

# FAB.

**Susie Orbach   Frances Aviva Blane**





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## “There’s a fair bit of anguish in the heads”

Frances Aviva Blane’s Heads are for our time what Munch’s 1893 iconic pictures were for his. He strove to render the anxiety he felt as he ‘sensed an infinite scream passing through nature’. ‘The Scream’ (or ‘The Shriek’ as it is known in Norway) has since entered public culture, becoming for the last century and this the go-to image for suffering, grief, terror, fear, horror. Blane’s Heads have a similar, but perhaps more haunting effect on me. The Heads add sorrow, confusion, dismay, grief, blankness, pulsing hurt, incomprehension, thwarted hope, loss, fury and just plain muddle.

These are not the heads of Graeco-Roman majesty, celebrating glory. These are heads mangled with pain. They are lost in incomprehension, screaming with private anguish, disillusionment. Heads without bodies. Heads so demanding that they reach into a palette of feeling which we may know and yet try not to feel.

Blane invites us to engage with this palette, to be less fearful of a head so at odds with the faces we see all around us – faces that are decorated to smile, to look nonchalant, to look to camera without

seeming to care, to implore us to buy while seeming disinterested. Those are heads that are colour graded, photoshopped to remove a perceived blemish, enhanced to make eyes bigger and lips fuller,



cheek bones more angular and pupils flooded with colour. Their artifice is there to seduce and inveigle us to believe that this is a

head. But a head, a face, is not static. It is the most visibly vibrant aspect of our bodies. Noses, eyes, teeth, lips, cheeks, foreheads, chins, are mobile. They are asymmetrical. The face that conceals and hopes to charm us nevertheless reveals and tells us about the inside of the head as well as the surface.

If we allow them to work on us, as Blane's Heads most certainly do, they arouse empathy and concern. Not wishy-washy empathy to blunt the power of the hurt, but an empathy mixed with awe at Blane's ability to expose so baldly the diminishment, the wound, the sorrow and sadness which surely she must have suffered in her becoming and ongoing being. The Heads stay with us because we know something of that anguish. We may want to turn away but we also know of the truths she shows. And although it is not easy, we are grateful, for she profoundly belies a culture of ersatz happiness where being 'on' is all and yet nothing.

Blane is modest about the work. She wants us to believe that she's investigating the paint and its capacity to disintegrate. Yes. But it is her use of the paint or the charcoal, and the way the slashed eyes or the slanted mouth tell of fragmenting while holding within the boundary of the paper, that so impresses.



Like the emotions engendered in the privacy of a psychoanalytic session, Frances Blane shows feelings, thoughts and screams: feelings, thoughts and screams that startle with rawness. Yet, as we encounter them, we know to stop and look and feel. She seems to be imploring us to see, to hold and then to manage with her the experiences she conveys. We do. We may look away but we look again. The shattered features compel us.

When we look to her other works the same fierce determination pulls us in. Investigating the paint is, again, what she says she is doing. But that is to refuse the beauty she shows us where, in the midst of the black, is an opening – beckoning, promising. Likewise, an orange line, no more than that, breaks in to pulsate with an opening, dare we say, to hope? The opening is akin to her laugh and red lipstick. The vibrancy amidst the pain.

I'm lucky enough to own 'Summer'. It pulls me in daily. The thickness of the pink and black paint, so dense I wonder if it will ever really dry, tells me of beauty and sorrow, of the struggle for life.

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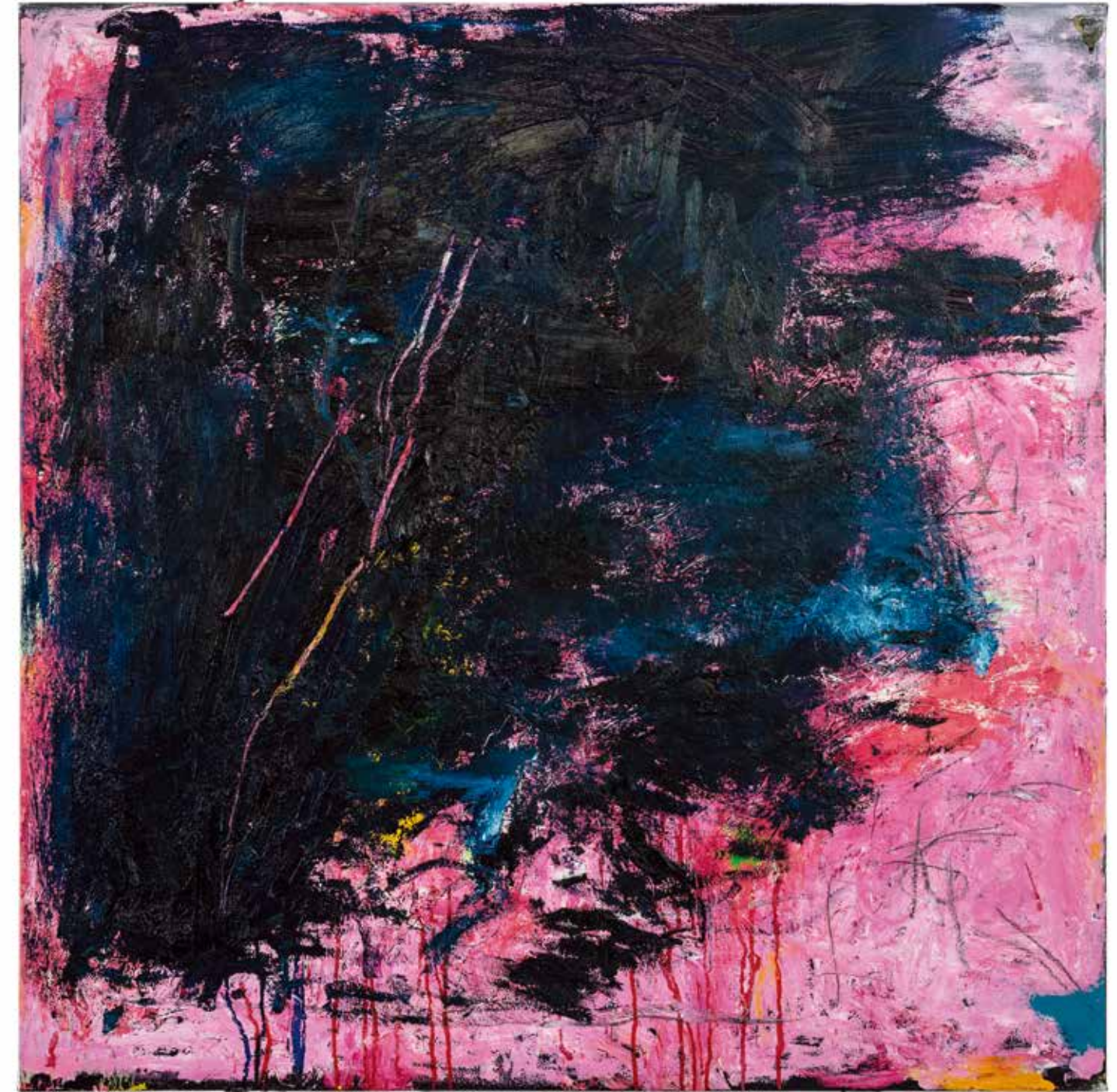


**Summer**  
oil/linen 198 x198 cms

An abstract painting on a textured, light brown canvas. The composition features several distinct areas of color: a large, dark blue shape on the left, a bright red shape on the right, and a yellow shape at the top right. There are also smaller patches of blue, yellow, and red scattered across the canvas. The word "paintings" is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font in the bottom right corner.

