

ITERANT

Issue #7 Winter, '22



PARADISE DREAMED

ISSUE #7 WINTER, 2022

Cover: Josias Figueirido, Subway Ride, 2016 Oil, acrylic, and enamel on canvas 45" x 60"

ITERANT

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ARTWORK IN ISSUE 7

by Josias Figueirido

Paradise Dreamed, 2018 Oil on canvas 48" x 60"



ARTIST STATEMENT

My work channels personal and social dilemmas into biographical and fictional narratives. The figures and scenarios in my work are invented and constructed with an awareness of digital aesthetics. The space is constantly oscillating between the virtual and the physical world, alluding to the struggles we face when trying to form an understanding of reality while moving from one space to the other. Humor and horror are interwoven within the narratives; the same characters, actions, and situations that amuse us also distress us. The overall psychological mood in the work suggests that unexpected danger may strike at any moment in an environment that is not as safe as it appeared.

Blending reality and imagination, my work originates from digital and traditional drawings. The imagery often evolves during the creative process. It is partly deformed, exaggerated, reduced, erased, and distorted without losing reference to the collage approach and the digital tools involved in its preparatory stages. I use an iconography that is largely based on the visual strategies found in animations and video games, such as saturated colors, symbols, texts, layering, disconcerting viewpoints, narratives within narratives, and the dry-brush painting technique that allows for a sense of motion. I carefully consider the flexibility and homogeneity of the medium I use, and I challenge myself to manipulate it and apply it in experimental ways. Along with my primary media, I often employ a range of materials such as fabrics, paper, glitter, and rhinestones that generate a rich tactile surface and induce us to consider the physicality of the work.

My practice is dependent on and fueled by long periods of constant drawing. My new bodies of work always emerge from hundreds of drawings that I make with the aim of clarifying my thoughts and generating ideas. For me drawing is a free, direct, fast, intense, and rudimentary practice that allows me to get to something new.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Josias Figueirido is an artist from Spain based in Laredo, Texas. He received an MFA from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia (2017), a Post-Graduate Diploma in Drawing from the Royal Drawing School in London (2010), and a BA in Fine Arts from London Metropolitan University in London (2008). Figueirido has been an artist in residence at The Fabric Workshop and Museum (Post-Graduate Apprentice Program), Dumfries House, Moritz-Heyman Residency, Vermont Studio Center, The Hambidge Center for the Creative Arts and Sciences, and Millay Arts. Working primarily in painting, drawing, and printmaking, Figueirido's work channels personal and social dilemmas into biographical and fictional narratives. Combining both humor and horror, his work addresses recurrent themes such as technology, loneliness, definitions, meaning, war, power, peace, and love. Among other group exhibitions, his work has been shown at the Royal Academy (Summer Exhibition), London, Museo de Artes do Gravado á Estampa Dixital, Artes (Spain), and Portal: Governors Island art fair, New York. His most recent solo shows include "Pelea en el studio" at Estudio Abierto in Vigo, Spain, "Give Me A Light That I May Walk Safely into The Unknown" at Marginal Utility Gallery in Philadelphia, and "Anything Goes As Long As It's A Joke" at CR Ettinger Studio Gallery, also in Philadelphia. His work is included in several collections, including The Horseman Collection of American Art (St. Louis, MO), Paintings in Hospitals Collection (London, UK), and Francisco Fernandez del Riego Collection (Vigo, Spain). Among other awards, Figueirido has received a University Creative Project Grant by Texas A&M International University, and a National Endowment for the Arts Grant. Figueirido teaches painting and drawing at Texas A&M International University, in Laredo,



Assaulting the Sovereignty of Your Imagination, 2018
Oil, acrylic, and glitter on canvas 56" x 60"

FEVER 103

Lying in bed
I am scared
I have grown

Tired of all
You have left
To say to me

Even if I have
Not yet heard
It all before

Late last night
I was scared
I was already

Tuning into
That hot little
Number sitting

Next to you
Ice cubes
Slowly melting

In their glass
I think I will
Have whatever

They're having
That's usually
How it starts

Isn't it? I mean
One day you
Start tuning

Out the one
You promised
To love till death

Do you part
In order to let
The other

Narratives in
Voices so full
Of novelties

Tantalizing
Possibilities
You'd never

Be able to
Otherwise find
On your own

No not in a
Million years
You are so full

Of it now
Just listen
To that ever

So slightly
Shifting lilt
In your voice

As you lean in
To this sudden
Availability

Stirring within
You now after
All those stale

Years doing
You know what
Nagged by

You know whom
All of that
Softened now

By the gait
In your step
Renewing all

Those blood-
Engorged
Versions of

Selves you
Thought you'd
Never be able

To feel again—

ROSCOE, NY

It was unplanned.
All afternoon, was it

Justin Theroux

who kept texting her
from Monticello

but all she wanted

was to go fly fishing
in the river, maybe

catch some trout,

something she
and her ex used to

love doing before

he threw her down
in the entry hall

and stomped on

her collar bone
with his work boots,

jealous and high

on coke because
she didn't like

his woodcarving
enough, my friend
who dropped more
than 100K to fix up
his place—“dirty
money” is how her
ex put it, his way
of showing gratitude.
“Why can’t I get
over him?” she asked
while I turned over
more cards for her
week after week,
her shoulder still
killing her when she
let out some line,
catching only tiny
beauts she had to
throw back, feeling
some accomplishment
as she stood up to
her breasts in muddy
waters, careful not to

soak her waders
and lose her balance
while a trout the size
of a salmon rolled over
next to her, splashing
her with his tail
with no one around
to see or hear it—
Iggy Pop’s “I Wanna
Be Your Dog” cued up
on her playlist,
James Blood Ulmer
jamming on a tune
Skip James once sang—
my friend who grows
the sweetest pears
in the Hudson Valley—
hard green ones
hitting the ground
at regular intervals
with a thud before
they soften—the ones
she lets me take home

to watch them yellow
slowly on a plate

exported from China

from another century
on a screened-in

porch—sweetest

flesh I've ever sunk
my teeth into, all

of it unplanned

when she met up
with some locals

who drew her a map,

showing her where
the best and most

secret fishing spots

are—a treasure
map that she texted

to my phone, same

phone that I take
a selfie with a man

whose middle name

I've kept to myself—
so much hidden

in a simple name
and why I have taken
so much pleasure
filling his mouth
with an incomparable
sticky sweetness
neither my friend
nor all the locals who
fish around here
have a fucking clue.



Next Level, 2018 Oil, acrylic, glitter, and rhinestones on canvas 84" x 96"

MANNA

1.All of this swiftly
molts like snakes and

time, like daisies. With
fresh snow and those

epaulettes that come off
to make room for a swarm

of flies. With the desire to paint
a truck yellow.

