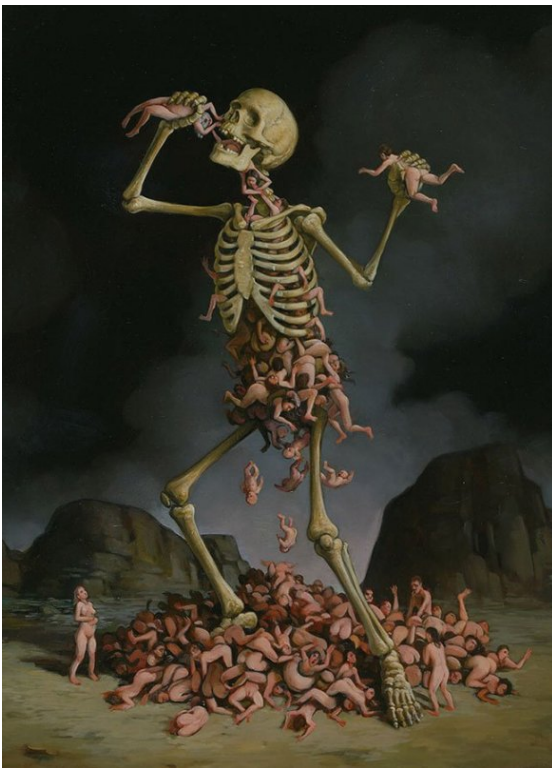


## Erik Thor Sandberg's Surreal, Painted Narratives

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Andy Smith



Calling his surreal paintings “suspended moments,” artist Erik Thor Sandberg captures ongoing narratives that exist before and after the scene in question. Whether it’s a towering skeleton consuming flesh or a fairytale-like jaunt between fantasy creatures, Sandberg’s paintings offer both whimsy and unsettling spectacle.

A statement on the artist’s website comments on that duality: “How often the disturbing and the grotesque capture the viewer’s gaze before the beautiful! Yet, beauty, eternally appreciated, remains an essential component of Sandberg’s work as it contrasts the unsettling and unsightly elements of these imaginary worlds that hinge, unsettlingly, on the verge of our own.”



Such is the case in paintings like “The Way of Things,” in which woodland animals, seemingly sprung from the beard of an elderly man, are gripped and threatened by children. It’s not a story in which viewers immediately find familiarity, yet the implications and possibilities hidden within the painting are numerous. In “Toehold,” a battle of humanity and nature takes another form, in which another subject’s struggle renders them naked and full of agony.

Sandberg lives in Washington, D.C., and was born in Quantico, VA. He works in both large and small formats.

