

OATO



Staged Theoretical

Michael Simms

25 Nov

Kirk Page

20 Dec 25

Staged Theoretical | *Michael Simms & Kirk Page*

Eloise Cato Gallery 25 November – 20 December

Essay by Vicki Van Hout

Michael Simms and Kirk Page, two bodies united through voice across cultures and mediums, navigating a relational trajectory in the topography of Country. Like a queen in tartan regalia propped against and distanced from a painted backdrop depicting her untamed dominion, the serenity of *this wild* is inversely separated by two 'knives' sheathed in a blanket of clear polymer.

Yet this is where the colonial portrait and this photographic essay depart. Whereas the images that inspired the genesis of this collection were heightened by a residency at the Arthur Boyd estate at Bundanon, by the man whose life's work speaks to humanitarian issues and universal themes of love, loss and shame, in rambunctious strokes of pigment upon canvas – the following images rendered in digital pixels capture, by the very nature of photography, an exposition of real-time intimacy, a specificity of vulnerability in closer proximity. Through political and personal reflection, a latent dialogue with Arthur Boyd's *Central Desert Bridal* series of the 1950's and 60's emerged – not as a starting point but as a post-realised discovery. Where Boyd highlighted the unfortunate plight of the half-caste newlywed, Page and Simms aim to similarly call attention to the pitfalls of queer relationships against a backdrop of lingering heteronormative convention.

This collection chronicles an emotive journey set very much in our contemporary context. The isolation of bushland is garishly juxtaposed by the tarpaulin which distorts the action on the other side of it, becoming somewhat of an allegory for a lens. Perception is warped, conjectures unfounded, truth held only by the players set on the stage – a boisterous coupling barely contained behind the fog generated by the initial burst of lust or a brewing quarrel? The heightened surreal hues burnt into the landscape by the Australian sun mirror-imaged in the water's reflection, the refracted light a harbinger of promises and false positives. The plastic, a portent of inaccessibility, of inevitable solitude and trauma – exaggerates and magnifies little disturbances, until no plastic is needed to create the void of broken attachment.

However, all is not lost. When this union of the painter in Michael Simms, who requires a clean image where the action is ambiguous yet uncluttered, unfettered by sidelines and unnecessary subtext, met in practice with the showmanship of Kirk Page who conversely invites the detritus into the frame, to muddy and misdirect conventionality, something more important transpired... in four years of collaboration, they forged a new songline.

A romance in art making alone, *Staged Theoretical* is their first official 'outing' as contemporary arts collaborators. An exhibition realised through the development of a rigorous arts practice which involved a daily schedule beginning with a morning warm up, consisting of an exchange of tasks focusing on physical mobility. This was followed by improvisations with Michael filling the aural vacuum by playing piano, as Kirk vocalised, while similarly fleshing out the space with embodied riffs and jams in accompaniment.

A second residency, the Gang Gang residencies program in Bermagui built upon their routine, to include perambulated wanderings to collect organic materials to fashion a frame of which they placed themselves within. This exhibition also shows drawings which compliment the sculptural nature of their collaborative output. Created through kinaesthetic engagement with the canvas exceeding mere inscription predicated upon the pincer grip handiwork with charcoal. In comparison to the photographic images which are representative of the journey to the place in which they have arrived, the drawings are embodied expressions of the willingness to harness their creative connection to continue working together in an interdisciplinary and cross-cultural capacity.

– Vicki Van Hout

Staged Theoretical | *Michael Simms & Kirk Page*

Eloise Cato Gallery 25 November – 20 December

Essay by Lucie Reeves-Smith

The wild natural beauty of Bundanon, on the New South Wales South Coast, has been a fertile and productive site for artistic residency exchanges since its conception as a gift from Arthur and Yvonne Boyd to the Australian people and local community in 1993. Over two weeks in 2024, Adelaide-born contemporary painter Michael Simms engaged with the site's ideals of multi-disciplinary knowledge sharing with an unprecedented collaboration with Munanjali actor, dancer and creative director, Kirk Page, combining movement, photography and painting to examine the institutionalised concept of marriage through a queer lens and First Nations experience. Representing a daring departure from Simms' previous paint-based figurative practice, the photographic series that emerged from the pair's collaboration was experimental and process-based, providing a critique of Australia's still-present divides along lines of race and sexual identity, resonant with iconographic echoes of Arthur Boyd's own celebrated *Brides* series, created 75 years ago.

Overlapping their respective practices of portraiture and movement-based artistic expression, Page and Simms play themselves the roles of the two protagonists in this queer love story between two people and the landscape. Playing with the introduction of framing devices made of local timber, and atmospheric photographic manipulations, the series is imbued with a dream-like tension. Inadvertently, it recalled the theatrical surrealism of Arthur Boyd's seminal modernist suite, the conscious-stricken paintings known as *Love, Marriage and Death of a Half-Caste* (1957 - 1960). While the site of Bundanon at Shoalhaven was inextricably linked with Boyd's later sublime depictions of the landscape, the luminous 'Brides' series remain his most powerful works, expressing the artist's humanism and deep compassion for Australia's First Nations community. Respected Indigenous academic Dr Marcia Langton AO has read the series as an attempt by the artist to atone for his inheritance of wealth, land and privilege, the historical proceeds of violent colonisation.¹ A heightened allegorical drama, it presents a doomed love story between an aboriginal man and his young wife of a mixed racial background, their futile desperation dramatised through the formalised social rituals of Western society - the wedding and the funeral. Simms and Kirk's photographs, created in the present-day fractured political context, reckoning with similar notions of privilege, particularly interrogating the gains and losses of a successful same-sex marriage plebiscite and a shamefully demoralising outcome to the Voice to Parliament referendum. The traces of the artist's bodies in the landscape enact a poignant and cathartic narrative, illustrating like Boyd had, a search for love and legitimacy.

¹ Langton, M., 'Arthur Boyd: Possession, Land, Spirit', in *Arthur Boyd: Brides*, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Victoria, 2014, p.32

Fragments of a larger movement-based performance produced within the landscape, this suite of photographs distils with dramatic lyricism the exchanges of power and vulnerability between two men. Within the ancient landscape of Yuin Country, by the riverbank and amongst the trees, Simms and Page employ the multivalent symbol of the veil. Here, it takes the form of a plastic sheet, its adornment evoking the various trauma-informed barriers to intimacy particular to the queer community. It obscures the artists' reflection in the river, and trails behind them as they run away, encloses the lovers and then hangs like a wraith in the air after they have left the scene, suspended on the wooden frame. It inhibits between them the creation of true, reciprocal interaction and a respectful presence within the pristine landscape cleft by the meandering Shoalhaven river, under bright skies and in the inky darkness of night.

Presented alongside the suite of photographs is a group of recent figurative paintings by Simms, continuing his investigation into an homoerotic reframing of the classical male nude. Contorted and pushed to the edges of the picture plane, Simms' figures are unbound and in a continual process of movement, as a gentle awakening of the static, statuesque male form. This push from classical contexts and the consumption of the idealised male form has been inspired by Simms engagement with experimental movement workshops, in which he contorts his body into unexpected forms in an abstract search of re-shaping. Painted with a restricted tonal palette, the focus of Simms' aesthetic enquiry is in the creation of tension and vulnerability through tightly cropped compositions and dramatic chiaroscuro lighting.

– Lucie Reeves-Smith



Michael Simms and Kirk Page

Nothing Holds, 2025, (1/1 + 2AP)

Archival photo cotton rag paper mounted on aluminium panel,
with custom stained, hard waxed Tasmanian oak frame

Paper size 30 x 40cm (11.8 × 15.7 in)

Framed size, 34 x 44cm (13.4 × 17.3in)

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Michael Simms and Kirk Page
Procession, 2025, (1/3 + 2AP)

Archival photo cotton rag paper mounted on aluminium panel,
with custom stained, hard waxed Tasmanian oak frame

Paper size 40 x 60 cm (15.75 x 23.62 in)

Framed size, 59 x 78cm (23.23 x 30.71in)

OATO



Michael Simms and Kirk Page
Bride's Lament, 2025, (1/3 + 2AP)

Archival photo cotton rag paper mounted on aluminium panel,
with custom stained, hard waxed Tasmanian oak frame

Paper size 40 x 60 cm (15.75 x 23.62 in)

Framed size, 59 x 78cm (23.23 x 30.71 in)

OATO



Michael Simms and Kirk Page

Unsettled Bodies, 2025, (1/3 + 2AP)

Archival photo cotton rag paper mounted on aluminium panel,
with custom stained, hard waxed Tasmanian oak frame

Paper size 40 x 60 cm (15.75 x 23.62 in)

Framed size, 59 x 78cm (23.23 x 30.71 in)

OATO



Michael Simms and Kirk Page
Breathless Union, 2025, (1/3 + 2AP)

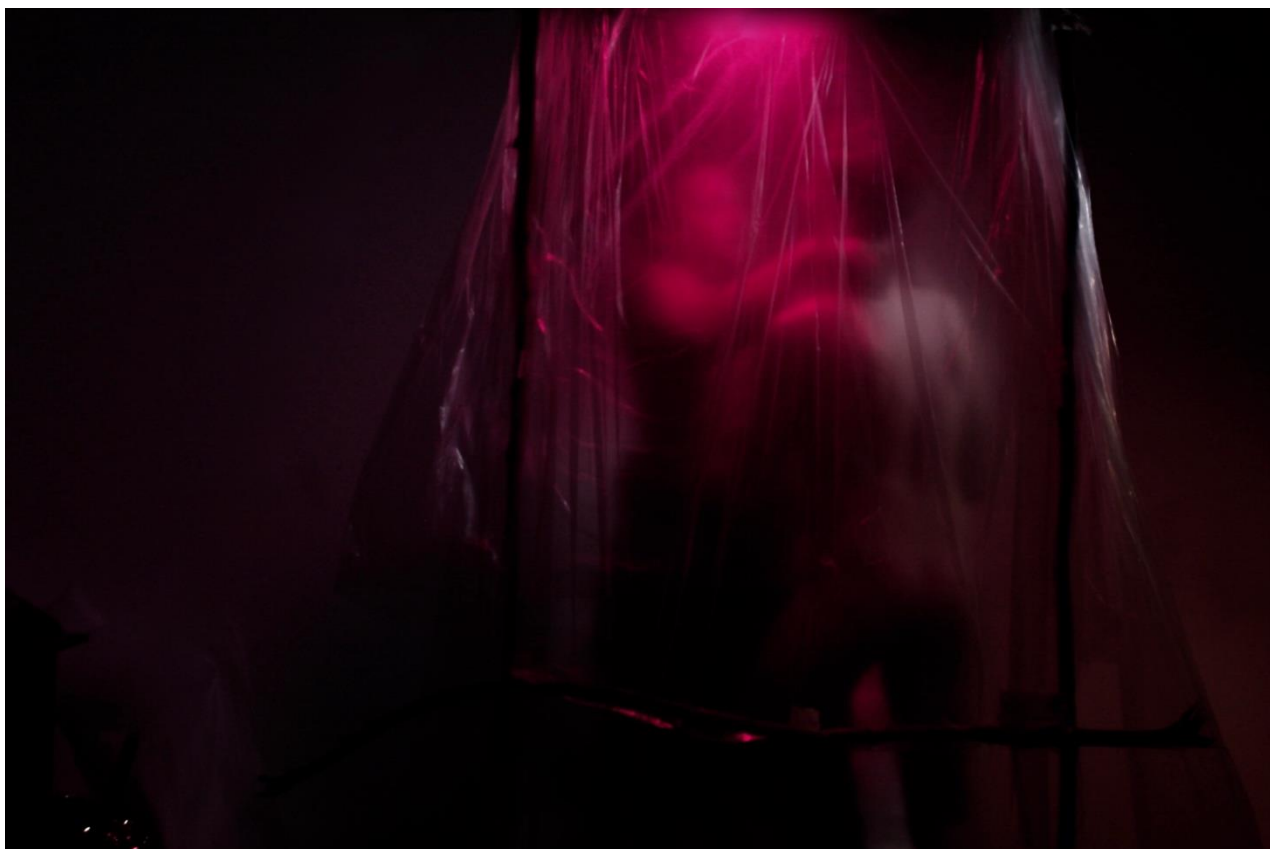
Archival photo cotton rag paper mounted on aluminium panel,
with custom stained, hard waxed Tasmanian oak frame

