

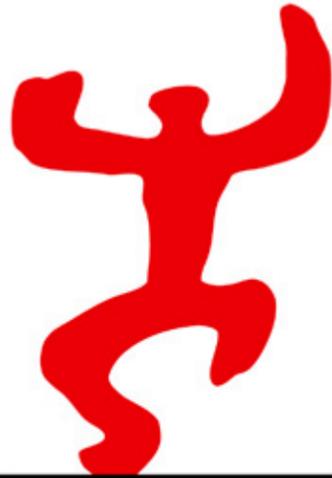
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[www.poetsandartists.com](http://www.poetsandartists.com) Issue #62, April 2015



**IMMORTALITY** vulnerability

**Sergio**Gomez



**ZHOU B**  
ART CENTER

It is my pleasure to continue my third collaboration with curator Didi Menendez in this exhibition as part of the Zhou B Art Center program of exhibitions. The title *Immortality and Vulnerability* was given to all the invited artists about one year in advance. Artists and poets were selected from across the country to participate. Each artist and poet was asked to respond to this theme from their own point of view and with their own visual language and writing style. The ideas of *Immortality and Vulnerability* have been part of the human experience for millennia and have been subjects of exploration by numerous artists throughout time.

Although two seemingly opposite or contradictory concepts, often, they have played a unified role in the writings and images of past generations. One such example can be found in Greek mythology's Achilles story. Achilles was a Greek hero of the Trojan War and the greatest warrior of Homer's Iliad. Although consider a great warrior, legends state that Achilles was invulnerable in all of his body except for his heel. Therefore, Achilles story embodies both realities. In this exhibition, the artists and poets will reinterpret the idea of immortality and vulnerability in a personal, psychological, or social manner to give the viewer a contemporary glimpse into an age old concept.

**Didi**Menendez

**PA**

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This is *PoetsArtists* third year showing at the Zhou B Art Center. Sergio Gomez and I start planning the shows a year in advance. The hardest part in planning the show is coming up with a theme. We start to discuss early so as to give the artists and poets invited enough time to create their works for the publication and group show.

This last year Nadine Robbins had a photo shoot with Howard Tullman who is a well known entrepreneur and art collector in Chicago and who has always been very supportive of *PoetsArtists*. Nadine Robbins initiated the shoot since her work is in his collection and because she was working on a new series of paintings and thought Howard would make a great subject.

After Nadine showed me the proofs I knew I wanted to have the finished painting in the next show. As it turned out Sergio Gomez came up with the theme of *Immortality & Vulnerability* during our discussions on Facebook which was serendipitous to my idea since the theme fit right into Nadine's series. Once we had the theme in place everything else fell into place.

**Geffrey**Davis  
**Denis**Peterson  
**Michelle**Doll  
**Debra**Balchen  
**Yuki**Toy

**Victoria**Selbach

**Daliah**Ammar

**Cesar**Conde

**Vincent**Katz

**Joyce**Polance

**Chris**Leib

**Timothy**RobertSmith

**John**Walker

**James**Needham

**Ron**Androla

**Nadine**Robbins

**Javier**Chavira

**Jeff**Bess

**Matthew**Hittinger

**Reiner**Hansen

**Aneka**Ingold

**Rory**Coyne

**Grace**Cavalieri

**Brian**Busch

**Cindy**Bernhard

**Claire**Girodie

**Mario**Robinson

**Angela**Hardy

**Matthew**Cherry

**Riva**Lehrer

**Nick**Ward

**Zachari**Logan

**Ryan**Shultz

GOSSI83 Publishing Group  
Didi Menendez,  
Publisher, Curator, Editor  
Sergio Gomez, Curator  
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## *The Suicide Notebooks*

I.

*The song confronts death. —Nick Cave*

the city has been asleep when you tell me  
I was done once I relight your cigarette

inside the wind and you say it again: I was ready  
to walk out into the watery dark of the Sound

and now I need an eternity  
to place my ear against the warm hull

of your back I need more moments  
to catch the muffled blood-

machine still knocking away we can't  
hear the truth no mouth can get around

we try teaching ourselves its half-names  
all the same —I try relighting your cigarette

against your going to keep you with me  
in the wind to have you dry and right

across from me I want to learn  
the minor key that makes you stay

to hear you staying to trust a voice could  
sing grief down that a mouth could hold

the right grace note against your suffering  
—to hold it as if some bird

calling the whole-bodied sun and us  
to witness to train the enormity

of that bird on your windowsill  
another morning to see you again—

II.

*Everyone has a poem called mercy. —Katy Richey*

ours begins inside a fallow field without flowers  
with nobody around or with everyone around

but we are five it begins with our very first yesterday  
blooming on the back horizon of our mind:

the moment  
memory provided this dark box for gathering experience

for keeping it not quite alive and growing  
ours begins with worry—the sweet edge of a song

becoming unbearably sharp it begins with  
all that follows awe



### **Why did you choose realism as your style?**

I started out in art school heavily influenced by art professors who were known minimalist and abstract expressionist painters.

Their inspiring art and provocative intellects were a strong platform for self discovery as to powerful expression, competent brush handling and effective execution of abstract ideas. I produced a full body of abstract work until they generously taught me how to fully integrate all I had learned into photorealist art, which eventually emerged as my style.

My initial attraction to it was twofold. As a contemporary art form, it provided a full array of evocative social and cultural motifs; and aside from content, it was a demanding genre through which I could effectively challenge flawed camera simulations while essentially capturing the verisimilitude of observational human experience.

### **What year was that? You were one of the first to really bring this medium into the New York art scene. With so many others working in this style, how do you plan to stay ahead?**

That was back in 1966 .. it was called New Realism then, followed by Sharp Focus Realism and by 1970 it was going full speed as Photorealism. There were many really fine and innovative painters in the movement. I regarded my own work, albeit original, lost in that mix and somewhere towards the bottom of the pile, despite a brief showing at the Brooklyn Museum. However, few others were airbrushing, particularly with acrylics, which in those days were nothing more than grossly overpriced latex house paints. Actually, I am quite pleased to see so much fine new work out there these days. I just let my work speak for itself, and never make comparisons. Frankly, I only compete with myself, finding that content and composition are the driving forces behind my direction. As I don't anticipate public reaction, I see this stylistic continuum as somewhat of an artistic journey to break creative boundaries, rather than as a competition.

So, in the interest of staying ahead of myself, I am constantly

inventing new painting techniques and art material applications headed for new discoveries. I have always averted heavy narratives as well as technical marvels, while rarely knowing where my work is taking me. This past year, I had been working on model centered monochromatic paintings, which will now be introduced in the Immortality and Vulnerability group show. As a developing series, it is an unusual departure for me, so the future of my work should prove to be interesting.

### **What was the inspiration behind this new series? It is so different from your previous work. Would you consider this to be your vulnerability or your immortality?**

Last year I started a test series of preparatory studies based upon the immortality of the soul; a distillation of the predominant theme in my former painting series, The Wall and Don't Shed No Tears. Simplicity of form is a radical departure from previous works based on extemporaneous shots routinely taken on the streets of New York.

In stark contrast, this new painting series requires posed models and studio lighting setups. All physical surroundings and color references were subsequently stripped out to isolate the figure in an undefined space. Compositionally, it was a virtual balancing act: evocative content vs a minimal narrative. As monochromatic work, considerably more attention was paid to creating the illusion of a black and white photograph. My paintings are quite literal - what you see is what you get. In stark contrast, this new work is semiotic imagery that somehow transmutes into a higher consciousness, that of the ethereal. I don't typically show works until a full series has been completed. This gives me the opportunity to see how the paintings work together in the same room and to plan out or alter the series. However, this new motif is still under development and without question, there is no end in sight.

Publicly exhibiting a disparate approach while uncertain where it is headed can be tenuous territory at best. Vulnerability? An understatement.

*In stark contrast to previous paintings, Suicidal Freeway is a radical departure in content and complexity, yet it nonetheless incorporates more than a few aesthetic principles that are the cornerstones of my work.*

*This painting required numerous preparatory studies, a fundamental shift in my approach. I also allocated the camera work to studio setups shot by model photographer Mark Ranum. Giving up reins on the photography aspect, albeit temporarily, made me less than comfortable while at the same time inspiring me relative to constructing new space for model centered work.*

*The initial challenge in Suicidal Freeway was to make the figure appear floating in an illusion of verisimilitude. Dramatic cropping and repositioning the figure metaphysically transformed it into a symbolic transcendent image with a subtle inference of immortality. Backdrops and color were eliminated to underscore an austere sense of solitude and to expose my subject's inherent vulnerability. Isolation in an undefined space was further accentuated by using a basic grey palette. This minimalistic context could not otherwise be observed by camera or by eye, giving the desired illusion of being at once both photographic and hyperrealistic.*

*As an evocative visual statement, Suicidal Freeway bridges the gap between real and surreal, between human form and humanity, and between vulnerability and immortality. In the end, this painting brings back fond memories of my first black and white figurative series shown at the Brooklyn Museum over forty years ago.*

Denis Peterson



*Suicidal Freeway (detail)*  
acrylic and lacquer paint  
Birch wood museum board panel  
24x36



Couple (A)6  
oil on board  
30x20



Couple (A)B3  
oil on board  
50x48

*I'm mostly interested in the intimate connections between people and the varied emotions that may be felt during those moments. There's an inherent vulnerability that I experience while painting intimate interactions, and it comes through the painting process. I allow myself to feel the beauty and weight of it all... so, I may experience feelings of love and connection while at other times I may feel fear or loss. It's all very transitory... moments in time. When I start a painting, I imagine the contact and connection... how does this feel and what is the importance of this? I usually focus on the inner emotional dialogue and physical sensation of certain area in the painting while allowing other areas to "fall away" or not fully rendering it... similar to the way an intimate moment is experienced.*

