

FRAN O'NEILL

spooning beauty, 2015
Oil on Canvas, 84 x 84 in



NILS MICHALS

It Is a Box They Will Never Know

It is a box they will never know. It is a box to stand for all who desire to be inside, to be held at the very edge, to dream the precise combination of glance and innocuous touch, of physical heat, of word and way. And yet that woman is burning from an afar too great to reach. Do you know where she is just now? She's in a salon, fully reclined, where an Asian woman glues to her skin the last Swarovski crystal to complete the shape of a diamond, which is quite clever really, the diamond rising out of the jewel box, the diamond they want to give her but can't, the diamond she thus gives herself. An alternate narrative is that of the woman who opened the box after having been instructed not to. And so out flew our ills compounded, our unpaid medical bills, our pointing fingers, our ordnance that arrives from invisible places and scatters the bodies of children into air. This is not at all like that. Not what is meant at all. The first use of the definition may be traced back to *All's Well That Ends Well*. But has it ever ended well? Who will she let in for all to see? Who in high definition? It can never be you. Someone you once resembled in an altogether different life, a thicker-in-the-pocket version when you close your eyes perhaps, but never you as you currently are. That is how all of this works: it is not so much the man in the little boat, but the little boat in the man. Haven't you seen it bobbing among the waves at dusk? It grows smaller and smaller as the camera pans slowly out. Speck in a wide, wide sea. All the Swarovskis are clear except the last one, the one being glued, the one closest to the pleasure, the diamond point whose cut furnishes the brilliance and from which every now and again pulses a bright pink.

Nils Michals is the author of two collections of poetry, *Come Down to Earth* (Bauhan, 2014), which won the May Sarton New Hampshire Prize, and *Lure* (Pleiades Press, 2004), which won the Lena-Miles Wever Todd Award. Individual poems have recently been published or are forthcoming in *Posit*, *Four Chambers*, *Small Po[r]tions*, *Bombay Gin*, *Theodate*, and *The Conium Review*, among others. He lives in Santa Cruz, California, and teaches at West Valley College.