REBECCA NESS PIECES OF MIND JULY 10-AUGUST 31, 2020

NINO MIER GALLERY 7277 SANTA MONICA BLVD LOS ANGELES, CA 90046

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Rebecca Ness's recent paintings and works on paper, produced between February and June of this year, reveal new spaces and quotidian rituals--subtle moments that reflect profound shifts. *Holly Coming Home* (2020), among the largest works in the show, exemplifies this impulse. The work is somewhere between a domestic mise-en-scene and a still life capturing the entryway to an apartment and the casual disorder of a home cum work space. Alongside portraiture, studio and domestic spaces are among Ness's chief subjects, and she consistently depicts piled-up pages of *The New York Times*, books, and images within her works, illustrating a world of thought and information, and marking time.

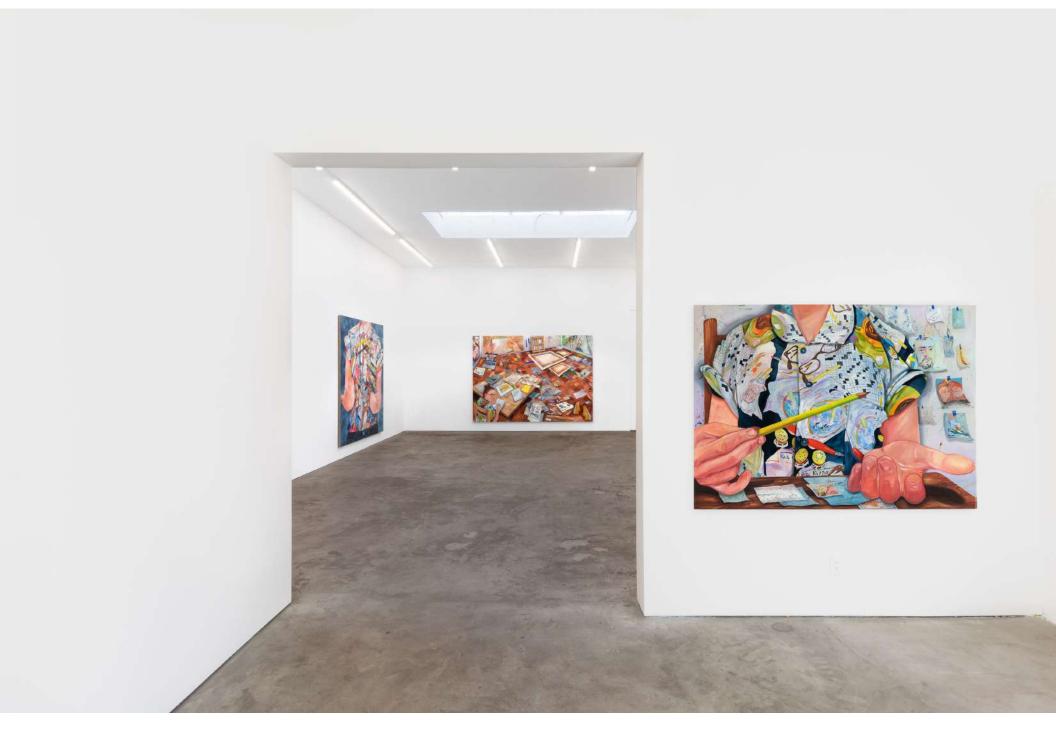
In this work Ness uses a distinctive, legible hand that can be both precise and cartoonish. With its strange cropping and downward cast point of view, Holly Coming Home recalls Sylvia Plimack Mangold's unique spatial perspective, her peaceful domestic austerity filled up with hysterical clutter. The action, so to speak, of the painting is confined to its upper edges--two figures seen only below the knees. One stands near a pile of sneakers in paint covered Birkenstocks, and the other, having just crossed the threshold into the apartment, is casting off bright blue scrubs. In its composition, energy, and overload of visual information, the work resonates with many of the Ness's previous works, but the scene it so quietly depicts--of Ness's girlfriend, a surgery resident, coming home from the hospital where she has worked throughout the COVID-19 crisis--offers an exact timestamp of the spring of 2020. The past several months have been marked by sickness, death, anxiety, and uncertainty--all the more so for medical personnel and others deemed essential workers. This obliquely portrayed ritual of stripping down at the doorway points to the newly introduced circumstances of Ness's life sheltering at home. This sentiment is echoed in a work on paper that shows a man in a Matisse-inflected shirt pouring over *The New York Times'* frontpage feature from May 24, which lists the names of the first 100,000 people in the United States who have died from COVID-19. Ness's intimate, observational, and self-referential style has lent itself well to the newly introduced circumstances of this moment, when, for many, engagement with the outside world has largely been reduced to a response to its periodic intrusion into the small spaces we have created.

