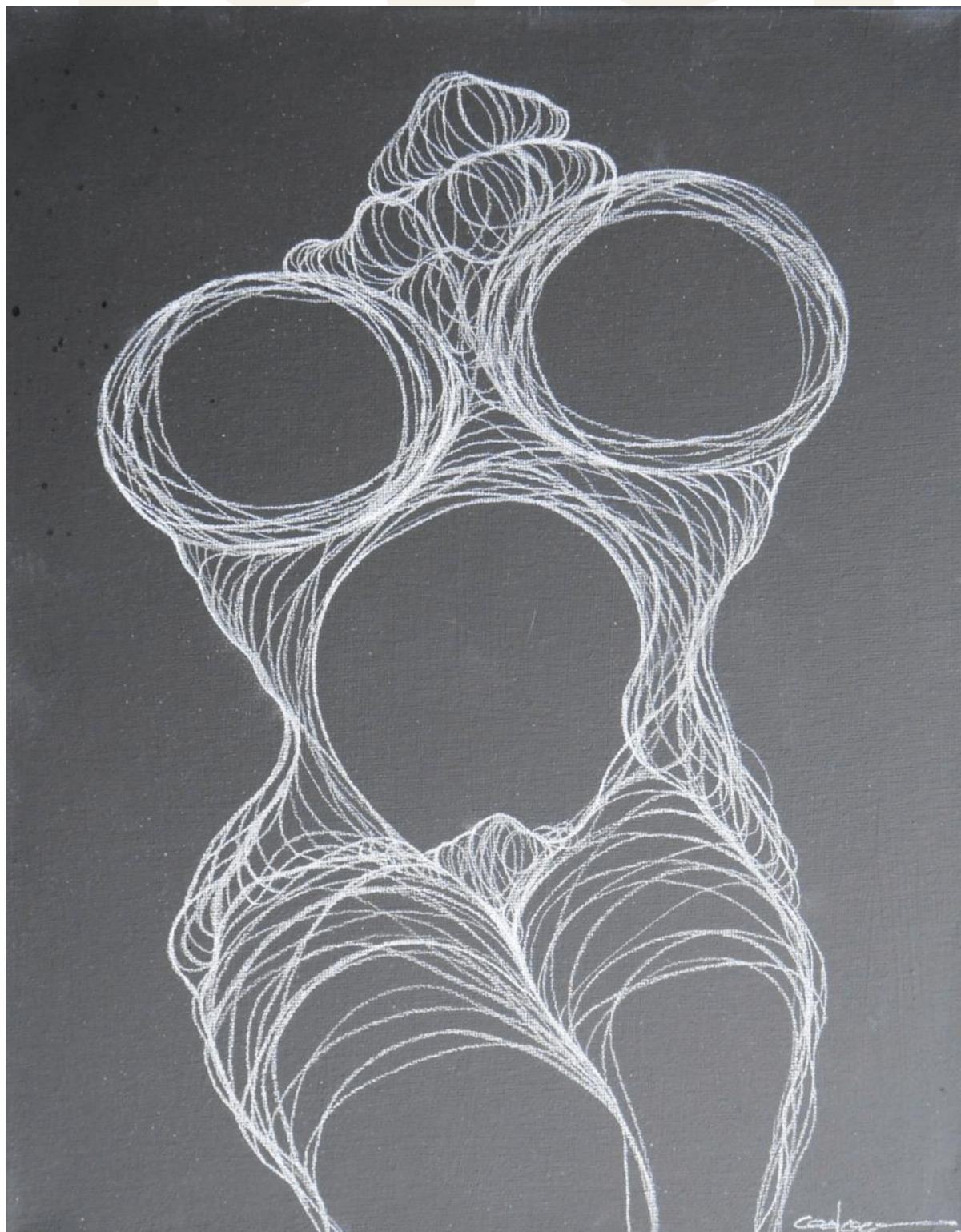
By Oleksandra Osadcha

¹ Vicari, Justin. *Mad Muses and the Early Surrealists*. McFarland, 2011. Print. p.21.

CADOC

Body #8

Charcoal on canvas | 11 x 14" | NFS



Artist

Nude: Alice Denham

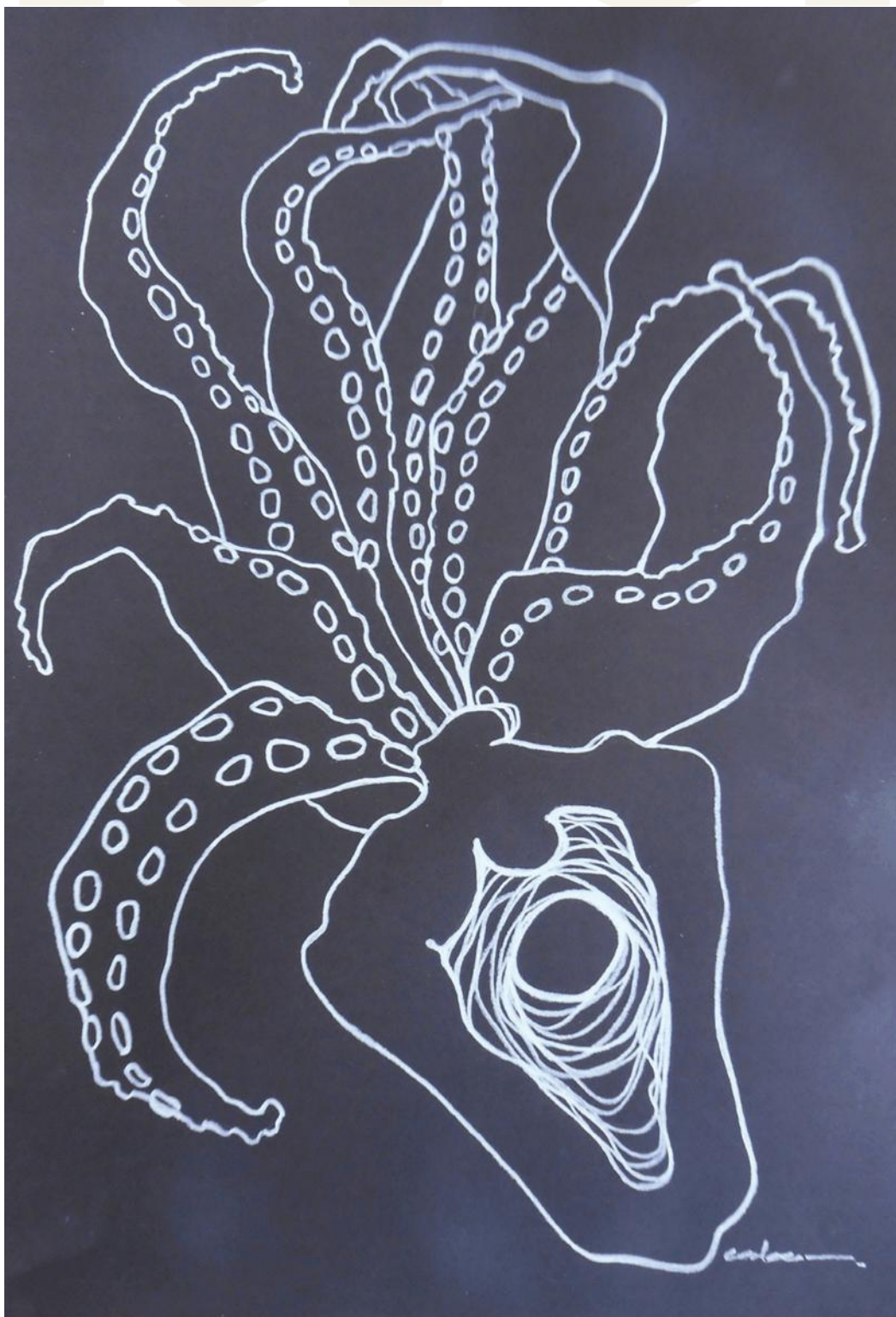
Digital collage, acrylic, ink on canvas | 12 x 12" | NFS



CADOC

Tentacular #16

Charcoal, acrylic on canvas | 12 x 18" | \$216



Artist

Penthouse 2 #16

Digital collage, ink on paper | 8 x 11" | \$176



Lauren Moss

www.artistlaurenmoss.com



Sedona

Watercolour on canvas board | 16 x 20 x 0.125" | \$290



Biographies of some artists remind of the Phoenix – a legendary bird that can reborn from its own ashes. Similarly, creators go through pain-of-life troubles, which turn them into the heat of transformations. Lauren Moss believes cathartic experience to be the element that connects the hearts of an artist and a viewer.

Lauren works in various techniques – from installation to printmaking and collage, or acrylic painting. It's not her preferences, but rather a desire to depict the vibrancy of the surrounding reality, that determines her choice of the medium for this or that work. Along with non-figurative compositions or sketches of human figures, the artist refers to the landscape motif, which are still represented through the prism of the abstract art.

The featured series of Lauren's watercolours depicts mountain 'scenery.' We use scenery in inverted commas, since the author obviously distanced herself from the mimetic capturing of a certain place. She seeks to demonstrate a vision of mountains as an allegory for human existence. Knowing the limpid and fluid character of watercolours, the artist applies bright, gentle pigments on the vertical, slightly slanted surface to get vivid runs of paint. The achieved texture, together with masking solution, produces a truly 'mountain' effect.

From our school years, we all know that mountains are the result of the tectonic plates' collision, when the energy of the earth's core heat transforms into the energy of motion. As the result – amazing geological formations, none like the other, are born. The same way our personalities are formed by the grandiose "tectonic shifts" (whether happy or traumatizing ones) and inner flame that give everyone a possibility to shape our uniqueness.

Curiously, but it wasn't before the beginning of Romanticism in the early 19th century that artists recognized the aesthetic side of the mountain landscape. It had been considered ugly, then at least frightening and dangerous. An art critic and watercolourist of the Victorian era John Ruskin was one of the first great minds who declared his admiration toward mountains, saying, "Mountains are the beginning and the end of all natural scenery." He noted that, when looking at them closer, they're not droningly serrated and peaked, but curved and variable in forms, like clouds; moreover, mountains are not stiff, but permanently changing. Sharing Ruskin's rapture with this natural phenomenon, Lauren transfers his observations to human nature. She sees the acceptance of our individual experience and dissimilitude as the main treasure that can turn each life into a masterpiece.

Lauren Moss is a Texas-born artist. She graduated from the University of Texas at Tyler in 2005 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Art History. Between 2013 and 2014 she received the RAW Director's Highlight Award. In 2015, the artist relocated with her family to Sewickley, Pennsylvania. Lauren is an active participant of art exhibitions all over the U.S., displaying her works in Austin, Brooklyn, Hudson, Bastrop, Portland, Sacramento, Seattle, Maine and Pittsburgh. Apart from that, she is involved with nine art leagues across Texas and Pennsylvania.

