



BLACK & WHITE

OPERA GALLERY

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Opera Gallery Beirut

OPERA GALLERY

PREFACE

Be it aesthetic, symbolic or religious, the pairing and contrast of black and white, is omnipresent in what we see in our daily life and experience symbolically in our beliefs. The duality of the yin and the yang of black and white reflects the oppositional forces of existence in harmony.

Naturally, artist themselves have also evolved with this dichotomy of colours. Since the Renaissance, painters have employed grisaille to draft an artwork or to imitate metals and stone. Many Neoclassical sculptors have forfeited polychromy found on classical or medieval works for the raw material of marble or stone, the state in which these works were found during archaeological excavations. Etching and calligraphy have left their mark on the evolution of arts too and with the onset of photography, black and white prints became valuable material for artists before emerging as works of art in their own right which then progressed in early video.

The artists presented in *Black & White* carry on this long and fundamental tradition. Soulages' 'Outrenoir' (beyond black) makes light appear from matter, whereas Lombardi's photographs use a clever play of contrast to evoke both intimacy and sensuality. Works of Alfred Haberpointner and Anselm Reyle play on variations of volume to resonate and fulfil astounding formalistic effects. Bahk Seon Ghi's installations explore suspension in space and material (carbon) to interrogate our relations to time, to space and to nature. Yasmina Alaoui too uses the rawness of her materials, to question the fragility and changing nature of her cultural heritage. Finally, we observe the universal aspect of black and white expressed perfectly by the young Thai artist Sittiphon Lochaisong (aka BOMB) who delicately disperses white pigment on a black canvas, depicting an ideal universe.

This *Black & White* selection is an opportunity to reunite at Opera Gallery Beirut with a diverse group of artists and techniques woven together by the theme of the exhibition. We hope that it will enchant you as much as it did us to put it together.

Salwa Chalhoub
Director
Opera Gallery Beirut

Gilles Dyan
Founder & Chairman
Opera Gallery Group

"This secret light comes from black."

Pierre Soulages

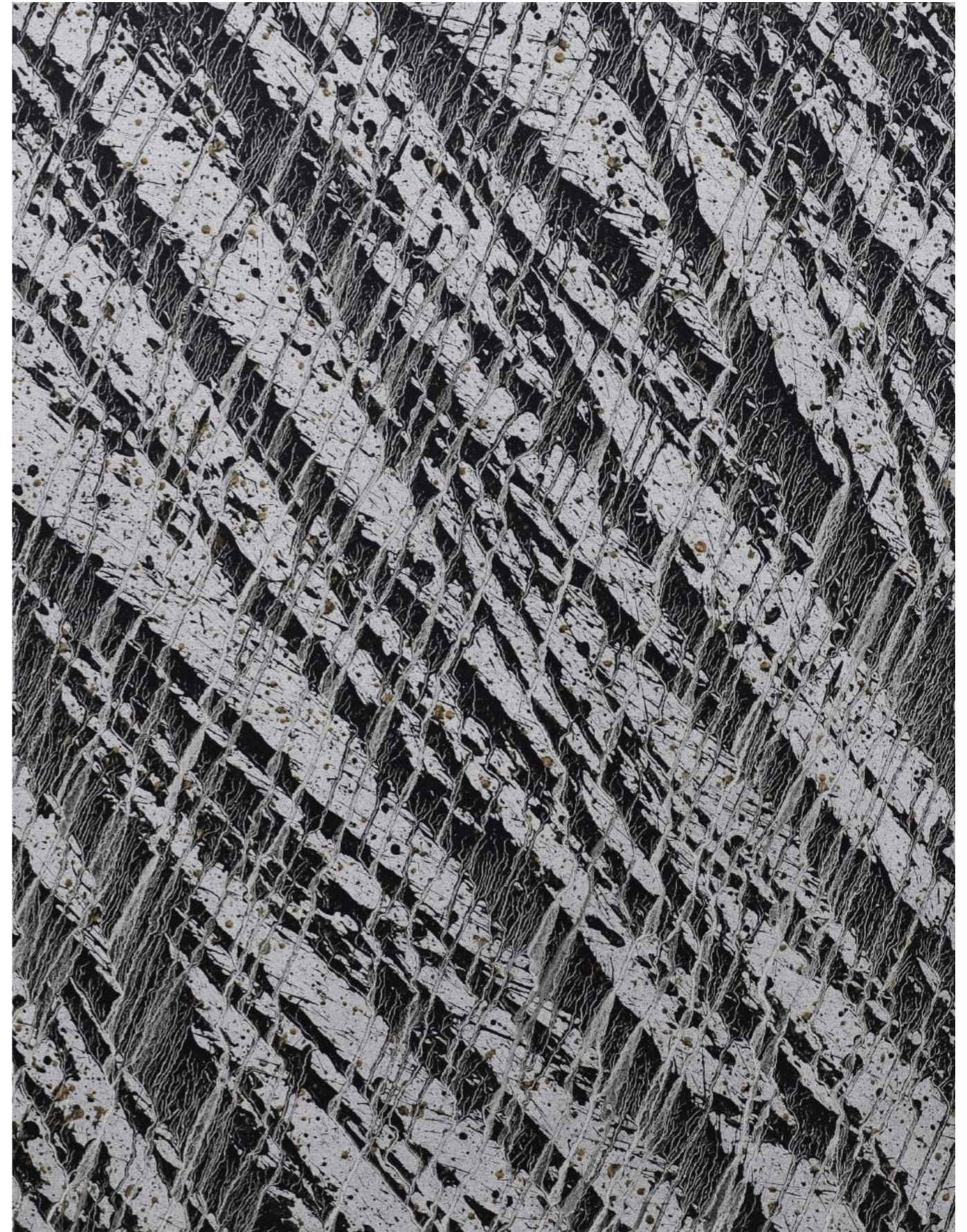
"White acts on our soul like silence, the void before the beginning."

Wassily Kandinsky

CHAE SUNG-PIL (b. 1972)
Terre anonyme 141119, 2014
Soil, natural pigment and India ink on canvas
116 x 89 cm | 45.7 x 35 in

Chae Sung-Pil is a South Korean artist currently residing in France. Combining the philosophy and techniques of traditional oriental aesthetics traditions together with a 'Quest for new ideas' expressed in Western art, Chae Sung-Pil is quickly becoming one of Korea's most established and prominent artists. His soil palette, collected from various trips around the world and then filtered, diluted with water and mixed with glue, creates an abstract texture on canvas reminiscent of texture of the earth itself. The soil is specially prepared on mulberry paper and often mixed with Chinese ink and powdered silver and gold dust. The organic mixture is then applied onto the canvas with a large brush or brooklets of water, which interact with the soil through slight tilts in the angle of the canvas.

Chae Sung-Pil is a doctoral candidate in Plastic Arts in the Université de Paris. He holds an MA and BA from Seoul National University and a second Masters from Université de Rennes II. He has held solo exhibitions throughout France, South Korea and China and took part in the 2014 London Art Fair, 2012 Art Basel and 2011 London Art Fair.