Squeezed and scared and with
a cap and I'm smoking.

The boycott has green guts.
Touch, touch

the face with your fingers and palms.
Holiness cleanses.

THOUGHTS

Stables are lined with wood, not with
frescoes. Frescoes chide a horse's

rump. In one square centimeter
of the pontoon, I put Siberia,

a firefly, and another firefly.
They all floated.

O, if a bee stings in the mouth!
The sky eats sweets.

The cold pushes away horsehair.
Victory floats away,

a beggar's barrel. Buttonholes
protect ladybugs

with creased heads. Serenity
grazes with a bloody mouth.

THE TRAIN GOES

In Pompeii they grew squash.
Lumberjacks watered it.

This is an icy branch,
you drank from the trees.

The sun doesn't have the width of a human leg,
Michael wants me to write

a journal. Your sky is labial,
sprinkled with black gnats.

Bits of legs are planed by
a red brick. By sails.

Bits?
Which bits?

You don't say. You don't participate.
The train goes. The train puffs.

MOBILE APHRODITE

I'll bind the air with a yellow
cup. With a yellow

speck, I'll hear it.
Einaudi will

lend me teeth. The zone is Trieste.
The rain is from Kočevje. Do you

remember? The shadow of a bear, not
the bear itself. He lifted

clay. He lifted a hut.
Candles and books stood

to the left and the right of the bed.
At night he picked

apples from the orchard. That's why
I could call you.

WHAT I BELIEVE AND WHAT THEY DON'T USE

The cheetah is damp. Salt flats are God.
Check if the carriages are low.

Motion is mother's cell. I'm coming to
the country with grass. Lambs that

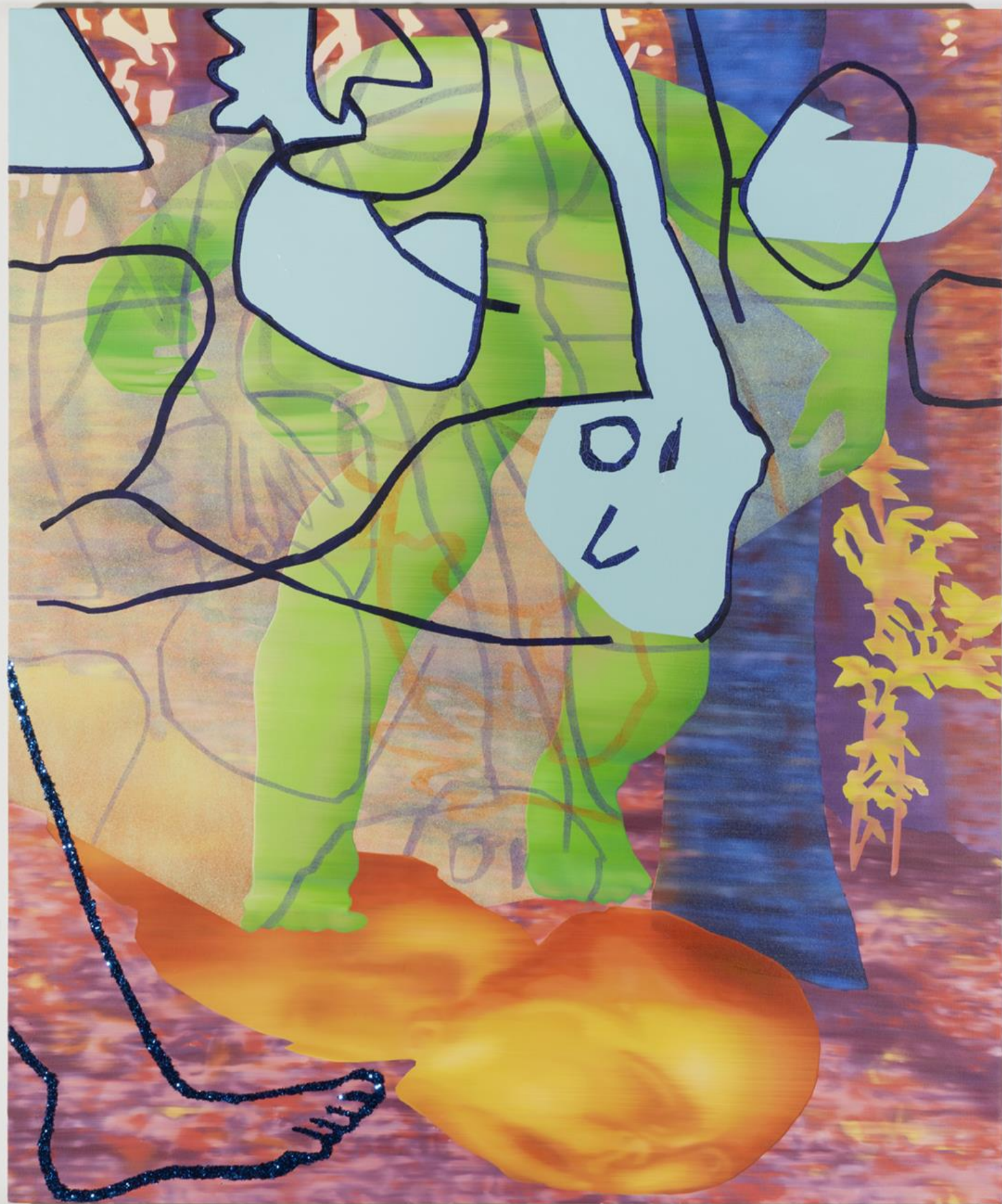
a geometer put under a wheel. Pokers
buried together with gray bark.

Night is fusion. The burden is sober. Silent
and painted, licked, bald. From

the loss set by green windows. When
I pant, I don't really pant. When

I breathe, I really breathe. They come inside
packages but keep all the caterpillar

legs inside the packages. Cream is flowery
and it glistens. I intend to extinguish the tree.



