



LIONEL SMIT
Irreversible



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1–27 March 2024



IRREVERSIBLE

Everard Read London presents an exhibition of new oil paintings and bronze sculpture by celebrated South African artist, Lionel Smit.

In this new body of work, Smit continues to explore portraiture and themes of identity. For Smit, the human face is a boundless source of study and his work accentuates facial characteristics through bold and vital swathes of colour and brush techniques, highly-textured bronzes and vivid patinas. The subjects of his portraits exude strength and dignity; some have a meditative quality while others evoke a sense of vulnerability conveyed by the sitter's averted gaze or contemplative expression.

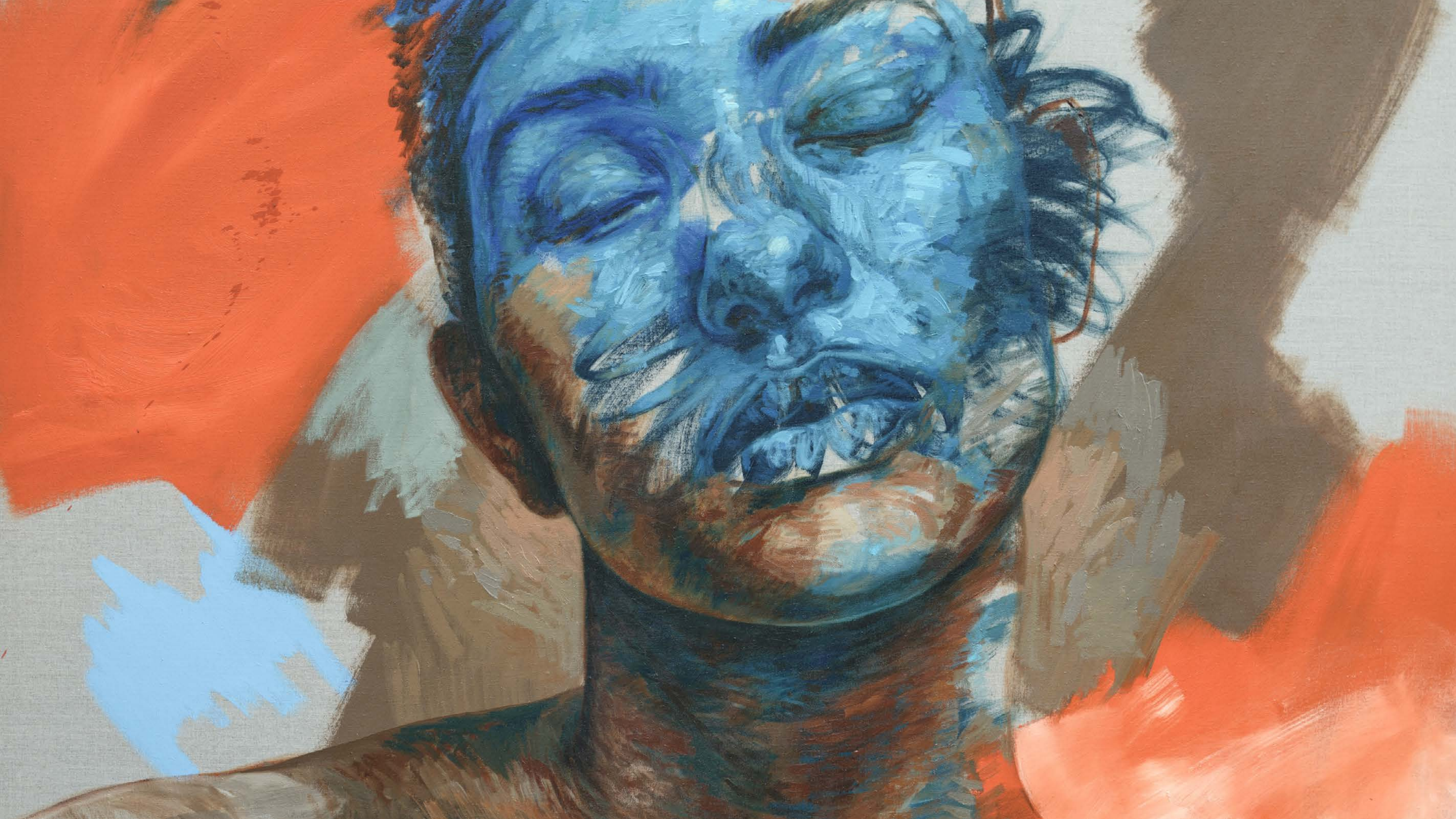
In this exhibition, Smit continues to reflect on the various art traditions that have influenced his own artistic output. Evident in these works is the loose brushwork and vivid colours that Fauvism brought into conversation in the early 20th century, while Smit's subjects and their posture reference the classical art movement of the Renaissance.

The result is a dynamic tension between the simplified and the detailed, the raw and the refined, with faces moving in and out of focus. In some of his paintings, it seems as if the 'human is emerging from some otherworldly realm, slowly drifting into focus and definition.'*

Best known for his contemporary portraiture, Smit's art is defined by a profound and ongoing dialogue between painting and sculpture. He grew up in an artistic milieu and his father's sculpture studio played a central role in his childhood. Smit explains further, 'I started with clay – so that's my reference point ... And that's the way I approach painting. I approach it like sculpture, adding pieces until the image emerges.'

