

PETER
Van Dyck A FLIGHT TO THE WORLD

Studio Interior, Ghost Easel color study #2 10" x 11" oil on paper



(Above [Left]) *Studio Interior, Ghost Easel* gesture drawing 10" x 11" graphite on paper

(Above [Right]) *Studio Interior, Ghost Easel* preparatory drawing 28" x 30" graphite on paper

(Above [Left]) *Studio Interior, Ghost Easel* color study #1 10" x 11" oil on paper

(Above [Right]) *Studio Interior, Ghost Easel* color study #2 10" x 11" oil on paper



A Flight to the World

In the Manayunk section of Philadelphia, a riverside community, you may find yourself in a fenced yard among flowers and a child's toys. Through a gate a vista of parked cars and rowhouses unfolds as the natural extension of the child's field of play. Your eye then discovers a towering blue sky resting on the shoulders of a wooded hillside hundreds of yards away on the opposite bank of the unseen river. The gaps between the distant trees are crowded with small headstones glittering like teeth.

Peter Van Dyck's paintings locate me in a world as everyday as the one we're sure we share. Replete with houses, cars, streets, sidewalks, trees, clouds, windows, walls, wires and cracked masonry, they perform the extraordinary trick of turning each and every thing into an enterable place. A first impression of Van Dyck's painted world settles on the light and the exhilarating borderlessness of rooms, and the surrounding spaces opened by skylights, windows, porches, and doors. Frames of every kind conduct the viewer from place to place. Their nominally rectangular perimeters are expressed with an optical curvature like the orbits of eyes peering from their sockets, thresholds between the dream of perception and the world. The thrill of the paintings is the feeling of movement they awaken. Entering them you encounter a pageant of things whose identity comes as much from their location and posture as their detail. The interval between a tree and a garden swing efface the contours of both while the windows of a shaded automobile come into focus as the car itself dissolves. Guided from thing to thing and place to place, the viewer's participation becomes especially mobile and fluid, which is a little odd insofar as you're continually colliding with obdurate realities: ceilings, sidewalks, masonry, and glass. But you don't crash, you move through, perhaps even fly, on an itinerary choreographed by the painter.

Flight in poetry can be toward or away from something. Van Dyck's pictures seem very much a movement toward the world, an embrace of what is. Each painting is full of information, above all, the color of the sky at a given hour in a specific season. You count the bricks on a rowhouse viewed from a second-floor window across the street. The high relief of a restaurant logo, seen obliquely, resembles the hindquarters of a rearing horse in the Parthenon frieze. The glossy finish on new cars make them funhouse mirrors bringing whatever they reflect into fish-eye fullness. Familiar things are made new in unfamiliar perspectives, usually at the periphery of the field of vision which, for the painter, is also the edge of the picture plane. Sometimes the pursuit of the unexpected, say the expanse of a parking lot or a still life of fuel cans, demand ad-hoc extensions of the picture's surfaces as if a suburb had grown up around old city walls.

Studio Interior, Ghost Easel 2018-2019 28" x 30" oil on canvas

Van Dyck's repertoire of planes and surfaces are an architect's obsessions. Depictions of skeletons, shop tools, motorcycles, and plaster casts imply whole resumes of technical experience. The artist has poured cement slabs, replaced joists, put in bathrooms, rebuilt transmissions, and assembled animal skeletons to study the movement of the joints. This expertise shows up in the paintings, souvenirs of domains to be explored in the expanding array of rooms and places whose borders are under continuous reconsideration and reintegration in pursuit of the picture's mysterious sense of wholeness.

Wholeness in all the arts is usually thought an aesthetic achievement. A poet elicits feeling from the contingency and disorder of experience by creating a regulating fictional structure to hold it. The key to Van Dyck's sense of order is in his drawings. Pictures he might work on for months and years begin in notes as brief as a gesture drawing where he registers an intuition about the joining of spaces, inside-outside, room to room. The larger working drawings develop the sketches with rehearsals of plan and elevation toward a summation complete with fields of silvery tone fenced by immaculate linear contours. The eccentric perspectives, mixed with their refinement, parody the mechanical regularity of architectural draftsmanship reminding us abstract models never resemble the world.