Michelle Doll



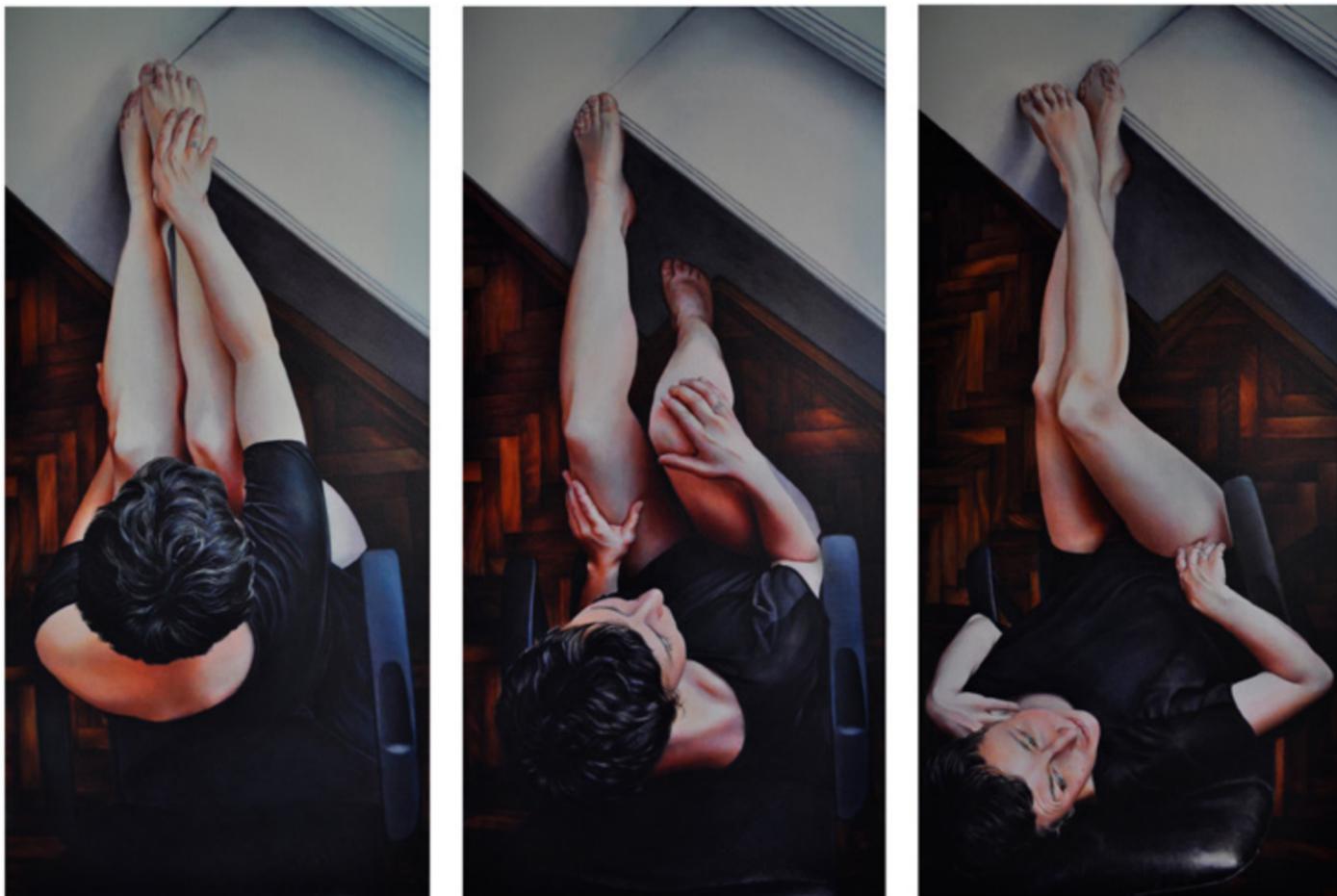
A Kiss  
fired\_earth hand painted  
13x12x8



The Roadrunner  
pencil and oil on paper  
18x24

My new drawing series is dedicated to the most beautiful southern California desert, Death Valley. I depict human beings and wild animals that could be seen in the desert, such as: the roadrunner, condor, coyote, etc. Sometimes, staying in the same place causes people to go blind to what they have. This is a notification letter from me to people who have forgotten how much beauty they are always surrounded by.

Yuki Toy



Gaze  
acrylic on canvas  
each 54x26

*'Gaze' is the final painting in the series 'Perceptions' which deals with how we see ourselves and others in the world. 'Gaze' traces our path to perceiving vulnerability. When sitting in a comfortable light filled world our sense of perceived vulnerability is articulated from three vantage points. Here She is looking in, She is looking out, and She is looking back at you, looking at her.*

*Our perceptions of vulnerability aimed to protect and shelter can limit and diminish us.*

*The surest path to immortality is to let the sense of vulnerability drop away and truly connect.*

Victoria Selbach



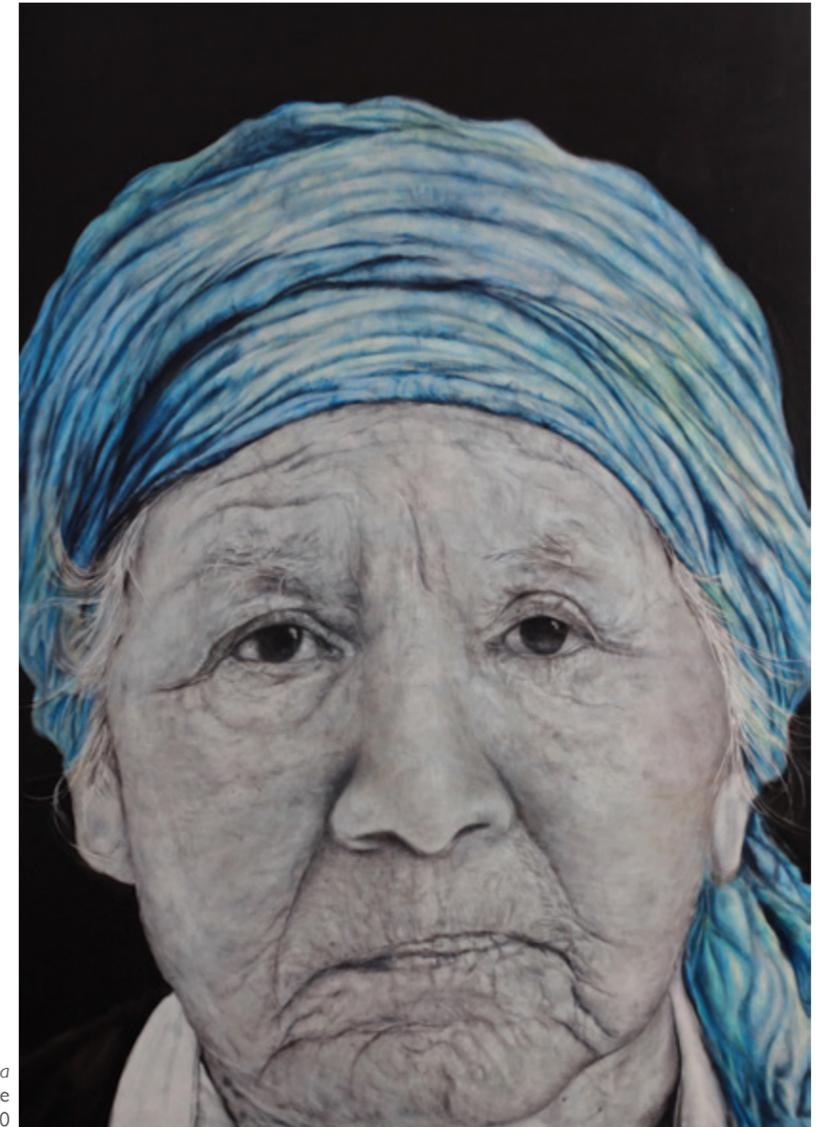
The Betrayal  
oil on canvas  
38x24

*My piece for the show, titled The Betrayal, depicts a innocent, timid-looking girl, gazing somewhere far beyond the viewer. However, behind her back, she holds a pair of crossed fingers hidden in the darkness. This piece was meant to represent the vulnerability of a person speaking lies, and the permanency of doing so.*

Daliah Ammar



*Dreams Vandalized*  
Technique Mixte and spray paint  
48x60



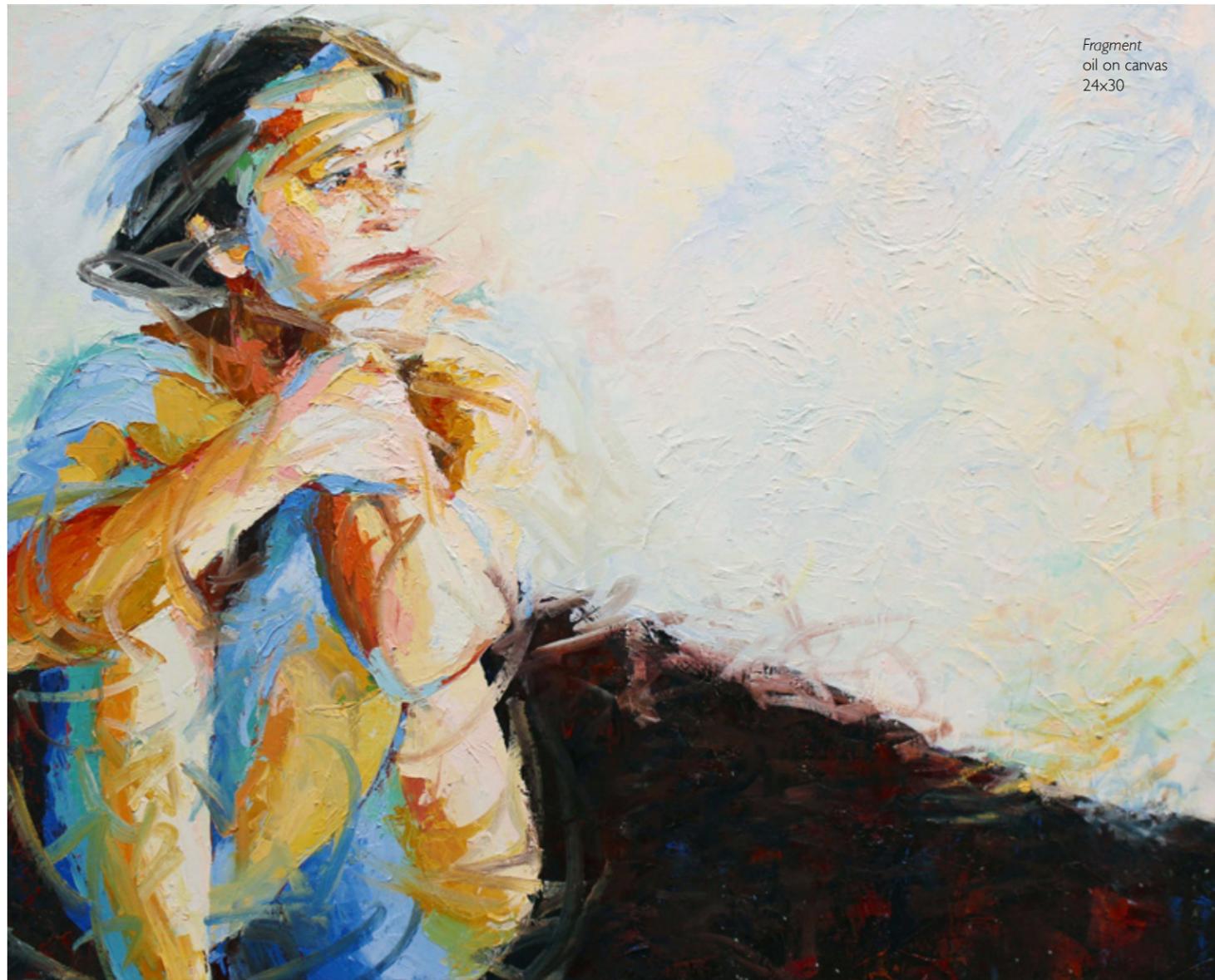
*Artisan from Argentina*  
Technique Mixte  
48x60

*The issue of immigration will always be around as long as we have people and land. Humans are one of the most adaptable species who has the capability to migrate faster, easily crossing borders in an hour to 24 hours. You can get anywhere because of modern transportation. However, there are millions who have to climb mountains, swim rivers, pay bribes and coyotes, cross oceans and high seas to get to their destination in hopes to seek fortune, a better life, escape wars and disasters, run away from oppressive regimes and such. The issue of immigration is immortal. It will cease when mankind cease to exist. But who knows, mankind might be immigrants to other universe and cohabit with "true" alien beings.*

*When I found my voice and place in this world through ART, I lost the sense of insecurity and found my purpose. But I have to allow myself to be open to the process and have my vulnerability drive my sensitivity to what matters to me and create.*

*As an immigrant and a U.S. citizen, I no longer tolerate any facets of racism in my life. There is no place for such. When I see injustices happen, I feel the need to do something constructive to bring the issue out in the open. Art becomes that medium for social movement. That's when I know that my art will matter: For myself and somebody else.*





Fragment  
oil on canvas  
24x30

The painting is both about the subject's fear of vulnerability, and my own willingness to be vulnerable as an artist. It depicts a lone figure in contemplation against a large space which, although appearing empty, is filled with energetic brush strokes and the faint textural outline of two figures (unseen in the image). The distant figures represent the ghosts of former relationships, who live on, in immortality, in the subject's mind. The subject is nude, vulnerable to the elements and to her emotions - there is a subtle sadness as she remembers.

