

A composite image featuring a small dog, possibly a Chihuahua, wrapped in a black plastic sheet. The dog's face is visible through a hole in the sheet, and it is holding a bone in its mouth. Two red tomatoes are placed on the surface in front of the dog. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

COMPOSITE

{Arts Magazine}

No. 2 The Gaze

Winter 2011

It's so easy to just pass by art. I've been to the Art Institute of Chicago so many times that I know where almost every painting is. I know where the old contemporary wing was by muscle memory... that is, of course, if I didn't see Warhol's Mao from across the museum first. That doesn't mean that I could tell you anything about the Asian artifacts I had to pass through dozens of times in order to get there. As artists, we are all guilty of going to an opening and walking through it so distracted by socializing that we couldn't remember what a single piece looked like. I will fully admit, somewhat ashamedly, how rarely I really stop and digest a painting. I take the time to bask in the experience of a painting that moves me, but I rarely take the time to understand something that doesn't capture me immediately. I rarely take that time to gaze.

When the work from our contributors starts to roll in, we look at the work right away. We discuss the pieces we love, and talk about the artists that completely surprised us with what they sent us. It has only taken us two issues to realize that we can't truly anticipate what our artists will send us, which is one of the joys of Composite. However, in the course of trying to plan an issue, we have to go much deeper than these first impressions. We spend several days figuring out the work we're sent, investigating the statements that come with it. We try to figure out which pieces talk to each other and figure out which pieces, if placed facing each other, will kill the conversation.

Once an order is determined, we begin laying out the pages. We may move a photo around a page multiple times before we figure out where it looks right. Then we'll do it again with the other 60 odd images we receive. Once it's all placed, we go back to make sure we are really seeing what we thought we did a few steps back.

Piecing together this issue, thinking about our topic, it struck me how much I've looked at each and every image. I know some of these works on an almost intimate level now. There is no doubt that I now appreciate our contributors' creations exponentially more from when I did at first glance. When we started Composite, we were looking for a way to show art and literature and create a collaborative environment. I had no idea how much our contributors would influence us and our practice, just by spending so much time looking at their art.

We are truly nothing without our contributors, so thank you for giving us work to look at and learn from. To you our readers, thank you for gazing along with us.

Zach Clark
Composite Staff

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It's like breathing. We do it constantly, everyday. We look at things, we look at each other, we look into space, and we look into ourselves. If we belong to the lucky majority who possess the ability of sight, we can't fathom life without it. And just like breathing, every once in a while we notice ourselves doing it. The eyes linger, and all of the other senses and motor skills fade, even just for an instant, and it happens—the gaze.

As you walk the halls of a museum, you will see many works of art that you like and probably just as many that you dislike. You take a few seconds to view the Hoppers, move on to the Kandinskys, and spend a little more time with the Picassos. However, it's not until you spot Georges Seurat's *La Grande Jatte* that you really stop to look. In a sea of Parisians, a little girl with her mother looks out at you, with an eternal stare. You look back and connect. Is she the subject of your gaze, or are you the object of hers? You try to figure out the pattern; you contemplate the painting so closely that it has begun to deconstruct into the million tiny dots it is comprised of. You are locked in a moment with this piece of art.

The Gaze

We look for a gaze within a work of art such as we do in life. A look can say more than a word; eye contact, or lack thereof, can hold a myriad of meanings. While crossing the street, or holding an elevator door, you may find yourself sharing a silent moment with a stranger, meeting eyes and exchanging smiles. Or you watch someone across from you on the bus and withdraw your sights quickly and sheepishly when they look up. Even in moments of solitude we can be caught in the gaze. A focused introspective thought can give us an observation of ourselves, or a long hike can be rewarded with a breathtaking view of a vast landscape. Whether voyeuristic or engaged, the gaze holds a true power.

Justin Schmitz

Mosh

My work investigates activities of Mid-Western youth

culture. From my most recent body of work, *Mosh*, portraits are made before, during, and after hardcore dancing has occurred. My subjects use the Mosh Pit as a platform to release the hostility and aggression they identify with in the music. These images are the aesthetic interpretation of my subject's violent expression. Chiaroscuro isolates the subject from the crowd, accentuating the gestural quality of their movement and expression. These images were made in Northwest Indiana, Central Illinois, and the Chicago Suburbs in 2007 and 2008.









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Justin Schmitz









Zach Clark

Clear Days, Grey Skies

I've been living in cities for years now.

The sky is something that exists above buildings and occasionally through windows. Grey skies have appealed to me as they act as mostly un-noteworthy backdrops for my surroundings. Growing up in Colorado, I paid little attention to the 300 plus sunny days a year either, but trips back west as of late have occasionally reminded me of what an open sky could feel like.

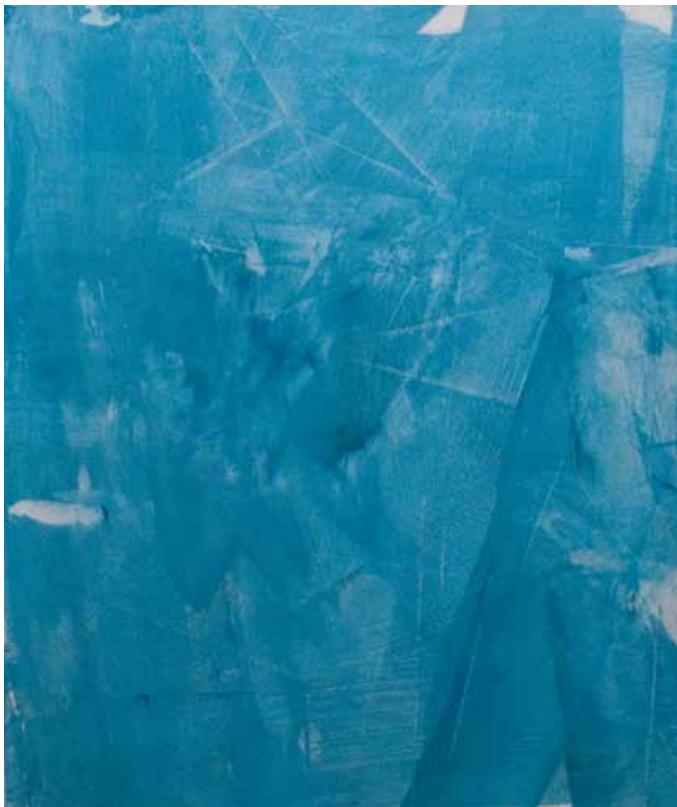
Our recent residency in Texas found me driving on the highway, completely lost in the sheer size and presumed depth of the sky. ***The clichés and stereotypes of the big sky in Texas ring truer than one would assume, and daily it struck me. At its core, that's really what this project is about.***



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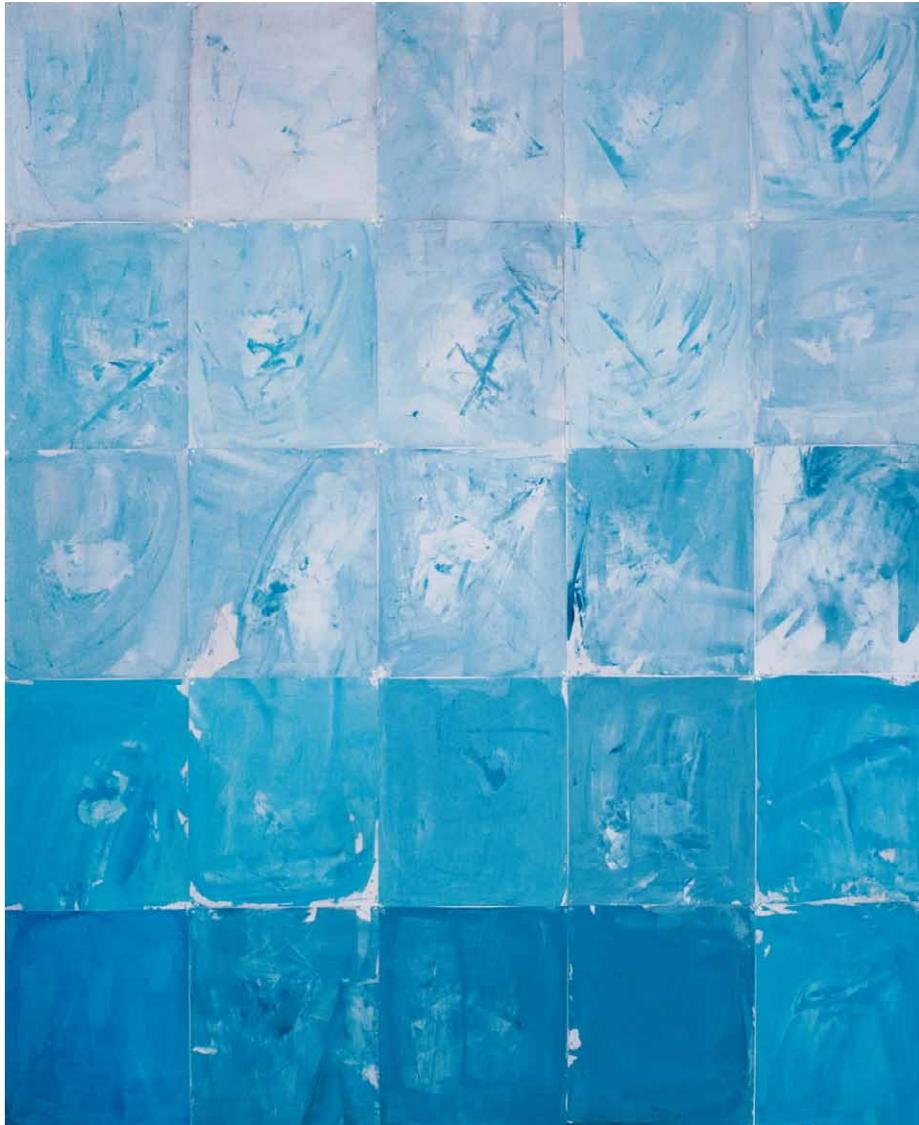
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The only plan made in advance was to create a field of blues that commanded attention and created a setting, rather than simply an image. The full 25 panel blue piece is roughly 7'x5' when fully constructed. The actual creation of each panel was done by mixing inks straight onto the paper and covering with a squeegee. This eliminates all ability to control the image being made leaving it up to chance mixtures and gestures of my hand, a process I feel makes a quite elegant metaphor for nature.

