

OUSSAMA
BAALBAKI
against the grain

This exhibition puts on view a wide selection of paintings by Oussama Baalbaki, some previously unseen, which were produced between 2010 and the present day. In doing so, this show seeks to defend Baalbaki's artistic position as primarily grounded in the observation and painting of contemporary life. Running counter to a thematic exhibition wherein the theme precedes the work, Baalbaki presents a compilation of works that are not immediately unified by a singular idea or concept. They are related after the fact in their function as commentary on the artist's sociopolitical reality.

Oussama Baalbaki takes himself as the subject and starting point of his work. Influenced by the modern flaneur, Baalbaki paints what he sees as he moves around the city of Beirut. His world is characterized by melancholy and romantic longing, but is also governed by a certain playfulness. It is this playfulness that articulates Baalbaki's stance toward an autonomy of art –an art that is free from the methodological constraints of science/knowledge, and that does not follow rules or regulations (of the fine arts academy, for instance – or, the presumptions of the current art-world establishment). Baalbaki regards the figure of the artist a free child who expresses himself and his position vis-à-vis the world, all the while sustaining the serious and laborious activity of artmaking.

In his interest in the contemporary relevance of literary and visual arts from former periods, Baalbaki playfully nods to both classical and modern artists and writers alike, including Vladimir Mayakovsky and Charles Baudelaire. His gesture is often humorous and self-referential. Several temporalities converge and collapse in his painting, producing work of a distinctly postmodern nature. It nonetheless remains the case that Baalbaki's model of the artist is ultimately a modernist one.

Natasha Gasparian
Beirut, 2018



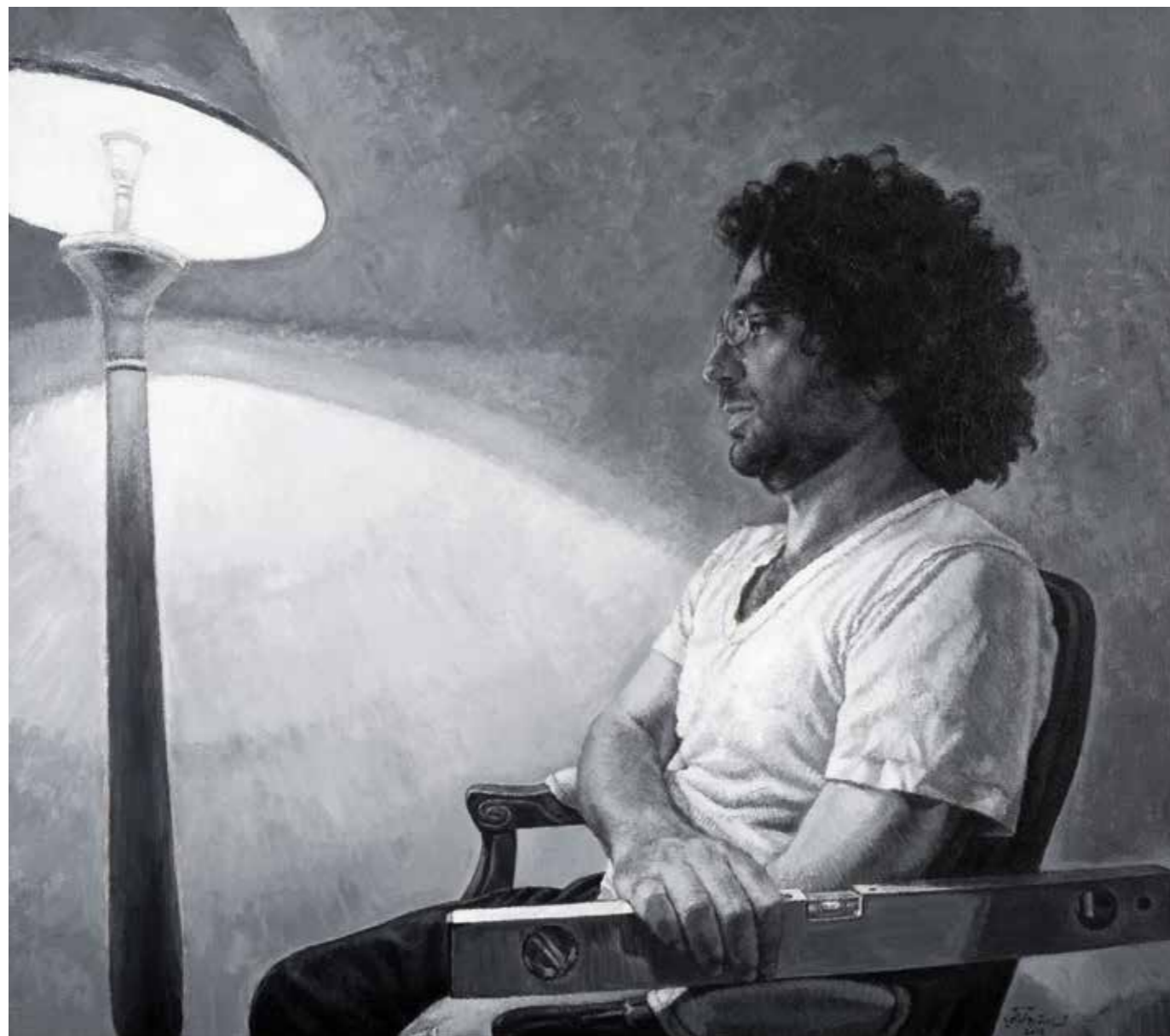
Car Cemetery
Acrylic on canvas | 115x130cm | 2010



