



PHILIPP FRÖHLICH

DOSSIER

INTRODUCTION

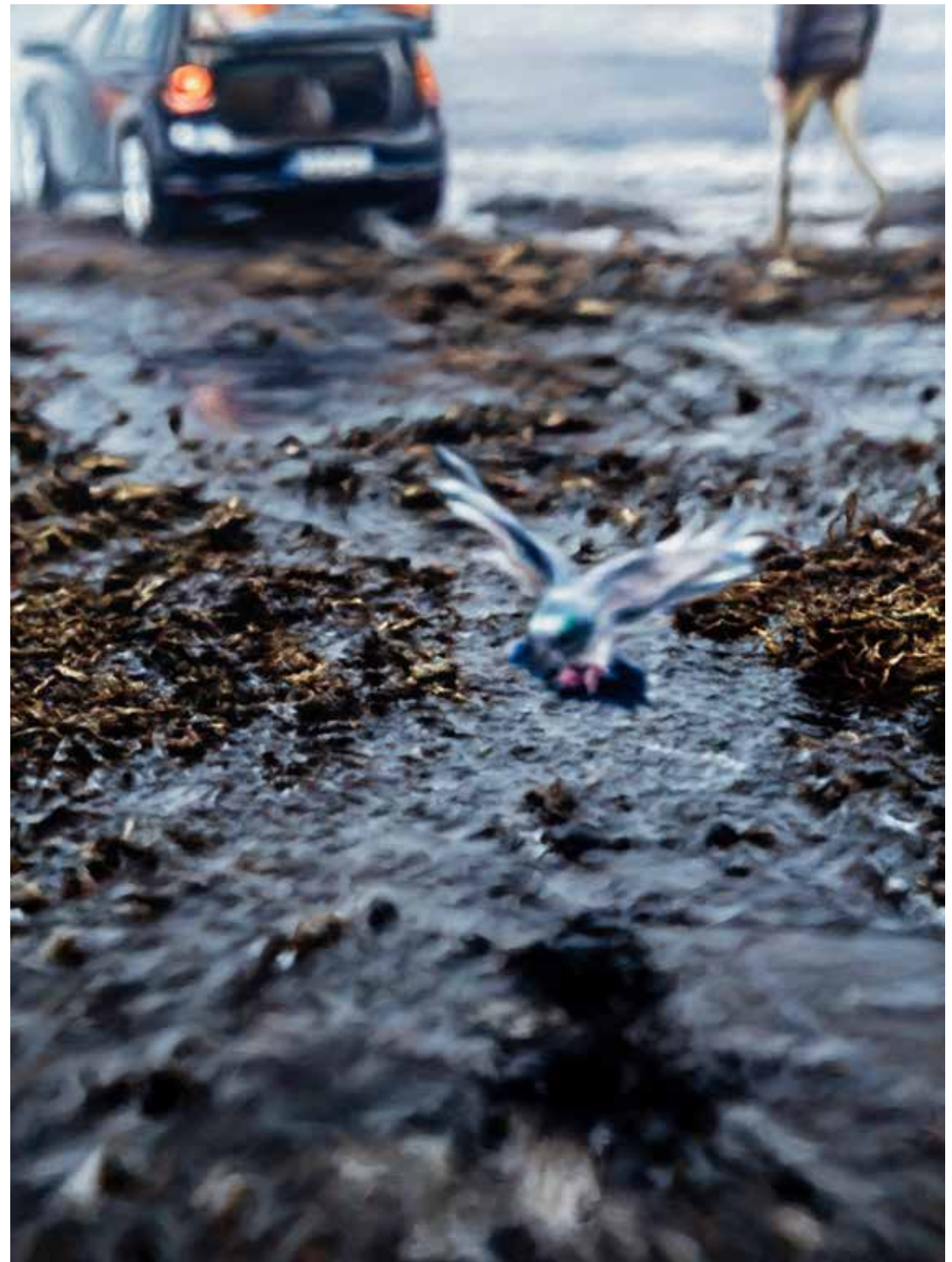
The essence of Philipp Fröhlich's artistic work is his devotion to the present-day relevance of painting as a medium, as is mirrored in its rich history. Texts of both poetic and journalistic nature often provide a point of departure for his suggestive tableaux, and he develops his practice of painterly associations accordingly, transforming existing words, sentences, and sounds into complex and labyrinthine visual dramas. Fröhlich frequently works in thematic series that investigate topics such as criminology or, most recently, children's fairy tales from all over the world.

The artist employs the following method: he constructs models with which he explores possible motifs seen from various points of view and lighting situations. Both the photographs that he takes of the models and the models themselves are then used as source material for his painted interpretations. The more seductive the visual spaces seem at the beginning, the more expansive they become as multiperspective realms of visual experience. It is particularly Fröhlich's dramaturgy of light and color as well as his choice of framing that articulate the artificiality of his painted compositions, producing visual puzzles that are balanced between reality and the reality of painting. Fröhlich uses genres and languages of classic art history with great detail and precision as a sort of quarry for his depictions of humans, animals, architecture, and landscapes.

Fröhlich confronts painting—whose death and resurrection have been repeatedly invoked like a mantra for decades—with the energy, bearing, and vision of a maverick. For him, pictures represent potential riddles as well as infinite interconnections with the world as both a counterpart and perpetual enigma that can be rediscovered over and over. By combining technical mastery with his distinct interpretations of structurally deceptive worlds of motifs, his canvases address universal themes with a contemporary complexity.

Philipp Fröhlich (born 1975 in Schweinfurt, Germany) studied stage design under Karl Kneidl at the Düsseldorf Art Academy before changing from theater to independent painting twenty years ago. Fröhlich lives and works in Brussels and Madrid.

2019—2023



La Cavale, 2021
oil on canvas, 195 x 145 cm, (335L)



Dug up by Dogs, 2020
oil on canvas,
110 × 145 cm, (283L)



(341L), 2022
oil on canvas,
110 x 145 cm



Arbeit und Struktur I
[Work and Structure I], 2019
oil on canvas, 110 × 145 cm, (251L)

Beachy Head, 2023
oil on canvas, 245 x 175 cm (356L)



One for Sorrow, Two for Joy I, 2021
oil on canvas, 110 × 80 cm, (338L)





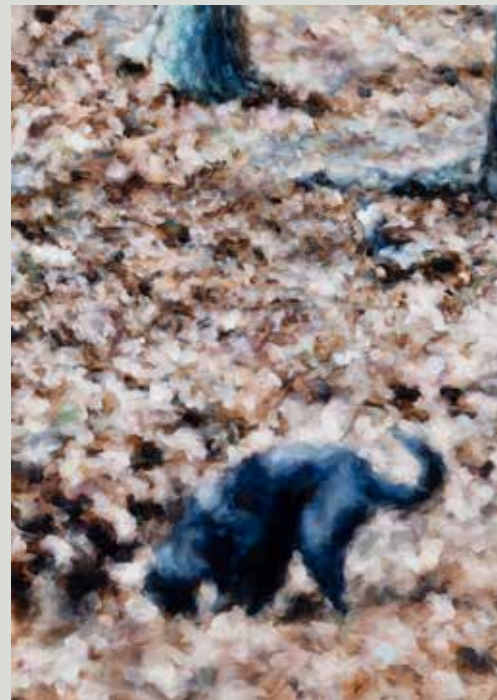
*One for Sorrow,
Two for Joy*, 2021
oil on Panel,
27,5 × 19,5 cm, (334H)

Motten und Licht
[Moths and Light], 2021
oil on Panel,
24,5 × 17,5 cm, (327H)



Grabender Hund
[Digging Dog], 2021
oil on Panel,
24,5 × 17,5 cm, (333H)

Arbeit und Struktur
[Work and Struktüre], 2019
oil on Panel,
24,5 × 17,5 cm, (266H)

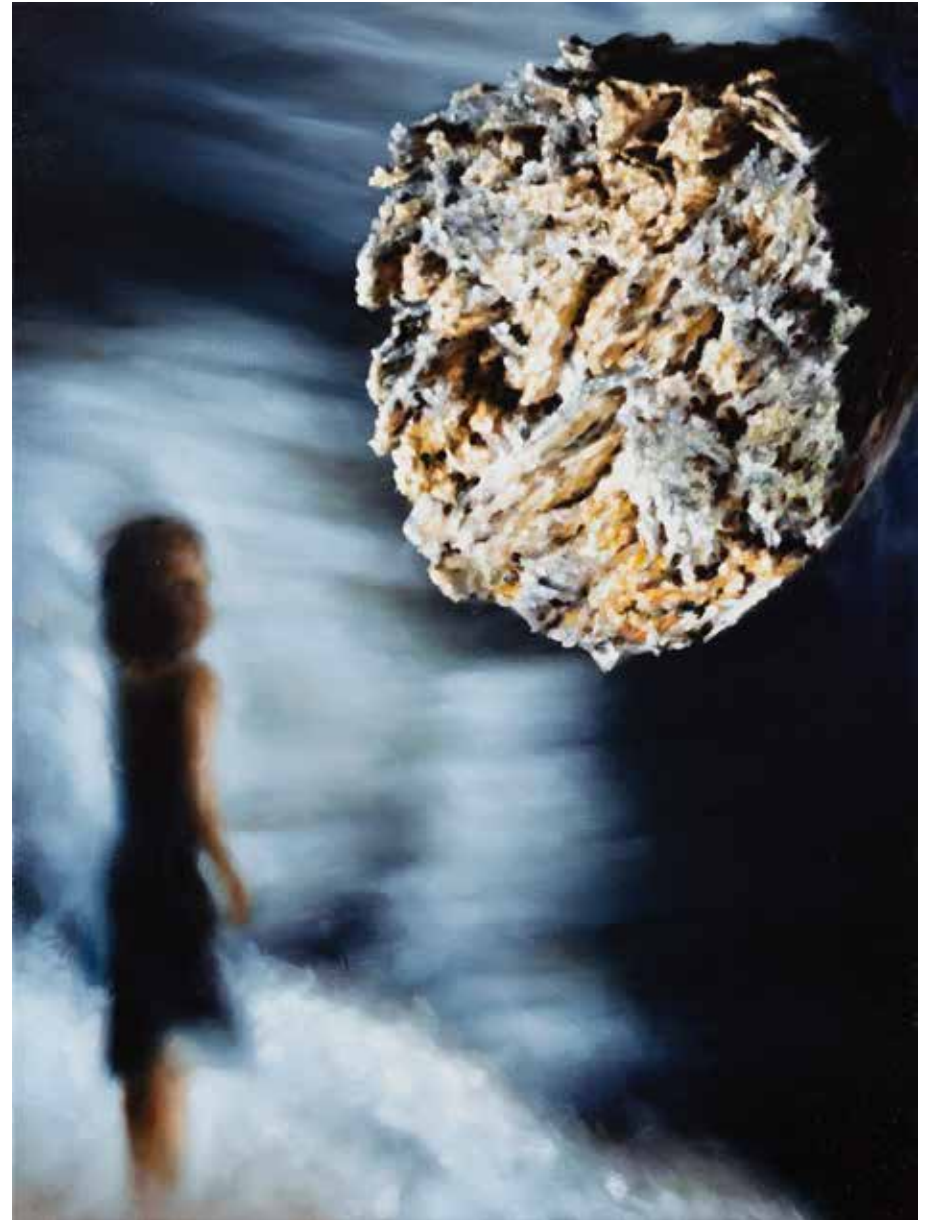


Fairy Tales

2017—2020



Großmutter, erzähl—der Sonne II
[Tell Us a Story, Grandma—the Sun II], 2020
oil on canvas, 60 × 45 cm, (258L)



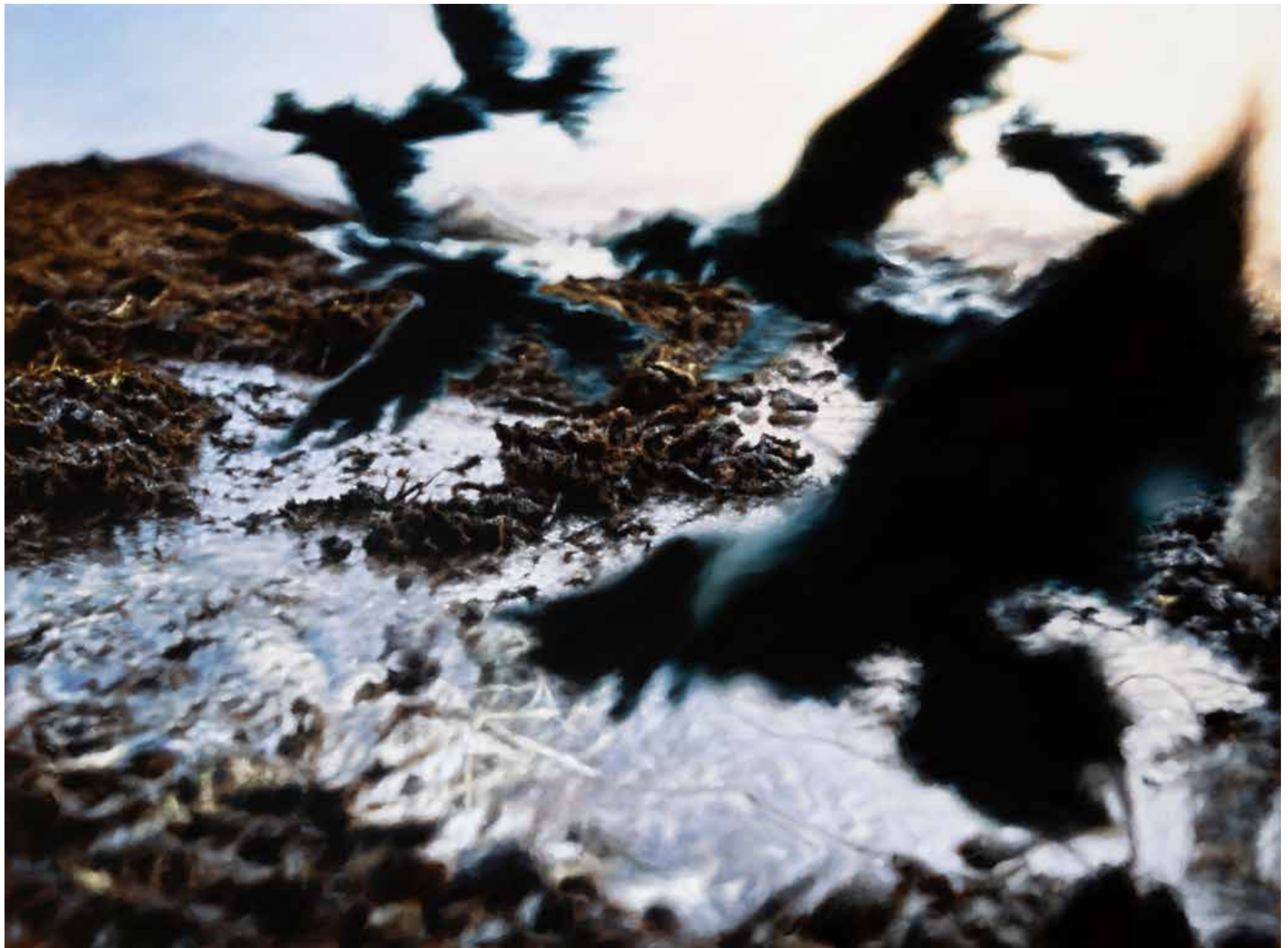
Großmutter, erzähl—der Mond II
[Tell Us a Story, Grandma—the Moon II], 2020
oil on canvas, 60 × 45 cm, (256L)



