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Fiona Mackay

One can approach the work by Fiona Mackay best by envisioning a possible but not necessarily connected sequence of 'events with painterly means'. These undertakings evolve in the realm of an exhibition or in relation to a given place or space. The beginnings lie between personal narration and the commonly used sign-systems or associative terms, words, and objects as 'roots'. In a blunt gesture, without a sketch but intuitively Mackay applies directly onto the canvas individual cycles between figuration and abstraction.

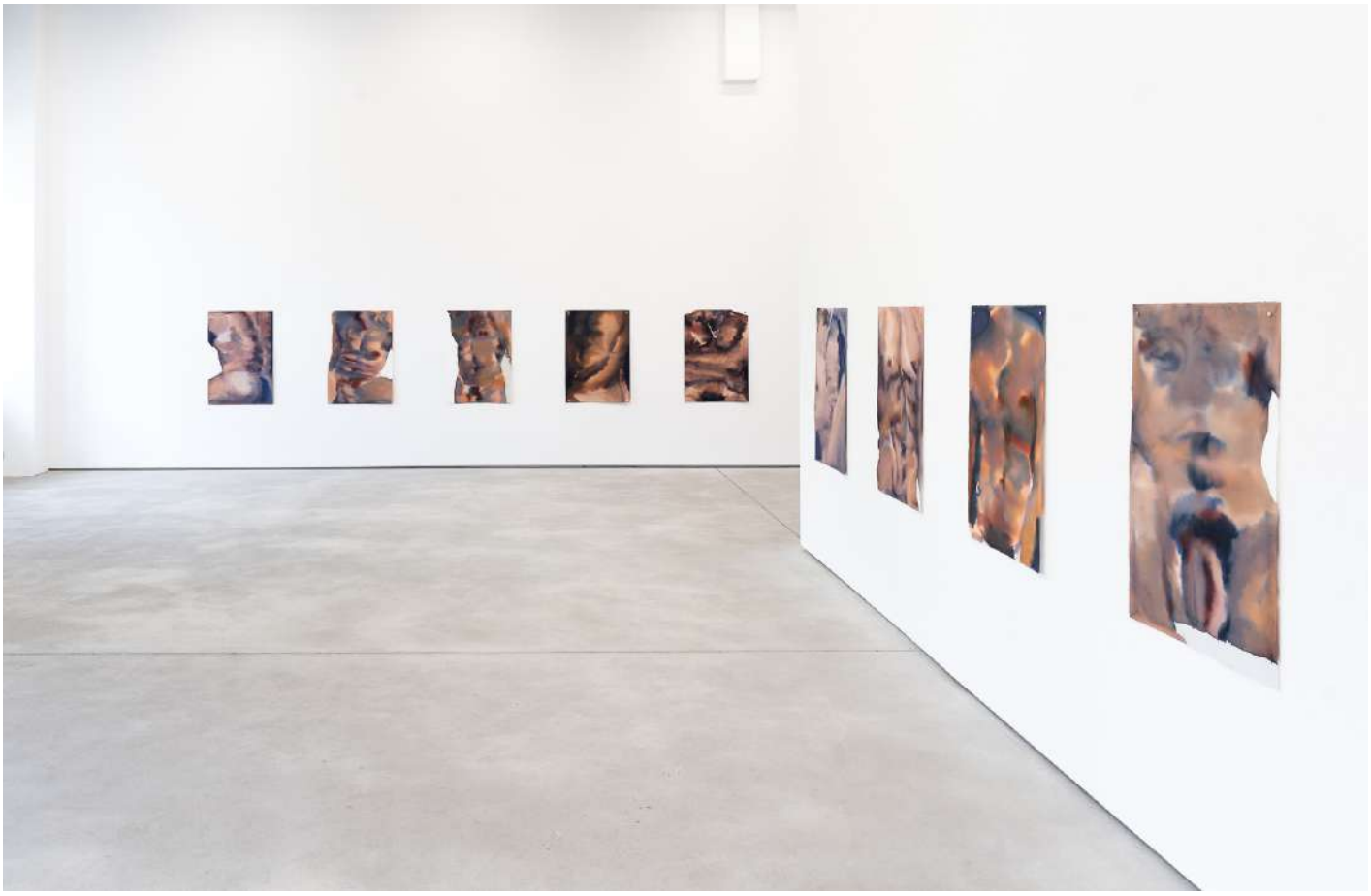
The artist develops syntactic bodies of work that reverberate in the exhibition space like sound waves – being radically open to subjective perception. The works, intense and luminescent, reveal an uncommon marriage of solidity and fluidity, monumentality and domesticity, the earnest and the whimsical, achieving a maximum impact with limited means.

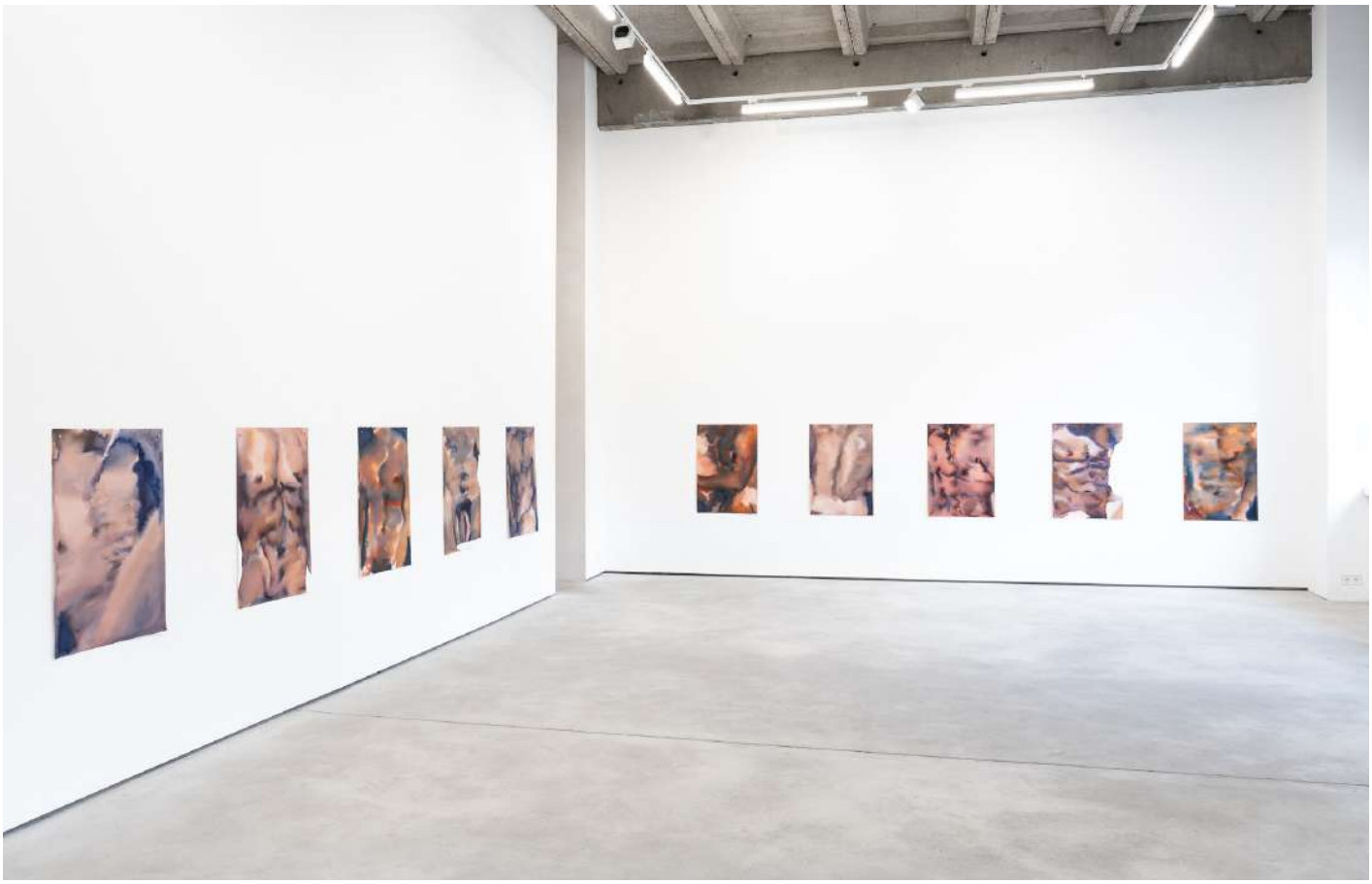
Her heterogeneous images purposefully disrupt the viewers', and artists' own, expectations of painting, contradicting or totally evading any fixed meaning to instead interrogate denigrated aesthetic styles, and embrace or distort notions of cliché, bad taste, and naivety. Mackay's paintings are perhaps most accurately understood as self-conscious critiques of the form, playfully experimenting with gestural mark marking and wordplay to create slippages between her colloquial titles and the images they purportedly describe. This approach lends Mackay's paintings a performative quality, articulating abstract emotions or ideas with immediacy and urge.

"My work has always been concerned with opposites, whether in regard to medium, imagery, or application, in an attempt to confess a personal narrative, versus a public system of signs always in potential flux." *Fiona Mackay*

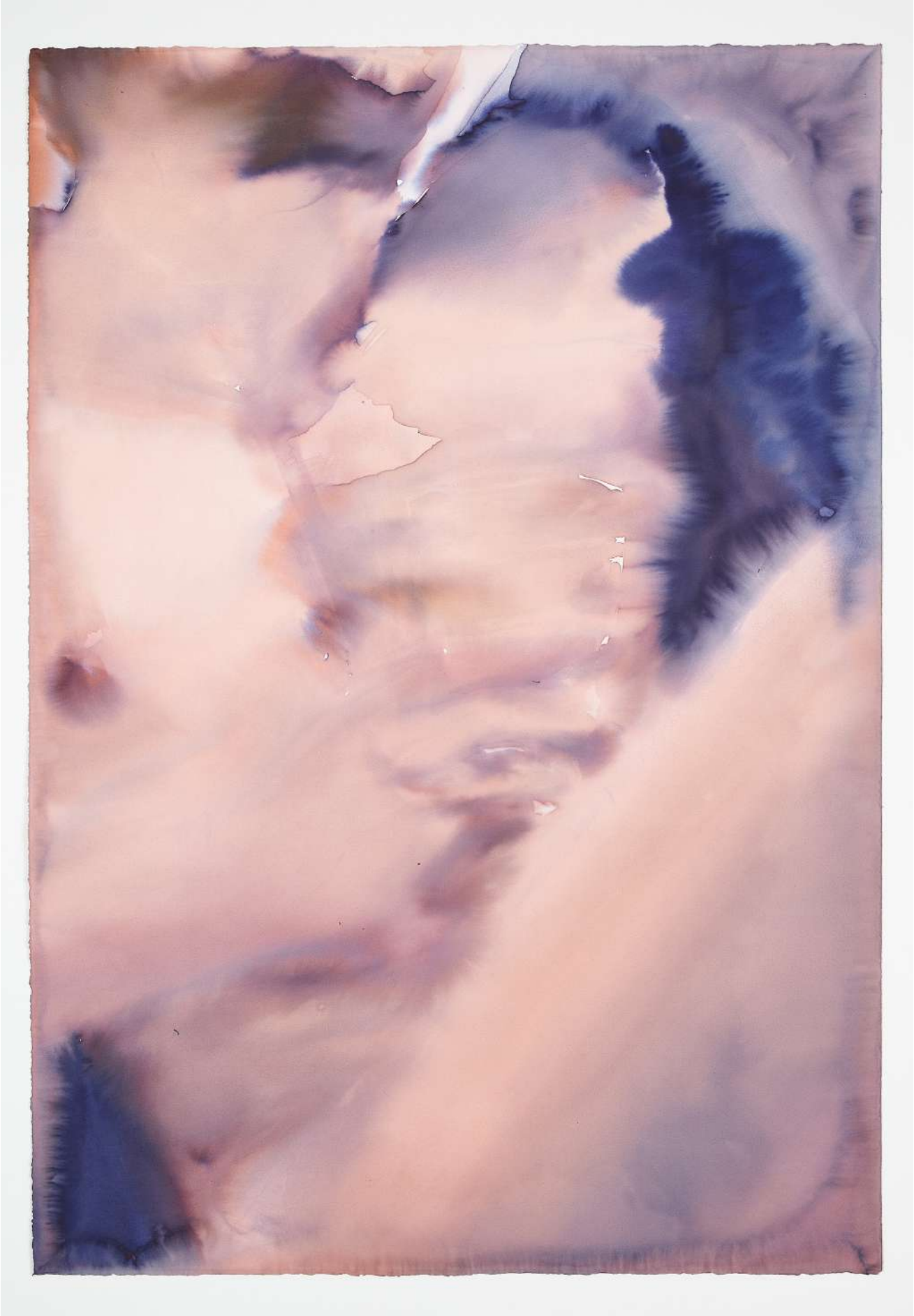
Fiona Mackay (1984, Aberdeen, Scotland) lives and works between Antwerp, Belgium and Marseille, France.

