

# JEAN-BAPTISTE MAITRE

## Portfolio

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# The Telephone is Killing the Cosmos

## Le Téléphone Tue Le Cosmos

Series of 21 paintings, Modeling paste, acrylic, ink, varnish on Resin Coated Paper, mounted on canvas, 30 x 40 cm or 40 x 60 cm, 2018-2019.

Exhibitions at Gallery Martin van Zomeren, 2018; Rita Urso Artopia Gallery, Milan, 2018; Art Dusseldorf 2019; California Museum of Photography, 2021.

In the Collection of Sammlung Philara, Düsseldorf Germany.

“The Telephone is Killing the Cosmos” is a series of paintings depicting still lifes (flowers, fruits, dead animals), scenes of human struggles, telephones and cultural artefacts. The paintings are first made colorless, white acrylic on a white canvas, then scanned and colors printed over to render machine vision visible over human trace.

Text from the exhibition: “Art in the Plague year” at California Museum of Photography, 2021:

*Jean-Baptiste Maitre titles his project after a 1923 quote by German cultural theorist Aby Warburg: “The telephone kills the cosmos.” Conversation technology, Warburg suggests, means men can talk at a distance without the need to walk to one another. And by not walking the world, man does not encounter the natural world and therefore does not create poetic, mythic interpretations of nature.*

*Maitre made a colorless painting—white acrylic on a white canvas. A modest size: 30 x 40 cm [11.8 x 15.75 inches]. It was, he says, a traditional still life symbolically engaged with issues of life and mortality: dead birds and hares, fruit, a tree branch. Maitre then scanned the white-on white work and used text recognition software “to identify an image in the painting.” This end-point piece is the image produced by the software. It encapsulates mortality, transformation, drift, and mutation.*



Jean-Baptiste Maitre  
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left Image: **2018\_01** , 30 x 40 x 3,5 cm, acrylic, ink, varnish on resin coated Paper, mounted on canvas, 2018  
right Image: **2018\_02**, 30 x 40 x 3,5 cm, acrylic, ink, varnish on resin coated Paper, mounted on canvas, 2018



left Image: **2018\_03** , 30 x 40 x 3,5 cm, Modeling paste, acrylic, ink, varnish on resin coated Paper, mounted on canvas, 2018  
right Image: **2018\_04**, (not available) 30 x 40 x 3,5 cm, acrylic, ink, varnish on resin coated Paper, mounted on canvas, 2018

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left Image: **2018\_05** , 30 x 40 x 3,5 cm, acrylic, ink, varnish on resin coated Paper, mounted on canvas, 2018  
right Image: **2018\_06**, 30 x 40 x 3,5 cm, acrylic, ink, varnish on resin coated Paper, mounted on canvas, 2018

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left Image: **2018\_07**, 30 x 40 x 3,5 cm, acrylic, ink, varnish on resin coated Paper, mounted on canvas, 2018  
right Image: **2018\_08**, 30 x 40 x 3,5 cm, acrylic, ink, varnish on resin coated Paper, mounted on canvas, 2018



left Image: **2018\_09**, (not available) 30 x 40 x 3,5 cm, acrylic, ink, varnish on resin coated Paper, mounted on canvas, 2018  
right Image: **2018\_10**, 30 x 40 x 3,5 cm, acrylic, ink, varnish on resin coated Paper, mounted on canvas, 2018

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Image: *Split Still Life*, 60 x 40 x 2 cm, acrylic, ink, varnish on resin coated Paper, mounted on canvas, 2018

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left Image: **2019\_01** , 30 x 40 x 3,5 cm, acrylic, ink, varnish on resin coated Paper, mounted on canvas, 2018  
right Image: **2019\_02**, 30 x 40 x 3,5 cm, acrylic, ink, varnish on resin coated Paper, mounted on canvas, 2018

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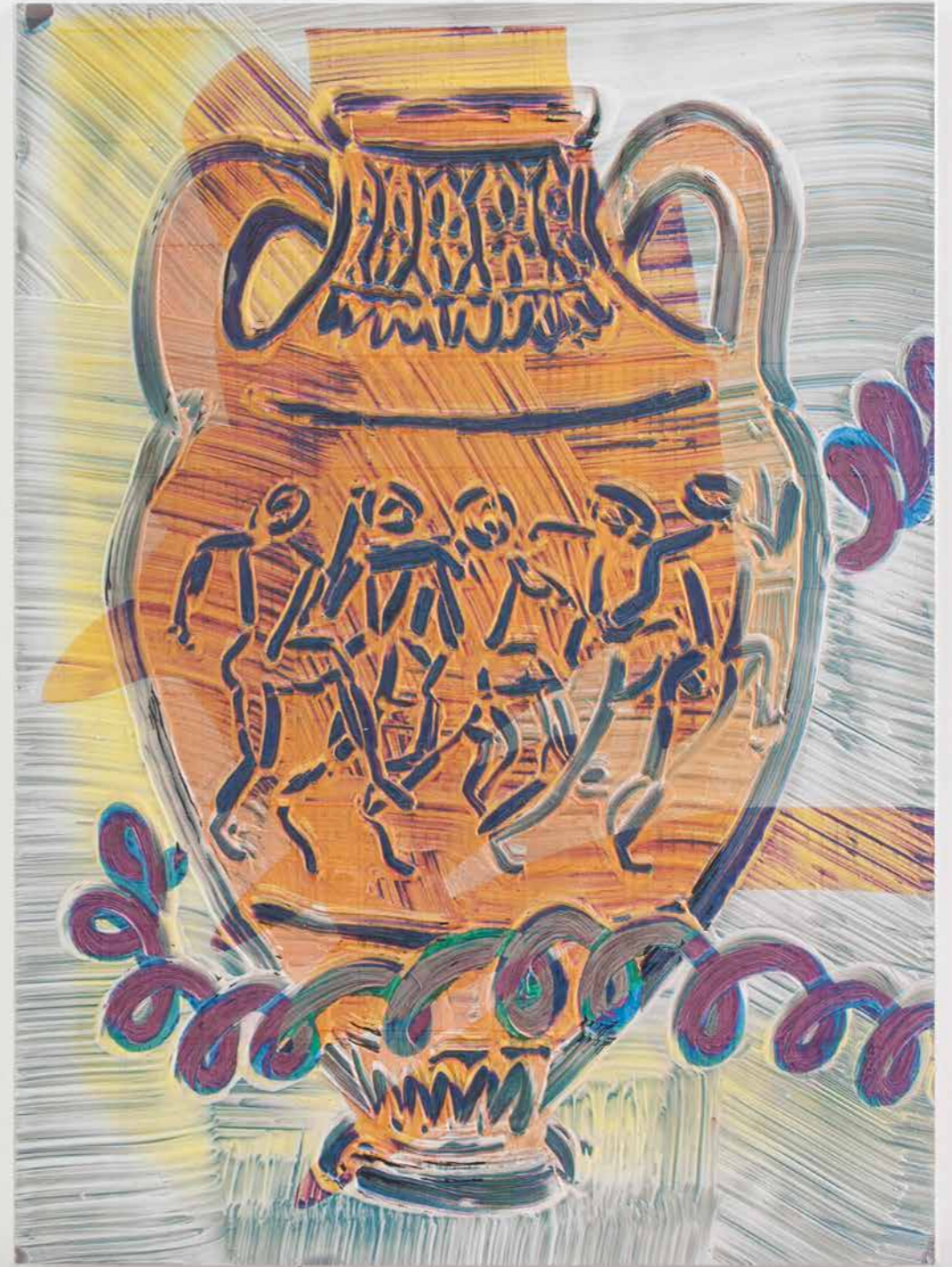
left Image: **2019\_03** , 30 x 40 x 3,5 cm, acrylic, ink, varnish on resin coated Paper, mounted on canvas, 2019  
right Image: **2019\_04**, 30 x 40 x 3,5 cm, acrylic, ink, varnish on resin coated Paper, mounted on canvas, 2019

