

Habits so you don't have to remember, 2020, oil, acrylic, and pencil on canvas, 24 x 28"

Andreas Fischer: And apologies for bringing this up

January 9 - February 20, 2021

“The ordinary is an ocean that moves for the lucky, whose ridiculousness remains a secret so open that it remains a secret.”

— Lauren Berlant and Kathleen Stewart

Whiskey Sour Recipe

Ingredients

2 ounces bourbon

$\frac{3}{4}$ ounce fresh lemon juice $\frac{3}{4}$ ounce simple syrup

$\frac{1}{2}$ orange wheel (for serving) Maraschino cherry (for serving)

Recipe Preparation

Combine bourbon, lemon juice, and simple syrup in a cocktail shaker. Fill shaker with ice, cover, and shake vigorously until outside of shaker is very cold, about 20 seconds.

Strain cocktail through a Hawthorne strainer or a slotted spoon into an old-fashioned or rocks glass filled with ice.

Garnish with orange wheel and cherry.

A Conversation with Andreas Fischer on the works in “And apologies for bringing this up,”
conducted by Gallery Director Claudine Isé

CI: I'd like to start with titles. The titles of your paintings are enigmatic and might seem to offer clues as to what is happening in the compositions. Interestingly, the titles could also stand alone as poetic phases or snippets divorced from a larger context we don't have access to. How do you think about your titles—both for individual paintings and the title of this exhibition? Do titles have a function with respect to their corresponding paintings and exhibition presentations?

AF: One of the things that has preoccupied me about painting, good books, movies, television, and many other forms, has been the question of the mechanics of each – what are effective ways for each of these to work? When you put this next to that that, what is the range of experiential possibilities? How could we adjust those? What does context say about what we should do?

I used to have lots of anxiety about writing haunting painting and I went through efforts to try to free my paintings from the 'bullying force' of writing. Somewhere in there, though, I started to like what I had thought was wrong. Sometimes the opposite of what you think you want is really what you want. I discovered that being fascinated with art and writing could be about the energy they exchange. If one way to be excited about painting is as a set of mixtures of ingredients, then writing can be part of that. That is how I think of titles now. For me they are opportunities for tiny bits of writing to be included as ingredients of painting.

Your idea that the titles could act as clues or could stand alone is an idea that I think extends to many parts of a painting, at least many of the kinds of painting that excite me. When you see a brush stroke in one of Courbet's landscapes or layer of paint in one of Michael Armitage's paintings, each of those plays a role in an assertive whole, but I think



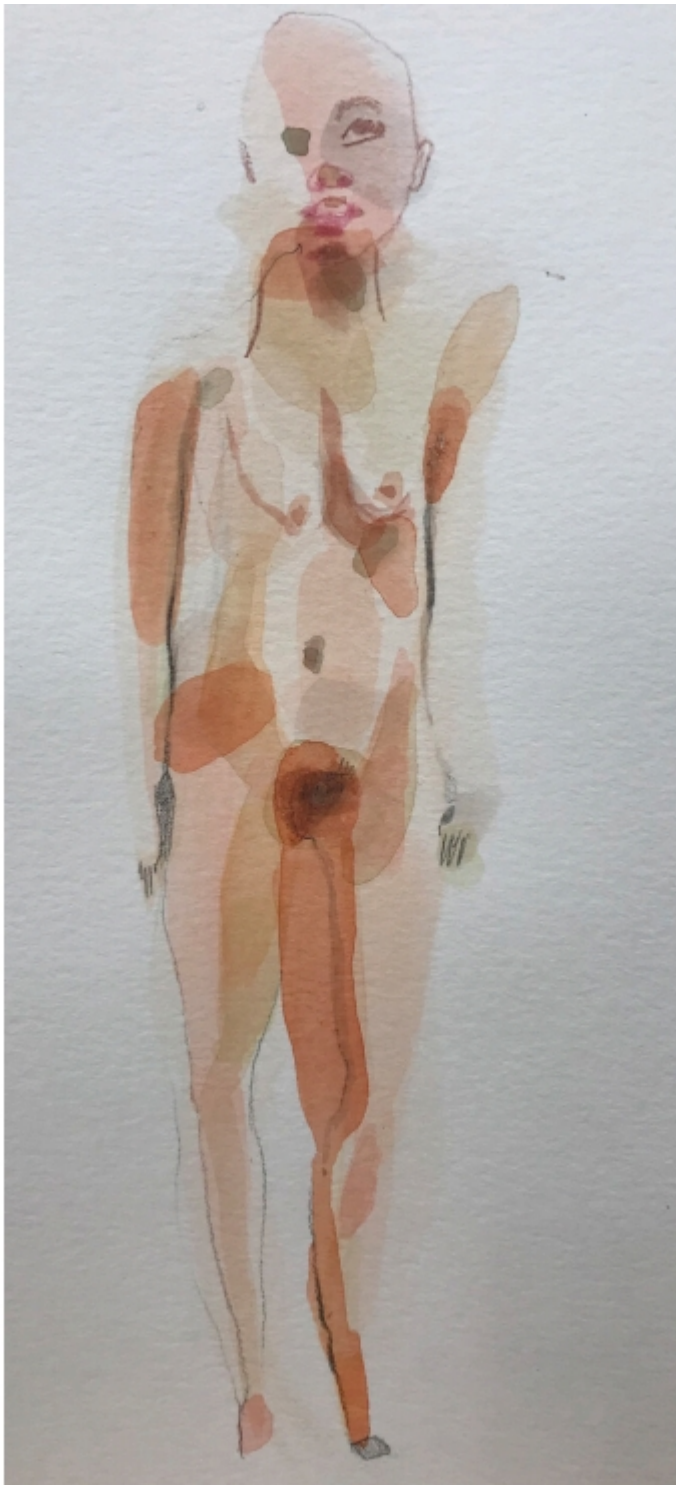
*When everyone changed at once, 2020,
acrylic and pencil on canvas, 40 x 45 inches*

each also offers itself pretty directly to be considered as an individual material instance. I think this kind duality of purpose reflects a worldview for each of these artists in a different way as it can with other artist who use similar mechanics. I certainly want my work to operate in this category.