By Oleksandra Osadcha

Lauren Moss

Glint of Gold

Watercolour on canvas board | 16 x 20 x 0.125" | \$290



Artist

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ArtAscent

Mountains

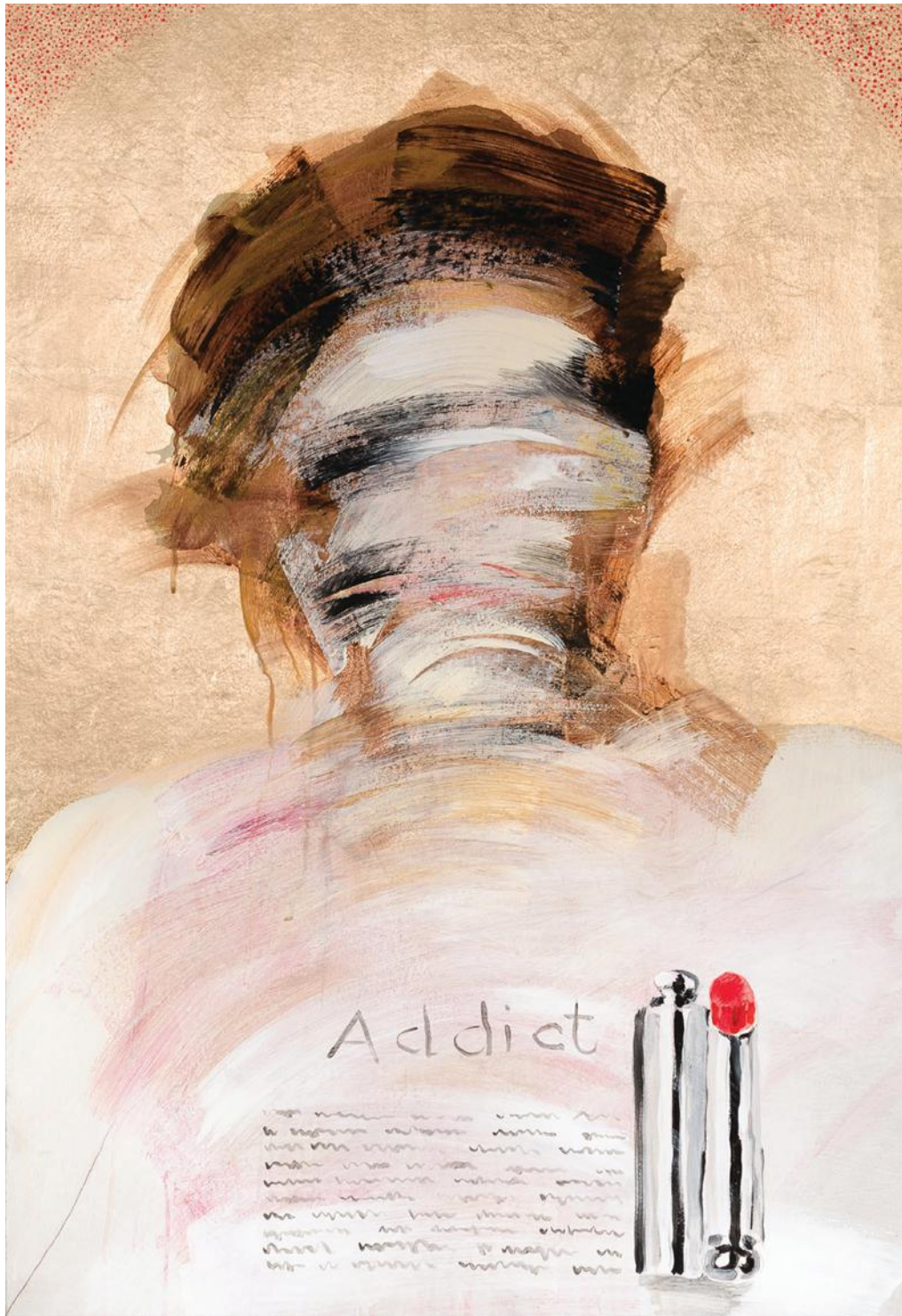
Watercolour on canvas | 17 x 17 x 1.5" | \$421





Addict
Acrylic on cardboard, gilt | NFS

RIGHT PAGE: Inevitable
Acrylic on canvas, gilt | NFS



Lauren C. Sudbrink

www.laurencsudbrink.com

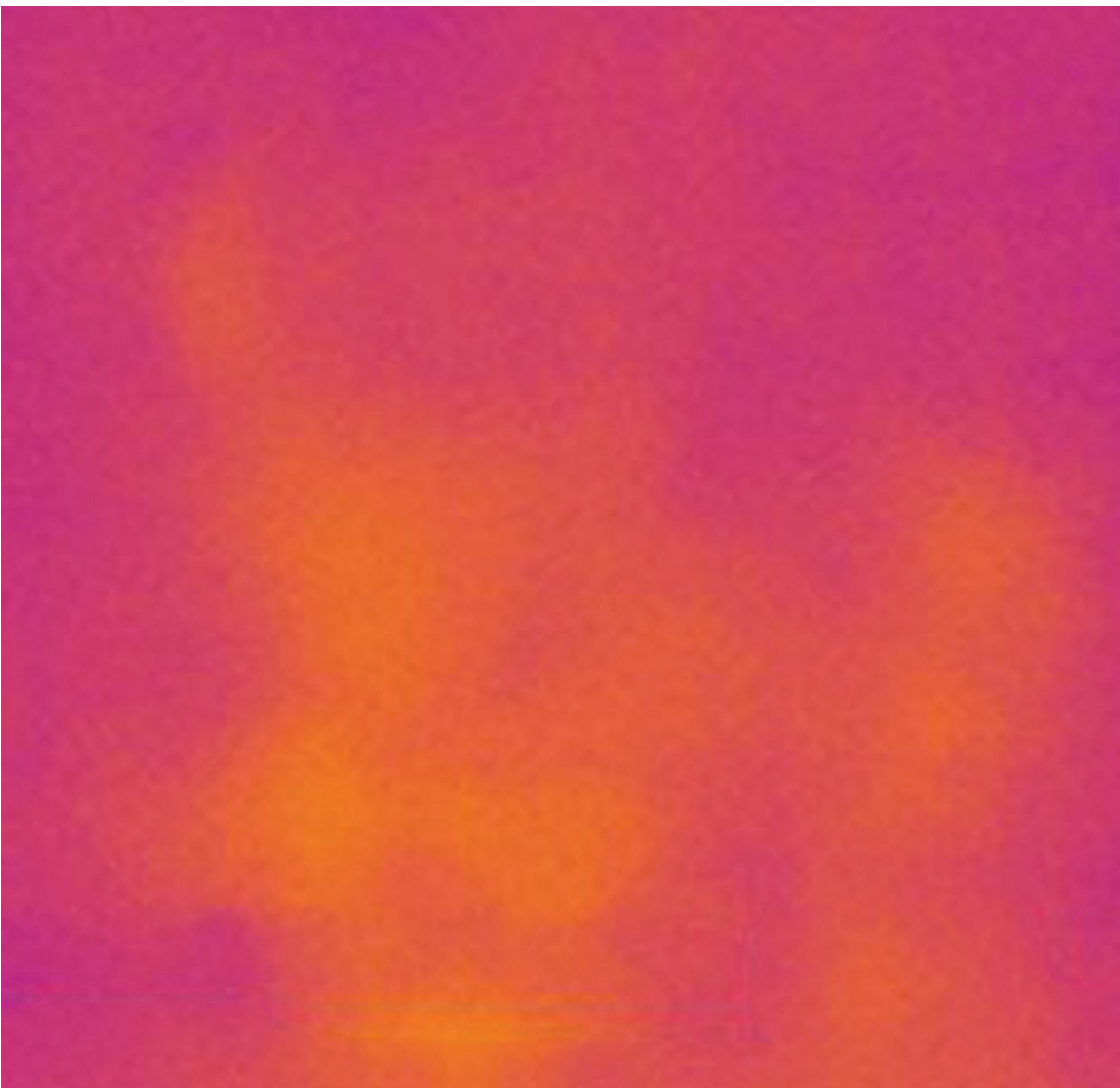


Evasive Emissions IV

Archival inkjet print on transparency film | 42 x 42" | \$2,500



Evasive Emissions III
Archival inkjet print on transparency film | 42 x 42" | \$2,500





Lady in Red

Mixed media | 25 x 50 x 2" | Sold





Heartfelt Heat

From a foreign place it did come
Hence bidding farewell to foolishly awaiting an apology

Unable to tame all that was rising from within
The blaze hastily took over

Flaring up like hostile fireworks
The last remaining calmness now fully aflame

All surroundings suddenly masked by the unfriendly glow
Only amplifying the heinous pain and ignorant cries

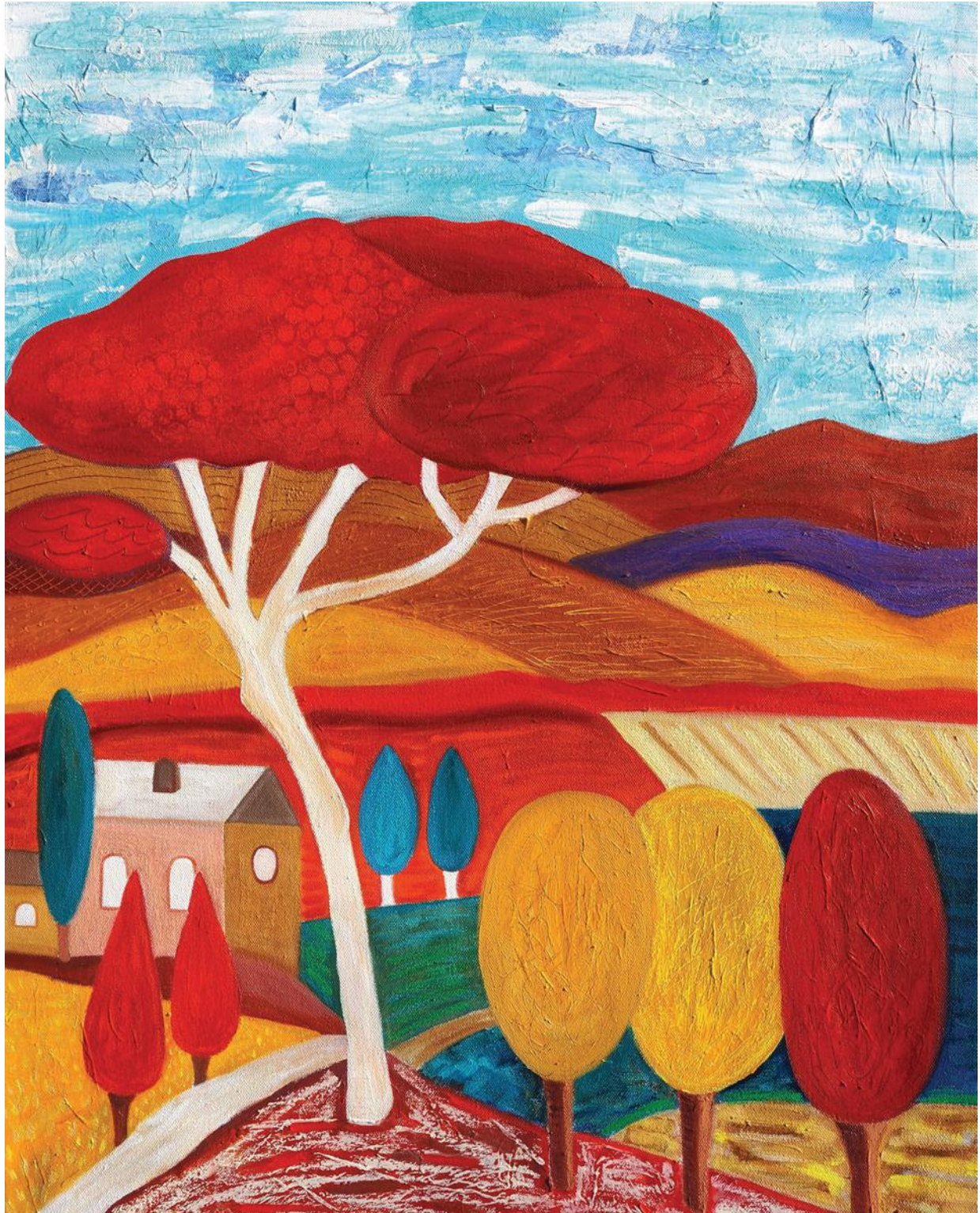
Feeling powerless I slowly step away
Taking along the burning pieces of all I ever wished for

With sparks still erupting toward the north, east, south and west
I am directionless with no clear pathways ahead



A Song for the Season

Oil and mixed media on canvas | 22 x 28 x 1.5" | \$785



Guardians of the Garden
Oil and mixed media on canvas | 39.5 x 39.5 x 1.5" | \$2,000





Collateral Heat

Air Force Staff Sargent, Lance Aubrey, hated Vegas. Too damn hot and too many damn people. He joined the Air Force because he liked flying his dad's Cessna 172 over wide-open spaces as nothing is bigger than a blue empty sky stretching as far as the eye can see over eastern Montana prairies.