Rose #1, 2025, procion MX dye on 270g BFK rives white velin paper, 90.5 x 62.5 cm

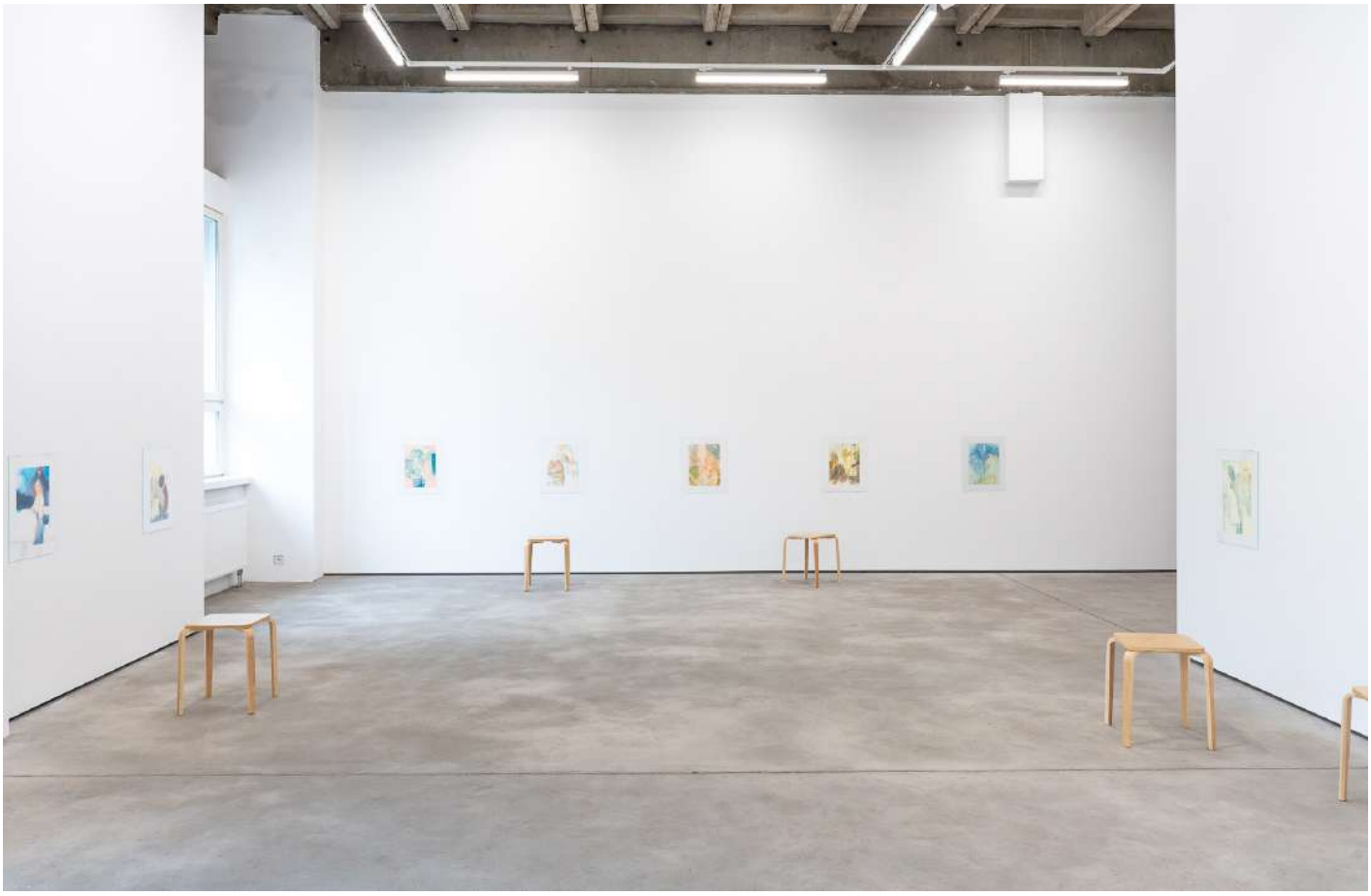




Exhibition View: *40's* - part I, KLEMM'S, Berlin, Germany, 2026



Rose #7, 2025, procion MX dye on 270g BFK rives white velin paper, 90.5 x 62.5 cm



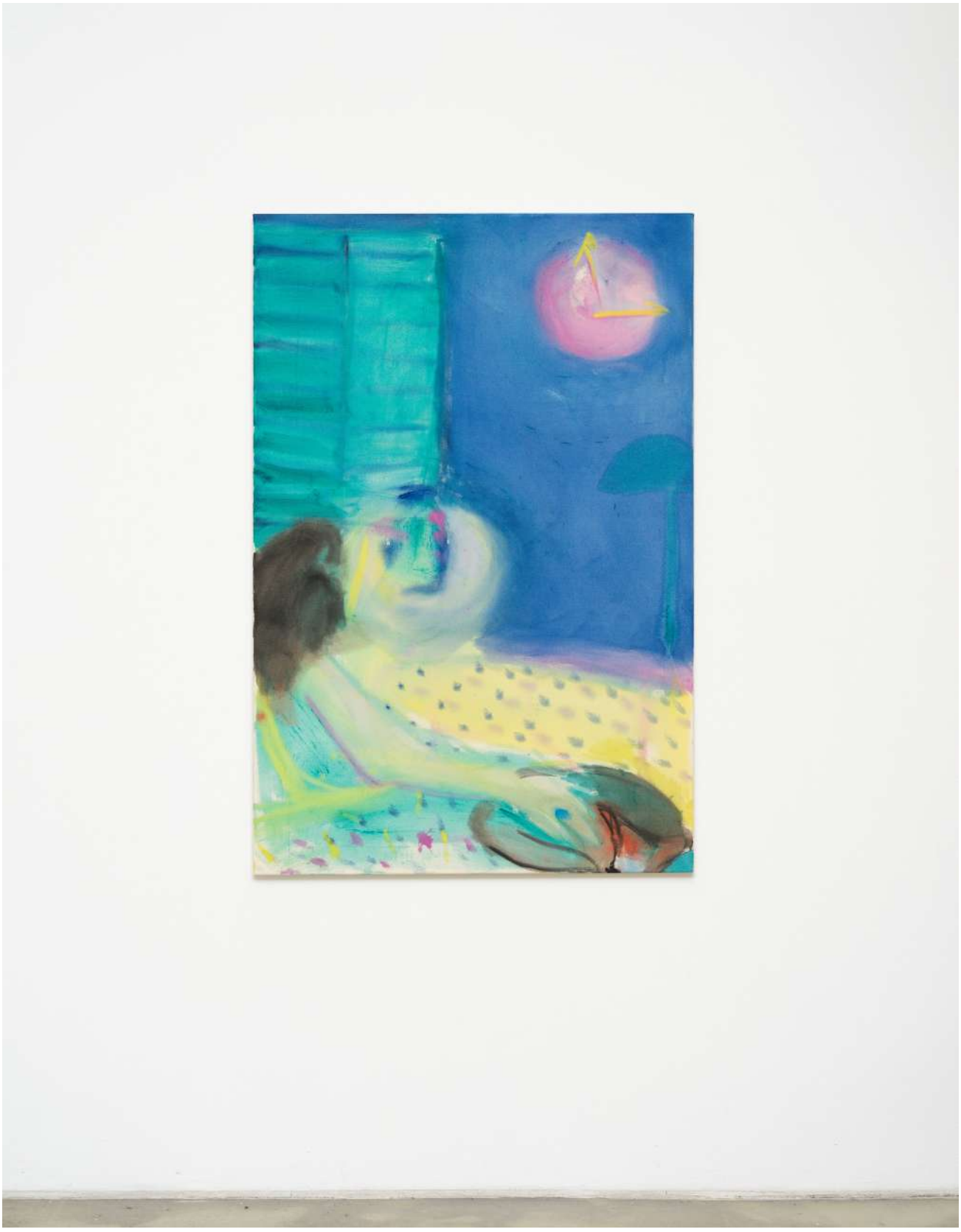
Exhibition View: *40's* - part II, KLEMM'S, Berlin, Germany, 2026

installation view: *40,* 2024, aqua wash printing ink on 300g BFK rives white velin paper, 39.9 x 30.4 cm

40, 2026, aqua wash printing ink on 300g BFK rives white velin paper,40 x 30.5 cm

Everything, 2022, acrylic, pigments on canvas, 160 x 120 cm

Exhibition View: *No Moon*, KLEMM'S, Berlin, Germany, 2023



Exhibition View *BadMoon*, 2022, in: *No Moon*, KLEMM'S, Berlin, Germany, 2023

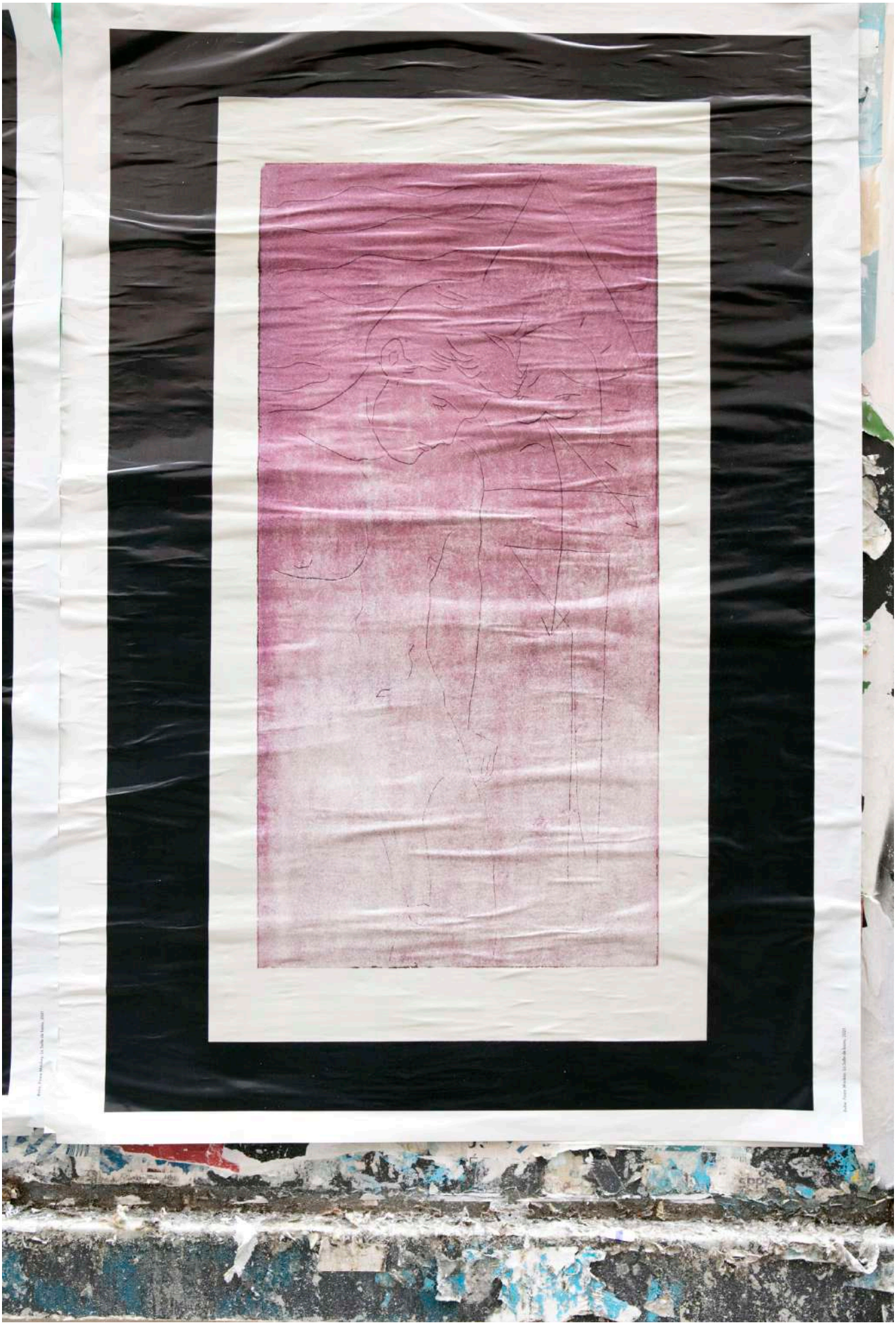
Bad Moon, 2022, pigments, acrylic on canvas, 150 x 100 cm

Exhibition View: *babe*; SDB, Lyon, 2021

Depending on the day and hour, anyone could have surprised those figures of Apollo and Narcissus (sometimes the both of them together) still wet, freshly slapped up on their signboard, or puckering quite a lot from the heat and weather. Occasionally you would find them partly covered over by other ads, which these beautiful young men displayed, although they did contemptuously, as if such a foreign presence were an irreverence to their classic beauty.

