

SOURCES



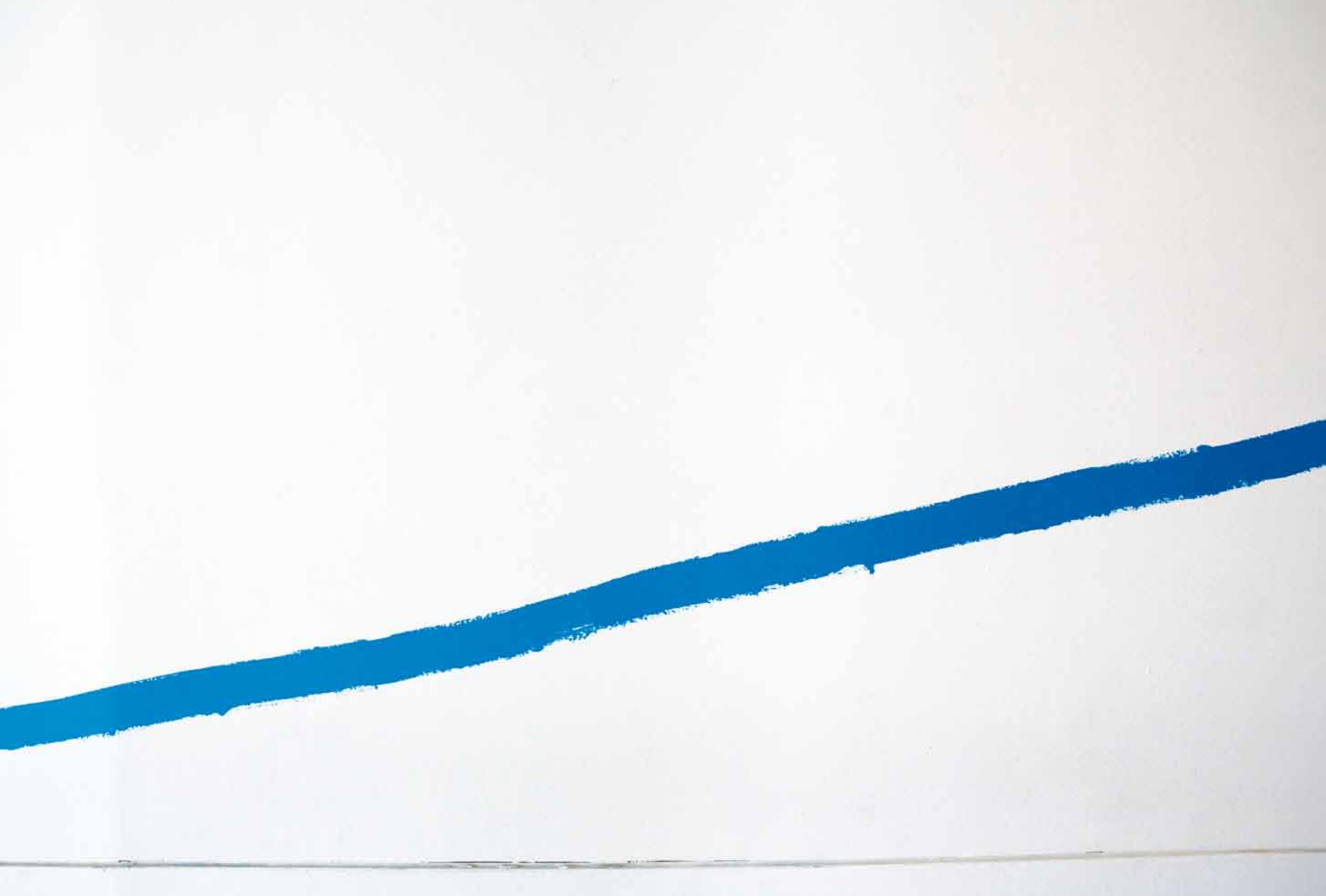






MEMORY MUIEL







€5,00

Muschetta
Dress



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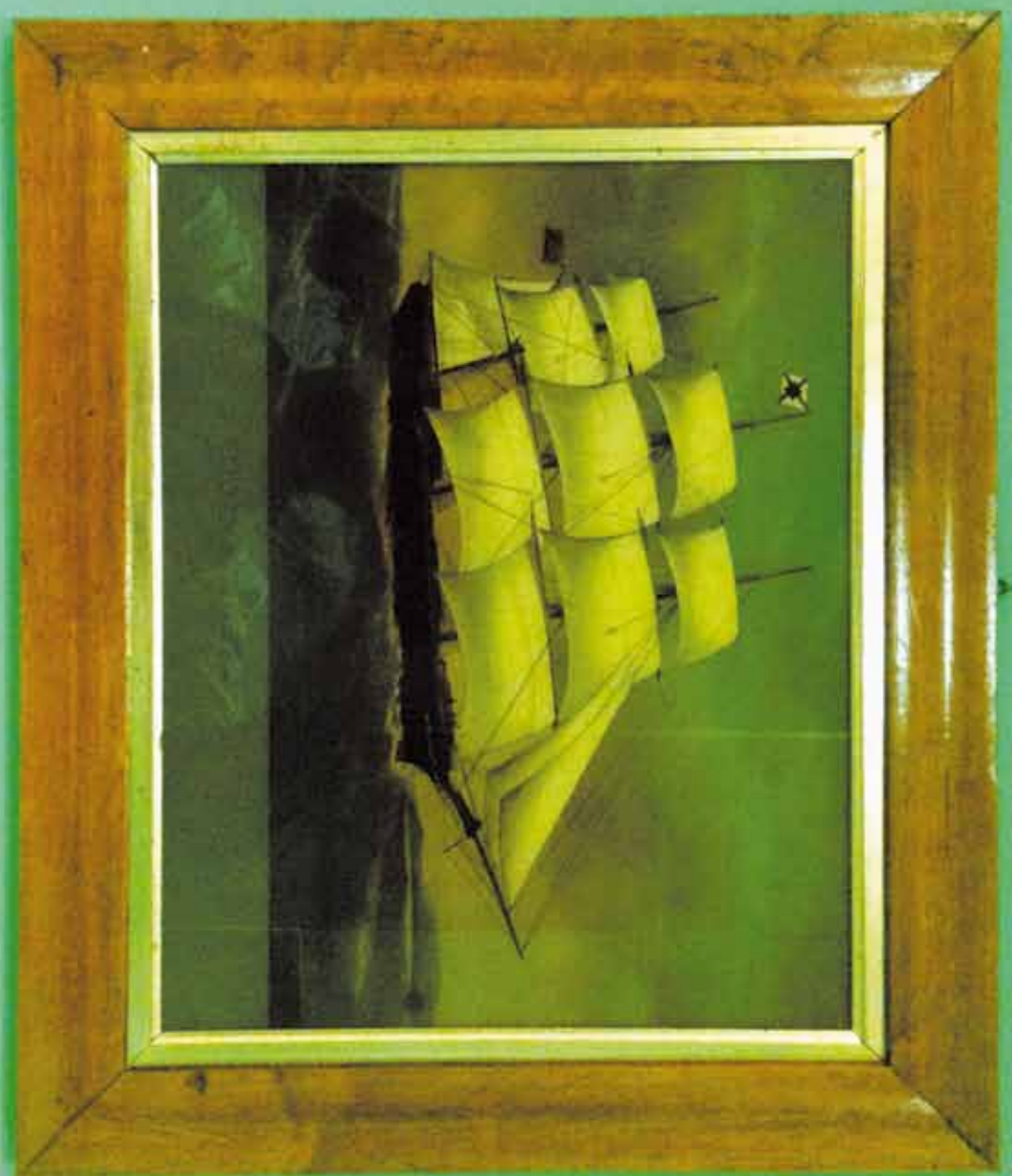
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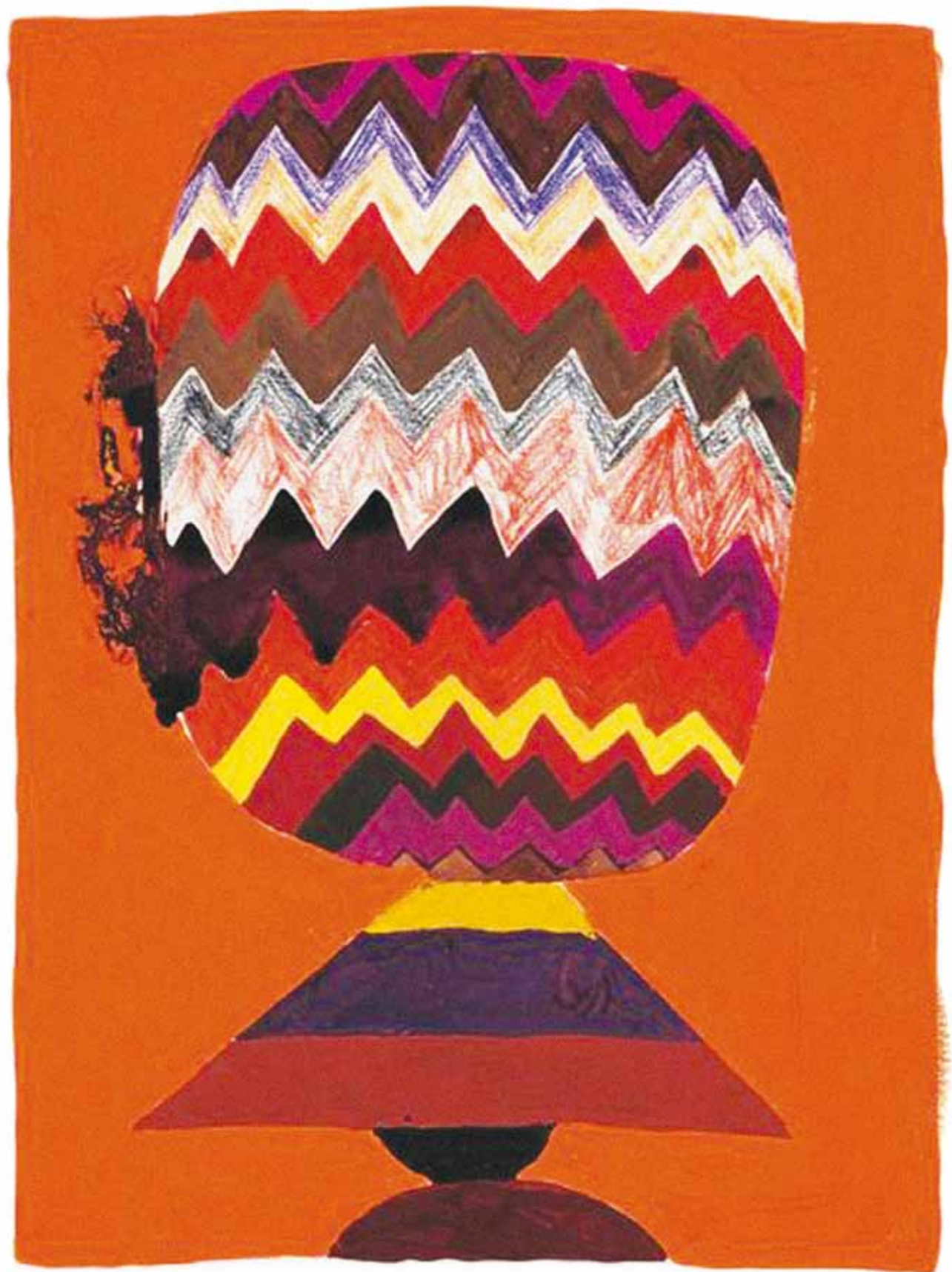


