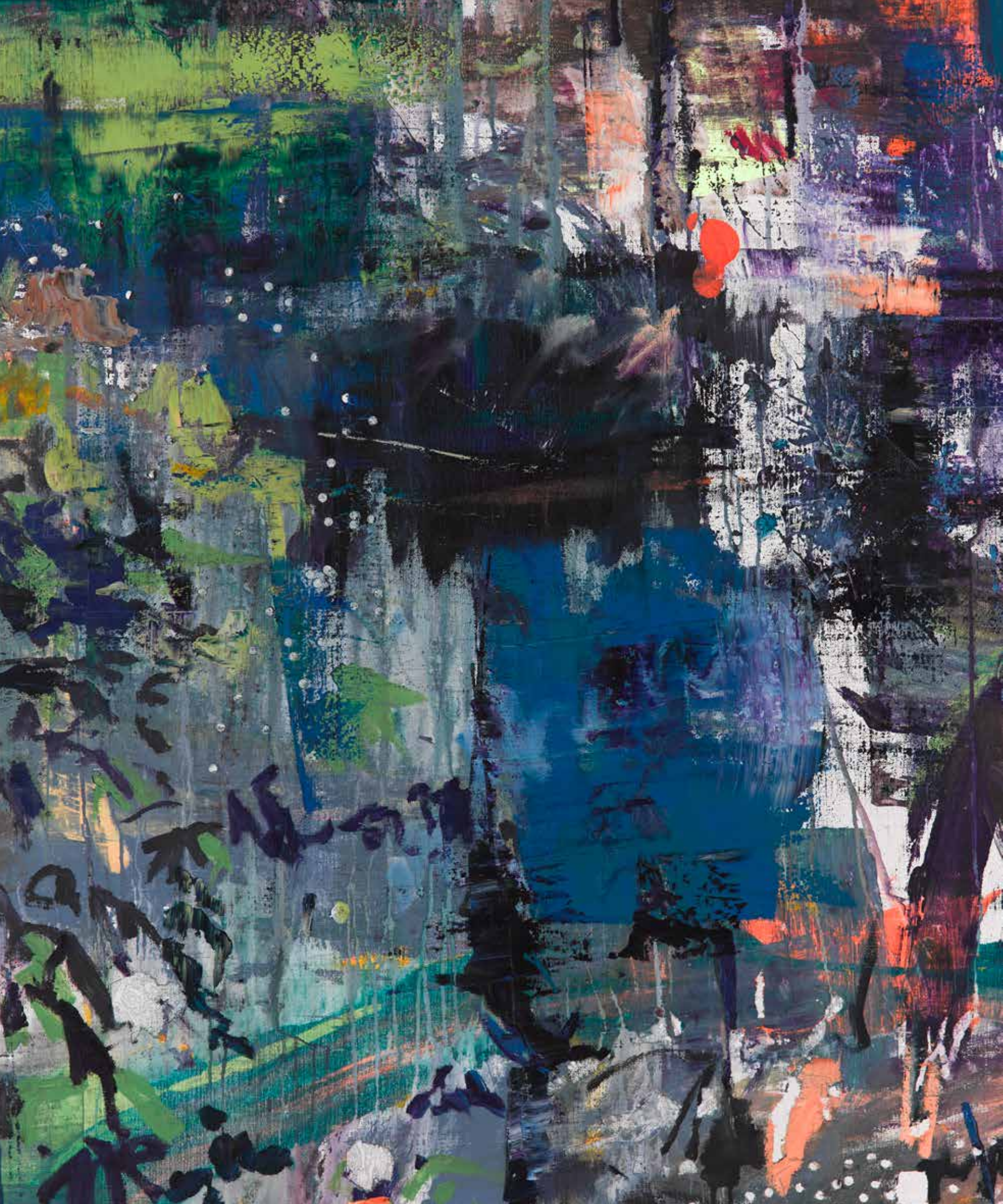


**MARIUS  
BERCEA**



# MARIUS BERCEA

BLAIN SOUTHERN

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info@blainsouthern.com  
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Jessica Smith  
Louis Shadwick  
Mariah Mazur

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## FOREWORD

ADRIAN SUTTON

When I made my first visit to Transylvania, in the summer of 2011, I simply did not know what to expect. I left a cool and wet London to arrive in the smoggy, hazy and intoxicating city of Cluj. I got into a non air-conditioned car and continued the journey away from the airport. We drove straight to an imposing concrete building, in which I was immersed in the unique complex of artists' studios and galleries that make up the Fabrica de Pensule (The Painting Factory). It was airless – the heat suffocating. This is where I met Marius Bercea for the first time.



Exterior of Fabrica de Pensule, Cluj, Summer 2011

To experience the Cluj school is unforgettable. One witnesses an incredible bond between this group of artists (some already established and well-travelled, others starting their careers), developed throughout childhood, school, university and studio-sharing, the ties remaining unbroken. Over the following days, I also realised how beautiful the landscape and architecture of Transylvania was, and more significantly, how it permeated the very fabric of Marius Bercea. Natural or manmade, the spirit and atmosphere of the country is deeply embedded within the artist's practice.

The light in Transylvania cannot be found anywhere else. It is almost otherworldly on some evenings, and the grass of the Carpathian landscape is a vibrant emerald green. Bercea's paintings truthfully reflect these astonishing colours. On a formal level, he incorporates a staggering commitment to colour with an alert sense of form as a means of conveying sensation. Furthermore, the paintings carry the history of their own making; the confidence of the marks is palpable in their presence. The painter considers landscape in both its natural 'virginal' state and its urban 'civilised' one. Like an anthropologist, Bercea presents the evidence of his unbiased observation to not only envelop us but also to actively engage us.



Surrounding countryside of Cluj, Summer 2011

Bercea often spoke to me about California and his desire to return there to immerse himself within that context. He finally made his first extensive trip in the spring of 2013. Bercea drove across the land, observing it through the lens of his own experiences. His gaze was focused, but remaining open and uncritical. In these new works, created in direct response to that road trip, it is not easy to determine where Cluj ends and California begins. Familiar characters of the West Coast look simultaneously ghoulish and space-age; a roller-skater next to a hairy creature of pagan tradition; zombies wander in a landscape that appears to be on fire; stars lie at the bottom of the canvas – as if fallen from the sky. Amongst the utopian and dystopian dialogue the wistful intensity and bold mark-making is both immersive and convincing – culminating, I feel, in paintings with their own unique truth and history. We are delighted to be exhibiting these most recent works for the first time at Blain|Southern London.

In the years that I have known Marius, he has become one of the more established artists from the Cluj school, building upon a strong foundation with growing confidence to explore his personal journey. As his horizons continue to broaden, I wonder where his practice will take him next.

It goes without saying that Blain|Southern is extremely proud to present this publication – the artist's first monograph and a review of works from 2010 to present day. I would like to thank the writers, Michael Bracewell, Barry Schwabsky and Louisa Elderton for their insightful analysis of Bercea's work in the following essays and extend my gratitude to Ciprian Muresan for his clear contribution in conversation with the artist. I also want to thank Jane Neal, who has been instrumental in my relationship with Marius Bercea. Our thanks also to François Ghebaly for his cooperation. Finally, I extend my personal thanks to the artist himself for the sheer excellence of his art and the honour of his company over the years, for his constant enthusiasm and erratic driving.

**CALIFORNIA DREAMIN'**  
**SOME NOTES ON THE ART OF MARIUS BERCEA**  
MICHAEL BRACEWELL

*Well I'd be safe and warm, if I was in LA...*

Let us suppose that you are a viewer who is wholly unacquainted with the art of Marius Bercea – what might your initial impressions be of his paintings?



A photograph by the artist from his Californian trip, Spring 2013

An example: On first encounter, the viewer might experience the sensation (but from where, and why?) of a place outdoors, virtually bleached by fierce sunlight. There is a sense of noon, the sun a white disc directly overhead, too magnesium white to even squint towards; and the heat is still and drowsy but somehow brutal, pressing down upon a corner of some neighbourhood that seems to be comprised of sun-traps. But there is something non-specific about this effect: it more resembles the transmission of a sensation; as though one were seeing a place through sun-strained eyes, or from a distance, or possibly from the point of view (fancifully) of one recently dead, now utterly freed and stilled in the act of witnessing. There is an *alien* quality to the scene depicted: what we might term an existential notion of the 'foreign' – and yet at this stage we are working on impressions, as though – like the 'ladies of Versailles' – two genteel English ladies of the turn of the twentieth century, who believed that they had walked through a fissure in time while visiting the French palace, and recounted the experience of seeing the landscape around them as though it was a tapestry, faded, all that was closest somehow far away... This quality, too, seems heavily encoded in the paintings of Marius Bercea: a point at which 'foreignness' conflates if not with time travel (although there is a scent of science fiction on the baking air) then with a distinct impression of time stilled or displaced, as though time were like film; to stop and start and freeze frame.

But this will never do; we must be more specific. The painting before our viewer, himself a stranger in a strange land, engages the gaze with a communication of the familiar becoming alienated, the same yet not the same: a present made out of a photographic sense of the past, in which there is also a view into the future. To be specific (then) in this painting (we do not know its title, yet still it holds us in its gravitational field) we may experience first sunlight, and then discern what appears to be an elegant modernist villa, in white, a cool house for the laid-back life of oblong windows and patios and terraces (perhaps) and partially obscured by cacti or palms or foliage – desert plants in flower; and looming high overhead like a bridge carrying a multi-lane highway, there in outline is the iconic HOLLYWOOD sign, cresting a dense cyclone of pinkish cream, beneath which seems to be a clump of rust-red trees. "*Come in under the shadow of this red rock...*" wrote TS Eliot, in his 'The Waste Land', back in 1922, when introducing first the subject of fear, but then, reprising the image, the concept of a desert place both here yet not here where a soul might be forced to choose: "*Here is no water but only rock, Rock and no water and the sandy road, the road winding above among the mountains...*" And later: "*What is the city over the mountains, Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air...*"<sup>1</sup>



The artist's studio, Cluj, Autumn 2013

But exactly!

In the centre of the canvas, figuration and abstraction merge. Neither, ultimately, giving an inch to the other. Pink, white and grey, as though in thick smears and cuts from a plasterer's trowel or palette knife, splatters and scuffs and broad, paint-heavy, abbreviated brush marks, in crimson, blue, tangerine, vermilion, red the red of dried blood. '*Bloody red sun of fantastic LA...*' intoned The Doors, who knew, in 1971, what they were after. To the right, as though printed or stencilled or traced, or somehow rendered in a medium which brings to mind architectural drawings or an 'artist's impression' of a planned redevelopment from which we will all (individually

<sup>1</sup> TS Eliot, *The Waste Land* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1922)

and collectively) benefit, we see tall palm trees, behind which lies an intimation of a gathering storm, given imagistic urgency by a conflation, in terms of the temper of the painting, of Impressionism and Abstract Expressionism: the poem shouts.



Detail, *Seasonal Capital of Itinerant Crowds*, 2013, oil on canvas, 280 × 395 cm

What California might this be? With its palms and HOLLYWOOD and blood red trees and white sky? For at the edges of the painting's foreground, is a shanty town jumble of temporary dwellings or outhouses or garden centre gazebos, a truck, houseplants, a chrome-plated mobile home with neo-Harley Earl Cadillac tailfins on the roof; tables, books, a shed... All on a sand coloured cement-like dusty driveway. The painting is loose yet resolute; forthright, determined; drips are allowed to drip yet elsewhere lines are firm; the perspectives are complex, receding into the picture plane while animated or yanked suddenly forward by a flared smudge of plastic green or a horizontal burst of ash-blue; and then the figuration appears to reassert itself, and we are perhaps in someone's front yard, somewhere in Los Angeles, at noon, with the light and heat putting the zap on us.

\*\*\*

And then there's always more.

In the art of Marius Bercea we might see a lush (even tropical) looking city garden landscape; white modernist terraces with hanging gardens as though some Brazilian experiment in radical architecture had found its way to... where? The *impression* might be summarised as the twinning of Californian palm trees with the silver birch trees of Eastern Europe; as though the Malibu modernism; the blue swimming pools in the squinting sun, the beach and the bougainvillea had become hybridised and intensified with utopian brutalism; drowsy sunny rolling grasslands, concrete factories, triumphant allegorical statues, exuberant, even wayward excursions into architectural heroism that, that, that... *You say you want a revolution – Well you know, we'd all love to see the plan...*

The world depicted in these paintings merges scenes and figures from quotidian life – modern citizens hanging out in the brave new world: leisure activities, tourism – with post-apocalyptic strangeness. At once ancient and modern, summoning impressions of a social experiment either in delinquency or abandonment or partial dereliction or perhaps a mode of relaxed survivalist contentment – the Bomb having gone off in our heads already.



The artist in his studio, Cluj, Summer 2013

Bercea deploys accretions and smears of paint to build a visceral sense of landscape and intensity of atmosphere – rough yet precise, many-layered, tense, brutal, lush. The viewer seems to be seeing both a place and a state of mind – a nexus of the fantastical and the geo-historical, once again touched by the mindset of time travel, on an Eastern European to Californian axis, at once specific and non-specific, ambiguous in spirit. Elsewhere, we are shown a vista of a harsh landscape, or a semi-residential track stretching towards the horizon, or what may be a night shrouded escarpment – but throughout, the grammar and syntax of these impressions are dominated by Bercea's bravura handling of colour. In particular, colour in relation to the materiality and texture of paint itself.

Above the flat-roofed houses and apartment blocks of a residential urban district, a garden suburb in a semi-tropical zone, the blankness of a commonplace sky, in powdery pale lemon yellow, ascends or gives way to merging strata of imperial purple, black, buttercup yellow, beige; these horizontal passages of colour seem to race and fragment and trail, revealing under-painting of downward brush-widths of scarlet or seeping, leaking, dripping shunted blocks of colour – within which we discern the lighted towers of another city...

