

# MAKE ME BELIEVE

AMANDA HOUCHEN XAXA MASON JJ MORGAN ANJA VON KALINOWSKI

*“The faculty of wonder, like curiosity  
can make things happen; it is time  
for wishful thinking to have its due.”*

Marina Warner

Cover image: JJ Morgan, *Fly By Night*, 2015, Acrylic on canvas, 40 x 40 cm

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OPENING TIMES

Monday - closed Tuesday-Friday 10 - 5pm Saturday 11 - 4pm

All other times by appointment

## REFERENCES

### Artistic:

Edvard Munch, Wayne Thiebaud, Marlene Dumas, Phoebe Unwin; Mat Collishaw (Insecticide Series); Paula Rego, Gustav Klimt, Egon Schiele, Emil Nolde, Max Ernst, Leonora Carrington. Russian religious iconography and German Expressionists

### Theoretical:

Marina Warner: *Once Upon a Time, A short history of fairy tale* and *On Monuments and Maidens*; Roland Barthes: *Camera Lucida*; Guy Debord: *Society of Spectacle*; S.T. Coleridge: *Biographia Literaria*; J.R. Tolkien: *On Fairy-Stories*; Murray Stein: *In Midlife – A Jungian Perspective*.

### Literary and cinematic:

Angela Carter: *Nights at the Circus, The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*; Neil Gaiman: *The Sandman Series* and *Hansel and Gretel*; Matt Gardner: *Sex & Death*; Grimm's Fairytales; Greek and Roman mythology especially Orpheus in the Underworld and Eurydice; Monique Wittig: *Les Guerilleres*; Baudelaire: *Les Fleurs du Mal*; Guillermo del Toro: *Pan's Labyrinth*; Tim Burton; Wes Anderson; HR Giger (Alien artwork); Neil Jordan: *The Company of Wolves*; Powell and Pressburger: *The Red Shoes*. Marilyn Monroe: film archive.

All the artists in this show met while studying for an MA Degree in Fine Art at City and Guilds of London Art School.

# MAKE ME BELIEVE

Part exhortation, part invitation, the title of this show conjures up a magical journey into strange yet familiar worlds. All that is asked of the viewer is to suspend their disbelief<sup>1</sup> and enter into 'make believe', as they would watching a play or reading a work of fiction.

Four women artists reveal the fantastical essence of prosaic existence, each in their own unique way. Amanda Houchen's vision of constructed identity is influenced by the theatricality of performance. Anja von Kalinowski draws on her own Russian/German roots and religious iconography to create remote worlds. XaXa Mason re-imagines archetypes from myth and fairy tale through the prism of film stills and personal photographs. JJ Morgan delves into the natural world and creates her own hybrid flying insects, 'flybrids', to populate a transient parallel universe.

Together these artists reveal truths about the darker side of life: vanity and cruelty, lust and envy; mortality and mystery. Unashamedly female, these inner visions are sometimes flamboyantly theatrical. Often decorative, their lush colour and instinctive mark making evoke dreamlike states. Removed by stealth from the rational, the linear or the analytical, a portal into another world opens up, inviting the viewer to step inside.

1. Coleridge, S.T. 1817. *Biographia Literaria* 1817, Chapter XIV.

Coleridge invented the term 'suspension of disbelief', describing its role in the context of fiction. He argued that it could be enabled if a writer added "human interest and a semblance of truth" into a fantastical tale.

# AMANDA HOUCHEEN

Amanda's interest lies in the relationship between the individual and the environment. How the external world becomes a mirror to internal emotional experience and is effectively coloured by our reaction to life; becoming a reflection of our innermost wishes, hopes and desires. The world responds to the way we enact our roles, shaping around us, as we explore a place of our own subjective creation and so become our own fairy tale, or nightmare.

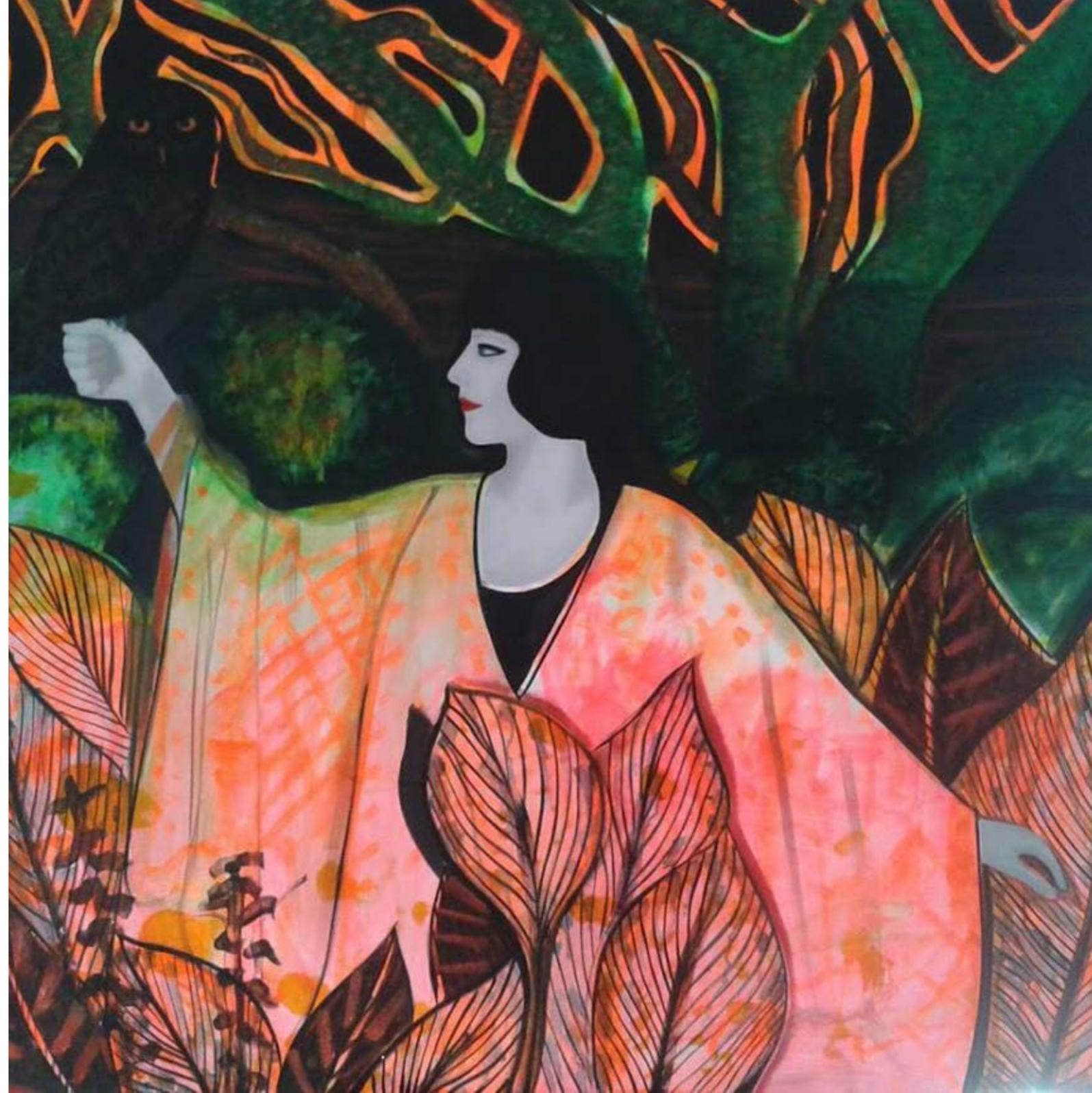
Amanda Houchen is a contemporary painter based in London, who recently graduated from City & Guilds School for Art with a Masters in Fine Art.