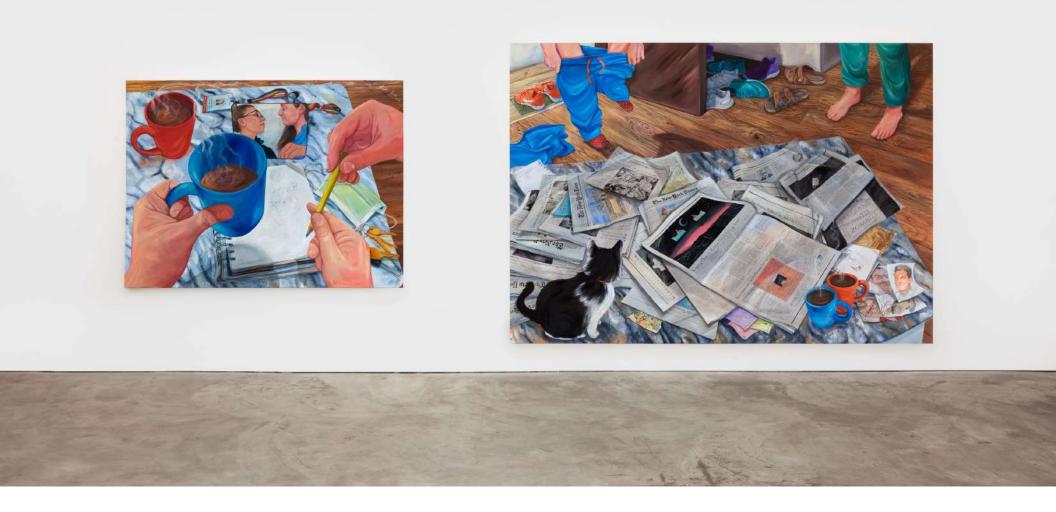
The delineation between subtle and profound is a slight one for Ness. Her work keeps a tight focus literally and metaphorically, showing us figures or partial figures with limited ground and just enough information to suggest the possibility of a site, or honing in on detailed depictions of interior settings. Recurrent motifs within these genres--torsos in wildly patterned button-down shirts, elaborate studio scenes, images of hands gesturing or at work, and modest still lifes--are complemented by paintings that pinpoint this period and by moments of sweet tenderness--faces kissing in a mirror, figures embracing, and hands extended and interlocking. The repetition in subject and form within these works--variations on a theme--and their visual density allows a kind of studied revisiting that keeps a painter's painter always expertly painting and learning to paint in each work.

Ness belongs to a group of figurative painters including artists like Jordan Casteel, Raffi Kalenderian, Arcomonoro Niles, and Jonas Wood whose stylized and similarly self-referential portraits index their social world. These artists embed their own art historical lineage into their works and are interested in the art historical tropes that lie in the details of settings and especially textiles, signifiers of representation, and the communicative possibility contained within images of others. Ness likewise wears her references on her sleeve and thinks of each object in her dense horror-vacui-like interior images and the gestures within her portraits as biographical details, constructions of identity, and iconographies of information for the viewer to read.

The first half of this year brought the artist inside and all the more reflective of herself in her work. The title of this show, *Pieces of Mind*, relays that inward turn, a life described in large, bold images of small things. As the world around us erupts into a new era of civil rights, Ness will turn outward again, but in the meantime, she has offered a concise glimpse into her life in a moment when the world seemed close at hand but strangely distant.

