

HOWARD IKEMOTO

Reservoir, 2013
oil on canvas, 54 x 43 in



credit: R.Blitzer Gallery

NIKITA NELIN Shore Leave

The body of the lake appears round, almost perfect—as if man-made—and bordered by a battalion of thick trees, sleepy pines and heavysset birch. So precisely cut it is easy to assume that the heart of it is flat like the face of a clock, shallow—primed for swimming across and not for exploring depths. But really, it stretches into coves and turns, and below into hidden auguries and springs. There is no end to it when you are a boy, there are no limits. And if out and away from shore you turn round, you find its borders lost under the soft spell of remembering.

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My brothers and I splash at each other on the sand ramps. We had rushed in head first. Our father stretches out on the grass beach. He has already swum across and back, has fulfilled his athlete's need, away from us. He is disciplined like that. Our mothers are nowhere to be found, they have been excommunicated from this dream...

We are getting warmed up, slapping each other. Warming the water. Alyosha, the youngest, keeps trying to get out too far, and Ivan, the middle one, chases after him, drags him back into the shallower end, punishes him with a knuckle wedge. Our mothers are nowhere to be found... my dream, the reassembly of broken parts that no one could make fit.

"Boys, stretch. Don't forget to get the ire out," our father yells from the grass. He is sitting upright and, once he is finished with his distant inspection of us, he lies back down, mechanically, his long upper body folding slowly onto the grass blades, as if he is the lead hand of a clock rotating counter-time.

I jump in with my brothers again, splashing. Alyosha swims under my feet, and I tear him out of the water as if he's a salmon. Ivan should jump on him now so that we can both wrestle him down, as our littlest one is a wild fish in need of taming. But Ivan stands out by himself and looks out over the lake, away from me, so Alyosha swims out to him, called by more precise genetics. I stand there alone, in the shallower end. Again I have to chase them. I have to work for something I should not have to. Something that should be mine, should have always been natural.

In these moments of lucidity, when I stand away from