



NICK NABER PENIS PORTRAITS

These are the directions sent to the models:

Please send 2-3 images of yourself soft or semi soft, whichever you feel looks best. Please make sure the lighting is good, by this I mean strong light and shadow. Please include your bush and a bit of leg. If you want to get creative and challenge me, please do that. Send the highest resolution image you can via text or email.

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DICK PICS

Peter Kelly

At first glance Nick Naber's Penis Portraits present a distinct deviation from the work for which he is most known-abstract architectural watercolors that are as playful as they are austere. Naber, who studied architecture and painting, describes his practice as monastic-every piece is executed in one sitting in his home studio. He is a self-taught watercolorist, building off a background in oil and acrylic. As in the canon of true monastic painting, his meditative practice has been a self-motivated education in the intricacies of the medium. A devout colorist, his choice of media and commitment to its mastery is evident in each work's subtle variations in hue. The abstract color fields seen in his architectural works are evocative of a murky interior landscape, which can be contextualized within his introspective process. As previously mentioned, superficially one might make the mistake that the Penis Portraits and architectural works are wholly distinct, but closer inspection elucidates the dialectic parallels between the two. Both bodies of work display tenderly rendered shifts of color stretched across form—the contours of each subject are a vessel for color. The architectural abstractions offer a more rigid, measured approach to form and line with a diffuse wash. Alternatively, the penis portraits present fluid organic shapes with more distinct boundaries between colors. His approach to penis as subject is squarely in the tradition of Mapplethorpe-whose approach to the body was that of a still life, a study of pure form and line. In the Penis Portraits, Naber takes Mapplethorpe's foundation for nude as still life and adds a collaborative conceptual underpinning, a colorist sensibility, and dedication to watercolor.

The disembodied nude is commonplace in the digital age; as such, the cultural conversation around this subject has shifted significantly from Mapplethorpe's original perspective. The tradition of genital portraiture is a subject revisited by artists, perverts, and others throughout time. Today's iPhone dick pic is a far cry from the single mindedness and care taken by Gustave Courbet to create his 1866 masterpiece L'Origine du monde (likely the most famous example of this tradition of genital portraiture in art history). The painting has been a subject of thought-provoking discourse that remains relevant today. Most recently the spread legs of the faceless sitter has become a representative image for the penetrating male gaze. The model, posed by Courbet, is perhaps made vulnerable through her submission to the painter. Images created by men looking at women is an ideologically fraught subject that have robust, consistent canonical representation. The sexualized male subject observed by a male artist is a more idiosyncratic history, with meaning dictated by cultural context.

While Naber's penis portraits feature a similar composition to L'Origine du monde—the male gaze directed toward male subjects is an inconsistent (and sometimes speculative) visual history. The same can be said for gay art history more broadly, our contemporary gay identity traces its visual history in part through re-contextualization and projection, from images of Greek shepherds to the tombs of Old Kingdom manicurists.² As our contemporary LGBT+ identity categories emerged from the underground in the mid to late-20th century, so too did the mainstream appreciation of images of men created by men. The wake of the Sexual Revolution, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Stonewall Riots also expedited the emergence of homosexuality as a fixed and distinct mainstream cultural identity rather than a marginalized subculture, or earlier an incidental vice.³ The public discourse on men and women and the way they look at each other has been recorded throughout history—as previously mentioned, men looking at men is a much hazier subject. As homosexuals became a social class unto themself there was a proliferation in homosexual visual culture, and erotic images of men by men became more integrated into mainstream American culture. 4 Today, there is an innate sexual charge assumed in homosocial nudity and its associated images that would not be an assumption held by all viewers throughout human history. The Penis Portraits challenge this contemporary cultural expectation. Though the male nudes are rendered by a gay male artist, there is an innate anti-erotic nature to the series. In the literal sense, as all models appear flaccid (occasionally semiflaccid) and metaphorically, as the penises are treated as a still life.

The contemporary digital media landscape and its innate image saturation are essential contexts to understand the series. Repetition of images means something entirely different to a viewer in 2025 than it would have to a viewer in 1985. While the latter audience might draw associations to serialization and mass production, the former might associate repeated images with the rapid proliferation of digital images. Given the subjects, a contemporary viewer, especially a gay male one, sees numerous disembodied penises as somewhat mundane features of our digital landscape. Though Naber's practice is monastic, his surrounding context is not. The disembodied nude is as ubiquitous as any other image online—one does not necessarily need to search to stumble across a veritable trove of dick pics. The years of training and commitment to produce an image like *L'Origine du monde* in 1866 are a stark contrast to the rapidity with which today's genital portraits (and images more broadly) are created, dispersed, consumed, and forgotten. The title, *Penis Portraits* elegantly references a colloquial

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name for the true subject of the series: dick pics. Naber elevates these fleeting images and questions their inherent eroticism—through the mundanity the disembodied nude has accumulated, eroticism has been obscured in transactional image economies.

The watercolors are interpretations of photographs. Each photograph is taken by its subject in a cooperative process between model/photographer and artist. Naber gives every volunteer the directive: "Please send 2-3 images of yourself soft or semi soft, whichever you feel looks best. Please make sure the lighting is good, by this I mean strong light and shadow. Please include your bush and a bit of leg. If you want to get creative and challenge me, please do that. Send the highest resolution image you can via text or email." The ultimate contribution is a photograph that will become the subject of the work on paper. Through Naber's guidance, his collaborator generates the composition, lighting, form, and line for the artist to interpret through color and technical skill. By relinquishing decisions about the image to a collaborator, Naber sets up a framework for intimacy and trust that allow for a trusting relationship between artist and model.

The exchange of photographs between the two participants are of central importance to the series. Naber's subjects are volunteers from his immediate social network–primarily through open calls on Instagram stories, but word of mouth, and general interest in the series has also drawn volunteers. As a result, many of those pictured are also artists themselves—as observed in one of the model testimonials, this framework is in the tradition of PaJaMa (and beyond), with artists taking turns modeling for one another. The images are taken separately with no instruction beyond the written prompt, and are then exchanged digitally. As in Ray Johnson's New York Correspondance [sic] School ("NYCS"), the ritual and performance of exchange becomes intrinsic to the work.

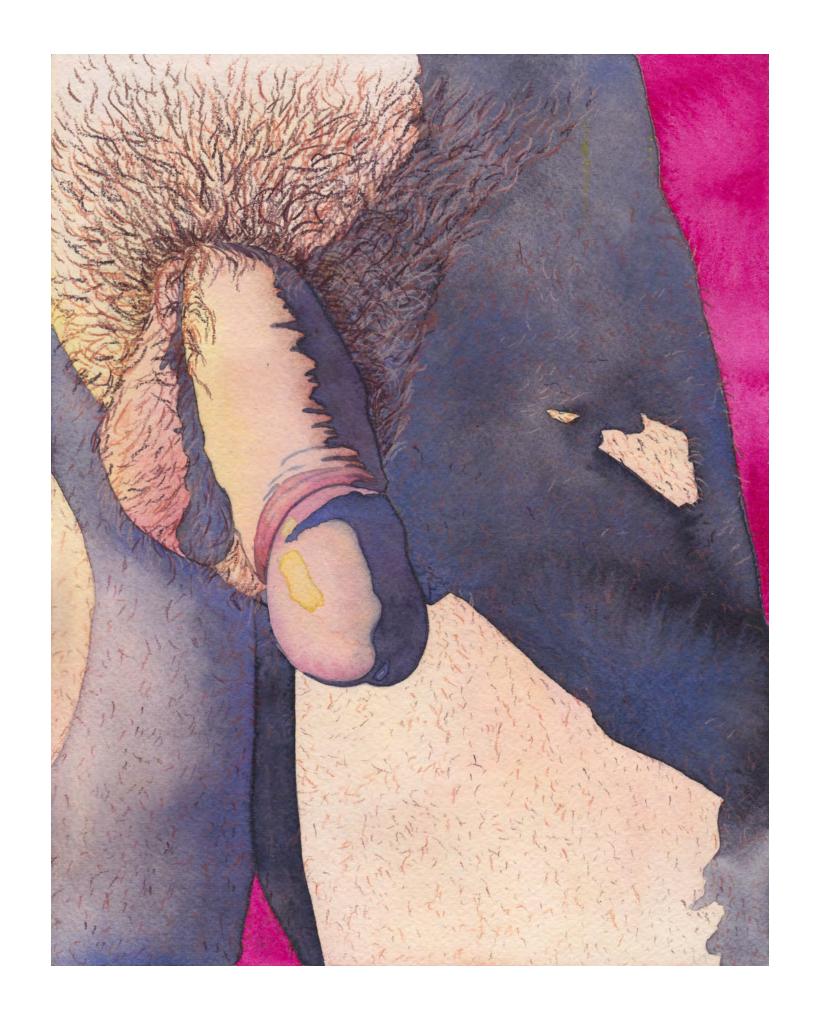
The image composition positions artist and viewer within the interiority of the sitter. The contributions to each image from model and artist imbue the series with a series of conceptual tensions. From the model, the staging and consideration of their de-sexualized nude photograph evokes an interior, self reflective dialogue—calling to mind the tradition of bathtub portraits by Bonnard, Cassatt, Degas, and Kahlo (more recently, and controversially, the torch was also carried by president and Sunday painter George W. Bush). Both present intimate, cropped views of the human body,

vulnerable and relaxed in their nudity. So too do the anti-erotic flaccid penises call to mind the self-portraits of Joan Semmel, all honest in their depictions of the body as it is, rather than how it should be. Like in Semmel's work, the Penis Portraits strive for a body neutrality rather than a body positive message—the body is depicted without the typical baggage around penis size or shape.

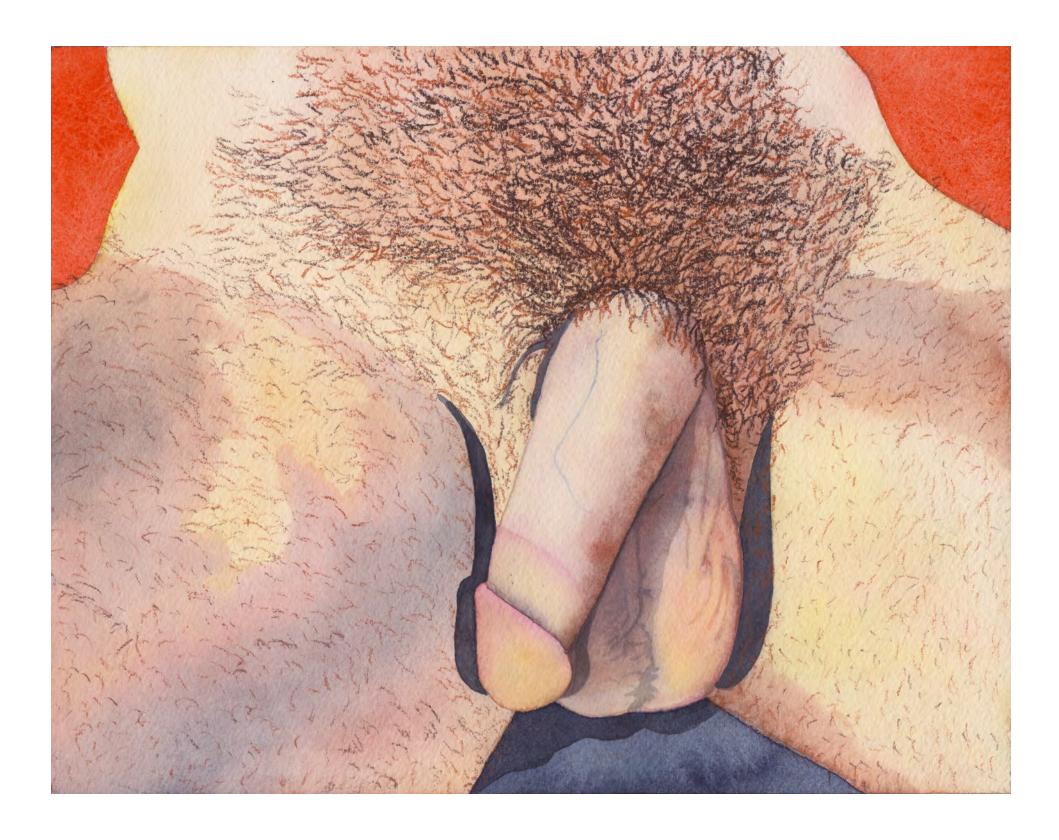
The contrasting, collaborative contributions of the two collaborators make the series particularly dense. The models are not simply posing nude, but presenting an image of themself to be interpreted by Naber and observed by his audience. The acute awareness of artist and viewer complicates the meditative aspects in this series and adds an essential exhibitionist thread—the exhibitionism inherent to the Penis Portraits evokes a safe and intimate feeling, a different end compared to other famed artistic exhibitionist impulses. Works like VALIE EXPORT's Action Pants: Genital Panic focused on a titillating confrontation with the viewer. The 1969 performance saw EXPORT confront the audience of an experimental, semi-pornographic movie theatre wearing a pair of crotchless leather pants. The exposed vagina in person was in stark opposition to the passive state in which the male audience was consuming images of disembodied vaginas. Naber is also challenging the economy of nude images within his own contemporary media landscape. The fleeting and inherent eroticism of a dick pic is upended by creating a non-erotic devotional and lasting image, venerating the nudity's mundanity.

- **1.** Jonathan Weinberg and Jean-Marc Scanreigh, Male Desire: The Homoerotic in American Art (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publisher, 2004).
- **2.** Linda Evans and Alexandra Woods, "Further Evidence That Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep Were Twins," The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology 102, no. 1 (January 2016): 55–72, https://doi.org/10.1177/030751331610200106.
- **3.** Foucault, Michel, 1926-1984 author. The History of Sexuality. New York: Pantheon Books, 19782021.
- **4.** David M. Halperin, How to Be Gay (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014).
- **5.** Jarrett Earnest, "The Young and Evil: Press Release," David Zwirner, February 2019, https://www.davidzwirner.com/exhibitions/2019/young-and-evil/press-release.
- **6.** Ray Johnson, The Paper Snake (Something Else Press, 1965). <?> Brian Boucher, "George W. Bush: Decider, Bather, Painter," ARTnews.com, December 18, 2017, https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/features/george-w-bush-painting-59246/.
- **7.** Brian Boucher, "George W. Bush: Decider, Bather, Painter," ARTnews.com, December 18, 2017, https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/features/george-w-bush-painting-59246/.

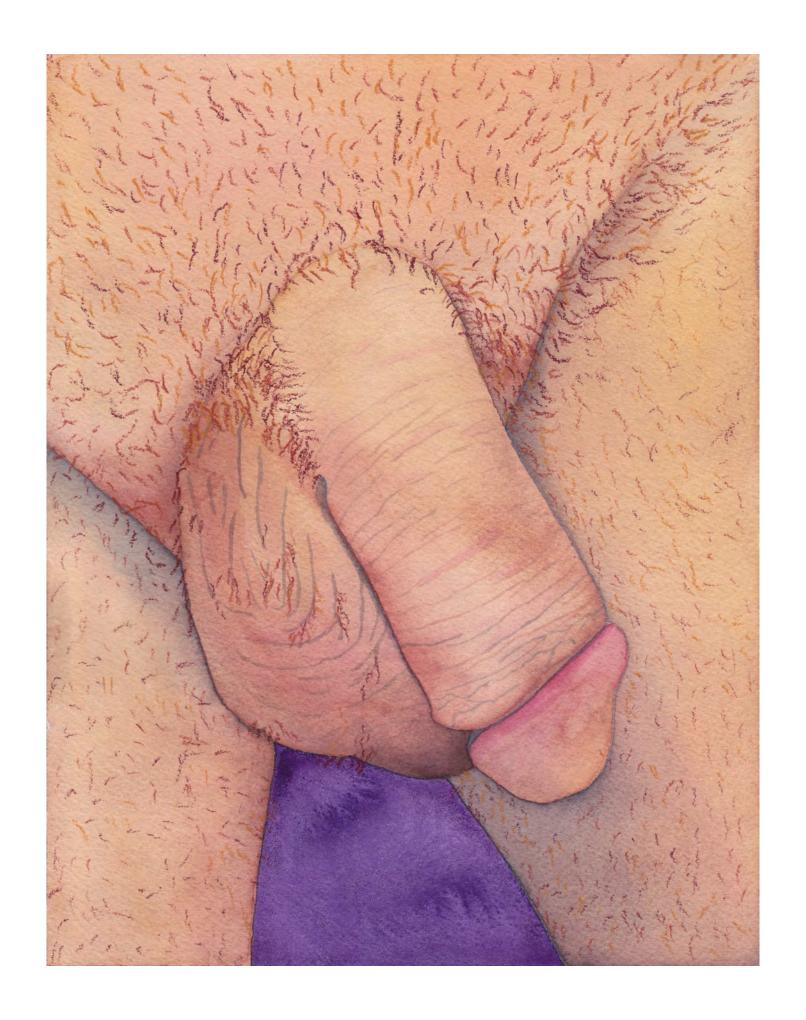
For some of us, finding a space of sexual confidence within masculinity is a lifelong challenge. This is especially true as a straight man, growing up in the American South, balancing my personal desires against collective male toxicity and the ever-present encouragement to view women as a commodity or object. Mix those ingredients into a simmering broth of low self-esteem, and the idea of being proud of your dick feels... complicated. This was an exciting project for me and I enjoyed the process energing from selfie to art work. Even with the anonymity, or maybe because of it, I was able to recapture a little more sexual pride and legitimacy, which means so much.