Influenced in particular by German Expressionism, Amanda seeks to create gestural and emotive paintings and is drawn to explore mysterious, claustrophobic spaces, with strong tones of light and dark. She is interested in artifice and constructed, temporary settings that are inhabited by fictional characters or performers who have an ephemeral quality.

Amanda has recently exhibited at The Affordable Art Fair and was shortlisted for Bloomberg New Contemporaries.

[www.amandahouchen.com](http://www.amandahouchen.com)

**Night Descending**, 2014. Oil and acrylic on mixed fibre. 110 x 120 cm.





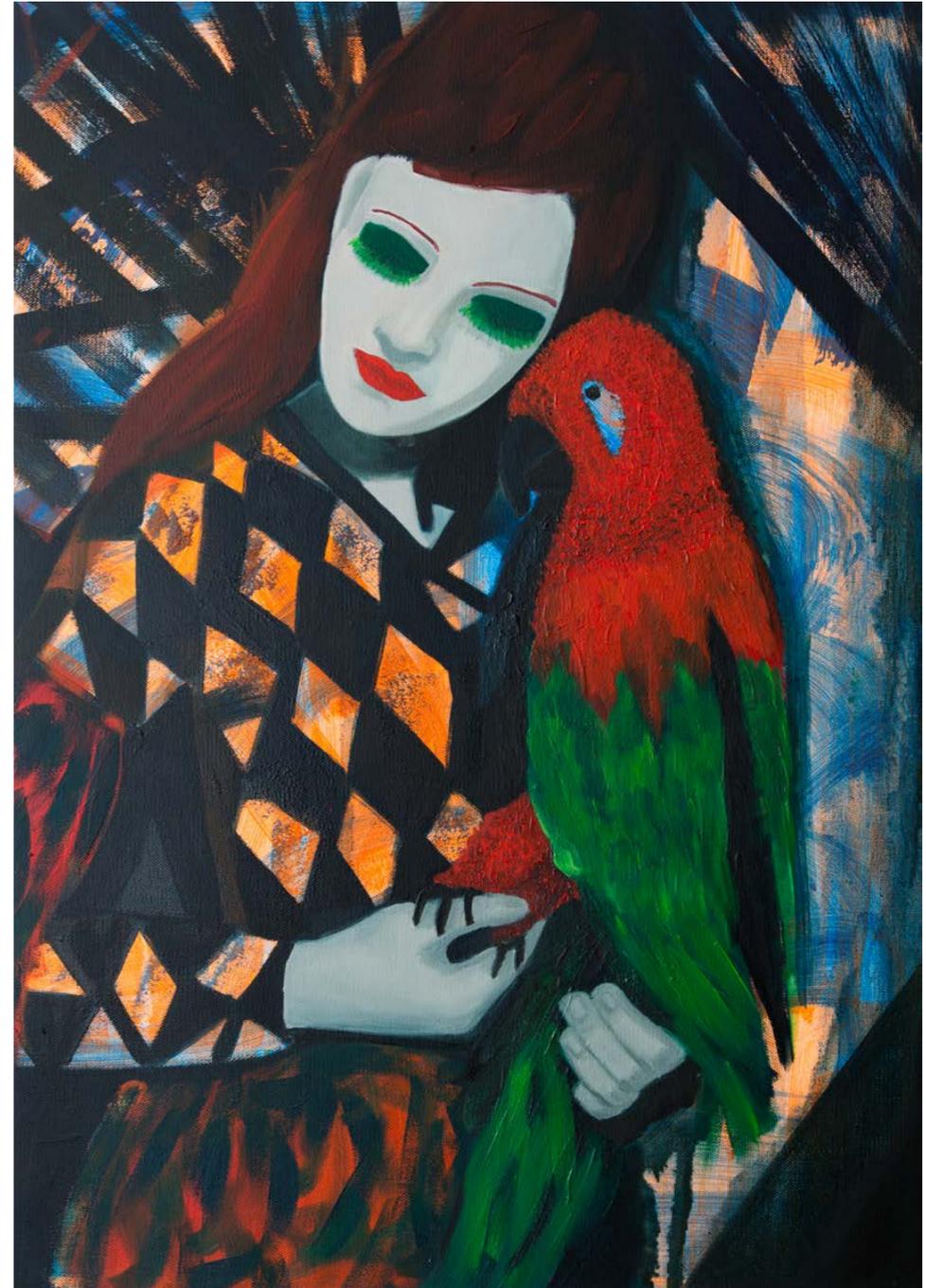
**Metamorphosis, 2015.**  
Oil and acrylic on mixed fibre, 60 x 70 cm