MURMUR

for the life of me
i cannot remember
something like
haha i wish
here
where the tech bros
drink IPAs
where there is a murmur
among the yellow machinery
& the sexcapades
of a young poet
the air
is tragically
nothing
& yet
one restaurant
describes their
casual, farm driven menu
as “Stoner International”
because they
take influence
from,
umm,
all over the world
i get it
the world

today
the gesture
of the sky
blown wide
with remember when
those variations
at the edge
where pleasure
serves
blank
indication
reminder
that in reverence
the signal boosted
& the arriving
frequency
are not the same—
for Nietzsche,
guilt &
debt & suffering
are genuinely
satisfying
to a creditor
the pleasure of
inflicting suffering
on the indebted
described as
a “genuine festival”
then again
Doritos
once broadcast
an ad
into the stars
targeted at
extraterrestrial life—

but i love advertising
& i believe
in things
i can't afford
in this way entertainment
lacks concept
to address
the chance dimension
of each day
so living
might be
a suspension
of premise
rather than
aggregating
discontinuous
sentiments
where objects
appear
the acceptance
of a condition
suggesting
likes
from an illegible
domain
then you are seen
in pictures
of yourself
wanting
truth
to call
from the air
which is
a dumb way of saying
i would spread

the cloths of heaven
under your feet
& there you have it
poetry
loves misery
misery
loves poetry
perversion
loves company
the life
is the work
the dull
impossible
light

APOLOGY

In my small hours
I have kept secret
The affairs
Which have comforted
The life
This life
Composed of ghastly detail
Nights I have removed
A slim volume
From the shelf
Indulged
The lush strawberry
Of solitude
Solitude
That fruit
I have found
It is good
To be pleased
With things
Like strawberries
& solitude
& the pliant nature
Of the flesh
It can be pleasant
Good, even,
Lolling
Through
The ticker
Or to just

Wallow for a spell
It can be
A thing of beauty
To draw a line
Through the rest,
And to bequeath—
That is the leniency
The flesh knows
I know
But hear me out
I shouldn't
But I will
Include for you
A memento
To carry
Through times
Of affliction
Here it is
A candle
A green candle
Say it:
Regret
There.
It will stay here
Even when
The night
Overtakes.
In the end
Well,
See above.
Truth, beauty
Beauty, truth
I have tasted the stars



Blind Spot, 2018 Oil, enamel, and paper on canvas 68" x 66"

IN MEDIA RES

You threw the roses
in the snow,
all because
you wanted to.
For The Row
the concept
was to design
the perfect t-shirt,
to perfect
how fabric
falls
on the body.
When I think
about mastery,
I could do
with beholding
only a boot,
completely die
at the hint
of more,
out there
in the midst of things.
Oh the temptation!
like the serpent,
for every head

chopped off,
2 new flowers.
This is what happens
if you let me
get my way.
I think hydra
means 6
in Greek or something?
Or maybe
it's "many heads?"
Leonard Cohen
lived on
the Isle of Hydra,
eating acid
in some
expat clique.
In ancient times
the island
was known
as Hydrea,
derived from
the Greek word
for water.
The Scots,
through some
heathen
wonder,
twisted
the etymology of

‘water of life’
to mean
Scotch.
Yup.
Spirits have
always served
medicinal purpose.
I’d like to
get somewhat better
at pronouncing Greek.
Just a little
is known
of Sappho’s life.
According to Reddit,
Sappho never wrote
“what cannot be said
will be wept.”
Still though...
I’m a deep well
of like
random bullshit.
The words
“fuck”
&
“poem”
share synonymous
Latin roots,
facere
and

poesis,
as in
to do
or make.
Tonight
the full moon
in Virgo.
Again my thoughts
come to
the superlative
power
of a garment.
Jasmine
pearls
saltwater.
I am pleased
when things
arouse.
By the jeweled
manner
of a stocking.
Paradise
is an enclosure.
The heart,
old news.
Drip.
Drop.
The lake
is there.

The green world
cropped
to just a
satin fringe.
Is it
so bad
To enact
your obsessions
like that?
To fawn beneath
the moon,
the moon!
In the original
Flammarion engraving,
a traveler puts his head
under the edge
of the firmament—
that i have tried
it too,
let cats
lick my palm,
is besides the point.



TWO KINDS

It was the only house I'd ever seen with two chimneys.
Shell red, dog-tooth white.
Some winters are like that: You see something.

Colonies of ladybugs traveled
from the living room's ceiling
corners as the weather shifted.

You showed me the game your mother taught you:
hello tea kettle. hello sugar
and polar caps

hello knees

There are only so many things to see
back to. The ladybugs travel
one at a time sometimes from one corner

to the other
cluster like spilled pepper on blue paper.

hello sunshine

Smoke rose from one chimney; the other
held its own dark.

There are two kinds of people:
the ones who say Nothing

when their father repeats the same story
again, and the ones who stop him.

hello little one

KALEIDOSCOPE

There is a kaleidoscope of chemicals Elijah takes now—chest bound, pre-op, new hormones rattling like private thunder, sweet peppering of stubble on his jawline. I am pained when the checkout girl calls him *Ma'am*. We stand drinking Coke in the thick Texas night outside the washateria, giggle at a chain of raccoons running by on their tiptoes. He is studying theology. *God is doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves*, he says. You have a poster on your fridge with an illustrated geologic time scale. There is a nautilus, an armored fish, a stegosaurus, an owl. Eon, era, period, epoch. Earth forms approximately four point six billion years ago. In the middle of the night, baby mice fall from the rafters onto the bed, looking like kidney beans glowing in the dark. The mice are in front of you would pass you the pictures they drew. Stick figure drawing a stick figure. Stick figure drawing a house. You drew your own body and passed it back. One day the kid was a solid. Later a gas. Then he evaporated. *This*, the teacher said, *is how you make a cloud*.

ELEMENTARY

Path unlatched, the grass bleached,
a National Geographic on the carpet
where you first learned that salt comes

from the earth. There's
the great pyramids.
There's another sea
you don't know the name of.

You're sharpening a pencil
like time, like your hands
could do that. The temptation
to eat glue comes only
because it's something you learned
could hold things together.

Look at all the things you can do.

This color and this color
and this color together
make another, and another.

You go home and are told
the dog has been bad,
so you say *BAD!* to the dog

and feel wrong.

The back door beats hard
against the house. You think
about a story you heard
where a boy had wings,

where his mother folded
his little wings
and sent him outside.

And then there is what you learn
from the time it takes to get
from where you are to the outside.
Who you were thereafter. Still
without the word *erosion*.

TEN YEARS AFTER

by Sophie Klahr

see that woman, my mother whispered,
she was the doctor we had to find

to give you
your abortion,

and I had not known
nor imagined
she was someone

who needed to be *found*—

we were at a play, my mother and I
we were supposed to be

quiet-settling
our bodies to face the stage

and I could not quite see
that woman

and the house lights dimmed

then shut
to dark

and some other lives began



The End, 2017 Oil and oil stick on canvas 65" x 80"

THANK YOU TERROR

This breath
falls from
my mouth.

And this one.
And this. And more.
A finite number more.

I try to gather them
in my hands,
in ink.

A coarse scrape
a body makes
of a life.

THANK YOU TERROR

Is this perpetual
browsing a self?

Yes, every night

pain does come
from a different place.

There is nothing
but that thing
just down the road,
down there,
beyond the trees—
do you see it?

It takes a long time
to become
what you were
when one who loved you
looked at you
with all that love.

