



I SAW THIS



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Tom de Freston | Ali Souleman | Mark Jones

I SAW THIS is a project by artist Tom de Freston in collaboration with Ali Souleman, Professor of Dramatic Literature at Oxford University, and filmmaker Mark Jones.

It is an ambitious, multi-platform, multi-disciplinary art project which tells a deeply personal and current – yet simultaneously universal and timeless – story of war, destruction and suffering.

At the heart of the project is Professor Souleman himself. Whilst living in his home city of Damascus, he was the victim of a terrorist explosion, which resulted in him suffering horrific injuries, and ultimately in the complete loss of his sight.

Remarkably, Souleman finds quiet hope in the aftermath of the violence. His experiences and reflections provide a unique perspective on the Syrian conflict and, more broadly, pose universal questions about what it means to be human.

I SAW THIS is an attempt to understand and to communicate Souleman's mission in life: to construct a new world internally both out of and beyond the traumatic memories and mental images he carries from his former life in Syria.

The project consists of three discrete yet interwoven elements, each with their own focus: an ambitious body of work by artist Tom de Freston; an extensive collection of textual fragments by Professor Souleman; and a feature-length documentary by filmmaker Mark Jones.

Together, the art works, texts and film make a significant contribution to dialogue about violence and its aftermath, trauma and recovery, physical suffering and healing, proposing that understanding, insight and hope can be found even in the darkest places.

The image is an abstract artwork featuring a dark, textured background. A prominent, bright, glowing area in the center-right transitions from orange to yellow and white, suggesting a light source or a focal point. The overall composition is layered and complex, with various shades of brown, purple, and red interspersed with the central glow. The texture appears rough and organic, possibly resembling a natural material like wood or stone. The text "Artwork: A Selection" is centered in the middle of the image.

