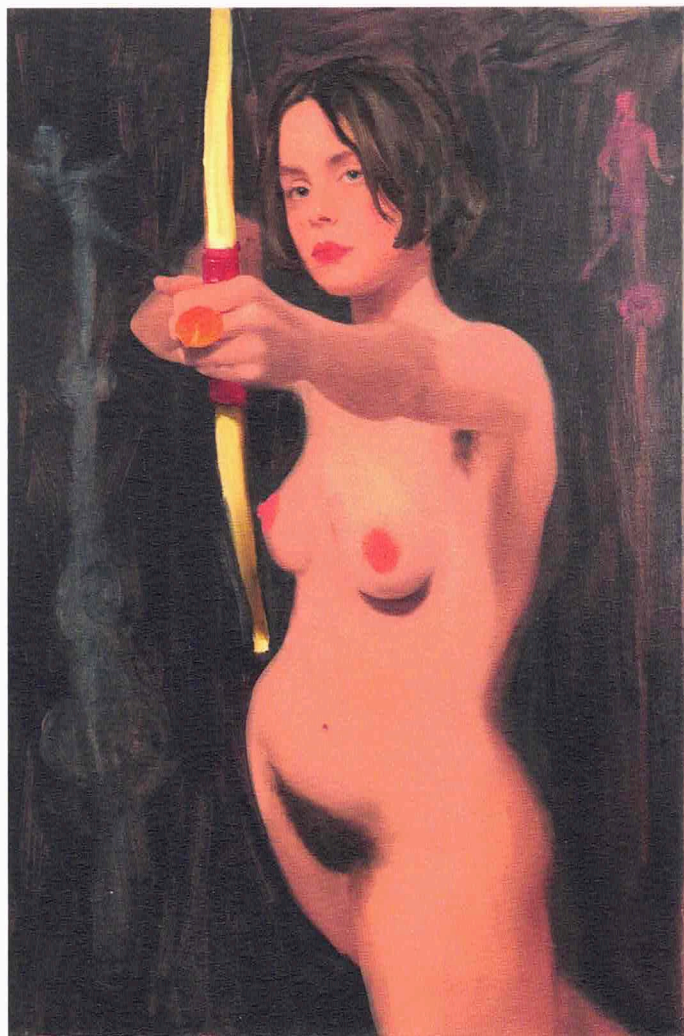
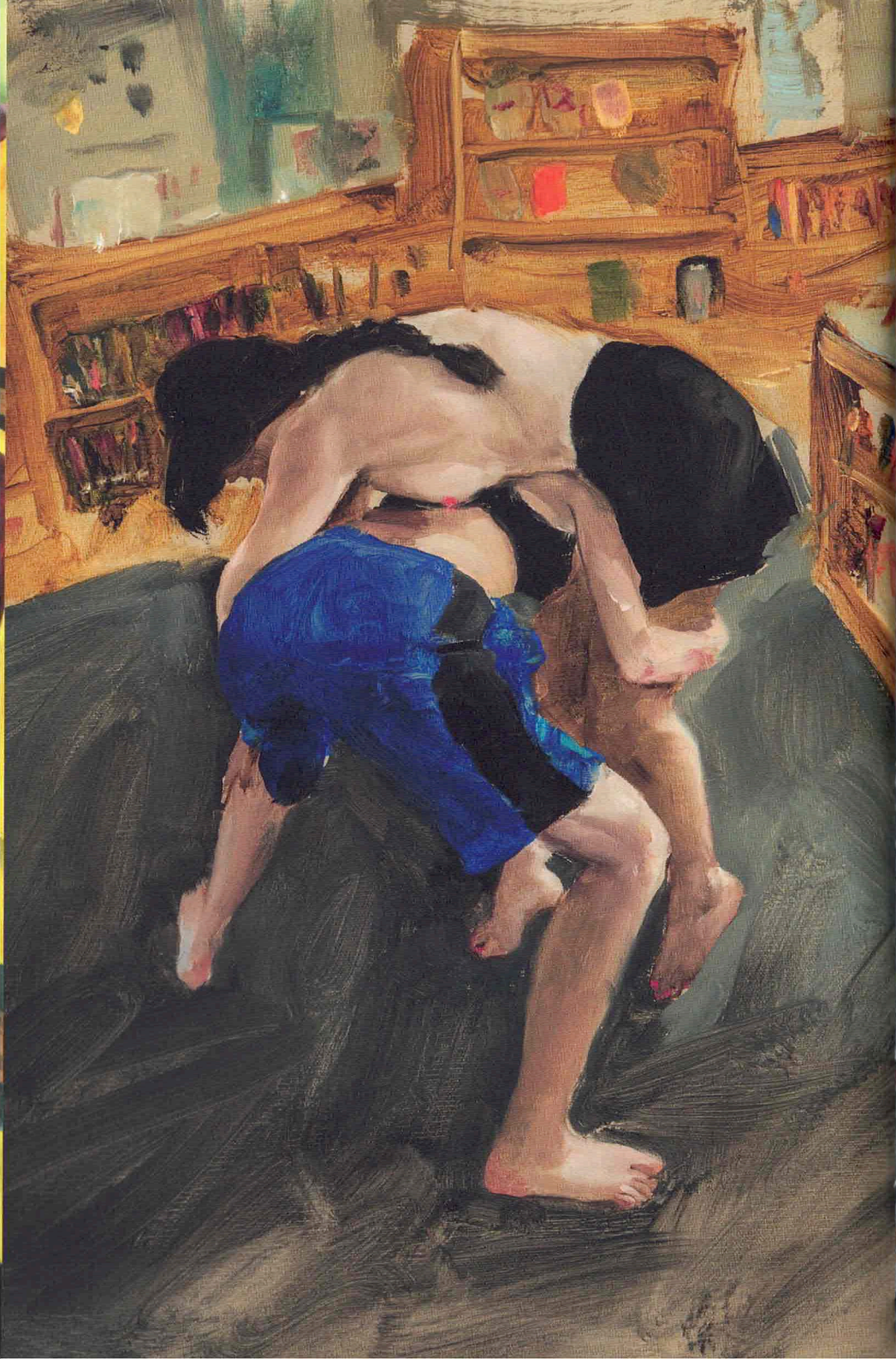