We never know
what holds us
in the dark,
only that it is dark,
that we are held.

And these few moments
at the Chilis
at the airport
feeling love's clenched jaws
unbite its laws,

they are worth it
for as long
as they are impossible
to define.

THANK YOU TERROR

There is a limit to knowing the self,
the clicks that link a thought
to its wounds & forms,
heard melodies reiterated
so many times
they feel like my own thoughts.

I am tired of what I can know.
I want the cold
to matter how a song matters,
the lyrics so internalized
I mouth them
without thinking the words.

I want not knowing to fill me
like a familiar song on the radio
with which I sing along,
my heart beating
the off-time of its own sweetness,
my own life plagiarized,
my own voice in this public mouth,
unwarranted, unpublishable
in any state
other than this police state.

The other day I laid on a my back
with my friend Georgia, who is five,
& we tried to list out everything we don't know.

I don't know how to ask
the right question right now.
I don't know how to be myself.
I was trained to speak another's voice
until I was very nearly what
I thought others might
have wanted me to be.

I don't know how suffering works.
It seems we each
are served a too-full glass
from which we sip
& we envy
each other's glass,
which could not possibly be as bitter
as our own
& right when we have put a dent in the amount
the server comes by
& refills the glass
with a kind smile,
whistling that familiar tune
from the radio.

Maybe suffering
arrives in a mess of disconnected notes
& we each compose our symphonies.

What stands in
for what we don't know?
For the words that become our names?

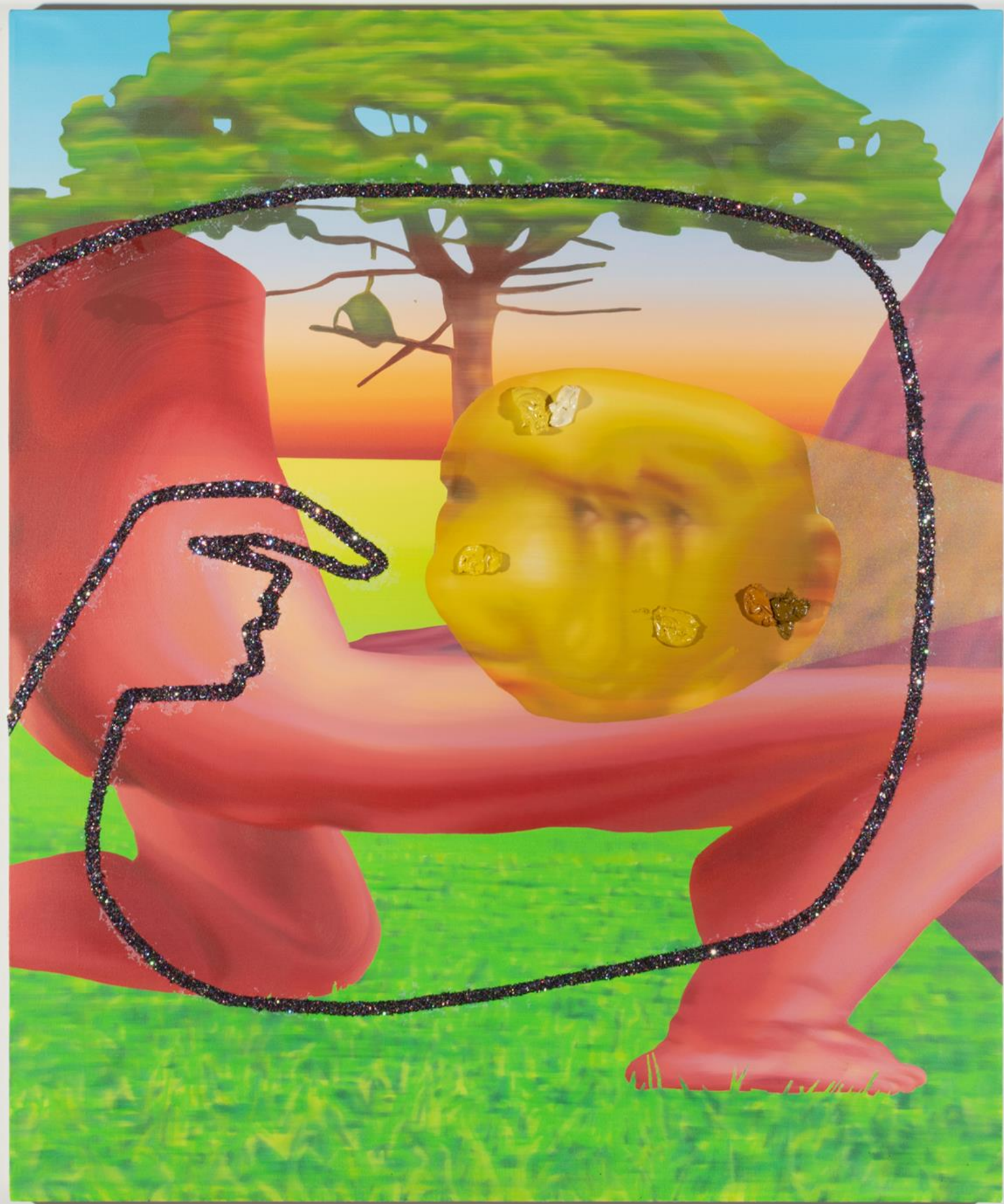
I want to feel something
I don't know how to feel.

I think the radio
plays these familiar songs

to soothe the dead air, the lightlessnesses
where bodies form & undo
without ever having been known,
or not as themselves, as such,

how a hole never knows
what it is a hole in,

how I carry a plastic bag
in my back pocket
to have something
in which to catch
the puke.



PSALM

Some believe the world was once
filled with so much color that angels
came down just to bath in it. Some
believe birds *are* angels, fallen from
clouds (*I guess*) to watch over us,
to help out when we can't. If this
were true then why can't we under-
stand them? And why don't they
have hands? And why is each wing
hollow? And why do they sing?
Some believe they only help if you
pray to them, yet as soon as you get
on your knees, as soon as you say
the word "pray," the word comes
flying back to you, not as an echo
but as a thing you could hold, turn
over. It has heft, it is made of some-
thing—a beating heart, a black eye,
a claw to your wrist.

VOLCANO

Two minutes & the world
will become mono-

chromatic, like your dreams.

Insects will stop chirring,
birds will stop chirping. Two

minutes & the trees will be

buried to their topmost
branches, to become a forest

of little trees. From

then to now, the sun will
become redder &

redder as it sinks, everyone
will mention it—*Holy fuck,*

did you see it? Tonight,

I'm working the homeless

shelter, I feel loved, I

give out bed tickets in exchange
for it. A plate

of food, a piece of floor,
a corner away from the baseball

bats & gasoline. I'm sleeping
with the woman who counts money in

the cage. It erupted on tv &
the world saw it, it will rain

down for a year, the ash
will slowly cover our naked bodies.

