

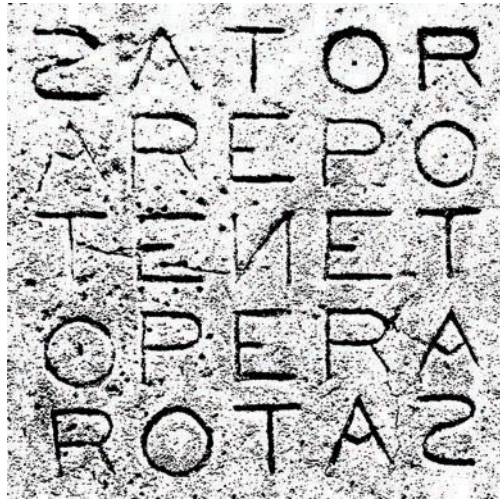
Sandro Chia

This catalogue was produced
in conjunction with the exhibition

Sandro Chia: Sator Arepo

steven harvey fine art projects

April 23 - May 25, 2014



FRONT COVER:

Untitled (021)

2011-2014

mixed media on paper, 8½" x 6 ⅞"
private collection

BACK COVER:

Untitled (031)

2011-2014

mixed media on paper, 10½" x 8"

Sandro Chia

Sator Arepo

steven harvey fine art projects

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Untitled (030)

2011-2014

mixed media on paper, 12¼" x 8"

Sandro Chia at the Shore

An Interview with the Artist

Richard Milazzo: I was quite taken aback by all the excitement surrounding the beautiful works on paper exhibition—comprised synthetically of watercolor, drawing and various other media—that took place at Steven Harvey Fine Arts Projects in New York in May, especially regarding all the compliments you received about the layering going on in these works. Anyone who knows your work—the works on paper as well as the paintings—should not be surprised by the levels of incident and, of course, the facture it involves, even in paper works. It is not wrong to think of facture not only in terms of the materiality of the surface—brushstroke, impasto, saturation, erasure, etc.—but also in terms of the ‘depth’ or compositional complexity of the surface. When talking about works on paper, particularly the watercolor medium, I think

the latter issue is more of a consideration. (And, of course, there is the richness of the imagery to consider, which is related but also something else.) This is true of Homer, Burchfield and Morley. Maybe the closer you are to an artist's work, the less you know, because so much of it becomes subliminal. Or maybe I just missed something...

Sandro Chia: No. I think it is a bit counterintuitive: just because you are close to someone doesn't necessarily mean you know them; whereas being further away, being really far, can sometimes produce the best communication.

RM: Maybe this is why social media is proving to be such a revolutionary moment. But no matter how much experience is overrated, we cannot rely purely on an exchange of information, no matter how multi-layered the interaction, which is actually quite superficial.

SC: Layers is part of the definition of working. But what matters—you are right—is the quality of the layers. Our bodies are like trees, made up of layers, circles upon circles of antiquity—in a biological sense, not just a cultural sense—and these 'trees,' through the process of sublimation, become books, the book of our lives, and these pages are related to each other. These watercolors reflect the pages in the book of my being.

RM: I think these time-lines are layers of memory. That's what we are made of—that's pure Plato.

Untitled (013)

2011-2014

mixed media on paper, 9 $\frac{5}{8}$ " x 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ "



S. Chia

SC: Yes. The quality of these layers depends upon whether they are merely automatic—which is ok, too—or, more significantly, labyrinthine. By this I mean that what happens on a piece of paper may have no center, because it is not just about running around in circles, it's not just about the skin of things, or pulling the layers of an onion back until you find nothing at the center...

RM: Well, in the end, there may be nothing at the center, and all our experiences may be for naught...or you may not be able to explain what is at the center, or, in fact, at the periphery—which is why we may ask such questions as: why is that figure standing there, alone; what is he doing; who or what are those little creatures and other figural elements accompanying him? Some are clearly identifiable—axes, palettes, wings, arrows, teddy bears, easels, balls, walking sticks, trees, birds; others are mere hints (linguistic or palimpsestic) and adumbrations. The watercolors are overflowing with a jewel-like spectrum of poetic data.

SC: Yes, because what we experience is so chaotic, anarchic, just a wild accumulation, similar to the beach or the shore: the waves come in, they go out; they leave a residue, they take something away, maybe most of it (whatever *it* is). What remains are residues, in our images, in our memories...

RM: In our histories, in our languages.

SC: There is always the question of what is kept and what is allowed to be washed away. Not that this is

Untitled (002)

2011-2014

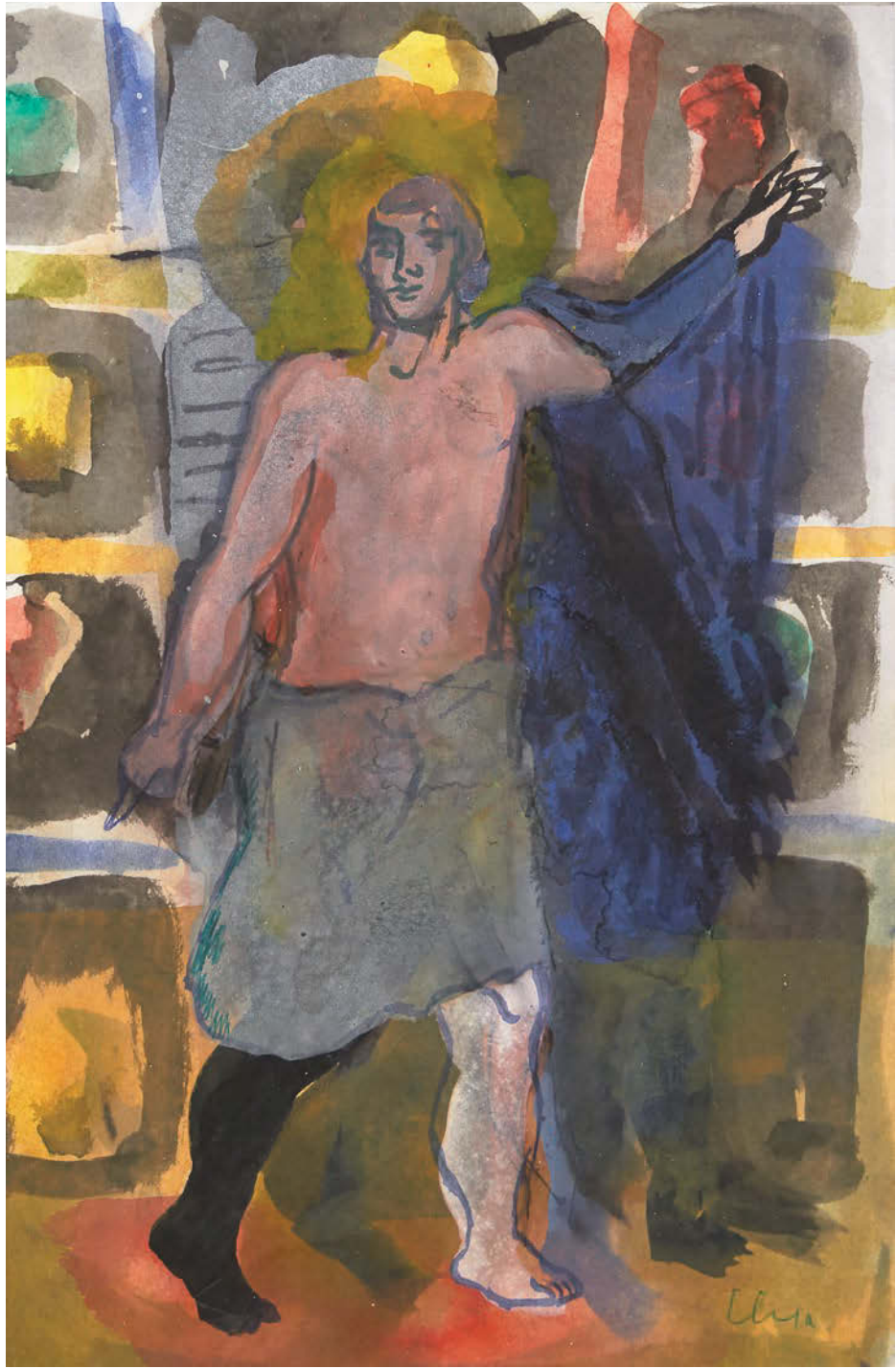
mixed media on paper, 9¾" x 7¾"