Marbled washes of watery pink and pale blue, dense impasto of ivy green, diagonal striation-like knife-slits of colour; the trunk of a small tree seemingly almost carved

out of the paint, the cleft between its branches backed by a poised male figure with outstretched arms, scuffed pale pink with a 'red-lipstick' red... Increasingly, it seems, in Bercea's paintings, the stuff and gesture of painting itself is being placed in the service of anecdote and narrative, scene and character – the tipping point between Impressionism and Abstraction, making articulate an ambiguous social geography overshadowed by tangerine trees and marmalade skies – the psycho-chemical meteorology of a Euro-American world that resembles life on Mars.

And yet realism is never distant, ever present: the insistence that within the at-times extravagant aesthetics and pictorial strangeness of Bercea's paintings there is the business of human survival. The days roll by, the slackening of order into boredom, or boredom into contentment. The girl skateboards or plays soccer, the boy and his masked accomplice look on and the Marlboro cowboy turns away. All are iconic, in their own way, as they take their place seemingly before a grove of spindly trees, rough vertical stripes of youth-fresh red and blue behind them, a star at their feet; so much depends – they might be in a brochure extolling the virtues of relocation; they might inhabit a song by Bob Dylan; the world turns; acid rains.



Detail, *Spies of the Angels*, 2013, oil on canvas, 190 × 135 cm

## SCENES FROM THE MIRAGE

BARRY SCHWABSKY

In the short, maybe not short enough twentieth century – which ended around 1991, according to Eric Hobsbawm<sup>1</sup> – art was typically a matter of movements, and these were often international (though far from global), or easily spread internationally: Futurism was born in Italy but flourished in Russia; Constructivism proliferated in turn beyond Russia's borders to find its way around the world, and some of its finest offshoots, still too little appreciated, sprung up in South America. As a result, in this period it became rarer and rarer to speak of “national schools” – the Italian school, the French school, the Dutch school, and so on seem to belong to an earlier period of art history, for as Renato Poggioli has explained, the idea of a school “is pre-eminently static and classical, while the movement is essentially dynamic and romantic.”<sup>2</sup> (There was a School of Paris of course, but the joke is that this referred primarily to foreign artists working in the French capital – Modigliani and Soutine, amongst others – and the label says little about the character of their art). Starting, however, with the craze for Russian art that gripped the Western art world around the time the Soviet Union began to unravel, as well as with the unexpected international explosion of the highly culture-specific art of the British YBAs at around the same time, interest in the national or regional identity of art has increased rapidly since the premature onset of the new century after 1991; and while the New York branch of Sotheby's recently announced that it would discontinue its sales of Russian art, due to lack of interest, the market for Chinese art, Latin American art and so on continues to prosper. Beyond these national and regional identities there are occasionally highly local groupings that succeed in making a big impact on the international scene – for instance, the “New Leipzig School”, whose best-known avatar is undoubtedly Neo Rauch. But while these local outbursts of activity are no longer movements in the modernist sense, neither are they truly schools in the classical sense.

If it is somewhat surprising that an internationally celebrated cohort of painters should have cropped up in a city of half a million people in the east of Germany – Europe's industrial and economic powerhouse – how much more unlikely it seems that something similar has happened in a city that is even smaller and even further east, a hitherto little-known university town that happens to be the second city of Romania. Yet Cluj-Napoca is the context in which Marius Bercea has developed his art, alongside such artists as Victor Man and Adrian Ghenie and many others whose works are worth seeking out. The sudden emergence of a significant group of painters working not in New York, London, Paris, or Berlin, but in a provincial centre far from the “capitals of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries” – to paraphrase Walter Benjamin – has been a phenomenon of journalistic fascination. Tellingly however, it was in its recent monthly “Style” supplement that the New York Times trumpeted Cluj as “an unexpected art world hothouse.”<sup>3</sup> The artists involved are distinct individuals, not a school. But the very appearance of such a grouping, and therefore of such artists, is a phenomenon specific to our time, which is, to the putatively post-ideological era following the break-up of the Soviet Union and drearily dominated by what is sometimes called the “*pensée unique*” – a time in which ideological movements like those that roiled the twentieth century have grown quiescent. Yet it would be fruitless to fantasise about some return to any pre-modernist artistic or cultural status quo. People have turned inward to cultivate the “small histories” that bind human beings together (or divide them) through shared experiences (therefore, through their past) rather than through galvanising ideas for a shining future. Bercea's art neither protests nor champions this rather disquieting cultural situation, but rather, simply tries to understand it – to come to terms with it.

In this sense, the “École de Cluj” is a mirage. What Bercea has in common with Man or Ghenie is probably as much or as little as he has in common with Dana Schutz or Martin Kober, Gillian Carnegie or Alessandro Pessoli. What a recent Danish exhibition

<sup>1</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914–1991* (London: Abacus, 1955)

<sup>2</sup> Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, tr. by Gerald Fitzgerald (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p.20.

<sup>3</sup> Zeke Turner, “Traction in Transylvania,” *T: The New York Times Style Magazine* (November 17, 2013), p.82.



A graffitied building, Cluj, Summer 2012

called “*Hotspot Cluj*” has been able to flare up, not so much because of all that is unique about the place and its history, but because of what the artists there share with others who are American or German, English or Italian, or indeed hail from Asia, Latin America, or the Middle East. This is not to contradict Bercea’s statement, in the catalogue to “*Hotspot Cluj*,” that “the individual location is a political, social, cultural and historical context that evidently influences the decisions that I make,”<sup>4</sup> but rather to point out that geography is no longer necessarily the crucial determinate for an individual’s “location” on a four-dimensional “political, social, cultural and historical” chessboard. The mirage of contemporary existence is becoming nearly ubiquitous.

In a certain way though, it is true that artists from Europe’s east may be among those more likely to be, as it were, intimate with this mirage than many others. Mihnea Mircan has spoken of a “distinct feeling of living between two indistinct worlds” as “a crucial factor in the Eastern European psyche.”<sup>5</sup> No doubt the two worlds to which Mircan is referring, are both the “old” one of Communism under which people of Bercea’s generation lived their childhoods and the new one promised by the still incomplete transition to capitalist democracy that, over the last two decades, has been postulated as the Eastern European project. The citizens of these lands were once supposed to be building Communism; they are now supposed to be building its successor; liberal democracy. But since Communism was supposed to have been the future, one must now wonder, with Boris Groys, what past or future can replace it – whether “post-Communist art is an art that passed from one state after the end of history into the other state after the end of history,” that is, “from the idyll of universal expropriation following the end of the class struggle into the ultimate resignation with respect to the depressing infinity in which the same struggles for distribution, appropriation, and privatisation are permanently repeated.”<sup>6</sup> In any case, the problem is not limited to Eastern Europe. The fall of Communism has not left the world with the confidence that capitalism has conquered – only the anxiety that there might be, as Margaret Thatcher grimly pronounced, no alternative. We have already seen once how a seemingly stable and indeed rigidly defended system could become hollowed out from within, and now must wonder whether the one that is left is not equally ramshackle behind its spiffed-up façade. The crash of 2008 and the ongoing inability of Western economies to recover from it suggest that this could be the case. The world seems finally to have caught up with the Sex Pistols who proclaimed, back in 1977, “No Future.” Or if there is a future, it is, as Mircan would say, distinctly indistinct.

Bercea evokes this indistinctness most distinctly in an untitled painting of 2013, a sort of empty landscape in which two broad horizontal zones of colour – blue at the top, a pinkish earthy tone beneath – appear to be the remains of some other painting that has been wiped off the canvas before it was entirely dry. At the horizon one seems to be able to make out something – but what exactly? Perhaps some architectural feature, it is hard to say. In any case, it seems that the artist – I don’t exactly mean Bercea himself, but an artist he may have imagined, the way the narrator in a novel may be a writer but is not exactly the writer who wrote the book – has tried to clear away a failed effort but has neither been able to wholly obliterate it nor to replace it with something else. What is left is a document of the fact that something was tried and then effaced. And the resulting blur has its own fascination. It is a space one can contemplate but not enter, a space without a “place” for anything.

With *Ragged Design*, also from 2013, we see a similar sort of placeless landscape, and yet there are a few things in it. One is an armchair, another is a somewhat misshapen or battered-looking vertical object that might be the remains of a tree. A few stubby forms scattered around might also be stumps of trees but it is hard to be sure. The empty chair faces away from the viewer, toward the rightward distance, vaguely but not precisely in the direction of the Beckettian tree. It evokes the unfulfilled possibility for taking a spectatorial attitude toward the spectacle of desolation. There is an ashen cast to the painting’s atmosphere. One realises that if there are things in this painting, it is not that the space is somehow hospitable toward them, but rather, that the things

<sup>4</sup> Bercea, quoted by Dorthe Juul Rugaard, “Generation Cluj: Between Past and Future,” in *Hotspot Cluj: New Romanian Art* (Ishøj, Denmark: Arken Museum of Modern Art, 2013), p.16.

<sup>5</sup> Mihnea Mircan, “The Realism and the Realism,” in *Hotspot Cluj*, p.26.

<sup>6</sup> Boris Groys, “Privatizations, or Artificial Paradises of Post-Communism,” in *Art Power* (London: The MIT Press, 2008), p.169.

have been ‘placed’ despite this. What really dominates the painting are the traces of a sequence of nonrepresentational gestures, a kind of grid left by the movements of a palette knife or other such instrument – not a paintbrush – across the painting’s surface and up and down it. These strokes, again, convey the idea of effacement – but they haven’t effaced anything. They are distinct presences in their own right and what they have done, above all, is to have constructed a surface. And this is why I have said that painting like Bercea’s does not envision anything like a return to a pre-modernist mode. It retains this from modernism: that a painting is not a window but a surface with colours on it. The modern masters who kept their distance from abstraction (Matisse, Braque, Bonnard, for example) strove to mark the presence of the surface through the harmony – or even the very tension inherent in the relation – between the marks through which the image was constituted. Today, in the work of such painters as Bercea, image and abstract surface function as interruptions of each other.

Bercea’s imagery often involves architecture. Often this is recognisably modernist, but that is not why his paintings can be seen as reflections on our retroactive relation to modernism or modernity. It is not just a question of style. More to the point, the idea that a painting has an architecture is something that was borrowed from deep within the European tradition and re-emphasised, sometimes radicalised in modernist painting. Thus the depiction of architecture functions not only as a source of subject matter but more as a structural analogy for painting itself. In *Seasonal Capital of Itinerant Crowds* (2013) various structures – ones that are seemingly permanent, provisional, or indeed mobile – conspire to construct a pictorial space that might at first appear to be rational, but that keeps fading in and out of definition, particularly along the painting’s central axis. The “itinerant crowds” of the title are nowhere to be seen in this makeshift vacationland. When they arrive, they will be as comfortable as they would have been in one of Piranesi’s *Carceri d’invenzione*. The painting has a structure to the extent that contemporary existence has a structure: one that is miragelike. The painting becomes most nebulous just where it is most patently material, most mystifying where the conventions of pictorial illusionism break down.

Yet perhaps there remains in nonsignifying matter (just there where the modernists thought it was) a glimmer of hope – at the ragged edge of reality where reassuringly false appearances fade away – that the basis for some alternative construction of truth might still be possible; that behind the mirage, there is more to be discovered.



The artist painting *Seasonal Capital of Itinerant Crowds*, in his studio, Cluj, Summer 2013



*Ragged Design*, 2013, oil on canvas, 50 x 70 cm



## EXILED IN THE LIGHT

LOUISA ELDERTON

It came suddenly. Individual liberty. Freedom. A collision of two social registers.

Marius Bercea describes the mood after the Romanian Revolution of 1989. He was ten. Communism swiftly shifted into consumerism, the fall of Nicolae Ceausescu's regime ushering the transition into a free market economy. The disintegration of the USSR and end of the Cold War followed two years later; the iron curtain call after years of division between East and West. As one decade drifted into another, utopian dreams finally crumbled to expose a dystopian reality, tainted by political repression and economic austerity. Bercea's paintings explore the effects of this space, this moment in time when polarised ideologies collided and altered personal narratives.

'In that moment, it was like standing in a cake shop not knowing what to do, what to choose.'

I imagine the artist's face reflecting upon the surface of a window pane, wide-eyed at the sight of row upon row of delights; amandine chocolate gateau covered with swirling peaks of soft chocolate cream; apple strudel oozing pale-green fruit, delicately dusted with white icing sugar; plum dumplings, purple jewels quietly shining beneath plump dough. Wash it down with some plum brandy, sweet on your tongue, throat scorching with heat.

How can our subjective experience be conveyed to and felt by another – affective moments effectively communicated outside of the cold pages of history? For Bercea, 'painting as a practice has a very strong personal relationship with history. I am inspired by the social, cultural, political landscape, mixed with a certain nostalgia.'

Nostalgia: a filter that distils essential elements of memory, collaging key sights, sounds and smells from the past. London, the eighties: my own memories see me surrounded by capitalism's skyscrapers, mobile phones like mechanical bricks – this is the future and it is arm-achingly portable – kaleidoscopic waves on tie-dye t-shirts, chromatic tides adrift. By contrast, Cluj, the eighties: Bercea's early paintings depict a decade bathed in the mood of monochrome, a world of childhood where the line between utopia and dystopia is blurred. Are these idealised images of yesterday, or the hues of darker days? Interior scenes from classrooms are constructed; games spill out into the school yard; figures are masked in a fancy dress line-up, faces obscured. Public and private spaces seem half-formed or on the edge of disappearance – hauntingly desolate and drained of colour.

Snapshots from a dream. I know where I am, I know who you are, and yet somehow everything is different. A child gazes outwards. He is surrounded by the hazy iconography of Christmas, a blank expression echoed by the limp limbs of a soft toy. Sheltered from the glare of consumer desire, the work's title tells us that *He Never Seen Temptation* (2008). The point-of-view perspective recalls a photographic composition; we see through the eyes of the silent, faceless observer who could have pushed the button of a Polaroid camera. Shutter closes – click – a mechanical whirl expelling the analogue film to reveal a muted palette of sepia tones, already fading.

