



TEN YEARS
& COUNTING

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THE ODYSSEY THROUGH COLOUR AND FORM

Justyna Gorzkowicz

There was nowhere to go but everywhere, so just keep on rolling under the stars.
— Jack Kerouac, *On the Road*, 1957

INTRODUCTION

In the spirit of the restless wanderers of the Beat Generation, Martin Taylor's artistic journey is marked by constant motion — a search for new forms of expression shaped by changing landscapes and intense emotions. His work captures the essence of 'being on the road,' blending spontaneity, reflection, and deep engagement with the world around him.

This artbook, produced to accompany the retrospective exhibition *Ten Years & Counting*, presents more than just a visual record of Taylor's decade-long journey of experimentation, discovery, and artistic growth. Illustrated with 36 reproductions of his paintings, it tells a story — one that speaks of the artist, his works, and their dialogue with the viewer.

The above quote by Kerouac — who, alongside William Burroughs and Allen Ginsberg, was part of the iconic Beat Generation — speaks of movement, exploration, and an endless road, both literal and artistic. It offers a guiding theme for this journey, where literary reflections meet a curatorial display of vibrant paintings, pulsating with colour and contrast — echoing the restless energy of the Beats themselves. The Beat Generation, a literary subcultural movement that emerged in America in the 1950s, was a manifesto for freedom and the pursuit of authenticity — qualities I find deeply resonant in Taylor's abstract works.

The Beats rejected conformity and drew inspiration from travel, emotional

intensity, and spontaneity. Yet in Taylor's case, the journey is not just about movement but more about introspection — an inner odyssey inspired by a decade of painting between three key places in his life: Scotland, England, and Poland. These are not fleeting stops, rather enduring points of reference that inform his visual language and artistic sensibility. His paintings reflect this layered geography, capturing moments of transition and the search for balance amid the familiar and the new.

Just as Beat poetry thrived on immediacy and raw experience, Taylor's art embraced these values — constant movement, energy, and emotional depth. This sense of restlessness is balanced by reflective pauses, where expressive gestures give way to quieter explorations. In this interplay — between spontaneity and control — Taylor's unique visual language finds its shape.

A TALE OF TWO PATHS

Nothing exists until or unless it is observed. An artist is making something exist by observing it. And his hope for other people is that they will also make it exist by observing it.
— William S. Burroughs, *The Job: Interviews with William S. Burroughs*, 1974

Martin Taylor is an artist of diverse interests whose creative journey has unfolded at the intersection of ceramics, design, and painting — the latter being a medium he took up relatively late, as he admits himself. During his time at Gray's School of Art in Aberdeen reveals an early fascination with materiality and form, which continues to outline his artistic practice to this day. But his artwork does not follow a straightforward path but rather resembles a "road" marked by twists and turns, where experience plays a crucial role. This experimental spirit is expressed in Taylor's two contrasting styles: one bold and energetic, the other quieter but still colourful.

Like Burroughs' idea that observation gives art its existence, Taylor's practice thrives on the tension between chance and intention. This is particularly evident in his expressive, predominantly abstract paintings, where dynamic brushstrokes build dense, almost sculptural textures. Thick layers of paint create a raw, tangible quality, while intense colours seem to pulse with inner energy, heightening the sense of movement. In many places, these paintings bring to mind Scottish landscapes — stark mountain scenery satu-

rated with rain, their heightened colours sharpened by the dramatic atmosphere. Similar to the work of John Houston, Taylor's spontaneous marks are never accidental. His brushstrokes are fluid and organic, evoking natural processes — the undulating water, gusts of wind, or jagged rocky slopes.

Unlike Houston, Taylor does not focus on wide landscapes but instead zooms in on their details. He captures fragments of nature, examining them closely — almost as if under a magnifying glass — and turns them into abstracted focal points. Taylor often repeats these fragments, creating rhythmic compositions filled with recurring forms. This visual effect may resemble thick, chaotic layers of impasto applied with a palette knife. Yet Taylor's brushwork feels smoother and more fluid. His long, sweeping strokes suggest the movement of waves, gusts of wind, or shifting rocky slopes. The result is a visual language that balances richness and refinement — dynamic forms where small details seem magnified and monumental. This rhythmic repetition infuses his paintings with a restless momentum, as though the landscape itself is in constant motion.

Taylor's paintings, whether large or small, vibrate with restless energy — a movement that draws the viewer in yet leaves them unsettled. This dynamic appears in Taylor's large-scale works, such as *Bad Sunday* (76x76 cm) and *Blue tree for Regina* (100x100 cm), as well as in his smaller pieces like *Burza* (20x20 cm) and *Rolling Waves* (30x30 cm). The title *Burza* — the Polish word for "storm" — reflects this intensity. As Taylor explains, "burza" sounds stronger and more fitting than the English word "storm." It better expresses the painting's emotional tone. In Polish culture, "burza" suggests not only a violent weather event but also feelings of chaos, anxiety, and sudden change — ideas that match the painting's restless mood.

In Taylor's *Burza*, jagged brushstrokes and bursts of turbulent colour reflect this tension, creating a visual language that feels volatile and uncertain. This energy is also evident in his use of flowing shapes, particularly in the lower part of the painting. These repeated forms — resembling plants, rocks, or swirling water — create a pattern that blurs the line between a natural landscape and a geometric design. By combining natural elements with

abstract flows, Taylor invites the viewer into a world where the familiar dissolves into uncertainty, evoking the instability and unpredictability of nature itself.

A similar intensity emerges in *Rolling Waves*. The composition relies on a striking contrast between a deep, almost monochromatic expanse of blue in the upper section and a textured layer of colour below. This uneven structure recalls the turbulence of the sea, with waves crashing against a rocky coastline. Bold brushstrokes and thick white impasto add movement and weight, evoking powerful natural forces — raging winds, swirling currents, or water surging against the shore.

These paintings are not literal depictions but rather seek to capture the energy of a particular moment. As a result, they transcend visual records of scenery, serving instead as powerful metaphors for the forces of nature and human emotion.

On the other hand, Martin Taylor's collection includes a series of more subdued, small-format pieces, often set against delicate, neutral backgrounds. The colourful patches in these paintings seem to float in space, evoking a sense of lightness and transience. Examples of

this quieter style include the *Dry* and the triptych *In my mind, In your mind, and In our minds*. These works recall ceramic painting and oriental decorative techniques such as Japanese *suminagashi* and Turkish *ebru*. *Suminagashi*, meaning 'floating ink,' is a traditional Japanese decorative technique. Ink or paint is delicately applied to the surface of the water, where patterns naturally form and are then carefully transferred onto paper. Taylor has adapted this method, translating it onto canvas with thick layers of acrylic paint. The resulting compositions are filled with organic shapes — almost identical, yet marked by subtle differences. These works highlight both chance as a key part of the creative process and the and the conceptual significance of the painting itself.