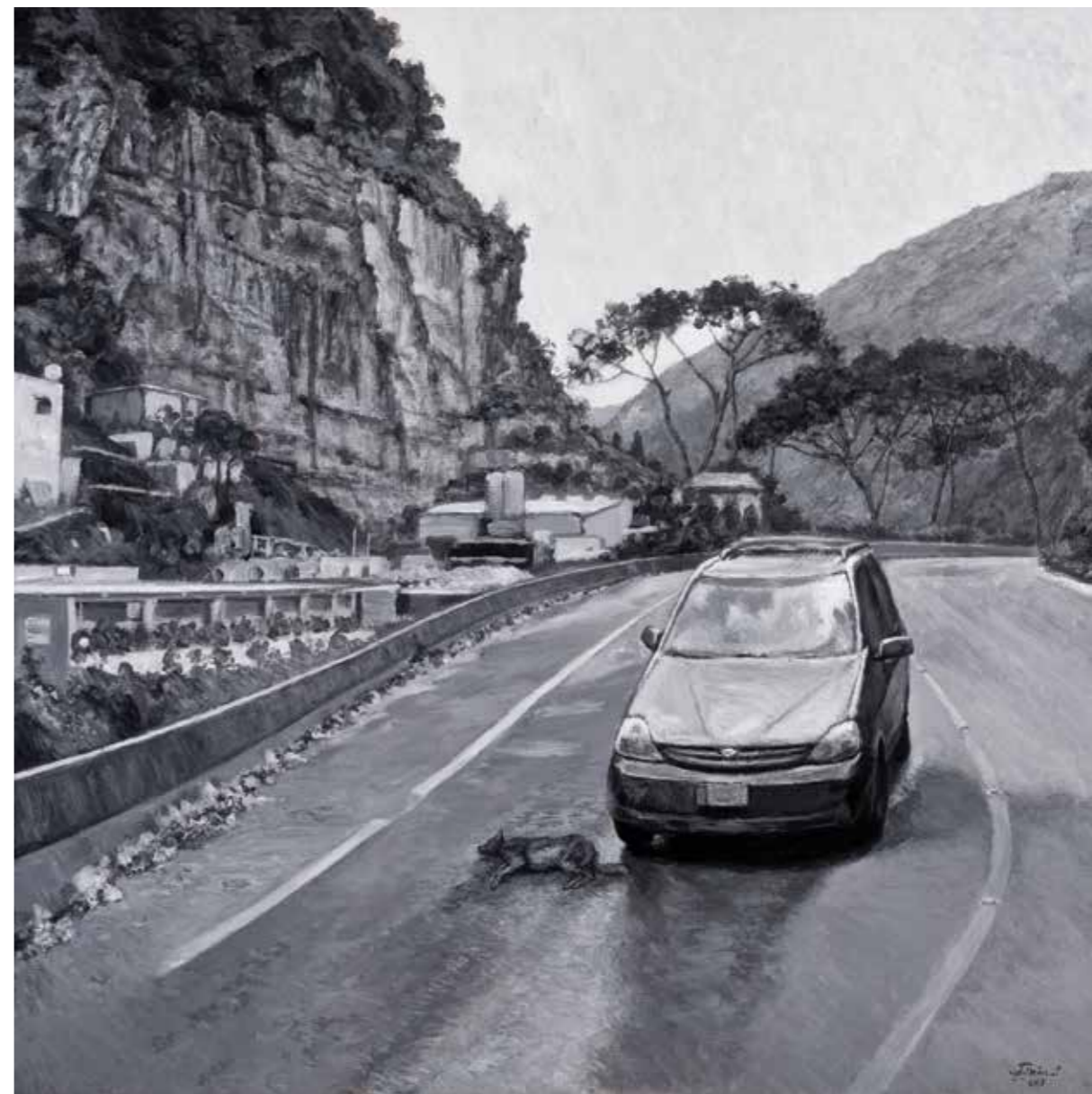
Towards the Abyss
Acrylic on canvas | 150x180cm | 2011



