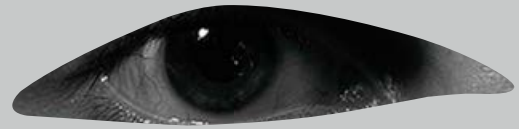


PETR SHEVCHENKO **GOING HOME**



painting
installation
sculpture
photo





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INTERVIEW WITH PETR SHEVCHENKO

By **Valeria Gorbova**. Curator

Petr, we're in Athens — what made you choose to live and create in this city?

I've been living in Greece for more than eight years; I think my inner soul-searching brought me here. I feel in sync with the energy of this country and its people. These lands breathe history and I believe that I share a deep connection with this place, going back to a very distant past.

As a firm believer in reincarnation, have this feeling that I lived here before. I have brief memories from the ancient times. While living here, I have been able to determine the time period. I remembered a tsunami which, according to historical archives, happened around 1500 AD following the Minoan Eruption eruption of the Santorini volcano on the island of Thira — it's assumed to have been what led to the destruction of the Minoan civilization.

Have you read Plato — he talked about this tragedy?

I haven't, I just happen to have memories of it — my recollection is of a day which felt like a national celebration; people festively walking around the streets filled with merchants. I believe I lived a happy life as a musician. These vague memories of being once happy here are what brought me to Greece from Switzerland, country that was a big part of my childhood and adolescence. While completing my business studies in Switzerland, deep inside I always knew that I was going to pursue art as a career and lifestyle. Eventually, my search brought me to Greece.

Your current lifestyle doesn't align with the typical definition of glamour, yet you are tuned into the trends, luxury brands and the concepts of beauty?

Well, yes, my life in Greece is much more holistic, but having grown up in Switzerland, these ideals are very familiar to me. In my studies, I majored in luxury goods, so I am well aware of how a "dream" is sold.

Isn't a work of art also kind of a dream?

A work of art can have a variety of functions. My creations offer the viewer a glimpse into another place; I see art as

a gate into a parallel world. A painting in itself unites two opposites — one is a borderless spiritual enlightenment, while the second is a type of formal symbolism that serves to define the boundaries in order to give it an understandable visual format. My aim is not about portraying reality in its given physical state. Instead, the focus is on the intangible metaphysical essence of existence.



Most of your paintings are abstract. Why do you choose this type of artistic expression and what is your personal connection with this genre?

In a number of my works, I try to communicate an idea which plays an important part in my belief system; it can be defined as "no such thing as empty space". I do not believe in truly empty space. Let me explain this... A space which seems empty is only perceived as such because of our inability to observe its contents. The so-called emptiness is rich with energetic structures and beings, perhaps even worlds, most of which lay outside of our physical spectrum of perception.

These beings and entities have a direct influence over us, and despite the fact that most of us are continuously unaware of their presence, we are in fact involved in a constant energetic interaction with them. Radio waves are a good example of something that fills a space which is usually assumed to be empty. Before we were able to build radio receivers and transmitters, we were unaware of the existence of radio waves, however the radio waves existed naturally. There are many other energetic fillings of a space — of which we are still widely unaware. Not being able to perceive them results in us not acknowl-

edging their existence which prevents us from being able to consciously evaluate and direct the energetic interaction which all of us continuously undergo.

We've reached a critical point in time where our civilization must begin to approach and acknowledge the metaphysical and spiritual essence of existence on a large scale. We need to pay attention and raise spiritual awareness of one another. We have become too focused on the physical, while increasingly ignoring the spiritual. It is a crucial time to shift our focal point from that which we can touch with our hands to that which we can address through our minds and souls, because physical solid matter is understandable in its nature while the initial root of most processes and problems lays in the energetic side of things. And it is only through learning and addressing the energetic nature of matter that we can find the roots and resolutions of most problems. Through my art, I aim to address this very process and its shortcomings. We have to open our metaphysical eyes and acknowledge the deep nature of things, or else we will perish in this materialistic and capitalist vortex that our civilization has become. People need to remember that initially we are all spiritual beings; I do not mean this in a religious way, but rather in an existential way. There is so much more to all of us than our physical attributes.

I feel that these matters are quite abstract from a physical point of view, and therefore abstract art seems to be the most appropriate genre for interpreting and communicating these thoughts. Abstract thinking is an essential survival skill which needs to be emphasized and abstract art is a perfect tool for exercising and strengthening this skill. On the contrary, figurative art is overly focused on the solid matter and is too strict in its format to be able to address the metaphysical.

How would you describe your system of beliefs?

It is not easy to narrow it down to one type of teaching. My system of beliefs is a multifaceted mix of various ethnic esoteric studies, elements of academic religions and a number of occult teachings, which all result in a system of personal shamanism.

Which esoteric teachings are you closest to? Do the religious beliefs of the ancient Greeks belong to an academic religion?

Multitheism is a pagan system with which I share a connection. It assumes the hierarchy of entities and spirits, namely the spirits of the powers of nature. It is one of my areas of interest and I am acquainted with people in Greece who have adopted and live by this belief system.

Do these people belong to a certain school or community?

In Greek, "Dodekatheismos" dates back to ancient pre-Christian Greece; the name translates as "twelve gods" and it is essentially a type of religion. Followers comprise less than five per cent of the population and adults who have consciously chosen this path, practice rituals and have organised educational centres as part of this community.

I feel that Greek people, in general, are quite open towards non-dogmatic or non-standard ideas and information. I have observed some elements of occultism even in modern Greek culture and customs. Perhaps this is partially the reason why there is an element of chaos in the Greek lifestyle. I can see many of them are in the process of soul searching and this element of social consciousness is very important to me.

Regarding the elements of metaphysics in my belief system, I can highlight the teachings of Blavatsky, Nicholas Roerich Robert Monroe and many others. Their books have played a fundamental role in the structural development of what I believe.

Do you acknowledge Roerich as a painter or as a theologian?

I consider him a painter among other things.

Do you feel any connection between his paintings and your paintings?

The formats are completely different and I would imagine that I have a long way to grow before I could allow myself to draw a comparison.

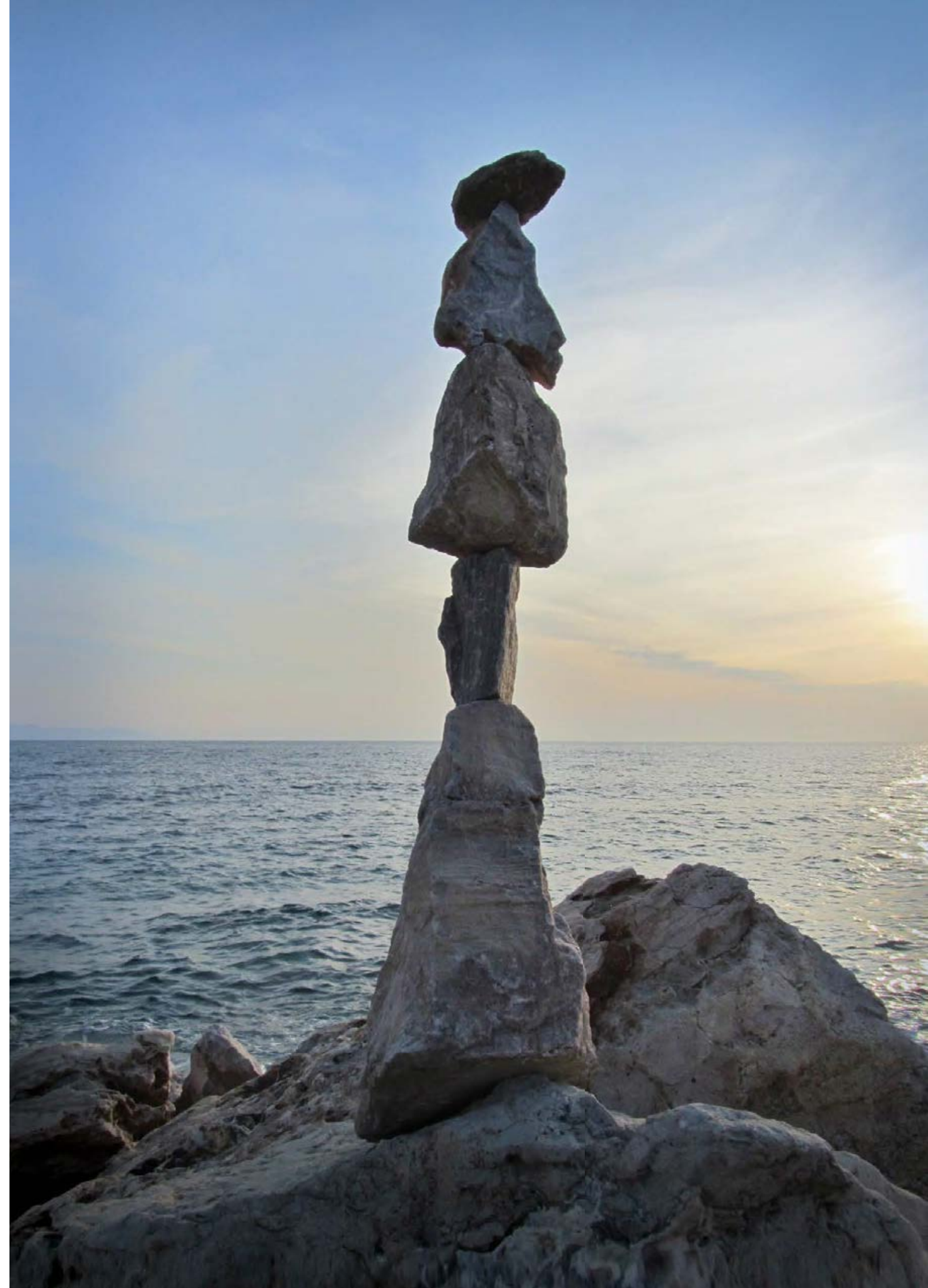
Can you name some of the artists who have given an influence to your artistic self-expression?

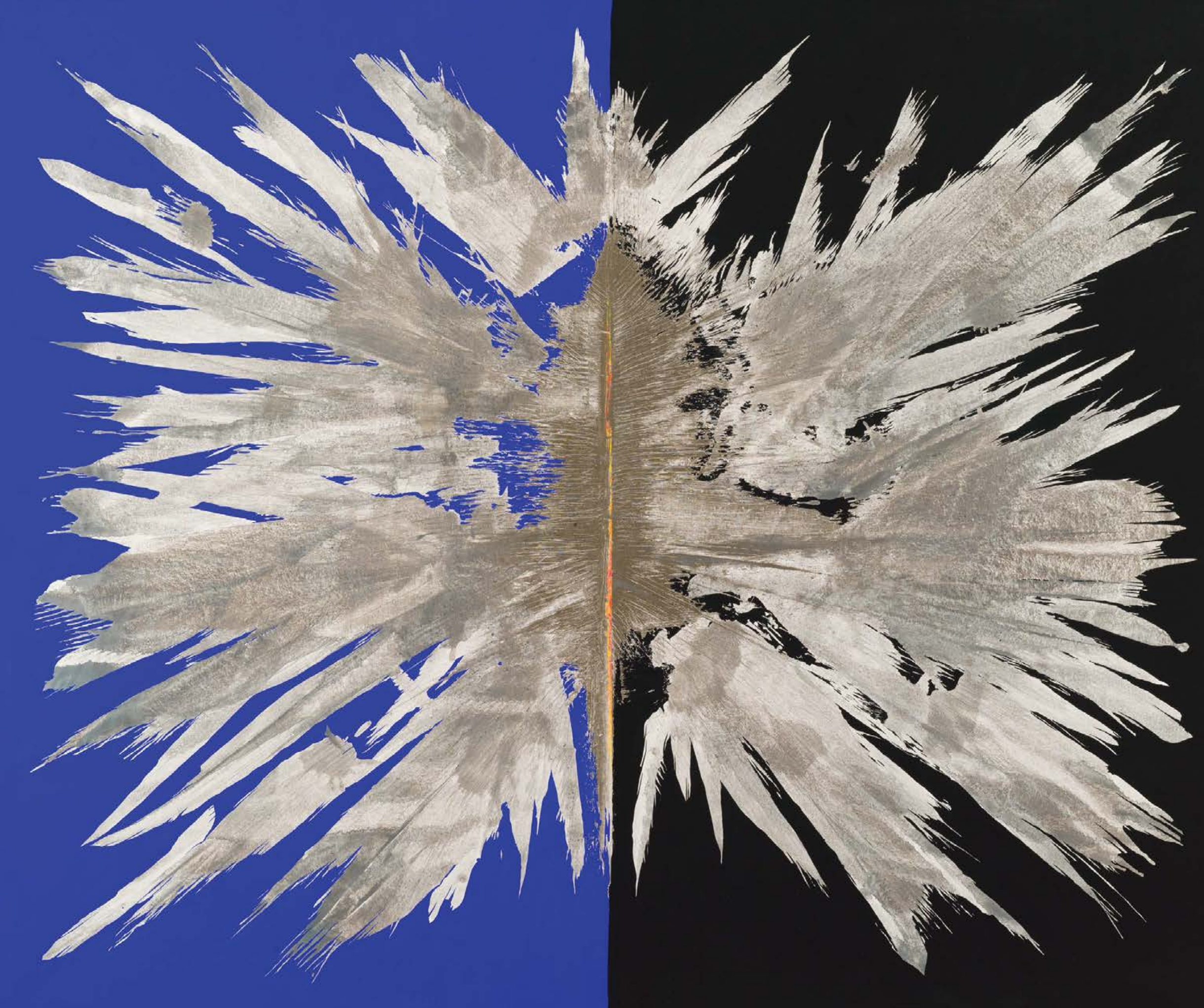
That would be Yves Klein, Anselm Kiefer, Kandinsky and Dali. I am an admirer of Leonora Carrington. Roerich has been an influence as well, but in his case, it's not so much the visual content of his paintings but rather the energetic content of his work that resonates with me.

That is quite an eclectic list of names...

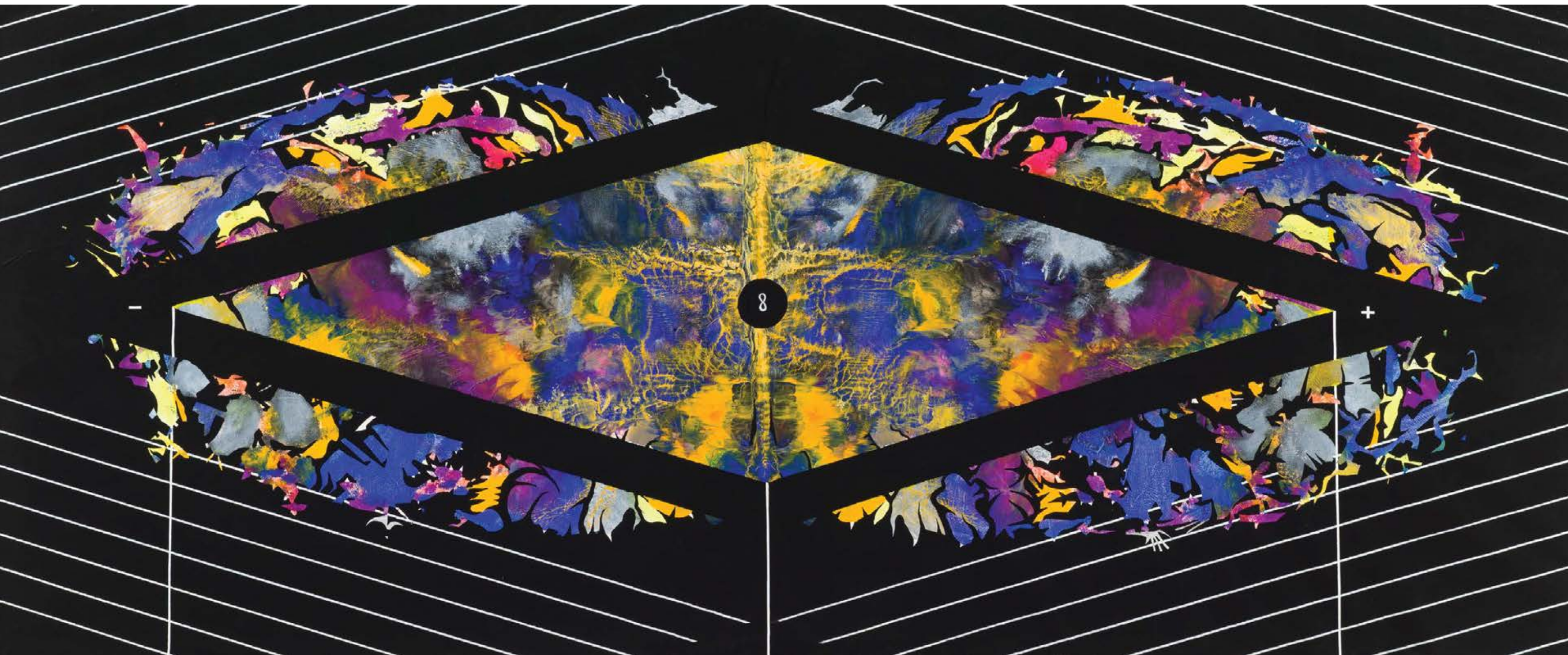
Yes, indeed. Dali's work shook me tremendously when I visited his house museum in Figueiras as a child. It was almost a psychological trauma for me back then and that experience was deeply imprinted on me. His works impacted me with his non-standard way of seeing, an approach which almost defies the laws of reality, which as a child I was only starting to discover. Suddenly there I was, plunged into his visions, into a whole parallel realm that his works display. I think it was right there and then that