Diana Nawi





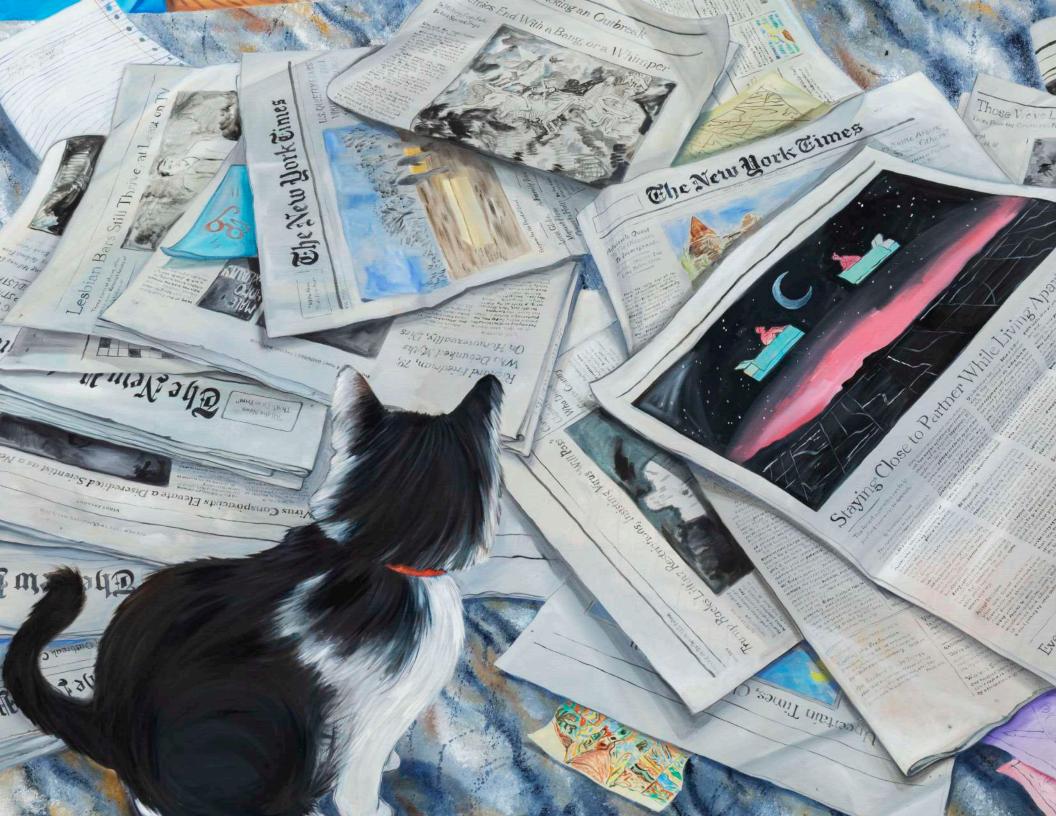








Holly Coming Home, 2020 Oil on canvas 85 x 120 in, 215.9 x 304.8 cm (RNE20.008)





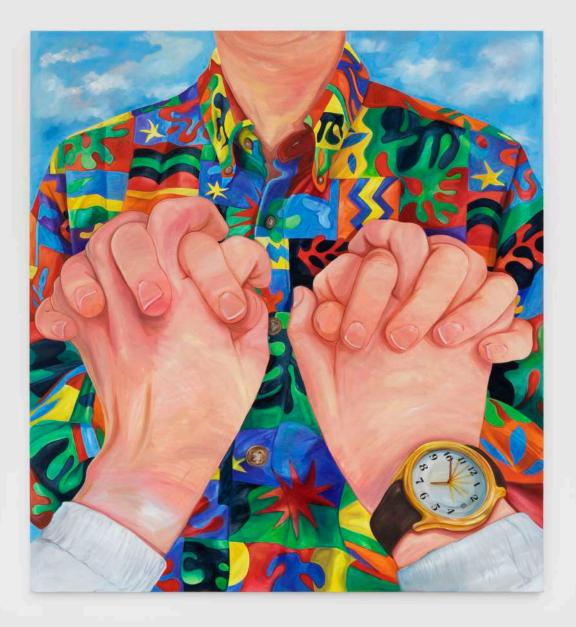


I See You, 2020 Oil on canvas 85 x 120 in, 215.9 x 304.8 cm (RNE20.009)









