

impossible.

frances aviva blane



‘Impossible’ is published in conjunction with Penny Woolcock’s film ‘If the answer is no...then actually yes’, available to view online at YouTube: <https://youtu.be/PGCVm1PdhRI>



paintings





Fall | oil/linen | 45x45 cms





Portrait 1 | oil/linen | 90x90 cms



Frances' heads generate questions about the head and about the self.

What is a head? What is a self? There is a brain with 10 billion neurons firing – connecting from one to 30 times a second. There are the senses perceived through our sight, our smell, our touch, our taste and our hearing. Personal experience – what we call the mind and consciousness – occurs through what meaning we make of affects. Frances' aesthetic is flooded with affect, no more clearly than in her heads. She enables us to see and when we can dare to hold the gaze we read aspects of the human condition which lie outside the polite.

To look at these heads is to feel. Yes, we may wish to turn away. If we can bear to stay, their physicality enters into us. The heads thrum. They are not flat. They are alive. They beseech the viewer to see, if she or he can hold on to the feelings that likely flood in.

Dr. Susie Orbach

is a psychotherapist, psychoanalyst, writer and co-founder of The Women's Therapy Centre in London (1976) and The WTCI in New York (1981).





Orange | oil/linen | 120x120 cms





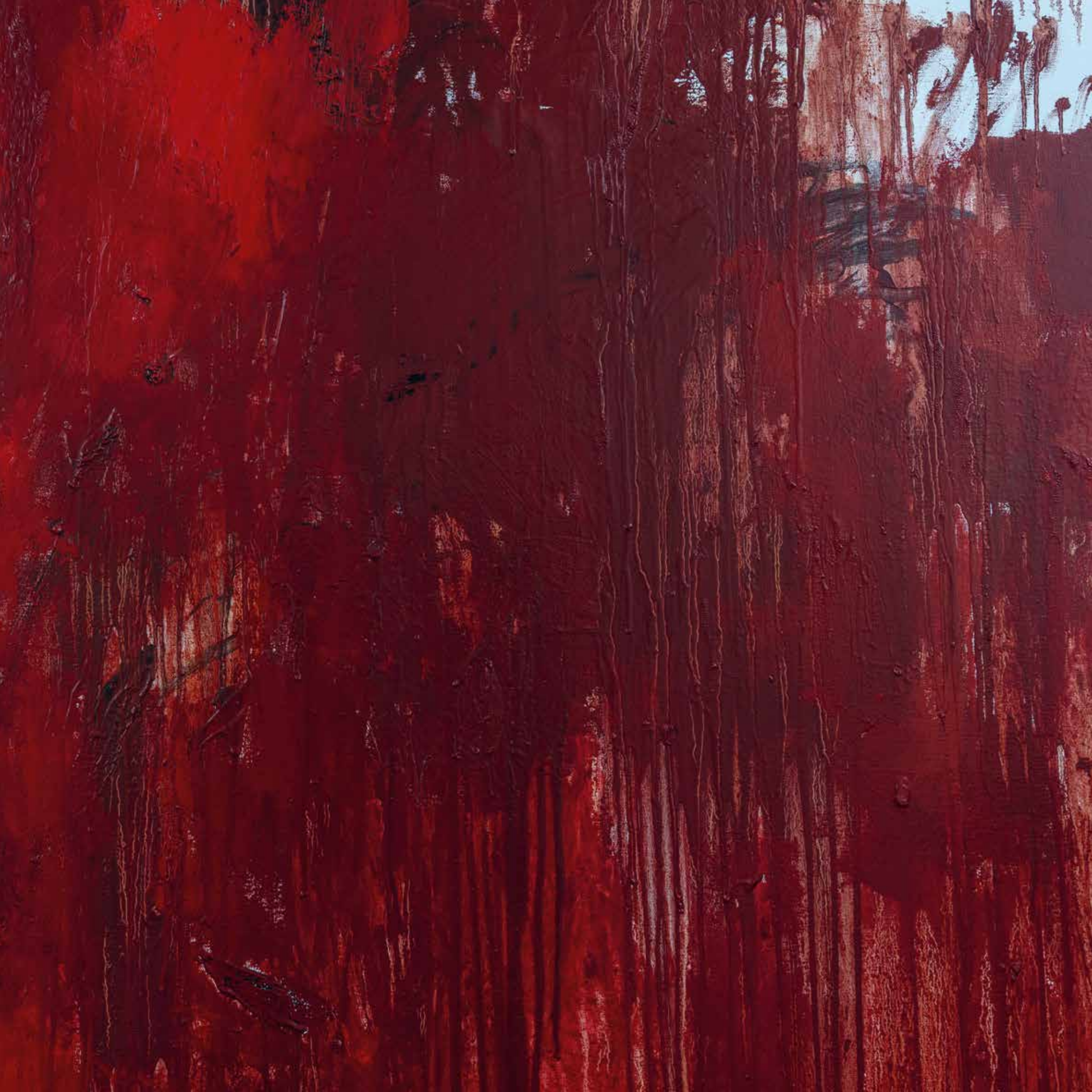
Clown | oil/linen | 183x183 cms

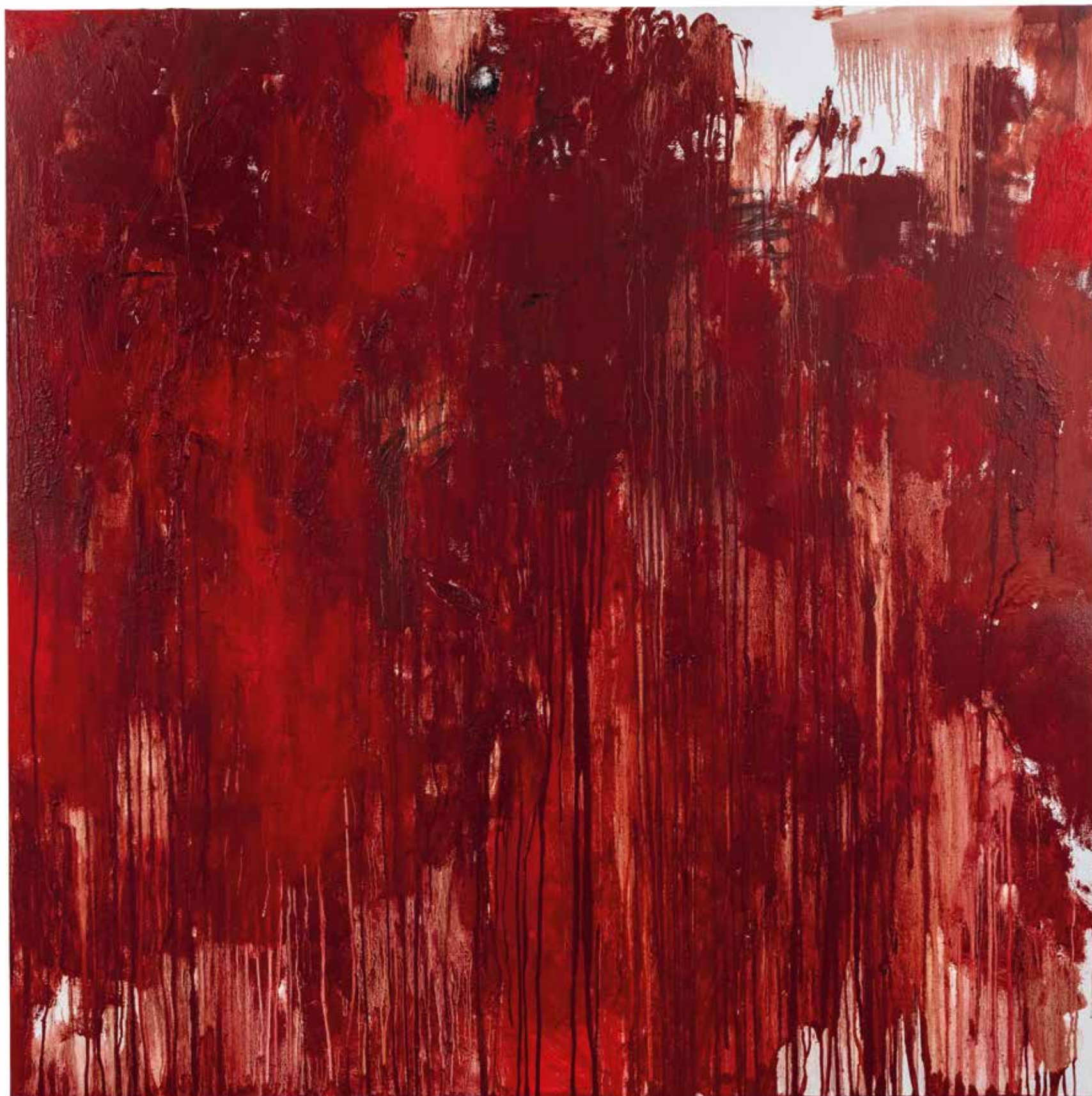