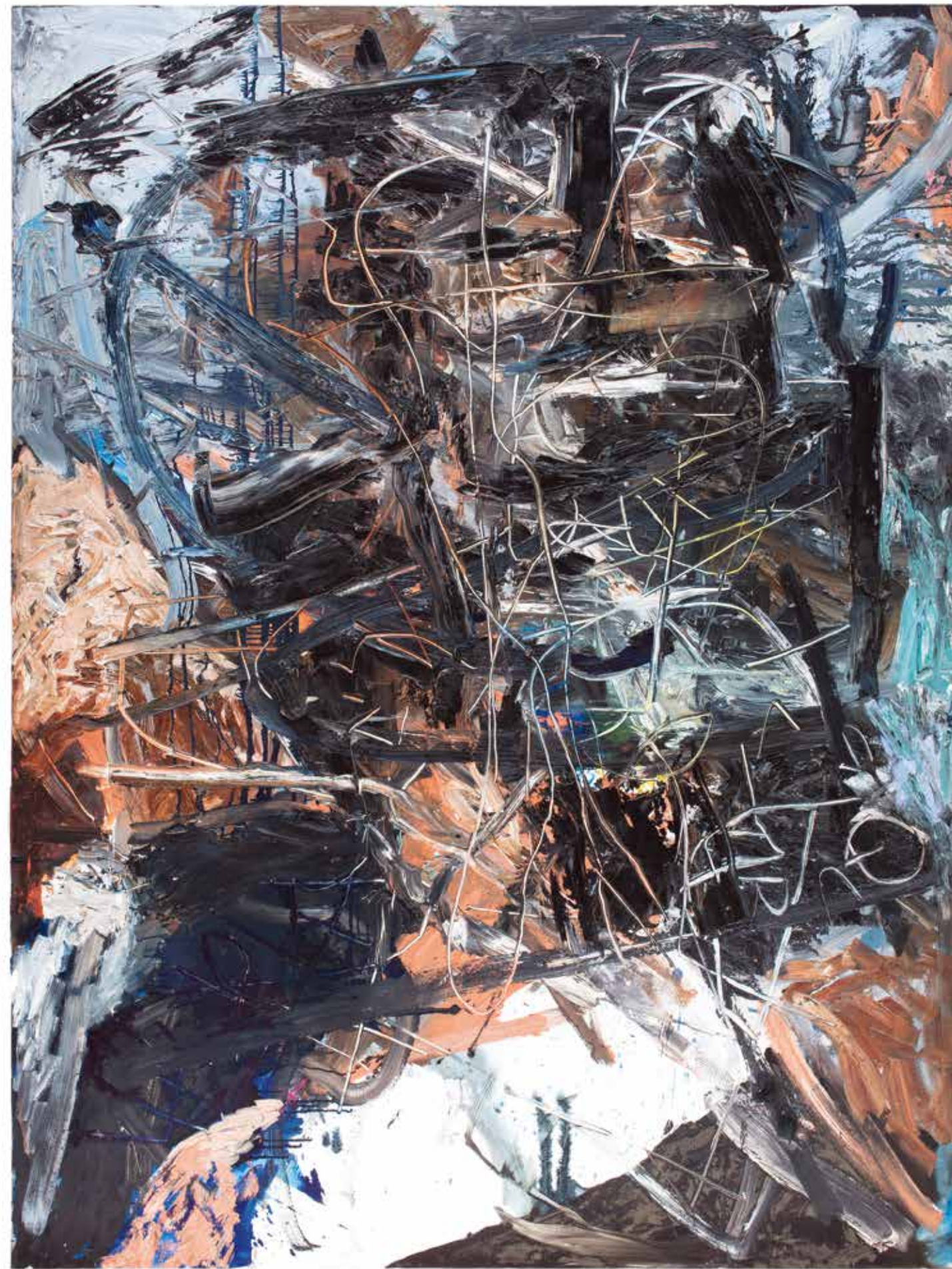
**paintings**





**black on pink**  
Oil/linen 90x90 cms





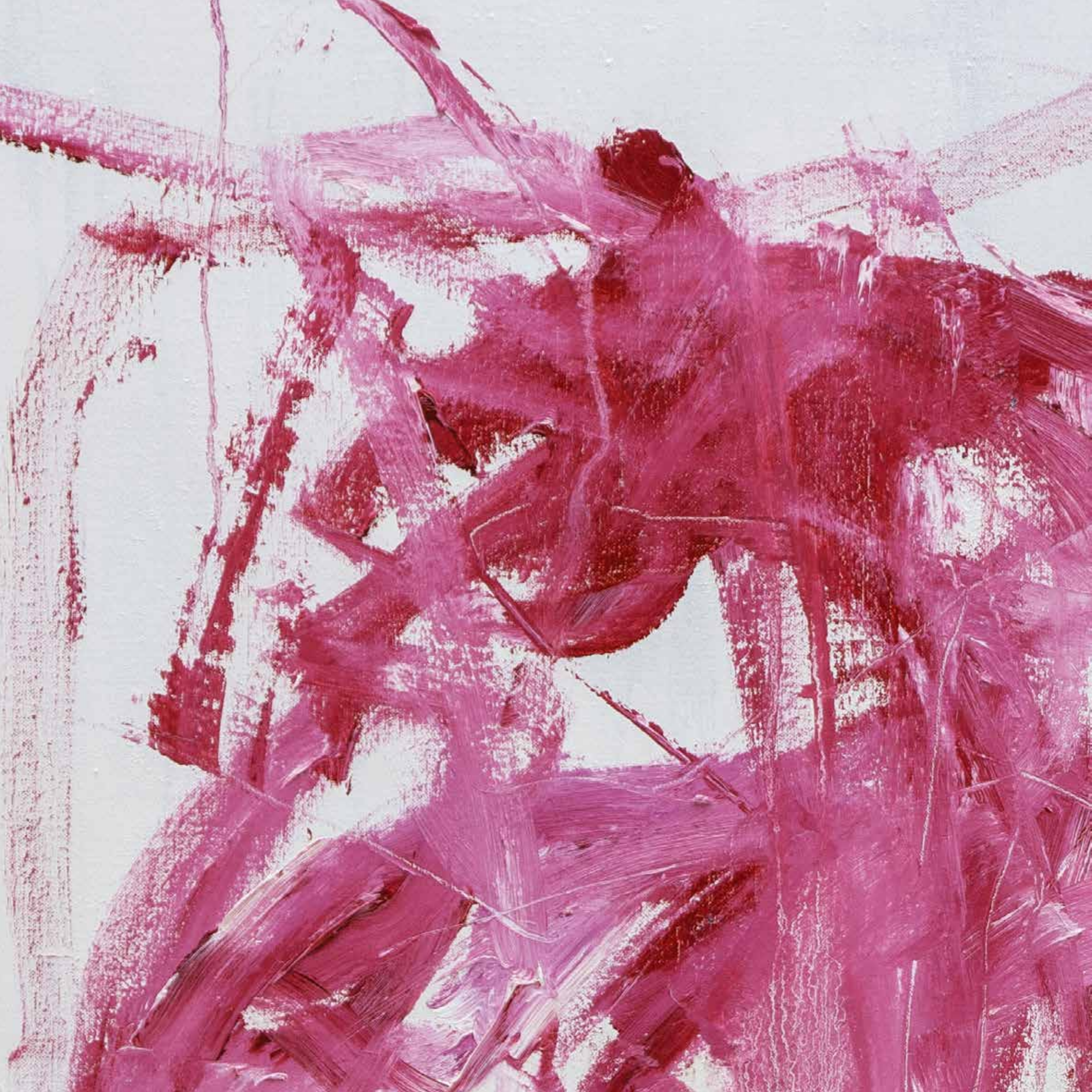
**Mother**  
included in John Moores Painting Prize 2018  
Oil/linen 244x183 cms