You ask about the function of titles relative to individual paintings. There is absolutely a function with respect to individual paintings. Sometimes the titles exist before the paintings, but more often as the paintings develop the titles develop too – as parts of each change and the experience of the painting becomes specific, so do the titles or vice versa in some cases. It is usually an ongoing back and forth. There is never a case of not having a working title by the time a painting seems to know what it is doing (as much as it even will). There are

Preparatory drawing for "When everyone changed at once"





Watercolor drawing from artist's sketchbook.

lots of changes during development, but there is never a case of finishing a painting and picking a title after it's done for my anymore. The titles are part of the process and a way of writing while painting (if a dissection needs to be made between the two). I feel like we could have this conversation about the difference and interplay of other technical process during development too.

Your titles often contain the words "I" and "you", but leave the identities of both open to interpretation. The "I" could be the artist/painter, it could be Andreas Fischer the individual, or it could be the painting's viewer reading the title. Conversely "you" could imply the artist/painter's painted subject (both in concept and, more literally, the paint applied to a surface to enact the painting); or a person or subject from the outside world referenced in the painting. "You" could also be the painting's viewer, and yet, since it is the viewer who ultimately perceives and makes sense of the paintings they perceive, process, and impart meaning to, that "You" could also ultimately refer to the artist/painter themselves. I enjoy considering the fluidity of the I/You conundrum here and for me, your use of I/You in your titles brings to mind the ideas in philosopher Martin Buber's I and Thou. How do you think of the relation between "I" and "you" in your titles, and in the relation of painter and viewer?

Those are great observations. Thank you. I don't know Buber well at all, but since I have been only briefly exposed to his thoughts through people with theological interests, I suspect the relationships in my work might be bit less specific. It will be interesting to dig into this a bit more and learn more about connections and differences.

One of the things I like very much about the way you are laying out this question is a recognition of a range of kinds of relationships. I want to ask for all of those possibilities, but since one of the things I think about consistently is who each one of us is in our given social, racial, and gender-based structures – maybe I could just say the structures that we create and reinforce for ourselves and others – and how we are permitted to operate within those, I hope that some part of this range might create an entry point depending on who a viewer sees themselves as next to the paintings. I also hope that this range of possibilities in not just activated by the titles, but by the work itself.

When I look at my paintings, for example, I have an experience that is like a confrontation with a mirror that shows desire and complicity, and occasionally, a bit of sweetness. So some of those pronouns and



Nothing you're doing is making me feel any better, 2020
acrylic, pencil, and felt on canvas, 24 x 20"



Preparatory drawing from artist's sketch



The Interruption, 2020, (detail). Acrylic and pencil on canvas, 32" x 36"

occasionally, a bit of sweetness. So some of those pronouns and relationships are confrontational for me. But I hope that the paintings might create opportunities for other kinds of roles in their relationships for other people. My biggest ambition is that they could offer a sense of vulnerability and even agency somehow (likely mixed with awkwardness and maybe some humor, assuming those don't become devices that cover up other possibilities). I don't know if that is possible, but I paint because I want connection for everyone. Maybe my work is a bit snarky – I've been told that, but what I really want is the most cliched beautiful leisurely sunny day in a nice field with flowers and a picnic for everyone without any worry that the Monday after will bring anxiety and stress.

One of the paintings in this new body of work I'm most drawn to is "The Interruption." In it, we see eight nude figures whose bodies are veiled or cloaked by some sort of filmy material that could be a sheer robe-like garment, a beam of light, a strange, glass tube-like enclosure, or something else I can't recognize that can only correspond to the world of

the painting and not our own. The most prominent figure at the center has their head turned to the side, looking out towards the viewer /outside the painting but not directly at the viewer. I can get lost in trying to determine what the interruption is here, where precisely the redirection is taking place. Is the gathering of these nude figures being "interrupted" by an event outside the frame that only that central figure is attending to? Has that figure lost their focus, or regained it, through this interruption? Something about your paintings makes me want to continually construct them, then deconstruct them, in endless circuits. What were you thinking about when you made this particular painting?

Thank you for those observations. I have not thought about it in ways quite as well structured as you are describing, but I am interested in all of the things you are describing. I especially like the idea that someone looking at the work might want to take it apart and put it back together again, especially if there is a need for that to happen over and over. I want that for all of my paintings, partly because I think we might live in a world where we are



When I died in my cat's arms, 2020, acrylic, pencil, and oil on canvas, 21 x 16 inches.

encouraged to consume things by putting them together once, maybe not even fully, and move on.

In my mind the disruption in this painting is coming from looking. I'm interested in looking as a duality. It is seemingly passive – something one can do from a comfortable distance, both in physical terms and in terms of other kinds of engagement – on the other hand it can have a real and powerful impact. It is easy to look and it can disrupt or even hurt to be looked at. In this painting there is a look that intervenes and interrupts whatever is happening and then there is a look back that is maybe searching or has landed but is shying away already (surrounded by looks that maintain their focus). It might all be gentle in the end, but it might be super serious too. This might be a case of a friend surprising another friend – and that could end with hugs. I want there to be a possibility of things being fine to be present here. But I think it is more likely that this could be more serious – like a scene in an action movie where some sort of international cult is being discovered in the middle of a ritual they use before scheming. Or maybe a jealous lover can't stand that the person who is turning back to look went to some event without him – even though these might be friends, dance partners, fellow actors, etc, they feel to the jealous person like otherworldly presences that are psychologically powerful and mysterious and the jealous person couldn't help but just barge in.

