

JOSHUA RAINER

ARCHENEMY



M CONTEMPORARY ART

OCT 14 - NOV 12, 2022

In the Wake of Shadows

Joshua Rainer is a young artist just 26-years-old. We emphasize this fact first more out of astonishment than criticism. In fact, consider this detail a quasi-secret key of unlocking the heart of much of what is on display in *Archenemy*, a solo exhibition of new drawings and paintings. At first glance, your eyes will have you believe that Rainer is simply another artist invigorated by the challenges of rendering technically excellent portraits. On that level he does succeed. Though relatively small, the exhibition is an impressive collection of highly realistic images — eight charcoal drawings on heavy Arches Aquarelle cotton paper and four oil paintings that almost look to be photographs. But to look again is to join an artist in full exploration of some of life's most timeless and vexing questions. Rainer comfortably plunges himself— pencil, paintbrush, body, mind — into deep philosophical waters.

Think Plato. Think Hegel; Jesus Christ too and you whom Rainer is betting has also tussled with questions of self-discovery; dark versus light, fight or flight. Rainer is right: No one alive is immune from self-inquiry. But it is often the singular gift of the artist – those willing to travel to and express from the edge – which lifts our eyes to what might otherwise be inexpressible. "I think a lot about how I go about being a better version of myself, who stands in the way of that and, who do I have to get permission from in order to become that person," explains Rainer, a graduate of the College for Creative Studies. "Ultimately, I arrive at myself. I don't think I'm alone."

For Rainer, the journey of understanding oneself is such a giant and consuming investigation that it drove him to also imagine bigger ways of making art speak. "There are pieces with subjects and ideas that deserve to be done not just well but at scales that hopefully add to the meaning." *Archenemy No.1* and *Archenemy No.2*, the exhibition's signatures literally test the limits of the walls at M Contemporary Art. Both drawings stand like pillars, each towering in scale, 72 x 48, and stark in execution. The figures are somewhat haunting and purposefully faceless. "I wanted to put the shadow there as this large imposing kind of eerie and deformed figure." Still, it is undeniably Rainer, front and center, vulnerably summoning and sharing a courage much larger than himself or his years. "It looks scary but what you're seeing is a figure individuating, coming to or realizing their own power and agency over the shadow."

He adds, "As long as we live, we grow. One big part of the growth is taking self-inventory of oneself and where we're at," says Rainer who teaches art part-time for adults and youth at the Birmingham Bloomfield Art Center. "Sometimes we can be the shadow in our own way. At least it's true for me. That's what I'm trying to say through these works." Let the viewer be comforted too: This is not a show of narcissism writ large. Rainer takes that question head on, acknowledging how easily the assumption can be made of any artist's exhibition daring to be self-focused with works featuring artist self-portraits.

Nichole M. Christian is a writer and veteran journalist. She has worked as creative director, editor and lead writer for the Kresge Foundation's annual eminent artist monograph series. The titles include: *A Palette for The People* (2021), honoring painter and educator, Shirley Woodson; *Wonder and Flow*, (2020) honoring ceramicist Marie Woo, and *A Life Speaks*, (2019) honoring poet and activist Gloria House. Nichole was also coauthor of *Canvas Detroit*. Her writing also appears in the poetry chapbook, *Cypher*, summer 2021; *Portraits 9/11/01: The Collected Portraits of Grief* from *The New York Times*; the online arts journal, *Essay'd*; *A Detroit Anthology*, and *Dear Dad: Reflections on Fatherhood*.

Photography: CJ Benninger

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Archenemy No. 1, 2022

Charcoal on Paper
72 x 48 inches

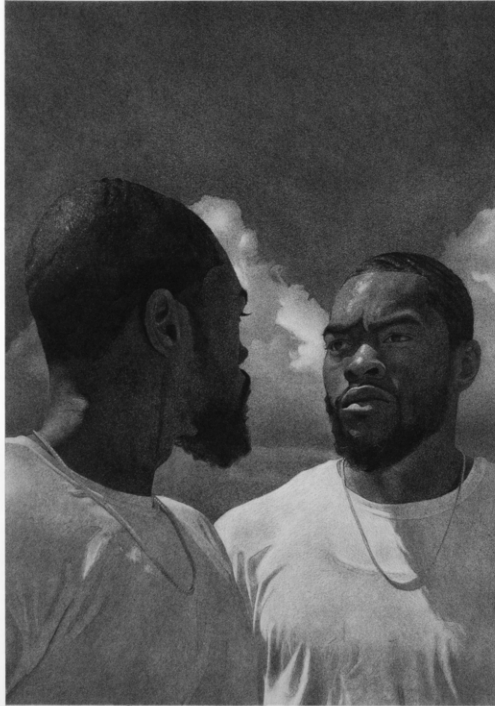
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Archenemy No. 2, 2022

