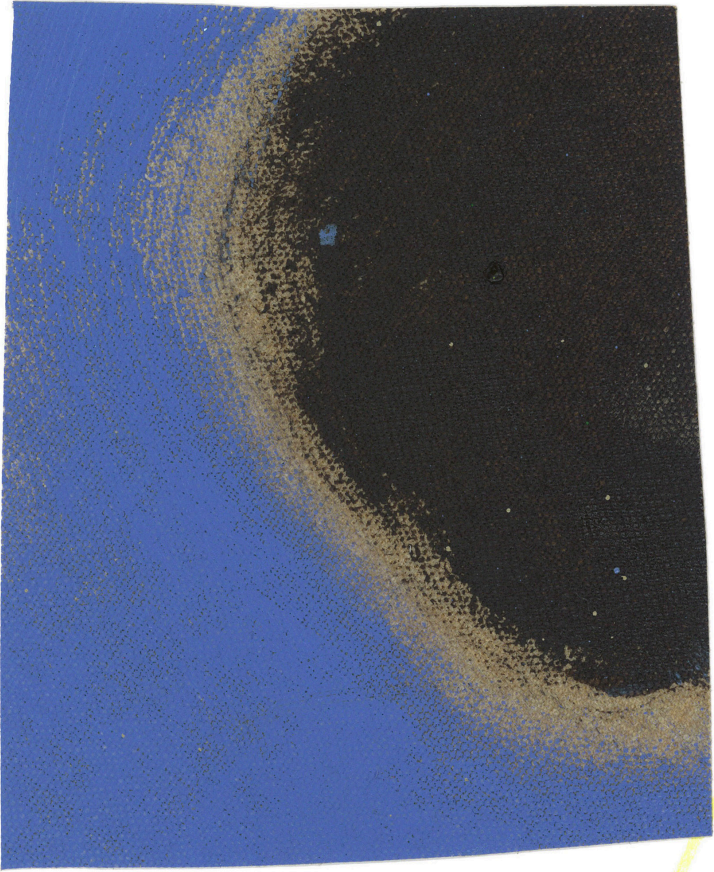


SOFIA SILVA

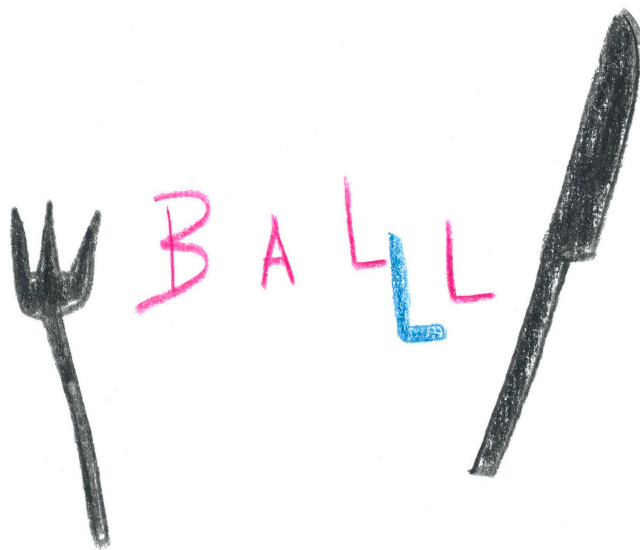
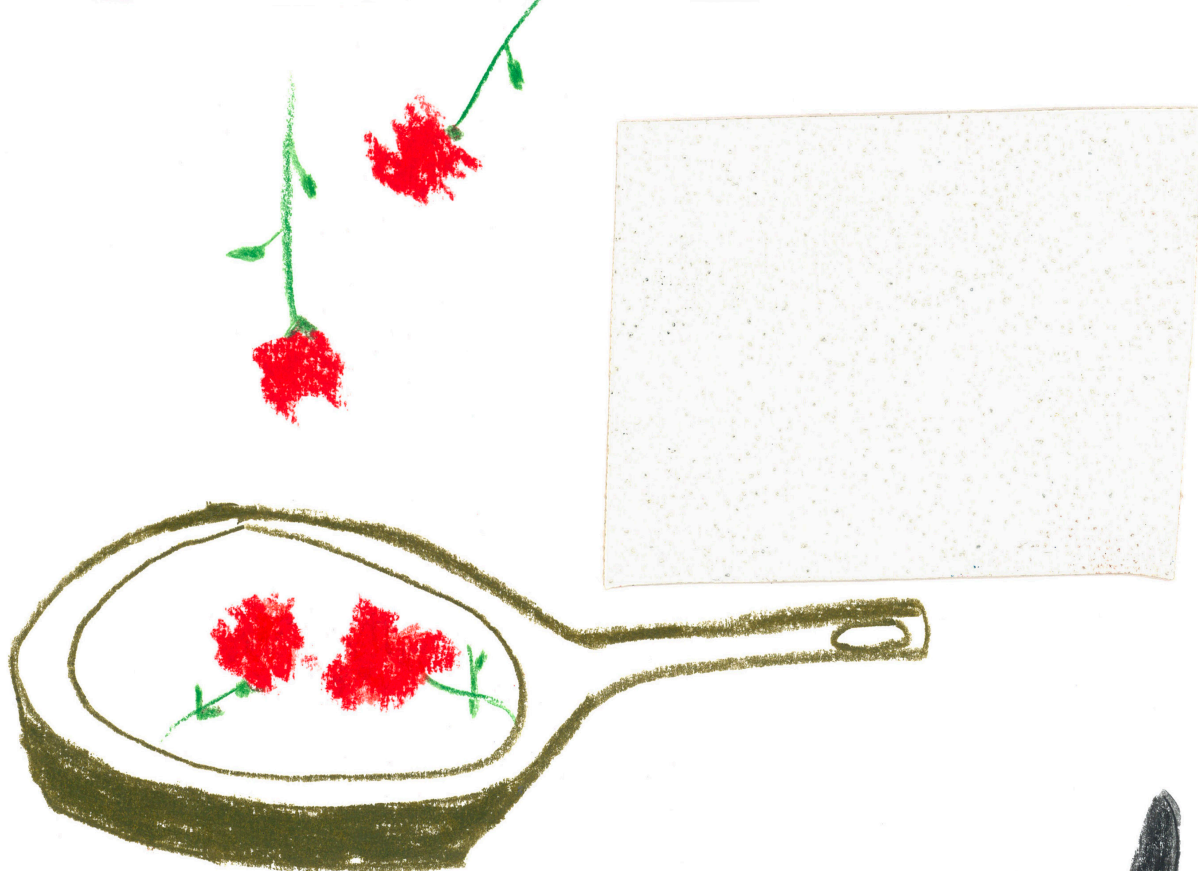
Fifteen very short and sometimes bitter stories

