

FAYE WEI WEI



ANEMONES AND LOVERS



FOREWORD

Ronojoy Dam

“I spoke to you, Aphrodite, in a dream...”

Sappho

On the door of Faye Wei Wei’s studio is pinned a poem entitled ‘Duet’. Her works dance a dance of dualities, their tensions and tenderness; of figurativism and abstraction, past and present, hope and disappointment, artistry and violence, stillness and movement, symbol and truth, and that ancient struggle of flesh and spirit.

When Faye Wei Wei was a child, she would memorise entire poems. Her notebooks are filled with lyrical fragments. She remembers lines and verses, and the singular details of events, experiences and emotions in her life. They form a poetic subconsciousness that erupts in her paintings; mining antiquity and myth, “mixing/ Memory and desire” to realise the transformations of the heart.

There is a physical and emotional strength in the mark-making and secret-hiding here - a sensual symbolism - in the exploration of love: confounding, irrational, alchemic, mysterious love.

I sit there with a bottle of beer on an old sofa; it’s a spring afternoon. On the shelf is Le Clezio’s *Flood*, De Beauvoir’s *The Woman Destroyed*, Borges’s *Labyrinths*, Blake’s *Songs of Innocence* and books on Francesco Clemente, Elizabethan Art, Lucian Freud, India, Piero della Francesca and Japanese prints. On the floor is a study of cuttings comprising of the black Italian boxer Leone Jacovacci, Joseph Beuys’ *Early Watercolours*, Matisse’s *Etchings*, a yellowed photograph of the Egyptian deity Apis, Bacon’s studies and various Renaissance tearings. It is a poetic view that embraces the world and its myth-making, striving to understand the deeply personal.

“In all this world, no thing can keep its form. For all things flow; all things are born to change their shapes. And time itself is like a river, flowing on an endless course.”

Ovid, *Metamorphosis*

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13th - 29th April 2017

Faye Wei Wei's bold, poetic works revolve around religious iconography and classical myth, centring on love rituals and the theatricality of masculine and feminine tropes. Her paintings are deeply idiosyncratic: although it might sometimes suggest themes of medieval courtly romance or a particular mythic narrative, at other moments it seems to depart into a more ambiguous, interior space of incongruity and uncertainty. Wei Wei's work plays with the language of personal symbols—the snake/the thorns, the boy/the girl, the mirror/the wall, two boxers, two suns, sea urchin/lioness—these dualities culminating in an imagined world where the protagonists seem to interlink and wink at one another. Stateliness coincides with brute force and pastel softness; symbols seem to shake free of their moorings and float, surrealistically, on the liquid expanse of dream.

Sometimes reminiscent of Picasso's Vollard Suite, Faye Wei Wei's images quiver with a lively, lyrical motion, combining classical poise with vibrant immediacy. The scenes might be imagined, but the energetic, bold brushstrokes, executed in thin layers, suggest a scene actually witnessed, with the momentum of a direct sketch. This results partly from her view of painting as a sensual, pleasurable process of infatuation. The large scale of her work, meanwhile, also emerges from her desire that its limits be those of her own body. In this way, the painting process itself is conceived as an intimate choreography between actual and pictorial space.

For the viewer, the result is an acute, yet ambiguous sense of Faye Wei Wei's own immediate presence: a subtle impression of physical proximity shaded with eros. But if the faces of Faye Wei Wei's figures seem contrastingly detached, this also arises from her interest in movement, gesture and performance: particularly her interest in Japanese Noh theatre, where masks are worn and plays follow strict formal rules. While the conventions of Noh might seem to limit emotive expression, they actually encourage its transmission through a highly subtle and nuanced language of gesture and movement. Wei Wei's compositions show her to be alive to this example. In fact, the use of the mask in Noh theatre aptly characterises a sense produced by her paintings more generally: that the motionless composure of the painted image is but a momentary surface, floating on a luminous depth of feeling beneath.



THE PAINTER'S DREAM

Sea urchin, queen of the sea

An egg yolk sun poured out of a thicket of black spines, the strange nonsense of the sweet rising sun emerging in the night. They say if you stare into black velvet long enough you'll find the things you should have done but did not do.

