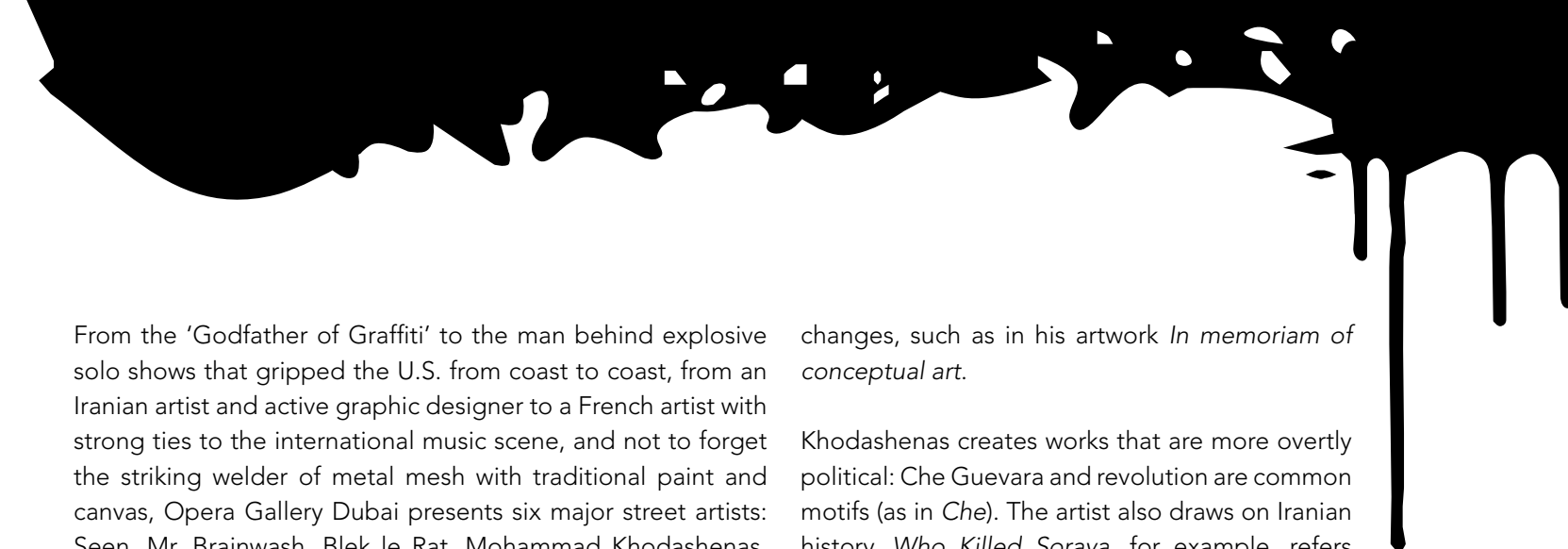


**STREET
ART
SHOW
DUBAI**

OPERA GALLERY

DUBAI



From the 'Godfather of Graffiti' to the man behind explosive solo shows that gripped the U.S. from coast to coast, from an Iranian artist and active graphic designer to a French artist with strong ties to the international music scene, and not to forget the striking welder of metal mesh with traditional paint and canvas, Opera Gallery Dubai presents six major street artists: Seen, Mr. Brainwash, Blek le Rat, Mohammad Khodashenas, Charles Munka and Paul Alexis.

Among the works by Seen, those in the *Signatures* series feature repetitions of the artist's name on the canvas reiterated until it approaches abstraction; obscured along with Seen's signature are the artist's identity and, with a postmodern twist, the signifier behind the sign. Depictions of comic book superheroes (*Iron Man head, Silver Surfer, Superman and Wolverine B&W*) serve as references to the roots of pop art and its genesis in the 1950's. These images' cheerful colours and crisp lines present a world in which good and evil are easily distinguished, a welcome contrast to the blurred realities of postmodern life.

Mr. Brainwash, too, often reproduces images of cultural icons, as in *Mickey, Mickey and Minnie, Charlie Chaplin and Einstein*. Motifs like *Campbell soup cans (Max spray)* recall Warhol, while maxims such as 'Love is the Answer' (*Einstein*) or 'Life is Beautiful', the title of his L.A. exhibition, imbue the works with a simplicity that is either endearing or ironic.

Blek le Rat's work tends not to draw on pop icons but rather classical icons. He also often depicts the everyday man or woman, as in the works in this exhibit. His paintings thus might be categorized as a type of portraiture honouring the common person, such as the young girl in *Minor Sins 2*. Blek encourages his audience to recognize those who might not otherwise be celebrated, as in *Young Afro-american from San Francisco*, or to appreciate those who enrich our lives like artists and musicians, as in *Violonist*. He speaks to viewers by mirroring them. The artist is also inspired by political events around the world. He uses his art to serve a social cause, to evoke reaction and inspire

Gilles Dyan
Founder and Chairman
Opera Gallery Group

changes, such as in his artwork *In memoriam of conceptual art*.

Khodashenas creates works that are more overtly political: Che Guevara and revolution are common motifs (as in *Che*). The artist also draws on Iranian history. *Who Killed Soraya*, for example, refers to the mystery surrounding the death of Soraya, second wife to the last Shah - when the former Pahlavi Queen was found dead in her Paris apartment in 2001, some alleged murder. Khodashenas' other paintings, such as *Rolling Stone wall*, combine Western pop culture with Persian script, reminding the viewer of the globalization that defines our times.

