

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER

The French Argentine painter, Olympe Racana-Weiler was born in 1990 and 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 Sybille/The Song of the Sybil*. Her work is featured in the first-floor boudoir of the Hôtel Richer de Belval, 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, you can see a dialogue between Racana-Weiler's painting and woodcut in her new solo show, *Romance with a Bird* at the 21Contemporary Gallery in Nice.

In March 2023, art critic and curator, Richard Leydier offered Racana-Weiler a solo exhibition at the GGL Foundation in Montpellier. The exhibition, which is running till September, is titled *Journal* and combines her paintings, drawings and engravings.

Olympe has pursued a number of collaborations with leading creatives, including a set of monumental woodcuts at the Steindruck Printing Studio in Austria. She also teamed up with Gate 44 in Milan to produce engravings that combine wood, silkscreen monotype and carborundum. Her first artbook with Line Press Limited in Brooklyn, and a bronze sculpture at the Kunstgiesserei Saint-Gall in Switzerland.

Her work can be found amongst collections and at foundations in France, Italy, Austria, Romania and Germany as well as in Asia and the US.

She has been reviewed in ArtPress, Télérama, 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.

- 2014 Degree in Visual Art and Art Theory - Saint-Charles Centre - Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne.
- 2018 Awarded the 22nd *Antoine Marin Prize* for painting. Awarded the *Pierre Cardin Prize* for painting. Beaux-Arts Academy - Institut de France.

PERMANENT INSTALLATION

- 2021 LE CHANT DE LA SYBILLE (THE SONG OF THE SYBIL), boudoir of Hôtel Richer de Belleval, home of the GGL Helenis Foundation, Place de la Canourgue, Montpellier, France.

INDIVIDUAL EXHIBITIONS

- 2023 JOURNAL, Fondation GGL, Hôtel Richier de Belleval, Montpellier.
Commissariat: Richard Leydier.
- 2022 ROMANCE WITH A BIRD, 21Contemporary, Nice.
- 2021 BEHIND THE EYES, Cuturi Gallery, Singapour.
SOMETHING ABOUT SILENCE, Éric Dupont Gallery, Paris.
- 2019 NEON DRIVING, Éric Dupont Gallery, Paris.
- 2018 I CAME BACK FROM PARADISE AND I'M FRANKLY HUNGRY, Jérôme Pauchant Gallery, Paris.

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2022 PRENEZ GARDE À LA PEINTURE (BEWARE OF THE PAINTING), Éric Dupont Gallery, Paris.
VEINES D'OPALE (OPAL VEINS), Espace Voltaire, Paris. Curators: Paulo Iverno, Anaïs Madani and Alicia Mineaud.
OSEZ MONTREUIL (DREAM MONTREUIL), La Fabrique Centre d'Art, Montreuil.
Curators: Evelyne Artaud and Bruno Brenard.
MATIÈRE DE LA PENSÉE, DOMAINE DE L'IMAGINAIRE (ON THE SUBJECT OF THOUGHT, AN IMAGINARY WORLD), 7.5 Isabelle Suret, Paris. Curators: Isabelle Suret and Camilo Racana.
- 2021 ALEPH, Éric Dupont Gallery, Paris.
ARTPARIS, Éric Dupont Gallery stand, Grand Palais Éphémère, Champ-de-Mars, Paris.
- 2020 DANS LA TÊTE C'EST MEXICO/MEXICO ON THE MIND, Éric Dupont Gallery, Paris.
IN FULL BLOOM, Cuturi Gallery, Singapour.
ARTPARIS, Éric Dupont Gallery stand, Grand Palais, Paris.
- 2019 GALERISTES/GALLERISTS, Éric Dupont Gallery stand, Le Carreau du Temple, Paris.
ACCROCHAGE D'ÉTÉ/SUMMER INSTALLATION, Éric Dupont Gallery, Paris.
ART BRUSSELS, Éric Dupont Gallery stand, Brussels, Belgium.
ARTPARIS, Éric Dupont Gallery stand, Grand Palais, Paris.
- 2018 GALERISTES (GALLERISTS), Éric Dupont Gallery stand, Le Carreau du Temple, Paris.
LES AMIS DE CHRISTIAN PARASCHIV EN ROUMANIE IV/FRIENDS OF CHRISTIAN PARASCHIV IN ROMANIA IV, Romana Gallery, Bucharest, Romania.
22ND ANTOINE MARIN PRIZE FOR PAINTING, Julio Gonzalez Cultural Centre, Arcueil, France.
- 2017 3'N THE MORNING - NOIRE ÉTAIT MON OMBRE (BLACK WAS MY SHADOW): QUENTIN EUVERTE - OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER, Michel Journiac Gallery, Saint-Charles Centre, Panthéon-Sorbonne, Paris. Curator: Jérôme Pauchant.

- LA PETITE COLLECTION (THE SMALL COLLECTION), Bertrand Grimond Gallery, Paris. Curator: Florence Lucas.
 LA NUIT RONDE VOL. 1 (CIRCULAR NIGHT VOL.1), Studio Plus 30, Paris. Curators: Claudia Squitieri and Sayoko Papillon.
 MRS, Hôtel de l'Industrie, Paris. Maître H. Poulain and Maître S. Aubert.
 À VIF AU 100/RAW AT THE 100, 100 ECS, Paris. Alexandre Donnat Collection.
 QUAND DENIS RENCONTRE PHILIPPE (WHEN DENIS MEETS PHILIPPE), Chaideny, Le Plessis-Robinson.
- 2014 VENEZ BOUFFER UN ZODIAQUE (COME BINGE ON A ZODIAC SIGN) - CHAPTER 3, Le Lac, Brussels, Belgium.
- 2013 SALON DE L'IMPRÉSENTE (IMPRESENTING SHOW), Saint-Charles Centre - Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne.

PRESS / BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 2022 ARTPRESS, "INTRODUCTION - OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER" by Richard Leydier, February 2022, n°496.
- 2021 ARTPRESS, "Montpellier, Fondation GGL Helenis" by Richard Leydier, October 2021, n°492.
 NUMERO.COM, "A Montpellier, des oeuvres d'art exceptionnelles s'invitent dans un hôtel de luxe" ("In Montpellier, outstanding artworks are on show in a luxury hotel") by Matthieu Jacquet, July 2021.
 LE JOURNAL DU DIMANCHE, "Plaisir Art" ("Art Pleasure") by Bruna Basini, Sunday 1st August 2021, n°3890.
 LE FIGARO, "A Montpellier, l'hôtel Richer de Belleval se pare de cinq créations contemporaines" ("In Montpellier, Hôtel Richer de Belleval is decorated in five contemporary creations" by François Delétraz, July 2021.
- 2020 TÉLÉRAMA HORS-SÉRIE, "Une histoire de la peinture française contemporaine" ("A story of contemporary French painting") by Olivier Cena.
- 2019 TÉLÉRAMA, "La chronique d'Olivier Cena" ("Column by Olivier Cena"), February 2019.
 LE QUOTIDIEN DE L'ART, "Olympe Racana-Weiler - Comme un Cadran Solaire" ("Olympe Racana-Weiler - Like a Sundial"), gallery review by Juliette Soulez, February 2019, n°1654.
- 2018 BOUMBANG, "Olympe Racana-Weiler - Tous les autres soleils étaient morts" ("Olympe Racana-Weiler - All other suns are dead") by Clare Mary Puyfoulhoux, May 2018.
 ARTFORUM INTERNATIONAL, column by Lillian Davies, May 2018.
 I CAME BACK FROM PARADISE AND I'M FRANKLY HUNGRY, Interview: Olympe Racana-Weiler/Jim Dine, E-catalogue produced for the exhibition "I came back from paradise and I'm frankly hungry", Jérôme Pauchant Gallery.

ADDITIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

- 2021 KUNSTGIESSEREI, St. Gallen, Switzerland: creation of a monumental bronze sculpture, private collection.
- 2019 LINE PRESS LIMITED, Brooklyn, US: production of a book with master printer, Ruth Lingen.
- 2016 STEINDRUCK PRINTING STUDIO, Apetlon, Austria: printing of artwork with master printers, Christophe Chavanne and Gabi Pechmann.

COLLABORATIONS

- 2015 Printer at the JIM DINE STUDIO, Montrouge, France, and Dine's assistant, especially for his printed works. Creating sculptures, painting and casting bronze patina at the Manufacture Nationale de Sèvres porcelain factory in France and the Blue Mountain Fine Arts Foundry, Baker City, Oregon, USA.
- 2014-2015 MICHAEL WOOLWORTH PUBLICATIONS, Paris: assistant to printers Julien Torhy and Marc Moyano.

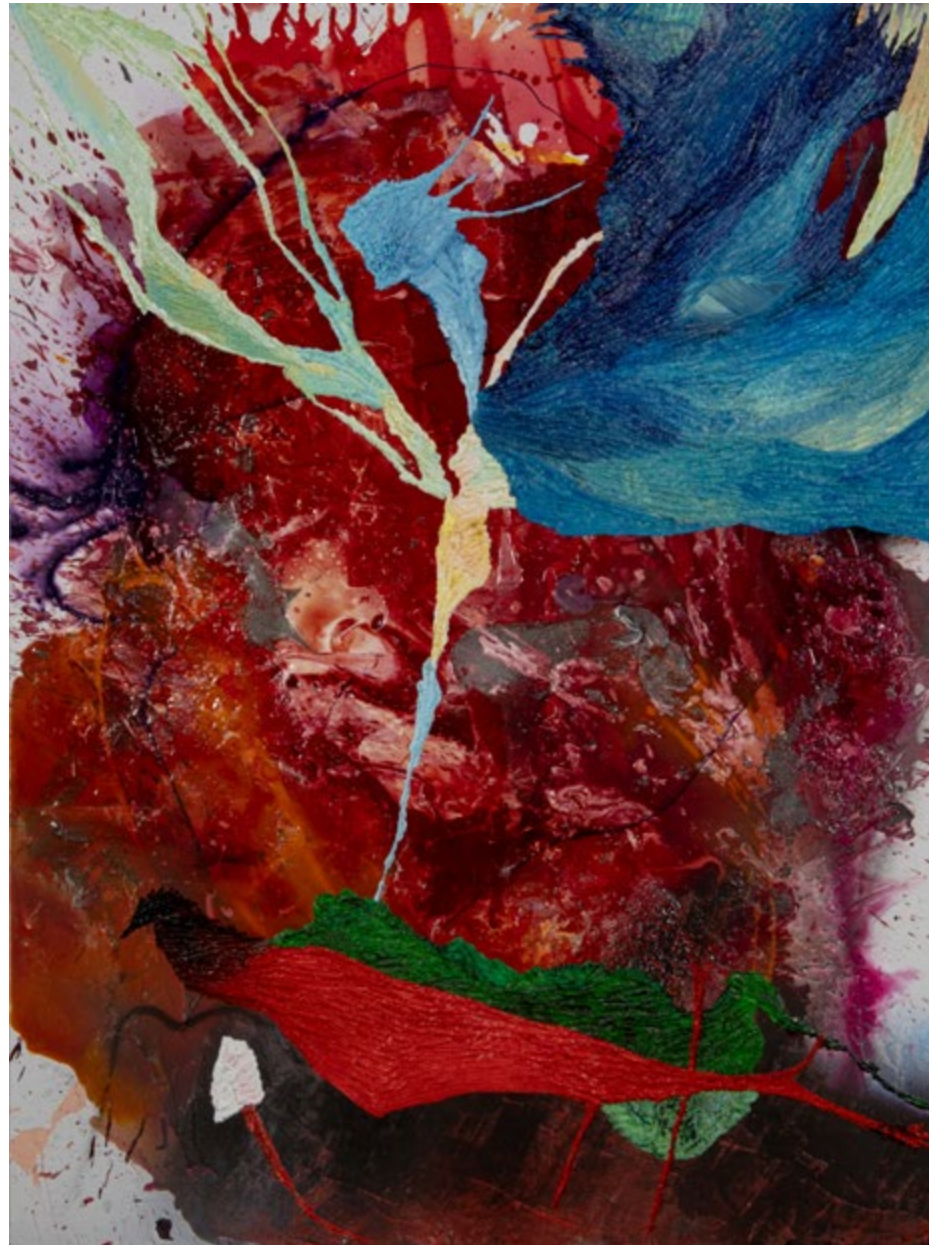
Olympe Racana-Weiler



THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE 2023
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
350 cm x 260 cm



RED SPIDER 2023
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
160 cm x 120 cm



THE FAIRIES 2023
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
160 cm x 120 cm