Out poured the black, briny liquid (cobalt violet + mars black—that muddy ephemera of oil), out of the porcupine shell into my palms, onto the skin of the canvas. It tasted bitter as the tongue touched my tongue. I know a kind of bitterness that lives in the body of a restless magpie, searching for its next glimmer.

Lying on black velvet you'll see jewel-embellished daggers in a dim lit glass cabinet. Their black spiked shells form a five-pointed star, fallen from above to the ocean floor.

The sea urchin revolves around the rule and pattern of the number five. There are five chambers in an urchin's heart, five lovers lay their memories there, five mouths to kiss before sleep.

The mouth of the urchin is called Aristotle's lantern. Waiting for that moment of wakefulness. A trapped gulp of seawater in the urchin's lips emphasised its sweetness. That tongue on your tongue. The salt brine tears that brings out the sweet.

Longing to join the sea-women of Jeju Island.

You wake up to say,

'Rain fell in my dream last night, this morning the streets are dry.'

Lady, Three White
Leopards Sat Under a
Juniper Tree
2017
Oil on canvas
183x137cm
£4,500
Sold



Lion Paw
2014
Oil on paper
121x90cm
£3000
Sold



Longing Moon
2017
Oil on canvas
91x61cm
£3,000



If All the Stars Couldn't
Bring You Back
2017
Oil on canvas
102x76cm
£3,000
Sold



Tossing Egg Yolk Sun
2017
Oil on canvas
107x91cm
£3,000
Sold



Pony
2017
Oil on canvas
61x46cm
£2,000



Boxers
2017
Oil on canvas
138x112cm
£4,000
Sold





Fountain Lies the Sun
2017
Oil on canvas
61x46cm
£2,000
Sold



Double Day
2017
Oil on canvas
183x137cm
£4,500



A Portrait of Two Boys
2017
Oil on canvas
61x46cm
£2,000



Shadow Boxing
2016
Oil on canvas
107x92cm
£3,000
Sold



Adonis and His Snake
2017
Oil on canvas
46x61cm
£2,000
Sold



Boy with Snake
2016
Oil on canvas
183x137cm
£4,500
Sold

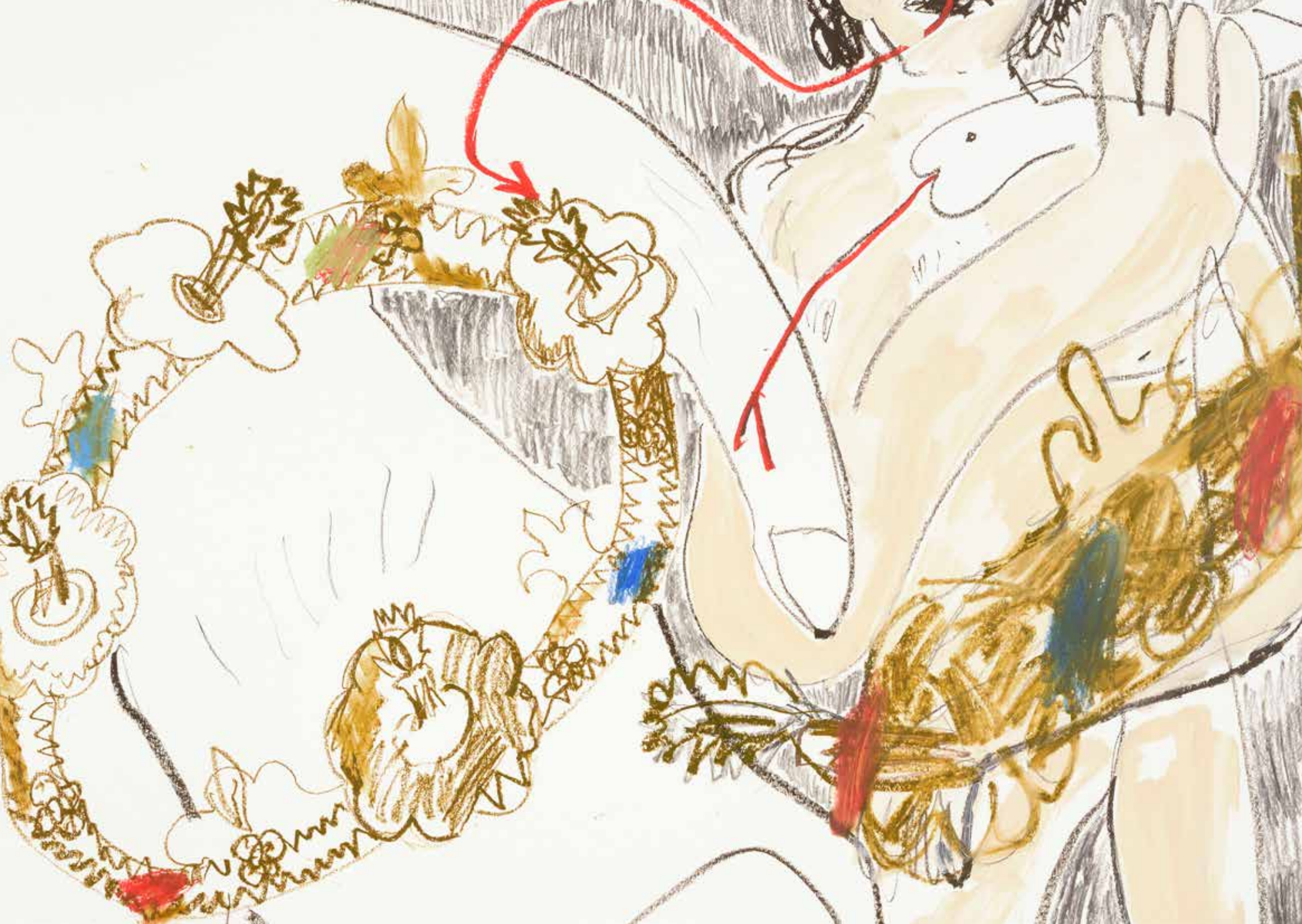


Boy, Mirror
2016
Oil on canvas
183x137cm
£4,500



The Women Would
Mourn the Wilting of
the Lettuce, and with it
Handsome Adonis
2017
Oil on canvas
183x137cm
Sold





Perfume (The
Distillation Would
Intoxicate Me Also, But
I Shall Not Let It)
2017
Oil on canvas
190x160cm
£5,000



Two Pearls on an Ebony
Table (Those Are Pearls
That Were His Eyes/
Saint Lucy)
2017
Oil on canvas
107x91cm
£3,000



