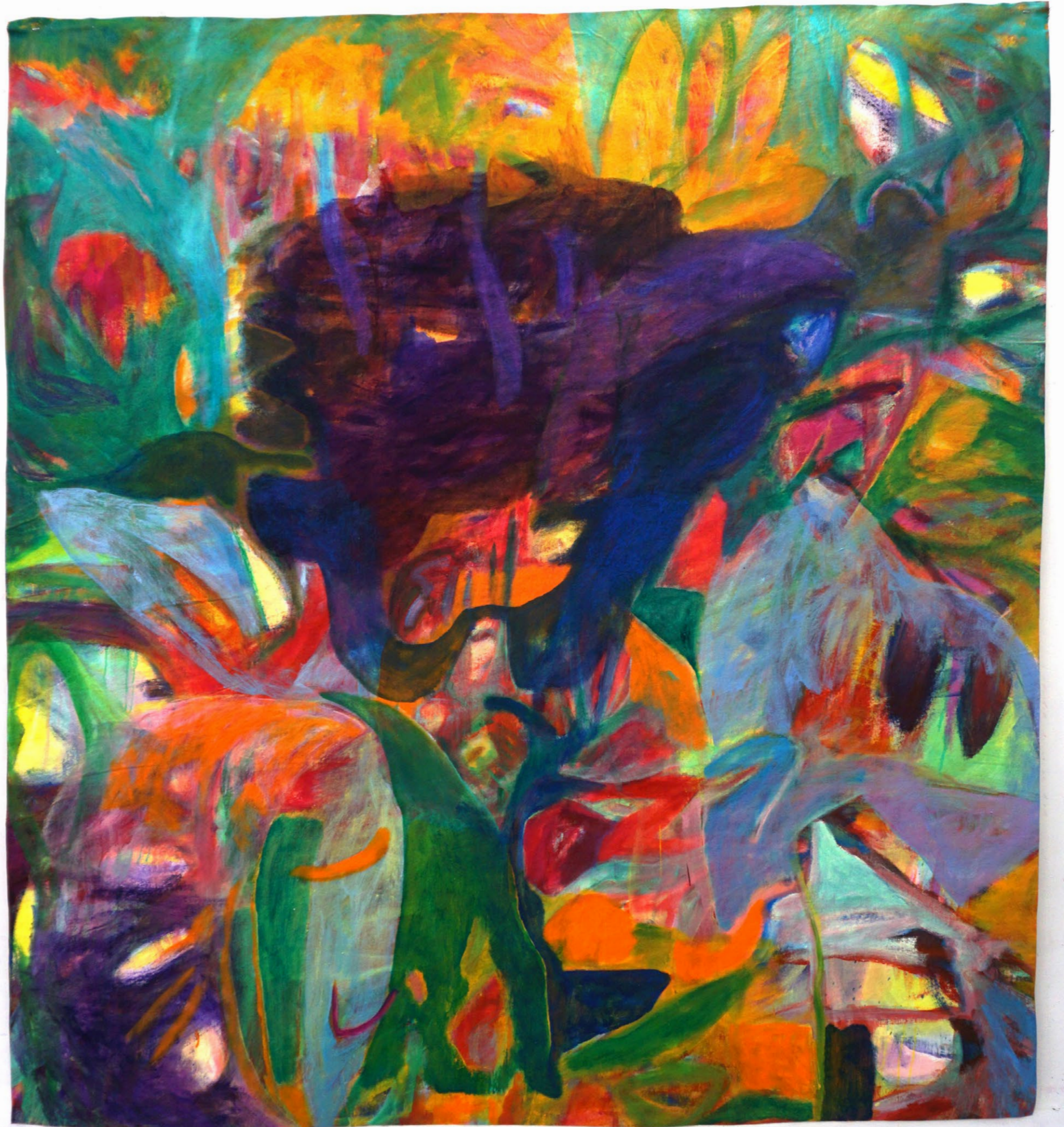


Sabine Schlatter

Werkdokumentation

Untitled, 2023
oil on canvas, 193 x 177 cm
Studio view





Untitled, 2023

oil on canvas, 147 x 162 cm

Studio view



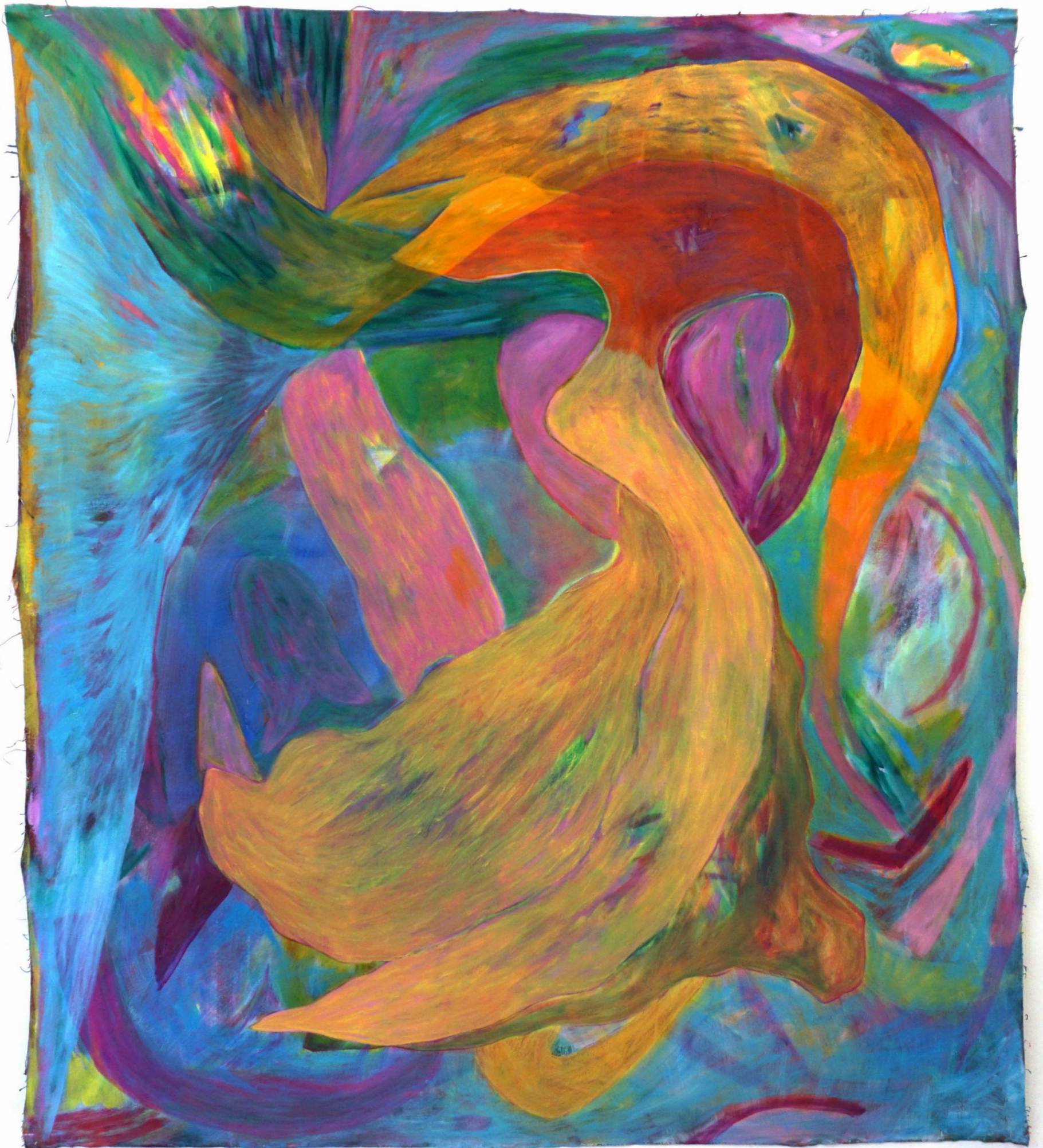
Untitled, 2023
oil on canvas, 177 x 156 cm
Studio view



