

**YOU MAY
FIND
YOURSELF**



MODERN WEST

May 20 - July 9, 2022

Diane Stewart founded Modern West with a vision to create a space that transcended gallery walls, inviting community, creativity, and collaboration. Facilitating and supporting collaborative engagement is a core mission of Modern West, cultivating dialogue between established, emerging, and mid-career artists. Our programming is directly informed by our artists' evolving work and their commitment to collaborate not only with each other, but also with our community.

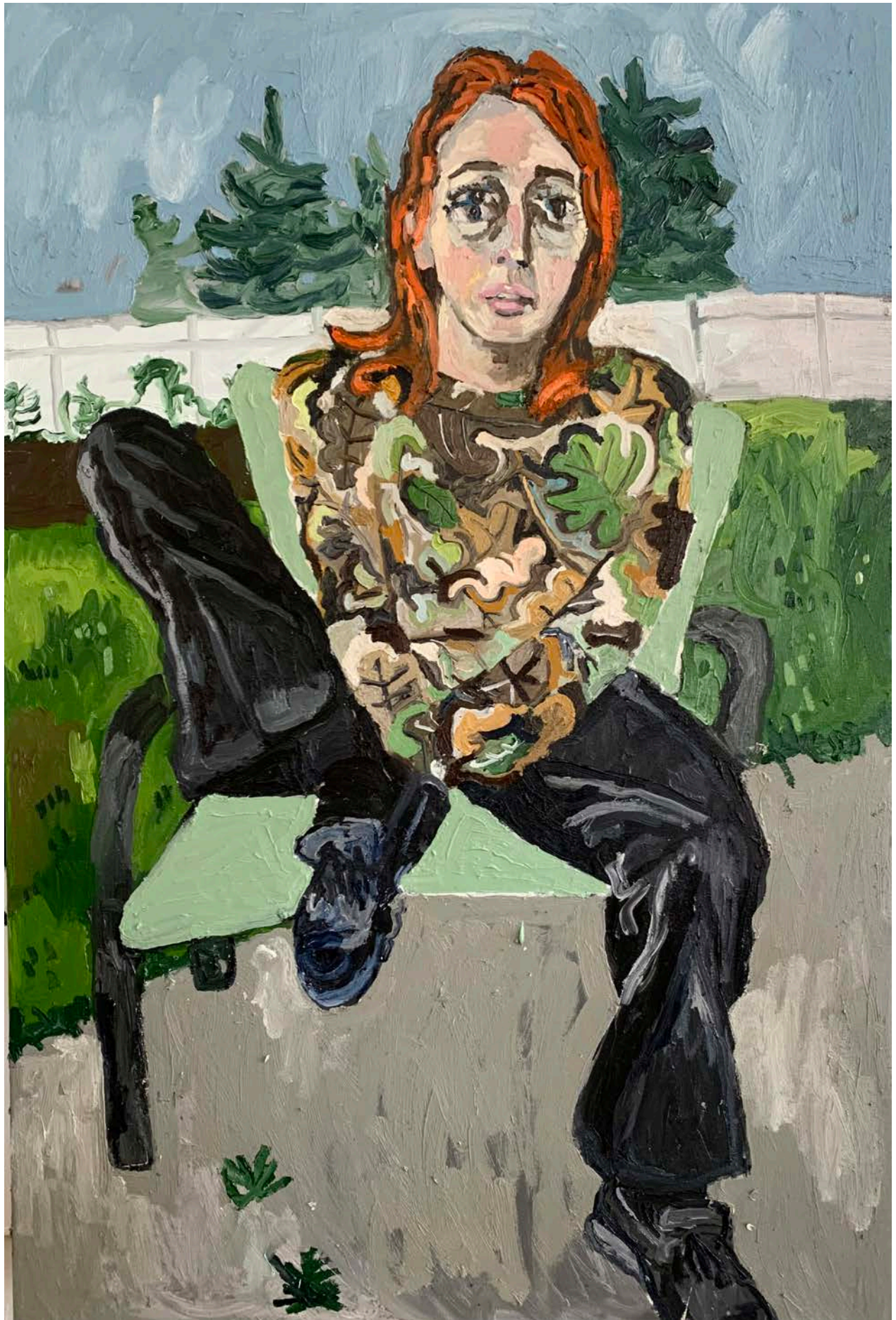
You May Find Yourself has been in the works since the fall of 2019. After Fidalis Buehler introduced Modern West's Director Shalee Cooper to Mitch Mantle's work, Cooper curated the group exhibition MYTH featuring works by Buehler, Mantle, and Wren Ross. The works from MYTH complimented each other so well that the show opened up discussion of future exhibitions by these artists.

Andrew Alba became an early artist in residence at Modern West in 2020 and he quickly connected with Buehler, Mantle, and Ross, sharing a similar thematic approach in his work. Matthew Sketch followed Alba's residency in 2021 and after Buehler introduced MW to Aisha Lehmann in the Spring of 2021, she became an artist in residence in the summer, followed by Jiyoun Lee-Lodge in the fall. Modern West's residency program has not only given artists a space to develop work, but has cultivated community between our artists and led to representation and the artists conversing about their work with each other.

While in residency, Alba, Lee-Lodge, Lehmann, and Sketch each developed work that spoke directly to identity in Utah, but with universal themes that extend far beyond. Each of the artists included in *You May Find Yourself* is rooted in Utah, but their identity-based work pushes boundaries and reflects outwards, from Utah to the West and beyond.







Andrew Alba, *Willow in the Backyard*, 2022, oil on canvas, 54 x 36 in

ANDREW ALBA

ARTIST STATEMENT

Borrowing techniques of abstraction from neoexpressionists, my work aims to evoke an emotional response while commenting on our wildly complex sociopolitical present. As a self-taught artist, I create work without the theoretical constraints and critical expectations of the academy. I sculpt using everyday materials from my day job in construction. I like to juxtapose the clean white walls of the gallery against the rough-hewn, everyday materials of the worker. While drop cloths, drywall mud, concrete, and lumber aren't of archival quality, I am interested in how these materials will enact the inescapable slow decay of blue-collar bodies. My work is for tired working people.

BIOGRAPHY

As a self-taught artist and descendant of Mexican migrant workers, Alba's large scale paintings and drawings evoke an emotional response while still maintaining relevant commentary on contemporary politics and society. Alba has exhibited work throughout the Pacific Northwest and Salt Lake City, where he currently resides.



Andrew Alba, *Trish in the Studio*, 2022, oil on canvas, 54 x 36 in



Andrew Alba, *Ari and Mickey*, 2022, oil on canvas, 30 x 25 in



Andrew Alba, *Diego*, 2022, oil on canvas, 30 x 25 in

How is your process and work integral to you, your environment, your community?

The process for me is the most important aspect of my work. This is something that has taken me years to figure out. It is something completely individual for each artist. For me it feels something like walking on a tightrope with contradicting ideas on both sides. Ugliness and beauty, Truth and Lies, death and life, painting for myself or painting to communicate something to the viewer. Figuring out my own process has required intuitive thinking and trust in the work. I try to separate myself from the paintings as much as possible while at the same time pour my whole self into it. I like surprises and mistakes and learning how to work around these things and have a certain level of trust in the work taking care of itself. I typically try to avoid making a painting where I see too much of a reflection of myself in it.

Is there significance to the double eyes motif in your portraits?

The eyes in my portraits have always been the most important piece that completes the work. I typically start off the painting with multiple eyes in different locations to see what best captures the mood and feelings of the person I am painting. With this series I decided to leave all the possibilities of the locations. I feel like it is a more accurate depiction of the complexities of emotions that we carry. I think it is beautiful that we can do this, to feel joy and sadness at the same time along with other contradicting emotions. I feel like eyes carry the emotions that we see in people at any moment.

What are you experimenting with in these new works? Is there symbolism or meaning behind certain aspects included in the new works?

At this moment in painting I am trying to stay away from symbolism and messages in the work. I'm not opposed to messages in work but in the recent past I have realized that I have no control over how the viewer interprets the work. Certain paintings in the past have been interpreted in a twisted sense or celebrated when I didn't feel like the subject was something to celebrate.

So at this time in my process, I am attempting to make work that simply exists with no message other than the fact that something has been created and now exists in the world and I believe if done right it can have a stronger impact than any message that I am trying to send. No one questions or looks for answers as to why a flower grows, it simply exists and that to me is very powerful.



Andrew Alba, *Nicholas on the Porch*, 2022, oil on canvas, 54 x 36 in





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Fidalis Buehler, *On the Move*, 2022, mixed media on panel, 20 x 16 in

FIDALIS BUEHLER

ARTIST STATEMENT

My work represents manifestations of identity seen through the complexity of American culture and South Pacific traditions - calling attention to confrontations and conflicting realities; straddling the line between levity and earnest devotion. Image making becomes an act of playful conjuring – reassembling personal histories that embody fear, anxiety, mythology, dreams, revelations, magic, mysticism, and ritual. The images are essentially a self-portrait seen through various forms of expanded and contracted narratives giving place for the viewer to exam the stirrings of my mind.

BIOGRAPHY

Fidalis Buehler is an artist living in Utah - the mountain west region of the United States. His life is a blending of two cultures - one being of Euro-American descent and the other of Pacific Island heritage. He exhibits in regional, national, and international exhibitions. Notable experiences include his participation in Urban Mythologies, Auckland's NorthArt Center, New Mystics at the CUAC, Rose Colored Glass at the Katherine E Nash gallery at the University of Minnesota, Gallery Protocol in Gainesville, Florida and a publication with New American Paintings.



