

RUINS/ROVINE

A group art show curated by Anda Klavina featuring works
by Inga Meldere, Ilga Leimanis, Richard Magee

Ruins: Anxiety as a Guide

For Freud, ruins were uncanny (unheimlich), because they reveal something that should remain hidden.

What attracts one's attention when traveling around Sicily is the extent and variety of its ruins. Along with ancient Greek amphitheatres and temples, there are remains of baglios (typical farmhouses), tuna factories dating from the Middle Ages through the 18th century, hospitals, and churches. There are the whole regions that have been destroyed by earthquakes, there are bunkers from WWII, and one can see unfinished utopian architecture that has been left to decay. More than anywhere else in Europe, authentic fragments of ruins coexist with restored ruins and modern buildings. Even the rubbish, so densely spread along the streets and roads, is a form of ruins. When one adds to this sheer volume of undead past a "summer that is as long and glum as a Russian winter" the result is an unsettling feeling that has bothered visitors from Goethe to Freud.

Ruins disorient us in time and space. They are present, while actually being from the past. At first one tries to "read them as an archaic language" as did Goethe, then one carefully retrieves and restores them as Freud did in his psychoanalysis. But something in the ruins resists this assimilation. That spooky, ghostly quality of ruins standing between past and present, death and life, the conscious and the unconscious, expressed and sealed for eternity – it cannot be thought, it can only be sensed. As the philosopher Dylan Trigg has observed, this creates anxiety in us as rational beings. This anxiety, however, becomes a portal to the unknown - to possibility, and to the future.

Since the ruins don't speak for themselves, but invite an active deciphering on the viewer's part, they have always been subject to erroneous or deliberate misrepresentation. The artist **Inga Meldere** (b. 1979) inhabits the dichotomy of truth and fiction in the phenomenon of ruins. Her site-specific installations are a careful, meticulous 'restoration' of a fictitious past.

By retrieving mythological figures from medieval allegories on the wall of a wooden house in Riga, or through 'discovering' a piece of 'fresco' in a Helsinki parking lot, she plays with the simulacrum-like quality of ruins, inviting her audience to be more careful, gentle viewers. The imaginative and fluid quality of her restorations conjures multiple story lines where the planet's ecology is more balanced, females have more agency, and history is fairer.

One could say that the young Irish painter **Richard Magee** (b. 1994) is interested in the archeologisation of 'the now'. In his works, the most ordinary, modern things often take on the appearance of ruins. A WIFI icon looks like an ancient Inca sign, and home utensils appear to be retrieved artefacts, casting doubts about their intended use. By mixing visual elements from collective and personal history, he creates layers much like in the psyche and in the physical world where 'historic' events intertwine with the current reality simultaneously and unpredictably.

Layering also occurs by using such techniques as screen printing and painting on self-made paper. By using strange and deformed angles, Richard is estranged from what is usual and invites archeological research into the everyday and the contemporary.

Ilga Leimanis (b. 1972) is concerned with the process of erasure, be it in her drawings and sketches or via performance art in which a 'line' of footsteps is immediately 'erased'. For her, the deletion is a two-fold process - one can delete more than intended, and then the necessary restoration work is revealed, or one can leave some traces of a previous mark. In the 'Ruins' show, the London-based artist is looking at erasure in the context of women's body and Russia's war in Ukraine. The artist uses the traditionally feminine crafts of weaving and embroidery as a form of resistance. By recycling her materials and weaving them into fabric, she creates a new matrix where the ruins of memory act as an amplifier of possibilities.

All of the artists in the show use the process of ruinification (creating the impression of a ruin) to express the difference in or distance from a personally-remembered past. "The historical present is being artistically defined, more and more, in a primarily backward-looking manner, as a time of memory, of recovery. [...] In this way, however, memory is in danger of becoming a medium of forgetting – a forgetting of the past as active within, as opposed to its separation from, the present – in a reactive manner." Ruinification can be a resistance to memory (forgetting). These artists do not try to 'enliven' the past. On the contrary, they look at the aspects of ruins that are attached to possible futures. "History (like art) is inherently utopian. This is something that ties art to history."

Maneuvering on the frontiers of artistic media, the artists in the exhibition do not offer an easy and conciliatory position on either their subject matter or the perceptive qualities of their artwork. They are deeply involved with the possibilities that an image can have in this era of visual omnipotency.