**24/4**  
oil/linen 90x90 cms





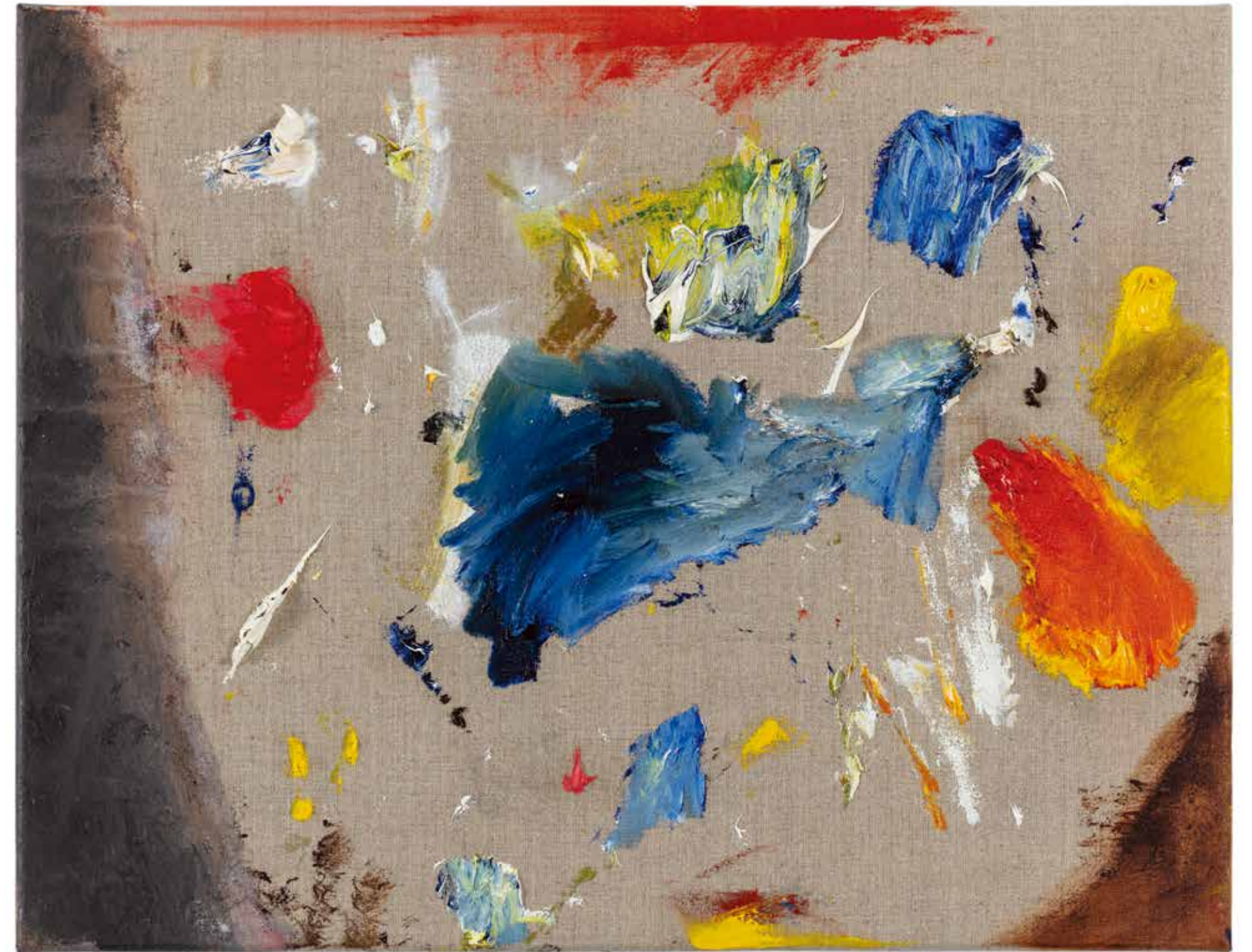
**Pink**  
Oil/linen 90x90 cms





**Hospital**  
Oil/linen 140x140 cms





**untitled**

Tim Sayer Collection London  
Oil/linen 36x46cms