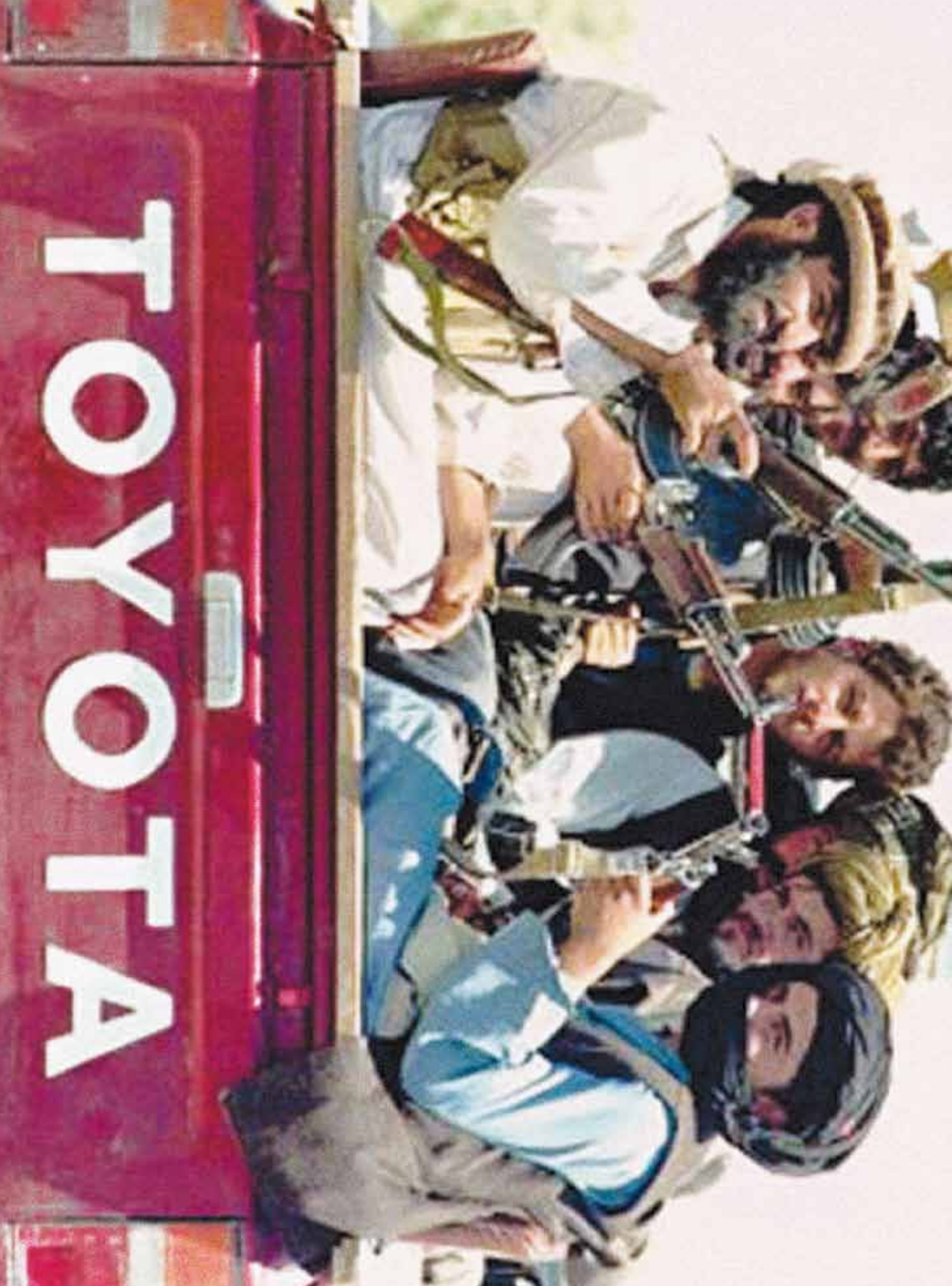
A 38964
printed in
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Philip GUSTON 1913-1980
painting, smoking, eating
1973 - 197 x 263 cm
Collection Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam

edition and colour-correction Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam © P. Guston Estate (1996)