Fidalis Buehler, *Squatters*, 2021, unique monotype, 14 x 20 in



Fidalis Buehler, *Gardener*, 2021, unique monotype, 16 x 14 in



Fidalis Buehler, *Scrap*, 2021, unique monotype, 16 x 14 in



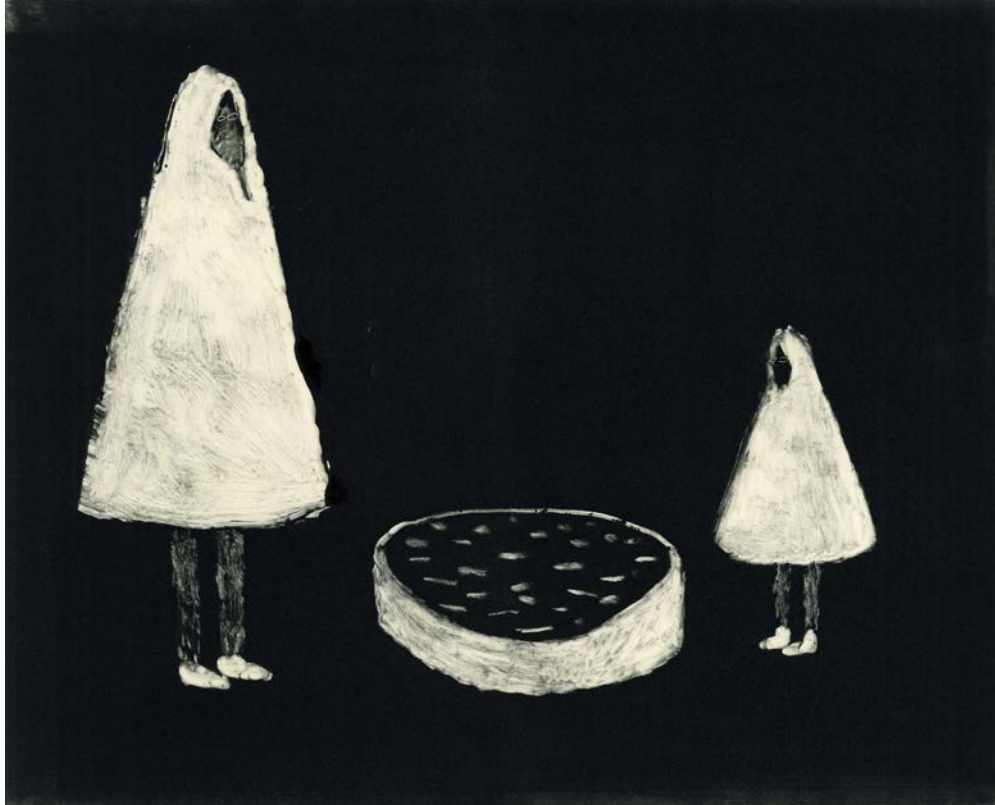
Fidalis Buehler, *Wrestlers*, 2021, unique monotype, 14 x 20 in



Fidalis Buehler, *Healing Tent*, 2022, mixed media on panel, 20 x 16 in



Fidalis Buehler, *Rest House*, 2021, mixed media on panel, 15.5 x 12.5 in



Fidalis Buehler, *Raincoats at the Pool*, 2021, unique monotype, 14 x 16 in



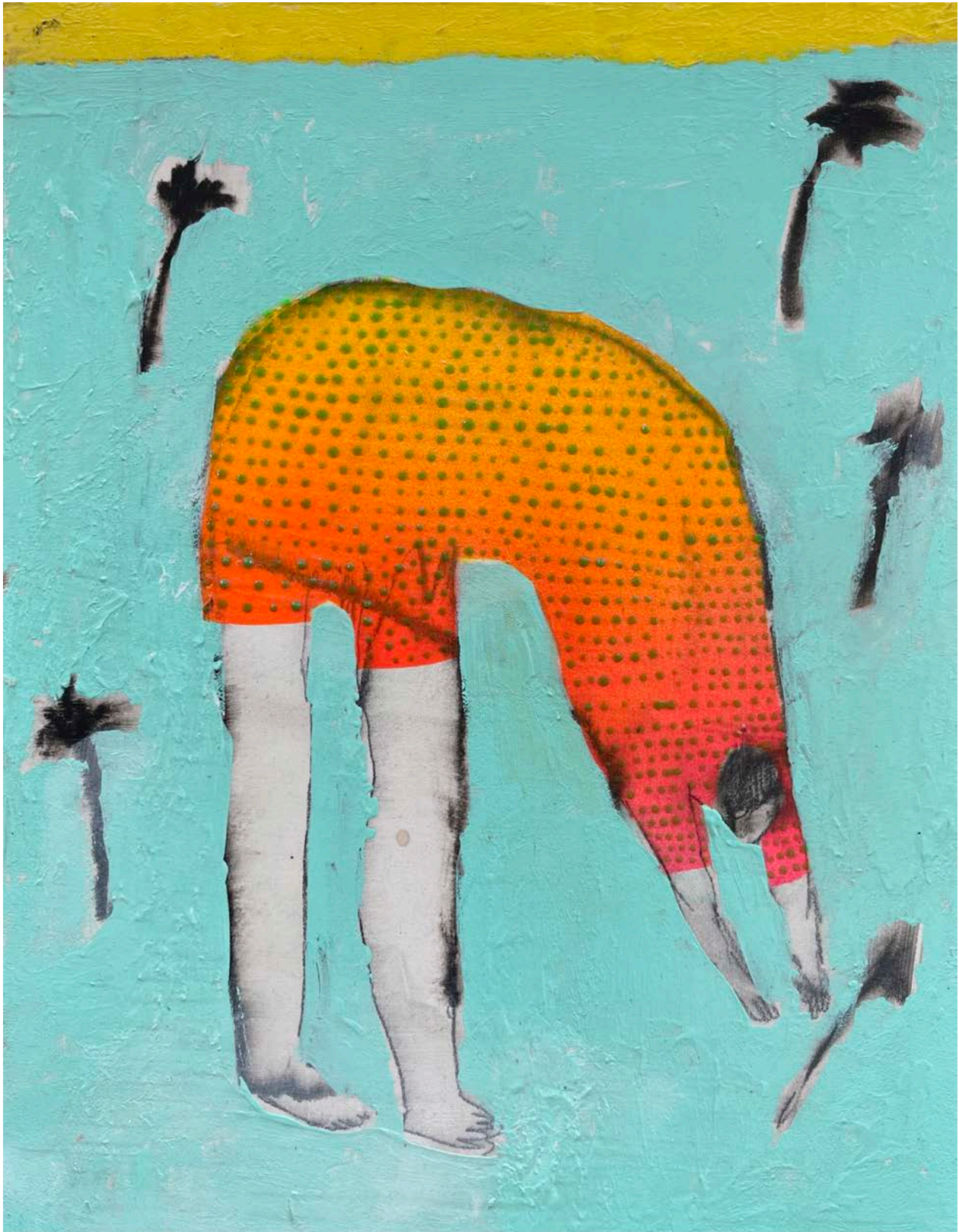
Fidalis Buehler, *Double Face with Rain Clouds*, 2021, unique monotype, 14 x 16 in



Fidalis Buehler, *Danger Close*, 2021, mixed media on panel, 12.5 x 15.5 in



Fidalis Buehler, *Words and Fire*, 2021, mixed media on panel, 21.5 x 17.5 in



Fidalis Buehler, *Picking Palm Trees*, 2022, mixed media on panel, 15.5 x 12.5 in



Fidalis Buehler, *Bathers Walking*, 2022, mixed media on panel, 23.5 x 20.5 in



Fidalis Buehler, *Kiddie Pool and Lemonade*, 2022, mixed media on panel, 21.5 x 20.5



Fidalis Buehler, *Ghetto Bird*, 2021, mixed media on panel, 12.5 x 15.5 in

Tell us a little about yourself and your current work.

As an artist that identifies with my mixed heritage I am usually consumed by personal experience and the distortions created through recollection. My latest work ebbs and flows between melodramatic visual impulses from domestic life enhanced through chronic daydreaming and the pervasive consumption of media.

How is your process and work integral to you, your environment, your community?

As an artist I become a receptacle, a sponge that collects from within my reach of awareness. I move paint around as a way to process it all. There is a type of symbiotic relationship between artist and everything. As I try to nurture the space, the people, the objects around me there is a natural reciprocating return on my investment.

What are you experimenting with in these new works? Is there symbolism or meaning behind certain aspects included in the new works?

Swimming pools, violence, gardening, wrestling... imagining dichotomies and disclosing my fears and/or what brings me peace.

What can you say about the way the figures in your new works are interacting with each other? Is there a give and take in their actions?

Some are violent and some are still. I want some of the work to express conflict and for other works to leave the viewer guessing. "Words and fire" is a type of give and take painting that shows an exchange between a person on the ground expressing a word bubble and group of four menacing figures with flames coming from their barrel-like-arms.







Jiyoun Lee-Lodge, *Waterman - In The Woods #3*, 2022, acrylic on canvas, 40 x 30 in

JIIYOUN LEE-LODGE

ARTIST STATEMENT

I make inside-out portraits of people I am surrounded by to understand myself and the world around me. My work represents my shifting identity as an immigrant, woman, or hybrid in a globalized world with a strong influence on Social Media. I make paintings, drawings, installations, and public art, influenced by surrealism and animation.