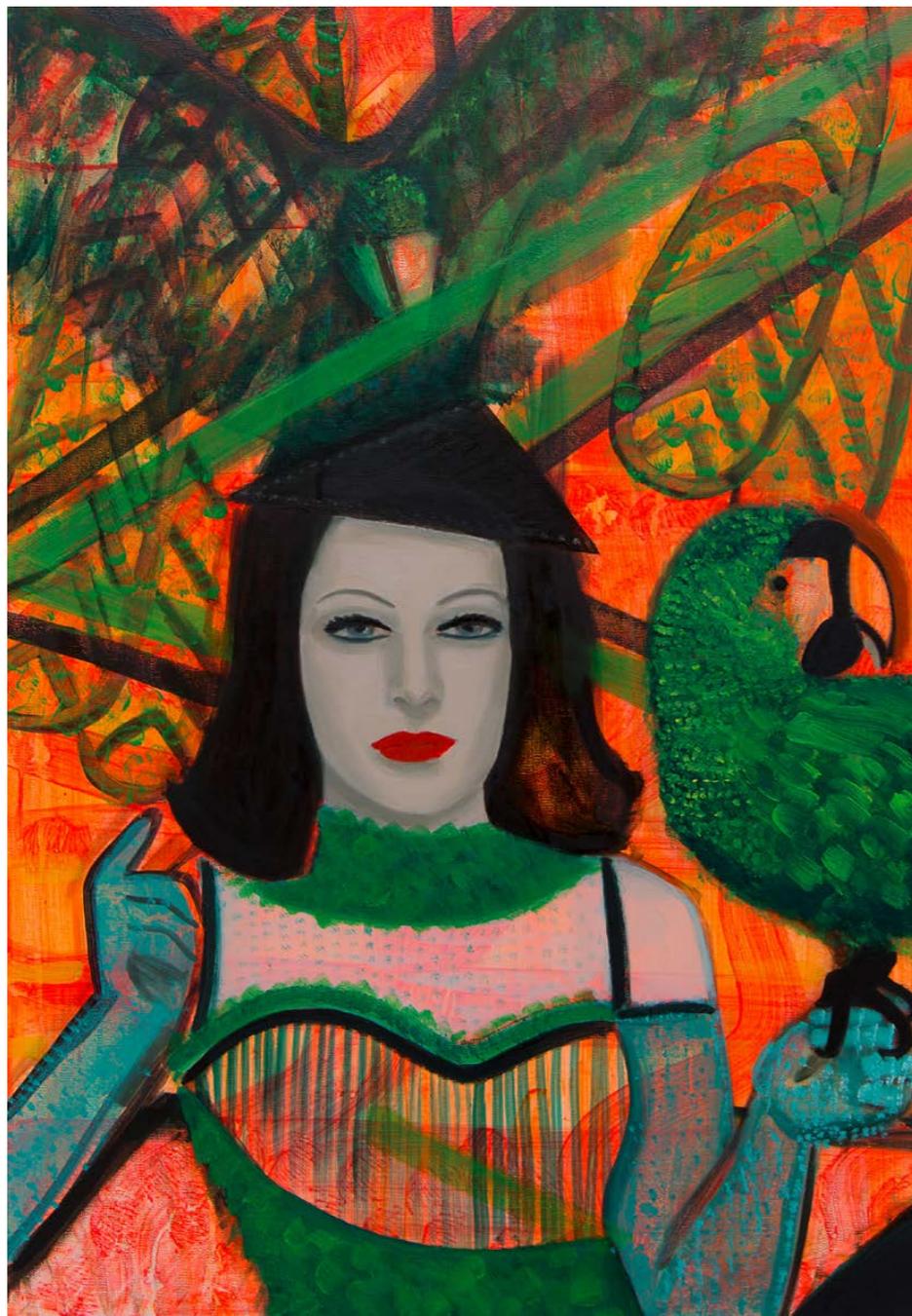
*Right: Hoodie Crow, 2015.*  
Oil and acrylic on mixed fibre, 160 x 135 cm



