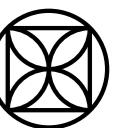
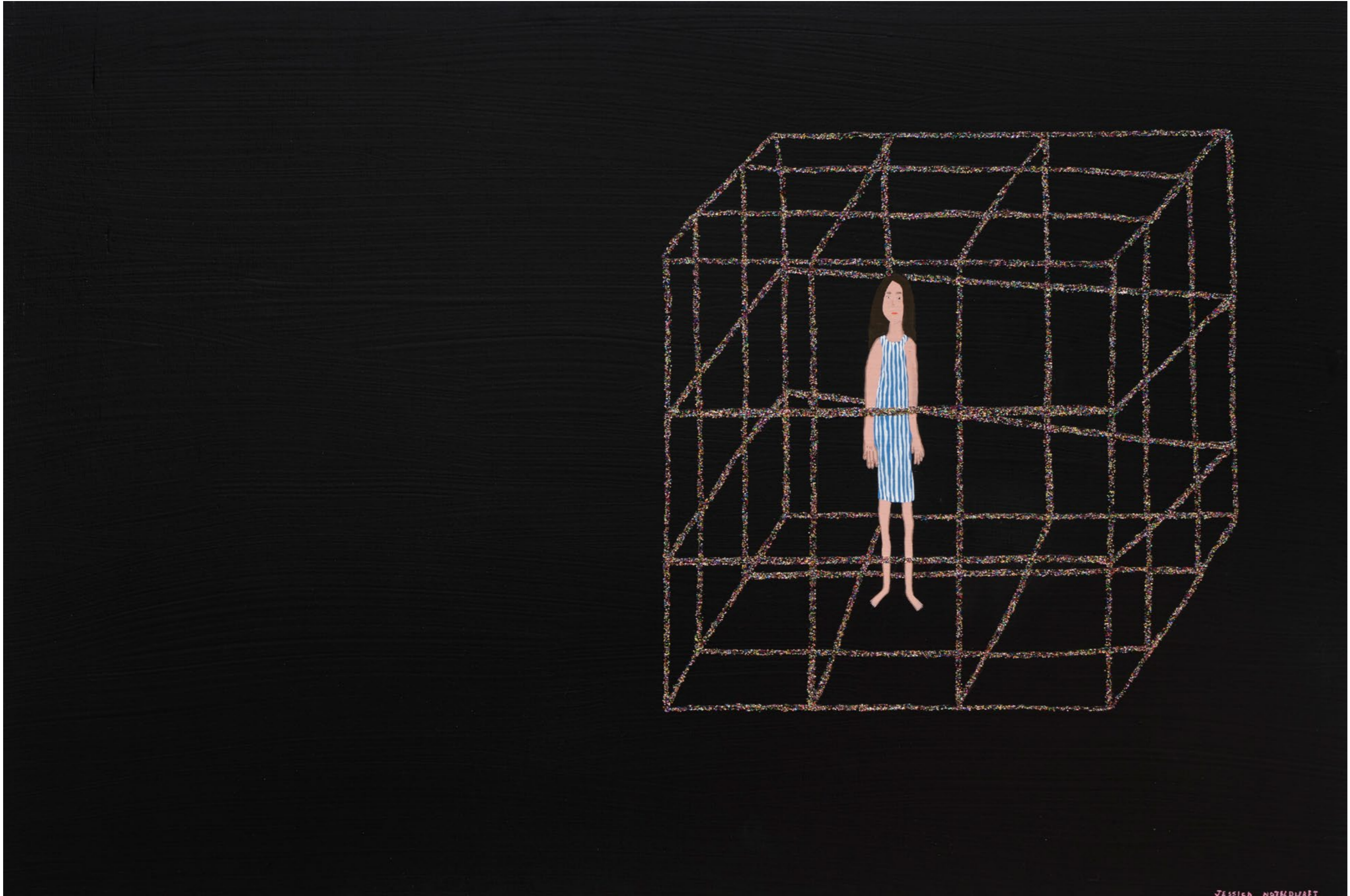


JESSICA NOTHDURFT

DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES





DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES
Jessica Nothdurft

Jessica Nothdurft

Pablo Picasso once said: "It took me four years to paint like Raphael, but a lifetime to paint like a child." His words echo in my mind when I look at your work, where Modernism's faux-naïve simplicity continues.

Louise R Mayhew



Side Gallery

Dreams and Nightmares

By Louise R Mayhew



Dear Jessica,

Pablo Picasso once said: “It took me four years to paint like Raphael, but a lifetime to paint like a child.”¹ His words echo in my mind when I look at your work, where Modernism’s faux-naïve simplicity continues.

Your signature line, present across your diverse sculptures, paintings and drawings, wobbles delicately and deliberately with the mimicked unsurety of a child’s hand. We can trace it up, down, and in the languid sweeping arcs of blue ink that mark out the anonymous figure of *Heavy Tits (ink)* (2022). Your signature in pink capitals, which starts at the bottom right of *Wilted* (2022) and turns abruptly up the corner of the canvas, recalls a child’s endearing yet failed attempt to fit their name within a given space. Your titles also, especially *The Yucky Things* (2022) and *The Lacy Kind* (2023), borrow innocent phrases from our youth. Finally, your use of bright, flat colours, inspired by late Modernism’s Colourfield paintings, equally suggest the colours of the playground and the bedroom. Tomato red, sunflower yellow, woodland green, and clear sky blue mark out abstract and endless landscapes, concentrating our attention on your recurring women and dogs.

I imagine you in your home studio, beginning each day with the ritual of your creative process. The music is on. The brushes are clean. Multiple works

unfold at once as you wrestle to let go of years’ of fine art learning and life-drawing; reaching for the adrenaline, freedom, and excitement of making like a child. Each work bears the marks of your dance between automatic expression and restraint. The result is snippets and snapshots of much larger stories, persuasively expressed in scant colours and lines. But your work is much darker than Picasso’s. Your juvenescent aesthetics accord less with his desire for a new creative language and more with the autobiographical origins of your practice. In this sense, your work is like the Surrealists.

Following Freud’s interest in these zones, the Surrealists also scoured their childhood memories and nightly dreams for the makings of their work. Across their wide-ranging practices, they returned to the strange and the strained. And like some of their most interesting and evocative proponents—Francis Bacon, Hans Bellmer, Leonora Carrington, Paul Delveaux, and Dorothea Tanning to name a few—your work contains a silent scream.

Your isolated women, who (fear to) yell, bend and trip. They wilt and collapse. Like their companion dogs, they kneel on hands and knees. They clench their fists, squeeze their tits, roll their tongues, and stand surrendered—topless and with knickers around their feet.

Recurring clues locate your women in the home: spilt milk on the (kitchen) floor; a glittering and spotless cage-as-home (or home-as-cage); cheap, striped house-dresses and one work named *Topless Housewife* (2023). Sometimes your women leave their bodies. They float above this domestic space of unknown terrors. In other works, they imagine another home with a pitched roof, two windows and a front door.

Via your feminine figures and symbolic subtleties, your work draws closer still to Louise Bourgeois. The French artist similarly spun a

lifelong practice from the figure of her mother—seamstress and spider—as viewed through Bourgeois’ childhood eyes. Cages, in particular, carry across both of your oeuvres: cast as spaces of protection and entrapment. Via Bourgeois, the women in your works resolve as your mother; the houses as your home.