Paper size 40 x 60 cm (15.75 x 23.62 in)

Framed size, 59 x 78cm (23.23 x 30.71 in)

OATO





Michael Simms and Kirk Page

To Have Or To Hold, 2025, (1/3 + 2AP)

Archival photo cotton rag paper mounted on aluminium panel,
with custom stained, hard waxed Tasmanian oak frame

Paper size 40 x 60 cm (15.75 x 23.62 in)

Framed size, 59 x 78cm (23.23 x 30.71in)

OATO



Michael Simms and Kirk Page

Little Disturbances, 2025, (1/3 + 2AP)

Archival photo cotton rag paper mounted on aluminium panel,
with custom stained, hard waxed Tasmanian oak frame

Paper size 40 x 60 cm (15.75 x 23.62 in)

Framed size, 59 x 78cm (23.23 x 30.71in)

OATO



Michael Simms and Kirk Page

This Wild, 2025, (1/3 + 2AP)

Archival photo cotton rag paper mounted on aluminium panel,
with custom stained, hard waxed Tasmanian oak frame

Paper size 40 x 60 cm (15.75 x 23.62 in)

Framed size, 59 x 78cm (23.23 x 30.71 in)

OATO



Michael Simms and Kirk Page

Brute, 2025, (1/3 + 2AP)

Archival photo cotton rag paper mounted on aluminium panel,
with custom stained, hard waxed Tasmanian oak frame

Paper size 40 x 60 cm (15.75 x 23.62 in)

Framed size, 59 x 78cm (23.23 x 30.71in)

OATO

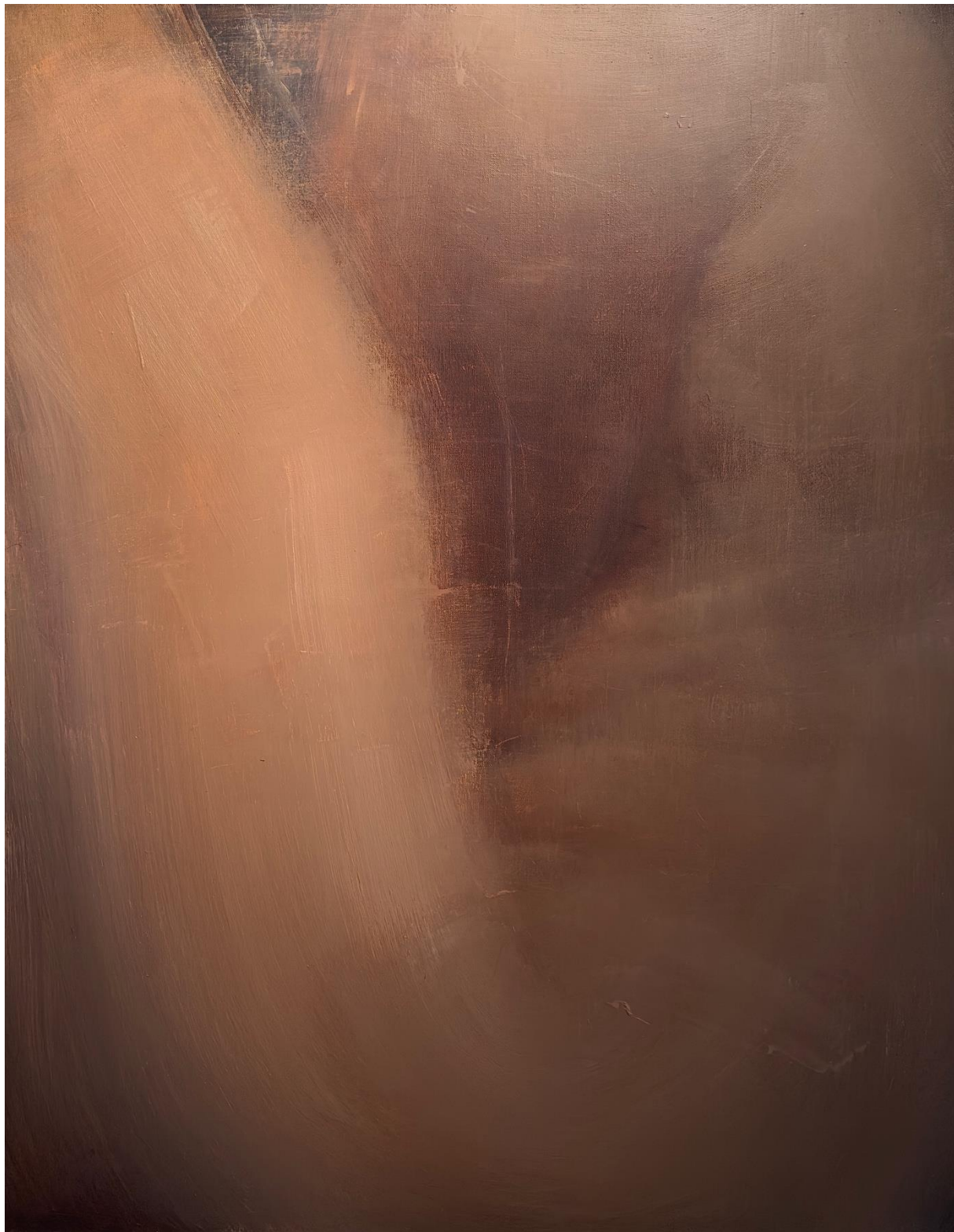




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Detail shot of framing, custom stained, hard waxed Tasmanian oak





