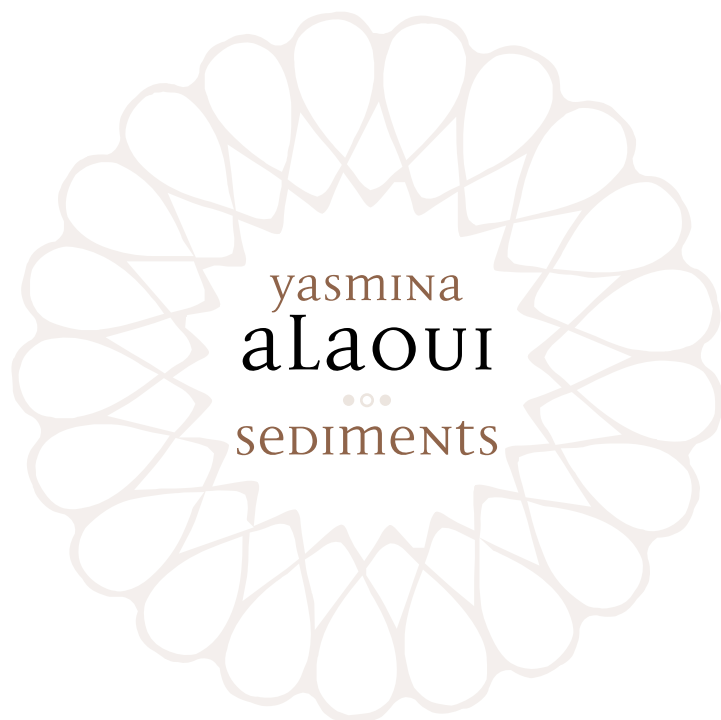




yasmina
aLaoui

OPERA GALLERY



yasmina
aLaoui
•••
sediments





preface

As the art season begins, Opera Gallery Dubai is proud to present the latest works of Yasmina Alaoui.

Over the last couple of years, our collectors were introduced to the artist's unique universe through her acclaimed collaboration with Marco Guerra.

For her first solo show in the region, Yasmina has created beautiful and hitherto unseen works, combining sand, gravel and minerals on canvas. The spirit behind her art is a nod to what makes Dubai and the UAE so special. A mixed population of different backgrounds and cultures, appropriating the city one day at a time: being caught between feelings of belonging and torn by the eventuality of having to leave.

This duality of feeling and perception is translated into Yasmina's work, where the viewers are exposed to what their minds articulate at a very specific moment in time. Are we looking at the sky, the desert, a combination of the two, or perhaps simply an amalgamation of feelings and what our psyche dictates?

Yasmina's work also embodies the cultural ambivalence to which most of us are exposed while living in the region: our senses are constantly stimulated by the local culture, yet are almost immediately offset with what is so deeply engraved in each of our unique values. Her canvases are infused with traditional Moroccan heritage, while the execution is very complex and undefinable.

Come to think of it, when we look at her paintings, we are really looking at ourselves.

This very ambivalence makes Yasmina's paintings so interesting; the back and forth between the ancestral crafts from her native land and the visual homage to her abstract vision of nature.

We invite you to step into her world, and as much as you are accustomed to the region, to rediscover sand and nature transposed on her canvases.

Gilles Dyan
Founder and Chairman
Opera Gallery Group

Sylvain Gaillard
Director
Opera Gallery Dubai

sediments

time AND memory ACCORDING to yasmina aLaoui

Yasmina Alaoui earned a reputation with a series of remarkable works displaying body parts or women's faces overlaid with abstract and sparkling patterns. Mixing drawing, painting, photography and diverse techniques of her own, these works, created in collaboration with her companion Marco Guerra, rapidly gave her a fully deserved international recognition.

Immersed in a bicultural environment with a Moroccan father and a French mother, Yasmina Alaoui immediately asserted her refusal of all stereotypes, whether related to women in general or to cultural archetypes from the Arab-Muslim world.

An evangelist of the quest for mystery and beauty, the artist carefully avoids specific political allusions in her works, while never losing sight of the potential social impact of her work. Recently, the artist has started to explore new artistic horizons, producing large-framed works (panel paintings, triptychs and square formats).

Such abstract compositions evoke vast mineralogical landscapes seen from the sky. *Texturologies*, *Sols et Matériologies* by Jean Dubuffet, burnt or smashed materials by Antoni Tàpies and Manolo Millares, American bird's eye views paintings, "futuro-archaeological" installations by artist Chen Zhen or the bright colour range of some of Zao Wou-Ki's compositions... One can think of numerous and rich associations when meditating in front of these captivating works, where the gaze probes the raw material, ceaselessly losing and finding its way.

Following her solo exhibition in Paris in October 2016, Opera Gallery is honoured to present twenty new works to the public in Dubai.

Each composition is the result of long hours of delicate elaboration. The artist begins by painting Zellige-type geometrical patterns. Found in traditional craftsmanship and mosaic works, these usually static forms seem to disintegrate here, sometimes even blowing up into pieces and vanishing into space.

Once this meticulously skilled stage completed, an eminently physical work begins, in which the artist's entire body is involved and where the unpredictable plays a crucial part. Yasmina Alaoui covers her geometrical compositions with a mix of materials both organic and mineral: a combination of salt, sand, gravel and acrylic painting is first applied and then dusted with pure pigments (Tuareg blue, turquoise, pink, green, gold...). Kohl, ashes and hand-crafted stars made of plaster are added, alongside materials collected in the palm grove not far from the Marrakech riad where she works a part of the year: pieces of styrofoam, broken ceramics... Sometimes panels are laid flat on the floor, sometimes slightly inclined while Yasmina gently drops the materials directly on the surface. These drops, like a sedimentary layer, cover some of the work, partly veiling the first outlined patterns that emerged.

Ruins of an ancient village, a civilisation that has disappeared, images of destruction or of looming human catastrophe, or perhaps the vision of a vegetal world or cellular division... her works contain something of the cosmic. Some will see a devastated battleground, while others, an image of birth or regeneration. Indeed, many feelings can be triggered when contemplating these works. But beyond any specific aspect of reality, what prevails is the extreme sensitivity of the artist's gaze and hands. Does she not say that each work from this new series is a reflection of her soul? Two layers are superimposed, one fragile and delicate, the other stronger, almost violent.

A portrait of the artist and the world she lives in.

David Rosenberg, January 2017





INTERVIEW

How did you evolve from photography, which marked your artistic beginnings, to your current style?

Sculpture was my original art form; I have been sculpting since I was 6 and got a Bachelor's of Art degree in sculpture. But after becoming allergic to many materials, I had to stay away from sculpting. Since then, I have been able to treat my condition, resume working with sculpture and get my hands dirty again. But everything happens for a reason. And because of that set-back, I had to develop other artistic approaches and to accept that if the medium is not primary, the artist's intention is. As a result, I am now able to work across multiple disciplines.

What are the different stages in producing your works?

First, designing the concept, then drawing and painting. Last, adding a sculptural layer to the whole piece.

How did you build your relationship with the canvas, marked by the importance of the material, the superposition of techniques and mediums?

I don't see it as a traditional canvas. I see it as a two-step process. First, a geometrical one: traditional, orderly, repetitive and meditative, which is then "destroyed" by a physical, violent, harsh and disorderly application of the material.

Your work is characterised by the predominance of large formats - triptych, polyptych... Why this choice?

We are miniatures in the big equation that is nature. I like to have this perspective of looking at a bigger world than just me, myself and I.

I like the idea of gazing at a microscopic world in a macroscopic format.

Your creative process shows a great physical commitment: what do you think?

Yes! I like to think I put my all into each piece. Both phases are challenging: the first, one with repetitive and detailed layer requires infinite patience while the second phase demands a lot of stamina. I want to remind the viewers and

myself that making art is not just a cerebral activity, it makes huge physical demands as well.

How did Islamic patterns become the painted web of most of your works?

It's part of my identity, my culture, my DNA. It also creates a ground layer of mysticism for future generations to figure out the past.

Your works integrate organic and mineral elements: sand, pigments, plaster, gravel, lost-and-found objects... What place does nature occupy in your works?

The phenomena of nature, science or life in general are what interest me, so it makes sense that I use these elements to express what's on my mind. Besides art, I'm passionate about science, particularly biology and geology. I also love archeology and the idea of what past generations have left us.

What role does travelling play with respect to inspiration? You split your work between your workshops in New York and Marrakech; how do these cities influence your creations?

Everything influences me, so the more I travel, the more I appreciate new ideas and the ones I already have.

How do your multicultural influences permeate your work?

They all come out in the many layers of my works.

Your interest in the support chosen is self-explanatory. What is your favorite medium? Would you like to tackle new mediums, as was the case for your creation exhibited at the COP22 in Marrakech?

As I evolve, my intentions and direction change over time. I am open to all new ways of expressing my thoughts and feelings: I have an unquenchable desire to explore new mediums. As it so happens, I am currently composing music.

What is the symbolic significance of your works, through your choice of patterns, embedded objects, colours and materials?

It represents my current spiritual understanding of the world around me.

One of your previous paintings refers to the destruction of Aleppo; are current events influencing you and are they directly anchored in your creations?

Yes and no. I try to stick to the idea that time does not exist, that it is only a human limitation and necessity.





So I do speak of current events, with the understanding that these events have occurred in the past, and will infinitely repeat themselves in the future.

Your works combine the symbolic and the abstract. What is the part each plays in your creation? Is this a way of overcoming them?