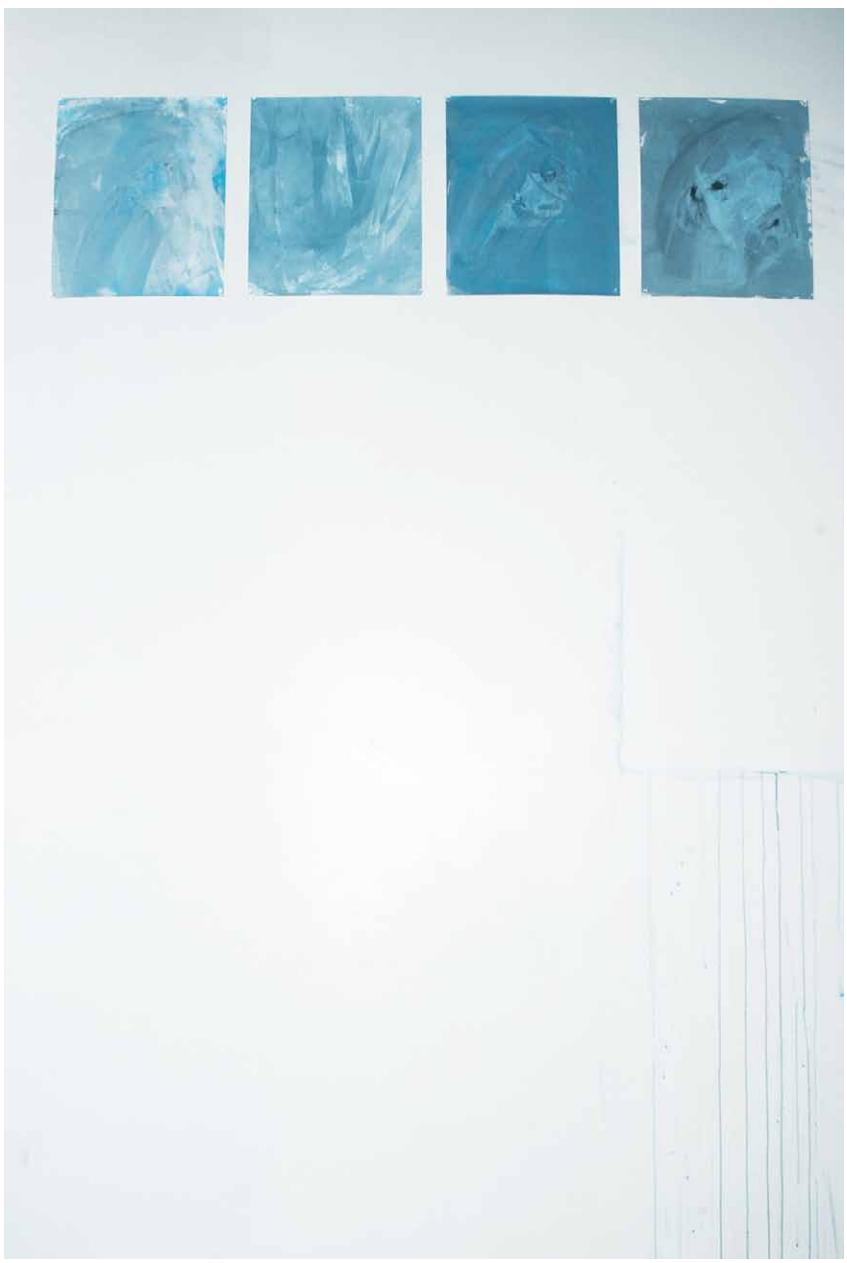


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Zach **Clark**



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Once I began making these, I realized more was going on. No matter how unintentional, images began to appear once you looked closer. This both made each panel more interesting and complex than a simple color field, but also helped to bring the project back to it's original inspiration: the concentrated gaze into the clouds and sky and the wonder and excitement of trying to find things in it.





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When the initial blue piece was completed, I knew a second companion piece, the five grey panels, was necessary. The color, arrangement, and placement of this piece is necessary to understand the size and scale relationship of the setting discussed in the project. Relationships within each piece became important as well. The value of a panel changes completely based on it's surroundings. Blues becomes bluer, contrasts become more apparent, completely different settings to place yourself in are created.



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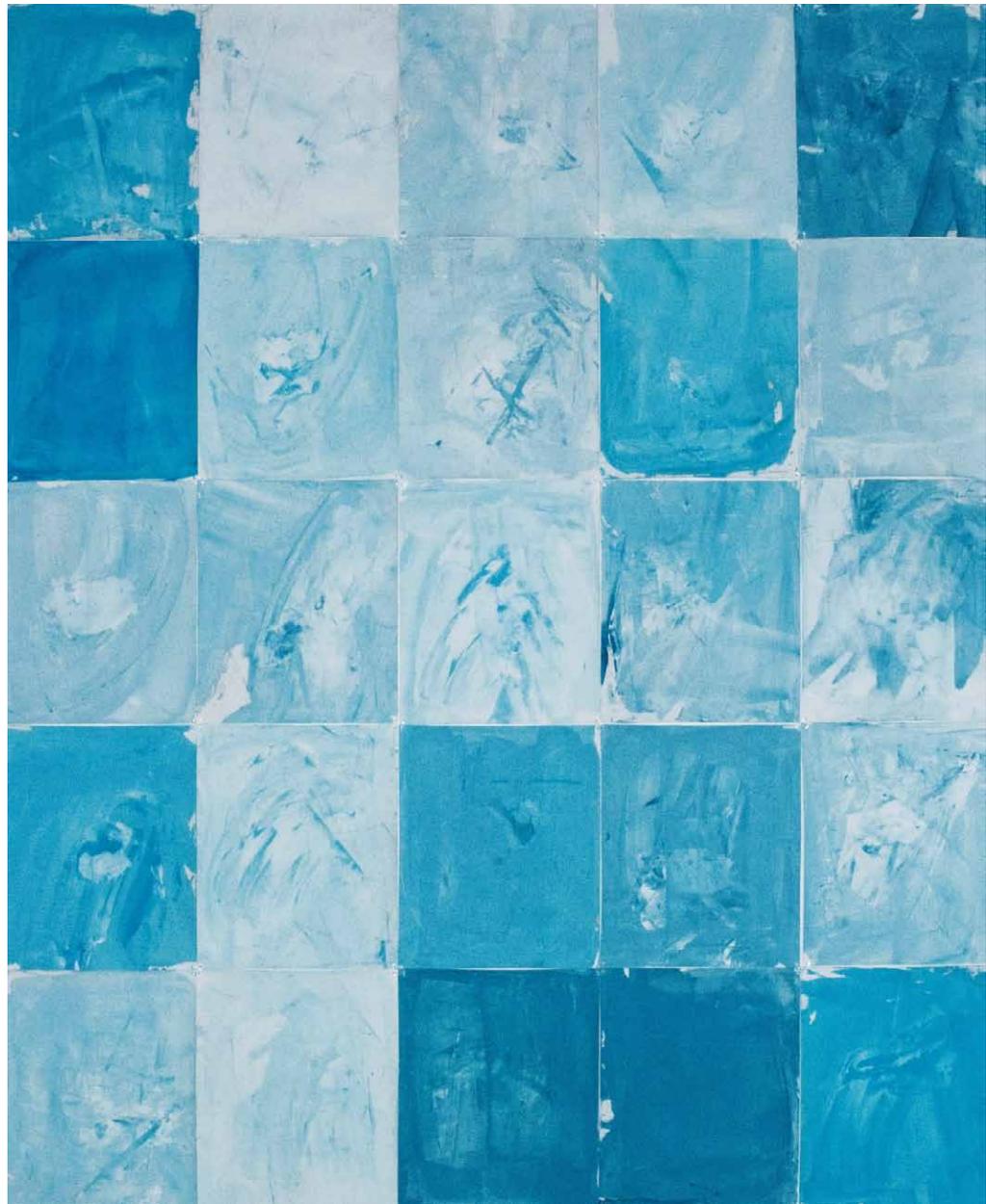


Zach Clark



Our current living arrangements find us in an unusually rainy and grey Fresno, CA, a city that is teaching us almost everything is relative, things need to be looked at and understood for what they are.

Zach Clark



Joey Pizzolato

Sweet Dreams in the Summertime

My twin brother's funeral is modest. Closed casket, with gray clouds blanketing the winter sun. The rain pouring down like the bags of dope falling from high-rises across the way when we were kids. We have a pastor from a community out-reach program proceed over the ceremony. He's one of four people who came to pay their respects today. There are three others: my wife, Sarah, myself, and our childhood friend Sammy.

Sammy and I place pictures of the three of us around Donnie's coffin before the pastor begins. We listen to him talk about everlasting life and all that bullshit. Sammy and I know that everlasting life isn't an option for people like us—even at this age. Only the Here, the Now—this is all that matters. We've learned that now.

We throw roses over Donnie's casket. Take one last look at the photos before we leave, my wife and I, arm-in-arm, with Sammy running after us.

"God," Sarah says, "your brother still looks so much like you."

"Yeah, well, that's the only way we're alike now," I say.

"Disney. Wait up brother," Sammy says, almost a whisper.

"Sammy! How you holding up?" We shake hands and hug.

"I'm alright. I wish more of the neighborhood showed."

"Me too, man. Me too. But what can you expect? Wasn't like there was a line of people waiting to support Donnie. Not then, not now. I mean who could, the man didn't know when to stop."

"Yeah, what can you do? We did all we could for him while he was still alive. Just couldn't get him off the block is all," Sammy says.

"Not after what happened," I say, "But we tried."

"Damn straight, brother. He's in a better place now," he says. Then asks: "Who's this young lady?"

"This is my wife, Sarah. Sarah, meet Sammy Fortanucci. He was Donnie's and I's best friend

when we were growing up.”

“Sarah...like...the Sarah Summers?”

My wife looks confused. I smile at her.

“Yeah. The Sarah Summers.”

“Actually,” Sarah breaks in, “It’s McMalley now. Sarah McMalley.”

“My apologies. Like your hubby said, Donnie, Disney and I go way back.”

“Well, it’s a pleasure to finally meet you.”

“We better get going, Sammy. Traffic is going to be backed up all the way to Addison if we don’t head out now.”

“Ok, brother,” he says. I turn for the car.

“Listen Disney, keep in touch, alright?”

“Will do, my man. Will do.”

“Hey! One more thing,” he calls, reaching into his coat pocket. He takes a swig from a silver flask and holds it to the sky. “To Florida,” he says, and I watch him turn and walk towards his car, pouring his flask atop the graves as he steps over them.

“***Goddamn this traffic.*** 635 used to be empty all the time,” I say, gripping the steering wheel until my knuckles are white.

“Sarah Summers, huh?” she asks.

I look at her, unable to hold back the smile.

“I haven’t been Sarah Summers in over twenty years. How would he know my maiden name? I’ve never even met him.”

“We went to the same high school, remember?”

“So you just go tell everyone our business?”

“It’s not like that.”

“Then tell me how it is, Disney.”

“All right, relax would you. The thing is, the three of us were always together. It was summer. We were sixteen, young, but still on the cusp of being adults. One night Sammy’s old man beat the living shit out of him, which was a usual nightly occurrence, but this time Sammy stole his old man’s

car and wrapped it around the tree in our front yard. We all decided to leave town, and with the help of my mother, we did. We took her blue mini-van, filled it with fishing poles, bait, beer, a carton of cigarettes, and drove north towards Lake Texoma on the Texas/Oklahoma border. I drove. Drove that whole damn trip.”

“So you ‘kids’ commit a felony and then flee the state? That’s smart.” Sarah says.

“No, it’s not like that. Sammy’s old man was a washed up boxer and a drunk. We just went on vacation, and my mother returned the car to Sammy’s old man. Just a little huff and puff from the guy and that was all. She told him where we were headed, when we’d be back, all that. I doubt he cared much. Plus, we were convinced it was a right of passage into adulthood, something we had to do, needed to do, wanted to do. Something we’d always dreamed of doing, so we took the opportunity and did it.”

**“So you
‘kids’ commit a
felony and then
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That’s smart.”
Sarah says.**

“Damn you kids were wild,” Sarah says. “The best we ever did was ditch school and go to the mall. Or planned to go

to Cancun during lunch until we got home and our fathers’ said ‘no’.”

“Yeah, well Donnie and I didn’t have a father, you know that. Piece of shit ran out on us before we could even wipe our own asses, so it was easy to hit the road.

“It’s been so long, I don’t remember the drive so well. It’s fused together with the other trips we took in high school—one to Taos, one to Chicago, another to New Orleans, Austin, San Antonio, Houston. The highway just looks like highway, no matter where you go. What I do remember is Sammy and Donnie started drinking early, so by the time we ate and found our hotel, they were both sloshed.”