Smit's work has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions from London to Miami, New York and Hong Kong. His work has been exhibited at the National Portrait Gallery in London receiving the Visitors' Choice - BP Portrait Award in 2013.

* Ernst van der Wal, professor of Visual Studies, University of Stellenbosch





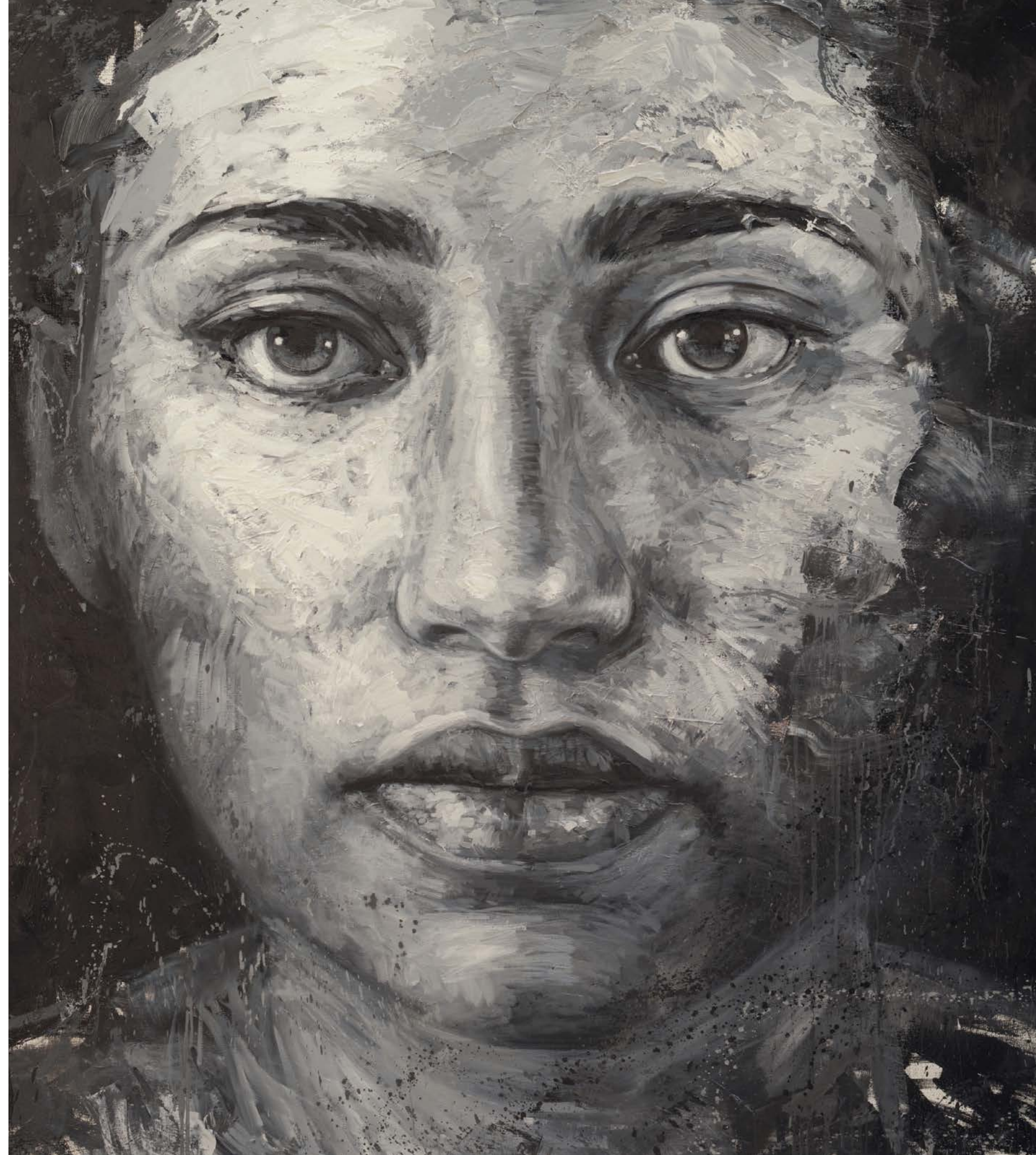
Memory Echo
oil on linen
150 x 120 cm
59 x 47 1/8 in