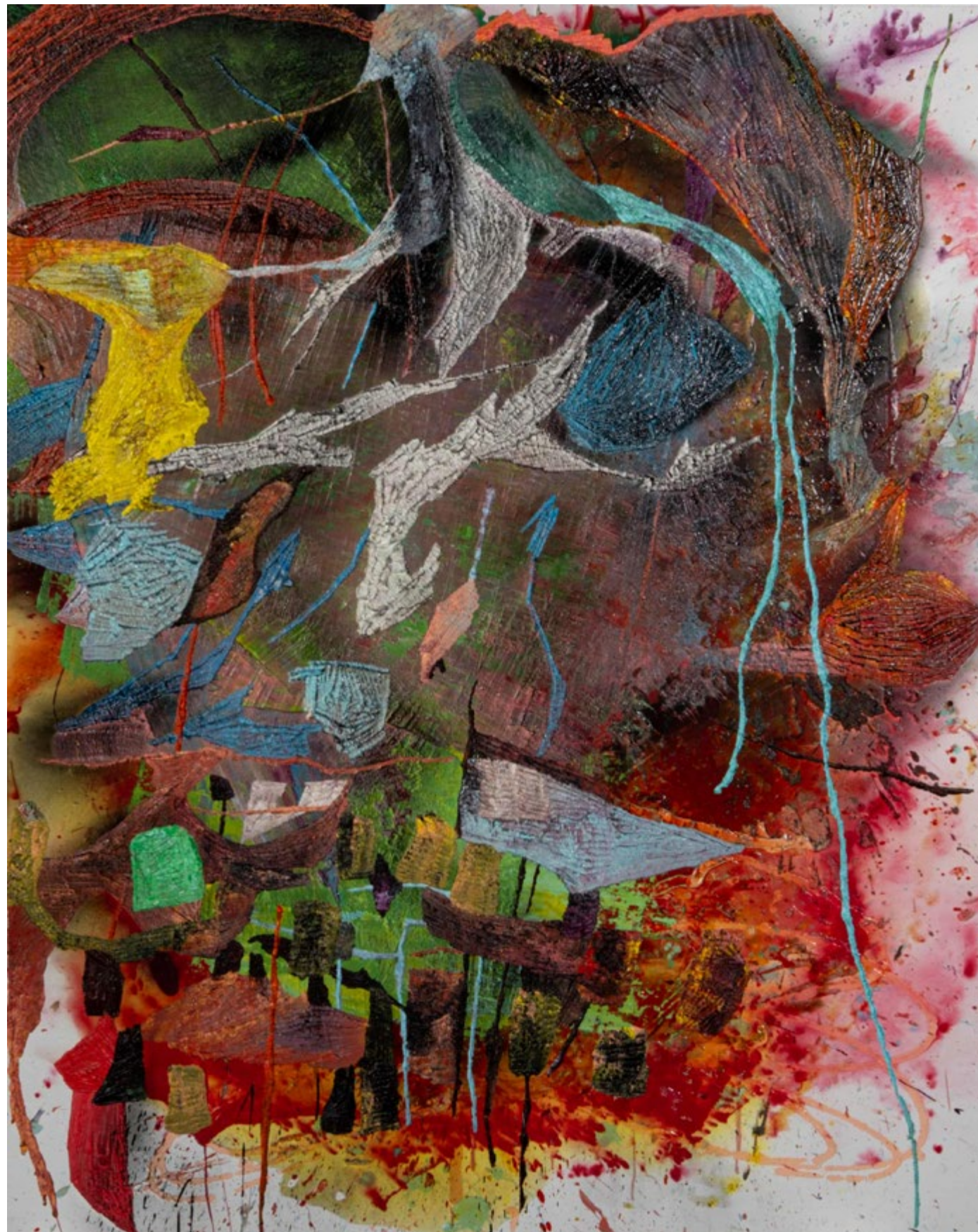
RUNNING 2023
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
160 cm x 120 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



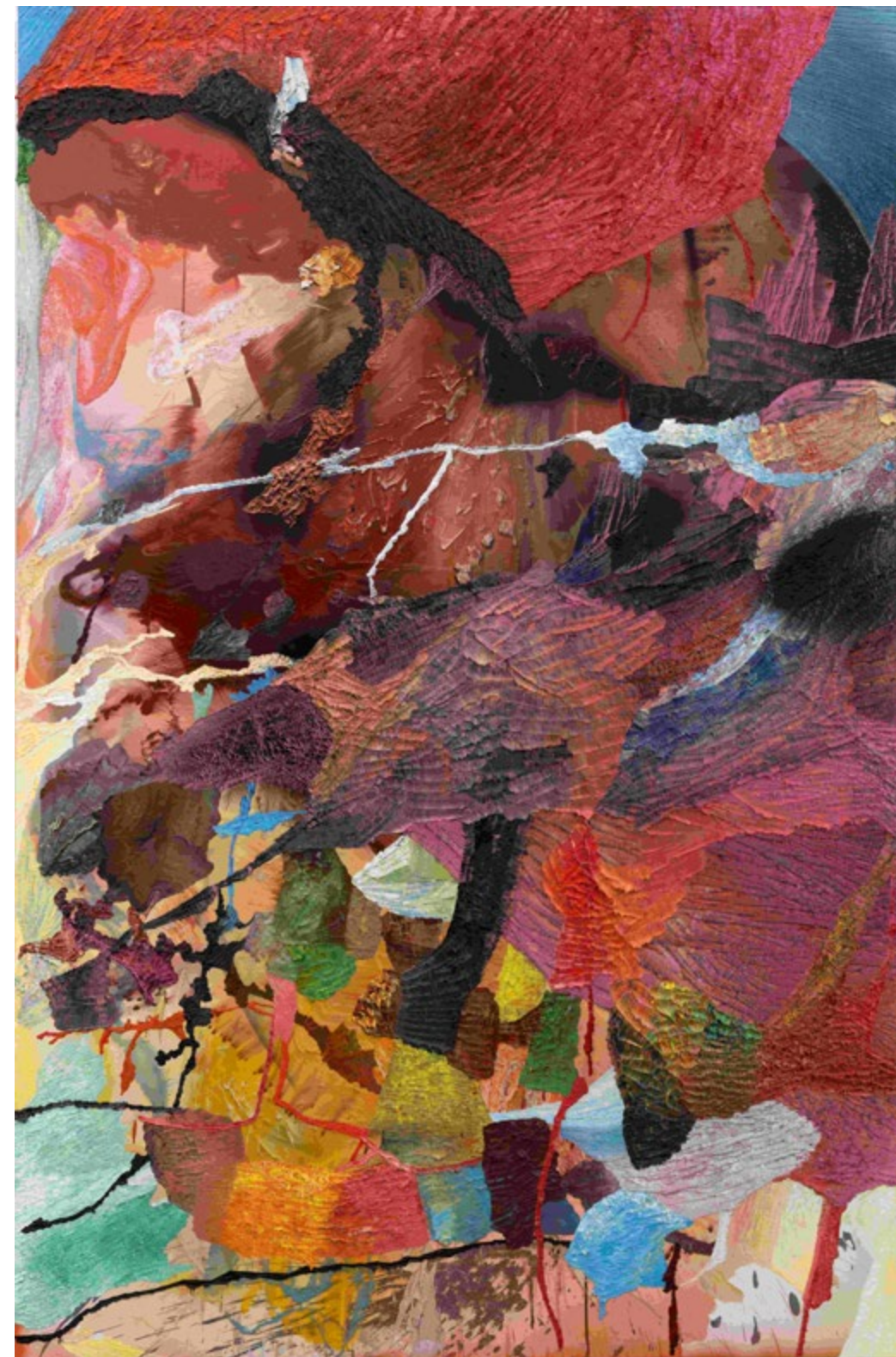
SINGING THE BLUE SONG 2022
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
200 cm x 160 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



YOUR FACE 2022
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
200 cm x 160 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



THE ROAD (diptyque) 2022
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
300 cm × 230 cm
(150 cm × 230 cm chacun)

Olympe Racana-Weiler



THE BIRD 2022
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
260 cm x 320 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



A RAW MOMENT 2022
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
240 cm x 220 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



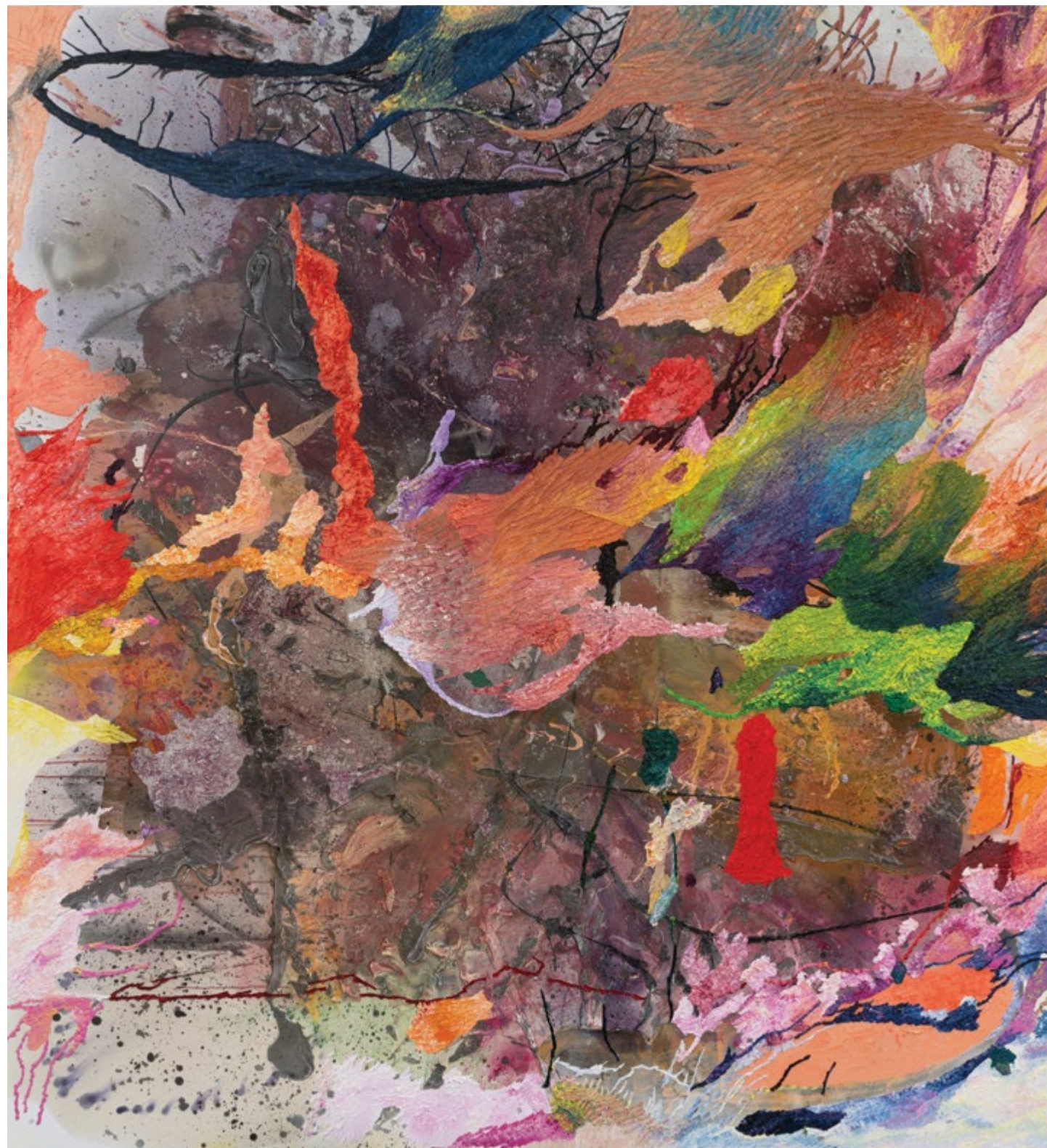
ANGELITO NEGRO 2022
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
260 cm x 320 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