Along the highway is an endless string of car dealerships lit up in Neon. Sarah asks: “Y’all went all those places?” I light up a smoke and continue.

“We stopped at this dinky motel painted pink and green. I remember it because it was like something out of an old B horror flick. I was sure we were the bright new stars that would never see a red carpet other than the trail of our own blood.”

Sarah removes her make-up in her compact mirror. She glares out of the corner of her eye through thick, black lashes. She wants to be entertained. I oblige her.

“The truth is, baby, I was scared. Scared at the kind of trouble we could get into, scared about being so far away from home—scared of being alone. You dream and dream and finally you’re there but you don’t know what to do with yourself. I mean, shit, we were city boys, born and raised—and we’ve seen some shit, without a doubt we’ve seen some shit—but I was always the pessimist back then, and we’d never done anything like we were doing. It was uncharted, unknown, and we didn’t know what to expect no matter what we dreamt it would be like.”

Sarah breaks in, “You’re not a pessimist baby. My salon would still be under construction if it weren’t for your go-get-em attitude.”

“You might be right—but let me finish. There was this bell on top of the counter, and Sammy rang and rang and rang it until the attendant came around the corner. Sammy stopped ringing and just laughed, laughed so hard tears poured out of his eyes and he doubled over like he’d been punched in the stomach. The man had some kind of deformity. Half his face was swollen like a water balloon and the other half was purple and blue and sunken to the bone as if he’d been beat incessantly with a tire iron. I was scared of him too.”

Sarah is laughing. She lights up her own cigarette, which she holds at the tips of her fingers. I start laughing too, can barely stop. We’ve moved about a mile since Sarah and I left the cemetery. Sarah’s expecting eyes say: tell me more, more, more. And I do, because I’m pissed he went off and died, pissed he can’t see what I see now.

“God, that room was such a piece of shit. There was dust on the comforter and the air-conditioning droned so loud we had to scream at each other. There were holes above the bed that I swear to this day had slugs in them. But it was paradise to us. No parents downstairs in the kitchen, no hiding our beers in plastic Sonic Burger cups, no drinking through a straw. That day, we drank out of the cans; Sammy smashed them on his forehead. In high school, he was a three sport athlete, could have been the first person to play in all three majors if he played his cards right.”

“Who? Sammy?” Sarah asks. “He weighs like three hundred pounds. Did you not hear him wheezing as he was trying to catch us?”

“Yeah, it’s been a long time, Sarah.”

I look out the window and watch the old neighborhood pass by. The three of us talked about college on the corner with the Quick Mart, discussed knocking off the liquor store on 4th Avenue in the park just around the corner. Cut our palms and became brothers under the overpass up ahead.

We were invincible. Nothing could touch us.

“We had all these grand plans for our trip. I wanted to find jet-skis in the morning and Donnie wanted to find a place called ‘Party Cove’, which he insisted that every lake had. He wanted to meet girls. He always wanted to meet girls. Back then, he was quite the smooth motherfucker. I think he hooked up with every girl in our class, and countless in the grades below. It was like his body was a breathing machine for his dick.

“Hah! I remember one time I had to take this girl over to Planned Parenthood to get the Morning After Pill because his dumb-ass was too lazy to use a condom. The next week I took him to a different doctor to treat the Clap he’d caught from her. He was always such a schmuck. Every time I inquired about one of his conquests he’d just wink and smile. Wink and smile.”

Sarah laughs now, “If I remember correctly, he fucked every one of my friends.”

“But not you.” I say, more of a question than a statement.

“Of course not, baby. I had my eye on you before you even knew who I was.” I laugh now because laughing is easier than crying.

“So, we sat around a crooked, worn down card table in the middle of our room for a while, drinking, talking shit, gossiping, and then we managed to get on the subject of Spring Break in Florida. Donnie went on and on: ‘Can you imagine what that would be like? To go half -way across the country with nothing but your homeboys and your home girls. The freedom of being totally on your own with nothing but your wit and some cash in your pocket. God, that would be great. Feeling the soft, Florida sand beneath your toes and the warmth of whisky resting in your stomach, the stars brighter than any street lamp in Uptown. God, what a life.’

“At the time I really couldn’t imagine what that freedom would feel like. I thought on it for a while, imagined myself in a small coupe with the top down, blazing down I-45 with the wind blowing in my face, on my way to start my life a new, not knowing what was ahead of me, the only assurance that sooner or later the road would end and I would find whatever I was looking for. I think we all wanted to be in that place, moving forward, running from a stagnant life, discovering, exploring. It seems like such a long time ago.”

“It was a long time ago, baby.” She brushes my hair over my ears.

“As we drank more beer, the conversation grew crude. Donnie was yapping about being a junior in a couple of months and already having five freshmen lined up that he wanted to take a go

at. The future was so bright for him. Sammy had one too, but he wasn't as particular as Donnie. He took what he could get, mostly at parties when everyone was too smashed to know who was fucking whom. I tried to stay silent, but the way they were talking about those girls, like they were just a piece of meat waiting to be fed to the dogs, I couldn't hold it back, so I said: 'You know, they're people too, not just objects for your lust.' So, of course, they started hassling me.

"Donnie yelled: 'Little bro has a crush!'

"And Sammy asked: 'Who is it, Disney? Come on, you can tell us.'

"Donnie broke in: 'Don't bother!' he said, snapping his fingers next to his ear, 'I got it. Sarah Summers, right?'

"I asked how he knew. You know I always tried to keep our secret, Sarah."

"I know you did, baby. You were good to me. Still are," she says, but she doesn't touch me this time. The rain is falling softly on the windshield. Everything ahead is blurry. I keep my wipers off.

"So they keep on taking shots at me. Donnie said: 'I've seen you talking to that little girl on that instant messenger thing. She's in eighth grade dude.'

"I asked: What's it matter? Eighth grade now, ninth grade in a few months. And since when did you become the moral authority of this group?'

'Ever heard of statutory rape, you retard?'

'It's not like that. We've only hung out a few times. Her parents aren't too happy about the idea of her dating an older guy, so we keep it on the low. Don't get much alone time together.'

"Sammy laughed: 'Ha! Ha! My man! If your brother plays his cards right, Don, he might get laid before the year's out.'

" 'Alright, enough already. It's not like that,' I said. 'There's something about her—the way she tightens up her face and scrunches her eyes together, it's like I see her as an old woman now, and I want to see her as an old woman in the future.'"

Sarah is tearing up now. She reaches into her purse and pulls out a tissue and smooths her dress down her leg.

"Donnie wailed that I was in love, that I needed to stop dreaming about some unforeseen future. Sammy pulled out a bottle of Peppermint Schnapps and called for a toast as he lined up the shot glasses.

Sammy called: '—To the future!'

I said: ‘—To our dreams!’

And Donnie said: ‘—To Florida! Here we come.’

“After a while we left to get something to eat. Donnie was convinced that the Pancake Palace would be a great hangout for a bunch of locals, so we went. We were seated quickly and our waitress approached us with the usual southern hospitality we’d known all our lives. She had strawberry blonde hair and pale, freckled skin—but her teeth—oh those teeth—HaHa!—they were like a picket fence molested by an Okie Tornado.

“Donnie was all over her from the minute we sat down. Sammy and I stayed quiet but Donnie worked the girl as if he were bartering for a used record in Trader’s Village. She smiled, nodded, took our drink order then stood for a long while talking to a man in leather by the cash register. When she came back with our food Donnie started up again: ‘You from around here?’ ‘We’re looking for a party.’ ‘Do you have any friends?’ ‘The more the merrier.’ All that bullshit.

“I could tell she wasn’t having it, but I guess he wore her down, because by the time we finished she’d left her number with instructions to call after midnight.

“When we went up to the cash register to pay, the man in leather wouldn’t take his eyes off Donnie, which was understandable, considering we were all tanked out of our minds. His black hair was spiked into two horns on the crown of his head. And, of course, Donnie just gave him a little wink, said, ‘Later, pal,’ and we walked out the door.

“We didn’t hear the door swing open from the Pancake Palace. We didn’t hear the clapping of the man’s combat boots. We didn’t hear what he said to Donnie before he clocked him with a tire iron. What we did hear was Donnie wailing into the night, the way he used to when we were kids and gunshots would ring out around the block.

“The man in leather was spitting on Donnie, saying something along the lines of: ‘You think you can come into my town and talk to my girlfriend? You think you’re hot shit, don’t ‘cha. Go home, city boy. I’m sure there are plenty of women to stick your pecker in.’

“By this time Donnie was a crumpled, bloody mess, so Sammy and I walked forward to scrape him off the pavement. The guy raised his tire iron at us. ‘Not so fast, pretty boys. I’m not done with your boyfriend yet.’

“And that mother fucker, he pulled out his cock, leaned his head back and, waving his arms around and singing the melody from Ode to Joy, pissed on Donnie.”

Sarah puts her hand over her mouth. I want to slap the grin forming on her face. But I breathe. I breathe and I keep going.

“I didn’t move. I couldn’t move. I was never the fighter; I was too scared. So I watched—watched as the man doused Donnie’s face and clothes. Sammy though—I told you he was quick, even when he was sloshed—he raced in there and grabbed Donnie before the guy had a chance to shake it off. We jumped in the car and sped off the highway back towards the Texas border.”

“So you just drove home? That’s it?” Sarah asks. She’s unbuttoning her blouse and fanning her face with a carryout menu from the glove box. It’s hot, even in December.

“No, we stopped at a rest area just outside of town. The liquor had caught up with Sammy and he was throwing up in the bushes. Donnie took a fishing rod from the trunk and sat next to a fetid pond, casting his line and reeling it in. Casting and reeling. Casting and reeling.

“I grabbed the bottle of Schnapps and dragged Sammy to where Donnie sat. We passed the bottle around. Donnie didn’t say anything, just sat there with the sweat beads atop his head glimmering off the moonlight. None of us said anything, really.

“But, we drank. We drank to the things we didn’t yet know, to all the things we wanted to do, to the places we wanted to see and the people we hadn’t yet met. We drank until the sun rose over Lake Texoma, listening to the soft song of the grasshoppers singing with the morning birds.

“Donnie swished around the last of the Schnapps, raised the bottle, and said: ‘Florida, here we come.’ He handed me the bottle. I laughed. He asked what was funny.

“I told him: ‘I think I get all this.’

“He asked me what. I told him that I couldn’t explain, that next time, it would be better. When we were older. He handed me the empty bottle; I looked in his eyes for a moment—our eyes—then I said: ‘Here we come,’ as I raised the bottle one last time before throwing it as far as I could see into the morning twilight.”

Sarah reaches over and touches my shoulder. She asks: “Do you get it now?”

“I didn’t move. I couldn’t move. I was never the fighter; I was too scared. So I watched—watched as the man doused Donnie’s face and clothes.”

“What?” I ask, lost in my reverie.

“You told your brother you got it. Do you get it?”