PIQUE



ISSUE 1

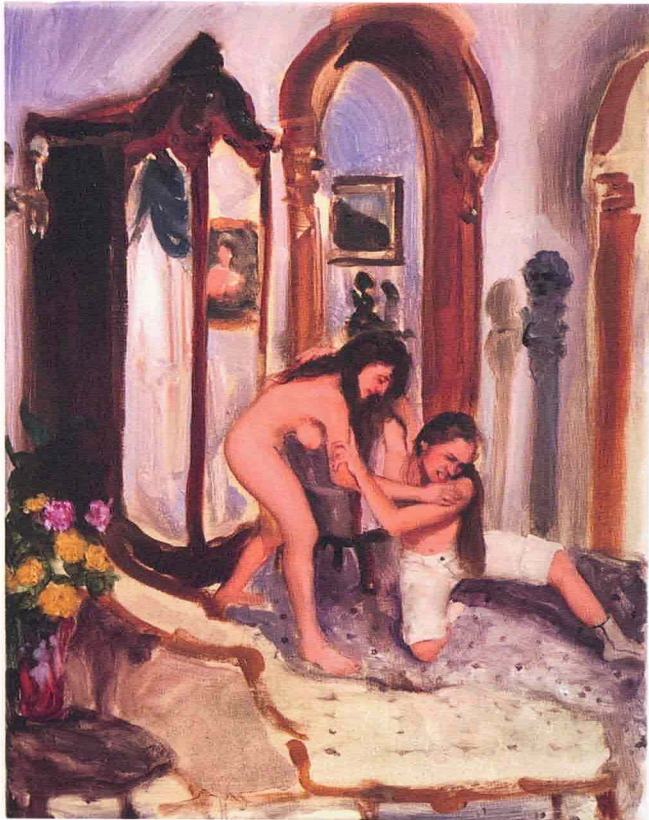
FALL 2020



With an eye for the irreverent and a commitment to multiplicity, PIQUE celebrates the art and cultural contributions of queer women and non-binary individuals today.

JENNA GRIBBON: MUSE TO HER MUSE

Julia Crain



Her fingers grip her opponent's flesh. She clenches her teeth, and her cheeks flush. As she writhes and wrestles in a purple haze of lush brush stroke, we consume her carnal abandon.

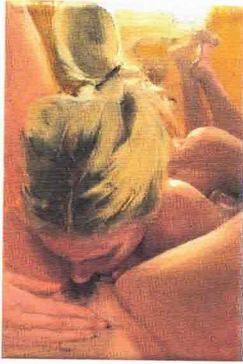
Jenna Gribbon's *Pollyanna Wrestlers* transports us to the musty yet opulent Victorian bedchamber that captivated the artist as a child. Gribbon tells me she watched *Pollyanna* on VHS everyday after school. She likens her infatuation with the titular character to teenage heartthrob, as if Gribbon would have—in an alternate universe—decorated her Knoxville bedroom walls with Pollyanna posters. It is through the unclothed women wrestlers she paints that the artist stakes claim of her childhood fantasy, queering the smug virtue of the 1960s Disney film.

