

Artist Statement

Mark Wilson Malek

The other day I found myself tearing up in my therapist's office. I wasn't prepared to express vulnerability in that way. I immediately clammed up, my arms folded across my chest in a desperate attempt to remain in control. In that moment, it became clear that fear has been the constant hum in my life—a fearful child experiencing punishment when he needed help, becoming a teenager wrestling with his sexuality and the weight of scripture, into an adult terrified of abandonment from both God and those he tries to trust. My work begins in that fear. Working primarily in monochromatic tones—charcoal, ink, paint, oil pastels, embroidery—I render the male figure in moments when the fear attempts to becomes acceptance: bodies at rest, contemplating, withdrawing. Drawing inspiration from artists like Egon Schiele, I'm interested in the raw honesty of the figure stripped of pretense.

The monochrome palette is both irony and acceptance. These limited tones strip away distraction, leaving only light, shadow, and the complexity of form. There's a tenderness in this reduction, a softness that runs counter to everything I was taught about being a man, about being right with God, about being worthy of love. My figures recline with reference to classical sculpture and dissolve into their expressionistic forms. Some feel caught between reverence and rawness, between fine art and something more immediate. This is my investigation of uncertainty and loss of control: with the self, with the body, with the quiet moments we rarely show others.