Exhibition View: *babe*; SDB, Lyon, 2021

Exhibition View: *babe*; SDB, Lyon, 2021



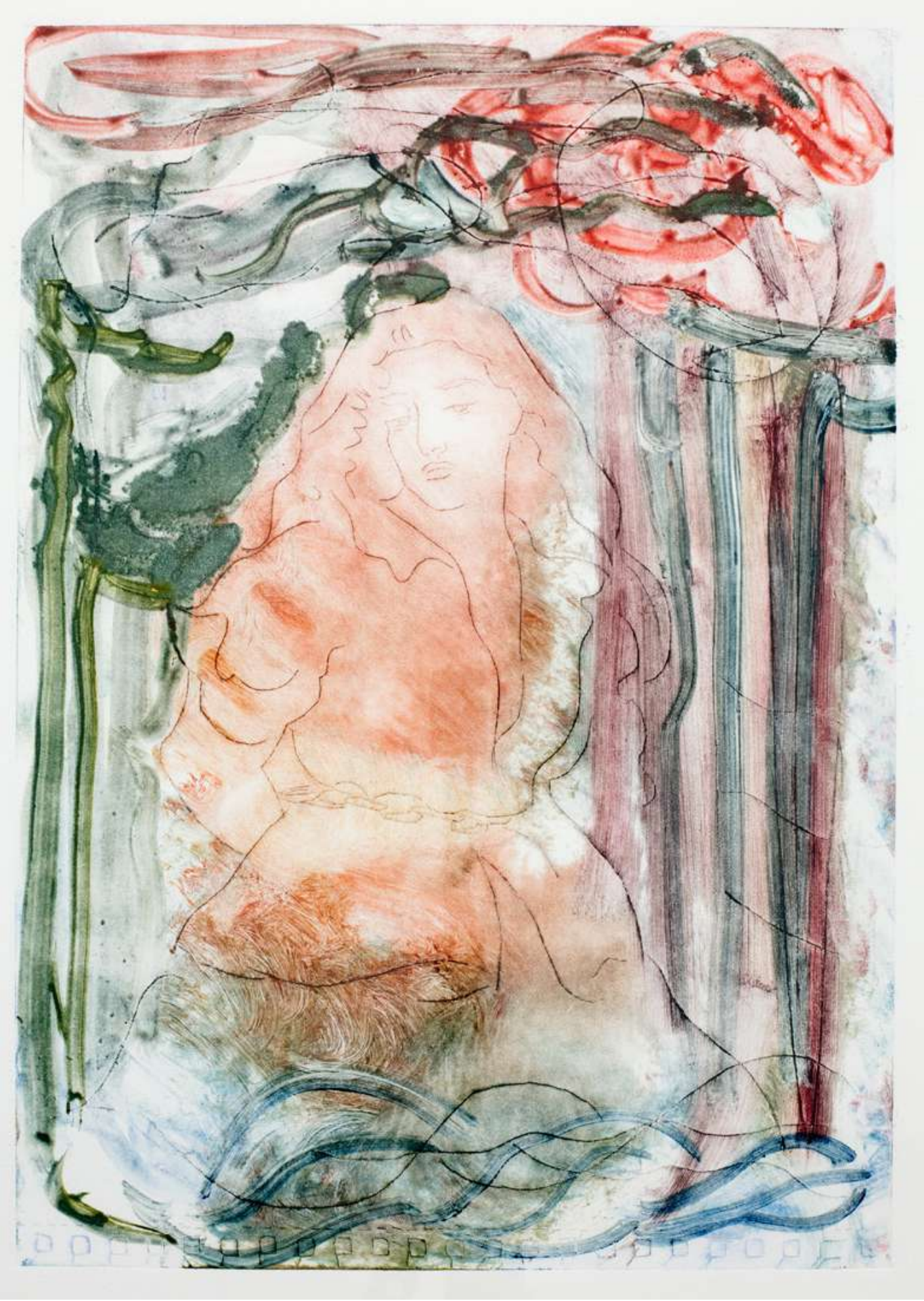
Exhibition View: *babe*; SDB, Lyon, 2021

Fortune and Promise, 2021, 39.9x30.4cm, aqua wash printing ink&fabric dye on BFK Rives White Velin Paper

A young age, 2021, aqua wash printing, ink on BFK Rives White Velin Paper, 300gm

The second part of the Fiona Mackay show at La Salle de bains lays out an experience of her work that is the exact opposite. In this case, the simple plural designation affixed to the title – Babe becoming Babes – is one of several misleading appearances. We should note, too, that “babes,” unlike the singular, isn’t used as a pet name for one’s “love object,” which lends an iconoclastic note to the addition of that ess.

Exhibition View: *Babes*, Salle de Bain, Lyon, 2021



Valium, 2021, 39.9x30.4cm, aqua wash printing ink&fabric dye on BFK Rives White Velin Paper

dreams.

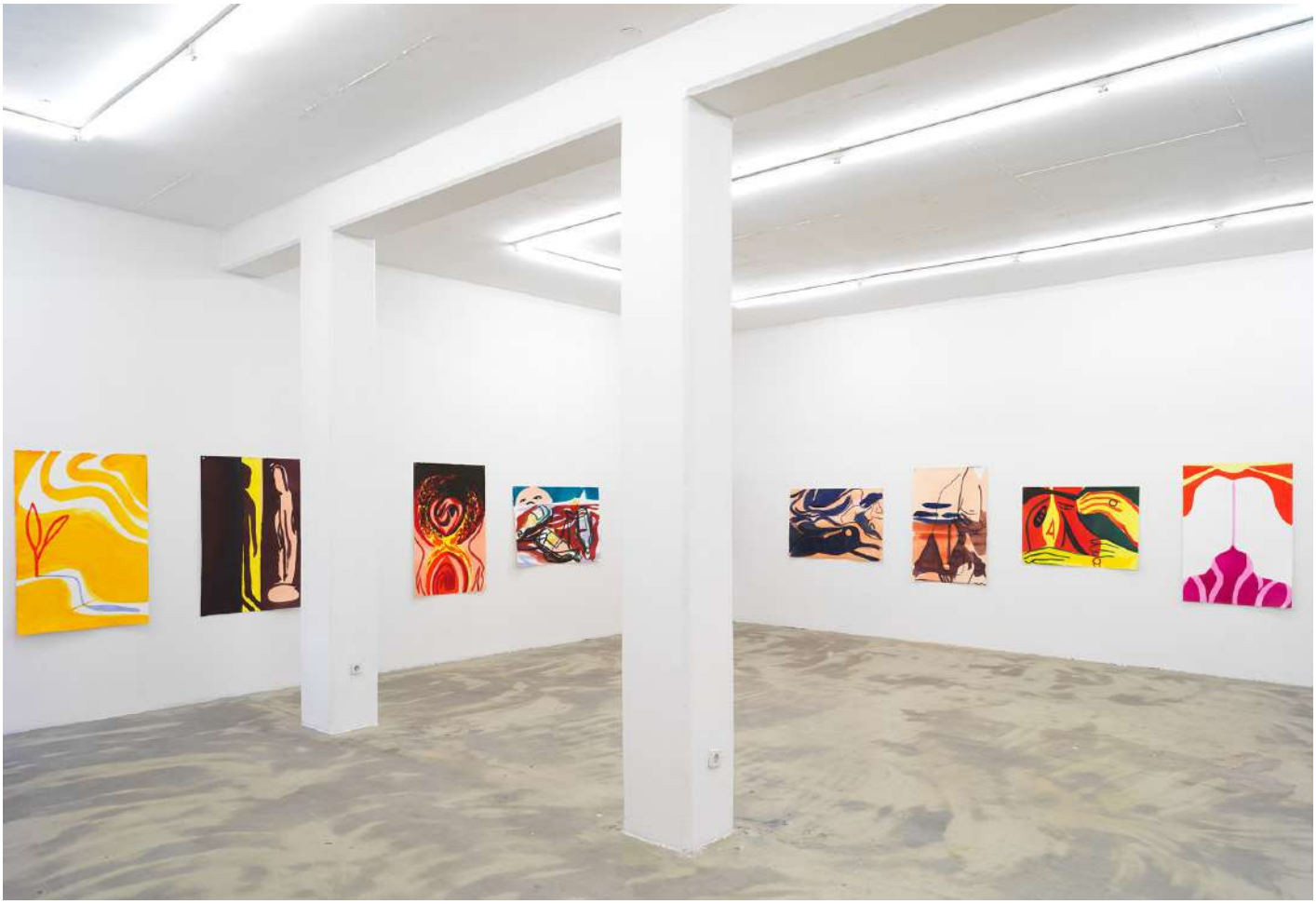
„I was in the winter of my life, And the men that I met along the road were my only summer."
— Lana Del Rey

dreams. A fragment of time from 2017 to 2019, from the North to the South and back again where repetitions recur as hallucinations in both day and in night, awake or asleep. Leaving dreams to continue endlessly, where dreaming generally is forbidden. Fiona Mackay showcases a glimpse into the painter's world of hallucinatory imagery, manifested as paintings on paper. Like reoccurring dreams, gestures, motifs and colors repeat throughout her works. The everydayness of paper as a supporting material is tied to the world of tactile reality, while its fragility and lightness – an innate quality of paper – is symbiotic to the sublime, whimsical world of dreams.

"Who belonged to no one - who belonged to everyone.
Who had nothing, who wanted everything,
With a fire for every experience And an obsession for freedom
That terrified me to the point that I couldn't even talk about it –
And pushed me to a nomadic point
Of madness that both dazzled and dizzied me."

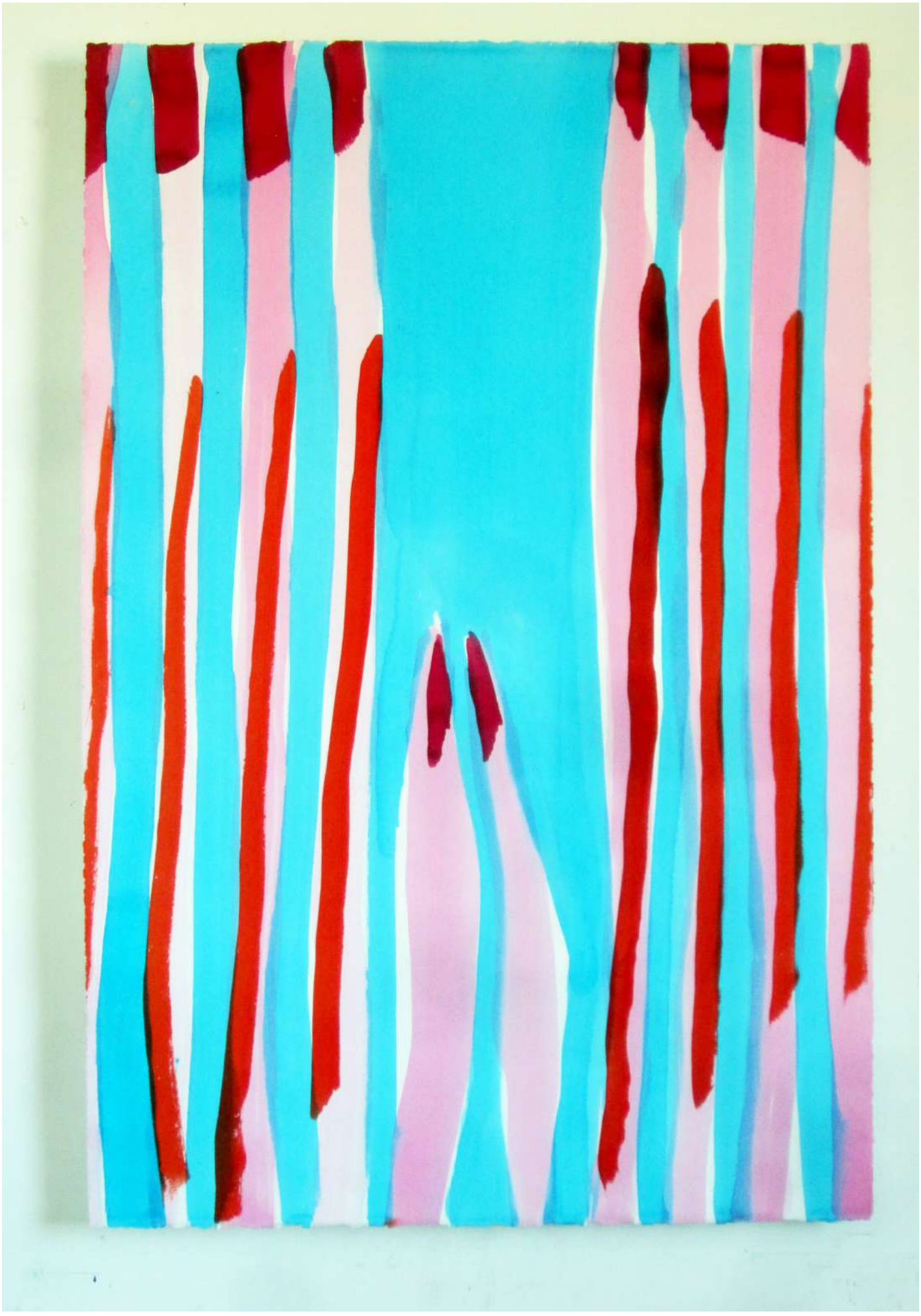
— Lana Del Rey

lovers & yes, actually no sir 2017; fabric dye on 300g, 100% cotton-paper; each 80x 120 cm

