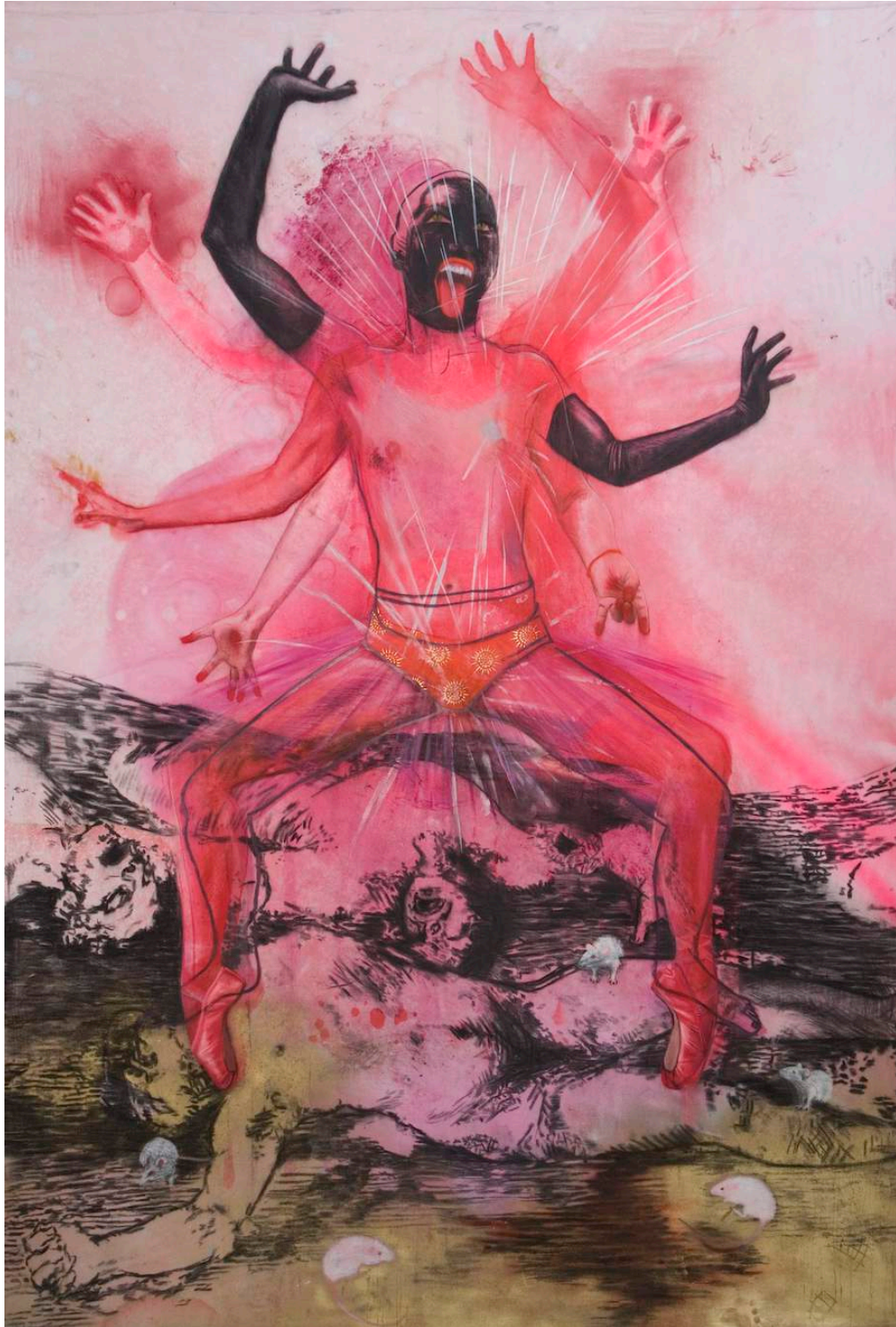


TRACY PAYNE

Fumbling Towards Ecstasy

September 5 – October 10, 2013



Kali "The power of orange knickers"