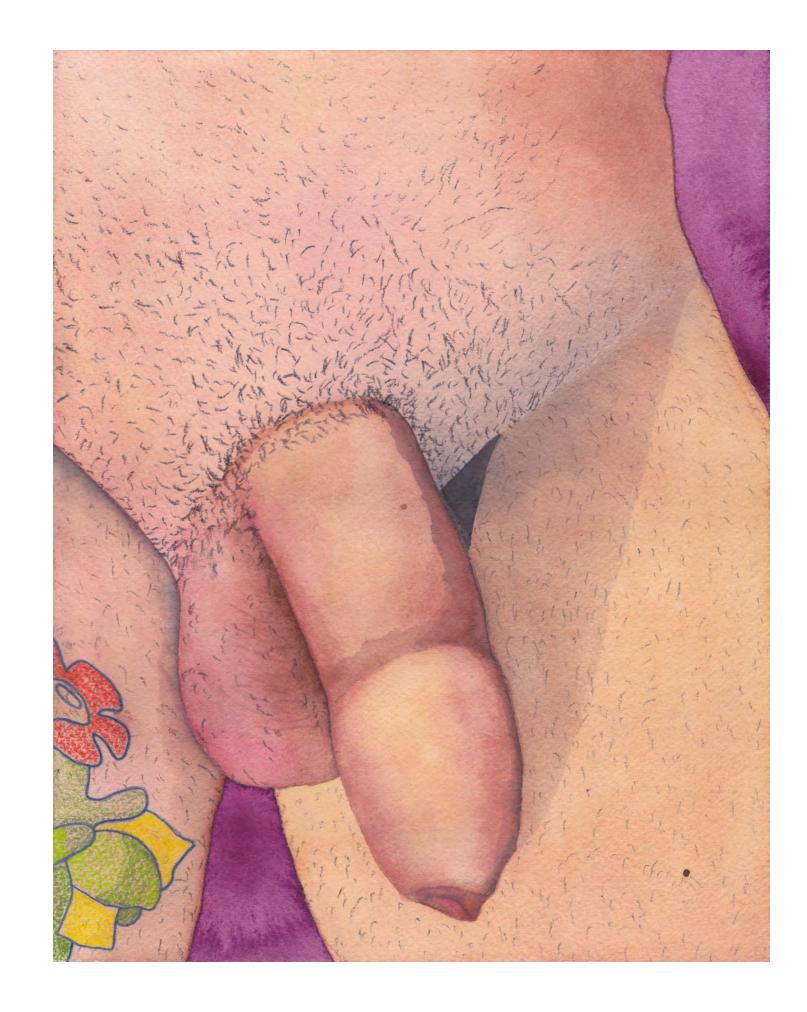
When I was younger, I was so ashamed of my body and hated anything to do with my supposed maleness. I was terrified for anyone to see my body, especially my genitals. As an adult, I've developed and defined my own identity as a man, as a male, and have come to appreciate and be proud of my penis. Nick's project helps so many of us to feel comfortable with ourselves and with each other. Having been so lonely as a kid, it's a wonderful thing to share, and neither my penis nor I mind having fans.







Nick Naber's Penis Portraits series holds a very special place in my heart. When I first encountered his art, I was captivated by how he uses watercolor to create landscapes of the most diverse kinds. In this project, focusing on the landscapes of the body, he carves out a tender space for a part of the body that is often weighed down by ideals of perfection, sensation, shame, and taboos. His work is vibrant, expressive, and profoundly respectful – something that shines through in every piece he creates. As a queer person, I feel a deep connection to Nick and his work. In a world dominated by rigid beauty standards – particularly within the gay community, where my own experiences have shaped how I view myself – I haven't always felt at home in my body, and I often still struggle with it. However, working with Nick felt incredibly safe and grounded in trust. He has a way of treating every person and every body with equal care and dignity. This was the first time I had ever exposed myself in such a vulnerable way, and seeing the finished portrait was a deeply affirming experience. It allowed me to see myself from a different perspective, helping me move a step closer to feeling more at peace with my body. Now, my portrait is part of a diverse collection of beautiful artworks that others also appreciate. I feel truly honored to be a part of it.



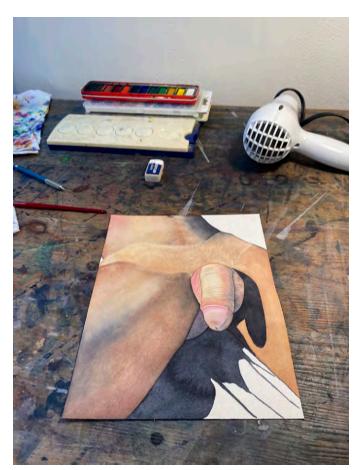


Body and image are separate realities; if we are lucky, we are proud of both. Nick Naber's Ween Portraits was the first time I've ever posed/made a nude image of myself for it to be publicly shown. At first, I was oddly hesitant, as this has never been an issue for me on an app. I loved working with Nick - experiencing his unwavering commitment and integrity in his work. Beyond that, I am part of something that continues to grow-hopefully encouraging gratification and a little smut for us all.

I have an initial sketch that Nick did of both myself and my partner's dicks on our bedroom wall. Hung with pride.





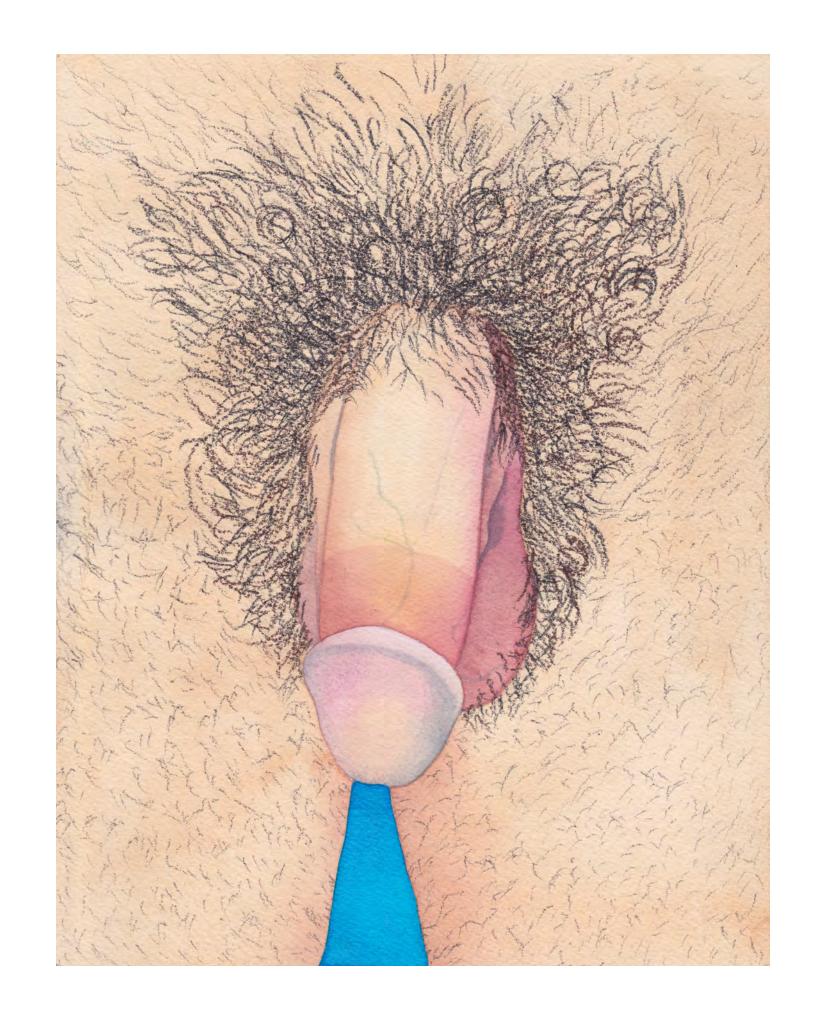




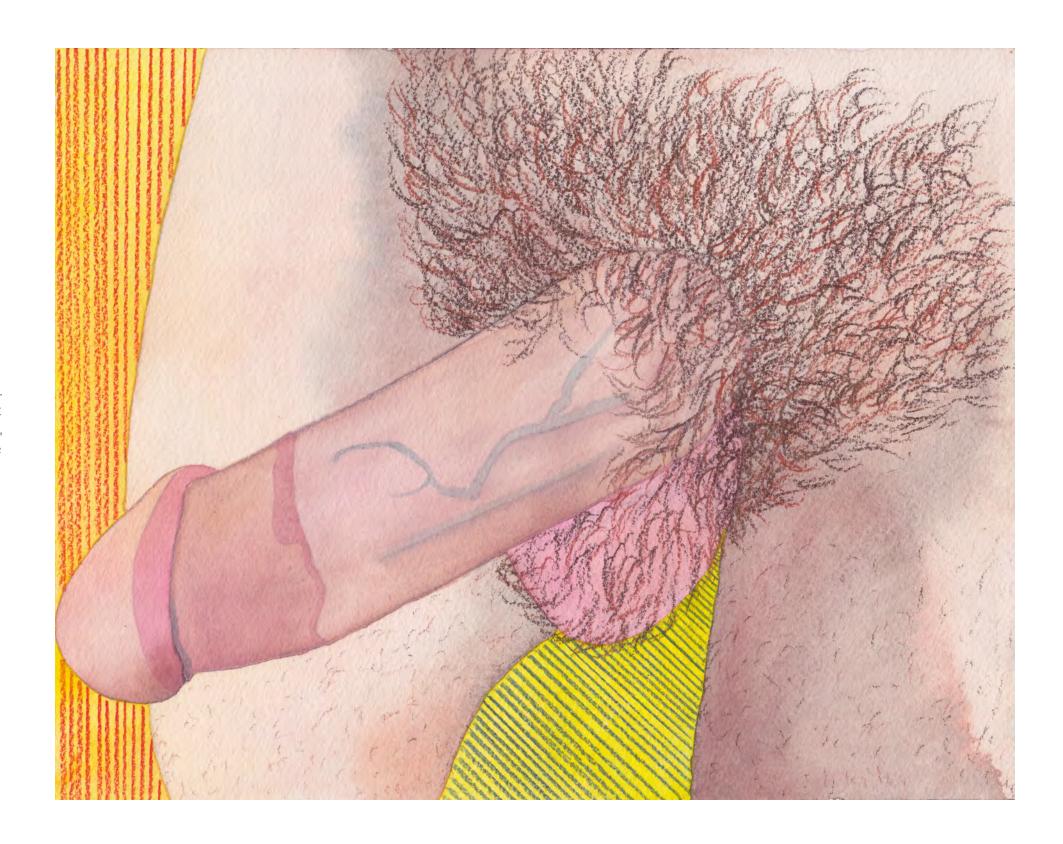


Penis Portrait XI, 2023, watercolor, colored pencil, graphite on watercolor paper, 10×8 in. $(25.4 \times 20.32 \text{ cm})$

Posing nude is something I've always liked the idea of doing. Growing up with societal pressures and judgement about the naked body have always been the devil on my shoulder keeping me from finding posing outlets, but I still always liked the idea. After coming out as gay and going off to college, I gained an immediate acceptance of myself as a person and subsequently my body as well. I was unabashedly myself in college, and those days in college helped me to grow and prosper as a human. Then, right after college, I did my first posing in the nude for an artist and I found it liberating, as well as awkward and scary, but liberating more than anything else. Since that time, I've wanted to pose again but the opportunity has not presented itself. So, after seeing the request for models on Ween Portraits, I decided to follow through. On the overtly sexual side of the spectrum, being nude is risque and ripe with vulnerability, which add to the enjoyment and excitement. With that, on the other end of the spectrum, nudity doesn't have to be sexual, it can simply be freeing and enjoyable for that simple reason. Both are fun and important to explore.



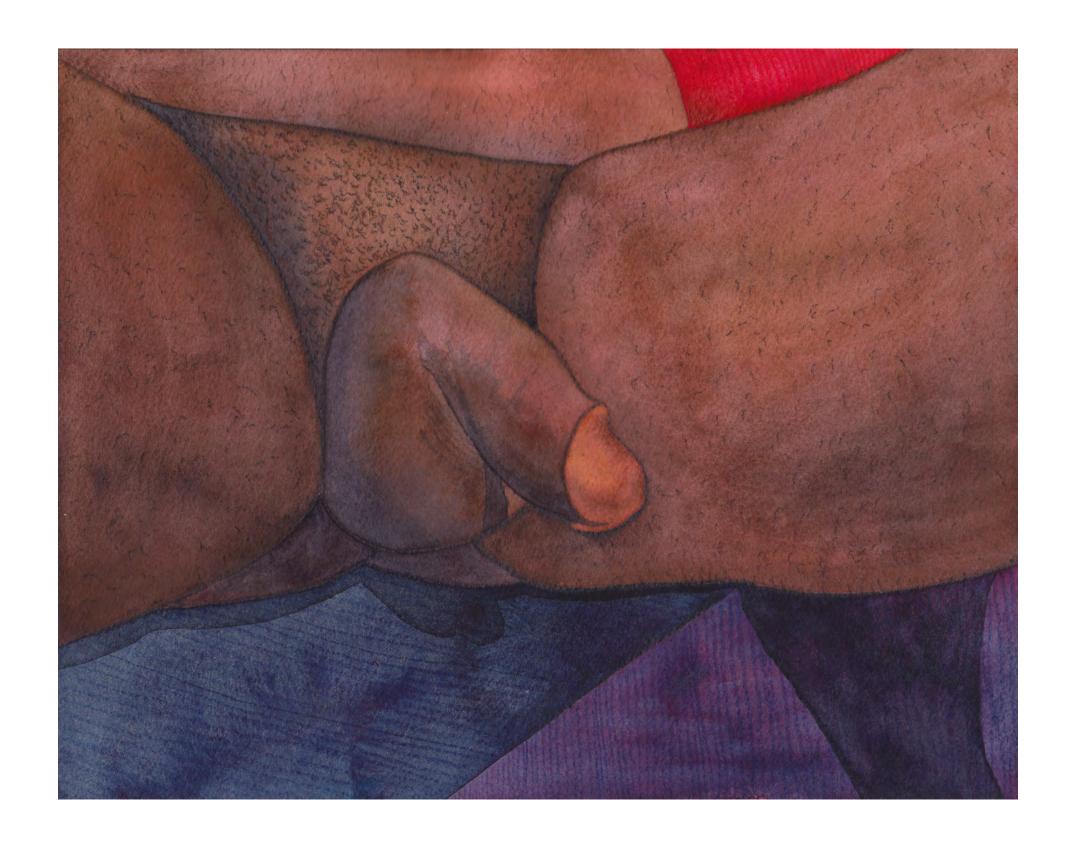
Nick's project builds on a legacy of gay artists posing for each other (think PaJaMa). At a glance, the images can feel prurient, but like their predecessors, are really about intimacy and trust. I personally find being vulnerable and exposed quite exciting, and Nick successfully captures that energy with his probing eye and sensitive draftsmanship.