In the waiting room of the blood test centre, with glazed eyes Olivia reads the words printed on the medical request form; from the usual ferritin to the rarer chrome, the levels to be tested total around thirty. As an aspiring vampire, she moistens her lips. She longs to fathom the depths; what was once hypochondria has now become snorkelling. She will find some deficiency or another and will rejoice in it, attributing her tiredness to it, which she will call asthenia. Not love, which is lacking; not sadness, which has been paying visits; not her empty bank account, but rather a lack of vitamin E.



Leaky Gut, 2020, mixed media on paper, 18 x 24 cm

The day promises to be a thrilling one. The sensation is akin to one's first intercontinental flight or when one eats the first of a fruit of the season: there's a wish to be expressed. She presses her forehead against the window. She always sees funny things when she gets a temperature.



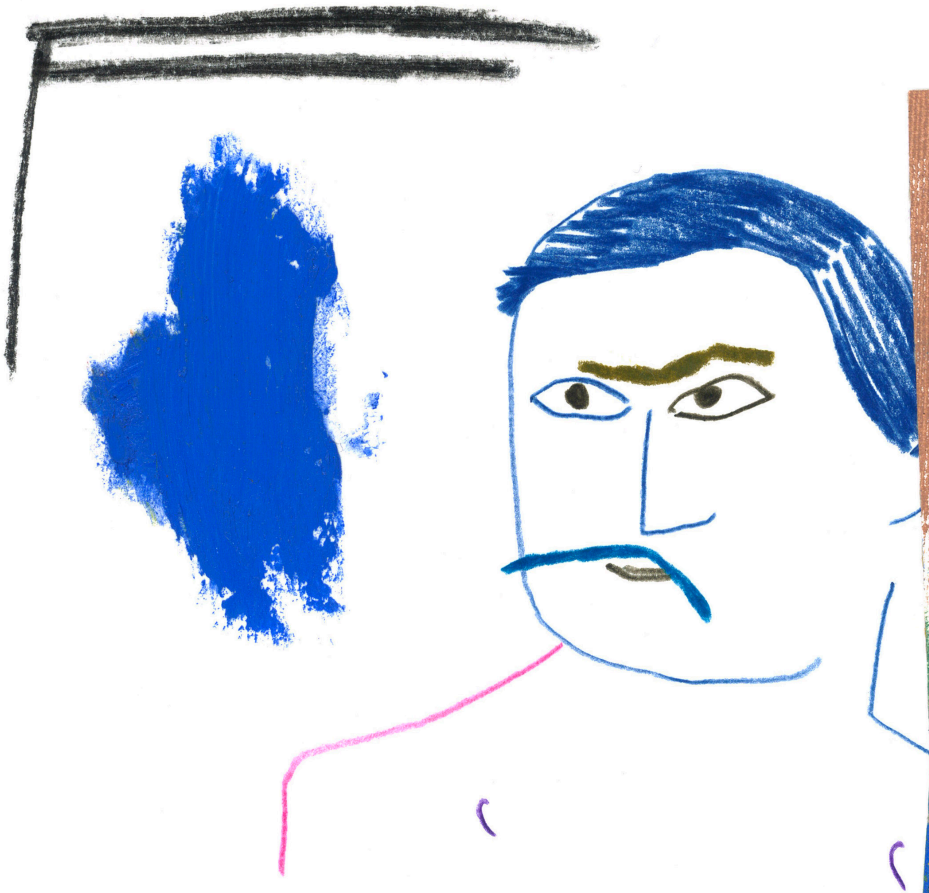
The First Fruit of the Season, 2020, mixed media on paper, 18 x 24 cm

Here's Sophia. She takes someone she wants to be bound to for the rest of her life. She offers herself as a companion, guiding him Virgil-like through an important day in their existence and makes sure that everything they had, have or will have to say to one another is said there and then, that morning, that afternoon, as long as it is blurted out before midnight. Should tears be poured for past or future mourning? If her interlocutor indulges in mourning for more than two hours, she starts to stare at him with hatred, and as the third hour comes around, she runs off. Is there a whole life of abuse to be recounted, of unexpected joys, of failed loves and children lost forever or just conjured up on the spur of the moment? Four hours is too much; two is quite enough. She can add in the details – he nods and finally gets it. And so they can be lifelong friends: he calls her from Abuja and she him from Prague, she from Tangiers and he from Philadelphia. Not that they have anything to say to one another except that they're friends, until the end of time.



Sophia, 2020, mixed media on paper, 18 x 24 cm

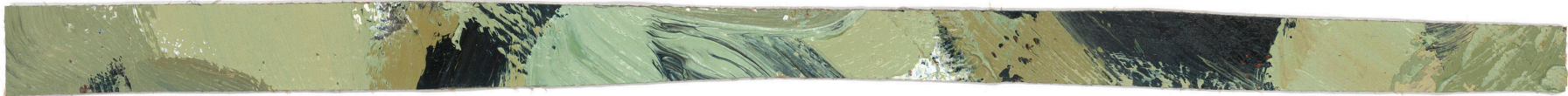
A girl runs up to greet him; he stretches out a hand for a friendly shake, but there's more to come: he also stretches out his loins and what hangs below, everthing in solemnis ostensio, clad in decidedly tight white tights. He is donning, boots and his chest is covered in a military overcoat, but the Louis XIV style peeps out from the wrinkles on his neck, wrapped in a jabot and a pleated lace tie, complete with beer stains. I just love him, don't ask me why.



