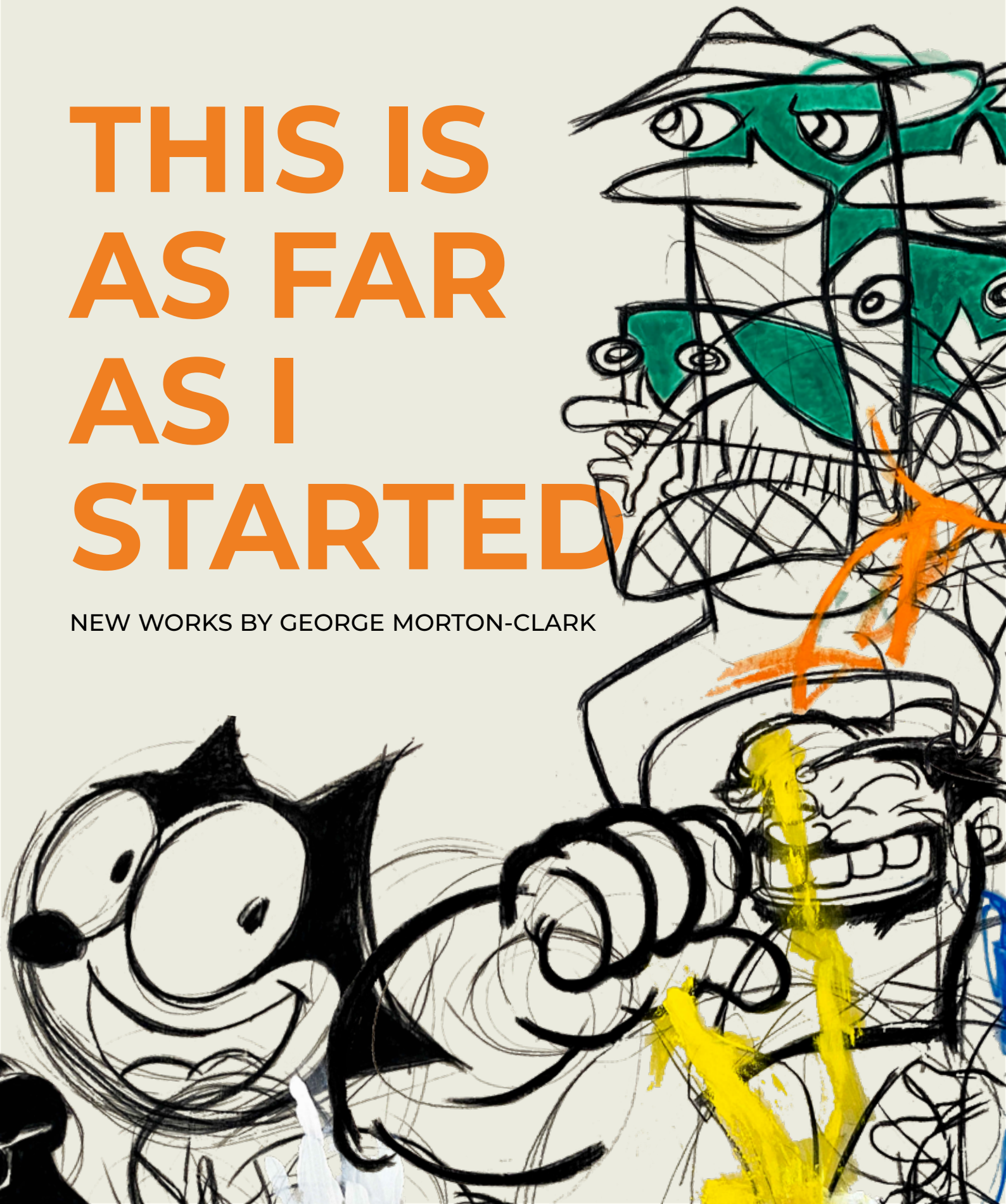


OPERA GALLERY

THIS IS AS FAR AS I STARTED

NEW WORKS BY GEORGE MORTON-CLARK



THIS IS AS FAR AS I STARTED

NEW WORKS BY GEORGE MORTON-CLARK

23 September - 4 October 2020

Preface

With *This Is As Far As I Started*, Opera Gallery London is pleased to present the new series of works by George Morton-Clark.

British artist George Morton-Clark presents a playful new body of artworks in his recognisably animated style. The artist adds originality and story to already familiar cartoon characters including Popeye, Bambi, Garfield and Sesame Street's Big Bird that are reborn with a newfound sense of vitality and meaning. While the works highlight the darker side of today's society, Morton-Clark's artworks also draw on the nostalgic and universal connection that we all have to cartoons in a quest to connect to everyday life.

The energy of Morton-Clark's work exists through their combination of intense colours, spontaneous drawings, and a connection to our past through these endearing, well-known figures.. While the characters evoke a collection of emotions and expressions from surprise to fear, we are engulfed in a state of curiosity. Even the chaotic, exaggerated portions of his work are expressed with such a natural frankness that they are transformed into positive elements that inspire vitality and liveliness.

Following the devastating blast in Beirut, Opera Gallery London will be showing their support by donating part of the proceeds from their new exhibition George Morton-Clark: *This Is As Far As I Started* to the Department of Pediatrics at St. Georges Hospital in Beirut. Opera Gallery London will be working closely with the Opera Gallery in Beirut which was is located near the harbour.

We would like to thank the artist for his commitment and welcome you in this celebration of life.

Gilles Dyan
Founder and Chairman
Opera Gallery Group

Federica Beretta
Director
Opera Gallery London



Artist's note

The exhibition is a collection of paintings that were started before and after 'lockdown' hence the title 'That's as far as I started'. This year has been very strange and muddled at best, which I wanted to convey in the title. During the time spent painting for the show, it was done at a more relaxed pace than usual. It seemed like time had slowed down for the majority of us. The paintings were able to sit with me a great deal longer than usual. I was able to get to know them more and spend a long time adjusting each piece. I find there is a very nostalgic connection to the characters I use in the paintings, and they are there as a vessel to show form and movement. They are used in an abstract way to convey an image I want to build. The characters are placed as a connection to the audience. Instead of telling someone how to listen to music or a song, they will make their own minds up and assimilate with the painting themselves. Rather than presenting a grand, elaborate theme, I present a painting that will make the viewer connect with what is in front of them.

George Morton-Clark

38th

2020

Dye, charcoal and spray paint on canvas
66.9 x 57.1 in
170 x 145 cm

PROVENANCE

Artist's studio



Action-Static

2020

Acrylic and charcoal on canvas
66.9 x 74.8 in
170 x 190 cm

PROVENANCE

Artist's studio



Was it Sarcastic, Sadist?