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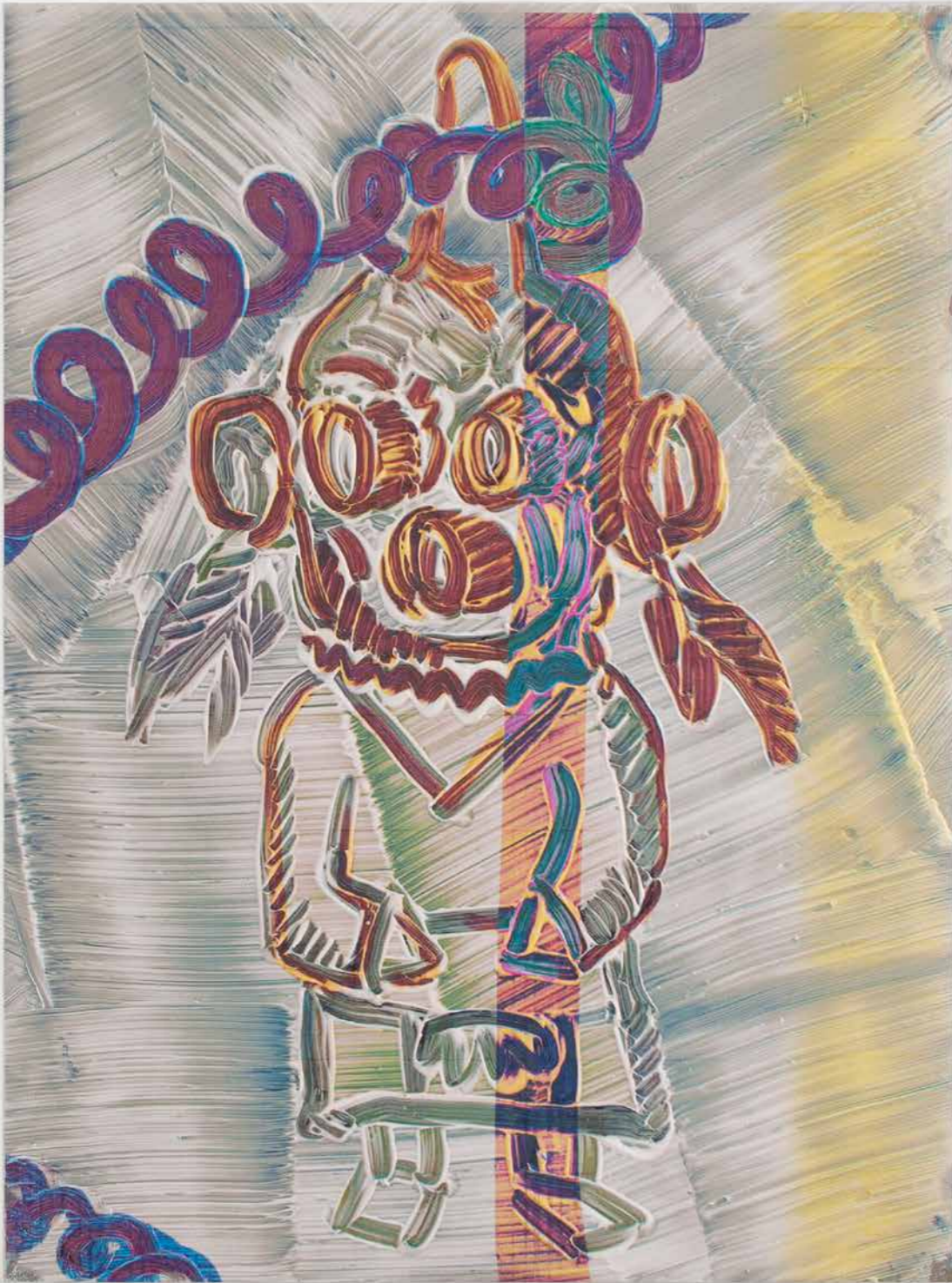
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left Image: **2019\_05** , 30 x 40 x 3,5 cm, acrylic, ink, varnish on resin coated Paper, mounted on canvas, 2019  
right Image: **2019\_06**, 30 x 40 x 3,5 cm, acrylic, ink, varnish on resin coated Paper, mounted on canvas, 2019



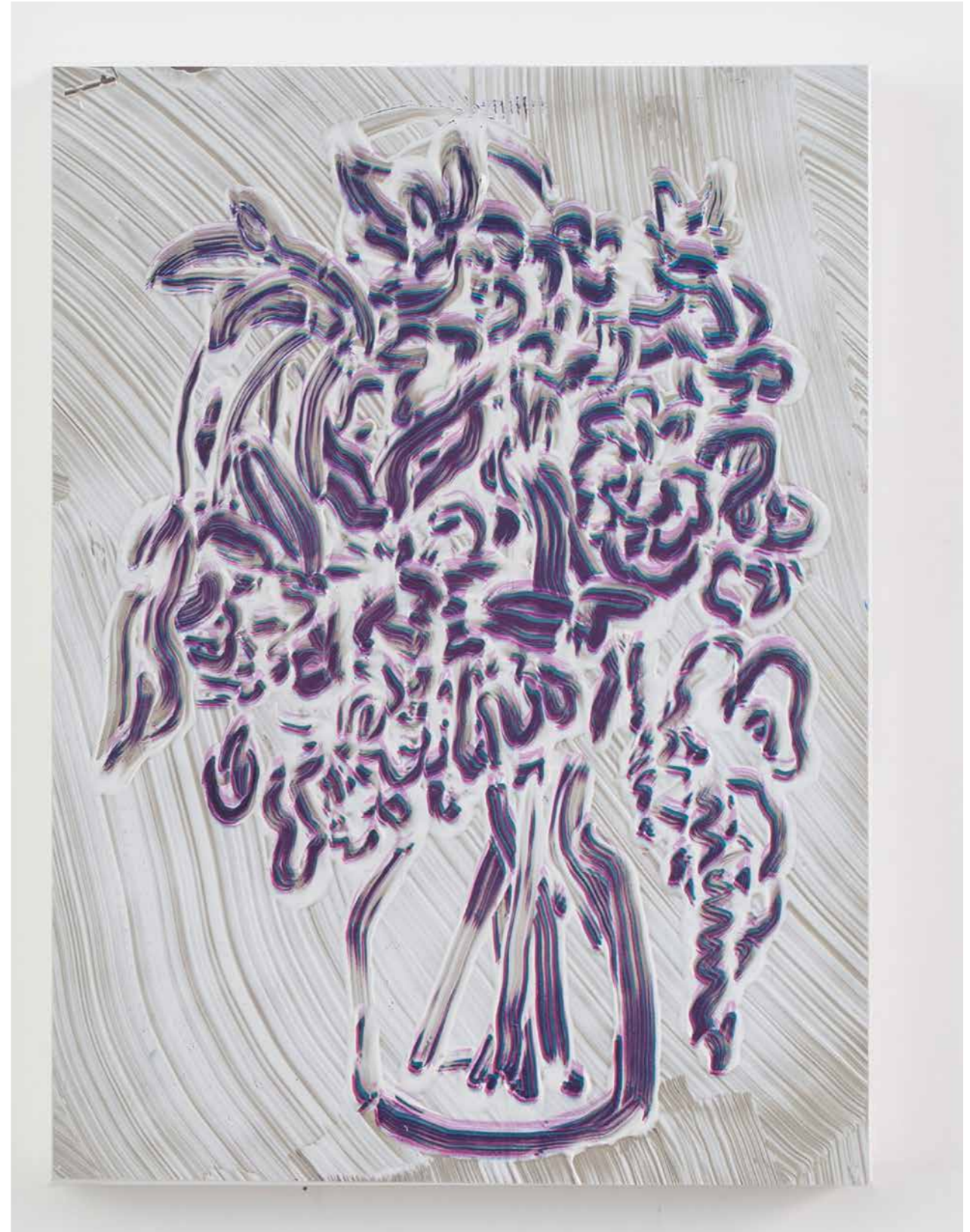
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left Image: **2019\_07**, 30 x 40 x 3,5 cm, acrylic, ink, varnish on resin coated Paper, mounted on canvas, 2019  
right Image: **2019\_08**, 30 x 40 x 3,5 cm, acrylic, ink, varnish on resin coated Paper, mounted on canvas, 2019



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left Image: **2019\_08\_bis** , 30 x 40 x 3,5 cm, acrylic, ink, varnish on resin coated Paper, mounted on canvas, 2019  
right Image: **WARNING !** , 40 x 60 x 2 cm, acrylic, ink, varnish on resin coated Paper, mounted on canvas, 2019



left Image: **2019\_09**, 30 x 40 x 3,5 cm, acrylic, ink, varnish on resin coated Paper, mounted on canvas, 2019  
right Image: **2019\_10**, 30 x 40 x 3,5 cm, acrylic, ink, varnish on resin coated Paper, mounted on canvas, 2019

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left Image: **2019\_11** , 30 x 40 x 3,5 cm, acrylic, ink, varnish on resin coated Paper, mounted on canvas, 2019  
right Image: **2019\_12**, 30 x 40 x 3,5 cm, acrylic, ink, varnish on resin coated Paper, mounted on canvas, 2019

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## Lower Your Voice in the Room of Unlikeness

A solo exhibition by Jean-Baptiste Maitre at Gallery Martin van Zomeren, Hazenstraat 20, 1016 SP Amsterdam; [www.martinvanzomeren.nl](http://www.martinvanzomeren.nl) ; exhibition date: 14th June to 14th July 2025.