YASMINA ALAOU (b. 1977)

White Square #3, 2017

Acrylic paint, salt, plaster, minerals and gravel on wood

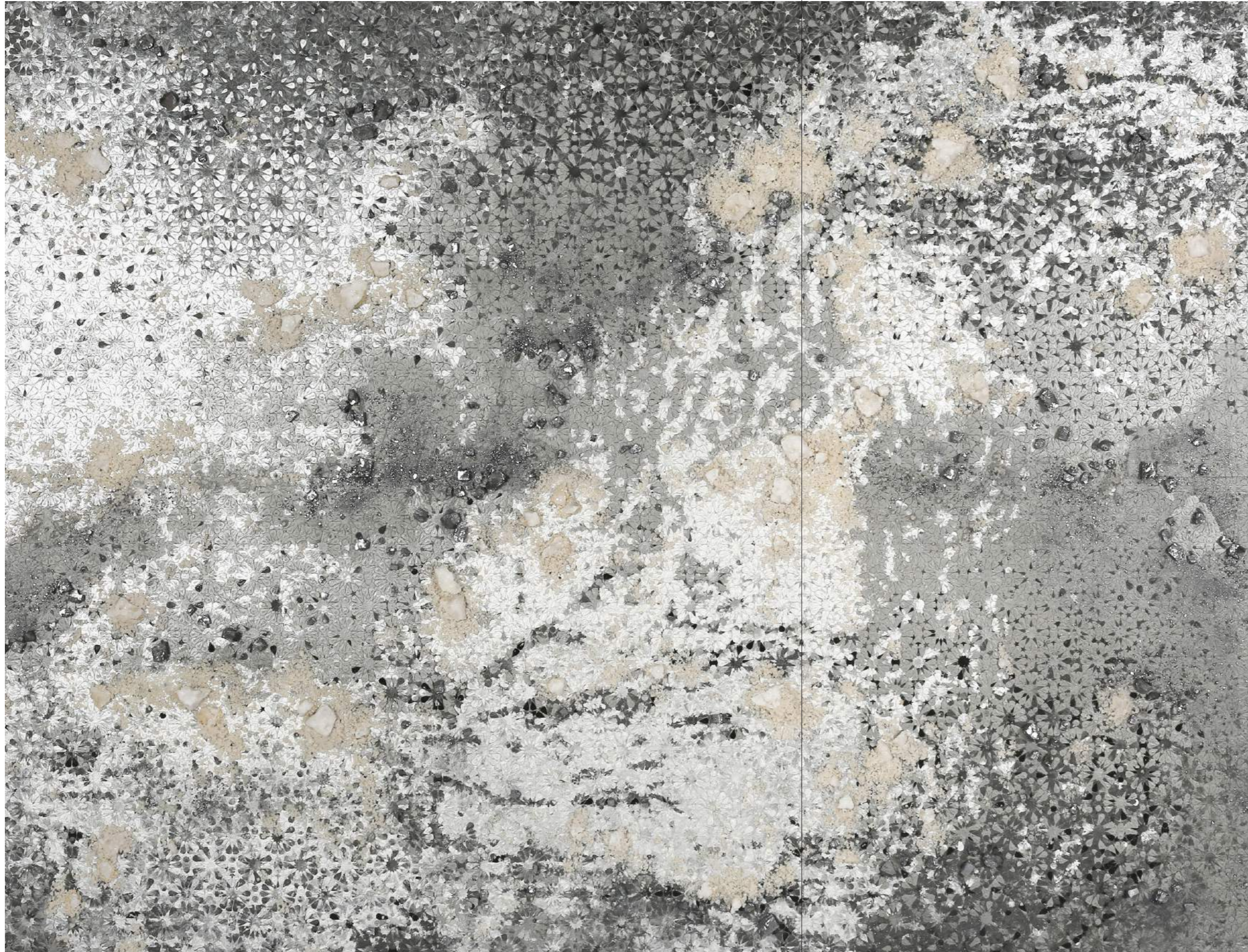
158 x 158 cm | 62.2 x 62.2 in

Yasmina Alaoui is of French and Moroccan descent. She started making art at the age of seven. To further pursue her passion and talent in art, Yasmina Alaoui studied Fine Arts at the Carrousel du Louvre in Paris and graduated with a B.A. in Sculpture from the College of William and Mary.

Immersed in a bicultural environment, Yasmina Alaoui asserted her refusal of every stereotypes and found inspiration in a wide range of artistic movements, allowing herself to incorporate into her art any subject that gets her attention. The underlying themes behind her works directly deal with her experiences of multicultural upbringing and aim at bridging extremes and 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 variety of techniques that she combines in an authentic manner.

Yasmina Alaoui's professional career as an artist truly began with the collaboration she made with the photographer Marco Guerra and from which resulted the *1001 Dreams* series in 2003. Since then, she has diversified her projects, stating that it is her love for different media that led her to use all of them, constantly shifting between sculpture, painting, drawing, fashion and jewellery designing, film making and even music composing.

Recently, she started exploring new artistic horizons, notably producing large-scale works (panel paintings, triptychs and square formats) with abstract compositions that evoke landscapes observed from the sky. Yasmina Alaoui currently lives and works in New York and Marrakesh. Her works have been collected and exhibited internationally since 2003.



YASMINA ALAOU (b. 1977)
Silver Rectangle #1, 2017
Acrylic paint, pigments, salt and gravel on wood
176 x 230 cm | 69.3 x 90.6 in

SITTIPHON LOCHAINSONG aka BOMB (b. 1991)

Full, 2017

Tempera powder on canvas

150 x 180 cm | 59.1 x 70.9 in



Clear and vague points are joined and assembled. Dots, figures and symbols meet with sensation and imagination. The delicate and the rough reflect a complicated mind which embeds both extremes: good and evil, birth and death. These works reflect moral principles, which motivate me to reach a clearer state of mind. The consciousness perceives the unstoppable movement of nature abstracted, causing the mind to concentrate, understand the truth, and realise natural balance. Such experiences raise our consciousness higher and lift us up to next level of morality. Each work is a universe, which we all have built forever in one's mind: the idealistic Universe.

