



RIISING VOICES 2
THE BENNETT PRIZE[®]
FOR WOMEN FIGURATIVE REALIST PAINTERS



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THE BENNETT PRIZE PARTNERS



MUSKEGON
MUSEUM OF ART

The Museum

The Muskegon Museum of Art in partnership with Steven Alan Bennett & Dr. Elaine Melotti Schmidt and The Pittsburgh Foundation, is excited to present the second Bennett Prize and Rising Voices Exhibit.

Although we knew the inaugural exhibition in 2019 would be a success, it surpassed our expectations. The artwork was big and bold, drew an enthusiastic audience into the museum, brought attention and generated discussion throughout the summer, and created a Bennett Prize community that I know will continue to grow. The energy at the 2019 opening reception and prize announcement was electric.

Rising Voices 2 looks much different stylistically and thematically from *Rising Voices 1*. This shows that the diversity of artists working within this genre also challenges expectations. The fact that we were again surprised and delighted with the sheer number of submissions and their quality testifies to the vision of Steven and Elaine.

Everything about this project resonates — the artwork, the stories of the talented women artists, a real purpose and opportunity to make change, and working with this incredible Bennett Prize team. The other fact is, we just plain like working on The Bennett Prize.

Thank you to Steven and Elaine, The Pittsburgh Foundation, the MMA staff, this year's finalists and all who submitted. It is a pleasure to work with you all!

Kirk Hallman, Executive Director
Muskegon Museum of Art

In collaboration with Steven Alan Bennett, Elaine Melotti Schmidt, Ed.D., and The Pittsburgh Foundation, the Muskegon Museum of Art is honored to present the 2021 award and exhibition for The Bennett Prize. A stipend/grant-in-aid award founded by Steven and Elaine, the \$50,000 Bennett Prize is given biennially to a woman painter whose principal focus is figurative painting, primarily in a realistic style. The Bennett Prize seeks to encourage the pursuit of figurative realism by women painters and provides support over two years to a select painter whose work demonstrates excellence in the genre. In this second cycle, we are excited to present not only an outstanding group of new finalists, but also to premiere the paintings produced by 2019 Bennett Prize winner Aneka Ingold during her grant period.

The 2021 call for entries brought an even larger group of submissions than our inaugural year of 2019, in a markedly more diverse range of approaches and themes. From the traditional to the experimental, the figure clearly remains a vital source of inspiration for women artists across the United States. Our four jurors — Patrick Moore, Director of The Andy Warhol Museum; prominent figurative painters Alyssa Monks and Katya O'Hagan; and Prize co-founder and art collector Steven Bennett — deliberated extensively, seeking those

artists whose works stood out amongst a very talented whole. They ultimately selected artists who presented in their paintings an intriguing blend of representation that both drew from and challenged traditional realism and the use of the figure, works whose stories resonated with our ever-tumultuous examinations of the self and its complex relationships, both past and present, to others. Beautiful, amusing, haunting, mystifying, celebratory, and surprising, these artworks invite closer examination of the artists' perspectives and offer viewers an opportunity to evaluate their own lives, experiences, and perceptions of the world.

The Muskegon Museum of Art is honored to serve once again as an organizer and host of The Bennett Prize. Steven and Elaine and our collaborators at The Pittsburgh Foundation and Rogo Marketing are a pleasure to work with, everyone passionately dedicated to the success of this endeavor and its mission and bringing a host of talents to the effort. It is our continued hope that The Prize will bring greater attention to women's voices and open ever-expanding opportunities for equal representation in galleries, museums, and the commercial market. Further, The Prize calls attention to the enduring use of the figure in art and the ways in which realism in painting can remain relevant, fresh, and engaging in today's art world.

Art Martin, Director of Collections and Exhibitions
Muskegon Museum of Art

THE QUEST FOR PARITY FOR WOMEN ARTISTS: A Long, Slow Slog

When we were college students in the early 1970s, the most commonly used text for introductory art history courses was Horst W. Janson's *History of Art*. First published in 1962, "*Janson*," as the text was commonly known, was at the time considered the gold standard for art history survey books and, through the years, sold millions of copies in more than a dozen languages. However, the early editions of the book had a major problem: they did not mention a single woman artist. NOT ONE. Indeed, it has been said that Horst W. Janson actively refused to include women artists in his books, including *History of Art*. This omission of women, in their entirety, from the so-called "history of art" was not an accident.

If only it was just Horst W. Janson who left women out. Sadly, the history of art, at least until, perhaps, the publication of the great feminist art historian Linda Nochlin's 1971 essay "*Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?*," is the history of men talking about men, the art of men, and the importance of men. Meanwhile, the women had to settle for whatever scraps they could get. Left out of publications, museum collections, and gallery shows, they got to raise babies, hold third-rate jobs and do the best they could with neither professional recognition nor curatorial respect. Everyone celebrates the drip paintings of Jackson Pollock but few remember Janet Sobel, the woman who invented drip painting.

In the 50 years since Professor Nochlin's *Great Women* essay, there has been some progress, although it would be unfair to say that it is *extraordinary* progress. And, despite the broad, attention-grabbing gestures in recent days of a few institutions committing to sell pieces by men to bolster the acquisition of works by women, or try to right the wrongs of the historical past by buying only women artists for a year, the facts are, in tangible and measurable terms, that women artists are still running far behind the men and playing catch-up in a world that still doesn't quite believe they are *really, truly, actually* as good as the work by men already hanging on the walls.

The quest for equality in the arts, both in gender and in race, has been, to put it kindly, a slow slog. In 1998, a survey of permanent collections in 18 major art museums in the United States identified 10,000 artists, 87% of whom were male and 85% of whom were white. And, back to Janson, the 9th edition of his *Basic History of Western Art*, published in 2013, identified only 27 women out of 318 artists mentioned. Well, at least it's not ZERO, but it is still a long way to parity.

This brings us to realism. In times of social stasis, realism, especially painted realism, is seen as old-fashioned, protective of the status quo and generally uninspiring. Sort of like vaudeville in the musical theater. Dead and better off forgotten. But, in times of social change and awakening, realism suddenly matters again. There's no easy, straightforward, apparent way to embody your respect for your history, your rage at the system or your celebration of the good your culture possesses by painting in the abstract. An artist who seeks to present a message that will not be misconstrued or worse, missed altogether, must avail themselves of realism, no matter how magical, distorted or illusionistic that realism might be.

In times that need artists pointing a way forward, it is realism and, in particular, figurative realism, that delivers the big messages and carries the payloads that reinterpret history, change our way of seeing and make new messages out of old metaphors. Amy Sherald's portrait of First Lady Michelle Obama is not an abstraction. Rather, it is a portrait, a *realist* portrait, not only of a woman but of a shift in the center of socio-cultural and political gravity. It is also a less than veiled comment on the future. Likewise, Harmonia Rosales' *The Creation of God* is more than a re-imagining of Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. It is a commentary on Black femininity, the centrality of women in Black culture, and, in the artist's way of thinking, the manner in which prevailing culture may have created God in its own image rather than the other way around.



Amy Sherald
Michelle LaVaughn Robinson Obama
 Oil on linen, 2018

National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; gift of Kate Capshaw and Steven Spielberg; Judith Kern and Kent Whealy; Tommie L. Pegues and Donald A. Capoccia; Clarence, DeLoise, and Brenda Gaines; Jonathan and Nancy Lee Kemper; The Stoneridge Fund of Amy and Marc Meadows; Robert E. Meyerhoff and Rheda Becker; Catherine and Michael Podell; Mark and Cindy Aron; Lyndon J. Barrois and Janine Sherman Barrois; The Honorable John and Louise Bryson; Paul and Rose Carter; Bob and Jane Clark; Lisa R. Davis; Shirley Ross Davis and Family; Alan and Lois Fern; Conrad and Constance Hipkins; Sharon and John Hoffman; Audrey M. Irmas; John Legend and Chrissy Teigen; Eileen Harris Norton; Helen Hilton Raiser; Philip and Elizabeth Ryan; Roselyne Chroman Swig; Josef Vascovitz and Lisa Goodman; Eileen Baird; Dennis and Joyce Black Family Charitable Foundation; Shelley Brazier; Aryn Drake-Lee; Andy and Teri Goodman; Randi Charo Levine and Jeffrey E. Levine; Fred M. Levin and Nancy Livingston, The Shenson Foundation; Monique Meloche Gallery, Chicago; Arthur Lewis and Hau Nguyen; Sara and John Schram; Alyssa Taubman and Robert Rothman



Harmonia Rosales
The Creation of God
 Oil on canvas, 2017
 The Bennett Collection of Women Realists

If painters have something to say about the way in which human beings are faring, how they are reacting, or the state of their lives, they must, perforce, resort to figurative realism. Neither bold color nor slashing strokes, controlled drips nor heavy impasto are enough for this immense task. It should come as no surprise then that women painters and figurative realism are among the most potent and potentially transformative combinations available in these roiling times. The women have something to say and need to say it. Realism is the tool to enable their expressive messages. By combining the two, The Bennett Prize seeks to facilitate these expressions while at the same time enabling women to participate in a space that is maintained for them alone. This is not an accident either.

When The Bennett Prize was in the conceptual phase, we knew that something must be done to further the cause of women painters. In excess of 90% of the artwork sold at auction was by male artists and only about one-fourth of artists represented by commercial galleries in the United States were women. This did not reflect the quality of the work women artists were doing and it did not fairly represent their participation in the arts. In our thinking, giving the women an opportunity to show their capabilities and to do so in a space designed specifically for them, would propel them as artists faster and in a more concentrated fashion than simply collecting their works or writing letters of encouragement to those who were promising.

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THE QUEST FOR PARITY FOR WOMEN ARTISTS: A Long, Slow Slog

We firmly believe that The Bennett Prize is an important tool for moving women painters and figurative realism forward. And we will continue to promote The Prize with these aims in mind. We ask that you join us with your support and your willingness to spread the word.

An undertaking of this magnitude requires both extraordinary expertise and heavy lifting capacity. Our thanks go especially to our partners in this endeavor, the Muskegon Museum of Art (MMA) and The Pittsburgh Foundation (TPF). Each organization brings particular and important skills and assets to bear in the production of The Prize. In particular, we thank Kirk Hallman, executive director of the MMA and the very able MMA Director of Collections & Exhibitions, Art Martin. Without this support and assistance, The Bennett Prize would not have the professional and exciting expression it has found. Similarly, we thank our partners at TPF who played a significant initial role in the conceptualization of The Prize and now in its continuation. TPF President and CEO Lisa Schroeder has continued the fabulous support initiated by her predecessor, Maxwell King. Kelly Uranker, the vice president of TPF's Center for Philanthropy, has continued her unwavering attention and advice as has TPF's Director of Strategic Projects and Foundation Initiatives, Emmie Calland. To Emmie, we are especially grateful for her dedication to detail and her willingness to keep us on track.

On the communications front, we continue to be grateful to our communications partners, Amanda Rogalski, Kathryn Gogliotti, and MeiLi Wieringa of Rogo Communications, each of whom has enabled us to create a communications strategy that is workable and effective. They have been joined by two consummate professionals, Marguerite Curran at MMA and Kitty Julian at TPF, who each brought their special expertise to bear in helping us spread the word about The Prize.

We also extend our thanks to our outside jurors, the fabulous painters Alyssa Monks and Katya O'Hagan, each of whom brought the critical eye and vast experience of longtime, practicing artists, and Patrick Moore, Director of The Andy Warhol Museum, who brought a museum professional's unique vision to bear on all of the jury's deliberations.

We continue to be gratified by the increasing reach of The Prize. With 674 entrants in this second iteration, most of whom did not participate during the first Prize competition, we understand that we are exposing, and being exposed to, a new, deep and rich vein of talent that otherwise might not have come into view. The courage each of these women displayed in taking the risk to put their work out there, to *be judged*, is the spirit that makes The Prize stronger and ever more successful. We thank each and every one of these women for their participation.

We also thank the winner of the first Bennett Prize, Aneka Ingold, who, for the past two years, has labored mightily to create the work that forms her most impressive solo show that accompanies the work of the current year's finalists. Her commitment to her artistic vision and to the demands of The Prize has enabled us to see more clearly the depth and breadth of her talent. We are grateful for her leadership as our first winner and appreciative of her example to all of those who follow.

It is our continuing hope that The Bennett Prize will shine a light on women painters and figurative realist painting. But we recognize that this is only possible with the participation of women artists with strong expressions and unique visions. To them we continue to dedicate our efforts. And for them we will continue our labors.

Steven Alan Bennett and Dr. Elaine Melotti Schmidt

The Pittsburgh Foundation

This book is a testament to the resilience of women. The ten Bennett Prize finalists have managed to create extraordinary works of art even as our world confronts crisis after crisis. I am referring not just to the coronavirus and the related disruption of school and child care infrastructures that, in normal times, would make it possible for women to support themselves and their families. There is also the related economic crisis, which has overwhelmingly affected women, and the racial inequities and injustices that many in our country have managed to ignore.

And yet, somehow, despite these ten women artists have continued to paint. They have imagined women and the ways they inhabit in ways that are instantly recognizable, yet that also offer tantalizingly subtle lenses into societal conventions about aesthetics, sexuality, body image, and age.

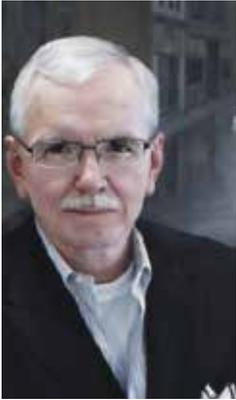
These women have ideas.

Their exaltations of the human form are as diverse and breathtaking as the artists themselves. It is our honor to uplift them through The Bennett Prize, which was established through our Center for Philanthropy in 2016 by collectors and curators Steven Alan Bennett and Dr. Elaine Melotti Schmidt. Then, and now, The Bennett Prize stands as the largest art prize solely for women who paint in the figurative realist style.

The Prize stands as a vivid illustration of what generous philanthropists with an inspired idea can do by working in partnership with community philanthropy. It is our honor to serve as steward to The Bennett Fund, The Prize, and to Steven and Elaine's vision of a world where gender is no longer a barrier to overcome, but a compelling force to be celebrated, venerated, and rewarded.

Sincerely,
Lisa Schroeder
President & CEO
The Pittsburgh Foundation

JUROR STATEMENTS



Steven Alan Bennett

This year, nearly 700 women submitted to The Bennett Prize, all providing thought-provoking work that challenged the jury and created significant debate. The works of the selected finalists range from straightforward portraiture to wild, magical realism to what I call “painting in two and a half dimensions.” In every instance, the work challenges the viewers, invites them to bring their own narratives to bear, and presents a different take on reality that tests

our notions about space, time, and reality. Indeed, the figurative realism of our 2021 Bennett Prize finalists is twisting and changing, sometimes confrontational, sometimes celebratory.

On the more traditional side, Amy Wertz presents us with deeply sensitive portraits of the elderly. Her renderings are neither indulgent nor pandering. Her sitters live comfortably within their skins and atop the vast store of wisdom they have each acquired. We all know these people or someone like them. Venturing just beyond true portraiture, Rebecca Orcutt gives us “realistic” scenes, but the presentations tend to be flattened and the backgrounds vacuous. Her images and the figures in them leave one wondering. What has happened here? Where does this lead?

Similarly challenging are the works of Lavelly Miller and Glasson. Lavelly, painting with her fingers, presents giant faces with eyes like drills or stabbing knives. Her sitters, no matter how young or sympathetically rendered, have “mileage” and you can sense that the burden of their experience weighs heavily upon them. By contrast, June Glasson presents women from the frontier, “rugged” women who know how to swing an axe and handle a gun. These women are survivors and pioneers and exist, perhaps, beyond the edge of civilization.

Still twisting our expectations is the work of Holly Keogh. Her images live between the world of now and the realm of someone else’s forgotten memories. Capturing moments as they might appear in out-of-focus photographs, Keogh veils people and place in mystery. Riffing on history and culture in a different way is Sophia-Yemisi Adeyemo-Ross, whose oeuvre conjures up a world that is at once immediate and yet, perhaps, a century (and a continent) away. With floral marginalia giving the works an honorific tone, these paintings are experienced as memorials to ancestors and forebears. Presenting yet another take on time, memory, and experience is the work of Ayana Ross, who combines a photograph’s detachment with geometric, patterned backgrounds. These works seem like both forgotten memories recalled imperfectly and snippets of people and moments flitting across the movie screen of awareness and recognition.

Stretching into a different realm are the works of Tanmaya Bingham, Chloe Chiasson, and Su Su. Bingham paints classically rendered figures in improbable circumstances surrounded by vibrant (and sometimes unsettling) geometrics. The beautifully rendered figures compete with the surrounding shapes to create “electric” images. Chloe Chiasson ventures beyond the picture plane with monotone or distorted body parts and colorful patterns that create an experience that lives in two and a half dimensions. While the works may at first seem a bit cartoon-like, scrutiny reveals them to be deadly serious. Finally, Su Su, the most magical of realists, presents figures that are explosions of color and brightness and whimsy. Her work carries with it the big-eyed wonder of anime and the color and movement of vintage Asian painting. Her women are wild, impetuous, and more than unpredictable.

All of our finalists present a unique take on figurative realism and use their vision and skill to bring us to places we could not otherwise approach. Each once again proves that there is a place for The Bennett Prize and much to be celebrated in the work of contemporary women figurative realist painters. To each of our finalists and all of our participants, we say thank you!