Taylor's fascination with East Asian aesthetics is evident in his balanced forms and thoughtful use of colour. Gold, red, black, and white — key colours in works like *Skriti Politika* (Slovenian for *Hidden Politics*) and *Mousetrap* — recall Chinese calligraphy and traditional silk painting. In these works, patches of paint drift across the canvas, as if suspended in liquid, echoing patterns found in por-

celain decoration. *Mousetrap* is full of unease and tension. The contrast between bold, heavy paint marks and a calm, almost sterile background heightens the sense of suspension and ambiguity.

The title hints at a game with the viewer — suggesting a trap, an ambush, or a hidden mechanism, reinforcing the piece's conceptual nature. The fluid, vibrant patches of colour resemble traces of movement, sudden gestures, or an explosion of emotion frozen in a single frame. This painting combines chance with control, creating a tension between spontaneous gestures and a precisely structured composition. It forms a self-contained microcosm — an abstract piece rich in symbolic meaning — perfectly aligned with Taylor's exploration of form, emotion, and interpretation.

COLOUR AS NARRATIVE: FORM AS MOVEMENT, MOVEMENT AS LIFE

Follow your inner moonlight; don't hide the madness.
— Allen Ginsberg, Interview by Tom Clark. *The Paris Review*, no. 37, Fall 1966. *The Art of Poetry* No. 8

In Martin Taylor's work, colour is more than just a means of expression — it becomes a vessel for emotions and signifi-

cance. The artist draws inspiration from nature, particularly the Scottish landscape. This influence is visible in works such as *Bracklinn Falls* and *Snowfall in Callander*, where Taylor's layered application of paint captures the atmosphere of wild, untamed scenery.

Taylor's paintings are never still. They resemble a stream of consciousness transferred onto canvas. In compositions like *Looking into the Chaos* or the almost monochromatic *Avalanche*, we witness collisions between opposing energies, emerging through dramatic contrasts. Even in works such as *Happy meadow* or *In my jungle*, where Taylor seeks harmony and calm, there is a constant pulse of ambiguous energy. Dense rhythms, sweeping brushstrokes, and upward movement of colour create an impression of perpetual motion. Like a conductor shaping an orchestra, Taylor organises this painterly chaos, arranging colours and forms in a seemingly spontaneous yet carefully composed structure.

The painting *Capecitabine at work* radiates anxiety and inner tension, almost physically drawing the viewer into its tangled structure. A swirl of blood-red hues, deep blacks, and flashes of yellow

seems to churn across the surface, yet the entire composition leads the eye to the centre — a dark vortex pulling everything into its depths. It is here, in this central core, that the painting gains its hypnotic power. The space appears to collapse inward, forming a tunnel that absorbs shapes and colours. Thick layers of paint, applied with dynamic, almost violent brushstrokes, create a surface filled with tangled streaks and swirling forms. The red — sometimes vivid and bright, at other times dark and heavy — seems to pulse like living tissue. Meanwhile, the black patches consume light, creating the effect of a devouring void. Amid this chaotic turmoil, small flickers of yellow emerge — like sparks of life, fleeting but persistent. The painting feels organic, almost biological — as if revealing processes at a cellular level. It evokes a sense of conflict, a struggle between destruction and regeneration, illness and healing. The black seems to swallow the red forms, yet they resist — swirling, expanding, and spilling across the canvas, defying the darkness. This is not a static space. It pulls the viewer deeper and deeper, as if into a spiralling vortex that devours everything — a po-

werful metaphor for the body's relentless battle to restore balance. In this tension-filled work, calmness is nowhere to be found. Dominant movement, flickering lights, and dramatic contrasts build an atmosphere of unease and anxiety.

Capecitabine at Work seems to represent a visual metaphor for an inner battle — of body, mind, and emotions — against forces that resist control. In the artbook, this painting is juxtaposed with *Lizzie*, a piece that shares a similar technique of dense, circular brushstrokes. Yet, despite this shared method, the expression and mood are remarkably different.

In *Lizzie*, vivid greens, yellows, reds, and blues intertwine in a chaotic dance of colour, evoking an impression of exotic richness. White emerges from this vibrant tangle, acting as a point of reference — illuminating the composition, organising the visual disorder, and giving it structure. It functions almost like an exotic bird amid tropical vegetation — eye-catching, vibrant, radiating strength and narrative humour.

This dynamism and storytelling element is no less present in *Guilt of the Rogachevo donkey*. Here, Taylor creates a striking paradox: the painted surfa-

ce vibrates with dynamic brushstrokes and bold colours, yet at its core stands an unmoving, almost sculptural figure. The donkey's immobility becomes, paradoxically, its most dramatic feature — a powerful metaphor for emotional weight and misplaced guilt. The work is an abstract interpretation of a memory from a trip to Bulgaria, where Taylor and his wife observed, through the window of their accommodation, a motionless donkey that stood in the same spot every day, appearing from a distance as though carved from wood. This peculiar sight became a source of artistic inspiration, evoking the image of Sancho Panza's donkey from *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes.

Much like in Cervantes' work, Taylor's donkey seems to embody defencelessness in the face of the absurdities of the world — naive yet loyal, a silent witness to reality, unknowingly burdened with the weight of others' illusions and guilt. Yet Taylor's interpretation carries an additional layer of irony, underscoring his characteristic distance from both himself and the world. By capturing this paradox — a motionless figure brought to life through energetic colour and expressive brushwork — Taylor invites the viewer to

reflect on how innocence and inertia can, paradoxically, become a source of blame.

EPILOGUE

And this was really the way that my whole road experience began, and the things that were to come are too fantastic not to tell. — Jack Kerouac, *On the Road*, 1957

Taylor's work is full of contrasts — balancing control with spontaneity, the observed with the imagined. This tension fuels his restless creativity, driving him to push artistic boundaries. Like the Beat Generation's wanderers, Taylor's path is one of constant motion — where each painting becomes a landmark in a map of self-discovery.

His paintings resist easy definitions; they are dynamic yet reflective, expressive yet thoughtful. His creative journey echoes Kerouac's idea of life as an open road — unpredictable but purposeful. Each painting is a moment captured in motion — a record of shifting emotions, changing perspectives, and evolving ideas. Whether bold and intense or quiet and restrained, Taylor's works invite the viewer to pause, reflect, and engage.

Like flowing water, his art never stands still. Each painting is not an endpoint, but

a waypoint — a marker in an ongoing journey of self-exploration and creative discovery. Taylor’s retrospective reveals an artist who embraces change, allowing his work to grow and transform — not in pursuit of a final destination, but in the spirit of endless movement and renewal.

