MIRIAM CAHN



SELECTED WORKS

BIOGRAPHY

Miriam Cahn was born in 1949 in Basel, she lives and works in Stampa, Switzerland.

Miriam Cahn's artistic practice, consisting mainly of figurative painting, explores social topics related to her objection to all forms of oppression, and in reaction to current political issues including gender-based violence, migratory conflicts and armed conflicts. In dialogue with the European feminist movements of the 1970s, the body remains central in her works, both as a subject and as an artistic medium.

She has received prestigious awards and prizes, such as the Käthe Kollwitz Prize in Berlin in 1998, the Meret Oppenheim Prize of the Swiss Federal Office of Culture in 2005, Baseler Kunstpreis in Basel in 2013, and the Rubenspreis of the city of Siegen in 2021. In 1984, she represented Switzerland at the Venice Biennale. In 2017, she took part in Documenta 14 in Kassel and Athens. In 2022, her work is yet again presented at the 59th International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale"The Milk of Dreams."

Many solo exhibitions have been devoted to her work, internationally, including a major exhibition at Palais de Tokyo in Paris, france in 2023; "MEINEJUDEN" at the Museum für Gegenwartskunst in Siegen in 2022; "ME AS HAPPENING," presented at The Power Plant, Toronto Canada and at the Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen Denmark in 2021; "I as Human," a travelling exhibition in 2019 co-organised by three major institutions at the Haus der Kunst, Munich, Kunstmuseum Bern, and the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw; "everything is equally important" at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid in 2017; "körperlich/corporel," the artist's first major retrospective in France at the Swiss Cultural Centre in Paris in 2014; and at the Fundación La Caixa in Madrid in 2003.

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MIRIAM CAHN

TRAUMBEFEHL

15 November 2025 –17 January 2026

Meyer Riegger, Berlin

Miriam Cahn's new exhibition at Meyer Riegger, Berlin represents a powerful and radical evolution of the artist's multi-decade practice. TRAUMBEFEHL consists of a single, monumental 'room installation' that extends over both floors of the gallery.

Comprising paintings and drawings on different materials, which mix her hitherto characteristic figurative style with more abstract and text-based pieces, as well as sculptural elements, the artwork is made up of 174 individual components that are conceived of as one cohesive group. For the presentation of the piece at Meyer Riegger, Berlin, the artist has devised a unique installation in dialogue with the physical space of the gallery. Dealing with themes of mortality and dreaming, in TRAUMBEFEHL visitors are invited to follow a predetermined path set by the artist and to 'read' Cahn's observations of her day-to-day life.

An artist's booklet containing a text by Miriam Cahn has been produced to accompany the exhibition.

Source : Meyer Riegger Website (https://meyer-riegger.com/en/exhibitions/traumbefehl)




ICHTS


SCHŌN WĀR'S
NICHTFLÜCHTENHŪSSEN


NEU


FUCK
ABST
RACT
ION




KÖRPERGENUG





MIRIAM CAHN

WHAT LOOKS AT US

June 26, 2025 – October 27, 2025

Curators: João Pinharanda and Sérgio Mah
Maat - Museum of art, Lisbon

Miriam Cahn (Basel, 1949) is a prominent figure on the European contemporary art scene. Her work has received widespread critical and institutional acclaim in recent years, following important exhibitions at Palais de Tokyo (Paris), Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (Madrid), Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, Haus der Kunst (Munich), Documenta 14 (2017) and Venice Art Biennale (1984 and 2022).

Miriam Cahn's artistic practice, in which painting and drawing feature prominently, but which also includes other media such as sculpture, installation, video, and photography, explores topics related to her objection to all forms of oppression and reaction to current social and political issues, including gender violence, migratory problems and armed conflicts. Her work is strongly imbued with the motivations, attitudes and discourses that marked the feminist movements of the 1970s and 80s.

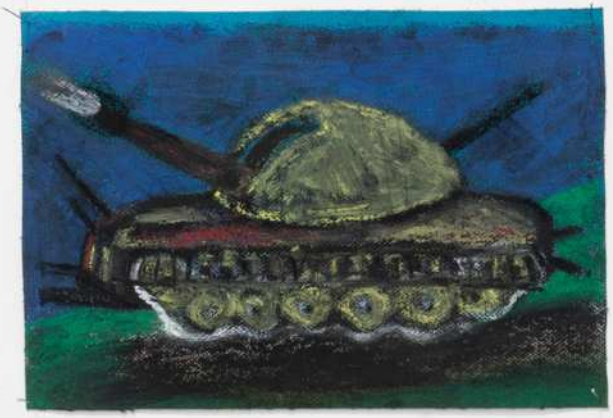
The body is central to her work. According to the curators of the exhibition, João Pinharanda and Sérgio Mah: "The body as a domain with a number of thematic resonances, but also as a creative medium (kindling and adding to certain ways of looking, drawing, painting...), is the core of the artist's imagery."

Miriam Cahn – What looks at us is the artist's first solo exhibition in Portugal.

Source : Maat Website (https://www.maat.pt/en/event/miriam-cahn-what-looks-us












LEBENSZEITALT
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MIRIAM CAHN

READING DUST

October 5, 2024 – January 26, 2025

Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands

Artist Miriam Cahn evokes powerful emotions with simple brushstrokes and a vigorous drawing style. Her paintings and drawings depict human atrocities with brutal reality.

VIGOROUS DRAWING STYLE AND POWERFUL EMOTIONS

Miriam Cahn's visceral imagery evokes powerful emotions through simple brushstrokes and a vigorous drawing style. Using different formats, bursts of color and enigmatic human forms she portrays universal emotions such as anger, fear, loss, vulnerability and power. Cahn paints indistinct, semi-abstract figures – often fragmented and ghostly – in otherworldly landscapes, where she confronts the complexities of human existence. Exploring themes from vulnerability to power, from perpetrators to victims. Her skill in creating maximum impact with minimum means underscores her unique place in the art world.

WAR AND VIOLENCE, CONFLICT AND SORROW

Cahn's work shatters taboos and, in a world in turmoil and violence, serves as a stark warning. Cahn depicts human atrocities with brutal reality. War, sexual violence and racism. Her in-your-face paintings and drawings don't sugarcoat the truth. Cahn's work deliberately provokes and unflinchingly seeks out confrontation.

FEMINIST VOICE

What does it mean to be a woman? Who controls my body? Shaped by feminist theory, the artist unapologetically depicts all the facets of womanhood. She depicts the female body nude and with a raw intimacy, rejecting unrealistic ideals of female beauty. With this she reclaims the female body from the male-dominated system that consistently objectifies, criticizes and seeks to control women's bodies.

Source : Stedelijk Website (https://www.stedelijk.nl/en/exhibitions/miriam-cahn-en)






























MIRIAM CAHN

DEVOIR-PLEURER

September 8, 2023 – October 26, 2024

Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris - Romainville, France

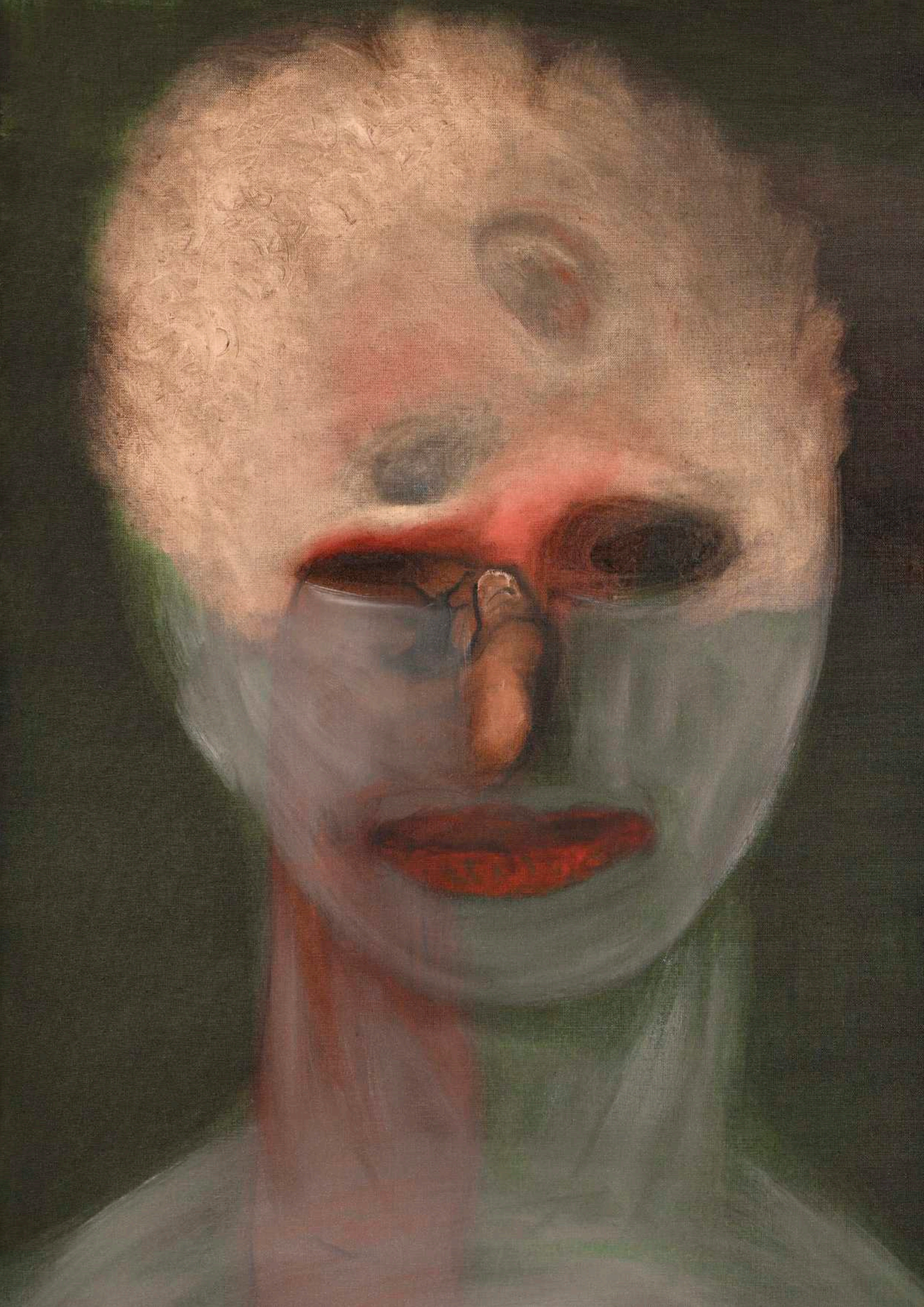
We are pleased to announce Miriam Cahn's fifth solo exhibition with the gallery, «devoir-pleurer», opening on September 8th, 2024. Spanning more than four decades, Miriam Cahn's diverse practice encompasses paintings, works on paper, slideshows, photography, and notebooks. Shaped by her serial thinking1 and reflecting her humanist perspective on the world, her work explores themes ranging from war, its injustice and violence, to individual and intimate experiences of identity and sexuality, such as being a woman or a Jew.
This year, she was honored with two of the most prestigious European art prizes: the Oskar Kokoschka Prize from the Austrian federal government and the Goslar Kaiserring from the city of Goslar.
In October 2024, her solo exhibition READING DUST opens at Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam.

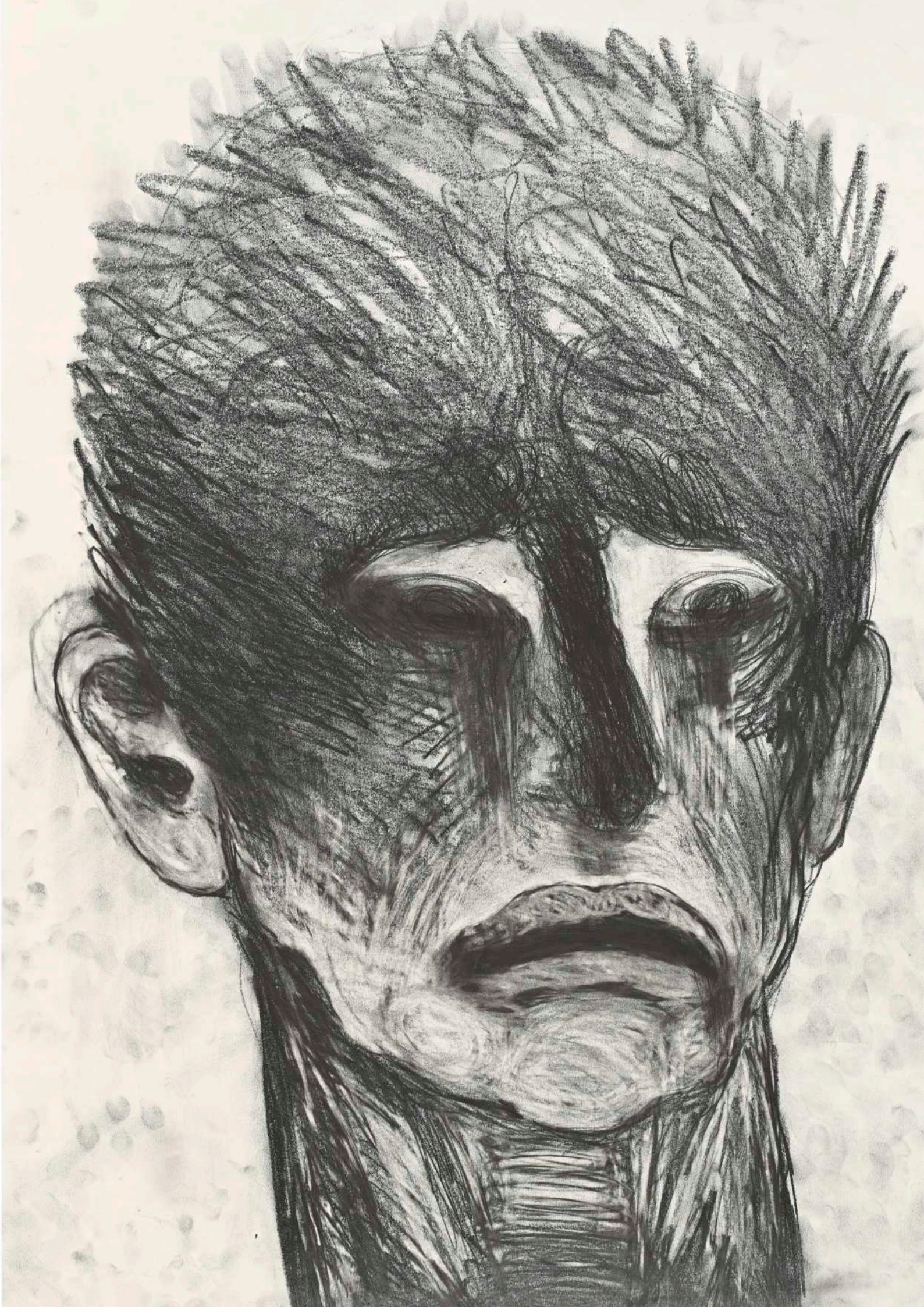
MY RHYTHMIC WRITING

cahn a jewish surname
my father german Jew
me raised in Switzerland without religion
child - I didn't know what Jew meant
my father's school friends were spread all over the world
when they would come to visit us I especially liked their german with american accents and their history/stories
the uncle from Berlin the aunt from Karlsruhe both left-wing zionist kibbutzniks
I only began to understand during puberty
began to see the difference between me and my swiss girlfriends
began to understand why my father learnt Basel german during the war
(...)

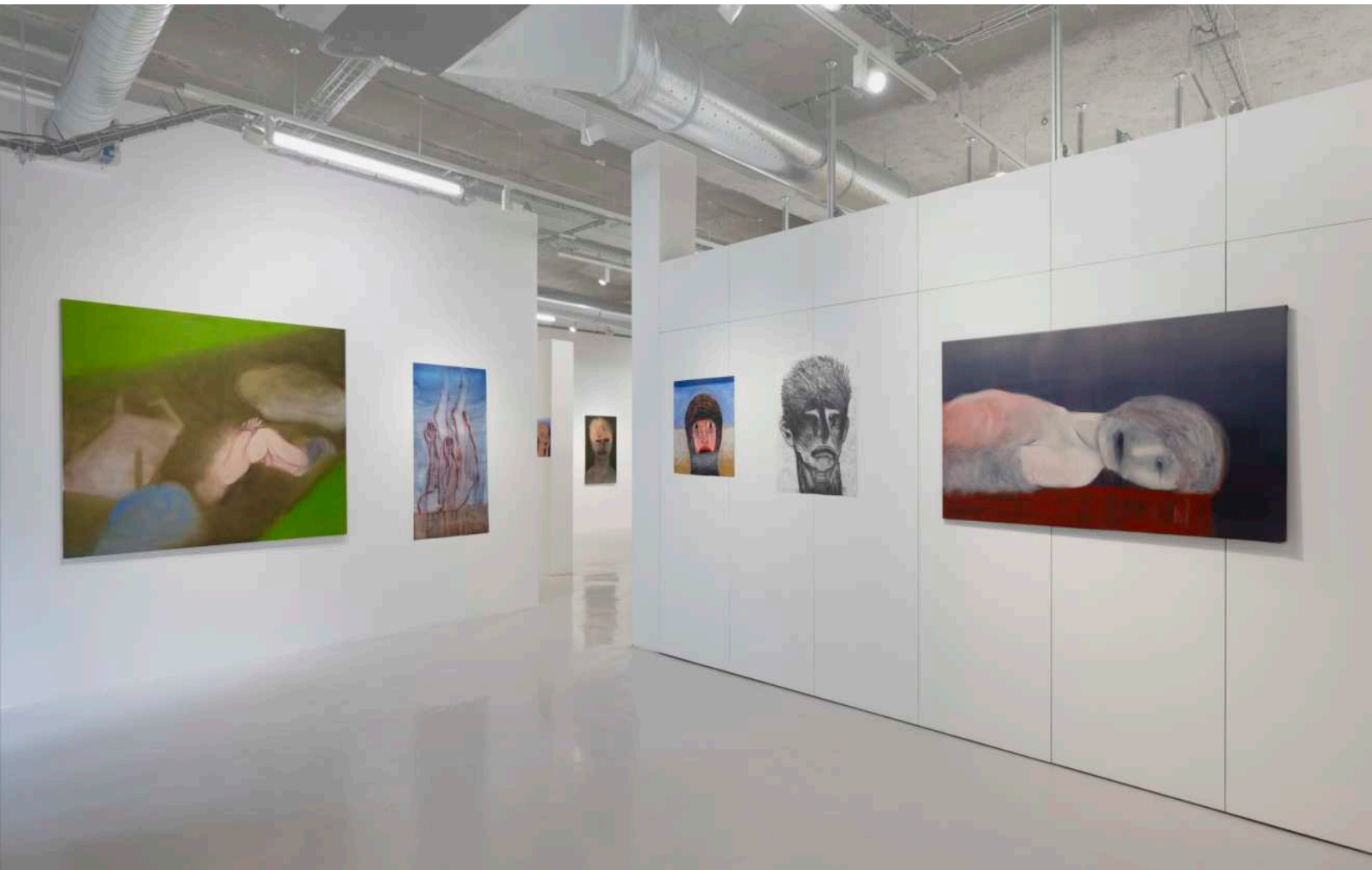
Excerpt from the exhbition text : *MY RHYTMIC WRITING*, written by Miriam Cahn, 2024

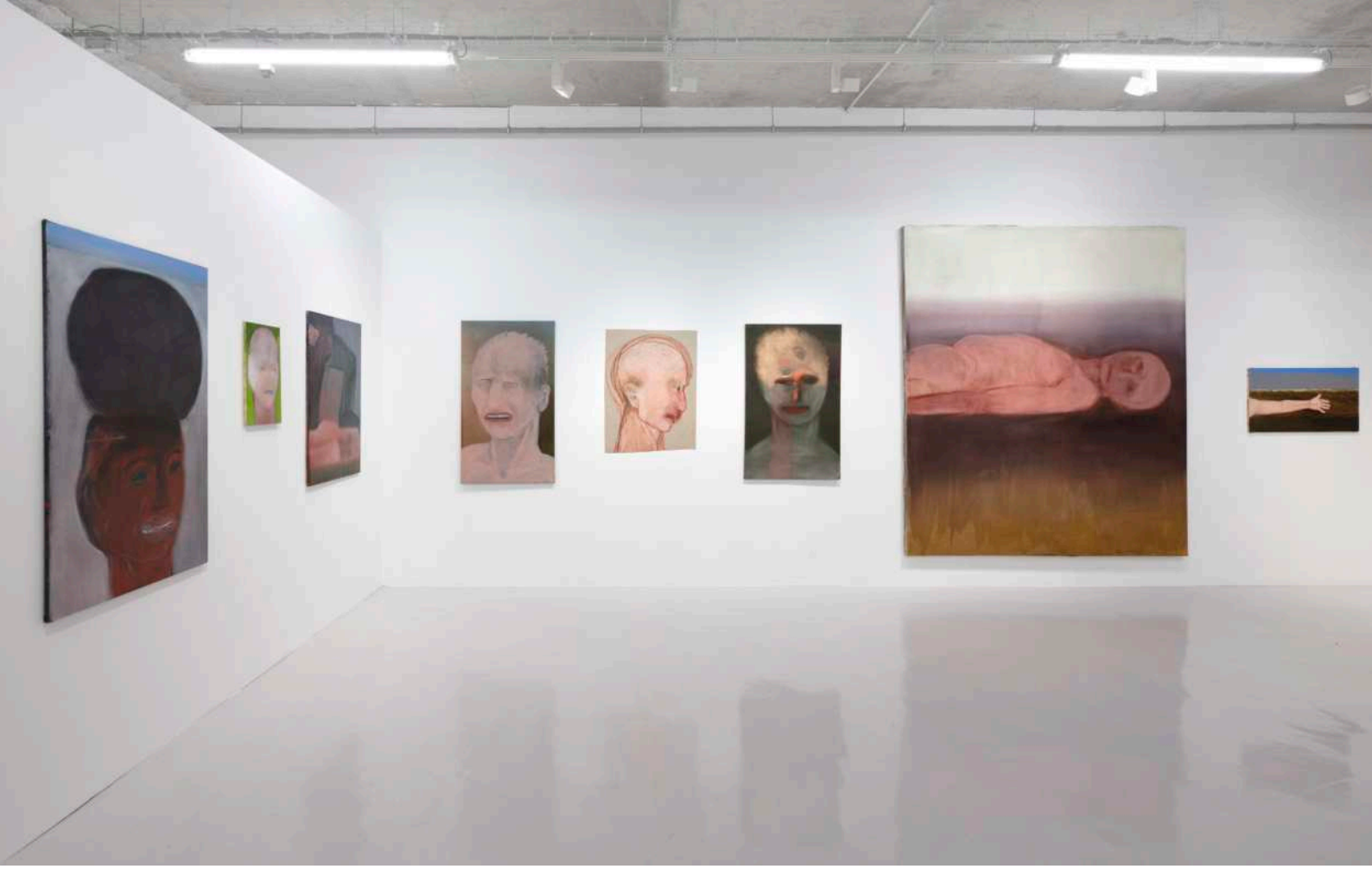
Source : Press release

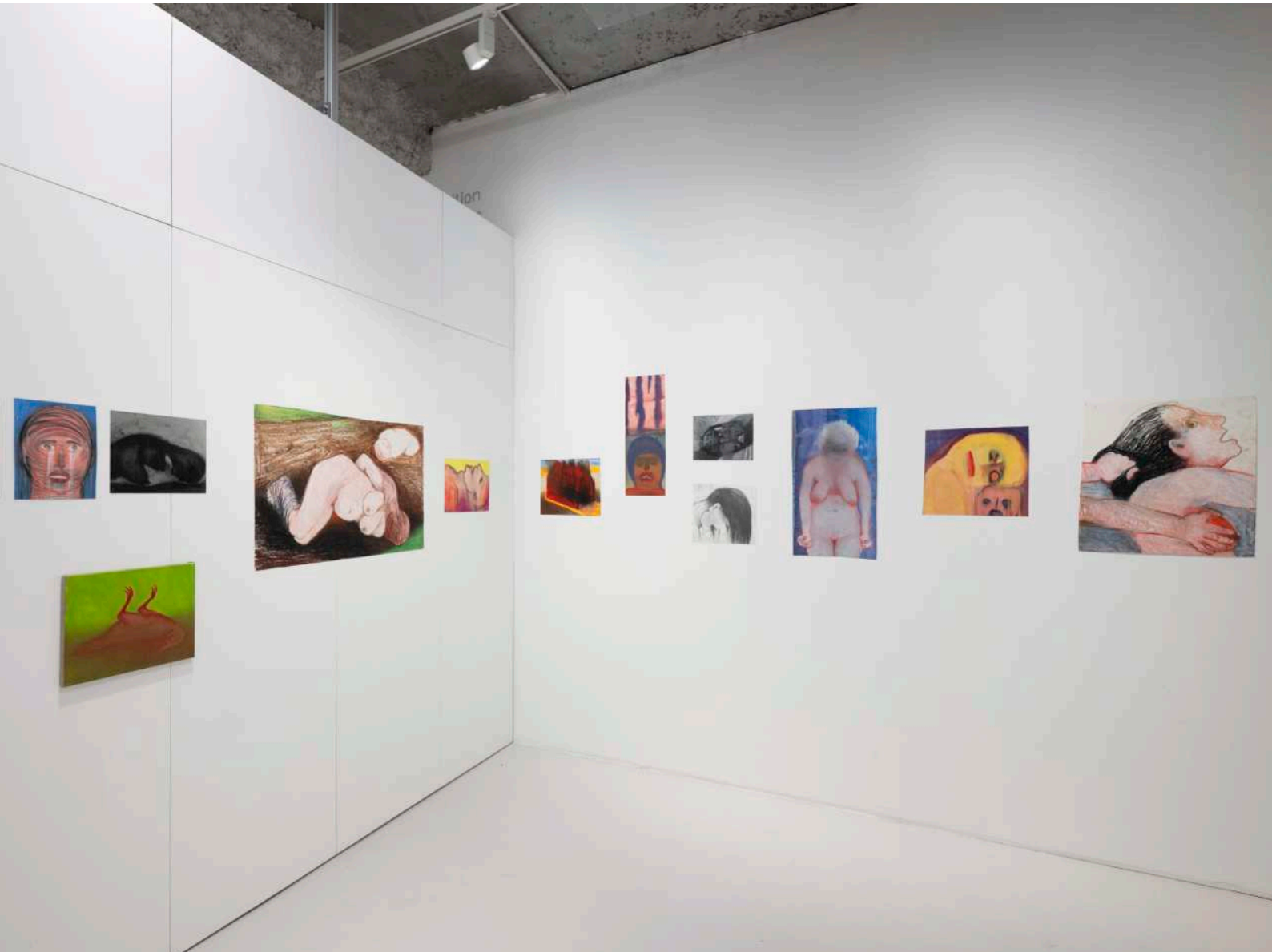














MIRIAM CAHN

MA PENSEE SERIELLE

February 17, 2023 – May 14, 2023

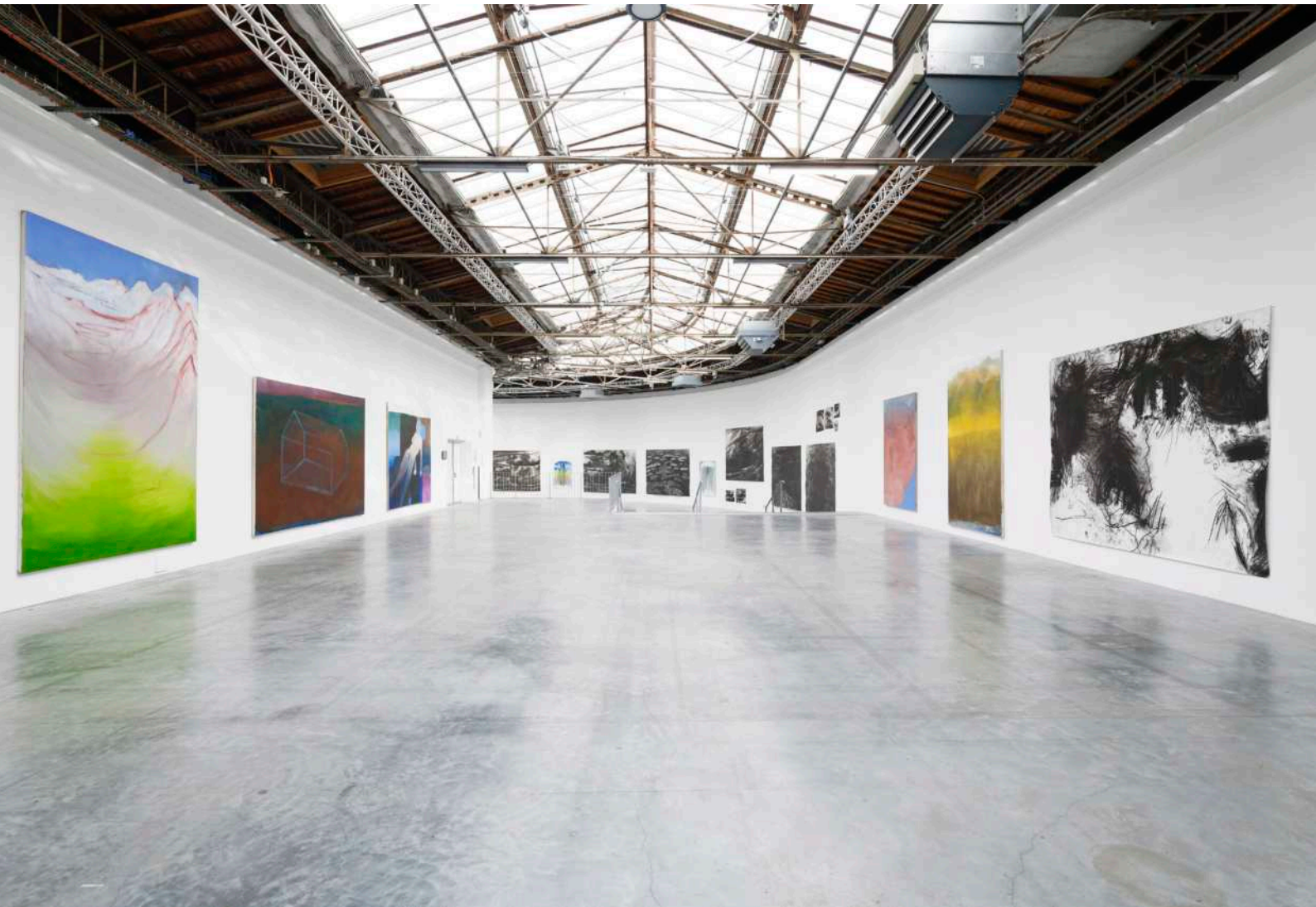
Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France

Curator: Emma Lavigne and Martha Dziewanska

Miriam Cahn imagines new material incarnations of that which disturbs us, confronting us with that which we would prefer to ignore: here it looks us straight in the eye, in a bodily confrontation from which we cannot escape. Day after day, through an intense pictorial oeuvre which encompasses drawing, photography, films, and writing, Miriam Cahn suspends the flux of volatile images of contemporary geopolitics and takes them up to witness, to resist and to embody them. Today she is recognized as one of the world's most important contemporary artists.
The exhibition at the Palais de Tokyo is the first major retrospective devoted to Miriam Cahn's work in a French institution, bringing together more than two hundred of her works from 1980 through to the present day. In place of the unique artwork, she channels a quasi-organic flow f images, sometimes organized like a narrative, her style refusing linearity in favour of explosive clusters and flights that allow for a rereading of the categories of art history. The stakes of Miriam Cahn's oeuvre lie not in some quest for balance but rather in finding plastic and spatial incarnations of the world's intensity and chaos. Images combine with words in a cyclical and infinite narrative that plays out constantly across the pages of notebooks, on the surface of the canvases, and in the digital variations that proliferate through scrolling projections. As Miriam Cahn herself reminds us, "an exhibition is a work in itself and I see it as a performance."

