



CATHY ABRAHAM

*A Sacred Matter*

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10 September – 4 October 2025

ER | 10 YEARS



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## *A Sacred Matter*

My practice is deeply rooted in repetition as a material prayer. Invoking transformation and healing, these prayers address past suffering that continues to exist in the present. Appearing as shadows in the overlapping 'ghosts' of colliding brushstrokes, my paintings give form to past traumas, the apparitions tracing the wound in its residue.

My unfolding engagement with numbers, symmetries, and ritual action is meditative and devotional, a means of transcending the self towards an understanding of the interconnected, miraculous nature of all beings. These reflections find resonance in Kabbalah's numerical interpretation of holy texts, where every Hebrew letter is given a value, and each number, in turn, is lent a spiritual significance. 18 and its multiples, which symbolise life in mystic tradition, are central to my process, as is 8 for the transcendence of the physical and 13 for the attributes of love.

In the recitation of these numbers in my practice, the living and the dead, the accepted self and its disavowed darkness, the individual and the great entanglement of the universe, find a place to coincide. Mark after mark, gesture after repeated gesture, counting the brushstrokes with their allotted number until the paint leaves only a faint trace, the making of each work affords moments of quiet revelation.

Continuing this engagement with numerical mysticism, my attention turns to a 'sacred matter' that connects all things: the self and other, consciousness and

cosmos. In this presentation of works, I find an analogue for the soul or spirit – for the divine presence – in numbers, which belong to both the material world and the imaginative world, they act upon the earth, are made physically manifest, yet remain simultaneously abstract. They are the language with which the universe is described, from the movement of stars and dust particles to the hardness of stones; they are eternal and abiding yet wholly human in their notation.

That my practice has long engaged the teachings of Kabbalah extends these reflections on numbers beyond the purely rational towards the spiritual. The physical, the theoretical, the sacred: numbers transcend these registers of assumed difference. However mystical or manifest, I regard their values as revelatory tools of self- and scientific knowledge. The two need not be divisible.

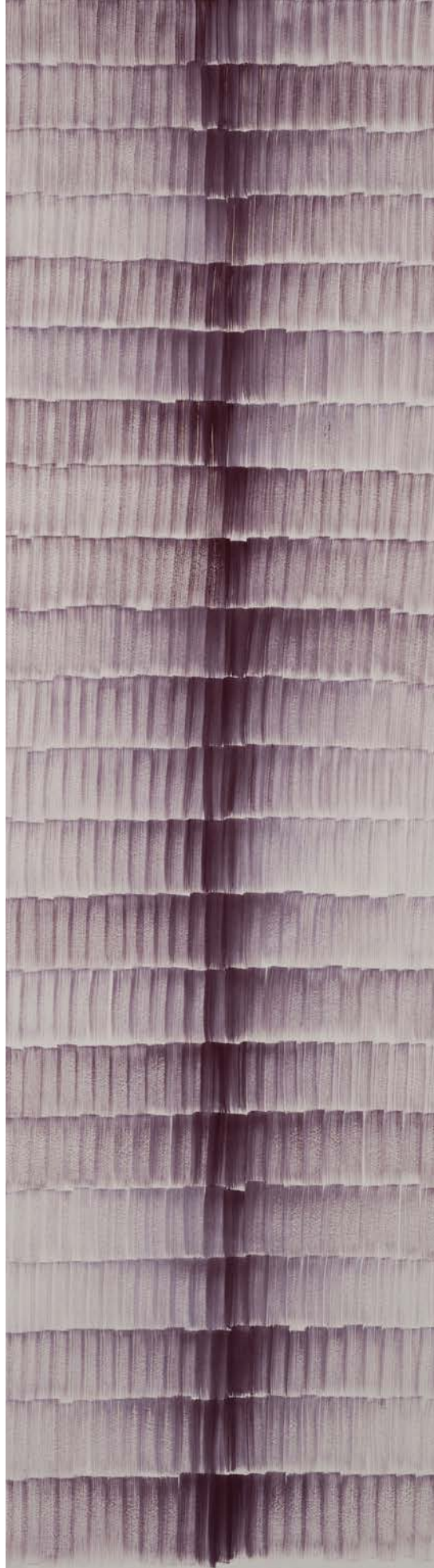
As Kabbalist Yehuda Berg writes: 'We are all interconnected. People and the planet. This connection achieves its highest state through human consciousness.'

With numbers, the invisible workings of nature might be revealed and our desire to belong, to recognise our place within the intricate web of life, affirmed. My commitment to counting as an underlying structure aspires toward this most sacred matter – our human connection to one another and the world.

– Cathy Abraham

*That the soul might be ascribed a value, might be possessed of a physical weight, was first proposed by Dr Duncan MacDougall in 1906. To something so seemingly intangible, he offered a definitive measure: 21 grams. This mythic 'weight of the soul' has been a lasting preoccupation in my work – the coincidence of the numinous and the numerical dovetailing with my wider practice. To the doctor's desire to describe and circumscribe so ineffable a substance, I offer options of a more mystical weight: sometimes 18 grams, measured in gold dust, and in this work 8 grams symbolising the miraculous nature of the connection between the spirit world and the physical world. The two were made by throwing gold pigment in gestures of release, then, once the 'dust' had all settled, using my exhaled breath to shift the powdered element across the surface until it stopped moving. Unprotected by glass, the gold is left vulnerable to time and change, easily affected by touch, necessarily transient. Fragile and precious – a testament to life.*

– Cathy Abraham, edited by Lucienne Bestall, 2024





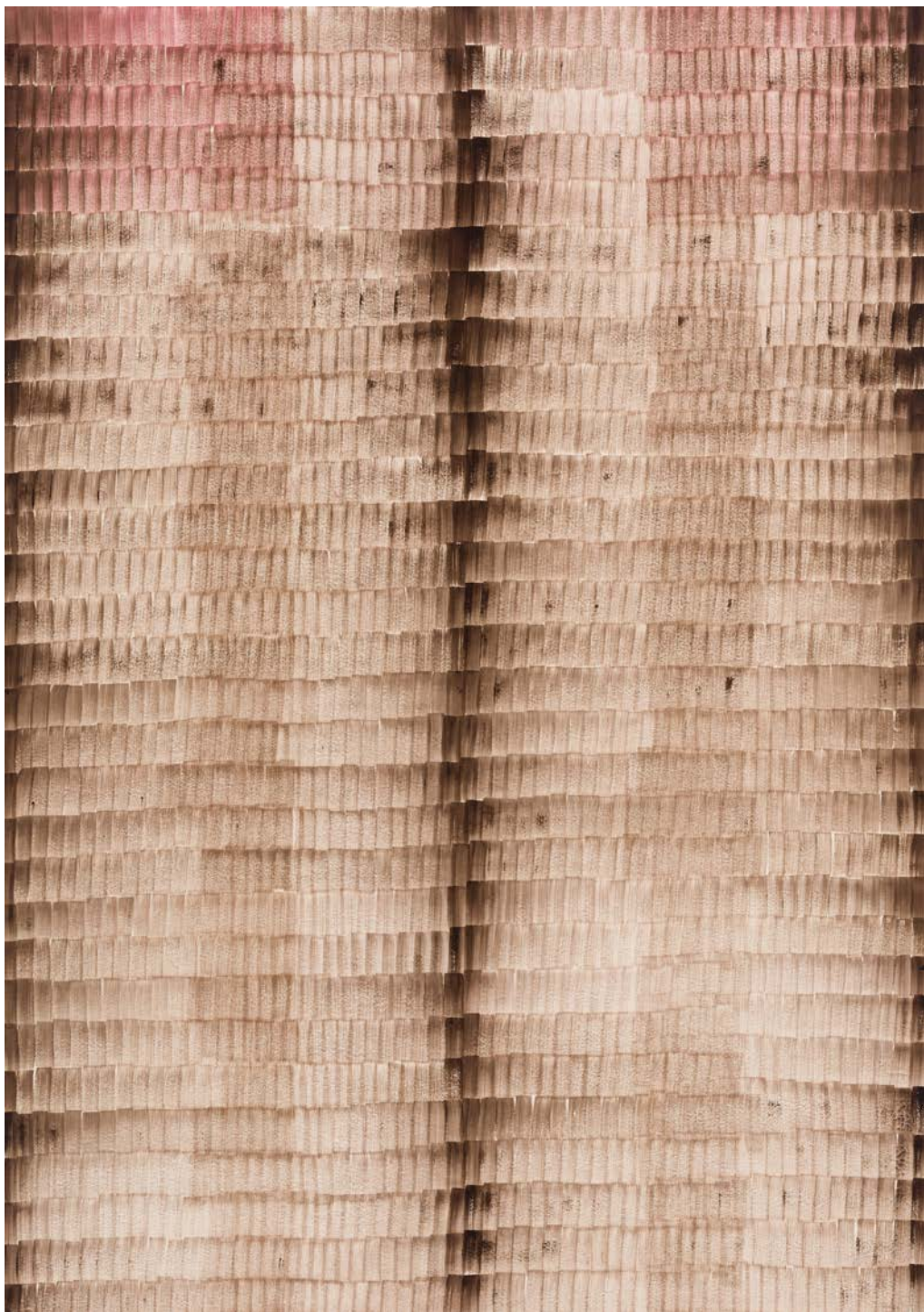
*'First there is darkness (miracle dust) I and II' hold the trace of this alchemical 'soul'. The works are individually titled for the levels of soul consciousness in Kabbalah, of which three reside in the finite body or 'divine form' (tzelem Elokim) and two beyond the physical, in the 'infinite light' (demut Elokim). The works were made by throwing gold pigment in gestures of release, then, once the 'dust' had all settled, using my exhaled breath to shift the powdered element across the surface until it stopped moving. The gold is necessarily transient, fragile and precious – a testament to life.*

– Cathy Abraham, edited by Lucienne Bestall, 2024



*First there is darkness (miracle dust) I*  
gold dust, breath and acrylic on Italian cotton  
126 x 90 cm