Michael Simms

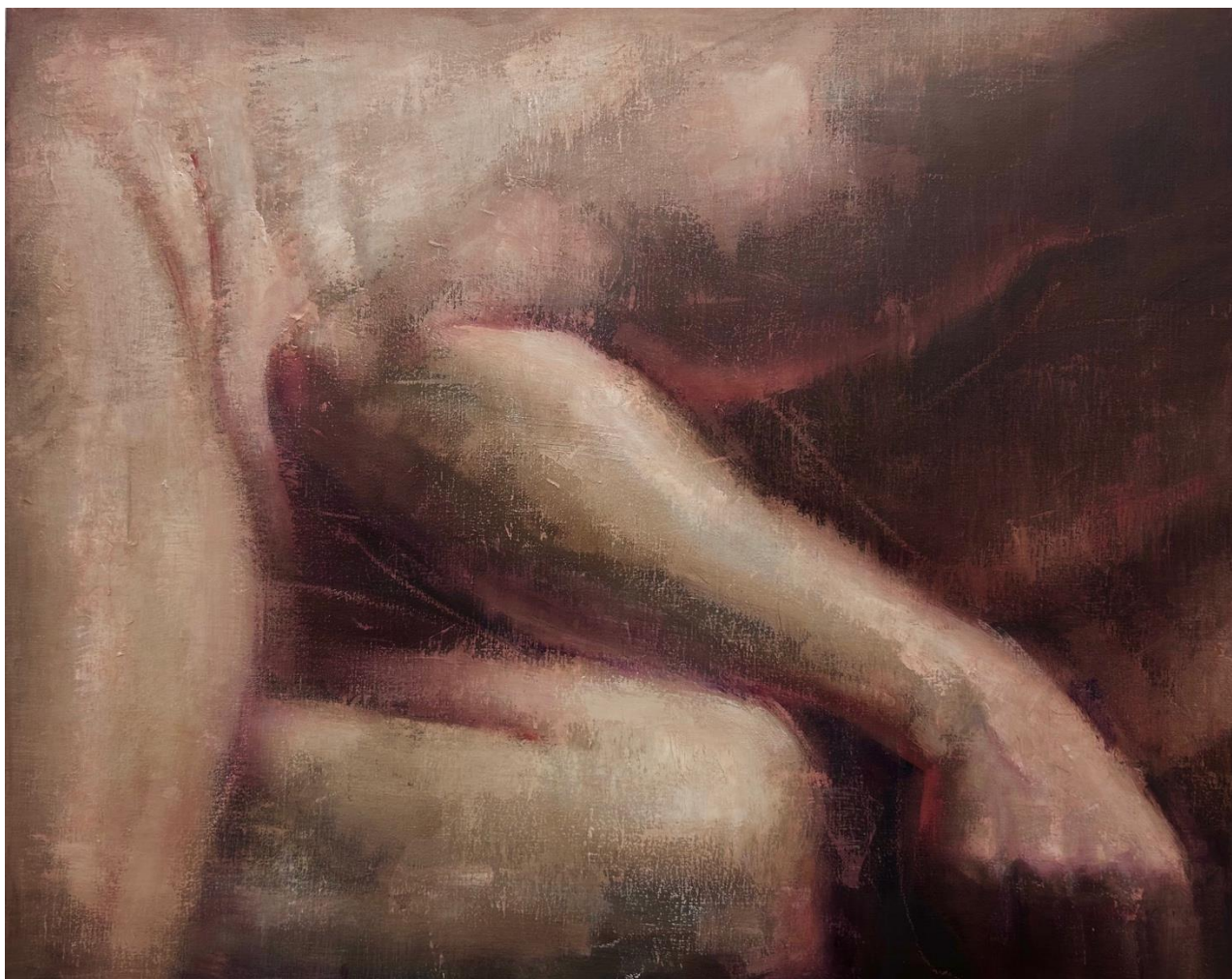
Leaning In, 2025

Oil on canvas

90 x 70 x 3 cm

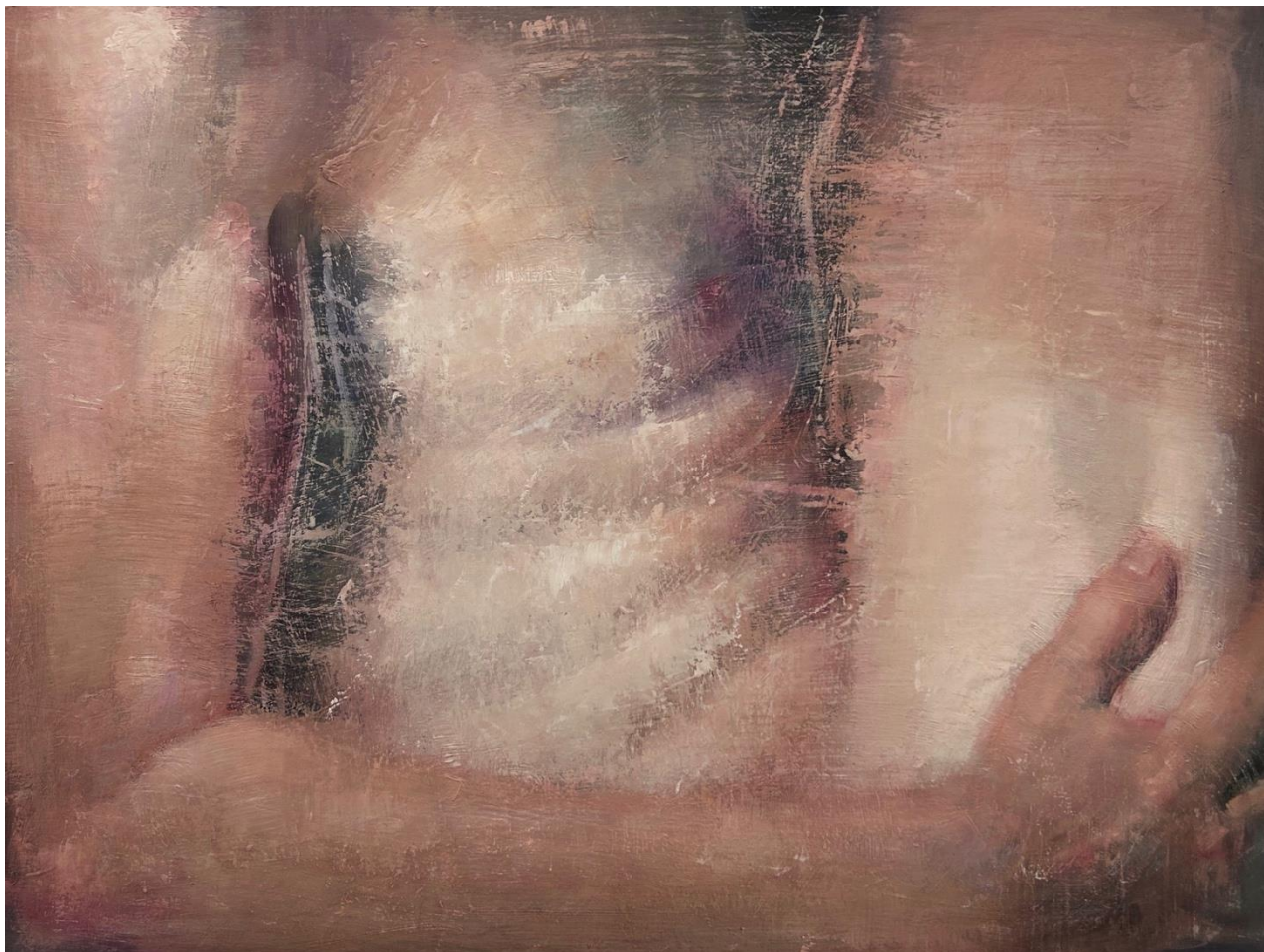
(35.43 x 27.56 x 1.18 in)

CATO



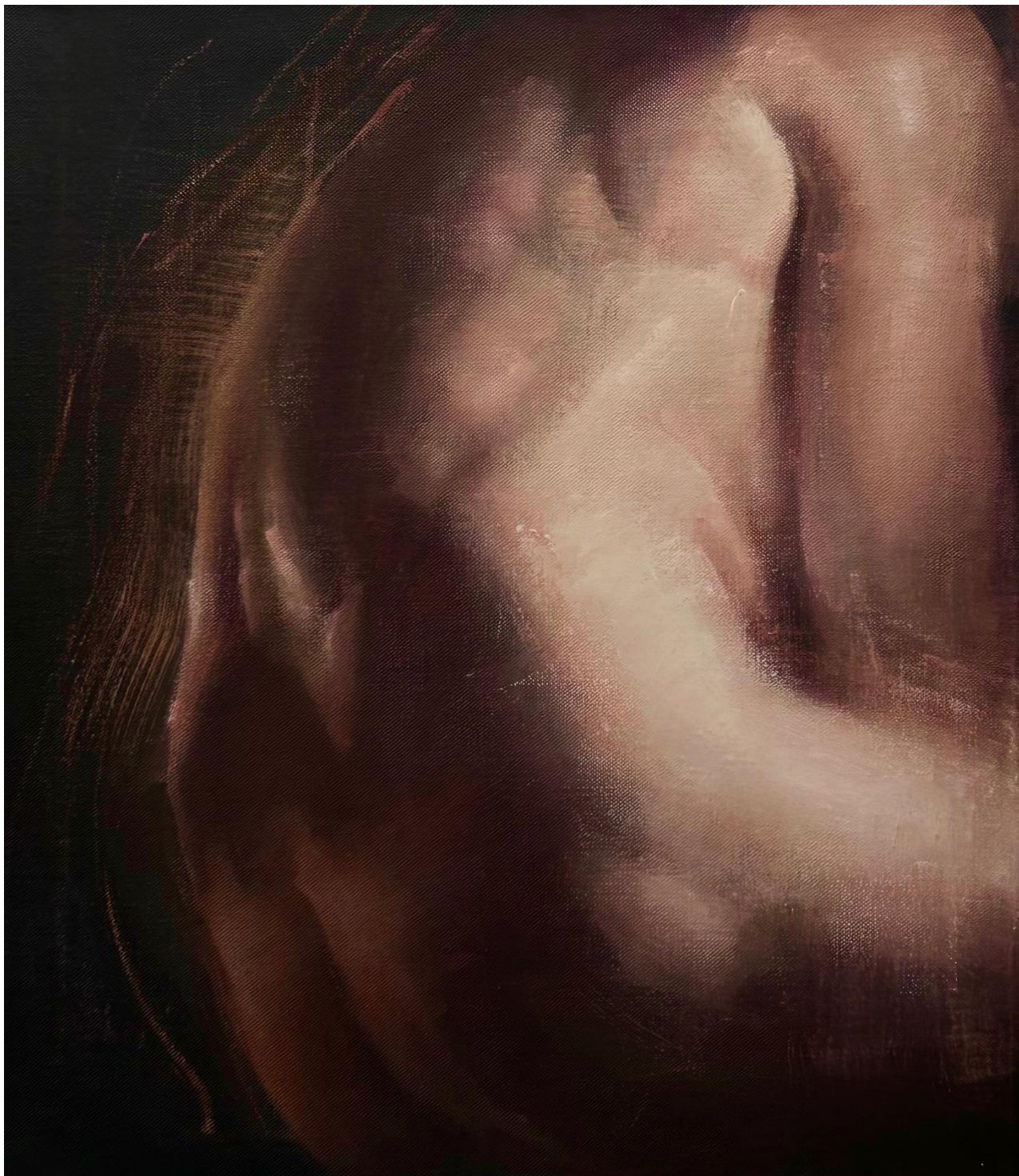
Michael Simms
Soft Territories, 2025
Oil on canvas
61 x 76 x 2 cm
(24.02 x 29.92 x 0.79 in)

CATO



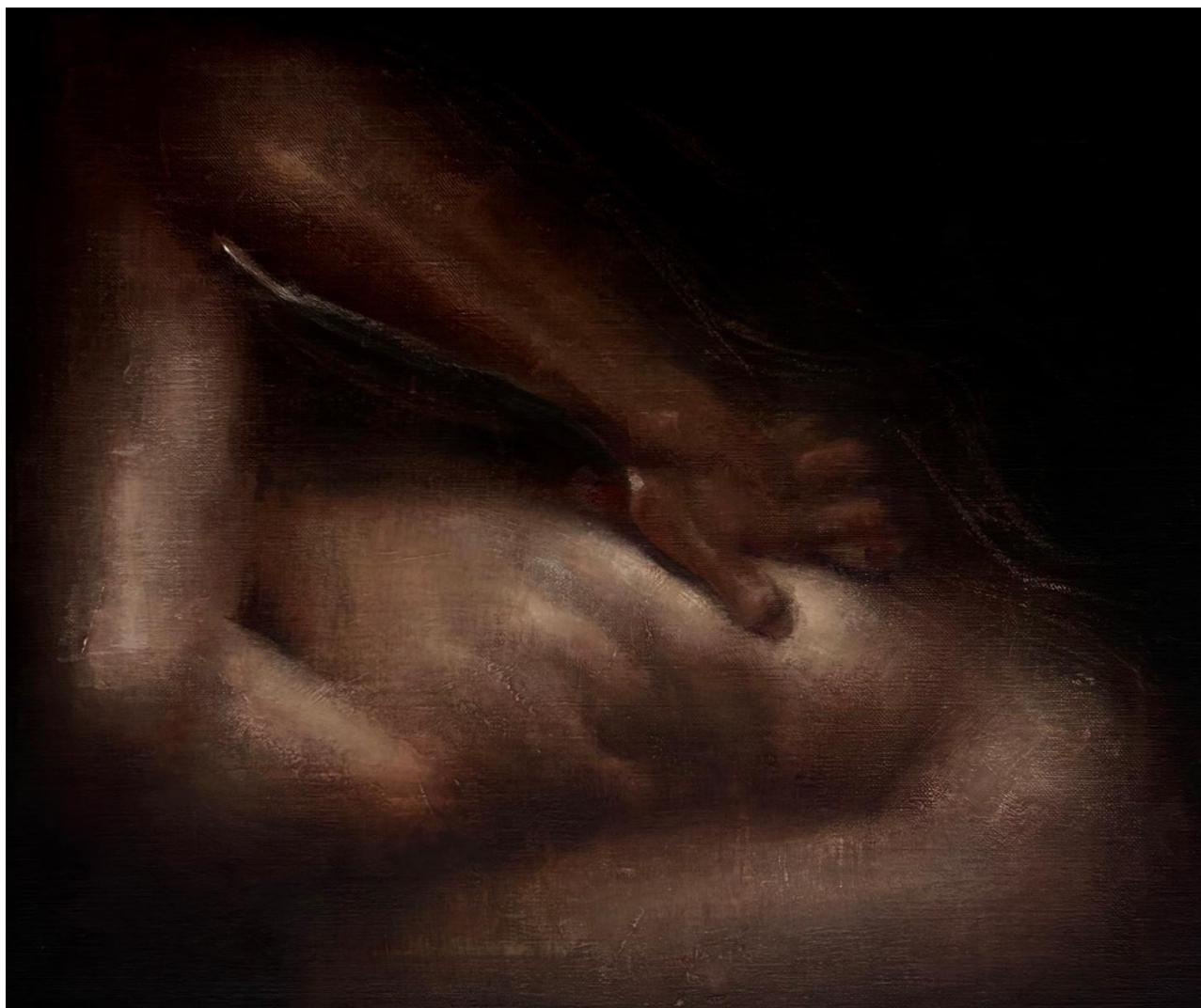
Michael Simms
Somatic Field, 2025
Oil on board
46 x 61 x 2 cm
(18.11 x 24.02 x 0.79 in)