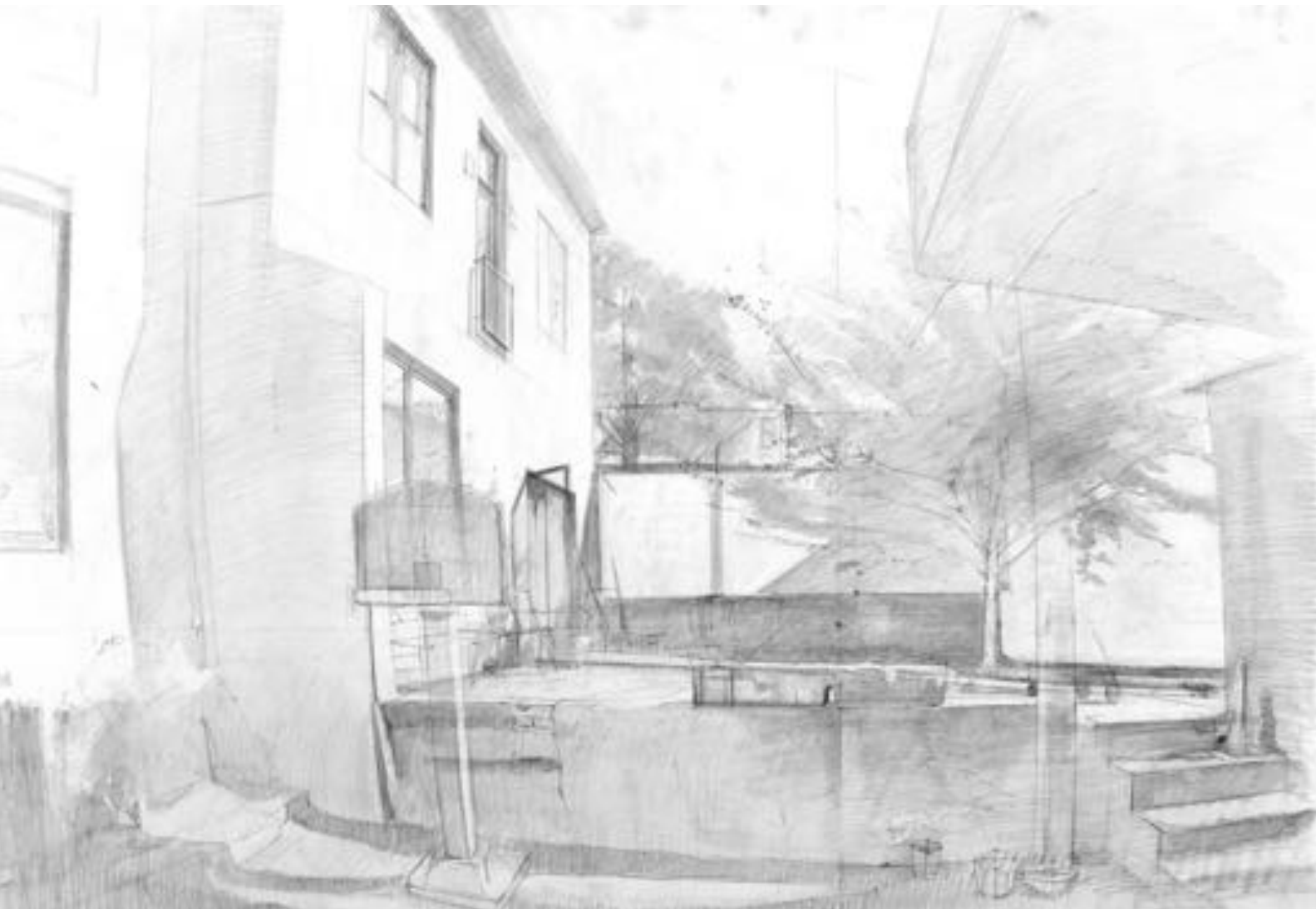
The gestural clarity of Van Dyck's drawings is put at risk in his paintings. Blooming into color, the paintings take on almost unmanageable loads of detail entertaining endless revision and a continually evolving desire. If the drawings have a certain Platonic ideality, the paintings are a descent into the complexity and ambiguity of the sensual world. But, eventually, the order of the drawing reemerges enriched by the immersion in looking and discovery it has been asked to undertake. Perhaps this is what a work of art is: an attempt to make the fullest account of our experience set to a musical score for others to follow.

