

ON THE
BACK OF A CAR-
TOON COASTER
PAINTINGS

JOE FLEMING
SHELLEY ADLER
H K G

October 2022





Joe Fleming
Shelley Adler

On
The
Back
Of
A
Cartoon
Coaster

October 15 - November 12, 2022

Herringer Kiss Gallery
101, 1615 10 Ave SW
Calgary, Alberta, Canada T3C 0J7

On the Back of a Cartoon Coaster

Jane Hope

The juxtaposition of work by Adler and Fleming is not an obvious choice. Adler's canvases are luscious figurative paintings of women, whereas Fleming sprays, stencils and incises panels of acrylic to create abstract compositions. Yet for both, drawing is key. Adler and Fleming are both masters of what art history tells us was called cartoon in the Middle Ages. At that time, the term cartoon connoted the line-art used to plot out murals and tapestries. It was the underpinnings of an eventual work, not finished art to be seen on its own. For Adler and Fleming though, cartoon is both the solid backbone and the elegant surface of their work, and the inspiration to show together for the first time.

Adler uses a highly contemporary form of cartoon, first popularized in the nineteenth-century to satirize politicians and socialites by exaggerating their posture or features to highlight failings like fakery or weakness. In the case of Adler's paintings though, such exaggerations serve to stylize her subjects. They are more akin to the history of fashion, where things like bustles and corsets, mini-skirts and Jackie-O glasses, have been the fashion designer's invitation to find new ways of looking at the female form. A further similarity, is that Adler's women are always clothed. They are studies of the self-image women choose to put out in the world, and make bold use of colour, shape, or pose, as deliberately as any Instagram post. However, Adler's women appear to be caught in an off-moment of doubt or self-absorption, at ease in a way their social-media selves would never allow. Adler's paintings turn the eyes that women reserve for other women on themselves. The paintings are the farthest thing from the studies of female anatomy, or the familiar pre-coitus or post-coitus sketches executed by male artists that fill museums. Who better than a woman to show us the difference?

Fleming comes to the idea of the cartoon as defined a century later, in the characters, line work, and cherubic forms epitomized by Disney. The familiar icons don't appear in his work for laughs or storytelling though, in fact, they are not entirely there at all. Fleming only presents us with fragments,

but in the best tradition of animation, they race, slide, and collide across the painting's surface. These are disobedient cartoons, and so of course the colour resides outside the lines, stencilled or squeegeed according to their frenzied rhythm. Still, the viewer knows the familiar childlike energy of the shapes and linework so well, that recognition is immediate, and the mind accelerates eager to put it all together. But then, something different happens. What appeared at first to be a nostalgic puzzle, begins to feel more like Humpty Dumpty destined to be forever broken. The shapes feel brutally truncated and the underpainting a protest, like inner city graffiti. Fleming astutely captures our collective attachment to innocence, amid the tenuous framework of our grown-up lives.

While the idea of the cartoon links Adler and Flemings work, the context of a two-person show also serves as opportunity for these two Canadian painters to link to place. Adler and Fleming have selected unique works specifically for the Calgary space, inspired by the lyric of the legendary Albertan artist Joni Mitchell: "On the back of a cartoon coaster." In addition to Mitchell's prodigious talent as a songwriter and musician, she herself is a visual artist. The song A Case of You from which the lyric is drawn, is rich with references to drawing and painting. The resulting works by Adler and Fleming come together much like the coasters of two strangers in a bar. Once a conversation between drinkers begins, the space between them closes and their coasters are stained by the abstract calligraphy of spilled spirits, or marked by doodles or diagrams made to illustrate a point. Adler and Fleming each make their marks with a similar combination of serendipity and intent. The paintings juxtapose highly personal interpretations of their shared conversation around the idea: On the back of a cartoon coaster.

Jane Hope co-founder of globally recognized marketing agency, TAXI. Designer and writer, she was awarded the Advertising & Design Club of Canada Lifetime Achievement award in 2018. Jane lives in Toronto and New York.