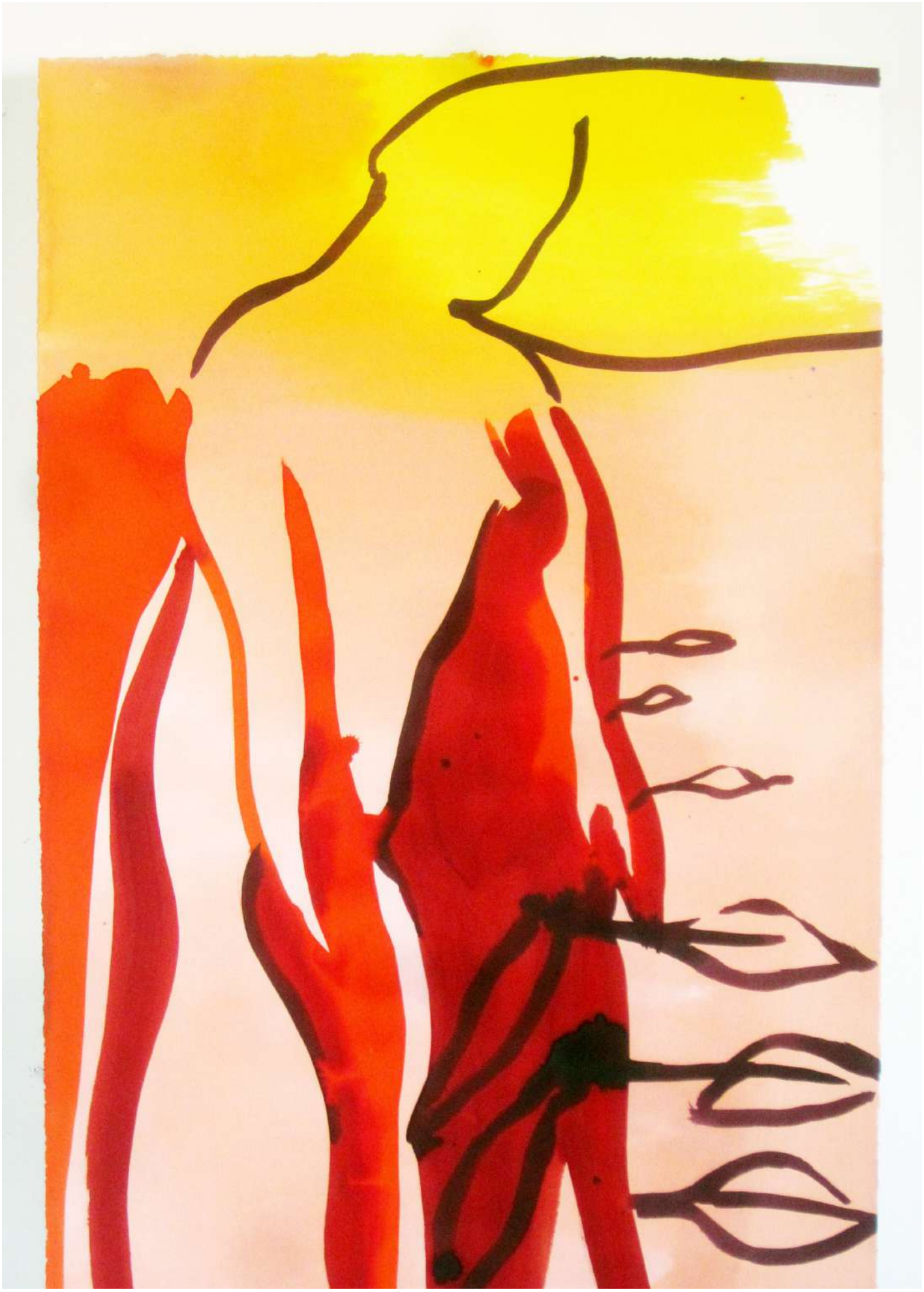


Exhibition View: *dreams.*, Klemm's, Berlin 2019

Universe; 2017; fabric dye on 300g, 100% cotton-paper; 120 x 80 cm

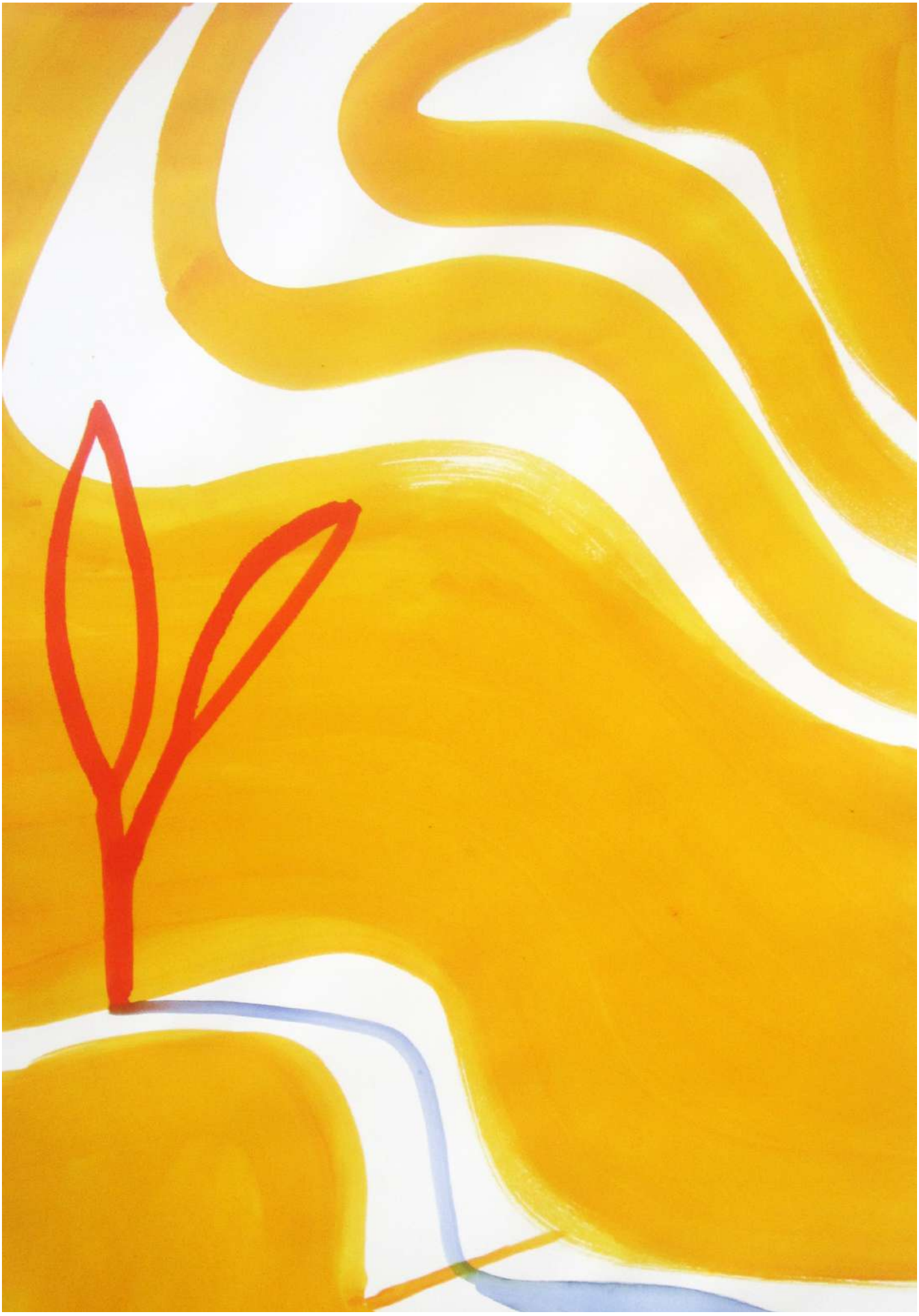


Blind; 2017; fabric dye on 300g, 100% cotton-paper; 120 x 80 cm



From the North to the South, 2017; fabric dye on 300g, 100% cotton-paper; 120 x 80 cm

La Lune et les etoiles, 2017; fabric dye on300g, 100% cotton-paper, 120 x 80 cm



Loneliness; 2017; fabric dye on 300g, 100% cotton-paper; 120 x 80 cm

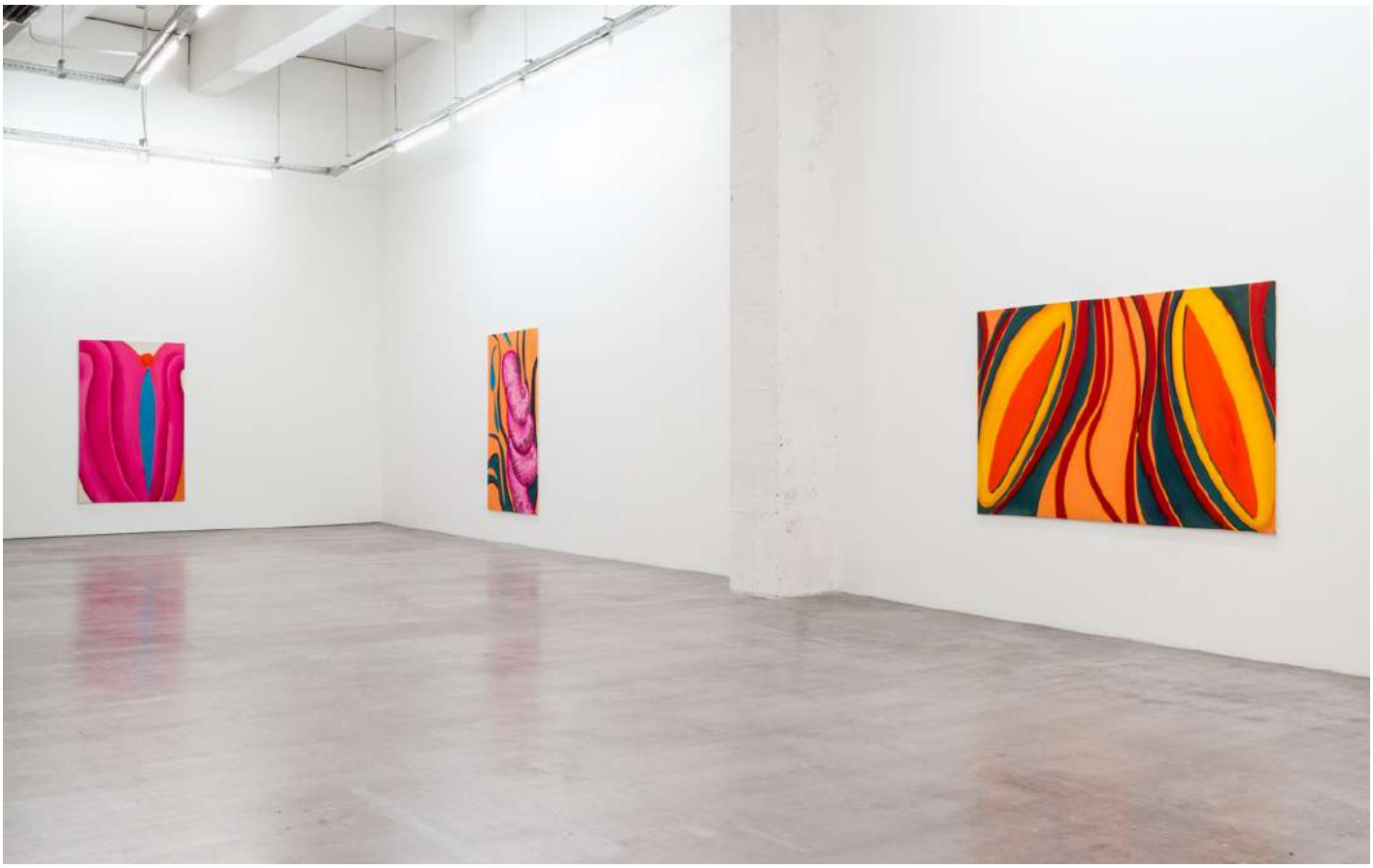
Running Away (with Manuela Gernedel), New Joerg, Vienna 2018

