

An abstract painting with vibrant colors and thick brushstrokes. The background is a mix of yellow, orange, and pink. The foreground is dominated by large, expressive strokes of green, blue, red, and brown, creating a sense of movement and depth. The overall style is reminiscent of modernist or expressionist art.

It's an ancient game
what a poor game!

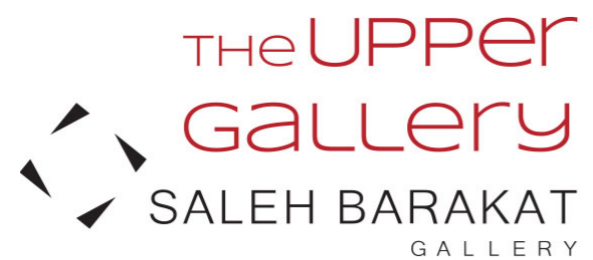
HIBA KALACHE

with a poem by
Younna Chlala

It's an ancient game
what a poor game!

HIBA KALACHE

with a poem by
Yumna Chlala





*They still purge the city of poets. It's an ancient game
extracted like the good leaves, the ones you eat first.*

*We find ourselves again at this juncture, language
a utilitarian artifice, artificial, arc-en-ciel, feu d'artifice*

*Glued to an image
conjecture, color, perspective, topology, anatomy*

*Glued to a body
Wool. Gum. Gun. Wire.*

*We wonder, can they really be after us?
the universe, not expanding but stretching*

*Excerpt from The Paper Camera
by Youmna Chlala*

I prefer leaves yellowed by
the rain to false victories

Acrylic ink and oil on canvas

143x163 cm | 2022





From the series "it's an ancient game" | Pastel on paper | 55.8x76.2 cm | 2022



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Within her multidisciplinary practice encompassing drawing, painting and sculptural installation, Kalache addresses the geopolitics of the Middle East from the perspective of a female body.

Kalache's recent paintings were made in San Francisco, where she moved after the 2020 explosion in the port of Beirut that decimated the city, rendering daily life untenable. The highly politicized nature and history of the Lebanese landscape have figured prominently in her work, and in the aftermath of the explosion, Kalache has become more attuned to the sonic effect of trauma, how it is carried through society and how it can be translated into painting.

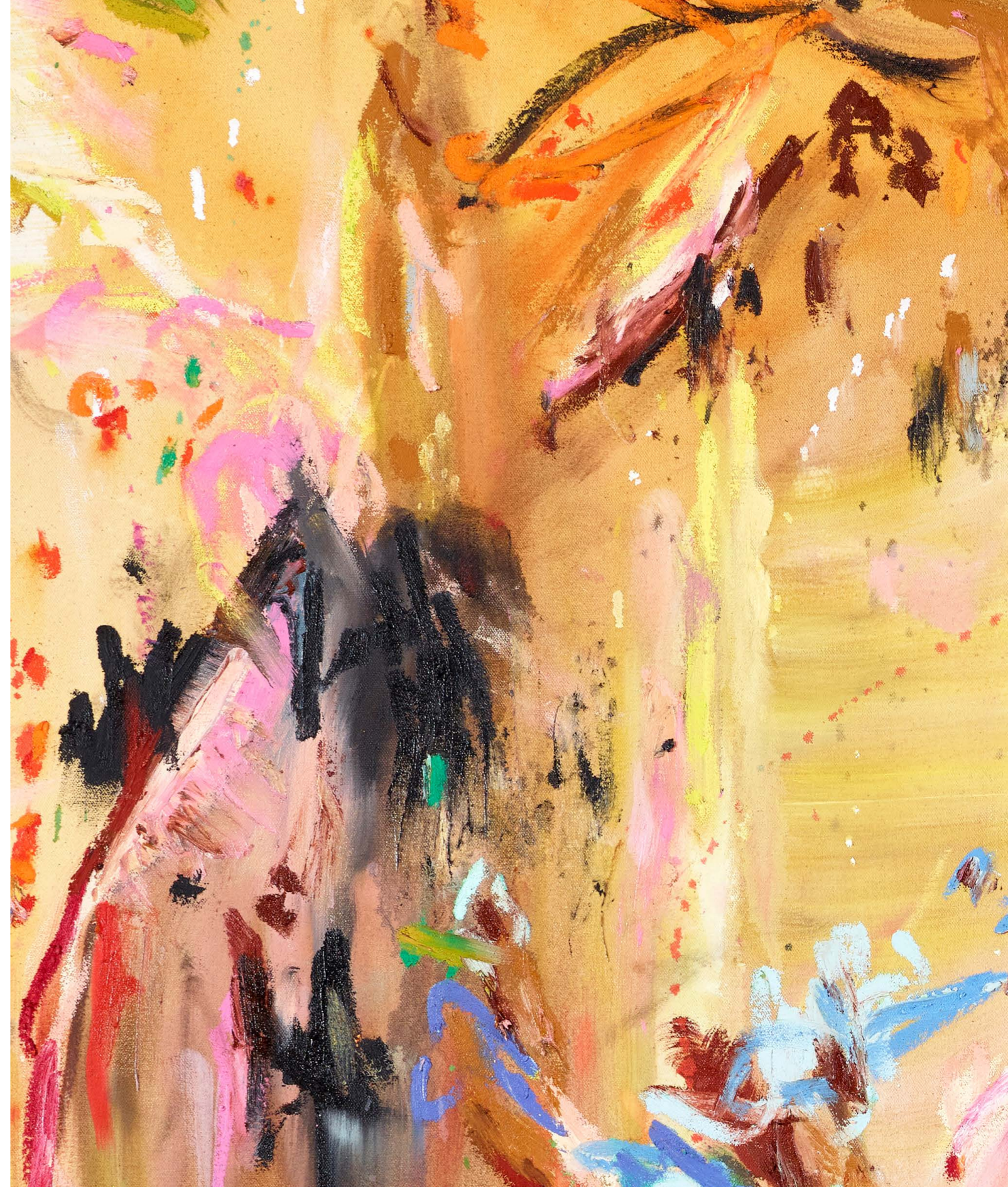
The luminous paintings that result are both an objection and an insistence, a way of circling around an indescribable event, each urgent gesture capturing the complex and conflicting emotions which remain after a familiar landscape is lost and the image of that specific time and place has shifted and must be translated through the lens of memory.