Gribbon's friends often ask her to paint them, so she arranges “wrestling sessions” in her Clinton Hill apartment, which are “more like choreographing a dance than actual fighting.” Her choreographic process: “very collaborative.” Relinquishing complete creative control, she allows her models to self-direct their poses.

The model who most frequently appears in Gribbon's work is her girlfriend Mackenzie Scott, the musician known as Torres. In many regards, their relationship resembles the typical dynamic with which we are familiar: Jenna spends hours in her studio studying Mackenzie's body—the particularities of her thin hands, the expressiveness of her pursed lips, the careful glance of her cool blue eyes. Mackenzie reciprocates Jenna's intensive gaze as she poses; the intimacy of their observation naturally lends itself to a romantic relationship. An equal participant, Mackenzie is not the typical muse.

As she describes their relationship, Céline Sciamma's 2019 film *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* comes to mind. Watching it, she tells me, was uncanny: “this is specifically my kink.” The film undermines the long held hierarchy that assumes a muse to be the passive object of an artist's desire; likewise, the mutual exchange between Torres and Jenna Gribbon is the collaboration which propels their relationship and creative work forward. Gribbon quips that it is “convenient” to cohabit with someone who provides so much inspiration, yet it is the product of their partnership that directly translates to their respective career success. Jenna, for example, painted the cover of Torres's most recent album, *Silver Tongue*; the painting, a portrait of Mackenzie, was selected for the inaugural group exhibition at Mammoth Gallery in London.

While Sciamma uncovers untold histories of women artists, Gribbon mines the canon of art history to refashion its tropes for her own end. She first chose to depict wrestling figures because of the homoeroticism she perceived



Jenna Gribbon, *Sunday Afternoon*, 2018. Photo: Cary Whittier. Courtesy of the artist and Fredericks & Freiser, New York

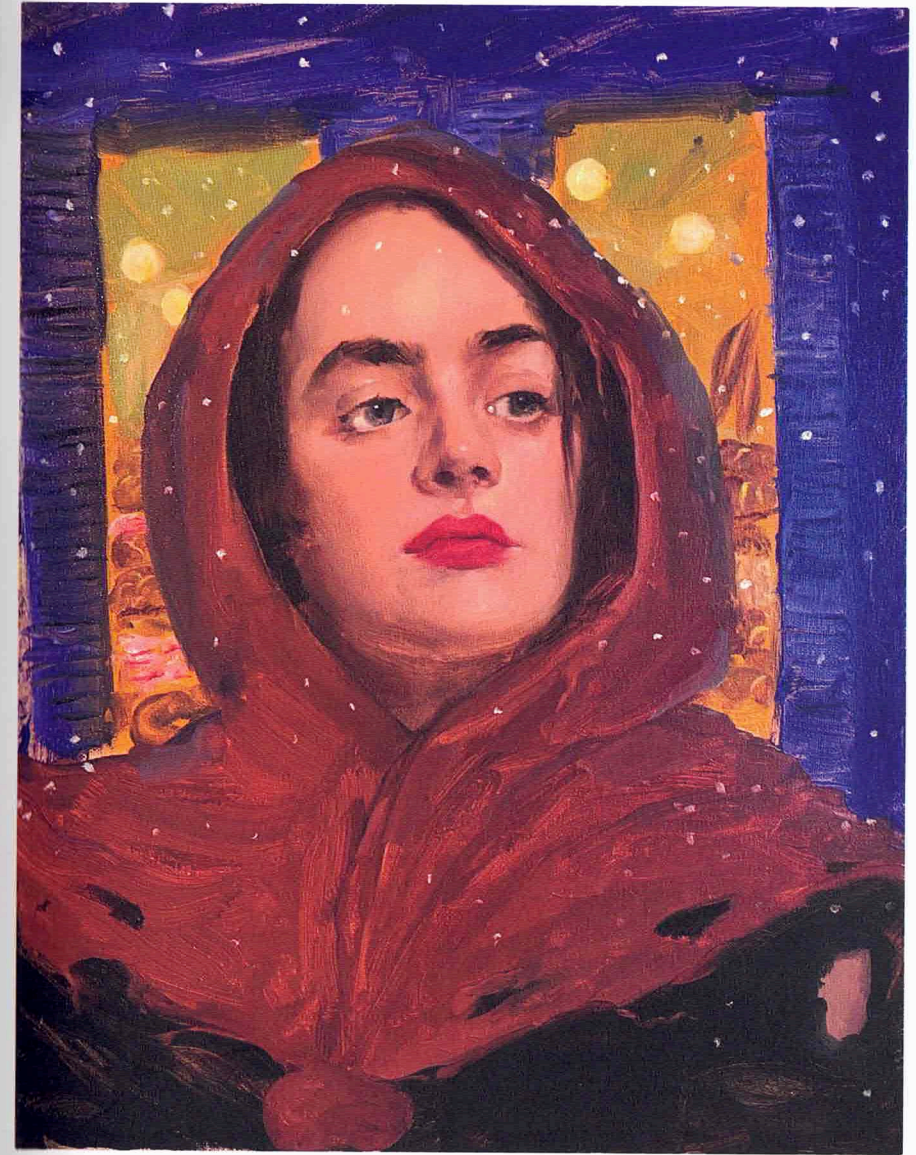
in the many art historical depictions of wrestlers—nearly all of which take men as their subject. Wrestling figures also satisfy another mandatory condition of her work: “I don’t like to paint women in passive positions.”