I don't like to stick to artistic descriptions made by scholars who place works into categories created for the sake of analysis and education. I try to go beyond "styles", "movements" and "genres".

Do you always work by series? If so, which theme would you like to explore in the future?

I'll be able to answer that question... in the future!

Tell us about your collaboration with photographer Marco Guerra. How has it influenced your artistic career? Are you considering more projects together in the future?

We collaborate on everything, especially intellectually speaking. We combine our influences to get a wider understanding of this human experience. And yes, we are currently working on future mutual projects.

Is there something you care about, something with which you could never part?

No. It's quite an artistic paradox. I create objects but do not want to be attached to anything physical! Does a piece of my son's newborn hair count as an object?

What does art bring you?

A way to experience the world on my own terms. And relief.

Who are your artistic influences? Do you have masters?

In the classics, William Turner, Auguste Rodin. As for contemporaries: Anselm Kiefer, Tara Donovan, Anish Kapoor for the big names. I also love Damian Hirst's obsession with science and death.





artist's statement

“I HAVE BEEN MAKING ART SINCE I WAS SEVEN,
IT IS WHAT I KNOW BEST AND FEEL MOST COMFORTABLE WITH.”

I have been making art since I was seven, it is what I know best and feel most comfortable with.

Art is a great tool for investigating the world. There are no limits to where you can take it and where it can take you.

It is a creative vessel indeed: wonderfully complex at times, therapeutic at others.

The language of art is timeless and international, and it was a great way for me to communicate, first with myself, then with the world.

Art lets me investigate any subject matter. Any subject that gets my intention can be incorporated into my art, research and development.

Although the title “artist” is still strange to me, I didn’t really become an artist; I have always been one, even before it became a full time career. I was an artist before I really understood what being an artist meant.

Both of my parents played a major role in my art career. My mother is a true art lover who has always been exposed to it. She loves photography and taught us about many great artists.

My father, though he would never call himself an artist, has a very creative and unusual way to tackle his diverse business ventures. He taught me a great lesson: a large part of making art is about strategy and problem solving.

My mother enrolled me in various after-school activities, piano, dance, etc., but the one that really resonated was sculpture. I took classes at the Carousel du Louvre in Paris, where they taught both how to be a great technician and how to think abstractly and conceptually. This class had a profound effect on me: today, in every project I create, technique is equally as important as the concept.

We moved to Morocco when I was ten. So immediately inspired was I by the various patterns I encountered in homes, in artefacts, in henna body art, that I began to draw obsessively.

I would draw all day long, including at school, which often got me into troubles... but I couldn’t stop! I would cover my entire books and then move on to my friend’s notebooks or those of whoever was sitting next to me. At the time, having no formal training in drawing or painting, the patterns –those found now in my “1001 Dreams” series–, although extremely delicate and complex, had a very naive and tribal quality to them. How I cherish those today: knowing as much as I do about drawing, these were truly my first investigation...

During my teenage years I was very lucky to be surrounded by extremely talented people: Yves Saint Laurent and Serge Lutens were close friends of my parents.

I remember when Yves Saint Laurent gave my mother, Serge and I a private tour of his house. I remember seeing a William Turner’s painting for the first time, a very abstract and minimalist scene of a caravan caught in a sand storm. That painting changed my life. It was so strikingly simple, so beautifully unpredictable and violent at the same time, I couldn’t wrap my head around how one painting could evoke such extreme feelings all at once.

I also spent a lot of my vacation time in Mahjoubi Aherdane’s house: his two daughters, Kenza and Fanou, caught my eagerness for art and became great mentors to me. We would spend days drawing, painting, sculpting, creating photo shoots. What a wonderful experience it was to find kinship souls who were as obsessed as I was!

I’ve always had a passion for science and I wanted to continue studying neuroscience and genetics. So I went to the US in 1995 to the College of William and Mary to study medicine. I heard the school had a foundry and decided to take sculpture classes. This ended up being my major! During those years I worked mostly on extremely large-scale sculptures in bronze, plaster, wood and metal. One of my teachers jokingly remarked that one day one of my creations would end up collapsing on me and that they would find me dead under it! Working with large-scale works is a very physically demanding task; it was also a huge leap from having worked for years with extremely fine ink pens on small scale drawings.

I also studied film making at NYU in the summer of 1998. So when I moved back there in 1999, I quickly found work in the film industry, notably for Spike Lee, Eriqah Badu and Rachid Bouchared. I was very curious about the film making process and worked in several departments: casting, production, film and sound editing and assistant director.

I met Marco Guerra in 2002 and we immediately spoke of working together. It is this collaboration that turned my passion for art into an actual career.

I worked on incorporating my drawings into his photos, developing a complex process of mixing photo, drawing, painting, collage and digital, for two years. Our first “1001 Dreams” series was born. It was an immediate hit. The very first gallery I sent it to offered us a show and the pieces started selling before the exhibition even opened.

My real artistic career had truly begun. I have since worked on many different projects, as I do not like doing the same thing over and over, and my love for diverse mediums calls me to use all of them, constantly shifting between sculpture, painting, drawing, fashion and jewellery designing, film making and music composing.

My choices of subject matter have also changed over the years: while my earlier work focused on the figurative, my later works are much more abstract.

My focus is on mediums, the history and traditions of art making, the cultural uses of mediums; and fascinated by the exploration of the line between science, nature, multicultural traditions and contemporary art making.