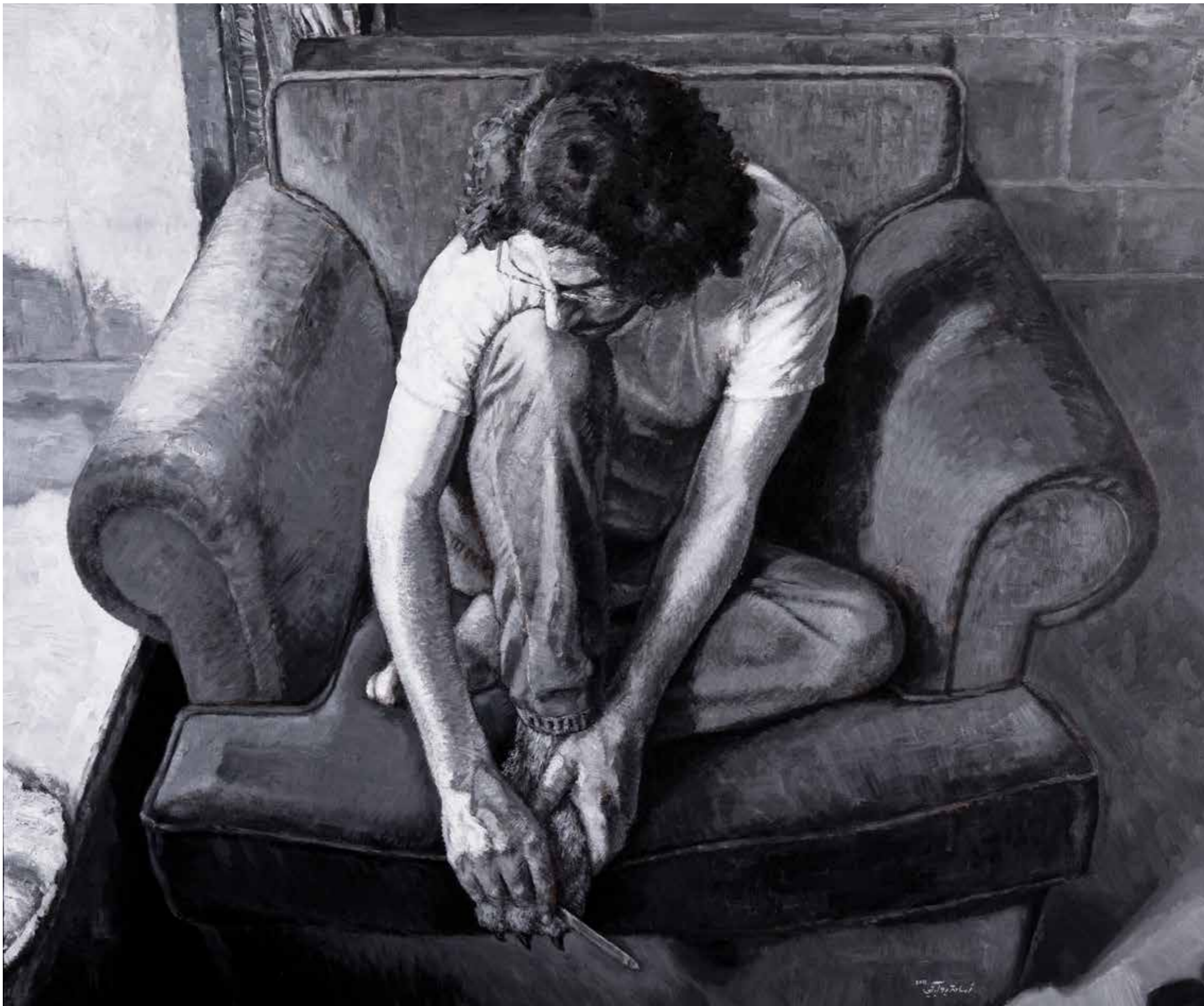
Scene from Odeisse
Acrylic on canvas | 100x100cm | 2011



