

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER

Olympe Racana-Weiler  
BIOGRAPHY

Born in 1990, the French Argentine artist, Olympe Racana-Weiler lives and works in Paris.

In 2014, Racana-Weiler graduated with a degree in Visual Art and Art Theory from the Université Paris 1 – Panthéon Sorbonne. She then decided to extend her academic training by taking her practical skills and knowledge to an advanced level.

First, Racana-Weiler trained in lithography at Michael Woolworth's studio specialising in etching. Then, having trained alongside American artist, Jim Dine, she spent a few years improving her woodcut technique at the Steindruck Printing Studio in Austria. There, she was mentored by master printers, Christoph Chavanne and Gabi Pechmann. She also worked on ceramics at the Manufacture Nationale de Sèvres and bronze at the Blue Mountain Fine Art Foundry in the US.

Since 2013, her work has appeared in a number of group exhibitions in France, Belgium, Romania and Singapore, and since 2018 she has been the subject of several solo shows (NB. *I came back from Paradise and I'm frankly hungry* at the Jérôme Pauchant Gallery).

That same year, she was awarded the Antoine Marin and Pierre Cardin prizes for painting from the Académie de Beaux-Arts.

The Eric Dupont gallery in Paris has hosted several of Racana-Weiler's solo shows (NEON DRIVING, 2019, and Something About Silence, 2021) and group exhibitions (Aleph, 2021, *Dans ma tête c'est Mexico/Mexico on the Mind*, 2020, *Accrochage d'Été/Summer Installation*, 2019), as well as international shows such as ArtParis and Art Brussels.

In Spring 2021, Olympe was invited by the art critic and curator, Numa Hambursin to create her first permanent installation: *Le Chant de la Sibylle/The Song of the Sybil*. Her work is featured in the first-floor boudoir of the Hôtel Richer de Bellevall, home to the GGL Helenis Foundation in Montpellier. The colours of her painting unfurl over the room's entire walls and ceiling.

Racana-Weiler's first solo show in Asia was entitled *Behind the Eyes* and took place in October 2021 at the Cuturi Gallery in Singapore.

In February 2022, Racana-Weiler's had an exhibition

called *Romance with a Bird* at the 21 Contemporary Gallery in Nice.

In March 2023, art critic and curator Richard Leydier dedicated a solo exhibition to Racana-Weiler at the GGL Foundation in Montpellier. The exhibition, titled *Journal*, connects the artist's paintings, engravings, and drawings.

Olympe Racana-Weiler continues to collaborate with remarkable artisans: a series of monumental woodcuts at the Steindruck Printing Studio in Austria; engravings combining wood, silkscreen monotype, and carborundum at Gate 44 in Milan; her first artist's book *L'Amour*, included in the extensive exhibition dedicated to the tradition of artist's books in Paris at the Folkwang Museum in Essen, Germany, CHAGALL, MATISSE, MIRÓ - *Made in Paris*; and a bronze sculpture at the Kunstgiesserei Saint-Gall in Switzerland.

Her work is part of collections, foundations, museums, and universities in France, Italy, Romania, Austria, Germany, and the Netherlands, as well as in Asia and the United States.

She has been reviewed in ArtPress, Télérâma, Artforum, Numéro and Le Journal du Dimanche, and interviewed on a number of occasions for exhibition catalogues: *Conversation with Jim Dine for I came back from Paradise and I'm frankly hungry*, 2018, and with Lillian Davies for *Romance with a Bird* in the *Figures* exhibition catalogue at 21Contemporary Gallery, 2022; and with Richard Leydier for *Journal* at the GGL Foundation, Editions Lord Byron, 2023.

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER  
ORORWW@GMAIL.COM  
OLYMPERACANAWEILER.COM  
French Argentine born in France, 1990. Lives in Paris, works in Montreuil.

#### STUDIES

2014 Degree in Visual Arts and Art Sciences: Centre Saint-Charles,  
Université Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne

#### AWARDS

2018 Awarded the Pierre Cardin Prize for painting, Académie des Beaux-Arts of the  
Institut de France  
Awarded the 22nd Antoine Marin Prize for painting

#### PERMANENT WORK

2021 LE CHANT DE LA SIBYLLE, curated by Numa Hambursin, Hôtel Richier de Bel-  
leval, GGL Foundation, Montpellier (FR)

#### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2023 JOURNAL, curated by Richard Leydier, Hôtel Richier de Belleval,  
GGL Foundation, Montpellier (FR)  
ON AIR, Olympe Racana-Weiler, curated by Glen Lasio, Gate 44, Milan (IT)  
2022 ROMANCE WITH A BIRD, Galerie 21 Contemporary, Nice (FR)  
2021 BEHIND THE EYES, Cuturi Gallery, Singapore (SG)  
SOMETHING ABOUT SILENCE, Galerie Eric Dupont, Paris (FR)  
2019 NEON DRIVING, Galerie Eric Dupont, Paris (FR)  
2018 I CAME BACK FROM PARADISE AND I'M FRANKLY HUNGRY,  
Galerie Jérôme Pauchant, Paris (FR)

#### GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2025 PARIS DANUBE, Print Salon, stand Gate 44, Hôtel du Danube, Paris (FR)  
BOOK ART, Contemporary & Historic Artist Books, curated by Ruth Lingen and  
Marilyn Waligore, SP/N Gallery, University of Texas at Dallas (US)  
BROOKLYN FINE ART PRINT FAIR, Line Press Limited stand, Powerhouse Arts,  
Brooklyn (US)  
2023 CHAGALL, MATISSE, MIRÓ – Made in Paris, curated by Tobias Burg,  
Folkwang Museum, Essen (DE)  
REFLECTIONS, curated by Paulo Iverno, Galerie MR23-MARAIS, Paris (FR)  
2022 PRENEZ GARDE À LA PEINTURE, Galerie Éric Dupont, Paris (FR)  
VEINES D'OPALE, curated by Paulo Iverno, Anaïs Madani and Alicia Mineaud,  
Espace Voltaire, Paris (FR)  
OSEZ MONTREUIL, curated by Evelyne Artaud and Bruno Brenard,  
La Fabrique Centre d'Art, Montreuil (FR)  
MATIÈRE DE LA PENSÉE, DOMAINE DE L'IMAGINAIRE, curated by Isabelle  
Suret, Le 7.5, Paris (FR)  
2021 ALEPH, Galerie Éric Dupont, Paris (FR)  
ARTPARIS, Galerie Éric Dupont stand, Grand Palais Éphémère, Paris (FR)  
2020 DANS LA TÊTE C'EST MEXICO, Galerie Éric Dupont, Paris (FR)  
IN FULL BLOOM, Cuturi Gallery, Singapore (SG)  
ARTPARIS, Galerie Éric Dupont stand, Grand Palais, Paris (FR)  
2019 GALERISTES, Galerie Éric Dupont stand, Le Carreau du Temple, Paris (FR)  
ACCROCHAGE D'ÉTÉ, Galerie Éric Dupont, Paris (FR)  
ART BRUSSELS, Galerie Éric Dupont stand, Brussels (BE)  
ARTPARIS, Galerie Éric Dupont stand, Grand Palais, Paris (FR)  
2018 GALERISTES, Galerie Éric Dupont stand, Le Carreau du Temple, Paris (FR)  
LES AMIS DE CHRISTIAN PARASCHIV EN ROUMANIE IV, Galeria Romana, Bu  
charest (RO)

- 22e PRIX ANTOINE MARIN POUR LA PEINTURE, Centre Culturel Julio Gonzales, Arcueil (FR)
- 2017 3'N THE MORNING – NOIRE ÉTAIT MON OMBRE : QUENTIN EUVERTE – OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER, curated by Jérôme Pauchant, Galerie Michel Journiac, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, Paris (FR)
- LA PETITE COLLECTION, curated by Florence Lucas and Matthieu Corradino, Galerie Bertrand Grimont, Paris (FR)
- LA NUIT RONDE VOL. 1, curated by Claudia Squitieri and Sayoko Papillon, Studio +30, Paris (FR)
- VENTE M.R.S, Maître Poulain and Maître Aubert, Hôtel de l'Industrie, Paris (FR)
- À VIF AU 100, Collection Alexandre Donnat, Le 100 ECS, Paris (FR)
- QUAND DENIS RENCONTRE PHILIPPE, Chaideny, Le Plessis-Robinson (FR)
- 2014 VENEZ BOUFFER UN ZODIAQUE – CHAPITRE 3, Le Lac, Brussels (BE)
- 2013 SALON DE L'IMPRÉSENTER, Centre Saint Charles, Université Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne, Paris (FR)

#### RESIDENCIES / WORKSHOPS

- 2025-2016 STEINDRUCK CHAVANNE PECHMANN, production notably of the series of 20 monumental prints 100 LINES (250 x 153 cm, 3 copies each), from 15 wood blocks requiring up to 20 press runs, printed by master printers Christoph Chavanne and Gabi Pechmann, Apetlon (AT)
- 2024 ATELIER RENÉ TAZÉ, production of the series of 22 prints SOOT FACE / TENDER WALL (55 x 42 cm, 3 copies; 105 x 201 cm, 2 unique copies), from 12 copper plates combining drypoint, aquatint, soft ground, and requiring up to 5 press runs, printed by master printers Domitille Arai and Bérengère Lipeau, Paris (FR)
- 2023 GATE 44, production of 40 prints LA FEMME SANS OMBRE (ranging from 280 x 130 cm to 150 x 120 cm, 6 copies or unique proofs), from 4 woodblocks, carborundum, and screenprint, with up to 7 press runs, printed by master printer Glen Lasio and printer Nicolas Muratore, Milan (IT)
- 2021 KUNSTGIESSEREI, production of the bronze sculpture WHISPERS AND HARVEST (250 x 212 x 120 cm, private collection), and apprenticeship in wax modeling, chasing, and patina techniques, Saint-Gallen (CH)
- 2019 LINE PRESS LIMITED, production of the artist's book L'AMOUR (33.8 x 27.6 x 1.5 cm, 23 copies, 96 pages), combining digital printing of a typescript facsimile from French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's lecture L'amour (Les Non-Dupes Errent, 1973), with 28 woodcuts printed on 7 varieties of handmade papers, by master printers Ruth Lingen and Nina Dine, Brooklyn (US)
- 2018 FONDATION DU DOMAINE OTETELISANU, residency of Les Amis de Paraschiv, 4th edition, Benesti (RO)

#### COLLECTIONS

THE KB, National Library of the Netherlands, The Hague (NL)

THE CLARK, UCLA, William Andrew Clark Memorial Library, Los Angeles (US)

THE FOLKWANG MUSEUM, Essen (DE)

COLLECTION OF GROUPE EMERIGE, Paris (FR)

COLLECTION OF FONDATION D'ENTREPRISE GGL, Montpellier (FR)

PRIVATE COLLECTIONS, Bucharest (RO) / Florence (IT) / Formentera (ES) / Gstaad (CH) / Milan (IT) / Munich (DE) / New York (US) / Paris (FR) / Seattle (US) / Singapore (SG) / Vienna (AT)

#### CATALOGUES

- 2025 LES NOUVELLES PIONNIÈRES. DANS LES ATELIERS DE FEMMES ARTISTES DU XXI<sup>e</sup> SIÈCLE, photographs by Catherine Panchout and text by Yves Michaud, éditions El Viso, February 2025
- 2023 CHAGALL, MATISSE, MIRÓ, MADE IN PARIS, by Tobias Burg, Folkwang/Steidl, September 2023
- RACANA-WEILER, JOURNAL, by Richard Leydier, Lord Byron editions, May 2023

- OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER, by Victoire Coyon and Adrien Ménard, édition.studio, April 2023
- 2022 ROMANCE WITH A BIRD, by Lillian Davies, Galerie 21 Contemporary edition, March 2022
- 2021 BEHIND THE EYES, by Alyssa De Silva, édition Cuturi Gallery, October 2021
- 2018 I CAME BACK FROM PARADISE AND I'M FRANKLY HUNGRY, conversation between Olympe Racana-Weiler and Jim Dine, translated by Vincent Broqua, Galerie Jérôme Pauchant edition, February 2018

#### PRESS / BLOGS

- 2023 POINT DE VUE, "Olympe Racana-Weiler - La Fureur de Peindre" by Isabelle Lortholary, n°3914, August 2023
- FRANCE 3 RÉGIONS, "The Franco-Argentinian artist Olympe Racana-Weiler unveils her colorful and joyful world in Montpellier" by Jean-Philippe Faure, April 2023
- MIDI LIBRE, "Flipping through Olympe's 'Journal'" by Jérémy Bernède, April 2023
- ART INTERVIEW, "Olympe Racana-Weiler" by Harry Kampianne, April 2023
- 2022 ARTPRESS, "Introduction - Olympe Racana-Weiler" by Richard Leydier, n°496, February 2022
- BORDERLINES PAPER, "Something about Silence - Olympe Racana-Weiler in her Studio", photo by Emma Picq, Atomic Issue #2, January 2022
- 2021 ARTPRESS, "Montpellier, GGL Helenis Foundation" by Richard Leydier, n°492, October 2021
- NUMERO.COM, "In Montpellier, exceptional artworks take over a luxury hotel" by Matthieu Jacquet, July 2021
- LE JOURNAL DU DIMANCHE, "Plaisir Art" by Bruna Basini, n°3890, Sunday, August 1, 2021
- LE FIGARO, "In Montpellier, Hôtel Richer de Belleval dresses in five contemporary creations" by François Delétraz, July 2021
- 2020 TÉLÉRAMA HORS-SÉRIE, "A history of contemporary French painting" by Olivier Cena, October 2020
- BEAU MONSTRE, "Olympe Racana-Weiler", photo by Emmanuelle Mafille, Private Party Issue #3, January 2020
- 2019 TÉLÉRAMA, "Olivier Cena's column", n°3605, February 2019
- LE QUOTIDIEN DE L'ART, "Olympe Racana-Weiler - Like a sundial", Seen in gallery by Juliette Soulez, n°1654, February 2019
- 2018 BOUMBANG, "Olympe Racana-Weiler - All the other suns were dead" by Clare Mary Puyfoulhoux, May 2018
- ARTFORUM INTERNATIONAL, "Olympe Racana-Weiler, Galerie Jérôme Pauchant", review by Lillian Davies, May 2018

#### COLLABORATIONS

- 2025-2015 JIM DINE STUDIO, production of sculptures (plaster, wood, stoneware, bronze, and patina) at Manufacture de Sèvres, Paris (FR); Blue Mountain Foundry, Baker City (US); and Kunstgiesserei, Saint-Gallen (CH); woodcut prints and murals for Chazen Museum of Art, Madison (US), Centre Pompidou, Paris (FR), l'Accademia Nazionale Di San Luca, Rome (IT), the Kunsthau, Göttingen (DE), and the Ground Seesaw Seochon, Seoul (KOR)
- 2015-2014 MICHAEL WOOLWORTH PUBLICATIONS, printmaker assistant to master printer Michael Woolworth and printers Julien Torhy and Marc Moyano, Paris (FR)