2020

Dye, charcoal and spray paint on canvas
66.9 x 59.1 in
170 x 150 cm

PROVENANCE

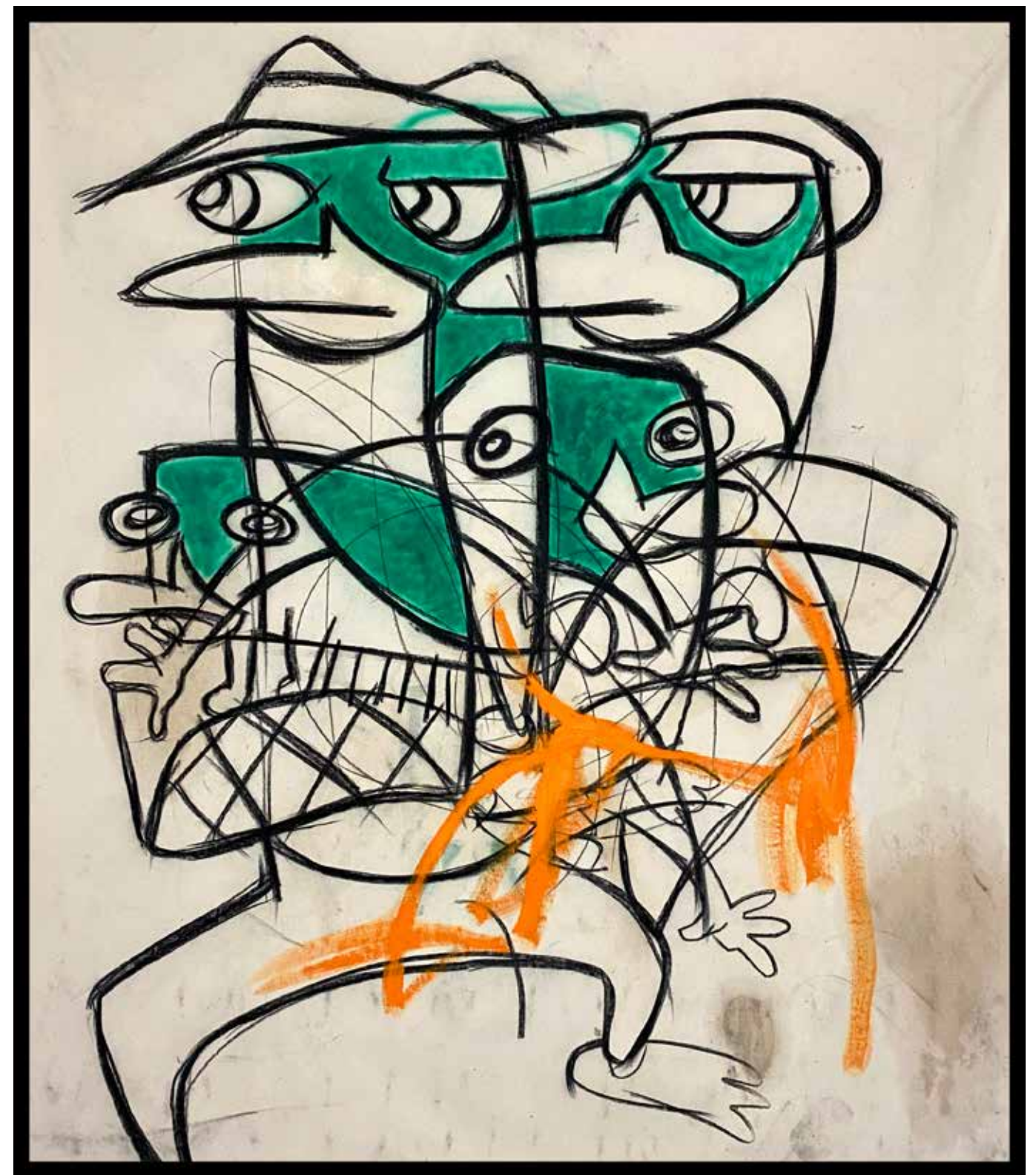
Artist's studio



Bird Up
2020

Oil, charcoal and acrylic on canvas
66.9 x 59.1 in
170 x 150 cm

PROVENANCE
Artist's studio



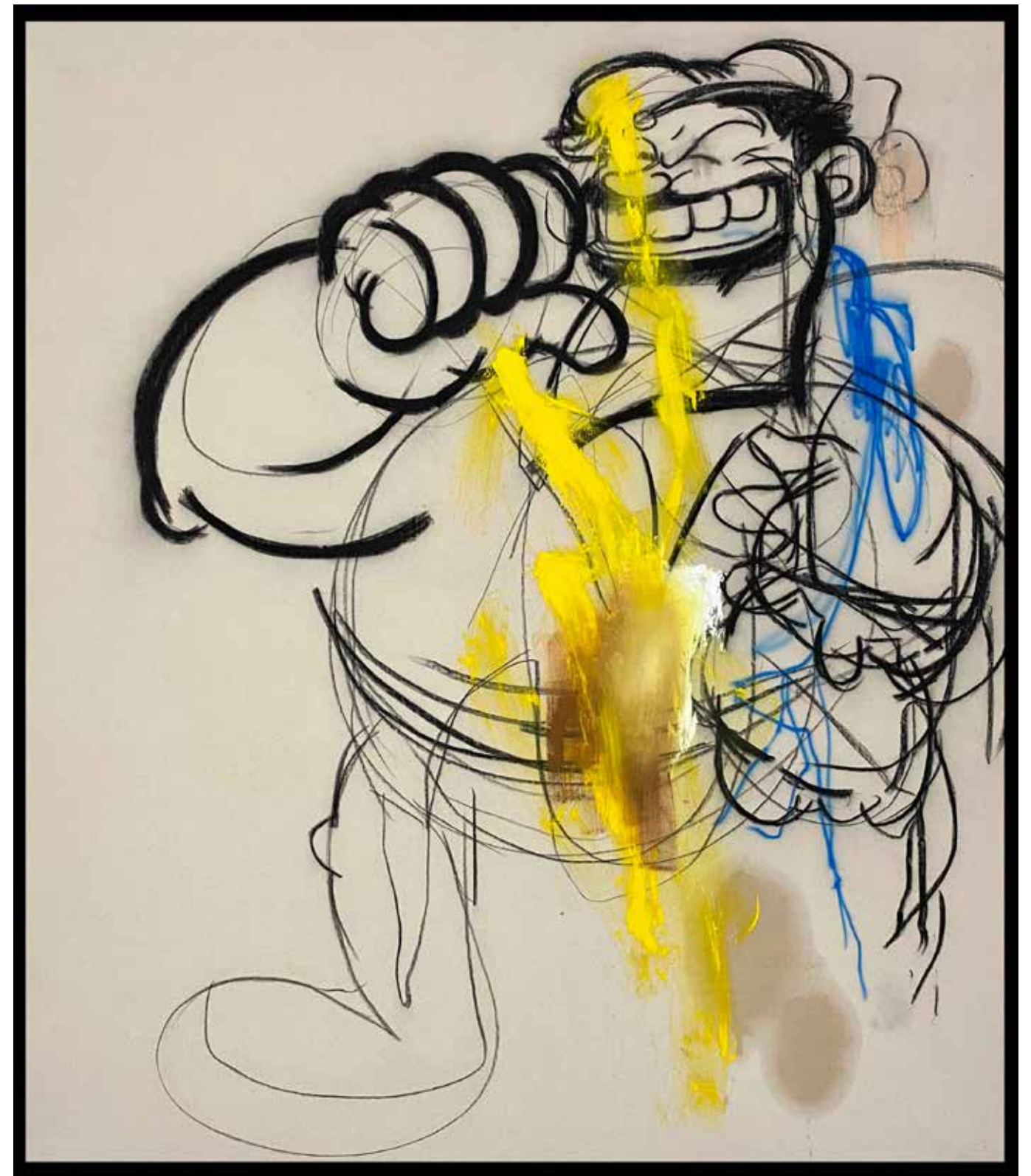
Blending Thoughts

2020

Oil and charcoal on canvas
66.9 x 59.1 in
170 x 150 cm

PROVENANCE

Artist's studio