Dumbass ignorant thinking, thought Lance often. I should have known better.

It wasn't the hours that restricted his access to blue sky. He had plenty of mission hours every week. It was his damn assignment to a reconnaissance squadron flying missions over Yemen, Somalia, Afghanistan and Iraq that ground his white ass to the Nevada desert every day. He flew missions, he just never left the goddamn ground.

As a remotely piloted aircraft sensor operator, Lance bombed the shit out of more people than he could have imagined when he was a kid on the ranch. But now, when pressed by folks back home he told them his missions with the Air Force were top secret. That impressed them and more importantly shut them up. He didn't bother to tell them he guided missiles dropped by MQ-9 Reapers—or damn drones as the public knew them.

Lance swished Diet Pepsi around his mouth—a nervous habit he formed the last two years, every time he was given the authorization to "light" a Hellfire missile at an insurgent. Tonight's mission was a signature-strike, which essentially meant the hard intel, wasn't so hard. Rather this "insurgent" simply smelled like a terrorist, walked like a terrorist and acted like a terrorist enough so that the conclusion was that he must be a damned terrorist.

The insurgent, #479-Eg, was parked outside a small compound in southeastern Yemen. The squadron first noticed him three months ago and had been tracking him ever since. Within three months he had visited the houses of five known terrorists, always parking his black Toyota pick-up, with a red topper on it, outside the building for about 10-minute stops.

Lance waited for the suspect to exit the building. The control rooms AC felt good on his hot face. If all went according to plan, Lance would smoke the terrorist 40 seconds after he drove away from the compound.

Soon the suspect exited the building and the Diet Pepsi began sloshing in Lance's mouth.

The insurgent put the bag in the back of the pick-up before hopping in and driving away.

"Stay on target," stated Lance's pilot calmly, sitting four feet away, staring at his own flight monitor.

Lance watched the Toyota drive down the dusty road.

"Fire away," said the pilot.

Lance's fingers felt electric as he watched the monitor's digital clock display. He was seven seconds out.

With precision he kept the cross hairs on the moving truck.

7—6—5—4—3—2—1—fire.

Lance swallowed his Diet Pepsi, guiding the hellfire missile with a laser to the speeding Toyota.

Ahmed waited patiently in the truck for his uncle, Naseem, who went into the house for a sack of bread to sell at the open market. Ahmed spun a football in his hands to waste time as he sat in the truck's passenger seat. His uncle left the truck running as Ahmed had the air conditioning aimed at his small face.

At 12, his world was good and simple. He wanted to play football for Yemen when he got older.

In an hour, Ahmed would play a pick-up game with his friends outside of Sana'a and he hoped Tawakkol would be there watching with her big pretty brown eyes. Yesterday she had shouted his name after he scored. "Ahmed! Ahmed!"

He wanted to hear her shout his name again, and this time, he would turn and wave and smile. That is what his uncle had instructed.

"You have a beautiful smile, Ahmed. Share it with her, and maybe she will smile back," said Naseem.

Ahmed felt warm thinking about her. Maybe he would get lucky and score two or three goals. He would try his hardest. He wanted to score for Tawakkol smiles.

His uncle jumped into the truck, clapping his hands. "Fresh bread and a football, match, Ahmed. We live like Kings," he laughed.

Ahmed nodded, laughing. "Yes, uncle, like Kings."

Naseem reached over to ruffle Ahmed's thick black hair.

The heat from the Hellfire missile sliced downward through the air.

The missile hit.

Simultaneously the air sucked out of Ahmed's lungs.

The explosion was massive.

The football incinerated.

Ahmed's small body exploded into many pieces, scattering along the dusty road.

The heat from the blast rippled through the air.

A desert thistle, at the perimeter of the burst radius, swayed against the blast of hot air.

An Old World swallow tail butterfly, now stronger than Ahmed would ever be, alit the thistle, took flight from the hot wind pressing against its butter cream wings, tacking drunk-like, through the air, hundreds of meters away from the warm blood seeping into the hot sand from the hand and foot and leg and head and ear and burning thigh ripped from a boy in love with his small life because the beast from the past will never tame the spark, the fire, the heat that forged its being.



Heat of Battle

Digital photo print | 12 x 18" | \$60









Mark A. Bernhardt

Hell on Earth

Digital photo print | 12 x 18" | \$60



Dance Fever
Digital photo print | 12 x 18" | \$60





Stab The Unfair

Plastic, needles, acrylic on T-shirt | 34 x 15" | \$800



Melting Fear
Plastic, steel, acrylic on T-shirt | 24 x 15"





The Cartoon of Meteorism

Acrylic on canvas | 43 x 31 x 2" | \$900





Incendio

Smoke started to rise from the primitive bow-drill.
Large and inflamed her centre grew
The shadow of a small flicker was seen
A fetus was born
The fire crackled in doubt, wavering
The child questioned, wondering
The fire was fueled
The child, cultivated and taught
Its flames continued to roar
Her transformation persisted The fire shared its
warmth with others
Her grace spread to the destitute like wildfire
The fire's glow propagated
She set the world ablaze
In time, the fire grew dim
With age, death greeted her
Like a phoenix, heated flames engulfed her
From the ashes, a new life, a new fire.



Hellraiser

Digital airbrush image on 200 gm heavy gloss paper | \$45





Gillian Smith
www.gilliansmith1973.wix.com/gilliansmithart

Solar Flare
Acrylic on canvas | 47.24 x 35.43 x 1.38" | \$800



**The Autistic Shooter**

Ink and digital colour | 11 x 17" | \$75





Alexander Butterfield

www.alexander.photos

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ArtAscent

Siren's Song

Photographic print | 16 x 9" | \$500



Morgan Ryan

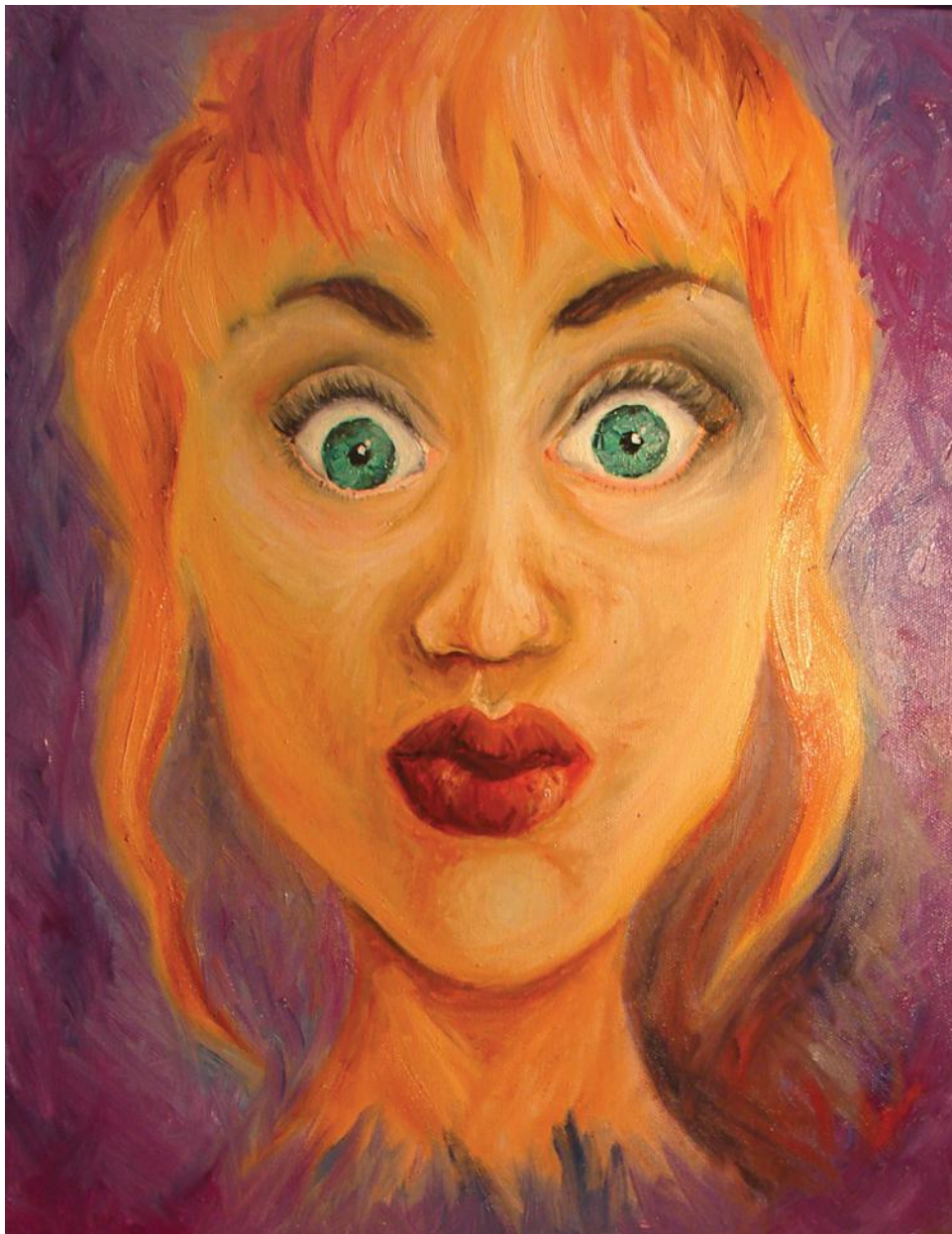
a.k.a. Cross-Eyed Morgan

www.facebook.com/morgan.ryan.art



Orange (Self Portrait)

Oil on canvas | 13.5 x 18 x 1.5" | \$265



Fembot (On Chair)
Modelling/photography, digital print





Jalapeños

You were too hot to handle, I said, trying to make light with corny clichés. But you could not be consoled. It was hard for me to accept that anyone had the power to upset you so profoundly; somebody other than me.

You had this thing for red-hot chili peppers; once, I got you these festive little patio lights shaped like jalapeños. You plugged them in and fired up the BBQ. You tossed some ribs and some scorching chilies on the grill. We were panting after a few charred masterpieces. You poured some Chardonnay over ice and we watched the night rise and the cars go by.