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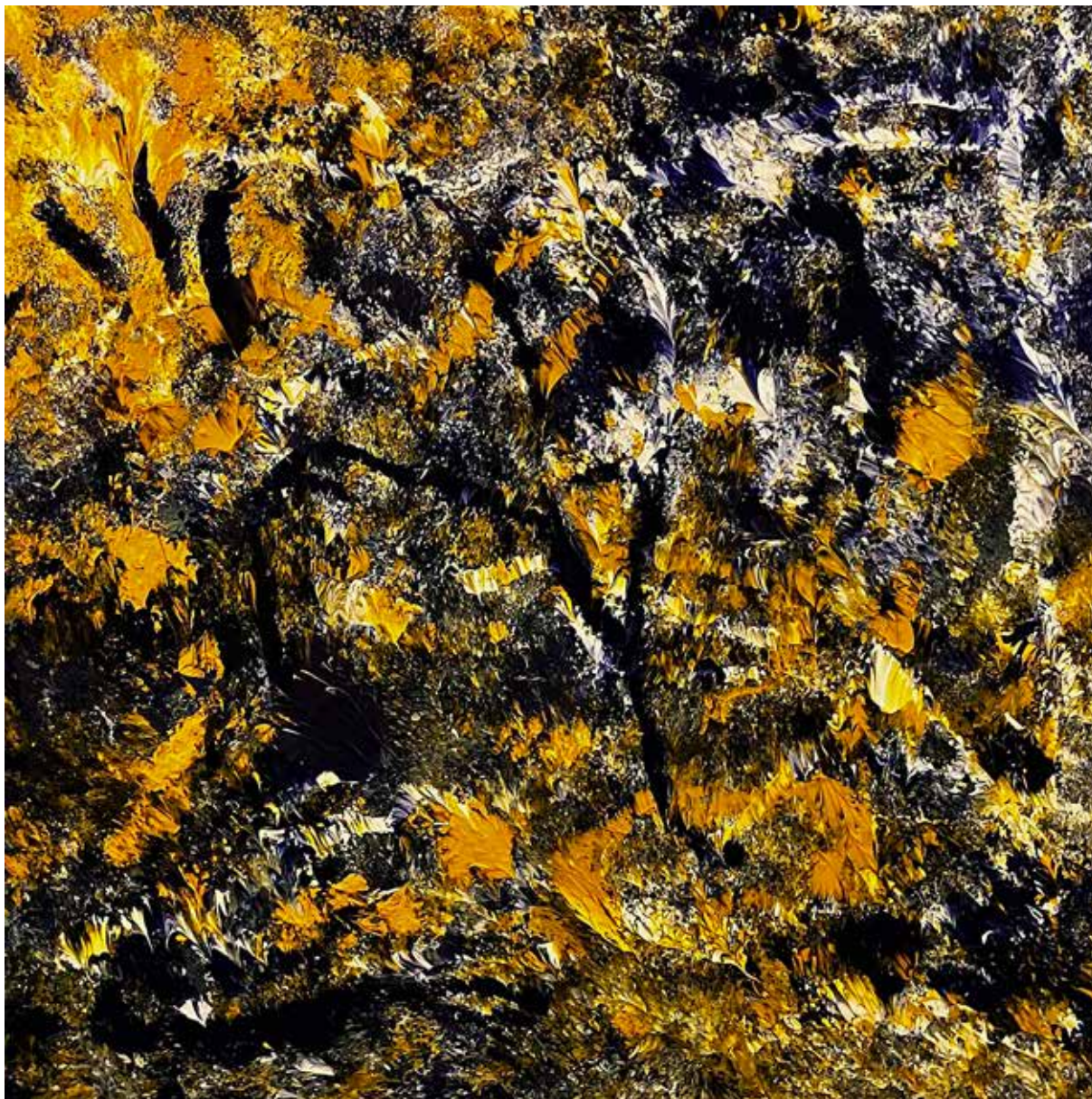
Bracklinn Falls, acrylic on canvas, 50 x 50 cm, 2018



Rolling Waves, acrylic on canvas, 30 x 30 cm, 2022



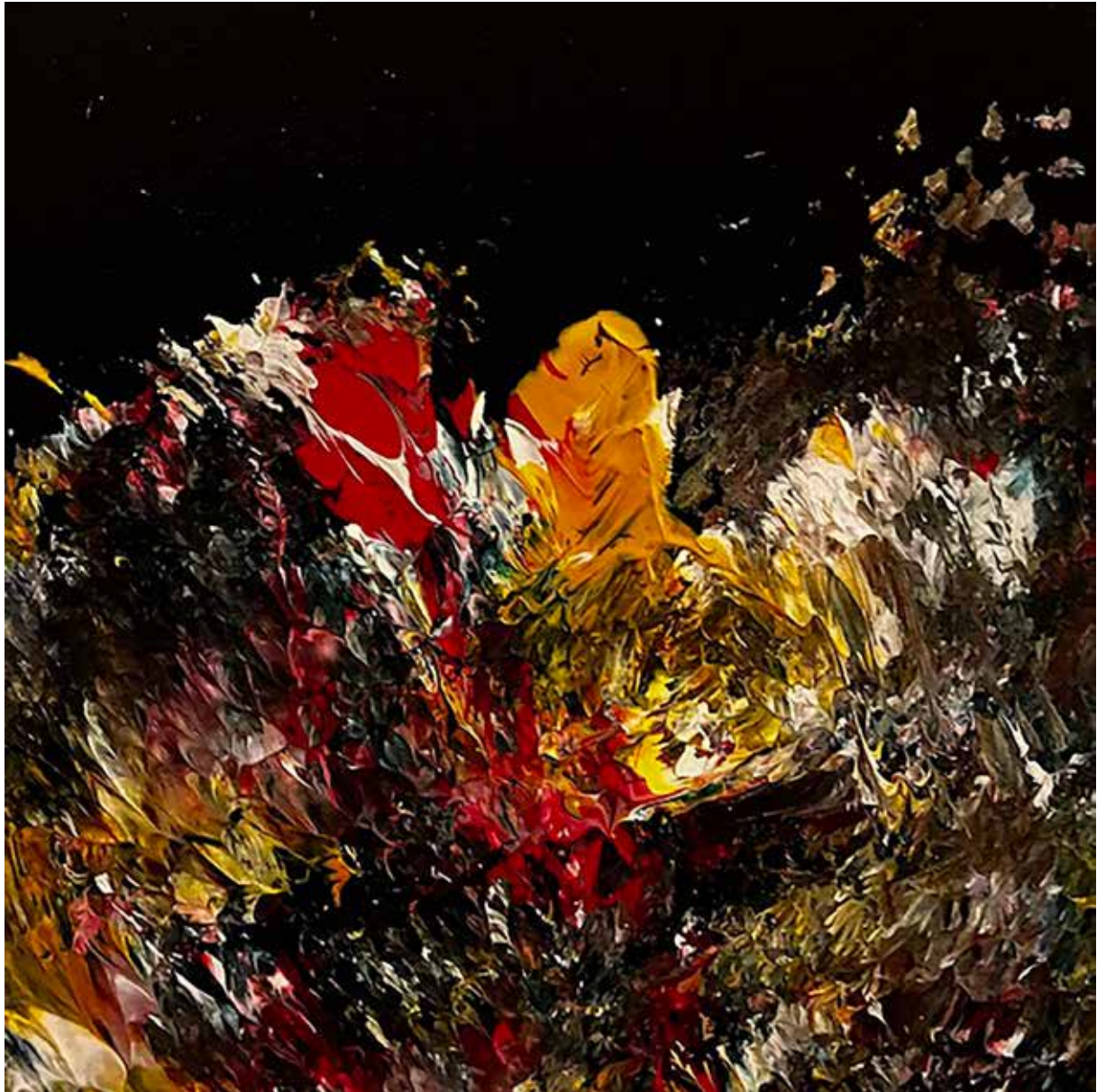
In my veins, acrylic on canvas, 60 x 60 cm, 2024



