

HALES LONDON NEW YORK

MICHAEL SMITH, "NOT QUITE UNDER GROUND"

Michael Smith (b. 1951 Chicago, IL, USA) graduated from Colorado College, CO, USA in 1973 with a degree in painting. Smith's participation in the Whitney Museum of American Art Independent Study Program in the early 1970s formed the beginnings of an extensive network in New York's creative community. The artist lives and works between New York, NY and Austin, TX, USA.

For forty years Smith has been producing performances, video works, large scale installations, commercial television, puppet shows, photos and drawings that have been shown in a variety of venues and contexts, including museums, galleries, cable television, nightclubs, children's birthday parties and on the streets. Smith has been at the forefront of a generation of artists interested in crossing over and merging an art world context with popular culture. A prolific artist, Smith often collaborates with other artists, including Joshua White, Mike Kelley, Seth Price and William Wegman. Drawing on aspects and conventions of daily life and mass media, Smith creates witty and ironic works that speak to the trials and tribulations of everyday life as well as to our most human concerns.

In the late 1970s Smith conceived of two characters, who have since been featured in the majority of his works – "Mike," a naïve, hapless but optimistic everyman, and "Baby Ikki," a genderless, prelingual, easily-distracted infant. These consistent performance personas have developed and aged with the artist, over the course of many years. In Smith's far reaching oeuvre, Mike has built a fallout shelter; had his own tv variety show; entered a disco dancing competition; starred in a music video; had a business that went bankrupt; and was an artist with a loft for sale, amongst other pursuits.

In 2017, as part of Münster Skulptur Projekte, Smith developed *Not Quite Under_Ground* – a fully operational tattoo studio, which was open to everyone but offered a significant discount to people over the age of 65. The idea was envisaged from his own observations of Münster and the increase in older tourists visiting the arts festival. In a promotional-travelogue-style video, Mike is with a group of senior citizens as they tour the city, eventually visiting the parlour to get tattoos. In true Mike fashion, he opts for an empty to-do list in a hard to reach place on his backside. The video embraces the tropes of cultural tourism, while slyly highlighting the drawbacks and ironies of being a tourist. Smith's accompanying works on paper suggest potential tattoo designs ranging from the conceptual, humorous to the mischievous.

As with every project Smith develops, he starts the process with drawing. Smith states, 'The drawing phase is the most fun and creative, a special window of opportunity. That's the time I let myself go and not edit out ideas.' [1] These works on paper detail the creative process and the hilarious and serious inner workings of the artist. The selected *Not Quite_Underground* drawings include sample tattoo designs and funny, pondering thoughts about tattoos.

[1] Miller, J. (2000) *Michael Smith*. Grenoble: Magasin-Centre National d'Art Contemporain.

For full details and larger images, please see the end of this document.



Michael Smith

Not Quite Under Ground, 2017

Single-channel video, 7:19 min, colour, sound

Edition of 3 plus 2 artist's proofs (#2/3)

(M_SMI0084)

[View detail](#)



Michael Smith
Bus, Bike, Bunny, 2017
Watercolor and ink on paper
40.3 x 50.5 cm
15 7/8 x 19 7/8 in

[View detail](#)

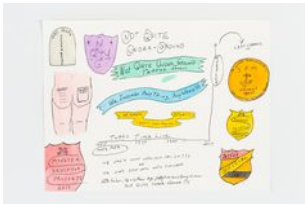
(M_SMI0103)



Michael Smith
Untitled: From the Tattoo series, 2017
Watercolor and ink on paper
40.3 x 50.5 cm
15 7/8 x 19 7/8 in

[View detail](#)

(M_SMI0102)



Michael Smith
Untitled, 2017
Watercolor and ink on paper
38.1 x 50.8 cm
15 x 20 in

[View detail](#)

(M_SMI0101)



Michael Smith
Of a certain age, 2017
Watercolor and ink on paper
38.1 x 50.8 cm
15 x 20 in

[View detail](#)

(M_SMI0100)



Michael Smith
Centre Stage in a fig leaf, 2017
Watercolor and ink on paper
38.1 x 50.8 cm
15 x 20 in

[View detail](#)