The exhibition Lower Your Voice in the Room of Unlikeness (Silence dans le Salon de la Dissemblance) by the french artist Jean-Baptiste Maitre (1978) presents a series of 15 portrait paintings alongside a single panoramic photograph. The paintings and the photograph together suggest a cast of characters poised for a play. They carry a sense of social decay that Maitre explores through painterly treatment of the faces and the use of oil paint applied “like makeup”, says the artist.

The title Lower Your Voice in the Room of Unlikeness is a reference to Saint Augustine’s idea of “unlikeness to truth,” which inspired Maitre to work on portraiture. It also alludes to Luis Buñuel’s film El Angel Exterminador in which a group of dinner guests find themselves trapped in a cursed living room, a scene that is depicted in the photograph on display.

This panoramic photograph brings together the painted portraits under a common sense of tragedy, as if all the figures in the paintings were also present in the living room. As Maitre concludes: ‘I see the viewers of the exhibition as figures among the very assembly they are looking at, completing the whole.’



Image left: *Travestissement des faits: joue gauche (Painting as make-up: left cheek)*, 40 x 50 cm, oil on linen, 2023

Image right: *Travestissement des faits: joue droite (Painting as make-up: right cheek)*, 40 x 50 cm, oil on linen, 2023

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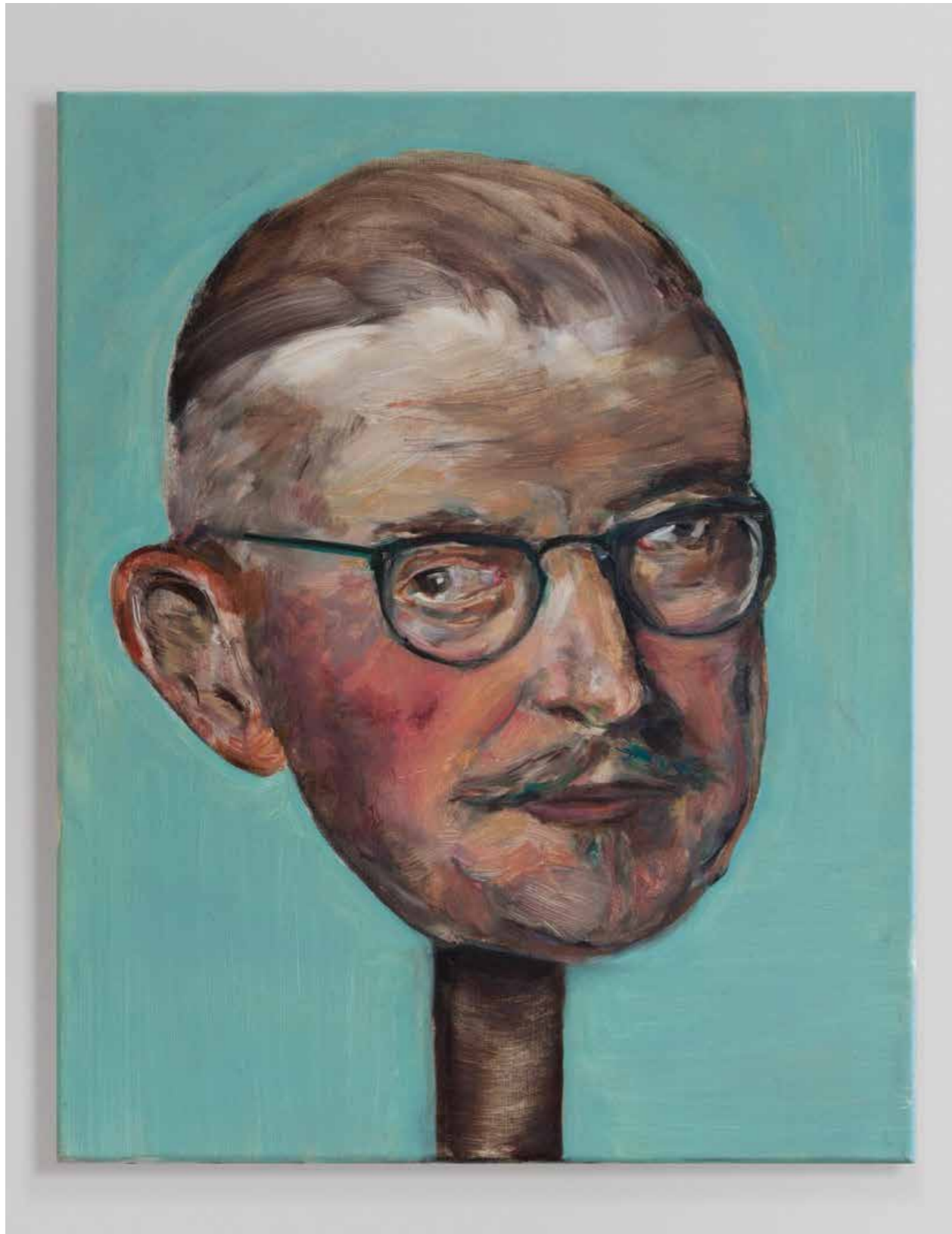


Image left: *Jean-Paul Sartre et La Fausse Moustache (Painting as make-up series)*, 40 x 50 cm, oil on linen, 2024

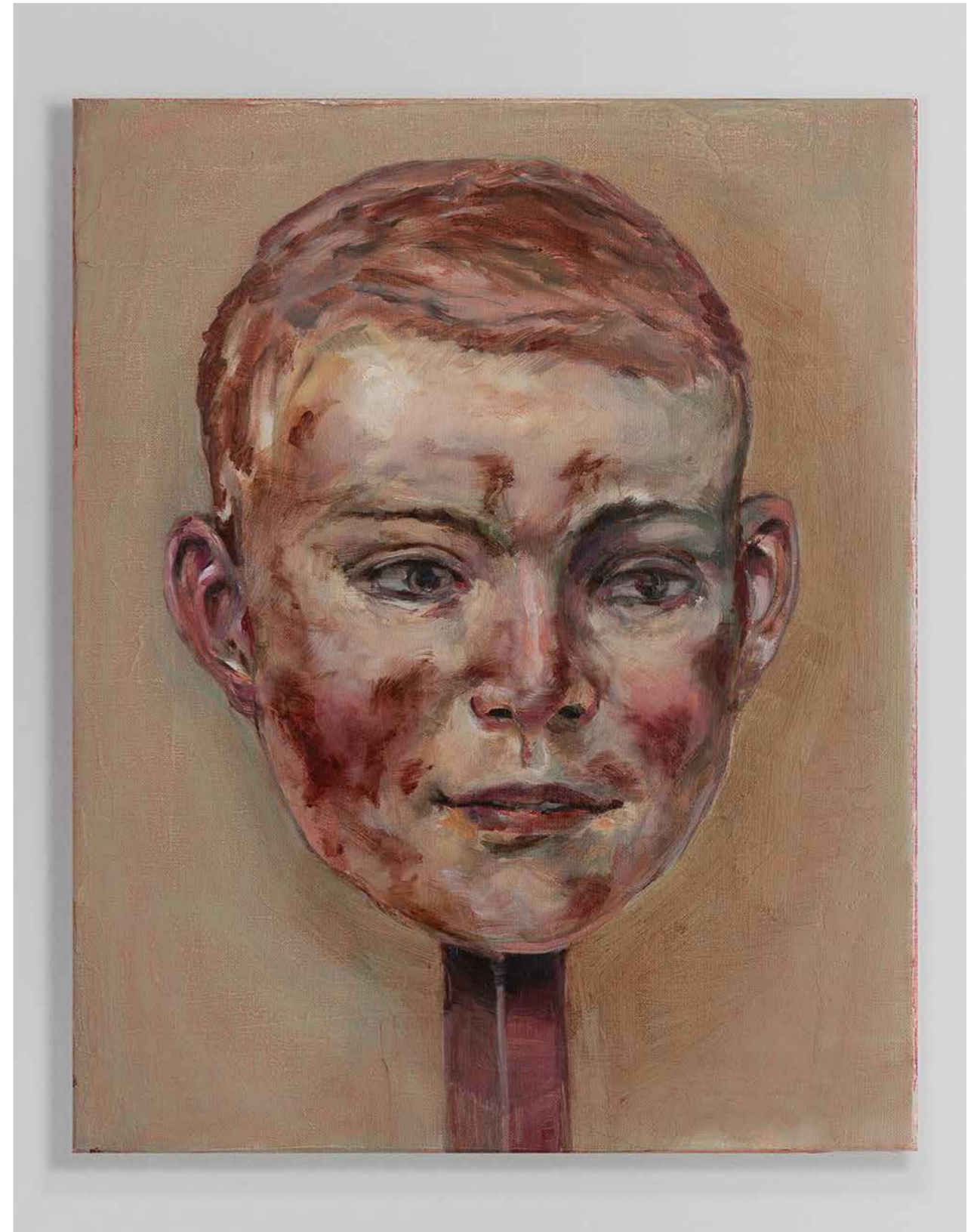


Image right: *Fille de Rubens en Ouvrier Chinois du Pétrole (Painting as make-up series)*, 40 x 50 cm, oil on linen, 2024