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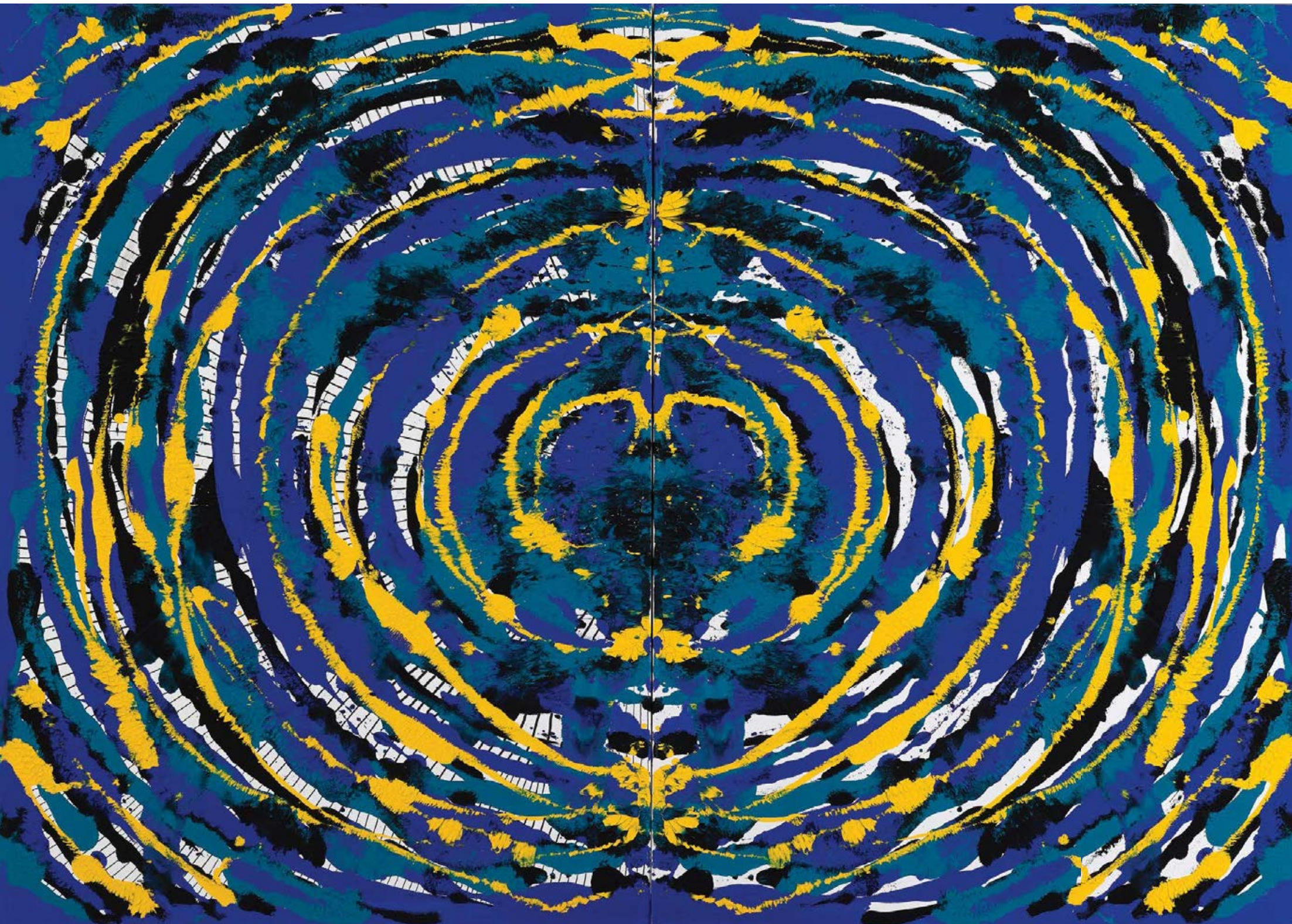




Intention empowered thought
acrylics on canvas, 155x175, 2018



Hypercube
acrylic on canvas, 85x200, 2018



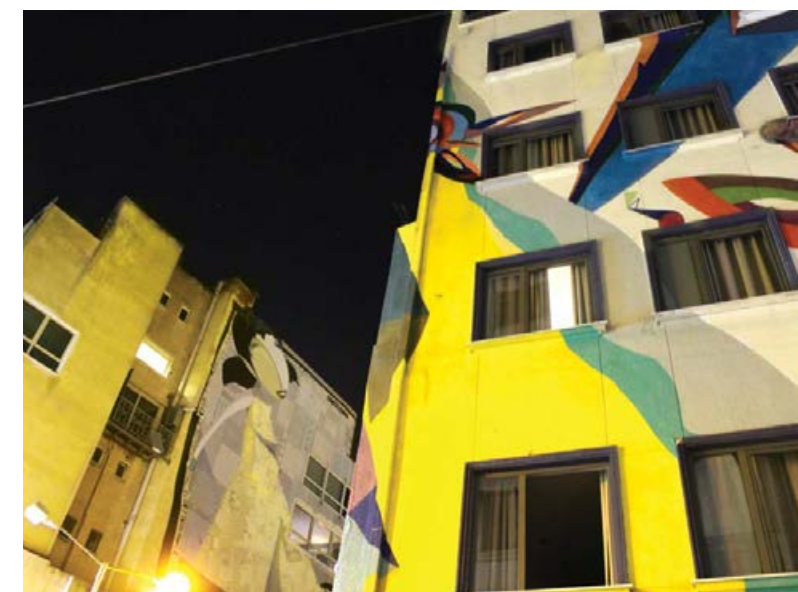
Firefly
acrylics on canvas, 100x140, 2017

Continue, start on page 3

I had felt the connection and the inner personal need to explore what lies beyond. I find Kandinsky very impressive; not only as an artist but also as a theorist. I have read his writings on the spiritual aspects of art and the thought that really resonated within me is that the function of art is higher and deeper than the mere representation of physical reality as it is.

What is your opinion of the Athenian art scene?

Well, Athens is not New York or London, but it has a vivid and eclectic art scene of its own. Strangely, the Athenian art scene is seldom heard of abroad, however it very much exists and evolves. For most foreigners, Greek art is about, but not limited to, ancient Greece.

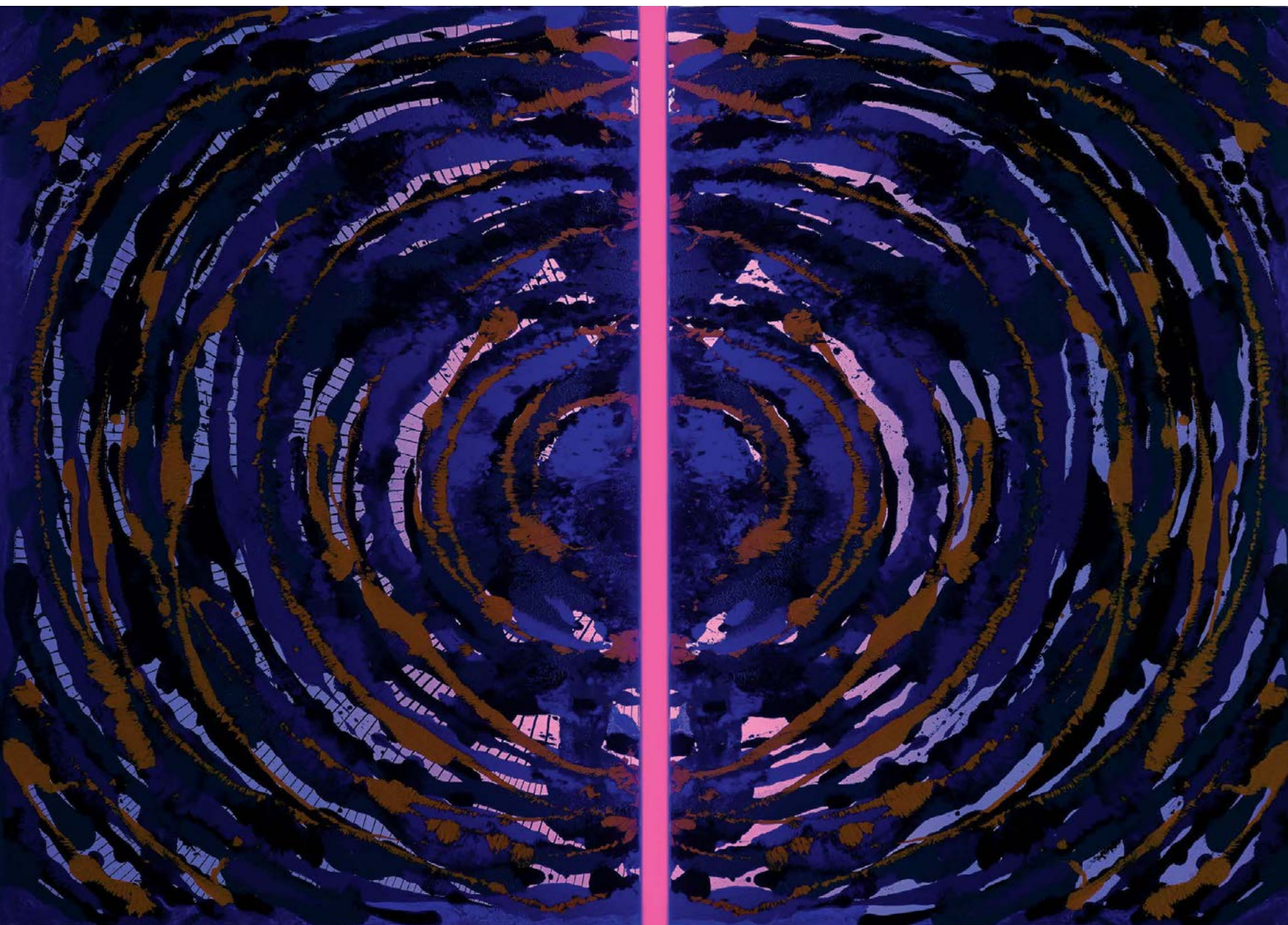


Did you study fine art here in Greece?

Yes, I have finished AKTO, which is the largest art, design and media school in Greece, which collaborates with the Middlesex University in Britain. Having graduated in Fine Arts and New Media, I have a diploma from AKTO and one from Middlesex University.

History of Art has been a very important part of this education for me. The overall experience had broadened my understanding of aesthetics. It did not necessarily teach me new techniques or change my ideas but it allowed me to better address and interpret the ideas that I already had and therefore exposed a bigger share of the invisible part of the "iceberg".

My initial goal is to help decode the information that the system constantly tries to suppress. This is also why I am very interested in the so-called "secret archaeology".



Alternative Aura

acrylics on canvas, 100x140, 2017

What words feature most among the names of your works?

“Being” or “Entity” are recurring words within my works’ names. Some are reflections of my perception, where I serve as an instrument through which existing energies gain a visually accessible format whereas some other pieces are a product of my self-expression. With some, I am their creator, while in others I am an interpretation mechanism for something that already exists.

A big part of the body of my work can be divided into two categories: introspection and extrospection.



Under (fragment)

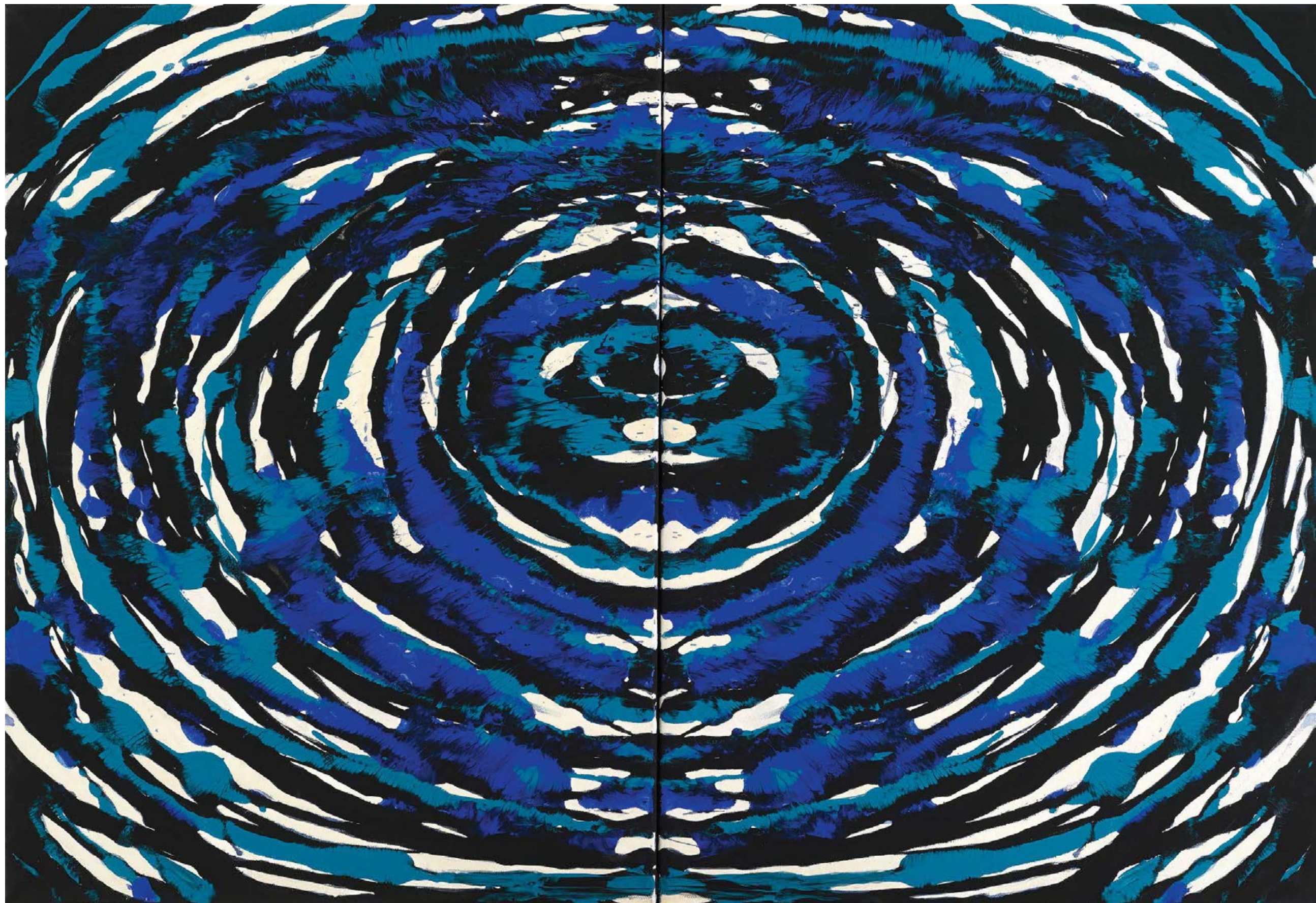
In a number of your works, a recurring human-like silhouette or outline can be observed...

The silhouette is an indicator of a physical presence, a protagonist; but since my focus of attention lies in the non-physical; I purposefully avoid any details of a physical body. In some cases, it is almost a cry for help, an attempt to underline the idea that a body is a temporary container with an expiry date, overemphasising how the physical shifts the attention away from the energetic essence. Physical matter is all around and everybody is too busy staring at it and dealing with it while the spiritual and the soul are often almost dismissed.

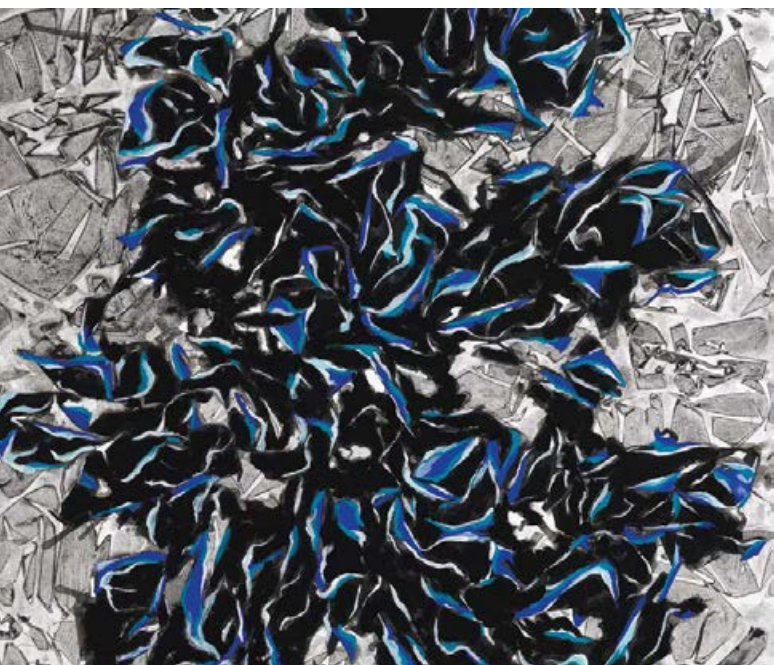
Talking to you, I understand that deep inside yourself you are not exactly at peace regarding the general state of the world, yet your paintings do not convey conflict — on the contrary, they communicate beauty and harmony. Some of your work even has a decorative aspect. Are you refusing to cross certain energetic boundaries. What is your logic for this?