What does it say about me to admit that the times we walked the train tracks at dawn were the best days of my life? You once got me drunk enough to kiss you, right on the only dance floor in town, which was really just a dusty circular strip of cement behind the ATM machine at Girls Girls Girls. We both had boyfriends. But sober, we trekked every inch of rail that ran through this county. We threw pebbles at trains from bridges and the overpass behind your cousin's farm. You played the Will You Still Love Me If game. If I was fat, if I had a lisp, if I was a ruthless CEO... As if. I couldn't live without loving you. You had on white and red striped socks and a Polaroid camera, and I would have done anything to be with you forever.

I don't know sometimes, what I'm thinking, you are saying, jostling me back to the present. You know, I just get too intense sometimes. Way too intense.

Well, you don't scare me, I blurt.

You nod. Still, you say. I think...I've just got to get a grip, is all. Sometimes I feel like everything is out of control. You think for a moment. Most of the time, actually, you say.

I picture putting a cold cloth on your forehead, imagine dipping your bloody fingers into antiseptic and bandaging them carefully, tending to ravaged nails, nursing torn and swollen cuticles.

I'm too volatile, you're saying. It's always been that way. I spin off the chart, no matter which direction.

I remember once when you'd come home after taking off for the ocean. You showed me scars on your wrists, and I thought they were beautiful like feathers.

Today your shirt is black and neon pink and says hot stuff, emblazoned in stencil type.

I tell you to down a handful of Valium and a couple of glasses of wine, our reliable vices. You'll feel better in the morning, I say. But then you tell me you are tired of all that. You really think you were wrong this time and you want to finally start dealing with the things you mess up.

You say you've come to understand the rules of someone else's self-preservation. I'm too intense, you repeat. I'm always going off the deep end, and it hurts people, and it hurts me. And I think I need to see somebody about it. I need to do something about it. Something is wrong, and I think it could be empowering, to take some responsibility. I think I need to get help.

I want to tell you how all these things, all this damage, all this intensity, this is the part of you that makes me high. The rush of you, it is inseparable from all this, it is this ride that I crave, this fever pitch.

It never occurred to me that you did not love these things as I did, and I see in one strange moment that I don't want you to want out, to find your way out.

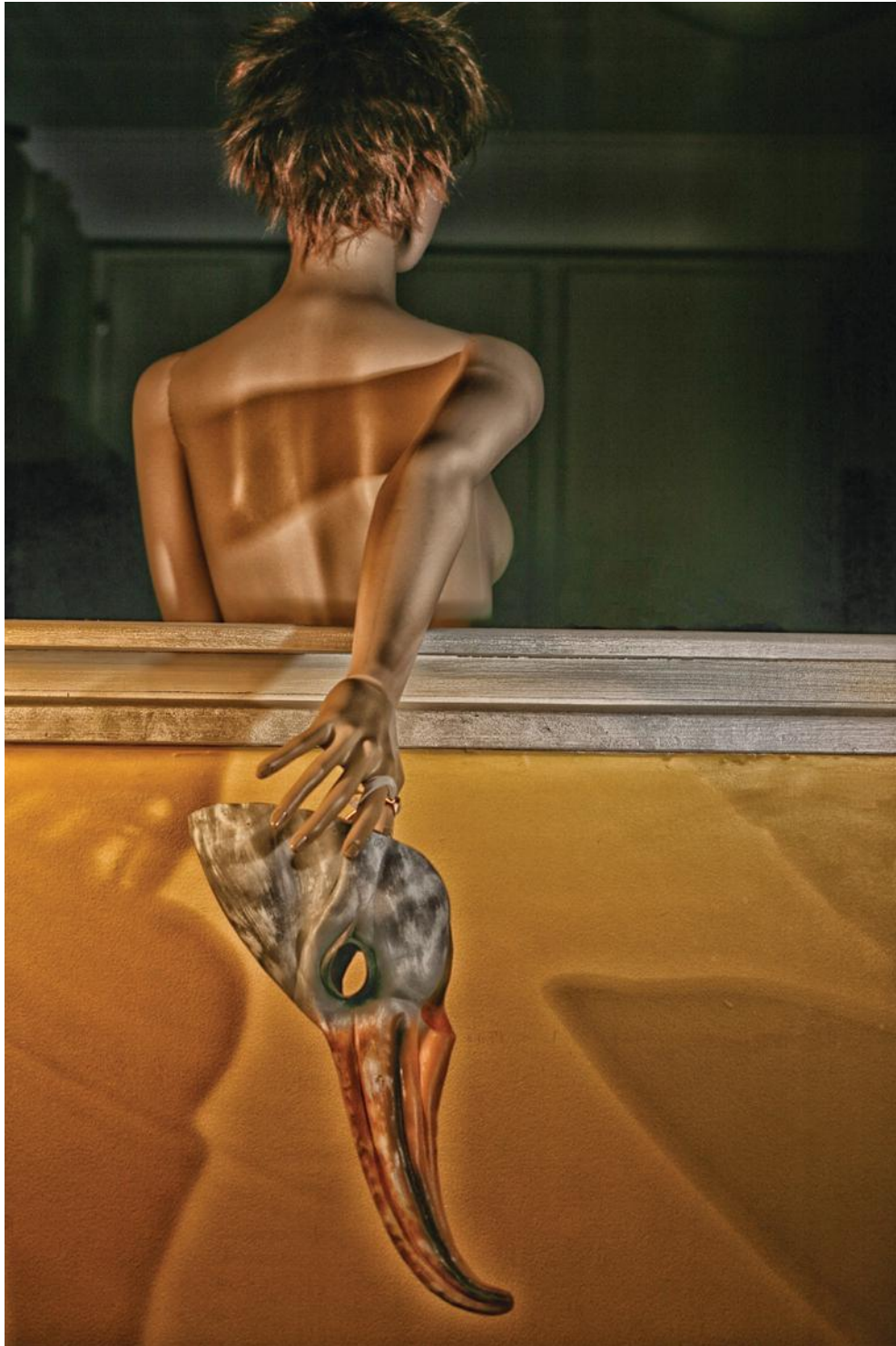
A terrible dark worry rises up inside of me, and I wonder if I want to keep you sick because I am.

That's how I loved you, I want to scream. But you know nothing of the things that I've kept hidden.



Exposed

Archival ink jet, dry mounted photograph | 11 x 14" | \$200



Hanging Chads
Archival ink jet, dry mounted photograph | 11 x 14" | \$200





Heat

In Brooklyn (New York, of course) when it was this kind of hot we'd say, "Boy this is a hot heat!" And was it ever, that August day in 1962. It was the kind of heat so heavy that it filled the spaces between houses. It was shirt-sticking-to-your-body hot. If one were a singer all one would have had to do to warm up the old vocal chords was to breathe in. And this day, my first date with her, was about to get hotter.

It was a beach date arranged by my older brother, a cast off that he so eloquently described as "jail bait." He had picked her up at Coney Island beach, and had lust in his heart until he found out she was 13. A perfect start for me, thinks he. We head for the subway, which at that point in Brooklyn ran above ground but was still "the subway." Go figure. Hot is sardine-can-packed subway cars without air conditioning during a New York City summer. Hot is a million people on a beach. Hot is when every grain of sand gravitates to the body like iron-filings to a magnet. Hotter still was my intended.

Finding someone in pre-GPS days amongst a million people was as much art as science. Third rotten post of the board walk, closest to the fourth life guard stand, about four blanket widths from the surf, usually worked, especially if one shared beach blanket colours. Dripping sweat and supremely uncomfortable, I received a jolt from my brother's elbow that nearly knocked off all the sand that was nearly cemented to my body. There she was. Her name was Sharon, and suddenly I could see the red mercury rising in the thermometer. She was hot.

Her act was even hotter. It was pin-up perfect, seated, one leg straight, one bent at the knee. Her hands swept up behind her head to grab gobs of reddish blond hair that she painstakingly folded up into a bun. The bun was then lanced with what looked like chop sticks. She was nothing like any 13 year old I had laid eyes on. Steam came out of my ears.

And then the temperature dropped. "Go say hello!" The words snapped me from fantasy to reality. That reality was that my brother was a chiseled 19 and I was.... well...15.

The one good thing about "hot heat" is that sweat is pouring off everyone. People sweat like pigs in that situation. So dripping steadily I went, I said hello, and just before my temperature reached "poach" she actually said to me, "Your brother told me all about you. When would you like to go out?" Gulp. Things would get searingly hot, but it would be at night, not during the day, and I wouldn't have the outter heat as an excuse for what was cooking my insides.

The cause this time for feeling like I was in a pressure cooker came from the outfit she chose to wear to go bowling. It was a knit jump suit whose pattern seemed imprinted on her body the two button straps of which buttoned atop—well use the "b" from button and you'll figure it out. Watching her mount the steps of a New York City Transit bus was such a sight that I thought the driver would comp me the fares. He didn't.

I arrived at her door. Her mother answered. Looking at this nice clean cut youngster, she grabbed me and said "let's go tell Sharon you're here." At the end of the hall she swings open a door and there sits Sharon in front of her mirror, coyly holding up a blouse...covering her naked body. I felt vaguely ill. Had I been taking my temperature, there would have been mercury all over the walls.

Then came the bowling. I didn't hit a lot of pins. When my eyes weren't on the buttons, my mind was on the exit strategy, which devolved into "the best laid plans...." I had decided I would kiss her goodnight in the elevator.

She had decided she would kiss me goodnight at the door.

Her father decided we would not kiss goodnight anywhere.

Heart pounding, sweat dripping, body feeling like I was a walking sauna, we entered the elevator. As we arrive at 5 the doors open, I turn for my big moment as she bolts out of the door toward hers. In a "Hey, wait for me Wild Bill" moment I lurched after her only to be hit by the closing elevator door that seemed to develop a palsy. It started going "ka-chunk, ka-chunk, ka-chunk" as it repeatedly opened and closed while trying to reset. Finally timing my exit, I leap through the doors racing to catch up on feet literally sloshing in my shoes from sweat. Finally, we're on the same page, in the same spot, with the same thing on our minds. Her apartment door opens. I see two things: an arm and an arm-pit. Under the arm pit was a raw-hide colour holster holding a .38. I also heard a voice. "Sharon had a very nice time. Thank you!" This was punctuated by a slam.

So much for the heat. I had wasted enough BTUs to run the furnace in her apartment building. What I hadn't gotten, however, was kissed — or shot.

Pavlina Krivy

www.pavlinakrivyart.wix.com/glass



Fire Spirit

Stained glass, copper wire | 11.5 x 12.5 x 2" | \$320





Anne Cherubim
www.cherubim-arts.com

Cave Dwelling
Acrylic on canvas | 18 x 24" | \$1,200





Dividing Line

10:45

Pink shorts, ironed carefully. Her shirt a field of linen blooming with violets. Moon-lit by five tiny silver buttons. She adds a purple ribbon to her ponytail, clutched high in a rubber band. A few tendrils wisping by.

A day to fry eggs on the sidewalk, as New Yorkers say.

Fourth of July. Macy's closed. Gristedes closed. Down by the subway, the news stand's always open. Good day for a Pepsi. Guys ragging on each other. Working their smoke rings. Playing their lucky numbers.

Swings lifeless. Benches vacant. The big kids hanging at Orchard Beach. Their little sisters off to girl scout camp. The Catskills for a week, sleeping in tents, whacking mosquitoes.