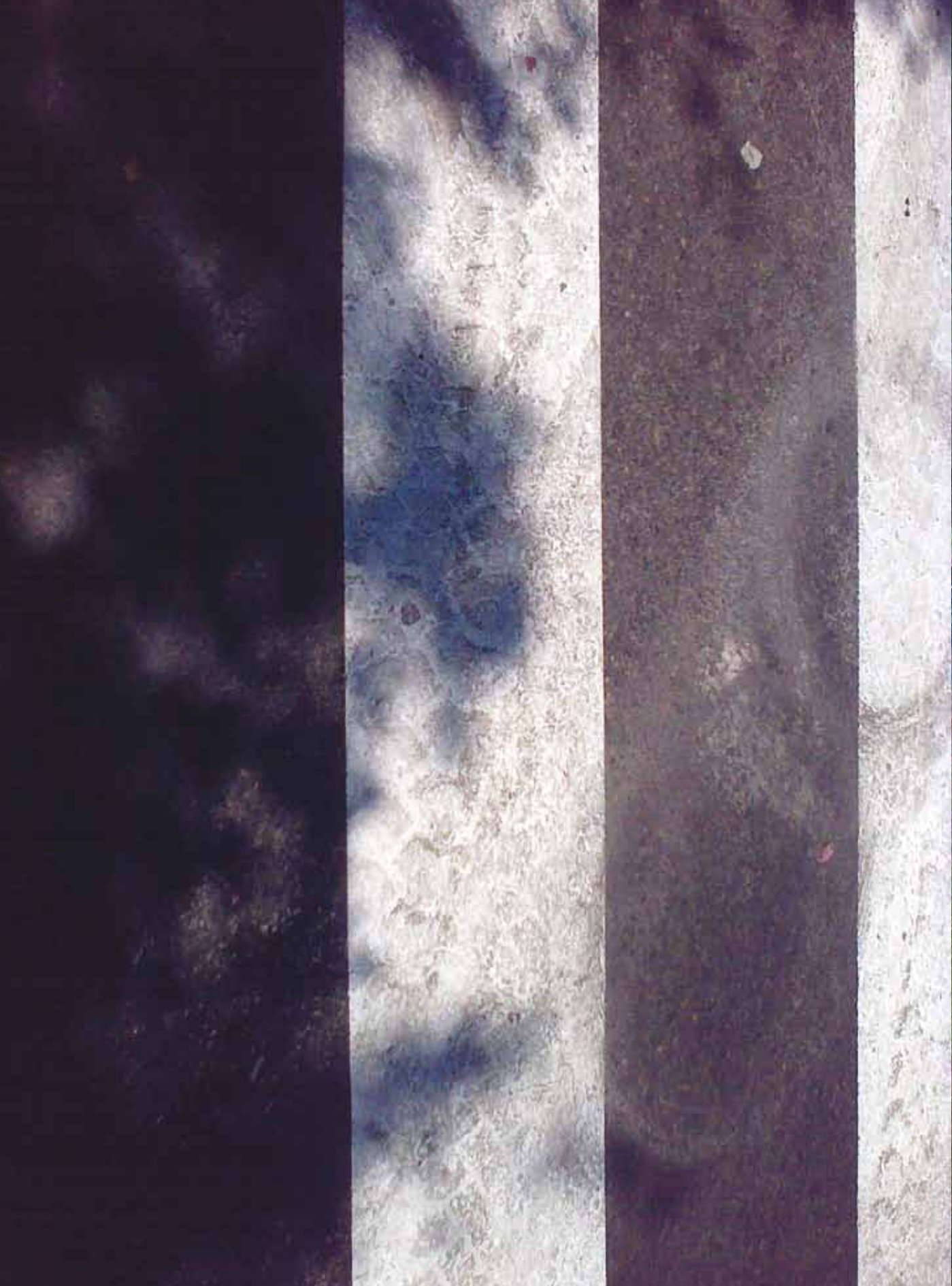








2010/10/23



















Studio, Hollywood Hills House 1982















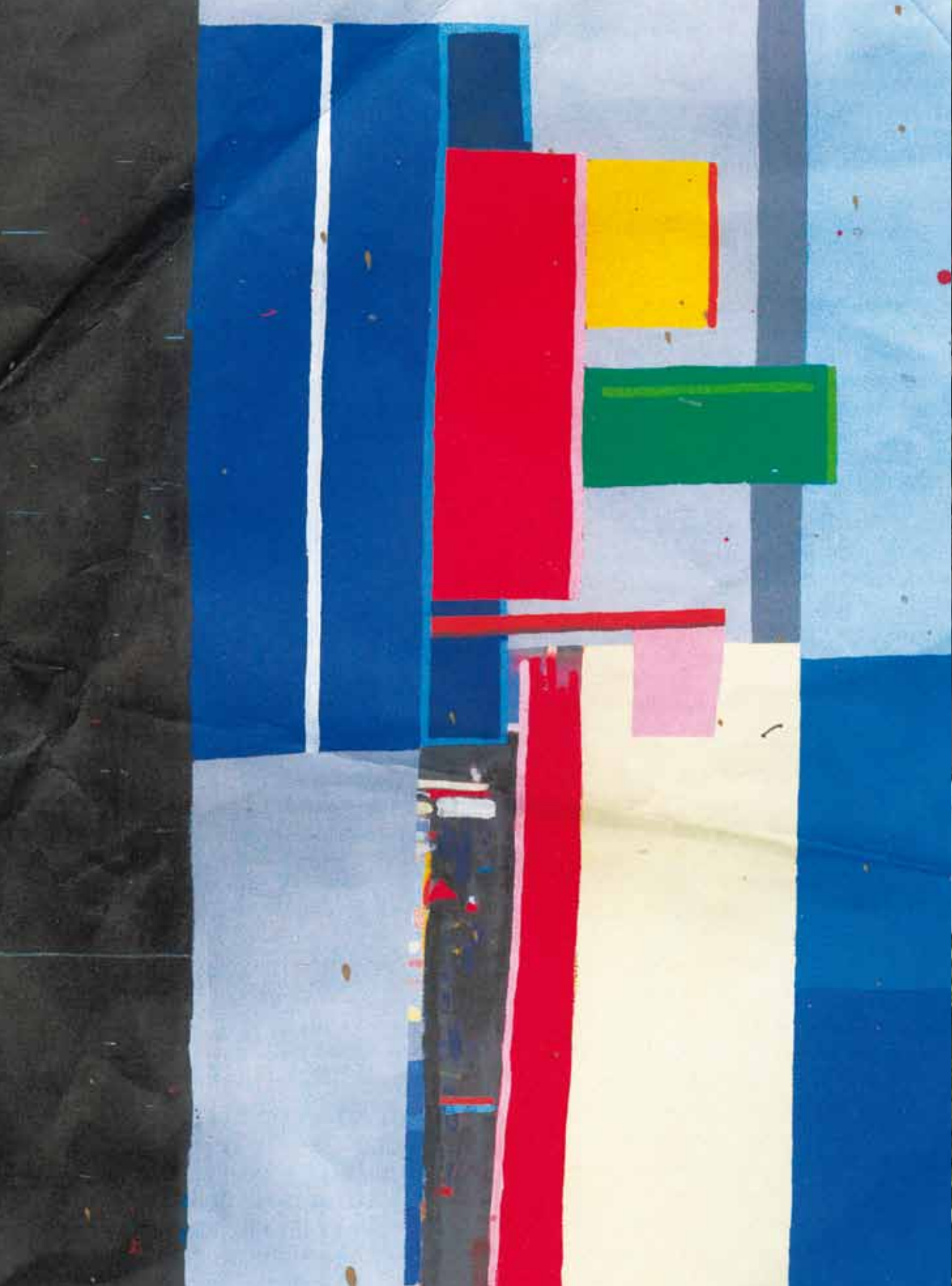


You can't expect constant intimacy.
It would be too tiring.



in developing a
language totally of
my own. This
language is rooted
in painting, in
beauty, in the
ancient, in the now,
in the contemporary,
in the language
that is cognitively
beyond words.

But to create
one's own language is
frustrating. It is
terribly lonely, anxiety
ridden. It's more dangerous
than cliff jumping, and
takes a heavy toll
on me. 1.4.10







**FIRST
WE
FEEL
THEN
WE
FALL**

Guy Yanai

**FIRST
WE
FEEL
THEN
WE
FALL**

Guy Yanai

May 12 — July 8, 2011
Alon Segev Gallery
Tel Aviv, Israel

Sources MARLOES HORST, OLIVIER ZAHM, PALMA VECCHIO,
IMI KNOEBEL, BAR RAFEALI, STUART HAWKINS, RACHEL CHANDLER,
RALPH LAUREN, HAW-LIN, HOLIDAY STRIPES, AHAD HAAM, CAPRI,
HELMUT NEWTON, GRAND HOTEL TREMEZZO, PINK PLASTIC SHOES,
SELECTA SPIELZEUG, JEAN-LUC GODARD, PHILIP GUSTON, AMERICANO,
EVA GREEN, LAKE COMMO, TEL AVIV, TAL R, STRIPED SHIRT, TOYOTA TALIBAN,
BALFOUR ST., NATACHA RAMSAY, DARREN BANKS, MASACCIO, HENRI MATISSE,
FOX HILL ROAD, LORIAN HENCKEL VON DONNERSMARCK, SCENES FROM
A MARRIAGE, MARK GROTJAHN, CAMPARI, DAVID HOCKNEY, MILANO,
WALID RAAD, FRUIT, WILLEM DE KOONING, DOMUS, BALENCIAGA,
CHARLES & RAY EAMES, PAUL SMITH, JENNIFER ABESSIRA, INGMAR BERGMAN,
SERGE GAINSBURG, STOCKHOLM, NAPLES.