Ultimately, I would like the narrative to flicker around between possibilities, but I feel like something intense is about to happen, regardless – whether it is overtly intense or seemingly gentle on the surface, but internally and psychologically intense. I want the painting to push out this kind of energy. I value awkwardness – it has a kind of powerful mystery. I am attracted to the idea that a painting could come out of awkwardness. Even if this were a good scenario like surprising a friend, I think there would be a second or two of WTF before the hugs.

The veil or cloaking layers here are important too. I have been using lots of blobs or orbs in my paintings lately and these are versions of those. I am very invested in them, but am not quite sure what they

are. They seem to have a kind of mysterious power too. Maybe they are a visual material version of the kind of mysterious energy I am talking about. Maybe they add some surreal characteristics or other worldliness to the work. Sometimes they can just be silly too. They can move back and forth between powerfulness and just a deflated useless state. I think they might be like belief in that way.

I know we live in a stranger than fiction world right now, but I also think the device of creating a fiction, an exaggeration, a ridiculousness, or otherworldliness in order to be able to somehow better deal with ordinariness is a useful device. I think it can be used as an effective way of stepping outside in order to look back. In this painting I am interested in the translucent blobs that also might act a bit like cloaks or veils in part because of their potential for mysterious or metaphysical implications. I think they add a kind of power to nudity. I think they make the scenario like the flickering back and forth between two “realities” that can happen if you look at someone fully clothed and imagine them naked. There are really two worlds of context, intimacy, privacy, exhibition, disruption, even violation happening on top of each other.

Another painting I love from this group is “Replacing anxiety with danger.” I don't recall seeing a painting of yours, at least recently, that portrays an action at the moment of its happening, its impact. The painting depicts a feminine figure at the moment of being hit in the side of the face with a soccer ball, her red glasses are flying off her face while she's in the middle of texting something on her phone. It's both funny and cruel — as if a soccer mom is being punished for not paying close enough attention to her kid's game. I just love this painting because for me, it's about the shocking moment when physical reality intrudes on the projections of our headspace, which include the digital realm we enter into when we focus on our phones and not the immediate environment our bodies are located in. Like when the Zen master slaps the student to bring on a shocking moment of presence/enlightenment. What does this particular painting mean to you?





Replacing anxiety with danger, 2020, 26" x 22"
Acrylic and pencil on canvas

I think this can certainly be about all of those things you mention and for some of them, then, it could invite us to judge this woman based on thoughts of things like self indulgence, distraction, maybe projecting an idea that she is the most important person out there and being hurt and defensive about that. Having been to many many kids' soccer games, I see this kind of judgy thing happen regularly between parents – it's like we are all 5th graders again. But what I hope is also operating is this painting is a kind of empathy for this person – she is being impacted in what is probably a pretty uncomfortable way and we get to just watch. How do we end up looking in that kind of relationship to her? I use to watch shows like "Whacked out sports" sometimes -I think Tik Tok might be sort of taking over whatever appetite that filled. But one thing that bugs me about things like "Whacked Out Sports" is that they offer us "content" to make us laugh, but some of the things we laugh at get those people really hurt. We're laughing and they're in the hospital and that is all supposed to be just fine. For me this image brings up a bit of that reflection too. I also wonder if a person at a game on her phone getting smacked by a ball isn't a metaphor for

what the society that we make does to so many of us. So many of us seem to have to move in multiple directions at once. We have to be moving through a "real" external world while navigating and negotiating a world that extends into our internal lives at the same time, as you mention.

In general this image makes me feel angry, satisfied, guilty, and empathetic all at once -and then it is just silly and ridiculous, maybe even a bit cartoon cute at the same time. Somehow it brings together lots of different kinds of energy.

"At first they knew, later they forgot" depicts a group of figures collectively lifting up a dark bluish object that suggests a coffin or a body bag. As with all of your paintings, the figures exist in a filmy, dream-like space that can't be pinned to a specific reality but feels (to me, anyway), more like the fleeting images you get when you half-remember a dream you had the night before, but only when it's too late to recall anything about it with much clarity. The communal bearing of a coffin of course suggests a funereal situation, which makes me reflect on our past year of 2020 and all of the sorrows, conflicts, and wanton dis-information we've had to wade through. But the painting also makes me think about the reality of death for those of us who go on living: the pain of loss that fades over time into a kind of forgetting, and the sudden, sharp reminders of that loss that will come out of nowhere every once in awhile afterwards. This painting in particular prompts me to ask you, what is the space that you are depicting (or better — conjuring?) in the compositions of paintings like this one? How attached to the "real world" is it?

What you are saying about the dreamlike quality is something that I want for all of the paintings here. I hope they are perceptually soft, gentle, and seem like something in a mind or an imagination rather than things that relate to observation. I like your use of the term conjuring. I want to the work here to exchange experiences with an audience in that way because I think it is a bit more speculative and flexible. I want to deal with a suggestive, affective channel rather than a real world one even though I hope the work has implications for the world we might live in.



At first they knew. Later they forgot. 2020, 30" x 36" Acrylic, pencil, cloth, and googly eye on canvas

I agree with what you are suggesting about the funerary. That is certainly something I had in mind while making the painting and I am sure that our context had a lot to do with that. But maybe even a bit more I was thinking about that shape as a globe- like balloon blob. I'm not sure how to explain it, but that seemed to be a good kind of thing. It felt good to think about all of these men coming together. I don't really think that is what men do, unfortunately. It felt good to work on a painting where men were supporting and share this mysterious blob. For me the painting and the title came to refer to another time or place where men knew how to work together to make something good happen – whether it was something like a funeral or something more fun. In

part I just wanted to fantasize about men working together in a real beneficial way – in a way that was not about any one person's benefit, but was bigger than individual desire.

