

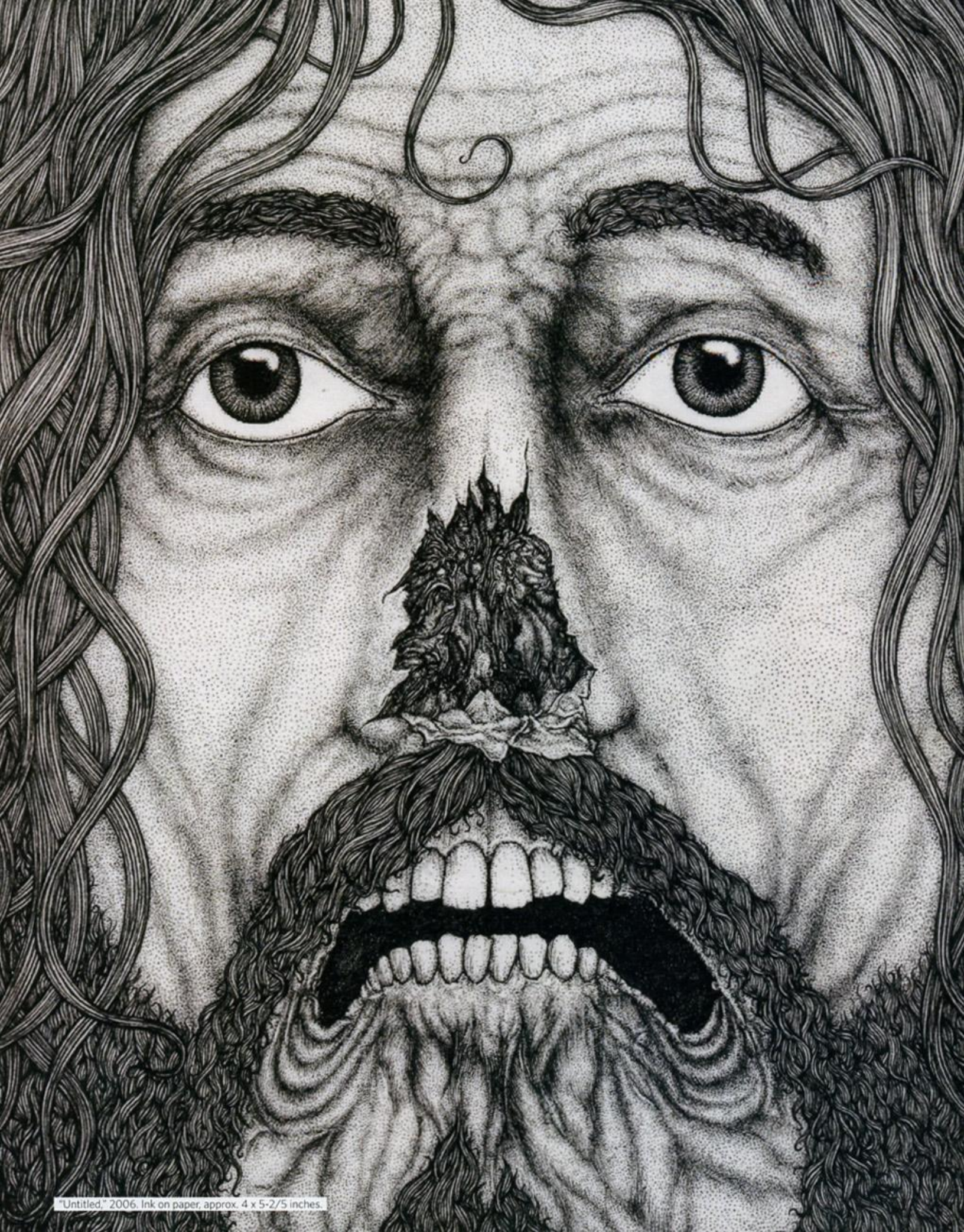
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"Untitled," 2006. Ink on paper, approx. 4 x 5-2/5 inches.

JOHN KLECKNER

THE TRANSFORMATIVE IN NATURE + ART

John Kleckner has a touch of the nomad. The 30-year-old artist was born in Northern Iowa, then moved to Cleveland, Ohio, and to Fresno, California, before returning to the Hawkeye State to study art at the University of Iowa. Post-graduation, he moved to Los Angeles and credits artist Jon Pylypchuk for being the impetus to put down roots on the West Coast. "When I was deciding between moving to New York or L.A.," remembers Kleckner, "I saw some of his work and I was like, 'Wow, I've never seen anything like this. If this was made in L.A., then that's the place to be!'"

In 2003, a chance meeting with Javier Peres, who had previously seen Kleckner's work at an art fair, led the contemporary art dealer to exhibit the artist's oeuvre a few years later. Eventually, he moved to New York and then made his way to Germany, intending to stay for a short visit, but a few weeks in the Spring turned into two years in Berlin, where he lives and works today.

Kleckner's work is composed mainly of watercolor, ink, and paper-based drawings. "I had a little moment in college where I tried to make abstract paintings but they weren't very interesting or good," he says. "I just feel really comfortable drawing watercolor- and paper-based works. It seems natural to me and I can express what I want to really naturally."