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Image left: *Masque Mortuaire du Jeune Robespierre (Painting as make-up series)*, 40 x 50 cm, oil on linen, 2024

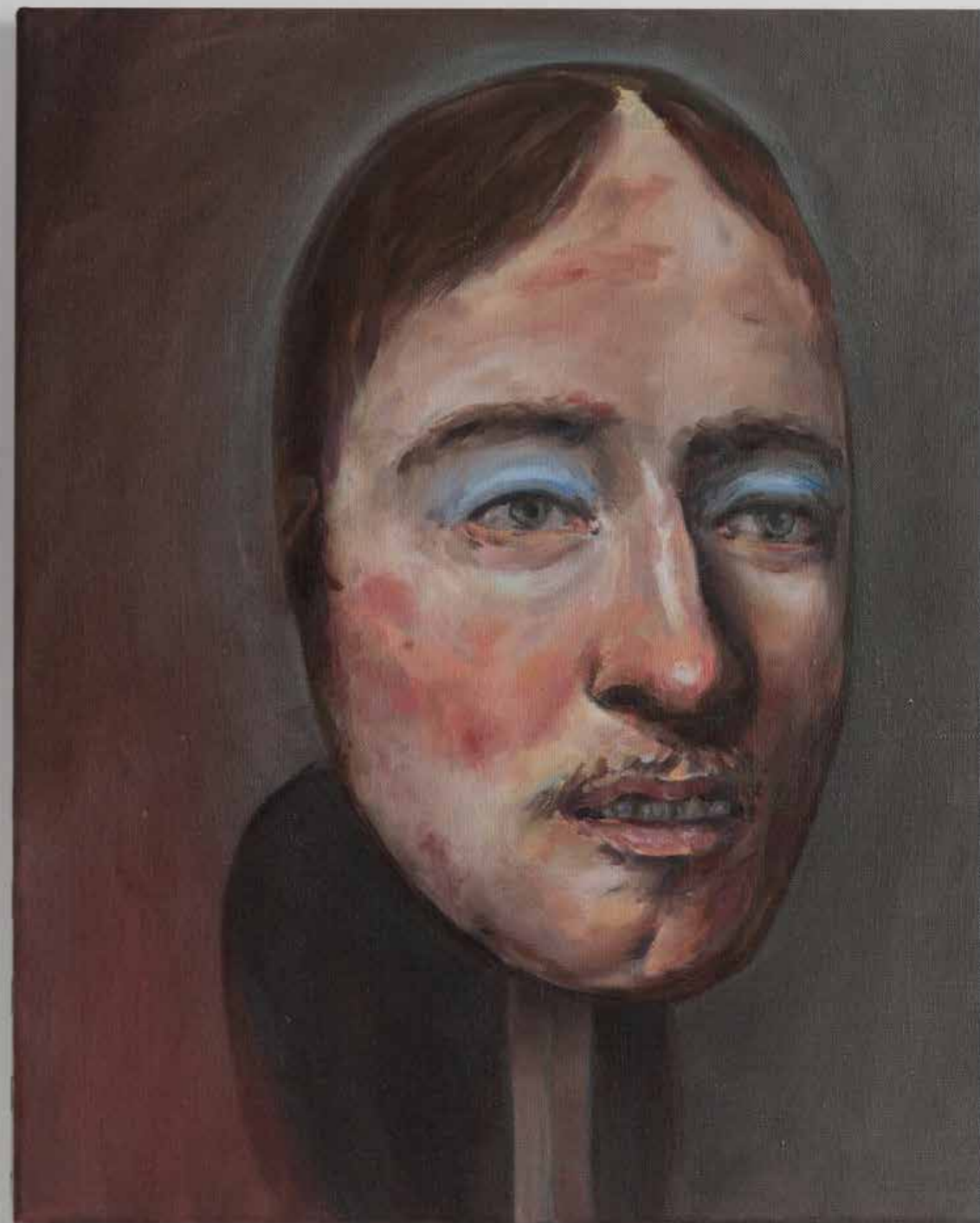


Image right: *Masque de Théâtre Nôh après Jan Verspronck (Painting as make-up series)*, 40 x 50 cm, oil on linen, 2024

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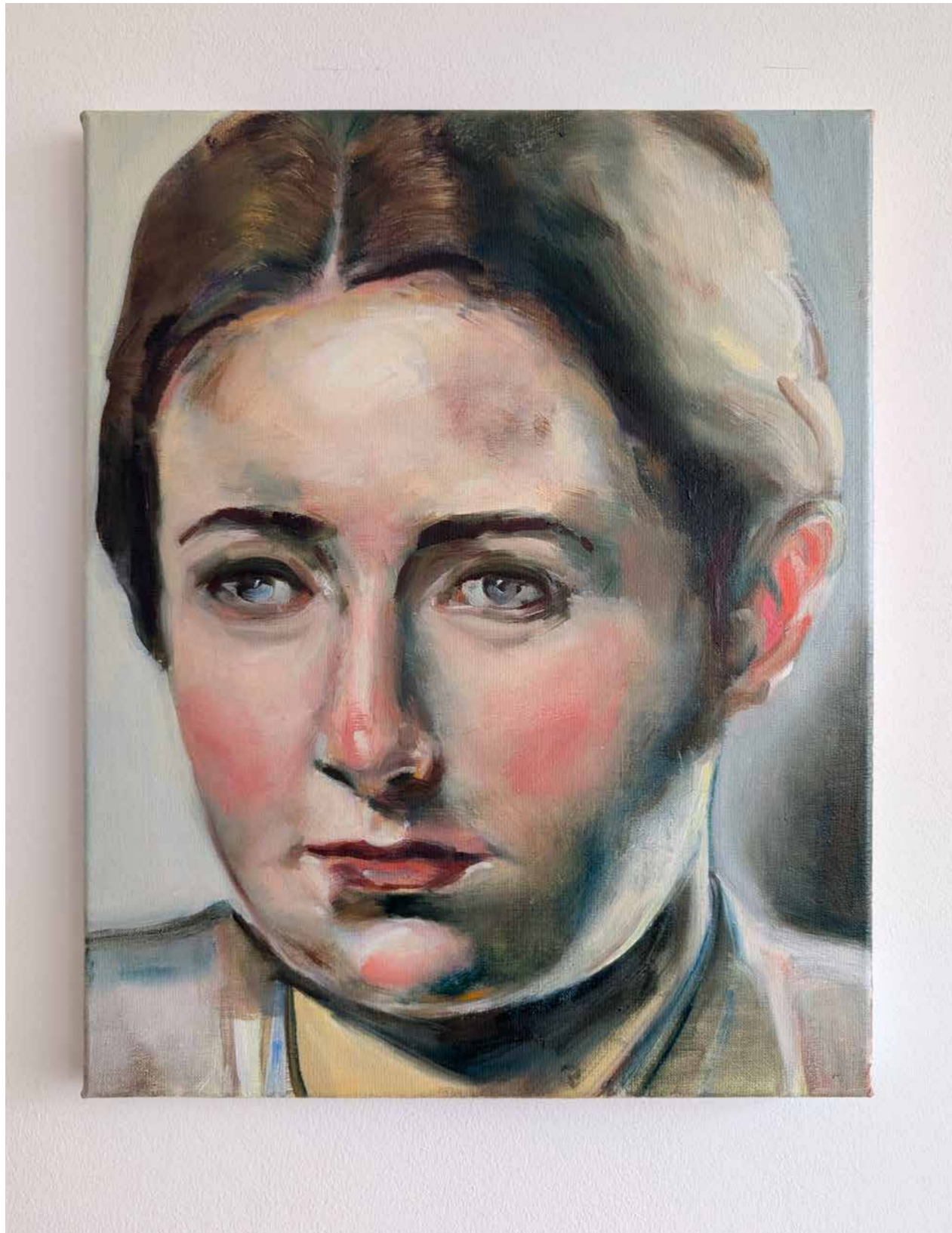