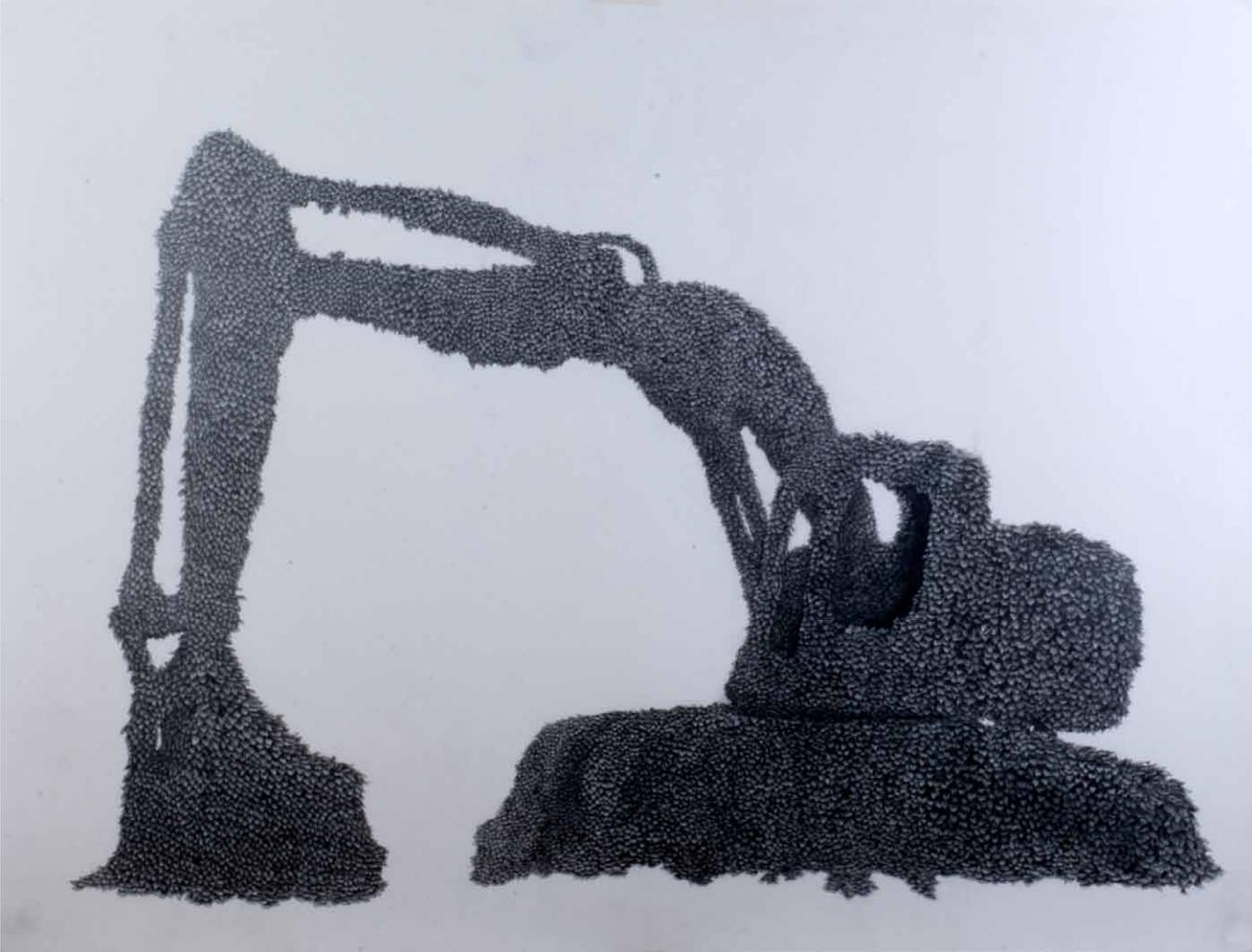
“Yeah, yeah. I get it. But it’s too late now,” I say as we blaze further along the highway.

What she doesn’t understand is that, while we may drive down that road again in the future, it will never hold the same majestic, mysterious quality it did the first time we dreamt it. That is, if we are lucky enough to notice it at all.

That dream, no matter what it entailed, will never be as sharp, crisp, or lucid as the first time we dreamt it: three sixteen year olds, a carload of beer, fishing poles, and endless possibilities. And yet, there will always be another dream following, steady at your heels, until, one day, the dreams become nothing more than distant memories.

Max Hudetz

Excavator Series



Since moving to Chicago from a more bucolic setting, the environs of my daily life have changed significantly. *I now see more concrete than cellulose, more gray than green.* The Excavator series was an attempt to merge the sightlines of my past to those of my present.

Excavator I {previous page} is loosely based on a lifetime of observing the shifting landscape of my hometown of Yorkville, Illinois. If you were to go there today, you'd see the neon geometries of the water park off of Route 47, a garish monument surrounded by countless miles of industrial agriculture and deserted subdivisions. There was a shape that people had in mind, and a shape that nature had in mind, and time has made a compromise of things that resembles both, but satisfies neither.

Excavator II is a prophecy of sorts: here, the gaze of man is made possible only by an artificial scaffold, an amalgamated life support system and prison cell. In an environment to which he finds himself becoming less compatible daily, he uproots and examines the withering remnants of what was once a land of milk and honey. With the weed torn up and cast aside, he will continue across an empty landscape, thinking only of the days when one could, for a nominal fee (perhaps as low as \$4.99), eat a theoretically infinite number of flapjacks at the International House of Pancakes.