While Blane's work may have an accidental, incomplete quality, it is anything but dashed off. Whilst she rejoices in responding to chance effects, her work requires discipline and tenacious effort.

Corinna Lotz

is an art critic, author and curator who blogs for Real Democracy Movement (www.realdemocracymovement.org). She belongs to the Critics Circle UK.





Michael | oil/linen | 183x183 cms





Accident 2 | oil/linen | 50x60 cms





Three years ago, Frances presented me with a framed drawing of myself. I look spiky, deranged, focussed, relentless. I recognise myself in this picture although interestingly, nobody who knows me sees any resemblance. Frances is clearly struggling not only to capture a superficial likeness but to dig deeper into what she feels about her subject, as serious painters have always done.

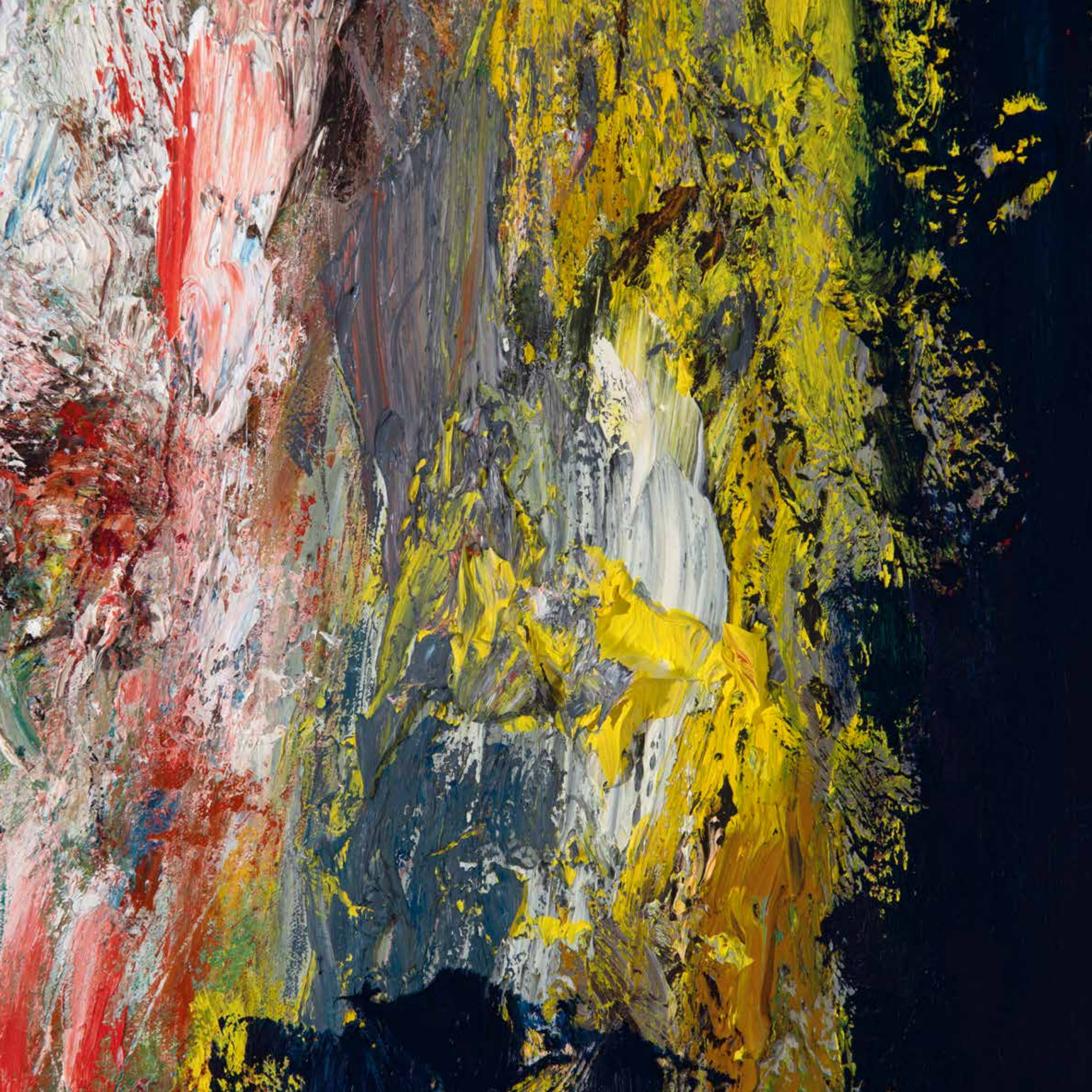
Penny Woolcock

is an Argentine filmmaker, opera director, and screenwriter.





Eye | oil/linen | 90x90 cms





Old | oil/linen | 90x90 cms



Even in Blane's multi-layered paintings, including those covered over with black or white, the colours underneath are fizzing with potential, waiting to burst through to the surface. Since colour cannot exist without light, the darkness is perhaps more in the act of concealment than in the revelation: the revelation of our inner darkness is, in fact, the revelation of this colourful light.

Anna McNay

(aka #TheCriticWithTheDog) is an independent writer, editor and curator. Her areas of particular interest are representations of gender, sexuality, the body and the (unhinged) mind.