Thinking about your practice in relation to Bourgeois’ prompts me to consider your symbolism and to observe your persistent interest in doubling. In *Ram Ram* (2022) and *Keep Quiet* (2023), two women and two dogs bend and touch their heads, partaking in the same unspoken rite. In their mirroring, they keep each other company. *Two Bitches* (2023) heightens this element of solace and succour, picturing the woman and the dog within the same space and positioning the pregnant canine as stable guard, benign protector.

From here, doubling multiplies as symmetry and repetition: two limbs, two breasts, two hands; two games of *Mercy* (both 2023), two *Wilted* mothers (both 2023). There’s a persistent order and regularity in this patterning of twos. It’s a form of neatness that continues in the glittering sparkle of *The Cage* (2023). In turn, doubling stands in for both comfort and its distressing other.

More subtly, doubling takes the form of visual and psychological fragmentations, duplications, and combinations. *Crouching Figure (Bronze)* (2023), for example, is both woman and dog, tail held poignantly between her legs. Extending this to you: sometimes you appear with your mother. Sometimes you appear as her. Sometimes we hear and read your voice. At other times it is your father’s.

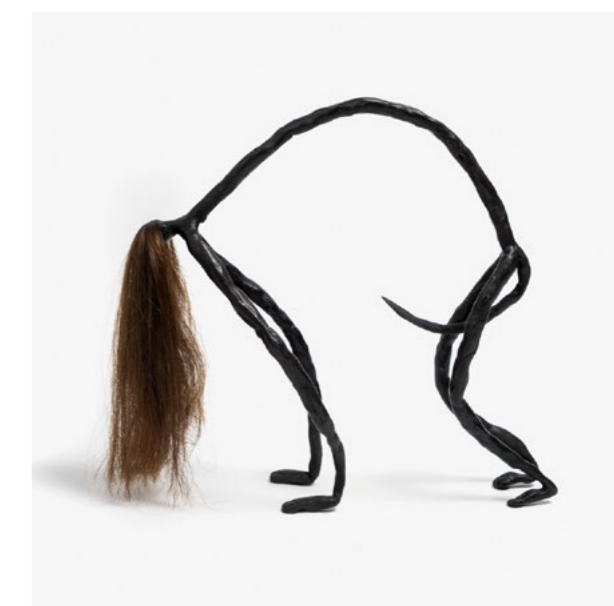
There is humour in your work, seeking lightness and relief. The silly joy and familiar pleasure of squishing breasts together draws us back to the present. But more importantly and

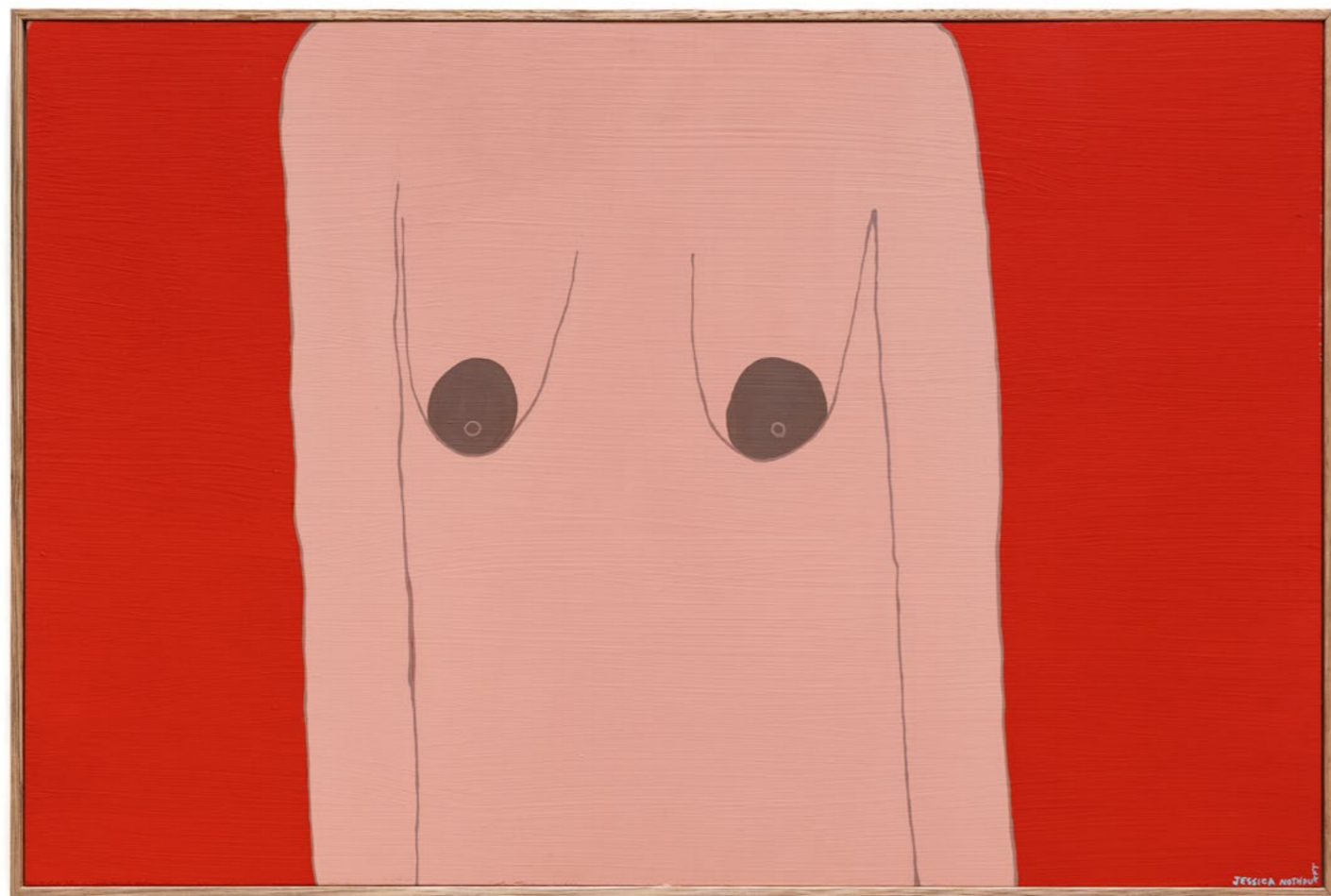
most vitally your work engages with a feminist commitment to articulation and care. Embodying the well-known mantra—the personal is political—your work champions the wisdom that there are important experiences and expressions in the private realm of the home. Moreover, it reveals the witness of the child, who was once quiet, and gives her a voice. In doing so, your work articulates a compelling call to action to those of us who live outside the cage. Speak up. Get involved. Don’t shy away.

Jessica, your art is undeniably gritty. But if it is born of nightmares, I hope the creative process—like the figure who lies on her back and ejects in a magical stream of glitter all *The Yucky Things*—also enables you to dream.

With all my love,
Louise

¹ Evidence that Picasso said these exact words is scant, through both his words and his art. Picasso expressed a desire to create with the naïveté of children.