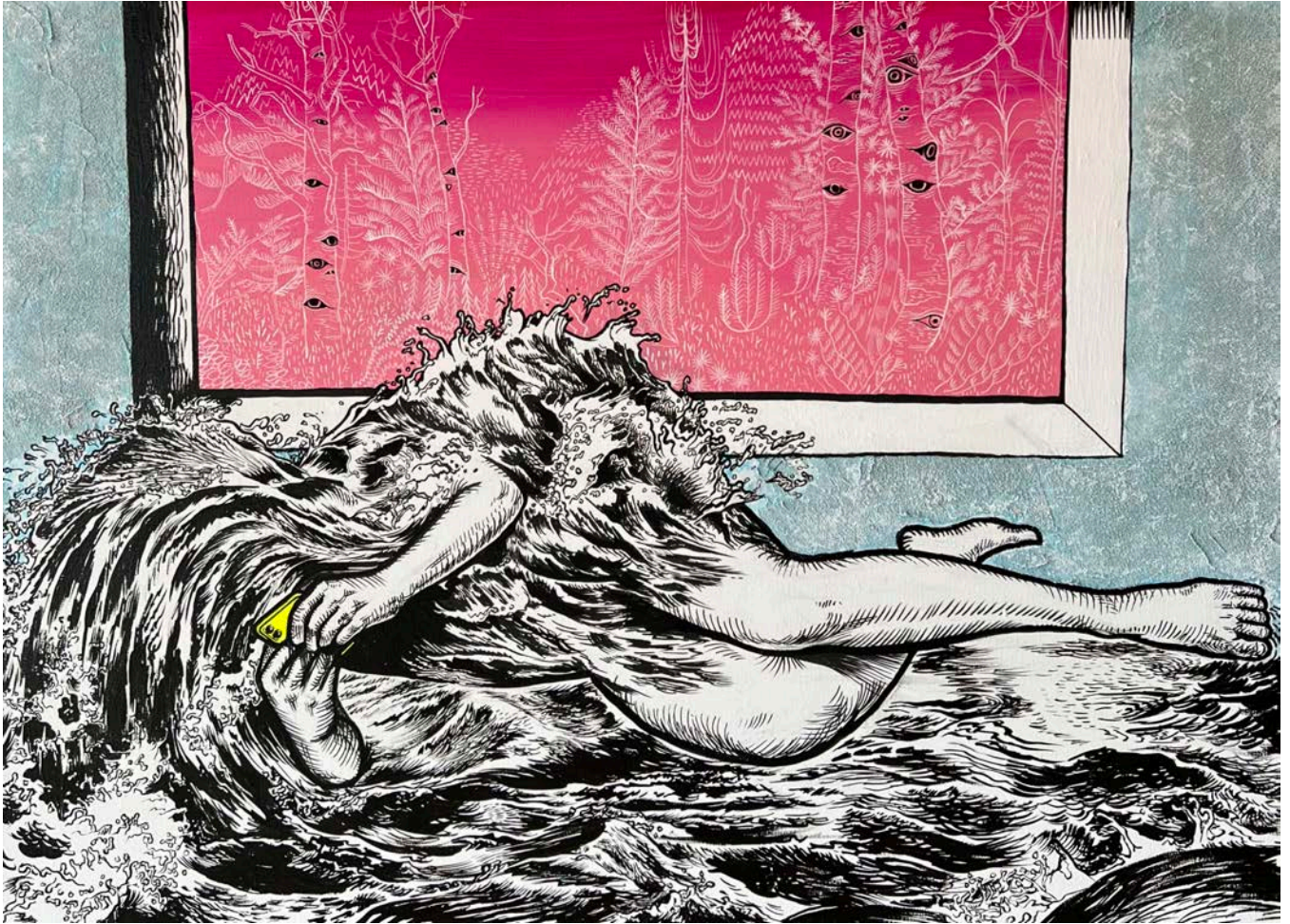
My recent work series 'Waterman the Stranger (2018-2019)' is about a person like me who struggles to shape identity and stay in a state of flux in a new place or new circumstances. I started by asking – 'if I mimic what an ideal life looks like in a new place, will I blend in well?' In this series, I deal with alienation because of pursuing the self-defined ideal life. I illustrate myself as shifting water that repels, absorbs, reflects, and fails to show the figure's struggle to find a place within its environment. The backgrounds reflect 'a better life' in Utah that I imagined. This series started from my struggle of settling in Utah after moving from New York.

BIOGRAPHY

Jiyoun Lee-Lodge is a Korean-born, Salt Lake City, Utah based artist. Selected exhibition venues include Utah Museum of Contemporary Museum, Gallery Korea, Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning, Recession Art, Gallery Ho, PizzaArte, ArtGate, Maum, Arario, the Bowery Club, Clinton Project, New York; ArtMora, New York, New Jersey, and Seoul, South Korea; 437CO gallery, Colorado; Rio Gallery, Urban Arts Gallery, Draw Inc, Bountiful Davis Art Center, Utah and more. She curated 'Hybrid Life Form' at Franklin St (Project Space) in NY, and her recent installation projects include an ArtShop Project at Gateway and The Block Main Street Kiosk Project, Utah. She recently completed the public art 'The Arrival' that is the commission by the NYC Department of Education, Public Art for Public Schools at PS 144 addition, Queens. Jiyoun is the recipient of the Utah Museum of Contemporary Art's Artist-in-residence program, Ahl Foundation Visual Arts Award, Manhattan Graphics Center Workspace Fellowship, New York, ArtMora Residency Program, New York, and Teaching fellowship at Brooklyn College. Jiyoun also won Small Matters show at Mesa University, CO, Statewide Annual at Utah Division of Arts and Museums. She was one of the finalists of NYC Urban Canvas as well. Jiyoun received an MFA in Studio Art from Brooklyn College, New York.



Jiyoun Lee-Lodge, *Waterman - You and I #1*, 2022, acrylic on canvas, 36 x 48 in



Jiyoun Lee-Lodge, *Waterman - On The Bed*, 2022, acrylic on canvas, 30 x 40 in



Jiyoun Lee-Lodge, *Waterman - In The Cafe #1*, 2022, digital painting, 23 x 30 in

How is your process and work integral to you, your environment, your community?

My work is influenced by my surroundings, including the environment and my community - maybe direct and indirect communities that I observe through social media. I find the feed on social media uncomfortable and fascinating. Inspiration, motivation, temptation, jealousy, and sadness come together with a little bit of new information in there, so I have to keep my critical eyes open, constantly and consciously. The struggle and the sense of isolation while I try to observe and communicate with the world informs my waterman in my works. Waterman characters in my works pose as if the people use social media or take selfies.

What are you experimenting with in these new works? Is there symbolism or meaning behind certain aspects included in the new works?

I address modern loneliness and isolation caused by social media directly by locating the phone and windows in the works with watermen. Windows are maybe the real world or the projection of the real world. The depiction of the background is outlined thinly as a delicate and fragile reality. Sometimes I locate the multiple windows - including the phone window- to illustrate the blurred line between real, projected and simulated reality.

You have one work included in the show that features two watermen figures interacting with each other; the first time any of your works have featured multiple figures — is this representative of a new era?

If the single waterman is about self-reflection in the form of a self-portrait, the multiple watermen are about a relationship. I see the relationship in two ways. First, between two or more people, like partners, kids, friends, family and me. The second is a relationship between different personalities and what-ifs. I mean, the push and pull between the good and bad OR scenarios A and B inside me. So you can see the multiple watermen in that sense. Multiple watermen will appear as I continue with single waterman portraits.



Jiyoun Lee-Lodge, *Waterman - Hallway #2*, 2022, acrylic on canvas, 30 x 40 in



Jiyoun Lee-Lodge, *Waterman - Falling #3*, 2021, digital drawing print on paper, 38.3 x 40 in, Edition of 10





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Aisha Lehmann, *Identity Formation: Roots*, 2022, screen print, 14 x 11 in, 6 artist's proofs

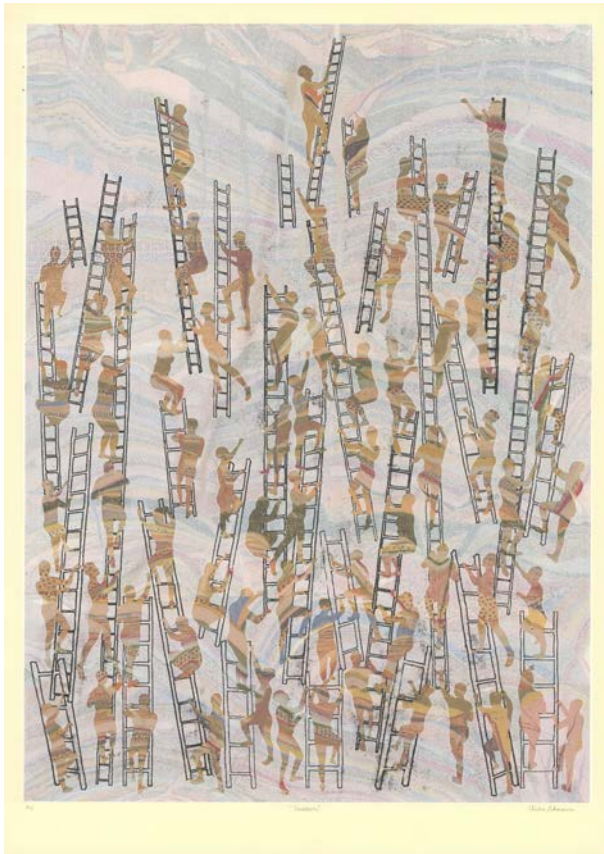
AÏSHA LEHMANN

ARTIST STATEMENT

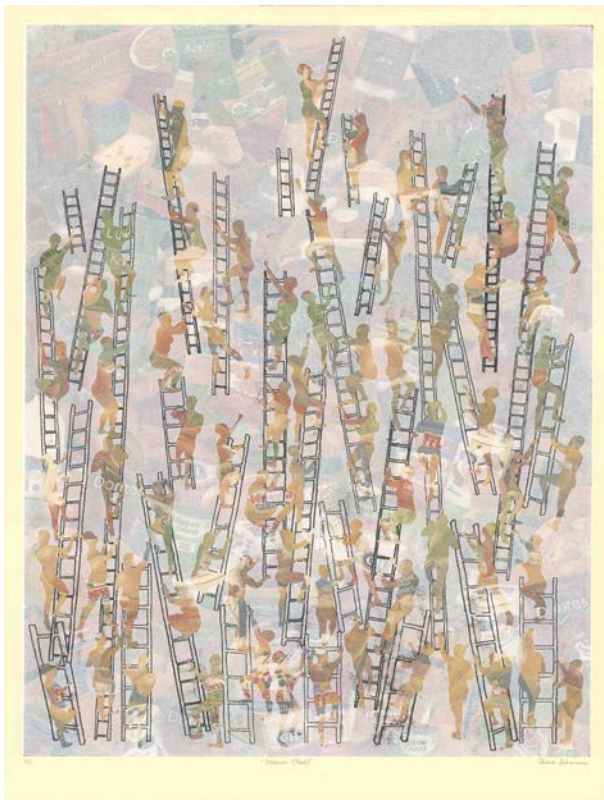
Race, ethnicity, culture, ancestry, nationality, religion, spirituality, and gender each combine and contribute to the formation of our human identities. While personal identity should be a celebration of uniqueness as well as unity, human history has proven to assimilate, use, abuse, terrorize and even completely annihilate entire peoples because they're core identities classified them as subordinate. My work could in no way encapsulate the cruel injustices or general complexities of identity—in particular race. How could it? It is impossible to accurately depict and explain a socially constructed reality in simple or adequate terms. At very least, imagery can attempt to teach audiences about the nuances of identity in ways words cannot. Issues of race and ethnicity have a tendency to turn people away, out of discomfort, ignorance, lack of interest, the assumption that it does not pertain to them, or perhaps, most understandably for people of color, racial fatigue. By using aesthetically appealing patterns, colorful and pleasant hues, and dynamic figurative imagery, the work is inviting, approachable, and accessible. But upon closer inspection of imagery and subtle use of text, my greatest desire would be for viewers to be reminded of their own unique identity, and more importantly learn and contemplate aspects of a human experience outside of their own. As I have embarked on this journey of identity exploration, I have delved into other's personal narratives, social science research that contextualizes our society, and finally my own mixed background. It is essential that each of us embark on such a journey of personal, informational, emotionally sincere, and explorative grappling. Our shared reprehensible human history requires individual and institutional reconciliation.

