

The image is an abstract artwork by Hala Mouzannar. It features a complex, layered texture. On the left side, there is a prominent area of shimmering, textured gold leaf. This transitions into a central and right-hand section dominated by dark, charcoal grey tones. Interspersed throughout these grey areas are vibrant, splattered patches of red and blue. The overall effect is one of depth and tactile richness, with various materials and colors appearing to be built up over time. The lighting highlights the uneven surfaces, creating a sense of movement and organic growth.

HALA MOUZANNAR
si la matière pouvait parler

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Life Encrusted Statements

Time slows in the pools of surface sheen, in neat and tiny crackles and foil relief. The evidence of movement and the pace of that movement are embedded within each painting, a material time of reaction. Add one material to another and see how it acts, how it reacts with another, under, beside, on top. The knowledge of material is experiential, the many compounds understood through an accretive, processual understanding. Unexpected reactions exist in a tension with experience, the knowledge of what one thing will do when placed in relation with another. There is always an element of chance in life, on or off the canvas, and there is always experience, knowledge, practice. Hala Mouzannar takes both, expanding and ushering these realities onto the stage and putting them under lights. They shine there, the chances, the experiences. The eye moves again in the pools.

Statements, moments trapped in accident of structure, a slowed down chaos of the world containing structure, material logic. Mouzannar has spoken of her work as a collision of matter and the pace of the collision is slow, happening under our eyes.

The paintings of Hala Mouzannar have the quality of moving between states. Foil, shimmer and shine, colour and chemical reactions draw the eye across the canvas, moving the eyes of the viewer as easily as any topographical landscape. Yet, what is seen is also at the level of matter, material, and can be explored through the nano-lens of collision, accident, chaos.

Political scientist Jane Bennett, a proponent of the theory of vibrant materialism, writes in her seminal work *Vibrant Matter, A Political Ecology of Things*, of the way that things we encounter can move in this way between states:

Glove. pollen. rat. cap. stick.

As I encountered these items, they shimmied back and forth between debris and thing-between, on the one hand stuff to ignore except insofar as it betokened human activity (the workman's efforts, the litterer's toss, the rat-poisoner's success), and, on the other hand, stuff that commanded attention in its own right, as existents in excess of their association with human meanings, habits, or projects.¹

It can be called life, the vibrancy of matter, but it can also be called collision, the coming together in moments and moving away, the continual movement, the to-ing and fro-ing of experience.

These paintings contain allusions to the bodily, topographical, the mineral. Constellations of colour, texture and obvious chemical reactions of surface materials vie on their conflicted surfaces that at once compel and repulse the viewer with their extremity, complexity, thickness.

¹Bennett, J (2010). *Vibrant Matter, A Political Ecology of Things* (Duke University Press, Unites States of America). p.4.

Time. Slowness, a material pace.
Layers, cracking, skins.
Pain and the world

The reactions that form these artworks don't stop when the painting is finished. Rather, they continue, at their own pace, if very slowly. Outside of the artwork, the same truth holds, everything in and of the world continues to react, collide, move, change. Everything is a question.

The continuing
extrusions

Mouzannar's paintings are acts of making visible, time and its movements.

It is known that, even if unseen, at the level of matter everything is moving, the question is only at what pace and scale. Through specific processes, Mouzannar creates paintings that embody life as motion, as reaction at scales from the nano to the human and out into the cosmos. It is the work of microcosm.

I look around myself in the café where I am writing, my eye is drawn to a crumbling corner on a wall of the coffee shop where I sit, the way this roughness connects as a smear with the terrazzo tiles of the floor. The dark wood of a chair leg, a moving shadow beyond a window frame. My eye is continually moved around by the textural colorful material thing-objects of the world.

Mouzannar's paintings again embody, and seek to embody, this complex and moving, yet still simple experience of life.

A foil extrusion pulls me in, golden and bulbous, and as I look I am drawn in closer, my eye seeking increasingly tiny crackles and inserts of colour, of peeling material, of lacquered pools.

It is the composition found in the world reflected here and filtered through the specificity of the artist's life and experience. Mouzannar's filter is strong, intentional and practical, and the painters' individual aesthetic is impossible to avoid. This strength in individual aesthetic is equalled by the conceptual embodiment of process.

Again, a foil extrusion. My eye. A glint. A drawing in to pools. Inside places and inside continuations. Inside structure. Movement. Life. Slow continual growth and change.

Mouzannar moves the continual movement of the world to the level of our senses while at the same time bringing her individual aesthetic to bear on the structures that she creates.

