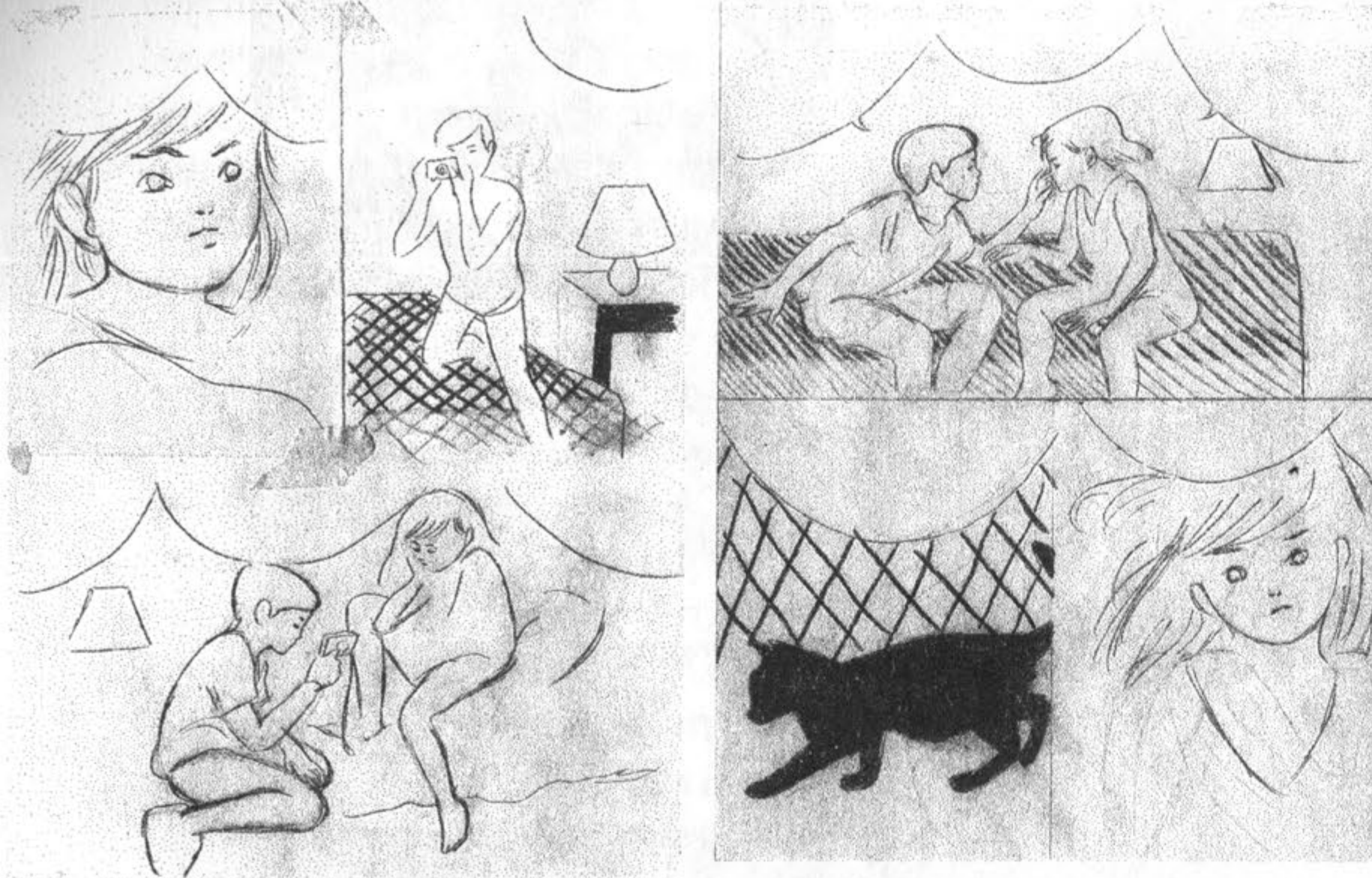


**Nicole Reber interviews
Blaise Larmee**



Nicole Reber Your new book "Ice Cream Kisses" is an intimate glimpse of several sexual encounters, some that take place online, others in person. To promote it, you put out a video with a girl topless, and yourself, mimicking some of the poses that end up being in the book. While comics can be a personal medium, I feel like most people don't normally associate sexuality with this form. Do you feel like you're trying to change that precedent?

