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Artist's Statement

The past in the present: the present seen more powerfully and clearly through the past. Archives have long been controlled by the anointed few, and mainly used by scholars who had the inclination to view their contents. With the advent of digitization, many archives have been opened to anyone with a computer and access to the internet. Additionally, personal pictorial archives can be found on blogs, Pinterest, Facebook and Instagram, among other sites. In my series of painted portraits of Olympic Club fighters, taken from a photo album found in the Rare Books and Special Collections Department of Princeton University, I began the exploration of a particular photographic archive of mostly anonymous athletes, wanting strong imagery without forcing content.

My earlier work had also used images found in libraries and archives, relating these to my personal history through juxtaposition. However, I wanted to utilize more of my technical skills and I pushed myself to let the paint application provide more of the content. The boxers' portraits, photographs of mostly anonymous San Francisco area fighters, circa 1910-1930, allowed me to do that. With these photos, I have found the perfect vehicle for expression: the boxers' struggles are etched upon their faces. Their lived lives provide powerful content.

Utilizing these images, I am free to make surprising color combinations while employing thick, textured paint surfaces. All of this is to allow the formal qualities of my painting to make tangible what Joyce Carol Oates described when writing of boxing:

*At its moments of greatest intensity it seems to contain so complete and so powerful an image of life—life's beauty, vulnerability, despair, incalculable and often self-destructive courage—that boxing is life, and hardly a mere game.**

With my recent portraits painted from photographs from public and private collections I am continuing my desire to connect the present to the past by adding my interpretations of found images to the flourishing archives of today.

*Oates, Joyce Carol, On Boxing. Garden City, NY: DolphinDoubleday, 1987.