Solemnis Ostensio, 2020, mixed media on paper, 18 x 24 cm

V

The Sirocco wind has soiled the ivy and jasmine leaves with sand. He struts along pompously, like one of those expatriates in certain early-twentieth-century paintings, in which the aesthetes would colour the dance celebrations of San Vio and fashion bazaars, with trousers all too wide and feathers firmly ensconced in hats. «Where are you going?» He can't keep up with any of the show he is trying to put on. Blushing, he takes her by the arm, trying to shelter his perfect silhouette, his eyes staring into the sun. Naïve, like only a child of his own time can be.



Jasmine Leaves, 2020, mixed media on paper, 18 x 24 cm

«He's the best of them all».

«Why?»

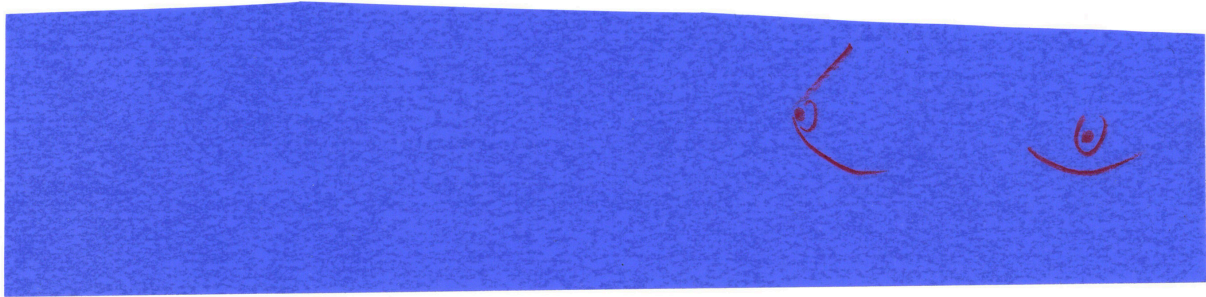
«He's sensitive. His sensitivity is intact, despite his rather thorny character. If he was a book and I had to find a place for him in my library, I would put him among the Russians. There we are. I don't quite know how to say it... He's harrowing but pure. Yet unlike a novel, he doesn't finish. There we are. He doesn't finish and I've grown tired of reading him».

«And so stop reading him. What's the problem?»

«I disgust myself a bit».

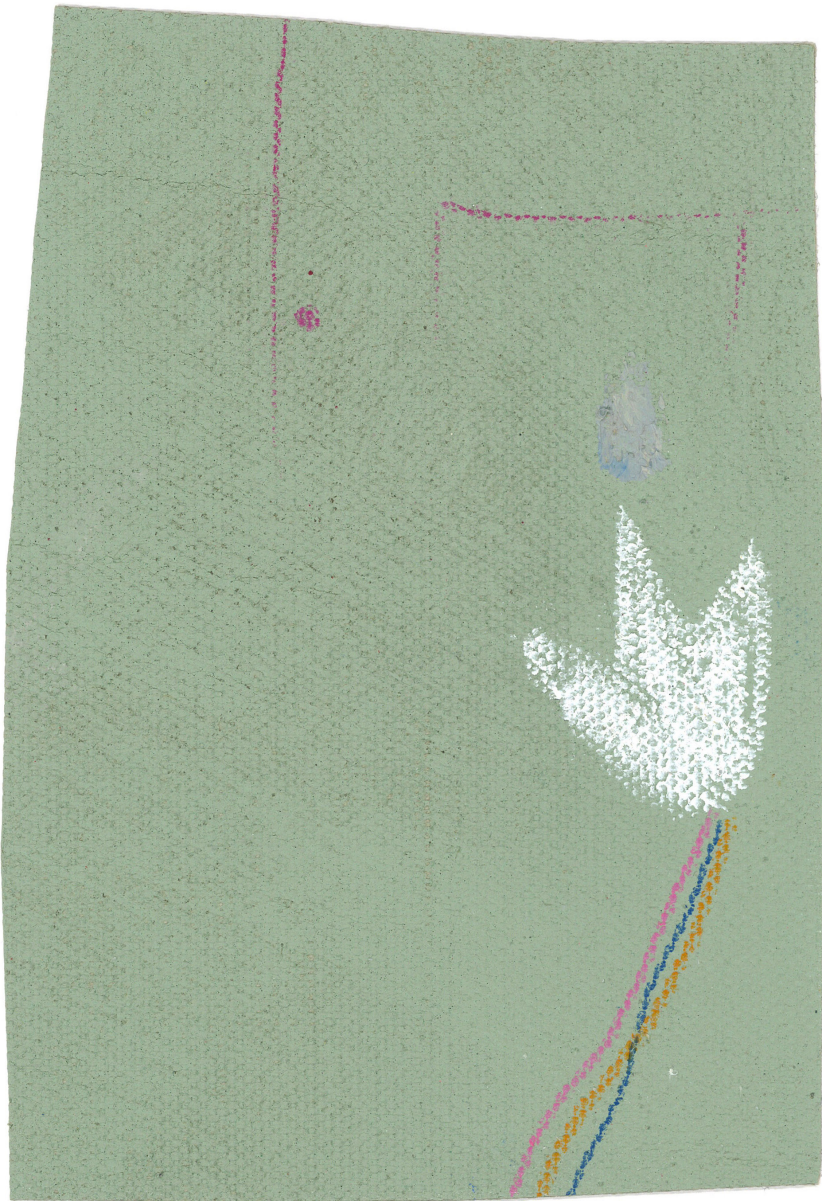
«A bit».