For me, as an artist, I decided to change the kind of work I do this year - to move away from realism toward expressionism. It's been very scary to let go of something I did very well, that I was getting recognition for, that might bring me some immortality as an artist, and to do something completely different. And I had the message in my head that people would think I'd forgotten how to paint. All year, I tried different things and couldn't get the feeling I wanted - a specific sort of energy in the figures. Then, with this piece, I had a sense that I had to paint it and in a way, destroy it. I put the figure and background in, and it was a lovely painting, but I wanted to take it to another level, to let myself be out-of-control when I painted, to be so vulnerable in my work that I would be willing to ruin it by going into it with abandon. And that's what I did: I took a brush and cut through the thick paint, but without thinking about it, just feeling it. And it was the first piece all year that felt like where I wanted to be going.

Joyce Polance



Family Tree  
oil on linen  
26x30

I use the metaphor of a family tree quite literally in this painting. 'Family Tree' is a metaphorical portrait of my parents. They posed for the bodies. The tree stump heads are logs of a tree cut down on the property.

To elaborate too much on the specifics, such as the tree stumps in the background, the logs, the bodies, etc. would hinder the mystery and dark humor that I hope the work presents, and the finding of relationships I did not consciously intend. In its fundamental incarnation I tried to touch on issues of longevity and lineage; the silent march of generations. Like all species we strive to immortal heights, to outlast the ages, but are vulnerable in our nature, imbued with adaptive traits that are also ruinous flaws.

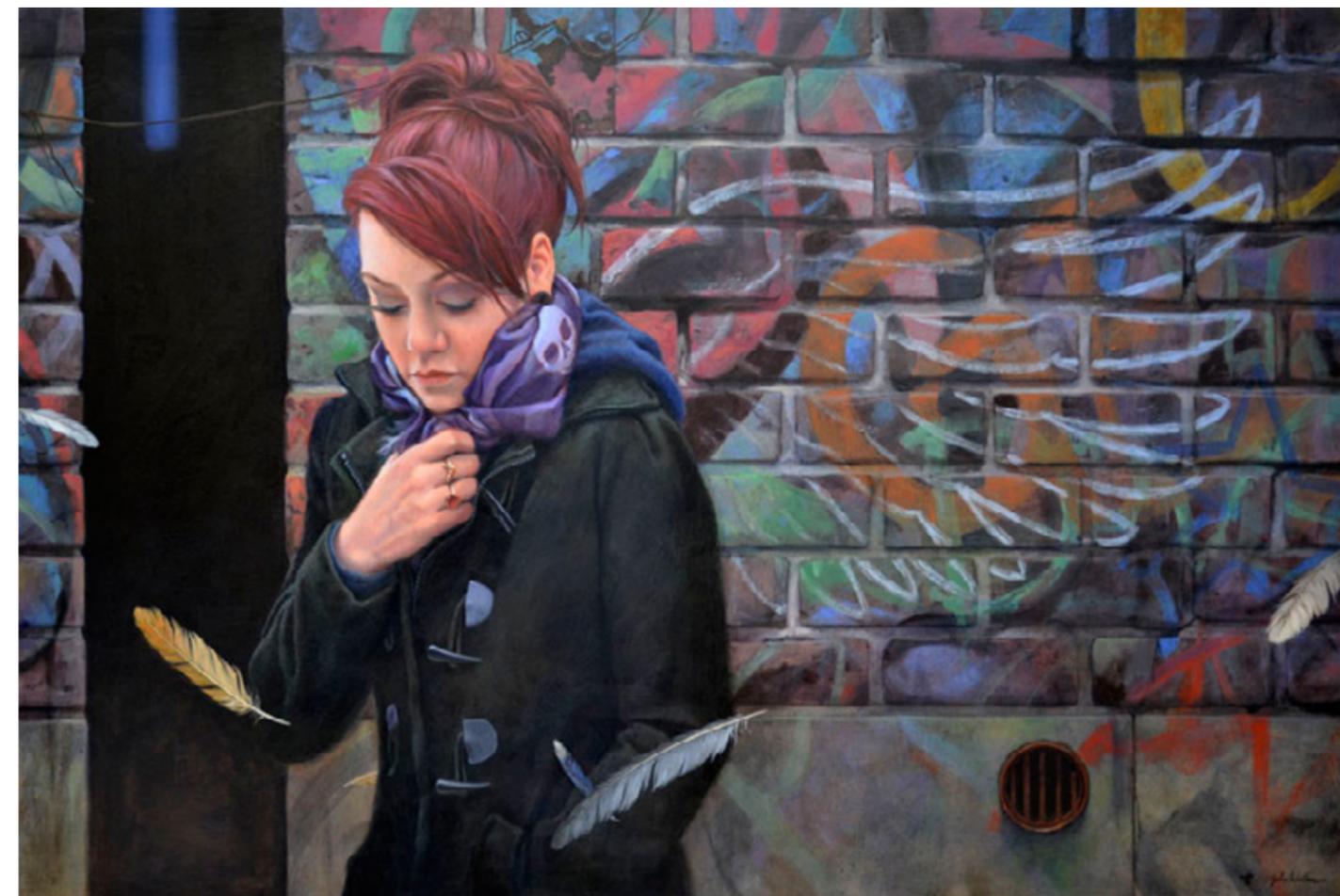
Chris Leib



Reality feedback loop  
oil on wooden panel  
48x48

Reality Feedback Loop is a series of paintings connecting observed physical space with theories of modern physics; specifically, the idea of infinite probable dimensions. In a "multiverse", everything that could happen, does happen in some version of reality. Recently, I was playing with a camcorder that was hooked up to a monitor. While recording, I turned the camera to view the monitor, and as the machine "saw itself", it created a million versions of the same scene (called a video feedback loop). These paintings focus on that kaleidoscopic repetition, asking viewers to consider the nature of their own realities and how they relate to the larger picture.

Timothy Robert Smith



Traversing the Parallel  
acrylic on board  
24x36

My work is often very narrative in nature but I usually resist describing a painting's whys and wherefores too much, preferring to let viewers explore a piece without a lot of its creator's influence. I also find it very difficult at times to describe in writing what I record in paint. That said, here are a few observations.

The subject of the painting is a young, beautiful woman. She is clutching a skull emblazoned purple scarf around her throat as she approaches the black vertical space between two parallel walls. These things could be considered symbolic of death. Yet there is a faint smile on her face, she has no fear of what may come. Perhaps she feels that while we are all vulnerable, the end of one existence may only mean the beginning of another, a transition to a different level of being, which is suggested by the parallel rows of bricks and the wall continuing on the opposite side of the darkness. Birds are sometimes said to carry messages from those who have passed away. In the foreground there are a series of feathers. They drift in a horizontal flow like the bricks and move completely past the dark space. On the woman's hand are two rings. One is in the shape of a bird, the other a heart. The bird ring connects the viewer to the feathers drifting by, the heart, suggests love. Is love the key that allows her to move past the dark, traverse the parallel to a new existence? On the old, graffiti covered wall behind the woman there is an image of a wing. A bird wing, or an angel wing? It's faint and worn away in places, but endures. Could it be an echo, or a reflection? Toward the top of the black area there is a small wire which forms a connection, spanning the distance between buildings, an indication that the darkness will not bring finality.

John Walker



### *Smile*

Smile like a jungle bird.  
 Smile like a pink, jungle bird.  
 Smile like a pink, jungle bird with  
 Tenuous, china-like wings. Smile  
 Now, not this afternoon when  
 The sky nose-dives into that  
 Vat of ticklish confetti you  
 Think is a head. Smile like  
 The gray light in a thousand  
 Mirrors rolling up like a wave  
 From the walnut tree horizon.  
 Smile like a final fruit-bat.  
 Smile like a feeding dinosaur.  
 Smile like a cowboy amoeba riding  
 Quick bubbles in a glass of beer. Smile  
 Right fucking now before  
 Knives of a clock cut  
 Thru your silly veins. A smiling  
 Surgeon lifts guts of your beating heart  
 In his hands to florescent heaven.  
 The nurses, smiling with awe,  
 Undress & tango. Yes,  
 They kiss.  
 Smile like a lurid voyeur.  
 Smile like peacefulness after  
 Orgasm. Smile like Caligula  
 Smoking a  
 Cuban cigar on his throne.  
 Groucho Marx rises  
 Up from Caligula's  
 Open legs & cracks  
 More jokes. Smile like  
 Confused unease. Smile  
 Like nausea, like Sartre  
 Dribbling bad milk.  
 Smile like you really  
 Shouldn't smile, not now.



Shera  
Portrait of Matthew Hittinger  
oil on linen  
24x24

*'She-Ra', like many superheroes, has a secret identity. Being a poet is my secret identity when I am out in the world watching, observing, recording. Just as she must chant words to transform into her super-powered self, I must use words to transform from my daily, mundane self into the thinking voice I have come to know as my true voice when writing a poem—the voice that is hypersensitive to the world, in tune with patterns and secret knowledge, able to explore the contradictions all around us to help others really see. She also leads a great rebellion against an invading empire, despite all the odds, and I persist in my personal struggle to continue to write poetry in a country and modern world that has little use for it.*

Matthew Hittinger



Double Gulp  
oil on linen  
24x24

Nadine Robbins' portrait of Howard Tullman offers an alternative look into Immortality. Traditionally, Immortality is tied in with themes of confidence, power, and etherealism. This painting instead shows Howard in a more vulnerable position. He is shown drinking soda from a Big Gulp, a habit of his. Though Howard Tullman is an entrepreneurial figure-head and leader, he is not impervious to having habits, despite the negative health consequences they may bring. However, this is also very telling of Howard's mortal state. Everything Howard involves himself in is big, from his career, to his art collection, the city he resides, and his Big Gulp. His personality and influence outweigh his more personal decisions, dietary or otherwise. Tullman's impact and image are Immortal.

**IMMORTALITY**vulnerability



**Explain to our readers how the two works in the show came to be.**

In 2014, I asked Howard Tullman if he would like to participate in a new body of work called "Bad Habits and Guilty pleasures" and he said yes. Enthusiastically he answered that he drank "Double gulps" all the time despite the negative health consequences. By a fortunate stroke of serendipity, when Didi Menendez mentioned the "Immortality and Vulnerability" show to me, I thought his portrait would be a good match. It's called "Double Gulp".

The second painting is called "She-ra". Poet Matthew Hittinger's guilty pleasure is that he liked to escape and dress up like his favorite rebellious superhero, She-Ra, who has a secret identity. He is secretly observing the world around him and despite the odds, persists in his struggle to continue to write poetry in a world that has little use for it.

**What is your guilty pleasure?**

Hands down, it used to be smoking. I loved it. I breathed it. The romance of it. It was sexy. I used to pull on a drag and feel it go into my lungs and loved every second of it. I know it sounds disgusting but I still miss it 10 years after going cold turkey.