Calamari
2020

Oil, charcoal and spray paint on canvas
66.9 x 59.1 in
170 x 150 cm

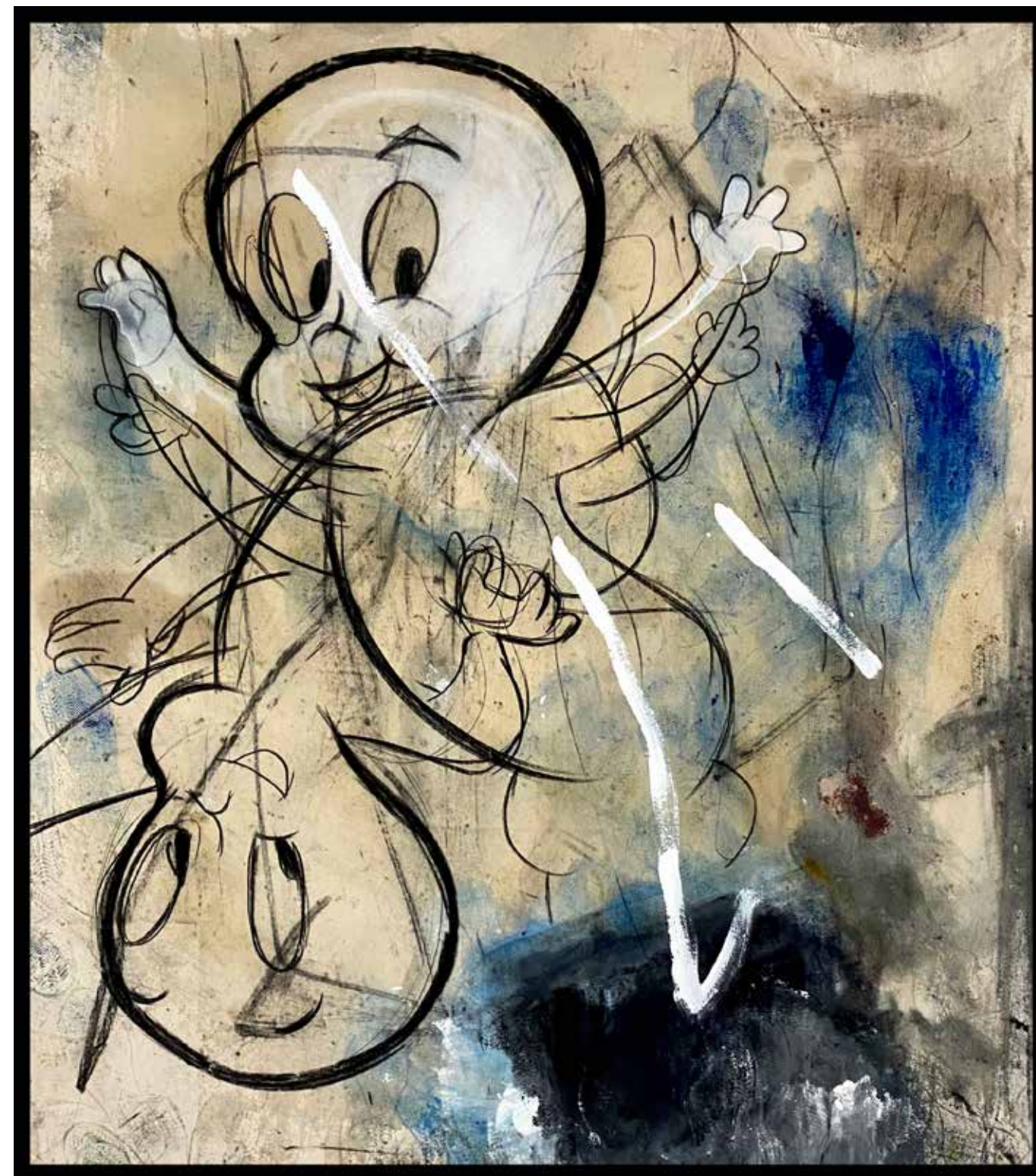
PROVENANCE
Artist's studio



A Cameo in my Movie
2020

Oil, charcoal and acrylic on canvas
66.9 x 59.1 in
170 x 150 cm

PROVENANCE
Artist's studio



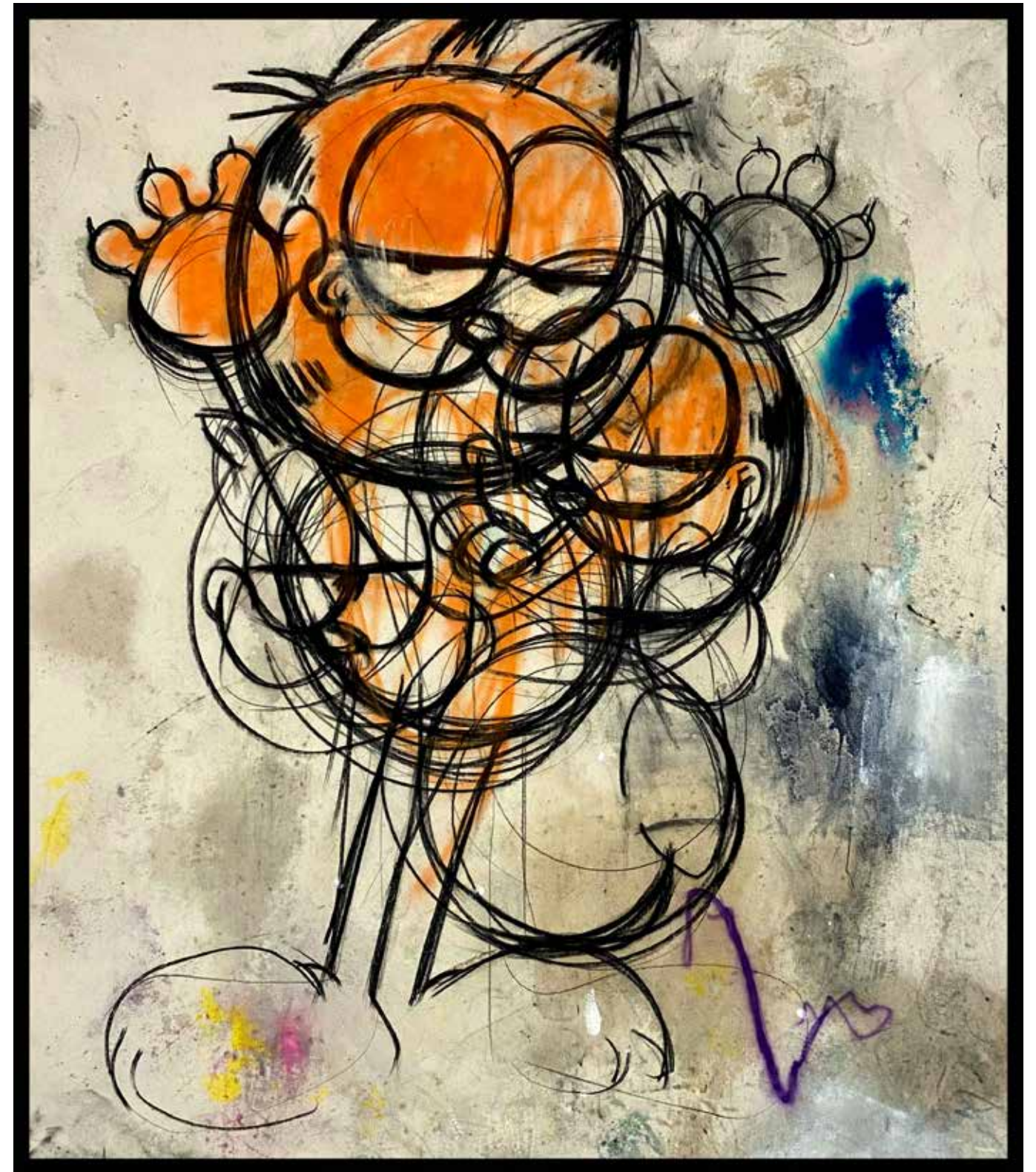
Fleeing a Food Fight

2020

Oil, charcoal and spray paint on canvas
66.9 x 59.1 in
