

CRYSTALLIZING AN ABSTRACT

by

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CRYSTALLIZING AN ABSTRACT

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# ABSTRACT

## CRYSTALLIZING AN ABSTRACT

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Visual Arts and Visual Communication Design, MA Thesis

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This text is a verbal reflection of the works I had done during my MA education at Sabanci University. My aim is to give a brief idea of my working process and to spotlight my inspirational sources.

Every painting has its own theme and different channels however they are all connected. Connection exists mainly because they are all made by me and they are like memoirs of mine. In that sense we may call them autobiographical works.

That is why I would like to take one step back while examining them and leave space for the imagination and/or personification of the reader.

Key words: seeing, light, horizon line, contemplation, time, opposites, intimacy

## ÖZET

### CRYSTALLIZING AN ABSTRACT

### ÖZÜ KRİSTALLEŞTİRMEK

Melisa King

Görsel Sanatlar ve Görsel İletişim Tasarımı Yüksek Lisans Programı

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Bu metin, Sabancı Üniversitesi'nde Master eğitimi aldığım süre içerisinde yaptığım resimlerin sözel bir yansımasıdır. Amacım çalışma sürecim ve esinlendiğim kaynaklar hakkında bilgi verebilmektir.

Bütün resimlerin kendine özel bir teması ve ulaştığı/ulaşmayı hedeflediği farklı kanalları olmasına rağmen hepsi birbiriyle bağlantılıdır. Bağlantının temel sebebi kuşkusuz hepsinin benim tarafımdan yapılmış olması ve anısal özellik taşımalarıdır. Bu bağlamda onlara otobiyografik işler diyebiliriz.

Bu yüzden onları anlatırken bir adım geriden gözlemlemeyi ve okura hayal edebilecek ya da kendiyi özdeşleştirebilecek bir alan yaratmayı umuyorum.

Anahtar Kelimeler: görmek, ışık, ufuk çizgisi, derin düşünme, zaman, zıtlıklar, samimiyet

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“I used to think I was the strangest person in the world but then I thought there are so many people in the world, there must be someone just like me who feels bizarre and flawed in the same ways I do. I would imagine her, and imagine that she must be out there thinking of me too. Well, I hope that if you are out there and read this and know that, yes, it’s true I’m here, and I’m just as strange as you.”

**Frida Kahlo**

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## INTRODUCTION

There are certain moments in life which are silent. Most of the time, I find the silence through a visual source. It can be a flower, person, landscape, dead dove or snail's broken shell. These are the times; I feel complete and connected by *seeing*. Then, I have a sudden urge to transfer that visual. This is where my journey to a painting starts. Following the urge to transfer the silence is always exciting, but hard to accomplish. This process is personal, because first of all, I try to satisfy my need of contemplation. I must like what I paint, before anyone else. I can't cheat myself. However, this need of transfer has ultimately a purpose of sharing. My aim is to share that familiar feeling and familiar silence with people. Every painting of mine has a theme on the front layer, even though back layer is always silence.

Sometimes the visual pops up and takes me to a feeling, other times I follow a feeling and search for a visual to transfer it. I use photography as a mediator, to carry and discover my visual. I take or find a photograph and I make a sketch of it on paper. This is my first meeting with the visual. At that point, the visual includes me in itself. So I see the first glimpse of connection and completion. I then decide on my canvas size. Almost always, I prefer a large canvas; I believe it is the result of my excitement of transferring the image. Transferring an image gives an option of enlarging it. I can add another dimension to that visual by giving it a larger space so I can make it more obvious to represent. This is my celebration, and I would like other people to see it as well. Then I draw a larger sketch on the canvas. It takes me a while to place the compositional elements on the right places and I make lines over and over until I reach the best and most suitable line. This process may be called as my search for quintessence of the painting.

After I am certain about the placement, I start to paint it. I continue to paint it until I come to a certain level of satisfaction and/or necessity of dropping out that theme or the emotion. Even though inspiration on the first sight is marvelous, the emotion that I carry throughout the painting phase may at times disappear. In that case I leave the painting unfinished (in my perception), and usually I cannot go back to it. The whole process of my painting is like crystallizing a moment or a feeling, in other words, crystallizing an abstract. My paintings are far from abstract painting and they can be defined as realistic however their content is mainly abstract.



Figure 1.1 Photo of *Sun is God*



Figure 1.2 Sketch of *Sun is God* on paper



Figure 1.3 Sketch of *Sun is God* on canvas

The verb “*seeing*” has various ways of usage in language. Most commonly it is referred as visual perception however it also has other significant meanings. In dictionary Thesaurus synonyms of seeing are; *alert, awake, inspecting, looking, noticing, perceiving, regarding, surveying, viewing, witnessing, aware, conscious and observant*. On the other hand, an antonym of seeing is *asleep*. I think all of these definitions are quite suitable for my understanding of seeing. Seeing starts from the surface, however it is the representation of the depth behind it. So, to my sensitivity paintings are two dimensional representations of the beyond.

After this personal introduction, from this point onwards I will attempt to analyze and inspect my paintings from a distance, perhaps from an impersonal point of view. I would like to create this distance, to be able to include the viewer into the process.





Figure 2.1 Self Portrait, 120x170 cm, Oil on canvas, 2013

## Self-Portrait

The painting titled *Self-Portrait* represents a room, which has two outward opening. One is at the back of the room and opens up to the horizon line of the sea and the sky, the other one is the window at the right side and is a source of light. Inside of the room, there are three focal points; the figure, the snail and the flowerpot. The female figure sits on a chair in an ordinary comfortable manner the way many do at home. The way she sits suggests the viewer that she can sit there for a while, the snail at the back appears as if it will also stay as is for a while, or it may move very slowly. So there is no sudden or momentary action within the atmosphere of the painting. There may be a slow action spread on a long duration.

Snail has many symbolic meanings in the history and in different cultures. In Africa and Central America, it symbolizes the lunar and fertility. Its spiral shell is a symbol of cyclical continuity. Snail constantly shows and withdraws its antennae and itself so it is like waxing and waning moon. From this perspective, it is also a symbol of constant renewal.<sup>1</sup> In Aztec iconography, it is the symbol of rebirth and resurrection<sup>2</sup>. According to the Tertullian the snail symbolized Christ. This idea comes from the way snails lie buried under the earth for three months, and when the weather gets warm they re-emerge. So the snail in its shell was associated to Christ in his tomb, and its re-emerging on earth as the Christ's Resurrection. Early Christians associated the form of the omphalos with the domical tomb of Christ, and later the domes of churches have on occasion been compared to the snail shell.<sup>3</sup> Since it carries its home with it, it is also referred as the symbol of self-sufficiency.

Horizon line at the back of the room is seen through a door. Horizon line's dictionary meaning is the line that separates earth and the sky. In the history of art, there are many painters who used horizon lines in their paintings. Such as Edward Hopper, Rene Magritte, Salvador Dali, Claude Monet, Leonardo da Vinci. Windows are also used very much by painters in the history of art. Apart from the painters I mentioned above, some of the other painters who has emphasis on windows are Andrew Wyeth, Eric Fischl, Henri Matisse, Van Gogh and Vermeer. In Renaissance art, windows were used in the paintings as the symbols of

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<sup>1</sup> Udo Becker, *Continuum Encyclopedia of Symbols* (A&C Black, 2000), 273.

<sup>2</sup> Jack Tresidder, *The Complete Dictionary of Symbols* (Chronicle Books, 2005), 184

<sup>3</sup> Hope B Werness, *Continuum Encyclopedia of Animal Symbolism in World Art*, (A&C Black, 2006), 376

father, son and holy spirit. It is probably not a coincidence that painters who have had emphasis on windows also had emphasis on horizon lines. Perhaps one of the reason for it can be found in their need to create depth. It may have a psychological expansion for the inner self. Rolf Günter Renner says; “(The window scenes of European Romanticism)...had also provided a visual transcript of scrutiny of the inner self – a scrutiny which induces us to examine ourselves in turn as we consider Romantic paintings.”<sup>4</sup> The windows are also used as the indicators of the source of light for the sake of the composition. On the other hand, painters like Caravaggio did not use the windows as a source of light. The light in his paintings has an anonymous source, that is referred as the “divine light” by some scholars.

The main colors red, blue and yellow are at the focal points of *Self-Portrait*, surrounded by the varieties of grey and ultimately black in some parts. Rigid and tiny brushstrokes are used in this painting rather than loose ones. The paint is not very thick on the surface. The way of paint is applied on the canvas may be considered to correspond to the painting’s general tranquil atmosphere. Slow and spacious movements of the brushstrokes, intends to refer to the same attitude of the painting’s long durated action or actionless movement.