Today, food is now my guilty pleasure and bad habit. I take great pleasure in every bite. I savor the flavors. If it's decadent I'll gravitate towards it. Foie gras, cheese, confit, butter. Add in some miche bread and red wine. Heaven. I'm drooling thinking about it. A box of Cheese-Its is pretty awesome too.

**I understand oysters may be on that list. Tell us why you paint oysters.**

Ah yes. Oysters. Those I don't feel guilty about at all. I love them. When we were kids, my dad took my brother, sister and I out on his boat outside of Charleston to find oysters and we ate them fresh out of the water. Years later, these fond memories led me to Cape Cod to taste the world famous Wellfleet oysters. During that trip I wanted to buy a painting of some oysters and I was amazed I couldn't find one. So I decided to paint some.

**Do you enjoy painting commissions as much?**

This is a great question. My portrait and oyster paintings balance each other out.

My first love is portraiture. But with commissions, there's always the risk of slipping into having to paint someone else's vision and I just don't want to do that. I'd start to hate portraiture. Painting oysters is fun because people like them for what they are. Since they sell well, the paintings therefore give me the capital to paint the portraits I want to paint.

Commissions are fantastic but I don't actively seek them out. If people like my portraits for what they are, and give me the creative license I need, then I'm all for it.

**Tell us what you are working on next.**

I'm finishing up a few more oyster paintings so they are ready for the summer season on Cape Cod and then applying for several grants to get my "Bad habits and Guilty Pleasures" project off the ground sooner than later. Since I've been working so hard for the past year, I decided to take a break from painting this summer and dedicate my time to photograph people for the project, eating oysters and hanging out with friends and family. I'm already feeling inspired.



For Frida  
oil over tempera with acrylic on  
translucent Plexiglas with transparent  
yellow plexiglas  
42 round

*Emblazoned in the light of a brilliant sun the lovely façade of a young earth mother appears. It is Frida! The mythical Frida, whose enigmatic and immortal gaze conveys both love and pain. She is the resilient desert flower, not yet in full bloom, framed and bejeweled with delicate orb-weaver's lace. Frida Kahlo! The peculiar and beautiful orchid! A descending swallow proclaims.*

Javier Chavira



*I Need Some Space*  
 acrylic on board  
 48x36

*'I Need Space' is about my fascination of the new interest in restoring vintage travel trailers. This particular 1950's model of Airstream and it's shiny aluminum reminds me of a space capsule. The painting also reflects my feelings at times of wanting to step out and escape the hectic, demands of day to day life.*

Jeff Bess



*Follow the Spartan*  
 acrylic on board  
 48x36

*Dear Art*

*It is such a distinct and total departure  
from the self to watch somebody sleep  
that it almost feels religious.*

—Michael Klein

You joked after Franco's  
Howl Ginsberg snapping  
Orlovsky while he slept  
that this was a thing you  
had yet to do snap me  
while I sleep and now  
I see how your eye can  
freeze the faint twinkle  
string the shadow cheek  
lashes and soft golden  
nape curls how the boy  
lip can wake can shake  
the stubbled chin tooth  
grind and clenched vein  
temple pulse and brow  
arrow strung in jaw bow

*Dear M*

I drew your profile while  
you slept beside me three  
attempts to reach you  
squiggle curve and hatch  
in one your feet peek  
from beneath the sheet  
in one your ear nears  
a sliced open pitted  
avocado and in the last  
mesh shadows screen  
a skewed city grid cross  
the stations of your face  
three pillows slope mid  
temple to chin the single  
lid and millipede lash  
give my M a Horus twist

*I Prefer Gentlemen in Bed*

*Montgomery Clift encounters The Misfits on TV,  
last night of his life, New York City, July 23, 1966.*

O Lorenzo, Lorenzo  
I once asked, Doc  
womb? I guess  
the shape my  
and green leafed  
sand in my thigh  
cake days. Ah,  
You cradle my  
my sister and you  
nameless Biblical  
bag they pulled  
and I tumbled  
into your face—  
before? —and not  
like ranch flies.  
A whiff of boot  
lust. The will  
mirror-centered  
for her. To keep  
the whole world  
but one moment  
at your clothes at  
chunk you hunk  
we're misfits  
bees, the wrong  
our honey except  
of it bees make it  
not pollen we are  
to make honey  
of being alone  
maybe all there is  
happens that happens  
to remember—

Absolutely not!  
did I start off  
we all start off  
posed legs made  
trunks the surf  
hairs the exposed  
here's our scene.  
bandaged head  
it's like having  
women; stuffed  
the handles until  
on the grass. How  
Didn't anyone  
giggle. Disaster  
Was I in worse  
polish and I'm off  
it took to conjure  
searching, looking  
a certain kind  
glimpse glimpse  
one still on screen.  
your hair to get  
you beefcake cheese  
attracting people  
kind of bee people  
honey doesn't attract  
this honey people  
pollen and bee  
we need a period  
alone to become  
is the next thing  
maybe you're not  
promises—O Lorenzo

and yet I watch.  
a girl in ma's  
a double X; Y  
crisp white tee  
crash behind me  
cheek of my beef  
Damn that bull.  
my psychic twin  
two mothers two  
me in a duffle  
the bag split  
hard to gaze  
every cry for you  
buzzing us  
shape than you?  
all tears and leather  
Marilyn, the hours  
at her, looking  
of secret you let  
Norma Jean for  
Everyone tugging  
a piece to get a  
cake knock-out  
the way honey does  
people who want  
bees come to think  
want and they are  
and hive all in one  
a period of being  
to become ourselves  
the next thing that  
you're not supposed  
—O that damn bull—



Reclining Women with Diamond  
oil on canvas  
26x36

*My work often refers to pop culture, women in the media and how they are portrayed. I use fragmented imagery from glossy advertisements, reconstructing humankind's distorted relationship to nature and history, in this case art history.*

*This painting's composition is loosely based on the painting by Goya, 'Nude Maya'. Advertisers play off the notion of youth, a time when we feel invulnerable, emphasizing the coveted traits of health and beauty. They offer the chance to regain youth.*

*I used splicing and collaging of multiple models appropriated from fashion magazine advertisements. The resulting fragmented subject is an image not of youthful everlasting beauty but one of chaotic construction, of vulnerability.*

*The claim of 'Art' to legacy, to standing the tests of time, to it's status of immortality, if you will, is more truthfully a proclamation to bolster investments, sell products, and engage in culture politics. Our contemporary 'Maja', her pose often referenced in advertising, is a beauty not of the ages, but of the moment. She is no more immortal than the pages of Cosmopolitan.*

*Splicing and fragmenting are representative of our fast paced media driven, low attention span culture and how we view the world around us, intake and information, history, and art history.*

Reiner Hansen



**Tell us what's on your easel and describe it to us.**

Right now I have a large painting on my easel that I'm doing finishing touches on. It's a reconstructed classical nude, the pose reminiscent of 'Nude Maya' by Goya, a reclining pose. Instead of the face, the woman has a large diamond. The body is a mix of different photographic references, different skin colors and textures. The paint work is a mix of tight realism and free abstraction. The color palette is fairly muted.

**It sounds as if you are leaning towards a new direction in your work. Tell us about why you are changing your style.**

When I started painting years ago I was experimenting with expressionism, the work was very loose, I was influenced by the School of London movement. Probably because I wasn't that practiced in rendering and using paint, and maybe because I am self taught, I grew very frustrated. This led me to study the renaissance painters, both because I admired the work and I think also to try to prove to myself that I could achieve something that was difficult to do. As a result I spent years working happily in this style of highly detailed layer painting. All the while though, at the back of my mind, I've had a need to implement more inventive, playful aspects to the

process. The goal is to utilize all the styles I've explored; tight and loose, descriptive and abstract, to combine them in a freer more visceral style of painting and to take more risks in the paintwork.

**Do you think that this initial vulnerability in your abilities may lead to immortality?**

Vulnerability, frustration and the feeling of failure can often lead to self improvement. In a funny way painting has taught me a lot about life in the way of learning patience and to love the process, not the result. When I was younger I'd have grandiose ideas about my work becoming immortal. Now my aspiration is to remove most ego related feelings about the work. Not to say I don't have any of that kind of vanity. But, the important thing is to have the means to be an artist today, which is hard enough, and be able to share what you do.

**What do you do for fun?**

I like to read biographies. And I love a good gangster movie.

**Are you making means as an artist?**

Yes.

*When We Were 14*

Brenda. Laughing, giggling  
 Dusk sifts down ancient trees  
 Above a sandy shore of the creek  
 On a lone picnic table in October.  
 Dry-humping, mauling at  
 Our jackets, clothes, hot  
 Breath, lurid excitement, minutes  
 Before it's too dark to return  
 To the path up to the community  
 Center. Neither of us mentions  
 Love & I burn cum on your bare belly.  
 I can barely see your face but you  
 Are grinning, flushed, &  
 Happy you phoned for  
 This rendezvous out of the blue.  
 We hold day hands walking in the  
 Night, up 3 long hills, across  
 Town where you live. You  
 Invite me inside to meet your  
 Parents. They are eating  
 Supper. I think your groggy father  
 Wants to kill me. Your mother  
 Squawks like a burning chicken.  
 You smile, sit at the kitchen table, &  
 Pat the seat of the next chair.  
 You are too beautiful & I'm too  
 Confused. Inside yr front door  
 We politely kiss goodbye, forever  
 & ever. I think I love you now,  
 Half a century later,  
 Brenda, decades dead.



Cardiogenic  
 mixed media on paper  
 48x40

*I think of each piece of artwork I create as a story told about vulnerability. I explore the susceptibilities and limitations I have and the battle to overcome them. Creating visual stories is a way for me to investigate and expose fears and desires that reside deep within. It is a complex process of negotiating my own mortality. Living vicariously through the characters I create, I can experience the difficult emotions involved in my search for identity. Projecting both my strengths and weaknesses onto figures, animals and inanimate objects I am able to use both personal and cultural symbolism to construct an ambiguous narrative. There is a lesson to learn in each story that is not always readily apparent. As I work intuitively, I must come back to a piece of art several times to ask it questions about its intention, trying to decipher the fragmented reality it reveals. I invite the viewers of my work to look for their own subjective symbolic history within these stories and to decipher the encoded mystery along with me.*



*SoloKill*  
oil on linen  
60x48

*At its core my work is about relationships, specifically what we hide from others and suppress in ourselves. Often this attempt to occult our feelings or actions is unsuccessful and only works to further complicate our relationships. My paintings are psychological revelations layered in symbolism and mythology – the truth is there, but it might also be in the shape of a snake woman or a horse-headed man. Characters glamorized with animal heads and limbs reflect the myriad reactions and emotions of abandonment, disappointment, struggle, and independence that arise from experiences of love, sex, suicide, rape, various bankruptcies and other events with life-long and life-altering impacts.*

*Because of my deep respect for strong, powerful women and the camaraderie I have with them, they often feature as primary characters in my paintings. Tattooed figures elaborate on the model's personal symbolism and give insight into the archetype embodied or myth portrayed.*

Rory Coyne

## *A Huge Weight*

A huge weight crushing your head

marching boots on pebbles  
on hard earth, on saccharine,  
songs of feather-lightness (head) and  
rain, rain turning road to mud to boot

Weight crushing your head

feet walking, bare feet  
on hard path, earth hardened by  
feet never knew no shoe

Crushing

waiting in rain in rock in lonely place

Weight

juggernaut of law, systems set “up”  
somewhere by people  
long ago some thought of you  
others of fat pig in meadow

A hard wait

waiting for a way out  
way to answer  
deadness of no complaint

compliant  
sentences  
moving endlessly  
through space

### *On The Subway*

If I think of something that happened,  
 What was that something,  
 That happened between two people, on the subway,  
 This morning, on the way to work,  
 Or wherever it is one goes early in the morning?  
 As the day wears on, it seems  
 It could be something one could talk about,  
 Or not, certainly not do anything about,  
 Not now that the moment has passed,  
 That will only be something that lingers  
 In the mind for a little while,  
 Then grows cloudy and wraith-like.  
 It seemed so distinct, something  
 One could always remember.