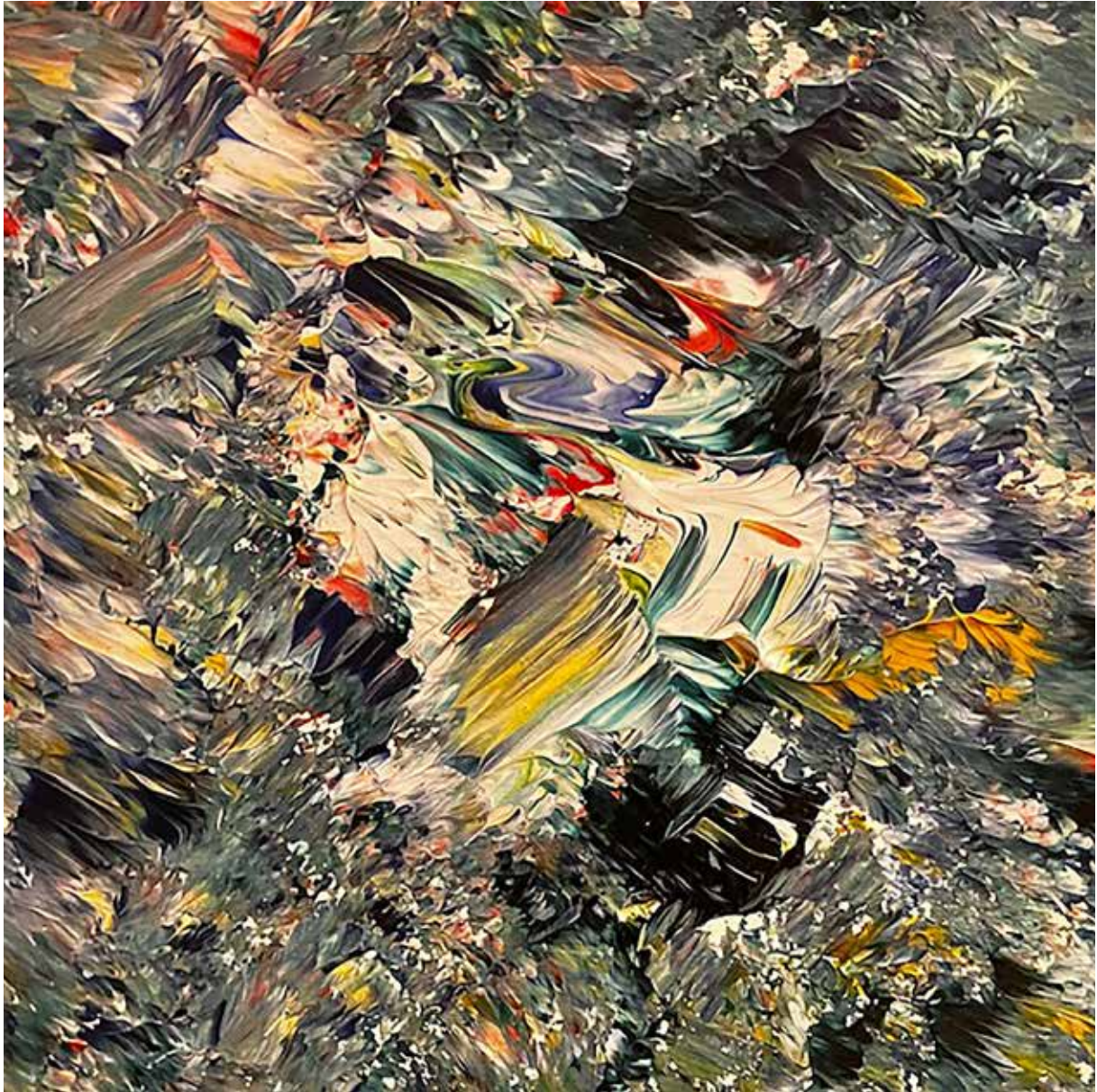
Blue tree for Regina, acrylic on canvas, 100 x 100 cm, 2022