"Because I loved you too much, baby" is a gorgeous painting, which shows a solitary feminine figure whose head appears fragmented from their lower body, cut away by a form like a jagged shadow. Her presence appears dwarfed by the shadowy forms surrounding her, which makes me wonder if she's actually all alone, or in fact surrounded by people or things that exist outside the frame and are perceivable to us only as reflected shadows. Another tactic I see throughout your new and recent



Preparatory collage drawing for "At first they knew. Later they forgot."



Because I loved you too much, baby, 2020, 17" x 21" Acrylic and pencil on canvas

paintings is the doubling of bodies, and the elongation and distortion of bodies, especially heads. As with the "Replacing anxiety with danger" painting, there's something at once funny, cruel, and also sad about these distortions, but there's also, for me, a nagging reminder beneath all of this that asserts that we are not our bodies, that our bodies are just the heavy, mutable forms we carry around with us during our time on this earth. Still, it is only through our bodies that we can experience pleasure, sensuality, the warning signs of physical pain, the joys of eating, swimming, sex. How do you think about distortion as it plays out in your depictions of bodies?

I worry about the woman in this painting. I think that is why the painting exists. I always like the phrase, "the road to hell is paved with good intentions." I

think that applies to so many situations where there is unequal power. We have talked before about heteronormative "romance" and how we are both drawn to depictions of it. I have always watched lots of romantic comedies. I can't stop watching them. They make me cry and are very pleasurable. But there is also just something disturbing, I guess – I'm not actually sure how to characterize it – in the chase, the process of convincing someone who is usually less powerful that they should fulfill your desires. There is something slowly violent in this process and we seem to approve of it as a society. Everyone in the airport always stops and listens, maybe even claps at the end of those movies when the man catches up to the woman who is about to fly away and convinces her that he was an idiot for whatever he did and that they should actually be together.

I grew up in a space where boys were socialized to somehow figure out how to convince girls to fulfill their desires. There is lots of very powerful social pressure around that and, even though I keep watching these kinds of movies, I think there is also something wrong here. I guess this painting was another way to stand in these exchanges. I seem to paint in relationship to these changes over and over.

Distortion is another one of those fundamental things I am just fascinated by and can't ever shake. It is fundamental in a political way. There is the way things are supposed to be – we can either accept that or push back. Although as a person I have some compulsions toward the idea that certain things are supposed to be a certain way sometimes, in a more general sense I have always believed that “the way things are supposed to be” as a kind of status is hugely problematic. I am not sure I can explain why- it has always just been with me. Distortion is a way to be in this question. There is a tension I think in my work between “the way things are supposed to be” and the push back of distortion. I think there are a lot of sub-functions for distortion depending on immediate context too. The particular kind of distortion provides a certain kind of mood or tone, so distortion can move in many different directions, maybe a bit like the way different types of handwriting seem to suggest different personality characteristics.

“The Deciders” is a new painting that depicts two white male figures seated cross-legged behind a desk. Spread out on the desk before them like playing cards are a number of images — probably photographs? — of brown-skinned people. And below all of this, in the lower sixth of the frame, stand a scattered group of doll-sized figures with their hands at their sides or in their pockets, standing around as if waiting. The visual power dynamics of the painting place the two large white figures at the top of the heap, as it were, with everyone else fanning out below them. Given the title, the painting seems to suggest it is about power and how power plays out. And as we discussed, many other of your paintings address the dynamics of power as they occur in the realms of sex, politics, race, as well as in romantic relationships. I know from many of our



Mister Rooooooooooooooooooooogers, 2020, 24” x 21”
Acrylic, pencil, and cloth on canvas

previous conversations that you are acutely aware of your social status as a cis, straight, white male who enjoys a number of privileges that come with that. And as a cis, straight, white female who grew up upper middle class, I too enjoy those privileges. What makes your paintings so interesting to me is the way they go about critique: you paint what you know, which is the subjectivity of white men (or, at least, your own as a white man), but there is no valorization, only a sense of confusion and visual dislocation. You are aware that you're painting from a privileged subject position and yet your contempt of what that position actually entails and signifies — your desire to refuse it, if only symbolically, in the work — necessitates a certain kind of retreat from the definitive, from straight (or straight-up) illustrative depiction, and even to a certain degree from the certainty of knowledge itself. Another way of putting it is that your paintings never tell us what to do, think, or feel, and they even refuse to dictate what exactly it is we're seeing. So after the above long-winded read, my question to you is: what parts of the above do you agree with, and what parts of what I've suggested above don't resonate so much with what you're trying to achieve with your paintings?

I am not sure if I actually refuse anything in or through painting. In part because that just feels like a tactic that belongs to a different time to me and I am not sure it worked. Instead of the paintings operating with a descriptive or prescriptive force, my interest is always in them setting up relationships and marshaling energy around those relationship for an audience to experience. I just want to put stuff out there, I guess would be the more casual way of putting it.

I am interested in what we can do with experience and maybe particular types or conventions of experience. In the best case, the work might create some vibrations in the world that get passed around, added to, re-interpreted, and re-processed in the kinds of viewers. I suppose this is like a slower moving, more subtle, and more indirect version of what happens when something on social media goes viral. It's not really about social media or even "content." There is power in affect here. I am totally interested that kind of energy. I am interested in pushing different kinds of forces out in the world, especially if doing that encourages us to squirm.