Blaise Larmee I'm not trying to do anything. I'm hoping the fact of my body will qualify any feminist reading of the text. In some ways I'd like to see dudes implicate themselves by publicly pre-



senting their sexuality but I'm also skeptical of any male feminist strategy, especially my own.

Nicole How autobiographical is your work?

Blaise Autobiography occurs when drawings simultaneously record, predict, and alter relationships, when drawing becomes a ritual mechanism of arousal, when images are made with a specific viewer in mind, when painting nude becomes a tynchat performance, when my dad discovers my nudes in google image search.

Nicole How do you supplement language with drawings? Do you fictionalize dialogue or take things you've heard or said and insert that into your work?

Blaise I approached the text that dominates this book in the same way I approached the drawing: getting aroused, locating myself in those overlapping ritual moments, remembering the subtleties of rhythm, thinking about things I wish I'd said, imagining things I want to say, writing thing I could never say.

Nicole What was the



most important thing you learned from your other projects that you wanted to apply to your new book?

Blaise To allow the book to be false, to be a parody of itself. To abandon in the final moment all the sentimentality that inspired its creation.

Nicole You play around with different identities on platforms like Tumblr. How does authenticity come into play in your own work? Do you find that creating characters makes it easier for you to remove yourself from your more personal work?

Blaise I don't have a lot of interest in authenticity except as something that can be bought and sold. I have a sociological view of the self: a component of society almost entirely restricted to a predetermined destiny. Like a rhythm game. There is no choice in the notes you hit and every event is a last second crisis. Drake hits these notes admirably well. He knows what he needs to perform and he performs it flawlessly. In the sociological view he has no agency. He



is manifested by his fans, a living conduit for their collective desire. If pop stars don't have agency then where does it exist? What is the larger organism we are all apart of?