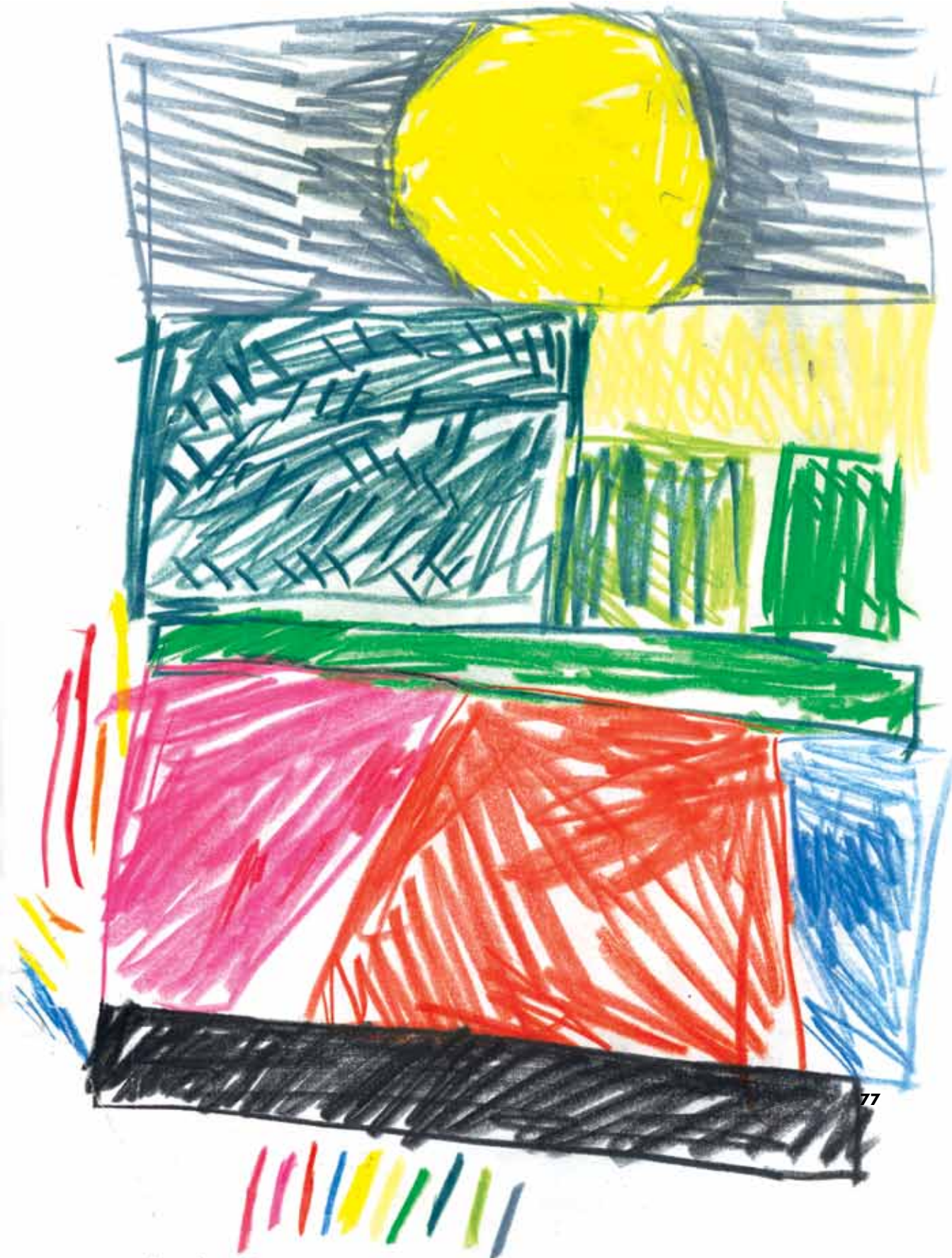
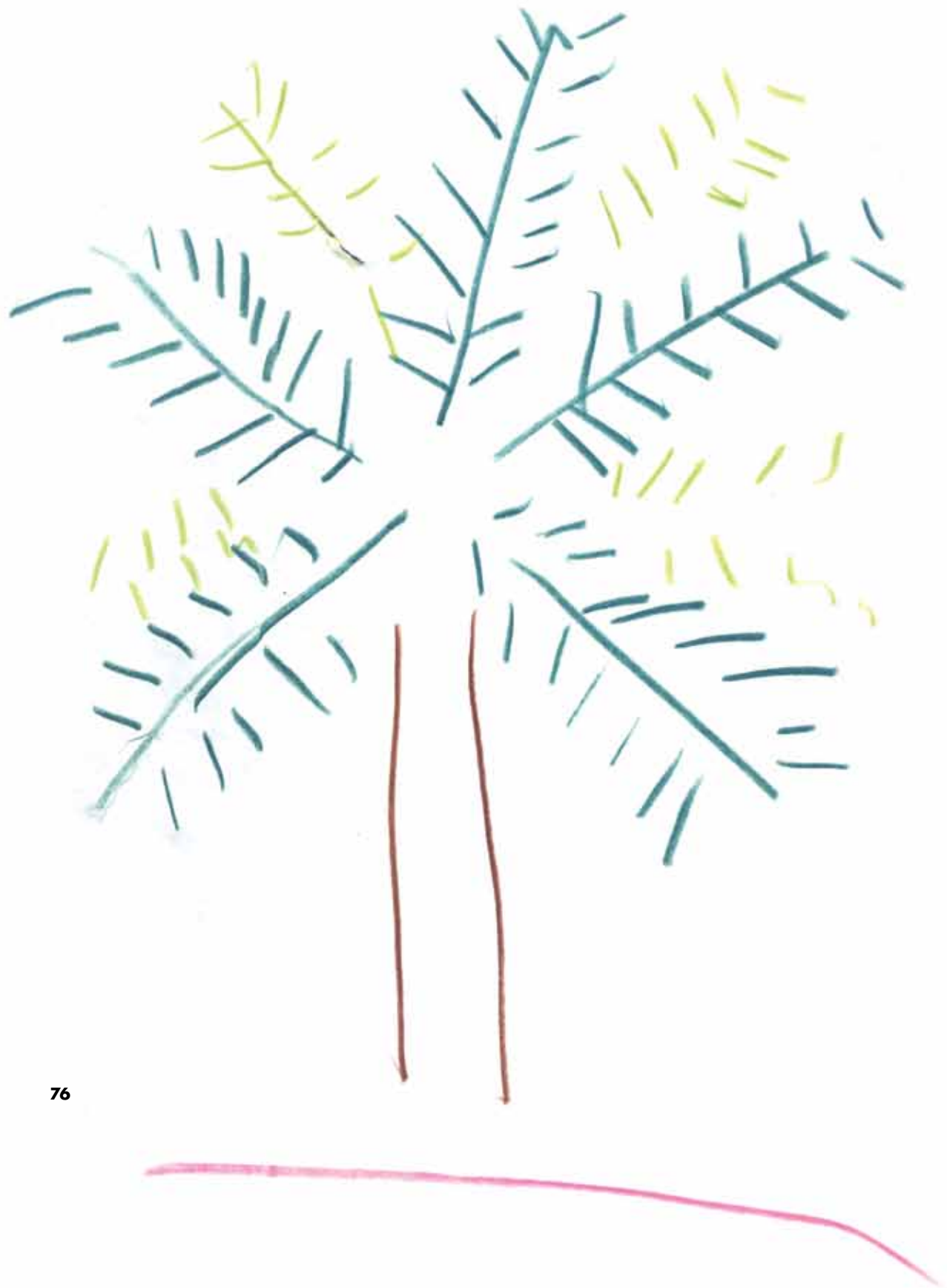


Alon Segev Gallery

DRAWINGS



bikini



first we feel then we fall...