Sittiphon Lochainsong aka BOMB, 2017



UMBERTO MARIANI (b. 1936)

Senza titolo, 2014

Vinyl and sand on lead sheet

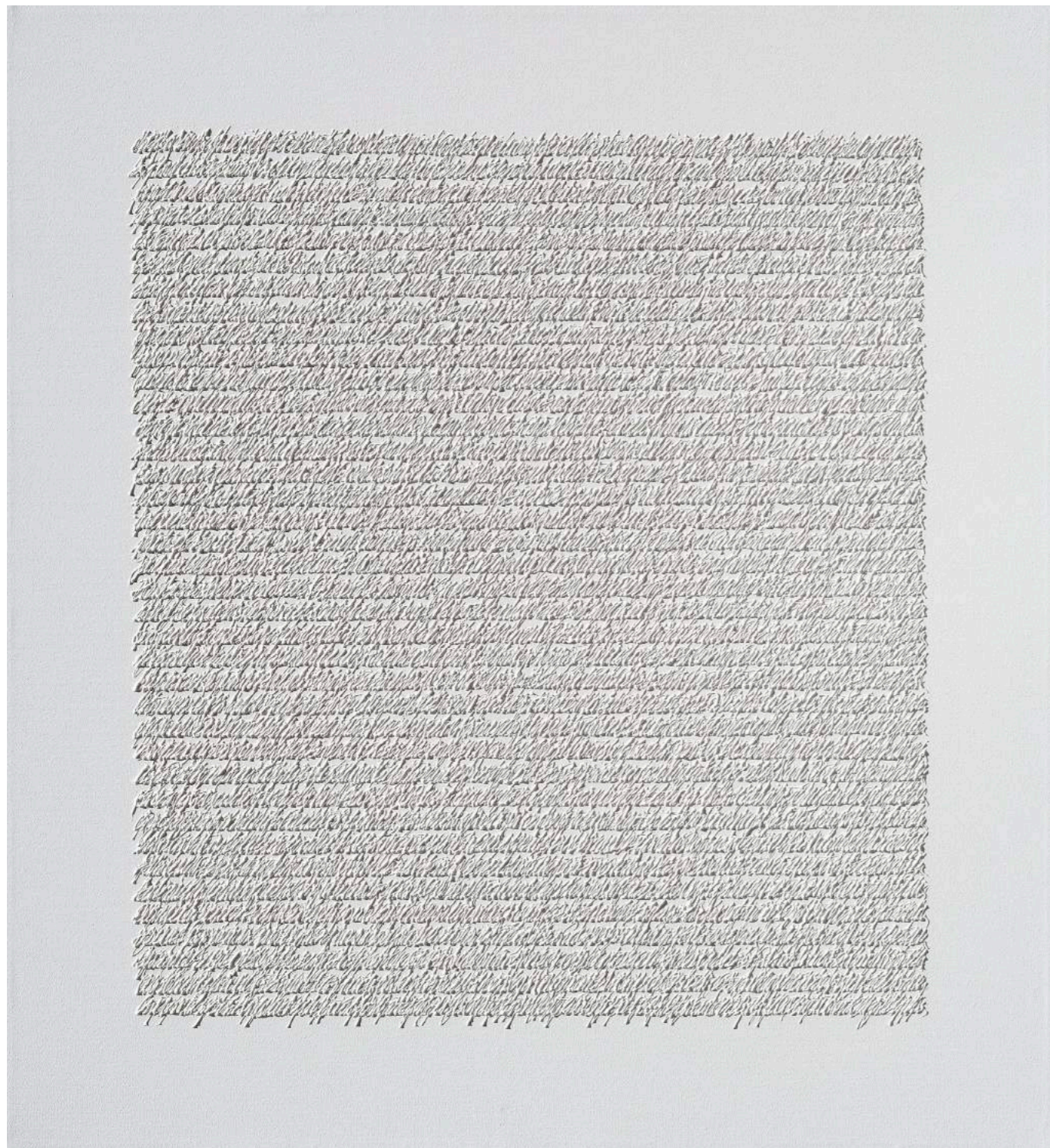
90 x 120 cm | 35.4 x 47.2 in.

Umberto Mariani was born in Milan, Italy, in 1936. His family home was used as a refuge for Jews persecuted during World War II. The war left lasting impressions on the artist, particularly the last months of 1945, and his works have been in continual evolution ever since. Mariani's first works are marked by the presence of bright colors dominating the canvas. His recent works show a complex use of shadows using white and black drapery, his signature alphabet letters and embossed symbols, all signs of the dramatic, semantic ambiguity of a language that is not always decipherable. Drawing much of his inspiration from the classical Greek statues that he saw growing up in Italy, Mariani's fascination with the balance between fragility of form and one strength of material is evident in these highly textured pieces. The method of drapery on the canvas constitutes intricate illusions of light and shadow, at once concealing and revealing what lies beneath.

PINO MANOS (b. 1930)
Spazio estroflesso grafite argentea, 2011
Mixed media on canvas
100 x 100 cm | 39.4 x 39.4 in

Pino Manos was born in Sassari, Italy, in 1930. He moved to Milan in 1951 to attend the Accademia delle Belle Arti di Brera, along with Enrico Castellani and Vincenzo Agnetti. A friend of Roberto Crippa, Gianni Dova, Marino Marini, Augustino Bonalumi and especially of Lucio Fontana, he adhered to the Spatialism movement. In 1962 he was called to London, along with thirty of the most eminent artists in Europe to be part of the Manifesto 'Europe 1962' Painting and Sculpture organised by the New Vision Centre Gallery as the basis of the emerging European Union. Manos participated in numerous solo and group exhibitions in Italy and other parts of the world, his works are in several private and public collections internationally. Three of his works feature in the Nelson Rockefeller collection in New York, USA.





ALESSANDRO ALGARDI (b. 1945)

Poema celato, 2014

Oil and acrylic on canvas

100 x 95 cm | 39.4 x 37.4 in

ALESSANDRO ALGARDI (b. 1945)