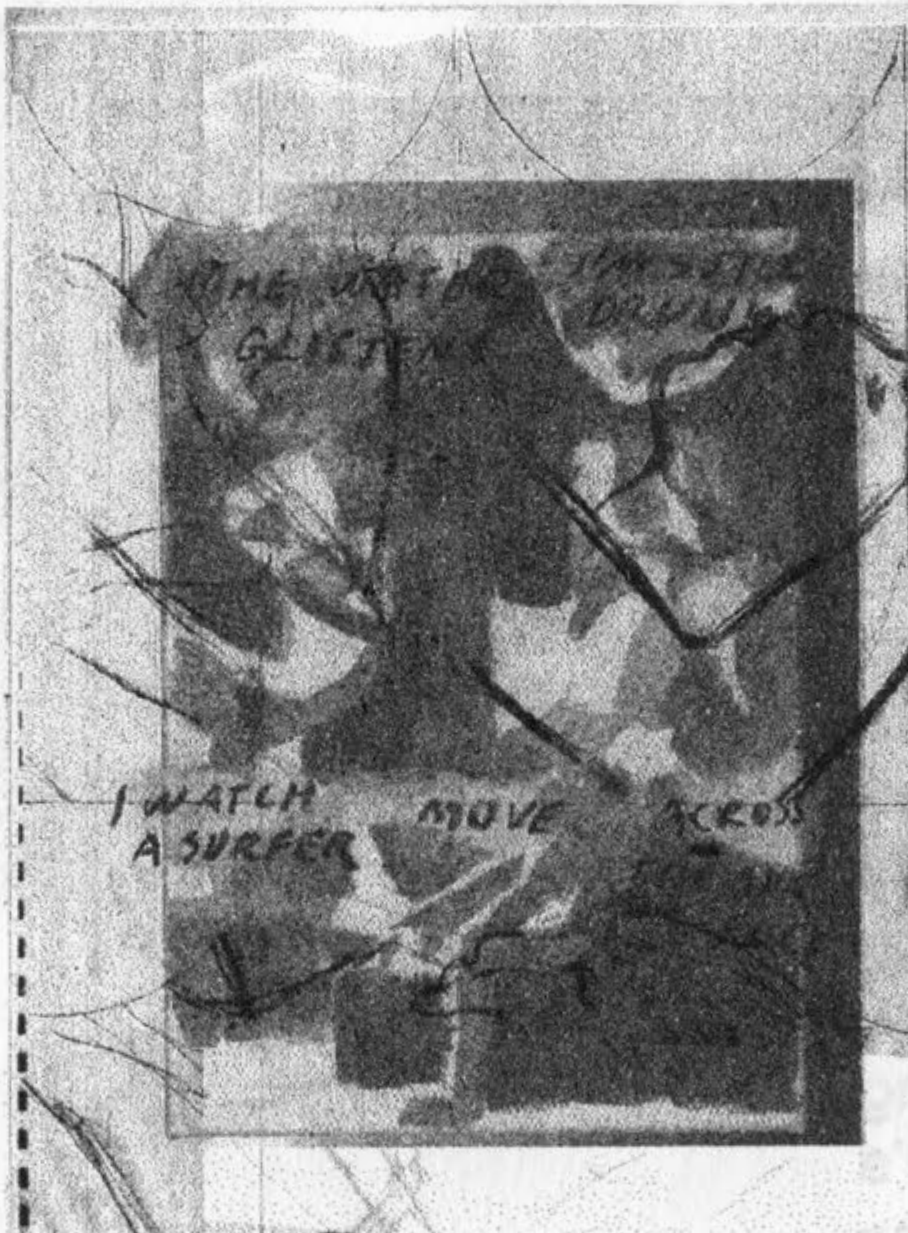


Drawing characters is a way for me to interact with others, although for the most part I only have 1 character and I only interact with *the* other. For me the other can take on a number of roles, but mostly it is a certain face I can project onto. A privileged young girl. I'm monogamous and monotheistic: there can only be one other,

or only one at a time. This perspective can be isolating and anti-pluralistic. It's best to hedge your bets with some mechanism of thinking of others, plural, whether it's astrology or Myers Briggs types or caricature. The challenge of caricature is to discover and exaggerate the physical, labored upon, framework that holds up the projection screen. These are the parts you feel guilty for noticing in someone when you start seeing them and the parts that melt away when you start to fall for them.

Nicole Do you think that it is possible to be anonymous as an artist anymore? Do you see any value in this?

Blaise Art is so art historical, and our notion of history is so focused on individual actors, that art and authorship seem inextricably bound together. On the other hand, the artist, in assuming their

