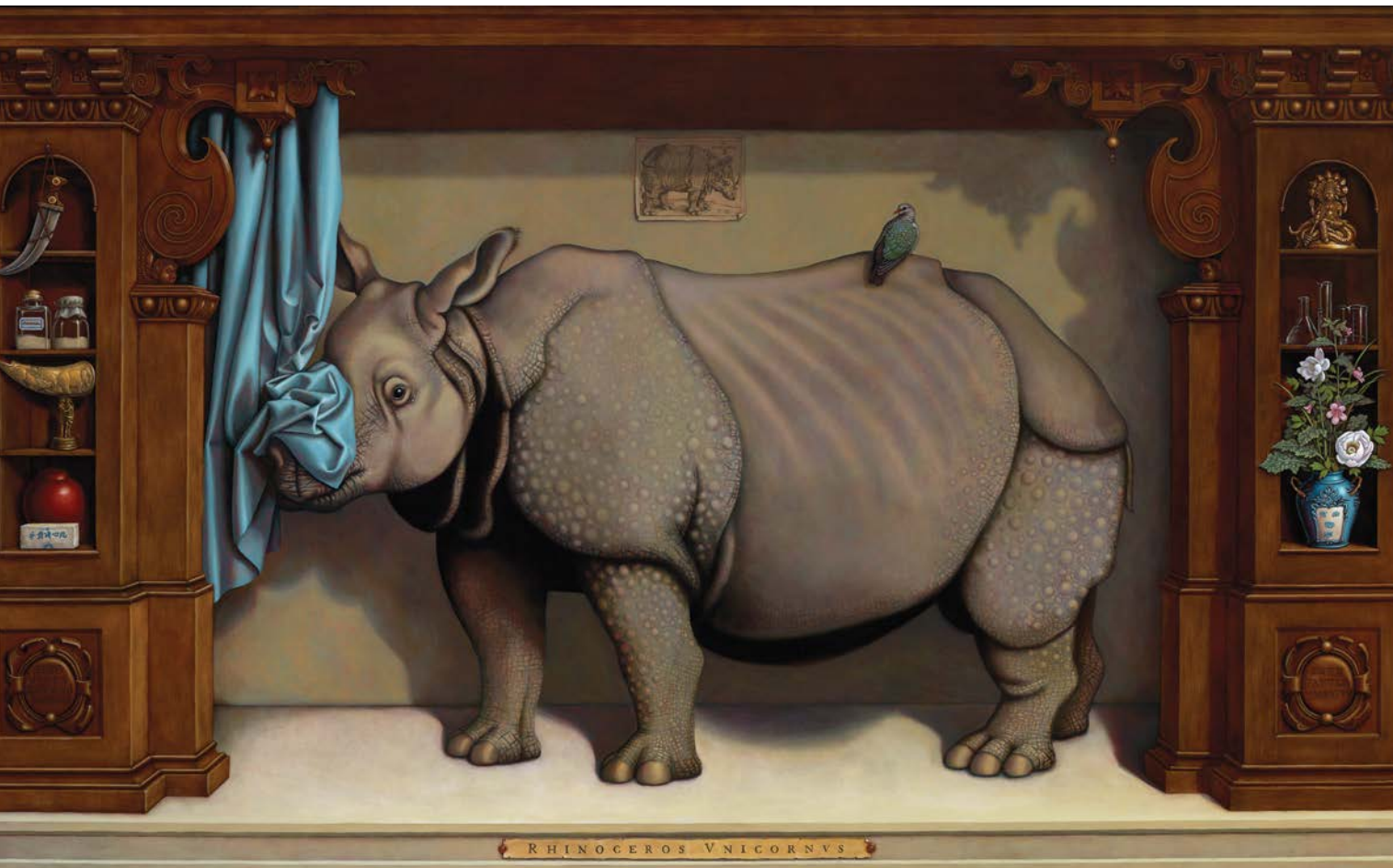


## MADELINE VON FOERSTER

*Unicornus*, 2009

Oil and egg tempera on panel, 69 x 42 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST

## AUSTIN SANCHEZ-MORAN

Clara  
(1741–1758)

### I. As a Child Desired

Her invaluable mother was shot on a whim,  
And so at three months, Clara ate from a gilded  
Dutch plate.

She was raised in the wealthy household of a seaman,  
named Van de Meer, who thought it right to sail her  
in the cargo hold with the cigars and the Assam Tea.

The Sailors fed her hay and IPAs,  
smitten with her thick skin and almost-seduction:  
she was a mermaid, a sexual substitute.  
And the goats grazed around Clara's legs.  
Mesmerized by the tropical rocking,  
the heady smell of tobacco, and the salty fish oil  
on her body, continually, all the way  
from Calcutta to Rotterdam, Clara was  
a one-horned, odd-toed ungulate in a third-eyed trance.

### II. As an Object Desired

Now on tour in a shockless stagecoach,  
only the Holy Roman theologians felt comfortable  
with copies of her in saintly porcelain and alabaster,  
fragile, just out of the kiln. The masses wanted to  
have her  
and would have given her black currants for all of  
her blisters.

The model for Dürer's misrepresentation, (missing  
her dorsal  
horn and her flowering jawbone) she showed the throngs  
that she was a measure of leisure in the orangerie.  
This German greenhouse is where she found love  
in hands that fed her fallen citrus.  
Her nostrils flared with the sweetness shown.  
In a bronze cage, beneath the regal glazed  
roof, the Black Forest's snowy pines  
reflected back onto a rhinoceros under a cupola.

### III. As a Subject Desired

She backtracked Hannibal's path through the Alps,  
even though the price of her presence at Versailles  
was almost  
too high for the Beloved King who needed company  
for his camel, his pelicans, and his seals. And the  
powdered wigs  
sauntered with elderflower liqueur and champagne  
in a coupe.

Then, that spring, she hit the fair in Paris.  
The "exotic gargantuan" even impressed the ladies.  
And Casanova took note. Handing out the rococo  
trinkets and bracelets made from macaw feathers  
and wing bones, he hoped that some Madame  
would remember  
the myth of Pasiphaë. And he could be that  
backdoor man  
hidden behind the cardboard cutout of a rhino.  
And that's what Clara felt like, after a while,  
without heft and unattuned to the arias of sensation.

**Austin Sanchez-Moran** received his MFA in Poetry from George Mason University where he was a Laanan Fellow and then an Honors Fellow. His poems have been published or are forthcoming in *Denver Quarterly*, *Fjords Review*, *The Laurel Review*, *Midwestern Gothic*, and *Texas Review*, among others.