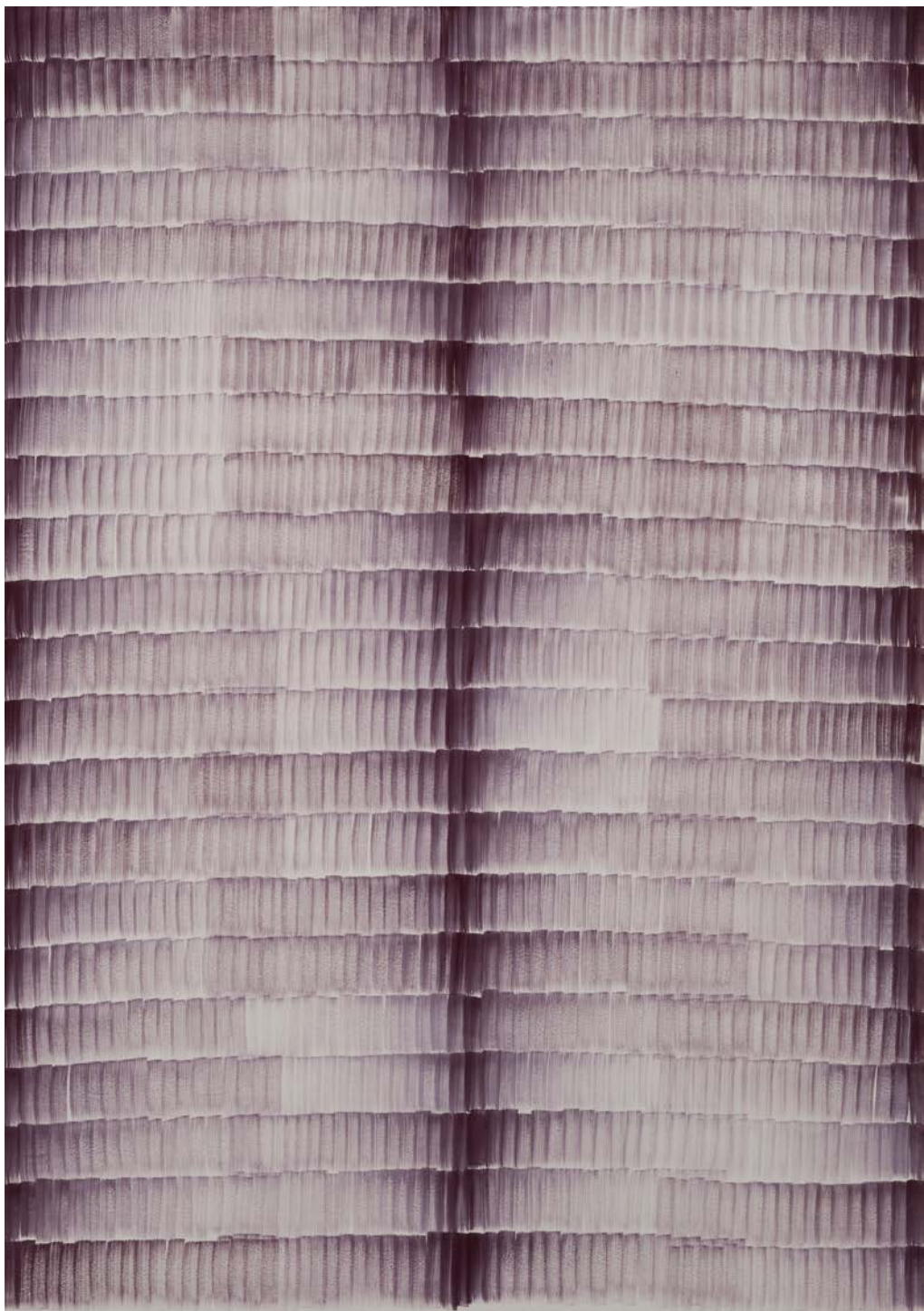
*First there is darkness (miracle dust) II*  
gold dust, breath and acrylic on Italian cotton  
126 x 90 cm