'I investigated the radioactive cloud top brightness of Chernobyl. I viewed the first calamity, the ghost town.'

It is 1986. A stream of radioactive vapour shoots into the night sky, an ultra-powerful cloud of uranium and graphite dispersing for hundreds of metres around the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant. An explosion ten times more powerful than Hiroshima. The invisible enemy moving with the wind.



*He Never Seen Temptation*,  
2008, oil on canvas, 40 x 30 cm



*Metropolis*/Publicity photo/1926, Films: "Metropolis" (Germany 1926; director: Fritz Lang). Publicity photo. Photo: akg/Horst von Harbou

Bercea's pulsing veins of recollection stream the past into the present. Time capsules of surreal imagery are unearthed. Architectures of yesterday monumentally mark the landscape beneath infected, murky skies. 'Architecture reflects both the concept of aesthetics and also the metaphysics of every culture.' Colossal modernist structures, originally intended by the likes of Le Corbusier for modern urban living, are seen corrupted by post-war fascist regimes to signify state supremacy. Oscillating narratives of liberation and oppression are evident in works such as *The Copper Bath* (2010) (page 26), part of a body of work in which the artist explored architectures of leisure, unnervingly juxtaposing images of fascism and fun. Imposing concrete pillars of dappled grey interrupt peaceful summer days, figures basking beneath a bleached sky, poised to leap into a glistening turquoise swimming pool. In *East Wind* (2011) (page 29), towering white strata dominate the landscape, obscuring a view of natural beauty; people stroll by a stream, purple and blue lakes edged with trees of fresh evergreen, while smears of yellow echo the suffocating sulphurous clouds above, blowing in from the East.

The architecture depicted by Bercea is science-fiction like, extending beyond the borders of Romania into a world of fantasy. The artist shifts the familiar into the unknown, suggesting the unreliable nature of reality and its extended imaginative potential. *Truths with Multiple Masks* (2011) (page 33) recalls imagery from Fritz Lang's 1927 German expressionist film *Metropolis*. Stark structures consume the field of vision, an urban jungle enveloping the viewer. Extended walkways of pale-grey jut into the air, concrete floating, inverted, as the ground below is scattered with objects that tell a peculiar tale. Animal masks roar, all teeth and fur; a mannequin is stiff and lifeless, a rigor mortis of rubber perched on a purple stool; a baby's pram is gripped in the claws of a bird of prey, predator of innocence. This is a stage set for an absurdist scene, a dramaturgy of truth stranger than fiction, symbolically suggesting the tears or cracks within ideology.



Bruegel, Pieter the Elder (1528–1569): *The Sermon of Saint John the Baptist* Budapest, Museum of Fine Arts Budapest (Szepmueszeti Museum). Oak, 95 × 160.5 cm. (37% × 63%). N. inv. 51.2829 Foto: Jozsa Denes © 2014. The Museum of Fine Arts Budapest/Scala, Florence, © Photo SCALA, Florence

In another large-scale canvas, *The Hierarchy of Democracy* (2011), a fecund forest frames a mass of bizarrely disparate imagery; the vestiges of monarchy, religious sermons in mid-flow, equestrian status, marble busts, canvas canopies and portable caravans all coalesce. Its composition directly references Bruegel's *The Sermon of St John the Baptist* (c. 1566), the innovative sixteenth century painting in which St John is swamped by a burgeoning mercantile crowd, the protagonist obscured by the ascension of democracy. Bercea's hybrid space posits signifiers of a ritualistic past (his iconography recalls the mechanisms of state and institutional power), merging these with the spoils of today's consumerism. History is inescapable and perhaps, even under democracy, we are less free than we think.

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Dinner with the artist, somewhere between the main course and dessert. Cigarette smoke swirls in, clinging to warm skin from the cold outside. The rain is heavy and glows under the electrical streetlights. He describes his recent Californian road trip and the imagined America of his childhood: the good, the bad and the ugly. Familiar landscapes from home merge with those recently encountered. His new body of work sees East and West collide, dancing under a sky of scorching colour. Modernist architectural forms continue to pepper the now-expanded landscape, urban iterations of cultural progress articulated on both sides of the Atlantic. Bercea considers the influence of the Austrian architects Otto Wagner and Adolf Loos on the development of 'modernist architecture under the sun'. In the late 1920s modernist ideals spread throughout countries including Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil in the face of new vibrant economies – then spreading further upwards towards California – recalling many of the buildings nestled within Transylvania and, more broadly, the former Austro-Hungarian Empire.

'You discover California while you are driving.' These roads have been famously



*The Hierarchy of Democracy*, 2011, oil on canvas, 280 × 400 cm

traversed by the words of twentieth century American writers. Cue Charles Bukowski, *Ham on Rye*: 'Then we were between two rows of orange trees, shaded from the sun by the branches and the leaves [...] We speeded back on the way out of the orange groves [...] I had never seen him drive the car that fast.'<sup>1</sup> Imagine juicy orange globes smearing into the warm skies above as you whiz past, a whirl of metal and kerosene. Jack Kerouac, Beat Generation icon, *On the Road*: 'I suddenly realised I was in California. Warm, palmy air – air you can kiss – and palms. Along the storied Sacramento River on a superhighway; into the hills again; up, down; and suddenly the vast expanse of bay (it was just before dawn) with the sleepy lights of Frisco festooned across.'<sup>2</sup> A medley of warmth, light and land.

In the artist's own words, he describes how 'a visually ecstatic sensation happened during my first drive in the desert. I've never seen such luminous intensity. I felt myself lost and exiled in the light. You discover the art of moving beauty, and during the night encounter the cold fire of electricity and systems of neon.' The skies of Chernobyl that seemed to haunt Bercea are replaced with swathes of multicolour. *Incandescent Moon* (2012) (page 57) sees a midnight sunset of colour singing; purple, apricot, aquamarine and lime hum with electrical intensity, a rainbow in the dead of night smudged from the sky into the sand. The theme of landscape shifts and enters a space of chemical colour, an electric undercurrent running from dawn into day, dusk and night.

The rapid development of Cluj in the nineties saw the influx of the first neon advertising signs, bright consumerist billboards invading the grey facades of the city's buildings. 'For a moment I felt myself to be a stranger in my hometown.' The sense of this incandescent light flooding the landscape with fresh electrical potency is felt in *Roulette of the Night* (2013) (page 94). The canvas is awash with luminous darkness as colour seems to slowly seep in and buzz behind a veil of shadow. Pink and yellow peep through, refusing to be silenced. And in the sky, explosions, nuclear blasts morphing into organic forms reminiscent of fireworks. Tendrils of chromatic light illuminate the landscape below, and an urban grid of colour is distinguishable in the distance; the bright lights of the big city. Or perhaps we are underwater, swimming past villi-like coral that drift in the dark sea.

Bercea's spaces shift in and out of being, weaving through past and present, night and day, colour and darkness, East and West, collecting fragments along the way – a rogue archaeologist. In *The Flame of the Little Match Girl* (2013) (page 85), the warmth of the day and cold of the barren desert night can be felt simultaneously. Vibrant coral and cobalt washes in the ether contrast with a dense grey hillscape – texture that you want to touch. This monolith could be on fire, thick smoke emanating from dashes of fierce acid yellow. A lonely caravan sits in the middle ground of the picture casting a long, dark shadow. A mirage of heat quivers on the canvas; my skin feels pink and scorched. The mobile home is melting, quietly transparent like an apparition or a ghost. You are dissolving, I can see right through you. I'm all alone now. Not a soul in sight.

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'Painting as colour and light, as craft, as archaeology, an image that expresses an attitude, an emotion, a truth, an ironic metaphysics, a verb, a logical hallucination; these are the virtues of the medium for me.'

A scent of optimism, barely discernible. From utopia into dystopia and back again; the worlds that Bercea has created through his oeuvre are in flux, reminiscent, like a thought lingering just beyond recollection. He paints from the inside out, memory and imagination remoulding familiar images from his past or from the everyday. Exploring the elements of colour, light, texture and surface, his paint is compelling, unearthing landscapes that drift in and out of abstraction. Building up pigment, rubbing back, thick dabs, sharp scrapes, translucent washes; these are the ingredients through which he transfers a lived experience.

<sup>1</sup> Charles Bukowski, *Ham on Rye* (Boston: Black Sparrow Press, 1982; reprint, Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2001), pp. 6–8.

<sup>2</sup> Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (New York: Viking Press, Inc., 1957; reprint, London: Penguin Books, 2000), p. 53.



**Facing page**  
The artist in his studio, Winter 2013

## CONVERSATION BETWEEN CIPRIAN MURESAN AND MARIUS BERCEA CLUJ, NOVEMBER 2013

**CIPRIAN MURESAN** *In this new series of works, I notice how you've moved on from some of your previous topics, yet I still recognise a very coherent formal approach. Could you clarify for me what these new topics of interest are?*

**MARIUS BERCEA** I don't want to become too explicit or too didactic about the work, so instead I'm tempted to provide hints, or clues for later interpretation. Within the medium I work with – namely traditional oil on canvas painting – the deployed visual vocabulary and 'baggage' that comes with the medium is epic enough. But ultimately this series of work starts with what I would call a "utopian" form of landscape and is concerned with two topographical icons: Transylvania and California. These are icons that speak to a large audience and have their clearly established places in terms of social perception and understanding. It all started with fusing the visual experience of Hollywood and South California my research on Central and Eastern Europe (focusing in particular on the land placed "in the shadow" of the Carpathians) – attempting to isolate elements that would ensure that the two areas made sense together. Structurally, this has many ramifications: some convergent, some parallel to each other, but the common points between the two are certainly there to find. I refer to the type of architectural modernism that is present in South America (and California by extension) and was present in the former Austro-Hungarian Empire in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, epitomised by two Viennese mentors, Otto Wagner and Adolf Loos. The modernist urbanisation of California has interesting crossovers with what previously occurred in Vienna, Salzburg, Linz or even in Romania.

Throughout my research I was also interested in the painters of the San Francisco bay area, who historically represented a sort of non-affiliation to the Abstract Expressionists of the East Coast. As a painter, I would more easily associate their work with a European painterly manner, in which understanding a landscape is based on integral elements such as colour and aerial atmosphere; a sort of panoramic view. These similarities in painterly approach baffled me. Of course, later I found out about the European artists who emigrated to the San Francisco area after the Second World War, who taught in institutions there, thus giving shape to a distinctive approach to painting. As a practitioner, I find it fascinating how historical context and international emigration immensely effects a creative iconography; this is a personal hypothesis I believe – being confronted by a sort of painterly icon, historically contextualised in the era of Abstract Expressionism. There are many first or second generation immigrants of this kind who settled in the area and by their own means (not around an existing school or structure) developed their painterly research in personal, subjective ways. A feeling of freedom pervades their endeavours, reminding me of Henry Miller's words: "freedom is the inner precision of a Swiss watch combined with absolute recklessness".<sup>1</sup>

There are other connections between the two areas, like the topic of the abandoned city, one that I've worked with before. I was looking to create a portrait of the 'ghost city' and naturally found it both in the desert areas of California and also whilst driving through Nevada and Arizona. Following the swift industrialisation and the frenetic exploitation of gold, ghost cities were built for a somewhat temporary use, with the exception of San Francisco, which remains a kind of centre in the Siberia of the West.

**CM** *I'm curious as to how you approach these topics. What do you want from such a subject – do you question it, problematise it? And if so, how do you actually do it through painting?*

**MB** The analogies in certain 20<sup>th</sup> Century literature are crucial, which describe the landscape in terms of reportage. Ilf and Petrov's *American Road Trip* from the 1930s

<sup>1</sup> Henry Miller, *Henry Miller on Writing* (New York: New Directions Books, 1964), p.99.

was an eye-opener for me: they toured the USA without really knowing what to expect, and wrote a travel journal, just as many other Romanian writers did, such as Vlahuta, Bogza or Hogas. Another aspect I consider is the presence of vagabondage within beat literature, where the world appeared to be in continuous motion; even if the landscape remained frozen, there was this drive to get across or wander around an area. I could also recall the eighties scenarios concerning the escape from the continuous growth of consumerism: “Into the Wild”, right? The guy who tries to return to an almost archaic living. I can't really say I'm militantly against consumerist society, rather I think I am an emotional observer of it.

All in all, the most important thing for me, coming from an area I'd researched, was the visual shock I encountered on my journey – largely because of the Californian sun. For me, painting is light, and the light in California – like that of Scandinavia, for example – has a very distinct identity.

**CM** *I see the Californian landscape clearly in your work, in the light and various compositional elements. Where should I look for the Transylvanian one?*

**MB** Transylvania is present in the spirit of my painting. I find the Californian way of painting very clearly defined; it is about the pleasure of freeze-framing a situation. I am thinking of Ed Ruscha, of Lynn Foulkes, in whose paintings you sometimes glimpse a corner of California. Perhaps there is a primary fascination with photography or film in their work, whereas here it was predominantly emotion that I was searching for. So a Transylvanian interpretation of California is to be found in the way I paint it. I don't paint as I previously have done; here I use my personal arsenal to tackle the topic.

**CM** *Do you use photographs or sketches to help you?*

**MB** I take photos, but I don't try to imitate them or simply enlarge them in a different medium. I took them because I was interested in preserving the memory of certain landscapes. I use photos for this purpose, to help recall a spectacular dynamic. I tried to capture images of places that looked different to all the photos of California I'd seen before. There, nobody seems to think in terms of the human scale, or about how a winter wind such as St. Anna radically alters visual perception. I discovered the huge difference in temperature between night and day, how you are totally vulnerable in the immensity of the desert, bathed in darkness or light, in the midst of which you can suddenly encounter strange communities of people. This is a sort of reportage; the attempt to remember every corner – how each canyon you cross exposes a new reality. In California, one moment you have the ocean's clear horizon, and then only an hour's distance away, the landscape becomes fuzzy and complicated. It is interesting to approach this as a painter, to frame this wild landscape within a rectangle. Areas get lodged in your mind, and you become aware of visual experience as an act of understanding.

