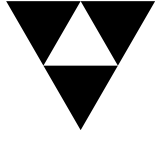


THE RACKET





THE RACKET

Hey folks.

It's amazing how, whether we like it or not, deeply affected we all are by the ego of self-important men. I was a young kid in the 1980s when Russia and the United States were coyly butting nuclear heads, but even then, decked out in a bright yellow Batman hats and grey sweatpants, the pressure of the great world powers puffing their chests made an impact on me. I had a recurring dream where Gorbachev and Reagan's floating heads loomed above a darkly clouded landscape, flickers of lightning illuminating a desolate plateau, while a thin stream of radio warned of an oncoming nuclear war.

Again, I was five or six, barely old enough to read a bike with training wheels, but the saber rattling of two powerful white dudes still found its way into my subconscious. I had no connection to war or to weapons of mass destruction, I was just a small, vulnerable human kicked around in the wake of all that bluster.

It's thirty years later—give or take a decade—and I'm reading an article about Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy and President Joe Biden butting heads over the debt ceiling and flashes of my anxious youth are sparingly across my brain. Again, two dudes trying to carve a spot out in the history books, have picked a battlefield that can, and probably will, directly affect an enormous amount of people in the United States in a very, very negative way. Not because they've done anything wrong, or done at anything all really, but just because two supersized egos are clashing with little or no regard to what happens in the aftermath.

It is jarring for many reasons. The obvious being that if the United States forfeit on their loans, our economy will be thrown into chaos and recession will become more than just an analyst's idle threat. And there's really no reason for us to do so aside from the fact that two people in power are trying to see who can get their hand the highest on the end of the baseball bat.

We vote people into power because we believe they'll, at the very least, look out for the best interests of their constituents. That the actions they take, if not always perfect, will at least always be aimed at improving the lives of those they serve. This is not that. This is a political dick measuring contest, a situation that is more often the norm these days. A situation where a personal quest to

THE RACKET

burnish ego and boost legacy come at the cost of the greater public. And though it speaks to the greater flaws of our corroded democracy, it also speaks to how little control our current system provides the populace that propels it. We are, again and again, put at the mercy of ego and individual purpose and more often than not find ourselves fighting to grapple with the consequences.

I don't dream of Biden and McCarthy's heads floating over a dystopian economic landscape. But I do spend chunks of my day fighting back an anxiety that seems to have no root cause. A twist in my gut that derives not from my day-to-day concerns, but from a hollow, political gridlock I have, absolutely nothing, to do with. Which, I guess, is just politics—the lives of the many decided by the few—and if so now, more than ever, it seems like utter bullshit. It seems like theatrics when we need change and reform and progress.

'Till next time.

- N

The Racket stands against
police brutality, racism and violence
perpetuated towards BIPOC
communities in all forms.

HELP BAY AREA HOMELESS YOUTH

HUCKLEBERRY YOUTH PROGRAMS

donate here

LARKIN ST. YOUTH SERVICES

donate here

FIRST PLACE FOR YOUTH

donate here

BLACK LIVES MATTER

<https://blacklivesmatter.com/>

THE RACKET : QUARANTINE JOURNAL, Vol. 5, NO. 82

Copyright 2023
The Racket

Cover Image: Osvaldo Ramirez Castillo
Credit: © Osvaldo Ramirez Castillo
Title/Date/Info:

Santo Marero / 2020

medium: mixed media drawing and size: 17.5' x 21.5' inches.

Website: <https://www.osvaldoramirezcastillo.com/>
IG: @osvaldoramirezcastillo

Promotional rights only.

This book, or parts thereof, may not be reproduced in any form without permission from individual authors.

The scanning, uploading and distribution of this document via the internet or any other means without the permission of the author(s) is illegal.

I'll be a lobsterman if I need to be.



WE HAVE A PATREON

We aren't in this for the money.

But there are costs in doing what we do.

Any help with those costs (and with the costs of future endeavors) would be greatly appreciated.

If not, we get it and we still appreciate you.