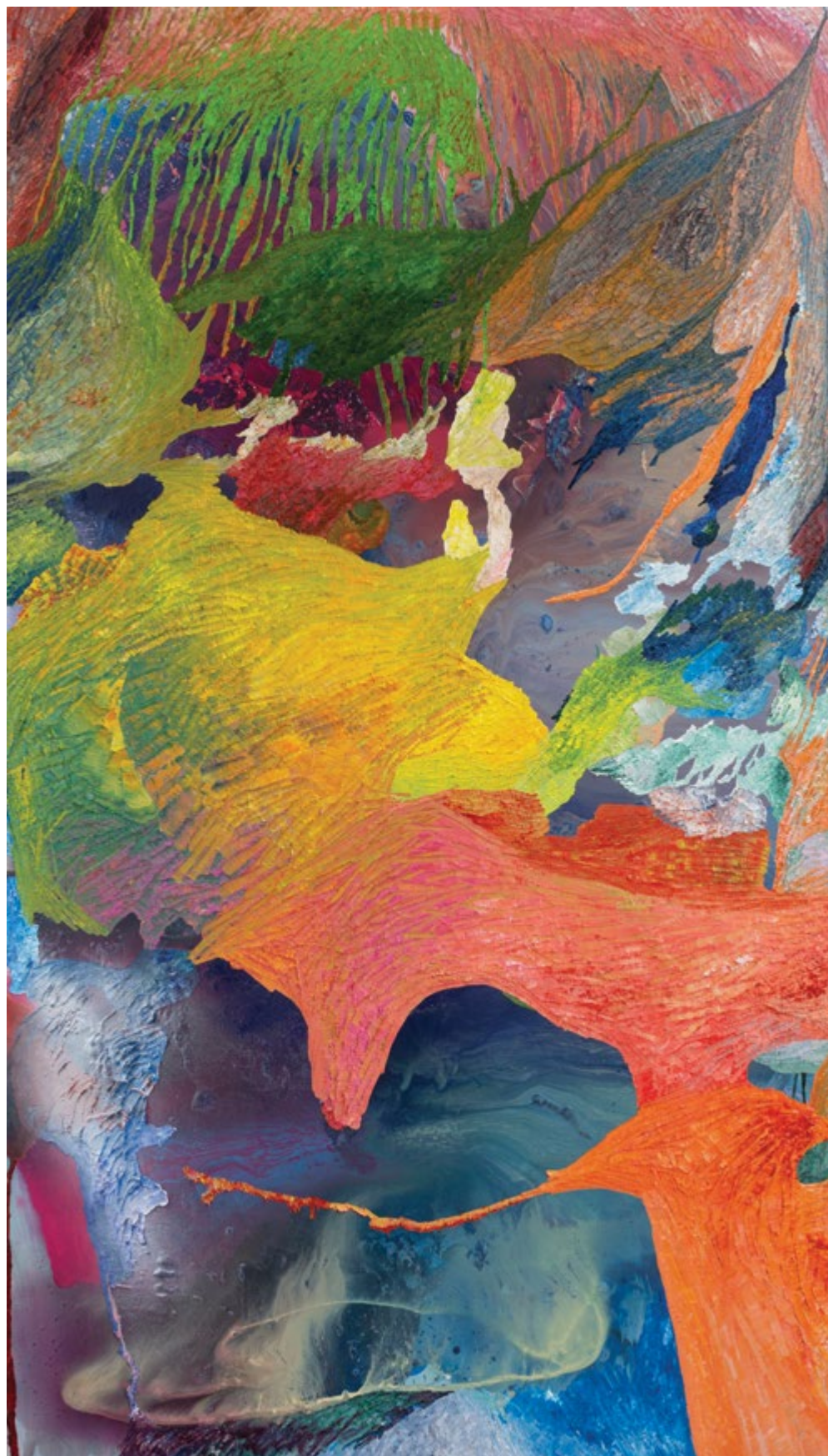
SOLSTICE 2022
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
240 cm x 220 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



CAPRICORN WINGS 2022
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
240 cm x 220 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



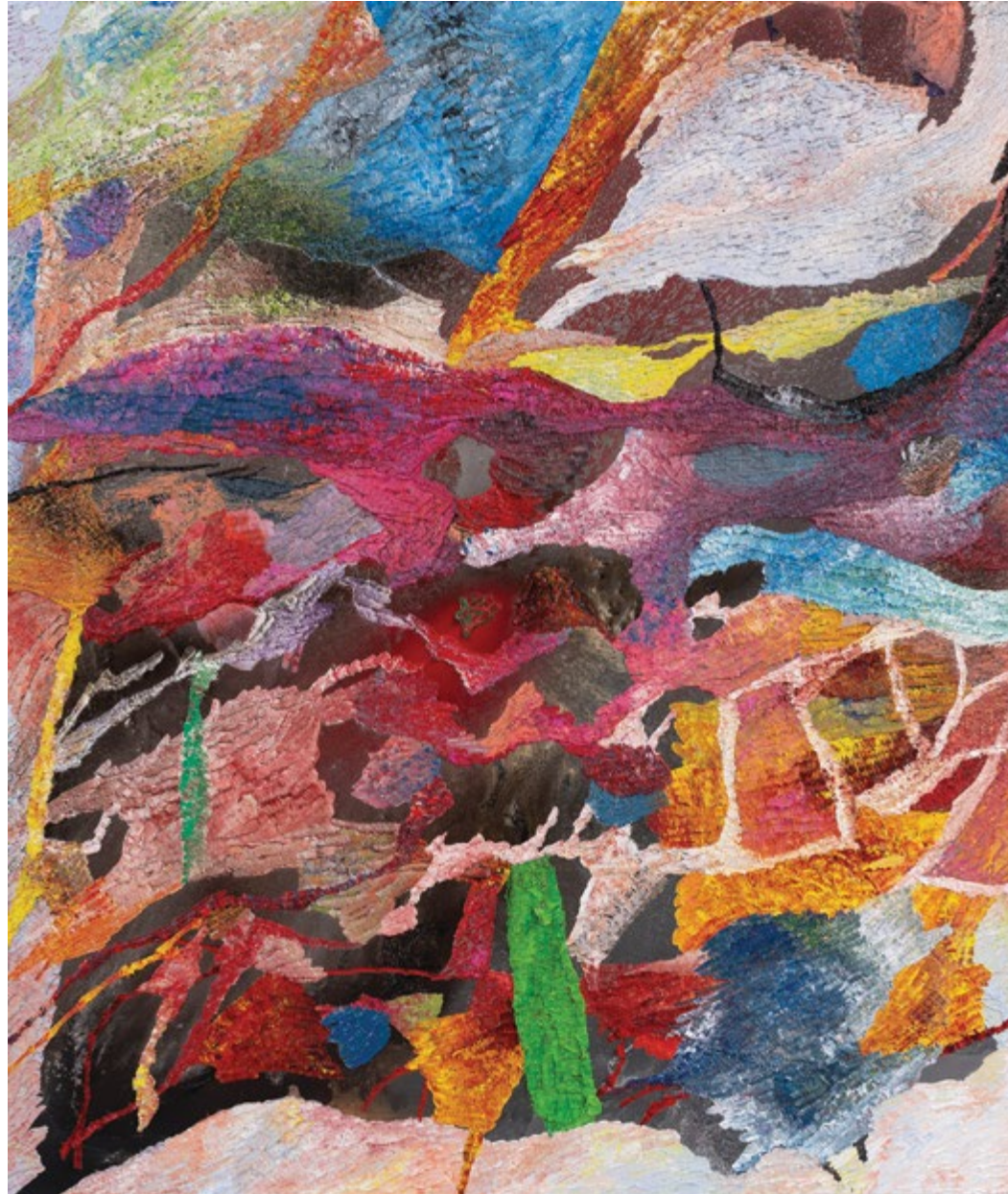
THE WOLF'S EAR 2022
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
280 cm x 160 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



THE POEM FOR BUFFON 2022
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
240 cm x 220 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



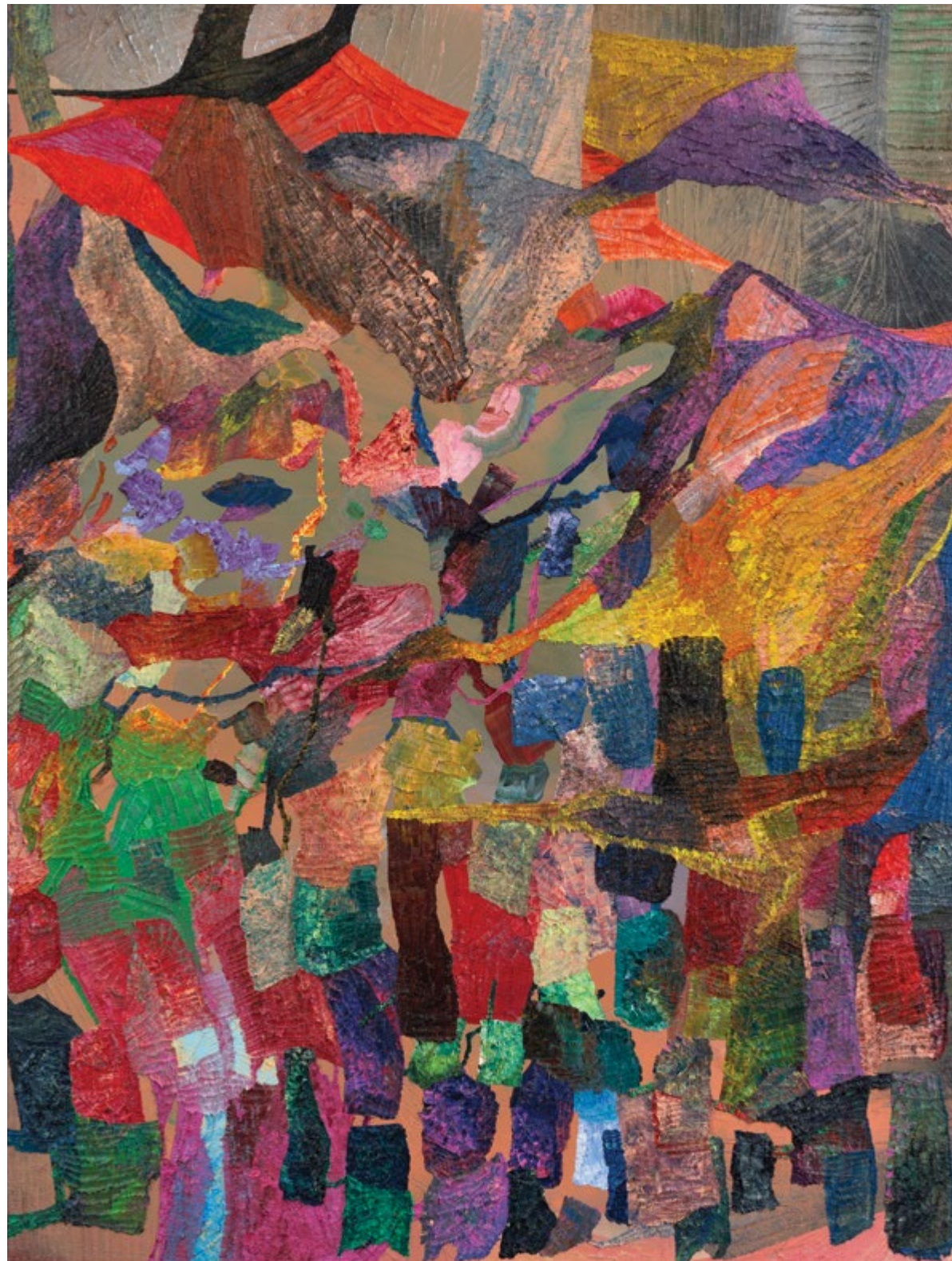
COYOTE RADAR 2022
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
130 cm x 110 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



SAIL OF CHANGE 2022
technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
160 cm x 100 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



PALENQUE 2021
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
240 cm x 180 cm



MY HIDDEN VOICE 2021
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
130 cm x 110 cm



BEHIND THE EYES 2021
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
130 cm x 110 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



UNDERSEA WAFARE 2021
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
130 cm x 110 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



PRETTY PINK, BABY BLUE 2021
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
240 cm x 180 cm



DEPARTMENT, CALVADOS 2021
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
150 cm x 130 cm



