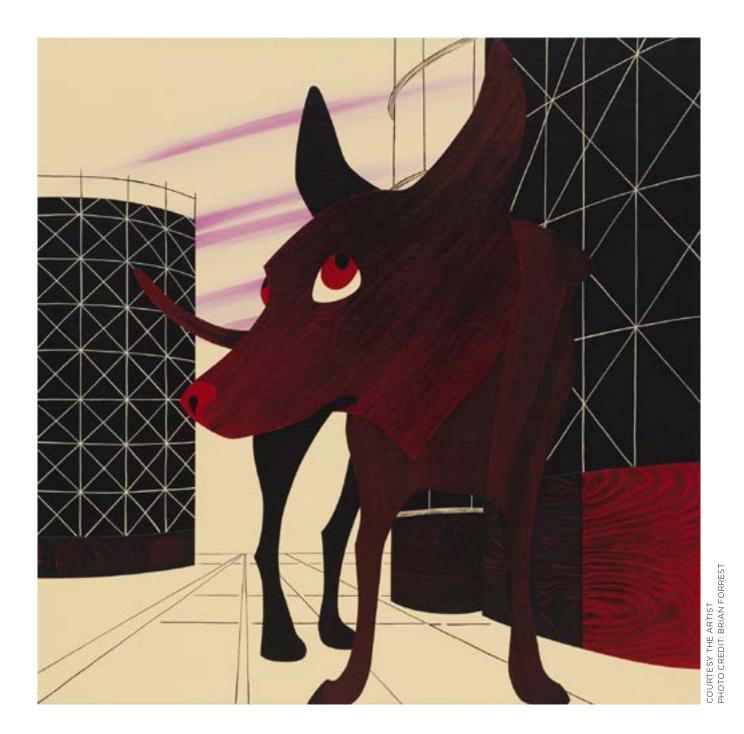## HILARY BAKER

Marcel, Downtown Los Angeles, 2017
Acrylic on canvas, 24 x 24 in

JUSTIN J. ALLEN

Bangr

The night I met Lance at his high-rise condo in San Francisco's SOMA neighborhood, there was a big glass door that opened to a hundred-foot drop that would instantly kill you. There was no warning, no caution tape, just a few jutting pieces of steel, which if you were lucky you'd grab on to and save your life. "If you're stupid enough to walk out a door without looking at what's below you, you deserve to die," I heard him say at least twice. He followed this with a laugh, like he'd said something devastatingly witty.

He was obviously insane, and a borderline sociopath, but not in the usual Mission Street way. He was rich-people crazy. A huge Barry McGee painting hung on the living room wall, opposite the future crime scene. The biggest flat-screen TV I'd ever seen in someone's home, in crystalline 4K resolution, silently floated a series of jaw-dropping drone video sequences of the Bay Area, New York, the Grand Canyon, and so on, swooping up and down and around, making you feel like one of those suicidal wingsuited BASE jumpers (which, I later learned, Lance was a big fan of).

My first guess was that Lance was an East Coast finance guy who'd just come west to break into tech, probably a cokehead and a technological ignoramus. I was wrong on all accounts: He was an adrenaline junkie, but did not take drugs or even drink; a born West Coaster, from the San Diego suburbs; and a techie himself, specializing in databases, with no connection to the world of finance outside of the Silicon Valley investors he knew—and who occasionally funded his ideas.

I came to the party with Paul Chin, a friend and former coworker.

"Jason's a front-end dev," Paul said, introducing me to Lance in his kitchen as I mixed myself a gin and juice.

"Oh yeah?" Lance said, leaning in, sniffing out competition. Typical alpha nerd. "What's your stack?" he said.

"I'm flexible," I shrugged. "Web and hybrid apps, mostly MEAN, I'm good with Angular but have some mixed feelings about Titanium and PhoneGap."

"They're no worse than Mongo, or any of the NoSQL systems used as a main datastore. They're all disgusting when used that way."

This was supposed to get me riled, but I demurred.

"Just give me a REST API and I'll build something awesome around it. I don't give a shit really."