A Case of You

Joni Mitchell

*Just before our love got lost you said
"I am as constant as a northern star"
And I said, "Constantly in the darkness
Where's that at? If you want me I'll be in the bar"*

*On the back of a cartoon coaster
In the blue TV screen light
I drew a map of Canada
Oh, Canada
With your face sketched on it twice*

*Oh, you're in my blood like holy wine
You taste so bitter and so sweet
Oh, I could drink a case of you, darling
And I would still be on my feet
Oh, I would still be on my feet*

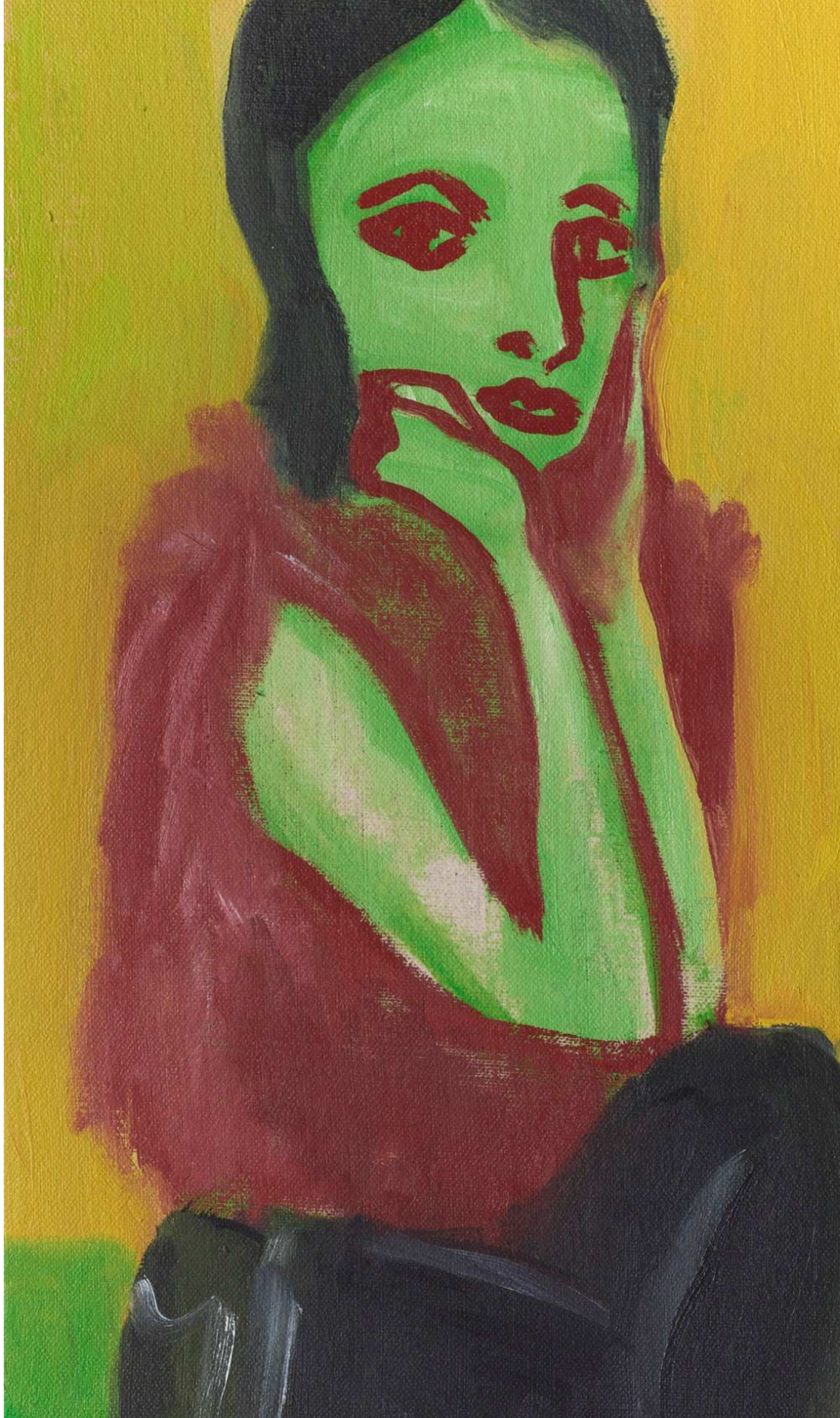
*Oh, I am a lonely painter
I live in a box of paints
I'm frightened by the devil
And I'm drawn to those ones that ain't afraid*

*I remember that time you told me
You said, "Love is touching souls"
Surely you touched mine
'Cause part of you pours out of me
In these lines from time to time*

*Oh, you're in my blood like holy wine
You taste so bitter and so sweet
Oh, I could drink a case of you, darling
Still I'd be on my feet
I would still be on my feet*

*I met a woman
She had a mouth like yours
She knew your life
She knew your devils and your deeds
And she said, "Go to him, stay with him if you can
But be prepared to bleed"*