I want this painting, for example, to channel some of the forces that move between the kinds of figures in it and to bounce off of images of what might be their counterparts in world we live in. You do a good job of describing some of those possibilities. I don't think we can ever forget who makes paintings and what the status of these makers is either -so that would be another source of a certain kind of relational energy.

Rather than refuting the status of the different parts of this painting or what they might signify, I want to use the parts of the painting (images in this case) to cause vibrations. I think there is so much in our world that seems to just be there in plain sight and is still somehow super opaque. I'm not comfortable talking about any of this and I am even more uncomfortable making paintings in parallel to these things, but I can't stop thinking about any of them – privilege, race, sexual desire, social structure. Maybe more importantly, I inhabit all of these things. I am a passenger propelled by forces. I live in the grotesque and the profanity of the bodily and its desire and it is

tempting to just give in. Painting is a way to put that all out there – to share it.

Lastly, I'd like to ask you three more-or-less standard questions frequently asked of painters:
—*Who are your favorite painters?*
—*Which painters have you paid particular attention to over the past year?*

I mentioned Courbet and Michael Armitage. Courbet is a long-standing interest as well as Manet. I love the tension between individual pieces and integration in both of their work and the political implications this relationship has relative to the histories within which they functioned. They way both of them challenge illusion as a conventional and ideologically driven device is huge for me and the fact that they did it with physical material is very encouraging for me as a painter.

I have been thinking about Michael Armitage quite a bit lately. The kind of mixture of parts and what they add up to -or don't- and their implications in the world today are fascinating. There is an amazing elegance and weirdness in his work too.

I have been interested in Benny Andrews lately too for his similarly inventive depictions and distortions. I find his work biting and moving.

Mamma Andersson is a long-standing favorite and I am a huge Nicole Eisenman fan.

I have loved the drawings that Nicola Tyson has been making too. Her Instagram in progress drawing videos have been very comforting. (I hope she doesn't mind someone putting it that way.)

I think of Jeff Wall as a kind of a painter and always come back to his work.

I like Jennifer Packer and follow her as much as I can. Asger Jom's paintings are exciting, weighty, and funny interventions.

I am interested in Melissa Brown's work, but have yet to see one in person.



The Deciders, 2020. Acrylic and pencil on canvas, 36" x 42"

I have been a fan of Mari Eastman since she was in grad school.

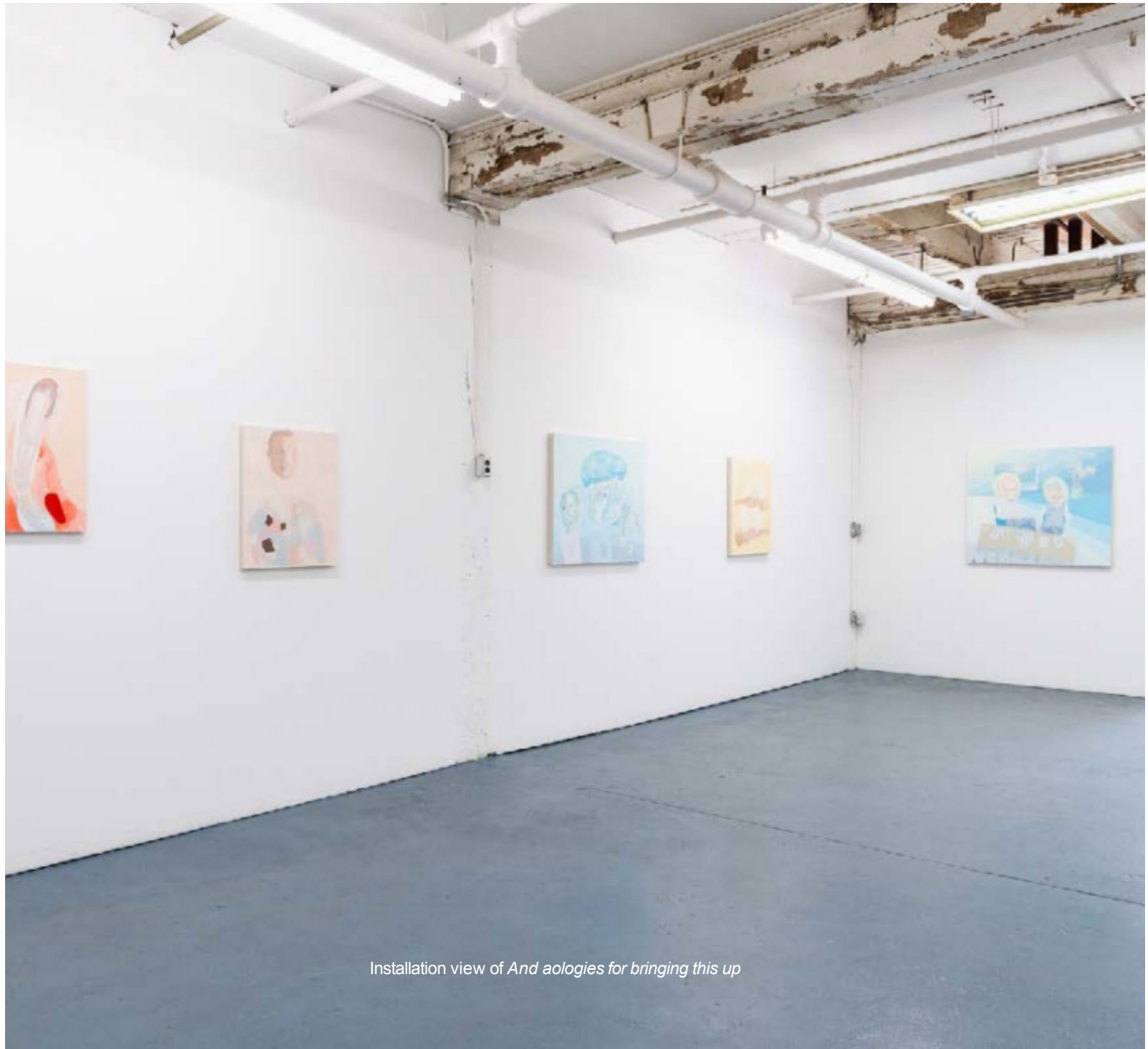
Martin Maloney and Jockum Nordström are people I keep coming back to.

