

Maxwell Cloe: The first one that I was really interested in is this painting *Corn Boy*.

Dustin Hall: Oh yeah I look like a hypocrite.

Maxwell Cloe: Tell me about - tell me about *Corn Boy*.

Dustin Hall: When I was a kid, we grew food. We didn't have a farm; we just grew food. There's a difference between that and industrial farming or farming for income. So I actually do like growing your own food. I advocate for it. When I was a kid, my dad specifically and my grandmother, on my grandmother's property, would have a farm sort of thing in the backyard. She had a cornfield that was about five feet by eighteen feet or something. In my mind it was a new world. Also very painful--there are worms that get in corn with barbs on them and you get stung a lot. Which is not fun. I ignored them. I loved it when I was a kid. Sting me! So I would run through the cornfield with this very Walton-esque mindset. I thought, I was in love with John Boy Walton, let's take a moment with that. I was obsessed with John Boy Walton; he was so gorgeous. And still, I would, if Richard Thomas were here today with me and was willing, I would date him or sleep with him or, I don't know, anything. I thought I was in the Waltons, basically. So we had the cornfield. I can remember a good picture in my head. There were some dogwood trees and the add-on to my grandmother's bedroom. Right behind that we kept, there were cucumbers on a fence. Beneath the cucumbers if you grew mustard, green leaf mustard under cucumbers on a fence it really helps them do better. I don't know why it does that. Behind that shelving was a row of beans and a row of okra. We loved okra. My grandma had no idea it was African, and I don't know if she would've told me if she did but she loved okra. I didn't find out it was an African food until I was eighteen. Who knew? Behind the okra was cabbage and the cabbage ran along the back of the farming area. In the middle-ground, sort of, there was a mixture of pumpkins or watermelons, which never did good at all. There's no sun in Goose Creek. You really have to have a hot ground to grow pumpkins or watermelon. I think it has to be seventy-five degrees or warmer to get a good crop of large, bulbous fruit. And then the corn kicked in. You had five feet over, eighteen feet back of just corn. On the other side of that was peppers, different kinds of peppers and then beets. We canned beets. That's a different memory entirely. I loved canning beets. I can smell it. I can see it. The cold day in fall, it's like burned in my brain. If I have Alzheimer's one day, I'll remember the beets. The beets are there. Back to the corn. So I frolicked in the corn, picturing myself being on Walton's Mountain. Walton's Mountain, by the way, is in Charlottesville. It's nothing but, there's a University there, obviously, University of Virginia, and like plantations and rich people and very virulent racists. So it really defeats the idea of Walton mountain. If you ever go to Charlottesville, you know, it's in the water. Bad! But in the 30s it wasn't like that. It was very rural and great and mountains were there or whatever. By the way, there's this episode of Walton's Mountain where John Walton sells the mountain partially to a land developer and they deforest it. Just a plot point. It's a real episode. Before John Boy went to New York, so before season five, but there's a deforestation land fill in the Walton's. You'll have to look into it.

So we've been in this conversation for a while. Strip mining actually began here in the 70s, so it makes sense to have that comment on *The Walton's*. Anyway, back to the corn. There's this one moment specifically, I wanted to make the guy in the picture look like a rabbit, sort of. Which combines, there's this photograph of Marcus Leatherdale by Robert Mapplethorpe, who were

lovers. And I think they're both so beautiful, could you imagine what that looked like? There's a photograph of Marcus Leatherdale with a killed, I think it's a rabbit. If it's a sheep, I'll be embarrassed. It's draped over his arm and he's nude. I've always loved that photograph. It's pretty frightening, actually, to think about the killing of the rabbit. But they taste very good and they nourish you. Sorry vegans. I just think of this photo a lot. So I wanted the man in the painting to look like a rabbit but also have a small body. So we're depicting myself as a kid at this point. Not in a gross way. Like a metaphorical way. So I incorporated that image in my head with this moment as a kid when I would run through the cornfield. You couldn't really run through the pepper patch next to the cornfield, but I did. A few times I knocked off all the peppers, at which point they would be eaten by scavengers. I got caught one time, but I didn't really get caught. They found it after I got in and they thought "oh what caused this?" and my dad said "those rabbits are eating the peppers." I didn't say anything, I didn't want to rat myself out. So I said "oh my goodness, I'm sorry the rabbits ate your peppers." It was me! I destroyed the pepper patch. And that painting is autobiographical of that moment. The rabbit eating the peppers. But I'm also the rabbit. And the rabbit is also Marcus Leatherdale. So, that's that painting.