Source : Press release

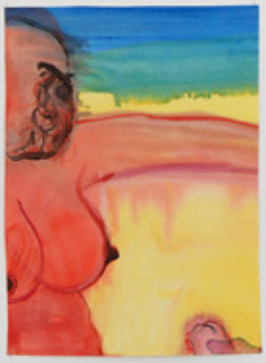




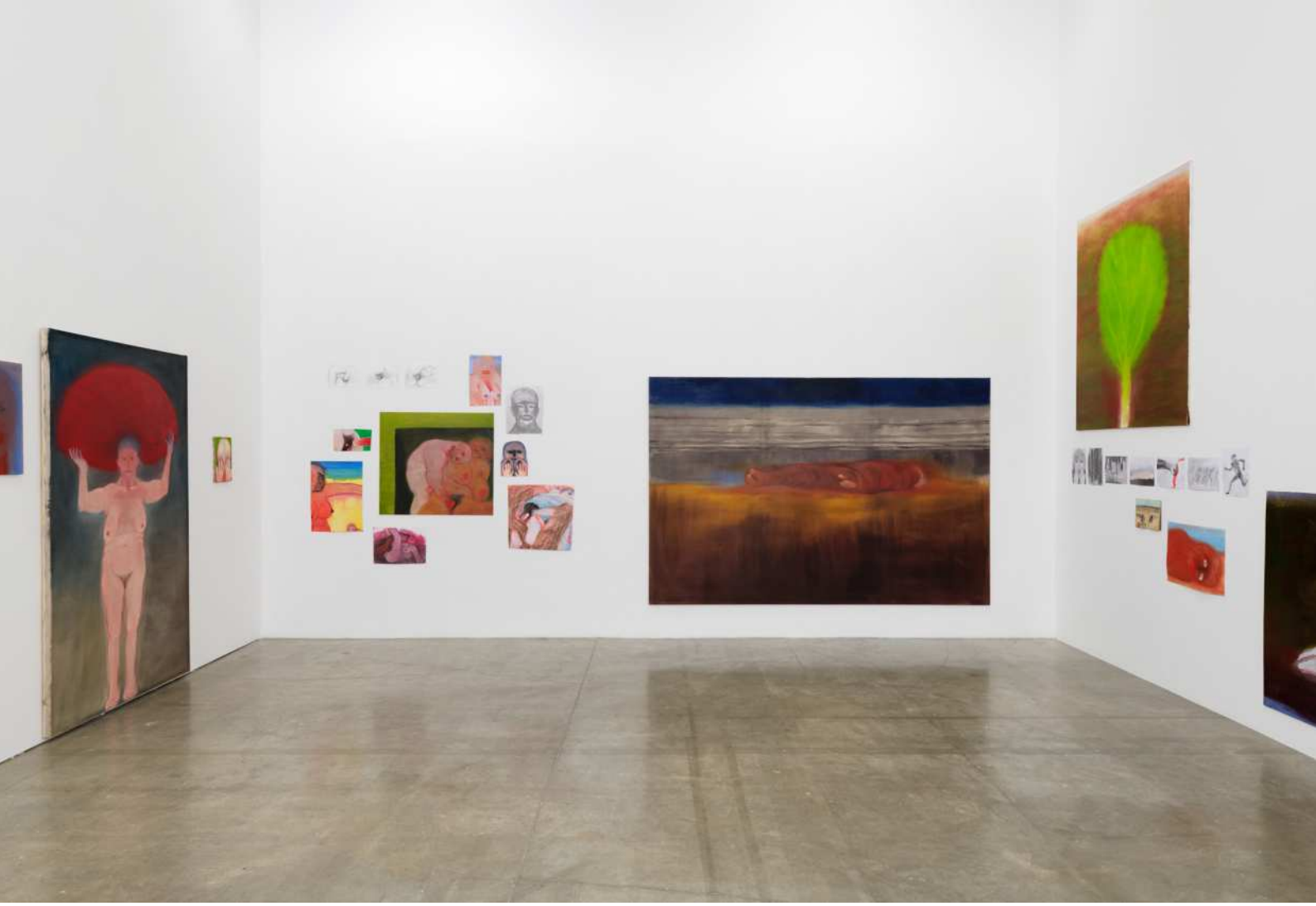














MIRIAM CAHN

MEINEJUDEN

14th Rubens Prize of the City of Siegen

June 26, 2022 – October 10, 2022

Museum für Gegenwartskunst Siegen, Germany

Curator: Thomas Thiel

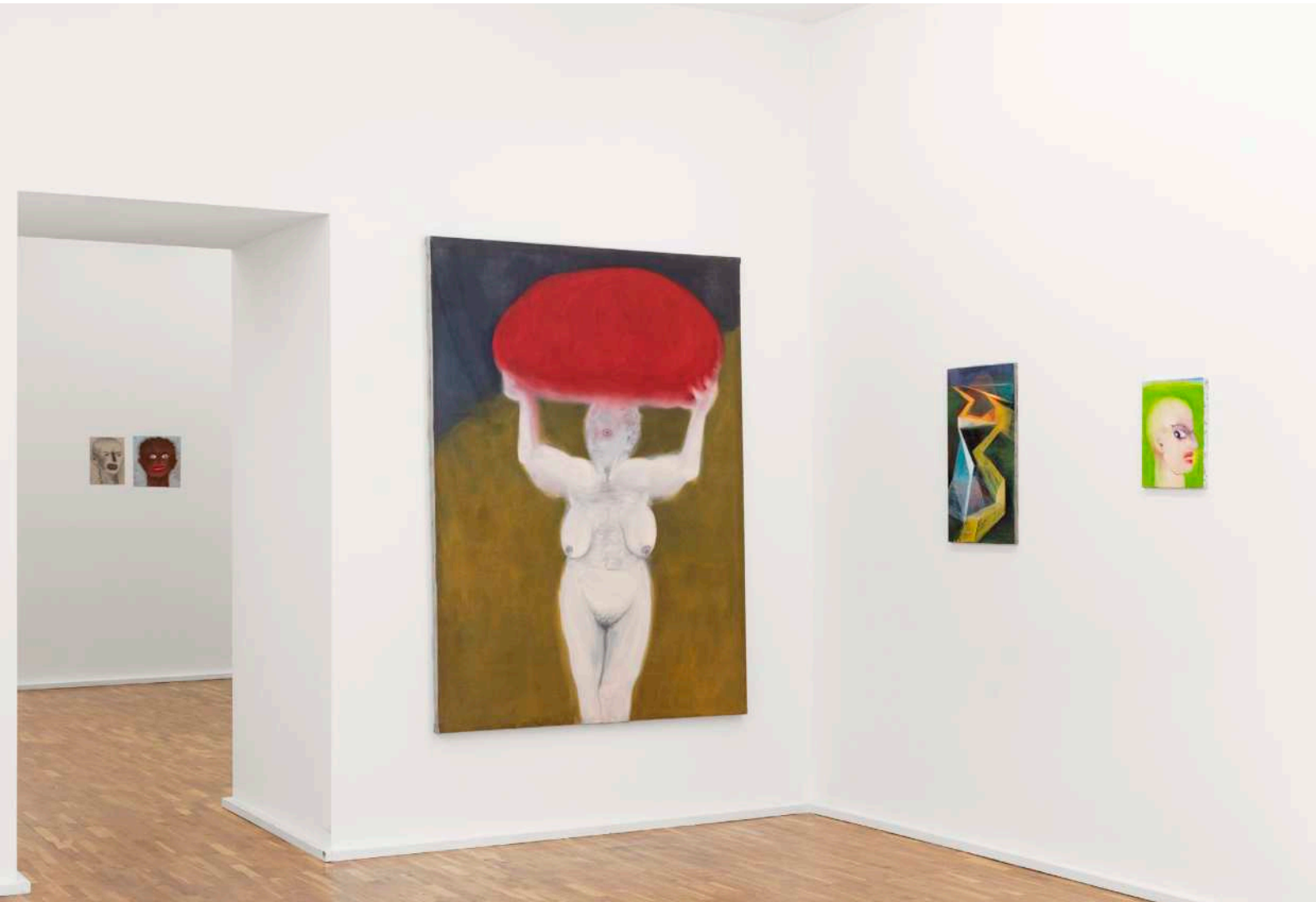
Miriam Cahn will be awarded the 14th Rubens Prize from the City of Siegen on 26 June 2022. Every five years since 1957, the renowned art prize has been awarded to an artist living in Europe for their complete œuvre, with a focus on painting and graphic art. The Rubens Prize is endowed with € 25,000 and also includes a publication and an exhibition at the Museum für Gegenwartskunst Siegen.

A jury of experts agreed on the artist Miriam Cahn, born in Basel in 1949, as the new prize winner. They explained their decision as follows: “Miriam Cahn occupies an original painterly position of great expressiveness. Subjective perceptions and feelings are combined with social and political questions in her work. The focus is on the body with all its fragility and vulnerability — also to external factors. This is particularly evident in the works engaging with the situation of refugees. The relationship between the human body and the machine is one theme, as well as the organic, also in the sense of connections between human and non-human beings. From the beginning of her development, Cahn has adopted a consciously feminist, independent and uncompromising stance. Her painting has unfolded independent of academic rules and aesthetics, and employing a wide variety of forms and materials.”

The exhibition MEINEJUDEN opens at the Museum für Gegenwartskunst Siegen on the day of the award ceremony, offering a comprehensive overview of Miriam Cahn’s multifaceted œuvre. In fourteen rooms conceived especially by the artist, she is presenting important groups of works and installations from the last five decades, as well as several new works. In addition to highly expressive, intensely colourful paintings, the exhibition includes floor-to-ceiling chalk drawings, works on paper, sculptures, performative videos, early sketchbooks and texts written by the artist. Taking up her own choice of title for the exhibition, in her current works the Rubens Prize winner deals once more with the fact of being Jewish.

Source : Press release













Exhibition views: MEINEJUDEN, Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Siegen, Germany, 2022

MIRIAM CAHN

THE MILK OF DREAMS
59th International Art Exhibition of
La Biennale di Venezia

April 23, 2022 – October 27, 2022

The Giardini and the Arsenale, Venezia, Italia

Curated by Cecilia Alemani

The Milk of Dreams takes its title from a book by Leonora Carrington (1917–2011) in which the Surrealist artist describes a magical world where life is constantly re-envisioned through the prism of the imagination. It is a world where everyone can change, be transformed, become something or someone else; a world set free, brimming with possibilities. But it is also the allegory of a century that imposed intolerable pressure on the very definition of the self, forcing Carrington into a life of exile: locked up in mental hospitals, an eternal object of fascination and desire, yet also a figure of startling power and mystery, always fleeing the strictures of a fixed, coherent identity. When asked about her birth, Carrington would say she was the product of her mother's encounter with a machine, suggesting the same bizarre union of human, animal, and mechanical that marks much of her work.

The exhibition The Milk of Dreams takes Leonora Carrington's otherworldly creatures, along with other figures of transformation, as companions on an imaginary journey through the metamorphoses of bodies and definitions of the human.

This exhibition is grounded in many conversations with artists held in the last few years. The questions that kept emerging from these dialogues seem to capture this moment in history when the very survival of the species is threatened, but also to sum up many other inquiries that pervade the sciences, arts, and myths of our time. How is the definition of the human changing? What constitutes life, and what differentiates plant and animal, human and non-human? What are our responsibilities towards the planet, other people, and other life forms? And what would life look like without us?

These are some of the guiding questions for this edition of the Biennale Arte, which focuses on three thematic areas in particular: the representation of bodies and their metamorphoses; the relationship between individuals and technologies; the connection between bodies and the Earth.

Source : Statement (excerpt)





MIRIAM CAHN

R.A.W. OR THE SIRENS OF TITAN

April 3, 2022 – October 16, 2022

Kunstmuseum Appenzell, Kunsthalle Appenzell, Switzerland

Group show with Judith Albert, Miriam Cahn, Valérie Favre, Asi Föcker, Agnès Geoffray, Roswitha Gobbo, Diana Michener, Martina Morger, Suzanne Treister, Birgit Widmer

Science meets imagination, culture meets existentialism. In the Kunstmuseum Appenzell and the Kunsthalle Ziegelhütte Appenzell, 10 artists counteract the impotence of the moment with the power of the creative. Judith Albert, Miriam Cahn, Valérie Favre, Asi Föcker, Agnès Geoffray, Roswitha Gobbo, Diana Michener, Martina Morger, Suzanne Treister, Birgit Widmer dare to tell the big story of love, feminism, knowledge, war, existence, humor in ten «spatial images». , memory, dream, cosmos, landscape, politics, light and death.

The «RAW» exhibition, inspired by the satirical-absurd anti-war novel «The Sirens of Titan» published by Kurt Vonnegut in 1959, allows existential poetic voices to be heard against the nonsense of contemporary history. With more than 90 works (painting, video, sculpture, text work, photography, sound, performance, installation), the artists show that the world does not have to be accepted as it appears at the moment.

Reality, artefacts and truth are combined in the artistic interventions to form an alternative to the sad images of the present, as if they were being viewed and interpreted from Jupiter's moon Titan. Each of the artists reflects and transforms the complexity of the world - and although art can certainly never repair the planet, let alone humanity, it can use the power of aesthetic imagination to set in motion that spiritual and emotional synthesis that gives meaning and sensuality to the experiences.

This ranges from Judith Albert's cinematic mental journeys, Miriam Cahn's defensive self-assertion, Valérie Favre's cosmic-poetic pedigrees to the subtle synaesthesia set in motion by Asi Föcker. Agnès Geoffray's monument to all past and future (gender) wars testifies to a physical historical awareness, as does Roswitha Gobbo's concentration on the sense of hearing and self-esteem, or Martina Morger's staging of the art location as a repository of cultural memories. Diana Michener's wild dreams of landscape are just as intense as Birgit Widmer's seemingly gentle weave of words - all held together by Suzanne Treister, whose escape artist even allows black holes to become the breeding ground of future life.

Source : Press release





MIRIAM CAHN

GEZEICHNET

March 8, 2022 – MAY 28, 2022

IAC Milano, Italia

Curated by Alberto Salvadori, Luigi Fassi

Miriam Cahn's work finds its core in life, made manifest through the representation of the body. The main characters of her works, which at a first glance elude the distinction between human and non-human, recall, through the evocative force of lines and colours, crucial themes of the present time such as impotence in face of traumas and violence suffered, the origin of a new life and the search for a coexistence between human beings, animals and nature.

With her works, Cahn activates an overturning of the medium of painting, that from a traditional genre becomes an instrument of reflection used to thoroughly investigate European and global history.

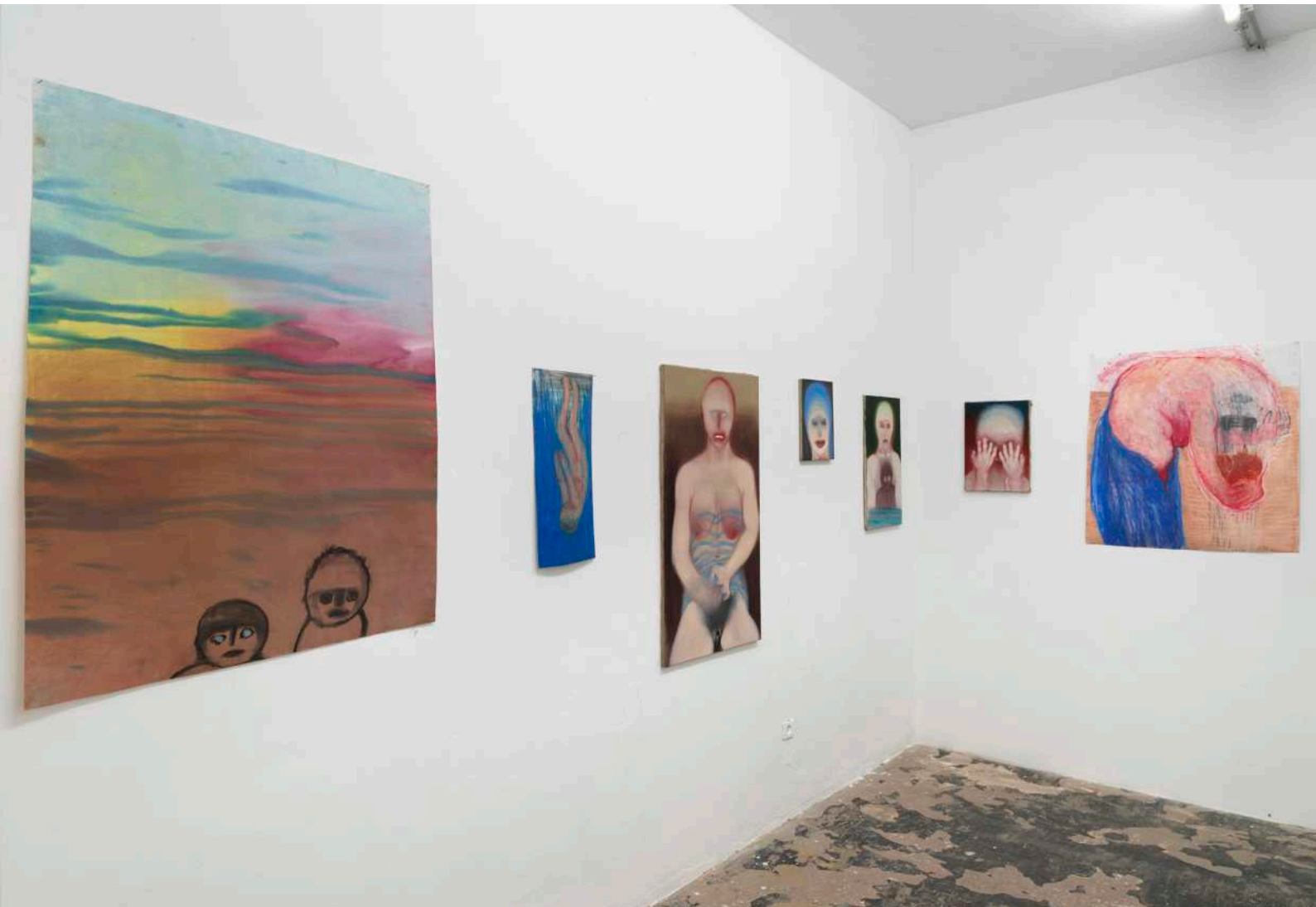
Drawing inspiration from performance art and the feminist movements of the 60s and 70s, Miriam Cahn's work often placed the body at the center of the creative process. Since the early 1980s her works have revealed a strong performative value, where the artist's body often turned into a real artistic medium. It was during this period that Cahn established herself on the international scene. In 1982 she participated in Documenta 7, however choosing to remove her works from the prestigious event as a sign of protest. In 1983 her works were presented at the Kunsthalle in Basel, on the occasion of a solo exhibition curated by Jean-Christophe Ammann. In 1984 she was selected for the 41st edition of the Venice Biennale to represent her country, Switzerland. During the 90s the artist experienced a radical transformation of her practice, abandoning the monumental drawings that made her internationally known and giving a greater attention to the pictorial medium.

Over the last twenty years Miriam Cahn has developed her own iconography, which exploits the evocative potential of colour to convey strong themes such as human conflict, war, real scenarios and inner worlds.
The works presented in Gezeichnet are the result of an artist's research who makes painting a real tool of thought. The figures that emerge from Miriam Cahn's canvases and drawings tell their stories through the incredible vulnerability of their bodies. From the violence of historical events to sudden passions, from the loss of social ties to the unpredictability of birth and death, Miriam Cahn's images identify exposure to vulnerability as one of the fundamental existential conditions of our human being.

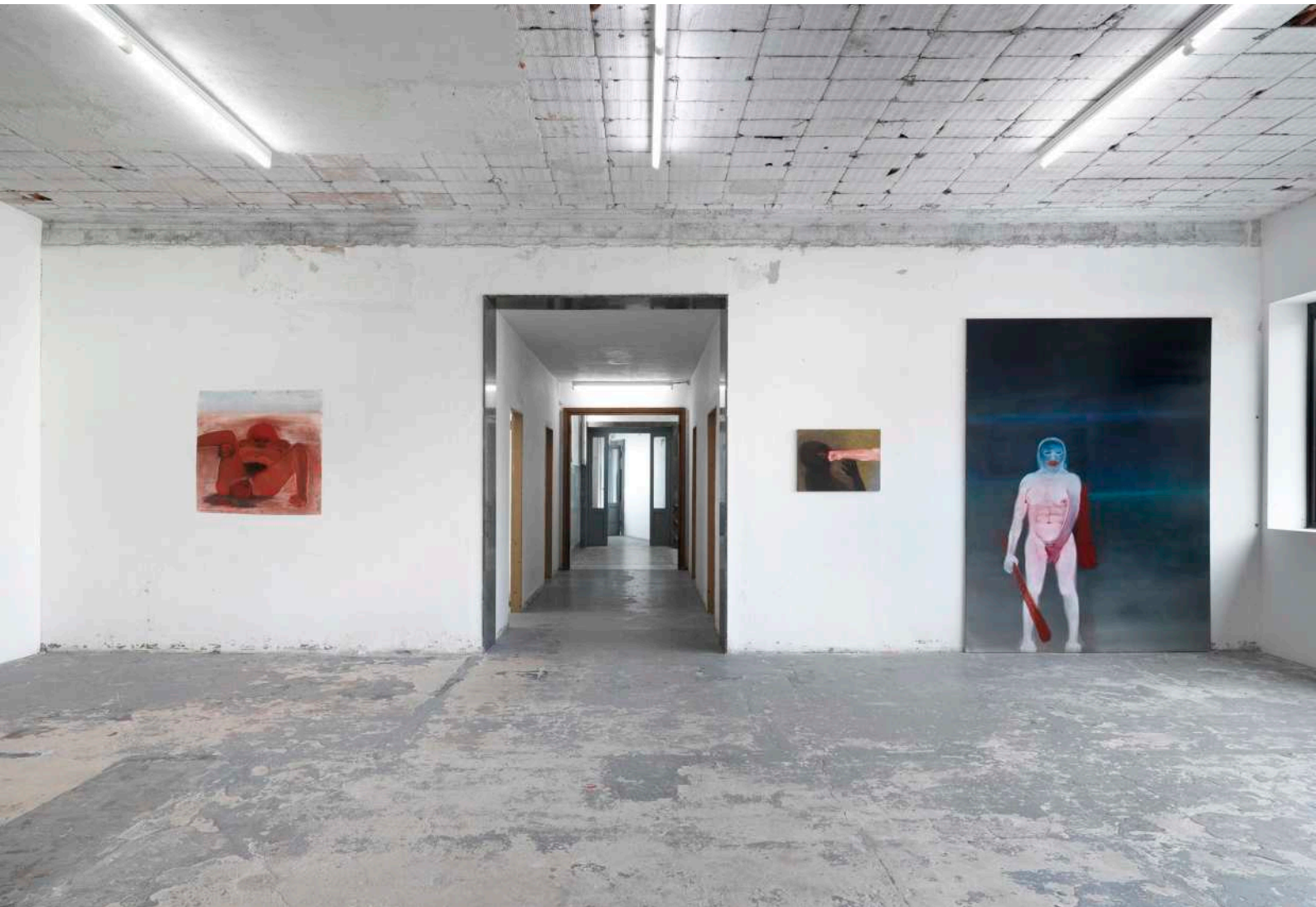
On this occasion, a catalogue in English, edited by Fondazione ICA Milano and Mousse, will be published at the same time with the opening of the show at Fondazione ICA Milano. The publication gathers together a selection of works by Cahn and the texts of the authors such as Alberto Salvadori, Luigi Fassi, Carolin Emcke, Dieter Roelstraete, Estelle Hoy and Francesca Recchia.