Untitled, 2023
oil on canvas, 192 x 157 cm
Studio view



Untitled, 2023
oil on canvas, 187 x 156 cm
Studio view



Untitled, 2023
oil on canvas, 189 x 165 cm
Studio view

PROBING THE DEPTHS: THOUGHTS ON SABINE SCHLATTER'S ARTISTIC PRACTICE

In the perspective of art historians, considering an oeuvre through the lens of the artist's biography has long been a contentious move—especially when that oeuvre is characterized by an abstract formal vocabulary, as is the case with the Swiss artist Sabine Schlatter's drawings and paintings. In this contention, one side vehemently defends the hypothesis that art is an expression of individual character and formative biographical experiences, while the other insists on a disconnect between person and creative output. The two attitudes reflect two ostensibly antithetical modes in the traditional historiography of art: formalist art history (as produced, for instance, by Clement Greenberg) and biographical narrative in the style of Giorgio Vasari.¹ The following reflections will seek to transcend this antithesis by engaging with Schlatter's work in a way that interweaves both perspectives.

Schlatter studied at the Zurich University of the Arts, where she struck up a collaboration with Benjamin Egger (b. 1981) that lasted from 2008 until 2011. In their typically performative works, the duo examined the seemingly uncontrollable dynamics of communities and how they take possession of spaces and thus also redefine them. For a performance at Kunsthof Zürich (2008), for instance, they worked with an amateur choir that sang the refrain from the hit song *Neuer Wind* in an endless loop as more and more people arrived on the scene who demonstratively held up cardboard signs with clouds painted on them and mingled with the audience: the longer the performance lasted, the more the space with the temporary community in it underwent a transformation.

After the end of this creative partnership, questions of the apparently uncontrollable and how power over space is accrued remained essential to Schlatter. She also works as a psychiatric nurse, and it makes obvious sense that her intimate familiarity with the workings of psychiatric institutions would shape these concerns as well.²

Her profession has provided her with insight into the concurrence of biological, psychodevelopmental,

and psychosocial factors that inform into her practice. The latter, in particular, are suggested by the concept of “social cartography” with which the artist describes her works, which balance between intuition and scientific precision.

The phrase (in English) also appears in the titles of the performances in public settings that now and then complement her graphical and painterly practice. Their focus is on an analysis of pedestrians' movement patterns in public squares, and especially on instants of encounter, of converging and intersecting paths. These social dynamics and territorial constellations that Schlatter retraces on the ground with blocks of colored chalk are in each instance based on observations over the course of several days, which she sketches and later paces out from memory. In a physically arduous process not unlike the one involved in making her large drawings, she produces large-format temporary floor drawings that can be described as a cartography of the singular merging into the larger whole. As in the drawings on paper or canvas, Schlatter thus creates intensely colorful biomorphic and geometric structures that record collective “conditions” in public space. She is especially interested in the process aspect, the labor of charting physical movements, in the case of the performances, and mental states, in the drawings.

It is now a widely accepted view that drawing can be conceived as a “performative practice”: In 2001, the art historian and curator Catherine de Zegher introduced the concept of the performance drawing with an exhibition she curated at the Drawing Center in New York that enlarged the field and discourse of graphic art by integrating performance art and other interdisciplinary influences.³ In a contemporary art context today, graphic art is accordingly no longer understood merely as a medium bound to two dimensions and “dry drawing materials”; it is conceived more expansively in its temporal and spatial dimensions and can encompass themes such as body, energy, movement, and light. This media paradigm shift commences in the 1960s and can be observed both in the field of visual art and in dance. Dancers and choreographers begin to harness drawing as an integral component of their performances in order to reflect on the inward nature of their being, among other things.⁴

¹ C. Isabelle Graw, “How Much Person Is in the Product?,” *Texte zur Kunst*, no. 128 (December 2022): 56–70.

² At Manifesta 11 (2016), Schlatter's work was presented in a section of the exhibition to which artists were invited who held down paid jobs while pursuing their creative practice. The thesis of the section aimed to deconstruct the widespread romantic notion that “good” artists can make a living from sales of their works alone. Cf. *Manifesta 11: What People Do for Money: Some Joint Ventures*, exh. cat., ed. Christian Jankowski (Zurich: Lars Müller, 2016).

³ Cf. *Drawing Papers 20: Performance Drawings*, ed. Catherine de Zegher (New York: Drawing Center, 2001); *Performance Drawing—New Practices since 1945*, ed. Maryclare Foá et al. (London: Bloomsbury, 2022).

⁴ Cf. Robert Luzar, “Rethinking the Graphic Trace in Performative Drawing,” *Theatre and Performance Design* 3, no. 1–2 (2017): 50–67.

Trisha Brown (1936–2017) and Robert Morris (1931–2018)—to give only two examples—work on the intersection between choreography and visual art, combining drawing and performance in an event of “making, being, and thinking.” In other words, these artists put graphic art on the stage, employing materials such as graphite or charcoal to index their actions and movements. Consider, for instance, the *Blind Times* drawings from the early 1970s, in which the visible traces of Morris’s moving hands and fingers are “noted,” or Brown’s large-format drawings “capturing” her body in dance. Another artist who was arguably a pioneer of this sort of practice was Xanti Schawinsky; in the 1950s and 1960s, he expanded the field of painting with process-based experiments—in the *Dance* paintings he produced during this period, for instance, he danced across canvases wearing specially prepared shoes that discharged paint. The immediate gestural impression on the canvas took Jackson Pollock’s *Drippings* a literal step further.¹

This history provides the context for Schlatter’s creative practice, in which biomorphic structures distinguished by rich and intense colors address themes and phenomena such as permeability, transparency, or fragility. It is an interest that connects her work both formally and substantially to the oeuvres of women abstractionists like the Swedish painter Hilma af Klint (1862–1944) and her Dutch colleague Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn (1881–1962). Beginning in 1919, Fröbe-Kapteyn repeatedly spent extended periods of time in Ascona, working in the orbit of Monte Verità and the alternative visions of life that were being put into experimental practice there. Both were exponents of the first generation of women artists who grappled with questions around spirituality and theosophical as well as anthroposophical theories.² These artists shared a spiritual openness, a characteristic phenomenon of their time that enabled them to tap into extrasensory abilities for an exploration of scientific as well as spiritual ideas—Fröbe-Kapteyn’s abstractions, for example, were the fruits of trance-like meditations. What many of these artists had in common across the decades—and without knowing of one another’s existence—was a systemic or diagrammatic approach in their art; they often adopted geometric forms drawn from Eastern as well as Western cosmological writings.