*Ghosts of the earth*

oil on Fabriano Rosapina paper

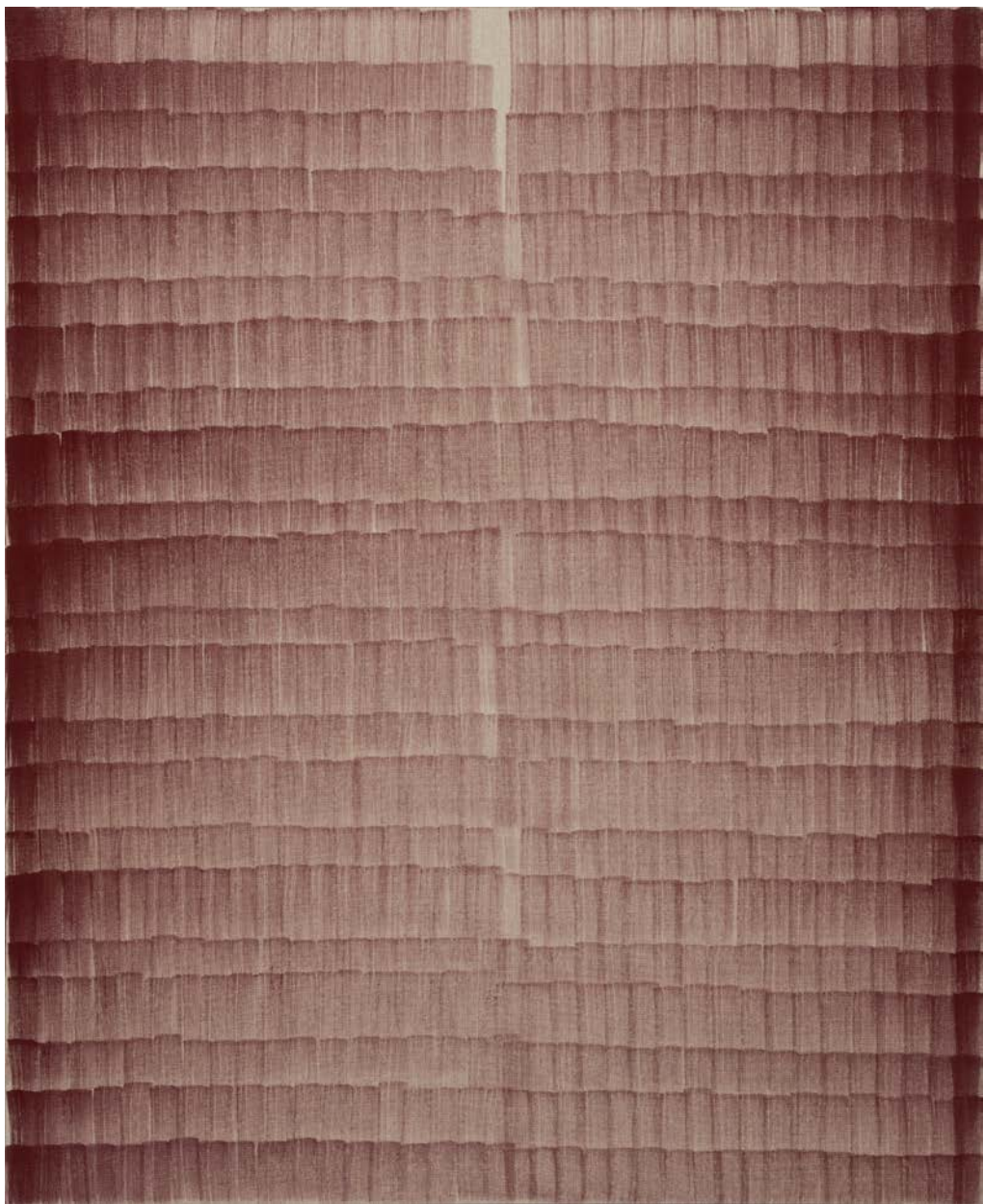
100 x 70 cm



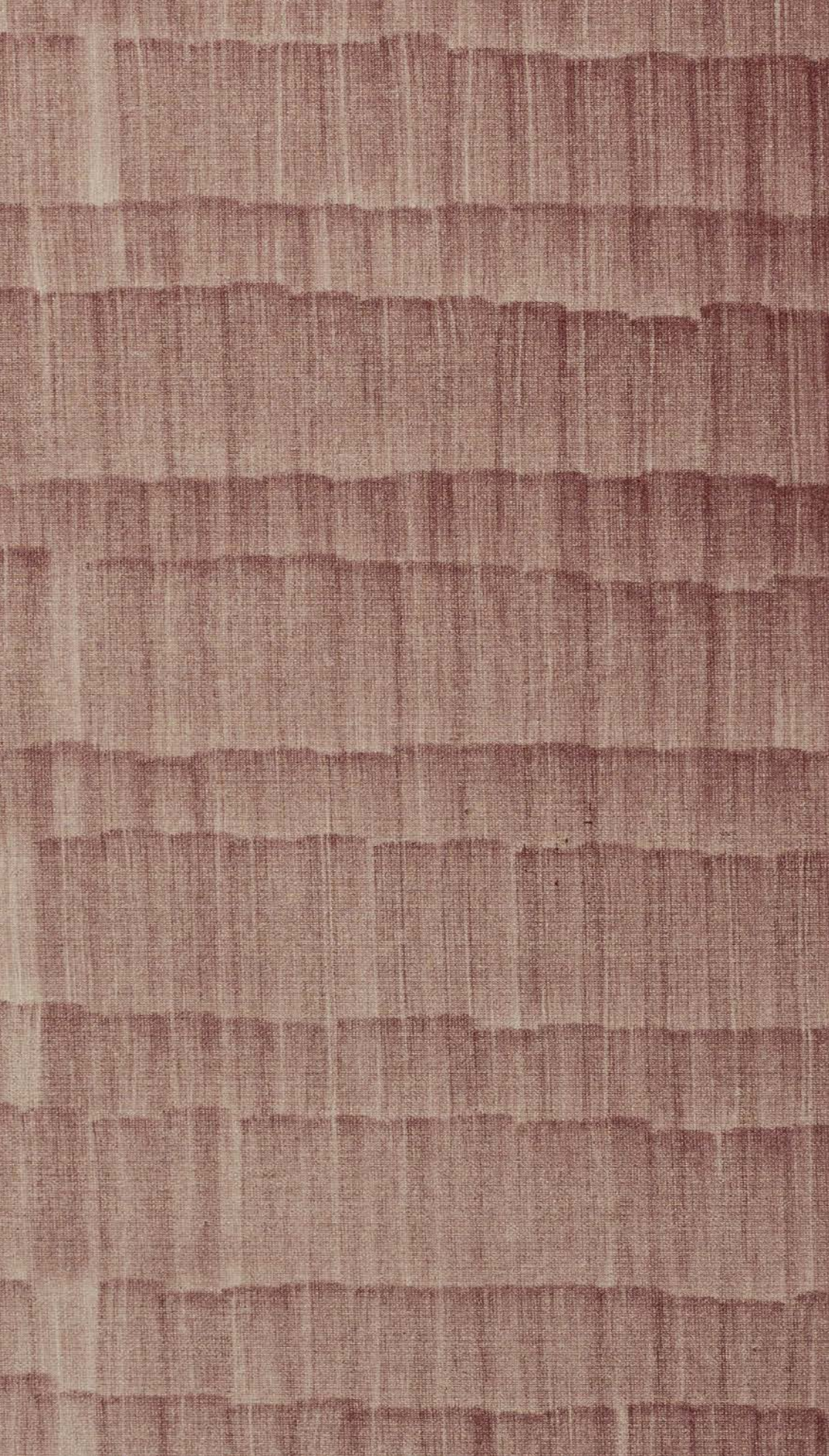
*Caput mortem ghost*

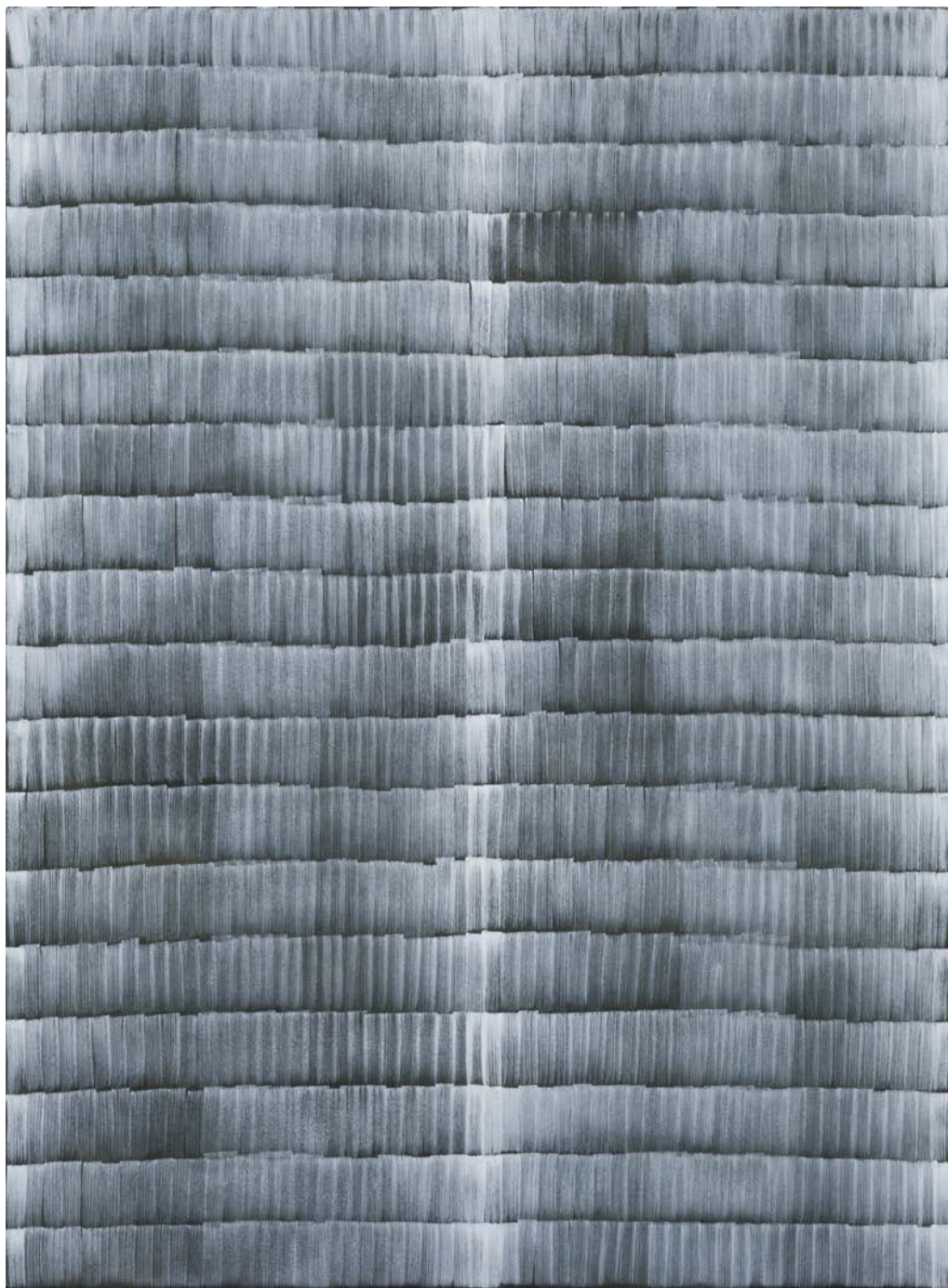
oil on Fabiano Rosapina paper

100 x 70 cm

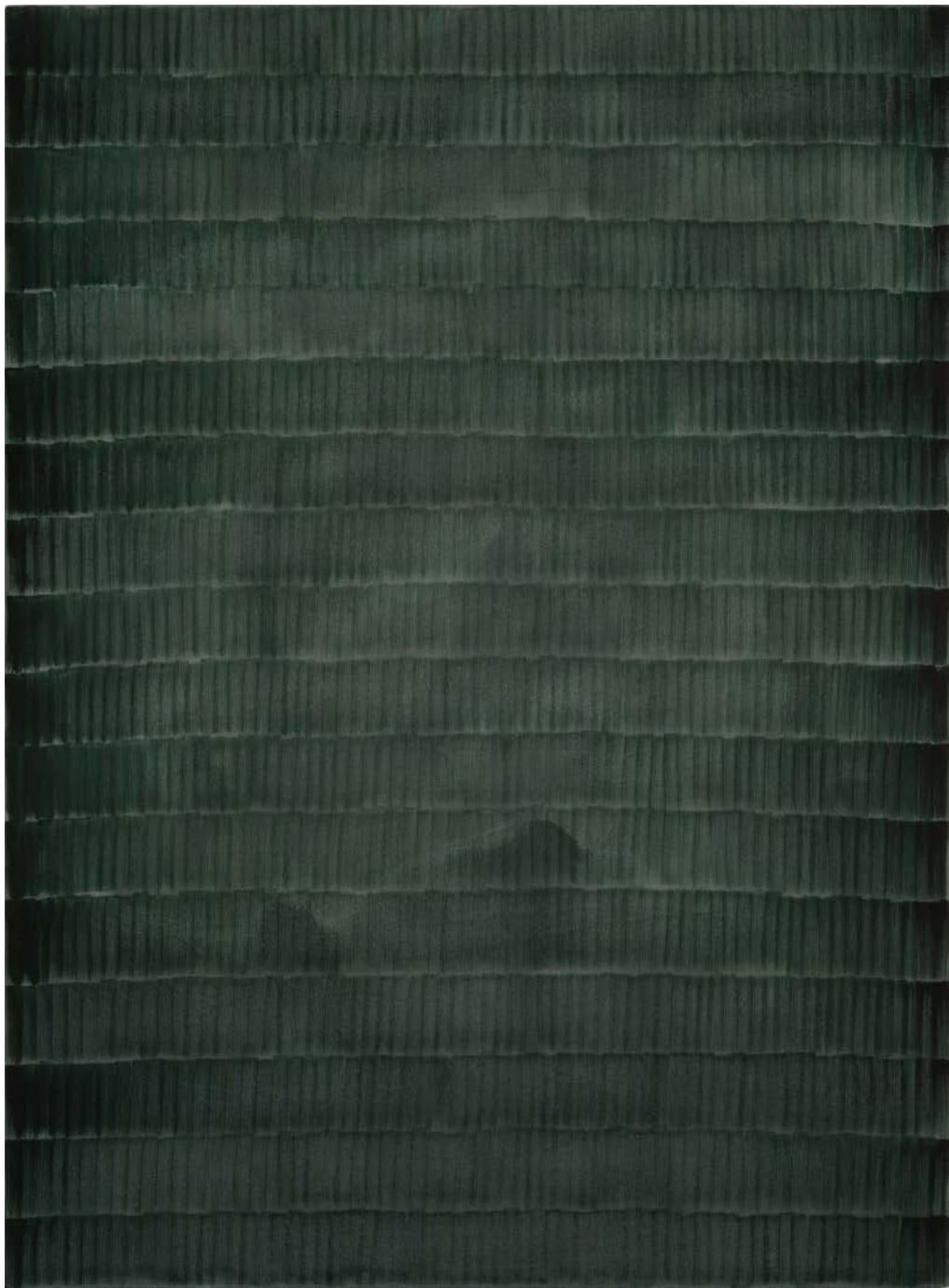


*Untethered caput mortem*  
oil on Italian cotton canvas  
54 x 44 cm

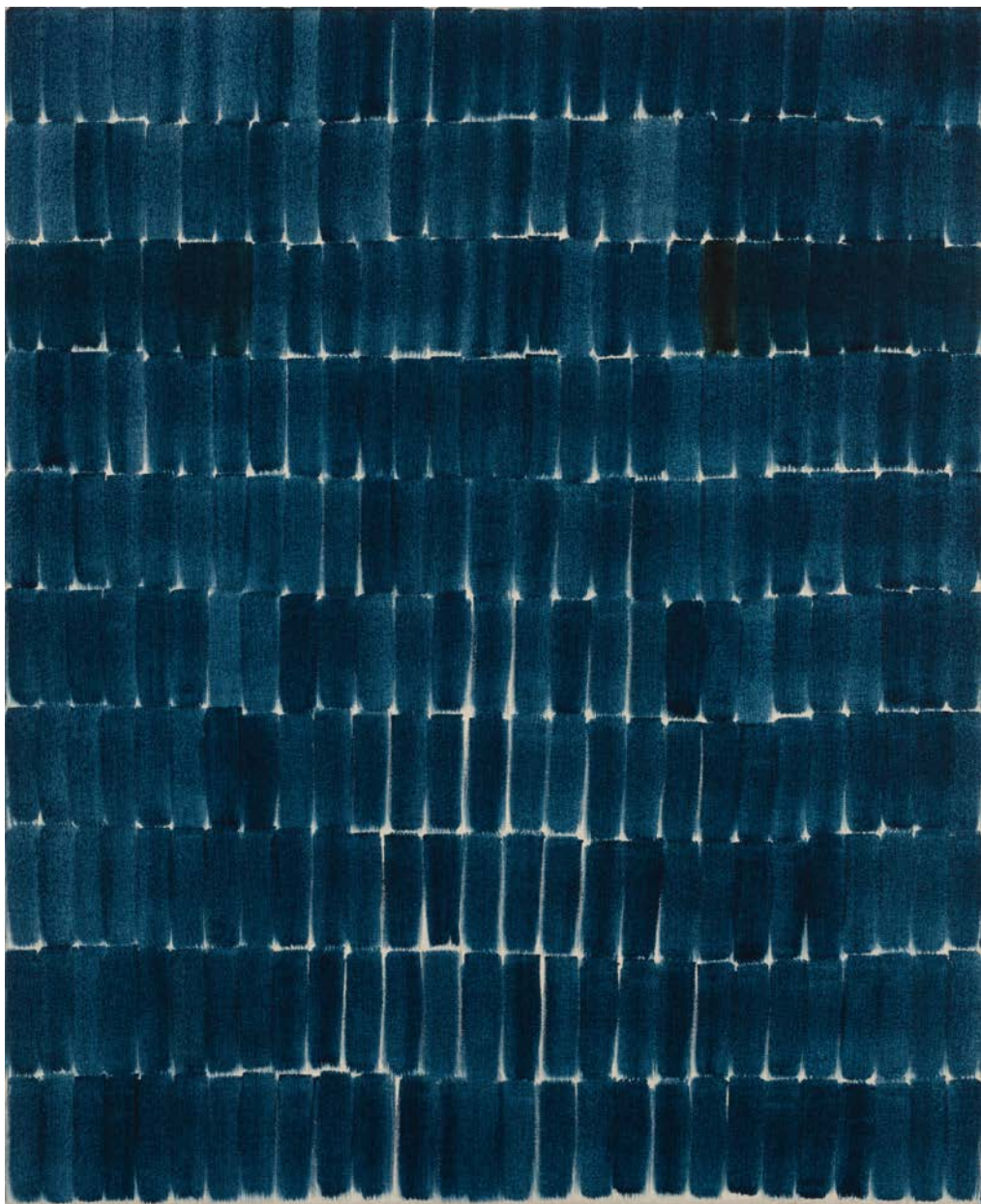




*Light spectre*  
oil on dyed linen  
98 x 72 cm