Infinite Change
oil on linen
150 x 120 cm
59 x 47 1/8 in



Permanence
oil on linen
230 x 170 cm
90 1/2 x 66 7/8 in





Irreversible
oil on linen
120 x 150 cm
47 1/8 x 59 in



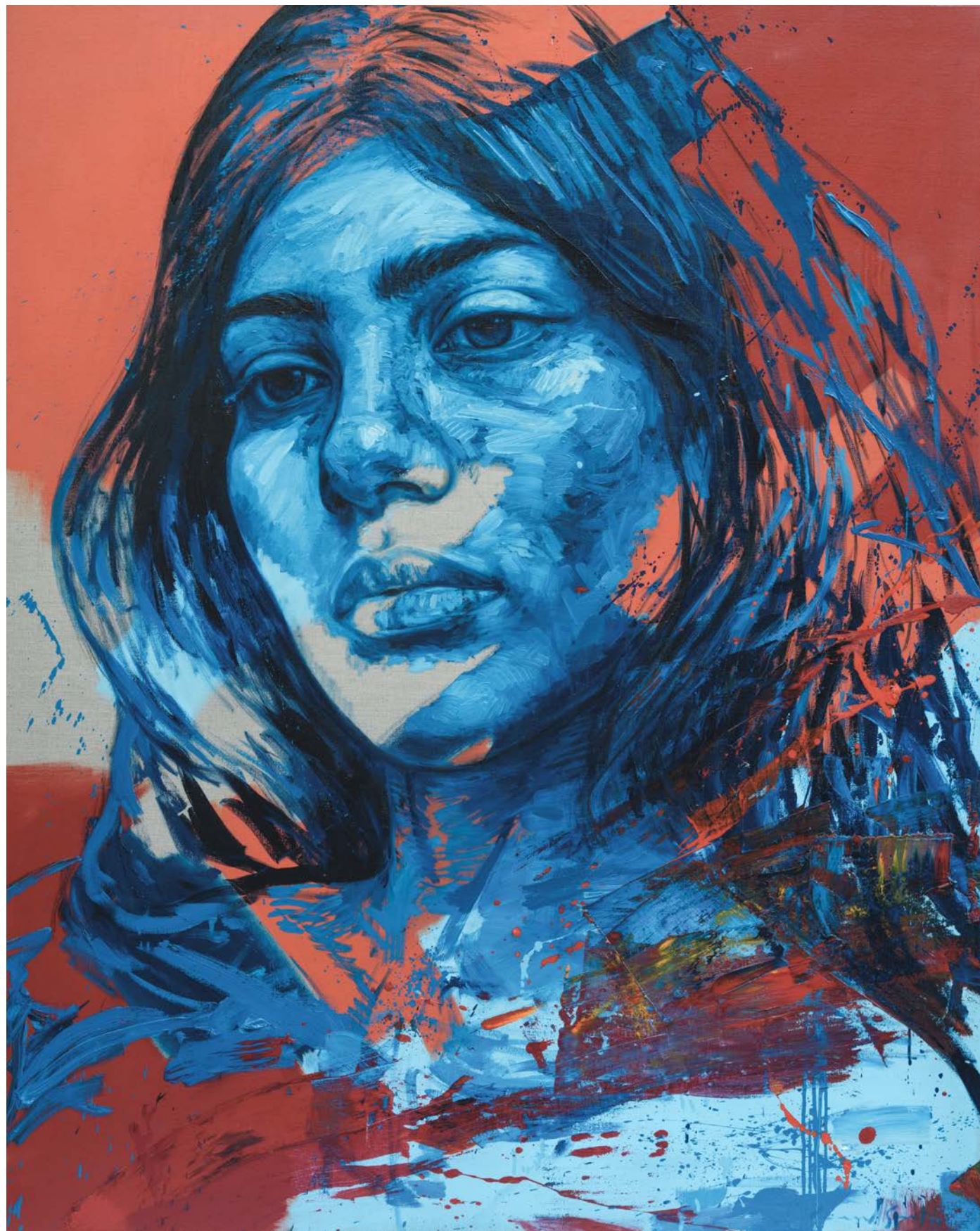
Moment
oil on linen
100 x 100 cm
39 1/4 x 39 1/4 in



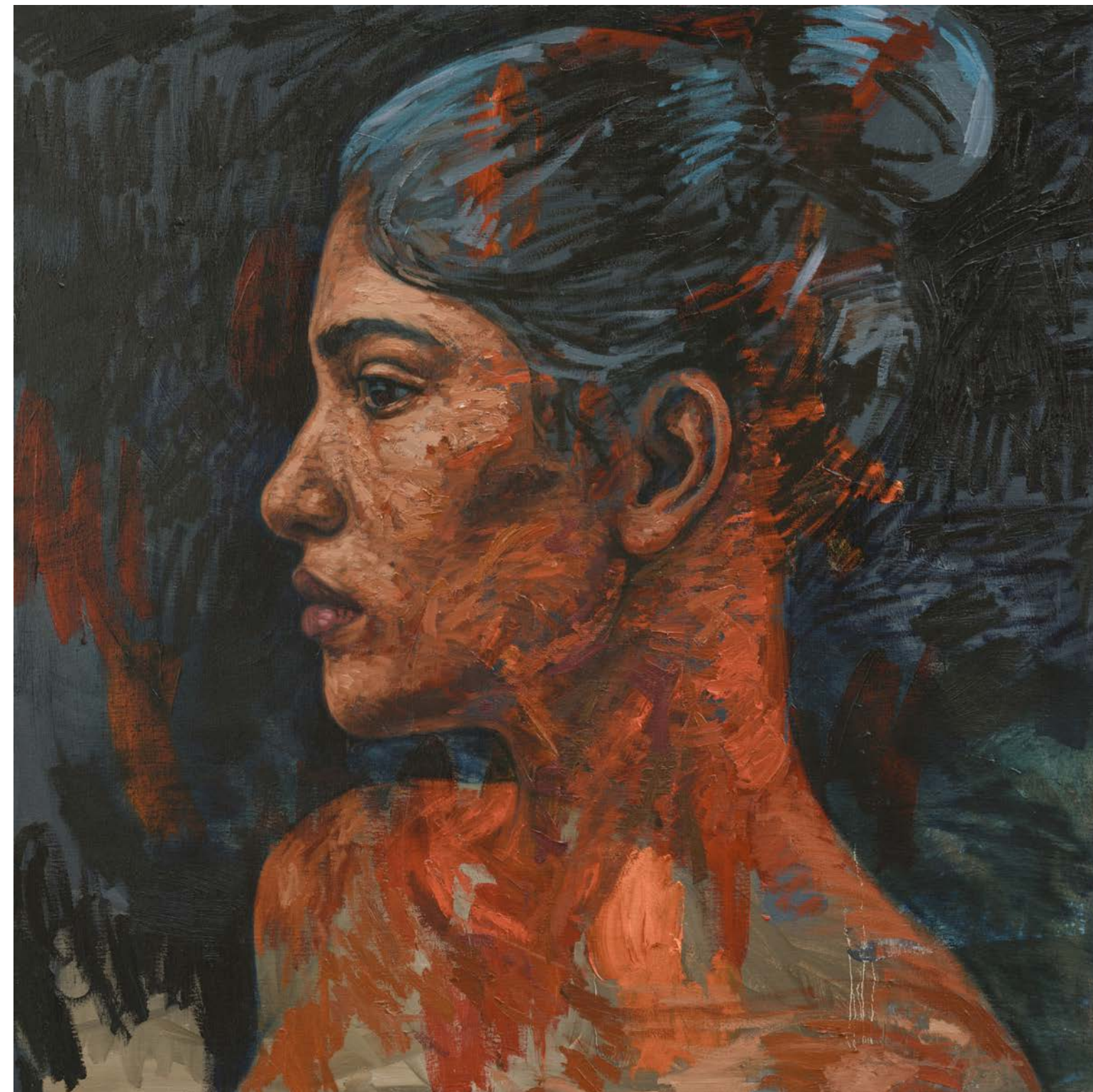
Remnants
oil on linen
100 x 80 cm
39 1/4 x 31 3/8 in