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Eclipse II
acrylics on canvas, 90x130, 2017



I believe it is a personal ethical choice that every artist makes at some point, perhaps even multiple times... Should an artist unload their dark side upon the viewer or should art be a pursuit of beauty and light? Many artists choose the dark side and some do it in a very talented and aesthetic way. Perhaps I am still not ready to open that door and take the viewer on a walk through the “dungeons”; I might do it in the future if I feel the need for it. For now, I am trying to convey my personal understanding of beauty and aesthetics.



Abstract Being (fragment)

I am really taken by your installations showing reflection. The reflection of reality through a structure of mirrors. It reminds me of what we observed yesterday in a local church. Metallic depictions of the saints, serve almost as a protective shield from reality for the icon. The transition from real and physical to something non-physical through beauty — a link between two worlds. The material that you employ in your installation is reminiscent of the metallic ornaments around the icon?

The phenomenon of reflection and the properties of reflective materials play a serious metaphysical function. Most people do not acknowledge the importance of it. I suppose Van Eyck and the pre-Raphaelites were fully aware of its function. Beauty is the barrier that protects us from the dark and the evil, just like a depiction of a saint or of Holy Mary. Beauty requires a state of harmony. This concept comes through in my work.

Some of your works employ numbers or numerology. Do you have a personal theory of how numbers can be linked to beauty?

I would not say that there is an actual theory, but in some works, I have an inner need to employ specific numbers. I am interested in the shapes of numbers and in their placement within the context of a specific work. There is a painting which has multiple intersecting lines, just like a grid, and every intersection has the number eight referring to infinity. Most of the eights on that painting have the number five placed next to them; the fives refer to expansion, so together eight and five suggest infinite expansion. The fives were placed in an intuitive manner and some time after the painting had been finished, I observed the logic and the message that these two numbers produce when used in combination. As a result, the painting is about infinite expansion.

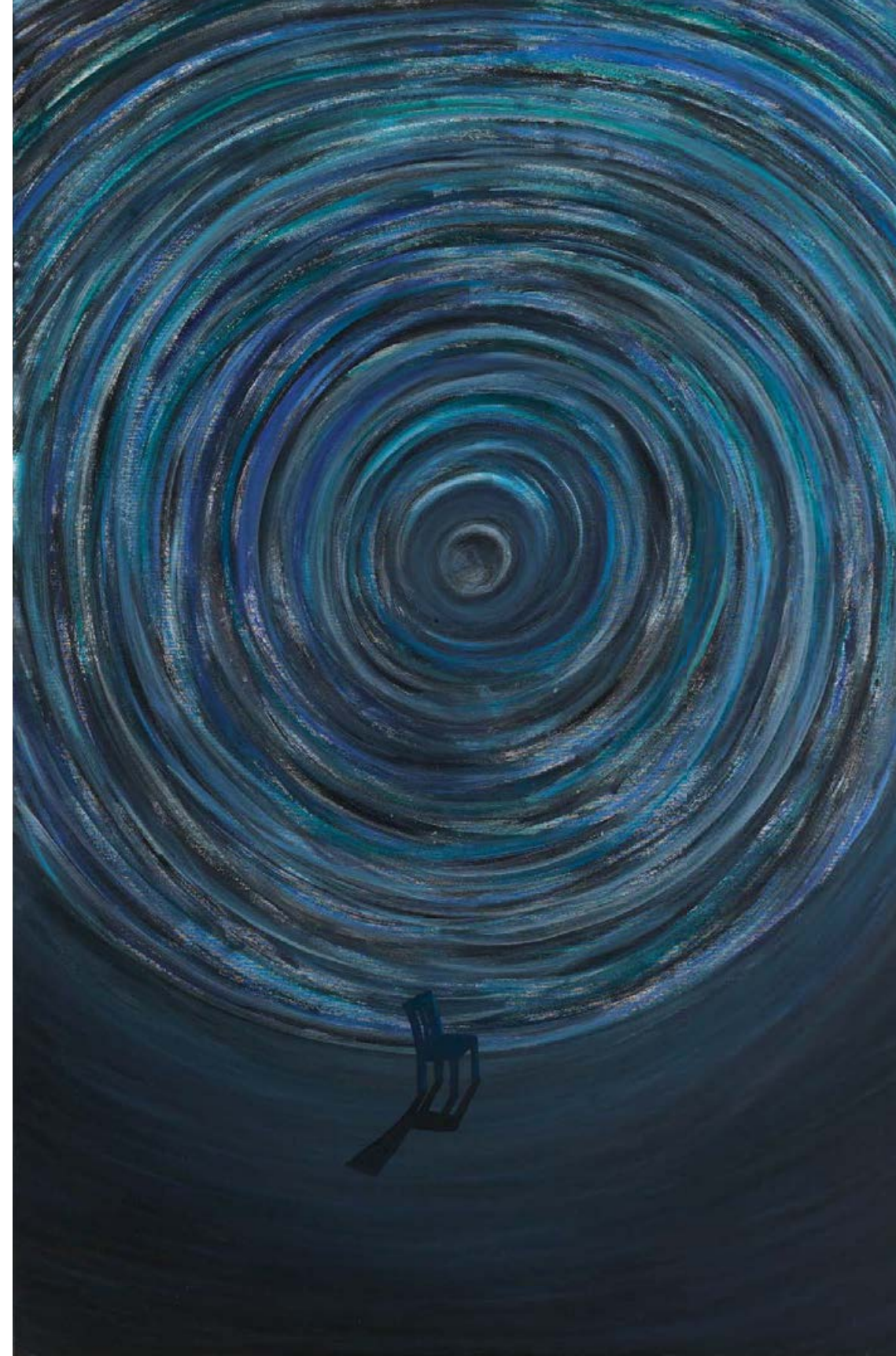
What would you say are the characteristics of the modern-day artist?

I believe that a modern artist should be free of limitations and boundaries in their work. I really like the term “visual artist” because it is broad. It suggests an artist who is free to interact with any type of visual context or visual art. A painter, for instance, is a much narrower term, whereas a visual artist can work in painting, sculpture, installations, video... For me, the element of research and experimentation is crucial; experimenting with techniques and materials, constantly looking for new materials and new ways to employ the existing media.

What about art as a manifest? And what about the limited lifespan of an artwork — doesn't it go against the notion of infinity?

Recently I found a mesmerising mirror-like textile and immediately had an urge to cover a building with it in order to disturb the predictability of an urban landscape. Covering a concrete urban structure with a reflective mirror-like surface disturbs the urban landscape and visually manipulates reality on an accessible and perceivable level — that is the ultimate function of an artwork. Actually, this is the common goal of numerous street artists. A common attempt to produce a visually unexpected, sometimes decorative impact on the environment that surrounds us.

I think Anish Kapoor and the American artist Christo are also doing something similar on a grand scale. When Christo wrapped Reichstag, that was surely an unexpected visual impact on a previously predictable urban landscape.



The Eclipse I
acrylics on canvas, 150x100, 2014



The Temple
acrylics on canvas, 100x65, 2014

As a visual artist, where do you stand today regarding your approach to art?

I feel that I am on a good path, in the sense that I am constantly experimenting and finding new ways to communicate my ideas. Despite a state of creative chaos, there is a clear sense of direction which progressively enables me to realise my potential. It is a step-by-step process and an endless discovery and evolution. The patterns gain complexity and expressiveness, and the ongoing core ideas take on new visual formats. I call it personal artistic alchemy.

You engage in open-air rock installations which use pure balance. Do you consider this to be one of your sculpture techniques?

This is a kind of an artistic meditative hobby of mine. I was by far not the first to think of this idea but I had come across it at some point and it really resonated with me since I love stones and minerals. My name comes from the Greek word Petra, which means stone. Stones are the most primitive and primary physical lifeform. Interacting with stones is an energetic exchange. This hobby is called "rock balancing" and it is almost a meditative exercise which uses nothing but balance to place big stones of various shapes one on top of another. The final result seems to visually defy the laws of physics while also serving to prove everything is inevitably interlinked even when common logic suggests the contrary. I also enjoy the reactions of the people who come across these 'sculptures' because it challenges their logic and provides them with unexpected visuals.

I collect certain stones and crystals, some of which I employ in my arts. I have a close friend who shares the love for geology and we organise crystal-hunting trips, going down mines and caves where we find various minerals and crystals. I have quite a collection now.

Another long-time obsession of mine is opals, especially Ethiopian opals. I collect them, and in my work, I am constantly looking for materials and techniques that can mimic the opalescence of a genuine opal.

Throughout your works, you often employ vortexes and spirals along with notions of duality?

Yes, in my works, vortexes are a very conscious element rather than a decorative touch. Everything, in a way, is a vortex. Nature and physical reality are built on spiral and cyclical movements; this is also applicable in the case of energetic structures and their movement. From satellites and planets to the universe as a whole, everything is cyclical and everything is a vortex. Even small children, before they are able to draw specific shapes or patterns often

draw a vortex or a repetitive circular movement which is intuitive because it is in the essence of everything.

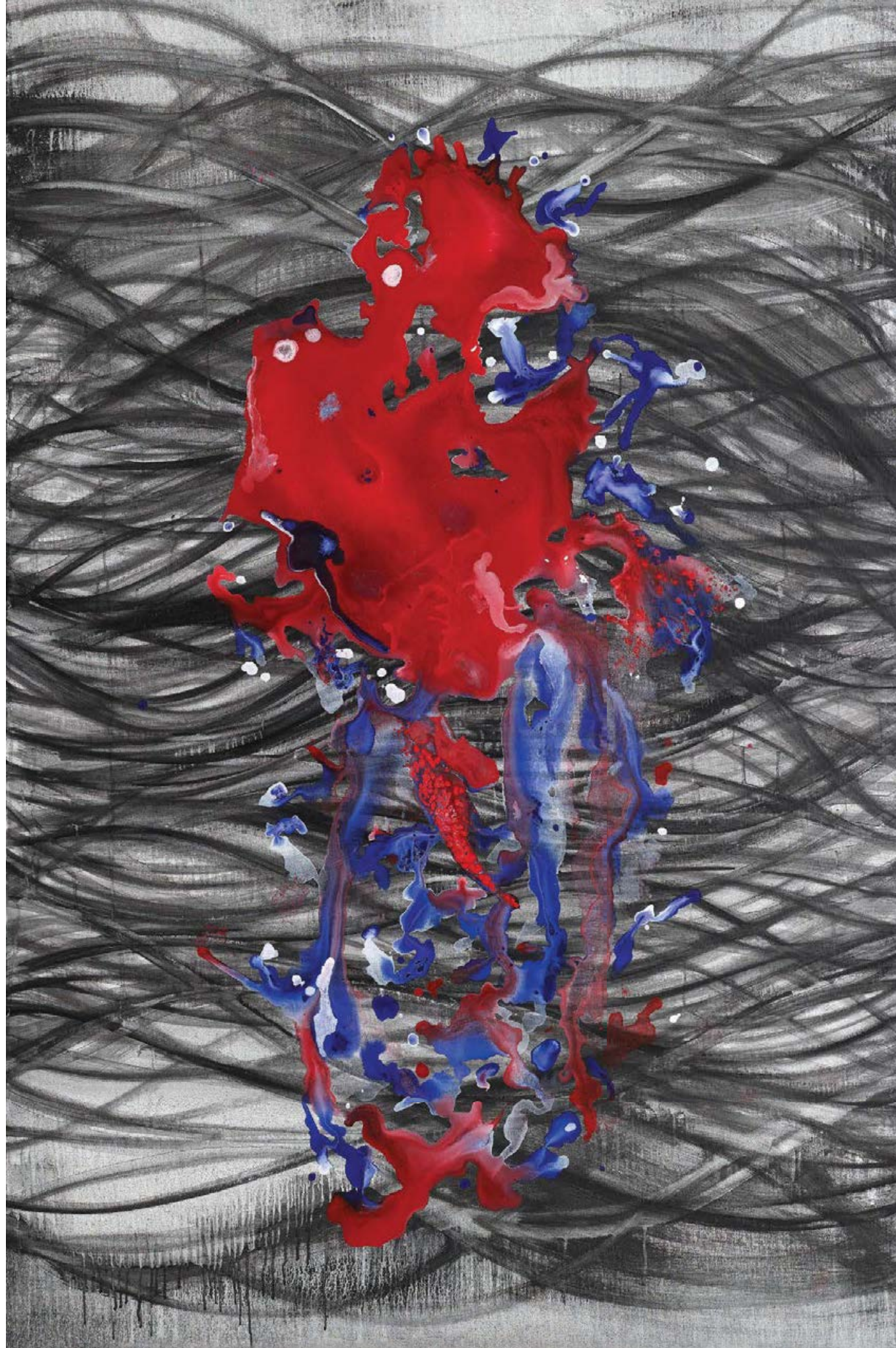
What are your current goals in your art?

Through my artworks, I am trying to convey the connection of everything to everything. No element and no matter is disconnected from the rest. This applies to both the physical and energetic and both are deeply in-



terlinked and interdependent. I am trying to extrapolate this connection from the perfection of universal chaos to display that the world we live in, is a harmonious structure in its essence, which does not stand still, but continually changes and evolves. To evolve in harmony, we have to overcome the limitation of the physical realm and acknowledge the deep energetic and spiritual essence, even in the most physical of matters. My focus of interest is there where solid matter exists only as an energetic structure and as a thought.

Breeding horse
acrylics on canvas, 160x100, 2014



WHAT THE “I” SEES: THE SUBLIME UNIVERSE OF PETR SHEVCHENKO

Cathryn Drake. Art critic, curator, Artforum writer

“Painting, in some way, stitched together what had been torn in me: it unified my inner being, it became the coming together of all the pieces of my experience, of my identity.”

Etel Adnan

The artist Petr Shevchenko’s body of work comprises a dynamic expression of the ineffable dimensions of existence. In the belief that there is “no such thing as empty space,” he endeavors to manifest the invisible essence of life, the energy that flows among earthly and otherworldly beings. The ecstasy of emptiness lies in the virtual lack of emptiness, the impossibility of the void and the power of our imagination to grasp what is beyond the perceptual capabilities of our physical senses. The line between reality and imagination is tenuous, and the concretization of thought is what has constructed and shaped our terrestrial landscape, while the spirit remains elusive to our reach. The practice of visualizing how we see the world with all of our senses gives eminence to our presence as an integral part of the whole and provides empowerment for transformation. Who is to say what is real and what is not? Belief is the important element. As artist David Hammons has said, “To be invisible is more powerful than being visible.”

The paintings of Shevchenko’s “Reflection” series (2017), all rendered in acrylics on canvas, allude to how our emotional states determine the meanings of what we see through images that recall the Rorschach Test, employed to tease out personal perceptions reflecting psychological conditions. Unlike the ten inkblots, Shevchenko’s vividly colored diptychs are not symmetrical — they

are both more inchoate and chaotic — and as such more realistic reflections of living things. These psychedelic abstractions trigger our instinctive tendency to impose order, to define what we are looking at, while the tongue-in-cheek titles of the artworks question the efficacy of such a diagnostic device as a reflection of raw, isolated psychological states.

The fearsome primordial face that materializes in *VII Scream at Me* upon prolonged gaze is split in half where the canvases meet, its mouth a black hole. Nearly indistinguishable from its mesmerizing halo of vibrant



brush strokes and splotches, the image summons the human condition as both discrete and at one with the riotous yet indiscernible field of atmospheric particles that

subsumes us. Its resemblance to Medusa elicits the duality between the awe of divine spirituality and the terror of the meaninglessness of life. *IX Kiss Yourself* evokes two visages facing each other rather than looking away like the mythical double-faced Janus, who rules over transitions and holds the key to the gateway of Heaven. We might imagine this penultimate card in Shevchenko’s array of mock assessments as a portrait of the artist and, in turn, a metaphor for self-examination. Or is it a butterfly just emerged from a splendid metamorphosis? Perhaps it is both.

The canvas *They Come When You Are Sleeping* (2016) dances with luminously colored forms exploding in a black void. Resembling a cluster of inkblots, it calls to mind anatomical organs populated by tiny creatures — or simply living matter suspended in space. These visceral paintings are potential portals either to paradise or to the demons dwelling in our subconscious. While the faces of Janus look to the past and future, *Kiss Yourself* forces us to consider the present, the here and now, as a mirror reflecting our soul as the source of what everything can be and the space where paradise can materialize through magical thinking. After all, self-love is the ultimate romance, paving the way for all others: to put it simply, we see only our own reflection in the shape we give the universe. Thus the duality represented by the two-faced god of all gods symbolizes our own potential to determine our fate.