Van Dyck's work has a curiously Philadelphian pugnacity, romantic in its love for the world, yet refusing the comfort of any unearned transcendence, which is exactly not to say the world can't be redeemed through work, attentiveness, and a little wit. In this, the painter is in a line that includes other eccentric anthologists of the everyday like Whitman and Eakins. But a film of a novel by William Wharton, an ex-patriate Philadelphian, resonates in my memory. *Birdy* is set in south Philadelphia in the late fifties and is the story of a young man who so identifies with birds he sees the world through their eyes. The centerpiece of Alan Parker's 1985 film, the enactment of Birdy's imaginative flight through a labyrinth of backyards and alleys, is a baroque ecstasy. The embrace of the world through flight, to not from, gets me closest to what moves me in Peter Van Dyck's paintings.

Scott Noel
February 2020

The Tiger, the Cow and the Canine 2019-2020 38.5" x 31" oil on canvas





View from the Lower Yard, Steve's Green Fence preparatory drawing 33.5" x 48" graphite on paper



View from the Lower Yard, Steve's Green Fence 2019 33.5" x 48" oil on canvas



View of the Barn and the Garage 2011-2019 24" x 30" oil on canvas

(Overleaf) Pool, Kia and Seaplane 2018-2019 22.5" x 47" oil on canvas





(Above) *Winter Studio Interior* gesture drawing 14" x 11" graphite on paper

(Opposite) *Winter Studio Interior* 2018 48" x 40" oil on canvas

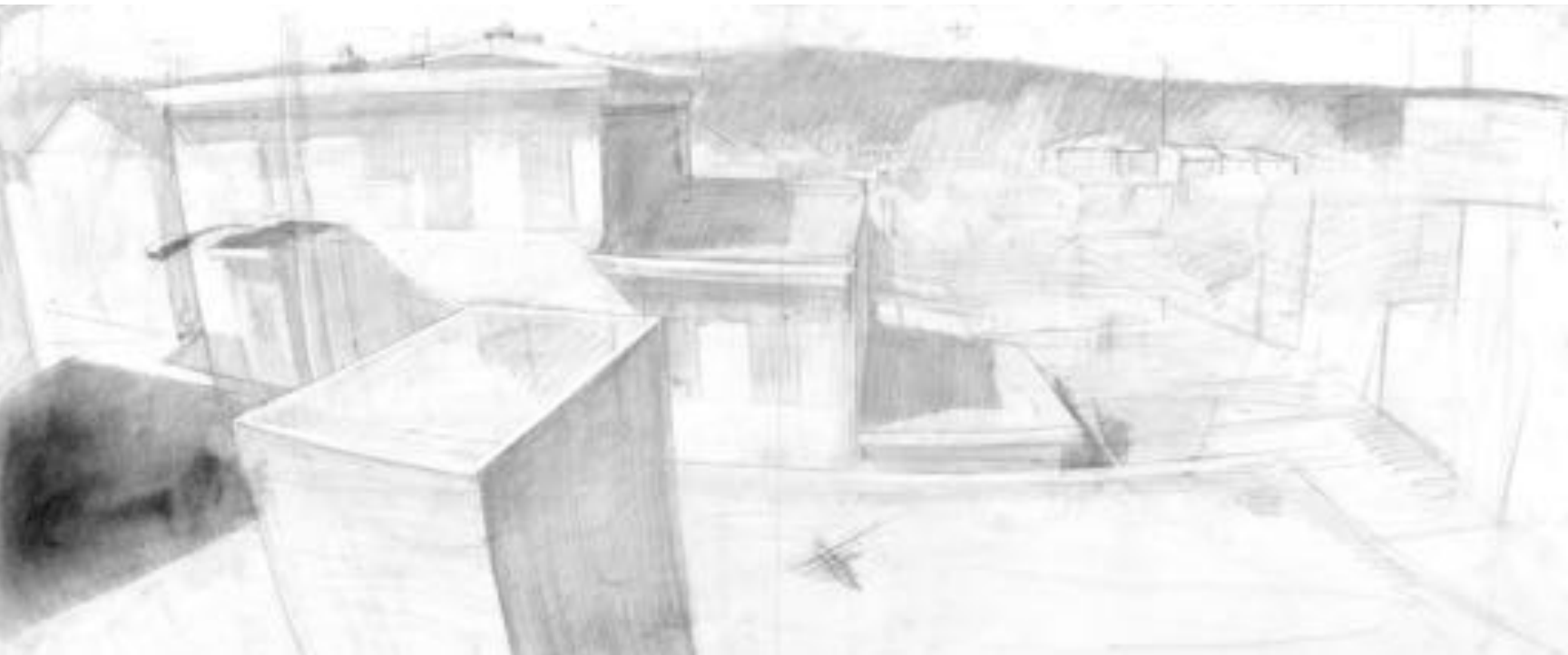


(Detail) *Winter Studio Interior*

(Overleaf) *Chili's and the Dissolving Prius* 2015-2018 24" x 50" oil on canvas







View of Efrem's and Belmont Hills preparatory drawing 20" x 48" graphite on paper