2013

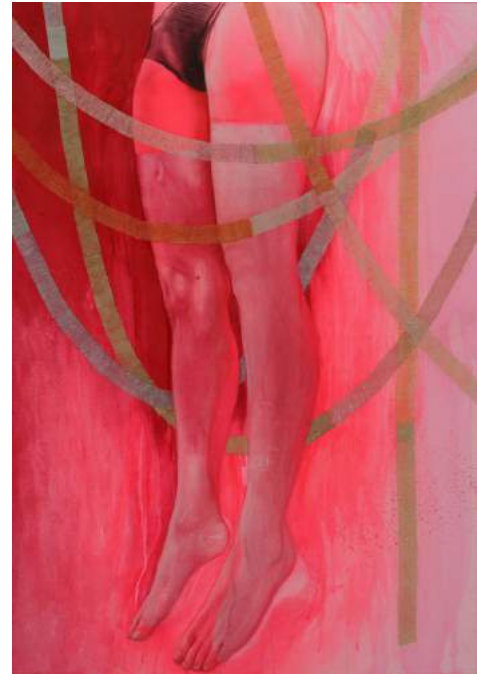
Ink, tea, acrylic, oil, chalk pastel, charcoal, spray paint on 100% cotton bed linen,
259 x 173 x 4.5 cm



Fluorescence

2013

Pencil crayon, spray paint, chalk pastel, charcoal, Japanese ink, liquid acrylic and tuile on Canson Montval, 300g
110 x 76 cm



Float

2013

Pencil crayon, spray paint, chalk pastel, oil and paper streamers on Canson Montval, 300g
110 x 76 cm



End of Summer

2013

Oil, silk sari and varnish on primed Canson Montval, 300g
100.5 x 70 cm



Monsoon

2013

Oil, silk sari, smoke and varnish on primed Canson Montval, 300g
100.5 x 70 cm

OPENING SPEECH

Presented by Hayley Manson

A noble cause indeed;

Don't we all spend some of our lifetime, maybe not enough of it, but some of it, on the quest for happiness and wholeness. Since the fall of man, haven't we been fumbling through the centuries, grasping for understanding that will enable us to cultivate ourselves into a more graceful way of being? Have our artists not attempted to reveal this to us through images and colour and content?

The ancient artists of the indigenous world were also the shamans of the time. Their art was infused with purpose and symbols, necessary for the growth of civilizations and the evolution of consciousness.

There is a Native American legend about the first woman who danced the world into being. She was given only mud as her material and a turtles back as her canvas. As the turtle rose out of the ocean, the woman began to smear the mud over the turtles back with her feet until her body literally danced the world into being.

Tracy is giving us an opportunity to see what can be materialized if we look deeply into our psyches and then express what emerges, authentically. Some of these pieces were literally danced into being by Tracy's courage to venture beyond accepted ways of creating paintings.

She partly attributes this to her time spent with me in an Astar studio, creating meaningfully and spontaneously in a place where nurturing and nonjudgment are the premise, where we can all find our creative expression in a safe container.

Tracy said to me that when synchronicity begins to happen with her paintings then she knows she is on track, she feels like she is working with the universal forces and not in her head, playing in the unknown. She trusts that her journey leads her exactly where she needs to go, to gather inspiration and content from her travels and from her daily life, coupled with her ability to journey inside the universe of her own being. She is not afraid to explore with unusual materials and knows that there are great things to be discovered in this way.

This is the warrior's path and the hero's journey: to express without censorship and to give a voice to our collective neurosis and our deepest unspoken desires. We as humans share this palette of life's emotions and experiences, but few of us are able to turn this so masterfully and beautifully into art, art that we would love to hang on our walls, colours so visceral, and images that delight and disturb all at the same time. To me these are the shamans of our times, our artists who do not create to match our furniture, but who paint to bring forth the symbols that help us along our way to self-reflection and possibly self-realization.

It has been said that creativity comes out of the unknown, that everything else is just a replicated version of what already exists in the world. Being in the unknown is often terrifying, as it is unfamiliar, yet traveling without a map can be extremely exciting, as we never know where we might end up, or what we may discover along the way.

