

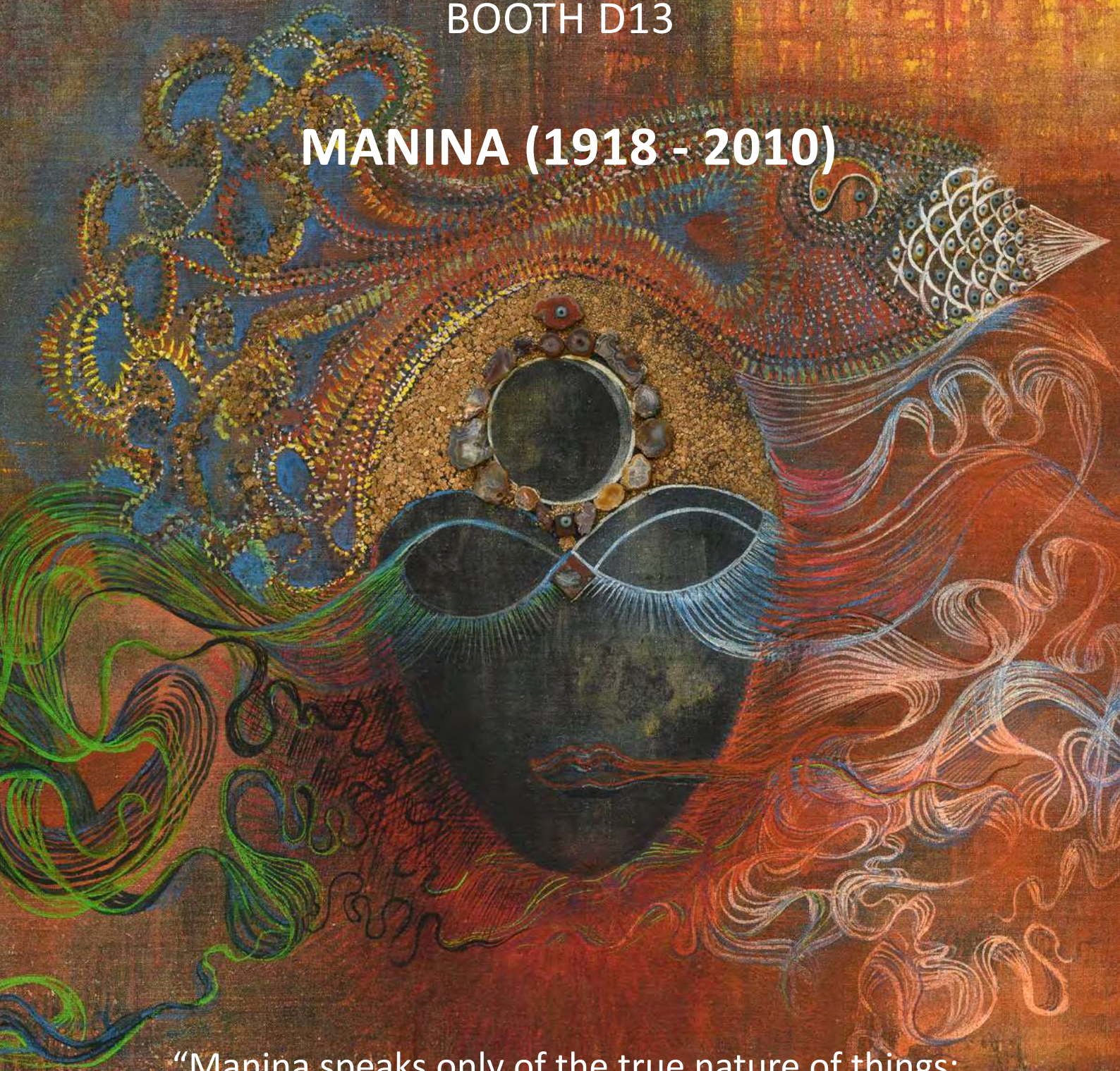
RICHARD SALTOUN

ART BASEL

16 - 21 JUNE 2026

BOOTH D13

MANINA (1918 - 2010)



“Manina speaks only of the true nature of things;
she is pure poetry, a born Surrealist.”

— André Breton.

Fifteen years after her passing in Venice, Manina's extraordinary contribution to Surrealism remains as powerful and relevant as ever. Celebrating her enduring legacy, the gallery presents eight rare works released from the estate exclusively for this occasion—marking the first presentation of her work in thirty years.

Bringing together significant paintings and drawings from the 1940s to the 1960s, the selection traces the evolution of a dreamlike and deeply symbolic practice. Recurring motifs — trees of life, shells, eggs, eyes, fish, and radiant suns — form a poetic cosmology in which spiritual and physical worlds dissolve into one another. Female figures with reflective faces, flowing hair, and metamorphic bodies emerge through luminous chromatic fields, suspended between vision and memory.

Following the tragic violent death of the artist's daughter in 1960, her work acquired a greater spiritual and introspective intensity. These motifs became vehicles for transformation, drawing on alchemy, Jungian thought, and mystical traditions while remaining rooted in a universal visual language.

Seen together, these works reveal Manina as a singular voice within post-war Surrealism, whose practice expanded the movement beyond its Parisian origins. The works on view restore visibility to an artist long overlooked, reaffirming her place within the history of women's Surrealism.