She's thinking of an ice cream. Later, maybe Loews for a movie. What's on today? Doesn't matter. Air-conditioned heaven.

NOON -----

1:00

Shorts. The once-pink of them makes her nauseous. Ripped waistband. Hair glued to sweat-streaked neck. Ribbon long gone. Shirt a soggy dishrag headed for the trash. Four silver buttons. One hole.

A day to fry eggs on the sidewalk. A Fourth of July to remember. A taste like wet nickels. I hate you, she'd said. She knew what that meant.



Mattie Mallernee
www.mnmphotoart.com

Through Faith
Convergent media on metal | 30 x 20" | \$799

NEXT SPREAD: Out of the Fire
Acrylic on canvas | 16 x 20" | \$299







Iron Clad V: General Mills

Iron fixtures, nickel silver, aluminum | 5 x 1.75 x 1" | NFS

RIGHT PAGE: Iron Clad III: General Electric

Iron fixtures, nickel silver, aluminum | 6.5 x 2.75 x 0.75" | NFS





Tony Esola

Iron Clad IV: K+M

Iron fixtures, nickel silver, aluminum | 4.5 x 3 x 1" | NFS

RIGHT PAGE: Iron Clad II: Westinghouse

Iron fixtures, nickel silver, aluminum | 4.5 x 3 x 1" | NFS







Burning

UltraChrome ink on ultra premium luster | 10 x 8" | \$150





A Spark of Hope

Snow nips at a shadowy figure stumbling
Through the trees.

Alone

And slowly freezing.

Wicked is the winter wind

That steals warmth from the air.

Yet the forest offers life.

Shelter in the form of fallen branches.

Frozen hands desperately link together the dead

Trying to block out the howling gale.

Still the cold clings with icy fingers

Unrelenting in its grasp.

Survival takes the shape of a match

Flick

Flick

Despair clings to damp twigs

Flick

Flick

Hope dances on the embers of a single spark.

The tiny flame reaches out into the night

Finding a measly pile of kindling.

Slowly they embrace,

Gently breathing warmth into the air.

The Flickering light begins to grow,

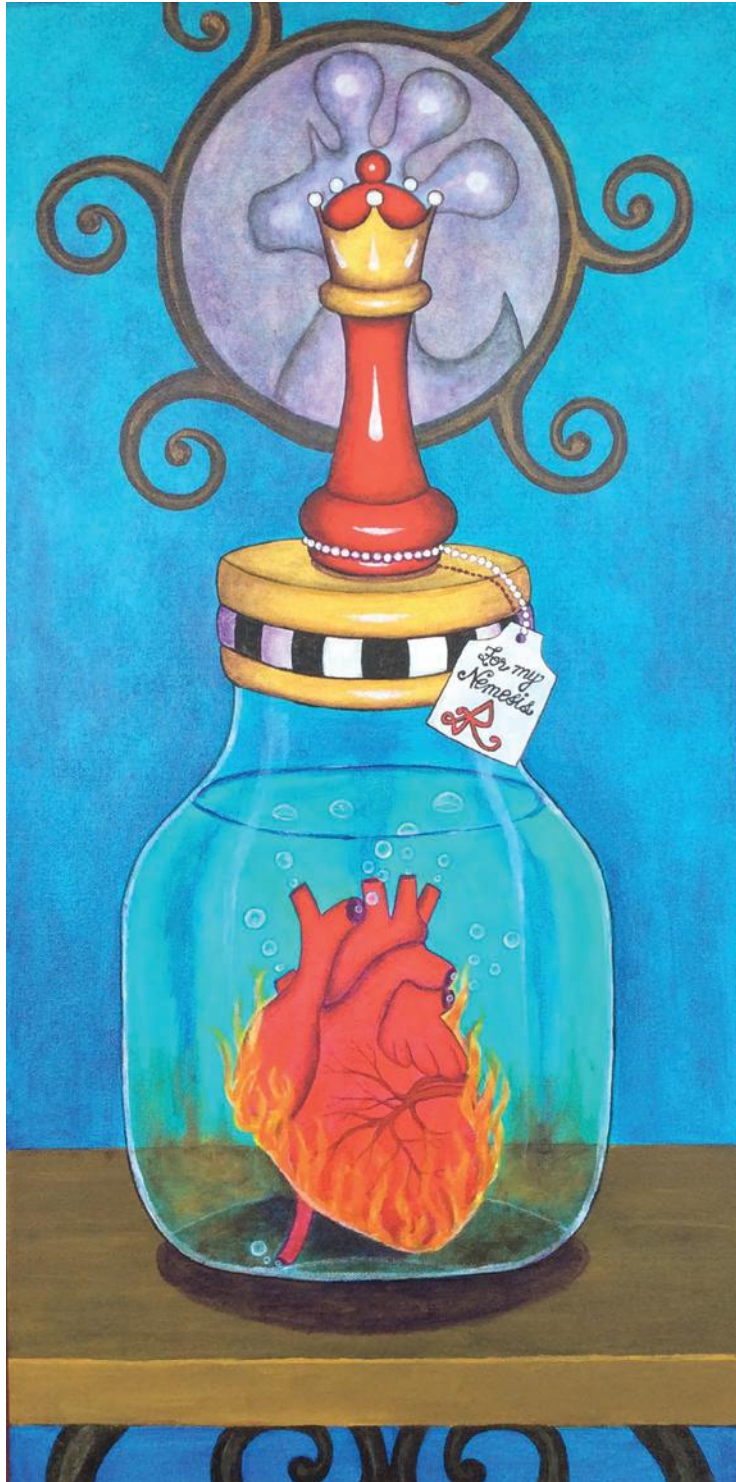
Spreading its heat throughout the small space.

Safety from the storm

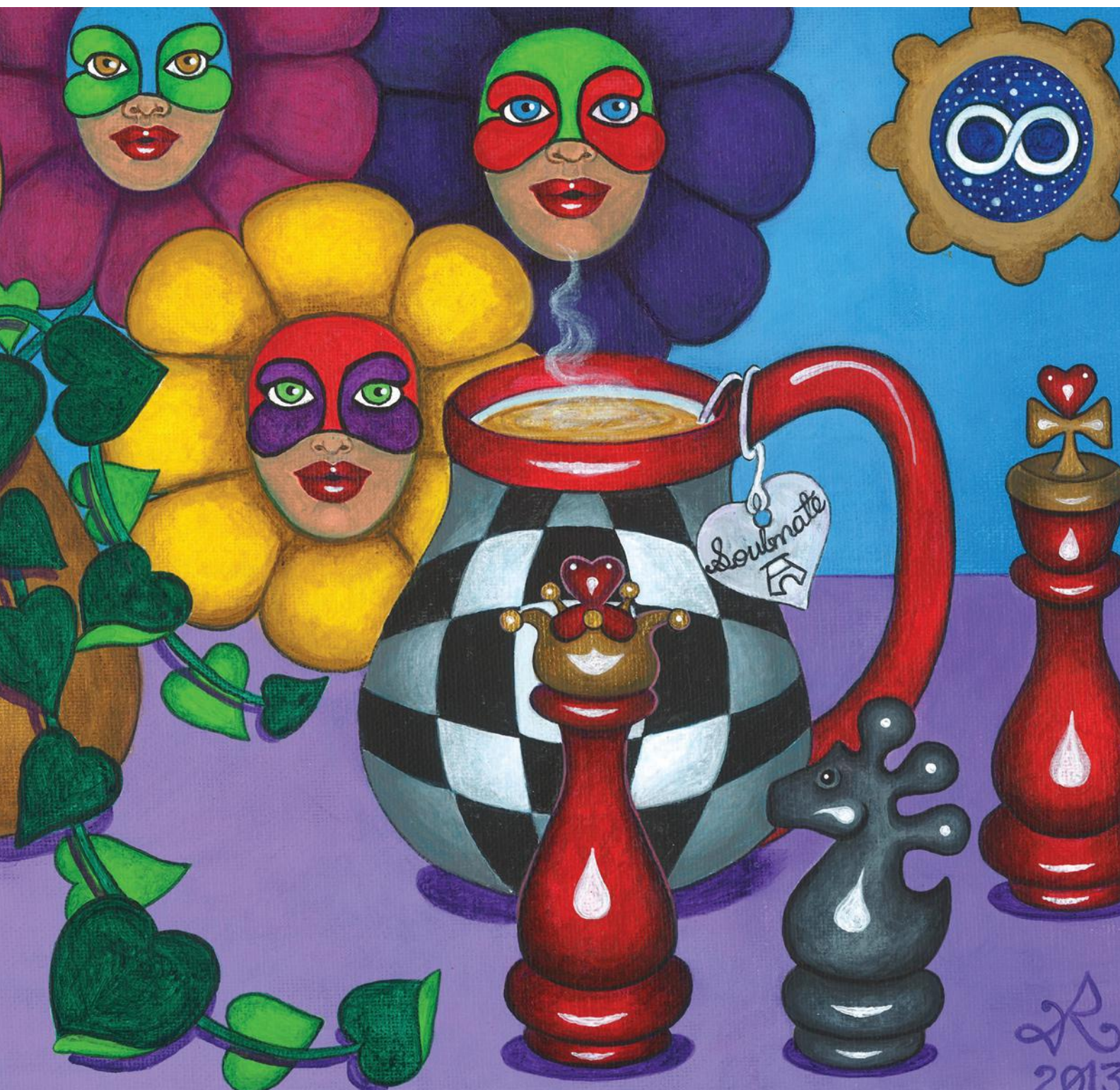
A chance to endure its relentless fury.

**Cryptoknight's Trophy**

Acrylic on canvas | 30 x 15 x 2" | \$2,000



Check-Mate & Soul-Mate (Diptych) (part)
Acrylic on canvas board | 12 x 24" | Sold