Gribbon lodges herself into the Western canon by adopting the visual language of legends from past eras. Her handling of paint calls to mind the confident Impressionist brushstrokes of Pierre Renoir, while her dream-like interiors—with their perspectival distortion and deliberate imperceptibility—resemble Berthe Morisot’s depictions of nineteenth-century French spaces.

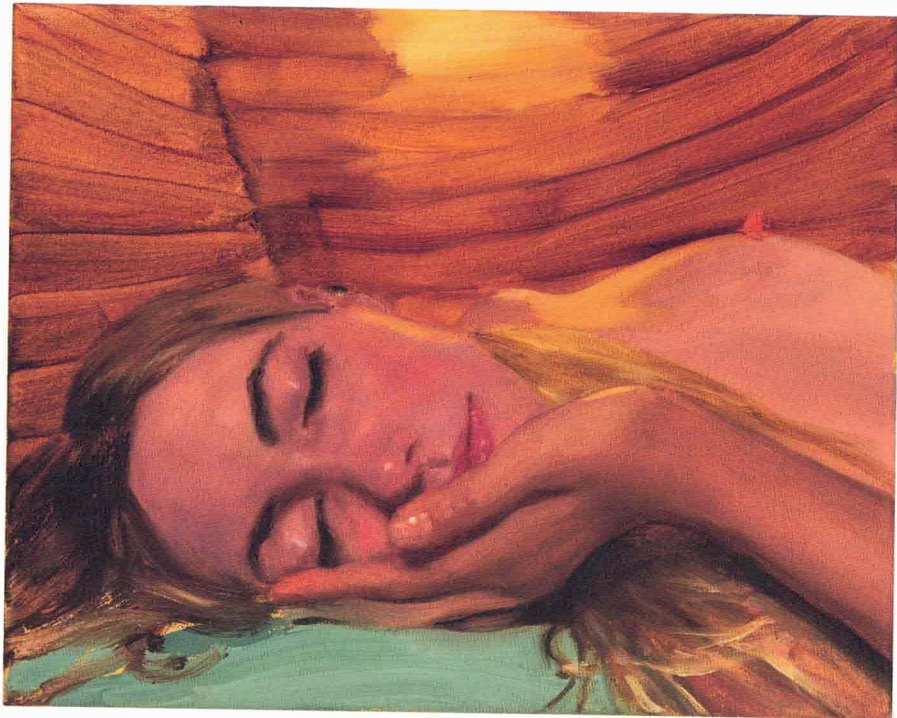
Because we have become accustomed to looking at images of the female form, Gribbon attempts to “reintroduce a level of discomfort into the viewing process.” She wants to remind us that we are “consuming an image of a body.” To that end, she employs fluorescent pink hues for her figures’ nipples, drawing our eyes toward them, implicating us in her voyeurism. For the most explicitly erotic of her paintings, including *Sunday Afternoon*, which places us in Gribbon’s vantage point as she receives sexual pleasure from her girlfriend, Gribbon works on a small scale. The paintings disallow multiple simultaneous viewers—providing an immediate illusion of privacy—but their size demands viewers to draw near, forcing them to expose themselves as they indulge in the erotic content.