The process of jurying for this award was incredibly inspiring — from looking at all the fantastic work submitted to discussing it with my fellow jurors. I want to honor all those who are making art and putting their heart and soul out there for the world. It is a worthy and complex struggle to connect to and channel that authentic inner experience of being part of this interconnected existence we are in, without too much ego or self-doubt or esoteric cerebral control over it, in order to make something that really speaks beyond our own identity, our own time, language, and even personal experience. I have a great deal of respect for all of the entrants. Contrary to what some non-artists might think, this is not an easy life and as the work becomes more impressive the level of difficulty with which it is made does not diminish. Indeed, it not only remains difficult, it tends to get more so, not less. So, it is truly an honor to be part of alleviating some of the burdens of the hard-working artist through this process.

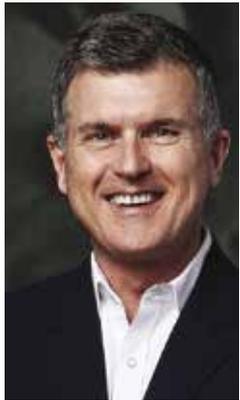
Most impressive to me were those artists who had a unique and developed vision and voice in their work, who took a solid position and created tension around it, clearly conveying their conviction but allowing the viewer to connect the dots and find multiple meanings.

Alyssa Monks

Additionally, the technical approach tells me a great deal about the artist's connection to their process and subject. The attention and care and high standard of execution tells me an artist is engaged and really stands behind their vision, whether it be realistic or not. Lastly, I appreciated how artists told their own personal stories in a way that communicated to a macro-experience of us all, so that the viewer can relate to and be changed by what they see. It was not an easy task to jury this show, pick finalists, and ultimately choose a winner. Along with my co-jurors, I deliberated and wavered as we helped each other look more deeply into the work. The work often changes and evolves over time in your mind and sometimes right before your eyes. This process really was evidence for me of the mysterious complexity of the handmade art object and how it works on us. I truly look forward to viewing the work in person and following the evolution of the artists. Congratulations to all of them.



JUROR STATEMENTS



Patrick Moore

As the Director of The Andy Warhol Museum, one might think that the figurative realist work of female artists would be outside of my professional interests. Quite the opposite. One of the most consistent through lines of Warhol's career was portraiture and frequently those portraits (in every conceivable media) were of women. As evidenced in our recent exhibition, "*Femme*

influenced by women, Warhol was deeply influenced by women. His life and work were filled with femmes in various guises (Mario Montez, Candy Darling) and a valcade of famous female celebrities, Warhol identified with the feminine world.

Although femininity is evident throughout his life and career, his representation of women is not without irony. Famously, he loved the heroines such as Marilyn Monroe and Liz. His representations of these "celebrity" images passed through a filter that removed any blemish or emotion leaving only a cool, distanced glamour.

One sees the difference between Warhol's "male gaze" (however queer it might have been) and the way female painters represent themselves and their world. A through line of so much of the work submitted to The Bennett Prize was an earnestness that would have been anathema to Warhol. When representing the female figures in the Bennett Prize, the figures displayed an extraordinary vulnerability even though the figures depicted are usually strong and empowered.

Perhaps this emotional immediacy is inherent in women painting women. (Warhol, also, of course, included in the exhibition these are female figures they have a different kind of emotional complexity.) There is also a kind of irony to many of these works that the artists don't "step back" from their subjects, rather they move closer to them as to justify their

This style of representation is sometimes difficult to see in the contemporary world, where the one-line joke and abject caricature are more important than the authentic and show

I often think about the untold number of creative women, back through time, whose voices we will never hear and whose stories will never be known. Centuries of human artistic expression were almost entirely an expression of the male experience. There have always been as many female artists born as there were male artists but fulfilling that destiny was never possible for women. The creative spark would never be allowed to catch and the paintings would go unpainted. Men created the visual record of women's lives. Even now, the male gaze dominates, with women still so often reduced to pretty, passive objects. This point

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had our preferences, but more than once I changed my stance after
listening to a fellow juror talk about why a particular piece resonated.
I would see an aspect to the work I had previously overlooked. Their
expertise was illuminating and made the whole process a valuable
learning experience. Although we all had to let go of entries we were
fond of, in the end we reached a consensus that we were very happy
with and that we feel represents the scope of talented women who
entered.

Katya O'Hagan



From Amy Werntz's quietly moving and expertly rendered portraits of solitary older women to June Glasson's beautifully conceived and executed feminist take on traditional Western art to Holly Keogh's evocative, dreamily nostalgic compositions, the fina... ll brought a unique perspective and sk... and each of them have an exciting... tive path ahead. Some are

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Wor... ace a unique se... les beyond the general
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caregiv... ow from my own... ow difficult it is to
balance domestic and artistic demands. Making a living as an artist
is already such a competitive and all-consuming endeavor that the
additional challenges women encounter can feel insurmountable. It is
such a privilege to be a part of a project that sees what female artists
are capable of — have always been capable of — and recognizes
how essential it is that female talent is nurtured and encouraged.
I congratulate our finalists on their impressive work and the great
achievement of standing out among such a large and talented group
of entries.

2021 BENNETT PRIZE WINNER

AYANA ROSS

McDonough, Georgia

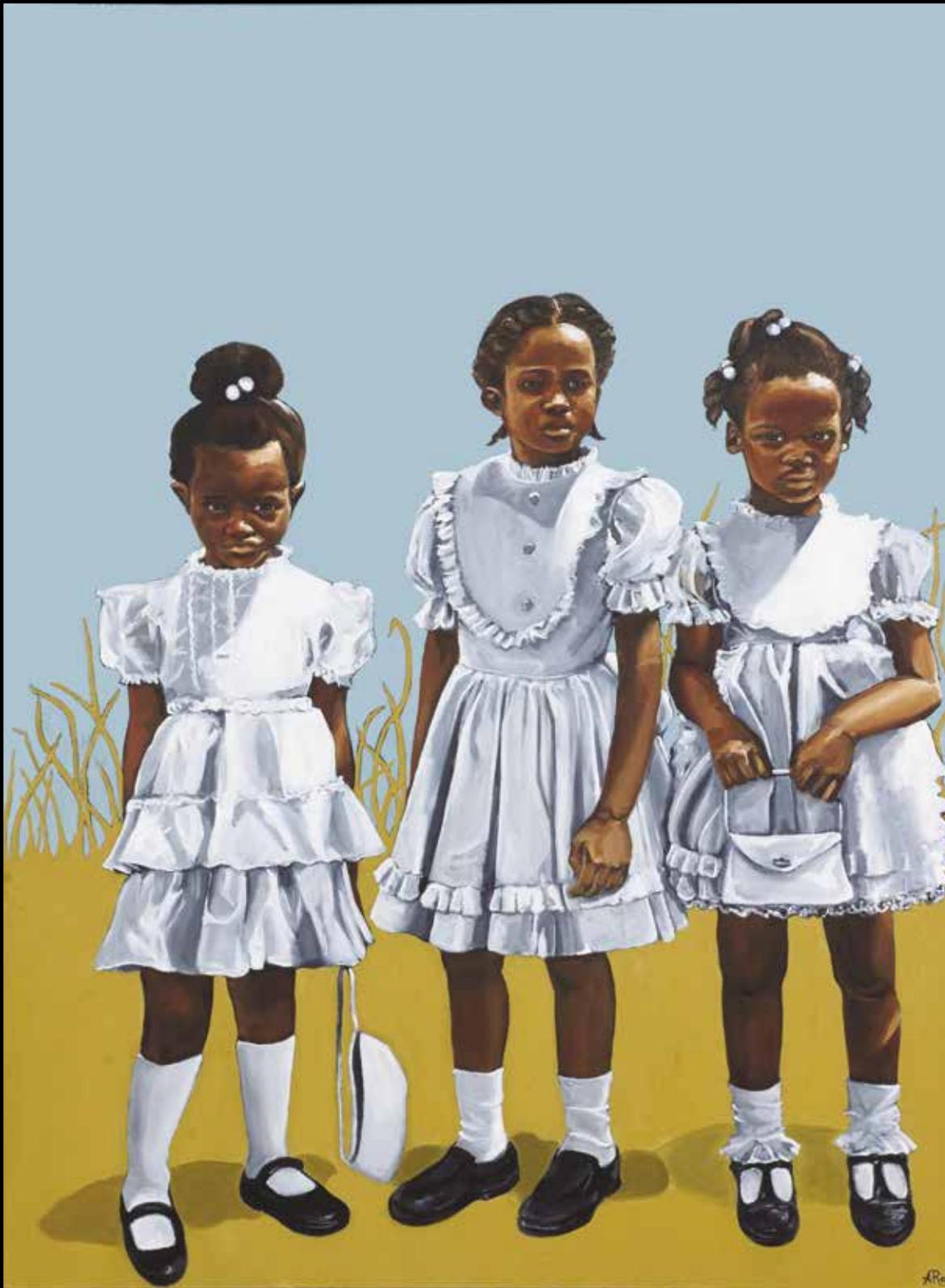


www.ayanaross.com

Instagram:
[@ayanarossart](https://www.instagram.com/ayanarossart)

Ayana Ross creates visual narratives that explore issues of identity and cultural awareness while highlighting moments of racial disparities and intergenerational mobility and progress among African Americans. Her everyday figures are often informed by events in her own family history, one rooted in the American South, but have proven to reflect a greater connection of shared experiences, values, and aesthetics. Ross combines visual nostalgia with contemporary motifs that draw connections between the past and the present. Her fragmented spaces of bold, graphic fields of pattern and color energize the composition providing context and visual cues. Her fragmented stories offer an opening for viewers to insert themselves and illuminate their own parallel or intersecting experiences.

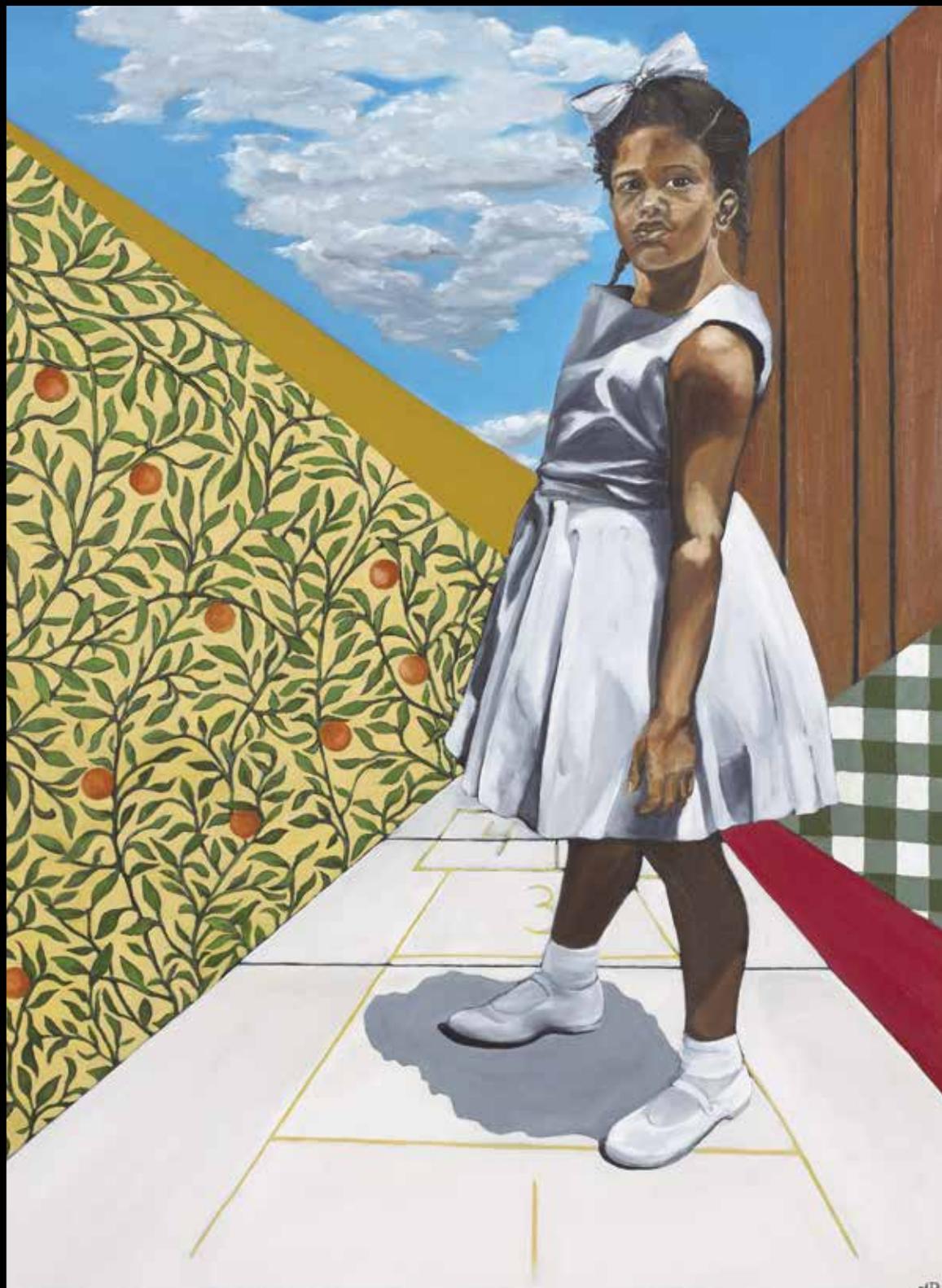
Ross received a BS in Apparel Design and Merchandising from Georgia Southern University and began her professional career as a designer in the fashion industry. She later returned to school to study Art Education at Greensboro College and received an MA in Liberal Arts from the University of North Carolina, Greensboro. Ross recently completed an MA in painting from the Savannah College of Art and Design and balances her painting career with her work as a secondary art teacher. A figurative painter, Ross has exhibited in various group shows throughout Georgia and her works are held by private collectors throughout the U.S. and abroad.



Girls in White Dresses

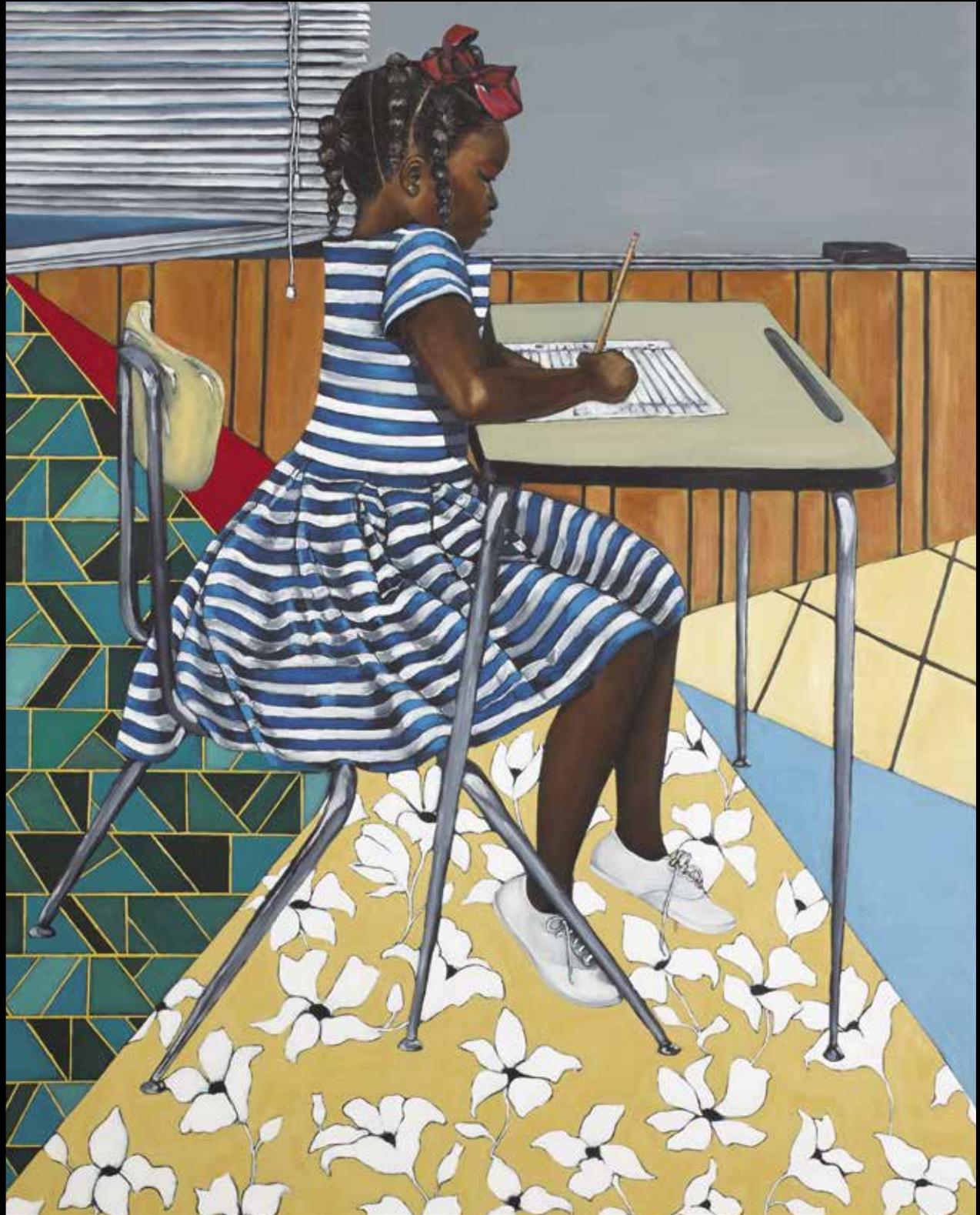
Oil on canvas, 2020
48 x 36 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

