it is an opposition born out of a prior devotion. The body is desired as well as feared, and few are willing to state that to themselves much less to others. Out of that queer archaeology of desire and shame, Buckhiester's layered drawings expose the inextricability of attraction and repulsion in images that still hold sway.

This exhibition brings together works made over the last decade that illustrate the shifts in Buckhiester's use of drawing as a medium, and I have to this point been primarily referring to his works from the past five years that employ collage, facture, and other non-verisimilar practices of image-making. Entwined among these works, however, are two drawings in the precise style that characterized his earlier work. A decade ago, Buckhiester created somber and heavily worked drawings representing his remembered or imagined scenes from the North Georgia mountain town where he grew up. While some of these works came to include rural collisions and depictions of masks, all relied upon a detailed and comprehensive attention to realistic detail. Because of this approach, the two works from this moment included here — Untitled (2009) and Sky (2009) — appear to be straightforward depictions. They have less of the overt and critical antagonism of the later works, and neither are about toxic masculinity so much as the attempt to find modes of escape from it.

The house depicted in Untitled is against a blank, timeless sky. It is a somewhat generic building — an example of a rural or semi-rural Appalachian type of domestic architecture. Buckhiester drew it from a low vantage point, so that its otherwise squat profile starts to loom. He attended to details such as the stains from the rain's sediments that have drawn a line from the porch's slanted roof to the foundation that sits on uneven ground. It is a quiet drawing in which there is no drama or event in the imagery, just the slow and loving attention to all of the little things that make this typical architecture unique. In Buckhiester's drawing, this house has become both humble and noble, easily readable yet withholding the dramas of the lives within it. Buckhiester's realism attention to detail has poured over the evidence on the house's exterior with a precision that is almost scientific. Nevertheless, the blinds are closed and we are relegated to the outside. No amount of careful attention to the house's surface can really tell us what histories have unfolded inside.

This same use of verisimilitude characterized the other early drawing, Sky, which shows another small, typical house with uneven and stained foundations. Comparing this domestic architecture to Sky, a friend from Maine who chose to remain in her rural community even though it would have been easier to take the more common route to move to a city in order to escape rural antipathy. She flaunted the norms imposed on her, both in the self-determination of her openness to her community about being a transgender woman and in her free-spirited attitudes that refused to be easily categorized or delimited by convention. Buckhiester captures this strength in the triumphant pose of Sky and in the impromptu windswept stage she has created with a sheet anchored by rocks on her porch roof. Rather than depict her in her hometown in Maine, he fused this image of his defiant friend with the homely architecture of the small, weathered mill town in South Carolina where he would regularly visit his grandmother. This was a way of paying homage to Sky's determination to remain rooted in a rural community as well as means to forge a new "memory" of the possibility of such defiance within his local, rural context that would seem to disallow it. This work was among those culminating the series of drawings of rural genderqueer and queer youth on which Buckhiester had focused his early drawing practice. (An example of the origins of this series is the 2005 drawing Blue Wednesday.) He intended these drawings to testify to evidence of survival, struggle, and difference in rural communities that are often caricatured as lacking such examples of self-determination and resilience.
imaginary as second-class heroes.

This made sense to me when I encountered Buckhiester's drawings of inmate truck drivers. These were taken from the passenger seat of his father's car on recent trips back to northern Georgia. I grew up in a different part of Appalachia than Buckhiester, in its upper reaches in semi-rural upstate New York. It was a place most people from other parts of the state knew only because it was where two interstate highways intersected. When I was very young, I remember being fascinated by truck drivers and their eighteen-wheel behemoths. The trucks were mighty, chrome-encrusted machines and their masters were symbols of freedom, traveling from town to town in elaborate chariots. Later in my teens, this fantasy of seeing beyond the confines of my hometown calcified into this imagery, and his critical approach to such politically problematic elements is reinforced by his interrogation of how such ideals and norms are inculcated and imposed. His work is often foreboding in its insinuation that violence looms against anyone perceived as other. Twelve Bullets and a Bucket (2012) lays this bare with its homogenous gang staring out. Buckhiester, however, fearlessly presents this image both for that intimation of homophobic violence and because of the ways in which that intimation has an inescapably erotic charge — one that would be consciously and politically disavowed but never fully dissipated. He has drawn this image more than once. Other such hints of violence's nearness are there in a floating knife, the wrestler's struggle, or the ghastly visage created by the seepage of watercolor under a football player's helmet.

