ANTHONY WHISHAW

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Woodland Encounters

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Anthony Whishaw is represented by:

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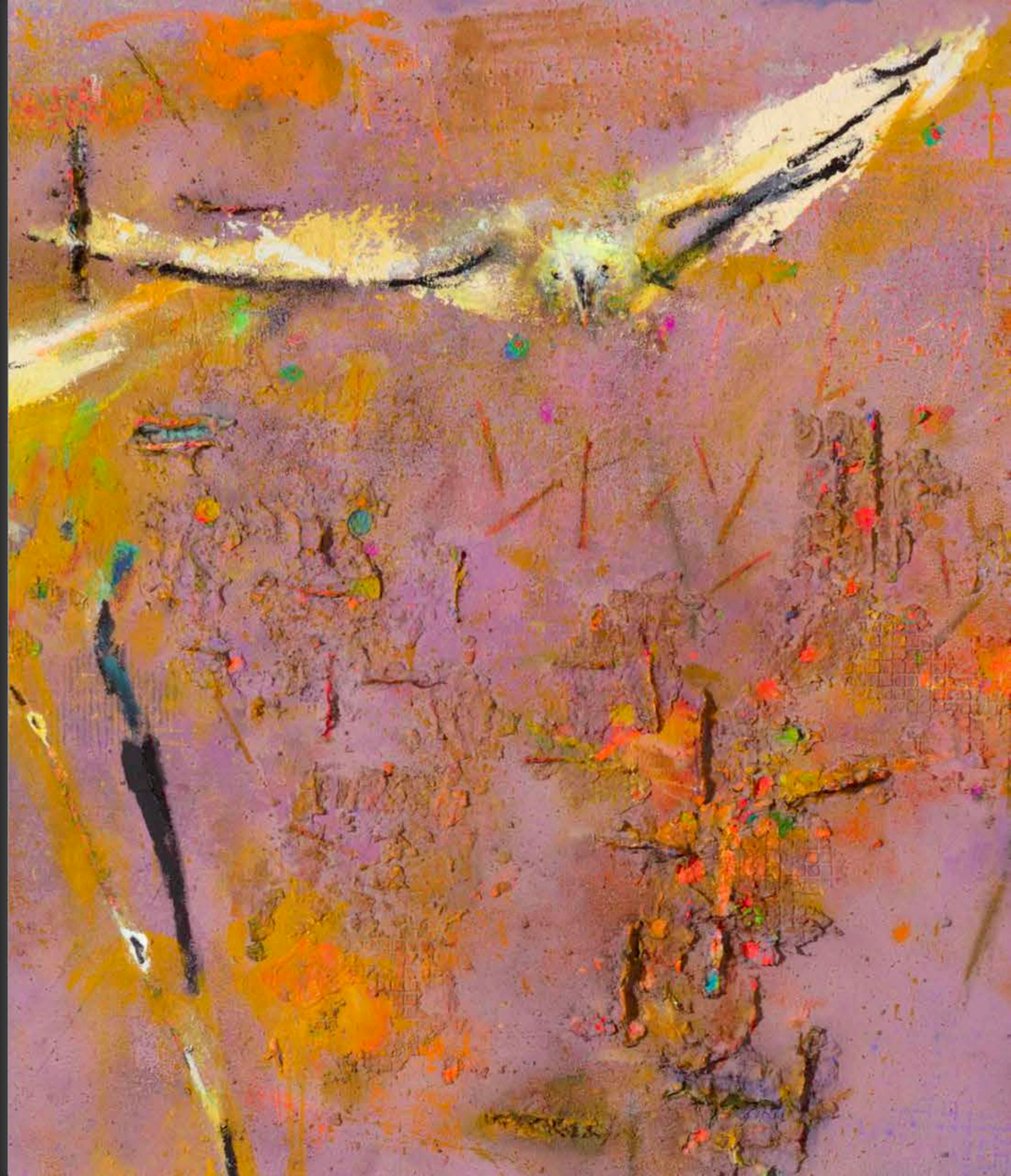