In Munka's canvases, ambiguously ancient characters render the compositions illegible while recognizable figures and motifs simultaneously lead the viewer into their fold. An image like *Seven Hills* recalls cave drawings, whereas the painting, *Smoke Circles*, imitates chalk drawings on black asphalt - literal 'street art'. *The Snake* more closely resembles conventional graffiti but in a deconstructed form, so that black lines overlay regions of bright colours rather than serve as strict outlines to well-defined letters and figures.

And, yet, Alexis provides an alternative response to the pop culture figures recurrently referenced in street art. Layers of metal mesh placed atop images of famous faces, such as that of American pop idol, Madonna, or 20th Century Egyptian goddess, Oum Kalsoum, render images that are hazy and impersonal. Alexis thus forces viewers to confront the paucity of collective culture and memory beyond its comfortable familiarity.

These six artists work with many of the same materials, incorporating pop culture and referring to contemporary art, but ultimately each provides a distinct perspective from which to view modern-day life. Together, they create a dialogue: Opera Gallery Dubai has the pleasure of inviting you to participate in this conversation.

Mariam Thani Hodge
General Manager
Opera Gallery Dubai



The street artist, Seen, born Richard Mirando in 1961, hails from the Bronx, New York. Seen's career began at just twelve, when he started painting New York subway cars, soon gaining a reputation with fellow taggers in the collective, United Artists, for covering whole cars.

Rightfully called the 'Godfather of Graffiti', Seen has continued to exhibit his creativity ever since. He persevered in tagging on the New York subway in the 1980's, even after the Metropolitan Transit Authority had successfully pressured many other artists to stop. Early that decade, Seen had begun to produce works on canvas that were purchased and displayed internationally. Entering both museum and private collections, Seen's artwork was displayed alongside that of art icons such as Jean-Michel Basquiat, Keith Haring and Andy Warhol ('New York, New Wave' in 1981). Seen helped transform street art into an art genre recognized by the mainstream.

Active for over four decades, Seen has not only changed the way we see street art, but also helped shape our definitions of art at large - he has imprinted his signature on the streets we walk as well as the world of contemporary art.



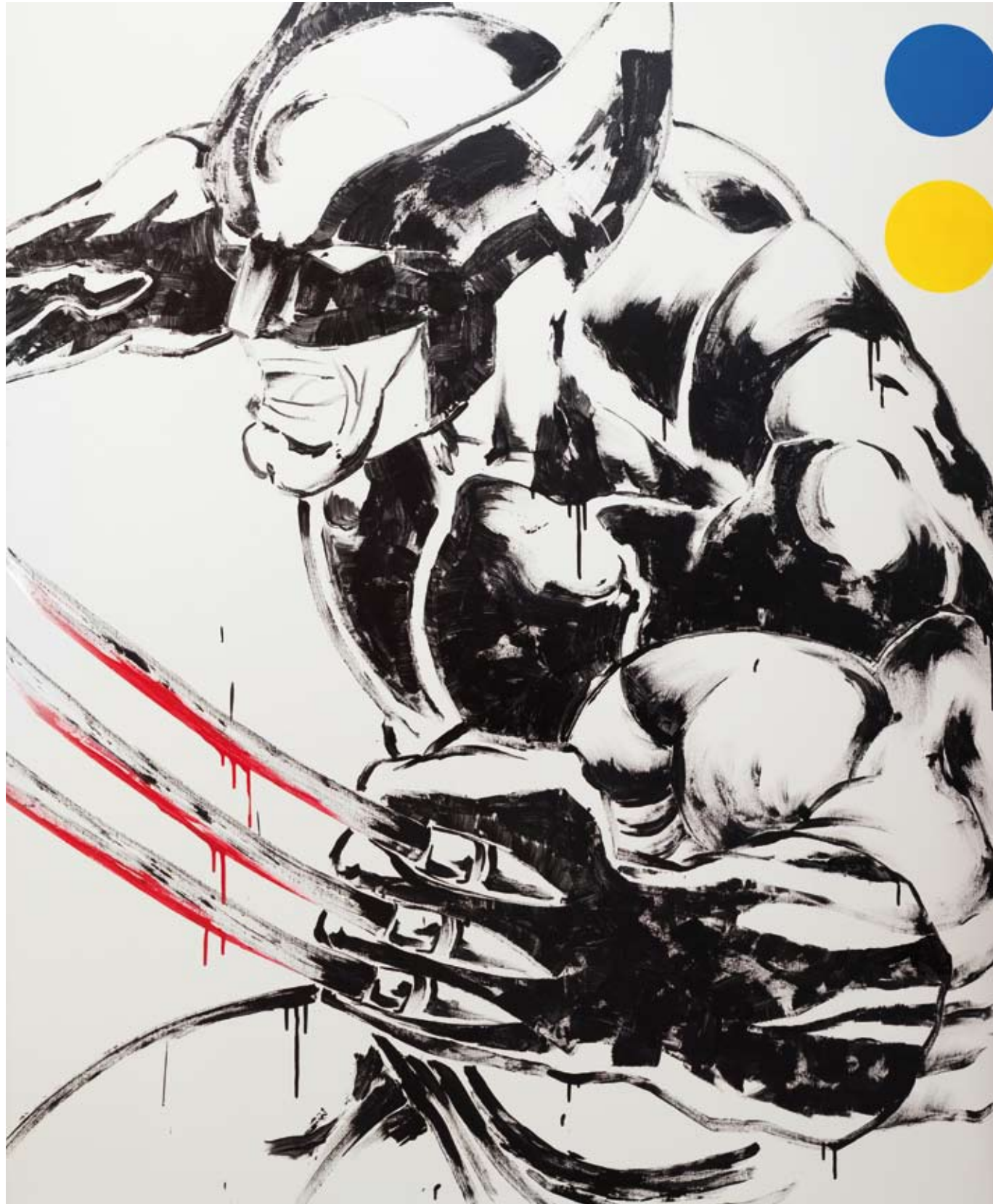
Iron Man head
Stencil and aerosol on canvas
215 x 100 cm - 84.6 x 39.4 in.