### *Bye-Bye Baby...*

*Just remember you're my baby/ when they give you the eye..."*

The screen door to the grass in summer  
     in the country  
 all those young poets lying on the grass  
 the blonde one  
 I was pulling the baby away from the pond  
 so I almost missed it  
 the beauty who said to my husband  
*I have all this metal lying*  
*around – can you make me*  
*some jewelry –*  
 it's a good thing I rushed over—  
*He's much too busy... he's got*  
*commissions.. unfinished pieces...*  
*...a show to mount...do you think he can just....*  
 He looked clear at her  
 in the coming starlight –  
 “Sure I'd love to”  
 bang the screen door  
 bang it– after I say, *I'll go in*  
*and make dinner –*  
 He follows me of course  
 opening the refrig. “Look what  
 I bought at the farmers' market.  
 brussels sprouts  
 growing in a pot – or else broccoli – small –  
 I can't tell which – you can plant them  
 later outside – they'll still be growing.”



Moon Face  
oil on canvas  
18x26

Regarding the theme of Immortality and Vulnerability, the figurative piece I chose represents a nude woman with a tattoo of Cherry Blossoms, which symbolize that life is short but beautiful, as the flowers fall off the tree shortly after reaching full bloom. The tattoo of the word "Moon Face" on her arm, is a nickname her late father gave her, thus keeping the memory of him alive.

Brian Busch



White Land  
oil on canvas  
40x40



**Tell our readers where you reside.**

I reside in Elwood Illinois.

**Tell us a little about Elwood.**

I grew up on a pig farm in Elwood, Illinois. My grandpa started the business when we first married, and my father and uncles continue to run the business which has grown to 14,000 hogs. As I have grown older I became aware that my childhood epitomized a romantic idealization of American the mytho-poetic family farm, and it has greatly influenced my work.

**Explain to our readers how it has influenced your work.**

During my graduate studies I moved to California, and my work began to evolve. I started to value the simple midwest lifestyle that I was surrounded by for twenty-four years. I began to anthropomorphize the pig by using it to symbolize myself and other people I interacted with in my day-to-day life. The pigs became a device to explore relationships and evoke emotions with a sense of humor.

**What are you working on for the Immortality and Vulnerability show?**

For the Immortality and Vulnerability show I am working on a painting that is larger than my previous oil paintings. The painting is 40 x 40 inches and plays with space and scale in a way that I have been wanting to explore for a while now.

**How difficult is it to move from your comfort zone?**

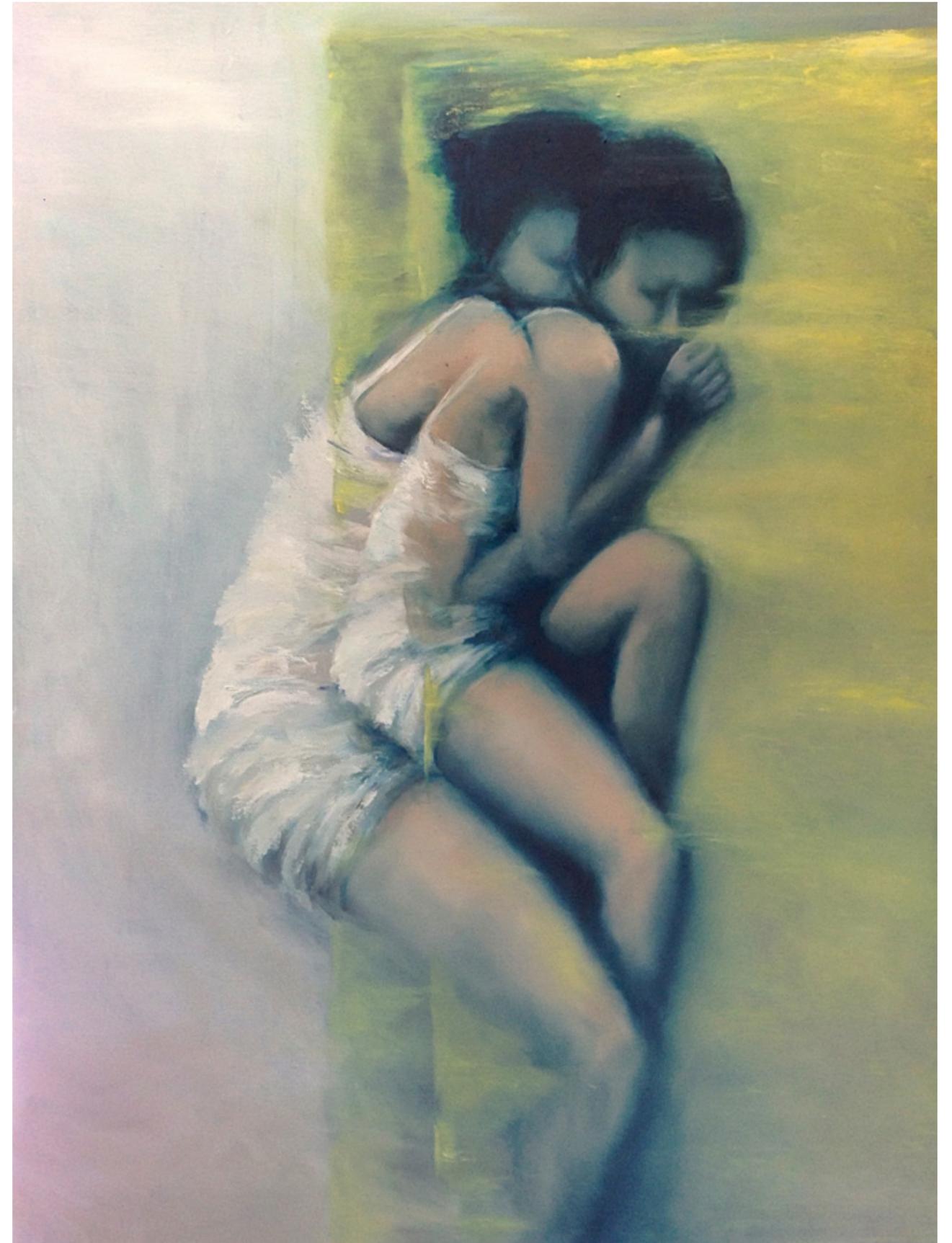
It can be intimidating, but it's also very exciting. I think it is important for artists to try new things and step away from their comfort zones, because it allows for growth.

**What is your vulnerability?**

A large part of my work is about personal vulnerabilities stemming from relationships. Much of my work is about the way figures, environments, and formal painting devices relate to one another.

**How has your art education benefited your art career?**

The relationships I developed with my instructors and other students have been invaluable. Both have served as great mentors long after graduation. I was taught first hand just how competitive the art world is by being surrounded by talented artists everyday. We both encouraged and challenged one another. These relationships have supported and opened up doors for me throughout my career.



Chartreuse  
oil on canvas  
30x40



Mrs. Reels  
watercolor  
18x24



The Agony and the Ecstasy  
acrylic on canvas  
36x24



Metamorphosis  
acrylic on canvas  
24x36

'Ashes to ashes, dust to dust'. These words summon images of the circle of life, making us vulnerable to our own mortality. In order to experience the ecstasy of living fully, I believe one must lay their self bare, and expose themselves to fear and agony of their impending death; where it is also believed that at our death, we become one with the beauty of the earth in which sustained us. Our death is an essential part of the metamorphosis and illumination of life. I attempt to capture the story of Immortality and Vulnerability through the cycle as the regeneration of all forms of life; were one death will provide life for another and to highlight the truth that we are always in a constant state of living and dying simultaneously.

Angela Hardy



bobble: IS you IS (orange)  
oil on canvas  
60x40

These two paintings are about the brutality of transition and the disorientation and devastation one experiences with the loss of one's identity, and the terror and vulnerability that accompanies such loss.

It will be difficult for many to get beyond the initial and obvious narrative, as it parallels the violent nature of the ISIS beheadings we have become too familiar with in recent events. This is one of the reasons why I chose to go to this dark place of appropriation in the borrowing of the graphic and horrific yet simple images of a man in an orange jumpsuit in front of a man in black clothing both fronting a backdrop of blue skyscape. Nothing will be more unsettling than these images spread across our tv and computer screens; such beautiful colors documenting such horrific and inhumane acts. It is exactly for that reason why I chose the subject matter; to unpack them to some degree, but to also make them more compact and layered by positioning myself overtly in the stead of both victims.

The subject of immortality and religious fervor has been a preoccupation of mine since I was born and could understand without fully comprehending the vastness of what immortality means particularly when we live a life where everyone and everything around us dies and/or changes.

I was raised LDS or Mormon. The idea of living forever with your family and God is a preoccupation, a lifelong pursuit, an eternal goal and a faith-driven belief. It was always more of a position of hope for me. One that I aspired to, as I fell in love and got married and raised a family with five children all the while knowing it was an impossible and unattainable reality if I ever lived my true nature as a gay man.

At forty five my wife came out and decided to separate from me in order to live her truth and to some degree in order for me to live mine. This "forced" or "allowed" my own "coming out". This is something that I honestly would never have done out of love and devotion, out of sense of duty and obligation, and



bobble: IS you ain't (black)  
oil on canvas  
60x40

most certainly out of fear. My nature precluded me from ever attaining the glorious immortality as described in my upbringing unless I remained married to my spouse who I loved since a child of fourteen. This is just one facet and a small glimpse at my fear and grief of losing her as an eternal mate. My very nature, how I was created, would forever keep me from ever attaining the "glory" and the "rights" that heterosexuals are graced with in this belief system. So while I aspired and tried to live according to my faith, I was raised knowing I was a fallen angel of sorts due to my physical, spiritual, and biological nature. It was something foreign and perplexing to me to participate in a culture that in the end could never embrace me as one of theirs. I lived a dual life, participating but ever standing on the perimeter observing, always on the outside "bobbling" my identities, never being able to come out due to choices I made earlier in my naive youth.

I am a western, white, christian (mormon-raised), gay, artist. Everything I am is in direct conflict with the mindset that carries out these atrocities. The devastation of losing my entire identity, my wife, my family as I had conceived of it, my way of live and day to day culture, the loss of my religion, and the complete platform where I based my footing underwent a complete and utter paradigm platform shift, and it was truly as violent to my being as anything I have ever seen. It almost proved too much, while I scrambled in the dirt and the blood and the gore and the aftermath of this transition simply trying to survive.

The irony - I have never felt such utter bliss and beautiful levity as I have living my truth despite its greatest cost.

This is freedom ... and nothing is more vulnerable!