Anthony Whishaw RA

Woodland Encounters

Paintings and Works on Paper 2016

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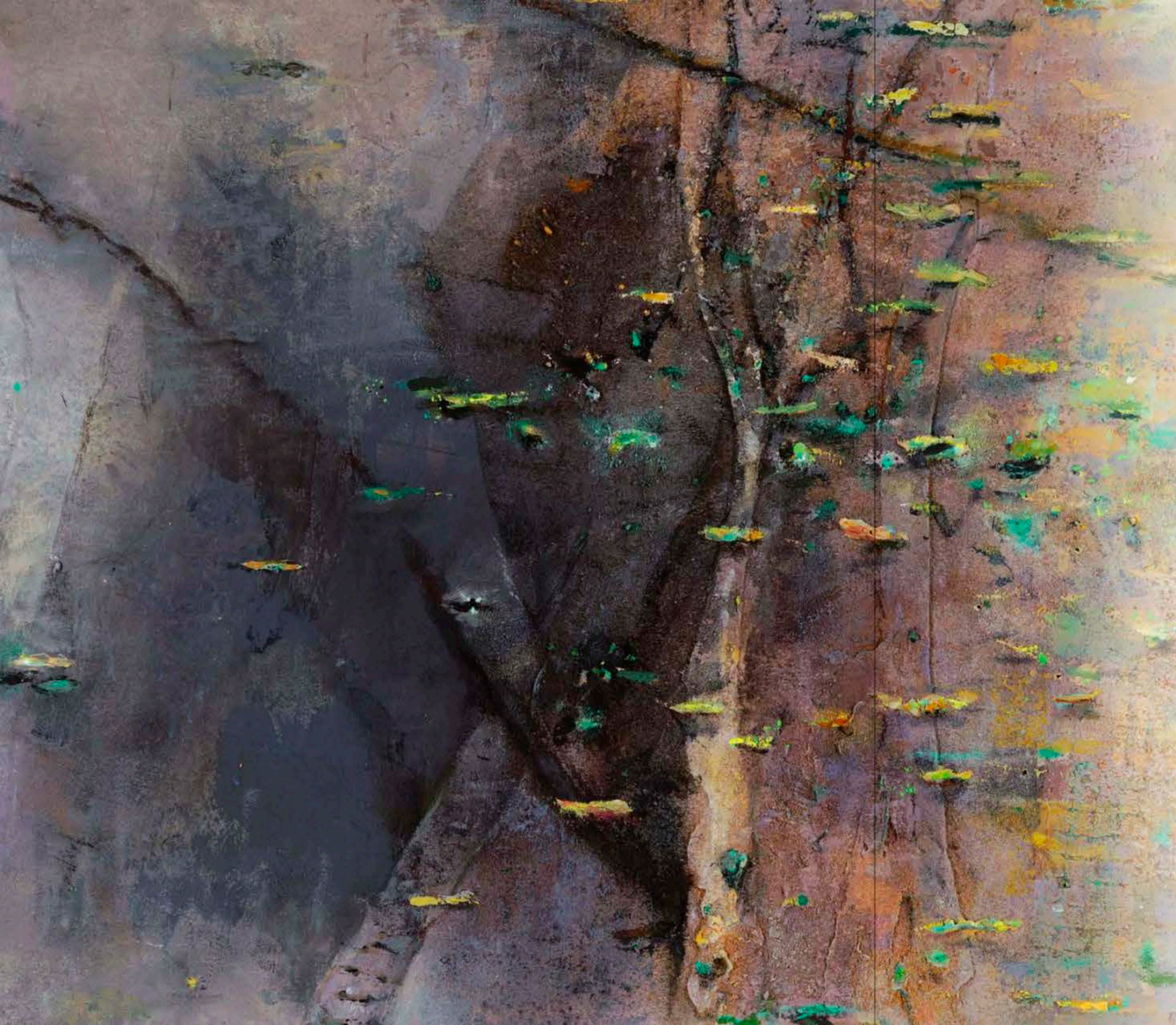