«Yes, but not very much».



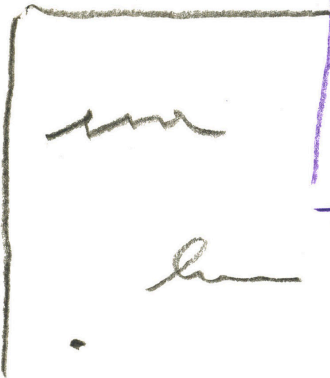
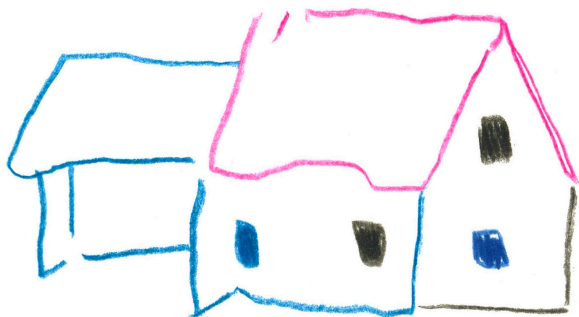
Among the Russians, 2020, mixed media on paper, 18 x 24 cm

«Last night it was another world. Now I stand in front of the mirror. I smile to myself ten times. Then I will smile to him, ten more times. I can't say I desired him for only about a quarter of an hour... You see, I just can't; I would come across as fickle».



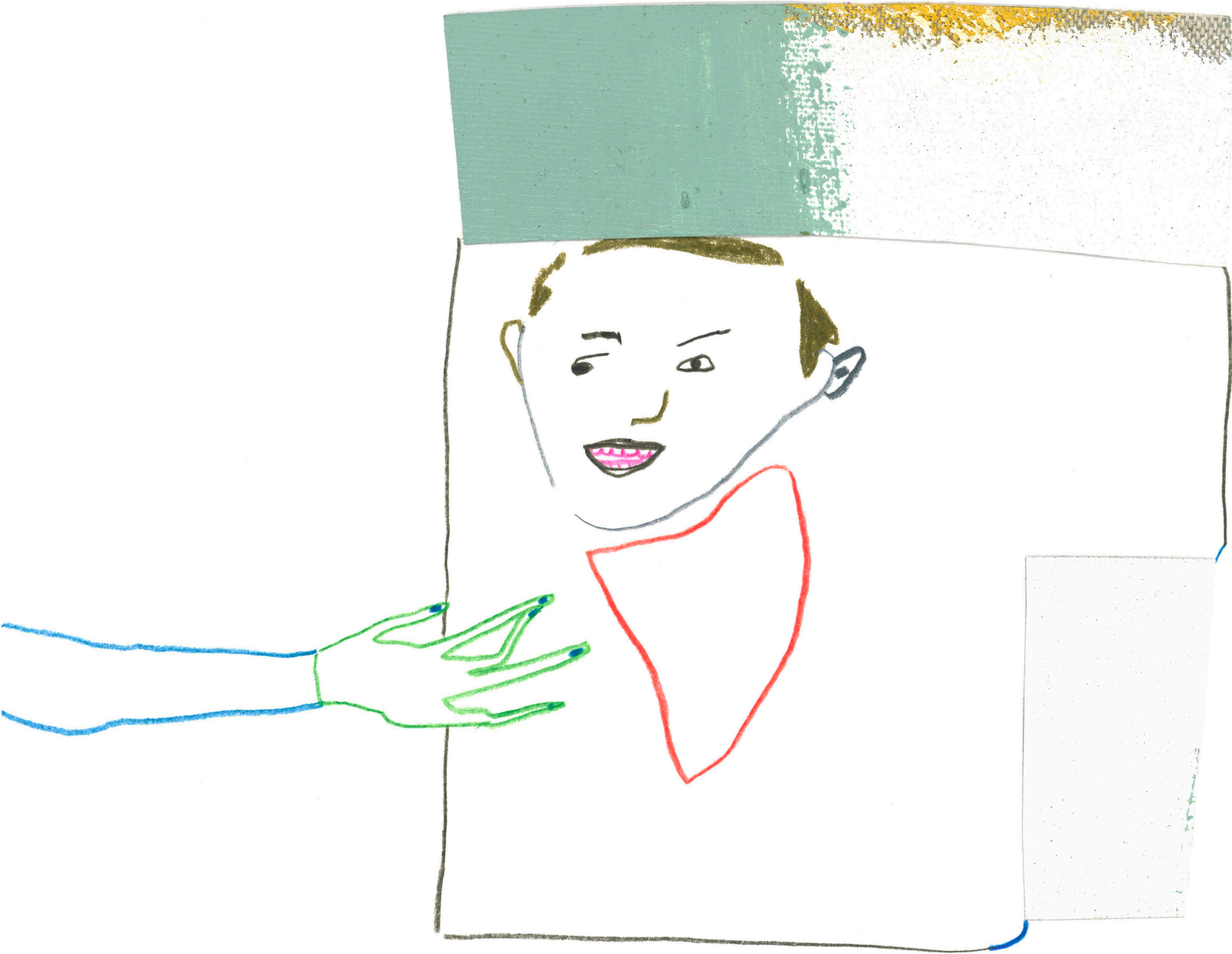
Last Night, 2020, mixed media on paper, 18 x 24 cm

He was a very good-looking lad, endowed with a sense of glory and of future which in some way he hinted at wishing to share with her. They had met only once in Boston: he was standing there, bare-chested and holding a woollen coat. His skin was so milky-pale, like that of a cuttlefish, and it looked like the bone of that cuttlefish was buried deep down under metres of flesh. When he reached her, they spent a number of charming hours together, but then he started to ask too many questions: «Can I make a Caprese salad with gorgonzola? Do you know where I can meet a real mafioso, here in the neighbourhood? Do you think I should become a Catholic? I could survive just by stealing things from fields, couldn't I? So, how about La Dolce Vita?»