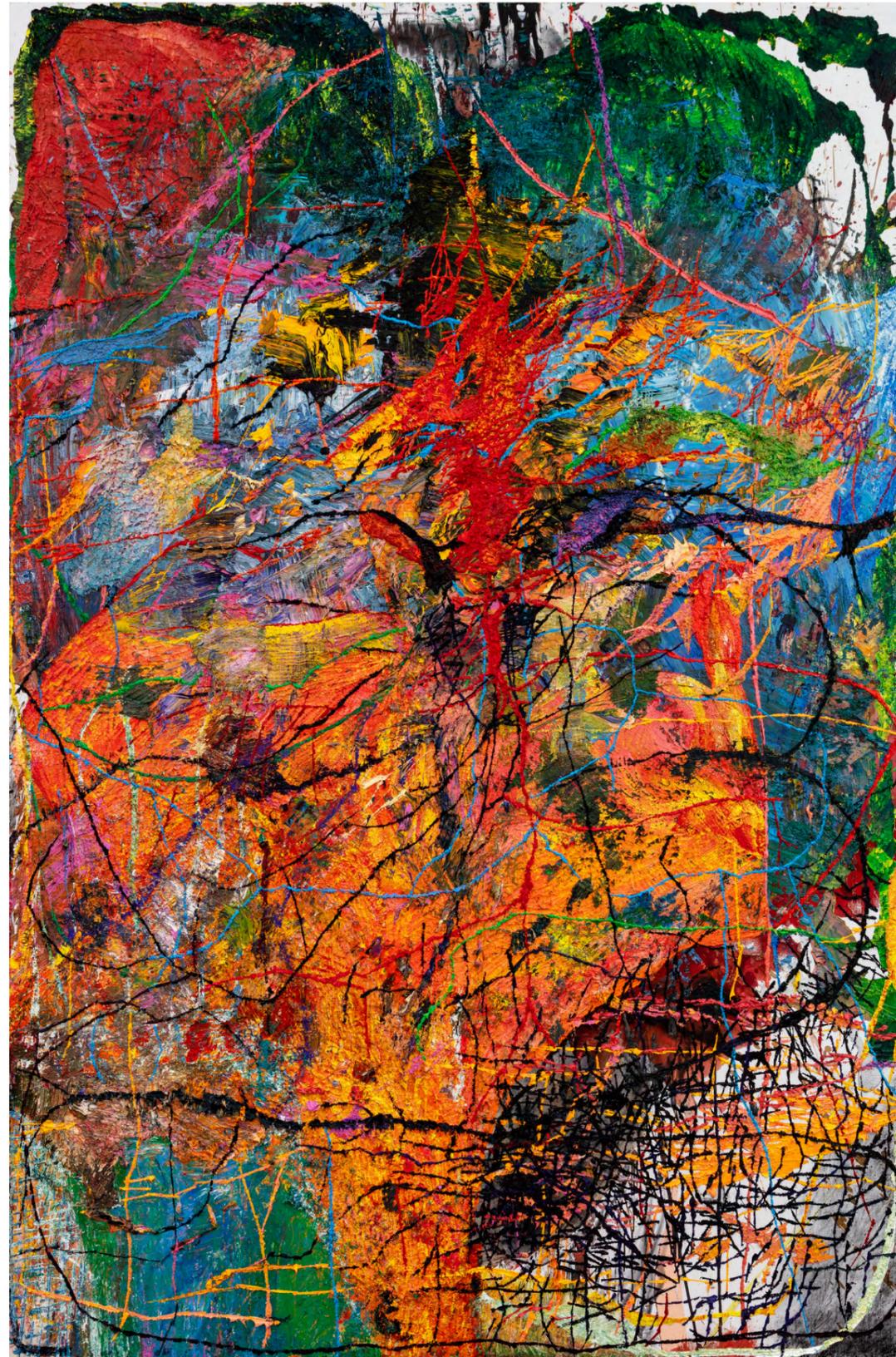
Olympe Racana-Weiler  
PAINTING

I created this set of paintings in the aftermath of a major life movement .

All the canvas were arranged on the walls of my studio. I then drew large faces in black chalk on some of them, simple bodies and bodies in relation on others. They instantly inhabited the space of the blank linen in its entirety and the studio was somehow full. There, the need for color took precedence over these familiar forms. The place I then gave to color made them distinct, tangible elements. And my way of acting on the material by the gesture of imposing or removing it became the only subject.



Olympe Racana-Weiler



LE SOLEIL ET LA GUERRE 2024  
Mixed media on prepared linen canvas  
118,1 in x 78,7 in

Olympe Racana-Weiler



TORO 2024  
Mixed media on prepared linen canvas  
94,5 in x 86,6 in

Olympe Racana-Weiler



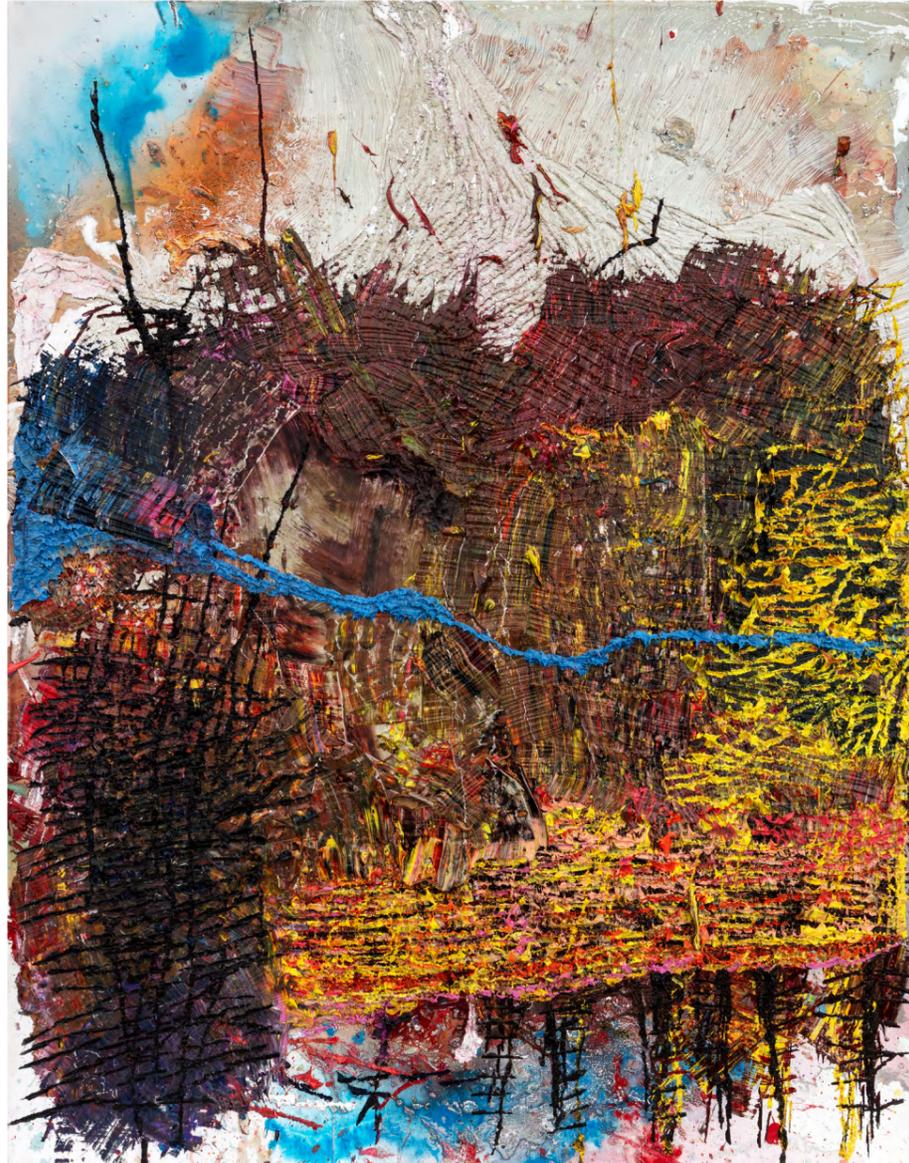
FACE SONG 2024  
Mixed media on prepared linen canvas  
95,5 in x 86,6 in

Olympe Racana-Weiler



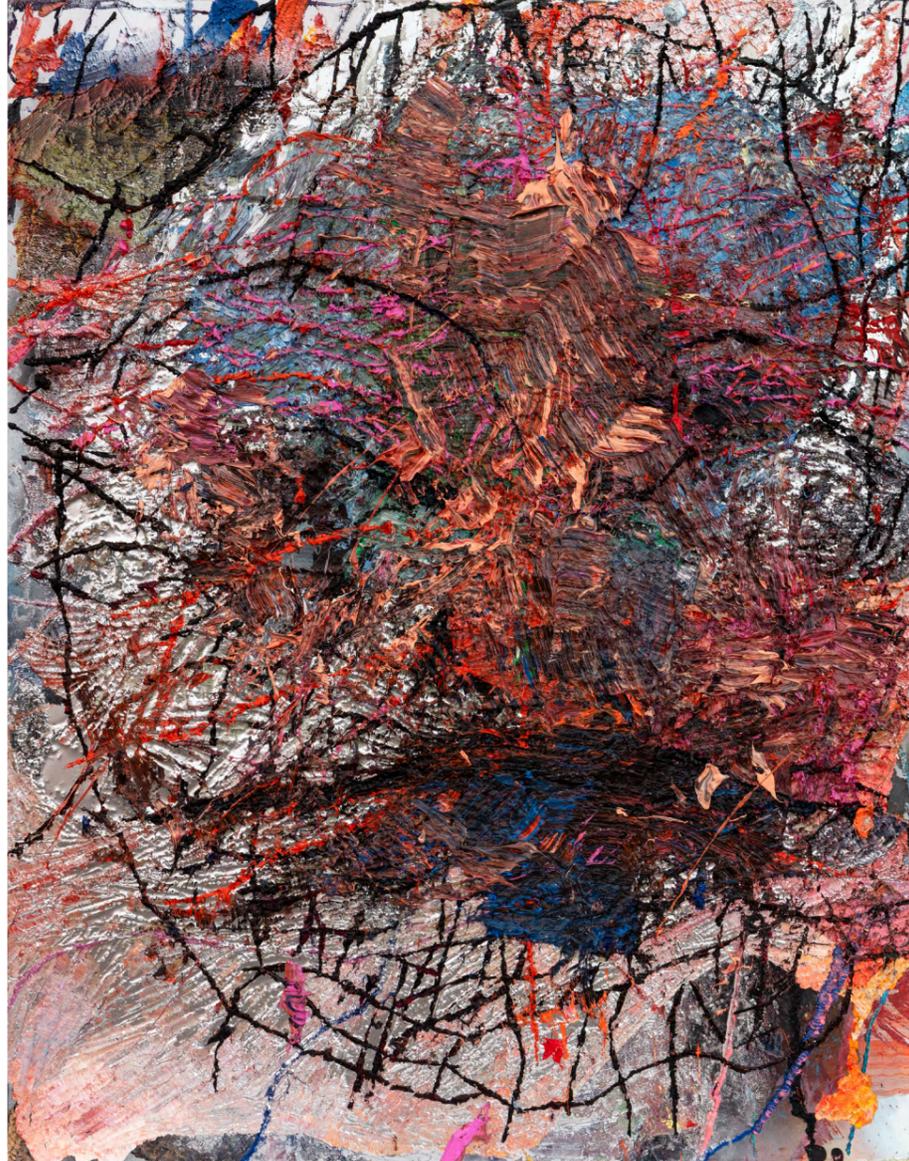
BABYLON 2024  
Mixed media on prepared linen canvas  
78,4 in x 157,5 in

Olympe Racana-Weiler



**BLUE BARK 2024**  
Mixed media on prepared linen canvas  
55,1 in x 43,3 in

Olympe Racana-Weiler



BLACK LIP 2024  
Mixed media on prepared linen canvas  
55,1 in x 43,3 in

Olympe Racana-Weiler



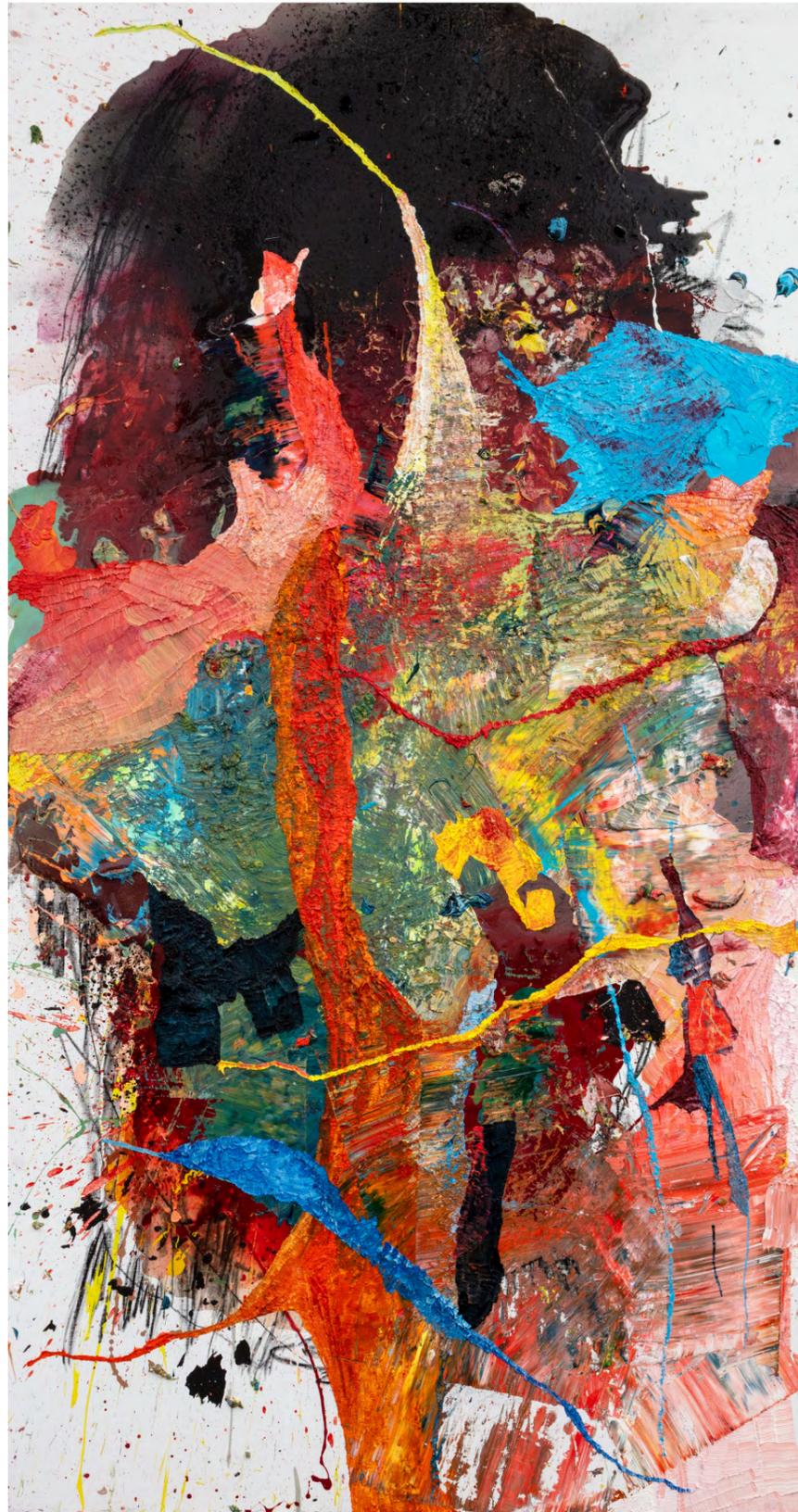
WHITE HAND 2024  
Mixed media on prepared linen canvas  
78,7 in x 78,7 in

Olympe Racana-Weiler



OEIL NOIR 2024  
Mixed media on prepared linen canvas  
78,7 in x 78,7 in

Olympe Racana-Weiler



PAUPIÈRE BLEU 2024  
Mixed media on prepared linen canvas  
118,1 in x 63 in

Olympe Racana-Weiler



PINK ROOM 2024  
Mixed media on prepared linen canvas  
118,1 in x 63 in

Olympe Racana-Weiler  
100 LINES

I've been practicing woodcarving since I was a child, in an attempt to understand where the pictorial gesture begins and ends. Engraving is a retranscription of this gesture. The gesture, the trace, takes place in an instant, like a sound. Translating it into engraving takes a long time. It's a laborious study of that instant - of the phenomenon or phenomena of matter under the action of my intention. Wood has its own identity more than a weave, it has its own purpose.

After my course of study, I sought to learn how to print; which I did for a year in Michael Woolworth's Paris workshop, where I assisted printers and artists. The combination of different matrices to build a multicoloured image fascinated me. The intervention and correction of the image after each pass through the press enabled me to understand this practice as a medium in its own right, and no longer as a means of producing an edition or a reproduction.

Since then, I've been working with different master printers around the world, each with their own specific know-how.

