

## ALEXANDER ROSS

### Notes on the Images: Daddy Photosynthesis

While I'm alone working in the studio my mind will sometimes manufacture pithy little dictums for itself such as, "Nodes are nodules, but a lobe isn't always a lozenge." These bits of advice are rarely useful but they often sound good to the inner ear, as if the imagery I'm seeing has a sub-need to express itself lyrically. No idea where they come from, or why.

One day recently I noticed a pleasant, soft, pumpity sound in a passage of electronic music in my headphones. I had a suddenly important urge to draw what I thought a pumpity sound looked like, and I had to do so using a very particular pale pink crayon. I knew exactly where the pink crayon was, even though there were loads of crayons scattered around the studio, and so I grabbed it and started realizing the image. That crayons are the one creative tool most unlike a glass LED screen was how I justified their use at the time. There are very few things you *can't* do on a computer these days, but one of them is to make a true mess. Crayons smudge, and they sometimes snap in half in your hand. Is an honest creative frenzy even possible with just mouse and keyboard? There are no snippets of paper or eraser chunks on the floor after you leave your flat screen. And isn't it wonderful to have to sweep up at the end of your workday, went my thinking. I wanted, almost out of spite, to render a digital sound in an olden way.

A few years ago I asked myself what a wall-snout might look like in Kelly green, and then made plans to paint one in oil, which I did do eventually, on linen. Something about the weirdness of nostrils when considered in isolation on the wet wall of a cave. In 2012 I made a suite of works on paper called "Summer Drawings" where I tried to fuse aerial views of swampland with on-the-ground impressions of backyard and brush. I wanted a looking-down-on-walking-through simultaneity. There was a special allowance in the drawings

for close-up details and distant objects to cohabit the same location on the paper. Then, for a painting I made later that summer, a languid gathering of translucent lime and avocado bio-strands get punctured abruptly by a single, turgid nugget of grey cell-foam. To my mind, such a summery “salad” needed a bit of tomato orange-red, so I threw in a rhombus of it randomly somewhere, setting the whole thing off nicely.

I should mention my love of grotesques and gargoyles, which started with an interest in Pagan green-man imagery—that leafy guardian-dude of the forest who I like to call Daddy Photosynthesis. The idea I think was to give nature a formidable persona so that one treads respectfully, which we haven’t. Hence my inclusion of an extruding tongue, which offends like a slow turd coming out. It means, “Turn away, back off before you ruin everything.” And while I rendered him defoliated and damaged, he nonetheless manages to sneer at us in glorious, waxy crayon.