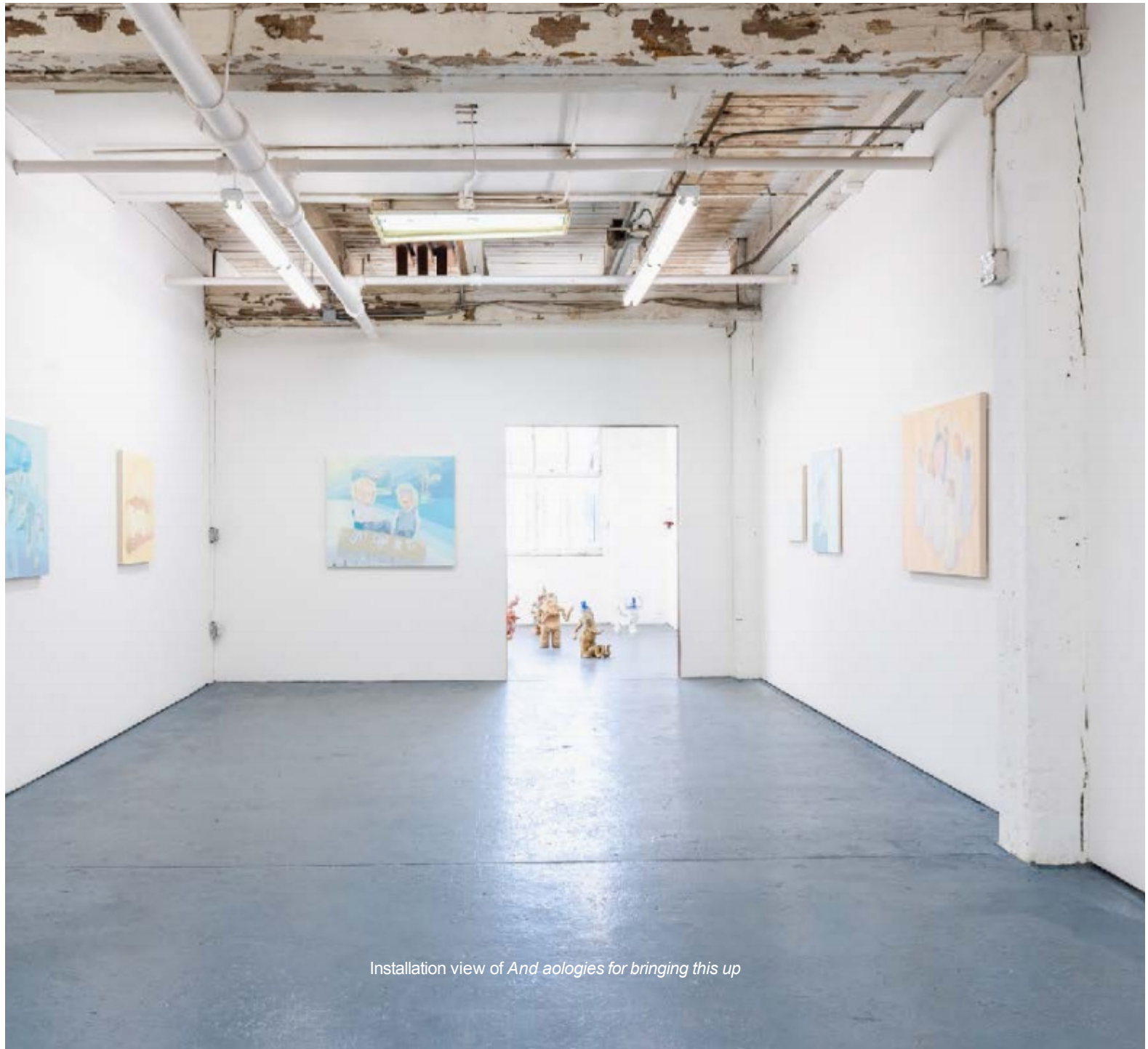
For many of these examples, I don't even feel like I decide to like them, I just can't stop coming back to their work.

—*What, in your opinion, makes a painting great?*

Right now I am preoccupied with the question of how much we can sense a painting as opposed to reading or understanding it in some way. I think great paintings have a presence that you can sense. The seeming contradiction of a static picture – an object and the creation of a kind of motion in the world is totally amazing. I think a great painting feels like it is moving even though we think we can see that it is not.





