



**NOTHING.**

**Frances Aviva Blane**

**paintings and works on paper 2015**

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**‘My work doesn’t come from being inspired.  
My work comes from nothing. And that’s what it’s about,  
making something of nothing.’**

Collected here are 18 of Frances Blane’s recent paintings and drawings. They disconcert. All show her determination to deconstruct paint through her personality until the two become indivisible. She is her work, her work is her. She talks of making paint a language, pushing boundaries, using it in an unfamiliar way, making it more exciting, containing explosion.

She does not challenge the materials she works with: fabriano paper, linen, oil paint, acrylic, charcoal. These are time-honoured and of the best quality. For the most part she works on a large scale. ‘I am known to paint big hectic paintings 2 metres square’ she says. But included here are 6 works on paper ranging from 22 to 50 cms and 12 works on linen 60x60 cms. Because her work is gestural, these small-scale pieces, where every mark is apparent, are more demanding and as with her drawings take her longer to execute than the large paintings.

In De Vage Grens at De Queeste Art Gallery in Belgium, Blane’s work was shown in 2015 with Frank Auerbach. In their Deconstruct exhibition 2014 she showed alongside Francis Bacon and Louise Bourgeois. All four artists utilise psychic disturbance. Auerbach’s parents died in Nazi concentration camps. Bacon’s work is informed by his sexual involvement with violent men. Bourgeois admitted ‘the subject of pain is the business I am in.

Frances Blane speaks of wanting, through her relationship with charcoal and paint, to 'discover marks which correspond to breakdown of self and matter.' She turns this correspondence into containment until she reins in the breakdown of self.

Her work method is raw. She does not know where she is going or what she is going to get before she begins a piece. There would be no point in doing it, she says, were that the case. She works on the *qui vive*, attacking the paint, catching the moment, waiting for an alchemy. She parries with paint, kicks it over, lets it spill and trickle, gouges at it, then intervenes to control, anchor, explore. Paint does what it will, but only up to a point. Paradoxically, despite an aspect of chaos, her control is tight. Sometimes a piece will take her fifteen minutes, sometimes weeks. The point when she stops is when chance and her judgement elide and she considers that's the best she can do. She could not retrace her steps, or replicate any of her works. For every one she keeps she abandons many. She chucks them if she feels she could do better, if the colour's dead, or the tone, or if something's wrong. She knows that she has, down the years, as she puts it, 'banked all that information' about form, composition, line, tone, technique, but still never knows what the end result will be. As a student at the Slade she was taught that a good artist is always in control of her material, but now is not sure if that's true. What she always keeps rigorous control of is her judgement: when and how to intervene, when to stop.

She is in awe of paint and what she can and can't make happen with it. Oil paint, she says, glows and is organic and rich. Acrylic has absolutely no interior, no texture and falls apart and dissolves 'like a dissolved personality'. It intrigues her to find what will happen when she breaks it down, what can she get when it's liquid or watery.

I look at the riot of 'Sheet', the joyfulness of 'Stage', the muted gentleness and tentative use of tone in drawings 'Note' and 'August'. She says it is hard to make anything look ugly with acrylic, but that it upsets her the way it dries and never glows like oil.

I comment on her use of pink in 'Bazooka': pink, she says, to my surprise, is her favourite colour. 'Did you have that bubble gum when you were little?' Why then I ask, without expecting an answer, do you revert so often to black?



Bazooka



My Summer

Abstraction in her work is uncompromising. There is no visible reference beyond the paint and herself. I ask if she ever starts from, or allows in, anything literal or recognisable: a view from the window, a bird, a river. She laughs, says she could not do justice to such things, and that she does not think literally. Instead she works with contrasts: contrast compels vision, she says.

The recurrent portrayal of heads, as ever self-reflections, are the nearest she gets to representation. They have expression or no expression and are of scarcely discernible form. Many or all are self-portraits of a sort. These heads inform her other work. I remark that 'My Summer' looks as if it's floating in blood. Actually that's me dead, she nonchalantly says.

There is no element in her work of trying to be seductive, of concealment behind style or performance. She is surprised when I say the initial impact of her pictures is shocking. 'Are they shocking? I don't know. They are how I live, how I think.'

Each piece withstands being looked at beyond first glance. Depth, colour, form and beauty take time to emerge. How people respond is up to them. She would like her work to be enjoyed and appreciated but answers only to her own uncompromising standards and counts herself fortunate in not having to earn a living through painting, not having to fit into a mould, or oblige a gallery. She cannot, as she puts it, 'run after people'.