WINNER
AYANA ROSS



My Turn

Oil on canvas, 2020
48 x 36 inches
Courtesy of the Artist



SWBAT

Oil on canvas, 2020
60 x 48 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

FINALIST

SOPHIA-YEMISI ADEYEMO-ROSS

Providence, Rhode Island

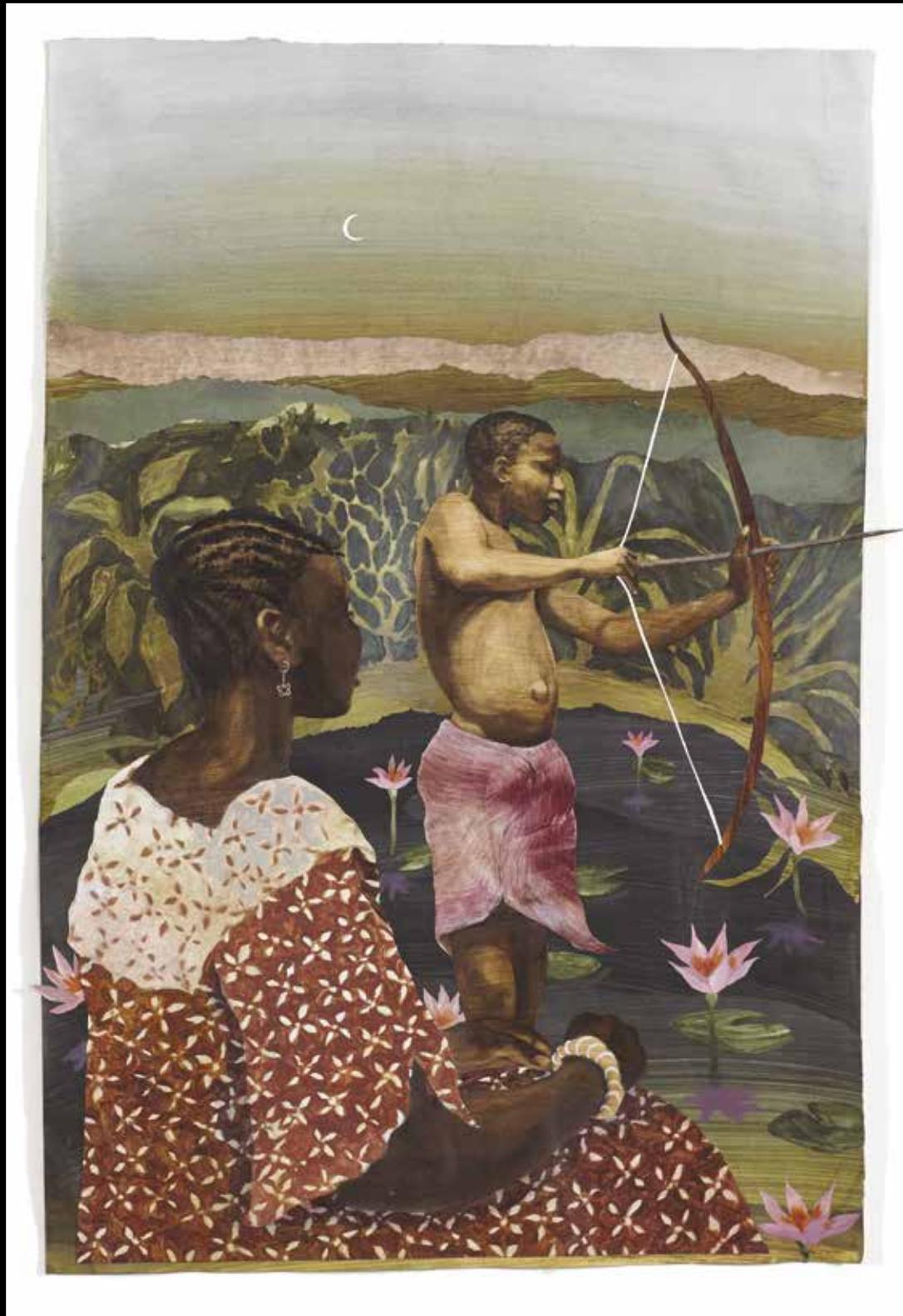


Sophia-Yemisi Adeyemo-Ross paints portraits as love letters to her subjects — unknown sitters translated from vintage photographs taken by missionary societies in West Africa at the beginning of the 20th century. Missionary activities of the era used Christianity to obscure the exploitative practices of colonialism; a history that closely informs Adeyemo-Ross’s work. As a Black, multiracial queer woman of Nigerian and German descent, Adeyemo-Ross explores her connections to both sides of this history by critically reinventing depictions of the past to imagine an anticipated and liberated alternate reality. Grounded by the Yoruba interlace motif, a symbol representing the interconnectedness between this world and the ancestral realm, Adeyemo-Ross blurs the past and present in her dream-like spaces. Like pieces of a memory, separate collaged elements come together to create an ancestral plane in which the flatness of documentary photography is the raw material from which Adeyemo-Ross honors her subjects, seeking liberation through the collectivity of an ancient lineage and the agency of a felt love between colonized people.

www.sadeyemo.myportfolio.com

Instagram:
[@sophia.yemisi.adeyemo.ross](https://www.instagram.com/sophia.yemisi.adeyemo.ross)

Adeyemo-Ross holds a BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design. She has been an artist-in-residence at the Lazuli Residency in Corinth, Vermont and at the New York Academy of Art in New York City. Her art has been exhibited at The Manetti Shrem Museum of Art in Davis, California and at Office & Gallery in Los Angeles.



*An Arrow Dipped in
Cactus Poison*

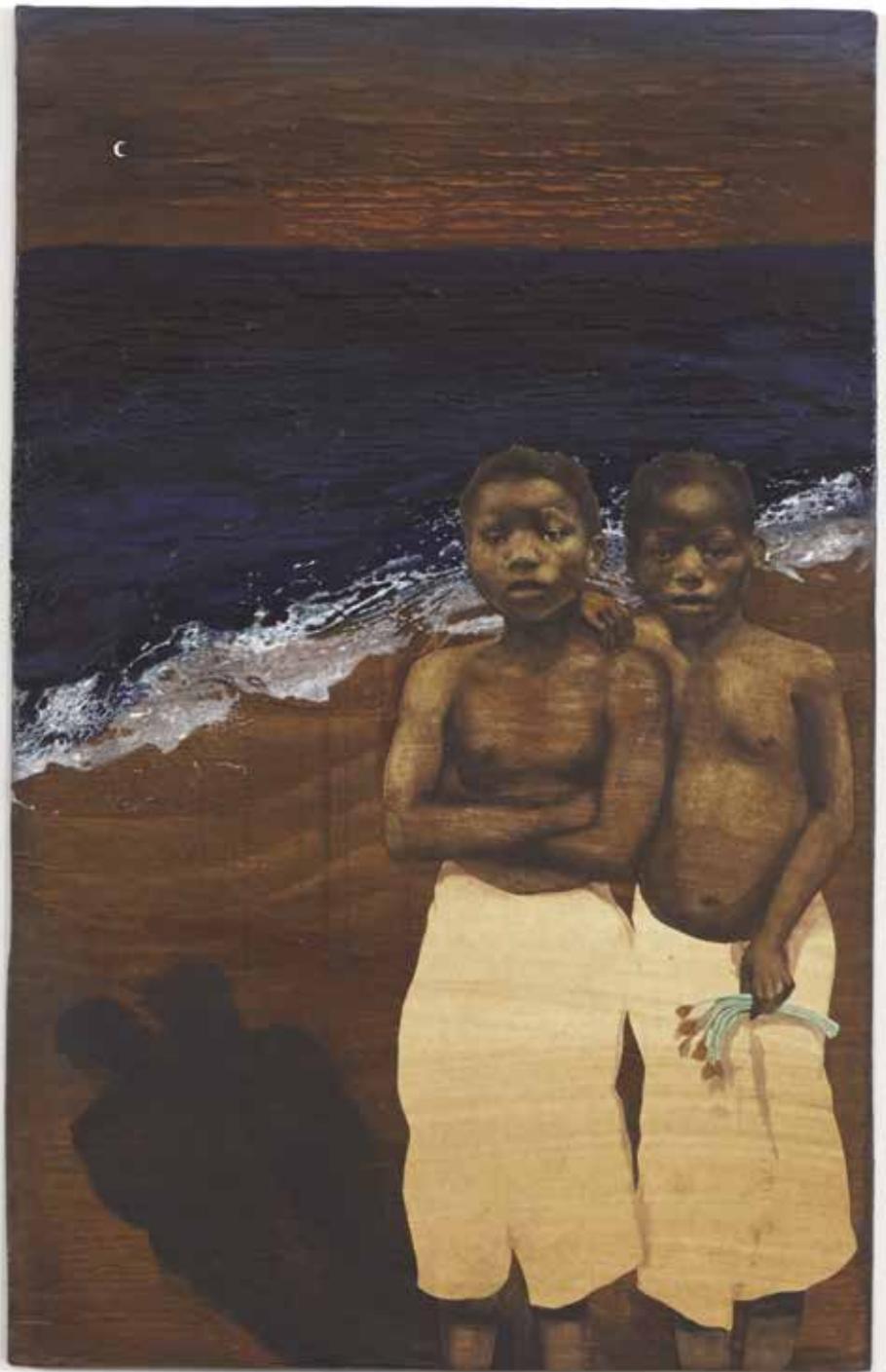
Acrylic and
watercolor, 2020
35 x 24 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

FINALIST

**SOPHIA-YEMISI
ADEYEMO-ROSS**

*Say Something at Sunset
or Simply Stand Together
(Two Boys in Gabon)*

Acrylic, watercolor,
and wood, 2020
22 x 14 inches
Courtesy of the Artist





Two Calla Lilies for Bathing Boys

Acrylic and watercolor, 2020
21 x 28 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

Roses for Knitting Congolese Women

Acrylic and watercolor, 2020
20.5 x 17.5 inches
Courtesy of the Artist



FINALIST

TANMAYA BINGHAM

Portland, Oregon

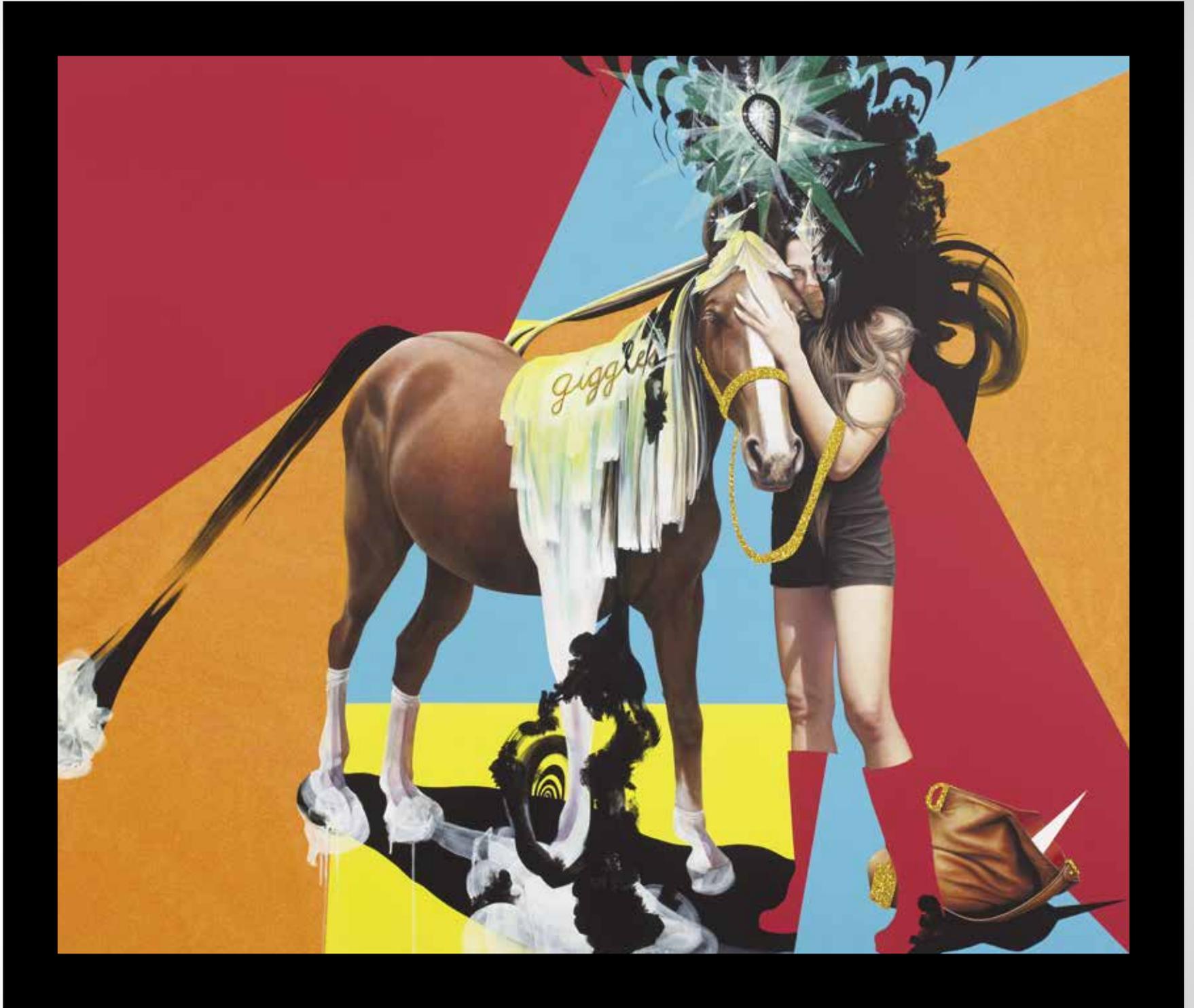


www.tanmayabingham.com

Instagram:
[@tanmayabingham](https://www.instagram.com/tanmayabingham)

Tanmaya Bingham works in blocks of series, her divergent narratives unified by their hyper-realistic figures and forms set against, within, and beneath flat, abstract planes and dynamic graphic forms and patterns. Blending classical Renaissance figurative traditions with editorial and cartooning elements, Bingham creates fantastical, surrealistic scenes that speak to the issues that define our contemporary world, including politics, social structures, sexuality, and the human condition. The recognizable serves as a frame of reference within the unreal, leaving the viewer to puzzle out the stories contained within. Her mixed media works are created in acrylic, colored pencil, and, on occasion, glitter.

Bingham holds an MFA in painting from the Australian National University in Canberra in the Australian Capital Territory, Australia and a bachelor's degree from Antioch University in Santa Barbara, California. Now a resident of Portland, Oregon, she has exhibited in solo exhibitions in galleries in Oregon, Santa Fe, New Mexico, and in Melbourne and Sydney, Australia. Her works have appeared in group shows in the United States in Tampa, Florida and Los Angeles, California and internationally in Hong Kong, China and Vancouver, Canada. Her work has been in publications including *ArtSlant*, *Hi-Fructose*, *New American Paintings*, *Surface*, *Vogue Living AU*, *Art Collector*, and *The Sydney Morning Herald*. In 2019, she received the 1st Place BBA Artist Prize at BBA Gallery in Berlin, Germany and 2nd Place in *The 37th Bradley International Print and Drawing Exhibition* at Bradley University Gallery in Peoria, Illinois.



Sexy Giggles

Acrylic, colored pencil, watercolor,
and glitter on panel, 2020
60 x 72 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

FINALIST
**TANMAYA
BINGHAM**



Sexy Snuggles

Acrylic, colored pencil,
watercolor, and glitter
on panel, 2020
60 x 48 inches
Courtesy of the Artist



Sexy Ticks

Acrylic, colored pencil,
watercolor, and glitter
on panel, 2020
48 x 72 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

FINALIST

CHLOE CHIASSON

Brooklyn, New York



www.chloechiasson.com

Instagram:
[@chloechiasson](https://www.instagram.com/chloechiasson)

Facebook:
[chloechiassonart](https://www.facebook.com/chloechiassonart)

Chloe Chiasson utilizes her sculptural, collaged, and mixed media paintings as a metaphor for the construction and deconstruction of the dominant cultural structures surrounding gender identity, expression, and sexuality. She specifically addresses the space of the “in between,” of falling outside of traditional dualities of masculinity and femininity and sexuality and their expression. In breaking apart the picture plane and reassembling it with various “incomplete” fragments that combine into a fluid whole, Chiasson embraces her queerness to explore identities unconstrained by the worlds they inhabit.

Chiasson holds a bachelor’s degree from the University of Texas at Austin and an MFA from the New York Academy of Art in New York City. She is a recipient of the New York Academy of Art Merit Scholar Award and the Buddy Taub Scholar Award, the 2018 Belles Artes Residency in Mexico City, Mexico, and the 2019 Chubb Post-Graduate Fellowship of the New York Academy of Art. Her work has appeared in group shows in New York City and London, at Art Basel Miami Beach, and in Potsdam, Germany (upcoming). She has been featured in *New American Paintings*, *Artnet news*, and *Juxtapoz* magazine.