Home | oil/linen | 183x183 cms

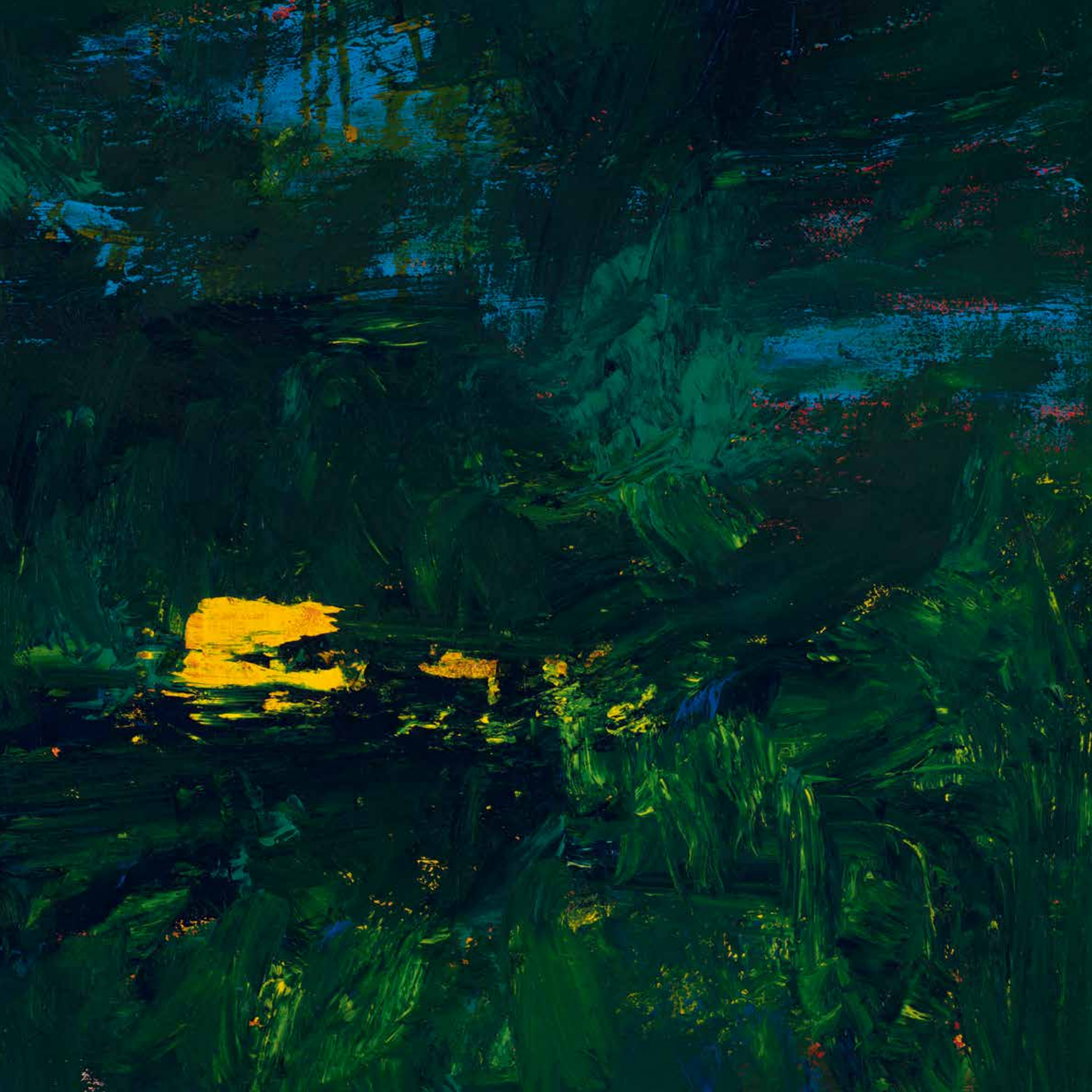








Fix | oil/linen | 76x60 cms



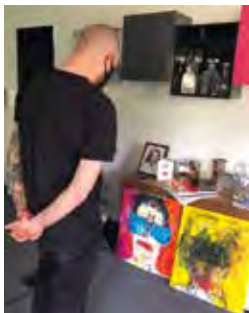


Landscape | oil/linen | 50x60 cms



And the truth is that these paintings are all of the things we've mentioned. These are self-portraits, images of her friends and loved ones, and depictions of emotions. They're all these things at once.

They are familiar and alien, abstract and figurative, earthly and ethereal, real and fictional. Frances Aviva Blane is asking you to try, really try, to hold on to something when you look at these works, to try to grasp the feelings and personalities and stories on display. But she also knows it's an impossible task, because she has painted all of these things just as they're about to fritter away. It's like trying to remember a dream, or keep hold of an old love. Reach, reach, reach, but you'll never ever manage to truly grasp. That's what makes them so enigmatic, that's what makes them work: their powerful mixture of possibility and total, absolute impossibility.



Eddy Frankel

is a London-based art critic. He has written about art for publications including *Time Out*, *The Guardian*, *ArtReview*, *The Art Newspaper* and *Vanity Fair*.





Secret | oil/linen | 50x60 cms





Point | oil/linen | 77x77 cms



Obviously, Blane's work starts with drawing and writing, and the outline of a face is, anyway, always a drawing on paper. Embarrassed by the drawings of faces she did some time ago whilst at the Slade and Byam Shaw art schools, Blane also works with an important and undeniable relation to writing in which there is no hierarchy of intention, subject, or point. A self-portrait can be obtuse, blunt, and obscure, and really not at all about a perceived likeness to anything seen from the outside, inside, or anywhere else.

Sacha Craddock

is an independent art critic, writer and curator based in London.





Grey | oil/linen | 90x90 cms





Sea | oil/linen | 50x60 cms







Blane's abstract paintings, however, demand 'more attention, more focus, more effort'. While both the abstracts and the Heads speak the same language of paint, the Heads might be seen as a one-step translation of the artist into paint, while the abstracts go a step further, becoming almost a meta-language of paint, speaking on its own terms, with the artist entirely removed. Blane suggests this might be one reason why Rothko's colour-field paintings are so powerful: because there's nothing there. Viewers are confronted by their own existence, their own death, their own mortality. By darkness.

Anna McNay

(aka #TheCriticWithTheDog) is an independent writer, editor and curator. Her areas of particular interest are representations of gender, sexuality, the body and the (unhinged) mind.









Birthday | oil/linen | 60x60 cms





New | oil/linen | 77x77 cms



Frances Aviva Blane's work defies representational association. It resists being shaped or driven by external social or political forces, while also resisting decorative abstraction. Her dialogue, or conversation is between what's going on in her head (for which she is known to draw and paint obsessively) and the colour, textures of paint itself, the physical, emotional and spiritual qualities of a specific moment in time.

Manick Govinda

is an independent arts writer, curator, commentator.





Oscillate | oil/linen | 77x77 cms





Collude | oil/linen | 77x77 cms



She takes us to the delight of her abstracts.

The pulsing colours, the breaking through of colour upon colour. Thickness, sensuality, richness. Paintings that beg you to enter them. The ambivalence of looking and turning away, unnerved by her heads, dissipates as we marvel at what she can do with paint, with colour.

They hold us with questions and wonder.