Born in Vienna in 1918, Surrealist artist Manina (a self-invented name, meaning 'little hand' in Italian) grew up amid the vibrant artistic milieu of pre-War Paris. The daughter of Expressionist painter Viktor Tischler and an operatic soprano mother, at 16 she became a muse for Dadaist photographer Erwin Blumenfeld, immortalised in many works including the iconic *Manina / L'âme du torse* (1934).

Facing rising antisemitism in France, in 1938 Manina fled to Los Angeles with her husband, the screenwriter Robert Thoeren, where she remained for the next decade. She began to draw in the late 1940s following a visit to Frida Kahlo in Mexico and following a move to New York at the end of her marriage, she created a group of ink and pastel works exquisitely rendered with detailed line. Psychological in focus and uncanny in effect, as if guided, she later reflected, 'by some outside power', they depict solitary women, animistic 'trees of life' and hallucinatory structures on scales alternately diminutive and vast. Gaining early recognition for her dream-like visions, Manina soon exhibited at New York's Hugo Gallery in 1951 alongside René Magritte, the gallery was run by Alexander Iolas, and subsequently at Jean Cocteau's 'Galleria Cocteau' at the Jardin du Palais Royal in Paris, the following year.

Returning to post-War Europe in 1952, first to London, then Paris, Manina settled in Venice where she lived for the rest of her life. Soon after returning, she met her second husband, the French Surrealist poet Alain Jouffroy, with whom she published *Les quatre saisons d'une âme* (1955) featuring her drawings and his poems, written in spontaneous response. Her connection with Surrealism was furthered with an exhibition at Galerie Fürstenberg in Paris (1957), introduced through André Breton – who declared her works 'pure poetry' – and by her inclusion in the *Exposition International du Surrealism* in Paris in 1959.

From the mid-1950s onward, Manina began exploring symbolic form and tonal scale in large-scale canvases, a direction that would continue to shape her practice over the next three decades. Soon after, she painted *Vol de lupté* (1958), a surreal landscape with crescent moon, mythic bird and isometric forms, made in homage to her friend Max Ernst. Following the tragic and violent death of her daughter in 1960, her works took on even greater spiritual resonance, consolidating the 'feminine' associated motifs of eggs, shells and suns with serpents, eyes and mask-like faces into a mature, pictorial cosmology. Increasingly free in their formal arrangement, the works from the 1970s and 80s delve further into the realms of the imaginary. Painting, for the artist, had become a transmutation of the self in which, she noted, there was 'a kind of falling-into-a-trance, into a state unfettered by time or space'.

In 1975 Manina co-founded Group AZ, Italy's sole Surrealist association. Existing for only a few years, their first exhibition was organised around the theme of death – a central concern of her painting. Responding to the 'magico-poetic' quality of Manina's painting, in 1986 Arturo Schwarz selected her for the exhibition *Arte e Alchimia* at the 42nd Venice Biennial and her second participation following the first in 1964. Schwarz also included her later in *I Surrealisti* at the Palazzo Reale, Milan in 1989. Continuing to work until late in her life, Manina died in Venice in 2010.

Marianne Tischler (Manina) was born in 1918 in Vienna and died in 2010 in Venice. She was included in the 32nd Venice Biennial in 1964 and the 42nd Venice Biennial in 1986. Her work has been exhibited at Palazzo Reale, Milan (1989); Bevilacqua La Masa, Venice (1962; 1956; 1955); Exposition International du Surrealism, Galleria Cordier, Paris (1959); Galerie Fürstenberg, Paris (1957); Galleria Cocteau – Jardin du Palais Royal, Paris (1952) and Hugo Gallery, New York (1951; 1952) amongst others.



MANINA (1918 - 2010)

Untitled, 1950s

Watercolour on paper

Signed and dedicated recto

46 x 31 cm

Framed: 47 x 63 cm

(MAN024)

€ 35,000.00 + applicable taxes





MANINA (1918 - 2010)

Untitled, 1950

Pastel on paper

Signed and dated recto

35 x 55 cm

Framed: 55.5 x 76.1 cm

(MAN063)

€ 18,000.00 + applicable taxes



"Her paintings, rather than surrealist, can be defined as "inspired". Indeed, Manina places herself before the canvas in all naturalness, in the disposition of the initiate who questions themselves to unravel within themselves the secrets of the world, entirely reflected in the dark mirror of the soul. In Manina, this "dark mirror" is particularly clear, and her magic, expressed in canvases often set up like talismans—where the mark, if it does not pulverize into light, wanders bound in Neo-Symbolist and Art Nouveau rhythms—does not disturb but reassures."