Yin and Yang

Acrylic on canvas | 20 x 30 x 0.75" | NFS



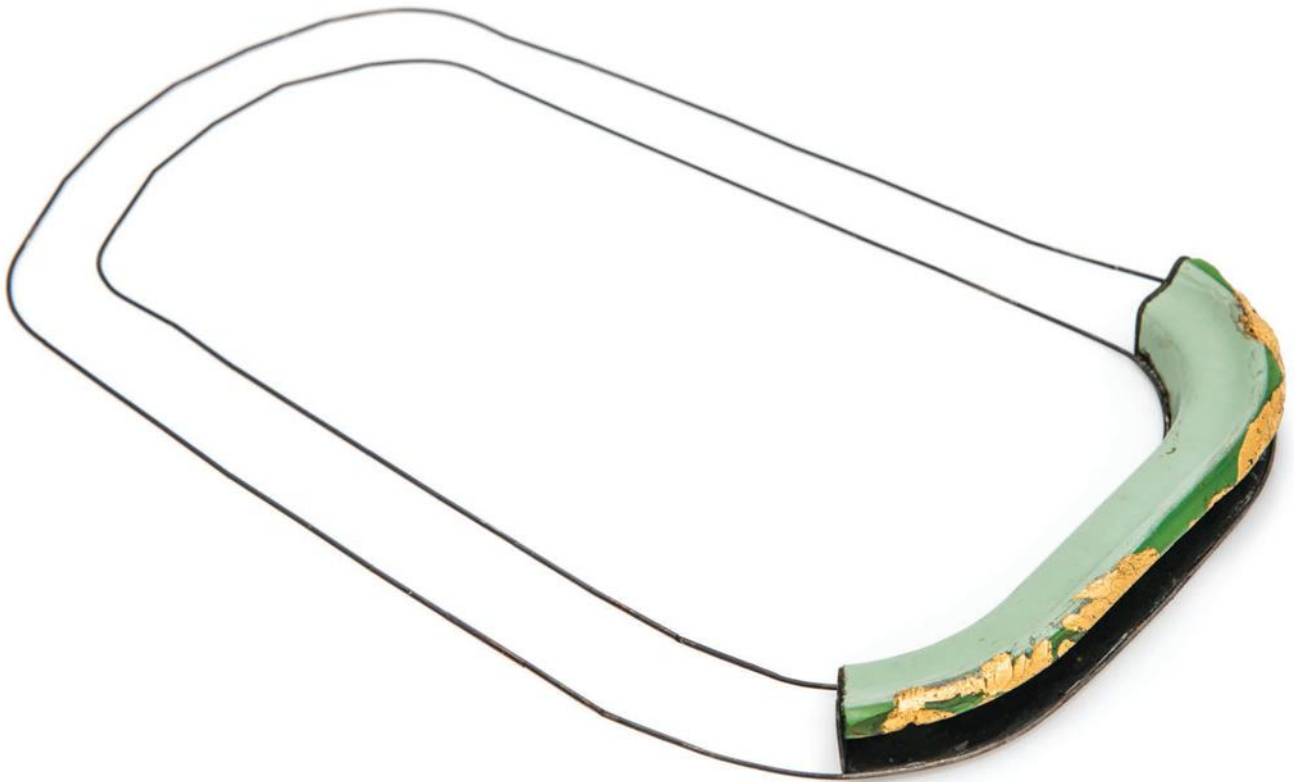
Promises

Acrylic on canvas | 24 x 24 x 0.75" | NFS



**Green Dish Gold Leafed**

Found enamelware, silver, gold leaf, enamel, mild steel, string | 12 x 7.5 x 0.5" | \$1,800



Green Dish Elevated
Found enamelware, silver, thread | 13.25 x 8.25 x 0.75" | \$2,000





The Butterfly Effect

Woodcut print limited edition | 23 x 30 x 1" | \$3,000





Monkey in Heat

Blistering heat vaporizes as the sun hides behind
the clouds. A playful red fire monkey dances in
the maples, squished by the hot wind and glow-
ing, wet, pregnant clouds. Only the red monkey
fingers the silken leaves of the trees as the rain
clouds whisper violent, vehement velocity into
the vestiges of hot vapor.

The red fire
monkey scalds
the dark clouds

cooling down
inside as
as tumbles

her torso
side to side
in the breeze.

Rain feeling
hot smolders,
dances on

umbrellas
of water
vanishing

into the
stream expelled
from her lungs.

Cold heat boils,
sizzles in
the tree tops

in which this
monkey plays
hide and seek

with the sun
who's afraid
of warm rain.

The red road folds up as red mums wither in the
warm rain. The red fire monkey pirouettes like red
plums soaking in the warmth of water out of sight.
All heat ascends into a violet azure, a demon of
blue burning bright in the red heat of sunset
just before the green flash turns the sun to ash.
Listening to the owls call to her, the red fire
monkey does her mating dance.

Miyazawa Kenji watches her with his burning
eyes. She's all heat. She's in heat, waiting to find
a lover hot enough to steer her in the right direc-
tion—heat, sweat, panting, enchanting—as the
Japanese maples curtsy to the wind.