Source : Press release











MIRIAM CAHN

TEN THOUSAND THINGS

November 8, 2020 – May 23, 2021

Sifang Art Museum, Nanjing, China

Curated by Weng Xiaoyu
Duo show with Miriam Cahn and Claudia Martinez Garay

Ten Thousand Things brings artists Miriam Cahn and Claudia Martínez Garay into an idiosyncratic encounter across generations, geography and culture. Conceived as a two-person exhibition, Ten Thousand Things features works of painting, drawing, installation, sculpture, video, collage and site-specific mural that span both artists' careers.

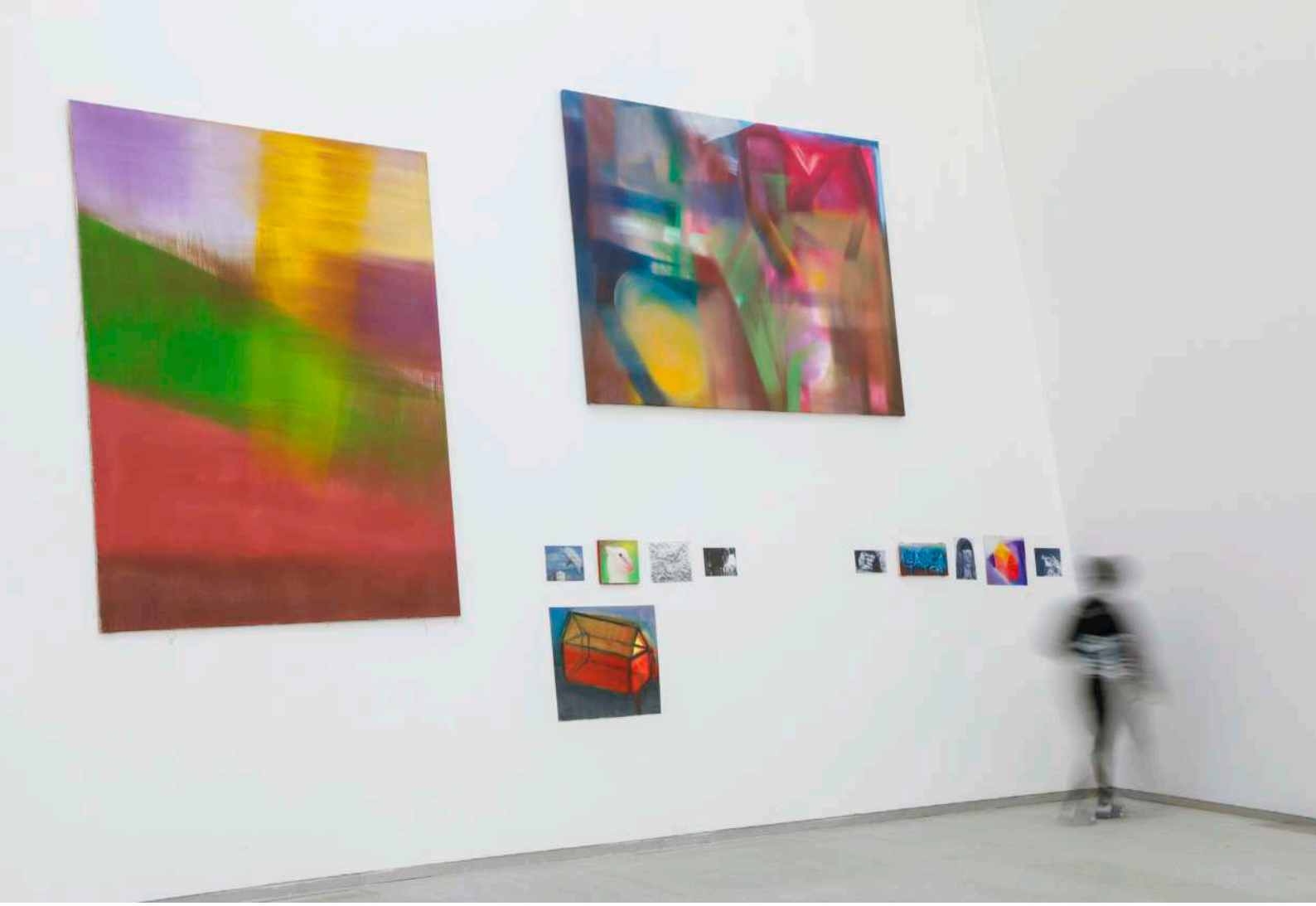
The title of the exhibition borrows the ancient Chinese cosmological view of the world as exemplified in the I Ching: "Heaven and Earth interact perfectly, and the ten thousand things communicate without obstacle." This view poetically connects the works presented in this exhibition and foregrounds the shared aspects of the artists' practices: they rethink how we as humans connect to nature, other sentient beings, the non-human environment, and man made systems, and how to represent such relationships.

Mainly known for her works on canvas, Swiss artist Miriam Cahn has committed over four decades of her artistic practice to the exploration of translating emotions into the language of image-making. Contemplating contemporary human conditions, Cahn always places her human subjects in an intrinsic web of worlds of animals and plants that extend our human-centric imaginations. The resulting images are imbued with intensity that respond to trauma, war and violence, and social conflicts. Cahn describes: "I am fish, bird, hedgehog, horse," and "my body remembers older epochs of planetary and natural history. [The glow of] the skin(s) of animals and women shows me how close I can get to animals, to women. But glowing is related to radiate, radiation, irradiated."

Claudia Martínez Garay's works reflect on indigenous mythologies and artifacts, particularly from pre-Columbian cultures. Culminating in layered and iterative installations, her research-based practice investigates how power and violence persist through narratives fabricated by colonialist frameworks. The presentation of her work in this exhibition combines existing work and new commissions including murals, tufting tapestries and rattan animal sculptures that bridge her native Peruvian heritage with craftsmanship from local artisans. These new works and the symbolic elements imbedded in them are inspired by "Pachakuti," a concept from Andean Cosmovision that signals a return to the initial point—as revolution, change and transformation—in a cycle that occurs in time and space.

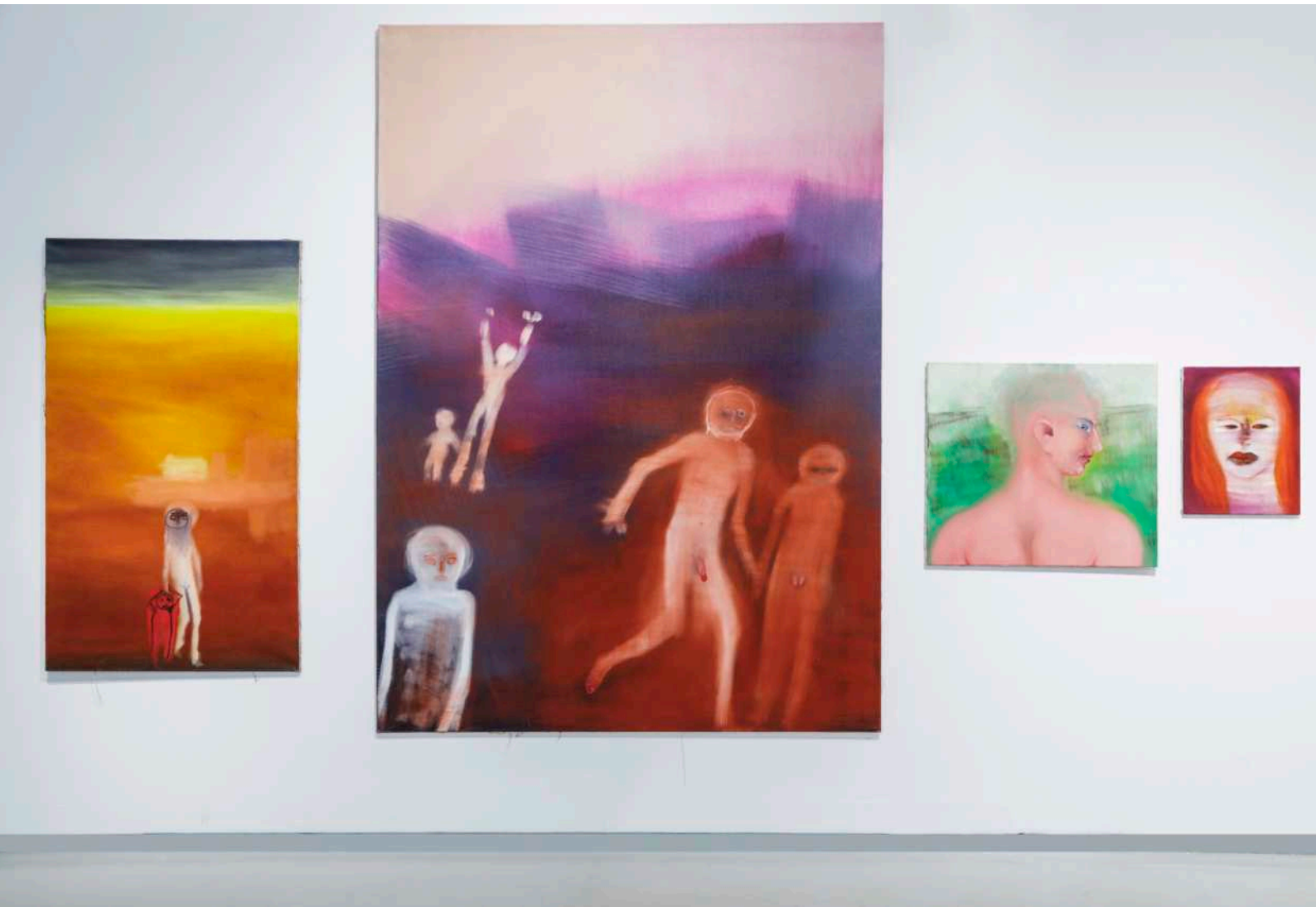
Cahn and Martínez Garay are both storytellers in their respective and distinguished modes of representation. As Cahn disavows the conventional categorizations and oppositions by creating hybrid representations of beings unidentifiable at first glance as animal or human, body or plant, female or male, horror or allure, Martínez Garay shades light on what we can relearn from ancient cosmologies to imagine new ways to understand time and space, and to relate to both beings and things. Underneath their colorful and even whimsical aesthetics, fluctuating and metamorphosing, are dynamic and uncompromising energy and force.

Source : press release





















MIRIAM CAHN

ME AS HAPPENING

October 8, 2020 – February 21, 2021

Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen, Denmark

Curated by Henriette Bretton-Meyer
The exhibition is organized and circulated by The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, Toronto where it will take place in 2021.

In her first solo exhibition in Denmark, the acclaimed Swiss artist Miriam Cahn (b. 1949) presents selected works from an extensive and versatile body of work. The exhibition includes works done in chalk, charcoal, pastel and watercolour on paper, oil paintings, photography and text. The many figurative works are vastly different in scale; some are part of larger series. Here, they have all been put together and installed with great dynamic energy by the artist herself, joining up to form a single, cohesive statement: ME AS HAPPENING.

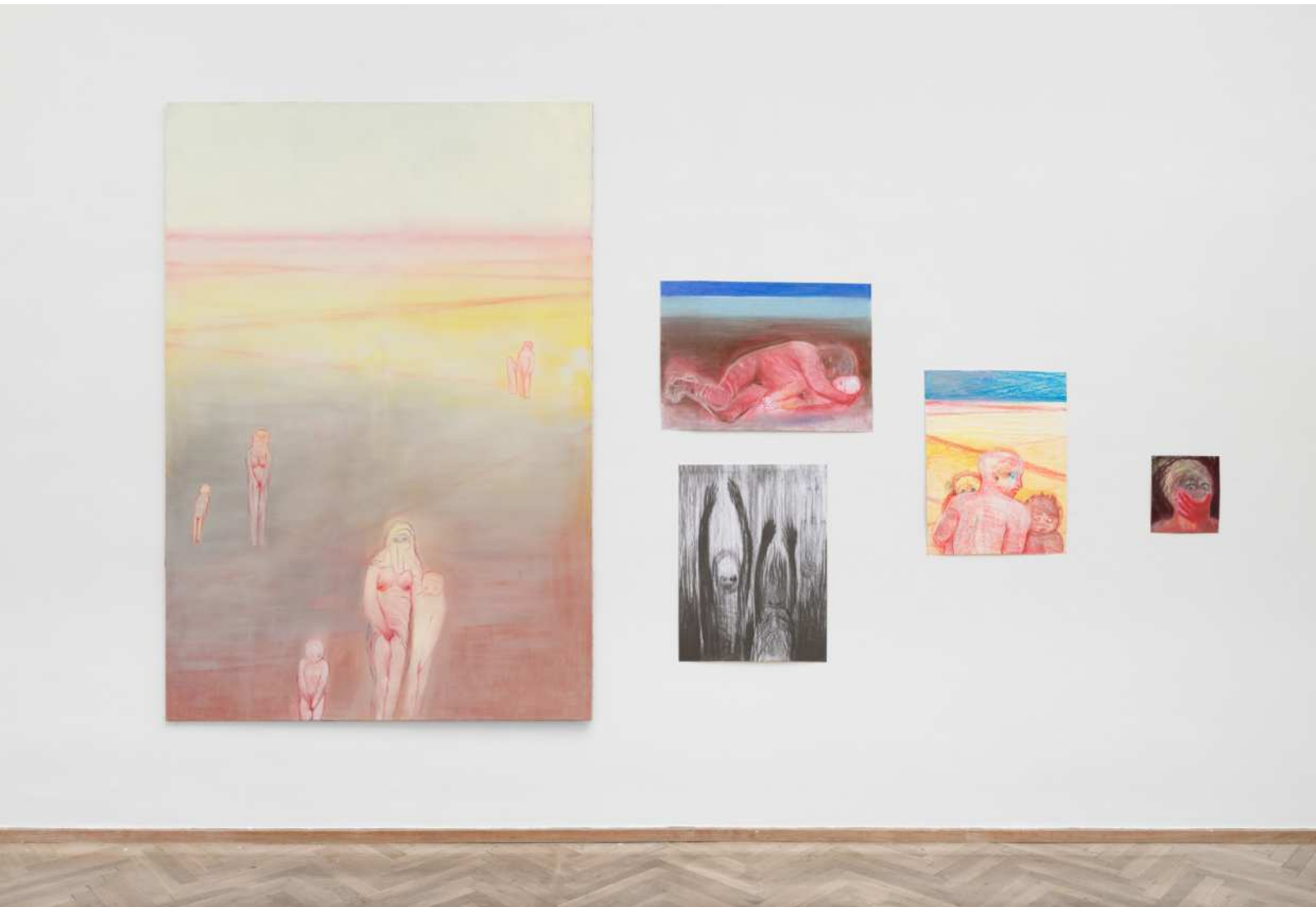
An uncompromising artist, Miriam Cahn has applied a feminist perspective throughout her career. An insistence on equality has always been a fundamental value for her. Anger and dissatisfaction become driving forces behind her creativity, impelling her to challenge centuries of male-dominated art history – for example by assigning a new, active role to the women depicted in art. In Miriam Cahn's work, women are not shy and bashful creatures that avert their eyes; they look the viewer directly in the eye. They have a prominent, powerful sexuality that is not hidden away. They give birth to children. They age. Issues associated with the human body and power relations are uncovered, and topical conflicts such as migration, war and flight are investigated. Other works take their starting point in the mountain landscape of southern Switzerland, where she lives.

The exhibition title points to what is happening right here and now: the selection and juxtaposition of these specific works in precisely these spaces. It is also a reference to the 'happenings' of the 1960s, which centred on the artist's own body. The body takes centre stage for Miriam Cahn, too: for her, creating works in the studio and then installing them in exhibition spaces is a physical activity closely linked to the body and its capabilities.

Miriam Cahn is a leading figure among her generation of artists. Drawing on her own experiences and observations, she often returns to previous works to establish connections and conversations between the personal, the natural and the historical. This exhibition comprises works from the last 25 years, including a number of new works. Joined up by the artist's own dynamic installation hang, they have become ME AS HAPPENING.

Source : Press release



























MIRIAM CAHN

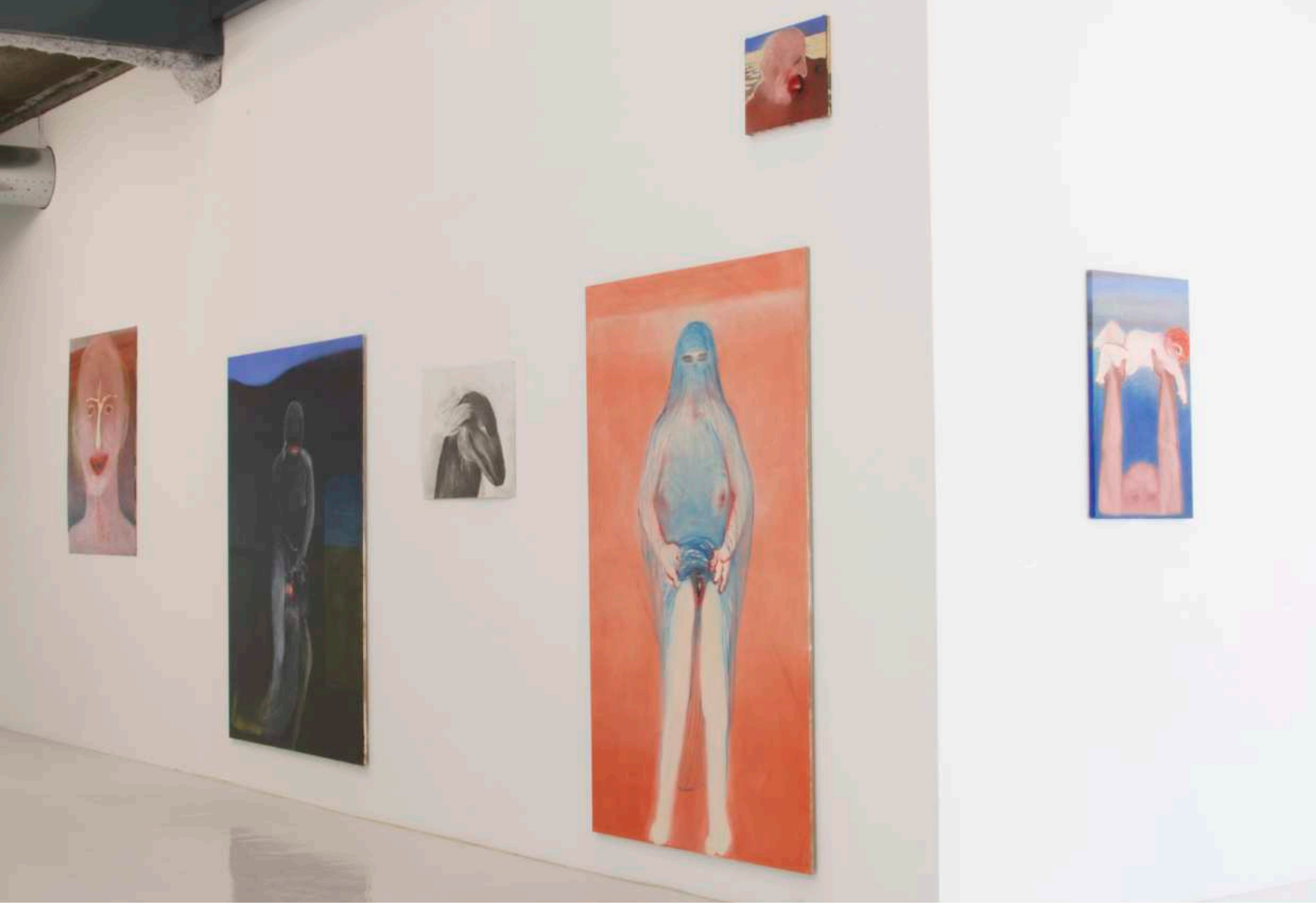
NOTRE SUD

July 2 – July 31, 2020
Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Romainville venue, Paris, France

Miriam Cahn's solo show "notre sud" is taking place in consecutive intervals at both of the gallery's venues, Paris-Belleville and Romainville. The hanging in the Belleville space was executed by the artist through a video-conference call.

Art critic Elisabeth Lebovici realised two podcasts on Miriam Cahn's notre sud at Galerie Jocelyn Wolff.

Links:
Part 1 https://soundcloud.com/galerie-jocelyn-wolff/elisabeth-lebovici-5-1e-partiemp3#t=0:00
Part 2 https://soundcloud.com/galerie-jocelyn-wolff/elisabeth-lebovici-parle-de-lexposition-de-miriam-cahn_podcast-2















MIRIAM CAHN

NOTRE SUD

April 4 – July 25, 2020

Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Belleville venue, Paris, France

Miriam Cahn's solo show "notre sud" is taking place in consecutive intervals at both of the gallery's venues, Paris-Belleville and Romainville. The hanging in the Belleville space was executed by the artist through a video-conference call.

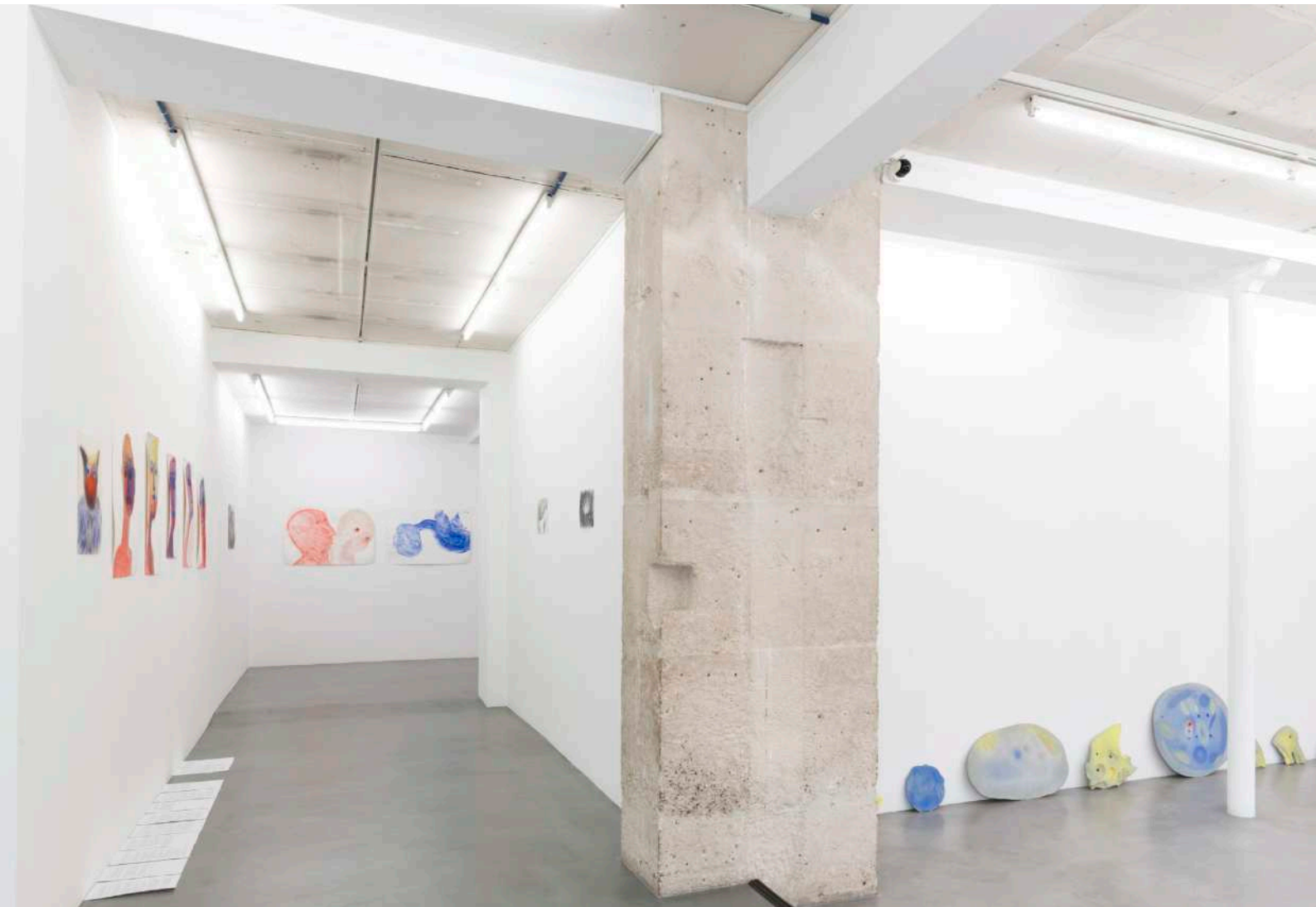
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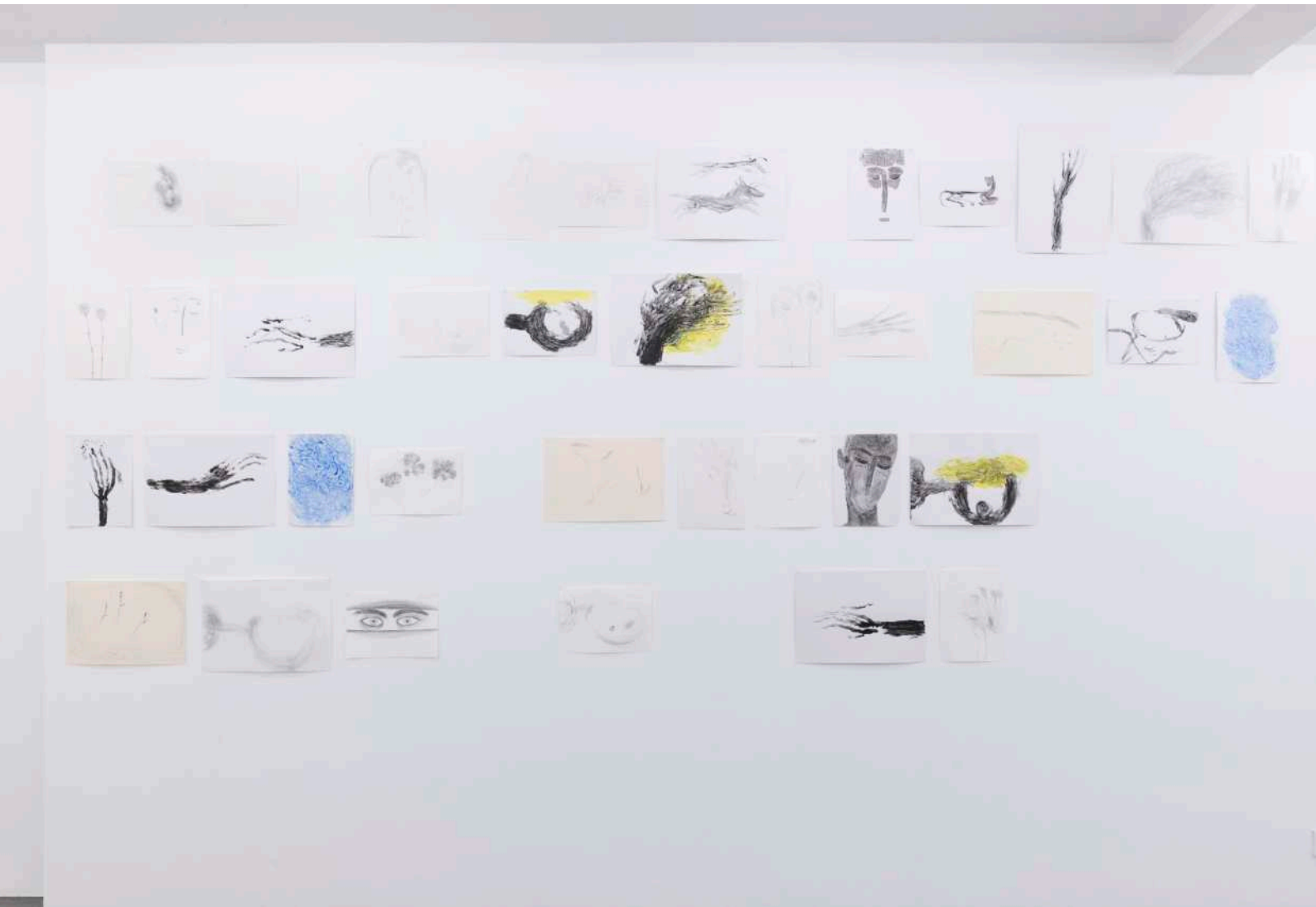
this page and next page
Miriam Cahn

Exhibition views: NOTRE SUD, Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Belleville venue, Paris, France, 2020













MIRIAM CAHN

I AS HUMAN

November 29, 2019 – March 1, 2020

MUZEUM - Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, Warsaw, Poland

Curated by Marta Dziewańska

“MIRIAM CAHN: I AS HUMAN” is the first Polish retrospective of the Swiss artist Miriam Cahn, one of the most important and acknowledged painters of the second half of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century. For over four decades the artist has been bearing witness to social conflicts, crises and emergencies, contemplating the contemporary human condition and the agency of painting vis-à-vis such subjects as war and violence, sexuality, nature, family relationships, and death. Cahn’s rich oeuvre, which includes not only painting, but also drawing, performance, text, and film is based on uncompromising resistance to all forms of violence and therefore is very relevant today.