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<sup>4</sup> Rolf G Renner, Hopper (Germany: TASCHEN, 2014), 8



Figure 3.1 Naturemorte, Oil and paper on canvas, 147x198 cm, 2014



## Naturemorte

In the painting titled *Naturemorte*, there are two people standing in front of a continuous background. The background is composed of two different colors. The upper half it is a yellow that turns into a pink, the lower half it is murky green. The separations of two colors are very distinct. These two distinct colors' contact is brighter on the top and gets darker on the lower areas reminding the viewer of a horizon line. On that respect the upper part can be read as the sky with its color variations, and lower part can be read as the one color based sea or the earth. However these two parts- sea/earth and sky are somehow different than the original colors with the very warm layer, almost filter in front of them. This intends to create a different kind of an atmosphere than expected. These opposing colors may also refer the yin and yang. Since yin and yang's literal meaning is dark and bright. It represents how opposite or contrary forces are indeed complementary.

Attention was paid to add the colors that are used on the upper part towards the lower part at the background. In other words, the colors are darkened on the top and applied on the lower part. So the pigments that are used on the upper part has a presence at the lower part.



Figure 3.2 Background colors of *Naturmorte*

Two figures in the front are translucent. In the history of art, translucency and transparency is widely used in naturemorte. When for instance there is a glass or a bottle that is completely reflecting the colors at the back of it then it is a “transparent” object. However if that glass or bottle is filled with a colorful liquid or already colored by itself, then it becomes “translucent”. In this respect, if the two figures in front are identified with a colored glass of naturmorte, the line at the background can be identified with the edge of the table, interconnecting the wall and the table.

Both figures have similar postures in their personal way, one’s eyes are closed. The colors of their t-shirts are black and white. This may also be considered as a reference to yin and yang – dark and bright. Goethe in his book called *Theory of Colours*, mentions that for the color to be created it is needed light and dark, brightness and darkness but in more general concepts, it is needed light and lightlessness<sup>5</sup>. So these themes of light and lightlessness can be found in between white and black or in the case of the background dark and bright. In his book called *Concerning The Spiritual in Art* Wassily Kandinsky defines the color black as; “Black is something burnt out, like the ashes of a funeral pyre, something motionless like a corpse. The silence of black is the silence of death. Outwardly black is the colour with least harmony of all, a kind of neutral background against which the minutest shades of other colours stand clearly forward.” He continues saying that, “ It differs from white in this also, for with white nearly every colour is in discord, or even mute altogether...Not without reason is white taken as symbolizing joy and spotless purity an black grief and death.”<sup>6</sup>

On the canvas one observes handwritten paper notes. Even though they appear on top of the paintings, I attached them before I started painting the figures at the front. So, the figures were made over those notes. Attaching another material, especially paper can create a collage effect, however cover such a small area when compared to the large visual space of the painting such effect is not very noticeable as was preferred. My aim was to make them part of the painting and increase my ability of expression.

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<sup>5</sup>Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe, Renk Öğretisi (Naturwissenschaftliche Schriften, Zur Farbenlehre) (Istanbul, Turkey: Kırmızı Yayınları., 2013), 29

<sup>6</sup> Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1977) , 39

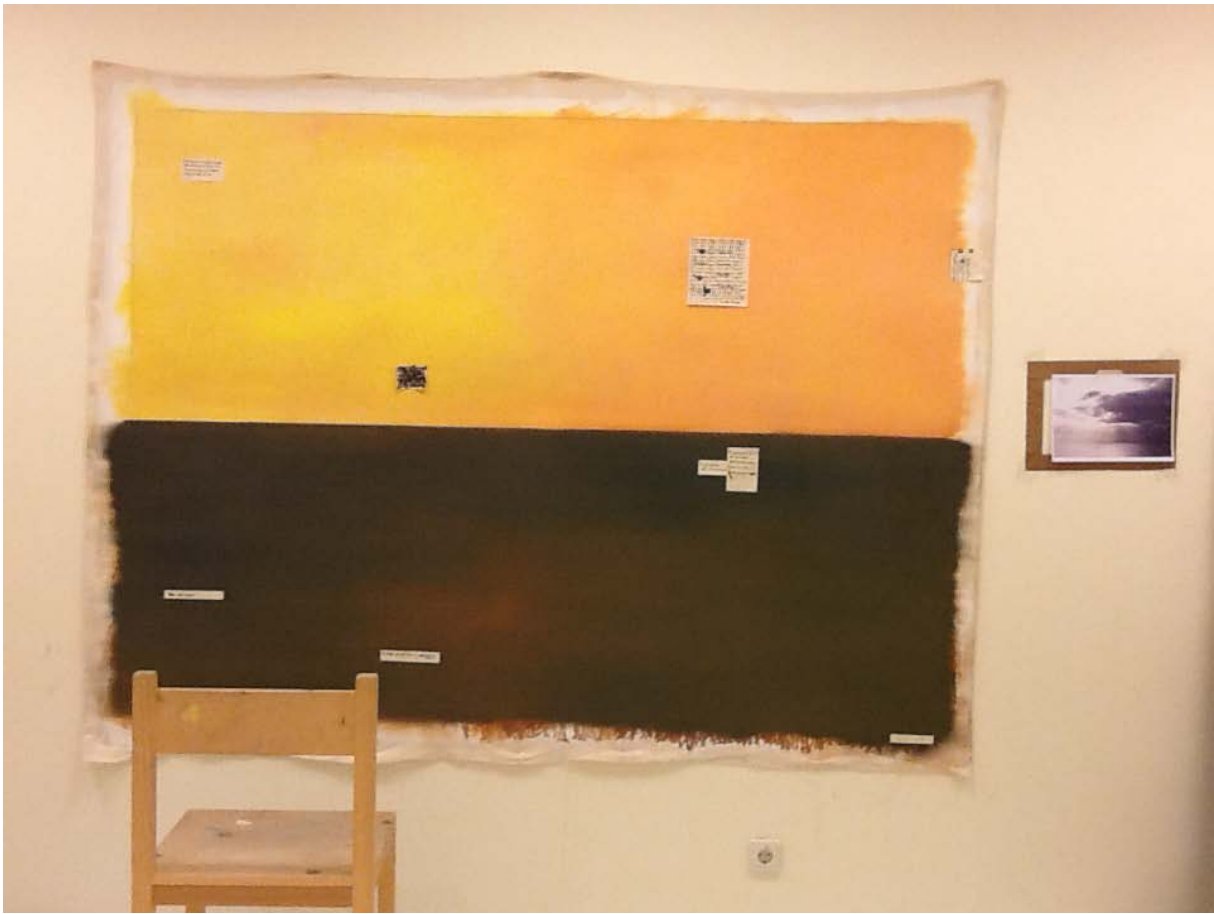


Figure 3.3 Notes on the canvas



Figure 4.1 Bonsai-My Hell, 138x205 cm, Oil on canvas, 2014

## Bonsai-My Hell

This is larger than life size painting of a bonsai (138x205 cm), with missing leaves. It is a dry bonsai. The body of the bonsai has a thick texture, made solely by spatula. Bonsai is a Japanese art form, which requires a high amount of carefulness and patience. Peter Chan explains in his book called *Bonsai Masterclass* that “The purposes of bonsai are primarily contemplation (for the viewer) and the pleasant exercise of effort and ingenuity (for the grower).<sup>7</sup> The word contemplation I find here crucial to extend. Oxford Dictionary meaning of contemplation is “The action of looking at something for a long time”. Admiration is considered part of this process. Looking thoughtfully at something for a long time can be related to the sense of time or timelessness. Especially it is a concept which occupies a place in religion and Greek philosophy. For example, for Plato, contemplation was an important part of his philosophy. He thought that through contemplation soul may arise to knowledge of the Form of the Good or other divine forms.<sup>8</sup> As Form of the Good he means the superb version of human, in his dialogue in *Republic* he gives the example of philosopher-in-training leading to philosopher-king by reaching form of the good. He also mentions that even though this transition cannot be clearly seen or explained, it can be recognized. And once this form is recognized, it paves way to recognize all the other forms. In Neoplatonism, there is a thought that contemplation is one of the important component to reach henosis, which is mythical oneness and unity.

Contemplation also occupies an important place in religion. There is an example in Islamic tradition of the prophet Muhammad contemplating life and its meaning on top of the mountain called Mount Hira. In Christian tradition, especially in Eastern Christianity contemplation has a literal meaning referring to see God or to have a Vision of God. In broader sense, it means content-free mind, directed towards the awareness of God as a living reality.