THANK YOU TO THESE FOLKS

MATTHEW CARNEY
CATHY & JOHN SANDERS
HALLIE YOUNG
JAMIE ENGELMANN
CASEY BENNETT
LILIAN CAYLEE
LAUREN C. JOHNSON
ANGIE MCDONALD
QUYNH-AN PHAN
SPENCER TIERNEY
ALEX MACEDA
DAVID SANDERS
SARAMANDA SWIGART
DANIELLE TRUPPI
RUTHIE WAGMORE
GALADRIELLE ALLMAN
HEIDI ASUNDI
STEPHANIE ANN MAY
SASHA BERNSTEIN
ELIZABETH BERNSTEIN
GEOFF CALLARD
KATHRYN CLARK
PAUL CORMAN-ROBERTS
CASEY COVIELLO
YVONNE DALSCHE

RHEA DHANBHOORA
KEVIN DUBLIN
LYNN E.
YALITZA FERRERAS
HADAS GOSHEN
KAREN JANAS
KIMI LYNN SUGIOKA
ERICKA LUTZ
TOMAS MONIZ
ALEX NISNEVICH
NICK O'BRIEN
LAUREN PARKER
EMILY PINKERTON
KRISTA POSELL
FRANCESCA ROBERTSON
TIM RYAN
DANIEL SCHWARTZBAUM
SAMANTHA SCHOECH
SAMANTHA SETHNA
NORMA SMITH
SELBY SOHN
ARJUN THAKKAR
CAROL VENA-MONDT
KURT WALLACE
ANNIE WATTLES
JUDY WEIL

OUR PATREON:

WWW.PATREON.COM/THERACKETREADINGSERIES

SUBMIT YOUR WORK

P O E T R Y

P R O S E

A R T

2 0 0 0 W O R D S

O R L E S S

Send to:

theracketreadingseries@gmail.com

CONTENTS

INDIANA HOOVER	<i>untitled sketchbook drawing</i>	1
KATE WYLIE	Holy	2
INDIANA HOOVER	<i>untitled sketchbook drawing</i>	3
INDIANA HOOVER	<i>untitled sketchbook drawing</i>	4
ZOE DORADO	At the Vigil in Oakland Chinatown, the KQED journalist asks for my permission to use my photo and I wonder what kind of grief gets documented.	5
OLIVER MCCONNIE	<i>Ex Nihilo</i>	7
OLIVER MCCONNIE	<i>Portent</i>	8
ANDREJ BILOVSKY	BUSBOY (AB)	9
SHANNON PURCELL	<i>Gun Crazy</i>	12
SHANNON PURCELL	<i>In Every Dream an Abandoned House</i>	13
NANA BOATENG	a sky I didn't notice changed	14
SHANNON PURCELL	<i>The Kiss</i>	15

THE RACKET

82



UNTITLED SKETCHBOOK DRAWING
INDIANA HOOVER
2022

Holy

KATE WYLIE

Dear dead ravens caught in migration,
all I want for Christmas is the moon.
If possible, I'll pull it down myself.

Granny's been leaving little scraps of tin
all over the yard, hoping you'll reappear.
She doesn't understand weather patterns

anymore. She's become cold, confused
regarding the old adage. Blame it on age
and the past. Blame it on anything but her future.

The woman who carried me on her back
needs me to carry her now. How hopeless.
How totally hollow, this whole-hearted life.

If possible, I'd become a winged chariot.
I'd fly her somewhere ethereal, mythical,
mystical. I'd braid myself a lasso, hook

to any shiny thing, just to show her how
much of the world she's become. How
the glitter in every sewer is her smile.

How gold. How holy.



UNTITLED SKETCHBOOK DRAWING
INDIANA HOOVER
2022



UNTITLED SKETCHBOOK DRAWING
INDIANA HOOVER
2022

At the Vigil in Oakland Chinatown, the KQED journalist asks for my permission to use my photo and I wonder what kind of grief gets documented.

ZOE DORADO

This is what I bring to school the next day:

1. My hair still braided with smoke from the night before after I spoke Lolo's name into a slip of paper and offered it to a fire of ghosts. After ash wisps float and cling to the back of my ear, my scalp, my eyelids. Cacked out so much from my mouth that all I've consumed must have been it. So I'm smearing my 2nd period AP Statistics desk in a coat of embers. Like no one has got the time to cleanse themselves yet of the oil.
2. The candle wax burn on my right thumb after it dripped at the altar. After I knelt down in front of names lit with a country on fire. I suck the sting and rub it under the bathroom sink as teen girls stare at the mirror shedding their locks until it clogs the drain. A basic habit. Hairbrush in hand. A repetitive motion to sink into.
3. Maybe if I stop paying attention in class, I can invent my own form of stillness. I'll call it dissociating. Call it bringing myself out of my body so you can see my body and I'll take a picture. I'll frame it in flowers. I'll call it my mother. I'll call it the woman who looked just like her. In Half Moon Bay in Monterey Park in East Oakland. I'll call it the 18-year-old boy like the one on MacArthur Blvd., but instead of dead, he's sitting in front of me in class as Ms. Gerdts explains what a population proportion is. How if you take larger and larger samples of said population the more Normal the distribution gets. The more normal the day becomes despite –
4. Throughout the rest of the week, none of my teachers ever say the word shooting. Say gun. As if to say a mass ____ happened 25 minutes away would be too intimate for a Thursday and so I bring my mouth loaded but don't say anything.
5. In 2023 there have been more shootings than days in the year and so I now measure time by the breaking news notifications I get on my phone. Which is to say time is moving faster and has left me breathless. So when I walk, I feel like I'm running. When I laugh, I choke and start crying. When I sing, I feel more like I'm humming – a vibration that I feel festering in my throat until I let it out.