Foreword

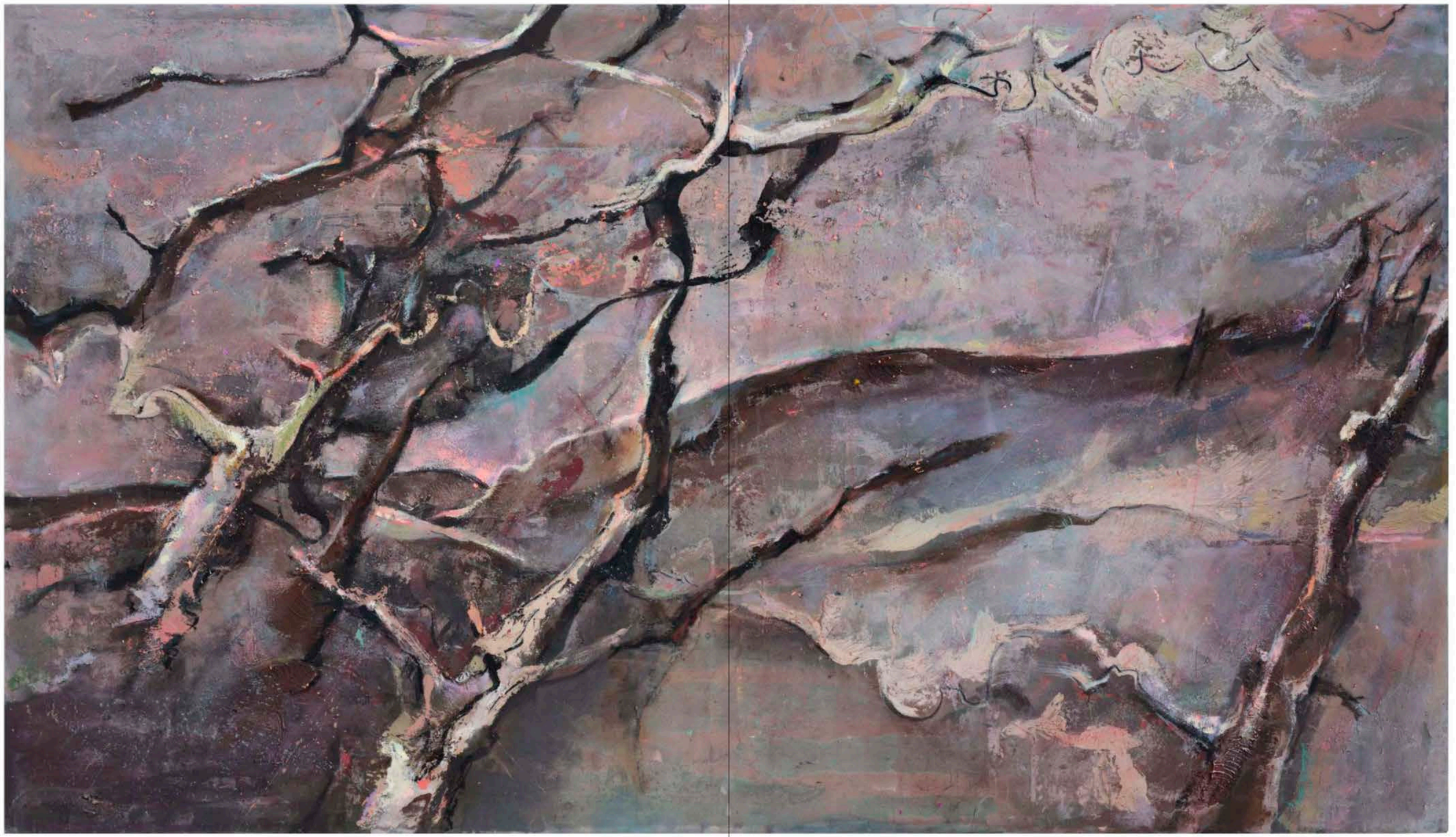
by

David Hare

The beauty and thoughtfulness of this new collection of paintings will be familiar to anyone who has relished Anthony Whishaw's work over the last fifty years. Admirers know that he works simultaneously on all different kinds of paintings, so that groups of subject matter co-exist, growing and changing over long periods. He will, he says, come upon a painting in his studio which he has long ignored and discover it has much further to go than he had first imagined. He has no agenda. "I don't want to know what the painting's going to be like. I want to look afresh in the morning and be surprised."

This latest show is made up largely of wind, air, birds, light, trees, field and sea, and yet typically it pushes no environmental line. "I have no cause – just what goes on in life, as it were." The canvases have no human figures to clutter them up. Instead, they are marked by those explosive little starbursts of energy – pure paint – that give a dot and dash life to everything Whishaw does. The fruit on the trees look like bullet holes, and to me, the birds have so much splash and spirit that they seem to be fighting in mid-air. By painting high and long, he tries to make you experience what the world must feel like to a startled bird, often seen with double horizons beyond. No wonder one of the principal paintings in this show hung for years on loan to the Institute of Psychoanalysis. No surprise there, then.

Whishaw has always claimed to belong to no school, to be an intuitive painter who reacts with horror to the idea of



making his art from study, model or photograph. The game of hunting for influence is played much more assiduously in the art world than it is in my own world of writing, and often with the dishonourable aim of putting a painter in his or her place - as though originality were not as important as line of descent. But Whishaw is an original, both in his sense of humour – who else would have painted his burnt-out car when it self-ignited in a supermarket car park? – and in his attachment to intricate motifs – the filigree of his lattice work paintings, and the strangely compelling pull of his target paintings.

