



LITA CABELLUT
ARMY OF POETS

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In her new series 'Army of Poets', Lita Cabellut touches on the complexity of war.

"The paradox of war is that it often originates from an impulse of idealism and a need to protect one's values. At the same time the violence and cruelty of war silences the voice of ethics. In the eye of the cyclone, destruction rules the silence, but from this silence poetry can arise like a flower from burnt ground, and poetry can speak the language of ethics, so that hope may once again blossom".

In each installation, sculpture and painting exhibited the reality of this contradiction appears. The soldier statues surrounded by destruction: a strangely beautiful mosaic of shattered flowers and ceramic. In other installations round floral targets express the brutal forces of nature surviving over time. The eyes are caught in a visceral movement of colour; the effect is a meditative glimpse into the constant flow of mankind's problematic existence.

"To me the flower symbolizes the constant renewal of sources of life".

Young soldiers set against a backdrop of intense colour and chaos express purity within the maelstrom. Through these portraits, Cabellut powerfully captures fragility, sacrifice, determination, humility, fear, and detachment expressed through the hysteria and melancholy that characterise war, but we are urged to journey through and beyond such feelings of anger, despair and destruction in an attempt to find hope and love. Through this recreation, Cabellut emphasises the continuous search for beauty out of destruction, and life out of death.

"We try to avoid war, but at the same time every war in the world is a part of ourselves. There is no war that is not our war. No war that is not mine"

Gilles Dyan

Founder and President

Opera Gallery Group

INTERVIEW WITH LITA CABELLUT

INVENTING A NEW KIND OF BEAUTY

Belén Quejigo

“In the past, governments were guided by philosophers and artists. I am convinced that the basis of love, peace and empathy lies in beauty.”

Simone Weil says that “the desire for light produces light”. What does light mean for you in painting?

Light is a reflection of the dream of what we imagine. Light goes on offering us a variety of prisms which our brain then continues to shape and create. Light allows us to imagine what there is. For me, light is no more than prisms reflecting we must then complete the image.

If there is light, by necessity there is darkness.

They go together. They are inseparable and indispensable to painting. Without them there is no volume. There would be no painting, no shades of colour. Imagine Velázquez, the master of light, when all of a sudden he brings life to the pleat of a dress for example. There is nothing there but paint, but the entire volume of folded cloth is perceptible. This is what light does: it gives shape to what we know and also lets us sense the things that are not there. We live our lives seeing - contrast gives us these beautiful experiences.

There is a whole psychology of colour in your work. What can it be attributed to?

For me, colours are like an orchestra. Sometimes there is a soloist but all colours are important because they each have a role. In reality a colour does not exist, it is always a reflection of many colours. Again we can talk about the imaginary prism because it does not really exist. It is like black, it is not a colour. If I paint a picture with a black background, or a picture in which there are patches of black, I would never just use black. It is always black with five or six colours. Each colour absorbs light in one way; some reject it and others put it to one side, others absorb it superficially, some drink it in and others leave it floating, and that is what colours keep on offering. Painting is simply a means by which material form is given to something of cosmic proportions, something which is highly abstract and which we cannot intuitively sense. There are people for whom such a universe is accessible.

You?

It is something with a much greater cosmic dimension and it connects with the universe. I think painters are something like this with colours and shapes.

You dedicate yourself to painting which is something very few people have mastered and furthermore you achieve a realism that is very personal because it is not hyper-realism. Can you explain a little more about the ‘Cabellut’ style of realism?

For me, the physical element is not important. What moves me is the philosophical and the ethical element; the sensitivity of the character - whether it is a likeness or not does not particularly interest me. We can never truly paint a portrait. What is a portrait after all? Portraits do not really exist. Portrait painters have always taken an interest in reality. But a portrait is always something which is dead and the human being is alive. We cannot imitate life. We can only imagine what could resemble life. So when people ask me to do a portrait, I always say “no”, because what I’m going to paint has already died at the moment I paint it. People are very determined about having a portrait done. Portraits have a very special place in history and in the history of art because we have the need to remember where we came from and who we are. Each portrait bears a kind of witness to these ancestors. Each portrait represents the fear of not knowing who we are. We are very afraid of losing the story of who we are. Imagine if there were no mirrors, what would happen? What would happen if there were no reflection in which we could see our own faces? We would become anonymous. Our face would be the face of the person we are looking at and your face would become my mirror. The human being always wants to be recognised. This is the role of the portrait in history.



I see in your work those who have been forgotten and marginalised and whom you lived with for so many years but I also see great artists, famous people... Who is actually there in your work?

Everyone. Without exception. We paint ourselves from the noblest to the humblest, from the most sublime to the most grotesque, from the worst to the best. Art is a great hall of mirrors. There are no distinctions. I try to be as comprehensive as possible. I'm also interested in the capitalist imprisoned by his numbers and his conditions in which happiness can or cannot exist. I'm also interested in the marginalised philosopher who is bitter or angry because no one listens to him. Also the humble peasant because he no longer cares whether in the eyes of others he seems simple-minded and of limited intelligence but perhaps his world is much bigger than our own. I'm also interested in people who are committed and fight for their ideals, those who never cease to dream. I am interested in everyone from the most open-hearted and loving to the most disturbed or tormented.



Van Gogh said that in order to create a style it was essential to do many portraits, copy a lot from others, study a lot, see a lot, read a lot. I see in your work a command of the history of art but also a mastery of all the techniques of painting.

Knowing the technique is essential. You don't know how difficult it is to paint. It takes such a long time... I've spent forty years painting noses, eyes... I can paint even with my eyes closed. I can see something somewhere and put it onto canvas without even looking. But there is so many hours of work; of eternal repetition. Repetition that is not applauded nor recognised, and so everyday, erasing and starting, erasing and starting, erasing and starting. To do this requires patience and humility because when you think that you are creating something like 'Art', it's over, it becomes an arrogant gesture. Wisdom is very humble. I also think the fact of knowing the materials is very important. It is from here that you can start to fly. I remember that I was struggling to understand the muscle movement of the mouth which it is essential to accentuate in a picture. Although, I had been studying every painter, could not understand it. My mouths were rigid because I couldn't get to the flesh and muscle. I remember that we went to an exhibition of Hans Holbein paintings here in the Mauritshuis in The Hague. I stood in front of a picture and then realised. I went home and I understood what the mouth was after many years without having succeeded in making the strokes that give it breath. He was a great teacher. To him I owe my mouths. To Velázquez I owe clothing and a way to create different shades. We need to be supported in this collective effort which is the 'History of Art'. No one suddenly has an idea. Everything consists of combinations and constellations of encounters. They are different ways of setting in its place what was there many years before. It's like a stone; stone isn't made in three days. When you find a stone you can prove it was formed many centuries ago. And so it is with art. Art is the old woman of the world.

You studied at the Rietveld in Amsterdam, one of the most prestigious schools in Europe, and I understand why you're still here. What most attracts you to it?

Frans Hals, Rembrandt... They worked with light. When I was young and saw those canvases, I saw moistness in the pictures, in the air. I wondered how it was possible to work such magic. Now I travel through these landscapes by bike or by car, I stop and look at them closely in silence. The celestial landscape in these countries does not exist in Spain. It's the light, the sun which breaks everything up. Everything is surrounded by water. It's impressive. Sometimes I can't believe it. It's so inspiring. The greens are incredible. As you know, the colour the human being sees best is green. We see all the shades of green in order to survive. The shades of green in this country are enormous: green with yellow, green with black, green with violet, green with blue, green with gold, green with red... It's a part of Europe where light and the artistic environment are very interesting. Here art has been much appreciated. The people are used to living and being with art.

I suppose that it is very difficult to identify an inside and an outside, but what do you see when you look at your work?

With that question, it is as if I'm being asked "What do you feel when you breathe?" I'm fully engaged in it. You'll know of that philosopher who says that when you are really engaged and really involved with something, your very soul turns into what you are feeling or doing. You are right at the heart of the matter. That's what I do. I get so deeply into what I'm doing that I'm part of it. I don't see it. It's me. I am me and the whole universe at the same time. I look at it and I like it.

Do you like everything you see?

Not always. But I respect it. Because I don't paint only for myself. I paint for everyone. For everyone and for every kind of eye. There are things that I dislike, but I believe that therein lies something interesting. Because those depths are also part of us. There are feelings that are also mine. A part of me will be affected and I have to let it be because it imposes itself and it is stronger than my will and my wishes.

And do you think that there is a future in art?

Art has now become synonymous with poverty or wealth. Art has removed itself from the middle classes. This is awful because if art disappears from the middle classes, extremism makes an appearance. However, I sometimes think that it is a constant in human life and it can never disappear because it is a most powerful fundamental, because it is a necessary means of expression. Plato always said "Beauty is love made visible". It obviously has a future.