Today there are very few unexplored images and topics, but for me Tracy is finding new ways to bring these images to us, she is bravely walking the path of the unknown to discover new techniques and combinations of materials that allow the real magic and alchemy of creation to be revealed. She allows her work to unearth itself to her, through a process. A process that begins with honest and sincere inner tracking, a breaking out of conventional artistic boundaries and sometimes literally dancing the materials onto her chosen surface, letting those works speak their hidden language so she may be guided to an artistic resolution instead of controlling outcome to please the status quo.

They are not only beautiful to look at, but they also speak to us on a much deeper level, where understanding can be transmuted to healing, without words and the analytical mind. Where we can receive the joy of an image without need to pick it apart with the fine toothcomb of our intelligent academics and left-brain thinking function.

As we fumble toward ecstasy, we may well ask ourselves; how much bliss can we stand? How willing are we to walk unknown paths, so as to receive a new and fresh visual language that is calling to us from the future. In this space, artists are allowed to think out of the box and blend many mediums and materials for our delight, unifying ancient imagery with a modern voice.

Tracy has worked with the Sacred Yin and Sacred Yang in her paintings for many years; now she is bringing these forces together in the divine marriage, a testament to her own spiritual development and growth. I find it very healing when painters relinquish control over the outcome, and create, awake and alive and conscious, free and spontaneous, whilst having some fun in the process.

I would really like to thank the Barnard gallery for having the courage to support and show artists whose work doesn't always fit into the consumer mold. It is so important to me that these boxes and categories get stripped from our society so that the artist, the shamans of our modern era, can bring through our collective visual imagery in an authentic and uncensored way, whatever that may mean.

It is with great awe and privilege that I can now pronounce this exhibition open, in all it's vulnerability and wisdom and to those lucky guests whose walls will become the homes of these sacred images, may you receive all the blessings these images embrace.

Thank you Tracy and congratulations for this exquisite and sublime collection of ALL of our stories and to Cinny, your mom who passed away a short time ago, an amazing, naughty little lady as you described her. I can only imagine how proud she was of you.

I wish you a long life.



In the Field
2013
Sun-dye, liquid acrylic and oil on cotton
bed linen stretched over board
60 x 60 x 4.5 cmcm



In the Garden
2013
Sun-dye and chalk pastel on cotton
bed linen stretched over board
60 x 60 x 4.5 cm



In the Jungle
2013
Sun-dye and oil on cotton bed linen
stretched over board
60 x 60 x 4.5 cm



In the Forest
2013
Sun-dye, liquid acrylic and oil on cotton
bed linen stretched over board
60 x 60 x 4.5 cm



Pan "Looking for a savior beneath these dirty sheets"
2013
Sun dye, ink, bleach, chalk pastel, charcoal, acrylic and oil on 100% cotton bed linen
266 x 178 x 4.5 cm



Snake Dancer I, II and III

2013

Oil on canvas

116 x 61 x 4.4 cm

Dreams

2013

Oil on canvas

116 x 61 x 4.4 cm



Glenda I, II and III

2013

Oil on canvas

28 x 35 x 4.4 cm

FUMBLING TOWARDS ECSTASY

Written by Hazel Friedman

The Barnard Gallery is proud to present *Fumbling Towards Ecstasy* – an exhibition of paintings by Tracy Payne. Taken from the haunting song by Sarah McLachlan, the title provides a poignant hint of Payne’s relentless odyssey in search of self-actualisation. It is about leaving and grieving, loss and reclamation. It is a quest that is skinless, profound and in parts, viscerally painful, but articulated with grace, sensuality and beauty. In parts, Payne has literally inserted herself into the painting by lying on the bed sheets, which serve as giant canvases for some of her more provocative imagery. But describing this exhibition simply as a “body” of works, while literally accurate, does not encapsulate the spiritual processes and self-interrogation Payne has undertaken in this ongoing journey.