CATO



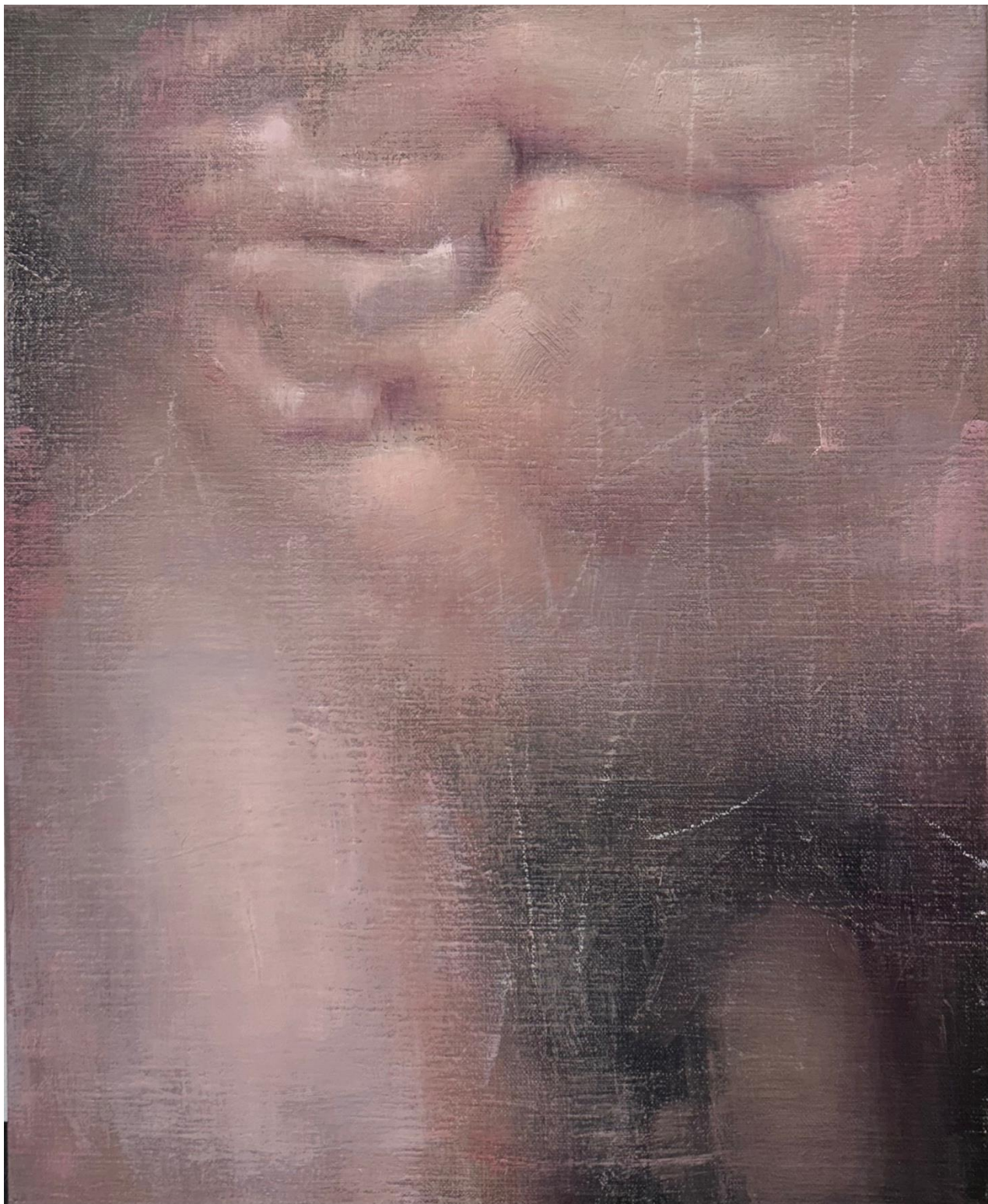
Michael Simms
Embodied, 2025
Oil on canvas
66 x 56 x 2 cm
(25.98 x 22.05 x 0.79 in)

CATO



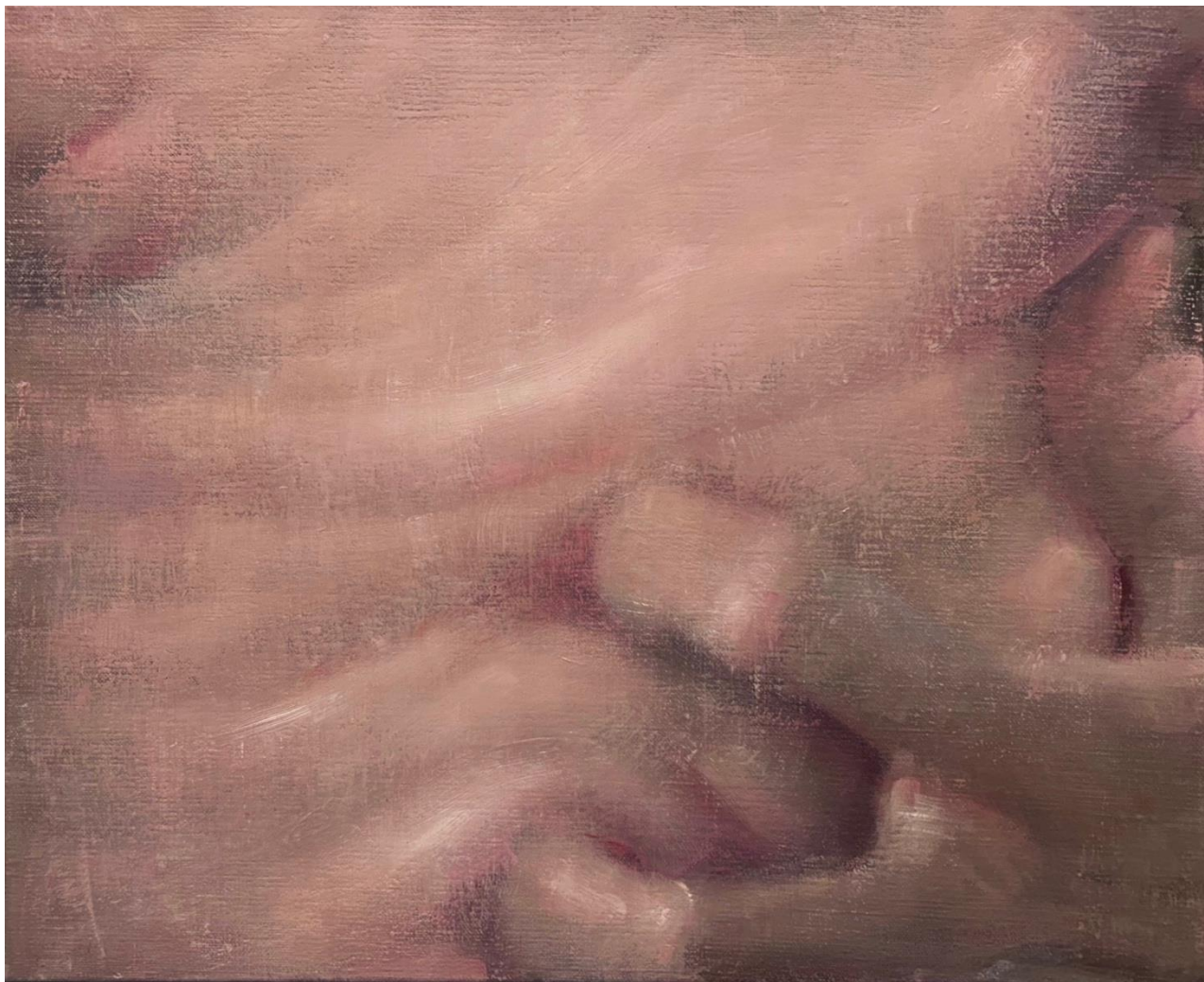
Michael Simms
Margins of Form, 2025
Oil on canvas
66 x 56 x 2 cm
(25.98 x 22.05 x 0.79 in)

CATO



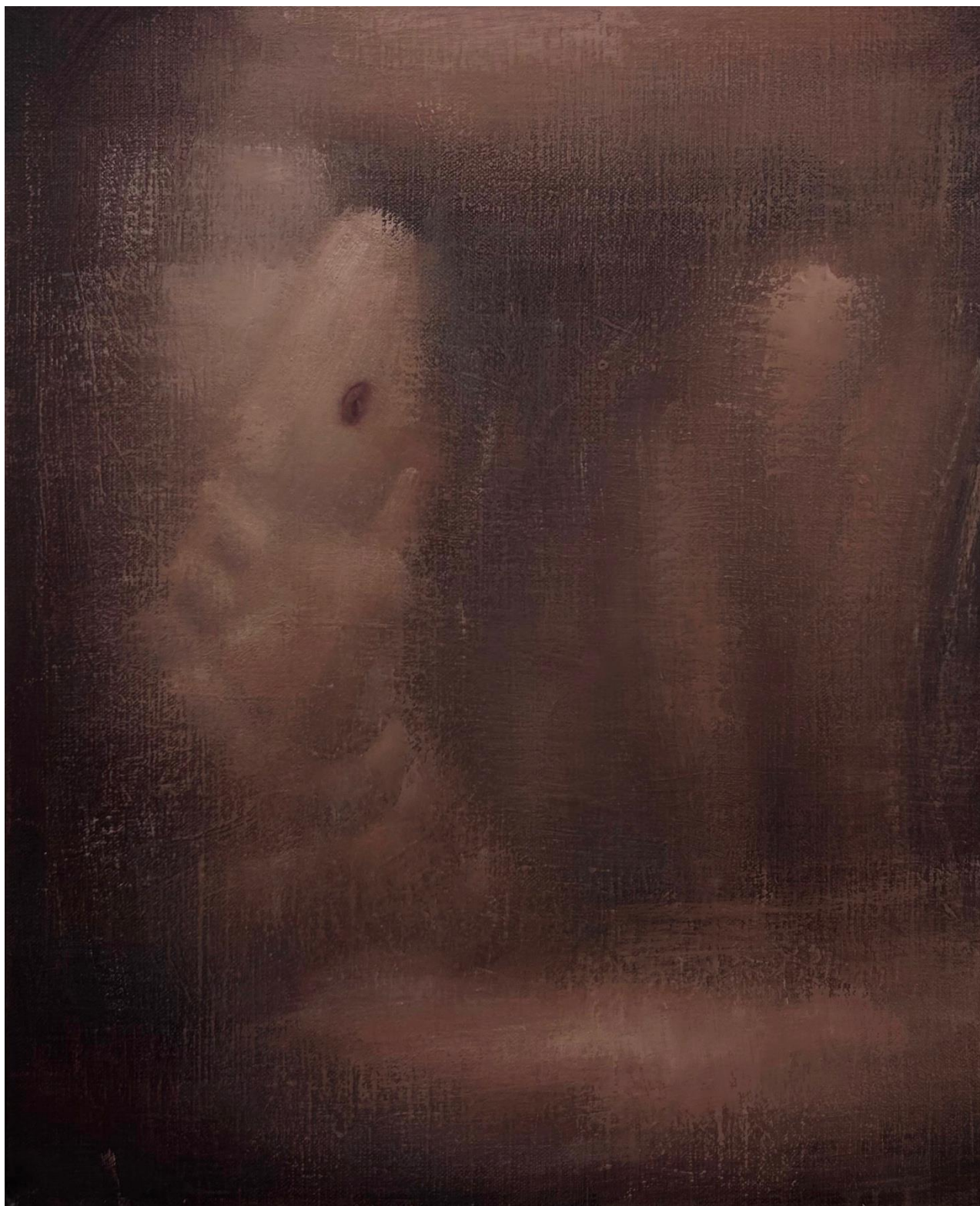
Michael Simms
Fault Lines, 2025
Oil on canvas
56 x 46 x 3 cm
(22.05 x 18.11 x 1.18 in)