*Dark spectre*  
oil on linen  
98 x 72 cm



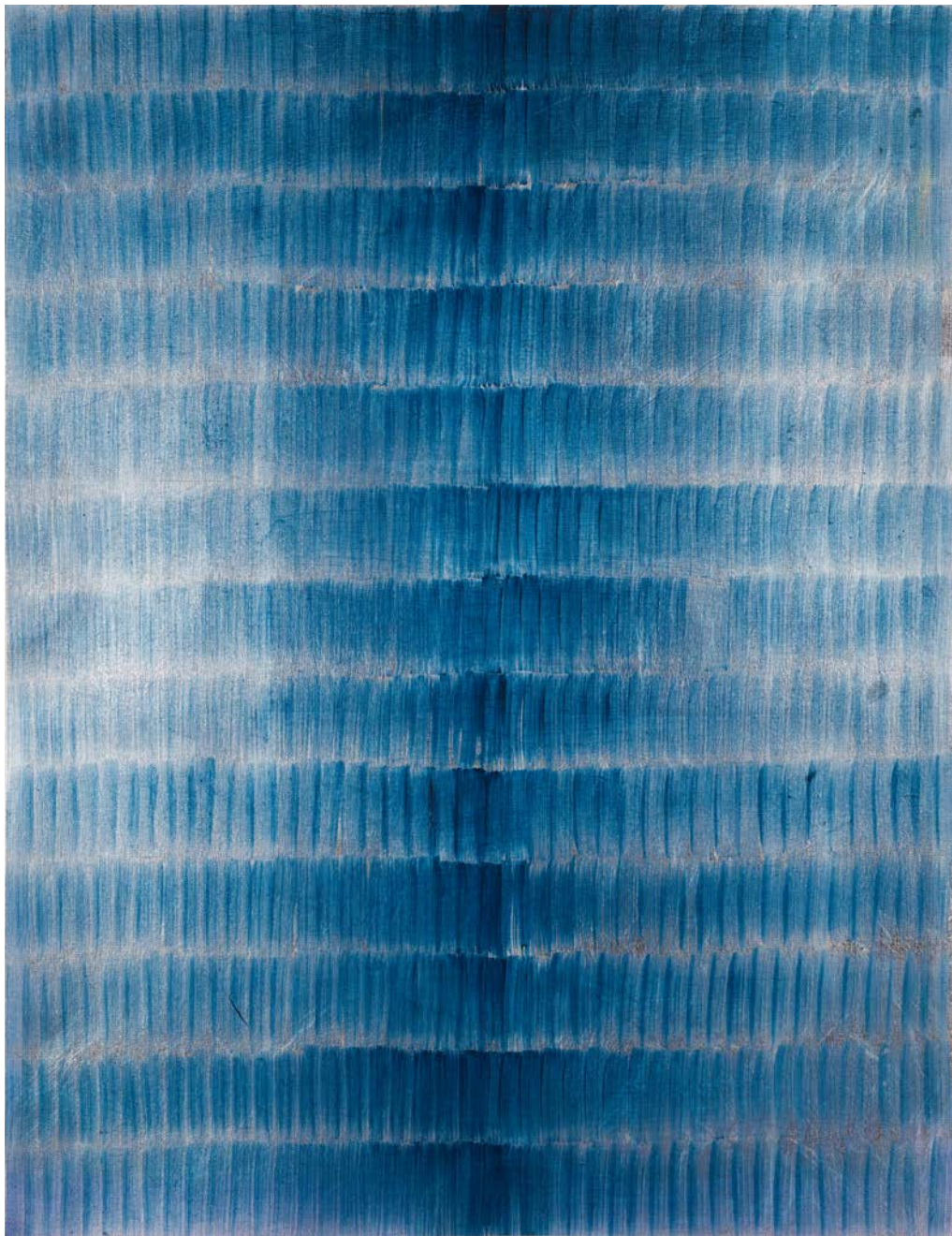
*Indigo eighteen strokes II*  
oil on Italian cotton canvas  
54 x 44 cm



*Indigo pathway I*  
oil and acrylic on green  
painters cotton  
54 x 44 cm



*Indigo pathway II*  
oil and acrylic on green  
painters cotton  
54 x 44 cm



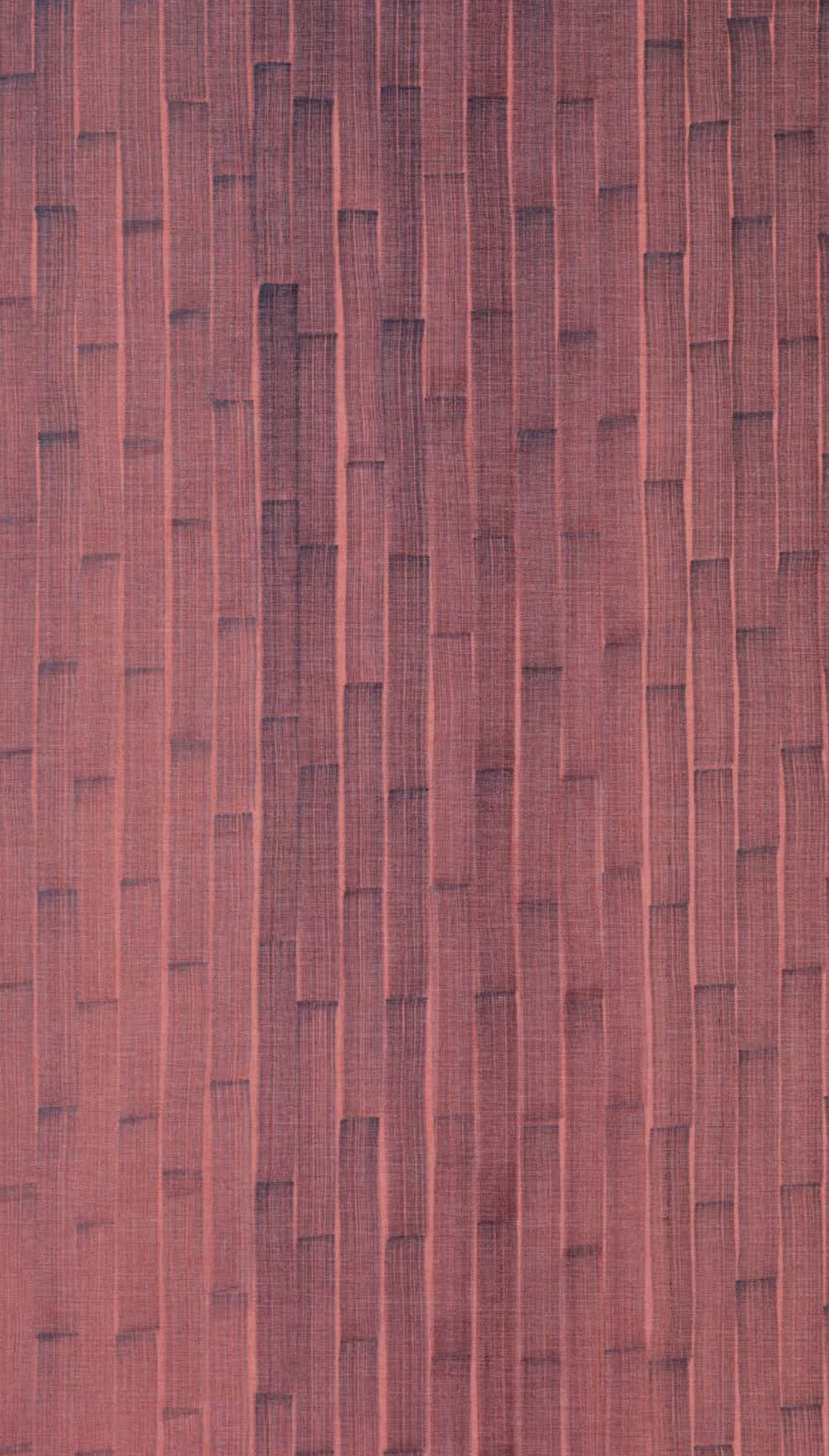
*Indigo silver leaf 18*

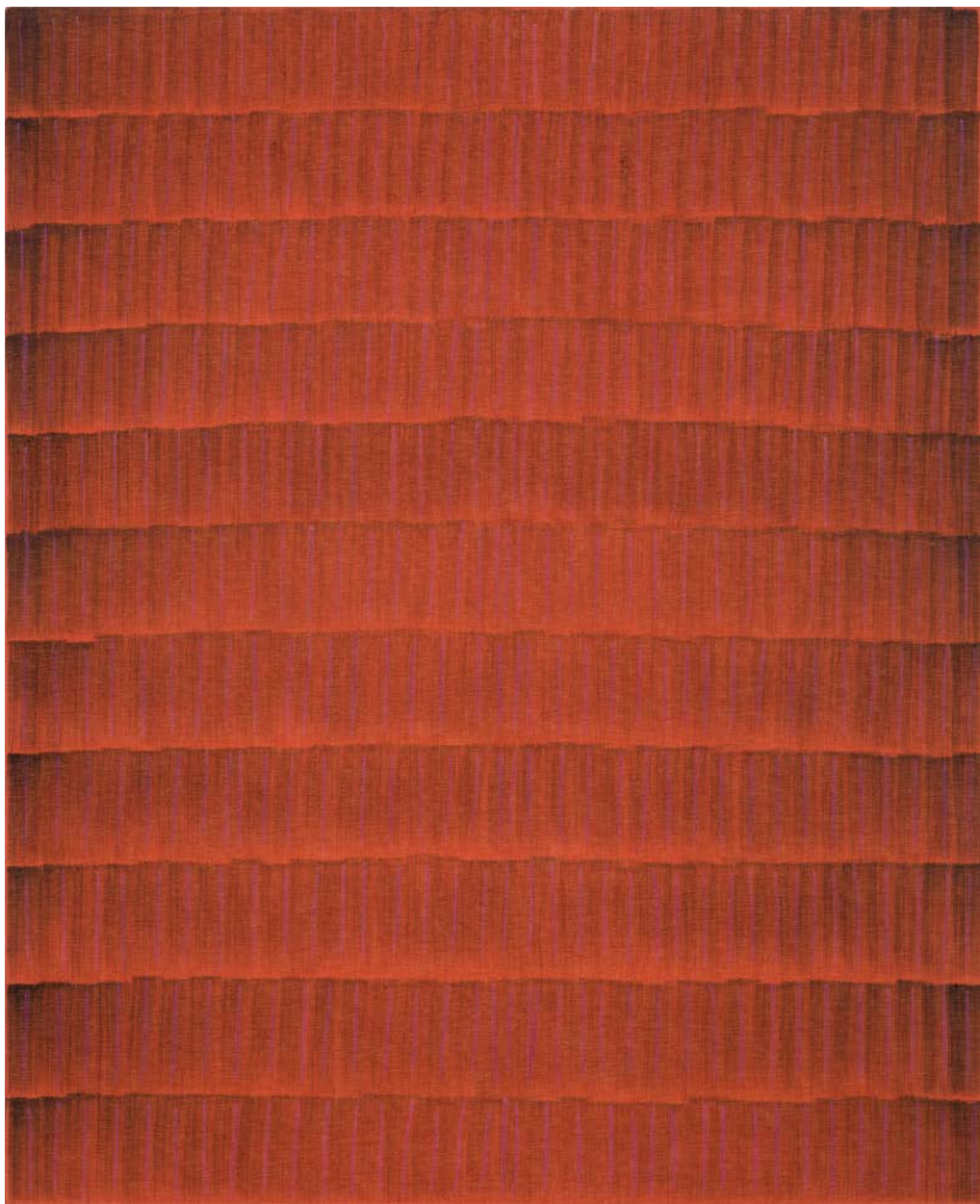
oil and silver leaf on Fabiano Tela paper

