

Somnambulist

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Kristin Hjellegjerde

Somnambulist

Imagine if music were colour – bursts of melody coming to life in shapes and lines. Like Paul Simon's "staccato signals of constant information", miasmas of baby blues and cream float forth, while elsewhere juicy jewel-like colours glow with warm light, lines criss-crossing in sharp tempo across the canvas. Somnambulist (28th of July – 27th August 2016) at Kristin Hjellegjerde will be Oslo-based artist Sebastian Helling's second exhibition at the gallery, but his first solo show, following his two-artist show Verve last year.

For Helling, the act of creation is very much like that of one composing music – shapes and forms flow out of him like melodies, coming to life in oil and spray paint. His gestural practice produces striking abstract expressionistic explorations of mark-making. His combination of graffiti-like strokes, abstract letters, shapes and brumes of colour hovers somewhere between shape and line, a visual language. He explores the idea of physical displacement, and within his work elements and surfaces float apart and merge together behind layers of paint. Through this process, Helling also obscures any easy reading of the work, mixing together what he refers to as a triage of "meaning, language and symbols." As such, while the work itself is abstract, it still contains recognisable motifs. "Though an abstract idiom grows," he says, "elementary symbols appear."

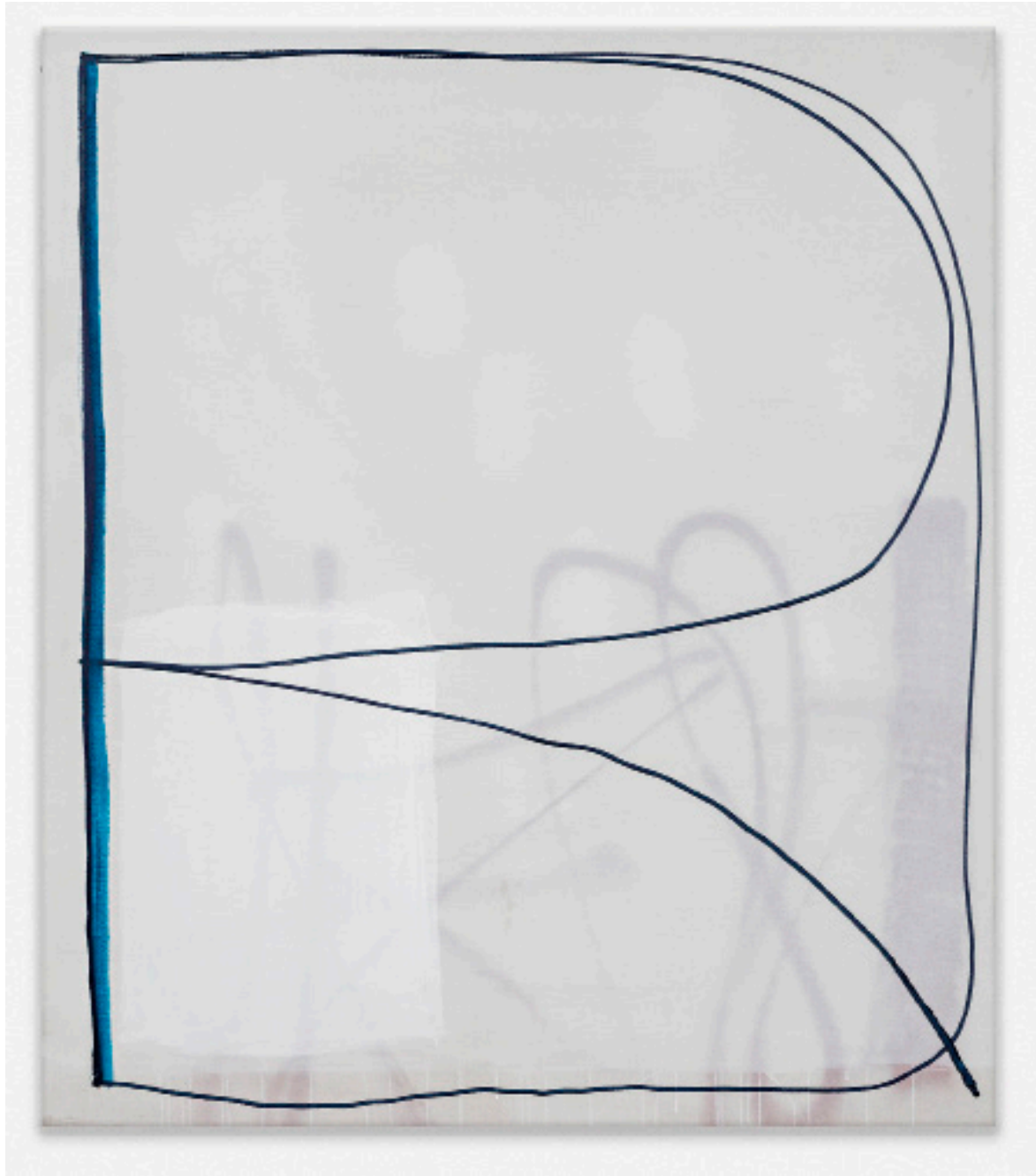
These symbols and motifs appear and disappear, adrift in a sea of currents created by explosive brushstrokes. Muted colours contrast with chromatic intensity, while a simultaneous obscuring

and revealing creates a tantalising tension of kinetic potential. Helling constantly adds and subtracts, builds and reduces, to create paintings that hover between positive and negative space, a force both destructive and productive, building itself even as it is tearing itself apart. His numerous – and at times frantic – marks become an act of memory, of thoughts expunged onto canvas, with the visible force and kinetic energy of the brushstroke evident in the finished piece long after he has finished. In a sense, each work becomes a memory of the movement that created it.

These new works draw on Helling's longstanding fascination – and use of – graffiti. Not the finely-curated clean-cut 'graffiti' style used by artists jumping on the bandwagon of a neo-pop art revival, where graffiti is added as an extra flourish to neon canvases. Rather, Helling's love of graffiti draws on long, dark nights, of the direct impact of spray-can on surface, and the new approaches to graffiti he has seen cropping up around the city of Oslo over the last few years. These works, crafted by young practitioners, present loose, uncontrolled and honest lines, a use of spontaneity and immediate gesture which resonates with Helling's own artistic practice. Furthermore, as a former graffiti painter, Helling still creates most of his work by night. It is during the quiet night-time hours that he finds true freedom, away from the interruptions of cell phones and loud neighbours. This somnambulist paints in liberation, stopping only when the sun rises, filling his studio with blurry light, a figure standing in front of a canvas, emerging from that sweet state that exists between sleep and wakefulness.

Sebastian Helling

Born in London in 1975, Oslo-based Sebastian Helling received his BA from the London College of Printing in 2001 and went on to receive an MA from the Royal College of Art two years later. In 2011 he received an MA from the Statens Kunstakademi in Oslo. Recent solo exhibitions include *Dive*, QB Gallery, Oslo (2015), *Gi Labb!*, Galleri Lab, Oslo (2014), *Grande Days*, Trafo Kunsthall, Asker (2013) and *When I Was Young*, NoPlace, Oslo (2012). He has exhibited in group shows as far and wide as Norway, Sweden, Poland, the UK and USA, including *Too Much of a Good Thing*, Nordic Contemporary, Paris (2015), *Tilfældet Oslo i Ringsted*, Ringsted Galleriet, Copenhagen (2015), *Verve*, Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, London (2015), *Shattered Preface*, OSL Contemporary, Oslo (2014), *Fluxus autonomus*, Hvitstensalong, Hvitsten (2014), and *The City is Empty*, Kronika, Poland (2013). Helling was the artist-in-residence at Hooper Projects, Los Angeles, in the summer of 2015. Forthcoming exhibitions include a solo show at Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, London, and a group show at Torrance Art Museum, Los Angeles (both in 2016). Helling lives and works in Oslo.



"I run this (1)" (2016)

Oil on Canvas
130 x 150 cm | 51 1/8 x 59 1/8 in



"I run this (2)" (2016)

Oil on Canvas
130 x 150 cm | 51 1/8 x 59 1/8 in



"I run this (3)" (2016)

Oil on Canvas
130 x 150 cm | 51 1/8 x 59 1/8 in



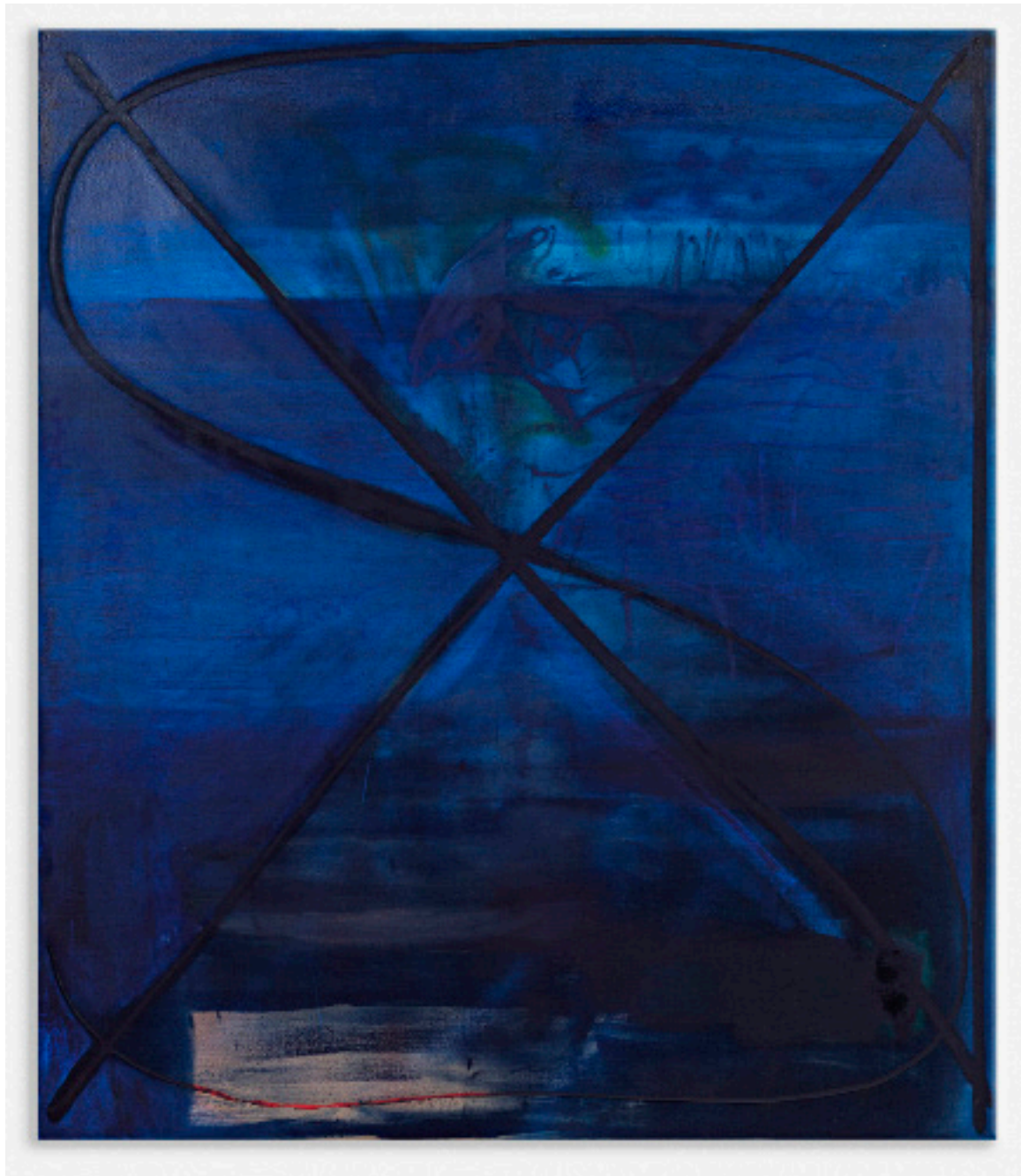
"I run this (4)" (2016)

Oil on Canvas
130 x 150 cm | 51 1/8 x 59 1/8 in



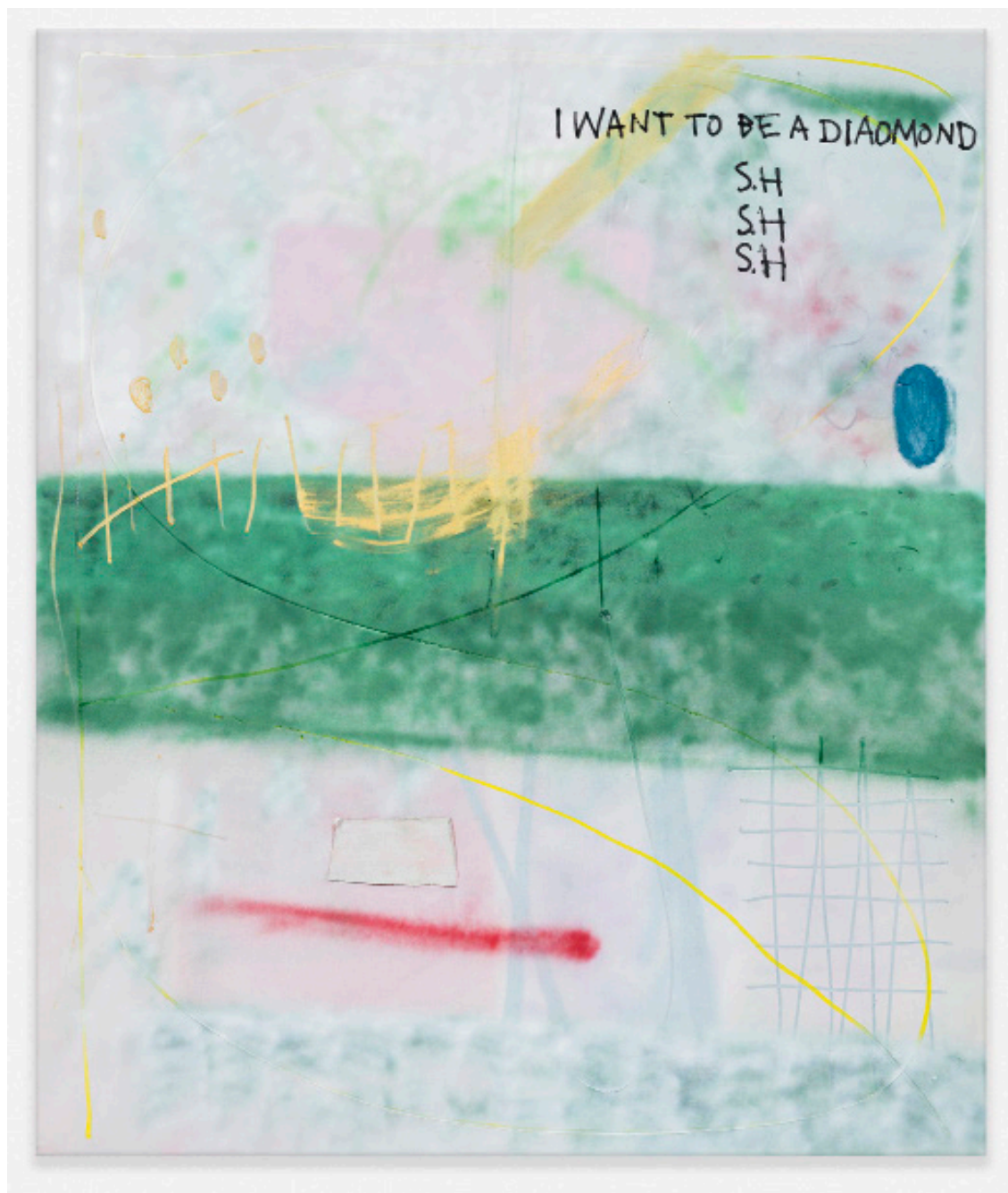
"I run this (5)" (2016)

Oil on Canvas
130 x 150 cm | 51 1/8 x 59 1/8 in



"Untitled" (2016)

Oil on Canvas
130 x 150 cm | 51 1/8 x 59 1/8 in



"Too close to my fantasy" (2016)

Oil on Canvas
220 x 185 cm | 86 5/8 x 72 7/8 in



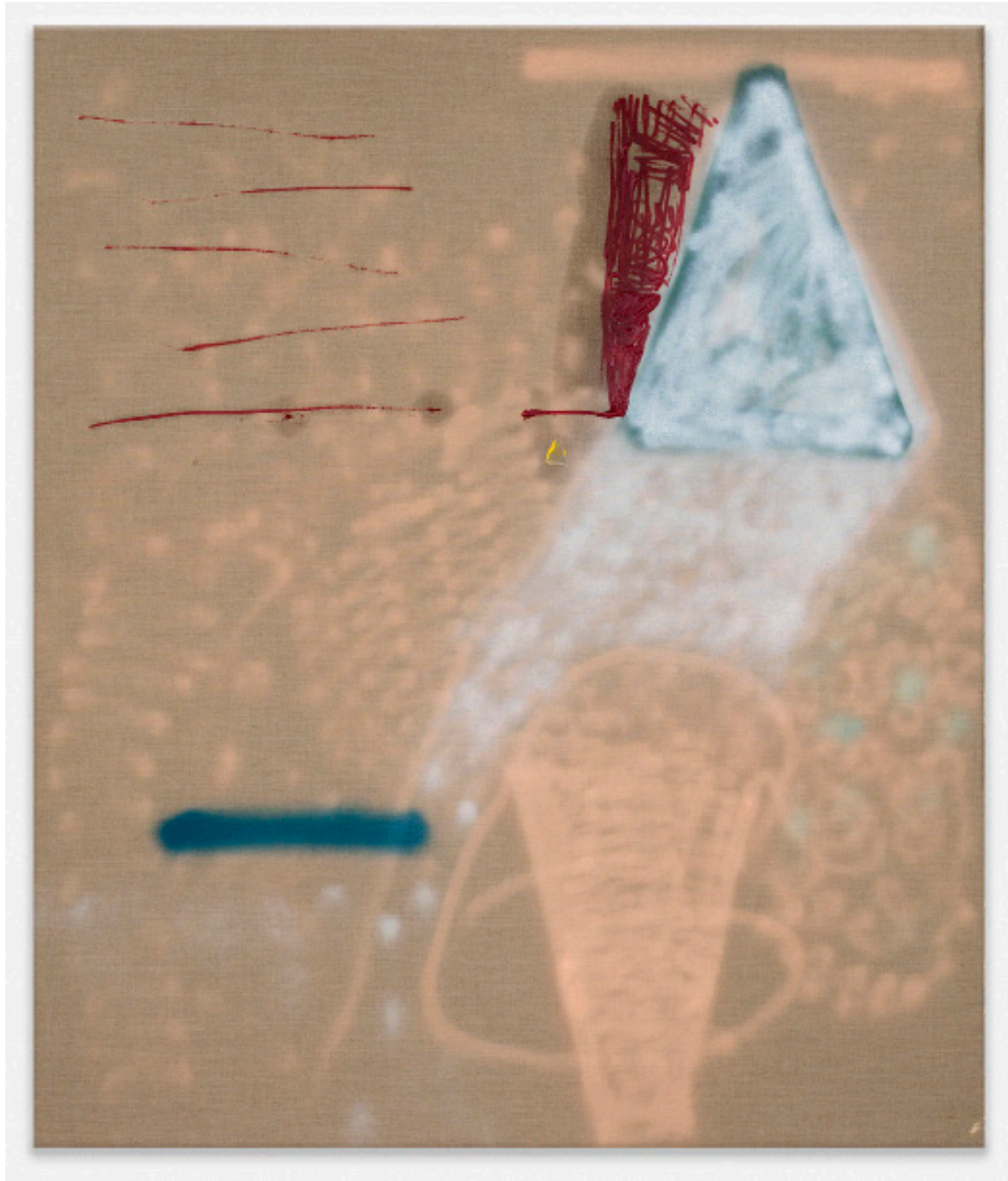
"Untitled" (2016)

Oil on Canvas
220 x 185 cm | 86 5/8 x 72 7/8 in



"I creep in one room" (2016)

Oil on Canvas
220 x 185 cm | 86 5/8 x 72 7/8 in



"Untitled" (2016)

Oil on Canvas
220 x 185 cm | 86 5/8 x 72 7/8 in



"Into the next or serious sex" (2016)

Oil on Canvas
220 x 185 cm | 86 5/8 x 72 7/8 in



"Nothing goes on" (2016)

Oil on Canvas
220 x 185 cm | 86 5/8 x 72 7/8 in



"Private collection III" (2016)

Oil on Canvas
220 x 185 cm | 86 5/8 x 72 7/8 in



"Untitled" (2016)

Oil on Canvas
220 x 185 cm | 86 5/8 x 72 7/8 in



"Turn the heat" (2016)

Oil on Canvas
220 x 185 cm | 86 5/8 x 72 7/8 in



"Untitled" (2016)

Oil on Canvas
220 x 185 cm | 86 5/8 x 72 7/8 in

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