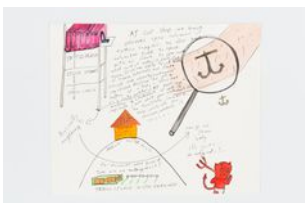
(M_SMI0099)



Michael Smith
I look out on the landscape, 2017
Watercolor and ink on paper
38.1 x 50.8 cm
15 x 20 in

[View detail](#)

(M_SMI0096)



Michael Smith
Anchor, 2017
Watercolor and ink on paper
34.9 x 43.2 cm
13 3/4 x 17 in

[View detail](#)

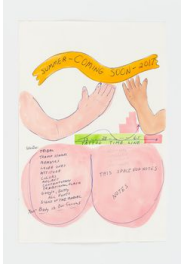
(M_SMI0094)



Michael Smith
My Body is my Canvas, 2017
Watercolor and ink on paper
34.9 x 43.2 cm
13 3/4 x 17 in

[View detail](#)

(M_SMI0092)



Michael Smith
Coming Soon, 2017
Watercolor and ink on paper
45.7 x 30.5 cm
18 x 12 in

[View detail](#)

(M_SMI0089)



Michael Smith
Hot stuff and Mom, 2017
Watercolor and ink on paper
30.5 x 45.7 cm
12 x 18 in

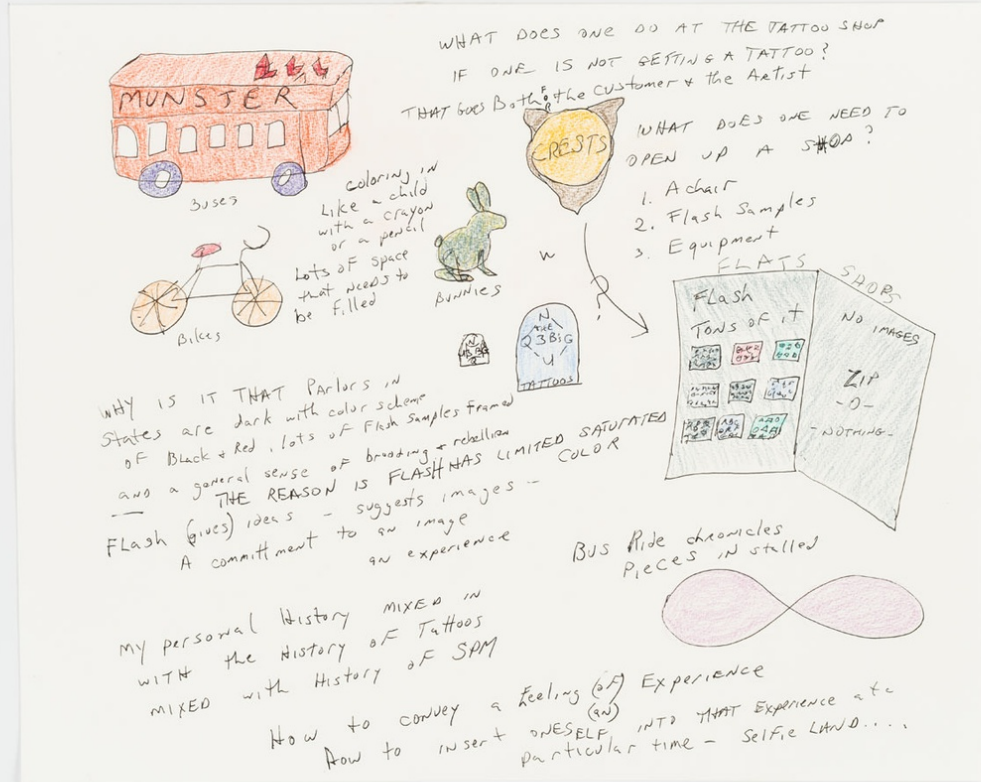
[View detail](#)

(M_SMI0087)

MICHAEL SMITH
Not Quite Under Ground, 2017



Single-channel video, 7:19 min, colour, sound
Edition of 3 plus 2 artist's proofs (#2/3)
(M_SMI0084)

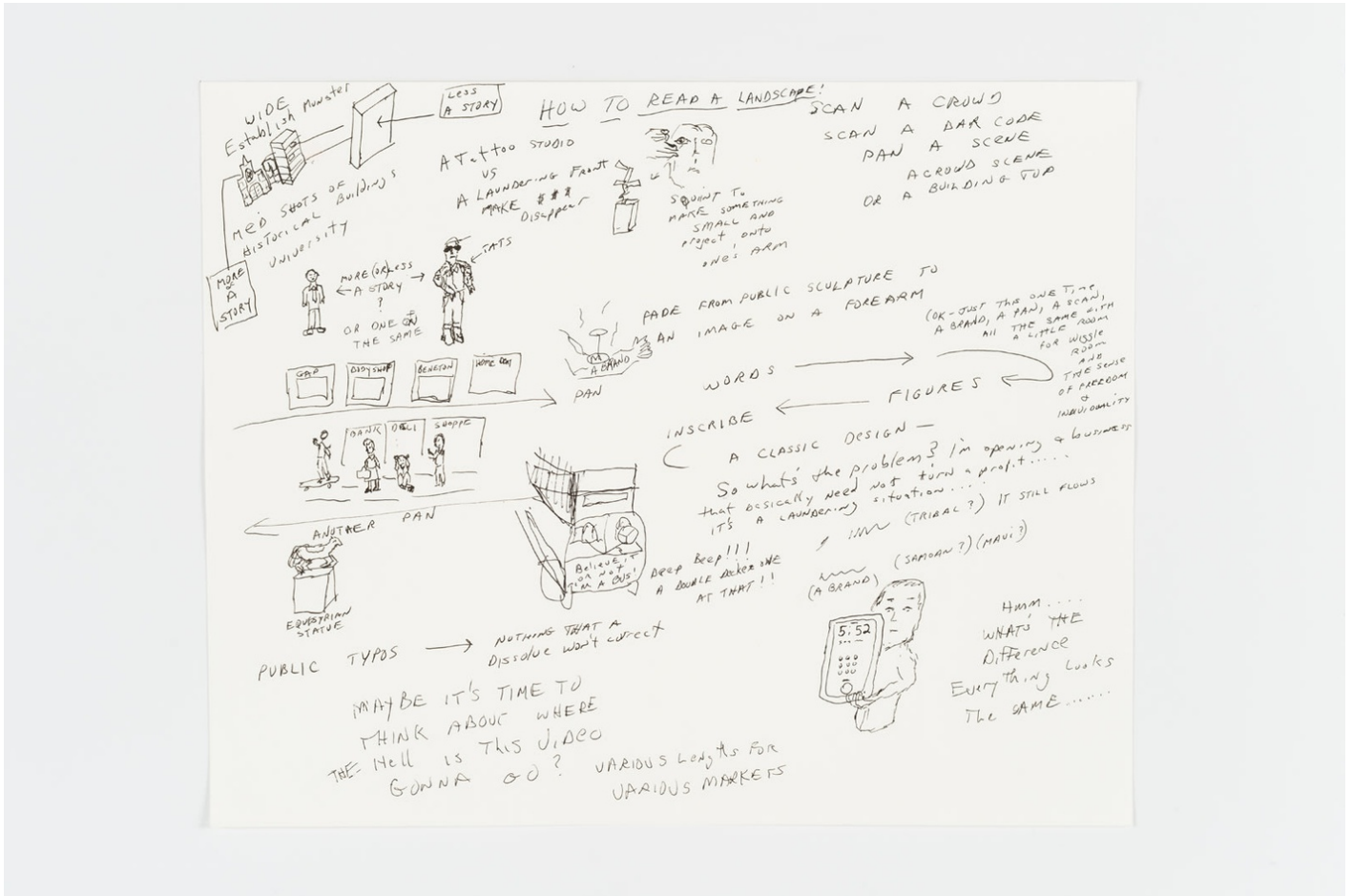


Watercolor and ink on paper
 40.3 x 50.5 cm
 15 7/8 x 19 7/8 in

(M_SMI0103)

MICHAEL SMITH

Untitled: From the Tattoo series, 2017

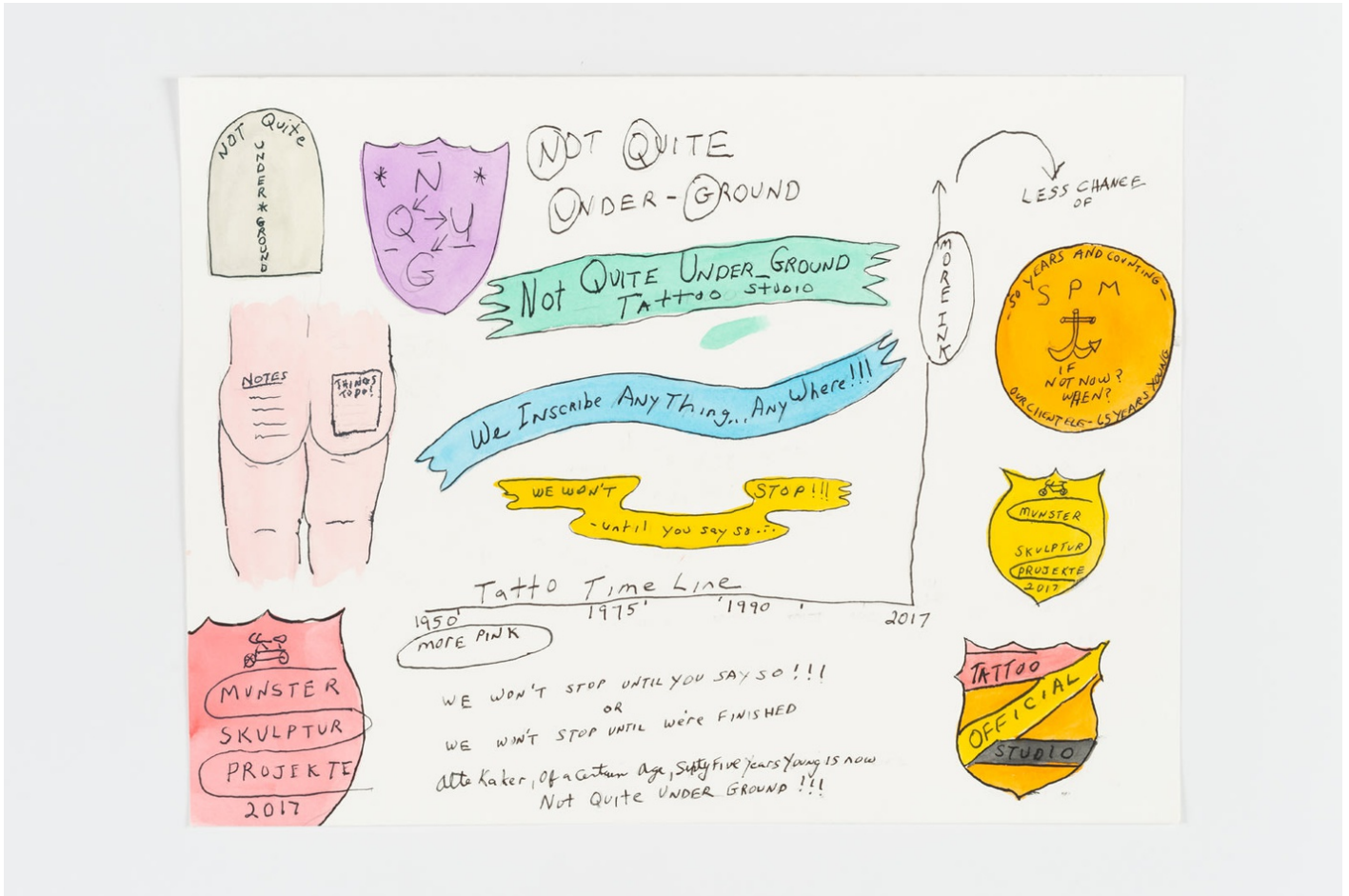


Watercolor and ink on paper

40.3 x 50.5 cm

15 7/8 x 19 7/8 in

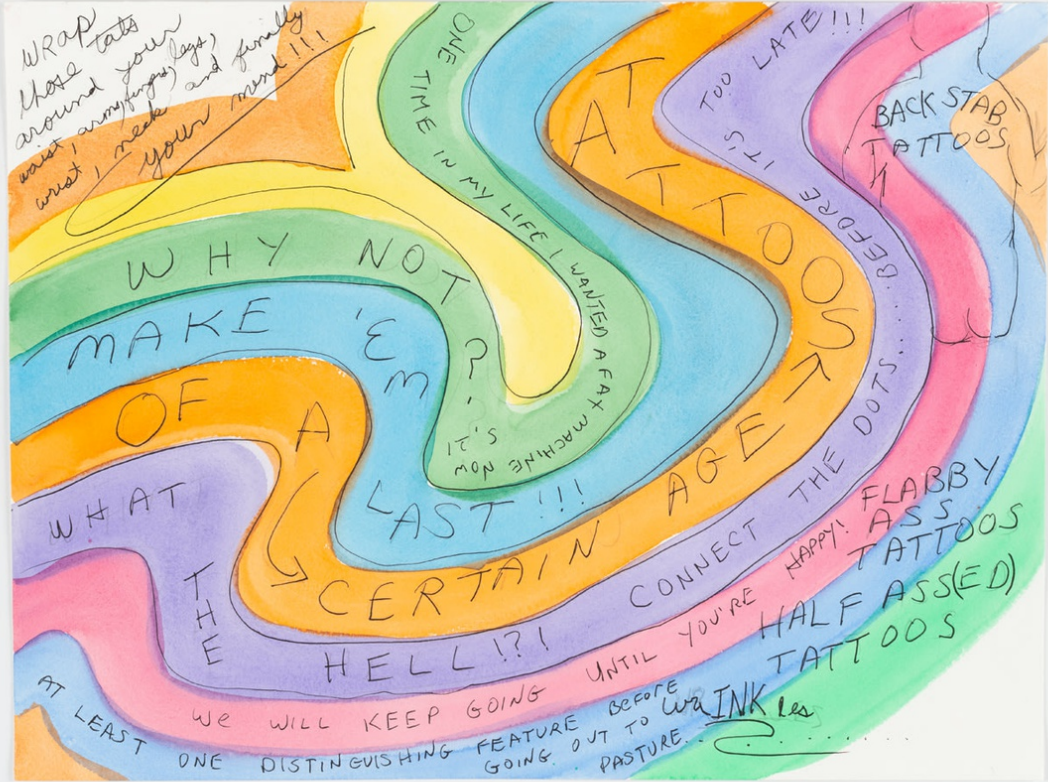
(M_SMI0102)



Watercolor and ink on paper
38.1 x 50.8 cm
15 x 20 in

(M_SMI0101)

MICHAEL SMITH
Of a certain age, 2017



Watercolor and ink on paper
38.1 x 50.8 cm
15 x 20 in

(M_SMI0100)

MICHAEL SMITH
Centre Stage in a fig leaf, 2017

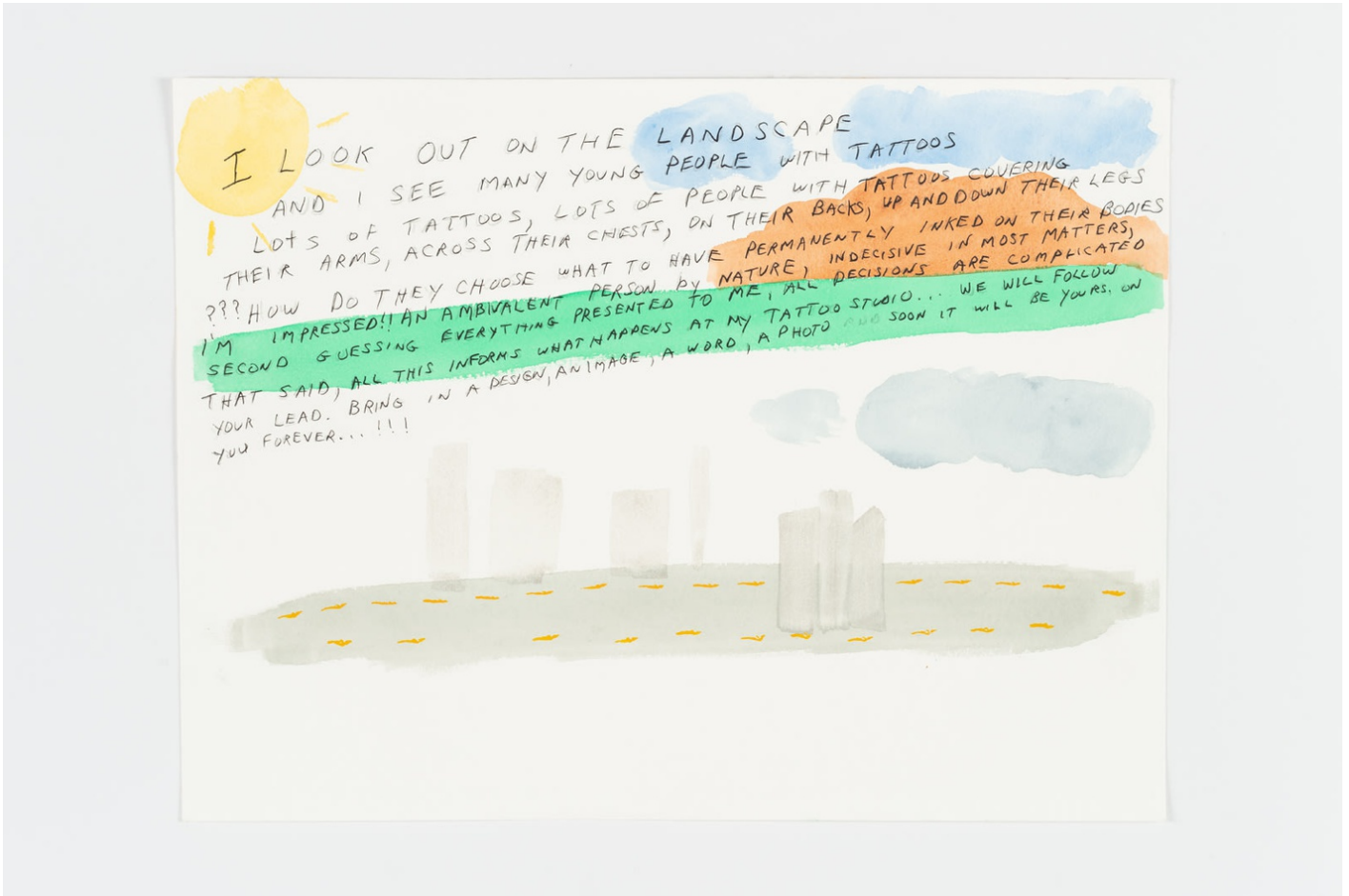


Watercolor and ink on paper
38.1 x 50.8 cm
15 x 20 in

(M_SMI0099)

MICHAEL SMITH

I look out on the landscape, 2017

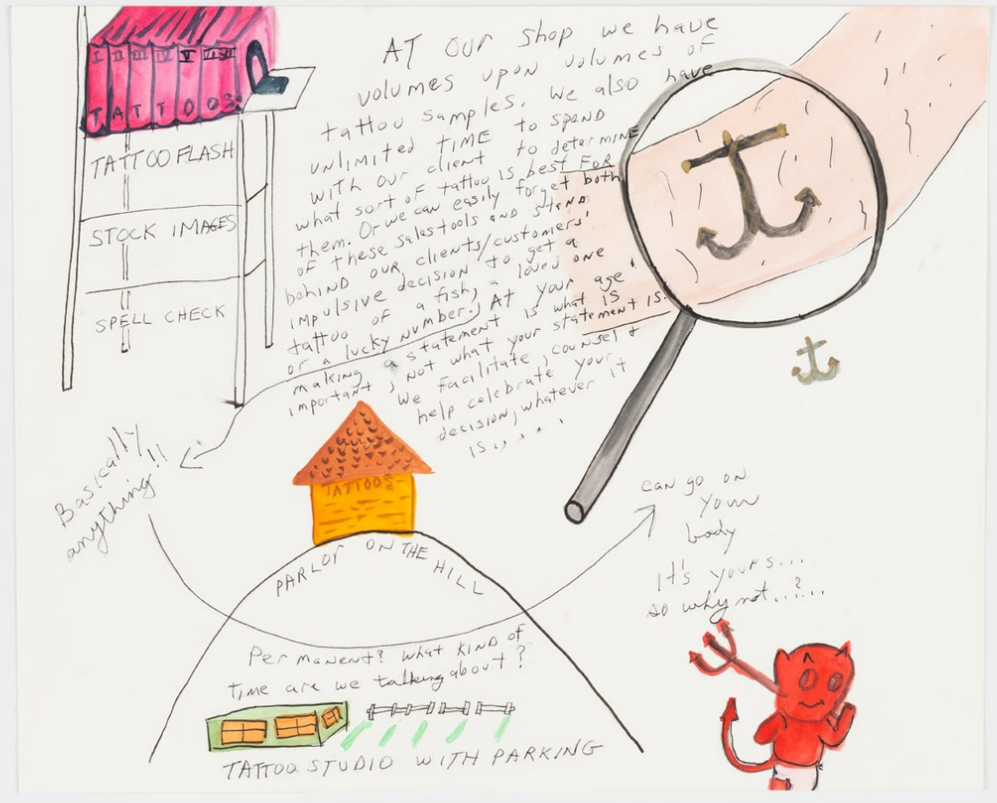


Watercolor and ink on paper

38.1 x 50.8 cm

15 x 20 in

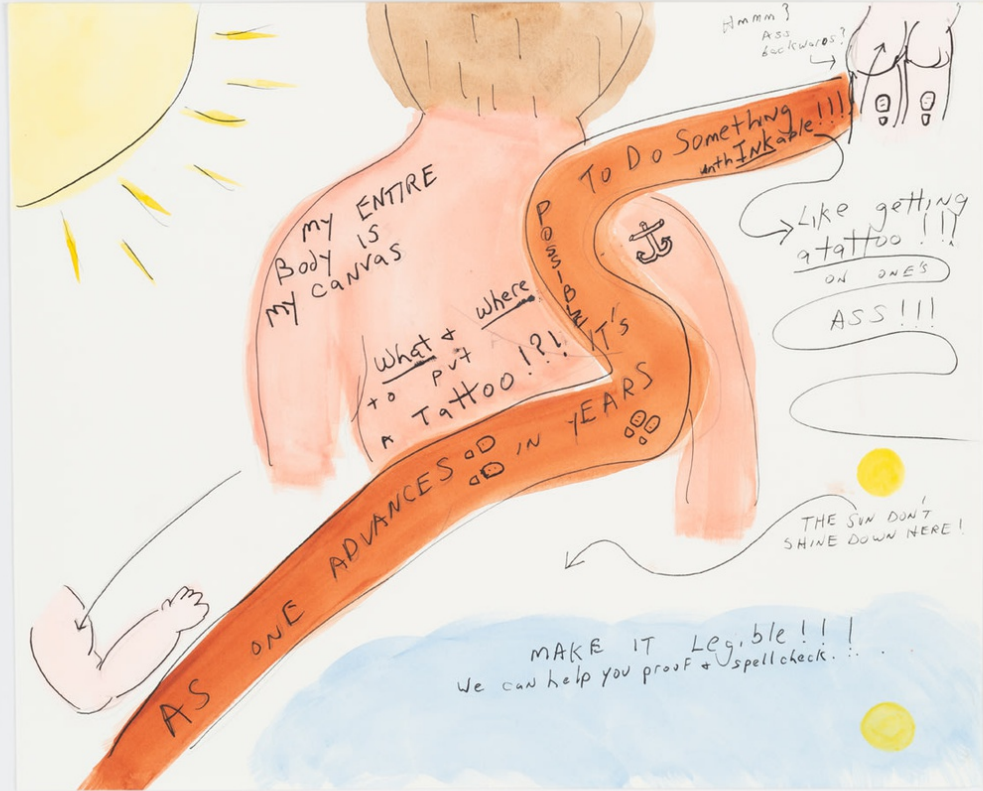
(M_SMI0096)



Watercolor and ink on paper
34.9 x 43.2 cm
13 3/4 x 17 in

(M_SMI0094)

MICHAEL SMITH
My Body is my Canvas, 2017



Watercolor and ink on paper
34.9 x 43.2 cm
13 3/4 x 17 in

(M_SMI0092)

MICHAEL SMITH
Coming Soon, 2017

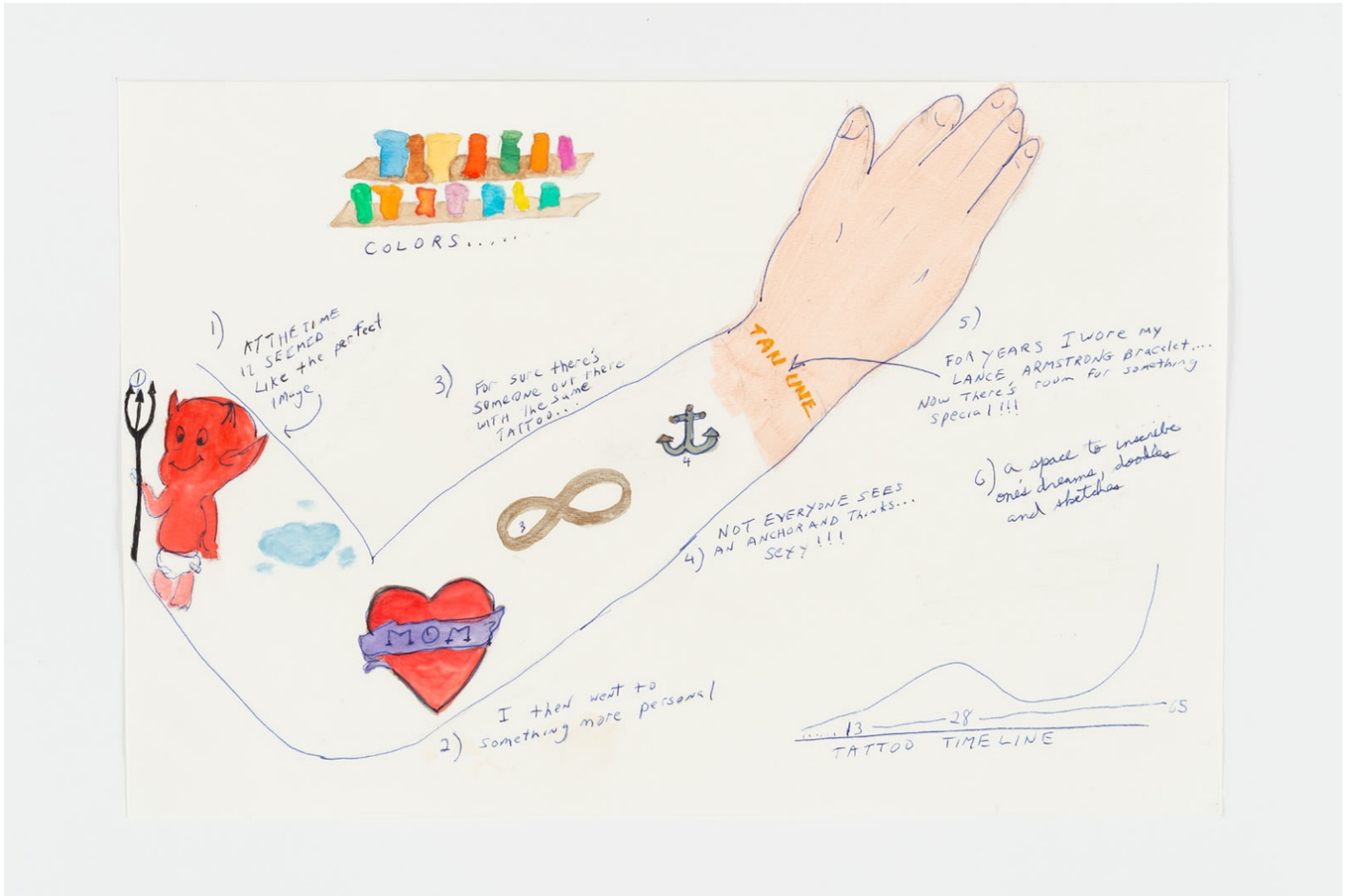


Watercolor and ink on paper

45.7 x 30.5 cm

18 x 12 in

(M_SM10089)



Watercolor and ink on paper
30.5 x 45.7 cm
12 x 18 in

(M_SMI0087)