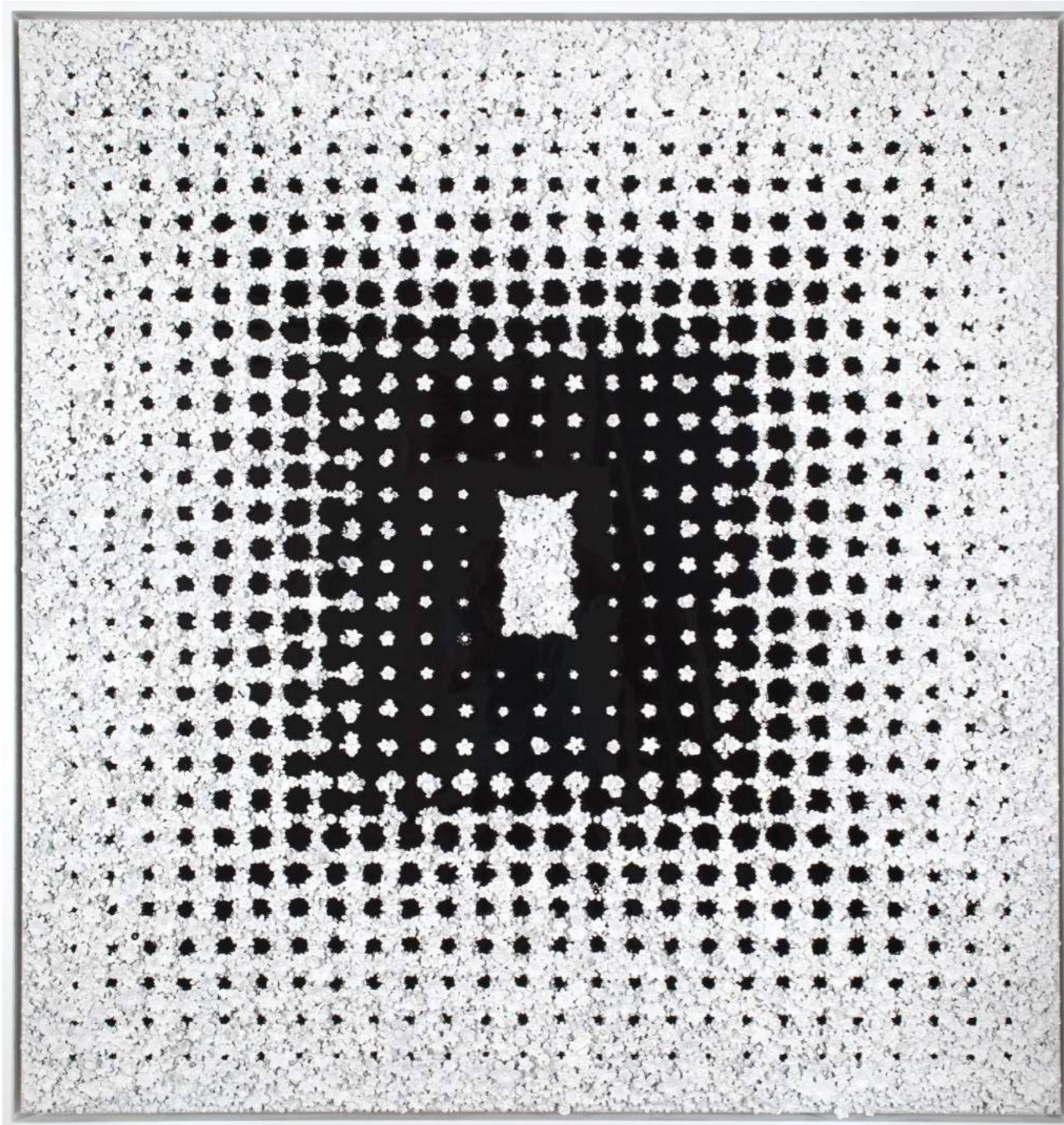
Modificare il linguaggio della comunicazione, 2004

Oil on canvas

95 x 105 cm - 37.4 x 41.3 in

Alessandro Algardi was born in Milan, Italy in 1945. Influenced by the Milanese movement of Piero Manzoni and Lucio Fontana, Algardi's work is a unique mix of poetry, calligraphy, the power of monochrome and the gentleness of light. The artist has participated in over one hundred exhibitions throughout the world, notably at the Venice International Centre of the Arts and the MoMA in New York. In the United States, Algardi's work is part of the permanent collections of the Museum of Art in Dubuque, Iowa and the College of Art and Design in Savannah, Georgia, in Italy at the Museo di Giovanni Verga in Vizzini. Algardi's work fluctuates within the experimental field of the visual-poetic, examining the fluidity between the act of writing and the materiality of the canvas. Working on monochromatic canvas and paper, his works reveal several layers of scripture su-perimposed onto one another to generate unreadable lines of text. While the text becomes indecipherable, the negative space in between suggests a symphony in what remains unsaid.





JOE BLACK (b. 1973)

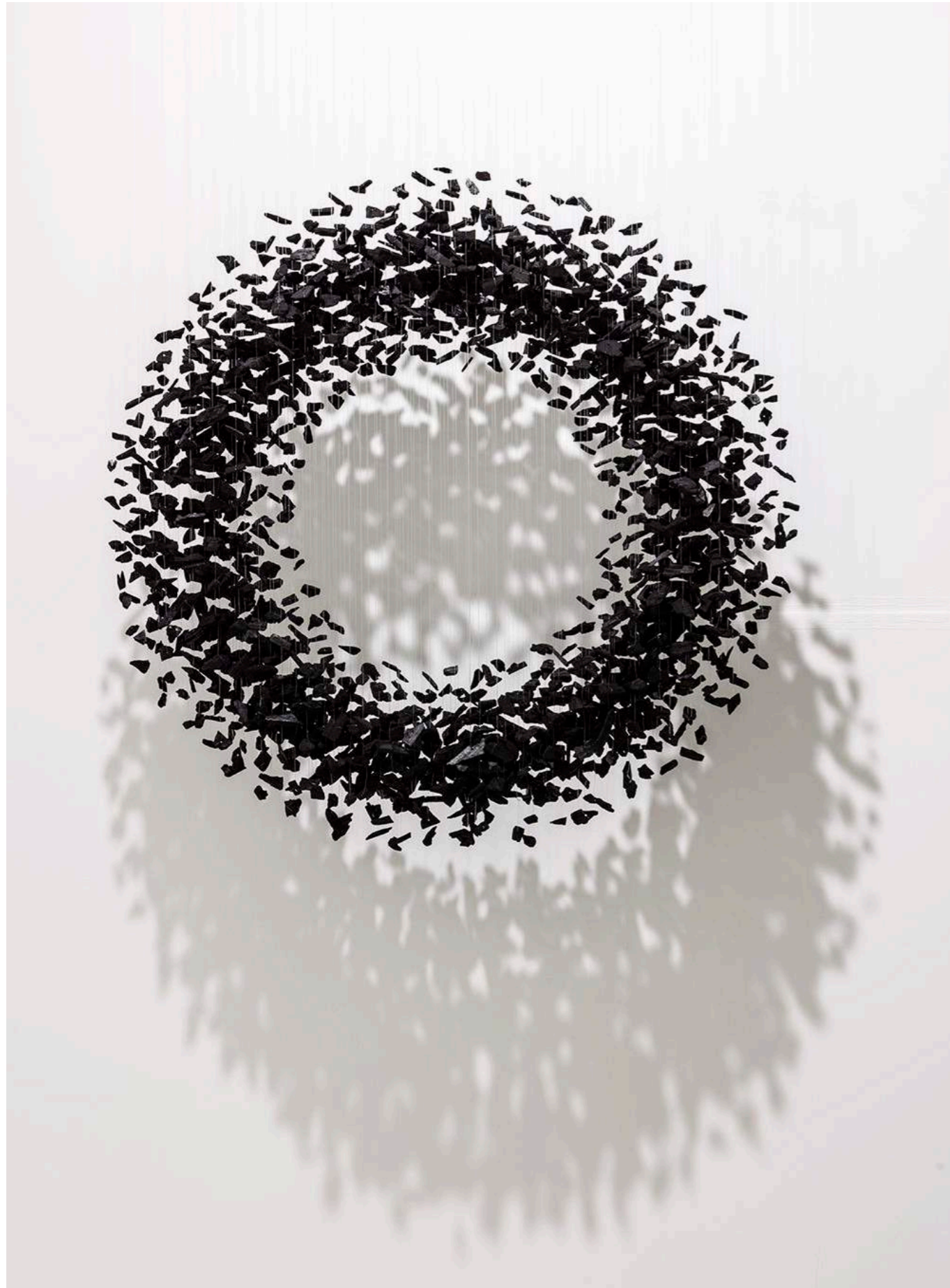
Echo, 2016

11000 spray-painted miniature plastic flowers, individually pinned on foam, mounted on aluminium and finished with mat white rubber coating and high gloss black resin

170 x 160 cm | 66.9 x 63 in



Echo play with the interaction of object, colour and shape. Drawing upon Japanese geometric patterns and the ideas of Op Art, this is an exploration of the perceptual experience. The flowers in the square piece are carefully placed within the confines of the pattern, the round acrylic rods in the circle piece echo the overall shape. The interaction of the colours and the rigidity of the pattern can create an illusion of movement, as the retina holds the after image whilst at the same time viewing the image on the wall. The tension between the overlaid foreground and background planes, emphasised by the reflected light, challenges how depth is seen.