In Sicily, the lava of the collective unconscious flows beneath one's feet, not far from the surface. For Freud, Sicily held 'childish memories' – a deep connection to the origins of civilization and even to the Oedipal complex. Where better to seek wisdom and a creative source in times of uncertainty and turmoil, if not in such a fertile and unsettling place? Let what we discover in the ruins disturb our thinking and open up the imagination.

Anda Klavina, Curator

Literature:

Galvagno, Rosalba: *Freud and Great Greece. Metamorphoses of the 'exotic' journey between ancient and modern imaginary*, 2011

Goethe, J.W.: *Italian Journey*, Penguin Books, 1962

Di Lampedusa, Giuseppe, Tomasi: *The Leopard*, Penguin Books, 2007

Mackey, Jamie: *The Invention of Sicily: A Mediterranean History*, 2021

Osborne, Peter: *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art*, 2013
Royle, Nicolas: *The Uncanny*, 2003

Trigg, Dylan: *The Psychoanalysis of Ruins*, 2012
<https://www.3ammagazine.com/3am/the-psychoanalysis-of-ruins/>

Ilgā
Leimanis

Woven Together 2022,
Oil on canvas, washed, ripped and woven,
approx. 134 x 70 cm
EUR 1500, excl. tax





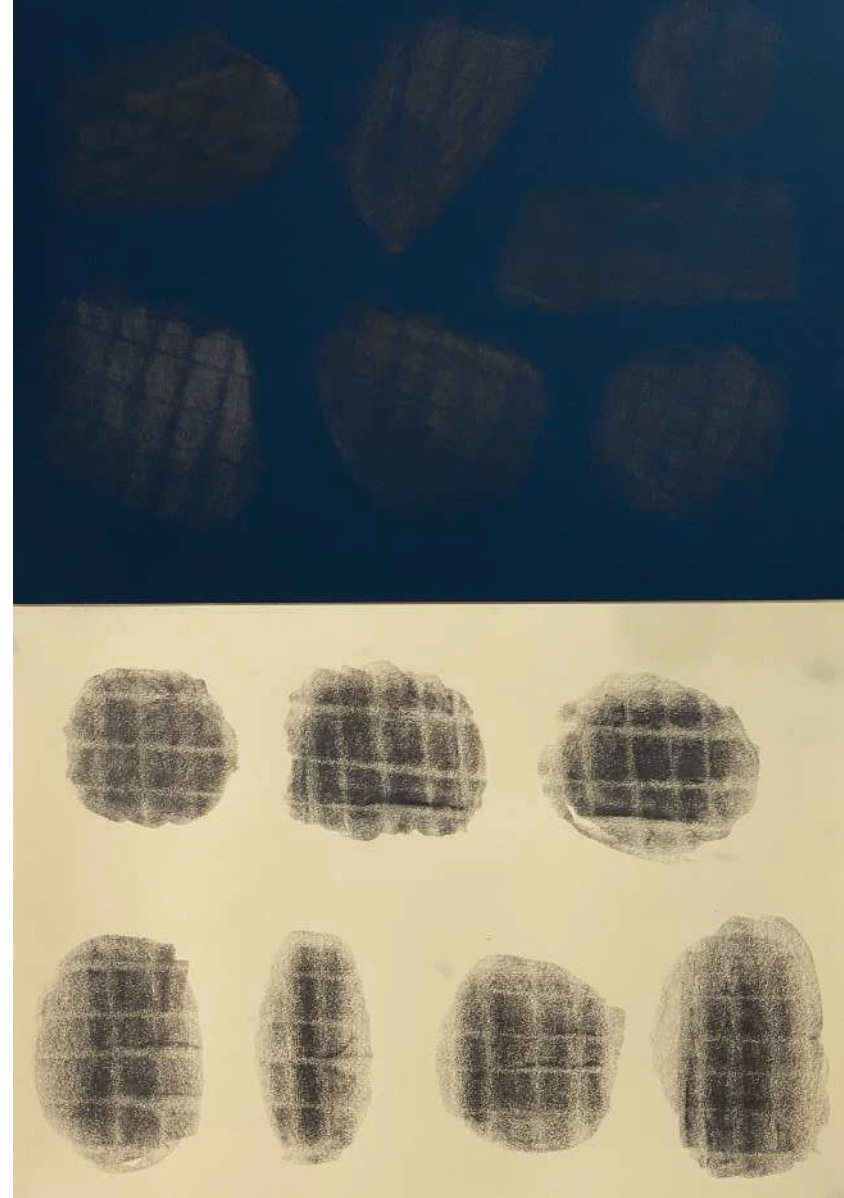
Gesture of Erasure I - II, 2022,
Graphite on paper, cut and erased, approx.
25 x 20 cm,
EUR 300, excl. tax