On four separate occasions throughout the course of her life, Kalache has left her family home in Beirut behind. The Lebanese Civil War of 1975 prompted the first departure when she was only three. Uprooted from her heritage, the abstract idea of translation has been a literal fact of her daily existence and a recurring theme in her work.

A voracious reader, Kalache's paintings often grow out of an exploration of text. Where early paintings began as a close translation of religious texts into visual language, more recently the relationship has become more abstract. Often drawing her titles from literary references or poems, her recent paintings pull from Etel Adnan's *Time*, a book of poetry in which each chapter recalls disjointed fragments of time and place. Rather than depicting specific moments of time, Kalache's frenetic drawing line can evoke a kind of intuitive writerly gesture. Influenced by feminist psychoanalytic writing, her paintings take up themes of female desire and subjectivity, often including references to the body.

Kalache's canvases, layered with soft oil and acrylic ink washes and passionate, intuitive bursts of color, reveal references to the body or the female form, but the artist's fragmented and instinctive gestures recall the splintering of memories over the passage of time, leaving traces of emotion untethered to concrete imagery or place. The resulting works, surreal and imagined, exist outside of time and place, even when referring to the abjectness of the physical body and its experiences.

Daelyn Farnham
Director, Altman Siegel



When the heart ceases to
mark the hour

Acrylic ink and oil on canvas

143x163 cm | 2022





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HIBA KALACHE

It's an ancient game
what a poor game!



This wall shows the life of games. It's an ancient game
It's an ancient game, the game of Hiba Kalache
It's an ancient game, the game of Hiba Kalache
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At once ethereal, bodily and scriptural, Kalache's work reveals tensions between formlessness and familiar images. Canvas and paper are marked with vivid color estranging Kalache's intimate world. The works together form a constellation of conversations, inspirations and parallel struggles, reaching beyond their own spaces onto that of Youmna Chlala's poetic pieces and Etel Adnan's written works.

Andrea Comair

Anthropologist of material culture Professor Daniel Miller, in his revolutionary work, 'The Comfort of Things', argues for a reframing of a Durkheimian narrative often applied to modern social life; the condition of modernity as a gradual fragmentation of society, a slow decay of the social and religious ties that traditionally bound societies together, and compounded through rapid industrialisation and the free labour market. In this view, commodities are fetishised and come to oppress those who made them. Relations with things, in this context, are seen as unpalatable at best, dangerous at worst. For Miller, however, the centrality of things, stuff, material possessions, in our modern world, can be positive, speaking to a closeness, rather than a degradation, in social relations. For Miller, 'the closer a person is to their things, the closer they are to others, material objects are viewed as an integral and inseparable aspect of all relationships'. People, he argues, exist for us in and through their material presence.' It is an anthropology between the minutiae of everyday life and a much wider humanity.

It is clear that Hiba Kalache's art plays out, spreads around her, in a close relation to things, materials, her wider life, indeed her humanity. Materials form the ground of her artistic spaces, and, one suspects, her life more broadly. From drawing on walls with fat and frosting during studies in America, to mark-making on canvas with the charred remains of car tyres during the revolution in Lebanon, and now returned to America and experimenting with vibrant colours, material, excited by the ease of availability, it is gesture and it is material, environment and relationship that she employs as both subject and object of her work, as life.