Amy Todman
Beirut, October 2023



Painting is going inside its canvas

Object becomes thought, is thinking
material rules.

The idea of painting
the accident
is painting

but what is that

a concentration drawn to sparkle.

Single words, statements,
colour after weight, heavy particles changing surfaces, transforming material.

The pace of hiding.

Jewels, walls and cared for ruins
bending painting time.

Clean dirt and chemical dust
topographies in small insertions

aerial and
body scale

a likeness inhabiting the world

an anxious cracking
strength, wall, building, growth.

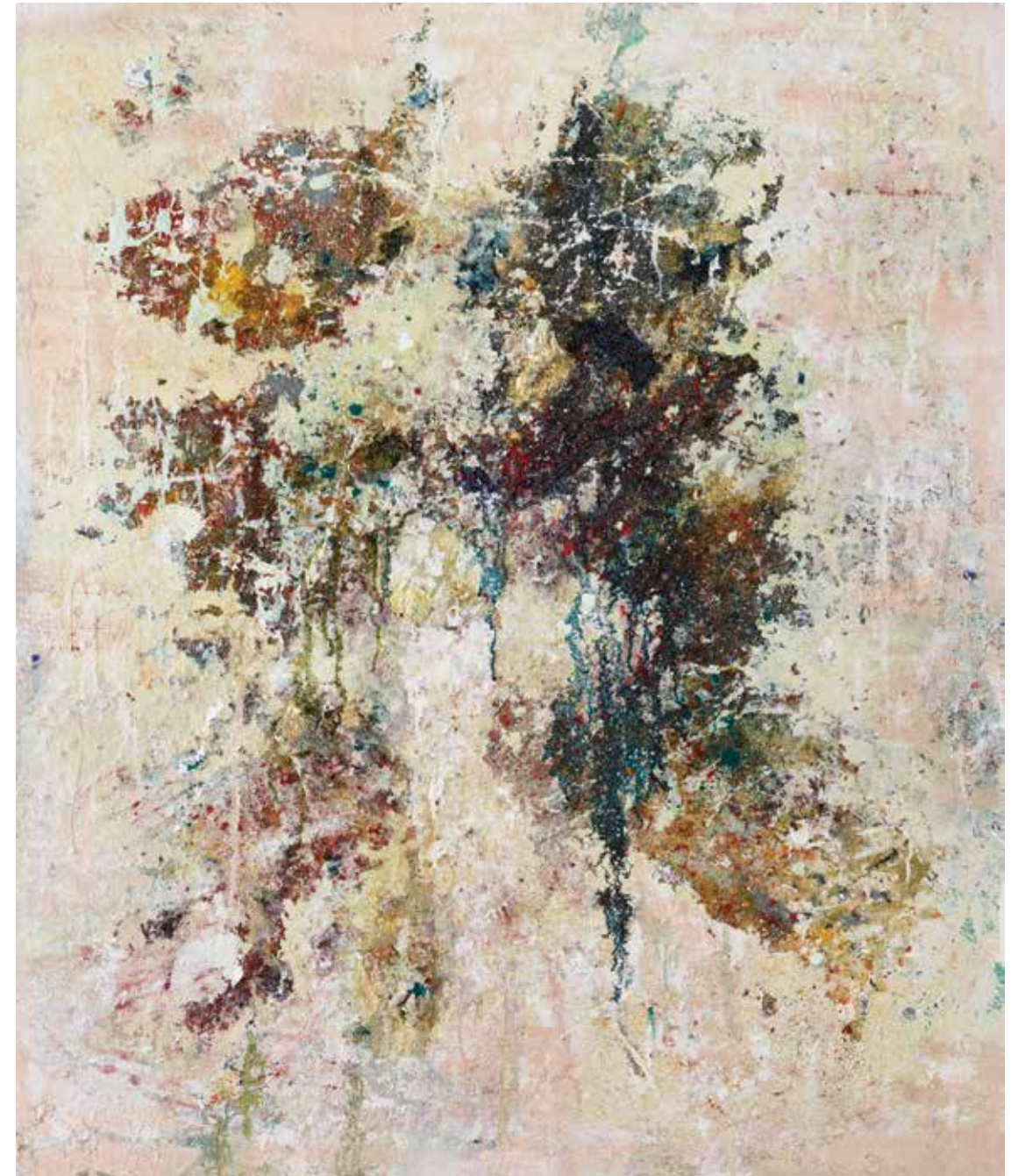
The materials of the city
the peeling

footprint and shine.