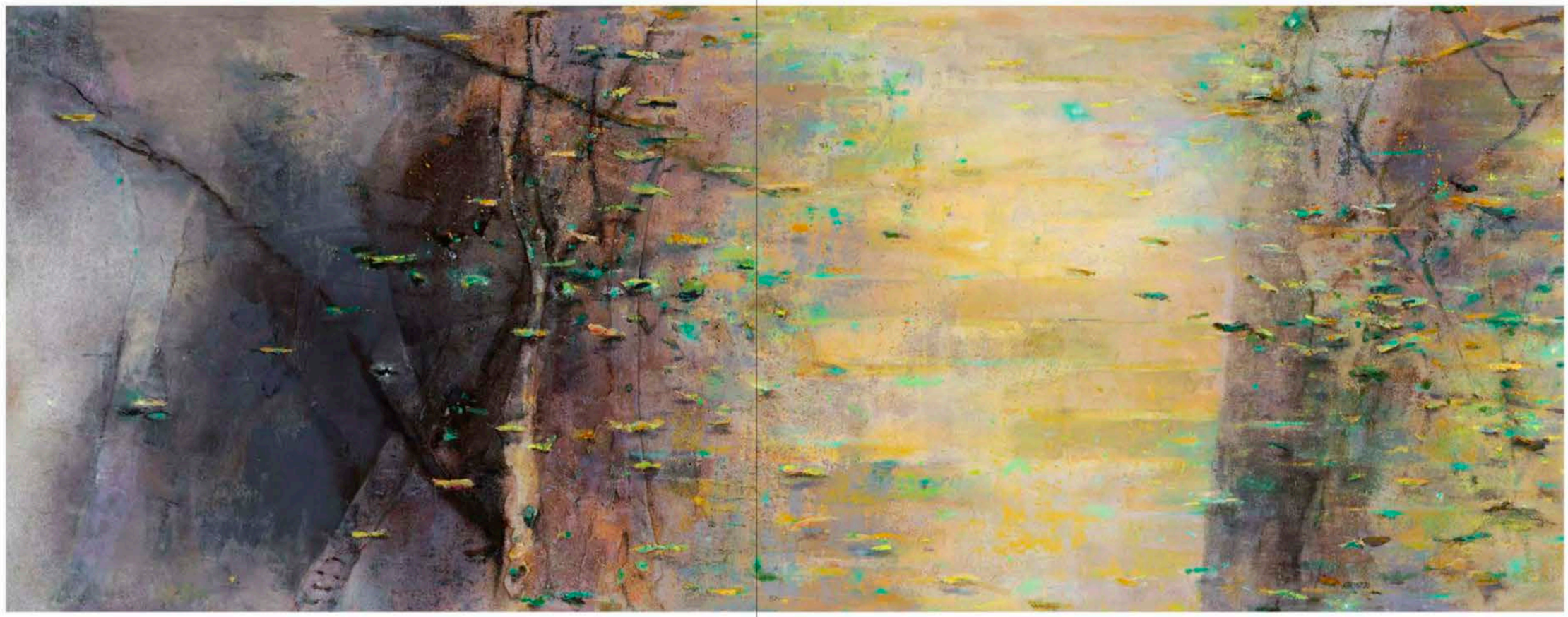
Indeed in this particular exhibition, it is one of what he calls 'the mavericks' which I love best. I prefer to call it a rogue, just like a rogue gene. It shows a leaking pipe staining deep brown an already rusty air-vent. Whishaw argues for its inclusion in this group because, he says, it's the kind of thing you might indeed find discarded in a wood. It needs no such justification. Look inside the grille and you will see exquisite colour in dabs and spots. What at first glance seems to be brown in fact contains countless colours, all of which have a vibrancy which makes nonsense of their apparent subject – the overlooked, the used, the forgotten.

Only a life-time dedicated to refining your art can produce this kind of stunning effect, and that's exactly what Whishaw has lived.