Do you remember your first drawing?

I was 8, 10, or 12, and I drew this dark comic of my parents as skeletons. I'd gotten so mad at them that I drew two skeletons with little sashes that said, 'Mom and Dad,' and left it out so my mom could find it. But that one didn't go on the refrigerator.

What inspires you?

I'm really into campy, B horror films from the '60s and '70s. I'm a skeptical hippie. I like the visuals of hippie culture. It's something that still resonates.

Is that where the nature aspect in your work comes from, and how you team nature with the human form?

I have an interest in different kinds of environmentalism, not that my work is at

all political. I love this idea that when we die, we turn into dust and dust turns into nature. In several of the drawings, I tried to create this moment where the person is turning back into a plant, but is still conscious while it's happening.

You're currently exhibiting *The 40 Seasons* in Berlin. How was that conceptualized?

I was showing at a gallery with Javier and I met an L.A. collector who liked my work. He said, 'Your work has this sensibility from the Renaissance and Albrecht Dürer. You should use the subject matter of four seasons.' I didn't want to do the spring, summer, winter, fall, standard-type thing. I liked the idea of forty seasons and it was cryptic enough to sound intriguing. Then I just rolled it into forty small works that are glimpses, or peepholes, into this mysterious world.

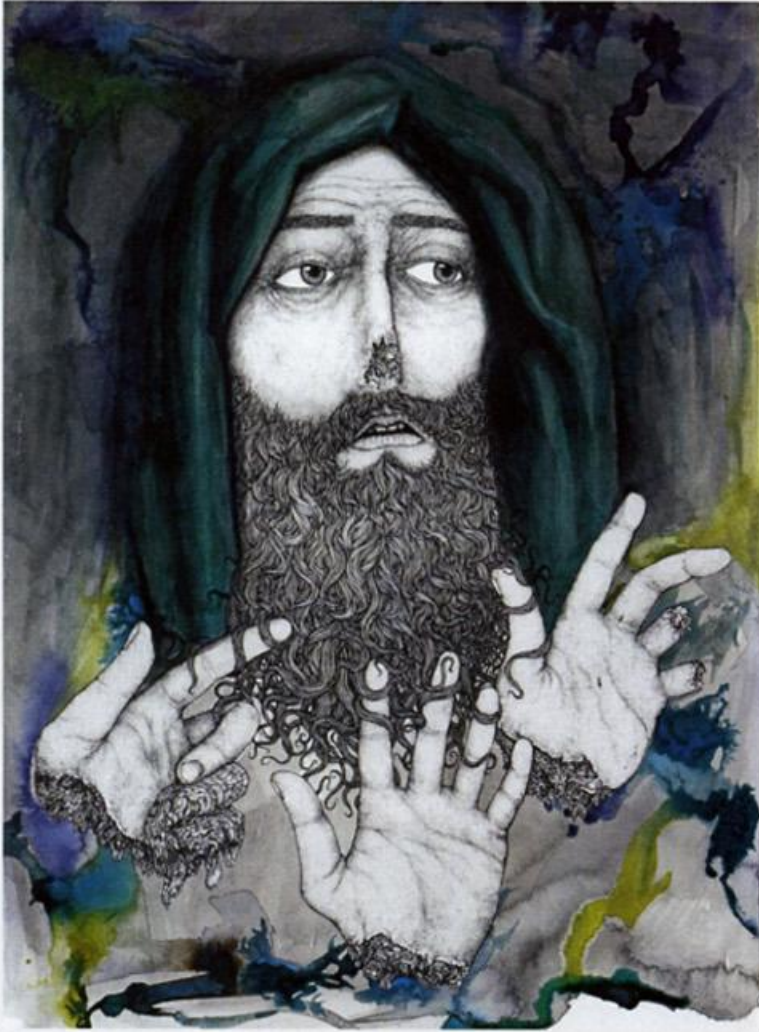
Is the recession affecting you at all?

Definitely. Everyone's pretty cautious with spending money. But Berlin is a good place to be right now. It's cheap. Even the mayor [Klaus Wowereit] has famously said that the city is 'poor, but sexy.' And it is. It's a poor city, but it has sexiness to it. Javier was joking that it's a great time to unveil the show with forty small drawings because even in a recession like this, it isn't hard to spend your money because they're affordably priced. From a business sense, that's good. The gallery was pretty happy that we could easily sell them...hopefully.

If you weren't doing what you're doing now, what would you be doing?

I'm so happy doing what I'm doing and that I can actually pay my rent with what I do. I suppose if you're asking me this right now and I'm standing outside in Berlin, I'd love to be somewhere sunny and warm, preferably on an island. Maybe a scuba diving instructor, fisherman, or something that deals with being on a tropical island. ☒

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"Untitled," 2007. Watercolor and ink on paper, 14 x 10-1/4 inches. "Untitled," 2007. Watercolor and ink on canvas, 15-1/4 x 11-1/3 inches.



"Untitled," 2006. Ink and watercolor on paper, 87.4 x 51-3/5 inches.