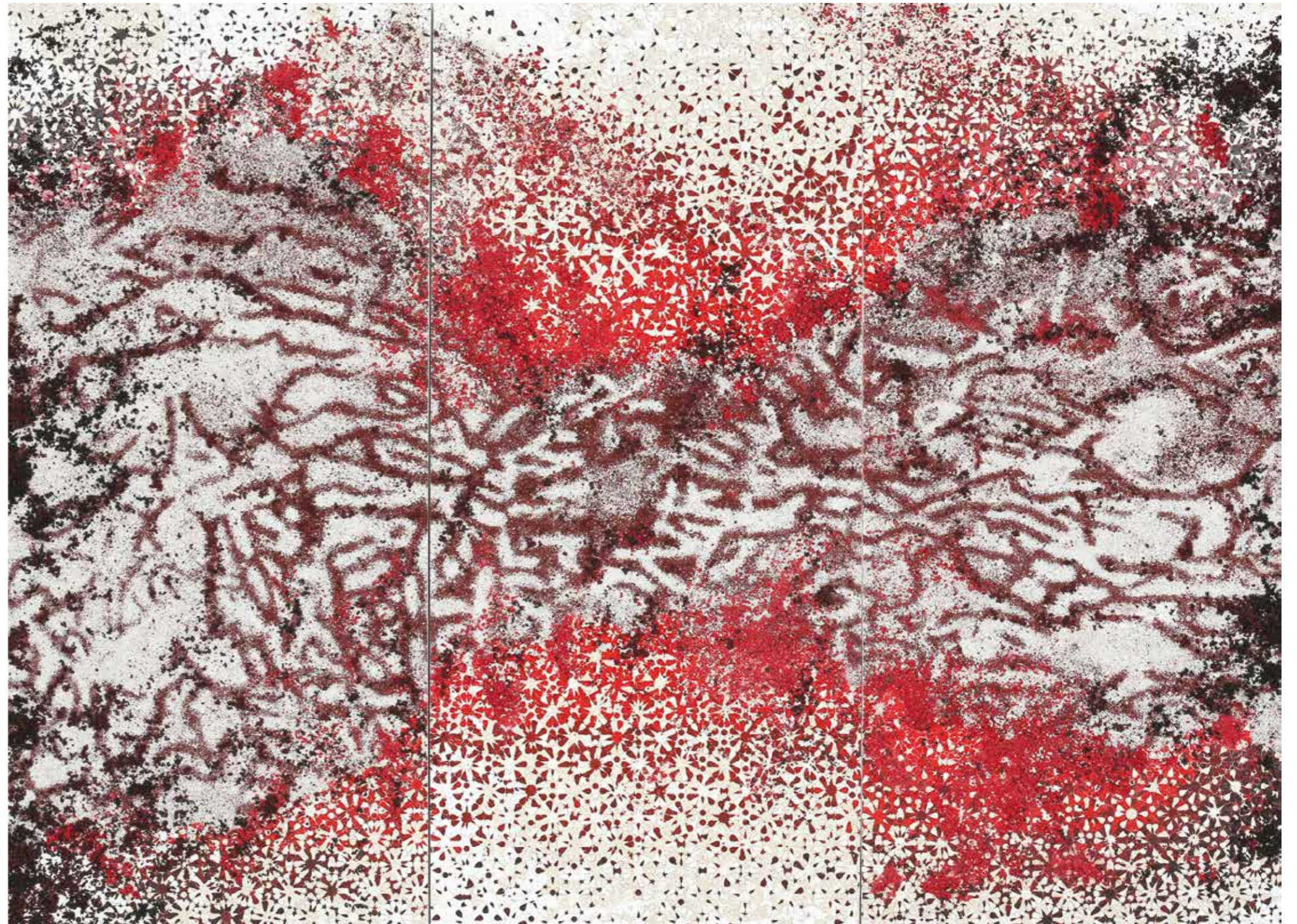




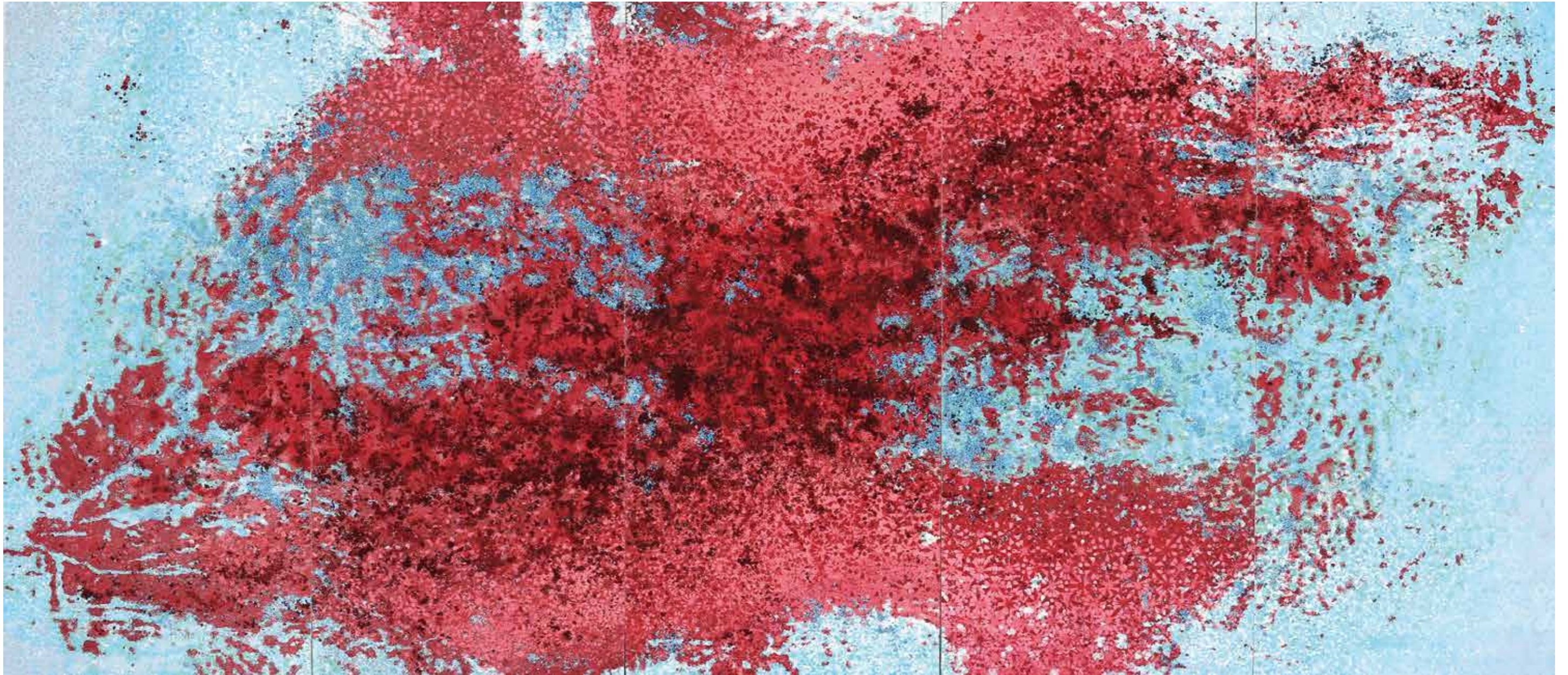
recent works



Red and White Trio Landscape #1, 2017
Acrylic paint, pigments, salt and gravel on wood
110 x 312 cm - 43.3 x 122.9 in.



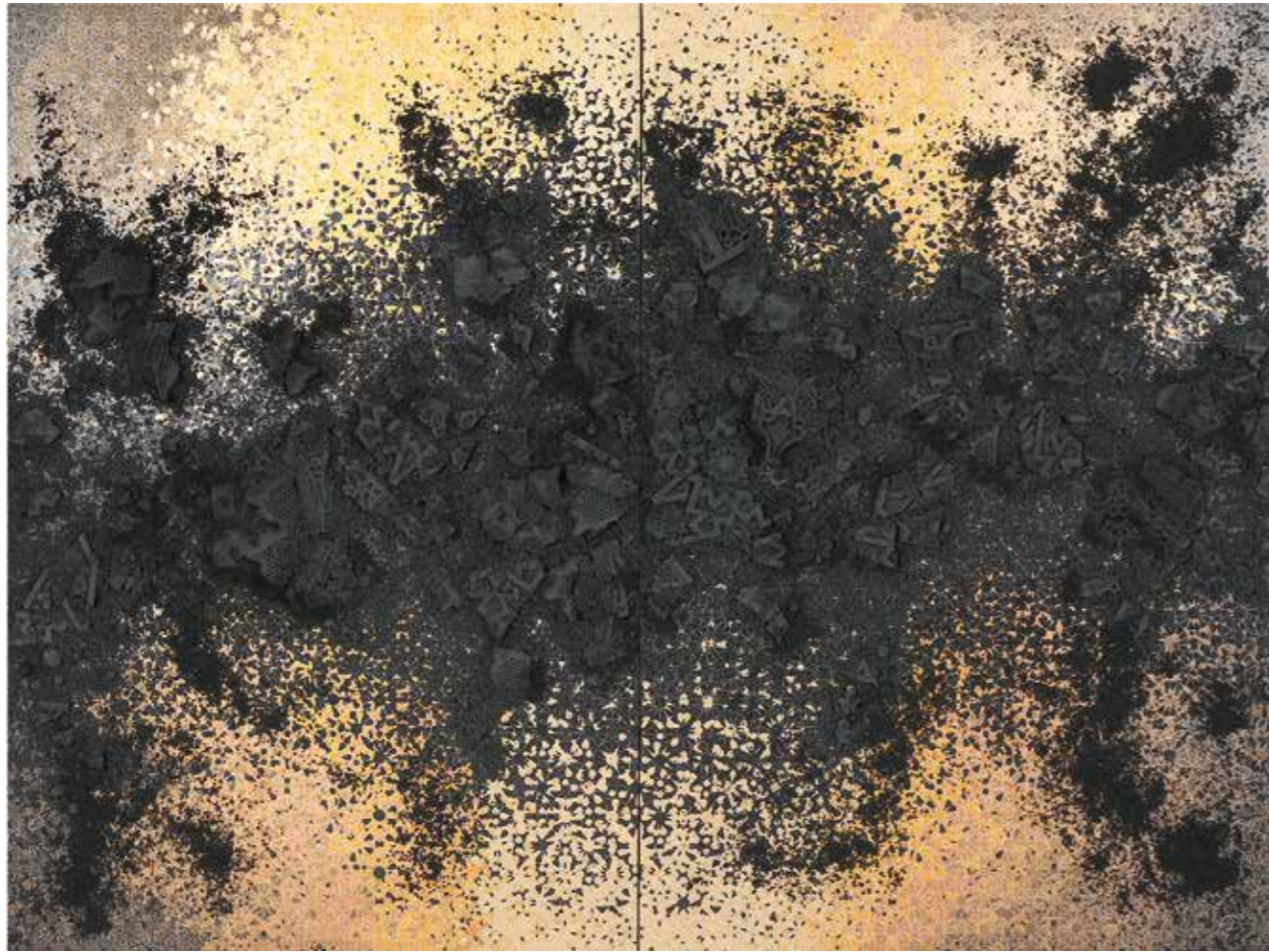
Red Trio #3, 2017
Acrylic paint, pigments, salt and gravel on wood
184 x 252 cm – 72.5 x 99.2 in.



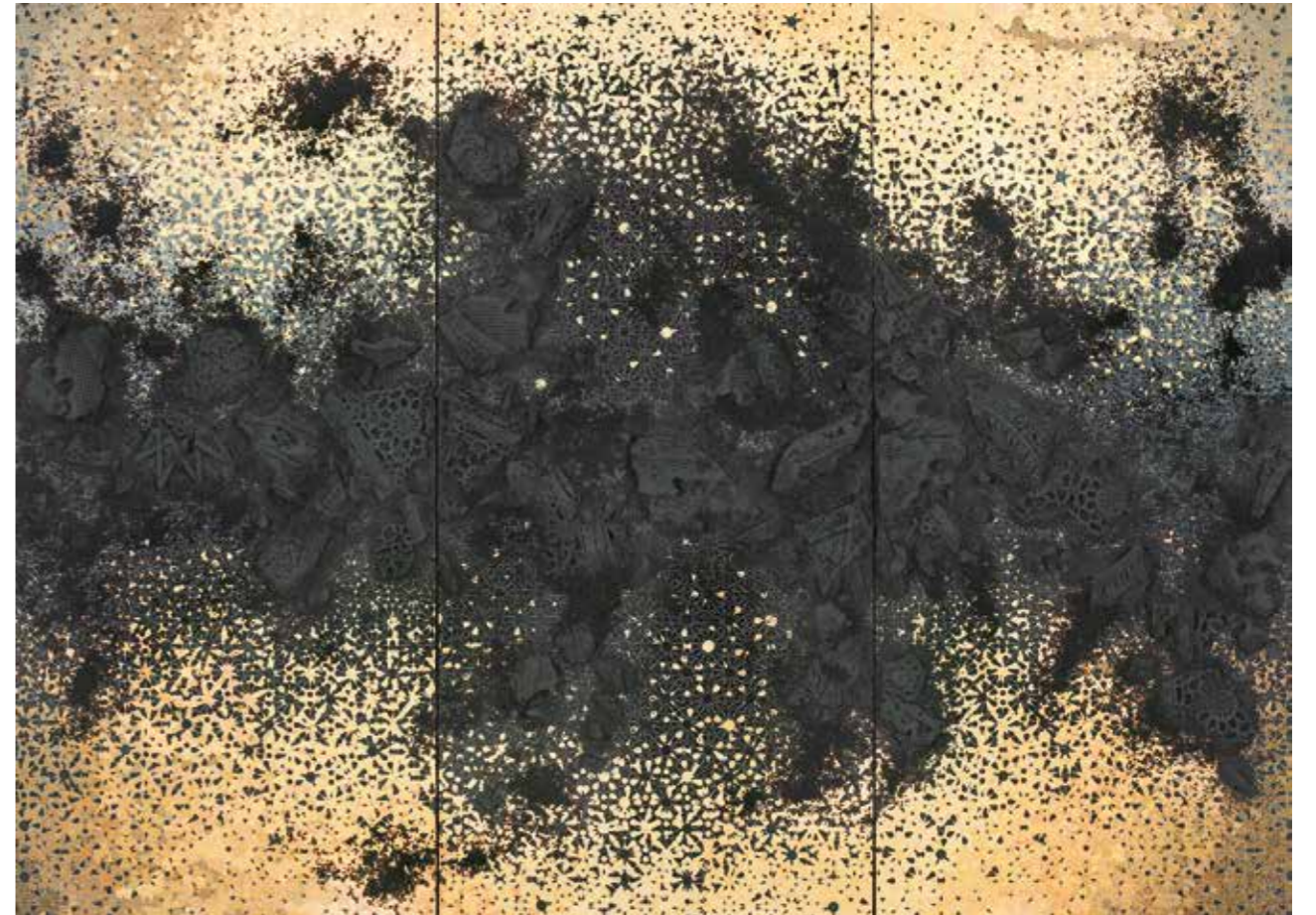
Red and Blue 5 panel #1, 2017
Acrylic paint, pigments, salt and gravel on wood
190 x 435 cm - 74.8 x 171.3 in.