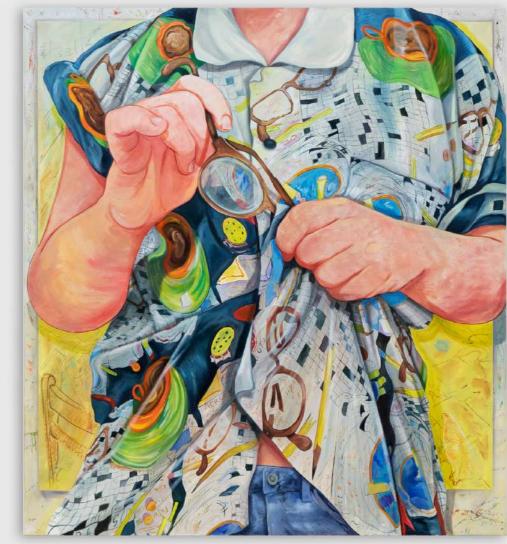
Time Together, 2020 Oil on canvas 83 x 90.5 in, 210.8 x 229.9 cm (RNE20.010)







Schmutz, 2020 Oil on linen 83 x 90 1/2 in, 210.8 x 229.9 cm (RNE20.011)











Pencil Flipper, 2020 Oil on canvas 83 x 90.5 in, 210.8 x 229.9 cm (RNE20.012)







Little Sam, 2020 Oil on canvas 6 x 12 in, 15.2 x 30.5 cm (RNE20.013)





Put the pencil down my love, 2020 Oil on canvas 60 x 80 in, 152.4 x 203.2 cm (RNE20.014)





Thinking, 2020 Oil on canvas 51 x 70 in, 129.5 x 177.8 cm (RNE20.015)







What a Painting Sees, 2020 Gouache and pencil on paper 25 x 40 in. 63.5 x 101.6 cm (RNE20.016)





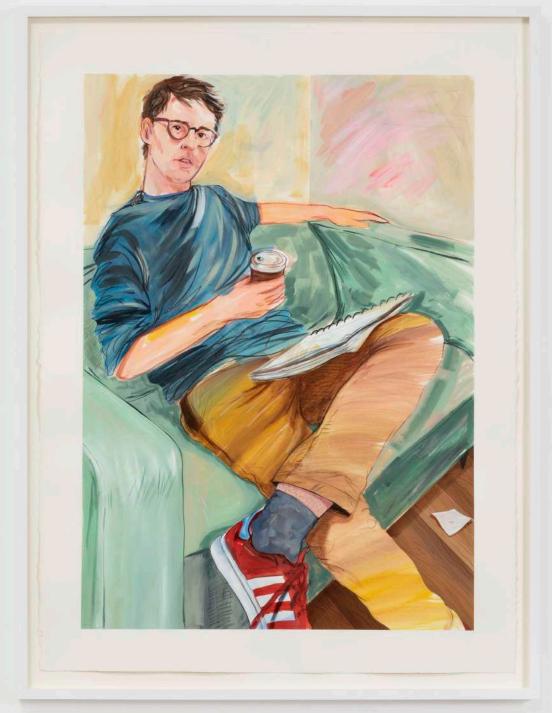
Us, 2020 Gouache and pencil on paper 25 x 40 in. 63.5 x 101.6 cm (RNE20.017)





Football Shirt, 2020 Gouache and pencil on paper 22 x 30 in, 55.9 x 76.2 cm 24 5/8 x 32 3/4 in (framed), 62.5 x 83.2 cm (RNE20.018)





Ian, 2020 Gouache and pencil on paper 30 x 22 in, 76.2 x 55.9 cm 32 3/4 x 24 5/8 in (framed), 83.2 x 62.5 cm (RNE20.019)





Newspapers II, 2020 Gouache and pencil on paper 22 x 30 in, 55.9 x 76.2 cm (RNE20.020)