Looking at your works I can see that there are unidentified common roots they share, do you work with concepts?

I always work with concepts. In fact I am a very conceptual artist. Firstly, there is the concept and the reason. Based on this, I do that part of the work that we could call the literary and philosophical part. Then secondly comes the part where substance has to be given to the concept. I am a 'broad field' artist as they say in France.

I look again and again at the pictures here in your studio, and all I see are folds of skin. Paul Valéry said that depth is in the skin.

There was an art critic, Anton Castro, who says that I have a lot to do with Valéry. I've always said that it is in the skin that you can read the human condition. In it you can see happiness, distress...Whether you're a happy person or not can be seen in the skin. Whether you're suffering or not. You can see everything there. In some of my paintings the skin is as cracked as my characters. I know they are broken inside. Nevertheless, the cracks in their skin are so beautiful. Looking closely at the skin is one of my aims. There is a widely held idea that the eyes are the window to the soul. But the eyes are not the only window to the soul. We have many more and besides windows there are passageways, rooms, corridors.... Everything that is deep is in the skin.

Nietzsche said that we have art in order not to die of the truth. For you, does art have a role?

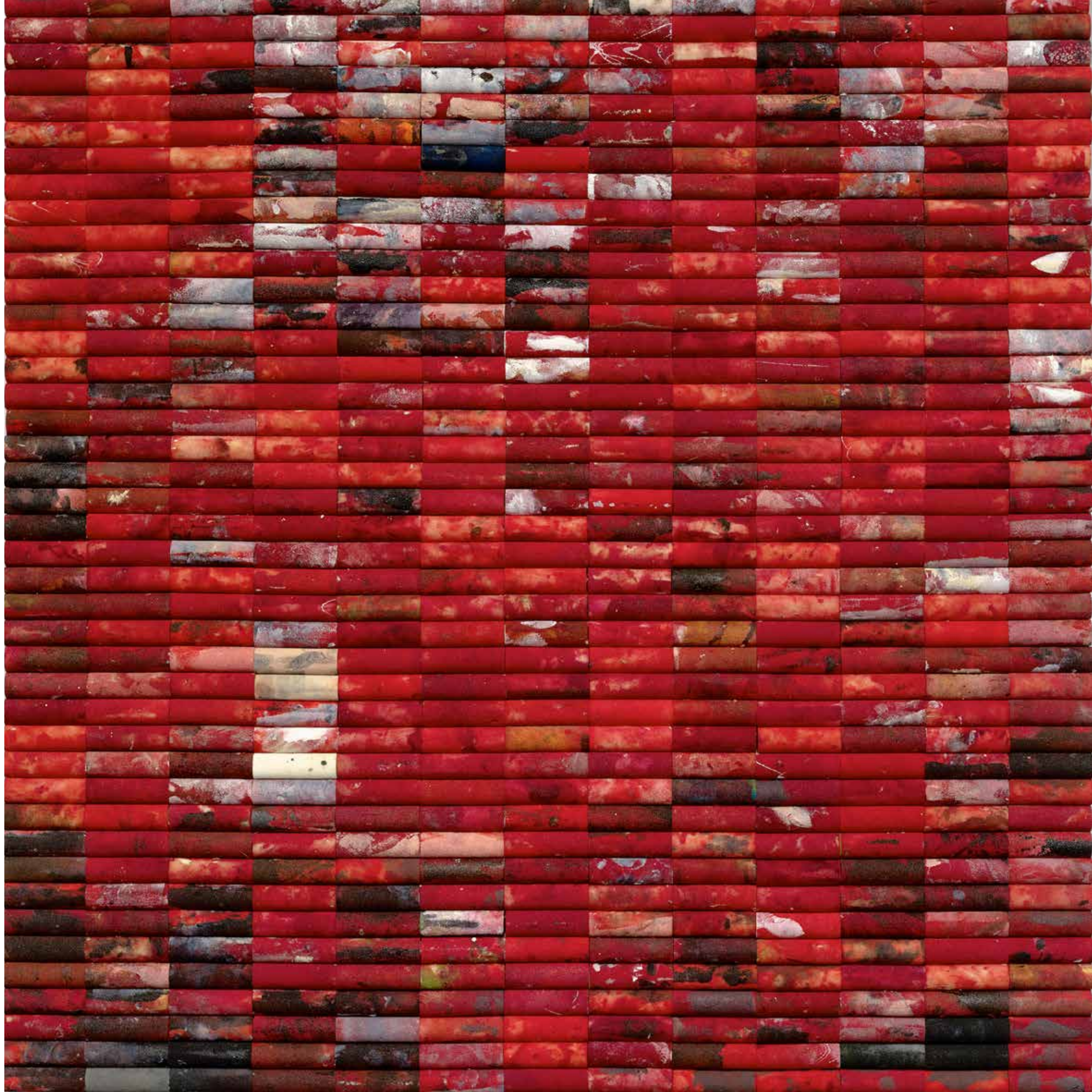
It has a vital role. Imagine a world without art. It would be horrible. It would be a distressing world. Art softens, tames, sharpens, turns you inside out, protects you, revitalises you, art is essential, it is the human being's starting point. The human being without imagination is no different from an animal. We are capable of imagining, achieving and giving pleasure. Art is above politics, economic values, statistics, whether you are the most sought-after person or not. That's not art, that's marketing. Art has always been a friend and an enemy of all that. Art is the most powerful weapon against everything. I am now getting an exhibition ready in Paris which is called 'The Army of Poetry'. There is in poetry a strong and powerful army which those in power greatly fear because it manifests itself in the theatre, in painting, in music, in activities that awaken in people the energy to rise up, express themselves, and dream dreams. People resist and will not be put aside. They demand their rights. That's what art does for people.







LOS DE AHI 04, 2017
Mixed media on canvas
150 x 150 cm - 59 x 59 in.



BETWEEN THE CHOICE, 2017
Mixed media on panel
150 x 150 cm - 59 x 59 in.



LOS DE AHI 03, 2017
Mixed media on canvas
150 x 150 cm - 59 x 59 in.

NOELLE, 2017
Mixed media on canvas
215 x 145 cm - 84.6 x 57 in.





SOPHIE 03, 2017
Mixed media on canvas
150 x 150 cm - 59 x 59 in.



ADELE 02, 2017
Mixed media on canvas
115 x 100 cm - 45.3 x 39.4 in.



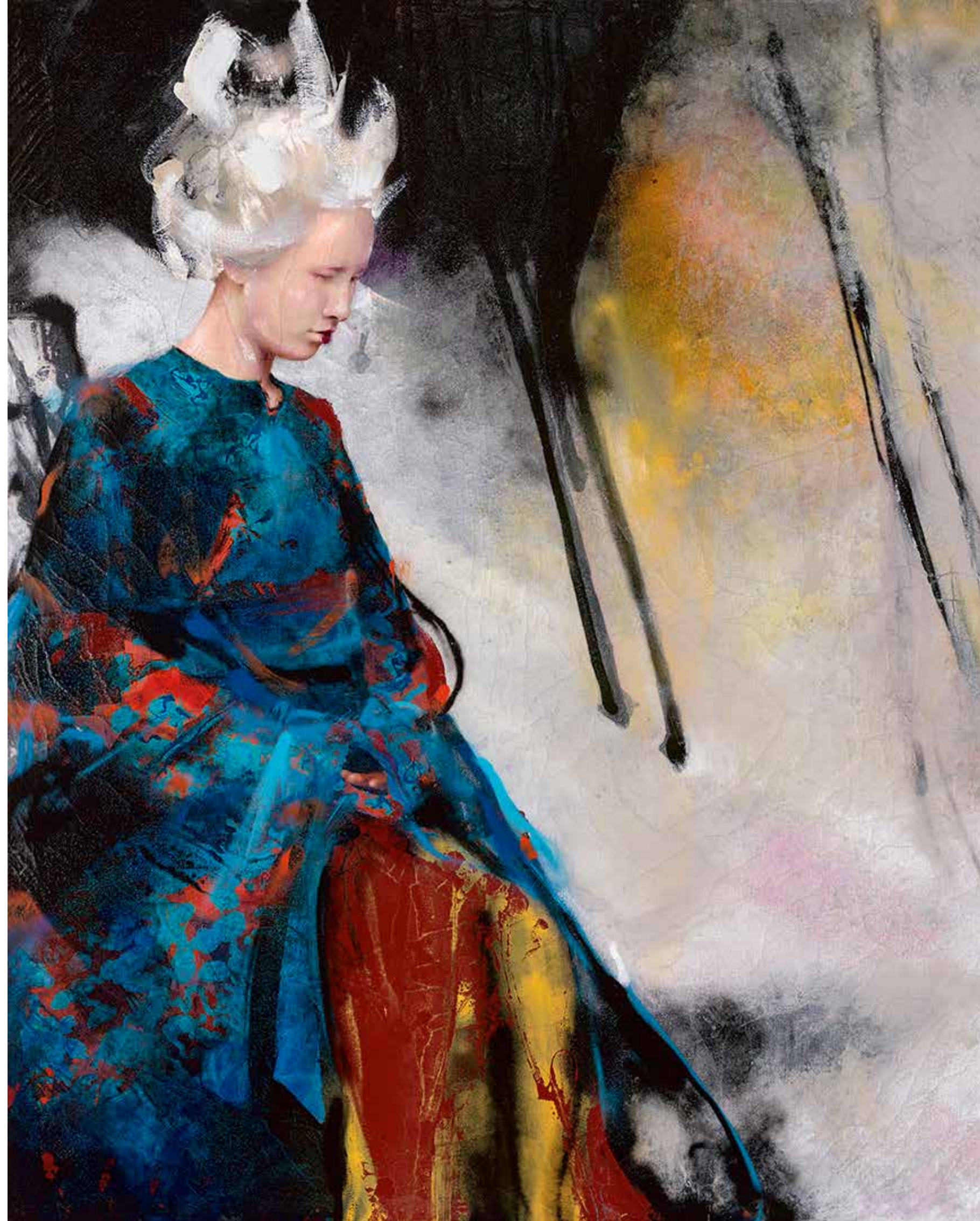
LOS DE AHI 02, 2016
Mixed media on canvas
150 x 150 cm - 59 x 59 in.