Page 4
Wilted 2023
 Oil on timber panel
 framed in raw Tasmanian oak
 61 x 40.7 cm
 \$850 Framed
 SOLD

Page 5
Crouching figure (Bronze) 2023
 Bronze, human hair wig
 23 x 25 x 6.5 cm
 \$2200

Heavy Tits 2023
 Oil on timber panel
 framed in raw Tasmanian oak
 61 cm x 40 cm
 \$850 Framed
 SOLD



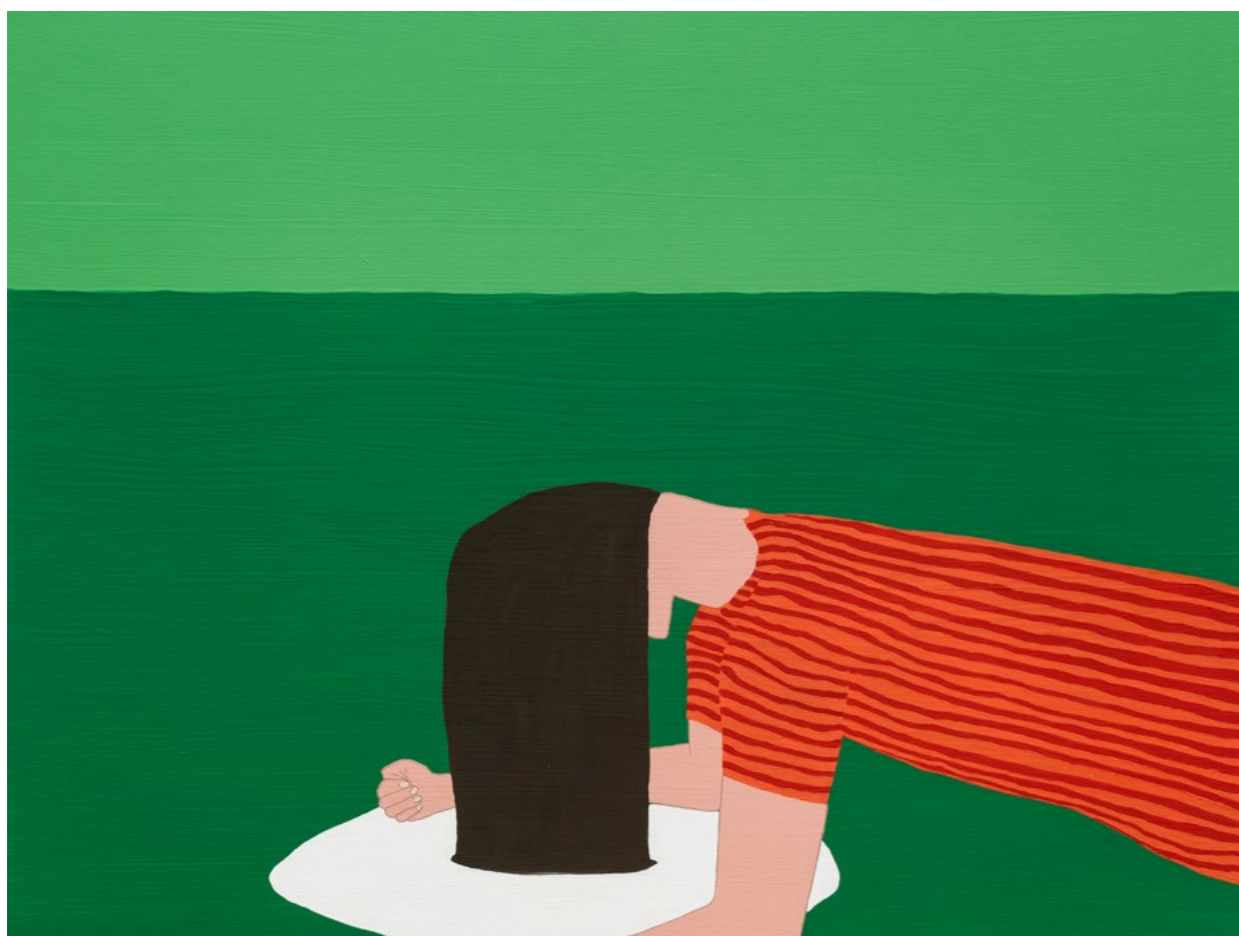
The Cage (Bronze) 2023
 Bronze, hand sewn House dress,
 human hair wig
 Cage: 32 x 32 x 32 cm
 Figure: 6.5 x 21 x 5 cm
 Contact gallery for enquires



Crouching figure (Bronze) 2023
Bronze, human hair wig
23 x 25 x 6.5 cm
\$2200



Mercy 2023
Oil on timber panel
framed in raw Tasmanian oak
61 x 40 cm
\$850 Framed



Human Milk 2023
Oil on timber panel
framed in raw Tasmanian oak
61 x 61 cm
\$850 Framed

Jessica Nothdurft

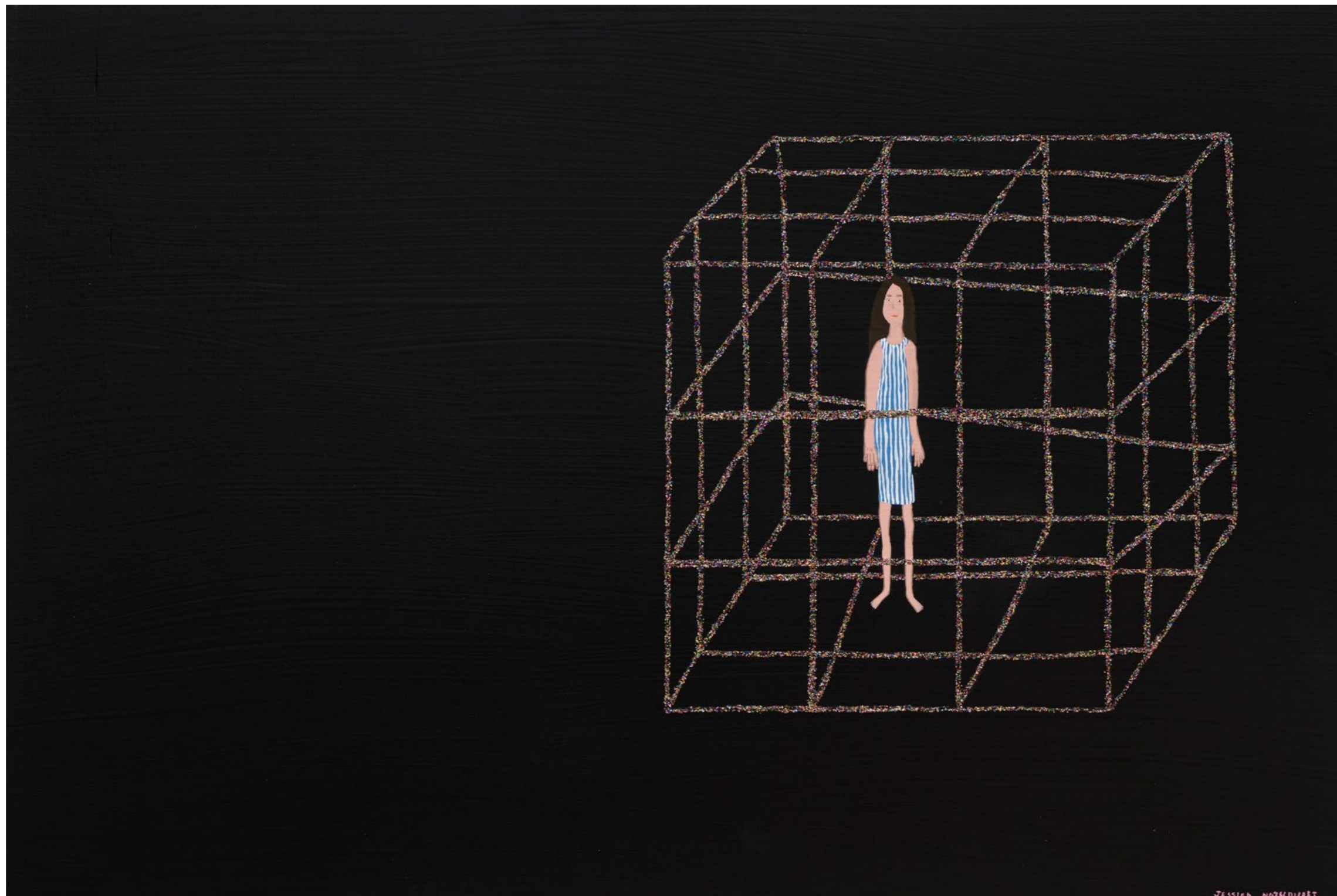
10



Ram Ram 2023
Oil on timber panel
framed in raw Tasmanian oak
61 x 61 cm
\$850 Framed