Buckhiester's drawings play out a struggle in which the image's power can be confronted as alien only because its constitutive impact has always already been felt. His imagery comes from the rural, white, working-class Appalachia, and he catalogues the kind of American archetypes that take hold in that context. These are not the mainstream national images of desire or masculinity, but rather the ones that come up for discussion and caricature in popular culture under such stereotypes as "the hillbilly" or "the hard-nosed redneck." Buckhiester embraces these working-class, would-be ideals not just because they shaped his adolescence but also because they are riven with their own fragility. The noble truck driver, the melodramatic professional wrestler, the high school football player that will never escape his home town, and the heroic inmate populate Buckhiester's drawings. Such archetypes are quintessentially American, but they are disavowed and downgraded in national popular culture — relegated to the rural and the working-class elaborates struggle with desires and the archetypes that underwrite them. The slower practice of drawing and the restraint of its materiality stretch out the engagement with the image over the course of trying to realize it on paper. Both with the deliberate scratch of graphite or the unexpected flow of the watercolor, the practice of drawing compels the artist to be deliberate in their striving for the image. The practice of graphic representation involves both a love for and a subservience to the thing being rendered on paper. Buckhiester's work capitalizes on the ways in which this love and subservience of the process of drawing can be used to reinforce (both conceptually and emotionally) his confrontation with images of conflicted desire. This is where his deformations of imagery come in, whether through the employment of materiality to alter the image or through a collage practice that cuts into his meticulous drawings.

There is a loving attention in all his works, even as each attempts to wrench power from his images of inmates, wrestlers, truckers, and bullies. His work takes on those stereotypes and fights against the toxic ver-
Both Untitled and Sky exhibit a mode of observational realism cultivated by Buckhiester to witness the emotional complexity that is often lost in caricatures of the working-class rural community. These drawings make heroic the humble, and they echo this through the painstaking rendering of details that fill the paper with the image. The minimalistic phase of Buckhiester's work is not just about such attention but also about the partiality of observation. With both the anonymous house and with the transgender hero against a homemade backdrop, the accounting of the exterior only goes so far. Buckhiester's detailed drawings stage a divergence between merely looking and actually knowing, and neither of the drawings fully reveal their emotional complexity, both drawings evidence an attempt to do justice to exterior appearance but both maintain a protection of the interior. In the drawing of Sky, the full force of her defiant gesture from her porch only starts to become evident when we come to know more about her (and thus grasp why this same flourishing gesture of strength is also brave because of the violence and reprisal that all too often are inflicted upon transgender youth). Much more is there than can be observed, and Buckhiester's precise renderings to make allegorical the hidden strength and depth in these everyday architectures and heroes.

Buckhiester made a deliberate shift in his attitude toward drawing about five years ago, and inverted the terms of his earlier practice. Rather than images of escape or rebellion, he instead chose to tackle archetypal images of masculinity and their presumptive power. Again, these are the conflicted working-class images of the inmate, the football figure, or the wrestler — the kinds of archetypes that cut through and determine American popular culture even as they are disavowed. Violence and reprisal that all too often are inflicted upon working-class rural community. These drawings make heroic the humble, and they echo this through the painstaking rendering of details that fill the paper with the image. The minimalistic phase of Buckhiester's work is not just about such attention but also about the partiality of observation. With both the anonymous house and with the transgender hero against a homemade backdrop, the accounting of the exterior only goes so far. Buckhiester's detailed drawings stage a divergence between merely looking and actually knowing, and neither of the drawings fully reveal their emotional complexity, both drawings evidence an attempt to do justice to exterior appearance but both maintain a protection of the interior. In the drawing of Sky, the full force of her defiant gesture from her porch only starts to become evident when we come to know more about her (and thus grasp why this same flourishing gesture of strength is also brave because of the violence and reprisal that all too often are inflicted upon transgender youth). Much more is there than can be observed, and Buckhiester's precise renderings to make allegorical the hidden strength and depth in these everyday architectures and heroes.

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Such use of the medium to engage in deformations and ambiguities can also be seen in the 2014 Drawing from Behind II, one of the many works that employ collage elements from the comic books that fueled Buckhiester's adolescent erotic imagination—The Savage Sword of Conan series. Its images of violence and muscular display were, like the professional wrestlers that appear in other works, built into the constructed image of masculinity to be both desired and feared. It is the unraveling of this fusion that Buckhiester's drawings labor towards, and they use this adolescent imagery to conjure past images of desire that are complicated through drawn deformations and material play.

