

MARIO LOBEDAN

Paintings & Drawings: 2008 to 2022



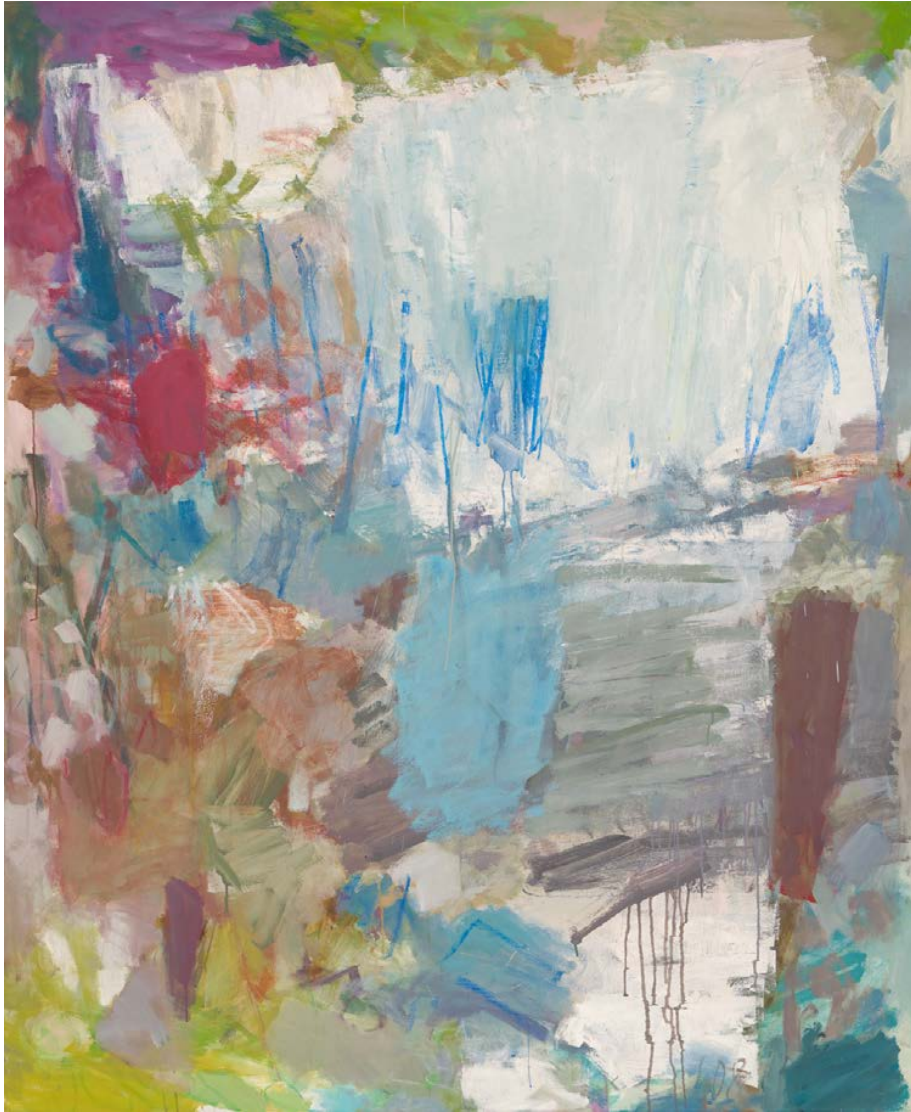
Untitled [18–XV], 2018

oil on canvas, 170 x 140 cms, 67 x 55¼ ins 38103

MARIO LOBEDAN

Paintings & Drawings: 2008 to 2022

John Martin Gallery
38 Albemarle Street
London W1S 4JG
www.jmlondon.com



Untitled [08 – LVI], 2008
oil on canvas, 170 × 140 cms, 67 × 55¼ ins 38129

Six years ago, staying with a friend, a gallery-owner and collector in Switzerland, I saw the work of Mario Lobedan for the first time. Hung behind the piano in his apartment was a large, horizontal canvas dominated by a blaze of emerald-green. The painting, that colour, immediately held your attention but then moved on, offering up further colours, colours within colours which seemed to describe a space within the painting. It hinted at a world beyond, a depth between foreground and background and a measurable void now filled with colour, light and air. Nature was there, but nothing recognisable, no water, sky or earth, nothing familiar that might distract from the painting itself. Whilst devoid of features, it was brimming with emotion, a mesmerising, glassy serenity, like a summer afternoon.

As I got to know Mario and his work better, this obvious, yet elusive connection with the natural world became so much in evidence that one began to sense specific seasons relevant to each one. From there it was a natural progression to understand each picture in musical terms, those subtle tonal variations running through the canvas like a delicate arpeggio, blacks and greys like a booming brass section, every painting played out in a minor or major key, happy or sad. As with music, the best way to understand Mario's paintings is to go to the heart of our own emotions, to see the frenzy, or calm, the sadness or joy that is wrung out of the paint. Mario summed it up in a recent conversation,

'All the paintings have all emotions, even despair. My best paintings are like angry old men, not very polite, a bit stupid...wounded and wasted old men, but still standing!'

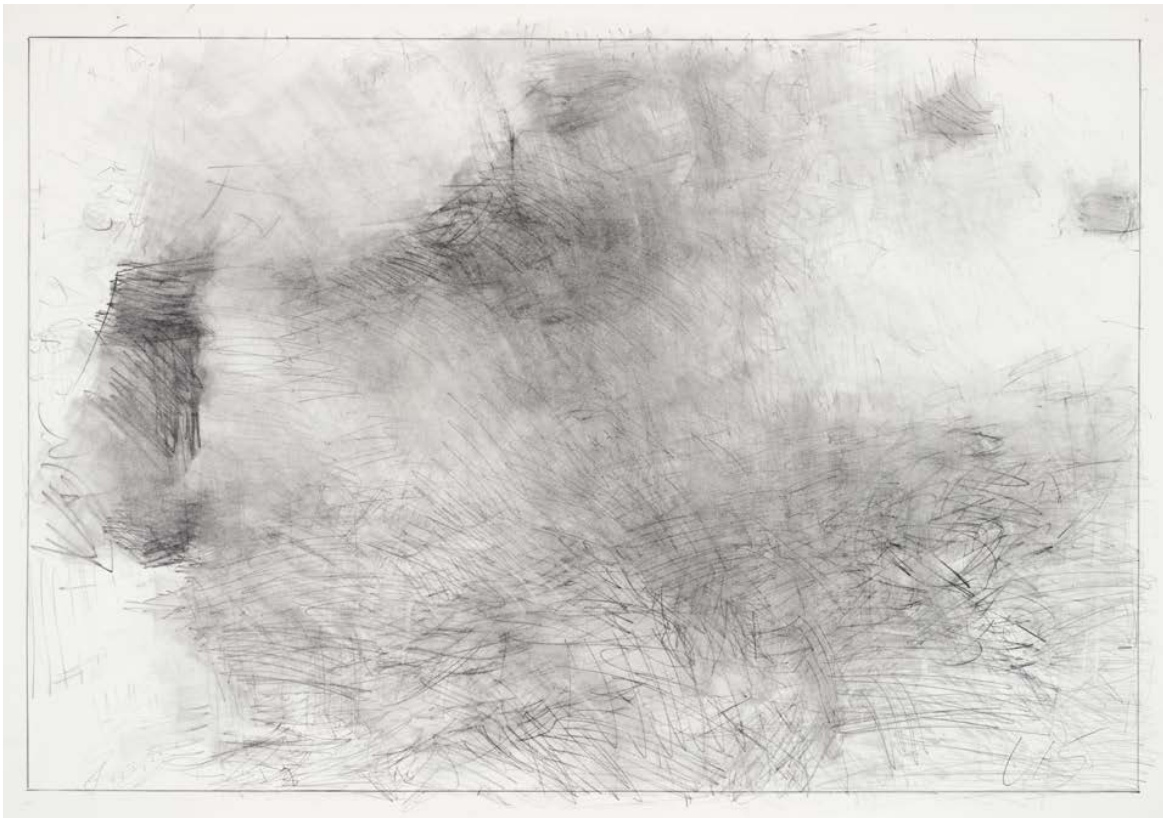
From conversations and in our correspondence, one comes to realise that the search for emotional power is the driving force behind everything Mario does. It demands exceptional inventiveness from the artist, fierce determination and the readiness to turn every painting into a fight. He talks of the need to unlock the power within the painting, whilst never losing control. Sitting in his studio this summer, sharing a beer, he summed up the frustration of this way of working:

'Sometimes I flatter the images, and sometimes I punch him in the face ... and most of the time they hit back! ... I have lost good paintings: I did not see that I had reached the final state. I got furious and stupid and went and lost it, then I have to build it again.'

His drawings are no less of a battle, the same massive collisions of marks and textures, the same glimpses of light beyond the surface. Like his paintings they bristle with static energy: combustible as they are spontaneous, emotional, raw, yet never out of control. Conditioned as we are to view expressive, abstract painting as a product of pure instinct it is important to remember how vital it is for Mario to stay in control of the work. Every picture is the sum of his experiences and each mark a decision based on his studies over the course of almost forty years.

Mario Lobedan was born close to Magdeburg in 1961, in what was formerly East Germany. After national service, he studied librarianship though most of the time there he 'was asleep'. He finished his degree and 'then woke up', making the decision to become a painter. This was in the early 1980's. Rather than going to art classes, he moved to a village in the Erz Mountains on the Czech-German border, working as a grave digger, and setting about teaching himself the basics of painting and drawing.

He says that he often wonders whether this was the right start. Art school would have put him 'on the right path' sooner.



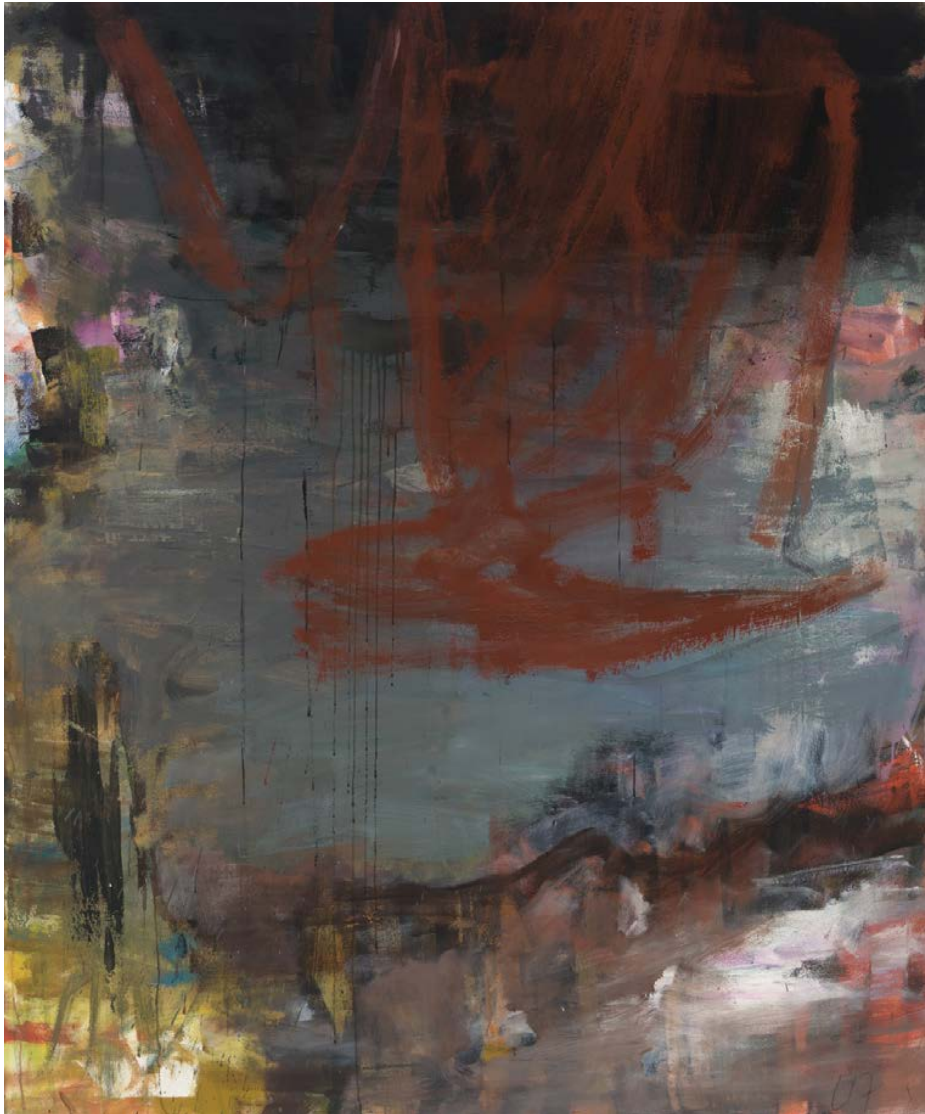
Untitled XXVII, 2015
pencil, 70 x 100 cms, 27½ x 39¼ ins 38069

'It was completely different for me – total seclusion without any guidance. There was not a single beginner's mistake I didn't make. I remember that I once spent two weeks on a drawing of my old jacket, putting in every detail without any sense of the need to economise the drawing. And it was no better with painting. After a year or so working on my own, an acquaintance put me in touch with an older painter. He leafed through my work, smoking one pipe after another and said at the end that he could see absolutely nothing in it, no approach whatsoever, but he could see there was an extremely strong will. It was a difficult, agonising start, but I came through it stronger and more true to myself.'

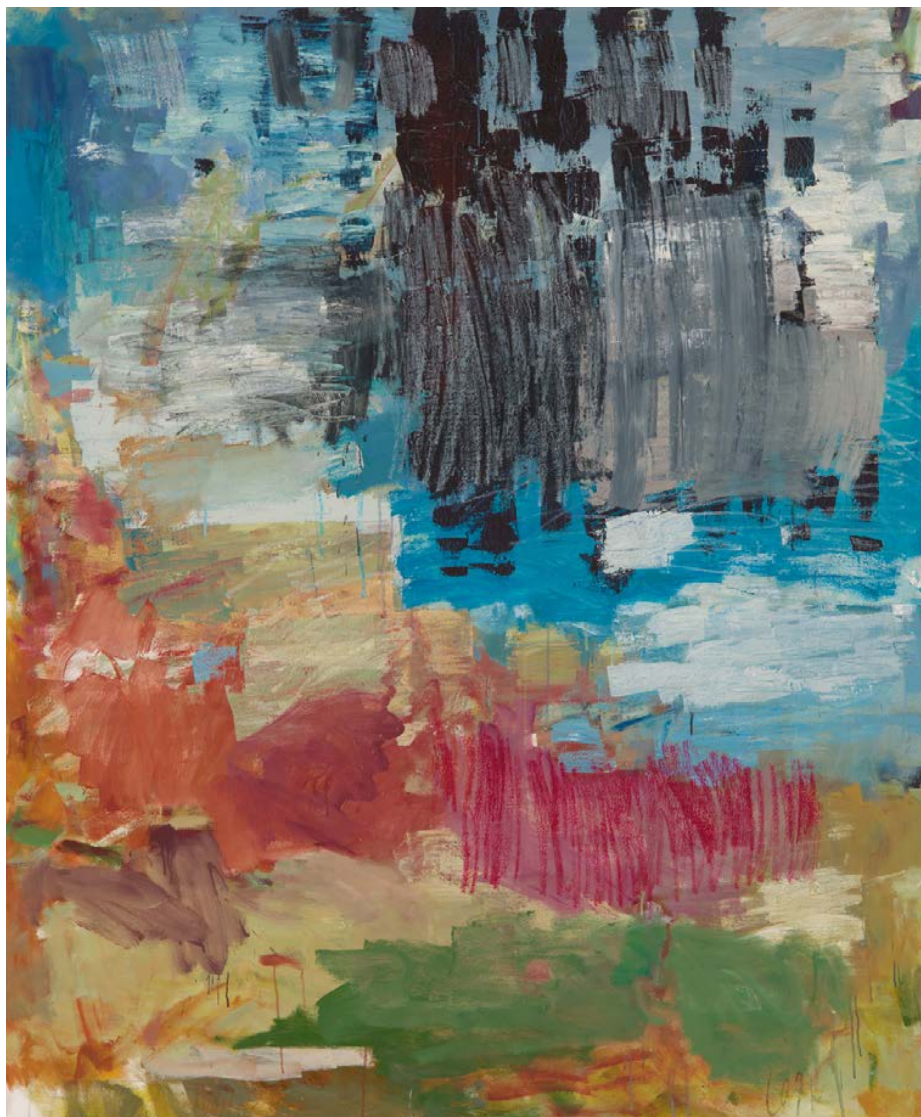
In 1986 Mario moved to Weimar taking a job as a librarian in the municipal library. For the next three years, teaching himself, he continued to develop his skills and build a portfolio sufficient to be accepted into the Leipzig Academy of Fine Arts to study painting. In 1989 he finally won his place. His time at the Academy was just before the arrival of Neo Rauch and the group of artists who came to be known as the *New Leipzig School*. Only in his final year was he taught by Arno Rink who was to become the leading force behind this group of painters. Until then the teaching at Leipzig remained focussed on formal, classical training, techniques which, at the time, exactly suited Mario's needs.

'When I decided to become a painter I was no longer very young. Some of my fellow students knew they wanted to be painters at the age of 5 (at least that's what they claimed). Of course, that gave them more time and the possibility of a playful approach. I no longer had that. For me it was clear: if I give my life a different direction, with all the consequences of that decision, painting would be at the centre of my life. And that's why it was clear to me that I had to study. I simply wanted to know everything about painting and printmaking. In that respect, studying was necessary. And the Leipzig Art Academy was quite suitable for that. The classical printing techniques were taught thoroughly and there were also teachers for the old master painting techniques. I occupied myself with all that, with various glazing techniques, egg tempera and so on. Today I don't use all that anymore. But we have a saying in German: Besser haben als brauchen./ better to have it, than to need it. On the other hand, I often felt that the studies were intellectually very narrow...It was the very last period of the GDR. Everything was run down, run down, also intellectually. The university was no exception.'

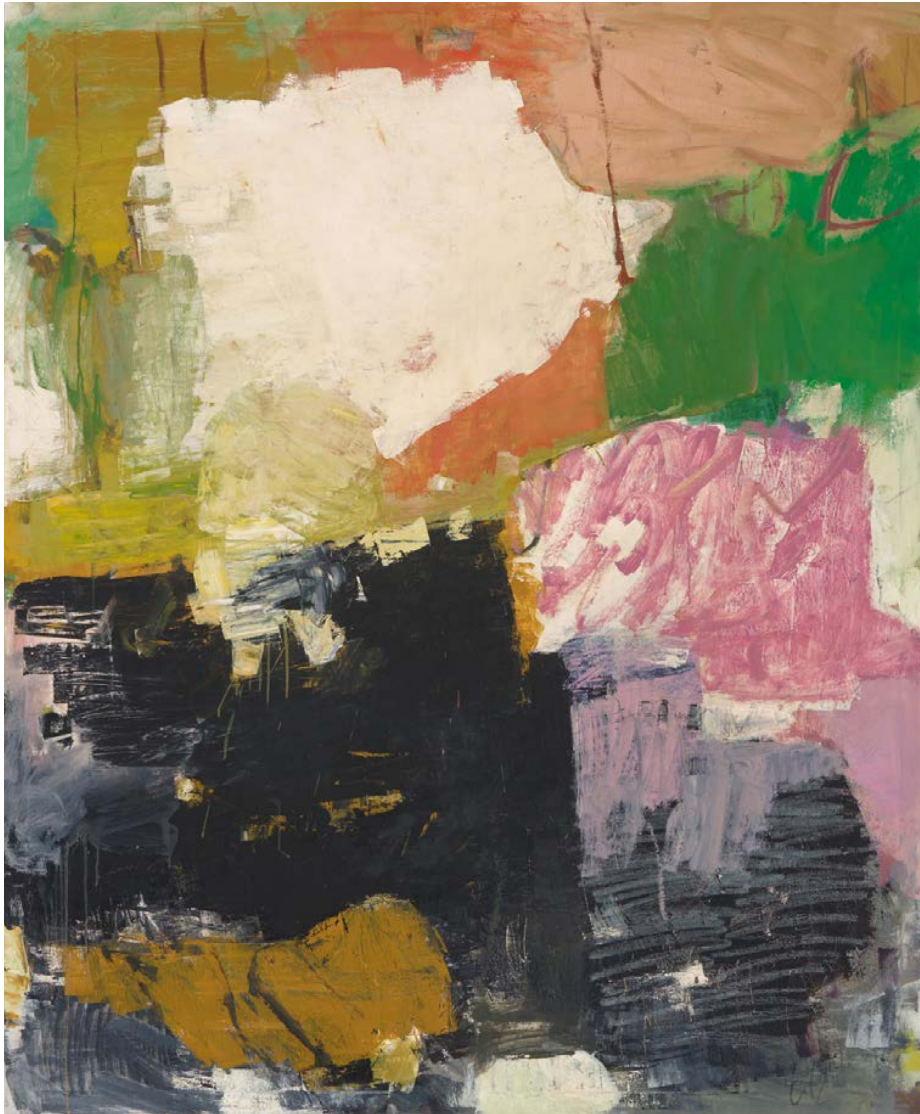
After graduation, he describes a ten-year period during which his painting slowly took a different direction, evolving and gradually moving from representational to abstract art. Mario was a reluctant convert, 'I am an abstract painter who doesn't believe in abstract painting', he once said. In 2006 he moved to Magdeburg, taking a studio in a derelict factory on the edge of the city, where he still lives and works. Just like his first escape to the mountains, he knew few people, the accommodation was extremely cheap, and he had the space and the time to concentrate completely on his painting. Twenty years after that decision to become a painter, and by then in his mid-forties, Mario had found an environment for his work to grow. This exhibition therefore picks up the story of his painting, two years after his arrival in Magdeburg and follows it over the course of the next fifteen years. During this period, he only had two solo exhibitions, a private exhibition in Basel and more recently, a survey of his paintings curated by Uwe Gellner at the Magdeburg Art Museum. This lack of critical attention or commercial success seems to be of no concern to Mario, who has made little effort to connect with the wider art world. The fact that he is so totally absorbed by the events taking place in his studio, that daily battle for each painting, is the reason why his work is so powerful and why it felt so important to bring his paintings to a wider audience.



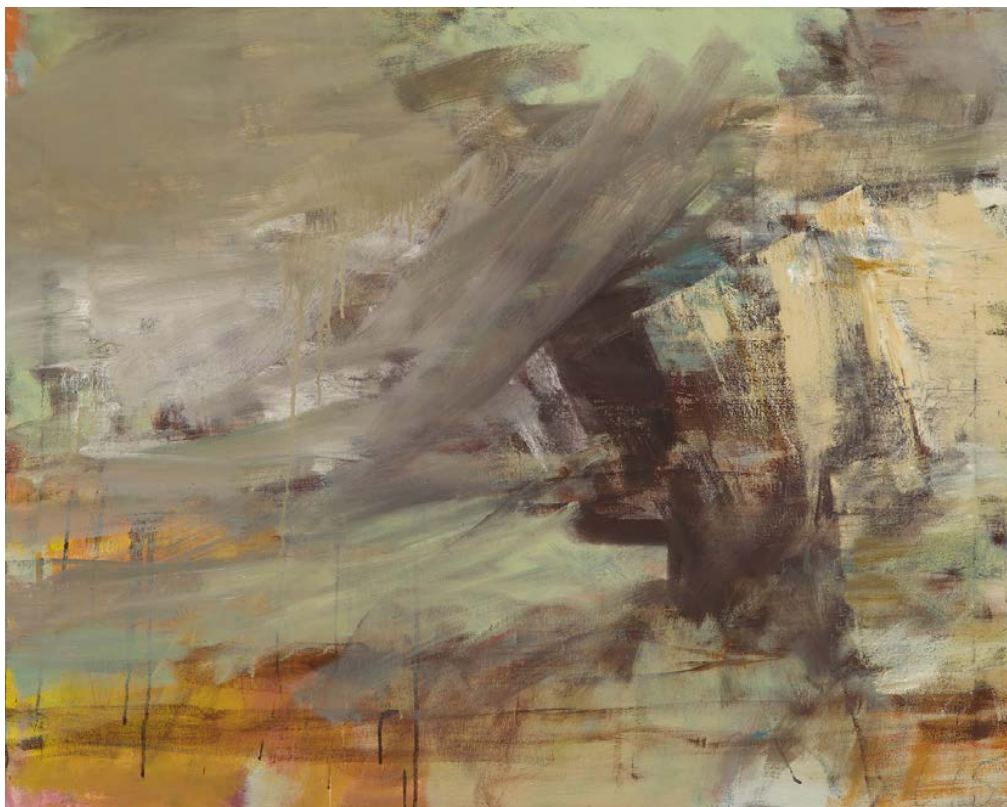
Untitled [17 – XXXVIII], 2017
oil on canvas, 170 × 140 cms, 67 × 55¼ ins 38104



Untitled [09-LX], 2009
oil on canvas, 170 × 140 cms, 67 × 55¼ ins 38147



Untitled [12 – LIV], 2012
oil on canvas, 170 × 140 cms, 67 × 55¼ ins 38128



Untitled [15 – XLXX], 2015
oil on canvas, 80 × 100 cms, 31½ x 39¼ ins 38148



Untitled [16 – LXIV], 2016
oil on canvas, 120 × 150 cms, 47¼ x 59¼ ins 38139



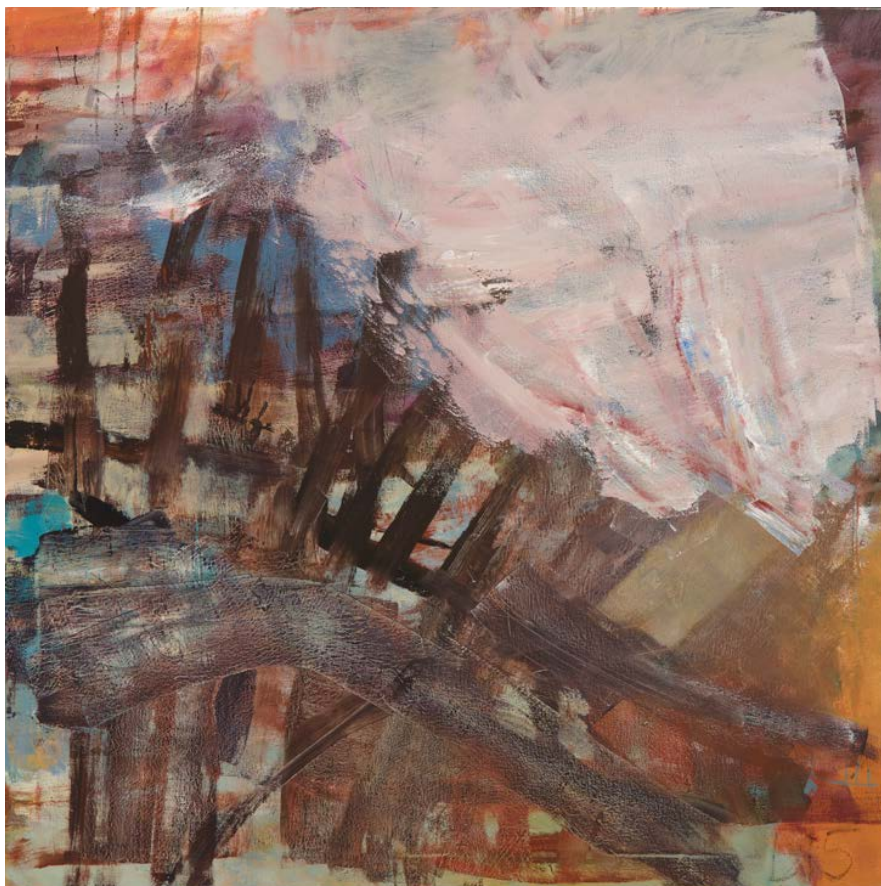
Untitled XXX], 2015
pencil, 100 × 70 cms, 39¼ x 27½ ins 38079



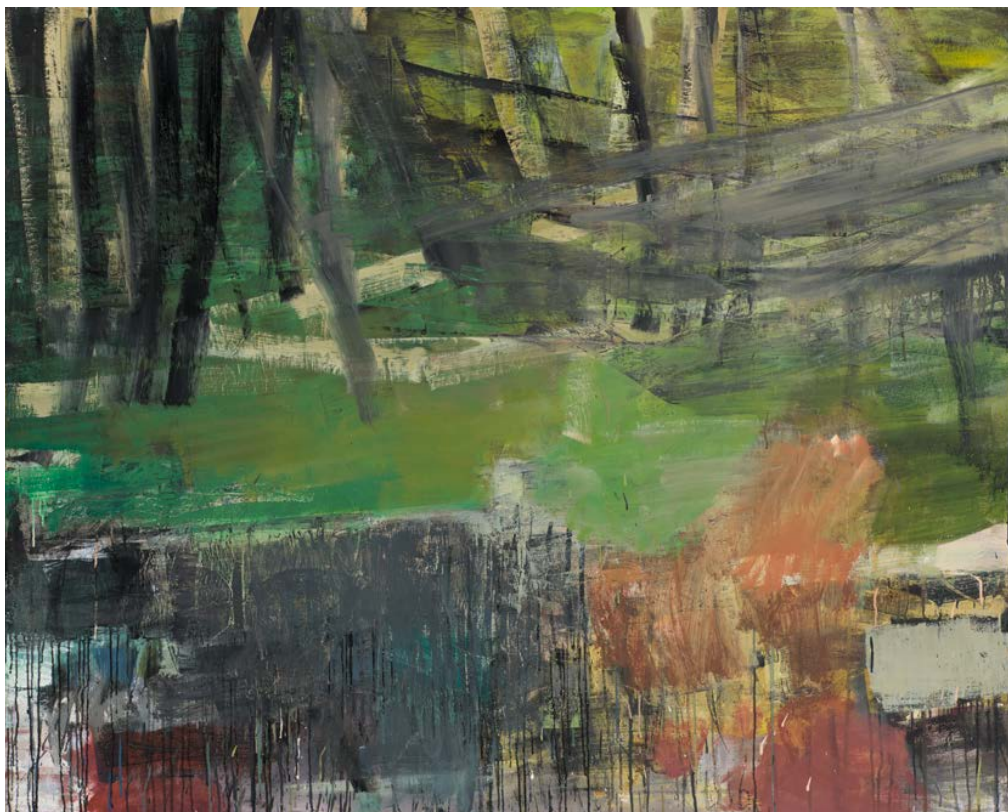
Untitled XXXIII], 2019
pencil, 147 × 200 cms, 58 × 78½ ins 38086



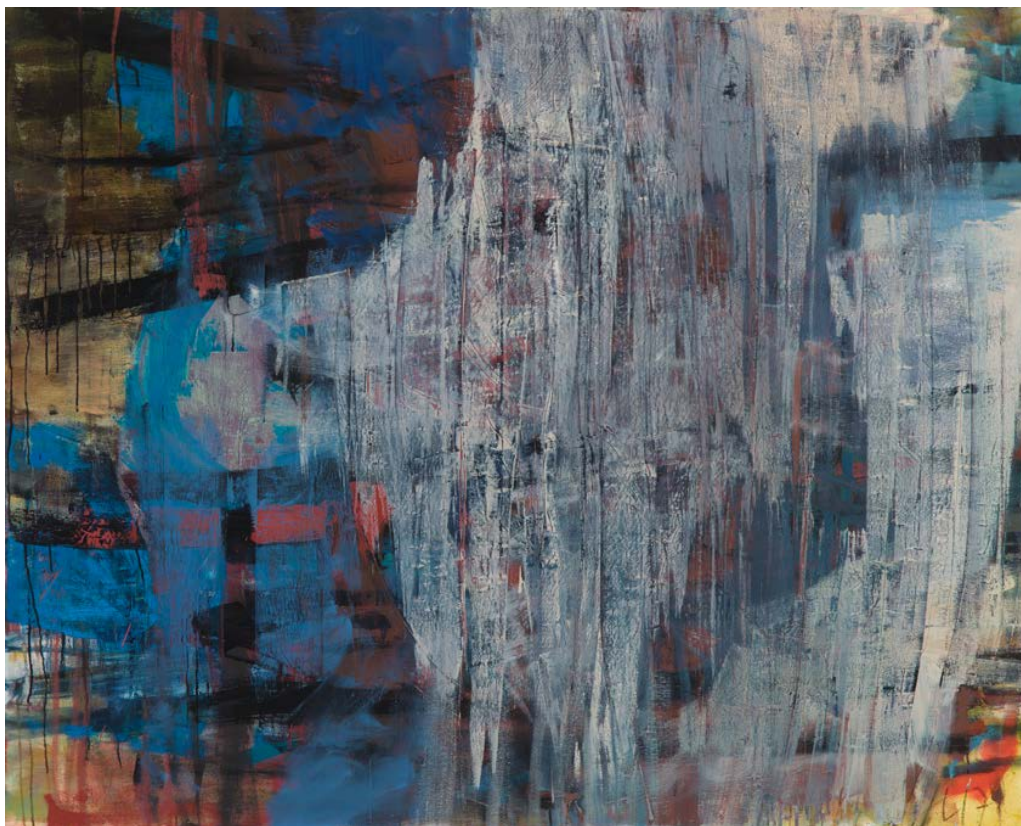
Untitled [15 – LV], 2015
oil on canvas, 170 × 140 cms, 67 × 55¼ ins 38127



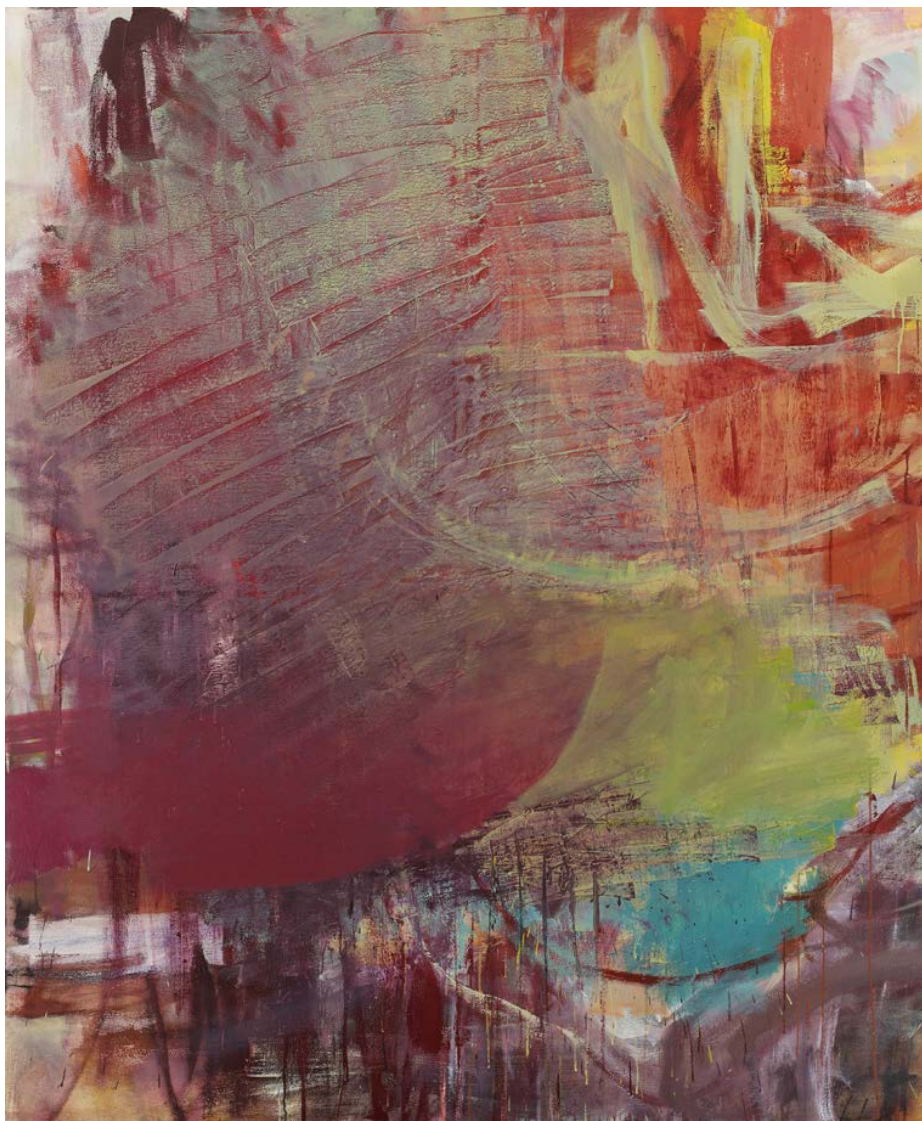
Untitled [15 – LXXIII], 2015
oil on canvas, 100 × 100 cms, 39¼ x 39¼ ins 38141



Untitled [16-L], 2016
oil on canvas, 120 × 150 cms, 47¼ x 59 ins 38131



Untitled [17–LXV], 2017
oil on canvas, 120 × 150 cms, 47¼ x 59¼ ins 38138



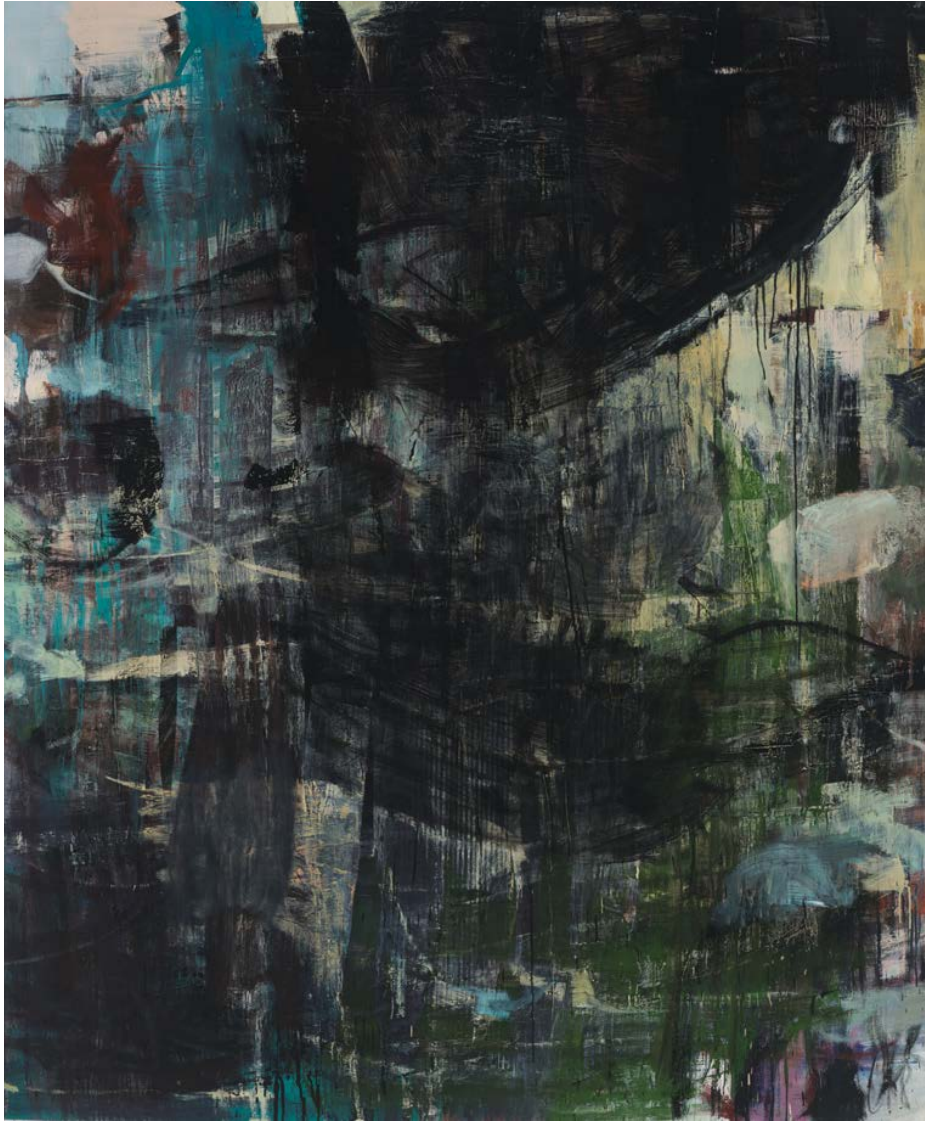
Untitled [17-V], 2017
oil on canvas, 170 × 140 cms, 67 × 55¼ ins 38018



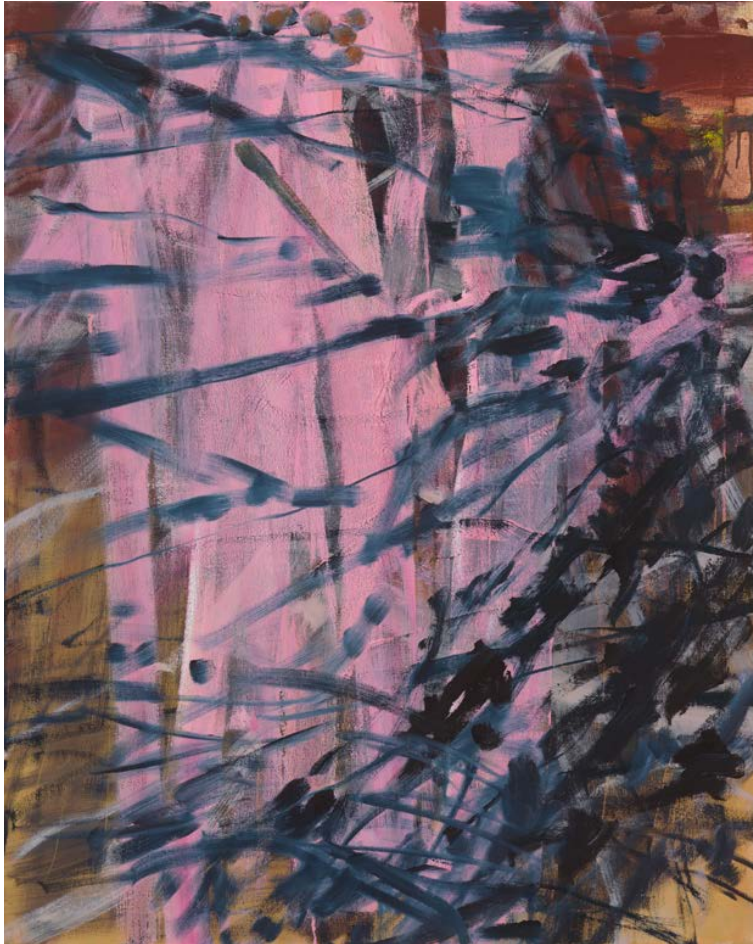
Untitled [17–LXII], 2017
oil on canvas, 120 × 150 cms, 47¼ x 59 ins 38145



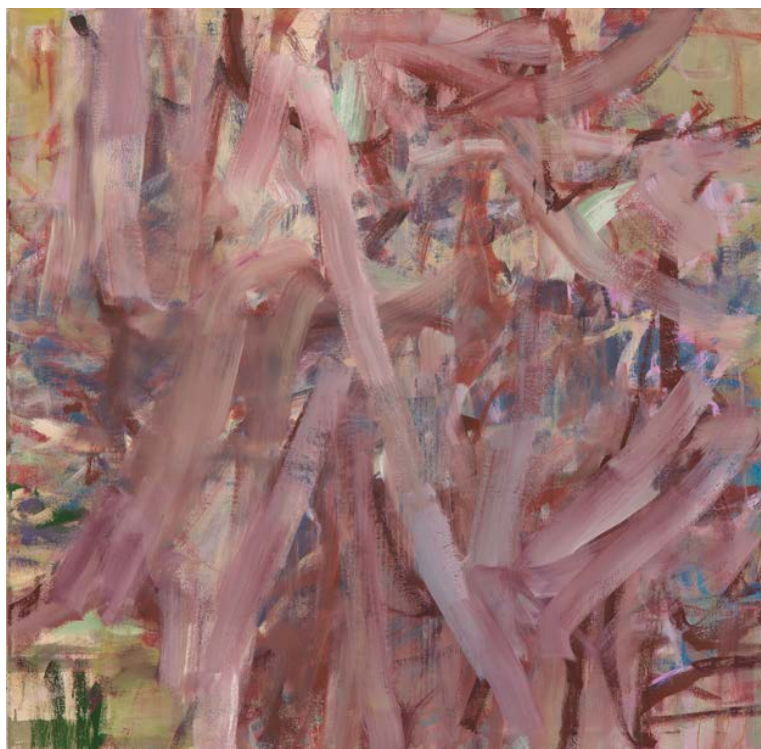
Untitled [18 - XLIV], 2018
oil on canvas, 170 × 150 cms, 67 × 59¼ ins 38105



Untitled [18 – XXXV], 2018
oil on canvas, 170 × 140 cms, 67 × 55¼ ins 38107



Untitled [20 – LVII], 2020
oil on canvas, 100 × 80 cms, 39¼ x 31½ ins 38126



Untitled [22-LXXI], 2022
oil on canvas, 100 × 100 cms, 39¼ x 39¼ ins 38135



Untitled [22 – LXIX], 2022
oil on canvas, 150 × 120 cms, 59 × 47¼ ins 38133



Solo Exhibitions

- 2022 Paintings and Drawings, John Martin Gallery, London
- 2019 Draw Art Fair, Saatchi Gallery, John Martin Gallery, London
- 2018 Allegro, Kunstmuseum Kloster Unser Lieben Frauen, Magdeburg
- 2015 Galerie Marc de Puechredon, Basel/Zurich
- 2006 Forum Gestaltung, Magdeburg
- 1995 Neues Rathaus Leipzig

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2017 Leben: Mit Kunst, Kunstverein Röderhof e.V.; Artstage Singapore
- 2016 Kunst Zurich
- 2015 *40 JAHRE/ 40 KÜNSTERLER/40 WERKE*,
Kunstmuseum Kloster Unser Lieben Frauen, Magdeburg
- 2015 Jahr-einJahr-aus-gezeichnet, Galerie Alte Schule Adlershof, Berlin
- 2009 Der Dinge Stand, Forum Gestaltung, Magdeburg
- 2002 Kunsthalle Gießen
- 2001 *a sort of homecoming*, Galerie BBK Frankfurt/Main
- 2000 Leipziger Künstler, Städtische Galerie Ingolstadt
- 1995 zeitgleich, Universität Leipzig
- 1994 Stipendiaten des Künstler hauses Schloss Wiepersdorf

Collections

Petrikirche, Leipzig, Regierungspräsidium, Leipzig
Geschwister-Scholl-Gymnasium, Magdeburg
Kunstsammlung des Landes, Sachsen-Anhalt
Kunstmuseum, Kloster Unser Lieben Frauen, Magdeburg

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Monday to Friday 10 to 6pm

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