With the printers Gabi Pechmann and Christoph Chavanne, I produce very large woodcuts. Their speciality is to print using a press commonly used for marquetry work. I began visiting their workshop in Apetlon, Austria, in 2016. Since then, I've been there two or three times a year. I carve my wood in France and have it delivered there. I stay about five days and we work intensively on the edition. Since 2019, I've been making a set of 20 images measuring 250 cm x 153 cm, around the oval of the face and its mysteries, in impossible portraiture.

At first I draw my image on the wood. Often a monolithic form that nonetheless indicates a point of gaze, a humanity.



Olympe Racana-Weiler



100 LINES - 19 2020  
Woodcut printed on DW 400 gsm paper  
98.4 in x 60.2 in

Olympe Racana-Weiler



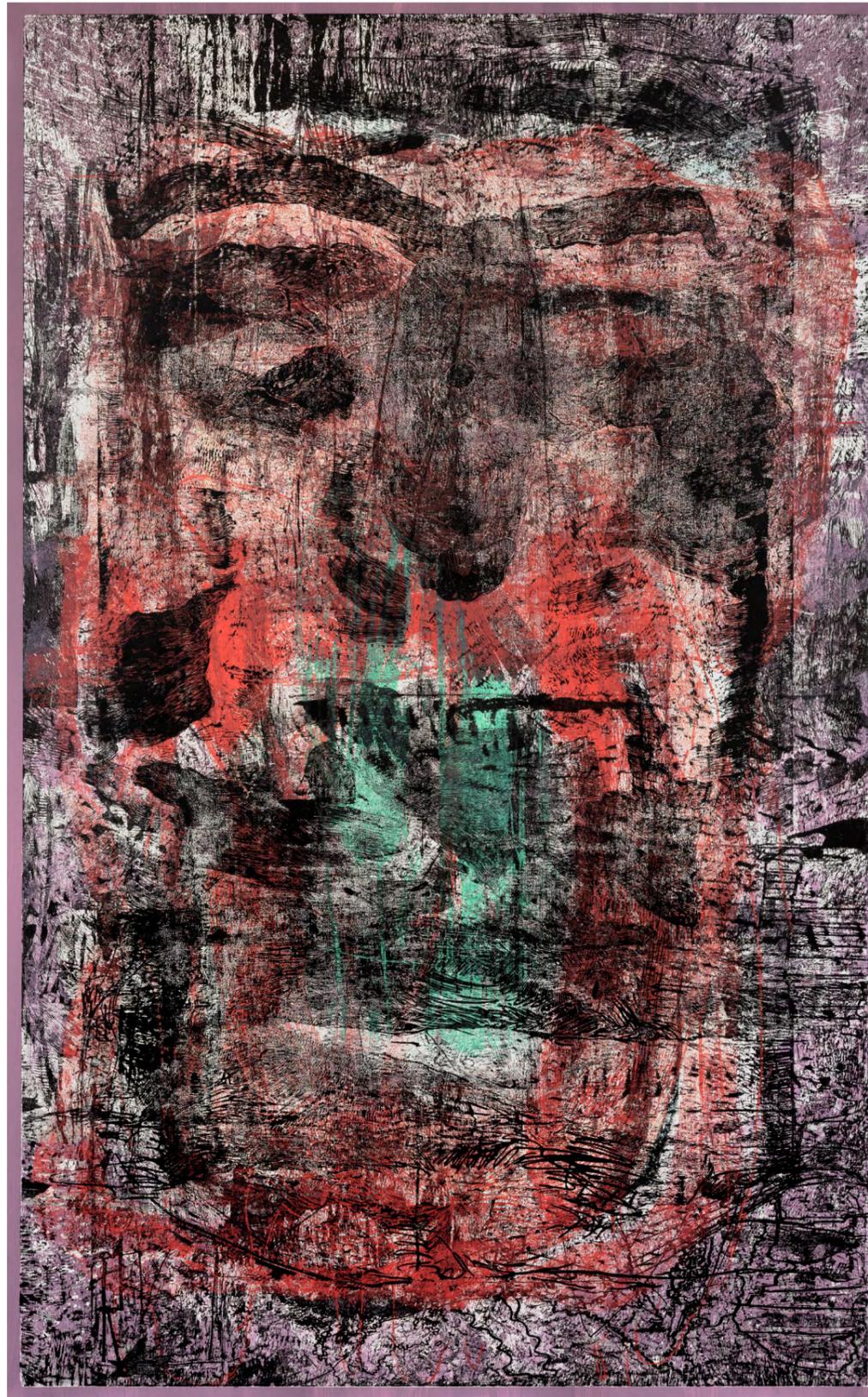
100 LINES - 17 2024  
Woodcut printed on DW 400 gsm paper  
98.4 in x 60.2 in

Olympe Racana-Weiler



100 LINES - 7 2021  
Woodcut printed on DW 400 gsm paper  
98.4 in x 60.2 in

Olympe Racana-Weiler



100 LINES - 9 2021

Woodcut printed on DW 400 gsm paper hand-painted by the artist  
98.4 in x 60.2 in

Olympe Racana-Weiler



100 LINES - 12 2022  
Woodcut printed on DW 400 gsm paper hand-painted by the artist  
98.4 in x 60.2 in

Olympe Racana-Weiler



100 LINES - 14 2022  
Woodcut printed on DW 400 gsm paper hand-painted by the artist  
98.4 in x 60.2 in

Olympe Racana-Weiler



100 LINES - 15 2023  
Woodcut printed on DW 400 gsm paper  
98.4 in x 60.2 in

Olympe Racana-Weiler  
L'AMOUR

In 2019, I went to Line Press Limited in Brooklyn, New York to work with Ruth Lingen and Nina Dine on the creation of my first artist's book.

I arrived with an object in hand, a fragile typescript yellowed by the years that I had found among the books my mother left me after her death. On its green paper cover, the title could be read in a neogothic typeface typical of the seventies: Jacques Lacan, L'amour.

The document contained the first section of "seminar XXI: Les non-dupes errent," delivered in Paris between 1973 and 1974 by the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. This seminar was given as an extension of Lacan's unfinished 1963 seminar "Les Noms du Père," which he delivered before the institution devoted to Freudian analysis. In response to its content, the institution would later excommunicate Lacan, interrupting the seminar and inciting him to establish his own School.

In this text, the richness of Lacan's language unveils the phonetic mirror between the two titles and explores their ambiguity: "Les non-dupes errent," roughly "those who are not fooled are the ones who err the most," is an exact homophone of "Les Noms du Père," "the names of the father." The text reflects on the intrinsic relations of the speaking being with the three dimensions of language: the Symbolic, the Real, and the Imaginary. They are bound together, tied in a trinity, and free of empiricism.

I am interested in analysis as a specific space-time, and by extension this text became a poetic source I was captivated by. I wanted to transform this found object into a real, physical, active territory; an experience. Jacques Lacan's speech is eloquent, his delight in the speaking subconscious can be clearly heard, and his train of thought takes on a physical consistency. My work must also be thought of in Lacan's terms of representation into the very concrete presence of the book. In the unfurling of these pages, I wanted to create an omnipresence, a confusion and forgetfulness, all while being held by the path, begun again after the fact by an eye, by the text, and then again in silence.

At Line Press with the printers Ruth Lingen and Nina Dine, and with the assistance of Frankie Bartolomie and Clare Altman,

we created a facsimile of L'amour, situating the object in the center of the white page as a starting point. A series of drawings completed several years ago and compiled in a notebook were put together in the pages of the book, germinations emanating from the writing, fine black lines weaving together into nets, figures, and mental landscapes, bound to the words of Sainte Theresa of Lisieux: "Love is all that counts."

Following this, the task was to disrupt the thread of reading even further by including a variety of handmade papers with specific textures and colors. These papers formed a palpable field, a chromatic zone, and silences that extended throughout the book. At every step of the project, I produced new woodcuts that Ruth and Nina printed progressively on the pages. I began my engraving work by making two abstract compositions, in knots with paint and monoliths. In the unfolding and this intimacy of the book, a more direct link to the figure emerges: hands, bodies, portraits reveal themselves, then are immersed once again in the book.

This project was made possible by the immense knowledge of my printers and I am extremely thankful for them.

Olympe Racana-Weiler  
L'AMOUR

There are 28 woodblocks printed in 52 woodblock print runs.

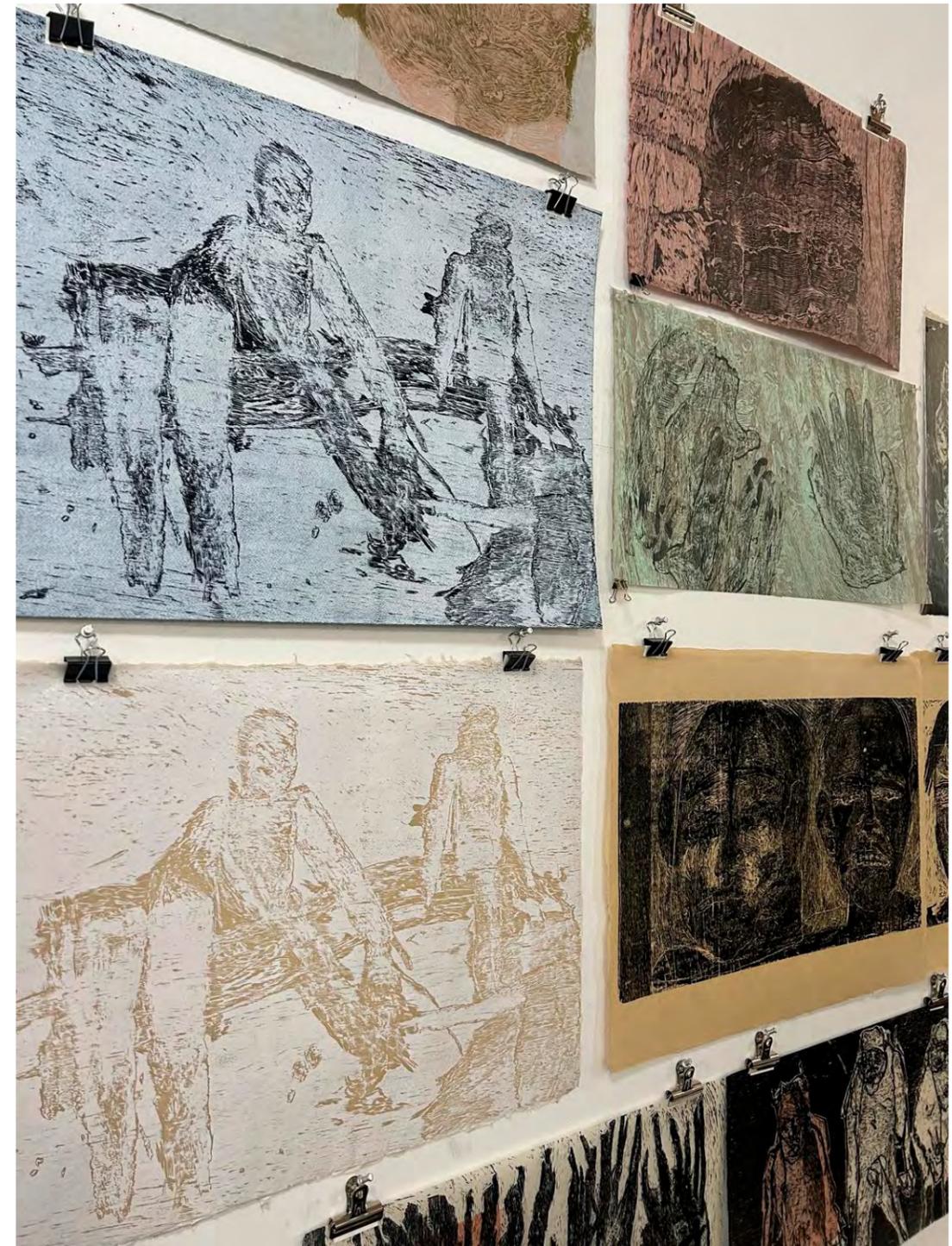
The handmade papers in this book include cotton, flax, abaca and mitsumata sheets made by Michaelle Marschall at the Morgan Conservatory as well as Japanese Yatsuo, Korean Hanji and Walnut Cave Paper. The digital paper is Awagami Bamboo white.

The binding is cloth over boards with hot stamping by Sarah Smith. All binding and printing was concluded in Brooklyn, NY in 2023.

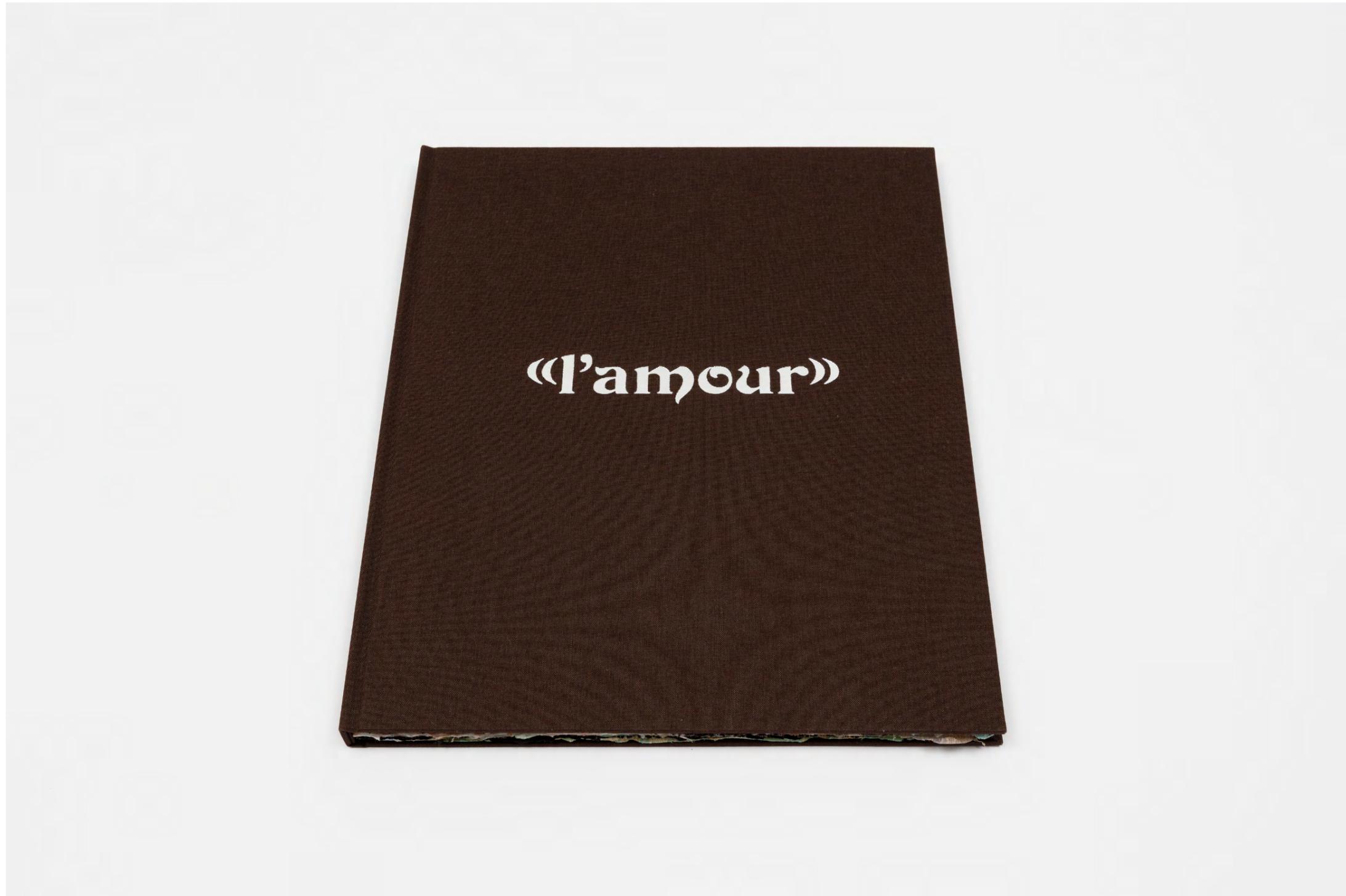
There are 23 copies in this edition, plus 3 artist proofs and 4 printer's proofs.