Dr. Susie Orbach

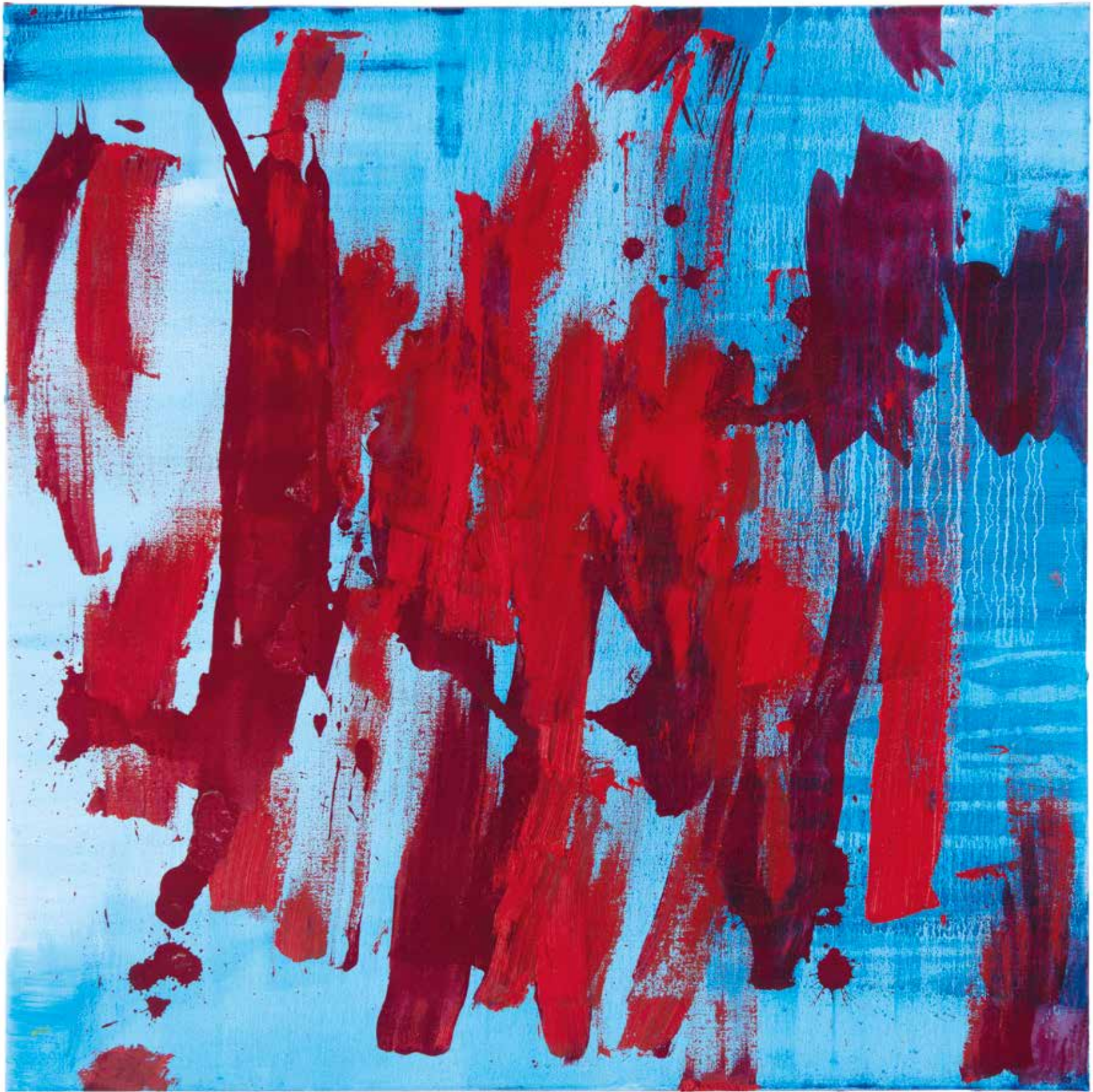
is a psychotherapist, psychoanalyst, writer and co-founder of The Women's Therapy Centre in London (1976) and The WTCL in New York (1981).