¹ Cf. Raphael Gygax, “Forward and Backward: Process-Based Painting,” in *Xanti Schawinsky*, exh. cat., ed. Raphael Gygax (Zurich: JRP|Ringier, 2015), 121–27.

² Cf. Simon Grant, “Art, Spiritualism, and Theosophy,” in *Women in Abstraction*, ed. Christine Macel et al., exh. cat. (London and New York: Thames & Hudson, 2021), 46–54.

Despite the differences between their backgrounds in the history of ideas, approaches, techniques, and results, they charted sometimes very similar paths as they probed the transcendental potential in art.

Making community and spirituality, as two concepts that are of profound relevance to society, tangible: that is a central motif in Schlatter’s creative thinking. Spirituality, however, figures here less as an individual practice divorced from any concrete relation to real-world situations than as an indicator of social and political potential. The sociologist Émile Durkheim’s (1858–1917) study *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912) locates man’s social nature at the center of its subject.³ Isolating the universal features of religion, Durkheim concludes with the insight that the holy or sacred that humans worship is not a divinity, metaphysical power, or distinctive experience as such: the essence of the sacred, what allows the individual to “transcend” himself or herself, is society. It follows that spiritual and transcendent experiences cannot be conceived as a purely subjective phenomenon, though they have often been portrayed as a form of ecstasy; they are essentially a social fact. To understand transcendence, one must examine its qualities as a process. As suggested by the Latin root, “transcendere,” it denotes an act of rising above or moving beyond, but it does not presuppose an unambiguous distinction between two defined realms between which religious experience moves. This insight underscores the significance of connection and the blurring of distinctions rather than disjunction: the overcoming of what may appear as a boundary or difference emerges as pivotal. The dynamic that transports the individual above and beyond the mundane can be closely bound up with the faculties of self-observation and self-reflection, which enable him or her to cross potential boundaries without necessarily drawing new ones. “Transcendence,” in this sense, should be defined as an activity that is performed afresh in each instance and thus actively thwarts processes of normalization. Schlatter’s art, I would propose, can be understood to be the expression of such a productive, process-based momentum of “transcendence.” The works are not merely visual interpretations of transcendence. Each in its own way, they instead harness the momentum of transport across boundaries as a creative principle. It is an artistic strategy that, in exploring aspects of spirituality, brings a broad social context into focus,

³ Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen E. Fields (New York: Fress Press, 1995).

though without letting itself be led astray by the fatuities of pseudo-religion. In this way, Schlatter’s works tell stories of a growth into depth that originates in existing forms of collectivity and that time and again offers us novel possibilities of transcendence.

Text: *PROBING THE DEPTHS: THOUGHTS ON SABINE SCHLATTER’S ARTISTIC PRACTICE*

written by: Dr. Raphael Gygax

For the publication accompanying the exhibition of the same name: *Paintings&Drawings, Sabine Schlatter*

Published by Museo Casa Rusca Locarno, Conceived by Raphael Gygax and Nancy Lunghi





Exhibition view: *Paintings & Drawings*, Museo Casa Rusca, Locarno, 2023

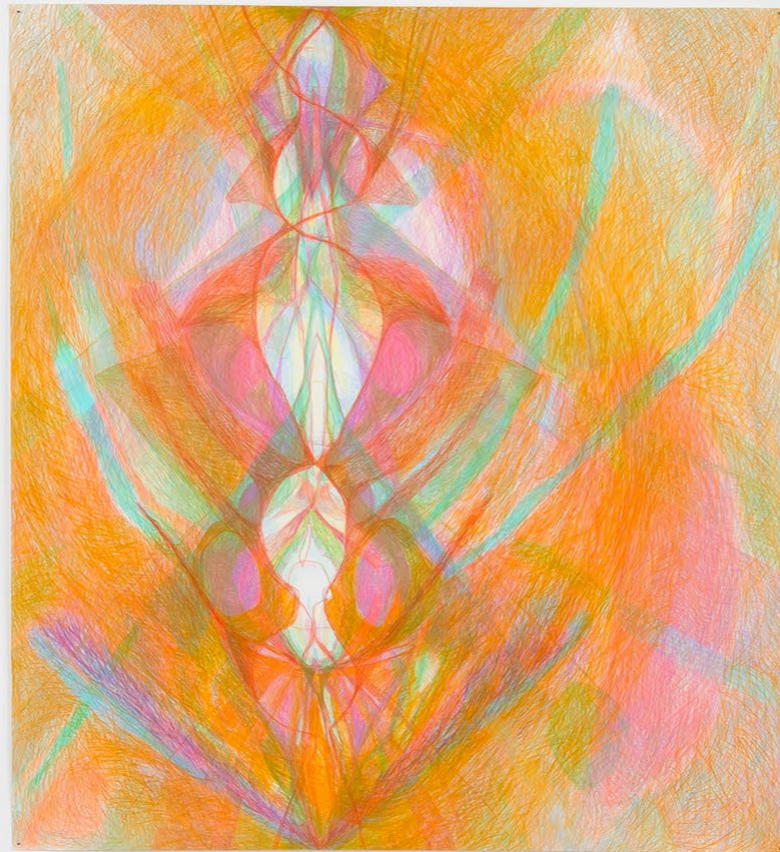
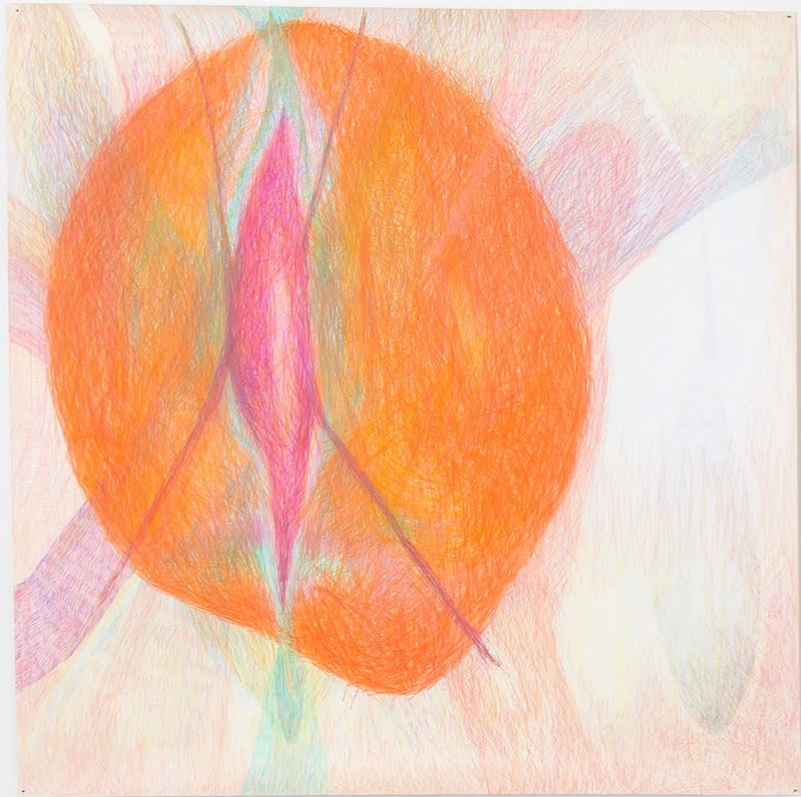