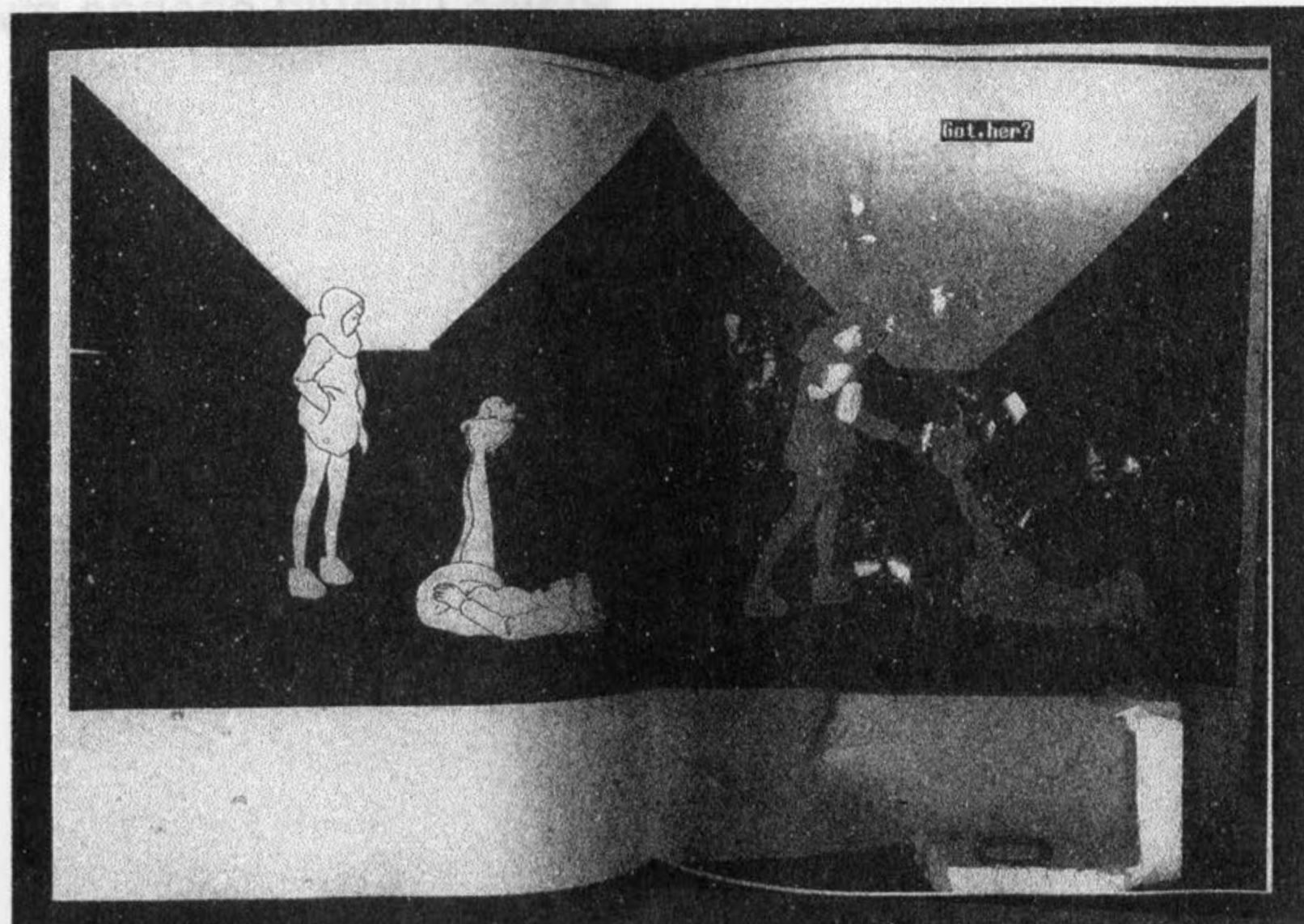


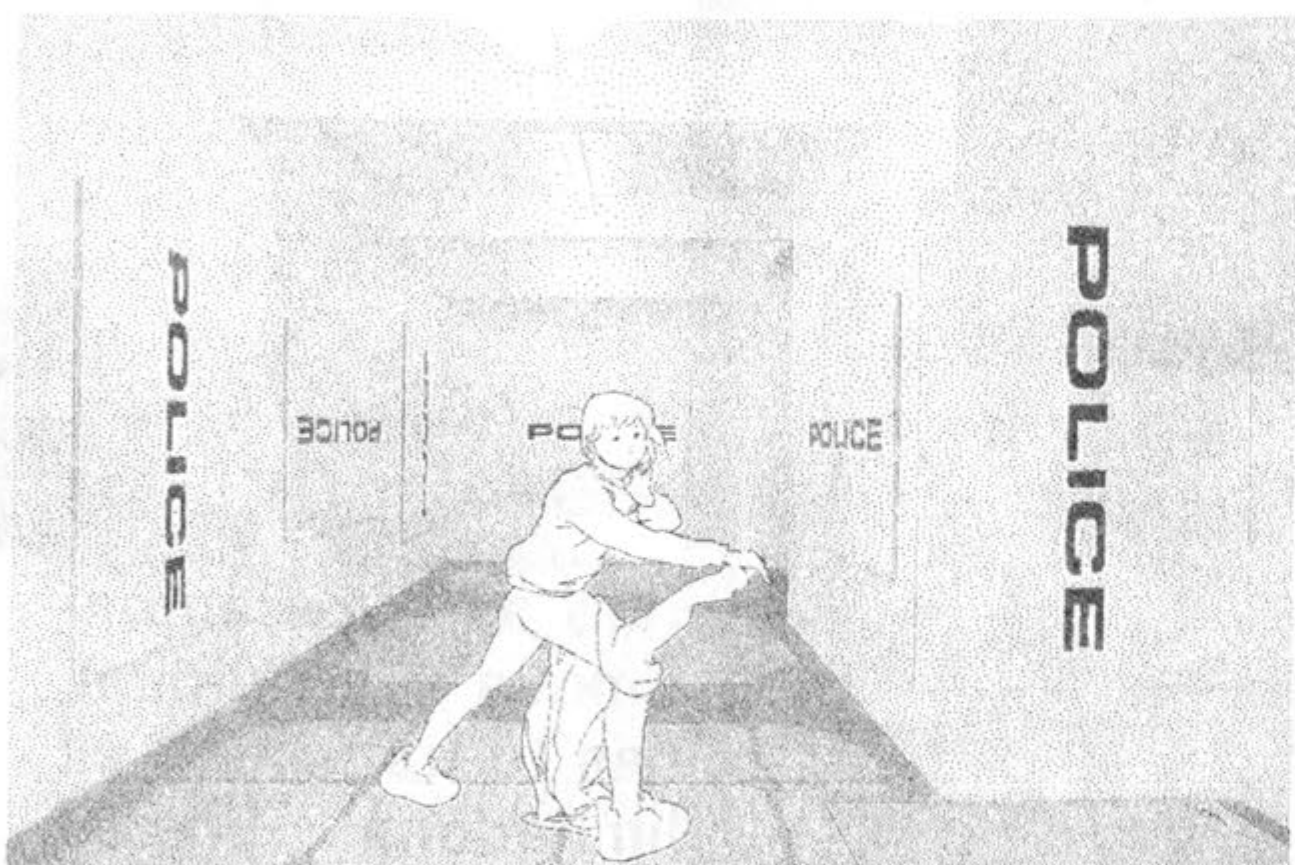
role as hyperautonomous individual, has to transcend all limitations placed on them, including, ultimately, their self. So it's a constant disappearing act by the very person with the most spotlights on them. The presence of the artist becomes all the more special because it is fleeting, because in becoming artists they have chosen to go underground.

Nicole You maintain a Tumblr called US ART, where you draw characters onto top of gallery images. I found these particularly surreal, having

actually been to some of these shows that you drew over. What was your intention with this project? How much does the fine art world effect the pieces that you make?

Blaise On one level US ART was an experiment in SEO. It was semi-successful: if you google