BAHK SEON GHI (b. 1966)
An Aggregation 20160621, 20161
Charcoal and nylon threads
180 x 100 x 24 cm | 70.9 x 39.4 x 9.4 in

My artistic work is an expression of numerous thoughts. An artwork can be beautiful or ugly and also it can have a form or not. This is not a major concern to me. Rather, my artistic work aims to probe the depths of my mind and thoughts. I endeavour for my work to be as close as it can be to my thoughts. No matter what materials are used, my work reveals my thoughts and feeling without damaging the very existence of those materials. Between this concept of art and spectators my work is therefore a mediator. I express feelings I have with this materialistic world to which my ordinary life belongs. I want neither to clarify the essence of materials and mind, nor to reveal the essence of perception. Nor do I have a desire to return the clarified essence to its existence. I hope viewers are not touched by what my work directs. My work is simply an invitation to entertain lightly. I just hope my work leads viewers to feel and think.

Bahk Seon Ghi, 1997

REZA DERAKSHANI (b. 1952)
One Bird, One Song, no.1, 2013
Black sand and gold paste on canvas
220 x 80 cm | 86.6 x 31.5 in

Reza Derakshani is a painter, musician and performance artist born in Sangsar, a small village in the northeast of Iran. Raised in a nomadic family in the mountains, Derakshani's diverse creative energies were deeply influenced by the changing seasons and landscapes he grew up experiencing. Harnessing the wonders of creation in multiple avenues of artistic expression, his admiration for natural beauty is always present in his work.

Derakshani's career includes collaborations with renowned artists, musicians and poets including Deepack Chopra, Madonna, Dawn Avery and Simon Haggage, among many others. He currently lives and works between Tehran, the US and Europe, and is considered one of Iran's most important contemporary artists.



JEAN-PIERRE ROC-ROUSSEY (b. 1951)

Esprit noir, 2016

Oil on canvas

195 x 130 cm | 76.8 x 51.2 in

I like characters to come in exotic shapes and sizes. I loathe anything that is too normal or symmetrical, or that gives the impression of being balanced, composed. There has to be an underlying fault line in my paintings, a hint of dilation, explosion, swelling. My protagonists are often alone, isolated, separated from the world, closed off and trapped in their daily accoutrements.

My personal desires alone decide what I paint. I want each piece to provoke the unpredictable, I want to be taken off guard by the intrusion of a magic touch. This is my own personal demon. It surpasses my creative motivation, transcends the very act of painting itself. I detest my work if this mysterious something eludes me or doesn't emerge. When this happens, my studio is in danger. I will break things, punishing everything within reach.

I love the intensity with which my brush strokes the canvas, and to experience that intensity I will literally withdraw from daily life, so trivial and unbearable and yet so necessary. Only my work exists. Otherwise, I am totally out of it.

I admire Gustav Klimt for his radiant, sophisticated paintings, so gracefully and elegantly adorned, and Fra Angelico's clear, lucid palette and incredible detail, his subjects' faces seem incapable of emotion but are really the camouflage of tormented souls. Such ambiguity delights and inspires me. I do not hate other painters, even those that I have trouble comprehending. What interests me is the creativity that spans all cultures, from the most archaic to the most sophisticated. This feeds my very own, homegrown imagination... One that is constantly evolving. I like statues in wood and stone, but also tapestry... Little fragments of all kinds and from various origins. And it is always thought-out, dreamed of, imagined...

Jean-Pierre Roc-Roussey





PEDRO LOMBARDI (b. 1967)

Zapato y piernas, 2003

Photography on arched paper

Edition of 10

72 x 100 cm | 28.3 x 39.4 in

Born in Montevideo, Uruguay, Pedro Lombardi has been living in Paris for 30 years. Naturally curious, he started his career as a photo journalist (in Russia, the United States, Morocco, Canada and New Caledonia).

As an independent photographer, his images were used on many album covers, in publications in the press and by publishers. He worked with many theatre and dance companies such as the Comedie Française.

Building links between Latin America and Europe, he tackles the theme of dance through tango, especially in Paris in 1998. At the same time a witness and an actor, his approach is at the same time that of an aesthete and a tango dancer. He looks at the woman he invites, as in a relationship of dance and all the sensuality, complicity and intimacy that make tango magical is released.

In 2004, he made, on the topic of tango, the calendar of the famous lingerie brand *Aubade*.

FLORE ZOE (b. 1975)
Fluent Fight - The Staircase, 2007
Photography
Edition of 5
139.5 x 177 cm | 54.9 x 69.7 in



Flore Zoe's passion is to translate aspects of life, ideas and emotions, capturing them with her camera. From a very early age she has been forming and staging images but only turned to it professionally later. Her studies in psychology as well as the inspiration acquired during an extended trip to the far east reignited this passion, today, her profession is her passion: the creation of images which tell a story.

Flore Zoe tells stories through her images. "In my work I stage and direct people and surroundings to tell a story, my own story." A large part of her artwork entails capturing emotions which speak to her, while at the same time reflecting how they speak to her, how they transmit her own perceptions. To call her art somewhat autobiographical would not be far from the truth.

She has worked with such renowned artists as Marcel Wanders, Iris van Herpen, Marlies Dekkers, Sander Kleinenberg, Don Diablo and many others. Her exhibitions have been staged in The Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, New York, Paris and Monaco.



GERARD RANCINAN (b. 1953)
Batman Family en voyage, 2015
Argentic print mounted on Plexiglas
Edition of 8
125 x 208 cm | 49.2 x 81.9 in

Gérard Rancinan comes from the South West region of France. He begins his career at an early age working for the newspaper *Sud-Ouest* as a photojournalist covering the local news.

He is discovered by the renowned photo press agency Sygma , which distributed his work during nearly 15 years. He reported news around the world, from natural disasters to sports tournaments and championships as well as wars, riots, features on people in the show business, the fashion world or movies (for instance *The Last Emperor* by Bertolucci or *Ran* by Kurosawa). He won several major prizes, including the first prize of the World Press four times over.