Deadly Nightshade, 2015.  
Oil and acrylic on mixed fibre, 60 x 70 cm

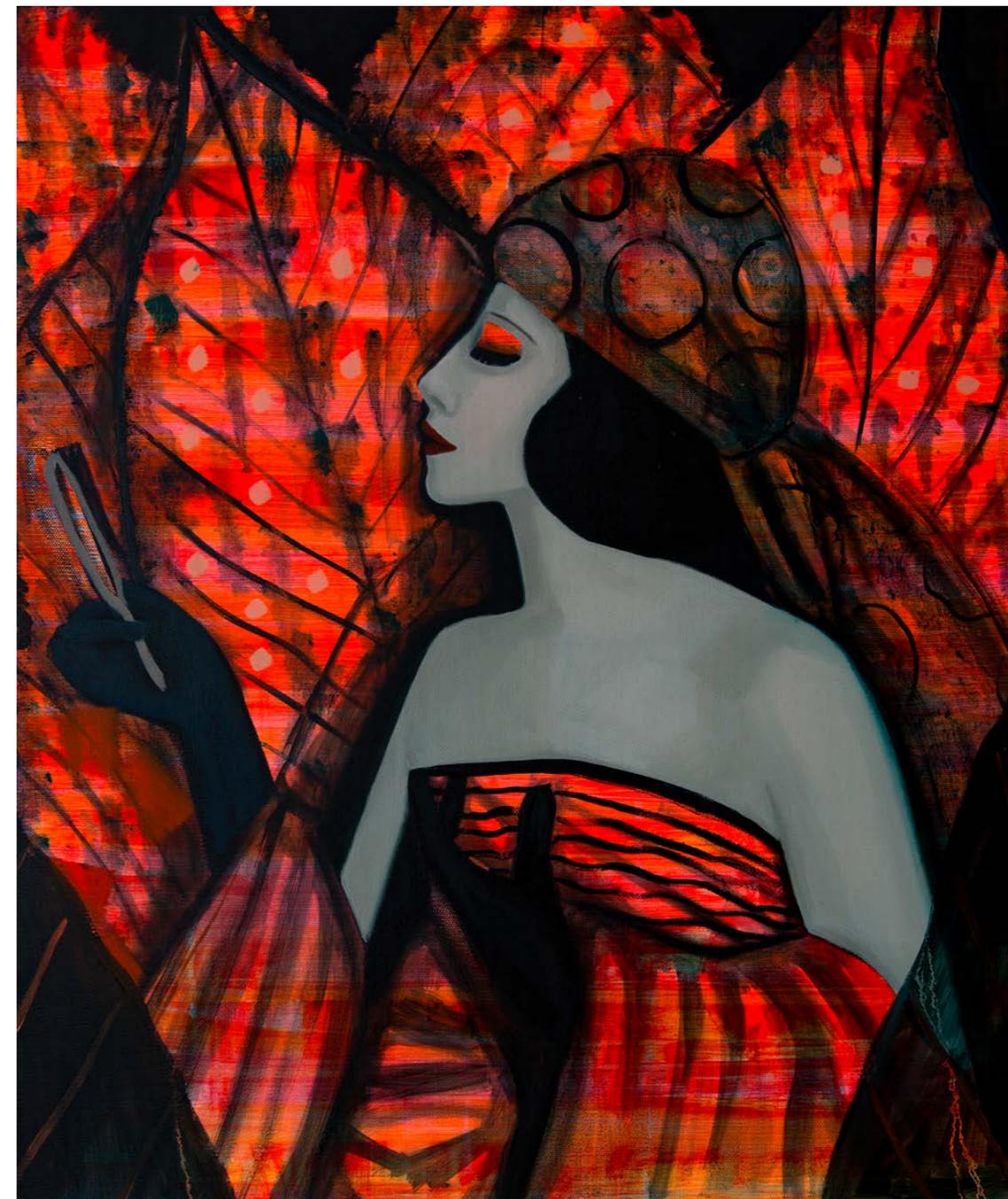


*Right:* The Wish, 2015.  
Oil and acrylic on mixed fibre, 70 x 50 cm

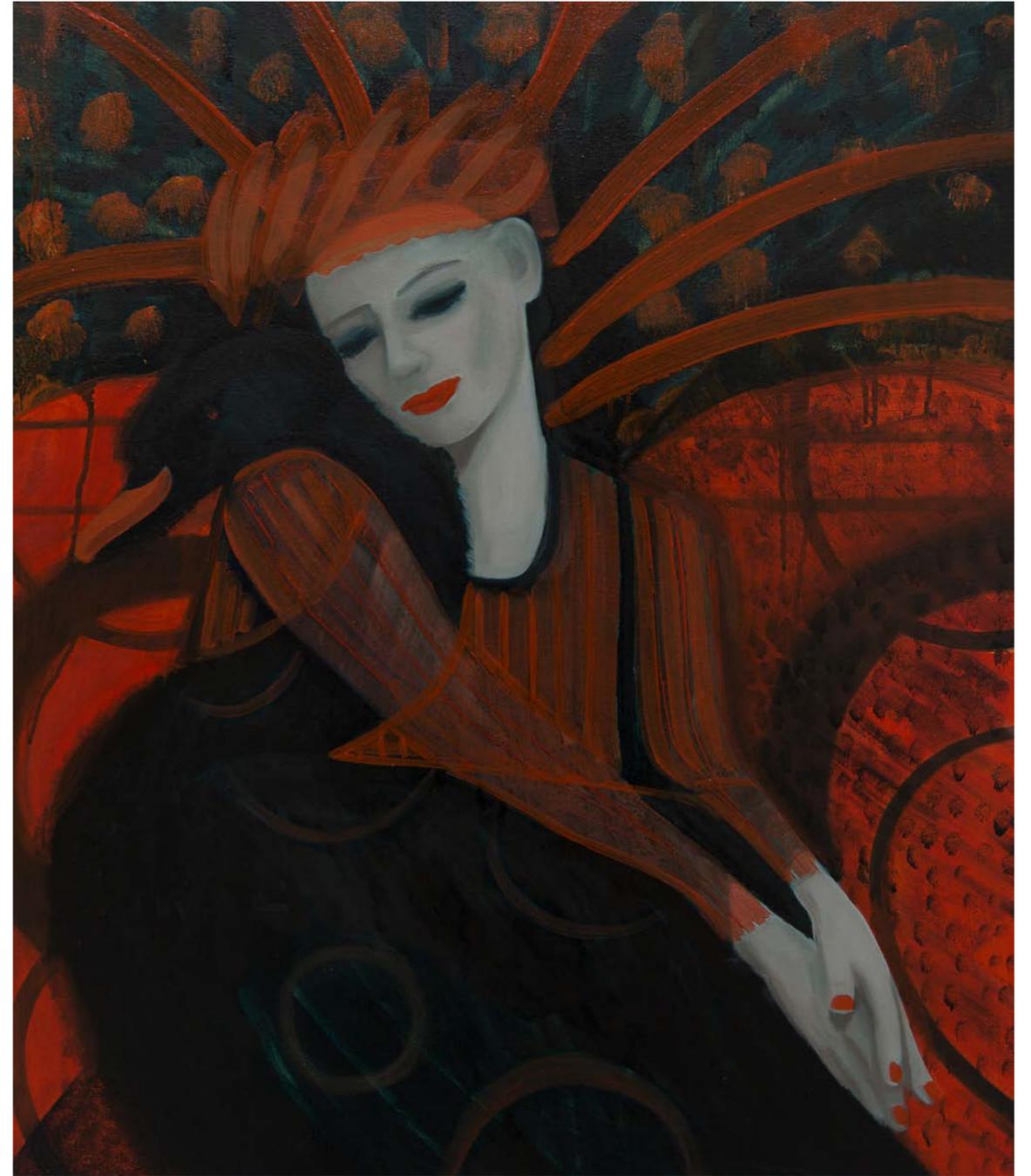


**Parrot fashion,**  
2014. Oil and  
acrylic on mixed  
fibre, 70 x 50 cm

*Right:*  
**The Enchanted,**  
2015. Oil and  
acrylic on mixed  
fibre, 70 x 60 cm



