

FRANK PAINO

The Central Story

(after the painting by Magritte)

Everything we see hides another thing, we always want to see what is hidden by what we see.

—René Magritte

The brown suitcase, locked and set before her on a table gray as surgical steel, might contain a secret she keeps coiled tight as a fiddlehead, might conceal a loss she cannot bear, or else it holds the mouth of the river into which she will wade until that brief wound heals above her, until the mud locks her ankles against all rising.

The tuba could be the curve of a woman's hip smoothed beneath her lover's palm, could be progenerative, or maybe what it means to be made for breath but to be left breathless all the same.

Her hand, pressed as it is against the thick reed of her throat, is most likely suicidal, unless it is autoerotic, a declaration of self-censure, or perhaps a gesture she signs to mean: *Please never speak of me again.*

The cerulean behind her is the same river held restless in the suitcase, or it is the immutable sky that will be just the same after she is gone, or else it is the blue of a lame cliché for the fog through which she stumbles along the path that has always led to the water.

And the simple russet dress is the earth that will cradle her once the river has relinquished its grasp, or it is the color of all hope lost, or it is nothing more than a simple russet dress.

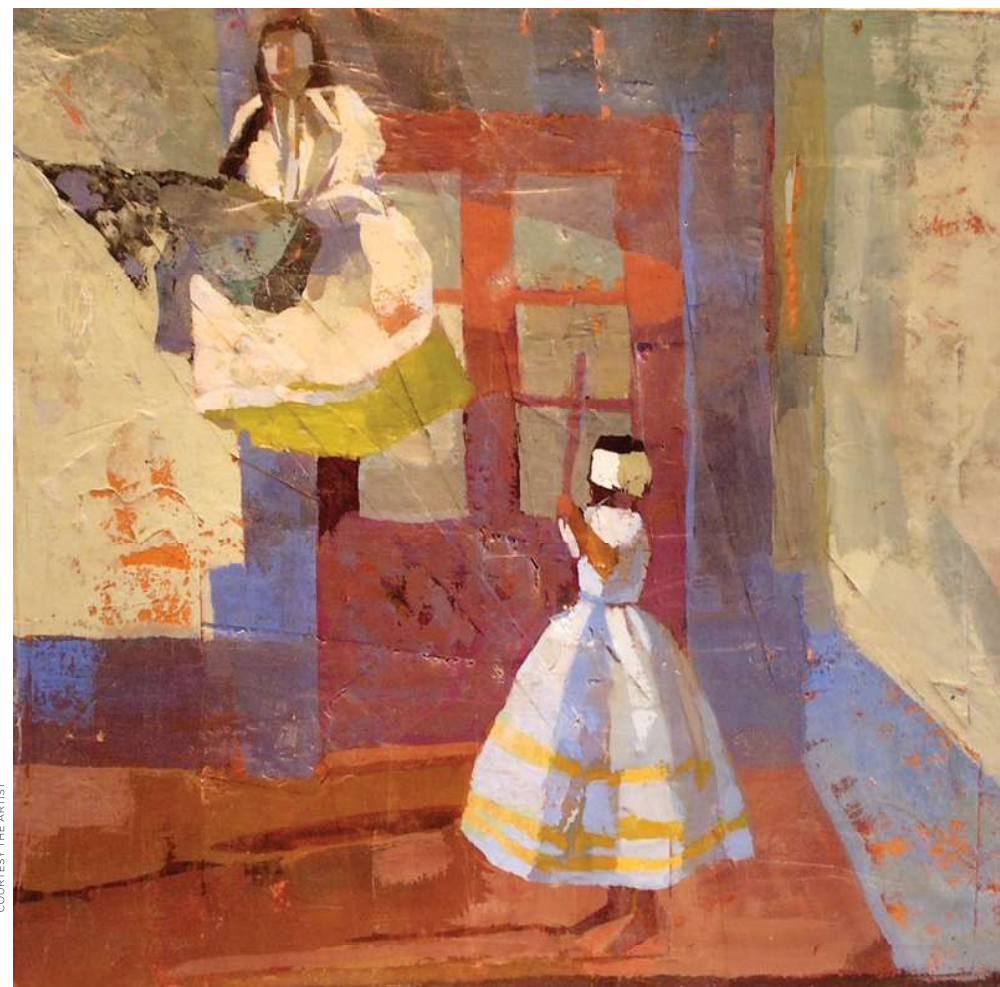
The white cloth might be the way she feels invisible, or it is the tracery of a skull that drifts like a cumulus cloud above the river that is also the sky, or else it is the nightgown that will leave her naked below the waist when she is dragged onto the mossy bank, the night shroud that will tangle and obscure her face from the wild eyes of her oldest son, who is still just a boy, or else it is the canvas upon which he will spend the rest of his life in a fury of trying to draw her back to that last brief kiss, to the moment she turned, just beyond the rusted back gate, and regarded him the way a woman might look at an heirloom she can no longer keep.

What difference if it didn't happen that way?

PERKY EDGERTON

Piñata, 2019

Collage, gouache, and oil on panel, 6 x 6 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST