

ARTFORUM



NEW YORK

Mark Ryan Chariker

1969 GALLERY

103 Allen Street

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Many artists claim connection to the painterly canon, but Mark Ryan Chariker applies rare authenticity—and invention—to this assertion in “Limbo,” his current exhibition here, which includes seven oils on canvas and fifteen small drawings on paper. The latter works, made

Mark Ryan Chariker, *13 AM*, 2020, oil on canvas, 54 x 48”.

with ink, oil, and watercolor, depict a variety of scenes, such as rustic peasant gatherings, grave robbers toiling at their macabre industry, and journeymen performing acts of heroism. These monochromatic images, done in an array of cornflower blues, delicate sepias, and misty grays, range in tone from whimsical to melancholic, and stylistically recall the works of J. M. W. Turner, Francisco Goya, and Caspar David Friedrich.

In *It’s a Long Road and There’s No Turning Back*, 2019, a splendid oil-on-paper composition, a shadowy figure leans on his companion for support as they traverse a dark forest, saturated in blood-red light. Branches, outcrops, and a bleak path are rendered with exquisite feathery marks. At the picture’s center, trees part to reveal a distant mountain, but their gnarled limbs seem eager to grasp the protagonists, unwilling to let them go. The wistful gothic atmospherics are utterly enthralling. However, *Side of the Road*, 2019, delivers an abrupt twist: A crumpled car—hood up, metal

guts spilled on the highway—jolts us back to the present. This broken-down moment of urban blight is a wry rejoinder to the bucolic Victorian lull that pervades the other drawings.

The paintings are biblical, portraying congregants on rocky edifices under billowing, portentous skies, perhaps awaiting the Rapture. Chariker inserts elements of contemporary life—modern attire, beer cans, sneakers—into these grim tableaux, so that they maintain classical sensibilities yet feel oddly familiar. In 13 AM, 2020, an unwrapped burger and a radio are visible among a dreary crowd that might be attending an outdoor concert—or expecting Christ's return. Chariker wittily collapses time between now and the past, linking human experience across the span of art history.

— Darren Jones