

# Art in America

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EXHIBITIONS THE LOOKOUT



## Sam Messer

at Fredericks & Freiser,  
through Jul. 31  
536 West 24th Street

The painstaking process evident in *Denis the Pirate*, a stop-motion collaboration between artist Sam Messer and writer Denis Johnson animated with over 1,000 hand-colored etchings and drawings, starkly contrasts with the silliness of its improvised narrative. Actor Liev Schreiber tells the tale of the fearsome seafarer Denis, a rude, crude booty king. The video is mesmerizing, in no small part due to the score composed by Sarah Neufeld and Colin Stetson of Arcade Fire. But the work's real muscle comes from its overflow of visual possibility: a single etching or drawing—of Denis or his pet monkey—could easily inspire a new body of work. The drawings and prints Messer produced with novelist Jonathan Safran Foer, as well as Messer's oil portraits of the writer, are lively and unpolished, with daubed paint and shifting perspectives. These works are surprisingly uninterested in intellectualism, showcasing instead the informal pleasure of creating with friends.

Pictured: Sam Messer, *Pietà*, 2013, oil on canvas, 88 by 89 inches. Courtesy Fredericks & Freiser, New York.