Gribbon knows she is not what comes to mind when most people think of who an artist is. She is a queer woman with a nine-year-old son—the near opposite of the shirtless, cigarette-smoking machismos of Abstract Expressionism. Conscious of how identity has long dictated who gets canonical consideration, Gribbon depicts her artistic circle at work. She captures her peers taking reference photos for paintings. She shows them breastfeeding. Using the scaffolding of art historical convention, Jenna Gribbon puts her life on display—her sexuality, her gender, and her motherhood—in order “to make the case that it’s a legitimate way to be an artist.”

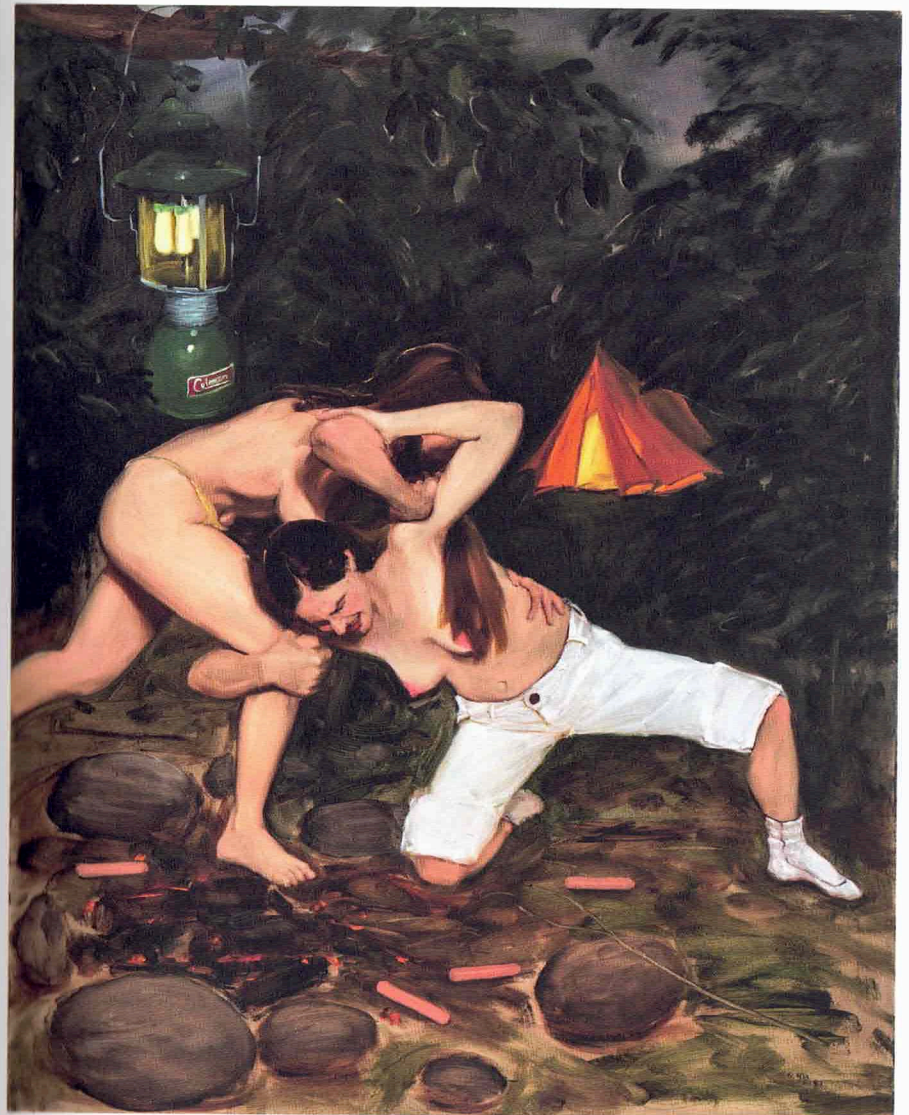
Jenna Gribbon is a painter based in Brooklyn. Represented by Fredericks & Freiser, Gribbon’s work has been exhibited at Galerie Perrotin and The Warsaw Museum of Modern Art. Her work has been reviewed in *Artforum* and in *Art In America*.



Jenna Gribbon, *Elizabeth as Sara Crewe*, 2020. Photo: Cary Whittier. Courtesy of the artist and Fredericks & Freiser, New York



Jenna Gribbon, *Tenderness and Trust*, 2019. Photo: Cary Whittier.
Courtesy of the artist and Fredericks & Freiser, New York



Jenna Gribbon, *Weenie Roast Wrestlers*, 2019