....so in through the entrance cutting the corner of Jägerstraße and Pappenheimgasse, you might see a black dick, or a purple something that has a whiff of rhino, this all depends on your height (or your mind). Two steps in and you literally have to click the neck back because there is nothing on the walls below 284cm, (lazy bitches). Past this golden line, is a troupe of 7 fillies, cantering around the maximum wall height, in various states and flavours. Two less and we could have the equestrian version of the Spice Girls. Its too bad that the angles of the room get in the way, because some of these creatures could be real hotties - flowing hair, flashing eyes; shoved in corners where features distort and stomachs sag. What a pity. (....) The pace seems to stop at the gate of a room guarded by a brown and black stallion. Stiff and austere (a bit realistic), he's got one of those eyes that follows you. Yeah you. Peeking between his legs, this second room appears to be empty except for a door, a door that is slightly open leading to something of a fantasy. A puffy dream. Upon reaching the handle, you realise that this pure illusion, a door made from the head, a trick of the eye. (...)

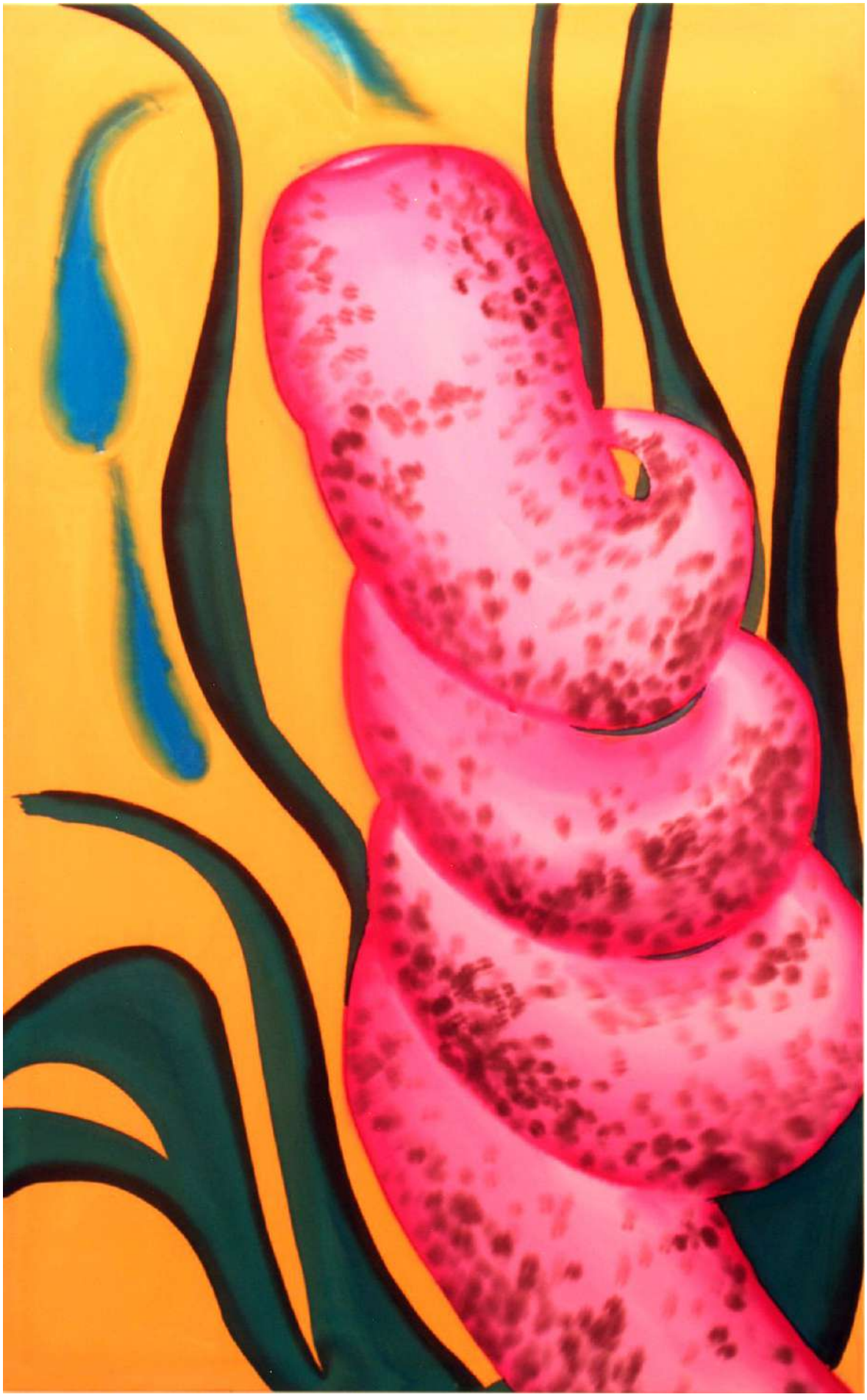
Manuela Gernedel and Fiona Mackay met at Glasgow School of Art. They have been collaborating since 2007 and painting together since 2009. For their European Painting Tour they spread themselves over walls, ceilings, windows and floors, merging separate individual ideas into one, for one moment of time.

Exhibition View: *‚Running Away'*(with Manuela Gernedel), New Joerg, Vienna, 2018

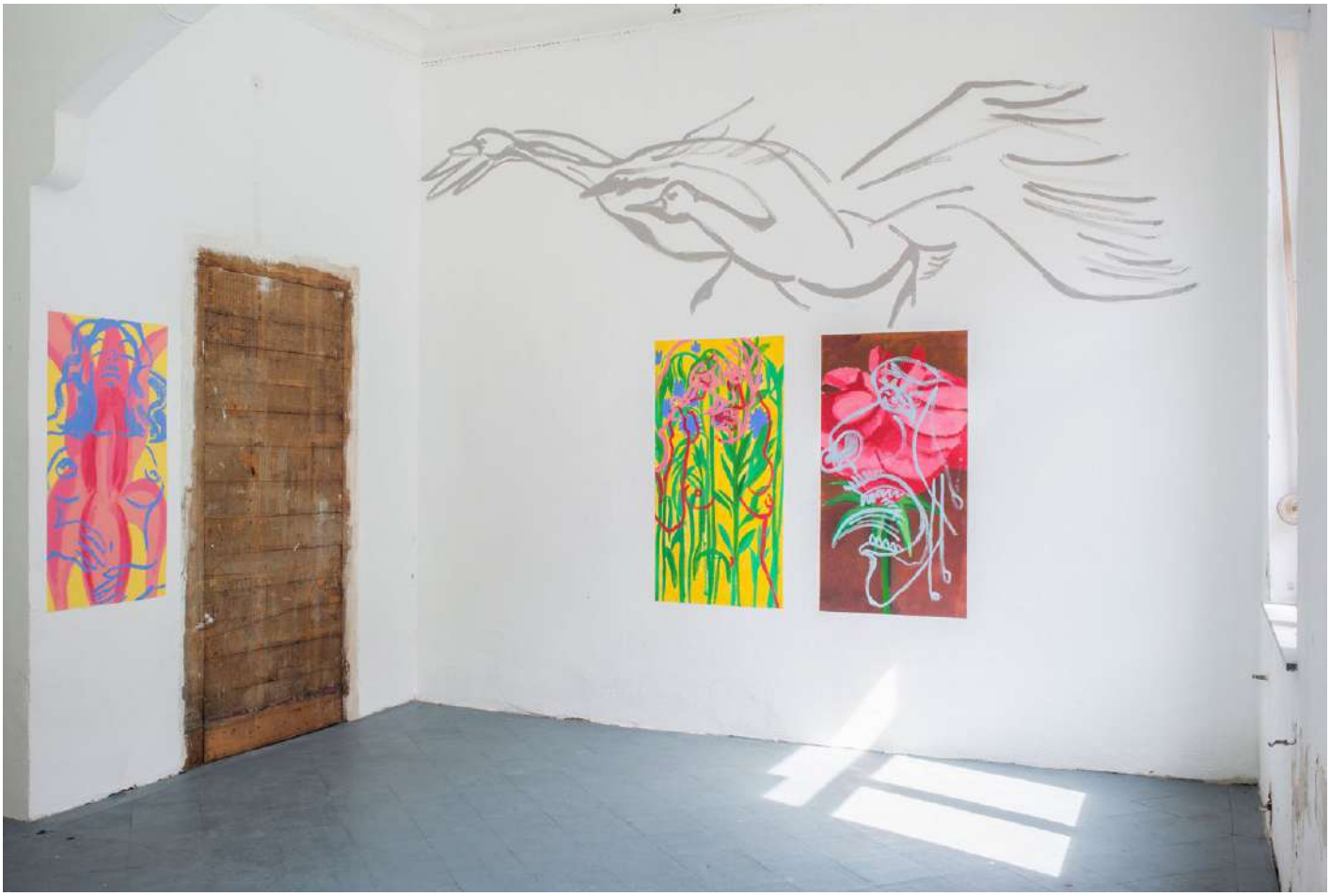
Exhibition View: ‚*Coma*'(with Manuela Gernedel), VIS, Hamburg, 2018



Exhibition View: ‚*Foreign Places*', WIELS, Contemporary Art Center, Brussels, 2016



Snake; 2016; fabric dye and acrylic binder on canvas; 200 x 125 cm



Exhibition View: ‚*LUI*' (with Manuela Gernedel), Real Positive, Cologne, 2016

Exhibition View: *Close to*, Klemm's, Berlin, 2015

„...they are ‚situations with painting'; sounds weird, but Fiona seems to be on the trail of an underlying idea, an original order in her exhibits; less in the sense of the project itself, but with the ‚result' of the final viewing experience in the back of her head"

„Without hesitation it hits me directly in the eye with full force. I am inthe middle of it immediately. But, other than expected, the sigh-t does not overpower me, does not pummel me. Quite the opposite: I feel safe and secure. At first sight, in love. Therefore, when I look again it hits me all the harder. Lets me doubt. Leaves me behind, lost.... Too fast, too much, too physical..."

„Count-in. Density. Empitness. Repeat. Rhythm and language are also appropriate associations: jazzy and free, but with a determination and a goal..."

„...a filter has surely had an effect: personal stories, or some sort of code language, associative terms...the pictures always look abstract at first, but probably for Fiona they are all figurative works in the end."

„...also the color spectrum. So many skin tones and gradients, almost tone on tone. In the disc-paintings then the overkill with paint and immediacy...large formats, but painted lightly. ‚Soft Monuments' maybe..."

„Curtain! The view through the keyhole: antique columns, bases, arches --theater somehow -- and the ‚irises' of the discs as eternal observers...."

„Outside in front of the gallery. Smoking. And looking through the big window at the paintings. We're silent to one another, but I still want to talk about
the works with her. About the feelings one gets. I'm a little embarassed about what I am saying and trying to express. We hardly know each other..."

„The paintings are related to one another, sometimes almost comment on and quote from each other, can stand on their own -- although they are one and all family members."

„Together we are looking for a word. A word that says everything, but of course we don't find one. We play ping pong with words, semantic sheaths: masculine and feminine, formal and gestural, figure and abstract... What for, anyway? I am annoyed; with defining and limiting, with vocabulary, and reflect back on the thing that it is. An image. And an image is an image is an image. Resign myself to this. And still, I am happy because I realize: I was, I am, very close."