Her allegiance to self is demanding, and expresses a disconcerting inner world. I remark on her flights into bright colours in 'Untitled as Yet' and 'Africa'. 'Just because things are in bright joyful colours doesn't mean they are bright joyful paintings,' she says. But what of that smidgen of colour in 'Stuck' that appears out of darkness like a chink of light. That, she concedes, might suggest a spot of hope.

**Diana Souhami**, 2015 London

# PAINTINGS

I want to make the paint do stuff you wouldn't even think of as paint.



**Victor**  
Oil/linen, 60x60 cms



**Stuck**  
Oil/linen, 60x60 cms

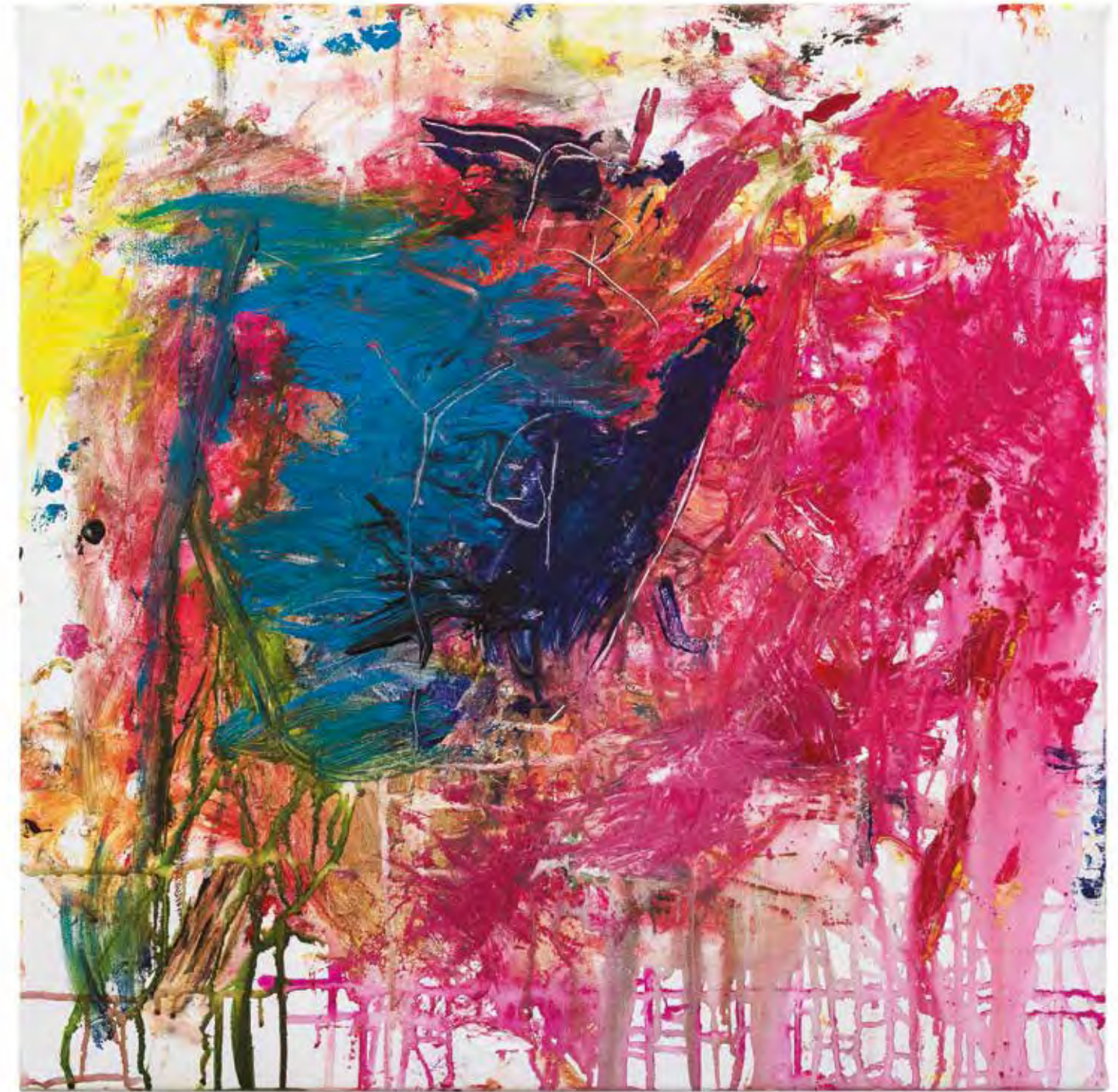
I never think literally. I work with contrast because contrast is what compels vision.



