

LIONEL SMIT

Faces of Identity



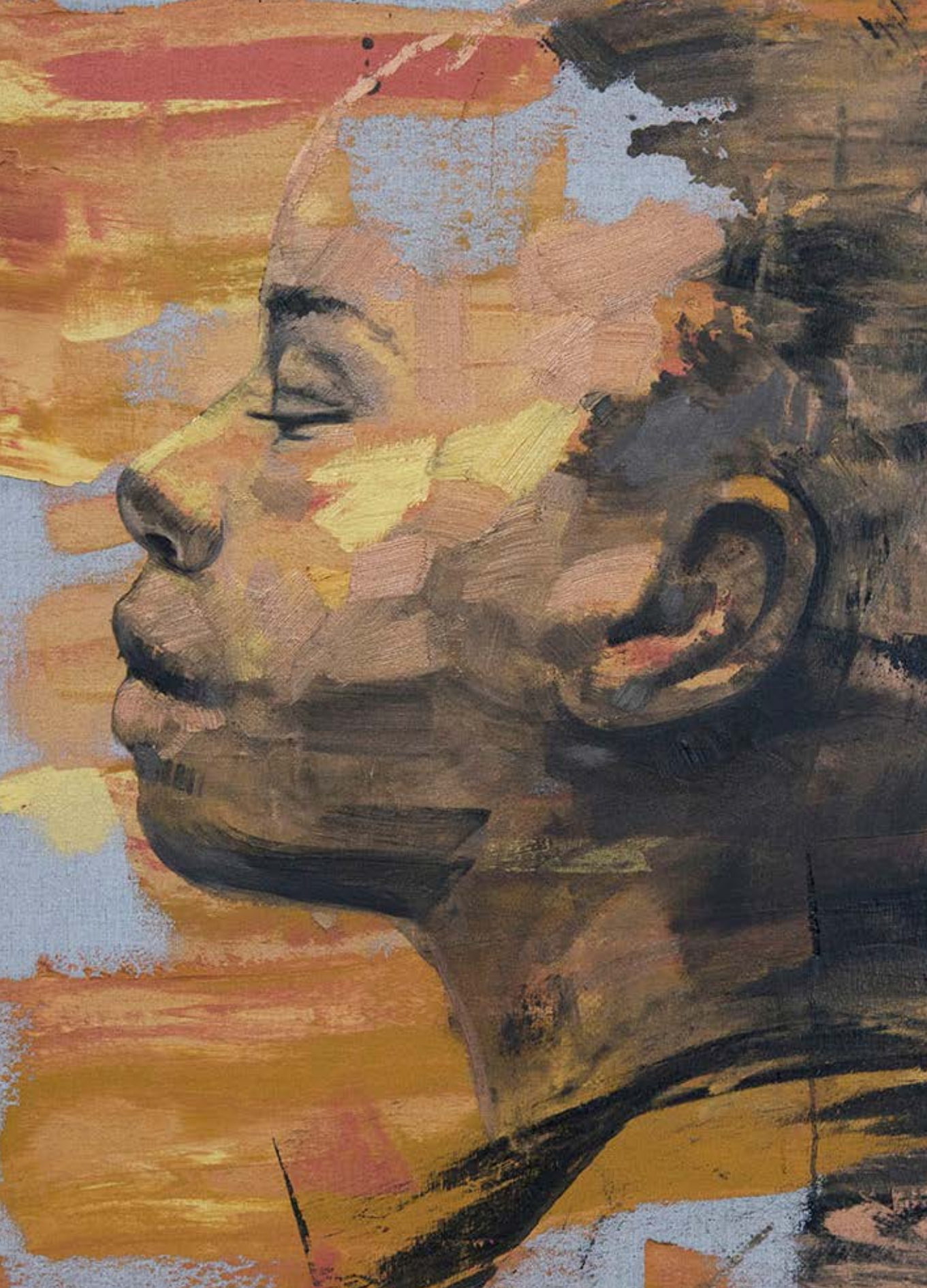
EVERARD READ

CAPE TOWN | JOHANNESBURG | LONDON CIRCA

LIONEL SMIT
Faces of Identity

24 February – 25 March 2017





COVER (DETAIL)
Unearthed #2
 oil on linen
 100 x 100 cm

TITLE PAGE
 Lionel Smit in his studio

PAGE 2–3 (DETAIL)
Singular Formation #2
 oil on linen
 190 x 190 cm

LEFT (DETAIL)
Unearthed #4
 oil on linen
 100 x 100 cm

LIONEL SMIT

Faces of Identity

This exhibition comes to London following Lionel Smit's acclaimed solo exhibition at the Didrichsen Art Museum in Helsinki where it was seen by more than 10 000 visitors.

Faces of Identity is a powerful body of work that explores themes of identity through portraiture on canvas and bronze deconstructions. With its ubiquity but also its uniqueness, the human face offers an endless source of study. Smit's work accentuates facial characteristics through bold swathes of colour and brush techniques, highly-textured bronzes and vivid patinas which result in the arresting work, often of monumental proportions, for which he is renowned.

His portraits reflect the mixed heritage of the Western Cape communities in which he lives and works and have become central to his exploration of identity. The subjects in his portraits exude strength and dignity, some have a meditative quality and others a sense of vulnerability conveyed by the sitter's averted gaze or melancholy expression.

Smit's work is defined by a profound and ongoing dialogue between painting and sculpture. He grew up in a world of sculpture and his father, Anton Smit's, sculpture studio played a central role in his childhood. 'I started off with clay – so that's my reference point ... And that's the way I approach painting. I approach it like sculpture, adding pieces until the image emerges.'

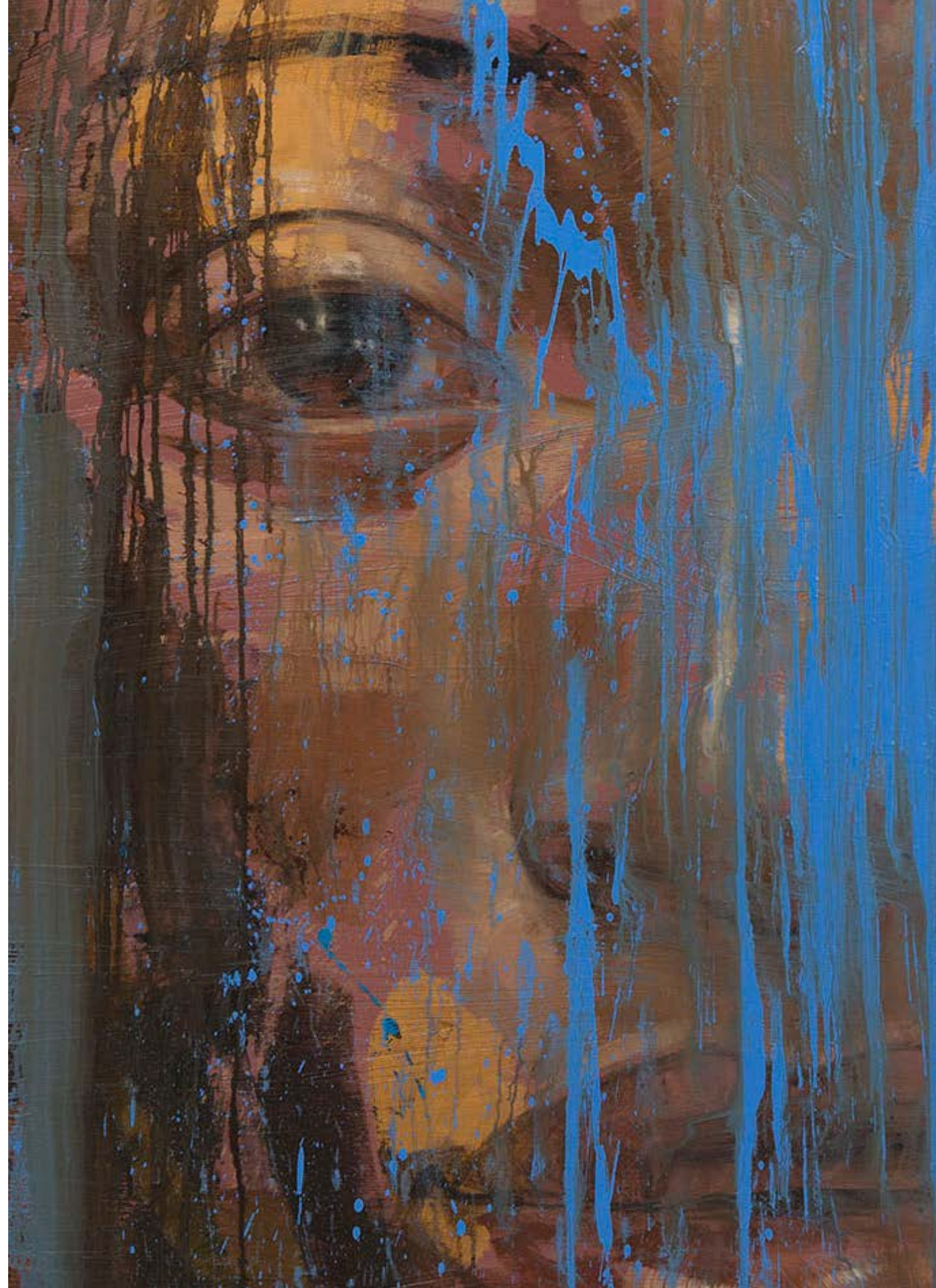
Smit began working in clay from a young age but later shifted his focus to painting, perhaps to claim his own artistic identity, separate from his father's. When he returned to making sculpture several years ago, it was his painting that deeply informed his sculptural works. 'I want the sculptures to mimic the paintings, I almost try to merge them in approach, [and] to translate paintings in a three-dimensional form. In my head, I see the pieces of clay as brush strokes. At one stage while working on a sculpture I found myself building the plaster of Paris with a brush because I liked to see the brush strokes and the drips.'

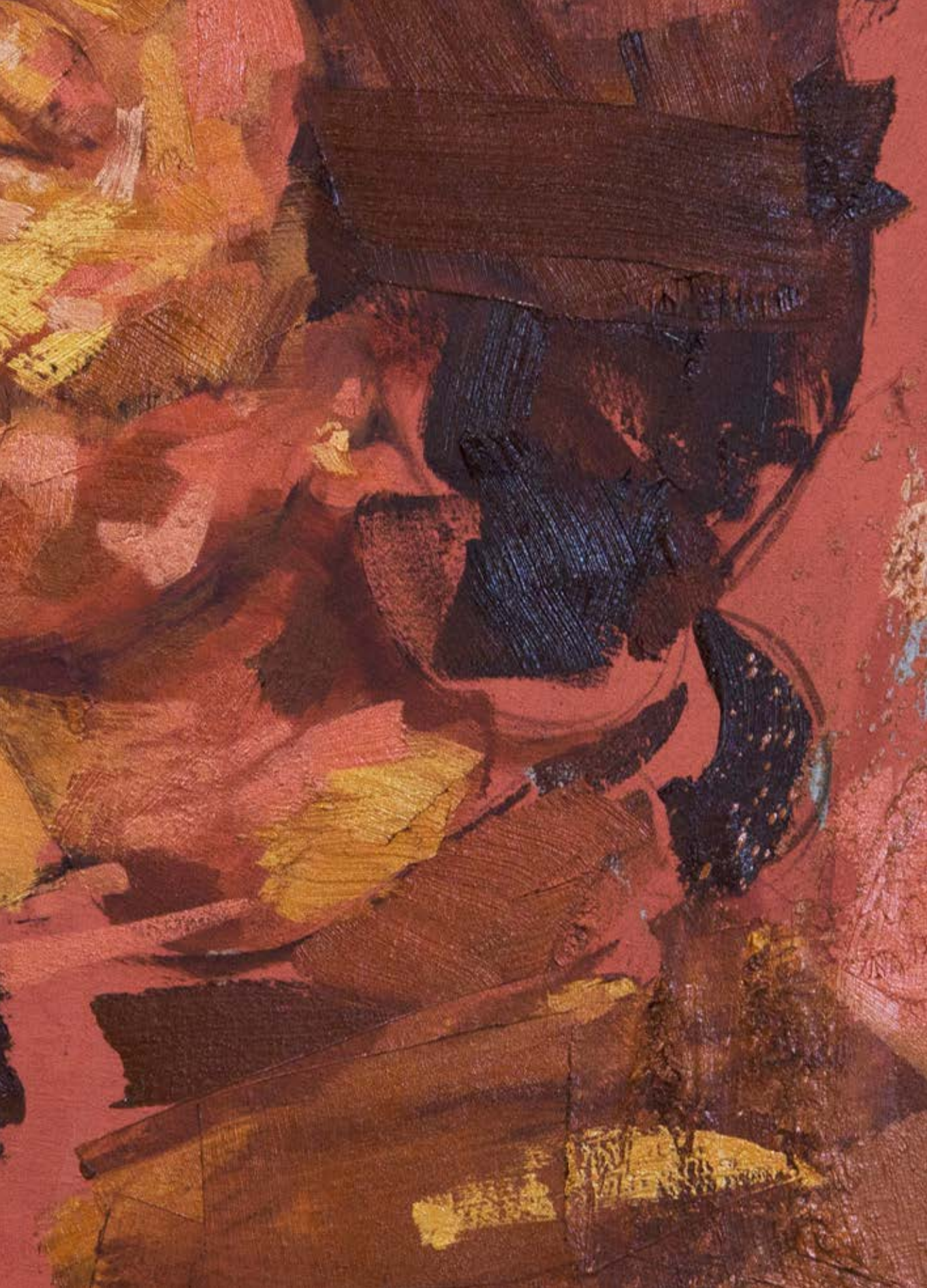


Endemism #1
oil on linen
170 x 230 cm



ABOVE AND RIGHT (DETAIL)
Singular Formation #3
oil on linen
190 x 190 cm



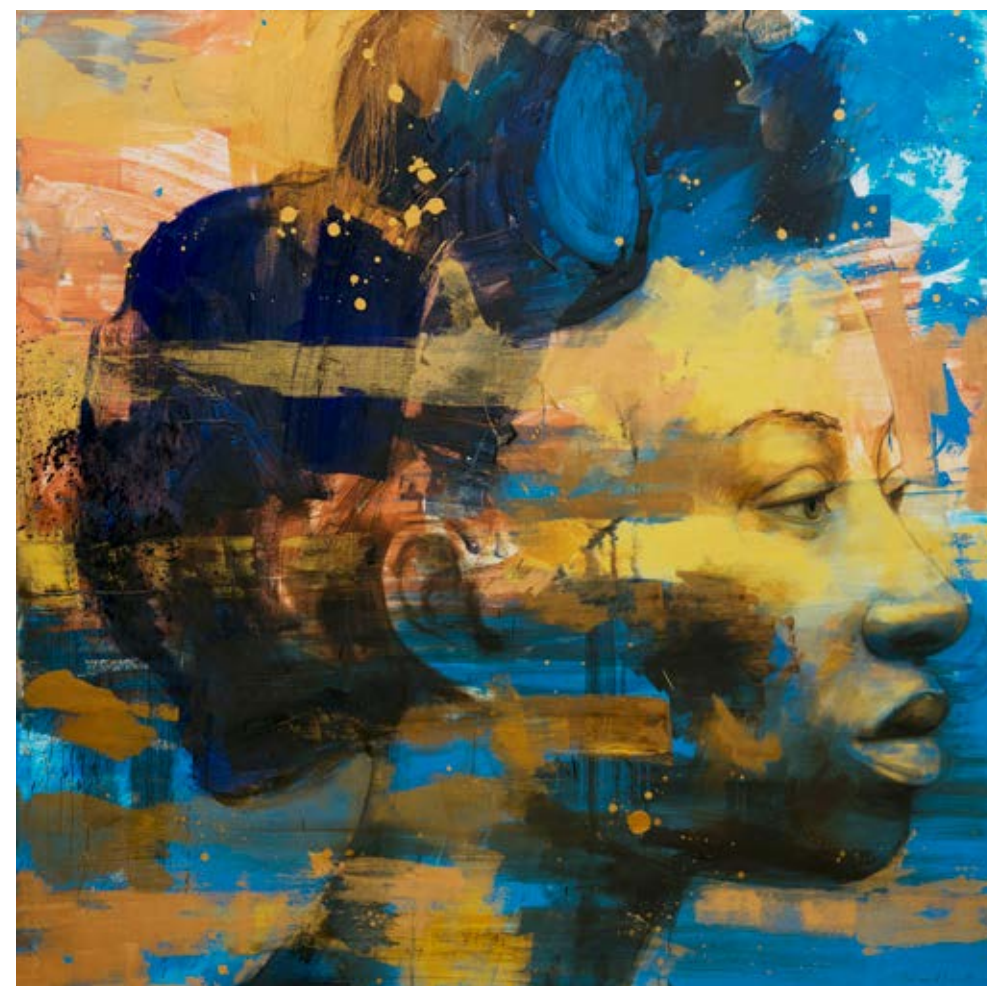


ABOVE AND LEFT (DETAIL)
Singular
oil on linen
100 x 100 cm



ABOVE, RIGHT AND PAGE 14-15
Isolate Series #1
oil on linen
170 x 230 cm

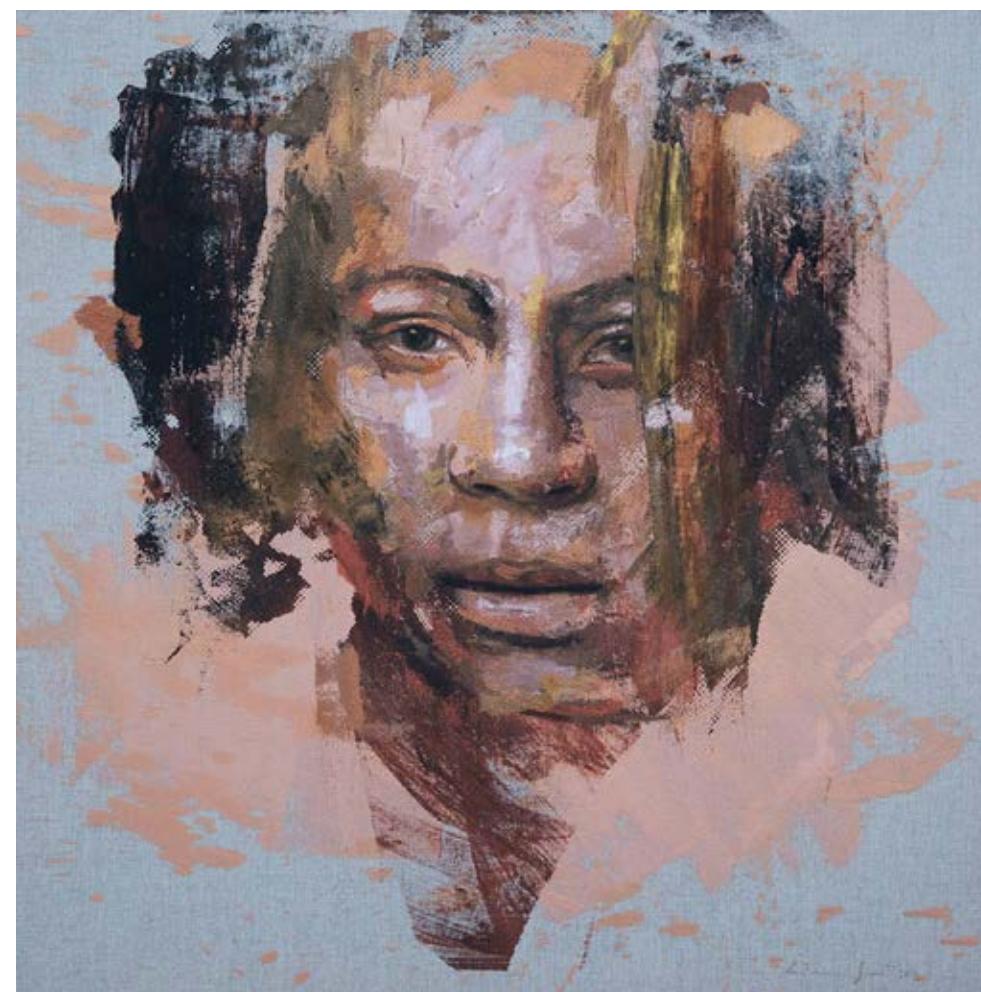




Singular Formation #2
oil on linen
190 x 190 cm



Unearthed #3
oil on linen
100 x 100 cm



ABOVE AND PAGE 20–21 (DETAIL)
Unearthed #2
oil on linen
100 x 100 cm





ABOVE AND LEFT (DETAIL)
Unearthed #4
oil on linen
100 x 100 cm



ABOVE AND RIGHT
Mind the Gap, edition of 12
bronze
78 x 33 x 58 cm





ABOVE AND LEFT
Divert #2, edition of 12
bronze
68 x 53 x 32.1 cm



LEFT AND ABOVE

Divert #2 Head Fragment, edition of 12

bronze

51 x 38 x 26 cm



LEFT (DETAIL) AND ABOVE
Broken Submerge, edition of 12
bronze
83 x 35 x 50 cm



LEFT AND ABOVE
Morphous Mask, edition of 6
bronze
184 x 80 x 80 cm



Malay Girl Revised, edition of 8
bronze
98 x 55 x 40 cm



Origins Broken Fragment K, edition of 6
bronze
45 x 17 x 21 cm

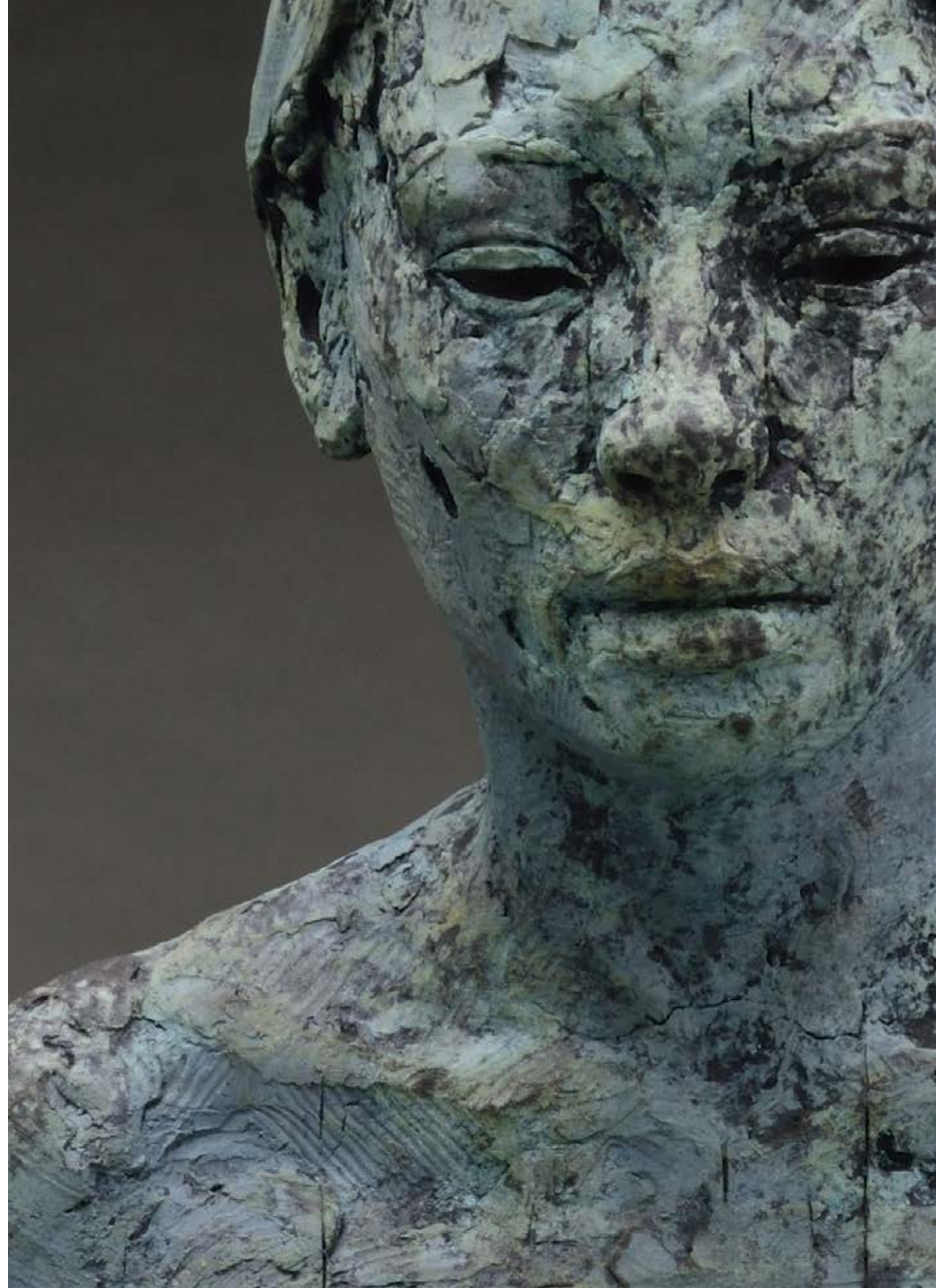


ABOVE
Origins Broken Fragment J, edition of 6
 bronze
 55 x 28 x 16 cm



RIGHT
Origins Broken Fragment R, edition of 6
 bronze
 49 x 25 x 14 cm



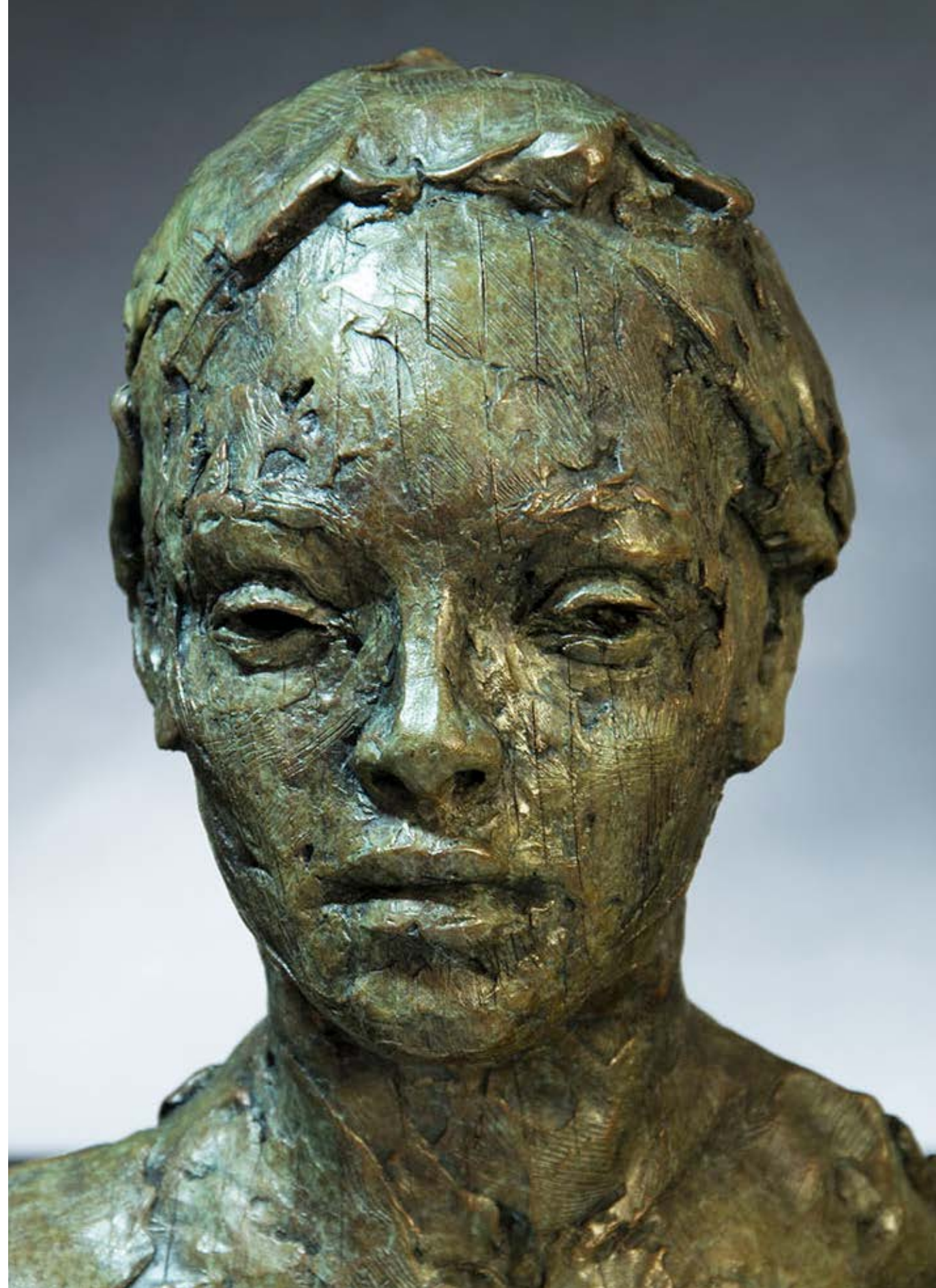


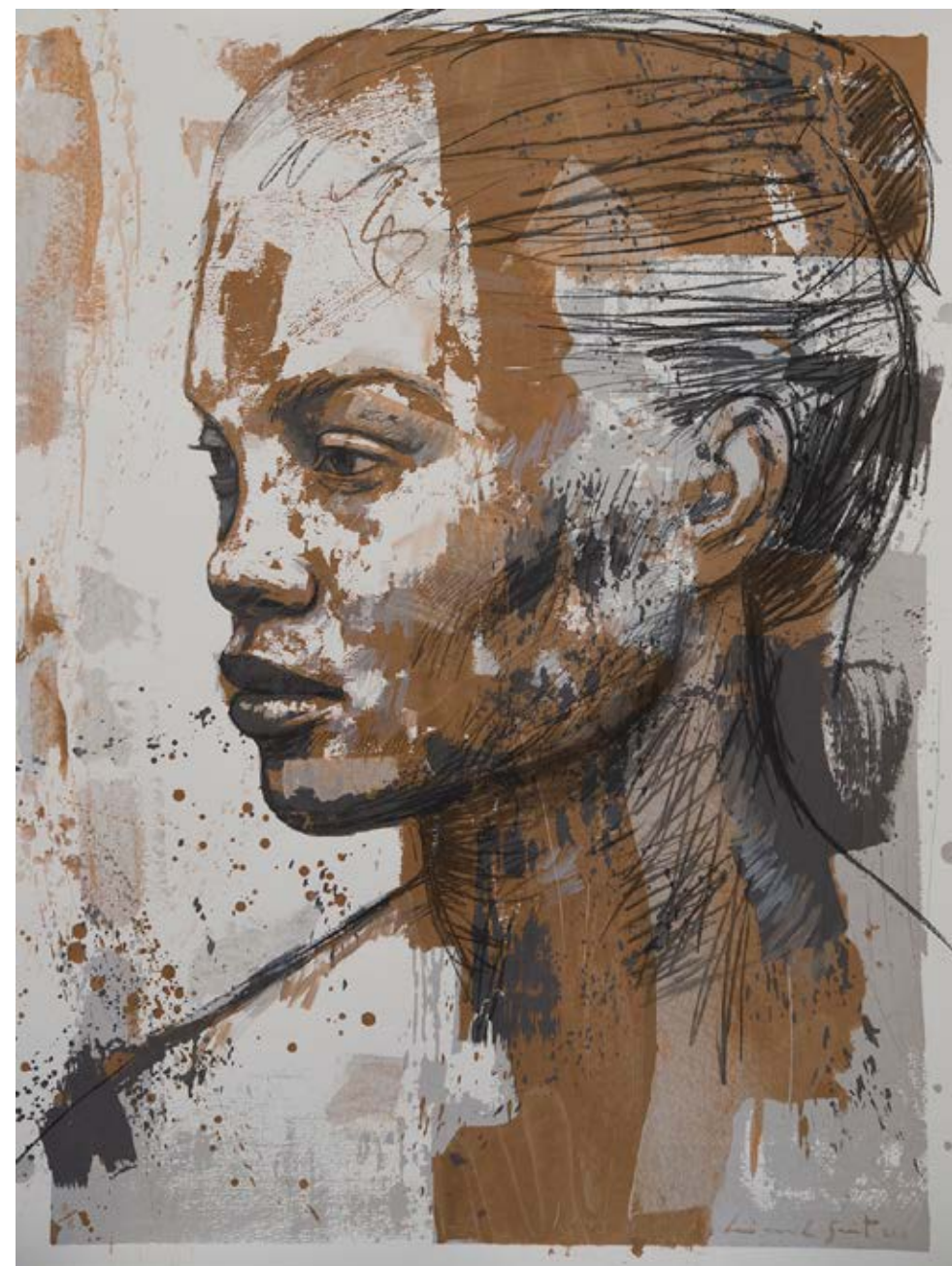
ABOVE AND RIGHT (DETAIL)
Process Series #2, edition of 12
bronze
105.5 x 40 x 40 cm



ABOVE AND RIGHT (DETAIL)

Shift Series #1(with lines), edition of 12
bronze
49 x 25.5 x 27 cm





LEFT (DETAIL) AND ABOVE

Obscura Revision Series #3, edition of 6
 silkscreen on archival paper, hand finished with charcoal and paint
 146 x 112 cm



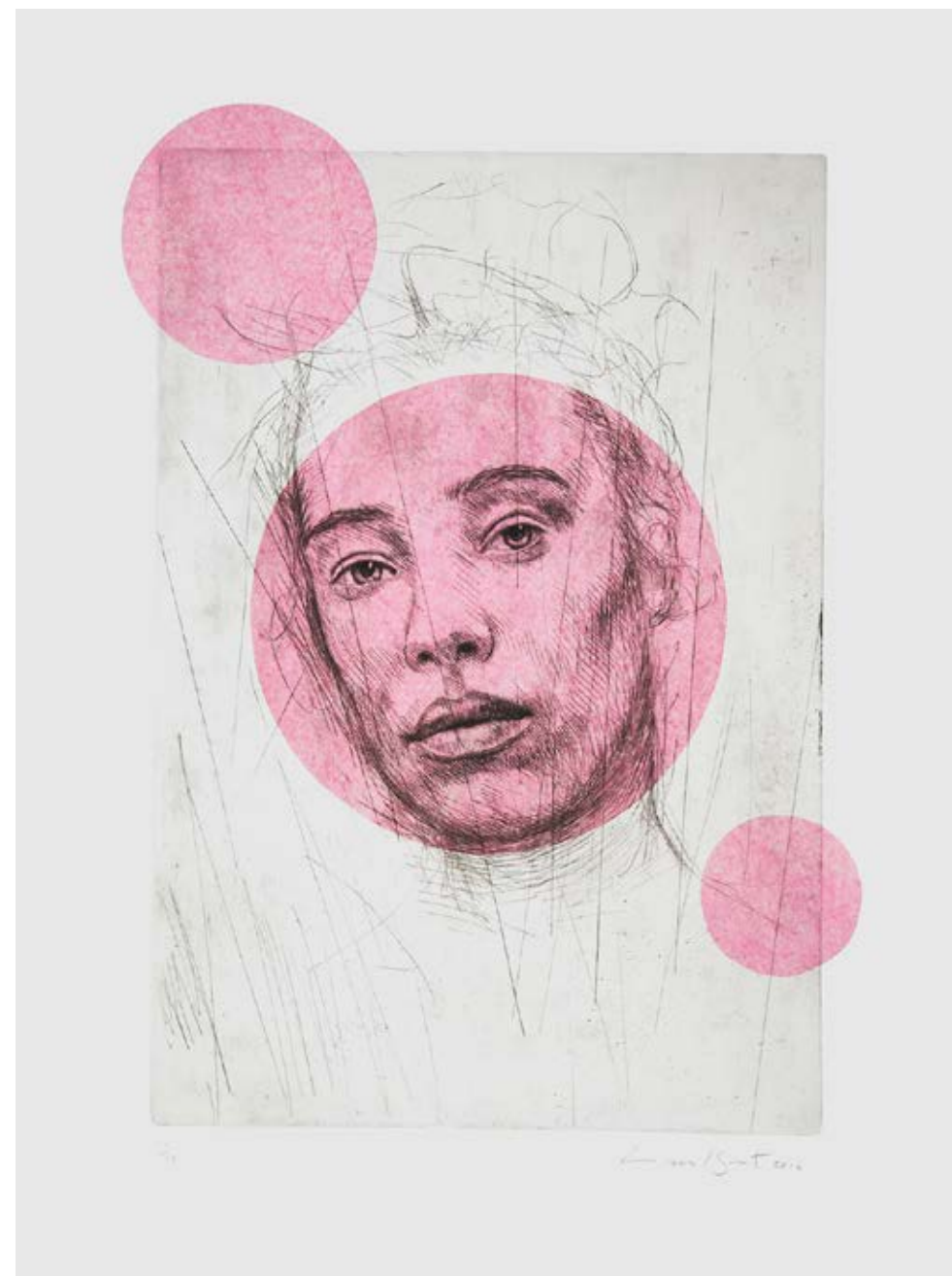
Cohere #1 (Gold), edition of 6
silkscreen on archival paper
74 x 57 cm



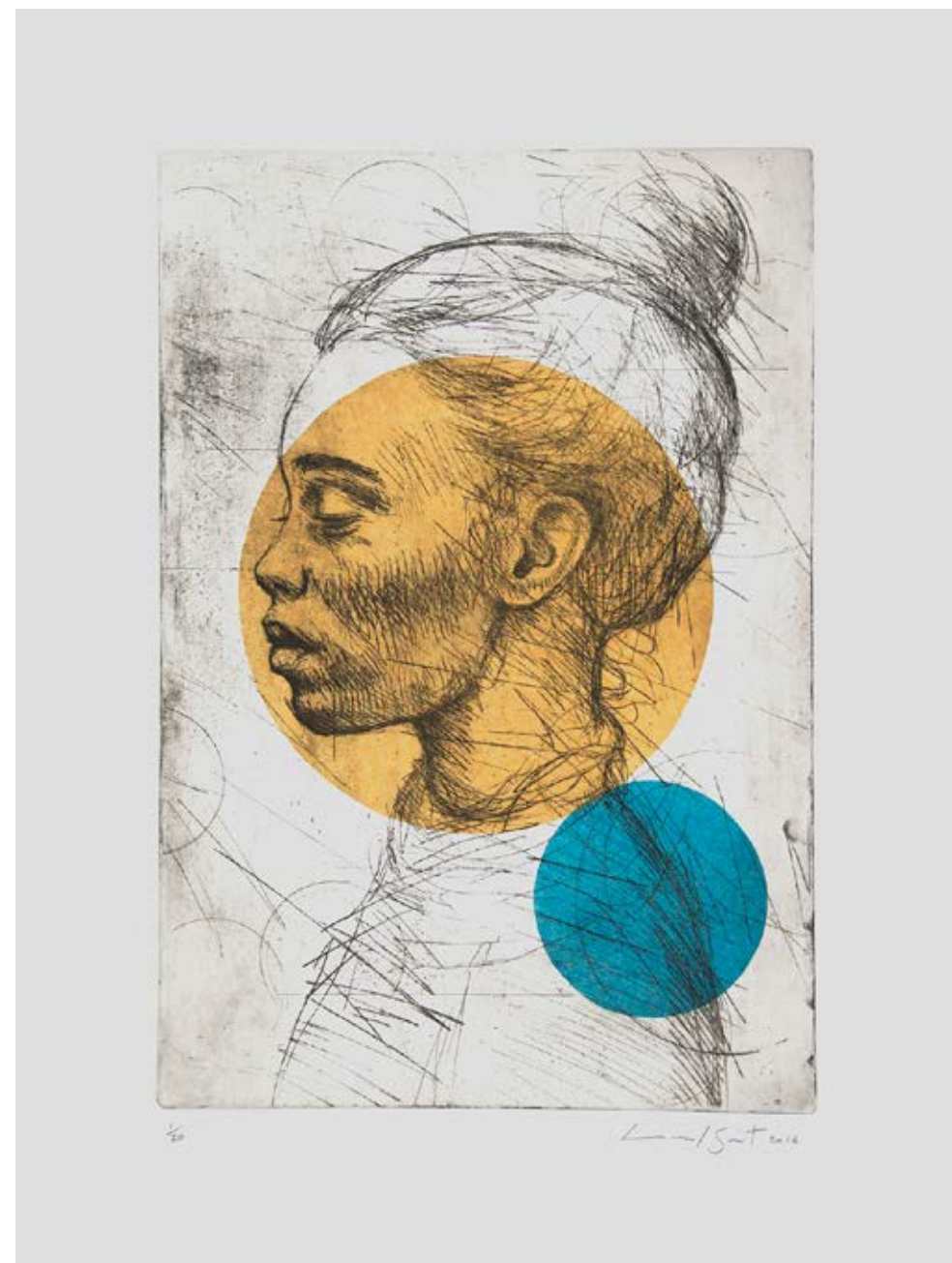
Cohere #1 (Grey), edition of 6
silkscreen on archival paper
74 x 57 cm



Formation Series #1, edition of 20
 etching on Somerset with Chine-collé
 75.5 x 57 cm



Formation Series #2, edition of 20
 etching on Somerset with Chine-collé
 75.5 x 57 cm



LEFT (DETAIL) AND ABOVE

Formation Series #3, edition of 20
etching on Somerset with Chine-colle
75.5 x 57 cm



Originate Grey, 2015, edition of 6
silk screen on archers paper
74 x 56.5 cm



Originate gold/copper, 2015, edition of 6
silk screen on fabiano
74 x 56.5 cm



Scattered Scare, edition of 12
silkscreen on archival paper
70 x 96 cm



Residue Series #1, edition of 30
 etching on archival paper
 71 x 51 cm



ABOVE AND PAGE 58–59 (DETAIL)

Residue Series #2, edition of 30
 etching on archival paper
 71 x 51 cm





BIOGRAPHY

LIONEL SMIT

(b. 1982, Pretoria, South Africa)

Lionel Smit is best known for his contemporary portraiture executed through monumental canvases and sculptures. Perhaps more than anything else, Smit's work is defined by a profound and ongoing dialogue between sculpture and painting.

A multidisciplinary artist, each of Smit's works offers us an entry point into the variety and richness that lies beneath every face we encounter in life, whether applied in bronze or in paint. While retaining their austerity and meditative aesthetic, Smit's figures remain highly charged with the emotive and gestural energy of his creative process.

Smit's paintings begin with abstract lines and swathes of colour that establish a foundation for the subsequently overlaid image of a face or bust – in most cases of anonymous models from the Cape Malay community. For Smit, the Cape Malay woman epitomises hybrid identity within a South African context, and reflects the fragmentation of identity within our increasingly globalised world. His work is freighted with both historical and aesthetic precedent and maintains a dialogue between figuration and abstraction.

Smit's bronzes are created using the lost wax casting method. Patinas commonly available to artists working in bronze include natural browns, blacks and greens. However, given the importance of colour to Smit, he uses alternative methods that result in a unique fusion of intensely saturated patinas. Brilliant streaks of blues and greens enrich the grooves of an ear, while the natural shadow of an eyelid is intensified by the deepening of rich black patinas. Smit's ability to manipulate the patination process, coupled with his focused enthusiasm for surface gradations, has allowed him to consistently push boundaries.

Based in Strand, Cape Town, Smit's process as an artist today remains adaptive, inventive, and physically engaging and he has achieved

success internationally, from Hong Kong to London and New York.

Smit’s painting has been exhibited at the National Portrait Gallery in London where it received the Viewer’s Choice Award, as well as selected as the ‘face’ of the BP Portrait Award 2013.

In 2016, Smit, in collaboration with Cynthia-Reeves Gallery, Smit installed a public art installation, *Morphous*, in New York’s Union Square.

He received a Ministerial Award from the South African Department of Culture for Visual Art.

Over the past 10 years Smit has established a substantial international following with collectors ranging from the Standard Chartered Bank to Laurence Graff Art Collection at Delaire Graff Wine Estate.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

2016

Art Miami, featured artist, Cynthia-Reeves Gallery, Miami
Faces of Identity, solo exhibition, Didrichsen Art Museum, Helsinki
JHB Art Fair, featured artist, Everard Read, Johannesburg
Echo, solo exhibition, Cynthia-Reeves Gallery, Massachusetts
Art 16, solo artist, Rook & Raven, London
Obscura 2, solo exhibition, Rook & Raven, London
Trace, solo exhibition, Rook & Raven, New York
Cape Town Art Fair, featured artist, Everard Read, Cape Town

2015

Art Miami, featured artist, Cynthia-Reeves Gallery, Miami
Recurrence, solo exhibition, .M Contemporary, Sydney
JHB Art Fair, featured artist, Everard Read, Johannesburg
Close/Perspective, solo exhibition, Everard Read, Johannesburg
Origins, solo exhibition, Rook & Raven, London
Obscura, solo exhibition, Everard Read, Cape Town
Art Central Art Fair, featured artist, Rook & Raven Gallery, Hong Kong
Accumulation of Disorder, installation, Independent Art Projects, MASS MoCA Campus, USA

2014

Art Taipei, The Cat Street Gallery, Taiwan
Conronym, solo exhibition, The Cat Street Gallery, Hong Kong
Morphous, solo exhibition and installation, Circa, Johannesburg
Cumulus, solo exhibition, Rook & Raven, London
Fugitive Identity, group exhibition, Cynthia Reeves, USA

2013

Art Miami Fair, featured artist, Cynthia Reeves, Miami
IS Sculpture, solo exhibition, IsArt, Tokara, Stellenbosch
Strata Art Fair, Saatchi Gallery, Rook & Raven, London
Fragmented, solo exhibition, Rook & Raven, London
Accumulation, solo exhibition, Everard Read, Johannesburg
BP Portrait Award Exhibition, Viewer’s Choice Award , National Portrait Gallery, London
Wonder Works Exhibition, The Cat Street Gallery, Hong Kong
Metal Work Public sculpture, Stellenbosch

2012

Compendium, solo exhibition, 34FineArt, Cape Town
Accumulation of Disorder, installation, University of Stellenbosch Gallery, Stellenbosch
Strata, solo exhibition, Rook and Raven, London
Robert Bowman Gallery, India Art Fair, India
JHB Art Fair, Everard Read

2011

Surface, solo exhibition, Artspace, Johannesburg
34FineArt, ArtMonaco ‘11, Monaco

2010

Out of the Office, group exhibition, Kunstmuseum Bochum, Germany
Cynthia Reeves Projects, Art Miami, USA
We are not Witches, Saatchi Gallery, London
Submerge, solo exhibition, 34FineArt, Cape Town

2009

F.A.C.E.T., Charity Auction, Christie’s, London
Relate, solo exhibition, Grande Provence, Franschhoek

QUALIFICATIONS AND AWARDS

2013 Visitor’s Choice Award, PB Portrait Award, National Portrait Gallery, London
2013 Ministerial Award from Department of Culture for Visual Art, Western Cape Government
2009 Merit Award, Vuleka, Sanlam Art Competition, Cape Town
2008 Achievement Award, Pro Arte School of Arts
2000 First prize in the MTN Art Colours Awards of Gauteng
1999/2000 Best painting student Pro Arte School of Arts