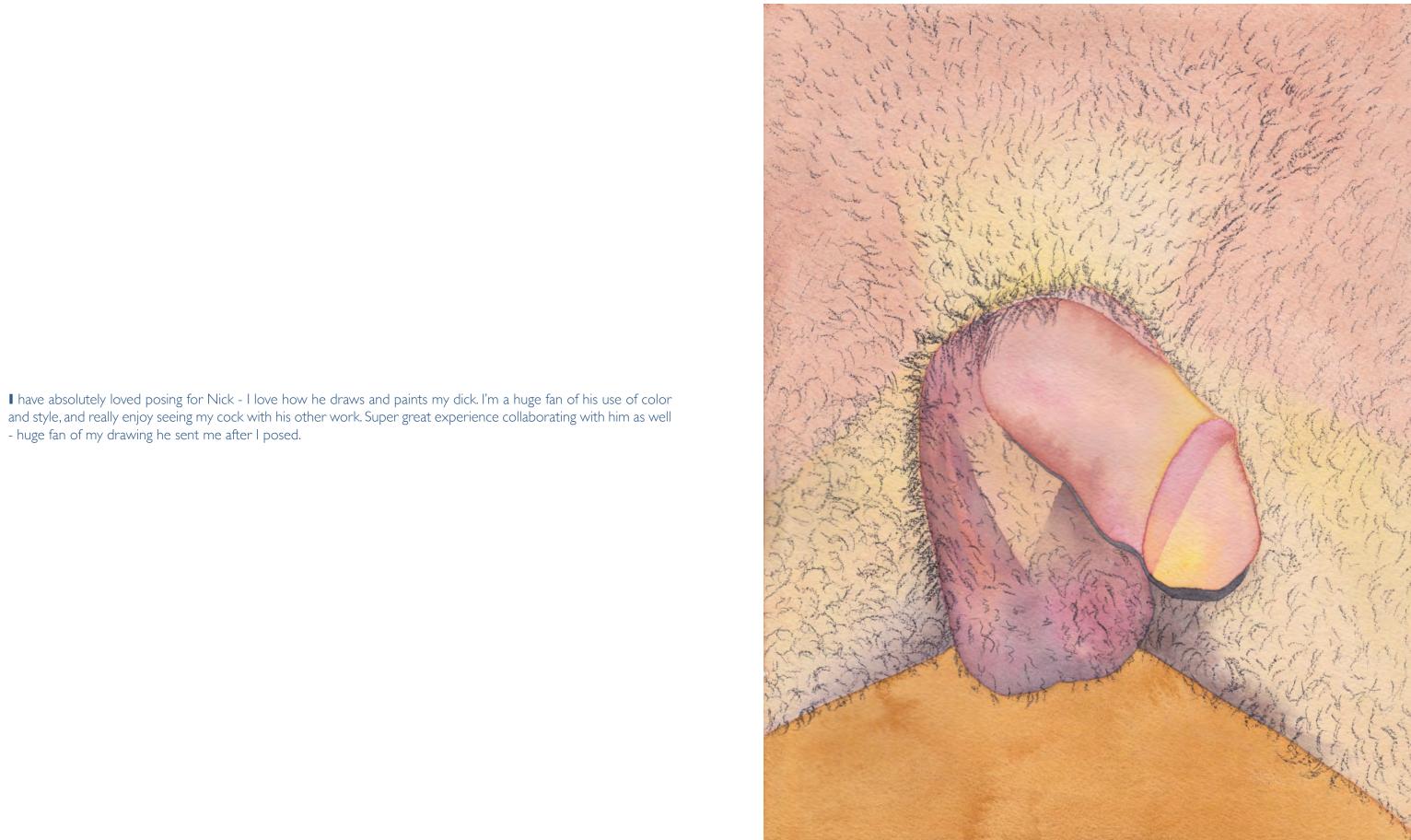








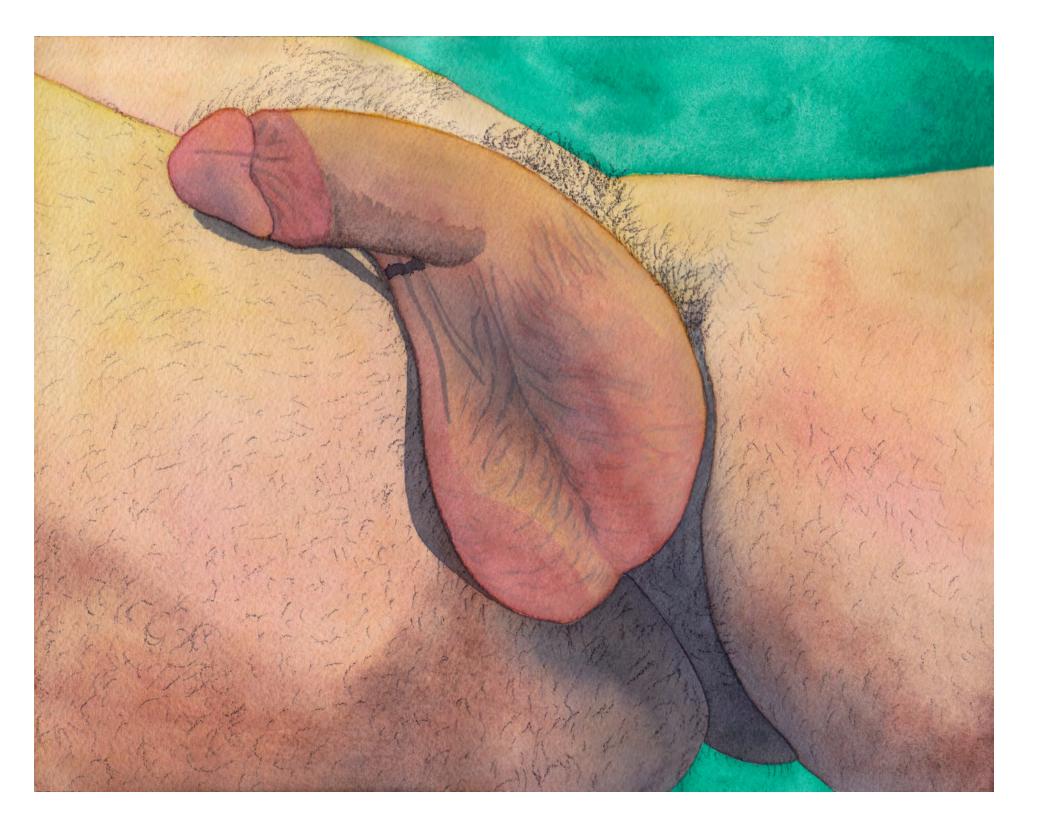




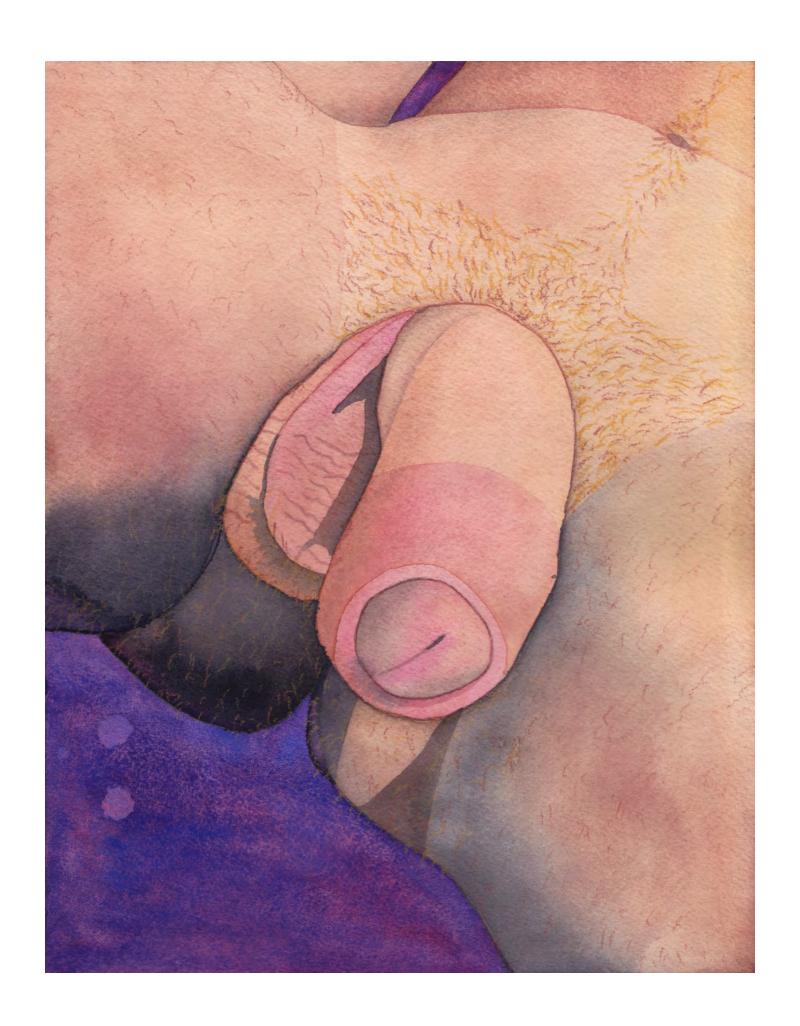
Despite what the internet often suggests about gay men, most of us—myself included—carry insecurities about our bodies and our sexuality. Not long ago, I discovered exhibitionist blogs like Tumblr, which were eye-opening for me. Unlike professionally produced porn, these platforms featured real people sharing their bodies in varying degrees of anonymity. It was refreshing, and I found myself drawn to it. I wanted to join in, to build the confidence to contribute, and, in a way, become the kind of erotica I wanted to see. What struck me most was that, often, the context wasn't overtly sexual. One of the most important lessons I learned from my initial experience with exhibitionism was how to discover what made me feel comfortable and confident in my own skin. It taught me how to embrace what made me feel good—and sometimes, even excited—about my body. So, when I heard about Nick's project, I thought it was brilliant, and I immediately knew I wanted to be part of it. I believe that sexuality is often misunderstood as something external, as if it's a measure of success or failure. Nick's project creates a safe space for anyone curious about sharing a piece of themselves in this way, and I admire that. I wholeheartedly believe that everyone benefits from the opportunity to reflect on what truly makes us feel confident, and to have that confidence celebrated.









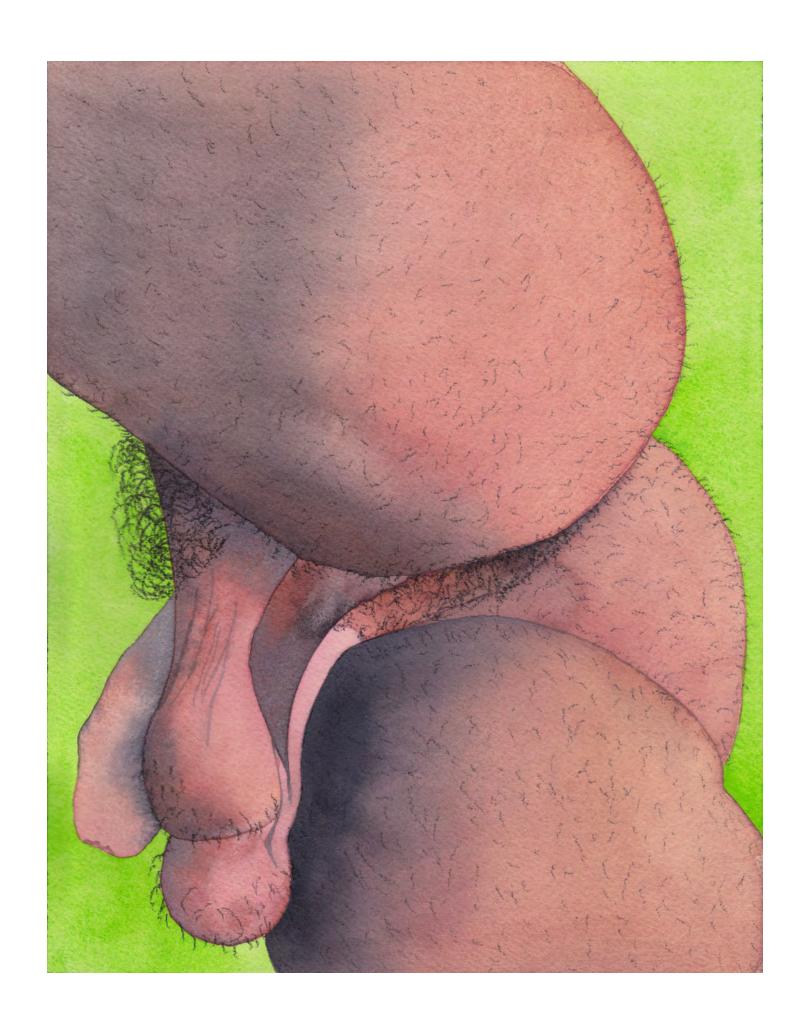


Growing up, being uncircumcised carried an inherited sense of shame—a taboo that lingered in silence. Over time, I came to understand that it was also a source of fetishization and desire. This duality often played out as a battleground within my mind. Naber's work, with its raw and vulnerable exposure of its subject, invites us to confront these fears and desires directly, without obstruction.

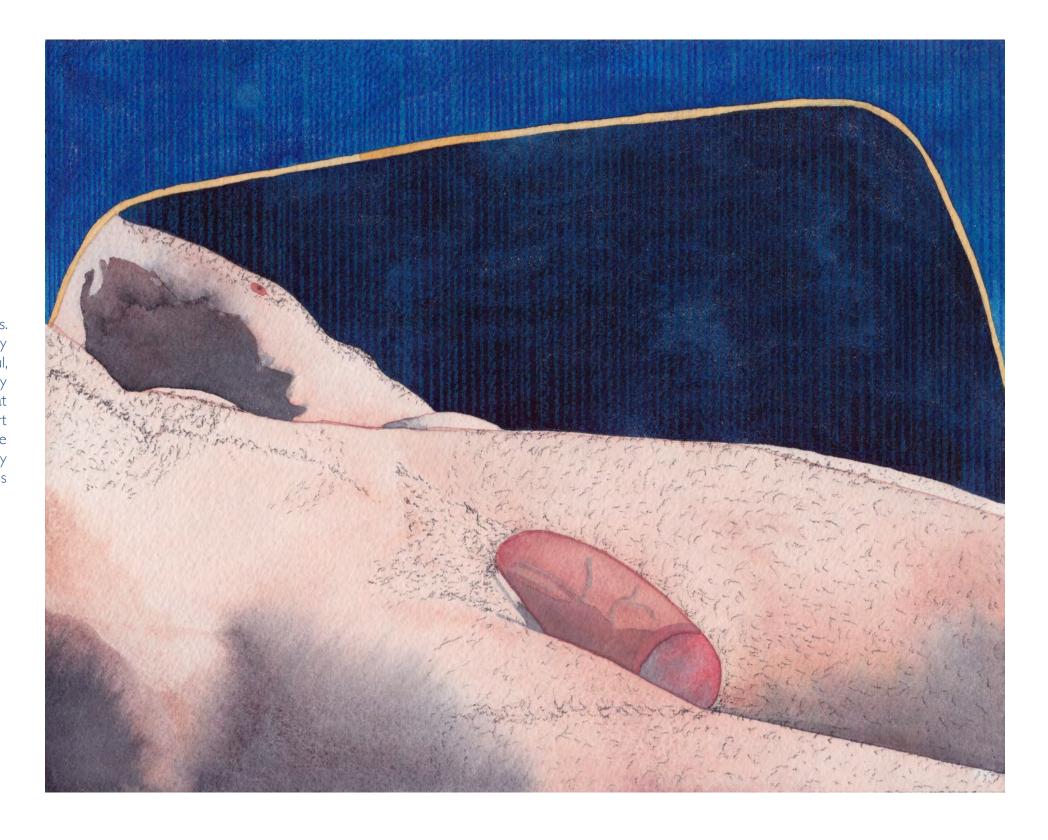


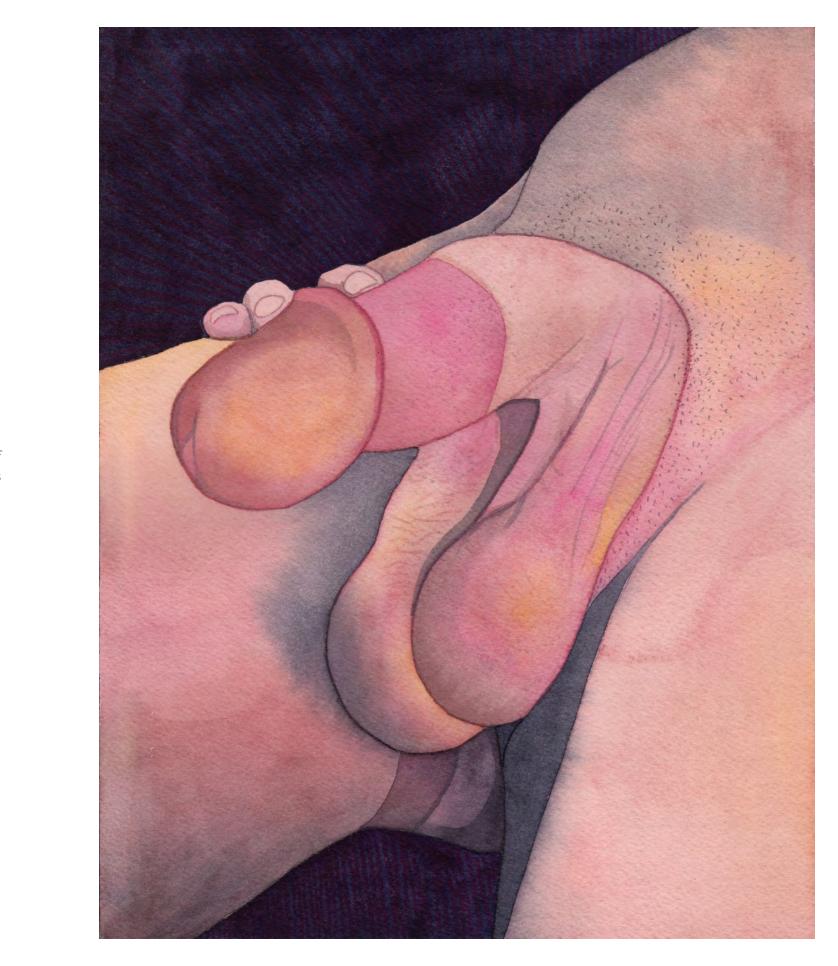






I was immediately intrigued by the aesthetic and originality of the 'Penis Portraits' series. The idea felt bold yet thoughtful, pushing boundaries in a way that resonated deeply with me. From the very beginning, Nick's communication was clear and respectful, making me feel safe and comfortable throughout the process. Nick was mindful of my boundaries, particularly in terms of privacy, which allowed me to trust him fully. What started as a creative collaboration evolved into an online friendship filled with support and mutual appreciation. I'm grateful to have been part of this project, and I hope we get to a point where online censorship is less restrictive of creative work—especially projects like this that thoughtfully explore nudity in ways that challenge societal norms and open necessary conversations.

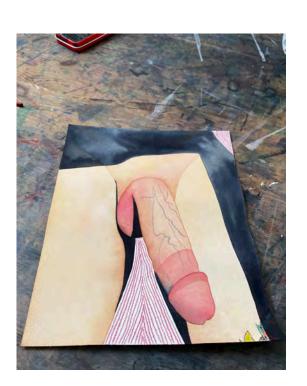




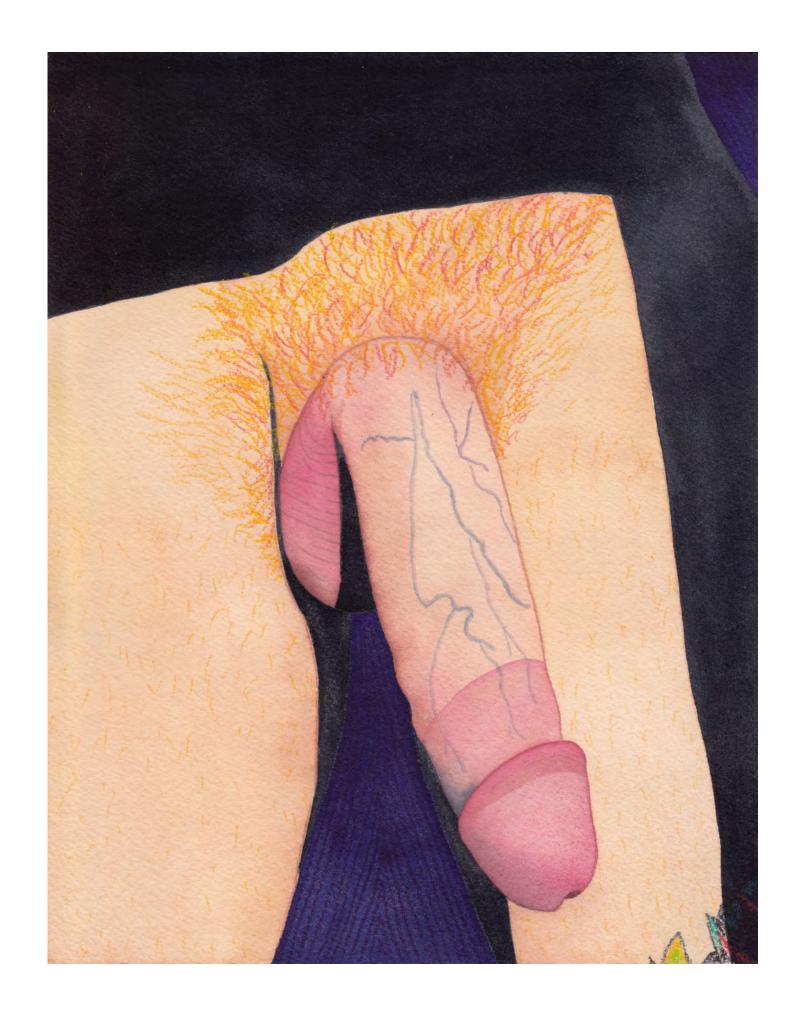
Posing for these portraits has been exhilarating. It has helped me to open up more and I'm happy to expose myself so Nick can bring these works of art to life! I hope these portraits of my penis make everyone as happy as I was posing for them!











