

**One cannot get fingerprints from a rock**



# BARRY REIGATE

One cannot get fingerprints from a rock

REFLEX AMSTERDAM



Explain How You Know exhibition



Only Fools & Falafals: W:235 H:305 cm, Acrylic, oil, spray paint, airbrush, paper collage, gloss paint, varnish, crayon and glue on canvas - 2012

## Who's for dinner?

*“we are afraid.  
our educational system tells us that we can all be big-ass winners.”*

Love is a Dog from Hell, Charles Bukowski, 1977

“Stupid as a painter” is an old French proverb, made famous by Marcel Duchamp. He used it to express what he perceived as the dead end of a “retinal” painterly practice, turning out works that pleased the eye, but failed to excite the intellect. According to the father of conceptual art, this practice barred artists from the quintessential to all art - metaphysical speculation. In this sense the real painter’s stupidity becomes his very reason to pick up painting, describing a lack of knowledge and a desire to find out by yourself, on your own terms, by your own means, with your hands and eyes. Not to articulate in words, but to create a visual language to examine and structure the world. Less weighed down by than grounded in its history Barry Reigate remains an independent observer, and takes on these qualities of painting, reinterpreting it as an expanded field that includes the ballpoint pen as well as the airbrush, offering an empowering back catalogue of contemporary artistic possibilities.

Looking at his paintings means entering a play of images, of visual puns, moments of slapstick, of visual narrative, with a plethora of subplots and references, full of altered meanings, double-entendres and ambiguities. It begins with the minute details and expands to the grand narrative. Beginning, say, with a stray line of blue marker, invisible from a few feet away, but oddly persistent as you draw nearer. Or the tiny, quickly pencilled half-closed eyes of a cartoon character, reminiscent of Pinocchio, the liar par excellence, next to what looks like residue of multicolored stripes, airbrushed over a slip of paper, since removed, leaving mere fragments from a rainbow, placed in a composition of scribbles and gestural marks, as well as drips and splotches.

All relating to the process of painting, as a craft as well as a way to create images, characters and narratives.

Reigate consciously makes his journey in the footsteps of giants, leading from the grandfather of bad painting and appropriation art, Duchamp’s pal Francis Picabia, to successors like Sigmar Polke (who rediscovered and elaborated the pictorial strategies of the Dada movement) and Martin Kippenberger (who not only in his painterly pastiches and grotesques, got heavily involved at the junction of high art and low life).

This comes at its most fluid and organic in Reigate’s drawings, that allow for a candid observation of the artist at work, thinking, speculating. Memphis designer Ettore Sottsass’ iconic “Carlton” shelf makes a prominent appearance on a small piece of paper, as if torn from a note pad, alongside a cast of two single eyeballs, a clown’s head, a rainbow, several balls, floral motifs, a sticker a happy green face and the letters WOW, a scribbled frog, a pyramid structure that mimics sculptures by Sol Lewitt’s (marked “Master” at the top), and an outline drawing of two feet in clown’s shoes extending to two hands holding two balls, no body, but legs and balls with polka dots. It portrays a colorful, occasionally garish postmodernist inferno, an excruciating nightmare of reference mayhem - and thereby renders a mischievous presentation of the artist at work: no holds barred, anything goes, and everything must go. Jotted down in direct notations of thought, with impressive fluidity, it’s a cloudburst of a brain storm, revealing a glimpse of Reigate’s inquisitive artistic interests and investments: intuitively finding consistencies in the seemingly random, fusing them to chaotic arrangements, and creating intricate compositions suggesting complex narratives.

The large scale paintings follow the basic strategy of his drawings but present a different set of tactics to construct the overlapping layers as interwoven strands of images and meanings. They show off a wealth of visual content, made up of adversative elements, packed to maximum density, exhibiting an architectonic sense of precision in composing. The word composition and its musical connotation is not used lightheartedly here, as various forms of repetitions, in protagonists, style, technique, form and color are some of the reoccurring features. Some are easily recognizable, like the three pigs and the big bad wolf from the well-known fairy tale, others less so, like a wooden contraption from a Smurf animation.