Image left: *This Person Does Not Exist*, 40 x 50 cm, oil on linen, 2025

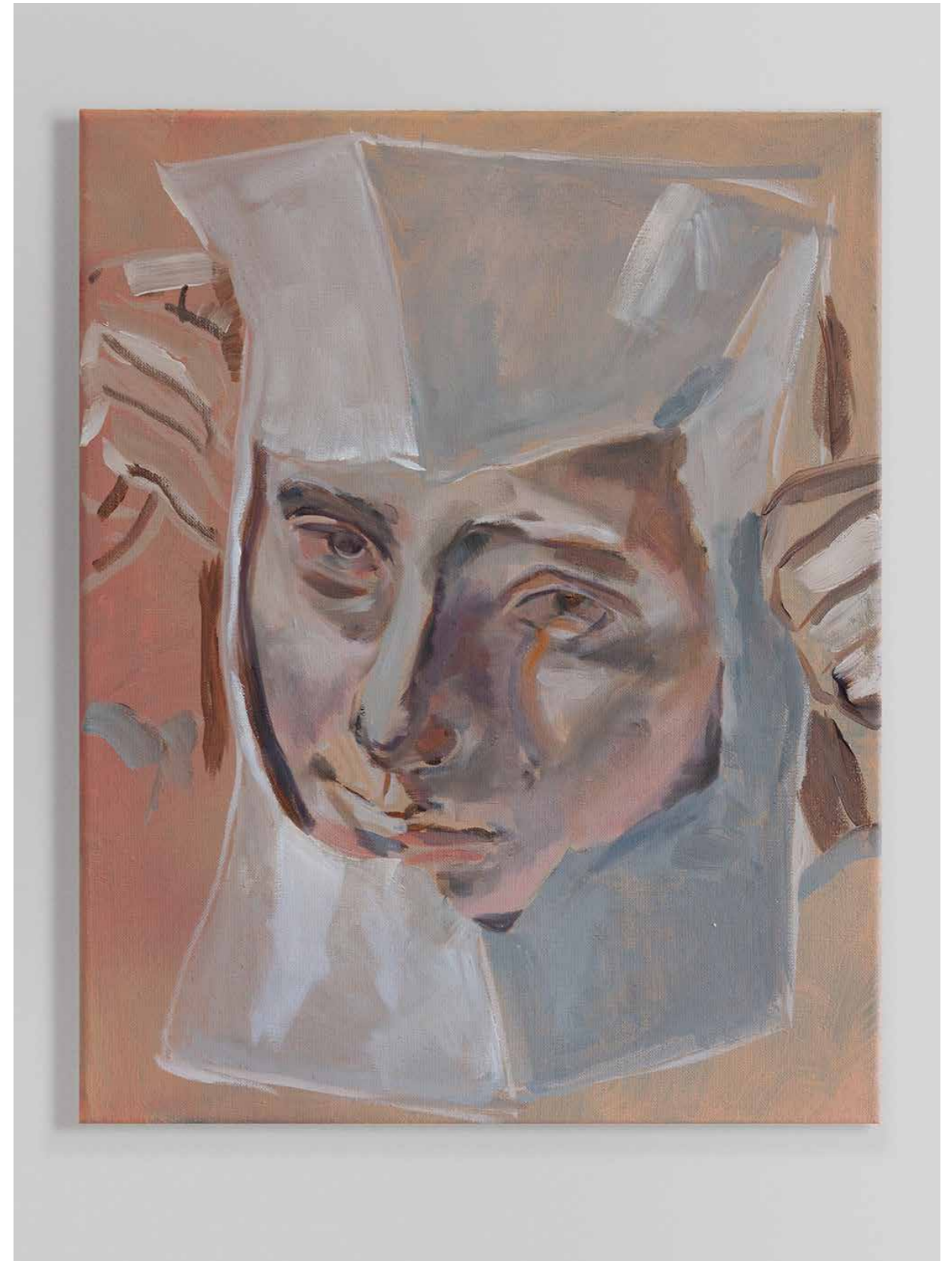
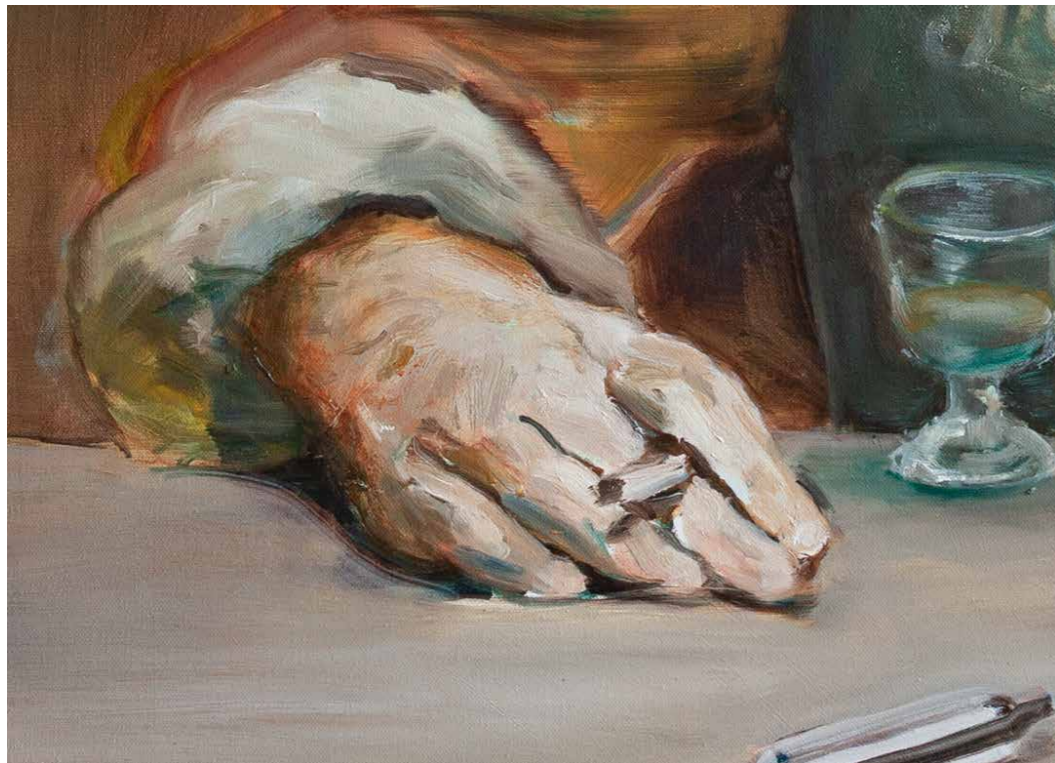


Image right: *Le Trou dans le Masque (A Failure of Concealment)*, 40 x 50 cm, oil on linen, 2024

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Image: *Stratège des Frites de la Liberté (d'après La Prune de Manet) - Freedom Fries Strategist (after Manet's La Prune)*, 90 x 110 cm, oil on egyptian cotton, 2025