February, 2016

previous page
December Wind, 1996-2012
Acrylic, 68⅓ x 120 ins / 174 x 305 cm

Treeness, 2009-2003
Acrylic on paper, 21 x 21¼ ins / 53 x 54 cm

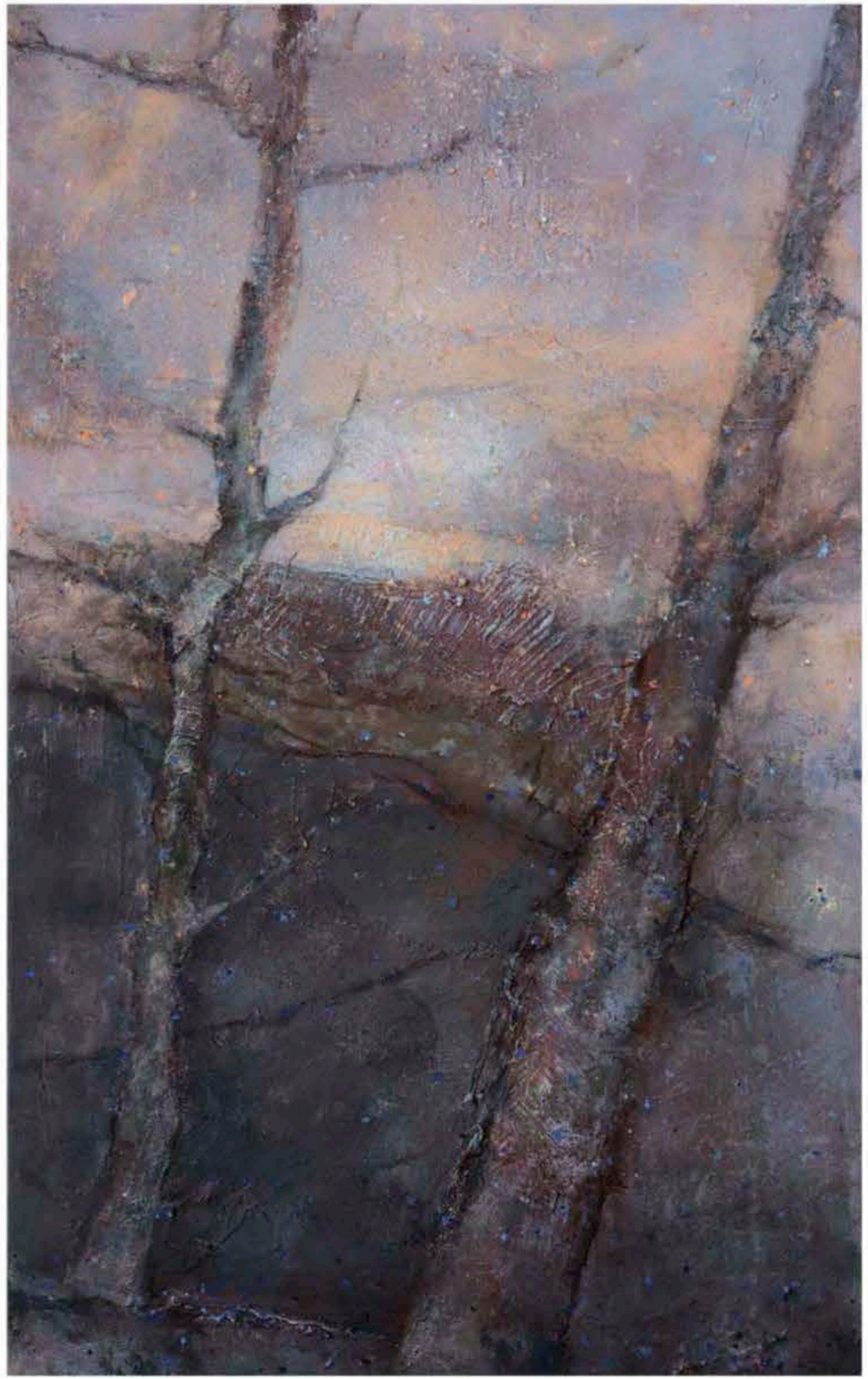


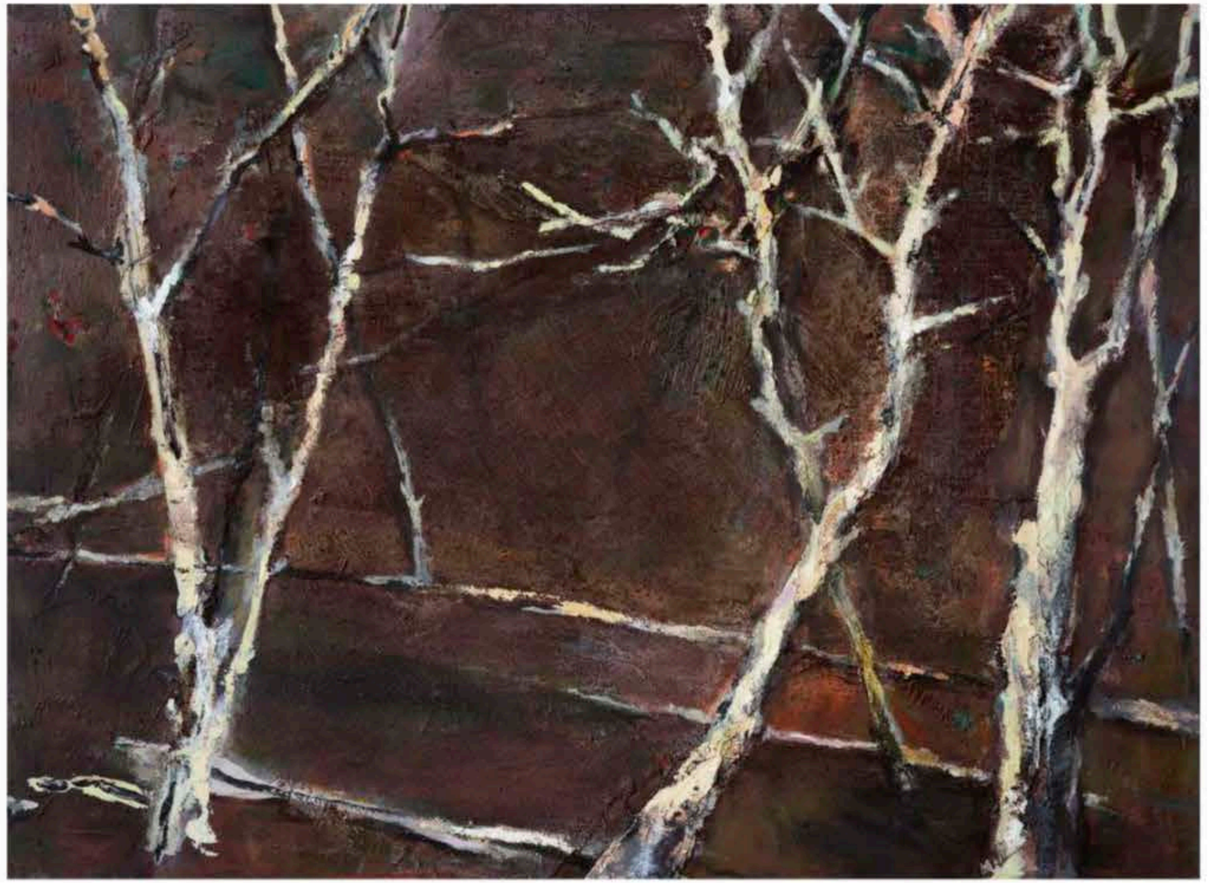
Coppice Early Spring Light, 2000 - 2006
Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 120 ins / 122 x 305 cm