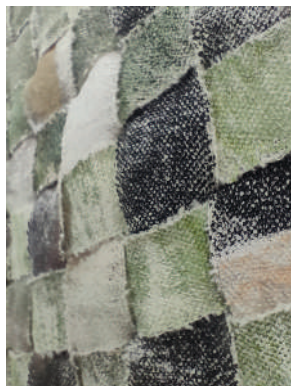
Rubbings (after Pietro Consagra) I – VI, 2022

Graphite on paper,

30 x 40 cm

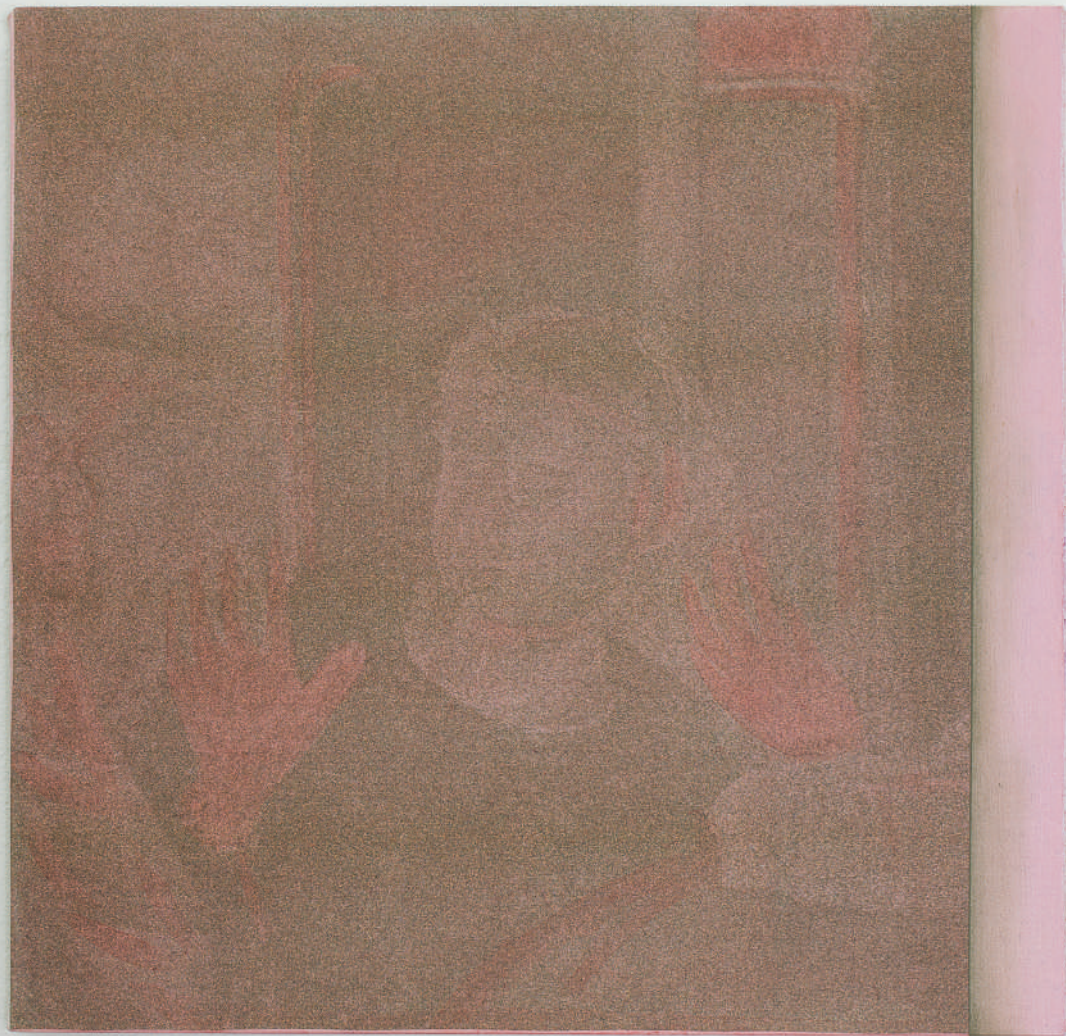
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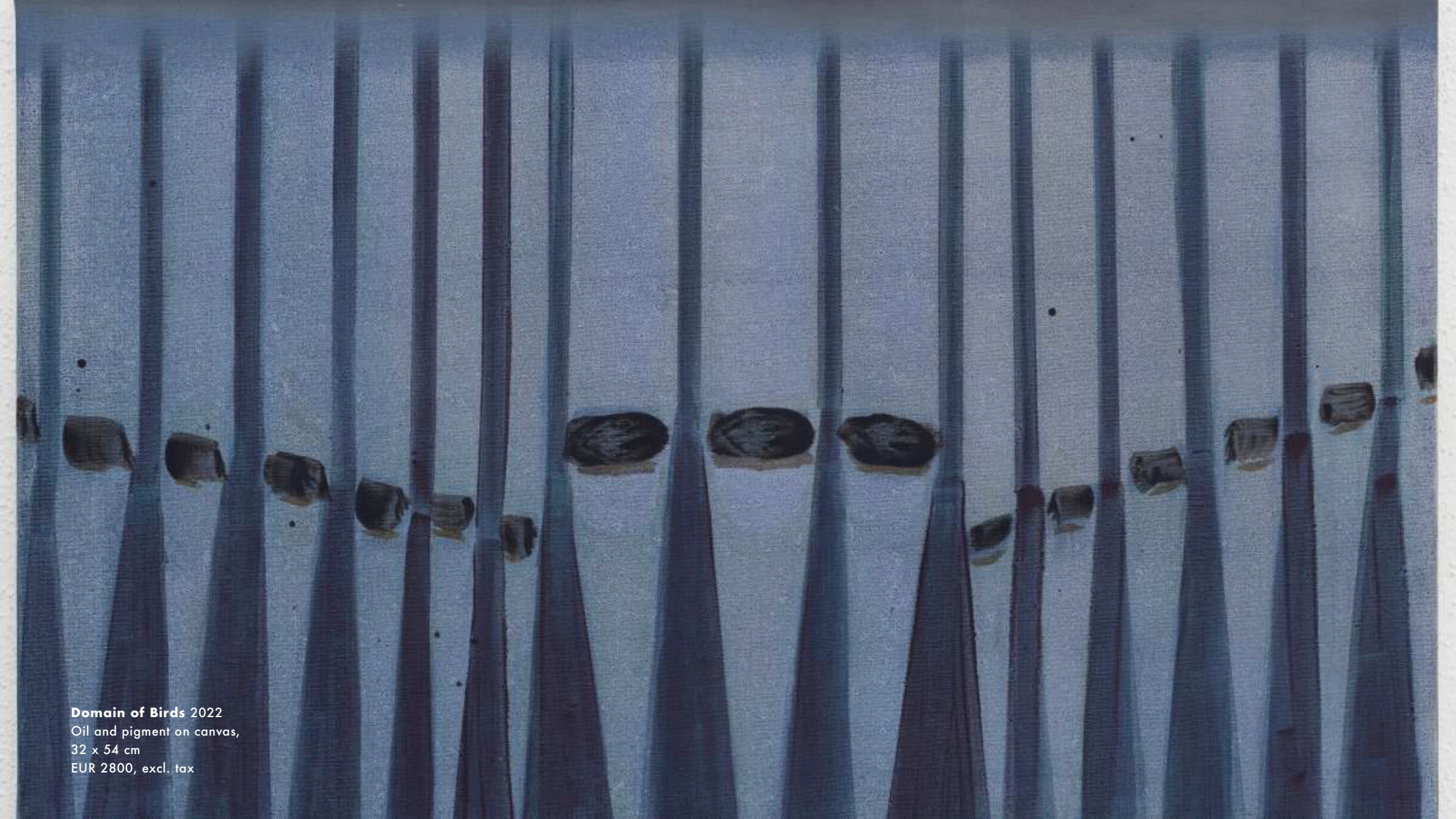
Inga
Meldere

From Giotto 2017
UV print, canvas, mixed media
26 x 37 cm
EUR 2600, excl. tax





The Sky, 2022
Wall painting in situ with pigments from nature (plants from Sicily and Africa),
Variable dimensions, Available as a commission