**Bird woman, 2014.**  
Oil and acrylic on  
mixed fibre, 70 x 60 cm



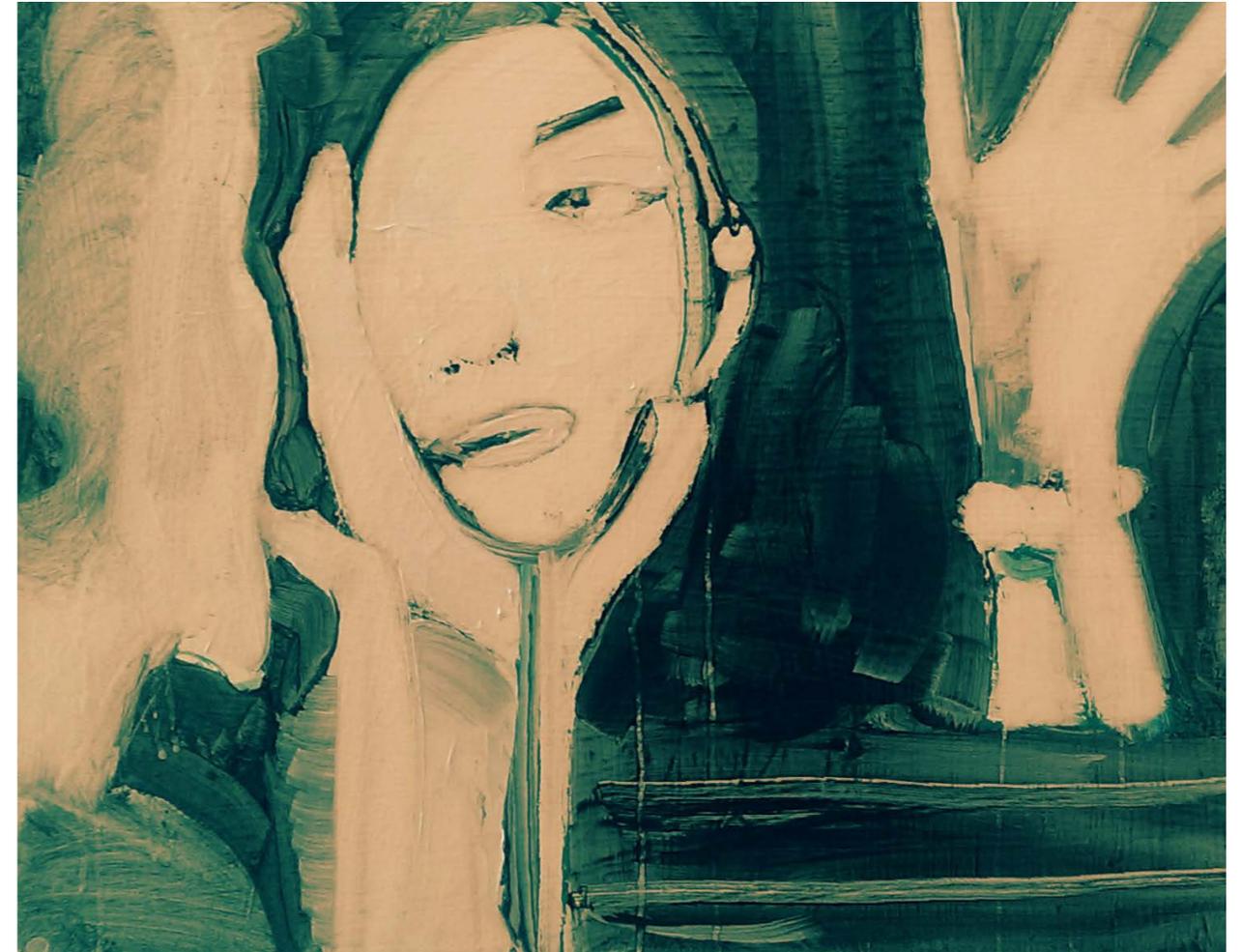
# XAXA MASON

'Glamour' was originally a term applied to a magical-occult spell - one that was cast on somebody to make them see something the spell-caster wished them to see. In this show, XaXa Mason explores glamour and femininity as relating to the archetypes and feelings contained within fairy tale and myth.

Following an Art Foundation course at City and Guilds (for which she was awarded the prize for best painter) XaXa Mason completed her MA in Fine Art at City and Guilds in 2014. Her paintings explore the territory of intimacy, drawing from film stills as well as personal photographs.

XaXa has exhibited at Gallery 54 in Mayfair as well as Larger Picture Gallery in Highgate and also sold work at Christies. She appeared in her first solo show as a musician/performer, *Dress Me Up, Dress Me Down*, at the Brighton Fringe Festival in May 2015.

[www.xaxamason.com](http://www.xaxamason.com)