*Daddy Made a
Soldier Outta Me*

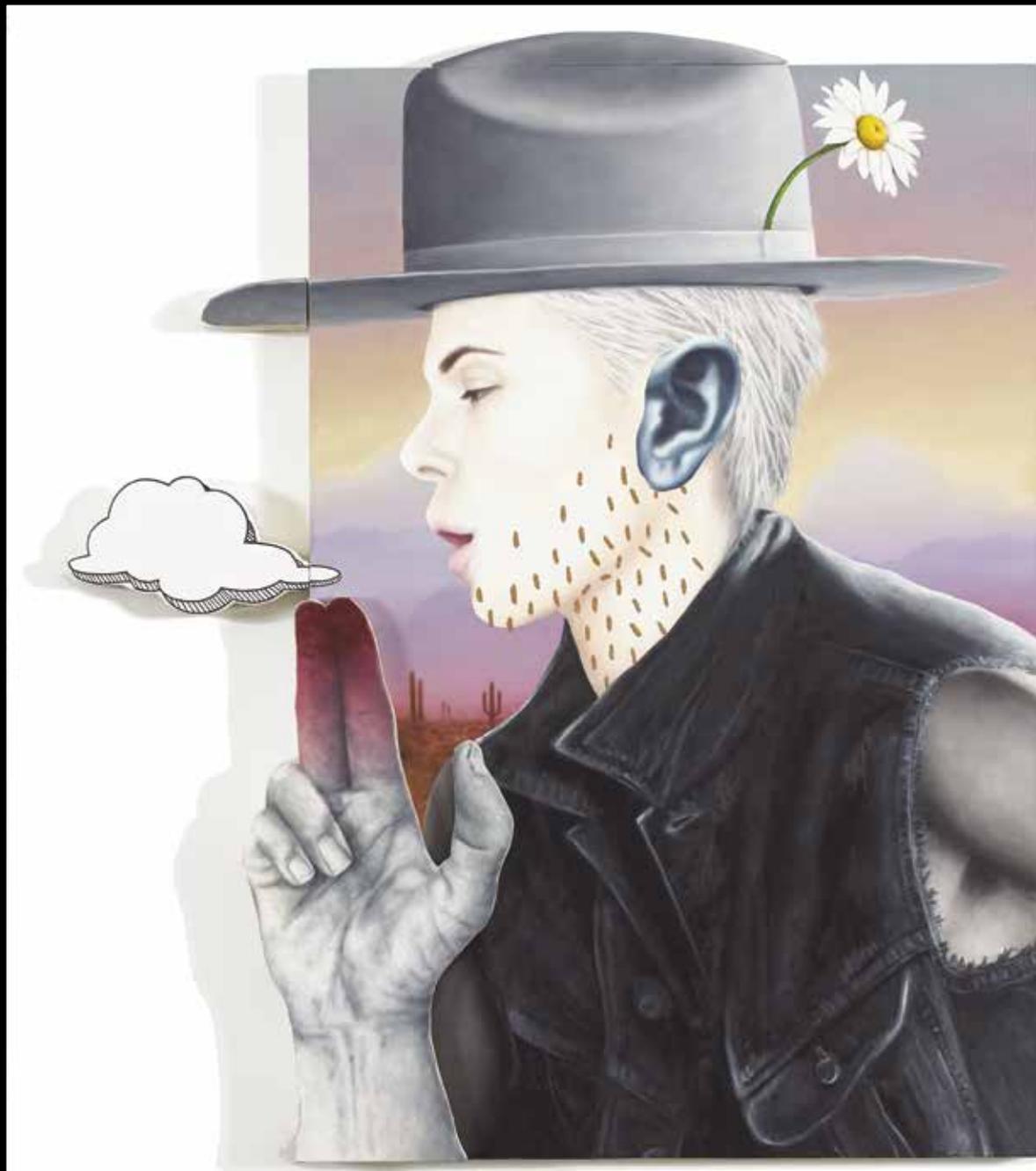
Oil and acrylic
on canvas, 2021
58 x 35.5 inches
Courtesy of the Hort
Family Collection

FINALIST
CHLOE CHIASSON



A New Dawn

Oil, acrylic, resin, wood,
and a match on canvas, 2021
78.25 x 96 inches
Courtesy of the
Hort Family Collection



Quick Draw

Oil, acrylic, and resin
on canvas, 2021
48.5 x 42 inches
Courtesy of
Seth Carmichael

FINALIST

JUNE GLASSON

Millbrook, New York



www.juneglasson.com

Instagram:
[@studio_glasson/](https://www.instagram.com/studio_glasson/)

Facebook:
[june.glasson.3](https://www.facebook.com/june.glasson.3)

June Glasson's full-length, representational portraits challenge how society expects women to behave and be seen. Her current interests began in 2008 in Berlin, where she encouraged her models to engage in "unladylike" behavior and invited them to bring props and costumes that reflected their self-identity. When Glasson moved to Laramie, Wyoming, she found her models bringing firearms, antlers, and other "western" props to the studio. This embrace of the region's narrative led to an exploration of the myths and stories that characterize the American West, including a deep dive into the Mountain Man culture. Glasson's portraits skew and deconstruct the masculinity of the Mountain Man, employing camp, parody, and drag in portraits that feature classic costuming altered by lace beards, sequin pants, and heavy, boa-like pelts. These paintings twist gender notions and introduce play and frivolity into the iconic symbols.

Glasson is an artist and designer in Millbrook, New York and holds both a bachelor's and BFA from Cornell University. Now a self-employed artist, her early career included art design and window staging for multiple New York City stores. Her work has appeared in exhibitions throughout the American West as well as in New York City and Europe (at the National Portrait Gallery in London among other sites) and has been featured in various publications including *The Paris Review*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *New American Paintings*, *Guernica Magazine*, *People*, *SAND Journal*, and *Domino*, and in the film *My Idiot Brother*. Glasson is the recipient of the 2010 New York Foundation for the Arts Visual Arts Fellowship and the 2015 Wyoming Arts Council Biennial Fellowship. She is also the co-founder of the Wyoming Art Party, an artist-led organization that supports and organizes Wyoming artists. Glasson is represented by Kenise Barnes and Visions Contemporary West.



Fox with Axe

Oil on panel, 2020
35.75 x 24 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

FINALIST
**JUNE
GLASSON**

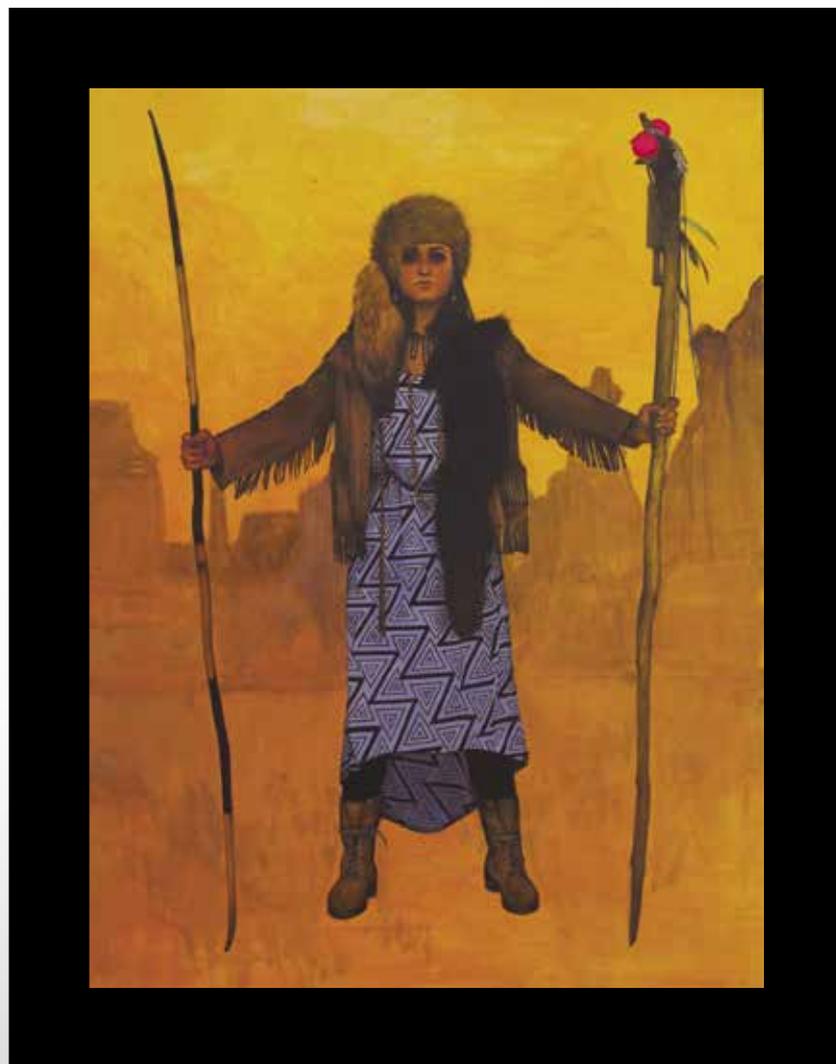
Cadmium I

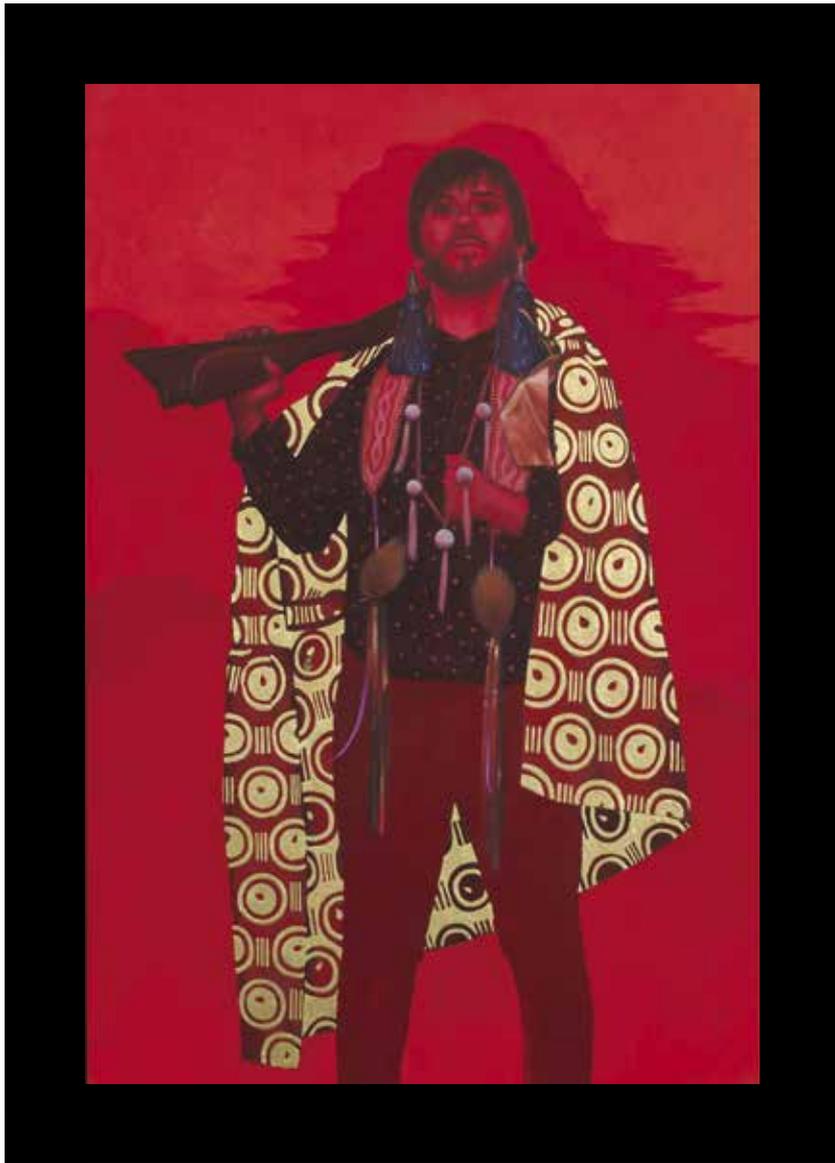
Oil on panel, 2020
40 x 30 inches
Courtesy of the Artist



Cadmium II

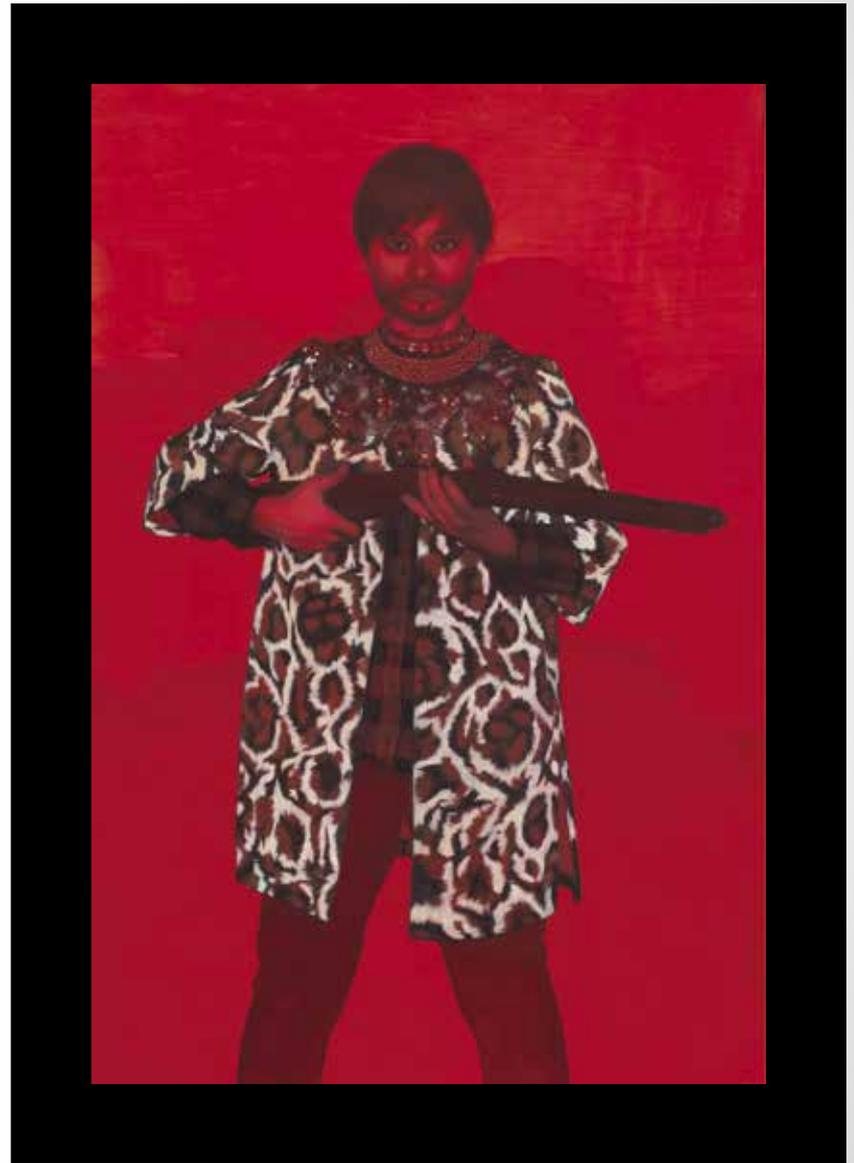
Oil on panel, 2020
40 x 30 inches
Courtesy of the Artist





XOXIMON I

Oil and gold leaf on panel, 2020
36 x 24 inches
Courtesy of the Artist



XOXIMON II

Oil and gold leaf on panel, 2020
36 x 24 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

FINALIST

HOLLY KEOGH

Charlotte, North Carolina



www.hollykeogh.com

Instagram:
[@hckeogh](https://www.instagram.com/hckeogh)

Holly Keogh “aims to render visible our desire to preserve experience” in her narrative, semi-documentary paintings. Inspired by photographs shared between family in the U.S. and England during her youth, Keogh’s paintings offer hazy, gently blurred narratives that speak to our desire to archive the past while knowing we cannot truly recreate or encapsulate it. The transparency of the paint and lack of sharp detail simulates the uncertainty of memory and time, inviting a delving of memory and the projection of the viewer’s own experiences into the narrative. These captured moments hold a sense of unease or disquiet; forever passed, they haunt in their incompleteness.

Keogh graduated in 2012 with a BFA in painting from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, a course of study that included a year abroad in Cape Town, South Africa. She currently lives and works in Charlotte, where she is represented by SOCO Gallery. Keogh is an original member of the Goodyear Artist Collective and was an inaugural artist-in-residence with the program. In 2019, she participated in the Pienkow Artist Residency in Chelm, Poland (where she received the People’s Choice Award) and in 2020 held an artist-in-residence at the McColl Center for Art in Charlotte. Her art has appeared in the magazines *Our State*, *Home Design and Décor*, *Hi-Fructose*, and *The Charlotte Observer*, among others, and in the 2018 publication *The Beautiful Book of Exquisite Corpses: A Creative Game of Limitless Possibilities*, by Gavin Edwards.



Girls Running

Oil on canvas, 2020
60 x 71.75 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

FINALIST
HOLLY KEOGH



*More Charming,
More Vague*

Oil on canvas, 2020
52.5 x 71.5 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

Grinding Halt

Oil on canvas, 2020
39.5 x 48.5 inches
Courtesy of the Artist



FINALIST

LAVELY MILLER

Baltimore, Maryland



www.lavelymillerkershman.com

Instagram:
@lavelymiller

Lavelly Miller paints portraits that narrate the effects of trauma, exploring visual cues that speak to loss, suffering, recovery, and salvation. Physically still, her figures exist in moments of emotional action, their frequently direct gazes challenging the viewer's attention. This sense of movement is translated through transparent layers of glazes, sometimes upward of 100 separate applications of color combining to create the final surface. The quality of layering is heightened by the use of paper, as it moves and crinkles during its application to create physical depth. Classical Flemish glazing techniques — unusually applied almost exclusively with the artist's right index finger — and the aged appearance of the painted surface give these figures a timeless quality, a frozen moment of physical time filled with universal human emotion.