70 x 50 cm

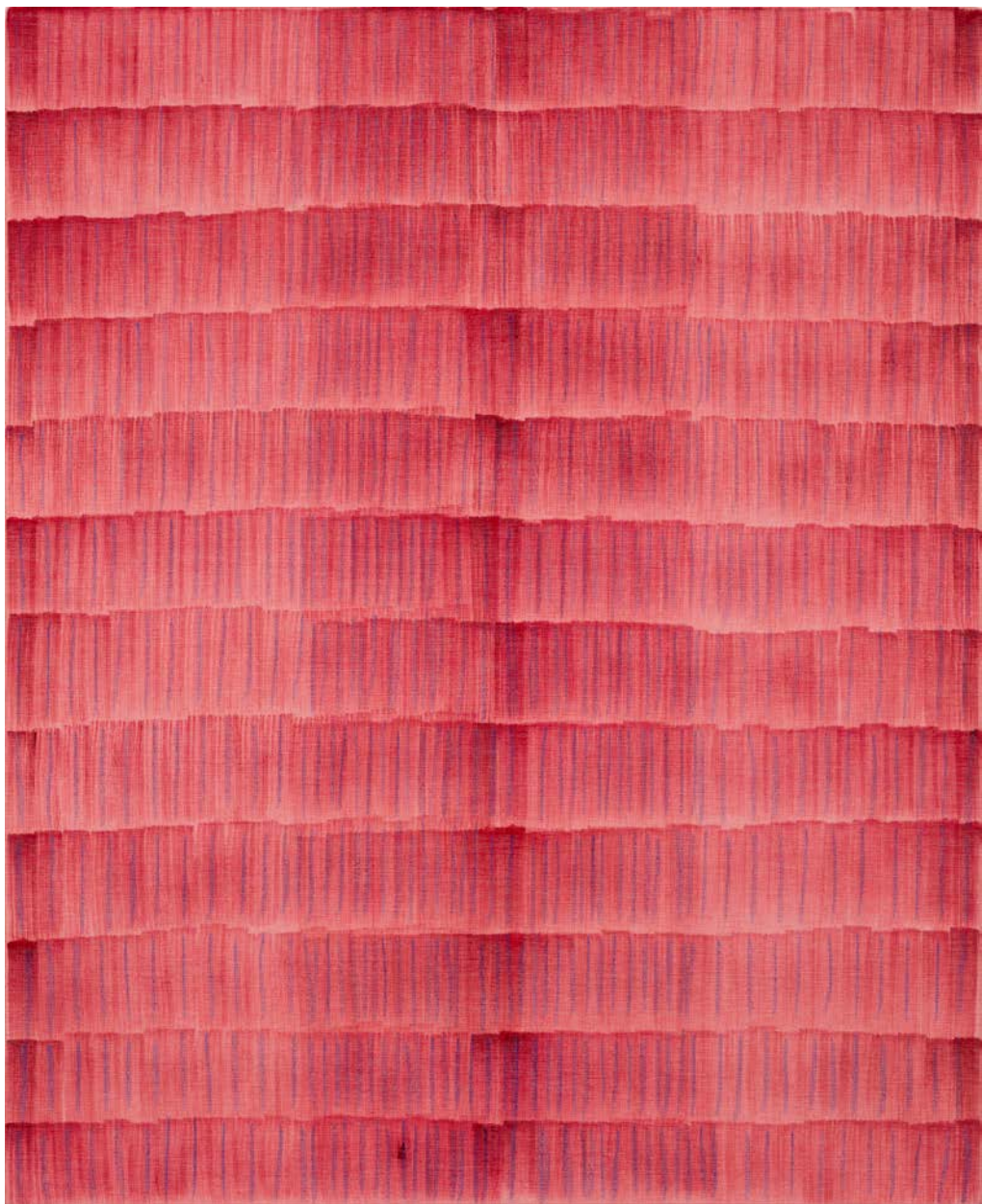


*The dream indigo to red*  
oil and gesso on book linen  
126 x 98 cm

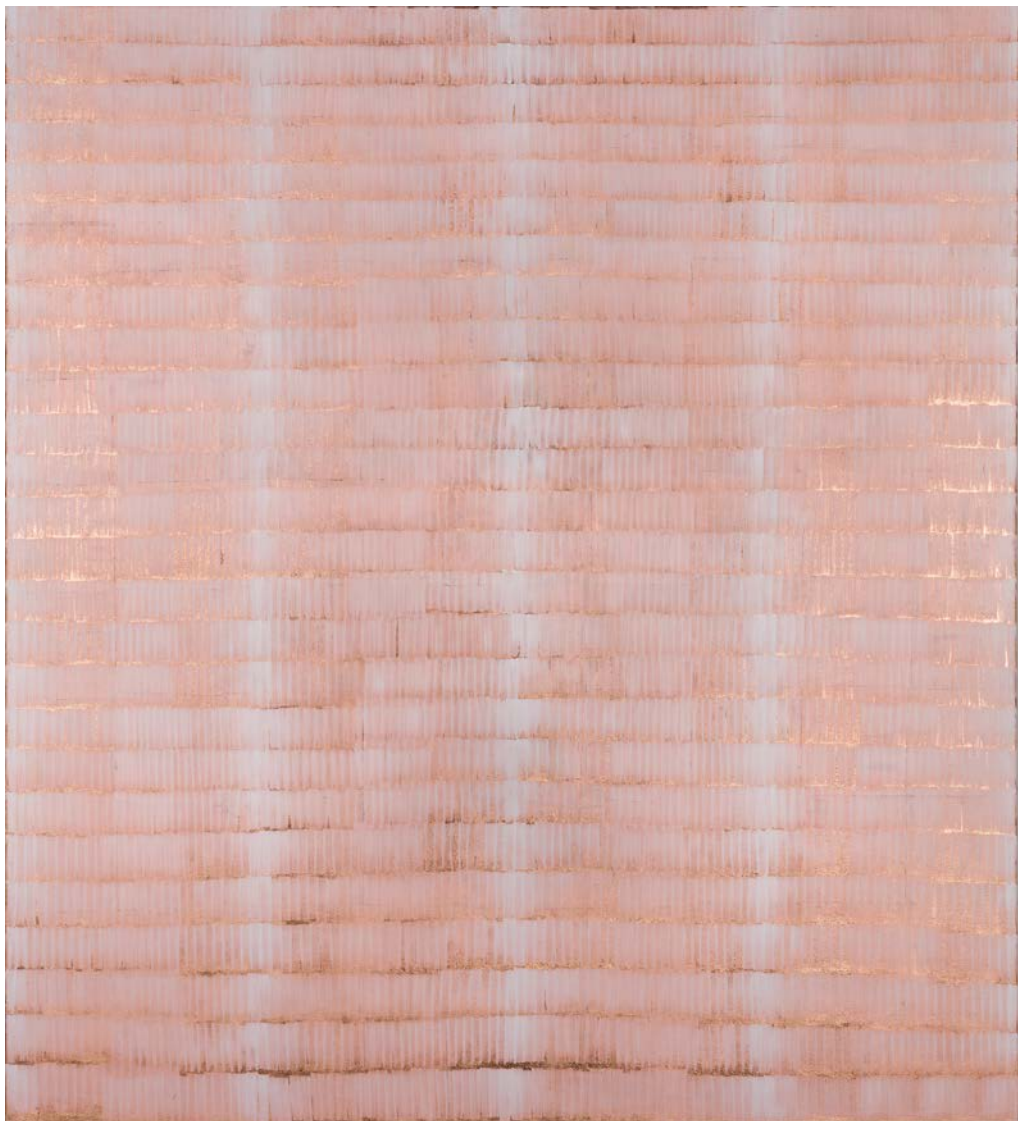




*Counting to life indigo on rust*  
oil and pastel on book linen  
54 x 44 cm

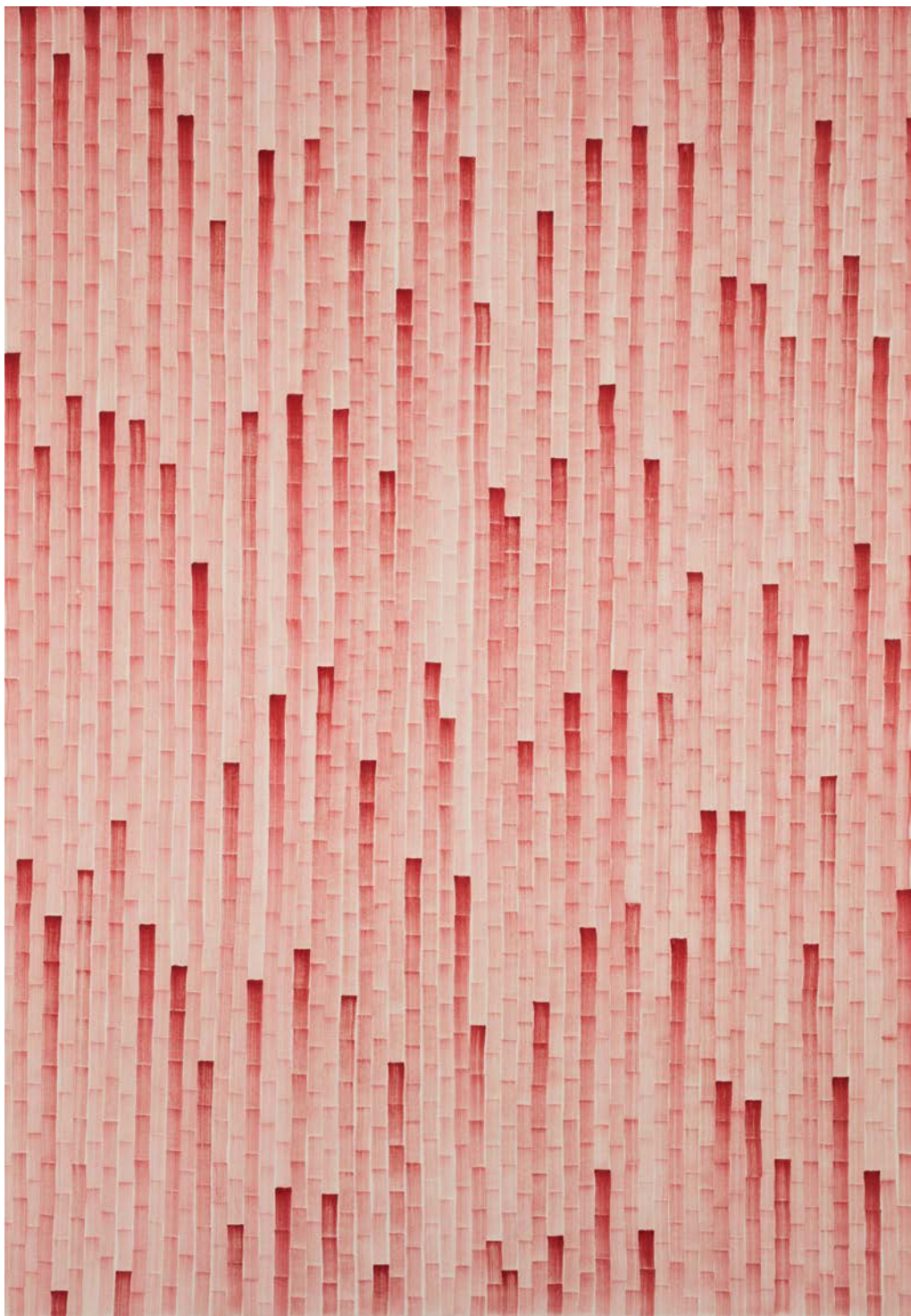


*Spectral counting red*  
oil and pastel on book linen  
54 x 44 cm



*Spectral copper*  