Deborah Brod  
charcoal on paper with dimensional collage  
30x44

Deborah Brod received her MFA from the University of Cincinnati, and has been the recipient of numerous grants and awards. She works extensively as a public artist and is well-known for her conceptual installation work. Brod's work is intensely material; her installations incorporated huge swathes of dyed fabric, wire, jewels, found objects, clothing and digital imagery.

Brod had chosen water as her totem, but as we began the portrait process, she was diagnosed with a blood disorder which includes chronic feelings of cold and fatigue. Water then became the ice on which she rests, a precarious surface from which she pulls the material of her art.

Riva Lehrer



**Tell our readers what is immediately on your easel.**

As we speak, I am putting the final touches on my piece for the Immortality and Vulnerability show that you are curating. This piece is a bit of a departure from what I have been doing so it has been kind of a long battle to find my way to the end of this painting.

**Do you find yourself battling it out with your work often? And if so where do these battles take you?**

Most pieces get to a point where I get lost, or lose motivation, or just plain stall out. The process usually goes like this; I start a piece with a new idea and lot of excitement, paint as fast as I can while I am in that honeymoon phase, which gets me about 75% through the painting. After that it is just a matter of keeping focused while I work on solving all the little problems that inevitable pop up while I am working on a painting, and finishing off the rest of the piece. I always start off painting all the most interesting parts first so, I guess at this point it is just part of my process. I usually have more than one painting going at a time so, when things get rough, I just switch over to working on something else for a while.

**That something “else” sometimes is a portrait. Do you enjoy portraiture because it is not a battle?**

Not necessarily. I actually consider almost everything I do a form of portraiture, even if they are not really a portrait in the traditional sense. I try to put the same consideration into a portrait that I do with the more narrative pieces, I still try to bring elements in that tell a little bit of a story, use some interesting textures and everything else that I am doing in the other paintings. So I struggle with the straight up portraits just like everything else. I am not really sure what draws me to portraiture, I just like the idea that everyone that looks at a portrait, no matter what their education or background, can incitingly understand what small changes in expression mean. I like being able to look my paintings in the eyes, which sounds weird when I say it out loud, but is true.

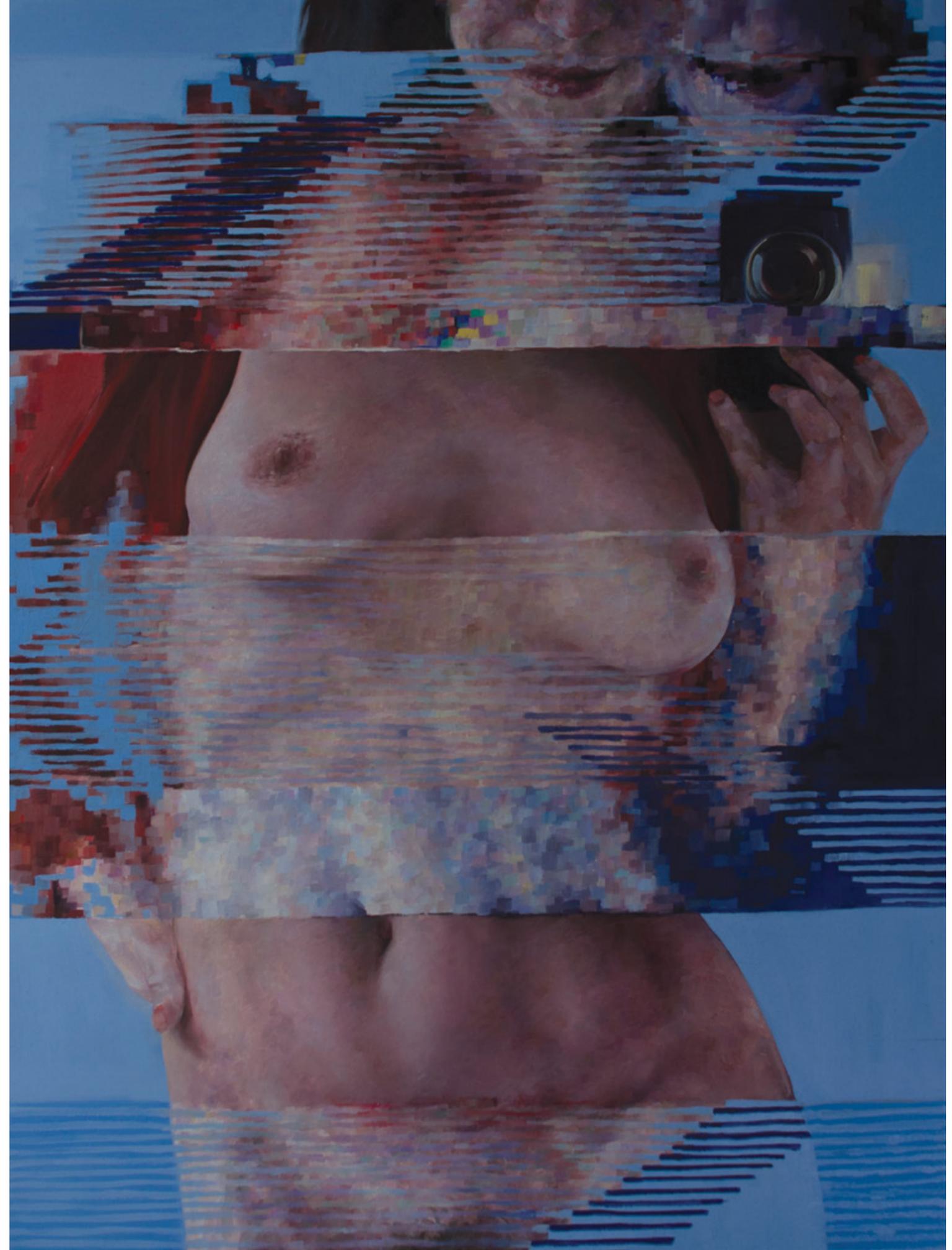
**Do you use photography for the initial stage of your work?**

Yeah, at this point I am using photo reference for all of the large pieces. Initially I was only doing this because I did not have the budget to have models in my studio for the extended sessions necessary to create large paintings but, at this point I am starting the quirks of working this way. I still like to have the models come back when the piece is getting close to completion to make adjustments and bring back some details that might be lost in translation but, if that is not possible, I don't feel like a piece is incomplete or anything like that.

The new series of paintings that I am planning on starting based on the last glitch painting experiment will be exploring this further. I am planning on pairing a painting using only a single low resolution photo reference that will be sent to me in a text message, with a more traditional portrait of the same model done primarily from life. Hopefully the paintings will give some insight into the differences of these ways of working, along with the larger story about our real versus digital lives.

**And this is the initial painting you are working on for the Immortality and Vulnerability show in April. Is this series also going to include the painting for next year's show CAN YOU FEEL IT?**

The paintings will definitely be related and share some elements but, for the CAN YOU FEEL IT show, I am not going to try to tie into the same themes or use any traditional observational painting. I plan on taking this opportunity to really explore what I can do translating these glitches imaged into paint. The plan is to take a very literal look into a disco club, take a lot of photographs, digitally destroy them, and then attempt to stitch the remnants back into a composition that still gives the feeling of motion and energy that these sort of scenes are known for. I think it could really turn into a beautiful and interesting piece.





Untitled  
oil on board  
2 panels  
30x40 and 30x30

The idea for this painting was to explore the disconnect between our digital and actual lives. Our lives are spent more and more in virtual communities online where our identities and information are subject to corruption and misuse by anonymous strangers. To create this painting I asked a stranger to send me a text message with a very private image, the sort of image that would normally be reserved for only the closest of companions. I took this image and cropped it to remove the identity of the subject and then did everything I could think of to corrupt the digital file, while still leaving as much of the sexual charge of the original image as possible. My goal was to mimic the sort of distortions and degradations that happen when digital files are shared repeatedly and carelessly duplicated. I saved the jpeg over and over at low quality. I shrunk the image smaller, then blew it back up large again. I opened up the file deleted some bits of the code. I took a photo of the photo on my screen. I then took the resulting image glitches and made one final corruption to the image by translating the results into paint. The resulting piece is paired with a more traditionally created portrait that will hopefully bring some human identity back to the woman involved, allowing the viewer to connect the anonymous sexual image with something that felt more like a real person.

NickWard

Through large-scale drawing, ceramic and installation practices I evolve a visual language that explores intersections between masculinity, identity, memory and place. Previous work related to my current practice, involved my body as exclusive site of exploration. In recent work, my body remains a catalyst, but no longer the sole focus. Employing a strategy of visual quotation, mined from place and experience I re-wild my body as a queer embodiment of nature. This narrative shift engages both empirical explorations of landscape and overlapping art-historic motifs.

Zachari Logan



Green Man  
pastel on paper  
50x100



Shannon  
oil on linen  
58x30

IMMORTALITY vulnerability

**Daliah Ammar** is a nineteen-year-old Palestinian-American artist based in Chicago, IL and is currently earning her BFA at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. The purpose of Daliah's work is to transcend the notion of the self and the physicality of paint, resonating from her own vulnerable and personal experiences – as a means of conveying life as it blooms and decays from within. Expressing that awareness of the self and reflecting to the viewer establishes a relationship between themselves and herself. Daliah's works are confrontational, yet, intimate and personal – using the painted surface as a trope for the physical and psychological presence between the inner self and external viewer.

**Ron Androla** is a poet living in Erie, PA.

**Debra Balchen** is a Chicago area artist who specializes in drawing, painting, sculpture and art glass. Debra was raised in Chicago and has also lived in New York, Italy, South Africa, Kenya and Egypt. She studied art at the Art Student League of New York, the Kitengela Glass Studio in Kenya, the Corning Museum of Glass in New York, and the Academy of Art University in San Francisco. She has also taught numerous special drawing classes for The American Glass Guild Conferences and for ROMOMA Modern Art Museum, sponsored by the Ford foundation in Kenya

Sculpting is a process of connection; working from life, the subjects expose their inner landscape through figural gesture and visceral expression, Vulnerability, the immediacy of the material and interpreting the beauty each life possesses become the language that reaches out through every pose

Born in 1989 in rural Illinois, **Cindy Bernhard** grew up on a pig farm with a pastoral landscape. Inspired by this, Bernhard's work is a romantic reverie of these spaces. In her pictures, the pig recurs as a personal figurative metaphor to symbolize loss, alienation, desire, and love. Her work is objective representations, but gleans aspects from non-objective modern aesthetics, such as the pictorial tension between deep space and a flatness that acknowledges the picture plane as well as synthetic color. In her work, Bernhard wants to create a spatial context for her figures to exist in, so she utilizes a semisurreal space or a space of the mind. "I conceive of my paintings as visual poems that utilize rhythmic relationships of scale, placement, and value to direct the emotional content of empathy, irony, playfulness, and humor." Bernhard earned her Master of Fine Arts in Painting at the Laguna College of Art and Design in Laguna Beach, California; her Bachelor's degree in Painting with specialization in Watercolor from the American Academy of Art, Chicago, and has previously studied at the Vitruvian Fine Art Studio in Chicago and the Sons of Turner Painting Workshop in Savannah, Georgia. She has served as an instructor for numerous institutions including the Evanston Art Center and American Academy of Art in Chicago, as well as the Laguna College of Art and Design and has received numerous awards and accolades.