View of Efrem's and Belmont Hills 2019 20" x 48" oil on canvas

(Overleaf [Detail]) *View of Efrem's and Belmont Hills*





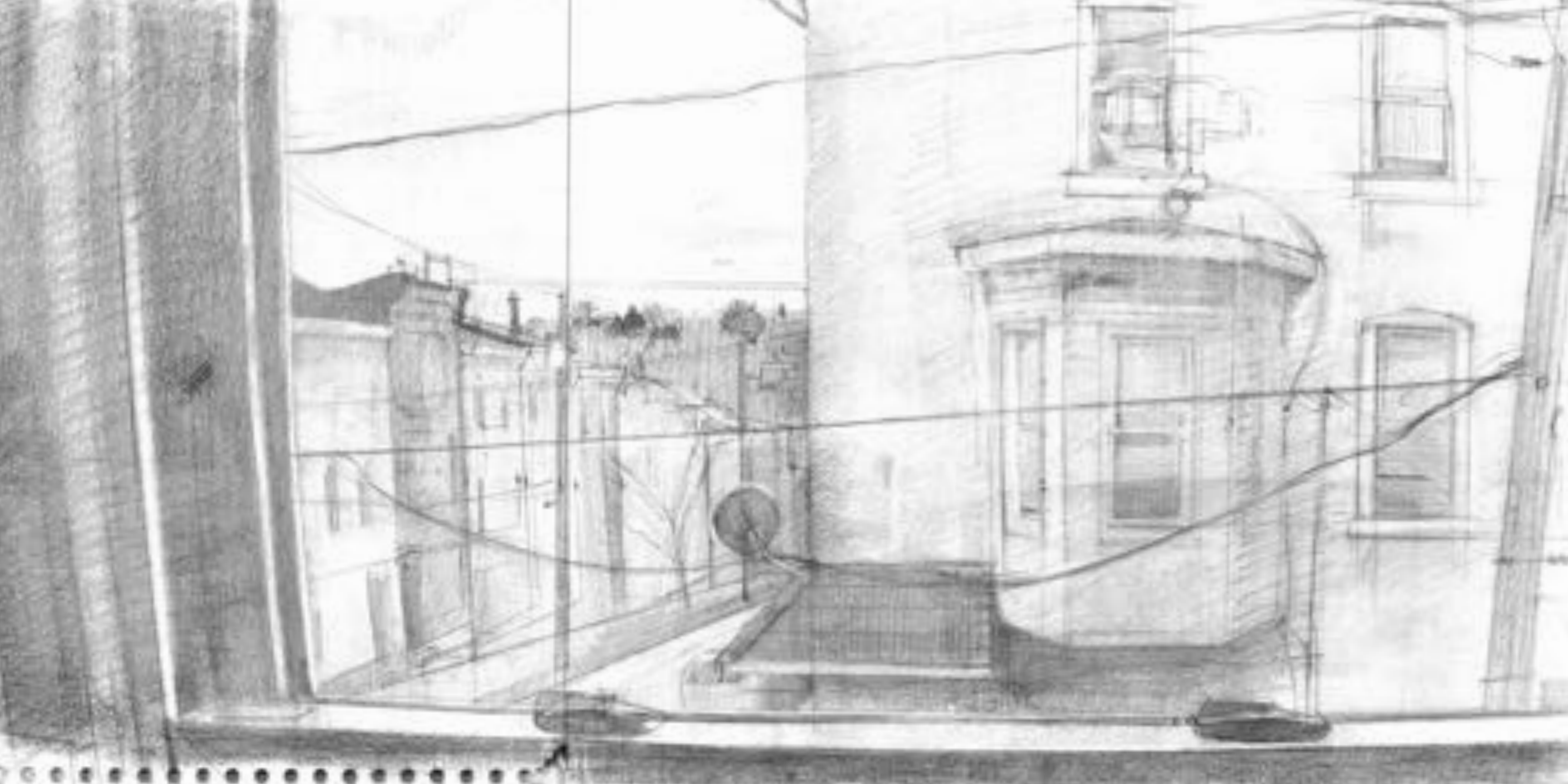
View Down Cresson Street 2016-2018 24" x 30" oil on canvas