**CM** *Tell me a bit more about the light, which for me is perhaps the most striking element in your new works.*

**MB** I am preoccupied by light, as I was when I painted my Chernobyl scenes; enveloping them in a yellow radioactive cloud. I insist on the drama that light can give to a certain scene.

**CM** *I noticed how architecture is portrayed less in your latest paintings...*

**MB** Yes, if up until now, I worked with an architectural portrait in which the building was stretched across the entire surface of the painting; now I provide only a few hints - some corners, or some cement grey areas; but even those hints are tinged by this “quote” of a consumerist society. I now use neon lights, or the textual

identity of billboards, now also found in Romania – a consumerist condom, covering the architecture. Think of what Piata Unirii in Bucharest once looked like, and how it looks now: it's like a piece of Vegas. I use both the daytime landscape and the dusk landscape, in which you can see both the architecture and the presence of the neon sign.

**CM** *You have a distinctive handling of paint – is there something that particularly captivates you during your working process?*

**MB** There is the risk of over-crowding a landscape with painterly elements. Recently, I have started to work by painting the canvas laid on the floor. I still treat painting as a kind of archeology: it has depth, and so I never finish a work in one episode, in the assumption that I might risk losing freshness, or for the benefits of interesting effects generated by hazard. The hardest thing, I find, is managing two concomitant attitudes. On one hand, I treat the painting as part of a history, taking care over the stratas of paint. On the other, I also try to treat the surface more loosely, with a liberty that I feel has something to do with an American approach to painterly representation – a sort of battle between my European background and an American experience. I have finally reached a compromise, being able to preserve both carefulness and spontaneity. Still, I feel a bit like I have committed a crime when I take a work painted loosely, choreographically and freely on the floor and proceed to turn its abstract appearance into something more neutral, more epic, and more structured. It's not killing it, yet something of the joy of the moment can be lost.

**CM** *I interpret this in a slightly different way: although you spoke earlier about those painters un-affiliated with Abstract Expressionism, you use many painterly techniques that are similar. You combine two registers, and this proves that you are not interested in the abstract–figurative duality, since you combine them so easily and freely. Why is it then, that if one were to extract small details from your work, they can appear very abstract? You can see it's a landscape, but your painting seems to work against this impression, like you're blocking complete access to the reception of the representation. How much of this is intentional, how much do you actively control, or even how much is it about you getting carried away by the sheer pleasure of painting?*

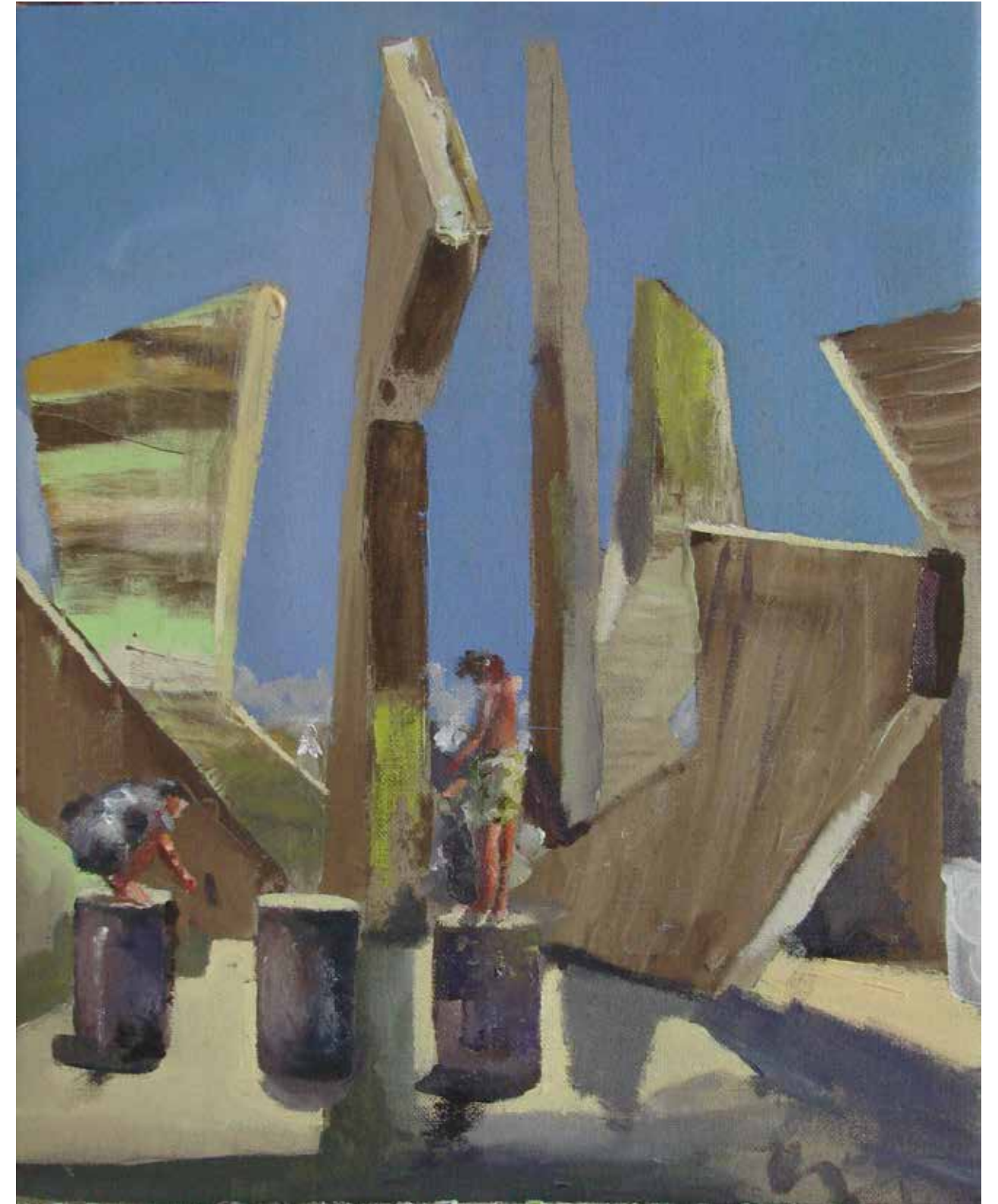
**MB** The visible landscape is a sort of atmospheric result, a painterly image that is metaphysically charged. The challenge I set myself is to use a palette that is somewhat inappropriate within this painterly genre: fluorescent, neon-like, radioactive colours that envelop a landscape, be it observed or imaginary. Painting results from air and light, and so I describe the visible, invaded by a clear and engulfing light. It is precisely this light that gives the landscape its almost mythological mystery.

My painterly manner is diverse – from sensual touches to gestural accumulation, to sharp, firm decisions. Thus, the painting advances towards becoming a tense, visceral act. I'm fascinated by the construction of a surface, resulting from an uninterrupted fusion between the figurative and the abstract.

The architecture I use, let's call it modernist, is schizophrenic; mixing styles and traditions. However, architecture reflects the metaphysical and aesthetic conception of a culture. I try to turn my audience into an unwilling accomplice, as I create a landscape that may or may not be populated; a landscape that is suspended in space and time. However, the human presence plays its role in circumscribing the scale of the landscape, or the architecture within it.



**WILD WASTE**  
2010  
OIL ON CANVAS  
149.5 x 200 CM (58 7/8 x 78 3/4 IN)



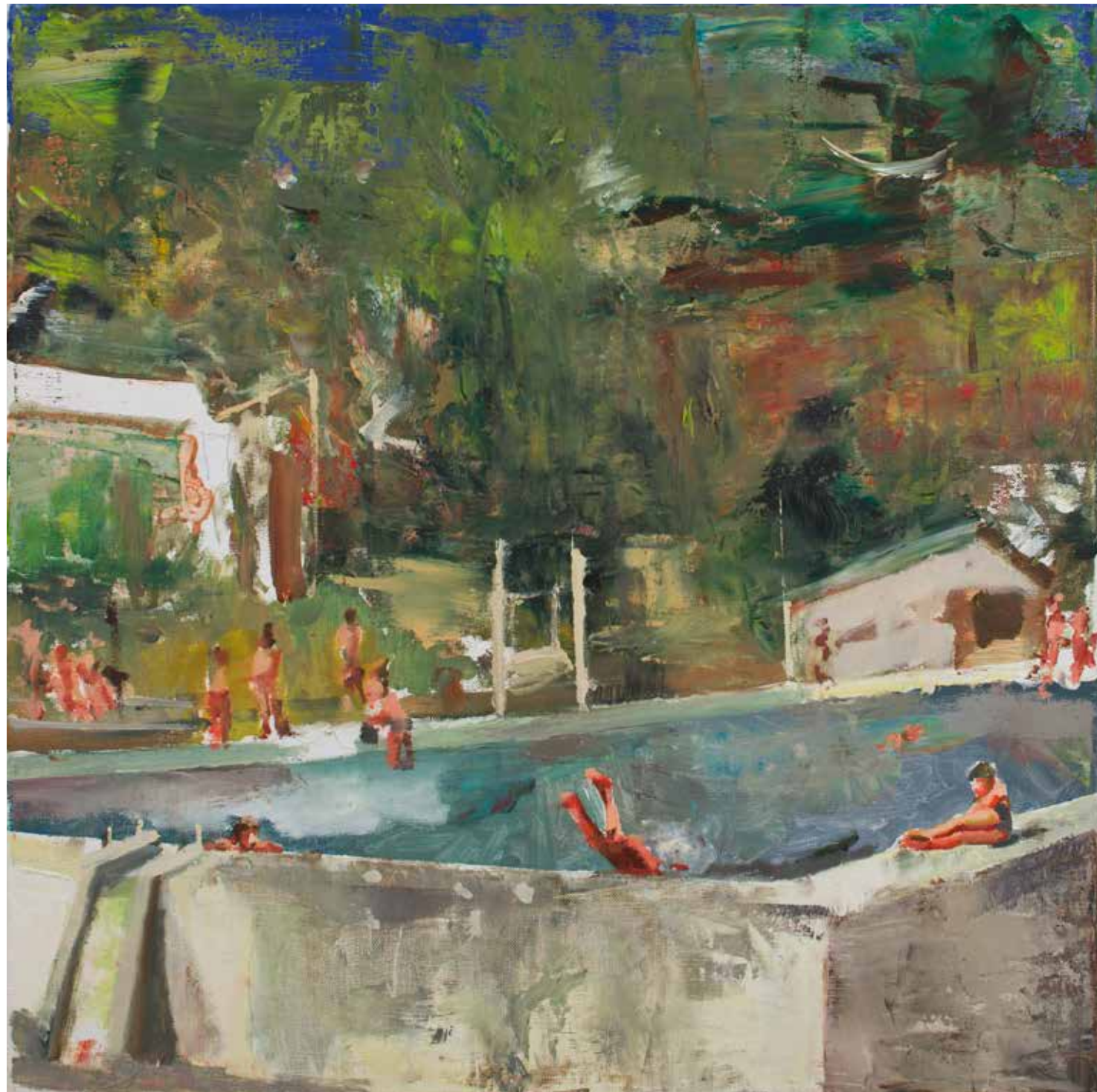
**UNTITLED**  
2010  
OIL ON CANVAS  
50 x 40 CM (19 3/4 x 15 3/4 IN)