Dreams and Nightmares

11



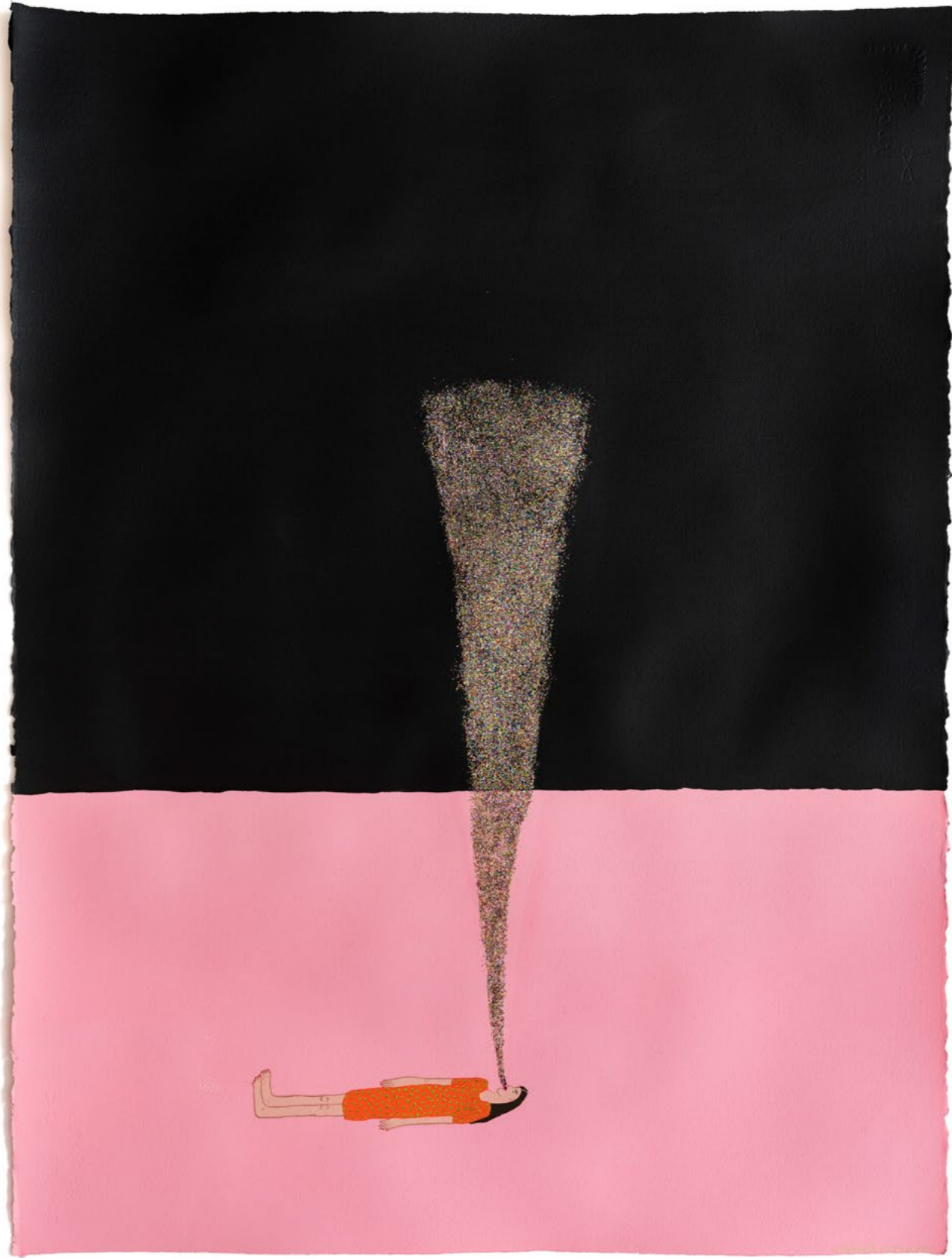
The Cage 2023
Oil on timber panel
framed in raw Tasmanian oak
61 x 40.7 cm
\$850 Framed
SOLD



Two Bitches 2023
Oil on timber panel
framed in raw Tasmanian oak
61 x 40.7 cm
\$850 Framed
SOLD



Wilted 2023
Oil on timber panel
framed in raw Tasmanian oak
61 x 40.7 cm
\$850 Framed
SOLD



The Yucky Things 2023
Oil Paint, Synthetic Polymers paint and
glitter on 300 gsm Arches Aquarelle Paper
Framed in raw Tasmanian oak timber frame
57 x 76 cm
Contact gallery for enquires



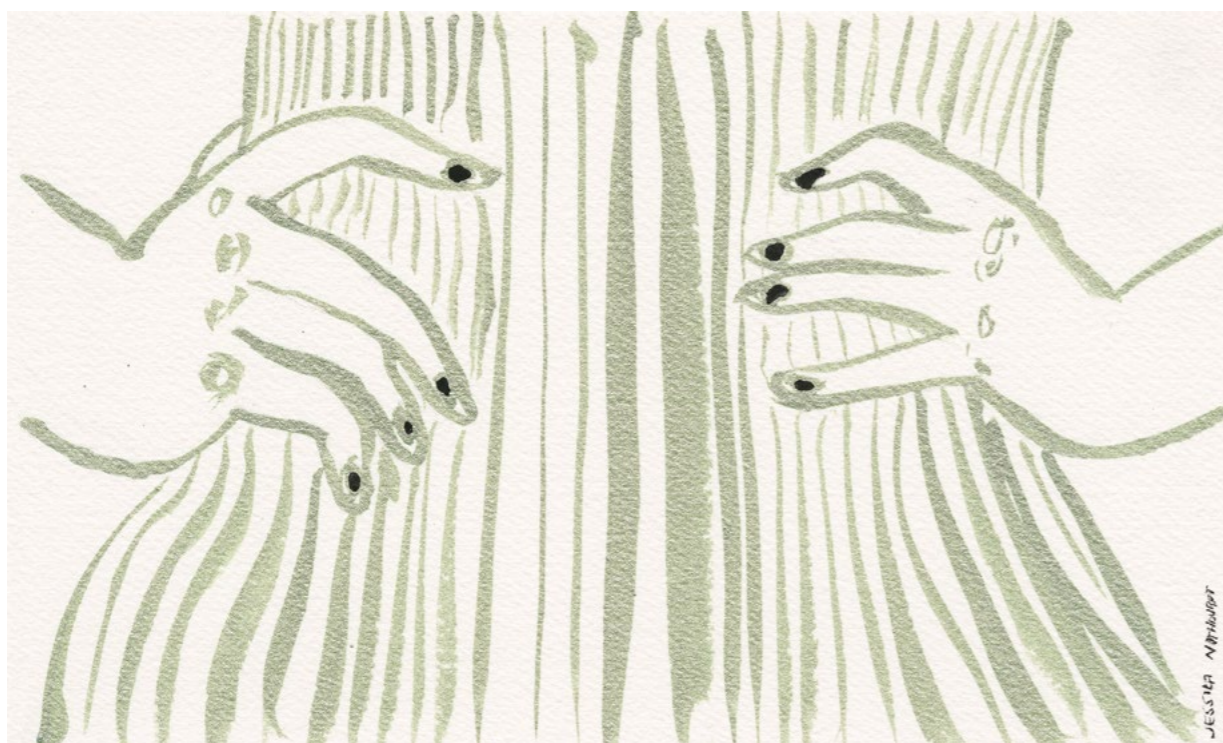
The Lacy Kind 2023
Oil on timber panel
framed in raw Tasmanian oak
40 x 61 cm
\$850 Framed