A practicing artist with a BFA in painting and drawing from James Madison University, Miller also holds an Ed.D. and M.Ed. in clinical mental health. She exhibits throughout the Washington, D.C. and Virginia area in addition to group and juried shows across the U.S. Her paintings can be found in the collections of the University of Virginia, the New Salem Museum, The National Center for Transgender Equality in Washington, D.C., and in the Twenty-First Century Fox and News Corporation Building in New York City, amongst other public and private collections. Her work recently received a top prize award at Art Basel (2013) and a judge's choice award from Camy Clough, director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History (2020). Miller is represented by Arcadia Contemporary in New York, New York and Artist's Proof in Washington, D.C.



*God Shot Me in the
Face and Then I Saw
(Blue Shirt)*

Acrylic on paper
on panel, 2020
40 x 30 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

FINALIST
LAVELY
MILLER



Chin Strap

Acrylic on paper
on panel, 2020
40 x 30 inches
Courtesy of the Artist



*Lindsay, as I
Remember Her*

Acrylic on paper
on panel, 2020
40 x 30 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

FINALIST

REBECCA ORCUTT

North Bend, Washington

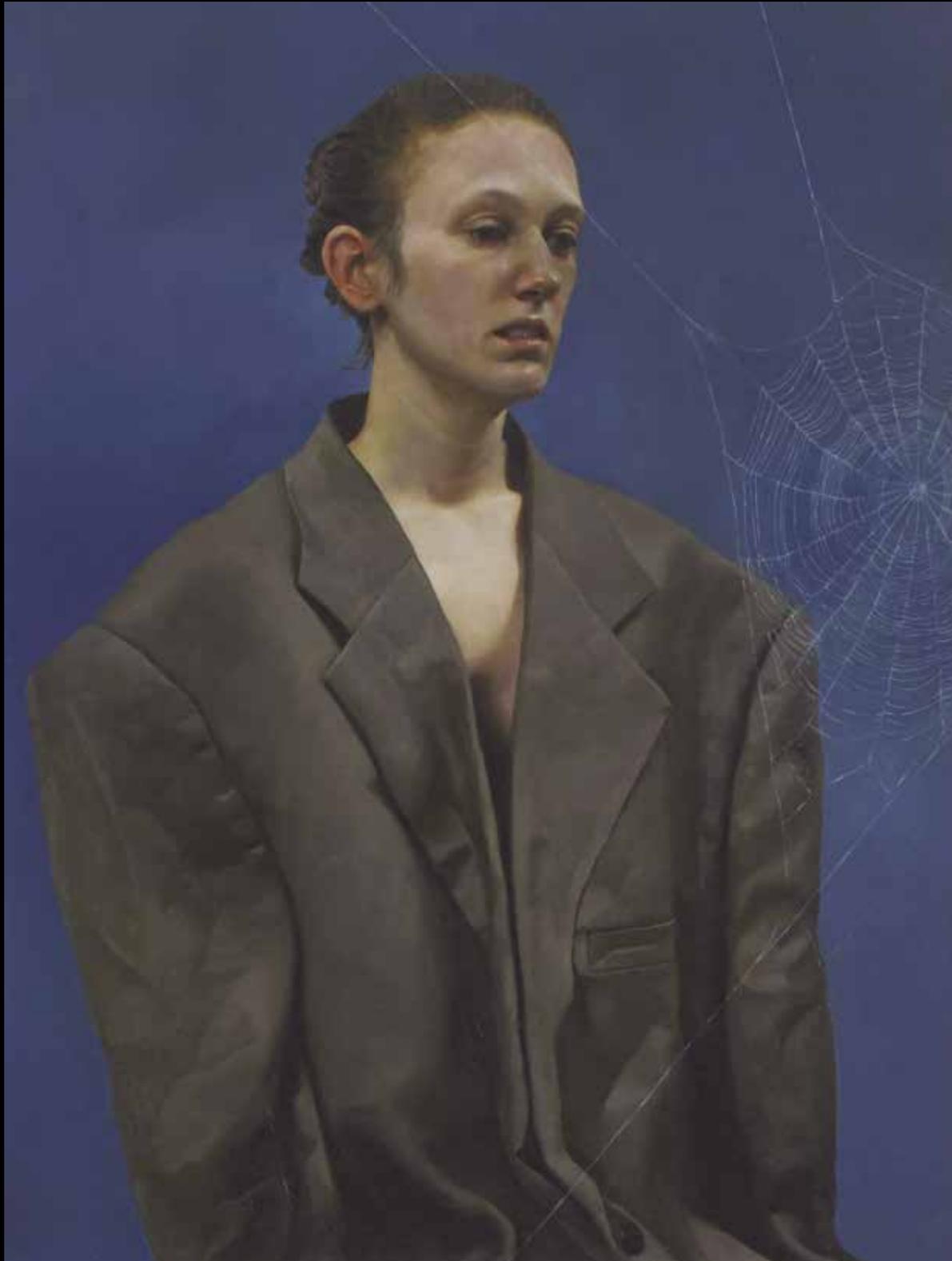


www.beckyorcutt.com

Instagram:
@ beeorcutt

Rebecca Orcutt constructs quiet, theatrical spaces in her ambiguously narrative paintings. She deliberately establishes moments where the characters seem to wait for events to unfold, the nature and outcomes of which are unclear. Within this uncertainty, she seeks to allow the familiar to transcend functionality and the commonplace, opening the viewer to the subtle emotions continually at play in our daily lives. With carefully arranged compositions stripped of detail until only the vital remains, the figures come to occupy spaces more psychological than physical and every relationship, be it between figures or between figure and object, becomes a point of tension. Within these unsettled relationships Orcutt builds a sense of disquiet and expectation, inviting the viewer to their own conclusions.

Orcutt received a bachelor's degree in painting from Gordon College in Wenham, Massachusetts and an MFA from the New York Academy of Art in New York City. While enrolled at the NYAA, she was a President's Scholar and was awarded the Leipzig International Art Programme Residency in Germany. Her work has appeared in shows around New York and the United States and internationally in exhibitions in Copenhagen, Denmark; Leipzig, Germany; at the National Portrait Gallery in London, England; the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh, Scotland; and the Ulster Museum in Belfast, Northern Ireland. In 2019, Orcutt was awarded an honorable mention in the inaugural Bennett Prize.



*Before It's Ruined
(or an Unrealized
Mean Side)*

Oil on canvas, 2020
24 x 18 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

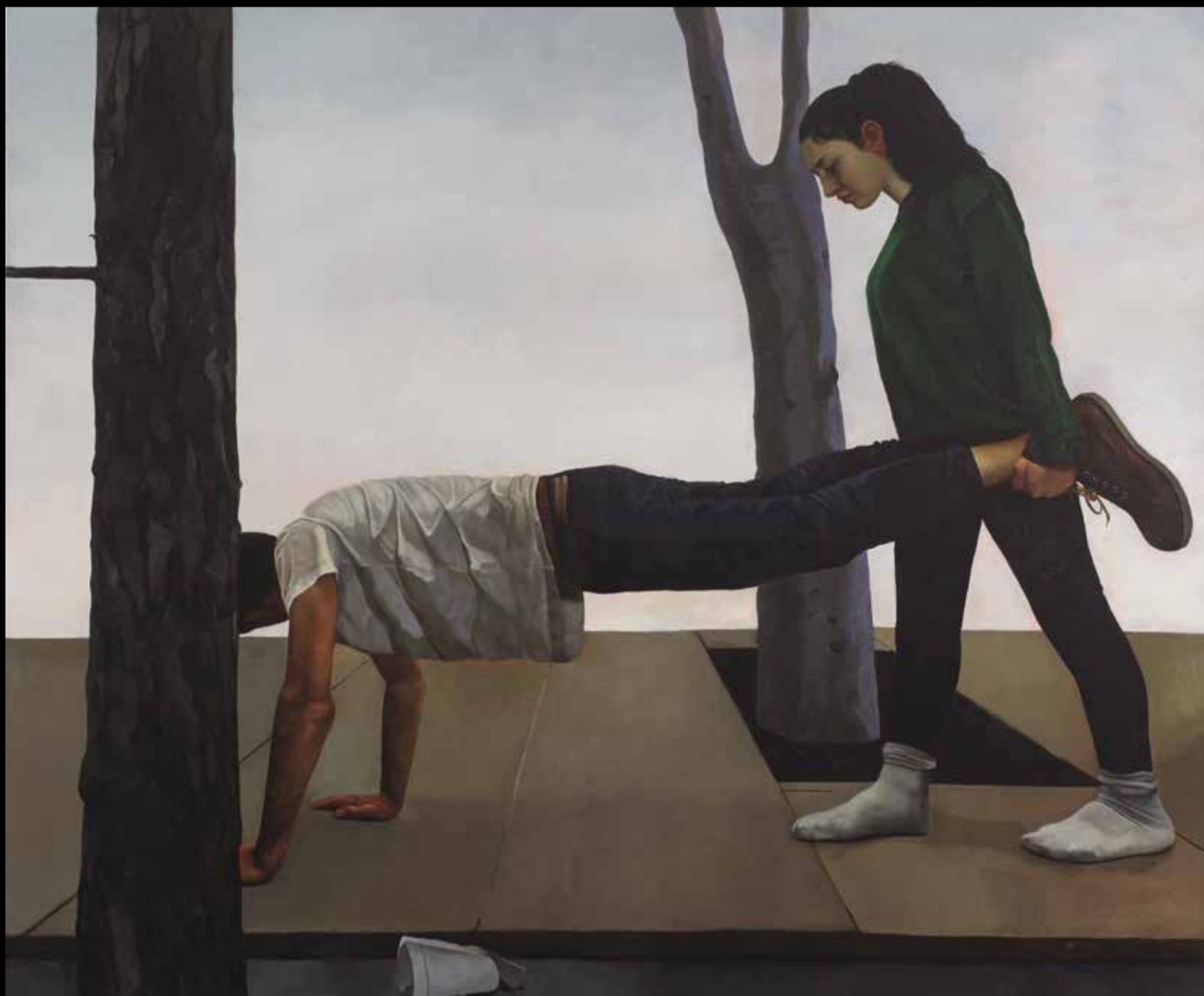
FINALIST
**REBECCA
ORCUTT**



*Sorry the Movie
Wasn't That Good*
Oil on panel, 2017
40 x 30 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

Talking About Leaving

Oil on canvas, 2021
60 x 72 inches
Courtesy of the Artist



FINALIST

SU SU

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

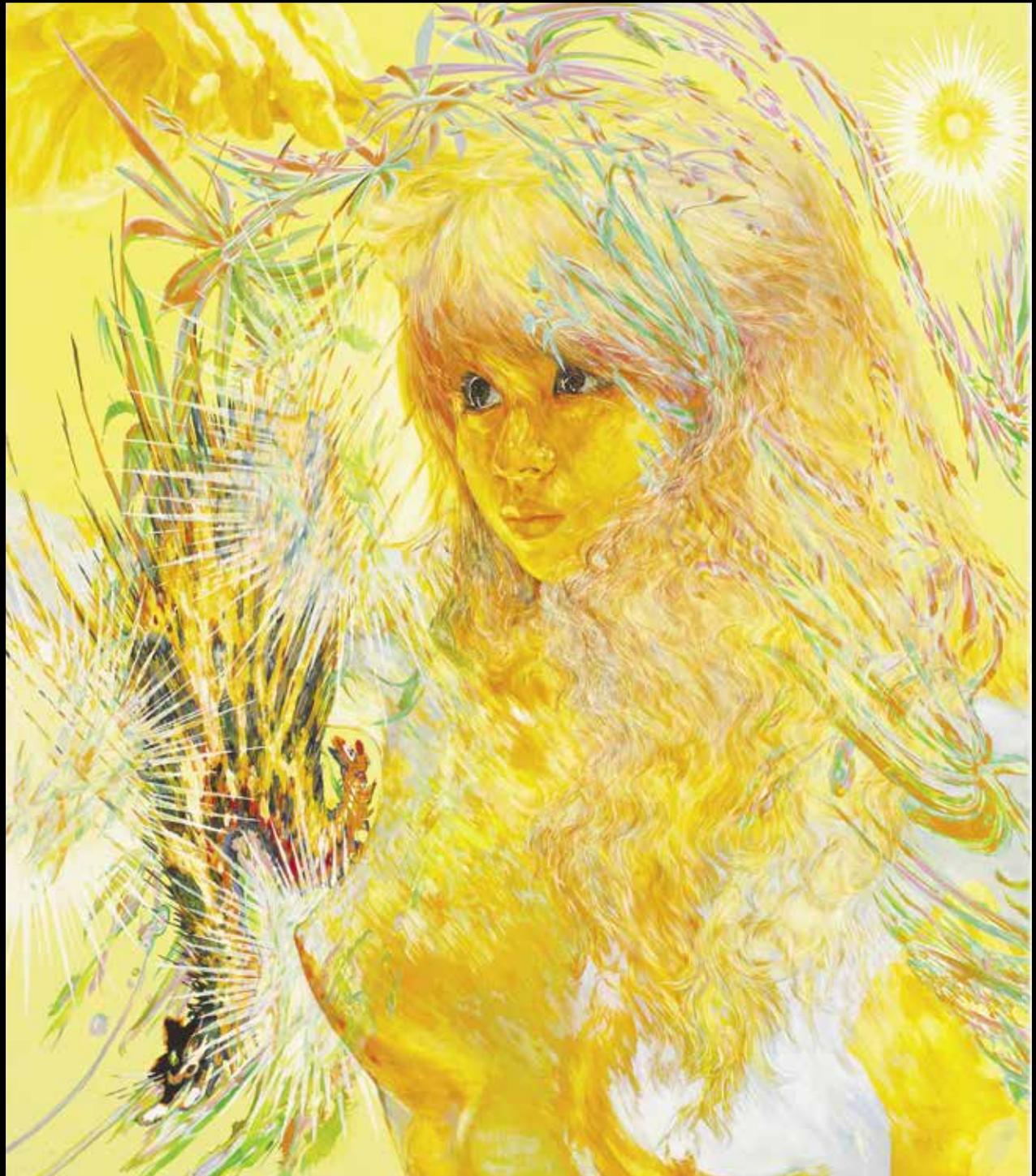


www.artbysusu.com

Instagram:
[@paintingsbysusu](https://www.instagram.com/paintingsbysusu)

Su Su merges figurative realism with surrealism in an exploration of cultural and self-identity in the ever-shifting landscape of popular culture and consumerism. Working primarily from self-portraits, the artist creates a persona that is “naïve and soft but fully in control of her sexual power.” In her vibrantly colored paintings, context is stripped away (mirroring her first experiences with American popular culture in her native China) leaving the viewer with a charming, “nymph-like” figure in a playful, sexualized atmosphere. Beneath these performative scenes simmers a disquieting reminder of the dangers to self and cultural identity in conforming to the on-trend and overtly commercialized identities unrelentingly offered by mainstream culture.

Su Su was born in Beijing, China and today lives and works in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She began studying art at the age of 12, at the Central Academy of Arts & Design in Beijing. A scholarship took her to Carnegie Mellon University where she received her MFA in 2015 and now serves as a guest professor. Su Su exhibits her works nationally and internationally, including recent solo and group shows in Pittsburgh, Denver, Chautauqua, and in the “*State of the Art 2020*” exhibition at the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art. Su Su was nominated for Pittsburgh’s Emerging Artist of the Year (2017), the Eben Demarest Trust Award (2018), and the Joan Mitchell Foundation Award (2019). Her works have appeared in the publications *Juxtapoz*, *Artpulse*, and *Galerie*.