**Noose**  
Oil/linen, 60x60 cms



It's very hard to make anything look ugly with acrylic.



**Interior**  
Acrylic/linen, 60x60 cms

I want to say as little as possible about my work.  
I don't like to talk about what something means or is, because you kill it.



**Pitch**  
Oil/linen, 34x34 cms

You do something and have to alter it. You must catch the minute.  
If it's exactly how you imagined it to be you've lost something. There's an alchemy.



**Stage**  
Acrylic/linen, 60x60 cms

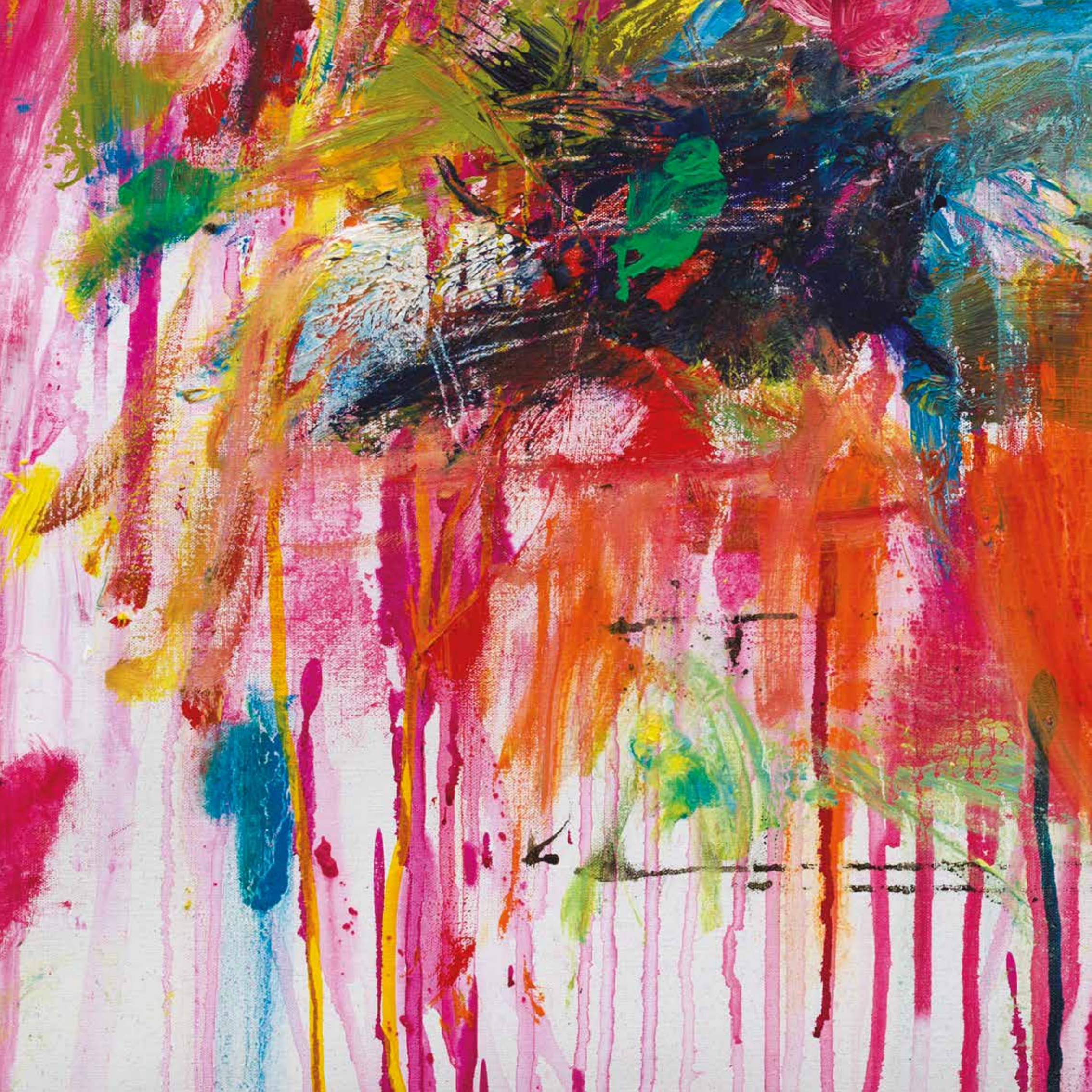


**Stack**  
Oil/linen, 60x60 cms

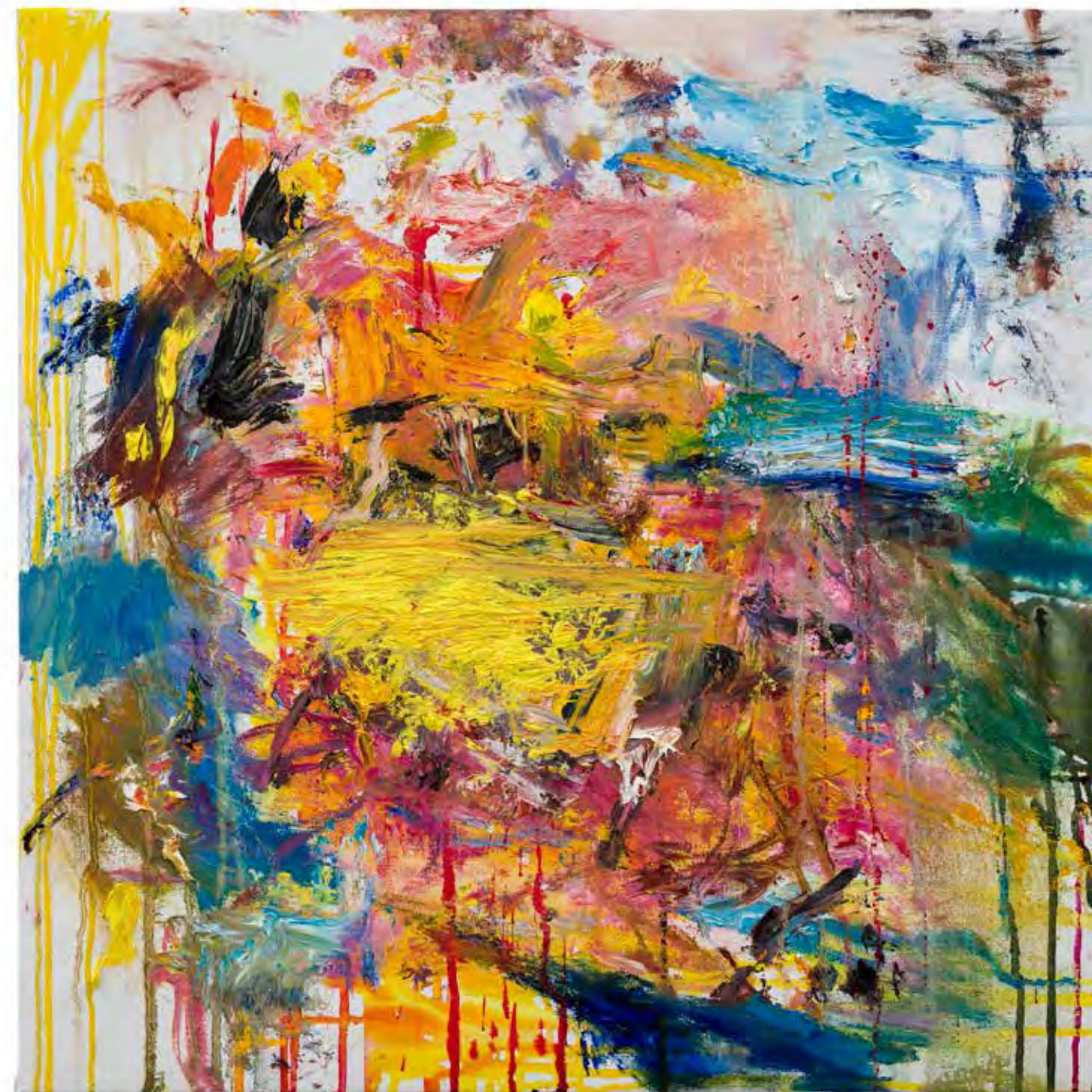
Just because you're doing something spontaneously you don't forget everything you know.



**Fall**  
Acrylic/linen, 60x60 cms



**Bazooka**  
Oil/linen, 60x60 cms



**Untitled as Yet**  
Oil/linen, 60x60 cms



**Africa**  
Oil/linen, 60x60 cms



I love pink. Pink is my favourite colour.