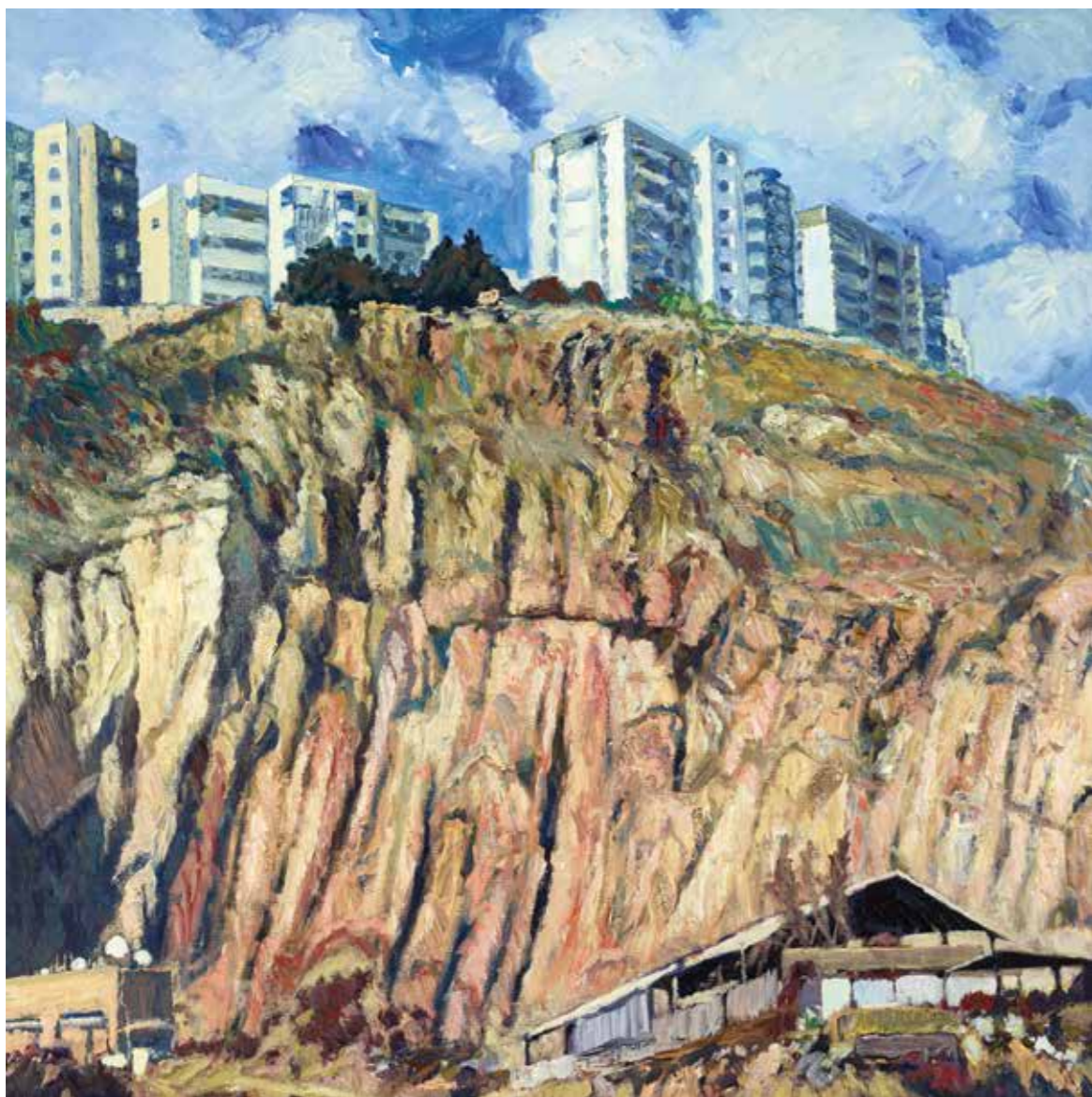
A Spiritual Steadiness
Acrylic on canvas | 115x130cm | 2012