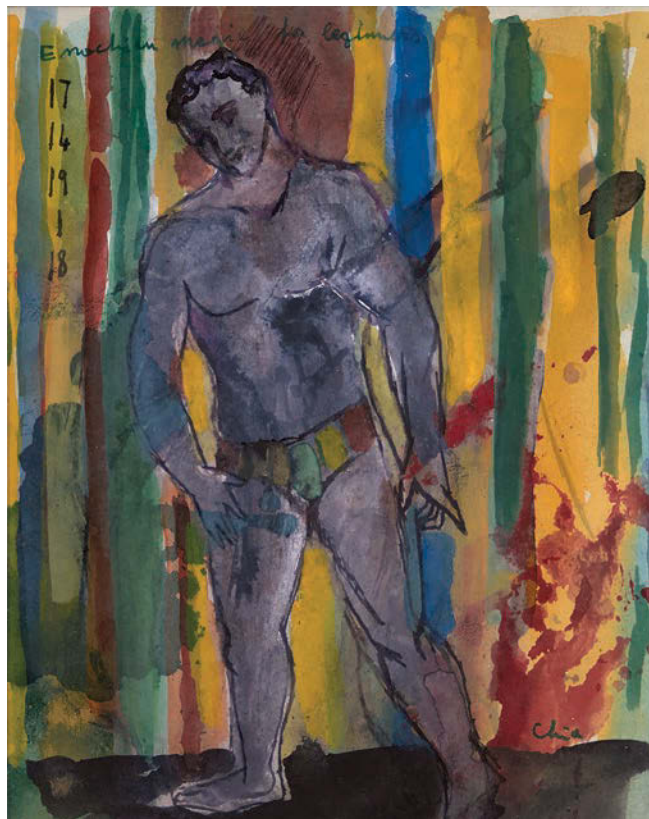


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ABOVE:

Untitled (029)

2011-2014
mixed media on paper, 9½" x 7¾"

LEFT:

Untitled (009)

2011-2014
mixed media on paper, 11" x 7½"

always or actually in your control. What you have in a drawing, in a watercolor, in a painting, is a phenomenology of marks, traces, that stay for a minimum amount of time—in our attention spans (as viewers), in our perceptions (as artists). But there is no growth, *per se*. Artists don't grow...

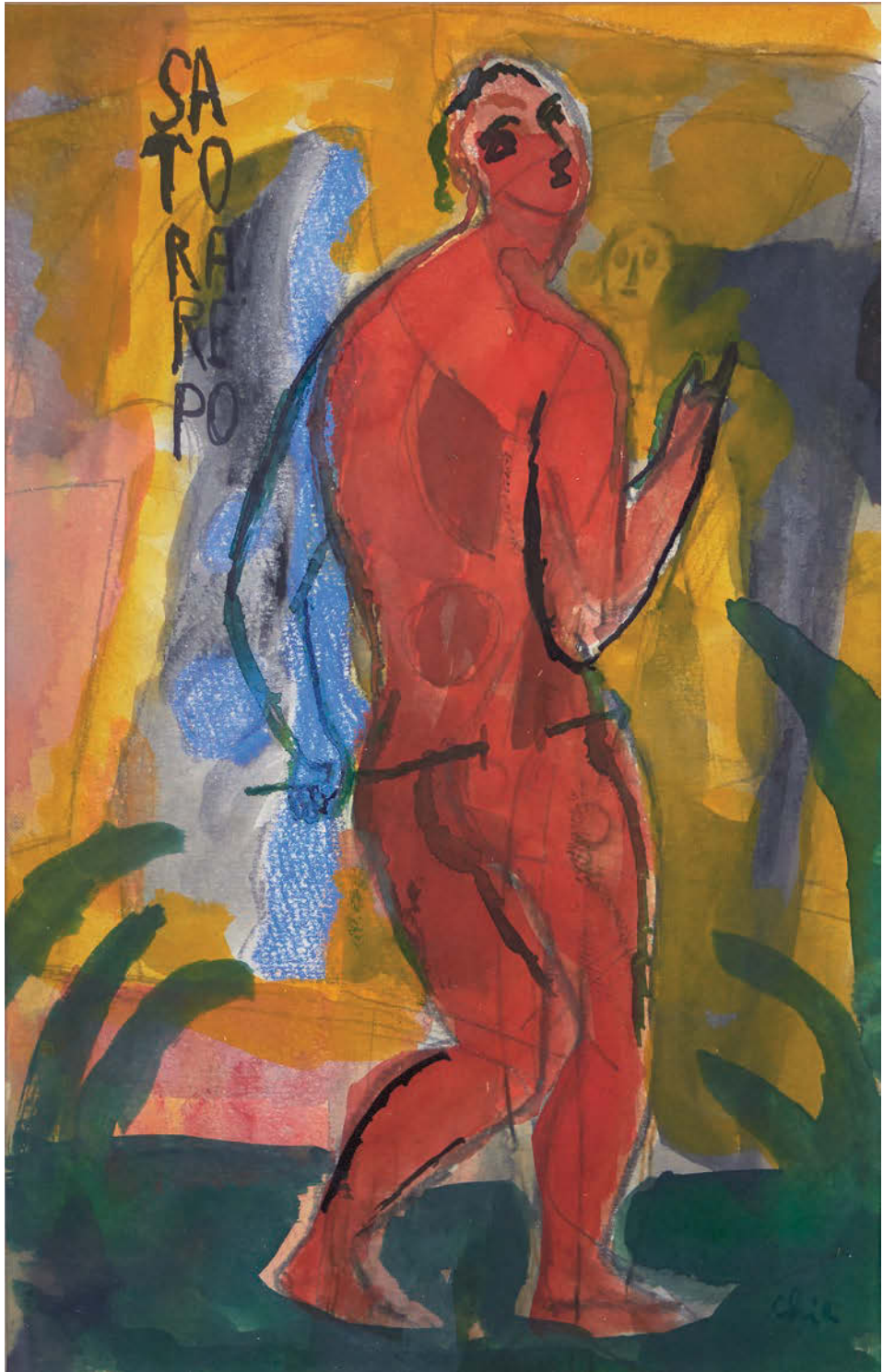
RM: They don't evolve...

SC: No. They don't reduce themselves in that way. They are not mechanisms; they are not even organisms, even where they generate, produce things. They create precarious situations that are ultimately undecidable, unpredictable. You fall back as much as you push forward. They circumscribe for a moment a geometry of the shore where waves sometimes come crashing in, sometimes come crawling in. You never know how a painting, a watercolor, a drawing is going to come out. No matter what your plans, you just don't know; and if you're smart, or want to survive the flood, you should abandon your plans right from the start. Better to go it alone; don't look back, don't look forward; just keep stroking, just try to say afloat, because there is no way to control these images, their flow, their speed, their form—the way the color, the pigment, and the water will interact. Just when you thought you knew it all, a riptide grabs you from below—if you are lucky!—and suddenly you are overwhelmed by something, a force, an image, you had not expected! And it doesn't matter how small or how big the work is. You are subject to all its influences. It goes viral in your head, in your being.

Untitled (036)

2011-2014

mixed media on paper, 10½" x 6¾"



RM: Although all the waves look alike at some level, they are also, each of them, very different. There is no way of knowing how they will insinuate themselves into the picture.

SC: They are all unique. There is no watercolor or painting I have ever made that is the same as another. They are all unique, even if the images come to me in a readymade form—in terms of history, the classics, myths, or the kitsch reality of the day to day. They are never the same. Each work in this show is the result of an accumulation of water and color. They articulate or depict memory in all its complexity. There is no future in these works, only the past.

RM: Does the past actually exist?

SC: The watercolor is evidence that something took place in the past. If it was something that anticipated the future, it would be a very anxious object. But instead they are reassuring signs, marks, traces of our existence—not that they are simple in character. They are complex, multi-layered, inconsistent. They are like the foam of the wave as it touches the shore—they are all effect but no cause.