BIOGRAPHY

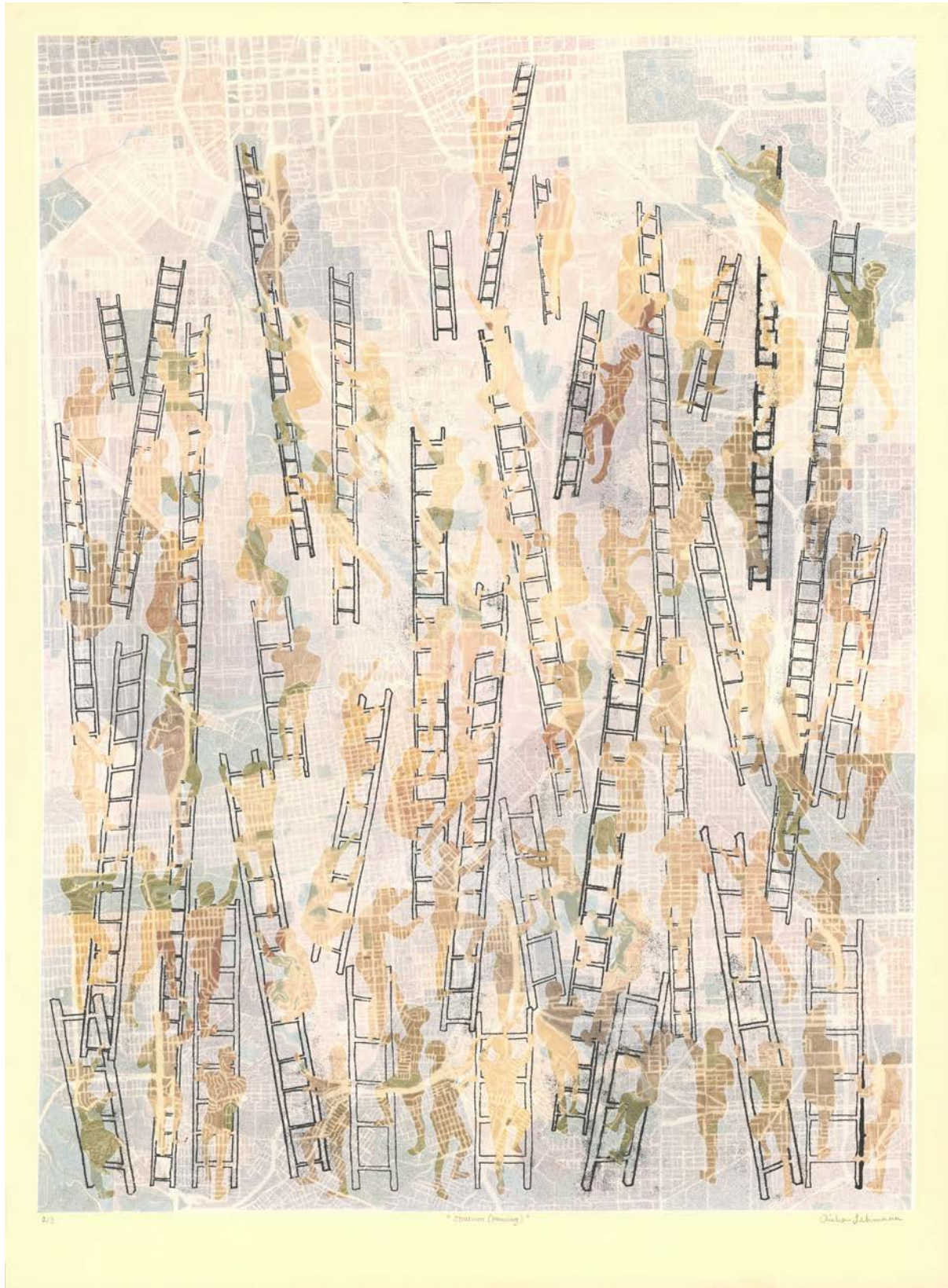
Aïsha Lehmann is an artist based in Provo, Utah. She is currently in Brigham Young University's Studio Art BFA program, with minors in Sociology and Africana Studies. She is an artist and researcher, grappling with the complexities of identity in race, ethnicity, gender, and spirituality. As she researches, she examines academic studies as well as her own gathered material on others' personal experiences and narratives.



Aisha Lehmann, *Stratum*, 2022, screen print, 30 x 22 in



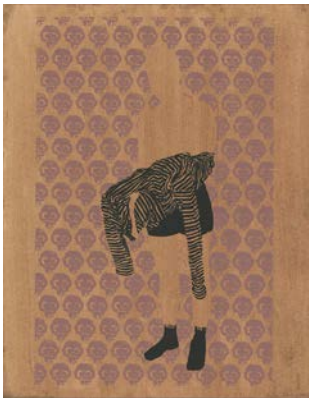
Aisha Lehmann, *Stratum (Food)*, 2022, screen print, 30 x 22 in



Aisha Lehmann, *Stratum (Housing)*, 2022, screen print, 30 x 22 in



Aisha Lehmann, *ausziehen anziehen* | *Untitled (I)*, 2022, screen print on organically hand-dyed paper, 14 x 88 in



Aisha Lehmann, *ausziehen anziehen* | *Untitled (M)*, 2022, screen print on organically hand-dyed paper, 14 x 88 in



Aisha Lehmann, *My Roots Your Roots*, 2022, lithograph, 22 x 15 in, Edition of 12

Tell us a little about yourself and your current work.

I'm fascinated with racial identity formation. While race is a social construct, we cannot deny its reality in our history and current society. My work last year focused on specific individuals, but I've begun to shift focus to aspects of identity which can be more universally applied. My mind is often occupied by the paradox of the natural and familial roots from which we all come, compared to the man-made and societal influences which often reap stratifying results based on one's identity.

What are you experimenting with in these new works? Is there symbolism or meaning behind certain aspects included in the new works? Clothing, chairs, etc.

I've been thinking about clothing as a symbol of identity, the societal aspects given to us, which we wear daily as a performance of that identity. Particularly for mixed identity, the use of a striped black and white shirt felt like a simple but significant way to show the privilege of a mixed person to remove or put on their identity depending on context. At the same time, the impermanence of the clothing shows the complexities and difficulties of the dual identities and constant switching based on outside context. Also, the act of removing one's "racial identity" to examine it more closely is an experience many mixed race individuals go through in their early adult years, an experience I have personally had as well as had the opportunity to research during my undergraduate.

I also have been exploring plants with roots as a symbol of familial origins and heritage. Plants that are used for cultural food in particular speaks to this idea. The figure is part of the roots yet still separate. It leans on and grasps the roots but also is fascinated with the other identities all around. The expressions reflect a sort of compare and contrast game, a hierarchizing mindset, either yearning for another's identity or looking down on others. As in the past, I also think about how boxes—both in naïvely drawn lines or the frame of the piece itself—speak to the societal categories which limit and box in a natural human identity into a specific man-made race or ethnicity.

How is your process and work integral to you, your environment, your community?

History, social science, and literature which explores race is often highly politicized or placed in too academic a realm for the subject matter to feel safe or approachable to most people. Art is a pivotal way to make such important concepts more accessible and hopefully embody the nuances and complexities of race in simple and digestible ways.

Where did you draw inspiration from for these works? Have other MW artists in this exhibition influenced your work?

Recently I've drawn inspiration from different vintage posters and images which relied on printmaking methods. For example I have been fascinated by taxonomy-like lithographs of flowers, plants, and vegetables. I also have been intrigued with narratives and sequences, almost in the form of a book, but displayed in such a way that each snapshot of the movement can be seen at once, such as one of the first photographs in motion "Horse in Motion" by Eadweard Muybridge.

Fidalis has been an influential mentor to me over the last few years. He was one of my professors at BYU and was my advisor for my final BFA show. I've grown so much through his art critiques, encouragement, and how much he pushed me to apply to things I didn't think I was qualified for. I owe him so much for the opportunities I've had during my undergraduate and with Modern West.