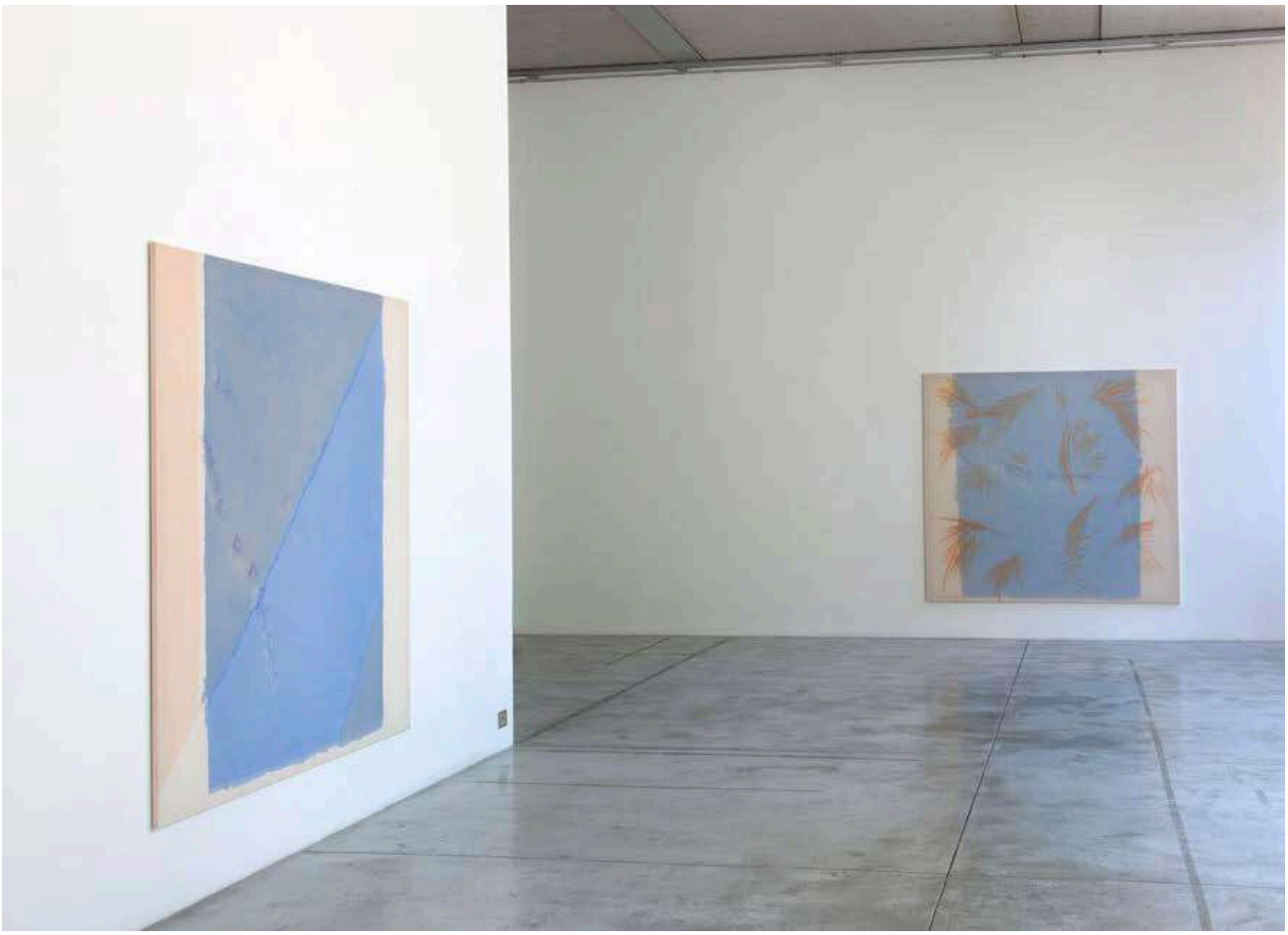
Silvia, Anna & Sebastian

Untitled, 2015, fabric dye on calico, 230 x 153 cm

Untitled, 2015, fabric dye on calico, 230 x 153 cm

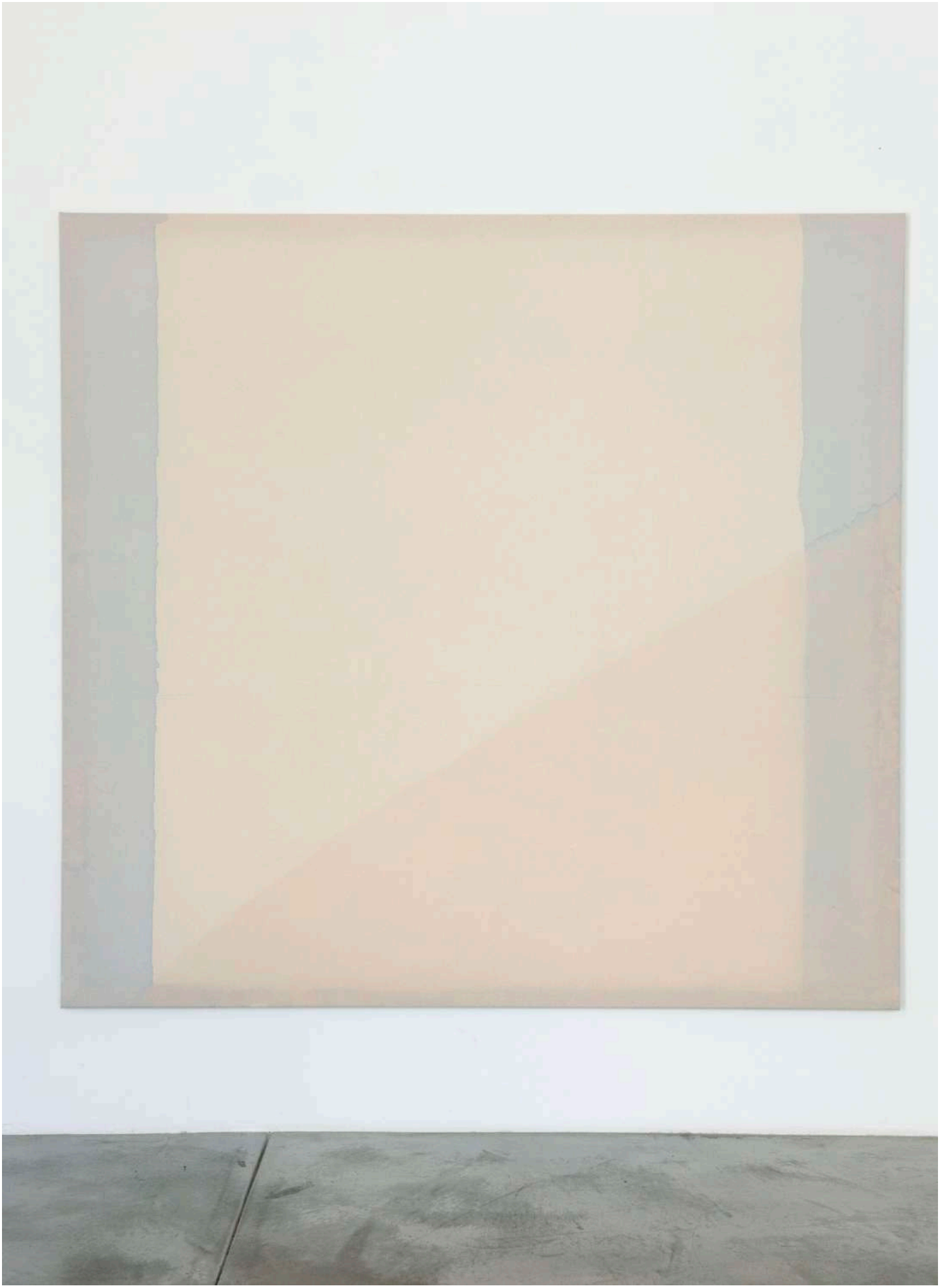
Untitled, 2015, fabric dye on calico, 230 x 160 cm

Untitled, 2015, fabric dye on calico, 230 x 153 cm



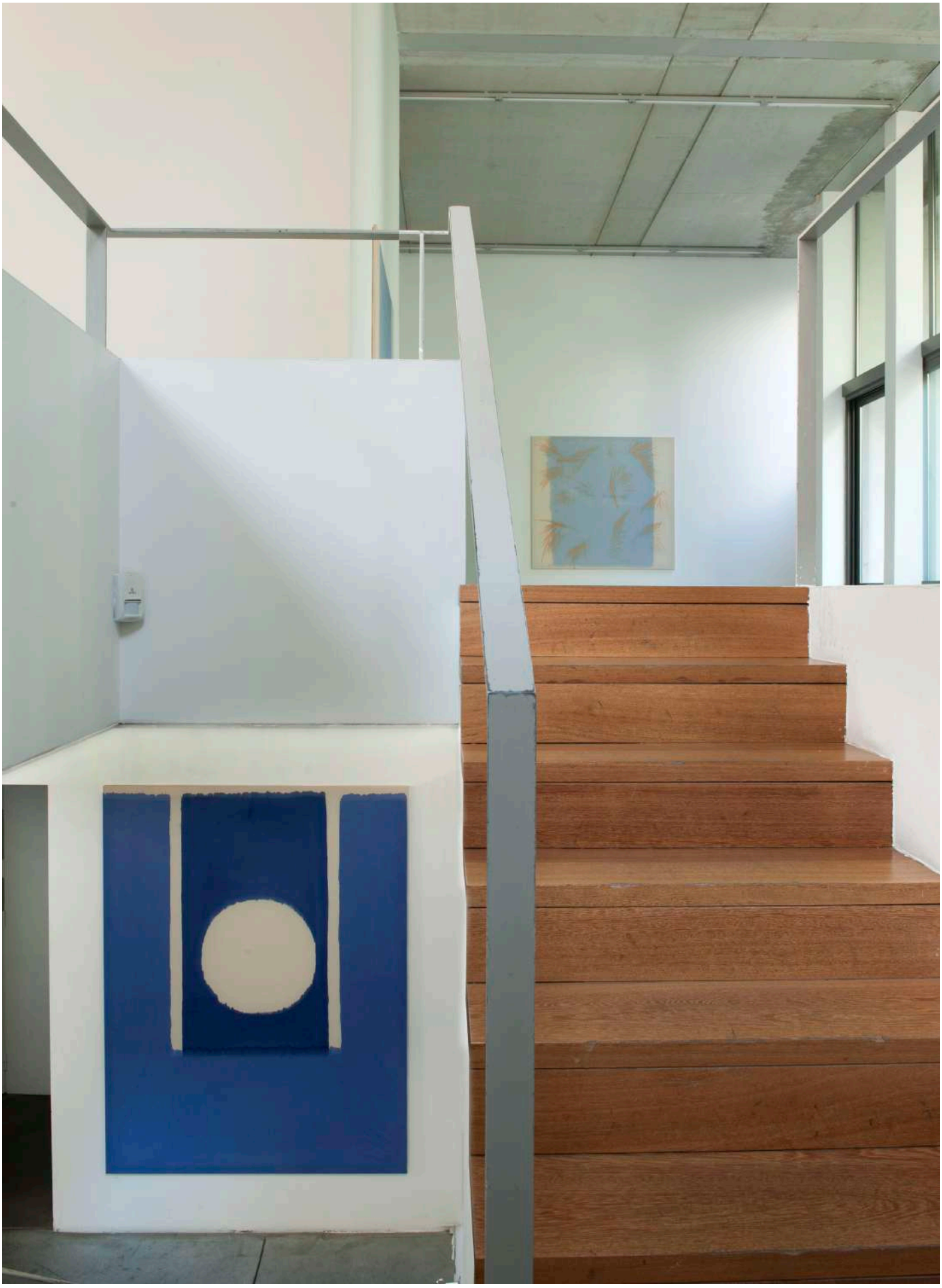
Exhibition View: *Sisters*, Albert Baronian, Brussels, 2014