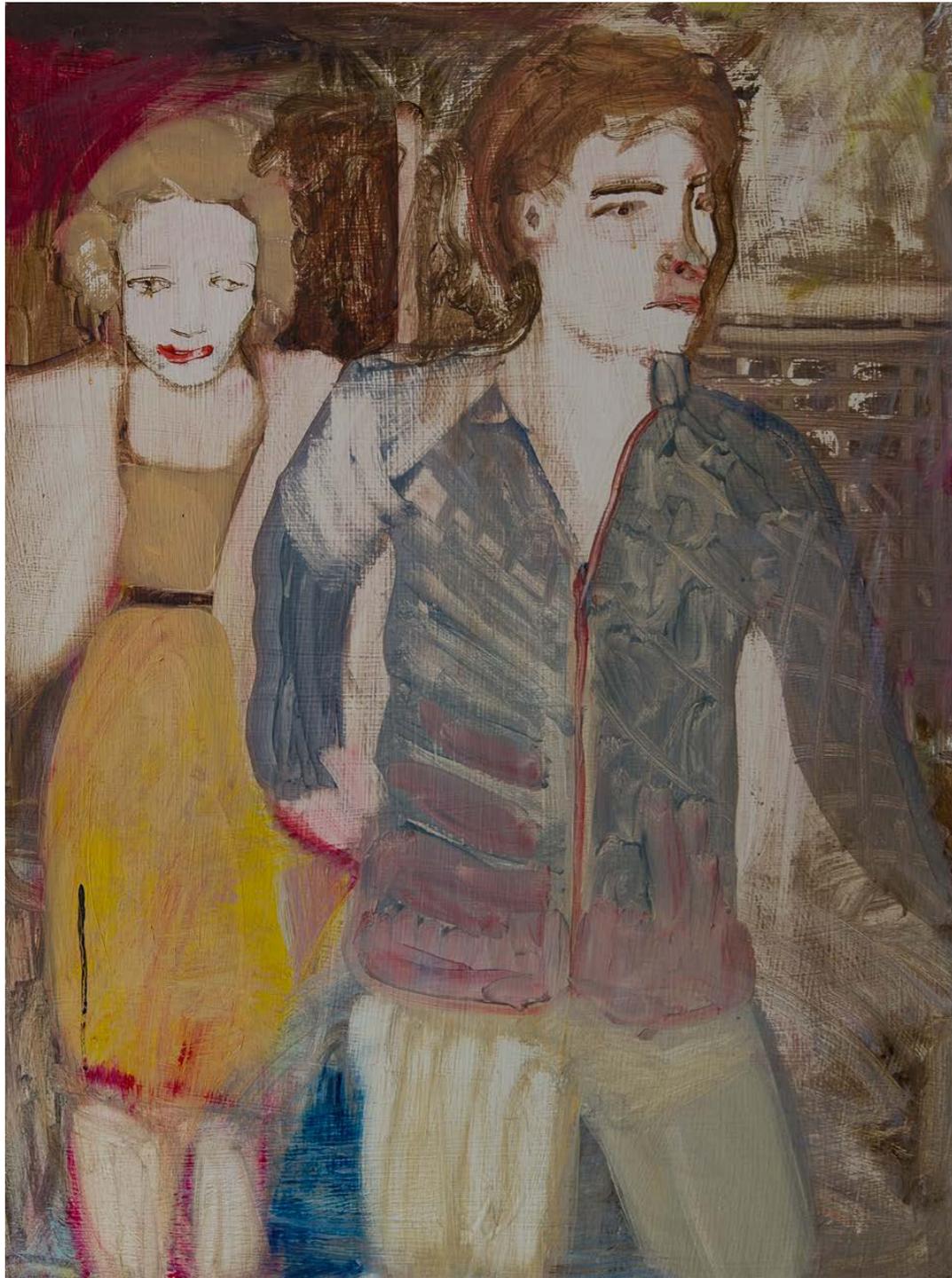
**Mirror Mirror**, 2015. Oil on canvas. 36 x 46 cm



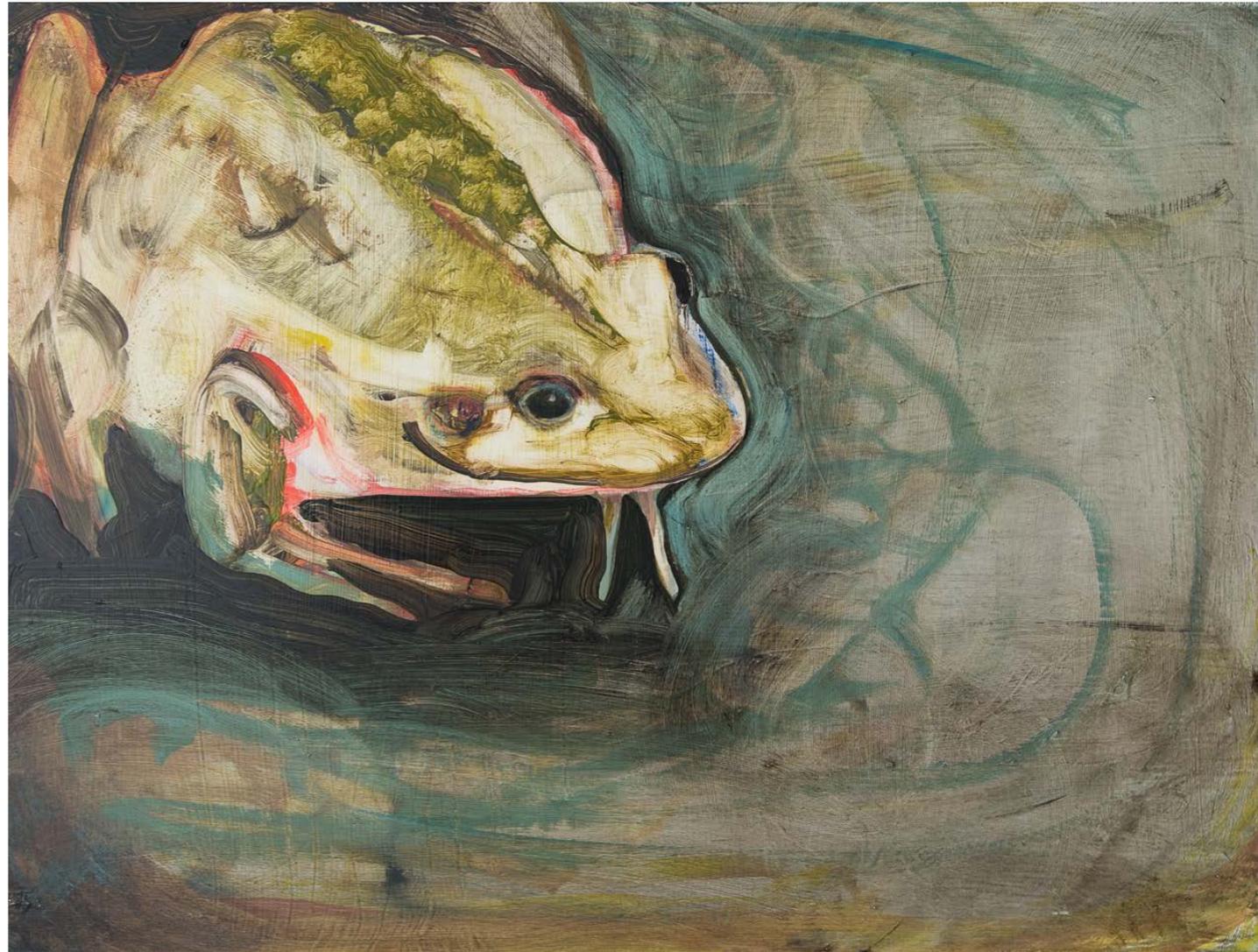
**Love Lies in Wait, 2014.**  
Oil on canvas, 60 x 80 cm