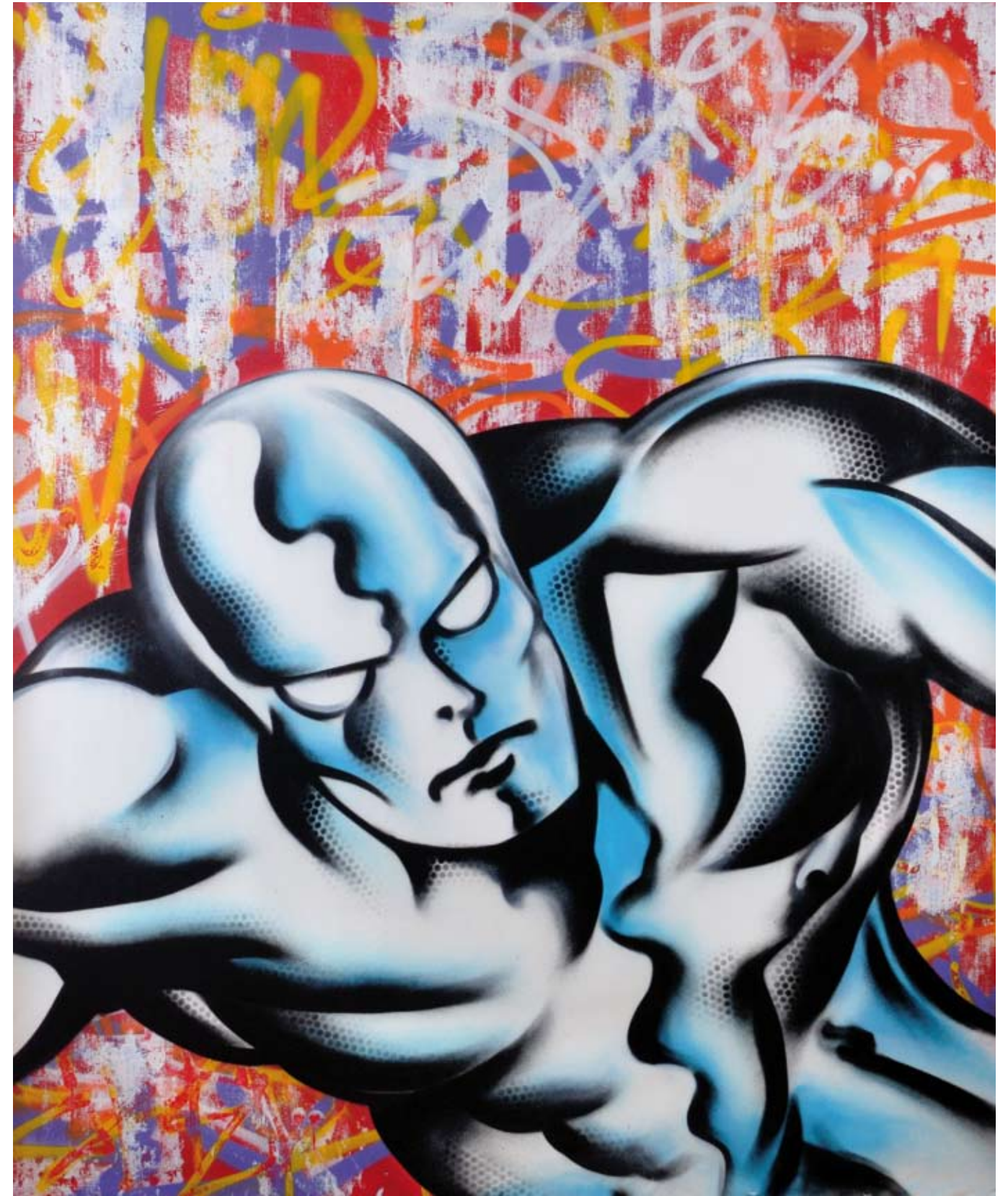
Superman
Stencil and aerosol on canvas
220 x 255 cm - 86.6 x 100.4 in.



Signatures
Aerosol on canvas
220 x 220 cm - 86.6 x 86.6 in.



Wolverine B&W
Aerosol on canvas
180 x 150 cm - 70.9 x 59.1 in.