Morning, 2014, fabric dye on canvas, 135 x 175 cm



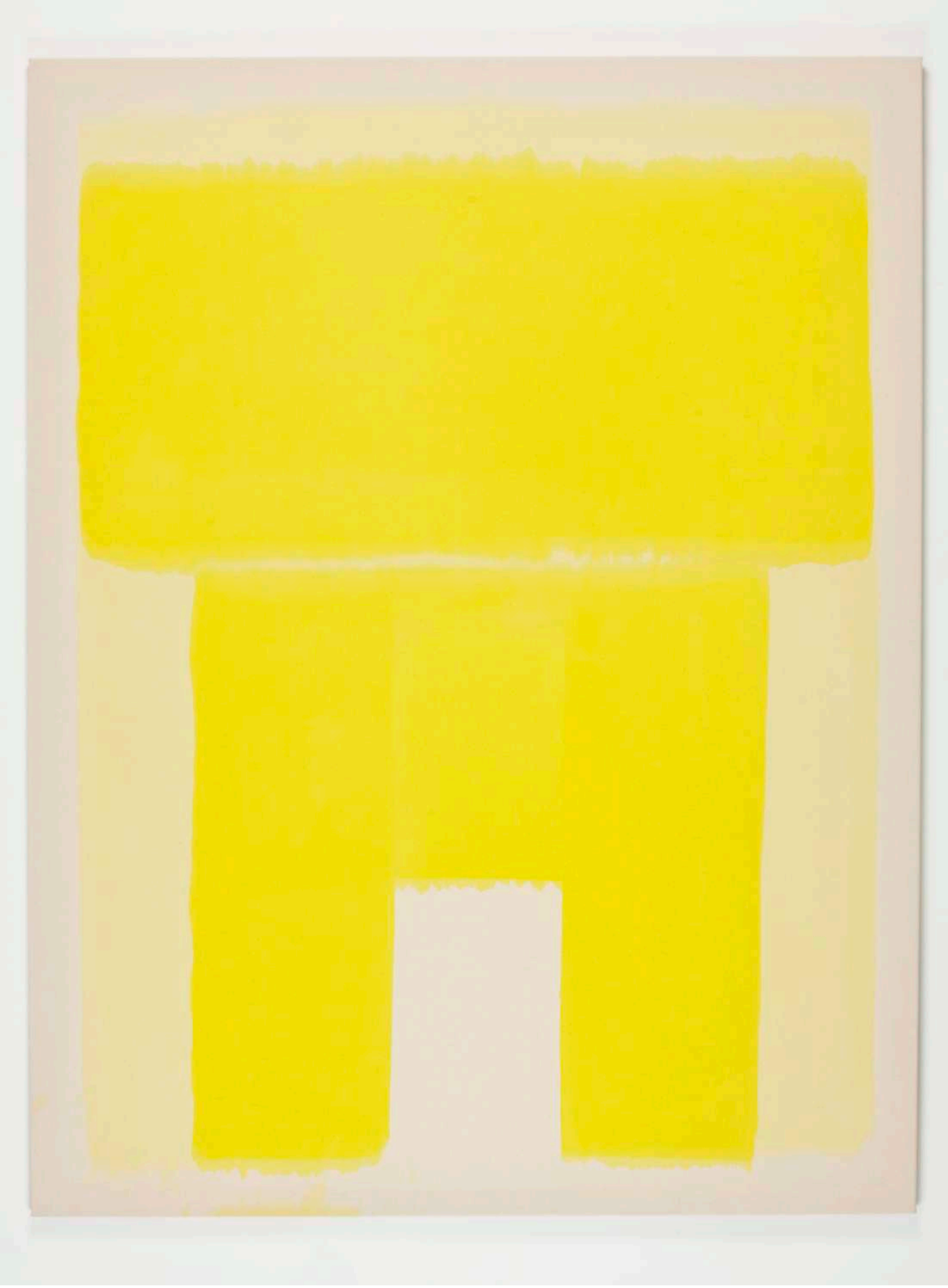
Untitled, 2014, fabric dye on canvas, 190 x 175 cm

Free Parrots, 2014, fabric dye on canvas, 195 x 175 cm



Exhibition View: *Sisters*, Albert Baronian, Brussels, 2014

Autumn In A, 2013, fabric dye on canvas, 135 x 175cm



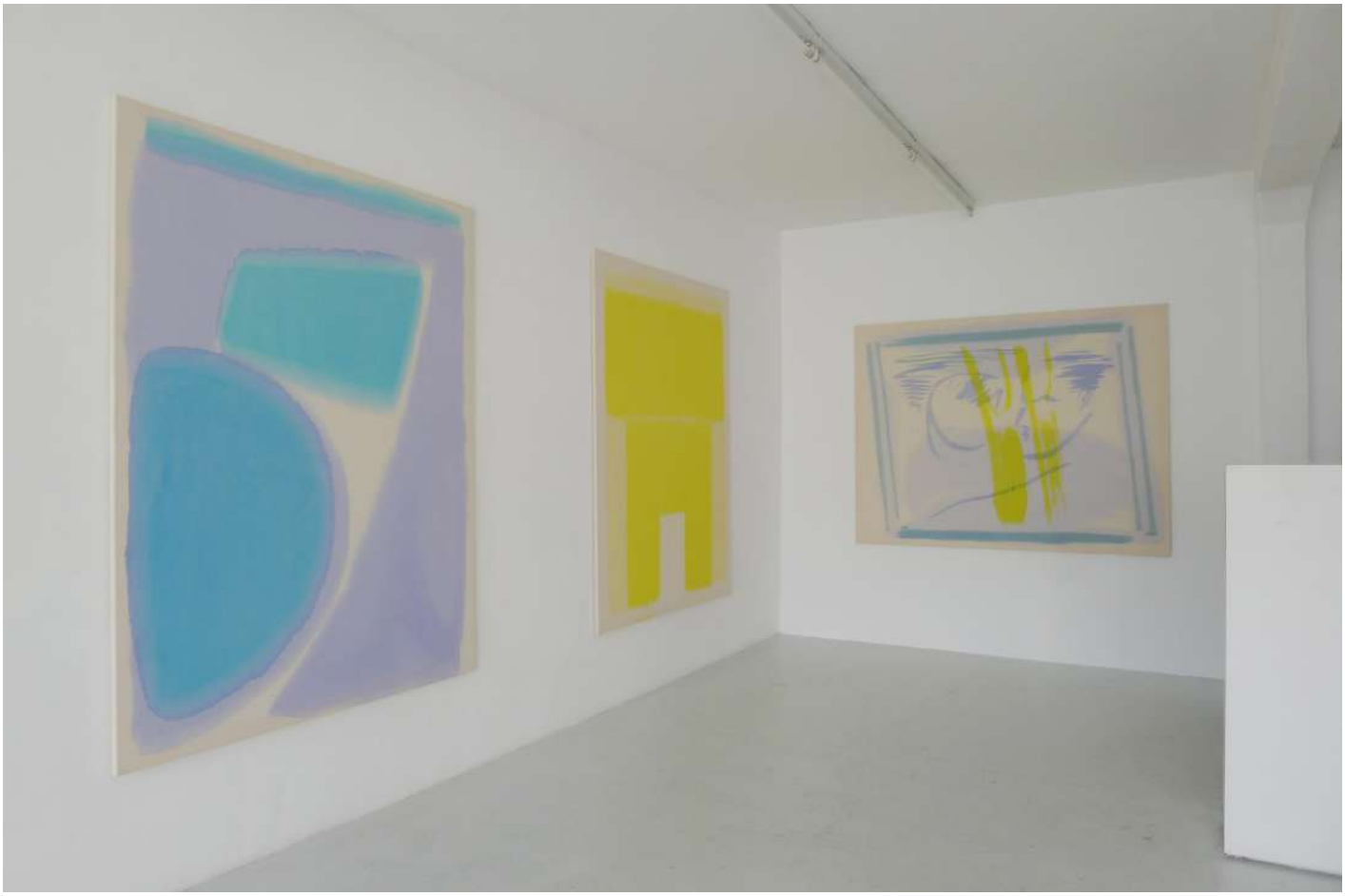
Monument, 2013, fabric dye on canvas, 135 x 175 cm

1

I've got all the money in the world but here the coffee is only half the price. This must be the place. And it's twice as good as home. It's great with borders vast. I could spend a whole year traveling within, from summer to summer and then back home again. Monumental postcards written, dated and signed as if I would be the man on that horse. Back in the saddle again, I'm lying on a towel on a beach. While high poplars sway in the backdrop scene to a gentle breeze, I see myself from the glare of too young locals passing by. Passively in action, I feel popular even though no one knows who I am. Washed on the surf of the sea to an unknown shore, I now enjoy. Who cares when sipping on local refreshments with wide blue eyes, off-piste when it's at best. Touring during the autumn in a country I don't know, I learn to know the inner fields, being what others call a tourist among other tourists, I fill out the land. All of it for sale, open on Sunday, closed on Monday, available during the other days, like ripe fruits in an orchard stolen by my foreign hands.

Andreas

Exhibition View: *Tourist*, Martin van Zomeren, Amsterdam, 2013



Exhibition View: *Tourist*, Martin van Zomeren, Amsterdam, 2013

2

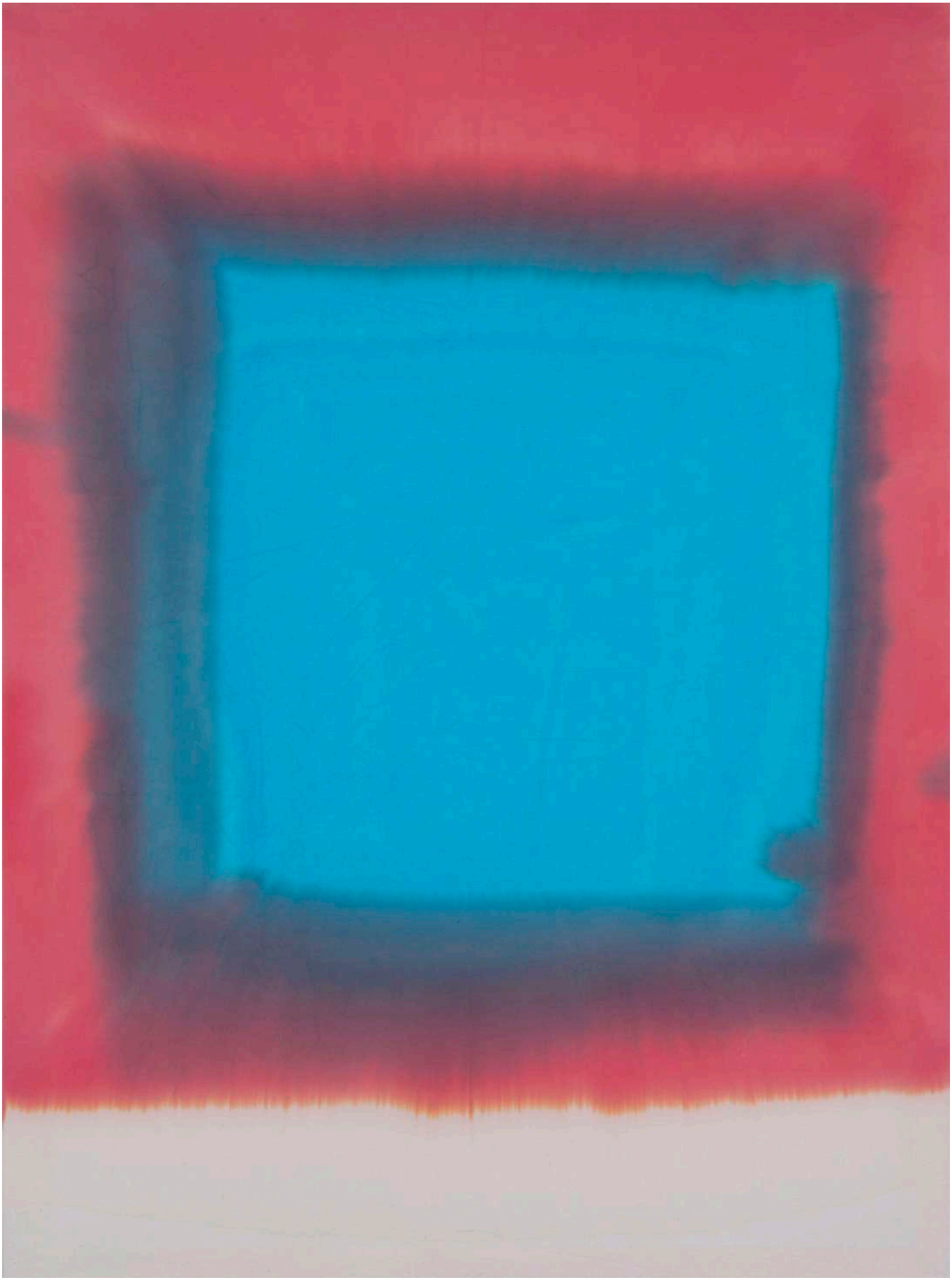
Here I am. Lying on a bed that is mine for the night and watching swaying curtains with shades that reveal what is real outside, on the floor a late sunbeam slowly stretches out to follow steps that went off to bed before. I now see what I earlier was looking at, me under a monument of a high horse and cast in the saddle a frozen man, from right below, tiny and so twisted in perspective that he now is difficult to understand. Underneath the minimal cast shadow of metal skin, I see myself standing with my half drunken glass, and I start walking from place to place to find the difference in between, the ice on a stick moves me like a tall poplar tree in a gentle summer breeze. Melting away and dripping down to places no one ever goes, if not just ending as stains on shirts, short hot pants, naked legs or shoes.
Leaving drop marks and forming patterns under all those touring soles, patterns of steps that wash out like waves hitting the beach or reaching a shore. To this I am returning night after night, addicted to impressions and shivering under my burning tan.
Waiting for the shutters and my lids to close for the day and the thoughts to take me home, I look for one last local refreshment with wide lakes of blue eyes. Going, leaving, traveling but never to arrive, I slowly move towards a bed that is mine for the night and close the curtains in front of the window where upon I rest my sight and travel on during night.