Cuttlefish, 2020, mixed media on paper, 18 x 24 cm

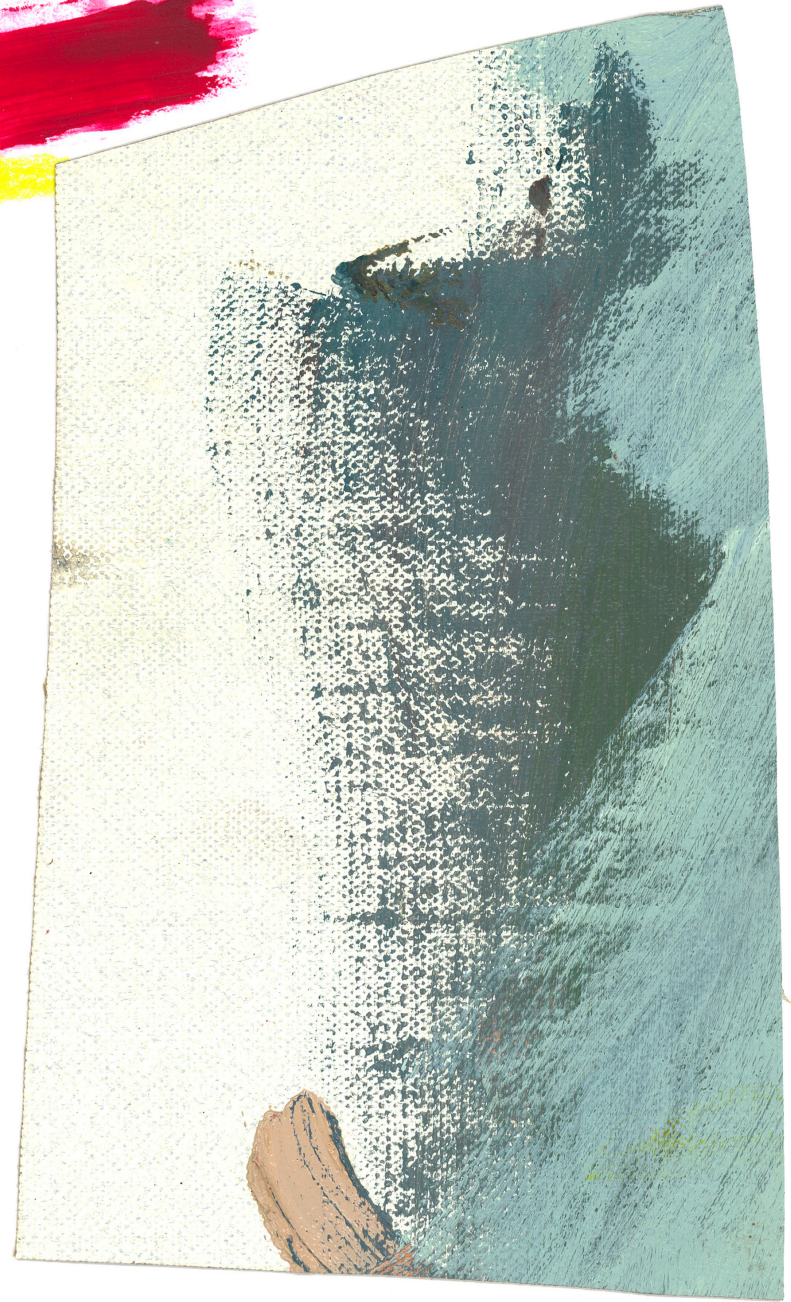
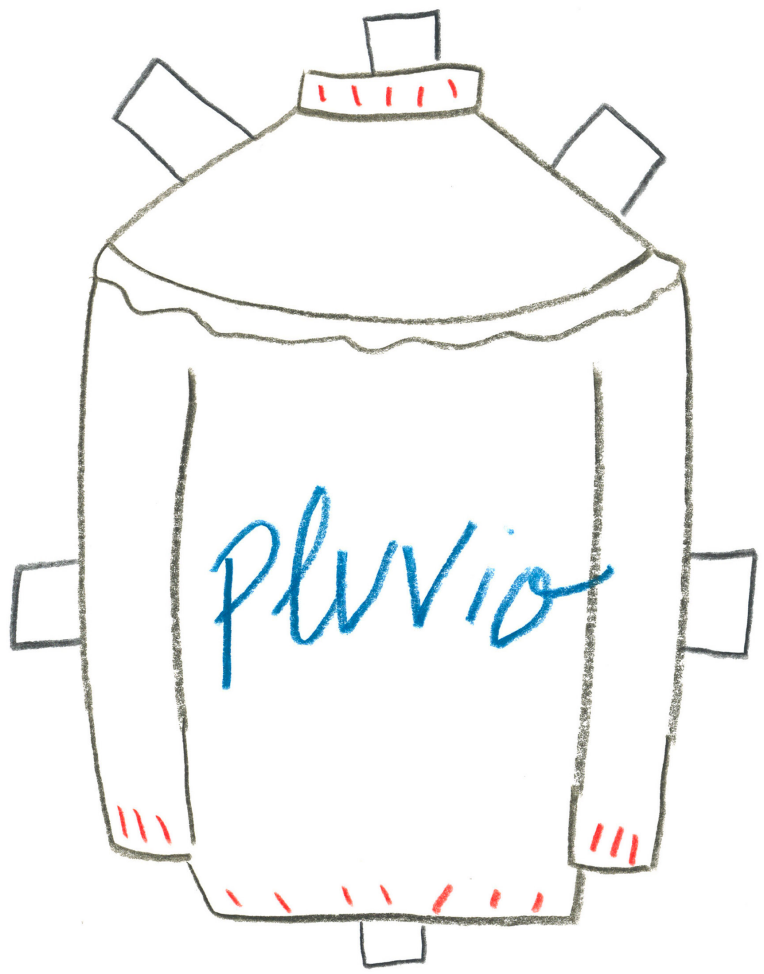
In the city where everyone loves themselves and some even kill themselves, in the metropolis of golden bodies of the West, of the horned witches with ingrown toenails of the East, London, everyone smells of someone else, and one night lasts three. The street noises hammer at the window, voices, sirens, gusts of wind. Around three in the morning, the fire alarm often goes off. Everyone out in the street, in their pyjamas, one degree below zero. We sit in groups on the steps of the houses in front, gazing perplexedly at our block, hoping that it really is going to burn down this time.