Silver Surfer
Aerosol on canvas
162 x 130 cm - 63.8 x 51.2 in.

MR. BRAINWASH

Among the well-recognized street artists today is Mr. Brainwash (born in 1966), whose appellation serves as the pseudonym of Thierry Guetta. A French artist and film maker who now lives and works in Los Angeles, Mr. Brainwash has unveiled several memorable projects in recent years.

In 2008, his L.A. solo exhibit, 'Life is Beautiful', combined images with installation; the show's duration was extended from two weeks to three months due to popular demand, with thousands of visitors coming to appreciate Mr. Brainwash's work. Two years later, in 2010, Mr. Brainwash opened his expansive solo exhibit, 'Icons', in New York. The exhibit was closely followed by 'Icons Remix' that same year, which also featured mixed-media paintings and sculptures. Finally, 2010 served as the release of the documentary, 'Exit Through the Gift Shop', for which Mr. Brainwash collaborated with world-famous graffiti artists Banksy and Shepard Fairey. The film was celebrated by critics and fans alike.

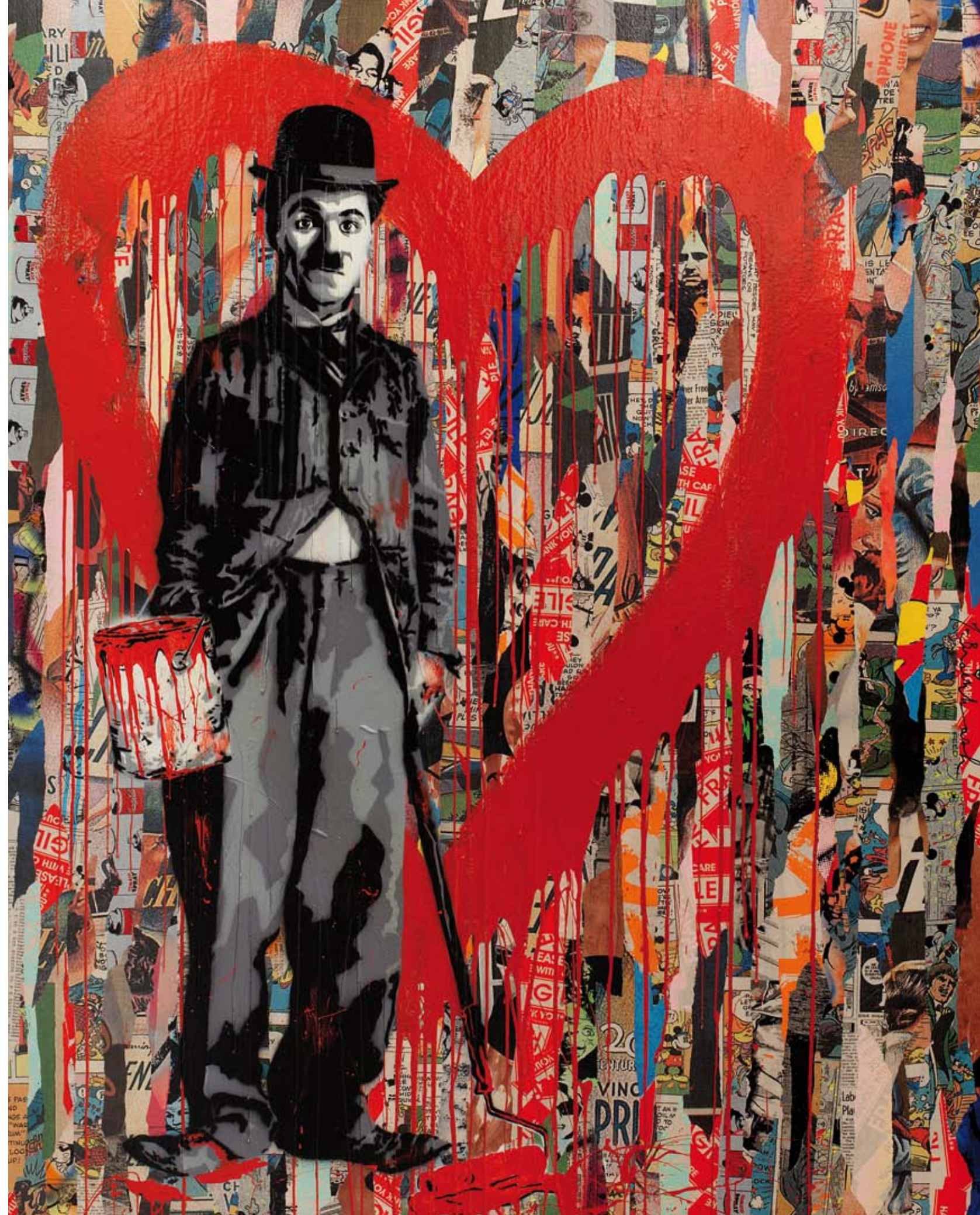
As can be seen in Opera Gallery's current show, Mr. Brainwash's canvases often reproduce images from pop culture; he incorporates a variety of techniques including stenciling to do so.



Max spray
Stencil and mixed media on canvas
101,5 x 233,5 cm - 40 x 92 in.