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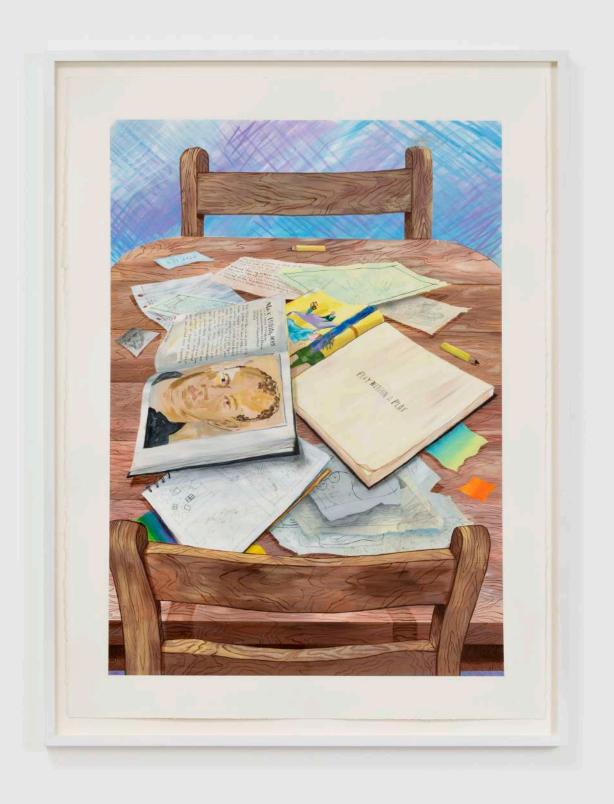
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Pencil Flipper, 2020 Gouache and pencil on paper 22 x 30 in, 55.9 x 76.2 cm (RNE20.024)





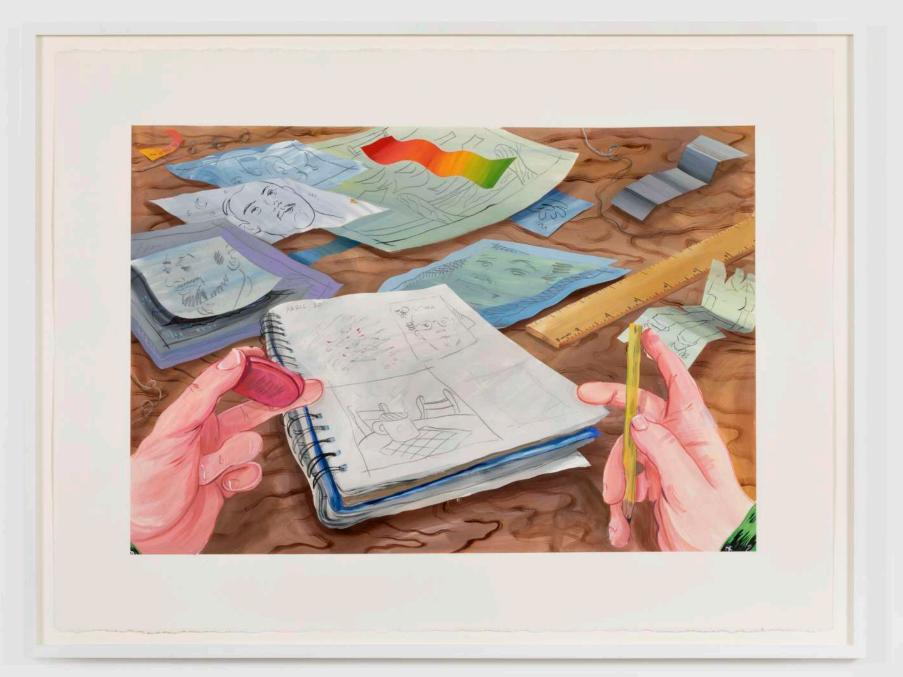
Morning Kiss, 2020 Gouache and pencil on paper 22 x 30 in, 55.9 x 76.2 cm (RNE20.025)





Dom in his Studio, 2020 Gouache and pencil on paper 22 x 30 in, 55.9 x 76.2 cm (RNE20.026)





Desk, 2020 Gouache and pencil on paper 22 x 30 in, 55.9 x 76.2 cm (RNE20.027)