Each book is 13,3 in x 10,9 in x 0,6 in and composed of 96 pages.

Each book is accompanied by a signed woodcut and digital print on Bamboo paper.



Olympe Racana-Weiler



L'AMOUR (EXCERPT) 2023

Wood engravings, digital prints, and typography hand printed and hand-bound on a selection of handmade papers, ed. 23 copies  
13,3 in x 10,9 in x 0,6 in - 96 pages

Olympe Racana-Weiler

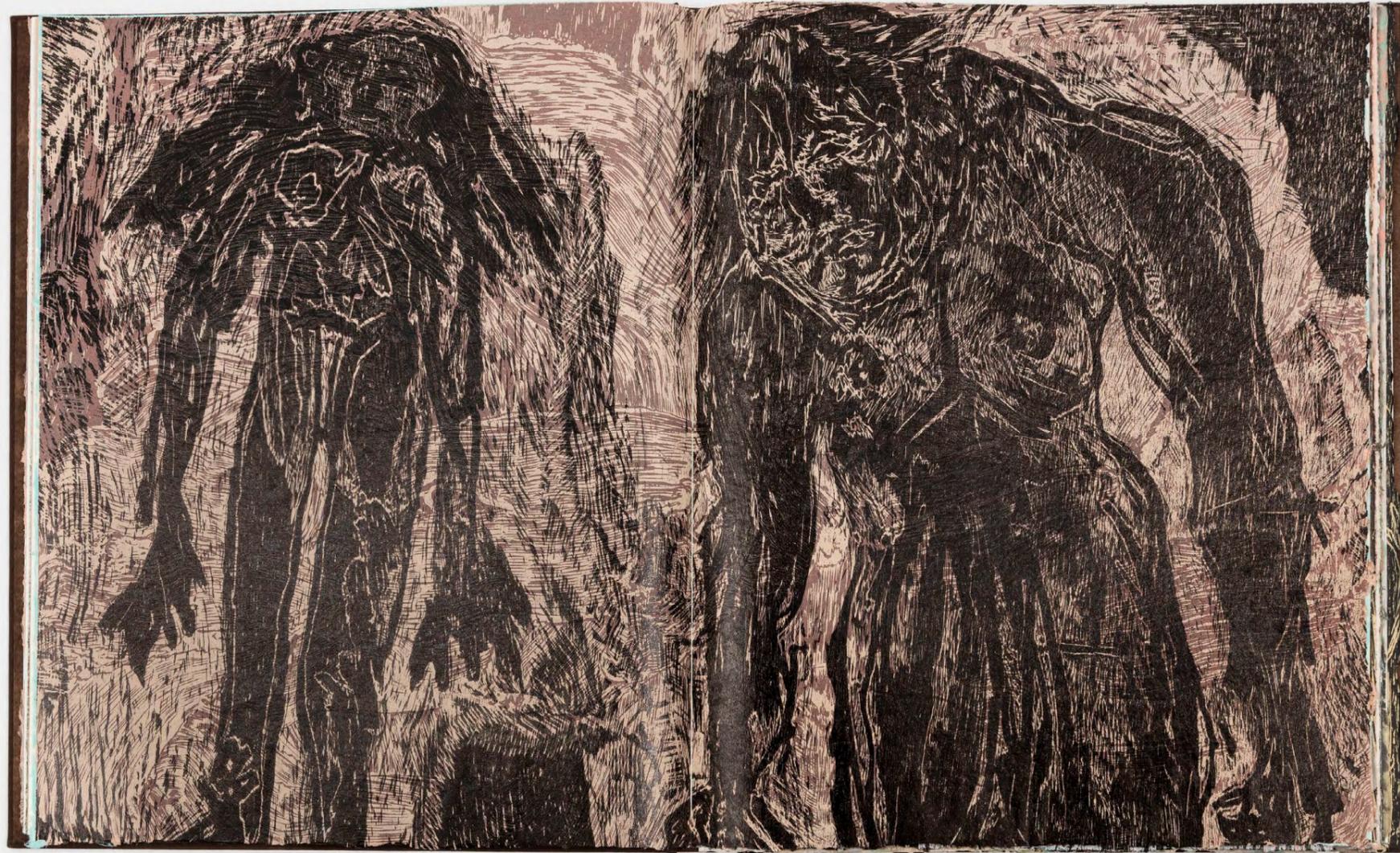


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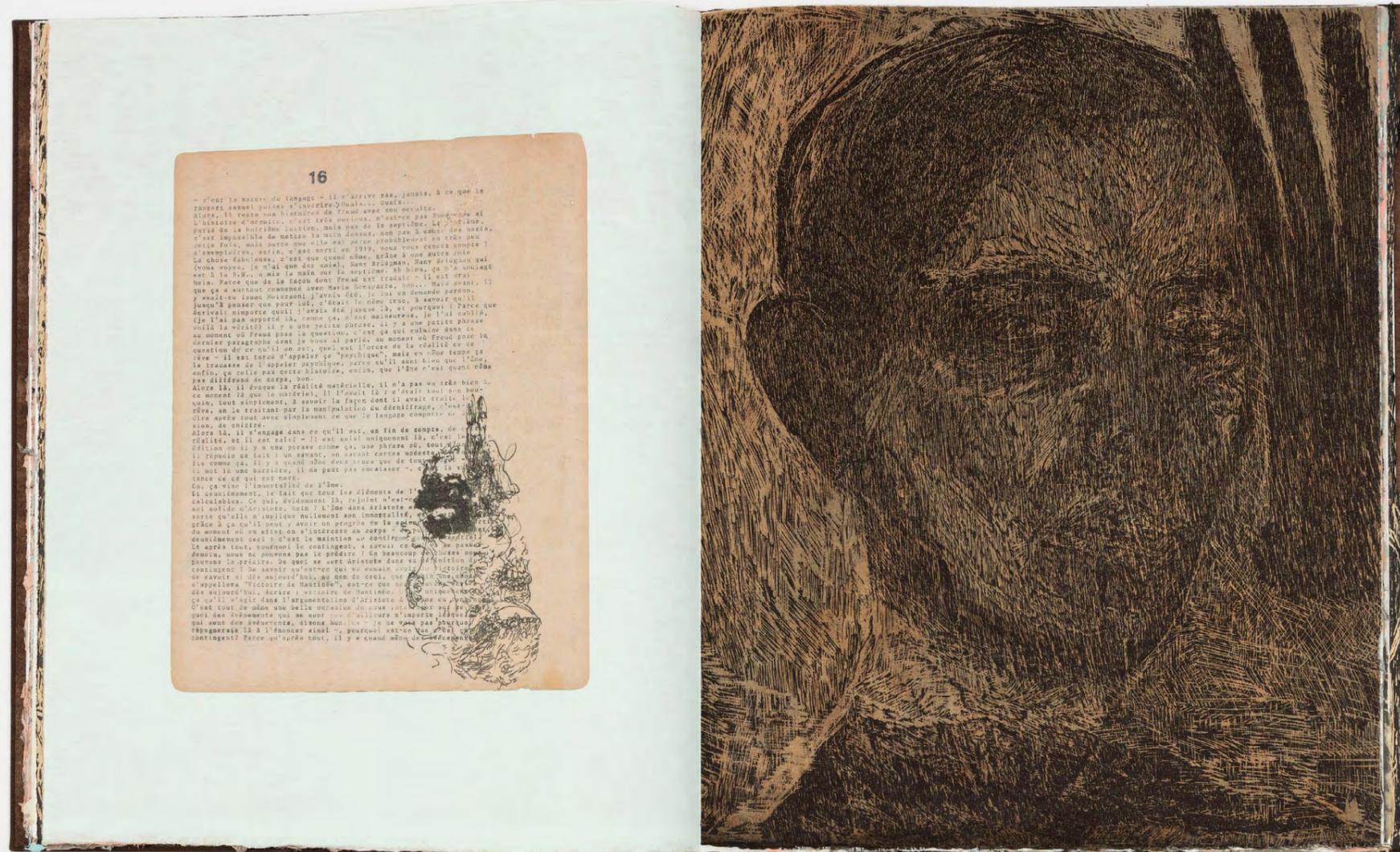


Olympe Racana-Weiler



L'AMOUR (EXCERPT) 2023

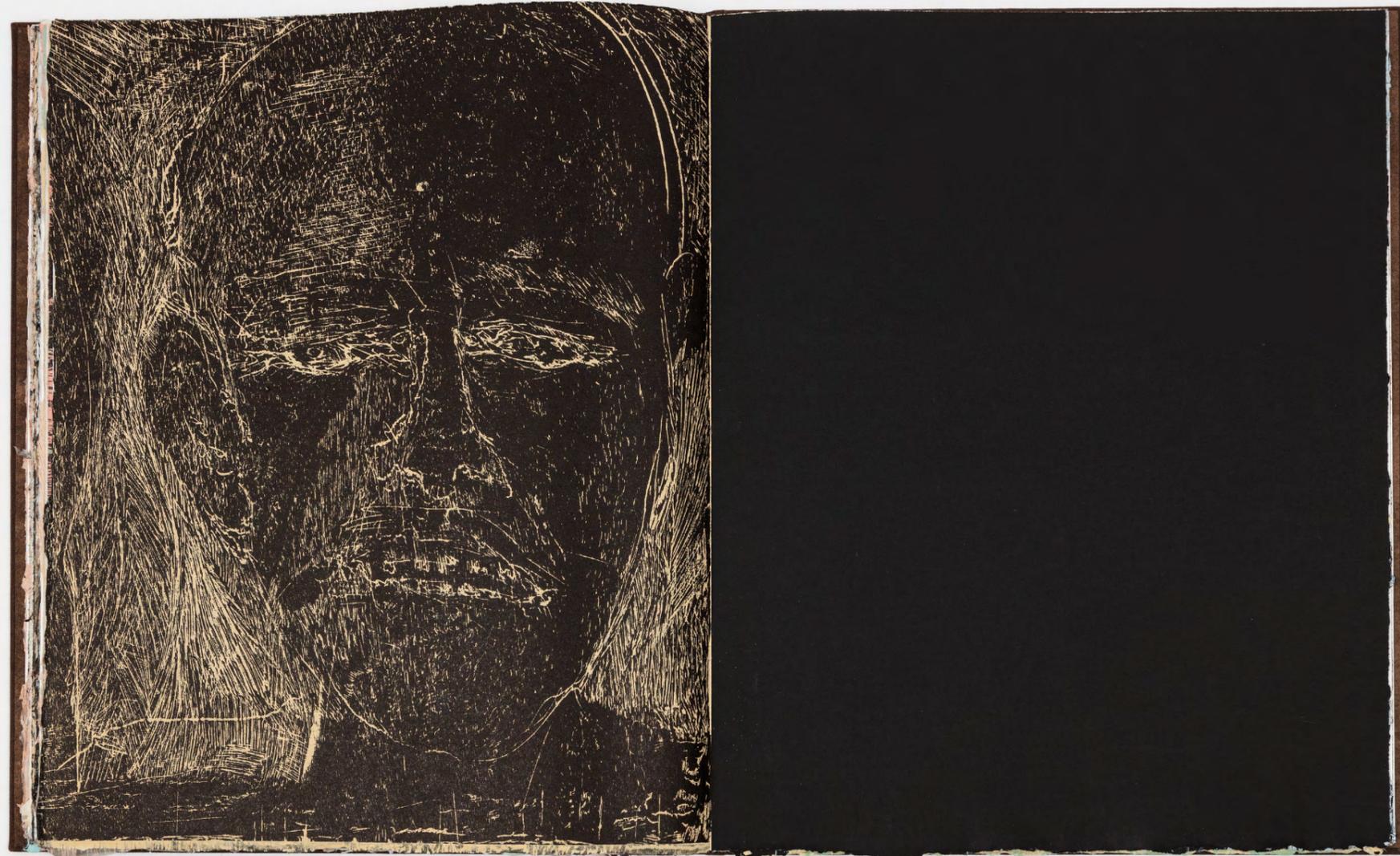
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Olympe Racana-Weiler



L'AMOUR (EXCERPT) 2023

Wood engravings, digital prints, and typography hand printed and hand-bound on a selection of handmade papers, ed. 23 copies  
13,3 in x 10,9 in x 0,6 in - 96 pages

Olympe Racana-Weiler



DARK STREET (DIPTYCH) 2023  
& PYTHON (DIPTYCH) 2023  
Woodcut hand printed on abaca handmade paper  
18,1 in x 48 in

Olympe Racana-Weiler



SELECTION OF INDIVIDUAL PRINTS 2023  
Woodcuts hand printed on handmade paper

Olympe Racana-Weiler  
LA FEMME SANS OMBRE

In the winter of 2022, at the invitation of Glen Lasio and Nicolas Muratore, I began a series of residencies at Gate 44 in Milan, a workshop dedicated to the production of multiples of all kinds, combining traditional printing techniques, typography, and flatbed presses, with more recent techniques such as screen printing, offset, laser printing, and 3D printing.

Finding You Again, La Femme Sans Ombre and Sibylle, v. 1, 2, 3, are sets of works resulting from this collaboration.

I arrived in Milan with three woodcuts that structured my research and constituted classic editions: El Kiosko, which resembles a mask, Silent, the scream, and Cosmique Wood, a celestial landscape with a thousand details.

The idea of the multiple was interrupted by my discovery of the silkscreen medium. I traced a Face on the screen with black charcoal, which, each time it went through the press, was altered by my additions of lines, ink and water. I then freely enhanced the areas by drawing again on the paper. The woodcuts printed in black ink partially disappeared in favor of these direct reactions.

In this way, I created around thirty unique images. The portrait ranged from an expressive mask to a simple oval, the permanence of the Face being constantly put to the test.