oil and copper leaf on dyed indigo linen  
140 x 126 cm





*Tears of fire*

oil on Italian cotton canvas

144 x 100 cm



*Light spectre white on red*

oil on book linen

54 x 44 cm



*Copper ghost*

oil and copper leaf on dyed red linen

63 x 60 cm



*Copper blue 18*  
oil and copper leaf on dyed indigo linen  
54 x 44 cm

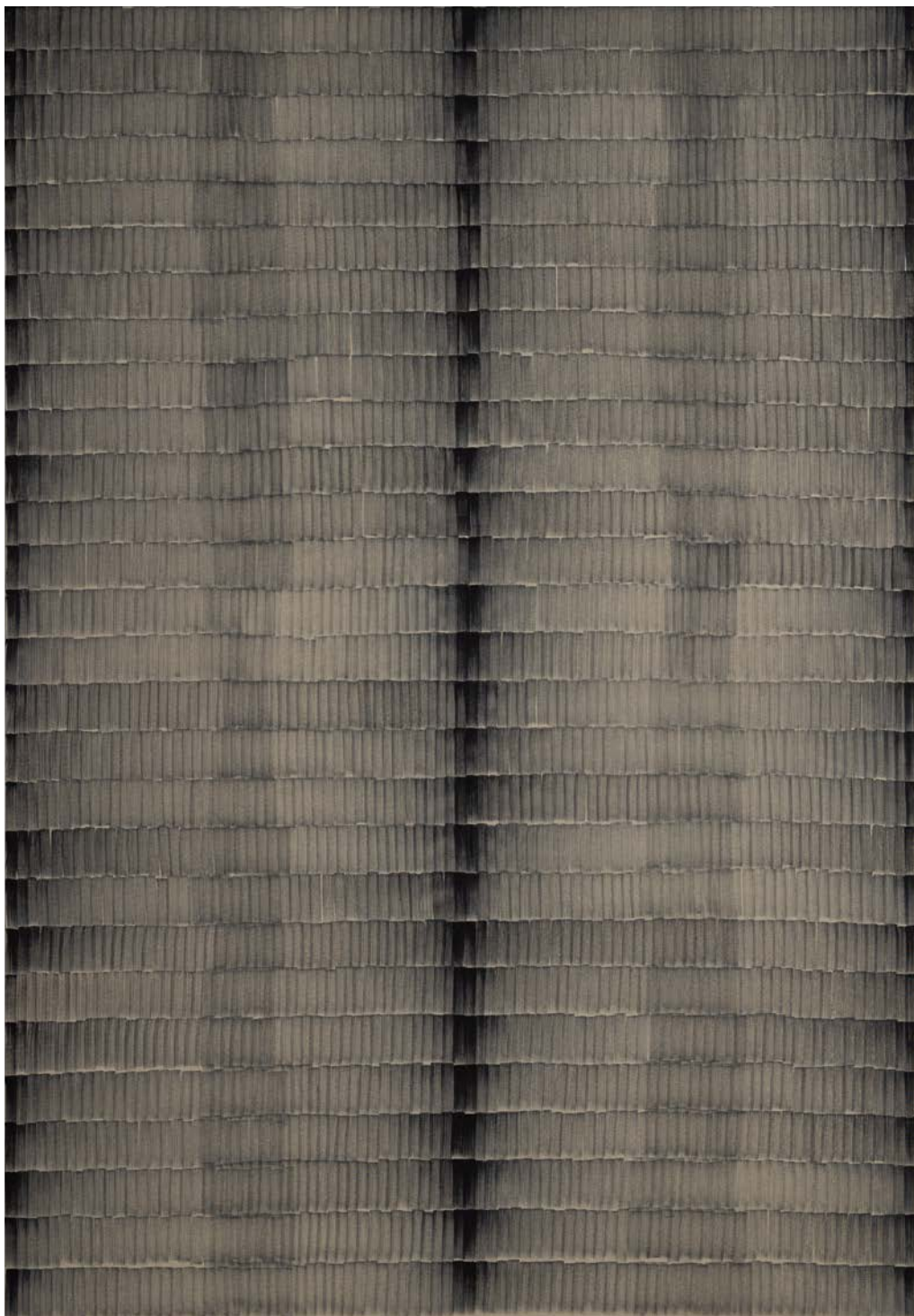