Grey orange | oil/linen | 90x90 cms



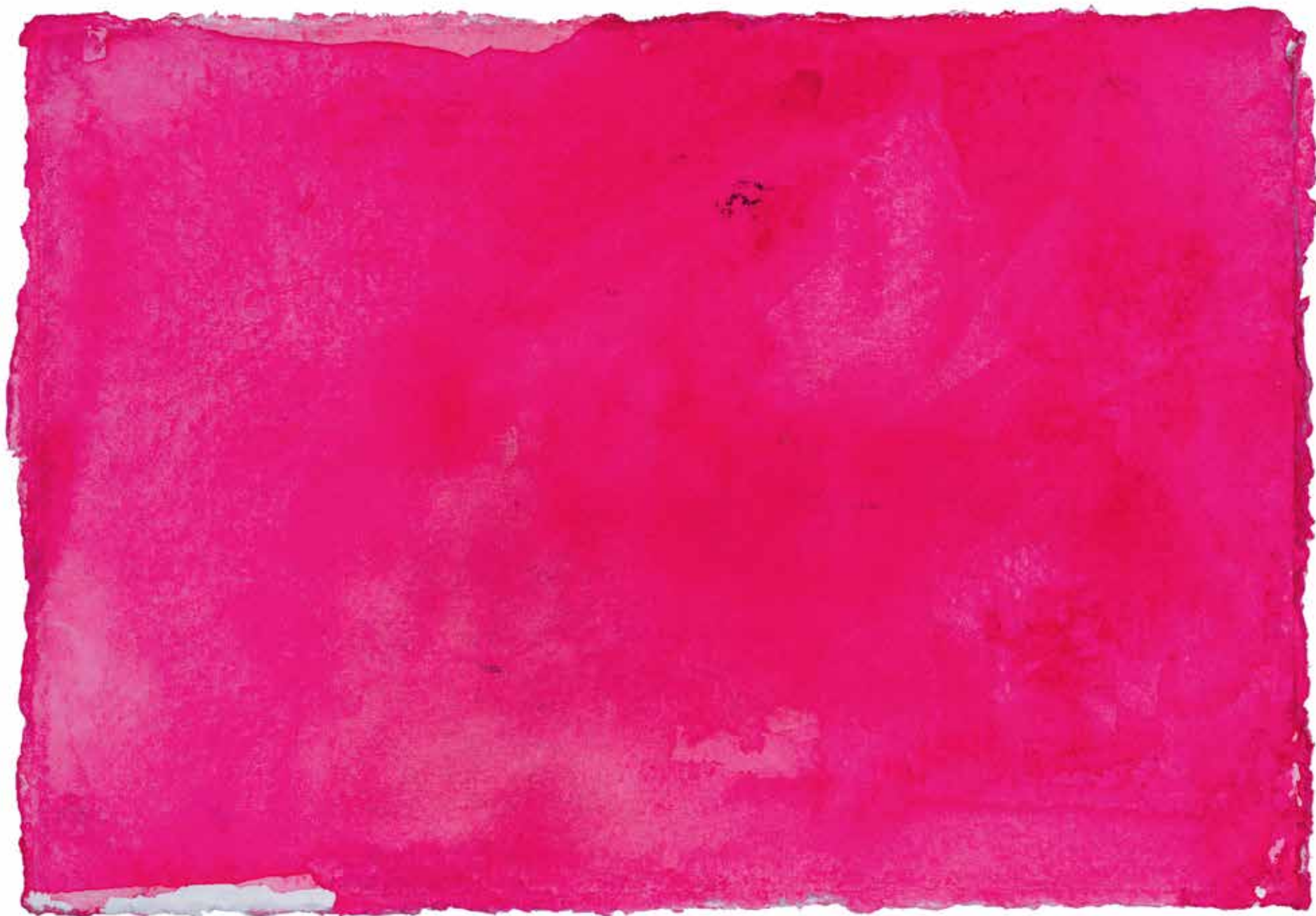


Domino | oil/linen | 60x60 cms



**works on
paper**





Untitled 1 | watercolour/khadi | 10x21 cms

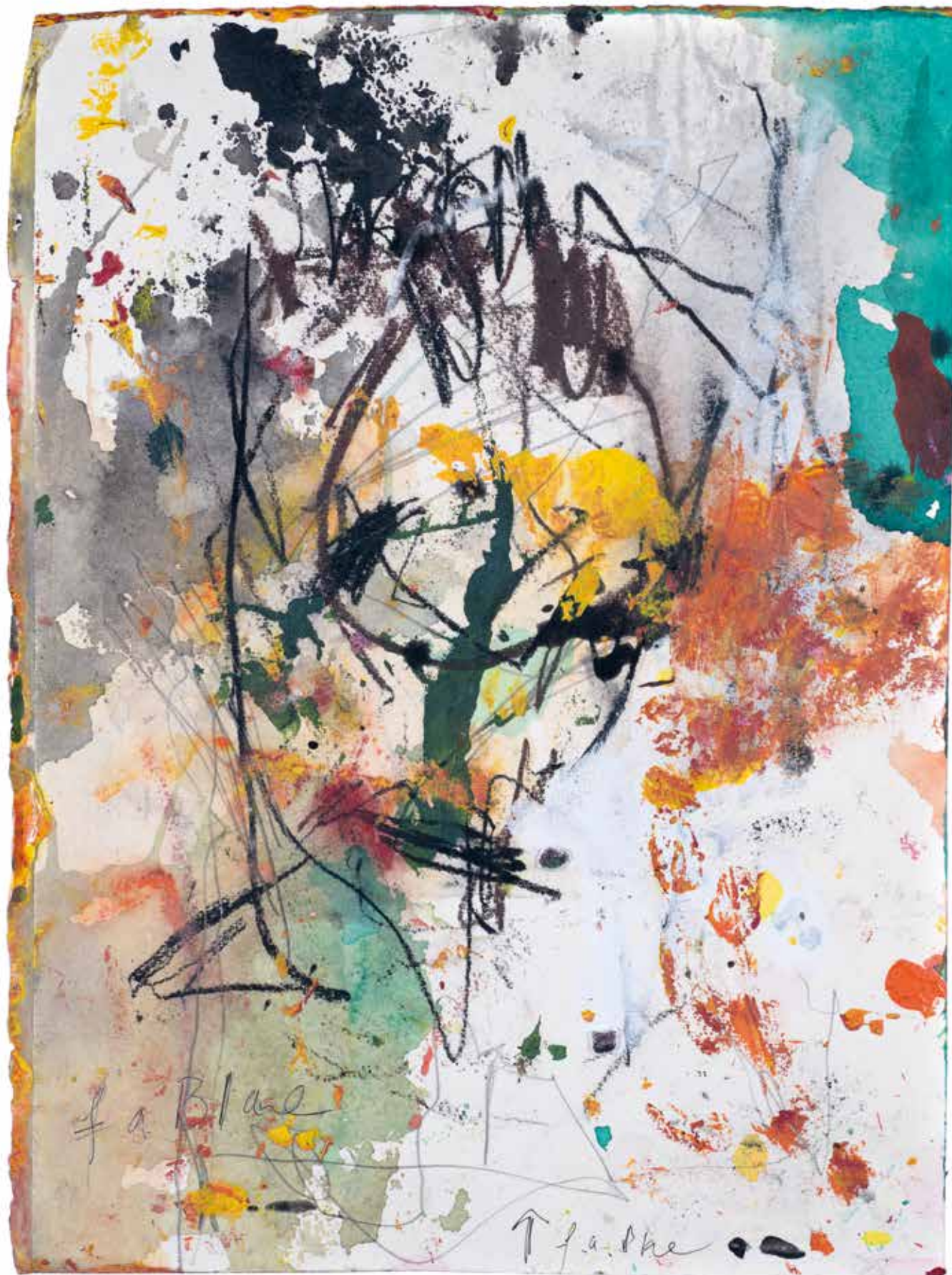


Grey/blue | watercolour/fabriano | 16x26 cms





Untitled 2 | watercolour/khadi | 10x21 cms



Portrait 2 | acrylic/charcoal/bockingford | 38x28 cms





Precipice | watercolour/bockingford | 37x47 cms

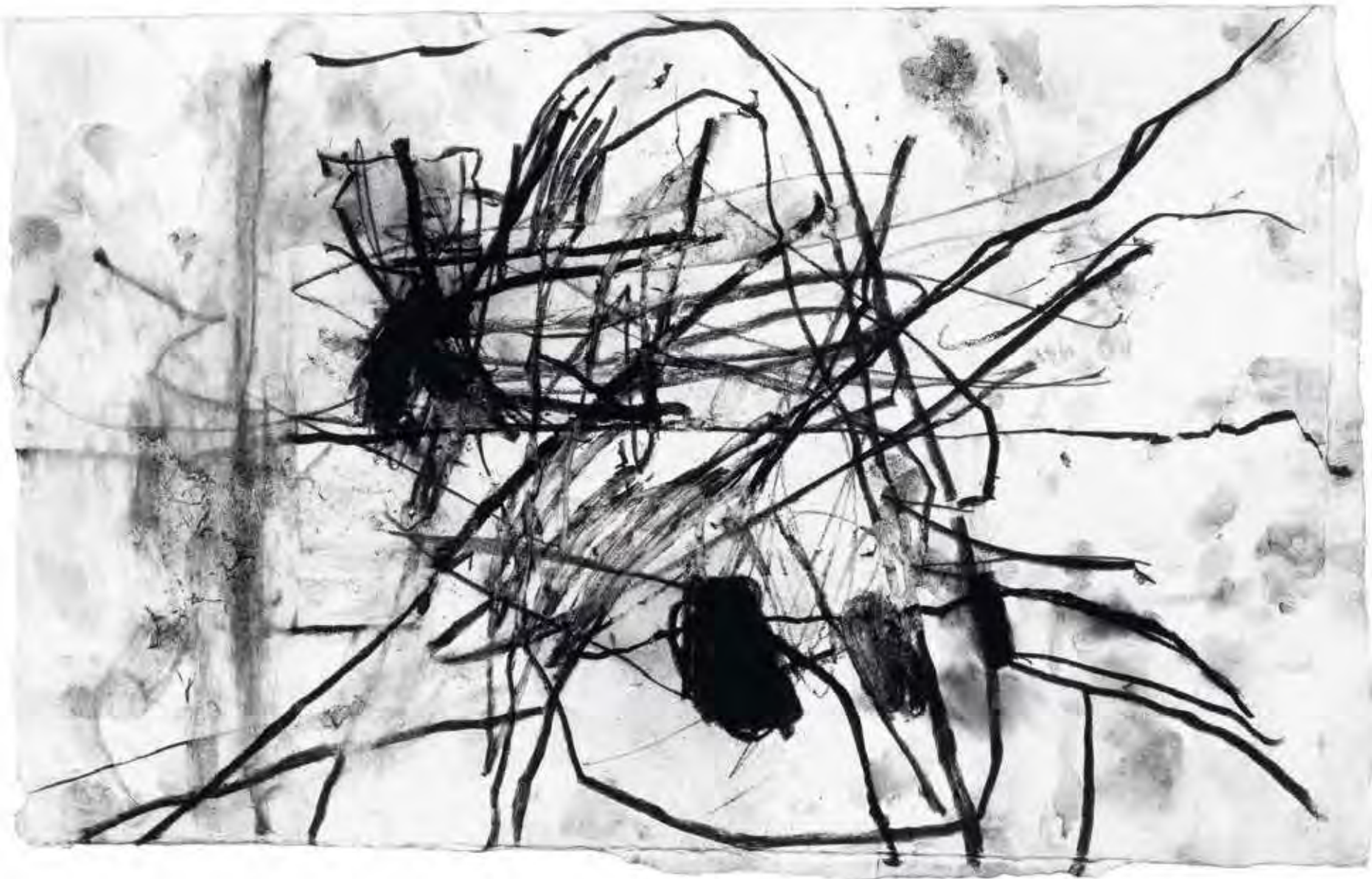




Spy | acrylic/charcoal/fabiano | 28x38 cms







Shrink | charcoal/fabiano | 16x26 cms



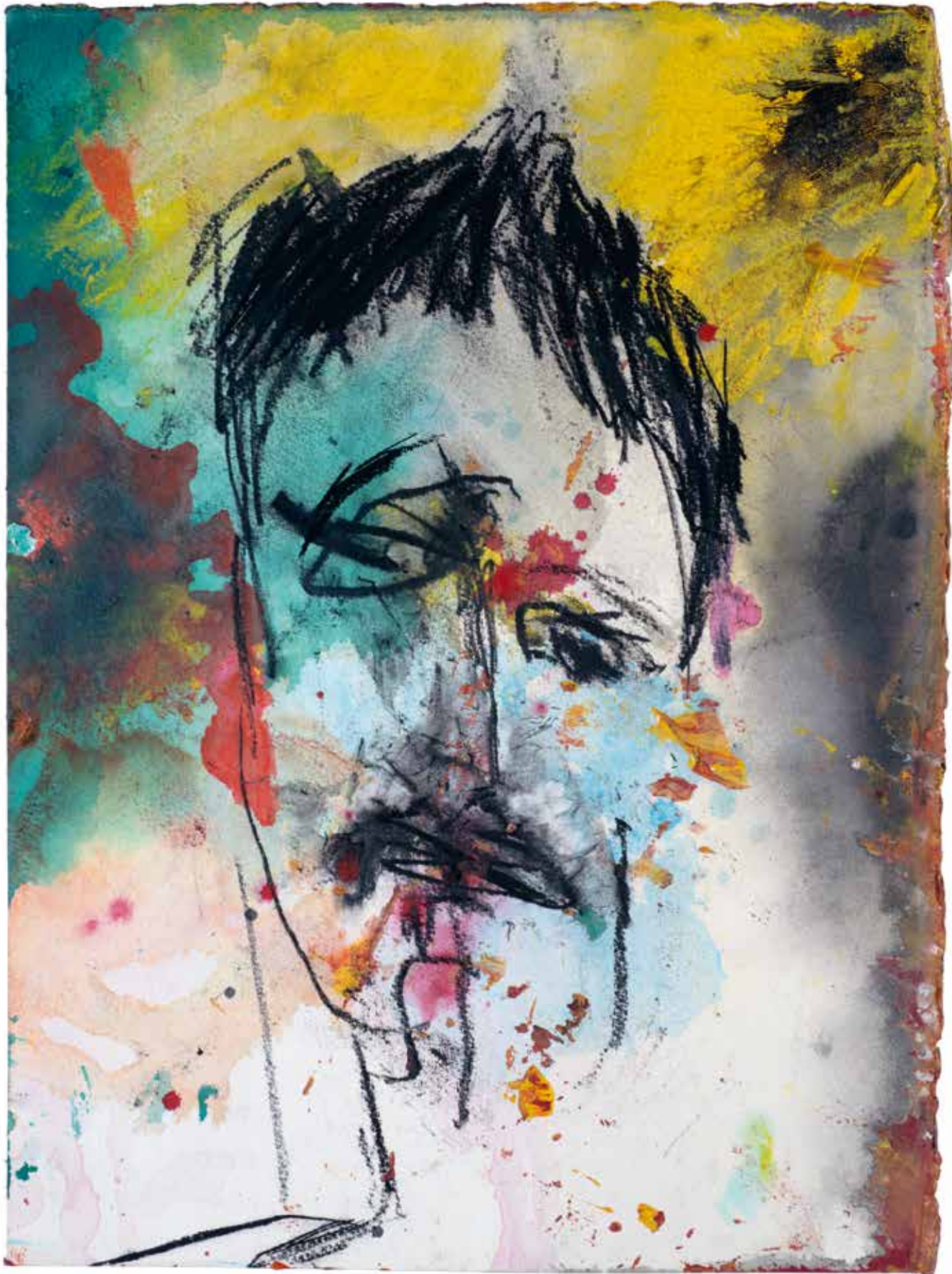


Green face | charcoal/acrylic/fabriano | 26x16 cms



Portrait Susie | charcoal/fabriano | 46x36 cms