EL KIOSKO 2022  
Woodcut on Hahnemühle 350gsm paper  
57,5 in x 41,7 in



SILENT 2022  
Woodcut on Hahnemühle 350gsm paper  
57,5 in x 41,7 in

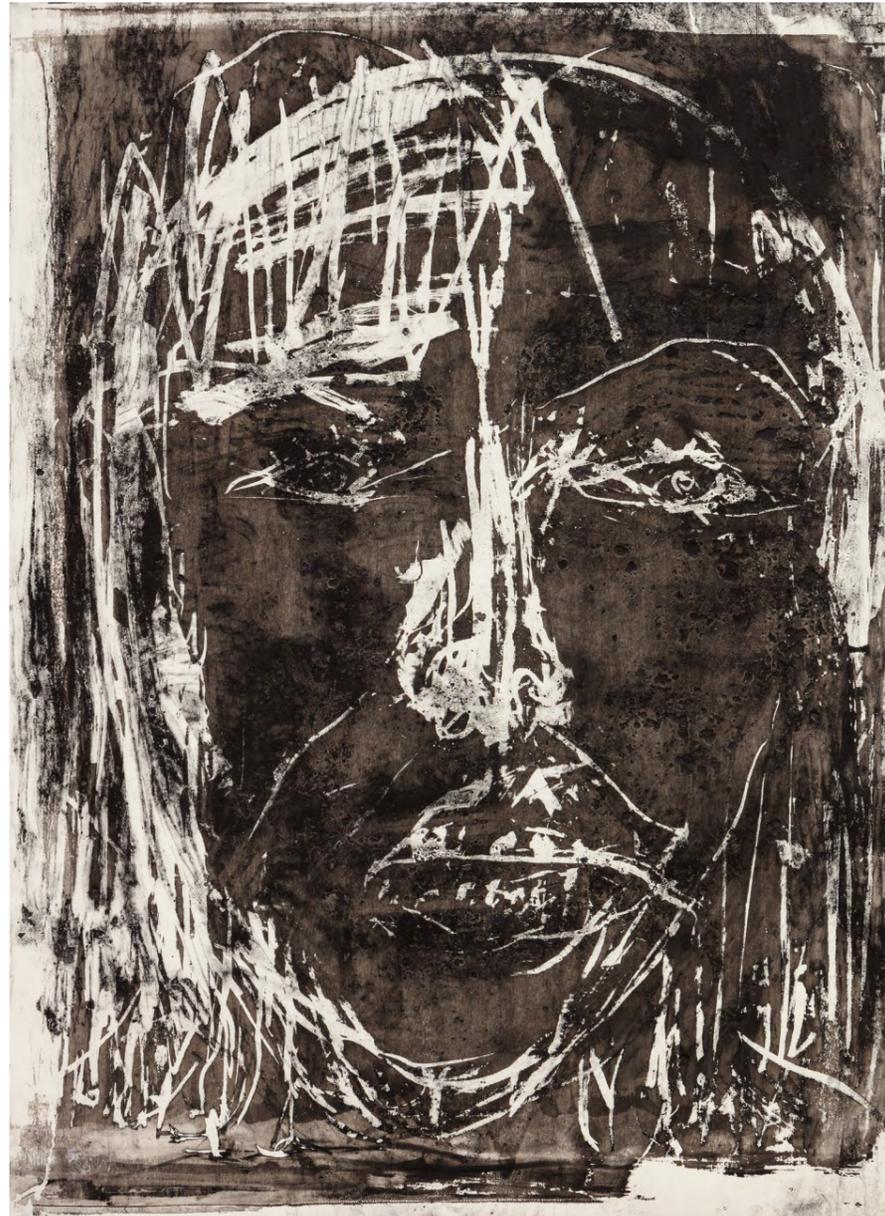


COSMIC WOOD 2023  
Woodcut on Hahnemühle 350gsm paper  
57,5 in x 41,7 in

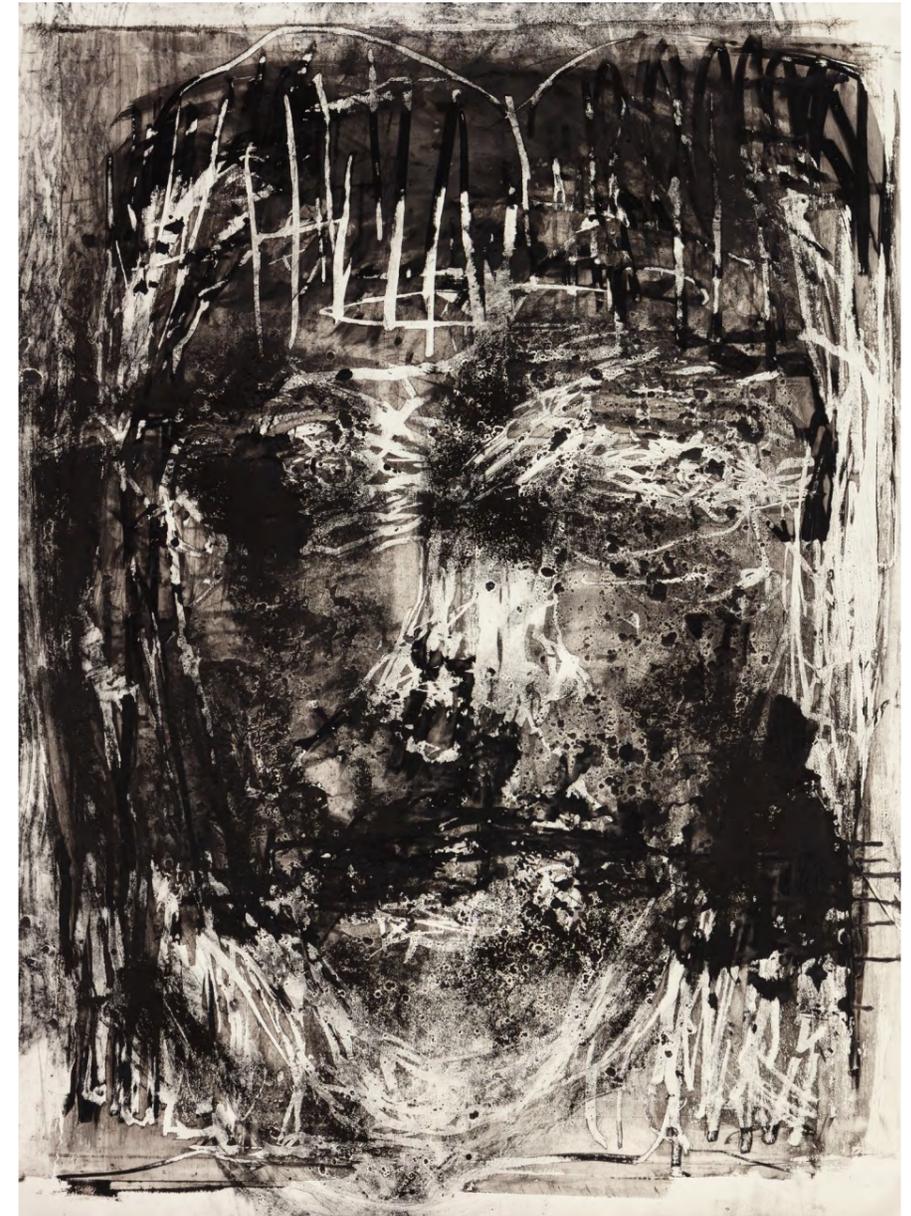
Olympe Racana-Weiler



FINDING YOU AGAIN 1 2022  
Monotype screeprint on Hahnemühle 350gsm paper  
57,5 in x 41,7 in



FINDING YOU AGAIN 2 2022  
Monotype screeprint and carborundum on Hahnemühle 350gsm paper  
57,5 in x 41,7 in



FINDING YOU AGAIN 3 2022  
Monotype screeprint and carborundum on Hahnemühle 350gsm paper  
57,5 in x 41,7 in

Olympe Racana-Weiler



FINDING YOU AGAIN 5 2023  
Monotype screeprint and carborundum on Hahnemühle 350gsm paper  
57,5 in x 41,7 in



FINDING YOU AGAIN 6 2023  
Woodcut, monotype screeprint and carborundum on Hahnemühle 350gsm paper  
57,5 in x 41,7 in

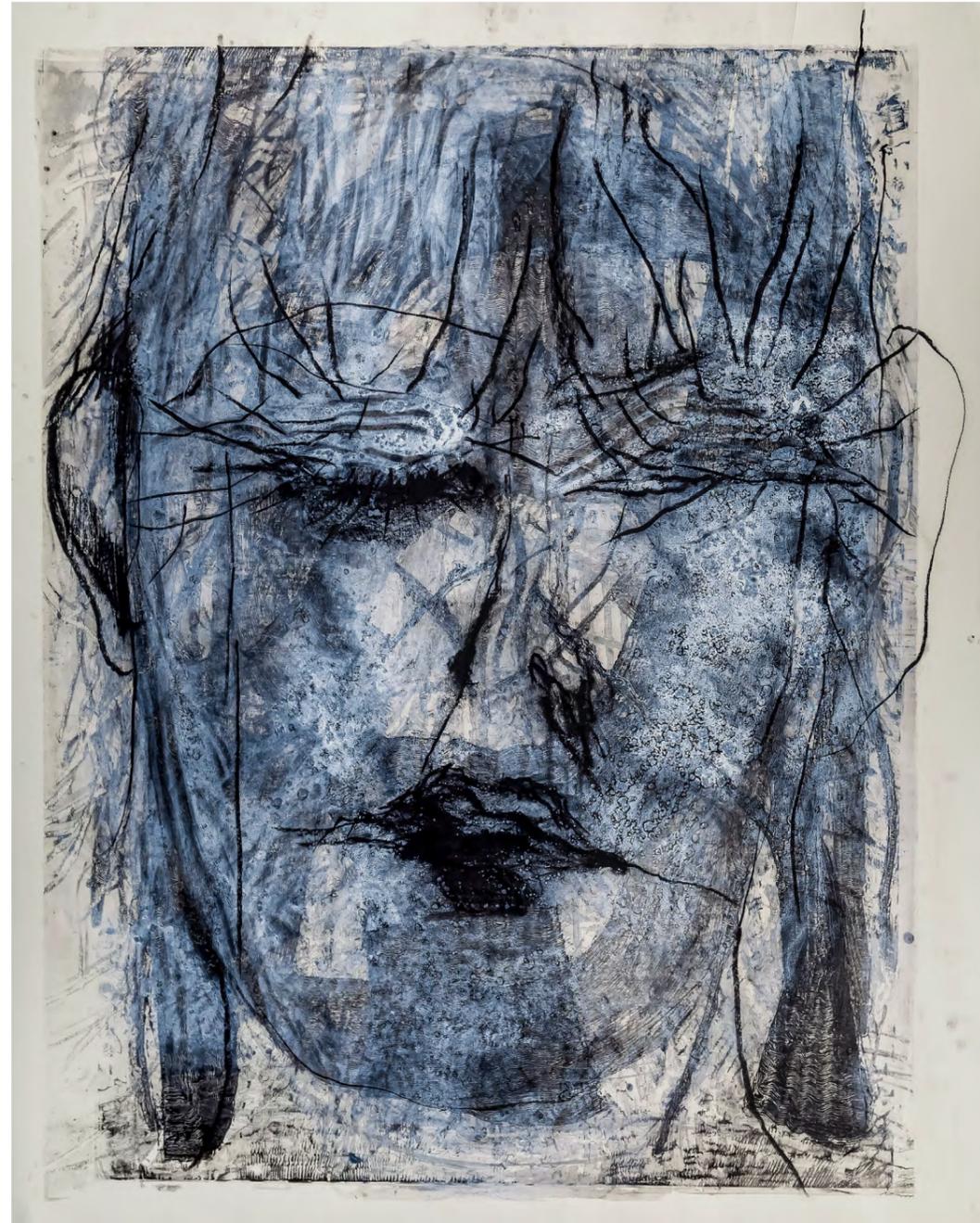
Olympe Racana-Weiler



LA FEMME SANS OMBRE 2023  
LE PALAIS BLEU 1

Woodcut, carborundum and black stone on Hahnemühle 350gsm paper  
57,5 in x 41,7 in

Olympe Racana-Weiler



LA FEMME SANS OMBRE 2023  
LE PALAIS BLEU 2

Woodcut, carborundum and black stone on Hahnemühle 350gsm paper  
57,5 in x 41,7 in

Olympe Racana-Weiler



LA FEMME SANS OMBRE 2023  
L'IMPÉRATRICE 1  
Woodcut and engraved cardboard on Hahnemühle 350gsm paper  
57,5 in x 41,7 in



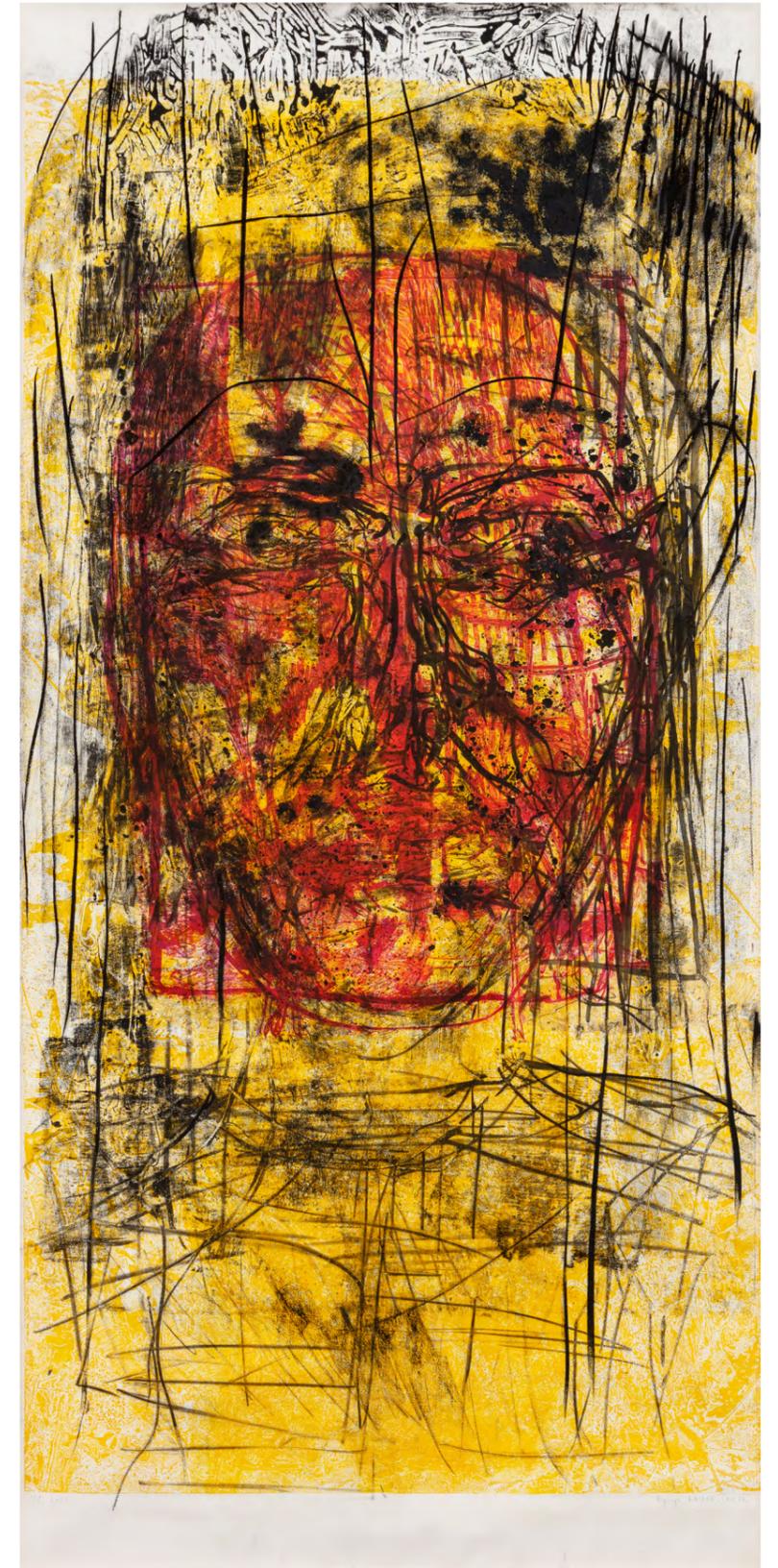
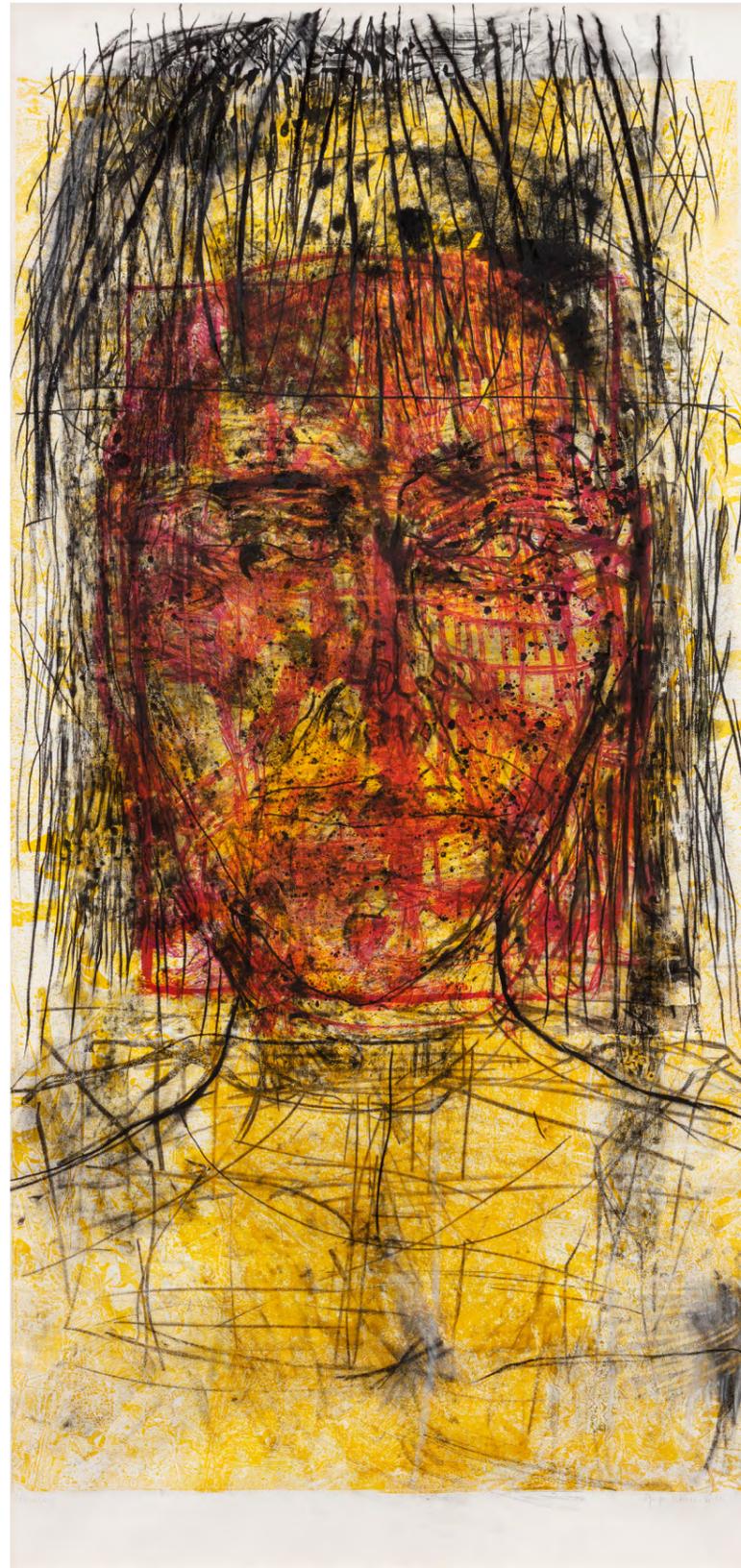
LA FEMME SANS OMBRE 2023  
L'IMPÉRATRICE 2  
Woodcut, engraved cardboard and monotype screenprint on Hahnemühle 350gsm paper  
57,5 in x 41,7 in