Penis Portrait XXXVI, 2024, watercolor, colored pencil, graphite on watercolor paper, 10×8 in. $(25.4 \times 20.32 \text{ cm})$

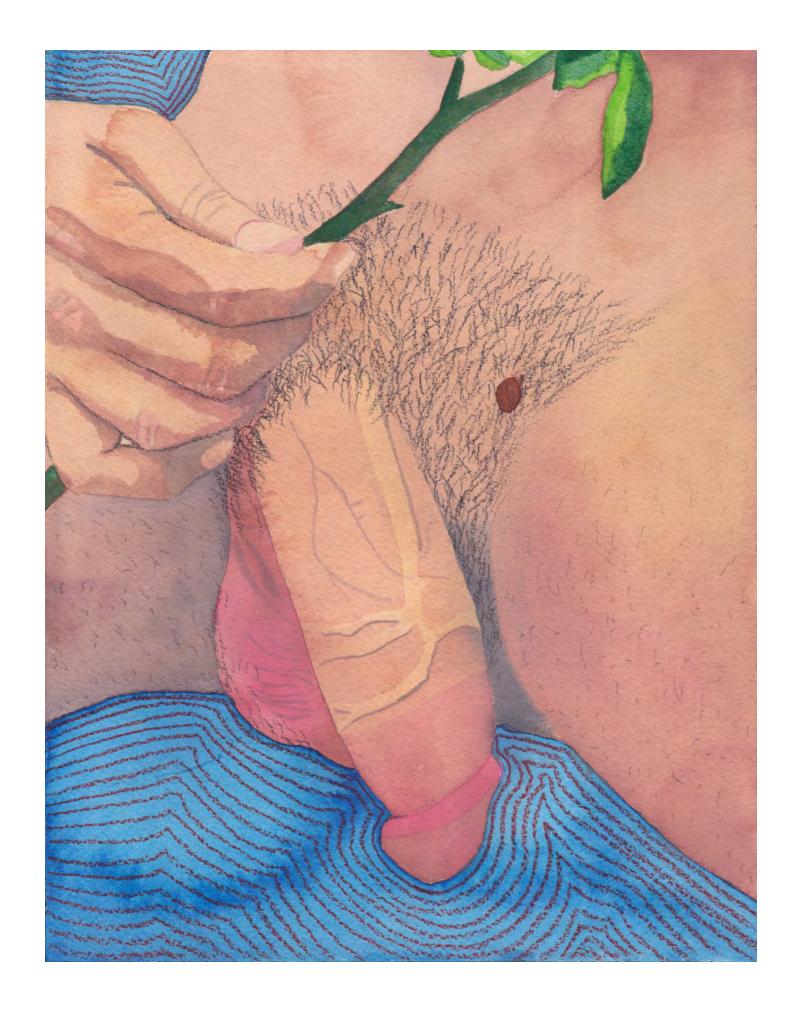
Posing for the penis portraits for me was an intimate and rewarding experience. As someone who has struggled with sexual addiction and substance use my own art making practices have become integral in my everyday living. So when I saw Nick's finished product it was a reminder that my body is sacred and a gift. It reminded me that I have a choice in who I share my intimacy with and when I make good choices I also feel good. I'm so happy to see this project take off just for the plain fact that our bodies are beautiful and remind us to venerate and protect what is precious to us.





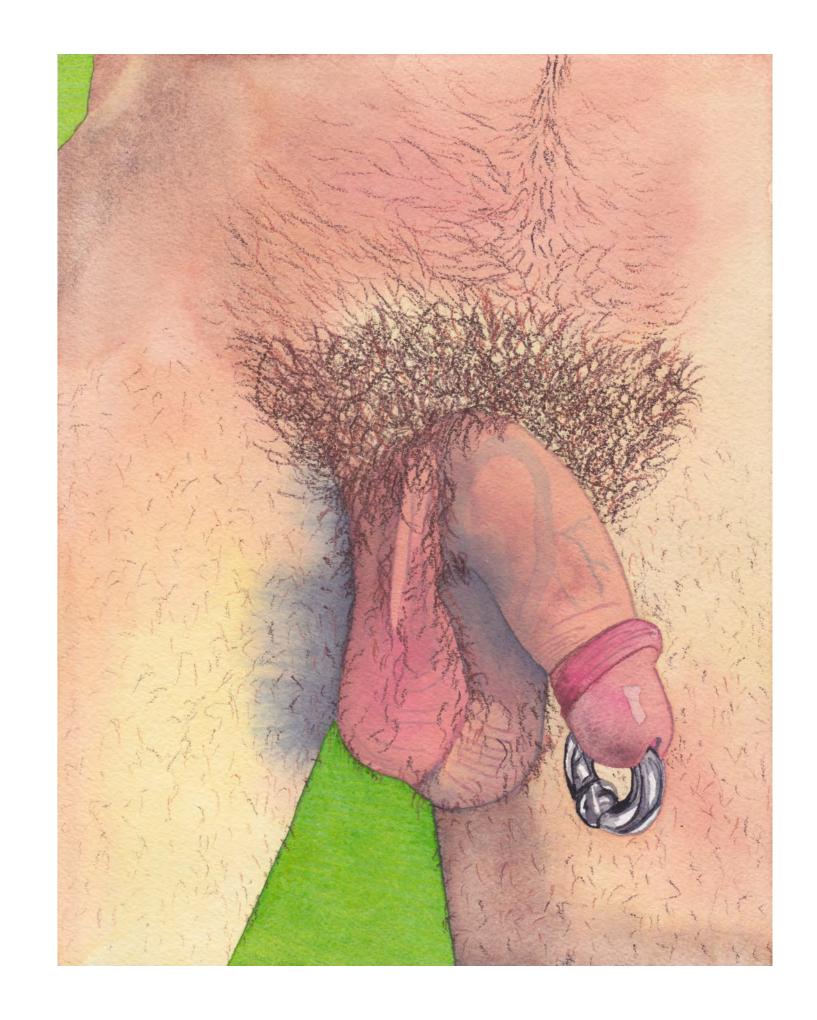


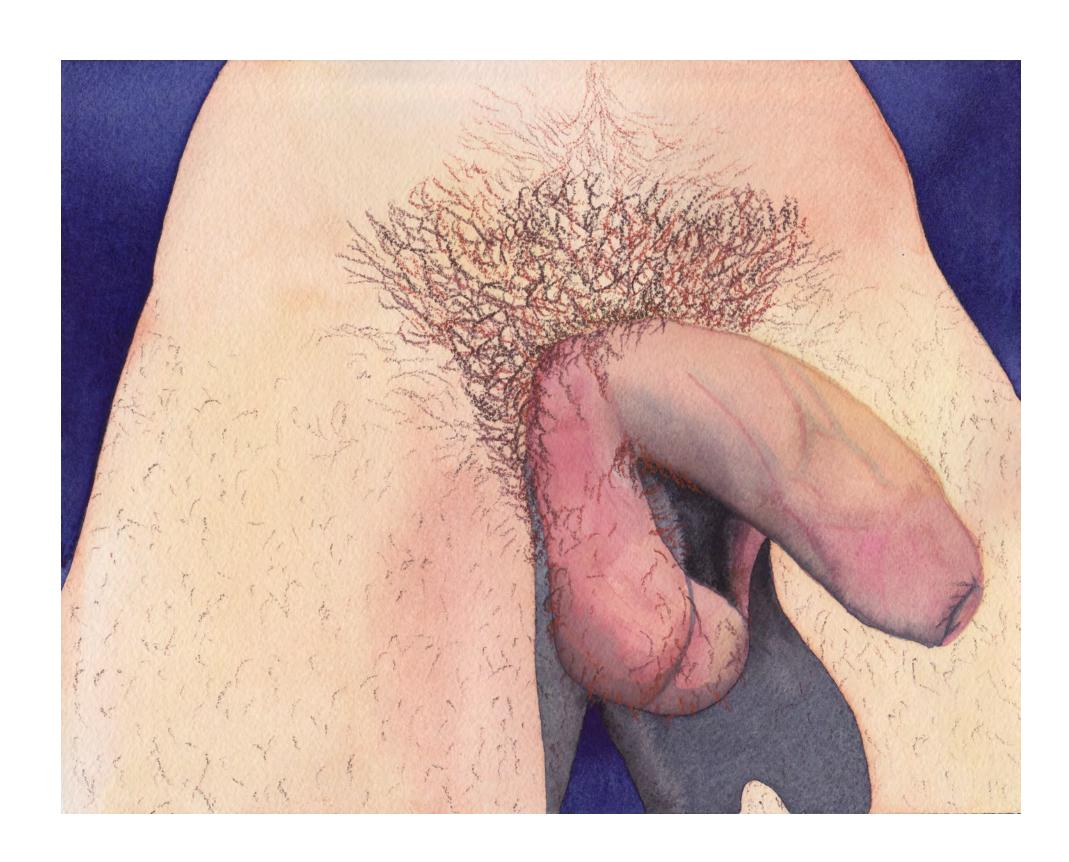
The first time I ever posed was randomly for a costume designer friend in NYC. He knew I was comfortable getting naked and wanted to practice his drawing skills. That same year, this same artist asked me to do a duo art session with him and a different photographer. Since then, I have been lucky enough to pose for many friends' art projects and even started professionally modeling for figure drawing classes/studios. The photo that inspired this drawing was actually taken out in Provincetown during Carnival for a photographic floral project. I am so fortunate for this piece to be a part of the *Penis Portraits* collection and for these phalluses to be captured so beautifully.



There's a bunch of us out there - artists who share their dick pics with each other. I often wonder about the motives of the artists who share. It's a form of exhibitionism. It feels good to not feel so precious about something we spent so much of our lives being ashamed of or keeping to ourselves. I've only sent you photos, so of course you've only seen me in my best light and angles, but I'm pushing 40, and it's nice to take a pic of yourself and still feel like you're hot - like the sexy X-rated glamor shots women would get for their husbands in the 90's. As someone who has a particular fondness for handsome wieners, I naturally felt attracted to this project. I think a lot about the boundaries between erotic art and fine art. What tips it from one to the other and can we also just say, "fuck it, I like it," and not care why? What if a painting could make you cum? When I was a kid, I had a hidden collection of clippings comprising mostly of naked Jesus art I stole from books in my church library. I solely got off on art for a big chunk of my youth. I love dicks.

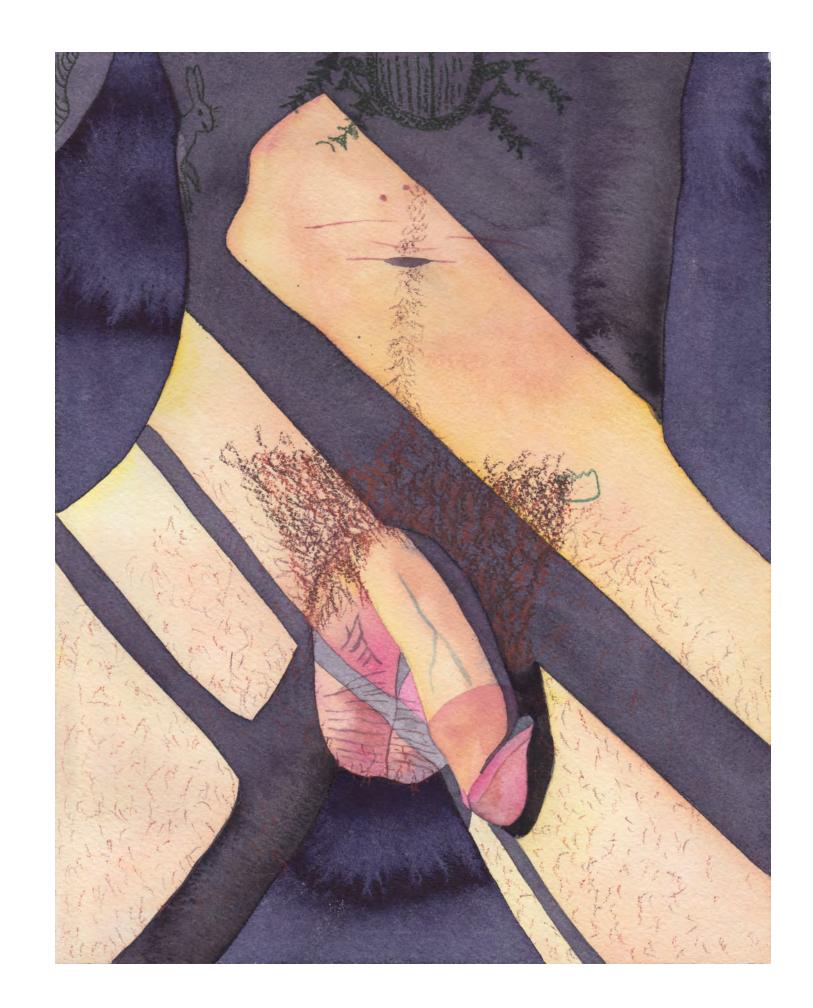


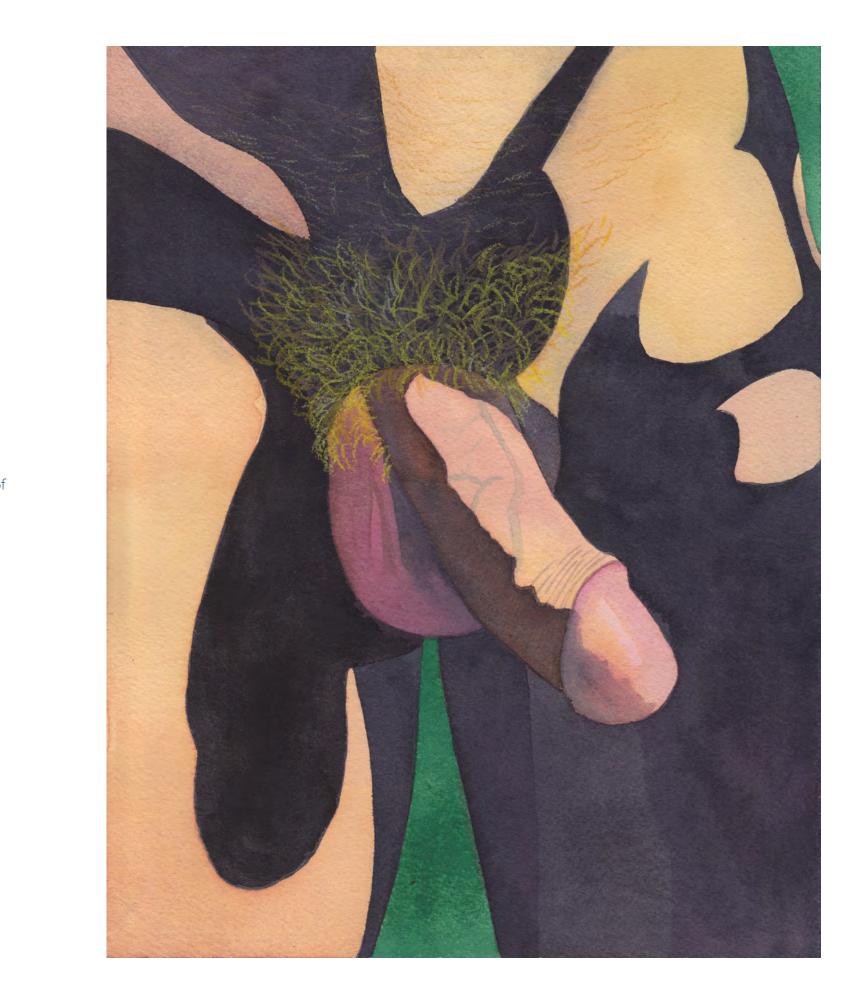




Modeling for the *Penis Portraits* was a fun exercise in creativity. I wanted to maintain the framing and composition of the other drawings in the series, while still adding my own creative vision to the piece. So of course I had to have dramatic lighting with oblique shadows.

Working with Nick was a pleasure. The project is unique in that it combines the vulnerability of modeling nude, with the privacy and separation of digital communication. This mirrors the modern day trend of sending 'dick pics' but slows down every step of the process, expanding on this usually quick and mindless exchange. By having the model take a carefully composed nude portrait, knowing it will be sketched, drawn, and water-colored, and possibly ultimately sold and shipped to an unknown collector, Naber encourages us to grapple with the sheer amount of meaningless 'dick pics' circulating gay dating apps. His project finds new ways to create connections through digital communications by slowing down.





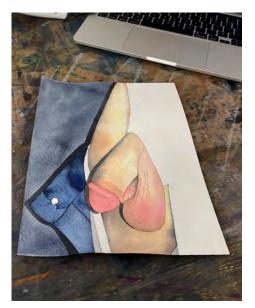
Posing anonymously was fun and kind of liberating. I hope that people viewing the portrait get a similar kick out of it that I did.