170 x 150 cm

PROVENANCE

Artist's studio



Helpful Stranger

2020

Oil, charcoal and spray paint on canvas
66.9 x 59.1 in
170 x 150 cm

PROVENANCE

Artist's studio



Hot Sauce Fight

2020

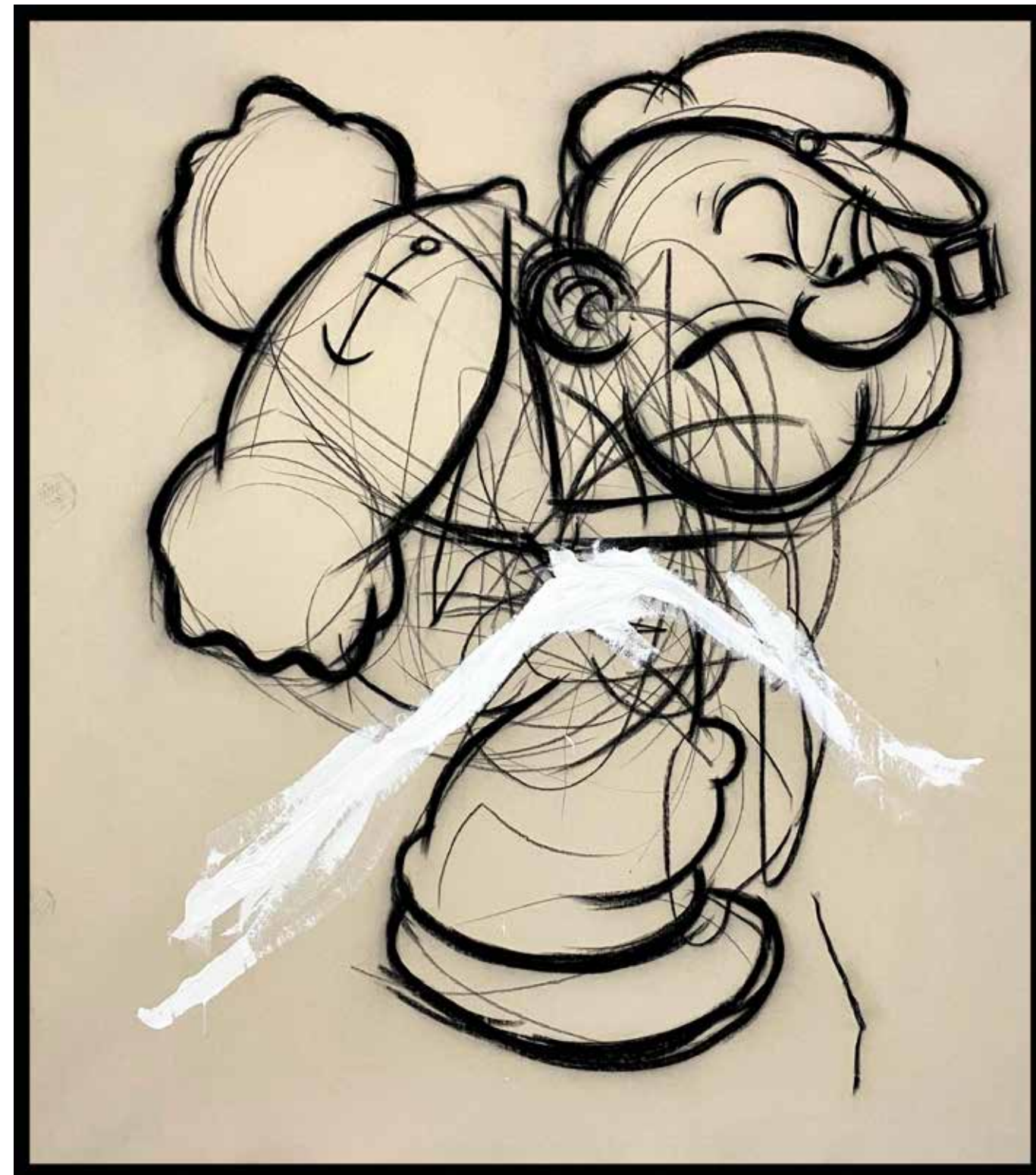
Enamel and charcoal on canvas

66.9 x 59.1 in

170 x 150 cm

PROVENANCE

Artist's studio



In a State of California

2020

Oil, charcoal and acrylic on canvas
66.9 x 59.1 in