Bad Sunday, acrylic on canvas, 76 x 76 cm, 2023



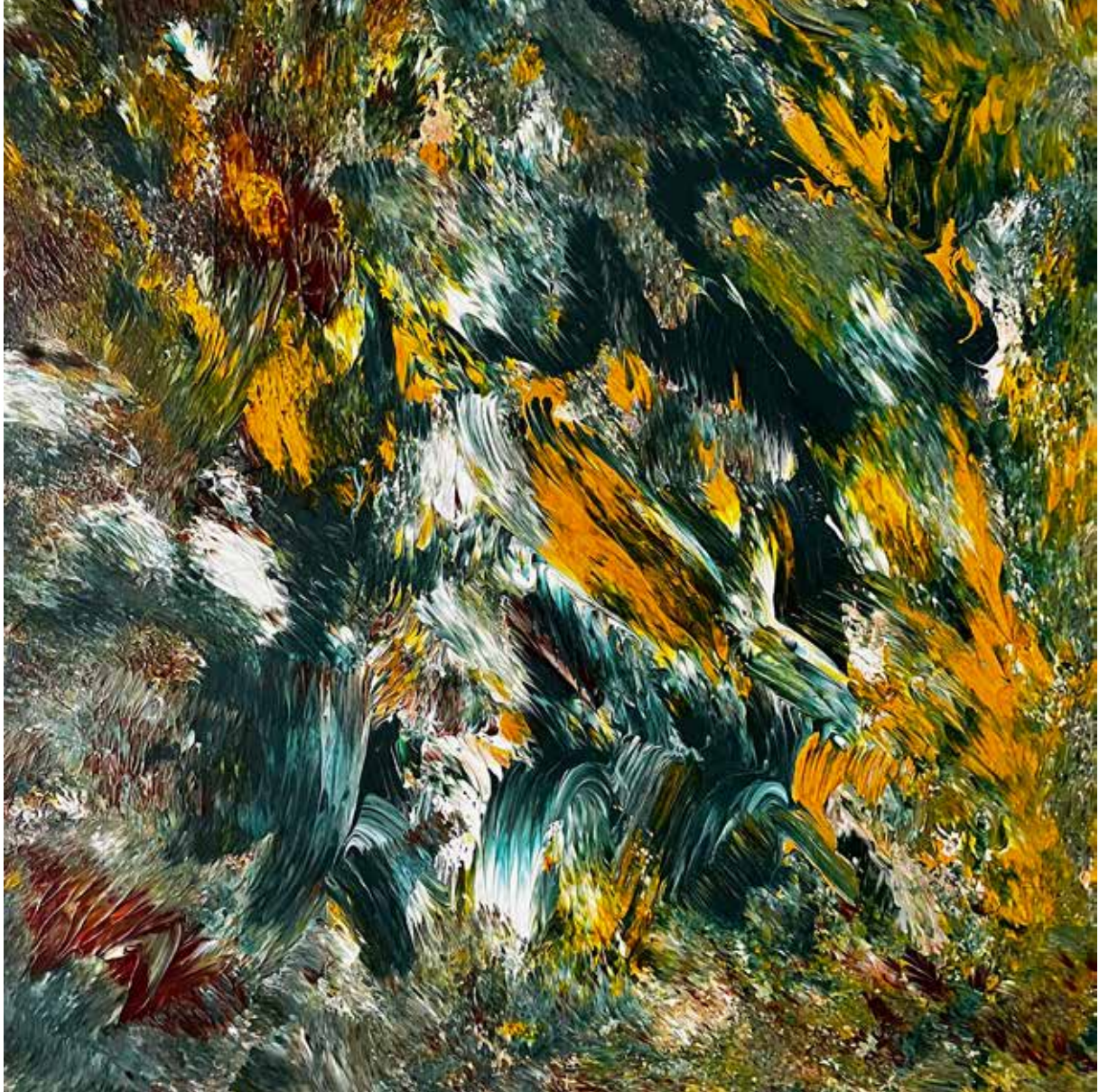
Fruits, acrylic on canvas, 20 x 20 cm, 2017



Working Stefan, 40 x 40 cm (panel from *Working people*, 80 x 80 cm), 2021



Swiss encounter, acrylic on canvas, 40 x 40 cm, 2016



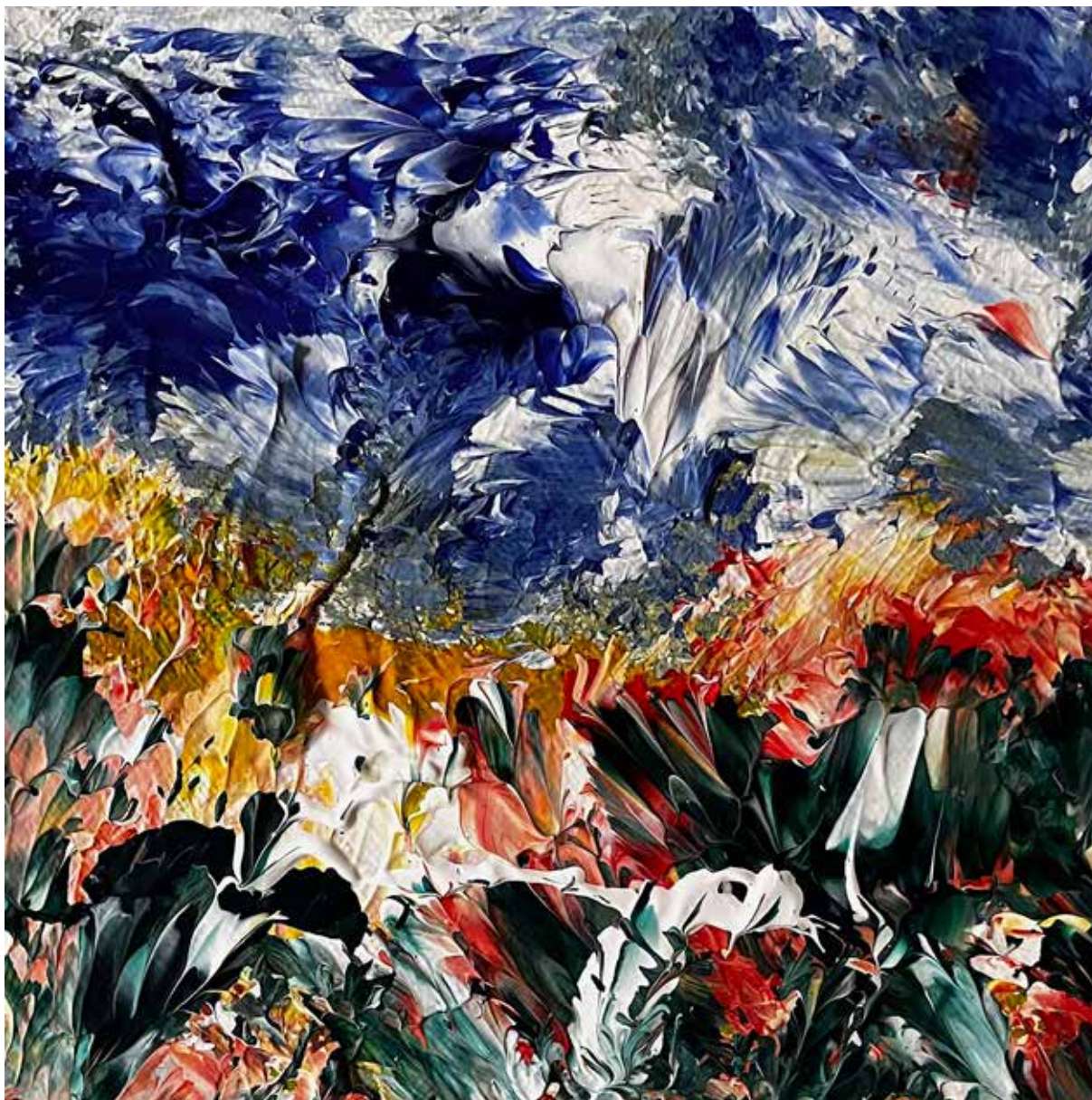
Parakeets calling, acrylic on canvas, 50 x 50 cm, 2022