Großmutter, erzähl—die Sterne II
 [Tell Us a Story, Grandma—the Stars II], 2020
 oil on canvas, 60 × 45 cm, (260L)



Großmutter, erzähl—die Erde II
 [Tell Us a Story, Grandma—the Earth II], 2020
 oil on canvas, 60 × 45 cm, (262L)



p. 14:
Die sieben Raben IV
[The Seven Ravens IV], 2020
oil on canvas, 145 × 195 cm, (280L)

Der Wolf und die sieben jungen Geißlein
[The Wolf and the Seven Young Kids], 2017
oil on canvas, 275 × 195 cm, (241L)







p. 16:
Rosendickicht [Rose Thicket], 2017
 oil on canvas, 110 × 145 cm, (228L)

p. 17:
Die Vögel des Waldes picken die Brotkrumen auf
 [The Birds of the Forest Are Picking the Breadcrumbs], 2017
 oil on canvas, 145 × 195 cm, (222L)

*Sie gingen die ganze Nacht und noch einen Tag von Morgen
 bis Abend, aber sie kamen aus dem Wald nicht heraus*
 [They Wandered About the Whole Night, and the Next Day, From Morning
 Till Evening, but They Could not Find a Path out of the Wood], 2018
 oil on canvas, 245 × 175 cm, (239L)



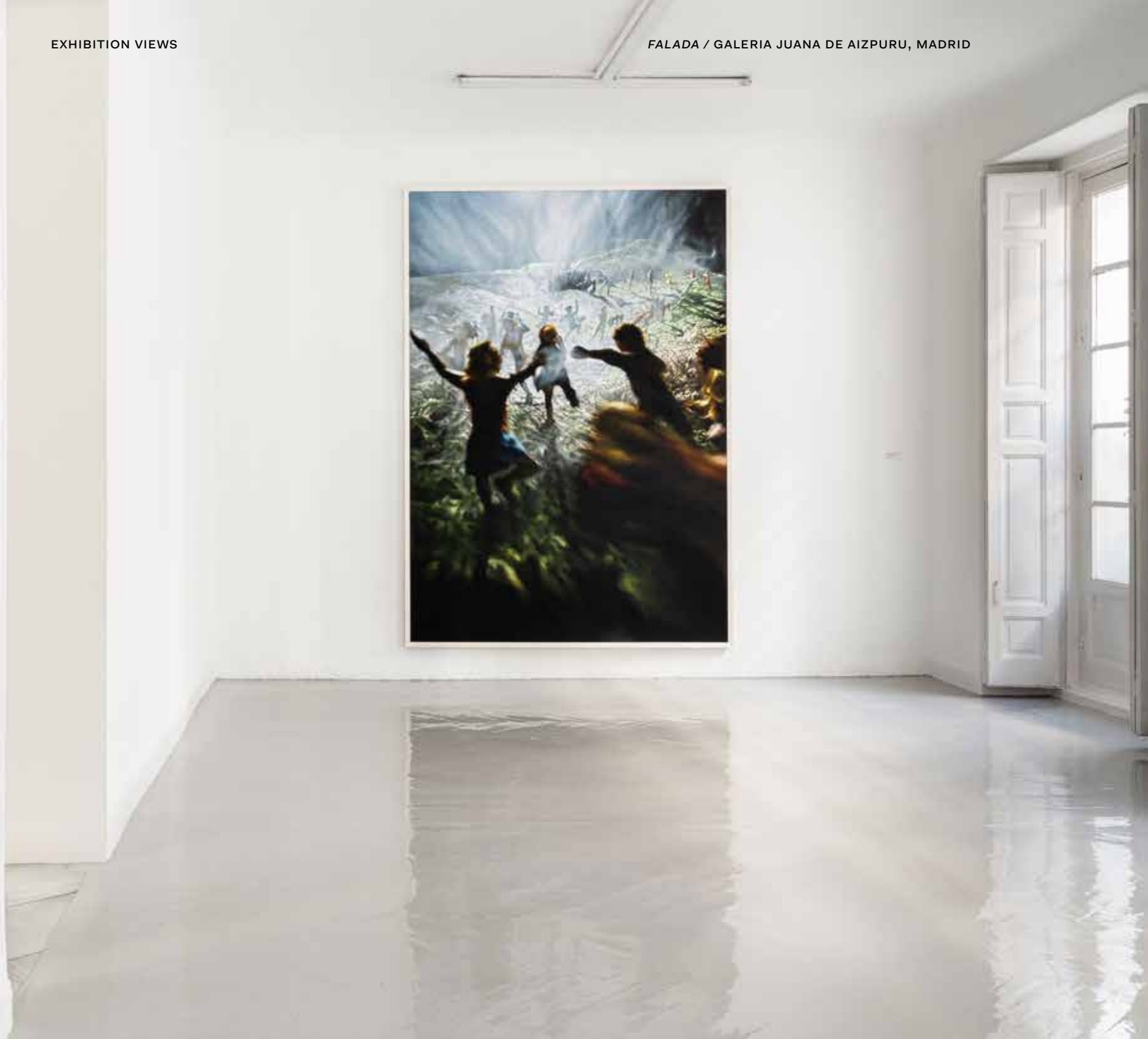


p. 19:

Da gab ihr Gretel einen Stoß, dass sie weit hinein fuhr, machte die eiserne Tür zu und schob den Riegel vor [Then Gretel Gave Her a Shove That Sent Her Right In, Shut the Iron Door, and Drew the Bolt], 2018 oil on canvas, 195 × 275 cm, (235L)

Entchen, Entchen, da steht Gretel und Hänsel. Kein Steg und keine Brücke, nimm uns auf deinen weißen Rücken [Here Are Two Children, Mournful Very, Seeing neither Bridge nor Ferry; Take Us upon Your White Back and Row Us Over, Quack, Quack], 2018 oil on canvas, 110 × 145 cm, (237L)





















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PHILIPP FRÖHLICH
 FALADA
 Ángel Calvo Ulloa

It is believed that after defeating the Prussian armies in the battle of Jena-Auerstedt, days after Napoleon entered Berlin, facing Frederick the Great's tomb and after ordering his marshals to uncover their heads, he said something along the lines of: *If he were alive, we would not be here today*. Amidst a resilient climate in Germany following the invasion, as a strategy to vindicate past glories and awaken a lethargic national spirit, extensive compilations of ancient poetry, patriotic speeches or folktales were published, which until then, had only been remembered orally. The Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm brothers – who were influenced by the romantic trend of the 18th century – had been working across this discipline for years, annotating and compiling stories belonging to the German popular imagination.

Despite the fact that these collected and written tales by the Grimms' have since become the greatest exponent of classical children's literature, *Children's and Household Tales*, the first compilation of these stories which was published in two volumes in 1812 and 1815, were not formulated in an appropriate language for minors, but rather approached from an ambitious philological perspective. As a result, several episodes of censorship recognized these tales as amoral, and the second edition was even banned in Austria. Confronted with this reception, the Grimms' had previously defended themselves by highlighting that the Bible also contained chapters which should be excluded following the same reasoning, but as the editions of these tales became commercially successful, they softened the harshness of their writings, omitting sexual allusions and episodes of extreme violence to please the bourgeois public.

As Walter Benjamin would say, *the fairy tale taught mankind in olden times, and teaches children to this day—is to meet the forces of the mythical world with cunning and with high spirits*. When Philip Fröhlich presented a series of paintings inspired by Hänsel and Gretel in 2019, he declared that this theme was only intended to inspire a single painting. However, the tale's evocative power led him to pause within its analysis, developing into a monographic episode and resulting in a larger series which also opened a door to a new universe, that the interlinear nature of these tales had provided him with.

Since then, and over the past three years, Fröhlich has concentrated his artistic practice on the analysis of these tales, in search for other versions and sources which have expanded his vision, and which of course goes beyond the Grimms'. The consequent series which has emerged analyzes painting's narrative, an area which Fröhlich has rarely assessed, since his former paintings, in his own words, *only suggested the plot, based solely on descriptive elements, but are never completely evident*. However, there is a bad omen within them which pervades everything. This is not something new as it is a recurring thread

throughout his work thus far, englobing a form of uncertainty which palpitates across his images and which, however anecdotal may seem, end up assaulting the spectator. Parallely, throughout the years, there has been a repeated image in his paintings which has manifested itself as a blinding light, like a transparency in the forest which we, as the spectator, feel drawn to. María Zambrano proclaims that *the clarity in the forest is not always possible to enter; you can see it from the edge and the appearance of some animal tracks does not help take that step. It is another kingdom that a soul inhabits and guards*. Although Zambrano identifies this imagery with a metaphysical vision of exile, the great theme of this notion and the recognition of Fröhlich's paintings along with the imagery that Zambrano describes, becomes overwhelming. The evidence of this snapshot is unnecessary, because frankly, almost any scene composed by Fröhlich has been done in a way which enhances the sensation of being drawn to a space, without the possibility of making that decision.

The small-scaled models which Fröhlich constructs and uses to gradually compose the painted scenes with, have been mentioned many times. I cannot help but think that thus far, the vision encircling this deed, has not managed to overcome the fetishistic aspect of this *modus operandi*. Paul Cézanne painted Mount Sainte-Victoire for the first time in 1867. Fifteen years prior, he visited this mountain on multiple occasions alongside his classmate Émile Zola, whom were both moved by the engineering works led by Zola's father who had completed a dam to supply water to that area. Years later, in a letter to the writer, Cézanne acknowledges the difference in painting Saint-Victoire after comprehending its different views, geological characteristics, its flora and fauna. Given his knowledge regarding Sainte-Victoire, Cézanne assumed that even though its sight was only one-sided, it inevitably contained significantly more information from others. Knowing what was hidden within the mountain's interior or its other faces, allowed the artist to approach the painting more ambitiously upon a flat canvas. For this very reason, considering Philip Fröhlich does not use a photographic record but rather a three-dimensional model, allows him to include information otherwise unknown. I think of *Die Kinder II*, a painting dedicated to *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, in which, with their backs turned and attracted to the flute's sound, the children head towards a clarity which leads them into a cave, where their tracks will vanish. I try to imagine their faces, their smiles or perhaps their perplexity before facing what will be unavoidable, and I interpret that the painter who had access to all this

information, allows him to approach it in the same manner which Cézanne references.

Almost three months ago, Philip Fröhlich invited me to visit his studio in Brussels. The intention was to see the paintings in this exhibition, discuss and write about *Falada*, a project which follows the same thread initiated in *Hänsel and Gretel* in 2019, and was extended by *Märchen*, a solo exhibition which the Kunsthalle Barmen in Wuppertal dedicated to him in 2021. Philipp's working method is seductive – the neatness with which he approaches his painting and the amount of detail that is veiled until endowed with a certain uneasiness. Perhaps the climax of this seduction lies within the hidden, more than the revealed, and thus forces us to compose the story, in the same way which stories have historically challenged us to imagine and configure the places and situations they describe ●

TIME WARP
ON A RECENT SERIES BY PHILIPP FRÖHLICH
Martin Germann

Everyone is familiar with the famous collection of fairy tales by the Brothers Grimm that were published in installments between 1812 and 1850 with the encouragement of the Romantic poets Clemens von Brentano, Achim von Arnim, and Johann Friedrich Reichardt. Compiled from countless sources, the manuscripts are now part of the university library in Kassel and have been included in the UNESCO Memory of the World program since 2005. This elevation of status substantiates the significance that these stories hold particularly for the Western world, as do the numerous film versions produced by Disney and others. However, fairy tales are not limited to Germany. They also have a long tradition in Asia and the Middle East, and “The Hobyahs,” an Australian fairy tale from the early twentieth century, provides evidence of a similar long-term oral tradition even on the other side of the world.

Before stories such as “Hansel and Gretel,” “Sleeping Beauty,” “The Seven Ravens,” and “Little Red Riding Hood” became a part of the international visual culture that they are today, they were narrative raw materials that could be made more dramatic or more trivial according to the needs of the storyteller. Such modifications were also undertaken by the Brothers Grimm, who were keen to transport an ethical and moral message with their stories. Readers who revisit the stories are left with a feeling of positive consternation of the best sort: like a kaleidoscope each story mirrors established, cultivated ideas of morality, and there is no lack of sheer physical and mental violence. Punishment and sin are just as much part of the order as is the vague idea of justice that is at the core of all of these stories. We encounter fantastically animalistic worlds that are populated by speaking horses, wolves, and witches; attributions such as *ugly* or *beautiful* are used openly and judgmentally, and it is quickly revealed who is *good* and who is *evil*. Concepts of morality clash time and again, and there is usually a conciliatory ending (but not always—see, for example, “Little Red Riding Hood”); expenditures and prices are always high, and in order to solve the problem, it is necessary for the “good” character of the story to bring to bear all of his or her characteristics, even though these—depending on the situation—might be deemed advantageous or detrimental to the character’s destiny, which often results in surprising plot twists. The texts are both compact and precise, which is surprising in comparison to the incredible contributions they have made to our store of everyday metaphors over the years. Countless motifs have become part of our cultural memory and are revived within the most random contexts—just think of the German expression *Dornröschenschlaf*, which is used to describe naive inertia, literally the “sleep of Sleeping Beauty.”