Charcoal on Paper
72 x 48 inches

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Id v. Ego No. 1, 2022

Charcoal on Paper
28 x 22 inches

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Id v. Ego No. 2, 2022

Charcoal on Paper
28 x 22 inches

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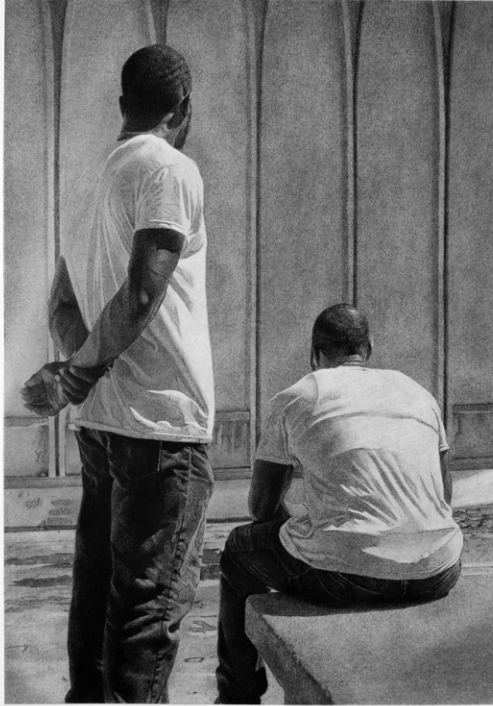
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Liminal Synthesis, 2022

Charcoal on Paper
28 x 22 inches

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Liminal Repentance, 2022

Charcoal on Paper
28 x 22 inches

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Transformation at Penuel, 2022

Oil on Canvas
48 x 36 inches

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Becoming Israel, 2022

Oil on Canvas
48 x 36 inches

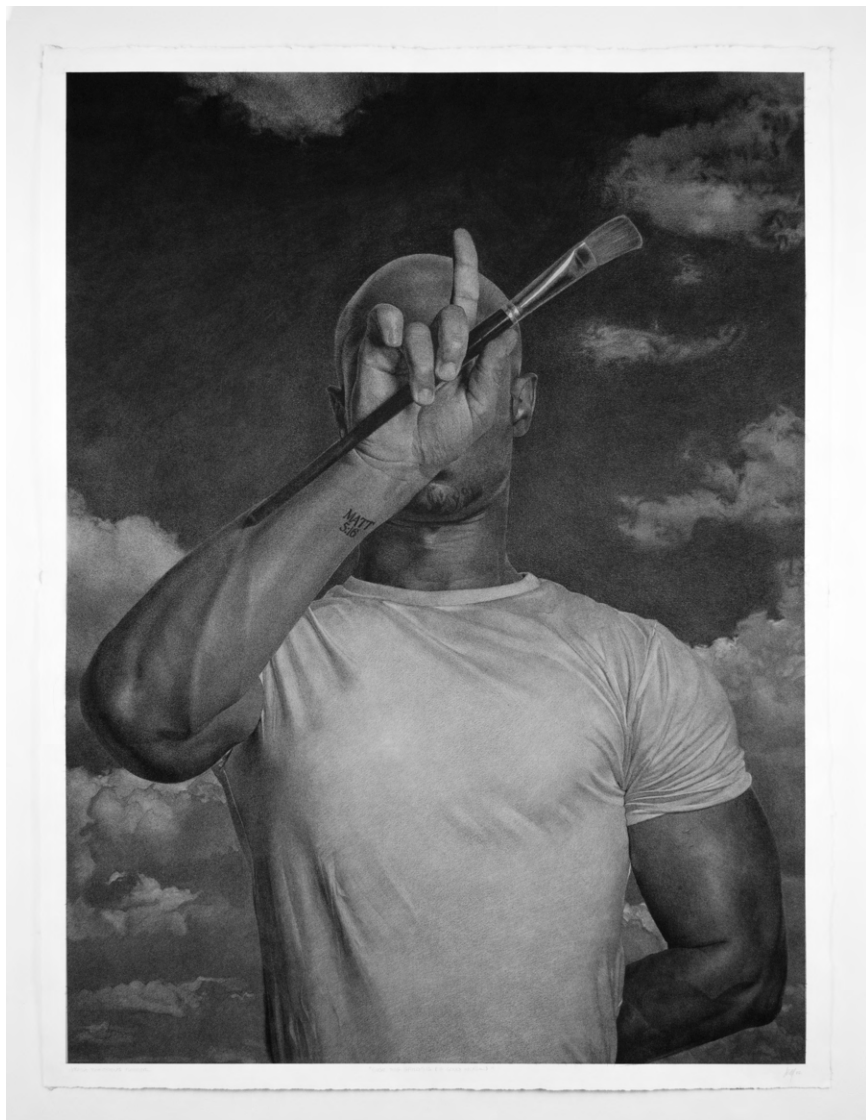
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Know Thyself #2, 2022