The Death Leap
Acrylic on canvas | 150x150cm | 2013



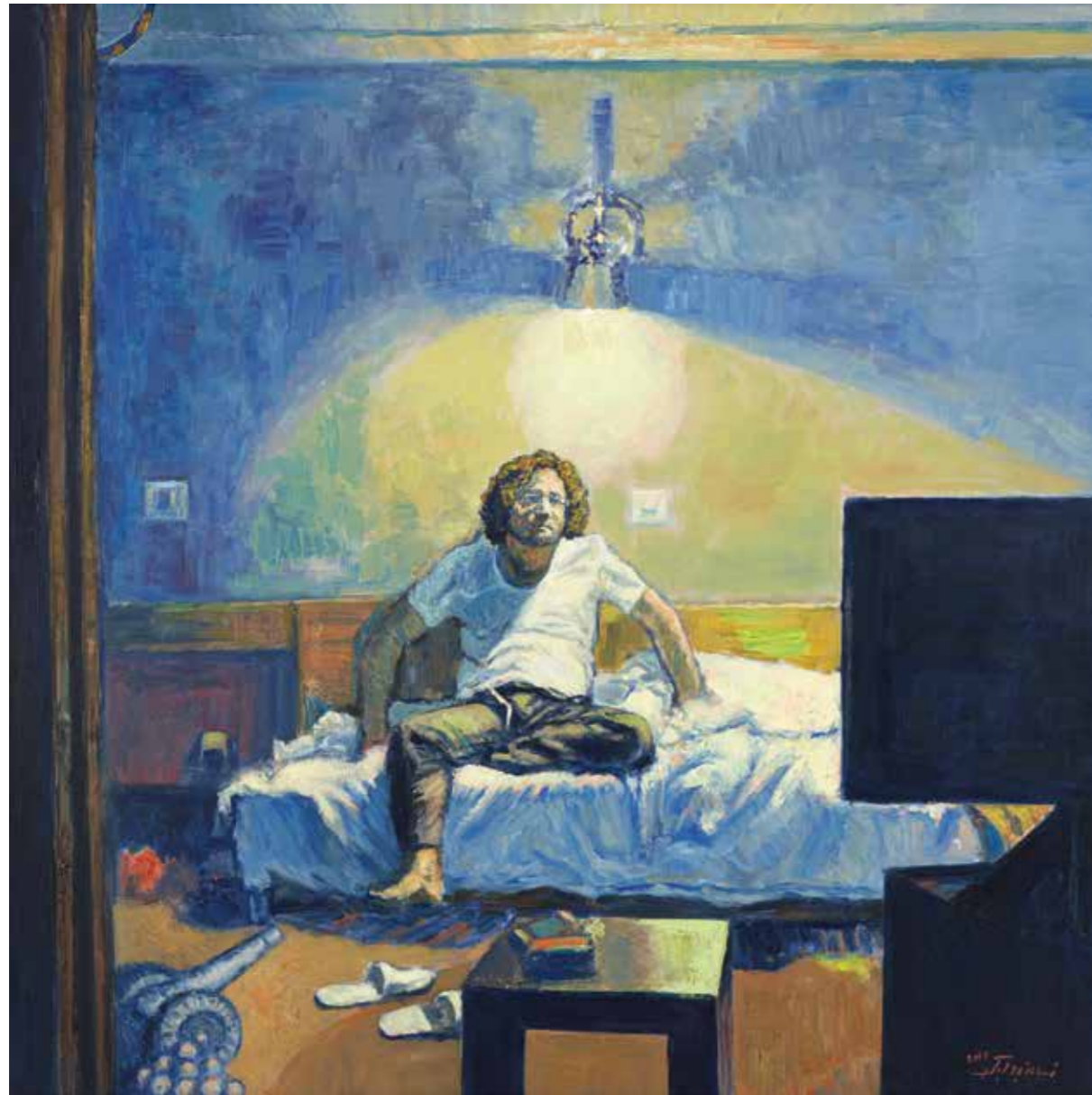
The Innocence of a Claw
Acrylic on canvas | 150x180cm | 2013