**The Huntsman's Garden, 2015.**  
Oil on canvas, 40 x 50 cm



*Left:* **Happy Ever After**, 2014.  
Oil on canvas, 80 x 60 cm



**Frog Prince**, 2015.  
Oil on canvas, 60 x 80 cm



**On The Tiles, 2015. Oil on canvas, 50 x 40 cm**



**Beauty Sleep, 2015. Oil on canvas, 50 x 70 cm**

Still Singing, 2015. Oil on canvas, 40 x 50 cm



# JJ MORGAN

The mayfly was the starting point for JJMorgan's latest cycle of work but they quickly morphed into her own hybrid flying creatures or 'flybrids'.

Fantastically coloured and with anthropomorphic overtones, these magical beings take flight against a black night sky – a flash of blue or purple before they are swallowed up into the darkness. Reminders of death but also the resilience of life, JJMorgan imbues these 'flybrids' with a mythical status and invites the viewer into their strangely familiar parallel universe.

JJ Morgan is a sculptor turned painter and this shows in her approach to the materiality (and immateriality) of paint. She explores its fragility through extemporized gesture and this gives her work an impermanent quality. Drawn to the themes of transformation from both the natural and imagined world, she builds up thin washes of paint and leaves traces of previous brushstrokes (pentimenti) to convey the ephemerality of being.

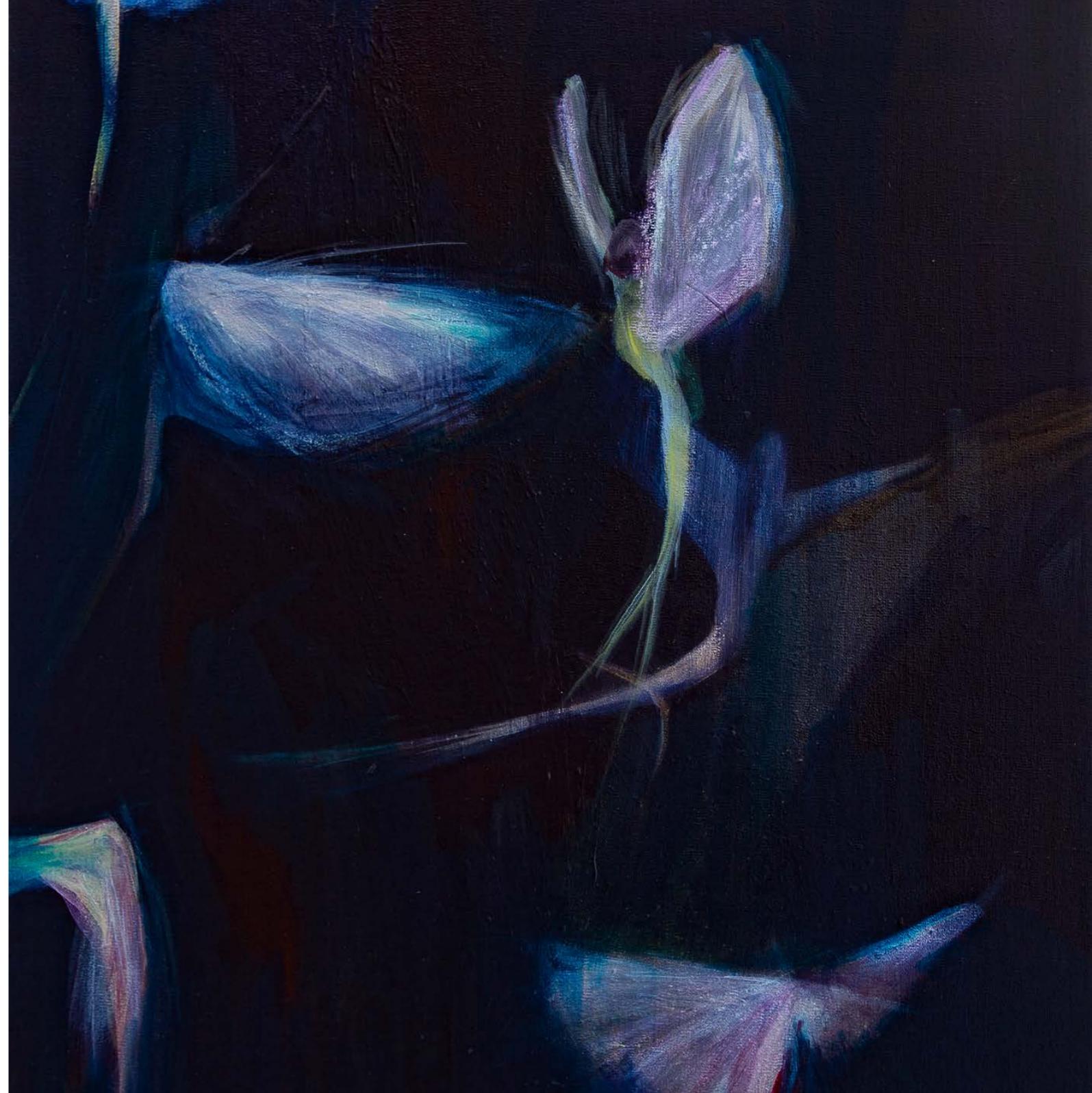
Following a BA in Sculpture (at London's City & Guilds Art School), she completed an MA in Painting in 2014. At College she won the overall prize for sculpture for her year as well as the Fishmongers' Beckwith Scholarship and the Tussauds Project Fund Award.

[www.jjmorganart.com](http://www.jjmorganart.com)

**Night Flight, 2015.**  
Acrylic on canvas. 94cm x 64cm (framed)

*"Love, death and fire are united at the same moment. Through its sacrifice in the heart of the flames, the mayfly gives us a lesson in eternity".*

Gaston Bachelard,  
The Psychoanalysis of Fire.