Continuing from where her previous *New Life* series left off, *Fumbling Towards Ecstasy* provides almost a chronological evolution of Payne’s efforts to access spirit through art and her embrace of creativity and creation. There are the *Cosmic Starbursts* – smaller paintings of inter-galactic explosions variously resembling magnified snowflakes or blood platelets viewed under a microscope. There are also the disconcerting *Hanging Paintings*. Payne depicts shapely female legs slightly elevated off the ground plane and almost balletic in their attenuated stance. They are mostly painted a lurid pink, suggesting life’s cheapness. Yet simultaneously, these works evoke a sense of ascension, even transcendence. And therein lie the paradoxes inherent in Payne’s ongoing duels and dances with duality, between yin and yang, sacred and profane. And always the twain shall meet.

For example, in her Snake Dancer series, Payne immortalises Glenda Kemp, the legendary stripper of the 1970s’, who raised body-temperatures and the ire of the church through her snake dances with Oupa – her pet python. In these works, however, Glenda’s features morph into those of Payne herself. And in the Glenda series, the snake seems almost to gag – even suffocate the dancer – an eerie echo of Payne’s previous bondage paintings. The serpent is, of course, one of the oldest and most powerful archetypal symbols in history. As both demon and deity, it is associated with duality, in all the major religions. In this sense Payne’s paintings give resonance to McLachlan’s evocative lyrics in her song ‘Fumbling Towards Ecstasy’.

“Companion to our demons
They will dance and we will play
With chairs, candles and cloth
Making darkness in the day
It will be easy to look in or out
Upstream or down without a thought”

Through its ability to shed its old skin the snake also symbolises rebirth or renewal. And this is the recurring refrain not only throughout Payne's exhibition but also in the show's centrepiece – a monumental painting of the Hindu God Shiva and Parvati in a carnal embrace.

In Hinduism, Parvati is more than Lord Shiva's wife. She is his Shakti, his power. And the two entwined deities – symbolising the masculine and feminine components of the self - represent balance. But there exists a third, dark force within this union: Kali – the "other" woman, who Payne also depicts. In Hindu mythology Parvati was known as the "Dark One" because she was dark skinned, and her husband teased her for such. She went away and had this dark skin removed, and became the "Golden One". According to myth the skin left over became Kali, whose name literally means "Dark."

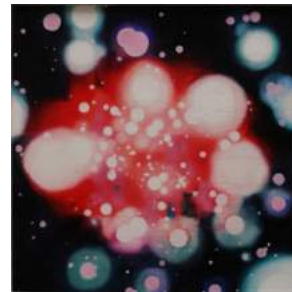
In Jungian mythology the dark side or shadow of the subconscious is the super-ego that, unless understood, confronted and tamed, exerts control over all the conscious choices we make in life, disrupting the harmony between yin and yang. Yet in the exhibition centrepiece, the coupling Shiva and Parvati are indeed as one. This is the first time in years that Payne has depicted men and women together in a single painting. This suggests a reconciliation of the splintered psyche, or perhaps the beginnings of the next interlinking phase of an endless journey for an artist who paints with both body and soul.