Untitled
Acrylic on canvas | 150x150cm | 2014



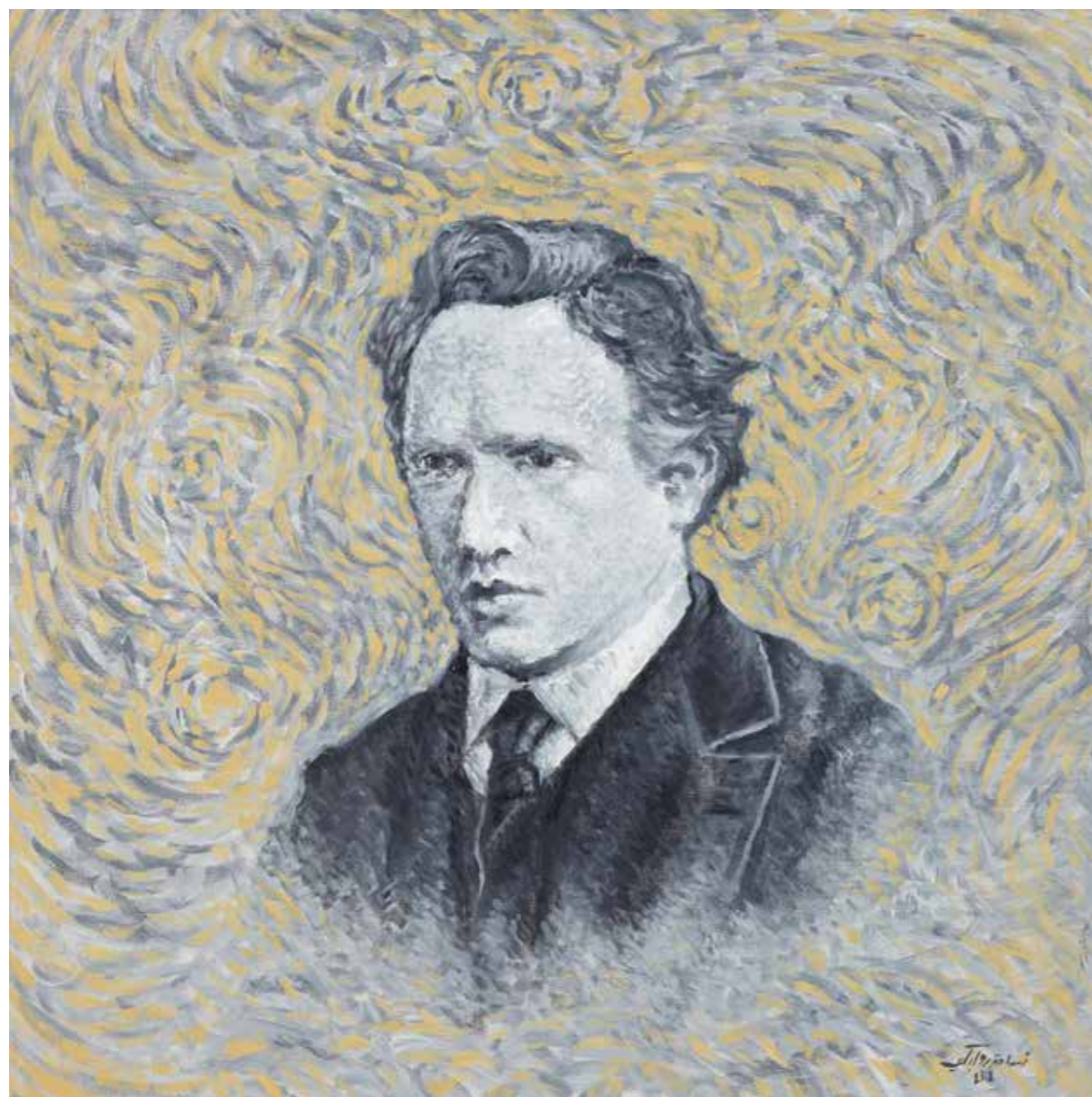
Heavy Clouds, Mute Noise
Acrylic on canvas | 150x180cm | 2017