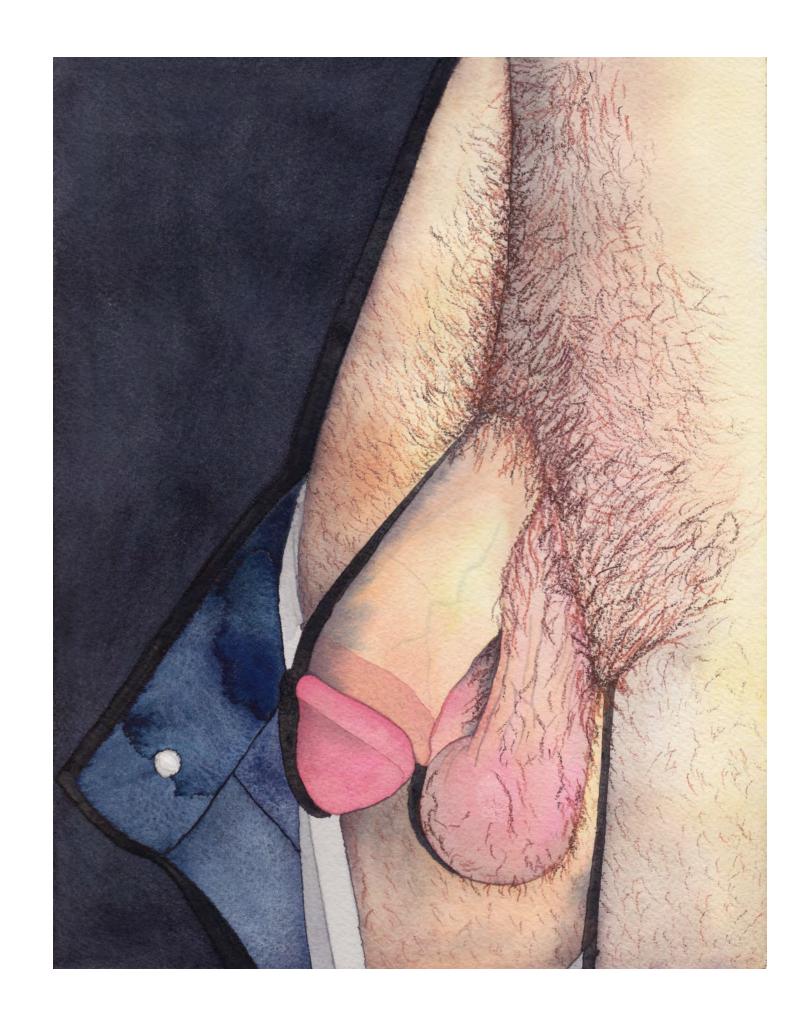
■ got to Nick's apartment around 6:00PM. We talked for a while — about life, politics, film, George Lucas, and the like. After about an hour, I asked him point blank, "So, what position should I get in? And when do you want to start painting?" But I didn't really understand the project. Nick preferred that I make those decisions myself, that he prefers to paint from *photos* and not from the *real*. So then I asked, "When do you wanna take the photo?" He didn't. He wanted *me* to take it on my own. That he preferred to *not* be in the room while I was taking the picture. That a lot of it's about how the subject sees themself.

So, I went over to his bathroom and tried out different setups. Bathroom lights on, vs. bathroom lights off. Fly unzipped, vs. pants fully down. Feet on the ground, vs. one foot resting in à la seconde in the sink (Sorry Nick). It took about 15 minutes to find the pose that I liked enough to Aidrop him: bathroom lights off, pants half up, iPhone flash turned all the way on. And my dick was soft, of course. There's so many photos of hard dicks in the world. Not enough flaccid dicks. That's what my mentor used to tell me. I think I'll buy this one for her. Nothing wrong with a hard dick, though. I just enjoy variety. I hope you do, too.

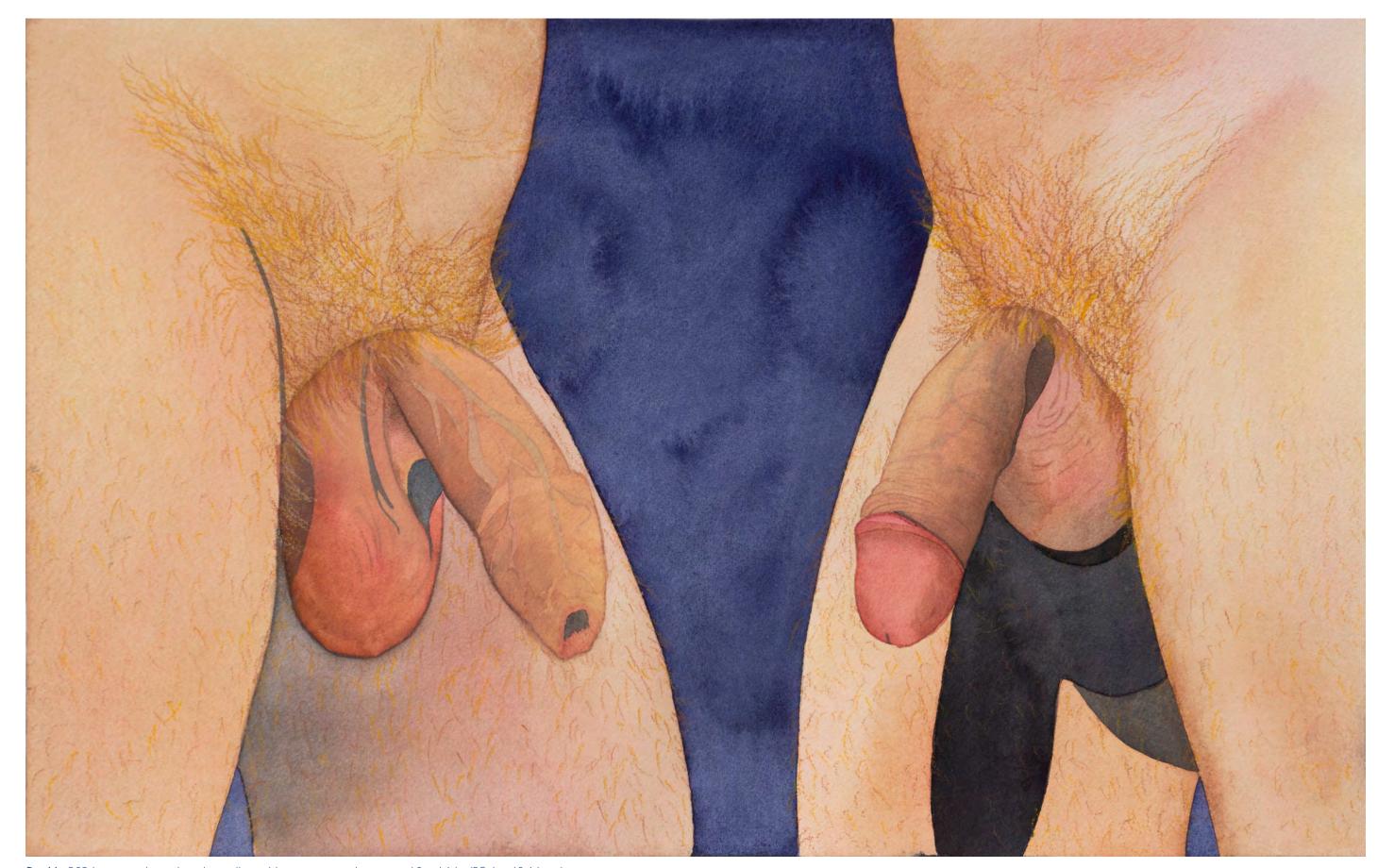








Penis Portrait LVII, 2024, watercolor, colored pencil, graphite on watercolor paper, 10 × 8 in. (25.4 × 20.32 cm)



Penis Portrait—Uncut Double, 2024, watercolor colored pencil graphite on watercolor paper, 10 × 16 in (25.4 × 40.64 cm)



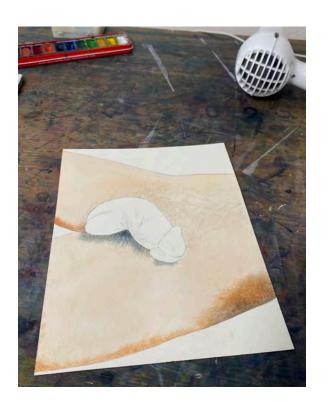
I took a lot of photos trying to get a "good one" but then realized I just needed to take a picture of my penis and not worry about how big I am.

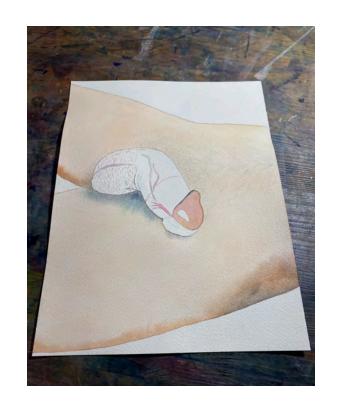


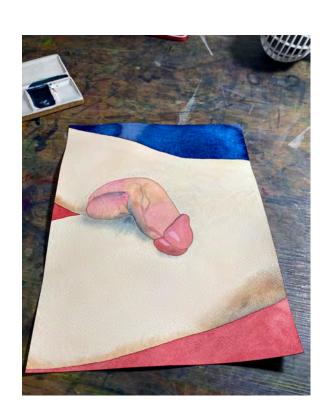


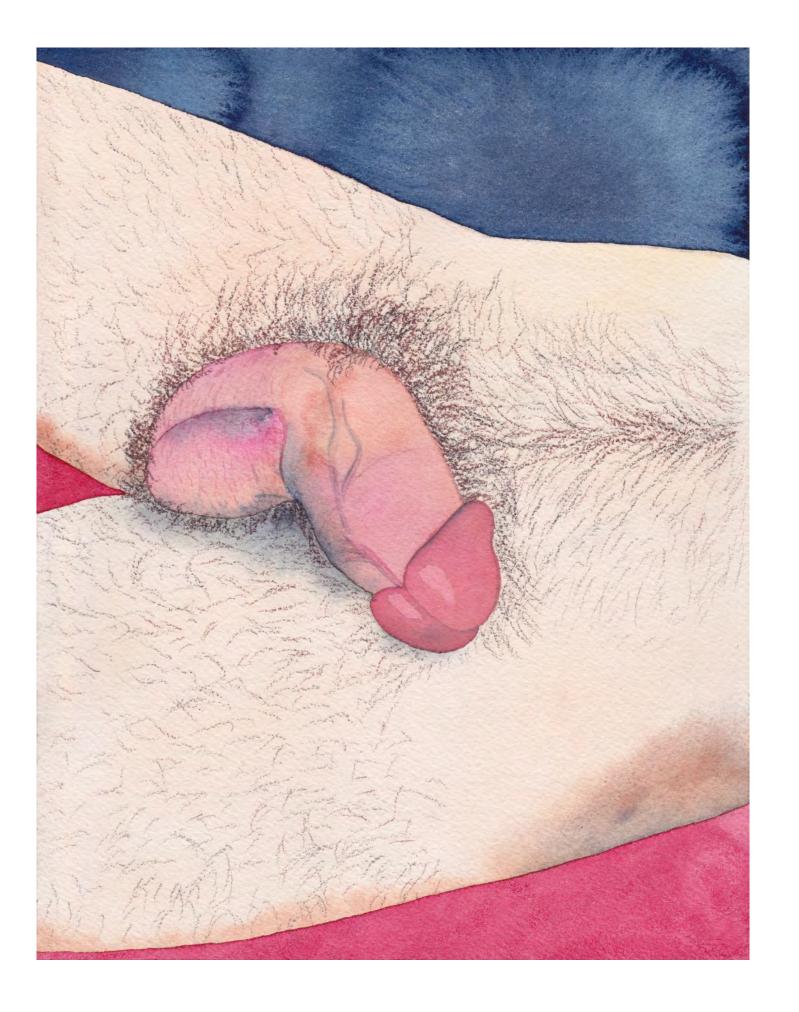








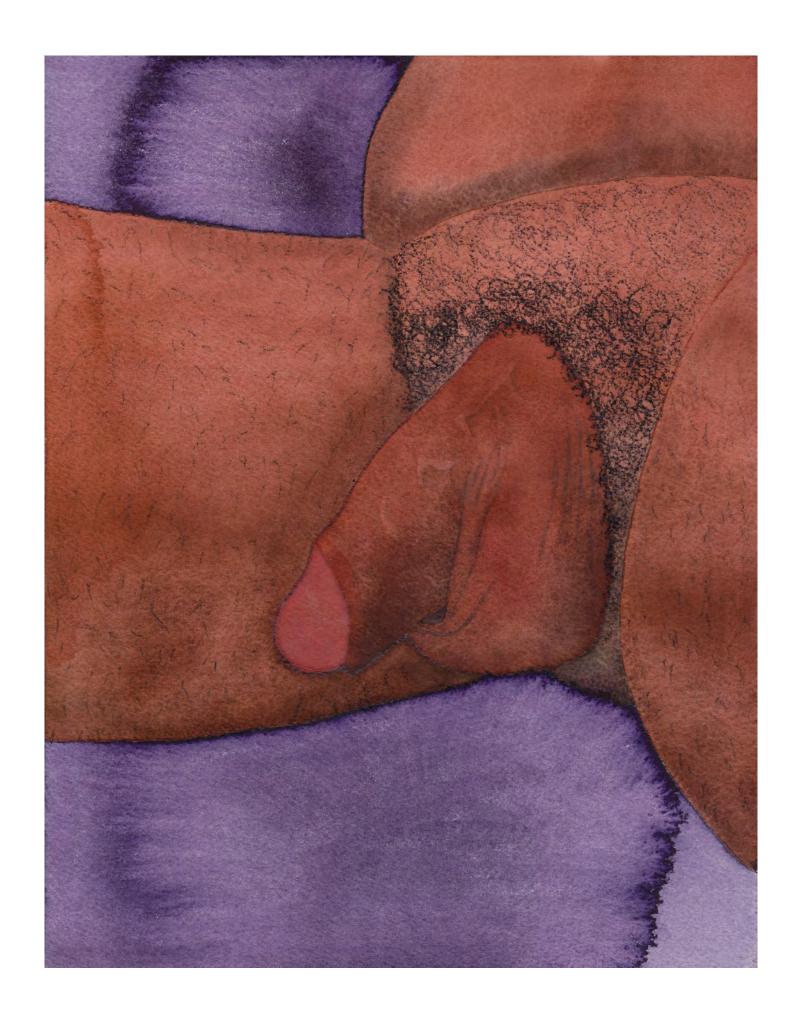




Penis Portrait LXV, 2025 watercolor, colored pencil, graphite on watercolor paper, 10×8 in. $(25.4 \times 20.32 \text{ cm})$



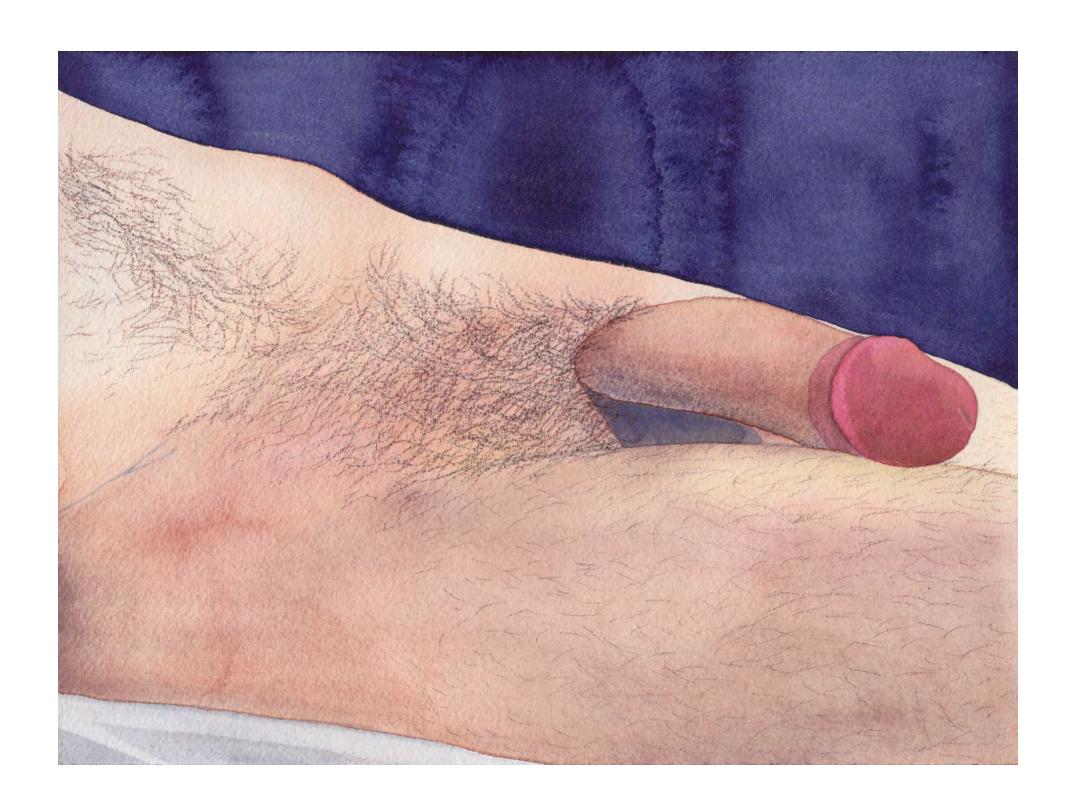




At best, it was something to be afraid of. Or, afraid for. Never use the urinals without the blockers. Face the wall when you change in the locker room. The thought of a communal shower still gives a chill. Will I ever look like they do?

And shame, like all the ideas we learn we aren't supposed to hold, doesn't go away on its own, but through a gradual process of soaping, scrubbing, uncovering, recovering, and uncovering again.