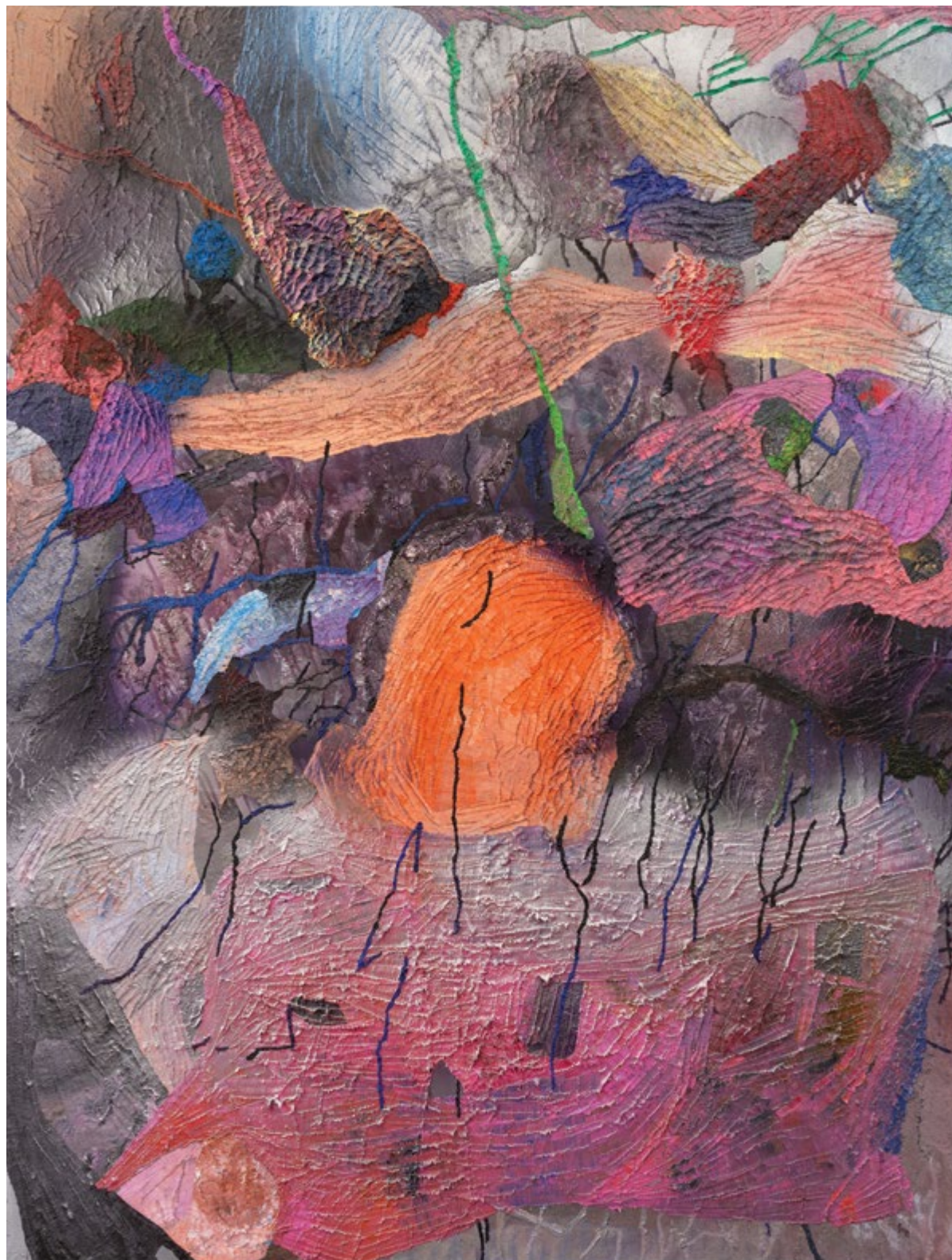
LOVE, LEAVES AND MAGENTA 2021
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
150 cm x 130 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



THE RAVINE 2021
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
150 cm x 130 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



ORANGE MAGNET 2021
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
240 cm x 180 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



THE VISIT 2020
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
250 cm x 153 cm

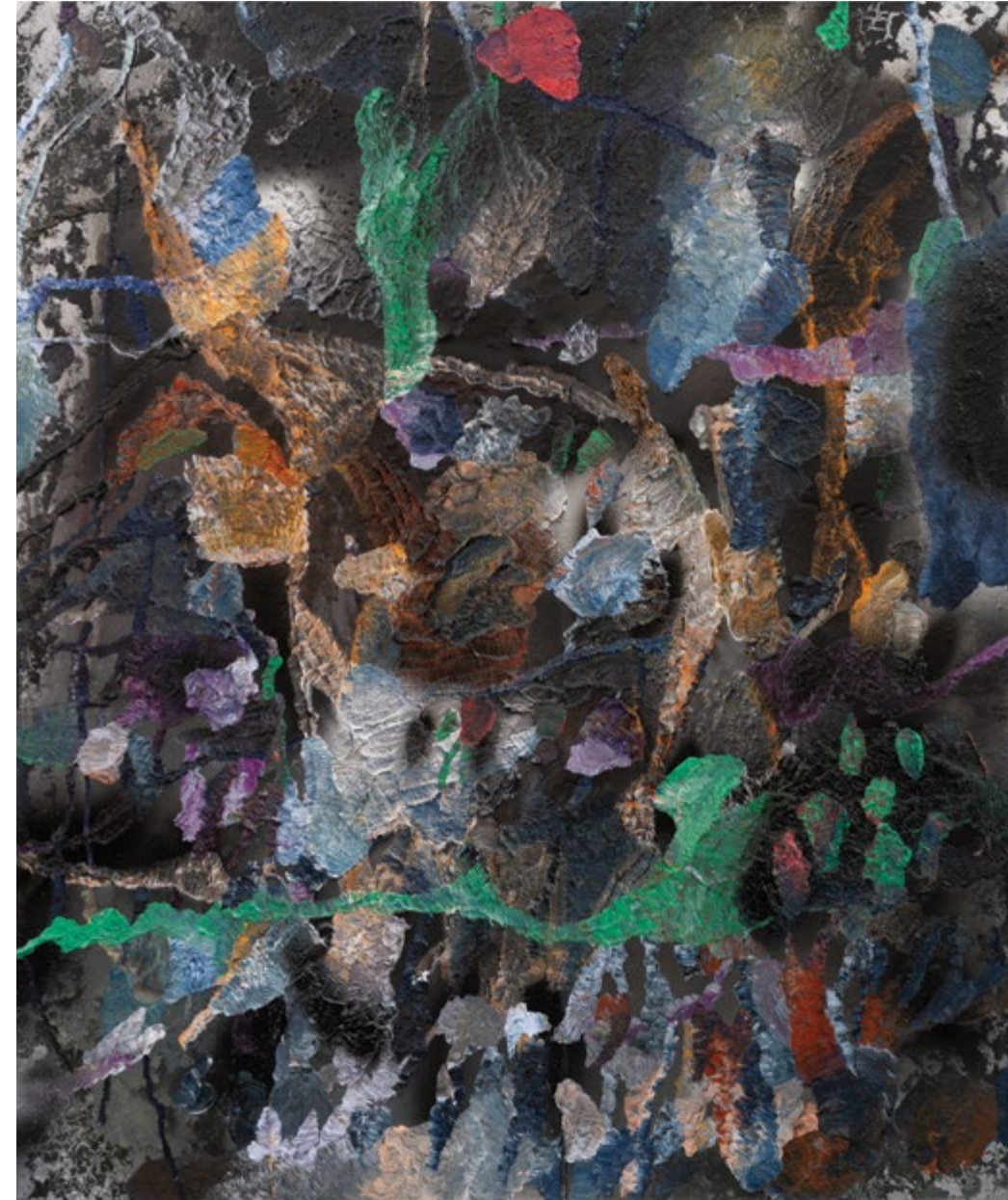


GRACE 2020
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
250 cm x 153 cm



THE SMILE 2020
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
250 cm x 153 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



SOMETHING ABOUT SILENCE (diptyque) 2018
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
130 cm × 220 cm
(130 cm × 110 cm chacun)

Olympe Racana-Weiler



THE PERSISTENCE OF DESIRE (ROUGE) 2020

Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée

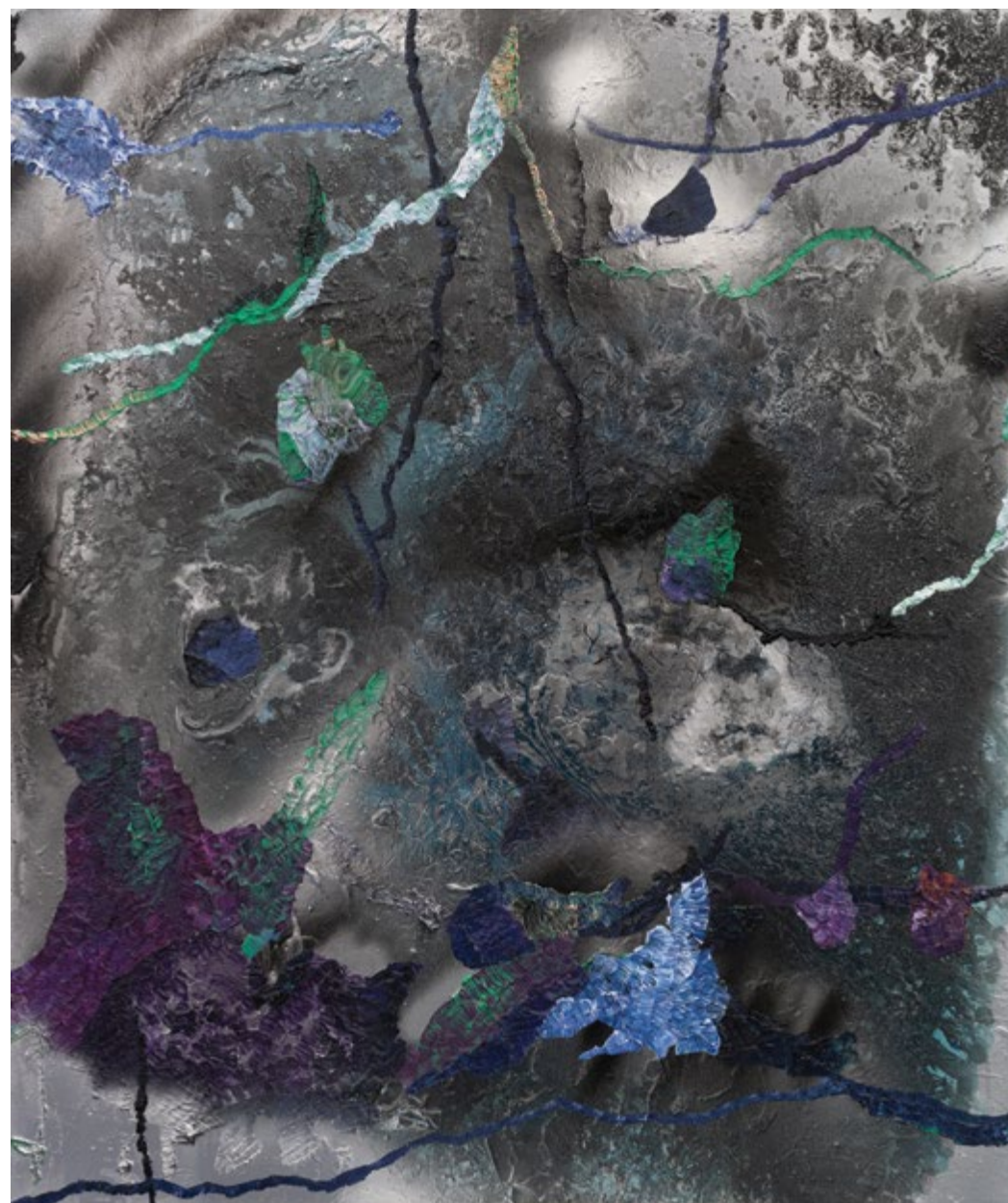
240 cm x 180 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



FAMILLE, FAMILLE, FAMILLE (triptyque) 2020
Technique mixte sur toile de lin tendue sur contreplaqué de forme ogivale,
230 cm x 450 cm
(230 cm x 150 cm chacun)

Olympe Racana-Weiler

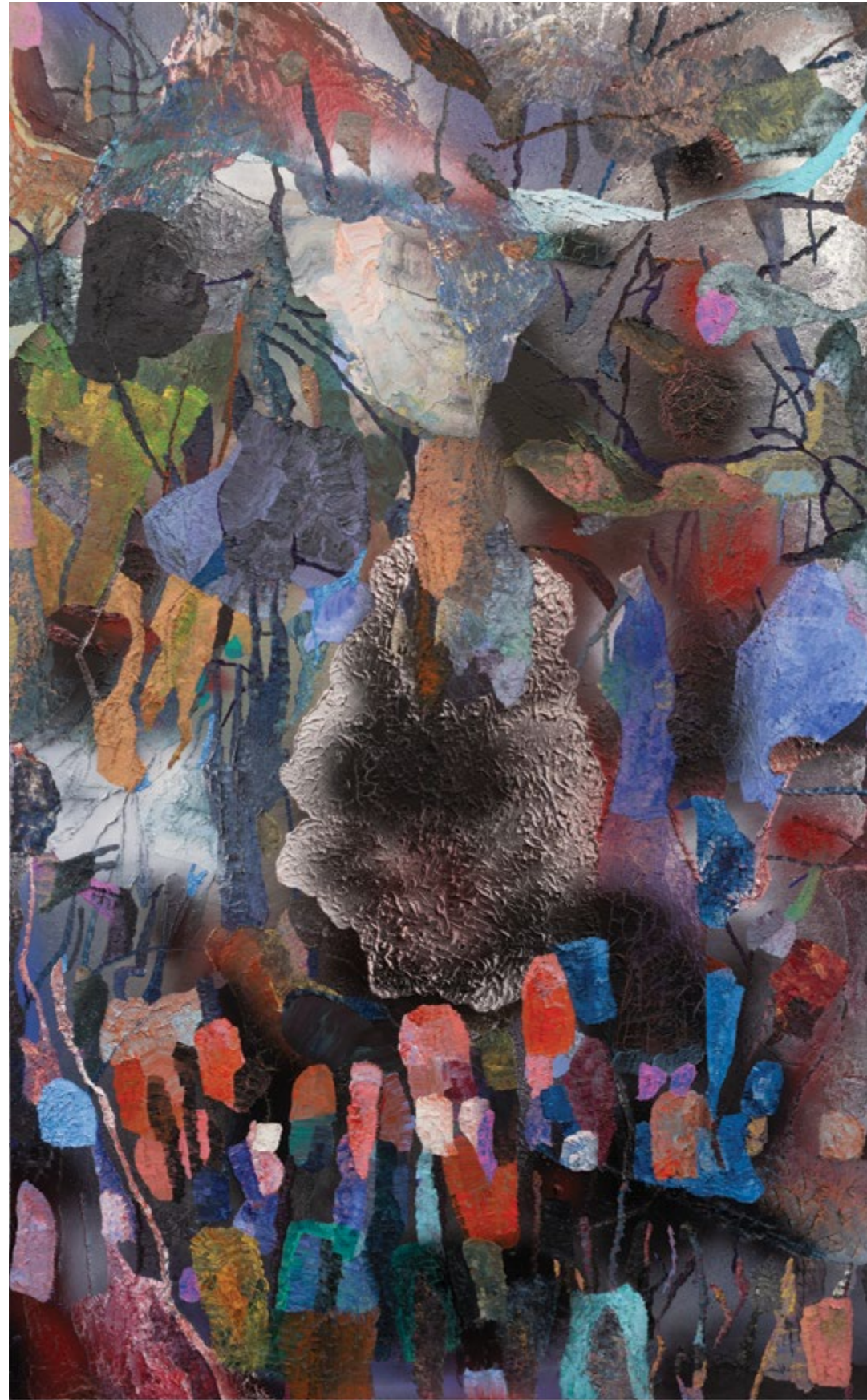


TIME I PASS IN CUBA 2020
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
130 cm x 110 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