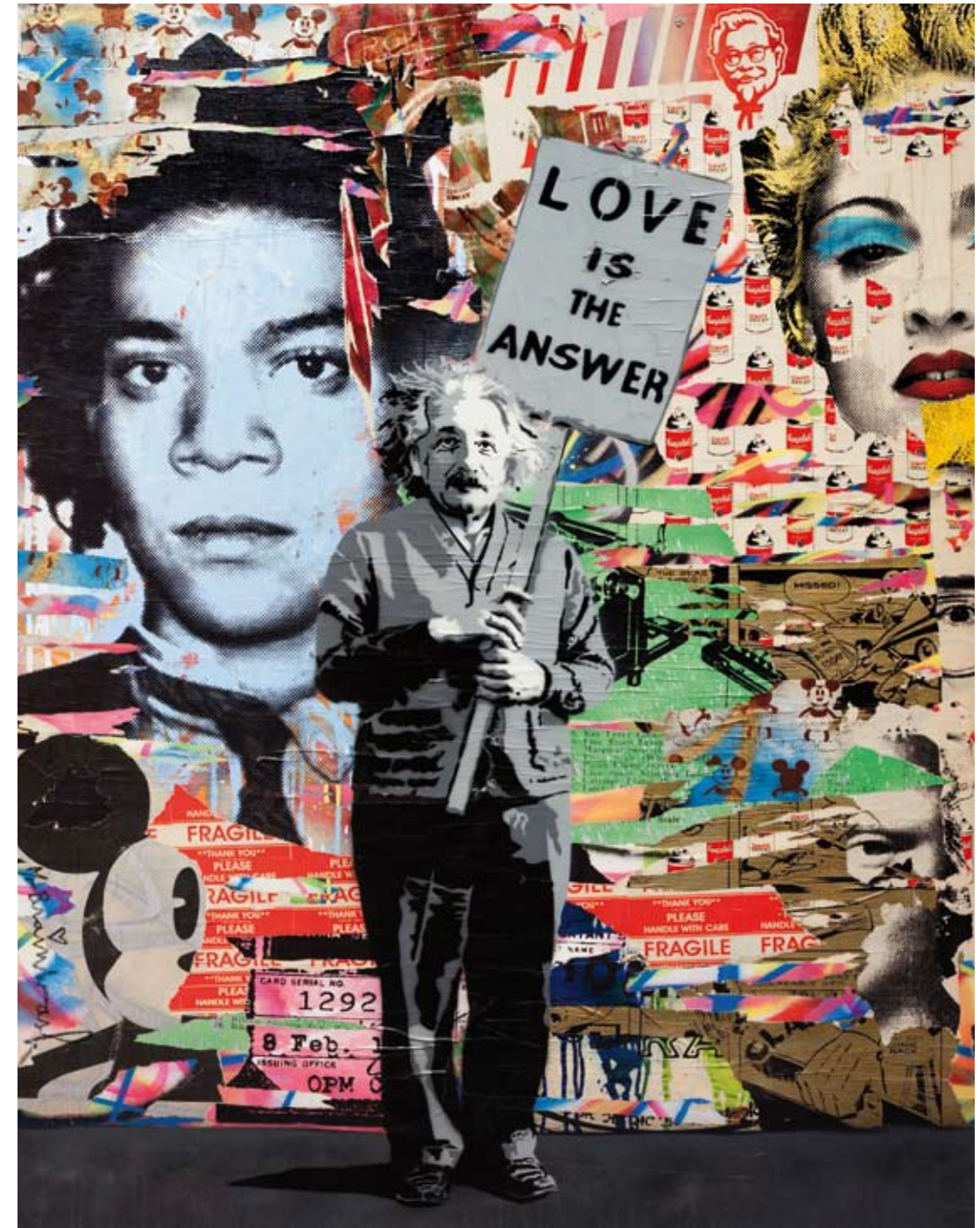
Mickey
Stencil and mixed media on canvas
91,5 x 91,5 cm - 36 x 36 in.



Charlie Chaplin
Stencil and mixed media on canvas
162,5 x 122 cm - 64 x 48 in.



Mickey and Minnie
Stencil and mixed media on canvas
162,5 x 122 cm - 64 x 48 in.



Einstein
Stencil and mixed media on canvas
162,5 x 122 cm - 64 x 48 in.



Blek le Rat, the assumed name of Xavier Prou, was born in 1952 in Paris. Widely considered the father of stencil graffiti, Blek le Rat began his career by stencilling rats on the streets of Paris in the early 1980's. Blek had initially been inspired by graffiti art in New York, but he soon served to establish a parallel French street art scene. His use of the stencil was a way of adapting American graffiti art to French culture by invoking its Latin roots.

Blek le Rat focuses on the figure more so than many other graffiti artists, with very little text appearing in his works. He stencils detailed images of common people as well as classical figures - including depictions of Greco-Roman statues or historical icons such as Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*; these are set against a monochromatic or collage background executed in spray paint and acrylic. Hence his aesthetic is at once traditional and avant-garde, both contemporary and timeless.



In memoriam of conceptual art
Stencil, aerosol and acrylic on canvas
210 x 140 cm - 82.7 x 55.1 in.



Minor sins 2
Stencil, aerosol and acrylic on canvas
210 x 140 cm - 82.7 x 55.1 in.