- Fabrizio Dentice



MANINA (1918 - 2010)

Egyptian sculpture, 1950

Oil on card

Signed and dated recto and
titled and location verso

36 x 56 cm

Framed: 50 x 71 cm

(MAN216)

€ 35,000.00 + applicable taxes





MANINA (1918 - 2010)

Untitled, 1951

Pen and watercolour on paper

Signed and dated recto

45.5 x 30 cm

Framed: 64 x 49.4 cm

(MAN220)

€ 15,000.00 + applicable taxes





MANINA (1918 - 2010)

L'Être Aimé [The Beloved One], 1954

Ink on plastic

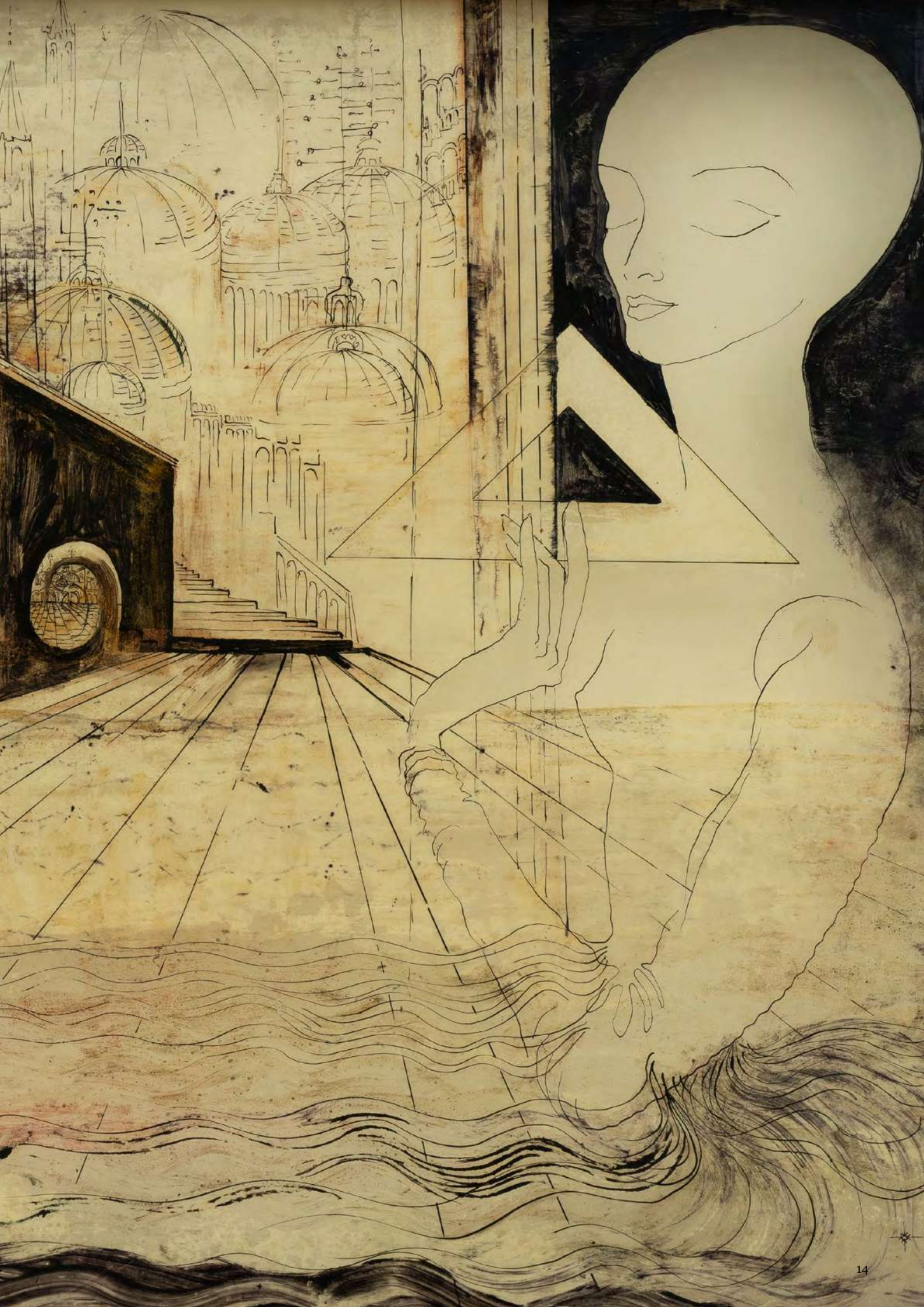
Signed, dated, titled and location recto

60 x 65 cm

Framed: 67 x 76 cm

(MAN059)

On Reserve





Erwin Blumenfeld, *Manina*, Paris 1936



MANINA (1918 - 2010)