HIVE

When you open the box

what you find inside
might not save you. You've

spent your life looking,

believing whatever
was locked inside would make

the story cohere. Here's

a story: in the orchard, beneath
each tree, a circle of green,

free of snow, the exact

size of the branches above it—
heat rising

up from the roots, or

perhaps the branches
were an umbrella in the storm.

A frozen pond appears in
the low of the field, grass

poking through, impossible
to stand on it. Your boot

hovers above this nothing, it

will vanish when the sun
finds it. For now,

it is a mirror of the sky, like
all oceans

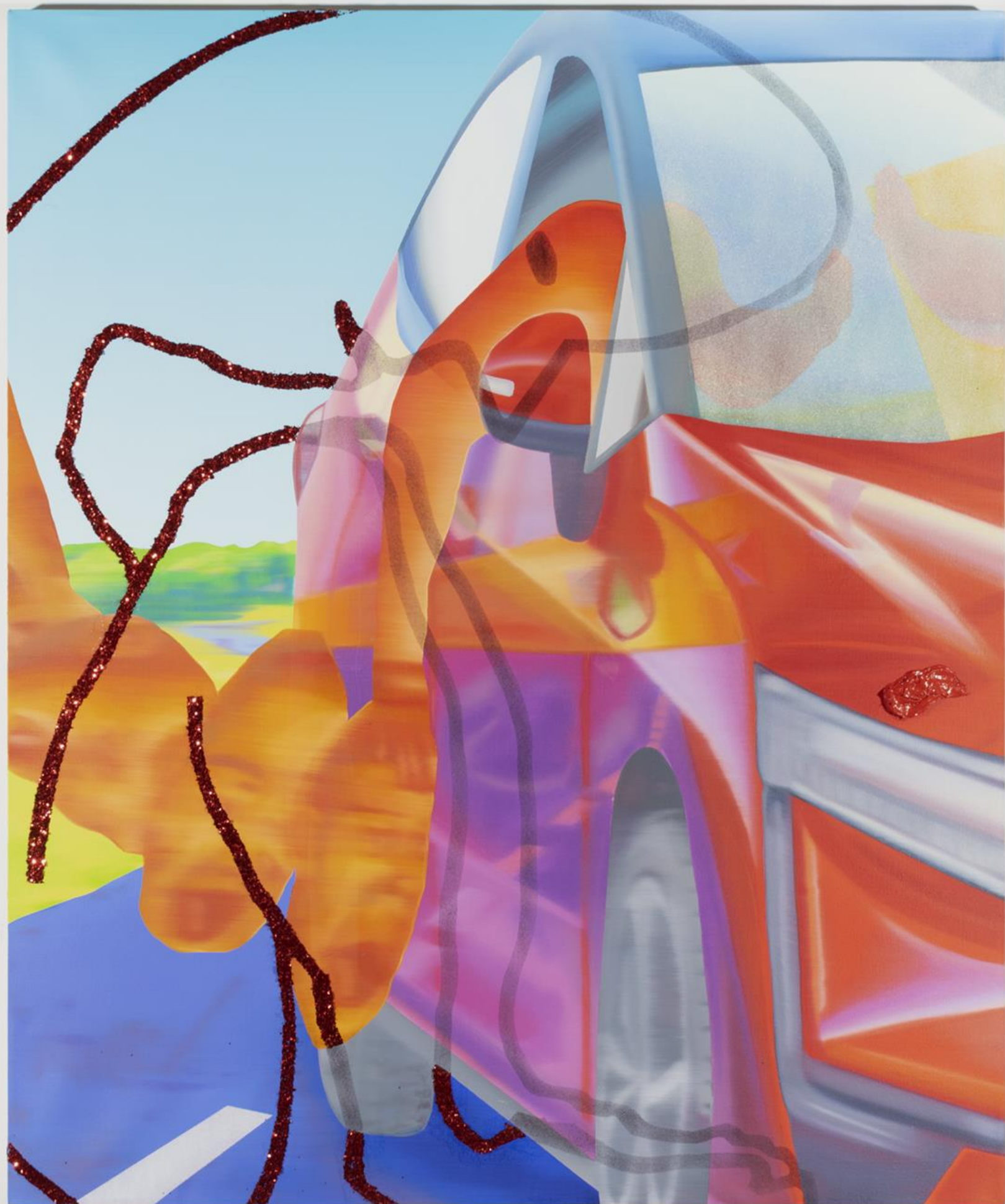
or cups of water.



BEFORE WAKING

At seventeen, I took a pill
with my face on it
then blacked out
before waking
at an altar dressed in white
beside a woman
the priest referred to
as 'First Wife' but
my mum seemed happy so
I drank the champagne
before waking
in a hottub, flecked
with petals like floating
clots and noticed
I was wrist-deep
in a colleague. "Where's
my wife?" I asked
after she'd come
but she looked strangely
hurt and didn't say.
My socks were in her drawers,
balled up like puppet fists
so, for years
I was imprisoned in that flat,
just padding to the freezer
for icecream

until her waters broke
and I slipped on the puddle
before waking
in a vintage cottage.
Scanning photos
on the fridge, I gleaned clues
of my travels. Disneyland.
Rome. Third wife
wept in bed all day,
propped on flowery pillows,
her brow mantled with blood
like a Victorian Strong Man
straining to lift a boulder
and when I finally said,
“Is it something I’ve done?”
she stared with such
contemptuous bafflement
I never asked again
till we were old and grey
and I fell off a ladder
before waking, hunched
at a desk, scribbling
exclamation marks
into a fat leather diary:
Jan 1st: Change your life!
Jan 2nd: Watch out
for that falling chandelier!.



THE LION

decades later when there's nothing left
and all the creatures you knew have died or changed or gone
the trainer reappears
you wanna swat her
claw her
but you also want her to hold your head
which has grown heavy with days
to pet your nose which is dry and cracked
she sneaks you into a fancy hotel
where no lion should ever be
to reenact when you were wild
when you knew no words
and this woman held mice by the tail
and dropped them in your mouth when you followed her commands
she was stronger than she looked but you broke her
and found a place to rest inside her
she broke you back
made her own place inside you
but it didn't stop the terrible pain of captivity
and her human pains
her womanly pains
it couldn't stop those either

TENSION, HUMILIATION, AND FEAR

This workshop will study tension, humiliation, and fear. Strangers, static, sirens. When to slow down and when to speed up. Intimacy/chaos. Everyday anxieties. Cracks in reality. Chemicals in the water. A troubling two-minute dream that plays all night on loop. Oil leaks, nuclear waste. The man watching us over his newspaper. The child bitten by a baboon spider. Students will be locked in bathrooms, dropped from helicopters, left in mazes. Ignored, lied to. Interrogated, abandoned.