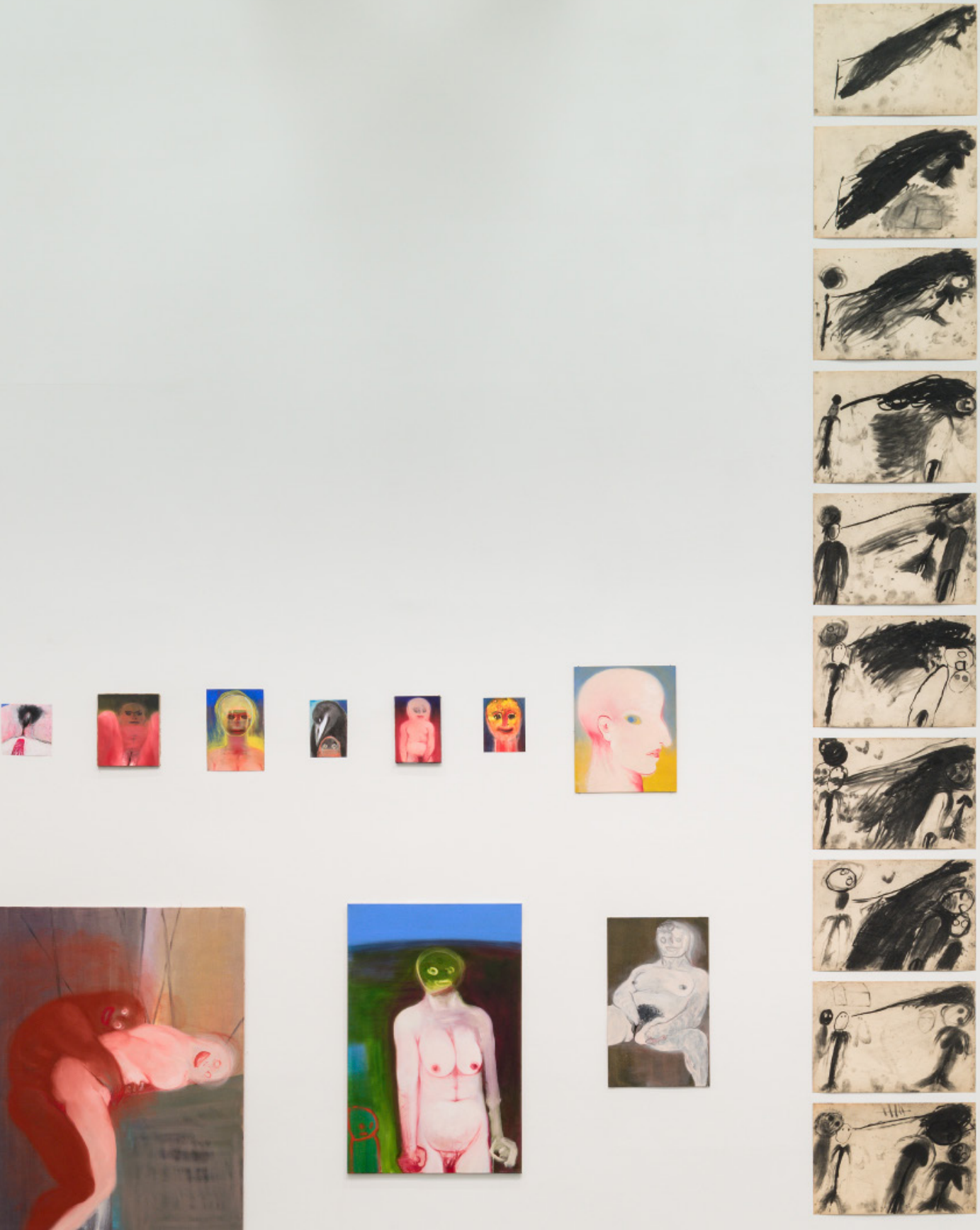
Cahn was born in 1949 in Basel in a family of Jewish immigrants who fled Nazi persecution in Germany and France between the two world wars and settled in Switzerland. Already in the 1970s the artist joined the feminist and peace movements. She demonstrated her opposition to violence and inequality not only in the field of art. As she participated in protests, wrote petitions, and painted murals in the urban environment, Cahn’s life and work have always been a response to the political reality around her.

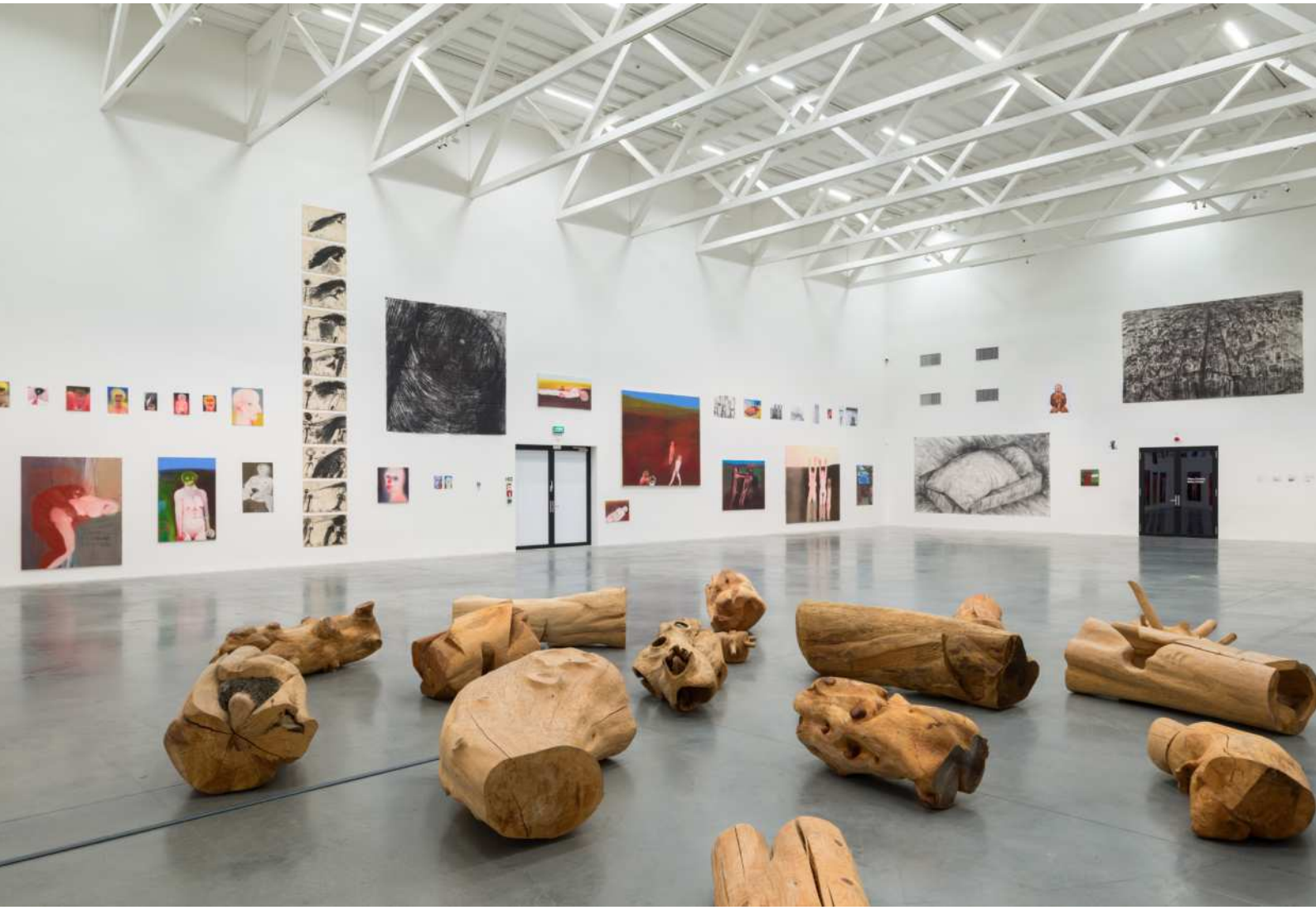
Simultaneously, she was developing her uncompromising language of artistic expression that has been always grounded in the body: the body as the artistic tool and as the object of visual representation. After graduating from the Department of Graphic Design at the Allgemeine Gewerbeschule in Basel, Cahn focused primarily on black-and-white works on paper, produced by using her entire body. She rejected the hierarchy which posits drawing as a sketch and a medium inferior to painting, moving drawing in the direction of performance. This gesture became the starting point for her later large-format drawings in coal, which the artist created on the floor, open to process and experiment. Registering the media coverage of social and political events such as the Persian War, the conflict in former Yugoslavia, or the attack on the World Trade Center, Cahn responded with, among others, the iconic representations of war ships, sites of deportation, weapons of mass destruction, and other symbols of power, control, and violence.

[...]

Cahn’s works on canvas are above all an attempt to translate emotions into the language of painting: emotions that cannot be conveyed in verbal language in the face of trauma, acts of violence, armed conflicts, racism, and toxic human relationships. Figures in her paintings are often represented without facial features and clothing, as if the artist wanted to lend them the most universal, primal significance, reducing the body to vulnerable bare life. She is also testing the possibilities of representation in painting and striving to face the key questions related to the agency and ethics of art. How does one represent suffering and injustice without telling a moralizing tale? How does one avoid the trap of pathos and sensationalist spectacle? How does one assume the right to speak in the name of those who were deprived of a voice? And finally, how does one represent relationships that extend beyond the human, to the world of nature and non-human species? .

Source : press release







Exhibition view: I as Human, MUZEUM - Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, Warsaw, Poland, 2019-20

MIRIAM CAHN

I AS HUMAN

July 12 – October 27, 2019

Haus der Kunst, Munich, Germany

Curated by Jana Baumann

With more than 150 works from all creative periods, Haus der Kunst honors Miriam Cahn's artistic career, which has spanned more than five decades. Her work provokes a discussion about new images of the body and humanity today through painting.

In her pictorial worlds, the Swiss artist Miriam Cahn (*1949, Basel) pushes for the abolishment of social norms and counters the traditional representation of the female and gender-specific roles. From her early works, which were strongly influenced by feminism, to her later creations, the focus of her painting has been the body. Clearly outlined in its contours, the body nevertheless dissolves into its surroundings. In her thinking, the artist often explores the boundary between inside and outside and what actually constitutes being human. Recurring themes within her work are complex interpersonal relationships, family constellations, women in society as well as refuge, war and violence. The artist pictures humans — irrespective of gender — in all their fragility. Particularly in her later oil paintings, the artist finds new ways of depicting the fragmentation of identity beyond binary gender discourses.

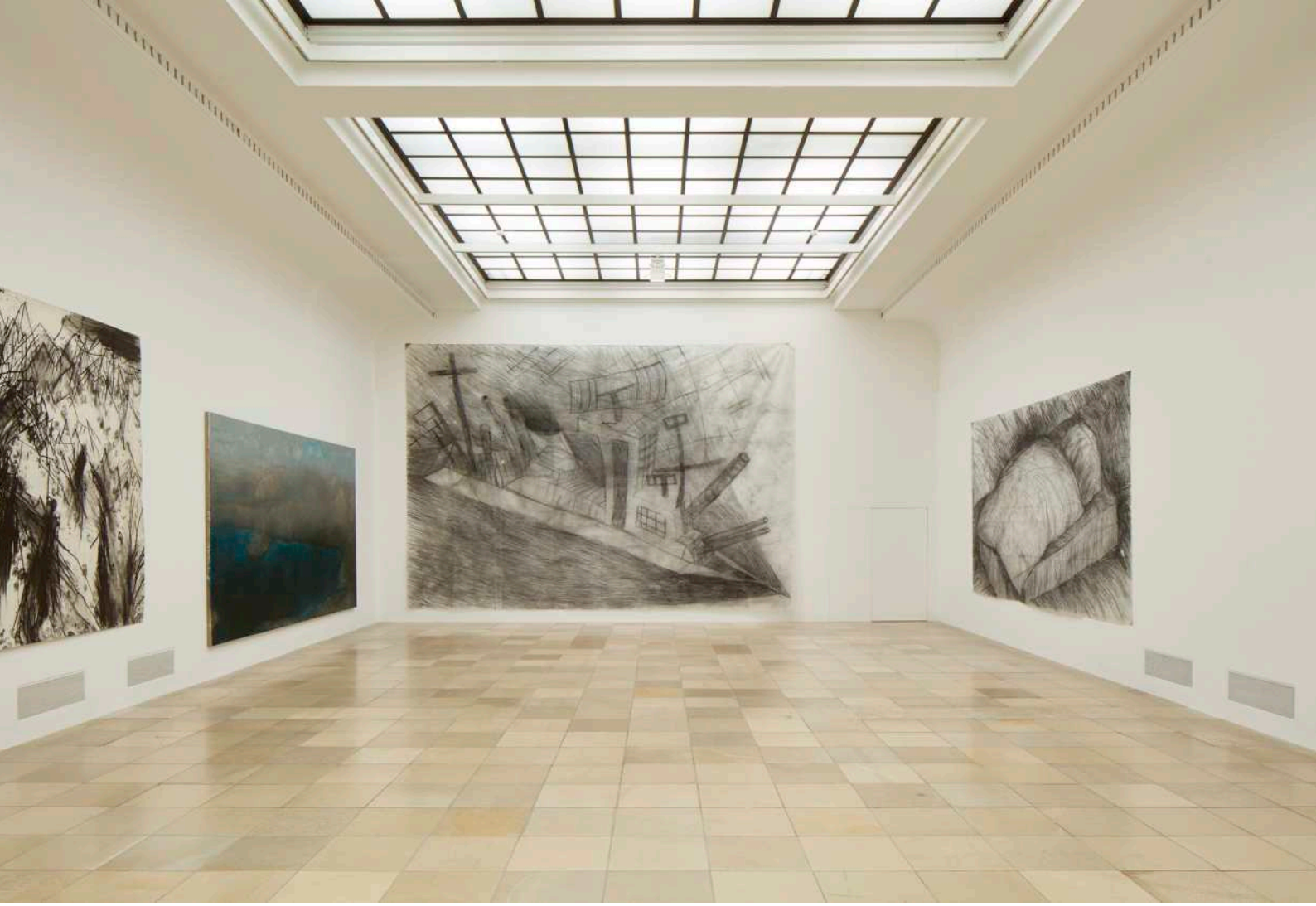
The exhibition brings together key works from all phases of Cahn's oeuvre, from the artist's early Super 8 films, sculptures, larger-than-life chalk drawings and watercolors, to the oil paintings which constitute her main body of work.

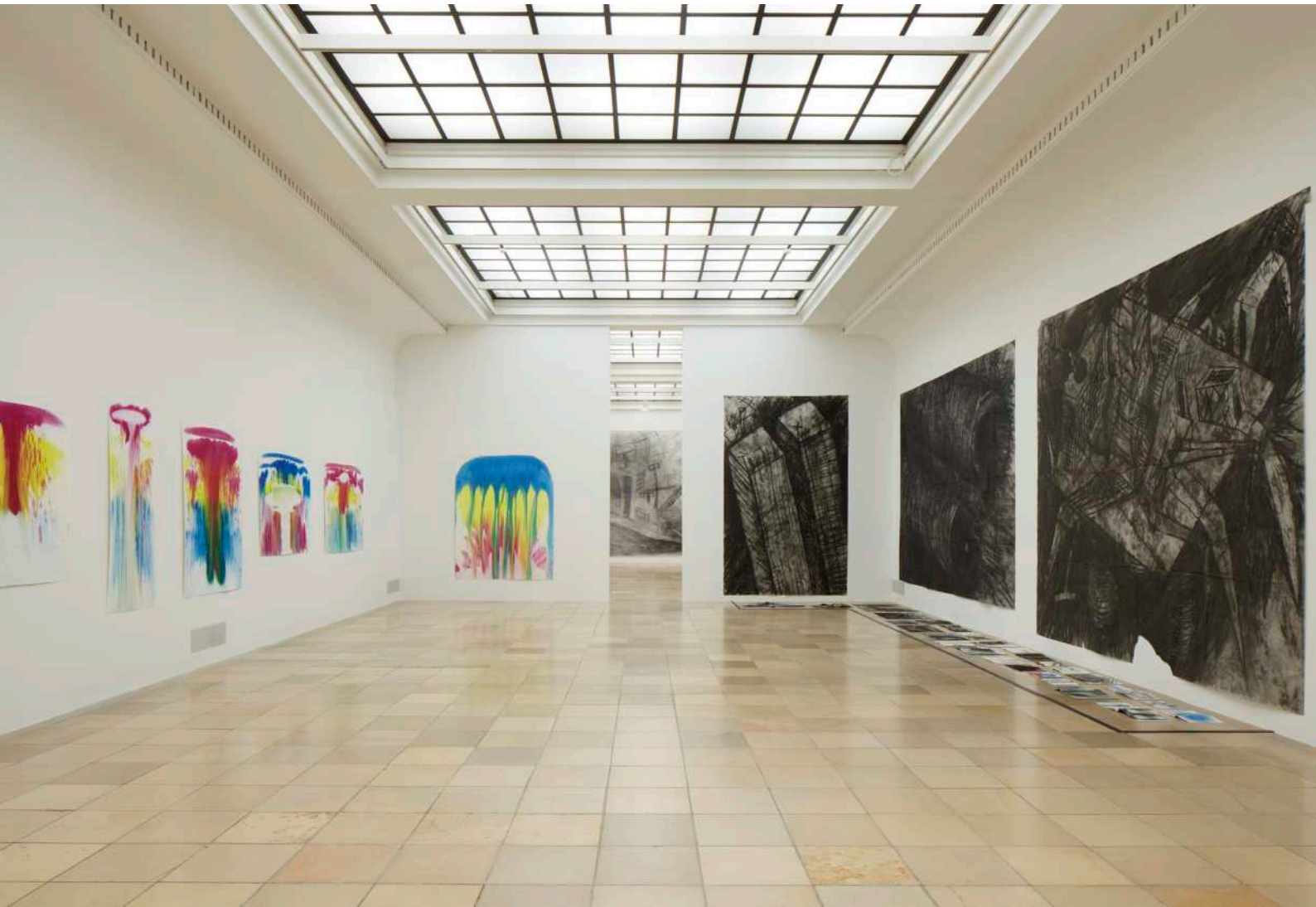
In her art, Cahn focuses on the moments when people are on their own, alone in the face of their fates. Her paintings tell of poeple who have empowered themselves to decide about the lives of others; she refers to Giorgio Agamben's concept of the «naked», treacherous and tormented life of the disempowered. Despite distinctly represented genitals, the figures appear sexledd and depersonalized, like proxies of a collective subject. The artist works with diffused, psychological colors and seductive, colorful pictorial spaces to express the immense pain of others. Cahn's paintings convey empathy with the life of others as an essential aspect of humanity.

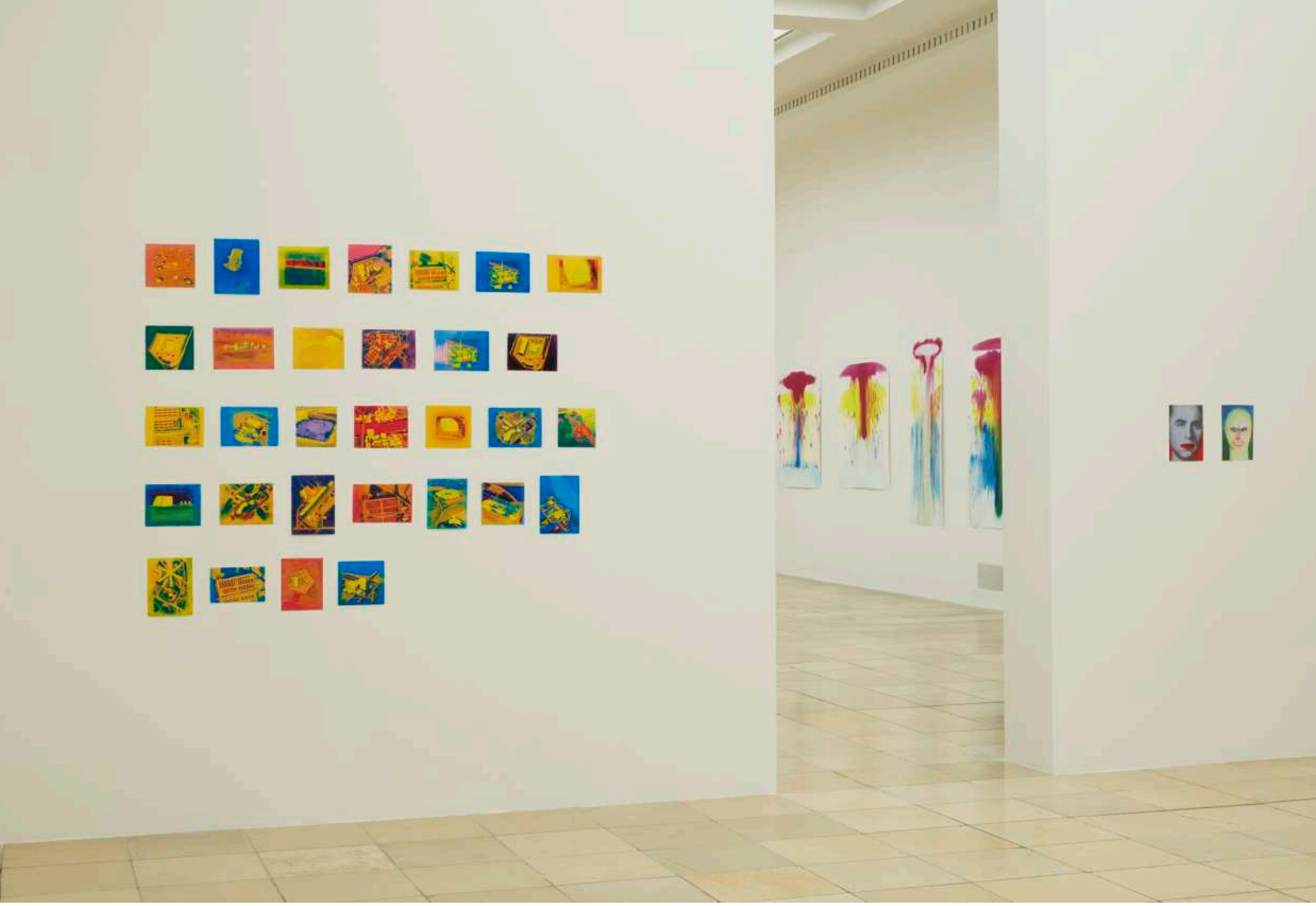
«In times of rekindling nationalism, populism, xenophobia, sexism and contempt for pluralism, Cahn's artistic work has become enormously explosive. The artist's central importance for a radically expanded understanding of the role of women in art historiography has become indisputable,» says curator Jana Baumann.

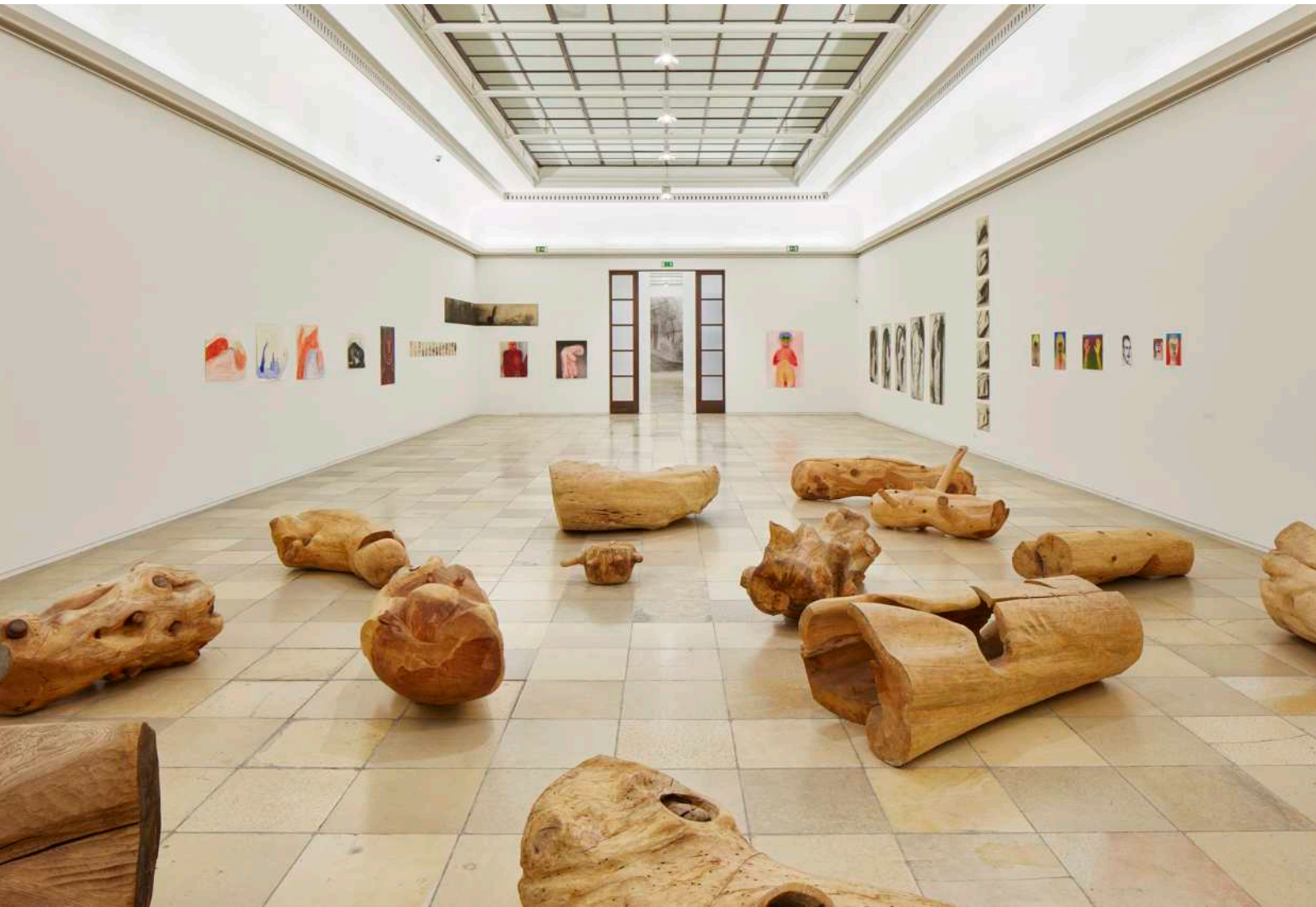
Cahn questions traditional societal, collective ideas and challenges the standardization of society. Her focus ranges from the initial development of new portrayals of the body to the disclosure of the current entanglement of people in the web of economic and ideological contexts.