*Copper green 18*

oil and copper leaf on Italian cotton

54 x 44 cm

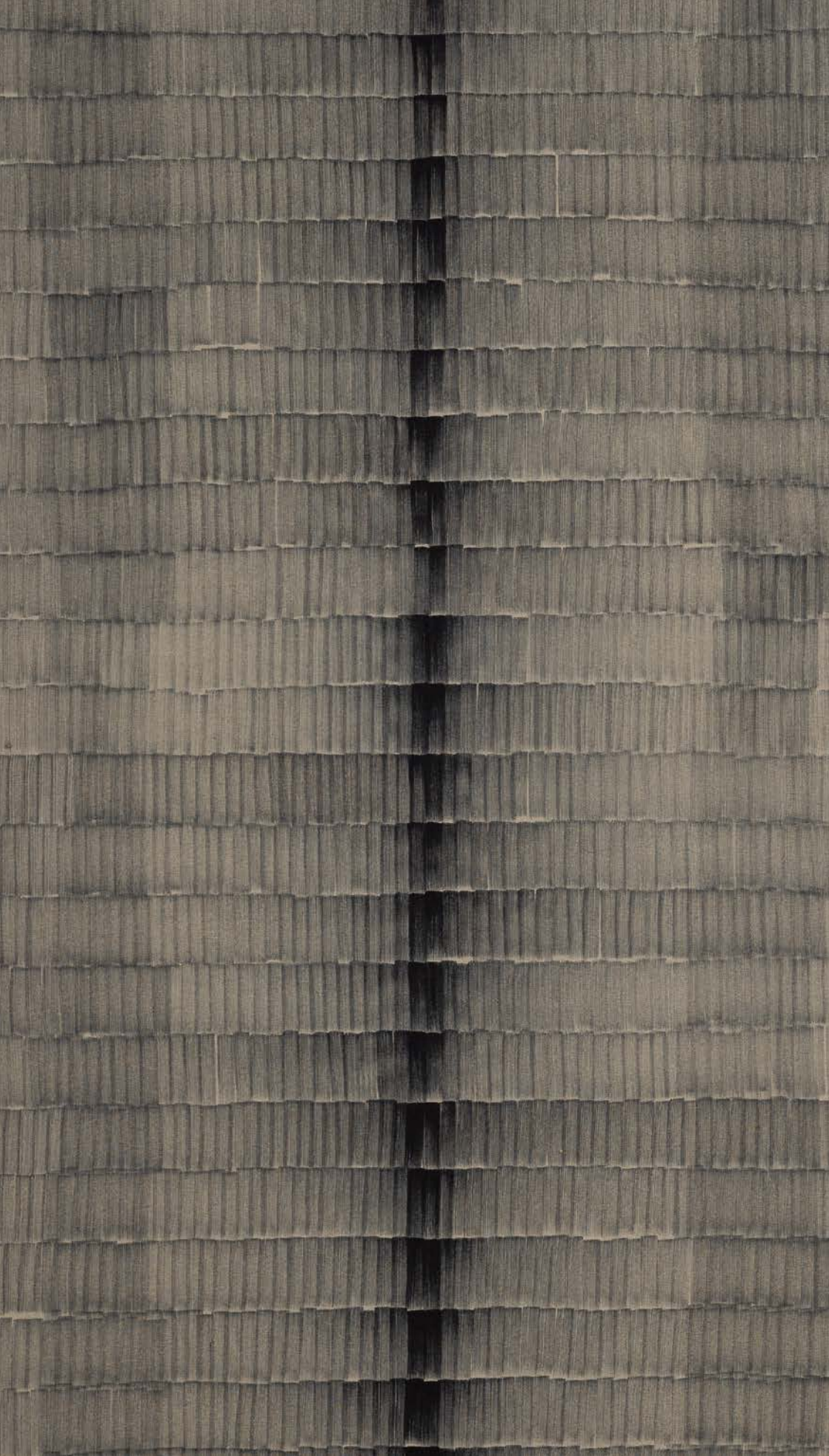


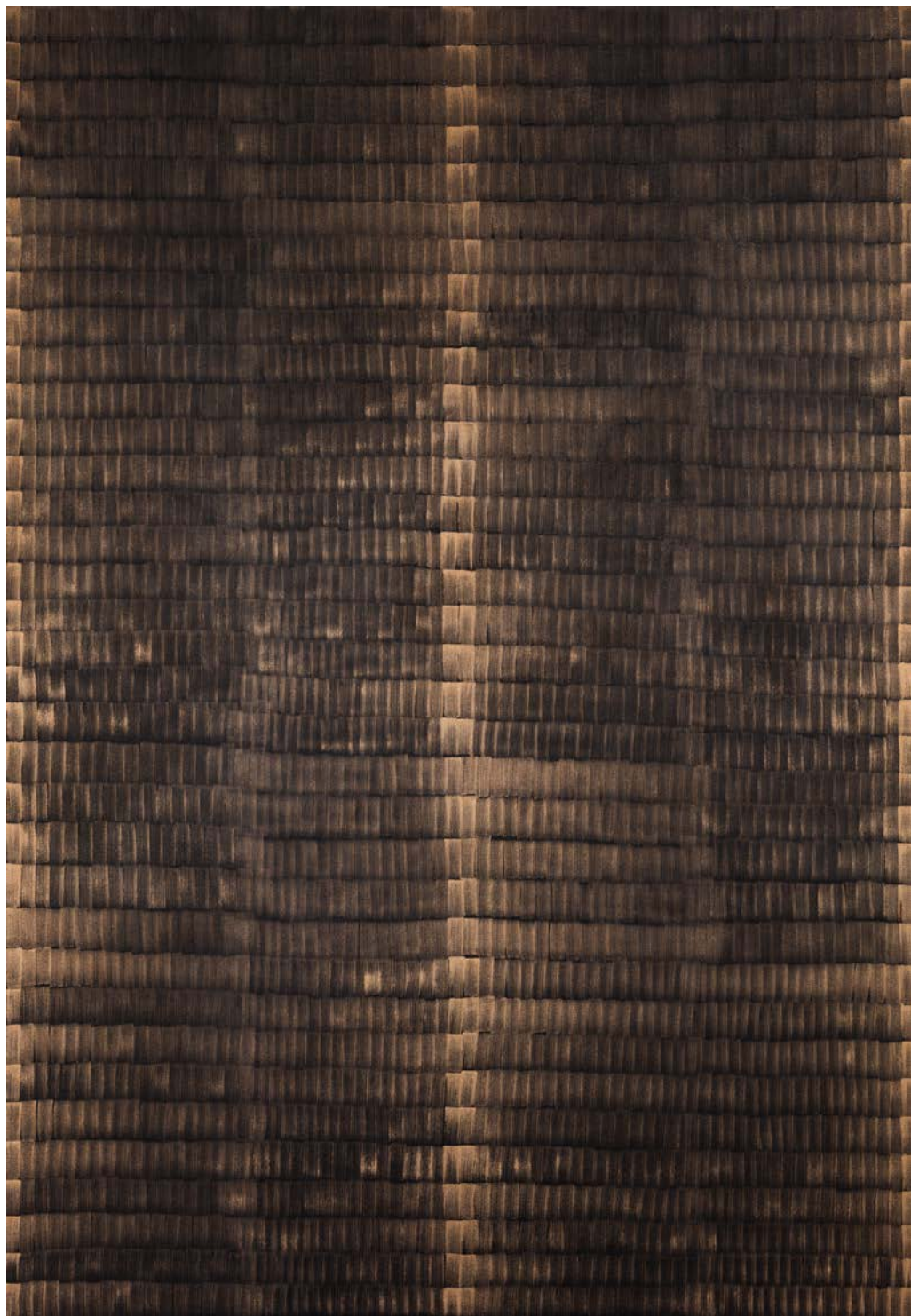


*Residual haunting peach black*

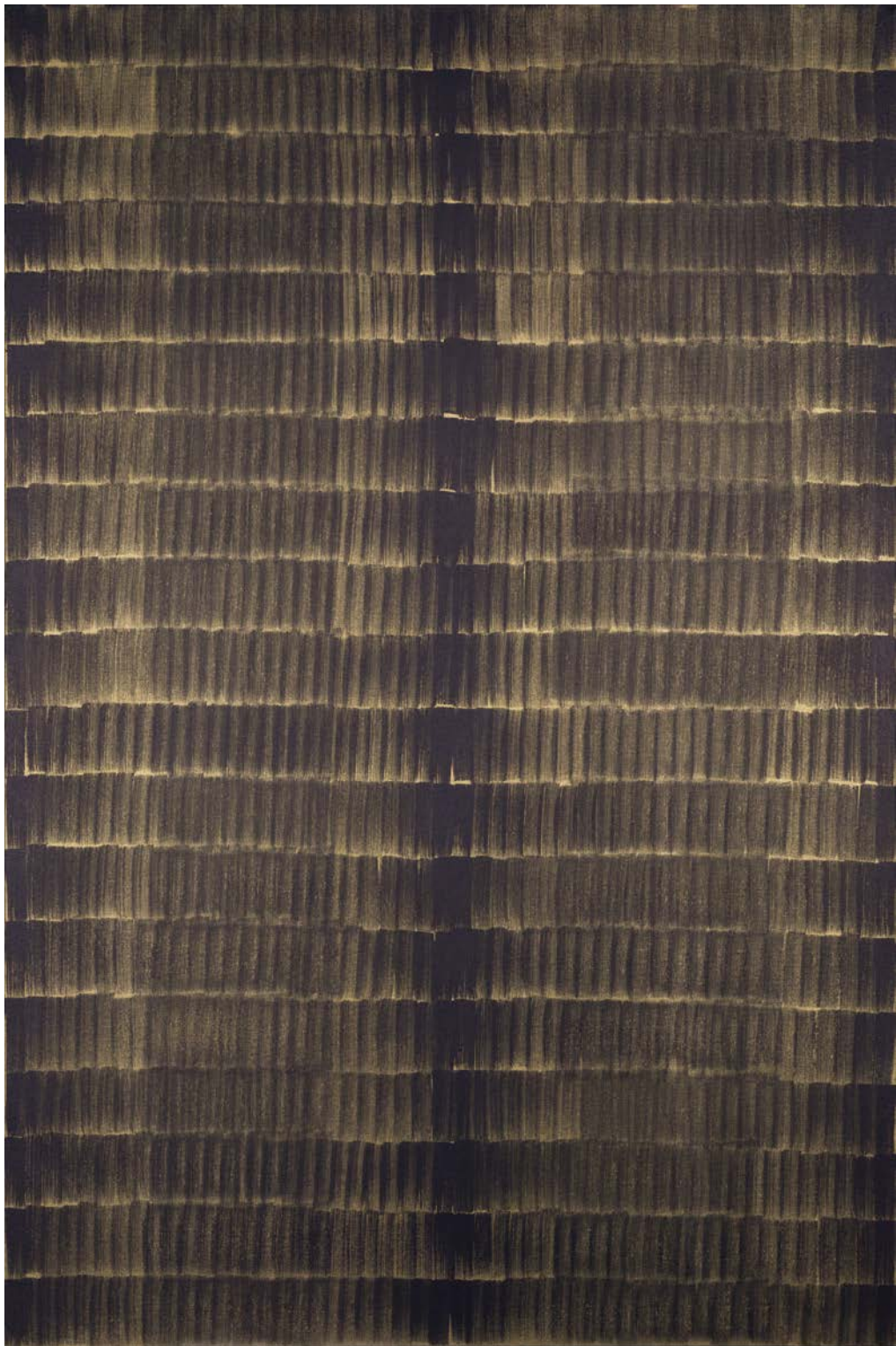
oil on Italian cotton canvas

144 x 100 cm





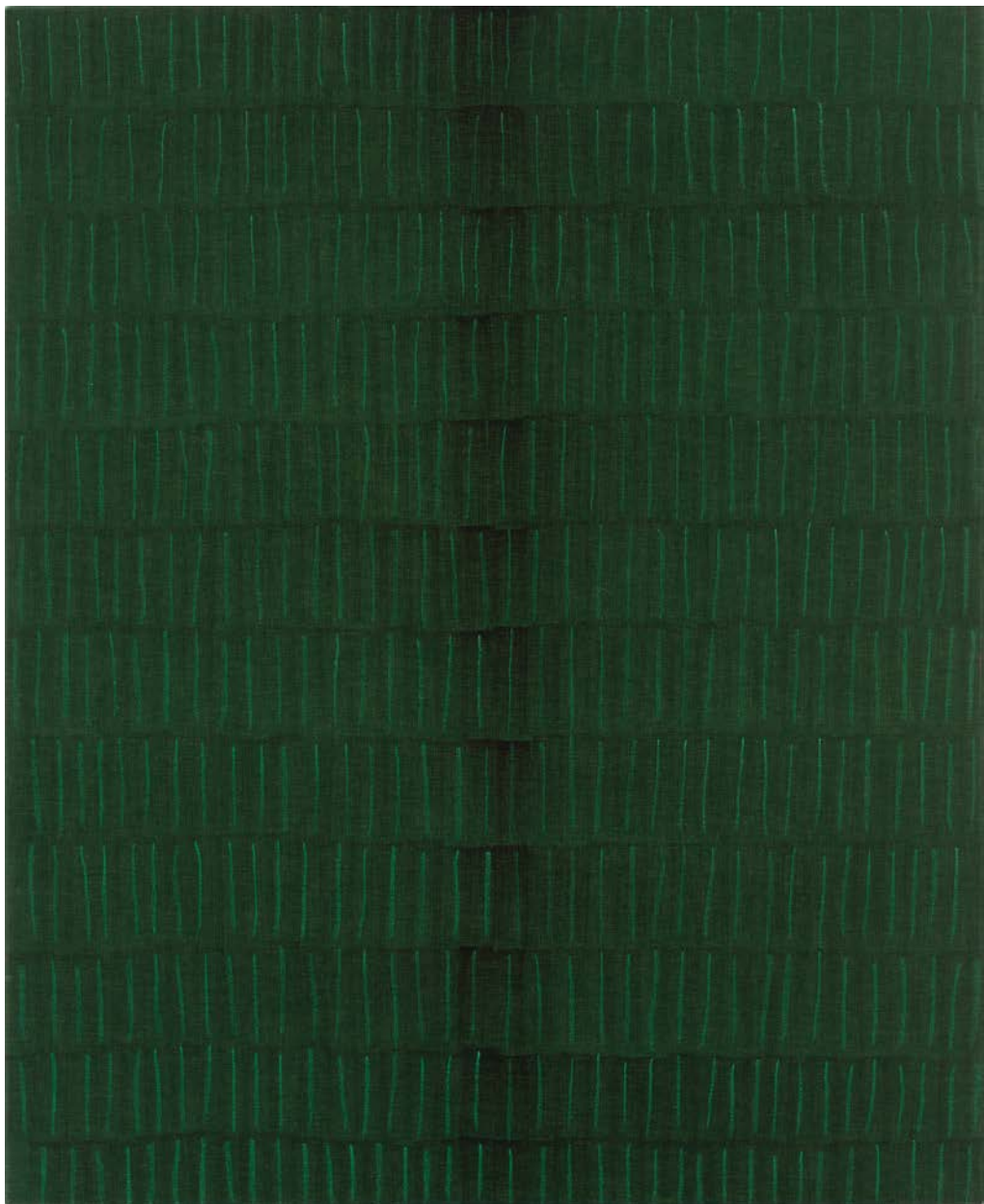
*Golden spine II*  
oil on Italian cotton canvas  
144 x 100 cm