*Oh, but you are in my blood
You're my holy wine
You're so bitter bitter and so sweet
Oh, I could drink a case of you, darling
Still I'd be on my feet
I would still be on my feet*

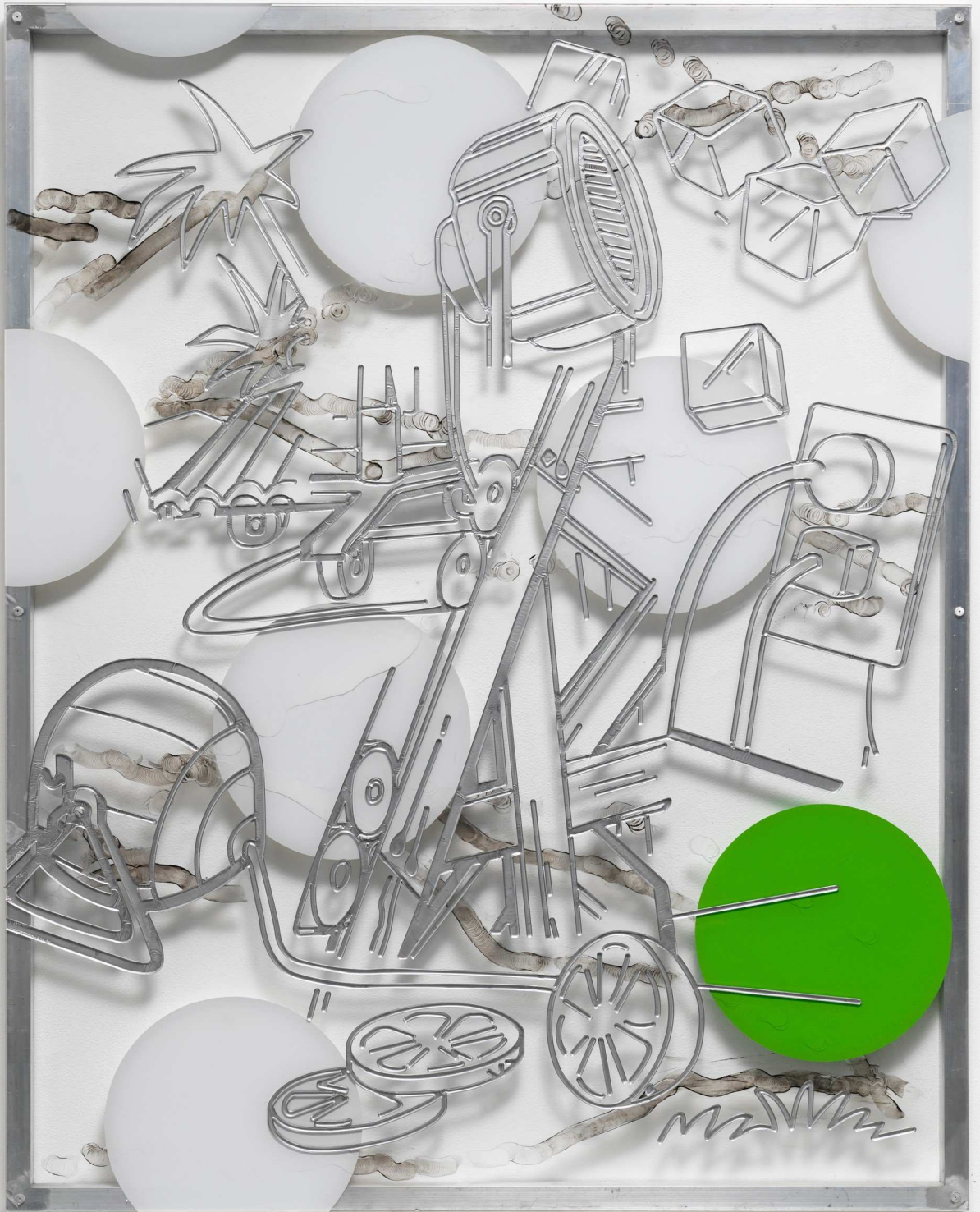
