Born in Macomb, Illinois in 1958. Primarily an acrylic painter, **Jeffrey Bess'** artistic background includes 25 years of graphic

design, acrylic on canvas and found object art. Jeff began his fine art studies at Miami Dade Community College and majored in fine art at Illinois State University.

Having recently moved back to Bloomington, Illinois from Miami, Florida, Jeffrey is excited to capture the beauty of rural Illinois. He loves photographing an area and painting, original acrylics on canvas in his studio. A large part of his creative process stems from his love of discovering new places. While mostly focusing on surreal landscapes and objects, agricultural scenes of an area and interesting pattern shapes in machines and vehicles. Simple compositions depict his work.

**Brian Busch** (b. 1970) acquired a solid foundational education in art while attending the American Academy of Art in Chicago and Rhode Island School of Design. His paintings have been included in numerous exhibitions in The United States and Germany, with his first solo show in 2006. He has a devoted following of collectors and is a frequent commissioned portrait painter. With a focus on the figure and still life, Brian is known for his muted palette and depictions of common everyday objects. Brian has been featured in Poets and Artists magazine as well as Blue Canvas. Brianbuschstudio.com

**Grace Cavalieri** is in recovery as a poet/playwright/mother/ for 50 years. Yet she goes on with all of it. Her last two books of poems in 2014 were The Man Who Got Away and The Mandate of Heaven. Five previous poetry books were published by Casa Menendez and they are treasured. Cavalieri is the monthly columnist/poetry reviewer for The Washington Independent Review Of Books, and she's honored to receive their "Books Alive Conference" Inaugural "Lifetime Achievement Award," April 2015.

**Javier Chavira** is an artist who has no misgivings about creating images that straddle the line between realism and abstraction. He is as much at home with the technical rigor of academic tradition and the liberating nature of formalism. His aim is to represent and at times unify those temperaments to create, as the great Oscar Wilde once wrote, "a work of art that is useless as a flower is useless." Javier's diverse catalog exists for its own sake and it is not explainable other than in the terms of itself. The useless and beautiful object created with great delight can hopefully provide the viewer "a moment of joy by simply looking at it." A prolific artist, Javier has exhibited nationally and internationally including at the National Museum of Mexican Art, Chicago, the Tucson Museum of Art and the National Museum of Sculpture and Painting in Izmir, Turkey. His work is also in numerous public and private collections. In addition to being an active artist, Javier is also an educator. He is a Professor of Painting and Drawing at Governors State University, Illinois, a position he's held since 2003. Javier is currently looking for gallery representation and presently resides in Crown Point, Indiana with his wife Sarah and their daughter Paloma.

**Matthew Cherry** is a Boston-based representational painter, straddling the worlds of contemporary art practitioners with

observational artists interested in figural constructs. His concepts and narratives are integrated and woven with a formal additive/subtractive process layering washes, glazes, marks, and drips that are accumulative and serve as a summation of an observational and painting process documenting thoughts, impulses and reactions. Balancing representation with abstraction and pure mark-making, the blend creates a final object with the process integral to the purity of its intent. His energies and oeuvre focus on the depiction of the face, head, bust and body but rather than portraits, Cherry sees his work more closely related to an objects or artifacts documenting the process of painting almost like a tapestry ... in layers or sessions. His work contributes to a dialogue on identity, individuality, gender, beauty, exploring the extraordinary within the context of the ordinary as he documents random people he connects with in life, on the streets and via social media. Cherry received his BFA from Northern Arizona University and his MFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago where he attended with the Presidential Fellowship. He is currently a faculty member and the Sr. Associate Dean of Academic Affairs at Lesley University College of Art & Design in Cambridge, MA.

**Cesar Conde** is a Filipino-American artist whose work is a series of reflections from his own experience.They are photo documents, timepieces stamped on film, paper, and canvas.These moments moved him towards the direction of social consciousness and action.

Conde won the first “The Paul Collins Diversity Award” in ArtPrize 2014. Studied at Angel Academy of Art in Florence, Italy with John Michael Angel , who was an apprentice for Pietro Annigoni. Also, with Master Painter of Technique Mixte , Patrick Betaudier in his atelier in France. Conde’s old master influences are Carravaggio, Rembrant, and Goya. 2013 Artist in Residence sponsored by Hebru at Lacuna Artist’s Lofts. Artist residency in Monastir, Tunisia. Conde has exhibited in museums and galleries nationally and internationally.Works are in corporate and private collections. Latest acquisition of Conde’s work was by Grand Valley State University.

**Rory Coyne** is a painter using personal as well as archetypal symbolism and mythology to reveal stories about contemporary relationships. He is a young master following in the steps of painters such as Mucha and Waterhouse. Coyne is one of the founders of Sidetracked Studio in Evanston, IL. He earned his MFA from the University of New Mexico in 2007 and is an occasional lecturer at various institutions such as the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Kennesaw State University, and others. His work can be found in exhibitions across the country with a focus in Chicago and New York City.

**Geffrey Davis** grew up in Tacoma,WA and teaches creative writing in the MFA program at the University of Arkansas. He is the author of Revising the Storm (BOA Editions, 2014), winner of the A. Poulin, Jr. Poetry Prize. Other honors include the Anne Halley Poetry Prize, the Dogwood Prize in Poetry, the Wabash Prize for Poetry, the Leonard Steinberg Memorial/Academy of American Poets Prize,

nominations for the Pushcart, and fellowships from the Cave Canem Foundation and Penn State’s Institute for the Arts and Humanities.

**Michelle Doll**’s paintings capture quiet, intimate moments hinged on personal connections between her subjects, as well as their interactions with the world around them. Doll’s recent works are imbued with femininity and introspection, and explore the themes of love, desire and connection. She earned her BFA from Kent State University and MFA from New York Academy of Art where she graduated Cum Laude on both. Her work has been exhibited and featured worldwide at galleries from New York to St. Barth’s to San Francisco to Basel and London. She is represented by Lyons Wier Gallery in New York, and currently lives and works in Hoboken, NJ.

**Claire Girodie** explores the unspoken, the ignored, and the power of silence. She likes to force the viewer’s attention, tricking him in a seemingly pleasantness, toward a maybe more disturbing content. Girodie primarily works with drawing, painting, and printmaking, in both representational and abstract ways. Sometimes, her 2-dimensional works evolve to become sculptures and installations, 3-dimensional drawings of their own. Girodie is not committed to a particular medium or even genre, which she considers being tools to her purpose. She uses their historical or cultural connotations or the implied meanings of their physical properties.This leads to a work that is at the same time traditional and exploratory, reminiscent of both her youth in Europe and her strong interest for the sciences. Claire Girodie is based in Baltimore, MD, where she received her MFA in Studio Arts, and her B.A. in Painting, Drawing and Printmaking from Towson University, graduating Summa Cum Laude.

Her work has been exhibited locally and nationally, is currently part of the travel exhibit Breaking Criminal Traditions (IL), and is scheduled to be shown in Dundee (Scotland) and Berlin (Germany). Selected venues include Maryland Art Place (Baltimore, MD), Maryland Federation of Art (Annapolis, MD), Pinebox Art Center (Baltimore, MD), Silber Gallery (Goucher College - Towson, MD), WoCA Projects (Fort Worth,TX), University of North Carolina Wilmington (Wilmington, NC), Zhou B. Art Center (Chicago, IL).

In 2014, Girodie was awarded with the Towson University Terminal Degree Fellowship, the National Wet Paint MFA Biennial 2014 Excellence Award in Chicago, IL, and the Maryland Federation of Arts Fiber Options Merit Award. She received her MFA in Studio Arts and her B.A. in Painting, Drawing and Printmaking from Towson University, graduating Summa Cum Laude. Girodie is currently a lecturer in French at Towson University and an adjunct professor in Art & Design at the University of Baltimore.

**Reiner Hansen** is an artist living and working in the Bay Area, CA. She was born in Odense, Denmark where she received a BA in Design and Illustration at Kolding School of Design. Hansen’s work has been exhibited in solo- and group exhibitions in numerous places in the US including the Dolby-Chadwick Gallery and Cain Schulte Fine Art in San Francisco, Manifest Gallery in Cincinnatti,

Fort Wayne Museum in Indiana, in Hamburg, Germany at Kunstverein Buchholz/Nordheide and at 2012 at Jack Chiles Gallery in New York. Most recently she showed her work with Stanford Art Spaces at the Silicon Valley Art Fair. She was a recipient of the Sugarman Foundation Grant in 2006 and was twice a semi-finalist for the Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition. In 2012 she received the Lillian Orlowsky and William Freed Foundation Grant as well as exhibited at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum, Provincetown, MA. Recently her work was featured in *Juxtapoz Magazine*, *Beautiful/Decay Magazine* and *Beautiful Surface Magazine*.

**Angela Hardy**’s portrait and figurative paintings have been widely published, graced covers and featured articles of many international magazines and can be found in collections in both North America and Europe by Prestigious Collectors such as Howard Tullman, International Famed photographer Dr Andy Gotts MBE MA FBIPP and Canadian Collector Bob Buckingham. “Angela Hardy’s work is simply breathtaking. It oozes depth and feeling and gets under the skin of her subjects. Each brush stroke adds another layer of passion and feeling from this amazing artist and I am proud to have her work in my collection.” Says photographer Dr Andy Gotts.

Bob Buckingham, Lawyer, collector:“Angela’s pieces, whether they be a soft, sensuous still life or bold portraits of her avant-garde friends all reflect the magnificent colors she was infused with as a child raised under the aurora borealis of Labrador.”

Angela Hardy holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree; Interdisciplinary from NSCAD University, Halifax, NS, Canada.

**Matthew Hittinger** is the author ofThe Erotic Postulate (2014) and Skin Shift (2012) both from Sibling Rivalry Press. He received his MFA from the University of Michigan where he won a Hopwood Award. His work has appeared in many journals and anthologies, has been adapted into art songs, and in 2012 *Poets & Writers Magazine* named him a Debut Poet on their 8th annual list. Matthew lives and works in New York City.Website: www.matthewhittinger.com.

**Aneka Ingold**’s ambiguous narratives combine a meandering of flat colors and patterns with highly rendered realism. In the vein of fairy tales and folklore, there is a dreamlike surrealism to the non-linear stories that she constructs using both personal and cultural symbols.As an undergraduate student at Grand Valley State University Aneka was the recipient of the Alexander Calder Honors Scholarship and the Advanced Visual Arts Scholarship. She received her MFA at Kendall College of Art and Design in 2014 where she was awarded the Kendall Scholarship of Merit in 2011 and in 2013. Her work has been represented by Lafontsee Galleries and City Art Gallery in Grand Rapids, Michigan.Aneka is currently living and working in her studio in Tampa, Florida and teaching drawing and painting at the University of Tampa.

**Vincent Katz** is a poet, translator, and critic. He is the author of eleven books of poetry and two books of translation. In 2012, Collectif Génération published his artist’s book collaboration with five artists, and in 2014 Faux Press published his chapbook *One-Liners*. Previous books of poetry include *Cabal of Zealots*, *BoulevardTransportation*, *Pearl*, *Understanding Objects* and *Alcuni Telefonini*. Katz curated an exhibition on

Black Mountain College for the Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid and was the editor of *Black Mountain College: Experiment In Art*, published by MIT Press in 2002 and reprinted in 2013. He is the author of *The Complete Elegies Of Sextus Propertius*, which won the NationalTranslation Award from the American Literary Translators Association. He lives in New York City, where he works as a freelance writer and organizes the Readings in Contemporary Poetry series at Dia Art Foundation.This year, Nightboat Books publishes his new collection of poetry, *Swimming Home*.