Young Afro-american from San Francisco
Stencil, aerosol and acrylic on canvas
210 x 140 cm - 82.7 x 55.1 in.

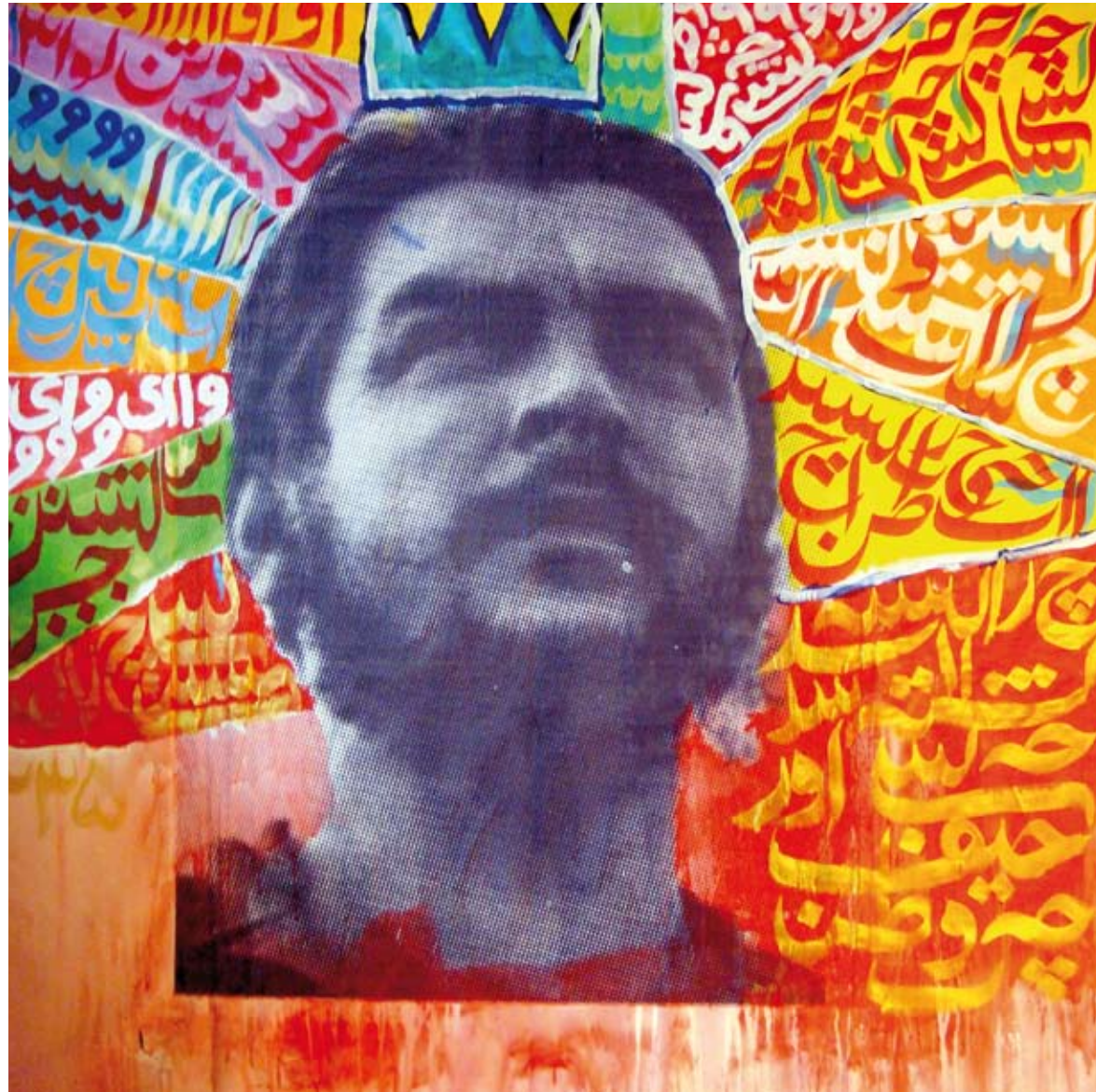
An Iranian graphic designer and artist from Lahijan, Mohammad Khodashenas was born in 1975. Khodashenas' training in graphic design, culminating in an undergraduate degree from the University of Tehran, is evidenced in his work. He has exhibited in Iran, including at a workshop of the famous film maker Abbas Kiarostami, abroad, in Europe and elsewhere in the Middle East.

In Khodashenas' canvases, bright colours and text are layered with figural imagery like the faces of famous historical figures. The works appear as pastiches of various forms, styles and techniques. The viewer is challenged to find meaning amongst the letters, words and iconic images, all of which conspire to obfuscate a decipherable narrative.

The sense of chaos in Khodashenas' works imbues the paintings with urgency and tension, which are reflected in their somewhat rough aesthetic. Dripping paint either imitates blood, such as in *Che*, or, in other pieces including those mentioned above, suggests an unfinished work. Thus, via this technique and in light of the political commentary embedded in his work, Khodashenas implies that the work of an artist does not stop when he puts down his paintbrush.



Who killed Soraya
Acrylic on canvas
200 x 200 cm - 78.7 x 78.7 in.



Che
Acrylic on canvas
175 x 175 cm - 68.9 x 98.9 in.