FUR OF MY HEART 2020
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
195 cm x 130 cm



WOLFCRAFT 2020
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
250 cm x 153 cm



A WOMAN'S PAINTING (LE SEMEUR) 2020
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
250 cm x 153 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



DAS BUCH VOM WALD 2020
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
250 cm x 153 cm



THE SILVER GARDEN 2020
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
183 cm x 135 cm



THE BETWEEN THE LEGS PAINTING 2020
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
183 cm x 135 cm



ROI GRIS (SUMMER) 2020
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
183 cm x 135 cm



BVM1 2020
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
150 cm × 120 cm



BVM2 2020
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
150 cm × 120 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



PUSSY PAINTING 2020
Technique mixte sur contreplaqué
210 cm x 120 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



LE GRAND BAISER 2020
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
230 cm x 350 cm



THE IRON MASK VERSION 1 2020
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
150 cm x 120 cm



THE IRON MASK VERSION 2 2020
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
150 cm x 120 cm



FROM THE FRONT 2020
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
250 cm x 153 cm



THE OVAL MIRROR 2020
Technique mixte sur toile de lin préparée
250 cm x 153 cm

I've been creating woodcuts since childhood, to try and understand where the pictorial process begins and ends. Engraving means transcribing that exact process. The mark-making happens in just an instant, like a sound. It's an impulse. Translating it into an engraving takes time. It's an arduous task, yet of the moment – responding to the phenomenon or phenomena of the medium.

The wood also has its own identity, being more than a simple framework, instead having its own intention.

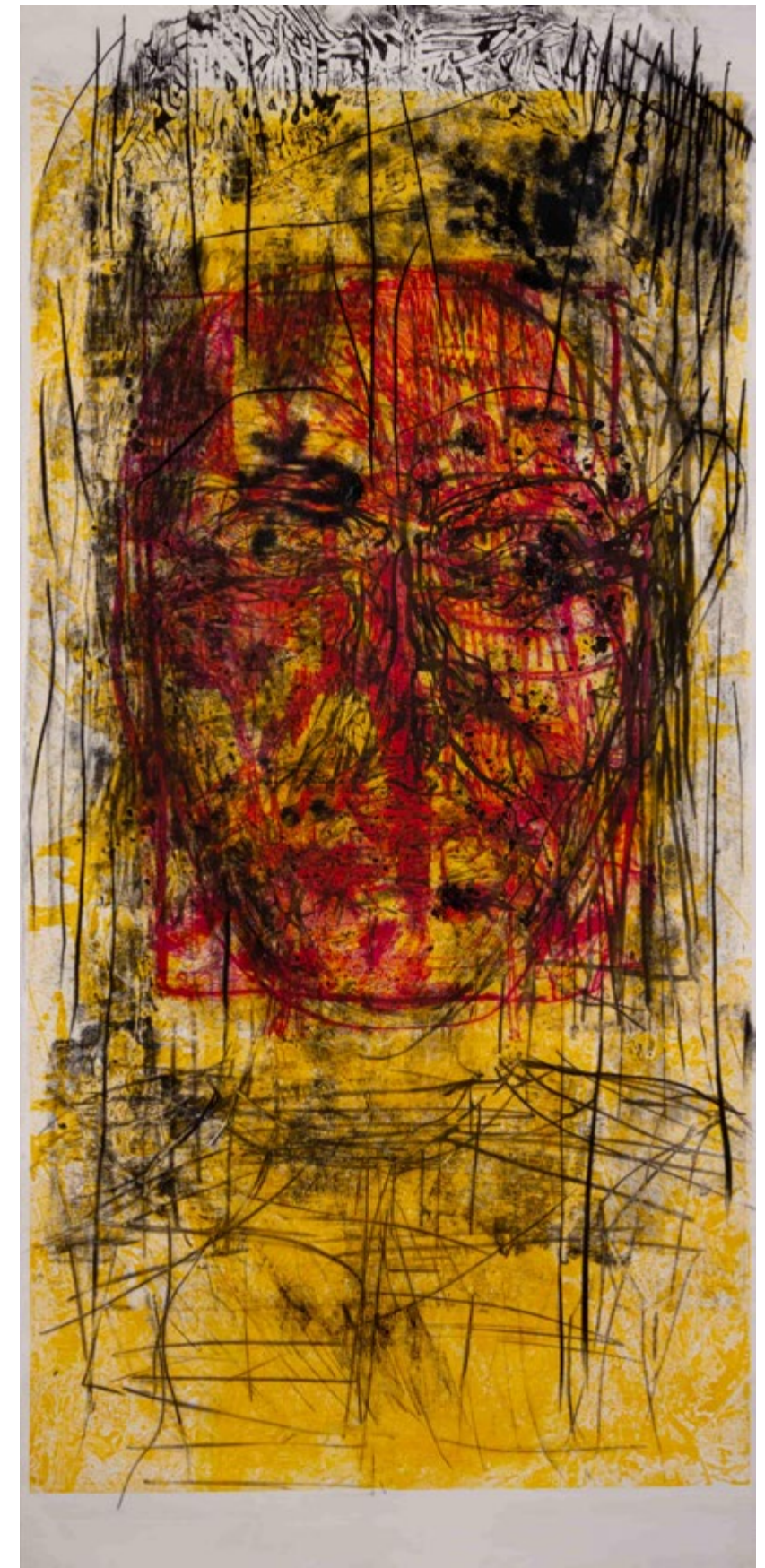
After university, I spent a year assisting printers and artists at Michael Woolworth's studio so that I could learn to print by hand.

The combination of different matrices used to construct a multicoloured image fascinated me. Each time the image was placed under the press, the shift, the response allowed me to understand the practice as an artistic process in its own right, not just a way of creating a duplicate, a reproduction.

Following this experience, I've been practising woodcut with master printers from across the world, each with their own specific skillset. [...]

The woodcuts start taking shape with an initial stroke of paint, often a monolithic shape that nonetheless reveals a viewpoint, a certain humanity. This process of working directly on the wood matrix can take several hours or sometimes just a few minutes, and if found on the linen canvas of one of my paintings, it would soon be covered up by resin and the rest of my process, but here it remains. It will remain almost indefinitely because I'll spend several hours engraving it to create a matrix. It will become an inverted mould, a stamp, the paternal form. [...] It's an active archive.

Olympe Racana-Weiler



LA SIBYLLE V1, V2, V3 2023
Bois gravé, Sérigraphie monotype et charbon noir sur papier Arches
280 cm x 130 cm