Window Tree, 2012-2014
Acrylic on paper, 21 x 25 ins / 53 x 63 cm

Approaching Storm, 1998-2013
Acrylic on paper, 17 x 21 ins / 43 x 53 cm

Coppice III (triptych), 2001 - 2002
Acrylic on canvas, 67 x 158 ins / 170 x 401 cm





above

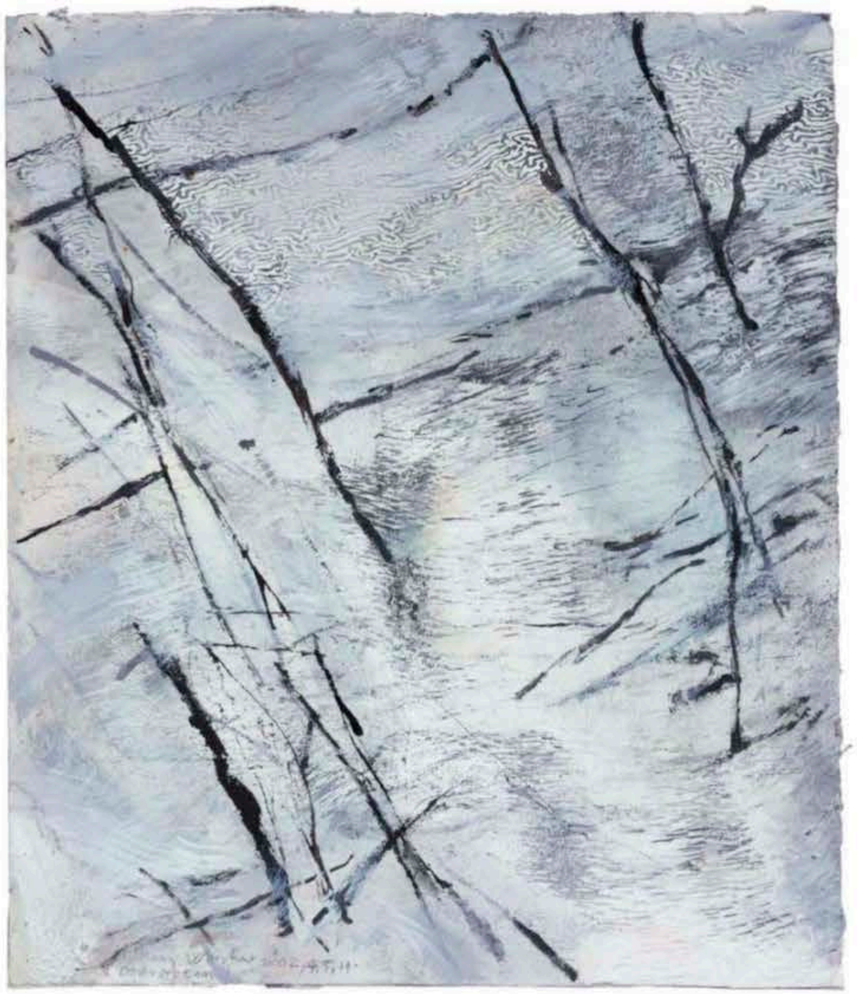
Night Drive – Treescape, 1998-2012

Acrylic & mixed media on canvas, 36½ x 50 ins / 93 x 127 cm

left

November Frost and Mist, 1998-2013

Acrylic & mixed media on canvas, 56 x 34 ins / 142 x 86 cm



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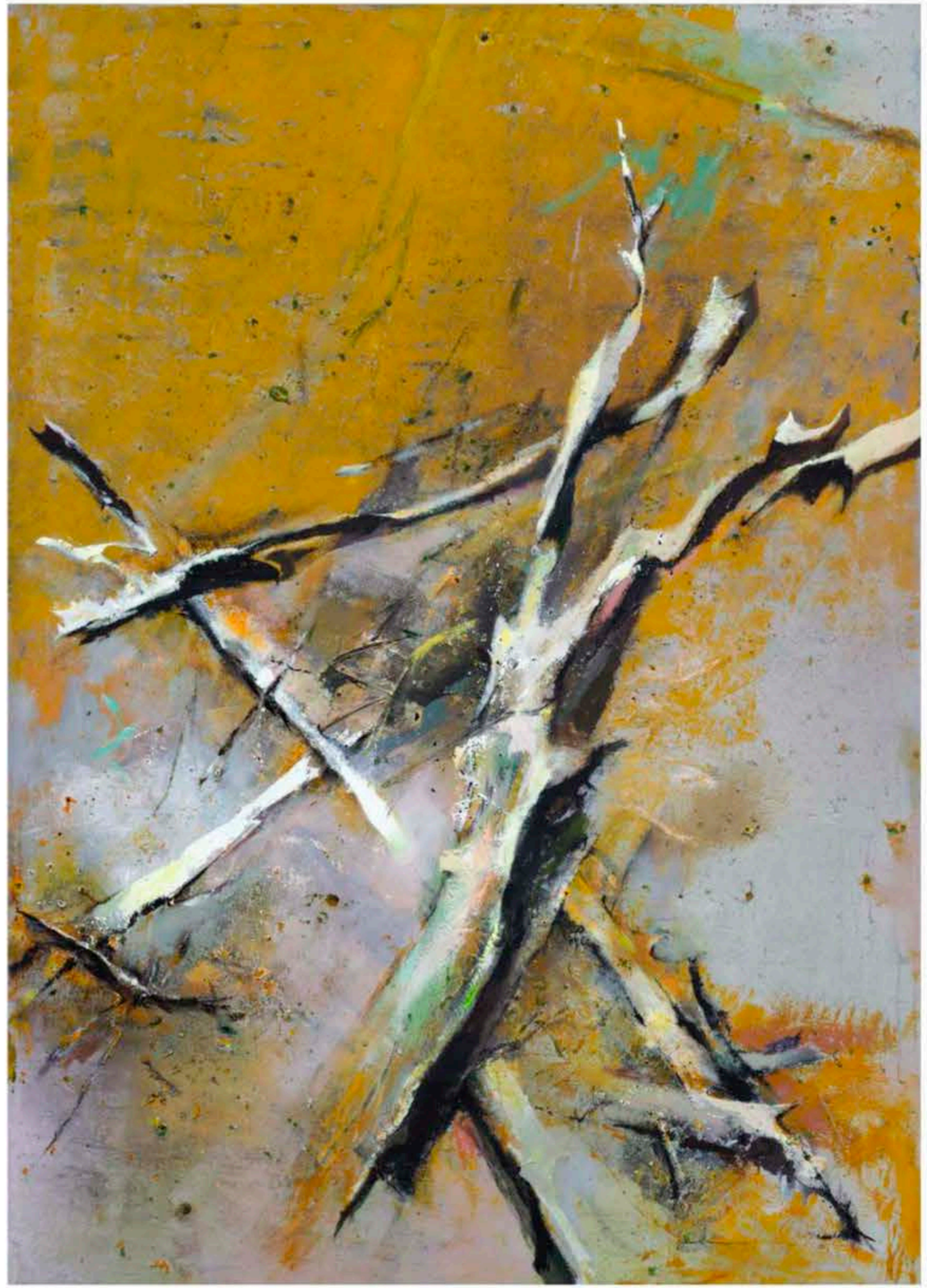
Down Stream, 2002-2014