Max Hudetz

Peter Frederiksen



“Big Spender” Oil on canvas, 2010



"Roommates are Sick" Oil on canvas, 2010

Peter **Frederiksen**



"Makeover" Oil on canvas, 2010

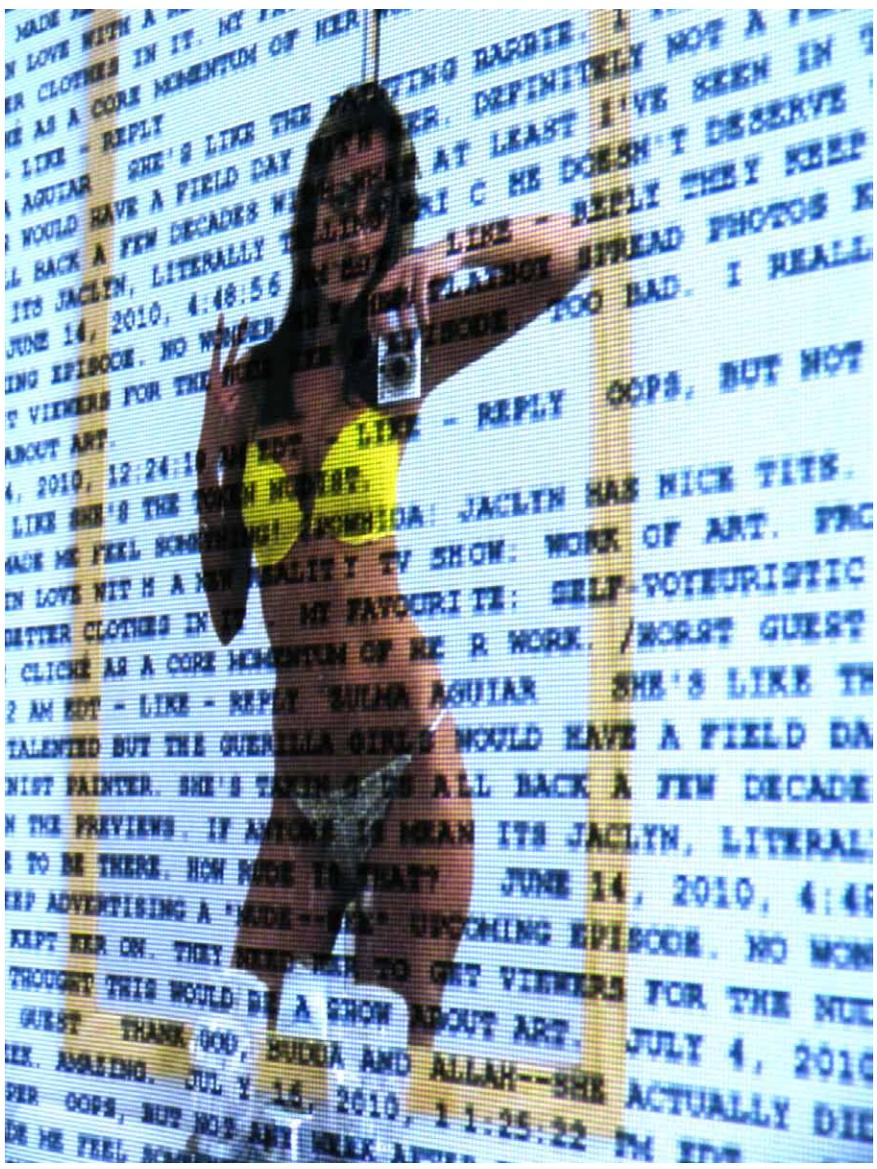


"Nosebleed" Oil on canvas, 2010

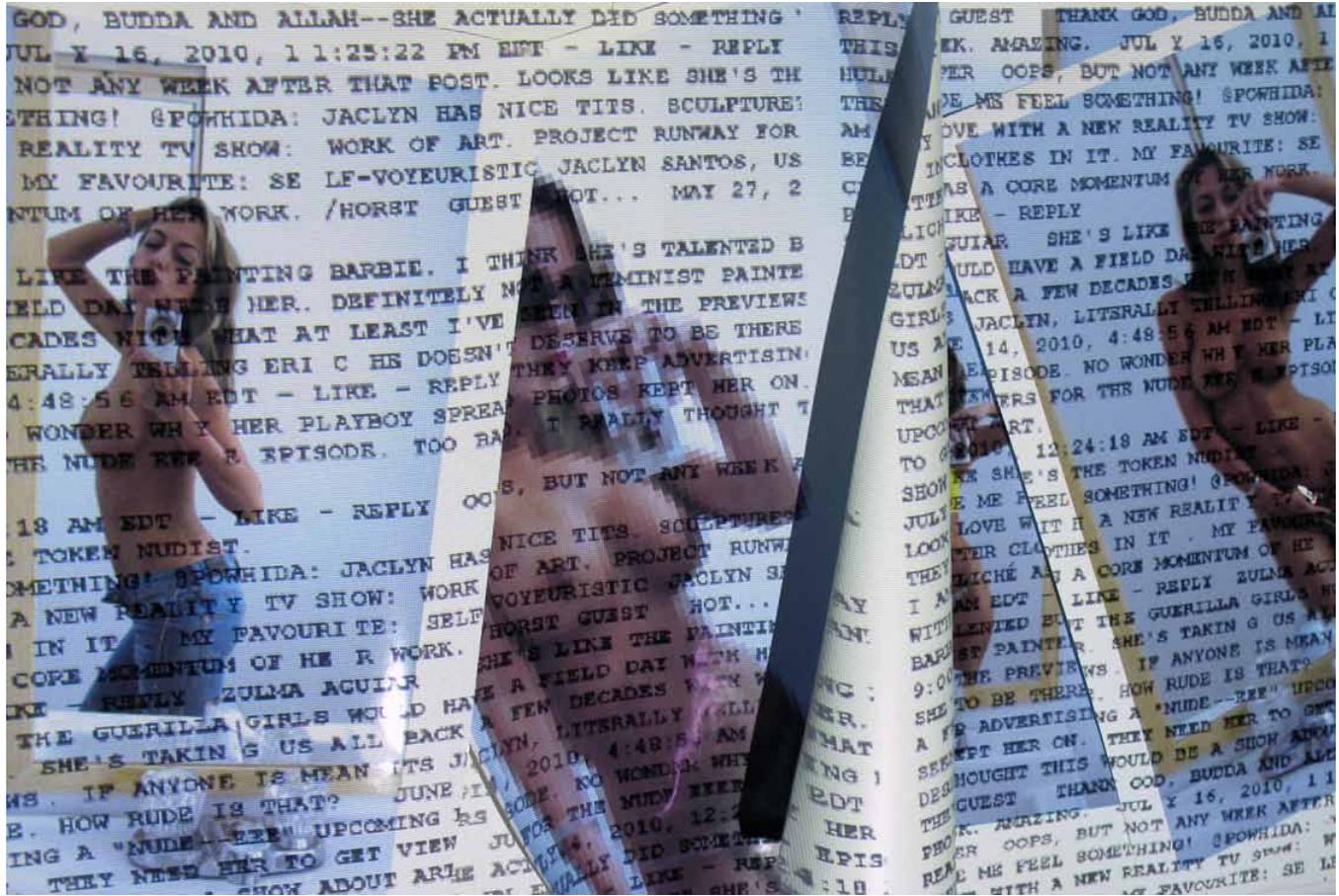


"Bad Dog" Oil on canvas, 2010

Peter **Frederiksen**

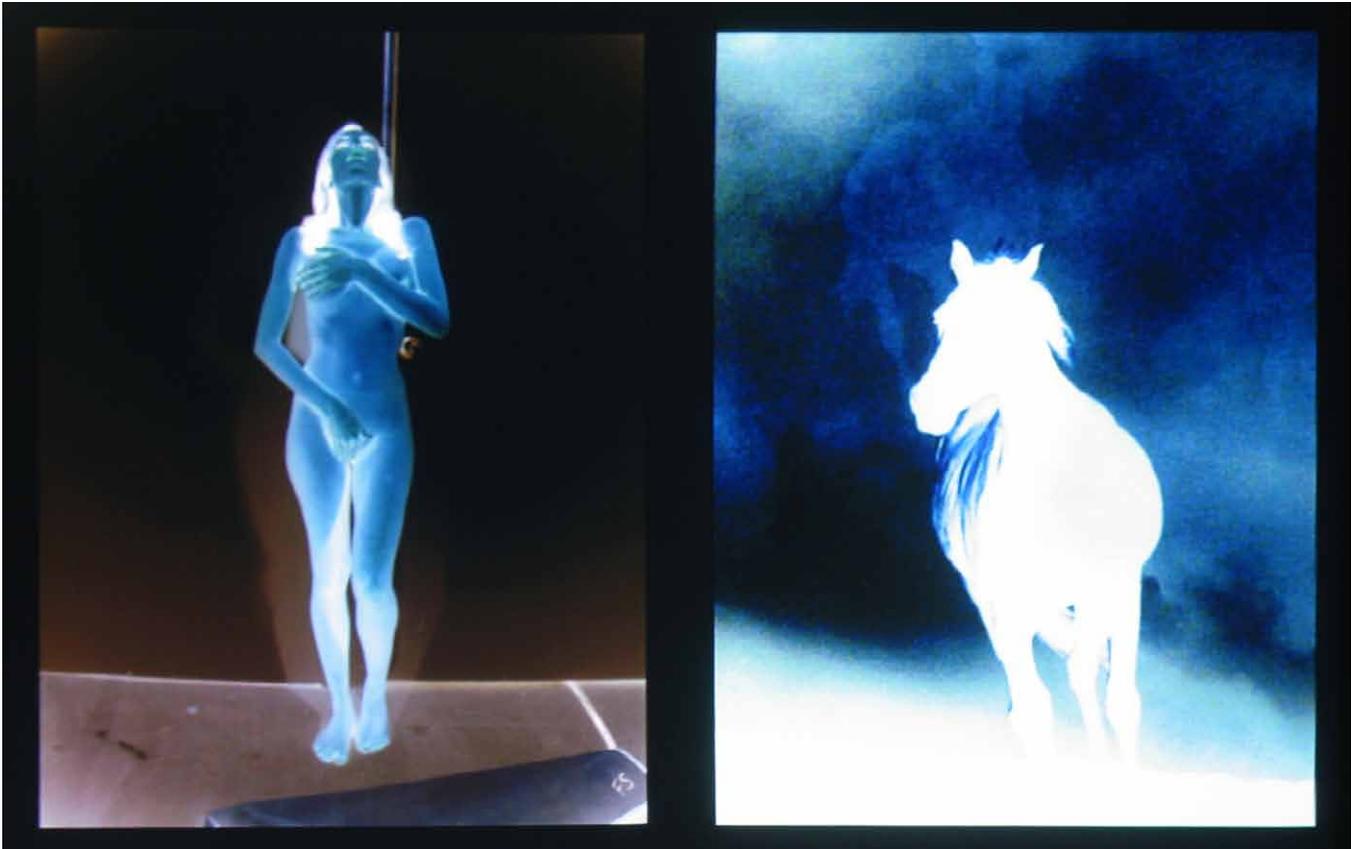


Jaclyn Santos



Jaclyn Santos

MULAN COOPER COPS, BUT NOT ANY WEEK AFTER THAT POST LOOKS LIKE SHE'S THE TOKEN NU
 THEY MADE ME FEEL SOMETHING! @POWHIDA: JACLYN HAS NICE TITS. SCULPTUR
 I AM IN LOVE WITH A NEW REALITY TV SHOW: WORK OF ART. PROJECT RUN
 WITH BETTER CLOTHES IN IT. MY FAVOURITE. SELF-VOYEURISTIC JACLYN
 BARBIE CLICHE AS A CORE MOMENTUM OF HER WORK. /HORST GUEST HOT...
 9:00:22 AM EDT - LIKE - REPLY ZULMA AGUIAR SHE'S LIKE THE PAINTING
 SHE'S TALENTED BUT THE GUERRILLA GIRLS WOULD HAVE A FIELD DAY WITH H
 A FEMINIST PAINTER. SHE'S TAKIN G US ALL BACK A FEW DECADES WITH W
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 THEY KEEP ADVERTISING A "NUDE--EEE" UPCOMING EPISODE. NO WONDER WHY
 PHOTOS KEPT HER ON PLAYBOY SPREAD PHOTOS. SHE NEED HER TO GET VIEWERS FOR THE NUDE EEE EPIS
 REALLY THOUGHT THIS WOULD BE A SHOW ABOUT ART. JULY 4, 2010, 12:24:18 PM
 AGUIAR SHE'S LIKE THE PAINTING BARBIE. I THINK SHE'S TALENTED BUT
 REPLY A GUEST WITH HER HANDS FINITELY NOT BUDDA AND ALLAH--SHE ACTUALLY DID SOMETHING



Santiago Martinez

Musings on the Gaze

Art-goers flock to see Seurat’s A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte. Sitting and staring for extended periods of time dissecting, re-imagining brush strokes in the calmness of the conscience has become, for both novices and experts, a meme of sorts. Atop the museum bench, the romance begins.

The uniqueness of the art-viewer relationship lies in the illusion that it’s a unidirectional love affair. Here the piece of art is hung upon the wall, vulnerable, flaunted for thousands of eyes, inducing admiration, condemnation, and a flurry of critiques. And on the other end, the human being strolls about, smugly aware that the piece will not respond.

An inanimate object has nothing to gain from your adoration.

It is what it is, does what it does, and our brains acknowledge that.

The give-and-take. A great charade with a tinge of foreplay. This is the silent battle of wills, an attempt to fully understand one’s mate only to be left flirting with an alluring reticence shaped by one’s own limits.

Du Bois once wrote, “But art is not simply works of art; it is the spirit that knows Beauty, that has music in its soul and the color of sunsets in its headkerchiefs; that can dance on a flaming world and make the world dance, too.”

A haunting power is prescribed to art. An inanimate object has nothing to gain from your adoration. It is what it is, does what it does, and our brains acknowledge that. But art, with its knowledge, spirit, and sensory brilliance, has the distinct ability to evoke and reveal, so as to make one wonder, who is the viewer?

And how does that make you feel? Shall a flush of red sweep from your eyes to your toes now that you've pondered you're not the only peeping tom? Does the enticement of the forbidden shrivel now that you've been exposed? And when you discover you're all alone in this duel, how much of your reflection will you be able to still recognize?

From a medium, all art potentially peers: the left eye latched onto the intellect, the right roaming about on the visceral, and somewhere a focus is beginning to take shape, at which a viewer is in a state of complete honesty, complete comfort, naked, as upon one another, two beautiful entities gaze.

“But art is not simply works of art; it is the spirit that knows Beauty, that has music in its soul and the color of sunsets in its headkerchiefs; that can dance on a flaming world and make the world dance, too.”

-Du Bois

Xavier Duran



Jacques Lacan postulates that *the concept of the gaze does not belong to the subject but the object of the gaze*. These selective stills of video pornography demonstrate that statement, emphasizing the exact moment the object becomes aware of this power. The result brings the gaze's power to transform the object's behavior and mental infrastructure.













Garrett Seelinger

A Guide to Surviving Your Favorite Book

I was nervous, but the good kind of nervous. I stood before the other traumatized readers with my mouth open, breathing quickly. My fingers tingled and my palms were sweaty. It was just like the way I felt when I picked up my favorite book for a second read, but this time I was in front of a crowd of supporters in the St. Xavier's Elementary School gymnasium. They sat on folding chairs every Wednesday from 7:15 to 8:30 with a big banner hanging that said: "Book Survivors Unite." If I was silent for any longer, I would have stayed silent. Instead, I spoke, shared my story, and my recovery began that Wednesday night, almost a year and a half ago.

After attending regularly for sixteen months, I decided to write something that could help others who have had trouble with books. We have our daily lives to contend with and books are all around us. The trauma of reading is too close to us. We can't recover quickly. Even street signs and billboards can cause a panic attack for the recently traumatized. In the first month after my incident, I

boxed all of my books and put them in the garage. It might be important to know that my garage is not in good shape. It still has the original asbestos roof, which has holes from the old owner's BB-gun wielding kids. So, putting the books in the garage wasn't just about getting them out of sight. I wanted to punish them with darkness and cold and moisture. I started writing soon after that. It was a way to control words. I would make neat sentences. I chose words. I commanded subjects. The "Book Survivors Unite" support group was helpful to me, but not everyone lives near St. Xavier's

Do not sell the book online...

Do not put the book in a drawer...

Elementary School and I knew other people were suffering. I decided to write this short article to help people, realizing that a book-length self-help guide might cause a nervous breakdown for someone whose trauma is closely associated with harsh irony.

It was a long time before I realized that everyone's trauma begins when they realize that the book was looking back at them, but this must have already been apparent to me somehow. A month before my first meeting, I wrote a poem that clearly reflected this genesis of my own problems. I've included it here because it may be helpful for those who are completely unfamiliar with the realization that causes the trauma.

“An Unforgiving Book”

I know you: eyes.
You sail the stormy waves
and stir foreboding clouds
until the dry-dock
sucks you blind.

Show me.
Illuminate the soul
your claim
for I see only
darkness. The sun shows you
me, but where is your light hidden?

Glassy sorrow
pleading for the end
and I spelled out your cowardice.

Drink me
not a drop spilled
and I will share my secrets.

Reader response,

Shut up, book.

Don't spell out darkness.

I'll re-stack you!

spine against the splintery shelf

or leave you in the bathroom.

I'll drop you in a box,

let you mold and freeze

with the lawnmower,

tears falling from the old

asbestos.

Let these eyes

rest

their blotted fear.

Stay closed,

please,

if you can.

I unwittingly wrote a poem that reflected the source of my incident.

It would have been better if I had realized it then. So, the first piece of advice, and I know the members of "Book Survivors Unite" would echo this back to you, is to pay attention. When you realize the book speaks to you, reflects you, looks at you, pay attention to yourself because the book will not know you until you let it.