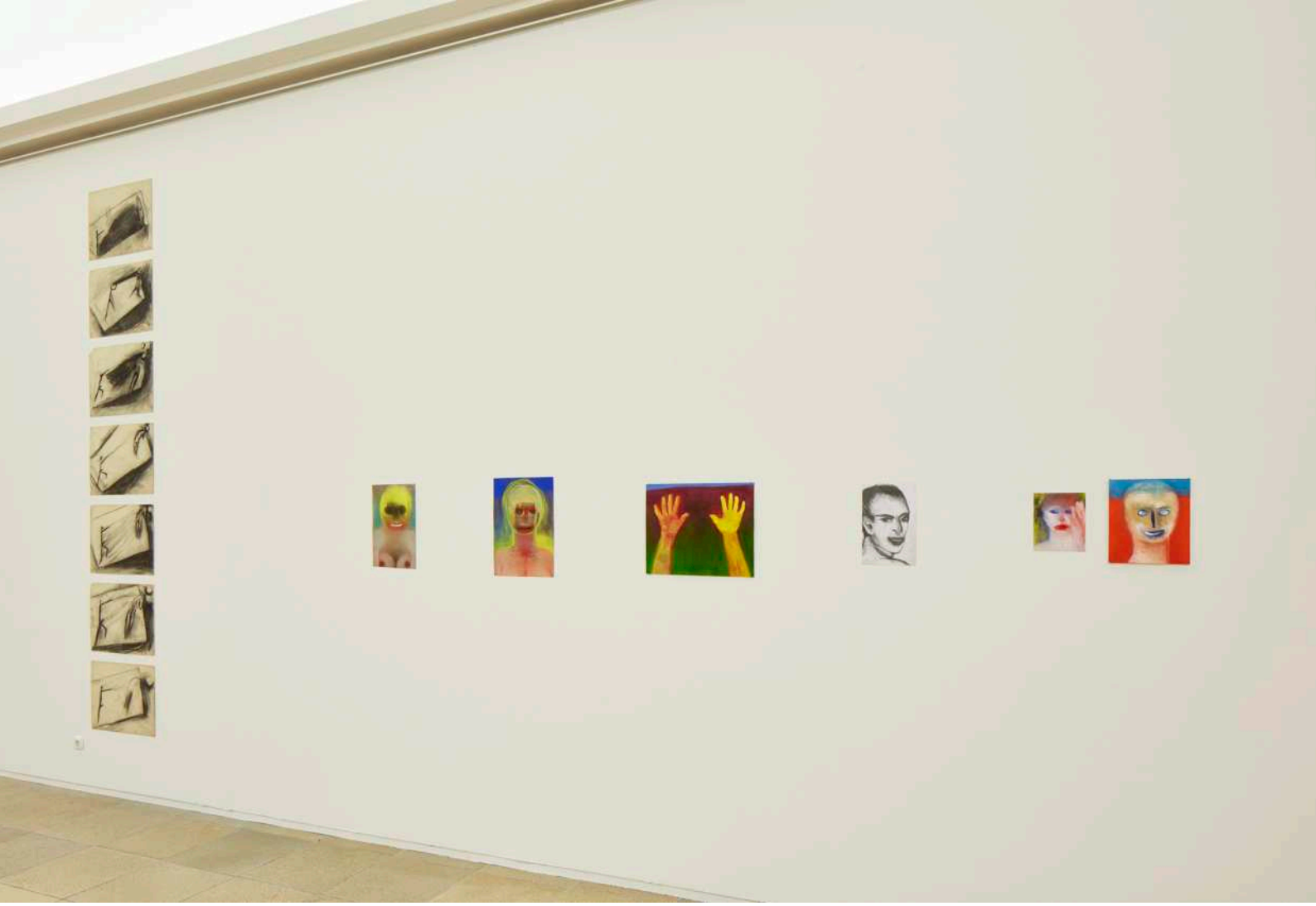
Source : Press release

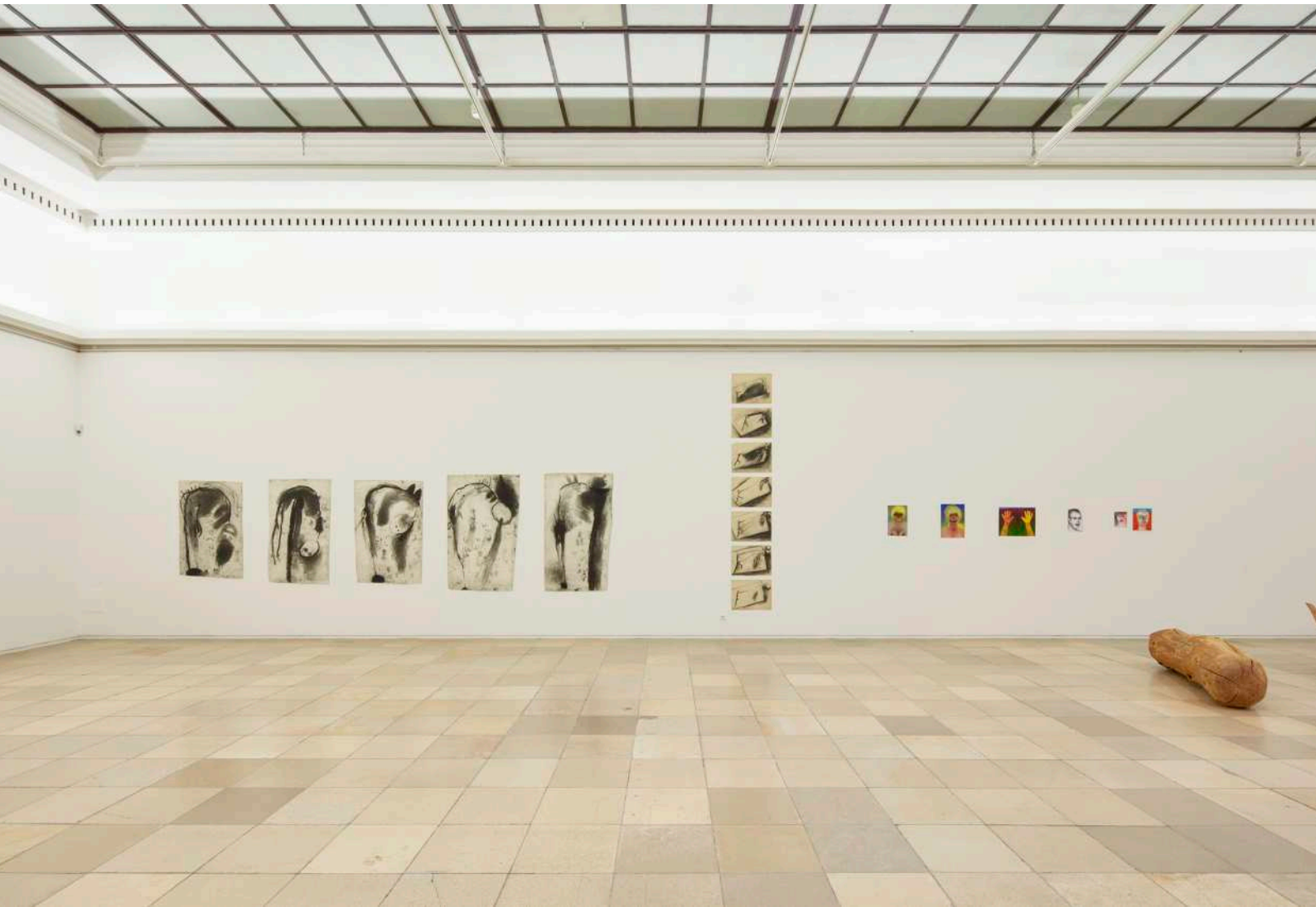




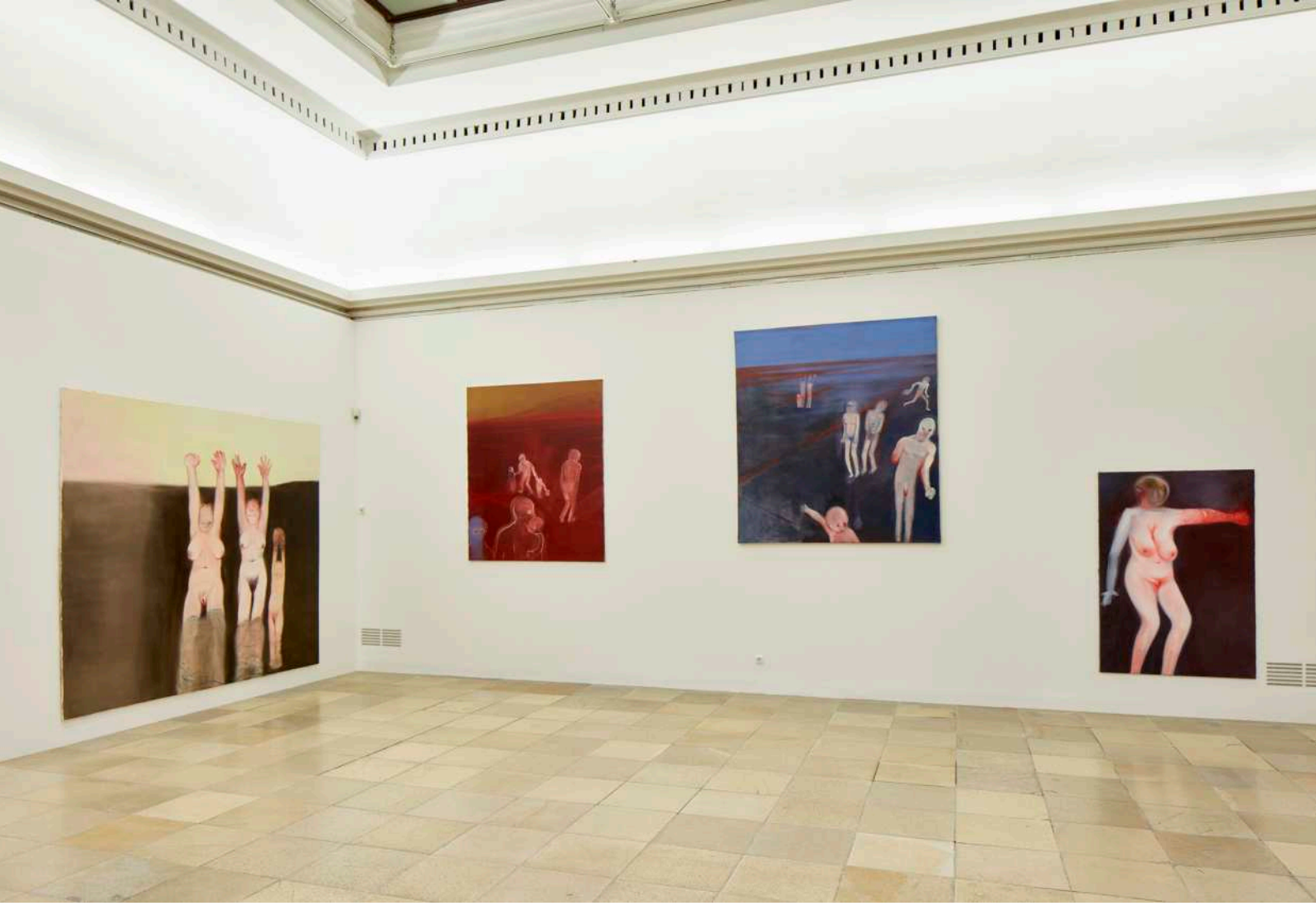














MIRIAM CAHN

EVERYTHING IS EQUALLY IMPORTANT

June 5 – October 14, 2019

Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain

Curated by Ana Ara and Fernando López

For Miriam Cahn (Basel, Switzerland, 1949), drawing, painting, photography, sculpture and writing reach their fullest sense when she puts her own body in motion, making it work as a performance tool: therefore, it is not simply represented, but materially embodies the coordinates of age and physical condition, testing them through art, both on a daily basis and across the broad time of biography.

The centrality of the body is related to Cahn's feminist awakening in the gestation of her work in the 1970s, when she displaced the customary sway held by sight and the faculty of reason. Thus, she explains how her hands are her "thinking tool" and unconventionally approaches traditional mediums, such as oil painting and charcoal drawings, ostensibly anachronistic, as processes with which to engage in an unusual relationship with time.

"I always work from the present," explains Cahn, for whom revisiting previous works becomes a chance to keep them alive while giving different meanings to her own existence, in different configurations and intersections between time in biography, nature, history and art history.

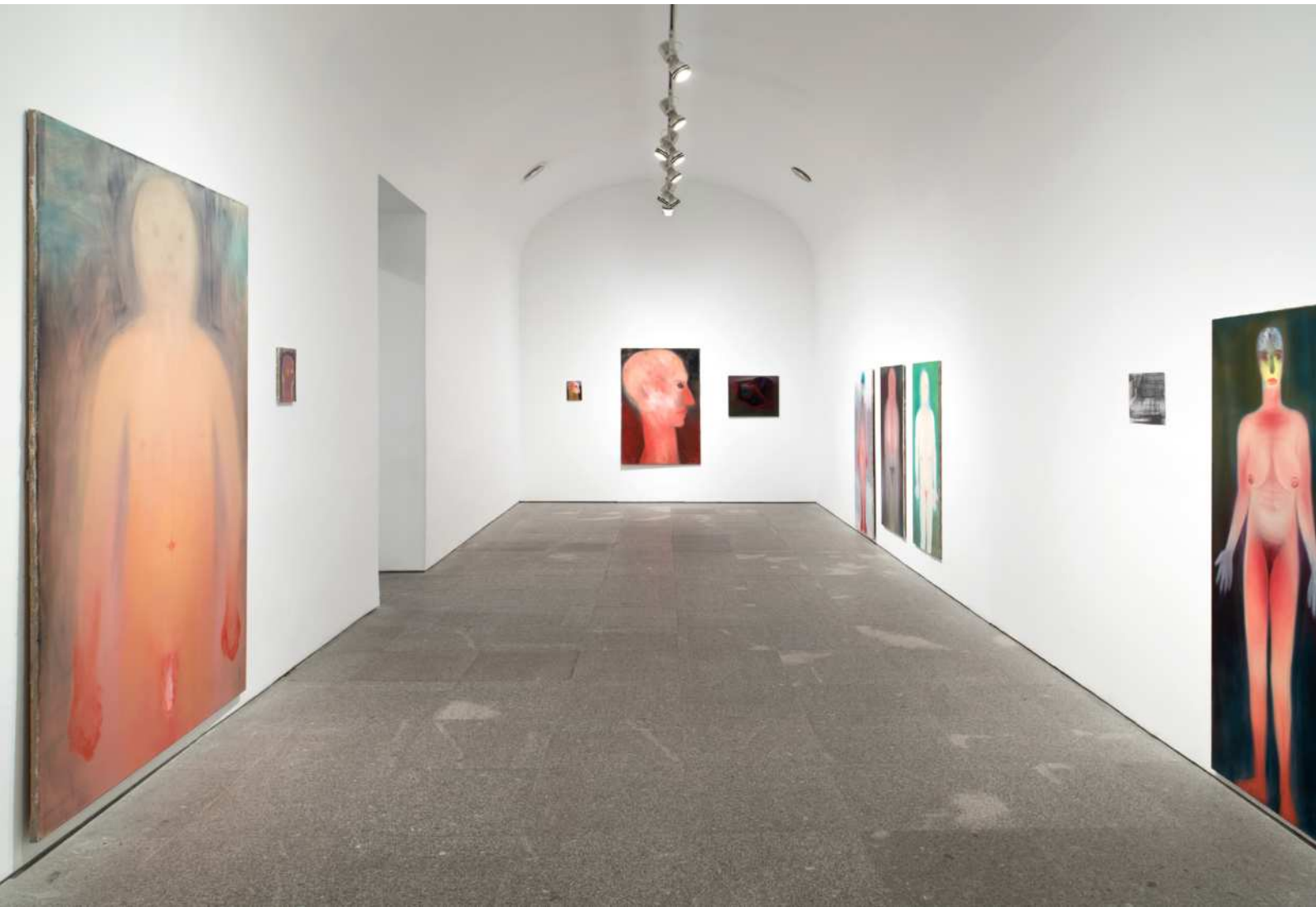
Conceived as a "biographic way of seeing the world", this exhibition stretches from her first notebooks and charcoal drawings from the 1970s to her latest works, in which each gesture, each movement and each thought is "equally important". Therefore, her works survey key themes which have become the focus of her concerns throughout her artistic career: war and violence, sexuality, nature, family and death.

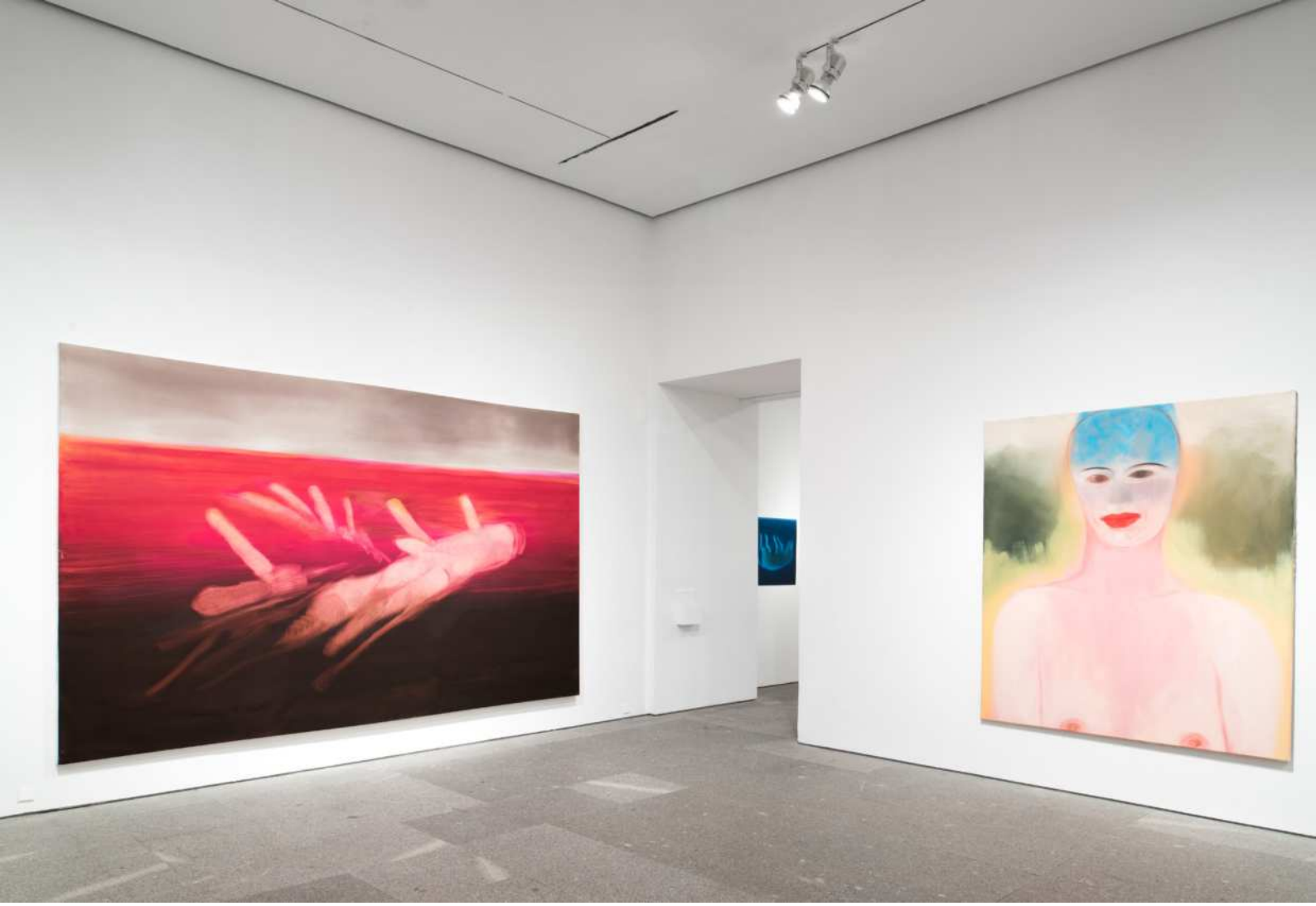
Large-scale drawings, bold and bright colours and unusual perspectives disrupt the perception of the viewer with regard to what they see. For Cahn art is political, and all the more so in its ability to raise awareness in the viewer through the display of her works. Thus the arrangement of these works in space gains importance and is carried out by the artist as she takes heed of intuition and allows scope for improvisation in the installation process.

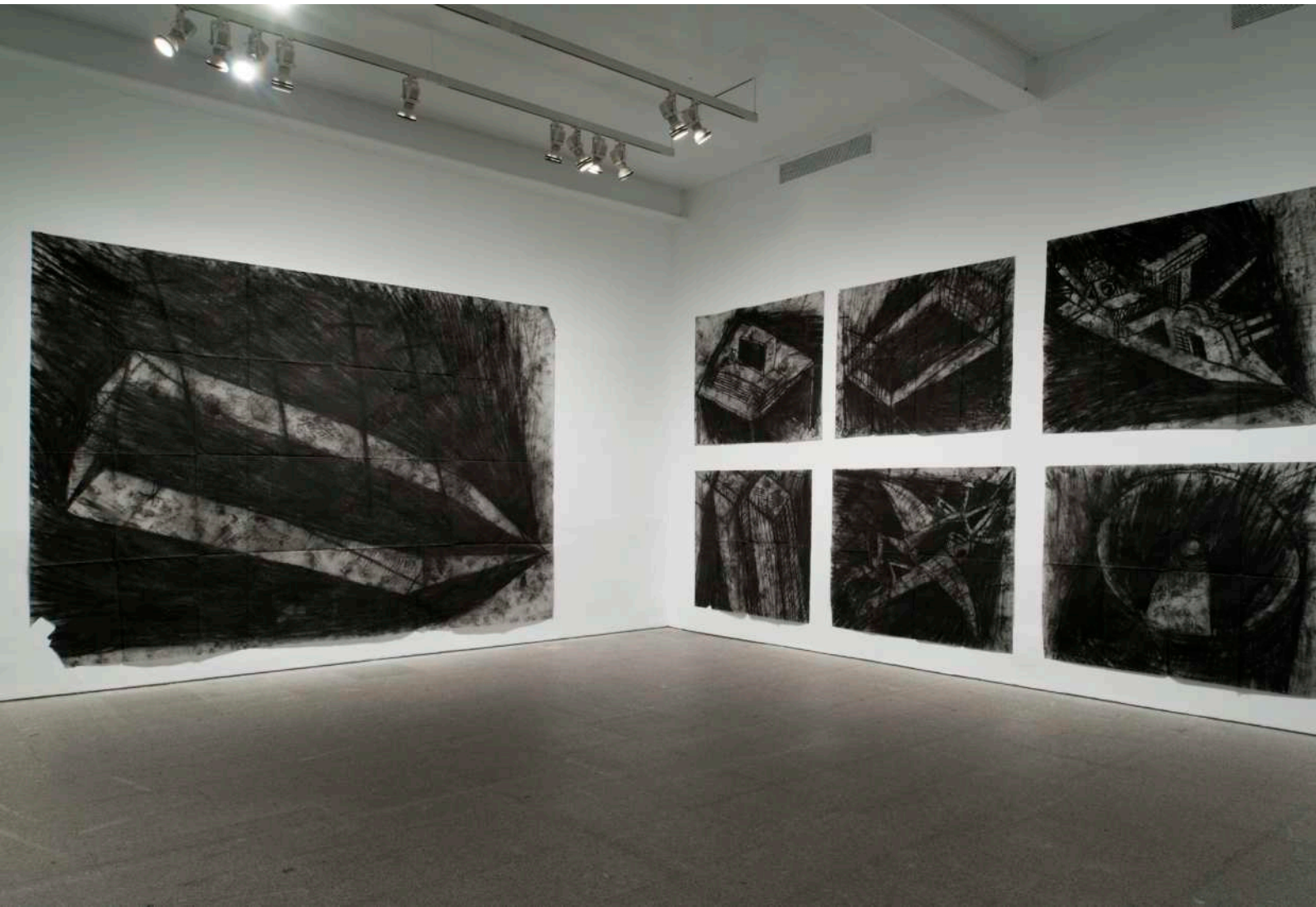
Source : Press release











Miriam Cahn
DAS WILDE LIEBEN (THE WILD LOVING), 1984
chalk, paper, plasticine, video
a room installation with 6 elements
approximately 36 x 4 m

It contains:
4 drawings :
frieze, chalk on paper 21 x 3,80 m
frieze, chalk on paper 9 x 3 m
single sheet, chalk on paper, 2,40 x 1,40 m
booklet, chalk on paper, 1,60 x 1 m (open)
31 plasticine sculptures :
weibliche waffen, wurfgeschosse, waffenfälschungen
(female weapons - missiles - fake/falsified
weapons)
approximately 4,50 x 2 m
b/w-video/monitor
weibliche waffen, wurfgeschosse, waffenfälschungen
(female weapons - missiles - fake/falsified

DAS WILDE LIEBEN (THE WILD LOVING), 1984, exhibition views: everything is equally important, Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain, 2019