RM: Isn't the past what caused them? The irony here, of course, is that I think of you as the quintessential artist who has always mined history for your images, not only the history of Modernism—Fauvism, Cubism, Futurism, Surrealism, Picasso and Matisse, on and on—but the history of Renaissance art, not to mention Classical and Romantic art.



The Silent Juggler (028)

2011-2014

mixed media on paper, 7¼" x 7½"

private collection



Untitled (017)

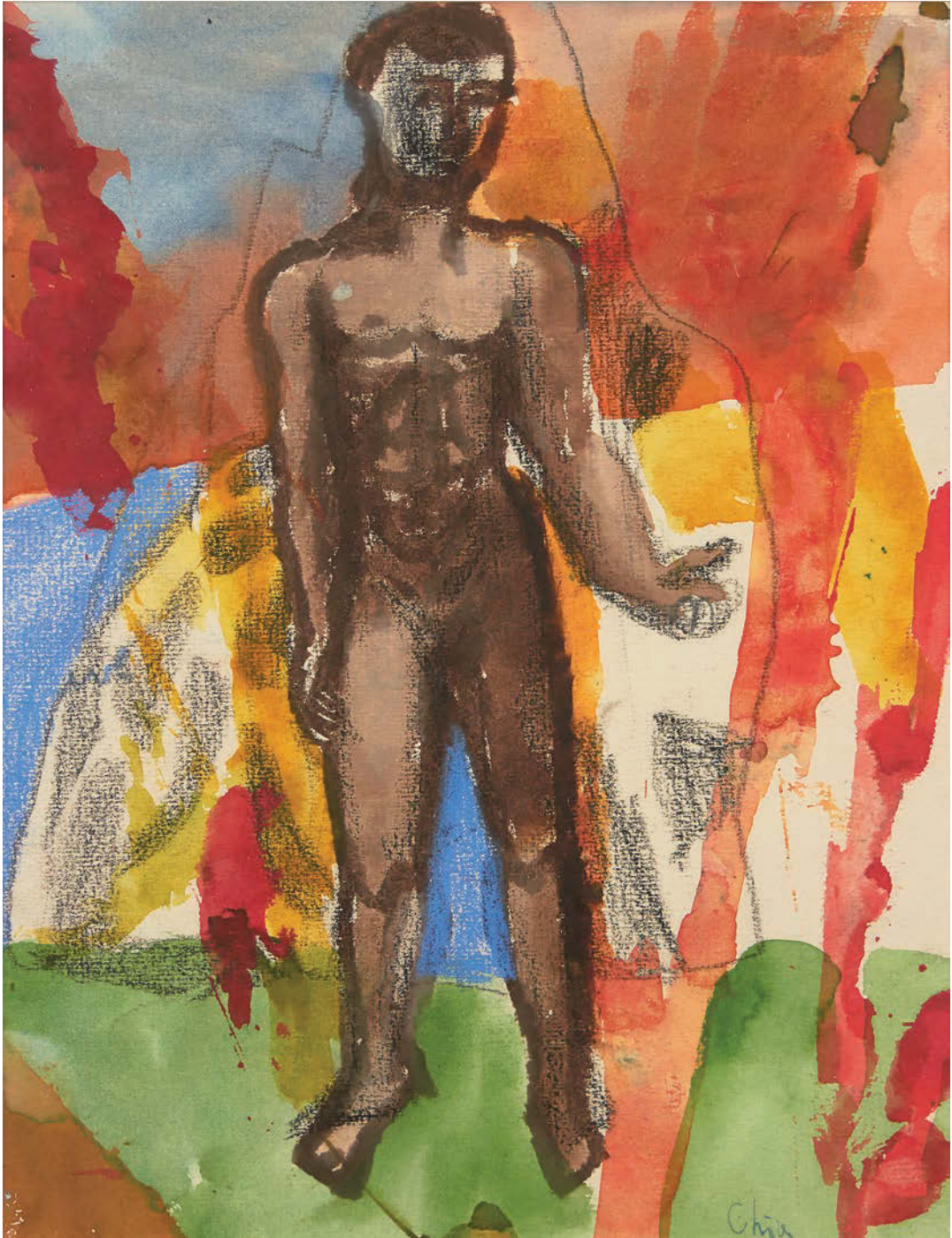
2011-2014

mixed media on paper, 7½" x 7½"

SC: Yes, the past caused these images, but not just the remote past or the art historical past or the biblical past, let us say, but the past we love, which was part of our experience—the part that was part of our lives. The living past. The part that is still in business! The remote past would have us forget what happened to us today or even yesterday—your memories, your experiences. It would wash us away in an impersonal tide. It is only when the past of history and the past of our lives intersect, when the history of Picasso's work or the history of the cave-man coincide in some way with our own past experiences, that we are able to create a symbolic history of our own, more or less—a digest of some sort, a concentration, an image or story, even just the parts of a language, that relates to history, to the past, but that is somehow in itself.

RM: To follow T.S. Eliot's understanding, it is the way the present transforms the past, which we tend to think of as a static, stable, linear dimension or sanctuary, despite our most strenuous, conscious efforts.

SC: It is an understanding of history that becomes personalized. A work of art, a watercolor, is like a time machine that passes through layers of history. It is like believing in Vasari: he tells us stories about many artists, but he is really telling us only one story, the story of only one artist—Vasari. What emerges from the whole panoply of the history he pieces together are the layers of a life he has lived and that he believes are worth recounting. It is not



a historical life *per se* he is rendering, which is not really possible, but his life—but it could just as well be yours or mine.

RM: I have always believed in chronology and facts, especially when it comes to relating historical matters, even though I know I live in a Postmodern, post-historical age that would wreak havoc with such things. Nietzsche's adage, "There are no facts, only interpretations" has become the watchword of our times, and has been thoroughly exploited in the most immodest of fashions. I would go so far as to argue that this given of modernism, which has virtually become a platitude, has turned in on itself, especially when it operates ideologically to subvert or deny the world of scientific facts, however vulnerable or susceptible to permutation this world in fact actually is (or ought to be). We know how difficult it is in the scientific community to upturn a given sclerotic paradigm. But I still believe that there is an order to things, even if the greater part of this order is socially constructed or imposed. It is not like Heisenberg's uncertainty principle does not apply to our most destructive and self-destructive games. Something which I think Wittgenstein understood, and why he tended to compartmentalize the various problems of philosophy, especially in his earliest work.

SC: What remains, remains randomly, casually. It is up to the artist to organize these residues, these traces, these linguistic fragments. It is up to the artist to see if some image emerges from these bits and

Untitled (022)

2011-2014
mixed media on paper, 9 5/8" x 7 3/8"

pieces, these shards on the shore, these memories of experiences, which take on a life of their own. The result is these watercolors. Even if we are left with a readymade, it is still something the artist might be able to work with. A watercolor is an old-fashioned thing. As a form, it is a kind of readymade. The paper is made up of many layers or threads, and it lends itself to layering, to absorbing the history of water and color. All the artist can do is calmly record the to and fro of the waves, knowing all the while that he will eventually be washed away.