The Lacy Kind (ink) 2023
Ink Drawing on 300 gsm Arches Aquarelle Paper.
Framed in raw Tasmanian oak
25 x 15 cm
\$500 Framed
SOLD



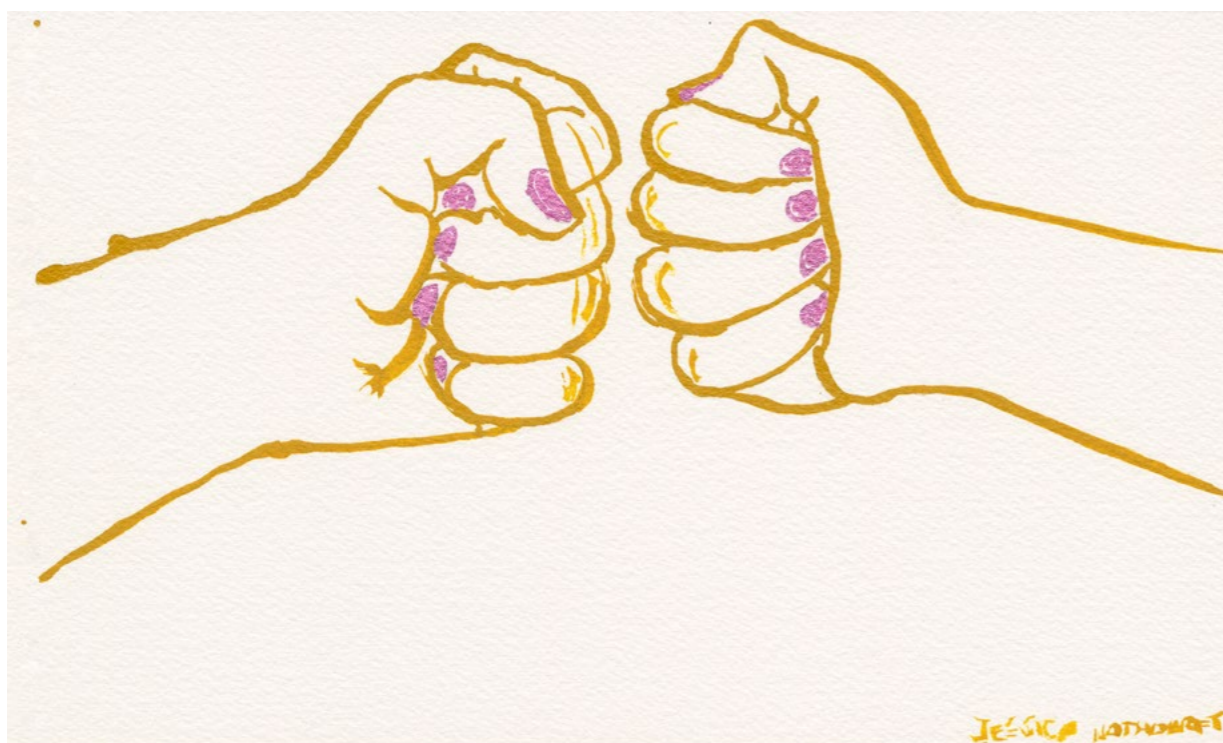
Wilted (ink) 2023
Ink Drawing on 300 gsm Arches Aquarelle Paper
Framed in raw Tasmanian oak
15 x 25 cm
\$500 Framed



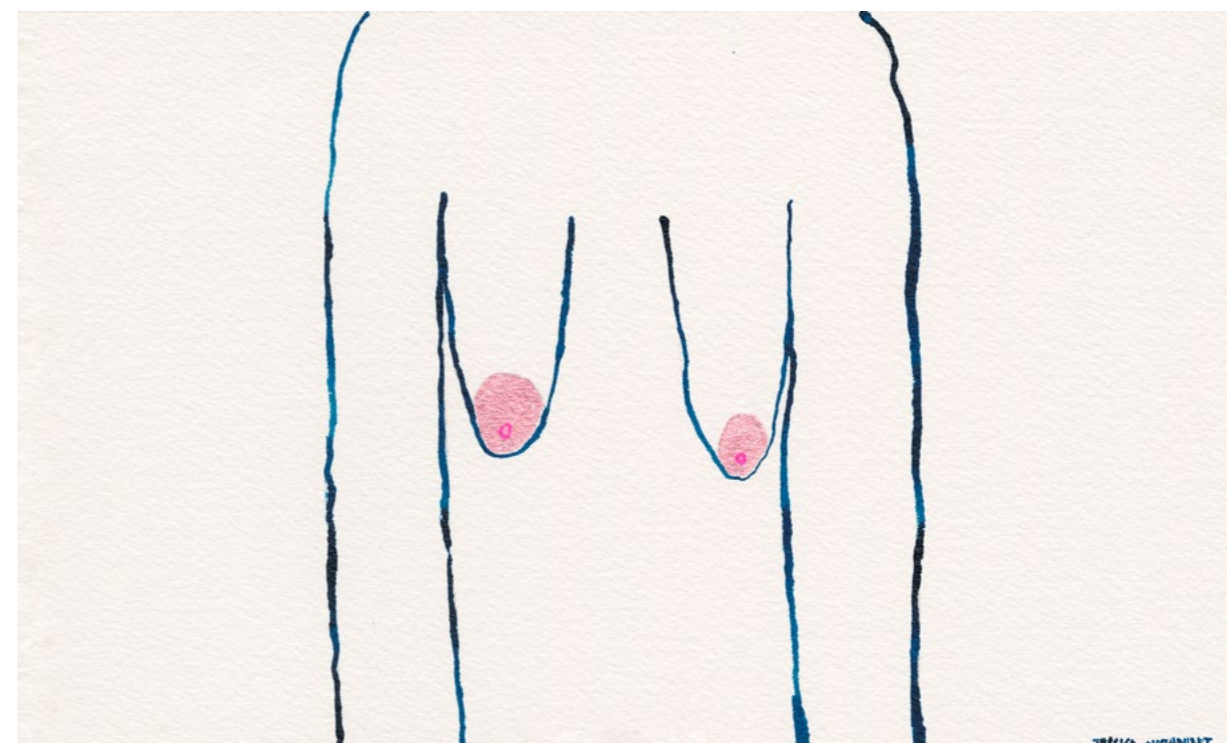
Akimbo 2023
Ink Drawing on 300 gsm Arches Aquarelle Paper
Framed in raw Tasmanian oak
15 x 25 cm
\$500 Framed