Parallel to the compilation of this rich arsenal of stories, which starting then and even earlier influenced the lives of countless children, there was another

story in the nineteenth century that caused the world to hold its breath: the discovery of photography. This was a collaborative effort, so to speak, between Joseph Nicéphore Niépce and Louis Daguerre with the support of William Henry Fox Talbot, produced a “latent image”—referring to the undeveloped picture—and advanced to a cultural technique that was to dramatically change our perception. Fairy tales that are now considered established had to take a long journey via countless authors and listeners before being made available in the version that has since entered the canon. Similarly, the story of photography is also a tale with many intertwined strands. A closer examination leads first to ancient Greece and Aristotle, who was responsible for the theory of the camera obscura, and then to the Middle East and the Arab scholar Ibn al-Haytham, who around 980 first experimented with an apparatus that is known today as a pinhole camera. Nevertheless, photographs of the sort that have been possible since the nineteenth century—those that are permanent images of reality—caused misunderstandings, especially in the early days, since the “pencil of nature,” as the negative-positive process was called by Talbot, its inventor, was uncontrollable. It became unclear who was actually drawing: was it nature, or was it the person behind the apparatus? Just like the repetition of fairy tales, photography is one of the cultural techniques that has long since entered the established canon, whose beginnings nevertheless literally lie in the dark. Both processes, the notation of oral history and the isolation of a moment of time as a photograph, are the expression of a desire to preserve something, which in photography is called the “fleeting moment.”

Philipp Fröhlich, whose work is the subject of this essay, is a contemporary artist who is primarily concerned with painting, although he uses photography and design concepts from theater as tools in his painting. The introductory remarks in this essay are relevant due to the fact that his artistic work takes a decided stance on all these issues, since painting lost its primacy as the most important medium of depicting reality to modern phenomena such as photography, which forced it so to speak into a phrase of introspection. This is evident in the isms such as Impressionism and Expressionism and the successive modes of abstraction that followed. This dynamic has also befallen photography in the meantime, whose relationship to reality has again shifted due to the advent of digital images.

Fröhlich studied stage design in Düsseldorf until 2002 and slowly switched from theater work to painting. Before moving to Brussels in 2016, he lived in Spain for many years. Like so many artists before him, he wondered what pictures could still be created in the medium of painting and what subjects offered more

possibilities for a painter to take a position on conventions and protocols that over the years have constricted painting—an artistic medium whose death and revival have been hailed like a mantra. Today it seems hardly conceivable that, for example, artists who were active after World War II were confronted with similar issues. Until the advent of Pop Art, narrative and figurative painting was no longer tolerated, thus pushing painting toward abstraction and then further to its material foundations, as can be seen in Art Informel, for example. Gerhard Richter’s landscapes from the late 1960s, which have now reattained iconic status, were only possible as paintings because they were based on photographs (taken by the artist himself). The works thus entailed the implementation of existing, technically filtered material and were explicitly not based on fantasy, which in the postwar years was mired in negative connotations. In this way all subjectivity or insinuation of iconicity could be eradicated while making it once again possible to create seductive images.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, discourse surrounding painting has again changed in step with the media landscape. The narrowing of the field of fine arts is diametrically opposed to the way that images of all kinds circulate in new media, on the internet, in our heads, and finally in our bodies. This in itself is not contradictory since images have changed from mere ornaments to a structure that is integral to our interaction. In a historical moment in which rampant political polarization makes it increasingly difficult to use the lowest common denominator, there is a new need for fiction as breathing space and a resource—creating new iconoclastic tendencies, as was the case in the art of the 1960s and 1970s.

At precisely this moment Philipp Fröhlich has chosen the genre of fairy tales as his subject matter—those ancient stories whose genesis is difficult to reconstruct, which he nevertheless makes use of like readymades that are, so to speak, “on hand.” They are stories that, unlike stories from the Bible, offer pragmatic models of conflict and interaction still in use in most families (including Fröhlich’s family). Historically permuted by a large number of authors, fairy tales offer the highest degree of universality, while at the same time, the sheer force of the images is still able to arouse a subjective response in the recipient that often involves socially suppressed fantasies.

For several years Fröhlich has been working on a series in which he isolates certain narrative moments of the fairy tales that are relevant for him. The individual works are painted in oil using flat, coldly reserved brushstrokes that are

superficially precise in terms of what they emphasize and what they literally leave in the shadows. The cinematic effect and the drama within the picture of each painting is heightened by means of grayish white, slightly beveled artist frames that draw the viewer into the picture and simultaneously create distance to reality (including that of the white cube). These frames seem to practically represent a manifestation of theater's "fourth wall"—the boundary between the viewer and the play, which due to the materiality of the painting cannot be crossed. For Fröhlich, this spatial barrier separating reality and fiction is not least of all of importance due to his own biography: as a trained set designer he more or less pursues the activity of a director in this new series. Beginning with notes and preparatory studies, he develops models, some of which are quite elaborate, for the future picture, with which he then again investigates the issues of perspective that he has already designated. The final picture is created from here in interaction with photographic studies—rather like the slow "developing" process of a daguerreotype, a picture that was always present in the artist but is still without contours.

The model is important for Fröhlich because unlike the fictive, universal, and rational certainties that are disabled in fairy tales, it is located in real space, along with purely physical certainties such as shadows or gravity. Similar to the wide spectrum between subjectivity and objectivity, an immensely broad range is indicated here: the banal reality of the model as compared to the vastly infinite possibilities of its modulation in the painted picture. One parameter should be added to this, that of represented time—or much more that of the selected narrative time: Fröhlich does not intend to make a complete representation of the fairy tales. He is more interested in certain moments within the stories that are particularly appealing to him, whose narrative offering he maximizes and subjectifies by obsessively exhausting the spatial possibilities. The extent that his pictures surround the viewer is noteworthy—the longer you look, the more you realize that narrative space is taking over actual space. This is due to the perspective, which always suggests a certain amount of distance to the event but is nevertheless too near or too voyeuristic to completely evade participation. Often there are hinderances in the center of the image, which seem to be caused by chance due to the perspective and suggest a sort of "being thrown" by the artist as a witness to the respective event. For this Fröhlich uses his design repertoire of lens-based photography, because the depth of focus is constantly changing throughout the space of the scenery, with which the event is accentuated: the center and periphery of each narrative moment are plunged into unusual yet clear

circumstances so that the hierarchies of the predetermined narration in Fröhlich's pictures can follow his ideas. The change from sharpness to blurriness that often occurs multiple times within the pictorial space also creates more abstract and more figurative zones in the pictures.

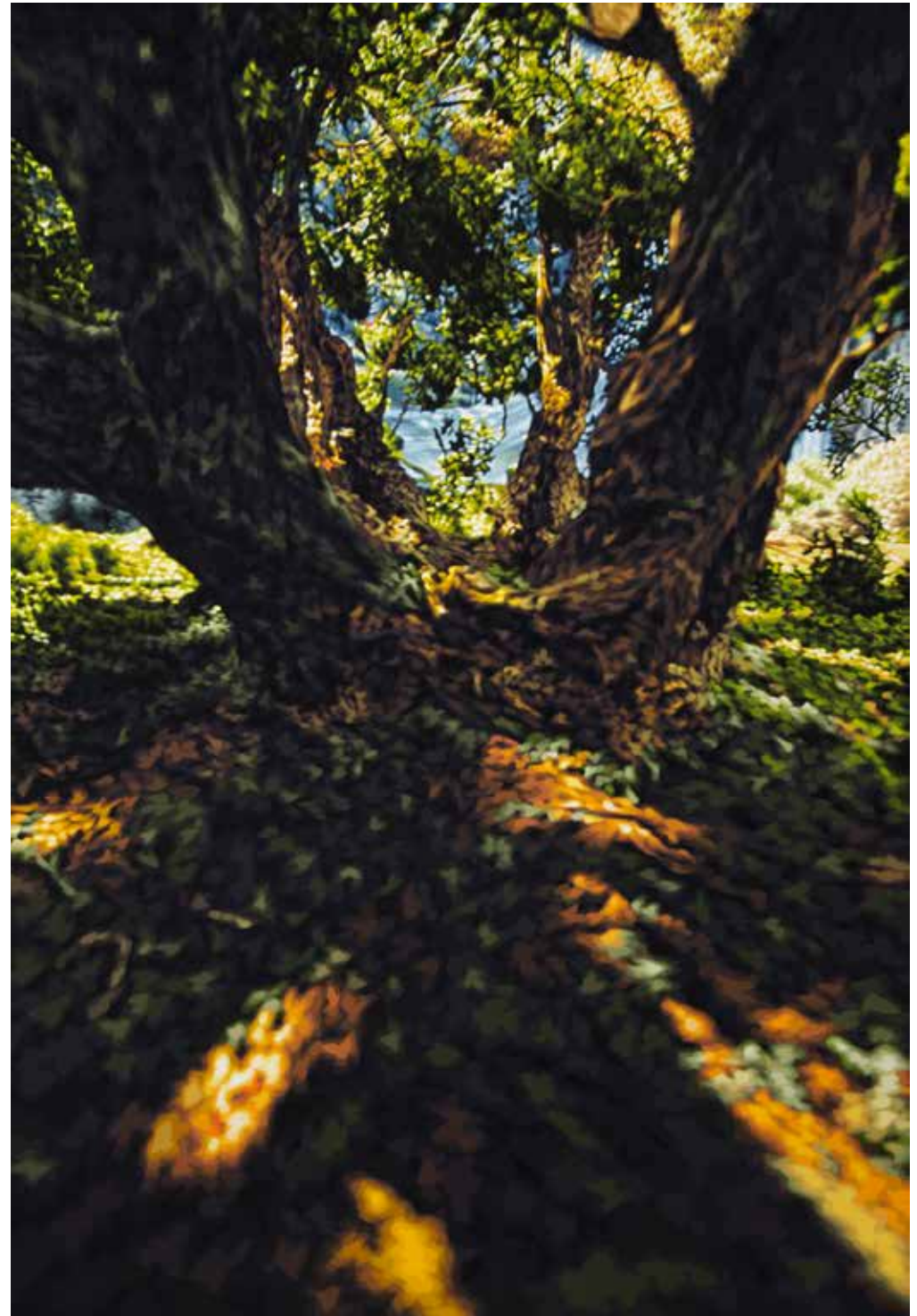
The handling of light is striking in these pictures. The setting is often a forest at night; existing sources of light such as fire, moonlight, and stars are as exaggerated as they are in the stories—especially since the fairy tales hark back to a time before electric light. The costumes of the protagonists are far from nostalgic, however, since their banal clothing can be dated to the present. The daylight that falls in the scenes, on the other hand, has a bright, almost artificial quality that emphasizes the fictional character of the stories. In this way the pictures constantly change between recognizability and distancing, between spatial depth and a sealed surface. Another element from the theater that Fröhlich uses in his painting is the daylight filter; normally used on stage, they further transform all light used in the studio, often contributing a puzzling character to the pictures.

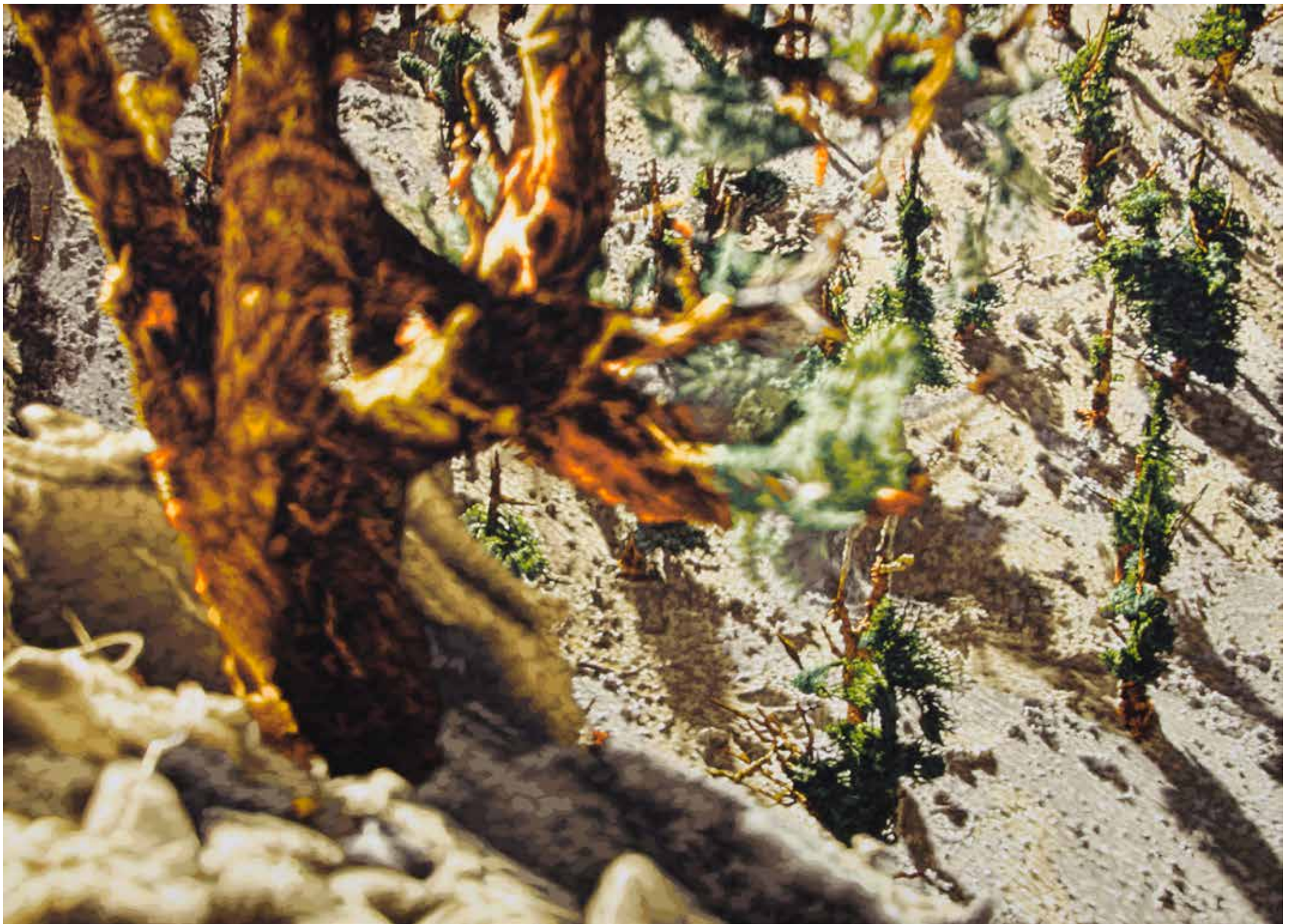
Fröhlich's attempt to reinterpret the genre of fairy tales, a field in which there is already an overabundance of interpretations that are frequently suspected of being trivial, may seem absurd. However, it is precisely this absurdity that strengthens his approach, since he casually helps himself to the treasure trove of the visual canon—including not only painting and photography, but also theater—in order to create pictures that are ultimately opaque. Each picture has depth and contains accurate detail, but also remains impenetrable in some way. For all their attention to the audience's space, the pictures remain true to themselves and to their own system of logic. Fröhlich finds a contemporary way to navigate into the depths of these premodern myths that entered the canon in the modern era and to reexamine archaic repositories of images—especially those that were often overlooked due to their supposed triviality. To this end, Philipp Fröhlich uses familiar framing narratives, with which he creates something new—something new that is simultaneously a transformation back to the raw material ●