Olympe Racana-Weiler



LA FEMME SANS OMBRE 2023  
THE SADDEST DAY OF MY LIFE  
Woodcut, engraved cardboard and black stone on Hahnemühle 350gsm paper  
57,5 in x 41,7 in

Olympe Racana-Weiler



LA SIBYLLE V1, V2, V3 2023  
Woodcut, monotype screenprint, carborundum and black charcoal on Arches 300gsm paper  
110,2 in x 51,2 in

Olympe Racana-Weiler  
SOOT FACE

In the spring of 2023, I started working with the printer Domitille Arai at the René Tazé intaglio workshop in Paris.

I made ten portraits on copper plates using a mixture of soft ground etching, hard ground etching, drypoint, burin and aquatint.

Each of the prints in the Soot Face series consists of three separate portraits, printed one above the other in three press runs.

The faces, teeth, gazes and cheekbones blend in a balancing act of color that nevertheless allows us to perceive distinct identities.

This multitude of individuals is inserted in its entirety into Tender Wall.



Olympe Racana-Weiler



TENDER WALL (BLACK) 2024  
Copper engraving on Hahnemühle 350gsm paper  
41,3 in x 79,1 in

Olympe Racana-Weiler



TENDER WALL 2024  
Copper engraving on Hahnemühle 350gsm paper  
41,3 in x 79,1 in

Olympe Racana-Weiler  
WHISPERS & HARVEST

Whisper and Harvest is my first bronze sculpture.

The silhouette first emerged through the tracing of a drawing projected in real-life space. I then constructed the volume in an assemblage of wood, plaster, clay, plasticine, bark and tree trunks. Then I had the opportunity to participate in all stages of the creation of the bronze in the workshops of the Kunstgiesserei foundry in St. Gallen, Switzerland. The artisans introduced me to the work of wax prior to casting, bronze chasing and patination. I was thus able to intervene and modify its design at each stage of its creation.

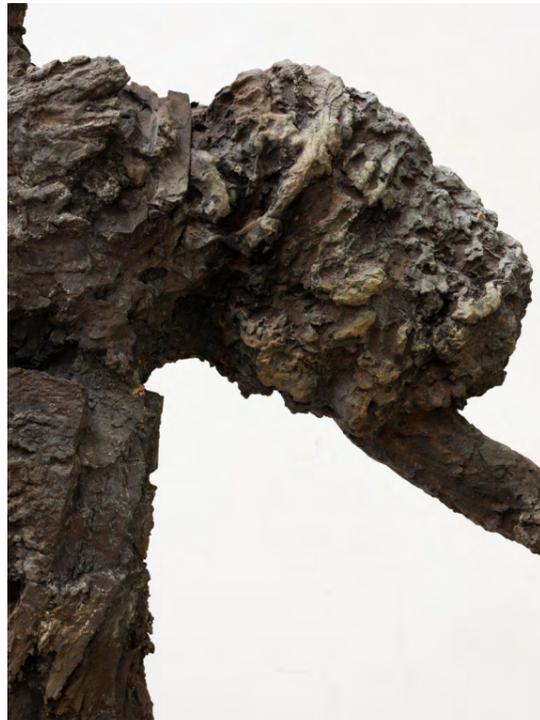


Olympe Racana-Weiler



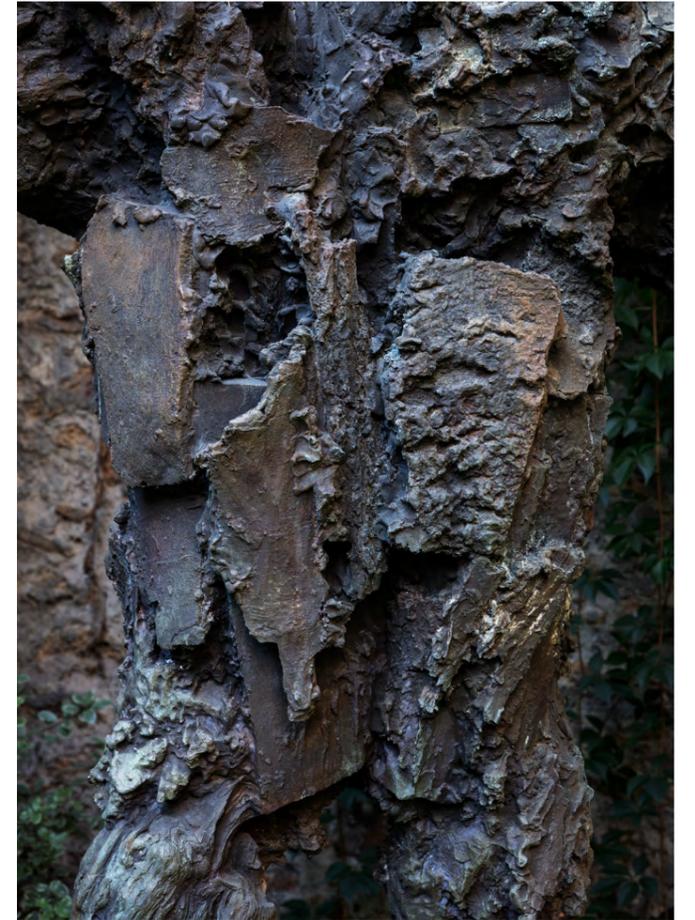
WHISPERS AND HARVEST 2023  
Bronze  
98 in x 83 in x 47 in

Olympe Racana-Weiler



WHISPERS AND HARVEST (DETAIL) 2023  
Bronze  
98 in x 83 in x 47 in

Olympe Racana-Weiler



WHISPERS AND HARVEST (ON SIT) 2023

Bronze

98 in x 83 in x 47 in

Olympe Racana-Weiler  
LE CHANT DE LA SIBYLLE

In the spring of 2021, I was invited by Numa Hambursin to create a permanent work in the boudoir of the Hôtel Richier de Belvalle in Montpellier, headquarters of the GGL Foundation.

My intention was to experience this space as an expression of an inner realm unveiled by painting. I spent three weeks with my memory of the lair of the Sybil of Cumae in Italy in my head.

I worked day and night in the room, in the silence of the hotel and the city, which had been deserted by the Covid lockdown.

From the walls to the ceiling, a procession of shapes emerged in an interlacing of colors, guiding the gaze towards a permanent language.

“It’s true; Olympe Racana-Weiler’s canvases bestow upon lovers of contemporary art a rare feeling of joy, even exaltation [...]. The remarkable *Le Chant de la Sibylle/The Song of the Sibyl*, created for the Hôtel Richier de Belleval and GGL Helenis Foundation, has transformed an entire room into a painted grotto, a unique opportunity for such a talent and a song full of hope for all loving orphans of the mysteries of abstraction.”

Numa Hambursin, June 2021



Olympe Racana-Weiler



LE CHANT DE LA SIBYLLE (WALL 1) 2021

Mixed media on walls and ceiling

Permanent artwork, created in spring 2021, on the four walls and the ceiling of the boudoir at Hôtel Richer de Belleval, home of the GGL HELENIS Foundation, Place de la Canourgue, Montpellier.

Olympe Racana-Weiler



LE CHANT DE LA SIBYLLE (WALL 2) 2021

Mixed media on walls and ceiling

Permanent artwork, created in spring 2021, on the four walls and the ceiling of the boudoir at Hôtel Richer de Belleval, home of the GGL HELENIS Foundation, Place de la Canourgue, Montpellier.

Olympe Racana-Weiler



LE CHANT DE LA SIBYLLE (WALL 3) 2021

Mixed media on walls and ceiling

Permanent artwork, created in spring 2021, on the four walls and the ceiling of the boudoir at Hôtel Richer de Belleval, home of the GGL HELENIS Foundation, Place de la Canourgue, Montpellier.

Olympe Racana-Weiler



LE CHANT DE LA SIBYLLE (WALL 4) 2021

Mixed media on walls and ceiling

Permanent artwork, created in spring 2021, on the four walls and the ceiling of the boudoir at Hôtel Richer de Belleval, home of the GGL HELENIS Foundation, Place de la Canourgue, Montpellier.



LE CHANT DE LA SIBYLLE (CEILING) 2021

Mixed media on walls and ceiling

Permanent artwork, created in spring 2021, on the four walls and the ceiling of the boudoir at Hôtel Richer de Belleval, home of the GGL HELENIS Foundation, Place de la Canourgue, Montpellier.

In the field of what is known as abstract painting, Olympe Racana-Weiler's canvases are particularly seductive and powerfully evocative. They are being exhibited at Galerie 21 Contemporary, Nice, from February 17th to April 15th, 2022.

Four years ago I paid a visit to Olympe Racana-Weiler's studio in Saint-Ouen. She had just started to exhibit at the Galerie Jérôme Pauchant [...] and had been awarded the Pierre Cardin and Marin prizes. [...] The last solo exhibition I visited was at Galerie Éric Dupont (in January 2021), which has represented her since 2019.

She invited me to her new atelier, this time in Montreuil: a larger space with lots of windows. [...] The compositions are still baroque, animated by an exuberance that might recall some of Frank Stella's work from the 1970s onwards [...]. The line has made its appearance. Following slightly wild diagonals, it runs through the canvases like veins, and the paintings become skins nourished in this way, skins that have their own history and accidents, sometimes played in the manner of the satyr Marsyas, punished by an Apollo jealous of his musical gifts. Or, more than veins, they are the lifelines in the palm of a hand, telling the past and the future of a body (that of the viewer), which seems more and more present.

Racana-Weiler has French and Argentinean origins. She has explored Latin America extensively, including the island of Cuba. That is why these lines are also the chaotic lianas of

tropical forests, which make them impenetrable, impassable. Branches on which birds of paradise land. They symbolise an untameable yet beautiful wildness, something unthought.

Racana-Weiler spreads the canvases on the floor, starts painting and covers the composition with thick layers of resin that form a kind of epidermis, and then stands them up. The swirling compositions are often organised around an oval, a kind of blind spot, which inspires the ogive shape of the canvases (2020), three conical shaped canvases that are like tables of the law, a kind of Code of Hammurabi of painting for Racana-Weiler. They seem to contain the past and future programme.

When I look at her paintings, I am underwater. They also remind me of the seabed, of stag or tube coral, of landscapes where time doesn't exist.

This blind spot also appears in the Hôtel Richer de Belleval in Montpellier, (1) where the artist painted the walls and ceiling of a room [...] where Jim Dine and Abdelkader Benchamma have also worked. She worked for a month in April and May 2020 in this 17th century building in the old town, on the Place de la Canourgue. In this former courthouse she created a grotto, with the Sibyl of Cumae in mind, who inspired the laws of Rome and lived in a rocky lair. The blind spot is a white area on the ceiling, at the zenith, where everything converges. It sucks in space like a black hole. It is like the eye of God that sees and knows everything. This blind spot also recalls the story of Regulus, the Roman general who, defeated by the Carthaginians, became blind by looking at the sun with his eyes open.

#### THE EMERGENCE OF THE FACE

One area in which Racana-Weiler is very active is etching, which she does on a monumental scale. Large prints on paper hang in her studio. In Montreuil, she works on plywood plates with a small electric utensil almost reminiscent of a dentist's tools. Patiently, she digs into the surface, drawing patterns and wefts that simulate the passage of a brush or the grain of the wood. She then sends the matrices to Austria where she prints them by turning the plates and multiplying the passages of colour. In this way she reveals almost geological landscapes, stratifications that are not so far removed from the visions of Per Kirkeby in Iceland. Regularly, among the rocky piles, a head appears, a sort of Buddha's face reminiscent of the impregnation of Veronica's shroud. This face is oval, the blind spot, the eye of God that looks at us, that of Abel in the tomb, staring at Cain.

(1) See the review  
in *artpress* no. 491,  
September 2021.

Text translated by Vincent Broqua and published in the “Romance with a bird” exhibition catalogue at Galerie 21 Contemporary, Nice.

If there is a best way to approach the works of Olympe Racana-Weiler (b.1990) it is with your whole body. The pulse and scale of her paintings on stretched linen rises from human form, its rhythms, internal and social, and its movements, awkward and transcendent. As a child Racana-Weiler studied classical ballet, but the moment came when she decided to push the audience’s gaze away from her own skin and onto her large-scale canvases. Her gestural abstractions, informed by the figure, begin flat on the wall, a sort of scenography, if you will, in her immense sun-flooded studio in Montreuil. [...] A sort of choreography emerges in her development of each canvas, each medium “used systematically for their own quality.” The idea, for the artist is to “create something else, a sort of object, a bodily presence.” The energy of dance, the lightness and strength of a *grand jeté*, for example, animates Racana-Weiler’s dynamic compositions, and creates an undeniable musicality. [...]

The artist’s practice has further developed since her work on the fresco *Le Chant de la Sibylle* last spring. Commissioned by Montpellier’s Fondation GGL Helenis for the double height walls and ceiling of a light-filled room in the historic Hôtel Richer de Belleval, to be inside the work is to be inside the other-worldly Gregorian chant that Racana-Weiler references with her title. Hauntingly beautiful, this Medieval song narrates a prophesized apocalypse, a vision the artist appropriates, translating soprano and silence into form and vivid color. Working in *fresco*, Racana-Weiler was forced to address the structure of the seventeenth century site, and it was perhaps in this challenge that the artist began to heighten the clarity of the architectures long present within her own canvases. *Orange Magnet et Pretty pink, baby blue*, for example, painted last summer, as well as the canvases she presented in her solo exhibition *Behind the Eyes* last fall, while consistently expansive in scale, reflect a more powerful and tightly bound sense of composition. [...]

Labelled Abstract Expressionist in the 1950s, the strength and vigor of Racana-Weiler’s work could be called Maximalist

today, a term contemporary American painter Rosson Crow uses to describe her immense and intricate canvases. In *art-press*’s February 2022 issue Richard Leydier describes Racana-Weiler’s paintings as “exuberant” and “baroque.” [...] Baroque is a very useful historical reference for Racana-Weiler’s work, that impetus for movement, ornament and grandeur, emerging in Rome in the early 17th century, and enthusiastically supported by the Catholic Church as a rebuttal to a spreading Lutheran austerity. [...]