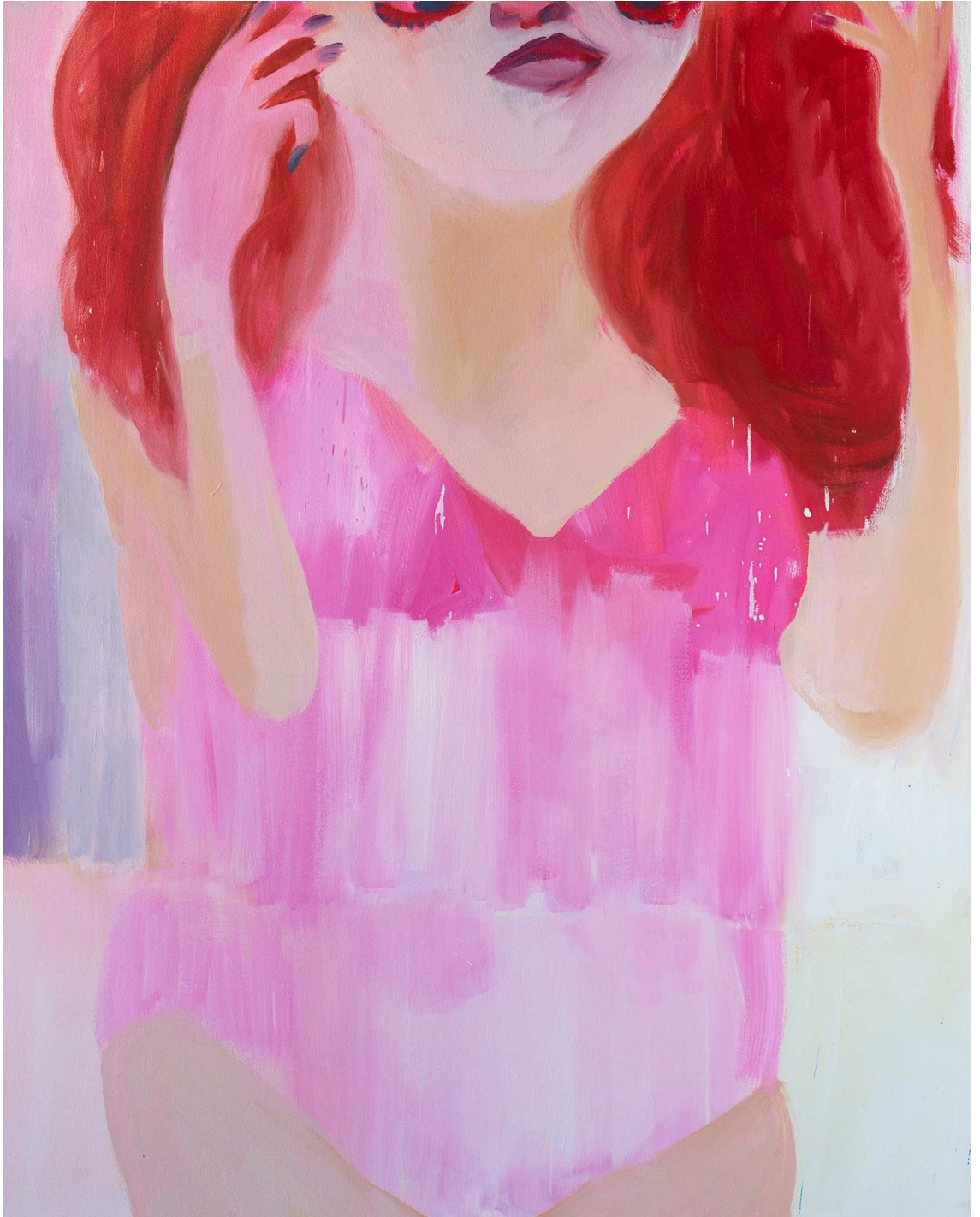


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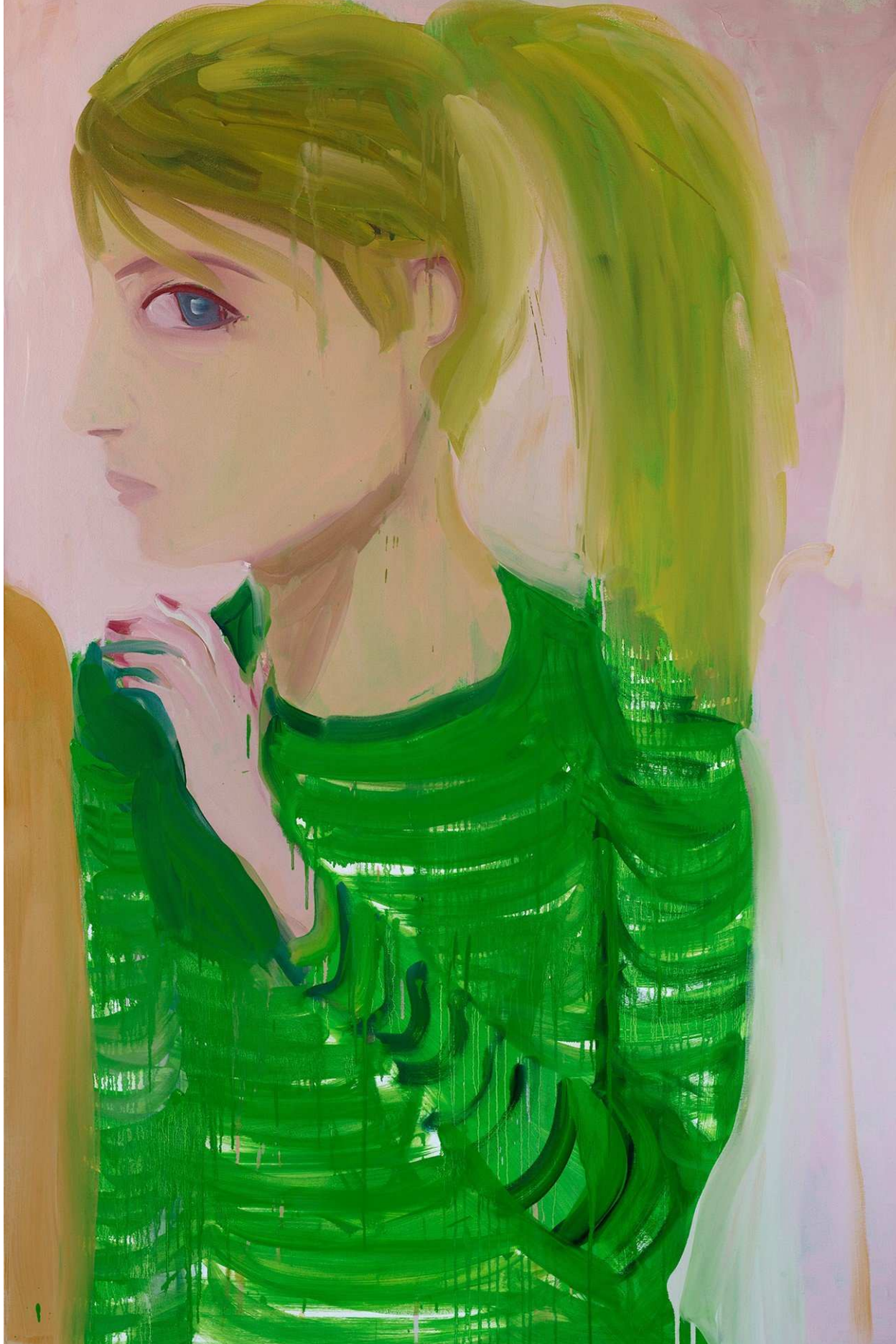