One Degree Below Zero, 2020, mixed media on paper, 18 x 24 cm

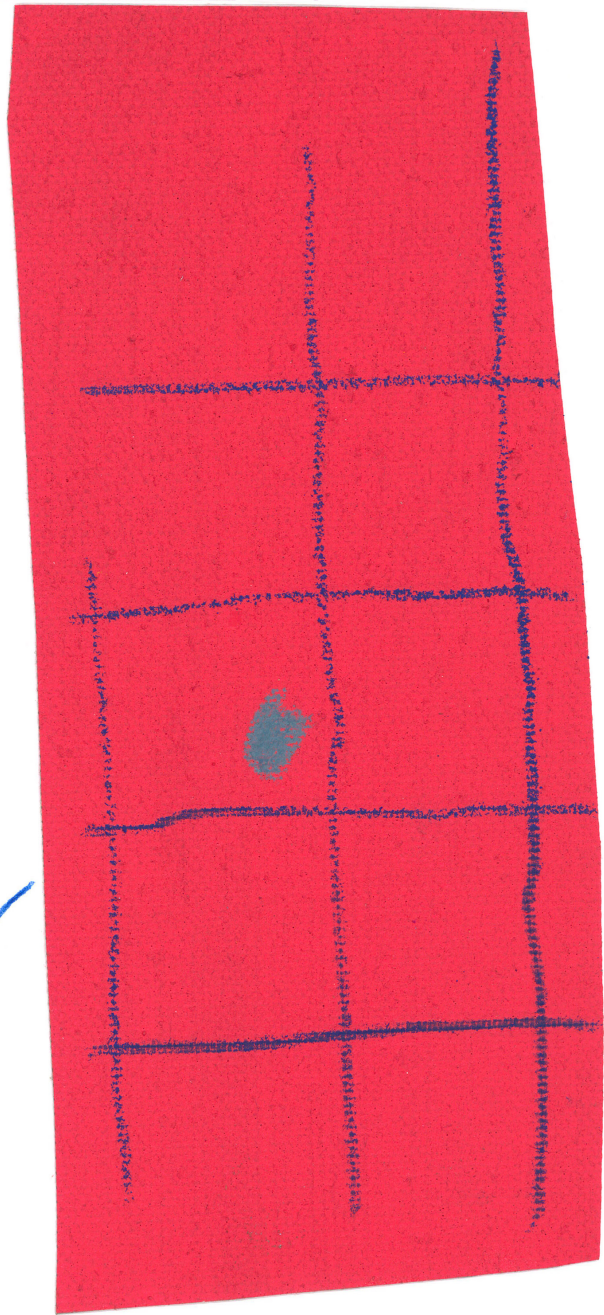
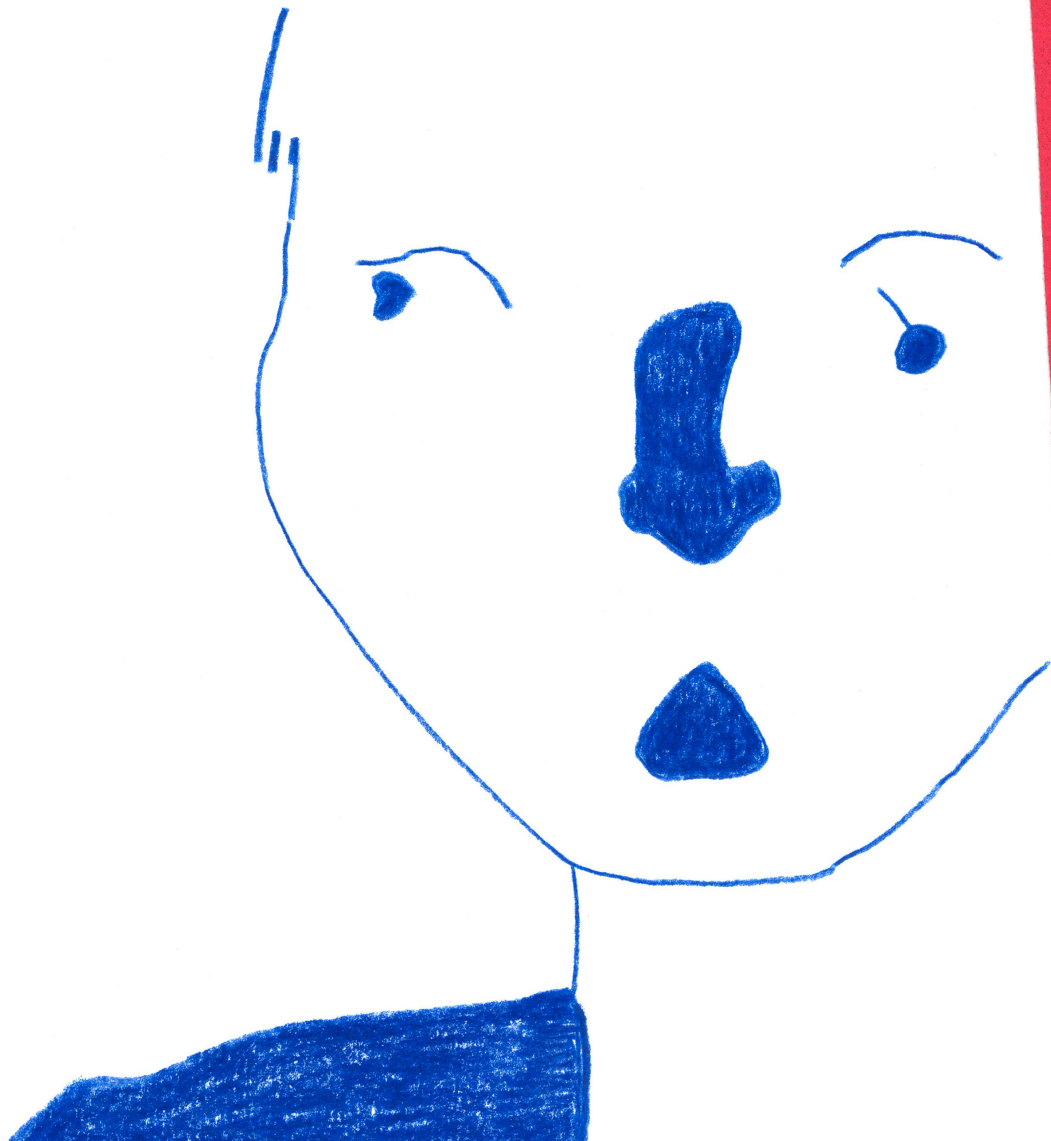
X