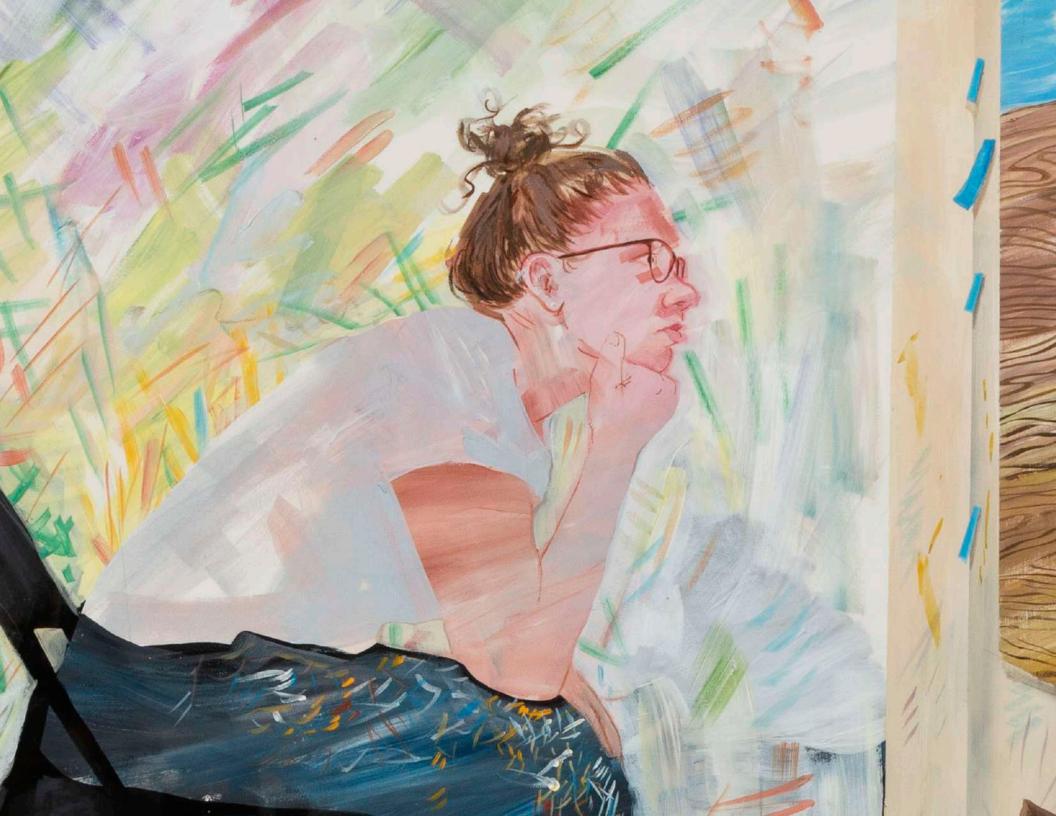


Critique II, 2020 Gouache and pencil on paper 22 x 30 in, 55.9 x 76.2 cm (RNE20.028)





Critique I, 2020 Gouache and pencil on paper 22 x 30 in, 55.9 x 76.2 cm (RNE20.029)





Book Stack, 2020 Gouache and pencil on paper 22 x 30 in, 55.9 x 76.2 cm (RNE20.030)





Baseball Shirt, 2020 Gouache and pencil on paper 22 x 30 in, 55.9 x 76.2 cm (RNE20.031)





Arms Crossed, 2020 Gouache and pencil on paper 22 x 30 in, 55.9 x 76.2 cm (RNE20.032)





100,000 Dead, 2020 Gouache and pencil on paper 22 x 30 in, 55.9 x 76.2 cm (RNE20.033)