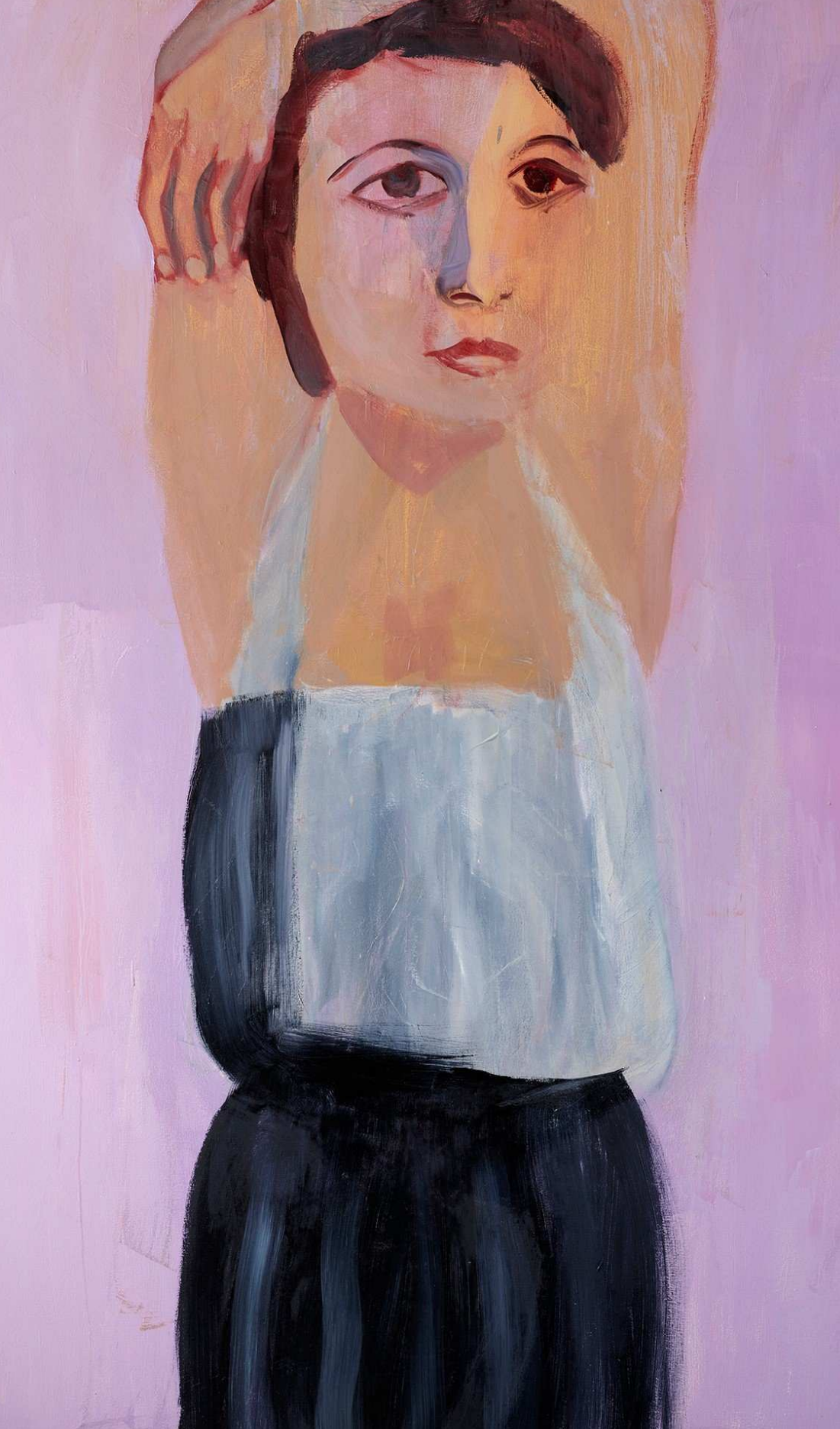










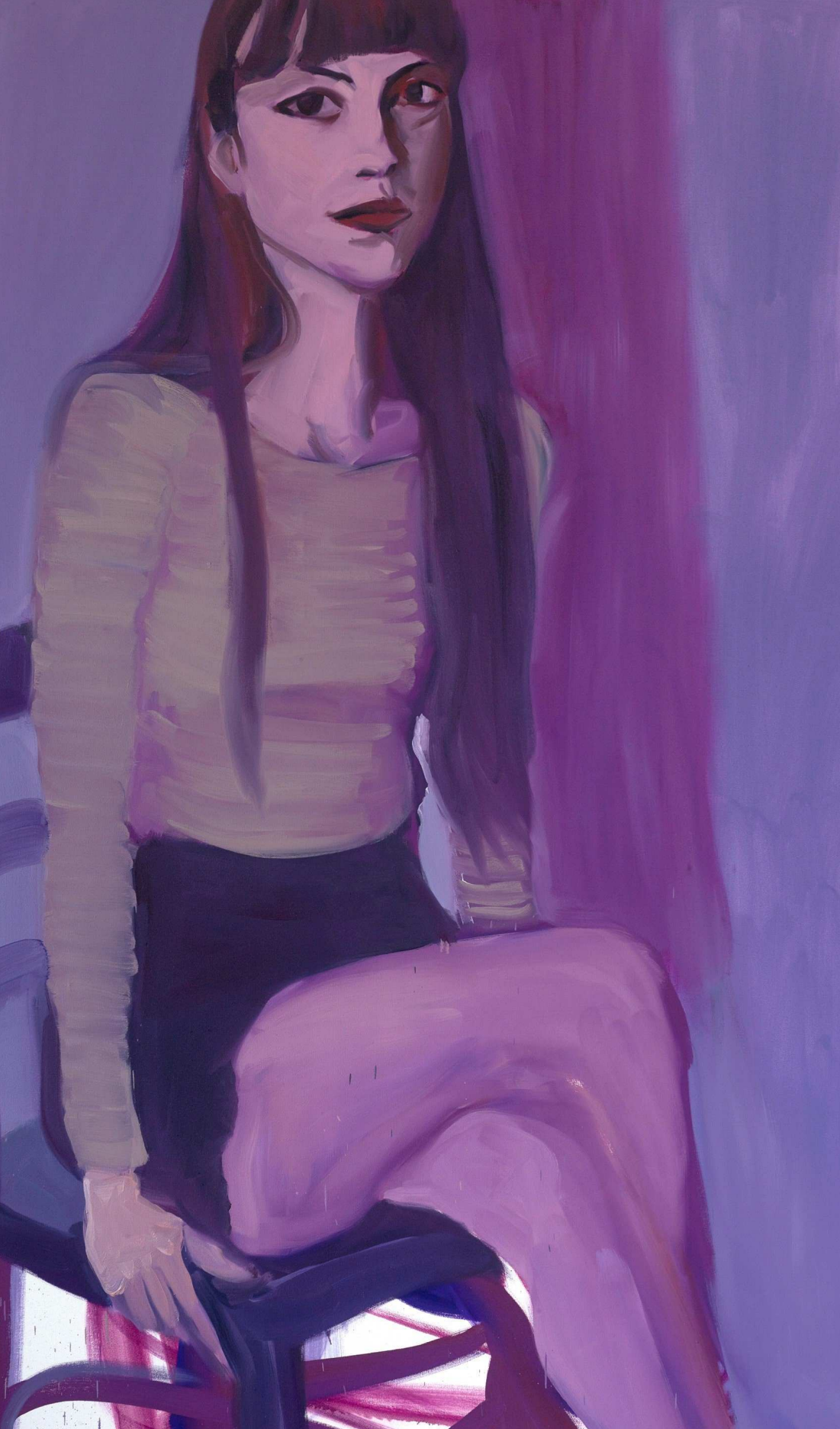








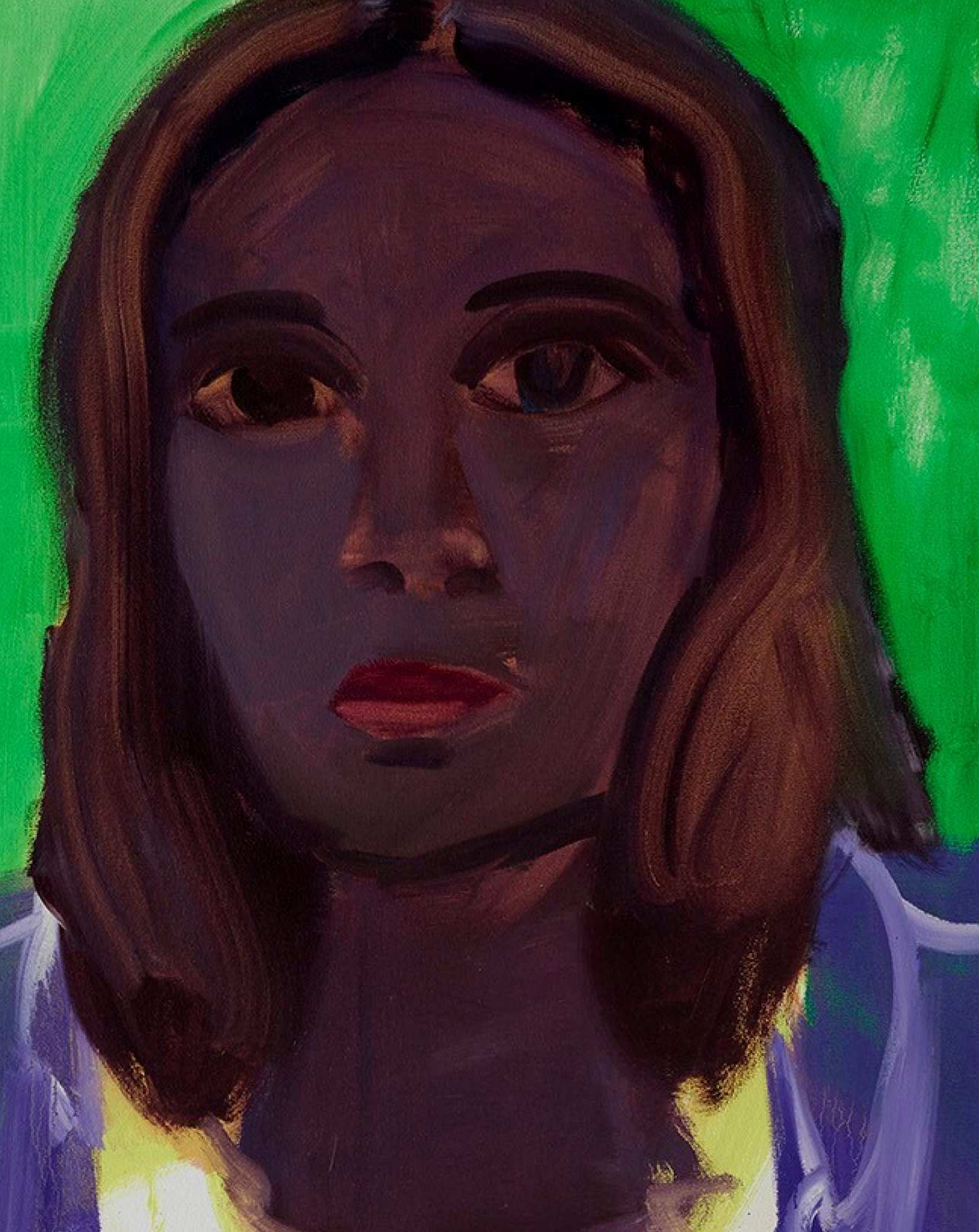












List of Works

1. Joe Fleming, *Netflix*, 2021, oil on polycarbonate, 21 x 18 inches (detail)
2. Joe Fleming, *Netflix*, 2021, oil on polycarbonate, 21 x 18 inches (detail)
9. Shelley Adler, *Woman in Fur Vest*, 2022, oil on linen, 15 x 9 inches
11. Joe Fleming, *White Palm Fever*, 2022, paint and silk screen ink on paper, 34 x 26 inches
12. Shelley Adler, *Dancers*, 2022, oil on linen, 16 x 12 inches
13. Joe Fleming, *Mediterranean Palm*, 2022, paint and silk screen ink on paper, 34 x 26 inches
14. Shelley Adler, *Girl in Green Shirt*, 2021, oil on canvas, 24 x 18 inches
15. Joe Fleming, *Untitled*, 2022, oil on polycarbonate, 50 x 40 inches
16. Joe Fleming, *Drive to Dorio*, 2022, paint and silk screen ink on paper, 34 x 26 inches