Aisha Lehmann, *Identity Formation: Chairs*, 2022, screen print, 14 x 11 in, 8 artist's proofs







Mitch Mantle, *Pillow Talk*, 2021, acrylic and collage on canvas, 60 x 73 in

MITCH MANTLE

ARTIST STATEMENT

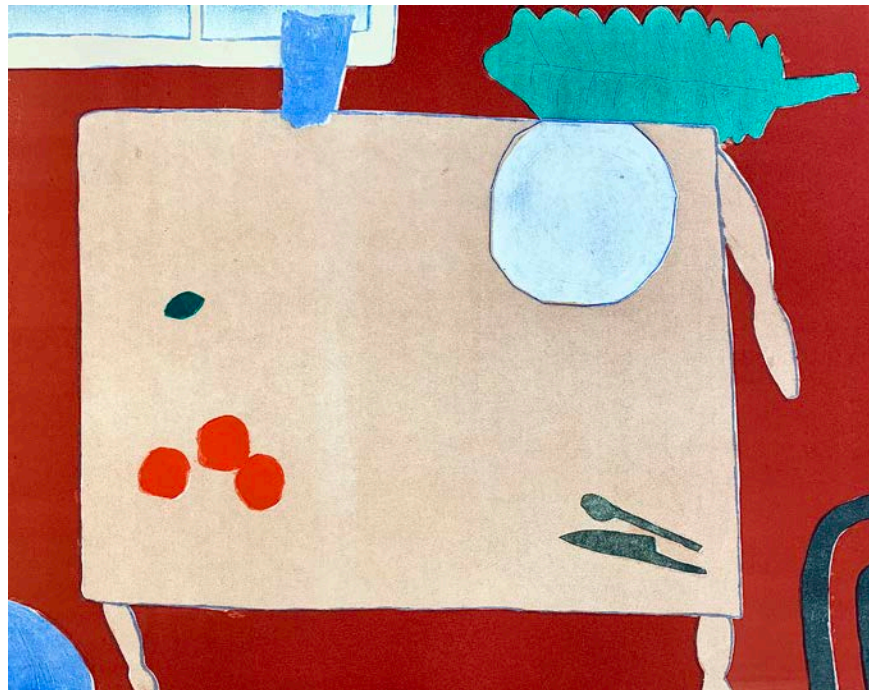
Art can be a powerful way to search for purpose and meaning. Anything we wonder about, question, or experience can later breach the surface of the subconscious to become an iconic visual symbol. In my own work, figures, animals, and buildings interact in a metaphoric narrative that is autobiographical and, hopefully, universal. I imagine they are me. I am every man, woman and animal that I draw. I am everybody and nobody in particular. My pieces attempt to explore and celebrate the certainties and ambiguities of personality, relationships, and being.

BIOGRAPHY

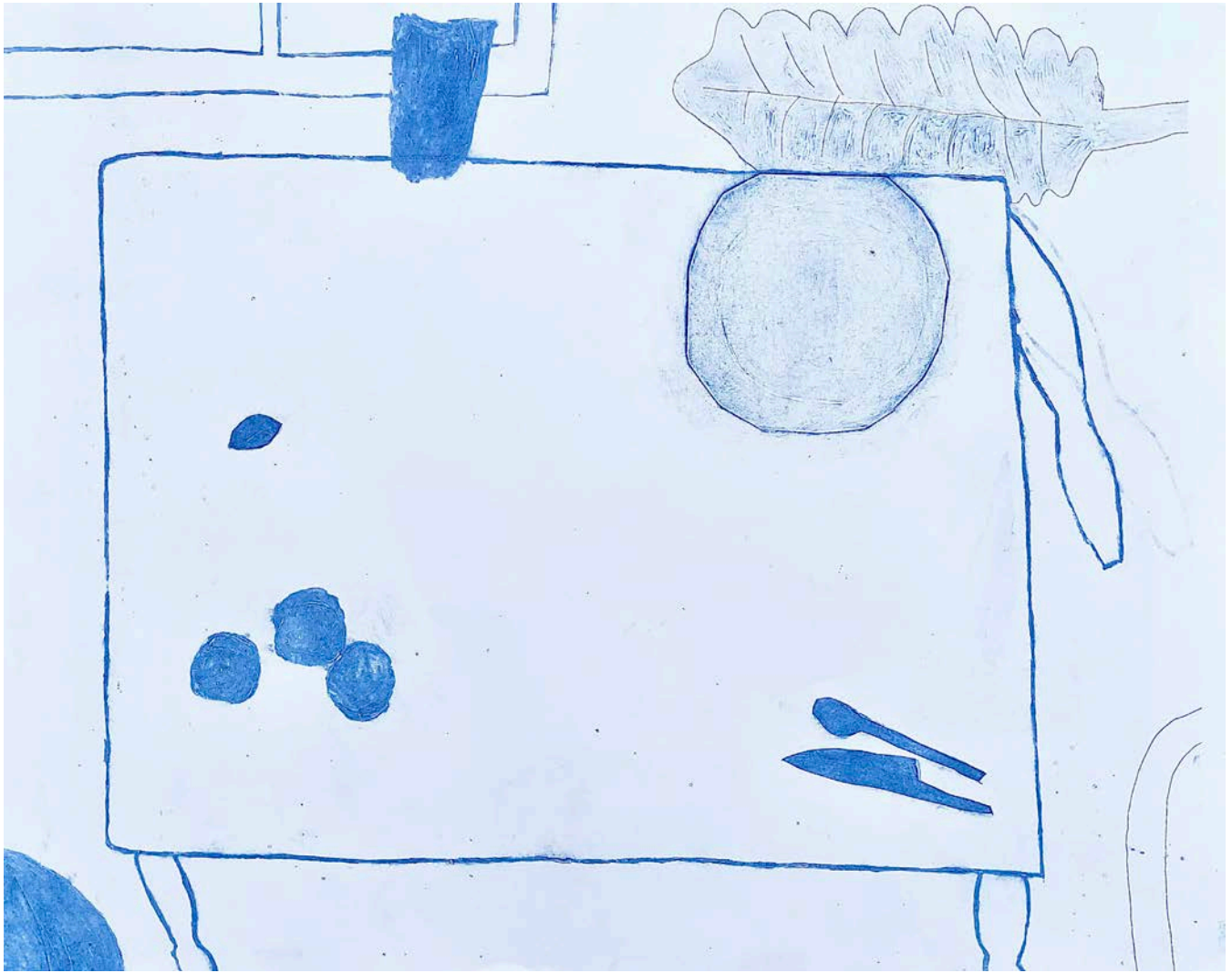
Mantle is originally from Southern Utah, now lives and works in Arizona. His large bold and vibrant paintings consist of dreamlike scenes, with a strong figurative element and mythical narrative.



Mitch Mantle, *Setting the Table 2*, 2021, intaglio and monotype, 29 x 36.5 in



Mitch Mantle, *Setting the Table 1*, 2021, intaglio and monotype, 29 x 36.5 in



Mitch Mantle, *Setting the Table 5*, 2021, intaglio and monotype, 29 x 36.5 in



Mitch Mantle, *Orange Devil*, 2021, ink on paper, 15 x 11 in



Mitch Mantle, *Orange Devil Two*, 2021, ink on paper, 15 x 11 in

How is your process and work integral to you, your environment, your community?

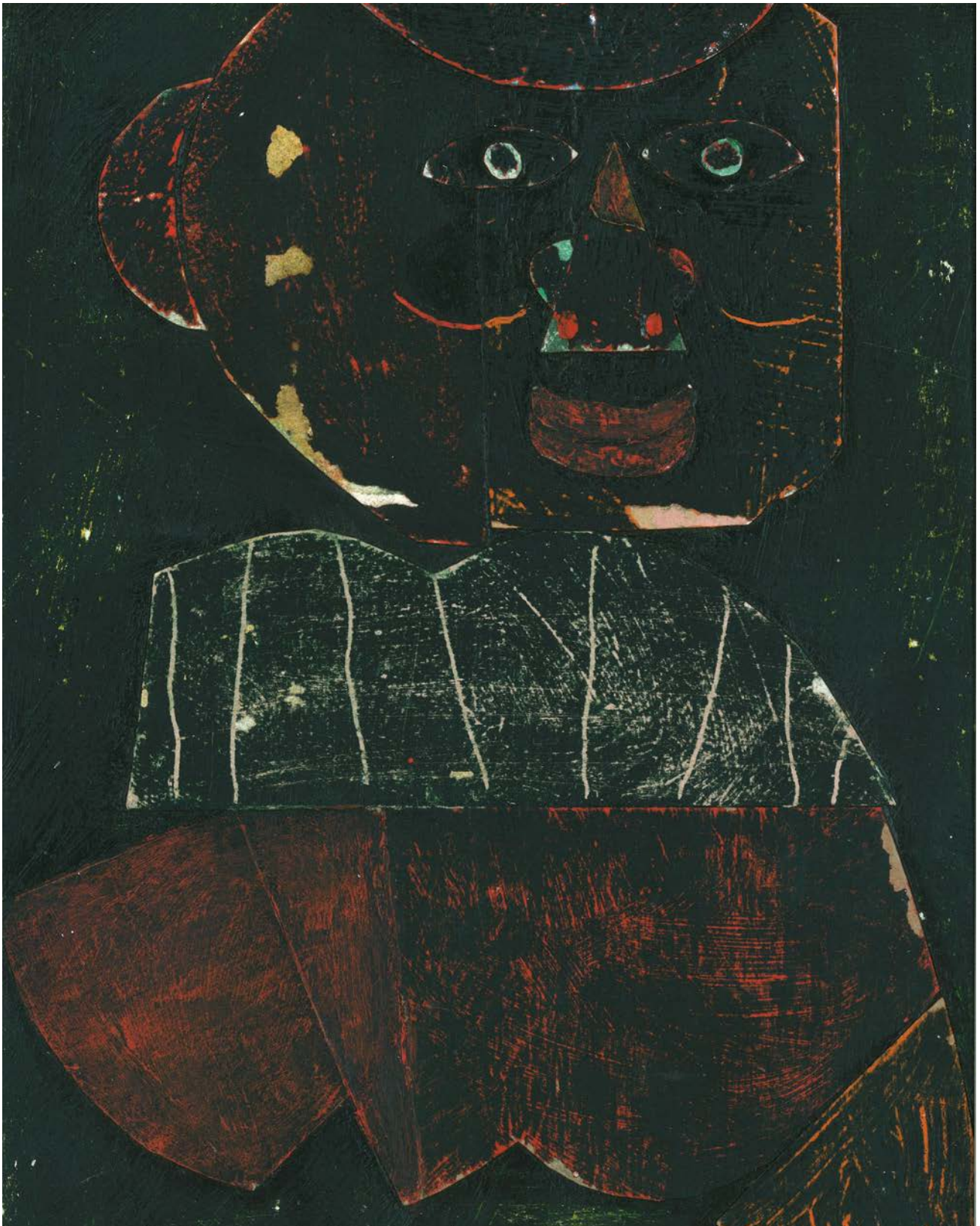
Painting is a chance to reflect. Spending time in my studio with only my paintings to communicate with gives me a chance to think and ponder, as conversations are opened and questions arise. I am not only reflecting on myself and the environment but the communities in which I work, live, and interact in as well. Painting helps me make sense of it all and allows me to communicate more clearly.