Garage Still-life with Broom and Mazda 2016-2018 48" x 48" oil on canvas

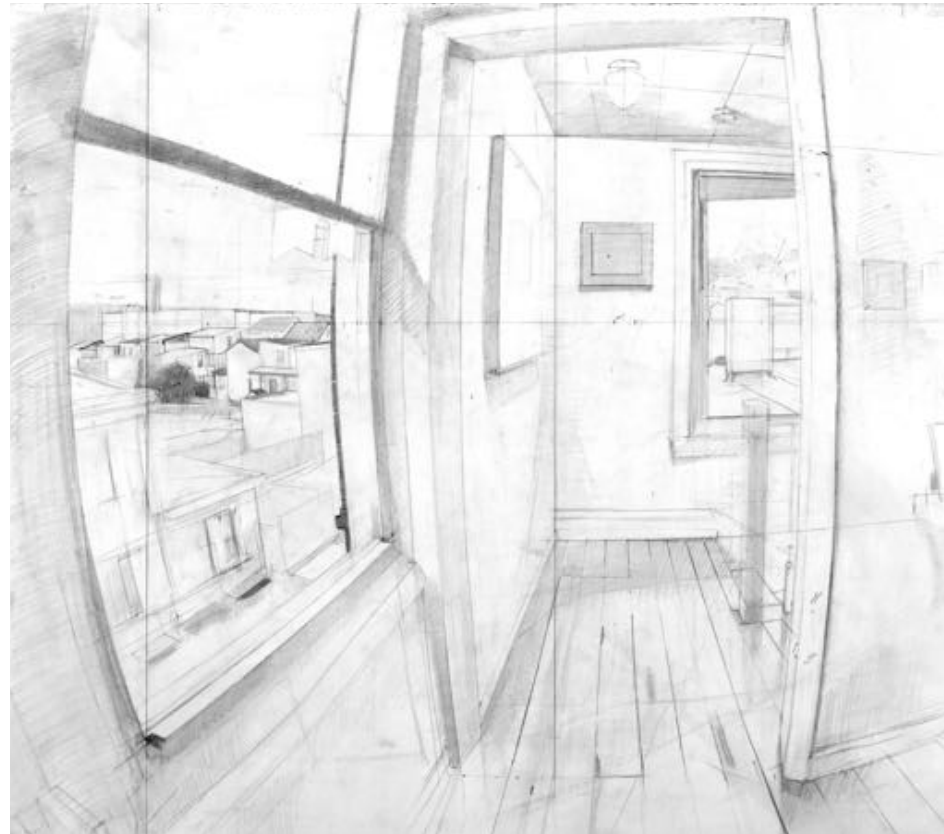
(First Overleaf) Efrem's Bay Window and a View Down Ripka Street preparatory drawing 14" x 28" graphite and acrylic on paper