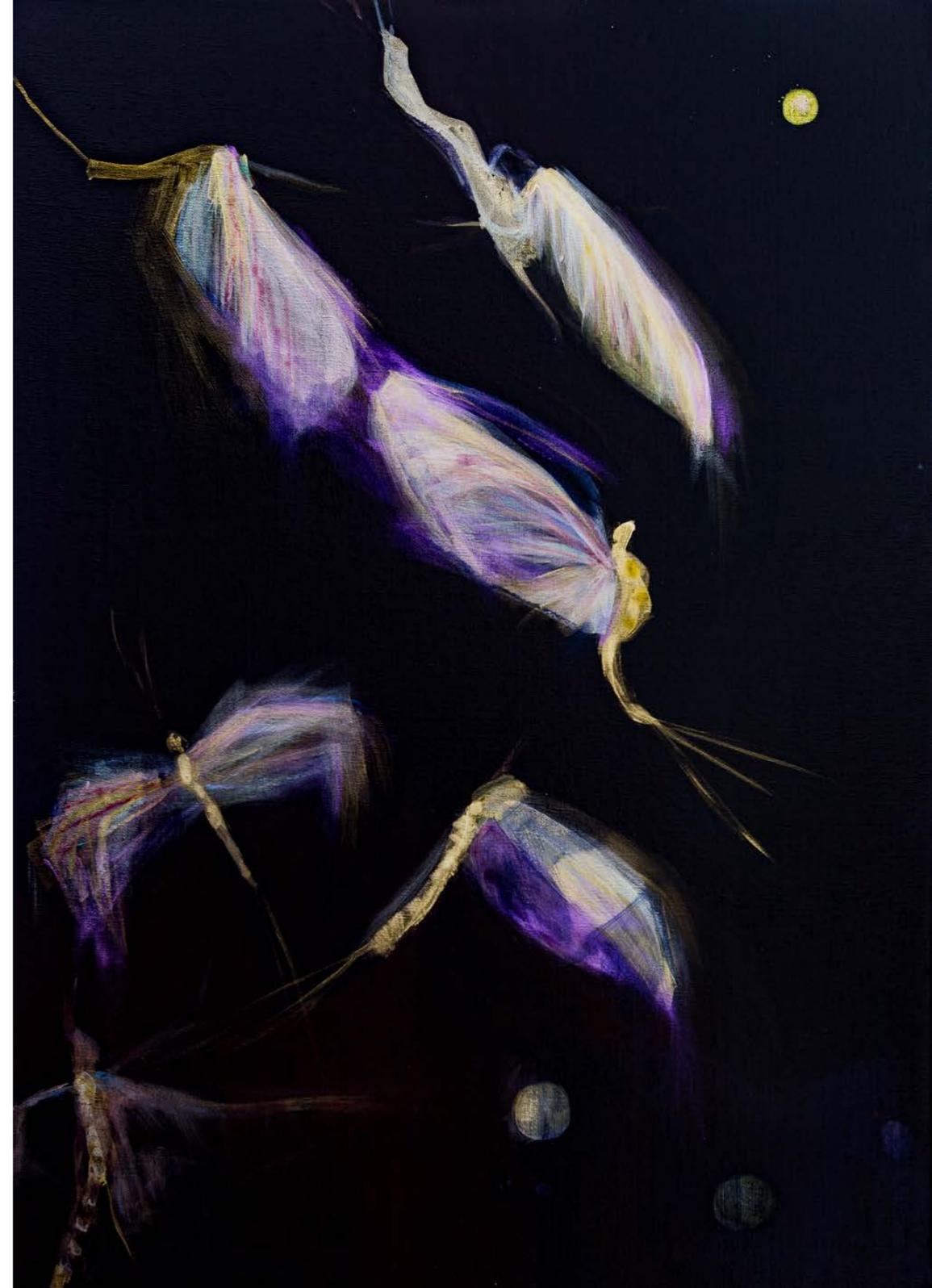
Fly by Night, 2015. Acrylic on canvas, 40 x 40 cm



Spinner, 2015. Acrylic on canvas, 40 x 40 cm



**Ephemeroptera**, 2015.  
Acrylic on canvas  
70 x 50 cm



**Emerger**, 2015.  
Acrylic on canvas  
70 x 50 cm



**Spent Spinners, 2015.**  
Acrylic on canvas,  
64 x 64 cm (framed)



*Right: Night Swarm, 2015.*  
Acrylic on canvas,  
103 x 73 cm (framed)

# ANJA VON KALINOWSKI

The 'cult' of remembrance means that for the last time an aura emanates from a photograph in the fleeting expression of a human face. This is what constitutes their melancholy and incomparable beauty. The punctum, the blind spot of distance and contact is visible in the resulting artwork, an 'optical unconscious.'

Anja von Kalinowski is a London based artist, specializing in oil painting and embroidery. Her body of work is mainly inspired by the Baroque period, the concept of Russian Iconography and her own Russian/German roots.

She graduated with an MA in Fine Art from City & Guilds of London Art School in 2013. She previously completed a BA in Theatre Studies from Croydon College of Art & Design in 2000, focusing on set design for opera and scenic painting.

Anja holds a Diploma in "Traditional Needlework Techniques" from the Royal School of Needlework after being awarded the Queen Elizabeth Scholarship in 2010.

[www.anjavonkalinowski.com](http://www.anjavonkalinowski.com)



Nara Park, Tokyo, 2015. Gilt and oil on board. 24 x 35.5 cm.



**Russia I, 2015.**  
Oil on Canvas,  
60 x 90 cm



**Spain, 2015.**  
Gold leaf & Oil on Board,  
24 x 35.5 cm



**Lithuania, 2015.**  
Gold leaf, Copper & Oil on Board, 30 x 88 cm



**Russia II, 2015.**  
Gold leaf & Oil on Board, 29 x 27 cm



**Retreating to the Breath of  
the Night Wind, 2015**  
Oil on Canvas  
123.5 x 91.5 cm

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