Objectivity is a myth, as our brain frames and crops out much of what we see and often fabricates what we do not see but would like to.

The hypnotic diptych *Intentioned-Empowered Thought* (2018) embodies nothing less than the endless possibilities and limits of the human imagination in bold feather-like strokes against a brilliant blue field, on one side, calling to mind the infinity of a daytime sky, juxtaposed with the black of night and death, or the finiteness of physical existence. In a religious framework it might portray a terrifying angel, magnificent and maleficent by turns — an archetype we have created to explain otherwise inexpli-

cable otherworldly forces. When we look up at the sky we see only a black scrim hosting a liminal field of stars marked by varying degrees of brightness hinting at what lies beyond. Since our physical senses are limited we can only divine the extent of the universe by developing a sixth sense — one requiring fantasy and faith. In any case, empirical science cannot explain everything.



Vision and spirituality go hand in hand, yet illumination dazzles and blinds as much as it ignites revelation and rapture. In that light, the same painting evokes the iris of an eye with an oculus veiled perhaps by the condition of mind inferred by the title. What we see and don’t see has as much to do our beliefs as with our physical faculties, in terms of what we focus on.

Indeed objectivity is a myth, even with sight, as our brain frames and crops out much of what we see and often fabricates what we do not see but would like to. Sight can even be a distraction, discouraging exploration of our environment via other senses. *Cat in the City* (2014) portrays the way a feline, whose vision is better at night, might experience the built environment — as dark, colorless masses defined only by the light between them. Dogs can hear things at four times the distance a human can and feel the destructive force of a thunderstorm far more intensely. Their worlds are no less real than ours.

When your eye develops what is called a vitreous detachment, for example, you can see its normally imperceptible mechanics in the form of shapes floating in the substance between the retina and iris like sea creatures swimming in an aquarium — not unlike the way we move through the atmospheric matter that immerses us. Thus the eye resembles an electronic screen experiencing interference, and the floating objects merge with those moving by in the exterior physical world to produce the

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Beyond the Grid
acrylics on canvas, 150x80, 2015



Solar Soul
acrylics on canvas, 120x90, 2017

Continue, start on page 22

sensation of distance and a sense of unreality, as if everything is a projection of the mind or a transmission from elsewhere. Over time the brain screens out these particles, even though they are still there — just as we filter out things around us in our everyday life.

Shevchenko's compositions portray psychic terrains that transport us to other planes of existence.

Nobody's Watching (2017) alludes to this biological trickery of perception with innumerable eyes peering out from the interstices of the cosmos expressed as a kaleidoscopic field of exuberant abstraction. In the same way, it expresses how we do not see the fabric of the universe that immerses us, that we are an integral part of, just as we do not perceive the rotation of the Earth. In the nineteenth century Eadweard Muybridge demonstrated how we wrongly perceive movement through his groundbreaking stop-motion studies, capturing what eludes the human eye and hinting at just the tip of the iceberg of what we don't discern of our own environment. *Find Your Way* (2010) evokes the relative flatness we perceive in a black staircase narrowing as it ascends into the void of the background. The missing link is the fourth dimension, that of the expanse of space and time beyond our perceptual abilities.

Just as the Romantics painted landscapes as manifestations of the sublime reflecting states of the psyche, from luminous and ecstatic to dark and foreboding, Shevchenko's compositions portray psychic terrains that transport us to other planes of existence. It is easy to dismiss that which we cannot understand with our own limited senses. *Beyond the Grid* (2015) expresses the tension between representation and abstraction, and in turn the privileging of science over the spiritual, in a radiant biomorphic form peering from behind a structure of crisscrossing bars bearing numbers, as if imprisoned. Every intersection has the number 8, a symbol for infinity; where the number 5 appears in proximity it signifies infinite expansion — but only if you know where to find it and what it means. Spirituality is just beyond the grasp of our five senses, our perception limited to the potential of our imagination, just as enlightenment eludes the formless being unless it can

see beyond the confinement of conventional knowledge structures represented by the grid.

Shevchenko is influenced by the theories of Wassily Kandinsky, a proponent of art as an expression of the spiritual through the reduction of forms to their most fundamental, down to mere lines still reverberating with the pure essence of meaning, just as colors convey different sensations. All is disembodied in *Disorder* (2012), a representation of life that recalls Kandinsky's whirling metaphysical constellations. Here we have candy, cats, and crocodiles flying through the air along with trains, planes, and rocket ships while gravity takes a coffee break. Yet they are like topsy-turvy hieroglyphs, an ancient language of signs and



symbols conveying abstract concepts whose meanings radiate beyond the realm of objects or words. We are left to interpret their meanings with our own resources and references: What does the encircled number 21 mean, for instance? Where it leads is essentially an exploration of the subconscious as a pathway to self-exploration.

Fragments of events are enfolded into us in a continual contingent process wherein everything converges into one nonlinear reality.

Fragments of events are enfolded into us in a continual contingent process wherein everything converges into



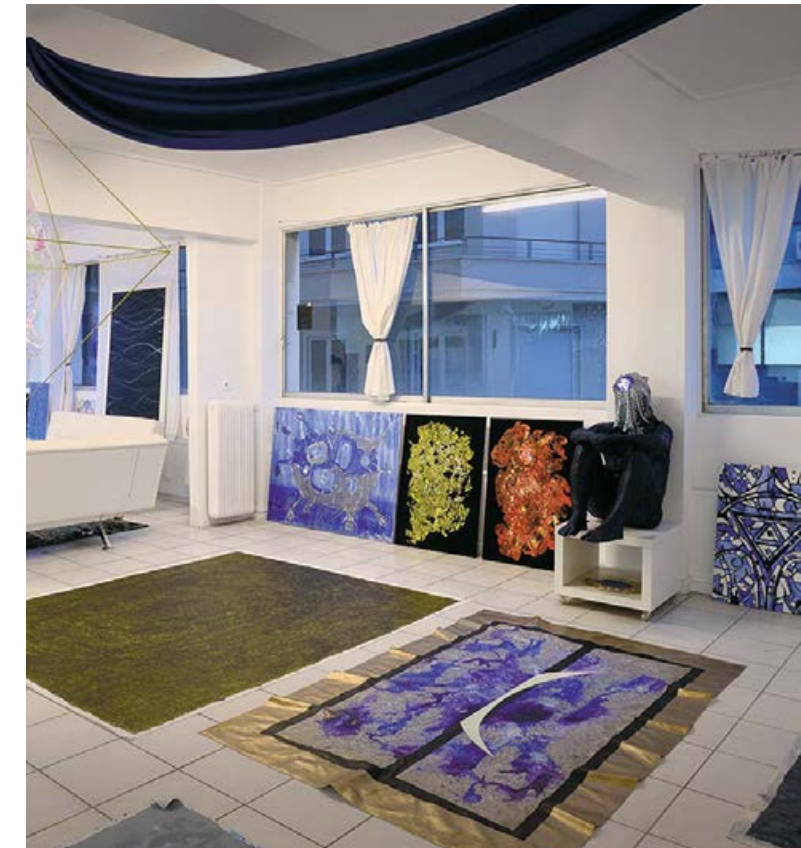
Solar Impact
acrylics on canvas, 100x70, 2017

one nonlinear reality. The most accurate perception of the world is perhaps through a shattered mirror: it is really just a chaotic, cacophonous congregation of continuous change and constant crisis. The delightful yet terrifying painting *Fragments* (2012) characterizes a cacophonous collection of vivid disembodied scenarios, conjuring the disjointed snippets of moods, thoughts, dreams, and nightmares of a restless mind. Outside forces of mass media have artificially fractured our perception, impairing our own native intuition by displacing, and thus disempowering, our ability to see through the onslaught of too many meaningless albeit potent messages to make sense of while we merely resist drowning a sea of disjointed images.

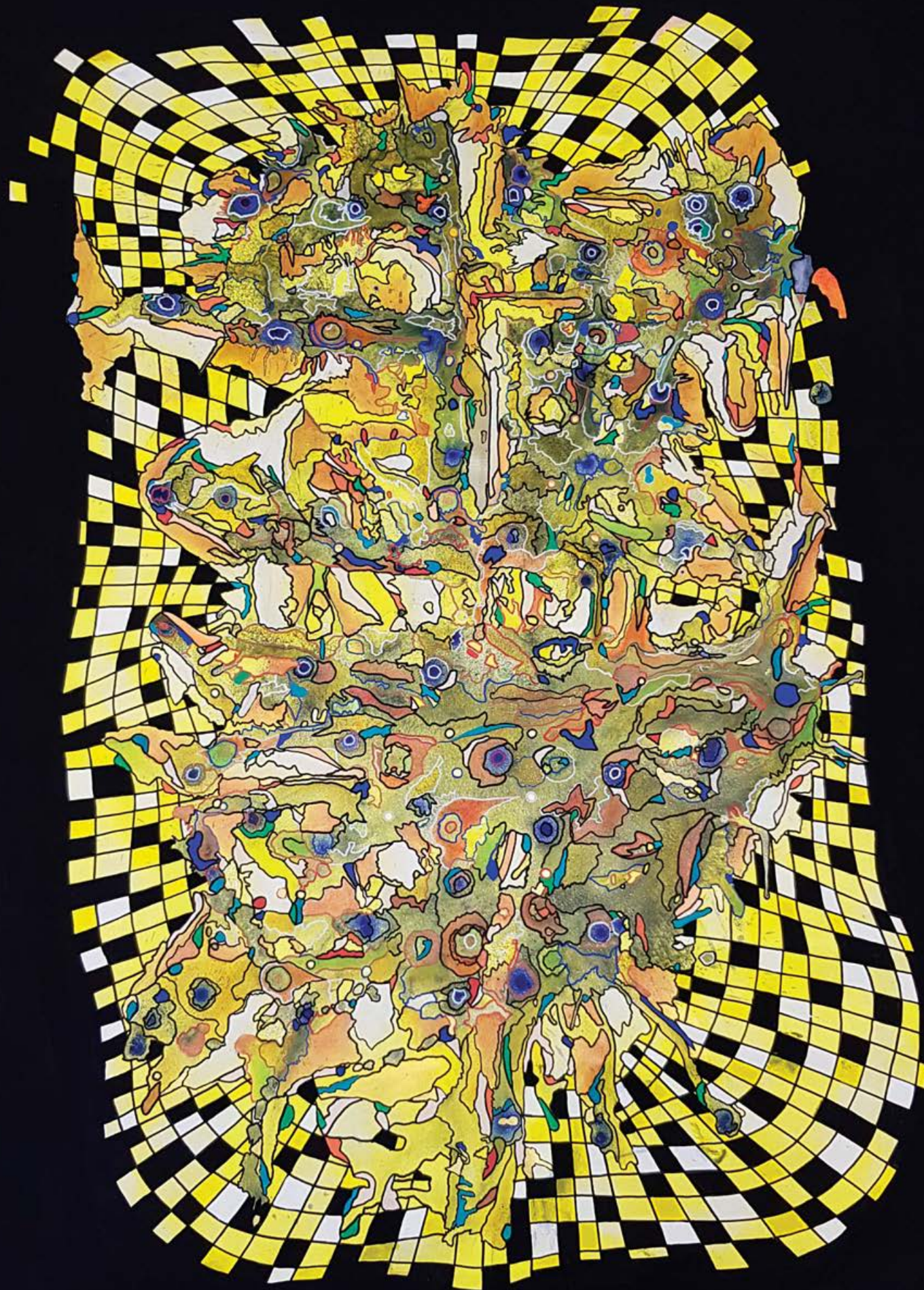
A source of inspiration for Shevchenko is Helena Blavatsky. Both were raised in the Russian Orthodox Church that incorporates elements of mysticism and beliefs outside the realms of rational order and empirical reason.

The modern schism between empirical science and intuitive intelligence has engendered both a move away from a holistic worldview and the conceptual separation, or imbalance, of mind and body. The mending of this fundamental rupture may be key to the salvation and reconciliation of humanity and the earthly sphere. Examples of paranormal phenomena are widely documented, yet the scientific establishment keeps its distance from any attempt at explanation. A source of inspiration for Shevchenko is Helena Blavatsky, a founder of Theosophy, an occult movement that conceives the purpose of human life as spiritual emancipation leading to reincarnation via the principles of karma. Both were raised in the Russian Orthodox Church, an Eastern faith that incorporates elements of mysticism and beliefs outside the realms of rational order and empirical reason: *Under the Surface* (2016) portrays a figure framed in gold like a Byzantine icon, the head shaped like a mati, a protective talisman against the evil eye, and the body reduced to a mere aperture revealing a charged, stormy landscape

navigated by a single ship. Most of all, the composition evokes a mystical representation of time as nonlinear, as an eternal present, the way the ancient Egyptians saw it, called Djnet.



As Shevchenko's idiosyncratic vision conveys, we have no alternative but to believe that the universe is held together by magic. In the installation *Mirror for the Soul* (2018) — a freestanding sculpture of crinkled metal illuminated by black light — the colors and forms change depending on the viewer's perspective and the light conditions. Its essential materials are metaphysical and ephemeral; its visual effects are unfixed and infinitely changing, reflecting the mutable and mysterious nature of reality. One and the same with the universe, we alone hold the power of transformation. It is our duty to be fully present to save the world from immanent invisibility, most of all by revealing the divine spirit in all that we do.



Photons
acrylics, ink, resin on canvas, 185x160, 2018



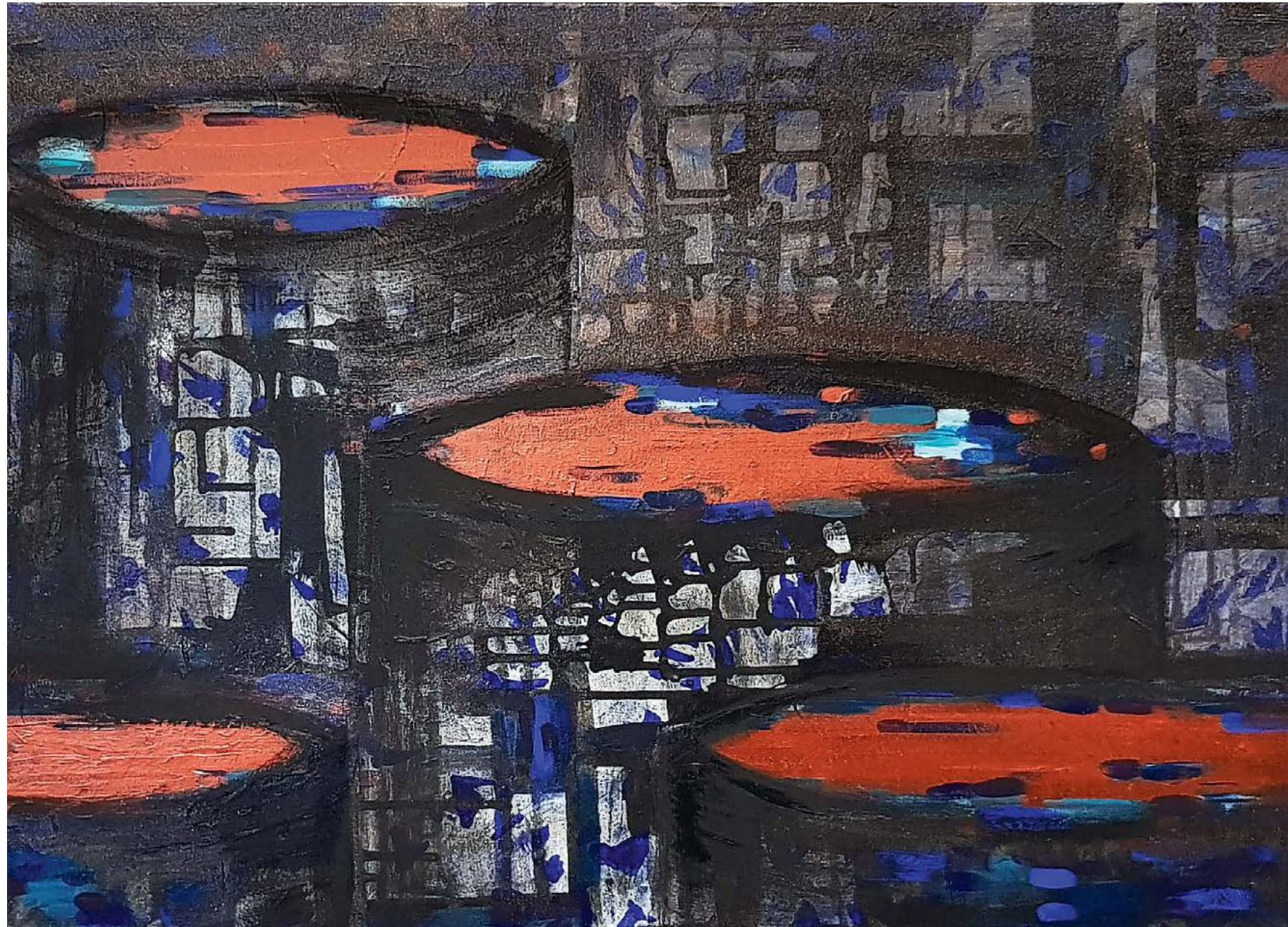
Mind VS Psyche
acrylics, ink on canvas, 188x122, 2018



Agitated Heart
acrylics on canvas, 70x50, 2017

Resources

Acrylics on canva, 50x80, 2018





Nobody's watching
acrylics on canvas, 100x140, 2017

ALWAYS SOMETHING TO SEE: ON P. SHEVCHENKO'S ART

Patrick Langley. Art critic, writer Frieze, Art agenda and Art Review

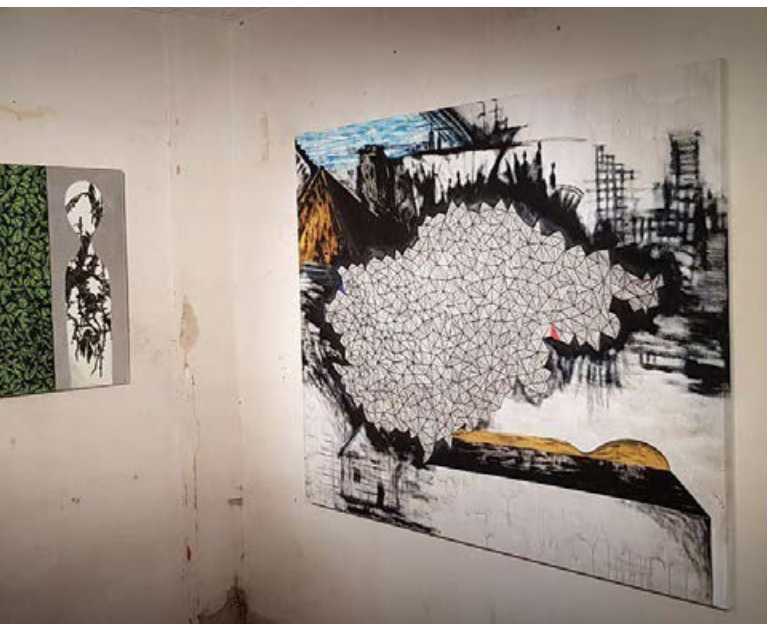
Space is never empty in Peter Shevchenko's art. His work depicts a universe in which the air itself teems with intangible forces, pulsating with entities that lie beyond the limits of ordinary human perception. Fittingly, the word "space" holds a double meaning: it invokes at once the



plane of the image, with its painterly arrangements of colour, texture, and form; and another, more nebulous space that his images represent. Both spaces — his art, the world it offers access to — are alive with energy. Space is never empty, but nor is it still. It is constantly teeming, crackling, flowing, fluxing.

