

Aaron D. Baldon

Artist Statement

What I create comes from without and from within. It can be intellectual and/or experiential. It is informed by research and interpretation, yet it is raw and unaltered. In most cases, the experience flows through my natural synesthesia, wherein I literally see the unseen sensations such as auditory and physical stimuli. Sounds and physical sensations become visual representations in my mind's eye, as well as superimposed upon my normal vision, like a second projection of an image onto an already projected screen. This allows me to translate my actual physical pain and my experiences into a visual medium, so that others may comprehend viscerally what I feel physically.

I don't try to create palatable images, because the world is a dark and brutal place, and I have been there. I take some inspiration from Goya in that he worked in a journalistic fashion. While he or can say, "I saw it," as can contemporary journalists, only a Soldier (or anyone else caught up in a war) can say, "I felt it". That's what I aim to do with my art - to embody what "it" actually feels like; particularly the aftermath of the experience. Despite the ugliness of conflict and the darker aspects of the world, I aim to combine it with the elegance of mastery of my craft, bridging the profound divide between the beauty of artistic quality and craftsmanship with the brutality of the subject matter. I am locked in a never-ending quest to channel my passion for the beauty of master works while giving form to the darker aspects of the world. This approach is about heightening my craft in order to use it as a tool to invite reflection, understanding, and empathy.

I paint like I draw. The act of incorporating craftsmanship is more than just applying paint to canvas - in my practice it is working with the material, playing with the subtle interactions of not only line but also creating a harmony between the flow of the ink/paint and the absorption of the substrate. Working with ink or high-flow acrylic on raw canvas is similar to a tattoo artist working with needle and ink on human skin - no mistakes can be made, but if they are made, they are part of the artwork, forever. I am constantly at war with perfectionism and spontaneity, trying to allow the process to happen, but fighting the desire to prevent unintentionality. Despite this war occurring at the macrocosmic scale, I am drawn into the microcosm of the material, enjoying the detail of the fiber as it drinks in the ink, then drawing back to see how the optical blending and forms render what I feel upon the canvas and deep into the canvas. This is part of what I enjoy the most about the process, is that the paint does not just sit on top of the canvas, but instead becomes part of the canvas; molecules of paint nestled within fibers of linen and cotton.

My methods and techniques are heavily influenced by my upbringing. As a child growing up in a poor Chicano suburb of downtown Los Angeles, I felt fortunate to have a rich cultural heritage of a Chicana mother from Los Angeles, a father from an Indigenous pueblo in New Mexico with ancient and sacred traditions, and a grandmother from a small village in Hawaii. However, in many ways I felt that I could not escape my barrio (neighborhood) or my background. Art was a mental way out, and I was surrounded by Chicano art, with the beautiful murals of Downtown and East Los Angeles, and amazing Chicano tattoo art in my culture and in my family. Unfortunately the vast majority of artists from my community either gave up on art for a more "practical" way of life, or worse. The few that continued to practice art typically did so as tattoo artists, which influenced my own art style, though I never actually put needle to skin as did many of my local contemporaries and family. However, I found another way out, though art. After over a decade and a half in the advertising industry, with most of that as an art director, I grew disillusioned with my chosen profession and decided to serve my country. I enlisted in the U.S. Army, quickly rising in rank, and deployed to an infamous mountainous area of Afghanistan. There I was a part of the war, and deeply and emotionally entrenched in the experience of a Soldier and the war's impact on the surrounding population. After my service in the U.S. Army, I received my

BFA and lived in Europe, seeking a change of environment. While there, I endured the attempted invasion of the city of Kyiv in Ukraine, surviving for a month with my fiancé and her son while the war ravaged around us. This gave me yet another perspective on war, as I saw the effect of war on people very close to me who were not Soldiers. After living as refugees in Central Europe for a year, I returned to the U.S. with my now wife and stepson.