Or basic geometrical forms and graphs, nicked from illustrations of equations in a set of standardized SAT math tests, which could equally represent modernist artworks. Also specific color combinations, or painterly techniques make reappearances, such as painted comic-style bubbles with a prominent reflection, black circles splattered with small speckles of pastel-colored paint, emulating the color schemes of synthetic veneers used in Memphis furniture.

The style is promiscuous, an eclectic mix with radical shifts and illustrational ciphers. But there are other narratives, that are maybe less obvious and more metaphorical, but emphasize the scope of the artistic ambition on display. At a time when London was shaken by a wave of violent riots, the artist came across an irritating advert for bottled gravy showing the wolf and the three little pigs enjoying dinner together, in all the anthropomorphous retro-glory of their Disney-esque cartoon incarnations, all shiny and smiling, celebrating family values: "ah—togetherness!". It brings up the question what or whom they might be eating?

While the fairy tale relates a story advocating the importance of constructing a safe house, or, in a wider sense, sustainable structures for life. There is a similarity to the motif of the math

exams, the aspiration of "a better life through academic qualification"; as the artist put it, seemingly abstract geometry devoid of metaphorical content, yet still representing social hierarchy and symbolic order. This also enters any act of reading the fairy tale to children, inadvertently making parents think about their own lives, the sustainability of the structures created for themselves. Isn't having dinner with the wolf like courting disaster? There is an analogy to the intuitive approach of the artist to his work, as a mix of planned steps and improvisations, allowed mutations of forms, one layer obscuring, destroying or enhancing the one applied before, like building blocks or bricks, yet accumulating meaning to the brink of exhaustion. Bare canvas signals transparency, there is no illusionism, every brush stroke and paint mark is there for a reason, carrying its very own meaning, as totemic as the little stick figure on top of the "Carlton" shelf.

This is not an exercise in deconstruction, in the lines of Derrida's concept, implicitly questioning the validity of the underlying structures upon which other meanings lie. Thoroughly and proudly contaminated by history, and at a time where the art world appears to always be fixated on the next big thing, Barry Reigate goes back to the point, where painting is a practice of dealing with the world by dipping his tools into the primordial soup of raw paint, a chaotic situation, where everything is possible. The quest is to extract, with classical and clearly defined artistic means, as redundant as they may appear, pieces of work, that can formulate a drama for today, that not only reflects basic artistic and painterly questions, but expand on them, right to the dinner table, and with the sincerity of the painter.

Andreas Schlaegel, Berlin



Equation exhibition



Untitled (Equation 9): 210x150cm, Acrylic, oil paint, spray paint, airbrush, pencil, eggshell & varnish on Linen - 2012



Install shot: Shelved Wisdom: H:178cm W:134cm D: 25cm (series of Academic Forms) - 2013



Untitled (Equation 12) 210x150cm, Acrylic, oil paint, spray paint, airbrush, pencil, eggshell & varnish on Linen - 2012



I Wanna Be Adored: H:46 W:22 L:53cm ApproxCement & fibreglass matting. Edition of 2+1AP - 2012



Untitled (Equation 11) 210x150cm, Acrylic, oil paint, spray paint, airbrush, pencil, eggshell & varnish on Linen - 2012



Untitled (I am a Barbarian#1) Base 40x40cm, H: 179cm Edition of 3+2 APs - 2013



Untitled (Equation 10) 210x150cm, Acrylic, oil paint, spray paint, airbrush, pencil, eggshell & varnish on Linen - 2012











Equation exhibition



Untitled (small equation, Hexagons): Acrylic, oil, spray paint, airbrush, crayon, varnish on Linen - 2013



Untitled (PP#23): Acrylic, oil, spray paint, airbrush, crayon, pencil, varnish, dirt & beeswax on canvas - 2013



Untitled (AF#2): Eggshell on birch ply, H:27, W:30, D:8.5cm on cast concrete base - 2013



Untitled (small equation, structure): Acrylic, oil, spray paint, airbrush, crayon, varnish on Linen - 2013



Untitled (a broken sword) Cast concrete, 26x26x26cm Edition of 3 + 2 APs - 2013



Untitled (MPP#9) 210x150cm Acrylic, oil, spraypaint, crayon, pencil, varnish, airbrush, dirt & beeswax on canvas - 2013