CATO



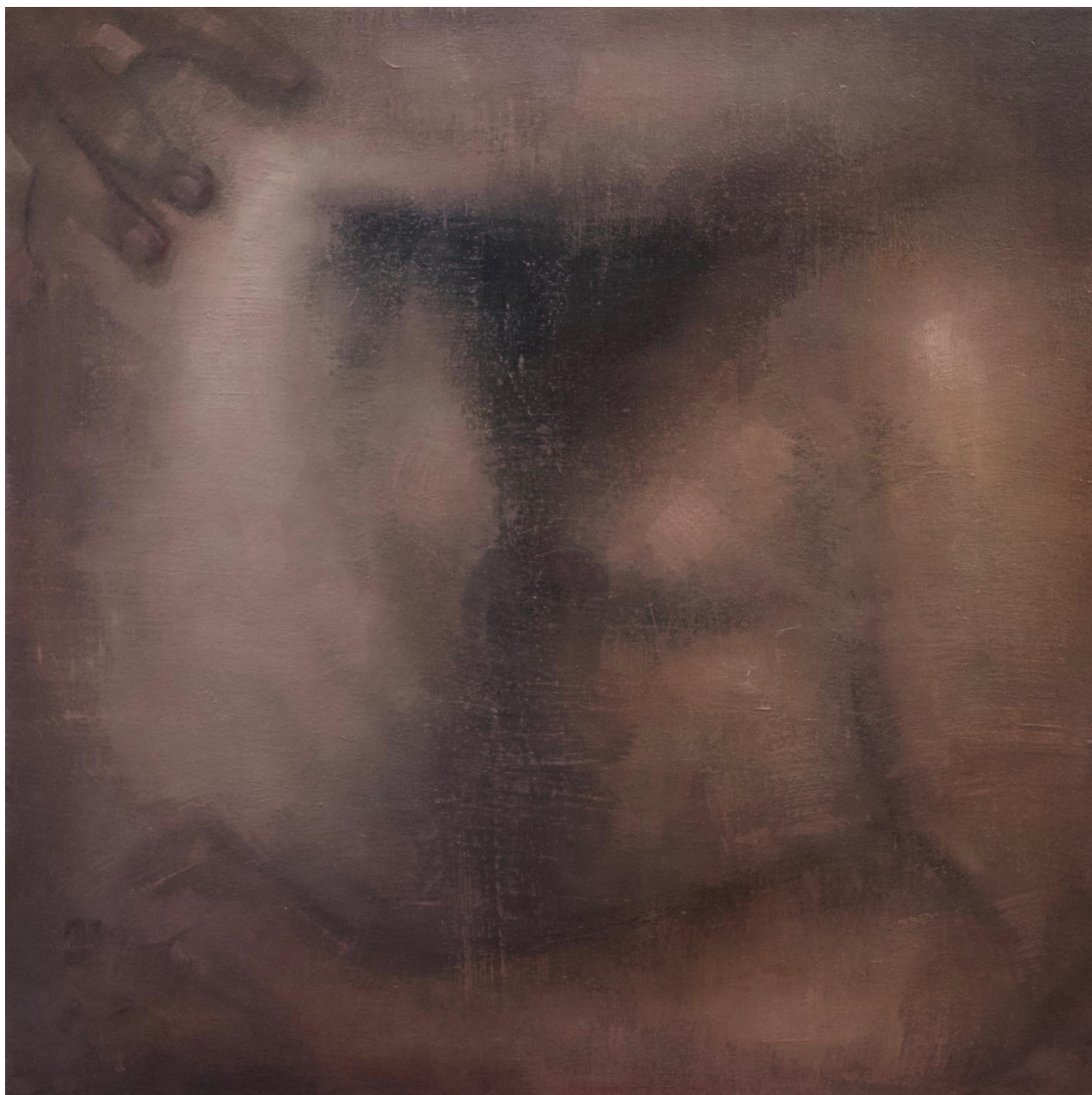
Michael Simms
Flesh Boundaries, 2025
Oil on canvas
56 x 46 x 3 cm
(22.05 x 18.11 x 1.18 in)

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Michael Simms
Soft Boundary, 2025
Oil on canvas
56 x 46 x 3.50 cm
(22.05 x 18.11 x 1.38 in)