Craving freedom, Rancinan becomes freelance in 1989. He finances his projects on his own and then sells them to magazines. His first project, a series of portraits of deposed political leaders called '*Kings with No Kingdoms*' is an incredible success. Several projects followed on, portraits of famous people of the political, artistic and sports scenes, as well as portraits of Hiroshima survivors or photos of the Chinese Olympic games. The profit made on a project finances the next one. He also did a series called '*Metamorphosis and Still Lifes*' in which he revisits the great masterpieces of art history and restages them to describe our disrupted world. A photo of this series called *The Raft of Illusions*, a reinterpretation of the painting *Raft of the Medusa* by Géricault, is sold for over 70,000 euros in 2008 by the Parisian auction house Drouot. Rancinan then becomes one of the top photographers in terms of selling value. His work is regularly published in magazines around the world and was on the cover of *Paris Match*, *Life Magazine*, *Stern* and the *Sunday Times Magazine* just to name a few.

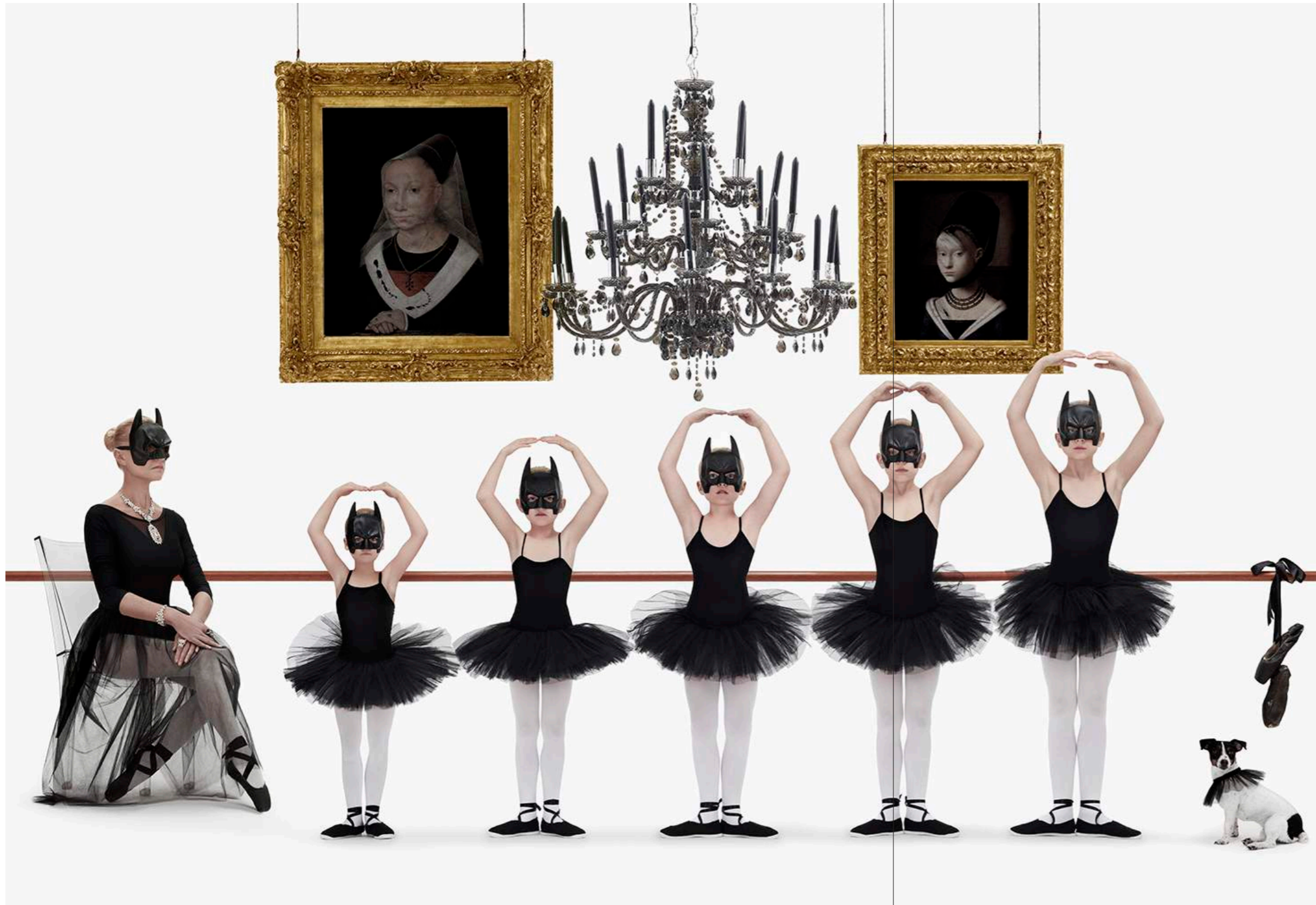
Since the end of the 1990s, his work has entered the art world and has been exhibited in a lot of galleries and museums worldwide (Palais de Tokyo, Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona, the Triennale Design Museum in Milan, Espace Cardin in Paris, Louvre Museum, etc.) they are also part of prestigious private collections and almost ten books are dedicated to his work.

The photographs by Rancinan, always daring or out of sync shock us in a positive or negative way but do not leave us indifferent. This artist captures images and each of them recounts a special story. He appears to be a witness to the changes of our world. Each photograph requires an incredible amount of preparation work (setting, casting, costumes, research, etc.) and an important budget. No detail is overseen. Rancinan insists that everything that appears on his images is in the original shoot and that retouching is kept to a bare minimum. What he shows is real.

GERARD RANCINAN (b. 1953)
Batman family boys en vacances (Scout), 2014
Argentic print mounted on Plexiglas
Edition of 8
125 x 187 cm | 49.2 x 73.6 in



GERARD RANCINAN (b. 1953)
Batman Family Girls Dance, 2015
Argentic print mounted on Plexiglas
125 x 182 cm | 49.2 x 71.7 in
Edition of 8



KATRIN FRIDRIKS (b. 1974)

Molecule Messenger Awakening Mind no. 2, 2015

Acrylic on canvas

100 x 100 x 5 cm | 39.4 x 39.4 x 2 in

Katrin Fridriks has developed her own, uniquely personal practice. Transferring the movement and speed of her gestures to the paint, she manages to capture the very act of painting, thereby turning the picture itself into an event. The experience of working in real space-time for her performance art and land art pieces, along with her drive for technical perfection, have ultimately given rise to this 'choreographical' painting process. Yet Fridriks does not simply contemplate her own experience, she makes paintings that reproduce this shifting mode of perception for visitors in the enclosed gallery space.