Acqua alta [High water], 1956

Oil on canvas board

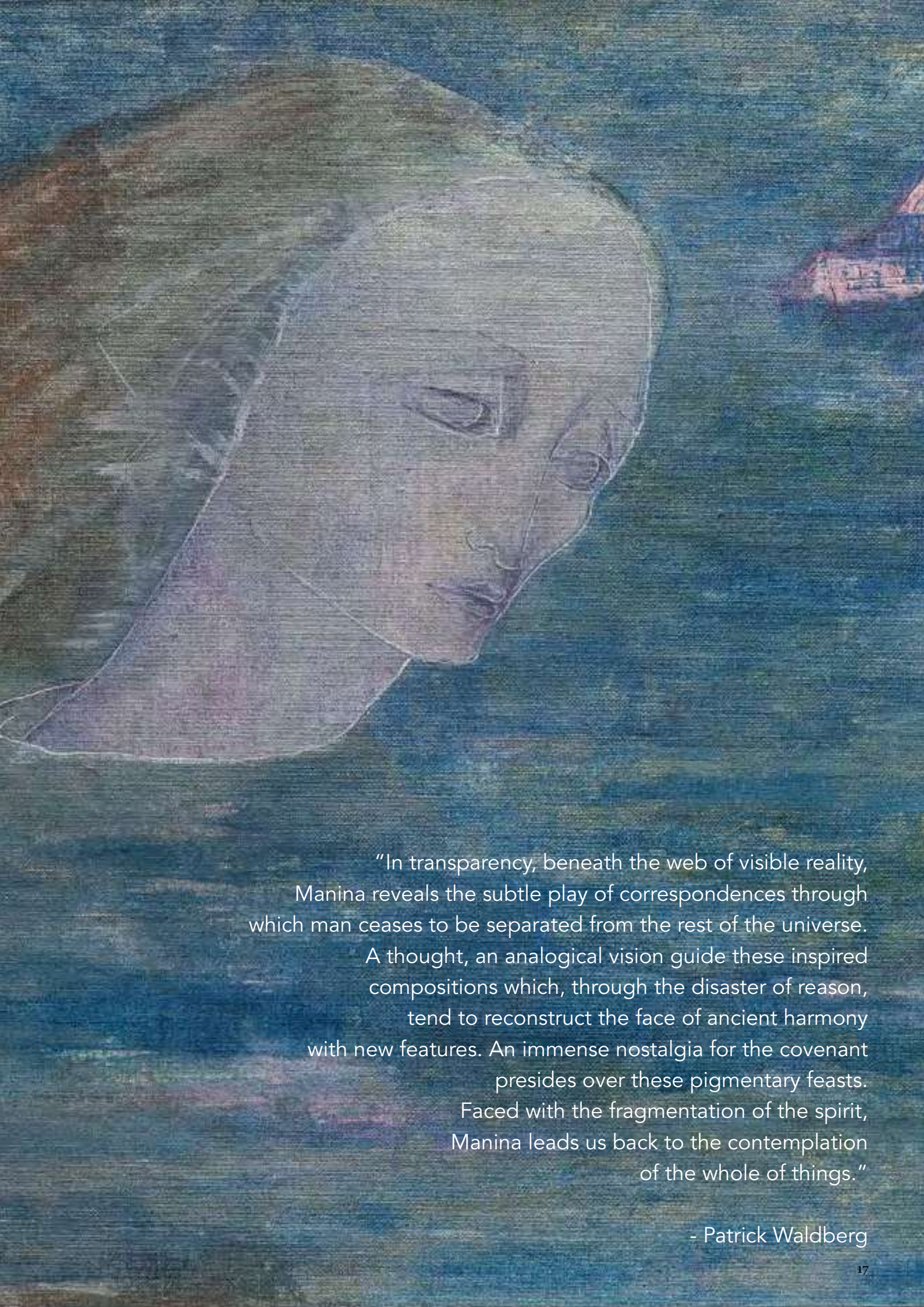
Signed, dated and location recto
and titled verso

34.5 x 45 cm

Framed: 46.5 x 56.2 cm

(MAN159)

On Reserve



"In transparency, beneath the web of visible reality, Manina reveals the subtle play of correspondences through which man ceases to be separated from the rest of the universe. A thought, an analogical vision guide these inspired compositions which, through the disaster of reason, tend to reconstruct the face of ancient harmony with new features. An immense nostalgia for the covenant presides over these pigmentary feasts. Faced with the fragmentation of the spirit, Manina leads us back to the contemplation of the whole of things."

- Patrick Waldborg



MANINA (1918 - 2010)

Ritorno nell'uovo [Back in the egg], 1963

Oil on canvas

Signed and dated recto

120 x 140 cm

Framed: 126 x 146 cm

(MAN050)

€ 120,000.00 + applicable taxes





MANINA (1918 - 2010)