Rolling Stone wall
Acrylic on canvas
180 x 260 cm - 70.9 x 102.4 in.

Charles Munka, pseudonym Ques, born in 1982, spent his young life in Lyon, France. Munka later relocated to Japan to follow an interest in the video-gaming industry and has spent much time in Asia since, moving to Shanghai and then Hong Kong, where he currently lives. Other influences on his practice include the L.A. beat scene and hip-hop. In addition to the pop references that pervade street art, Munka's works utilize gaming, music, film and hieroglyphics. He regularly collaborates with other artists, including as a founding member (along with Claude Weiss) of LCP United.

Munka himself uses the term 'mind maps' to describe his works. Indeed, his canvases appear to be compilations of disjointed elements, a string of *non sequitur* thoughts presented in stream-of-consciousness style. They might also be likened to the hip-hop songs from which he sometimes draws inspiration: each canvas freely moves between topics and ideas like verse, pulling the audience in so that, even for a few moments, we share the artist's mental and emotional space.



Seven hills
Mixed media
154 x 173 cm - 60.6 x 68.1 in.



Smoke circles
Mixed media
145 x 152,5 cm - 57.1 x 60 in.

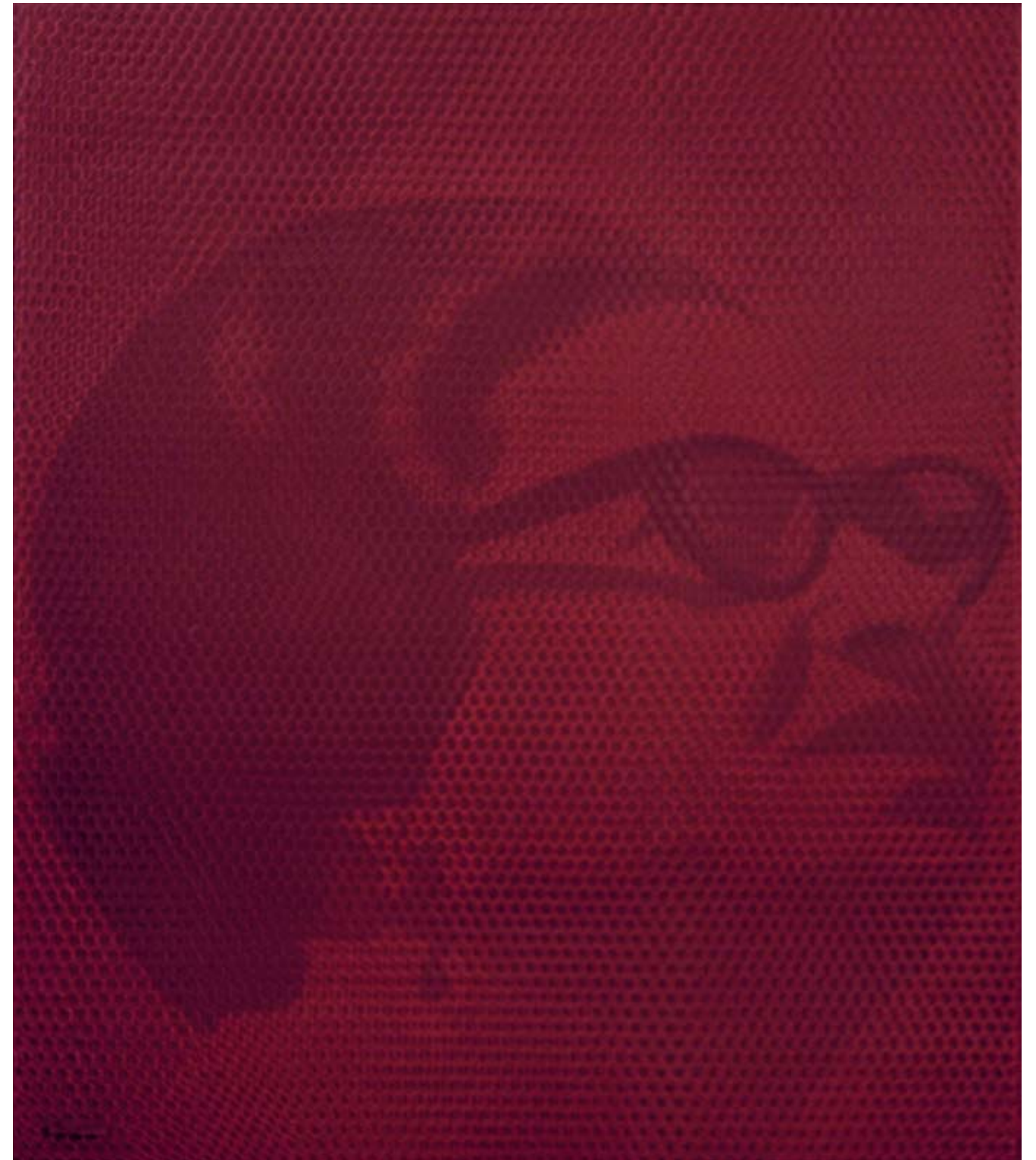


The snake
Mixed media
162,5 x 132 cm - 64 x 52 in.