**THE COPPER BATH**  
2010  
OIL ON CANVAS  
150 × 150 CM (59 × 59 IN)



**WHEN HAZARDS MEET VULNERABILITY**  
2010  
OIL ON CANVAS  
150 × 160 CM (59 × 63 IN)



**UNTITLED (SWIMMING POOL)**  
2011  
OIL ON CANVAS  
52 × 52 CM (20½ × 20½ IN)



**EAST WIND**  
2011  
OIL ON CANVAS  
180 × 184 CM (70¾ × 72½ IN)



**UNTITLED**  
2011  
OIL ON CANVAS  
52 x 52 CM (20½ x 20½ IN)



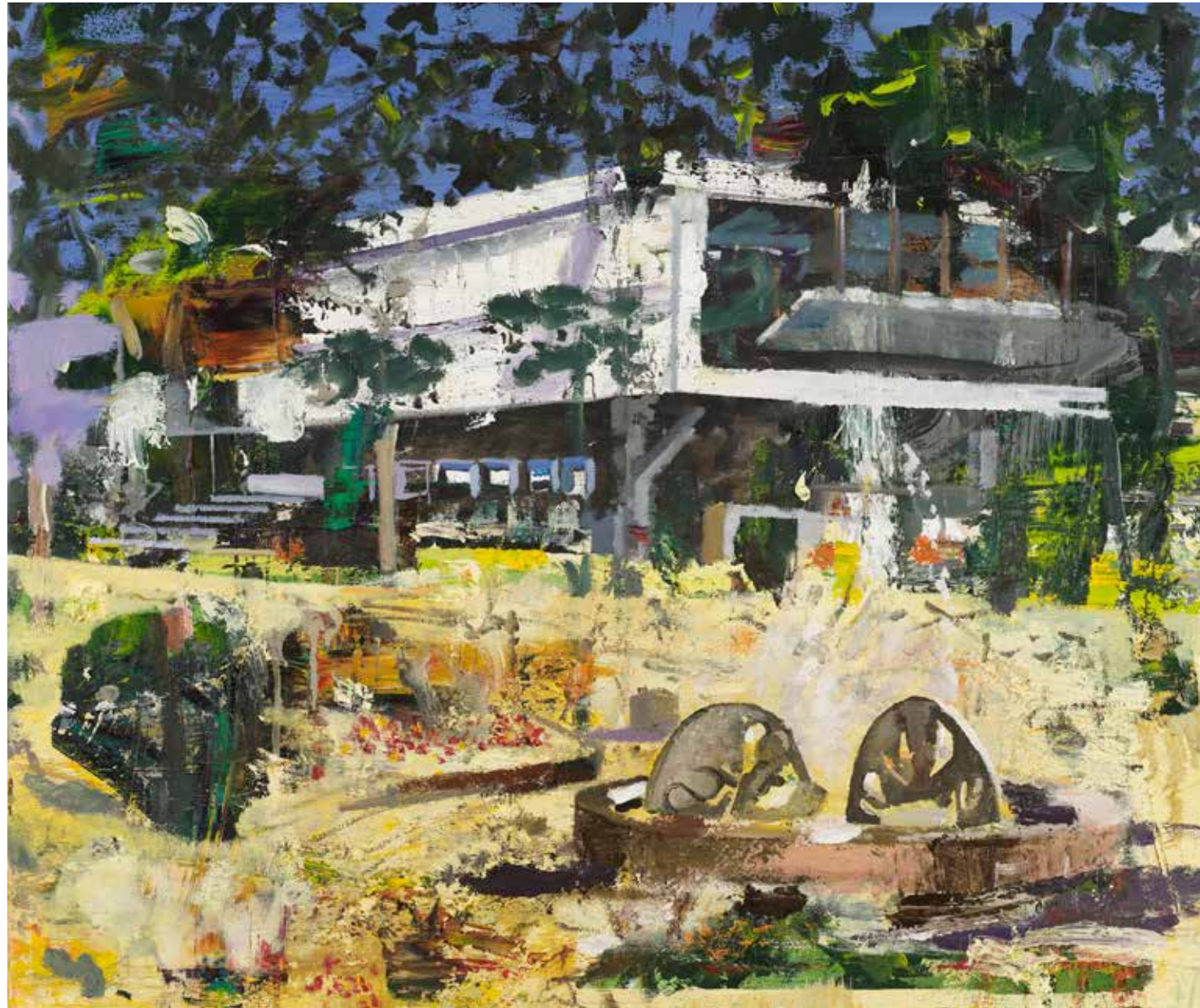
**A VIVID PICTURE OF ACTUALITY...**  
2011  
OIL ON CANVAS  
153.5 x 157 CM (60½ x 61¼ IN)



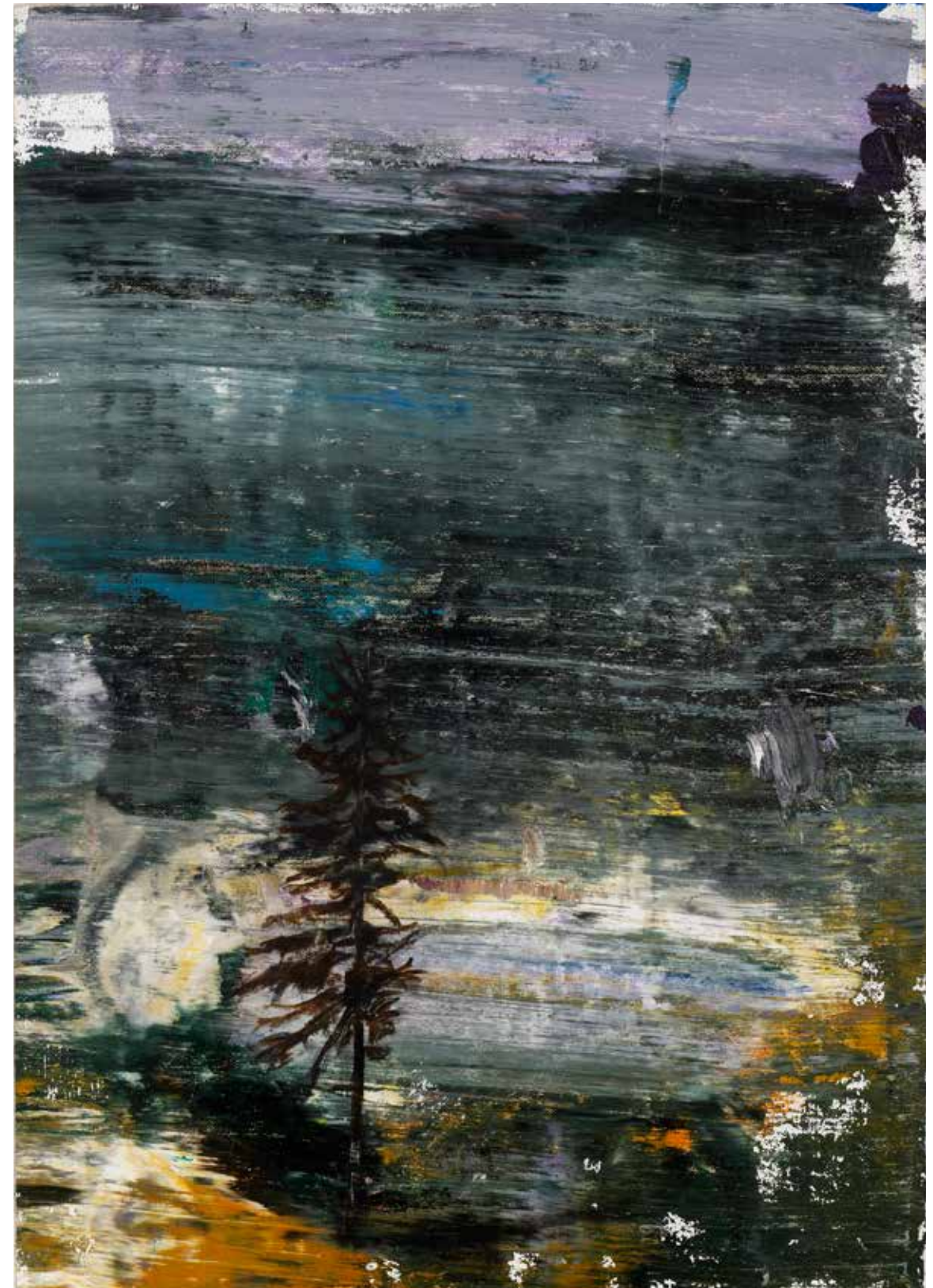
**TRUTHS WITH MULTIPLE MASKS**  
2011  
OIL ON CANVAS  
280 × 385 CM (110¼ × 151½ IN)







**TRANSPARENT PRESENT**  
2011  
OIL ON CANVAS  
77.2 × 91.2 CM (30% × 35% IN)



**REACTIVATE THE AREA**  
2011  
OIL ON CANVAS ON BOARD  
44 × 31 CM (17% × 12% IN)

**SPEED OF SOUND**  
2011  
OIL ON CANVAS  
34 × 39 CM (13% × 15% IN)





**MIDNIGHT LOG**  
2011  
OIL ON CANVAS  
60 × 90 CM (23½ × 35½ IN)



**MORNING DRAMA FAÇADE**  
2011  
OIL ON CANVAS  
90 × 140 CM (35½ × 55½ IN)

**WORKING OVERTIME**  
2011  
OIL ON CANVAS  
51.5 × 52.1 CM (20¼ × 20½ IN)





**ELEGANT RATIONALISM**  
2011  
OIL ON CANVAS  
132 x 144 CM (52 x 56 3/4 IN)



**COSMONAUT CINEMA**  
2011  
OIL ON CANVAS  
50 x 50 CM (19 3/4 x 19 3/4 IN)



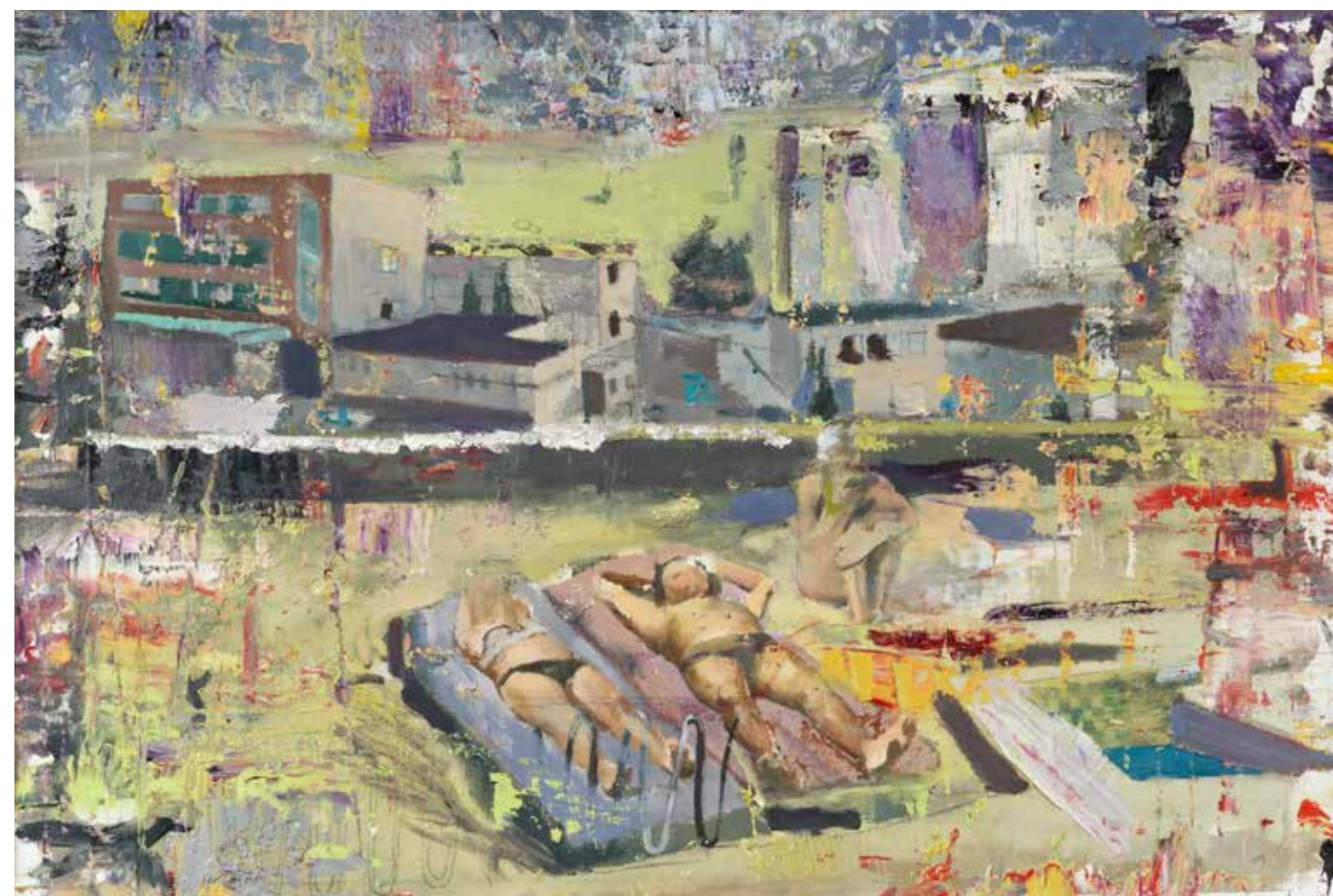
**DARKNESS YELLOW**  
2011  
OIL ON CANVAS  
150 × 150 CM (59 × 59 IN)