**morning**  
Oil/linen 170x170 cms





**White on blue 2**  
Oil/linen 182 x120 cms





**Edge**  
Oil/linen 122x122 cms





**Slide**  
Oil/linen 138x138 cms





**Black on white**  
Oil/linen 60x76 cms





**Yellow on black**  
Oil/linen 172x172 cms





**Black on yellow 2**  
Oil/linen 60x60 cms



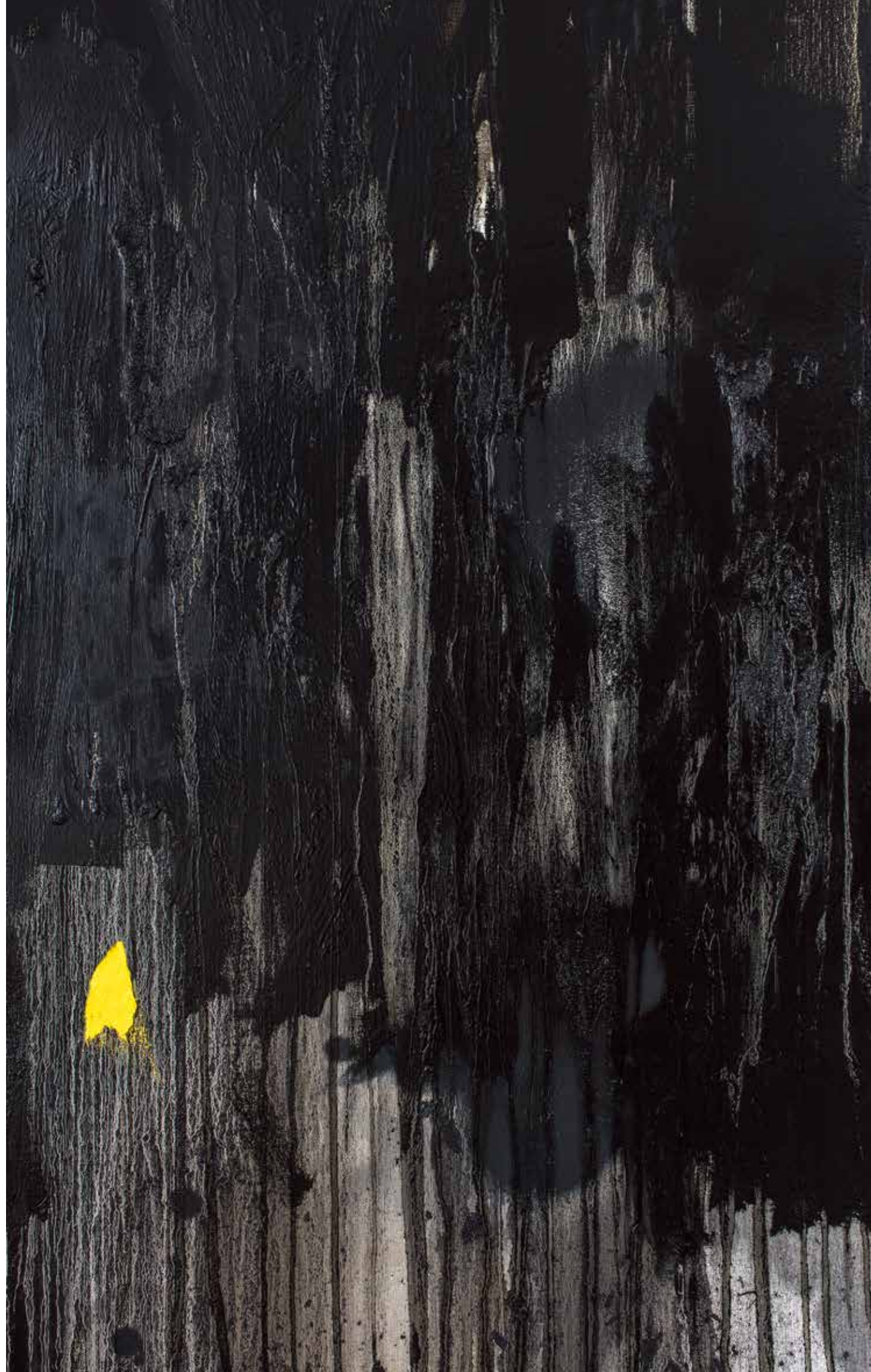


**the paint**





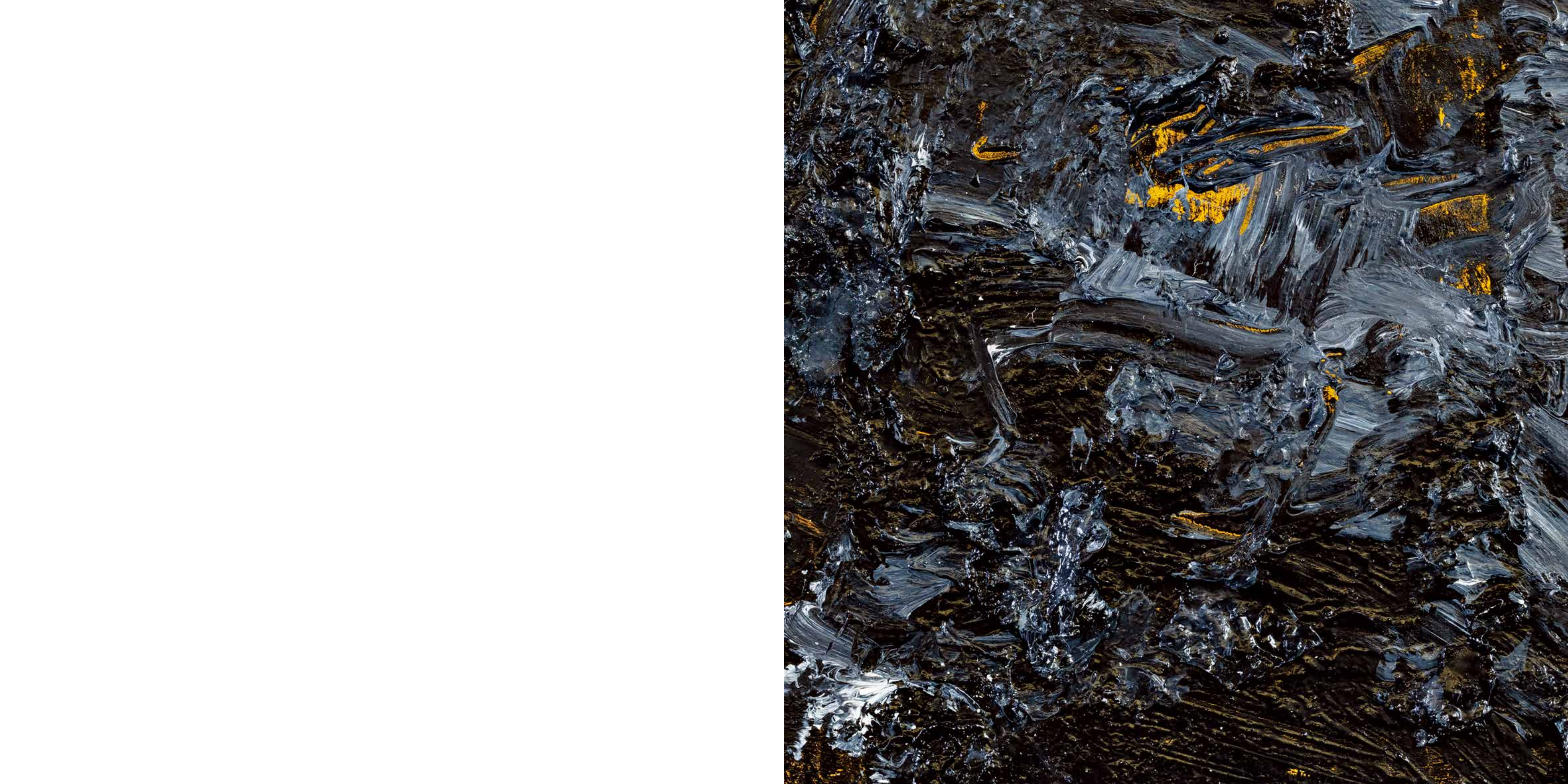