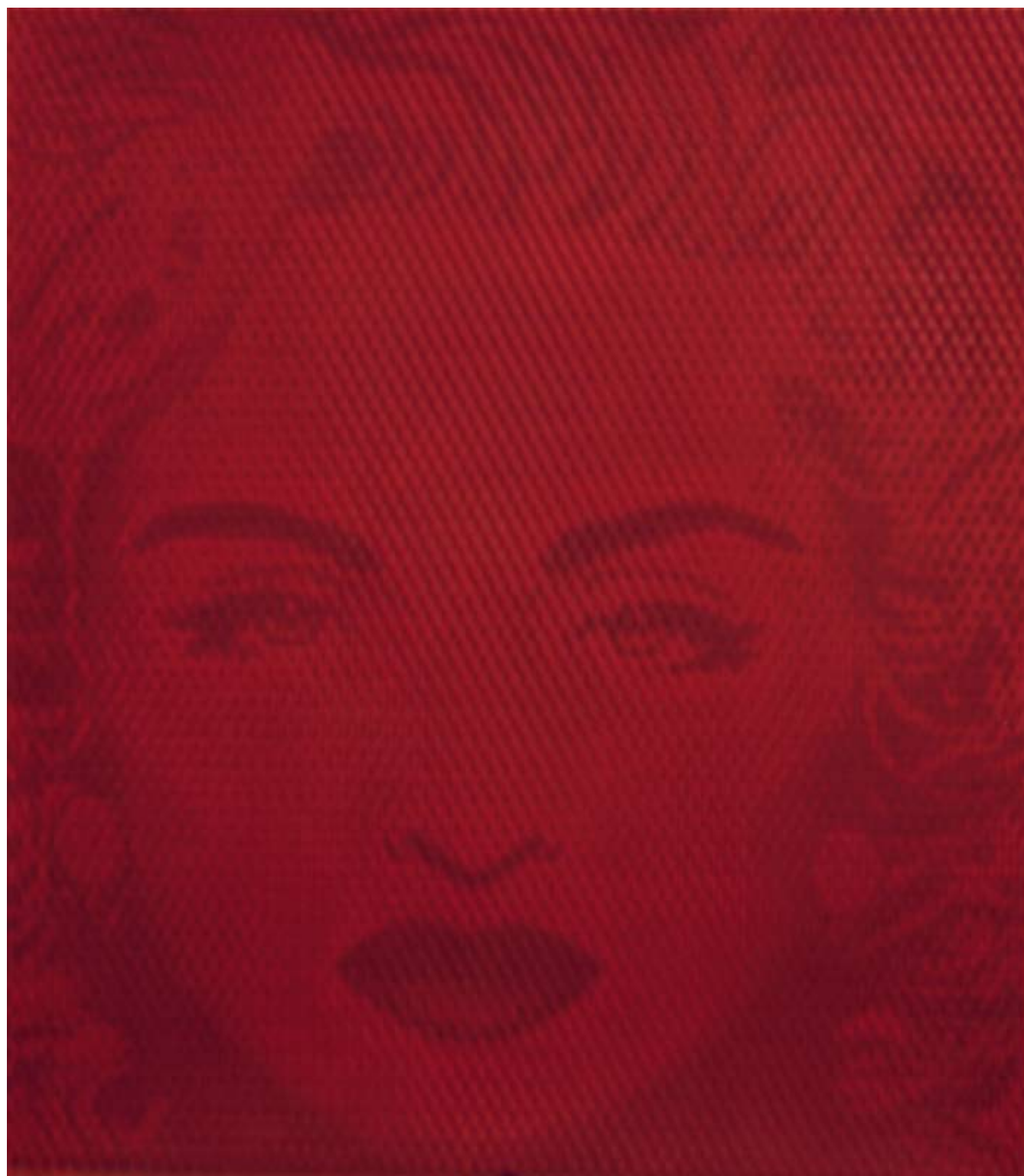


Paul Alexis is a French artist born in 1947. He is a Knight of the French Order of Arts and Literature as well as of the French National Order of the Legion of Honour. Outside Paris, Alexis has exhibited widely across Asia, at museums and galleries in Beijing, Shanghai, Tokyo and Jeju, South Korea. Active in Paris, he acts as President of the French Salon Comparaisons and Vice-President of the Federation of Historical Art Salons of the Grand Palais, and co-founded the recurring exhibition, 'Art en Capitale'.

Alexis is most well-known for his mixed media paintings in which layers of metal mesh are placed atop a canvas and painted. Featuring the faces of famous figures, these works play with the idea of the photograph and the way images are imprinted on our collective memories. The works are almost monochromatic, as Alexis uses shades of the same colour to outline the figures' features. He employs a subdued palette of grays, purples and, as in the paintings *Madonna* and *Oum Kalsoum* featured at Opera Gallery, washed-out reds. The sheets of metal mesh create shadows on the canvas and further obscure the image. Concepts of memory and dreams are thus at the forefront of Alexis' works. No matter how hard viewers may try, the figures never really come into focus; instead, they are part of a dream distinguishable only by its trace or a fading memory.



Oum Kalsoum
Oil on canvas and wire netting
140 x 115 cm - 55.1 x 45.3 in.



Madonna

Oil on canvas and wire netting
140 x 115 cm - 55.1 x 45.3 in.



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