Artwork: A Selection

Large Paintings
Series of 25
200 × 125 cm





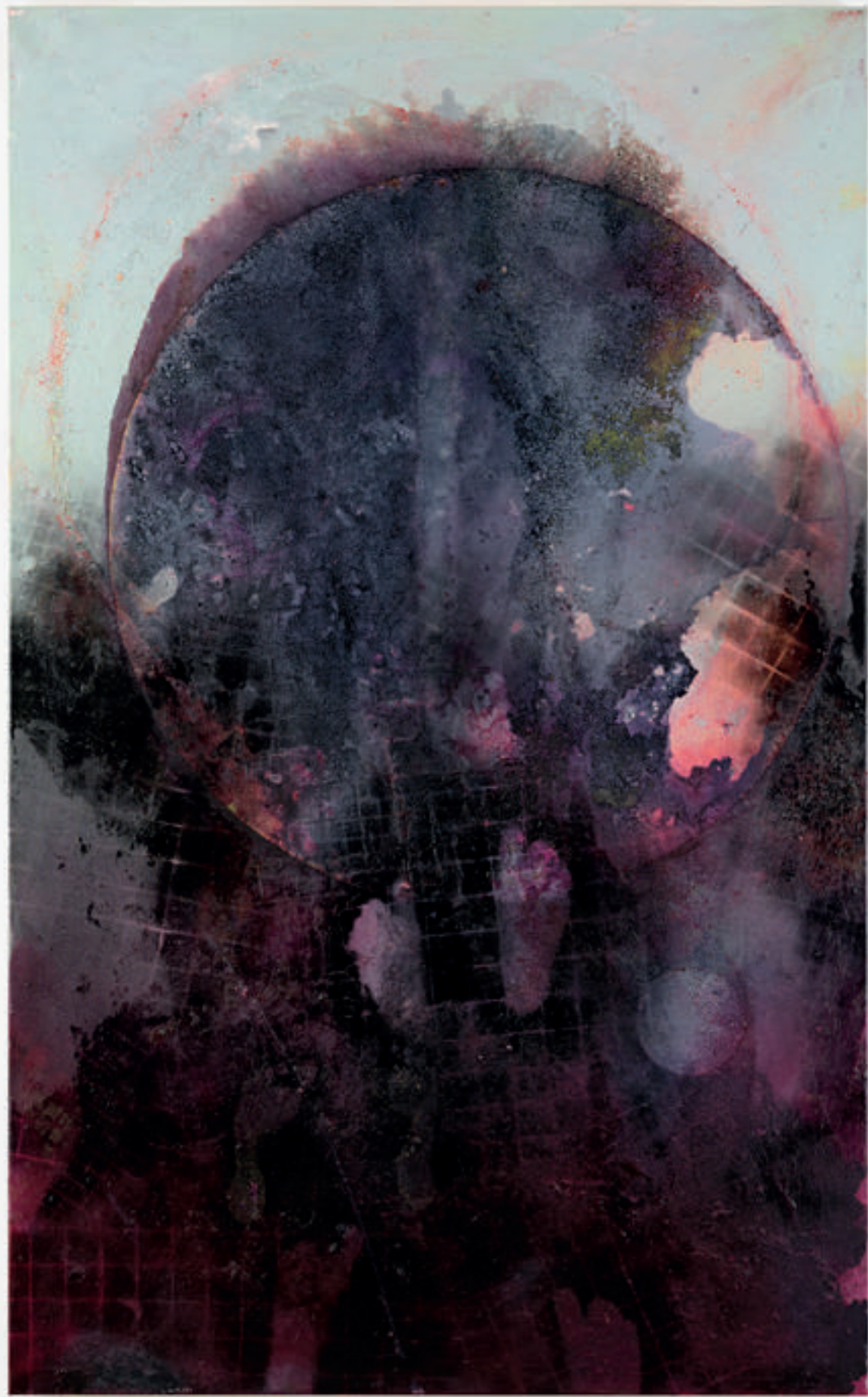
