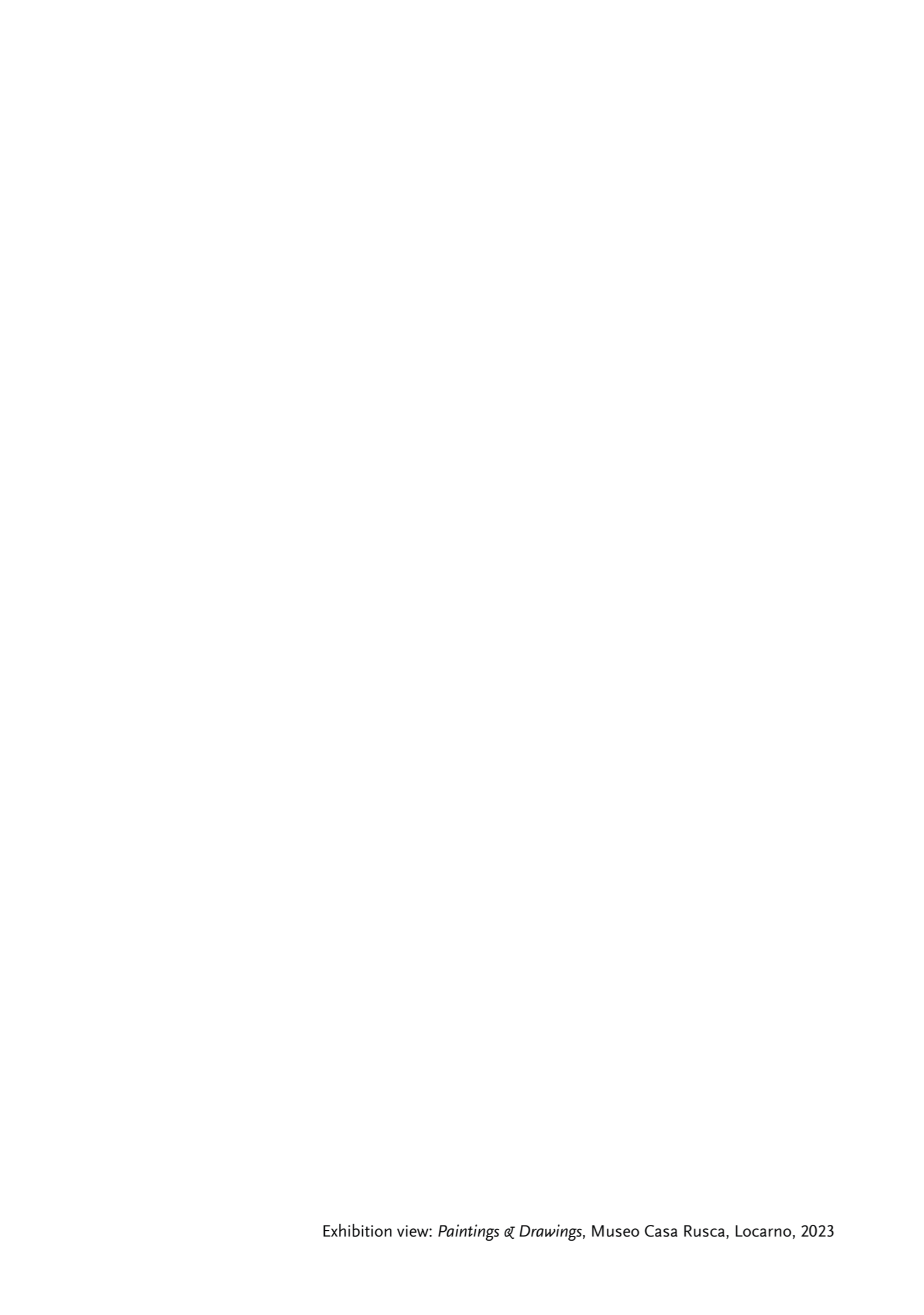


Exhibition view: *Paintings & Drawings*, Museo Casa Rusca, Locarno, 2023

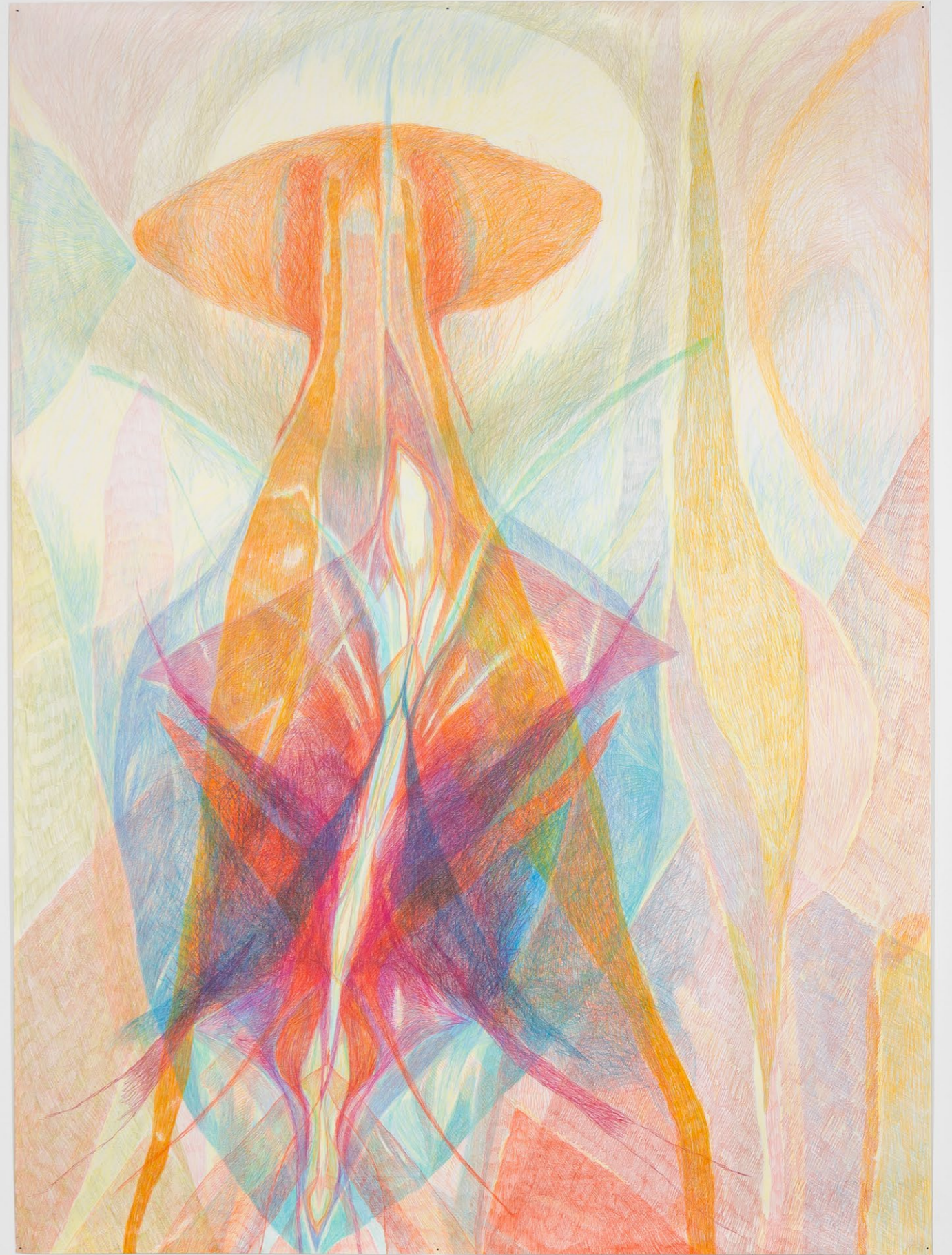


Exhibition view:
Paintings & Drawings, Museo Casa Rusca, Locarno, 2023





Exhibition view: *Paintings & Drawings*, Museo Casa Rusca, Locarno, 2023



Exhibition view: *Paintings & Drawings*, Museo Casa Rusca, Locarno, 2023
Colored Pencil on Paper / 265 x 195 cm