To grow a bonsai, certain shaping style is needed to reach a particular standard. It's shape and proportions are to be kept under control, and after a certain point it's growth is limited to the pot environment that it's planted. It is a human interfered kind of a plant. One of

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<sup>7</sup> Peter Chan, *Bonsai Masterclass* (Sterling Publishing Co., Inc, 1987)

<sup>8</sup> Routledge Nicholas D. Smith, *Plato: Critical Assessments*, (Psychology Press, 1998)

the reason for human being's will to control and shape a tree by making it so much smaller than its own size can be searched in humanity's obsession for chasing the ideal beauty and will to create it on his own. In the book called *Classic Bonsai of Japan* there is a reference to the first lengthy work of fiction in Japanese in year 970 called *Utsubo Monogatari (The Tale of the Hollow Tree)* in which presents a passage saying "A tree that is left growing in its natural state is a crude thing. It is only when it is kept close to human beings who fashion it with loving care that its shape and style acquire the ability to move one." So the idea of relating true beauty to the natural beauty when it's in accordance with human ideal was present even 20 centuries ago. Other version of human interfered plant series can be found in Vietnamese art making practice called Hon Non Bo, which is to create miniature landscapes with real plants. In both practices, bonsai and hon non bo, the creation is not only smaller than their own size but they are smaller than human size as well. It may easily remind the fact of human desire to control things, even nature. To have the sense of even being greater than the nature or to have the ability to control it. The same pattern can be find in human being's habit of petting animals by putting a collar and leading them. The action of using a collar may be meaningful to examine a human behavior. Even though it may be defined as a loving act to grow a bonsai or to pet an animal, they are both under control and under interference of a human being. Both are beautiful as long as they serve the human ideal of beauty. To contrast with this ideal, I intended to portray a bonsai, even bigger than a life size; to have a glimpse of observation to reflect its strength.

I applied red spots on top of black branches. Red and black can create the effect of violence when applied together. Alberto Burri uses black and red together to strengthen the effect of violence in his paintings. The background has two layers. One at the very back is has yellowish pink, and the one applied on top of some parts by spatula are different kind of pink. They together may remind of a skin, and even a wound. This can be both a wound that is getting bigger, or a wound that is getting smaller. I paid attention to cover the surfaces on each layer equally.





Figure 4.2 Background of Bonsai

There are traces of pencil left on the finished version of the painting as a reference to the sketch at first made on top of a wet background. I wanted to keep the traces of the sketch, and even the *mistakes*. According to the dictionary, *mistake* has two meanings as a noun. First is; “an error in action, calculation, opinion, or judgment caused by poor reasoning, carelessness, insufficient knowledge”. Second one is: “a misunderstanding or misconception”. In my point of view mistakes in this painting are the unplanned and unaesthetic traces on the canvas. However in contrast to my other paintings I left them as they are without worrying for *concealing my mistakes*.

The understanding of mistake goes hand in hand with perfection. It may also be possible to categorize mistake and perfection as opposites. Every opposite is complementary. Without perfection there is no mistake, and without mistake there is no perfection. This takes us to the argument of “Is there perfection?” or “What is perfection?”.

The question of perfection or ideal can be traced back to Platonic idealism. According to Plato, everything that surrounds us are imperfect reflections of the world of ideals. We are all aware of that world of ideals and this is how we identify its imperfect reflections around us. Connecting this to my point of view, I can come up with the idea that actually, there is no perfection. Or, perfection is something that is unreachable like a piece of light that flies away whenever I want to catch it. I can just follow it, but never truly have.

From this realm, mistakes loses its meaning as well. Because if there is no perfection, there are no mistakes. There is only the journey of following the light.

From the perspective of Platonic idealism, the concept of Bonsai, can be identified as the ultimate point of imperfection when compared to the abstract form of Tree-ness. So according to Plato, the art of Bonsai can be interpreted as the art of making mistakes.





Figure 5.1 Internal Landscape, 100x140 cm, Oil on canvas, 2014

## Internal Landscape

The base element of this landscape painting is the intersection of the sky and land which is a horizon line. Sky and land, both crucially needed to create a landscape and I am interested at these meeting points of earthly structures with the sky. The sky has its own slow, long lasting movement that reflects through the shape of clouds and dispersion of light. The land has its own physical elements of forms that contains even longer durated movements. Under the natural light, we see on land, the reflections of the sky above. For instance, I applied the colors that are used for the sky on land. Questioning if can it be reversed? Could land, reflect to the sky?

For our perception, sky and light has effect on everything that it interacts. If we take this idea further, one may also say that, if there wouldn't be sky and eventually the light, we could see nothing but vast darkness. This brings another question on the mind can light be more dominant than dark? Goethe defines the separation between *light and dark* as *light and lightlessness*. David Lynch in his book called *Catching the Big Fish* defines darkness as *nothing*. In other words, darkness is not something to get afraid because in darkness you do not see anything, so it is basically nothing.

In the history of art, there are many painters who are interested at the meeting of land and the sky what is also referred as landscape painting. There are examples of landscape painting from all over the world, since 1500 BC.<sup>9</sup> According to me one of the most essential landscape painter is Caspar David Friedrich. He is a 19<sup>th</sup> century German Romantic painter, and very effective of transferring not only the landscape in front of him, but also the *spirit* of it.

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<sup>9</sup> Fleming John Honour Hugh, A World History of Art (Laurence King Publishing, 2005)



Figure 5.2 Caspar David Friedrich, *The Monk by The Sea*, Oil on canvas, 1808-10

(Joseph Mallord) William Turner can be considered as another painter, who has similar sensitivity on transferring not only the landscape but the spirit of it. He is contemporary of Caspar David Friedrich as they both are 19<sup>th</sup> century Romantic painters. He is a milestone in English watercolor landscape painting and also referred as “the painter of light”. His works accepted by some scholars as Romantic prologue to Impressionism. I find it interesting to share the information that as “the painter of light” it is said that when he was dying his last words were “The sun is God”.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Norman Davies, *Europe: A History*. (London: Pimlico., 1998)



Figure 5.3 William Turner, Rain, Steam and Speed- The Great Western Railway, 1844

This matter of transferring the spirit was also important for Eastern cultures and reflected in the East Asian ink wash painting in which the purpose is not to reproduce the appearance but to apprehend and capture its spirit. So it is considered as an art form capturing the unseen.

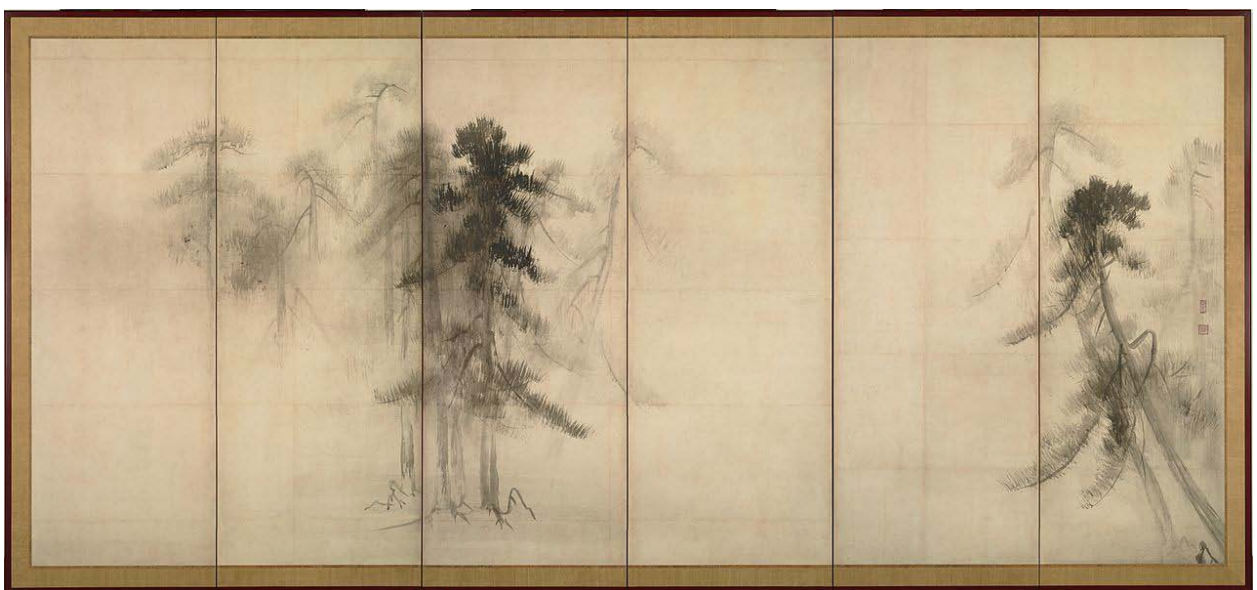


Figure 5.4 Hasekawa Tohaku, *Pine Trees*, ca. 1580



In ink wash painting, the artist must devote his many years to comprehend the skills for transferring this unseen. The scenes are mostly imaginary, or very loose adaptations of physical scenes. American artist Arthur Wesley Dow, who was the teacher of Georgia O'Keeffe was fascinated about ink wash painting and wrote;

"The painter ...put upon the paper the fewest possible lines and tones; just enough to cause form, texture and effect to be felt. Every brush-touch must be full-charged with meaning, and useless detail eliminated. Put together all the good points in such a method, and you have the qualities of the highest art."<sup>11</sup>

In ink wash painting there are many tonalities between black and white, and it is beyond than shading. It has a delicate light and dark arrangement. Chinese version of this is called Shan Shui painting which has also inspired a genre of poetry called Shan Shui poetry or Landscape poetry. One of the important example for this poetry is Wang Wei from 8<sup>th</sup> century. He writes;

To reach the Yellow-Flowered River  
Go by the Green-Water Stream.  
A thousand twists and turns of mountain  
But the way there can't be many miles.  
The sound of water falling over rocks  
And deep colour among pines.  
Gently green floating water-plants.  
Bright the mirrored reeds and rushes.  
I am a lover of true quietness.  
Watching the flow of clear water  
I dream of sitting on the uncarved rock  
casting a line on the endless stream.