The artist’s research in the possibilities of harmonious color is in full force. *Palenque*, for example, is as tightly woven as a Mayan tapestry. And *Coyote Radar* is composed as Elaine de Kooning [...] could have, form and color knit together into an energetic core. As if a parachute pulled with a ripcord, in the last year, Racana-Weiler’s compositions have become even more taught. Her works contain structures, complex spaces full of sky, of sun, floating high above a peopled landscape, Mediterranean this time, in a feat of the body, determined.

“Olympe Racana-Weiler, L’iridescence (Iridescence)”  
by Jeanette Zwingenberger, Paris, 2019.

Page 3/13

scapes liberate us from the infernal mirror, so we must confront the unthinkable. It’s the need to leave the space of the speaking-being to enter a particular temporality. No edge, no corner; you lose yourself inside the canvas, and only the frame brings you back to a tangible reality. We are within a map of a senseless yet very concrete world.

Exhibition info for the show “NEON DRIVING”, Éric Dupont Gallery, Paris.

Olympe Racana-Weiler disrupts and survives the intrinsic wonder of the canvas. Her work, *Naked City* evokes both the incandescence of Rome’s Colosseum and its layers of history. She hopes the eye will always cling to musical meaning in its pursuit of a presence that’s never fully attainable.

Since her childhood, which was dedicated to dance, she’s maintained a sense of space, movement and dialogue with light. She chooses to recreate her choreography on human-size canvases where she applies staccato, allegro, muted or radiant brushstrokes. Her omnipresence is embodied in the painting.

However, the virtuosity of her first movement is put in danger by the antagonism of different media. The glistening ink withdraws into a layer of turpentine. The spray froths. The residue of each infuses the other, still clinging to the canvas. The gravelled pigments climb the ramparts but the rocks with bellies full of colour hold them back. Cracks evoke geological strata, interrupted by the colour of flesh, suggesting cellular layers. Shades of ultramarine blue, gleaming pink, violet and eosin red sometimes spring out into the silence of colourful expanses.

The flow of iridescent ink – extremely unstable but resistant to all other coverage – emerges from within a sombre light.

Olympe Racana-Weiler’s challenge is to nurture the process of painting till it gives birth to an object. In *Mercure Sauvage* (Wild Mercury), the reflective pool of aluminium springs out like an eye staring upon us. The ebbs and flows, furrows, marks, blankets of shadow evoke retinal vision, a sort of *déjà-vu* that recalls the words of Gilles Deleuze on Cézanne: “Man is absent from but entirely within the landscape”. Like germination, this materialisation of a whispering memory is elusive, the gaze always called upon like an internal beacon. The painting takes a human form. The incisions, scratches and inversions reveal a sculptural dimension, a force field between emptiness and fullness.

And so she becomes an active presence.

For the artist, painting saves man from his memory, and through aesthetic force it defeats words. These interior land-

The organisation of chaos is a perilous activity. Simple to all appearances – you put a pile of things on canvas – its complexity is unveiled as the surface is covered. But there's a danger lying in wait: exaggeration, emphasis, too much, kitsch. Thus, the overload of mark-making and colour, this expressionist hypertrophy ends up engulfing the energy of German painter, Jonathan Meese. Organising doesn't mean adding and piling up until it becomes nauseous. You need to have a deep feeling for the composition so as to order the accumulation of forms and give the composition a baroque structure, rather like the American, Frank Stella has done since 1975.

Quite often, the process only works when the artist is young. Painters let themselves be guided by their instinct and energy. They experience paint like a dancer experiences music. They find spontaneity and unconsciousness are necessary. [...] Hence, Olympe Racana-Weiler is at the start of a difficult journey. She is young (27) and talented. Her canvases are abstract; colour explodes upon them. Depth is created upon them and space exists, especially when a canvas isn't saturated with paint and when the background gives the viewer the freedom to wander between the mark-making, the meanderings, the intermeshing (*Mercure sauvage* [Wild mercury], 2018). There's a floral impression that dominates, and beyond, an intention that's more vegetable than mineral. The artist, it seems, tries to reproduce the view she has of the world, whether it's her gaze upon a cherry tree or the radiance of light upon water. There's something similar to the British artist, Cecily Brown in the maelstrom of colours and forms. Things are moving, a lot, rightfully, and without excessive violence. [...]

"Olympe,

A living painting, voilà. A painting that's unstable, indeterminate. A painting that's huge in size. An expanse where texture and colour pulsate, tremble, sing, swell, surrender to permeation. A painting that breathes.

Olympe Racana-Weiler doesn't really like being called 'abstract'. But, as she's clearly not figurative either, how can you describe her? You could say that such a young artist walks a tightrope, it's tension lying somewhere between figuration and abstraction. More precisely, she moves inside a no man's land where no longer do you need definitions, where contradictions are no longer contradictions but elements of a whole, leading us to speak of *metabolism*, of this set of reactions that interact within a living being. In fact, this is where the creative process operates, revolving around a body, always evoked, never represented, around a euphoria of the medium awaiting incarnation.

The writer, Witold Gombrowicz spoke of youth as a passion for incompleteness, opposed to a form that fixes and finalises. With Gombrowicz, there was a war between form and formless. A creative indeterminateness. This exists with Olympe Racana-Weiler too."

"Olympe Racana-Weiler - Figures - Interview by  
Richard Leydier"  
Translated by Bill Hamlet, 2023

Page 5/13

Published in the exhibition catalog "JOURNAL" at the GGL Foundation, Hôtel Richier de Belleval, Montpellier.

RICHARD LEYDIER: Why this title, Journal ?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: When I created the Song of the Sibyl, a permanent work on the second floor of the Richier de Belleval Hotel, I reopened the field of the figure. In charcoal on white paper, over three days, I made a set of fifty-two faces in a notebook. I then took the drawings out and arranged them on the walls of my studio. With a desire to represent, but without an image at hand, they arrived, or came back through my hand. They were telling me about something or someone. They were just about to speak. They appeared to me as another side of the piece at the Hotel, its echo, its spectators, or residents. Several years ago, I stopped approaching figure at a key moment, one of grief, a memory too brutal to be left behind. I traveled through several parts of the world with a camera, a film camera. I wanted to capture things, to see and to live. Painting came back in a form of jubilation, free of myself, from the personal aspect of the image, to finally make space for an intimate relationship with color, matter, with the leanings of chance. I wanted to help it a bit to question what is said about it. I got attached to this Sibyl story. I went to Cumae, in Italy, about twelve years ago. The lake that the Romans considered to be the entrance to Hades is there, as well as the temple of Apollo, and the Sibyl's cave, all in a network. They can be filled with whatever you want, and you could talk about myth, but for me it was less about a person than a life.

The journal is situated between facts and the truth, and these paintings are in no way prophecies. It is a will, a desire to organize a space, to give this world to the world, to transform a desire into a real, undeniable element. This source of pleasure, peace, exile, is confronted today with the face, the drawn body. This face is authoritative. It is a dialogue with this body carried on forever, the other's memory, and a mental space world. And we move constantly from one to the other.

It is a work journal, nourished with various visual

frequencies.

RICHARD LEYDIER: Does your biography, I'm thinking of tropical South America, influence your painting ?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: In Latin America, Central America, and the Caribbean, I searched for traces, vestiges of a first humanity, from the movement from a nomadic state to a sedentary one, fascinated by the arrangements of stones, built up into villages, temples. I crossed the Andes mountains, following the footsteps on Incan and pre-Incan civilizations of northwest Argentina. I went to Chiapas in Mexico, on the Guatemalan border, to Cuba, in the footsteps of Taino people in the southeastern part of the Island.

What interested me in this great journey was walking, the loss of bearings, images of the self, of the mirror. In this chosen places, outside cities, Spanish isn't always spoken, but surviving dialects; resistance movements have been established, self-managed communitarian systems as well, certain rites continue, sometimes taking hybrid forms, syncretism with stunning representations. Without language, by way of presence, the mimicry of gestures, I learned to see these forms and forget my own. The jungle is an example that produces this effect. You forget your own body to be inside of a larger metabolism. You are alert, perceptions and senses intensify; you rely on this form of attention.

The rites interest me. They gather, reunite beings who sing a ragga of prayers together and dance, dressed up, and blossoming in poetic spaces. In that dramaturgy, I could enter, forget myself, incarnate myself, learn. Painting might be this, this space-time that one can go in and out of, but that remains beside the body as a heterotopia. I enter the work, separating myself from the personal to reveal this intimate link with the matter that becomes flesh, dampness. A color cries out suddenly, reveals itself, relations reverse, the subject oscillates. Like in the jungle, color incarnates, the tunnel or the labyrinth of things, of recognized objects is suddenly ruptured in a manifest presence, above suspicion.

RICHARD LEYDIER: Undersea landscapes also come to mind.

In short, your painting makes the imagination wander.

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: Up until now, I have lived by the water of the Seine, and I've looked a lot, enough to forget all that. The painting is malleable, moving. I often move it around on the ground. I cover the past of the painting through the action of

the resin. The first acrylic markings come up to the surface again, in volume. The resin is shiny, it reflects external light, it is punctuated with pigments in rubble. That is how I cause space to be born, the field, the fertile ground that I then develop on the wall with oil painting. From this substrate emerge cracks, vines, networks, teeth, masses, eyelids, a word. Those forms have recently become organized into not so much stretched or traced gestures as sequenced ones, the interventions follow one another and gather mass, color object.

The oceanic feeling that you evoke might be connected to that immersion in a painting without any other referent than the painting itself. I think that while diving, you only hear your own breath, its a "with yourself", with your heartbeat, its slight variations, its palpitations. You lose speech. You progress under the veiling and with the weight of bodies, to see, to cross the darkness, the slight glimmerings of external light, the crossing of our imagination, to the shadows of giant silhouettes of the big fish, the monster, the rapture of certain colors that amazingly persist there, unprecedented forms.

RICHARD LEYDIER: Why this reference to the Sibyl?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: The question is actually of losing the referent, to lose the citation to try to be in the world.

Separating from the personal, to weave an intimate and specific relationship with painting. To strip it from its recognizable signs and enter a quasi-archaic construction of the language of forms, to evoke, to question the beholder about this other possible time, the time of doing, the rhythm of the hand, the dream, the unconscious, the prenatal that combines fear, anxiety, and well-being. There are so few spaces where that is possible.

Beside this abstract world, I undertake drawings, rather rough, tense, direct, and engravings. The Faces, my face, those of beholders, those that I've seen or that have seen me and maybe simply those that I leave behind when I paint these abstract formulae.

The history of the Sibyl at Cumae and her cave interests me in light of that, The Occitan Song of the Sibyl too. It's the title of a permanent piece created for the Richer de Belleval Hotel and the Foundation. Faced with this enthralling story about a prophetess who has crossed many centuries, an ancient symbol (the Aeneid, the Laws of the Twelve Tables of Rome, the Church, represented in the Sistine chapel and on the walls

of the Cathedral of Sienna, for example), the Sibyl remains a metaphor for the algorithm (see William Kentridge's Waiting for the Sibyl).

Analogies exist between abstract painting and the sibylline language, that of the oracle who makes incomprehensible murmurs, sounds rhythms, an idea of trance. History often speaks of the origins of abstraction as being held at the beginning of the 20th century by women with esoteric, mystical practices, I am thinking of Hilma Af Klint and her link with theosophy. The psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan said of the woman: "She is Silence or Mysticism." The mystery still holds.

I remember a spectator saying to me one day, "That doesn't look like a woman's painting." Oh really? What exactly does that mean?

Esoterism is a world that does not yet bear a name, it bathes in obscurity. We come from this stomach, where the things of the real were barely perceptible beneath our eyelids, where words that were spoken on the outside were only sounds or noises. The walls of this world were moving and like linen on the frame we said I am. I am there and I am coming out. I am there by the trace, the mark of a color. The question of the prophetess, of the witch, that too often characterizes the feminine world, still shadowy, parallel, dissociated as a victim must stop there. No more mysticism, but plenty of painting of matter, real matter. I bring with me in this exhibition, facing that solitude a group of works created in printers' workshops. Amazing artisans who help me, teach me with their know-how and give another dimension to the work, to my search. They hold the secrets of a culture that they activate, they are treasures of the nation, and I am thankful that they let me in. It is a link to the world, to their genius.

RICHARD LEYDIER: To what extent are your engravings tied to your paintings?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: The engravings correspond to the first action of painting, normal covered up by the steps in the process. When I make a wooden printing block, I work in black and white, often with India ink and acrylic. Sometimes with charcoal and ink. I construct a space, and when I sense that it's looking back at me, that certain points rise up and hold the composition, I stop there and I engrave for hours and hours the grooves of the brush, the velvet of the charcoal, and the diffuse cloud of spray. I find graphic solutions to transcribe the

various jags, densities of material, transparencies, halftones, I zero in on shining things. A final binary, of emptiness and fullness. What I engraved will disappear but sometimes noises, traces of the tools I use will remain. The full will be visible, anchored and printed. So I want to evoke as many things as possible that I perceive in the drawing, the initial motion, the wood is also a given, living, and the movement of painting, and the tool of retranscription.

It's an approach to preserve the first gesture, its vigor, also a way of studying the painting very closely. When I engrave, I'm in my workshop at the heart of the colors and paintings that are waiting for me, that are waiting for a reaction, a response, but I concentrate meticulously on the motion of engraving, which is a rather contradictory movement, another time, at the same time outside of and at the heart of the pictorial phenomenon.

Once the blocks have been created, I transmit them to the printers that I work with. In Austria with Gabi Pechmann and Christoph Chavanne who have a monumental press, in New York at Line Press with Ruth Lingen and Nina Dine where I am working on an artist's book, in the Parisian workshop of René Tazé, with the copperplate engravers Domitille Araï and Bérangère Lipreau where I work on copper, and since November in Milan at Gate 44 with Glen Lasio and Nicolas Muratore with whom I can mix several techniques. The engravings at the exhibition came out of our recent collaboration. They sometimes combine woodcuts, silkscreen, carborundum, and touch-ups with black stone. Depending on the workshops, the environment I find, the different projects, I usually stay for a week. I like these workshops, these beings, interactions are the work are rich, their expertise and their perspectives nourish me, they renew my field of action. I push them, they push me, they also stop me and it's a very good thing.

RICHARD LEYDIER: In the engravings, a kind of face appears.

Where does it come from concretely?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: Two things. I was in my workshop during the lockdown. I worked there a lot, and a series of things took place through the painting and the context. I read texts about the Face, written by Emmanuel Levinas, Giorgio Agamben, Hans Belting, in short, all of that interested me a lot and I missed this face a lot, of course. The text by the American art critic Dave Hickey about the work of Joan Mitchell in her catalogue *Sunflowers* (ed. Steidl) made me reflect even more directly.

He talked about her work in a secular way, and I understood it as if it were at the very heart of the phenomenon of nature, directly retranscribing this whole, without critical reversal, without empiricism, by the sole proof of painting, stripped of the details of the evocation of being.

A bit cut off from the world, as we all were at that time, cut off from nature, from the other, I had, by chance and thanks to Philippe Marin, several frames with me. I first worked around a 250 cm x 150 cm format, the limits of my body with the arms outstretched, a high upward vertical. The face incarnated there suddenly. Then right away, I had no more color, no more resin to pursue the project, canvases with acrylic came together, in black ink and structured like mortar, sort of monoliths or figures with stones. When that period of lockdown came to an end, the doors opened again, the gaze of the other, the spectator came back, and a new way of working came about. I started working on my engraving projects again, choosing wood in the initial 250 cm x 150 cm format. An oval form imposed itself, forming a large portrait. By adding on the blocks, one after the other to construct the image, the necessity of masking the gaze and the vertical of the name allowed me to stabilize the eye of the beholder in the upward format.