Medium Paintings
Series of 18
Sizes vary





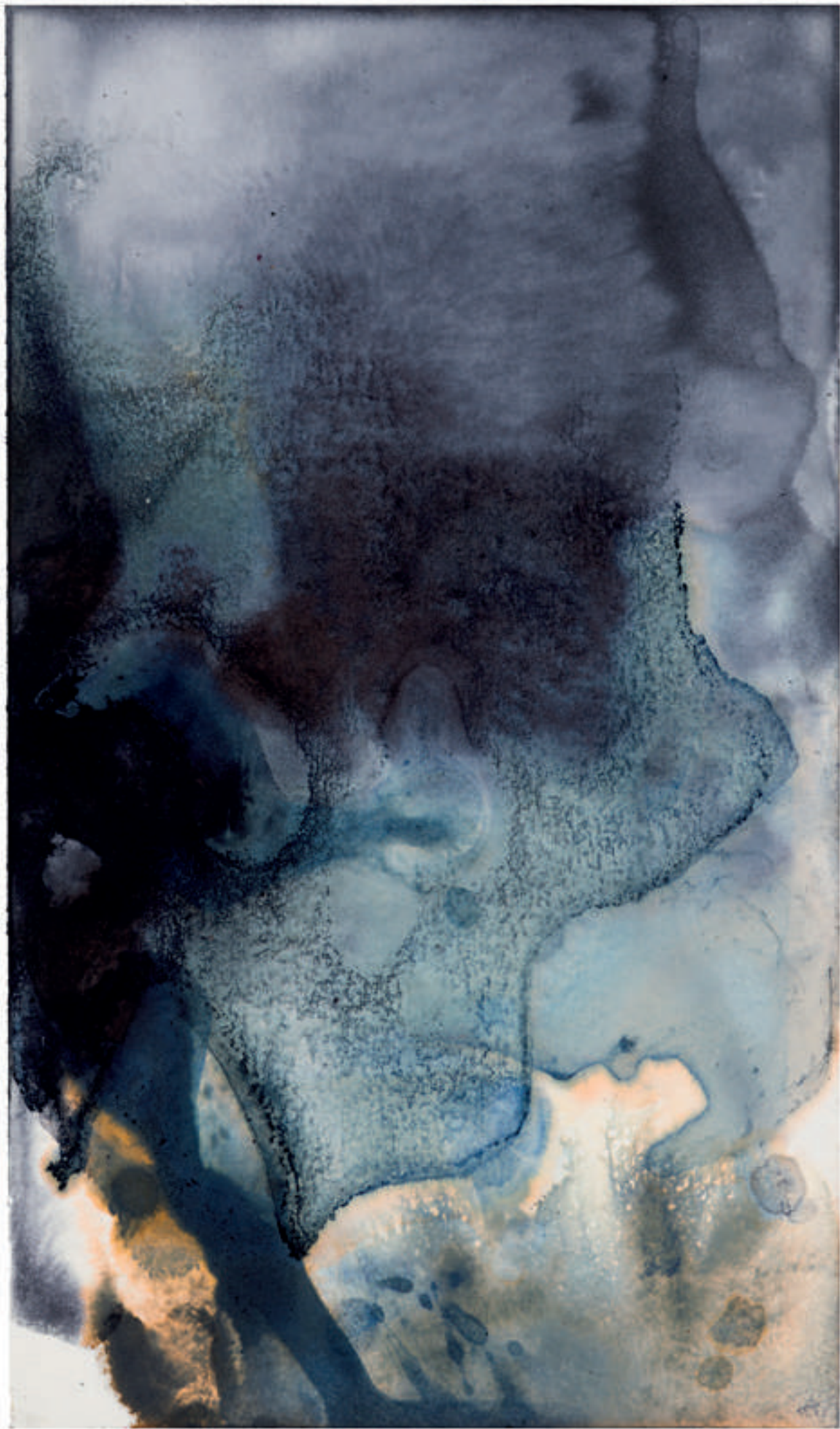