Amy Todman

madness sings in the morning

Acrylic ink and oil on canvas

143x163 cm | 2022





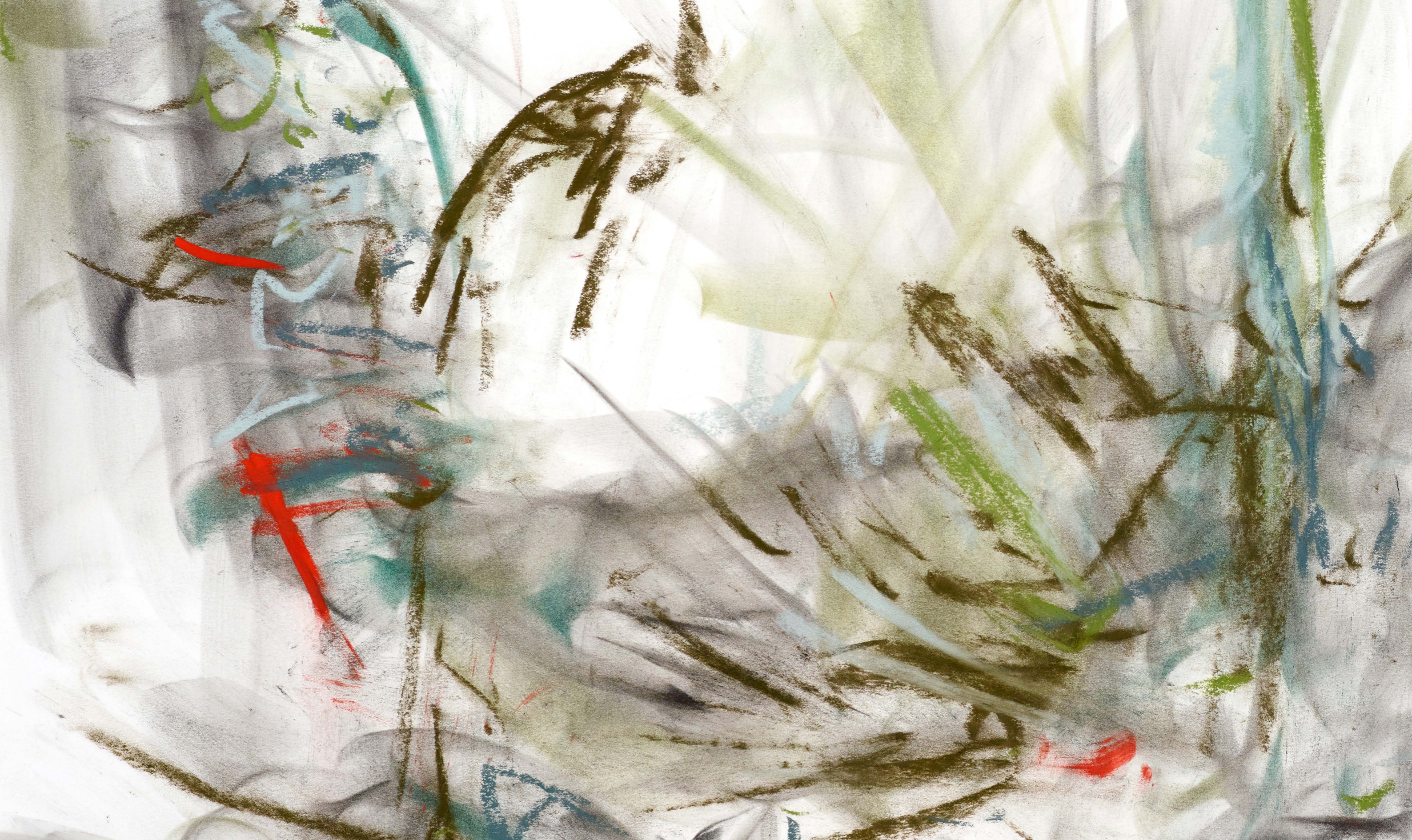
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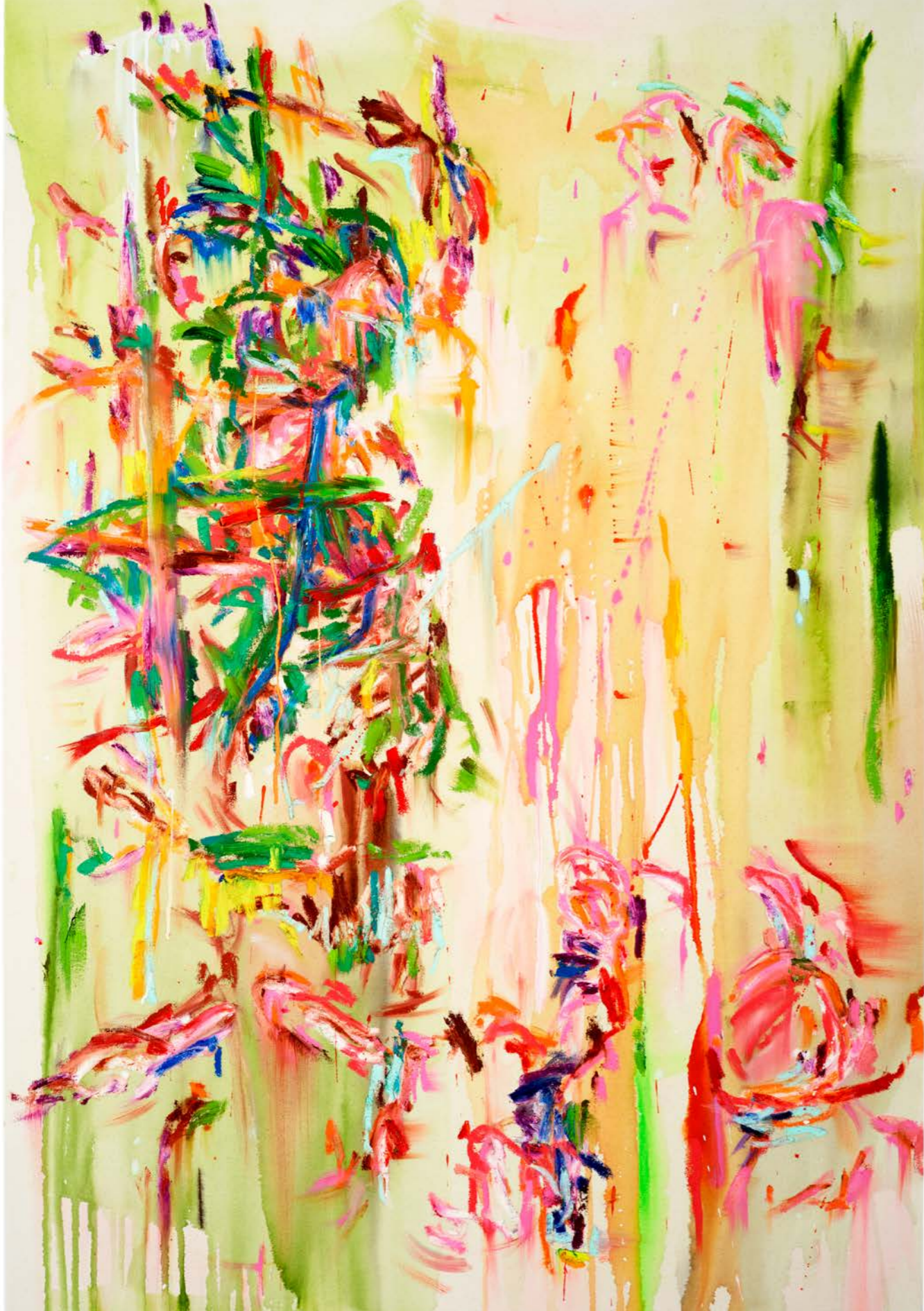
The artist in her studio
San Francisco|2022