Untitled (love is a dog from hell # 1): 210x150cm, Acrylic, oil paint, spray paint, airbrush, pencil, eggshell & varnish on Linen - 2014

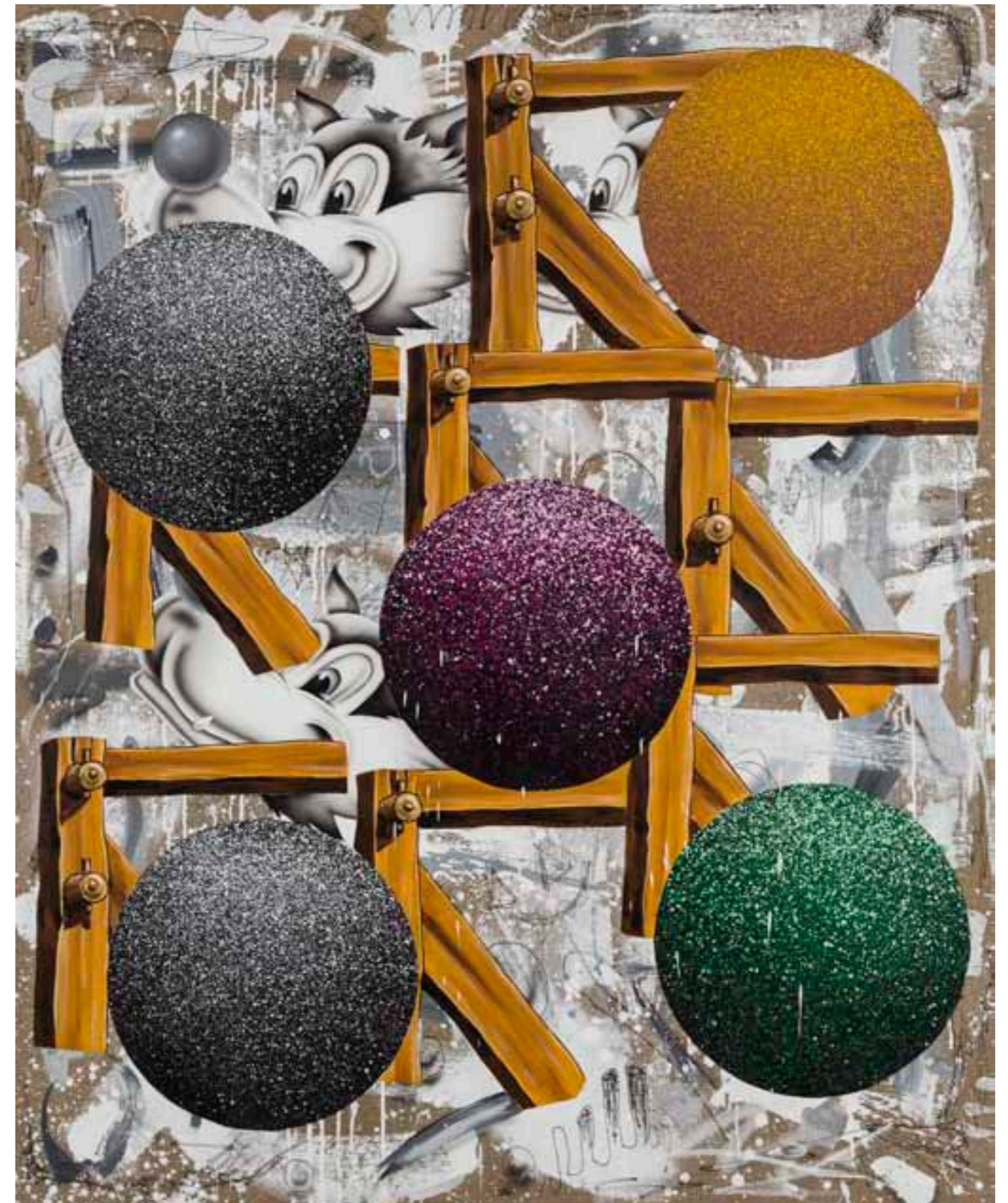


Untitled (skinny jeans): 61x55cm, Acrylic, oil paint, spray paint, airbrush, pencil on Linen - 2014