War scars everyone, whether physically or emotionally. It reshapes landscapes - physically, culturally, and ethnographically. Unfortunately, war has become an abstract concept to most. With my art, I can stir emotions, finding a more powerful connection with viewers than I could with words alone. It is my hope that the work I create evokes a contemplative intensity within the viewer, and to feel the experience of the aftermath of war. Much like war, the art I create leaves permanent marks. They are unalterable - they cannot be gessoed over, they cannot be erased. I feel that the unalterable permanence of the marks is an allegory for the unalterable experiences that Soldiers and civilians bring home from the experience of war, scarring our minds, scarring our bodies, and leaving a story to tell.

Abstract:

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Exhibition from 25March2024 to 29March2024
Reception on Tuesday 26March2024
1700-1900 (5pm to 7pm)

Aaron D. Baldón
MFA Thesis Gallery Exhibition
an exploration of the theme of trauma due to war

East Gallery
Claremont Graduate University
251 E. 10th Street Claremont, CA 91711

<https://www.aarondaldon.com/studio-art>



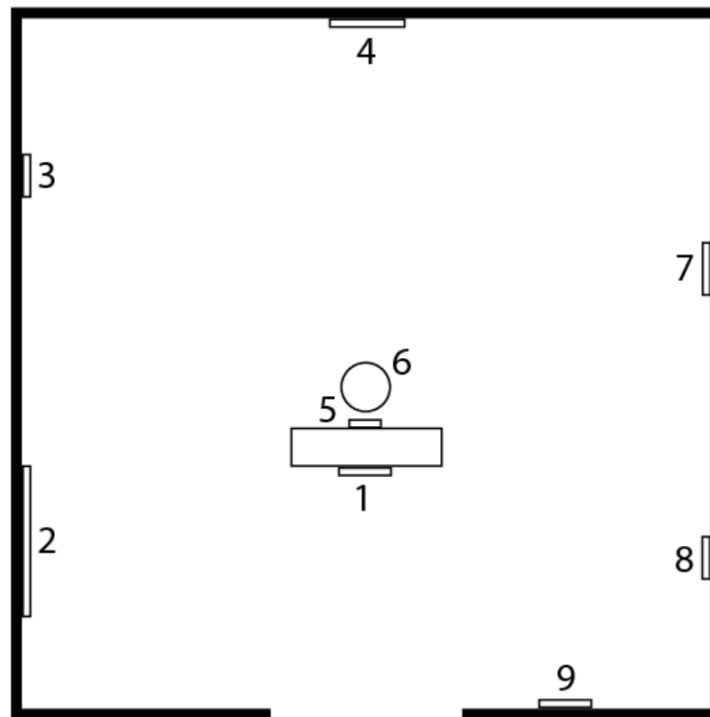


Claremont Graduate University - Art Department
East Gallery

Aaron D. Baldón

MFA Thesis Gallery Exhibition

an exploration of the theme of trauma due to war



1. *Down*, 2024
High Flow Acrylic on Raw Linen 48" x 24"

2. *Blue Dress*, 2024
High Flow Acrylic on Raw Linen 96" x 10.5"

3. *The Last Thing You See - Internal Scream*, 2024
High Flow Acrylic on Raw Linen 20" x 27"

4. *The Returned Warrior*, 2024
High Flow Acrylic on Raw Linen 48" x 96"

5. *Loading Ammo, Then This*, 2024
High Flow Acrylic on Raw Linen 27" x 20"

6. *My Kit*, 2024
Helmet and Plate Carrier on a Pine Stand

7. *Defeated*, 2024
High Flow Acrylic on Raw Linen 32" x 51"

8. *Nerve Pain - Humerus*, 2024
High Flow Acrylic on Raw Linen 19" x 27"