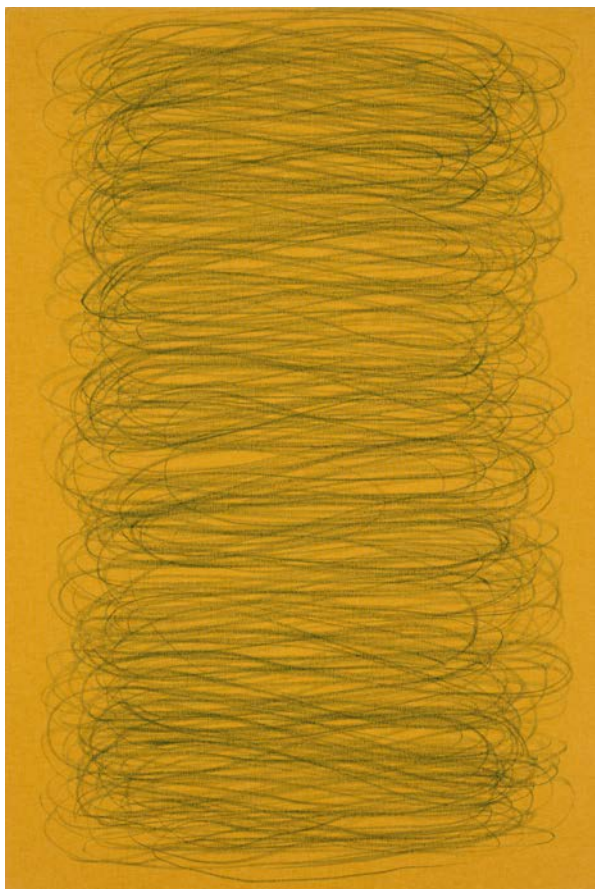
*Ghost on gold*

oil and acrylic on Italian cotton

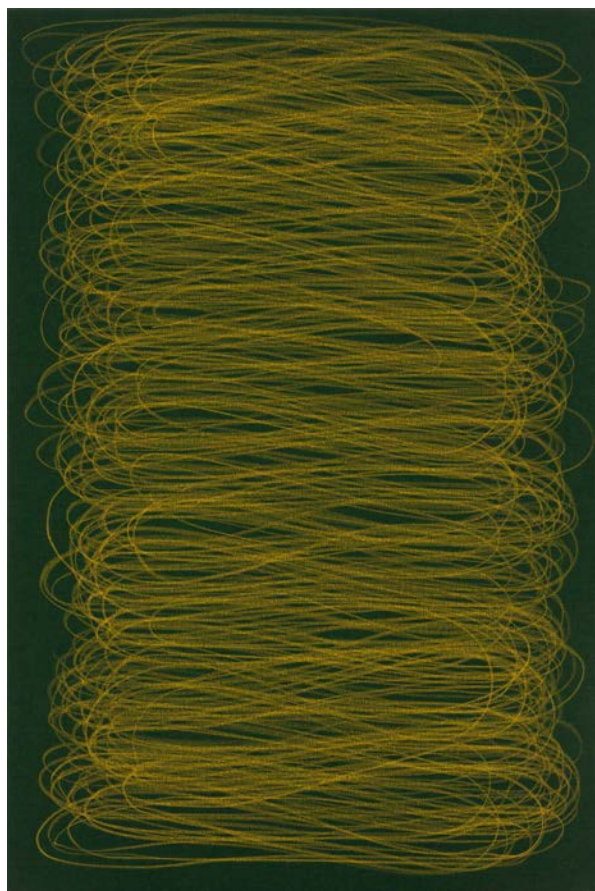
90 x 60 cm



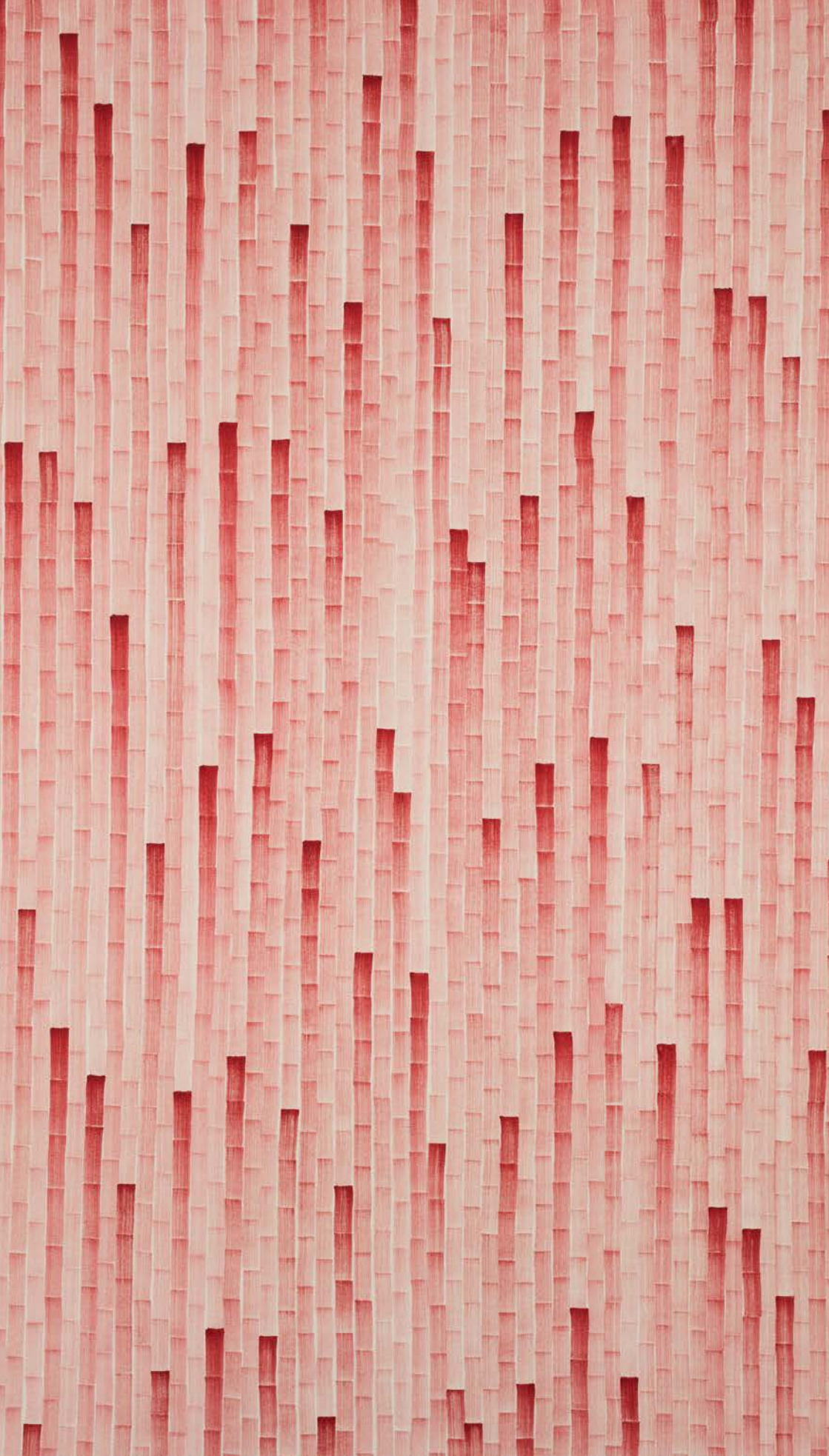
*Ghostly rain green on green*  
oil and pastel on book linen  
54 x 44 cm



*The two eights green on gold*  
pastel on raw book linen  
90 x 60 cm



*The two eights gold on green*  
pastel on raw book linen  
90 x 60 cm



## CATHY ABRAHAM

b. 1968, Cape Town, South Africa

Cathy Abraham specialised in process-based art at the Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town, where she earned a Post Graduate Diploma in 2016 and a Master's in Fine Art in 2018. Her work is included in the IZIKO South African National Gallery Collection, the Rupert Collection, the Spier Art Collection in South Africa as well as the Kilbourne collection in South Africa.

'My practice is deeply rooted in repetition as a material prayer. Invoking transformation and healing, these prayers address past sufferings that continue to haunt the present. Appearing as shadows in the overlapping "ghosts" of colliding brushstrokes, such hauntings give form to otherwise formless traumas, the apparitions tracing the wound in its residue. My unfolding engagement with numbers, symmetries, and ritual action is meditative and devotional, a means of transcending the self towards an understanding of the interconnected, miraculous nature of all beings.'

– Cathy Abraham, 2025

In 2025 Abraham presented a solo exhibition, *A Sacred Matter*, at Everard Read, Franschoek, South Africa. Further solo presentations include: *A Shifted Season*, presented by Untitled at FNB Art Joburg, Johannesburg, South Africa in 2024; *The Fallen Sparks of Tohu*, with IBI Art at Contemporary Istanbul, Turkey; *Yielding to the Shadow*, with IBI Art at the Investec Cape Town Art Fair, South Africa, both in 2023; *22 Pathways* at Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa in 2022; *Spaces: The Abyss of Deep Time*, at The Fourth, Cape Town,



South Africa in 2021; *A Deeper Kind of Nothing and The Monument* at Glen Carlou, Franschoek, South African in 2019.

Selected group presentations include: Investec Cape Town Art Fair with Locus Projects in 2025; RMB Latitudes presented by RESERVOIR, Johannesburg, South Africa in 2024; *What I feel when I think about the cosmos* at Everard Read Franschoek, South Africa in 2023; *Seduction* at Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa in 2022; *Conversations with Irma* at Irma Stern Museum, Cape Town, South Africa in 2019.

## SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2025** Solo booth with Reservoir Projects, Spark Art Fair, Vienna, Austria  
*A Sacred Matter*, Everard Read Franschoek, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2024** *A Shifted Season*, solo booth with Untitled Art, FNB JHB Art Fair, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2023** *The Fallen Sparks of Tohu*, solo booth, Contemporary Istanbul Art Fair, with Locus projects, Istanbul, Turkey  
*Yielding to the Shadow*, solo booth, Investec Cape Town Art Fair, with IBI Art Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2022** *22 Pathways*, Cubicle Series, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2021** *9 Spaces: The abyss of deep time*, The Fourth, Cape Town, South Africa  
*Featured artist Turbine Art Fair*, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2019** *A Deeper Kind of Nothing*, Gallery at Glen Carlou, Stellenbosch, South Africa
- 2018** *A Deeper Kind of Nothing*, Michaelis Galleries, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2013** *Undying Entanglement*, South African Jewish Museum, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2010** *Memory Stains*, IBI Art Alliance Francaise, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2009** *Stripped*, IBI Art Alliance Francaise, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2008** *Naked*, Joao Ferreira Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

## SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2025** *A Repeated Refrain*, duo art booth with Locus projects Cape Town art fair, Cape Town, South Africa  
*Motherhood*, Iziko South African National Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2024** *RMB Latitudes Art Fair* with Reservoir projects, Johannesburg, South Africa  
*Winter 24/25*, Everard Read, London, UK  
*Southern Light*, Everard Read, London, UK  
*Artissima International Contemporary Art Fair*, WHATIFTHEWORLD, Turin, Italy  
*Winter Collection*, Everard Read, Franschoek, South Africa
- 2023** *What I Feel When I Think About The Cosmos*, Everard Read, Franschoek, South Africa  
*Winter*, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa  
*September Selection*, Everard Read, London, UK  
*Summer*, Everard Read, London, UK
- 2022** *Seduction*, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2019** *Conversations with Irma*, curated by Christopher Peter, Irma Stern Museum, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2015** *Art /Out of the Ordinary*, curated by Marilyn Martin, Association of Visual Arts, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2014** *Seeking Eden*, curated by Margie Murgatroyd, Casa Labia, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2013** *My Mother's Garden*, Arts on Main, Johannesburg, South Africa  
*In Good Company*, curated by Michael Chandler, Irma Stern Museum, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2011** *Domestic Departures*, The Forge, Cape Town, South Africa

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Opening hours: Monday to Thursday 10 am – 6 pm  
Friday 10 am – 5 pm | Saturdays 12 pm – 4 pm

PHOTOGRAPHY CREDITS

Mia Thom and Pascal Bier

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