The eye.

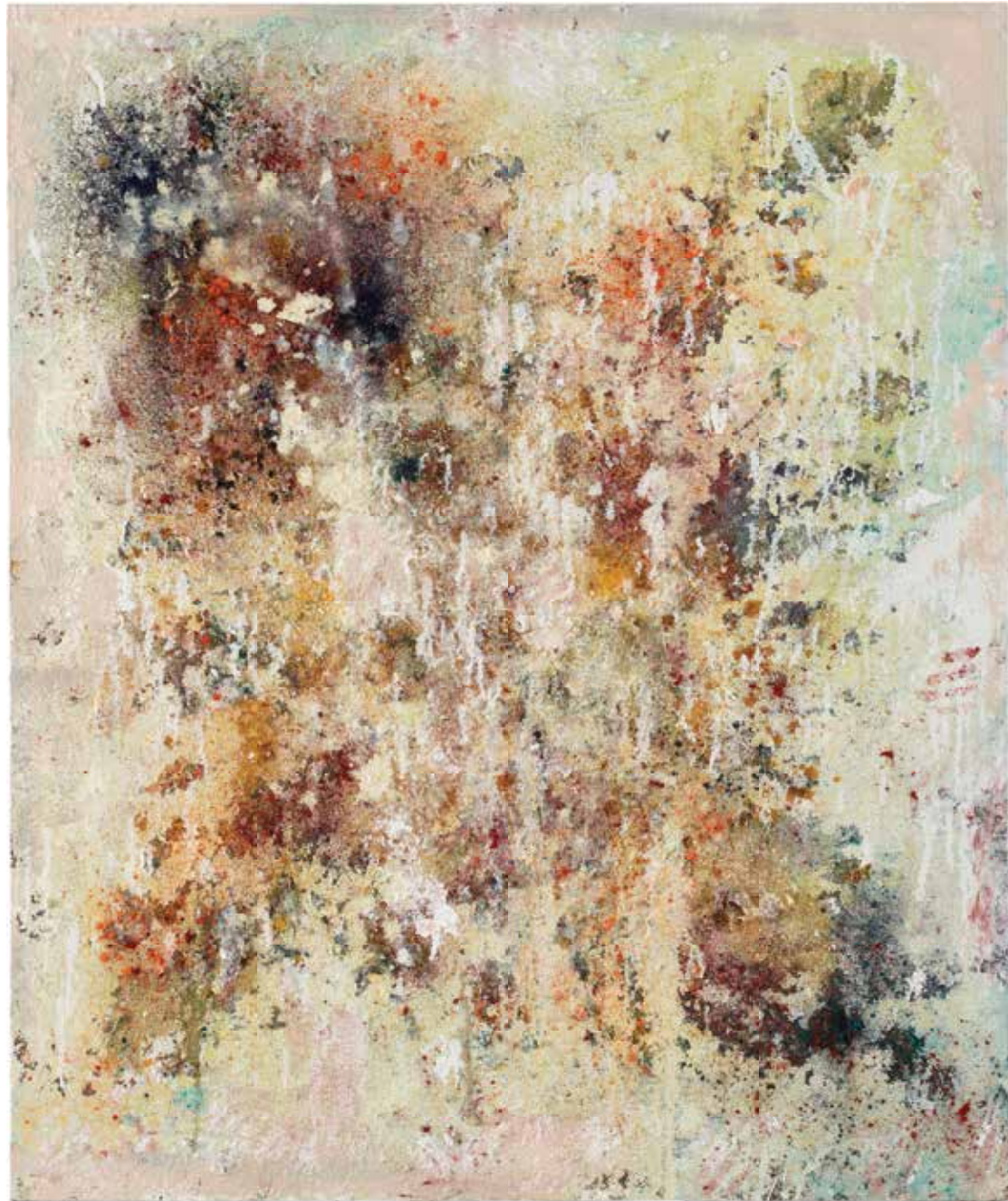
The aesthetic is
the painting itself bent.
Time is immaterial material

accident is everywhere
in nature
denial.
Texture is inside
paintings.