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80

Burste



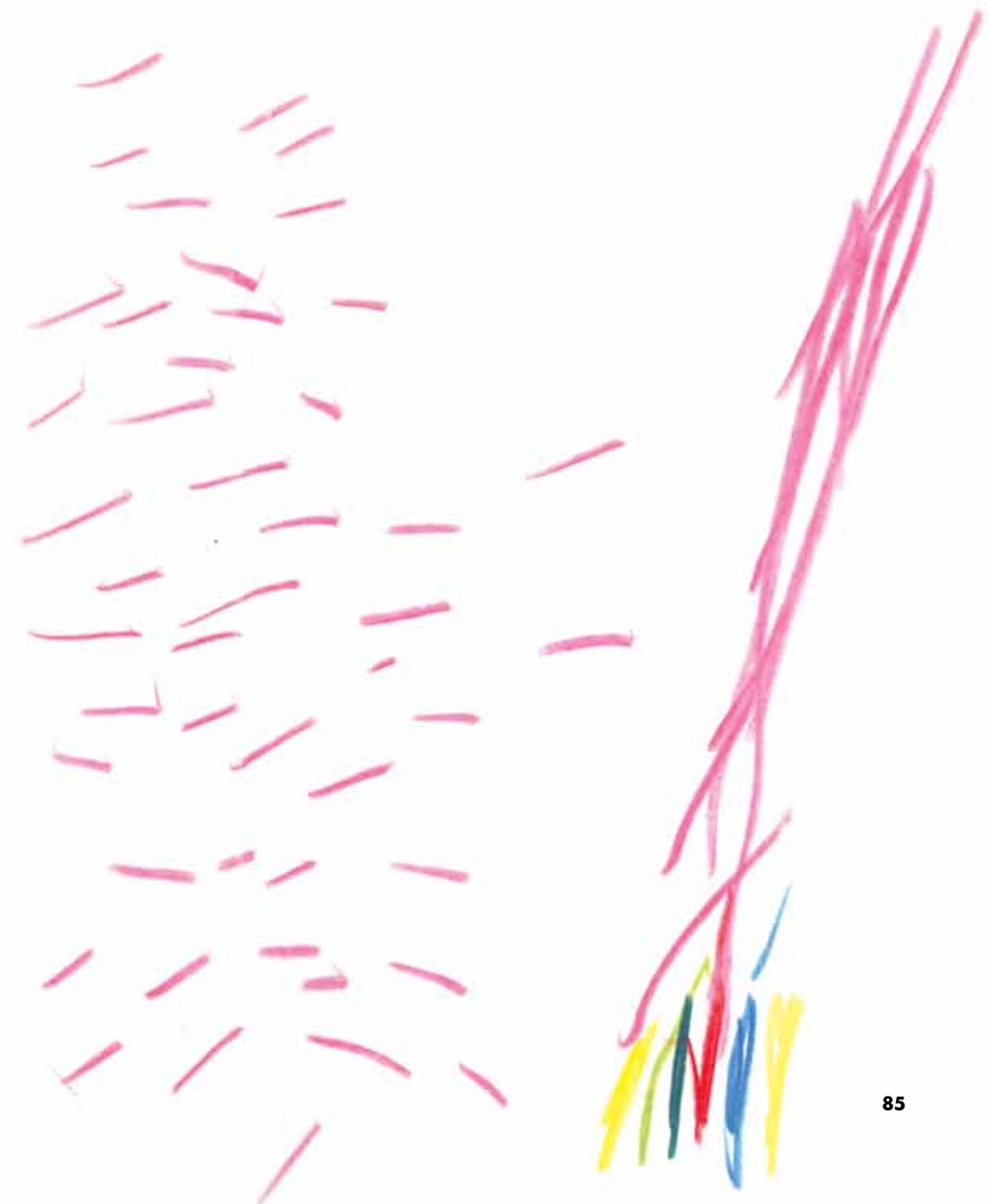
81

rita ackerman





Lindsay Lohan

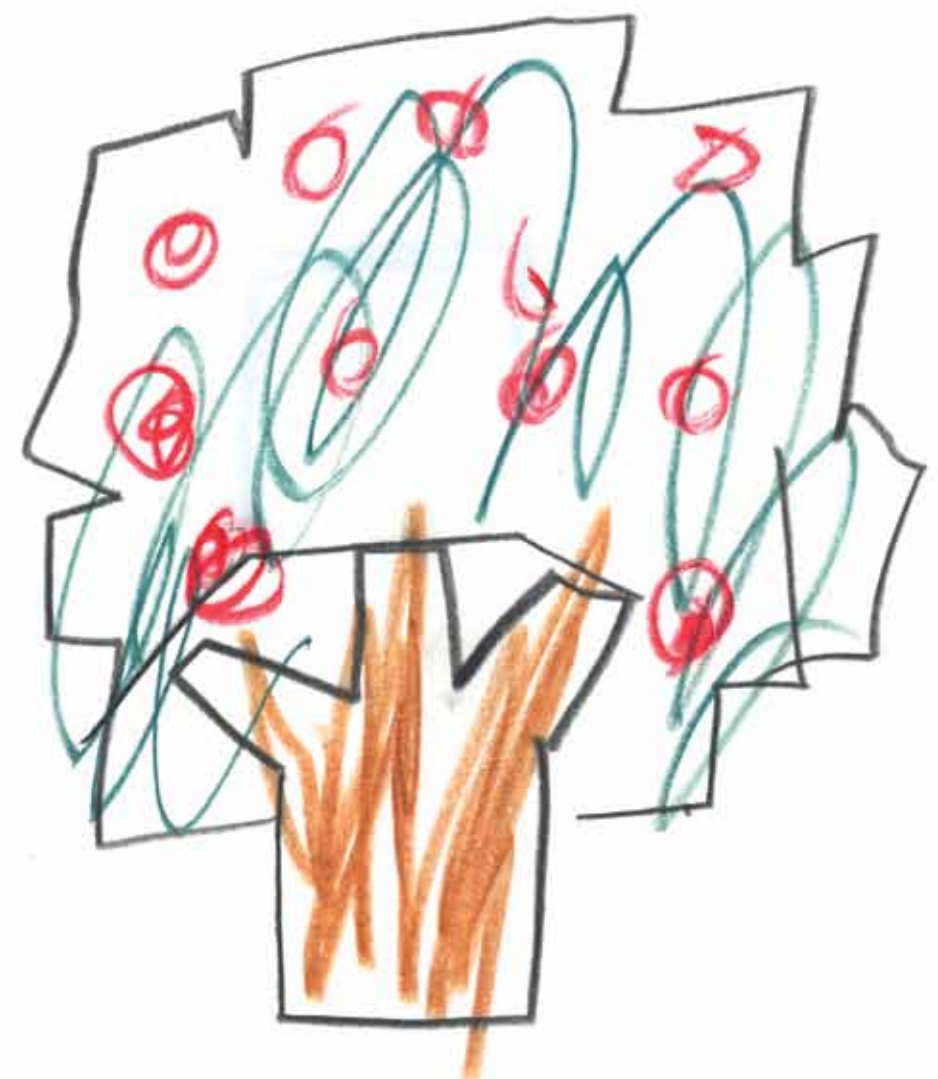


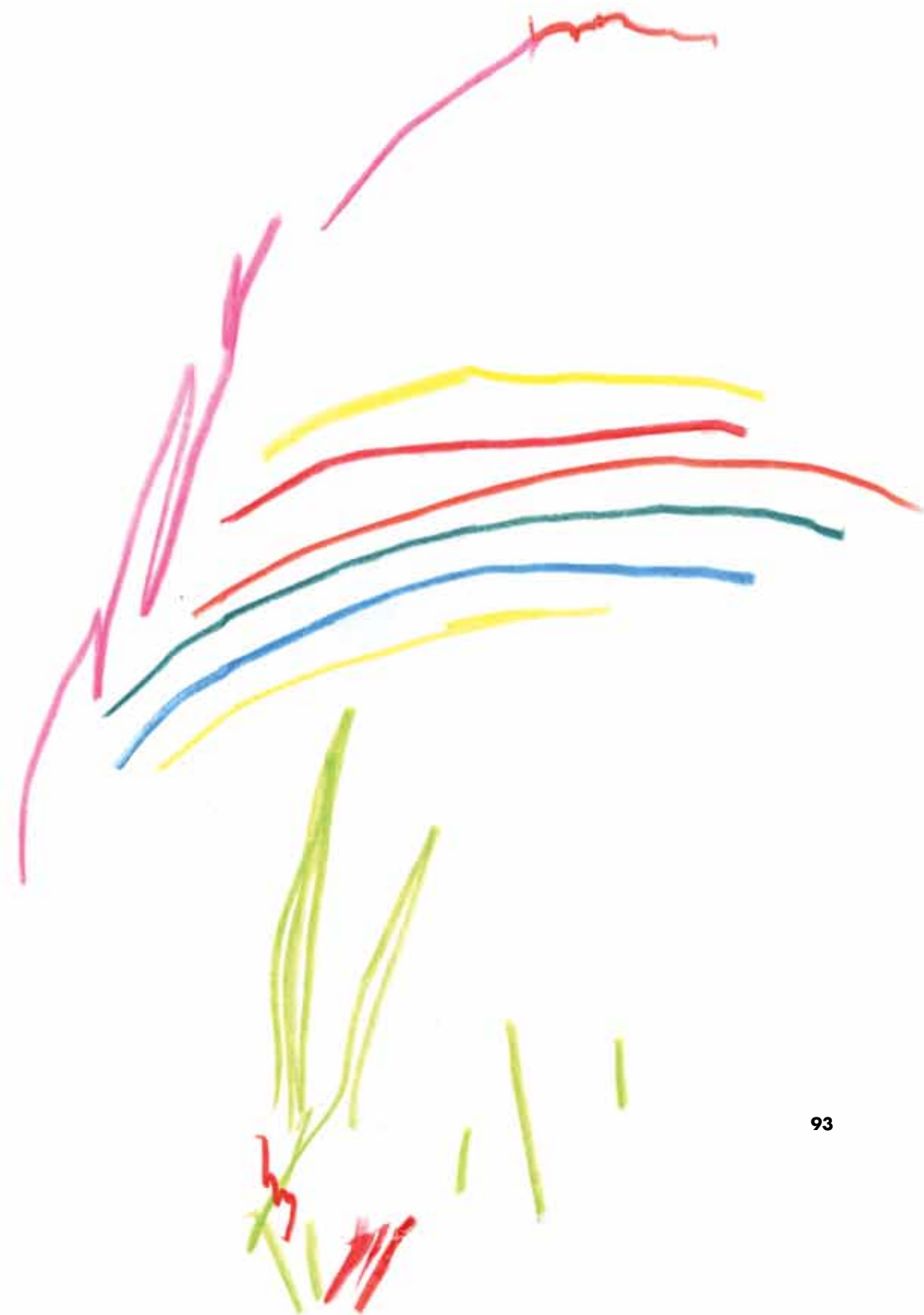




Lemon







Everything Being Equal: Painting as Relay, Painting as Engine

by Nait Banai

One of modernism's principal narratives considers the interstices through which two of its most paradigmatic mediums -- photography and painting -- have flirted, rivaled each other, and struggled to define their specific fields of legitimacy and experience. The discourses surrounding this privileged relationship often hinge on the ways in which photography's traditionally empirical imperative and painting's radical renunciation of mimetic fidelity participate in the constitution and critique of aesthetic and social codes. Clearly, neither photography nor painting can be contained by the broad categorical strokes within which they have been habitually assessed -- 'empiricism' vs. 'rationalism,' 'original' vs. 'copy,' or 'figuration' vs. 'abstraction' -- as both modes of communication persistently shun strict operational boundaries. Nevertheless, the historical murmurings of this debate continue to be processed through contemporary image systems that vie to capture, mimic, duplicate, and re-present the dramas and banalities of everyday life. Indeed, it could arguably be proposed that the search for 'the real' as a contained event or dispersed sensation, micro-or macro history, singular transcription or serialization of effects haunts most aesthetic practices today. In this context, Guy Yanai's *First We Feel, Then We Fall* (2010-2011) is a striking and dexterous positioning of painting as both an 'open source' whose syntax is collectively and interactively invented and a singular method of perceiving the world. As this essay suggests, Yanai's formal techniques and expansive archive of references, situate painting as *a relay* and *an engine* -- a transmission system through which images are circulated and a site for their fabrication and critique.

First, the relay: The twelve works in the series, with their large scale and shallow depth of field, are redolent of public billboards hawking clothing and cruises or advertisements touting the latest Hollywood blockbuster. Yet their brightly colored surfaces emerge from a rather 'democratic' tribute to a cross-section of filiations, including photographic, print media and film sources, art historical precedents, and the artist's idiosyncratic memories and chain of associations. For example, *Marriage* and *Driving in Stockholm* are both inspired by Ingmar Bergman's television series "Scenes from a Marriage," *Woman Outside* takes a photograph by Swedish artist Hanna Liden as its point of departure, *David Hockney is Not Jewish* is partially sourced from a watercolor by the English painter, and *Holiday* is a combined response to a found photograph of St. Tropez

and a picture of a boat that the artist observed in one of his nephew's books. Moving between different systems of images with no apparent motivation other than an affective connection, Yanai creates unique alliances. His sampling does not favor any one system, but engages with an expanded semiotic flow that occasionally intersects and, at times, materializes as a painting. How many images, we wonder, are still laying dormant in Yanai's collection and when will their time come to be 'outsourced' into a painting? His decision to compile and 'curate' an inventory of this source-material and expose it as a fundamental element in his artistic process is not without significance. What we can glean from this decision is that photography, painting, television, print media, and personal memory are all imagined as sites -- or archives -- that momentarily stabilize and organize the constant data flow of life as a form of representation. These media function as egalitarian apparatuses that give shape to the content of a communal imagination but cannot arrest or transform its frictions and differences into a conclusive composition. Yanai's