6. When I say I miss you I mean I miss you because I don't know you but I need to see you here. So you have a good picture for us to memorize before tomorrow. Before the story gets published and I'll see a blurry photo of myself there among a community whose grief will get documented, whose bareness will bleed into California's gilded night.
7. When I get home from school, I wash my hair and watch it hover over the drain, the pooling shower water sucking up what my body knows to remove: Fire, but not its heat. Smoke, but not the offering it gives to the sky. I want my hands to just be hands when I pray to some kind of God. And maybe this is another type of documentation. The kind that gives warmth to the body despite the distance. The kind that won't stop the burning.



EX NIHILO
OLIVER MCCONNIE
2023



PORTENT
OLIVER MCCONNIE
2023

BUSBOY

(A B)

ANDREJ BILOVSKY

What do I fear most?
Red meat or vomit?

Or smoking?
Or cannibals?
Or spies?

A choir of beards
are devouring a pig.

A boy's face is white as garlic.

The monster
is a neon light,
the door of an in-town hotel,
a restaurant with fangs
& headless statues,
an octopus
like long wet hair
with suction cups.

Why the glare & the misted glasses?
The sports shirts & the soldiers hidden within?

Professional murders
carried out
with knives and forks.

The night squad taking refuge.
The US army with its legs spread.
Polite Hitlers - their palms out flat.

“You boy!” cries out helicopter head.
“You boy! What are you afraid of
other than your own annihilation?”

Plenty corpses where they come from.
Plenty cowards vomiting in their aftershave.

I’m just AB, with a brain like buzzing
headphones
and dry sauce on my shirt.

They open their mouths,
show me the sweet raw meat of springtime.
PROPOSITION

As if carrot soup
& lime soda
isn’t enough

I email my contact in government
he merely responds
with well-paid neutrality

& my friend Jason at the armory
pierces my foot friendly-like

& I fly over body bags on TV

stow my wet hands
in the pockets of my pregnant belly
monsoon rain
women in headdresses