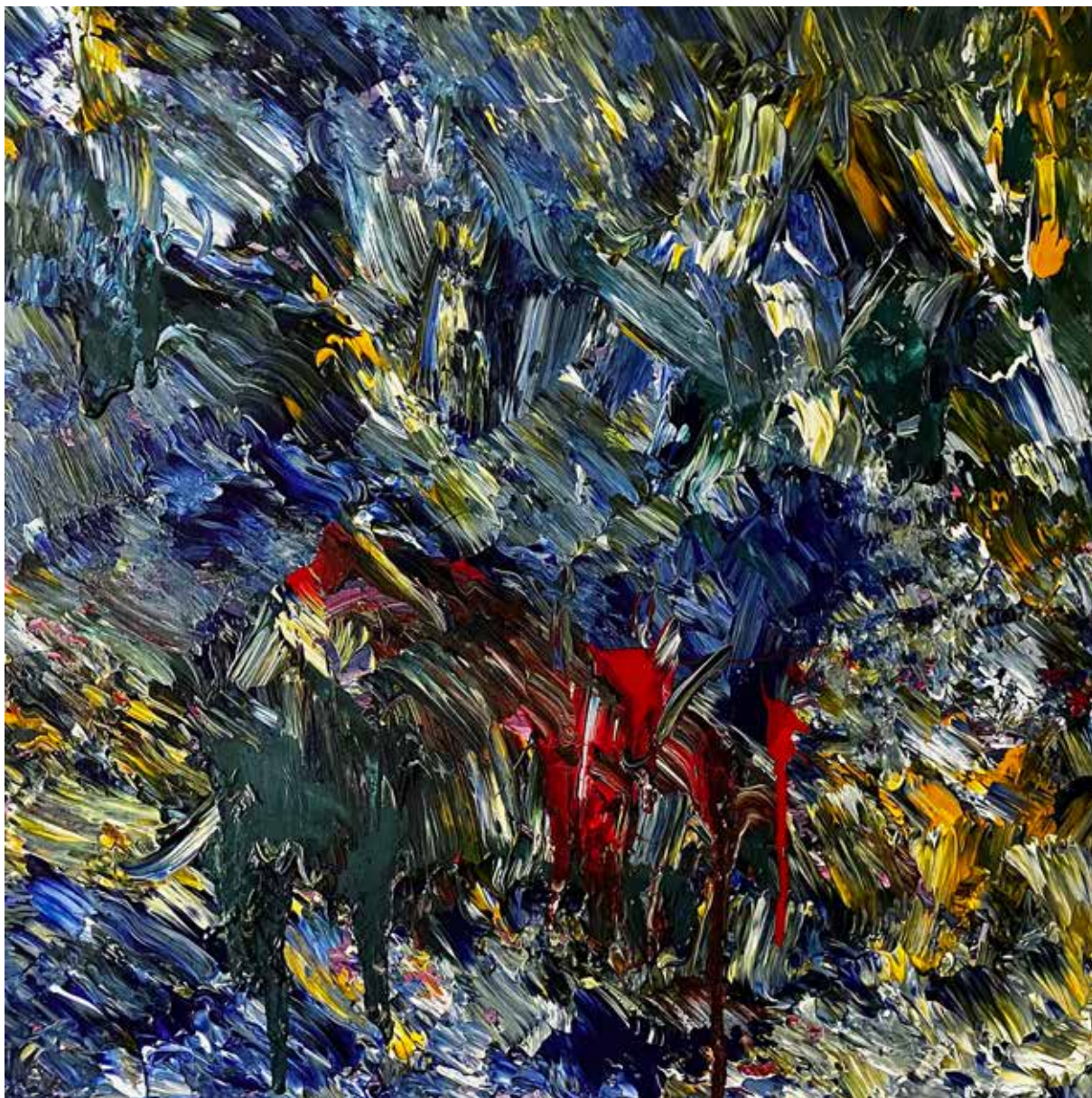
Looking in to the Chaos, acrylic on canvas, 50 x 50 cm, 2023



Avalanche, acrylic on canvas, 20 x 20 cm, 2018



Burza, acrylic on canvas, 20 x 20 cm, 2019



Guilt of the Rogachevo donkey, acrylic on canvas, 50 x 50 cm, 2023



Capecitabine at work, acrylic on canvas, 30 x 30 cm, 2024



Lizzie, acrylic on canvas, 20 x 20 cm, 2016



In my mind, acrylic on canvas, 30 x 30 cm, 2017



In your mind, acrylic on canvas, 30 x 30 cm, 2017



In our minds, acrylic on canvas, 30 x 30 cm, 2017



Inspired, acrylic on canvas, 50x50 cm, 2017



Skriti politika, acrylic on canvas, 20 x 20 cm, 2017



Mousetrap, acrylic on canvas, 20 x 20 cm, 2017



Dry, acrylic on canvas, 20 x 20 cm, 2024



Carnations, acrylic on canvas, 50 x 50 cm, 2017



It's a lovely day, acrylic on canvas, 80 x 80 cm, 2023



What went wrong, acrylic on canvas, 80 x 80 cm, 2021



Lavender, acrylic on canvas, 20 x 20 cm, 2015



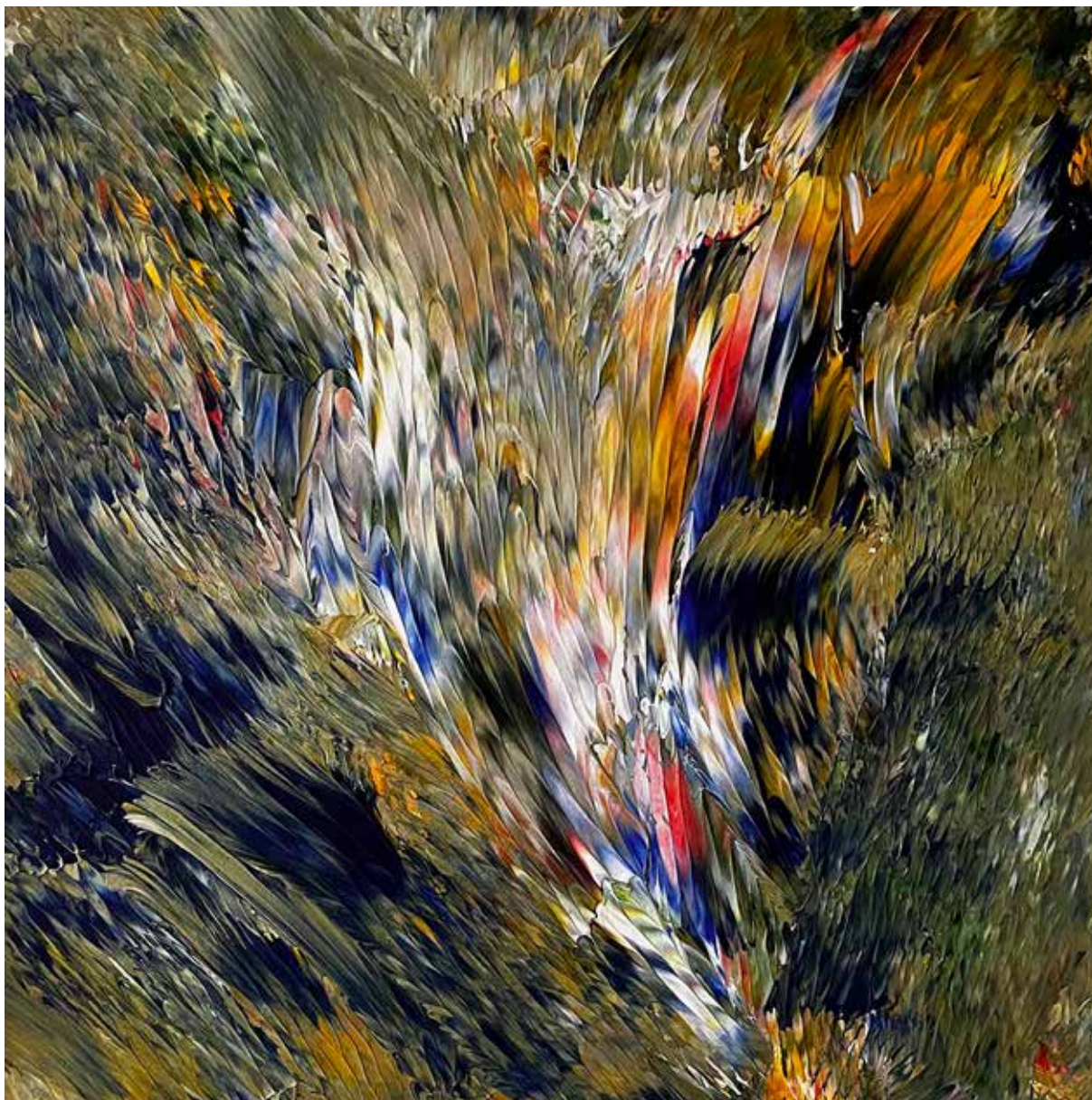
Ruptured, acrylic on canvas, 80 x 80 cm, 2023