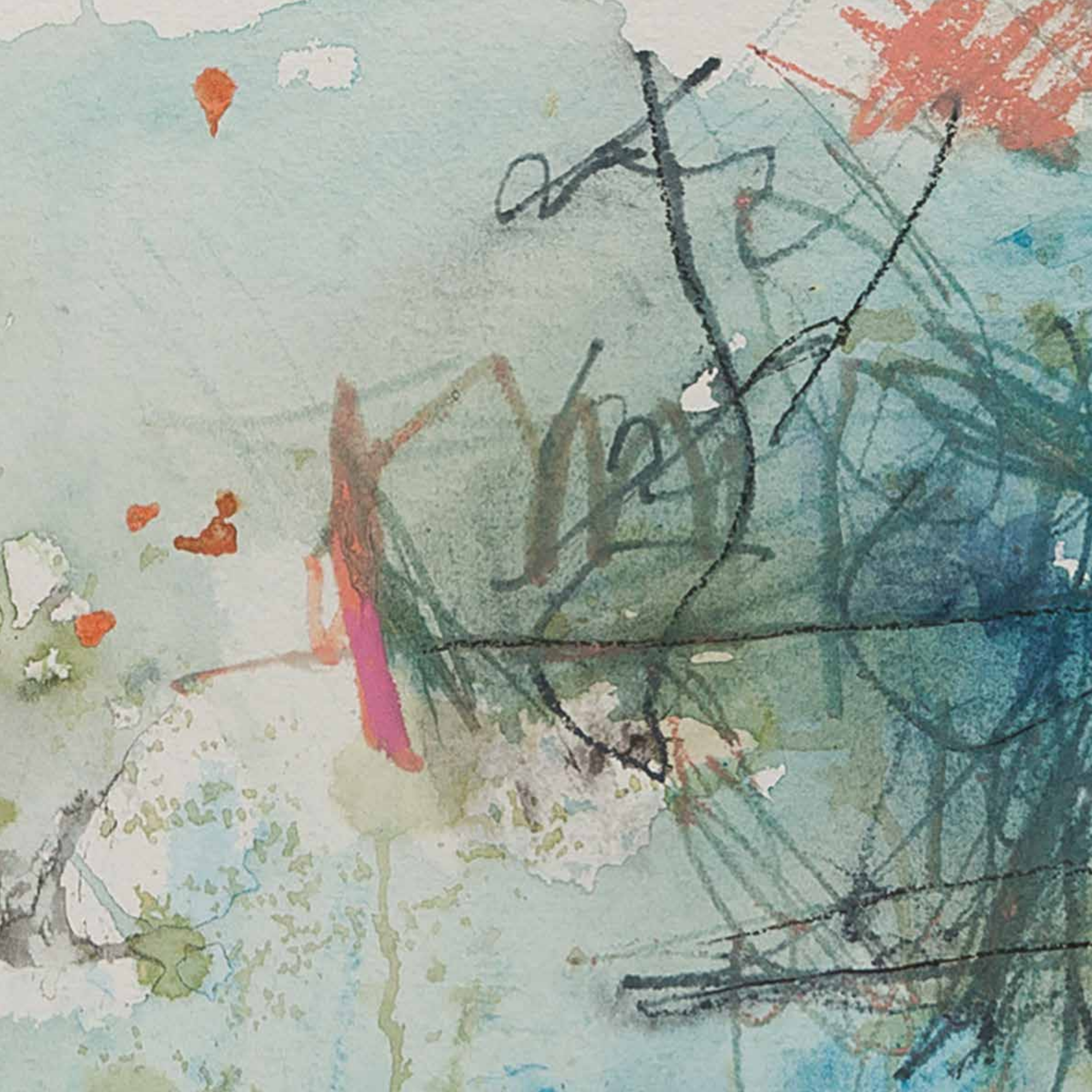


**Africa Head**  
Oil/linen, 34x34 cms

**works on paper**



**My Summer**  
Acrylic and charcoal/Fabriano, 43x43 cms

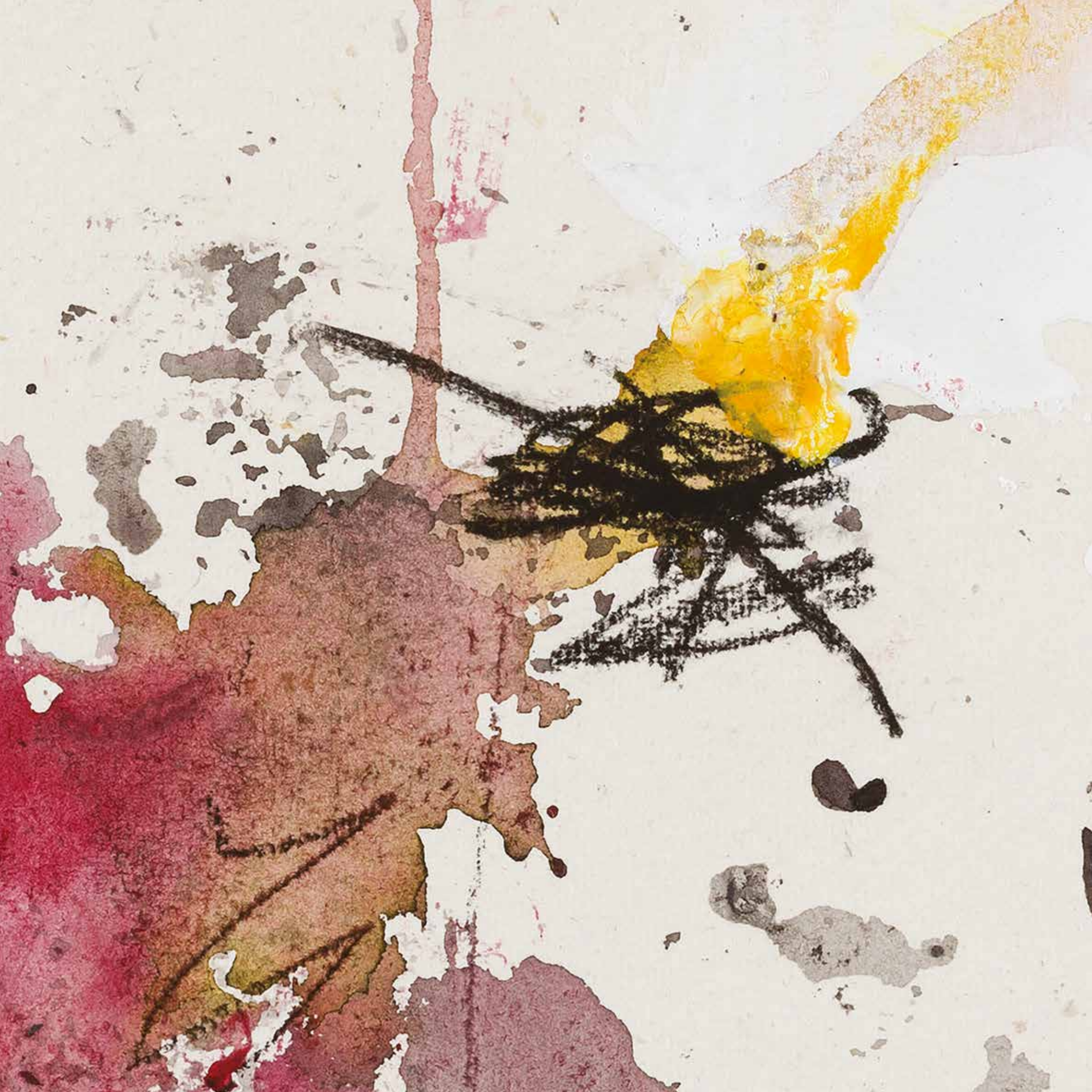


**Note**  
Acrylic and charcoal/Two Rivers, 56x76 cms

I always take control.



**Red**  
Acrylic and charcoal/Fabriano, 28x33 cms.



**Sheet**  
Acrylic and charcoal/KHADI, 30x30 cms

After it's done I can't retrace my steps. I don't know how I did them.  
I couldn't do any of them again.



**Desert**  
Pastel/Fabriano, 29x29 cms

It's death if you love your work. I don't paint to be seductive.



**August**  
Charcoal/Fabriano, 43x43 cms



Frances Aviva Blane  
Born in London

**Education**

Chelsea College of Art 1987, Byam Shaw School of Art 1988-1991, Slade School of Fine Art UCL 1991 - 1993.