The rest of my advice is for those who have already passed their crisis point and need help with recovery. First, do not throw the unforgiving book away. Or, at least, don't throw it away immediately. There is a hierarchy to a books involvement in your life. Try to find balance in knowing

Garrett **Seelinger**

that it is a proper inhabitant of your life by identifying its correct place. Based on location, here is a guide to the hierarchy of a book's involvement in a person's life:

1. In your pocket
2. On your bedside table, desk, or coffee table
3. On the floor
4. On a bookshelf
5. In storage

Warnings: Do not sell the book online. If the crisis reaches the point when you must get rid of it, sell or donate it to a used bookstore. Otherwise, it will haunt you in plain sight. Do not put the book in a drawer, serious trauma can be caused if you absentmindedly open the drawer and are surprised to find its cover looking at you.

Members of “Book Survivors Unite” have suggested that trying to go back to reading should begin with something nonthreatening, like a fashion magazine or a cookbook. I recommend something predictable, but well-structured. Cookbooks are good for those who have had particularly bad experiences, unless the descriptions of food are graphic. As you progress, you may find poetry helpful. The content can be daunting at first, but take comfort in the structure of some old sonnets or a villanelle. Try not to pay attention to conflicted meanings or interpretive difficulties. Try finding poems online before you attempt a book. Some survivors describe how books of poetry or short stories can have an underlying voice or unifying theme that begins to notice your attention. Popular, but not award-winning, books are best for those who feel up to the challenge of getting back to a full novel.

Despite my willingness to provide advice toward re-entering the reading world full, protection can only be found in abstinence. Several members of “Book Survivors Unite” went on to form a commune. Fearing and respecting the gaze of writing in itself, they do not allow pen or pencil. All communication is oral and they regularly hold days of silence for the sake of those who find that speech is too similar to authorship. After I realized that the anxiety of public speech was similar to the anxiety of reading, I spent a few days in silence with the commune of book survivors to cleanse myself of these associations. I eventually managed to separate the feelings of being watched by people and books, but the association is still unnerving.

As one final warning, readers should know that even the shape and material of a book can be problematic. My favorite book, the one that plotted my downfall, was a small green cloth-bound book, called “Singular Island.” It watched me and seduced me page by page. When I finished it, I knew only that I loved it, not that it had devoured me. I came back to it and read it again, but this time, I did not feel its closure at the end. After a failed third attempt at reading it, I found myself in a dark state, familiar to all book survivors. A thin line separated me from insanity or self-destruction. I burned it. I left it behind until after my recovery, when I came back to it. I bought a new edition, a slim paperback. Re-reading it in these last few weeks has been a slow process, full of bitterness. My only remaining serious symptom arises when a green cloth-bound book notices me. They invade my peripheral vision, surging for prominence in my ever-narrowing mind.

Max Hudetz

Absent

Self-portraiture has always been an interest of mine-

-the overtly subjective and masturbatory nature of the self-portrait is, to me, nothing short of the core ideology of the visual artist.

Visually speaking, I found that a likeness could be accomplished with little other than the shapes of the head and hair. At the time, these aspects of my appearance were unremittingly tied to Christianity--because of my long hair, friends and strangers alike had taken to calling me "Jesus." Something about this intentional error of perception was the genesis, so to speak, of this drawing.

Absent, for me, is a meditation on willful blindness.



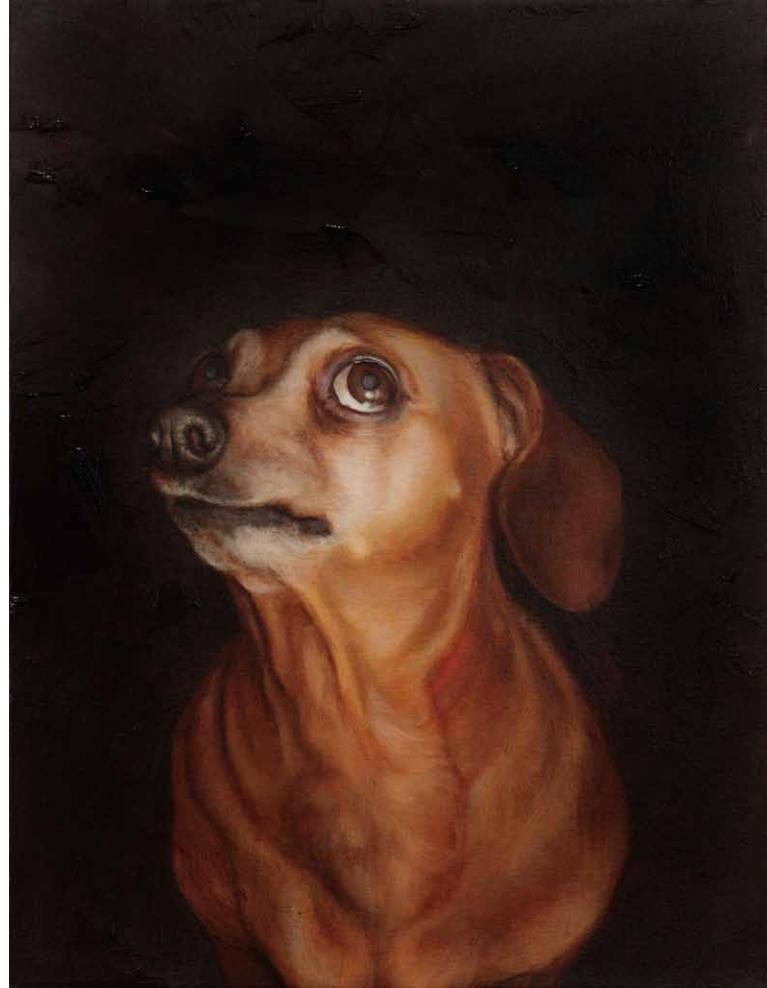
Raychael Stine

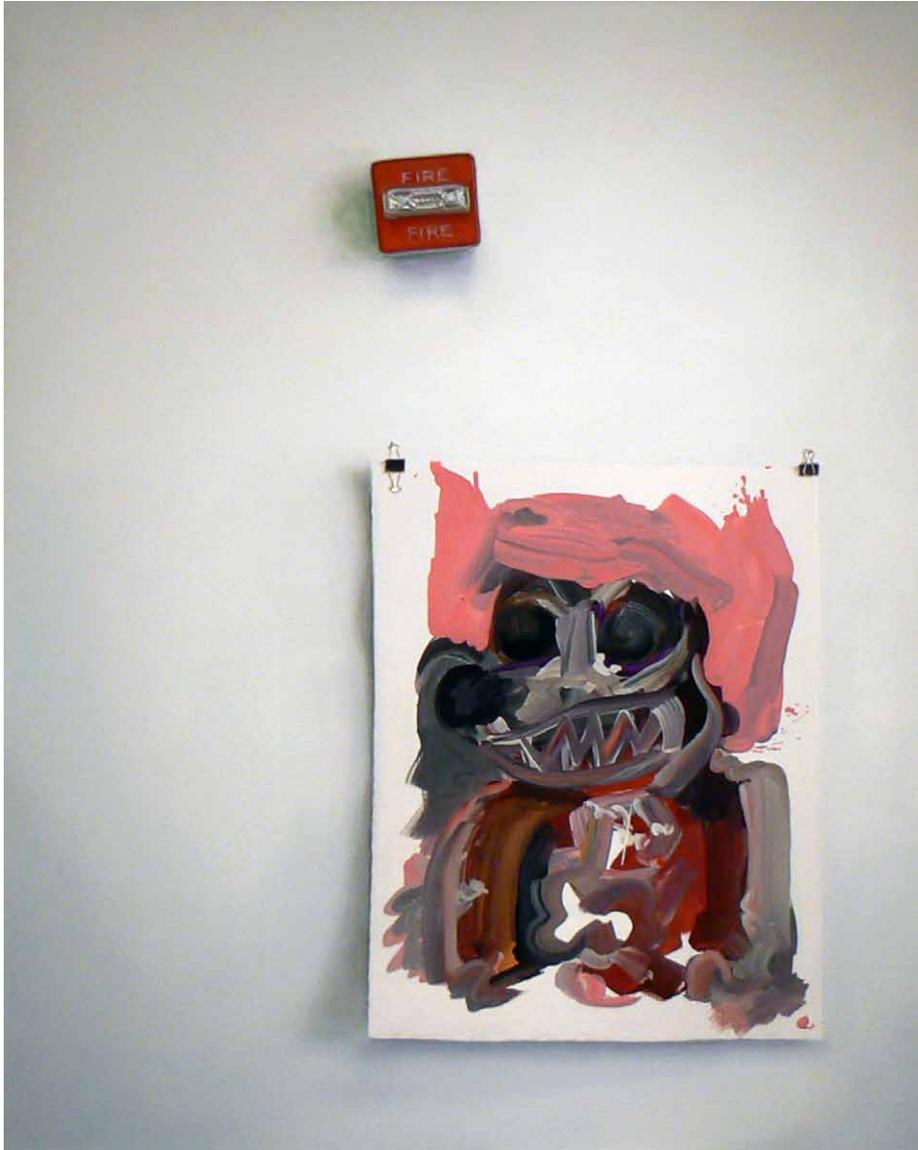
Saturn Series

Portraiture is not simply about the desire to immortalize, or to mirror; ***particularly a portrait of a dog.***

One accesses a portrait of a dog through different means, without linguistic symbol or structured language and with a different set of assumptions and a different set of place. This displacement allows a subtle undercurrent of instability to seep in. It can be funny and endearing, and gently disarming, and sometimes unexpectedly terrifying.

Saturn, 2009, acrylic and oil on canvas, 13 x 17 in





Saturn 2, 2010, acrylic and oil on canvas, 40 x 32 in



Vision 1, 2010, acrylic and oil on canvas, 13 x 17 in

I like blurring the lines between the intimate domestic space, and the vast, possibly dangerous unknowable spaces that exist underneath the familiar, outside or elsewhere—I like the desolation and isolation that happens in various kinds of horizons and fulcrums; and on a more intimate level, the unknowable, immeasurable power of the veiled. Both conjure fear and instability by making us aware of our lack of control over the familiar and the unfamiliar that exists within it.



Lizzy (Pointer and Plow).

Oil and Acrylic on canvas, Acrylic on Arches paper, postcard, digital photograph, tacks, 8.5 x 11 in.

Often in my work, an insidious and uncanny formal repetition begins to emerge. Sometimes it makes me laugh, sometimes not so much. There is control over the self and then there is the lack of it. The line between control and lack of control is danced upon and traversed in the creation of a single painting and across a body of work. There is a kind of nesting that happens from piece to piece. The work is self referential, cyclical, and constantly shifting.

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Saturn Saturn 2 2, 2010.
Acrylic and oil on canvas,
Digital photograph, digital
photograph, tacks, clips.
50 x 60 in

Raychael Stine



Late fall 2009. Hal laying in the same place as pictured in "Blanket", with "Blanket" and "Saturn"



Food for the Moon, 2010, oil and acrylic on canvas, 54 x 62 in

Raychael **Stine**



Studio, March 2010

I paint about paint, painting and painting; I am interested in what it is to see and to picture and the relationship between these processes. I am always mucking about in the vague, productive area that exists between false poles (of the dominant and the submissive, and the serious and humorous, the good and the bad, and between abstraction and representation). These power dynamics are an integral part of the entire history of painting and particularly portraiture. This history and these structures are not static but ever-approachable, ever evolving. A portrait is always dangerous, and seductive, because it engages our desire to see, to be recognized and known, and our capacity to reciprocate.