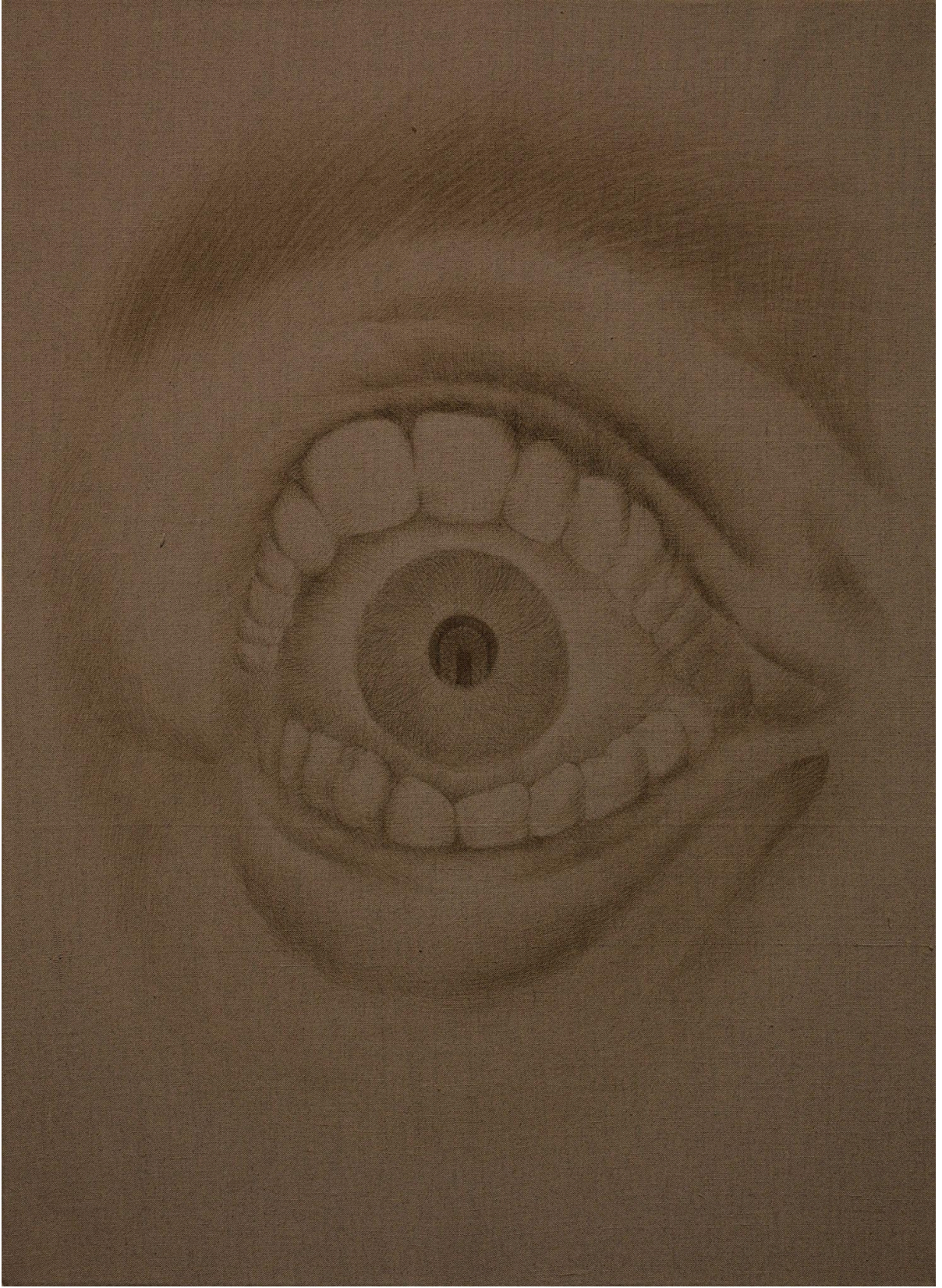
9. *The Aftermath of War*, 2024
High Flow Acrylic on Raw Linen 30" x 50"