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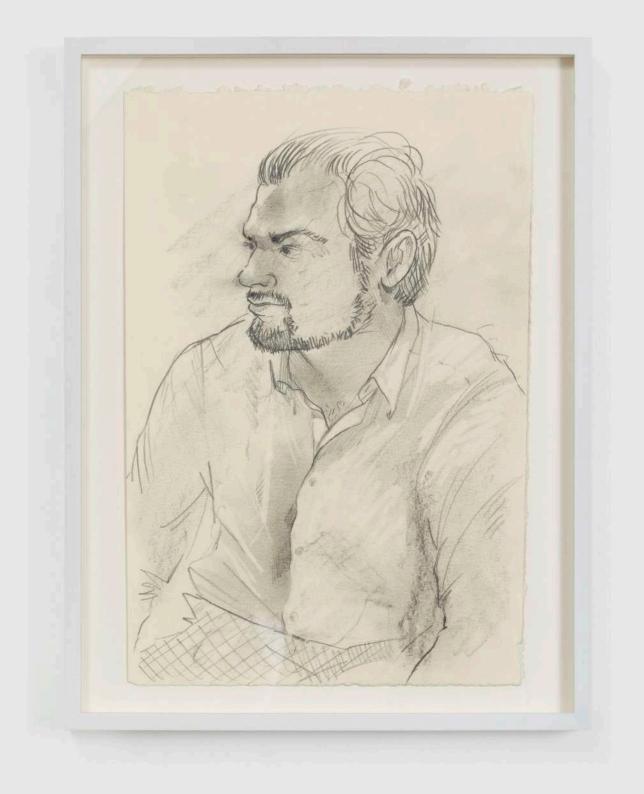
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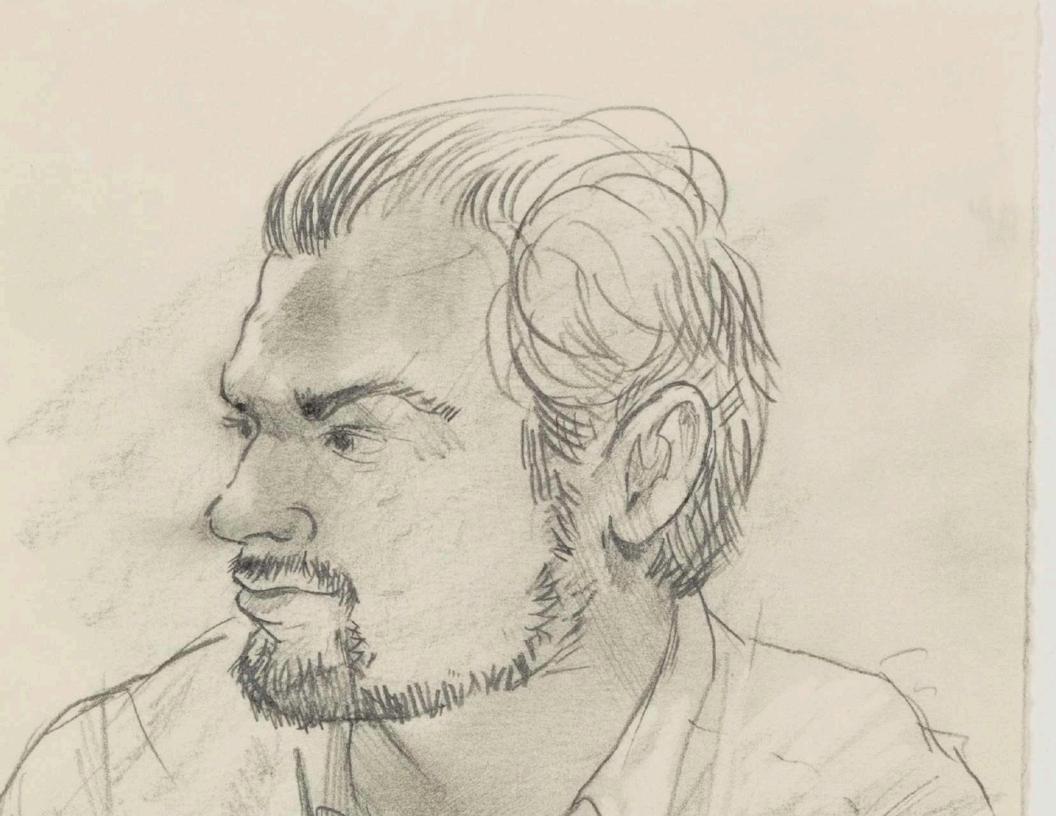
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Morgan, 2020 Graphite on paper 7 x 10 in, 17.8 x 25.4 cm (RNE20.034)





Studio isolation self portrait study, 2020 Gouache and pencil on paper 9 x 12 in, 22.9 x 30.5 cm (RNE20.035)





Glasses, 2020 Gouache and pencil on paper 22 x 30 in, 55.9 x 76.2 cm (RNE20.036)