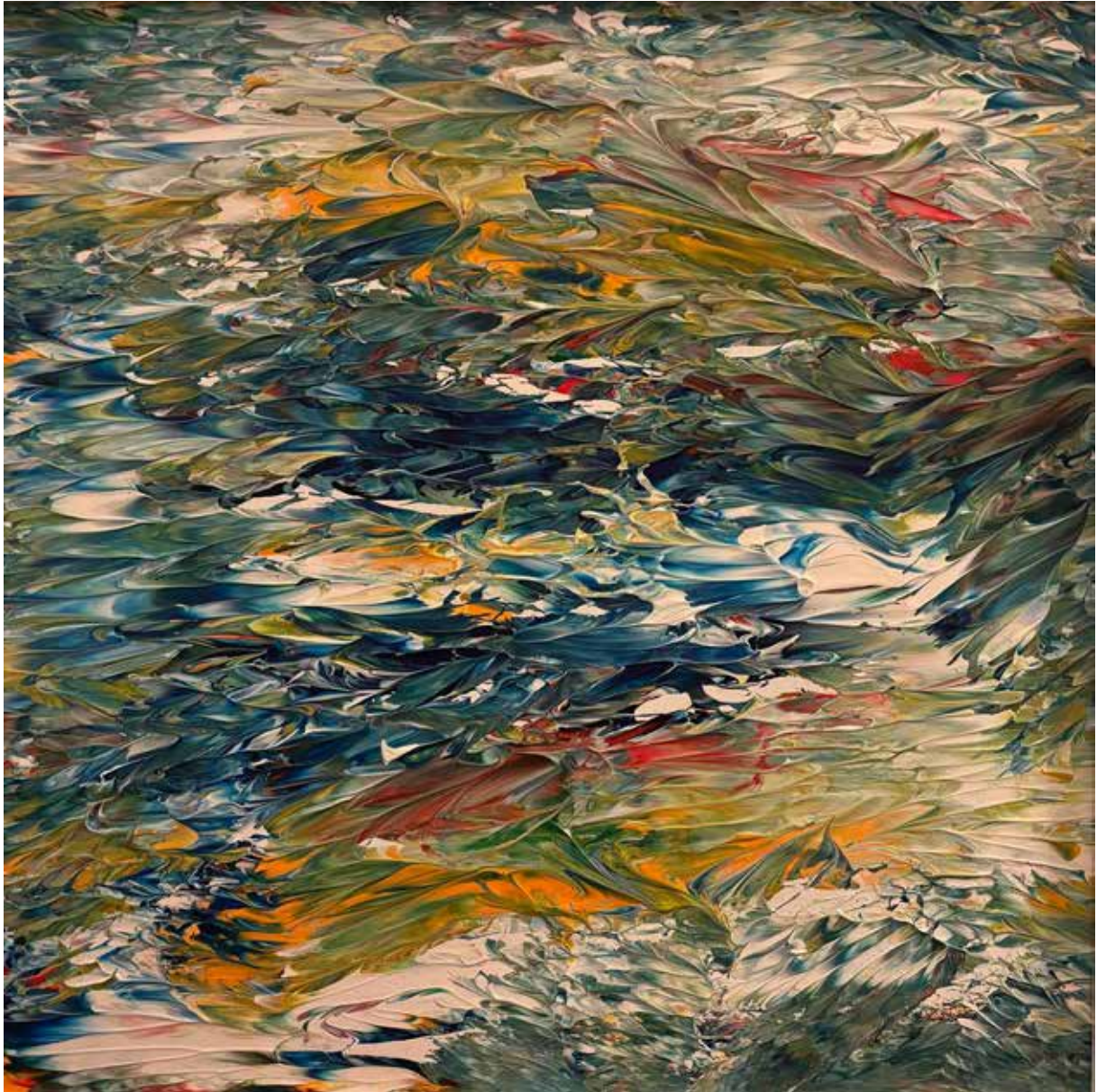
Working artist, 40 x 40 cm (panel from *Working people*, 80 x 80 cm), 2021