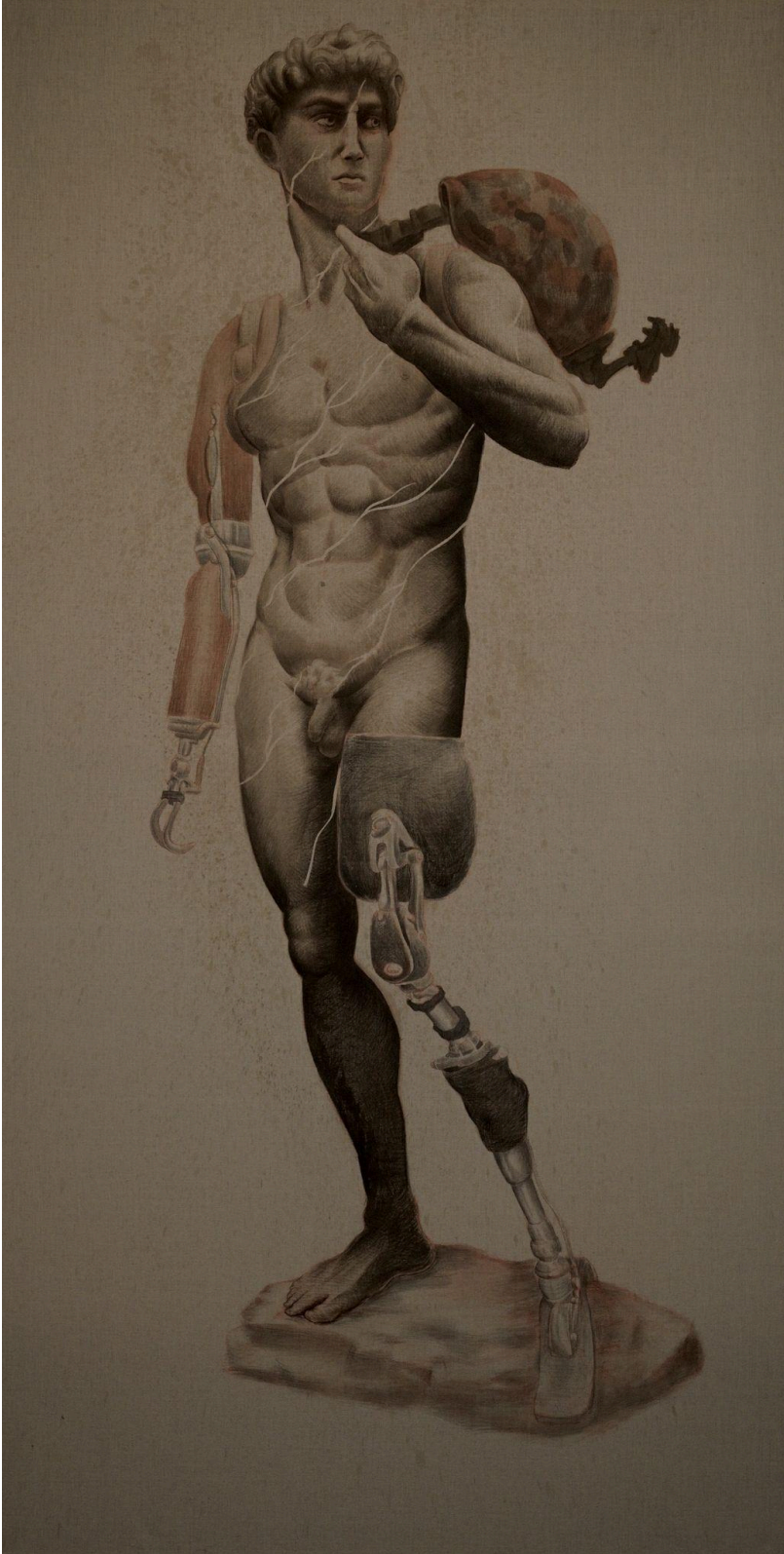
1. Down, 2024 High Flow Acrylic on Raw Linen 48" x 24"