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<sup>11</sup> Arthur Wesley Dow, Composition (Minnesota : Baker and Taylor Company, 1903)



Figure 5.5 Photo of “Internal Landscape” I took from bus on the way from Prag to Vienna in 2014



Figure 6.1 Halil, 106x146 cm, Oil on canvas, 2014

## Halil

This painting portrays a young man sitting on a couch with an ashtray beside him. He is not holding a cigarette on his hand, so the action of smoking has obviously ended, or was done by somebody else earlier. The man is sitting in highly comfortable position. Again there is no momentary action in this painting, rather the action has a time period. The color of red blanket covering the couch, and the color of blue on the wall can be considered as two vibrant colors used next to each other.

Sitting position of the man can be compared to the female's sitting position in *Self-Portrait*. Both figures seems comfortable and they can sit like that for a while as if they are listening someone in front of them. Their glance directing forward may also claim that there may be someone having an eye contact with them. Besides, the ashtray in this painting may have a relationship with the flower pot in *Self-Portrait*.

The way male figure in this painting puts his leg in front of the couch may or may not be considered as seductive, however he ensures us that he is comfortable. Comfortable sitting position is widely used in painting literature. Lucian Freud uses these comfortable seated and laying positions in his paintings. Especially use of the "couch" is crucial in some of his paintings. Couch and bed may have some similar aspects such as their association with comfort, and their representation of privacy. Person sitting or lying on a couch or a bed may give an audience a feeling of intimacy. Besides, the fold and curves of a blanket or the a sheet may be felt very tempting by many painters since it is widely used in compositions for decades.





Figure 6.2 Lucian Freud, Girl with a White Dog, 1950-1

The figure on my painting is making a direct eye contact with the viewer. By doing this I wanted to make the connection of the figure with the viewer even stronger. Stranger (the figure) making an eye contact with the viewer and giving an inside smile. He may even be telling something secretly. Also, the way he sits may be claiming that he feels very comfortable in front of the viewer. I often observed and asked myself why not the viewer can't feel comfortable in front of him? There may be a relationship between them in a comforting or disturbing way. Viewer may be disturbed by his way of sitting like that, and may even get offended by it. If the figure would be looking at somewhere inside of the painting we might not be talking about these different approaches towards him, however since his glance takes us out of the painting, the space between them (figure-viewer), may be considered as part of the work.

Brushstrokes on the painting are looser comparing to my other paintings. I decided to give little less detail to this one, try simplification in my style. I also decided to leave some parts empty, without touching the brush on canvas. I did that to create areas for the painting to breathe. These are holes, for the eye to go back and forth on the painting. If we consider the

paint on canvas as a layer, blank canvas itself becomes another layer. Moreover blank canvas is a layer on top of the space behind it. If so, can space itself be considered as another layer? And if it is, what is it covering?





Figure 7.1 Zucchini Flower, 100x150 cm, Oil on canvas, 2014

*“Whether you succeed or not is irrelevant, there is no such thing. Making your unknown known is the important thing.”*

*Georgia O’Keeffe*

## Zucchini Flower

*Zucchini Flower* is 100x150 cm, it can be called as a big representation, or enlarged zucchini flower. The colors are luminous, both the background color and flower's color. Close up flowers has been used as a subject matter in Georgia O'Keeffe's paintings. She painted enlarged flowers as well as she painted New Mexico landscapes. I find her flower paintings as a discovery, discovery of another universe. When you delve into a natural object so close, you have a sense that it gets larger and larger. "I decided that if I could paint that flower in a huge scale, you could not ignore its beauty". – Georgia O'Keeffe.



Figure 7.2 Georgia O'Keeffe, *Oriental Poppies*, 1928

The shape of this zucchini flower with its leaves are being opened at the right side may remind of a mouth. Also it can be intimidating since it is an open mouth. Or it can remind of a threat. On the other hand the pink of background and yellow of the flower are providing warmth opposite to the zucchini flower's potential threat.



Painting flowers is one of Van Gogh's subject matters as well. Apart from his famous "Sunflowers" he also painted spring flowers. He made a series called *Almond Blossoms* between the years 1888 and 1890. When he moved to Arles, it was the blossoming time of fruit trees in 1888 and he saw almond, apricot, peach and plum trees became a source of inspiration for him.



Figure 7.2 Van Gogh, Almond Blossom, 1890

Claude Monet's water lilies, can be another example of enlarging and signifying a plant. His series called Water Lilies consist of 250 oil paintings. The interesting thing is that he painted many of them while he was suffering from cataracts. I interpreted this as the haziness and sometimes abstraction of the flowers can be from this exact reason.



Figure 7.3 Claude Monet, Water Lilies, 1897-1899



Figure 8.1 My Father is My Mona Lisa, 200x300 cm, Oil on canvas, 2015

## **My Father is My Mona Lisa**

This is a 200x300 cm painting displaying a giant portrait of an old man wearing sunglasses. At the background there is a landscape consists of water, brushwood and mountains. The figure is directly looking at the viewer, similarly to other figures in my paintings. The way he looks can be identified as happy and smart.

The colors are bright, vibrant and full of light. There are many spatula strokes on the painting, such as on mountains, brushwood and man's hair. There is no quick or momentary action in this painting. It seems like he can stay there like that for a while without any interruption. His hair indicates a movement of breeze in the air. This is accompanied by the movement on the water. Actually, these movements along with the irregular arrangement of brushwood, are indicators of an unseen element of "air".

Air has a fundamental importance on Earth but yet it is invisible. It is the main source of continuous movement on Earth and on human body. The word air comes from Latin *spirare* and important words derived from it, such as **aspire**, **inspire**, **perspire** and **spirit**. According to ancient sources, element of air represents the powers of the mind, wisdom and higher intuition. It is the power of self-mastery through appropriate use of strength of will<sup>12</sup>. Air is also referred as the link between Earth and the heavens and all the birds are associated with this element to some degree.

The name of this painting is "My Father is My Mona Lisa". This choice of name is personal and humorous, however at this point I actually would like to link this painting to Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*. *Mona Lisa* painting is referred as "the best known, the most visited, the most written about, the most sung about, the most parodied work of art in the world."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ted Andrews, *Animal Speak* (Llewellyn Worldwide, 1993)

<sup>13</sup> John Lichfield, *The Moving of the Mona Lisa*, *The Independent*, 2005-04-02 (Retrieved 9 March 2012)



Figure 8.2 Leonardo da Vinci, Mona Lisa, 1503-1506

*Mona Lisa* has always been exclusively popular and that is why for a long time I wasn't able to observe it objectively. Its success is debatable and it can be the genius result of culture industry, to use it as a tool to convert an art form to a source of income. Besides it was stolen and hid in an apartment for two years which increased the mystery behind it. When I force myself to observe it independent from its popularity, I find an elegant, pure portrait of a woman done by very specific palette of earthy colors. To my opinion, the colors in this painting are used magnificently, greenish and bluish earthy tones are used at the upper part of the painting till the beginning of the figure's neck. I believe it is a very confident choice to take the attention at the face itself and to display it even more pure. From the shoulders on, the colors at the background turns out to be brownish and reddish earthy tones totally balancing the yellow, black and bright skin color.

At the background there are roads, brushwood, mountains and water. These are similar elements to what I have used in my painting. The figure, Mona Lisa, (whose actual name is Lisa de Giocondo), looks at the viewer directly, right in the eye. Apart from all the debates, in my personal opinion she is smiling with heavy feeling of loneliness. I believe this sincerity, her opening up her feelings to us, makes us feel closer to her and eventually to the painting.

To my sensitivity this plays an important role in this painting's success. When other da Vinci paintings are considered it can be clearly observed that he is very sensitive in conveying feelings and almost all of his portraits are carrying an emotion.



I find the fate of this painting is also worth to mention briefly. It was stolen from Louvre once and it was subject of attack many times. That is why it's now displayed in a separate room behind bulletproof glass in Louvre. In spite of millions of admirers and popularity, it is a lonely, isolated work of art. Just as Mona Lisa herself – smiling with heavy loneliness.