Anemones and Lovers
2017
Oil on canvas
183x137cm
£4,500
Sold



Young Eros,
Double Day
2017
Oil on canvas
61x46cm
£2,000
Sold



Mary
2017
Oil on canvas
45x35cm
£800

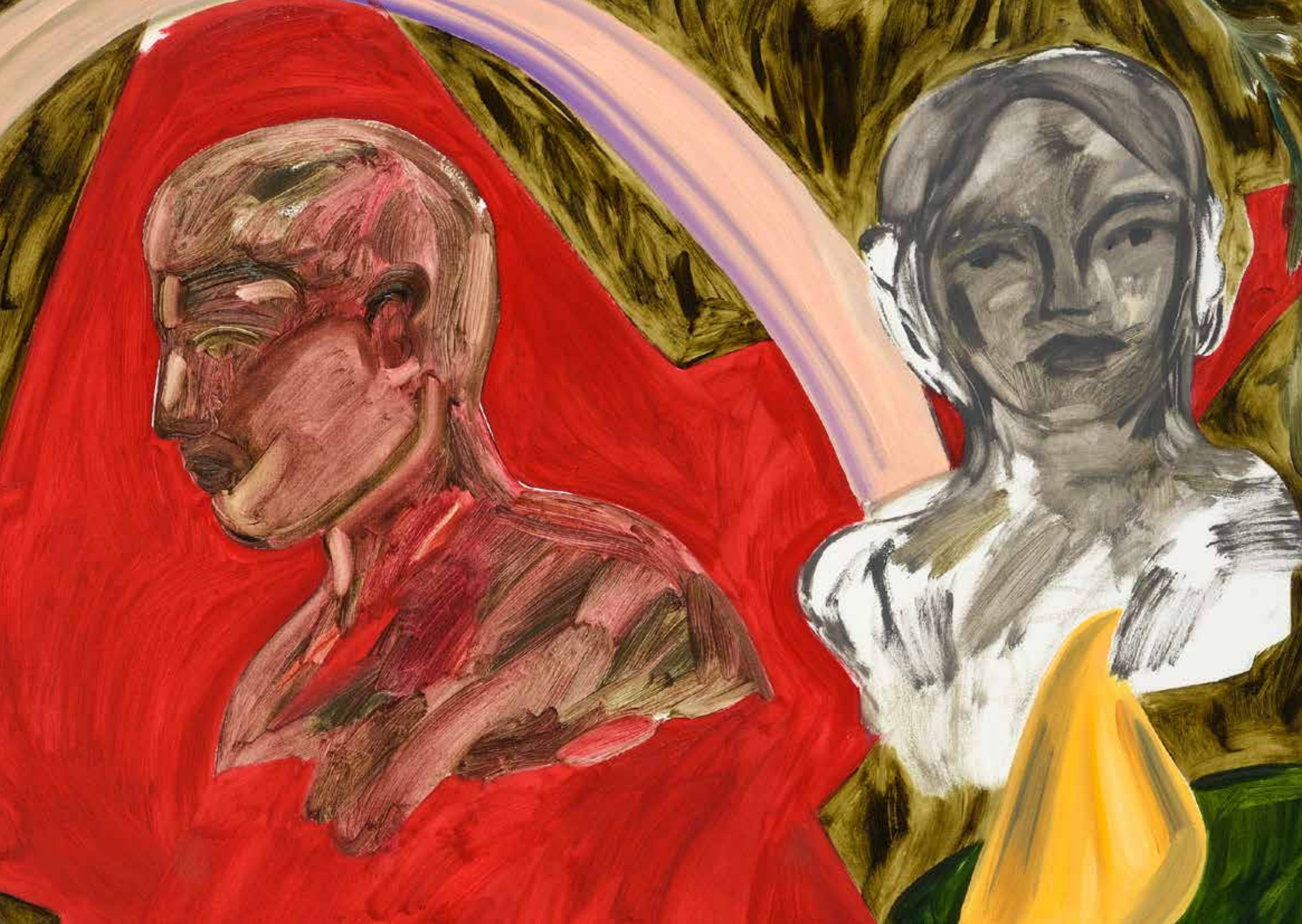


Desire and Aphrodite
2017
Oil on canvas
183x137cm
£4,500
Sold



He Donned His
Trousers of
Striped Grass
2017
Oil on canvas
152x122cm
£3,500
Sold





Blue Madonna
2016
Oil on canvas
183x137cm
£4,500



Pony (The Stars Seemed
To Get Wet in the Sky)
2016
Oil on canvas
250x200cm
£5,000



Shocked Bride
2016
Oil on canvas
61x47cm
£2,000





Valentine
2014
Oil on paper
84x119cm
£3,000
Sold

Bamboo Bed
2014
Oil and gold leaf on sun
bleached paper
110x90cm
£3,000
Sold



Snake Boy
2016
China marking pencil
on paper
41x29cm
£1000
Sold





Thorn, Snake, Knight
2016
Charcoal on paper
43x35cm
£800



I Know a Type of
Sadness That Smells
of Pineapples
2016
Charcoal on paper
137x102cm
£2,000
Sold



Viewing Mount Fuji
2016
Charcoal on paper
102x72cm
£1,500



The Peony Quivers
2016
Charcoal on paper
102x72cm
£1,500



Two Tongues
2016
Charcoal on paper
137x102cm
£2,000
Sold



Love Lies Bleeding
2016
Charcoal on paper
137x102cm
£2,000
Sold



King of the Woods
2017
Oil on canvas
64 x 49cm
£1,500



Some Thought That He
Was The Sun
2017
Charcoal on paper
64 x 49cm
£1,000



Two Lips
2017
Oil on canvas
183 x 137
£4,500



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www.cobgallery.com