Untitled (Blanket), 2009. Oil and acrylic on canvas 34 x 40 in

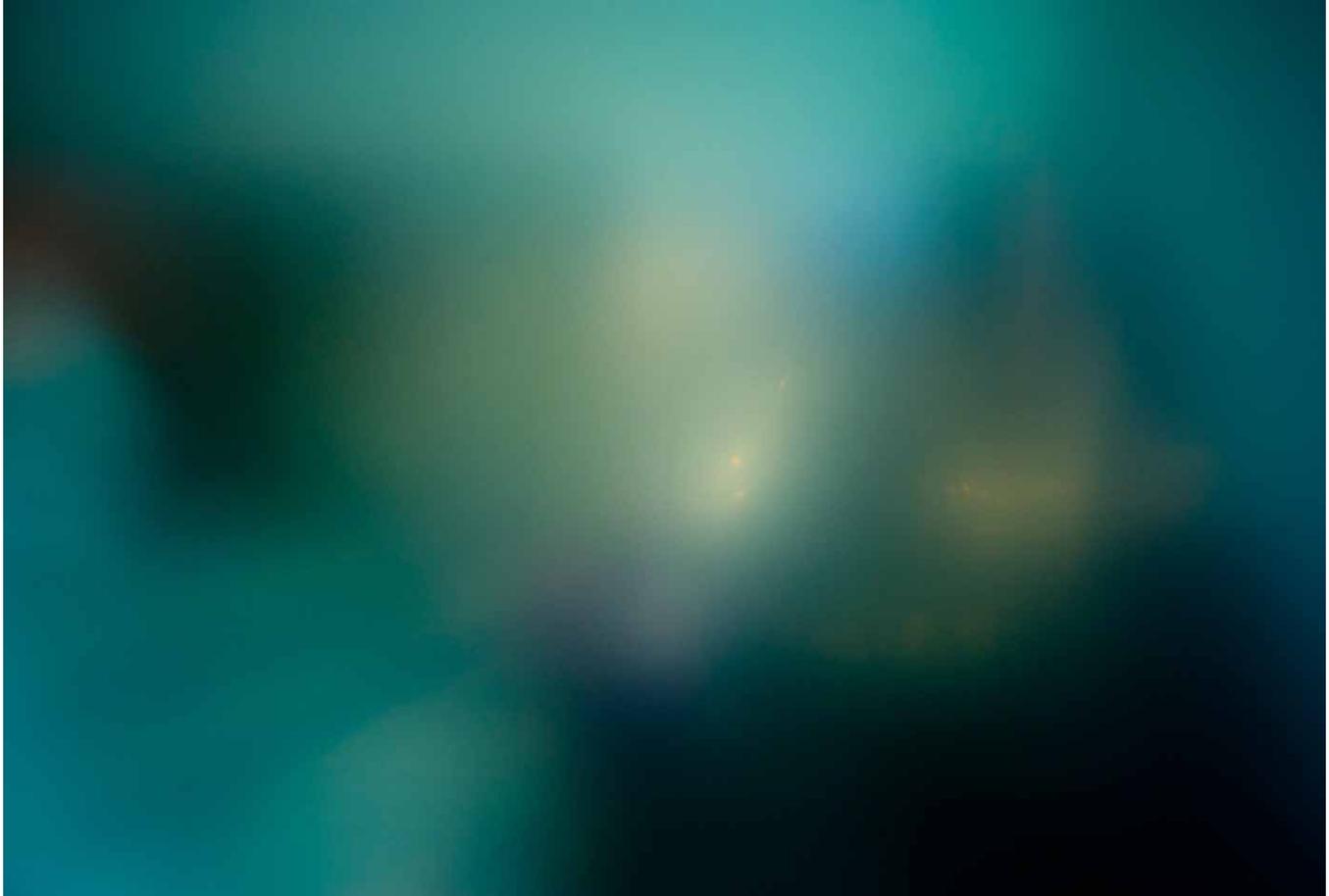
James **Exley**

Losing Sight Of What Is Real

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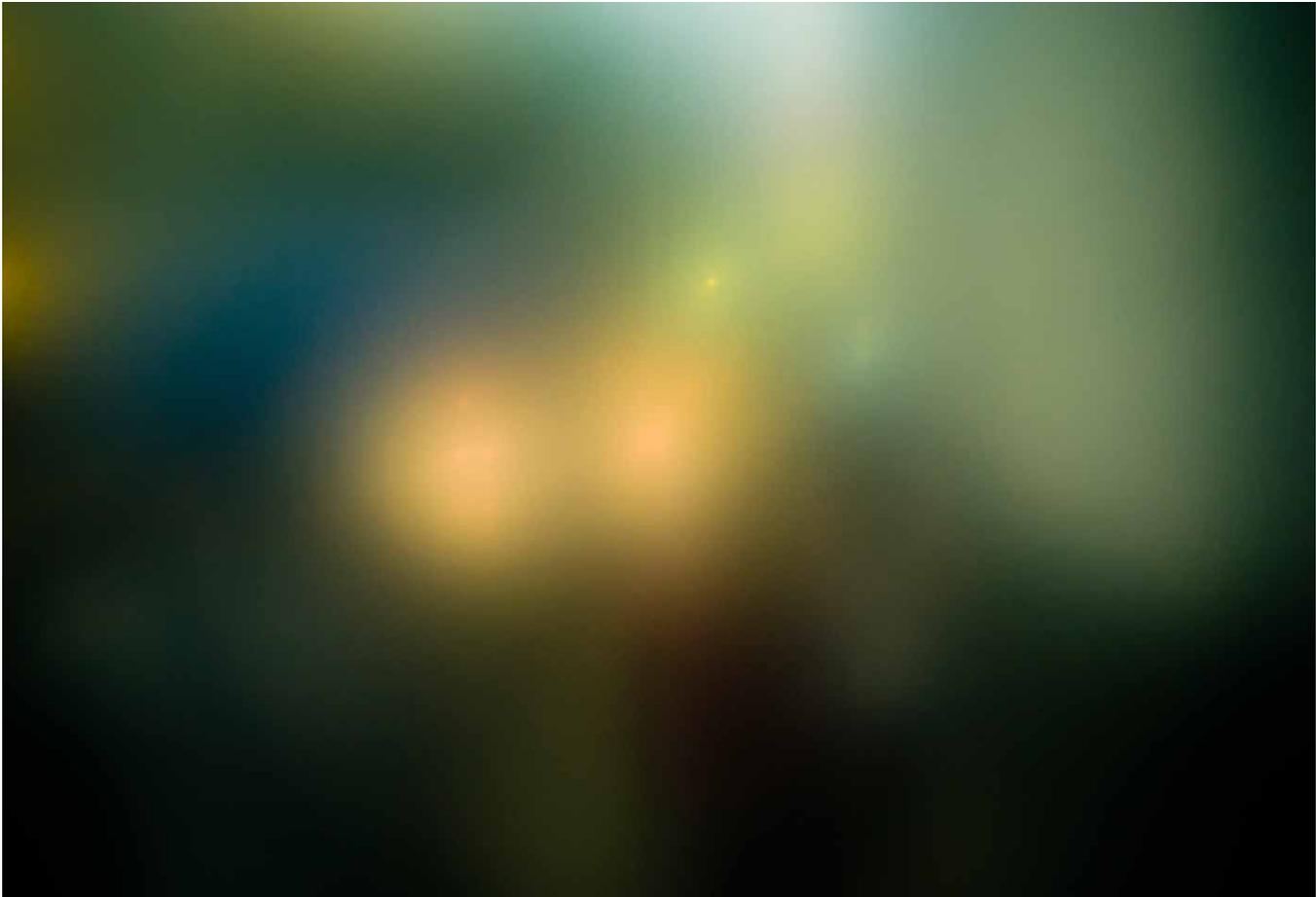
The Gaze / Winter 2011

Four years ago I started working in the world of commercial photography. A large part of my work responsibilities became color management and fine art printing; two tasks that demand precision and an ability to discern minute subtleties. As time progressed, ***I became certain that my vision was deteriorating at an increasingly rapid rate. The world started to blur before my eyes.*** Before starting to work in this field, I had a prescription for glasses to correct very mild nearsightedness. I would only wear my glasses if driving late at night, or if I was very tired. Now I was beginning to wear them more and more frequently, not willing to trust that I was actually seeing my surroundings with any clarity.

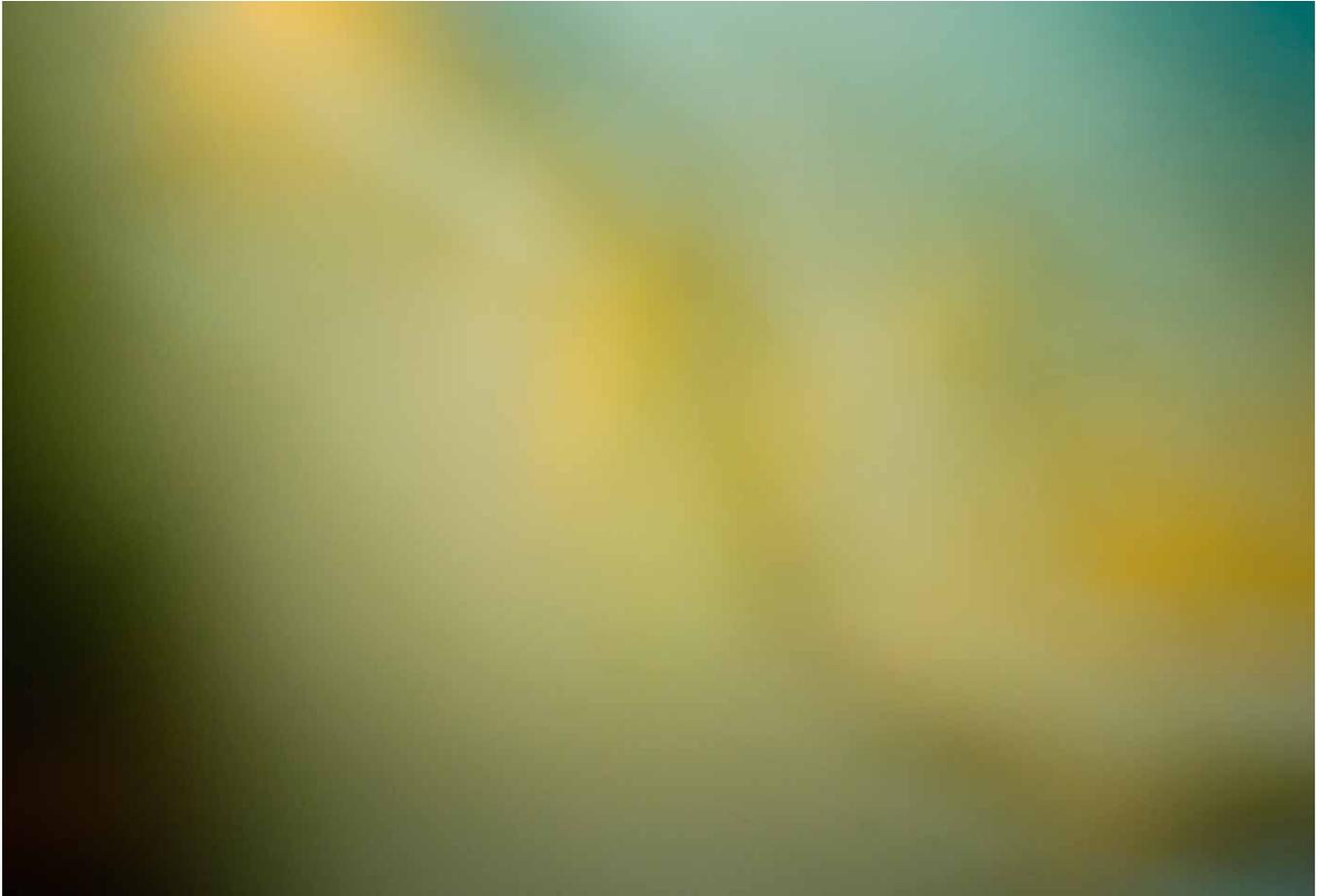


Jonathan In The Rain
On Previous: Downtown Chicago

James Exley



Oncoming Traffic



How I Feel When I'm With You

I began to intentionally take pictures out of focus, in a strange attempt to predict what my future vision would be reduced to. Unexpectedly, I began to find a great beauty, (and a somewhat odd comfort), when viewing things completely out of focus. At a certain point lines and light would move past being recognizable and would blend together in such a way as to create entirely new scenes. Despite my intense fear of losing my vision, I found these images quite compelling. For myself, they are a reminder that the world is full of beauty, regardless of my limitations or inadequacies.