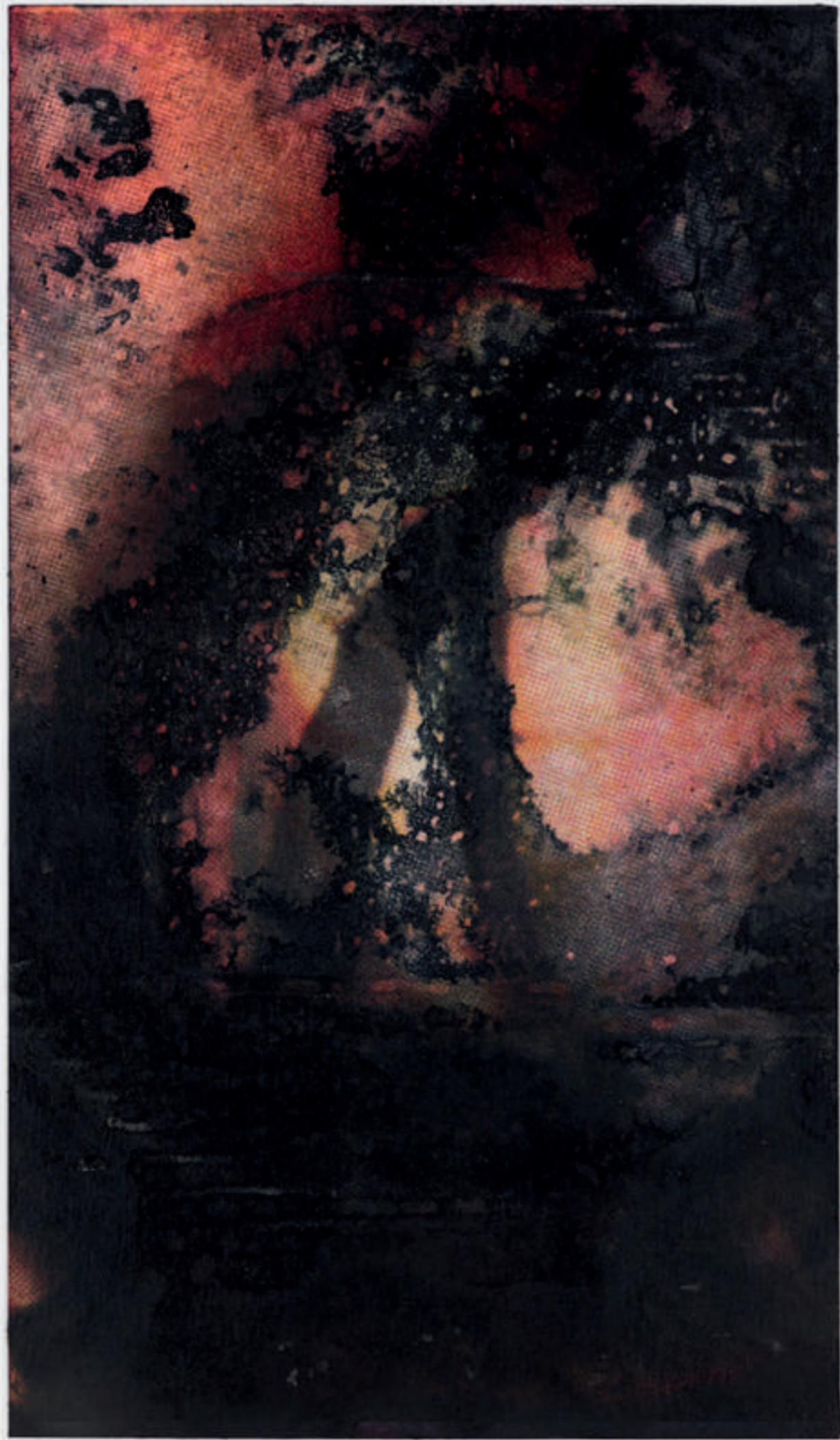
Works on paper
Series of 108
Various sizes, approx.
28 × 16 cm