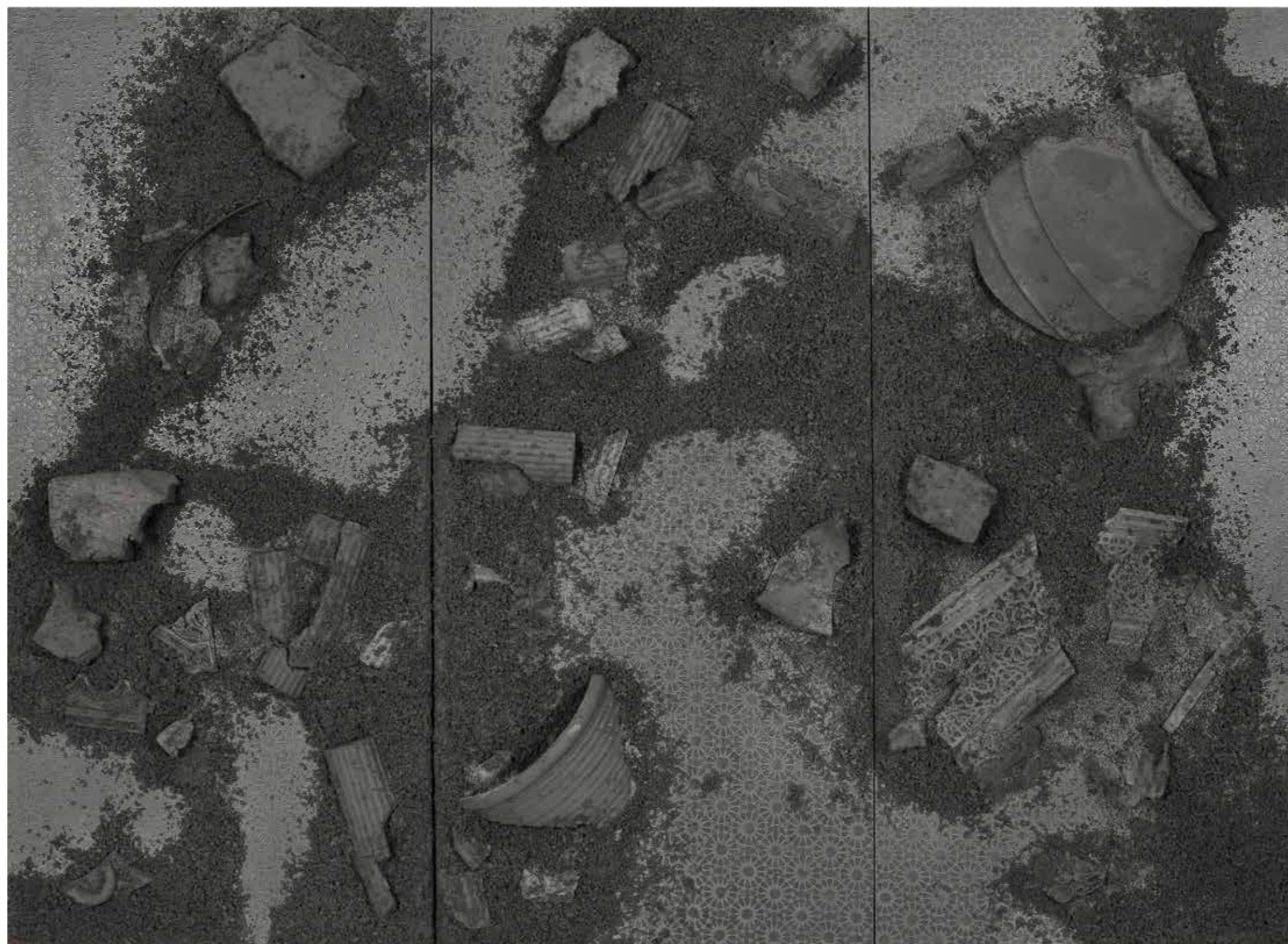
Blue and White Trio Landscape #1, 2017
Acrylic paint, pigments, salt and gravel on wood
110 x 312 cm - 43.3 x 122.9 in.



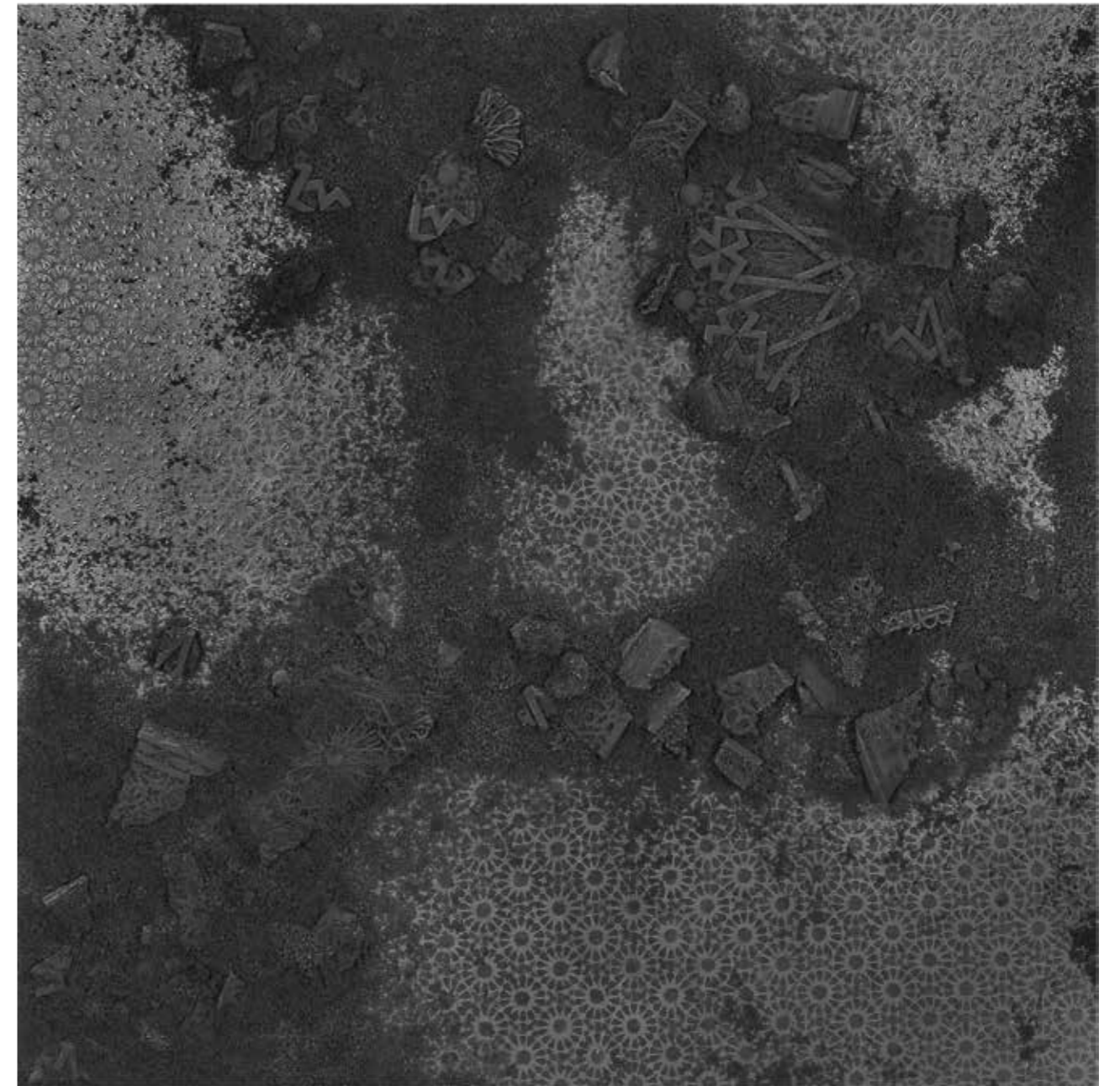
Black and Gold Duo #1, 2017
Acrylic paint, pigments, salt, plaster, found objects and gravel on wood
176 x 230 cm - 69.3 x 90.5 in.