Sacrificial Mask, 1963

Oil on canvas

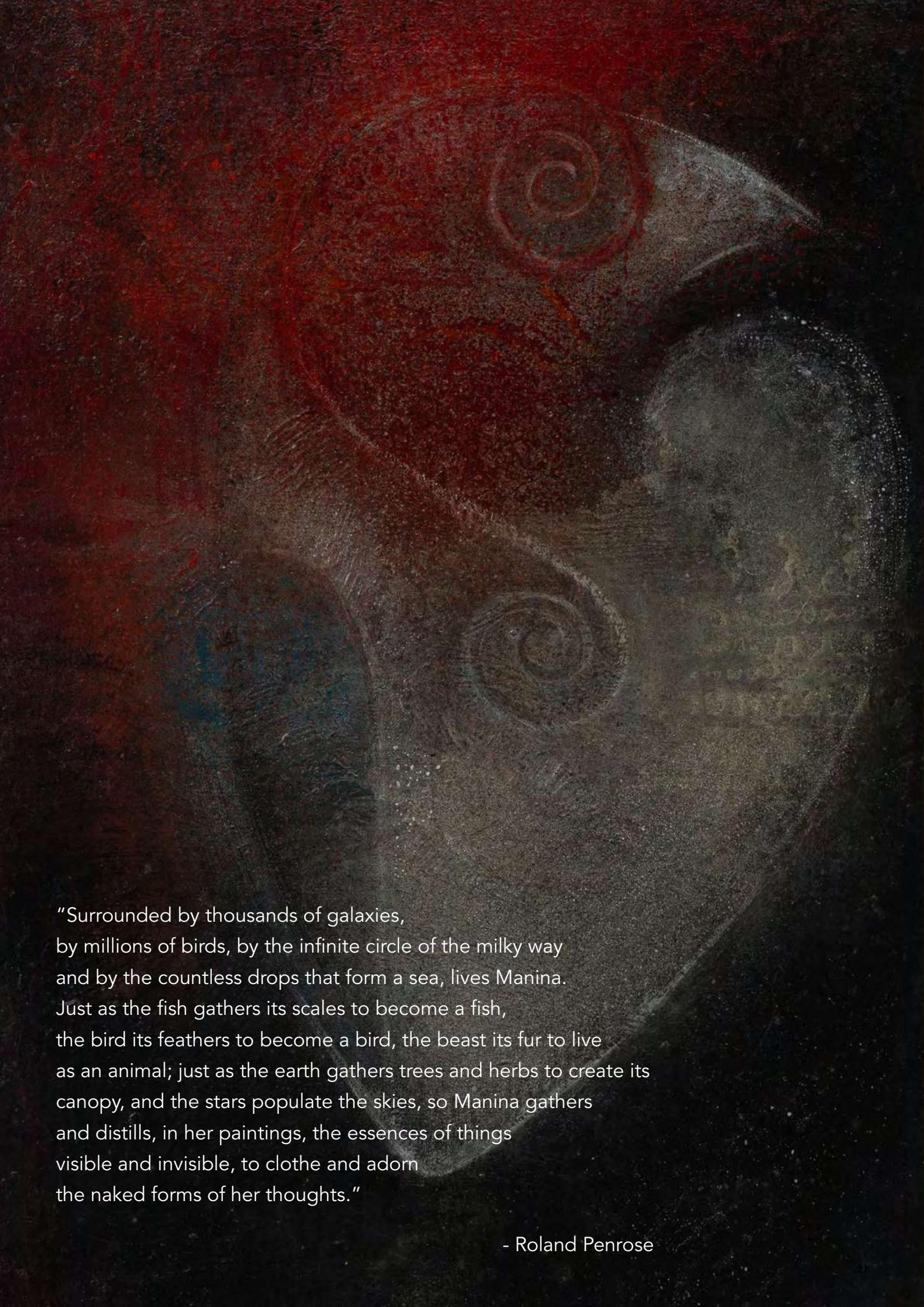
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59.5 x 39.5 cm

Framed: 66 x 46 cm

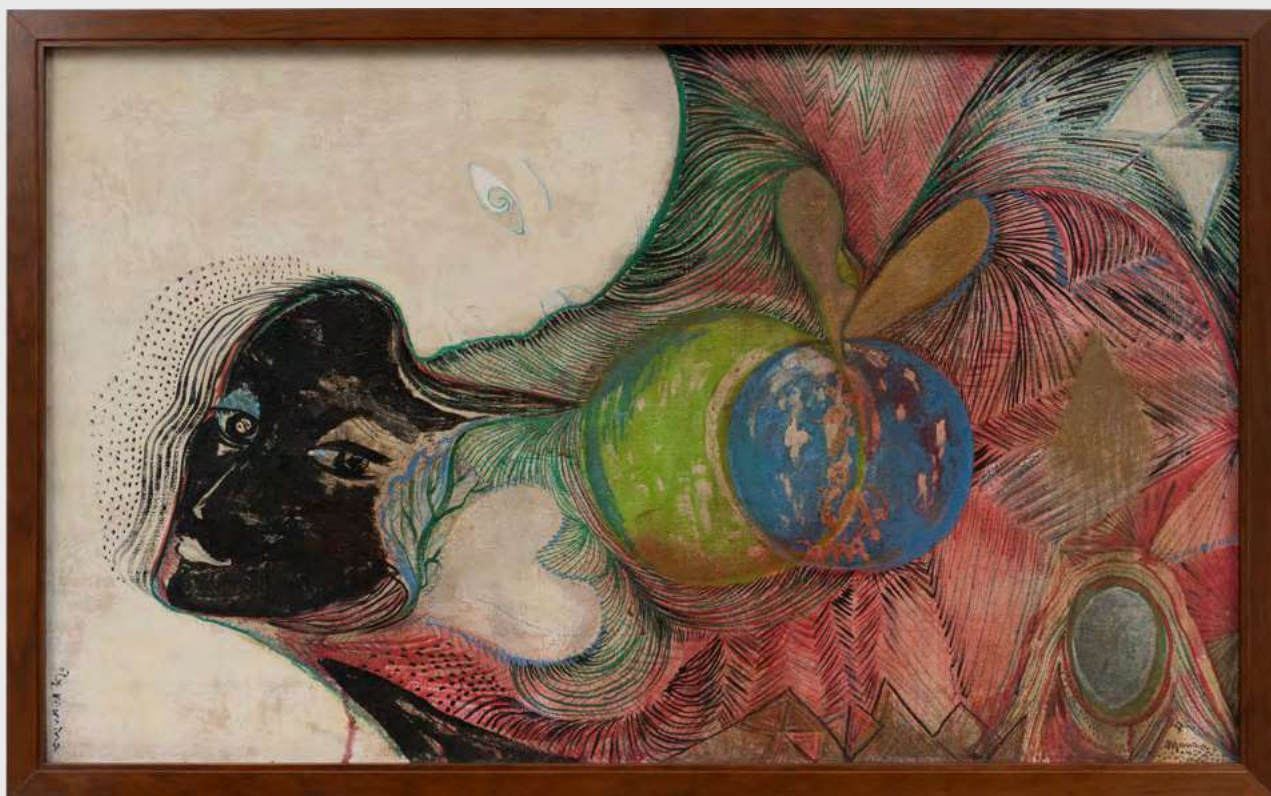
(MAN007)