170 x 150 cm

PROVENANCE

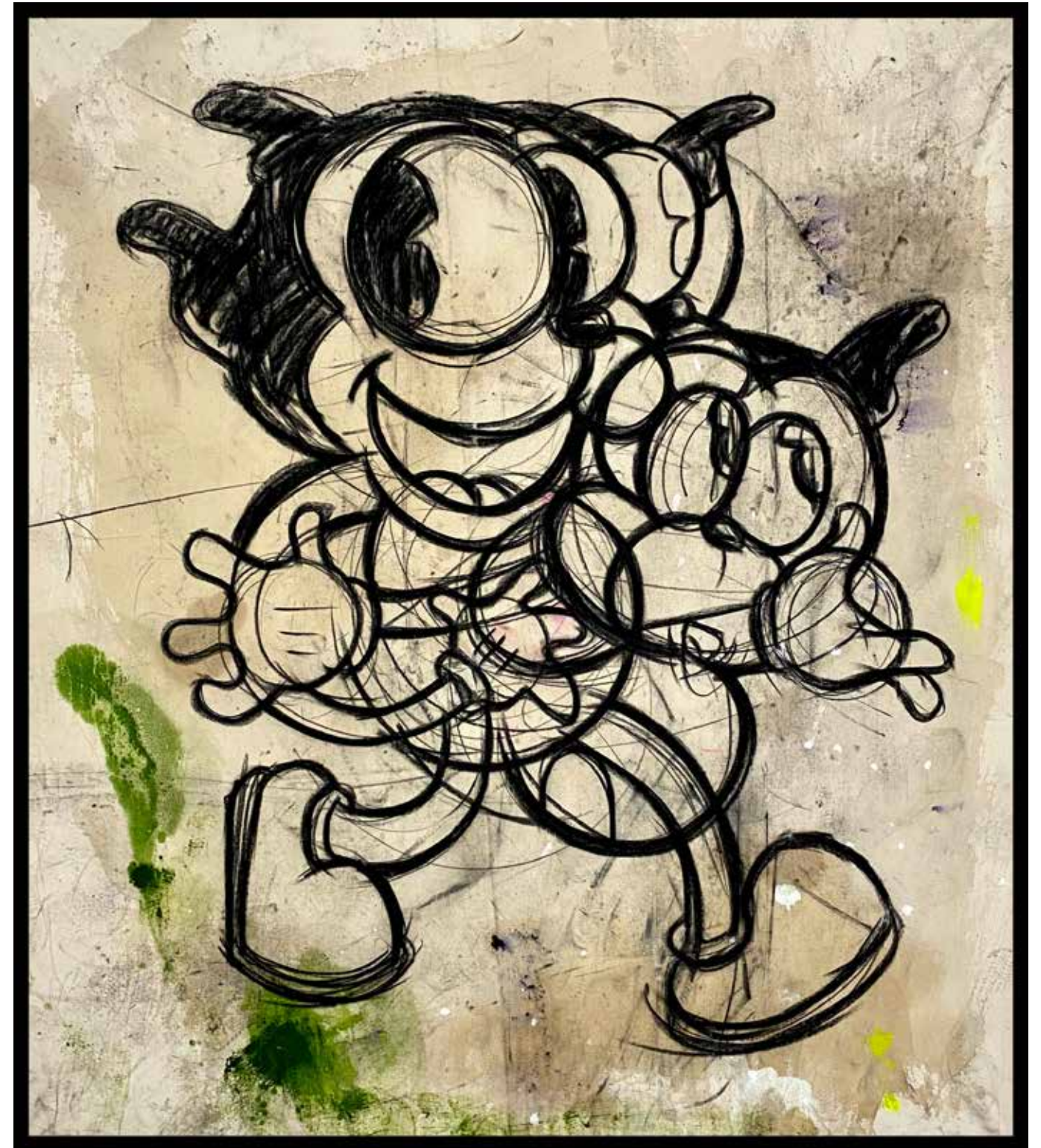
Artist's studio



Junk Mind
2020

Oil and charcoal on canvas
66.9 x 59.1 in
170 x 150 cm

PROVENANCE
Artist's studio



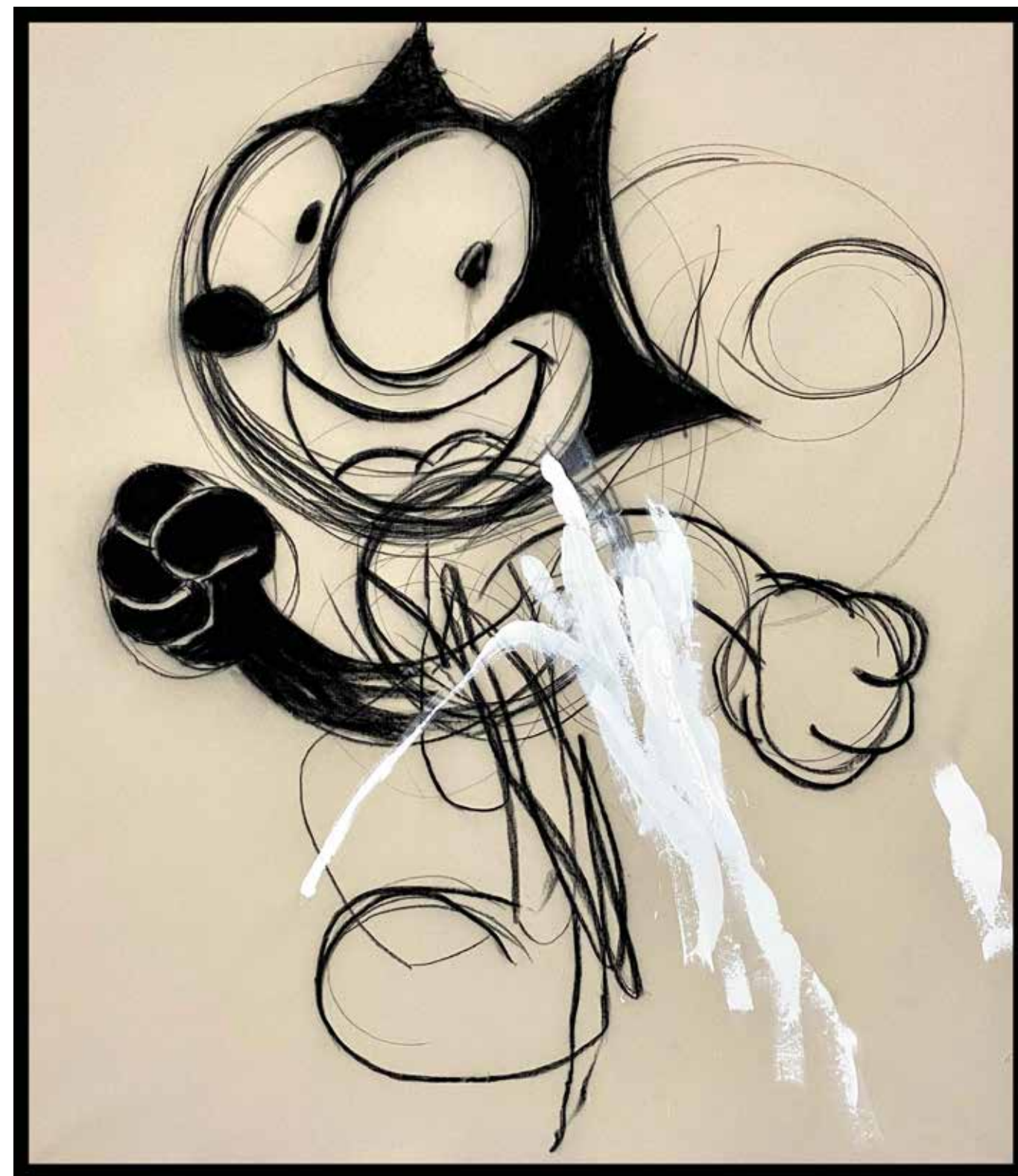
Moonlighting Painter

2020

Enamel and charcoal on canvas
66.9 x 59.1 in
170 x 150 cm

PROVENANCE

Artist's studio



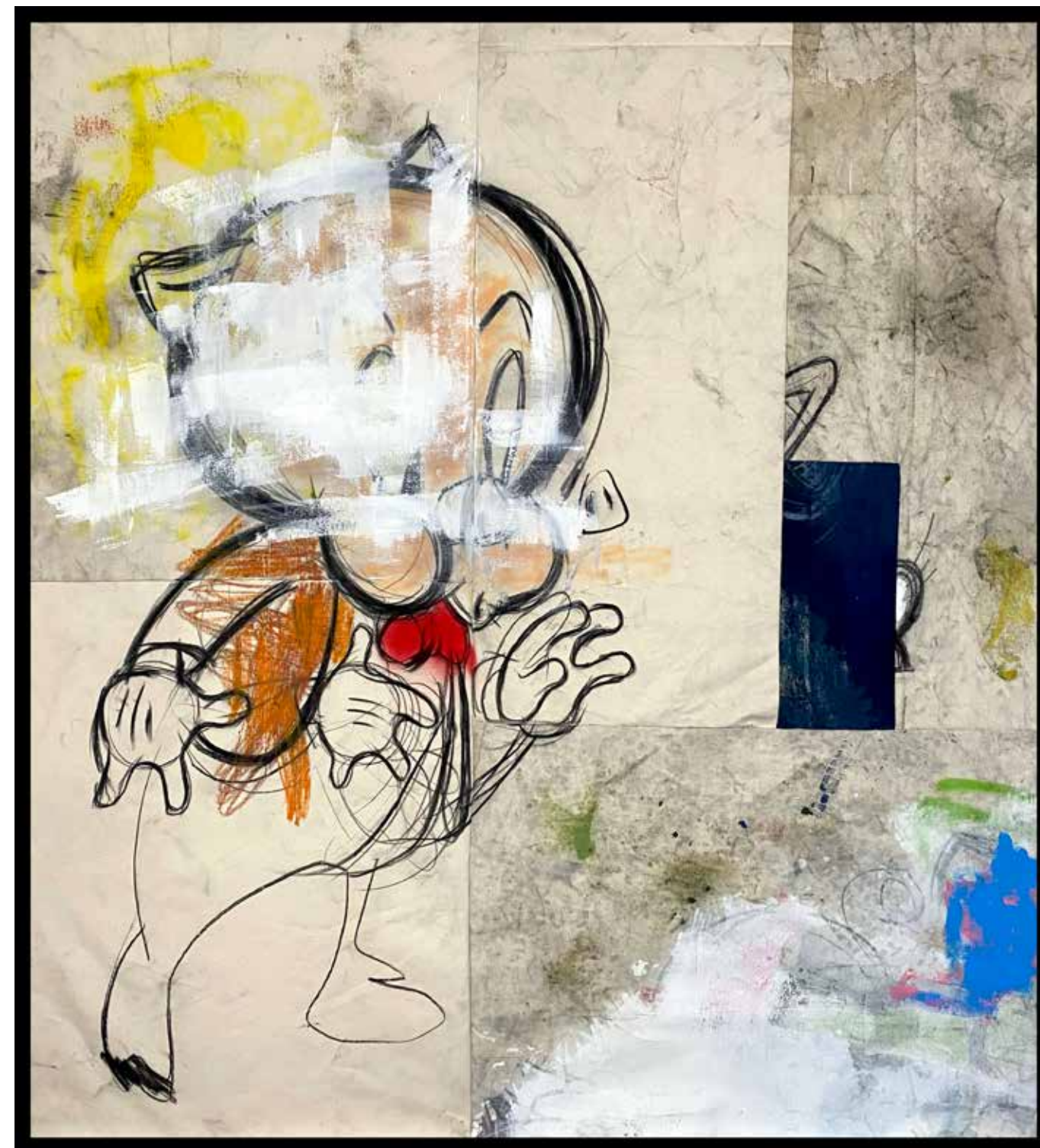
Roast Beef

2020