Hoap of a Tree

2013—2016

(195L), 2015
tempera on canvas, 175 × 120 cm





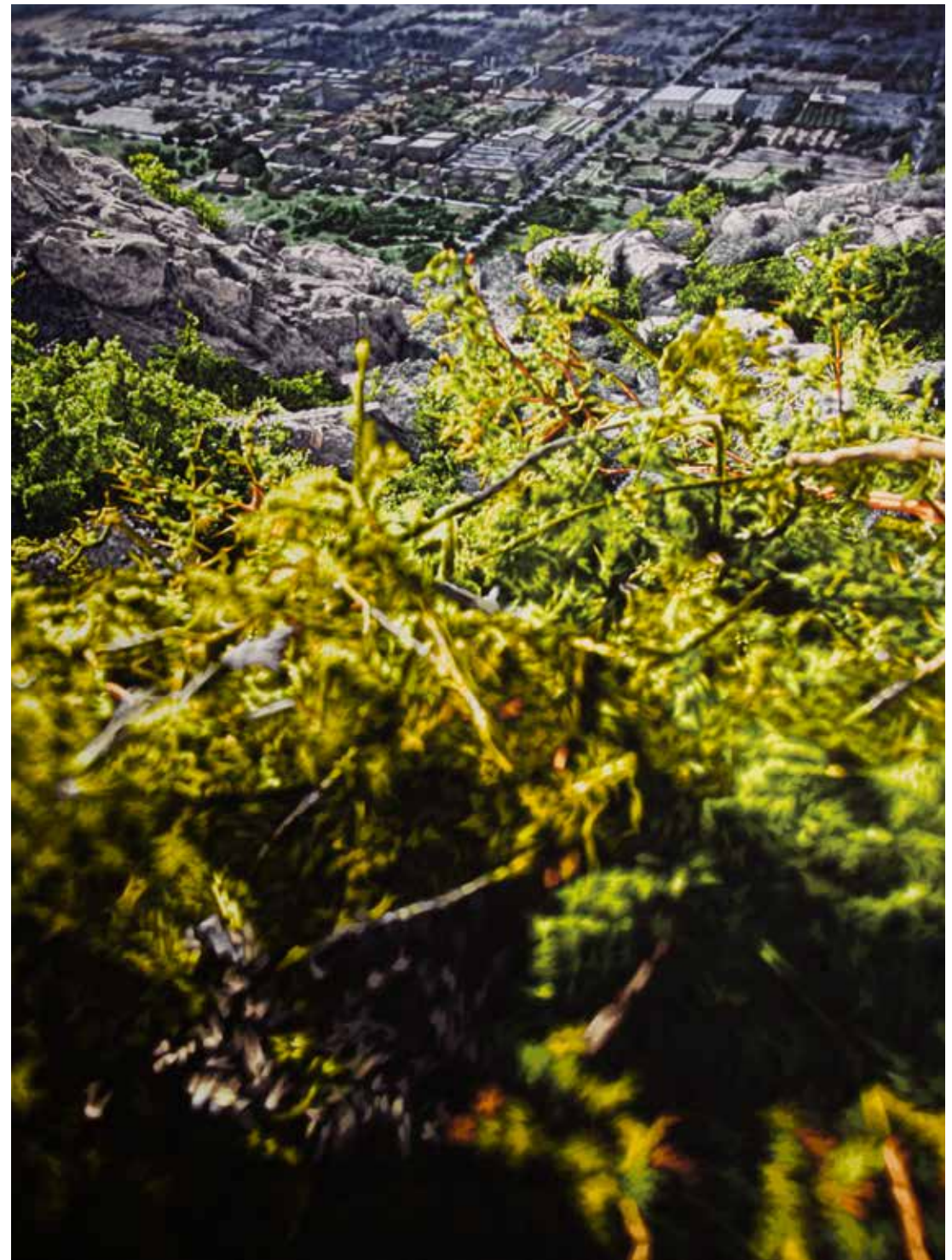


p. 37:
(189L), 2014
tempera on canvas,
175 x 245 cm

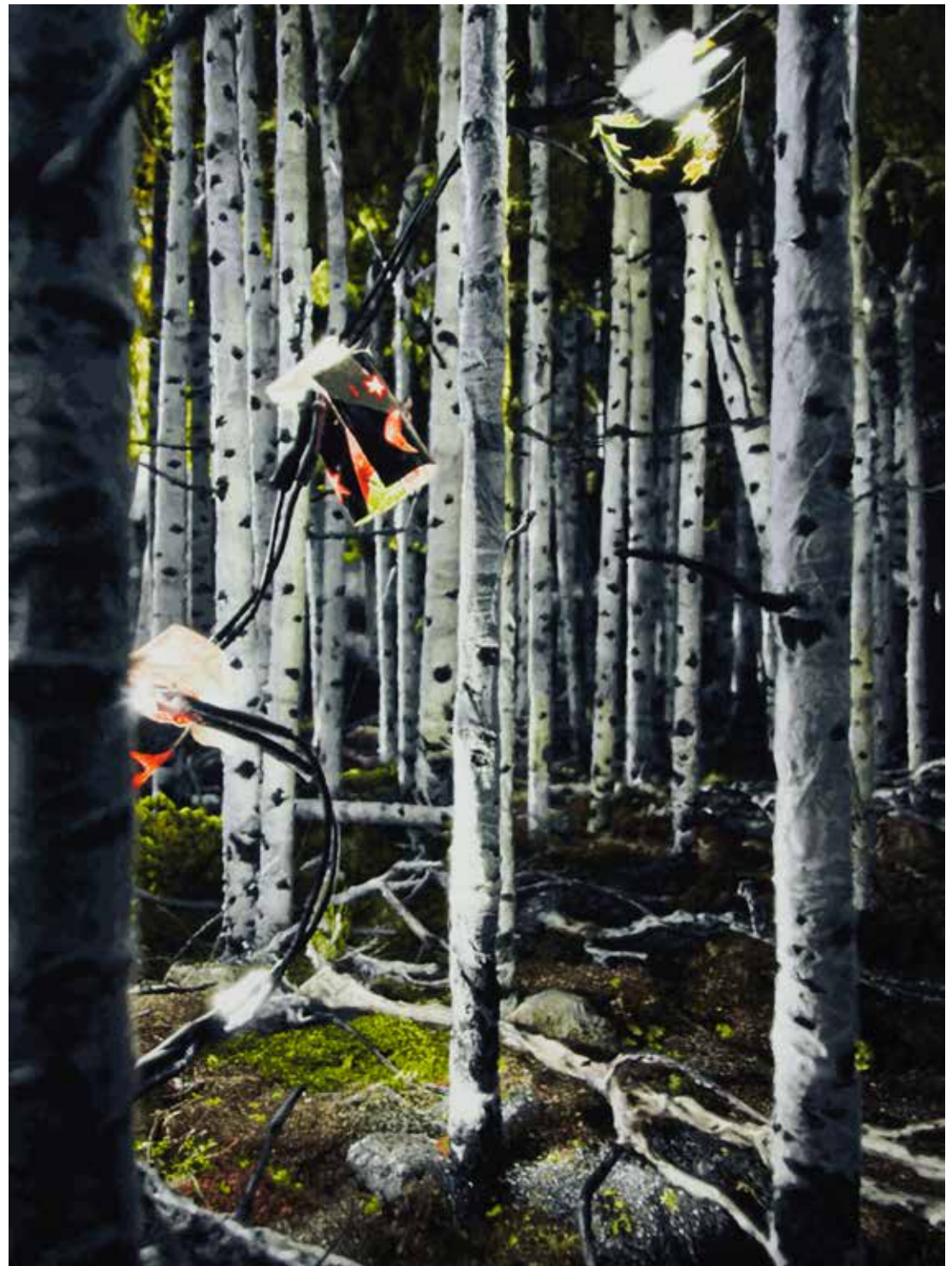
Paravent (171H), 2013
tempera on folding screen,
171 x 378 cm



(199L), 2015
tempera on canvas, 195 × 145 cm



(186L), 2014
tempera on canvas, 280 × 210 cm
Von der Heydt-Museum Collection



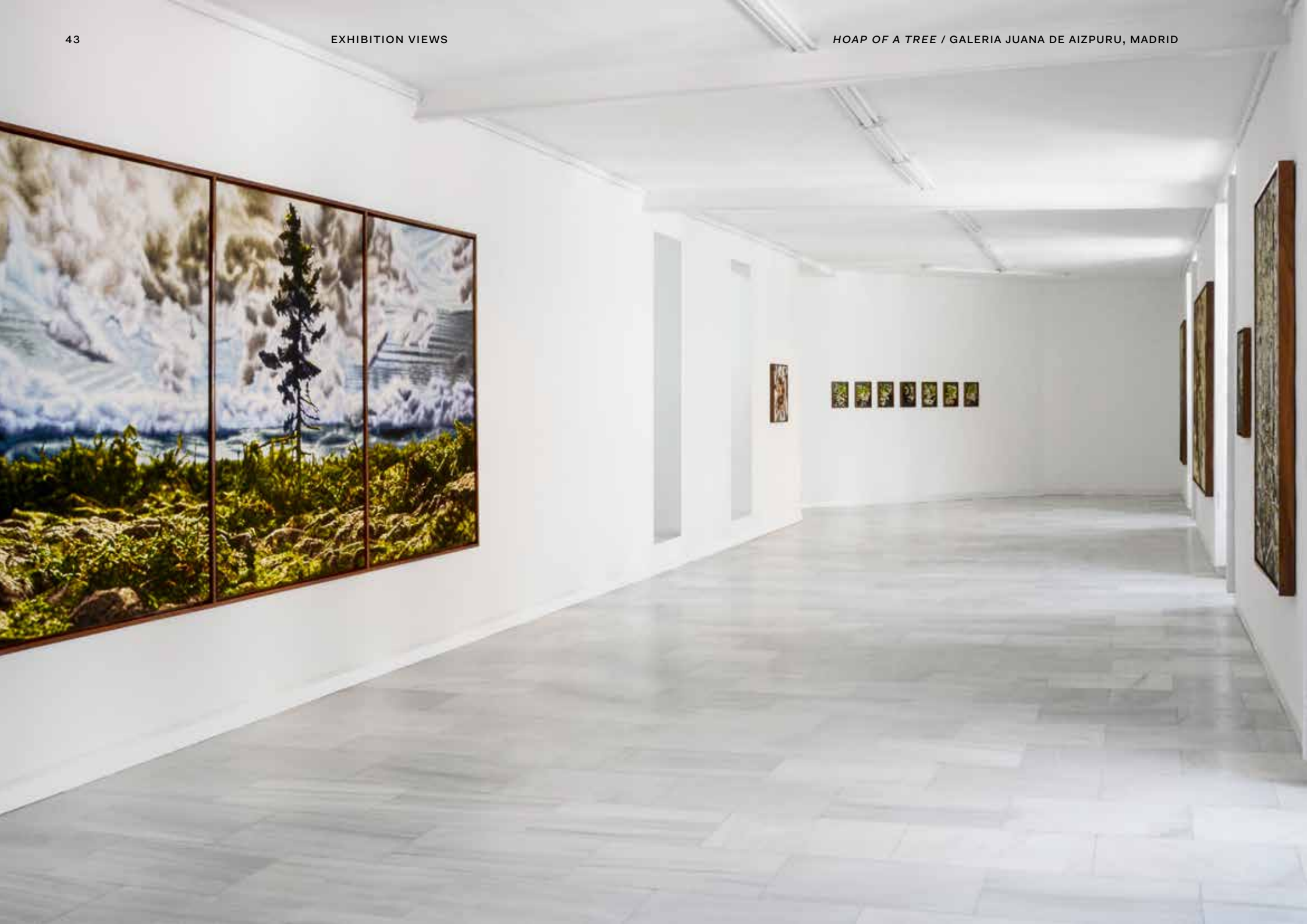
Sonne, Mond und Sterne
[Sun, Moon and Stars], 2017
tempera on canvas, 195 × 145 cm, (218L)



FALL, FALL, FALL, 2016
210 × 280 cm, tempera
on canvas,
(200L)