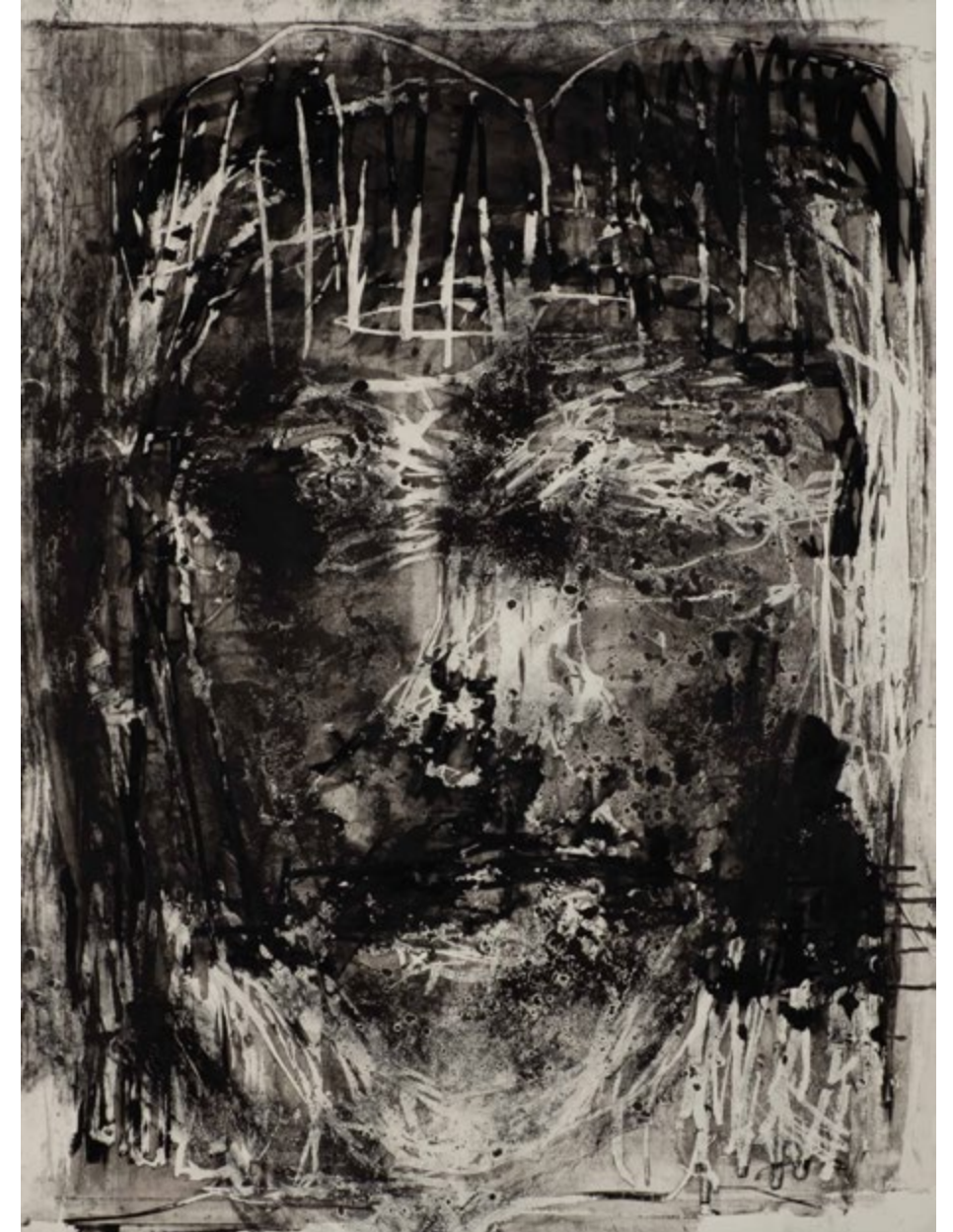


LES MURS DU TEMPLE 2022
Gravure sur bois imprimée sur papier
146 cm × 106 cm



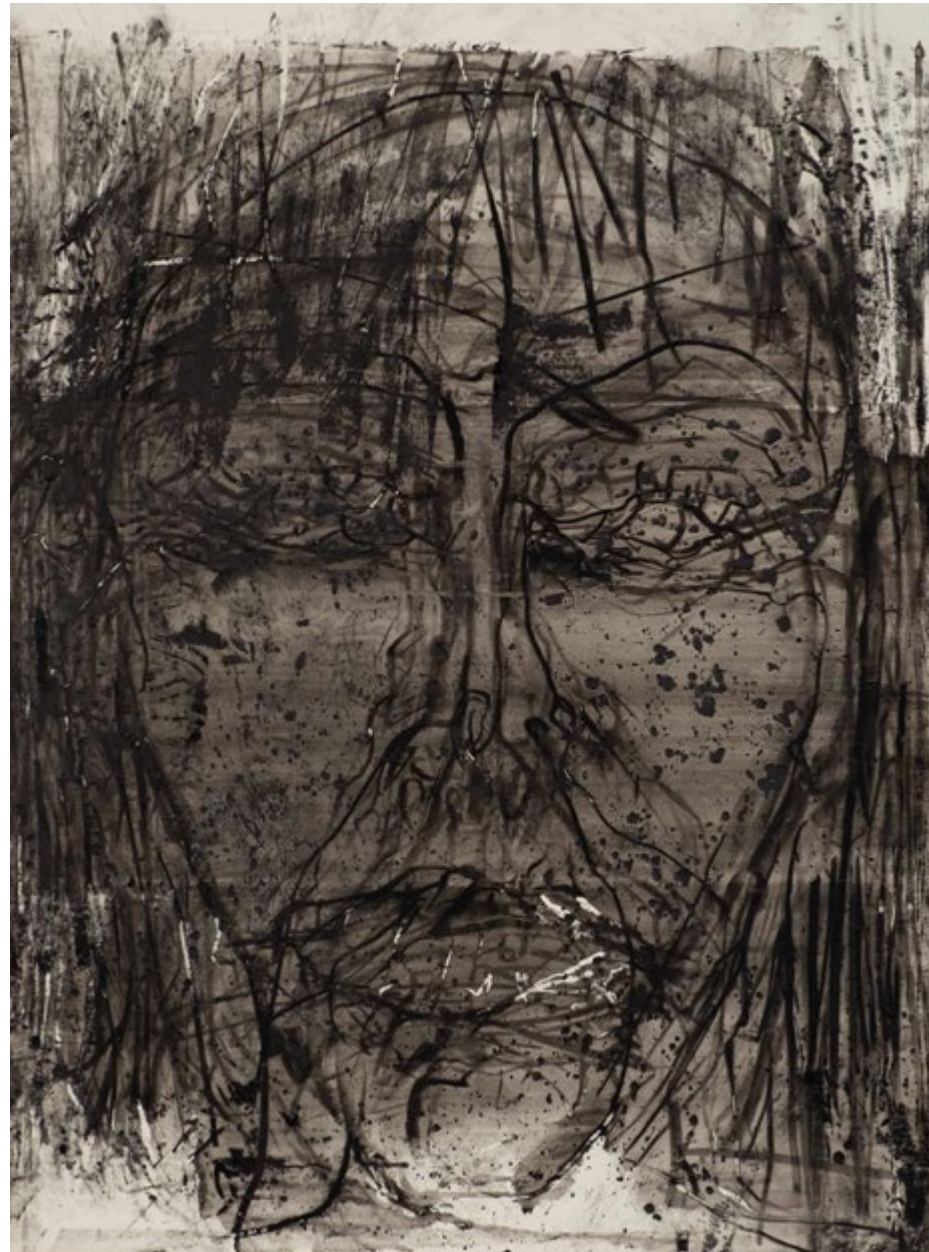
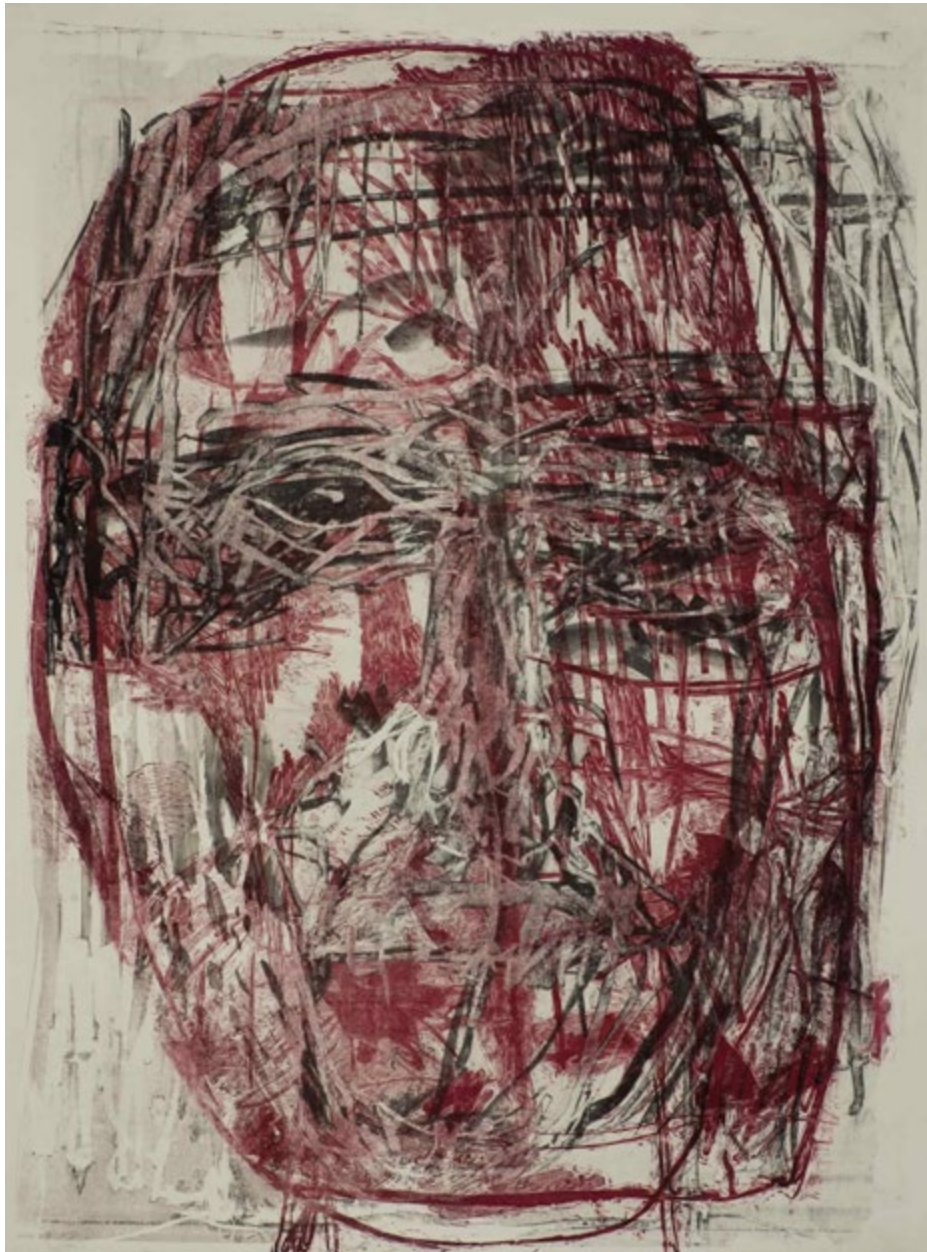
THE COMB 2022
Gravure sur bois imprimée sur papier
146 cm × 106 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



VISAGES 1,2,3 2022
Sérigraphie monotype sur papier Hahnemühle 300gr
146 cm x 106 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



VISAGES 4,5,6 2022
Sérigraphie monotype sur papier Hahnemühle 300gr
146 cm x 106 cm



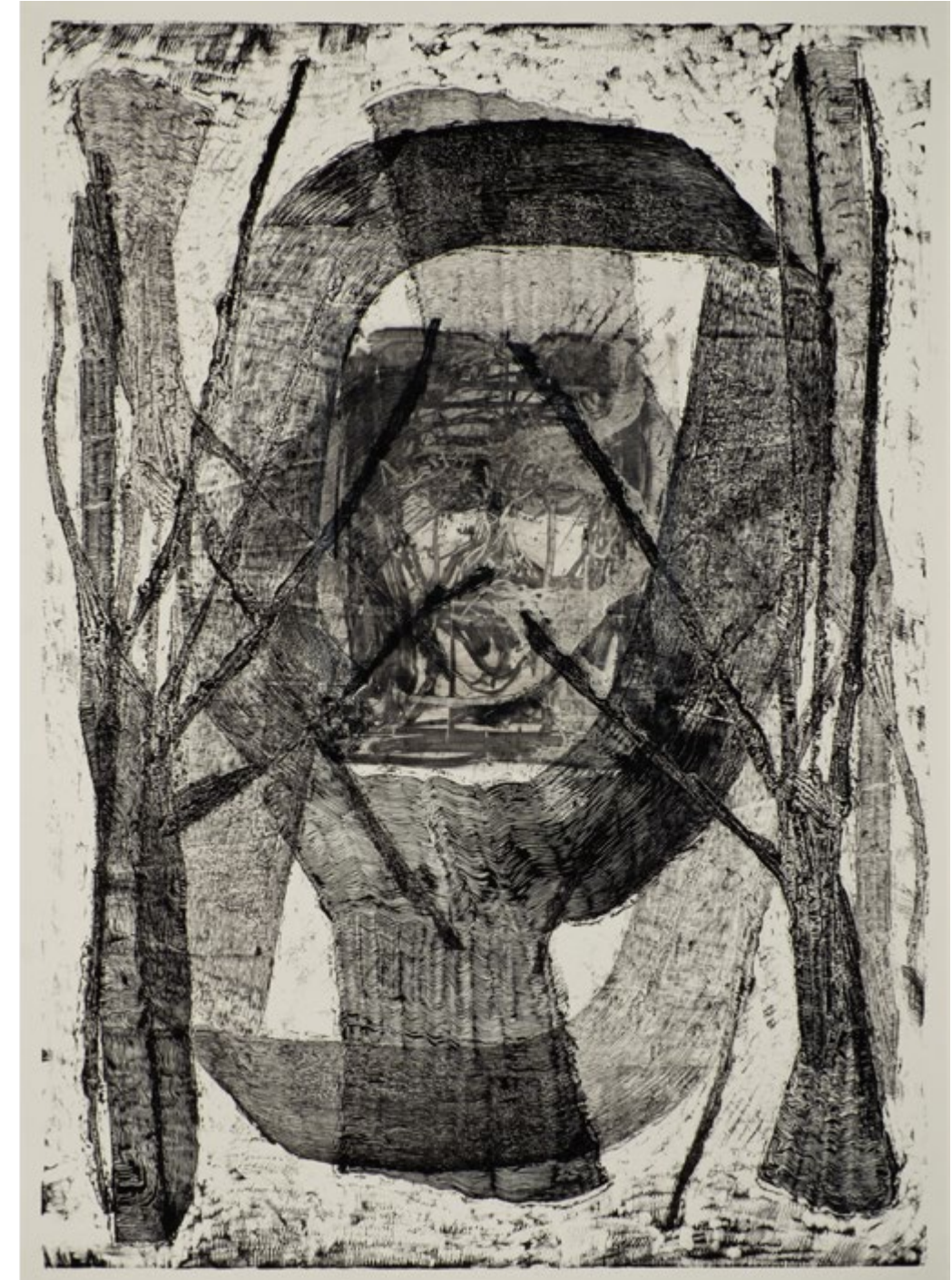
COSMIC WOOD 2022
Bois gravé sur papier Hahnemühle 300gr
146 cm x 106 cm