Big Bang
2011
Oil on board
30 x 30 x 4.8 cm



Cosmic Light I



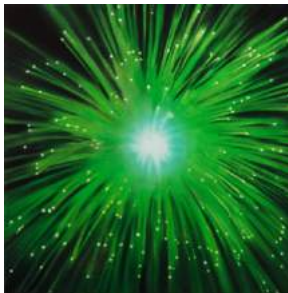
Cosmic Light II



Starburst



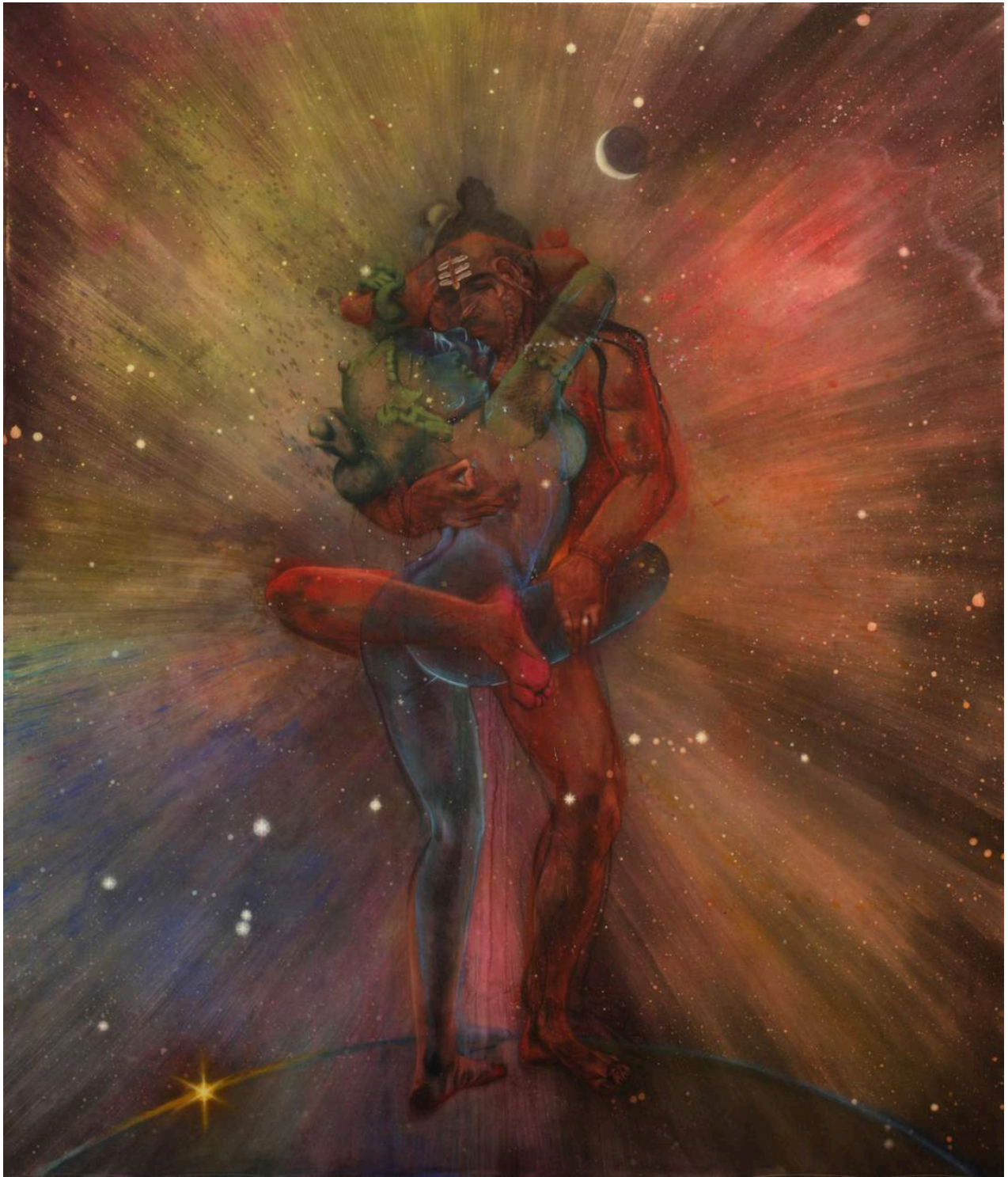
Fireworks I
2013
Oil on board
30 x 30 x 4.8 cm



Fireworks II



North Star



Shiva and Parvati "Come on baby light my fire"

2013

Ink, dye, bleach, vinegar, liquid acrylic, chalk pastel, charcoal, powdered pigment, bindis on 100% cotton bed linen