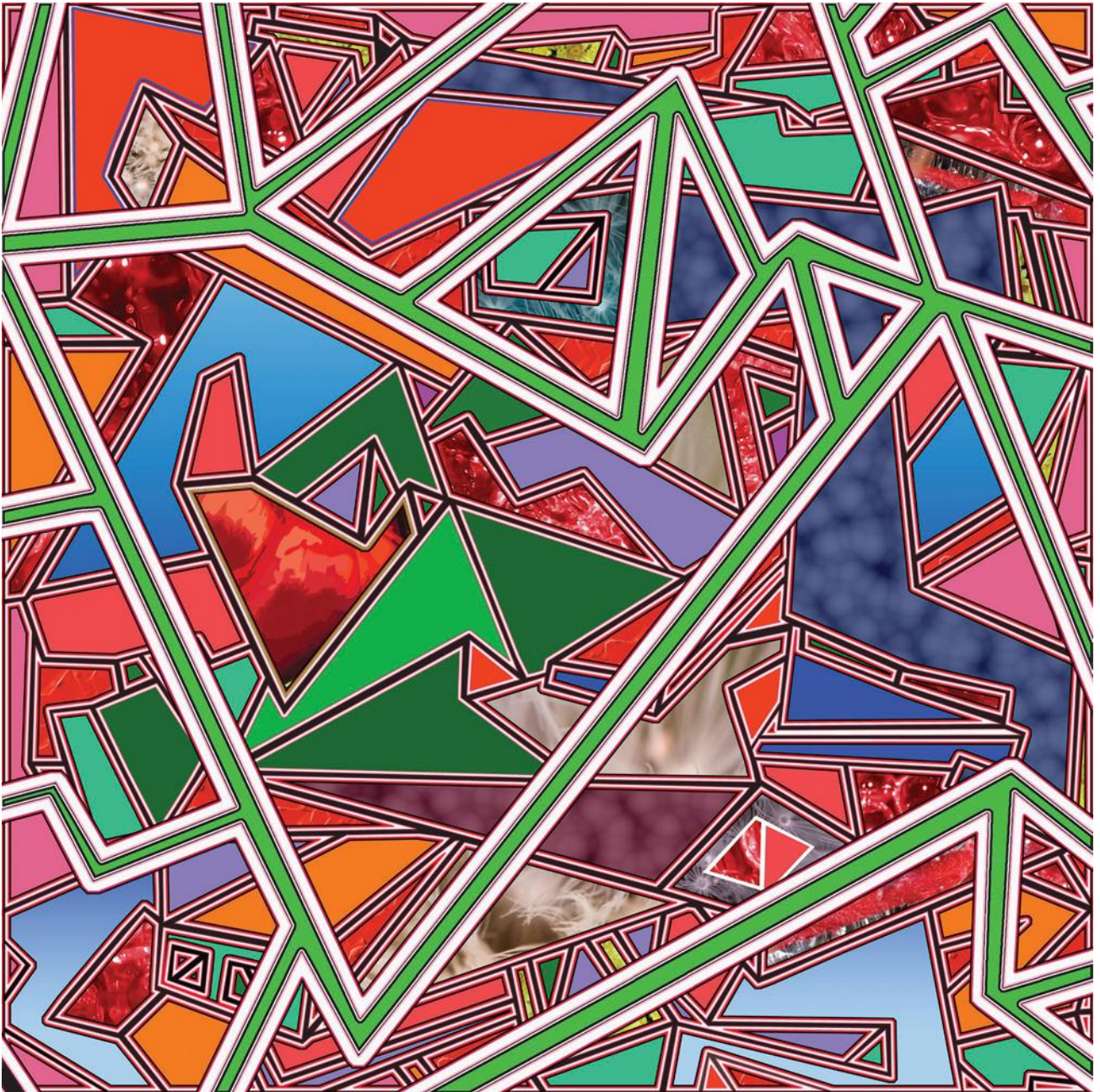
Dex Hannon

www.brokentoycompany.co.uk

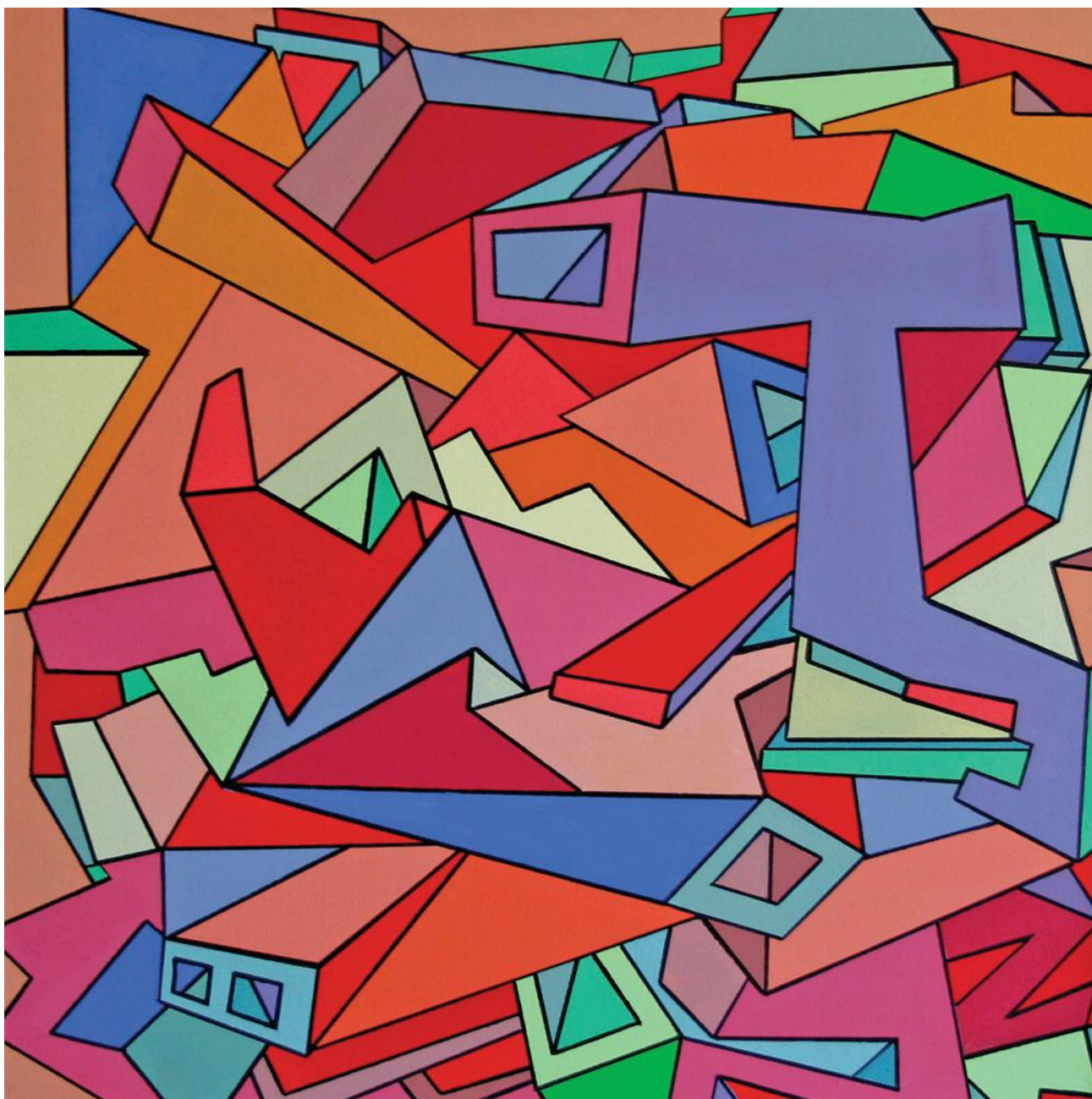


deKonstruktluv

Digital artwork, giclee print | 23.6 x 23.6" | \$285



Luvstruk!
Acrylic and ink on canvas | 19.7 x 19.7" | Sold



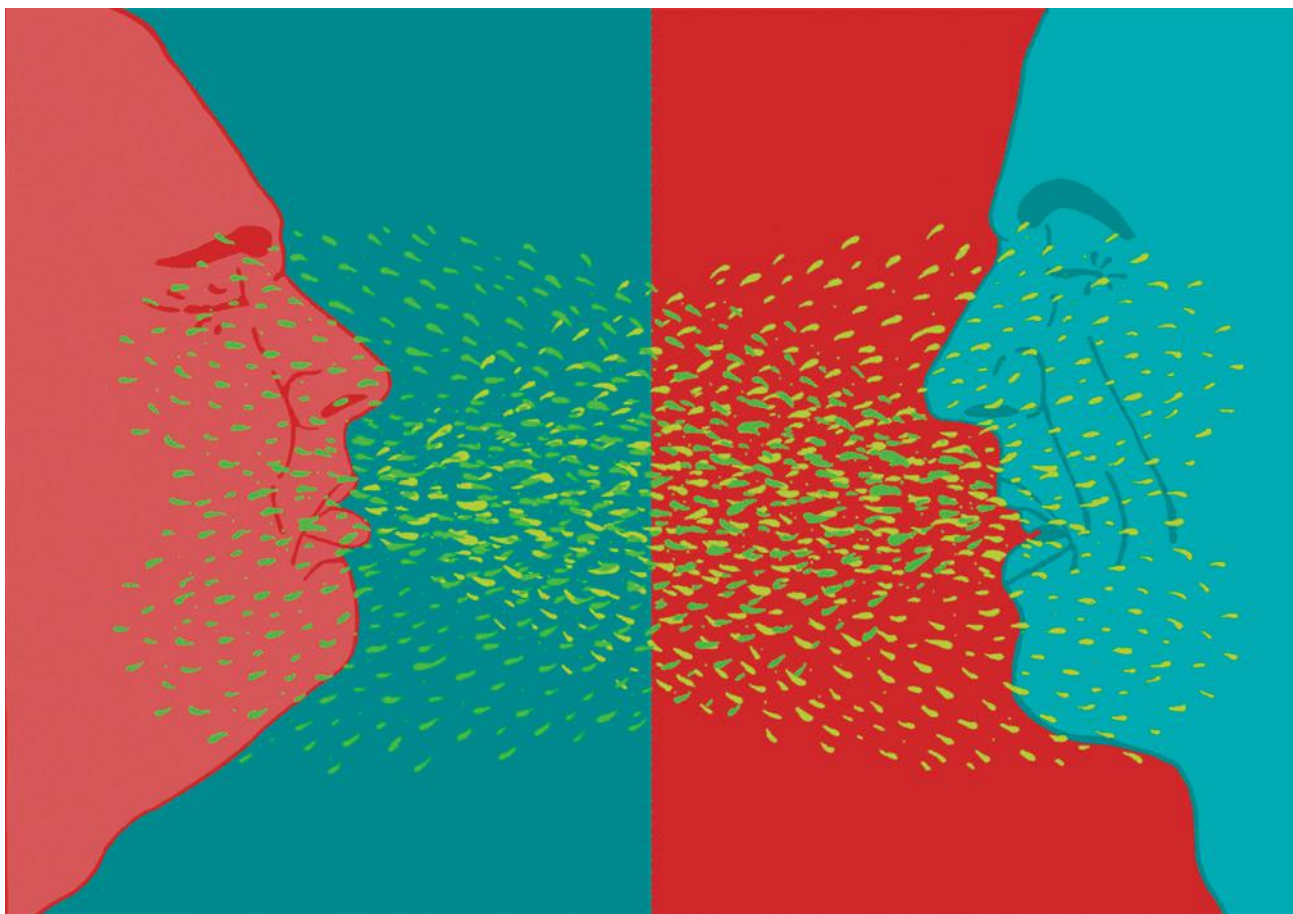


Warholesque

Ink and gouache print | 13 x 17" | \$30



Cold War
Ink and photoshop print | 11 x 17" | \$30





Laughter

"Woa! That puddle's massive?" She chuckled to herself as she remembered his innocence the first time he saw the lake. That was always the first thought she had every time she sat there and every single time, she laughed. Her laughter never wavered. She'd brought her youngest down to the water's edge too. She'd quacked at the ducks and made for the overhanging boughs, demanding that they lower themselves when she'd realized her two and a half feet weren't going to cut it. She laughed again.

Dogs had left their hungry paw prints strewn across the path followed by the muddy remains of running shoes. "It's always the way" she thought. Even in the summer, they somehow manage to leave behind their prints, remnants and reminders of their existence. Lest the world forget! Oh no, no, we mustn't forget! What about the time that couple had chased one another round the petting zoo barefoot? The sign is still up warning the world any bare footers would be duly dealt with, oh yes indeed. And the time that girl wrestled her attacker and stood guard over him until the police arrived? Yes... that made it to the papers that did. You remember the time the whole town was out on that bank holiday? She remembered seeing one of the schoolteachers there with her miracle boy swinging off her shirt sleeve in a hot rage.

But she didn't like getting muck on her shoes. No, she always avoided the puddles and mud. And the leaves, their crunching moan made her skin crawl. Oh and the stones, they always managed to get in to her feet no matter what she wore? And the grass too really, that was for the little beasties, she didn't have any business there. But the smooth path, with a bit of caution managed to get her to the honorary bench set "In Memory of Dave the postman", overlooking the majesty of the lake.

As two more perfectly muddy pairs of feet passed her swiftly on their merry way, she saw Him. She always did when she was here. She giggled. The late winter sun was enough to catch her in the eyes, but not enough to stop her breath spiralling out of the folds of her scarf. Her fingers fluttered the Brandenburg Concerto in her pockets. He always saw her too. He never noticed the runners, walkers, barkers, talkers, butchers, bakers or candlestick makers no. But he saw her. She tapped her toes gently to the violin. The sun illuminated His throne on the lake. That's what must have been catching her in the eyes. She needed to keep them open today; she needed to make sure she could see. She swayed in her seat back and forth to the rising tempo. Allegro trickling in to her chest she began to open up. He was lifting her up. She felt His gaze but couldn't see the blazing blue. The flute lifted her arms still higher, her head lulling in the numbness of sheer joy. She giggled when the harp-sichord tickled her body in to figures of eight. This time certainty swelled up inside her. This time He beckoned. His fingers tousled the water in harmony. She twisted now in the warmth of the sun, letting his rhythm carry her. She needed to see the blue.

The warmth melted everything but her spiralling breath. In meticulous movement, she emancipated her arms from the drudge of an overcoat. She floated. Her scarf propelling through the air, she circled the score to the water's edge. Her feet burned. She needed them only a little while longer so she kicked off her shoes to feel the water – all she needed to feel. He smiled. She needed to see the blue. The sweltering water rose around her in salutation, welcoming her to the horizon. She needed to see it, just once before they flew. Mid pivot she saw the figures of her youngest, the couple from the zoo, the girl and her attacker through the spirals of her breath and she guffawed! She knew she was there. She turned to face Him. She saw the blue. The ultramarine eyes reflected her entire universe. The concerto burst out of her at a fever pitch as he enveloped her. She was flying. The eyes smiled down on her, swallowing her in a brightness so intense she roared with laughter. swallowed her. 'Down she went, in his scorching embrace, letting her laughter burn the silence into cinders.

Her laughter never wavered.

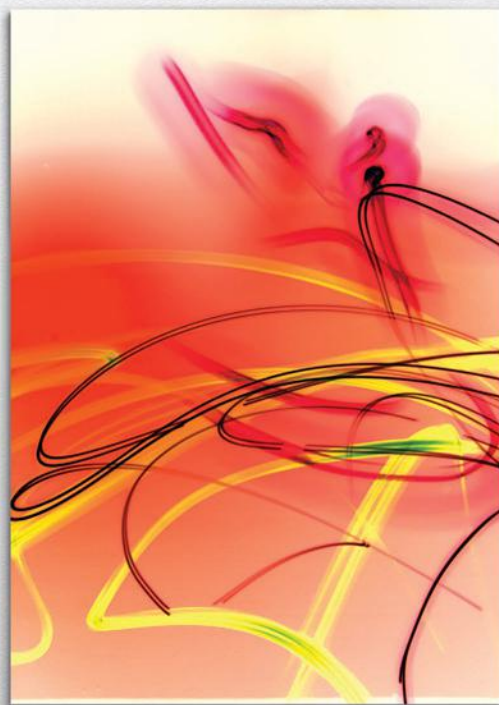


Burning Infinity

Mixed media under matte acrylic glass | 48 x 72" | NFS



Sketches of Summer
Mixed media under matte acrylic glass | 72 x 48" | NFS





Solar Flare



Wood Fired Bowl



Studio Spotlight

The best dollar I ever spent

For years my studio was a closet, which severely limited what I could sculpt. Then in 1987, I found a listing in our local newspaper for a house for sale for \$1 to anyone who could remove it from downtown Main Street. I decided it would be the perfect studio, found a building mover and he trucked the one story house to my land.

It was the best dollar I ever spent. For more than thirty years, I've used one room as my showroom/gallery and one room as the casting room. The former living/dining room is my main work area, filled with sculpture stands, a kiln, drying racks, shelves and lots of sculptures. A set of double doors opens onto a newly installed deck, so that trucks with heavy deliveries can back up right to the door and unload, for example, a ton of clay.

Since I work both from my imagination and from life, I need privacy and space to pose a model. I need room to work simultaneously on large and small sculptures and space for fragile terracotta sculptures – in all stages of drying – away from children and animals. Having adequate studio space has meant that I could accept sculpture commissions that would otherwise have been out of my reach. My studio has also been a refuge in hard times. Knowing it's there waiting for me has saved my sanity.

My work is figurative; I concentrate on the human face and figure. The human condition is the main subject of my work. I believe in the strength and resilience of the human spirit of which the human form is the most perfect and eloquent expression. I make sculpture, because I see something that is so beautiful that I want it to last forever.

By Deborah Dendler
Deborah is a U.S. citizen,
was born in Chicago and
is currently based in Newton.
Visit www.deborahdendler.com





Art Investor Tips

Collecting in the postmodern context

As contemporary art forms challenge traditional methods of productions, collectors are faced with how to purchase and display hard-to-show-artwork. Performance art, video art, and large-scale installations are at the center of the discussion on the topic, as all three formats are often well-represented in today's galleries, institutional shows and even at art fairs. Many collectors are interested in acquiring these pieces, but how do you hang a performance on the wall?

Performance Art

Traditionally, performance art has been sold and archived through photography and video. Marina Abramovic may be best-known for her feats of endurance and personal expression, but it is the photographs of her performances that sell in the marketplace. Now, artists like Tino Sehgal have revolutionized the way performances can be commoditized by selling instructions to how the pieces need to be performed. Granted, not everyone can hire someone to continuously perform a piece on loop in their living room, so there is always the question of what the purpose of acquiring such work is. Instead of buying an object, the purchaser instead owns the rights to the piece's concept. The benefit? A number of exciting artists are producing work in this medium, and as museums are becoming more interested in exhibiting and acquiring performance pieces, many find this to be a solid investment.