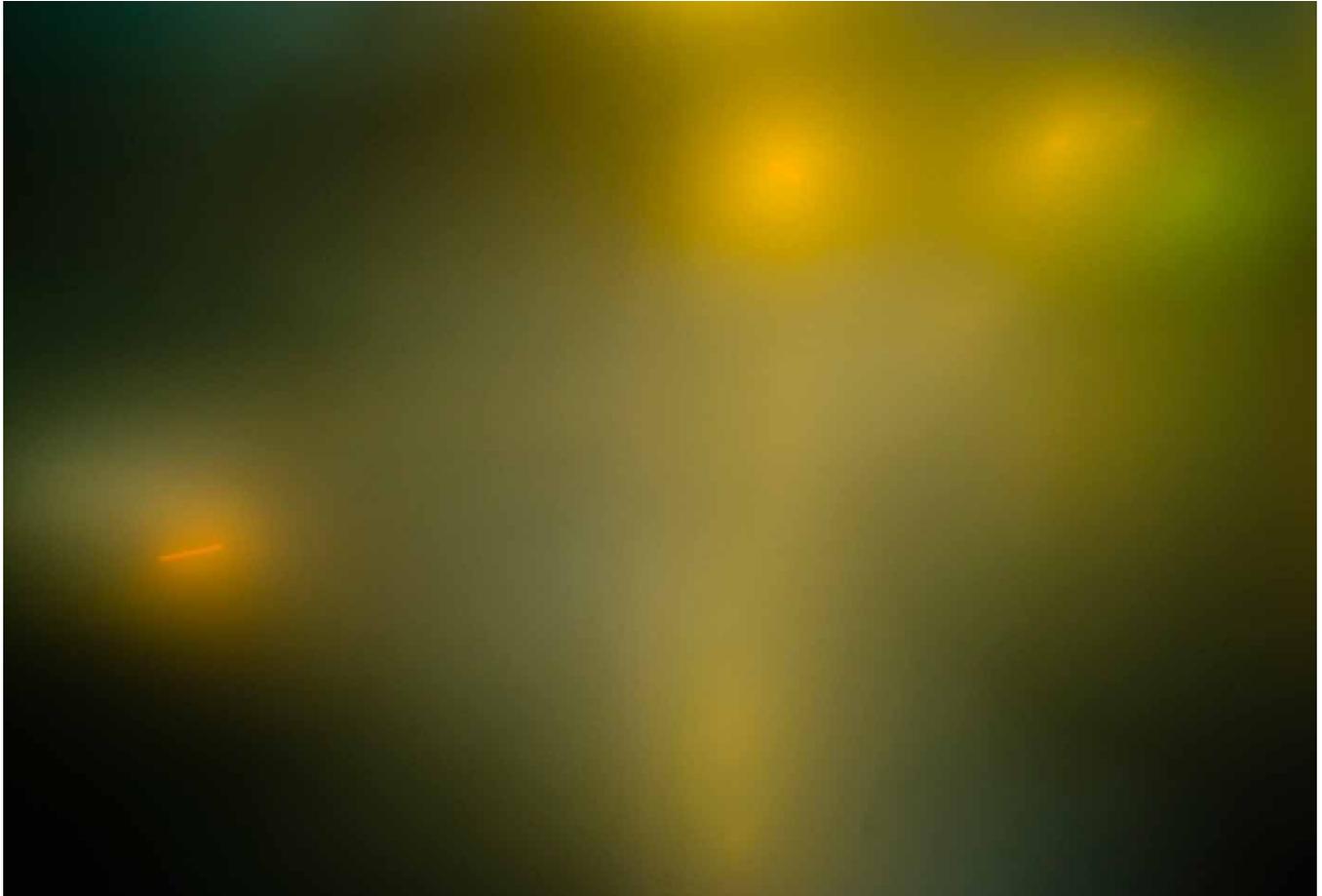
James **Exley**

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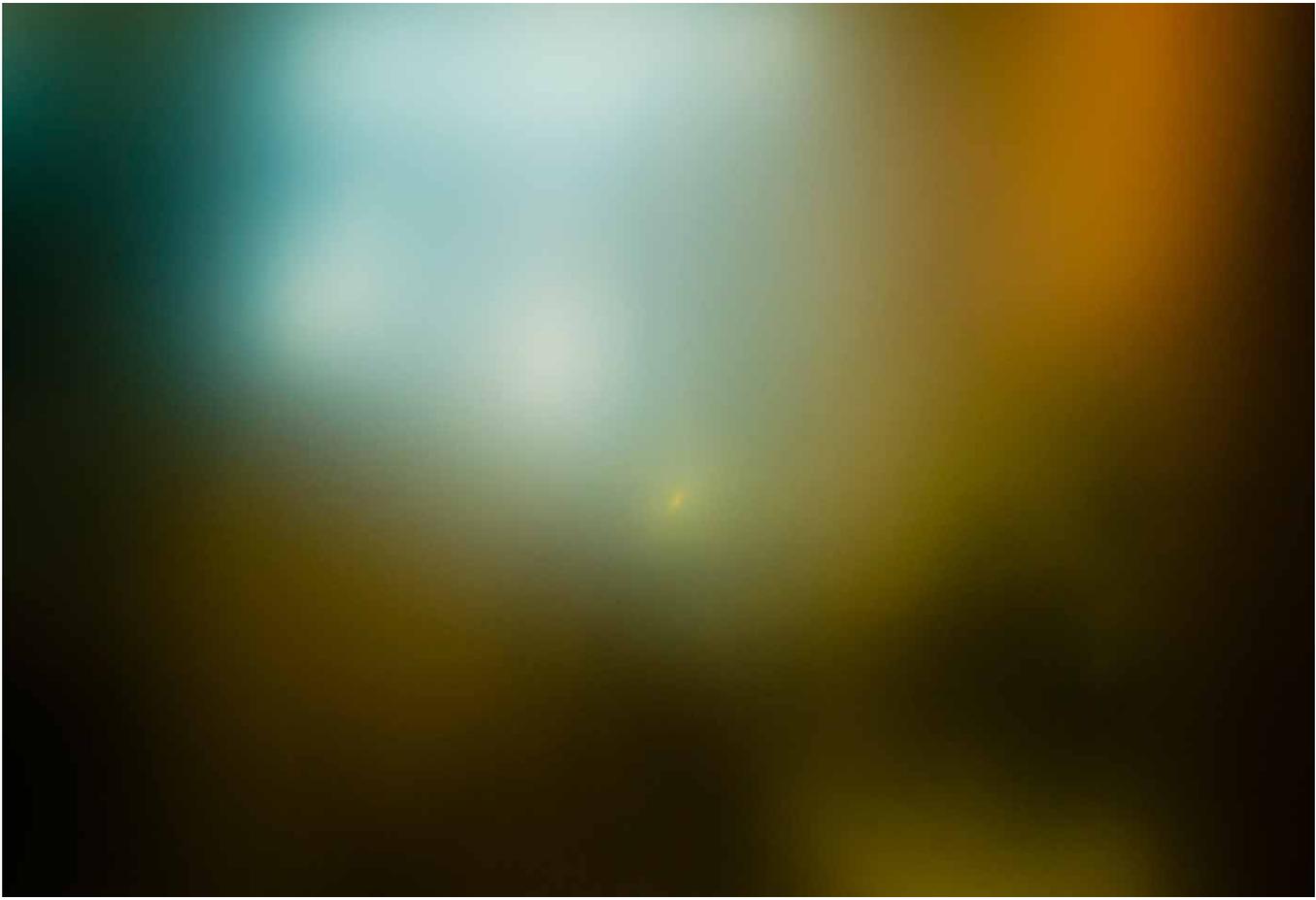
James Exley

This past summer I went to see an eye doctor for the first time since starting to work in the industry of photography. I found out that my prescription has not shifted - in any way - in the past four years. *The truth, it seems, is that the changes that occurred were in my mind, not my physical body.* As I honed my visual sensitivities, the cost came not in the form of actual damage to my physical body, but rather as an increasing awareness of the limitations I have had all along.



That Was The Worst Night Ever
On Previous: *And The Sun Still Shines*

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Valerie Fixing My Hood

CONTRIBUTOR BIOS

No. 2 The Gaze

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Max Hudetz draws and sometimes paints. He will receive his BFA from UIC in 2011. When he isn't running or arting, he is sleeping. At the time of this writing, his socks have dogs on them. From time to time he posts drawings or what-have-you's at Makejax.blogspot.com.

Santiago Martinez is a Joliet native and graduated from Columbia College Chicago in the field of fiction writing. He is inspired by poverty, neurosis, psychosis, and the contradictory nature of humans. He can be reached at smez86@aol.com.

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Raychael Stine is an artist residing in Chicago and Texas. She is best known for her paintings featuring dogs in dangerous, humorous, and intimate situations. She received an MFA from the University of Illinois at Chicago and a BFA from The University of Texas at Dallas, and she is currently a visiting artist in residence and lecturer for the 2010-2011 academic year at Texas Christian University, Fort Worth. Additional information can be found at www.raychaelstine.com

COMPOSITE INFO

No. 2 The Gaze

Composite is a Chicago based quarterly electronic magazine aiming to showcase the work of artists working in multiple disciplines focusing around an issue specific theme.

Coming Spring 2011: Your origins define you, without you having any say in it. The genes passed through generations are impossible to escape, and the culture that comes with it can be as equally engrained, or somehow muddled in the transition, ***No. 3 Kith & Kin.***

More information can be found through the following vehicles:

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Email: compositeeditors@gmail.com

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Composite is the brain-child and uncompensated project of:

Zach Clark is currently Californian, living in a valley who's smog and fog deters much ability to see anything ever. More of his work can be seen at www.zachclarkis.com.

Kara Cochran made many drawings and paintings of eyes during high school. Also, she is the only person in her immediate family who does not need corrective lenses. Her work can be found at www.karacochran.arloartists.com.

Xavier Duran believes that the stare is the most dangerous and sensuous of all physical acts. You can view his work at www.xavierduran.com.

Suzanne Makol enjoys gazing at the little details in life that others typically pass by. She often captures these moments in the form of photographs. She can be contacted at suzannemakol@gmail.com.

Joey Pizzolato is a writer, photographer, and avid traveler based out of Chicago. His work has appeared in AREA—Chicago, Steam Ticket: A Third Coast Review, and is forthcoming in Cantarville. He can be reached at joeypizzolato@gmail.com.

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