«May I be forgiven if this verbosity has the consistency of clotted blood. I soldier on by default and shut every window. I have no intention of offering any breadth to my thoughts, and I sincerely hope that those who listen will find me quite revolting. May every sentence of mine start with a subject and end with hatred».



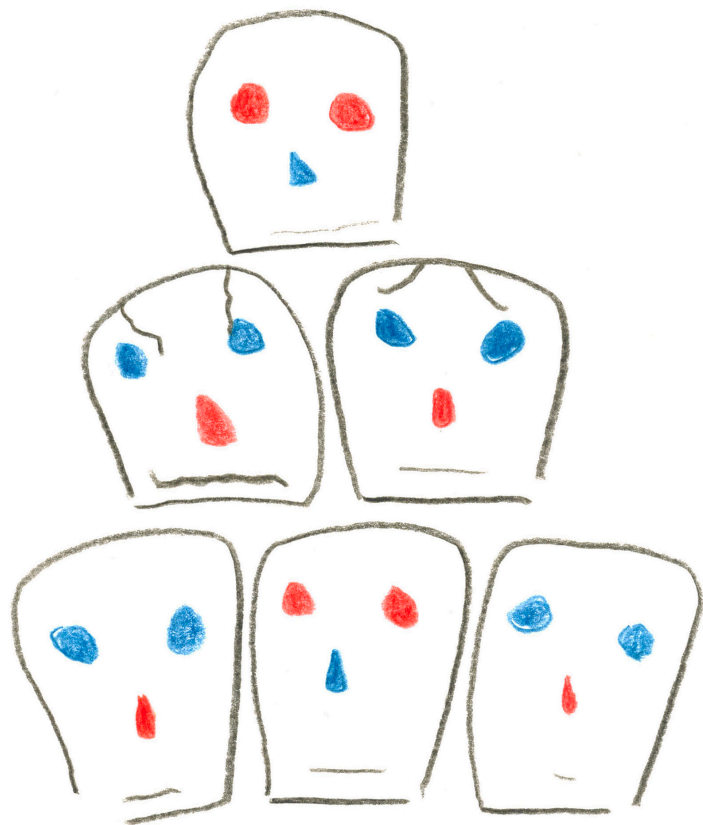
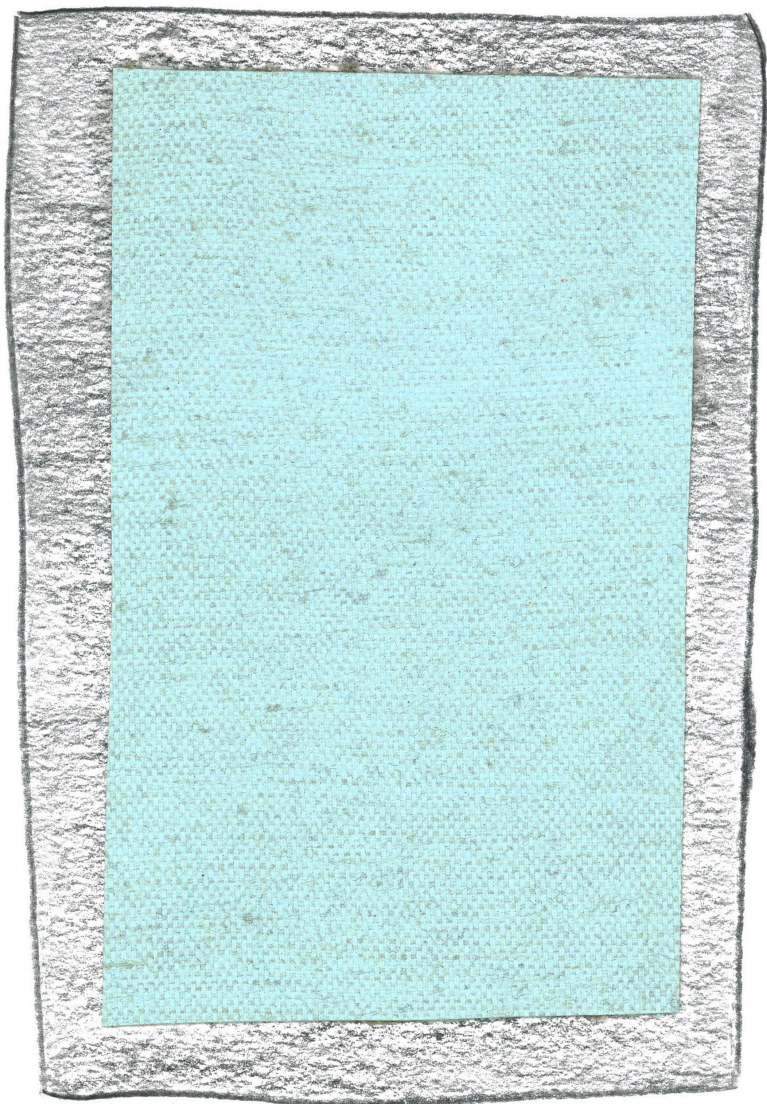
Saint Headache, 2020, mixed media on paper, 18 x 24 cm