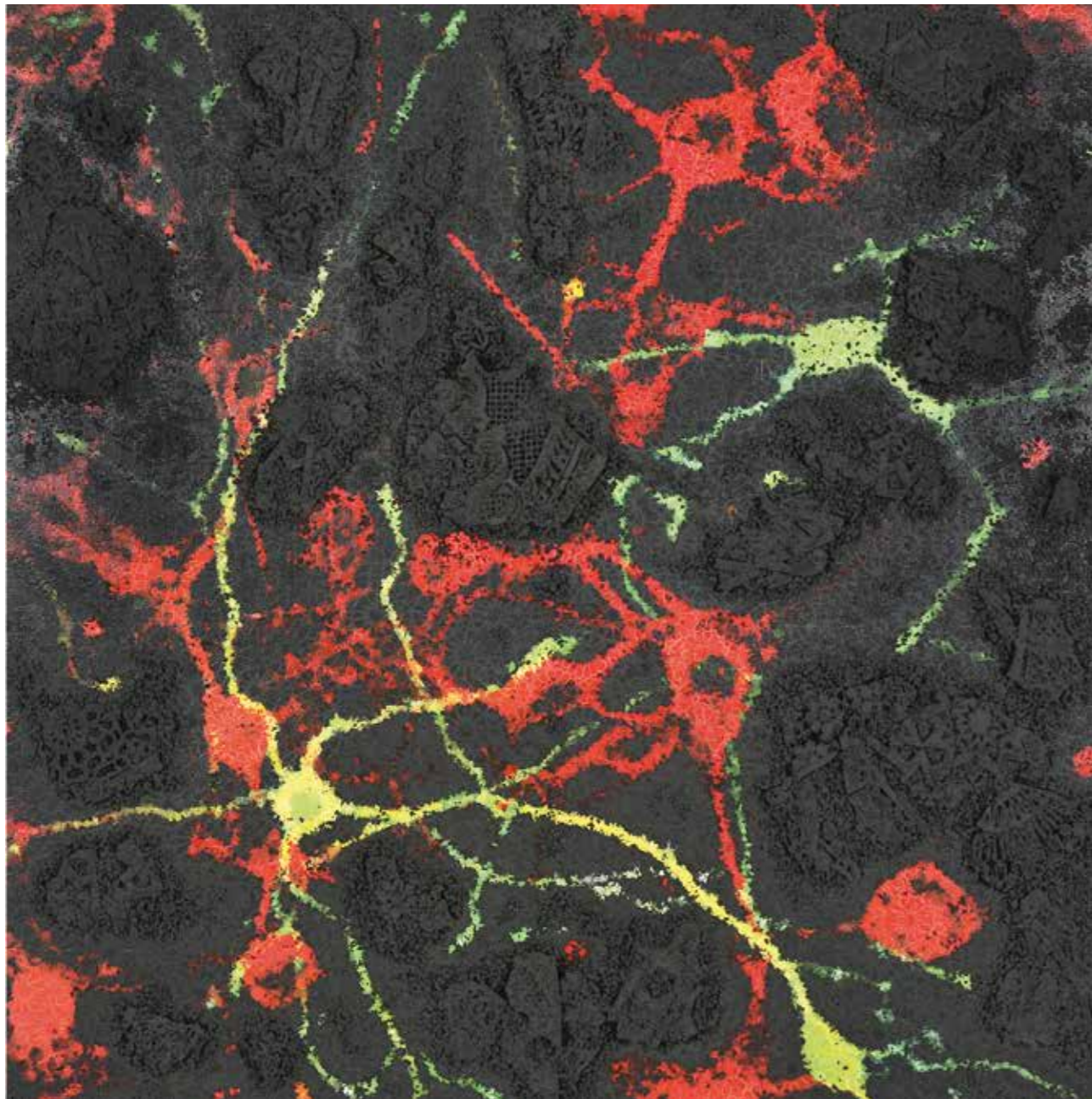
Black and Gold Trio #1, 2017
Acrylic paint, pigments, salt, plaster, found objects and gravel on wood
188 x 260 cm - 74 x 102.4 in.



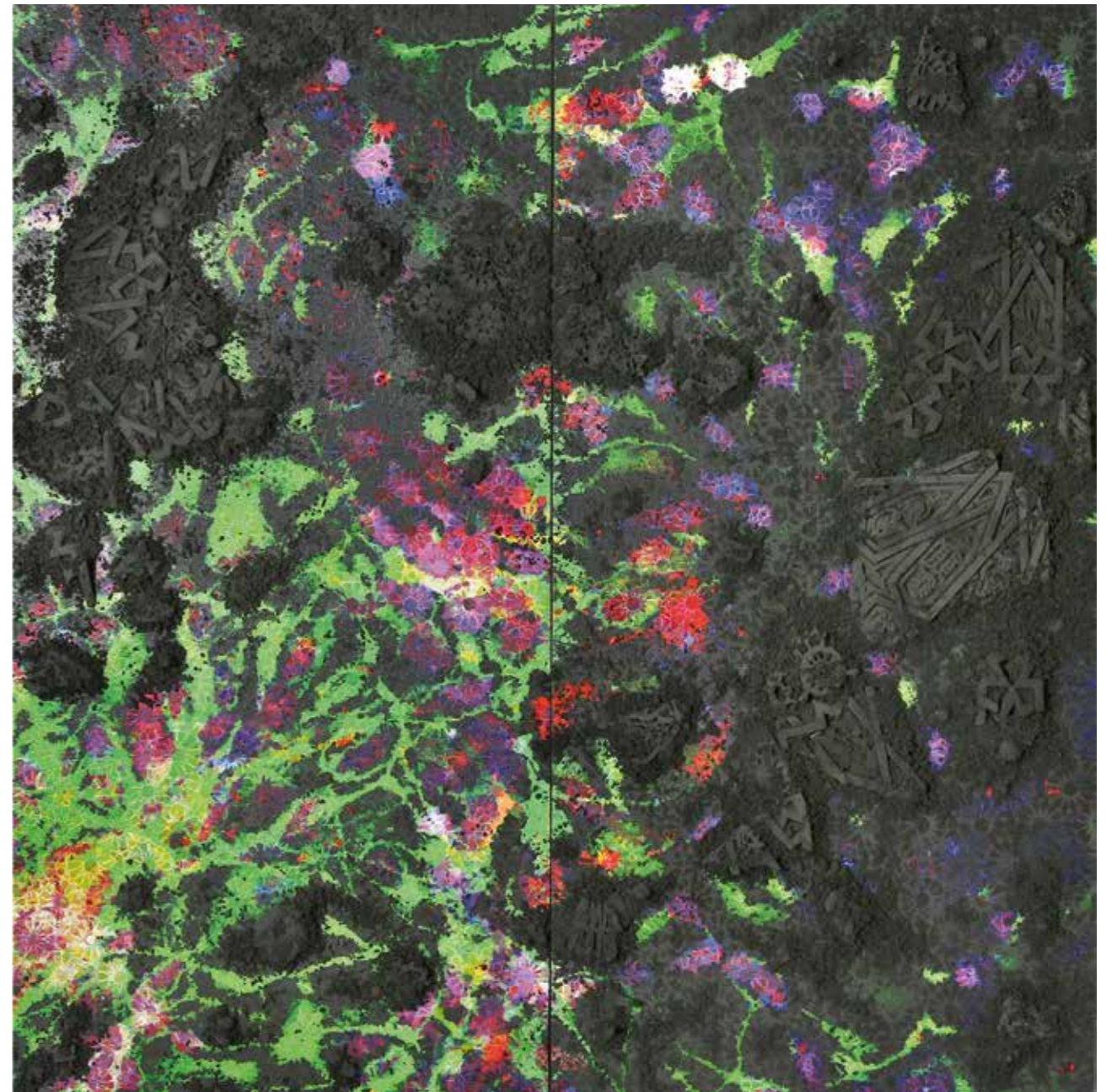
Black Trio #2, 2017
Acrylic paint, plaster, found objects and gravel on wood
188 x 257 cm - 74 x 101.2 in.