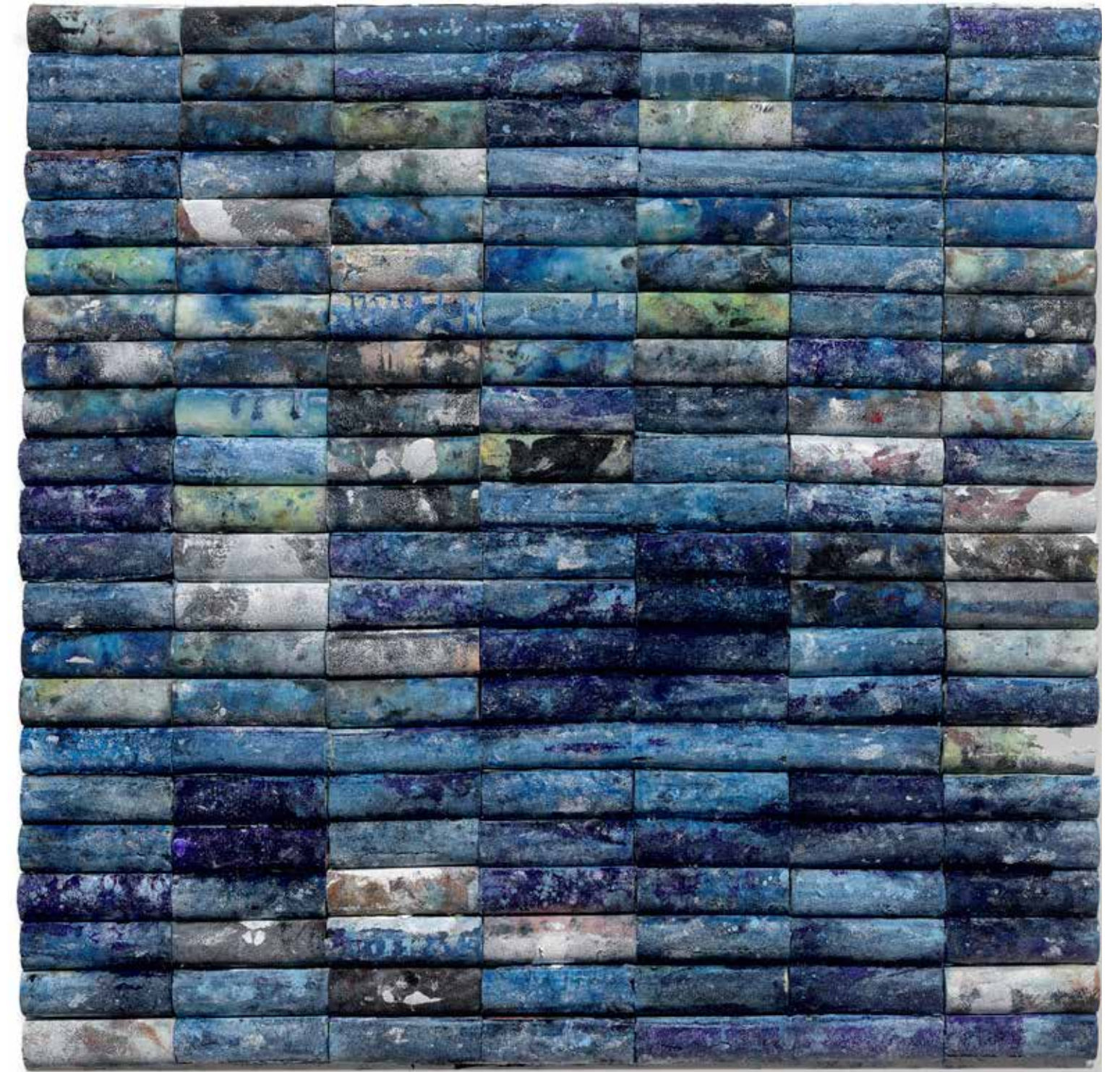
LOS DE AHI 01, 2016
Mixed media on canvas
150 x 150 cm - 59 x 59 in.



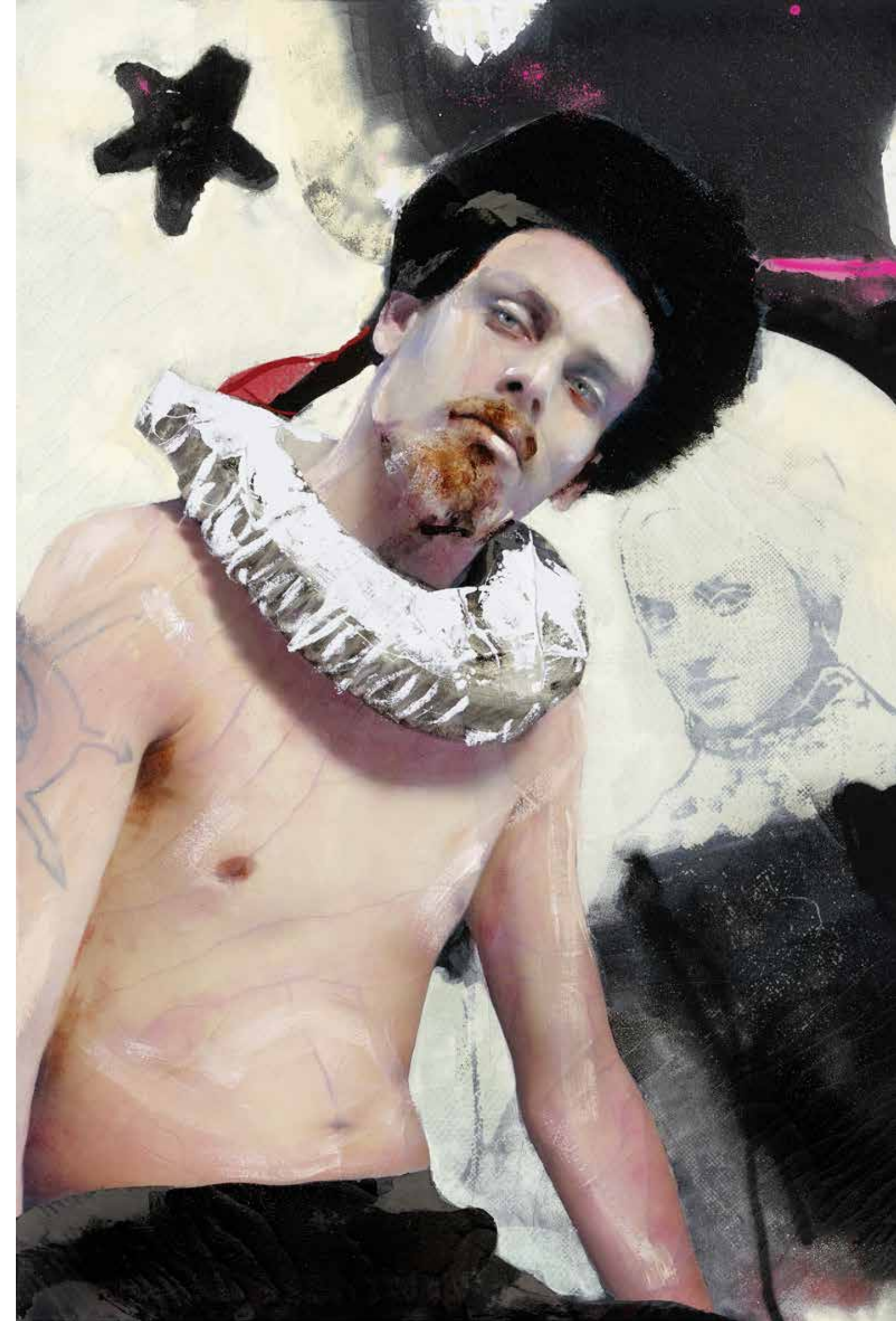
DRAGON BLUE 01, 2017
Mixed media installation with flowers
240 x 120 x 100 cm - 94.5 x 47.2 x 39.4 in.