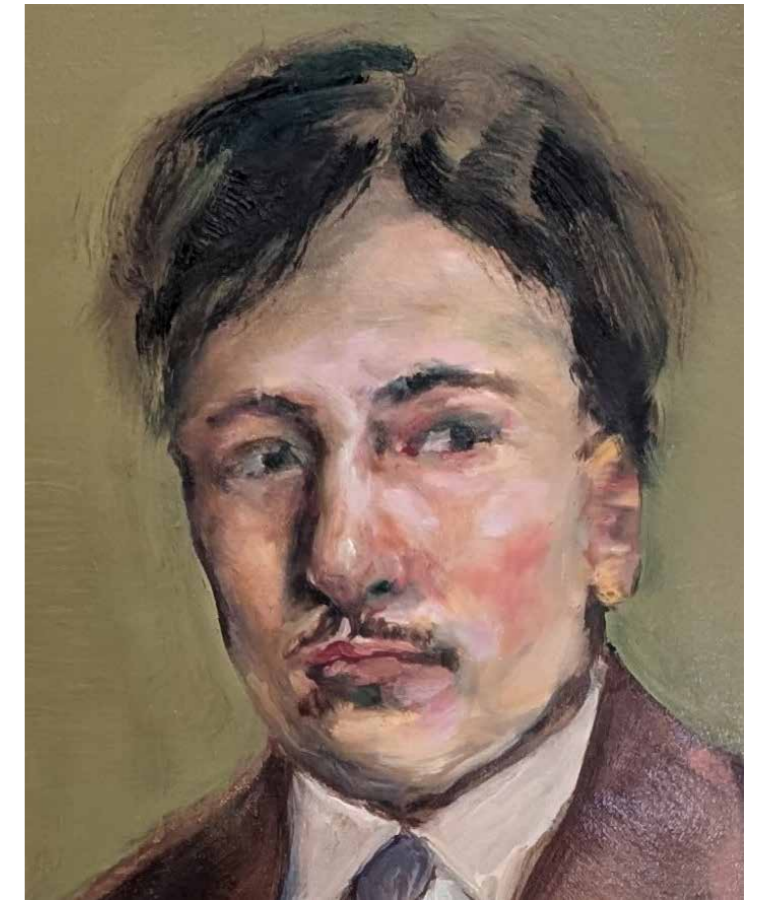


Image: *Zero Duck Feedback*, 120 x 100 cm, oil on egyptian cotton, 2025

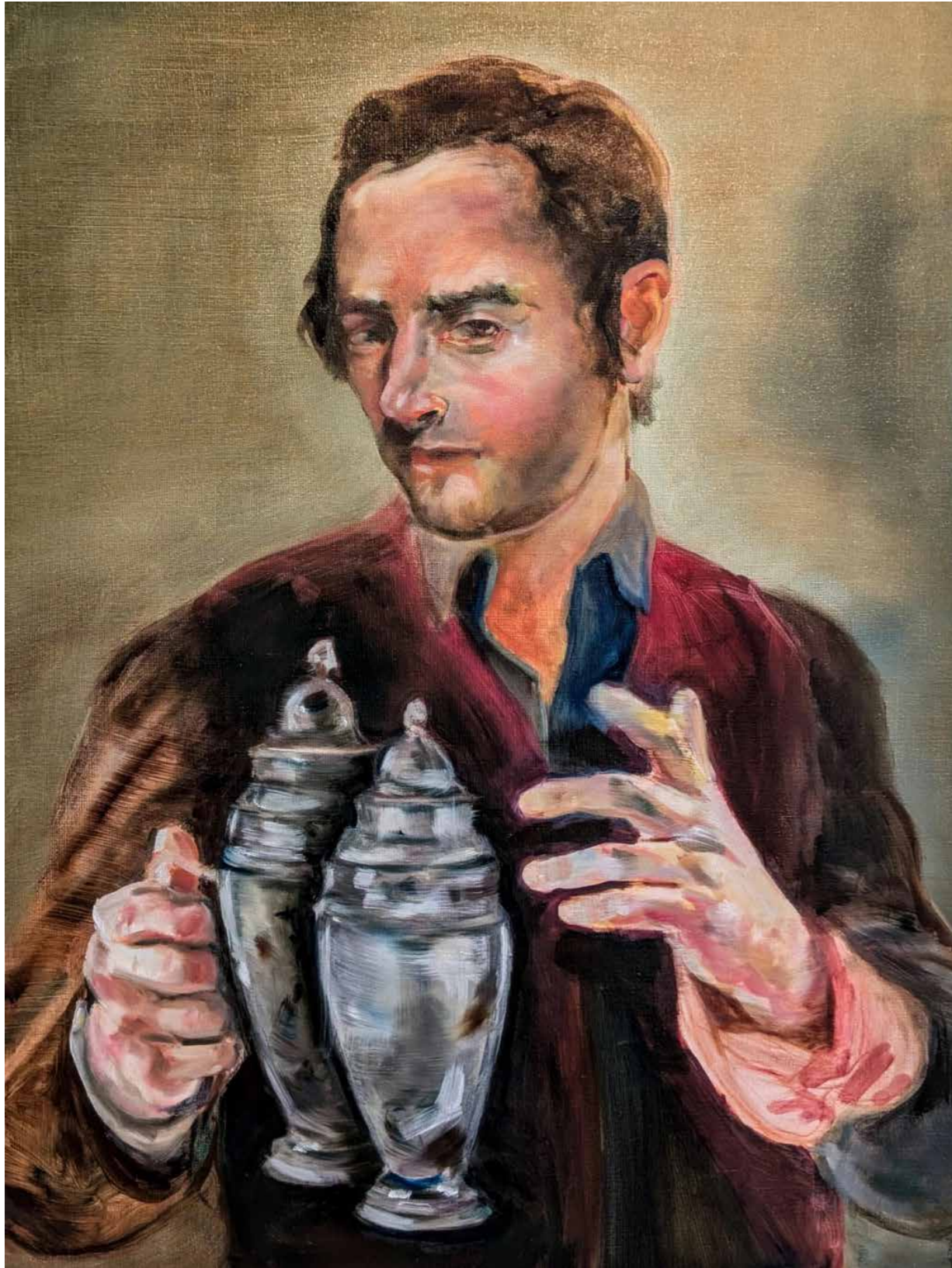
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Left Image: *Daily Cover-up Routine*, oil on linen, 60 x 80 cm, 2024  
Right Image: *Your Holophace*, 50 x 40 cm, oil on linen, 2025



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Image left: *If You Know You Know*, oil on linen, 60 x 80 cm, 2025  
Image right: *La Tête dans le Vase*, 60 x 80 cm, oil on linen, 2025



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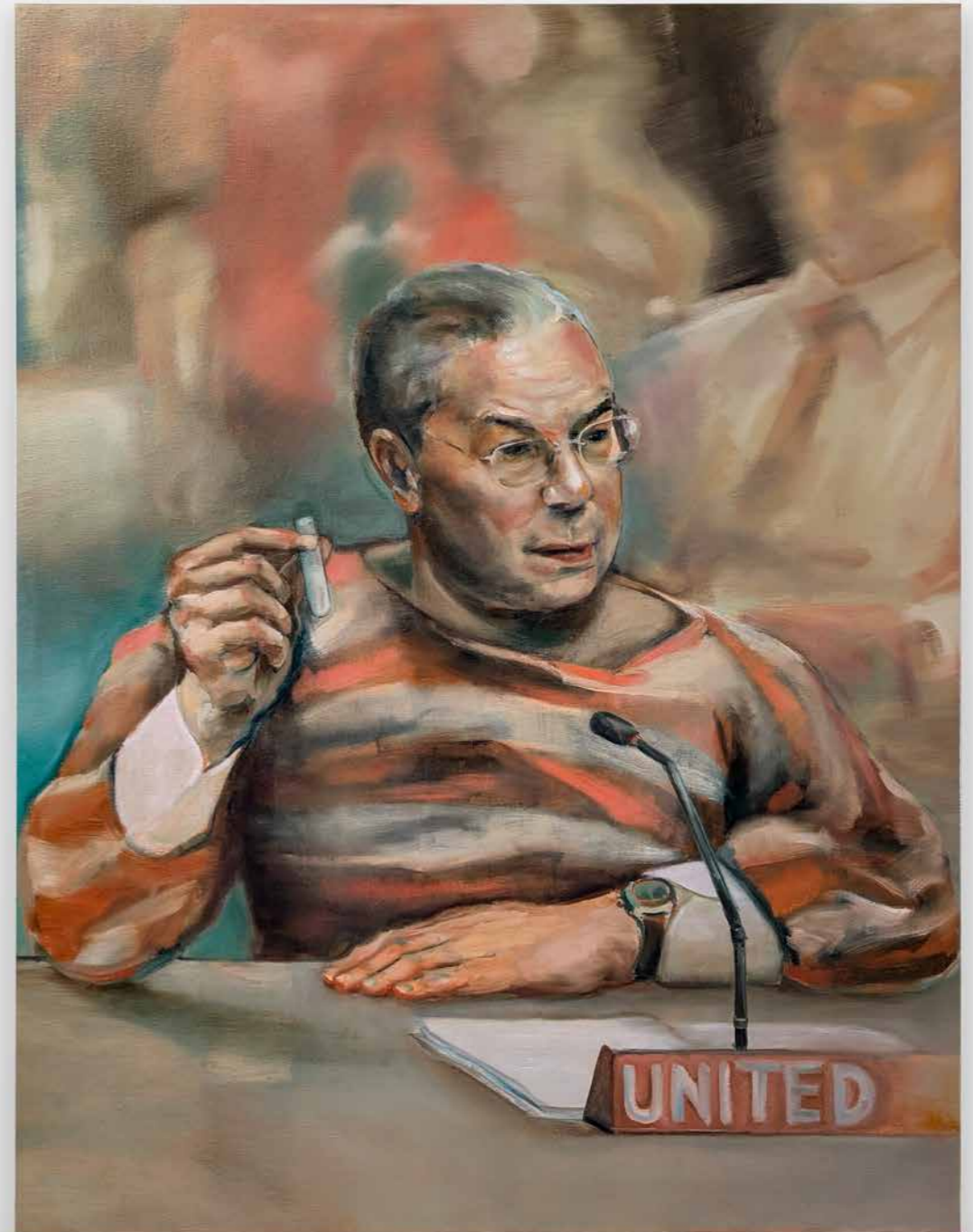