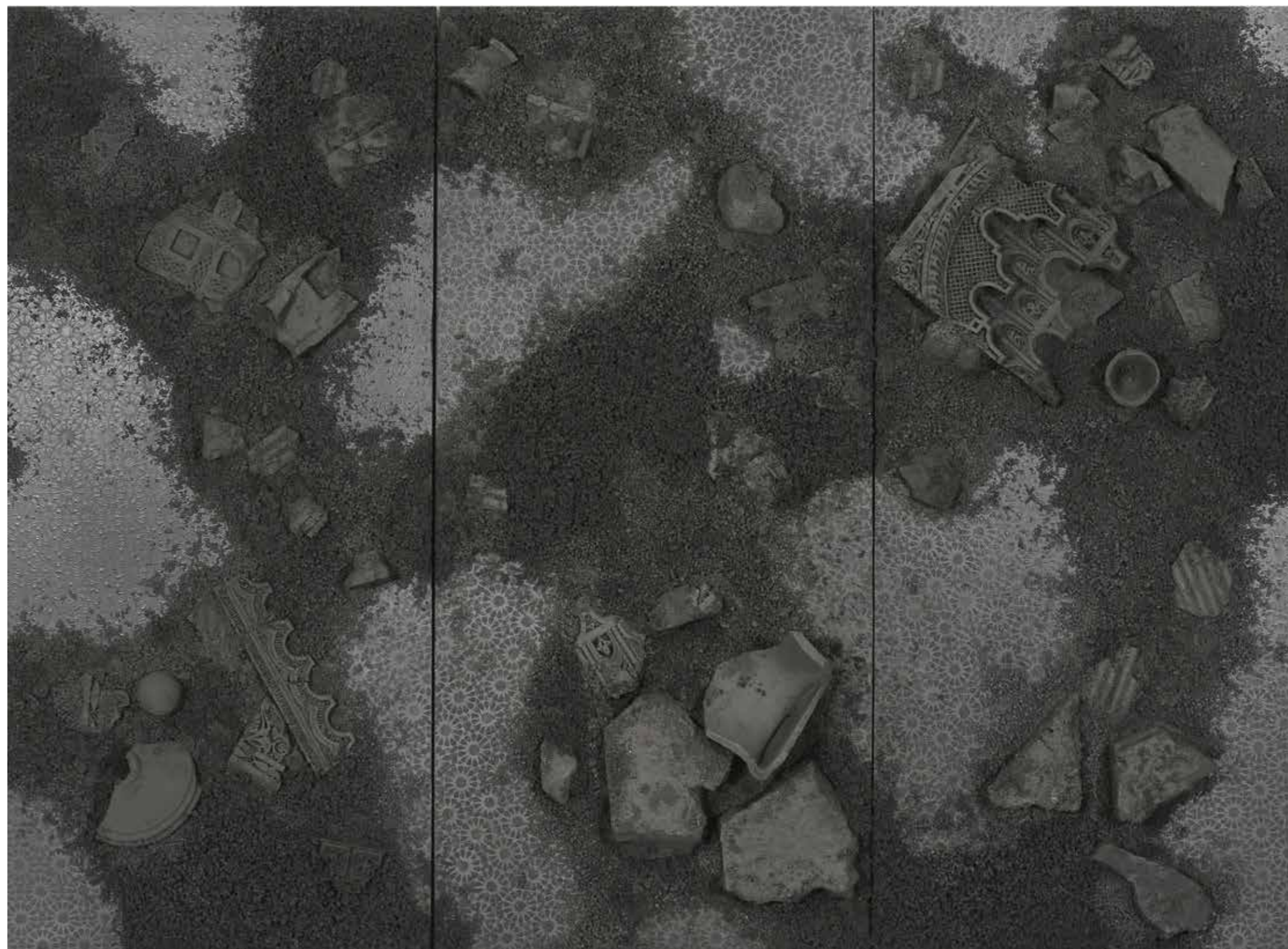
Black Square #1, 2017
Acrylic paint, plaster, found objects and gravel on wood
158 x 158 cm – 62.2 x 62.2 in.



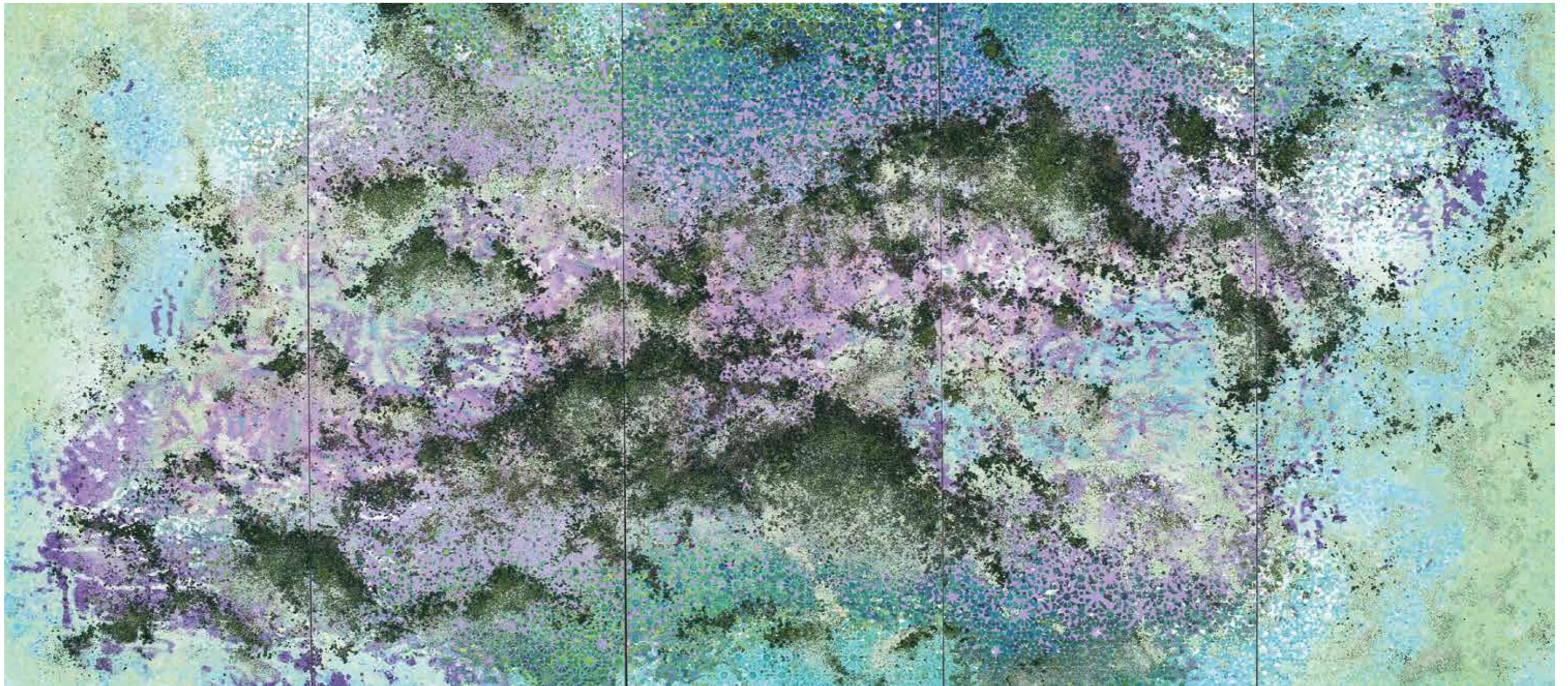
Black Red Square #1, 2017
Acrylic paint, pigments, salt and gravel on wood
158 x 158 cm - 62.2 x 62.2 in.



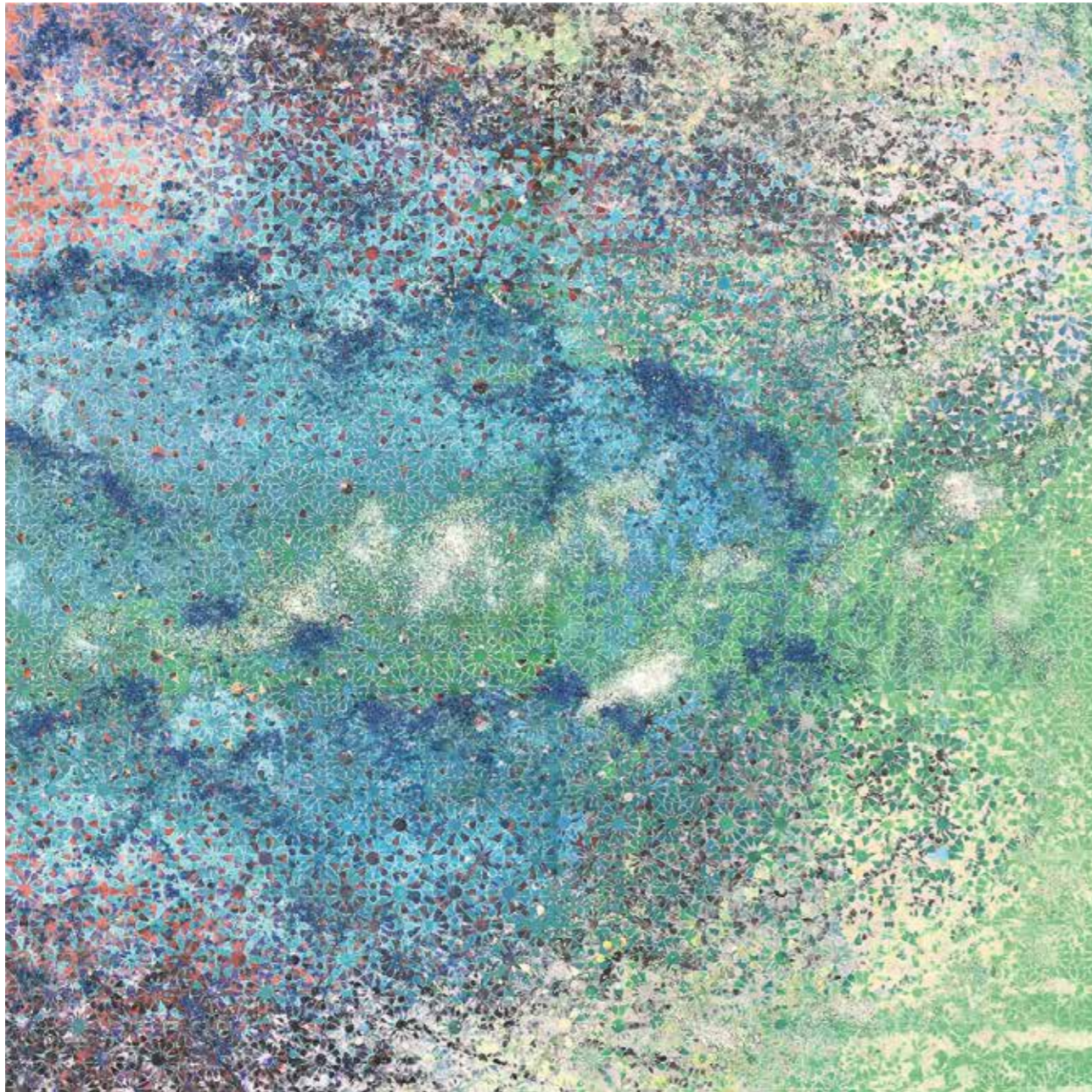
Black, Green, Purple Duo #1, 2017
Acrylic paint, pigments, salt and gravel on wood
158 x 158 cm - 62.2 x 62.2 in.