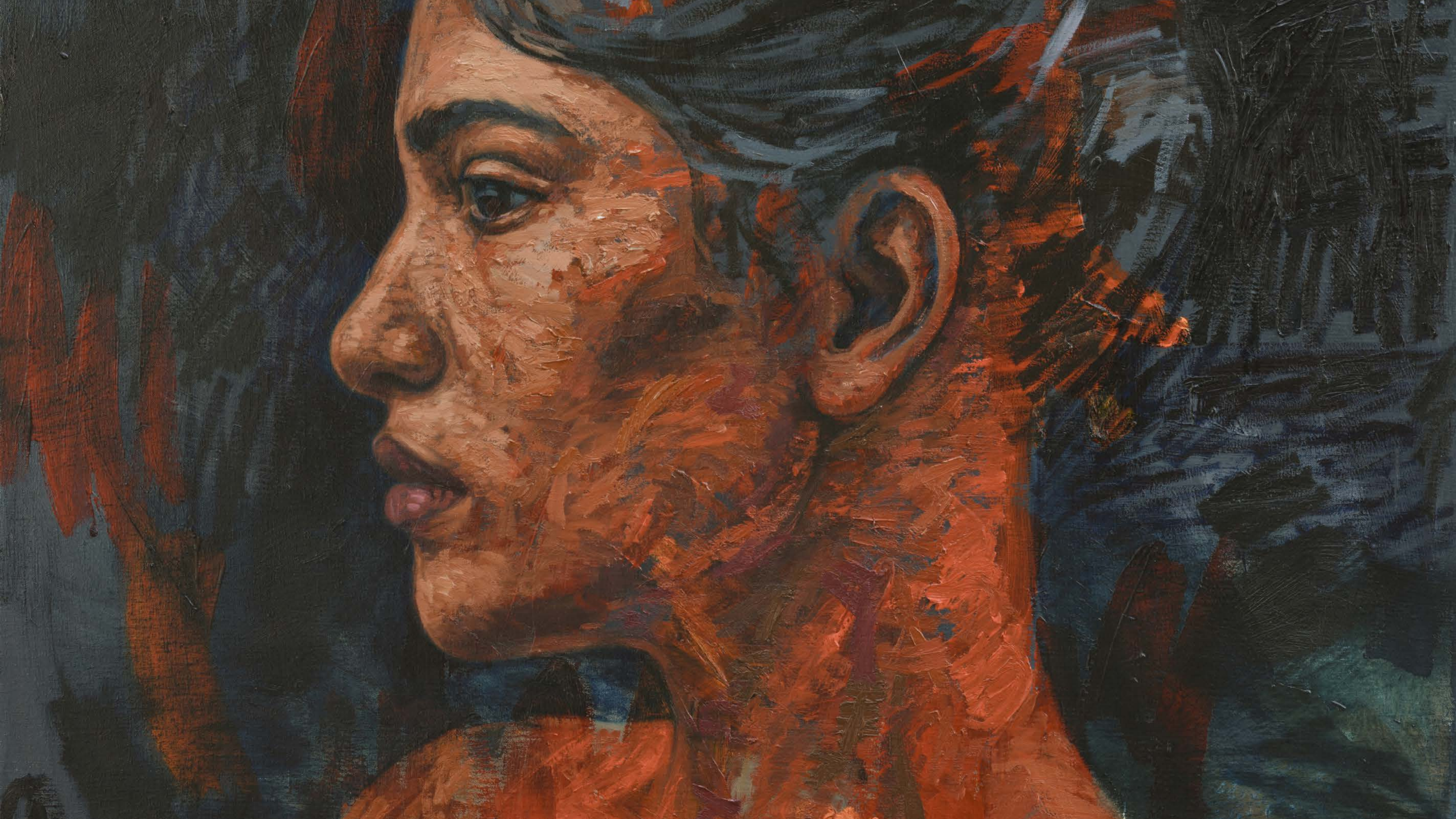


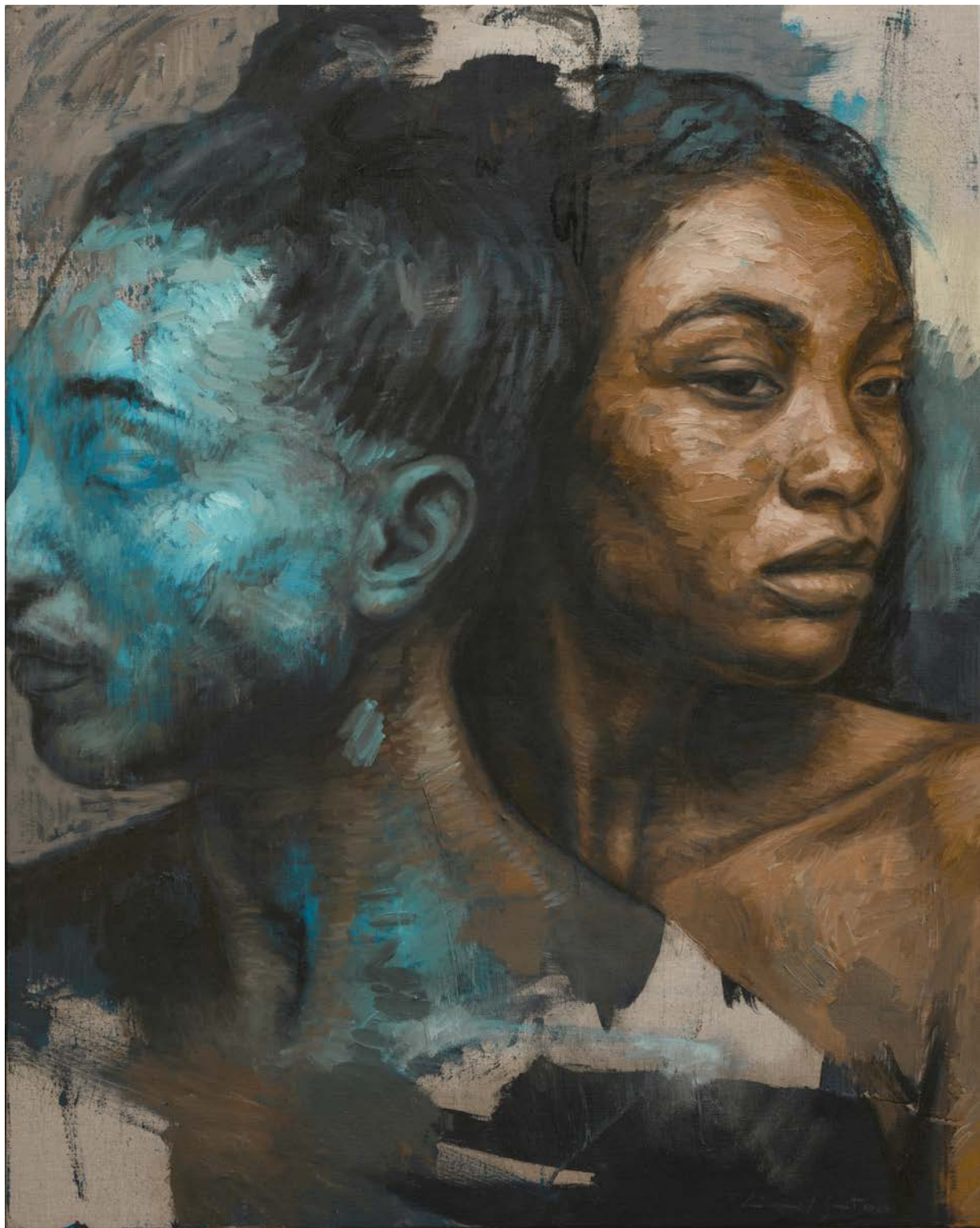


Reversible
oil on linen
150 x 120 cm
59 x 47 1/8 in



Dimmed
oil on linen
100 x 100 cm
39 1/4 x 39 1/4 in



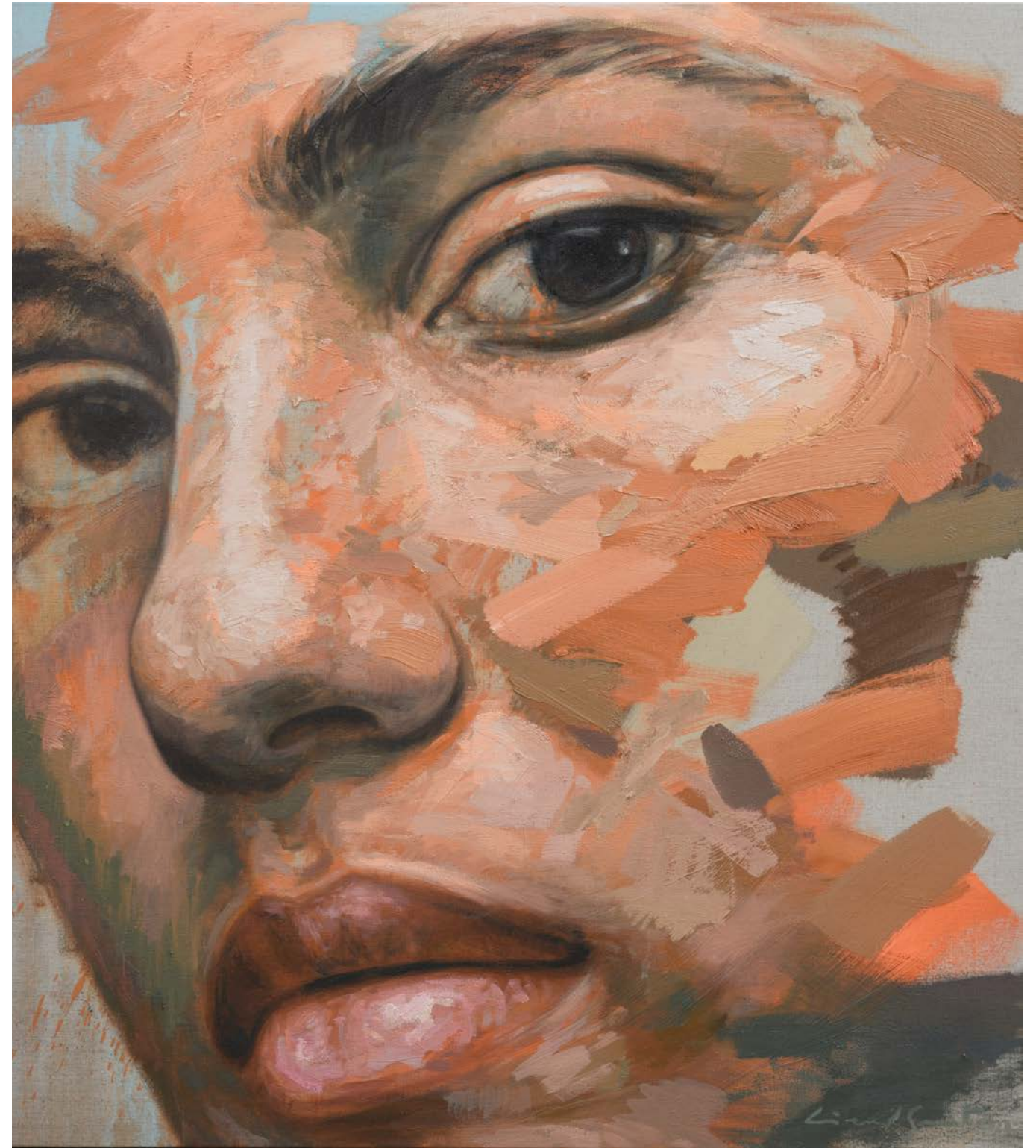


Delicate Rehearsal
oil on linen
100 x 80 cm
39 1/4 x 31 3/8 in





Reframe#1
oil on linen
90 x 80 cm
35 ³/₈ x 31 ³/₈ in



Reframe #2
oil on linen
90 x 80 cm
35 ³/₈ x 31 ³/₈ in





Shroud #3
bronze
Edition of 3
99 x 61 x 40 cm
39 x 24 x 15 5/8 in



Unravelling Form

bronze

Edition of 8

111 x 85 x 66 cm

43 ⁵/₈ x 33 ³/₈ x 26 in



Ascendance
bronze
Edition of 8
112 x 50 x 36 cm
44 x 19⁵/₈ x 14¹/₈ in





Reshape
bronze
Edition of 12
47.5 x 37 x 30 cm
18 ⁵/₈ x 14 ¹/₂ x 11 ³/₄ in



Calm State
bronze
Edition of 12
43 x 32 x 20 cm
16 ⁷/₈ x 12 ¹/₂ x 7 ³/₄ in





Adaptive Application #1

bronze

Edition of 12

26 x 20 x 45 cm

10 ¹/₈ x 7 ³/₄ x 17 ⁵/₈ in



Adaptive Application #3

bronze

Edition of 12

28 x 20 x 44 cm

11 x 7³/₄ x 17¹/₄ in



LIONEL SMIT

b. 1982, South Africa