Image left: *Landline with Stripes*, oil on linen, 50 x 55 cm, 2024  
Image right: *Colin Powell 2003*, 100 x 130 cm, oil on linen, 2025



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Image: *Cut Through The Living-Room of the Exterminating Angel*, digital print in two frames with artist' mat, 67 x 86, 5 cm; and 60,9 x 80, 4, cm, 2025



Image: *Cut Through The Living-Room of the Exterminating Angel*, digital print in two frames with artist' mat, 67 x 86, 5 cm; and 60,9 x 80, 4, cm, 2025

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## Lower Your Voice in the Room of Unlikeness

List of Works and Introduction:

The paintings presented in this exhibition are divided into four groups: Makeup, The Thinkers, Head in a Vase, and The Archetypes.

### GROUPE 1 : MAKEUP

The first group, Makeup, served as the genesis of this project. Inspired by Saint Augustine’s concept of “Unlikeness”—the idea that humanity has drifted away from the image of truth—Maitre explores portraiture ranging from ancient busts to contemporary figures. Using visible brushwork influenced by “fast painting” such as Velázquez, Frans Hals, and Manet, these works reflect a modern impulse: the fabrication of artificial images of one’s self. Through this lens, Maitre questions what becomes of the truth when we are constantly sculpting our own reality.



3. *Masque de théâtre Nô après Jan Verspronck (série Painting as make-up)*, 2024, huile sur lin, 40 x 50 cm. Another piece in the series reimagines a traditional Japanese Noh theater mask by applying the painterly qualities found in the portraits of Frans Hals and Jan Verspronck. To further emphasize the connection between identity, theatricality, and the physical act of painting, Maitre added a stroke of bright blue eyeliner, linking the tradition of stage makeup to the very materiality of the paint.



4. *Your Holophace (série Painting as make-up)*, 2024, huile sur lin, 40 x 50 cm. Your Holophace is a painting based on a sculpture from the facade of the Opéra de Paris. The original work depicts an actor either putting on or taking off the mask of the character he embodies. The word Holophace combines “hollow” and “hologram,” suggesting a technological layer placed over the face. Holophace sounds like a facial device that might allow one to interact virtually as a video game character, or perhaps to meet others in a secure environment—free from physical interaction, risk, or confrontation.



5. *Daughter of Rubens as Chinese oil worker (série Painting as make-up)*, 2024, huile sur lin, 40 x 50 cm. The painting Daughter of Rubens as Chinese Oil Worker\*\* began as a playful study in transformation. Starting with Rubens’ portrait of

a young girl, the artist merged it with a 19th-century sculpture by Carpeaux representing China and a contemporary image of an oil worker with a weathered face.

Maitre accentuated the pictorial qualities of each source—the oil stains, the delicate skin tones of the Rubens, and the sculptural form of the Carpeaux. Layer by layer, he combined these elements to create a face that balances the harshness of adult labor with the softness of childhood.

### GROUP 2: THE THINKERS

In the series The Thinkers, portraits of Mao, Sartre, and Robespierre receive the same pictorial treatment, where the skin becomes densely layered and highly textured. These works explore how the representation of the face can be intertwined with specific political or intellectual stances.



6. *Jean-Paul Sartre et la fausse moustache*, 2024, huile sur lin, 40 x 50 cm. Why represent Jean-Paul Sartre with a fake mustache? For Maitre, the fake mustache symbolizes the artist’s freedom to apply, modify, and interpret the subject—playing with the boundary between the “real” historical figure and the artist’s own intervention.



1. *Travestissement des faits : joue droite (Painting as make-up: right cheek)*, 2023, huile sur lin, 40 x 50 cm, 2023  
2. *Travestissement des faits : joue gauche (Painting as make-up: left cheek)*, 2023, huile sur lin, 40 x 50 cm, 2023.



In the two paintings *Travestissement des faits : joue droite et joue gauche*, the same bust of an ancient Roman citizen is depicted from opposite profiles. One version features brushwork and texture reminiscent of a Delacroix painting (Right Cheek), while the other incorporates a woman’s face inspired by a portrait by Manet (Left Cheek).



7. Daily Cover-up Routine, huile sur lin, 60 x 80 cm, 2024. This painting was conceived while reflecting on the Belgian sinologist Simon Leys, whose critiques of Mao's Cultural Revolution in the 1970s—notably in \*Chinese Shadows\*—sparked intense controversy. At the time, many French intellectuals viewed the Maoist regime as a radical social experiment and an alternative to Western capitalism. They met Leys' precise accounts of repression with hostility, mistakenly confusing totalitarian control with a new form of liberation.

During this same period, Andy Warhol created his famous Mao silkscreens (1972–73), transforming the Chinese leader into a pop icon. Warhol's glamorized imagery echoed the idealized vision held by certain Western thinkers.

Daily Cover-up Routine reinterprets Warhol's aesthetic—preserving his vibrant colors but applying them with a textured, naturalistic touch. The result resembles green cosmetic concealer, evoking the daily routine of concealment and artifice behind the presentation of power.



8. Masque mortuaire du jeune Robespierre (Death Mask of Young Robespierre), huile sur lin, 40 x 50 cm, 2024. This painting takes as its starting point a digital facial reconstruction of Robespierre created in 2013. It simulated his features based on a death mask reportedly

exhibited by Madame Tussaud in 1802. The image, which showed signs of past illness in the form of pockmarked skin, sparked a strong reaction in France; some judged it unflattering and ideologically biased.

While working on the series, Maitre discovered a clay pipe at the Amsterdam Pipe Museum featuring a caricature of Robespierre's head as the pipe bowl—a Dutch-made object that depicted the revolutionary in a satirical light. The artist used this as a model, reimagining the face by accentuating the caricatured features of this “pipe-head” and transforming it into a theatrical mask.

### GROUP 3 : HEAD IN VASE



9. La Tête dans le Vase, ou Cueillir l'Absence par les Anses, huile sur lin, 60 x 80 cm, 2024. Head in Vase, a transitional painting in the series, depicts a head inside a vase suspended mid-air, as if thrown or seeking to escape. This work introduces movement and narrative to the series. The phrases “I have my head in the vase” or “to pick absence by the handles” do not exist in common usage; they mimic the form of an idiom, appearing almost convincing in their false familiarity. The artist explores the meaning of this invented expression, questioning the desire for anonymity and the urge to disappear into something opaque—yet as fragile as pottery.

### GROUP 4: THE ARCHETYPES

Consisting of five paintings, the Archetypes group presents figures composed from the torso up, each adopting a distinct posture. While continuing the same pictorial treatment of the face, these works introduce costumes, objects, and simple gestures: holding a mask, presenting vases, talking on the phone, posing for a video, or smoking in a bar. Together, they sketch out emerging archetypes, figures that evoke specific social roles. Every visual element contributes to this impression: the brushwork of the faces serves as a psychological cue; the costumes suggest a particular era or social context; the objects indicate a function; and the gestures provide subtle behavioral codes. Because these elements remain understated or ambiguous, the roles they suggest stay intentionally open to interpretation.



10. A Failure of Concealment, 2024, huile sur lin, 40 x 50 cm. For A Failure of Concealment, Maitre used a 19th-century bust by Carpeaux as a model, chosen for an expression that conveys a kind of weary dignity. A torn paper mask is held before the face, framing this exhaustion. The surface of the skin was left as bare as possible—not to define a specific individual, but to leave the face's disappointment clearly visible.



11. If You Know You Know, huile sur lin, 60 x 80 cm, 2025. \*\*If You Know You Know\*\* draws on a contemporary internet idiom that refers directly to the concept of niche knowledge and shared recognition within specific online communities. The painting's meaning remains intentionally ambiguous; while a visual repetition is evident in its structure—the reiteration of “you know you know” in the title being mirrored by the double vase in the painting—the exact nature of the scene or the objects depicted is not immediately decipherable.

