

EXTRACT: LIZZIE HOMERSHAM

*A painting? Or a picture?*

Those are two different things...

*I know it. I just needed more detail...*

A horse's head pokes through a hole in the back of a hand. The hole appears above the middle finger, at the height of the thumb joint. The hole lets the golden brown of a dog's coat shine through. The dog stands behind the horse yet engulfs the horse's body, with the sole exception of its head. The hole is positioned at the heart of the image, slightly to the right if you're facing, slightly to the left if you stand behind it or hold it, arms outstretched, for someone else to view. An irregular oval, a beam of negative space, a clearing. Below the horse's mouth the bean-hole drips as a tear would but in its dried-on-canvas aridity a tear is torn. It has been made, while still wet, with a knife more subtle than Fontana's, tip held outwards from the chest feeling outwards to find a crease in thin air. It picks up one and leaves other layers unripped. Move one aside and upwards, separate them, turn them like pages. The book gets denser as you proceed. The horse's nose kisses one edge of the tear. The opposite edge runs a line from the tip of the horse's left ear, cutting along the outer edge of its eye, and down past its jaw. The sky is a ceiling in a stately home. Blue with hints of golden brown match the large dog's coat. Clouds of convention. Template for contemplation at the bottom of the picture plane, where a landscape painting would have wanted ground. Clouds beneath the fingernails of the hand suspended, hand occupying so much space, and beneath the feet of three other horses, bridled but poised to burst from the space between the dog's front and hind legs. Are they about to run scared? They are poised to wrest themselves like a child from under a table. They've been borrowed from a frozen fountain now unthawed. Their hips are gathered near like a fan's compression. Front legs are raised, fanning out. There is one more horse here, painted in profile, feet on a ground that for this horse consists of the back of the white hand. Could the canvas have been primed and not painted here? This horse stands above the tear where the top of the thumb joint meets the wrist. Open mouth, relaxed jaw. Parted lips stretch in the direction of a tendril painted in black, abandoning the outline that separates the hand from the horses, the sky, and the dog. A gentle tendril, extending toward the horse's mouth as if the hand might feed it one day. A hand that in its hugeness runs the curve of the

dog's brow. Hand of a ballet dancing giant. Hand that breaks the oval with both arms raised above the head.