Oil on Canvas
36 x 24 inches

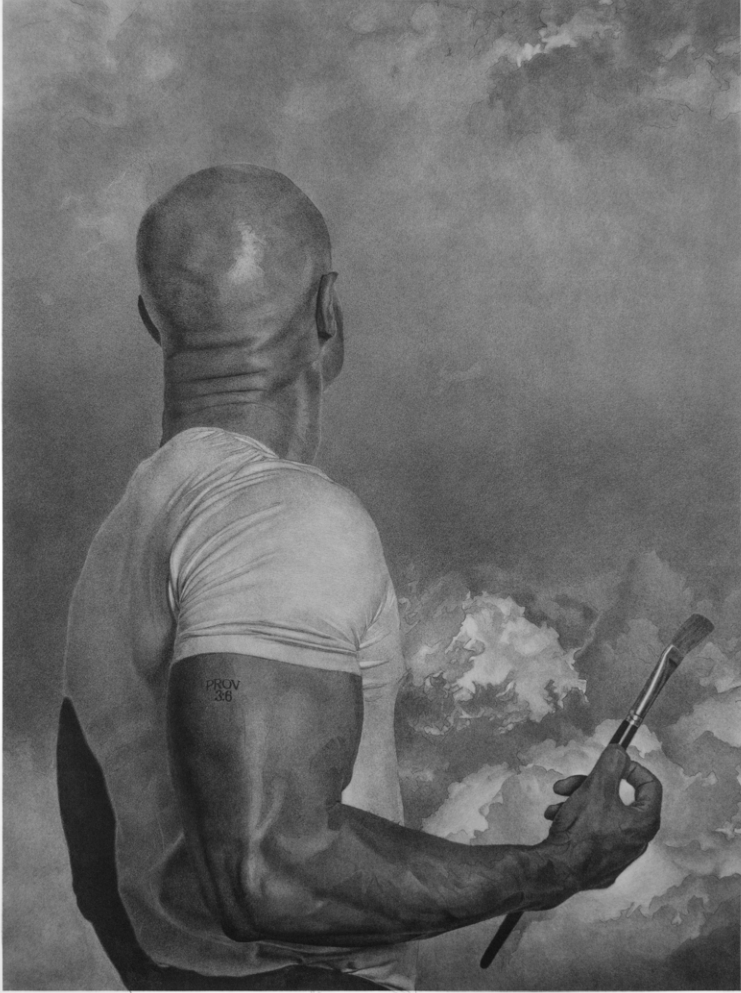
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Ever the Epilogue (A Good Work), 2022

Charcoal on Paper
28 x 22 inches

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Ever the Prologue (Modus Operandi), 2022

Charcoal on Paper
28 x 22 inches

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JOSHUA RAINER was born in Detroit February of 1996. He lives in and works from his hometown. Rainer began formal art education at Cranbrook Upper Schools, is a member of the Birmingham Bloomfield Arts Center (BBAC). He was the recipient of four Scholastics Regional Gold Medals in Painting, the Regional Best of Show, a Regional American Vision Nomination, and a Scholastics National Silver Medal in Painting. Rainer graduated from the College for Creative Studies' Illustration Department in 2018 and has exhibited in the Grosse Pointe Art Center, the U245 Gallery, two College for Creative Studies Juried Student Exhibitions, Marygrove College, and been featured in DDEAF Magazine.