254 x 214 x 4.5 cm



Shiva and Parvati I – VI

2012

Mixed media on Bockingford, 300gms
17.8 x 12.7 cm

The Blood of Me

2012

Mixed media on Bockingford, 300gms
25.4 x 17.8 cm

THANK YOU

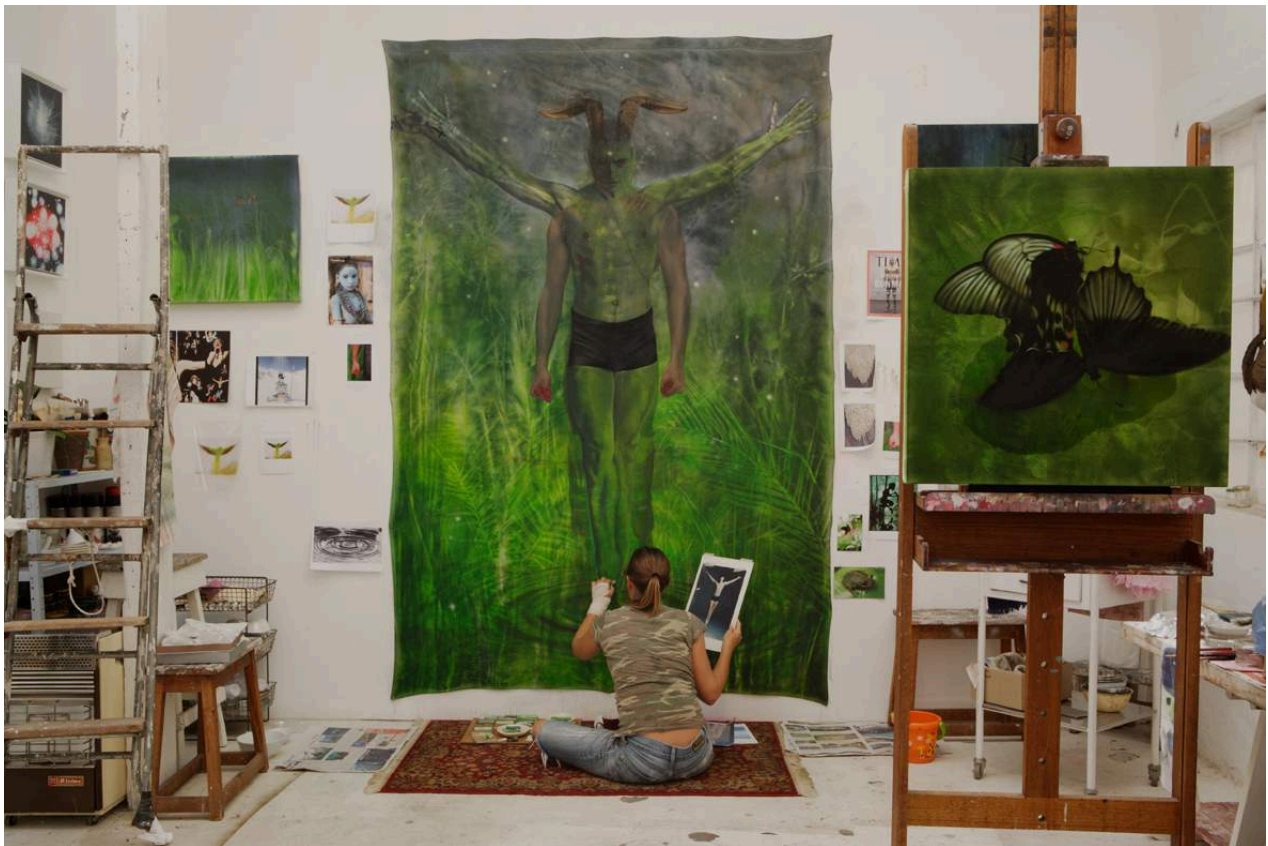
To my mother Cynthia and father Nigel for always supporting my creative endeavours and allowing me to be true to my soul's calling

To my sister Natalie for photographing my studio process and paintings

To Hayley Manson for facilitating my creative process in her ASTAR studio and for her opening speech

To Hazel Friedman for finding the words

To Barnard Gallery and staff for hosting Fumbling Towards Ecstasy in their beautiful space



Photograph by Natalie Payne