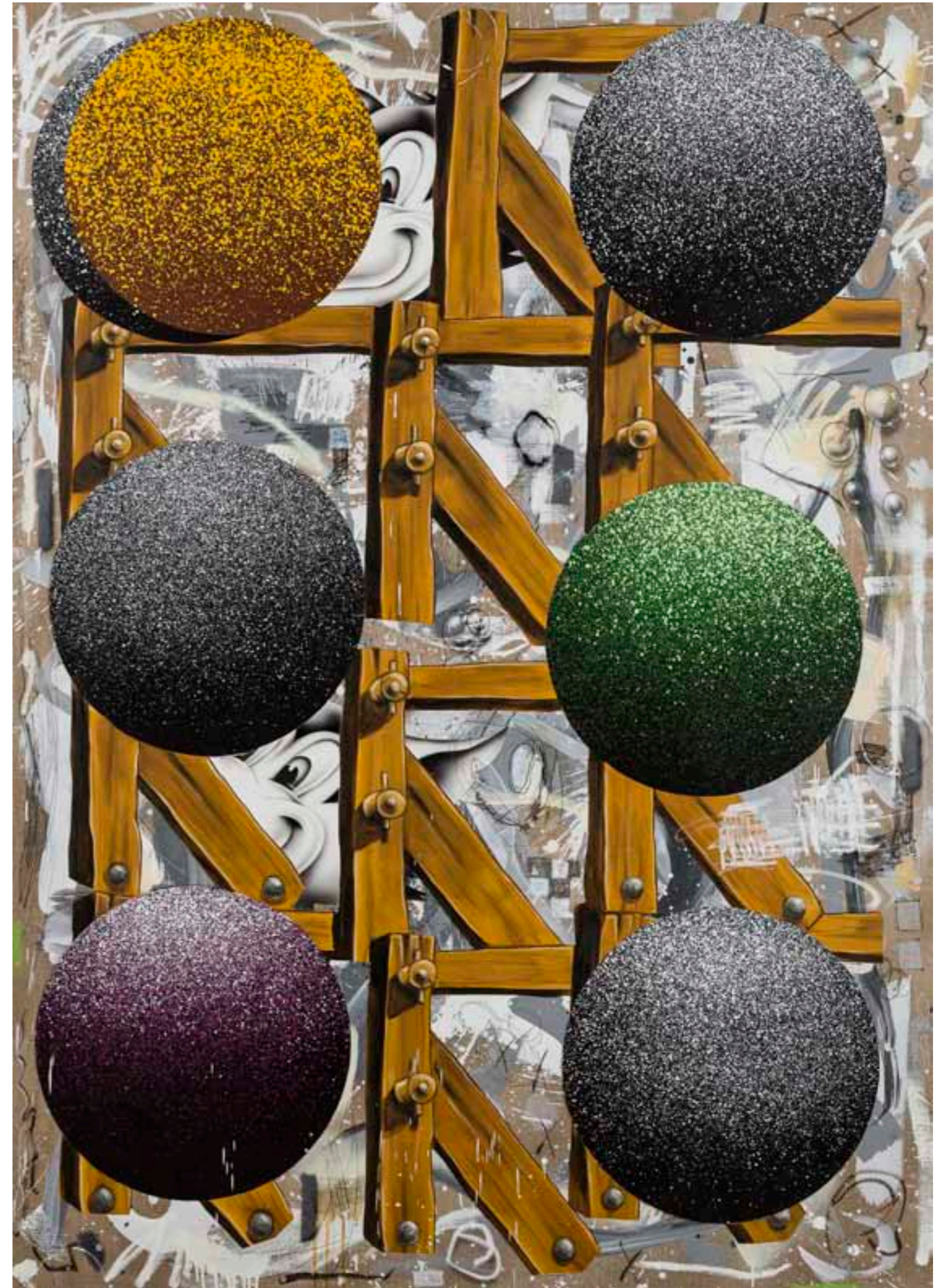


Untitled (no one told me the world was flat): 91x63cm, Acrylic, oil paint, spray paint, airbrush, pencil, beeswax & eggshell on Linen - 2014 41