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Michael Simms

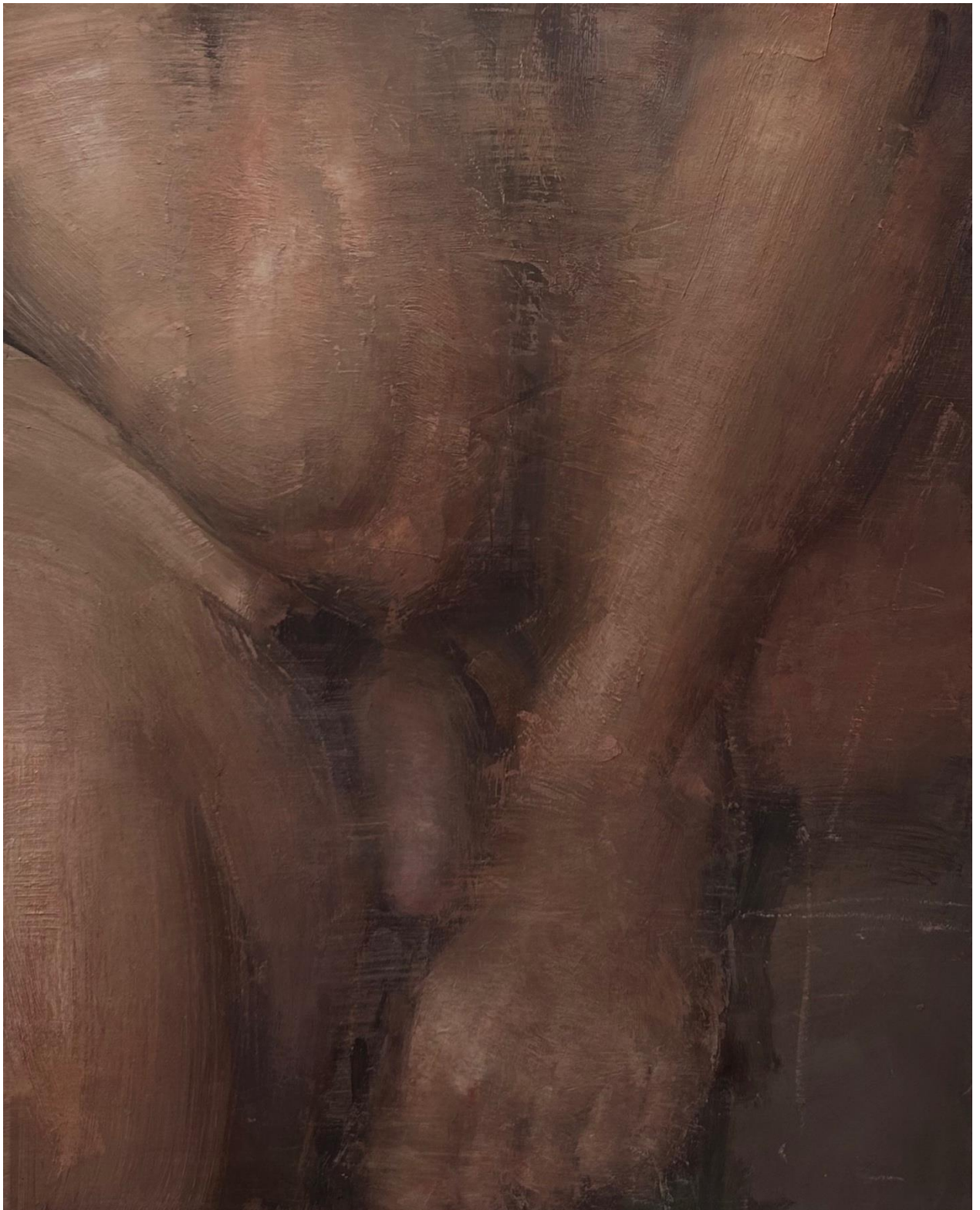
Forma, 2025

Oil on canvas

51 x 51 x 3.50 cm

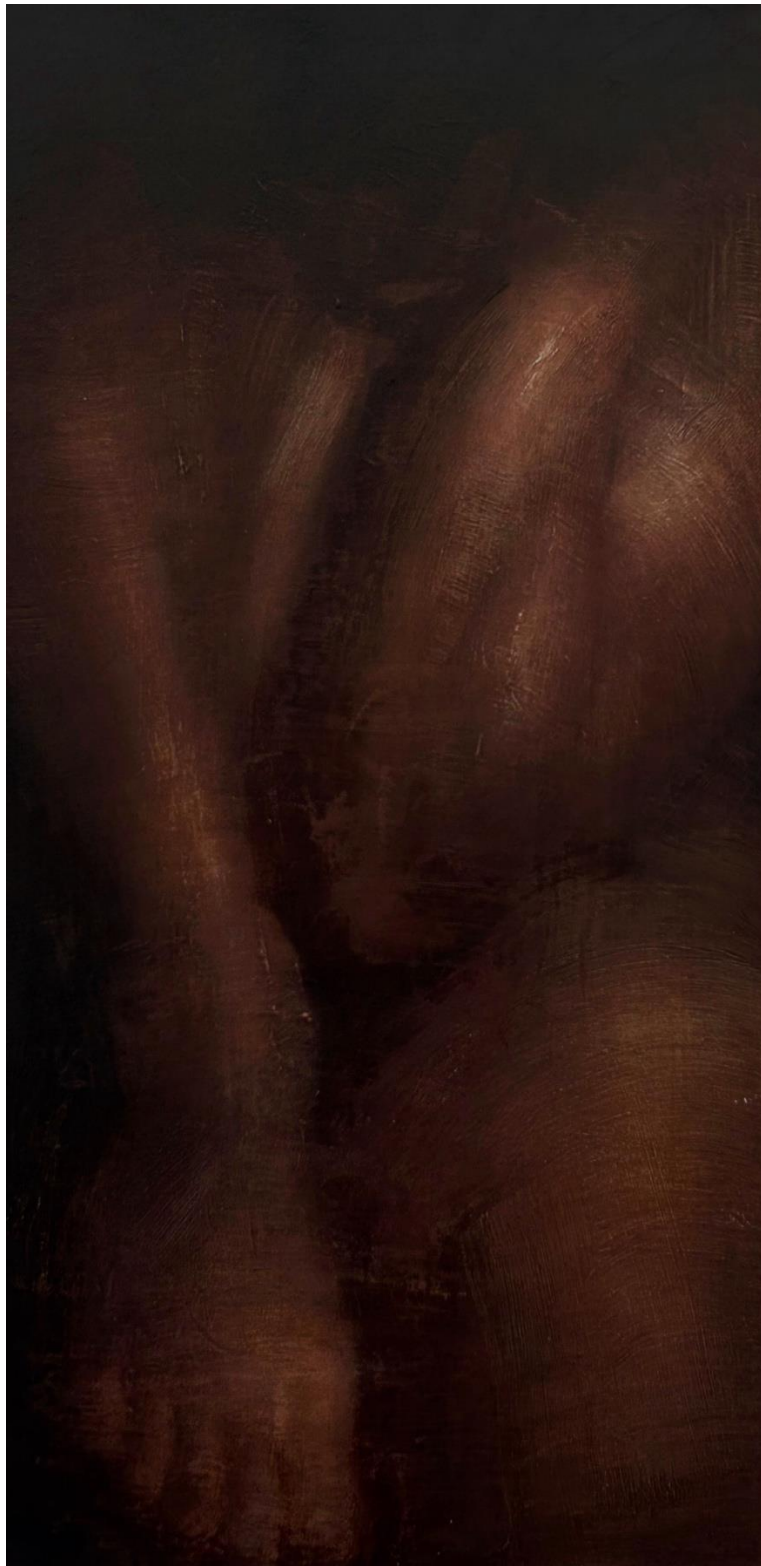
(20.08 x 20.08 x 1.38 in)

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Michael Simms
Unposed, 2025
Oil on board
50 x 40 x 2.50 cm
(19.69 x 15.75 x 0.98 in)

CATO



Michael Simms

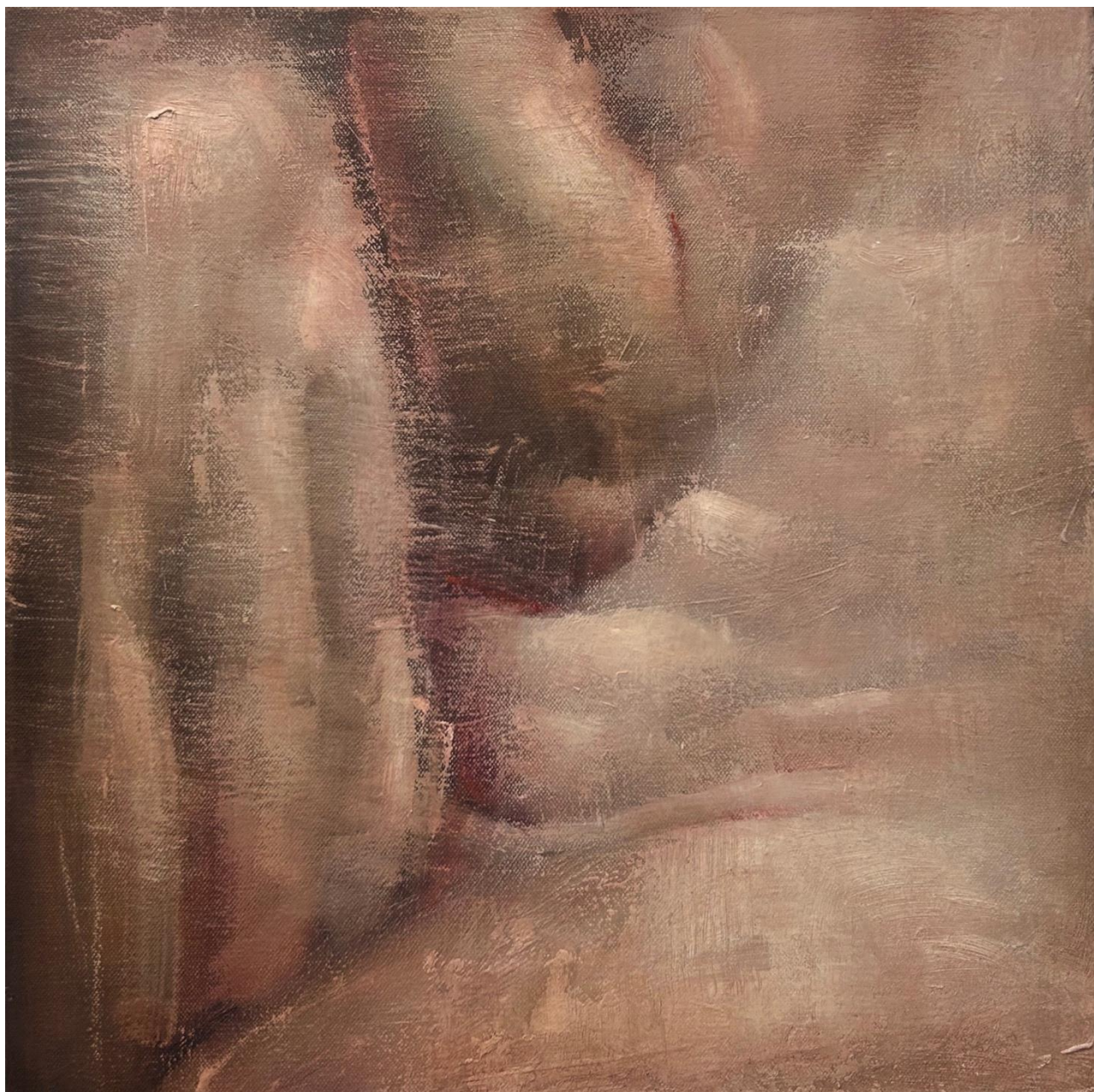
Body Remembering Itself, 2025

Oil on board

60 x 30 x 3 cm

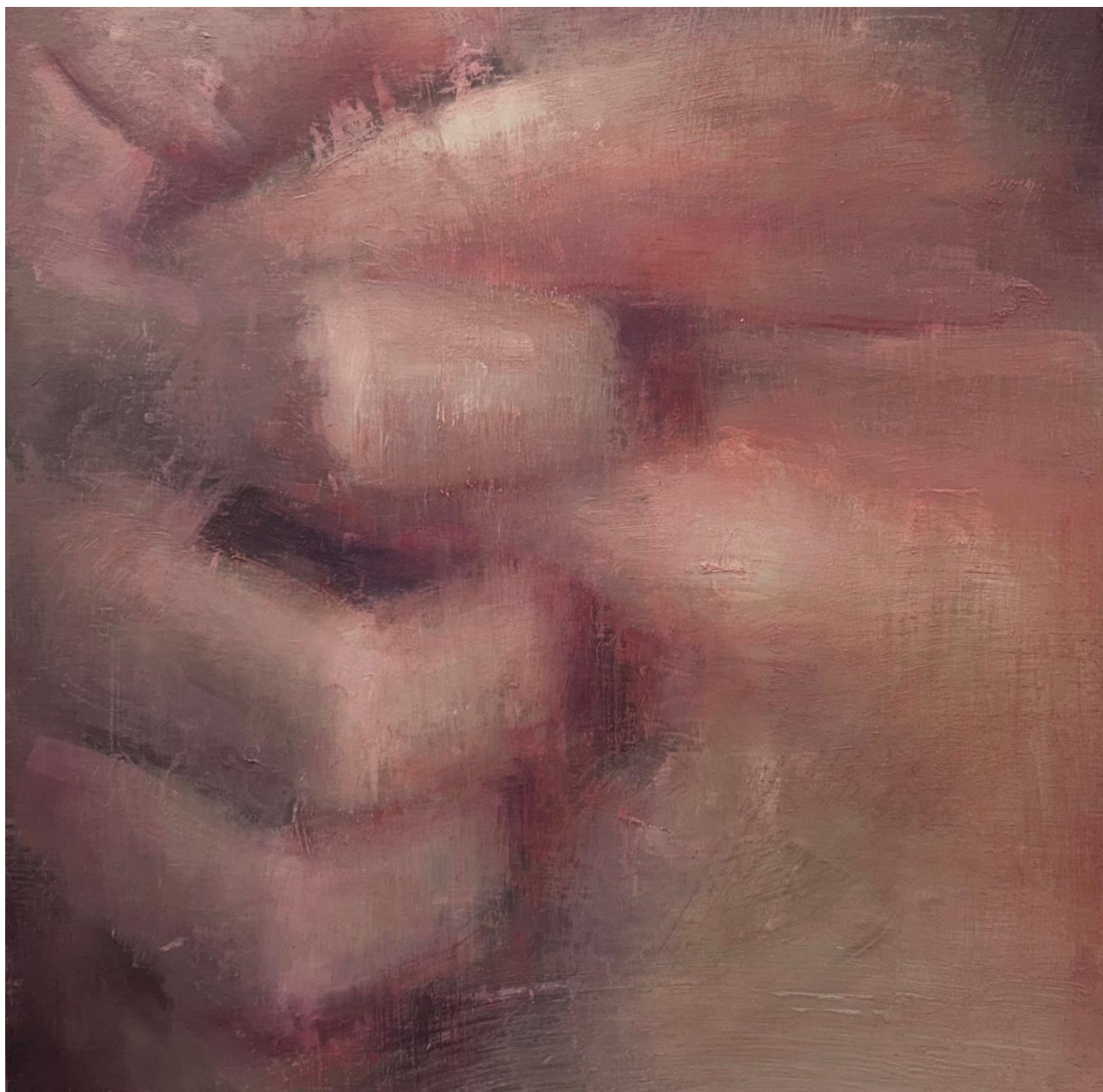
(23.62 x 11.81 x 1.18 in)

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Michael Simms
Surface Tension, 2025
Oil on canvas
46 x 46 x 3.50 cm
(18.11 x 18.11 x 1.38 in)