Domain of Birds 2022
Oil and pigment on canvas,
32 x 54 cm
EUR 2800, excl. tax

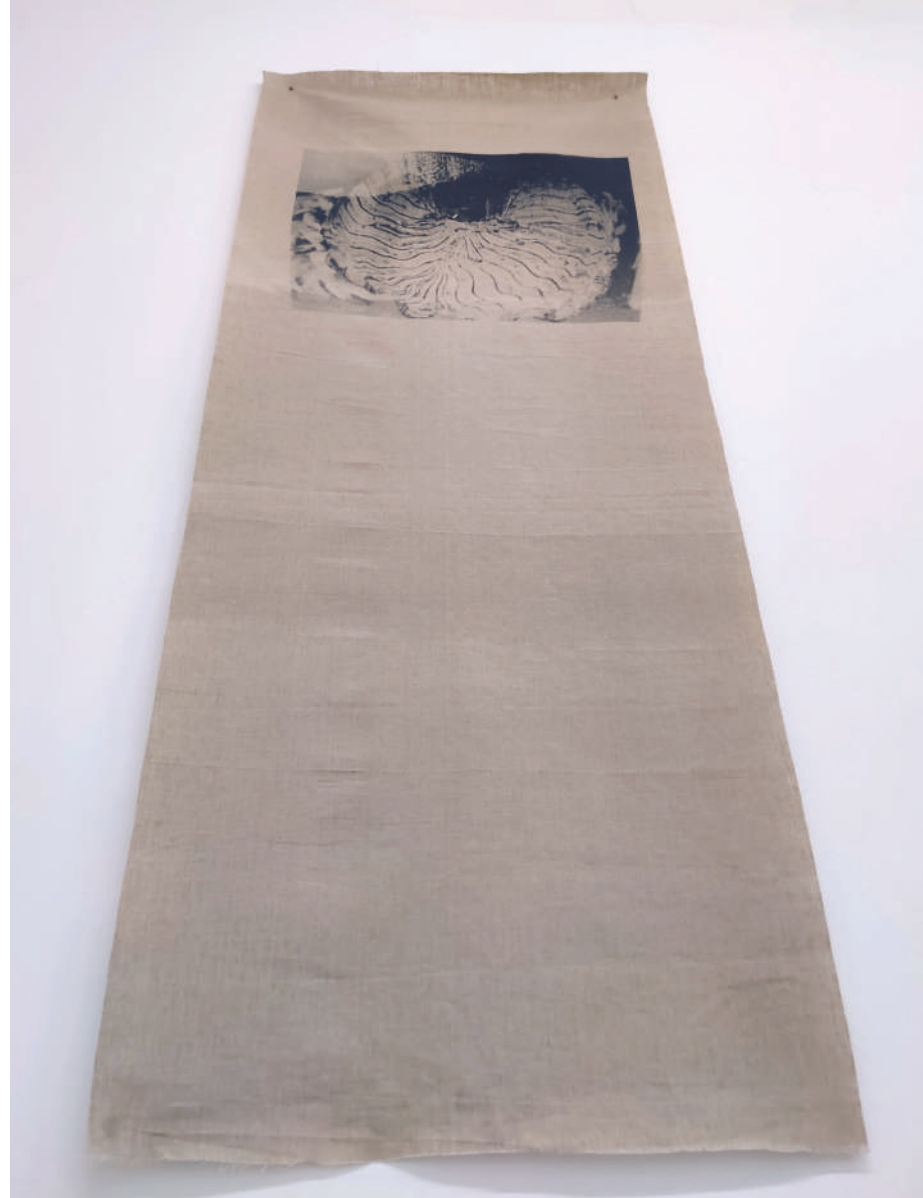


Domain of Birds II, 2022
Tempera on exposed wallface
Variable dimensions,
Available as a commission

Domain of Birds III, 2022
Tempera on exposed wallface
Variable dimensions,
Available as a commission