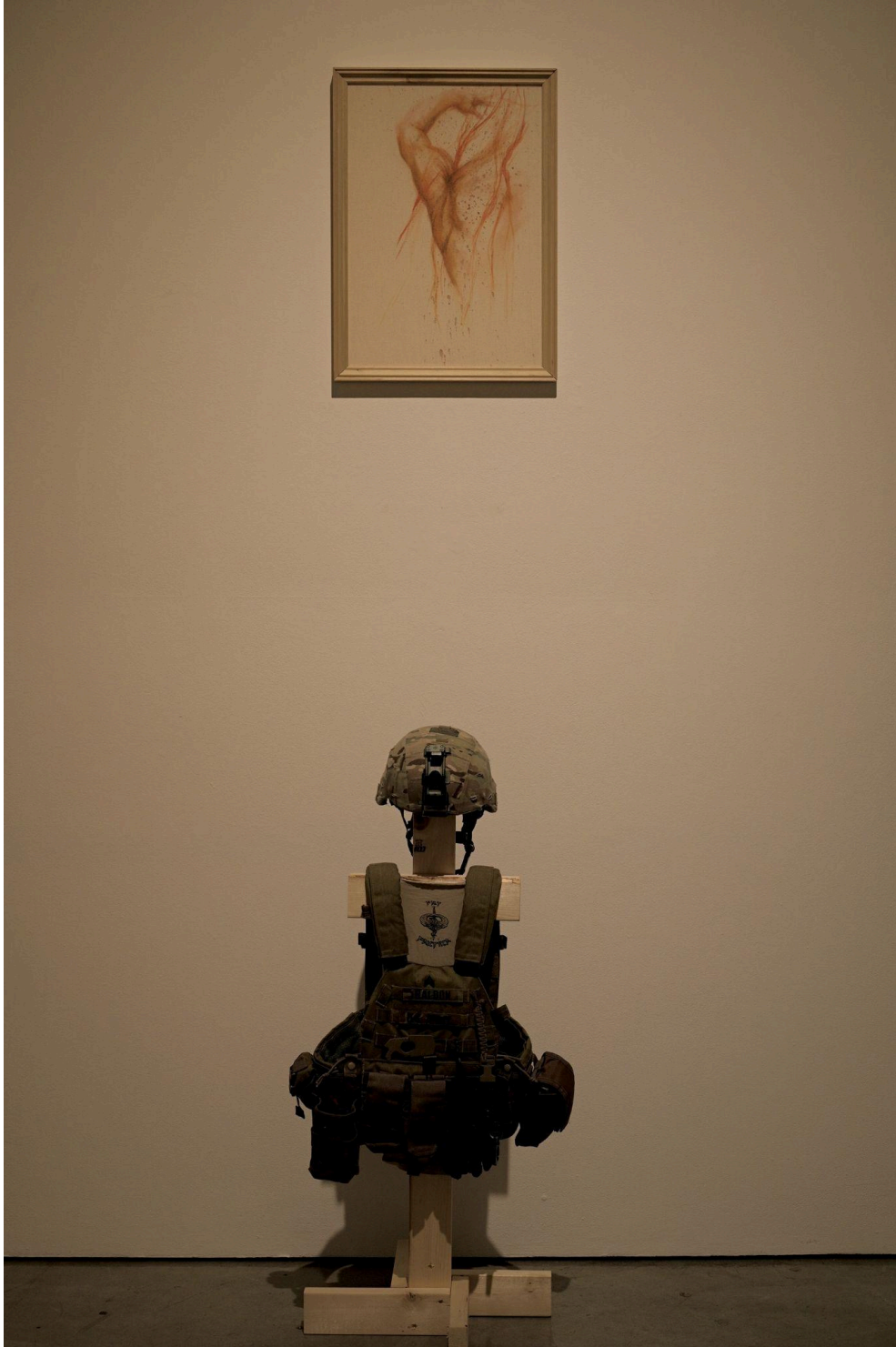
2. Blue Dress, 2024 High Flow Acrylic on Raw Linen 96" x 10.5"