CATO



Michael Simms

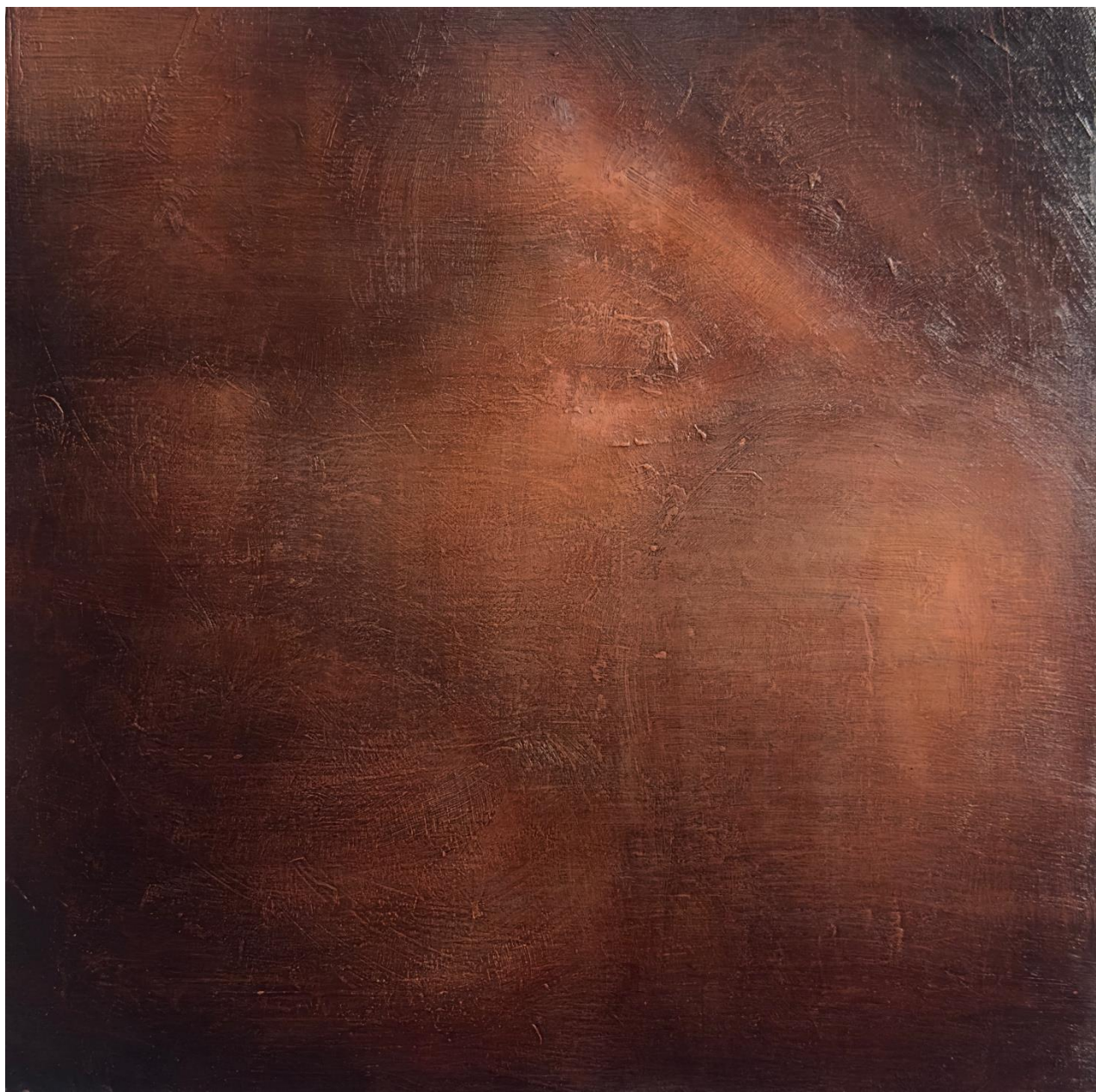
Pulse, 2025

Oil on board

40 x 40 x 2.50 cm

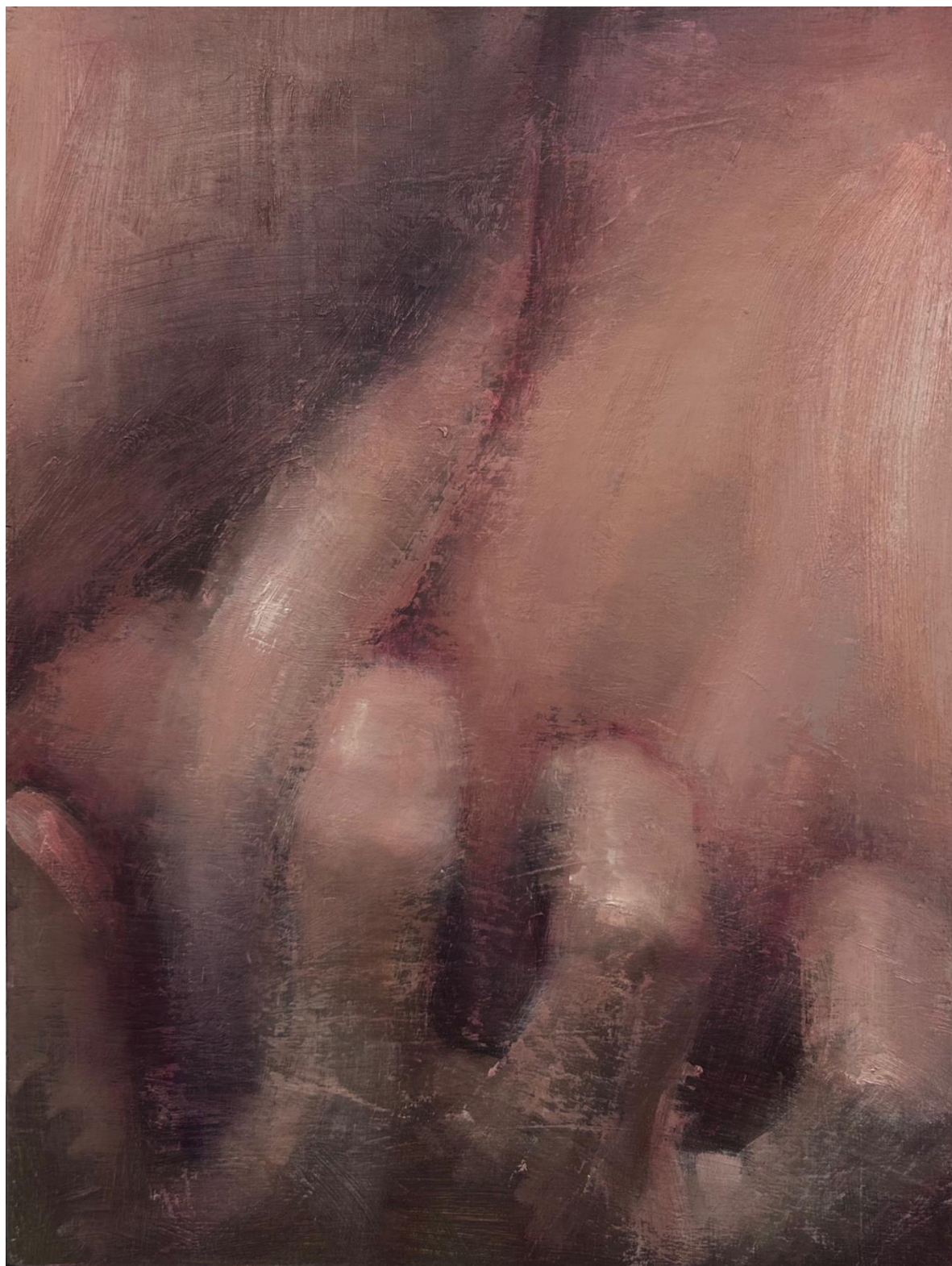
(15.75 x 15.75 x 0.98 in)

CATO



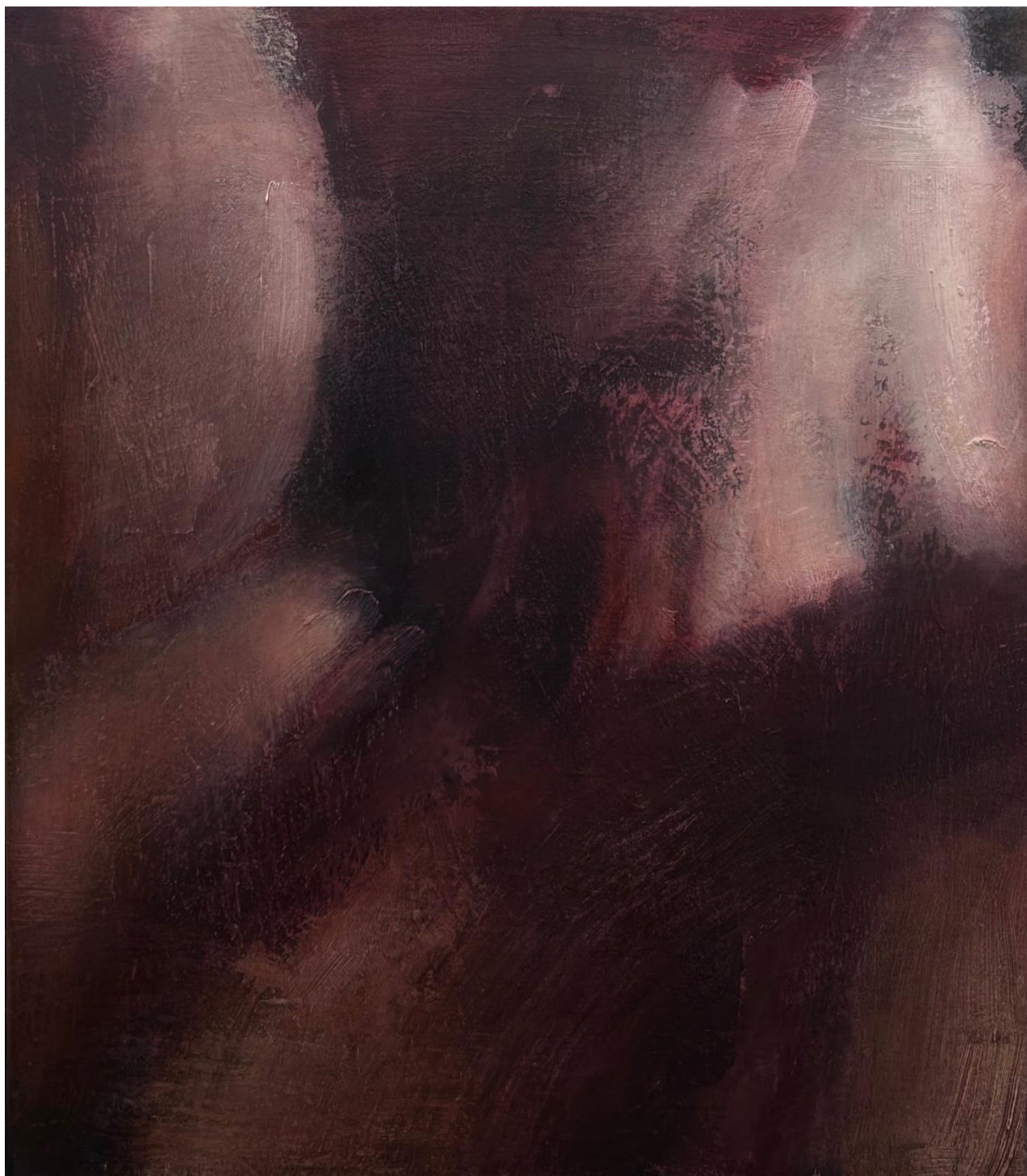
Michael Simms
Compress, 2025
Oil on board
40 x 40 x 2.50 cm
(15.75 x 15.75 x 0.98 in)