**Phases of *My Father is My Mona Lisa***

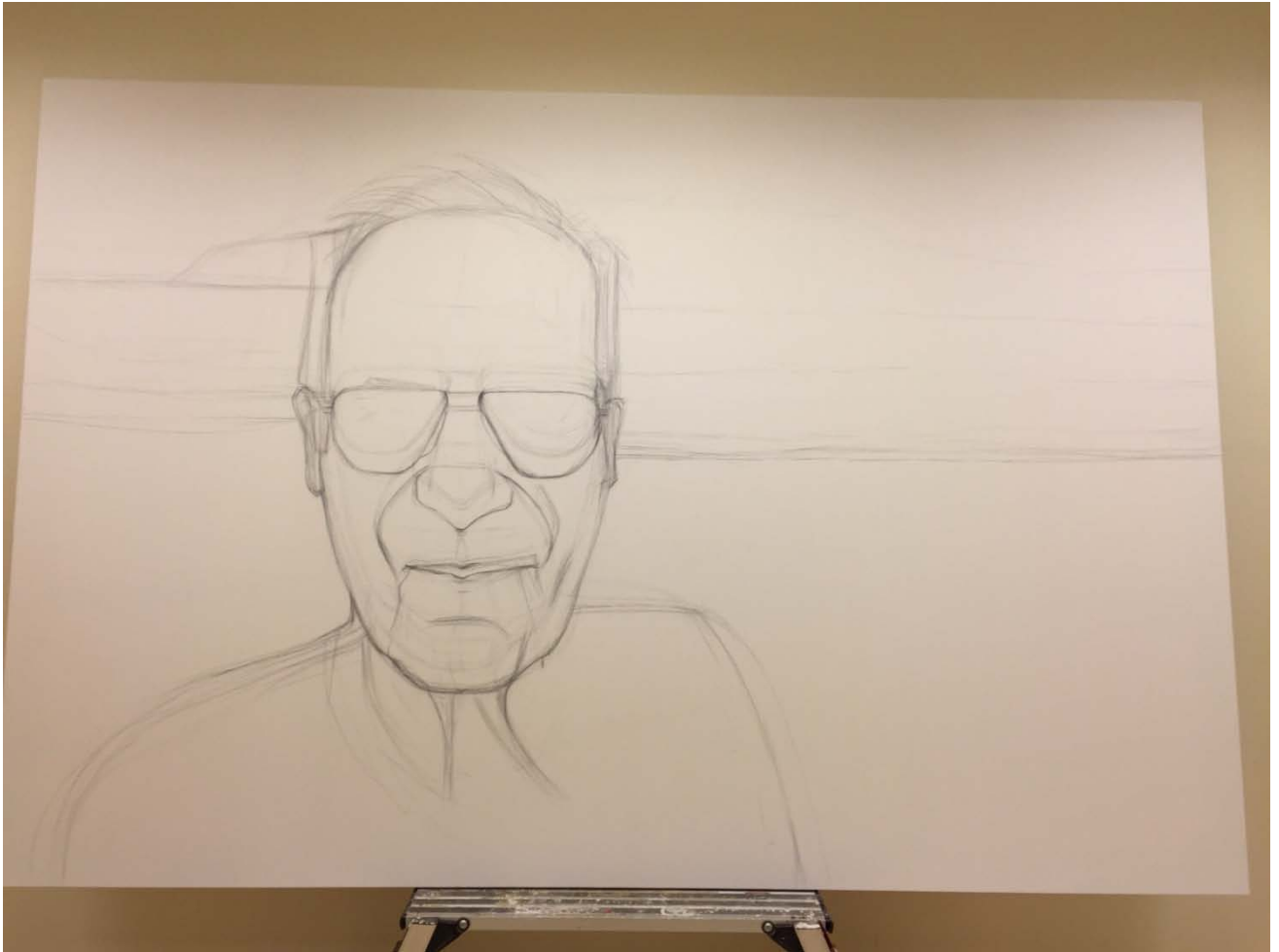


Figure 8.3

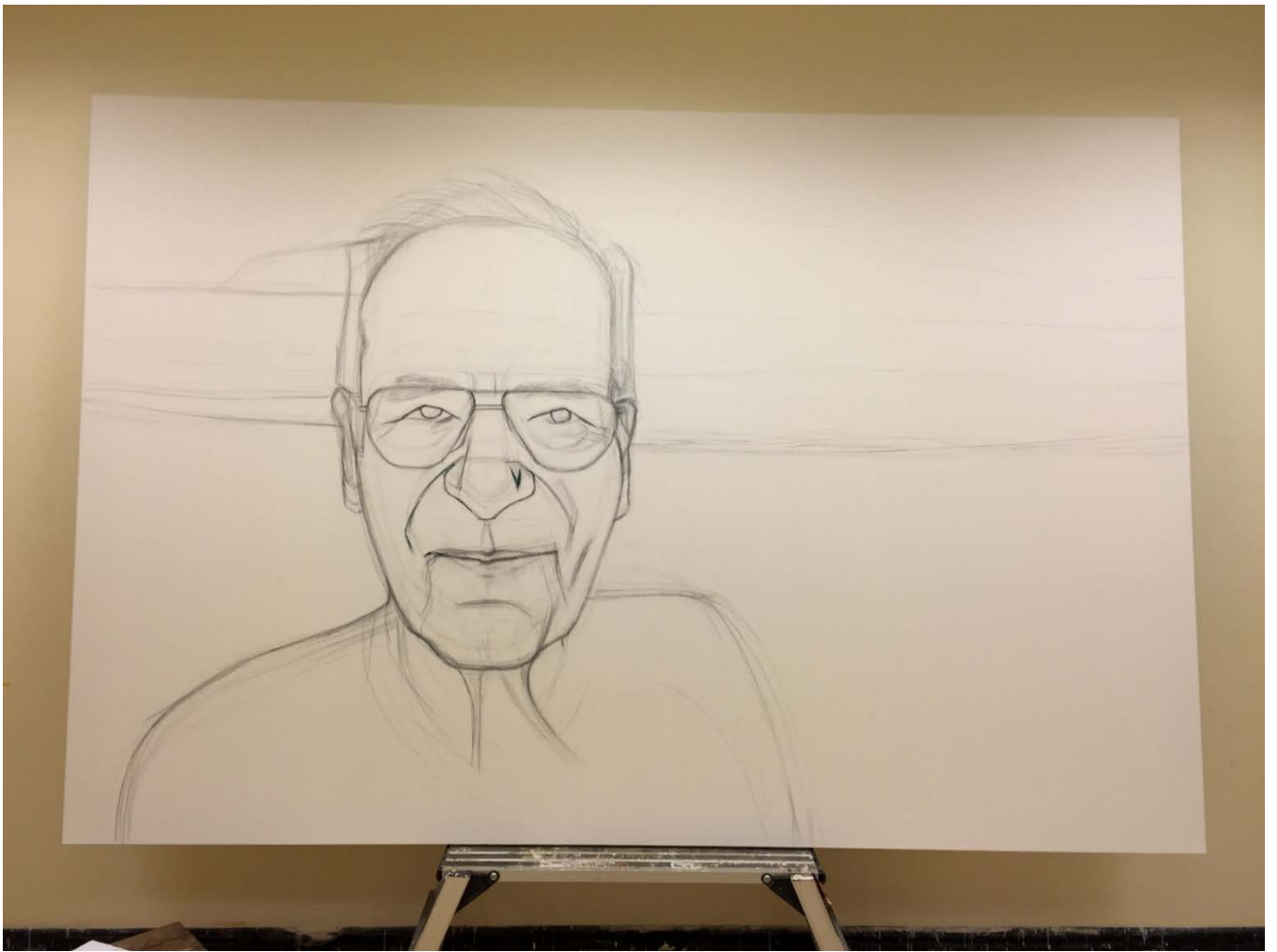


Figure 8.4

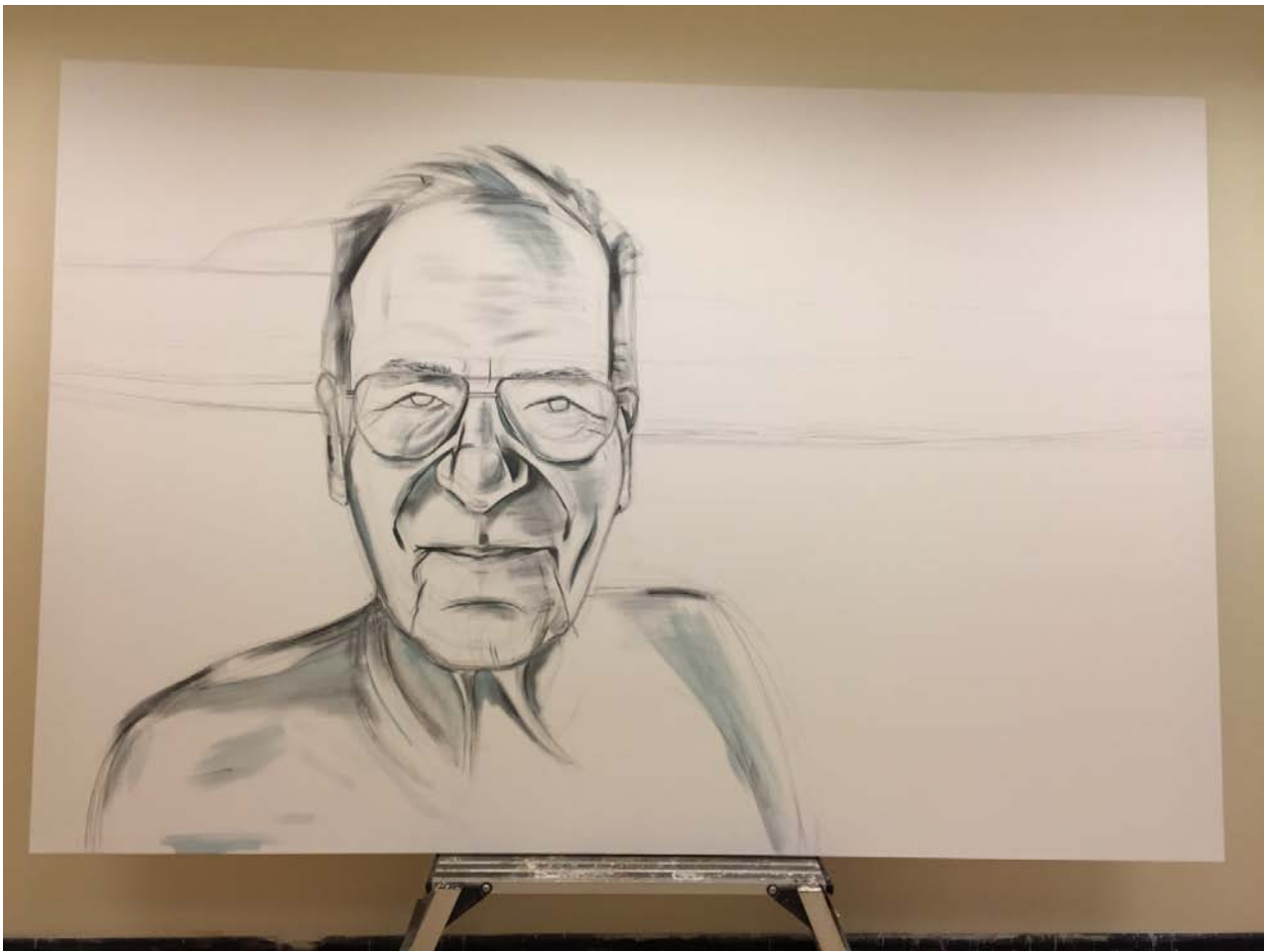


Figure 8.5

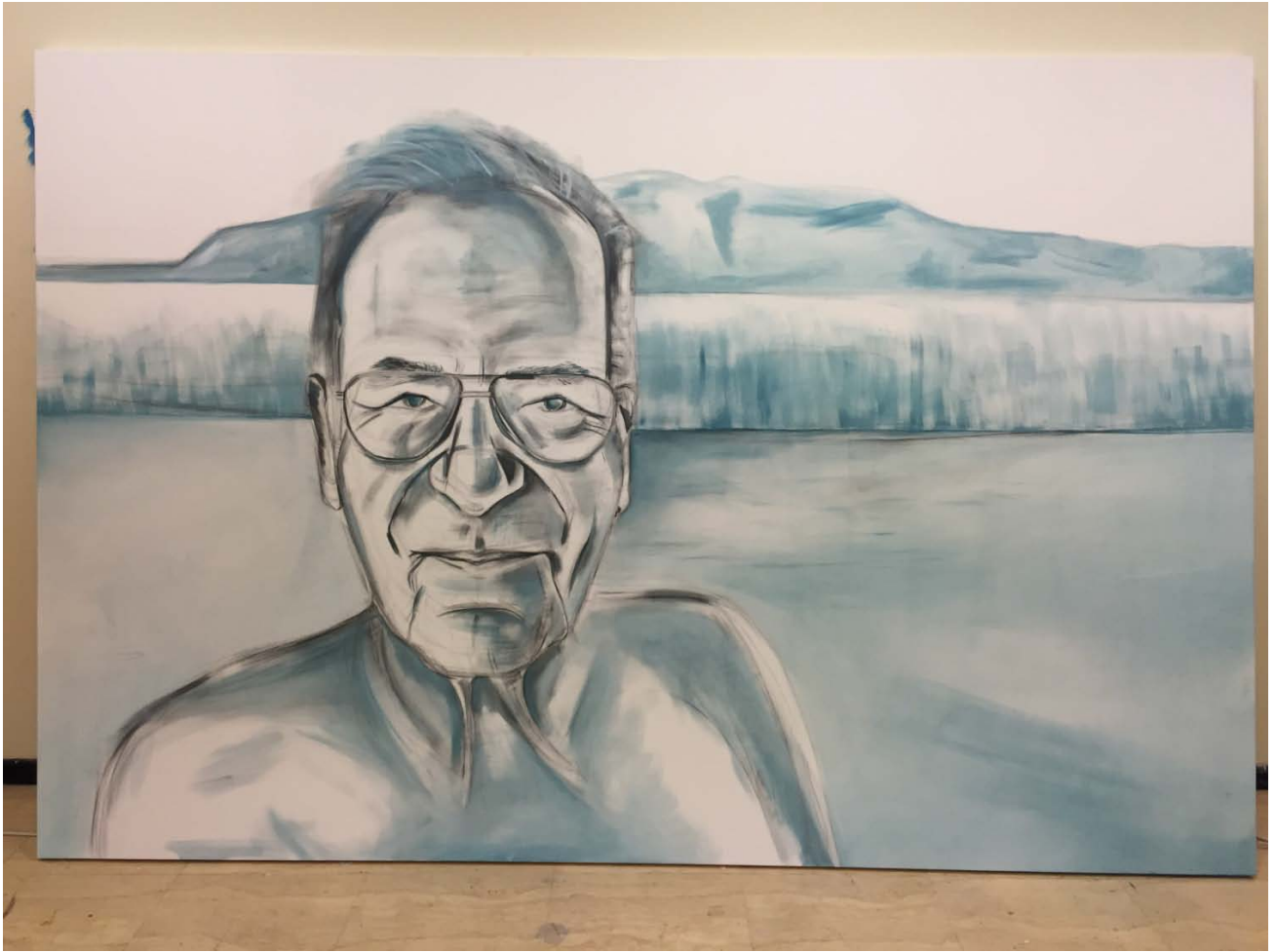


Figure 8.6

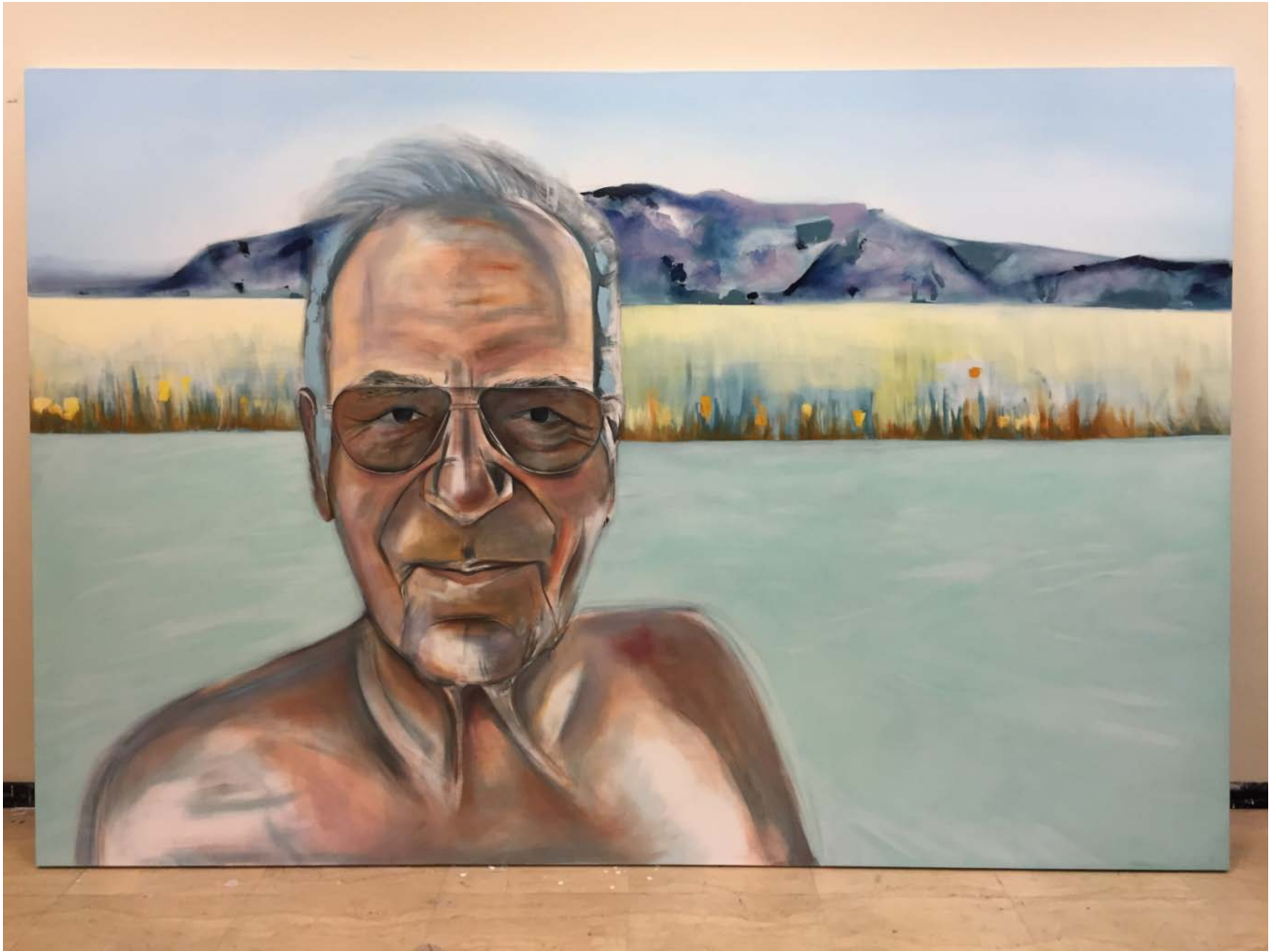


Figure 8.7

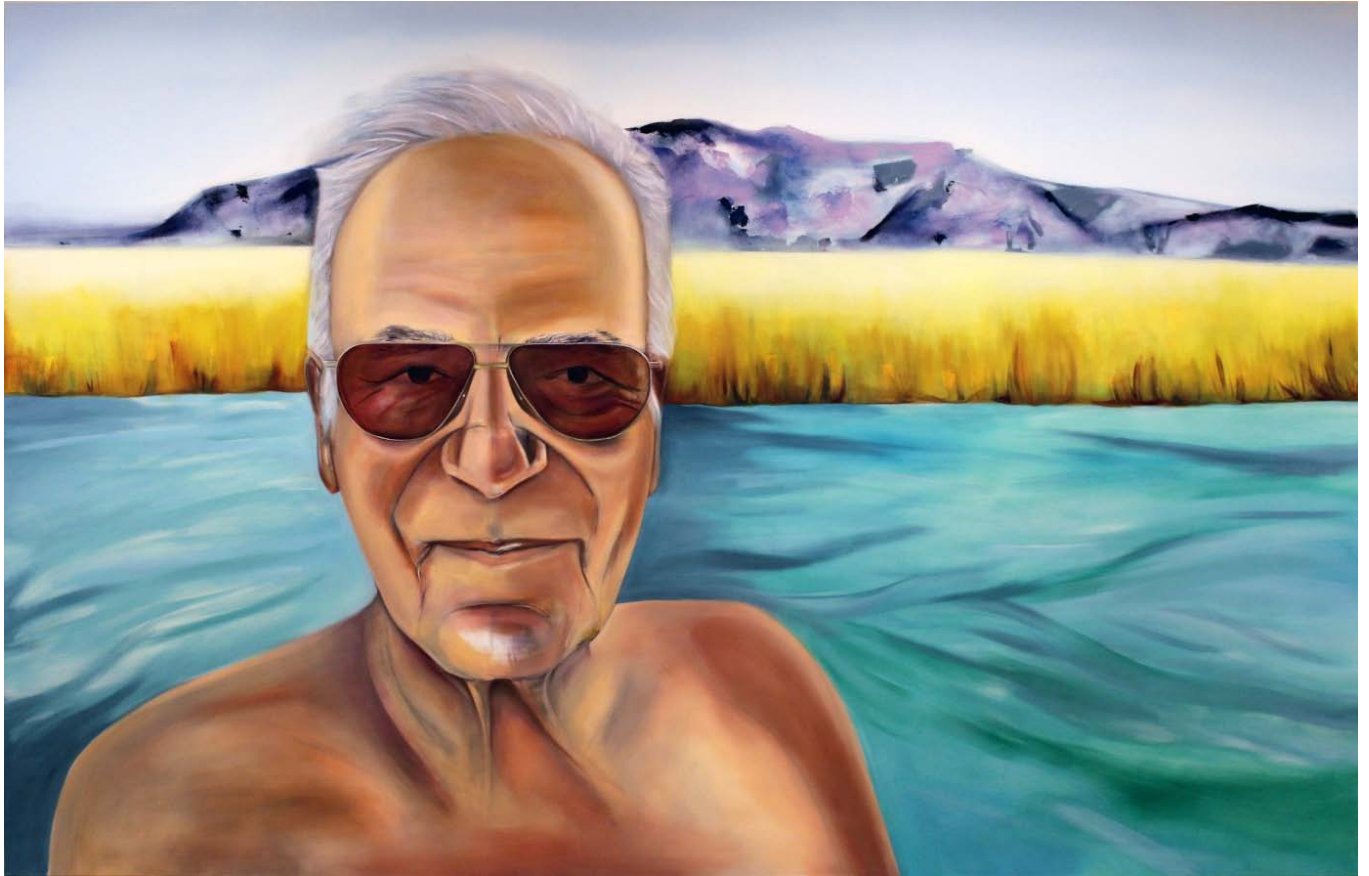


Figure 8.8



## CONCLUSION

I have come up to the conclusion that I have tendency on delving into opposites such as time and timelessness, light and lightlessness, motion and motionless and so on. In all of my paintings figures, animals, plants, land and sky are all in a slow motion movement. They grow, move, or die slowly as if time has opened up another dimension and there is no need to rush. Besides, all of the objects in my paintings are willing to make interaction with the viewer. They are open to show themselves and make a connection with their size or the way they contact.

With this text, I tried to put my objectives on the forefront of my painting process. I am a curious observer of painting genre, and trying to correspond it with my works. I may be using the paintings as a mirror, for summing up and abstracting. I believe, a painting can explain a lot, which words may not be enough to explain. It has strong, meaningful and hidden language.