LA NOCHE, 2017
Mixed media on canvas
250 x 200 cm - 98.5 x 78.7 in.



BEFORE THE NIGHT, 2017
Mixed media on panel
80 x 80 cm - 31.5 x 31.5 in.



EL BUFON Y SU ESTRELLA, 2017
Mixed media on canvas
215 x 145 cm - 84.6 x 57 in.



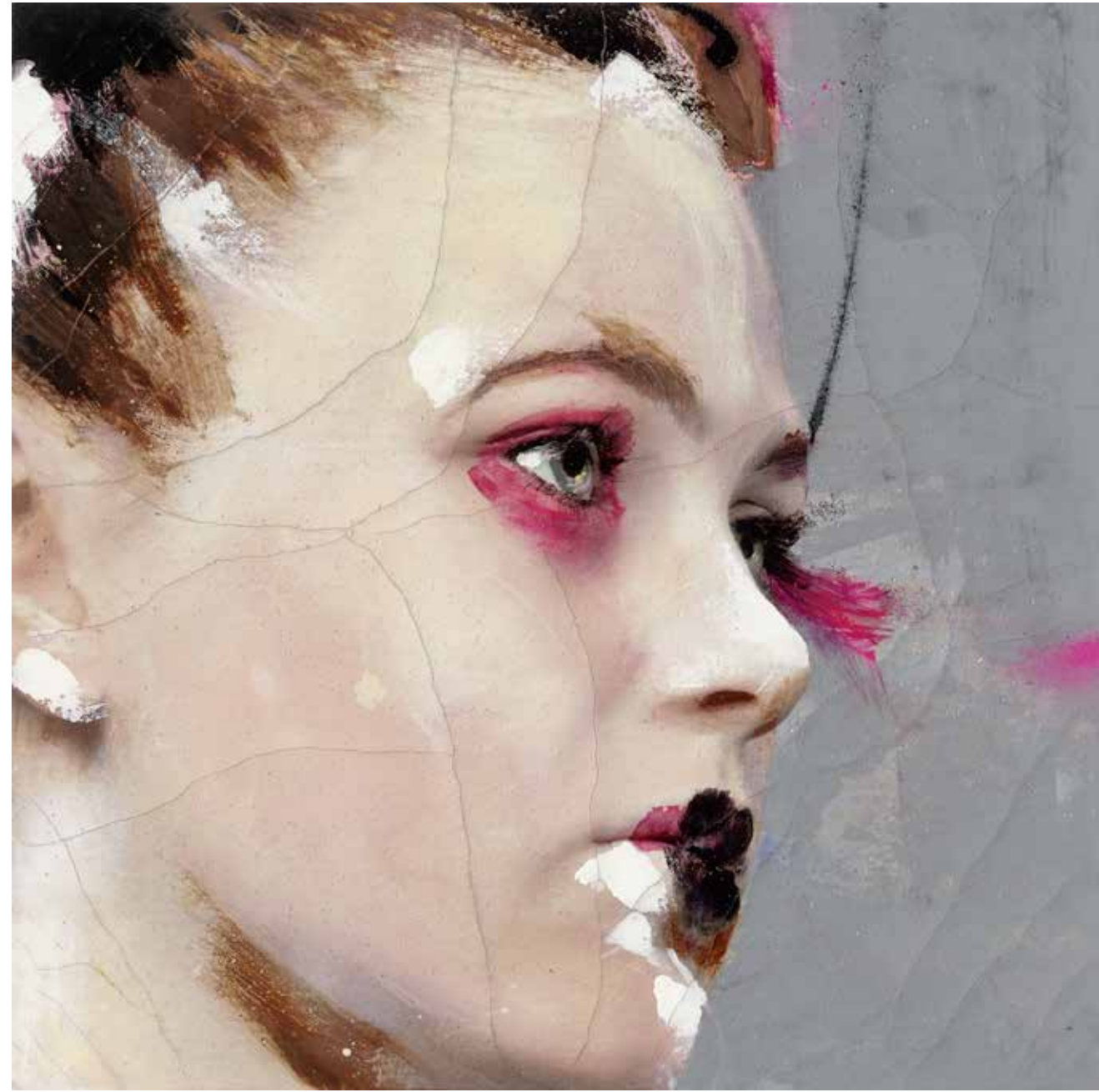
ARMAN, 2017
Mixed media on canvas
150 x 150 cm - 59 x 59 in.



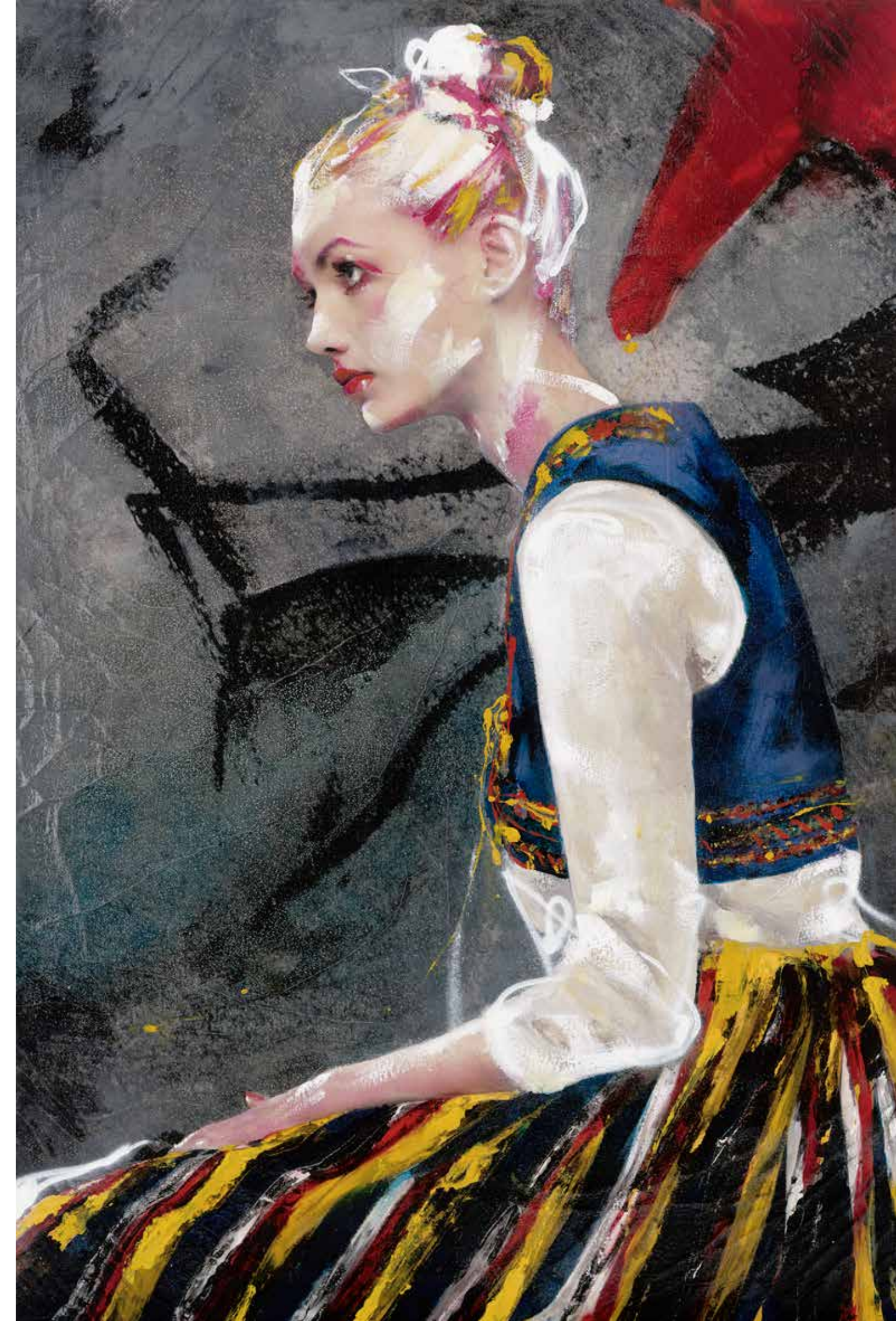
YOUR SILENCE, 2017
Mixed media on panel
80 x 80 cm - 31.5 x 31.5 in.