MIRIAM CAHN

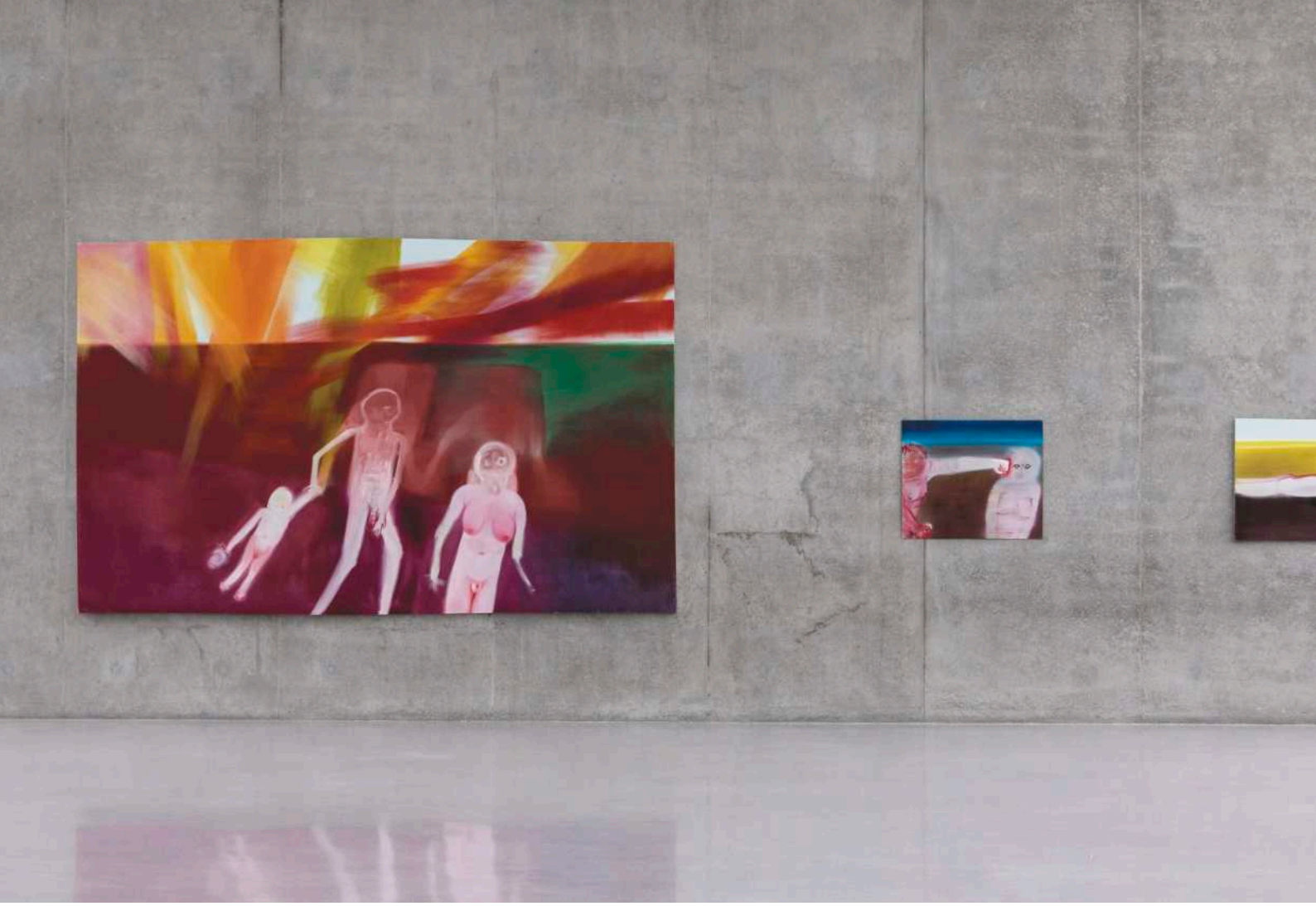
DAS GENAUE HINSCHAUEN

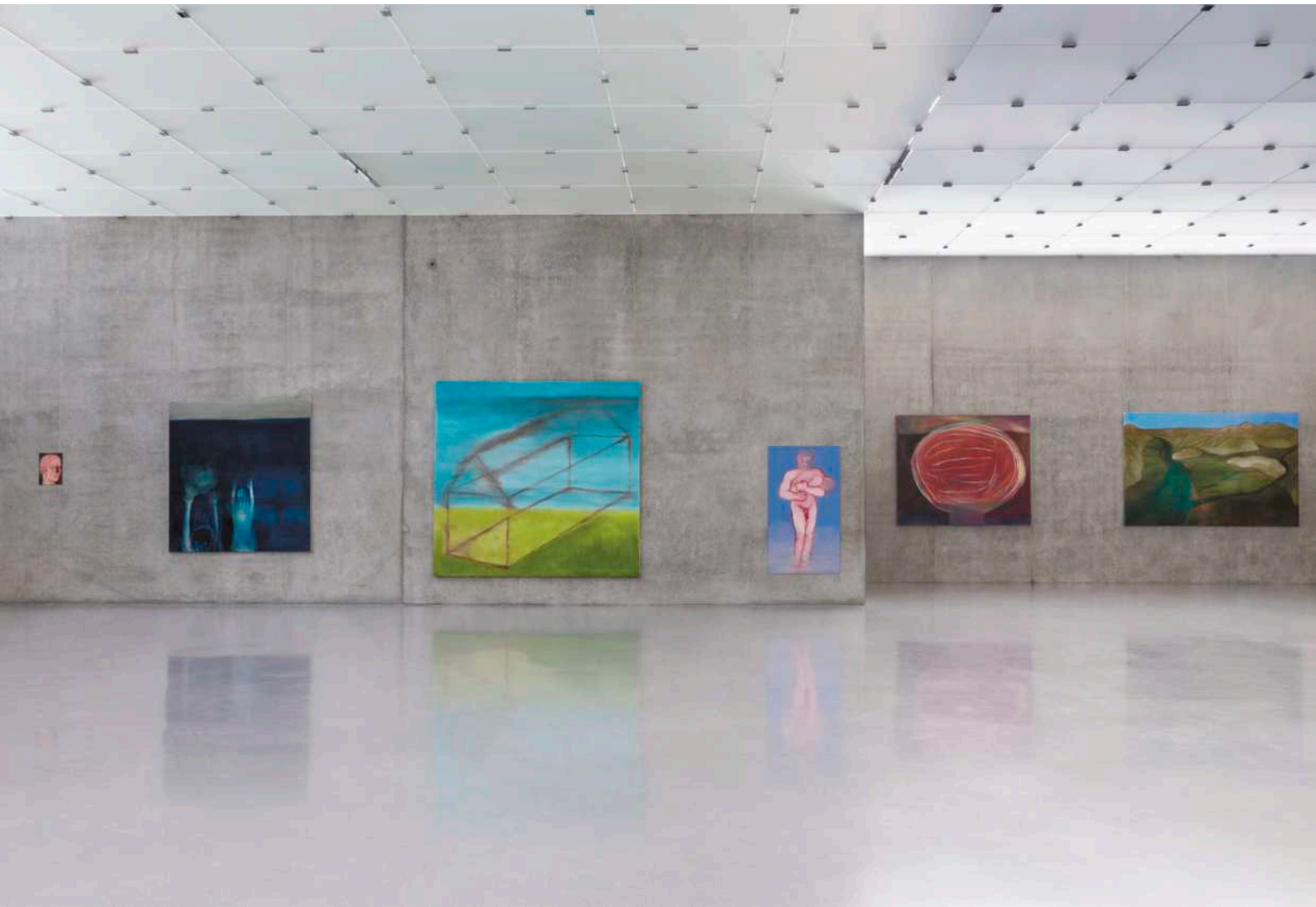
April 13 – June 30, 2019

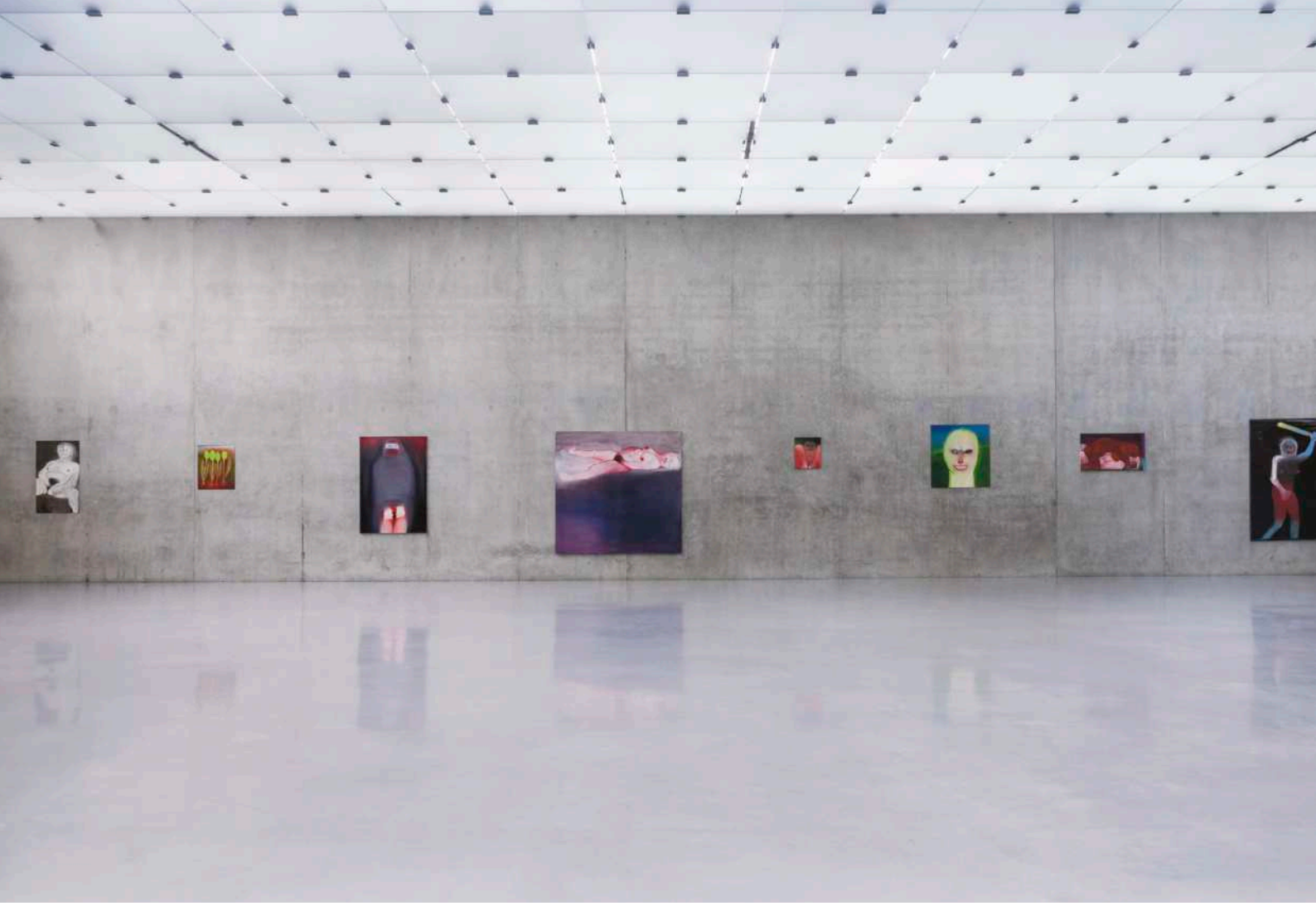
Kunsthaus Bregenz, Bregenz, Austria

The figures glow in fluorescent light, immersed in matt ultramarine. Their hair flows upwards, together with apparently weightless arms and hands. The figure to the left grabs towards a pale piece of fabric, displaying a veiled face evoking the Turin Shroud. The eyes of those portrayed are glazed and ghostly, the dark, shadowy mood of shock. MOOD NOSTRUM, the title of the painting, is the Latin term for the Mediterranean, but also the name for the Italian naval operation during 2013/2014 to rescue thousands of refugees at sea off Lampedusa. The painting is an unsparing document of the present crisis. It depicts drowned refugees sinking namelessly to the seabed.
On the third floor, a selection of her impressive paintings confronts current political and social debates. Not only the fate of the victims in the Mediterranean, but also violence – sexual, political and religious violence – are subjects central to the work. Cahn is not averse to throwing real punches, such as in o.t., 2017, where a left hand catches the victim straight in the face. The culprit is a man with a flushed face, whose right hand grasps his erect phallus. The woman who has been struck is pale, her eyes blank. Her face and even the blue pale horizon are barely perceptible. The dramatic motif of provocative violence repeatedly returns in variations. In addition, there are depictions of the family, portraits as if barely painted by the Expressionists, and repeatedly the nude: children, women, men. They are portrayed in all their vulnerability: as perpetrators and victims, in desire and in isolation, deranged dreams, loving, harsh, embracing, calling for help, masturbating, or dead.
What does that actually mean today, this being a woman?
The second floor features Miriam Cahn's large-scale drawings from 1982. The works are dusty. At the time Cahn drew kneeling on the floor, working very rapidly and performatively. They display monumental forms associated with masculinity, such as doppelkanone, a series of ships, an oil platform, and the World Trade Center towers in steep perspective. What is striking here is the geometry and the doubling of some forms, the dynamics and spikiness, and above all the stage-like composition as well as the consistent use of a deep black evoking gloomy visions.
The first floor comprises works drawn in black chalk on white paper that resemble photographs. Most of these drawings, which Cahn assembles in series; date from the 1980s and early 1990s. In many, their painterly work and movement are visible.
On the ground floor there are drawings and color photographs, liebenmüssen – DAS GENAUE HINSCHAUEN, 2018, is a series of scans hanged densely together. These are black and white reproductions of her own paintings, mostly depicting the female gender. The woman as subject of the gaze, the exposure of the female body, and pornographic voyeuristic curiosity repeatedly appear in this series. Cahn is a feminist, who has titled a collection of her own texts DAS ZORNIGE SCHREIBEN. Cahn responds to the current #MeToo debate, to the portrayals of the female gender circulating in the media, but also to art history. As early as 1866, Gustave Courbet painted exposed female genitalia in The Origin of the World (Musée d'Orsay, Paris). "This is a central image for a lot of women making art because it shows the mix, between horny pornography and beauty," explains Miriam Cahn.
Mirian Cahn is not shy of the subject of sexuality. She bases her art on the profane, entering into a dialogue of opposing equivalents with the seemingly sacral architecture of Kunsthaus Bregenz. Although both architect Peter Zumthor and the artist were born near Basel, they have never met in person – to accompany the Bregenz, a public conversation will be taking place between them for the first time.

Source : Press release

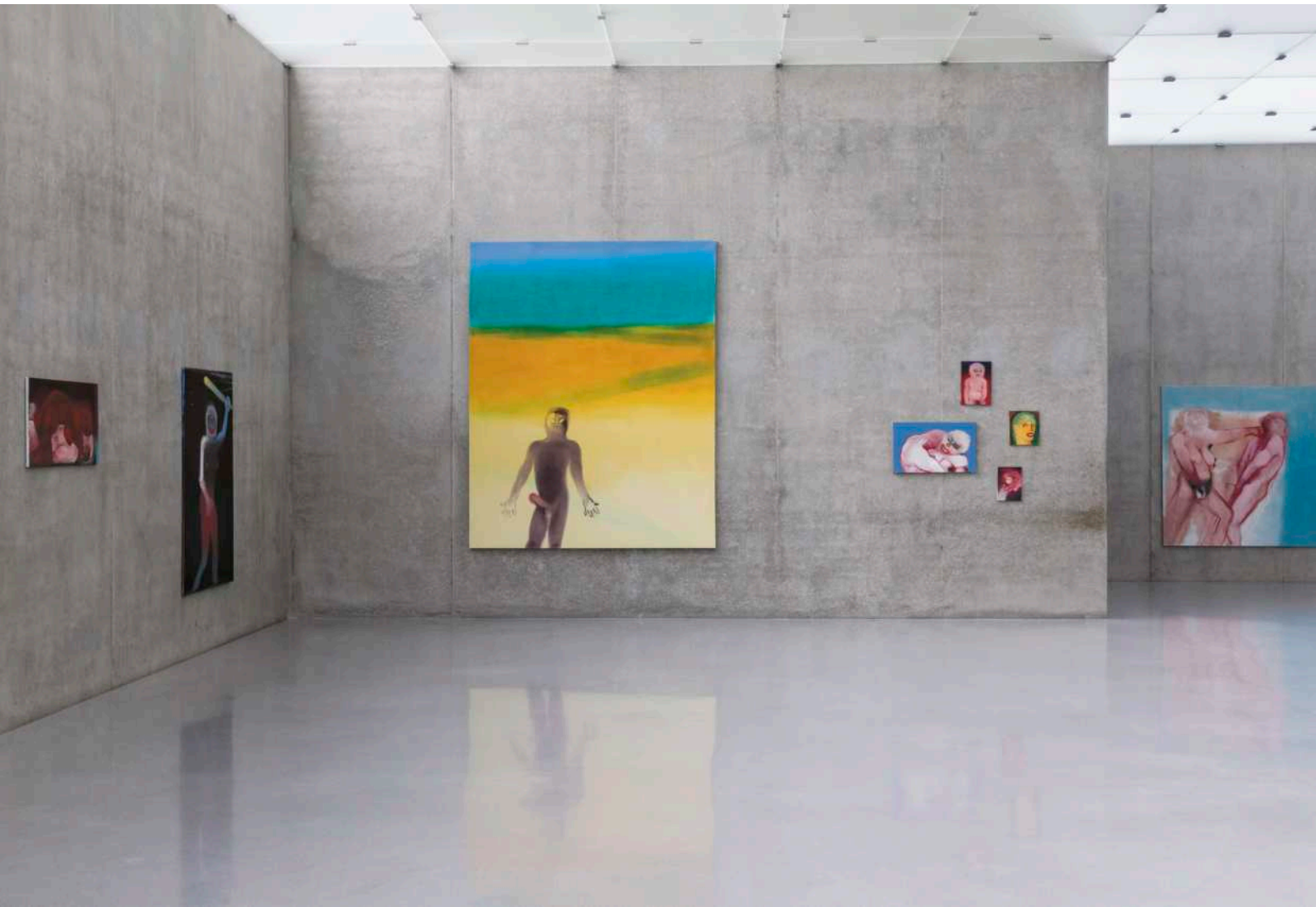












MIRIAM CAHN

I AS HUMAN

Februrary 22 – June 16, 2019

Kunstmuseum Bern, Bern, Switzerland

In a comprehensive survey of her oeuvre that represents the key phases of her artistic career, Swiss artist Miriam Cahn shows vibrant works on paper, oil paintings in bewitching colours, monumental sculptures, performative videos, and sketchbooks. The latter have never been on view to the general public before and have been assembled in a unique chronology and in a thematically expansive installation. In it the artist reinterprets the classical museum building as a sensual, conceptual construction while illustrating the artist‘s principles in regard to meaning, motifs, and aesthetics. Many works have been created especially for the exhibition or are key works in the possession of the artist.

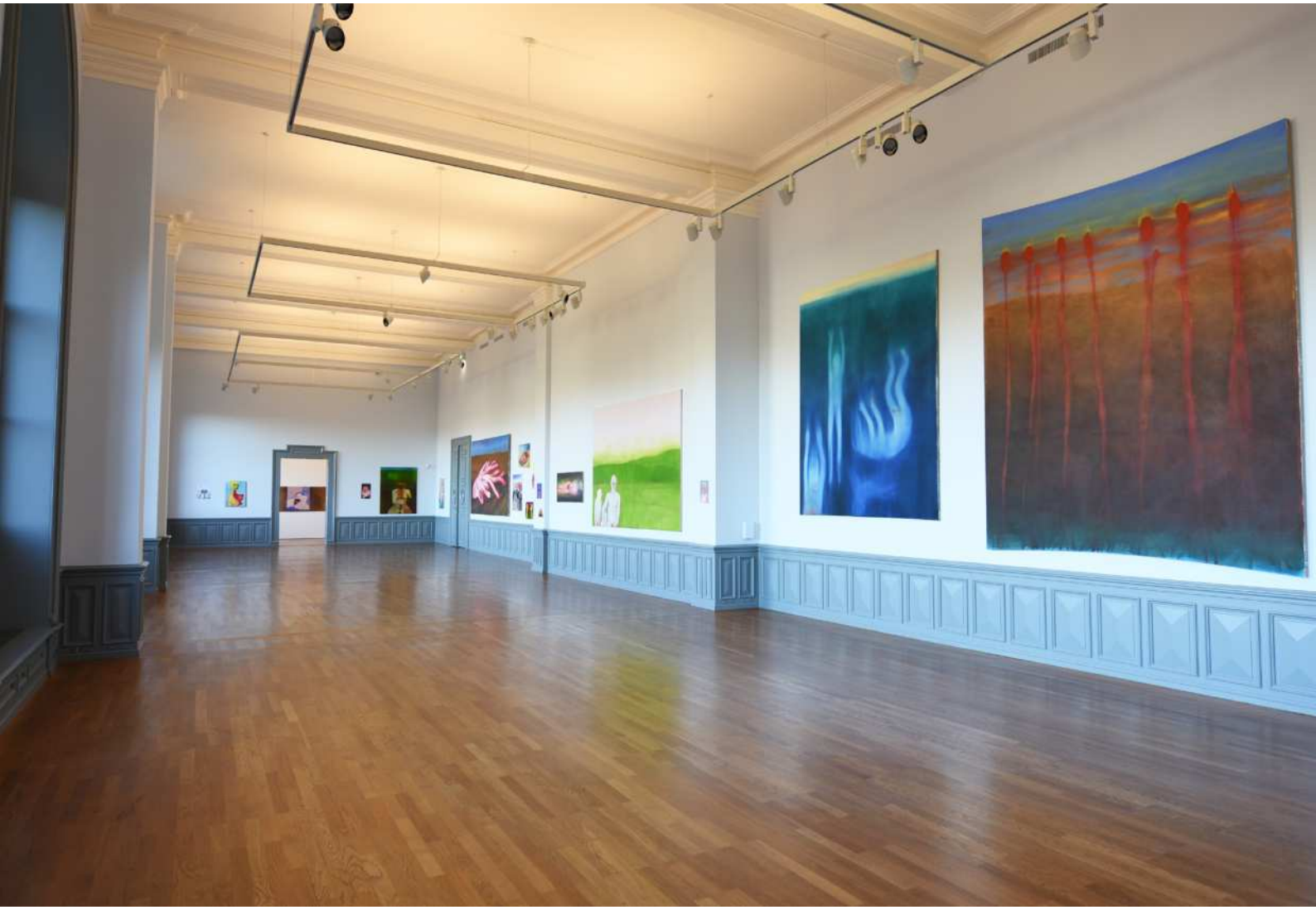
Miriam Cahn is a leading figure in the art of her generation. Above all, her very convincing presentations in conjunction with documenta 14 in Athens and Kassel strongly underscore the overwhelming relevance of her work for today’s world. This is reason enough to again recall, for a broad audience, her diverse oeuvre and her resolute, radical artistic approach. A number of museums will be paying tribute to her artistic legacy in 2019: after the large solo exhibition at the Kunstmuseum Bern, four further solo exhibitions will be mounted – at Kunsthaus Bregenz, Reina Sofia in Madrid, Haus der Kunst in Munich and the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw.

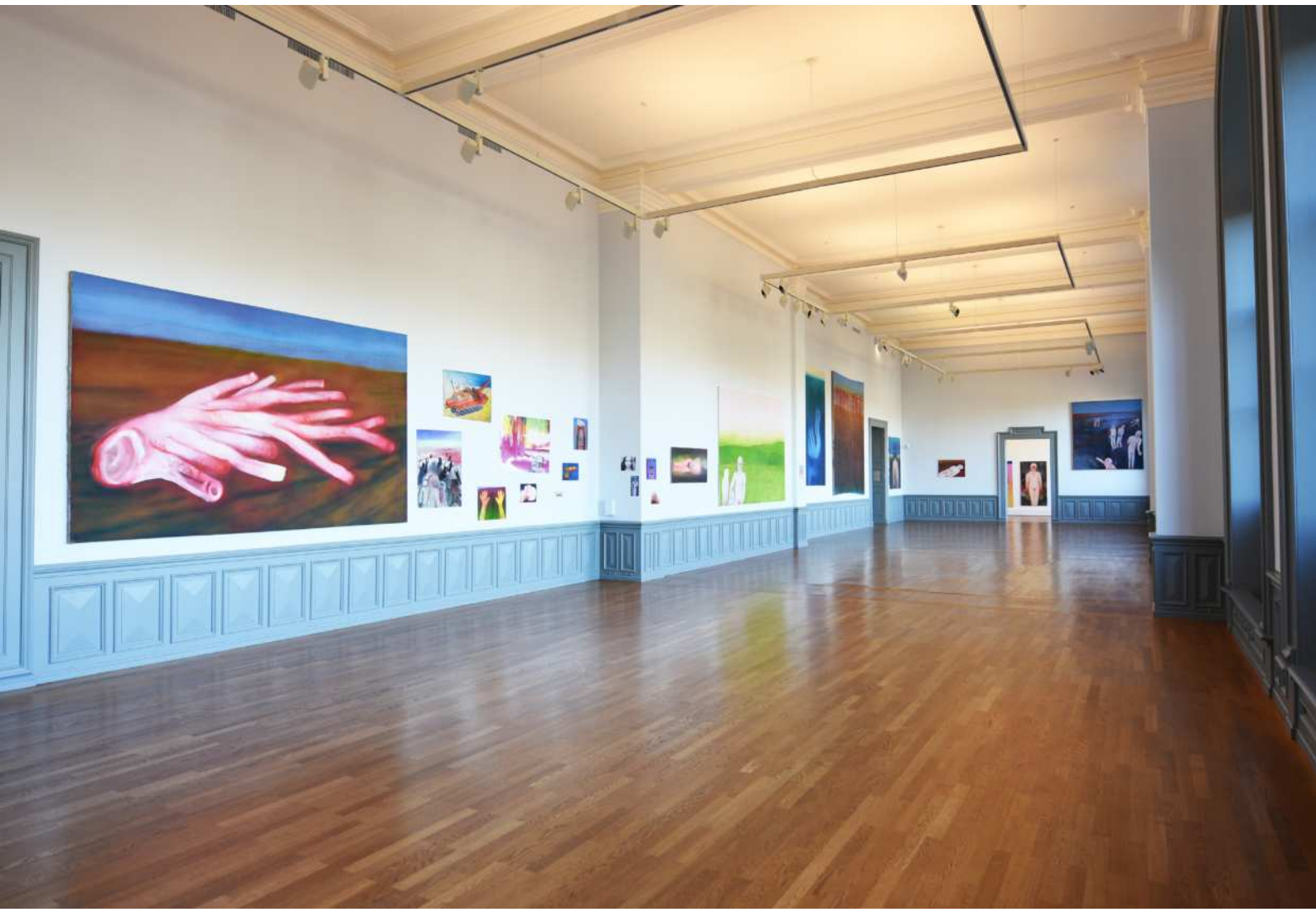
The title Miriam Cahn has chosen for the exhibition – I AS HUMAN – revolves around the artist’s deliberate and implicit commitment toward humanistic principles and the question of what comprises humanity at present. The artist’s images and exhibitions articulate, in an unequivocal and palpably visible and cogent way, her preoccupation with war, displacement and gender relations as well as her investigation of violence, love and the fragility of nature. Because the artist is determining the hanging herself, the works can be read as a condensed commentary on and subjective interpretation of her own work and as a contemporary view of art and the world. A good reason for this is that Miriam Cahn, since beginning her artistic career, not only critically addresses political and social issues and events but equally engages with the question of the artistic methods she uses, her modes of expression and also the background and history of the media she selects. Self-determination in expression, methods and subject matter is her primary goal alongside the uncompromising confrontation with what is considered human in our time and age.

Source : Press release









Exhibition views : Kunstmuseum Bern, Bern, Switzerland

MIRIAM CAHN

21ST BIENNALE OF SYDNEY
SUPERPOSITION: EQUILIBRIUM & ENGAGEMENT

March 16 – June 11, 2018

MCA - Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Sydney, Australia

Shaped by the emergence of second-wave feminism, Miriam Cahn's artistic practice contends with the materiality of the body, asserting the basic substance of the physical form. At once haunting and ambiguous, Cahn's works investigate the different meanings connected to our bodily reality – namely abjection, vulnerability and ignobility. Cahn treats figurative subjects with an abstract sensibility, using basic objects and motifs to talk about complex socio-political concerns. Despite living and working in a remote alpine region in Switzerland, Cahn's work is very much tied to current affairs.

The development of Cahn's practice has relied heavily on her physical self, driving the artist's methods and use of media. Cahn's large-scale charcoal drawings of the late 1970s and 1980s were produced by working directly on the floor, often without artistic implements, evading any mediative distance between technique and subject matter. Traces of this process, including fingerprints and other marks, are often visible in her works, linking the resultant image with the performative gesture.

Cahn's series of four charcoal drawings, Reading in dust, the wild love (Lesen in staub, das wilde lieben), 1984, were created in this way. Depicting scenes teeming with energy and movement, the female figures in the drawings revel in bodily experience, carrying out base actions removed from shameful or indecent associations. Motivated by impulse, Cahn's drawings rejoice in the actuality of the human body.

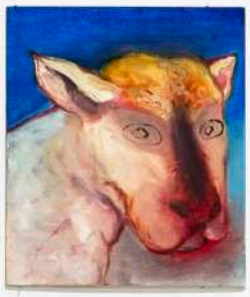
In the 1990s, Cahn moved towards oil painting, introducing colour into her visual vocabulary when observing the efficacy of mass-media images and advertising. Describing the logic behind her inclusion of colour, Cahn has said: 'The first oil paintings, of course, were elementary in their statement, simple only with three colours. For me, colour was always a complication. And because I wanted to work quite directly and physically at first, I intentionally left out colours in order not to slow it down with an intermediate step.'

Cahn's implementation of colour is highly considered, as demonstrated in the presentation of her more recent paintings at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. In MARE NOSTRUM, 2015–16, Cahn applies a fleshly red to highlight the figures' enlarged genitals, indicating fecundity and sexual potency. Links to sexuality and fertility in Cahn's paintings are frequently denoted by the colour red, as in gezeichnet (drawn), 14.08.2016 and o.t., 07.02.2016.

Source : Artist's presentation by Biennale of Sydney:







MIRIAM CAHN

DOCUMENTA 14
LEARNING FROM ATHENS

April 8 – July 16, 2017
Benaki Museum-Pireos Street Annexe, Athens, Greece

June 10 - September 17, 2017
documenta Halle, Kassel; Germany

« Niggling questions

Is Miriam Cahn, born in Basel in 1949, a realist artist? What can be seen in her drawings, performances, films, and paintings—and what cannot? Where does the difference lie between how the world manifests itself, how we experience it, and how we perceive it? Is it possible—and if so, where—to draw a clear division between the subjective and the objective image of the reality around us? What is the significance of the framing, and is abstraction not the only means to realistically render the process of looking and the work of memory? What does Miriam Cahn look at, and what does she see?

