

An abstract painting by Hermann Nitsch, featuring thick, expressive brushstrokes in dark brown, black, and red, with some lighter, textured areas. The composition is dense and layered, with a central area of bright red and white. The overall effect is one of intense, chaotic energy.

# HERMANN NITSCH

**MARUANI MERCIER**

JANUARY 20 to FEBRUARY 12, 2022  
AVENUE LOUISE 430 - 1050 BRUSSELS



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**MARUANI MERCIER** is pleased to present a solo exhibition featuring recent paintings by Austrian artist Hermann Nitsch.

Considered a key figure in Viennese Actionism of the 1960s, Hermann Nitsch continues to use a radical method of painting, essentially through his creation of the Orgien Mysterien Theatre, a concept of ceremonial performance art comparable to Wagner's Gesamtkunstwerk (total art work). This total art form calls to all five human senses and advocates for a profound existentialist reflection.

Hermann Nitsch creates his paintings using his entire body. Therefore, they are simultaneously the origin and the result of his performances. Using or applying oil or acrylic paint of a certain hue, he spreads it on canvas using unconventional tools as well as his hands, feet and whole body movements. Through these actions, Nitsch demonstrates his energetic, spiritual, sensual and passionate persona. Chaos and violence, which accompany his work, are in fact a celebration of life and mirror the human soul.

His works are exhibited in the two Nitsch Museums in Mistelbach and Naples as well as in the Nitsch Foundation in Vienna and can be found in the permanent collections of preeminent international museums and galleries, including: **MoMA**, **Guggenheim**, **The Metropolitan** Museum New York, **Tate** Gallery London, The Centre **Pompidou** Paris, **Pinakothek** der Moderne Munich and many more.



# HERMANN NITSCH



Created in the context of post-fascist Austria, Hermann Nitsch's provocative paintings, which developed through his famous ceremonial performances *Orgien Mysterien Theater*, sit outside the canon of classical painting. Since the 1960s, Nitsch's artistic vocabulary revolves around the constant play of tension between life and death, embodied by the use of red pigment and animal blood.

His physical artistic process, which involves the use of unconventional tools, brushes and sponges, as well as his hands, feet, and whole-body movements, is suffused with a strong ritual charge. Based on rituals, sacrifices, bloods, beliefs, communions, Nitsch's paintings embody the intensity of his performances from which they originate and result. Questioning the myths of European culture, particularly those linked to the Catholic religion, his performances affirm a strong liturgical character where painting, music and theater are intimately connected, replaying in a symbolic way the mysteries of the origins.

The art of Hermann Nitsch and the Actionist must be understood as an emblematic moment of contemporary art, whose constant exploration for the possibilities of pictorial language and revolutionary dimension frees them from the traditional boundaries of art.

Hermann Nitsch is collected by major public institutions like the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, the Guggenheim New York, the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, Metropolitan Museum of Art, the MoMA and the Tate Modern in London.

Born in 1938, Hermann Nitsch lives and works in Vienna.

**Pat\_11, 2011**

acrylic on canvas

200 x 300 cm

78 3/4 x 118 1/8 in









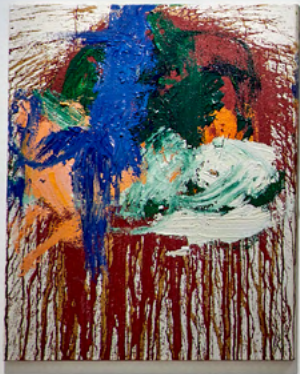
**K\_Luke\_21, 2021**

acrylic on canvas

100 x 80 cm

39 37/100 x 31 1/2 inches





Created in the context of post-war Austria, Hermann Nitsch's performance works, which developed through his formal conceptual performance *Orgien Mysterium Theater*, go outside the scope of classical painting. Since the 1960s, Nitsch's artistic vocabulary involves visual and conceptual elements of human sacrifice: the pig, death, embodied bodies as if undergoing physical blood.

An abstract color palette, which involves the use of unconventional tones, combined with energy as well as his hands, feet, and whole-body movement, is infused with a strong ritual charge. Based on ritual, sacrifice, blood, breath, communion, Nitsch's paintings embody the merging of the senses from which they originate and result. Questioning the myths of European culture, particularly those linked to the Catholic religion, his performances affirm a strong liturgical character: this painting, music and theater are intimately connected, Nitsch's is a specific way the mythos of the origin.

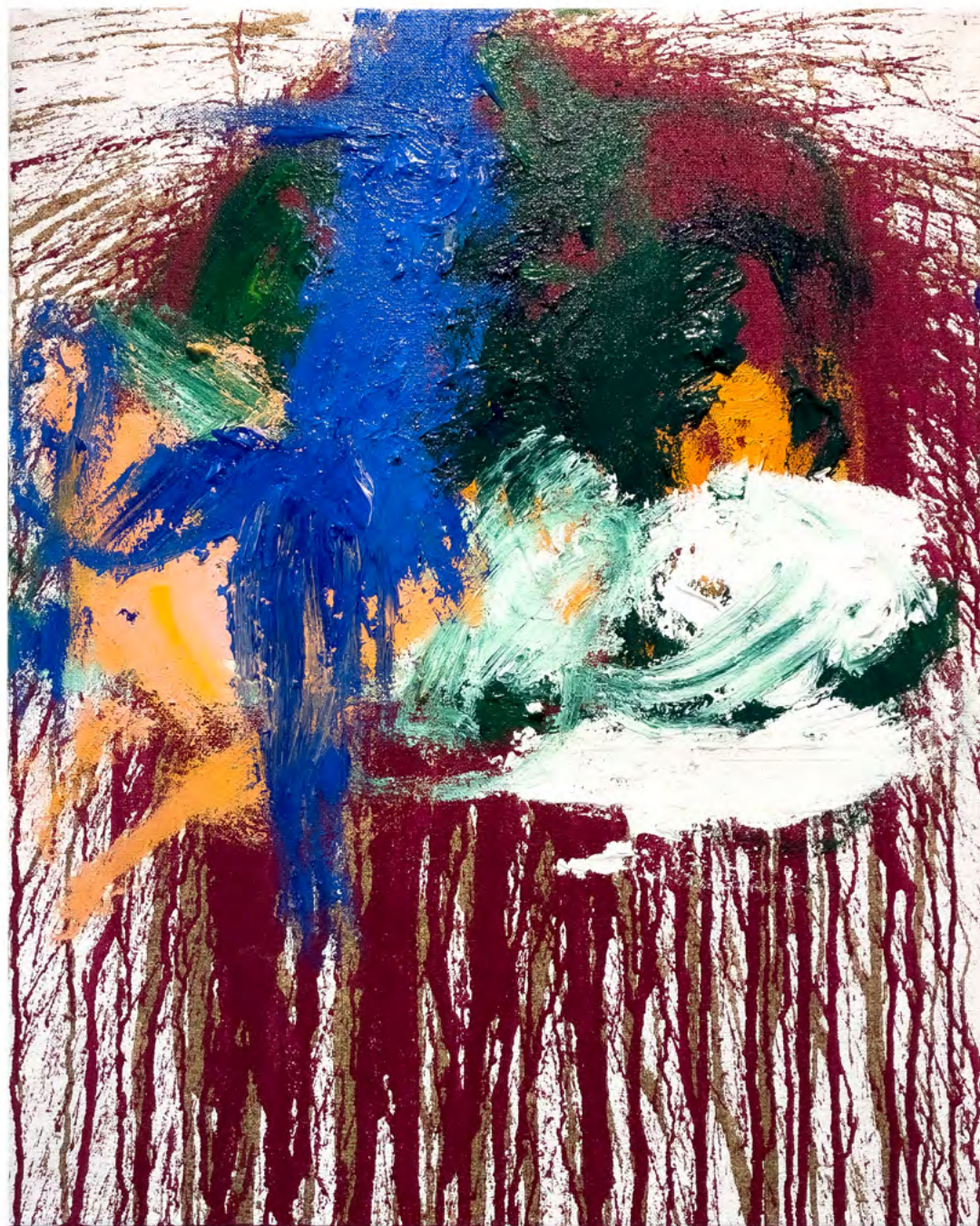
The art of Hermann Nitsch and the historical music understood as an embodied moment of communion or intense moment of exploration for the possibility of personal language and revolutionary dimension has been further methodical boundaries of art.

Hermann Nitsch is included in major public institutions like the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, the Guggenheim Museum New York, the Museum of Contemporary and Classical Mediterranean Museum of Art, the British Museum in London.

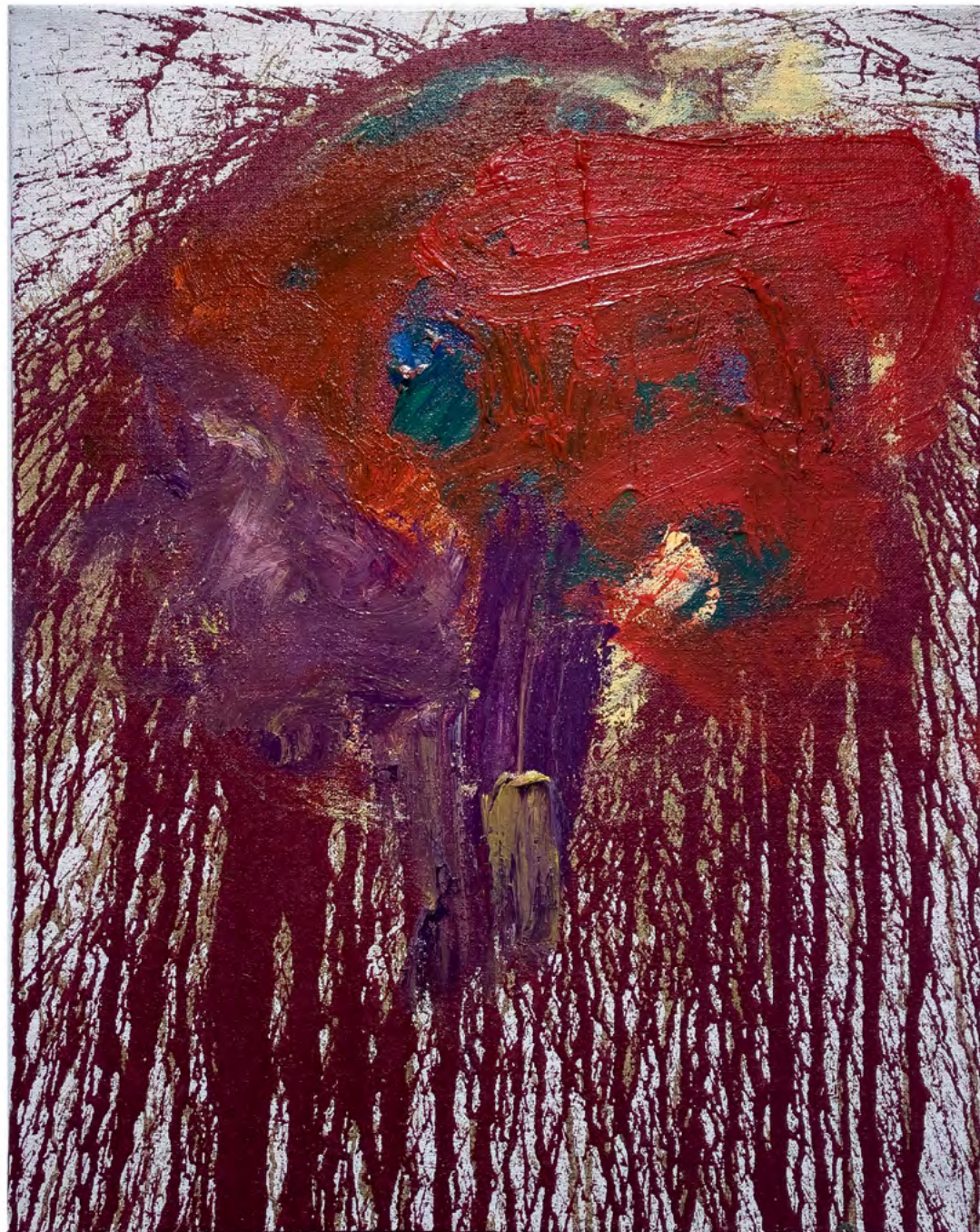
Since 1978, Hermann Nitsch's work and acts in Vienna Austria.

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**K\_05\_20, 2020**  
acrylic on canvas  
100 x 80 cm  
39 37/100 x 31 1/2 inches



**K\_14\_20, 2020**  
acrylic on canvas  
100 x 80 cm  
39 37/100 x 31 1/2 inches







**K\_06\_20, 2020**  
acrylic on canvas  
100 x 80 cm  
39 3/8 x 31 1/2 in



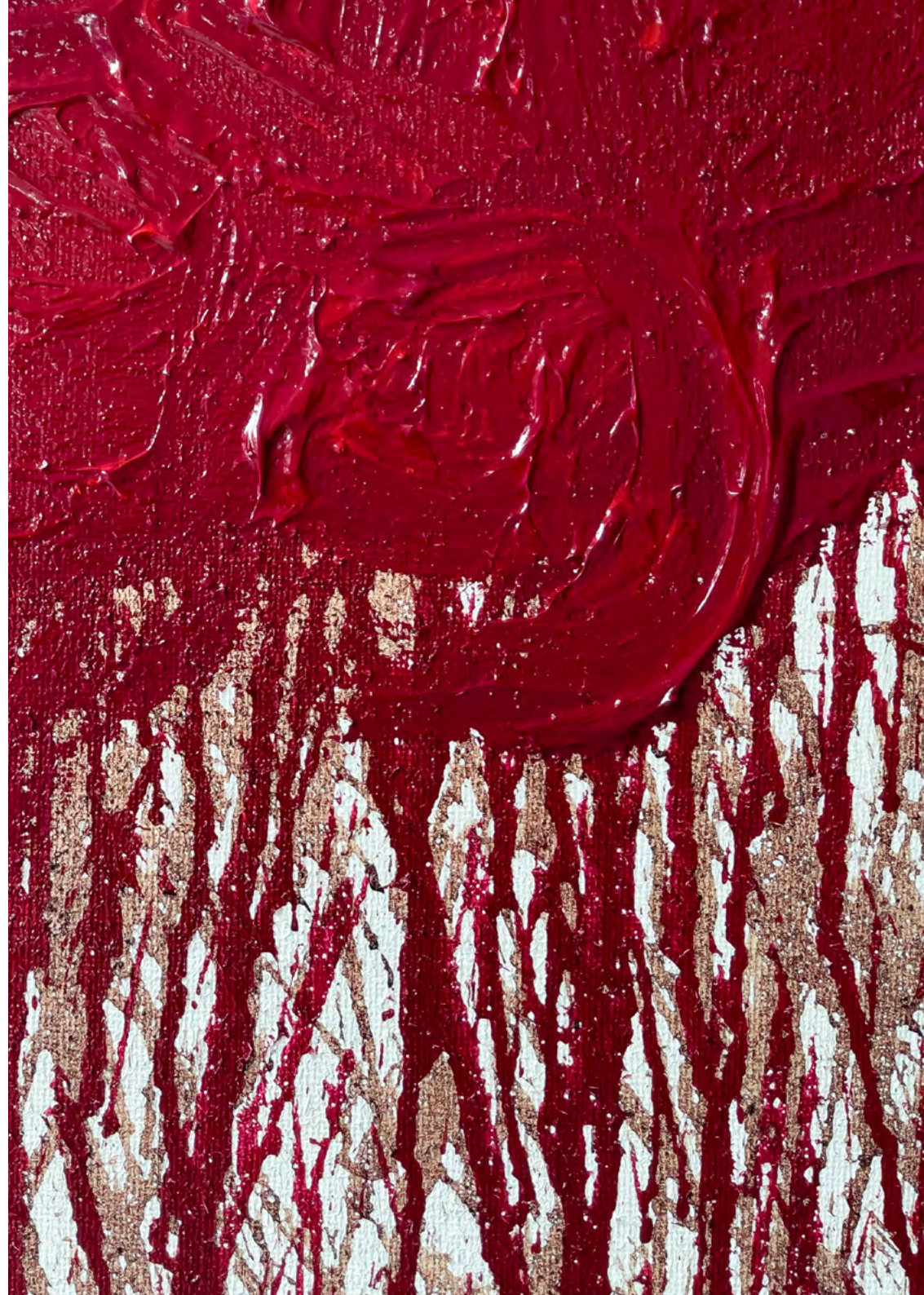
## SCHÜTTBILDER

Born in 1938, Nitsch studied at the Graphische Lehr- und Versuchsanstalt (Institute for Applied Graphic Arts) in Vienna.

Inspired by the exhibition «Junge Maler der Gegenwart» in 1959 (Young Painters of the Present) and more specifically by the works by Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Georges Mathieu, and Pierre Soulages among others, Nitsch developed his first Schüttbilder in 1961. As a variant of dripping developed by the Viennese Actionists, an art movement active between 1960 and 1971, initiated by Günter Brus, Otto Muehl, Rudolf Schwarzkogler, and Hermann Nitsch, these Schüttbilder became part of Nitsch's ongoing work. In contrast to drip painting, the paint is not just allowed to drip onto the support, nor is an object dipped into the paint and spread onto the canvas, but it is distributed in larger quantities directly from its container onto the canvas.

After the first painting actions between 1960 and 1962, Hermann Nitsch interrupted his work on canvas in order to devote himself entirely to the Orgien Mysterien Theater. It was only in 1983 that he resumed his painterly work.

Also known as Malaktion (painting actions) his artistic process consists of guttering, pouring, smearing, combining thick brushstrokes with fluid streaks of paint. Triggered by the liberation of painting from traditional narrative, representative and depictive functions, Nitsch's practice involves the use of his whole body, capturing the rhythm of his movements on the canvas. The direct contact with the medium as well as the human dimension using directly his hands and feet places Nitsch in the center of his painting. His paintings cannot necessarily





be grasped according to purely aesthetic criteria, they require one to engage with the process of creation.

Color also being an important part of Nitsch's research, the artist since his debut shows a particular interest in the red color and its symbolics. The strong presence of red in the form of splashes and drips, which evokes blood, is in dialogue with the deep blacks. Later, the Austrian artist added a bright yellow to his palette, symbolizing light. In his most recent works dating from 2019, 2020, and 2021, a new intensity and energy emerges subtly revealing the first layer of his signature color: blood red.

In the context of the Second World War, his multi-faceted work with cathartic dimension goes beyond history and the questioning of the human condition. In contrast to the mortifying thoughts that the artist developed in his earlier performances, this exhibition is an assumed celebration of life. With this recent body of work, Nitsch in a way demonstrates that life does not only consist of suffering.

**K\_Nils\_21, 2021**

acrylic on canvas

100 x 80 cm

39 37/100 x 31 1/2 inches





**SF\_05\_15, 2015**

acrylic on canvas

140 x 100 cm

55 3/25 x 39 37/100 inches





**HF\_Alissa\_21, 2021**

acrylic on canvas

200 x 150 cm

78  $\frac{37}{50}$  x 59  $\frac{3}{50}$  inches





**HF\_74\_20, 2020**  
acrylic on canvas  
200 x 150 cm  
78 3/4 x 59 1/8 in



**HF Ina 21, 2021**

acrylic on canvas

200 x 150 cm

78 37/50 x 59 3/50 inches









**Tamme\_20, 2020**

acrylic on canvas

200 x 300 cm

78 3/4 x 118 1/8 in



**HF\_35\_18, 2018**

acrylic on canvas

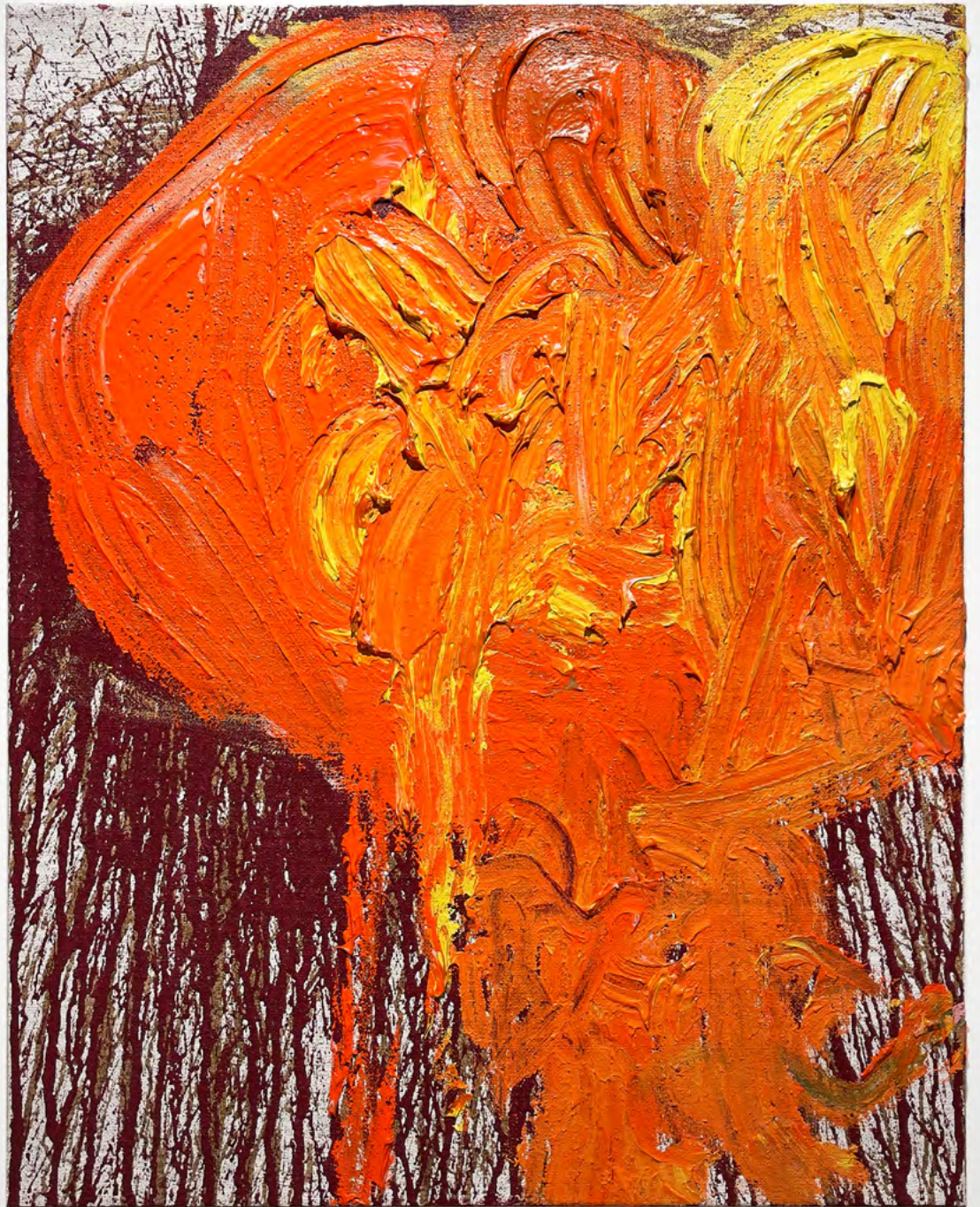
200 x 150 cm

78 37/50 x 59 3/50 inches





**K\_16\_20, 2020**  
acrylic on canvas  
100 x 80 cm  
39 3/8 x 31 1/2 in





**SF\_016\_12, 2012**

acrylic on canvas

100 x 150 cm

39 37/100 x 59 3/50 inches