artworks participate in this dynamic at two different levels: First, there is the frequent appearance of certain motifs, like the wildly exuberant succulent plants that grace interiors and exteriors alike. Seen in tandem with the artist's source material, we notice the numerous recurrences and 'migrations' of succulents across different contexts as, for example, in the oeuvre of Henri Matisse, the urban landscape of Tel Aviv, or an art fair installation by contemporary French artist Cyprien Gaillard. From this abbreviated inventory, we might surmise that Yanai's use of such motifs is a way of asserting his affinity to the shared visual imagination and libidinal economy of the Mediterranean region. Second, and perhaps more elusively, we start to discern that Yanai's repeated rendition of specific motifs is not simply paying homage to a territorial or cultural commonality but is also linked to the formal possibilities they engender. Look closely at *David Hockney is Not Jewish* and *Salon*, for example, and you may remark that the fragmented compositional structure of both paintings looks very much like the barbed, spiny stems of various Mediterranean plants. Yanai employs the jaggedness of the cactus leaf and unruly abandon of the palm tree not simply as decorative patterns, but as tectonic elements that organizes the internal configuration of each painting. In this sense, each canvas in the exhibition is a temporary assemblage, a concretized point in time that captures an unexpected and unscripted constellation of collective forms, utterances, and desires and transforms them into new formal possibilities for painting.

Then, the engine: Yanai is a *painter* -- and would insist on this appellation -- so to neglect this appertenance would be to overlook painting's particular capacity to engage with today's saturated image sphere. Indeed, perhaps the fundamental question that drives his ongoing investigation is what painting can do in its contemporary condition as a communication structure irrevocably intertwined with a constant drift of mechanically manufactured and reproduced information. What zones of experience can it distinctly represent if the structural limits between the painterly and the photogenic appear to be so indistinct? Despite its embrace of an open source code, this series argues for painting's explicit power. This is not immediately evident as it appears that Yanai's works have absorbed the distancing mechanisms that pervade most techniques of mass production. Most notably, there is a sense that the contents or events are happening 'over-there'

on a wide-angle panoramic screen and that they can be apprehended from a detached position of objective safety. There is also the critical function of the variously sized facets and bands of color, which simultaneously serve as the surface ornamentation and structural scaffolding of each canvas. Evoking popular references, the stacking of thin yellow, pink, and green strips in the top right corner in *Woman Outside* brings to mind a textile sample book while the color segments that traverse *Plant on Toast* suggest the graffiti-and poster-covered palisades erected around urban construction sites. Yanai does not shy away from the indexes of modern life and takes great pleasure in making evident the *indifference* created by their perpetual, transmutable circuits of exchange. Gilles Deleuze, writing on the works of French post-war painter Gérard Fromanger, offers an exceptionally apt description that seems to resonate with Yanai's project. He notes Fromanger's use of hot and cool colors and an aggregate effect of detachment that emerges from the "...indifference of the...planes of [each] painting; the indifference of the commodities in the background, the equivalence of love, of death, of food, of the naked and the dressed, of still life and the machine..."¹ With such complicity in the trafficking of signs, a careful demarcation of painting's particular force field seems to be even more urgent. And it is precisely here, at such a critical juncture, that Yanai's prowess as a painter comes to the fore.