Bed Straw

Oil on canvas, 2020
42 x 36 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

FINALIST
SUSU



This page:
Space Jems

Oil on canvas, 2020
60 x 40 inches
From the Collection
of Jim Spencer
and Michael H. Lin

Next page:
Empty Vessel

Oil on canvas, 2020
36 x 36 inches
Collection of
David Stanger and
Susheela Nemani-Stanger



FINALIST

AMY WERTZ

Dallas, Texas

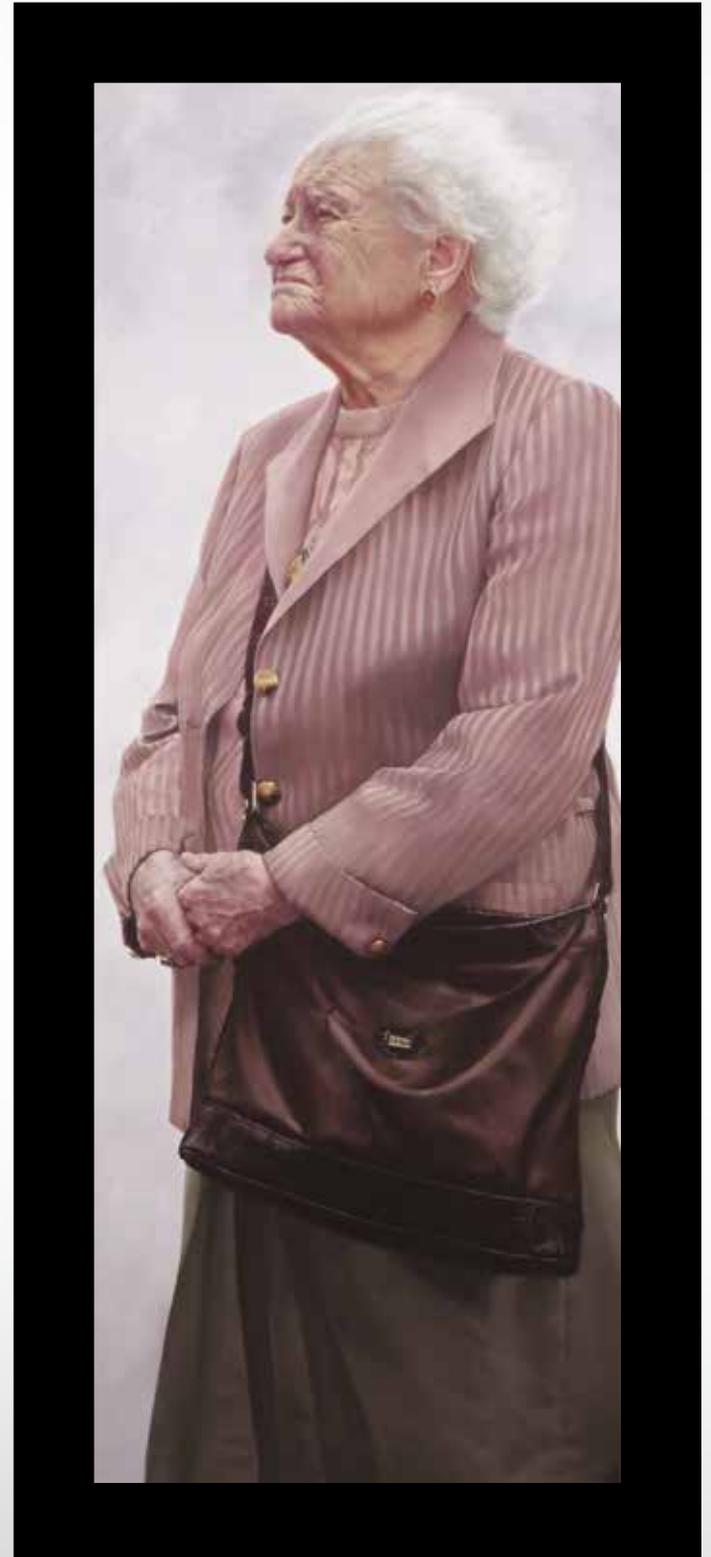


www.amywertz.com

Instagram:
[@amywertz_art](https://www.instagram.com/amywertz_art)

Amy Wertz is obsessed with time, of the fear of its passing and the feeling of not living in the correct moment. This passion plays out in her art, explored through translated vintage black and white photographs that bring forward the past to her current work, which seeks to capture the seemingly insignificant moments of everyday life. Her meticulously crafted and highly realistic figures are isolated from the environment. They are the only story and their features, gestures, clothing, and props offer the only cues to narrative. Wertz leaves the viewer to fill in the details from their own life experience, to create a story from their history and perhaps to see the importance of every life in a society that is often too fascinated with the allure of youth.

Wertz is a practicing painter and interior designer, with a BFA in interior design from the Art Institute of Dallas, Texas. Her paintings have been exhibited widely in Texas and in group shows in Wausau, Wisconsin and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. She has received recognition and numerous awards for her portraits from the Portrait Society of America and took first place in the Richeson 75 International Art Competition Portrait/Figure category in 2020.





Temple II

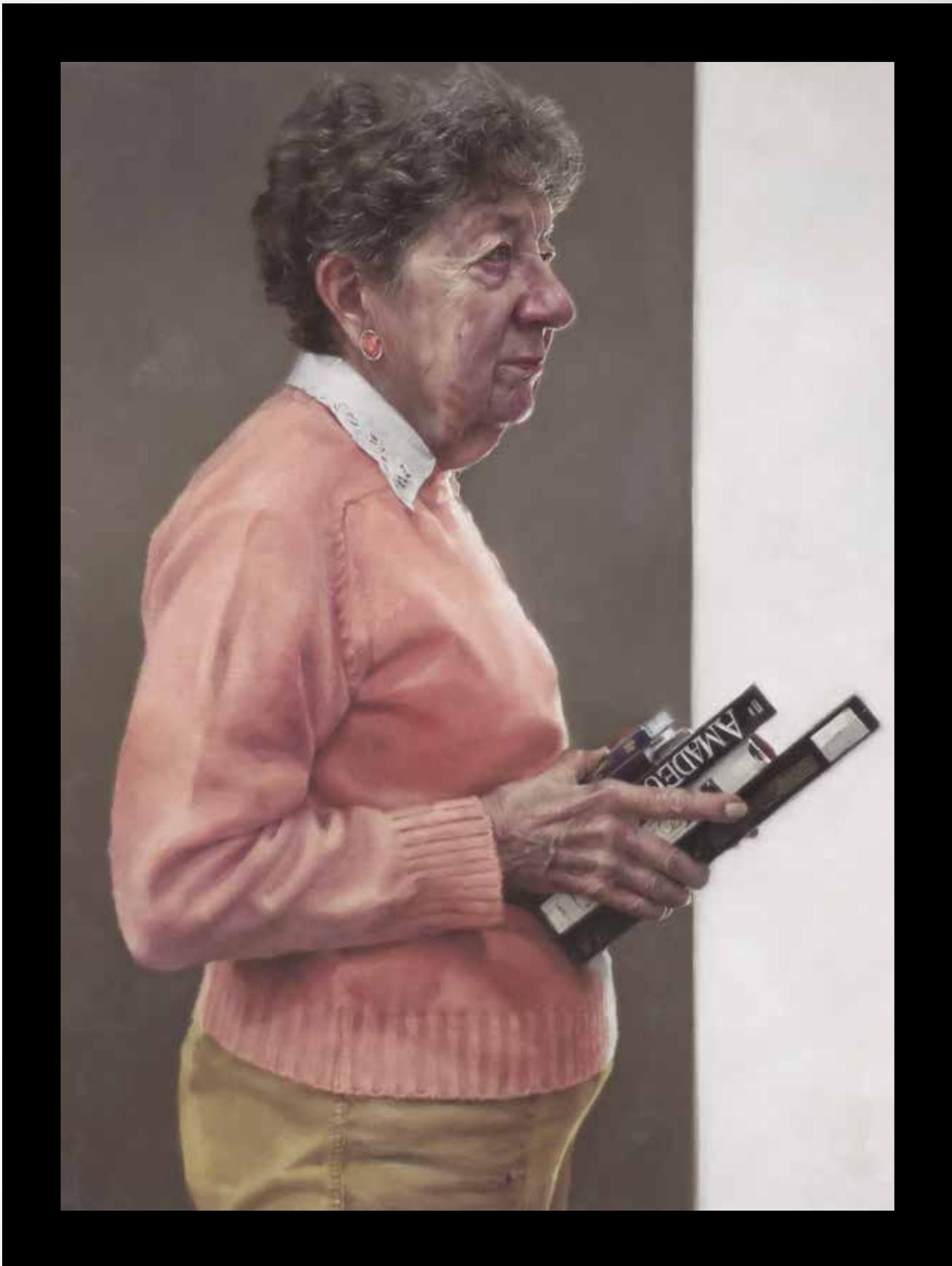
Oil, 2020
21.75 x 16 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

FINALIST
**AMY
WERNTZ**



Blue Scarf II

Oil on panel, 2020
16 x 12 inches
Courtesy of the Artist



The Shopper

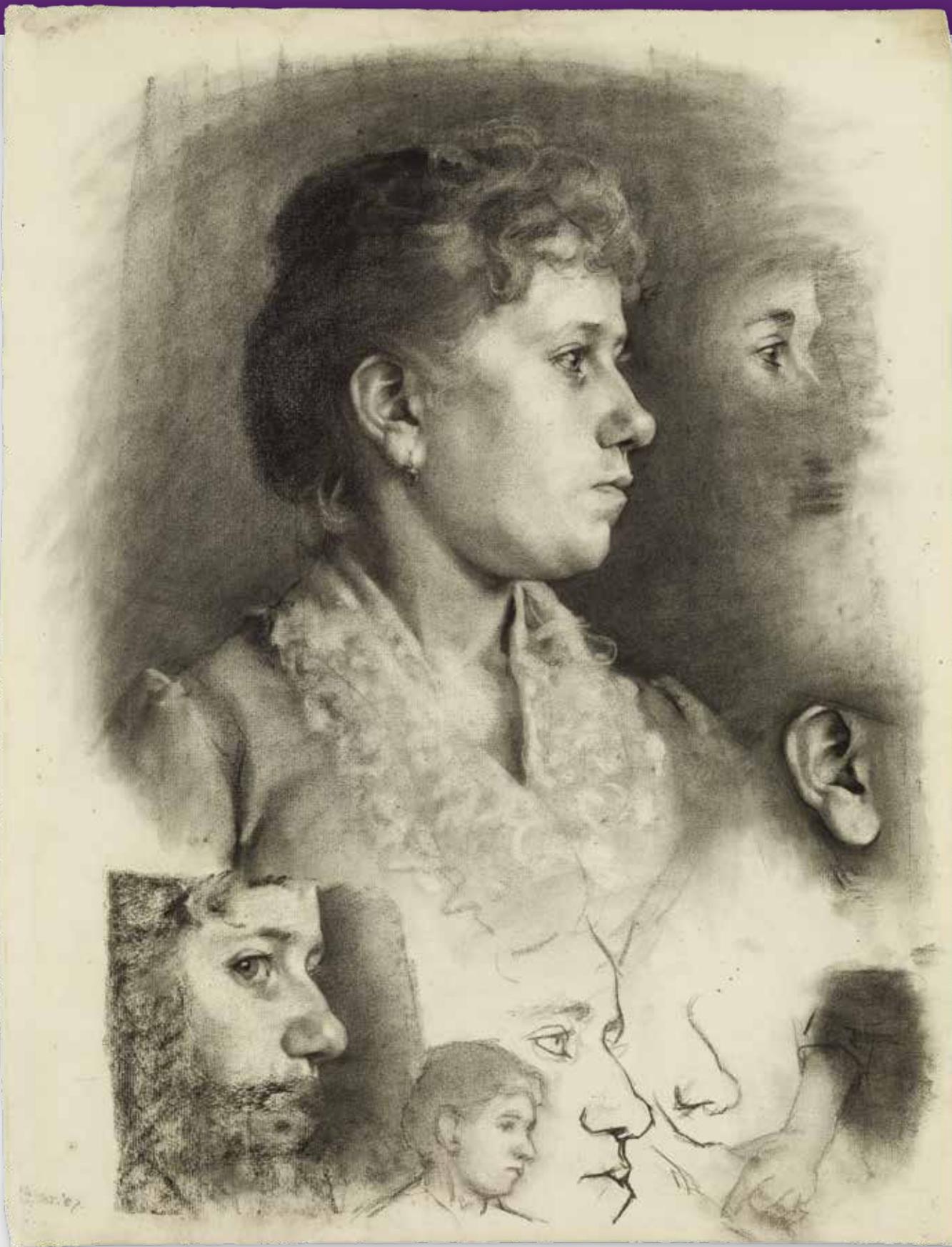
Oil, 2019
23.375 x 18 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

FROM THE PERIPHERY TO THE CENTER — GUEST ESSAY

For art students in the late 19th century, the period was one of profound resurgence. The nation's iconic museum-schools absorbed teaching philosophies from a generation of European-trained American artists who advocated for the tradition of mastering the human figure. One of the instructor-heroes of the era, the iconic teacher and artist John H. Vanderpoel, articulated new ideas about human structure that permeated through his pedagogy. He promoted a closeness of observation in the human body that helped to propel artists' skill levels to new heights. A Dutch immigrant to Chicago, Vanderpoel overcame a severe spinal injury to become a "helpmate" to many, with his 30 years of research shared through *The Human Figure*, his landmark 1907 text on drawing.

The era also witnessed a substantial increase in women seeking artistic training. Minerva J. Chapman, who, along with her contemporaries Georgia O'Keefe, Elizabeth "Lizzy" Nourse, and Cecilia Beaux, was the earliest and most dedicated. In notebooks Chapman maintained through 1906, when she was middle-aged, she refers to herself as "always a student." In his introduction to a 1986 exhibition of the works of Chapman, Paul J. Staiti tries to decipher what Chapman may have meant by this: "...Studenthood—self-directed learning rather than apprenticeship—allowed her to avoid the imaginative fixity and intellectual calcification that can attend academic orthodoxy or professional status." Later, Staiti is more succinct: "...For Chapman, studenthood was an open invitation to artistic inquiry."

The Bennett Prize, a marvelous forum for "imaginative artistic inquiry," has emerged to promote the contributions to figurative realism of 21st-century women artists. It was inspired by the underlying biographies within The Bennett Collection—untold struggles which, like Chapman's, avoided "intellectual calcification" by prioritizing self-directed learning and expression. As a school dedicated to seizing the tools of realism, and as a community where women artists are overwhelmingly represented, Studio Incamminati, where I serve as Dean of Fine Arts, upholds the belief that maintaining a student's temperament can empower anyone to triumph by finding their voices within and without the academic orthodoxy of realism. The community is proud of having hosted the traveling exhibition of the first Bennett Prize in 2021, rendered out of 647 applicants. Now, The Bennett Prize 2 has attracted over 670 entrants, many of whom embody the convergence of contemporary and historical realist image-making.



Minerva Josephine Chapman
Portrait of a Woman with Earrings
Charcoal on paper, 1887
Collection of Mount Holyoke
College Art Museum,
Gift of Mary and Morse G. Dial
1986.25.13

The second round of The Bennett Prize honors the work of ten impressive finalists: Sophia-Yemisi Adeyemo-Ross, Tanmaya Bingham, Chloe Chiasson, Lavelly Miller, June Glasson, Holly Keogh, Rebecca Orcutt, Ayana Ross, Su Su, and Amy Werntz. These remarkable women have evoked powerful themes. These include Ross's focus on "racial progress within our value systems." Through a beauty of gesture and narrative, the graphic weight of her painted family images reclaims their humanness. The works of Adeyemo-Ross reach further back in time. Her "love letters" to anonymous sitters from Africa's troubling colonial and missionary past celebrate multiracialism and humanity. Glasson, whose colorful paintings counteract societal presumptions on where and "how women should behave and be seen" ventures into half-real worlds that scrutinize masculine and feminine tropes that are tied to authenticity and frivolity. Chiasson deconstructs the picture plane with a flurry of mixed media sculpture, painting, and collage. Her work reassembles a fluid and unconstrained wholeness, the fragments of which seek to embrace both the strange and the complete. There is also a sense of salvation in Miller's painting. Her penetrating work, which heralds the act of overcoming trauma, comes from an emotional core of lived-experience and depth.

The notion of incompleteness is another profound theme within the work of these artists. In Su Su's nymph-like self-portraits, which explore sexual power and ambiguity, there is an undertone of anxiety beneath consumerism and a disappearing set of cultural boundaries through the removal of a contextualized reality. Bingham's mixed media pieces repurpose traditional imagery toward a more contemplative place. Her surreal images comment on political and social conditions and the search for meaning. Keogh's aim, which is "to render visible our desire to preserve experience," is inspired by gently blurred photographs, like living archives. The uncertainty of memory, projection, loss, and a sense of unease in Keogh's imagery underscore an incompleteness. Orcutt's work, which is anticipatory, welcomes the entry of the unfamiliar, the unforeseen. Her theatrical paintings focus on "numerous possibilities" within the tension of the narrative. Werntz's goal is "to give importance to the

ordinary moments in everyday life." The notion of time itself as an irreplaceable and undeniable element of life invites younger people to interact with our older generation—in those whose faces they will eventually embody.

In the stories and biographies of these artists, I want to highlight the emblematic drawing of Minerva J. Chapman's *Portrait of a Woman with Earrings*, from the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum collection. Chapman studied with John H. Vanderpoel from 1880-1886, at a time when women were not expected to produce much of great interest. Arranged in the *mise en page* format, the drawing is actually a visual and pedagogic collaboration between Chapman and Vanderpoel, a page full of little masterpieces. From linear profiles of the sitter's mouth to features to hand poses, the full head stands out amidst the vignettes to reveal genuine emotion. In this there is a culmination in Chapman's main drawing, a breakthrough piece. Chapman's proficiency through the rite-of-passage of the figure brings her to the center and literally places Vanderpoel, the historic teacher, on her periphery. She has demonstrated mastery of her technique as the vehicle to creative expression and is thus enabled to take control of her own artistic future.

The courage it takes to embark on figurative realism, with its tapestry of symbolism, is not lost on any painter. Each artist knows that she is contributing to a perpetual visual discourse with humanity, about humanity. As Director of Collections and Exhibitions of the Muskegon Museum of Art Art Martin assures us in the first Bennett Prize's curatorial essay, the figure has the unrivaled capability to "convey the human experience to viewers at all levels of experience and knowledge." The underlying technical language of learning the body has always been a huge obstacle which stands between the artist and "conveying the human experience." Just as in Vanderpoel's time, the human figure is the key to unlocking an inexhaustible vocabulary of design and aesthetic languages. Women now comprise the vast majority of figurative art students, which is prophetic. Women are the ones most interested in taking on the historical legacy of figuration, but

on their own terms. They will tell the stories of this age to future generations through hard won insights as well as a deep conviction to self-determination. Women are driven to explore the vicissitudes of humanity from their previously (and still) underrepresented perspectives. Women will show what it means to live as a creative human being throughout the 21st century.

Participating in the adventure of humanity is the cornerstone of this work and our predicate for entering the extraordinary worlds of The Bennett Prize finalists. For these artists, earning proficiency in the expansive creative disciplines of the figure is only part of their achievement. Each painter has amplified her voice by becoming a visionary who knows how to manifest the struggles of life into timeless works of art.

In the spirit of this advancement, I place my trust in a future where the depth and cadence of *her* voice is as appreciated as that of *his*. The Bennett Prize has been a remarkable symbol of recognition, reflecting the elimination of unfair societal expectations on women. By empowering an award of such consequence, Steven Alan Bennett and Dr. Elaine Melotti Schmidt are building a world stage for the work of women. The scores of women artists who possess the spirit of the age and audacious faith in their own rising voices consecrate, through the depth of their expression, this exhibition for the voices that have yet to awaken.