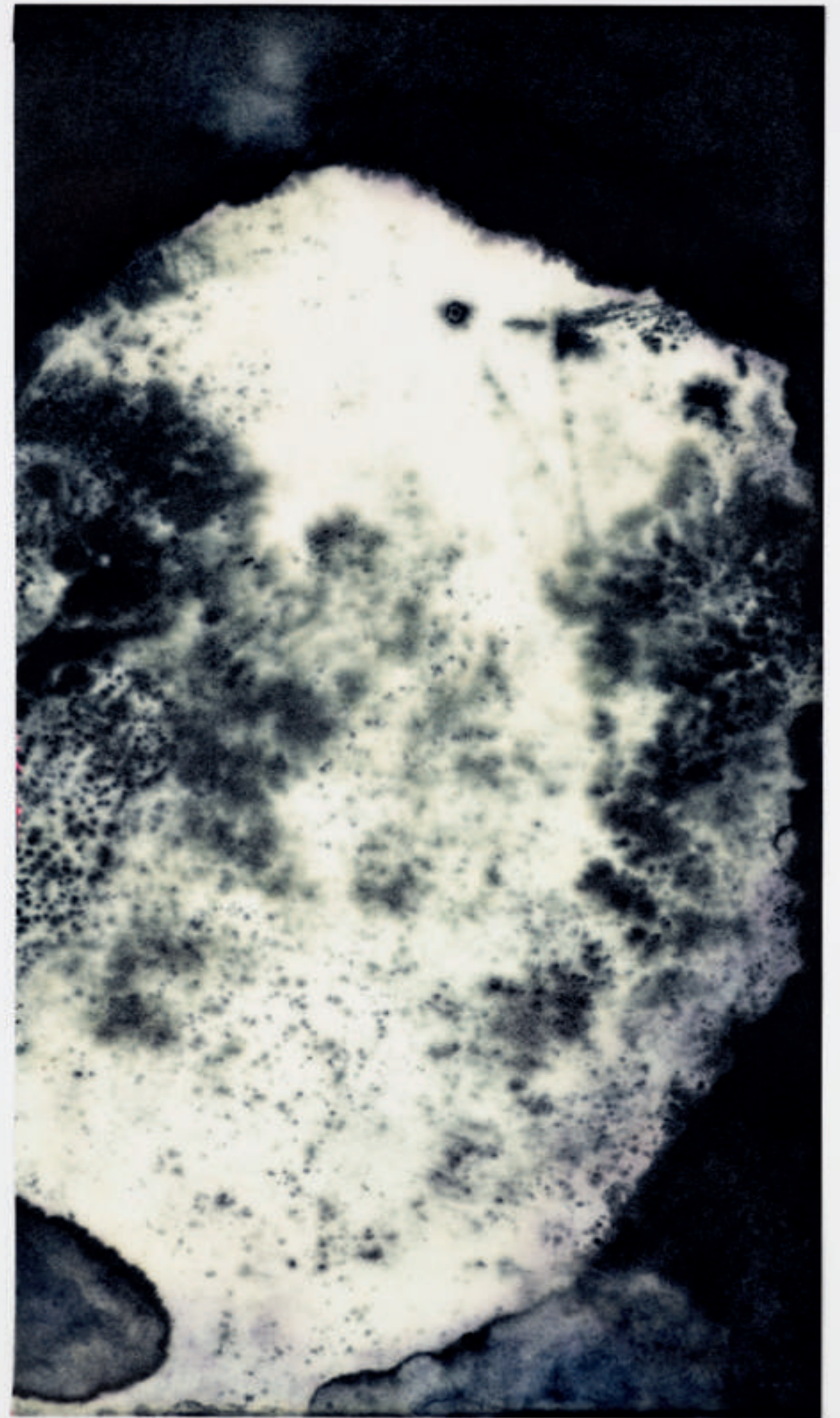


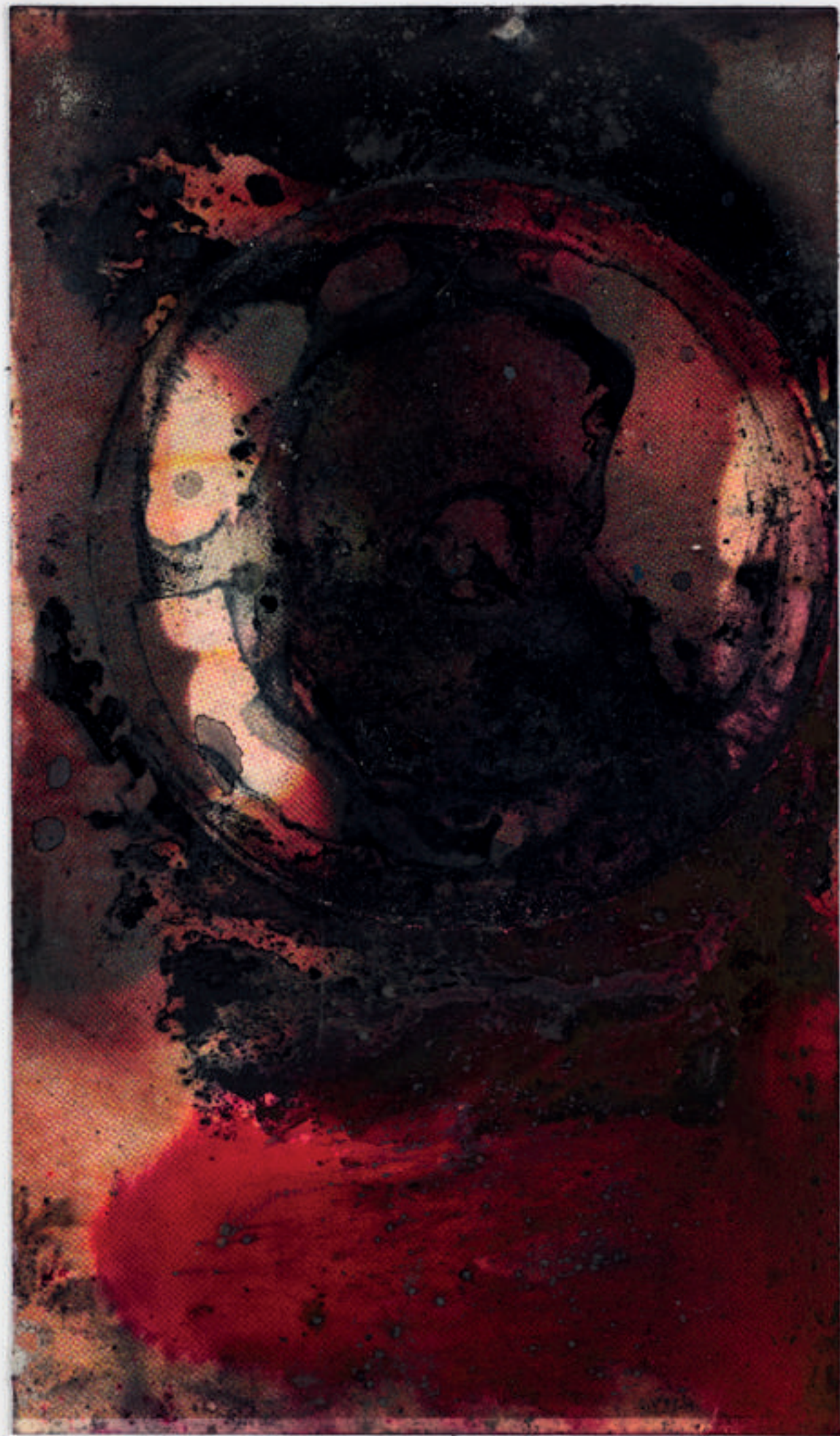