Black Trio #3, 2017
Acrylic paint, plaster, found objects and gravel on wood
188 x 257 cm - 74 x 101.2 in.



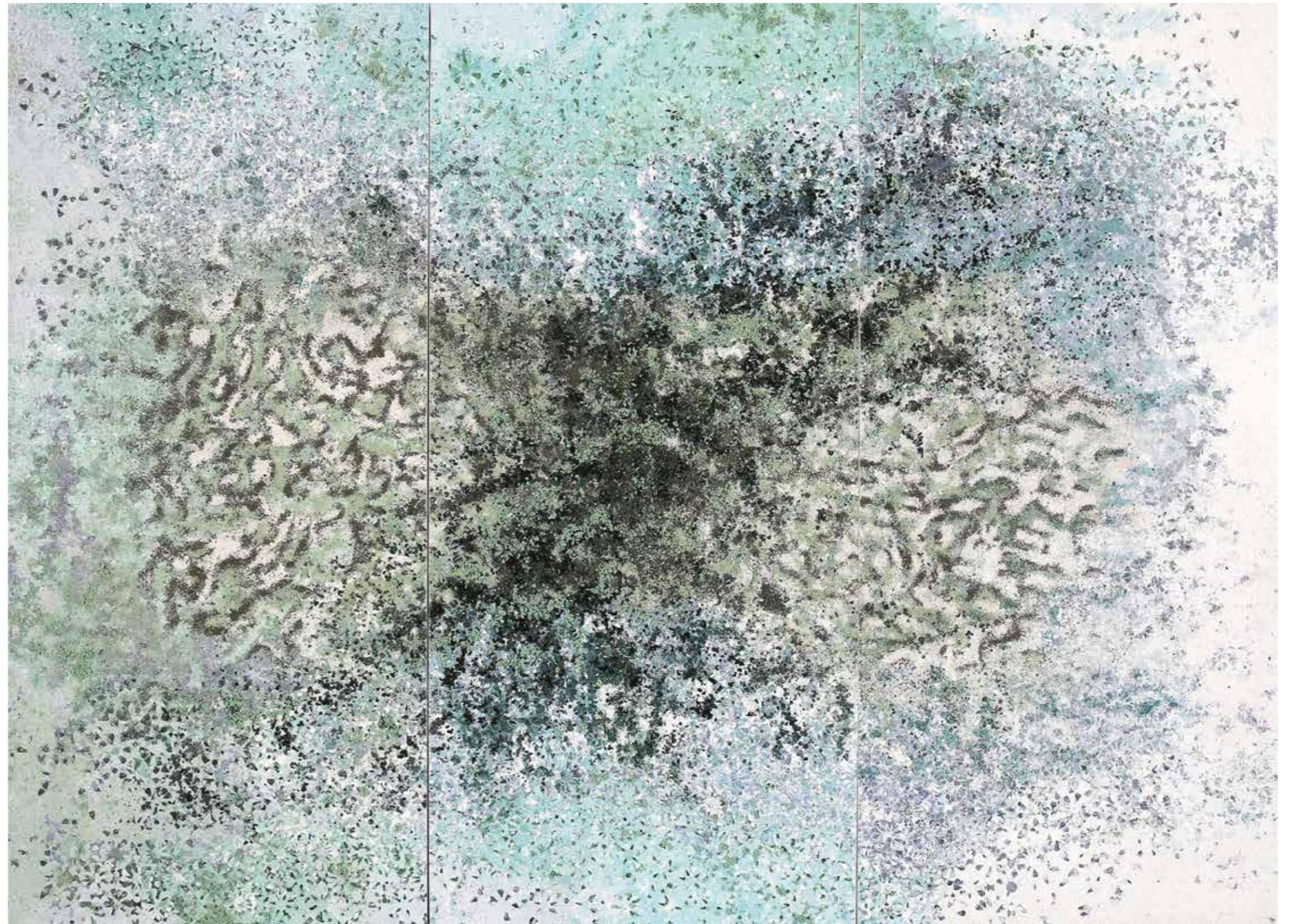
Green and Purple 5 panel #1, 2017
Acrylic paint, pigments, salt and gravel on wood
190 x 435 cm - 74.8 x 171.3 in.



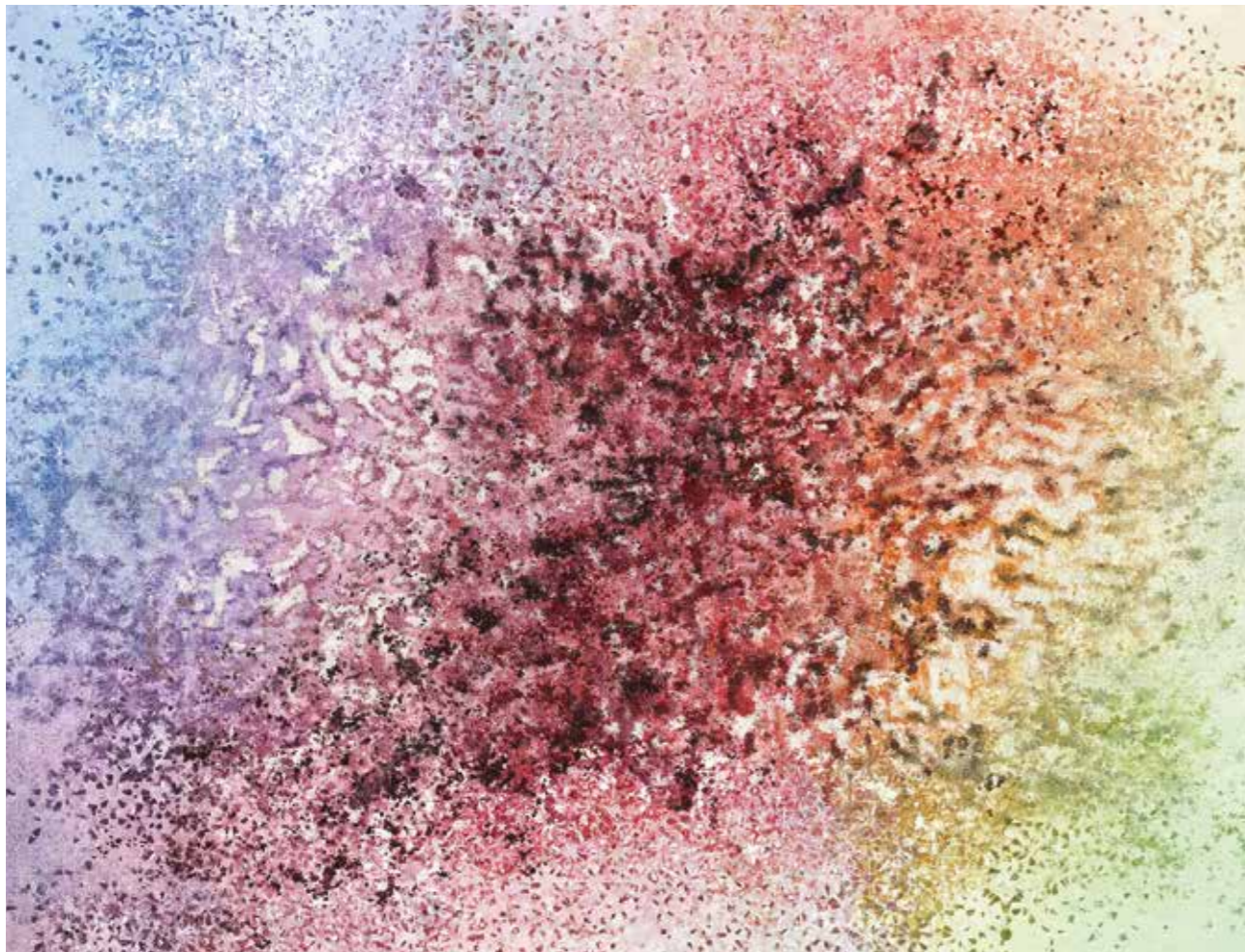
Green Blue Square #1, 2017
Acrylic paint, pigment and salt on wood
158 x 158 cm - 62.2 x 62.2 in.



Green Rectangle #1, 2017
Acrylic paint, pigments, salt and gravel on wood
176 x 230 cm - 69.3 x 90.5 in.



Green Trio #1, 2017
Acrylic paint, pigments, salt and gravel on wood
188 x 257 cm - 74 x 101.2 in.



Rainbow Rectangle #1, 2017
Acrylic paint, pigments, salt and gravel on wood
176 x 230 cm - 69.3 x 90.5 in.



