

## CARLA CRAWFORD

*Irena*, 2014  
Oil on Linen, 18 x 22 in



COURTESY WINFIELD GALLERY

## MOLLY DOYLE

### Sketches of the Arctic Tundra in October

I remember my town as it was when I was younger; it was somewhat placid, the people and the houses seeming to be wrapped in a scattering of blue smoke. The school I attended there was much like the rest of the town in the way it stood by itself on the top of a small hill, enclosed in a fist of thin trees, almost indiscernible if you did not know what you were looking for. Ms. Collier taught us all the subjects, never showing preference for one area of study over another, speaking about the Iroquoian and Algonquian cultures on the Atlantic coast of North America, and simplifying expressions by combining like terms with the same lackluster approach. I imagined pulling out the strands of her hair as she talked, limp and dry and lifeless as they appeared, and how naked her scalp would look without this protective layering. Other times I used my pencil down to a nub, shading one spot of my notebook until the lead was thick on the page and looked like a metal shield. Filbert Monahan sat next to me all day long drawing miniature maps over every surface he could reach, while I tried not to look at him because his sharp green eyes made me squirm with a feeling I could not define.

Midway through the month of October, Ms. Collier decided to assign the class a fun project for the upcoming holiday. Each of us was given a biome with the idea that we would draw it in an accurate but festive manner, inserting ghosts here and there, perhaps a couple pieces of candy and a pumpkin. Filbert and I were the arctic tundra.

In October it was as foggy as it always was, except the air was crisper and you could feel its edge as it pulled itself across your bare skin. On the first day of that month I had turned thirteen, and on the second my grandmother had died. My mother spent most of the time in her room with the blinds shut, or sitting at the living room table gluing together pieces of old *National Geographic* magazines she kept in a box at the foot of her bed. I didn't know what to say to her to make her feel better, or if there really was anything I could say. I was sure there must be but that I wasn't looking in the right places. My father and I went on hikes, we sat on the couch watching out the window the family of deer that lived behind the house. At night after work he cooked food he knew my mother liked—risotto with squash, chef's salad, lasagna, while she kept on gluing pieces down. I thought about this as I walked to Filbert's the first day we had arranged to work on the project,