



# MICHAEL BJORNSON

BEYOND NARRATIVE

HEADBONES GALLERY



# MICHAEL BJORNSON

JUNE 21 - JULY 26, 2014

BEYOND NARRATIVE

HEADBONES GALLERY

Artist Catalog: *Michael Bjornson - Beyond Narrative*  
Copyright © 2014, Headbones Gallery

This catalog was created for the exhibition *Michael Bjornson - Beyond Narrative*  
at Headbones Gallery, Vernon, BC Canada, June 21 -July 26, 2014

Artwork Copyright © 2014 Michael Bjornson

*Beyond Narrative* commentary by Julie Oakes  
Copyright © 2014, Julie Oakes

Rich Fog Micro Publishing, printed in Vernon, 2014  
Layout and Design, Richard Fogarty

Printed on the Ricoh SPC 811DN

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, except as may be expressly permitted by the 1976 copyright act or in writing from Headbones Gallery. Requests for permission to use these images should be addressed in writing to Michael Bjornson c/o Headbones Gallery.

[www.headbonesgallery.com](http://www.headbonesgallery.com)

Cover Painting: *Village* - 2014, Oil on canvas, 48x96 inches

ISBN: 978-1-926605-72-2

RICH FOG



Micro Publishing

MICHAEL BJORNSON

BEYOND NARRATIVE

COMMENTARY BY JULIE OAKES





*Blackwater* - 2014, Oil on panel, 28.5x76.5 inches

## **Beyond Narrative**

### An Exhibition of Paintings by Michael Bjornson

The idea of incompleteness is found in religion, philosophical treatises and even through bodily perception. The Buddhists speak of the persistent drive towards 'more' where man's desire interrupts the awareness of the immediate. The Bible tells of the unfulfilled in the story of the Garden of Eden portraying man and woman in a perfect garden where there is only one restriction – not to eat the apple – which constitutes the potential and eventuality of their expulsion from grace. Our perception as well is a step behind our mind as virtual surroundings, through physics and technology, can be witnessed to a degree of detail that our physical perception cannot achieve. There is more than “can be dreamt of from your philosophy” as Hamlet said to Laertes as they mulled on the significance of otherness. Mediums, psychics, spiritualists, shamans and artists have sensed this 'beyond'. History brings forth examples of personal transcendence in diversity with characters such as Joan of Arc, Rasputin or Madame Blavatsky. Folk tales tell of the other side. Accounts of near death experiences speak of it. Beyond-our-ken is indisputably within our repertoire.

Michael Bjornson brings the world just outside of our periphery into the frame. He doesn't nail this otherworldliness into a sharp focus for the very concept of this dimension necessitates remaining just out of reach. Bjornson graduated from Emily Carr at the same time as The Young Romantics. From an age of technology, Bjornson tackles, head-on, the issues raised by romanticism. The Romantics, in adversity with the industrial revolution and the dross that it produced, exerted a stance against the over-rationalization of nature. They pictured landscapes that featured evidence of past civilizations and were entranced by death and its inscrutability. In the age of Facebook,

digital friendship and global social networking, Bjornson's figure-works present man as far more elusive, complex and intriguing than could be captured by a selfie. He brings humanity, feelings, longing, and desire back into play so that the coolness of contemporary social interactions is warmed. He puts blood into the veins of his subjects with an awareness of heart. This is a romantic perspective. He re-inserts incompleteness and it beefs up the insipid, distant, superficiality that technological communications allow in our inter-personal relationships. He brings the vulnerable human back into the landscape.

His haunting portraits, reminiscent of the work of Edward Munch or Francis Bacon, depict man in a sociological framework that points to a potential for isolation despite the 'connected' awareness of the age of social media. Perhaps it is the time spent working in film that brings a sense of drama to his paintings. The lone figure in the landscape with the empty boat in *Dark Sea* or the ghostly white presence enclosed within an architectonic rectangle in *Contained* suggest a context for his figures yet more often it is a solitary being, costumed, disguised, existing. Bjornson brings a psychological presence into the picture that is as palpable as the portrait. The feeling of psychosis is not an active, violent or disturbed concentration, however, but a poignant and beautiful appreciation of melancholy. Like Goethe's (The Sorrows of...) Young Werther, the sentiment is drenched in perfumed romance.