Amy Todman
Beirut, October 2023

La terre vue des étoiles IX | Oil on canvas | 120x100 cm | 2023



La terre vue des étoiles X | Oil on canvas | 120x100 cm | 2023



La terre vue des étoiles XI | Oil on canvas | 120x100 cm | 2023



Sublimation X | Oil on canvas | 120x100 cm | 2023



Sublimation IX | Oil on canvas | 120x100 cm | 2023



Sublimation XIV | Oil on canvas | 100x120 cm | 2023



Sublimation XV | Oil on canvas | 100x120 cm | 2023



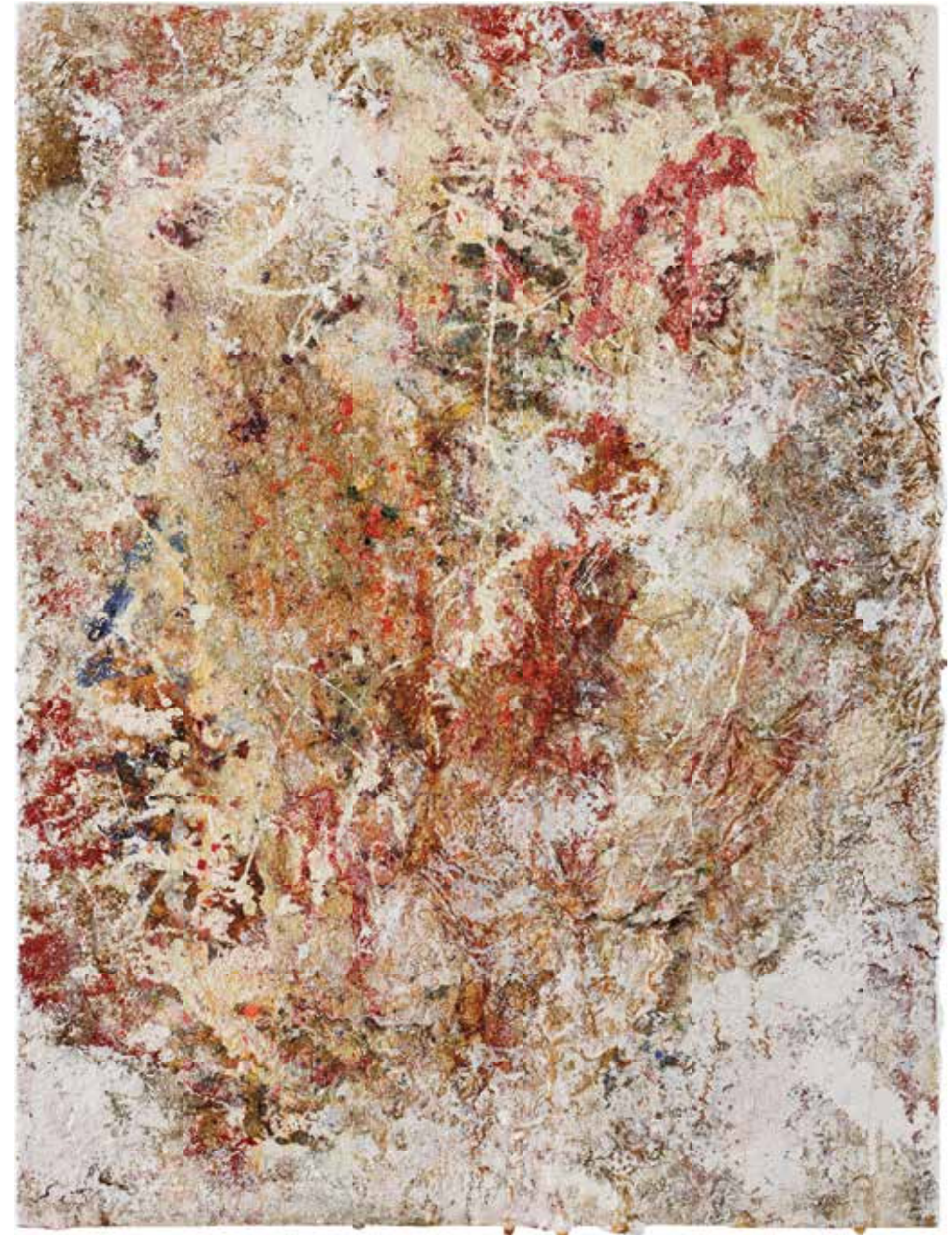
Sublimation XI | Oil on canvas | 100x80 cm | 2023



Sublimation XIII | Oil on canvas | 110x90 cm | 2023



La terre vue des étoiles III | Oil on canvas | 80x60 cm | 2023



La terre vue des étoiles IV | Oil on canvas | 80x60 cm | 2023



Sublimation II | Oil on canvas | 100x80 cm | 2023



Sublimation VIII | Oil on canvas | 120x100 cm | 2023



Sublimation IV | Oil on canvas | 90x80 cm | 2023



Sublimation III | Oil on canvas | 120x100 cm | 2023

La matière est mon langage

La superposition de couches, la discontinuité des applications, la continuité et la régularité de la texture font de la matière un langage et un outil dont je fais usage dans mes peintures. C'est par elle que j'incarne les paradoxes et certaines contradictions de l'existence: elle est vie et mort, beauté et laideur, plaie et cicatrisation, résistance face à la douleur, résilience face aux traumatismes. Dans mes toiles, la vie est combat.