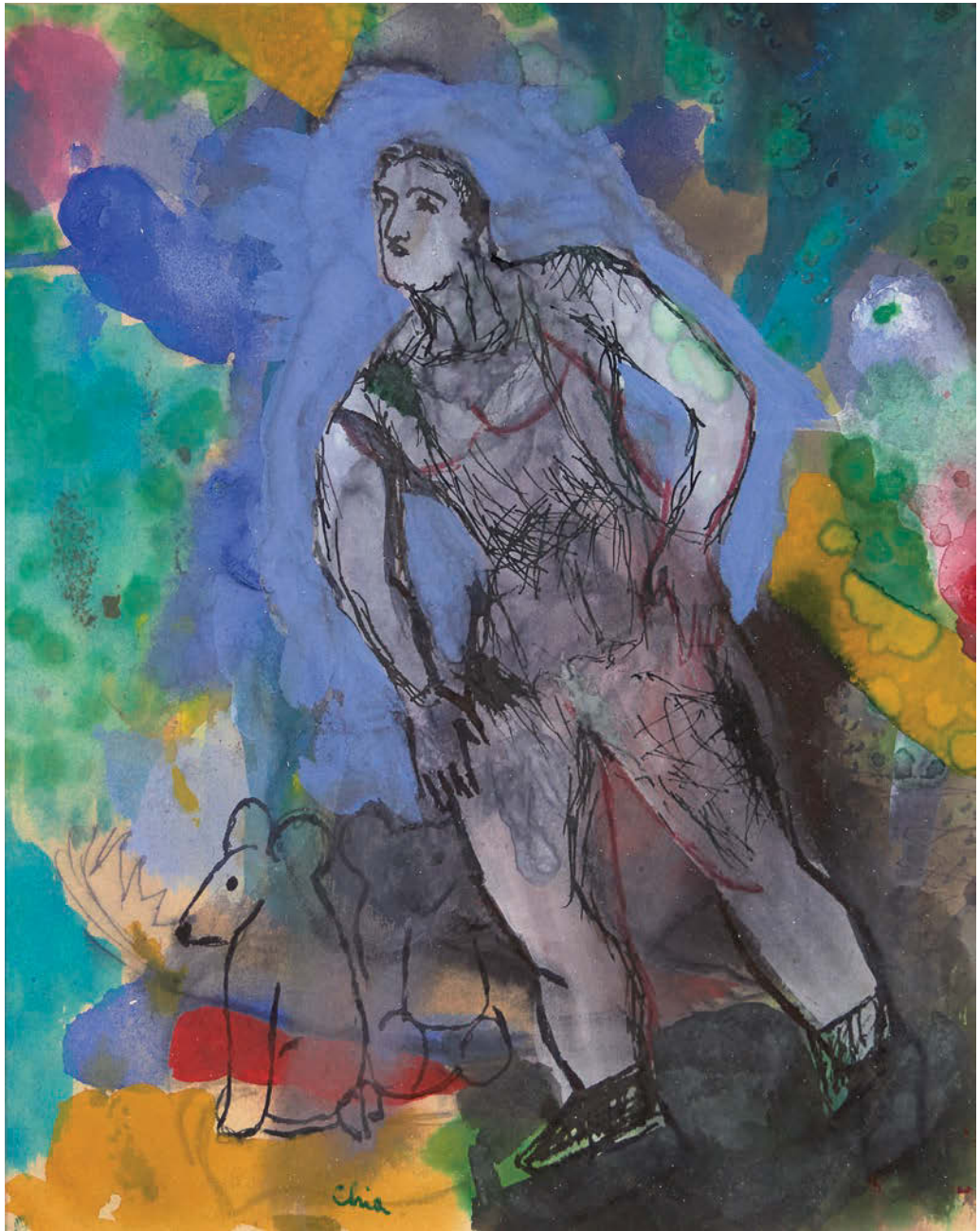
This telephone conversation between Sandro Chia in Castello Romitorio (Tuscany) and Richard Milazzo in New York City took place on May 13, 2014.

Richard Milazzo's most recent books are Peter Nagy: Entertainment Erases History—Works 1982 to 2004 to the Present (New York: EISBox Projects, 2014) and Sandro Chia: Paintings, Sculptures, Drawings, Mosaics (Modena, Italy: Galleria Mazzoli, 2014).

Untitled (027)

2011-2014

mixed media on paper, 9½" x 7½"







ABOVE:

Untitled (038)

2011-2014
mixed media on paper, 9 ¼" x 7 ¼"
private collection

LEFT:

Untitled (035)

2011-2014
mixed media on paper, 9 ½" x 7"



ABOVE:

Untitled (016)

2011-2014
mixed media on paper, 8 3/8" x 6 3/8"

RIGHT:

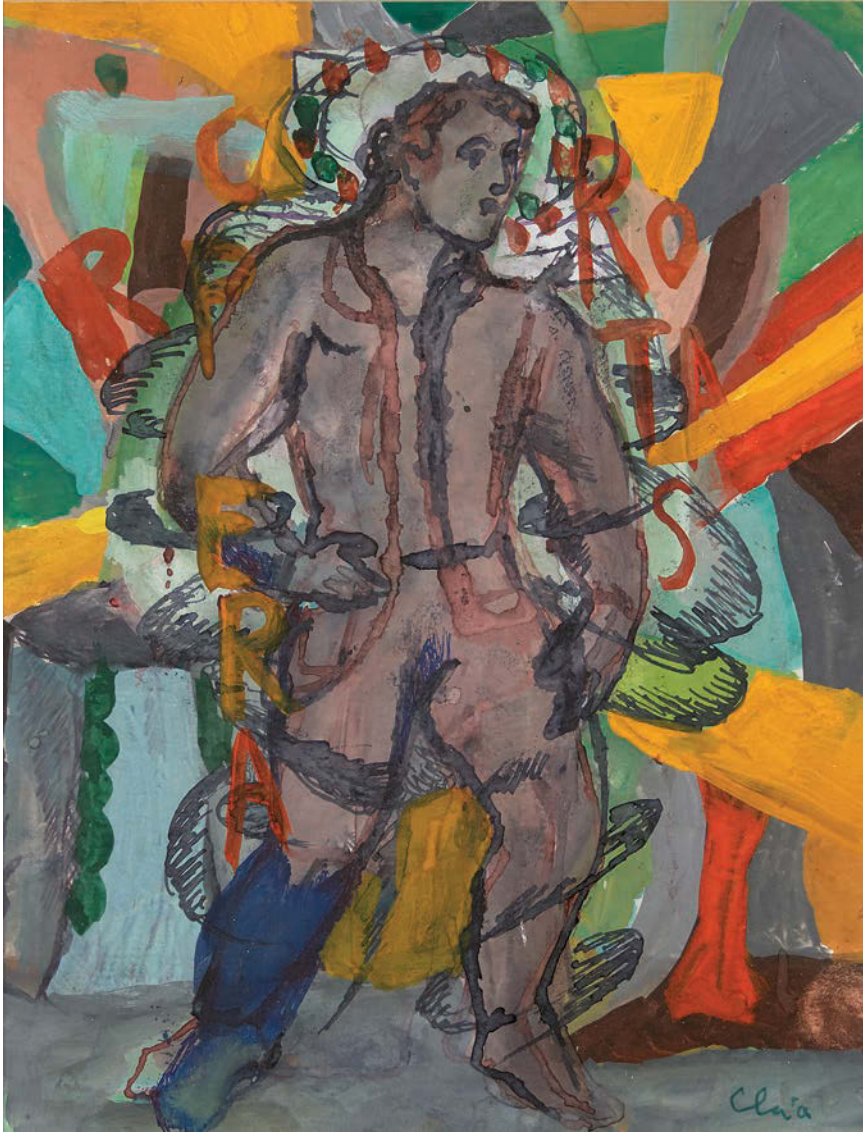
Untitled (018)

2011-2014
mixed media on paper, 9 3/8" x 6 3/4"



we talked enough

Chia



ABOVE:

Untitled (014)

2011-2014
mixed media on paper, 9¾" x 7¾"
private collection

RIGHT:

Untitled (006)

2011-2014
mixed media on paper, 10¾" x 7"