*Village* - 2014, Oil on panel, 48x96 inches







*The Band* - 2014, Oil on panel, 28.5x76.5 inches

Michael Bjornson has great empathy with the following quote from Michael Ondaatje. "I don't have a plan for a story when I sit down to write. I would get quite bored carrying it out," ... "It's a discovery of a story when I write a book, a case of inching ahead on each page and discovering what's beyond in the darkness, beyond where you're writing."

He says that the author's statement expresses his own personal sense of engagement as he endeavors to develop visual narratives. He frequently moves back and forth with images, ultimately reaching an edited and/or reconstructed version that suggests a time of acceptance, as opposed to competition.

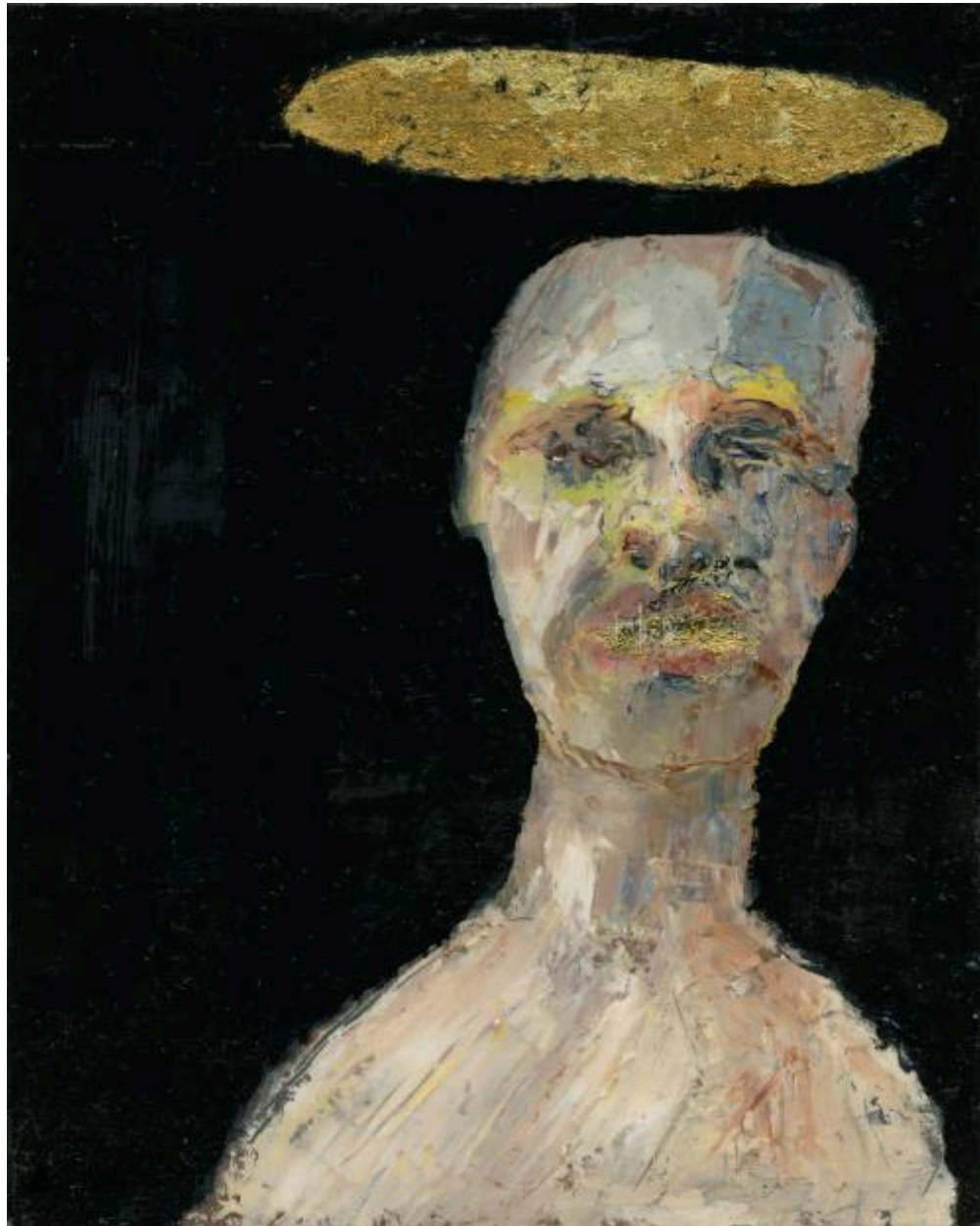
Bjornson's identification with story-telling moves beyond the physical plane to evoke a more colourful and complex set of personalities. He creates a world peopled with characters who appear to have colourful foibles and in doing so he invites us into the picture as well. This is the 'engagement' that he speaks of. It is an allowance, a gift of acceptance that Bjornson passes over for our consideration.