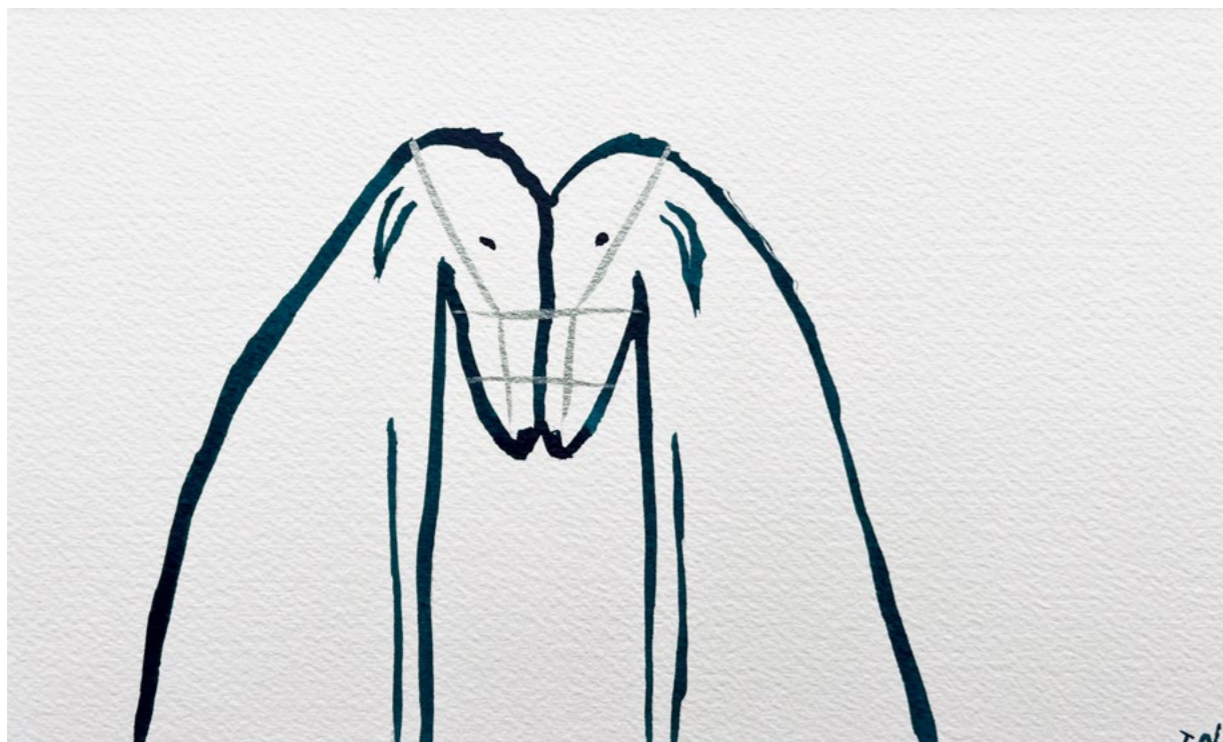
Fever Dream 2023
Ink Drawing on 300 gsm Arches Aquarelle Paper
Framed in raw Tasmanian oak
15 x 25 cm
\$500 Framed



For Shit's Sake 2023
Ink Drawing on 300 gsm Arches Aquarelle Paper
Framed in raw Tasmanian oak
15 x 25 cm
\$500 Framed



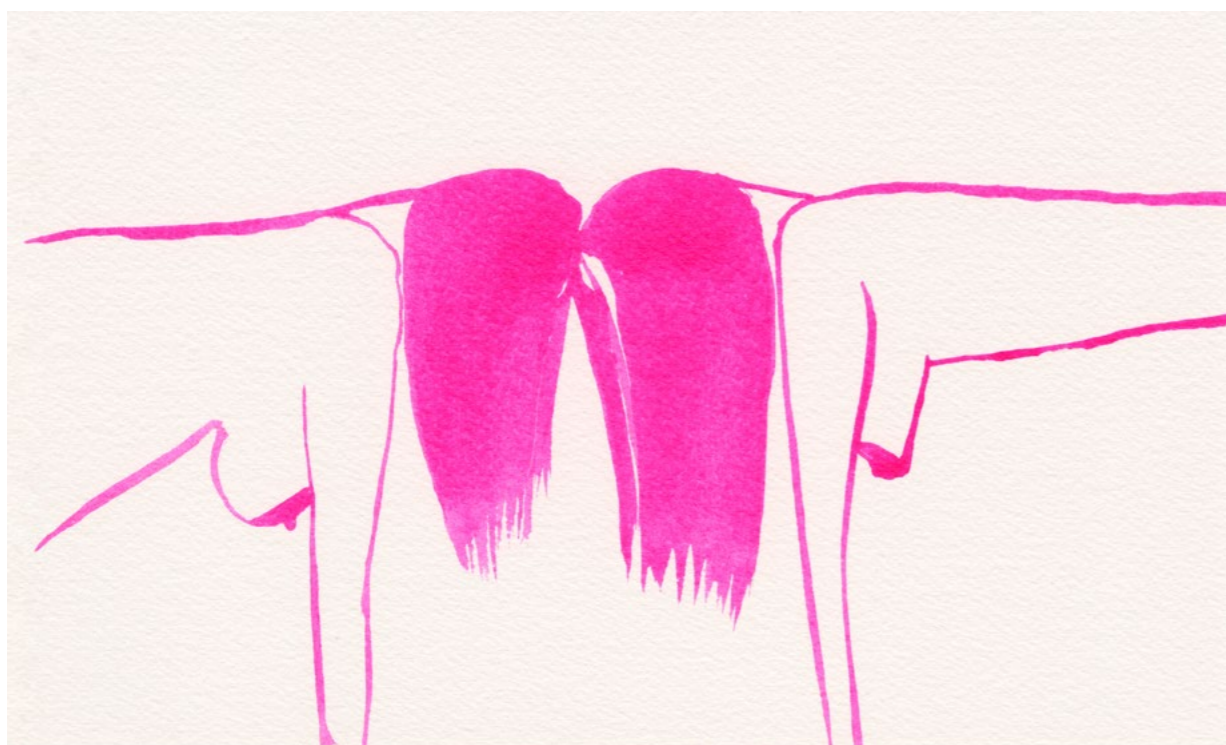
Heavy Tits (ink) 2023
Ink Drawing on 300 gsm Arches Aquarelle Paper
Framed in raw Tasmanian oak
15 x 25 cm
\$500 Framed



Keep Quiet 2023
Ink Drawing on 300 gsm Arches Aquarelle Paper
Framed in raw Tasmanian oak
15 x 25 cm
\$500 Framed
SOLD



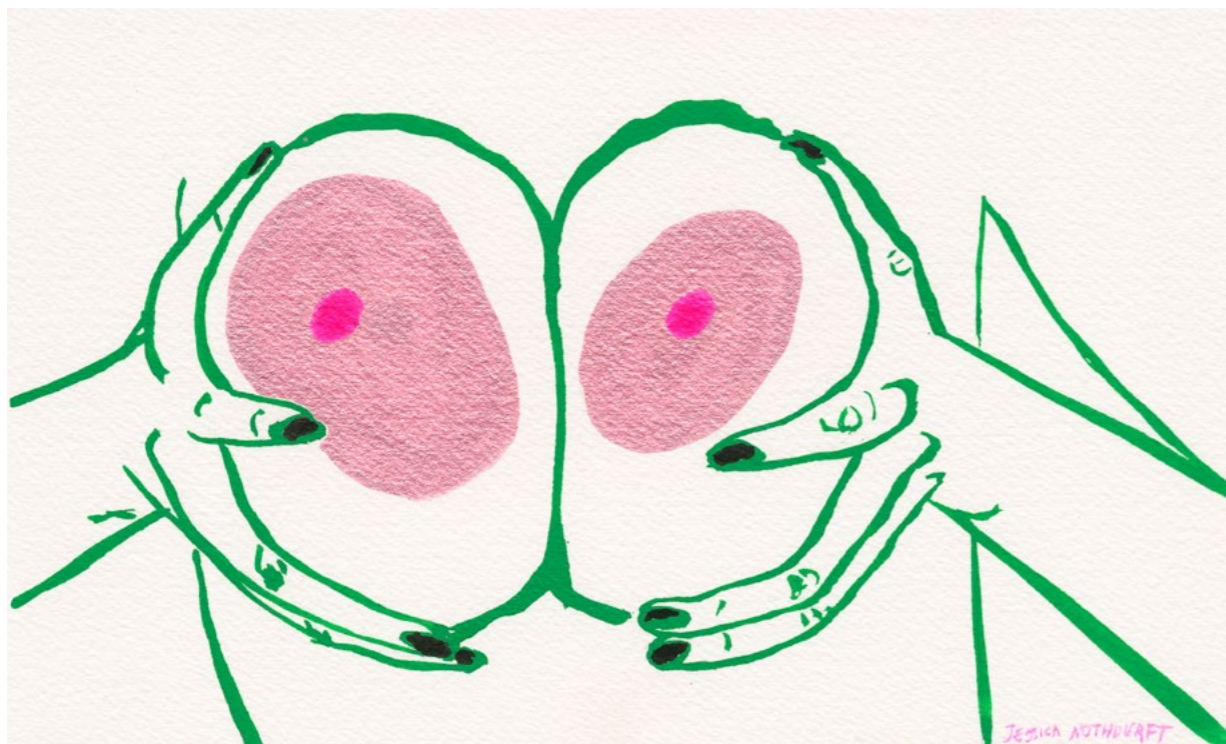
Mercy (ink) 2023
Ink Drawing on 300 gsm Arches Aquarelle Paper
Framed in raw Tasmanian oak
15 x 25 cm
\$500 Framed