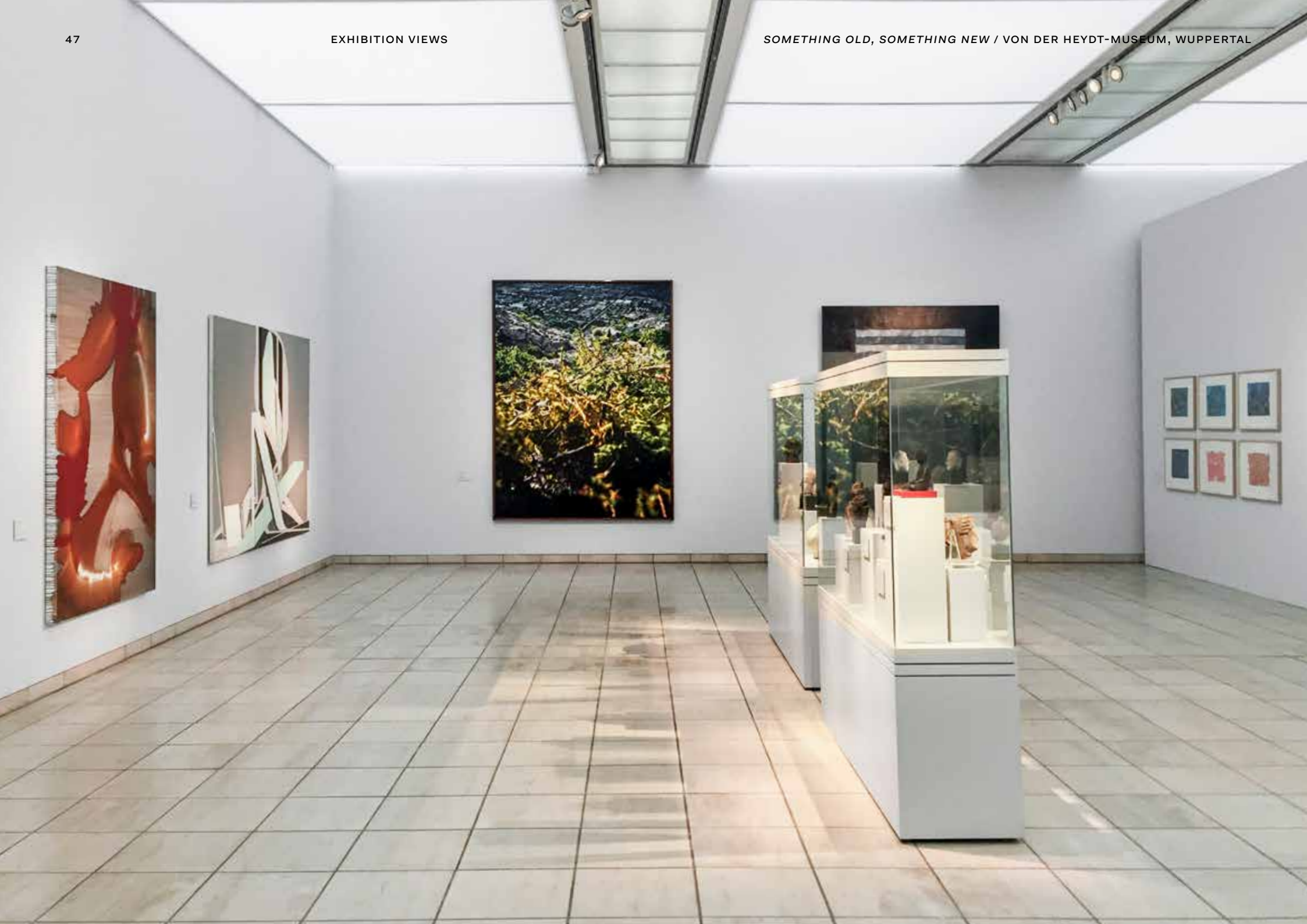
Sleep Has his House, 2016
tempera on canvas,
175 x 245 cm,
(203L)











Remote Viewing

2011—2012

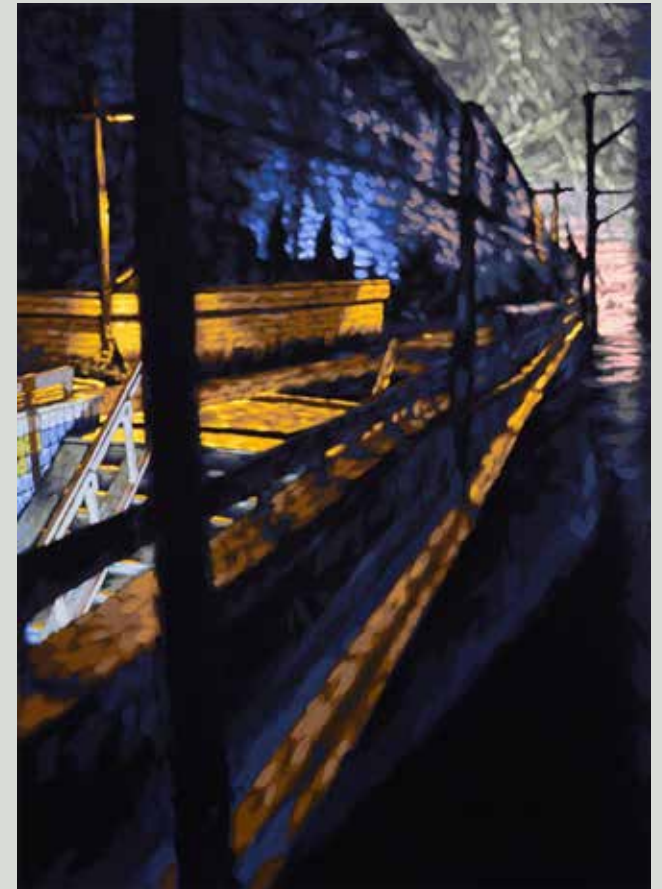


(116L), 2011
tempera on canvas,
245 x 175 cm

p. 49:
(116L), 2011
tempera on canvas, 245 × 175 cm

(115L), 2010
tempera on canvas, 245 × 175 cm

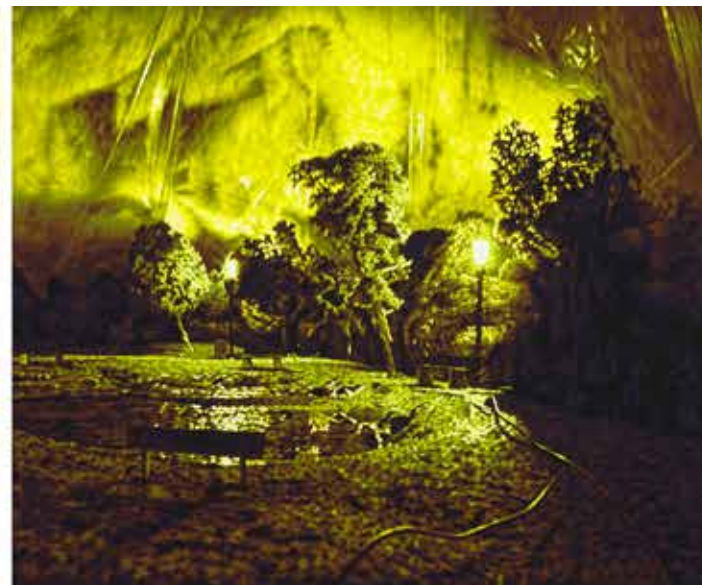




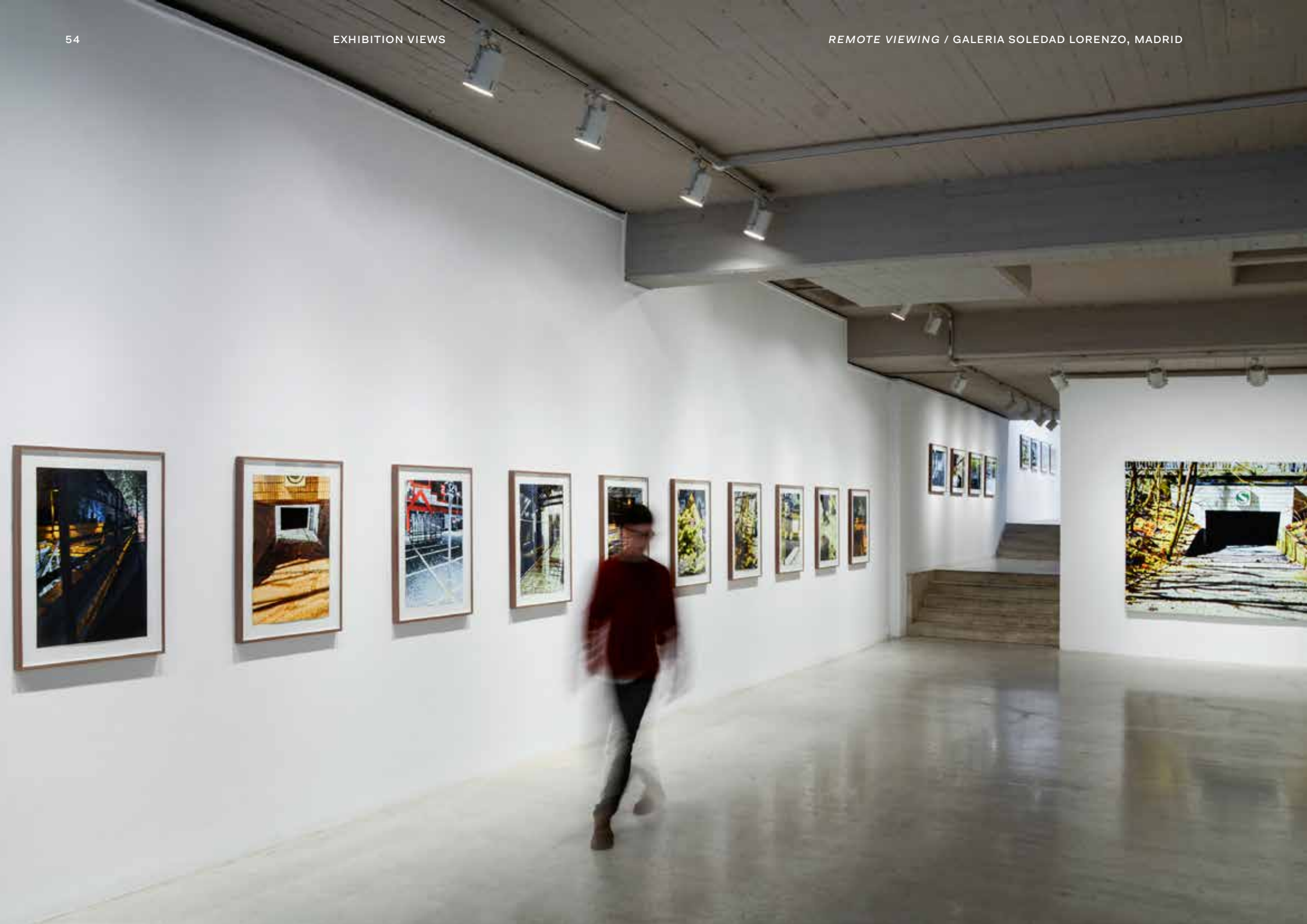
(123P, 127P, 132P), 2011
tempera on paper, 70 x 50 cm



(119L), 2011
tempera on canvas, 195 × 145 cm



(122LT), triptych, 2012
tempera on canvas, 120 × 444 cm







PHILIPP FRÖHLICH
 REMOTE VIEWING
 Tania Pardo

Philipp Fröhlich presents his third solo exhibition at the *Galería Soledad Lorenzo*, Madrid, consisting in a selection of paintings completed over the past two years. Once again, he offers fragmented landscapes and uncompleted stories in which something is likely to have happened or is about to occur. Through the application of the same process of creation in which he first imagines a scenography for a certain incident then builds a model and finally translates it onto a canvas, he provides us with scenes charged with mystery. In fact, Fröhlich uses that process in each of the 18 pieces of tempera on paper, as well; from the imagination to the model and then from the model to the paper. The difference from the canvases is in his point of view: both interiors and exteriors (a restroom, escalators, the entrance to an underground, a street and two houses) are observed from diverse perspectives, which show a deliberate and conscious way of approach.

The title of the show in itself is an invocation of remote viewing, the ability that allows the perception of extrasensory information, in this case through faltering scenes where the absence of humanity sets free all the suspense and mystery that emanates from every piece of his work. Unfinished stories, half unveiled, that built on a moving representation of the intrigue.

Additionally, in a number of these paintings, some element blocks the sight making the observation of the entire scene impossible, delegating the responsibility to the spectator to act as a witness. The complexity of the paintings lies in the technique of the artist: a slow process of painting temperas on canvas and paper. Either way, the work of Philipp Fröhlich can be characterised by the representation of empty landscapes and mysterious scenes that gain their artificiality by means of creating a scenography and an amazing use of light that results in moving atmospheres full of tension.

In the end, *Remote Viewing* is a reflection on the power of imagination in the service of painting ●