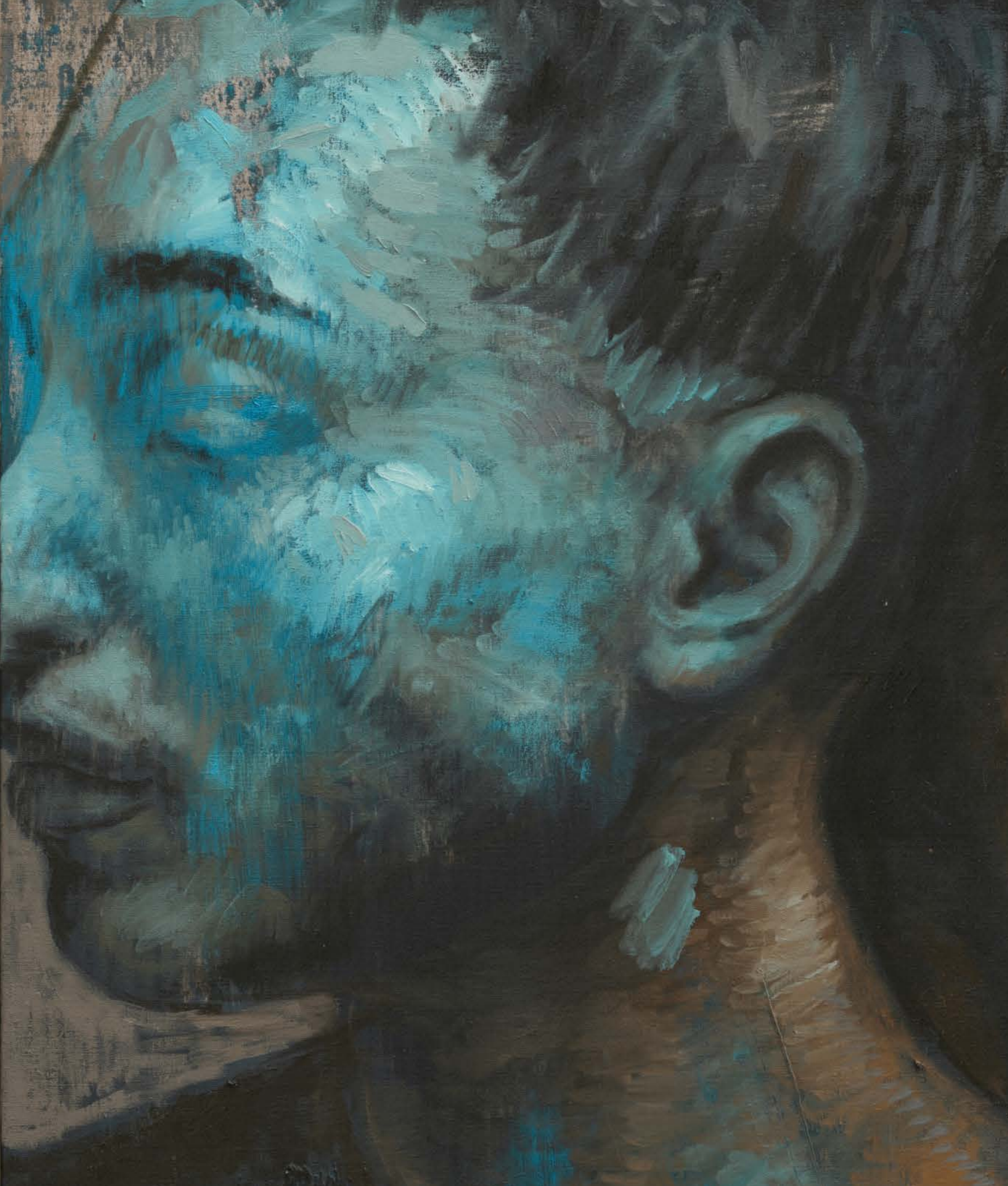
Lionel Smit is best known for his contemporary portraiture executed through monumental canvases and sculptures. Perhaps more than anything else, Smit's work is defined by a profound and ongoing dialogue between sculpture and painting.

A multidisciplinary artist, each of Smit's works offers us an entry point into the variety and richness that lies beneath every face we encounter in life, whether applied in bronze or in paint. While retaining their austerity and meditative aesthetic, Smit's figures remain highly charged with the emotive and gestural energy of his creative process.

Smit's paintings begin with abstract lines and swathes of colour that establish a foundation for the subsequently overlaid image of a face or bust – in most cases of anonymous models from the Cape Malay community. For Smit, the Cape Malay woman epitomises hybrid identity within a South African context and reflects the fragmentation of identity within our increasingly globalised world.

Smit's bronzes are created using the lost wax casting method. Patinas commonly available to artists working in bronze include natural browns, blacks and greens. However, given the importance of colour to Smit, he uses alternative methods that result in a unique fusion of intensely saturated patinas. Brilliant streaks of blues and greens enrich the grooves of an ear, while the natural shadow of an eyelid is intensified by the deepening of rich black patinas. Smit's ability to manipulate the patination process, coupled with his focused enthusiasm for surface gradations, has allowed him to consistently push boundaries.

Smit's painting has been exhibited at the National Portrait Gallery in London where it received the Viewer's Choice Award, as well as selected as the 'face' of the BP Portrait Award 2013. In 2016, Smit, in collaboration with Cynthia-Reeves Gallery, installed a public art installation, 'Morphous', in New York's Union Square. He received a Ministerial Award from the South African Department of Culture for Visual Art.



SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2023** *Exposure*, solo exhibition, Everard Read CIRCA Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2022** *Pendulum*, Uitstalling Art Gallery / KUBE Gallery, Genk
Interlude, Everard Read CIRCA, Johannesburg
Collide, .M Contemporary, Sydney
- 2021** *Prelude*, Everard Read, London, UK
Discrepancies, Uitstalling Gallery, Ghent, Belgium
- 2020** *Suspended*, Everard Read, Franschhoek, South Africa
Verso, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
Reposition, Uitstalling Gallery, Ghent, Belgium
- 2019** *Destructure*, Everard Read, London, United Kingdom
Manipulated Image, Everard Read, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2018** *Obscura*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Miami, USA
Divide, Art|Life Gallery, Los Angeles, USA
- 2017** *State*, Everard Read Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
Emerge, M Contemporary, Sydney, Australia
Faces of Identity, Everard Read, London, UK
Premise, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2016** *New Work*, Rook & Raven Special Project Space at Armory Art Fair, New York City, USA
Didrichsen Art Museum, Helsinki, Finland
Morphous, installation in Union Square, New York, USA
Echo, Cynthia-Reeves Gallery, Massachusetts, USA
Trace, Rook & Raven, New York, USA
- 2015** FNB Joburg Art Fair, Everard Read booth, Johannesburg, South Africa
Close/ Perspective, Everard Read Johannesburg, South Africa
Origins, Rook & Raven, London, UK
Recurrence, M Contemporary, Sydney, Australia
Obscura, Everard Read Cape Town, South Africa
Accumulation of Disorder installation, Independent Art Projects, MASS MoCA Campus, USA
- 2014** *Morphous*, CIRCA, Johannesburg, South Africa
Cumulus, Rook & Raven, London, UK
Conronym, Cat Street Gallery, Hong Kong
- 2013** Art Miami Fair, featured artist, Cynthia Reeves, Miami, USA
IS Sculpture, IsArt, Tokara, Stellenbosch, South Africa

- Strarta Art Fair, Saatchi Gallery, Rook & Raven, London, UK
Fragmented, Rook & Raven, London, UK
100 Accumulation, Everard Read, Johannesburg, South Africa
Wonder Works Exhibition, The Cat Street Gallery, Hong Kong
- 2012** *Compendium*, 34FineArt, Cape Town, South Africa
Strata, Rook and Raven, London, UK
- 2011** *Surface*, Artspace, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2010** *Submerge*, 34FineArt, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2009** *Relate*, Grande Provence, Franschhoek, South Africa

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2022** *Summer Sculpture Exhibition*, Riverhill Gardens, Kent, UK
Winter 2022/23, Everard Read, London, UK
- 2021** *Summer 2021*, Everard Read, London, UK
Winter 2021/22, Everard Read, London, UK
- 2020** *Bronze, Steel, Stone & Bone*, Everard Read, London, UK
Staring Straight to the Future, online exhibition, Everard Read, UK & South Africa
Masterpiece online, with Everard Read, London, UK
- 2019** *Winter*, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
Art Central Fair, with M Contemporary, Hong Kong
CONTEXT Art Miami, with Everard Read, Miami, USA
- 2018** *Winter*, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
Sydney Contemporary, with M Contemporary, Sydney, Australia
- 2017** *Exposed*, Helen Day Art Center, Vermont, USA
Art Miami, Cynthia-Reeves Gallery, Miami, USA
Art Central, M Contemporary, Hong Kong
- 2016** *Opening Gallery Exhibition*, Everard Read London, UK
Investec Cape Town Art Fair, Everard Read booth, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2015** *Bronze, Steel & Stone*, Everard Read, Johannesburg, South Africa
FNB Joburg Art Fair, Everard Read Gallery Booth, Johannesburg, South Africa
Art Miami Fair Featured Artist, Cynthia Reeves Gallery, USA
- 2014** *Summer Season*, Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
Art Taipei, Cat Street Gallery, Taiwan
Fugitive Identity, Cynthia Reeves, USA

- 2013** BP Portrait Award Exhibition, Viewer’s Choice Award , National Portrait Gallery, London, UK
Metal Work Public sculpture, Stellenbosch, South Africa
- 2012** *Accumulation of Disorder*, University of Stellenbosch Gallery, Stellenbosch, South Africa
Winter, Everard Read, Johannesburg, South Africa
Robert Bowman Gallery, India Art Fair, India
Joburg Art Fair, Everard Read Gallery Booth, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2011** 34FineArt, ArtMonaco ’11, Monaco
MOMAC, Group Exhibition, Roberta Moore Fine Art, England
- 2010** *Out of the Office*, Kunstmuseum Bochum, Germany
Cynthia Reeves Projects, Art Miami, USA
We are not Witches, Saatchi Gallery, London, UK
- 2009** F.A.C.E.T., Charity Auction, Christie’s, London, UK

AWARDS

- 2013** Visitors’ Choice Award, PB Portrait Award, National Portrait Gallery, London, UK
Ministerial Award from Department of Culture for Visual Art, Western Cape Government, South Africa
- 2009** Merit Award, Vuleka, Sanlam Art Competition, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2008** Achievement Award, Pro Arte School of Arts, Pretoria, South Africa
- 2000** First prize in the MTN Art Colours Awards of Gauteng, South Africa
- 1999** Best painting student Pro Arte School of Arts, Pretoria, South Africa

SELECTED CORPORATE COLLECTIONS

- Delaire Graff Wine Estate, South Africa
Ellerman Contemporary, South Africa
European Investment Bank, South Africa
Grainvest Futures, South Africa
Johannesburg City Council, South Africa
Johann Jacobs Museum, South Africa
Laurence Graff Collection, South Africa
Parkdev, South Africa
Rand Merchant Bank, South Africa
Saronsberg Wine Estate, South Africa
South African Embassy, Nigeria
Standard Chartered Bank, South Africa