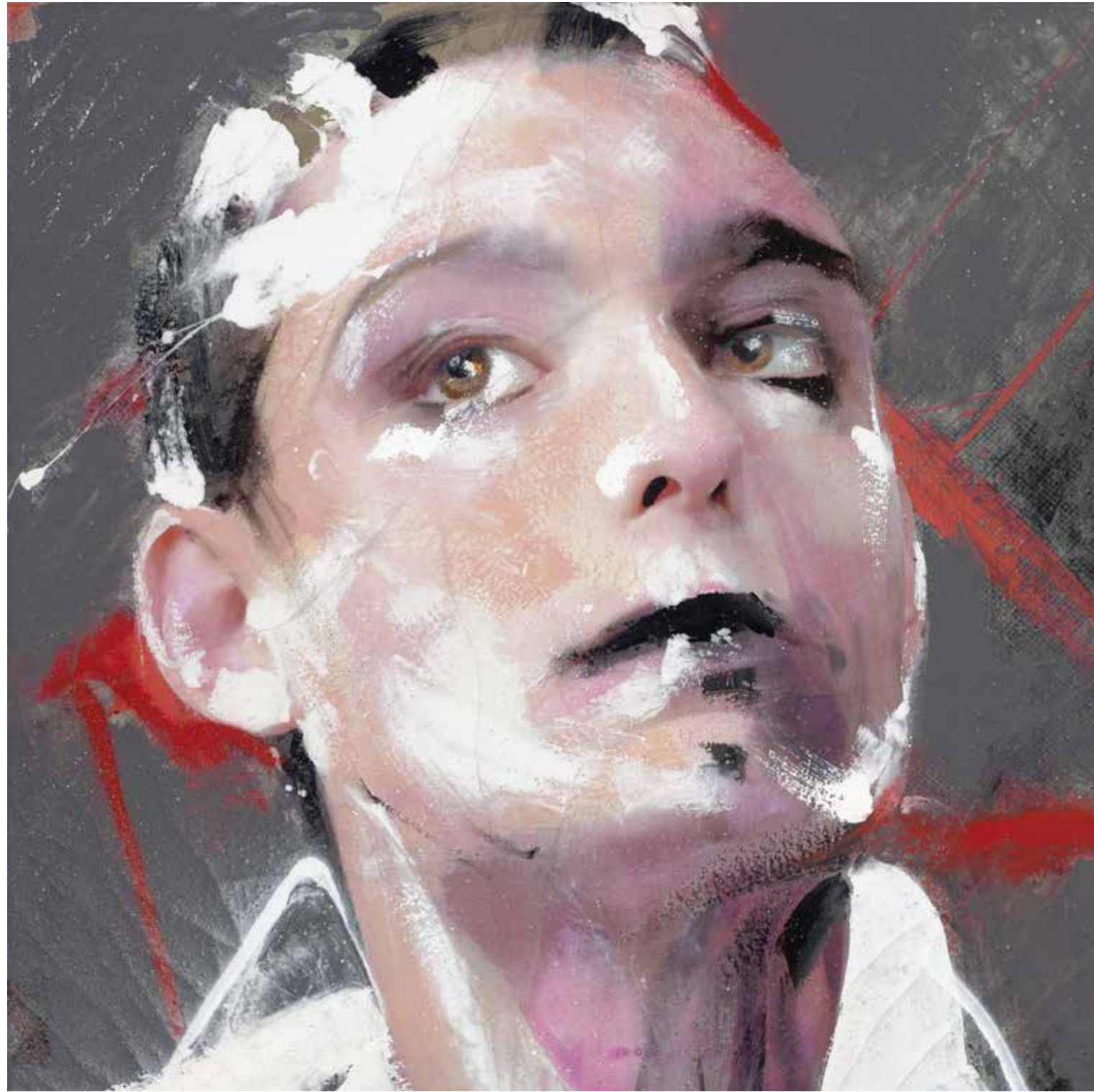
JEROME, 2017
Mixed media on canvas
150 x 150 cm - 59 x 59 in.



SOPHIE 04, 2017
Mixed media on canvas
80 x 80 cm - 31.5 x 31.5 in.



SOPHIE 02, 2017
Mixed media on canvas
215 x 145 cm - 84.6 x 57 in.

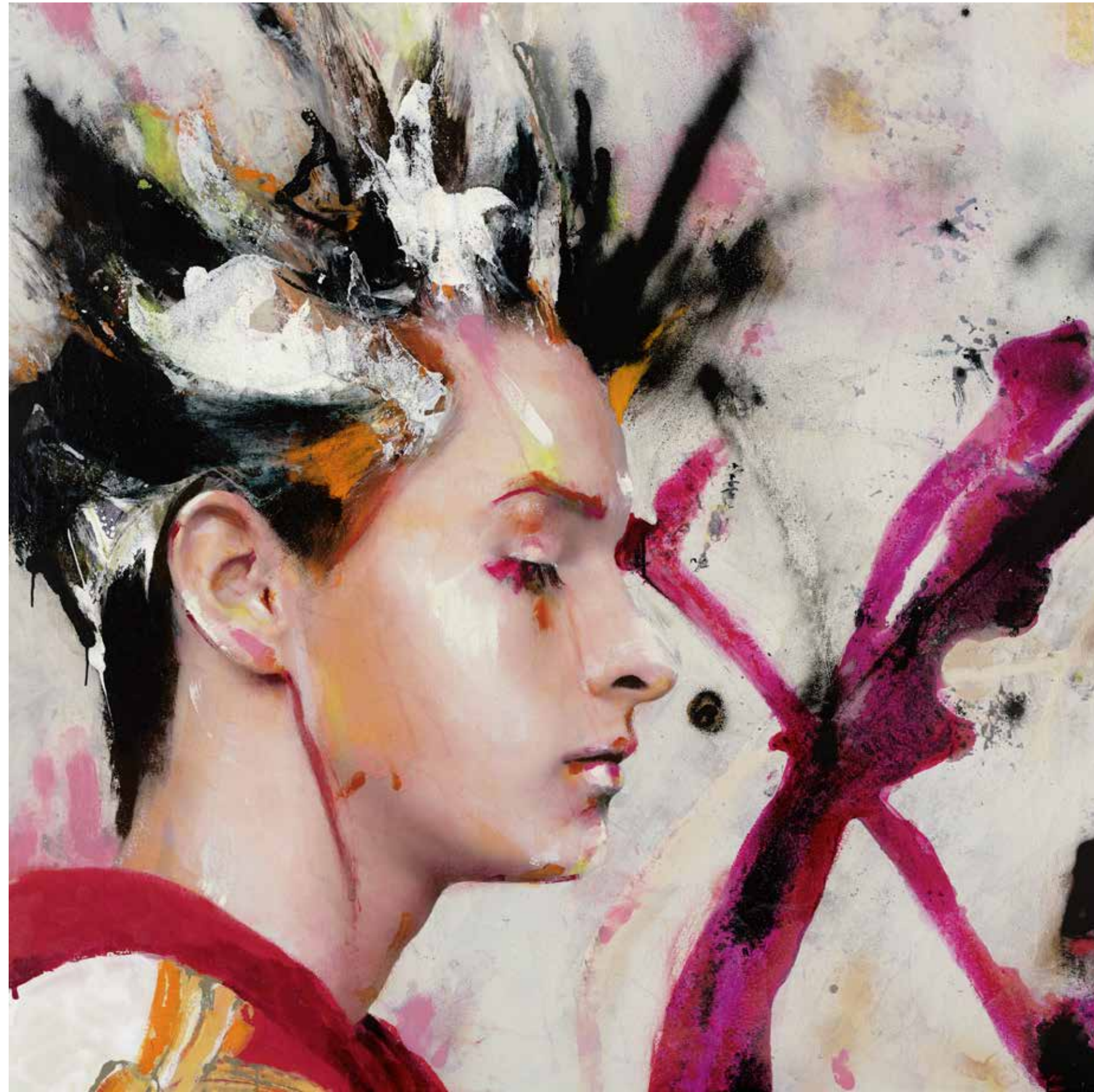


URBAN PEOPLE 03, 2017
Mixed media on canvas
80 x 80 cm - 31.5 x 31.5 in.