Oil, charcoal and spray paint on canvas
74.8 x 86.6 in
190 x 220 cm

PROVENANCE

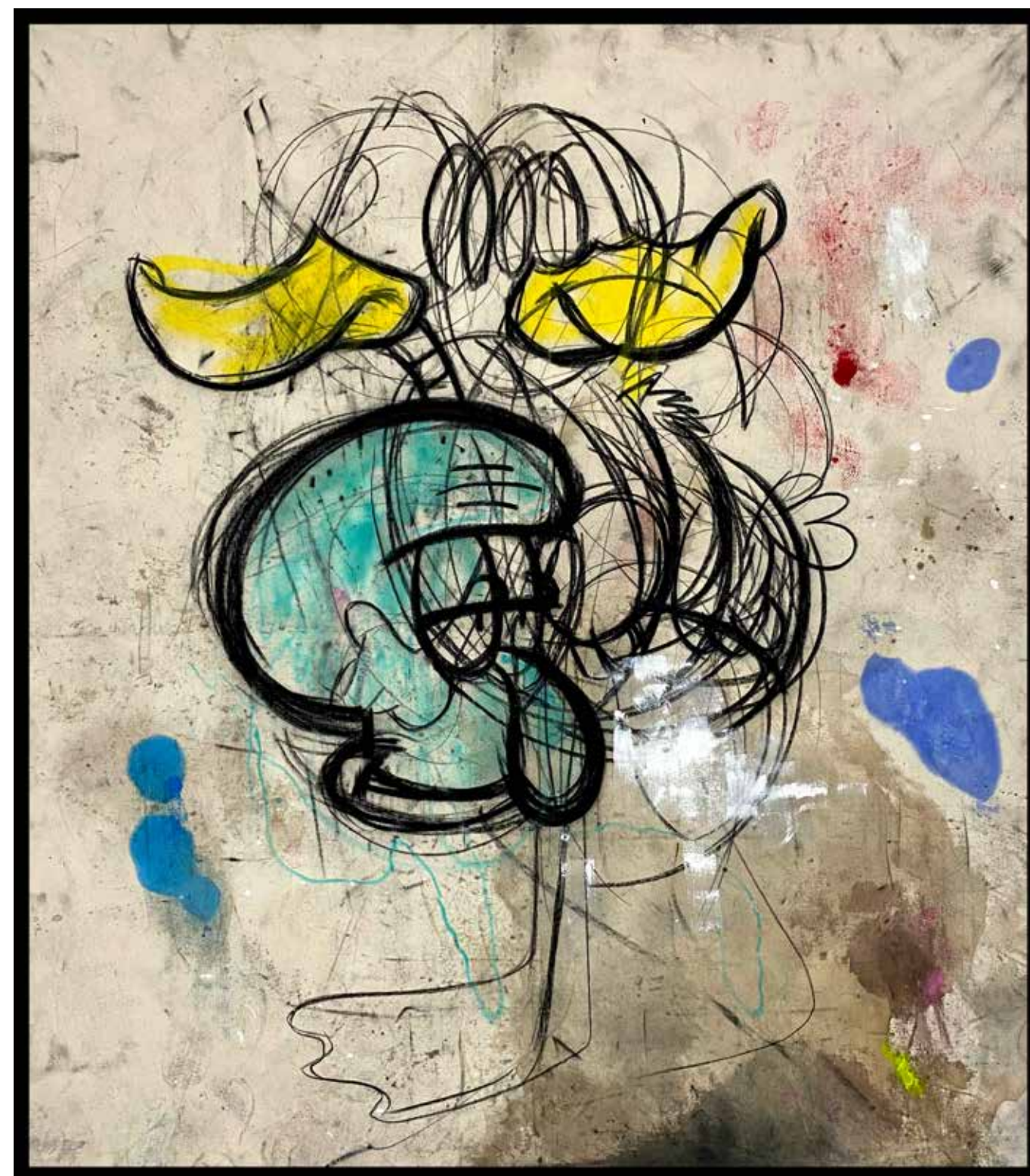
Artist's studio



Someone Make me an Offer
2020

Oil, charcoal and spray paint on canvas
66.9 x 59.1 in
170 x 150 cm

PROVENANCE
Artist's studio



Sunny Side Up

2020

Oil, charcoal and spray paint on canvas
66.9 x 98.4 in
170 x 250 cm

PROVENANCE

Artist's studio



The Little Robot that had a Chest Infection