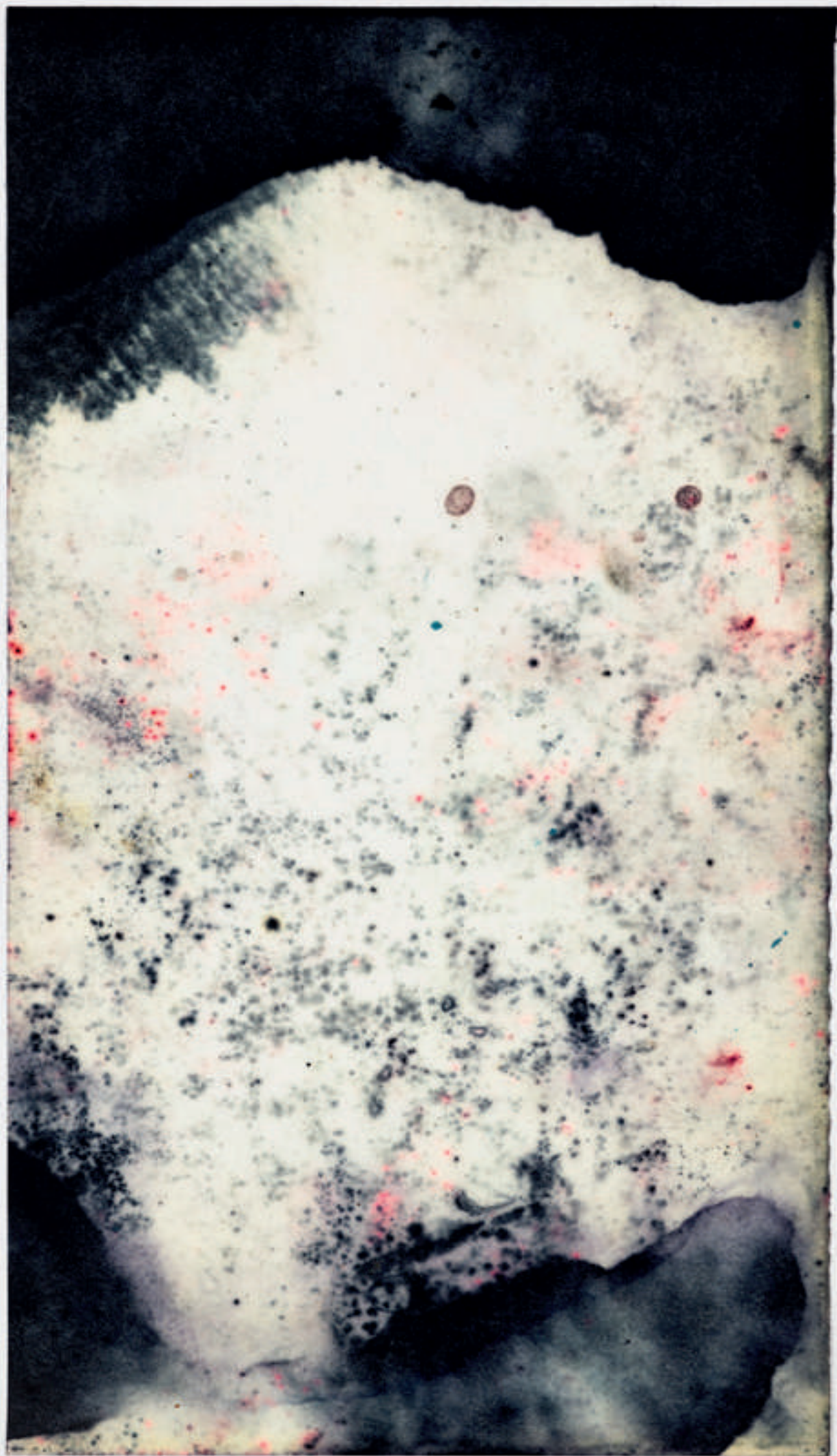
