Scare the Night Away

2008—2010



(047L), 2008
tempera on canvas, 280 x 210 cm
Patio Herreriano Museum Collection



(048L), 2008
tempera on canvas, 280 x 210 cm
Reina Sofia Museum Collection



(095L), 2009
tempera on canvas, 245 x 175 cm
CA2M Collection



(102L), 2008.
tempera on canvas, 110 x 145 cm



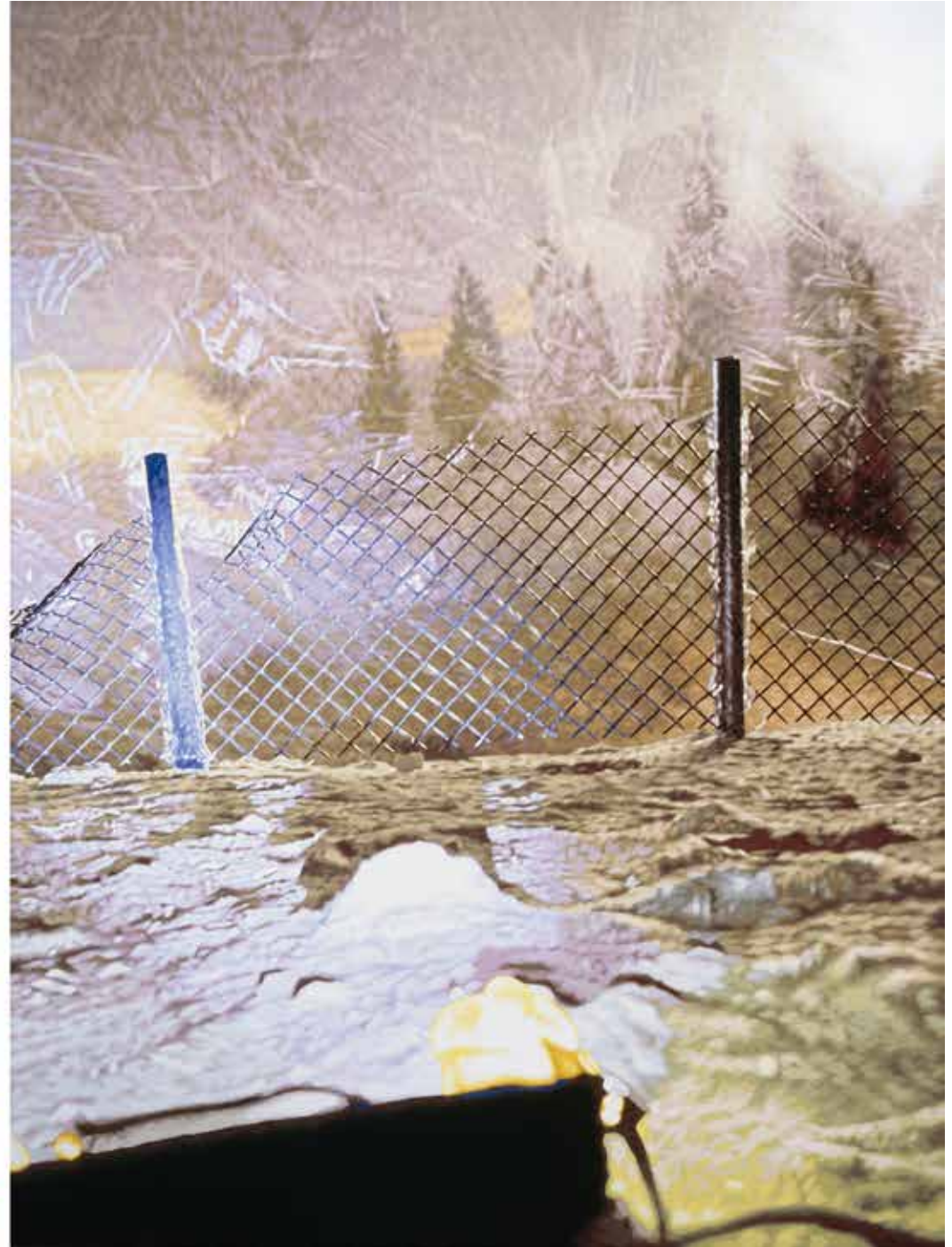
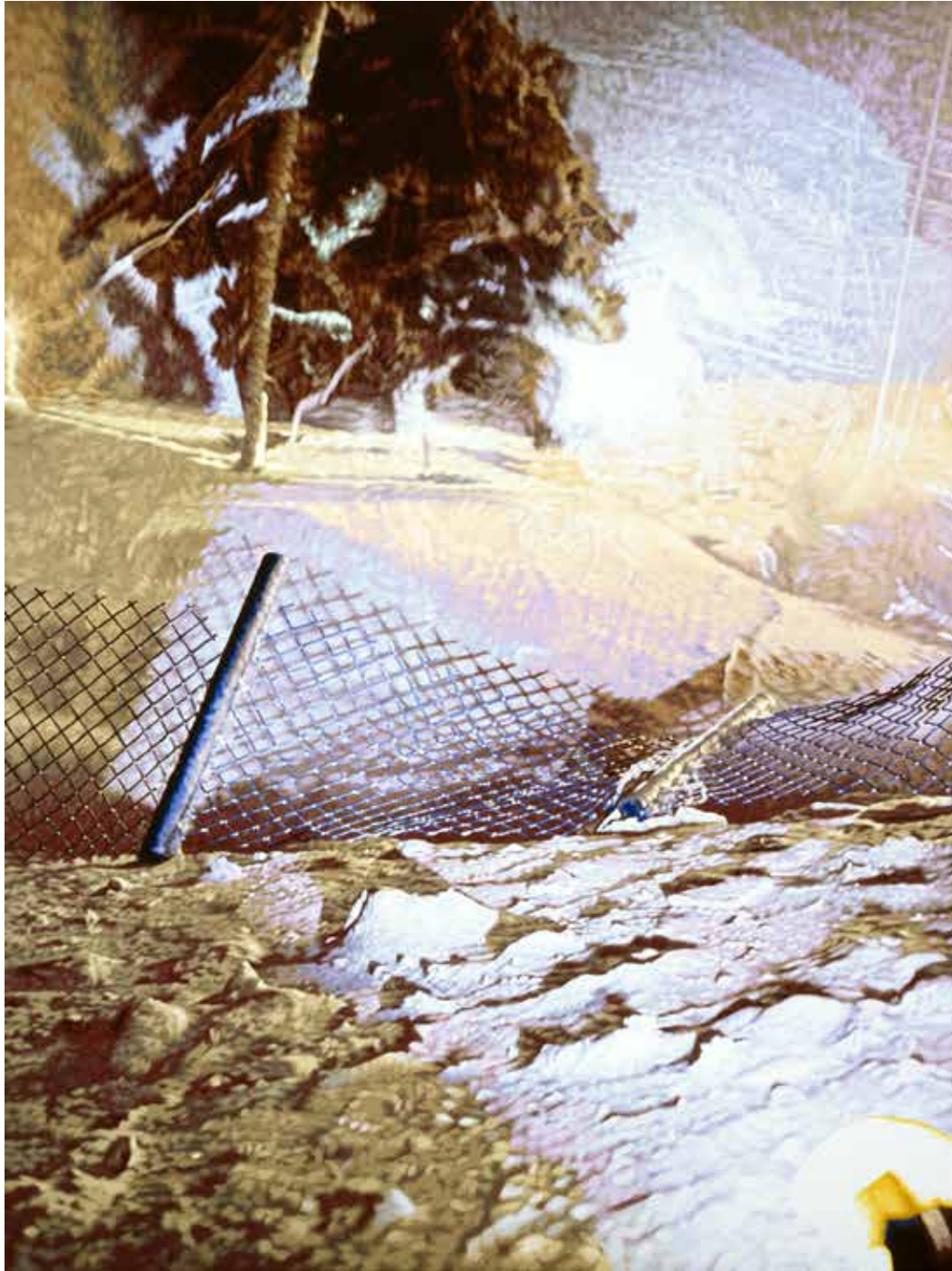
(105L), 2008
tempera on canvas
110 x 145 cm



(110L), 2009
tempera on canvas,
210 x 280 cm



(107L), 2009
tempera on canvas, 245 x 175 cm
Reina Sofia Museum Collection





p.66:
(111LD), diptych, 2010
tempera on canvas, 280 x 426 cm

(109L), 2009
tempera on canvas, 45 x 60 cm







PHILIPP FRÖHLICH
SCARE THE NIGHT AWAY
Kristian Leahy

The German painter, Philipp Fröhlich (Schweinfurt, 1975), presents his second individual exhibition at the *Galería Soledad Lorenzo* consisting of twelve paintings executed in tempera over a period of the last two years.

Philipp Fröhlich's work is characterized by layers of color superimposed in faint brush-strokes, thus creating a fragmented surface of translucent elements. The artist gradually outlines and contrasts multiple coats of tempera in keeping with his concept of painting as the static result of a temporal and dynamic process made visible not only in the result itself but also in its structure, all for the purpose of drawing the eye of the viewer into its unfathomable, dream-like depths. The evolution of this procedure could be summarized as reflection, evocation and representation. The subject matter is inevitably drawn variously from fortuitous events reported in newspapers and periodicals, the recollection of certain literary passages or even verses of a musical composition, none of the particulars of which are ever revealed. These inspirations are materialized in the studio by means of prototypes, at times full-scale models, constructed down to the last detail of the imagined scene of the drama, later to be captured on canvas.

The pictorial whole feigns a certain reality, albeit a reality disintegrated into a veritable conglomerate, poised on the frontier between abstraction and figuration, reality and fiction, vision and intuition. Each of these paintings is a complex labyrinth evolving into a lucid reality all its own, uniquely transfixed in an undulating sea of tinged colors and flashes of light. Fröhlich further enhances these effects by means of a diffused focus that enables us to contemplate the work in its entirety from the stand point of an exceptionally imaginative plastic force, seducing the eye to search out the painting's focal point of energy.

Among the works on exhibit are four paintings related to the still-life genre featuring diverse objects placed in four domestic environments based on the artist's own scenographic prototypes; a small kitchen, a terrace and two rooms. The unpretentious arrangement of these everyday objects --a drill, a steel kettle and several terra-cotta pots-- is in marked contrast to the traditional characteristics of the *vanitas still life*, thus converting the "all-is-vanity" moralising message into something intriguingly suggestive rather than metaphorical, stripped as it is of the habitual iconographic symbols. It is an allegory as occult as the sinister incidents hidden among the splendors of the series of nocturnal paintings in which mysterious lights suddenly break through the darkness, "scaring the night away", the phrase which also serves as the title of this exhibition.

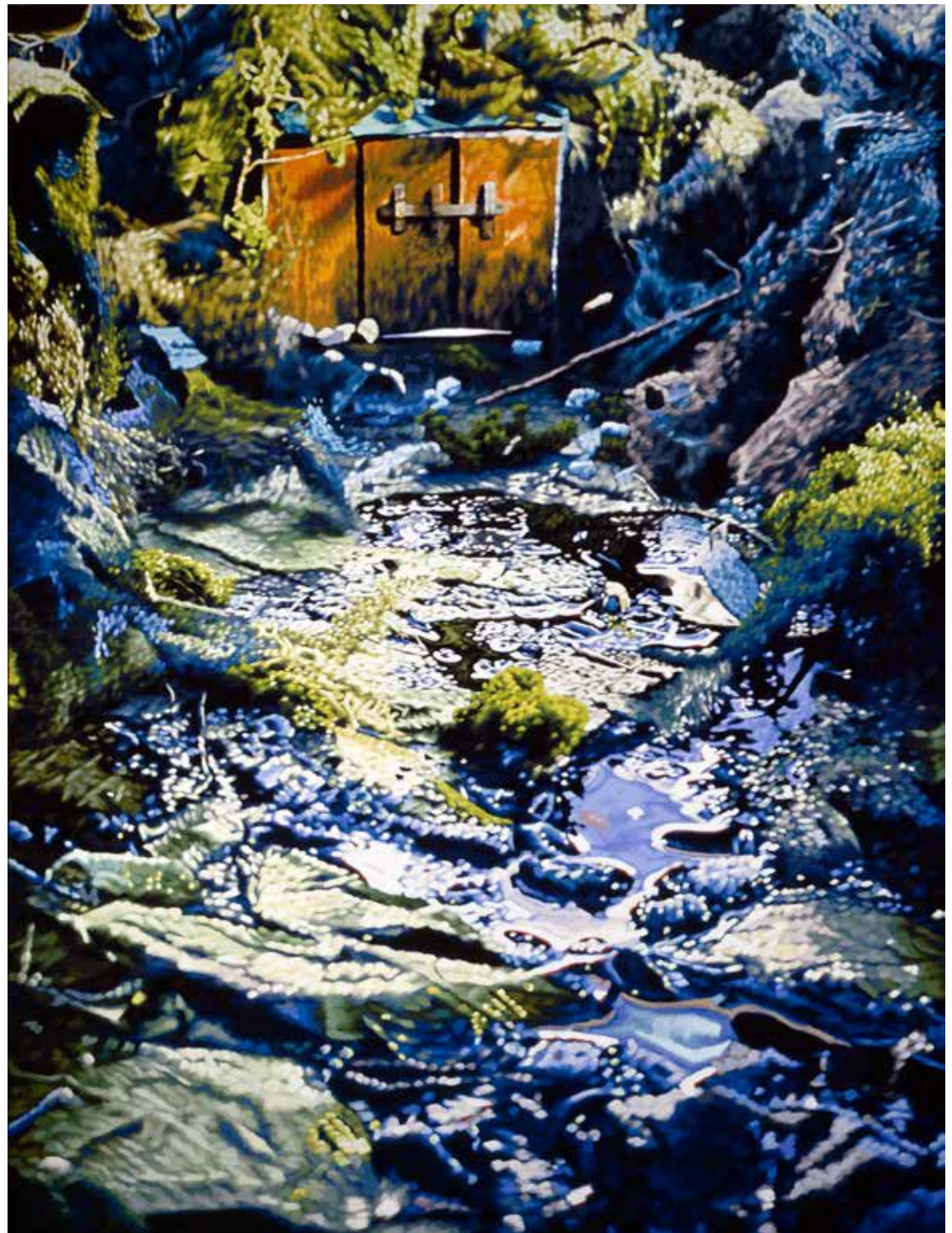
Fröhlich's captivating play of luminous reflections, developed by the artist to an admirable degree in this new series of paintings, reveals a deeply moving poetic essence, throbbing in the echoes and rhythms which reverberate in all of his work, generating a uniquely enriched surface, vibrating in frenetic pulsebeats, compelling us to enter into the solitary places that he depicts, endowed with the inexplicable and radiant light of mystery. A dense all-enveloping atmosphere and refined detail prevail, where form, color and subtle gestures are the sole interpreters of the appearance and significance of isolated realities which, although troubling in their content, raise the spirit into the realms of enigma, into the anxiety of the unresolved, and into the delicious world of uncertainty ●

Beachy Head

2006—2007



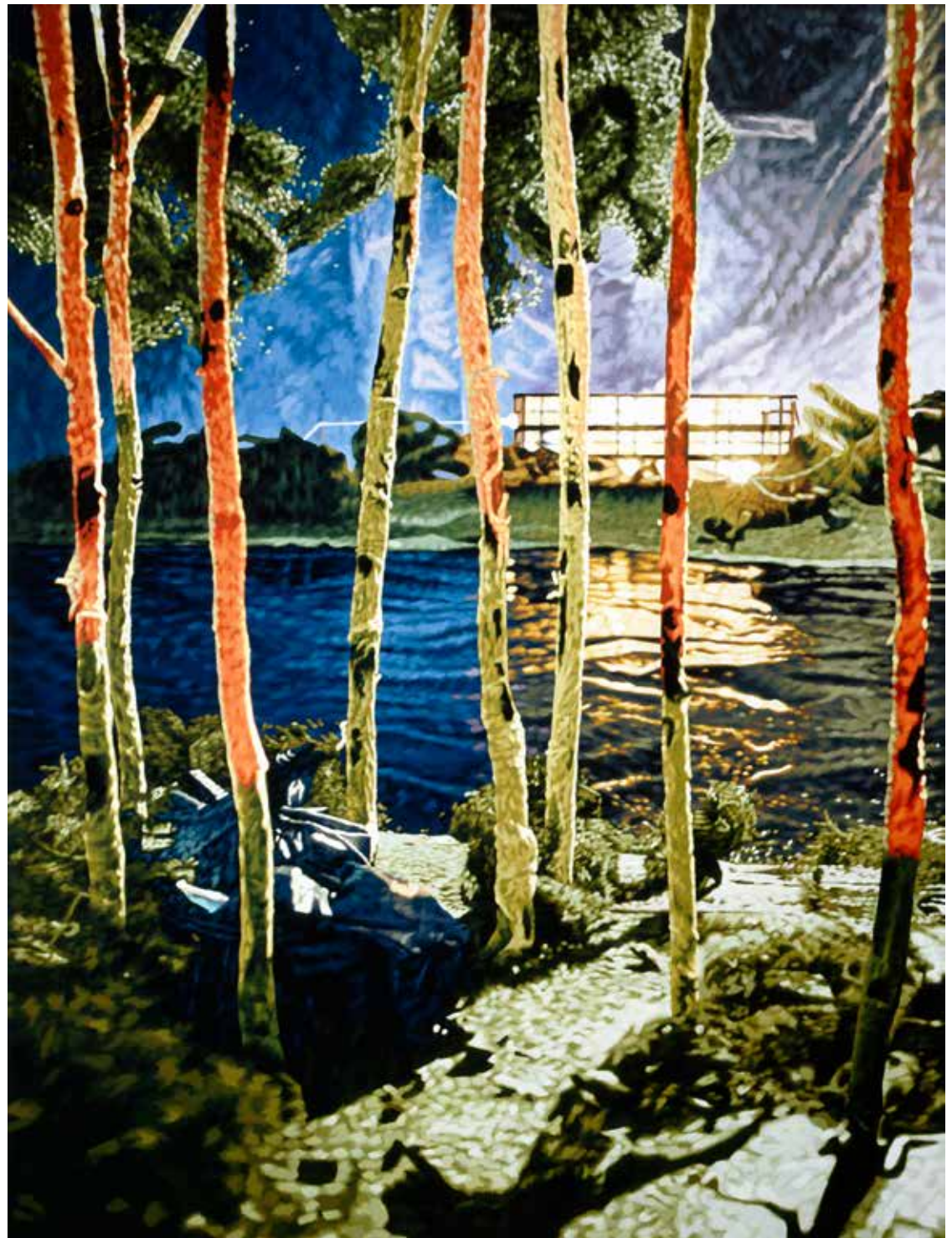
(039L), 2007
tempera on canvas, 280 x 210 cm