Friedericke Schafer, 2014

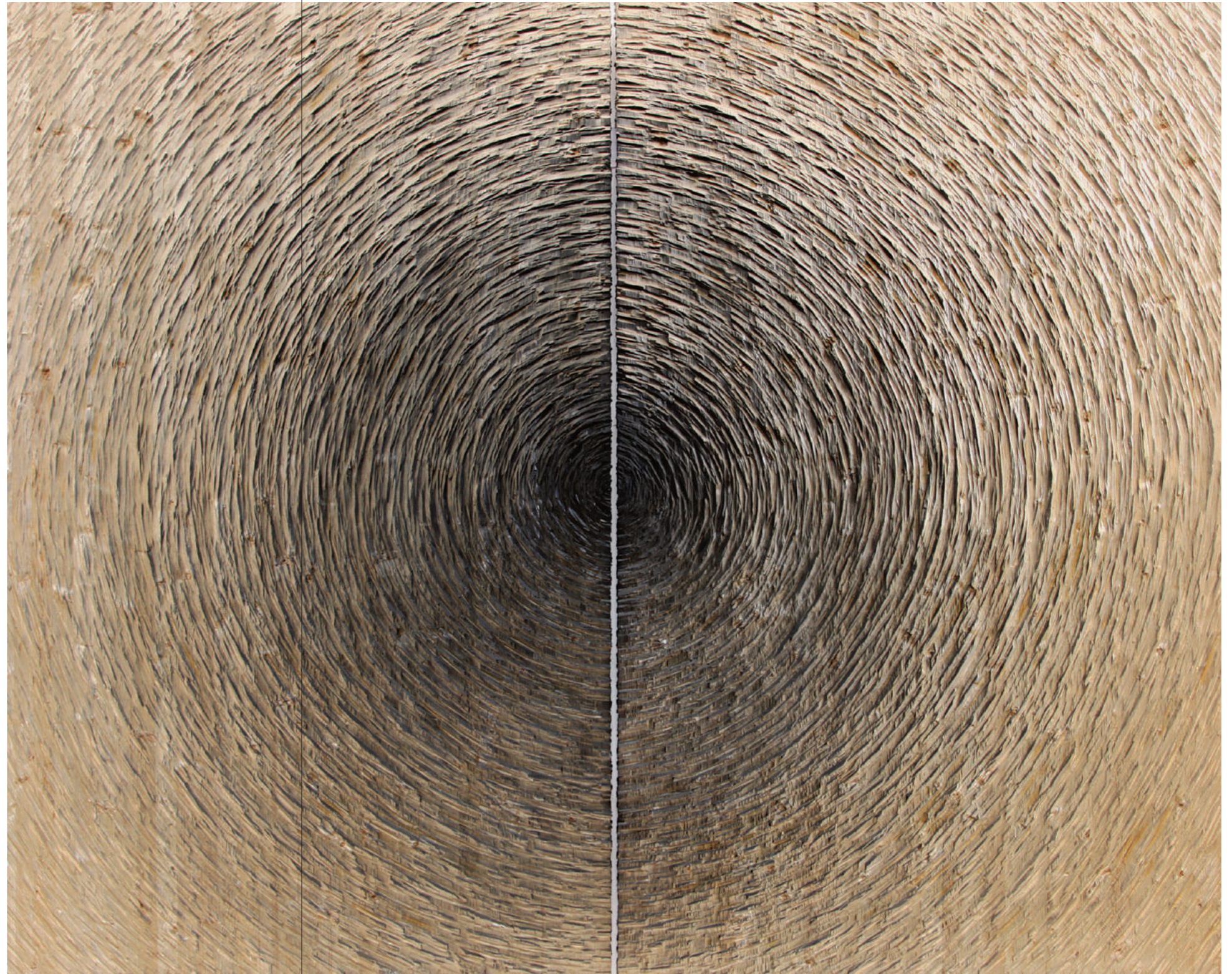


ALFRED HABERPOINTNER (b. 1966)

W-IIOS, 2017

Sprucewood stained

200 x 244 cm | 78.7 x 96.1 in



I like dynamic structure and colour, but facets of nature also play a role in my creation. I like the texture and toughness of the material. If you work on wood manually, you can achieve a spatial and pertinent depth. By painting on it, you could even obtain an appropriate chromatic abstraction.

Alfred Haberpointner



ANSELM REYLE (b. 1970)
Untitled, 2003
Acrylic and foil on canvas in acrylic glassbox
133.5 x 114 cm | 52.6 x 44.9 in

The work of Anselm Reyle is intimately linked to Modernism, borrowing, critiquing, and reinventing its conventions all at once. Reyle's abstract sculptures and paintings are made with fluorescent colours, found objects, and shiny common materials including foil, glitter, and mirrors. Inspired by early abstract painter Otto Freundlich and using techniques innovated by Jackson Pollock and Barnett Newman, Reyle self-consciously revives aspects such as Hard-Edged stripes and the gestural brushstrokes of Abstract Expressionism. In 2011, Reyle made his affinity for popular culture explicit, designing accessories for fashion house Dior.

ANDY DENZLER (b. 1965)
Photo Frame Painting 15, 2015
Oil on canvas
180 x 150 cm | 70.8 x 59.1 in

Visual Logic
about Andy Denzler

The international career of Andy Denzler has flourished within the past years. Why is Denzler recognised by both art institutions and private collectors as one of today's major artists?

