

# CHEIM & READ

## ARTFORUM

CRITICS' PICKS

### Jack Pierson

**CHEIM & READ**  
547 West 25th Street  
June 25–August 29

The island is a premier existential metaphor, and the works in “onthisisland,” Jack Pierson’s exhibition of some sixty-plus ephemeral oil and watercolor paintings, graphite drawings, and driftwood assemblages, offer new and fluid insight into the artist psyche. Pierson created the series during a four-month stay on the Floridian island of North Captiva, and the works, mostly small in scale, expose the poetics of process. Pierson practices his own variation on automatic drawing—he’s dubbed the results “Anagogic Paintings”—based on the Surrealist method. At once lushly abstract and confidently nonspecific, the works convey the topographical patterning of subliminal urges: Impasto belts of sand-thickened oil paint in acid-washed hues gently whirl around small canvases, taking forms alternately sexual (such as the pinkish, roselike form at the center of *Nativity*, 2015) and playful (the more staccato *Deluges of Lethe*, 2015), while dusky watercolors (all *Untitled*, 2014–15) sensuously pack together repetitive marks that look as though they’re still wet.

Pierson is known for his wistful, sensual photographic portraits and word sculptures composed of found sign parts—works that channel nostalgia and romance while accentuating the pathos evoked by gaze, body, and relic. In distinction, these new works directly take on the internal world, at once foregrounding the artist himself and forcing a Rorschach-like response of psychic and physical identity.



Jack Pierson, *He Swears*, 2015, oil, paint, sand, wax on canvas, 10 x 8".

— Anne Prentnieks