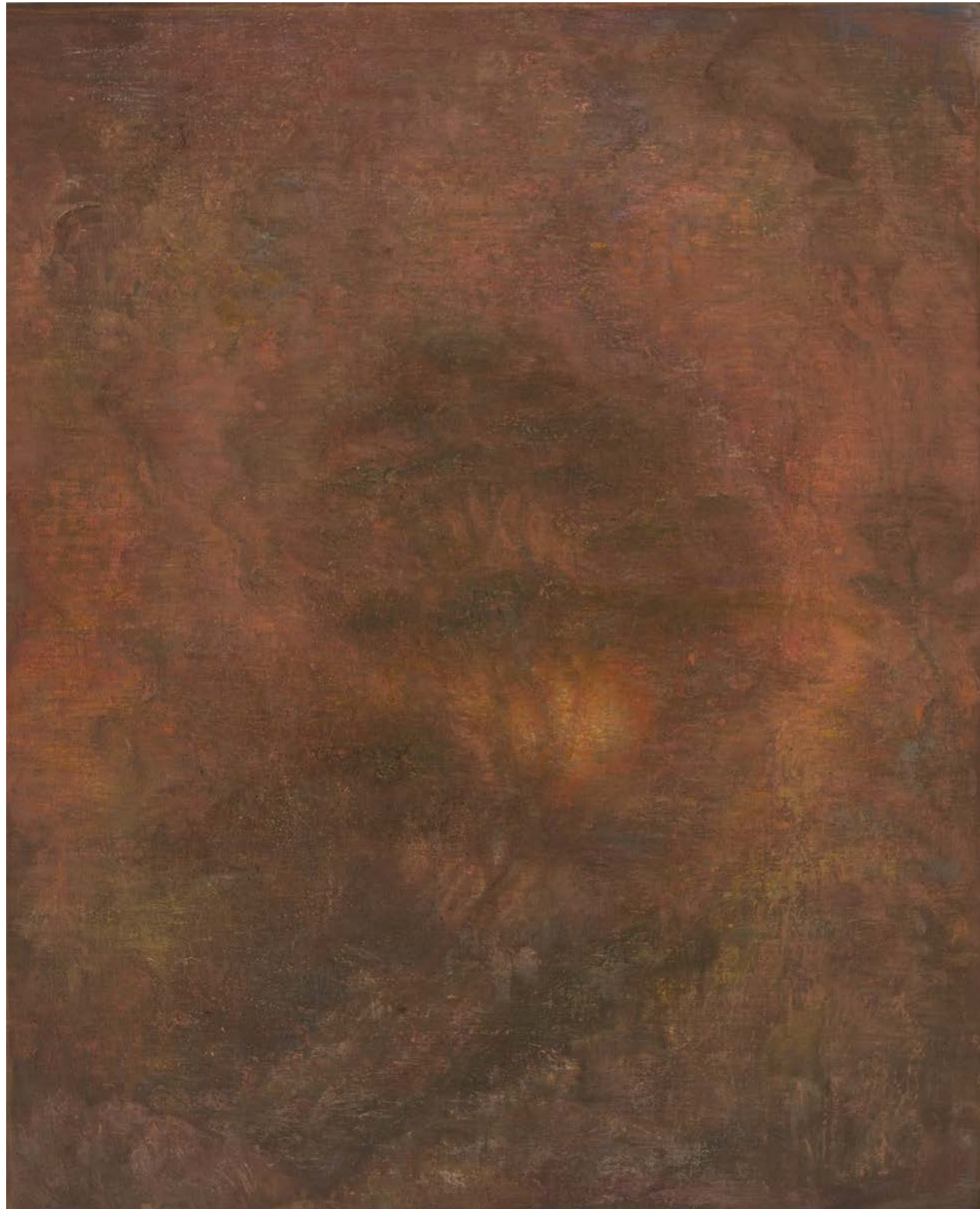


ERIC HOLZMAN

Miazaki Sunset, 2015
Oil on Canvas, 55.5 x 71 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST

NICHOLAS DIGHIERA

Silver Forks, California

*Camping with my kids
and how, at any moment,
I could lose it all*

I have these dreams where Dominic falls. Each time it's different. In one of them, he and I are framing in a skylight on the roof. It's sunny and I can feel the warmth of the tar paper under my knees and under the palms of my hands. Dominic is squatted by the skylight. He is five in this dream, stubby with moppy hair, and looking into the opening at the concrete below. The ceilings are high in this house, and when I take my eyes off of him he throws things down the hole. Mostly nails. I can hear a plinking sound as each one strikes. Then I reach for something, I don't remember what, and he stands to pull something out of his hip pocket. It's probably some pennies or something else to drop. And he tips over and falls through the hole.

I lean over and look in. It's not something you want to see, your son all twisted up like that, legs wrapped back where they shouldn't be. He's moving, but I can't tell if that is just reflex. I run across the roof. I run down the ladder. I run through the house. I run everywhere. I'm always yelling in these dreams. I don't know what I am saying, but I suppose if this happened in real life I would be yelling and I wouldn't know what the words would be either. When I get there I lift him up and he feels like a tiny, warm sleeping bag filled with kindling. There is a meat sound to his wheezing and I can feel his bones shifting like rocks knocking together underwater. And his eyes are open. Way open. They are glassy and bright and the green in them hurts to look at more than anything in the world. I never expect that, the eyes, but it's always the same. And his mouth is open, closed, open, closed, open, closed. But the only thing coming out is the wheezing and the meat sound.

I wake up here. I dry heave sometimes. Then, if he is around, I go to him. I watch him sleep. His breathing is easy and clear. Light snores. And then I go make some coffee and stare out the window wondering how I could ever love something so much.

* * *

We are driving Highway 50 through the Sierra Nevada and this stretch of asphalt has been climbing for miles. It's early afternoon and the clouds are close and thick, blanketing the peaks. The day has been dragging; I decide it's time to camp.