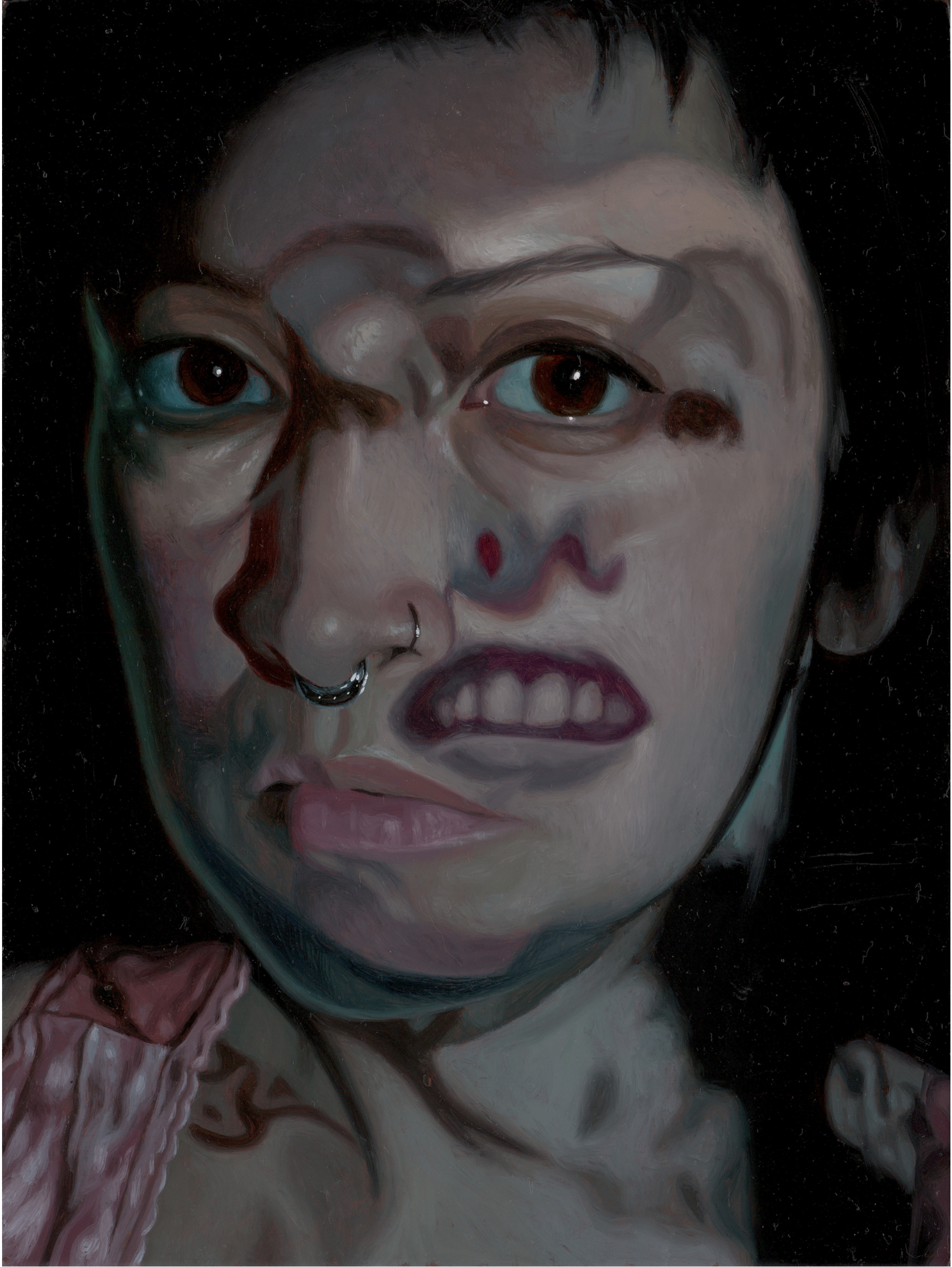
corner preacher-man
the snake of the mind
emerging as a smile

as he hands me a brochure
religion morphine two millennium old

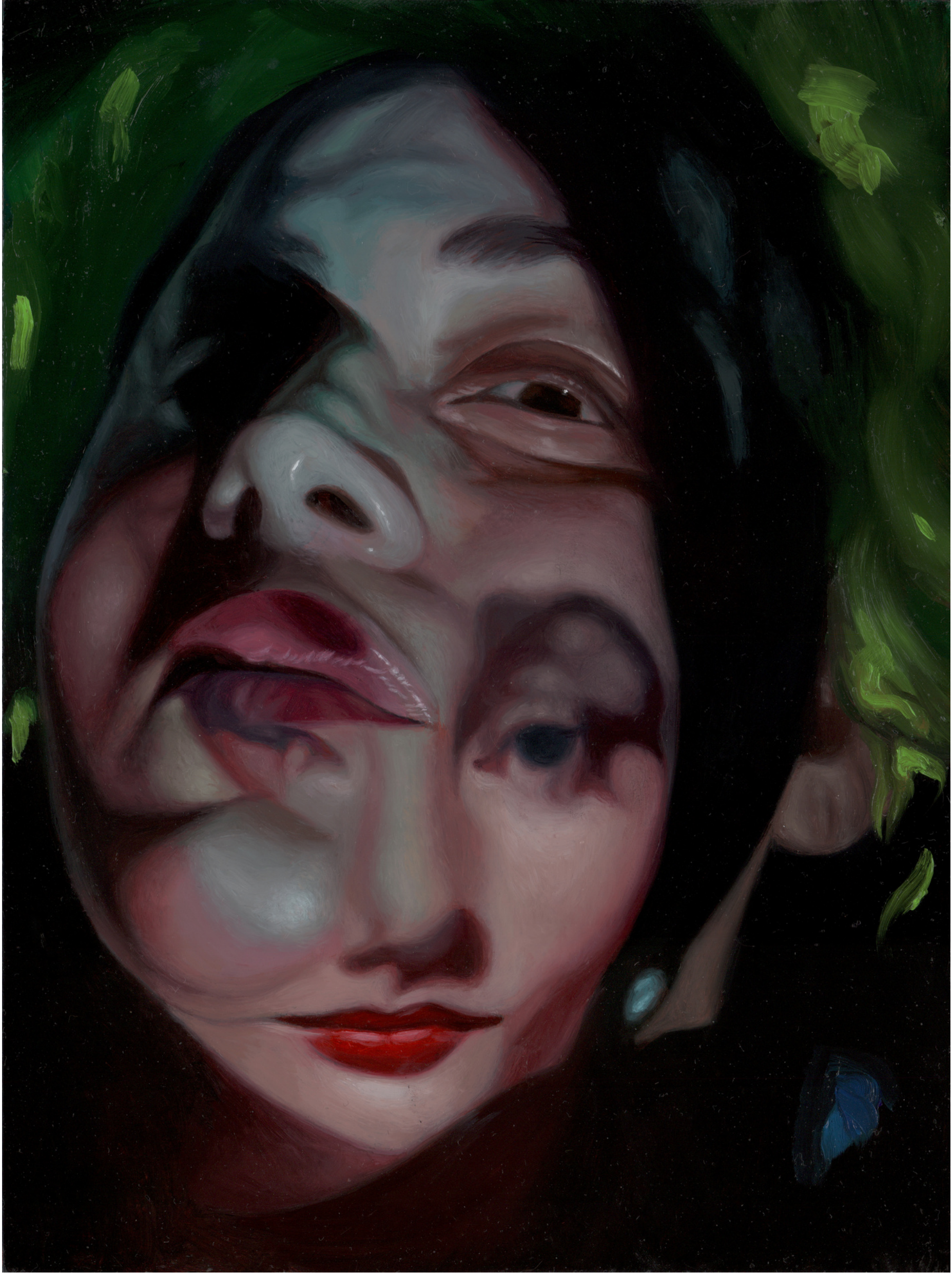
sphinx-head in shop window
rooftop pyramid
Egyptian Eddie bending down
to tie his shoelaces
admire his footprint

& if smooth-skinned workmen
weren't enough
& crotch itch
& Judas Iscariot pothead Judas we call him
& banded worms crawling across my palms

I'm in a room
surrounded by a friend's pronouncement
he loves me more than Gary
he of the army postcards
& that's enough
for a trembling man (so he thinks)
soon to be a stone monument in drag



GUN CRAZY
SHANNON PURCELL
2022



IN EVERY DREAM AN ABANDONED HOUSE
SHANNON PURCELL
2022

a sky I didn't notice changed

after Abbey Cliffe

NANA BOATENG

Truth is I didn't look up. Truth is when day broke I was still sleeping
wrestling for morning. darkness waned into a slurry of clouds and stars
tangled together in a snake pit. Truth is I drifted on my belly. convinced
waking before first light could burn holes and gnaw blisters. Truth is the sky
ranaway. drunken. a dreamless dance. sunlight put distance between us.
a standstill. this whole dang time. and I tried to figure it out.

Truth is my door remains unlocked.

Truth is I tend to look away. Truth is clouds fought to bring me here
my maladies ballooned. 99 times. gently glazed ribbons, curled and tied
head to toe. mimicked a nodding ghostjaw. swirling in a grayed out
tomorrow. Truth is the sky went runny on our faces. tender and itchy
spoonfuls fell on us like goose feathers. covering the rage of a billion
hungry eyes. a bright comet on virgin snow.

Truth is I got high.

Truth is I didn't want the day to end. Truth is I jumped mountain peaks
caught starlight, sang a new song to prepare for my own arrival.

Truth is it never felt like enough. the moon was the brightest
when we didn't say goodbye. In a stew of clouds, orcas surfaced
gleeful in their terror. Truth is I rested. threw my hands in the air
to shape a sky I didn't know would come again.

No, I didn't want the day to end.



THE KISS
SHANNON PURCELL
2022

CONTRIBUTORS

ANDREJ BILOVSKY
NANA BOATENG
OSVALDO RAMIREZ CASTILLO
ZOE DORADO
INDIANA HOOVER
OLIVER MCCONNIE
SHANNON PURCELL
KATE WYLIE

THE RACKET

PATREON

WWW.PATREON.COM/
THERACKETREADINGSERIES

WEBSITE

WWW.THERACKETSF.COM

NEWSLETTER

WWW.THERACKETSF.COM/
NEWSLETTER

INSTAGRAM

@THERACKETREADINGSERIES

SUBMIT YOUR WORK:

<https://theracketsf.com/submissions>

SUCCESS.