(Second Overleaf) Efrem's Bay Window and a View Down Ripka Street 2018-2020 14" x 28" oil on canvas









(Above [Left]) Dobson, Stairwell, Hillside preparatory drawing 38.5" x 42.5" graphite on paper

(Above [Right]) Dobson, Stairwell, Hillside color studies 12" x 11" acrylic on paper

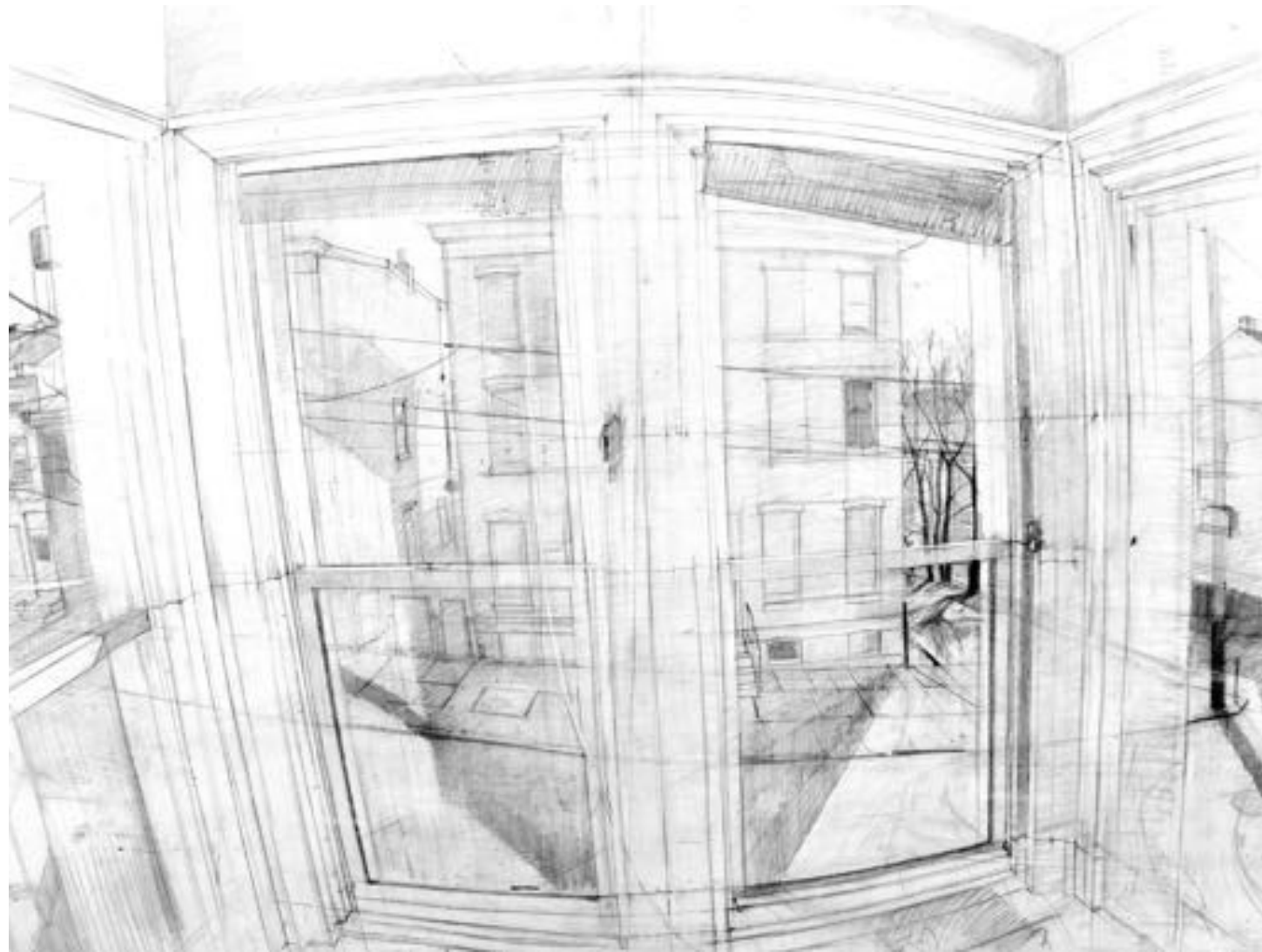
(Opposite) Dobson, Stairwell, Hillside 2019-2020 38.5" x 42.5" oil on canvas