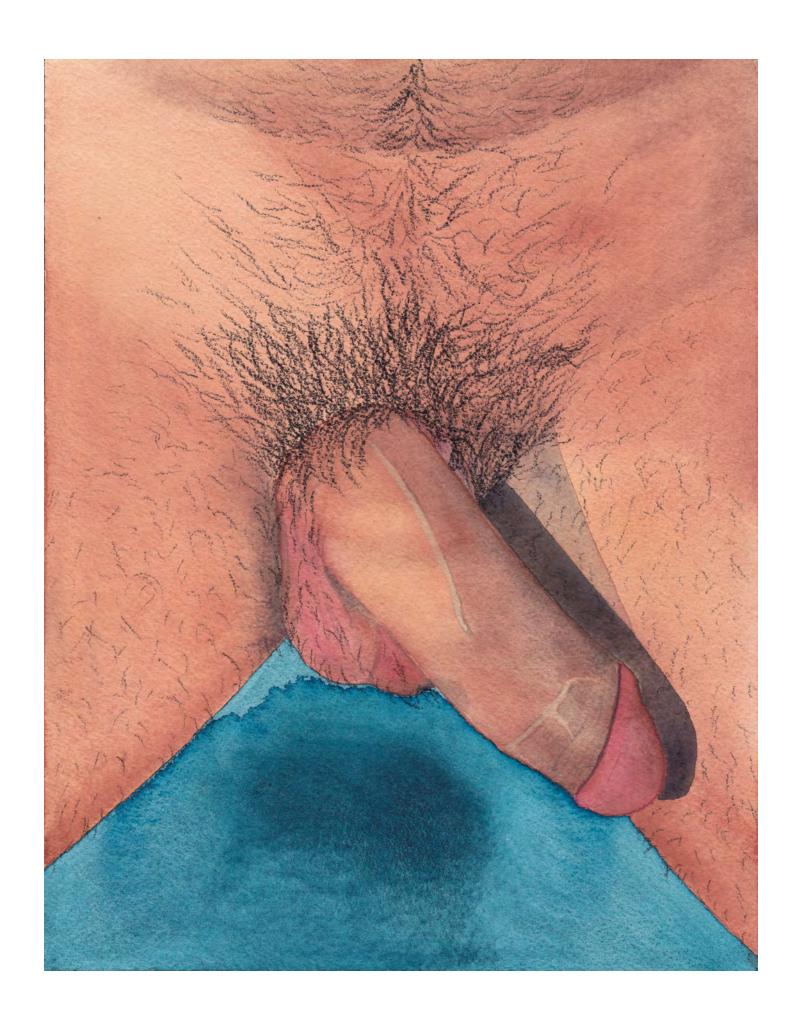
Or, with a camera, a pencil, and a set of watercolors.













Mariah Robertson in conversation with Nick Naber

Hi, Nick. Thank you for having me.

Thanks for coming

Gosh, I love this project so much on many levels. First, would like to ask you, what you would like to be known to someone coming new to this project, about how it came together and, what are the important things for you about the way it's done and the way you want to put it together in the book format?

I want people to know is that started as postcards that I was making because I needed to make enough money to buy frames for an exhibition, and I had previously been doing astrological nudes of friends during COVID. I did this because I was asked to pose for an artist friend. I posed and he said to me, "Oh, well, I'll pose for you," and in my mind I thought, "I'm not really interested in that. That's not what I do." I thought about it a bit more and said, "Fuck it, why not." That's where it started, and eventually has led me to these larger watercolors. The work became deeper than just making money for frames, by that I mean the conversations with the friends that posed

for the postcards became more psychological, emotional, and specific.

The work blossomed from there, word of mouth sort of started spreading about it. The anonymity helped people feel less uptight about posing.

That their faces are not in the image?

Yeah, and that I don't identify the model, they are anonymous unless they decide to reveal themselves.

What is the relationship of working from life and from photographs, some were sending photographs?

They're all from photographs, because the drawings take between six and eight hours to complete, which is sort of an impossible ask for somebody to stand for that or sit for that amount of time.

You are taking the photographs?

No, they take the photograph. It's a sort of a collaboration. I give minimal instructions to the friends who pose, and then they take the photograph. It's exciting to see how they frame themselves, how they see themselves. Sometimes, the men that are posing are straight men. I've gotten this comment many times, "I've never taken a photo like this, or I don't ever take photos like this." It's interesting to see how they frame themselves, knowing that it's not a photo that they take. Where with gay men, it's a normal text message to send or receive. "Here's a dick pic," it's a different, mentality around the body between straight and gay men.

That an example of what you mean by some of the deeper conversations you're having with people who are exploring something new for themselves, and they're telling you about that process.

Yes, absolutely. Not everybody wants to talk about it. Where the conversation really comes from is when people want photo updates of the drawing, it leads to texting about what I'm doing, what I'm seeing, and they will then divulge more about themselves, their feeling about themselves, whatever it sort of runs the gamut of what it is that they want to talk about. Sometimes they don't want to talk, sometimes they just want an image of where the progress of the work is.

I think you told me some other things about people getting positive feedback about seeing themselves in this way.

One of the early drawings, he revealed that he had been in an abusive relationship with a woman who talked down to him about his body and specifically his penis. He said that by doing this project and posing, it gave him a lot more self confidence in himself. I ended up gifting him that drawing because it was such a moving story.

It's a mix of friends and strangers?

It's mostly friends, and I would say the other quarter of people are acquaintances. Specifically, people that I knew or followed me when I had Instagram, people that are sort of on the periphery. It's not people I don't know.

I know your work being hard edged. These have organic lines, and there's painterliness in the work that I had not seen before. The subject matter and the way the paint is handled is so beautiful. They're representing something that was in the photo, but the paint becomes its own abstract thing especially in little areas so many details to get lost in. Baseline, the subject matter is great to look at and get lost in, the way these little touches, the way the drawing, the colored pencil lines, and where you balance this representation and these fields of pure

paint

I had to teach myself how to do watercolor the way that watercolor is supposed to be used. In the geometric work I'm using watercolor, but I'm not allowing it to do its watercolor thing, which is soft blending and pooling, and all those beautiful inherent watercolor things. When I started doing the astrological nudes, then the Weener drawings and then these, I had to learn how let it go and allow it to do what it does. It was a learning curve, because I never took a watercolor class, and I went back on YouTube and said to myself, "okay, how do I mix a decent skin tone and not add too much white, so it doesn't become chalky?" It was going back to those sorts of things that you learn in a figure painting class; it sort of applies a bit to watercolor, but watercolor is definitely its own media.

Notoriously difficult.

It's difficult because you can't go back and correct it, you can sort of lift some of the watercolor, but it's mostly one or two passes, and that's it. It becomes too opaque, with multiple layers and it doesn't have that beautiful watercolor feel anymore. It feels overworked, and that can happen quickly with the watercolor.

I know that you're alternating working on these and the geometric work. How do they inform each other?

Where I am with the geometric work right now is in direct relation to where the *Penis Portraits* are. I would not be where I am in the geometric work had it not been for this schism in what I'm doing in the studio with the Penis Portraits. I was talking about allowing the watercolor to do what it's going to do in the portraits and that has infiltrated my geometric work. It's put me a bit off kilter there, which is nice to not really know what's going to happen. Allowing for chance to happen in that work is leading to positive change in the work that I'm mostly known for.

And how long have you been doing this project?

The first *Penis Portrait* is from 2023 and the *Weener* drawings I did those at the end of 2021 and into 2022, it's been about three years in total that I've come back to the figure.

You're laying them out in the book chronologically to see the progression or...?

I'm not sure exactly how I'm going to lay them out. I think that I will definitely do a section where I've drawn the same person multiple times, that will be a separate section from the main group, where it's like one offs.

You were saying there was time between the first and

74. 75.

second when you've drawn the same person multiple times?

I don't do one and then the other right after, it is a couple of months in between, or even a couple of years between. Sometimes people will come back and say, "Oh, I want to pose again."

They've seen the finished drawing, and they want to collaborate further?

Yeah, or some of them have sent multiple images. I'll do my favorite image first. Later I will come back to the folder that has their images, it usually feels different seeing them again than it did the first time. It's the same sort of thing when you look at art in the world where you're like, "Oh, I'm not really interested in this right now." Then you come back to it six months later, and you're like, "this thing is the greatest thing I've seen, you know?" It happens the same way with the inspiration for these. Sometimes the lighting is off, or the pose seems weird. Then six months to a year later I think, "Wait, there's something odd about this. Or I like this, I want to paint this person again."

That appreciation develops over time. There's enough clear representation, and moments of abstraction, drilling down on a detail, then it appears to be more pure paint than description. It flickers in and out, and I but some have attention-grabbing shadows, I like thinking feel lost in a dream.

Some of them become much more abstract, or they become, like they're there, but they're not there, and it's interesting. I'm not conscious of that when I'm making them. I think about them, and I'll say to myself, "Okay, this feels like it's Oh, it's a mirror. done enough," and it is. Other times I get, obsessive about it, and they can become overworked, and it's a fine line for me figuring that out. I think some of them are much more successful than others, but I think each one of them informs the next one. I like that about this series. I'm speaking the same language repeatedly, but because it's a different pose, it's The mullions, mullions. a different person, it's different lighting, it's different whatever. The problems are different too. Each person's body is different, it presents different things.

Do you toss any of them out?

I have, yeah, there are a couple that I've worked on where I just I couldn't get it right, and I had to throw it away. What I usually do is take a break from it, and then I'll try it again, and I do it soon after, because I want to remember what it was that was going wrong, and not do that again. The butt one, the butt one was difficult, because that angle is odd, and the shadowing that was happening and the light, where his balls connect into his grundle, it's a hard pose. His penis is mostly in shadow, and

the work is about his undercarriage, and trying to figure out the lighting on that was difficult. That's the second version of that drawing.

That one is so gorgeous. The penis is just a silhouette, and the butt cheeks do sort of almost become like food. and then back into butt cheeks. [p. 33]

Yeah, he has beautiful dark brown skin too, which makes it even more compelling the way that it was lit. It created soft tones on his skin, and that was also part of the reason why the first one didn't work. The work got way too dark, way too quickly, and it was not salvageable.

Well, yeah, it seems like scrotums are an unusual color, different than the rest of the skin in a way that I could imagine, can look artificial quickly if you're trying to be accurate to the photo.

I'm not 100% accurate to the photo. It's sort of impossible. Sometimes it appears pinker, you don't want to be bright pink, because that is not possible in skin tone unless, something is wrong. It's a fine line. Many times, they become abstract. I just sort of leave it, "Okay, this is enough to describe this," and then other times they become much more detailed. It's that in and out focus that happens with these. It's also this collaboration with the lighting. Some of them are straightforward lighting, about the model putting a lot of work into making the image of themselves.

I assume this is one is from a windowpane. [p. 93]

Oh, oh, that one's a mirror, yeah. But this one, this is a windowpane, yeah, that one of the, what do you call it? Perpendicular lines...

This one, the intense black shadows. So many questions about what was going on there. [p. 55]

Well, this guy, the one with the intense shadows, he lives in Australia, and I don't know where he was standing, but the shadows, they were not as intense as this, but I thought it'd be cool to abstract the shadows that were happening on his body. I went with it and played it up. You'd have to be standing in some very specific situation to get that dark of a shadow on the body.

I like so much that I don't understand what that shadow is, but it's, they're so visually appealing and potent as I

look at a wall of dicks.

I go back to what you were saying, it's fascinating to see when people put in the work in their poses. I'm appreciative of everyone who has posed, but I do think some people put in some effort in how they're presenting themselves.

Usually with nude work, the subject the model is not in control. In a fine art context, or in pornography and editorial and advertising, the model, nude or otherwise, is usually not in control of how they are being presented. This work is returning that to the model, and you have this collaboration with them.

It's paramount to the project, that and their anonymity are two vital parts of the project. The collaboration of them doing the photo is important. Over the few years of doing this I think maybe three or four times I've had to tell them, "This is not a photo that I can use. It's like, too dark. You're not posed, right. It's from too far away." Otherwise, everyone pretty much gets it, on the first go around.

Even if they don't get it, it's fun to think of you guys collaborating to get the right picture.

I want them to be sort of consistent, but I don't want them to the same repeated pose over and over, it's nice to see the model's ingenuity. Two people have included clothes, that was a choice. I haven't said no clothes, but everybody else is fully nude or nude in the area that's being painted.

Do they want them paintings for themselves, or they're just happy to be part of it?

Two people that have posed, have bought their own drawing. I think for the most part, they're excited to see it finished. Many of the models are interested in seeing the work in progress too. I will text images of the work in process. At the end I give the model JPEGs of the watercolor, and a lot of them ask for the high-res file for it, and I happy to send it. Many of them are not art world people, so it's curious to know that they want a high-res photo of it.

Keep that in a special folder.

Yeah, I don't know what they're going to do with it, but I'm happy to send them that high-res file.

Christmas card.

I'm just so hypnotized by this work, especially as we are talking in a room where there are dozens of drawings up on the wall. It's a real dream come true. They're so beautiful. It's hard to not get a little hypnotized looking

at them.

Seeing them all together they inform one another in a different way than if they're singular.

This is powerful. Everything you're describing about the process of it, it seems tender. A collaborative journey is really a great thing. Each one of them is beautiful. The being parts of the whole project is powerful. Oh, gosh, the pubes are just, it just like the variety of pubes stunning.

It's from like full hair to, completely trimmed or shaved.

It's very interesting. You got this ginger stubble here, and then this, like, Wolf Man, with that full bush, and then hairy balls, incredible. Then where the pubes trimmed just bleed into the leg hair. I mean, full spectrum...

77.

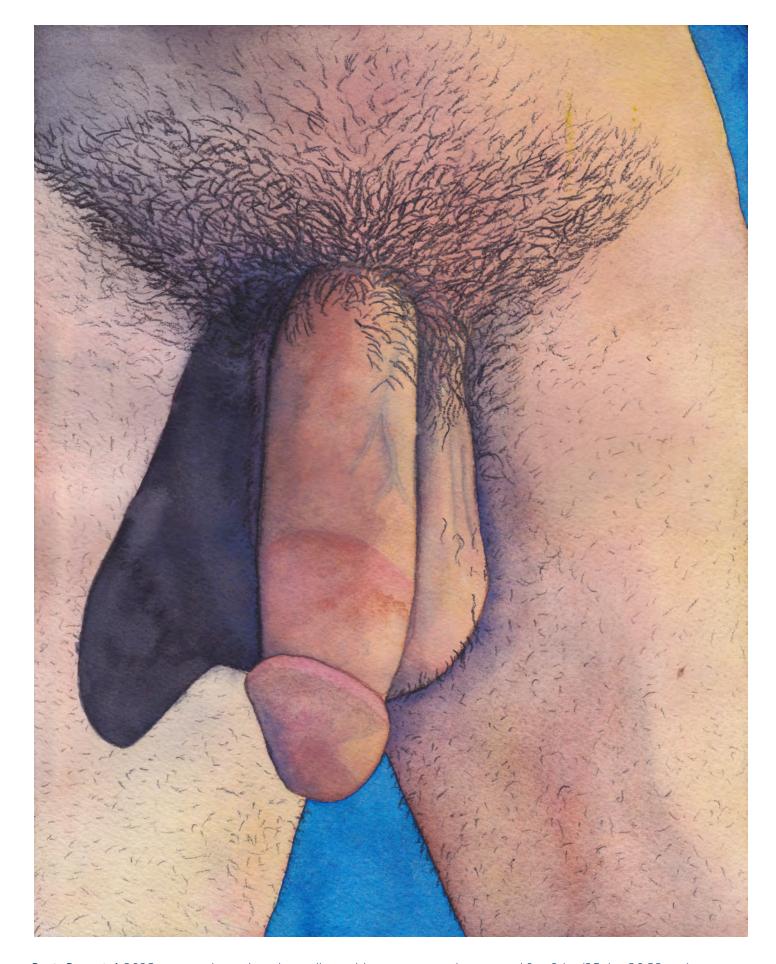
76.

Repeat Model Plates

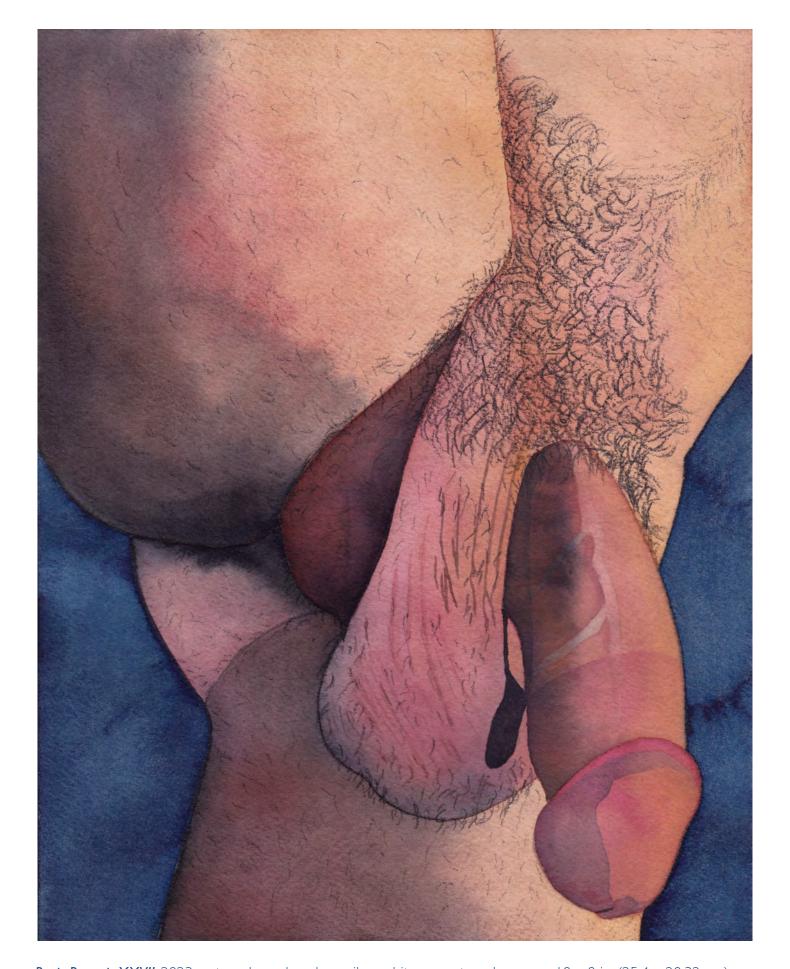
Penis Portrait I & Penis Portrait XXVII (following two pages)

Growing up, I felt I should be ashamed of being nude around anyone. Over time, I learned to be comfortable with my body. When Nick made a public call for penis portraits in 2022, I decided to send one. We had become friends and I knew he was a professional. Knowing that such a revealing photo of myself would be made into art was a freeing experience that boosted my confidence. Seeing the first watercolor he created of me gave inspiration to be more creative with poses. I experimented with capturing angles of the male body I'd never seen before, which was an eye-opening experience. While I feel secure in my own skin, I appreciate the anonymity Nick provides each person who has shared more of themselves. His respectful approach made the process deeply rewarding. It's been so impactful that I've since sent photos for another artist whose work I admire, building tighter relationships in the art community.