Works on film (with Mark Jones)
Series of 5
Varying lengths,
approx. 3 mins

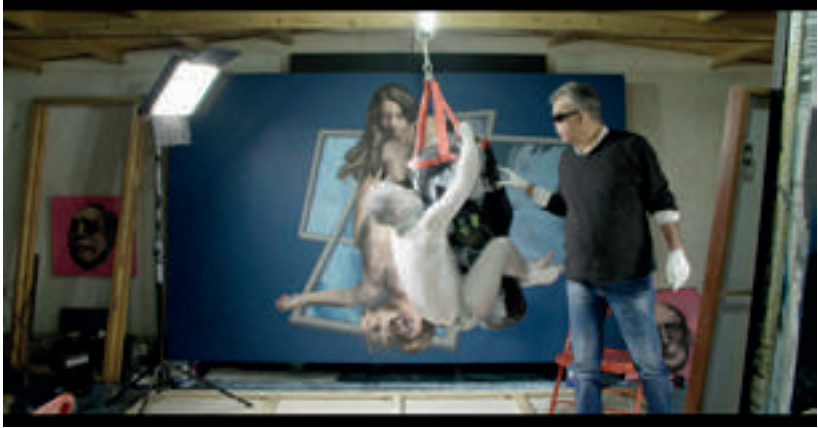
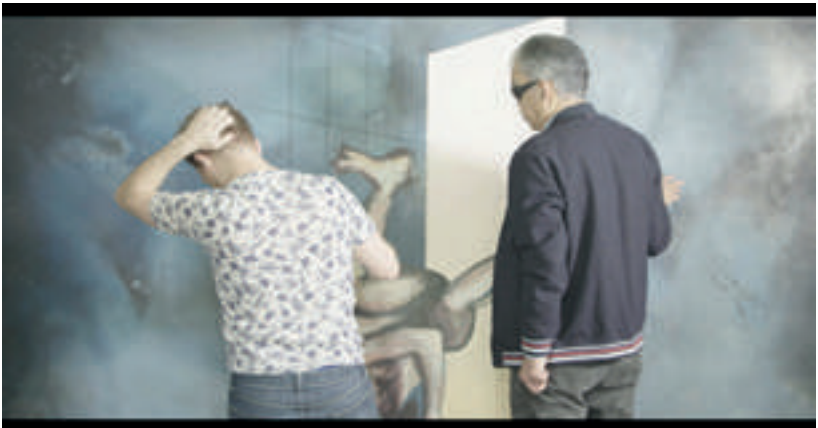




Documentary Feature (INSIGHT)

70 mins

Colour | 16:9





Curriculum Vitae

Funded Residencies and Awards

2019-22 University of Queensland and Oxford University – funding for research trips to Australia.