Untitled (full moons): 129x159cm, Acrylic, oil paint, spray paint, airbrush, pencil, beeswax & eggshell on Linen - 2014

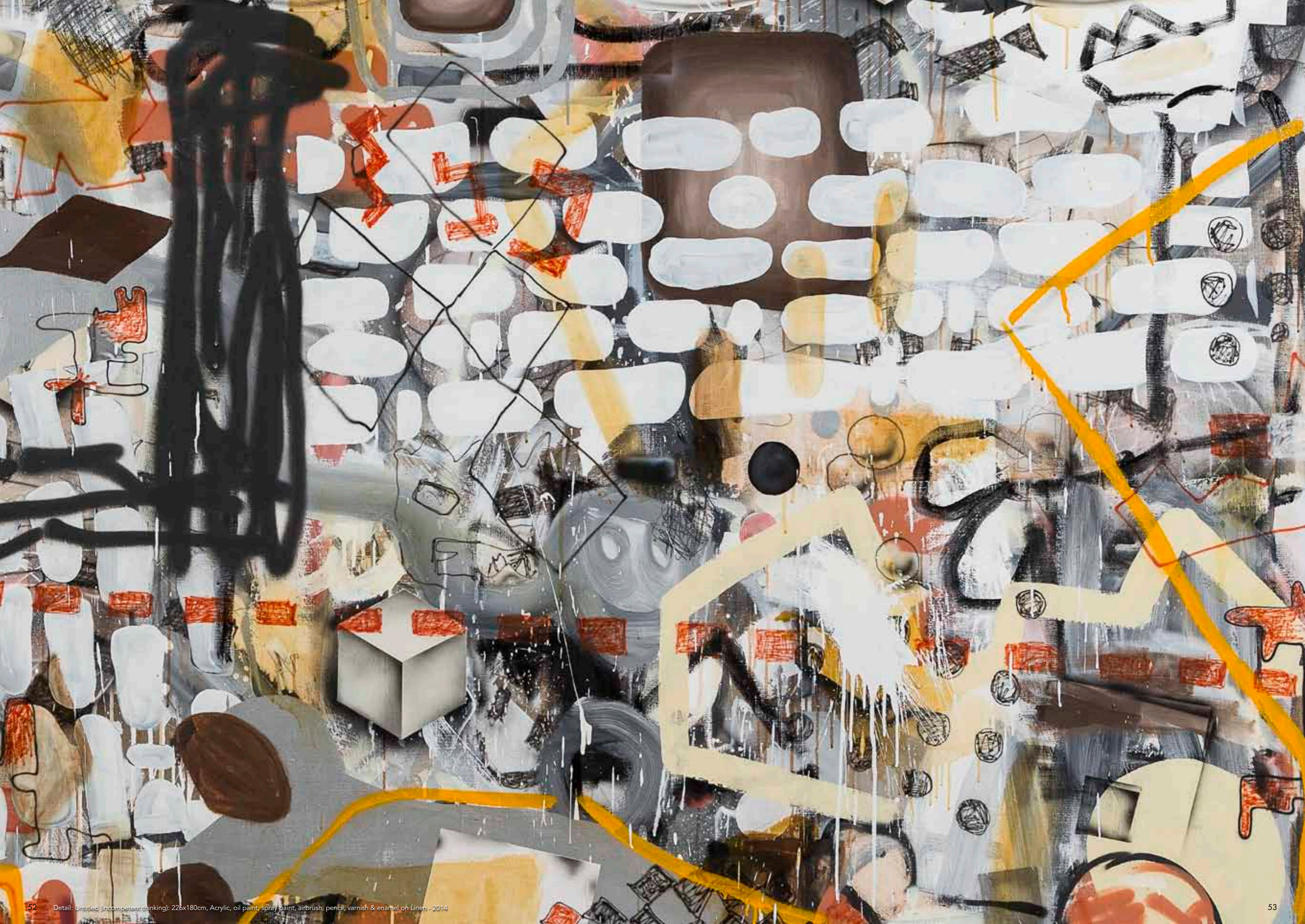




Untitled (love is a dog from hell # 2): 150x210cm, Acrylic, oil paint, spray paint, airbrush, pencil, varnish & enamel on Linen - 2014