Acrylic on paper, 19 x 16½ ins / 48 x 42 cm



right

Collapsing Tree, 2008 -2010

Acrylic on paper, 84 x 60¼ ins / 213 x 153 cm

above

Woodland III, 1999-2001

Acrylic & mixed media on paper; 36¼ x 49½ ins / 96 x 126 cm

right

Startled Birds, 1982-1985

Acrylic & mixed media on paper; 60 x 48 ins / 152 x 122 cm

above

Stubbled Field with Birds, 2005-2012

Acrylic & mixed media on canvas, 69 x 84 ins / 175 x 213 cm

left

Stubbled Field with Birds, 2005-2012 (detail)

cover
Stubbled Field with Birds, 2007-2012 (detail)
Acrylic & mixed media on canvas, 60 x 84 ins / 175 x 213 cm

inside front cover
Landscape with Startled Birds (detail)

frontispiece
Landscape with Startled Birds, 1986-1989
Acrylic & mixed media on canvas, 95½ x 65 ins / 243 x 165 cm

inside back cover
Treeness II, 2013-2014
Acrylic on paper, 25 x 29 ins / 63 x 74 cm

This catalogue is published to accompany the exhibition:

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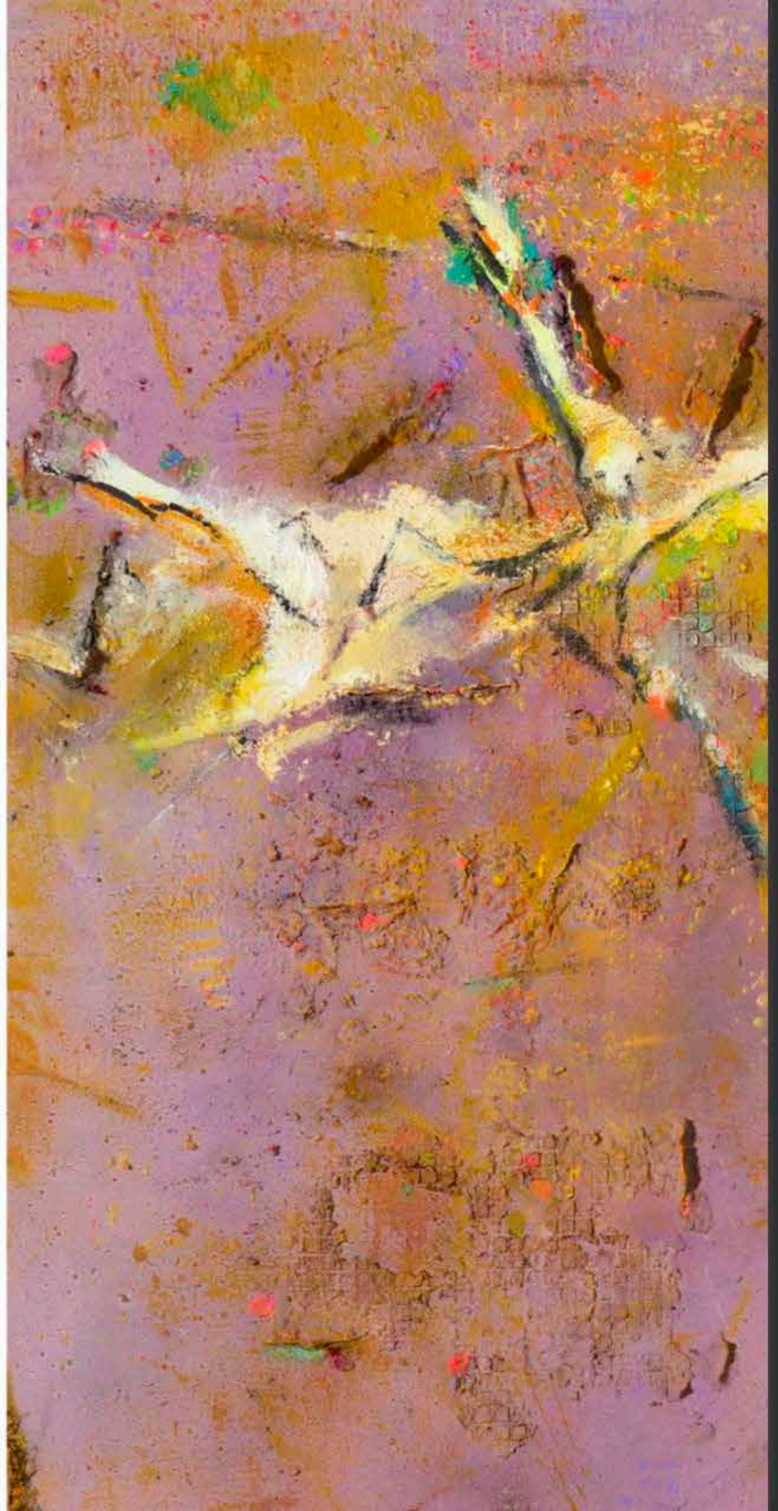

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