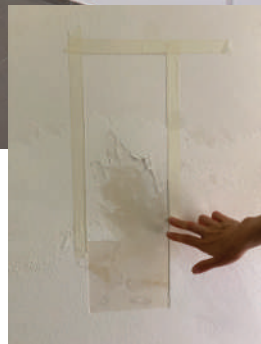


Sconce, 2022,
Silkscreen on linen,
140 x 35 cm,
EUR 1200, excl. tax

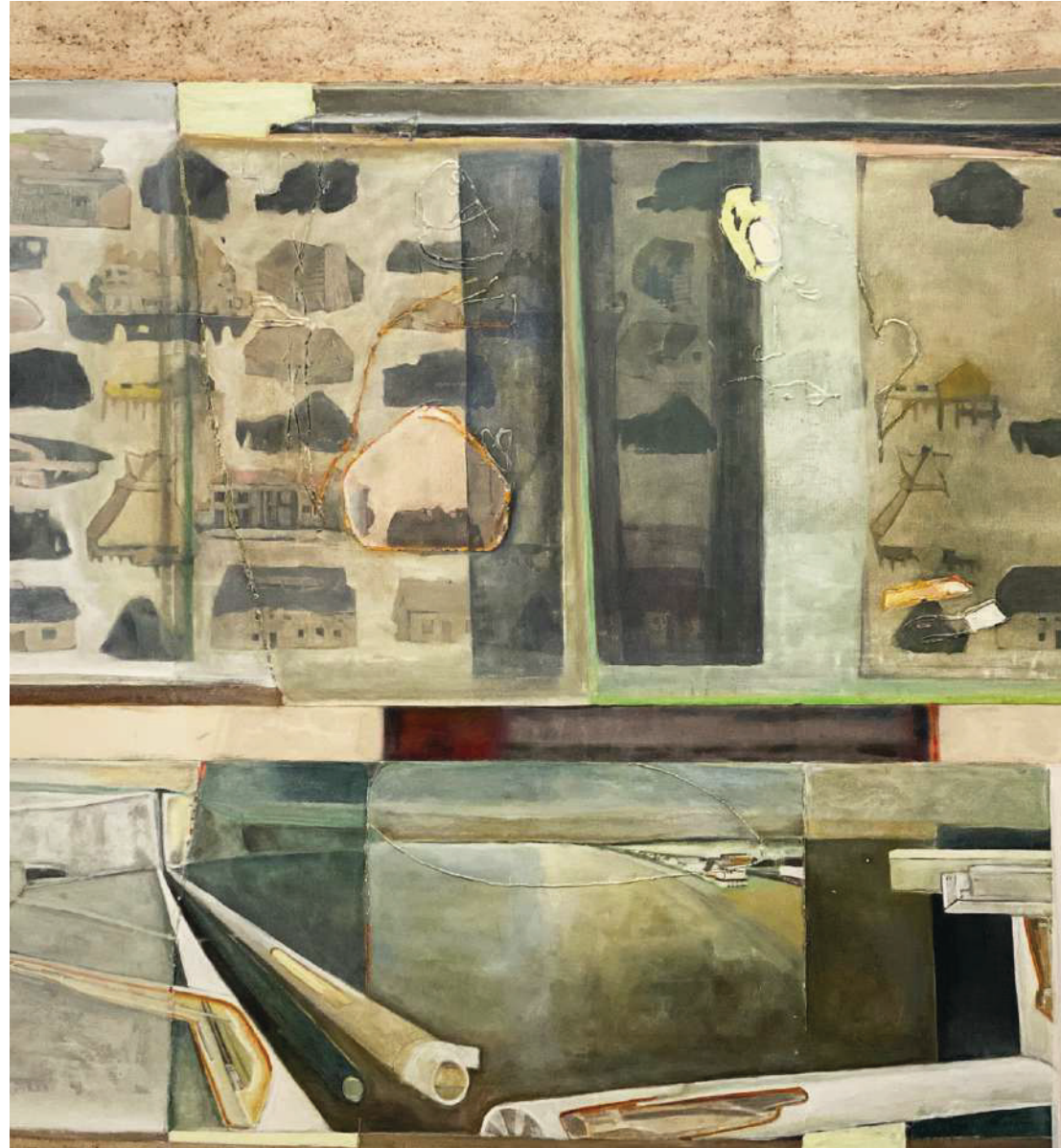