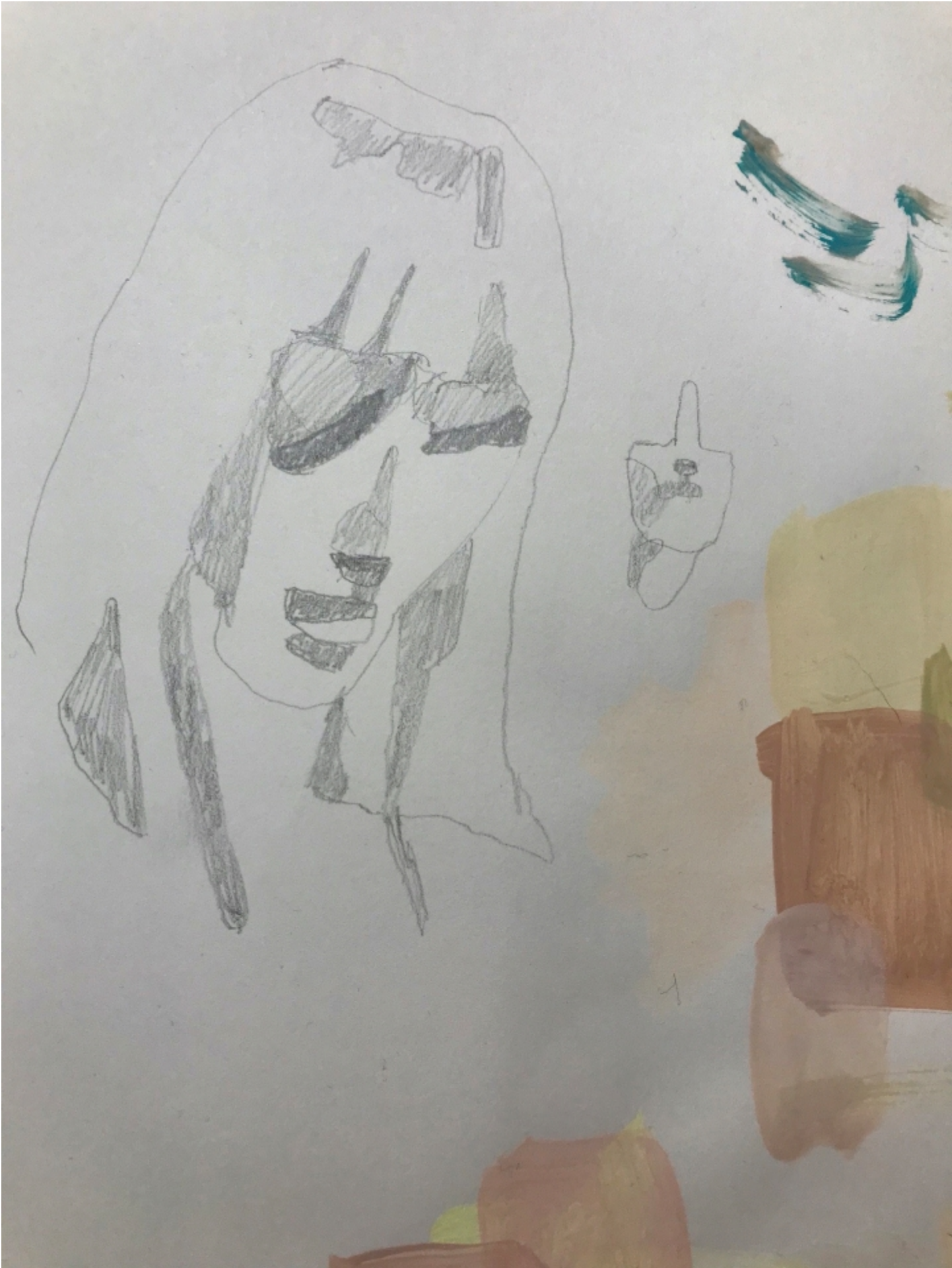


Installation view of *And aologies for bringing this up*

Selected Sketchbook Drawings



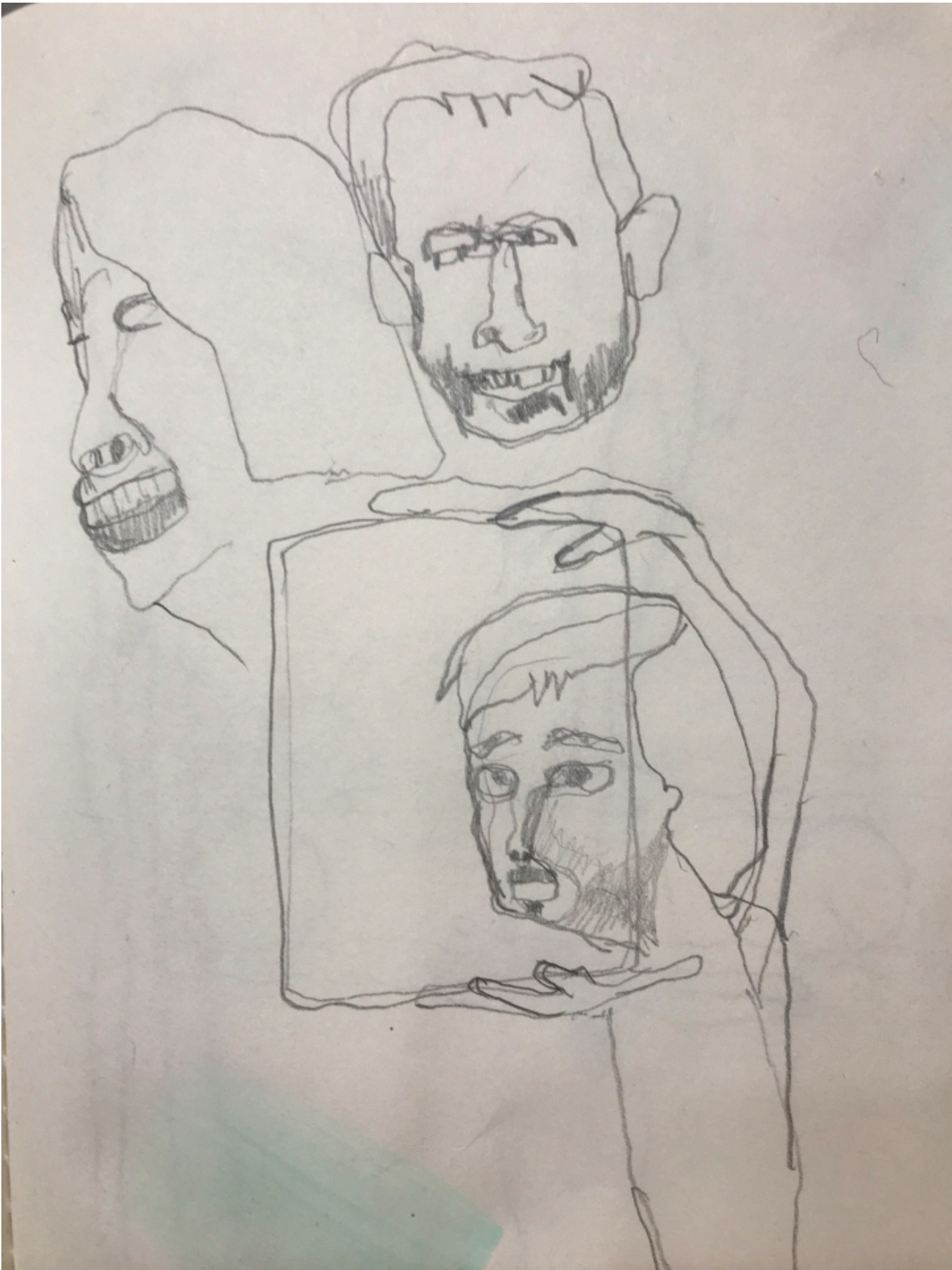
















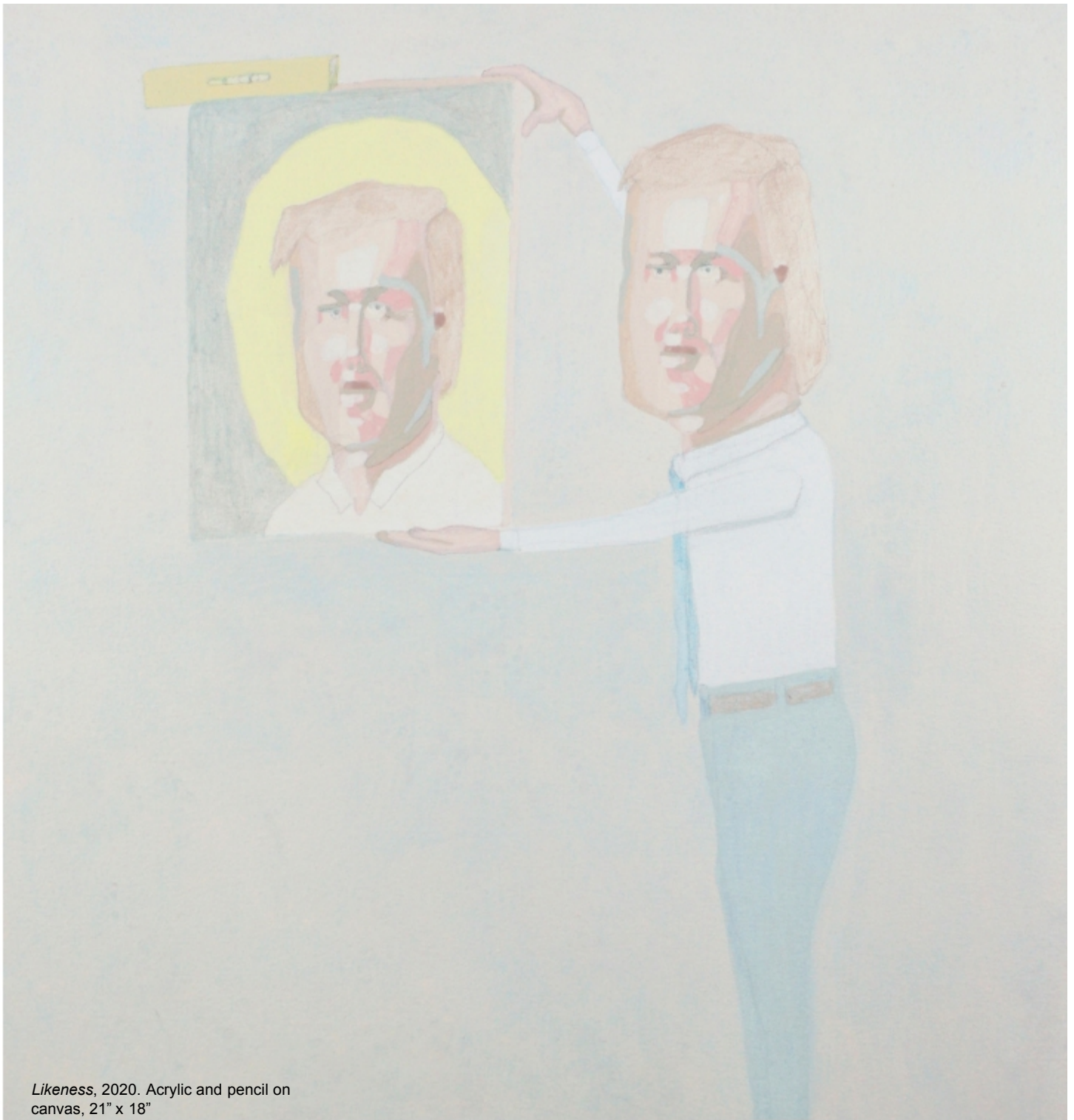












Likeness, 2020. Acrylic and pencil on canvas, 21" x 18"

G OLDFINCH

319 N Albany
Chicago, IL 60612

goldfinch-gallery.com
info@goldfinch-gallery.com
Fridays & Saturdays, 12 - 4 pm, and by appointment