CATO



Michael Simms
In The Fold, 2025
Oil on board
40 x 30 x 3 cm
(15.75 x 11.81 x 1.18 in)

CATO



Michael Simms

Turning In, 2025

Oil on canvas

35 x 30 x 3 cm

(13.78 x 11.81 x 1.18 in)

CATO



CV– Michael Simms

Born 1987, Adelaide, Australia

Living and practicing in Sydney / Warrane, Australia

QUALIFICATIONS

The Julian Ashton Art School, Recipient of the Sydney Mechanic's School of Art Scholarship, 2011 - 2014

Flinders University, Bachelor of Behavioural Science (Psychology) and Bachelor of Arts, 2006 – 2011

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2025– *Body Talk*, Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne

2025– *Stages*, New England Regional Art Museum

2023– *Charged*, Lethbridge Gallery, Brisbane

2023– *Stages: Sydney World Pride*, Woollahra Gallery at Redleaf, Sydney

2023– *Personas*, Frances Keevil, Sydney

2022– *Memories and Dust*, Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne

2022– *Stages*, Manning Regional Gallery, NSW

2021– *Distance*, Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne

2021– *Epoch*, Frances Keevil, Sydney

2020– *Drive*, Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne

2018– *Interfacing*, Stanley Street Gallery, Sydney

2017– *Brink*, Cambridge Studio Gallery, Melbourne

2016– *Reverie*, Artworld Studio Gallery, Brisbane

SELECT GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2025– *Intro*, Eloise Cato Gallery, Sydney

2025– *The Figure*, Lethbridge Gallery, Brisbane

2024– *Horizons*, Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne

2023– *Lives of Their Own*, Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne

2022– *Glow*, Lethbridge Gallery, Brisbane

2022– *Wanderlust*, Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne

2021– *Home*, Lethbridge Gallery, Brisbane

2020– *A Passion Shared*, The ELLIOTT EYES COLLECTION, Maitland Regional Gallery, NSW

2020– *Artists to Watch*, Lethbridge Gallery, Brisbane

2020– *Still*, Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne

2019– *Nude*, Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne

2019– *On The Fringe*, Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne

2019– *Equus*, Frances Keevil Gallery, Sydney

2018– *Undercurrents*, Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne

2018– *Temporal*, Lethbridge Gallery, Brisbane

2017– *Exploration 17*, Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne

RESIDENCIES

2024– Bundanon Artist in Residence Program

2024– Gang Gang Residency Program

2021– The Broken Hill Art Exchange

2019– The New York Academy of Art, Summer Undergraduate Residency

SELECTED AWARDS

2025– Finalist, Brisbane Portrait Prize, State Library of Queensland, QLD

2024– Finalist, John Leslie Prize for Australian Landscape Painting, Gippsland Regional Art Gallery, VIC

2024– Finalist, Fisher’s Ghost Art Award, Campbelltown Arts Centre, Sydney

2024– Finalist, Calleen Art Award, Cowra Regional Art Gallery, NSW

2023– Finalist, Archibald Prize, The Art Gallery of NSW

2023– Finalist, Sunshine Coast Art Prize, Caloundra Regional Gallery, QLD

2023– Winner, Packers’ Prize at the Kennedy Art Prize, The Royal Art Society of South Australia, SA

2022– Finalist, Darling Portrait Prize, The National Portrait Gallery, ACT

2022– Finalist, Mosman Art Prize, Mosman Art Gallery, NSW

2022– Finalist, Mudgee Portrait Prize, Mudgee Arts Precinct, NSW

2021– Finalist, Calleen Art Award, Cowra Regional Gallery, NSW

2021– Finalist, Clayton Utz Art Award, Clayton Utz, QLD

2021– Finalist, Shirley Hannan Portrait Prize, Bega Valley Regional Gallery, NSW

2020– Finalist, Percivals Portrait Prize, Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, QLD

2020– Finalist, Global Art Awards, Shanghai, China

2019– Highly Commended, Naked and Nude Art Prize, Manning Regional Gallery, NSW

2019– Highly Commended, Melt Portrait Prize, Brisbane Powerhouse, QLD

2019– Finalist, Eutick Memorial Still Life Award, Project Artspace, NSW

2019– Finalist, 14th International ARC Salon, Art Renewal Center, New Jersey, United States.

2019– Finalist, Fisher’s Ghost Art Award, Campbelltown Arts Centre, Sydney, NSW

2018– Winner, Young Artist Prize, the Royal Art Society of NSW

2018– Winner, SBS Portrait Prize, Southern Buoy Studios, VIC

2018– Winner, EBNA Portrait Prize and People’s Choice Award, YSC Consultancy (Accenture), NSW

2018– Finalist, Kilgour Art Prize, Newcastle Art Gallery, NSW

2018– Finalist, Hurford Hardwood Portrait Prize, Lismore Regional Gallery, NSW

2017– Finalist, Doug Moran National Portrait Prize, Juniper Hall, Sydney

2017– Finalist, Lyn McCrea Memorial Drawing Prize, Noosa Regional Gallery, QLD

2017– Highly Commended, Lethbridge 10000 Small Scale Art Award, Lethbridge Gallery, Brisbane

2017– Finalist, Fisher’s Ghost Art Award, Campbelltown Arts Centre, Sydney

2016– Winner, Cliftons Sydney Art Prize and Cliftons People's Choice Award, Sydney

- 2016– Finalist, Blacktown Art Prize, Blacktown Arts Centre, Sydney, NSW
- 2016– Finalist, Black Swan Prize for Portraiture, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, WA
- 2016– Finalist, Emerging Artist Award, Fortyfivedownstairs, Melbourne, VIC
- 2016– Finalist, Calleen Art Award, Cowra Regional Gallery, Cowra, NSW
- 2016– Winner, Cambridge Studio Gallery Portrait Prize, Melbourne, VIC

COLLECTIONS

- Maitland Regional Art Gallery, NSW
- The Elliott Eyes Collection, Sydney
- Accenture (YSC) Collection, Sydney
- The Thomas Keneally Centre at the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, Sydney
- St Patrick's College, Strathfield, Sydney
- Champagnat Catholic College, Sydney
- Cliftons Art Prize Collection, Sydney
- The M2M Collection, Sydney

SELECT PUBLICATIONS

- 2025– Art Almanac, 'Michael Simms: Body Talk', Dr Joseph Brennan, June 2025.
- 2024– About Face by Amber Creswell Bell, Thames & Hudson, September 2024.
- 2024– 'The Little Book of Art Essays', Flinders Lane Gallery, February 2024.
- 2022– The Adelaide Advertiser, 'Fielding an Electric Talent', June 2022.
- 2022– The Manning River Times, 'Acclaimed Portrait Artist Speaks at Opening of New Exhibition', September 2022.
- 2018– The Music, Boon, Maxim, 'Top Talent in 2018', January 2018.
- 2018– Beautiful Bizarre Magazine, Gregson, Caitlyn, 'Interfacing', 4 September 2018.
- 2017– 'Talking With Painters' Podcast, Episode #23, Stoljar, Maria, 25 May 2017.
- 2017– The Guardian Australia, Harmon, Steph, 'Doug Moran portrait prize 2017 finalists: from Isla Fisher to Ahn Do', 11 October 2017.
- 2017– The Daily Review, 'Doug Moran Portrait Prize Finalists 2017', 11 October 2017.
- 2017– The Contemporary Art Awards, Ong, Annette, 'On The Periphery', March 2017.
- 2017– Artospective, Sing, Manav, 'Paintings by Michael Simms from Australia', 21 August 2017.
- 2016– The North Shore Times, 'Drawing On Inspirations', 20 April 2016.
- 2016– Western Sydney Local Health District News, 'Sydney Artist Paints Westmead Doctors In New Light', 19 January 2016.
- 2016– Parramatta Advertiser, Morris, Cathy, 'Portraits a Window into Surgeon Role', 27 January 2016.

CV– Kirk Page

Born 1973, Based on Bundjalung Country, Northern Rivers NSW

A Munanjali man with Badu Island lineage, Zenadth Kes - Torres Strait Islands with settler heritage, Polish & German.

Interdisciplinary Performer - Actor, Dancer, Director, Writer, Movement Consultant and Artist

QUALIFICATIONS

Trained in Dance / Performance, National Aboriginal & Islander Skills Development Association (NAISDA) 1994 - 1996

Associate Director, Northern Rivers Performing Arts (NORPA) 2016 - 2019

RECENT WORK

2023 - 2026 — Smoke (Creative development)

2025 — Dear Son (Performer)

2025 — Love Stories, Stage adaptation of Trent Dalton (Performer)

2022 — Wudjang: Not the Past (Performer)

SELECTED THEATRE CREDITS

Sydney Theatre Company

The Harp in the South

A Midsummer Night's Dream

The Sunshine Club

Belvoir Street Theatre

Conversations with the Dead

The Dreamers

NORPA

Djurra (Director)

Horse's Mouth (Director, with Beyond Empathy)

Dreamland (Performer)

Griffin Theatre Company

Dogged (Movement Consultant)

Swim (Movement Consultant)

Silent Disco

Bell Shakespeare

My Girranjundji

Merrigong Theatre Company

Death in Bowengabbie

Malthouse Theatre

One Night the Moon

Queensland Theatre

Black Diggers

Black Swan State Theatre Company

Corrugation Road

Ilbjerri Theatre Company

Coranderk play reading

Blak Rights (Dramaturg & Director)

Melbourne International Arts Festival

My Lovers' Bones

Priscilla Queen of the Desert, The Musical

CDP Theatre Producers

Snugglepote & Cuddlepote

Kooemba Jdarra Indigenous Performing Arts

Binny's Backyard

Going to the Island

Bangarra Dance Theatre

Wudjang: Not the Past

Legs on the Wall

4 on the Floor

Runners Up

EORA Crossing

On the Case

Ensemble Dancer (1995–1998)

SCREEN & FILM CREDITSTelevision

2018 — Mystery Road, Season 2

2013 — Redfern Now, Series 2

Film

2009 — Bran Nue Dae (Associate Choreographer)

2006 — Shadow Play

DIRECTING, CHOREOGRAPHY & MOVEMENT

- 2025–Present — Ephemera (Co-creator & Director/Writer Ephemera)
- 2022 — Janet's Vagrant Love by Elaine Crombie
- 2021 — Movement Director, Dogged - Griffin Theatre Sydney
- 2021 — Movement Director, Swim - Performing Lines
- 2019 — Co Devisor/Director Horse's Mouth (NORPA / Beyond Empathy)
- 2016–2019 — Associate Director, Northern Rivers Performing Arts
- 2017 — Writer/Director Djurra (NORPA)
- 2006 — Indigenous Section, Melbourne Commonwealth Games (Choreographer)

AWARDS

- 2013 — Logie Nominee: Most Outstanding Actor (Redfern Now)
- 2008 — Green Room award Priscilla Queen of the Desert

MENTORING & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 2010s–Present — Mentor, Bangarra Rekindling Youth Dance Program
- 2010s–Present — Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Youth Engagement with Beyond Empathy
- 2016–2019 — NORPA Associate Director Youth & Community Programs