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C'est une douleur incandescente, chronique et vive qui s'exhibe crûment. Ce sont les chocs, les impacts, les collisions et les glissements, les ruptures et les inondations, les tremblements et les éruptions par lesquels la création a eu lieu. Notre terre s'est formée dans la fureur d'être. La matière se meut, dégouline hors de son cadre, s'étale et se transforme.

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C'est le calme retrouvé, la quiétude, une invitation à regarder de plus près, à sonder le geste. Le temps a fait son effet, il a apaisé la matière. La toile devient alors le sujet de son environnement.

Là, je travaille en série des diptyques et des triptyques, à partir des mêmes matériaux. Une fois mon intervention terminée, je les laisse sécher dans des pièces différentes avec des températures différentes afin qu'ils évoluent chacun à leur manière. La surface s'étire et se déchire, des rides se forment sur les toiles.

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C'est la lumière. La douleur est transfigurée, elle est hors de soi. Après l'affrontement et l'acceptation, c'est le moment de prendre de la distance.

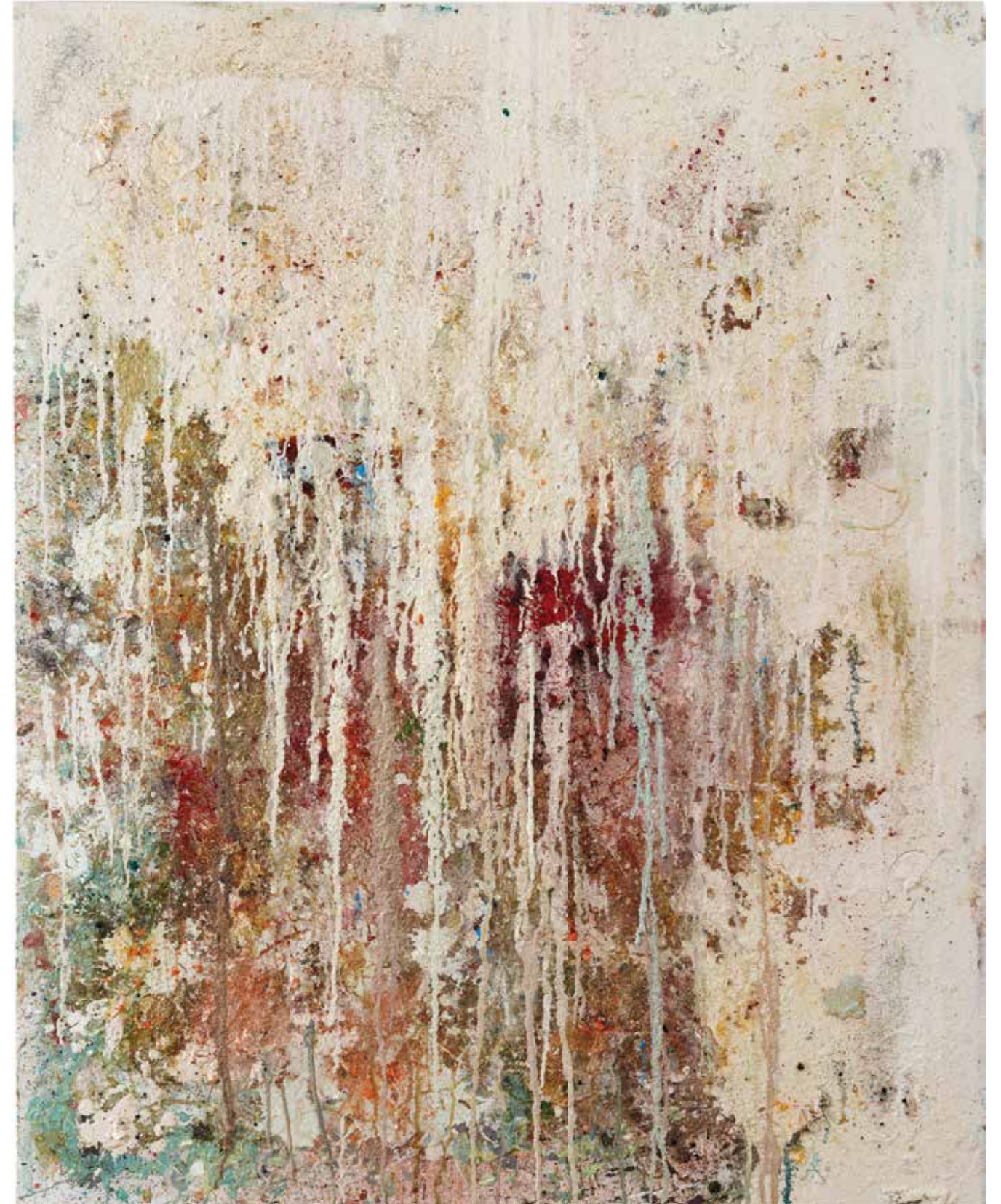
Dans ma main, un cœur séché et trempé dans de la résine; des vaisseaux oranges et rouges qui s'entrecroisent. Les cadres blancs, omniprésents dans cette série, interpellent le cosmique, le spirituel. Dieu a-t-il posé sa main sur la douleur ? Est-elle désormais de son côté?

