

**RAQUEL VASQUEZ  
GILLILAND**

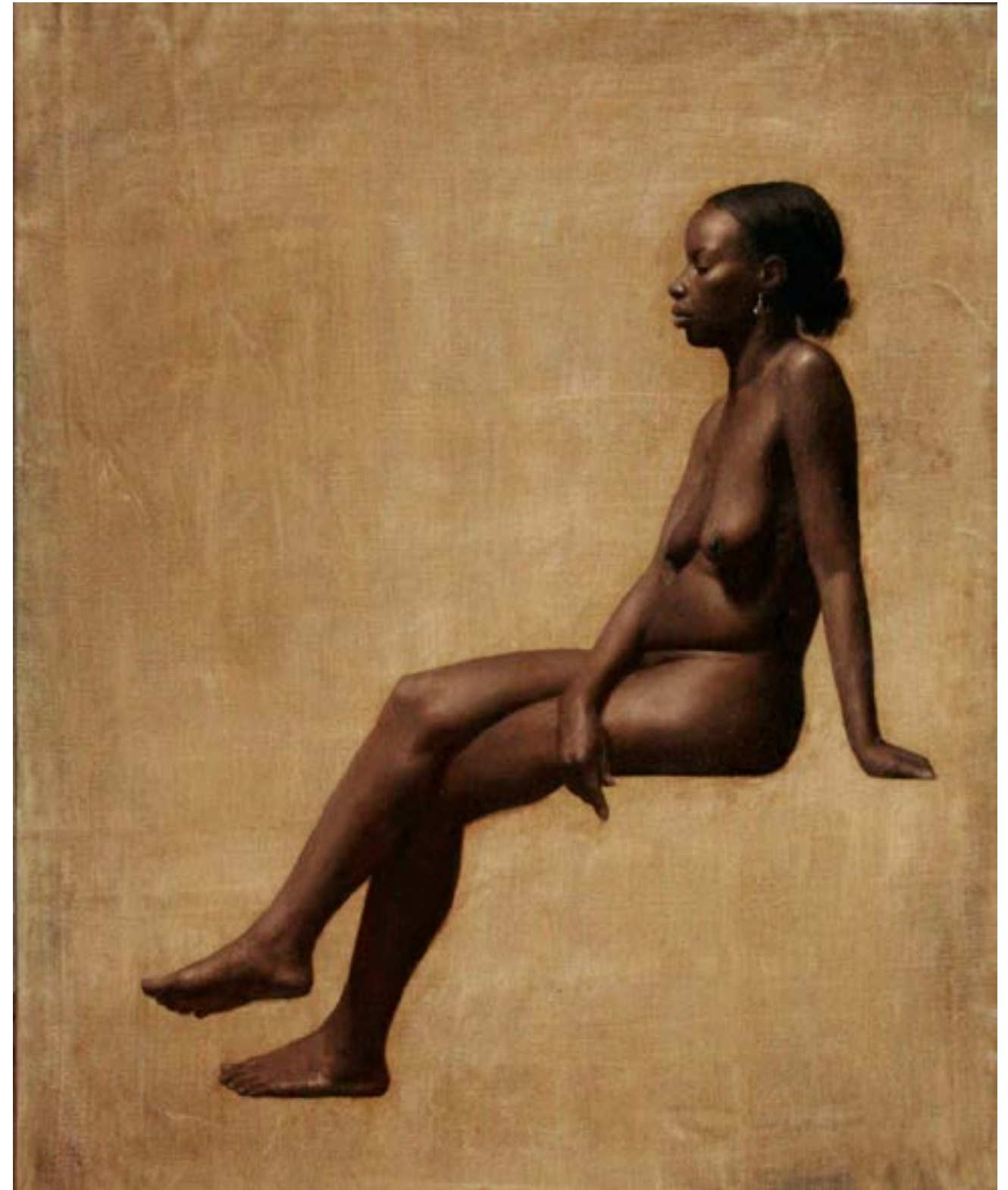
Excerpt from  
Letter to the  
Ancestry  
Company

I want to know if my great-great-  
great-grandmother's grandmother  
liked the rain. If it reminded her  
of something longer than blood.  
If it made her feel like the earth  
were calling an ancient lover.  
If thunder made her shiver,  
but the good kind of shiver, like when  
a palm leaf brushes your shoulder  
as you walk in the cold mud.  
Did the rain clouds remind her  
of the birth caul of her children,  
did it seem like the sky was fertile  
before each feral storm. If lightning  
looked to her like cracks opening  
to a new universe, one where rain  
spoke backward and cried from time  
to time. Did she name each sort of  
heavy cloud. Were the huge  
ones "underwood at dusk,"  
the accompanying wispy gray,  
"baby hair." Were her favorite  
the clouds that arrive after  
the storm, before the set sun,  
when the whole world drips  
with rose gold? 'Cause that's  
my favorite. Can you tell me, please?  
Did I get that from her?

**Raquel Vasquez Gilliland** is a Mexican American poet and painter from South Florida. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in *Dark Mountain*, *Rattle*, and *Fairy Tale Review*, among others. Her first collection, *Dirt and Honey*, will be released in 2018 by Green Writers Press. More of her work may be seen on her website, [raquelvasquezgilliland.com](http://raquelvasquezgilliland.com).

**CARLA CRAWFORD**

*Constance*, 2016  
Oil on linen, 16 x 20 in



COURTESY WINFIELD GALLERY