Winn-Dixie Parking-lot, Enterprise 2014-2016 47" x 96" oil on canvas and board



Alabama Yard, Winter 2011-2016 30" x 40" oil on canvas



Bay Window Goggles preparatory drawing 36" x 48" graphite on paper



Bay Window Goggles 2018-2019 36" x 48" oil on canvas

Notes and Acknowledgments

I am a painter, draftsman and general life-enthusiast living in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Elba, Alabama. My primary vocation is the making of oil paintings, but I also make drawings, do home improvement projects of dubious quality and obsessively ruminate over the metaphysical quandaries of life, much to the irritation and exhaustion of my family and friends. I also devote a significant portion of my time to teaching painting and drawing.

I studied at the Florence Academy of Art from 1999-2002 under the wise guidance of the painter/all-around-father-figure, Daniel Graves. Daniel gave me the opportunity to teach when I was in Florence, and, when I returned to Philadelphia in 2002, I was able to continue my work as an educator at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Much to my continued surprise, the fact that I am moody, unreliable, insecure and difficult to work with has remained either undiscovered or more likely, graciously overlooked by my students and colleagues, and I happily continue to teach in the BFA and Continuing Education programs at PAFA.

The underlying drive of all my efforts in life has been to win and maintain the respect of my brothers, Tom and Steve. They are incredibly talented, accomplished, kind and, most importantly, hilariously funny. They have been the primary source of my enthusiasm for life.

Although many people have given their time and attention to my artistic development, two teachers in particular have had the most profound effect on me, though I doubt that their names have ever appeared in the same sentence before now. They are Ramiro Sanchez and Scott Noel.

I am eternally grateful to my Mom and Dad for their unrelenting support of my life and work as well as for being such excellent people and parents.

I would be completely lost in life if not for my incredible wife, Carolyn Pyfrom. Overflowing with artistic talent, intelligence, wisdom, courage and generosity, she is quite simply the best person I know. Finally, I want to acknowledge my most excellent boy Sam who is so very smart and curious and, by all objective measures, the cutest kid in the world.

Peter Van Dyck
February 2020

(Detail) The Tiger, the Cow and the Canine

(Front Cover [Detail]) Efrems Bay Window and a View Down Ripka Street

(Back Cover [Detail]) Bay Window Goggles

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