Portrait 3 | acrylic/fabriano | 38x28 cms

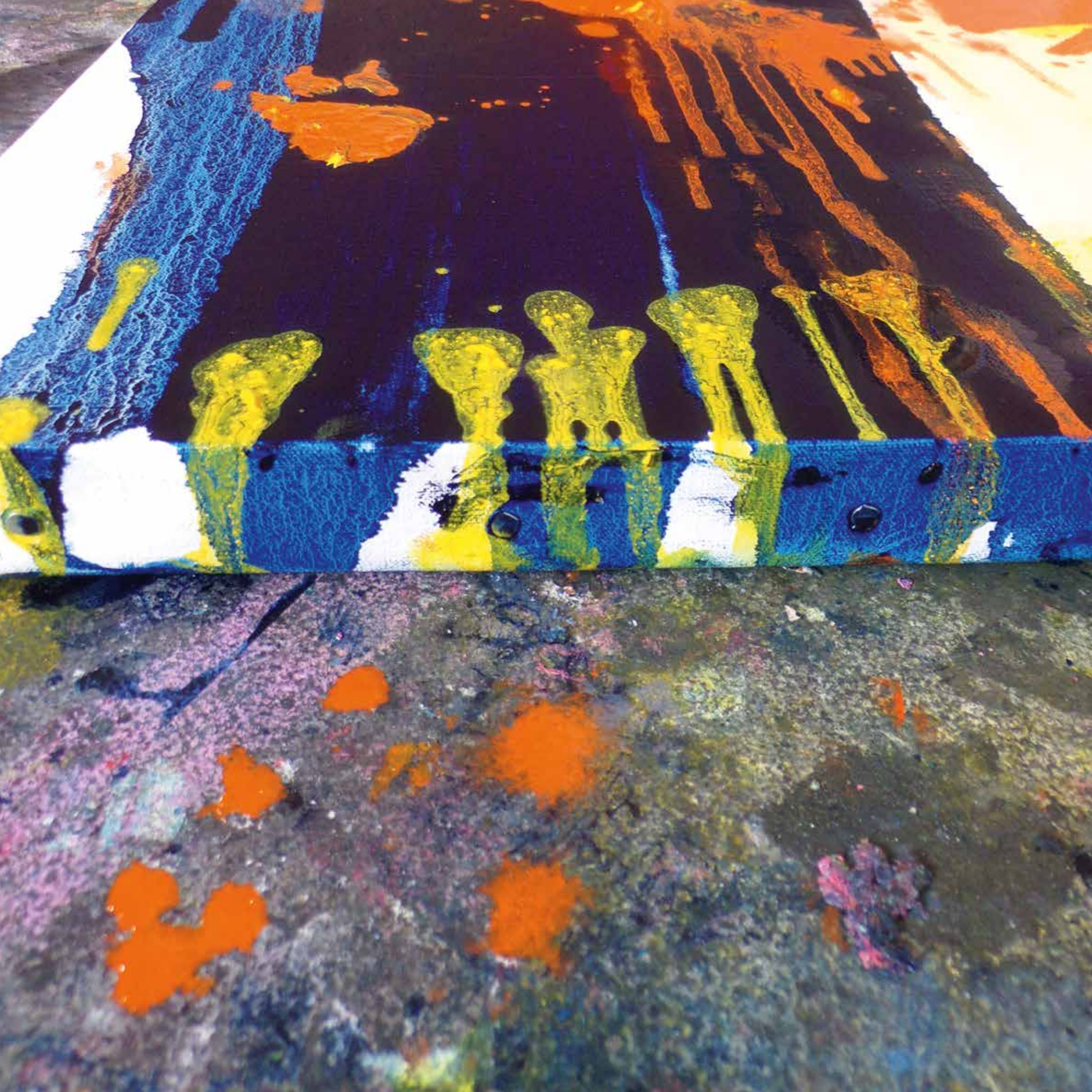


Sad | charcoal/fabriano | 40x30 cms

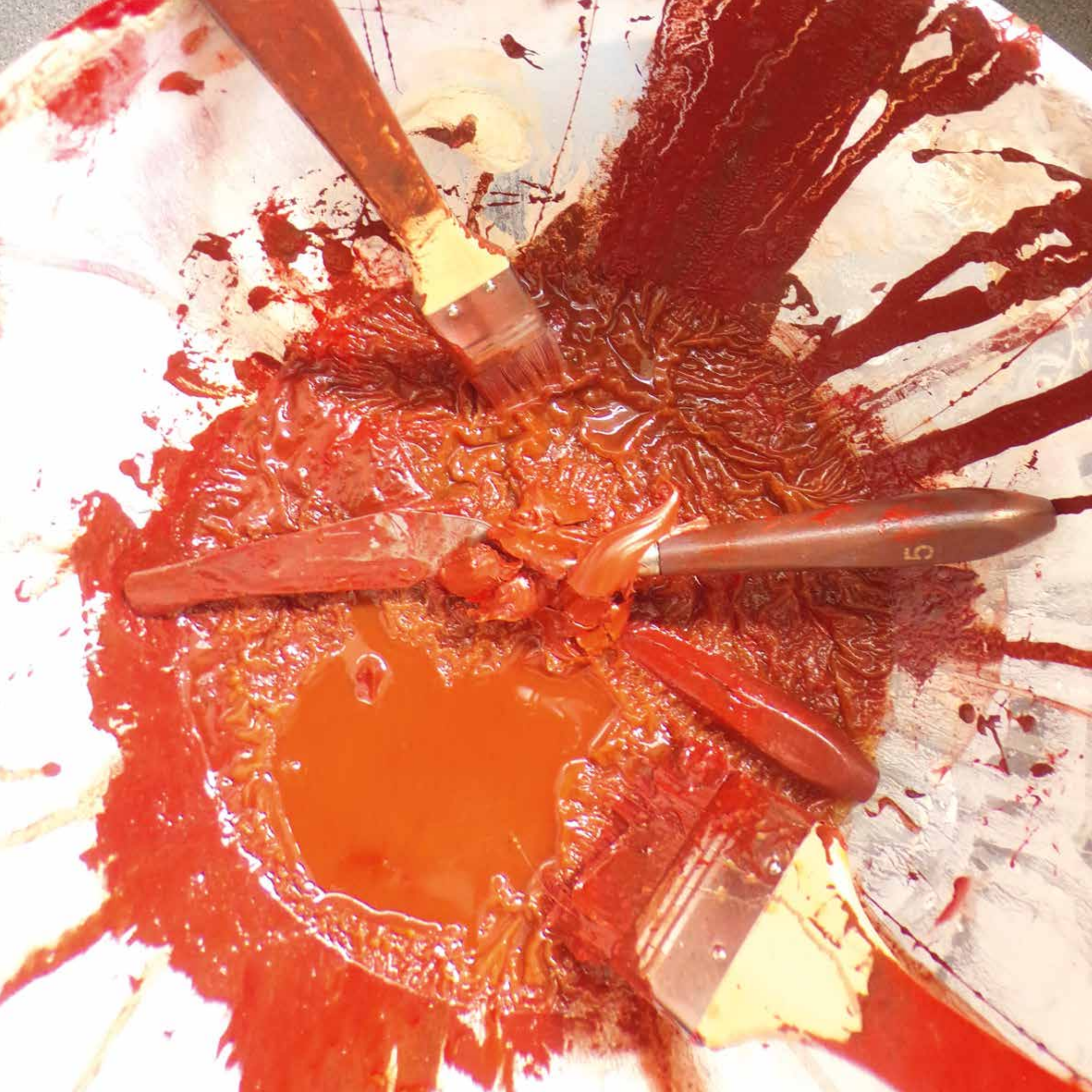




Giant | charcoal/acrylic/fabriano | 38x28 cms







Frances Aviva Blane

Slade School of Fine Art, UCL (University College London), 1991–1993

Byam Shaw School of Painting and Drawing, London, 1988–1991

Chelsea College of Art, London, 1987

Selected solo shows

IMPOSSIBLE. Greatorex Street Gallery, London, 2026

ME ME ME! Zuleika Gallery, Woodstock, Oxford, 2024

DISTURB. Shippon Gallery, Chardstock, Axminster, Devon, 2024

ON PAINT. At ecArtspace.com, London, 2022

DARK. De Queeste Kunstkamers, Abele/Watou, Belgium, 2018

BLANE. Broken Heads, Broken Paint. 12 Star Gallery at Europe House, London, 2018

TWO FACES. Painting/HEADS. The German Embassy, Belgravia, London, 2016–2017

DECONSTRUCT. Solo show alongside exhibitions of Louise Bourgeois and Francis Bacon. De Queeste Kunstkamers, Abele/Watou, Belgium, 2014

BIG BLACK PAINTINGS. Bay Hall, Kings College, London, 2014

Selected group shows

DE QUEESTE ART GROUP SHOW. Ypres, Belgium, 2025

HET FESTIJN. De Queeste Kunstkamers, Abele/Watou, Belgium, 2024

AN ECHO IN TIME. De Queeste Kunstkamers, Abele/Watou, Belgium, 2024

SALON VAN DE TEKENING. With Max Beckmann, Daniel Enkaoua, George Grosz, Marcelle Hanselaar, Erich Heckel, Karl Schmidt-Rottluf.