We have ^{not} talked
ENOUGH

it vanishes
into the
concept



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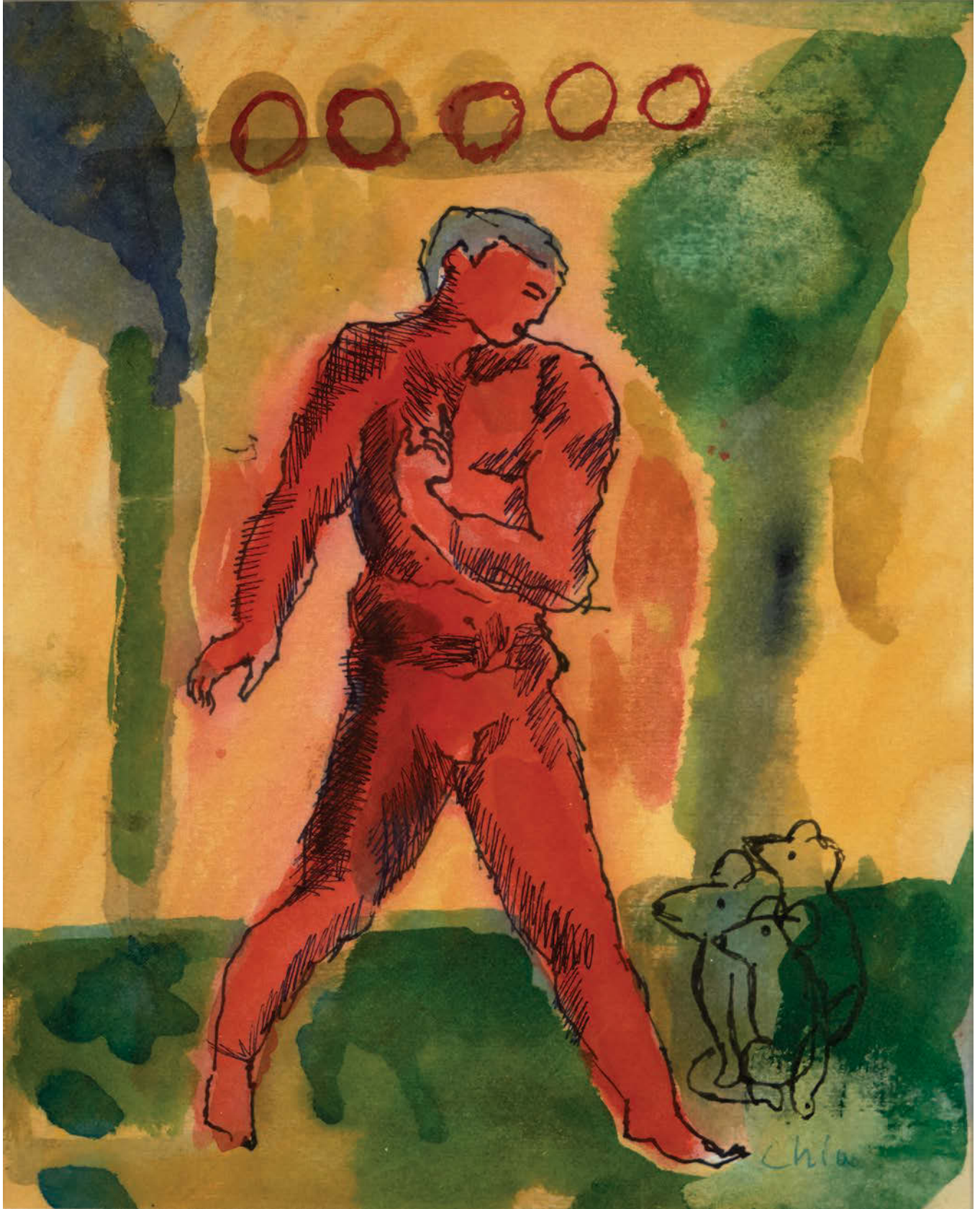




Untitled (012)

2011-2014

mixed media on paper, 8" x 10 3/8"



Chia



ABOVE:

Untitled (034)

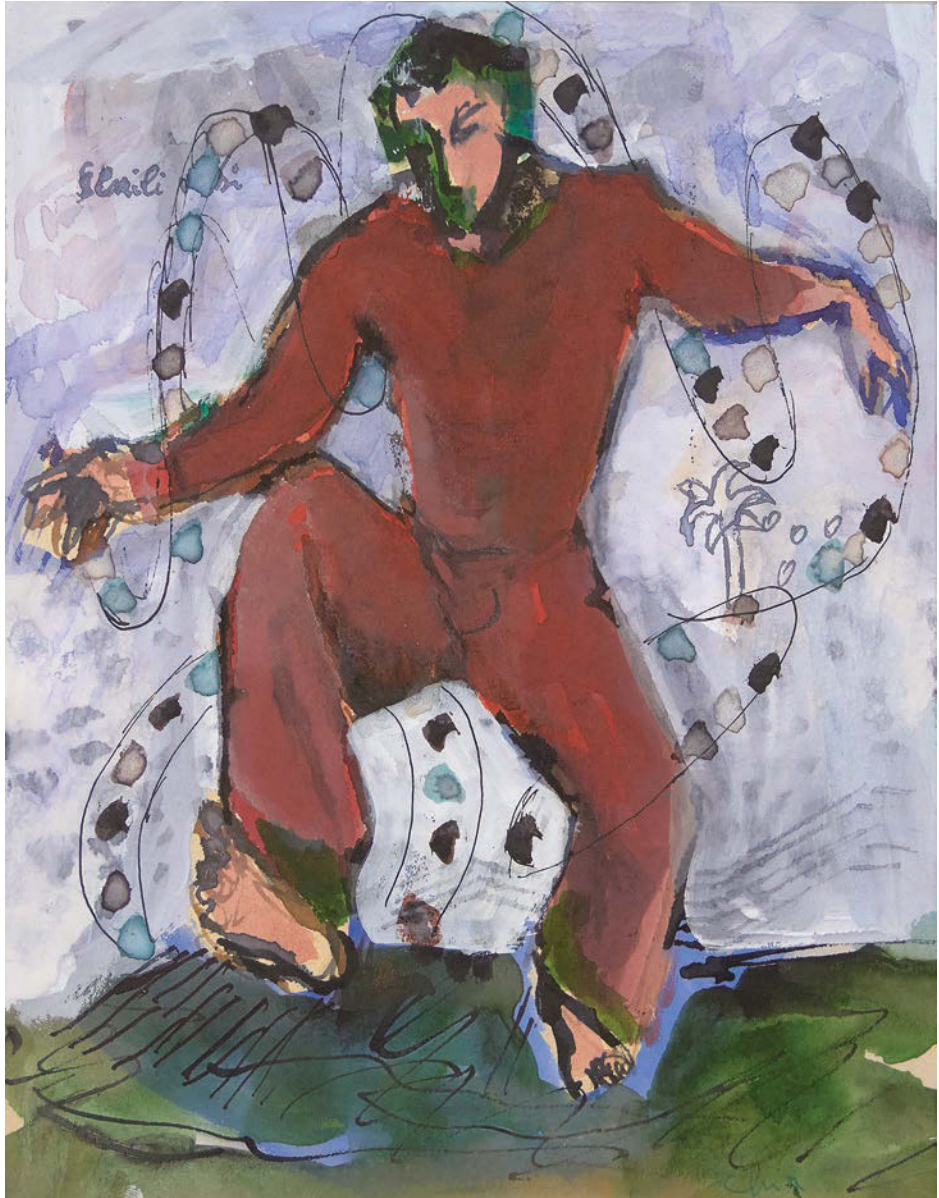
2011-2014
mixed media on paper, 9 1/2" x 7 1/8"

LEFT:

Untitled (008)

2011-2014
mixed media on paper, 9 1/2" x 7 3/4"





ABOVE:

Untitled (004)