17. Shelley Adler, *Necklace*, 2020, oil on canvas, 72 x 48 inches
19. Joe Fleming, *Palm Engine*, 2022, paint and silk screen ink on paper, 34 x 26 inches
20. Joe Fleming, *Diamond Shoes*, 2022, paint and silk screen ink on paper, 26 x 20 inches
21. Joe Fleming, *Glamping (pink and silver)*, 2019, oil on polycarbonate, 36 x 28 inches
22. Joe Fleming, *Hope and the Pursuit of Pleasure*, 2022, paint and silk screen ink on paper, 34 x 26 inches
23. Shelley Adler, *Pink Teddy*, 2022, oil on canvas, 50 x 40 inches
25. Shelley Adler, *Girlfriends*, 2022, oil on canvas, 72 x 48 inches
26. Joe Fleming, *Detour*, 2021, oil on polycarbonate, 50 x 40 inches
27. Shelley Adler, *The Secret*, 2020, oil on canvas, 72 x 48 inches
28. Shelley Adler, *Pose*, 2017, oil on panel, 21 x 15 inches
29. Shelley Adler, *Ellie Sitting*, oil on linen, 20 x 17 inches
30. Shelley Adler, *Untitled (Standing Figure)*, 2022, oil on canvas, 72 x 48 inches
31. Joe Fleming, *Spring Training, Blue Sky*, 2021, oil on polycarbonate, 36 x 28 inches
32. Shelley Adler, *Green Sweater*, 2019, oil on canvas, 72 x 48 inches
33. Joe Fleming, *Blue Waves*, 2022, oil on polycarbonate, 37 x 31.5 inches
35. Joe Fleming, *Netflix*, 2021, oil on polycarbonate, 21 x 18 inches
36. Shelley Adler, *Violet Anna*, 2016, oil on canvas, 84 x 52 inches
37. Joe Fleming, *Green Splash*, 2021, oil on polycarbonate, 21 x 18 inches
39. Shelley Adler, *Listen*, 2020, oil on canvas, 50 x 40 inches
40. Shelley Adler, *Girlfriends*, 2022, oil on canvas, 72 x 48 inches (detail)
41. Shelley Adler, *Girlfriends*, 2022, oil on canvas, 72 x 48 inches (detail)





Special Thanks:

Jane Hope

Niki Dracos

Paul Cohen

Jackie Knight

Deborah Herringers Kiss
and everyone else

at DHK