Arndt

Piste, 2013, fabric dye on canvas, 235 x 175cm

Tourist, 2013, fabric dye on canvas, 135 x 175cm

Exhibition View: *Syntax*, OUTPOST, Norwich, UK, 2013

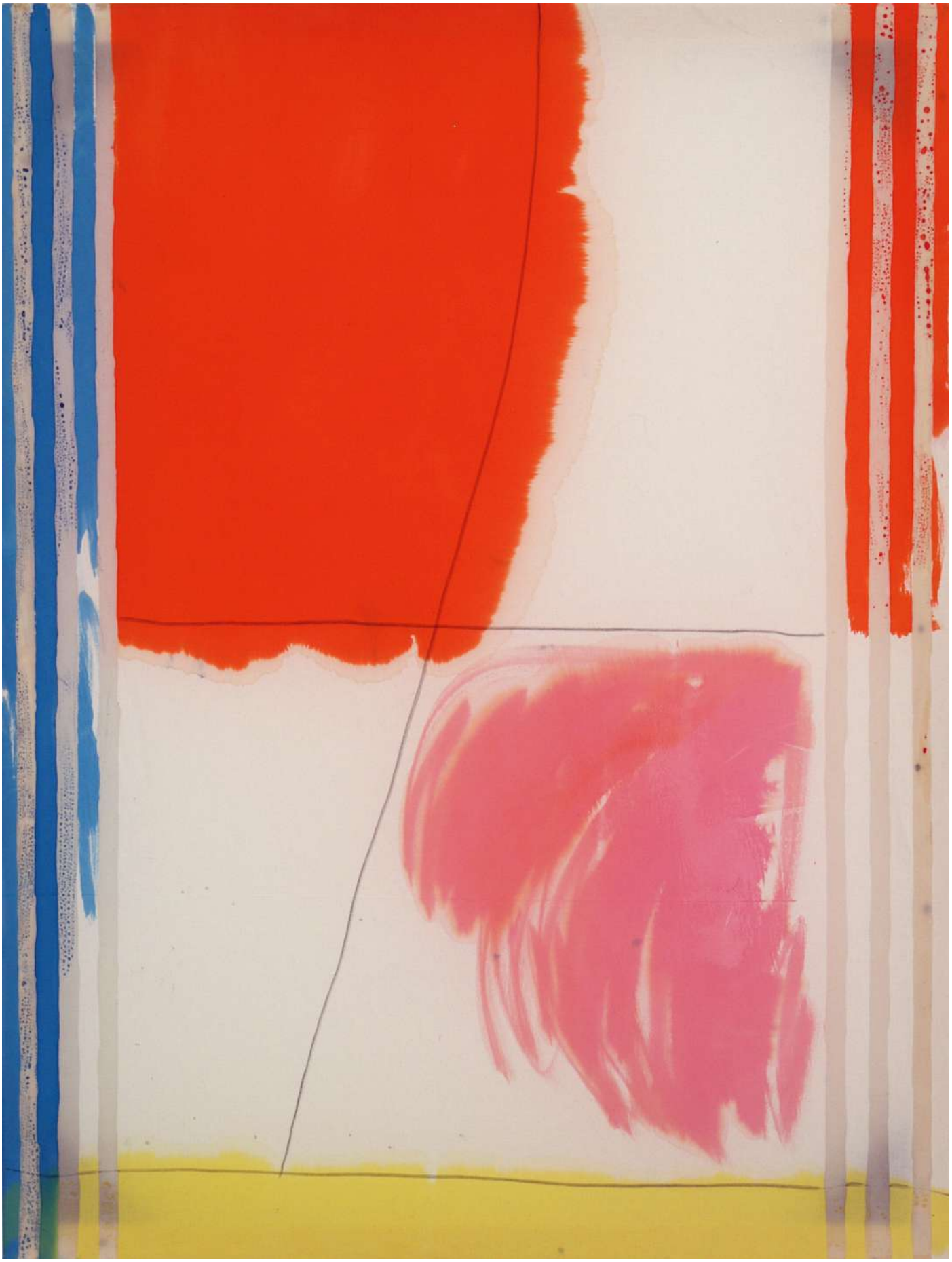


Postcard 2013, fabric dye on canvas, 135 x 100 cm

Exhibition View: *Syntax*, OUTPOST, Norwich, UK, 2013

Exhibition View: *Intentional Stance*, De Ateliers, Amsterdam, 2012

Over the Amstel, 2012, batik and wax on canvas, 152 x 115 cm



Mixed Drinks, 2012, Batik dye, wax and charcol on canvas, 152 x 115 cm

Sonnata, 2012, Batik dye and wax on canvas, 152 x 115 cm

Everyone tells stories. Humanity tells itself stories about itself and its place through science, history, philosophy etc...

When these stories are completed we can say with some conviction ‚these are facts'. But what about the stories we as individuals tell ourselves to interpret our reality and our place? Are these stories completable?... When we examine our private stories do we find facts? Or do Identities emerge by the recognition of a process which mediates between stories, always fluctuating due to our own fallibility and proximity to the subject?

Emerging from the gaps caused by the conflict between purity of intention and the impossibility the work to represent fully that which is incomplete, comes a story which is always tentative, ephemeral and transitive = whimsical. Through obtuse symbolism, line, lines, repetition, layering; these stories are open yet obscured, and perhaps the more illuminated for that.

Scented Letter, 2013, fabric dye on canvas, 100 x 135 cm

Biography

1984 born in Aberdeen, Scotland. Currently lives and works between Antwerp, Belgium and Marseille, France

Residencies and Awards

2012 Schloss Plüschow, Plüschow, Germany
2010 De Ateliers, Amsterdam, Netherlands
Locaal 01, Antwerp, Belgium
2009 Wiels Residency Program, Brussels, Belgium
Donald Dewar Visual Art Award
2006 Emmy Sacs Prize
2001 Donald Parton Painting Prize

Solo Exhibitions

2026 *40's*, Klemm´s, Berlin, Germany
2023 *No Moon*, Klemm´s, Berlin, Germany
2021 *Babes*, La Salle de bains, Lyon, France
Opium, Belsunce Projects, Marseille, France
2019 *dreams.*, KLEMM'S, Berlin, Germany
2015 *Close to*, KLEMM'S, Berlin, Germany
2014 *Sisters*, Albert Baronian, Brussels, Belgium
2013 *Ghosts*, S.I.C, Brussels, Belgium
Syntax, OUTPOST, Norwich, UK
SOLO, Croxhapox, Ghent, Belgium
TOURIST, Martin Van Zomeren, Amsterdam, Netherlands
2012 *Albert Baronian (THE ROOM)*, Brussels, Belgium
MILAN, Cite Des Arts, Paris, France
84 Paintings IN THE BANK, De Nederlandsche Bank, Amsterdam, Netherlands
2010 *3.5 weeks*, Lokaal 01, Antwerp, Belgium

Duo Exhibitions

2022 *realness*, with Manuela Gernedel, Pli, Munich, Germany
2019 *blow*, with Manuela Gernedel, V8, Karlsruhe, Germany
PORTIKO, with Manuela Gernedel, Antwerp Art Pavillon, Antwerp, Belgium
Under the sun, over the moon and down to earth, with Manuela Gernedel, Tor Art Space,Frankfurt, Germany
2018 *Ether*, with Manuela Gernedel, Une, une, une, Perpignan, France
Coma, with Manuela Gernedel, VIS, Hamburg, Germany
Running Away, with Manuela Gernedel, New Joerg, Vienna, Austria
*FRIDAY NIGHT**, with Manuela Gernedel, Belsunce Projects, Marseille, France
2016 *LUI*, with Manuela Gernedel, Real Positive, Cologne, Germany
2015 *Summer Show*, with Cornelius Quabeck, Martin Van Zomeren, Amsterdam, Netherlands

Group Exhibitions (Selected)

2025 *Une maison familière*, Marseille, France
Showroom Bar, Art Concept, Paris, France
Lost Cat, Kolonins fönstergalleri, Arvika, Sweden
2024 *La Salle de Bains fête 25 ans*, Salle de Bains, Marseille, France
Unfolding, Klemm´s, Berlin, Germany
2021 *Sugaar*, Cibrian Gallery, San Sebastian, Spain
2020 *La psychologie des serrures*, (group show including a duo with Manuela Gernedel) CAN Centre d'art Neuchâtel, Neuchâtel, Switzerland
Sur pierres brûlantes, Friche la Belle de Mai, Marseille, France
naturlich! {sic!}, Klemm's, Berlin, Germany
2019 *Le petit cercle Bruxellois*, A-V-VEN-DE-JET-TE Institut de Carton, Brussels, Belgium
Every Loft needs a sink, (group show including a duo with Manuela Gernedel), Vleeshal, Middelburg, Netherlands
2017 *Artemisia*, Albert Baronian, Brussels, Belgium
The Painting Show. Recent Painting from the United Kingdom, AramArt Gallery, Goyang AramNuri Arts Centre, South Korea
Prologue, Apes&Castles, Brussels, Belgium
2016 *Foreign Places*, WIELS, Brussels, Belgium
Andy Boot, Sam Falls, Erik Frydenborg, Larissa Lockshin, Fiona Mackay, Albert Baronian, Brussels, Belgium
The Painting Show. Recent Painting from the United Kingdom, Contemporary Art Center, Vilnius, Lithuania
Le jeu de l'oie, Sic, Brussels, Belgium
2015 *Gust*, Global Committee, New York, US
Perroquet, Loods12, Wetteren, Belgium
2014 *Ritomando*, CIAC, Ghent, Belgium
Painting, Poetry and Pottery, Tobias Naehring, Leipzig, Germany
Toute la Forêt, Apes and Castles, Brussels, Belgium
Wanton Mobility, Klemm's, Berlin, Germany
June, Galerie Samy Abraham, Paris, France
Vensters, Kunsthal Amersfoort, Amersfoort ,Netherlands
Elevator Pitch, Base Alpha Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium
Bande à Part, CAB Art Center, Brussels, Belgium
2013 *Works on paper*, Tobias Naehring, Berlin, Germany
Curated by Vienna, Why Painting Now?, Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna, Austria
Paradise, Gallery Conrads, Dusseldorf, Germany
2012 *Krummes Ding*, V8, Karlsruhe, Germany
Salon, 34 Rue Des Fabriques, Brussels, Belgium
Is there life on Mars?, Martin Van Zomeren, Amsterdam, Netherlands
Intentional Stance, De Ateliers, Amsterdam, Netherlands
Arrives in Starting, The Lighthouse, Glasgow International Festival with the Duchy Gallery
2011 *Where Language Stops*, Wilkinson Gallery, London, UK
Outrageous Fortune, Focal point Gallery, Southend-on-Sea, UK
JOY AXE, Embassy Gallery, Edinburgh, UK
2010 *PICALDI*, Forgotten Bar, Berlin, Germany
There's a Tear in My Beer, West Germany, Berlin, Germany
Characters Make Stories, Croxhapox, Ghent, Belgium
84 Paintings, Wilkinson Gallery, London, UK
2009 *84 Paintings*, Wiels, Centre for Contemporary Art, Brussels, Belgium
Summer Show, Wilkinson Gallery, London, UK
Concrete Galley, Reset Your Life, Wilkinson Gallery, London, UK
The Ventriloquist, Timothy Taylor, London, UK
A Moveable Feast, Glasgow Studio Warehouse, Glasgow UK
Last Tango in Partick, The Now Museum, Glasgow, UK
FUCK YOU HUMAN, Maribel Lopez Gallery, Berlin, Germany
2007 *New Contemporaries 2007*, New Art Gallery Walsall, Rochelle School, Cornerhouse Walsall, London, Manchester, UK
Post Stuckism is The New Black, Glasgow Studio Warehouse, Glasgow, UK
The Subjective Object, Gallery Conrads, Düsseldorf, Germany