If painting is an engine, it is one that raises difficult questions about its own possibilities. In "First We Feel, Then We Fall," Yanai agitates the potentially stultifying *buis clos* in which we may find ourselves if we subscribe to the idea of a hermetically-sealed loop of equivalence. Though we may approach these paintings as an assortment of media 'screens' upon which the image of 'the real' is continuously projected, the discrete planes of color that materialize each image also perform a poignant attack on imaging systems that (re)present the world as a naturalized whole. This disruption occurs at the level of color, which re-organizes the real by intensifying the chromatic saturation of the world of images. In Yanai's paintings, the reds are redder, blues are bluer, and greens are greener -- his pigments diffuse a luminosity that modifies the real by a tiny fraction edging ever-so-slightly 'beyond the nth degree.' It is also through color that Yanai produces a type of visual 'static' within his own field of pictorial operation. The improbable red sliver that cuts through the vegetal lushness and turquoise skies of *South of France without a Woman* or the multicolored spectrum of narrow bands that veer through the domestic psychodrama of *Marriage* are a case in point. By unsettling any notion of compositional, chromatic, or thematic integrity these uneven, horizontal 'zips' generate static within the circuit of equivalence and nurture heterogeneous links to other aesthetic idioms and regimes of signs. Using the power of chroma, painting's engine critically assesses its own language as one that simultaneously participates in a relay of exchanges while evading equivalence.

1 Gilles Deleuze. *Cold and Heat*, in *Photogenic Painting*. London: Black Dog Publishing, 1999, p. 72.

Guy Yanai: The Middle of Somewhere

by James Trainor

To hear him tell it, Guy Yanai's solitary two-month artist residency in a desanctified 19th-century church in a rural section of upstate New York in 2009 was a season in the back of beyond, like stepping into the yawning gulf of a howling wilderness. The bucolic setting of this sudden cultural-deprivation chamber, surrounded by trees, grass, hills, crickets, sweetly twittering birds, fluffy clouds drifting across a mindless blue sky at first only drove home just how cut off he was from the background sensory blizzard to which he was accustomed and addicted, living within demanding and bustling city limits of Tel Aviv. "No phone!", "no signal!", "no stores!", "no Internet!" Yanai still enjoys recounting in detailed astonishment, as if these lacks were the harbingers of things far worse yet to come – potential bear attacks, slow starvation, madness. But the wild animals kept their distance, provisions were gathered, and then things started to happen.

Like a modern-day painterly Thoreau, (whose own self-imposed ascetic exile in the woods allowed him to turn four walls and very little else into an entire world, welling up from within) Yanai discovered that solitude and the abrupt cessation of the nattering 24-hour cycle of external stimuli to which we are all exposed, privately and collectively, was also the catalyst for a sudden creative outpouring. He started seeing and making the intimate acquaintance of all the things in his head that were there all along, waiting patiently to be called upon and attended to. In fact, he recalls that images began "puking out of me". The now-vacant former chapel started getting peopled with a congregation of pictures – of national flags, grisaille portraits of unsmiling men in Ray-Bans, fragments of text in Latin and Hebrew alphabets, a stray, dirty Morandi-esque sneaker, a perfect ripe avocado, ready to be eaten, tenderly-rendered ancient Levantine ceramics, cactuses, cropped sections of roadway with their dashed centerlines banking out of frame, silhouetted pyramids, fantasy mosques, abstract arrangements of blocks of color, dreaded moose-deer hybrids and other wild animals (real or imagined), more succulents, a forlorn hot dog with a serpentine dash of mustard. There was a non-judgmental, egalitarian democracy of treatment in how he depicted his subjects, or as Yanai puts it: "Lindsay Lohan is not more important than a piggy bank or vice versa".

Pinging around from past to the present, things found right at hand in his immediate environment and others seemingly recollected, mentally burnished in his mind's eye, the images began to form a wildly associative inventory or index. The walls and floors of his private sanctuary filled up like a community message board with notes, glyphs, scraps and declarative snippets, studies and neat little self-contained visual statements, and after two months he had over 80 completed small-scale paintings. It was the satisfaction of an obviously ardent hunger for the company of things, images, visual connectivity, talismans.

There is a contented lusciousness, a sensuousness in bringing things into existence where there had been nothing. Yanai, ever the magpie on the prowl for just the right useful or beautiful tidbit to wing back to the nest, is motivated by the look of things in the world – whether those things are in front of him or calling siren-like from a book or magazine, a movie or a mail-order catalogue. Like one of his heroes, the leonine French New Wave filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard, he is a collagist and a purloiner, a collector of scenographic fragments aligned with one history or another, an image-maker both fascinated by the material world – the beguiling, seductive power of consumer objects – while possessed of a self-reflexive skepticism and unease with those very same objects.

The title of one abstract painting from 2009, *Yellow Crate (Scandinavian Socialism)* seems to deftly capture an understated sense of mutually permissive attraction and distrust suffusing much of his work. The associations proliferate in this Ad Reinhart-esque set piece of colorful squares and rectangles – the Utopianism of pure geometries and the inferences of Good Design, the Postwar political idealism embodied in modernist furnishings and uplifting objects by Kaj Franck, Alvar Aalto, Arne Jacobsen and Georg Jensen and the inevitable dissolution of those ideals as transliterated into the IKEA megastore, the shipping crate, a formulaic universe of cheap populist crap cluttering a world already brimming with clutter. Another large recent painting, *Marriage* (2010), takes its composition directly from a famous shot in Ingmar Bergman's excruciatingly bittersweet domestic drama, *Scenes from a Marriage* (1973), showing a husband and wife in bed, each reading their own book, just a few feet apart but with an emotional chasm silently opening between them. In his painting, however, Yanai has fixated on the geometries and color schemes of their spare furnishings to graph the psychological tensions at stake in this relationship. This particular marriage seems just as much tamped down by things as by emotional dynamics, as if the life they have chosen, embodied by their good taste, is slowly constraining and swallowing them up. The Mondrian-like rectilinear bands of color could be extensions of the enameled steel framework of their bed or just abstract mark-making on the painting's surface. Either way, they are weaving the figures into the fabric of their surroundings, binding them to their possessions, slowly shutting down one possibility after another. The color patterns in the painting are lifted straight from a selection of minimalist sofas Yanai came across in a *Domus* magazine – the kind of advertising that promises that everything is going to be alright, repurposed for an empathetic critique showing how everything is going very wrong.

Like David Hockney, Fairfield Porter, and another of his figurative “painters’ painter” forebears, Alex Katz, Yanai seems to often assume the role of implicated anthropologist, the participating chronicler of the life and times of a very particular cultural milieu, a creative class of people that likes to imagine itself as somehow special and exempt from easy categorization but still conforms to its own conventions, its own discernable behavioral patterns and tastes. Katz gave to the world a visual shorthand for how a circle of city-dwellers, New Yorkers of a certain generation, saw themselves – cool, urbane, sophisticated, both naïve and cynical, buoyed by potential. Likewise, Yanai looks and records – sometimes critically, other times willfully not – and finds pleasure in what may be transitory or superficial and yet true. It is the pleasure of being both *of* a world and *outside* of it at the same time. That is when something resonates far below the surfaces of things, in keenly knowing your subject from a clinical distance while having been in bed with it all along.

...

During a conversation in March 2011, Yanai spoke about what it was like to put down temporary stakes in the wilds of New York’s Hudson Valley:

Guy Yanai: It was lonely. I couldn’t stop these images and associations and about 10 million other things going through my head. Everything became about identity, even my ethnicity – I’m half Syrian and a quarter Polish and a quarter German – and I started painting all these portraits of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad, and his father, the former President Hafez Al-Assad, and deconstructing the German flag. It was about being alone in the middle of nowhere and feeling totally disconnected. I think Columbia County is about as far as you can get from South Tel Aviv. It’s a civilizational change, in every way, shape or form. I mean, I like things quiet, but *that* kind of quiet, it’s frightening! At night I was reading my way through a massive six-volume biography of Winston Churchill.