78.



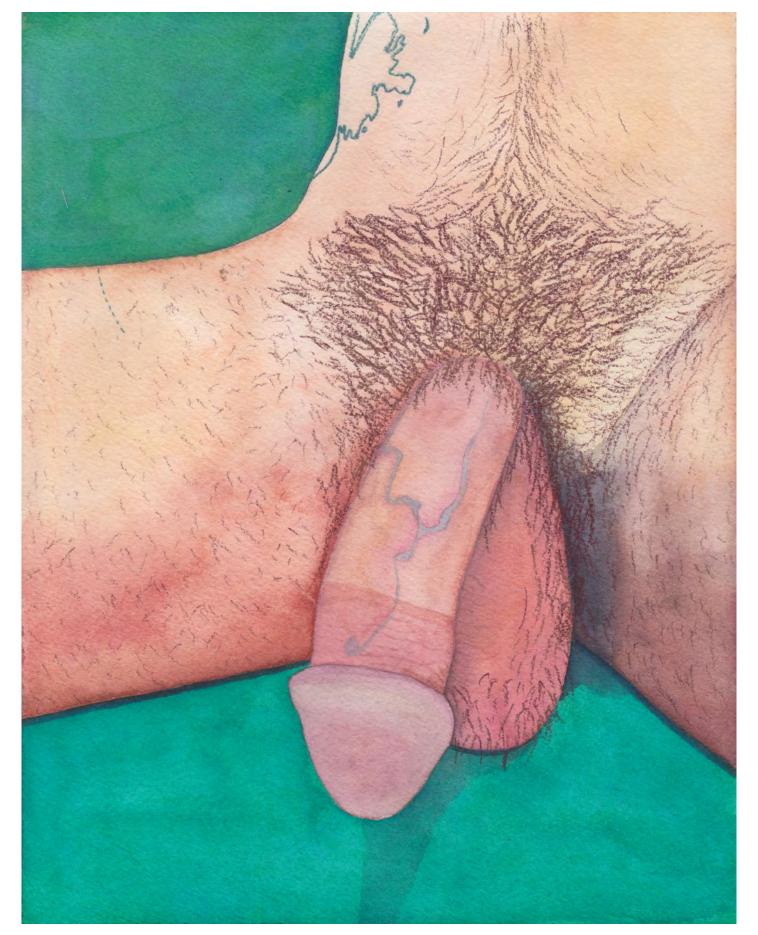
Penis Portrait I, 2023 watercolor, colored pencil, graphite on watercolor paper, 10×8 in. $(25.4 \times 20.32 \text{ cm})$



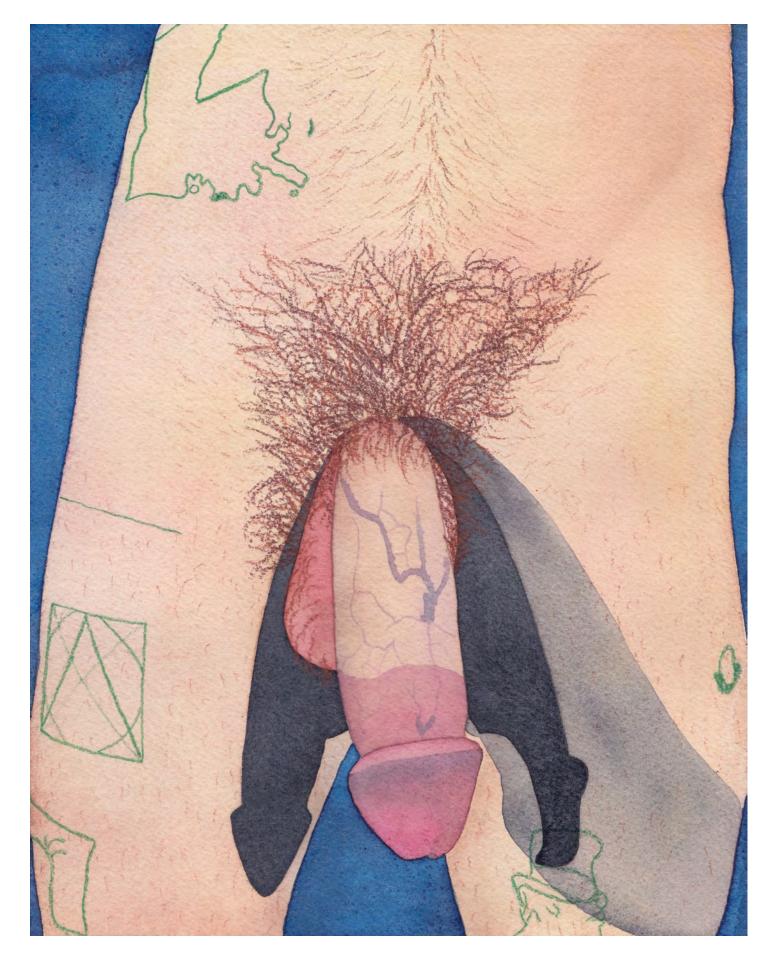
Penis Portrait XXVII, 2023 watercolor, colored pencil, graphite on watercolor paper, 10×8 in. $(25.4 \times 20.32 \text{ cm})$

Penis Portrait VII, Penis Portrait XXXVII, Penis Portrait-Quad, Aerial-PP

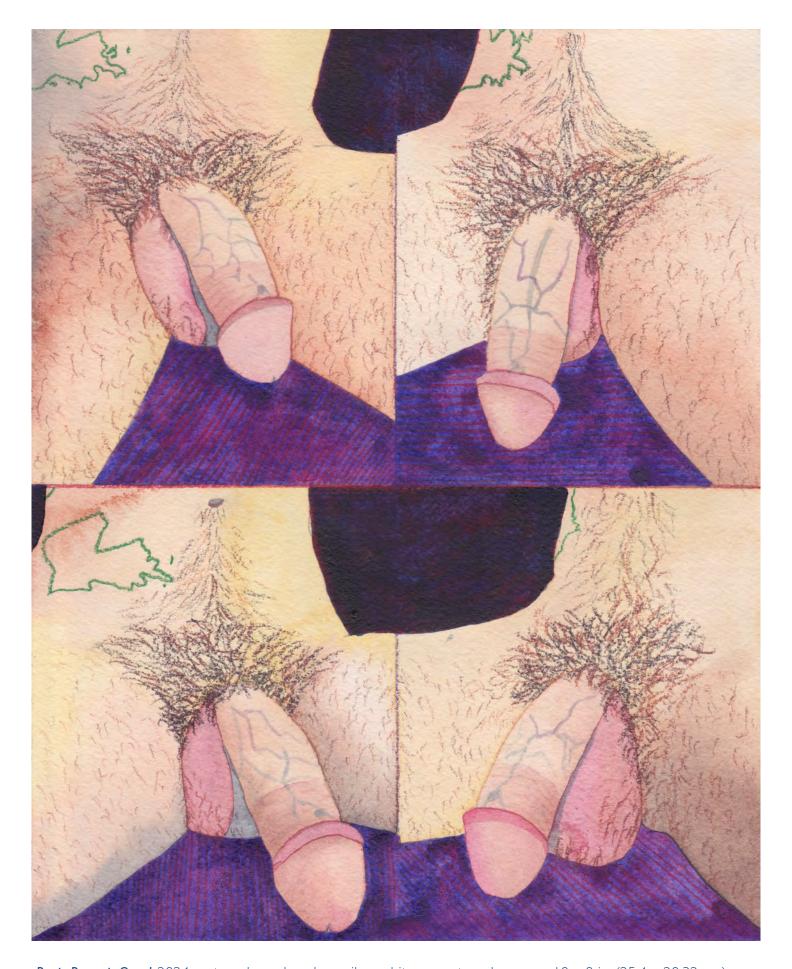
The portraits have been a fun minor distraction over the course of the project. The pleasure for me has been as a dialogue with a friend, a way of expressing connection non-verbally as the intimacy of the photos demands a certain trust - and the laborously constructed watercolours become an expression of care. The fleetingness of a photograph (around which exists a flurry of textual exchange) memorialised, an expression of trust and friendship and time and care in a moment when our world desperately needs these things.



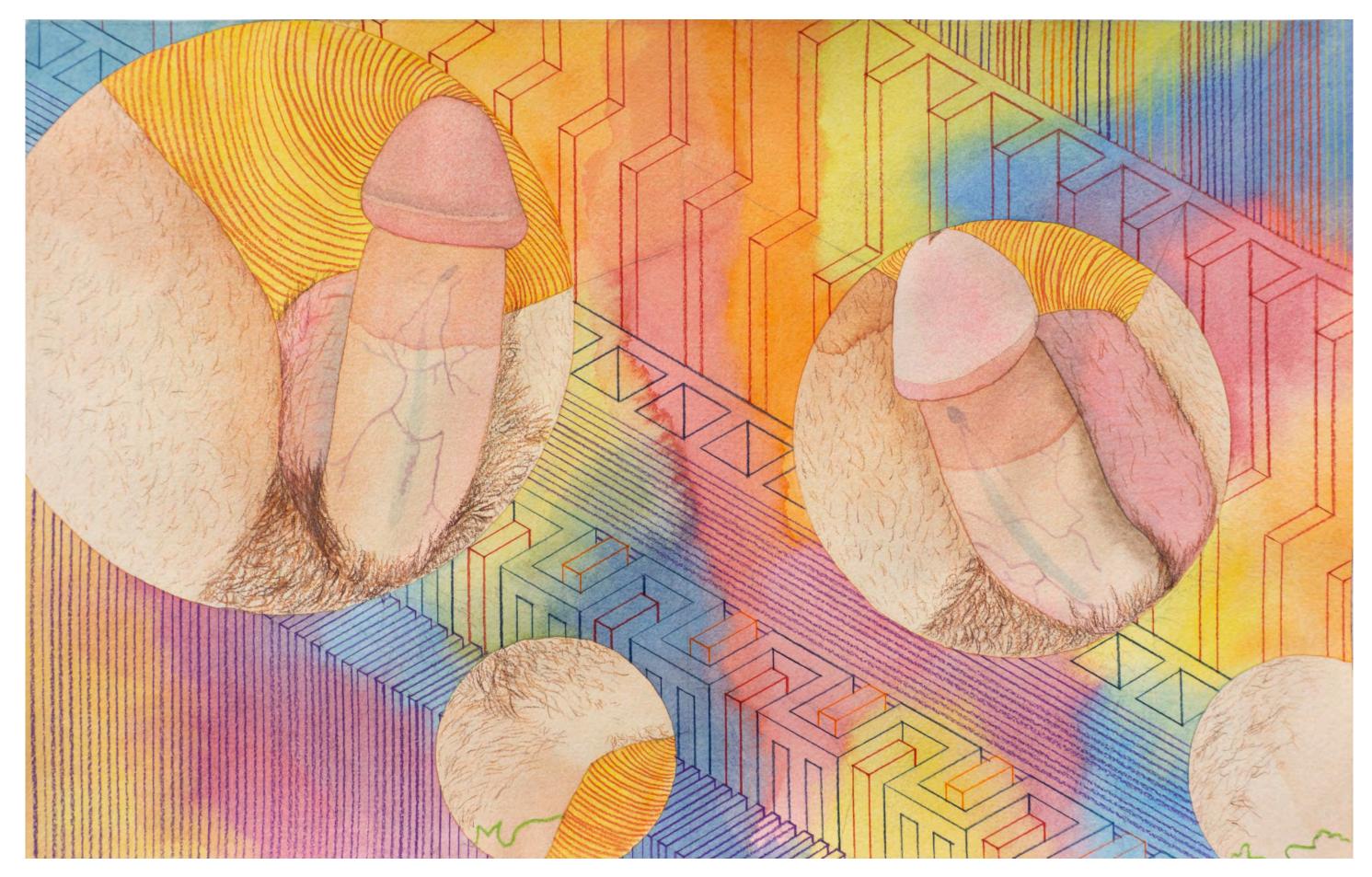
Penis Portrait VII, 2023, watercolor, colored pencil, graphite on watercolor paper, 10×8 in. $(25.4 \times 20.32 \text{ cm})$



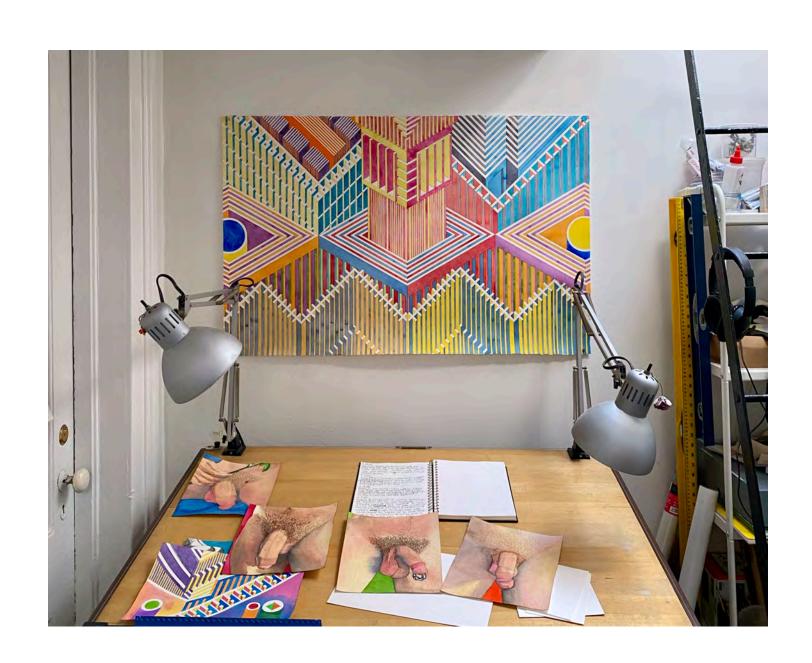
Penis Portrait XXXVII, 2024, watercolor, colored pencil, graphite on watercolor paper, 10×8 in. $(25.4 \times 20.32 \text{ cm})$



Penis Portrait-Quad, 2024, watercolor, colored pencil, graphite on watercolor paper, 10×8 in. $(25.4 \times 20.32 \text{ cm})$



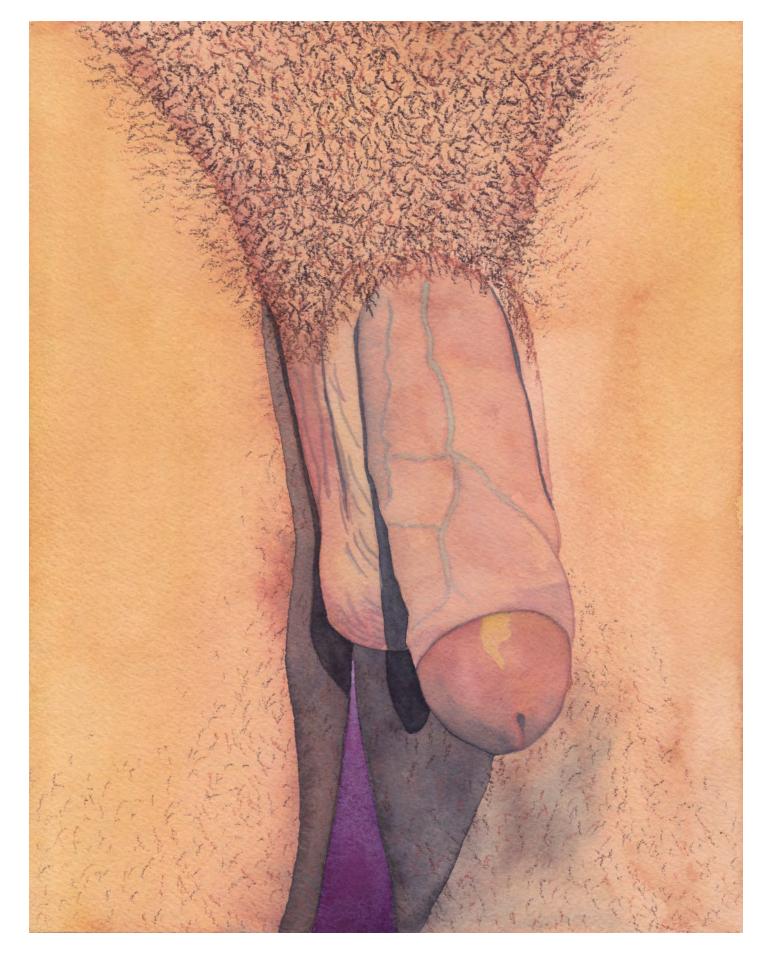
Aerial-PP, 2024, watercolor, colored pencil, ebony pencil on watercolor paper, 11 1/2 × 18 in. (29.21 × 45.72 cm)