2016-18 AHRC, National Trust and TORCH Major funding awards for Demons Land project.

2016 Saboteur Award winner for ‘A Fool’s Worlds’.

2016- Artistic Director, Medicine Unboxed.

2016- Birmingham University Creative Fellow.

2016 Arts Council GFA for OE exhibition and performances.

2016- Battersea Arts Centre and Guardian Artists Bedrooms commission.

2016- Arts Council GFA for OE film.

2015- Saboteur Award winner for The Charnel House.

2014- Aldeburgh Lookout Tower residency – as part of the Aldeburgh Poetry Festival.

2013-15 Artist in Residence – Medicine Unboxed.

2012 Represented UK at World Event Young Artists 2012, Nottingham.

2012 Artist in Residence, The Expansionists, Whitstable.

2012 Hatley Artist in Residence, Centre for Recent Drawing (C4RD).

2010-11 Leverhulme Artist in Residence, Cambridge University.

2009-11 Artist in Residence, The Less.

2008-9: Levy Plumb Visual Arts Residency, Christ’s College.

Selected Solo Shows

2018 Lush HQ, London.
Old Fire Station, Oxford.

2017 Stowe, National Trust. (Demons Land).
Ashmolean Museum (Demons Land).

2016 Battersea Arts Centre – permanent installation.
47/49 Tanner Street, London.
RSC (The Other Place): Birmingham University Creative Festival.
Bodleian Library: Shakespeare’s Dead.

2014 Orpheus and the Minotaur, Bresse Little, London.
Frontiers (Medicine Unboxed), Parabola Arts Centre, Cheltenham.

2013 Charnel House, Bresse Little, London.
Paintings After Shakespeare, The Globe Theatre, London.
Voice (Medicine Unboxed), Parabola Arts Centre, Cheltenham.

2012 Scavengers at Tsubouchi Memorial Theatre Museum, Tokyo.
On Theatre at Breese Little Gallery, London.
Shakespeare Paintings at Pallant House Gallery, Chichester.
The Golem at Centre for Recent Drawing, London.

2011 On Falling at Frameless Gallery, London
Scavengers at the British Shakespeare Association Conference, Cambridge.
Scavengers at the Birthplace Trust, Stratford-Upon-Avon.
Deposition (permanent installation) at Christ’s College Chapel, Cambridge.
The Fall of the Rebel Angels at Michael-house Chancel, Cambridge.

2010 Exiles: The Brick Lane Gallery, London.
Fallen With Him: St. Peters Church, Kettles Yard.
Between somewhere and nowhere: Museum of Classical Archaeology, Cambridge.

Selected Publications

2020 *Wreck: Gericault’s Raft and the art of being lost at sea.* Granta. March 2021.
Julia and the Shark, Orion. September 2020.

2016 *OE* by Tom de Freston – Bloomsbury
Macbeth/Macbeth by Ewan Fernie and Simon Palfrey, with Tom de Freston, Bloomsbury 2016.
Tarot – ‘A Fools World’ by Tom de Freston and Helen Ivory, Gatehouse Press.

2014 *The Charnel House* by Tom de Freston et al- Bridgedoor Press. Saboteur Award winner 2015.

2012 *House of the Deaf Man* by Tom de Freston and Andrea Porter, Gatehouse Press.

2011 *Scavengers* by Tom de Freston and Kiran Millwood Hargrave with forewords by Sir Trevor Nunn and Dr. Abigail Rokison, BSA Publications.
On Falling by Richard Cork and Rye Holmboe (Breese Little).
Deposition essays by Sir Nicholas Serota and The Right Hon. Rowan Williams, Green Pebble.

2010 *Ekphrasis* by Kiran Millwood Hargrave. (ed.) Fifteen poets in response to Tom’s work.
Reflections essays by Dr. Caroline Vout and Ruth Padel, Tablo Arts.

Education

2005-7: History of Art MA Hons, Cambridge University.

2002-5: Fine Art BA Hons, Leeds Metropolitan University.

2001-2: BTech Diploma in Art and Design, Warwickshire College.