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Ce sont des paysages géologiques, des vues circulaires de la terre, des horizons imaginés à partir du ciel. La matière devient roche, mais aussi mer, minéraux, ciel, pluie, agglomérations, entassements et masses.

Hala Mouzannar
Beirut, October 2023

La terre vue des étoiles XII | Oil on canvas | 150x120 cm | 2023 ▶





Sublimation V | Oil on canvas | 120x150 cm | 2023



Sublimation VI | Oil on canvas | 120x150 cm | 2023



Sublimation VII | Oil on canvas | 120x150 cm | 2023



Sublimation I | Oil on canvas | 100x120 cm | 2023



Sublimation XII | Oil on canvas | 100x120 cm | 2023



La terre vue des étoiles I | Oil on canvas | 100x120 cm | 2023



La terre vue des étoiles II | Oil on canvas | 100x120 cm | 2023



La terre vue des étoiles V | Oil on canvas | 80x100 cm | 2023



La terre vue des étoiles II | Oil on canvas | 80x100 cm | 2023



La terre vue des étoiles VII | Oil on canvas | 80x100 cm | 2023



La terre vue des étoiles VIII | Oil on canvas | 80x100 cm | 2023



Des visages et des couleurs I | Oil on canvas | 30x30 cm | 2023



Des visages et des couleurs II | Oil on canvas | 30x30 cm | 2023



Des visages et des couleurs III/IV | Oil on canvas | 50x50 cm each / 40x50 cm each | 2023



Des visages et des couleurs V/VI | Oil on canvas | 30x30 cm each | 2023

About the Artist

Born in Beirut in 1968, Hala Mouzannar came to the world of art after decades of experience in the creative industry. She worked as a media planner for Leo Burnett Beirut, as a media executive for Future Television, and as a director of acquisitions for Aïzone fashion department store.

In 2005, she co-founded *Madame Rêve*, a costume jewelry company and store where she also worked as a creative stylist. She shifted to a painting practice in 2015.

She holds a BA in Business Administration from the American University of Beirut (1989). She also earned, in 2021, an MFA in Visual Arts from Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts (ALBA) in Beirut.

Her solo exhibitions include *La Chasse aux Papillons* in Beirut at Agial Art Gallery and an exhibition in London. Her group exhibitions include Arthaus Gallery, Beirut Art Center, Maintain, La Maison Abandonnée and Green Cedars in Beirut.

Solo Exhibitions

2023 *Si la Matière pouvait parler*. Agial Art Gallery. Beirut, Lebanon.

2022 *Meet the Artist*. Marie Jose Gallery Gallery. London, United Kingdom.

2021 *La Chasse aux Papillons*. Agial Art Gallery. Beirut, Lebanon.

Group Exhibitions

2022 *Maintain* (under the collective Yalla Bala Manyake), Beirut Art Center (BAC), Beirut, Lebanon.

2021 *La Maison Abandonnée*. Beirut, Lebanon.

2021 *Green Cedars*, Arthaus Gallery, Beirut, Lebanon.

2020 *Green Cedars*, French Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon.



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