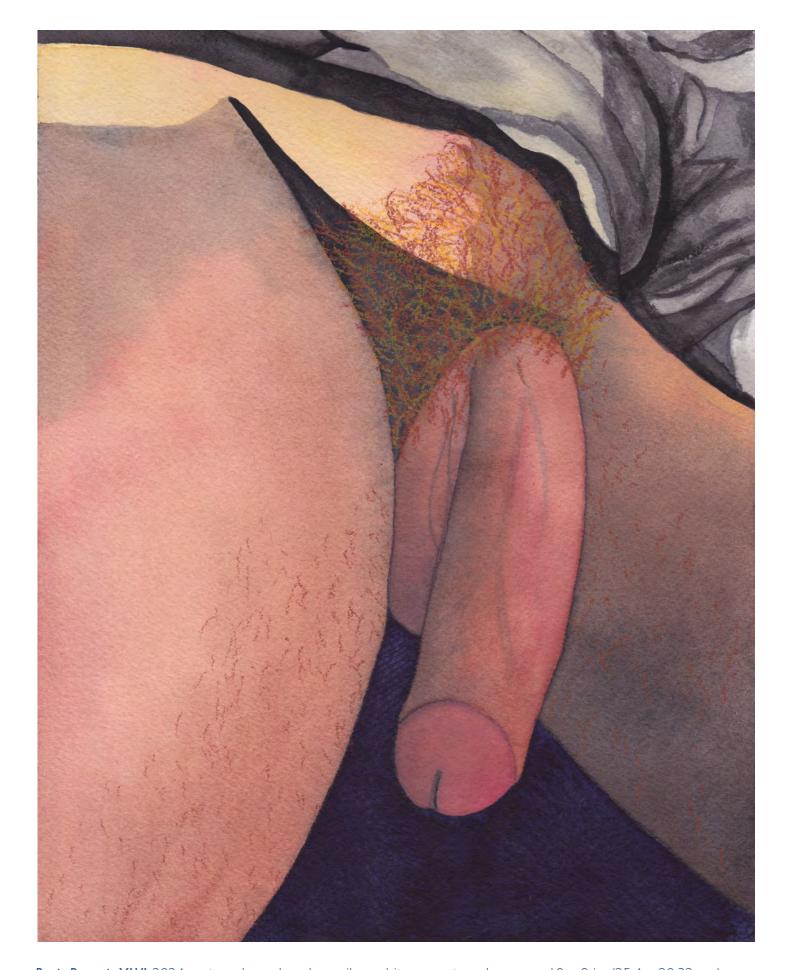
Penis Portrait XX, Penis Portrait XLVI (following two pages)

■ came across Nick's amazing penis drawings by chance and was immediately intrigued and wanted to pose. It was exciting to know that a drawing would be created and that others would see it too. Nick showed me pics of the process which was fascinating. After a while I posed again, but it was more spontaneous. I took a random dick pic and liked it a lot and I thought it would look great as a drawing and it did!

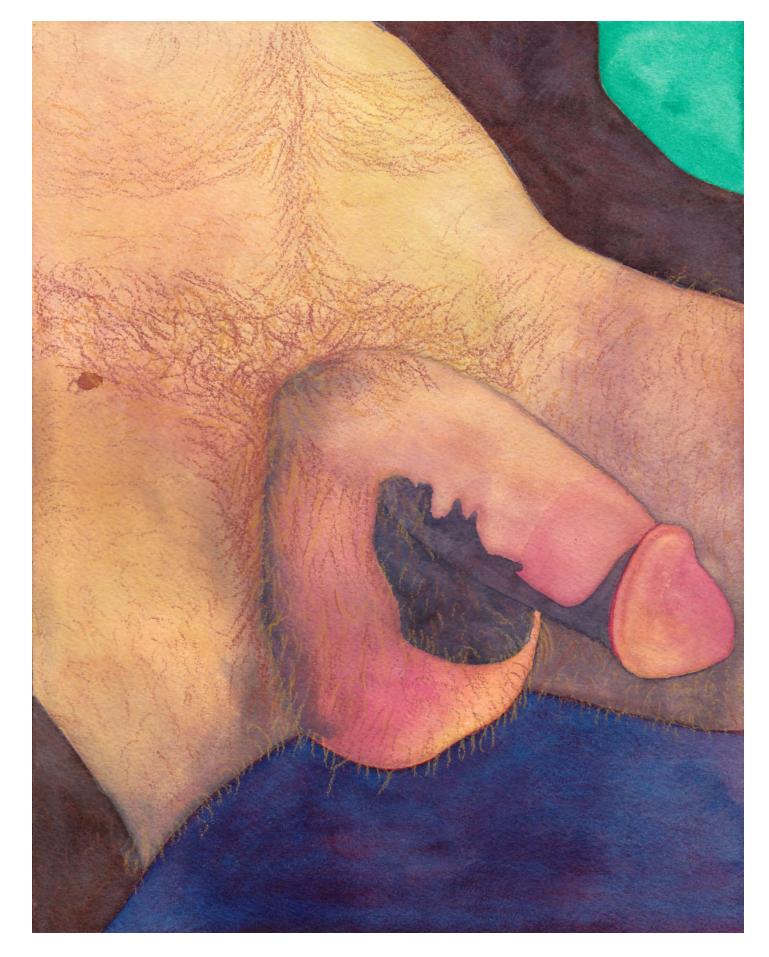
88.



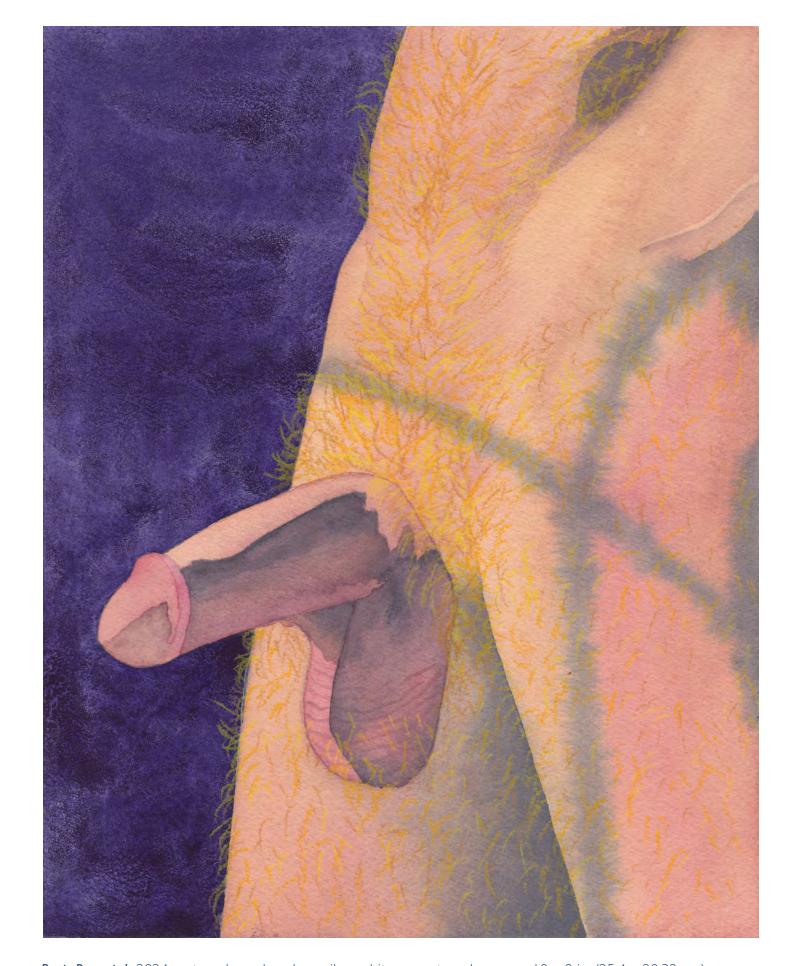
Penis Portrait XX, 2023, watercolor, colored pencil, graphite on watercolor paper, 10×8 in. $(25.4 \times 20.32 \text{ cm})$



Penis Portrait XLVI, 2024, watercolor, colored pencil, graphite on watercolor paper, 10×8 in. $(25.4 \times 20.32 \text{ cm})$



Penis Portrait XXI, 2023, watercolor, colored pencil, graphite on watercolor paper, 10×8 in. $(25.4 \times 20.32 \text{ cm})$

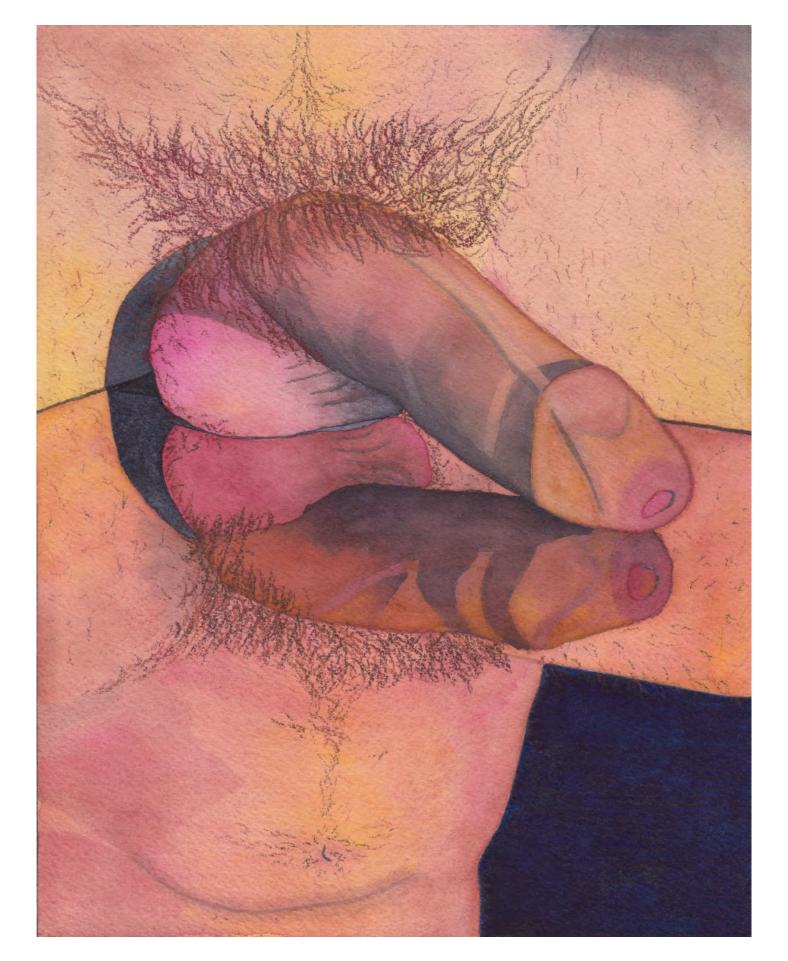


Penis Portrait L, 2024, watercolor, colored pencil, graphite on watercolor paper, 10×8 in. $(25.4 \times 20.32 \text{ cm})$

Penis Portrait XXXIII & Penis Portrait LII

Instagram recommended Nick's account to me and I immediately messaged him wanting to partake. He's a skilled artist and his penis portraits are stunning, so I was eager to find out how mine would look painted like the ones I'd seen.

I probably took a hundred photos. Wanting to stand out I used a mirror. While the project is anonymous, portraits are supposed to capture who the subject is, and I'm thankful Nick left me so much freedom. My friends would likely be able to tell which one is mine. "It's that one, the guy who can't get enough of himself so he has to show up twice." What can I say; I love my body.



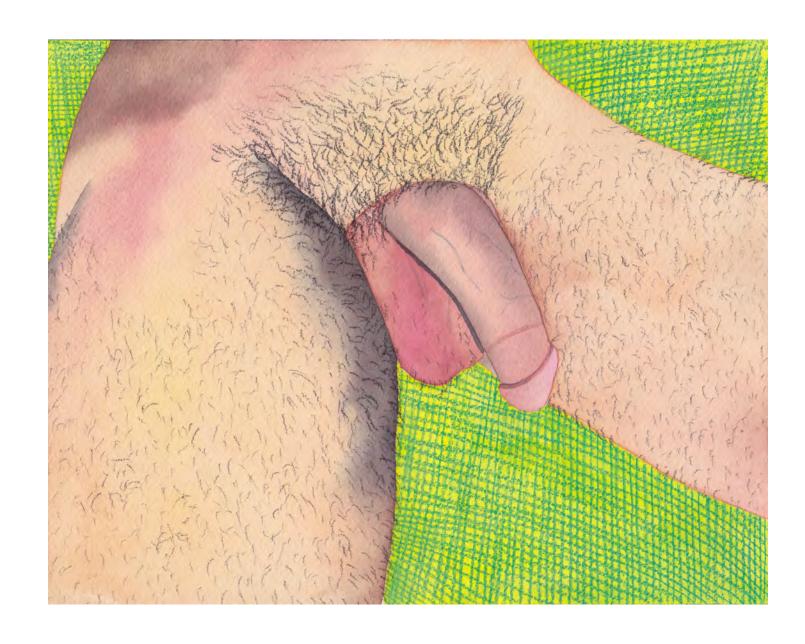
Penis Portrait XXXIII, 2023, watercolor, colored pencil, graphite on watercolor paper, 10 × 8 in. (25.4 × 20.32 cm)

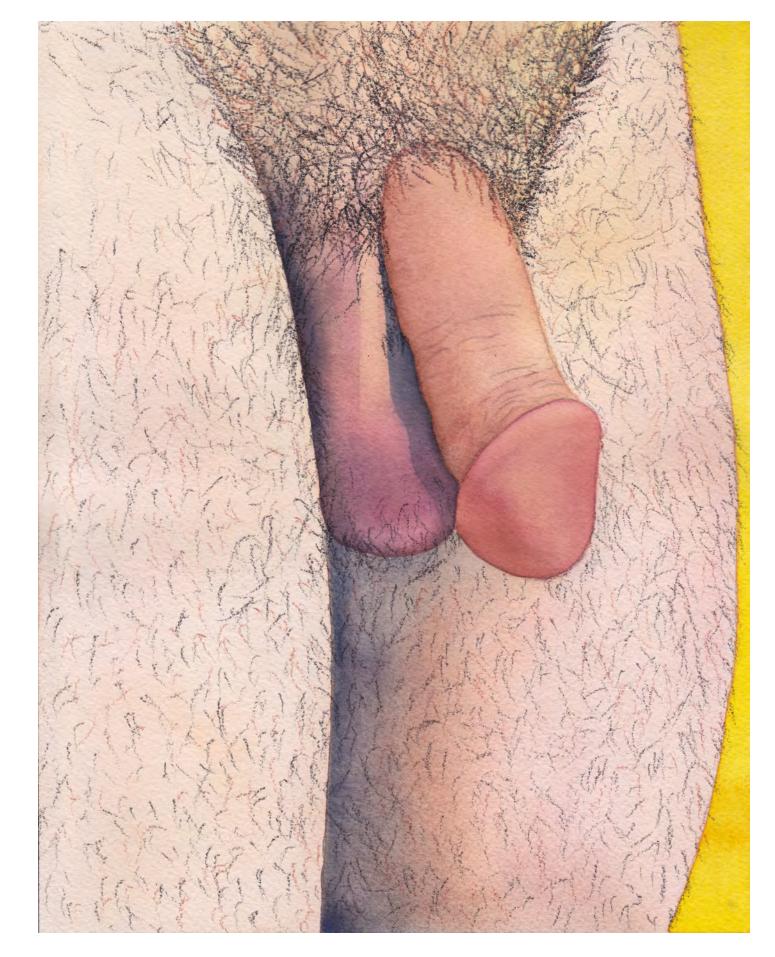


Penis Portrait LIII, 2024, watercolor, colored pencil, graphite on watercolor paper, 10×8 in. $(25.4 \times 20.32 \text{ cm})$

Penis Portrait XXXV & Penis Portrait LXIV (following two pages)

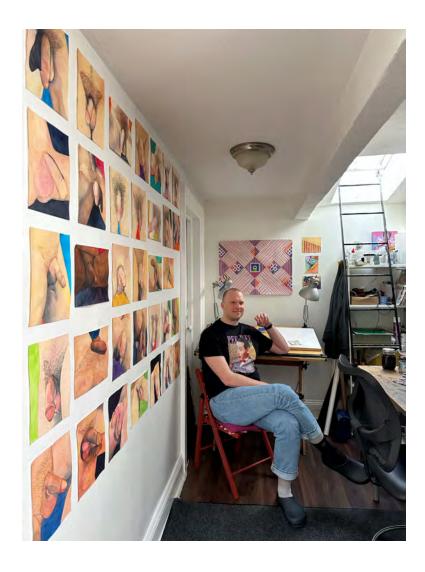
I chose to pose because I think it's such an interesting concept and I wanted to make sure Nick has enough poses to develop the series of 'Penis Portraits' as far as he can. What I find most intriguing about the series is the way in which it desexualizes the penis. Choosing to depict non-erect penis' using watercolours brings a tenderness that I don't often associate with the male genitalia. Posing for the first time was a very vulnerable experience as I am not one to generally take naked photos of myself, however, this faded with my second pose.





Penis Portrait LXIV, 2025, watercolor, colored pencil, graphite on watercolor paper, 10×8 in. $(25.4 \times 20.32 \text{ cm})$

Penis Portrait XXXV, 2024, watercolor, colored pencil, graphite on watercolor paper, 8×10 in. $(20.32 \times 25.4 \text{ cm})$



Acknowledgments

I want to thank everyone who has modeled for me. I appreciate your trusting me with painting your most intimate body part and for being my friends. I'd also like to thank Peter Kelly for his thoughtful and insightful essay about my project. Mariah Robertson and I had the best time talking about the watercolors, looking closely and delving deeper into their multiple meanings. I'm eternally grateful to her and her insight into this series of work.

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