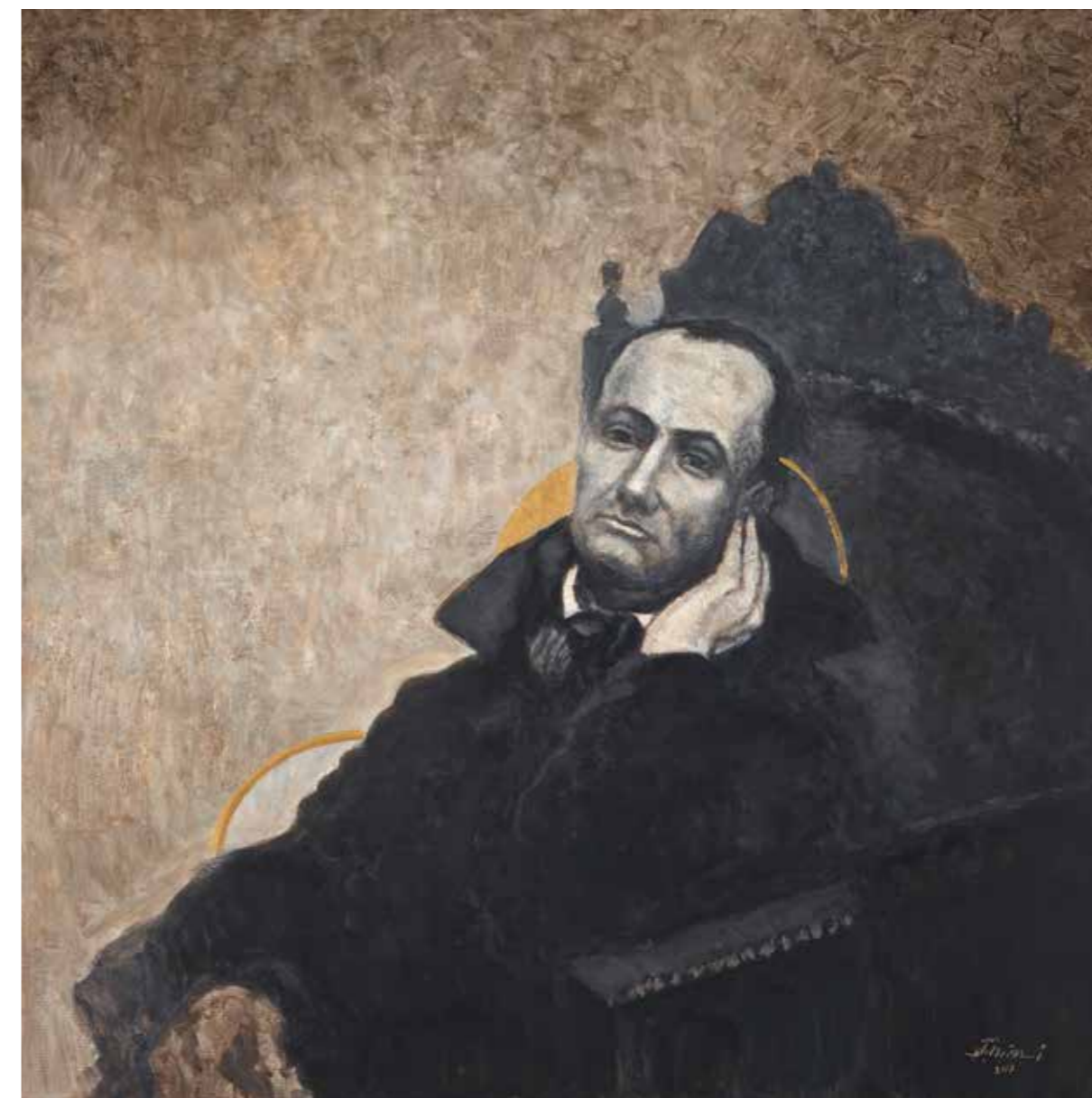
An Exhausted Night
Acrylic on canvas | 150x150cm | 2017