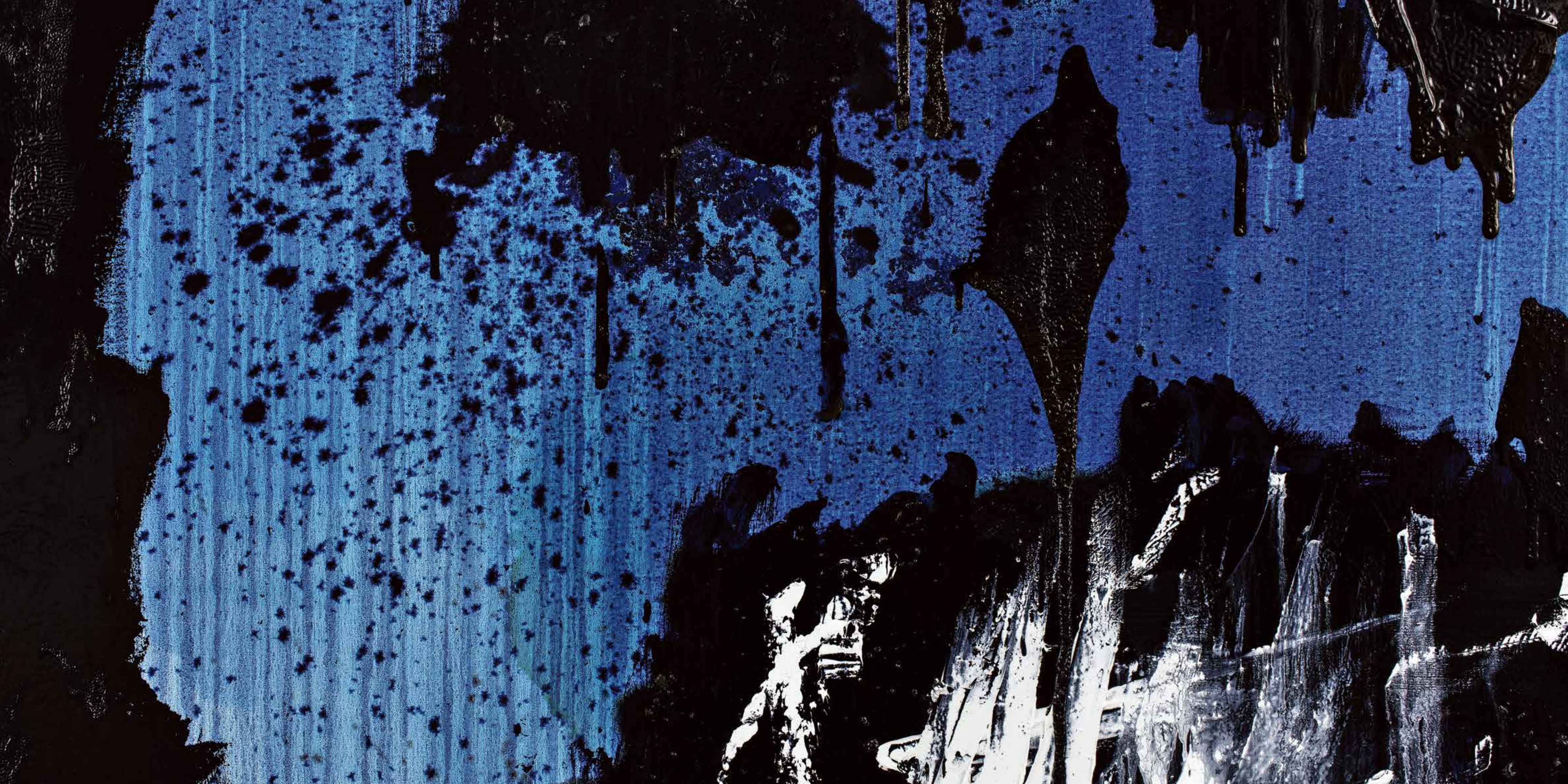












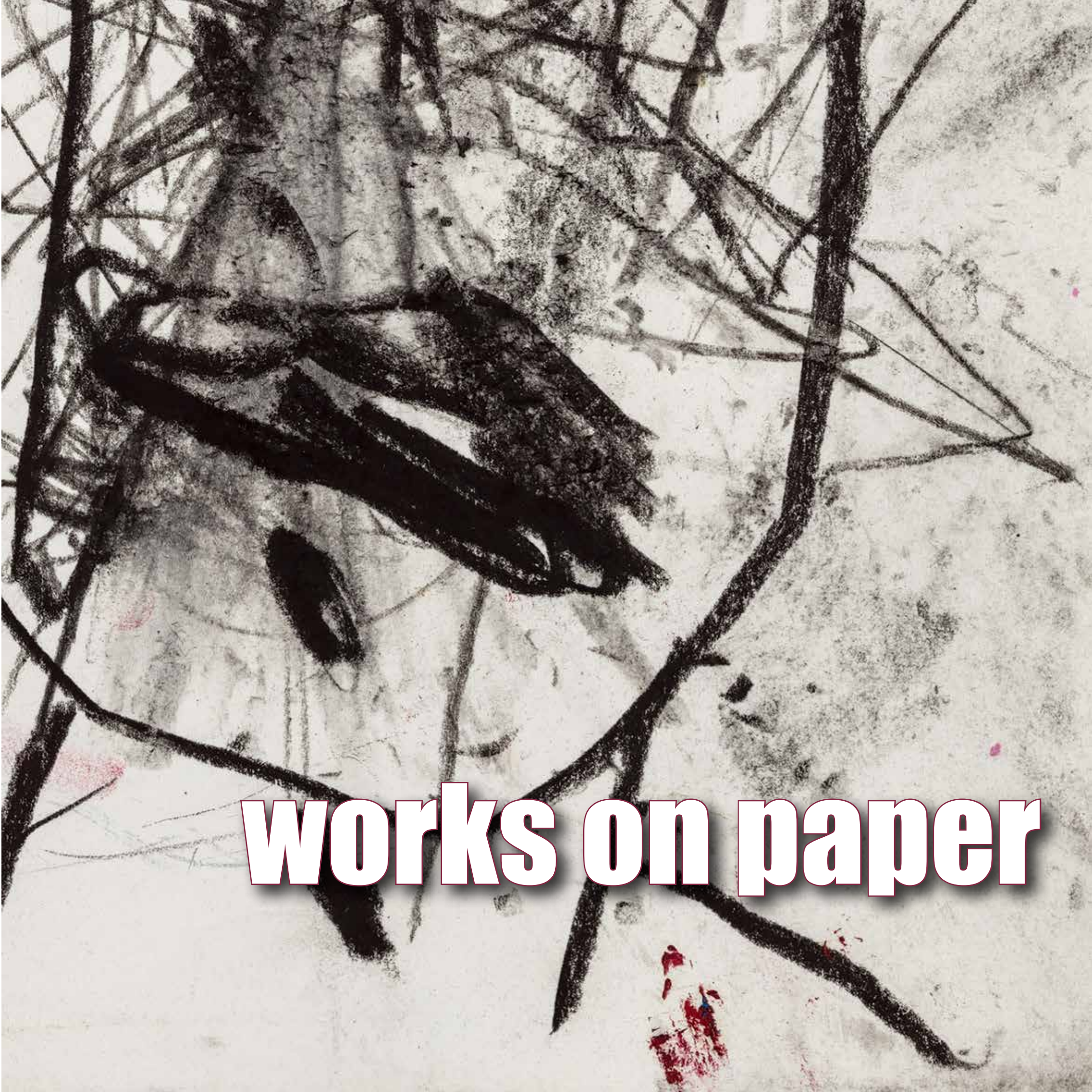












**works on paper**





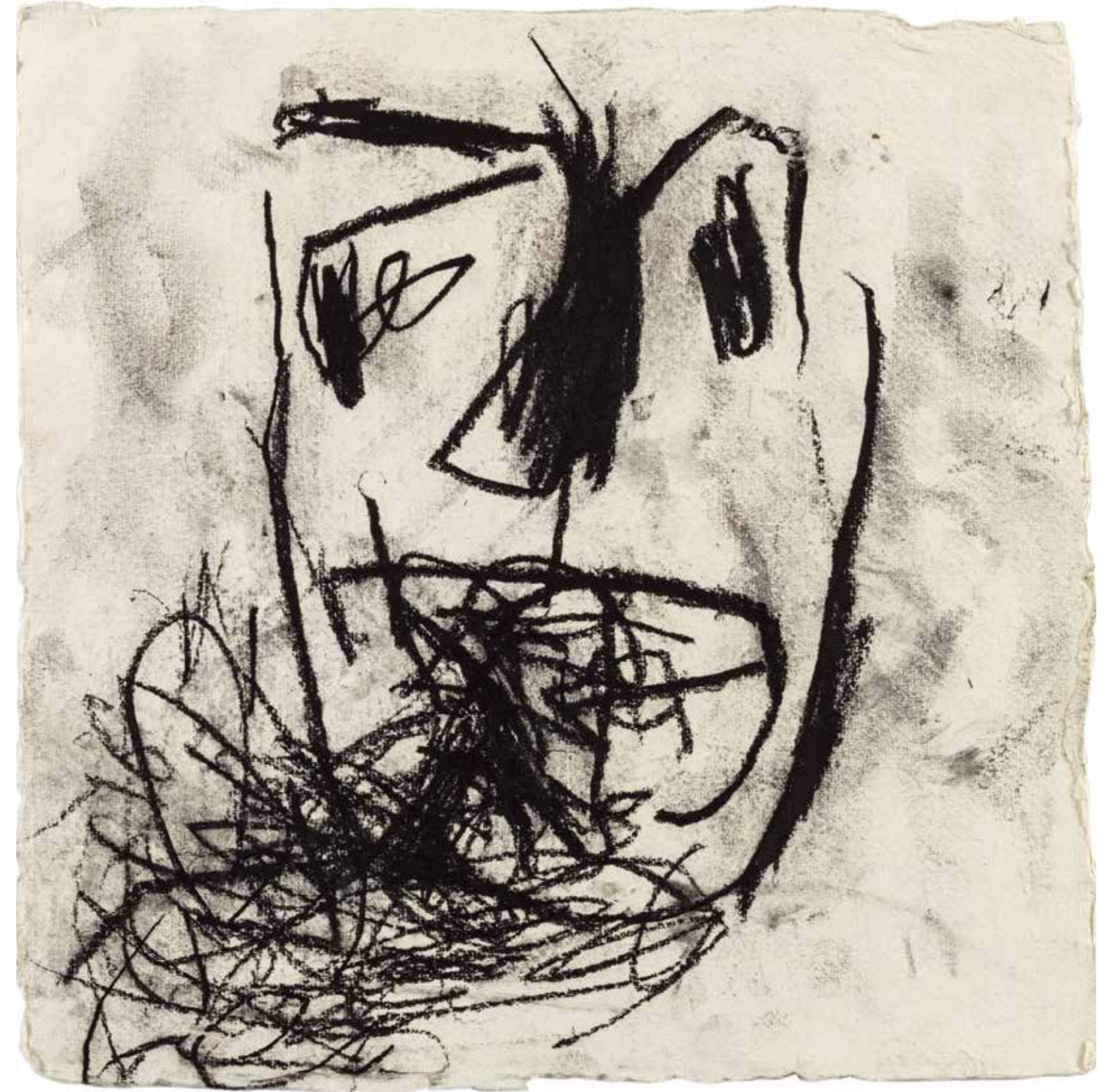
**April**  
acrylic/charcoal/fabriano 57x38 cms