Noah listens to her hopefully, but the image that Emily is giving of herself is beyond the point of no return. The sad drool of lies, of that made-up life she is describing to him, froths from her lips: she is Jesus among the Doctors of the Temple, Doctors madly in love with her who weep as they listen to her misadventures. In order to move him, she comes up with pneumonias she has never had and reprehensible men who have never taken advantage of her. Exhausted by the burden of that imaginary world, they both take their leave.



Madly in Love, 2020, mixed media on paper, 18 x 24 cm

Next to the ossuaries there's a toilet. The cemetery squatty is never clean. When the water taps provided to change the water in the flower holders are surrounded by people, people empty the slime that forms in the bottom of the flower vases into the toilet sink and chuck the flowers into the paper-towel basket. And so the cemetery restrooms stink of the urine of the living and the rotten flowers of the dead.



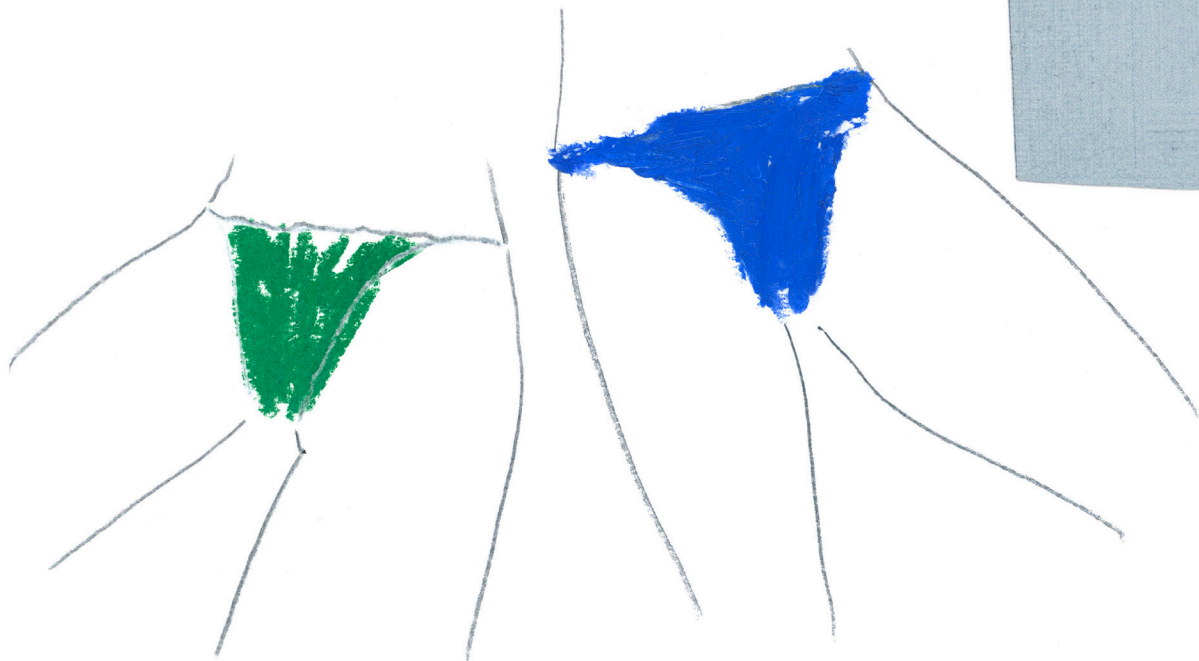
The Cemetery Squatty, 2020, mixed media on paper, 18 x 24 cm

She looks at him and he feels looked at. OK, but it's a blank, uncommitted gaze, like one of spontaneous human combustion, that by which certain people catch fire due to chemical reactions and die, but they die alone, with nobody else around, not with him. She is reminded of the first time she went fishing. Alpine char, rather like trout, in the mountains. She hadn't realised that once they were caught they had to be killed – she thought that, once out of the water, they would have the good sense to die of their own accord.



Rather Like Trout, 2020, mixed media on paper, 18 x 24 cm

She is not grateful to life for having met him. She feels like an Aztec colonised by the Spanish rat plague. She has become a cannibal trained not to feed on human flesh. She has no interest at all in learning the lesson. If maturing meant developing an intellectual understanding of insanity... fuck the ripe apples. «Why did I fall off the tree?» she wonders, rubbing her eyes with dirty hands.



Fuck the Ripe Apples, 2020, mixed media on paper, 18 x 24 cm

Why do we meet people like Jacob in our lives? For the same reason we are led to waste our time pouring over late-nineteenth-century English novels, in which three quarters of the text is given over to the painstaking description of plates of roast beef and ancient remedies against aphids: because those pages may be skipped. And skipped light-heartedly, without remorse, for there is just as much intensity to be mustered in skipping them as in reading them: a postulate of beauty.



Jacob, 2020, mixed media on paper, 18 x 24 cm

ARCADE

rue du marché aux Porcs, 10

Brussels

1000

@thisisarcade

ARCADE

87 Lever Street

London

EC1V 3RA

thisisarcade.art