To Manet
Watercolor | 75x55cm | 2017



Van Gogh... Smile!
Acrylic on canvas | 100x100cm | 2018



To Baudelaire Again
Acrylic on canvas | 120x120cm | 2017



Fire... Works
Acrylic on canvas | 130x150cm | 2017



Untitled
Acrylic on canvas | 60x90cm | 2018



Beirut at Night
Acrylic on canvas | 60x80cm | 2017



The Witnessing Images
Acrylic on canvas | 150x180cm | 2018



Untitled
Acrylic on canvas | 120x150cm | 2017



Sky Crane
Acrylic on canvas | 100x80cm | 2018

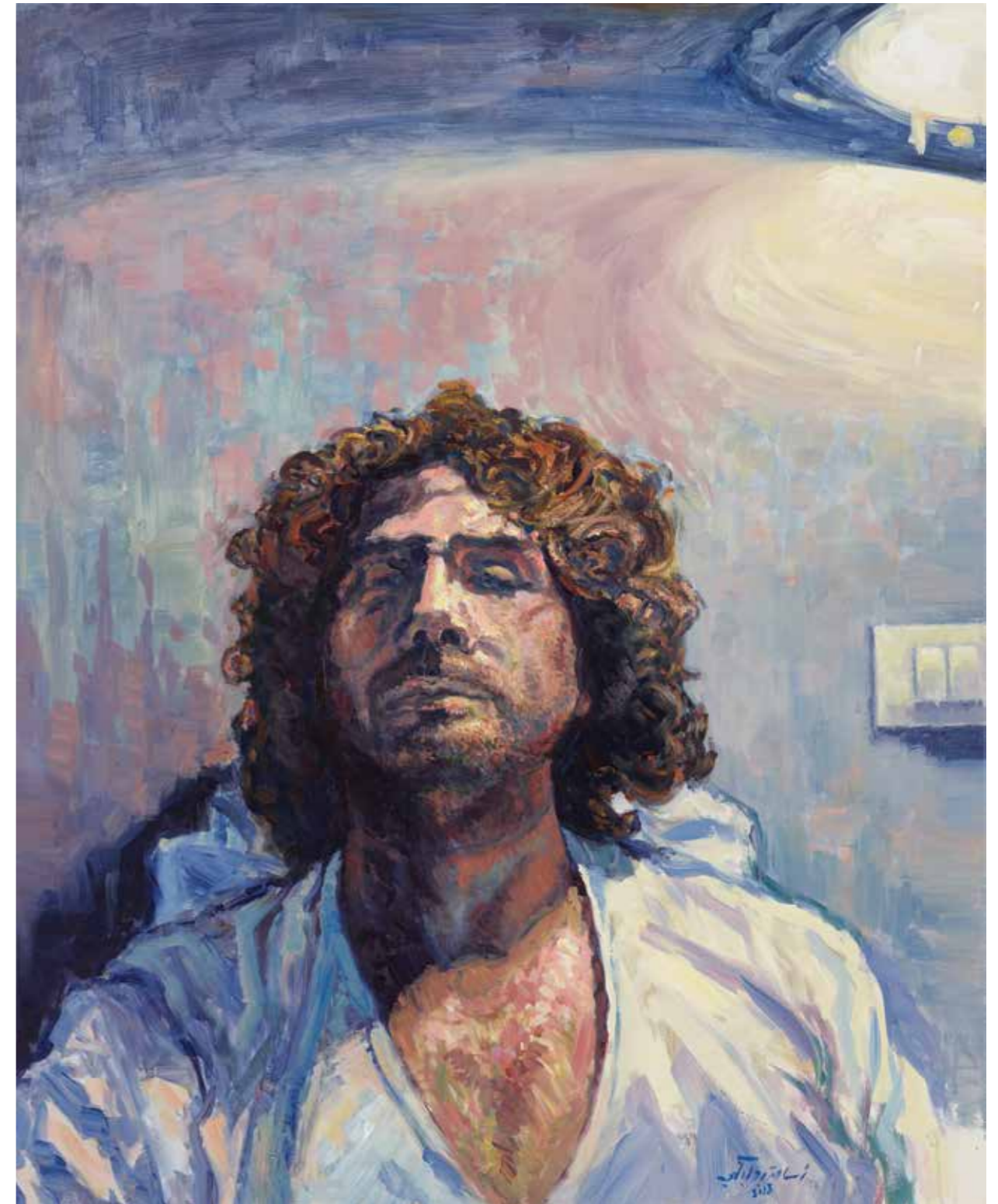


Flash
Acrylic on canvas | 120x90cm | 2018



Untitled
Watercolor | 55x75cm - each | 2017

Untitled
Watercolor | 55x75cm - each | 2017



Dissatisfaction
Acrylic on canvas | 150x120cm | 2018

Oussama Baalbaki was born in the village of Odeisse in the South of Lebanon in 1978. He graduated from the Institute of Fine Arts at the Lebanese University in 2002. He has participated in group exhibitions in numerous institutions, including the Sursock Museum in Lebanon, as well as abroad, in the cities of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, London, Miami, Munich, New York, and Washington. His solo exhibitions include *Paintings in Black* (2004) at Dar El Nadwa, *Scenes of Isolation* (2007) at Safana Gallery, and *Less smoke, and more...* (2009), *Rituals of Isolation* (2011), and *Pleadings of the Light* (2017) at Agial Art Gallery, as well as *Shadows of Gloominess* (2014) at Tanit Gallery hosted in collaboration with Agial Art Gallery. In 2009, he won the silver medal for painting at the "Jeux de la Francophonie". Baalbaki lives and works in Beirut.



SALEH BARAKAT GALLERY

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