You have talked about how your work is inspired by “ . . . the individuals that surround me. Simple and ambiguous circumstances are intriguing to me, especially those that may seem mundane and are oftentimes overlooked.” What more can you say about how everyday objects in your work such as tables and fruit add to ambiguous circumstance and identity?

It's easy to walk past something in your home and not even notice it. We get so used to our surroundings, people, objects, that we sometimes become numb to their significance, as well as the impact they have on us. A bowl of fruit is simple, basic but within it holds seeds and the ability to reproduce and further sustain us in the future, as well as feeds and nourishes our bellies. The bowl no longer holds just items, but life. It can be easy to overlook or take for granted the simple things around us, but really, it's the simple things that make us who we are.

Can you speak about one of the new works you plan to include in the show? Elaborate on your process, concept, memory, whatever comes to mind with that work?

The piece “Pillow Talk” is a piece that I spent a great deal of time on. I reworked the composition many times and feel like this piece, more than others, has a visual layered history. It also holds deeper meaning for me, personally. I have been observing my wife and her relationships, as well as her struggles, and in return reflecting on myself and how I respond to her. This piece is an impression of her resting on our bed, while a demon is dwelling underneath. In opposition we all respond differently. Sometimes we feel overwhelmed and want to hide away, sometimes we want to fight, and other times we yearn for rest from whatever demon may be lying under our bed. Examples of pillow talk: Sharing what you love about each other, talking about the future and your dreams. Reconciling special moments or talking about fears that you have.

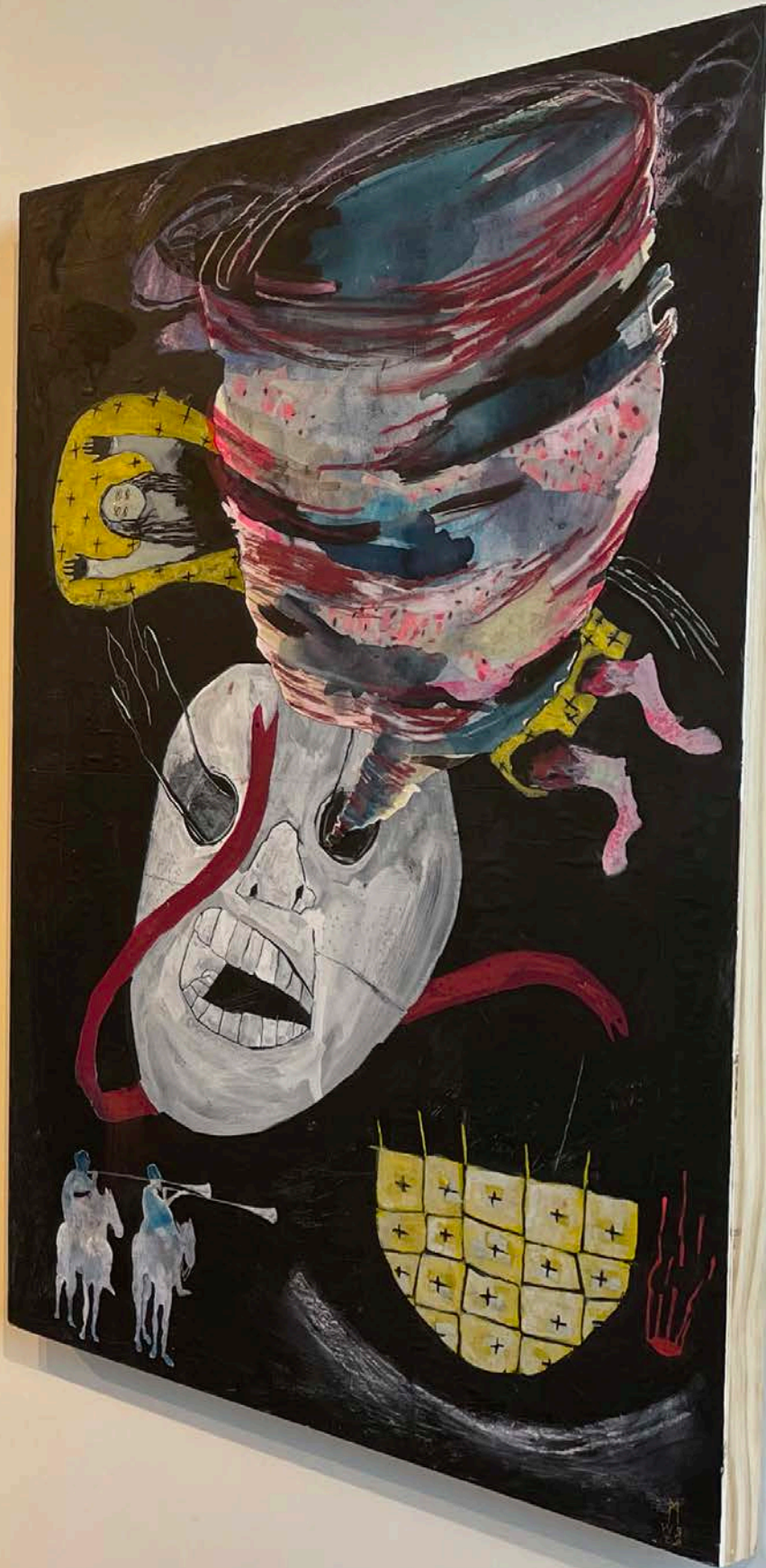


Mitch Mantle, *Portrait of Ozro at Night*, 2021, acrylic and collage on paper, 12 x 9 in

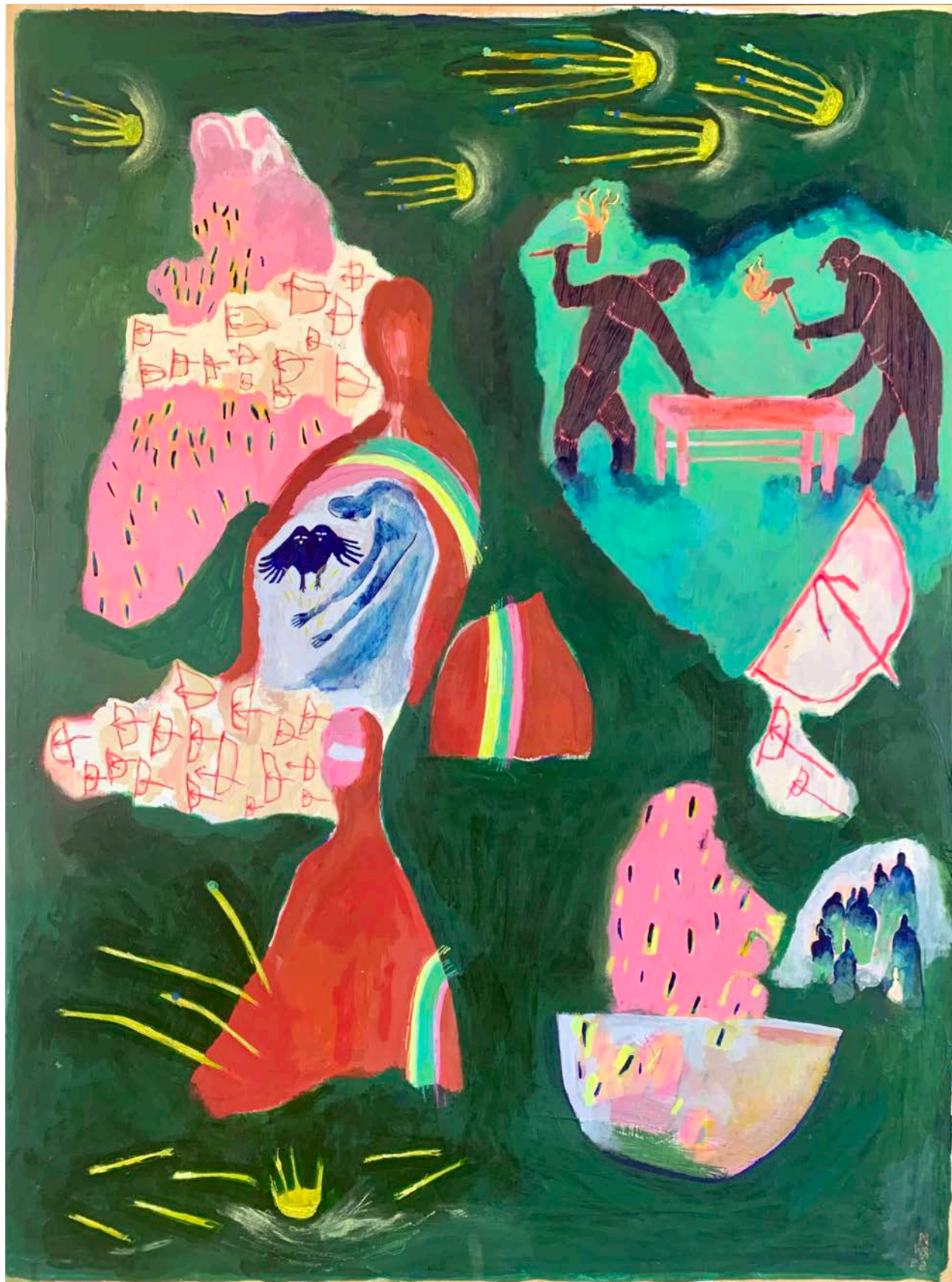


Mitch Mantle, *Working into the Night*, 2021, acrylic and collage on paper, 12 x 9 in





Small text labels, likely artist or title information, located on the right side of the gallery wall.



Wren Ross, *Shango and the Shooting Words*, 2022, mixed media on panel, 48 x 36 in

WREN ROSS

ARTIST STATEMENT

I seek respite in the human tradition of mark-making: the need to make impressions, and to translate personal, corporeal experience into something tangible and stationary.