**Summer head**  
charcoal/chalk/fabriano 40x29 cms





**Sick head**  
charcoal/khadi 30x30 cms





**Wire head**  
acrylic/charcoal/khadi 42x30 cms





**Blue head 2**  
Chalk/khadi 42x30 cms





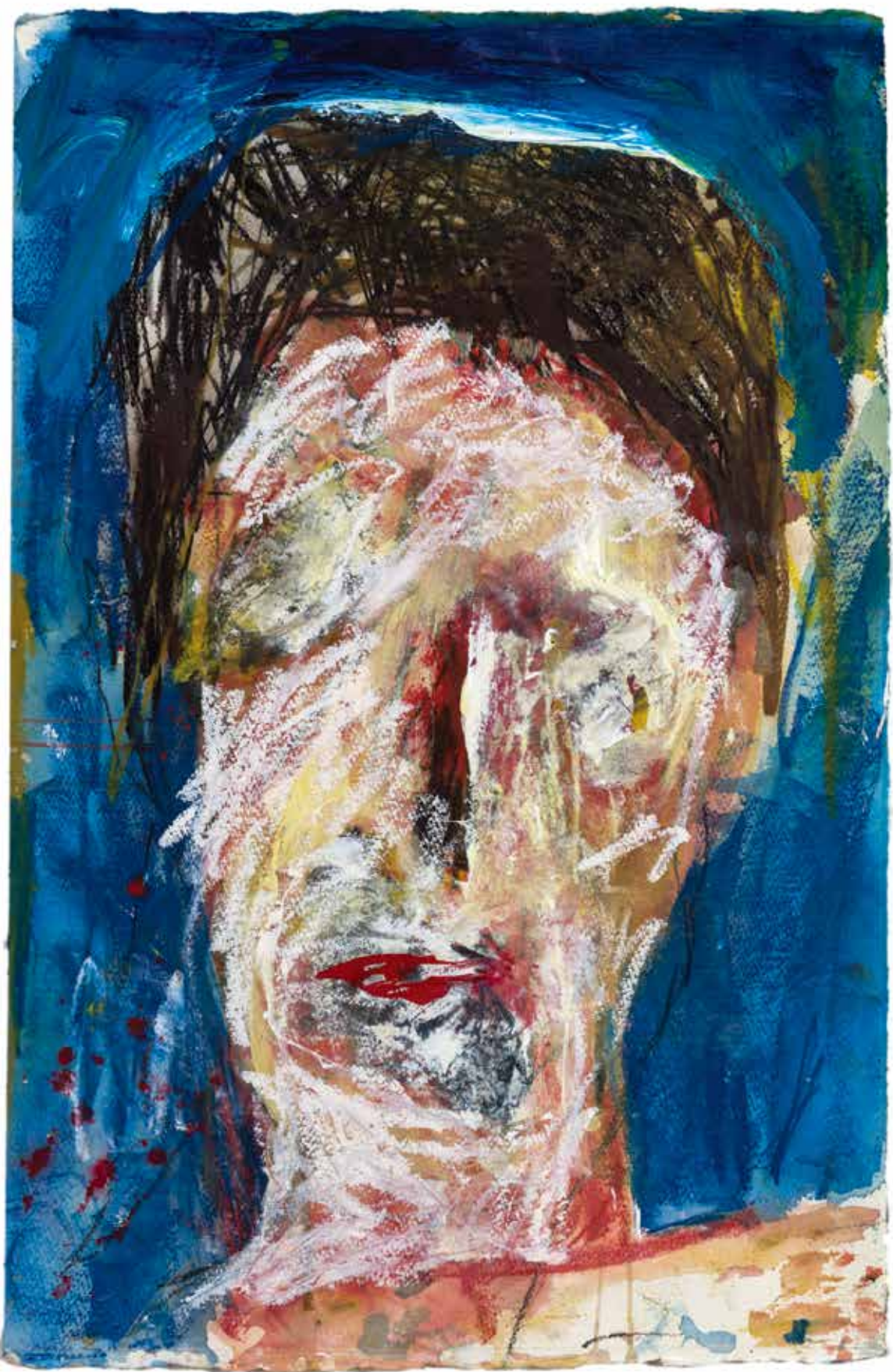
**Smoke head**  
acrylic/charcoal/fabriano 40x29 cms





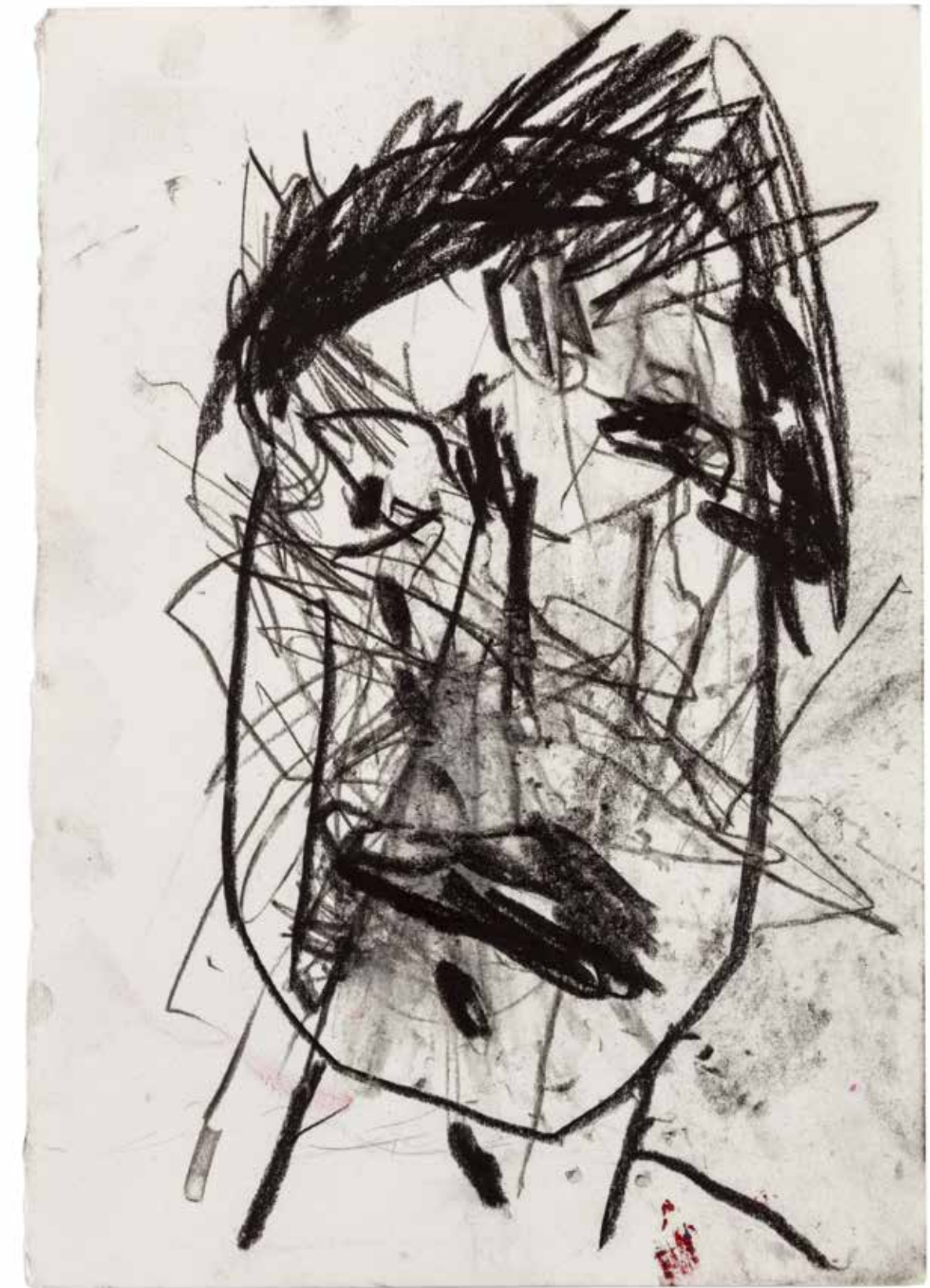
**Car head**  
Charcoal/khadi 33x33 cms





**Portrait**  
acrylic/pastel/fabiano 57x38 cms





**Sad head**  
Charcoal/fabriano 27x19 cms





**Yellow head**  
Acrylic/Waterford 57x38 cms





**Yellow head 2**  
chalk/khadi 42x30 cms





**Split head**  
acrylic/charcoal/khadi 42x30 cms



**Frances Aviva Blane**

Slade School of Fine Art, UCL (University College London), 1991 – 1993  
Byam Shaw School of Painting and Drawing, London, 1988 – 1991  
Chelsea College of Art, London, 1987