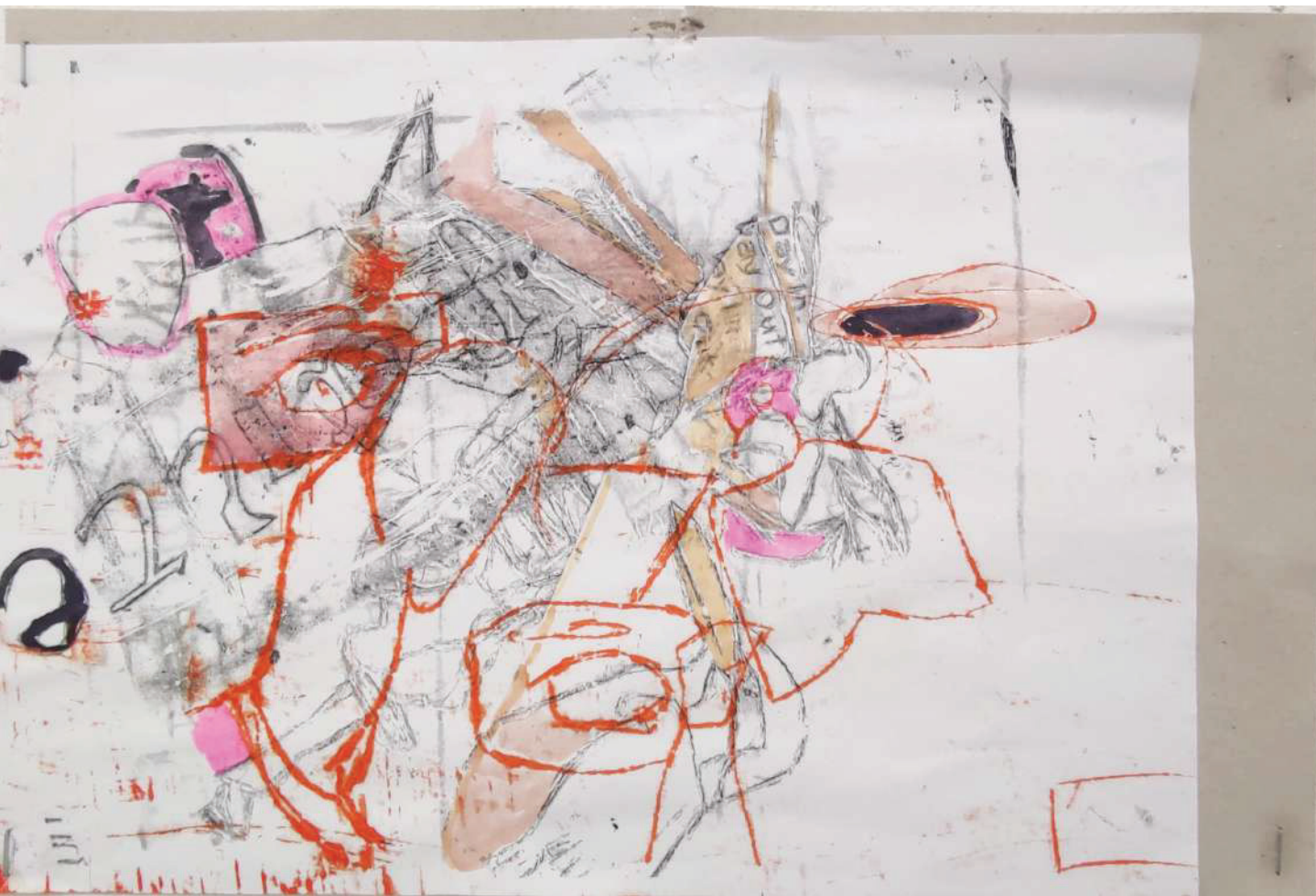
Reflection, 2021
Acrylic on paper, magnet, unique technique
30 x 42, com
EUR 1000, excl. tax