THE MATERIAL 2022
Bois gravé sur papier Hahnemühle 300gr
146 cm x 106 cm



SILENT 2022
Bois gravé sur papier Hahnemühle 300gr
146 cm x 106 cm



THE COMB 2022
Bois gravé sur papier Hahnemühle 300gr
146 cm x 106 cm

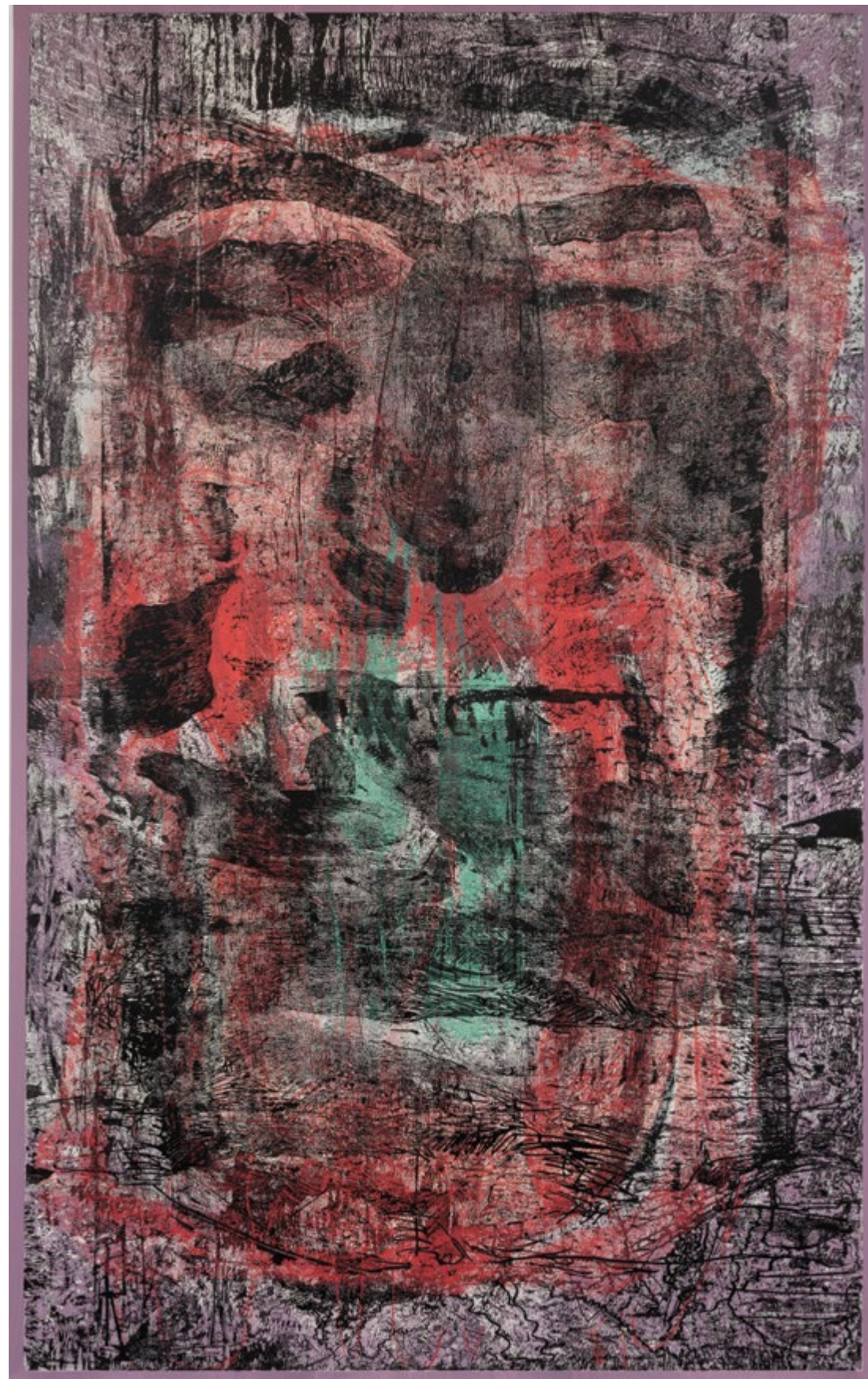


CARA 8 2021
Gravure sur bois imprimée sur papier
250 cm x 153 cm



CARA 12 2021
Gravure sur bois imprimée sur papier
250 cm x 153 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



CARA 11 2021
Gravure sur bois imprimée sur papier
250 cm x 153 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



CARA 7 2021
Gravure sur bois imprimée sur papier
250 cm x 153 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



CARA 6 2019
Gravure sur bois imprimée sur papier
250 cm x 153 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



CARA 2 2019
Gravure sur bois imprimée sur papier
250 cm x 153 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



CARA 4 2019
Gravure sur bois imprimée sur papier
250 cm x 153 cm



CARA 3 2019
Gravure sur bois imprimée sur papier
250 cm x 153 cm



CARA 1 2019
Gravure sur bois imprimée sur papier
250 cm x 153 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



L'ORGE ET LE BLÉ 2019

Gravure sur bois imprimée sur papier d'écorce coréen

213 cm × 153,5 cm

Edition de 1 + 1 E.A. + 1 BAT

Olympe Racana-Weiler



APETLON STONES AT TWILIGHT 2018

Gravure sur bois imprimée sur papier Daitoku

140 cm x 100 cm



TABLE DE FLEURS 2018
Gravure sur bois imprimée sur papier Fabriano
210 cm x 120 cm

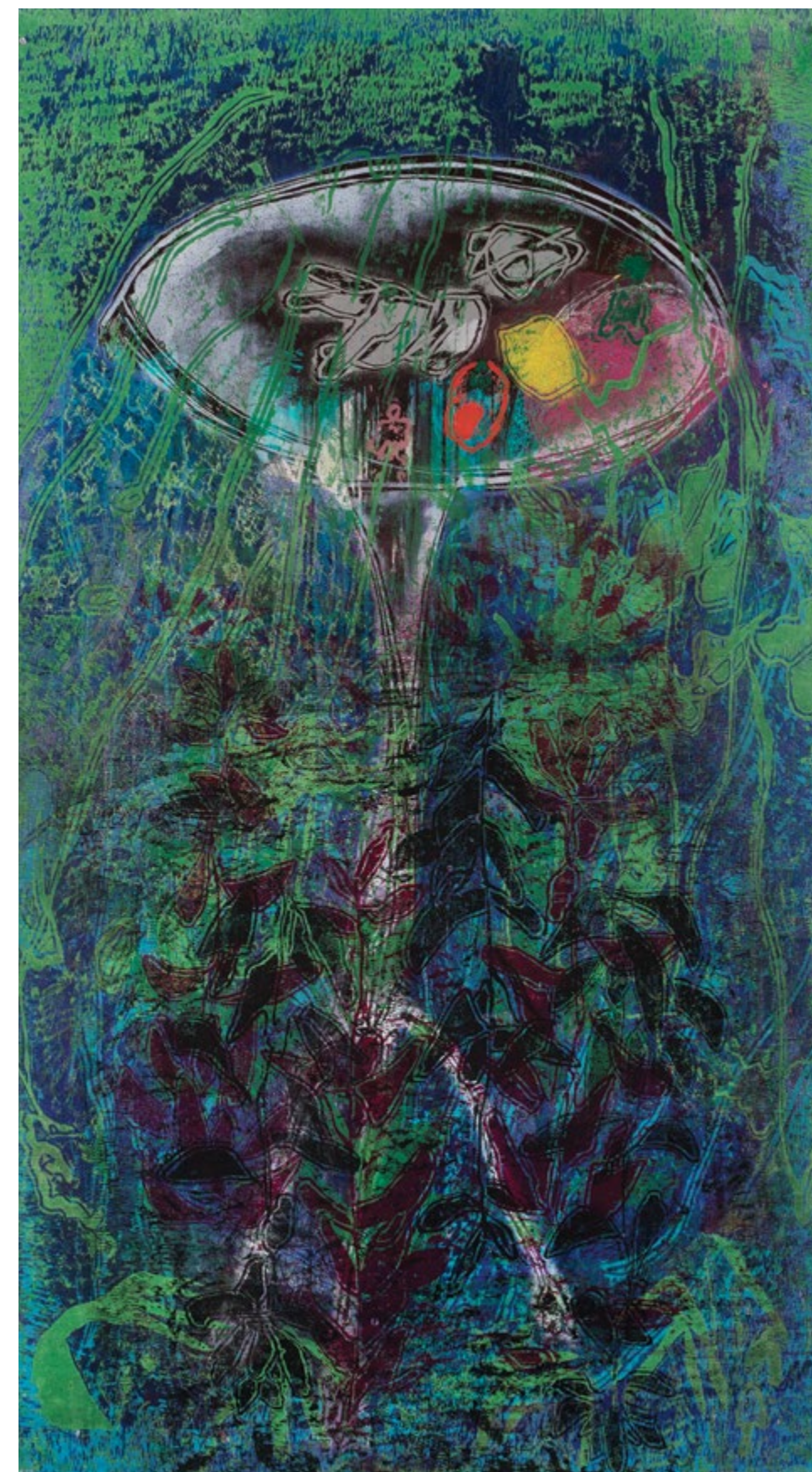


TABLE DE FLEURS (V2) 2018
Gravure sur bois imprimée sur papier Fabriano
210 cm x 120 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



ELLE 2018

Gravure sur bois imprimée sur papier d'écorce coréen peint à la main

213 cm × 153,5 cm

Edition de 1 + 1 E.A

Olympe Racana-Weiler



LUI 2018

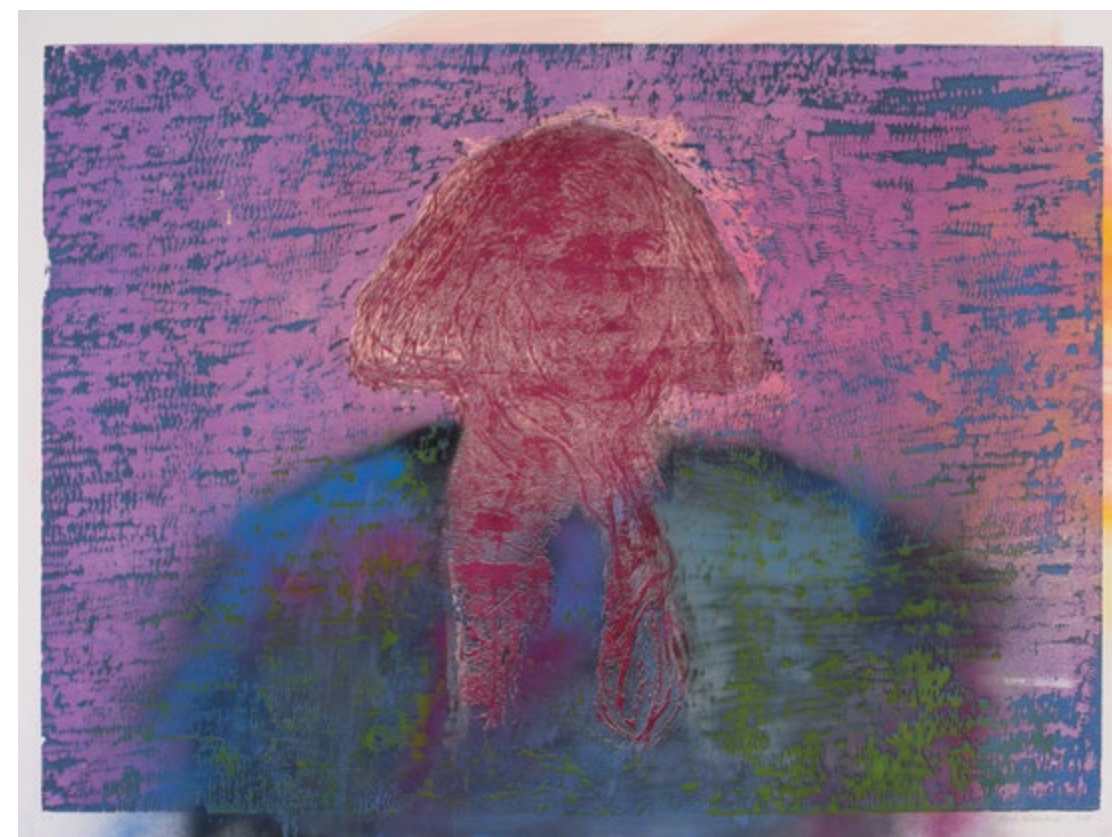
Gravure sur bois imprimée sur papier d'écorce coréen peint à la main
213 cm × 153,5 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



ISSA 2018
Gravure sur bois imprimée sur papier
188 cm x 150 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



FM 1, FM 2, FM 3, FM 4 2017
Gravure sur bois imprimée sur papier peint à la main
100 cm x 140 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



BARACOA 2017

Gravure sur bois imprimée sur papier Fabriano peint à la main
179 cm x 140 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



ARHUACO (tryptique) 2016
Gravure sur bois imprimée sur papier Fabriano peint à la main
179 cm x 420 cm (179 cm x 140 cm chacun)

Olympe Racana-Weiler



GIBIER BLEU (dyptique) 2016
Gravure sur bois imprimée sur papier Fabriano peint à la main
179 cm x 280 cm (179 cm x 140 cm chacun)

Olympe Racana-Weiler



MEMBRANE 2016

Gravure sur bois imprimée sur papier Daitoku peint à la main
170 cm x 126 cm

Olympe Racana-Weiler



SOUCHE 2016

Gravure sur bois imprimée sur papier Daitoku peint à la main
170 cm x 126 cm

Numa Hambursin, “Le Chant de Sybille”
Spring 2021

“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 Sybille/The Song of the Sybil*, created for the Hôtel Richer 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.”





LE CHANT DE LA SYBILLE (MUR 1) 2021

Technique mixte sur murs et plafond

Œuvre permanente, réalisée au printemps 2021, sur les quatre murs et le plafond du boudoir de L'Hôtel Richer de Belleval, siège de la Fondation GGL HELENIS, Place de la Canourgue, Montpellier.