Video Art

Video art is a bit easier to collect than performance art since a purchaser is getting a piece of work more tangible than a concept. That being said, the logistics of displaying video art are a bit more complicated than hanging a painting. Typically, collectors will receive the video in a playable format – once tapes, then DVDs, now often digitally – which can then be displayed on a device of their choosing. Some dealers who specialize in new media provide video work to collectors on limited-edition flash drives, which sometimes are a work of art themselves.



Installation Art

Installation art again gives purchasers a tangible object to acquire, but displaying and storing the work is a challenge. Because of their size and display requirements, large-scale and site-specific installations are often collected by institutions with the resources to accurately recreate the original pieces. Some gallery owners embrace this, knowing that most collectors will not purchase installations, but will rather seek out smaller works by the artist, and focus instead on getting larger pieces into museum collections. However, others are creatively working with artists to break down installations into individual pieces that are then sold off to collectors. This practice is a bit controversial, as critics believe it weakens the intention of the original piece.

Artists like Sol LeWitt creatively solved the issue of selling ephemeral installations like wall paintings by creating instructional guidelines for reproducing each work, which constituted the collector's "art object." Similar to purchasing performance art, the collector owns the rights to the work and is the only person who can recreate it authentically.

It remains to be seen what new boundaries will be pushed in contemporary art, and collectors will likely find themselves faced with new challenges in displaying purchased work. That being said, the difficulty of showing a piece of work shouldn't be a discouragement from acquiring it; there are new ways of sharing art thanks to technological advances, and many dealers are finding new ways to assist collectors with their new pieces.

By Rachel Cohen, LCAT, ATR-BC

Pictured above (frame excluded):
Check-Mate & Soul-Mate (Diptych) (part)
by Roopa Dudley
www.RoopaDudley.com

Art Investor Tips

Framing the masters: Behind the scenes of frame restoration and curation

It is early morning in Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum. In a few hours, the corridors of this national gallery will be filled with thousands of visitors who flock daily to witness the works of Rembrandt, Vermeer and Van Gogh, among others. But, for now, the museum is empty, but for two people who carefully lift a painting — 'Landscape with Rocks and a Waterfall' by Gustav Courbet, 1872—down from the wall.

They work quietly and carefully. It is not a sinister scene, but more of a Cinderella story. It is Hubert Baija, senior conservator of frames and gilding at the museum, and an intern from the University of Amsterdam. They have come to see whether a frame in their possession fits the painting.

"We suspected it was the painting's original frame," Baija says. "And not only did it fit, but we also saw that a strip of paint on the inside of the frame matched an old damage on the painting. So we knew the painting had been framed in this very frame before it was fully dry."

Baija, 61, is tall and angular, calm in demeanor and very softly spoken, but the gleam in his blue eyes as he recounts this incident reveals what a thrilling discovery it was. "It was very exciting," he says.

Getting the frame right, according to Baija, is an essential part of experiencing a painting authentically. "A frame can tell you many things about a painting," he says. "Among them, when it was created, where and for what purpose."

Appreciation for frames is relatively recent in the art world. "There was a period up until about 50 years ago when the frame was simply what the painting came in," Baija says. "But now the frames are art pieces in their own right, and acquiring a new frame is just as exciting as acquiring a new painting, and all the better if you can reunite a frame with its original painting."

His work demands that he be part art historian, part scientist, part artist, part matchmaker. "With framing, we try always to display paintings in their original frame," he explains. "And we have many paintings in the museum that we know are together with their original frame."

With works from the Middle Ages, Baija explains, it's more likely to find an original frame with its painting. It's in the later periods—starting in the 17th century—that it becomes more problematic. "Until then, paintings were mostly religious works, and would not trade owners and be reframed," he says.

Changing owners and framing styles make it far more challenging to find paintings in their original frames. "When we can't, we try to find a frame from the same period and geographical location as the painting," Baija says. "If we can't do that, sometimes we commission a new frame to be made."

Baija came to be passionate about art and frames in particular in a rather indirect manner. "I wanted to be a geologist from a young age," he says. "I was fascinated by dinosaurs. I spent hours preparing fossils, labeling and naming them. And in fact a lot of that work actually trained me for my current profession."

He is a lecturer, author and speaker of six languages, and studied chemistry and physics before beginning a successful career as a painter and illustrator. "In the end," he says, "art won." For 25 years, he has worked with restoration projects at Holland's national museum, including consulting with curators specifically about frames.

Some of his work can be done with the naked eye, if you know what to look for. For example, two paintings by Cornelis Engebrechtsz hang side by side in the Rijksmuseum: to the right, 'Christ's Second Visit to the House of Mary and Martha' (c. 1520) is still in its original frame; to the left, 'Christ Taking Leave of His Mother,' is not.

"You can see this because the painting on the right no longer exactly fits," Baija says, indicating that the painted wooden panel is now slightly narrower than the frame due to shrinkage over time. "The other painting fits perfectly, so we know it's a newer frame."

Art Investor Tips

Other times, he says, initial appearances are deceiving, as is the case with Lucas van Leyden's triptych, 'Worship of the Golden Calf' (c. 1530). The frame is made of oak and covered in black ebony. Its condition is perfect.

"At first everyone thought this must not be an original frame," Baija says. "But we had dendrochronology [dating an object by using the characteristic patterns of annual growth rings in timber] performed on the wood and indeed the tree was felled as little as seventy years after the painting. This meant that we have a very valuable early reframing of Van Leyden's work."

Such realizations are very satisfying, he says. "It's a mystery to solve, and it is really a great feeling to make this kind of discovery."

The Ateliergebouw—the conservation lab of the Rijksmuseum—is where Baija spends most of his time. From the outside, the building—which faces the museum—is unassuming, but inside is a vast, six-level space with two towers. It is filled with lab equipment, studios and workshops, and underground storage areas with a passageway to the Rijksmuseum across the street.

After passing through strict security—you can only visit the Ateliergebouw by appointment—you enter into a clinically bright, quiet corridor that is like a medical facility for art. It's hospital white and temperature controlled, with labs full of surgical microscopes and lamps. In the paper restoration area is a small incubator that would not be out of place in a premature baby ward.

The silence is one of reverence and concentration, but is occasionally broken by an excited whisper or friendly hallway encounter. Baija is truly in his element. "We have fascinating conversations in the personnel restaurant," he says. "Everyone is working on something interesting, and making new discoveries. We are a close group."

There is high-tech equipment for pigment analysis and imaging solutions, including a digital microscope that can produce 3D images, much like Google maps, of the topography of an object. "So you see," Baija says, "how my early interest in geology fits in."

What can be revealed through this relatively new technology has had a major impact on restoration knowledge. "It is really amazing," Baija says. "We can make an X-ray based analysis at an exact point of an artwork, and see what elements it contains. In combination with other information we can deduce which materials the artist used."

And like a forensics scientist, Baija has used technology to make new discoveries about gilding practices of hundreds of years ago. "There was an early period of Auricular framing in the Netherlands where the work wasn't very durable," he says. "In the same period in France you saw very delicate carving work and sophisticated gilding and texturing that held up very well over time—and in the Netherlands you couldn't see the carving in such detail because the deteriorated frames were so often regilded."

This, he uncovered, was because early Dutch Auricular frames were gilded using only glue as a primer, no chalk, and eventually the glue would crack and break off. It is a finding that may be hard for someone not sharing Baija's passion for frames and art history to fully appreciate, but for Baija and his peers it is groundbreaking, and one of the reasons Baija is the most respected framing expert in Europe.

Outside of work, Baija acknowledges that sometimes it's hard for him to give a lay explanation when someone asks him at, say, a dinner party what he does for a living, and he must fight the urge to get too technical. "Indeed," he says. "That can happen."

There are special labs for every walk of art—paintings, metal, glass, furniture, textiles—in which scientists in lab coats labor delicately and scrupulously. It offers a visitor a rare view of fine art, one that Baija delights in. "It is wonderful to see a tapestry from the back," he says. "The fronts have all faded, but the backs are so colourful."

Still the function of art restoration is not to make everything look brand new again, and like the doctors they emulate, restorers must pledge to "do no harm." Baija says they cannot "make things back to how they originally were, because we can't really know for sure. You can get very romantic ideas, but we do not do anything unless we are certain that we are restoring and not editing."

Meticulous records are kept of any kind of work or treatment given to frames in the Rijksmuseum collection. "We work very diligently to record everything that we do, everything that we touch, so that people who come after us have a clear record."

Sometimes too much historical accuracy is the wrong approach, he says. "Frames that have been gilded to look as they would have in the time the paintings were made now look too shiny, too new—the frame and the painting should look the same age."

Other times, the choice of frame can add to the essence of a painting, even if the period is not technically correct. Such is the case, according to Baija, with 'Willem I, Prince of Orange, also called Willem the Silent' by Adriaen Thomasz Key, 1579. Although physically the antique frame is probably a pastiche, combining elements from different centuries, Baija thinks it is a fitting match psychologically. "He has such a tight expression, and the frame has these sorts of bolts on it, keeping the viewer at even more of a distance. It works very well."

Baija is an encyclopedia of frame history, but his relationship to the frames is also quite personal. As a restorer, he has had the opportunity to work on many pieces, including restoring a gilded section of 'Saint Francis Receiving the Stigmata,' Lorenzo Monaco, c. 1420. Baija is pleased with his work, but deeply privileged by the opportunity. "To do something like that," he says, "is really amazing. Truly wonderful."

And he finds wonder in far more subtle contributions. While dusting "The Massacre of the Innocents," [Cornelis Cornelisz van Haarlem, 1590] one morning," he says, "I saw the tiny handprint of a child on the bottom rail of the frame. And that is something really poetic."

For twenty-five years, Baija has been a protector of the Rijksmuseum's rich collection, and it's work he takes very seriously. Concern for art—for preserving these historical expressions of humanity—is inherent in mankind, he says. "Even at the onset of World War II, fine art was a priority—the Rembrandts were all rolled up and hidden away in 1939."

The strict security measures in the Ateliergebouw and the rigid research and careful labour of restorers like Baija speak to the collection's worth. "The value of what we have here is far greater than money. You cannot say, for example, 'Okay, I guess we will have to buy another Milk Maid by Vermeer.' No. We have to take care of it."

By Tracy Brown Hamilton

Tracy Brown Hamilton is a freelance journalist based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Her work has appeared in the Atlantic, Salon, The Irish Times and Time Out Amsterdam, among other publications.

Artists Talk

How did you learn your visual/writing craft?

Drawing is the new activism. A former writer, I now work with images to discover my stories, cast fresh light on old concerns, and move people's hearts and minds. - Dr Donna McDonald
<http://www.donnamcdonald.com/>

My photographic education has been random, extending from the third grade to present day. Due to the Internet and digital technologies, though, I have been able to refocus my passion.
 - Jim <http://jimbaab.com>

I am self taught – Photoshop, Epson scanner and Canon camera.
 - Carel Schmidlkofer
<https://www.saatchiart.com/carel>

The Internet is where I've learned the most about painting, then just experimented from there. I want to be able to paint all the ideas that come to my head! -
 Morgan Ryan crosseyedmorgan@hotmail.co.nz

Mothers didn't count back then, of course. When I was in kindergarten, my teacher asked me, "What does your father do?" Being literal-minded, I replied, "He types." As I do now, on a Mac rather than a Royal. In our family, writing (though not poetry) and reading were as basic as eating and sleeping. As they still are now for me.
 - Marian, writer

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