€ 60,000.00 + applicable taxes



"Surrounded by thousands of galaxies,
by millions of birds, by the infinite circle of the milky way
and by the countless drops that form a sea, lives Manina.
Just as the fish gathers its scales to become a fish,
the bird its feathers to become a bird, the beast its fur to live
as an animal; just as the earth gathers trees and herbs to create its
canopy, and the stars populate the skies, so Manina gathers
and distills, in her paintings, the essences of things
visible and invisible, to clothe and adorn
the naked forms of her thoughts."

- Roland Penrose



MANINA (1918 - 2010)

Marriage Alchemique [Alchemic Marriage], 1967

Oil and mixed media on canvas

Signed and dated recto and

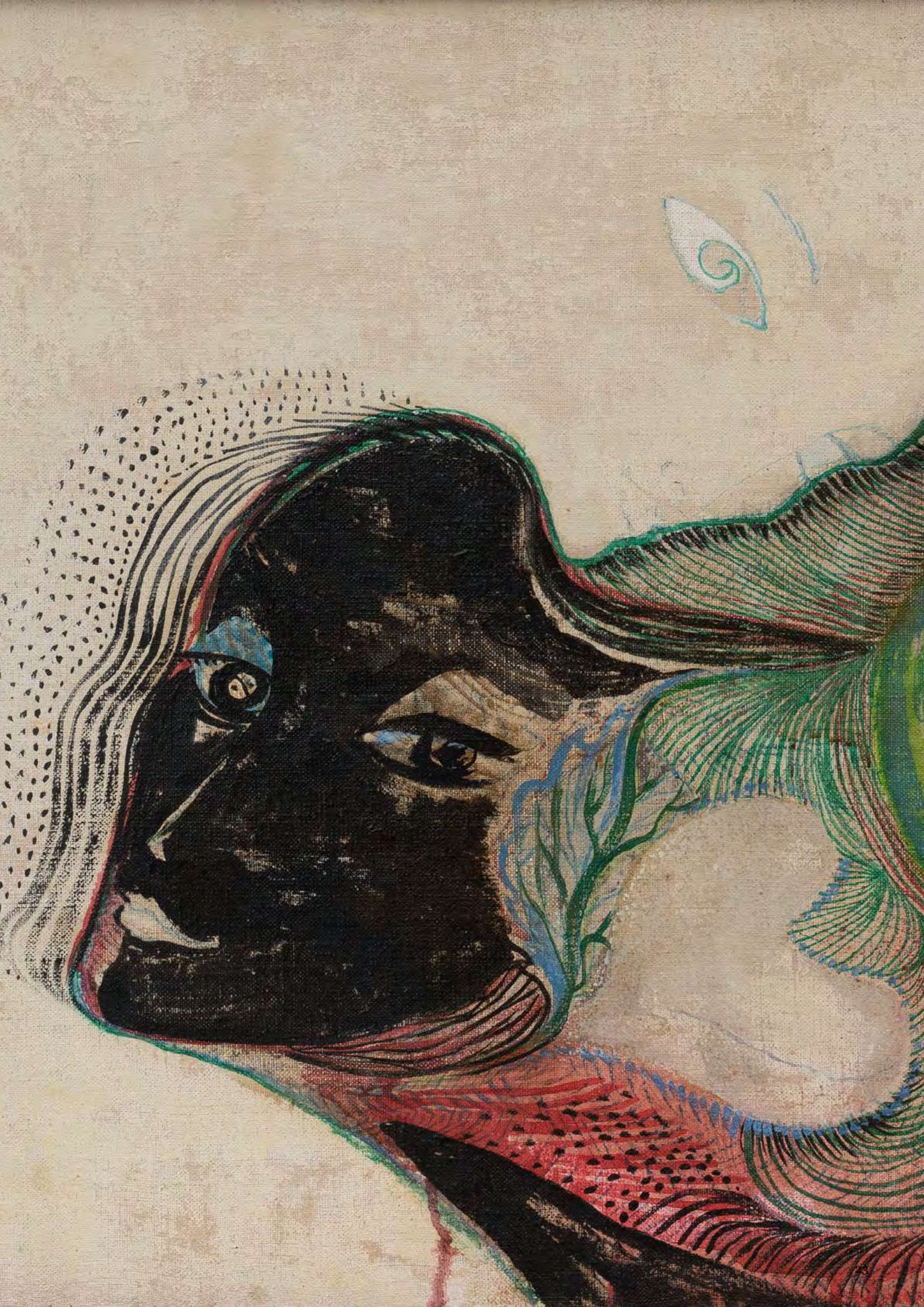
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60.5 x 100.5 cm