De Queeste Kunstkamers, Abele/Watou, Belgium, 2023

SEA OF CHANGE part 2. With Susan Stockwell and Jason Oddy. At ecArtspace, Lemnos, Greece, 2023

FIRE. With Claudia Clare. Gallery 286, 286 Earls Court Road, London, SW5, 2022

BRAVE TRUTH. Zuleika Gallery, Woodstock, Oxford, 2022

BASIL BEATTIE + FRANCES AVIVA BLANE. At ecArtspace.com, London, 2022

TEMPORARY group show including Frauke Wilke. De Queeste Kunstkamers, Abele/Watou, Belgium, 2021

TRINITY BUOY WHARF DRAWING PRIZE 2021

MOI ET LES AUTRES with Daniel Enkaoua and Eric Monbel. De Queeste Kunstkamers, Abele/Watou, Belgium, 2021

Ruth Borchard Self Portrait Prize, 2021

SEA OF CHANGE with Susan Stockwell & Jason Oddy. Lemnos Greece and ecArtspace.com, 2021–2022

FRAGMENTED with Claudia Clare. Zuleika Gallery, London, 2020

INTERMEZZO. Including Paula Rego and Daniel Enkaoua. De Queeste Kunstkamers, Abele/Watou, Belgium, 2020

DISTANCING. With Basil Beattie, John McLean and Susan Stockwell. At ecArtspace.com, online, 2020

THE DESIRE OF LOOKING. With Daniel Enkaoua, Paula Rego, Marcelle Hanselaar. De Queeste Kunstkamers, Abele/Watou, Belgium, 2020

AGE IS JUST A NUMBER. Summer Show. Zuleika Gallery, London, 2019

ABSTRACT ALLIES. Curated by Tim Sayer MBE with Naum Gabo, Nigel Hall, Howard Hodgkin. Zuleika Gallery, London, 2019

IKONOCASH #01. With Anton Kannemeyer, Roel Goussay, Marcelle Hanselaar. De Queeste Kunstkamers, Abele/Watou, Belgium, 2019

John Moores Painting Prize 2018. Walker Gallery, Liverpool, 2018

NO MAN IS AN ISLAND. With Susan Stockwell and David Connearn. Art Dialog, Bonn, 2018

HUMAN. The German Embassy, London, 2017

CREEKSIDE OPEN. Selected by Jordan Baseman, 2017

LIQUID THOUGHT, with Daniel Enkaoua and Chris Stevens. De Queeste Kunstkamers, Abele/Watou, Belgium, 2016

IMPACT, with Marthe Zinc, Louise Bourgeois, Mark Anstee. De Queeste Kunstkamers, Abele/Watou, Belgium, 2016

DE VAGE GRENS, with Frank Auerbach, Reniere & Depla. De Queeste Kunstkamers, Abele/Watou, Belgium, 2015

JERWOOD DRAWING PRIZE. London and tour, 2015

DRAWING BREATH. Jerwood Anniversary Exhibition, Award Winners, London, Sydney, Bristol, 2006–2008

ANNELY JUDA, a Celebration. Annelly Juda Fine Art, London, 2007

PRIME TIME. German and English Painting, Berlin, 2006

LONDON GALLERY SWAP, sponsored by the British Council and Goethe Institut, 2002

DRAWING with Basil Beattie. At ecArtspace, London, 2001

PAINTING with John McLean. At ecArtspace, London, 2000

CHORA. Curated by Sue Hubbard. Group show including Susan Hiller, Helen Sear Edward Chell. London, Bath, Bracknell, Kendall, 1999–2000

Awards

Jerwood Award for Drawing, 1999
Cheltenham and Gloucester, Open Drawing Show (award winner) 1999
Mid-America ART Alliance Fellowship for Visual Arts, 1998
Residency at Djerassi Artists' Foundation, California, 1998
Graham Hamilton Drawing Prize, 1991

Collections

Blind Art, London
Jesus College, Cambridge
The London School of Economics
Moorfields Eye Hospital, London
The Sternberg Centre, London
The Usher Gallery, Lincoln
The Faith and Belief Forum, London
The Tim Sayer Collection, London
The Doris Jean Lockhart Collection

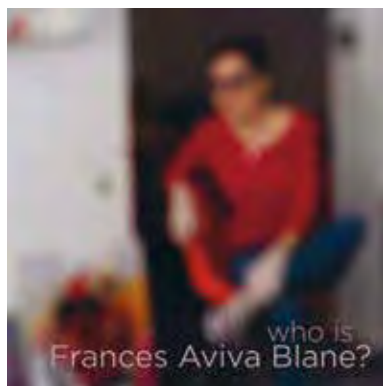
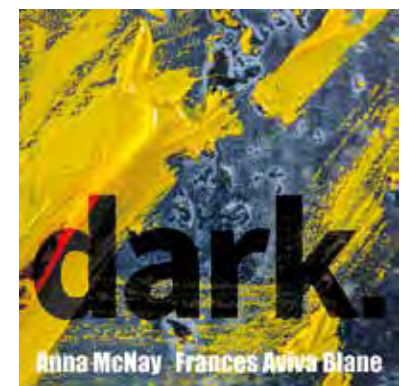
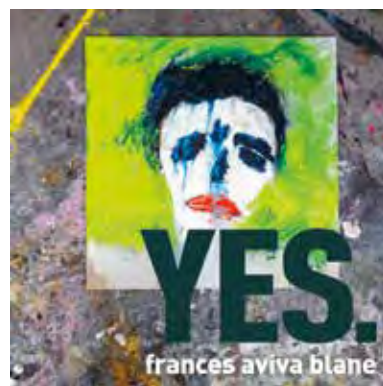
Film

If the answer is no...then actually yes. Directed by Penny Woolcock, 2026
Portrait with Susie Orbach. Directed by Penny Woolcock, 2024
On Painting with Corinna Lotz and Susie Orbach. Directed by Penny Woolcock, 2022
Who is Frances Aviva Blane? Directed by Penny Woolcock, 2021
Fragmented. Directed by Penny Woolcock, 2020
She Paints Like a Bloke: Penny Woolcock in conversation with Lizzie Collins, 2020
Two Metres Apart with Susie Orbach. Directed by Penny Woolcock, 2020
Studio Visit in COVID Time. Directed by Penny Woolcock, 2020



Frances Aviva Blane

for more information on Frances visit: www.avivablane.com



IMPOSSIBLE.
Essays by various critics

YES.
Essays by Corinna Lotz and Manick Govinda

ME ME ME!
Essays by Anna McNay and Susie Orbach

PORTRAIT.
Essays by Susie Orbach and Penny Woolcock

DARK.
Essay by Anna McNay

AUGUST.
Essay by Susie Orbach

ON PAINT.
Essay by Sacha Craddock

FRANCES.
Essays by Eddy Frankel, Susie Orbach and Corinna Lotz

COVID.
Essay by Susie Orbach

WHO IS FRANCES AVIVA BLANE?
Frances Aviva Blane, Susie Orbach, Penny Woolcock

FAB.
Essay by Susie Orbach

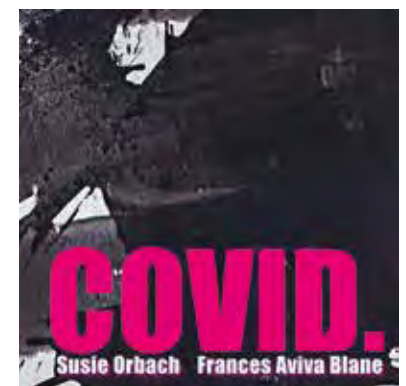
BROKEN HEADS BROKEN PAINT.
Essays by Diana Souhami and Tess Jaray RA

MORE.
Essay by Mark Gisbourne

EMBASSY.
Essays by Tess Jaray RA and Dr Peter Ammon

NOTHING.
Essay by Diana Souhami

FRANCES AVIVA BLANE DRAWINGS
Essay by Doris Lockhart Saatchi



Frances would like to thank

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Manick Govinda

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