Dan Thompson
Dean of Fine Arts
Studio Incamminati

2019 BENNETT PRIZE WINNER

ANEKA INGOLD: TRANSFIGURATION



Aneka Ingold's dramatically staged paintings present mysterious allegories informed by the stories and lives of women. Drawn from self-reflection and the shared experiences of peers and women throughout history, her narratives are relayed through symbols and patterns that culminate in a central, goddess-like figure. Ingold's powerful characters, rendered in precise layers of colored pencil and paint, earned her the honor of being named the inaugural winner of The Bennett Prize for Women Figurative Realist Painters in 2019. The paintings in this exhibition are the culmination of her two-year grant period and represent a profoundly transformative time, of life upended and redefined, and a woman transfigured by her journey.

The Bennett Prize, in its core conception, is intended to give an artist the support she needs to advance her art and career to new levels of accomplishment and recognition. In Ingold's case, The Bennett Prize would serve in circumstances no one could have anticipated. 2020 was a year of devastation wrought by COVID and the subsequent economic fallout, disrupting lives and livelihoods and introducing fear into the most daily of activities. The forced isolation of COVID exacerbated all of the challenges Ingold already faced through her own monumental life change: the end of her marriage.

In 2019, only a few months after Ingold was named The Bennett Prize winner, her husband of 14 years asked for a divorce. Suddenly a single mother of two children (Spencer, 11, Iris, 4), Ingold had to work through the pain and stigma of separation and the grief and sense of betrayal at the loss of her marriage while caring for and supporting her children. Roughly six months into this period of struggle, of trying to reinvent herself while dealing with the trauma, COVID struck, compounding all of the isolation and uncertainty. Supported by The Prize and part-time teaching, Ingold was able to keep her home and provide for the children. But the greatest gift she attributes to The Prize is the sense of recognition it gave her, a gift from which she drew a new strength that allowed her to redefine herself. For Ingold, the Prize was not just a validation of her art but of her, as a human being. She was someone of interest, and every interview request from the press, or to exhibit, or to just hear her story became another realization of self-worth. This new awareness gave her the foundation she needed to reclaim and redefine her life, to work through the turmoil and return to a place of creativity and making. While the future remains uncertain, Ingold finds herself looking forward, once again painting and aided and strengthened by the catalyst of The Prize.

Fecundity

Mixed media on paper, 2021
74 x 48 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

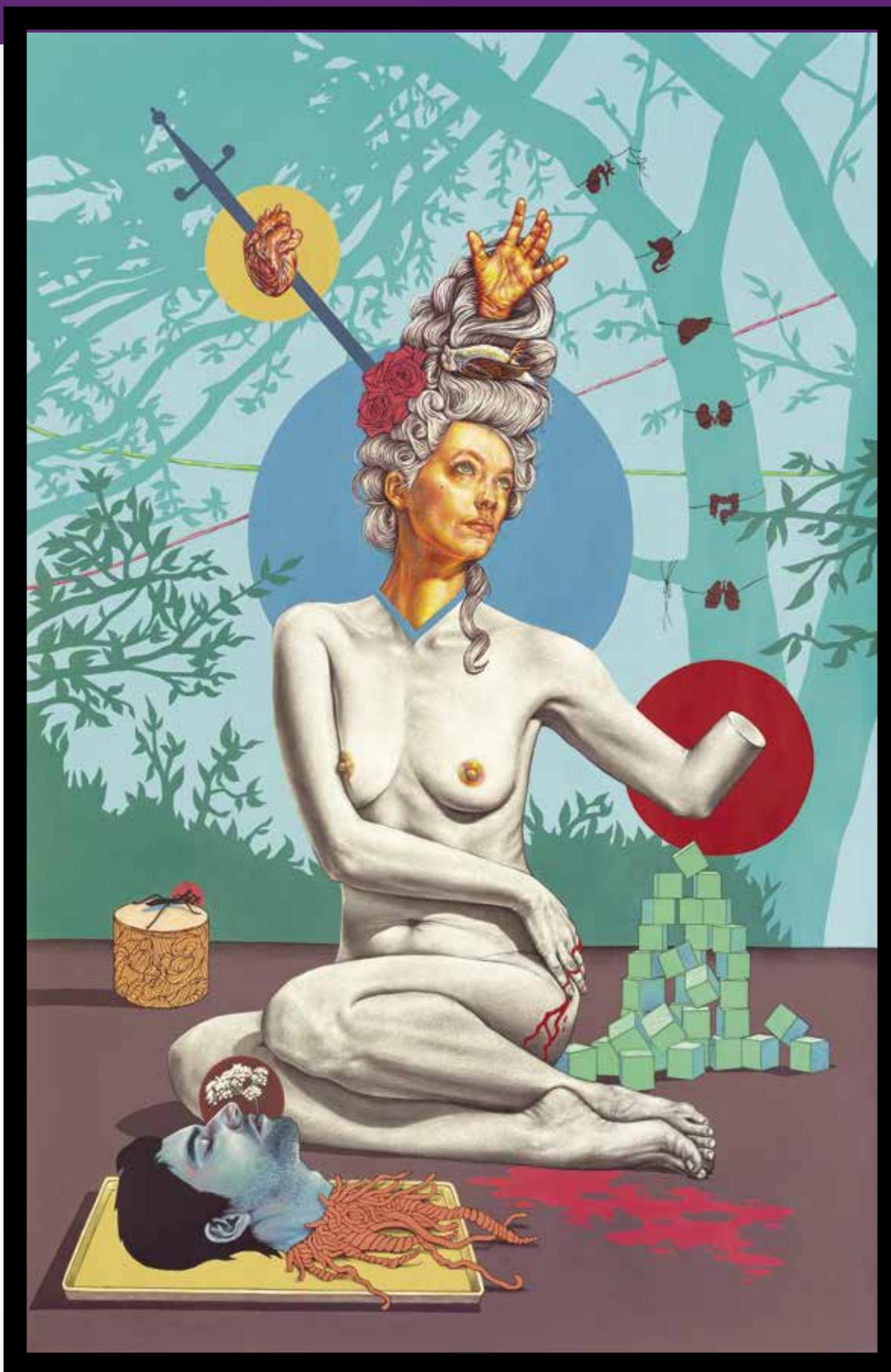


ANEKA INGOLD: TRANSFIGURATION

The resulting works in this exhibition thus represent a continuity of artistic theme and style sharpened by an experience the artist describes as a personal transfiguration. The paintings feel more intimate, less about an archetype and more deeply invested in the struggles and triumphs of the subject and, in this way, more evocative in their universal explorations. While the narrative inspiration changes from painting to painting, some visual themes repeat, most notably the distinction of color palette between head and body. In some works, the body is rendered in black and white while the face is depicted in color; in others, the reverse, creating a mask-like visage atop a vividly hued body. This visual device speaks to the separation of mind and body, of how what the mind may believe is belied by the needs, demands, and reality of the flesh. The concerns of the mind impact the body in ways we often fail to see and understand, and vice versa. Complicating the mind/body dilemma was the artist's realization that, as a now single woman, she had to understand, even reinvent, her sexuality outside of marriage.

Live and Let Live predates the collapse of Ingold's marriage and contains a woman similar to those of her style at the time, a remote, self-contained figure removed from the influence of the viewer. She is powerful and self-assured, her body nude but posed and contained, a goddess figure from a classical frieze. She is protector and mother, set before the vulnerable fawn, her gaze watchful and intent. Nature abounds within the room, in the floral motifs on the wall, circling insects, and the distinctly fenestrated leaves of the *Monstera Deliciosa*. The repeated use of the circle suggests life cycles and the circular exchange of the idea inherent in the concept of "live and let live." The space itself implies a room, with a window to the exterior world. The symbols used here are less distinct and more impersonal than the works that follow, revealing a new layer of maturity in the subsequent paintings.

Devil's Bread and *Fecundity* both speak to Ingold's new way of examining the body and themes surrounding relationships and sexuality. Issues of vulnerability play out most powerfully in *Devil's Bread*, a direct expression of the end of her marriage. Within *Devil's Bread*, nudity is an exposure, a revelation of damage. Yet the face is serene, uplifted, at odds with the violence that surrounds it. A ribbon of red, a decorative element in *Live and Let Live*, is now clearly blood, running from the remaining hand, as if first a ring around a finger and then a torrent. The wedding ring hand is severed, an injury called to vividly by a circle of red, a diagram of the wound. The heart, pierced by a sword, is likewise diagrammed and the head of the figure surrounded by a halo, a classical device of elevation and spirituality. Haloes, diagrams, constellations, or guide markers, these circles call our attention to the keys that unwind the story. The ornate and twisting wig, lifted from Rococo fashion, is a call to pretense, of putting forth an illusion. But the wig is a heavy burden, and the bird (symbolizing the nest of home?) is dead, and the severed ring hand displayed as a trophy. The death of the marriage is on full ornamental display, a public performance. Only the red roses, a symbol of romance, are whole, yet they too are pierced. Internal organs are mounted to the tree behind, tied neatly



Devil's Bread

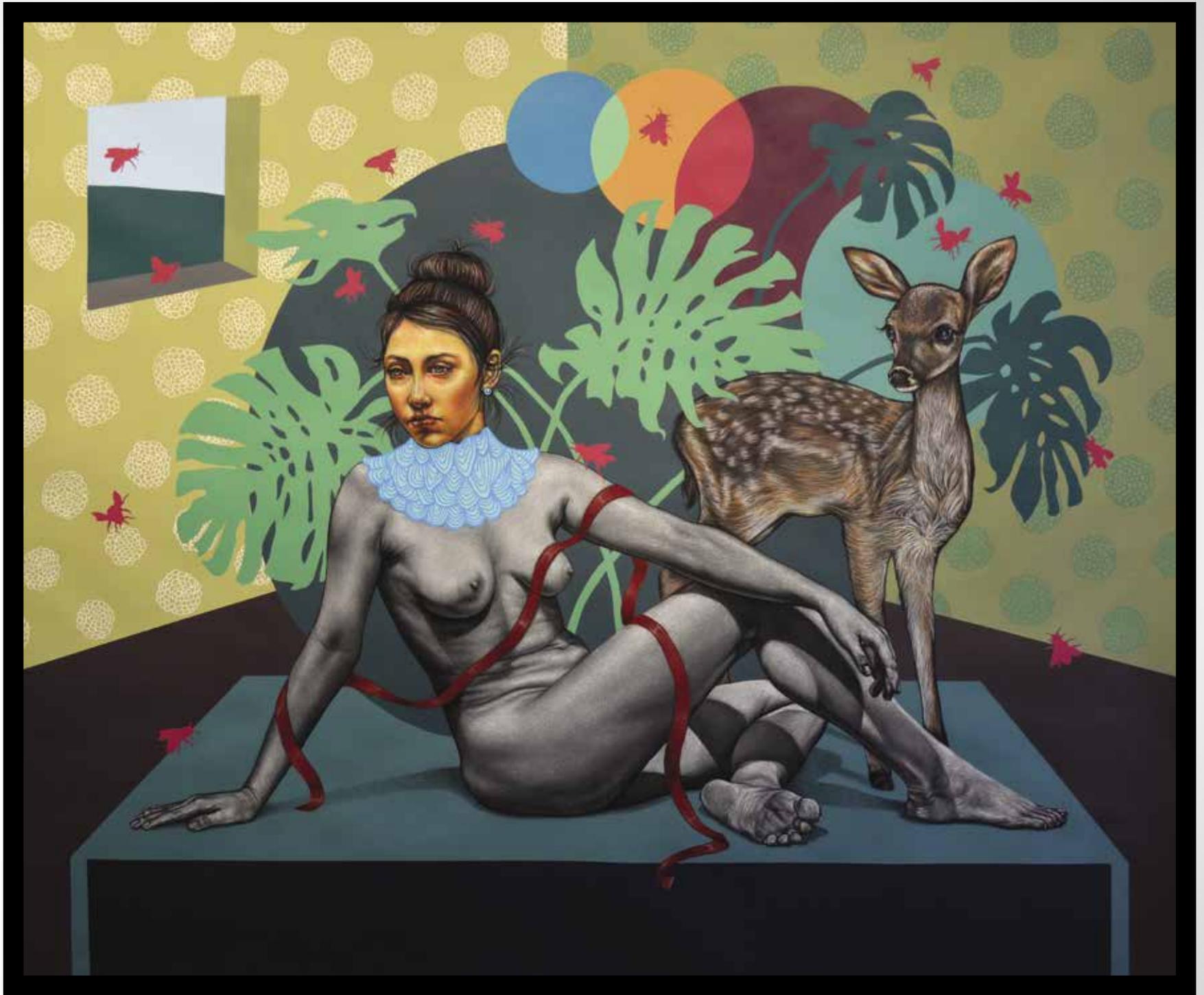
Mixed media on paper, 2020
74 x 48 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

ANEKA INGOLD: TRANSFIGURATION

with strings as if offerings. Is the gutted feeling on display for all to witness? The severed male head, neatly set onto a platter, is a reference to the images of Judith and Holofernes found throughout Western art, an evolving allegory of power, aggression, and seduction. The white flowers are hemlock, the devil's bread, a highly poisonous plant that grows primarily in uncultivated spaces. There is no antidote for its toxins, yet it was once grown in English gardens for its appearance. Hemlock is the allure of marriage, of partnering, and their betrayal. As the use of the figure has changed, so too have the spaces Ingold creates. While her work has often incorporated graphic backgrounds, here the space is more exaggeratedly flat, layered landscapes now replaced by theater set curtains, heightening the sense of staging and performance. Additional symbols round out the story. Blocks, perhaps the foundation of a shared life, crumble away, but also hint to the presence of children. A mantis, decapitator and devourer of the male, lurks in the background.

Fecundity means abundance, of new ideas or fertility, multiple definitions relayed here in symbols that lead to either interpretation. In *Fecundity*, the realm of ideas reigns supreme, a queen upon her throne, her face a mask while her body is inflamed with passion and the power of creating. Butterflies, symbols of transformation and beauty, burst forth from her skirt and circle her throne. Succulent red fruits tumble about her feet, traditional symbols of plenty, fertility, and the flesh. The sitter's sexuality is hers alone, she is severe and beholden only to herself. She is seductive, but has no use for subservience. Her crown is topped by phalluses, symbols of male power now made her own. She appears to contemplate not the red-golden pear in her hand, but its offering, the posing of the hand suggesting the act of placement or giving. Is she weighing whether or not to extend her gifts? While power and intellect are the primary drivers of the artist's intent, the heavy drapes deliberately speak to the sheets of childbirth, of the physical tolls inherent in the process of creation.

Continuing the themes of personal narrative over the years of *The Prize*, *Virulent* directly addresses isolation through divorce and COVID. The staging is extreme, a seated woman confined to a plinth, further contained within a small rectangular space. The sickly green of the walls is repeated in the flesh of the body, while the face, masked and adorned in coiled braids, is hale and healthy. Worms wiggle from her pants and Venus flytraps surround her like additional arms, reminiscent of Kali, Hindu goddess of time, creation, and power, a warrior and protector. A scorpion, leashed, its power under her control, defends her. A pocket watch, devoid of hands, dangles at the front of the composition. In the pandemic, all sense of time is lost and no ending known. Yet she holds the keys, to her own prison or the viewer's release? Is the sitter the danger, or does she rest strong and self-assured in her protective shell? The figure is again accented by a red halo, a circle within a constellation that diagrams the composition as it orbits her.



Live and Let Live

Mixed media on paper, 2019
48 x 58 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

ANEKA INGOLD: TRANSFIGURATION

These four paintings, accompanied by the additional works of the exhibition, chronicle the transformation of a woman's life; of a profound change marked by trauma and the emergence of a stronger, newly defined self. Empowered and supported by The Bennett Prize, Ingold has survived and flourished, her art marked by a new maturity and a honed language of symbols. As her term as the inaugural winner of The Bennett Prize closes, I speak for the entire team when I say we look forward to what is to come.