EXHIBITION AT FASS ART GALLERY

11.05.2015-22.05.2015

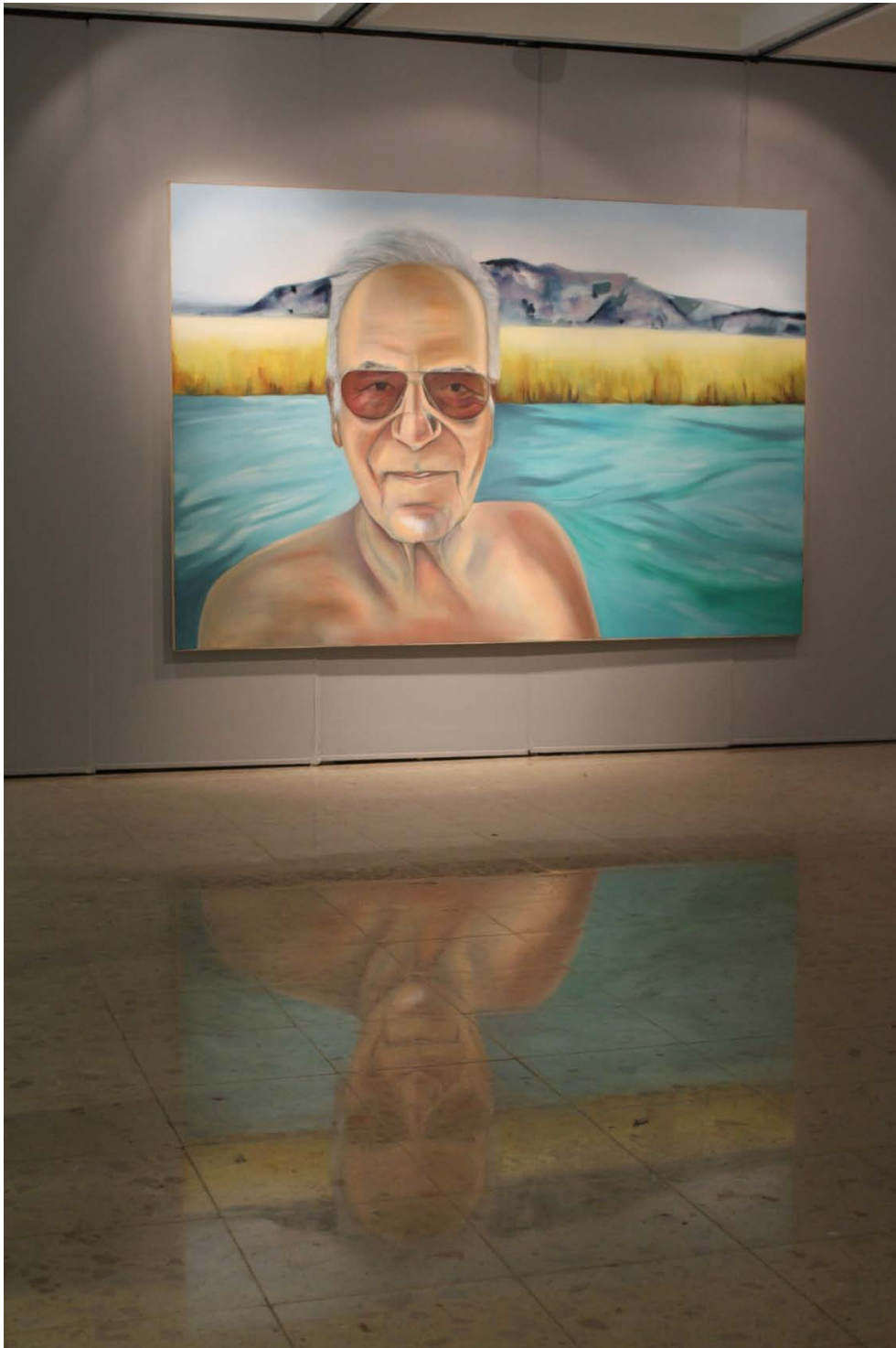


Figure 9.1



Figure 9.2

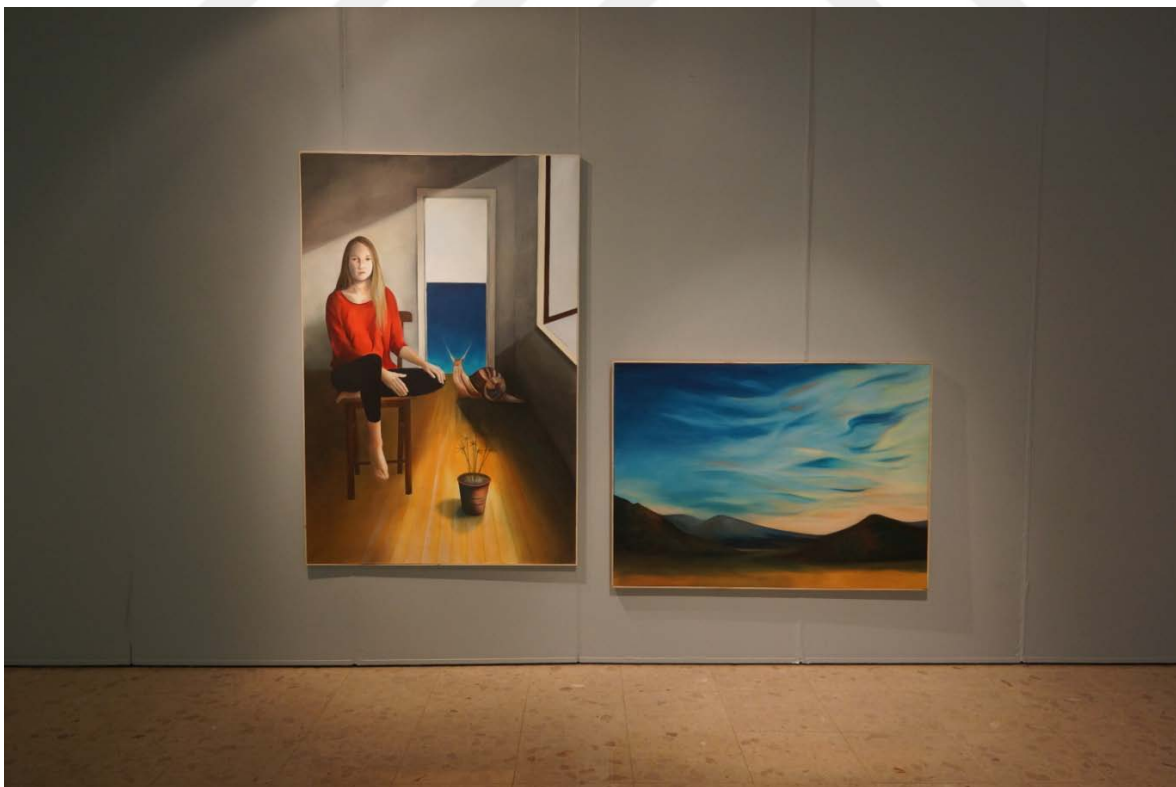


Figure 9.3



Figure 9.4

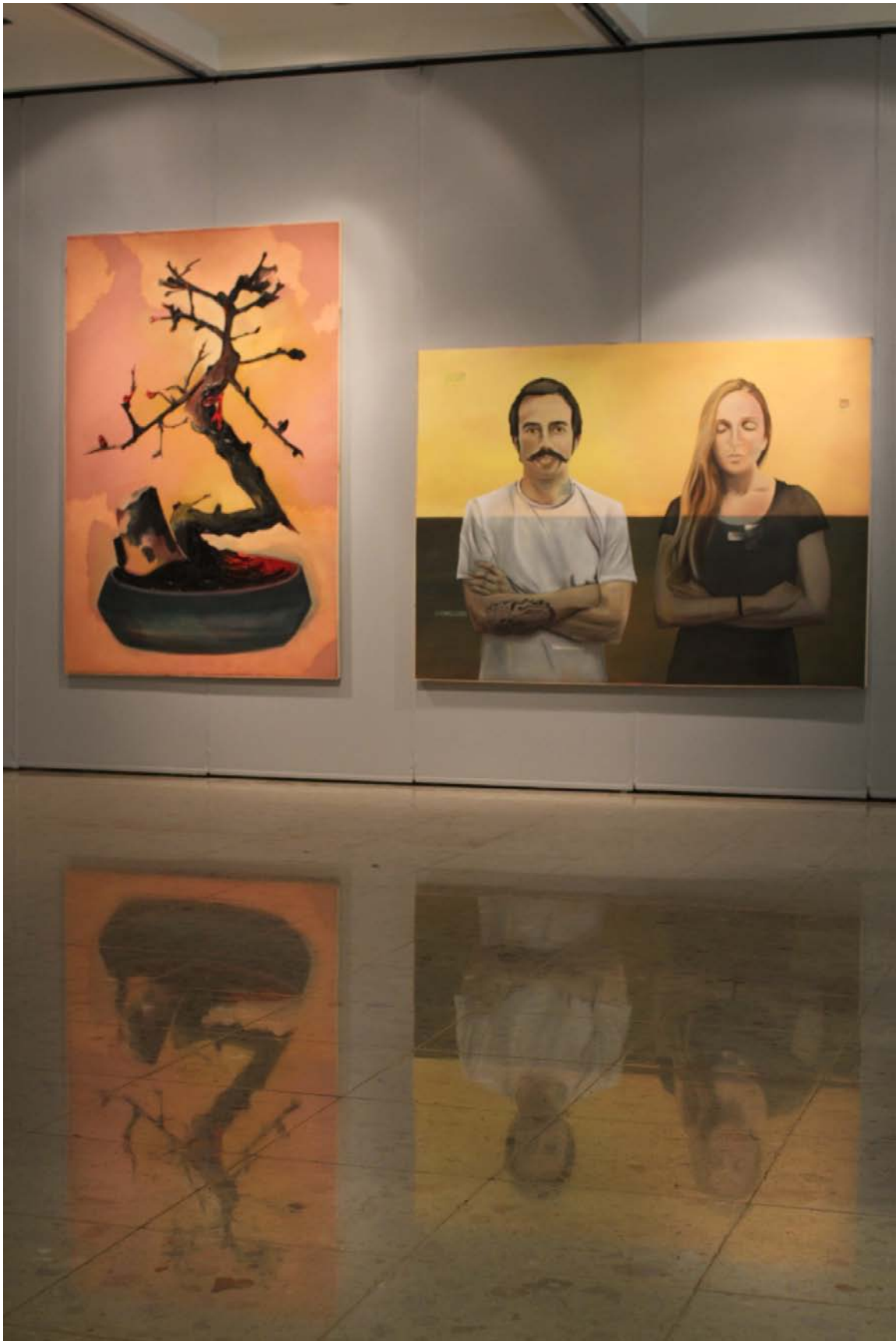


Figure 9.5





Figure 9.6



Figure 9.7



Figure 9.8





Figure 9.9



Figure 9.10

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