AFTER WE HAVE SEX

I close my eyes and see inside a bodega
blue-black with the lights off
stacks of things on metal shelves
the thin pages of daily papers fanned at the corners

I see a basement rec center closed for winter break
soft squares of overcast sky through high squat windows
illuminating the plants looking nonplussed in their pots
and the ping pong table where a ball rests under a paddle

I see a living room from the '70s
scratchy vertical blinds attached with ball-chain

moving drunkenly against each other in the wind
I see a new Home Depot gazebo sitting in a musty garage
a tract of land under an overpass where dead leaves collect in fall
an abandoned mall where pigeons nest on a statue's head in the fountain
and fly out through the missing windows of the food court atrium
I see a waitress smoking against the cook's old silver convertible
as streams of cars progress slowly through rush hour traffic
why am I seeing a young boy feeding his bird?
the beak pecking the soft skin on his hand
I see religious ceremonies from a great distance
like I'm orbiting the planet on my way to somewhere else
I see the beginning of the world
but it looks eerily similar to fireworks and lava lamps
why am I seeing construction workers vaping in the shade
on their third break of the morning
and why do I get the sense that there is a rift between them
that began with what radio station to listen to but now has become vast and
abstract
what is making me see two old women sitting side by side at a piano
experimentally touching keys creating discordant sounds
how come I see scenes in a little realm to the left of my eyes
in a spot that for so long has been vacant
why has my mind split and become two people
one who talks and one who listens
one who writes while the other reads



Global Warning, 2018 Oil and glitter on canvas 84" x 96"

NOTHING

after The Fugs

Obama, nothing
Biden, nothing
Kamala Harris nothing,
Democratic Party, a whole lot of nothing
Nothing nothing
Nothing

Mother Jones, nothing
Teen Vogue, nothing
New York Times, nothing
Washington Post, a whole lot of nothing
Nothing nothing
Nothing

White privilege, nothing
Girlboss, nothing,
Non-profit sector, nothing
Black Lives Matter (™) a whole lot of nothing
Nothing nothing
Nothing

Twitter, nothing
Facebook, nothing
Instagram and Pinterest, nothing
Reddit threads a whole lot of nothing,

Nothing nothing
Nothing

Call-outs, nothing
Cancelled, nothing,
Pleading and crying, nothing,
Emotional labor a whole lot of nothing,
Nothing, nothing

Nothing, nothing
Nothing, nothing
Nothing, nothing, nothing
The United States is a whole lot of nothing
Nothing, nothing
Nothing

CATS

So she had her eye on this tom for awhile now. He had her eye on her too. But, as always, there are complications. Well, she was a confident feline—and a fine lookin one too. Walked with one paw in front of the other and kept her silky coat clean with her small pink tongue. While she cleaned herself she looked at him out of the corner of her eye, and every now and then made direct eye contact with her deep brown eyes the color of fertile earth.

He was a sad tom. Lived in an apartment complex he paid too much for with a pompous brat from New Jersey he was in the process of quittin'. His coat was the kind of gray that's almost blue that made her purr when he sent her a picture. That's how they began their acquaintance. He would leave her letters in the mailbox and she would grab them with her teeth when his girlfriend wasn't lookin. It got intimate as their correspondence developed, and both of them dreamed about each other. "How did you sleep?" the tom would ask her in the morning.

She began to fall in love and told him so. Maybe she should've kept her mouth shut but feelings are feelings and better to tell than to blurt out a spontaneous "I love you" at the end of one of their clandestine phone conversations. The tom confessed he had no idea but wasn't indifferent. The feline answered, "well you didn't run away screaming into the night" and they both laughed at her ability to turn a serious confession into something normal that happens every now and then between two cats who clearly wanted each other.

The feline had some business of her own to attend to. She was also in the process of quittin' her person and had been so for a very long time. Her tom was the father of her two adorable kittens so things got tricky for awhile—adjusting and laying the foundation for her new life, regardless if the new tom changed

his mind about her or not. She was a smart feline. She knew what men were like, and wasn't going to make the mistake again of putting a tomcat before her own sweet self. Her umber coat shone with the new possibilities for her life, and sly cats from all over town noticed her transformative glow-up. She opened herself to pleasure, sharpened by the lessons she learned about unnecessary sacrifice.

A tension began to creep into the correspondence between the feline and the tom she wanted to love. She supposed it was the stress of the tom's life; he had many responsibilities and problems, and the pompous brat from New Jersey he lived with was no help. They decided to part ways for a while, and when the day came when they agreed to talk again, her concerned letters remained unread. She was devastated. "Men are all the same," she wailed. She hated it when pain burdened her ability to discern one tomcat from the next. Finally, a rollicking autumn storm broke through the fever of her suspended patience. She wrote him a final note and told him where to go. She kissed her paws clean and whistled, like she had always done, sauntering away—looking over her shoulder for anything she may have missed.

HOW TO SURVIVE CONFUSION

- 1.) Lean on pride. Gas yourself up on a regular basis. Admire your legs. Smile.
- 2.) Take long walks. Talk consolingly to yourself. Bring a friend who can laugh.
- 3.) Spend time with small children and animals. They're who they appear to be.
- 4.) Take it for granted your feelings are valid so you don't miss it the first time.
- 5.) Rotate self-examination with materialism. Go to the store alot. Buy things.
- 6.) Remember people can and will surprise you, but what matters is yourself.
- 7.) Pay attention to strange signs that appear when you're not looking for it.
- 8.) Confusion distorts one's sense of self and those around you. Absorb this.
- 9.) Stay hydrated, I guess. Or don't. Water is a conductor for big feelings.
- 10.) Confusion is America's mode of time. Clarity is dangerous, and political



RETURNING

I have returned / after
my roadside highway wire-cutter motel room autopsy
nervous breakdown model room display

crawling on hands and knees towards a state trooper
in Ravensworth Shopping Centre, Springfield, VA

clutching my chest / lung(s)
mummy torpedo
jury disgusted
by CIA torture

I-495 RSO speedway cerebral
transmission breakdown / alternator
sniping breaths in the heart-core
chambers something over here stinks to, yes, pump the blood
stygian awakenings / vegan bio-mass

Kenny vs Omega

I self-referee
elimination chamber

How is continuing the work of the text – how is that?
Death of
/ symbiotic options to copy and paste