**SHADOW OF THE ECHO**  
2012  
OIL ON CANVAS  
48 × 48 CM (18 7/8 × 18 7/8 IN)



**EIGHTY-NINERS**  
2012  
OIL ON CANVAS  
47.9 × 70.8 CM (18 7/8 × 27 7/8 IN)





**DUSK**  
2012  
OIL ON CANVAS  
37 × 51 CM (14½ × 20 IN)



**CASTING NONSENSE**  
2012  
OIL ON CANVAS  
150 × 193 CM (60 × 76 IN)



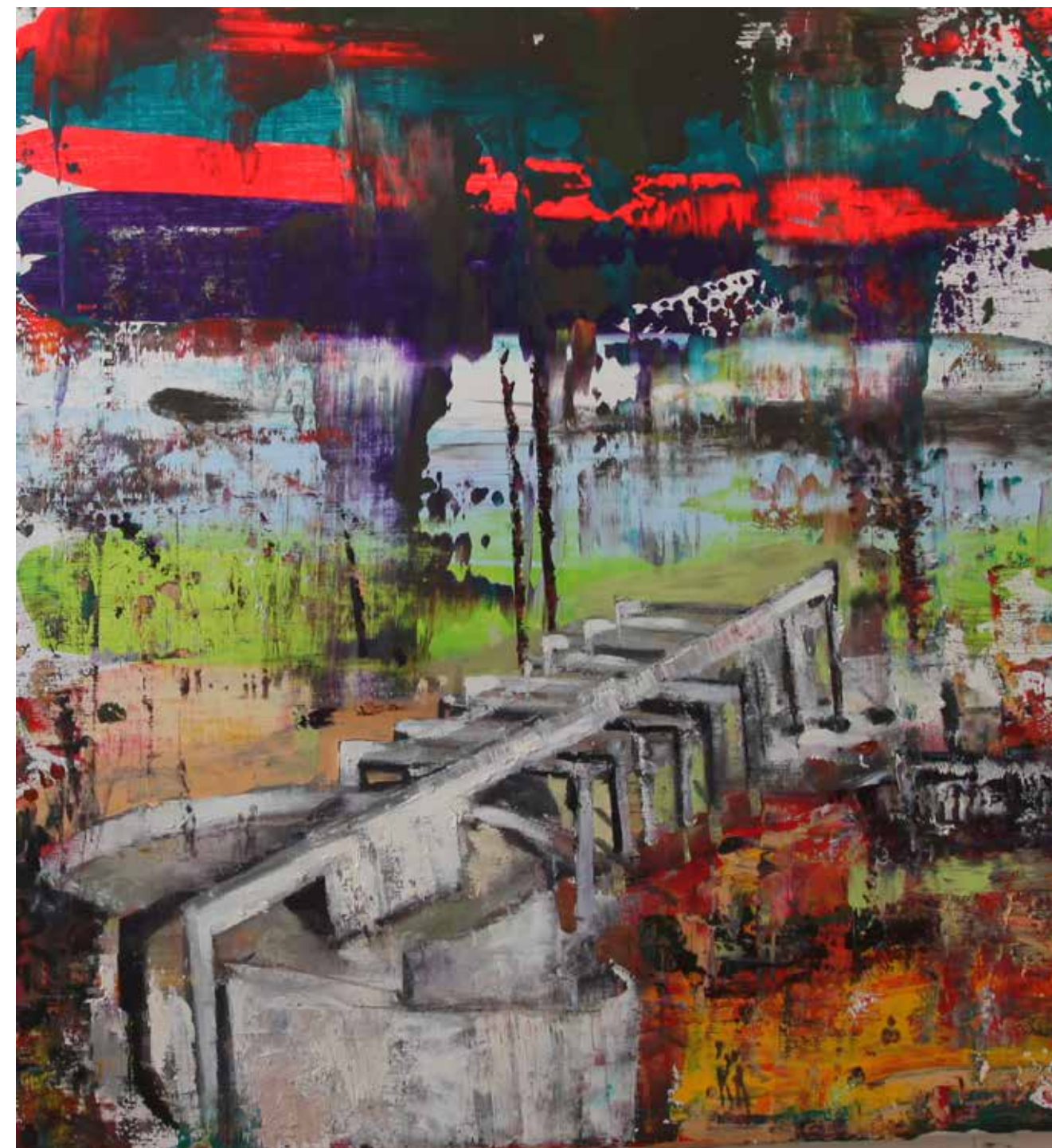


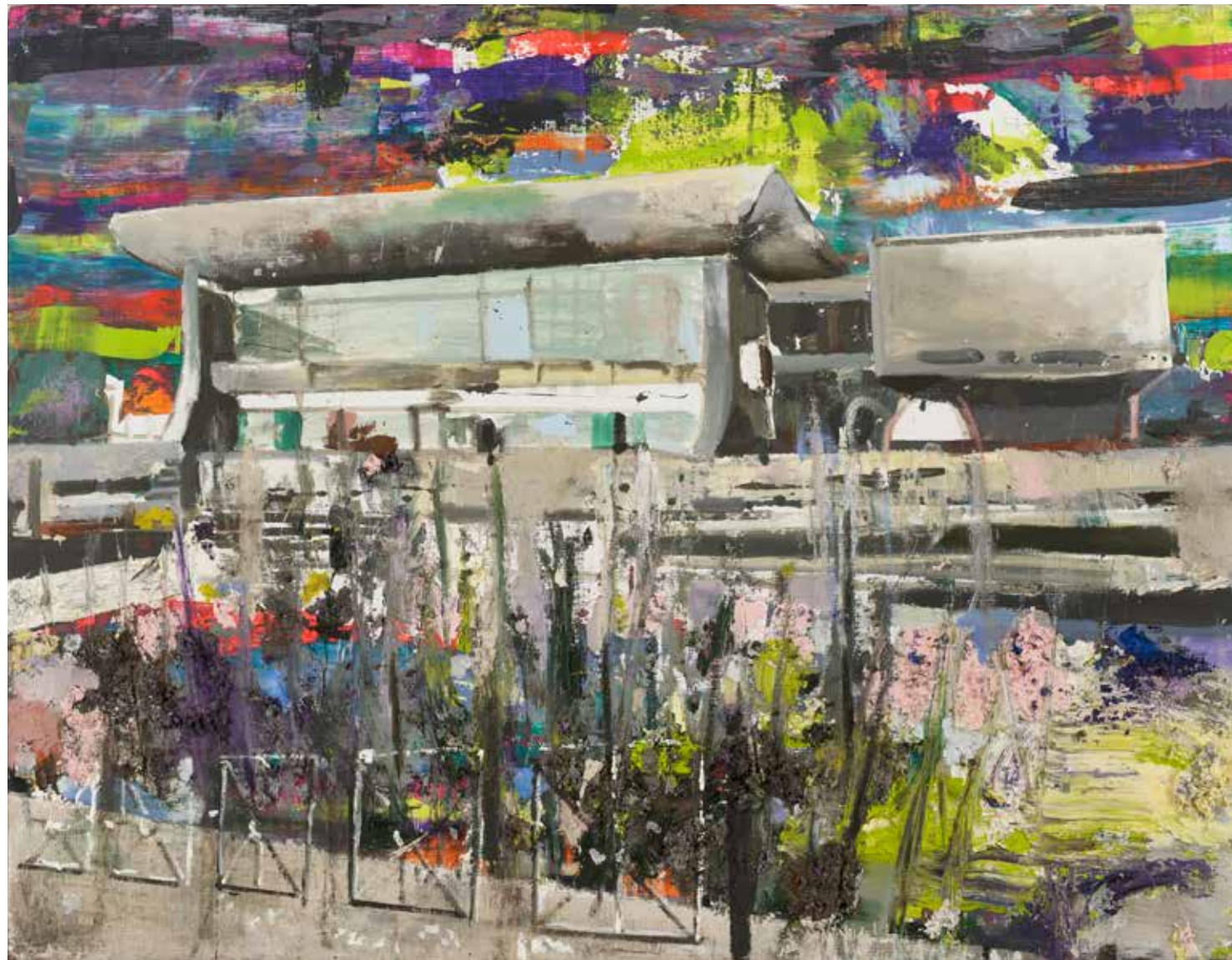
**THE DRAGON**  
2012  
OIL ON CANVAS MOUNTED ON WOOD  
65 × 95 CM (25% × 37% IN)



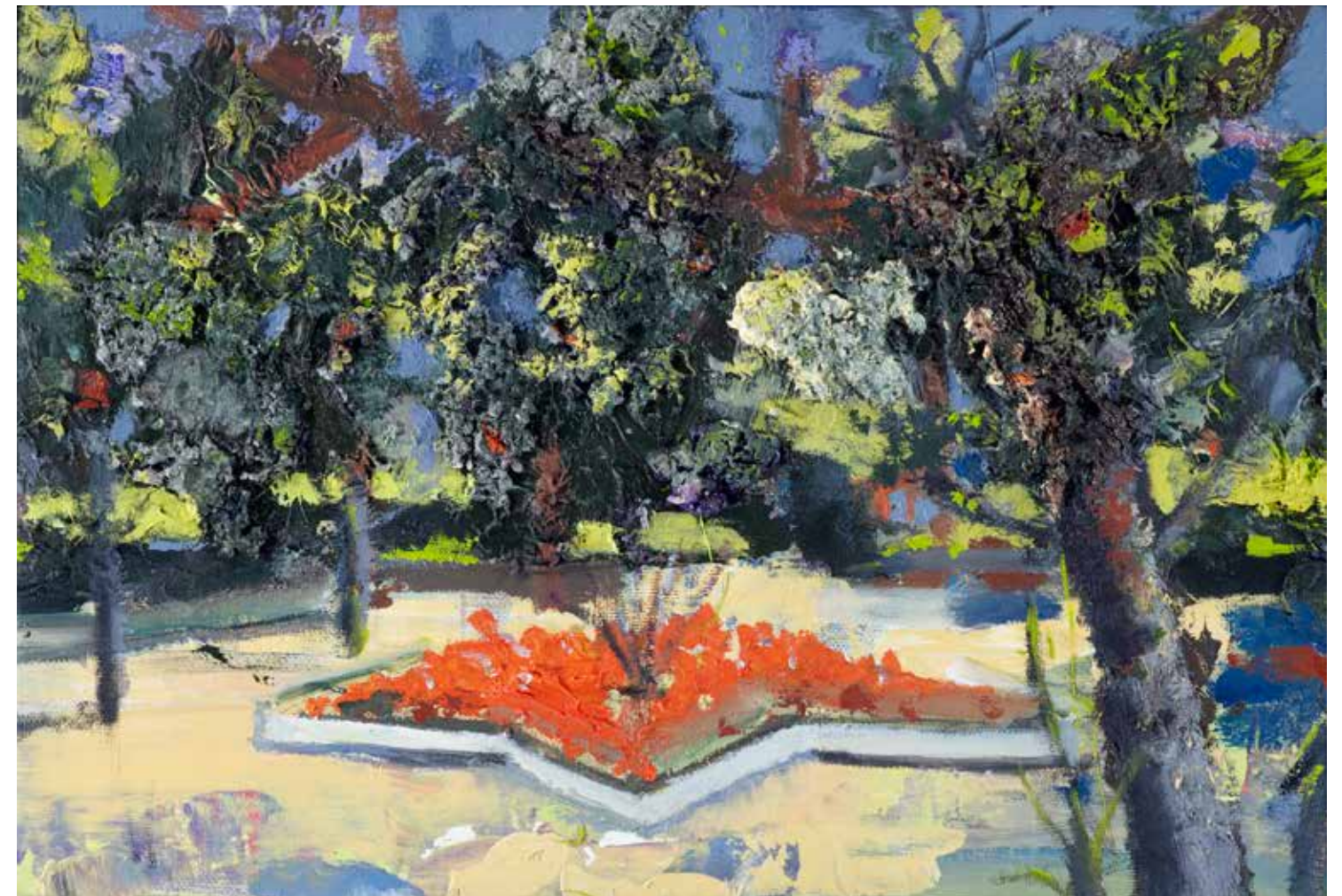
**PARK FOR REHEARSING THE SUPERSTITIONS**  
2012  
OIL ON CANVAS  
97.6 × 102.7 CM (38½ × 40½ IN)

**INCANDESCENT MOON**  
2012  
OIL ON CANVAS  
100 × 95 CM (37% × 39% IN)





**HOUSE FOR CULTURE**  
2012  
OIL ON CANVAS  
102.8 × 132.7 CM (40½ × 52¼ IN)



**UNDER THE SHADE OF DOUBT**  
2012  
OIL ON CANVAS  
26 × 39 CM (10¼ × 15½ IN)

**SUNSET OF JOY**  
2012  
OIL ON CANVAS  
150 × 200 CM (59 × 78¾ IN)







**LA BELLE ÉPOQUE**  
2012  
OIL ON CANVAS  
192 × 145 CM (75½ × 57½ IN)





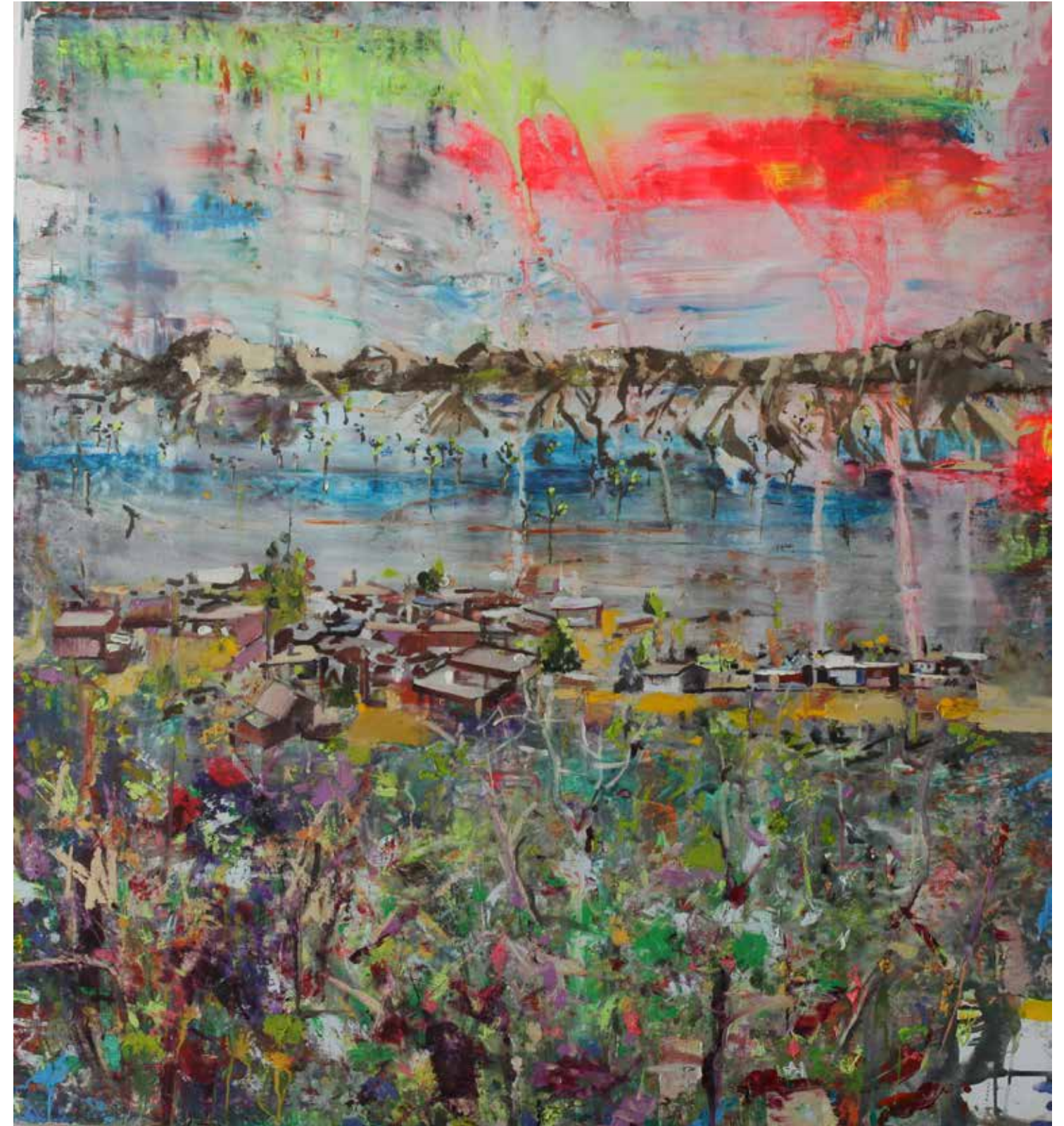
**UNTITLED**  
2012  
OIL ON CANVAS  
18.6 × 26.2 CM (7 3/8 × 10 1/4 IN)