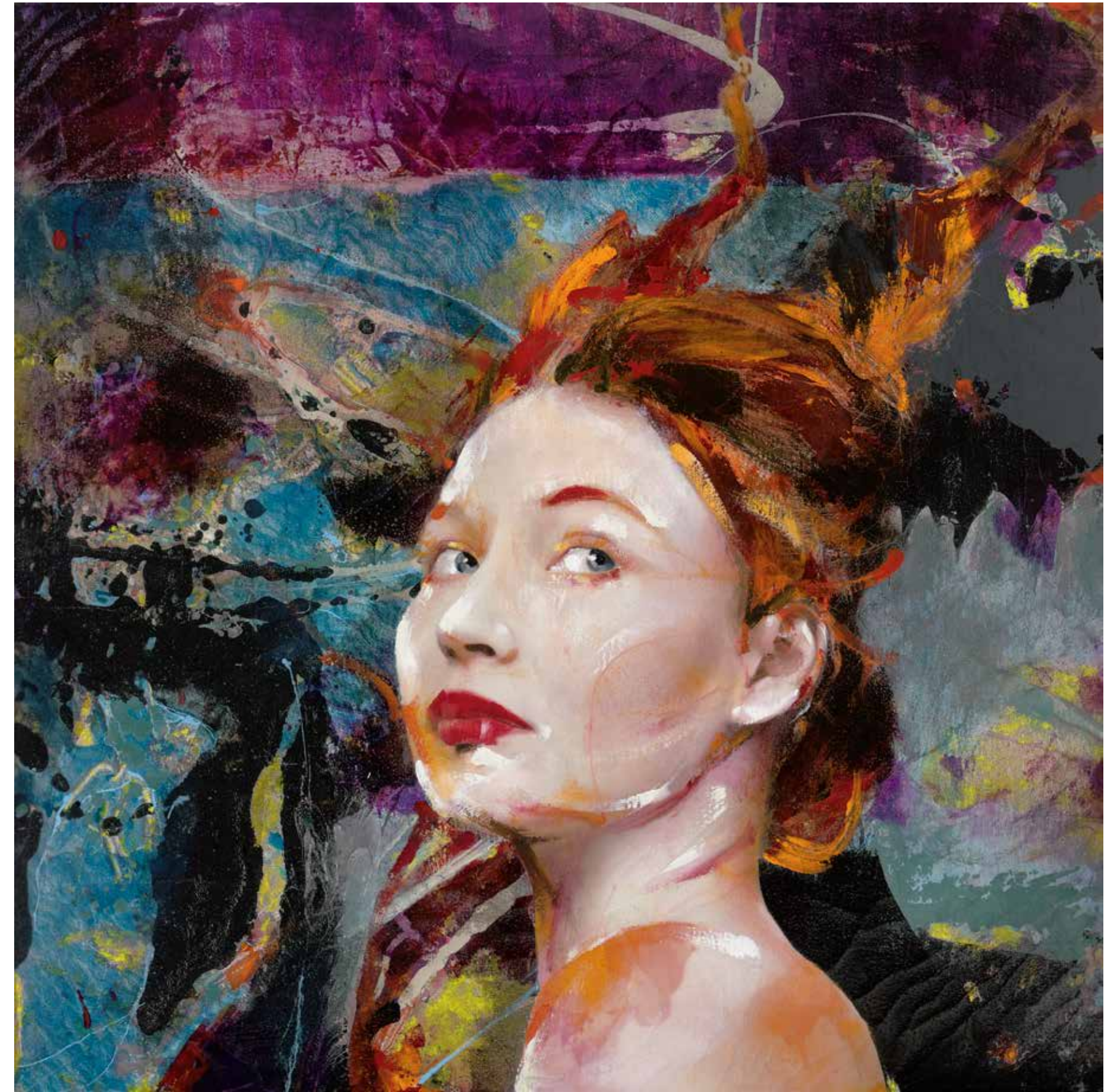


URBAN PEOPLE 02, 2017
Mixed media on canvas
80 x 80 cm - 31.5 x 31.5 in.