Exhibition view *Abstrakt Gedacht*: Atelier Hermann Haller, Zürich, 2022
Photos of the Exhibition: Sebastian Schaub



Untitled, 2022

oil on canvas, 210 x 180 cm

Exhibition view: Atelier Hermann Haller, Zürich, 2022



Untitled, 2022

oil on canvas, 180 x 155 cm

Exhibition view: Atelier Hermann Haller, Zürich, 2022

Untitled, 2022
acrylic and oil on canvas, 105x 100 cm
Exhibition view: Atelier Hermann Haller, Zürich, 2022





Exhibition view *Put-to-bed: Last Tango*, Zürich, 2021 (Group Show)

Photos of the Exhibition: Kilian Bannwart



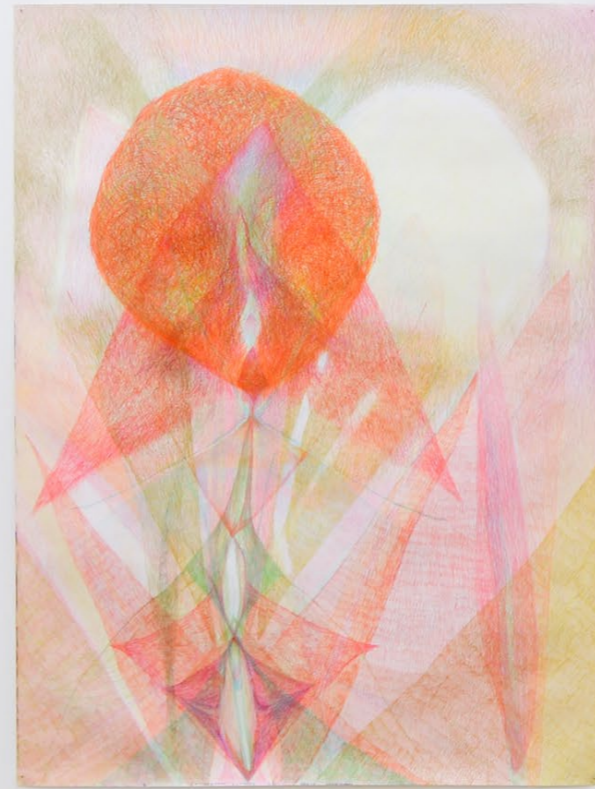
Untitled, 2020



Untitled, 2021
oil on canvas, 185 x 169 cm
Exhibition view: Last Tango, Zürich, 2021



Untitled, 2021
egg tempera, acrylic and oil paint on canvas, 111,5 x 102 cm
Exhibition view: Last Tango, Zürich, 2021



Exhibition view *Step Out of Your Body, Enter New Ones:*
Untitled drawing 2020 / *Social Mapping* chalk, pigments, rope 2021
Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zürich, 2021 (Group Show)



Step Out of Your Body, Enter New Ones
Untitled drawings 2020/21 / *Social Mapping* chalk, pigments, rope 2021
Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zürich, 2021 (Group Show)