Although Shevchenko works in installation and photography, his primary medium is painting. Over the course

of his career to date, he has developed a visual language marked by breadth, flexibility, and an intuitive approach to his chosen materials. Combining striking use of colour with expressive abstraction and an interest in the mesmeric possibilities of pattern-making, his paintings feel driven by a need to figure out a visual language capable of capturing non-visual phenomena. The result is a highly vivid, if abstracted, world marked by motion and change, and influenced at a conceptual level by a system of beliefs incorporating metaphysical speculation, esotericism, occultism, and mysticism.



Reflecting the artist's interest in the hidden energies that flow through our world, a number of his most striking works are abstract. Various resembling Rorschach tests, dream-visions, and pulses of electricity — yet never quite reducible to any single visual comparison — these paintings have a mesmerising effect on the viewer. *Lost in the Dream* (2018), for example, balances contrasting colours (yellow and purple, orange and blue) in gestural, rippling lines to conjure a sense of fluid reverie. Others are filled with darker, more ominous imagery. Reflection *Series II Extremes* (2017), for example, is a brooding, monochromatic flock of black-and-white smudges like birds streaming across a pitch-dark night. Others still evoke a contrasting sense of playfulness and spontaneity — his ongoing photography series of beach stones stacked in temporary towers spring to mind. Despite the diversity of their form, material, content, and mood, all of Shevchenko's works are united by an attention — and perhaps a kind of devotion to — spirituality.

Painting is the cornerstone of Shevchenko's practice; the medium through which he expresses his most complex and ambitious ideas and reveals the breadth of his visual vocabulary. Combining rhythmic patterns, gestural abstraction, a complex and personalised form of figuration, and expressive use of colour, they blur distinctions between the physical act of making (putting paint on the canvas, arranging colour and form on the pictorial plane) and metaphysical speculation (developing a highly personal visual language to express non-visual phenomena). Often, a compelling ambiguity hovers over these works. It may be unclear to the viewer whether the objects, figures, and scenarios Shevchenko depicts through his vivid acrylics are observed from real life, from dreams, or whether, conversely, his paintings are the result of a shamanistic process — as though the artist is channelling spiritual presences or entities that communicate directly with the viewer through the medium of his art. But perhaps it is most accurate to say his paintings are all these things at once.

His paintings feel driven by a need to figure out a visual language capable of capturing non-visual phenomena.

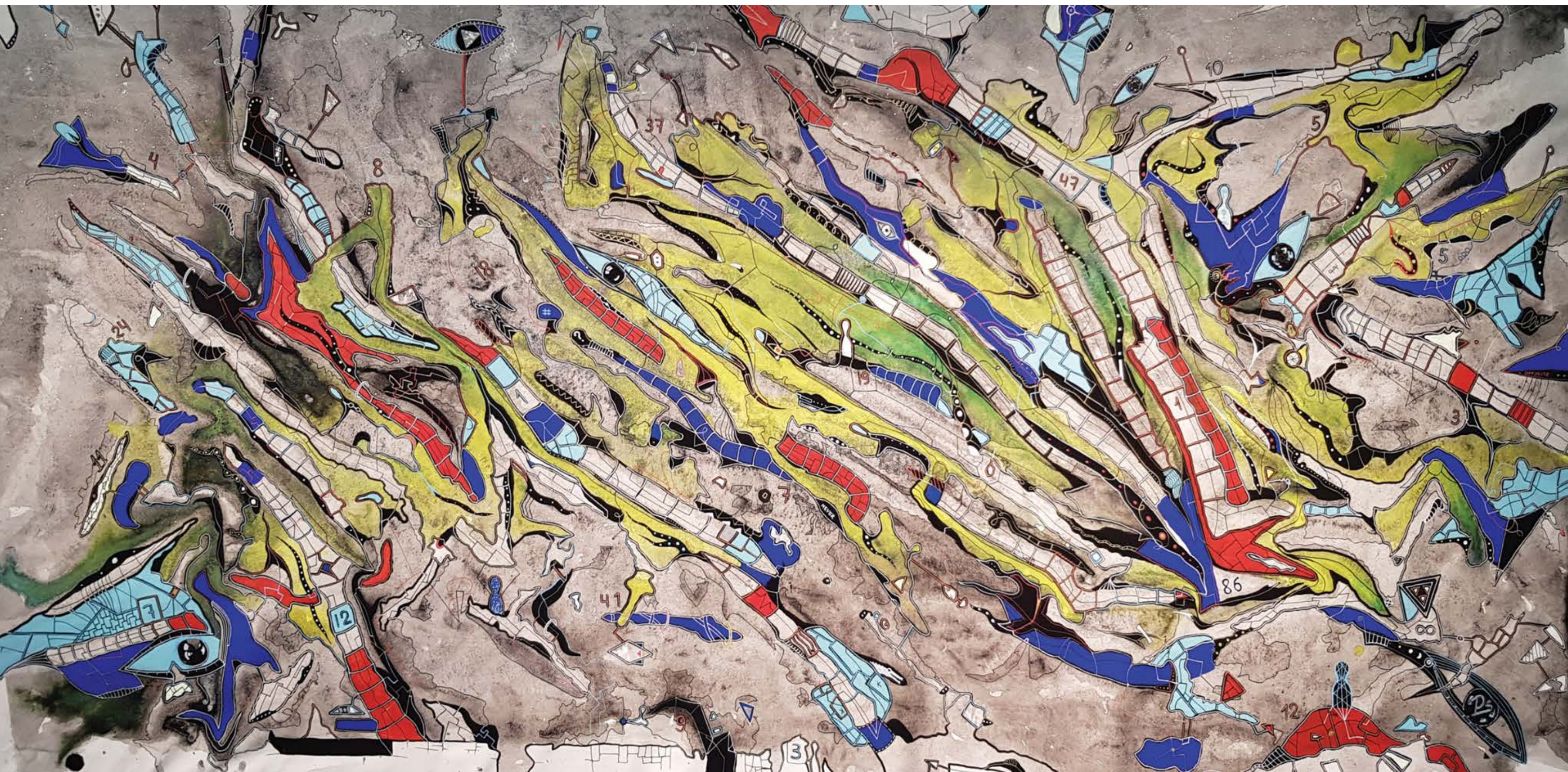
This complexity is, in part, a function of Shevchenko's use of colour. One could turn here, for comparison, to International Klein Blue. Working with a chemist, Yves Klein created (and in 1957 patented) his astonishing tone of ultramarine, which, despite forming the basis of his most formally reductive works, offered what the artist described as an "open window to freedom". Colour, for Klein, had richly associative potential. Paint was a material means to immaterial ends. "Each blue world of each painting", he once remarked, "although the same blue and treated in the same way, presented a completely different essence and atmosphere". (1) A similar remark might be made of Shevchenko, who works with colour in an intuitive way, guided by the emotional and psychic associations that arise from his chromatic selections. These selections are, in turn, rooted in the complex energies he is attempting to capture on canvas.

A parallel with Klein's blue works arrives in the form of Shevchenko's 2015 painting *Elements*. In Shevchenko's blue painting, the image is fragmented into a dazzling

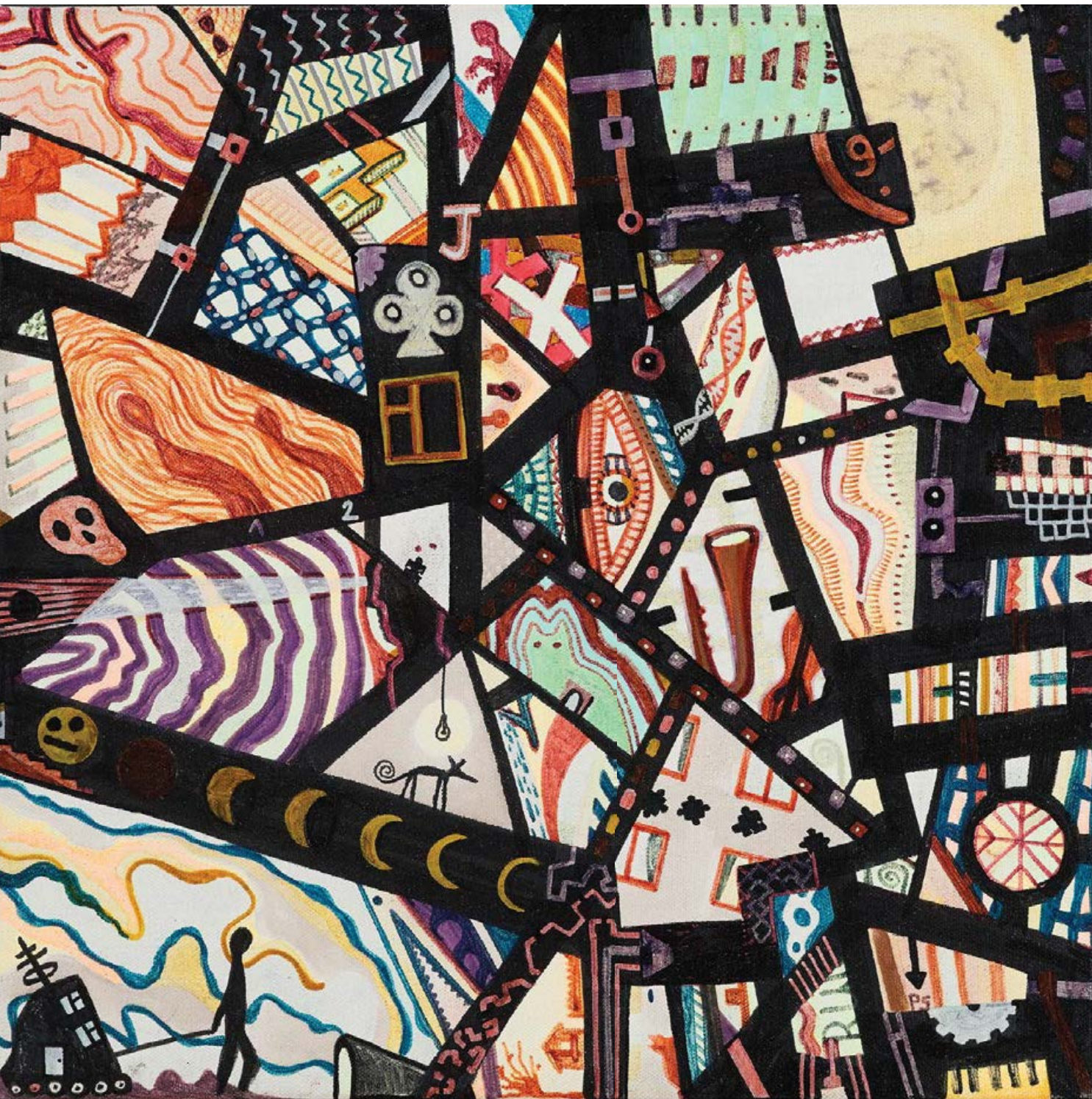


They come when you are sleeping
acrylics on canvas, 177x133, 2016

Continued on the page 45



Action and consequences
acrylic on canvas, 80x110, 2018



Fragments
acrylics on canvas, 45x45, 2012

Continue, start on page 39

pattern of discrete (or elemental) blocks of translucent blue paint, darkening where they overlap, and revealing white space where they don't quite tessellate: fragments of energy bustling in a radiant void. In another blue painting, *Interaction I* (2017), two dark circles emit radiant vectors of turquoise and ultramarine. The precise nature of these circles is unclear, yet they may bring to mind two mythological creatures who share an affinity with the

ent essences, different atmospheres, through his instinctual application of colour.

Shevchenko's use of paint could also be described as alchemical, a process by which readily available, industrially made materials offer access to realms exist within — but are all too often obscured by — capitalism's dizzying blizzard of commodities. While his art is not concerned with making explicit claims or explicit polemics, or in



mythology of Greece, Shevchenko's chosen homeland: Scylla and Charybdis, the pair of sea-monsters (one of which assumes the form of a whirlpool) that Odysseus plots a treacherous path between in Homer's *Odyssey*. Then again, they might just as easily be electrons spinning in a void, or black holes colliding in outer space.

constructing rigid dogmas, there is nevertheless a sense in his work that a deeper acceptance of the spiritual aspects of our existence may liberate the viewer from the depredations of materialism.

This impulse helps contextualise Shevchenko's photographic practice. While the artist considers his photography secondary to painting, it nevertheless reflects a shared interest in excavating immaterial essences from material forms. Using a camera in a spontaneous, unplanned, flexible way, he aims to capture images of abandoned or overlooked places which have an aura about them — something unclassifiable. A pair of plimsols dangle from a wire between two apartment blocks. Emerald duckweed thrives in a basin of rusty metal. Disembodied hands narrow the lens of a camera focused on an unseen horizon. An aeroplane hangs in an amber sky. While photography is a mechanical medium, offering objective (if deliberately framed) records the material world, for Shevchenko it offers something different: the ability to capture immaterial auras and moods.

The material world, for Shevchenko it offers something different: the ability to capture immaterial auras and moods.

That such a range of interpretations are possible to the viewer — stimulated, but by no means explicitly determined, by the mixture of compositional austerity and gestural mark-making — points towards the instinctual nature of Shevchenko's handling of colour. As a result, his paintings could be considered worlds that create differ-

In a few of Shevchenko's photographs, human figures appear — but rarely if ever do you see them completely: their head is humorously hidden by a silver ventilation tube or obscured behind a time-lapse outline of their own body scrawled in the air by torchlight. A number of

Continued on the page 50

Disorder
acrylics on canvas, 60x80, 2012



Trouble
acrylics canvas, 20x30, 2012



his paintings extend this interest in skewed or obscured figuration even further. Several paintings feature faces, limbs, silhouettes, and other figurative elements which capture, yet complicate, the viewer's understanding of how the human figure relates to the spaces and situations he paints. In so doing, these images convey a wider sense that the human body exists in a more complex relationship to physical space than one typically realises; that to be a creature of flesh and blood, with a limited array of senses, is to be enmeshed in a play of energies we may not consciously be aware of, yet which conditions our experience of the world. Take, for example, the human and animal figures in his work. Though recognisable in form — the titular cat that appears in the desolate cityscape of *Cat in the City* (2014), or the branching, crimson structure that might be a pollarded tree or a neuron in *The Rupture* (2013) — tend to manifest in his paintings in oblique, distorted ways, as though glimpsed at the corner of one's vision.



