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5-2015

# Unknown

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UNKNOWN

by

Gabrielle Erin Valdez

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Fine Arts

Major: Art

Under the Supervision of Professor Matthew Sontheimer

Lincoln, Nebraska

May, 2015

UNKNOWN

Gabrielle Erin Valdez, M.F.A.

University of Nebraska, 2015

Adviser: Matthew Sontheimer

As somebody who spent a considerable amount of time coming to terms with my own identity, I would often look to other people to try and see what makes them who they are. This is obviously impossible to ascertain from a quick glance or brief observation I make in a public space. I know almost nothing about the subjects of my paintings — and the viewer of my paintings is provided the limited information that I take away from this interaction. These brief encounters are documented as photographs taken with my phone. This body of work is a progression. As I understand my own identity more and become more comfortable with it, I find that the interactions I have with others leave much less of an impression on me.

Working from these cellphone images I make what amounts to exaggerated studies of the people I have chosen as subjects. The individuals and imagery I choose to paint are selected quickly. The snapshots that become the basis of my paintings are part of a large collection of images taken arbitrarily over several sessions. Selecting an image to work from is an intuitive decision based on formal aspects of the photographic reference. I pay particular attention to the composition of the image and the form the subject provides. I have no interest in painting individuals I know, as I do not want to feel obligated to represent additional characteristics about them. My paintings lack very specific details of the figures and the environment they are depicted in. The paintings are

all relatively small, as I find I lose a sense of immediacy when working on a larger surface. With less space to work with, the process of painting becomes less of an obstacle in making the marks and imagery I want to present. The purely visual objective in my paintings is to create an image that describes the speed, light, and distance of my documented encounters.

These technical decisions about my work have been made to reflect my own views about the subject matter. I am intentionally removing detail from my work in a form of destruction by omission. At this point, I am not presenting a subject's characteristics to the viewer, I'm instead showing a lack of identification and the traits that make who they are. In understanding myself better over the past couple of years, there is no longer a need to keep looking to others as a potential example. I no longer feel that compulsive need to study those around me. These interactions are now routine and I have the freedom to walk away from them with no lingering questions or doubts about who I am. This is what I am showing in my current work. It is the freedom to take as much or as little as I want from my observations and not feel burdened by a constant need to examine everything about them.



*October 2013*  
Oil on Paper  
14"x 11"  
2014



*Hug*  
Oil on Paper  
14"x 11"  
2013



*Standing Figure*  
Oil on Paper  
16"x 11"  
2013



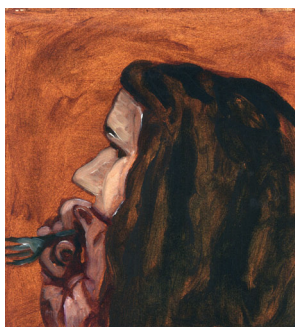
*Exhibit*  
Oil on Paper  
14"x 11"  
2014



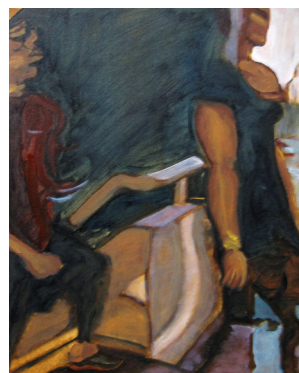
*Bag*  
Oil on Paper  
14"x 11"  
2013



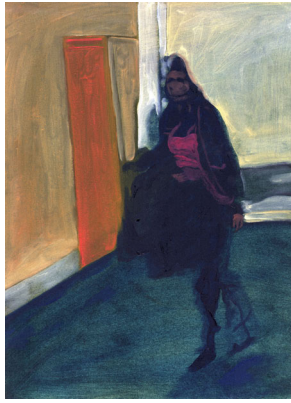
*Looking*  
Oil on Paper  
14"x 11"  
2014



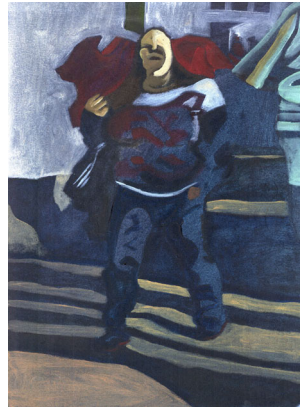
*Fork*  
Oil on Paper  
10"x 10"  
2013



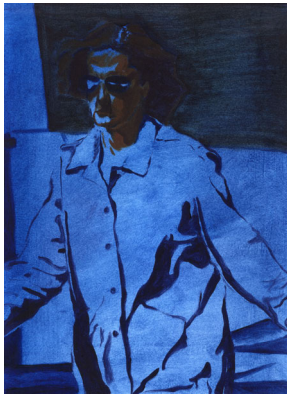
*Stairs*  
Oil on Paper  
14"x 11"  
2014



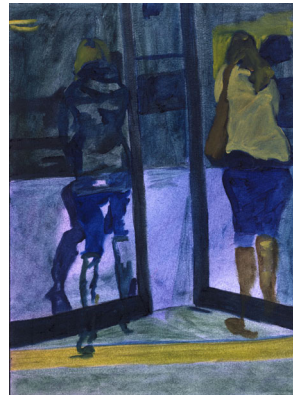
*Orange Door*  
Oil on Paper  
14"x 11  
2015



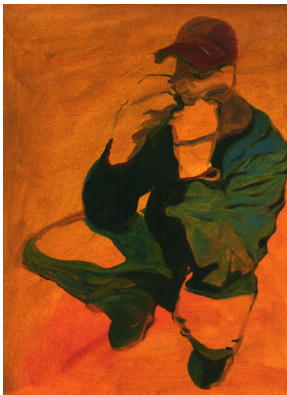
*Sunny*  
Oil on Paper  
14"x 11  
2015



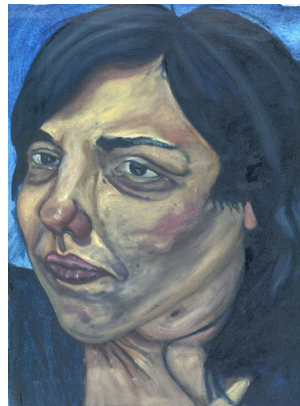
*Blue*  
Oil on Paper  
14"x 11  
2015



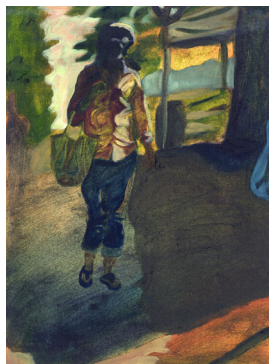
*Movie*  
Oil on Paper  
14"x 11  
2015



*Crouching*  
Oil on Paper  
14"x 11  
2015



*September 2014*  
Oil on Paper  
14"x 11  
2014



*Sidewalk*  
Oil on Paper  
14"x 11  
2015