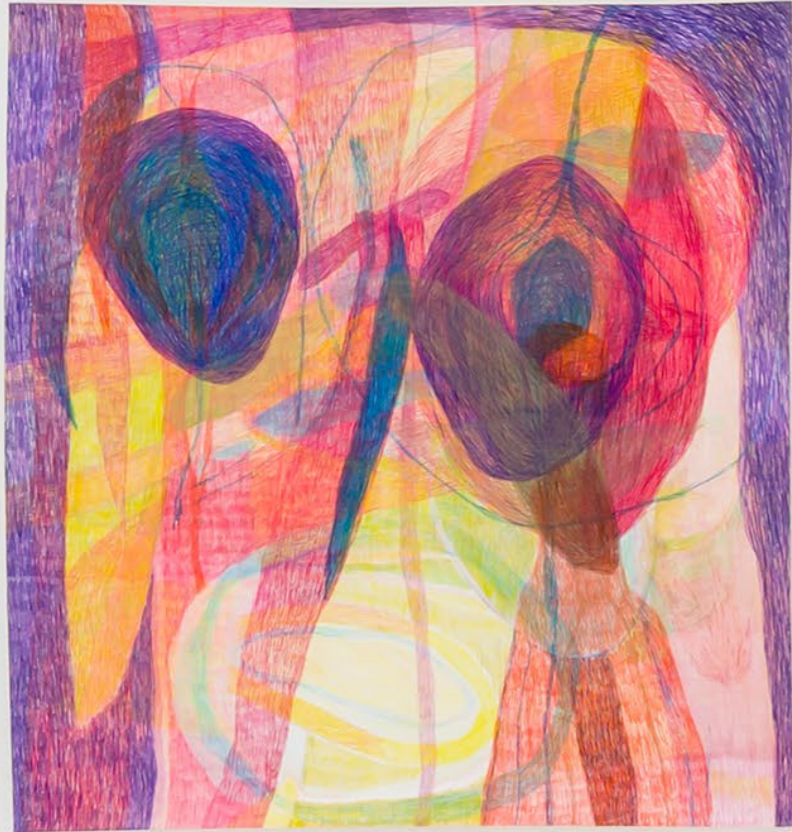


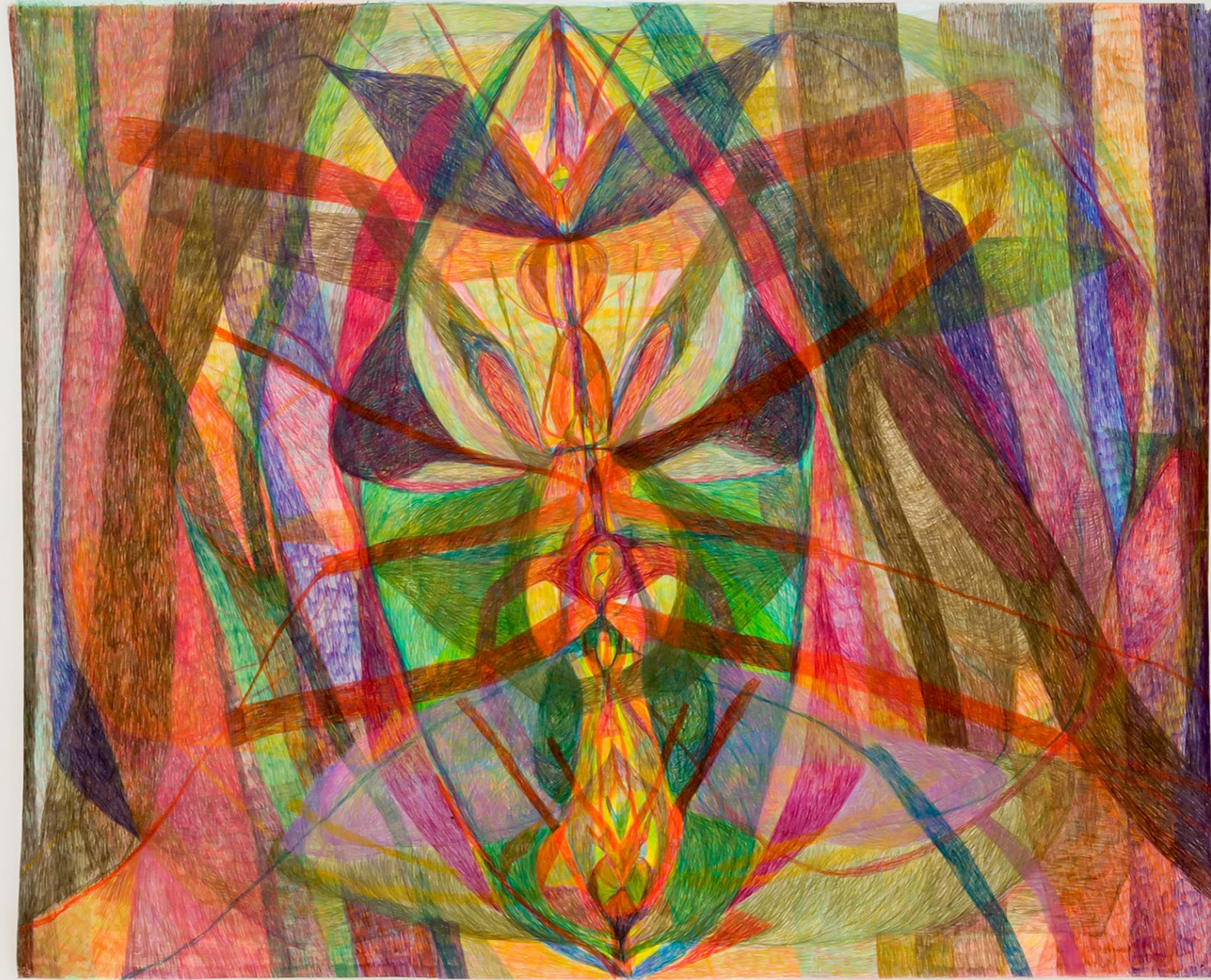
Untitled, 2019

Colored Pencil on Paper, 215 x 195 cm / 200 x 195 cm / 210 x 195 cm

Exhibition view: Helmhaus, Zürich, 2019

Photos of the Exhibition: Zoe Tempest

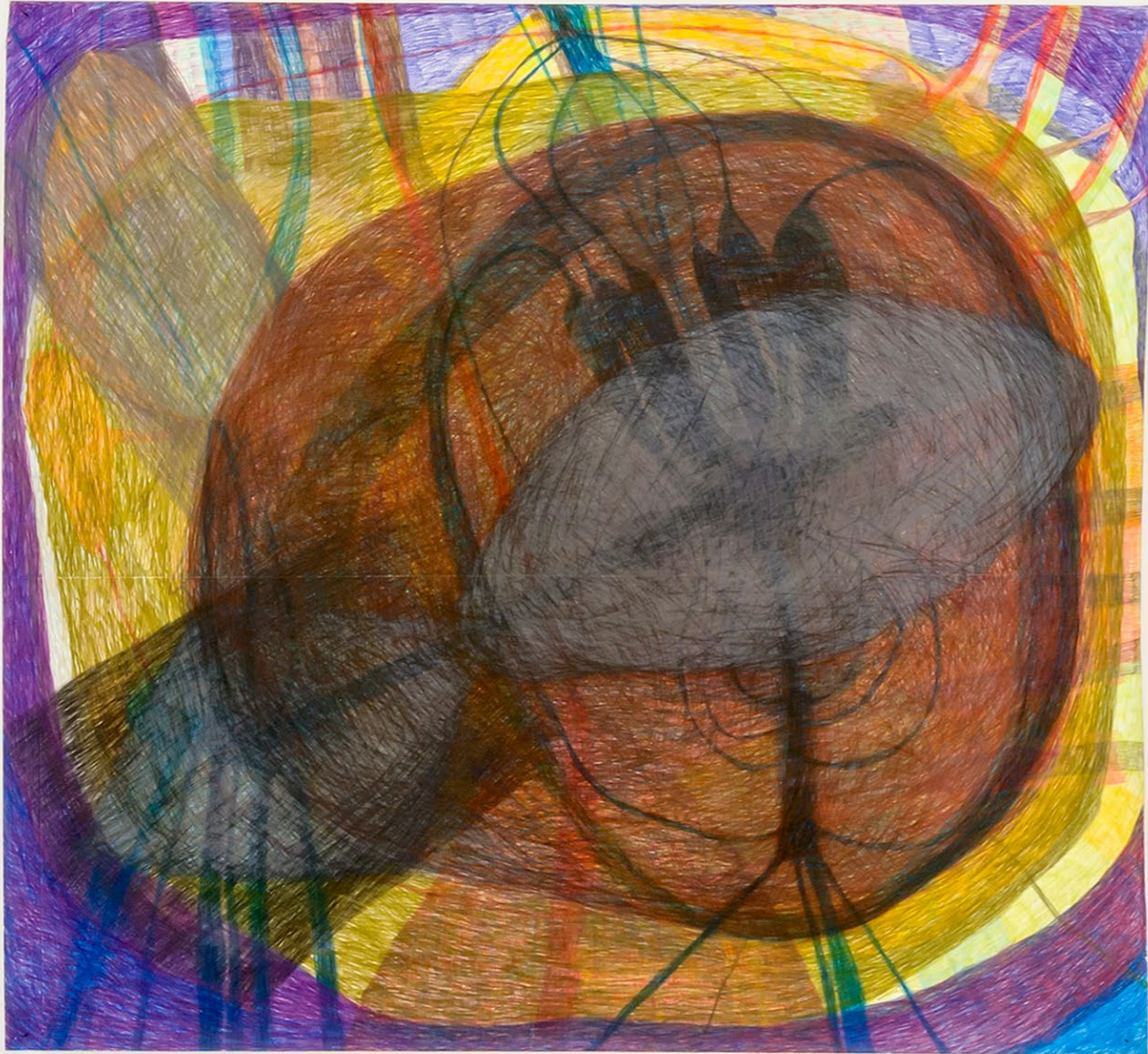




Untitled, 2013

Colored Pencil on Paper / 240 x 294 cm

Exhibition view: Helmhaus, Zürich, 2019



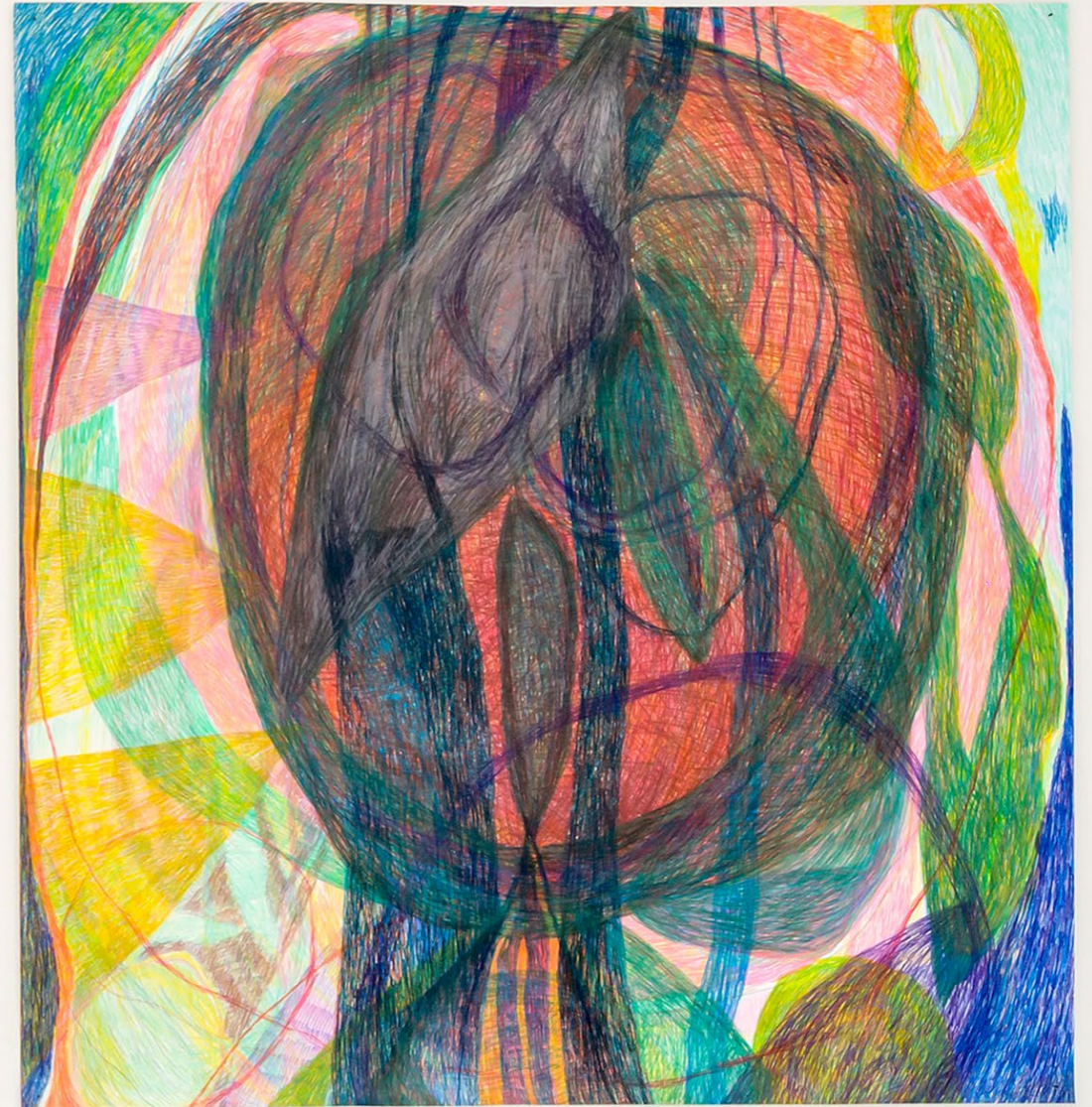
Untitled, 2014

Colored Pencil on Paper / 150 x 167 cm

Untitled, 2018

Colored Pencil on Paper / 150 x 154 cm

Exhibition view: Helmhaus Zürich, 2019





Social Mapping, 2018

Performance

25 Jahre BISS Magazin, Wittelsbacherplatz,
München, 2018

Kurator: Marcel Bleuler

Im Juli/August 2018 macht die Künstlerin Sabine Schlatter den Wittelsbacherplatz für 10 Tage zur Zeichnungsfläche. Mit selber gegossenen Kreideblöcken ging sie den Fragen nach, wo sich Bewegungen überschneiden, wo wir im öffentlichen Raum in Berührung kommen oder wo Ausschluss entsteht.