/ like a whole world of consequences
to coagulate, user in a behemoth's measure of
solitary bacchanal of self-depravity

a lemon
each morning

tetanus shot bulge attracting glaring eyes
a lonely road is always rough

so many endings in the bag / a new one to lengthen
elevator repair certification date / welcome
to maybe a different kind of elevator
'How do you do?' I ask laughing / at
the carpet inside
the Showboat lobby in Atlantic City
walking around the boardwalk is crazy

overturned beach surveillance booth
a backdrop of a suspended orb shooting 400 feet into the air over fried cheesy
shrimp dough balls

by introducing fragments, incomplete
returning steadily pitching
dust like a beach wave

someone out of sight / pointed to trees

up against the ocean then
recited a lesson for beginners "How to

Swim" I fell out of it there, ended up
dousing my poor fat white saggy body
with corn chips, ouzo, marshmallow

either way—sink-or-swim—I drive on
deeper into the interior of the fucker
system
incomparable to how we breathe sometimes, lungs lined with wool catch
particulates broken free from esophageal chambers gathering

wet and incomprehensible, I am

Death is where I am, anyways, always returning to –
a clutched bundle of wax, tripping over paramilitary
flags and glass shards across from my dad's grave

*where the run-off of motor oil drips down
hill mixing with corpse-box gas emanations
only here is where I can go to return to it, that
moment where I am always returning, awake
drifting in light or somnambulating in night
like a cat curled/spiraled around a coffee tree .*



BALCONY SCENE

The horizon in June is as clear as a wail.
In isolation the self unspools
as much as it reaches for meaning:

e.g., the word solitude arrives
in 14th century Old French, via the Latin *solitudo*.
It implies being alone in a desolate place,

a desert, or a wilderness.
I'm unaroused by this image
but the French *seul*

(bachelor, unaccompanied)
borrows from *sāwol*, Germanic for soul.
My heart, in its smoky boudoir,

swells like a bladder. There's no way
of knowing if this linguistic
kinship is real or imagined but I'm certain

of the divine velour of solitude
swathing me at day's end (cypress trees gauzy
in the distance), the word's

hardly necessary. Because of its silence
this balcony—as stage for my selfishness—

encases the white noise of my soul.

Weeks ago, incomprehensibly
alone in the waiting room of Huntington
Memorial, while mother's brain

tumor was removed, I imagined
the clutter of the operating room, ripe
with activity. It disgusted me

to think of it, as the man beside me,
bulging and specific, had appalled me.
I collapse into myself.

This island is a cluttered room too,
café-lined with laughter.
I drive up the narrow dirt road.

I am a singular light source above
the cove. At the home's threshold, I find it
too precious for what I intend to do.

Balcony scene, laptop-lit:
I jerk off unromantically to *Str8 Marine*
Fucking Older.

Below, the dark water goes..

PART OF IT

A feral cat, skittish yet curious, on the balcony this morning.
Feeding him cold cuts by hand
is strangely pleasurable, like being chosen for a dance.

Sunrise scene: horizon as blue scale
punctured by pastel provokes mild joy. Agnes Martin says,
If you get up in the morning, and you feel really happy,

and everything seems good, that's without cause.
When the cat has finished with the meat he returns
to the field below. What Agnes means is

sometimes you just can't help yourself.
There's a slight excitement,
a faint image that survives briefly until supplanted

by another. It is a vagueness.
And also she means: sometimes you want to die.
The field below is now fully animated

(bright pastoral buzzing) and yet I am hardly part
of it. When I look out across the waves beneath the cliff
I have no desire to plunge into them.

YOUR OWN HYSTERIA

A poet I despise has won a prize.
Everything's unchanged, in this wooden kitchen
in my filthy clothing (salted breeze through

the shutters) yet my personhood's tendrils
extend immeasurably beyond me. I exist in the world by proxy.
Gunman Kills 4 Marines at Military Site

Pakistan Heatwave Kills 2,000
To know this is like floating in the cobbled sea,
suspended in the murky water.

If suffering is a puncture it points outward:
like a pronged apparatus, it emits as much as it receives,
its force whetted by the absence of locality.

In the hospital room, the nurse asked mother:
Show us where it hurts, she pointed to her own skull.
From one to ten how do you rate your pain?

In the corner of the room,
vased on the mantel, wildflowers deteriorate—
their tendrils glassy, languished.

How do you begin to remedy when pain
emanates as an aftershock? When a flower begins to die,
its stem loses water, causing cells to burst.

Eventually membranes disintegrate. This is wilting.

This is, for the flower, a catastrophe.
And yet, being aware of your own hysteria won't diminish it.

Pain is a translation, a gradient of injustice.
The sunset before me is useless. Far away, on 14th Street,
my dentist drills into someone else's open mouth.



MY NATURE

Dusk unfolds its slanting light

blazing yellow fall, plucked and clean-shaven

—

Her low race down into the soil
Most things on that body can be braided
pulling roughly at the roots
grown wrong, ancient slanting sun

A braided path tightens over the field
it splits the ground into what grows and what grows tight
Your neck unfolding
someone follows in your footsteps straightening out
She's the one who wets my freckles
that's her, in my face
mother, sweetness

The stars are large tonight, shining greedy and greasy
a scent of God
They forgot the harvest
our faces peeled almonds
slowly turn in the wind

We do this for the mother, the dividing and cutting
we do it for the bitter, sharp
we make it tight.
Every tiny bulge, every
black and blue tuft of grass we pull and tighten and
braid into the dirt.

When the stars fall they're grey from space and longing
pounding bodies crash into hordes
drifts of what no longer twinkle:
mass communication, the speech act

Inside the fallen a word revolts
before the crash, before the skin, o God

The child brings home her hordes

—

Return to the curtains that are drawn, opening
A young man enters the low stage, wearing
a black leather miniskirt, a minimal tank top, moves his hips,
not quite dancing.
He's as undressed as you can be.
Balancing his nudity between his hip's narrow, almost
imperceptible moves. There. Hold fast.
Keep that tension, the observer's gaze.
The stage is red, the folds in the curtains even redder.
The young man is so beautiful
I cry
His hips are moving slightly, he is dead serious
A concentrated toss of the head

I realize they have to be slim this is 1986

I realize 1986 that it's desire for another man
My glittering gray fixation

give in to it, spit it back, give in and

I spell out: a dark inscription.
like restraint. This is us.