Richard
Magee

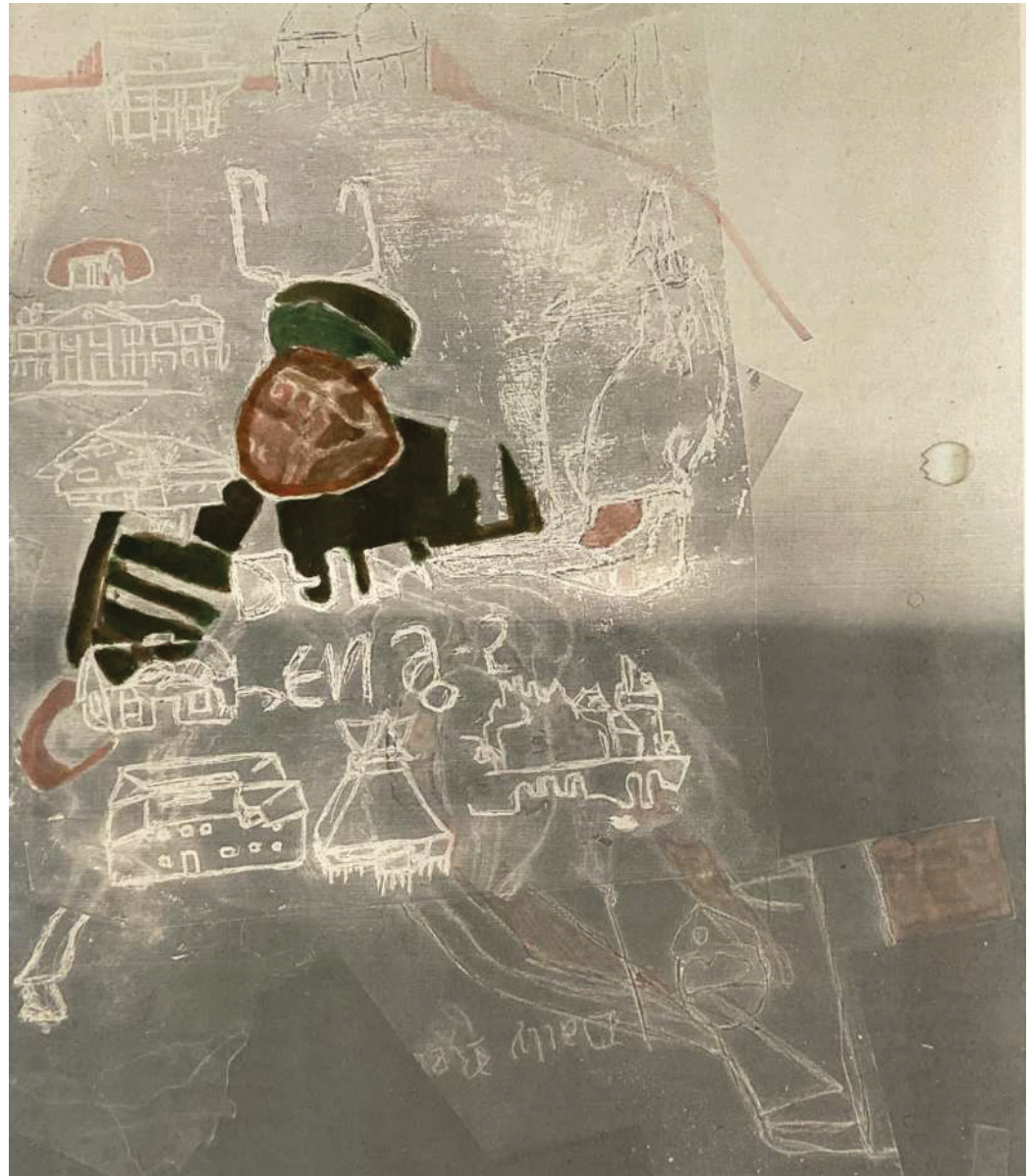


Channel Tunnel '94, 2021-22,
Oil, acrylic, plaster, disposition and homemade
pigment from soil on canvas,
150 x 150 cm,
Corinthian Contemporary Art Partnership Collection



(False) Rumors I, 2022,
Oil, ink, water colours and highlighter on print,
32 x 22 cm,
EUR 300 excl. tax

(False) Rumors II, 2022,
Ink on print,
29 x 42 cm,
Corinthian Contemporary Art Partnership Collection





(False) Rumors III, 2022,
Multiple parts, mixed media, water colours, ink and
highlights on print
60 x 42 cm,
Corinthian Contemporary Art Partnership Collection



(False) Rumors IV, 2022,
Multiple parts, mixed media, water colours, ink and
highlights on print
60 x 42 cm,
EUR 300 excl. tax

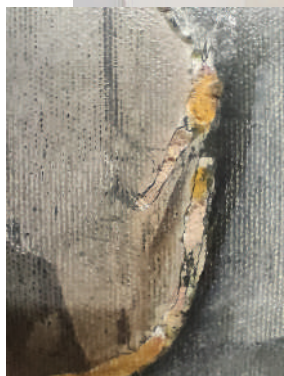


(False) Rumors V, 2022,

Multiple parts, mixed media, water colours, ink and highlights on print

56 x 21 cm,

EUR 500 excl. tax



Sales enquiries:

anda@corinthiancontemporary.art
+371 24249303