Framed: 65.5 x 105 cm

(MAN055)

€ 80,000.00 + applicable taxes





MANINA (1918 - 2010)

Materializzare lo Spazio, Spiritualizzare la Materia
[Materialising Space, Spiritualising Matter], 1968

Oil on canvas

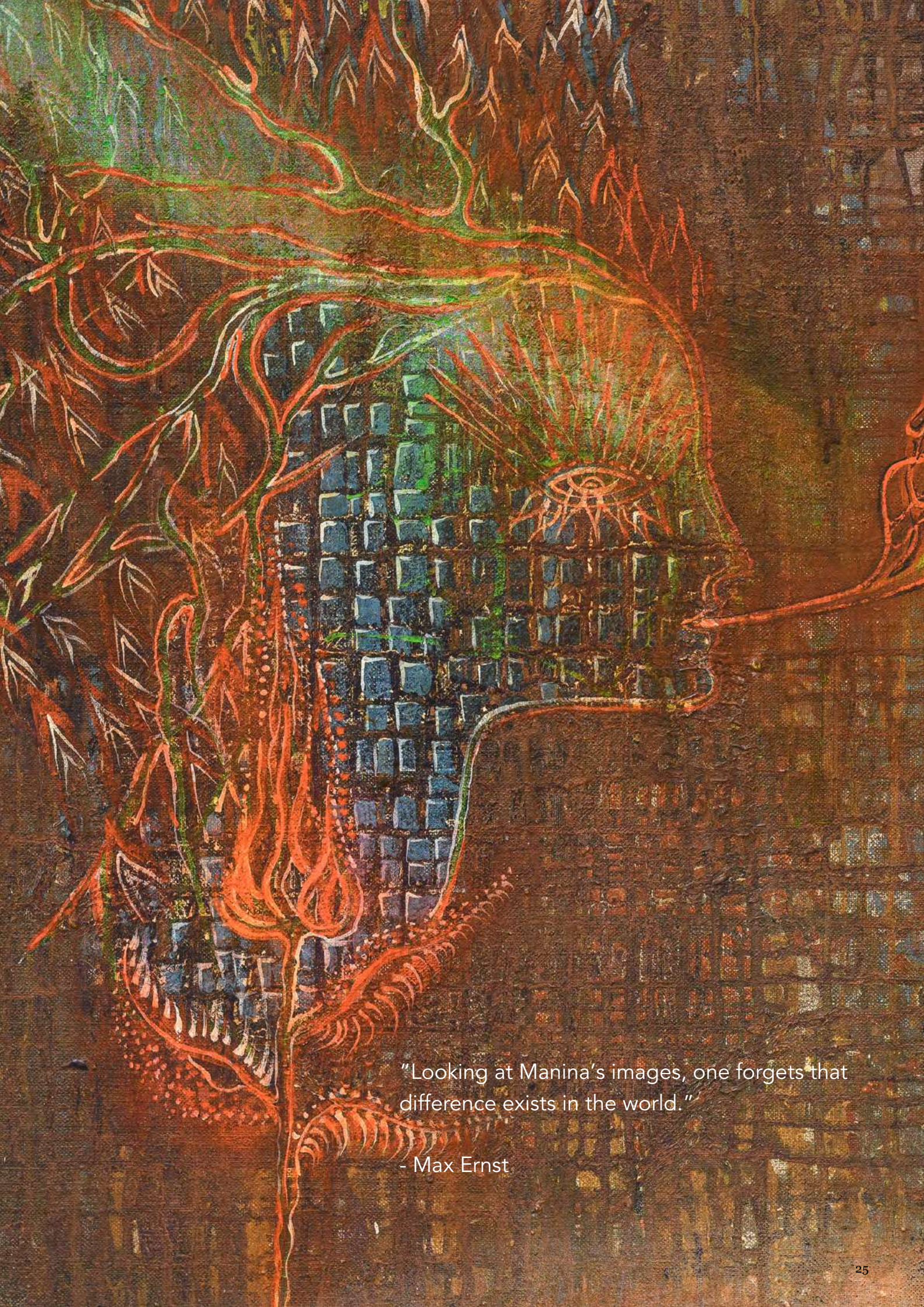
Signed and dated recto, and signed and dated verso

70 x 120 cm

Framed: 72.5 x 122.3 cm

(MAN051)

€ 80,000.00 + applicable taxes



"Looking at Manina's images, one forgets that
difference exists in the world."