This ambiguity, heightened by the title's insistence on prior understanding, invites the viewer to engage actively. It highlights

the way meaning is constructed through personal memory, history, and culture—one of the few remaining freedoms in a world saturated with prefabricated narratives.



12. Zero Duck Feedback, 120 x 100 cm, huile sur lin, 2025. \*\*Zero Duck Feedback\*\* focuses on a slightly swollen face with a nose that is a bit too large, suggesting a mask, heavy makeup, or botched plastic surgery—all while maintaining a constant “duck face” expression. The title reflects key elements: “Zero” refers to the ring light framing the subject; “Duck” to the deflated lips evoking the familiar selfie pose; and “Feedback” to the livestream setup with a phone on a tripod. Together, these elements signal frustration, suggesting a failure to capture the attention of an invisible audience.

13. Freedom Fries Strategist (after Manet’s La Prune) / Le Stratège des Frites de la Liberté (d’après La Prune de Manet), 90 x 110 cm, huile sur lin, 2025. This painting is loosely inspired by Manet’s \*Plum Brandy\* (\*La Prune\*) and the ancient bust of Pericles. The classic portrait of the Athenian statesman and general is modified: a youthful face replaces the beard, and the helmet sits awkwardly on his head. The figure—simultaneously soldier and civilian—appears idle and pensive. On the table lie nitrous oxide canisters, a recreational drug associated with adolescent experimentation, alongside a glass of alcohol. His T-shirt bears the inscription “Freedom Fries”—a loaded expression stemming from the patriotic rebranding seen during the 2003 American invasion of Iraq. The painting contrasts heroic imagery with modern disenchantment, tracing the way grand narratives dissolve into T-shirts, memes, and chemical stupors.



14. Landline with Stripes, huile sur lin, 50 x 55 cm, 2024. This painting combines a landline telephone, exaggerated makeup, and

a striped shirt. The obsolete phone evokes a dated form of communication, while the makeup and stripes draw attention to questions of painting and representation. The work plays on the contrast between the figure’s heavily made-up face and the person on the other end of the line, who remains unable to see them.

### ADDENDUM: Cut Through the Room of the Exterminating Angel



15. Cut Through The Living-Room of the Exterminating Angel, impression numérique en deux cadres avec passe-partout de l’artiste, 67 x 86,5 cm et 60,9 x 80,4 cm, 2013–2025. In addition to the series of paintings, the exhibition features a large-scale panoramic photograph titled \*\*Cut Through The Living Room of The Exterminating Angel\*\*. This digitally constructed image reconstructs a long tracking shot from Luis Buñuel’s 1962 film \*El Ángel Exterminador\*. It captures the exact moment the dinner guests find themselves cursed and imprisoned within a salon. Fascinated by the film, the artist sought to recreate this pivotal sequence where the curse takes hold—a slow, uninterrupted camera movement across the room. To achieve this, Maitre extracted every frame from the sequence, capturing all 24 frames per second of the tracking shot, and then assembled them into a single panoramic composition. This expansive photographic work condenses the camera’s motion into an extended view, visually compressing time and space into a single perspective.

### New Paintings



16. This Person Does Not Exist, 40 x 50 cm, Oil On linen, 2025  
The image is based on a face generated by ThisPersonDoesNotExist.com—one of the first public demonstrations of artificial intelligence’s ability to generate hyper-realistic human portraits. At its launch, the site captivated the public by producing faces that felt undeniably real, yet were entirely algorithmic. It means the person depicted has never existed, and the face itself will never appear again once the site is refreshed. The painting thus becomes the only physical trace of a non-existent individual: a portrait without a subject.

The artist seeks to demonstrate how painting, traditionally tied to memory and identity, can now give form to someone with neither a history nor a life. The role of the portrait shifts: rather than representing a real person, it serves to create one, bringing them into existence on the canvas. The power of the work lies not in resemblance, but in the act of granting them a body.



17. Colin Powell with Red Stripes (2025) Huile sur lin, 100 x 130 cm

This painting reimagines Colin Powell’s pivotal 2003 UN speech justifying the war in Iraq. The artist shows Powell wearing a red striped shirt, which is a garment he never actually wore. By applying modernist stripe painting to historical scenes, the artist recontextualizes political moments to signal a departure from documentary reality. The artist is using the stripe not as a decoration, but as a tool to interrupt narrative immersion and expose the painting as a constructed artifact. He is using stripes as a visual equivalent of quotation marks.

## Biography

Jean-Baptiste Maitre (b. 1978) is a multidisciplinary artist, primarily a painter. He works across animation film, digitally constructed photography, painting, and ceramics. His last painting series explores the relevance of the painting medium today while examining the theatricality of modern life, from social media personas to performed identities. His current project uses the genre of history painting to tackle recent historical mediatic events with personal narrative.

### Painting

His recent series, “Lower Your Voice in the Room of Unlikeness (Painting as Makeup)”, brings together paintings exploring identity, theatricality, and the act of self-construction. Drawing from sources ranging from Saint Augustine’s idea of unlikness to Manet’s brushwork, from antique busts which lost their painted colors to online personas digitally modifying their facial appearance, Maitre examines how faces reflect systems of representation—cosmetic, political, and pictorial—revealing the ways we stage and remake ourselves through images.

His 2018 painting series “The Telephone is Killing the Cosmos” examines still life through a combination of digital and traditional techniques. By integrating scanning and printing with hand painting, the works explore how pictorial gestures, typically associated with human touch, can be replicated by digital vision, resulting in still lifes that raise questions about perception, and the interpretation of feelings.

### Film

His animated films examine the mechanics of cinema while crafting fragmented narratives inspired by modern events, whether drawn from the media or post-war art history. His videos spans a wide range of subjects, from episodes of the 2003 invasion of Iraq ( The Magic Vase) and comic strips from The New Yorker Magazine (Jokes), to cinematic reinterpretations of modern art. His weaving film series aim at translating into cinematic language the paintings by Hannah Hoch (Mandala Republique), Frank Stella (Shaped Cinema), Sol LeWitt (Camera Movements Following Circles And Arcs) Richard Anuskewicz (RAIN CUHZASRK DIEWICZ) and sculptures by Robert Morris (Three L). He also experiments with site-specific video, such as envisioning an exhibition that does not exist (Sculptures at the Bonnefontenmuseum ).

### Ceramics

His ceramic works reinvent the neon sign, an art form that emerged in the 1960s and has since evolved into a widely recognized artistic trope. The phrases he selects for these ceramic neon signs come from diverse sources: cut-up text merging social media posts, interviews with tech CEOs warning of social media’s psychological impact. He also uses recollections of iconic neon artworks by Joseph Kosuth, Bruce Nauman, and others, which he attempts to recreate from memory. One piece reconstructs a fragmented memory of a Dan Flavin work (“Dan Flaving Around”), while another references his cinematic project (“20 Men with 20 Vases”). Across these works, he explores the idea of the petrified thought—a neon sign that imitates the glow of neon light but remains unlit, existing solely as a representation of illumination.

### Education

Maitre received his degrees in Art History (Paris-Sorbonne University) and Fine Arts (Ecole des Beaux-Arts Paris) as well as in Studio Photography (Gobelins Ecole de l’Image, Paris). He was a researcher at the Jan van Eyck Academie in Maastricht and at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam. Maitre was an artist in residence at PiST Istanbul, The American Academy in Rome, Rose Residency Museo d’Arte Moderna di Bologna, Via Farini in Milan, Lo Schermo dell Arte Visio program in Florence.

### Exhibitions and Collections

Maitre has exhibited at PAKT platform for contemporary art (Amsterdam); Galerie 1M3 (Lausanne); Centre d’Art La Salle de Bains (Lyon); Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts (San Francisco); Bonnefontenmuseum (Maastricht); Centre Pompidou (Paris); Eye Film Museum (Amsterdam); Museo d’Arte Moderna di Bologna (IT); De Nederlandsche Bank (NL); Live in Your HEAD (Geneve).

His works is part of the collections of the Stedelijk museum Amsterdam, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, Museo d’Arte Moderna in Bologna, Sammlung Philara in Düsseldorf, as well as the Dutch Central Bank and ABN AMRO Bank collections, A&O Shearman among others.

He is currently actively developing works on Egyptian Blue with his partner the Egyptian-French artist Dina Danish.

Maitre is represented by Martin van Zomeren in Amsterdam and Rita Urso in Milan.

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