**Riva Lehrer** is an artist and writer whose work focuses on issues of physical identity and the socially challenged body. Her work has been seen in venues such as the United Nations, the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, DC, the the DeCordova Museum, the Frye Museum, the Smithsonian Museum, the Chicago Cultural Center, and the State of Illinois Museum.

Her work has been featured in numerous documentaries, including “The Paper Mirror” (2012) by Charissa King-O’Brien, on her collaboration with graphic novelist Alison Bechdel;“Self Preservation: The Art of Riva Lehrer” (2005) by David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder; “Variations” (2014), by Laurie Little and Anuradha Rana; and “Code of the Freaks” by Salome Chasnoff, Carrie Sandahl, and Susan Nussbaum (in progress). Ms. Lehrer’s writing and visual art are included in publications including “Criptiques”, edited by Caitlin Wood, 2014, and “Sex and Disability”, Duke University Press, edited by Robert McRuer and Anna Mollow, 2011, and *TriQuarterly*, 2013 and 2014, for which she received a Special Mention Pushcart prize.

Riva Lehrer is currently an instructor in Medical Humanities at Northwestern University.

**Zachari Logan** is a Canadian artist working mainly in drawing, ceramics and installation practices. His work has been exhibited widely, in group and solo exhibitions throughout North America and Europe, including: Athens, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Brussels, Berlin, Cincinnati, Calgary, London, Los Angeles, Miami, Montreal, New York, Ottawa, Paris, Toronto and Vienna and can be found in public and private collections worldwide. Logan has attended residencies in Paris, rural Tennessee, Calgary, NYC, Vernon and twice in Vienna; most recently through the Museum Quartier’s quartier21: Artist in Residence Program, in conjunction with Vienna’s Museum of Modern Art. His work has been featured in many publications worldwide.

**James Needham** is an English Artist based in Sydney Australia. Having studied at The Oxfordshire College of Art in the UK, James moved to Australia permanently in 2010 and currently studies at Sydney’s National Art School. He has had 3 Solo exhibitions and been involved in several group shows in both Sydney and Brisbane. His art is focussed on human beings, from the visual, aesthetic beauty of the Human form, to the exploration of human relationships and how we interact with one another. His work is intentionally voyeuristic to reflect the human obsession with others and how we are viewed by our contemporaries. He has received several important portrait commissions locally as well as having his paintings in collections around the world.

**Denis Peterson** taught figurative drawing at Pratt Institute where

he achieved his MFA. His painting career ranges over forty five years, during which time he exhibited in numerous colleges and universities, as well as at major galleries and public museums. His work can be found among the foremost collections in the world and in university textbooks.

His early paintings were widely exhibited during the emergence of New Realism/ Photorealism in New York. Breaking off from their more traditional conventions, he later pioneered the more recent Hyperrealism movement with his newer works which had metamorphosized into what he describes as “visual excursions through a range of societal norms as alternate realities”.

Denis is a full-time painter in New York.

**Joyce Polance**'s figurative oils explore gender and relationships. Born in New York City, Polance attended Wesleyan University and received a BFA from the Fashion Institute of Technology.

Polance is a six-time grantee of the CAAP Grant from the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs as well as the recipient of a Cliff Dwellers' Artist in Residence Award, two Judith Dawn Memorial Fund Grants and a George Sugarman Foundation Grant. Her work has been featured in the *Chicago Tribune*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, *Chicago Reader*, *American Art Collector*, *Antigone Magazine* and the *Visalia (CA) Times-Delta*, *King's River Life*, *Parce Que Magazine*, *iArtistas*, on the covers of several collections of art : *Face*, *Figure*, *Identity*, *Urban Confusions*, and *The Other Journal*, as well as inside the German-published volume *Women in Art*. Her work is also aired internationally as part of the Austrian Artfem.TV website.

Polance's paintings are held nationally and internationally in private and corporate collections including Commonwealth Edison, Deloitte, The University Club of Chicago, Barack Ferrazzano Kirschbaum & Nagelberg LLP, The Illinois Institute of Art, and London collector William Boyce. She has exhibited widely and is represented by Josef Glimmer Gallery in Chicago, Illinois and Judith Ferrara's Blue Gallery in Three Oaks, Michigan.

**Nadine Robbins**, a portraitist known for the insight and vigor she brings to her commissions, grew up in France, the daughter of an artist. Coming of age in a family and culture steeped in visual art decisively influenced her life and taste.

Nadine studied first in France then continued her education in the US and London, eventually earning a BFA in Graphic Design from SUNY New Paltz. She achieved considerable success as the founder of her own firm – Namaro Graphics – while also developing and honing her skills in both photography and painting. In 2008, while looking through some of her old high-school artwork, Nadine came across a portrait of her brother she had painted and something in her changed. She remembered how much she loved to paint and how passionate she was about art. It was time to move forward, revisit her past and creatively start over.

Working in her Hudson Valley studio Robbins has developed her artistic practice, gaining important commissions and critical notice along the way. Although she is not a photorealist, Nadine is a gifted photographer

who uses her own original photos as the starting point of her paintings. Rejecting the rigid postures and heavy symbolism of traditional portraiture, Nadine invites her subjects to relax and to convey their inner states and desires.

Nadine's portraits are visually striking and attract attention. The first painting in the “Bad Habits and Guilty Pleasures” sequence impressed critic John Seed, writing in the *Huffington Post*. He chose Nadine's portrait “Mrs. McDonald” as one of his “Ten Memorable Paintings for 2013.” Seed praised the “sultry mood and unique beauty” of the image, and was then inspired to write a second article “An Alluring Woman with Fries” dedicated to analyzing the painting more completely. He then chose the painting for the cover of a book he published entitled “10 Rather Eccentric Essays on Art” that included the second article. Her double portrait “The Golden Gown,” has been hailed by critic Keith Shaw as “the best nude oil painting I've seen in the Berkshires outside The Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, MA. Nadine Robbins is a superb figure painter, and her double portrait is an American masterpiece.” Her large portraits “The Rolling Buns” and “Acacia and the Bowman” have traveled to London to be included in the Royal Society of Portrait Painters Exhibition 2 years in a row and several of her portraits are now part of the The Tullman Collection including “Double Gulp”.

Nadine's work builds upon her intuitive visual experience as a creative director. She digs into the concept of “personality” by merging photography and painting into design-influenced compositions striving to draw in the viewer by capturing an unspoken confidence, emotion or unique beauty.

Mario Andres Robinson was born in Altus, Oklahoma—where he resided with his family before relocating to New Jersey at the age of twelve. His artistic gift was discovered by a fifth grade teacher and a creative explosion was sparked in the pre-teen. Robinson studied at the prestigious Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York.

The work of Mario Andres Robinson fits squarely within the tradition of American painting. Robinson's finished works bear a close affinity to the masters of the realist tradition, Andrew Wyeth and Thomas Eakins. Containing few references to modern life, Robinson's work has a timeless and universal quality and exhibits a turn- of- the- century aesthetic. The images he chooses, which refer to a bygone era where solitude and reflection were abundant, also provoke frequent allusions to the paintings of Winslow Homer and Edward Hopper.

Beginning in 1994, Robinson's work began to extensively incorporate rural subjects primarily located in Alabama. Each subject is very personal for the artist in both selection and execution. As the work progresses, his relationship with the sitter develops and a uniquely personal story begins to evolve. Robinson frequently depicts subjects framed within the context of their daily lives. The underlying narrative counters sentimentality and serves as the underpinning for his figurative images.

**Mario Andres Robinson** is an Exhibiting Artist Member (EAM) of The National Arts Club, The Salmagundi Club, NY and a Signature member of The Pastel Society of America. He is considered a Living Master by The Art Renewal Center. His work has been featured several

times in The Artist's Magazine, The Pastel Journal, Watercolor Magic, Fine Art Connoisseur, American Art Collector and on the cover of American Artist magazine. In the February 2006 issue of The Artist's Magazine, Mario was selected as one of the top 20 realists under the age of 40. In 2014, Robinson was appointed Brand Ambassador for Winsor & Newton.

**Victoria Selbach** is a New York Contemporary Realist. Selbach's work is a study of the complexity of light and it's ability to reveal and abstract what is present. Her gaze is directed through a deep connection to women who carry their strong presence and beauty into her paintings. Celebrating real women, not masked by pretense or accessorized to fetishize or categorize, Selbach presents women just as they are, honest and whole, comfortable in their own magnificence. The work challenges us not only to look at how the depiction of the female nude sits in the context of contemporary art but also triggers thinking on how women are truly seen currently in the world. www.victoriaselbach.com

**Ryan Shultz** received his bachelor's degree from The American Academy of Art in 2005, and his M.F.A. from Northwestern University in 2009. Shultz's work deals primarily with youth culture and the “cult of excess,” depicting scenes of intoxication and drug use, alienation and ecstasy. These works embrace the art historical canon, borrowing compositional devices, technical processes, poses and gestures from classical painting. Shultz is equally influenced by popular culture, film and the fashion world, referencing this imagery in the subject matter and scenarios that he creates. In this sense, his work could be called a marriage of the present and the past, a re-utilization of past techniques, to make works that explore romanticized views of contemporary youth culture.

**Timothy Robert Smith** is a Los Angeles based oil painter, using observational techniques to portray a multi-dimensional perspective of the universe. After receiving his MFA degree from Laguna College of Art and Design (LCAD) in 2013, he has created a plethora of work for galleries, museums and written publications, including a solo show at Copro Gallery in Bergamot Station and many articles in the *Huffington Post*. He also teaches art at LCAD and CSU Los Angeles.

**Yuki Toy** is an artist and writer based in Los Angeles. She uses colored pencils on paper and raw canvas to create washed out like vintage style portraits and figures. As a writer, her stories includes neo-counter culture and art scenes in Los Angeles. Her articles have been featured in *Huffington Post Japan* and various publications.

**John Walker** has been working as a professional artist for over thirty years. After graduating from The American Academy of Art he began a career in illustration, creating a wide array of artwork for clients nationwide, including McDonalds, Random House and National Geographic. Acrylics became his media of choice during this time and he has become fluent in their application. His focus has largely shifted to painting and exhibiting personal works which have been awarded honors in numerous exhibitions. He was named a finalist in Artist Magazine's annual competition in 2012 for his painting “Rose.” In 2013, “The Fisherman's Wife,” was named Best of Show in the Richeson 75 International Portrait and Figure competition. His painting, “Ginni

Moon Prepares for Takeoff,” was recognized with the National Society of Painters in Casein and Acrylic Award, at the NSPC&A's 59th annual exhibition in NY in 2013, and he was a juried participant in 2014 with the painting, “So Alice Went Through the Looking-Glass Again.” “VooDoo Steps Out,” was selected for inclusion in North Light Books 2014 compendium, *AcrylicWorks: The Best of Acrylic Painting*, and “Winter Contemplation,” was juried into the 2015 edition, *AcrylicWorks 2: Radical Breakthroughs*.

**Nick Ward** is a Boston based painter who is interested in exploring portraits place in contemporary art. Nick's work is generally described as realism but, exaggerated features, complex textures and vivid colors attempt to bring more complex stories to his simple compositions. His work earned him the Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Grant in 2012.