Frances has exhibited widely throughout the United Kingdom, Europe, Japan, USA and Australia  
some of her exhibitions are listed below

**Selected Solo Exhibitions**

'Deconstruct' De Queeste Kunstkamers, Abele/Watou, Belgium  
Shown alongside exhibitions of Francis Bacon and Louise Bourgeois, 2014  
BIG BLACK PAINTINGS, Bay Hall, Kings College London, 2014

Paintings and Works on Paper, De Queeste Kunstkamers, Abele/Watou, Belgium, 2013

Paintings/Drawings, Frances Aviva Blane, Quest 21 Brussels, 2011

Portrait/Painting, ShillamSmith3, London, 2006

Paintings, Frances Aviva Blane, Galerie Seitz and Partner Berlin. 2006

Frances A Blane Paintings + Drawings, EcArtspace, London, 2004

Delinquent Paintings, EcArtspace, London, 2001

Solo x 9 Artists in Clerkenwell, Berry House, EcArtspace, London, 1998

F Blane, Only Drawings, ShillamSmith, London, 1997

F Blane Only Paintings, Curated by Andrew Mummery, 1997

Frances Aviva Blane at The Curwen, curated by Andrew Mummery, 1995

**Selected Group Exhibitions**

Jerwood Drawing Prize, London and UK tour, 2015-2016

De Vage Grens with Frank Auerbach, Reniere & Depla etc, De Queeste Kunstkamers, Abele/Watou, Belgium, 2015

Critics Choice, Selector Corinna Lotz, Mall Galleries London, 2013

Drawing Breath, Jerwood Anniversary Exhibition of Award Winners, London and touring UK, Australia, Japan, 2008-2009

Annely Juda A Celebration, Annely Juda Fine Art, London, 2007

Prime Time Berlin, Young Art from London, Galerie Seitz and Partner Berlin, EcArtspace 2006

Sense and Sensuality, London, UK tour and New York, 2006 - 2007

London Print Fair, Marlborough Fine Art, London, 2006

Blind Art in New York, 2006

Blind Art, RCA London and UK tour, 2005- 2011

Very British? Arbeiten von Britischen Künstlerinnen, with Tacita Dean and Mike Silva  
Die Drostei, Pinneberg, Germany, 2004

The Discerning Eye, Selector Prof Anita Taylor, Mall Galleries London, 2004

Small is Beautiful, Angela Flowers Gallery London, 2000 - 2004

Dialogue, Frances Aviva Blane and Nigel Ellis, EcArtspace London, 2002

Art Futures, Contemporary Art Society, London, 2002

Before, Now and After with Helen Sears, EcArtspace, Berlin, London, 2000

German and English Gallery Swap, Berlin, London, Sponsored by The British Council and Goethe Institut, 2002

Drawing, Basil Beattie and Frances Aviva Blane, EcArtspace London, 2001

Jerwood Drawing Prize. Cheltenham UK tour Berlin and Ghent, 2000

Painting with John Mclean and Frances Aviva Blane, St John Square, EcArtspace London, 2000

Cheltenham Open Drawing Competition. Award Winner, Cheltenham, UK tour Berlin 1999-2000

Chora curated by Sue Hubbard, with Susan Hiller and Helen Sears etc, London and UK tour, 1999-2000

Cheltenham and Gloucester National Open Drawing Competition, touring to University of Lincolnshire & Humberside  
and Kunstatte Vest Bahnhof, Berlin. 1998-1999

9 Artists in Clerkenwell: Solo x 9

Berry House with Susan Hiller, Dryden Goodwin etc, EcArtspace London 1998

In The Looking Glass, Women's Contemporary Self Portraits, curated by Dr Judith Collins, with Maggi Hambling etc,  
Usher Gallery Lincoln and UK tour, 1996-1997

Royal Academy of Art Summer Exhibition, London, 1996

Into the Nineties, Pick of Postgraduates, Mall Galleries, London, 1993

**Collections include**

3 Faiths Forum London | Sternberg Centre London | Usher Gallery Lincoln | London School of Economics  
Jesus College Cambridge | Blindart. London | Moorfields Eye Hospital London

**Awards**

Jerwood Award for Drawing 1999 | Mid-America ART Alliance Fellowship for Visual Arts 1998  
Residency at Djerassi Artists' Foundation, California, 1998 | Graham Hamilton Drawing Prize, 1991

Frances is represented in Belgium by De Queeste Art Gallery

Frances is currently exhibiting with the Jerwood Drawing Prize at the Jerwood Foundation London & Touring 2015-2016

for more information on Frances visit: [www.avivablane.com](http://www.avivablane.com)



Frances Aviva Blane

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