(038L), 2007
tempera on canvas, 280 x 210 cm



(31LT), triptych, 2007
tempera on canvas, 245 x 535 cm
MUSAC Collection



(028L), 2007
tempera on canvas, 280 x 210 cm



(029L), 2007
tempera on canvas, 280 x 210 cm

Octavio Zaya
New York, November 2007

Dear Philipp,

Although we have barely exchanged but a few words with each other, it appears evident, from the photos that Soledad has sent me that things are going well. For that reason I prefer not to come out with a stream of platitudes, for neither of us really enjoys flirtatious comments.

In reality, I usually tend to lack motivation when dealing with most painting; unless we are talking about George Condo, Barry McGee or referring to Kara Walker's pictorial-conceptual spaces or those of Abigail Lazkoz, or Hadassah Emerich's mural paintings or Brendan Cass's colourist experiments. Nevertheless even if this is what I am thinking now, ever since Rafa Doctor introduced your work to me, I have added your painting to this strange disparate list. First of all because I understood it as an adventure without a narrative, understanding the first as an existential condition and the second as an expected "necessity" of the ego. For me, this distinction is essential in order to understand, and ultimately to surrender myself to and to lose my sense of direction inside the painting. The narrative picture which abounds in our hemisphere simply adds a layer more to the small anecdotes that weigh down and plague our daily life, and little else.

For some this lack of narrative implies a kind of never-ending game of suppositions or riddles, of guesses and puzzles, as if the work itself challenged them to nominate, to represent or to decipher improbable scenarios, or incidents and unfamiliar shapes. Whoever referred to your immediately previous work by saying that it appeared to be missing something, and attributed a mysterious plot to it, was trying to understand painting by looking for something that did not exist, and which in this case, would obviously never be found. Deep down there is not really any essential difference to that of approaching a piece of work by describing elements and data of the reality that surrounds us. And then of course you will always find those who hasten to appease these paintings by naming a useful background of ancestors and formal precedents. Obviously the painting that you are now showing has not appeared from nowhere, but to my mind, in general terms, the list of its pedigree does not add any relevant details about the painting. Unless of course it directly cites or responds to certain specific historical sources, or unless we are trying to flatter the artist in an attempt to put him in line with others in order to lap up some of their glory. However, with almost all certainty, the quest for relations, whether formal or historical, usually tends to ignore or underestimate the challenge that the experience of painting creates; that is to say, to see without naming. A famous philosopher (whose name

I fail to recall at present) said in his definition that naming implied suppositions and judgements that ossify and bring to a close what has already been named. On the contrary, the artist who avoids using a narrative keeps the flow of painting in silence whilst he paints.

To me, your art is a result of that silence without a closure. And any narrative seen here as an imposition merely supports this statement, in the same way as our own sense of consideration and the need to dismantle this ambiguity, to surrender to the painting itself. In any case, when I come close to these new paintings of yours I am always struck by their openness, that spatiality that invites us to step inside them, even when we suddenly feel that moving uncertainty that takes us by surprise. That pictorial space is an imaginary experience that arises from our disorientation, in its entire dimension, its scale, its support and its continuity. Because of course this is not a realist painting, that represents and describes a space supported by its gravity and coherence. Although they may appear as individual figurative forms, these paintings do not call for nor do they invoke any concept of cohesion and unity for they are evasive spaces, spaces of fluctuation and ambiguity. Only when we return to the painting itself, to the actual material pigment on the canvas, are we then able to free ourselves from the constant tension provoked by the “landscape” images. However, the fact that we feel protected inside this physicality of the world simply indicates the surrender of our conscious being, the failure of our conscience.

Therefore Philipp, I have to admit that I tend to think that these paintings correspond in silence with those inner spaces of our body; hidden spaces, out of sight, secrets for our conscience. Our traumas, our fantasies, our memories seem stranger and darker to us than our every day reality. However each one of us, perhaps without noticing, perhaps without suspecting, or perchance with effort and terror, slowly warps that other essential space of our existence, which we venture into, conscious that our body is a spectator who holds the key to deception and the means for the challenge of adventure. The absence of human characters in each of these paintings, and in all of your paintings that I can think of up to this date, seems to corroborate that statement about hidden space. In other words: the spaces of the mind are not representations of the world; painting is not a reality; pictorial landscapes are not the whole territory.

But despite this, each of the paintings, in their own way, invites us to reflect on the world and to decide whether or not we belong inside this reality –inside your pictorial reality- that we can see. And as a result, without narrative, without stories, without descriptions, this picture brings us closer to the world itself.

To tell you the truth, the first thing that came to mind when I began to contemplate your painting was a brief text by Emerson that I had filed away amongst other notes that I keep –about the ecological bankruptcy which we are immersed in- in order to alleviate, in an emotional sense, the daily impact of the failure of our civilization. In “Nature” (1836) Ralph Waldo Emerson said that “Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact. Every appearance in nature corresponds to some state of the mind, and that state can only be described by presenting that natural appearance as its picture”. To begin with I had to make an effort to consider a phrase written half way through the 19th century in the context of a piece of work created in 2007. However the reference did not appear to be that far off, considering now what I have previously written, or perhaps what I previously wrote is now considering this. In any case, the domain has already been chosen in so far as contemporary art. Most definitely, for me, that spirit of relation and moral recognition with nature, still present and refreshing, and which has been taken to its extreme in vanguard art, are only reflected in our time as a decadent effect; without shame, with exaggerated self-confidence and arrogance in the same way as our political system and a good amount of art that is arrogated to the vanguard standard. In short, that spirit has failed to survive, the same as that state of mind.

In a certain sense, I think that this new work that you are about to present can find its meaning by invoking that necessity to assume painting as an act of distillation and mediatization –this time not from the sublime image “of nature”, but from the dehumanization of that image. In this way, the sublime image is condemned to be devalued in the relics of parks and gardens, and painting could only translate this as incoherence and ambiguity, as something unrecognisable, something disorientated and traumatised. What remains therefore is its spirit, the spirit that has been removed from the generalised decadence that surrounds us. What really matters in the work is no longer the natural appearance or its storyline. Without human beings and without anecdotes, these paintings present us with nature as something that has not only been distorted but completely

transformed. Nature here no longer has any substance because it is simply a ghost, a space inside our mind, for these paintings go beyond nature and appear at first as an almost romantic project. However there is no immediate world or a reminisced world here as characterized by Wordsworth but instead the “heroic” incoherence that belongs to our “nature”, that is the illusion of nature. The romantic vision has been transformed into ideology’s bad faith.

In this sense, as far as I understand, these paintings neither come from nor go anywhere. These paintings, like painting itself, lead us to a dead end: and once we have reached it the only way back is to follow again the same path out. This secretiveness is even more disheartening in so far as that the works appear even more naturalistic. All of them are marked by that kind of solemnity that we relate –in another order- to Balthus’s painting. But here there is no sensual trace in any of them; they are like flesh without sex. Even so, this perversion is conservative in so far as that there is no reactionary attitude inside it; it is not established against something nor does it restrain anything. What is surprising is the fact that it has so much power to recover the aesthetic and fantastic ability of painting whilst our possible enthusiasm only serves to complicate and finally frustrate any sense. But here there is no mystery, as mysteries imply solutions. What is put in evidence, in any case, is that no matter how much we know, our knowledge is merely futile.

Best regards,

Octavio Zaya
New York, November 2007

Exvoto-Where is Nikki Black

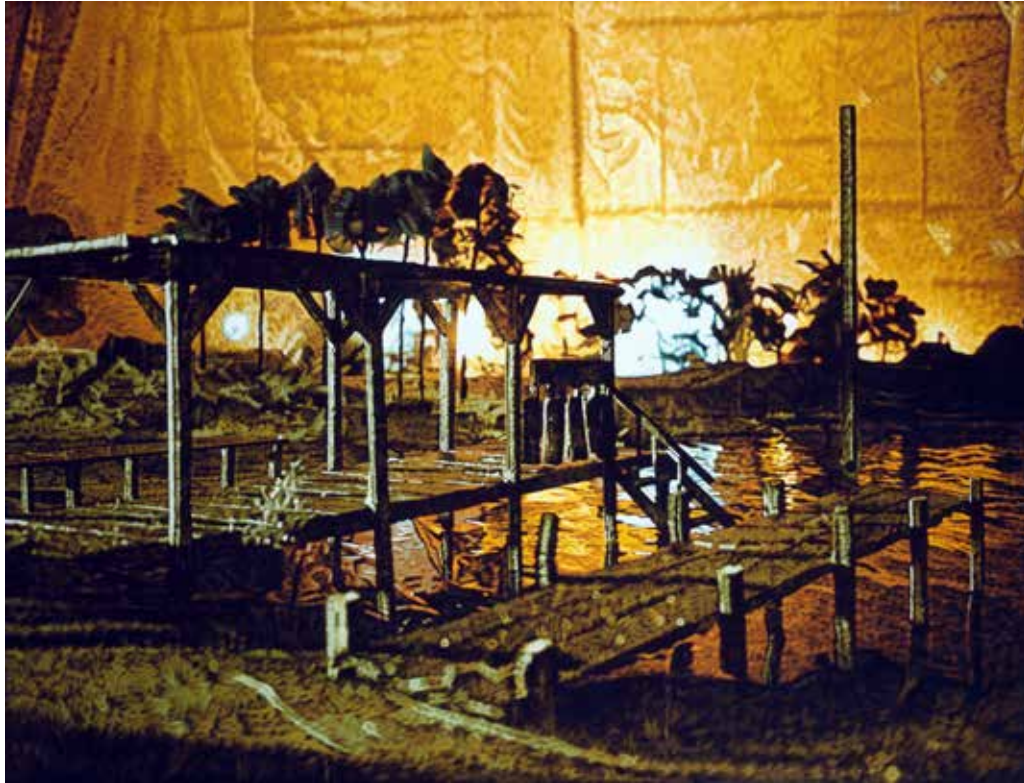
2003—2006



(016L), 2006
tempera on canvas, 195 × 146 cm



(017L), 2006
tempera on canvas, 195 × 146 cm



(027L), 2006
tempera on canvas, 210 x 280 cm
MUSAC Collection



(026L), 2006
tempera on canvas, 210 x 280 cm
MUSAC Collection



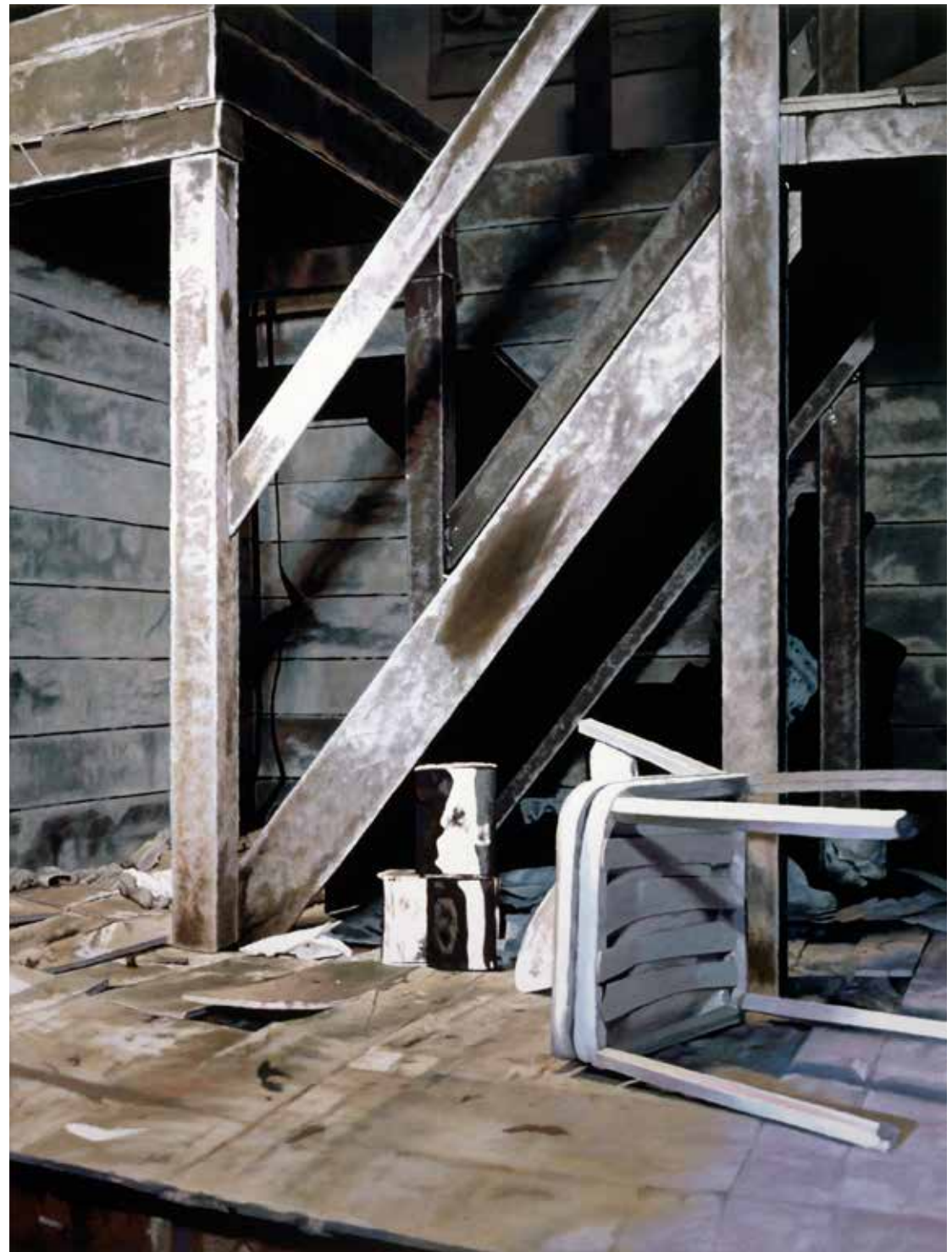
(020L), 2006
tempera on canvas, 146 x 195 cm