- Max Ernst



MANINA (1918 - 2010)

Altare alla libertà (Sapienza)

[Altar to freedom (Wisdom)], 1968

Oil and Murano glass on canvas

Signed recto and signed, dated, titled,
dedicated and location verso

140 x 118 cm

(MAN012)

On Reserve





MANINA (1918 - 2010)

Larva, crisalide e spirito

[Larva, chrysalis, and spirit], 1968

Oil on canvas

Signed and dated verso

70 x 120 cm

Framed: 72.2 x 121.5 cm

(MAN033)

€ 80,000.00 + applicable taxes





MANINA (1918 - 2010)

Angelo nostro spirito [Angel our spirit], 1969

Oil and mixed media on canvas

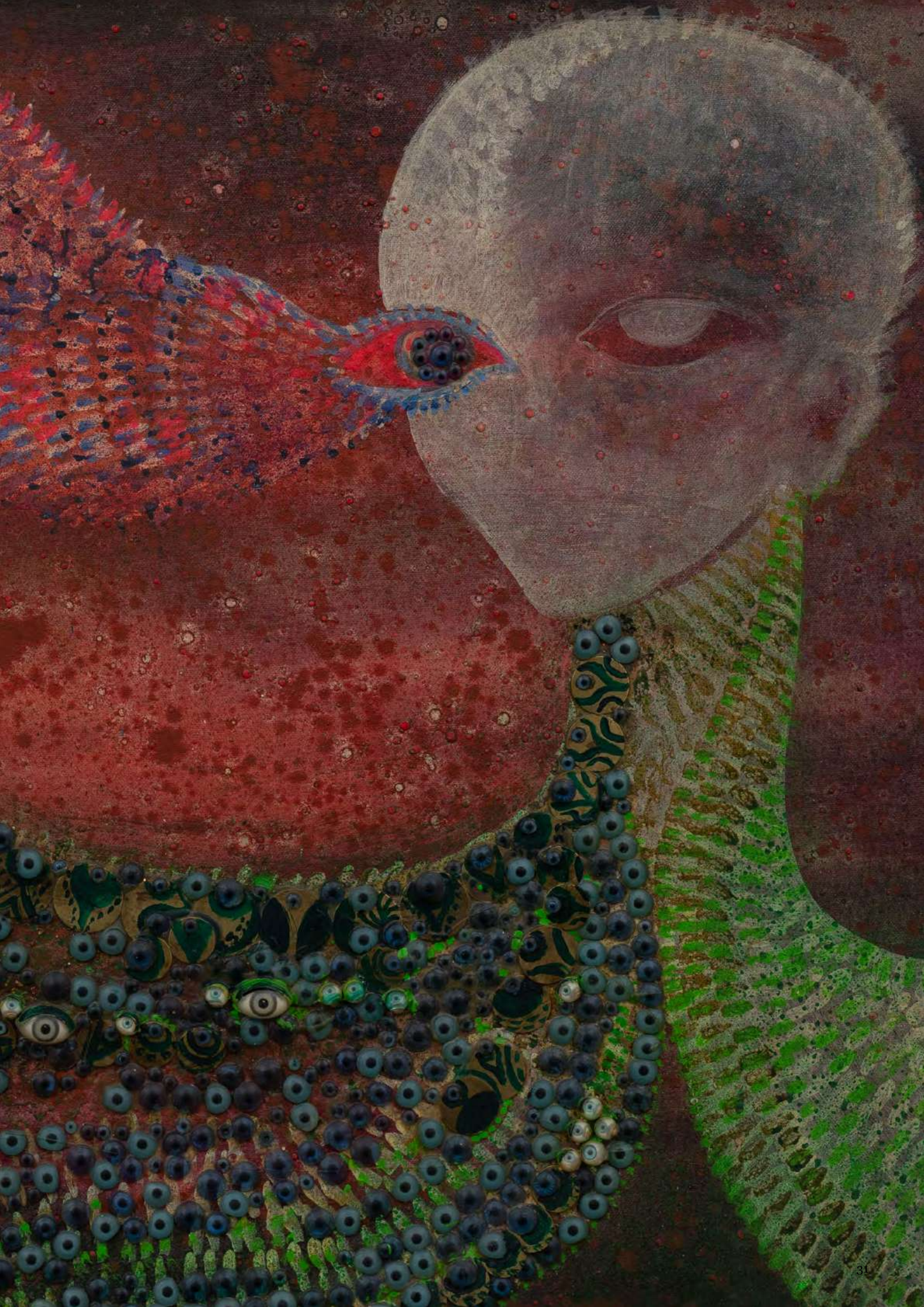
Signed, dated and titled verso

62.5 x 83 cm

Framed: 68 x 88 cm

(MAN013)

Not For Sale





Erwin Blumenfeld, *Manina - L'âme du torse*, 1934

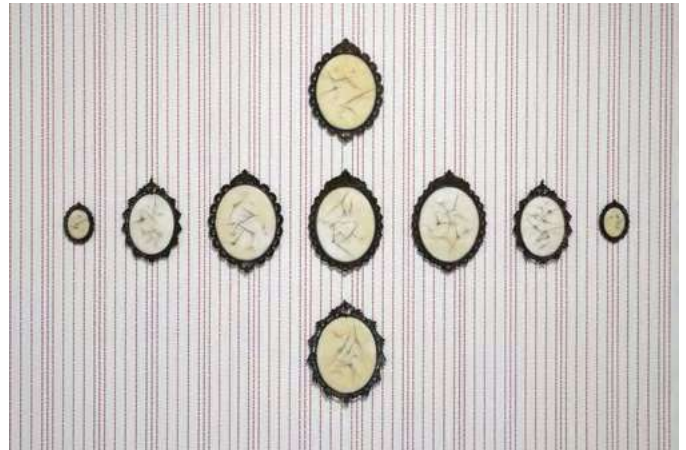
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Scandalous:

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