Art Martin, Director of Collections and Exhibitions
Muskegon Museum of Art

About the artist:

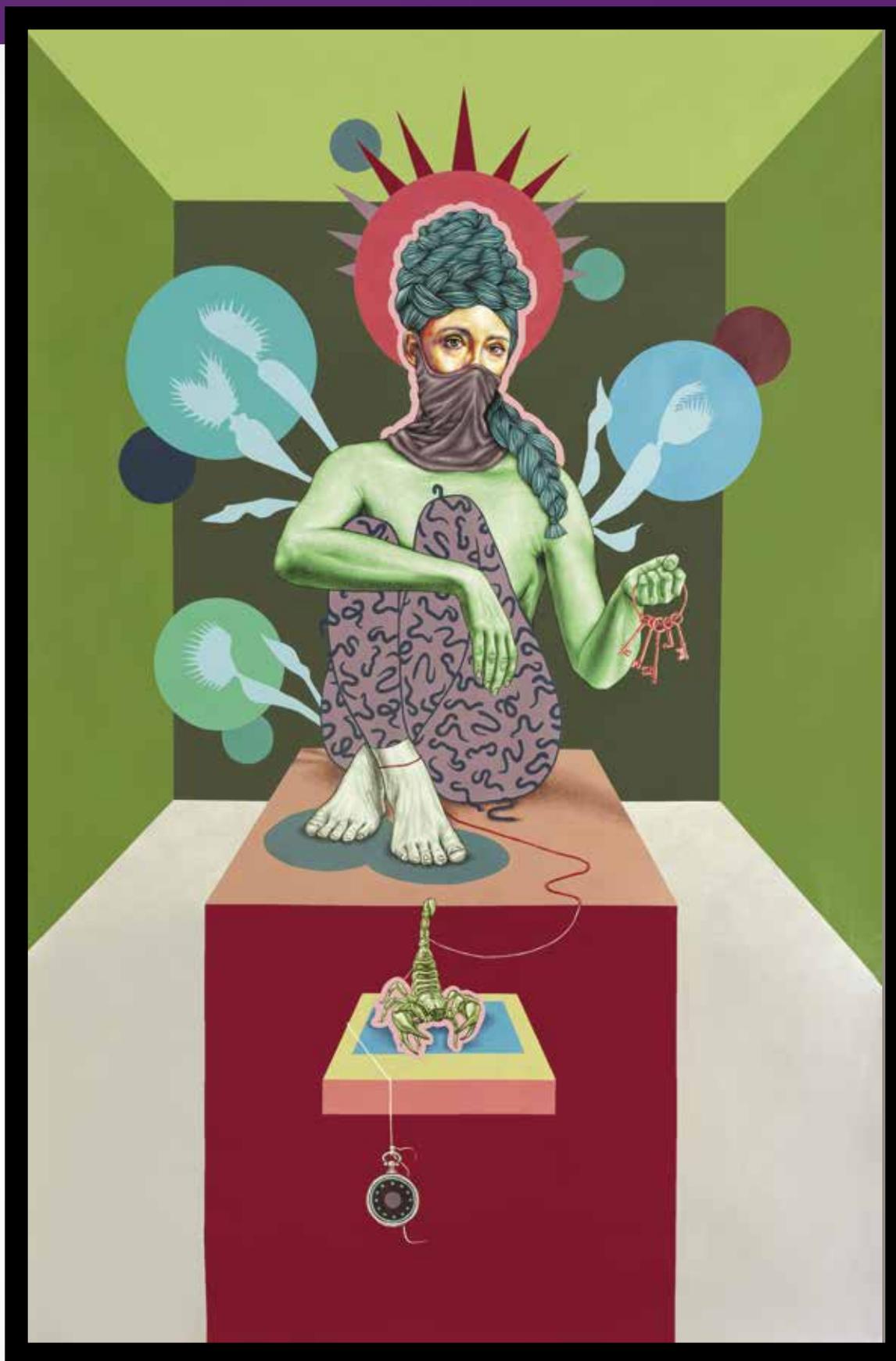
Aneka Ingold holds a BFA from Grand Valley State University in Allendale, Michigan and her MFA from Kendall College of Art and Design in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In 2015, Ingold was the Grand Prize Winner at the *Vying* show during Miami Art Basel, at Viophilia Gallery in Wynwood. She was awarded First Place by Juror Carrie Ann Baade at the *Valdosta National All-Media Juried Competition* at Dedo Maranville Fine Arts Gallery, Valdosta State University, Georgia in 2016. Other recent exhibitions include *The Deep End* at RJD Gallery in Romeo, Michigan; *Strange Figurations* at Limner Art Gallery, Hudson, New York; *Immortality and Vulnerability* at Zhou B Art Center, Chicago, Illinois; *Women in Art*, at Las Laguna Art Gallery in Laguna Beach, California; and the *Surreal Salon 8* at Baton Rouge Center for Contemporary Art, presented by *Juxtapoz* magazine. Since winning The Bennett Prize, Ingold has interviewed with *New York Undressed*, *American Art Collector*, *Mahattanarts.com*, and *Brenda Magazine*.

Ingold's art has been published in the 13th and 14th *INDA: International Drawing Annual*, presented by Manifest Creative Research and Drawing Center, *Poets and Artists*, curated by Sergio Gomez of 33 Contemporary Gallery in Chicago, Illinois, and the drawing textbook *Drawing Essentials: A Guide to Drawing from Observation*, by Deborah Rockman.

Major collections include the Howard A. and Judith Tullman Art Collection, Chicago, Illinois; West Michigan Center for Arts and Technology, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Grand Valley State University, Allendale, Michigan; and University of Tampa, Florida.

Ingold is currently an adjunct professor at the University of Tampa teaching Drawing and at Hillsborough Community College teaching Design. She is represented by RJD Gallery in Romeo, Michigan.

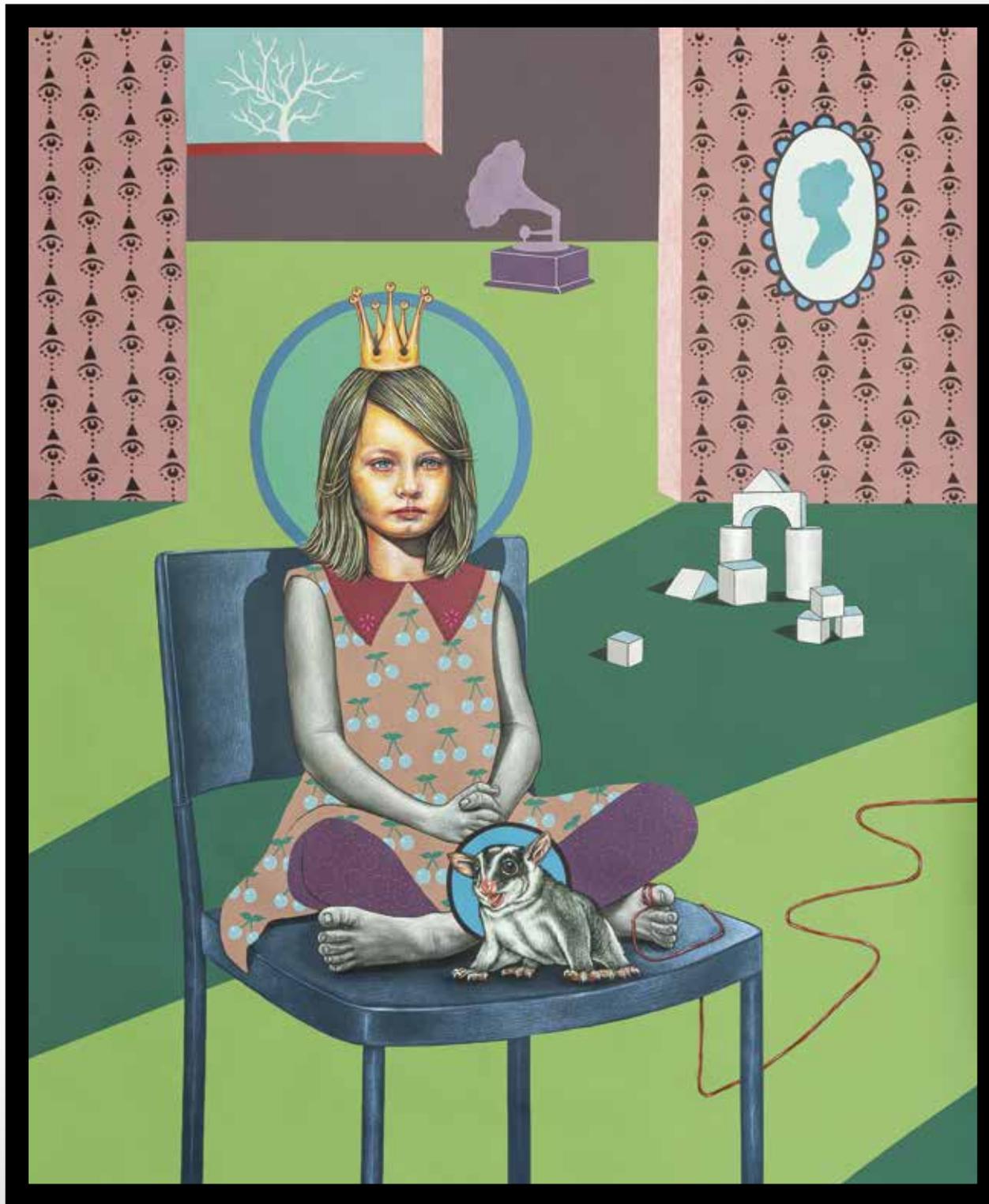
www.anekaingold.com
Instagram: @anekaingold
Facebook: Aneka Ingold



Virulent

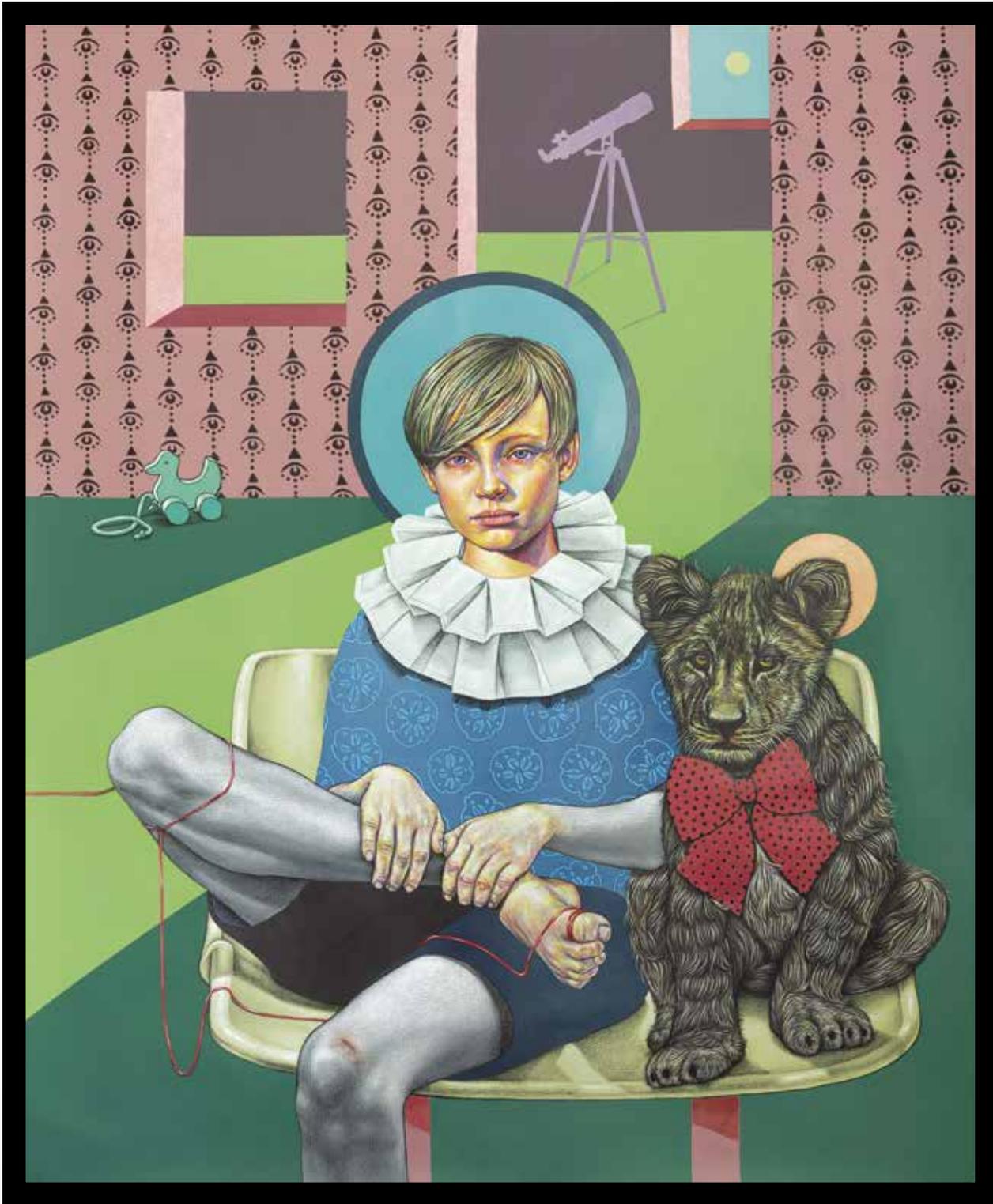
Mixed media on paper, 2021
74 x 48 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

ANEKA INGOLD: TRANSFIGURATION



Symbiosis (Dptych)

Mixed media on paper, 2021
48 x 40 inches (each)
Courtesy of the Artist



EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

Sophia-Yemisi Adeyemo-Ross

Roses for Knitting Congolese Women
Acrylic and watercolor, 2020
Object: 20.5 x 17.5 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

An Arrow Dipped in Cactus Poison
Acrylic and watercolor, 2020
Object: 35 x 24 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

Say Something at Sunset or Simply Stand Together (Two Boys in Gabon)
Acrylic, watercolor, and wood, 2020
Object: 22 x 14 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

Two Calla Lillies for Bathing Boys
Acrylic and watercolor, 2020
Object: 21 x 28 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

Tanmaya Bingham

Sexy Giggles
Acrylic, colored pencil, watercolor, and glitter on panel, 2020
Object: 60 x 72 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

Sexy Tickles
Acrylic, colored pencil, watercolor, and glitter on panel, 2020
Object: 48 x 72 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

Sexy Snuggles
Acrylic, colored pencil, watercolor, and glitter on panel, 2020
Object: 60 x 48 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

Chloe Chiasson

A New Dawn
Oil, acrylic, resin, wood, and a match, on canvas, 2021
Object: 78.25 x 96 inches
Courtesy of the Hort Family Collection

Daddy Made a Soldier Outta Me
Oil and acrylic on canvas, 2021
Object: 58 x 35.5 inches
Courtesy of the Hort Family Collection

Quick Draw
Oil, acrylic, and resin on canvas, 2021
Object: 48.5 x 42 inches
Courtesy of Seth Carmichael

June Glasson

Fox with Axe
Oil on panel, 2020
Object: 35.75 x 24 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

XOXIMON I
Oil and gold leaf on panel, 2020
Object: 36 x 24 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

XOXIMON II
Oil and gold leaf on panel, 2020
Object: 36 x 24 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

Cadmium I
Oil on panel, 2020
Object: 40 x 30 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

Cadmium II
Oil on panel, 2020
Object: 40 x 30 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

Holly Keogh*Girls Running*

Oil on canvas, 2020

Object: 60 x 71.75 inches

Courtesy of the Artist

More Charming, More Vague

Oil on canvas, 2020

Object: 52.5 x 71.5 inches

Courtesy of the Artist

Grinding Halt

Oil on canvas, 2020

Object: 39.5 x 48.5 inches

Courtesy of the Artist

Lavelly Miller*God Shot Me in the Face*

and Then I Saw (Blue Shirt)

Acrylic on paper on panel, 2020

Object: 40 x 30 inches

Courtesy of the Artist

Chin Strap

Acrylic on paper on panel, 2020

Object: 40 x 30 inches

Courtesy of the Artist

Lindsay, as I Remember Her

Acrylic on paper on panel, 2020

Object: 40 x 30 inches

Courtesy of the Artist

Rebecca Orcutt*Before It's Ruined*

(or an Unrealized Mean Side)

Oil on canvas, 2020

Object: 24 x 18 inches

Courtesy of the Artist

Sorry the Movie Wasn't That Good

Oil on panel, 2017

Object: 40 x 30 inches

Courtesy of the Artist

Talking About Leaving

Oil on canvas, 2021

Object: 60 x 72 inches

Courtesy of the Artist

Ayana Ross*SWBAT*

Oil on canvas, 2020

Object: 60 x 48 inches

Courtesy of the Artist

My Turn

Oil on canvas, 2020

Object: 48 x 36 inches

Courtesy of the Artist

Girls in White Dresses

Oil on canvas, 2020

Object: 48 x 36 inches

Courtesy of the Artist

Su Su*Bed Straw*

Oil on canvas, 2020

Object: 42 x 36 inches

Courtesy of the Artist

Space Jems

Oil on canvas, 2020

Object: 60 x 40 inches

From the Collection

of Jim Spencer and

Michael H. Lin

Empty Vessel

Oil on canvas, 2020

Object: 36 x 36 inches

Collection of

David Stanger and

Susheela Nemani-Stanger

Amy Werntz*Berg*

Oil, 2020

Object: 41.75 x 15.5 inches

Courtesy of the Artist

Blue Scarf II

Oil on panel, 2020

Object: 16 x 12 inches

Courtesy of the Artist

The Shopper

Oil, 2019

Object: 23.375 x 18 inches

Courtesy of the Artist

Temple II

Oil, 2020

Object: 21.75 x 16 inches

Courtesy of the Artist



RISING VOICES 2
THE BENNETT PRIZE[®]
FOR WOMEN FIGURATIVE REALIST PAINTERS

This catalogue has been produced by the Muskegon Museum of Art to accompany the exhibition *Rising Voices 2: The Bennett Prize for Women Figurative Realist Painters*, held at the MMA from May 28 to September 5, 2021.

Additional Venues: Customs House Museum and Cultural Center, Clarksville, Tennessee; Bo Bartlett Center, Columbus State University, Columbus, Georgia; Studio Incamminati, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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Rising Voices 2: The Bennett Prize for Women Figurative Realist Painters was organized by the Muskegon Museum of Art in collaboration with Steven Alan Bennett and Dr. Elaine Melotti Schmidt, and The Pittsburgh Foundation. The premiere exhibition was sponsored by Raymond James Financial, Inc. of Muskegon, Michigan.

Project Director, Editor: Art Martin, Director of Collections and Exhibitions/Senior Curator, Muskegon Museum of Art

Production Coordinator: Marguerite Curran, Director of Marketing, Muskegon Museum of Art

Designed by Yvonne McKessy, FineLine Creative, Spring Lake, Michigan

Printed by Holland Litho, Zeeland, Michigan

Photography credits: Rich Curtis and Natalie Dilenno (Aneka Ingold)

Marketing provided by Rogo Marketing and Communications

Exclusive Local Underwriter

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