Very few things endure, but our need to interpret and reconcile experience into line and form has remained. Printmaking in particular bows to this heritage, allowing us to transform something as elusive as language into concrete, enduring objects. My images are examples of language distilled, repacked and condensed into meaning concentrates. Looking to the masters of symbology- ancient cultures, Native American, Paleolithic Man, etc., I seek to circumvent technology, and pay homage to those most ancient endeavors in communicating. Such an aesthetic is particularly resonant with our contemporary reliance and fixation on simplified symbols and rapid communication (texting, emailing, etc.) My interest lies in that dynamic space that spans both and inhabits neither.

BIOGRAPHY

Wren Ross is originally from Utah and holds degrees from the University of Utah, Master's of Social Work Cum Laude, 2016 and from the Rhode Island School of Design, Bachelor of Fine Arts with Honors, 2006. She currently lives and works in Park City, Utah.



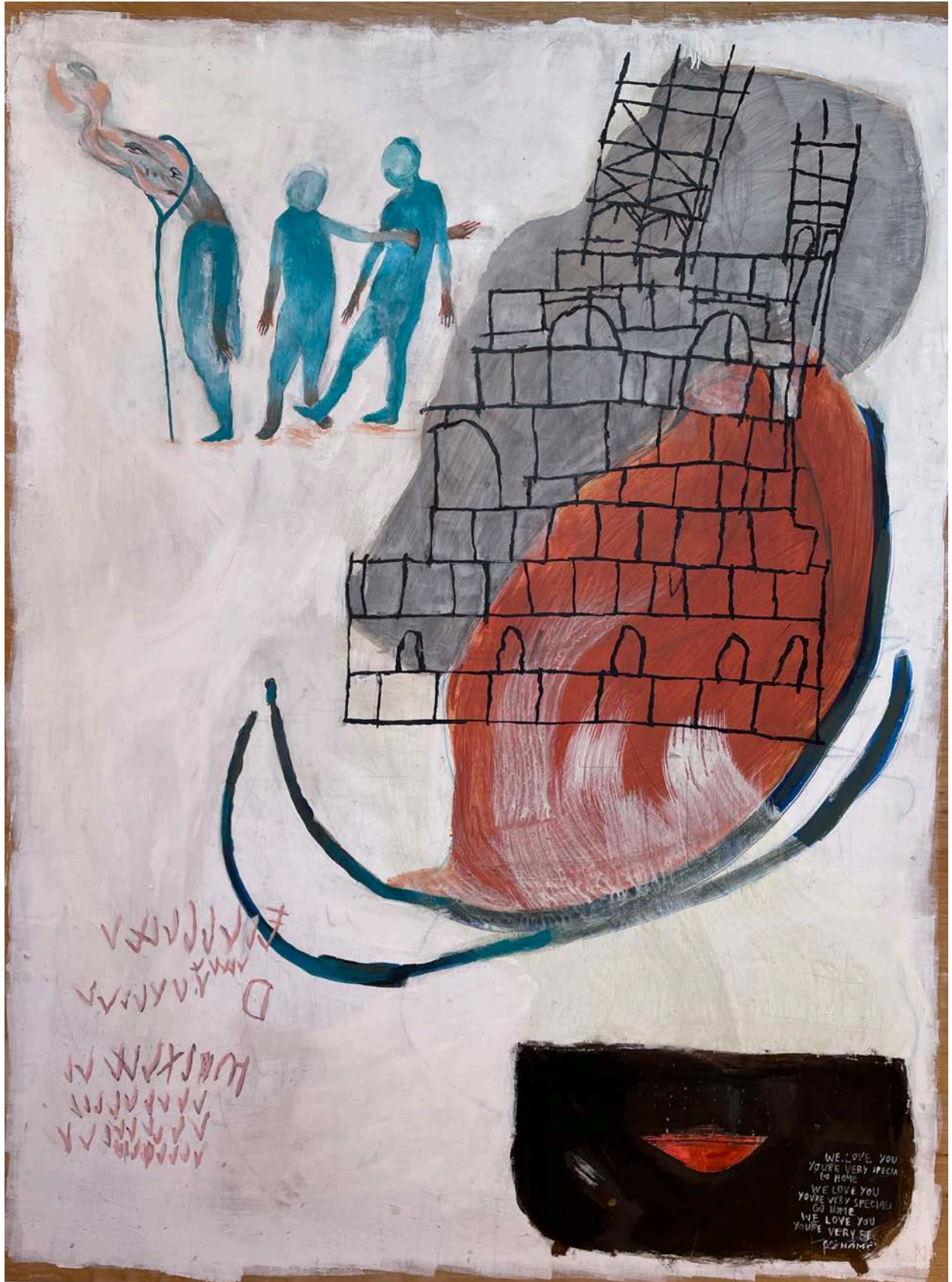
Wren Ross, *Spirit Trumpets of the Haruspice*, 2022, mixed media on panel, 48 x 36 in



Wren Ross, *Taranis*, 2022, mixed media on panel, 36 x 24 in



Wren Ross, *A Map Depicting _____*, 2022, mixed media on pan-el, 36 x 24 in



Wren Ross, *Pair Dadeni*, 2022, mixed media on panel, 48 x 36 in

How is your process and work integral to you, your environment, your community?

I don't think of my work and my environment and my community as disparate entities. As a social worker my environment and community necessarily show up in my artwork (if incidentally), and my creative practice informs the kind of social work I offer.

I have been moved by the concepts of ecopsychology and the role of ecology in art criticism, and also by the idea that there are powerful responses in the body, at both the individual and the community level, that provide cues for connecting and understanding ourselves. Resonance, it seems, is everywhere and inescapable. Ultimately that just means all of those sectors overlap indelibly, and that each is needed for the rest to be nurtured and sustained.

My intention when presenting work is to be firstly present and attuned to what the drawings want themselves to be, and to offer them to the community as oracles for self-examination, clarity and an opportunity to reorient. There has never been an aspect of my work that has been about accurately explaining or reacting to a specific stimulus, instead I mean for the narratives to be open and permeable to interpretation. This feels like a meaningful offering to people from all backgrounds and cultures, and they are meant to be universally available.

Can you speak a bit about offerings and your art, and treating art as an entity? Is this part of your recent practice and philosophy? Where has it come from?

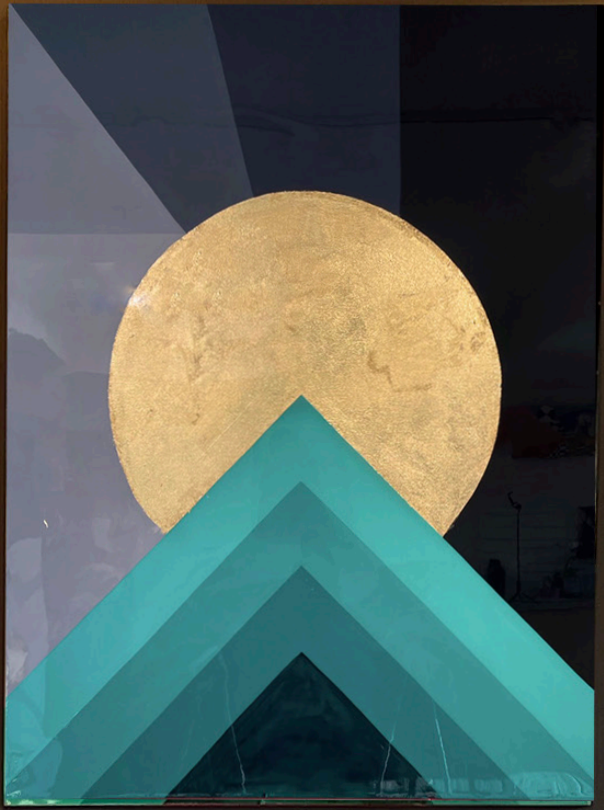
I've always felt like my work has been sentient and that it uses me to come through. This is an honor and also very uncomfortable because I frequently feel disconnected from any sense of authorship in the images. However, the idea of offering is a vital part of how I engage with the world. Offering is sometimes transactional (how can you claim ownership of this idea or image without relinquishing control or expectation?) but is more often unidirectional for me. I think as human animals we have become divorced from the idea of giving without getting, that we have lost touch with the potency of the act of giving simply in order to please or honor a larger Something. (I do not mean religion. This feels more loose and spiritual, less prescribed.)

In this body of work I was less directed by pre-determined concepts, and instead tried to work with the idea of ushering in the work that wanted to land on the panels. There was something imperative about the images having autonomy and that I was meant to channel or translate in order for them to come through. I spent a lot of time fostering a relationship with my blank substrates. It was awkward initially. I talked to them— well complained and bickered; I offered them bread and milk; I brought them flowers and lit little beeswax candles; I sat with them. Honestly, there were times when I just lay on the ground and threw a great big noisy fuss because I felt stuck (which was for a long time initially.) They were very patient. I felt really intimidated by scale and by working outside my comfort zone in terms of media. What came out of the ritual of sitting and giving over to the panels' intentions was humbling. There were frank periods of discomfort after each was made (or as they were all being finished together) where there were these big questions— What are these things? What did you make? I've had more and less success articulating that depending on when and how I ask.



Wren Ross, *Acanthis, Because of the Horses*, 2022, mixed media on panel, 48 x 36 in







Matthew Sketch, *Cream no.2*, 2022, acrylic on canvas, 72 x 36 in

MATTHEW SKETCH

ARTIST STATEMENT

Matthew Sketch is a painter and draftsman based in Salt Lake City, Utah. His motifs vary widely: from animals and celebrities to interiors and abstractions, Sketch's practice finds its coherence not in content, but in approach. His works grow out of his personal relationships, his sensitivity to the objects and spaces memories attach themselves to, and a particular kind of intimacy that he achieves in his solitary encounters with nature. His gestures sprawl across the canvas in strong colors and thick strokes as if arranged by magnetic force. These dynamic surfaces draw the viewer in – an invitation to see the world from inside Sketch's eye: wild and complex and full of emotion.

BIOGRAPHY

Matthew Sketch grew up in Houston, Texas, where he worked as an industrial designer in the oil industry. Since 2012, he has practiced full-time as an artist. Solo presentations include *Affinity for Grace* 2021, *Wax Lyrical* 2020, *False Arabesque* 2020, *Snow Carte Blanche* (2019), *Obligatory Consent* (2018), and *Simply Complicated* (2017).