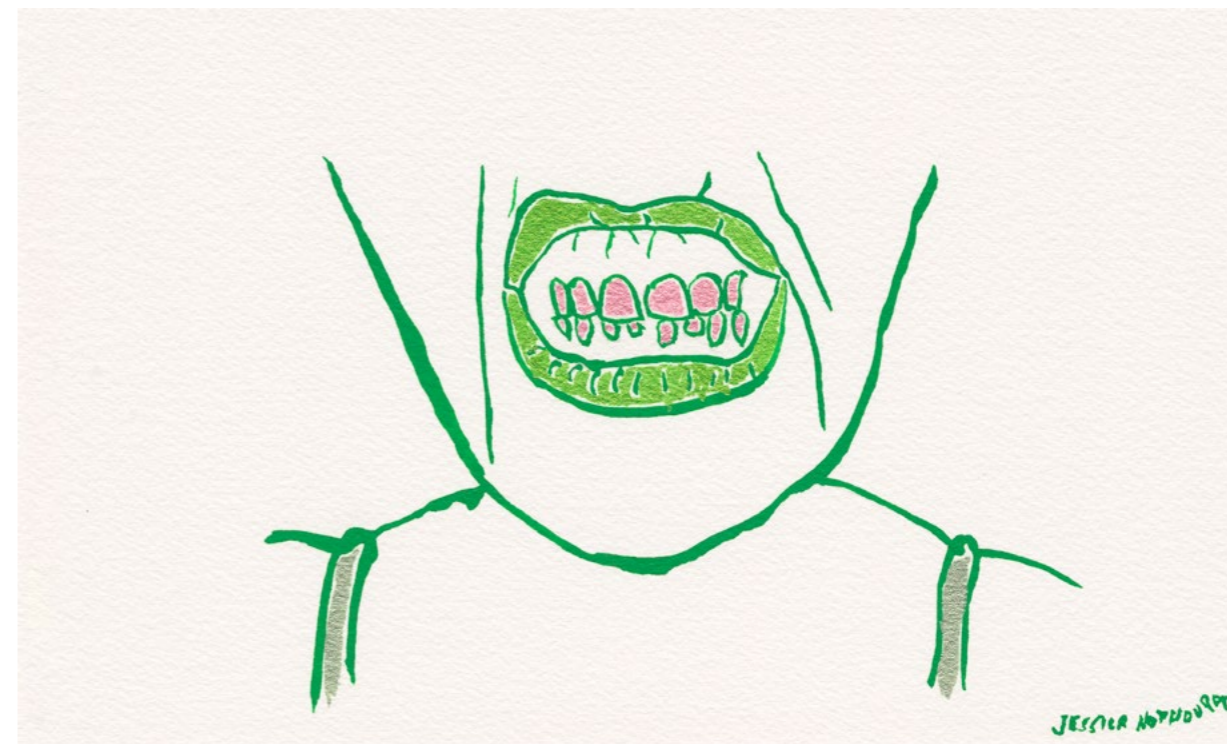
Ram Ram (ink) 2023
Ink Drawing on 300 gsm Arches Aquarelle Paper
Framed in raw Tasmanian oak
15 x 25 cm
\$500 Framed
SOLD



Rolling Tongue 2023
Ink Drawing on 300 gsm Arches Aquarelle Paper
Framed in raw Tasmanian oak
15 x 25 cm
\$500 Framed



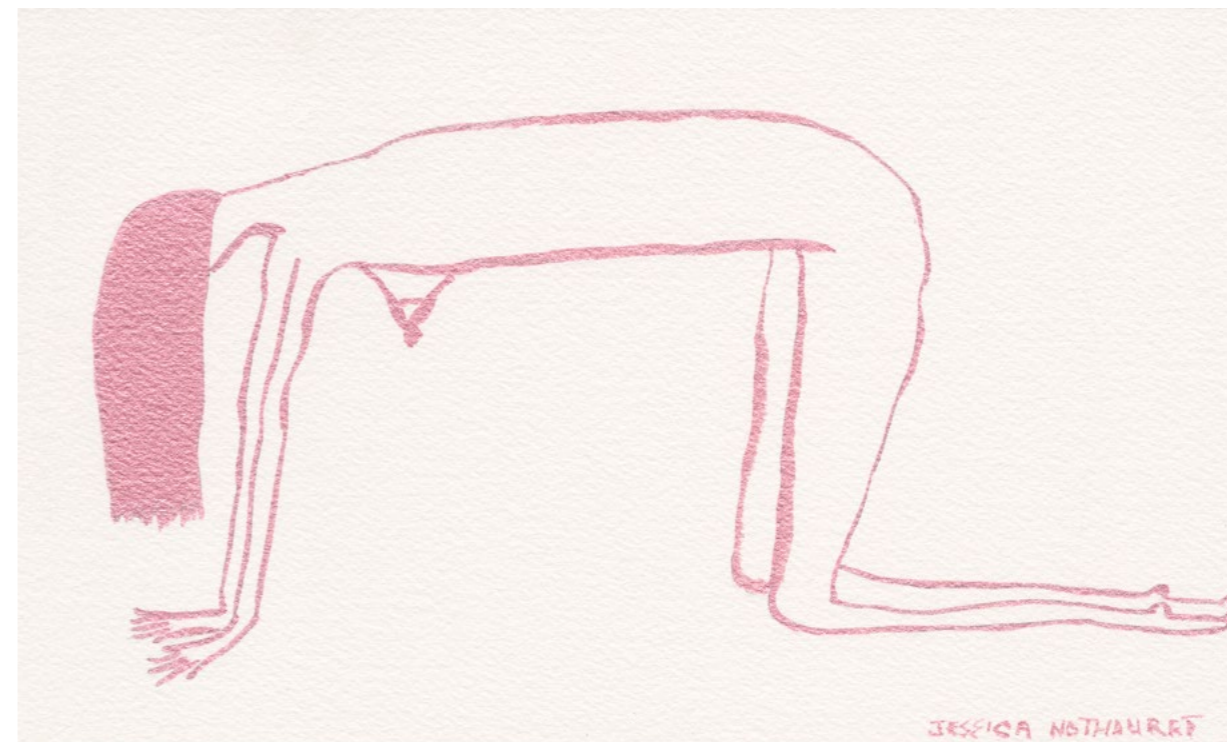
Squished Tits 2023
Ink Drawing on 300 gsm Arches Aquarelle Paper
Framed in raw Tasmanian oak
15 x 25 cm
\$500 Framed
SOLD