2020

Oil, charcoal and acrylic on canvas
82.7 x 78.7 in
210 x 200 cm

PROVENANCE
Artist's studio



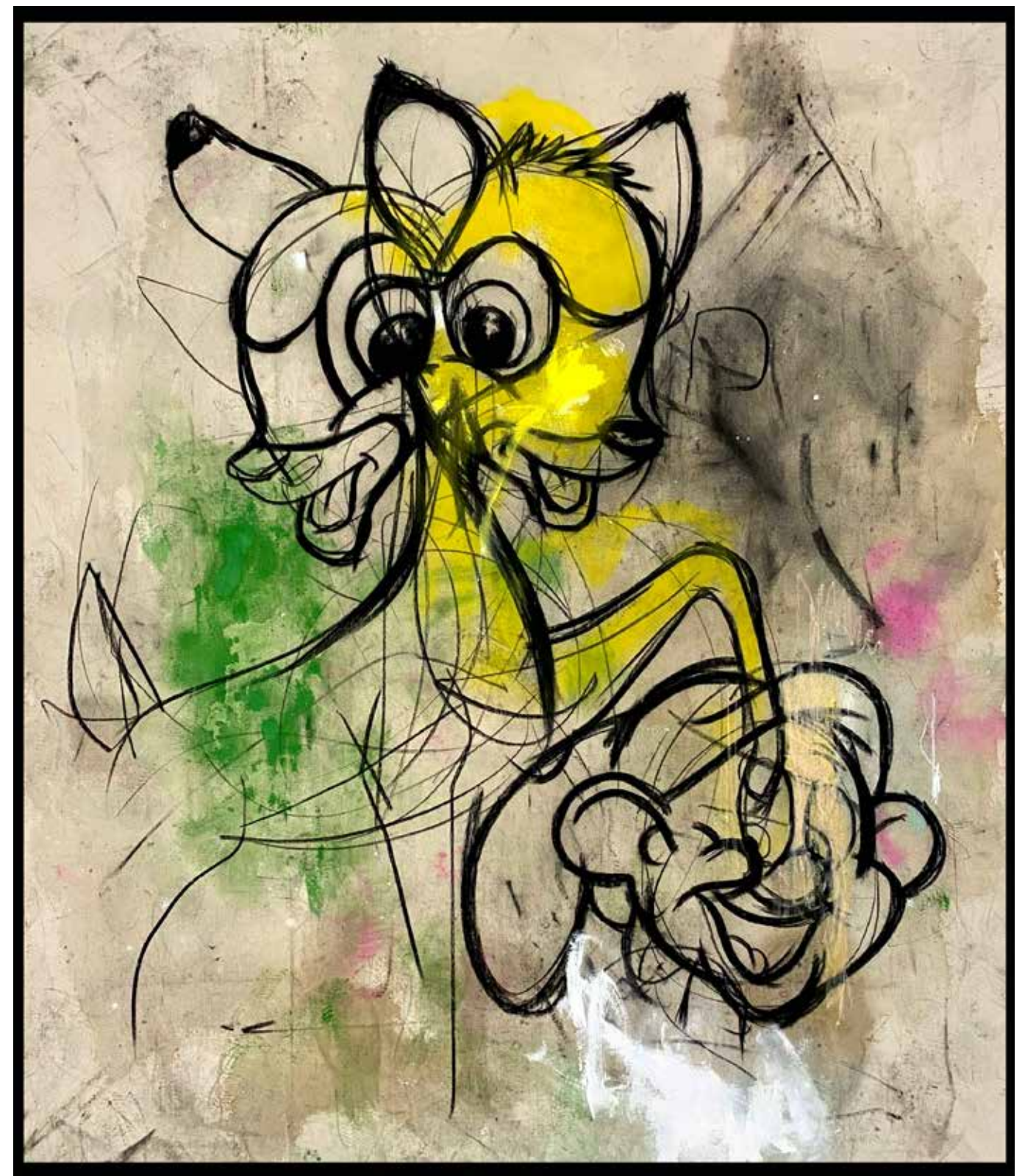
Entertaining as it Was

2020

Oil, charcoal and spray paint on canvas
66.9 x 59.1 in
170 x 150 cm

PROVENANCE

Artist's studio



Interview

You studied animation at university, what inspired the switch to fine art? What was that journey like?