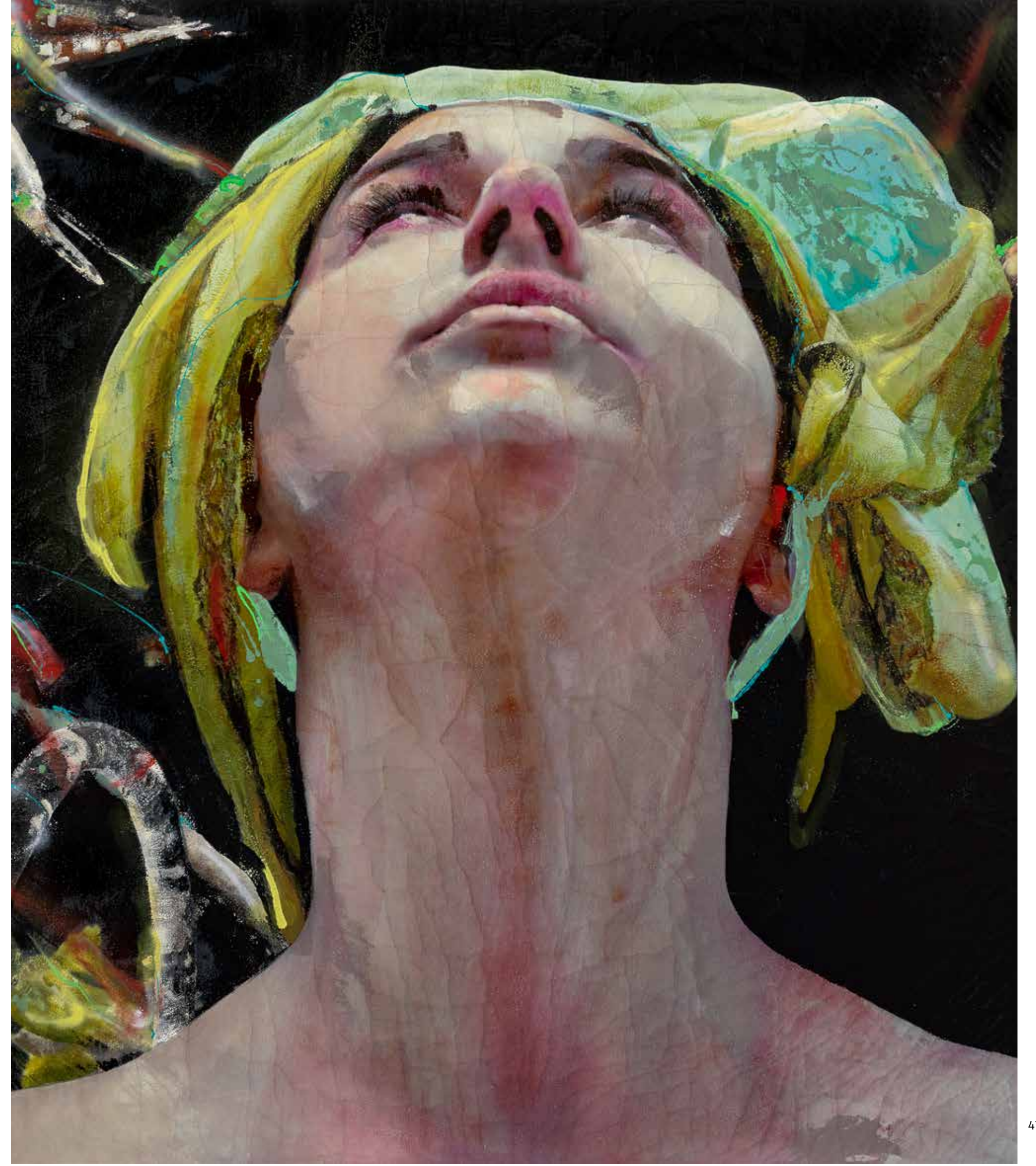


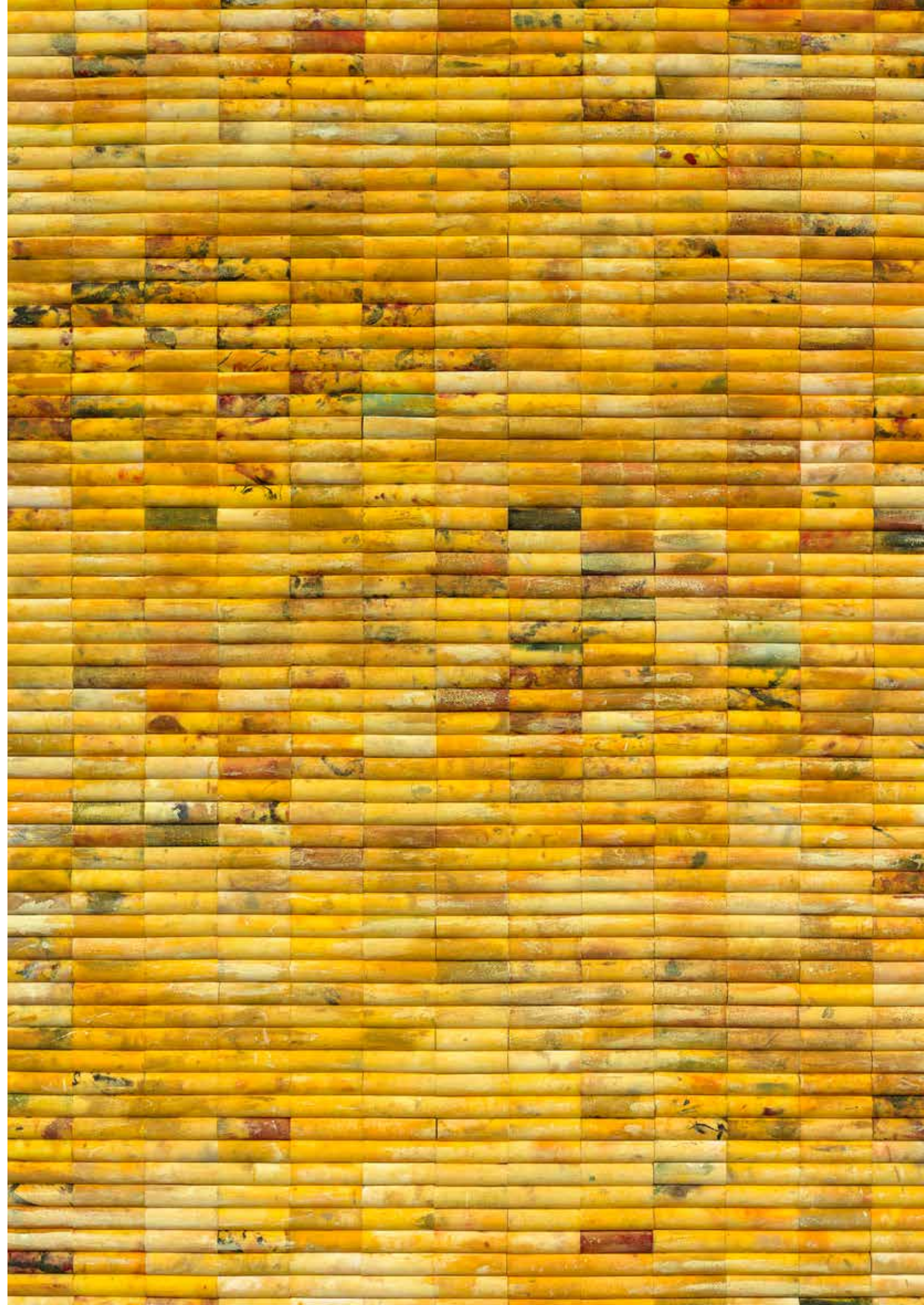
ROBERT, 2017
Mixed media on canvas
150 x 150 cm - 59 x 59 in.



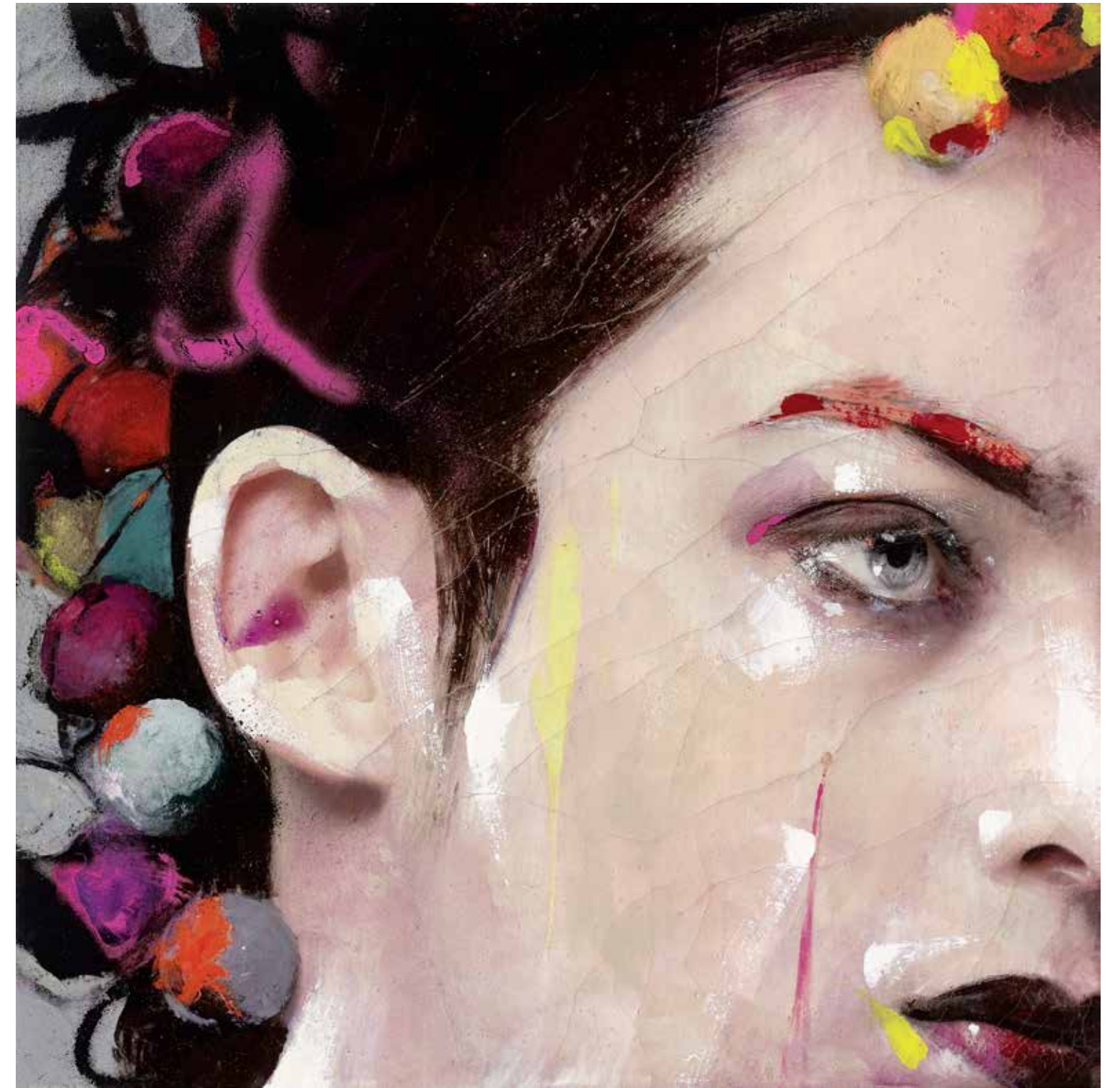
JULY, 2017
Mixed media on canvas
150 x 150 cm - 59 x 59 in.

ELISABETH, 2017
Mixed media on canvas
230 x 200 cm - 90.5 x 78.7 in.