In the same period, I started an artist's book project, in which there is a convergence of engravings and a fac-simile called "L'amour," a part of Jacques Lacan's seminar, "Les non-dupes errent." In this text, he studies the relationship between the three dimensions of language, the symbolic, the real, and the imaginary, and me, overlaying it, blocking the text either by transparency on the different qualities of paper, I react by printing woodblocks that form knots of painting, portraits, and sometimes bodies, hands in the intimacy of the book. The face comes back and lets itself be seen then is immersed again. The stream of text allows itself to be read then pauses again.

RICHARD LEYDIER: You have just created your first sculpture.

A big bronze one. A new episode has begun.

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: Yes, closely following my path and my taste for sculpture, a couple collector friends invited me to create a piece for their house. Thinking about the location, and spatializing my intention, I drew this almost levitating body, on the edge of flight. Next, I made it out of plaster, rubble, wood, branches, wax, and silicon. I was working on all the steps of its creation at the foundry Kunstgiesserei de St Gall

in Switzerland. Many other things could have happened, more fragmentary elements in resonance with my painting. But a body is what made itself manifest. This sculpture is the first of a whole world that is redefining my relationship to form.

“Olympe Racana-Weiler in conversation  
with Jim Dine”

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Page 9/13

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JIM DINE: When did you first know that you were going to be a painter, I mean seriously know.

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: There were two moments. The first was the moment of the first painting that you’ve ever really made. The first object of your desire that looks forward to your future research. Then, I think that I realized that I was going to be a painter when I started to work on words.

JIM DINE: What work was that?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: I was working with a text and I started to make a drawing of this text. I extracted a few words from it but above all I had a feeling about the whole scene, the sound of its situation. I found that the form and the content of the drawing arose from this process.

JIM DINE: What kind of text was that?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: It was Ovid’s Metamorphoses. The section about crossing the river of the dead, the to and fro movement between death and reincarnation. I then knew I was going to be an artist, I was conscious about it.

JIM DINE: But that was the moment when you knew that you were going to be an artist or a painter?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: A painter. Yes I think it was something about...

JIM DINE: More precisely, how did the idea about being a painter come about? I know you’ve worked at paintings all your life. How old were you when this happened?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: 15. But I was always obsessed by painting from the start. I remember that when I was a child, I had made a drawing from a book. It was the Renaissance portrait of a woman in sort of ecstasy, singing or in love, that sort of thing. And I was trying to come up with a way to draw her face, to replicate her expression in my drawing; I was also trying to reproduce the dress, the crazy geometry of the dress, its texture, the different light effects. I was fascinated by the figure of course but I was also struck by the structure of the clothes, my problem was how to invent...

JIM DINE: I understand, but did you know then that you were driven to be a painter?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: I think it was a choice I made as an opposition to something else.

JIM DINE: When you always drew when you were a child, did you find peace?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: Yes, I became aware that this was my calling, I see it as belonging to the research that I am into now, it is as if the research had begun then. I mean that I realized that I could create a world... It started by a gift. A gift that you can make, that you can produce by yourself. You also realize that you can produce some love for another person. But then that other person disappeared and in fact it broadens the aim of the painting.

JIM DINE: What do you have in mind when you say another person?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: Hum, the other person is the one you make the gift to. More specifically, I think that person was my mother. I was trying to make a gift to my mother. Her disappeared eyes became the world.

JIM DINE: That’s my other question. Did your parents separately encourage you, did they see your talent, or did they just see a little girl making pictures?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: No, they were happy with what I was making. Yet, for me, this was something to protect, something that I almost needed to hide... it wasn’t there yet.

JIM DINE: What do you mean?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: I felt that I needed to create that space. I mean my own rapture. When I was a little girl, I would dance all the time, I would dance for anyone and everyone. I was ecstatic. Then all of a sudden through the way beholders looked at me, I realized that I was giving everything out, that I was giving away a very intimate part of myself. Through dance I realized that that whole thing came from me and that the support mattered to me. In fact, the second moment when I understood that painting was happening was when that object of desire was shifted, displaced.

JIM DINE: Did it really work like that?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: I was just happy, that’s all... I could dance for hours. I had a certain sense of presence and of giving, a sense that my mother passed on. At 11, I felt the other persons’ look on me, it was almost intrusive. And I thought that it wasn’t my

way to go, I mean working on that exaltation. I think that this is the reason why I stopped and I started to paint.

JIM DINE: Does painting give you peace?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: Because it gave me peace but also because I could see the body that I was creating.

JIM DINE: I see, the other was too ephemeral, like a vapor, this was more material.

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: Yes indeed, because I felt that I could totally enjoy myself with painting, it created more complexity. I needed a coat, to create a coat for this body.

JIM DINE: To protect it?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: To be with me. I had to have this mirror. This body gave me a lot to produce. The observation of this body through the perspective of dance taught me to put a mask on this face, to make movement, and I also learned how the body is made...

JIM DINE: But it's also the way that you learn to create an illusion (and to trust that illusion) like a painting. You were training for painting.

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: I don't know if you can be trained to be a painter. You either paint or you don't, but those memories were important to me. I started to paint and I transformed these experiences.

JIM DINE: When did you criticize your own painting for the first time?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: I always did.

JIM DINE: You mean it was never good enough?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: No, it came the way it did but it was always traumatic. And I didn't wish to transcribe feelings literally or to draw a literal figure. Therefore I was criticizing my own work then.

JIM DINE: Because I know you are so critical about your painting. You're good at that. Therefore when it's shit you can change it, or try to. So when was that? Let's call it the first critical moment.

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: I always was. I mean that I always have observed the world, everyone's habits, their desires. At first, I was almost sorry to paint.

JIM DINE: Why?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: What I could see in my painting is that I was killing my mother. I mean when I started to paint, what I saw was a beheading, a separation.

JIM DINE: I don't understand.

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: It was very clear, that's what I saw. I started in that studio in the 13th arrondissement, my mother was sick then...

JIM DINE: This was the abstract studio where you were training?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: Yes. I would always see her body come and go. And I started to see the death, and it came through my hand. This is what truth can do, in the painting something about the material that one uses is infused with the life that comes, something that you cannot make disappear, something that you have to face. Anyway, this had nothing to do with abstraction, I got a more complex sense of what humanity is. My freedom seemed too remote and so I had to work on it. I mean that I didn't want to be explicit and didn't want to paint the story of myself. My personal history was heavy. I was not working on materials, it was not abstract. I could see how powerful I could be.

JIM DINE: So you see the power of it in the fact that painting is alive?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: Exactly.

JIM DINE: Did it make you think that the paint, I mean the material, that you had a relationship with the paint to use that material? Did you feel comfortable to use it? Was it satisfying, using material?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: Using it was more than satisfying. I think that I didn't know anything at the time, but I was fine with the idea of creating a final work, with the idea of light and the idea of color. I had an ambition, and I was curious but materials resisted me and I was trying to understand why.

JIM DINE: The challenge from the material?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: Yes the challenge from the material and that's why I was interested by the materiality of paint, I'm free with the material because...

JIM DINE: Where did that come from, the freedom? Do you think that you found a way to speak with the material?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: Yes. I also worked with other mediums and I think that it gave me a lot of freedom in my relation with painting. When I was a student at the Sorbonne's art institute, I worked with video, I was immersed in the unbridled nature of pixels. I was using Plexiglas, latex, burlap to amplify the presence of that form in space. But I needed the trace that painting allows. I had the impression that the intensity of my hand was muted. The ephemeral aspect I was using in that type of installation definitely brought me back to paint. Later, I chose to train with craftsmen, I would mime their gestures, I wanted

to get to know their tools, and this broadened my relation to the material.

JIM DINE: It gave you a language. Let me ask you something else: when did you find that you had the power to paint?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: The power to paint or the power in general.

JIM DINE: I'm not talking about the fact that you are born with the power. Tell me when you think the power of the paint gave you the impetus to go forward.

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: I think it came when I made my first big painting when I was 18.

JIM DINE: And were you in the abstract studio.

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: Yes, and I was scared of my condition as a woman.

JIM DINE: Why? What did that have to do with women?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: It's when you realize that women are extremely misogynistic with themselves. Something to do with this new strength in my hand and I had to learn to be comfortable with it.

JIM DINE: Why, and what about a man who paints?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: Well, it's not my problem...

JIM DINE: So it was the condition of Olympe.

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: Yes it was.

JIM DINE: When did you drop the idea of going to the abstract studio and wanted to be just a painter? Because you know when they teach this thing, that you can go here, you can go there, you can do abstract, you can do figurative, forget that...

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: When I was there I never thought I would go abstract, I sensed that there was something hermetic in using the word abstract. And I started to see this cacophony. I mean the dramatic, tragic, comic quality in painting.

JIM DINE: Exactly, when you paint you're not a machine, you are like a living organism outside the body.

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: That's right, what I had seen as a child, was one idea of painting, of modernity, support-surface, kinetic art...

JIM DINE: Because your father brought you to it, wanted you to know culture.

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: Yes and also because my mother's family, having been in construction work, had a very specific idea of modernity, of the straight line, and of proportions. Maybe this was about the desire to move away from the living, from nature,

from its germination, and from animals. So what I saw in my childhood was the work of people like Louis Cane, Viallat, the Poirier... and on the other hand, I remember discovering something else with my father in Rome when I was 11 in the church of Santa Maria del Popolo with its two Caravaggio paintings. And I felt that this painting was unique and masterful. A world in itself with discontinuous temporalities. A painting that only arose from painting. At that time my father was dark and sick. He showed me all or some of his favorite churches in Rome, just like in a pilgrimage without words. He was showing me painting, the strange part of it. And it was a grand meeting with something autonomous, with something that didn't need me to look at it to exist. We didn't need to talk. And I think it changed me.

JIM DINE: But you've met Caravaggio when you were eleven. You said hello Caravaggio.

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: Yes and felt that I was saying hello to a lonely life of work.

JIM DINE: There you go! That's it!

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: Prior to that experience I had met two old painters.

JIM DINE: Called?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: One was Romanian Horia Damian, a friend of my mother. I remember his studio like a white nightmare of freedom and construction.

JIM DINE: Did you smell the oil paint?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: I did, and I saw his eyes. And the next one was Jean Olivier Hucleux, I was 17, he was a friend of my father.

JIM DINE: Who is that?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: A French painter, he created his paintings on the canvas with the grid. In front of his big portraits, we talked about the passage of light, which shines on things and makes them completely abstract. And he showed me his abstract work, which were called Square, as well as another work called Deprogrammations. He started from the fragment of a square and rebuilt it. And I was fascinated by that. The final deprogramming of the figure of the memory of language. I started to be interested in the similar mechanisms in every size, about that passage between the micro and the macro-cosmos. I was interested by this passage, how the figure opens one door to another world. And then, a few years after I saw your Pinocchio, Double Iron Man at Michael Woolworth's studio for one of your poetry readings. It looked as if the interior of the body

came outside, as if the imaginary body came outside. And for me it was the start of your abstract prints, maybe.

JIM DINE: Really? But don't speak about me, I want to hear about you. Let's go back to the two Caravaggio. Speak about the way that he paints the horse, what do you think? Were you aware about the way that he painted it, not about the image? Were you aware of the physicality of the paint?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: I think this came way after, the way that people painted.

JIM DINE: It's a technical question but it's a question that's important.

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: I agree, but I was subjugated.

JIM DINE: How he used paint, you never had an interest for that, you were never inspired by how someone spoke through paint?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: Do you mean for Caravaggio? Of course I was, but that happened later in front of The Martyrdom of Saint Ursula. I saw how he painted. But at that time I wasn't interested by that, I was interested in the impossible space he composed.

JIM DINE: Do you think that the two paintings are influenced by the way that they are put in, they are so near you cannot get back, you have to put the light on...

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: In my memories I see them far away from each other. When I went back to see them, I had to bend my body to see, I had to adjust to that painting.

JIM DINE: It's almost claustrophobic I think, I couldn't get back far enough from the horse.

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: I think it's important to address the question of representation.

JIM DINE: What do you mean by it?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: Actually, I want to think about the moment when a painting is finished.

JIM DINE: De Kooning said he never thought a painting is finished. And I understand it completely. When is a painting finished? Maybe if you are a representational painter who is very sharp, like let's say Balthus: he had a literary intention about making an idea, and painting it as best he could because he was a gifted draftsman and painter. And so, we knew when it was finished, whether sometimes it look unfinished, which is the ones I prefer. You have to be a very sophisticated painter to make it look like that, as he was to paint like that and then to leave some areas. And

yet De Kooning was never satisfied and never thought his paintings were finished, he kept scraping them off. In a way it was an open-ended experience for De Kooning, it was full of self-doubt, but also a quest for perfection.

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: Open?

JIM DINE: Yeah open-ended. But to be an abstract painter, to be a painter like you, who paints from pure feeling and emotion it can be never finished, I feel, do you?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: I'm not sure. When I start a painting it could be finished immediately. When I begin a painting, I can stop to paint and see that it is something and leave it like that.

JIM DINE: For sure, because as painters, we are like Kings and Queens, we are the ones who say it's finished

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: Yeah, but at the same time, I also think that doubt is part and parcel of painting itself, I mean that the image has to be tested again and again. And you know that it is finished when doubt itself becomes the subject of the painting. You just said "if you are an abstract painter", but I'm not interested in that.

JIM DINE: I know, I know you don't care about that.

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: I feel that there is a double temporality, it is something that just goes through my body very quickly, it's very alive and fugitive. Then I construct and build something. And so, in my work process there is a kind of gradation in the way I use different materials and how I create layers. For instance, I can begin with acrylic, then add oil, then polyurethane; and so all these additions without waiting for them to dry, create something else, a sort of object a bodily presence. So my painting is like a living body but it's not representational.

JIM DINE: What else we can say about it? The only thing I can also see is that your painting, when it's a success, becomes an object. We can see that it's as an object. Of course, the most profound paintings are objects.

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: Right, I work with my oblivious memory and my hand is proof of that forgotten memory. And this is why I don't use figures.

JIM DINE: But in your work you work with figures.

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: I use something else than the figure.

JIM DINE: Well, in the prints you use the figure.

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: Of course I use the figures on the prints but it's another kind of work.

JIM DINE: No, it's your work.

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: It's my work, of course, but in my painting the only figure is the mark of the brush.

JIM DINE: Yeah, but there is an allusion too. It's not like in Rothko, who doesn't allude to the figure. De Kooning alludes to the figure, to the landscape, to the still life.

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: Ok, I see what you mean. Yes the figure, if there is one, is not representational, and maybe, for Rothko an internal figure manifests itself in his painting, but be it abstract or not, the figure in Rothko is his paintings.

JIM DINE: He is still not using figures. He's using colors to speak about the figure. He's using colors because it gives something else over the whole surface of the canvas, and that's very different from an exact square or rectangle. In the end what is next is rather profound silence but it's not a figure... Un-figured.

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: But I think that these abstract painters—and I'm thinking specifically of a painting by Richter where he seems to appropriate Bonnard's full palette—created a method with which they could continue to produce their paintings.

JIM DINE: Because his is very intelligent. You cannot be cynical if you are not intelligent. This is a very good conversation, as I never had before. Let's talk about your painting. What you say is so profound. What about the relation between your painting and your prints?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: They are very different. When I print, I don't do prints but a print, a monotype. I don't make editions, these are prints that are printed uniquely so that some people would call them monoprints although they could be an edition. So let's call them works on paper. When I paint, I don't follow a specific design. And if a pattern appears, I test it, I dissolve it and forget it. Because of the nature of carving, I begin with forms. As soon as you begin to cut the block, signs begin to appear, because when you cut as opposed to painting you don't have colors, at the beginning. So I always begin with a form, that form is usually full of mistakes and I work on it with a manual gouge or electric tools, and those tools are super important in this difference between painting and carving. Then I will lose that figure or that sign, I will gradually neutralize it more and more in the printing process.

JIM DINE: What's important too is that wood is concrete, the carving is concrete.

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: Ok sure, the wood is concrete, that's true.

Wood is part and parcel of the structure of the final work because of its grain and its rhythm.

JIM DINE: What about narrative in your painting?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: What interests me is that painting is a source of knowledge that words cannot materialize. At the end of the process I just see something that emerges from a kind of metabolism, from a multiplicity of temporalities, it's right in your face, "like that", embodies, real.