Informational text panel on the back wall, containing several lines of small text.





grass grows at the edge of scars

Acrylic ink and oil on canvas

149x104 cm | 2022



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Beirut Downtown,
protests site, 2019



Hiba Kalache was born in Beirut, and now lives in California. She has recently participated in FOG fair with Altman Siegle gallery in San Francisco. Her solo shows include *Our Dreams are a Second Life* (2020), and *Lemonade Everything Was So Infinite* (2018), at Saleh Barakat Gallery, Beirut, Lebanon. Group exhibitions include Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, France; Villa Romana, Florence, Italy; Beit Beirut Museum, Rose and Shaheen Saleeby Museum, Beirut, Lebanon; Newcomb Art Museum at Tulane University, New Orleans, LA; The Boghossian Foundation, Brussels, Belgium; and the San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA.

Younna Chlala was born in Beirut and lives in New York. She has exhibited at the Hayward Gallery, Kunsthall Charlottenborg, The Drawing Center, Dubai Art Projects, Concrete Gallery, Hessel Museum of Art and MAK Center for Art and Architecture. She participated in the 33rd Bienal de São Paulo, 7th LIAF Biennial in Norway, and 11th Performa Biennial. Chlala is the author of the poetry and photography collection, *The Paper Camera*.

SALEH BARAKAT GALLERY



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Photos © Hiba Kalache

Design by Chada Noueir

Photography by Mansour Dib

Portrait Photo by Mounia Natour

Studio Photo by Michele Theberge

Saleh Barakat Gallery Beirut | Justinian St. | Clemenceau

Beirut, Lebanon

info@salehbarakatgallery.com

www.salehbarakatgallery.com

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