**Selected solo shows**

`dark', De Queeste Kunstkamers Abele/Watou Belgium, 2018  
BLANE. Broken Heads, Broken Paint, 12 Star Gallery at Europe House, London 2018  
TWO FACES. Painting/HEADS, The German Embassy Belgravia, London 2016 – 2017  
DECONSTRUCT. solo show alongside exhibitions of Louise Bourgeois and Francis Bacon.  
De Queeste Kunstkamers, Abele/Watou, Belgium, 2014  
BIG BLACK PAINTINGS. Bay Hall, Kings College, London, 2014

**Selected group shows**

Abstract Allies Zuleika Gallery London curated by Tim Sayer MBE  
with Naum Gabo, Nigel Hall, Howard Hodgkin 2019  
IKONOCASH #01  
with Anton Kannemeyer, Roel Goussay, Marcelle Hanselaar De Queeste Kunstkamers Abele/Watou Belgium 2019  
John Moores Painting Prize 2018 Walker Gallery Liverpool 2018  
No Man is an Island, with Susan Stockwell and David Connearn, Art Dialog, Bonn 2018  
HUMAN, The German Embassy, London 2017  
Creekside Open, selected by Jordan Baseman, 2017  
Liquid Thought, with Daniel Enkaoua and Chris Stevens,  
De Queeste Kunstkamers Abele/Watou Belgium, 2016  
Impact, with Marthe Zinc, Louise Bourgeois, Mark Anstee,  
De Queeste Kunstkamers Abele/Watou Belgium, 2016  
De Vage Grens, with Frank Auerbach, Reniere & Depla,  
De Queeste Kunstkamers, Abele/Watou, Belgium, 2015  
Jerwood Drawing Prize London and tour 2015  
Drawing Breath, Jerwood Anniversary Exhibition, Award Winners  
London, Sydney, Bristol, 2006 – 2008  
Annely Juda, a Celebration, Annely Juda Fine Art, London, 2007  
PRIME TIME, German and English Painting, Berlin, 2006  
London Gallery Swap,sponsored by the British Council and Goethe institut, 2002  
Drawing with Basil Beattie, ecArtspace, London, 2001  
Painting with John McLean, ecArtspace, London, 2000

**Awards**

Jerwood Award for Drawing, 1999  
Cheltenham and Gloucester, Open Drawing Show (award winner) 1999  
Mid-America ART Alliance Fellowship for Visual Arts, 1998  
Residency at Djerassi Artists' Foundation, California, 1998  
Graham Hamilton Drawing Prize, 1991

**Collections**

Blind Art, London  
Jesus College, Cambridge  
The London School of Economics,  
Moorfields Eye Hospital, London  
The Sternberg Centre, London  
The Usher Gallery, Lincoln  
The Faith and Belief Forum, London  
The Tim Sayer Collection, London  
The Doris Jean Lockhart, Collection

Publications

**BROKEN HEADS BROKEN PAINT.**

**MORE.**

Essay by Mark Gisbourne

**EMBASSY.**

Essays Tess Jaray RA and Dr Peter Ammon

**NOTHING.**

Essay by Diana Souhami

for more information on Frances visit: [www.avivablane.com](http://www.avivablane.com)



Frances Aviva Blane





Frances would like to thank

Susie Orbach

Lucid Plane

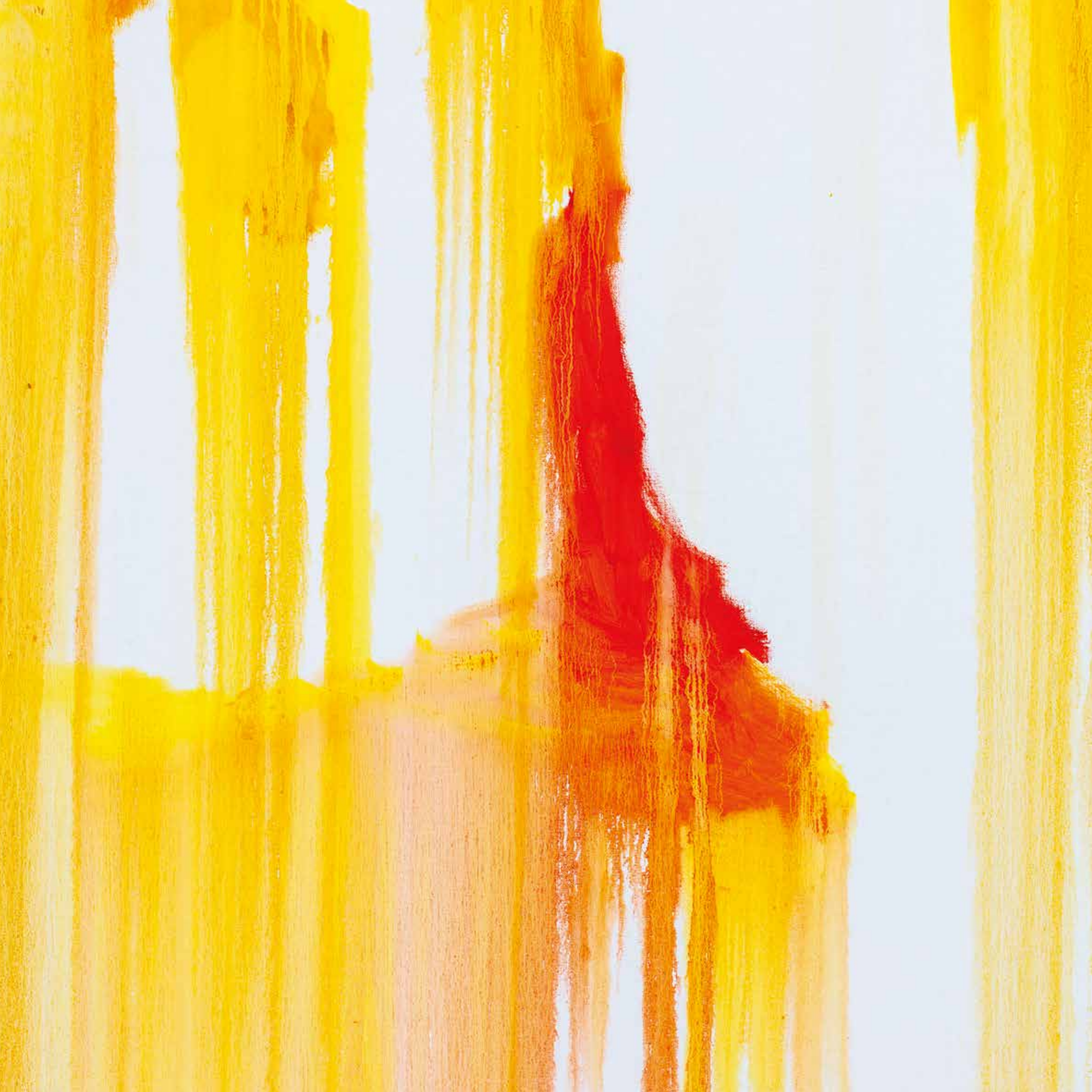
Richard Ivey

Joe Corr

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