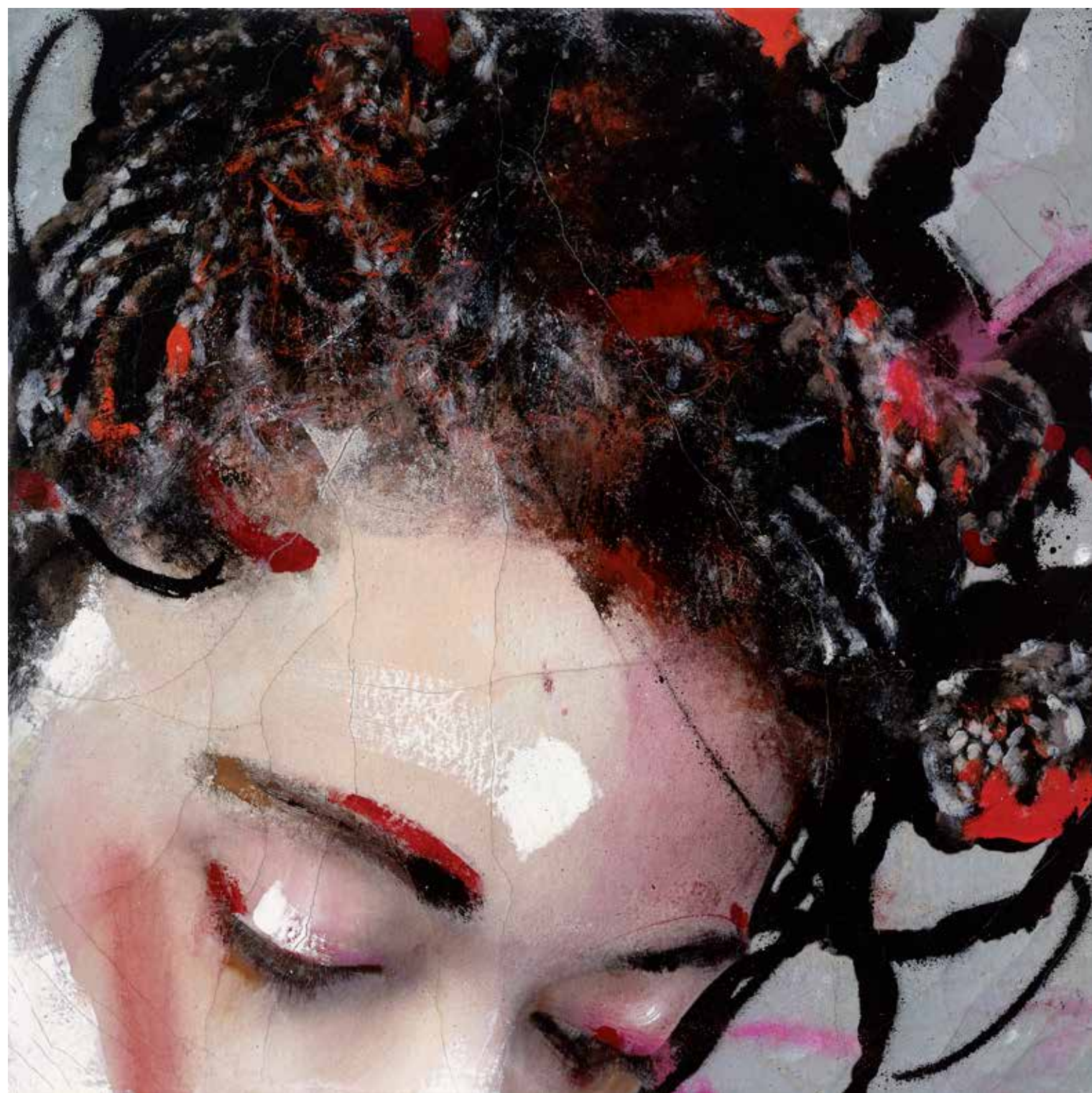




SILENCE, 2017
Mixed media on panel
215 x 145 cm - 84.6 x 57 in.



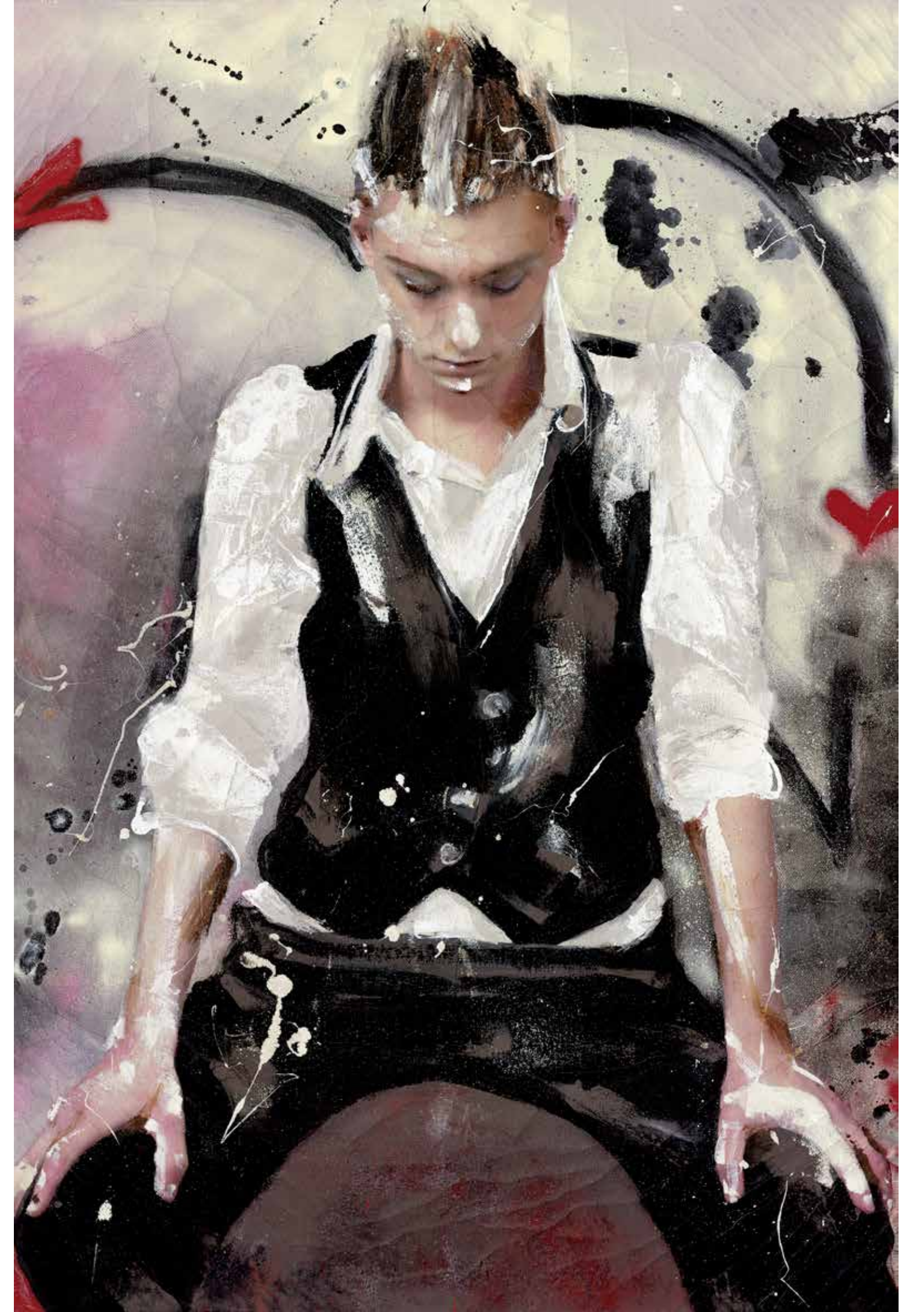
BERNARD, 2017
Mixed media on canvas
80 x 80 cm - 31.5 x 31.5 in.



ADELE, 2017
Mixed media on canvas
80 x 80 cm - 31.5 x 31.5 in.



ELISA, 2017
Mixed media on canvas
80 x 80 cm - 31.5 x 31.5 in.



MI AMIGO ARTISTA, 2017
Mixed media on canvas
215 x 145 cm - 84.6 x 57 in.



THE SHADOW OF THE MORNING LIGHT, 2015
Mixed media installation with flowers
100 x 100 cm - 39.4 x 39.4 in.

MATHILDA «THE GATE KEEPER», 2017
Mixed media on canvas
250 x 200 cm - 98.5 x 78.7 in.



BIOGRAPHY

Lita Cabellut was born in Sariñena in 1961. She lived on the streets until the age of 12 before being adopted by a prominent family. She was then introduced to the Spanish masters at the Prado Museum, where she was deeply influenced by the paintings of Velázquez, Goya and Frans Hals. A prolific contemporary portraitist, the young Cabellut was inspired by the ubiquitous fresco paintings in her hometown. She spent four years in classical training before holding her first exhibition at the Town Hall of Masnou, Barcelona at the age of seventeen. At nineteen, she left her native Spain to study at the Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, which is where she remains today to live and work. Over the years, Cabellut has developed a unique technique that yields an inimitable quality and texture to her work, painting large-scale portraits incorporating traditional fresco techniques with modern applications of oil paint. She also developed a unique technique for installations and 'Hybride' Photography, combining her materials in a 3 dimensional experience.

MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS

- 2017 Testimonio | Museo de Arte contemporáneo Gas Natural Fenosa | La Coruna, Spain
Retrospective | Fundació Vila Casas, Espais Volart | Barcelona, Spain
- 2016 The Figure in Process: de Kooning to Kapoor | Pivot Art + Culture | Seattle, USA
- 2015 Disturbance | Jan van der Togt Museum | Amstelveen, The Netherlands
Black Tulip; the Golden Age | Lalit Kala Akademi | New Delhi, India
Trilogy of Truth | MEAM, Museu Europeu d'Art Modern - permanent collection | Barcelona, Spain
Blind Mirror | Hälsingland Museum | Hudiksvall, Sweden
Trilogy of Doubt 15 | MACS Museo Arte Contemporanea - permanent collection | Catania, Italy
Black Tulip; the Golden Age | CSMVS (former Prince of Wales Museum) Mumbai | Mumbai, India
- 2014 Black Tulip; the Golden Age | State Visit Okura Hotel | Tokyo, Japan
100 Masterpieces | Seoul Arts Centre | Seoul, South Korea
Here To Stay | Kunststation Kleinsassen | Berlin, Germany
- 2013 Trilogy of the Doubt | Het Noordbrabants Museum | Den Bosch, The Netherlands
Trilogy of the Doubt | Fundació Vila Casas, Espais Volart | Barcelona, Spain
- 2012 Retrospective | Tricot | Winterswijk, The Netherlands



We would like to thank the artist for her trust,
as well as all our collectors for their constant
support throughout the years.

cover: Elisabeth, 2017, Mixed media on canvas
230 x 200 cm - 90.5 x 78.7 in.

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