Rainbow Rectangle #2, 2017
Acrylic paint, pigments, salt and gravel on wood
176 x 230 cm - 69.3 x 90.5 in.

the artist has NO use for RULES;
he throws the material as a psychic substance
and the essential lies in this throwing

Antoni Tàpies

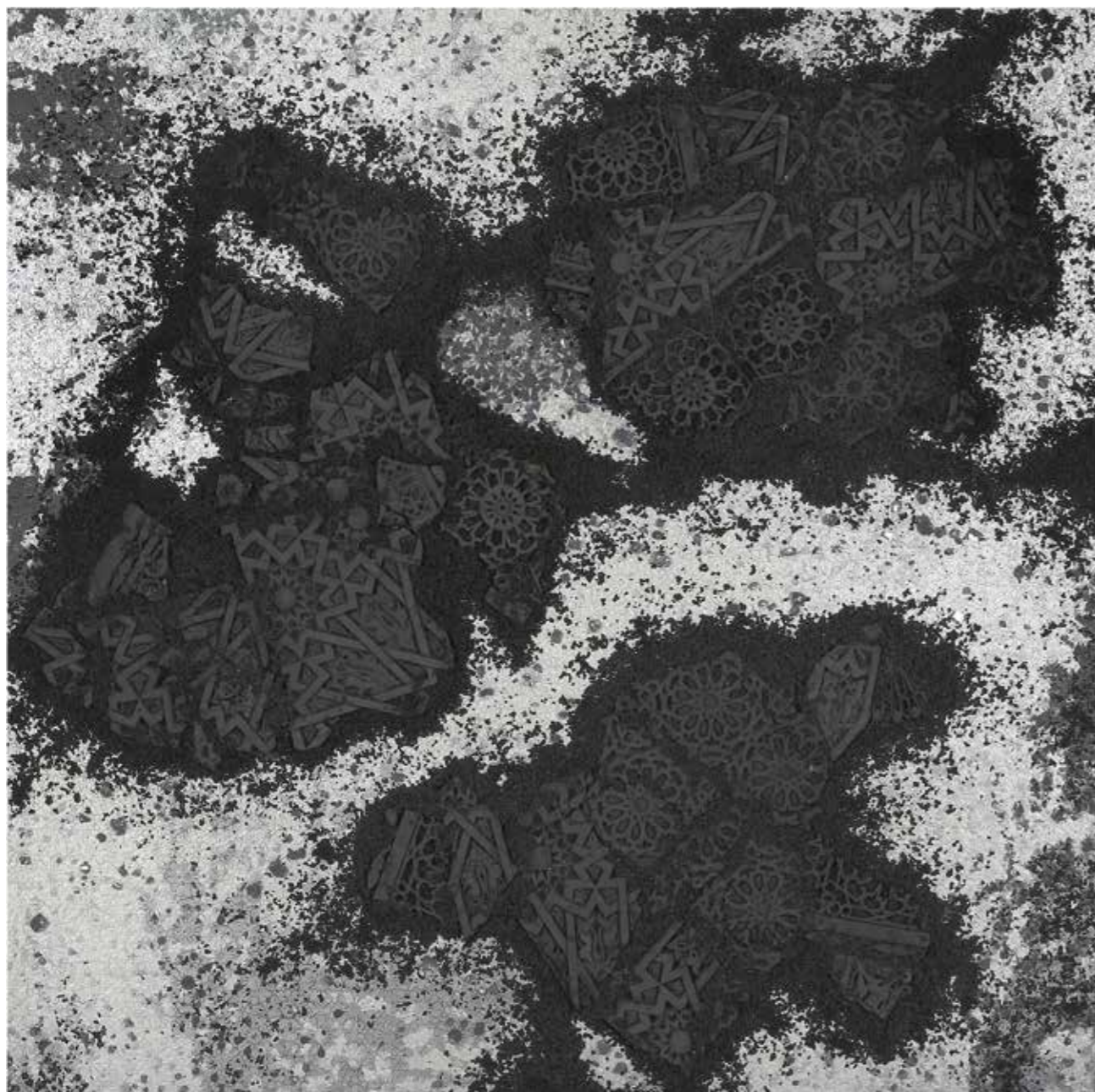
White and Gold Trio #1 (détail)





White and Gold Trio #1, 2017

Acrylic paint, pigments, salt, plaster, found objects, ashes and gravel on wood
191 x 260 cm - 75.2 x 102.4 in.



Silver, Black, White Square #1, 2017
Acrylic paint, plaster, salt and Kohl on wood
158 x 158 cm - 62.2 x 62.2 in.



Silver Rectangle # 1, 2017
Acrylic paint, salt and Kohl on wood
176 x 230 cm - 69.3 x 90.5 in.



White Square #2, 2017
Acrylic paint, salt, plaster, found objects and gravel on wood
158 x 158 cm - 62.2 x 62.2 in.



White Square #3, 2017
Acrylic paint, salt, plaster, minerals and gravel on wood
158 x 158 cm - 62.2 x 62.2 in.

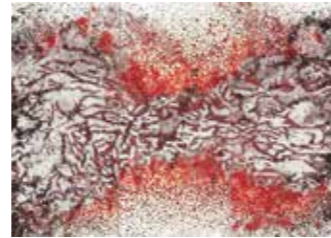


White Rectangle #2, 2017
Acrylic paint, salt, plaster, found objects and gravel on wood
190 x 260 cm – 74.8 x 102.4 in.

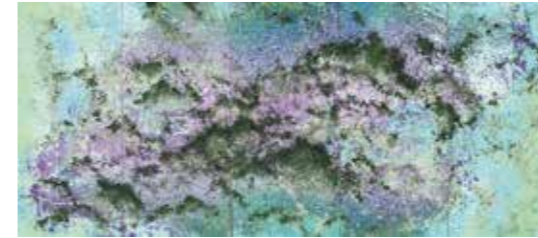
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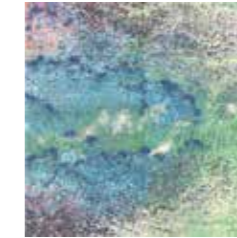
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Green Trio #1
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Rainbow Rectangle #1
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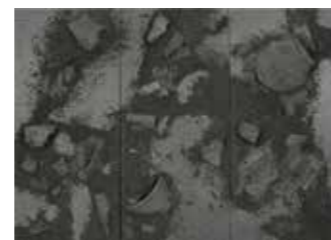
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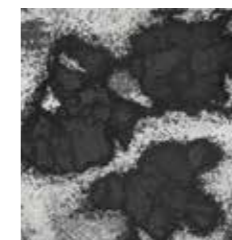
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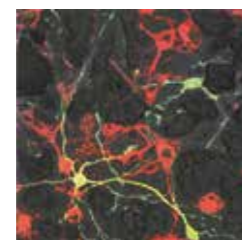
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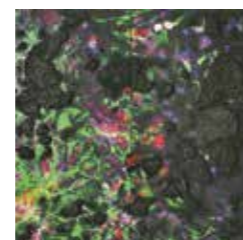
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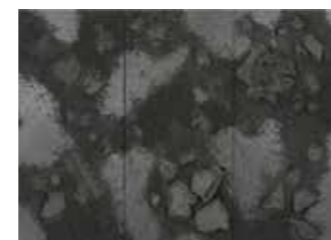
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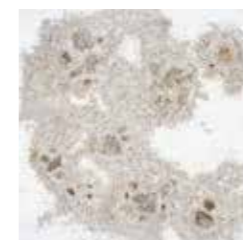
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White Square #3
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White Rectangle #2
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BIOGRAPHY

Yasmina Alaoui is of French and Moroccan descent, born in New York in 1977. She studied Fine Arts at the Carrousel du Louvre in Paris and passed a B.A. in Sculpture from the College of William and Mary. She currently lives in New York city and exhibits internationally. The underlying themes behind all her works directly deal with her experiences of multicultural upbringing and aim at bridging extremes by embracing opposites: secular and holy, classical and contemporary, order and chaos, repulsion and attraction. She is known to create complex and intricate visual works using a wide variety of techniques, which she combines in an authentic manner.

Yasmina Alaoui has collaborated with photographer Marco Guerra on the "Tales of beauty" and "1001 Dreams" series, which have been collected and exhibited internationally since 2003.

Exhibitions

- 2016** Solo exhibition, Opera Gallery Paris, France
- Monumental sculpture Untitled 2016, COP 22 project, curated by Mahi Binebine, Jardin des Arts, Marrakech, Morocco commissioned
- Not New Now, curated by Reem Fadda, Marrakech Biennale, Marrakech, Morocco
- Empreinte, group show, curated by Mahi Binebine, Musée de la Palmeraie, Marrakech, Morocco
- Sans-titres, L'Blassa, Marrakech, Morocco
- 2015** Americana Art Festival; Soho: Collection opening group show, Allouche Gallery East Hampton, New York, USA
- 2014** Group show, Leila Heller Gallery, New York, USA
- Inaugural group show, Musée Mohammed VI d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Rabat, Morocco

- 2013** Jamm Arts, group show, curated by Lulu Al Sabah, Dubai, UAE
- Calligrafitti, group show, curated by Jeffrey Deitch, Leila Heller Gallery, New York, USA
- Syriart, group show, Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, France
- 2012** Biennale, Marrakech, Morocco
- Biennale OFF, group show, Marrakech, Morocco
- Solo show, Opera Gallery New York, New York, USA



Cop22 Project



acknowledgment

The artist would like to thank: Marco Guerra for helping in the making of this project, Gilles Dyan for his continuous support and belief in my art and the entire Opera Gallery team for all their hard work.

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