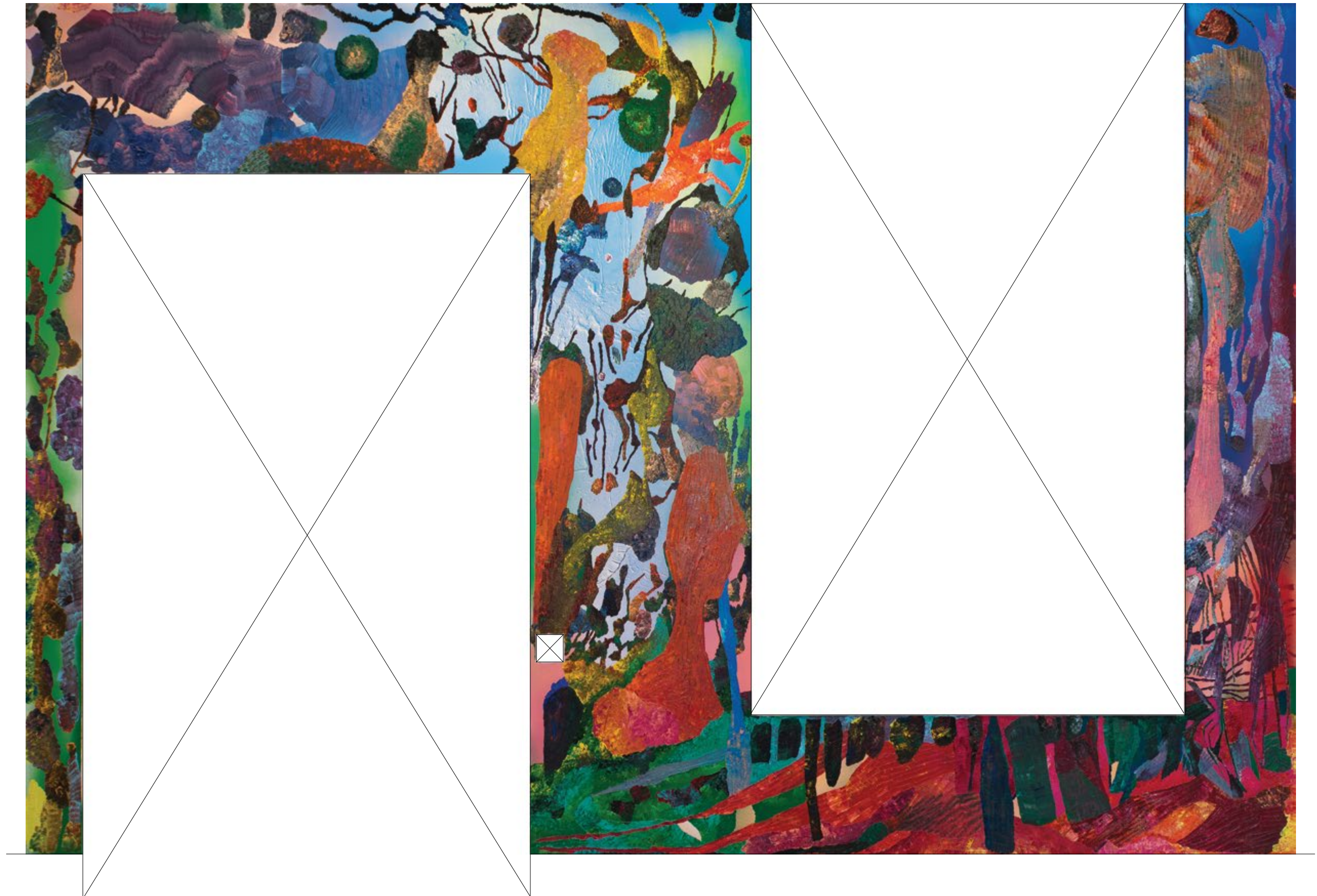
Olympe Racana-Weiler



LE CHANT DE LA SYBILLE (MUR 2) 2021

Technique mixte sur murs et plafond

Œuvre permanente, réalisée au printemps 2021, sur les quatre murs et le plafond du boudoir de L'Hôtel Richer de Belleval, siège de la Fondation GGL HELENIS, Place de la Canourgue, Montpellier.



LE CHANT DE LA SYBILLE (MUR 3) 2021

Technique mixte sur murs et plafond

Œuvre permanente, réalisée au printemps 2021, sur les quatre murs et le plafond du boudoir de L'Hôtel Richer de Belleval, siège de la Fondation GGL HELENIS, Place de la Canourgue, Montpellier.

Olympe Racana-Weiler



LE CHANT DE LA SYBILLE (MUR 4) 2021

Technique mixte sur murs et plafond

Œuvre permanente, réalisée au printemps 2021, sur les quatre murs et le plafond du boudoir de L'Hôtel Richer de Belleval, siège de la Fondation GGL HELENIS, Place de la Canourgue, Montpellier.



LE CHANT DE LA SYBILLE (PLAFOND) 2021

Technique mixte sur murs et plafond

Œuvre permanente, réalisée au printemps 2021, sur les quatre murs et le plafond du boudoir de L'Hôtel Richer de Belleval, siège de la Fondation GGL HELENIS, Place de la Canourgue, Montpellier.

Olympe Racana-Weiler



THE CALL 2022
Charbon de bois sur contreplaqué
140 cm x 110 cm

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 Sybille* 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 *artpress*’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.

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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-

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.

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."

Clare Mary Ouyfoulhoux
“Olympe Racana-Weiler – All other suns had died”
Boumbang, 8 May 2018

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[...] Olympe Racana-Weiler paints, and the dimensions of her work speak to the body. With an average length of two metres, her paintings are on a human scale, like supernumerary spaces ready to welcome the poppies that do not exist yet are offered to us nonetheless. These are landscapes of nothing, “pictorial organisms” that instantly inherit whatever it may be from us. Somewhere, overhanging, a blue mark on a yellow background, third eye of the end of time, the trance returns.

A rock
Emerged from blackest mist like some arm approaching.
He grasped it, and his feet touched summits.
Then the dreadful being called Never
Dreamed. His forehead sank between his guilty hands.
The three suns, far off, like three great eyes,
Watched him, and he watched them not.
Space resembled our earthly plains,
At evening, when the horizon sinking, retreating,
Blackens under the white eyes of the ghostly twilight.
Long rays entwined the feet of the great exile.
Behind him his shadow filled the infinite.
The peaks of chaos mingled in themselves.
In an instant he felt some horrendous growth of wings;
He felt himself become a monster, and that the angel in him
Was dying, and the rebel then knew regret.
He felt his shoulder, so bright before,
Quiver in the hideous cold of membraned wing,
And folding his arms with his head lifted high,
This bandit, as if grown greater through affront,
Alone in these depths that only ruin inhabits,
Looked steadily at the shadow's cave.
The noiseless darkness grew in the nothingness.
Obscure opacity closed off the gaping sky;
And making beyond the last promontory
A triple crack in the black pane,
The three suns mingled their three lights.
You would have thought them three wheels of a chariot of fire,
Broken after some battle in the high firmament.
Like prows, the mountains from the mist emerged.
“So,” cried Satan, “so be it! I can see!
He shall have the blue sky, the black sky is mine.
Victor Hugo

We’ve already mentioned the list of media found upon the canvas. What turns them into a painting is something else, timeless: blood and light, bodies, wind, contours, internal struggles between the hand, eye and spirit; one by one they deliver. Radiance. It’s said, somewhere, that Caravaggio is important to Olympe Racana-Weiler, and you can see it. It’s in the state of abandon of necks and mouths, subtle torsions of the chest, appeasing the ossuary of all the murdered who are represented. Satan may be, accepts Olympe. In her recent exhibitions, titled “3’n the mornin’ – noire était mon ombre [black was my shadow]” and “I came back from Paradise and I’m frankly hungry”, she does not provoke. What you do hear is the incredible strength of youth for those for whom it is forgotten. The siren call of the believer who can, invincible, who can deny the common erosion of daily life. There’s something of a transatlanticism about the titles and iridescence of certain inks that’s a little cheap, beyond pop, no doubt. You can hear the final trail of laughter at a party, the sky is mauve. And in this new dawn, the heart contorts. It’s impossible to abandon the idea that it’s all tainted with romantic recollections. A forgetful yet melancholic kitsch that’s deeply sincere. The boxing ring is right there: it’s not the painting’s shame that holds things back, it’s the repudiated ennui turned into goodies for tourists, for lack of a cliché. You finally remember that there was a time when you could draw to find something, when the process of painting was like looking at the sky to understand the weather. [...]

“Olympe Racana-Weiler in conversation
with Jim Dine”

Translated by Vincent Broqua. Paris, 2018.

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Published in the exhibition catalogue for “I came back from Paradise and I’m frankly hungry” at the Galerie Jérôme Pauchant, Paris.

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.

“Joint interview with Anastasia Simoniello,
Art Historian,
Quentin Euverte / Olympe Racana-Weiler”.
Paris, 2017.

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Exhibition: “Quentin Euverte / Olympe Racana-Weiler - 3’n the mornin’ / Noire était mon ombre (Black was my shadow)” Michel Journiac Gallery, Saint-Charles Centre – Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, Paris. Curator: Jérôme Pauchant.

ANASTASIA SIMONIELLO: I’d like to begin this interview by looking at the origin of your works. When I talk to you, Olympe, I have the feeling that you experience creativity like a form of asceticism, a spiritual exercise that tends towards an artistic ideal, one that allows the pictorial medium to take shape, existing and expressing itself through you, insofar as you exist and express yourself through it.

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: That’s right, painting contains the inexpressible and the absurd. It isn’t disconnected. In my contact with the medium, memories, representation, identity, taste all combine, without ever being the actual subject. Painting is my transformative space. The pictorial process unveils what you carry within your self. The act of painting connects me with the world. My work consists of giving it form.

ANASTASIA SIMONIELLO: You told me that you only achieved that after a long period of reflection punctuated by revelations and renunciations.

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: This form of ethics of painting has definitely taken a while to mature. Understanding the particular features of the paint requires a separation from the narrative, from the idea of self.

ANASTASIA SIMONIELLO: But in the end, your canvas succeeds in becoming a place of incarnation for the pictorial body.

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: Yes. I want to give visibility to the elusiveness of the motionless matter that inhabits me. Producing an inconceivable space, in constant germination. The eye will always be drawn in. But nothing allows itself to be seen, grasped, thought, critiqued. An impossible outcome in this unresolved state. So, time opens up.

ANASTASIA SIMONIELLO: Olympe, what media do you use in your work?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: There are all sorts: iridescent ink, acrylic,

gravelled pigments, low quality oils, high quality oils, polyurethane, signage paint and enamel spray paint, stripper, lithographic ink. I like contradictory chemical reactions. I like it when one medium repels another.

ANASTASIA SIMONIELLO: Talk to us about the way you work with these materials.

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: It’s the absence of convention that guides me. The forms I could attach myself to too much, those that could convince me, that I could recognise, they don’t last long. I traverse a canvas that’s too big and too white, and then it takes seed. I use all the chaos of materials, their shortcomings, their hesitations, their resistance. I cultivate them, adjust them, make them talk to each other, disappear beneath a new skin, layer, a brightness unfolds. I think of the body and I forget it. This fragment of something, of someone you remember. Space becomes plausible but always inconceivable.

ANASTASIA SIMONIELLO: Yes, although you may want the paint to be the master of this “morphogenesis” as you call it, I can still feel you behind it. It’s that spiritual exercise I was just talking about – where you combine discipline and letting go, mastery of the hand and abandonment to the paint, as well as emotions – it finally allows you to create a special dialogue with it.

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: The canvas is a mirror, a bed, a table, a wall. It’s a framework, the dialogue is continual, the moods come one after the other, nothing is acceptable. A painting can undergo fifteen revolutions, centimetres of materials, but at a certain point, it’s complete.

ANASTASIA SIMONIELLO: You also have something in common: you name your works by adding a title. On the whole, this practice is very common, but it did strike me in relation to you both. Olympe, you advocate paintings that reject the narrative, which have an existence of their own, and which therefore are enough in themselves. However, you assign them titles, anchoring them in another reality, that of your interior world, while you could have chosen self-referential titles that say just what the work is. Can you shed light on this point?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: My interior world is materialised by the single painting I allow to be seen. The titles come after, when the work is completely finished, when I have to archive it, when it has to leave me. The titles are signs, recollections. They pay

homage to the forms that have guided me, that have sometimes disappeared or asserted themselves. Words sow doubt, they remain to one side, they are appendages.

ANASTASIA SIMONIELLO: These words that link your creativity to your interior world, you say they come to you when your two bodies separate. So, maybe they're a way of marking the end of this interaction, while retaining a link between this pictorial body that you've given life to, to counter this apprehension for nothingness that you reveal when I speak to you?

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: I don't think I have anxiety about nothingness, I am just wary of words. But conferring a title is a way of playing the game of the living. Of giving something.

ANASTASIA SIMONIELLO: With your paintings, Olympe, viewers will have an experience of a different kind. How did you envisage introducing them to your collection.

OLYMPE RACANA-WEILER: I chose to introduce the exhibition with a painting I did in 2015 entitled The Head. It may seem apart from the other paintings in the exhibition, but it actually contains all of them. This dark mass is a cerebral landscape, a magma with neither start nor finish, like an affliction. Head-on, it obstructs colour. The folds of a confounded brain. The claws of metal open it up, the mass of memory explodes.

Ecstasy.