Tell us a little about yourself and your current work.

I promised to be vulnerable with my work in my application for artist in residence at UMOCA. I am trying my best to do that while still keeping a consistent message that will hold true and carry into future works. Finding beauty in trauma and creating a work that portrays that has been a heavy endeavor. Many of my recent pieces have targets or gunsights on them, indicative of the Black experience. Most poignantly for me, a message I took from bell hooks. The message that the thinking man is considered dangerous & subsequently targeted. As critical thinking Black men learn to reject institutional patriarchal-influenced morality, the more dangerous we are perceived to be-

How is your process and work integral to you, your environment, your community?

We are all created from energy and have experienced negative and positive vibes. We have received positive energy from loved ones and strangers alike and felt energized from the interaction. This series is the visual representation of the flow of energy from one's self and the people and space around us. Our environment is a reflection of the energy we put out into the universe and with intentional focus we can transform not only our surroundings but the lives of others we meet along our journey

What are you experimenting with in these new works? Is there symbolism or meaning behind certain aspects included in the new works?

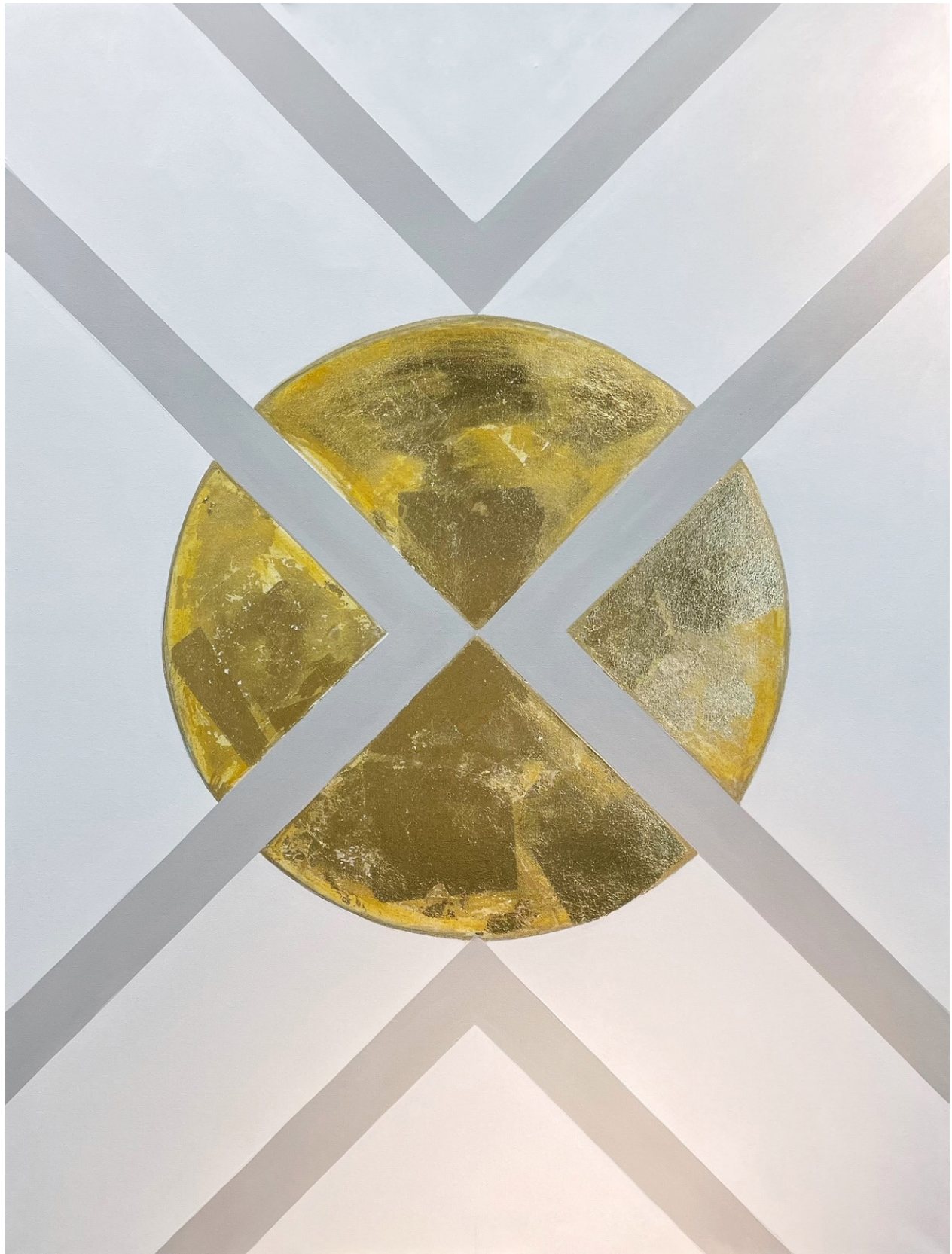
For years I dealt with anxiety that kept me from wanting to leave my home. The media was constantly showing images of Black men being killed and this affected me greatly. If I could find a reason not to leave, I would take it and stay home. I think back on this and how it made me feel, like I was fading into the shadows of a world I still avidly wanted to be a part of. I realized that I was given one life to live. I would not live in fear and I was not going to fade away. These paintings are expressions of energy and determination, personal growth and a willingness to share painful experiences in hopes of moving forward from them a better person.

What is the significance of titling your work? Often the titles are really thought-provoking and bring a new context to the abstract works. Can you tell us about the meaning behind some of the titles in this exhibition?

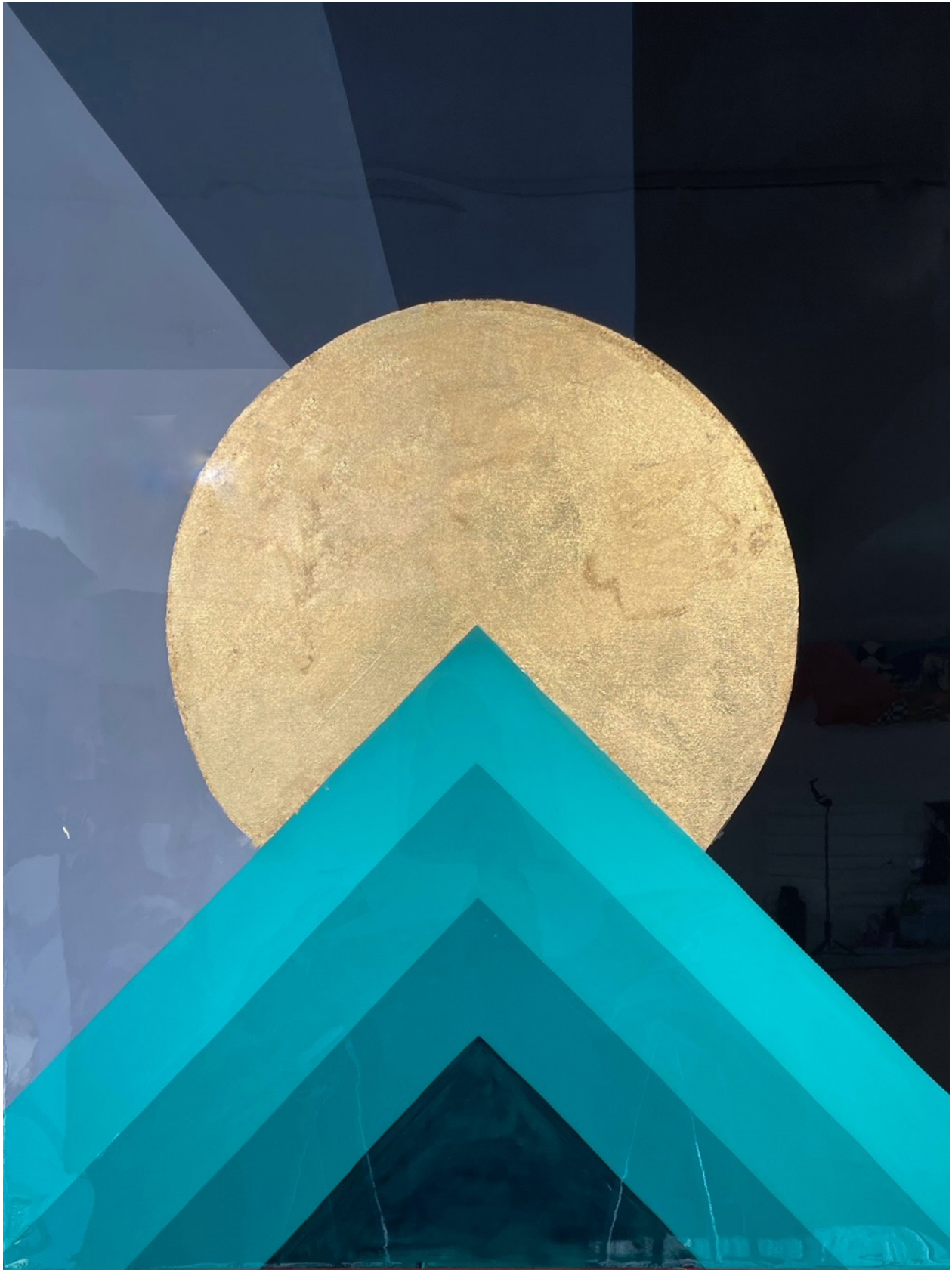
I want to make art that sparks conversations about change. The titles are not descriptions of the piece, they are often a part of a thought which occurred during the painting. Titling my paintings can be a daunting task, it is the final step in my process. I usually listen to music and talk to my wife about what the piece means to me. The titles present themselves in conversation.



Matthew Sketch, *We Can Fly no.2*, 2022, acrylic, resin, and gold leaf on canvas, 48 x 48 in



Matthew Sketch, *Nude*, 2022, acrylic and 18kt gold leaf on canvas, 48 x 36 in



Matthew Sketch, *Take Me for a Swim*, 2022, acrylic and 18kt gold leaf on canvas, 48 x 36 in



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