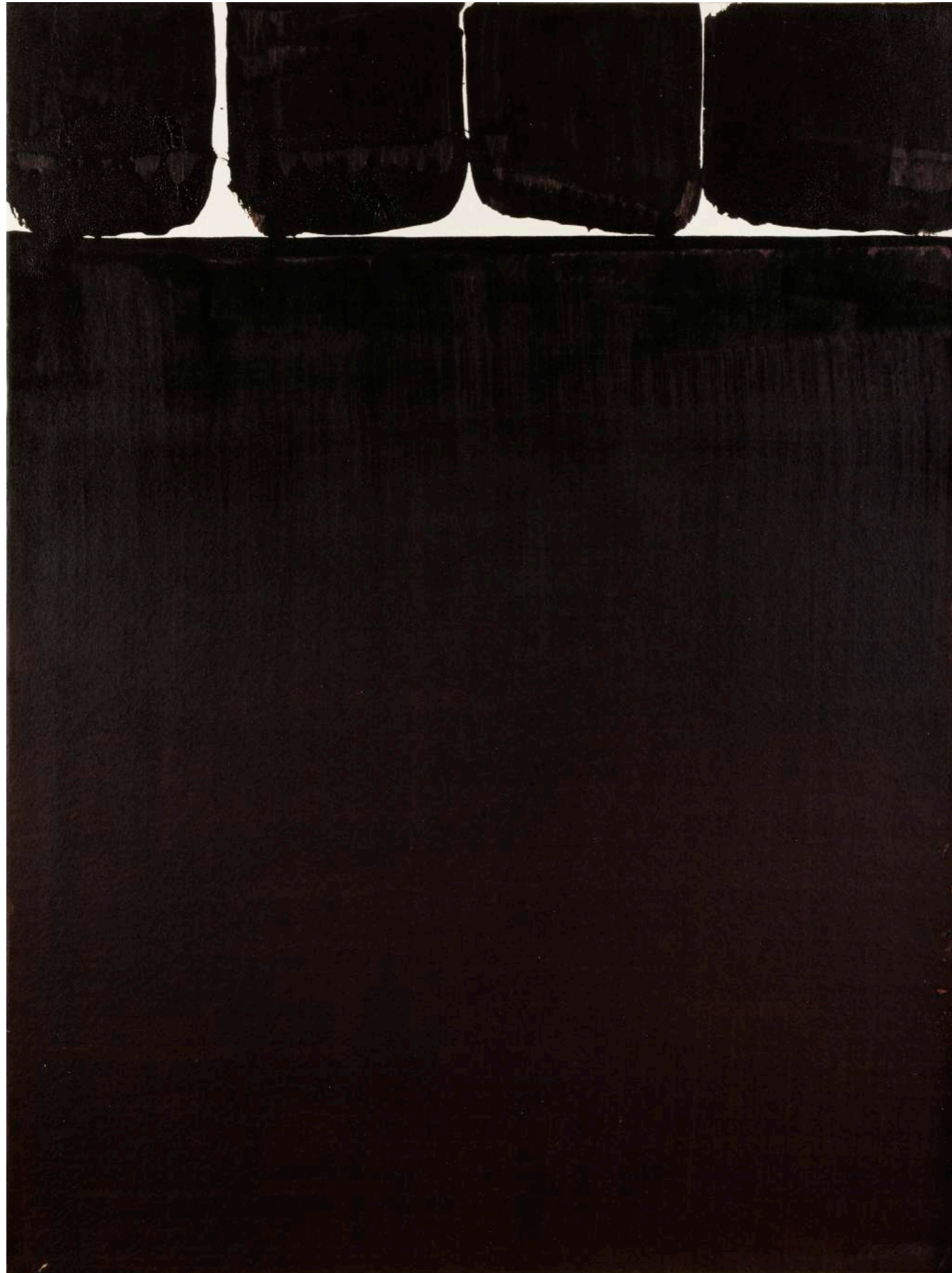
There are several reasons to this fact, the first and foremost is that Denzler's paintings are immediately recognisable. The artist has from the start created a visual signature of style and universe that are unique. We instantly know and without hesitation that we are looking at his work. Another reason, is the fertile relationship that Denzler maintains between image and substance. There is a constant dialogue and mutual enrichment from these two poles. The paintings' subjects never end with the depiction of the image, nor is the act of painting reduced to a pure experimentation of the material. The viewer's perception of the work wavers between pure abstraction and evocative portrayal. This experience is enhanced by the neutral and muted colours that the artist uses.

Denzler reflects and defines the pictorial medium in accordance with new technologies and photography. His experience as a film maker and photographer is present in his work. His use of imagery goes beyond historical and cultural knowledge, it extends to concrete experiences of various ways to produce what is visible. This is perceptible in the staging, the composition of his paintings, the lighting and the dramatic narrative but also in his subtle way of positioning his work in a world over saturated with digital screens - the artist makes use of his own photographs taken with a Leica.

The artist's 'visual logic' allows us to experiment with a sort of disruption of the image, as if there was interference, as if the visual signals were scrambled. The existence of the painting is both obvious and incontestable, but the subject itself seems to resorb or absorb in the subject that it reveals. Thus, it is a paradoxical experience of vision that Denzler suggests. We see very clearly what is blurred and imprecise. It is a little like the moment frozen by the pause button on an old VHS player. Striations in the image, furrows in the substance... This leads us to state another aspect of Denzler's work. The moment when the artist removes material from the canvas, streaking the image using a palette knife. In sculpture, it is common to compare two methods. Subtractive and additive. The first consists of cutting away in order to reveal a form buried within, such as Michelangelo discovering his figure within a block of marble. The second describes the method illustrated by Giacometti, in which the sculptor adds small quantities of wax that amass together piece by piece on a metal armature revealing the contours of a silhouette. It is interesting to note here that these two techniques are one and the same for Denzler. The addition of material always has as a corollary its elimination, as if he swept the image with his hand or gaze. Add or subtract, these two apparently contradictory acts, far from cancelling each other out, allow the artist's vision to manifest itself.

David Rosenberg
Paris, April 2017





PIERRE SOULAGES (b. 1919)

Brou de noix, 76.5 x 56.5 cm, 1998

Broux de noix on paper laid on canvas

76.5 x 56.5 cm | 30.1 x 22.2 in

Pierre Soulages is a French abstract painter, engraver and lithographer. In 2014, François Hollande, French President, described him as "the world's greatest living artist." He is known particularly as 'the painter of black'.

Pierre Soulages was born in Rodez, Aveyron. As a youth, he is soon impressed by the prehistoric and Romanesque art of the region. The 3000-year-old monoliths scattered near his home in the Aveyron region particularly fascinated him. He has kept to his provincial roots. He and his wife are currently dividing their time between Paris and their house overlooking the Mediterranean Sea in Sete.

After a first aborted attempt to study painting in 1938, he finally settled in Paris with his wife in 1946 and resumed painting. He made his first non-figurative works in 1947 with black signs in heavy brushstrokes on a light ground. After moving to Paris, Pierre Soulages began using walnut stain to make gestural abstract paintings on paper.

By the 1950s, Soulages had begun using oil on canvas, using looser, slashing brushstrokes, later sometimes with more fluid washes of colour. He created compositions of black bars in front of a white ground influenced by East Asian calligraphy, which Soulages learned about while travelling in Japan. Between the period of 1950s and 1960s, Soulages' work was seen as a kind of French analog to the Abstract Expressionism of New York School artists like Mark Rothko, Willem de Kooning, Milton Resnick and Robert Motherwell. A turning point in his career is marked by his *Outrenoir*, (Beyond the Black) series of black monochromatic paintings, which he began in 1979. Pierre Soulages has explained that he works with the light reflecting on the canvas. Striations of the black surface of his paintings enables him to make the light reflect, allowing the black to come out from darkness and into brightness, thereby becoming a luminous color.

Long before Soulages made a name for himself in France, American museums were purchasing his paintings, beginning with the Phillips Collection, in 1951, and then the Museum of Modern Art, in 1952. Pierre Soulages's work can be found in museums around the world, including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York and the Tate Gallery in London. In 2001, he became the first contemporary artist to be exhibited at the Hermitage, in St. Petersburg. Soulages has held several retrospectives throughout Europe. His most recent exhibitions include a large-scale retrospective at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, celebrating his 90th birthday. He has also received many fellowships and awards, notably the French Legion d'Honneur (2015), the Austrian Decoration for Science and Art in Vienna (2006), the Premium Imperial Prize for Painting of the Japan Art Association in Tokyo (1992), Foreign Honorary Member for Art of the American Academy of Arts and Letters (1979).

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Coordinators: Muriel Asmar, Noumis Barakat, Tom Masson

Photography: Courtesy of Opera Gallery and the artists

Cover: Pierre Soulages, *Brou de noix*, 76.5 x 56.5 cm, 1998

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