In certain cases, complex patterns, vivid abstraction, and mercurial figuration combine in a single work. *Fragments* (2012) is one example. The pictorial surface broken, as the title suggests, into shard-like fragments intersected by black space adrift with hieroglyphs: a skull, the letter “J”, a series of half-moons. Contained in each sharp-edged fragment is an abstract pattern or miniature scene: pulses of amber, ripples of purple, a circular design resembling a mandala. In one, a ghostly, lime-green cat stares at the viewer. In another, a famished dog stands beneath

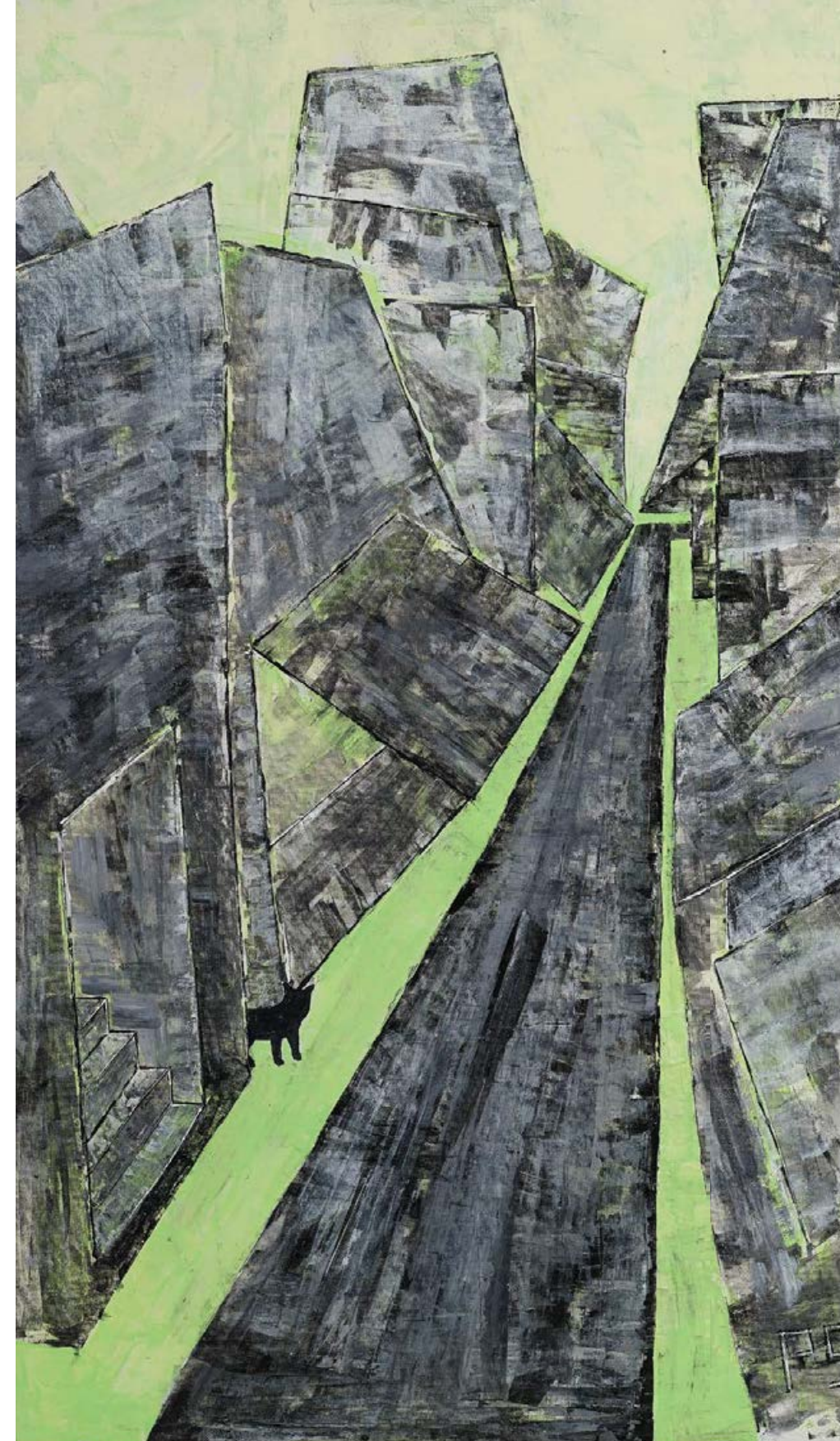
a blazing light bulb. And in the bottom left of the image is a silhouetted figure, pulling a wheeled contraption — it could be a small tank, a fallen satellite, or a robot — through a desert beneath a brooding sky. Formally, the painting balances rigor and chaos, structure and dissolution. It resembles a pane of glass that has only just been smashed — or perhaps it is on the brink of coalescing into a unified image-plane.

The manner in which figures appear, disappear, and reappear in Shevchenko's paintings reflects how they move through the world — just at the limit of our ability to perceive them.

A similar enigmatic figure appears in *Trouble*, which was painted in the same year as *Fragments* and shares certain visual similarities with it. Here, the silhouette stands to the right of the composition, reaching out from the blank, pale-green space surrounding it to touch a contrastingly dense, geometrically complex, jaggedly rendered pattern that dominates the left half of the composition. The figures in *New Moon March* (2015), by contrast, are not shadow-dark and clearly defined. They are colourful, melting creatures, picked out in drips and washes of midnight blue that seep into milky white at their feet and head. These deliquescent forms resemble a troupe of pilgrims, their bright heads lit by the radiant cusps of half-moons — the motif recurs across several other paintings by Shevchenko — arrayed in the sky above them, pale against the straw-blond background that accentuates the figures' inky hues. The manner in which such figures appear, disappear, and reappear in Shevchenko's paintings reflects how they move through the world — just at the limit of our ability to perceive them, and only ever fleetingly glimpsed.

Shevchenko's alchemical art shares affinities with that of Josef Beuys and Anselm Kiefer. Both artists elevated lowly, base materials into mediums of spiritual expression — felt and fat for Beuys; ash, paint, burnt wood, and other detritus for Kiefer. For Beuys in particular, the transformative material processes he engaged with could have

Continued on the page 57



Cat in the city
acrylics on canvas, 100x50, 2014

Find your way
acrylics on canvas, 30x20, 2010



Under
acrylics on canvas, 160x100, 2015





Collision
acrylics on canvas, 140x140, 2016

Continue, start on page 39

transformative social effects. He believed that art could enable a shift away from the mechanistic, materialistic nature of western culture towards attitudes of being that were more attuned to spiritual, shamanistic, holistic worldviews, ones which embraced spiritual energies (be they good or bad) rather than shun or belittle them.

One might also turn here to Walter Benjamin's "To the Planetarium". In this short 1928 essay, Benjamin meditates on the transition from ancient to modern society and laments the privileging of a rationalist view of the universe — one that lionises technology and industry — over a holistic proximity to nature that incorporates spirituality. "[T]he exclusive emphasis on an optical connection to the universe", he writes, "to which astronomy very quickly led, contained a portent of what was to come. The ancients' intercourse with the cosmos had been different: the ecstatic trance". (2)

One key aspect of Shevchenko's practice — is that it evidences a kind of artistic shamanism.

One key aspect of Shevchenko's practice that sets it apart from much contemporary art — with its emphasis on surfaces, celebrities, commodities, and emergent technologies — is that it evidences a kind of artistic shamanism. Through art, he encourages in the viewer a state of receptivity and openness to new experiences, while at the same time rooting his practice in precise forms of looking, painting, and composing that encourage optical connections with his subjects, and with art itself. It is finally, and paradoxically, the material nature of art-making that enables this synthesis to occur. By reminding the viewer time and again to the expressive power of painting, Shevchenko offers glimpses of other realities, prompting the viewer to look again, to reconsider, to enter a kind of ecstatic trance.

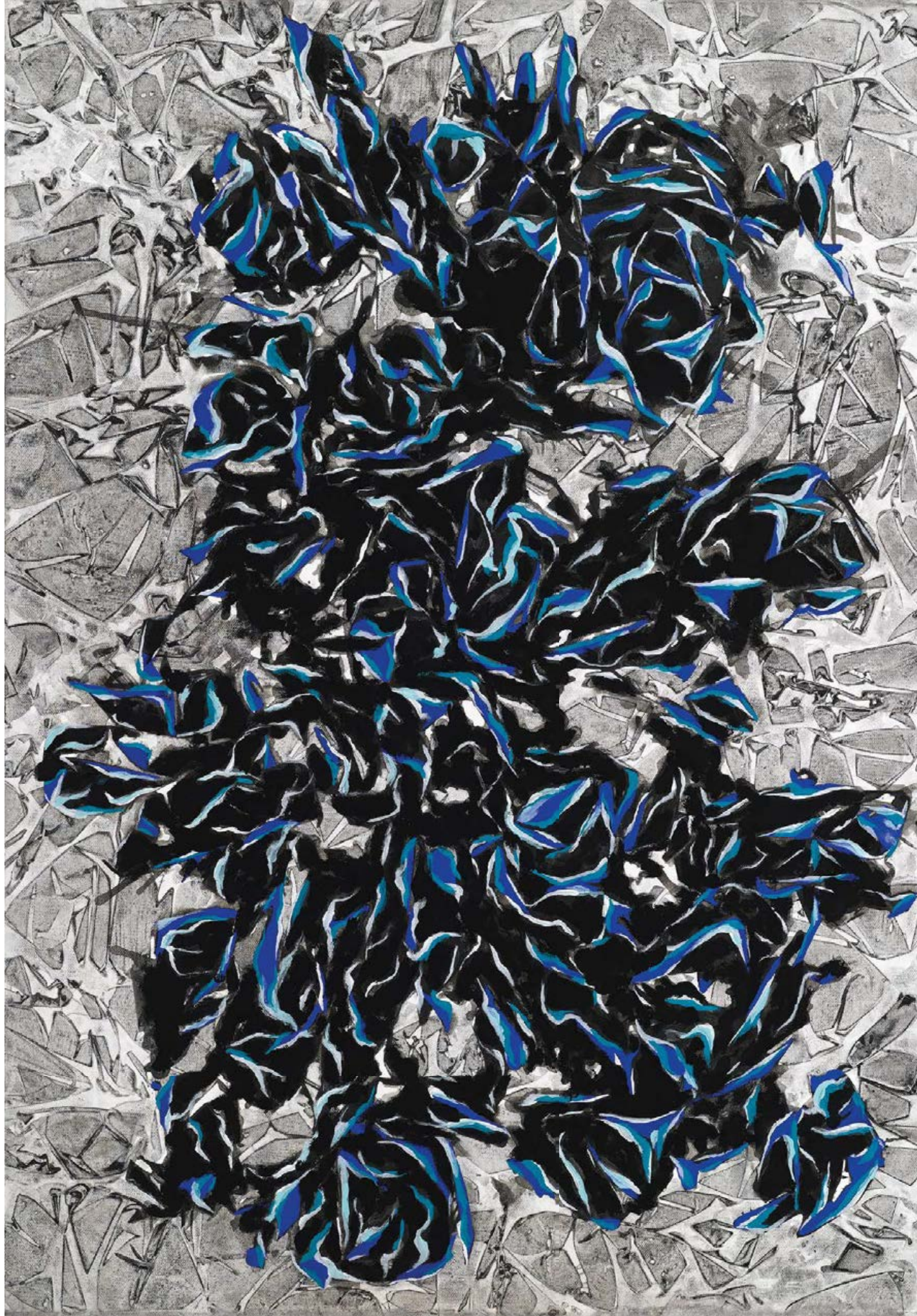
(1) Yves Klein, quoted in Yves Klein: Exhibition Catalogue (London: Hayward Gallery, 1995), pp. 86-7.

(2) Walter Benjamin (translated by Edmund Jephcott), "To the Planetarium", in *One-Way Street and Other Writings* (London: New Left Books, 1979), p. 103.

Untitled
acrylics on canvas, 55x40, 2018



Abstract Being
acrylics on canvas, 100x60, 2017



Under the surface
acrylics on canvas, 177x192, 2016





Unexplained
acrylics on canvas, 195x128, 2017



No such thing as empty space
acrylics on canvas, 195x125, 2017

Here and Now
acrylics on canvas, 177x192, 2016





Left hemisphere vs Right hemisphere, diptych
acrylic on paper, 80x60, 2018

Reflection Series VII Scream at Me
acrylics on canvas, 50x80, 2017



Carnal thoughts
acrylics on canvas , 90x130 , 2017



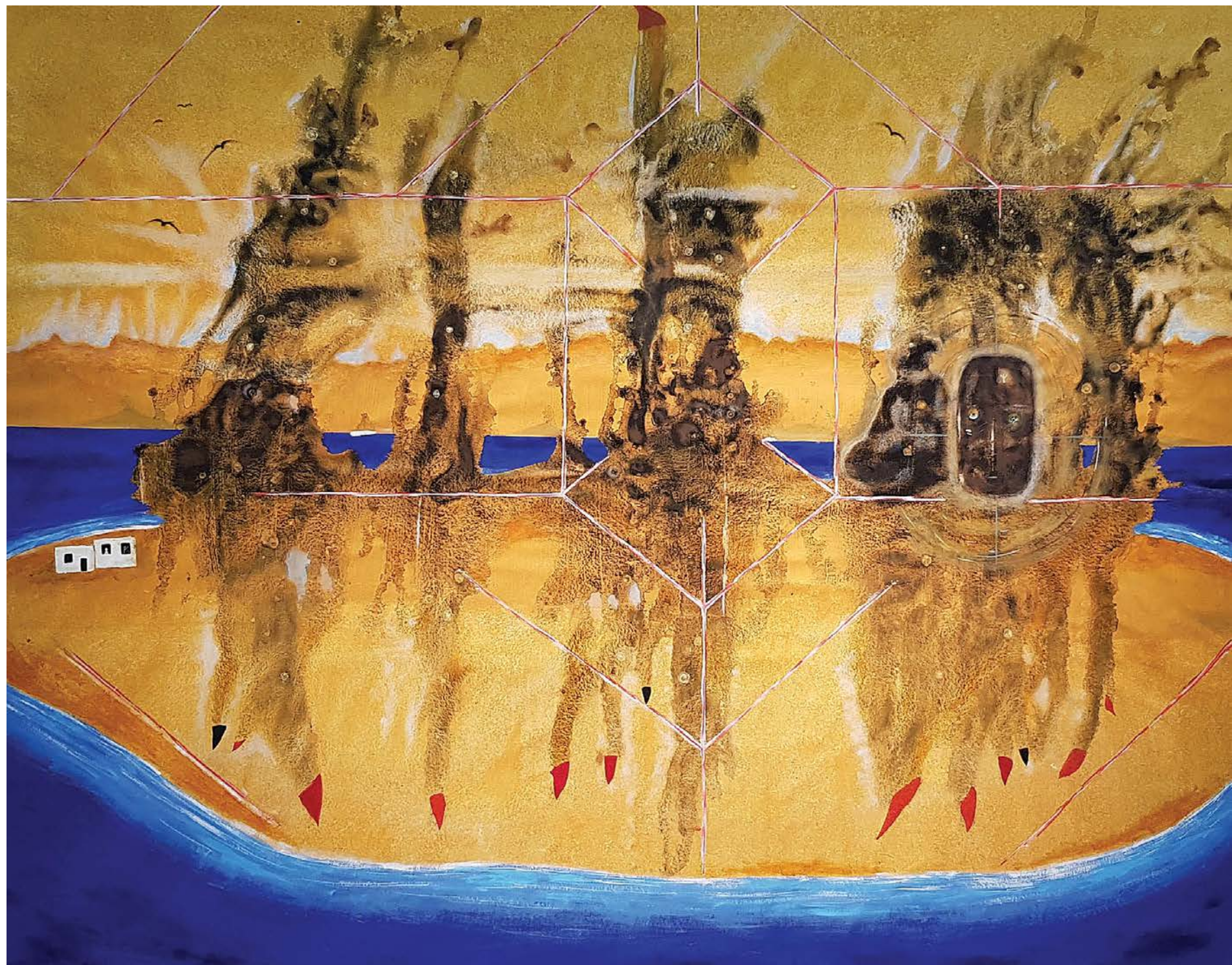
Reflection Series II Extremes
acrylics on canvas, 60x100, 2017