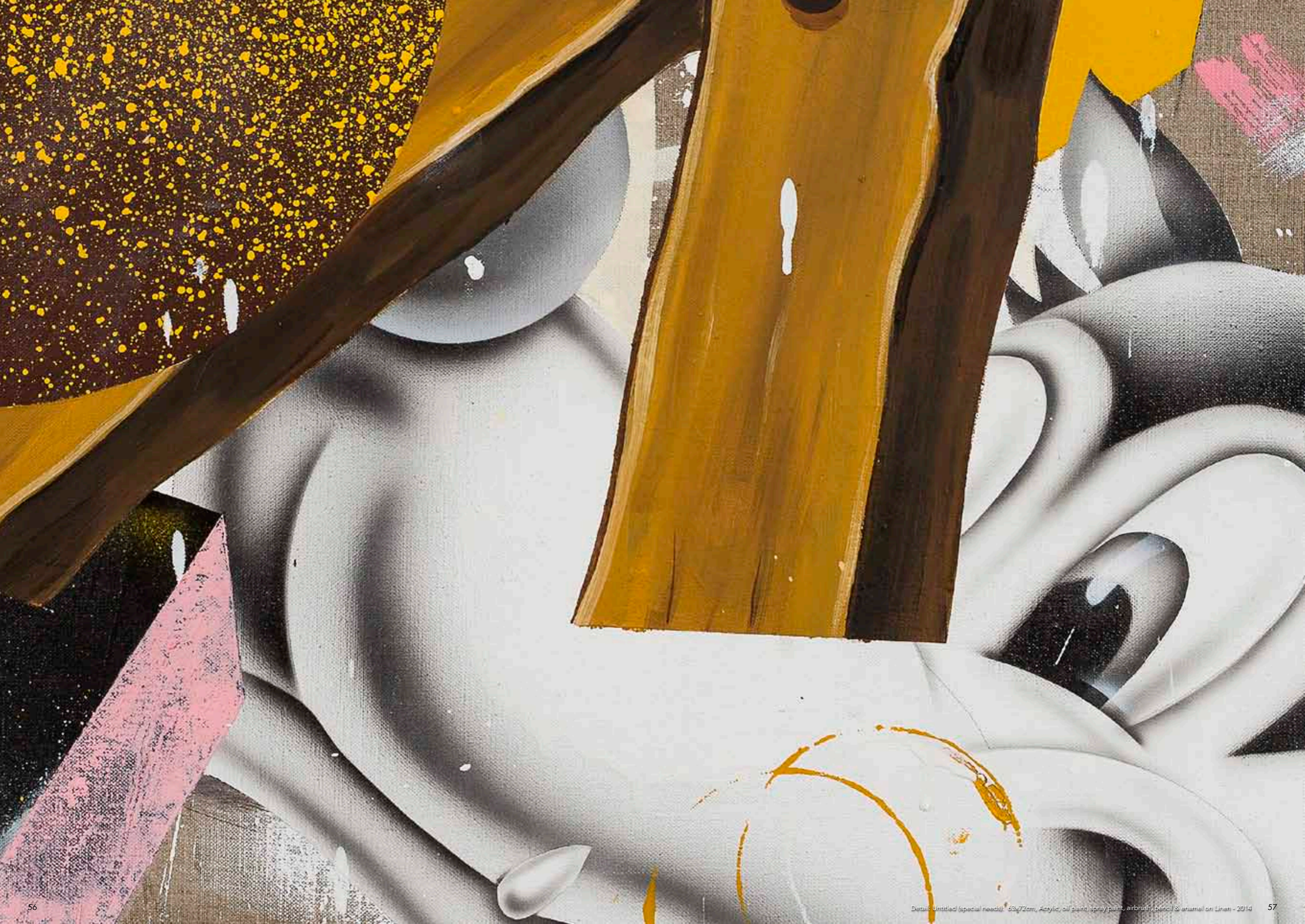




Untitled (an attempt to break in): 63x72cm, Acrylic, oil paint, spray paint, airbrush, pencil & enamel on Linen - 2014



Untitled (modern living): 63x72cm, Acrylic, oil paint, spray paint, airbrush, pencil & enamel on Linen - 2014



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