Formats / techniques / means / stakes

a) Violent, quivering, unstable charcoal drawings: a means of rendering, and commenting upon, the reality rolling in front of our eyes; a chain of images, a flurry of thoughts, the cacophony of time experienced; a jungle of perceptions, recollections, dreams, and fears.

b) Creating on the floor, working with eyes closed, drawing with the whole body, the work dictated by biological rhythms: a device for suspending interpretation, relinquishing control and safe distancing; a real (feminine) presence.

c) Filming that in its frames includes—besides the “object”—the breathing, trembling, and tiredness of the filmmaker.

d) Disturbing, oneiric paintings sparkling with color, showing figures with blurred contours, crude features, and grotesquely exaggerated sexual organs (and many “unclear beings”). Despite their strong presence in the frame, they seem absent, distant, and empty, reminiscent of abandoned shadows. Sporadic detail marks points of tension or identity: the (usually erect) genitals, hole-like vacant eyes, clenched fists. Installed so that the eyes of the protagonists and the viewer are at the same level, Cahn’s paintings act as sinister mirrors (apart from seeing oneself in their terror, is this not also a device for representing the randomness of history?).

e) The works’ titles contain no, or only, capital letters: to suspend the specific is to generalize. sarajevo, beirut, hände hoch!, MARE NOSTRUM could be anytime, anywhere; they can be/are everywhere, at all times.[*]

[...]

Source : text by Marta Dziewańska (excerpt)

















MIRIAM CAHN

DEVOIR-AIMER

April 29 – June 17, 2017

Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France

For her fourth show at the Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Miriam Cahn has decided to present her most recent work, with the paintings and drawings of devoir-aimer (must-love).

After being deeply struck by the fighting of the 1990s in the former Yugoslavia, Miriam Cahn is now pursuing her examination of conflicts associated with war; and in particular those that have shaken up the Middle East and Syria.

The hanging of her paintings bears witness to the profusion of images which we receive from conflicts, the media treatment of war, the questions that result from the flood of refugees in Europe, and the frequent debates that result. Miriam Cahn's work can even sometimes evoke a number of military, or humanitarian operations (such as MARE NOSTRUM) which did not receive the means they needed to be put into action.
Her figures are fleeing, with scared faces turning around, to see for one final time what they are leaving behind; amputated bodies which can, even distantly, evoke an ancient classical statue; raped women whose bared bodies are put before all of our eyes, bearing witness to their extreme vulnerability.

Miriam Cahn has chosen to direct her gaze at these faces which have been barely sketched out in a rudimentary, primitive style; these scared, hallucinatory, shocked, rigid stares; these static or moving bodies, with phantom-like or straying figures.

The paintings are hung on the wall at eye-level, like a movie shot where the screen grasps the viewer; in this way, visitors are directly confronted with the characters' eyes.

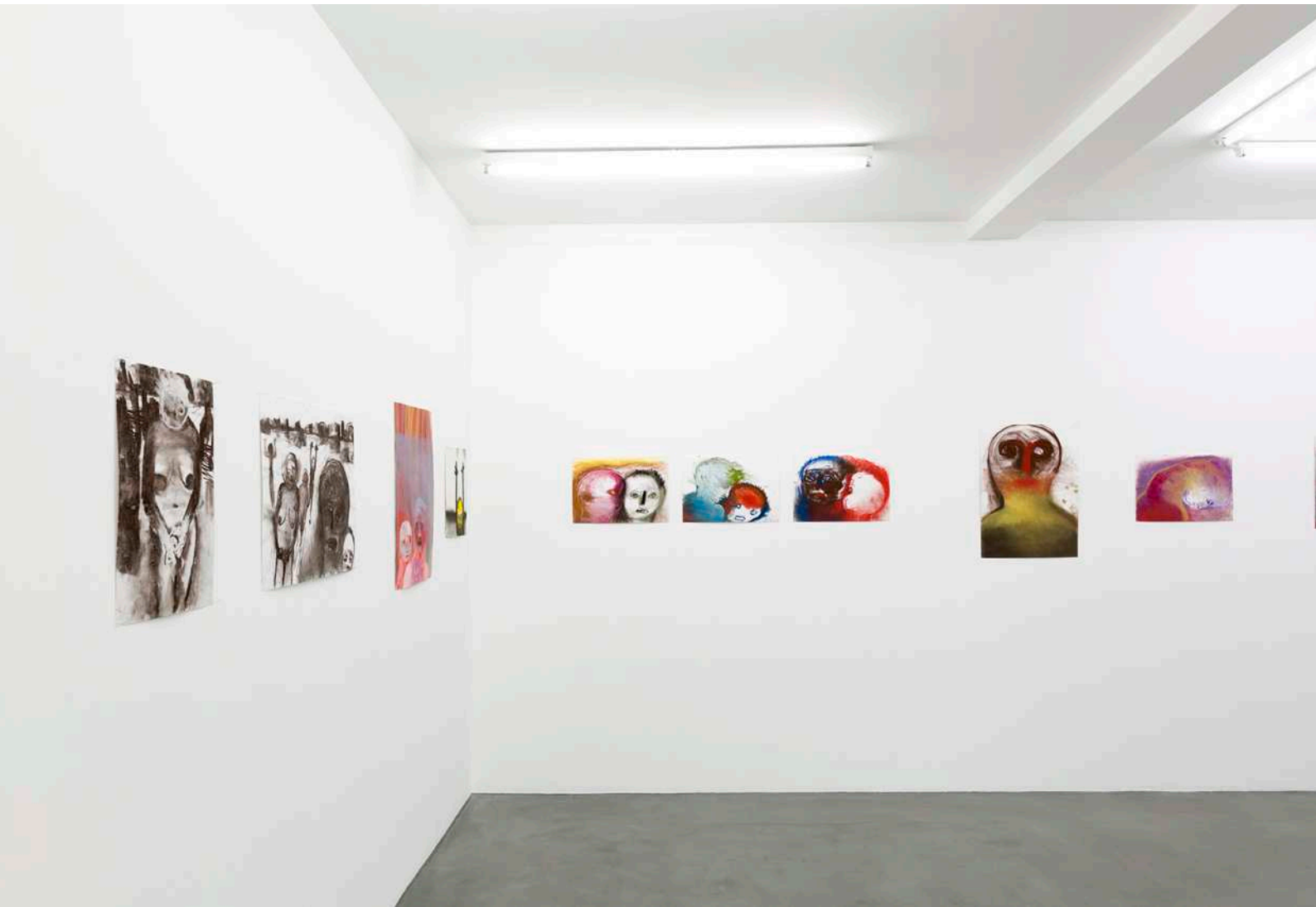
The colours can be bright, or pale, almost absent, as in the great disaster canvas in which the light is so strong that the colours seem to have been whitened.

In the second part of the space, Miriam Cahn has placed a large set of 22 drawings, which form a single work. The title 8 tage (raum) suggests that the series was produced in 8 days, between 13th October and 15th November 2016. The drawings have been hung chronologically: each group, of 2, 3 or 5 drawings, represents one day. However, this installation also features a great liberty in its presentation, because the order of the drawings made during the same day can vary. But their association as a group remains primordial while offering the possibility of multiple interpretations, reflecting a constantly evolving topicality.

On a small shelf can be found two sketch pads and a photo which has been reworked with the artist's crayons. The sketch book o.t., 19.12.14 - 25.9.16 picks up on the themes that recur in the show, such as portraits, still lifes, landscapes, and architecture. The other, smaller pad (vergessen und rekonstruieren (ordnungsversuch) (zitate), 20.3 - 6.4.2014) deals with forgetting and reconstruction. Ranging from 11 September 2001 to architecture, while taking in the realistic depiction of nature, as a break, these pieces attest to the diversity of Miriam Cahn's work, in the subjects and her choice of media, which are constantly being re-examined or associated.

Source : Press release





MIRIAM CAHN

KÖRPERLICH - CORPOREL

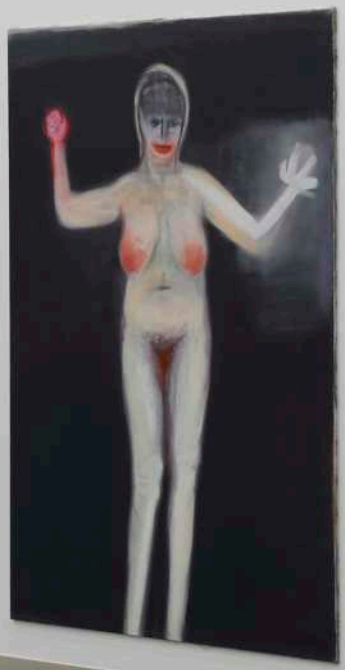
January 24 - April 12, 2015

Aargauer Kunsthaus, Aarau, Switzerland

Miriam Cahn is a leading figure in recent Swiss art. She garnered national and international attention in the late 1970s with blackand- white drawings that were made by using the body performatively. From the outset the body and physicality were central themes of her art that she explored with pencil and charcoal. Around 1986 Miriam Cahn discovered colour for herself and subsequently turned to painting in the 1990s. Human beings, animals, buildings, and plants, as well as frequent reflections on the female and male body, dominate her work. Figurative imagery merges with sketchy, abstracted elements in her works. And yet the absent, the invisible and the inexpressible are always palpable in her depictions as well. Miriam Cahn's oeuvre as a whole bears witness to an intense preoccupation with existential issues, current events

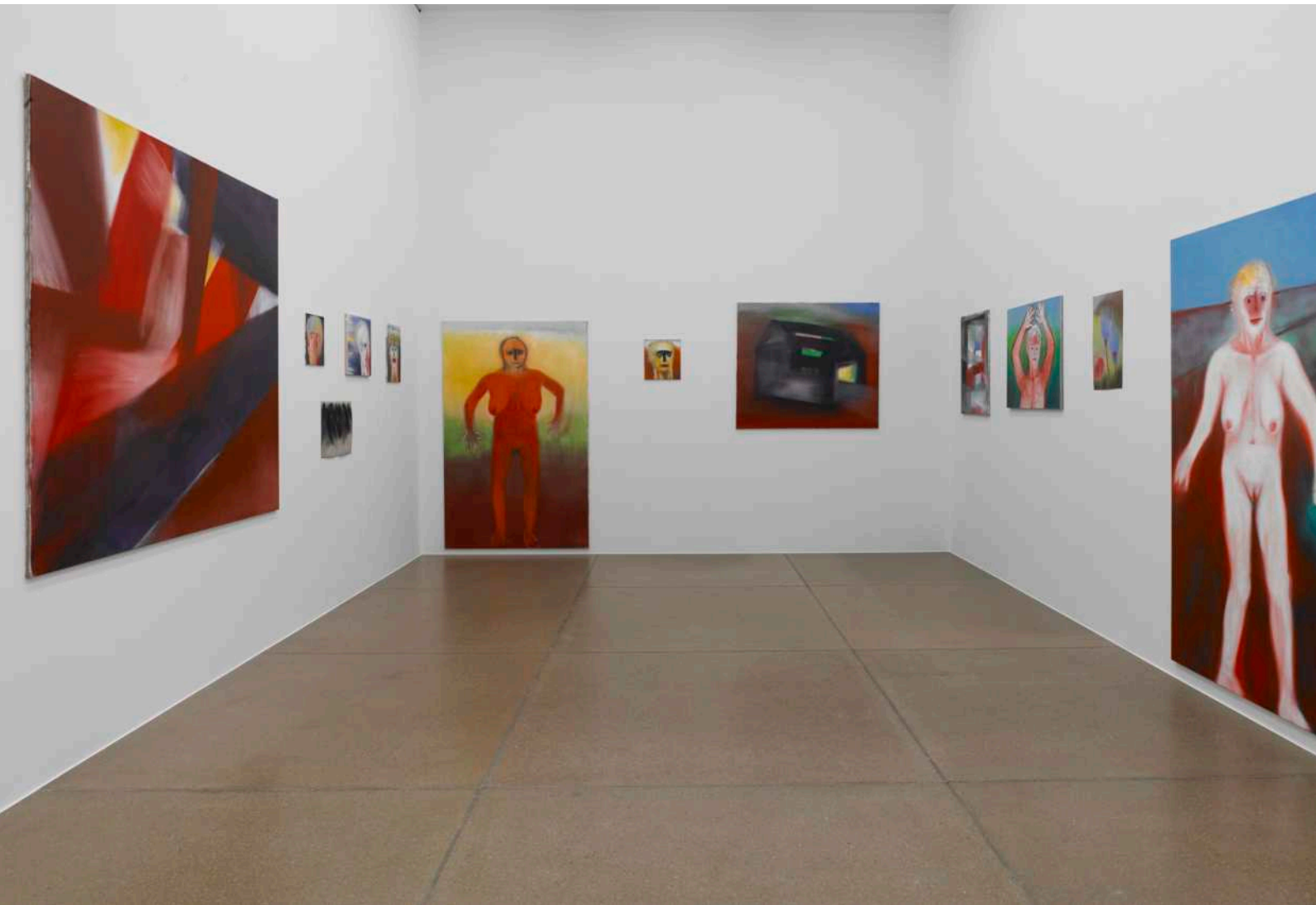
and social conditions. The exhibition körperlich – corporel assembles works from different creative periods of the artist, with large- and medium-scale paintings and drawings from the past three years taking centre stage. For the first time included in an institutional exhibition, the sprawling wood piece schlachtfeld / alterswerk (2012) is installed in the accessible cou tyard, introducing viewers to a lesser-known aspect of Miriam Cahns work.

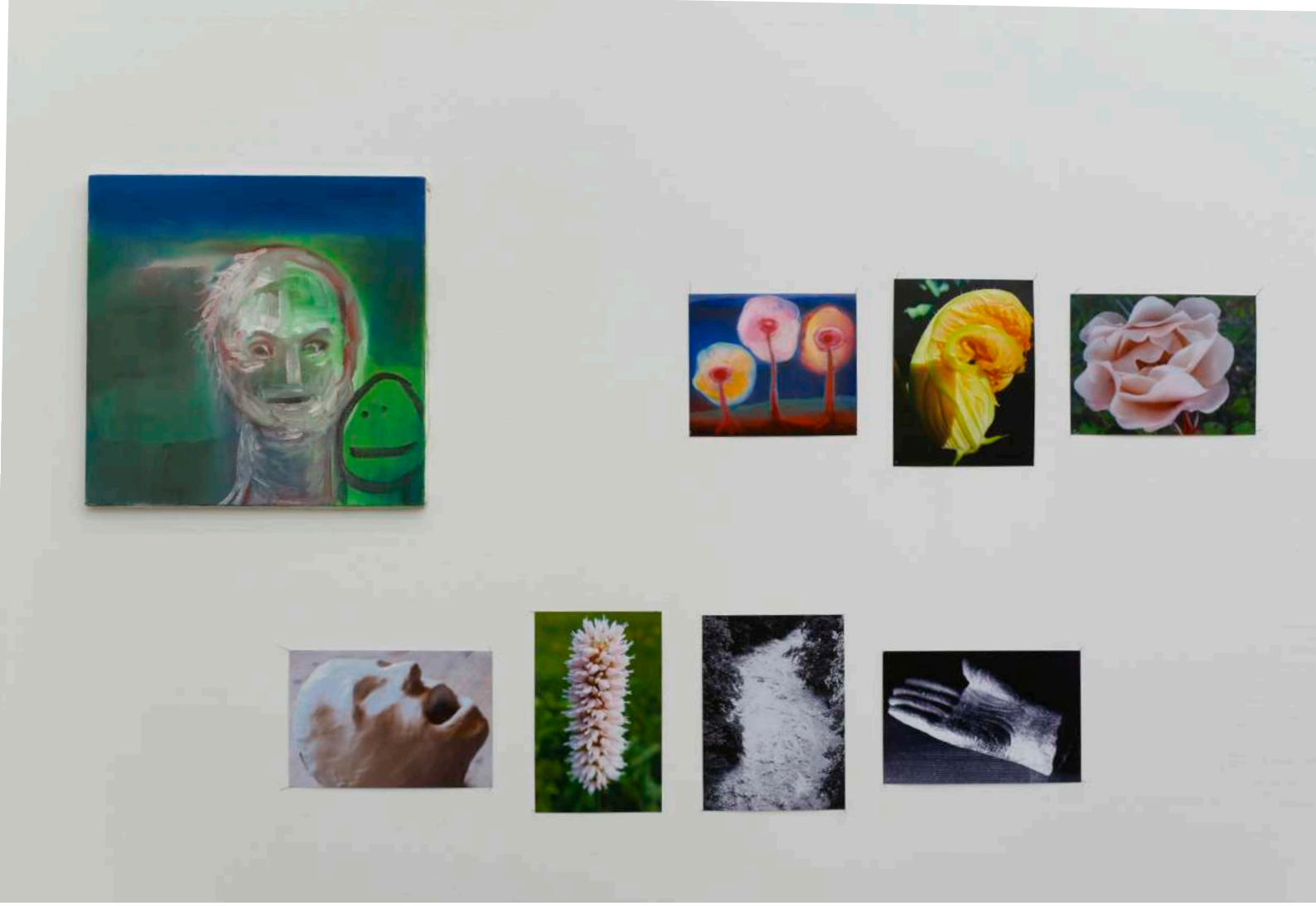
Source : Press release













MIRIAM CAHN

SCHLACHTFELD /ALTERSWERK 2014

November 15- December 20, 2014

Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France

«LATE WORK

I call the piece *kriegsschauplatz/kampffeld/SCHLACHTFELD* a late work. when I used the term with a friend who is my age she felt incensed, offended and angry with me.

I had used the term proudly and pointed with a broad sweep of the arm to all the large already finished tree trunks lying there, had wanted to show her with this expression that I as 60-me would continue working these enormous hunks of wood by hand until my powers fail me, that I with my own two hands would strip, saw, carve these roughly man-sized bodies of wood with handsaws and carving knives, rob them of their skins like a modern marsyas with my instruments, penetrate their innards surgically
until the day my powers leave me (no-power-anymore-me))
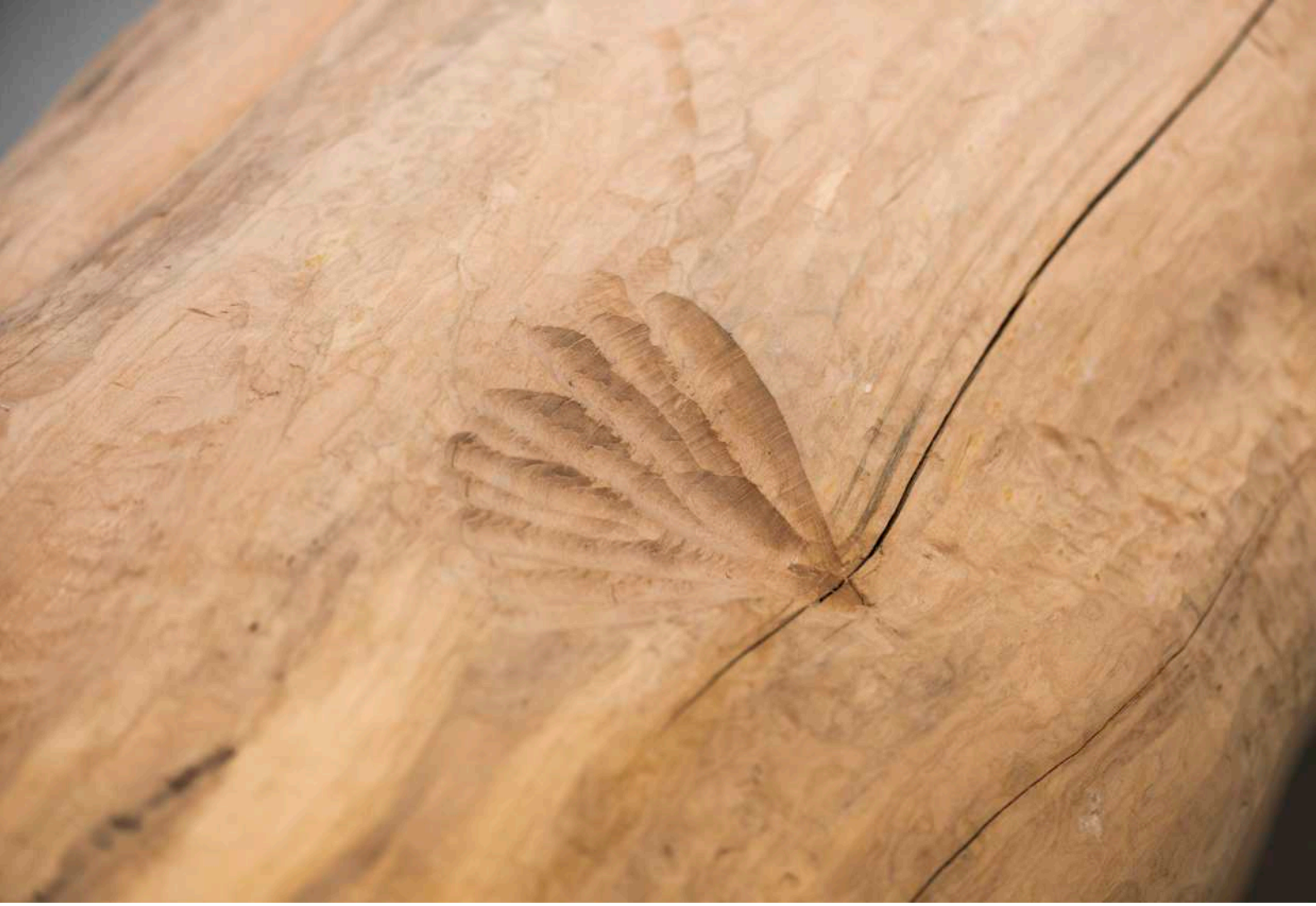
that's how long this work SCHLACHTFELD will endure, that's how long I will belabour these tree trunks a long time hopefully at least as long as I have the power to carve and saw and cut with my hands.

lying there are the ones I have finished, lying next to one another as bodies I have worked and defined there as a field, these bodies lying spread about in the field on the floor of the space these bodies worked bodily by me beings, that had been standing trees and now are prone bodies, a battlefield of work, of bodies, of space. your body is a slaughterhouse, your body is a battlefield, your body is a battleground.

Miriam Cahn»

Source : Press release









MIRIAM CAHN

CORPOREL / KÖRPERLICH

September 12 - December 14, 2014

Centre Culturel Suisse, Paris, France

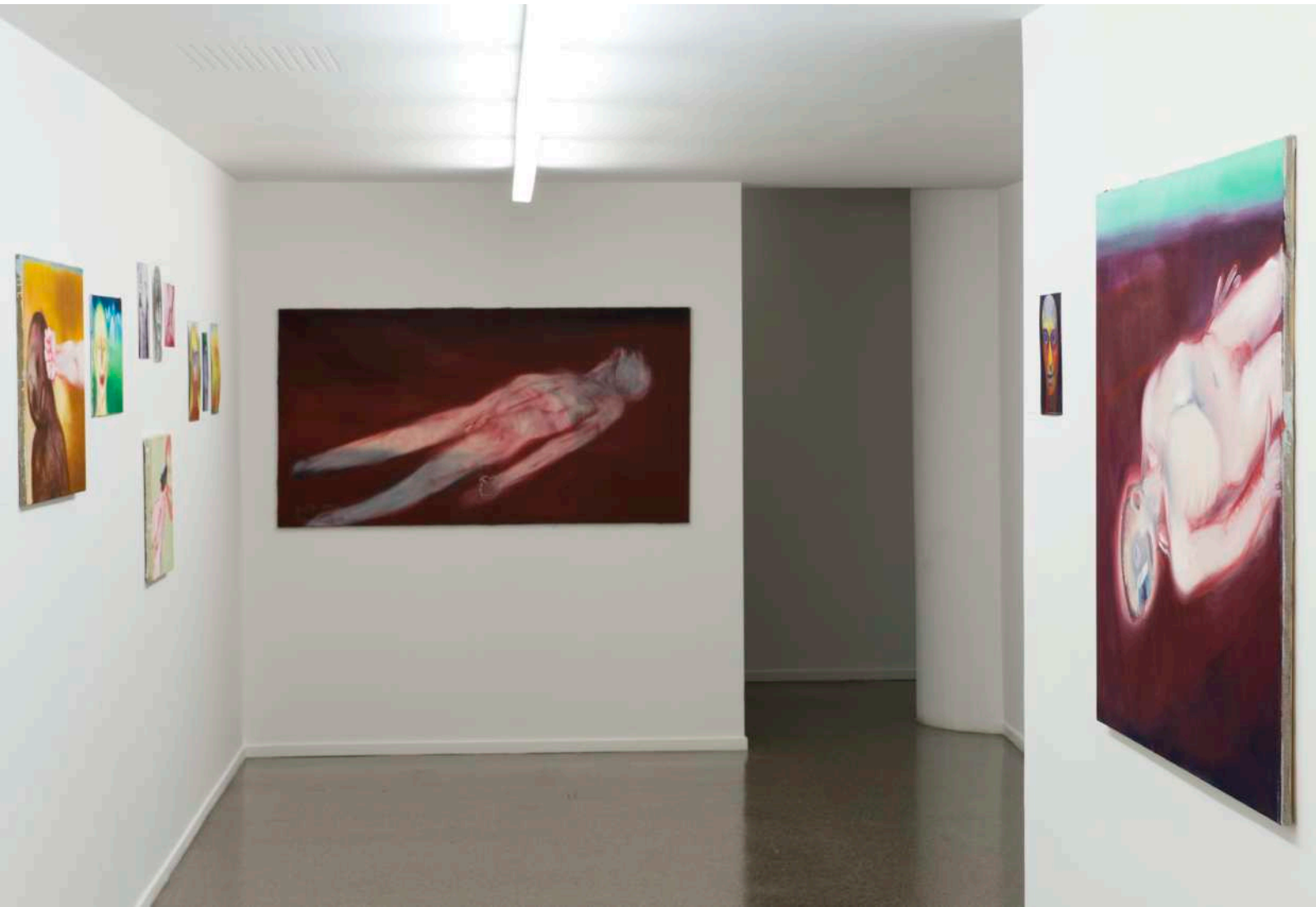
The current Miriam Cahn show at the CCS is the most comprehensive one devoted to the artist ever mounted in France, and includes works done over a period of thirty-five years, from 1979 to 2014. It is articulated around five distinct spaces and features different series of pieces (drawings, paintings, sketchbooks, photographs of street drawings), while also devoting a large section to new paintings.