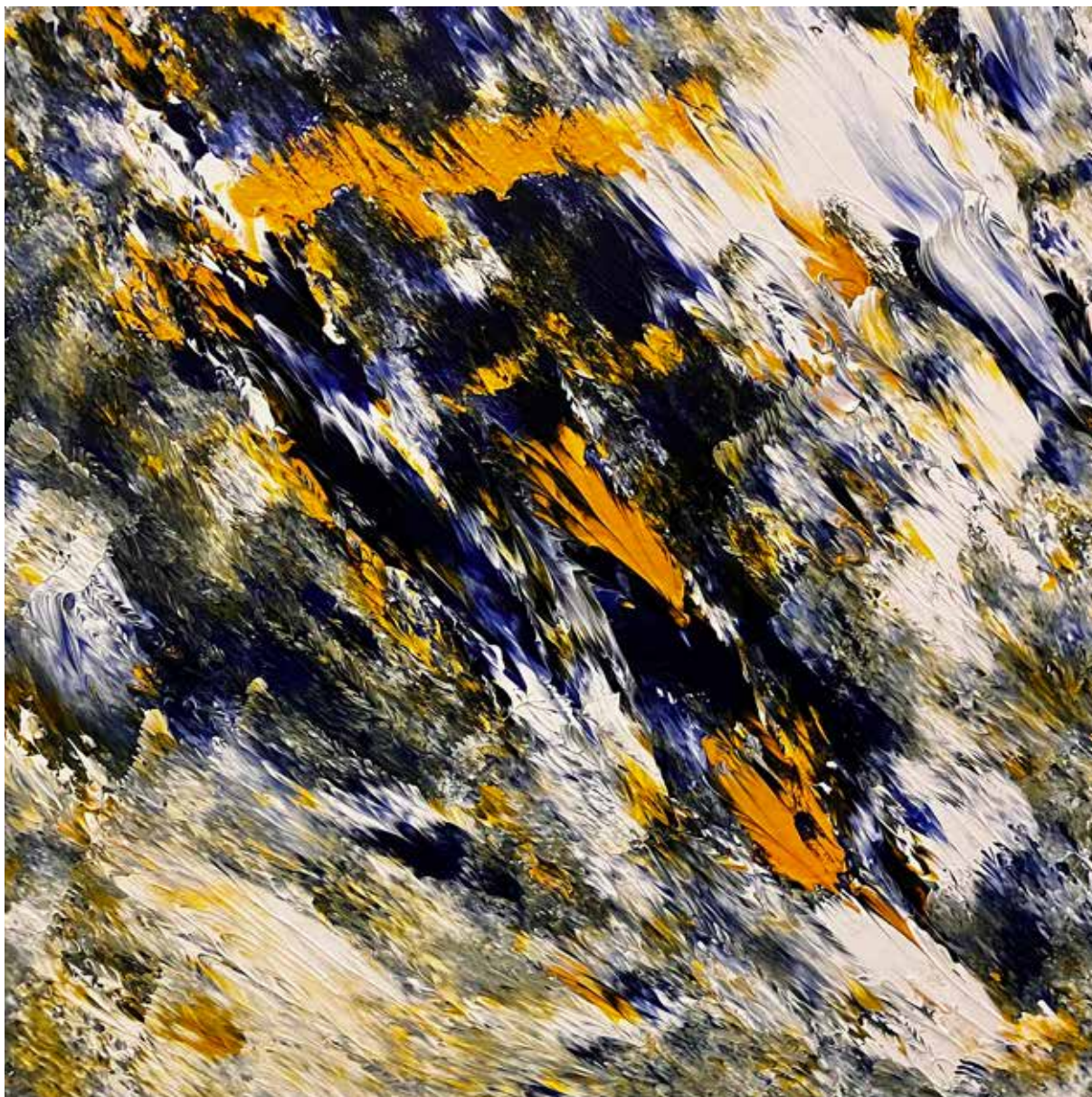
Snowfall in Callander, acrylic on canvas, 80 x 80 cm, 2022



Frenzy, acrylic on canvas, 50 x50 cm, 2017



River Teith in spring, acrylic on canvas, 50 x 50 cm, 2017



Hope, acrylic on canvas, 76 x 76 cm, 2024



Nails, acrylic on canvas, 76 x 76 cm, 2024



Happy meadow, acrylic on canvas, 76 x 76 cm, 2024



In my jungle, acrylic on canvas, 76 x 76 cm, 2024



Cosmogony, acrylic on canvas, 30 x 30 cm, 2024

I was born in August 1957 in Coatbridge, Scotland, on what I hope was a beautiful day—but it was probably raining. I studied at Gray’s School of Art in Aberdeen from 1976 to 1980, earning a BA in Design, specialising in Ceramics. From 1980 to 1984, I lived a dual life—by day, working in the office-based departments of oil companies; by night, spinning records as a DJ in Aberdeen’s top nightclubs. In 1985 I moved to London and continued in the oil industry within graphic departments until 1987, when I joined *Slideshow*, a printing company based at the Barbican. I’ve been there ever since—because clearly, I like to see things in print. Then came 1988, the year when **my life changed forever (for the better!)**.

I met a lady who knocked me sideways. When I got back up off the ground, I found myself married to the most talented Polish Impresario posing as a writer and journalist. I quickly had to get used to the word “kropka” as she dictated stories over the phone to Polish newspapers in Warsaw. Back then, email wasn’t an option, and fax machines had only just been introduced. I soon learned that the Polish word for full stop would become an essential part of both my vocabulary and my life. I married the genius in 1989, and now we have two lovely, grown-up children. Hook, line, and sinker, I was immediately integrated into Polish literary circles—offering help with printing, layouts, and whatever else needed doing.



THE ARTIST ON HIMSELF

These days, we live in Chiswick with our two French bulldogs, affectionately known in the family as 'the stinkies'.

EXHIBITIONS & COLLECTIONS

- *Dreaming of...* — group exhibition alongside Mańka Dowling, Sławomir Blatton, Joanna Ciechanowska, and Andrzej Pacak at the MAGAN Gallery, London (June 2023).
- *Ten Years & Counting* – solo retrospective exhibition curated by Joanna Ciechanowska and Justyna Gorzkowicz at the POSK Gallery, London, in collaboration with Blue Point Art (March 2025).
- My works are held in several private collections (*though none by my own bulldogs, who remain unimpressed*).

THINGS I ENJOY

Polish events (*not that I have much choice on this one!*), motor racing, doing the dishes (*yes, really*), cleaning the floors (*true or false*), unblocking drains (*not as often as I'd like*), and—most importantly—seeing people happy and enjoying life. Big family lunches at Number 5, and, of course, painting these crazy, mad, and colourful works you can see before you.

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5. *Bad Sunday*, acrylic on canvas, 76 x 76 cm, 2023
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7. *Working Stefan*, 40 x 40 cm (panel from *Working people*, 80 x 80 cm), 2021
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9. *Parakeets calling*, acrylic on canvas, 50 x 50 cm, 2022
10. *Looking in to the Chaos*, acrylic on canvas, 50 x 50 cm, 2023
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13. *Guilt of the Rogachevo donkey*, acrylic on canvas, 50 x 50 cm, 2023
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„... It's a rarity to see a painter who is obviously firmly into abstract, who commands the use of colour in such a suggestive manner. Landscapes, sea, trees — figures that never appear yet draw you in to show something that perhaps is only in the viewer's mind. His mark-making is superbly executed, colours perfectly clashing — and all so... dare I say it, Scottish? Why and how? You have to see and judge for yourself. This selection feels like the start of a conversation — one that promises to keep surprising us.” — Joanna Ciechanowska, Director of Gallery POSK, Co-curator of *Ten Years & Counting* exhibition.

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