*Julie Oakes - 2014*

**Wallpaper** - 2014, Oil on canvas, 48x48 inches



***Untitled (Golden Halo)*** - 2014, Oil on panel, 10x8 inches

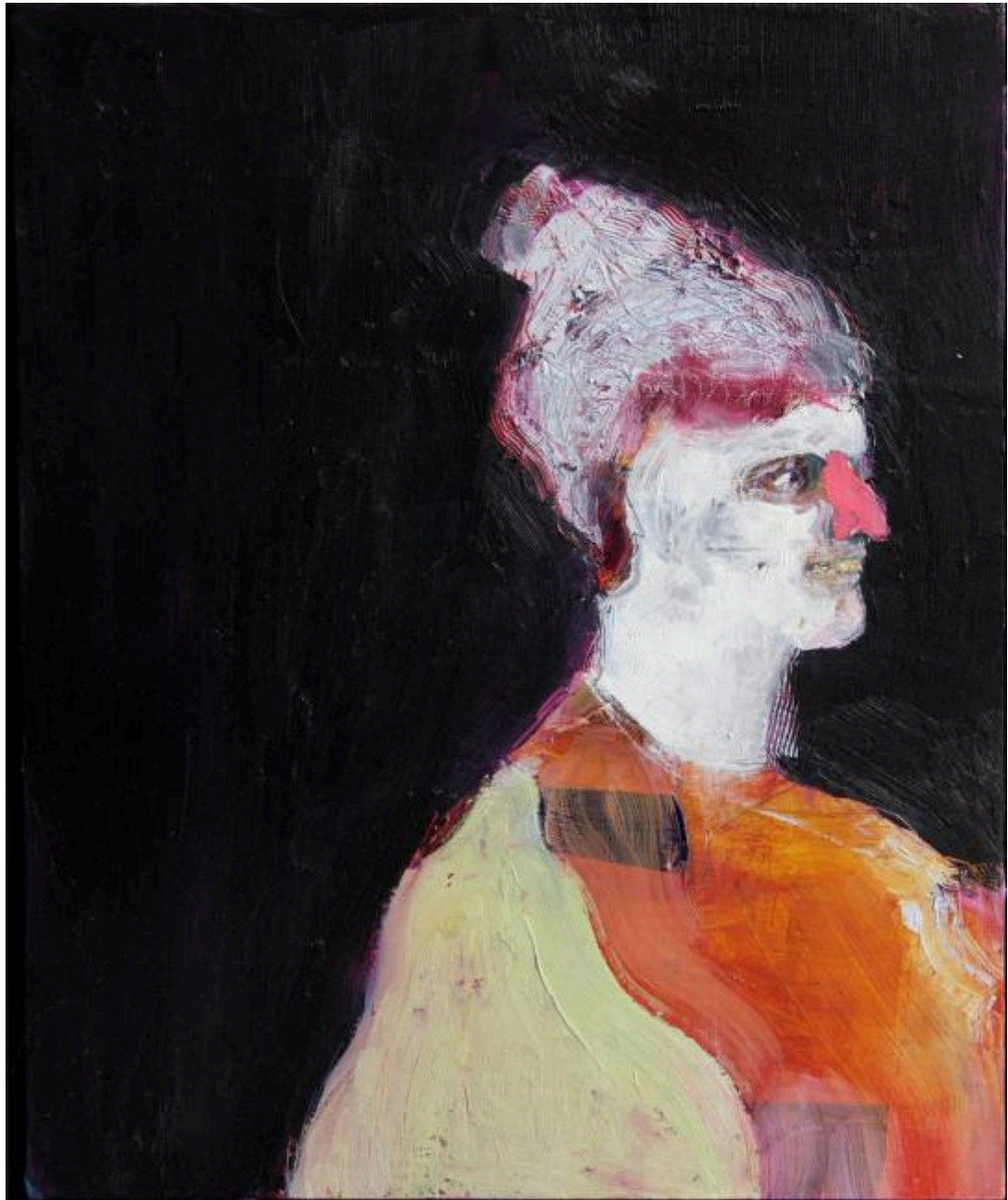


***Alarm*** - 2014, Oil on canvas, 24x20 inches