New Moon March
acrylics on canvas, 100x160, 2015

Some Places are Sacred
acrylics on canvas, 177x192, 2016



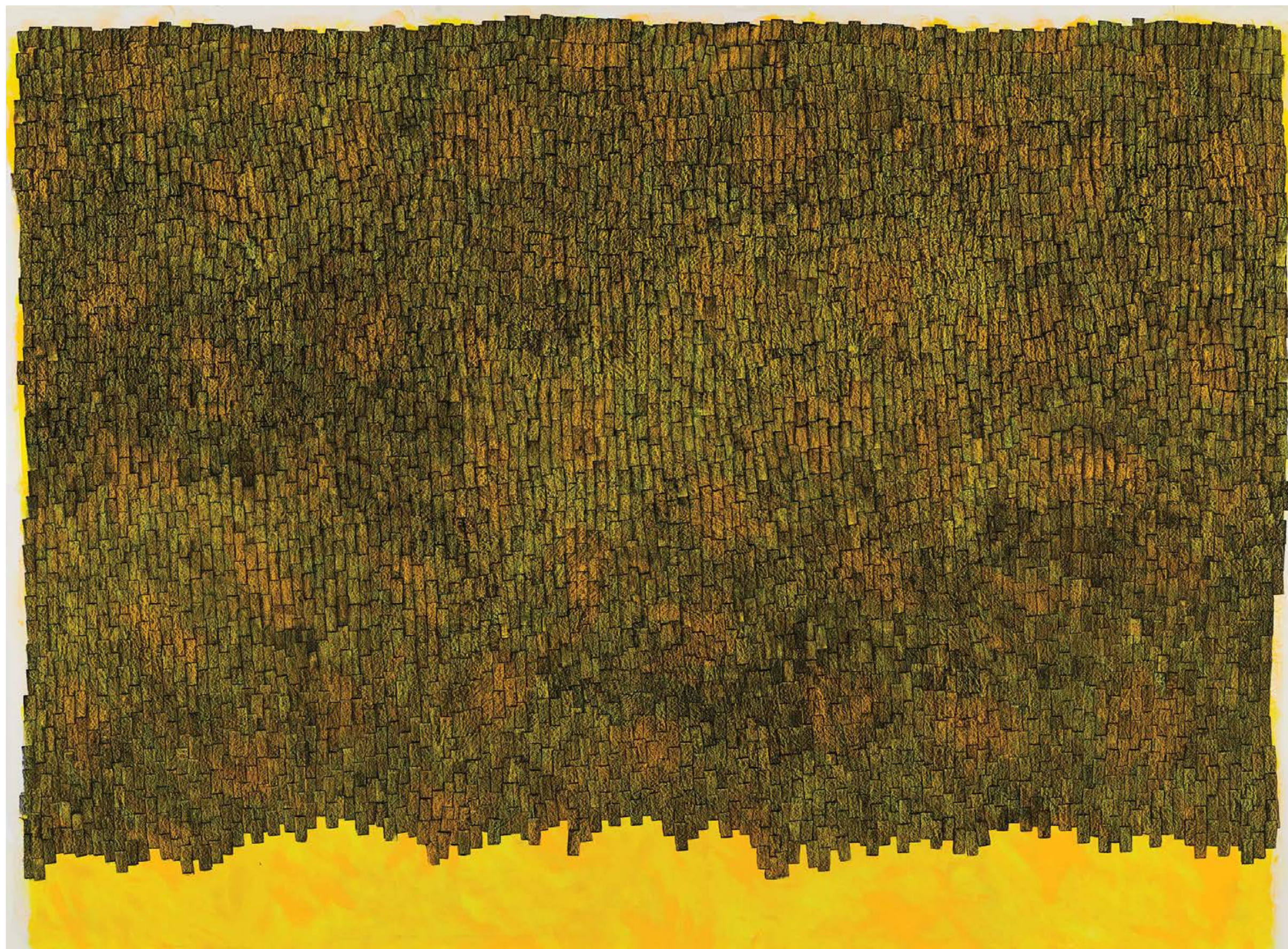
Orbit one
acrylics on canvas, 150x180



Constellation
acrylics on canvas, 100x150, 2015

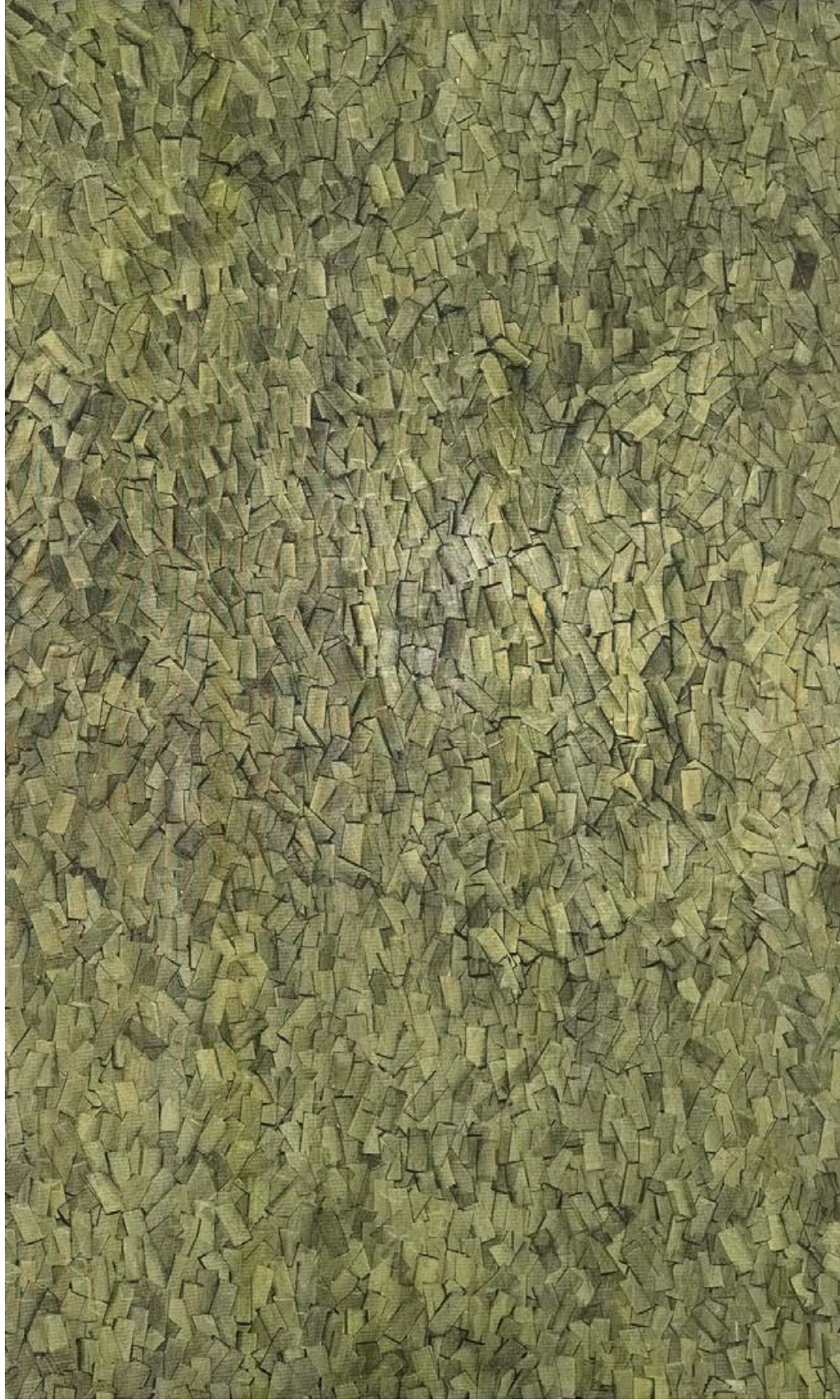


Solar rain
acrylics on canvas, 184x220, 2018



Multitude of Existence
acrylics on canvas, 150x185, 2018





More
acrylics on canvas, 170x100, 2015



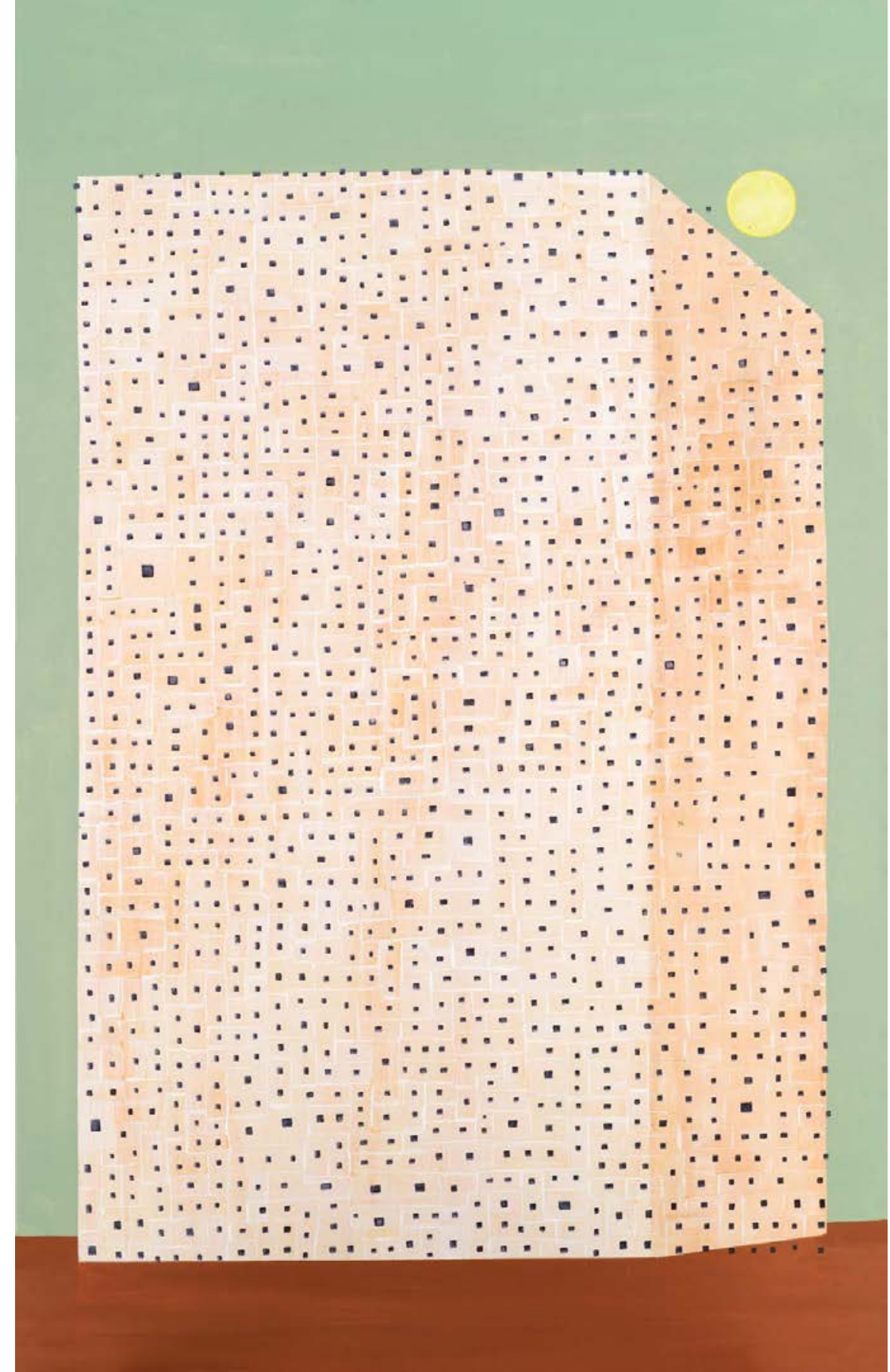
Fusion
acrylics on canvas, 150x100, 2014

Primal Matter vs Emotion
acrylics, ink on canvas, 90x60, 2018





The rupture
acrylics on canvas, 70x30, 2013



Babylonian
acrylics on canvas, 160x100, 2014

**ABSTRACT THINKING IS
AN ESSENTIAL SURVIVAL
SKILL WHICH NEEDS TO
BE EMPHASIZED**

and abstract art is a perfect tool for exercising and strengthening this skill. On the contrary, figurative art is overly focused on the solid matter and is too strict in its format to be able to address the metaphysical.



The recent installations, best viewed in the evening when

the lights within the installation

are turned on, the observer is invited to engage in a cosmic journey. Floating stones, twinkling lights, translucent layers, fluorescent colours, mystical shapes, come together resulting in a poetic and sophisticated playfull work that transcends his imagination into a visual almost tangible fantasy. Using mixed media and ultraviolet light, he creates an entrance to one's inner abstract being.

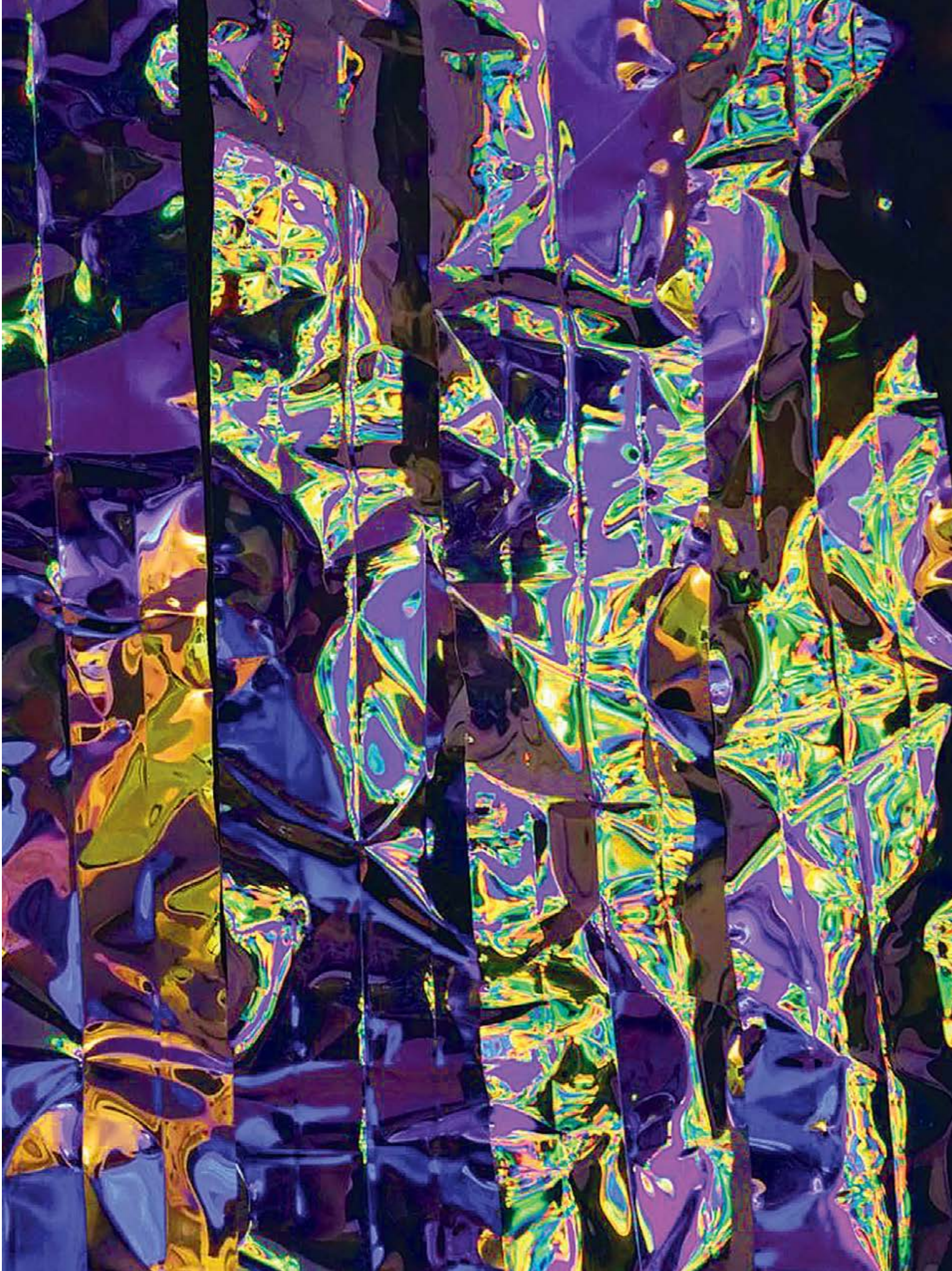
Tanya Van Breda Vriesman
Art Vienna Contemporary