(018L), 2006
tempera on canvas, 146 × 195 cm
Montemadrid Foundation Collection



(019L), 2006
tempera on canvas, 146 × 195 cm



(015L), 2006
tempera on canvas, 195 x 146 cm
MUSAC collection



(030L), 2006
tempera on canvas, 195 x 162 cm



Exvoto, (003H - 005H), 2003
tempera on panel, 45,5 x 35 cm





Exvoto, (006H - 008H), 2003
tempera on panel, 45,5 x 35 cm



Exvoto, (009H - 011H), 2003
tempera on panel, 45,5 x 35 cm





Exvoto, (012H - 015H), 2003
tempera on panel, 45,5 × 35 cm











PHILIPP FRÖHLICH
Sergio Rubira

In autumn 1996 the houses numbered 23 and 25 on Cromwell Street in Gloucester were completely demolished. Today a path cuts across the site they occupied. No trace at all remains of the buildings. The debris was swiftly cleared away to avoid it becoming much sought-after souvenirs of the horror of the crime. At least ten women had been raped, tortured and strangled there. Their mutilated bodies were buried in the garden and in the basement, Fred and Rose West, the murderers, were sentenced to die in prison. He committed suicide, hanging himself in his cell; she tried to kill herself taking an overdose of pills but failed and is still alive today at Bronzefield Prison in Ashford.

Although perhaps the memory of the event, a reminder of the terrible incident of the past, remains because a wooden board has survived that depicts in tempera the door of one of the houses on Cromwell Street, an open door that gives on to a platform that rises over the excavated ground of a courtyard. The painting is intriguing, in both senses of the word, both mysterious and tricky, for it is difficult (perhaps even impossible) to identify the actual scene of the crime. Only a few of the accomplices of the painter, Philipp Fröhlich, know the secret and not many have dared reveal it

because the sentence could be life imprisonment. The marks of what took place have been erased; the clues left are minimal, as minimal as the two letters, 'fw', that distinguish its title from other pictures in the same series, Exvoto12 (2003) and have now proven to correspond to the name and surname of the murderer, Fred West. So, who do the initials in the rest of the paintings (dn, jc, ap, pd, cn, c, eg, jwg, jd) belong to? Could the living-room with the striped settee and a Turkish carpet come from the flat belonging to Jeffrey Dahmer, the butcher from Milwaukee? Could the open garage with the cement floor belong to the killer clown John Wayne Gacy? Could it have been Ed Gain, another butcher, who used the room full of wooden planks to dismember his victims? The evidence is circumstantial. There are no certainties. He cannot be condemned.

Over the course of time, Fröhlich's complex forensic technique, which leads him to make his mock-up taking pictures or texts of the crime scenes (in a sort of reverse ekphrasis, if we consider murder a fine art) to paint and then destroy them (another crime) in a slow, gradual process, is refined almost to the point of becoming a perfect murder. The viewer misses the opportunity of solving the case and is forced to abandon his detective inquiries; the huge canvases that represent the rooms of horror have forgotten their titles; all that which could accuse him has been eliminated, just as the houses on Cromwell Street were pulled down to erase their memory, that of a crime, the crime.

Or perhaps that's not the case and in that photofit of the scenes of unexpected death he, the painter, has left another trace, for the landscapes of his

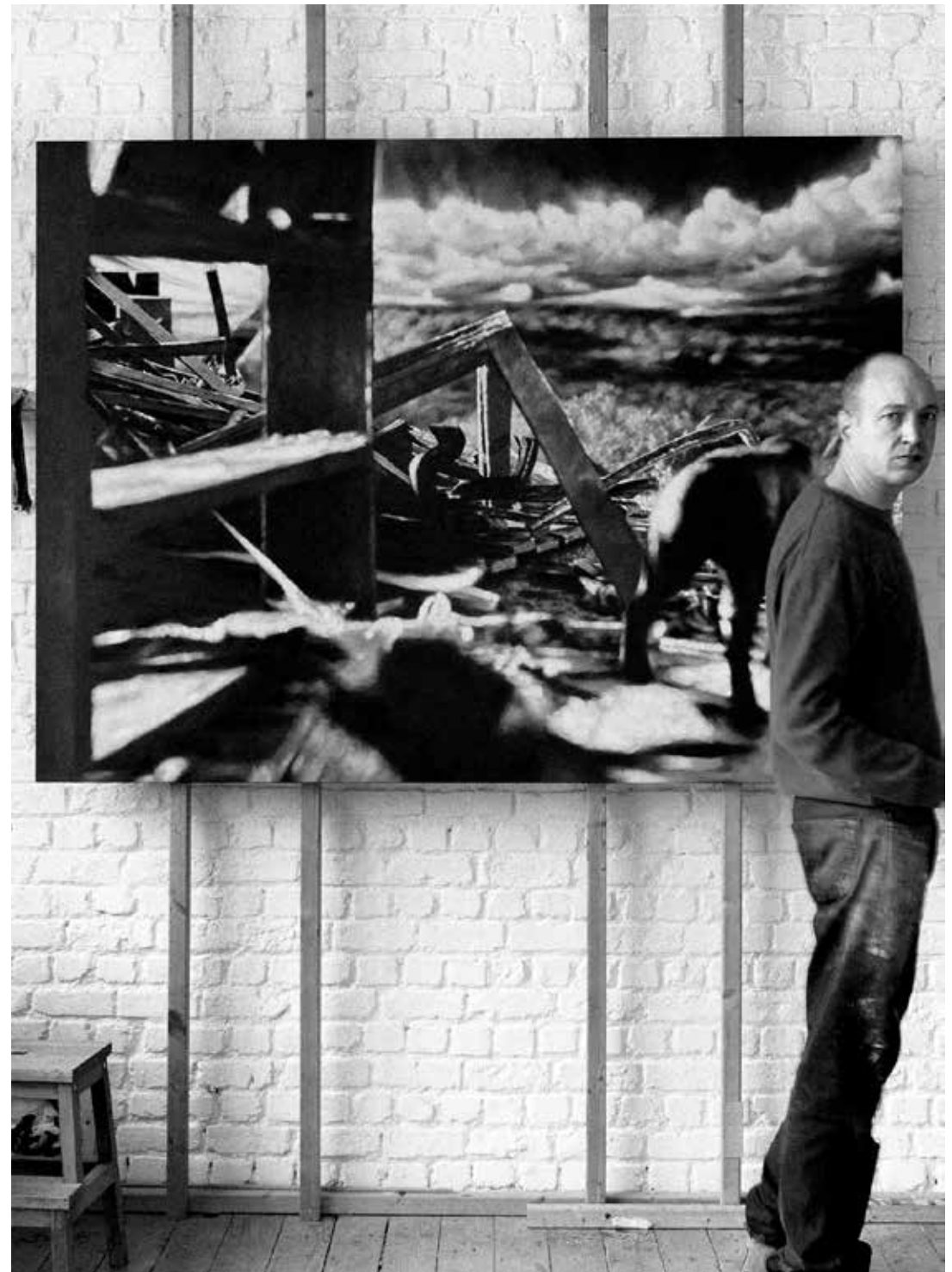
following series aren't as innocent as they seem either. They are as disturbing as the title under which they were displayed, Beachy Head, a cliffy area on the south coast of England that boasts one of the most beautiful views in the country and has been for centuries a spot chosen by thousands to take their last mortal leap over the rocks. A wonderful scene with which to conclude a drama or a tragedy (even though such bills, resembling prompters' scripts, are dreadful), which fill it forming a part of the panorama and ask the characters to reconsider the last act, their last act. A sublime theatre set to bring their lives to an end. A backcloth as fabulous as these paintings by Frohlich, empty scenes waiting to be filled by actors who are spectators, in which the creased canvases or the balls of cotton wool that stand for the sky in the representation still appear as pieces of stage machinery, just as other props do—for instance, the light bulbs covered in colored cellophane paper which, too large for the scale of this nameless triptych, are visible in the foreground and are inserted, alongside the bare copper cables, badly connected and even potentially dangerous, between the paper-mâché ruins to discover the trick, the constructed nature of the landscape but also of the gaze. These elements become the confidants of the beholder in the intriguing tales of suspense into which Fröhlich's paintings are transformed, tales of suspense because the time and space of the events are suspended between memory and testimony, trauma and evidence, nightmare and fact, fiction and reality ●

Born in Schweinfurt (Germany), 1975

1996-2002 Staatliche Kunstakademie Düsseldorf/ Germany, attended the master class of Karl Kneidl

Exhibitions

2023	<i>Exotermia: Semiótica de la ubicación en la Colección</i> , MUSAC, León	(group exhibition)
	<i>Proyecto para una colección</i> , Galería Juana de Aizpuru, Madrid	(group exhibition)
2022	<i>El vertigo de la vida moderna</i> , DA2, Salamanca	(group exhibition)
2021	<i>Falada</i> , Galería Juana de Aizpuru, Madrid	(solo exhibition)
	<i>Märchen</i> , Kunsthalle Barmen, Kunst- und Museumsverein Wuppertal	(solo exhibition)
2019	<i>Hänsel und Gretel</i> , Galería Juana de Aizpuru, Madrid	(solo exhibition)
	<i>1919–2019 Hundert Jahre Moderne</i> , Von der Heydt-Museum, Wuppertal	(group exhibition)
2018	<i>Cuestiones personales</i> , Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid	(group exhibition)
	<i>Neue Sammlungspräsentation</i> , Aufbruch in die Moderne, Von der Heydt-Museum Wuppertal	(group exhibition)
2017	<i>Extracto de una coleccion</i> , Museo Patio Herreriano, Valladolid	(group exhibition)
	<i>De la Habana ha venido un...</i> , Galería Juana de Aizpuru, Madrid	(group exhibition)
	<i>Imbalance</i> , Laznia Centre for Contemporary Art, Gdansk, Poland	(group exhibition)
	<i>Something old, Something new</i> , Von der Heydt-Museum Wuppertal, Germany	(group exhibition)
2016	<i>Iconografías 2.0</i> , Museo Patio Herreriano, Valladolid	(group exhibition)
	<i>Una mirada en abierto</i> , Conservera Ceuti	(group exhibition)
2015	<i>Hoap of a tree</i> , Galería Juana de Aizpuru, Madrid	(solo exhibition)
2014	<i>Antes de Irse</i> , MACUF, A Coruña	(group exhibition)
	Soledad Lorenzo-colección, Centro el Carmen, Valencia	(group exhibition)
2013	<i>Una posibilidad de escape</i> , Espai d'art contemporani,Castellón	(group exhibition)
	<i>Colección</i> , Museo de Arte Moderno y Contemporáneo de Santander y Cantabria	(group exhibition)
	<i>Pintura</i> , Galería Adora Calvo, Salamanca	(group exhibition)
	<i>Itinerarios de una colección</i> , Casino de la Exposición, Sevilla	(group exhibition)
	<i>Diálogos</i> , Museo Patio Herreriano, Valladolid	(group exhibition)
	<i>Declaración de ruina</i> , Fundación Cerezales Antonio y Cinia, Cerezales del Condado, León	(group exhibition)
2012	<i>Remote Viewing</i> , Galería Soledad Lorenzo, Madrid	(solo exhibition)
	<i>Una mirada a lo desconocido</i> , DA2, Salamanca	(group exhibition)
	<i>De ida y vuelta</i> , ECCO, Cadiz	(group exhibition)
2011	<i>Fiction and Reality</i> , Moscow Museum of Modern Art, Moscow and Museo Patio Herreriano, Valladolid	(group exhibition)
	<i>Pulso xxi</i> , Museo de Arte Moderno y Contemporaneo, Santander	(group exhibition)
	Nuevas Adquisiciones 2011, Fundación Coca-Cola, DA2, Salamanca	(group exhibition)
2010	<i>Scare the Night Away</i> , Galería Soledad Lorenzo, Madrid	(solo exhibition)
	<i>Colección II</i> , Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo, Madrid	(group exhibition)
2009	<i>Enlaces+Cuatro</i> , Museo Patio Herreriano, Valladolid	(group exhibition)
	<i>Paisajes</i> . Entorno a la Colección MUSAC, Museo de la Siderurgia y Minería de Sabero	(group exhibition)
2007	<i>Beachy Head</i> , Galería Soledad Lorenzo, Madrid	(solo exhibition)
	<i>Existencias</i> , MUSAC, León	(group exhibition)
	<i>Planes Futuros</i> , Baluarte, Pamplona	(group exhibition)
2006	Exvoto. Where is Nikki Black, Laboratorio987, MUSAC	(solo exhibition)
	Generacion 2006, Caja Madrid	(group exhibition)
2005	Sucesos, Centro de Arte Joven, Madrid	(solo exhibition)
	<i>Generación 2005</i> , Caja Madrid	(group exhibition)
	<i>Circuitos de Artes Plásticas y Fotografía</i> , Madrid	(group exhibition)



Thank you!

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