***Untitled (Beige Robe)*** - 2014, Oil on panel, 20x16 inches

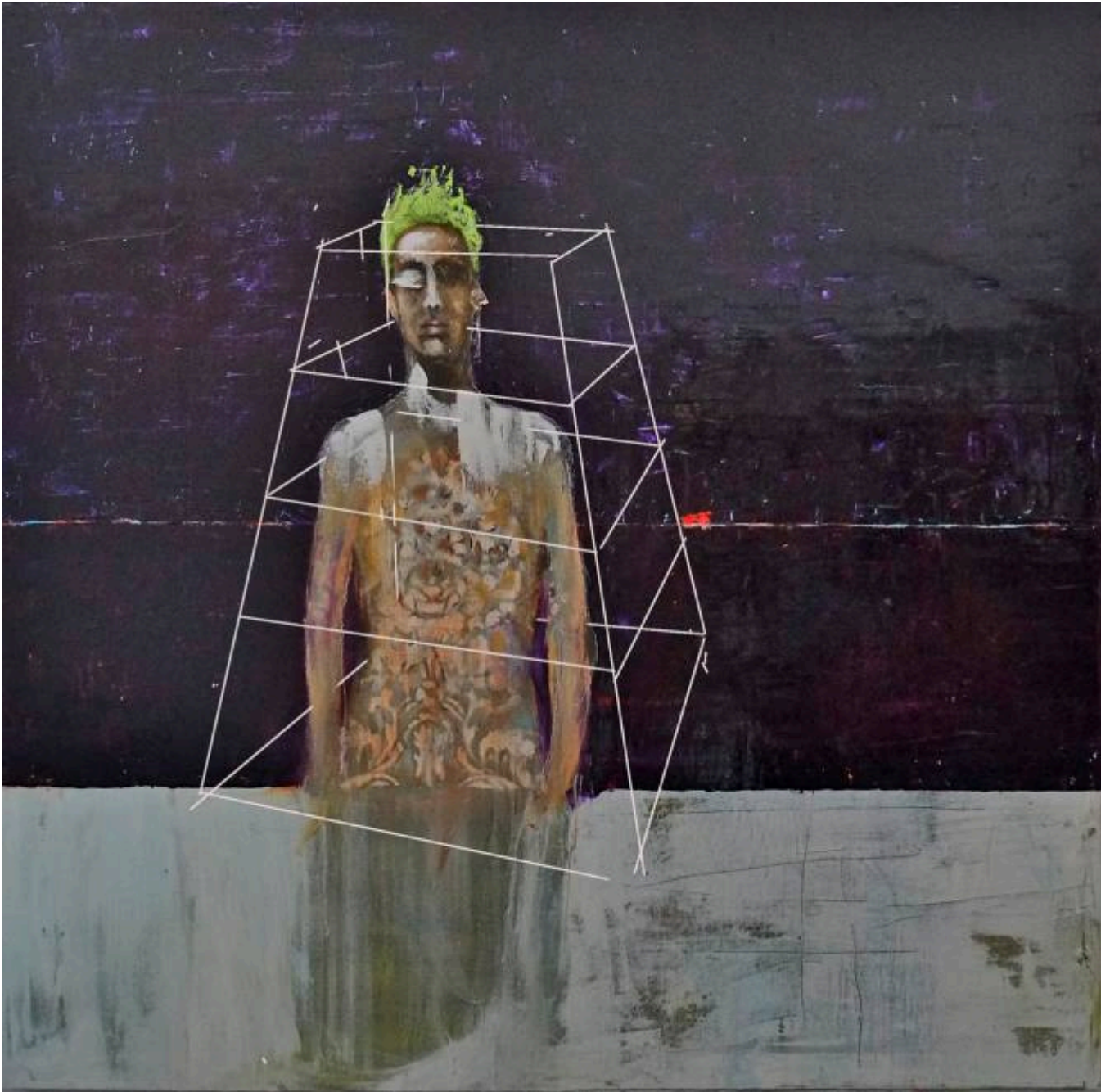




***Untitled (Golden Halo)*** - 2014, Oil on panel, 20x16 inches



***Contained*** - 2014, Oil on panel, 54x54 inches



***Untitled (Cyan Legs)*** - 2014, Oil on panel, 64x48 inches



***Untitled (Headpiece)*** - 2014, Oil on panel, 20x16 inches







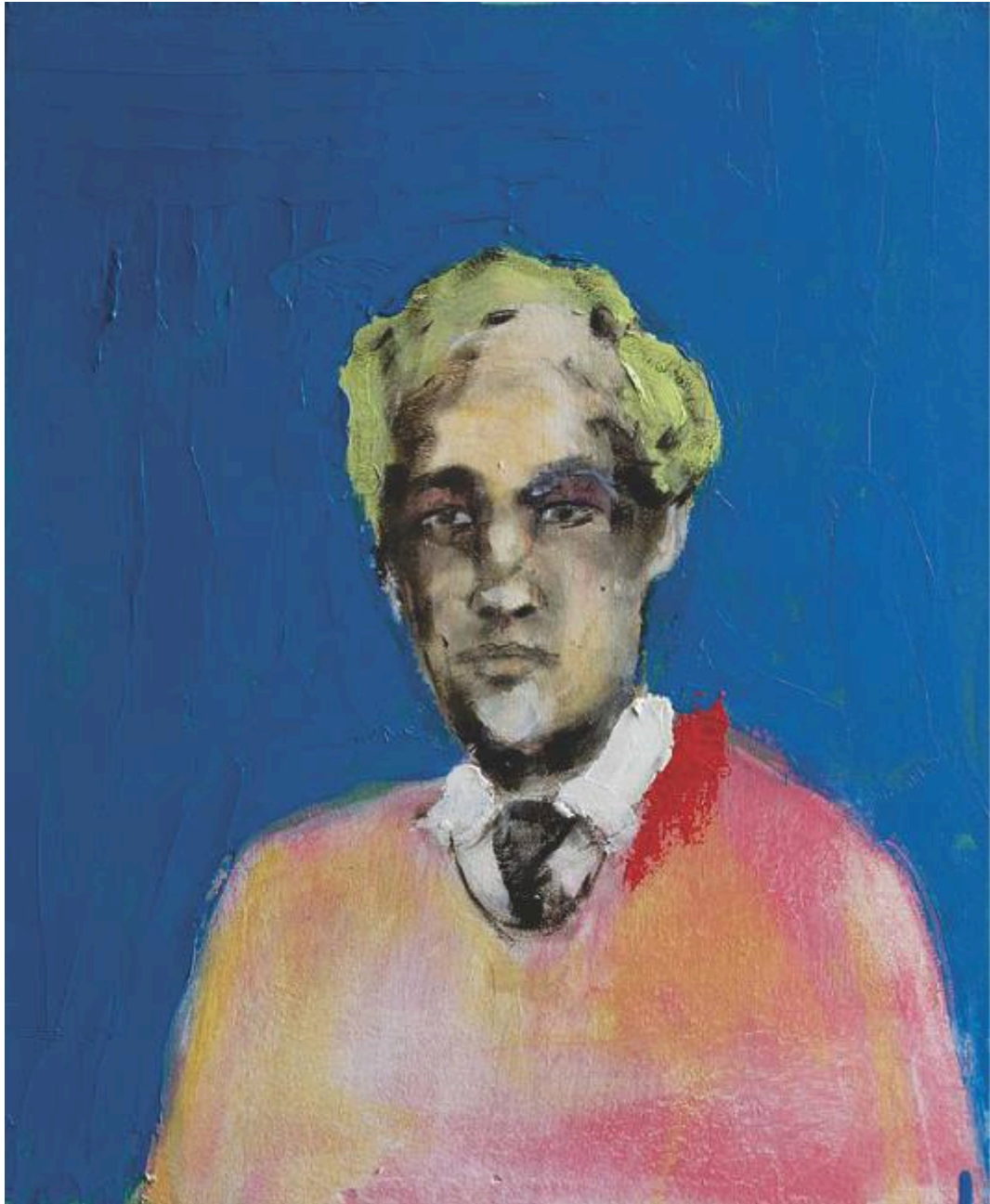
*Untitled (Red Nose with detail)* - 2014, Oil on panel, 48x48 inches