**PARADOXICAL HUMOUR SCENE**  
2013  
OIL ON CANVAS  
90 × 130 CM (35 3/8 × 51 1/8 IN)



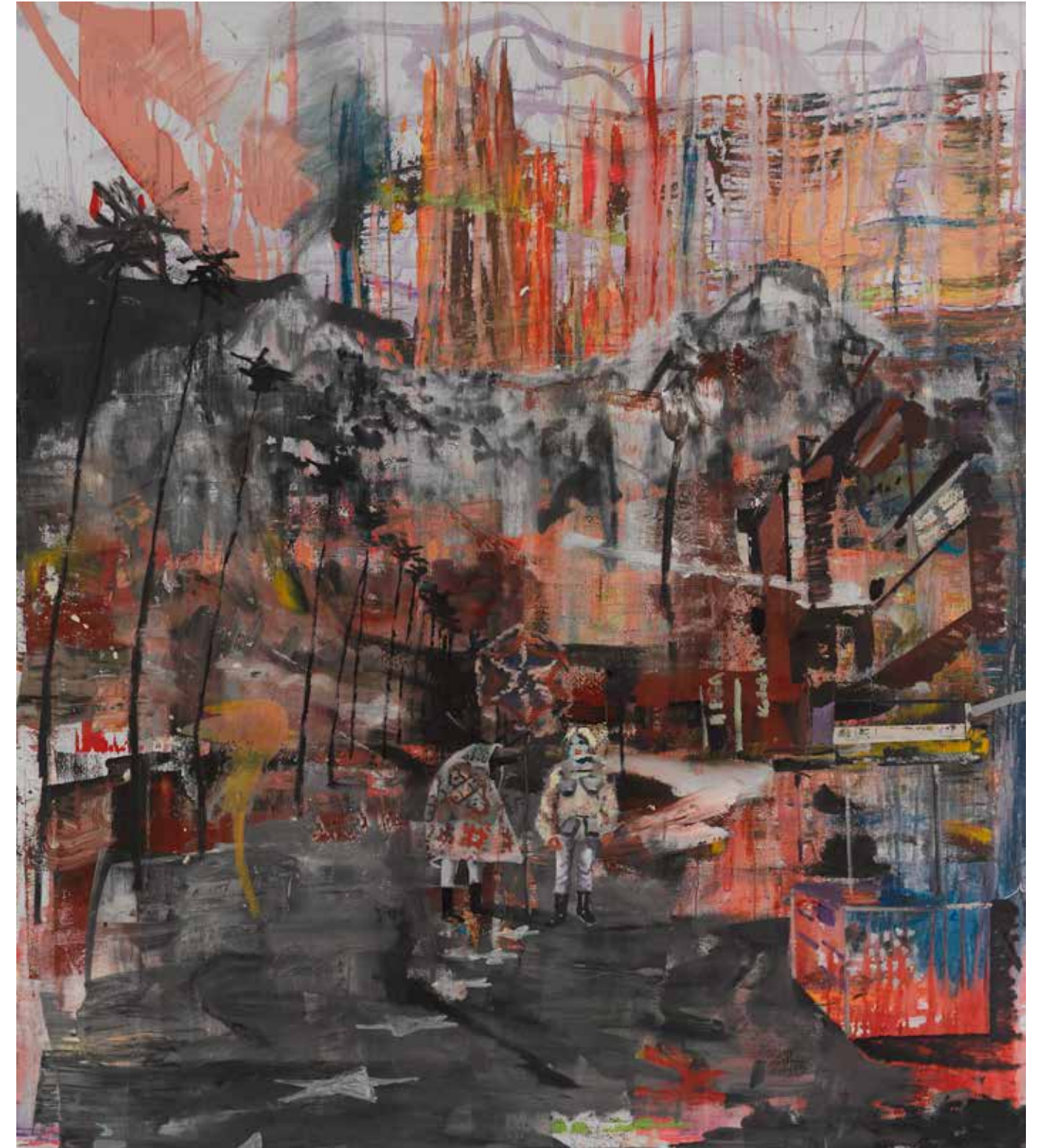
**SPEED STERILITY**  
2013  
OIL ON CANVAS  
95 × 100 CM (37% × 39% IN)