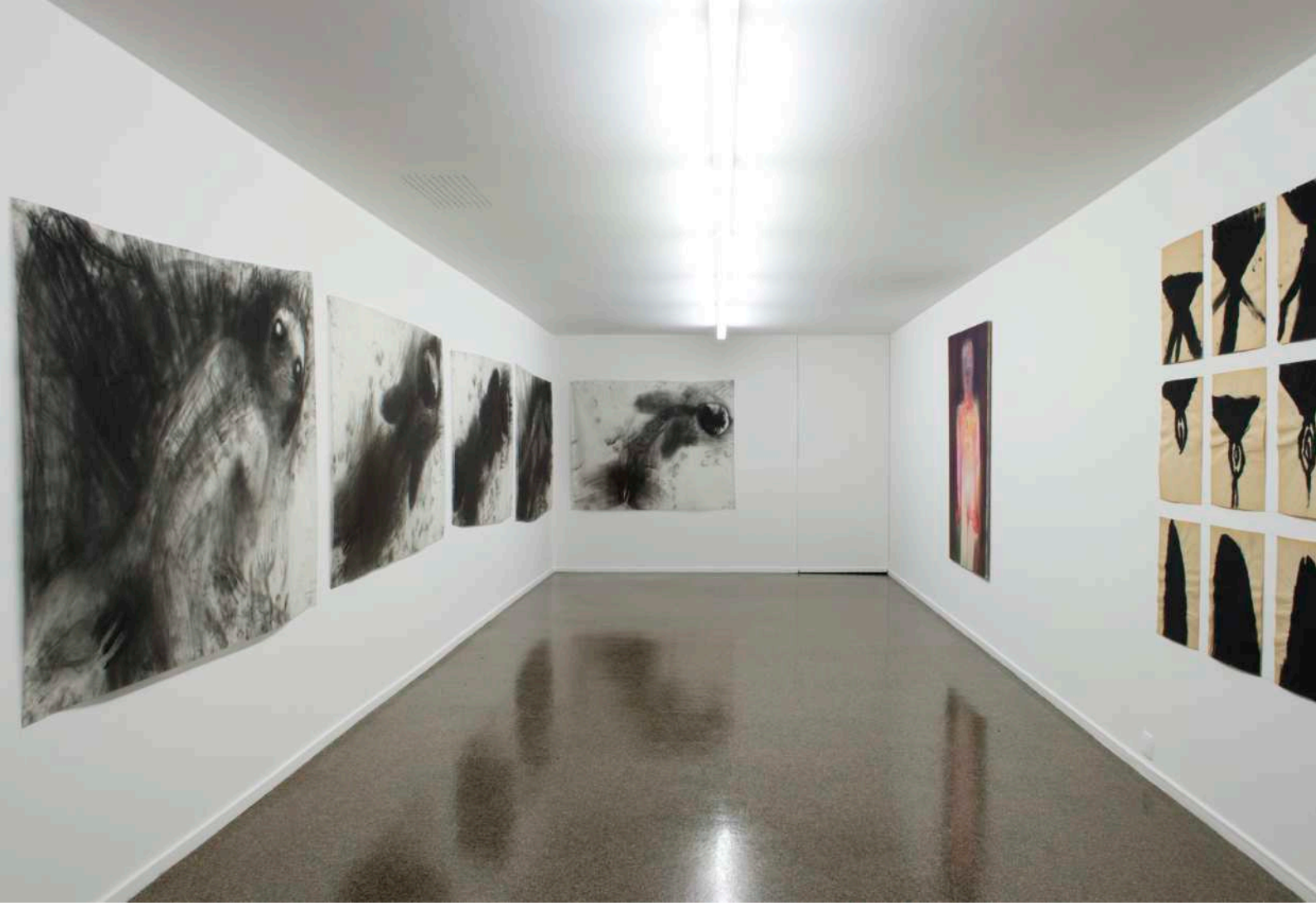
In the 1970s, Miriam Cahn began drawing directly on the floor, using black chalk especially, as well as on largeformat

sheets of paper and even in public space. With her lively style, she creates striking human figures that are infused with a troubling intensity in which woman exhibits her body in all its expressiveness. Miriam Cahn also draws menacing architectures along with warships, which echo man's constructive and destructive follies. A rebel and activist, Miriam Cahn defends a form of feminism in her art practice. Later on in her career, she experimented with oil painting and bright colors, notably in her series of nuclear mushroom clouds. A significant part of her output has always comprised "portraits" of humans, animals or plants, often depicted facing the viewer and throbbing with an enigmatic presence. In the 1990s, her work started to allude at times to political subjects like the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and the Middle East, or the 9-11 terrorist attacks. She is currently evoking the situation in Syria while continuing her sensitive and expressive exploration of the body and nature.

Source : Press release











MIRIAM CAHN

LACHEN BEI GEFAHR

September 28 - November 25, 2012

Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe, Germany

Badischer Kunstverein is pleased to present the largest exhibition in Germany to date by Swiss artist Miriam Cahn. A selection of works will be shown across all three levels of the building, ranging from the late 1970s to today. Though Cahn predominantely works with the format of oil painting, she also explores the mediums of drawing, performance, film, and photography. The themes found in her pictures revolve around feminity, sexuality, love, violence, or destruction.

Influenced by performance art and the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s, Miriam Cahn's approach to art proves radical and unconventional. Evading the usual criteria used to classify artists, especially when it comes to her selection of working methods, Cahn pursues a tenacious interplay between her various formats, which she frequently joins together as densely constellated «clusters» in the exhibition setting. Cahn initially delved into drawing before turning to color and oil painting in the early 1990s. She has repeatedly emphasized how drawing, with its more transient character, offers a welcome counterpole to the conventional conception of the oil painting as an autonomous, self-contained masterwork shadowed by chiefly male connotations. Movement and performance are key concepts in her art, with the body becoming the pivotal moment of its execution. In this respect, Cahn spawned her large-format drawings with the full force of her body, crawling on hands and knees, sometimes even in the nude and with eyes closed.

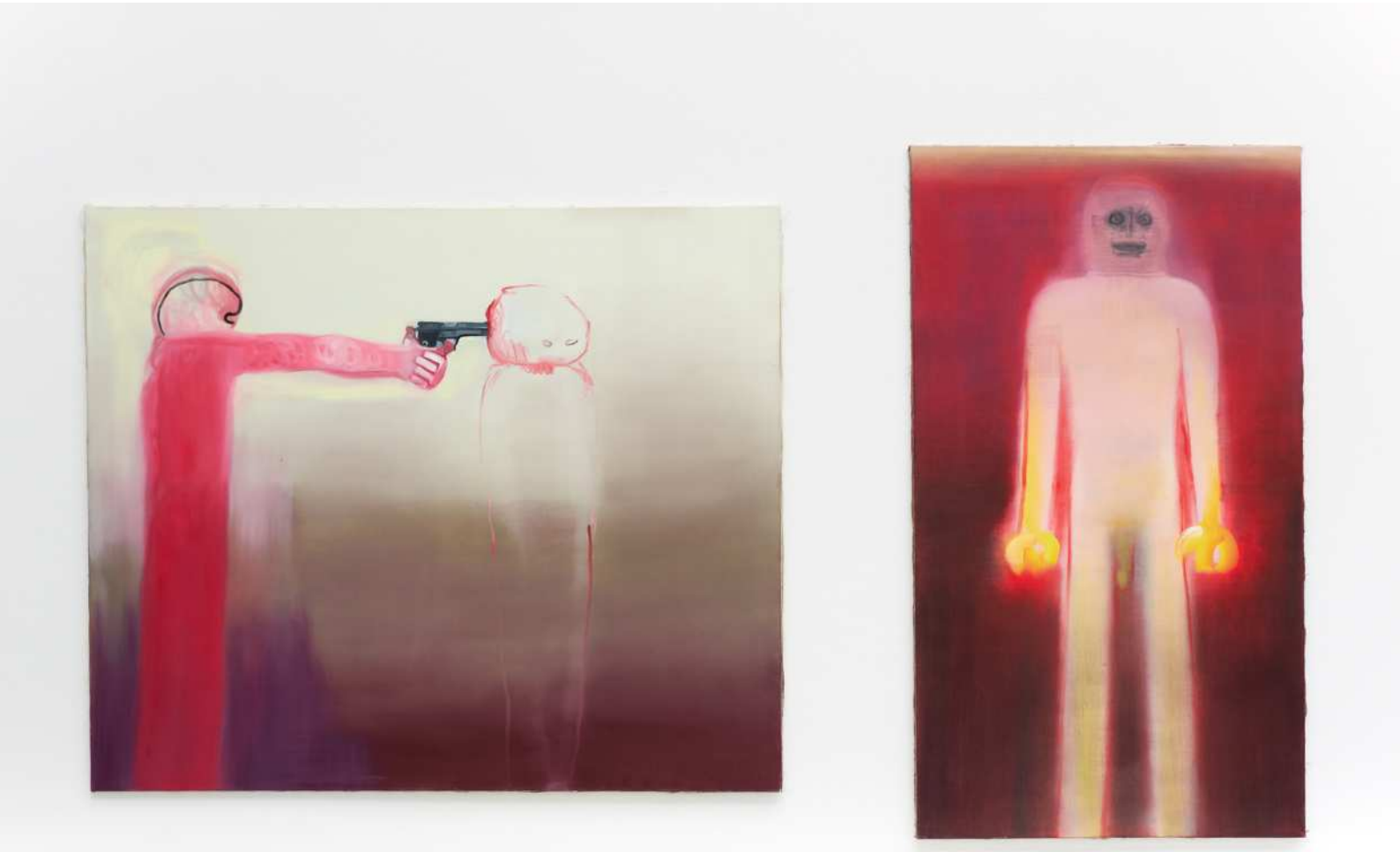
The exhibition LACHEN BEI GEFAHR gathers a variety of works selected by the artist with close consideration of the Kunstverein's spatial relations. Alongside her large-format chalk drawings, bright individual pictures encounter series created in oil, aquarelle, pastel, or watercolor. A separate exhibition section presents the artist's performative and text-based works along with her filmic work in Super-8. Despite numerous invitations, both in Switzerland and abroad, with such important stops as documenta 7 in Kassel or the 41th Venice Biennale, Miriam Cahn's artwork has not been shown as a solo exhibition in Germany for quite some time. This will now be remedied by the comprehensive exhibition in Karlsruhe.

Source : press release











MIRIAM CAHN

September 30, 2011 - January 15, 2012

Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz, Liechtenstein

Text in German :

Die Ausstellung ‘Beispiel Schweiz’ zeigt in einem offenen thematischen Parcours eine Auswahl von Arbeiten raumorientierter Kunst aus der Schweiz, Installationen, aber auch Gemälde, Zeichnungen, Fotografien und Objekte. Die Ausstellung betont durch die ausgewählten Werke und deren Inszenierung den hohen Stellenwert von Raumkonzepten in der neueren Kunst aus der Schweiz. Sichtbar werden Formen der Konzeptualisierung und Entgrenzung des Kunstwerkbegriffs. Die im frühen 20. Jahrhundert einsetzende Erweiterung des Werkbegriffs durch die Künstler und die damit einhergehende Befragung von Raum und Zeit ist ein bis heute unabgeschlossener Prozess. Zahlreiche Arbeiten der zeitgenössischen Kunst, insbesondere installative Werke, bilden in sich räumliche Konstellationen, die nicht wie Werke der Malerei oder Skulptur betrachtet werden, sondern die man erleben kann. Entgrenzungen und Passagen gehören im doppelten Sinne zur Kunst der Gegenwart, denn Werke der zeitgenössischen Kunst können nicht nur Prozesse auslösen, welche Raumerfah-rungen betreffen, sondern sind nicht selten selbst Ergebnis bildnerischer Prozesse, in denen der Kunstbegriff geprüft und auf seine Veränderbarkeit hin getestet wurde. Die Entgrenzung betrifft somit sowohl den Werkbegriff selbst als auch die ästhetische Erfahrung mit einer einzelnen Arbeit und deren gestaltbildenden Eigenschaften. Die Ausstellung versteht sich als geografisch lokalisierbare Erzählung innerhalb dieser inter-nationalen Geschichte von Kunst, welche sich mit der Erfahrung, der Reflexion und dem Entwurf von Raum und Zeit befasst. Zu entdecken ist eine offene Schweiz, die an diesem dynamischen, die nationalen Grenzen überwindenden Diskurs der Kunst seit langem aktiv beteiligt ist. Ein Ausstellungskatalog, herausgegeben von Roman Kurzmeyer und Friedemann Malsch, mit Beiträgen von Jacqueline Burckhardt, Helmut Federle, Christian Kerez, Thomas Hirschhorn, Mai-Thu Perret, Peter Suter und Adam Szymczyk erscheint Mitte Oktober 2011 im HatjeCantz Verlag. Zur Ausstellung erscheinen zudem Editionen von Latifa Echakhch, Bruno Jakob, Vaclav Pozarek, Pamela Rosenkranz und Erik Steinbrecher.

Group show with:
John M Armleder, Silvia Bächli, Bruno Bertozzi, Max Bill, Miriam Cahn, Valentin Carron, Andreas Christen, Latifa Echakhch, Hans Emmenegger, Helmut Federle, Fischli/Weiss (David Weiss, Peter Fischli) ,Sylvie Fleury, Clara Friedrich, Alberto Giacometti, Camille Graeser, Thomas Hirschhorn, Karin Hueber, Bruno Jakob, Emma Kunz, Verena Loewensberg, Richard Paul Lohse, Christian Marclay, Mario Merz, Karim Noureldin, Mai-Thu Perret, Vaclav Pozarek, René Pulfer, Pamela Rosenkranz, Dieter Roth, Adrian Schiess, Shirana Shahbazi, Roman Signer, Erik Steinbrecher, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, André Thomkins, Niele Toroni, Felice Varini, Ben Vautier, Hannah Villiger, Aldo Walker, Caspar Wolf

Source : press release





MIRIAM CAHN

September 30 - December 17, 2011

The David Roberts Art Foundation Fitzrovia, London, UK

This exhibition marks the first solo presentation of Miriam Cahn in London. Conceived as a new project for the David Roberts Art Foundation, it will include several new works and installations together with a selection of older paintings, drawings and photographs—spanning her career from 1978 to 2011. The exhibition is curated by Vincent Honoré, director and curator of the David Roberts Art Foundation.

Miriam Cahn's work emerged from a compelling physical experience instilled by the performative happenings of the 70s and is heavily influenced by the feminist movement of the 1960s. First structured around performances, large black and white charcoal drawings and interventions in the street (for which she was arrested in Basel), her practice grew to include films, music, photography and the medium for which she is perhaps best known—painting. Cahn's paintings are uncommon and immediately recognisable: an extraordinary colorist, she uses vivid pink, violet and blue to represent ghostly silhouettes, faces and animals. Cahn works in series, some of which are related to political issues, for instance her series of works on Sarajevo or the Iraq war.

The exhibition opens with the room installation Schlafen (1997), comprising of thirteen paintings of lying figures of different sizes. The lying figure in Cahn's imagery has often been associated with the war and its disasters; nonetheless the reading of these paintings remains ambiguous.

A second room installation, RAUMICH räumlichich (2010-11) follows. Made especially for the exhibition and shown in London for the first time, the work consists of ten selfportrait paintings. The performative element of Miriam Cahn's work is just as prevalent as her own corporeality and its influence on the formation of her pieces. The body is not only the object of contemplation, but also the medium with which the artist's corporea images are expressed. This installation, probably one of the most ambitious she has produced, expresses a number of her preoccupations—the portrait, the family, the selfportrait—together with revealing a wide range of techniques and forms.

Finally, the third room consists of an installation made of various existing works including some notebooks with drawings Cahn has never shown, alongside some of her latest paintings and photographs. Connecting the various media she works across—painting, drawing, performance, film, photography and music—Cahn sets the works in correspondence with each other within the given space. By allocating her works into different series she has not only created a private index, dividing the paintings into cycles, but also demarcates direct positions, which—in the whole and especially when they are hung together—interact with each other as autonomous bodies of work

Yilmaz Dziewior writes in ArtForum: "In addition to engaging in specific social and political debates, Cahn delves into more universal themes, causing the images she creates to function rather abstractly, so that at first one often overlooks any illustrative or anecdotal subject matter. In all the works, however, one senses a world that is out of joint. Faces are wide-eyed, and figures often lie on the ground as though dead or wounded. Awkward poses, screaming mouths, and eyes that are alternately anxious and devoid of expression transform the human body into a horrifying entity. Even the animals and landscapes depicted have a ghostly quality that taps into primal human fears.

Source : Press release





MIRIAM CAHN

SARAJEVOARBEIT/LE TRAVAIL SARAJEVO/ THE SARAJEVO WORK

March 17 - April 23, 2011

Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France

Interview of Miriam Cahn by Martha Dziewańska

«When did you first begin to work on Sarajevo? And for what reason?

From the very beginning of this war, I worked as I have always worked, by integrating things happening in the world.
However for a while there, I also had the impression that I had to change my way of working; I had the impression of a routine, of knowing too well how my work functioned – boredom in the work.
It was also the first "new" war since the "cold war" (=das gleichgewicht des schreckens = balance of terror/fear) and the first war in Europe since 1945, so close to home.
I watched the television, and I saw people like us, running with their plastic bags from their supermarkets, like MIGROS and ALDI, in a street that resembled Kleinhüningerstrasse*. They were running because snipers were firing at them. This made me aware of the different nature of all the other images of war I had already viewed on television: even if these were much more brutal, they were more distant, images on television…
My work changed: it became completely basic, simple, made up of small drawings, with poor materials, as though I had started from scratch. I didn't know what to believe anymore. What to do, if there were concentration camps in Europe again, not elsewhere, but here, in our place. So I returned to my table, with my pencils, to start over…

In 1995, you were invited to participate in a project in Sarajevo.
How long did you spend there? Did your stay change the way you understood the conflict?

The cultural policy at Obala-center was that of normality, which meant (if I simplify) "don't care about the war, don't care that the Chetniks want to bombard Sarajevo and make an international and multiethnic city into an ethnic village, don't care about this idea of national culture anyhow, we are making an international film and exhibition festival with international artists."
So they invited me, which still moves me today… Normality, that meant that the director came to see me at my studio in Basel; we chose the works together, and I sent them to Sarajevo.
I went there for a week; I installed my exhibition; as always, there was an opening, and that was it.
Because the city of Sarajevo was under siege, the normality was rather complicated. And I found myself in the situation where I felt as though I had already pretty well summed up the war.

sarajevoarbeit or sarajevo work: how many years did you work on this conflict? Are there recent works that are tied into this theme?

I more or less worked on Sarajevo throughout the duration of the conflict.
I would say that the entire discussion concerning Islam (the "burkas and minarets" discussion) and the damage

done in Europe are not only, but also connected to this initial conflict in the Balkans. Still today, a few works within my work are connected to this theme.

sarajevoarbeit represents a large scope in your work; why did you chose to show it all?

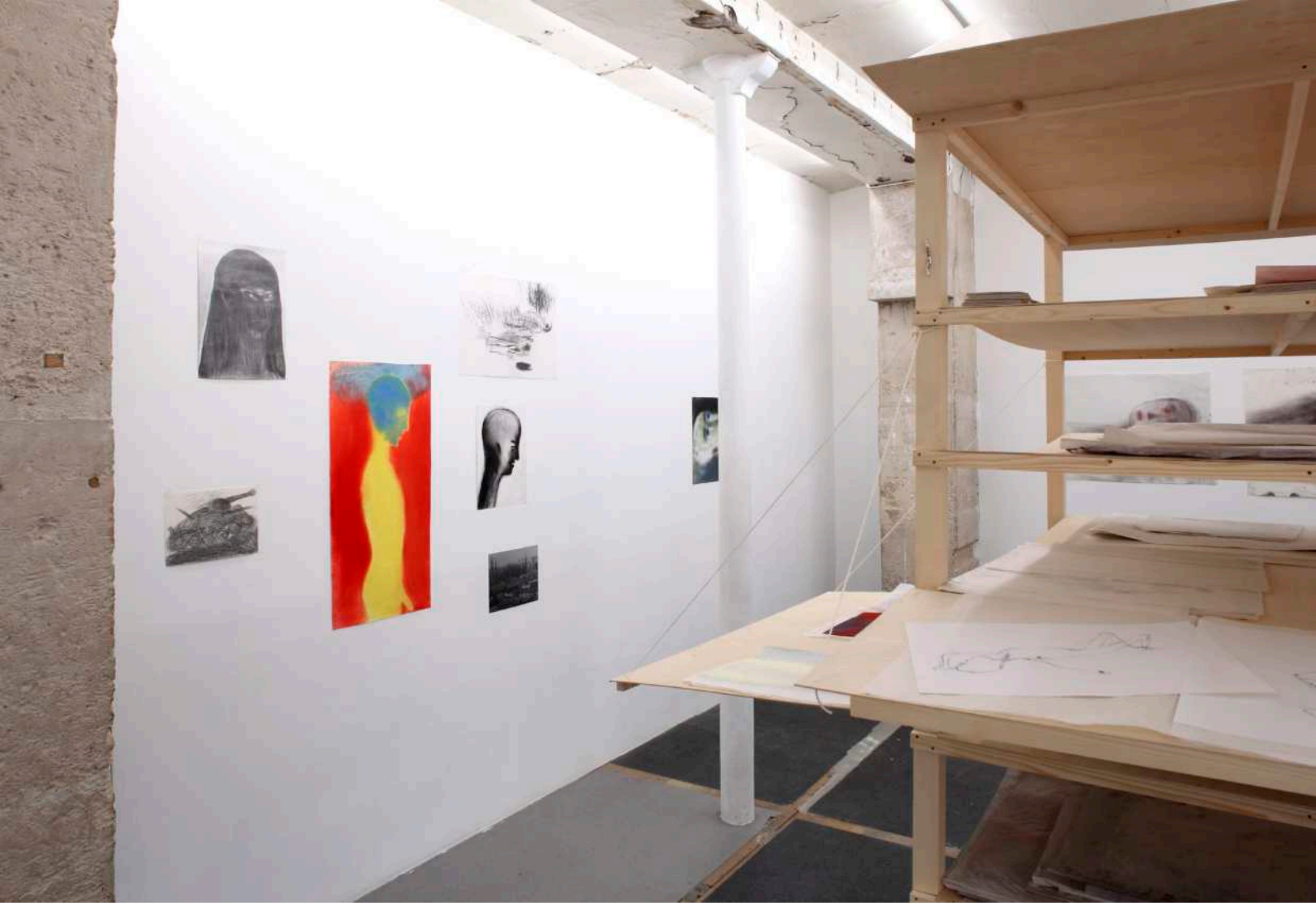
Each time I am in Basel and I look at the SARAJEVO works on my studio table, I tell myself that I have great difficulty selecting, even more than with other works. Each and every time, it was nearly impossible for me to make a “selection” in this work
Perhaps it is this very word: selection, that, in the case of SARAJEVO, carries a disagreeable double meaning (= selektion). Maybe this is the reason, but perhaps it is also because I cannot really chose from, which is for me, a WHOLE without thinking in terms of a room-installation.

* Kleinhüningerstrasse: a street in Basel (Switzerland), near where the artist lives.»

Source : Exhibition text









MIRIAM CAHN

DAS WILDE LIEBEN / THE WILD LOVING

Art Unlimited, Art 41 Basel, Basel, Switzerland

June 16 – June 20, 2010

Miriam Cahn
DAS WILDE LIEBEN (THE WILD LOVING)
1984
chalk, paper, plasticine
a room installation with 6 elements
approximately 36 x 4 m

contains :
4 drawings :
frieze, chalk on paper 21 x 3,80 m
frieze, chalk on paper 9 x 3 m
single sheet, chalk on paper, 2,40 x 1,40 m
booklet, chalk on paper, 1,60 x 1 m (open)

31 plasticine sculptures :
weibliche waffen, wurfgeschosse, waffenfälschungen (female weapons – missiles - fake/falsified weapons)
approximately 4,50 x 2 m

b/w-video/monitor
weibliche waffen, wurfgeschosse, waffenfälschungen (female weapons – missiles – fake/falsified weapons)
9 min 48 s

first presented at the Biennale of Venice, Swiss pavilion, 1984











MIRIAM CAHN

FLUCHTGEFAHR
GRISAILLE

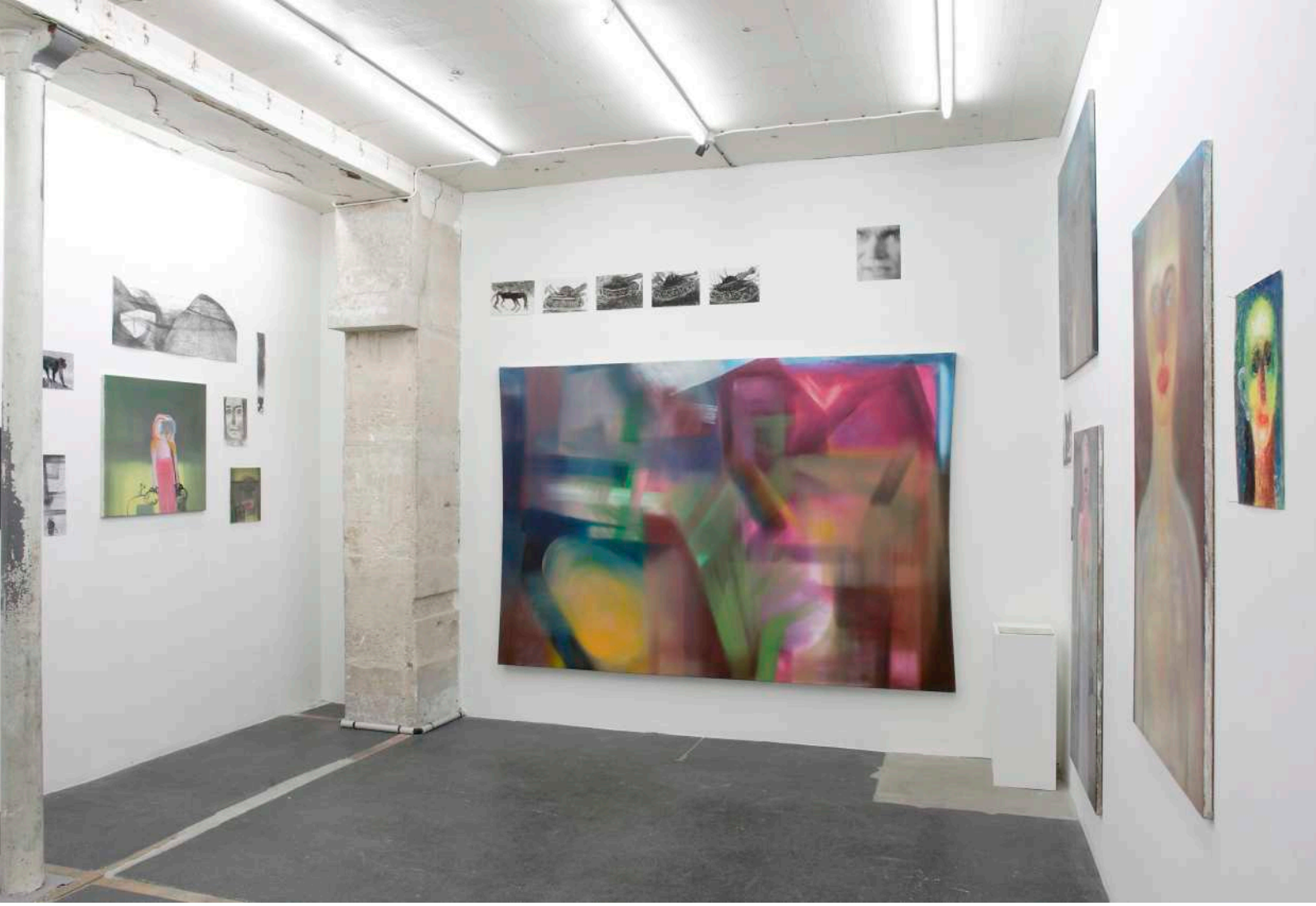
January 15 – March 7, 2009

Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France

For her first solo show at Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Miriam Cahn worked in a unchronological manner, bringing together older works (blind, von vorne, vom frausein, 1979, notebook completed with eyes closed; o.t, 1980 etc.) and recent works created in Paris for the exhibition (ensemble of paper works in the small room), asserting a kind of temporal unity of the work and its heterogeneousness where oil paintings, photographs, charcoal drawings and other techniques on paper are shown without hierarchy, side by side. The ensemble of works was composed in relationship to das hirn meiner mutter (the mind of my mother). This piece occupies a central and frontal position in the exhibition, the starting point for a dense and complex hanging, for which the exhibition space was divided into two independent rooms.

Regardless of format or technique, each work's completion was allotted approximately the same amount of time. More than its formal dimension which is treated in a heterogeneous fashion, the process is at the heart of the work, confirmed through the strength of the hanging when works are placed in opposition and its "curatorial incorrectness", as with schönheit placed next to o.t 28.02.95 (a small finger painting on the wall to the right when entering the large room), and also with ereignis 7.02.07, where sketches of perspectives appear in confrontation with o.t 16.10.04 with its flat, solid patches of color (back wall in the small room).

Source : Press release





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