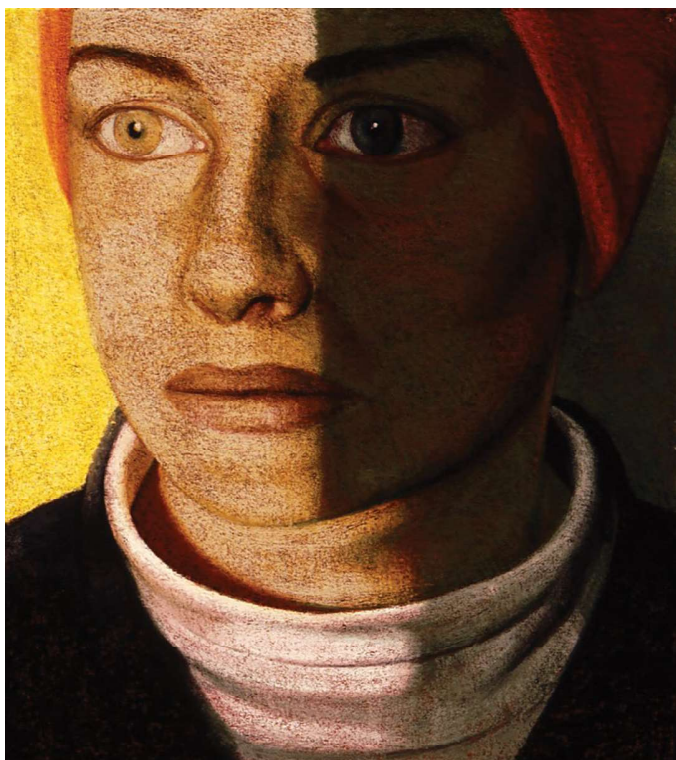


## SUSAN MOORE

*Mannequin*, 1991  
Oil and Paint Stick on Paper, 80 x 70 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST

## DAVID DENNY

### Leaf, Flower, Boll

**O**n a hot July afternoon, I slip into the air-conditioned classic movie theater. The orchestra seats are packed, but up in the balcony there are only a few others besides me, and we are spread out, each in his own little zone of popcorn and soda and Good & Plenty.

The movie is a depression-era drama, set on a dilapidated farm in the Deep South. A widowed sister has come to live with her brother and his wife, who are struggling to bring the cotton in on time. In the opening scene, as the sister steps off the train clutching her carpetbag, a hail-storm sweeps through, damaging the crops and prompting the locals to wonder aloud if the sister has perhaps cast some sort of curse upon their little town.

The sultry heat that follows the hail makes it impossible to work through the afternoon hours. The husband rises well before dawn and works hard through the morning. His wife and sister shoulder all the house and barn chores. It's an impossible life, but life nevertheless. To top it off, the locusts are coming—a plague-sized brood sweeping down from the north.

There resides an unspoken tension between the sister and her brother, but the nature of the problem is never made clear. The brother has made room for the sister in his home but not in his heart. The wife makes subtle attempts at diplomacy, but neither the sister nor the brother seems interested in airing the problem, much less working toward a resolution. They labor in stoical silence.

I drift off to sleep, chin on chest. The movie becomes my dream. With the locust cloud on the distant horizon, the sister lugs an ax from barn to house. She goes inside. The dream camera never enters the house. It is fixed, for the moment, on a long tripod shot with the house on the left and the barn on the right. The large, dusty expanse between the buildings fills most of the frame, with that ominous cloud of insects occupying a gradually darkening piece of the sky.

After a long silence, noises can be heard from within, but they are indistinct, no more significant than those coming from the barn ... horses shuffling, pigs snorting (or is that me snoring?), a muffled cry, a sudden rooster. Here and there a small twister of dust picks up and settles down.

The musical soundtrack is a moody, roots-style slide guitar and mouth harp—not at all the traditional