***Untitled (Pointy Head)*** - 2014, Oil on panel, 10x8 inches

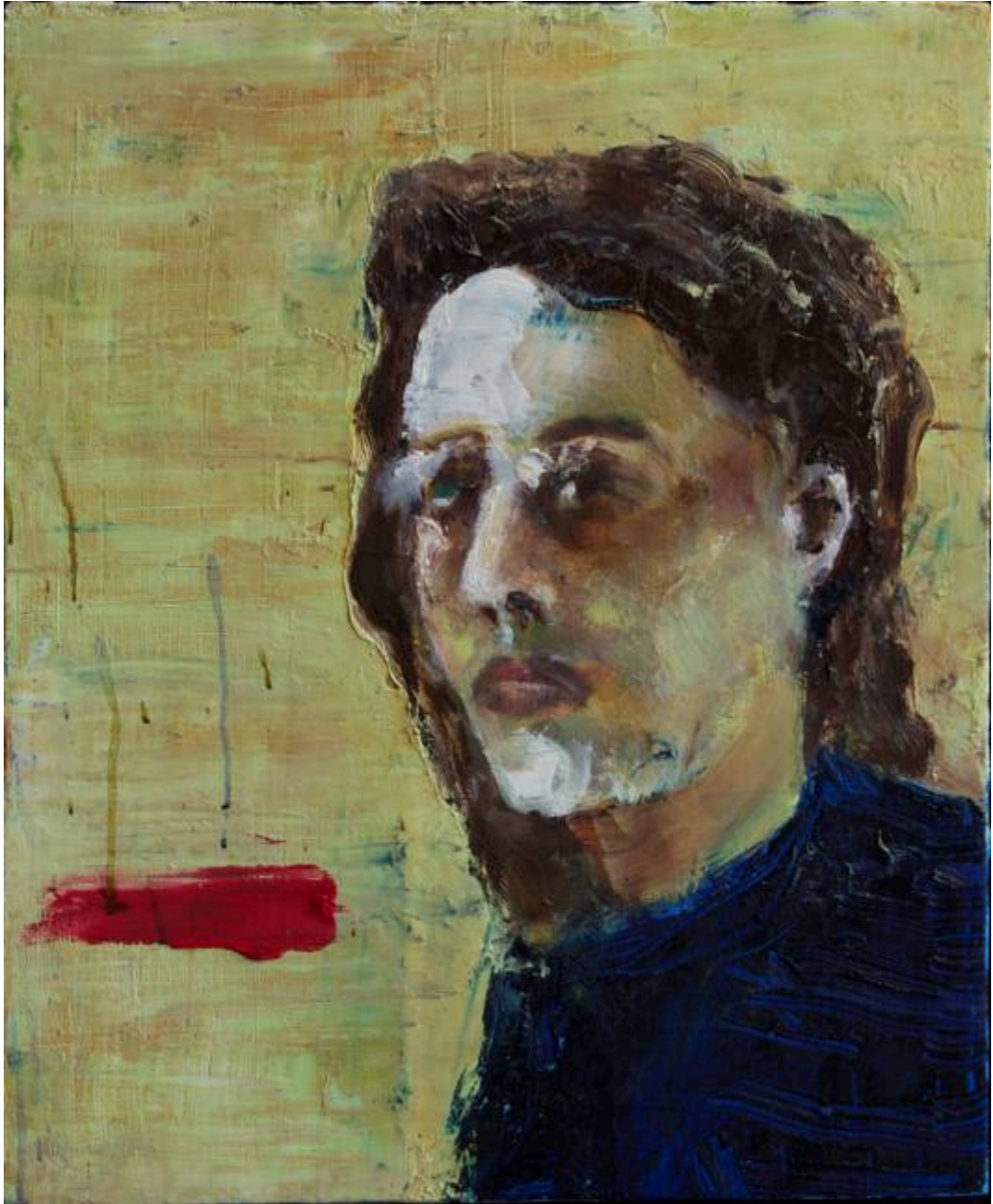


***Untitled (With Tie)*** - 2014, Oil on panel, 20x16 inches



***Untitled (Blue Sweater)*** - 2014, Oil on panel, 20x16 inches





***Untitled (Cyan Halo)*** - 2014, Oil on panel, 20x16 inches



***Untitled (Two Girls in Field)*** - 2014, Oil on panel, 20x16 inches



***Untitled (Blue Robe)*** - 2014, Oil on canvas, 20x16 inches



***Linear Space #1*** - 2014, Oil on panel, 16x16 inches





*Linear Space #2* - 2014, Oil on panel, 16x16 inches



***Linear Space #3*** - 2014, Oil on panel, 16x16 inches





## **MICHAEL BJORNSON**

### **EXHIBITIONS**

#### **SOLO**

Initial Gallery, Vancouver, BC, May 1, 2014

Head Bones Gallery, Vernon, BC, June 20, 2014

Installation/video projection, for Art Toronto

Installation You Are What You Eat, Centre A [Collaboration with Mina Shum]

#### **GROUP**

Two Rivers Gallery Collaborative drawings with Kitty Blandy

Richmond Art Gallery

Malaspina Printmakers Gallery

Llubjana

### **EDUCATION**

BA art history, UBC

BArchitecture, UBC

Dipl. FA, ECIAD, Interdisciplinary Studies

### **CURATING**

Courtenay Public Art Gallery

Gallery Atsui, The Other, works by Gillian Macdonald, Kitty Blandy and Carrie Walker

Robert Lynds Gallery, Site[d] JG Mair

Numerous exhibitions over ten years for TAG [Third Avenue Gallery] Vancouver





## **SCHOLARSHIPS/AWARDS**

UBC School of Architecture, scholarships

Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design, Student Merit award

Leo Award, best production design for Mon Amour Mon Parapluie

Golden Sheaf Award, best production design for Mon Amour Mon Parapluie

## **FILM PRODUCTION/DESIGN**

Double Happiness

Lunch with Charles

Drive She Said

Long Life and Prosperity

Mon Amour Mon Parapluie

Stroke

## **COLLECTIONS**

Private and Public including, Richmond Art Gallery, Simon Fraser University, Ljubljana Print Biennale, Air Canada

[WWW.HEADBONESGALLERY.COM](http://WWW.HEADBONESGALLERY.COM)