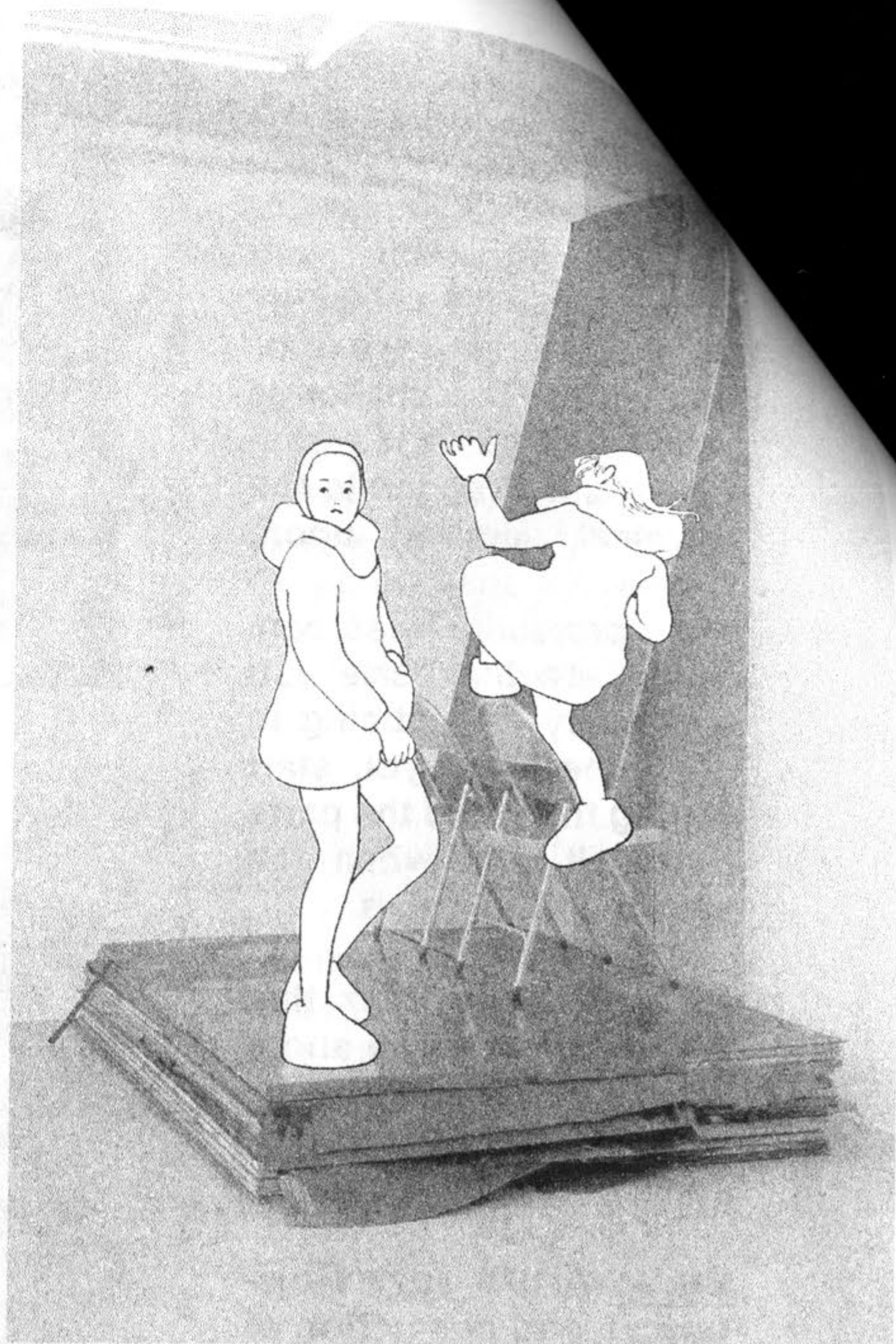




Kyle Raquipiso or Aaron Garber-Maikovska you'll see my images toward the top of the pile. On another level it was declaring my relationship to art as an outsider. In my role as illustrator, i.e. creator of virtual actors, I inhabit and activate these gallery images. Contemporary artists don't represent — they present. For some reason representation has been removed from contemporary art discourse. Maybe this lack is a leftover of Greenbergian modernism that somehow never got around to being corrected. Or maybe it's the result of the culture industries' anticompetitive monopolistic spirit. I don't know. In any case, it seems like a gap with rich potential that I am uniquely positioned to fill.

Nicole What are the biggest influences on the work you make?

Blaise Tumblr.



Nicole If you could change one thing about the art you make what would it be?

Blaise I would change my audience.