

ALEX KANEVSKY

Embrace, 2015
Oil on Wood, 20 x 20 in



COURTESY DOLBY CHADWICK GALLERY

EIREENE NEALAND

That Season's Exchanges

Outside, on the balcony, this is us: two socks hanging from a skinny clothesline. It's getting colder outside. The wind makes us flap. There's nothing but little wooden pins to hold us up by our toes. Two friends have already fallen this year. Both suicides. One because of a car.

"Not worth fixing," the mechanic said.

Matt, innocent as he was, took the comment as being about himself. Already he could hear the sound of the tow truck, its deafening chop, calling attention to his all-too-obvious helplessness; already he knew how the driver would look, a taut-faced man with giant pores, skin ruined by methamphetamines and prison food. Nothing Matt could do would help, and why should he help? The man'd had more good times than Matt ever did. Indeed, as soon as Matt hopped into the passenger seat, the mechanic began to chatter on, hopeful but cynical about being redeemed. For more money than Matt could pay, he dragged Matt's broken-down heap of metal to a private parking lot that Matt didn't own. Safe from the police, but not from the landlord.

These days, you can't even abandon your troubles on the side of the road.

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Because where is she now, Nadezhda? Bulgaria, if you know where that is. She looks out the window and sees birds flocking past. The last of this summer's swallows, she thinks, but they are not. They are grey pigeons, the same rumple-feathered ones that curl up on her windowsill, attracted to whatever heat leaks through the window panes, whatever protection from the wind her wall allows.

When she opens the window to offer bread, they flee. Why shouldn't they?

She, a former squatter with shaggy bangs and blue-bleached hair, has come here to test her survival skills. Yes, a bit of partying is involved. Her bangs lie flat on her forehead and, given the distance of an actor's gaze, she'll pose in a stance like she's ready to punch.

"It's capoeira!" she'll say when a thug grabs her backpack and runs.

These days, there aren't any fighters, only a dance of adjusted desires.

"Be in the moment," she'll scream after she curtails