3. The Last Thing You See - Internal Scream, 2024 High Flow Acrylic on Raw Linen 20" x 27"



4. The Returned Warrior, 2024 High Flow Acrylic on Raw Linen 48" x 96"



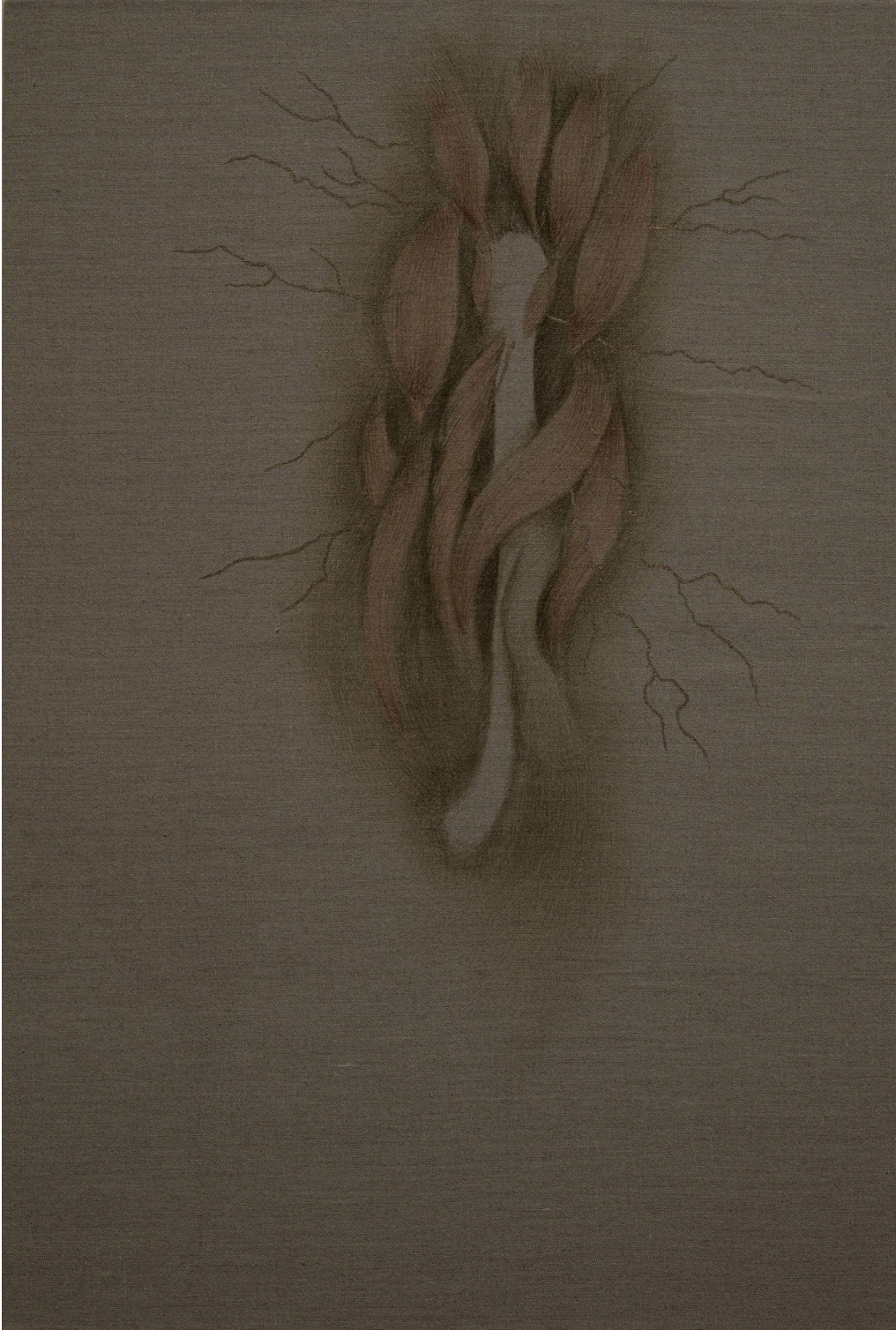
5. Loading Ammo, Then This, 2024 High Flow Acrylic on Raw Cotton 27" x 20"

6. My Kit, 2024

Helmet and Plate Carrier on a Pine Stand



7. Defeated, 2024 High Flow Acrylic on Raw Linen 32" x 51"



8. Nerve Pain - Humerus, 2024 High Flow Acrylic on Raw Linen 19" x 27"



9. The Aftermath of War, 2024 High Flow Acrylic on Raw Linen 30" x 50"