Another central image for Buckhiester is that of the cowboy, which (unlike some of his other iconographies) retains a general hold on American national clichés. In his cowboy works, Buckhiester explicitly sexualizes this figure, making the "cowpoke" receptive as a means to undercut the stereotype of the conquering, phallic pioneer. Ice Cream Cone (2014) does this in spectacular fashion through the depiction of manual self-penetration with a gloved hand—an image that re-describes the mythical image of the cowboy's riding into town with a masturbatory, receptive loco-loco. The title of this work came from the painting Winter Judy Linn. She first saw the work in the memorial show to Hudson, the director of Feature Gallery where both Buckhiester and Linn had been in group shows together. She said she thought it was a drawing of an ice cream cone and claimed she could not see the self-pleasuring cowboy with pants around his bootied ankles. Buckhiester retained her comment as the title since it calls forth the kind of sublimations or displacements through which one copes with sexual desire. The licking of the melting ice cream cone is an oft-repeated example of the mundane evocation of sexual pleasing, and Linn's misrecognition of the cowboy's gymnastic anal masturbation compounds rather than detracts from this image's erotic charge.

The large drawing at the center of the exhibition, Untitled (2015), is characteristic of Buckhiester's current approach, which combines elements of his previous verisimilar practice with moments of deformation and collage. An appropriated image of a prison inmate from behind, the drawing presents itself as a hero, with armpit, perfect (retro) blond hair, and requisite tattoos. Like Ice Cream Cone, there is a looseness that comes from the watercolor or that fights with the precise rendering of space and figure. This back-facing figure is eroticized, and we again are viewing from a slightly low-vantage point upward. Buckhiester has superimposed onto this image other cliché images of masculine power. On his lower half, he wears the Sumo wrestler's fundoshi rendered economically with the application of a collaged white paper "T" around the waist and between the buttocks. An analogous stripe evokes a football player's helmet in the upper half, and this is reiterated by the section cut out of the drawing in the shape of football pads. Through this hole we see a second layer made of fabric printed with flamboyant ice skaters (the inverse of the iconography of tough masculinity) that, itself, is ripped to reveal a third layer underneath. While it is made into the shape of armor (in the form of football pads), this ideological layering of underlying images can be understood, by contrast, to evoke the earlier ways of being in the world that the hard shell of the adult inmate must suppress. In this ambitious large-scale drawing, Buckhiester layers symbols of conflicted masculine power onto the prisoner who, because of his incarceration, becomes both desired and pitted, powerful and impotent.

Perhaps the most psychologically charged (because the most narratively unstraightforward) drawing in the exhibition is the 2016 Untold. For this, Buckhiester took a 2009 self-portrait drawing as the basis for a new collage. His return to his earlier work is another attempt to unpack his imagery's emotional and psychological representation of queer self determination that was the original subject of the source drawing. In a bolder way than in other works, the ominous additions to Untold transformed and relied upon the drawing's initial tenderness.

In that same conversation about aggression and tenderness, we arrived at the title for this exhibition. "Love Me Tender" is a song about the subservience of the one who is loved: "Love me tender / Love me sweet / Never let me go / You have made my life complete / And I love you so." Famously performed by Elvis Presley in 1956, the song is supremely sentimental and itself, carries a Southern valence due to Presley's twang. Recorded soon after Presley had relocated to Memphis and his first non-rock ballad, the song was written by Vera Matson and Presley based on the 1861 song "Aura Lee" written by George R. Poulton. In his 2008 book on the history of song lyrics (Love Me Tender: The Stories Behind the World's Favorite Songs), Max Cryer details the century-long story of the song, from it being the anthem for Antebellum graduates at West Point to its becoming a
favorite of Civil War soldiers to its later appearances in many military movies such as *The Last Musketeer* (1952) and *The Long Grey Line* (1955). In 1956, Matson and Presley's new lyrics and arrangement built upon its status as a long-surviving American armed services song that had become "timeless" despite its tangled Civil War history. Its folksy association with duty was recast as the lover's vulnerability. Presley sang this song of the subservience of love to show his sensitivity, and that move of self-exposure was reliant on the deeply-rooted associations of the tune with military duty and self-sacrifice. "Love Me Tender" is a song about dependence that is, itself, dependent on its history. It is also a song about vulnerable masculinity, and it is counterposed to the swaggering, sexualized persona that had been Presley's trademark. With the song (and its deep history), the previously brash Presley was allowed to show a different, passive side. He could plead to be loved back, tenderly.

Buckhiester holds out for such an unlike-ly tenderness in the stereotypes of masculinity he exposes and critiques. He does this out of an understanding that — however much they might be disavowed and opposed — these unchosen images are inextricable and affecting. It is the ethical complexity of this self-awareness that forms the emotional ground for Buckhiester’s drawings of conflicted desires and the archetypes that anchor them. He fearlessly exposes the process of self-criticizing one’s given assumptions and pathways of desire, and he uses the slow medium of drawing to imbue his images both with loving attention and with committed resistance. In the end, his practice seeks to face head on that which few of us can face — the limitations of the conditions that forged us. However, Buckhiester’s work does not resign itself to determinism. Instead, it is hopeful in its brave understanding that to critique a toxic culture’s norms is to take to heart how much any such opposition is fueled by a history of entanglement.

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