I found the switch very easy. With animation I did not have as much creative control as I wanted. I have always been a painter so the switch was not very hard for me. The reason I went into animation in the first place was my love for cartoons and anime. After studying for 3 years I realised even though I loved it, it was not for me. I was more drawn to the traditional practice of animation and I could see it was changing very fast to computers. I love the freedom and the mess you can make with brushes and canvas. The immediacy of using paint on a canvas and seeing it in real life, this you will not find in animation.

How does your experience in animation influence the work you do now?

The experience of drawing thousands upon thousands of cells definitely gives you a lot of practice! I am sure whilst I was doing my degree my drawing skills went up a notch! In animation, I would use different styles of drawing which comes in good use as a painter being able to switch up styles. I also learnt to be patient.

What meanings do you think cartoon characters carry? Are those meanings important in your creative process?

There is a very nostalgic connection to cartoons. We all see and grow up with them in our most informative years. I use these images as a vessel to create abstractions in my work. It gives the viewer already a meaning and a connection to the painting before they look at the rest of the picture. This is a hook to capture the viewer.

What is the meaning of your title’s work? Do they have a particular importance for the viewer’s understanding of your work?

The titles I come up with are from everyday life. When having conversations with people you do not realise there are some great throwaway phrases that we constantly use on a daily basis. I store these phrases and then when I find the right painting I will match it to them. Sometimes a title will instantly come to me by just looking at the painting.

Do you realise notes or sketches before starting your paintings? Do you know in advance what you’re going to create?

No, not in the slightest. The immediacy of my work is very apparent. I love the mistakes I make and incorporate them

into my work. Some of the best paintings I have done have come from mistakes. I will use these and then follow the path to the end result. This way, I too am surprised by the outcome and creates a freshness to my work. So I am constantly evolving and falling in love with the craft on a daily basis.

Does your creative process begin with the choice of a particular cartoon character?

Sometimes, but rarely. I first start by creating an abstract painting with the background then formulating an image to the foreground.

Do you attach as much importance to the creative process as to the final result?

Yes, I think the creative process is massively important. It is not like a switch that can be turned on. As I get older the better I understand how to harness it. At the end of the day, it is the reason you have the final result.

Is there room for accident in your working process?

Yes, this is my main goal in every painting as without this you are treading the same path and getting the same results. It is a crucial part to growing and finding new areas to explore.

What movement or type of art do you most identify with?

None really. I like to be inspired by a whole spectrum of artists. It is like listening to music, some days you want light music some days fast. It all depends on your mood and how I feel that day.

In your future works, do you consider using another material? What challenge would you like to take up?

I am always using different materials and mediums. In my studio, there are all the past relics of different mediums I have explored with. Sometimes I will go back to them as it will best suit an idea I have. At the moment I am using different materials and sewing them together. I like my work to have an aged effect but with a contemporary feel. I like the contrast of this idea.

Do you think you’re redirecting yourself towards more contemporary animated characters, such as Disney or Pixar characters? Would they have a different meaning from your current characters, which mostly come from cartoons?

To be honest I do not set out to choose any type of character. I use the character as an abstract form to convey an image I want to build. I find the more identifiable the character, the more nostalgic the piece will be, and greater an appeal it will have to a large audience

Biography

George Morton-Clark, a British artist, utilises oil, acrylic, and charcoal on unprimed canvas to bring familiar cartoon characters to life. With a combination of bold images and strong colours, his line drawings are immersed in an abstract atmosphere of energy and liveliness.

After studying animation for 3 years at London University, he attended the Surrey Institute of Art and Design. Once he completed his Bachelor of Arts, he left to pursue a career in art but animation remained a strong influence in his craft.

Morton-Clark guides us into his energetic work with an interesting combination of three elements: intense colours, spontaneous drawings, and nostalgic cartoon characters. His work may seem simple at first glance, just a straightforward fusion of cartoon characters and abstract components, yet something striking lies in the midst. The artist's rich imagination and sensibility are freely expressed; he is not restricted by a single genre, and all kinds of colourful materials naturally communicate their allegorical stories to those viewing his work.

He adds originality and story to already familiar cartoon characters, and through this, they are reborn with a newfound sense of vitality and meaning. He is wary of complacency and constantly strives to move his work in a new direction. This results in his art becoming a mixture of a variety of styles—abstract elements mingling with figurative, and expressionistic techniques also adding to the diversity represented in his work. Morton-Clark uses the natural, unprimed surface of his canvas as a place to bring well-known characters such as Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, and Tom and Jerry, to life. They are drawn in such a way that embodies both the charm of a painting that is finished and one that is still in progress. Even the chaotic, exaggerated portions of his work are expressed with such a natural frankness that they are transformed into positive elements that inspire vitality and liveliness.

Another element that catches the eye is the numerous characters that continuously make appearances in his paintings. Their large eyes stare at us from the canvas, in a striking and overemphasised fashion. Their gazes are enough to evoke a collection of emotions; everything we feel and express. Whether they are conveying surprise or fear, or if they are actually a representation of the artist's eyes, is unsure. Nonetheless, we are engulfed in a state of curiosity which the artist responds to with an ambiguous simplicity. His artwork is simply a gift to the viewer; a small window of relaxation and simple enjoyment that the viewer can use to imagine to their heart's content.

Morton-Clark's work, which has been highly praised by Dr. Rolf Lauter, former Chief Curator and Deputy Director of the Museum für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt, Germany, emanates humility and candour: "To appreciate his work properly, one must take in the contents played upon the entirety of the canvas, instead of looking for a hidden meaning behind them. Rather than presenting a grand, elaborate theme about our time, and trying to integrate himself into some section of Art History, he presents pieces that resemble comfortable and fun times spent laughing and talking to close friends."



Opera Gallery would like to thank the artist for his help and generosity that made this exhibition possible.

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