Then, all this stuff came out. Maybe I had suppressed it so long. I kind of had to let everything in, and then let everything out. I called those little paintings “aphorisms” because they are kind of like small little sentences. I picked a small size I could travel with and take with me. I wasn’t going for anything monumental and if I went down to the store and saw a pineapple, and I thought “I like the way that looks” then I painted a pineapple. Or if I ate a hot dog, I would end up painting a hot dog. Whatever went into my head, I just did it. I hadn’t worked that way in such a long time. It started out very playful and fun, but then turned very serious, wondering how deep can I get into this.

James Trainor: It feels like you were shuffling and re-shuffling a deck of cards, where the cards are this internalized set of interests, fixations, sources, things you like, things you don’t like – a whole vocabulary of possible images – and you are playing them out, making them share space, seeing which ones can hold their own and stand up to scrutiny.

GY: Yes, It is like creating a sort of index. There are millions of different things that we are bombarded with every day and I feel I am putting myself in the role of editor. It comes very naturally to me to take everything in around me and then to sort of hoard it. I really like the idea of that and to get away from the idea of style. Every project I do has a distinct set of linguistic parameters for me – subject, themes, and also surface and size. It would be too easy to just repeat these parameters and I am constantly trying to trip myself up, while constructing building blocks on top of the work. The whole issue of style is analogous to the situation with musicians like Miles Davis or a composer like John Zorn, who are always switching musical forms and genres while always finding something consistent throughout. The freedom to be able to pick and choose your particular framework is very appealing.

JT: How do you manage the anxiety that comes with kinships and influences and the whole history of art stacked against you? It is like being in this big room with all of these people or things you love and are drawn to and balancing how you express those relationships.

GY: That’s the hard thing. The big challenge is to figure out how to transform your influences. It’s kind of like speaking with the painting and letting the painting tell you what to do. It tells you: “no”, “yes”, “no”, “yes”, “yes”, “no”. I draw a lot, but it’s never really preparatory drawing. It’s more a matter of going to work directly on the surface, and correct, and correct, and change, and radically change, and wipe down, etc. Just talking about it makes me nervous and fills me with anxiety. In the end each painting, until it is finished, it nearly kills me in a way, until I find a way for it to become linguistically independent, a whole new kind of phrasing or expression. The whole process just wears you down. For example, there is a little painting that I did of a Mies van der Rohe *Barcelona* chair – I was trying to abstract a Mies van der Rohe, which is a kind of losing battle in the first place – and afterwards I was sick for two days with a fever. With another work, *David Hockney is not Jewish*, I basically took a little watercolor of his and went and fucked it up, messed with its DNA, trying to see how far I could take it. It is in effect like a transcription of the original.

JT: You’ve mentioned that you don’t want to have any comfort zones, and what you are describing doesn’t sound like an always comfortable process you set up for yourself.

GY: It is all about anxiety – the process, being in the studio, everything. I can’t actually work if I think to myself “I am comfortable doing this thing”. Basically, for me, I think as far as art and painting are concerned everything begins as a big problem. I’m never solving it, and everything I am attracted to contains some sort of problem. Not that I even end up solving it. It’s just that I’m a painter and I can’t do anything about it. I am really jealous of all other mediums. I’m absolutely jealous of writers, or film directors, or architects and video artists. Anyone who can inject true psychology into their work, which I sometimes think is sort of an impossibility for me. That’s why I love all these people and things.

The problem isn't that painting is some puzzle to be solved. I'm not interested in paintings about paintings. Once I thought that I needed to choose sides in a painting, decide between opposing forces. But now I don't want to choose any sides. I want to leave all these conflicts, skirmishes and oxymorons irreconcilable. I want to make a painting where that constant tension actually works – even formally, introducing brushstrokes that are in a completely different language or making marks that in one part of the painting can be descriptive and yet in the other can mean something altogether different – that is what is exciting. And somehow the viewer immediately picks up on and understands these differences. So these pictures negate easy explanations or easy readings. There's no story there. In the Renaissance you had to tell a story with paintings. And then later Clement Greenberg said, "no it's not that, it's pure Formalism". But it's not that either. For me, negating these two opposing functions of paintings isn't itself a negative activity – it's liberating. The physical act of painting is something that I love. When I start mixing paint it's like heroin to me. The medium itself is so seductive to me even though I want to get past the medium.

JT: Is this jealousy partly the source of the big problems you're talking about?

GY: It is kind of hard to admit, but it's true: when I see a Vitra catalogue I start to drool, in a very superficial, materialistic, capitalist way – on the level of "ME WANT THIS". I love Charles and Ray Eames, Jean Prouvé, I love all this "stuff". It is hard not to fetishize it. But they are also part of these questions: how do we live now? How do we choose to lead our lives? How do we sit in this chair? What kind of lamp are we going to read our books with? They are all playing on us at this fantasy level too. Although the objects, like the Eames chair, now have this stigma of being found in every nice high-end store and home, these people were working at a profound level.

I wrote a motto on my studio wall one day with a pencil, it is covered up now. It said: "I'm now painting an object toward which I have many conflicted feelings and opinions". You love something, you hate something. It's so beautiful that you think it's ugly, it's so ugly that you think it's beautiful. You're so conflicted about how you actually feel about this thing. Some things are simple, but most things are not. There is this full parliament of feelings about the subject, from Neo-liberal embrace to Marxist rejection, from total attraction to total repulsion. It's knowing that you are among the suckers who love something, the object or the way it looks in the world. Right now I am making a painting with a life-size iPhone in the middle and I am one of those people who loves his iPhone and I am aware that this love is pathetic. But I want to see what happens when you do that.

GY: He is!

JT: And Ad Reinhart is busy designing a better reading lamp...

GY: Yes, it is this kind of tension that has always been there and when I was much much younger I used to absolutely separate them – small abstract works and these large figurative paintings, acrylic and oil, and it was like two completely different worlds. It took me a long time to be comfortable with the realization that there is no single direction and that I don't need to reconcile the two. There is something deeply seductive when abstraction and representation come together in strange ways. I'm inherently drawn to and seduced by both, and this is actually the motherboard, the nerve-center of painting for me.

James Trainor writes about art, books, film, architecture, landscape and contemporary culture. His columns, essays, editorials, interviews and reviews have appeared in *Artforum*, *Frieze*, *Cabinet*, *Art in America*, *Metropolis* and other periodicals. He lives and works in New York City.

JT: There is always an interesting seesaw effect going on in your work between abstraction and representation, as if you had discovered that Barnett Newman is somehow lurking in those *Domus* magazines or Vitra catalogues that you flip through covetously.

PLATES



DAVID HOCKNEY IS NOT JEWISH
oil on linen, 165×165 cm



SALON
oil on linen, 165×165 cm



LIVING ROOM
oil on linen, 165×165 cm



FIRST WE FEEL THEN WE FALL
oil on linen, 165×165 cm



BUS IN ITALY
oil on linen, 190×190 cm



HOLIDAY
oil on linen, 185×185 cm



TREE WITHOUT ROOTS
oil on linen, 190×190 cm



PLANT ON TOAST
oil on linen, 200×200 cm



DRIVING IN STOCKHOLM
oil on linen, 180×190 cm



SOUTH OF FRANCE WITHOUT A WOMAN
oil on linen, 180×190 cm



WOMAN OUTSIDE
oil on linen, 200×200 cm



MARRIAGE
oil on linen, 185×185 cm



BOAT
oil on birch panel, 80×80 cm



PLANT
oil on birch panel, 80×80 cm



TAL R IPHONE
oil on birch panel, 80×80 cm



CAMPARI
oil on birch panel, 80×80 cm



DEMOCRACY
oil on birch panel, 80×80 cm



TERRACOTTA
oil on birch panel, 80×80 cm



SALON
oil on birch panel, 80x80 cm



DAVID HOCKNEY IS NOT JEWISH
oil on birch panel, 80x80 cm



FIRST WE FEEL THEN WE FALL
oil on birch panel, 80x80 cm



EAMES CHAIR
oil on birch panel, 80x80 cm

This book is published on the occasion
of the exhibition

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Guy Yanai

May 12 — July 8, 2011
Alon Segev Gallery
Tel Aviv, Israel

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