Photo: Hannes Rohrer



Photo: Benjamin Egger

Social Mapping, 2018

Performance

25 Jahre BISS Magazin, Wittelsbacherplatz, München, 2018



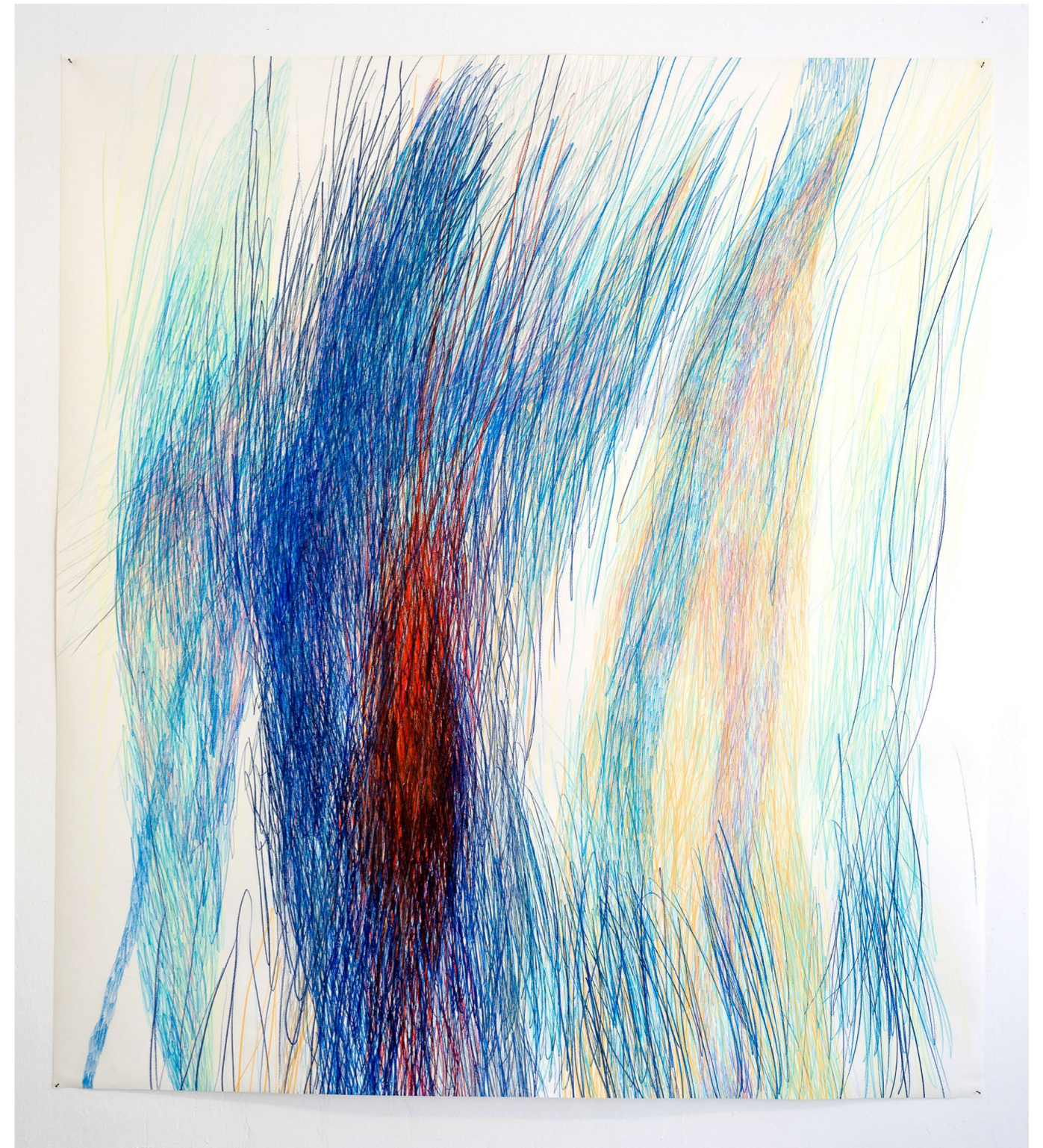
Photo: Hannes Rohrer

Sabine Schlatter is presenting a series of older and new works, using as a motif the idea of territorial boundaries. Her large-scale gestural drawings are built up through layers of pencil and take as a point of departure the fragile structures of living creatures, and their ongoing cycles. With a strong love for the natural world, she looks at the garden orchestrated toward human ends – being confined to an area and planted so that wilderness is somewhat tamed. Schlatter seeks to understand mutualistic relationships. The artist states: «Anxiety is part of our survival instinct. I'm interested in getting connected with other humans and species. This in-between field where we can connect with our emotions, including feelings of anxiety. By becoming vulnerable you break down your walls. I think it is very interesting to let other species into your territory. There is a fear of putting down barriers.» Schlatter's forms capture us in their membranous enigmatic depths, sometimes saturated with a fleshy quality other times lighter and luminous. The drawings, both inviting and at times slightly sinister, disorient our perspective: are we viewing from inside-out, where do the flowing underlying passages lead to?

*Pressrelease: Linda Jensen,
Curator of Last Tango, 2017*

Map of Violence II, 2017
Colored Pencil on Paper / 204 x 181 cm
Exhibition view: Last Tango, Zürich, 2017

Photos of the Exhibition: Kilian Bannwart



***The Surface of Light II*, 2017**
Colored Pencil on Paper / 194 x 197 cm
Exhibition view: Last Tango, Zürich, 2017





The Surface of Light I, 2017

Colored Pencil on Paper / 280 x 346 cm

Exhibition view: Last Tango, Zürich, 2017



Untitled, 2015

Colored Pencil on Paper / 250 x 350 cm

Exhibition view: Insel der Angst, Stiftung Binz39, Zürich, 2015

Photo: Dominik Hodel



Untitled, 2015

Colored Pencil on Paper / 290 x 360 cm

Exhibition view: Manifesta11 Kunsthalle Zürich, 2016

Photo: Wolfgang Traeger

Sabine Schlatter

*20.2.1977, lives and works in Zürich
mail@sabineschlatter.com / sabineschlatter.com

Group Exhibitions

2022

_Atelier Hermann Haller, Zürich
_Kunstraum Engländerbau, Vaduz
_Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich

2021

_Step Out of Your Body, Enter New Ones ,
Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zürich
_Art Cabinet, Studio K3, Kunstmuseum Olten
_Put-to-bed, Last Tango, Zürich

2020

_Artist in Isolation, Studio K3, Zürich

2019

_Träume werden wahr, Helmhaus, Zürich

2018

_Zukunft, Kunsthalle Schlieren, Schlieren

2017

_Temenos (Revisited), Live In Your Head, Genf

2016

_Kunstzeughaus Rapperswil, Grosse Regionale
_Atelier- und Werkstipendien der Stadt Zürich, Helmhaus
_Manifesta11, *What People do for Money, Historical Exhibition*, Kunsthalle Zürich
_Counter Space, Sourcing Manifesta, Zürich

2015

_Swiss Art Awards, Basel
_Kunstraum Sihlquai55, Zürich
_Hold the line I halle.li, Schlieren, Zürich

2014

_Candy Colored Clown, Herrmann Germann
Contemporary, Zürich
_Art Ort Tat, Galerie am Leewasser, Brunnen,
CH

2013

_Atelier- und Werkstipendien der Stadt Zürich, Helmhaus
_Catch of the Year, Dienstgebäude, Zürich

2012

_Catch of the Year , Dienstgebäude, Zürich

2010

_unterdessen, Museum Bärengasse, Zürich
_K 10, Oxyd, Winterthur
_Swiss Art Award I Basel
_ich tier! (du mensch), Perla Mode, Zürich
_Stiftung Binz39, Zürich

2009

_Catch of the Year , Dienstgebäude, Zürich
_Atelier- und Werkstipendien der Stadt Zürich, Helmhaus, Zürich
_Übersetzungsparadoxien Teil 3, Schedhalle, Zürich
_Plattform 09, EWZ, Zürich

2008

_12MinMax, Tanzhaus, Zürich

Solo Exhibitions

2023

_Paintings&Drawings, Museo Casa Rusca,
Locarno

2019

_Leuchten, Lokal14, Zürich

2018

_Social Mapping, Wittelsbacherplatz, 25 Jahre
BISS Magazin, München

2017

_The Surface of Light, Last Tango, zusammen
mit Hans Witschi, Zürich

2015

_Insel der Angst, Stiftung Binz39, Zürich

2014

_Island of Anxiety, Kunstschlager, Reykjavík, IS

2009

_Stadtgalerie Loge, Bern

Education

_2004–2008 Studienbereich Bildende Kunst,
Zürcher Hochschule der Künste

Collections

_City of Zurich
_Kanton of Zurich
_Julius Bär Art Collection
_Kunstsammlung ZKB
_Private Collections

Stipends / Prizes

_2022 Covid Arbeitsstipendium, Stadt Zürich
_2021 Covid Arbeitsstipendium, Stadt Zürich
_2020 Wissenschaftliches Institut ZHDK
Hands on, Steindruckerei Wolfensberger, Zürich
_2016 Freiraum-Beitrag, Kanton Zürich, Fachstelle Kultur
_2009 – 2011 Atelierstipendium, Stiftung Binz39, Zürich
_2009 Förderbeitrag der UBS Kulturstiftung

Publications

2023

_Paintings&Drawings, Sabine Schlatter
Published by Museo Casa Rusca Locarno,
Conceived by Raphael Gyax and Nancy
Lunghi

2017

_The Ambivalence of Black Holes and Green
Moons,
Published by Last Tango, Conceived by Arianna
Gellini and Linda Jensen

2016

_Manifesta 11 catalogue, Lars Müller Publishers

2010

_unterdessen, hsg. Annalies Walter, Zürich
_Die Grenzen der Wirklichkeit erweitern, Artcollector Nr. 3, Basel

_Themen aus dem aktuellen Zürcher Kunstschaffen,
Visarte Zürich, K10 – Ortungen

2009

_Wie wichtig ist der Kick für dich? Die Ausstellungsreihe
in der Stadtgalerie Bern, Boa Books, Genf