—

She divides the dark into darkness and what comes from the mouth
she divides the dark into what's beaten and what's felled
In a ward of grass and wheat girls lie in straight lines
Yellow shines from beneath the letter e
I present my finest letter to thee
Winding it roughly around the neck

It has to be yellower
it has to be like madness to seem so very yellow

it has to be yellower
it has to be like decay to seem so very yellow

The waves must be yellow and the foam
the foam of the sea must be shot through with yellow

Your autumns smell like almonds, drag them out
The sky, of course

The 6th of October 09
Even metaphors are just another way of getting laid

—

So close to the sea I cut the waves
so close to the roof I cut the treetops
so close to the ditch I cut the sky
so close to the road I cut the sidewalk
so close to the stem I cut the petals
so close to the window I cut the view
so close to the glass I cut the light
so close to the cloud I cut the sun
so close to the voice I cut the song
so close to the rock I cut the root
so close to the dirt I cut the root

so close to the speech I cut the tone
so close to the writing I cut the speech
so close to the speech I cut the writing

I cut the speech with the writing and
the writing with the speech
Down where the red begins.

A LA MERE

a minor

and one who escapes

i m a g i n e

the battle for pleasure

between *race* and *beauty*
the word is gilded by flesh

an immobile wrist
reveals everything

the root
the earth expels what's below

“and the long vowels in the girls’ throats tighten in the sun”

transition to the wrist
here the girl begins

she destroys her body
as soon as she articulates
a female madness

“I already knew”
my hand was searching for something red

tradition!

this is where we all unite

to annihilate her face

black apostrophe
the mother appears ever more seldom
here our

hips may obstruct the movement
the foam of femininity

she answers childhood *with her hands*

her sounds are regulated
beneath sublime stony

I cannot see

the mouth in their words

You point out the place where petrification occurred. I avoid
it, the dream of the sculpture, but it rocks me like
disease, femininity. Dark night of marble.

because letters are black by nature

Springtime with the girls. They willingly part *their* meanings.

An answer, a dream, and whatever must be black. The night cuts out/forms
a wrist that belongs to no one.

Girl. Minor. Bruise. Syrup. The negative says nothing of the word's images.

The high-pitched voices are practically homeless. Without
language they move in and out through the girls.

The room smells of sea. The hand erases and rewrites. Hands
cupped around the grief. She heaves herself out
of the strange.

in order to catch sight of
what she lost

the father spelled wrong

the hunt for the innocent
the victims' resistance broken down by close-ups

on the inside
the yellow that spelled her name
this loathsome treachery
that forces her to escape

a new history
will document the removal of the roots



Subway Ride, 2016 Oil, acrylic, and enamel on canvas 45" x 60"

A STORY ABOUT THE NATURE OF TIME

A long time in the past, a door opens. Four young men carry a gurney with a living body on it out of a building. The body is wrapped in a sheet, and bleeds onto a disposable mat. The body's fingers hold the mat in place. Its face looks toward the sky, where there is no rain, only an empty eye.

The men step down the stairs like large show horses, in unison. The oil they emit from their bodies dissipates into the air in a metallic spritz. They put the body into a vehicle, then take it to an emergency room, where it is scraped. Its liquids are low like a receding tide. Before it goes under, it feels its death drive beat inside it like a live fetus.

The body wakes up, receives a bag of blood, eats iron. The iron travels through the body like a benevolent knight. The body doesn't even have to acknowledge it's being repaired.

Leaning on the power of the iron, the body can rise like a shitty tower. The body climbs a StairMaster at the gym, rising above everyone else.

The body has dreams, even now.

HUNGRY GHOST

When we met to sign the paperwork
It was in a coffee shop called Hungry Ghost
The paperwork consisted of two certificates
And when the funeral director handed them to us to sign
Her face was grim with practiced empathy
Hungry Ghost is a term from Buddhism
For beings who are driven by need
And unlike regular ghosts
Hungry ghosts died in unusual circumstances
Or in their lifetime did an evil deed
Why this is a name for a coffee shop I don't understand
As much as I don't understand
Why we chose to meet the funeral director there
She had offered to bring the certificates to our apartment
But my immediate reaction was to say no
That I didn't want her inside my home

Though I would later allow her in

But not yet

★

Hungry Ghost was full of people on laptops

Doing the ordinary work of their lives

Scrubbing through film clips

Or editing an endless document

Like this one

All the tables were taken

So we sat in a row of three on a bench

A large painting of a bull behind us on the wall

The funeral director, my husband, and me

I ordered a small caffeine-free tea

I needed to order something

To pretend we were there

For a normal reason

On this day in October

Just days after my daughter

Came out of me not breathing

I sat behind the barrier of my husband
So that I could hide my face if I needed to
And he covered me with his huge emotional wingspan
Even though he was also feeling devastation
And as I signed the paper I screamed in the silent forest of my heart
And the queen's corpse
Which was my corpse
Rattled with the force of my voice
I gave the paper back
And held my undrunk tea
In my freezing hands and felt its heat
Radiate into the little calcium of my bones

★

I had been to Hungry Ghost the day before the birth
I had been feeling good
The contractions were occasional
But already strengthening
I sat with my longtime friend
Who used to tell me

When we were kids
That I was too secretive
That I should feel okay about letting people in
When I'm having a hard time
That I should let people care about me
The way that I care about them
She had the barista take a picture of us
While she pointed at my belly
I saw the photo only once
But I remember exactly
The way it looked
The way I looked in it
Dear friend I am having
A hard time today.

SUNFLOWER

Once there was a sunflower on a fire escape across from my own. It grew slowly, as plants do, from a small pot. I did not notice it until it was huge, its big head on its small stalk, wobbling hilariously in the wind. The surprise of seeing the sunflower made me laugh. It's so big, I kept saying. How did I not notice.

I have a blind spot. I now know this.

In the maternity ward, there was an emblem on our door of a calla lily, the flower of funerals. The emblem was there to warn anyone entering about the atmosphere of the room. All the other rooms in the ward received sunflower emblems.

Behind my funeral door, so much of my blood was gone that I felt completely dried of everything. But urine still leaked from my catheter, a muted yellow, my body ejecting more than I thought it was capable of ejecting.

In the lily room, they gave me the blood of a stranger, and I took it and let it rehydrate my body like a plant being watered.

Sunflowers are like a total eclipse. They are dark in the middle, with a corona that extends.

During an eclipse, animals and plants go to sleep. They start to wind down, tucking their legs under their bodies, closing their leaves. Bats begin hunting. Mosquitoes start biting. When the eclipse is over, they experience stress because what happened is not what they expected.

I realize now that you came from the eclipse. You were sucked back into it when it was over, when our time together came to an end. You were beautiful

and world-ending. You shocked me with your beauty, and I became so scared.

A blind spot burned into my retina. A permanent hole, like film chewed up by heat.

Sunflowers are sunny. Why wouldn't that be.

Later at the grief group, each participant brought in a flower to create a big bouquet. We were sad people in a room, and the bouquet was for all our babies. I brought in the biggest flower, a sunflower. It had the tallest stalk. It had the biggest head as it glowed there, dark in the middle.



B.S.



POSSIBLE PIG

BIANCA STONE

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