2011-2014

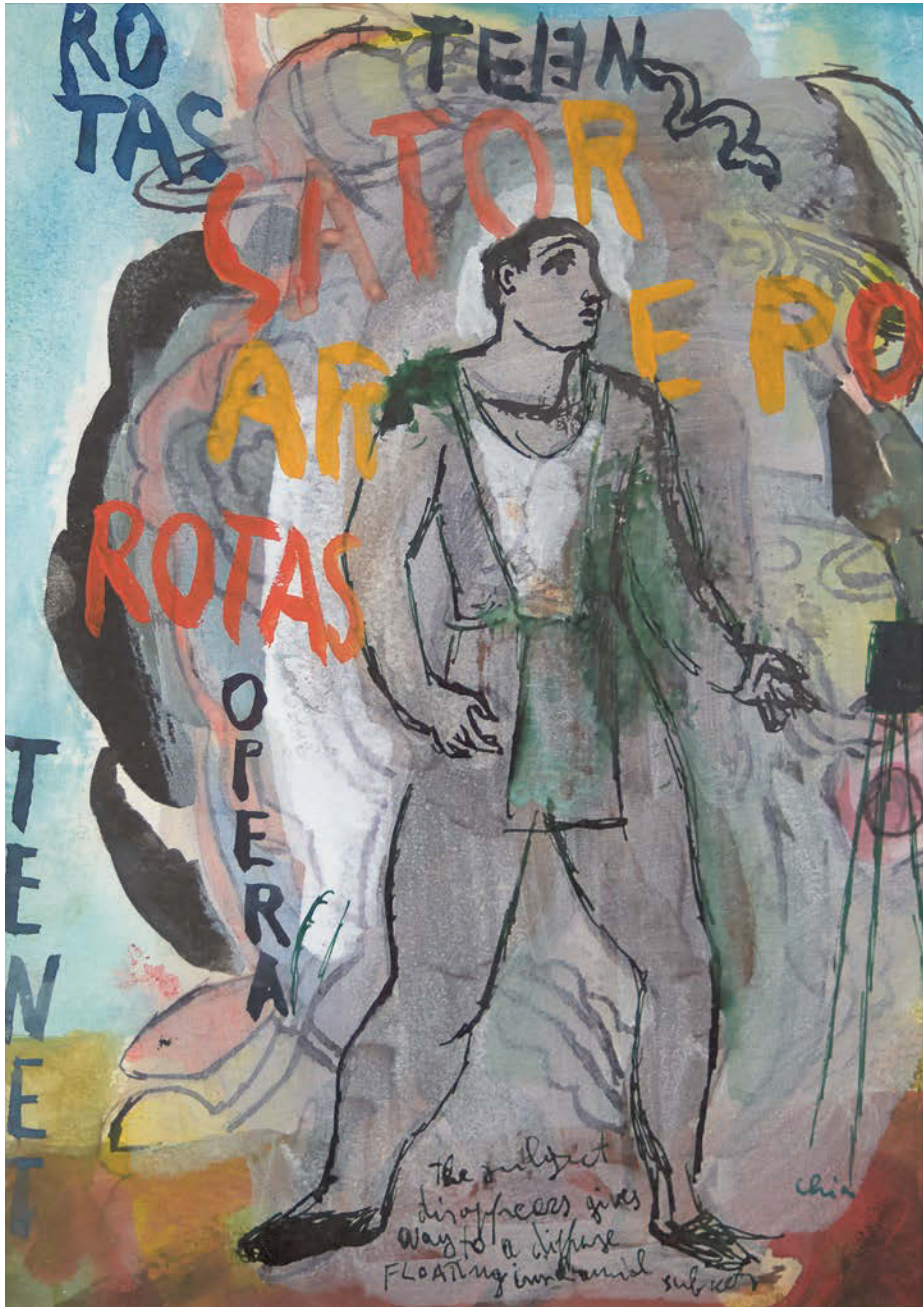
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LEFT:

Untitled (010)

2011-2014

mixed media on paper, 10½" x 7¼"



Untitled (037)

2011-2014

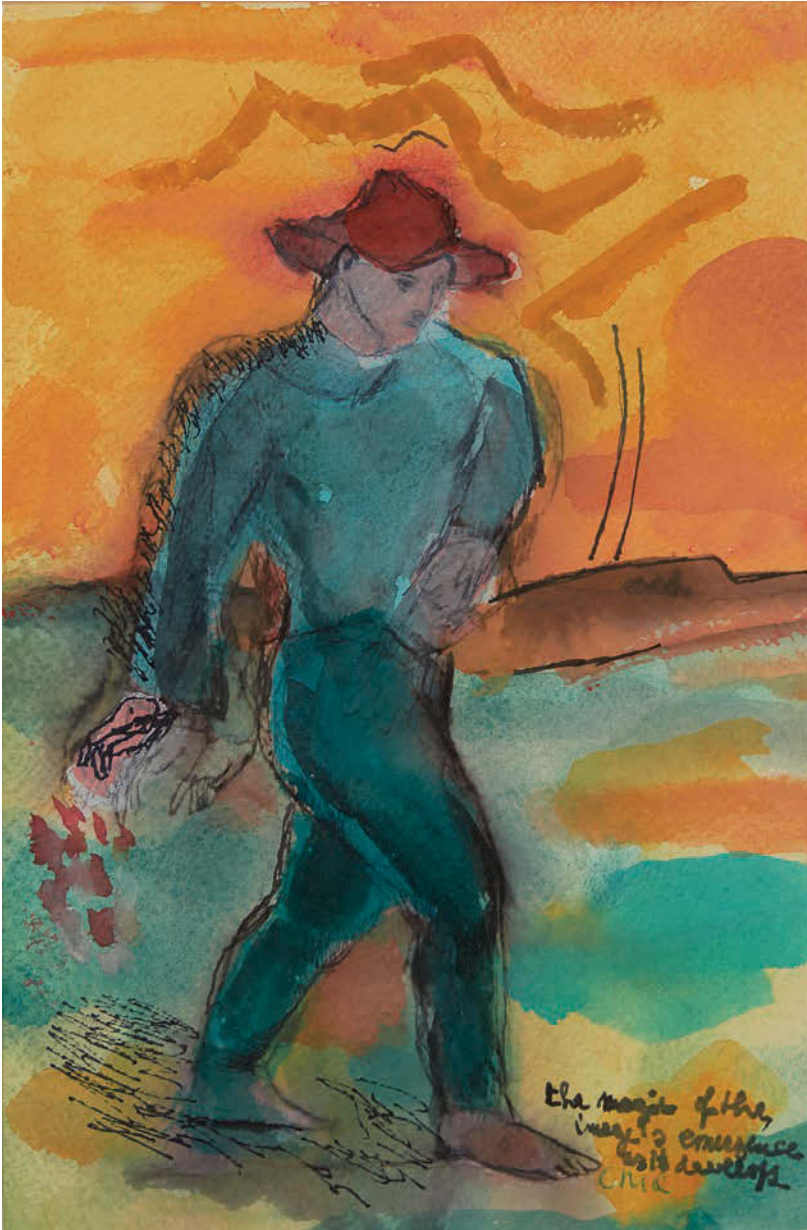
mixed media on paper, 9" x 6½"



Untitled (023)

2011-2014

mixed media on paper, 8 3/4" x 6 1/2"



ABOVE:

Untitled (003)

2011-2014
mixed media on paper, 11" x 7½"

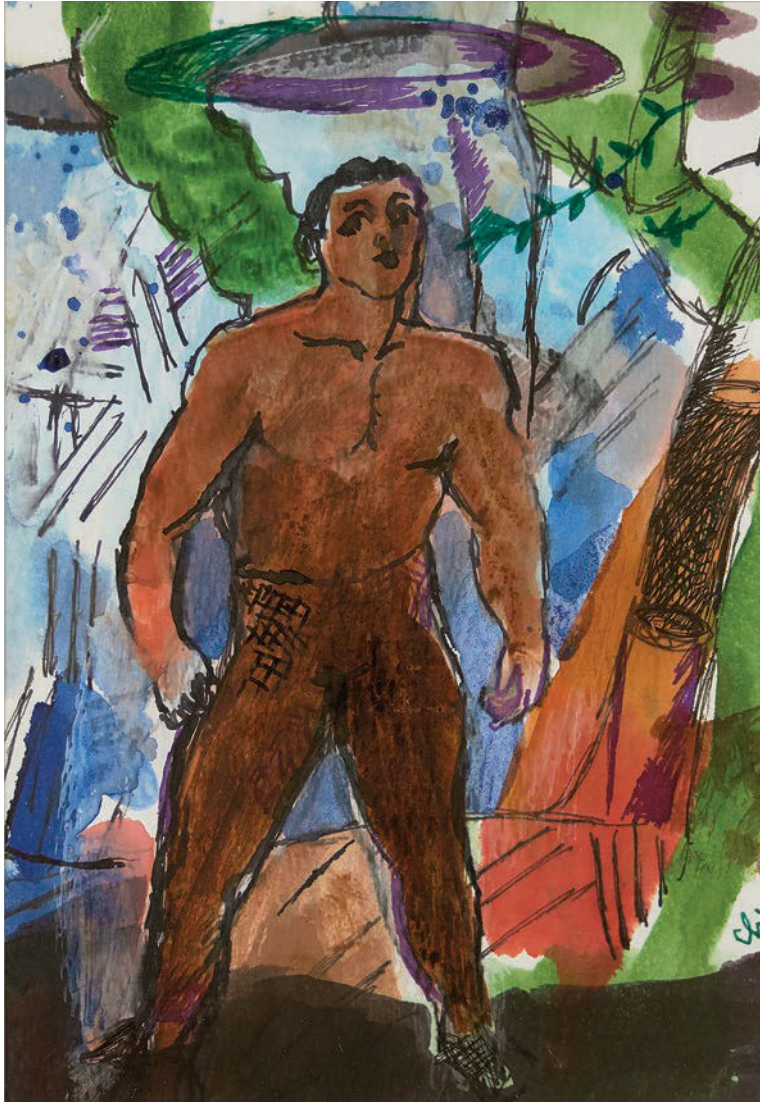
RIGHT:

Untitled (005)

2011-2014
mixed media on paper, 9¾" x 7¾"



Chia



ABOVE:

Untitled (019)

2011-2014

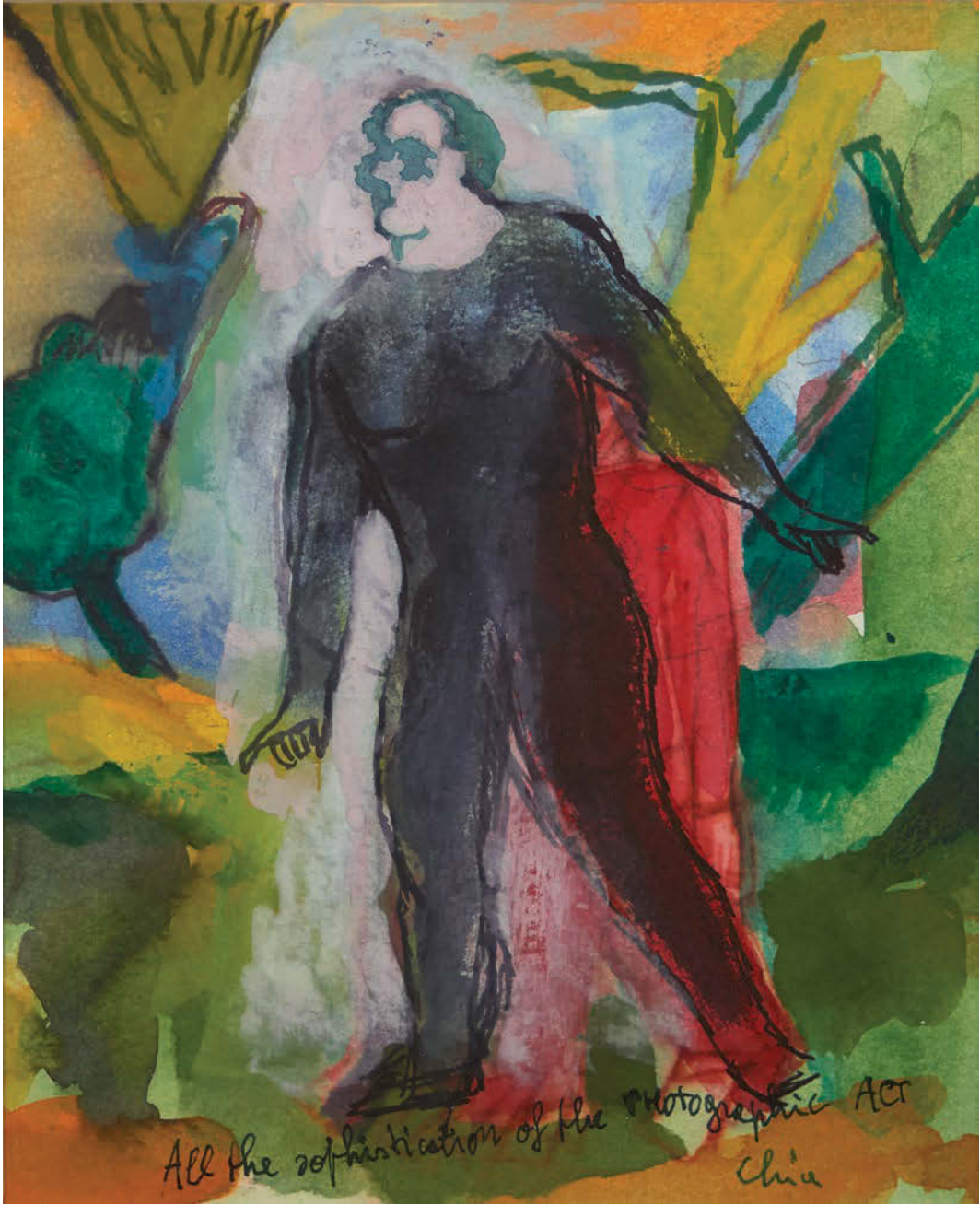
mixed media on paper, 9¾" x 6¾"

RIGHT:

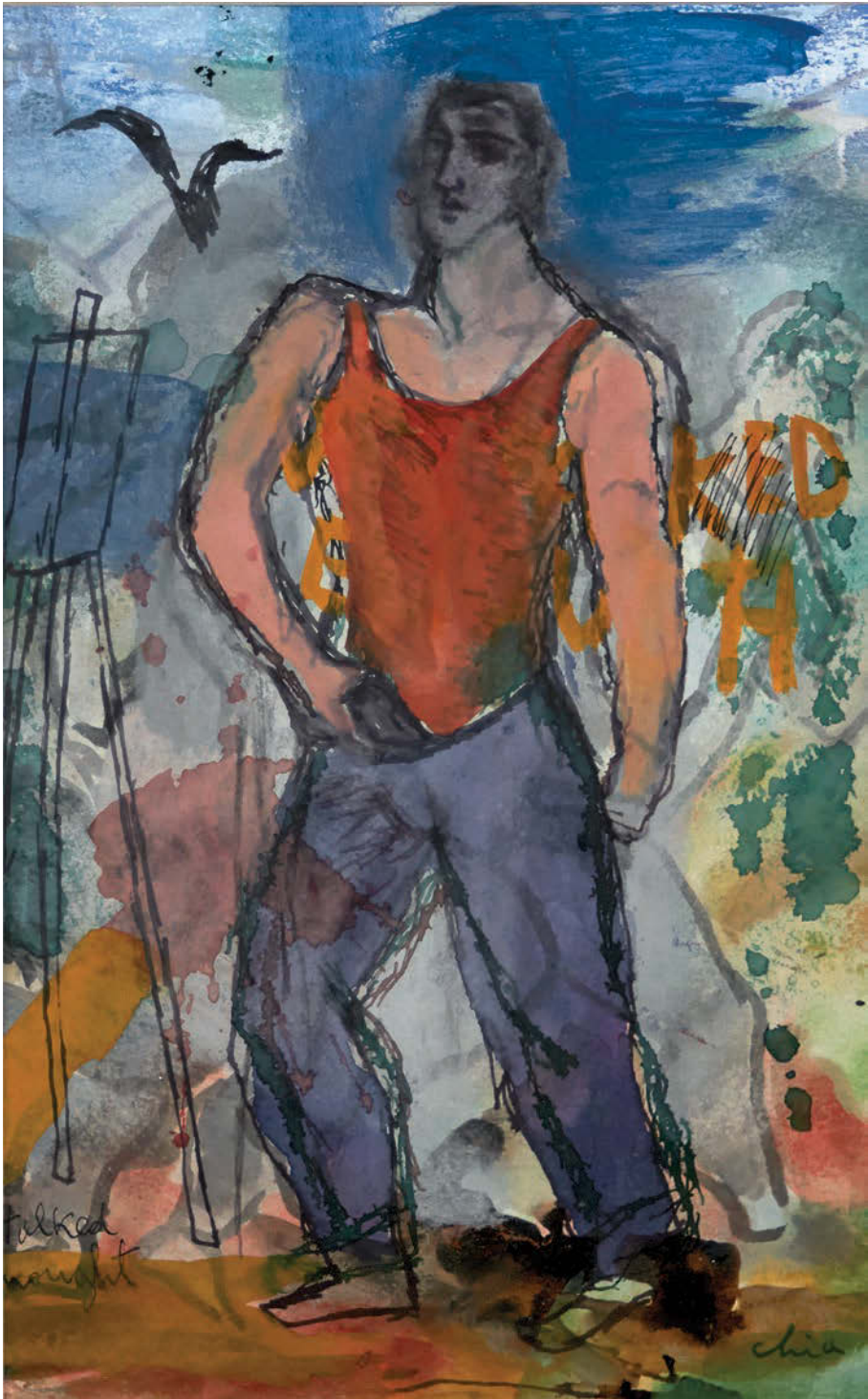
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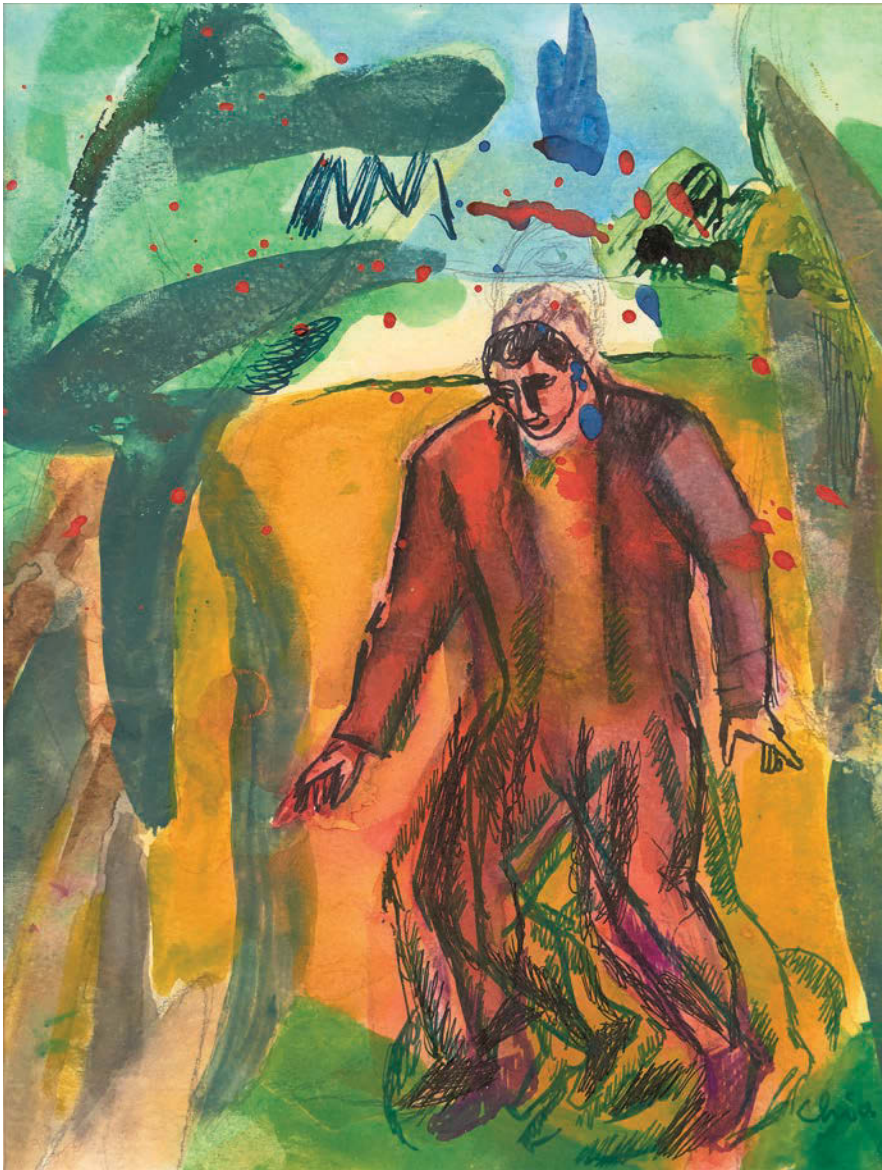
2011-2014

mixed media on paper, 7½" x 6"



All the sophistication of the photographic Act
Chia





ABOVE:

Untitled (015)

2011-2014

mixed media on paper, 10¼" x 8"

LEFT:

Untitled (024)

2011-2014

mixed media on paper, 9¾" x 6½"





ABOVE:

Untitled (007)

2011-2014

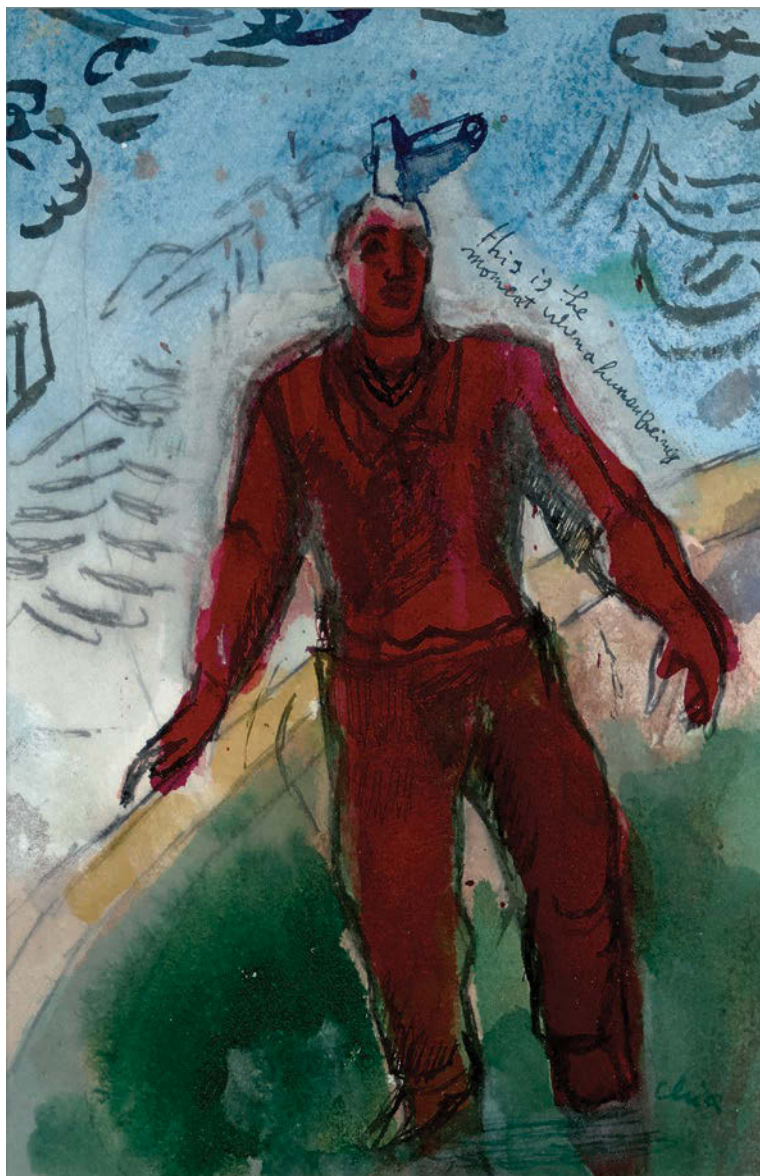
mixed media on paper, 7 ¾" x 7 ¾"

LEFT:

Untitled (020)

2011-2014

mixed media on paper, 9 ¾" x 6 ½"



ABOVE:

Untitled (011)

2011-2014
mixed media on paper, 9½" x 6½"

RIGHT:

Untitled (033)

2011-2014
mixed media on paper, 10¾" x 6¾"



with the
accused
Michael
for guidance
and protection

Chia



Spring
Hurray
The Zooer
5/10/16

Chia



Thanks to: Lisa Rosen, Richard Milazzo and Sandro Chia

ABOVE:

Untitled (032)

2011-2014
mixed media on paper, 10 ¼" x 7"

LEFT:

Untitled (026)

2011-2014
mixed media on paper, 9 ¾" x 6 ½"