**LARREA TRIDENTATA**  
2013  
OIL ON CANVAS  
144 × 133 CM (56% × 52% IN)



**ELECTRIC SNOW**  
2013  
OIL ON CANVAS  
190 × 215 CM (74½ × 84¾ IN)



**TWO CHARMERS ON THEIR WALK OF FAME**  
2013  
OIL ON CANVAS  
164 × 145 CM (64½ × 57¾ IN)



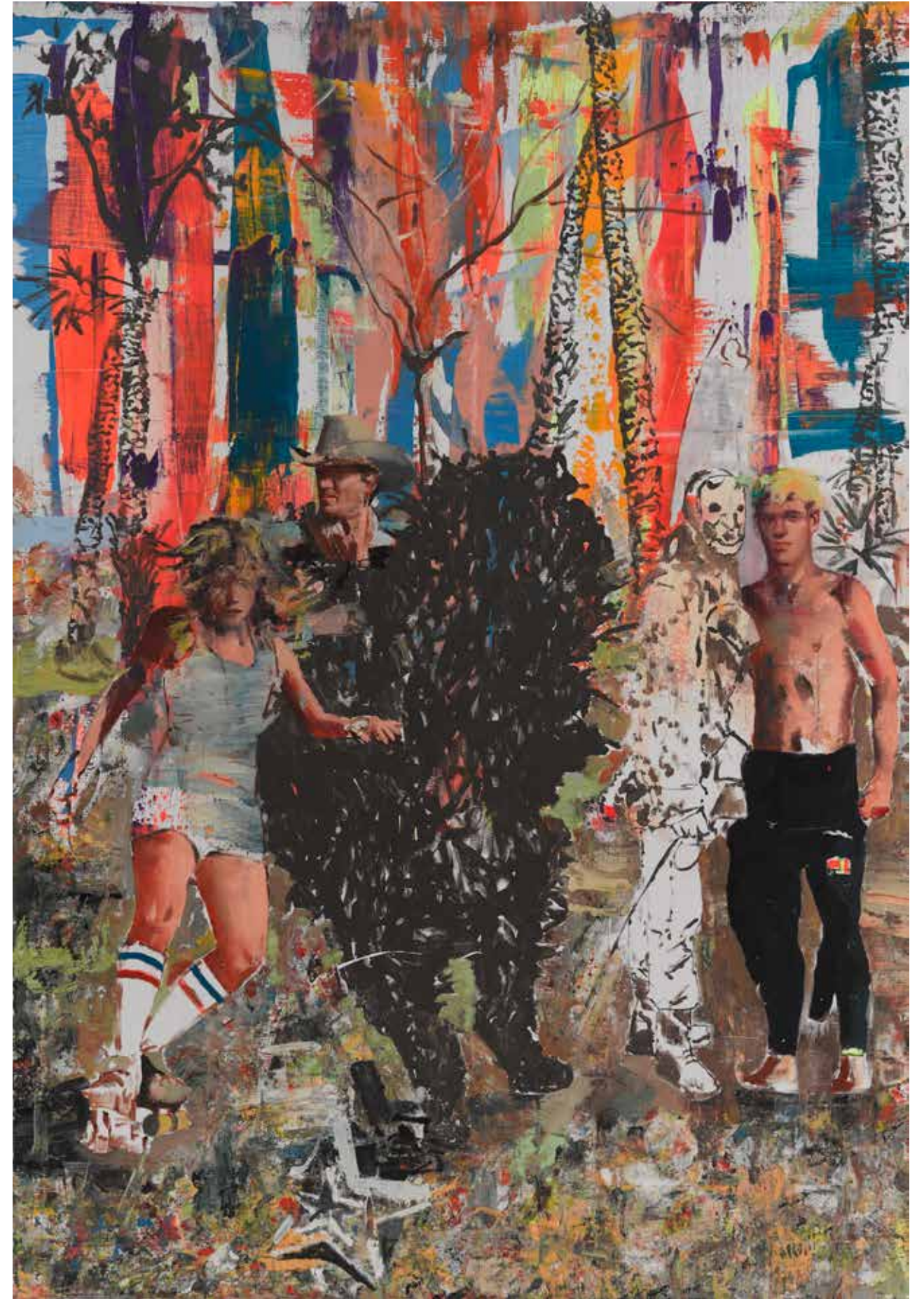


**SNOW WHITE COTTAGE**  
2013  
OIL ON CANVAS  
95 × 100 CM (37½ × 39½ IN)



**SOLITUDE OF THE HILLS**  
2013  
OIL ON CANVAS  
143 × 145 CM (56¼ × 57½ IN)

**SPIES OF THE ANGELS**  
2013  
OIL ON CANVAS  
190 × 135 CM (74¾ × 53¼ IN)







**TRAVEL WITHOUT LENS**  
2013  
OIL ON CANVAS  
40 × 40 CM (15¾ × 15¾ IN)





**MINIMAL GREEN FENCE**  
2013  
OIL ON CANVAS  
40 × 50 CM (15½ × 19¾ IN)



**PINK DARKNESS**  
2013  
OIL ON CANVAS  
40 × 40 CM (15½ × 15¾ IN)

**THE FLAME OF THE LITTLE MATCH GIRL**  
2013  
OIL ON CANVAS  
45 × 50 CM (17¼ × 19¼ IN)



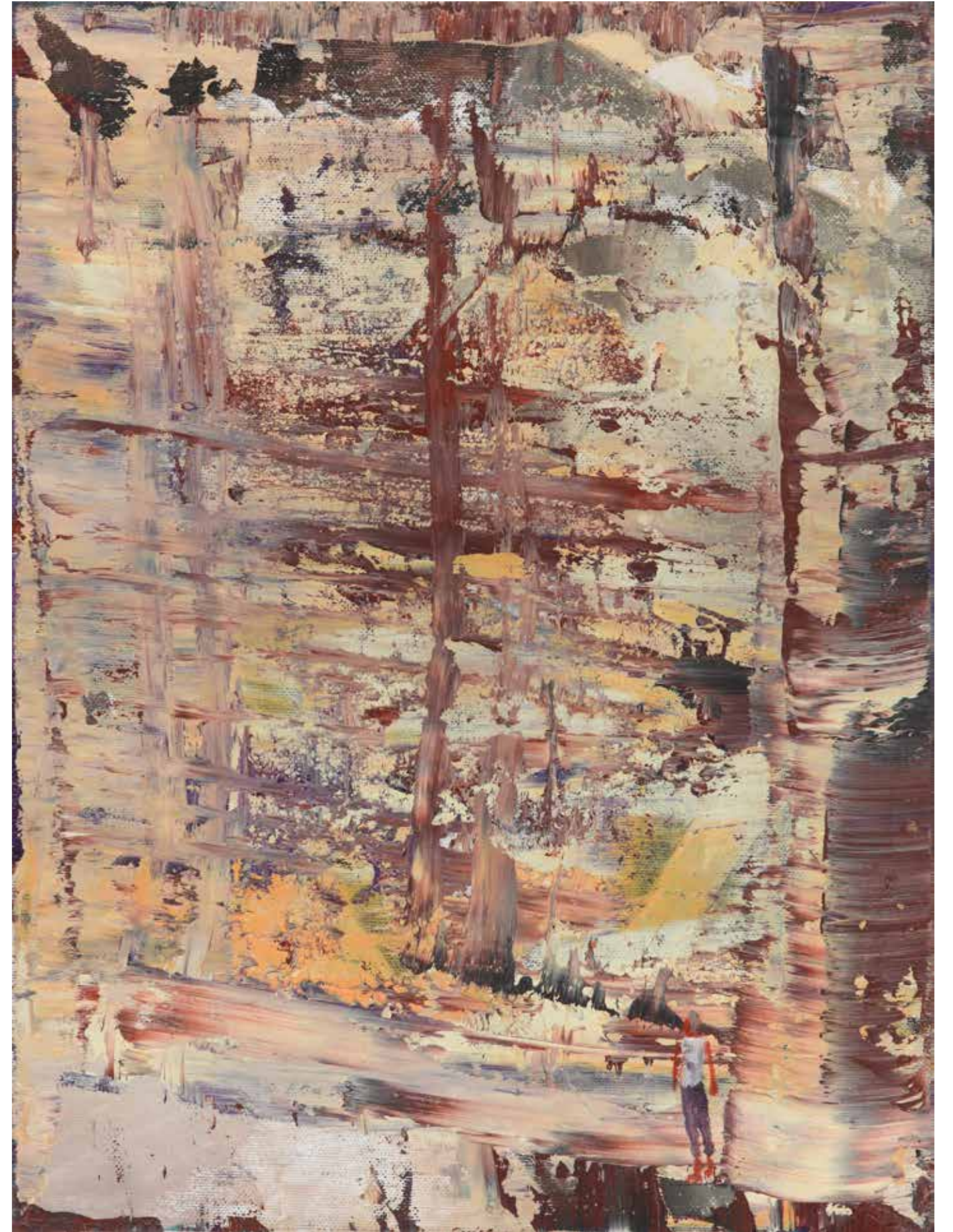


**TOYON**  
2013  
OIL ON CANVAS  
95 × 100 CM (37½ × 39½ IN)



**THE TITANIUM SUN**  
2013  
OIL ON CANVAS  
176 × 180 CM (69¼ × 70¾ IN)

**SCREAMING AIR**  
2013  
OIL ON CANVAS  
40 × 30 CM (15¾ × 11¾ IN)







**SUSPENDED ANIMATION**  
2013  
OIL ON CANVAS  
50 × 45 CM (19¾ × 17¾ IN)



**UNTITLED**  
2013  
OIL ON CANVAS  
25 × 30 CM (9¾ × 11¾ IN)



**ROULETTE OF THE NIGHT**  
2013  
OIL ON CANVAS  
40 × 40 CM (15¾ × 15¾ IN)



**FUNERAL PARADISE**  
2013  
OIL ON CANVAS  
165 × 145 CM (65 × 57¾ IN)



**SEASONAL CAPITAL OF ITINERANT CROWDS**  
2013  
OIL ON CANVAS  
280 × 395 CM (110¼ × 155½ IN)





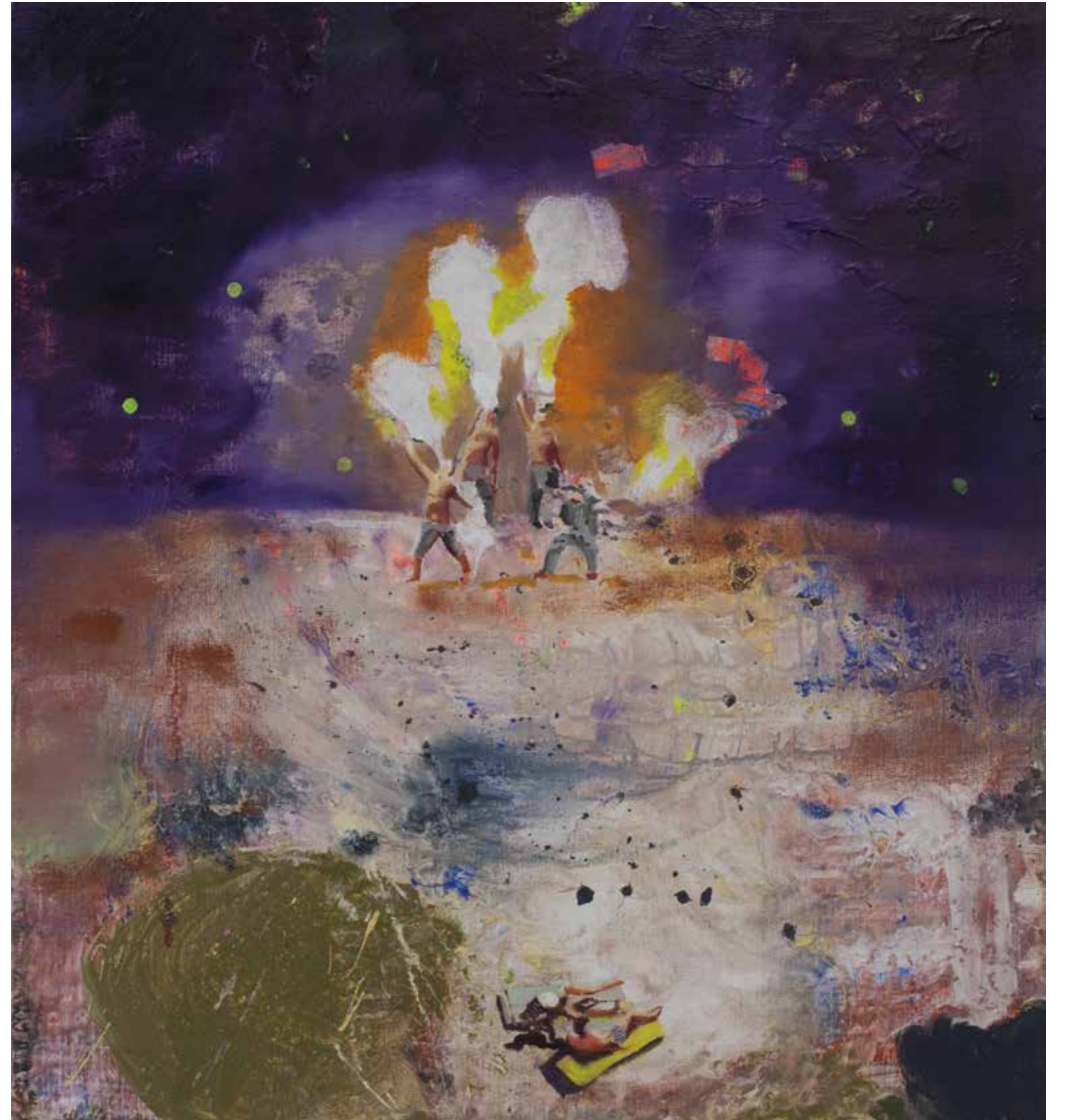


**PROPHETIC SMILE**  
2013  
OIL ON CANVAS  
120 × 145 CM (47¼ × 57½ IN)



**ECHO DRAMATURGY**  
2013  
OIL ON CANVAS  
120 × 145 CM (47¼ × 57½ IN)

**HEROES AND SUNSETS**  
2013  
OIL ON CANVAS  
65 × 60 CM (25½ × 23¾ IN)





**PERSONIFIED SEASON**  
2013  
OIL ON CANVAS  
60 × 65 CM (23½ × 25½ IN)



**SUN SHADE EDITION**  
2014  
OIL ON CANVAS  
140 × 160 CM (55½ × 63 IN)



**ERODED WORDS**  
2014  
OIL ON CANVAS  
85 × 130 CM (33½ × 51¼ IN)



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- 49 **EIGHTY-NINERS** 2012 47.9 × 70.8cm Private Collection
- 50 **DUSK** 2012 37 × 51cm
- 51 **CASTING NONSENSE** 2012 150 × 193cm Collection of Blake Byrne
- 54 **THE DRAGON** 2012 65 × 95cm Ole Faarup Collection, Copenhagen
- 55 **PARK FOR REHEARSING THE SUPERSTITIONS** 2012 97.6 × 102.7cm
- 57 **INCANDESCENT MOON** 2012 100 × 95cm The Club at the Ivy Private Collection
- 58 **HOUSE FOR CULTURE** 2012 102.8 × 132.7cm
- 59 **UNDER THE SHADE OF DOUBT** 2012 26 × 39cm
- 61 **SUNSET OF JOY** 2012 150 × 200cm
- 65 **LA BELLE ÉPOQUE** 2012 192 × 145cm ARKEN Museum of Modern Art, Denmark
- 66 **UNTITLED** 2012 18.6 × 26.2cm Private Collection, UK
- 67 **PARADOXICAL HUMOUR SCENE** 2012 90 × 130cm
- 68 **SPEED STERILITY** 2013 95 × 100cm
- 69 **LARREA TRIDENTATA** 2013 144 × 133cm
- 70 **ELECTRIC SNOW** 2013 190 × 215cm
- 71 **TWO CHARMERS ON THEIR WALK OF FAME** 2013 164 × 145cm
- 74 **SNOW WHITE COTTAGE** 2013 95 × 100cm
- 75 **SOLITUDE OF THE HILLS** 2013 143 × 145cm
- 77 **SPIES OF THE ANGELS** 2013 190 × 135cm
- 81 **TRAVEL WITHOUT LENS** 2013 40 × 40cm
- 82 **MINIMAL GREEN FENCE** 2013 40 × 50cm
- 83 **PINK DARKNESS** 2013 40 × 40cm Collection of Tim Clements, UK
- 85 **THE FLAME OF THE LITTLE MATCH GIRL** 2013 45 × 50cm
- 86 **TOYON** 2013 95 × 100cm
- 87 **THE TITANIUM SUN** 2013 176 × 180cm
- 89 **SCREAMING AIR** 2013 40 × 30cm
- 92 **SUSPENDED ANIMATION** 2013 50 × 45cm
- 93 **UNTITLED** 2013 25 × 30cm
- 94 **ROULETTE OF THE NIGHT** 2013 40 × 40cm
- 95 **FUNERAL PARADISE** 2013 165 × 145cm
- 97 **SEASONAL CAPITAL OF ITINERANT CROWDS** 2013 280 × 395cm Collection of Ovidiu Sandor, Romania
- 100 **PROPHETIC SMILE** 2013 120 × 145cm Collection of Ovidiu Sandor, Romania
- 101 **ECHO DRAMATURGY** 2013 120 × 145cm
- 103 **HEROES AND SUNSETS** 2013 65 × 60cm
- 104 **PERSONIFIED SEASON** 2013 60 × 65cm
- 105 **SUN SHADE EDITION** 2014 140 × 160cm
- 109 **ERODED WORDS** 2014 85 × 130cm

## BIOGRAPHY

- 1979 Born in Cluj-Napoca, RO  
Lives and works in Cluj-Napoca, RO

### EDUCATION

- 2005 MA, University of Art and Design, Cluj-Napoca, RO  
2003 BA, University of Art and Design, Cluj-Napoca, RO

### SELECT SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2014 *Hypernova*, Blain|Southern, London, UK  
2012 *Concrete Gardens*, François Ghebaly Gallery, Los Angeles, US  
2011 *Remains of Tomorrow*, Blain|Southern, London, UK  
2010 *Qui Vivra Verra*, François Ghebaly Gallery, Los Angeles, US  
2009 *Time will Tell*, Chungking Project, Los Angeles, US  
*If Through the Copper Woods You Pass*, Eleven Fine Art Gallery, London, UK  
2008 *Shorn lambs fall behind*, Mie Lefever Gallery, Ghent, BE  
*Yellow Side of Glamour | Melted Guidelines are passé*, Contemporary Gallery of Brukenthal Museum, Sibiu, RO  
2007 *The Games we Played*, Eleven Fine Art Gallery, London, UK  
*Lapte Gros and Stuff Like That*, H'art Gallery, Bucharest, RO

### SELECT GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2014 *Between Worlds*, Galerie ISA Mumbai  
*This Side of Paradise*, S2, London, UK  
2013 *Hotspot Cluj – New Romanian Art*, ARKEN Museum of Modern Art, DK  
2012 *Nightfall*, MODEM, Museum of Contemporary Art, Debrecen, HU (cat); travelled to Galerie Rudolfinum, Prague, CZ (cat)  
*Referencing History*, Green Gallery, Dubai, UAE (cat)  
*European Travellers*, Mucsarnok Kunsthalle, Budapest, HU  
2011 *Selektionseffekte*, Blain|Southern Berlin, DE  
*Palets*, Galerie Barbara Thumm, Berlin, DE  
2010 *No New Thing Under the Sun*, Royal Academy, London, UK  
*After the Fall*, Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art (HVCCA), Peekskill, US; Knoxville Museum of Art (KMA), Knoxville, US  
*Mircea Pinte Collection*, Museum of Art, Cluj, Napoca, RO  
2009 *Close to Home*, Galleria Davide Di Maggio, Milan, IT  
*Invisible Body, Conspicuous Mind*, The Luckman Fine Arts Complex, Los Angeles, US  
*Prague Biennale 4*, Prague, CZ  
2008 *Memorials*, Laika Art Space, Cluj-Napoca, RO  
*7 Parallel 7*, Museum of Young Art, Wien, AU  
*Under Natural Circumstances*, MODEM, Museum of Contemporary Art, Debrecen, HU  
*15 Hungarian and Romanian Painters*, Plan B Gallery, Cluj-Napoca, RO  
2007 *PLUS 2*, Museum Kuppfersmuhle fur Moderne Kunst, Duisburg, DE  
*Donau Documenta*, Regensburg, DE  
2003 *Re-location*, Casino de Luxembourg, LU

### PUBLICATIONS

- 2013 Byrd, A., *Art Cities of the Future: 21st-Century Avant-Gardes*, Phaidon, UK  
*Hotspot Cluj – New Romanian Art*, Exhibition Catalogue, ARKEN Museum of Modern Art, DK  
2010 *Nightfall – New Tendencies in Figurative Painting*, Galerie Rudolfinum, Prague, CZ  
*Nightfall – New Tendencies in Figurative Painting*, Exhibition Catalogue, MODEM, Museum of Contemporary Art, Debrecen, HU  
*After the Fall*, Exhibition Catalogue, Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art, US, July  
2009 *Prague Biennale 4 | Prague Biennale Photo 1*, Giancarlo Politi Editore, IT, May–July  
2008 *Under Natural Circumstances*, Exhibition Catalogue, MODEM, Museum of Contemporary Art, Debrecen, HU, May  
*7 Parallel 7*, Exhibition Catalogue, Museum of Young Art, Wien, AU, April  
2007 *PLUS 2*, Exhibition Catalogue, Museum Kuppfersmuhle fur Moderne Kunst, Duisburg, DE, June  
*Donau Documenta*, Exhibition Catalogue, Regensburg, DE, September  
2005 *32 Romanian Painters*, Exhibition Catalogue, H'art Gallery, Bucharest, RO, December  
*Open Studio*, April–June

### SELECT ARTICLES AND REVIEWS

- 2013 Neal, J., 'The Romanian Art Scene', *L'Officiel Art*, September  
2012 'Hit List', *Modern Painters*, December  
'Green Art Gallery introduces the works of renowned eastern European artists to the region', *Art Daily*, 26 September  
'What Lies Beneath: Painting and the Archeology of Invisibility', *Flash Art*, July–Aug  
'Something New, Captivating and Disquieting' This Artweek. LA, *Huffington Post*, 22 May  
'Marius Bercea "Concrete Gardens" on View at François Ghebaly Gallery', *Art Daily*, 25 April  
2011 Iacob, B. 'Marius Bercea at Blain Southern', *Jacob's Review*, 11 November  
Wright, R. 'Marius Bercea', *Studio International*, 10 October  
Milner, C. 'Movers & Shakers', *The London Paper*, October  
'Marius Bercea: Remains of Tomorrow', *The Week*, 24 September  
Grant, D., 'Romanians of the Day', *Art News*, 10 May  
Schwendener, M. '18 Journeys Forged in Communism', *The New York Times*, 14 January  
2010 Maertens, M. 'l'école de Cluj', *artpress*, May, p. 58  
Unwin, R. 'City Report', *Frieze*, March  
2008 Iacob, B. 'The good, the bad, the beautiful; schoolyard version' *Re-Title Online*

### PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

- ARKEN Museum of Modern Art, DK  
Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art, US  
Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), US  
Zabludowicz Collection, UK



**MARIUS BERCEA WOULD LIKE TO THANK**

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