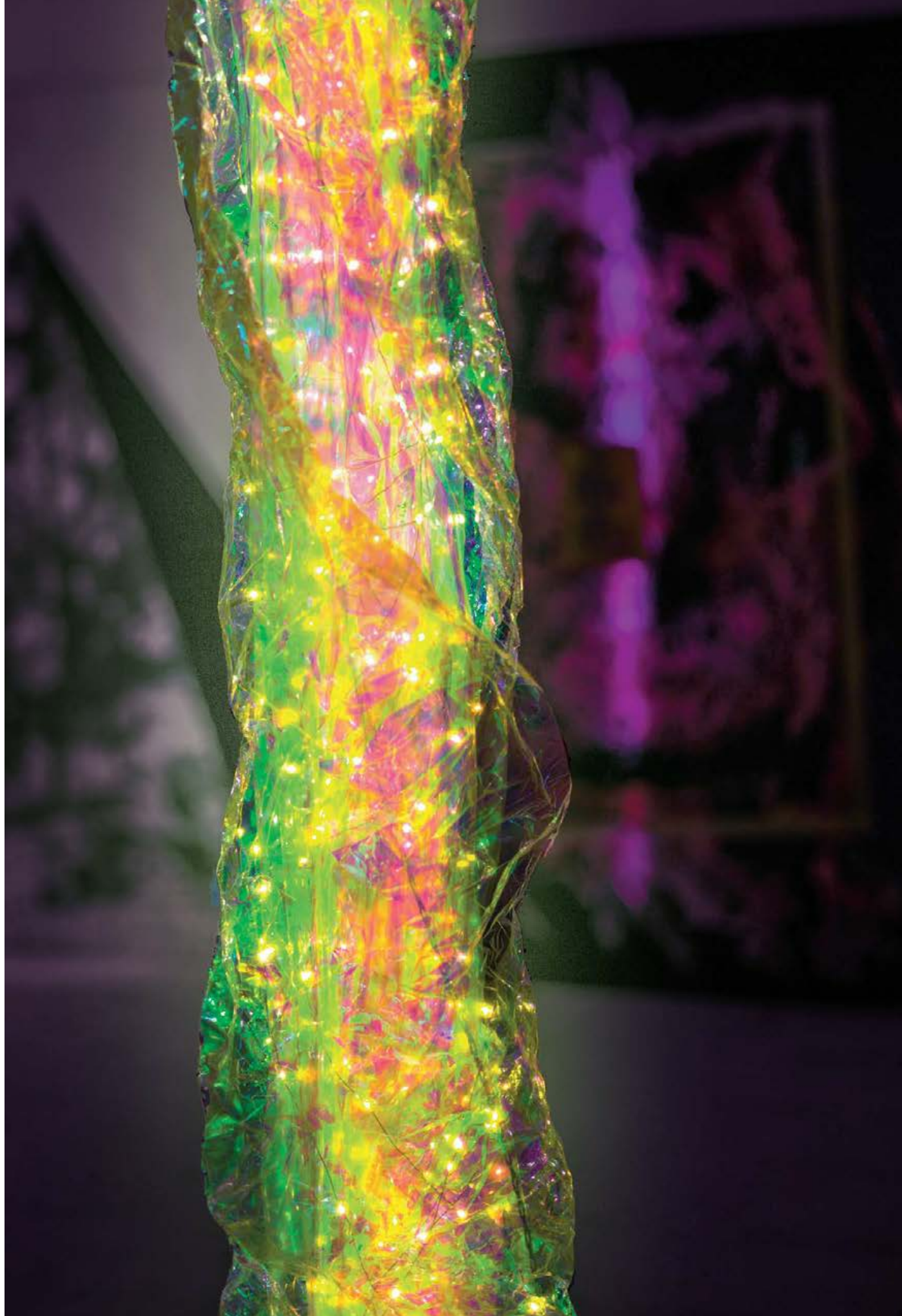
No such thing as empty space
acrylics on canvas, 195x125, 2017



Personal space
installation, 2018



Mirror for the soul
installation, 2018



Anatomy of kindness
installation, 2018



Aura
cardboard, acrylic, lenticular lense, 40x60

Pulse
Light sensitive tape on canvas, 60+60, 2018



The Temple
drift wood, gold leaf



ATHENS HAS ITS OWN VIBRANT AND ECLECTIC ART SCENE

but it really exists and develops. Greek art belongs to ancient Greece, but is not limited to it.





Michalis Kakogiannis Foundation Theatre, 2014
Medea of Euripides
Stage design by Shevchenko Petr

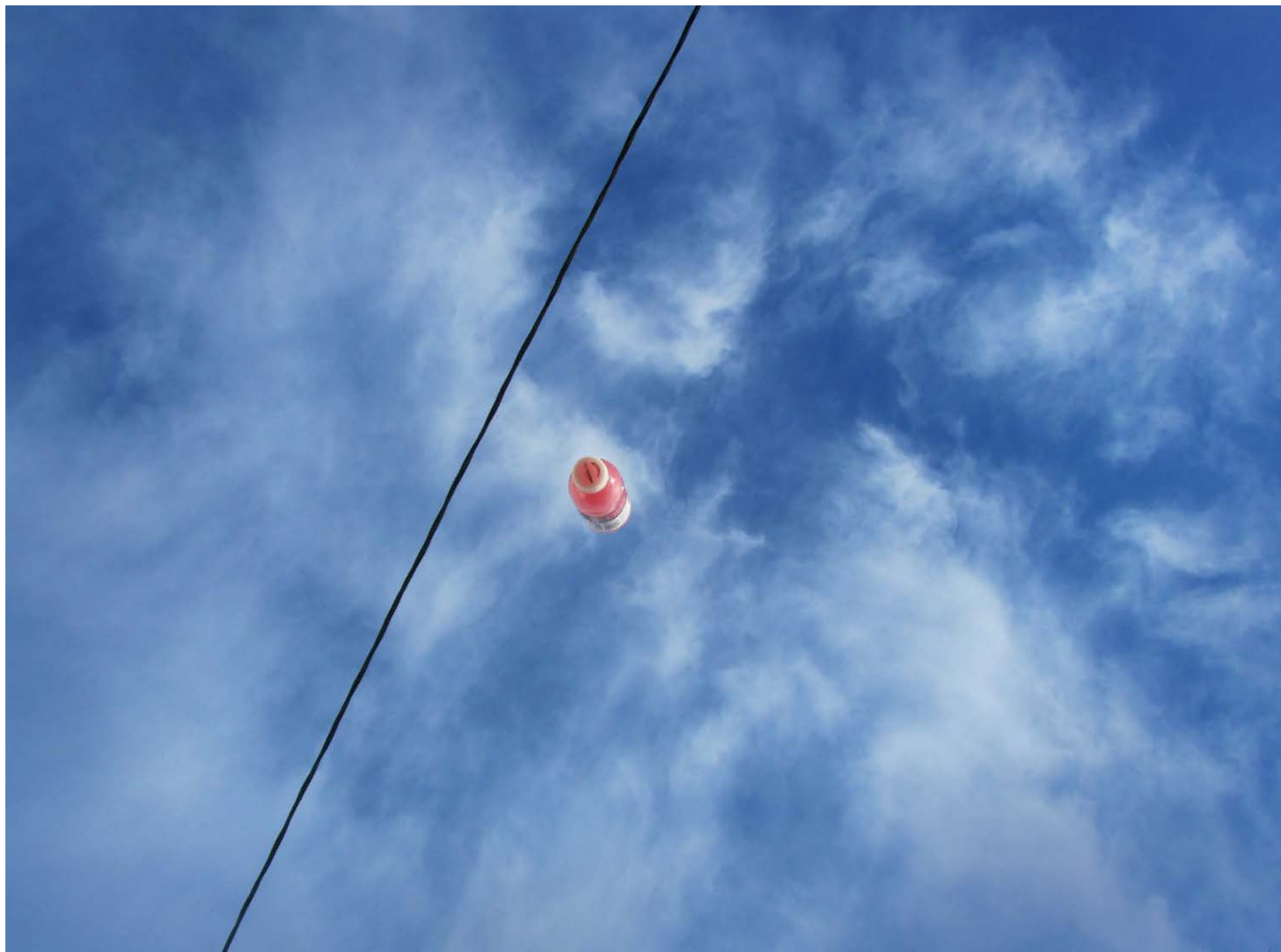


HIS PHOTOGRAPHS REFLECT MEMORIES

of blissful moments of stillness, humorous encounters, or disconcerting discoveries. The context surprises and takes you beyond oblivion, lingering and even echoing in many of one's own memories.

Tanya Van Breda Vriesman
Art Vienna Contemporary

Imperfections



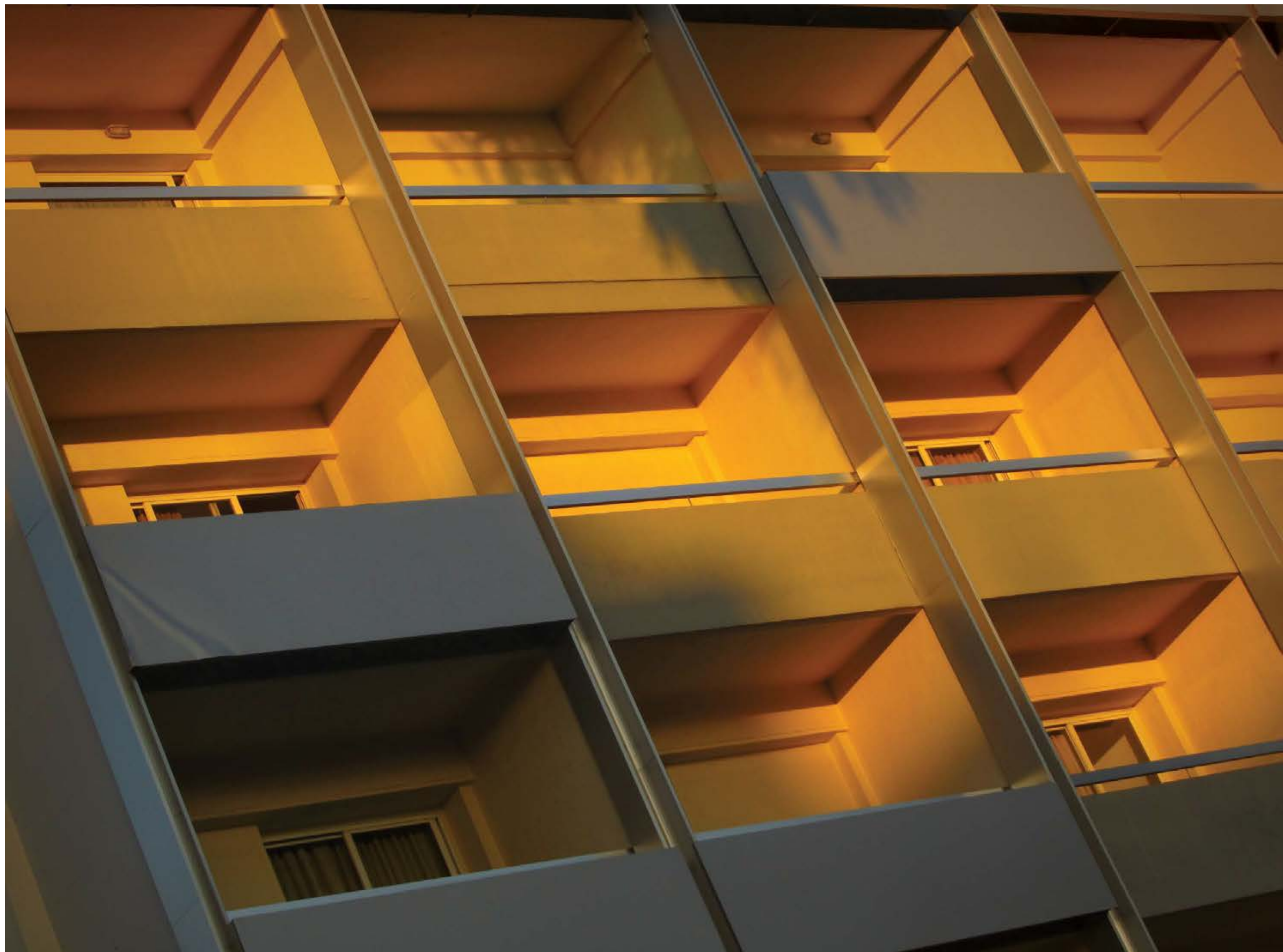


Connection established

Everyone glows in a different way



Good news will come soon



Ancient message



Flight of thought



Optimist and pessimist



Painful memories



Determined





Resistance

Carmic situation



Love story





Inner guilt

Positive thinking



Daydreamer



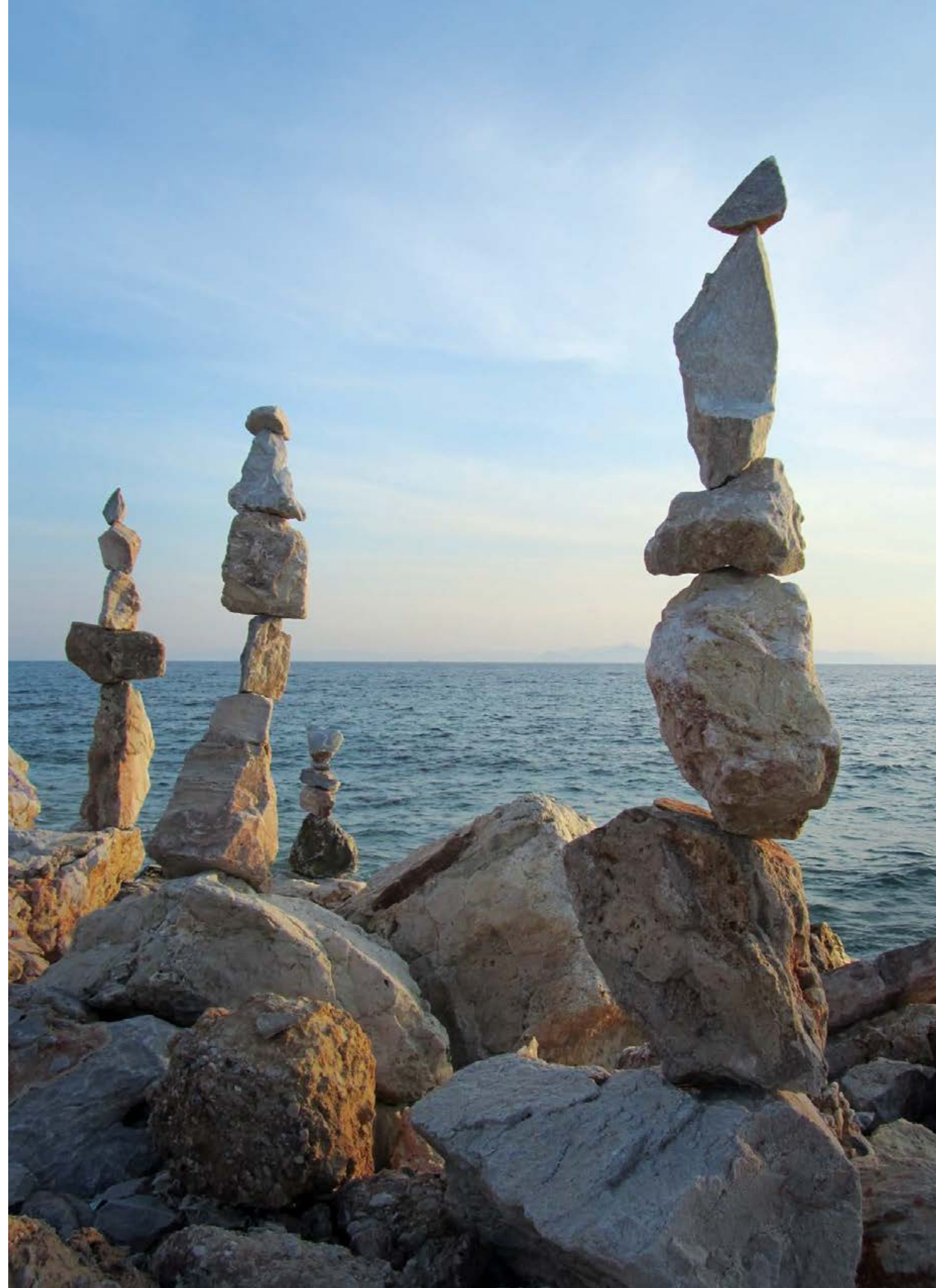
The stones found on the shores of Petr's adopted homeland Greece connect the artist with both the elemental as well as the esoteric.

Retrieving stones and bringing them home, each stone becoming almost a personal talisman.

One of his galvanizing experiences involving stones happened on the beach of Glyfada where he practises the art of stone balancing. In a meditative way, Petr matches the stones together to fit together in their natural grooves, resulting in statuesque figures, which punctuate the seascape. Even though the ancient art of stone balancing has been practiced since time immemorial, these graceful, towering edifices in sculptural groups have the presence "gazers" at the edge of the beach. On closer inspection, one discovers that each stone has been carefully picked and grouped to make a near perfect match in terms of colour and texture – adding greater subtlety to the work.

The temporal transience and beauty of the stone statues is enjoyed by those who observe and photograph them until they are reabsorbed back into the natural environment through wind, water and human touch.

Tanya Van Breda Vriesman
Art Vienna Contemporary



The silent ones



After the rain



Sacred affairs

Friendly soul





Sun worshippers

EXHIBITIONS

Born in 1986. Graduated from AKTO College in Athens with a degree in BA of Fine Arts and New Media in 2015 under the programme of Middle Sex University. Started organising personal exhibitions and participating in group exhibitions as of 2015. Currently living and working in Athens, Greece.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS:

- 2015 Historical Archives Museum of Hydra, Hydra, Greece
- 2016 "Caramel" Rethymno, Greece, Cultural year of Greece and Russia
- 2016 "Subconscious Flow", Pallas Athena, Athens, Greece
- 2017 Modart open house project, Domus Gallery, Athens, Greece
- 2019 "Undo Everything", Parallel project of the Venice Biennale

GROUP EXHIBITIONS:

- 2017 "To Xenion – The House Call", Match More Underground Gallery, Chania, Greece
- 2017 Museum of Contemporary Art of Chania Xania Art
- 2017 "Art Collection", Spazio Cima Gallery, Rome, Italy
- 2018 "Art of Collecting", Spazio Cima Gallery, Rome, Italy. In collaboration with Inside Art
- 2018 "Art of Collecting II", Spazio Cima Gallery, Rome, Italy. In collaboration with Inside Art
- 2018 "Softwear", Athens Intersection/CheapART, Athens, Greece
- 2018 "Die kunst ist ein ausweg bei sexuellen problemen", Freud Dream Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia



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