The Tension 2023
Ink Drawing on 300 gsm Arches Aquarelle Paper
Framed in raw Tasmanian oak
15 x 25 cm
\$500 Framed



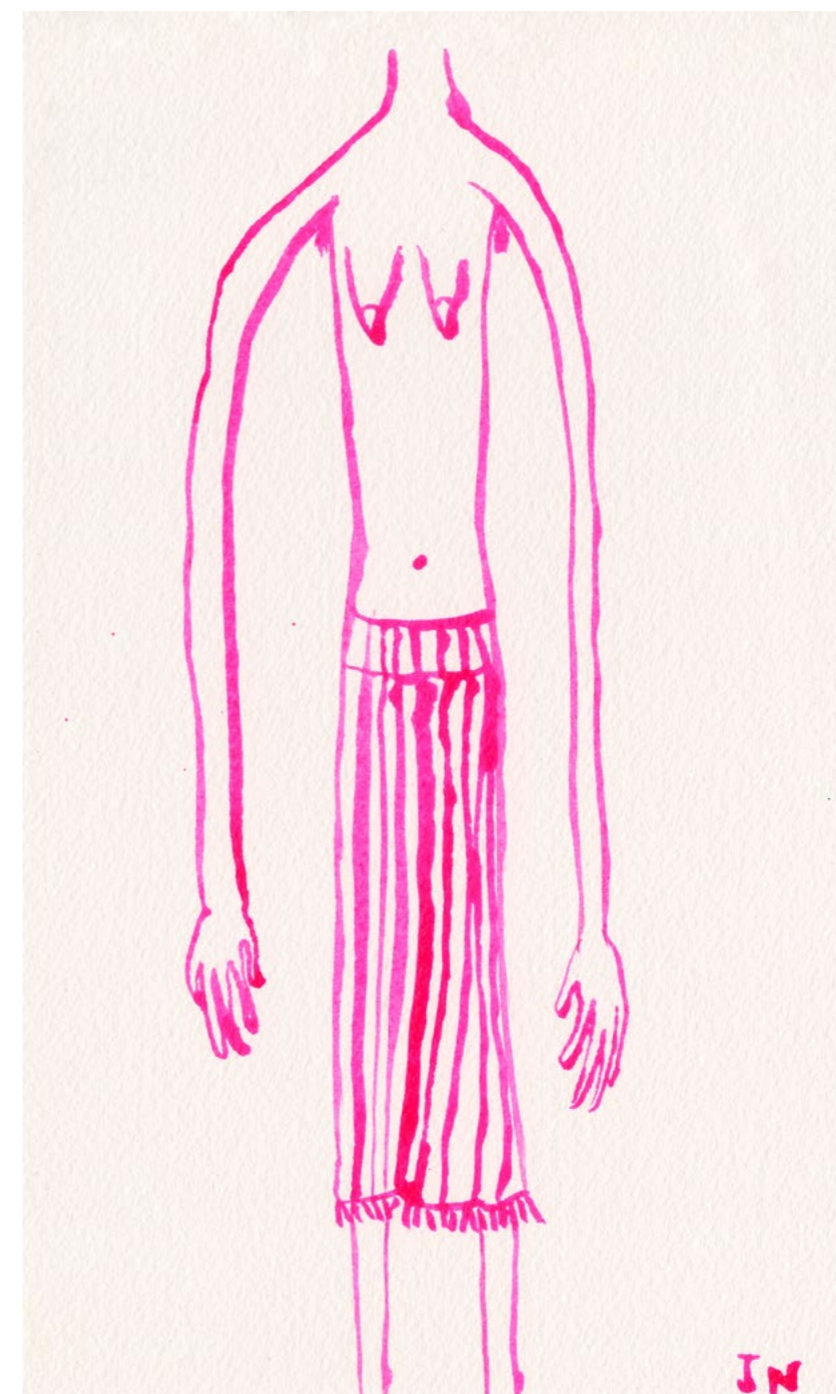
Preggos (ink) 2023
Ink Drawing on 300 gsm Arches Aquarelle Paper
Framed in raw Tasmanian oak
15 x 25 cm
\$500 Framed



Crawl 2023
Ink Drawing on 300 gsm Arches Aquarelle Paper
Framed in raw Tasmanian oak
15 x 25 cm
\$500 Framed



What A Pretty Girl 2023
Ink Drawing on 300 gsm Arches Aquarelle Paper
Framed in raw Tasmanian oak
15 x 25 cm
\$500 Framed



Topless Housewife 2023
Ink Drawing on 300 gsm Arches Aquarelle Paper
Framed in raw Tasmanian oak
25 x 15 cm
\$500 Framed

Dissociate with me (Bronze) 2023

Bronze and antique glass eyes

11 x 9.5 x 5 cm (each)

Contact gallery for enquires





Jessica, your art is undeniably gritty. But if it is born of nightmares, I hope the creative process—like the figure who lies on her back and ejects in a magical stream of glitter all The Yucky Things—also enables you to dream.

Louise R Mayhew

You have to learn to stand on your own four feet 2023
Bronze
10.5 x 25 x 14 cm
\$2200



*Black Heart
Your Heart
My Heart
(Artist Book)*

2023, Bronze, dyed natural silk
154 cm x 120 cm, Book closed: 16.5 x 18 x 3.5 cm, Book open: 31 x 18 x 5.5 cm
Contact gallery for enquires

Jessica Nothdurft



Jessica Nothdurft is a multimedia artist living and working in Meanjin/Brisbane.

Following studies in visual arts at TAFE and then at the Queensland University of Technology, Jessica has developed her art practice to explore highly personal, evocative depictions of her life experiences. A winner and finalist of multiple awards, Jessica uses a variety of media, including oil, ink and metal. She has honed a lifetime of experiences into a recurring exploratory theme, often in faux-naive stylised depictions. By drawing on the familiar visual languages of artists from Giacometti to Louise Bourgeois and Jenny Watson, Jessica uses her art practice to explore the existence of struggles below the surface and the many facets of shame.







Jessica Nothdurft



Dreams and Nightmares



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Side Gallery

The Garden Studio
7 Emma Street
Red Hill
PO Box 515 Red Hill
Queensland 4059

info@sidegallery.com.au

0409 549 447

Gallery Hours

Jessica Nothdurft —
Dreams and Nightmares
June 29 – July 2, 2023

Monday & Tuesday by appointment

Thursday — Friday 10 am – 5 pm

Saturday 10 am – 1 pm

Sunday 10 am – 1 pm

Stay updated by checking our website and social media for exhibition opening dates and times.

Instagram: [thesidegallery](#)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Yuggera [yug-a-rah]

Turrubul [tor-oo-bull]

We acknowledge the Yuggera and Turrubul people as the Traditional Custodians of the Country we live and work on at Side Gallery. We recognise their continuing connection to the land, waterways and skies, and thank them for protecting this region and its ecosystems since time immemorial. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and extend that respect to all First Nations people, acknowledging too that they never ceded sovereignty of the land, skies and waterways.

Photography

Artwork photography by Louis Lim

Page 1 Designfront

Pages 2, 3, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46 by Lara Furst

Design Designfront