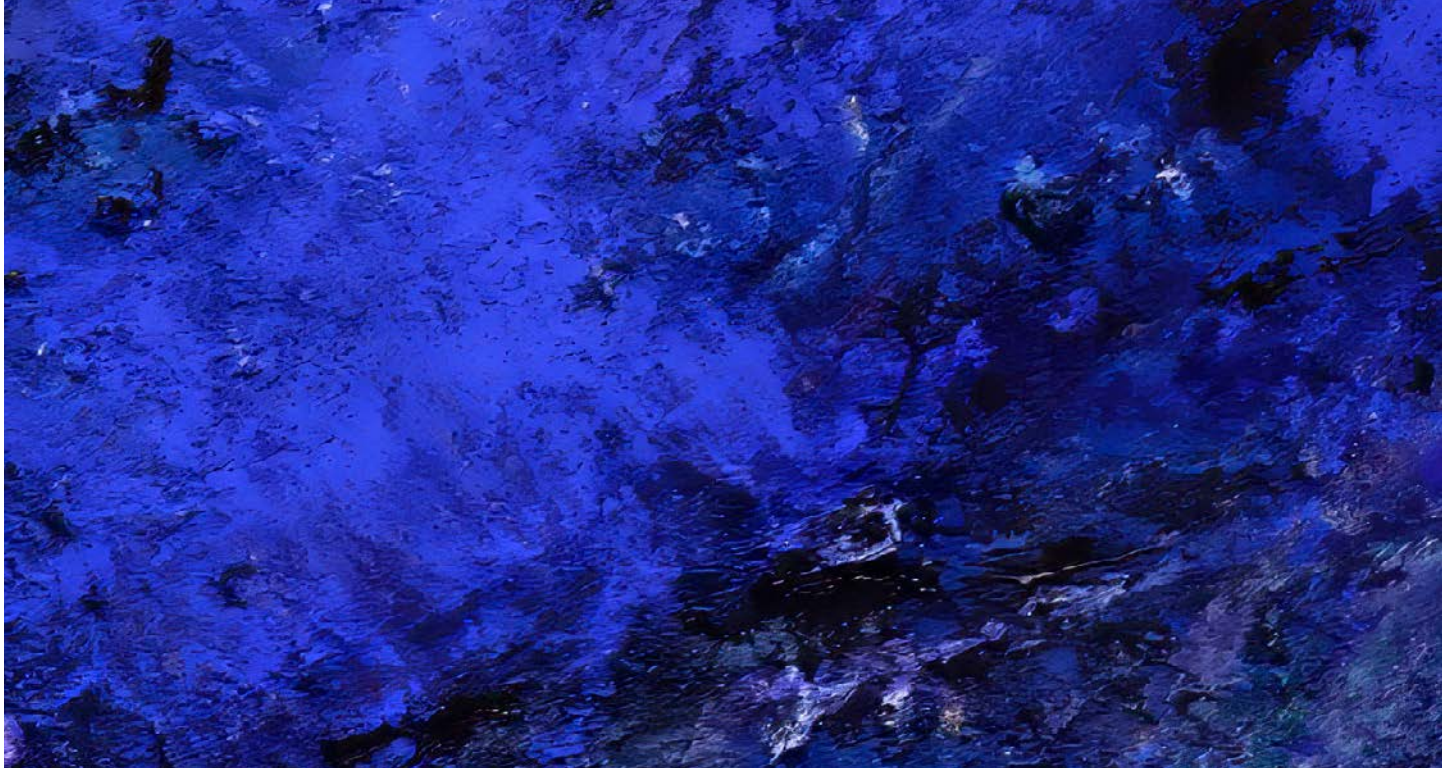


THE UNSEEN SELF

Cristina Babiloni

Xevi Solà

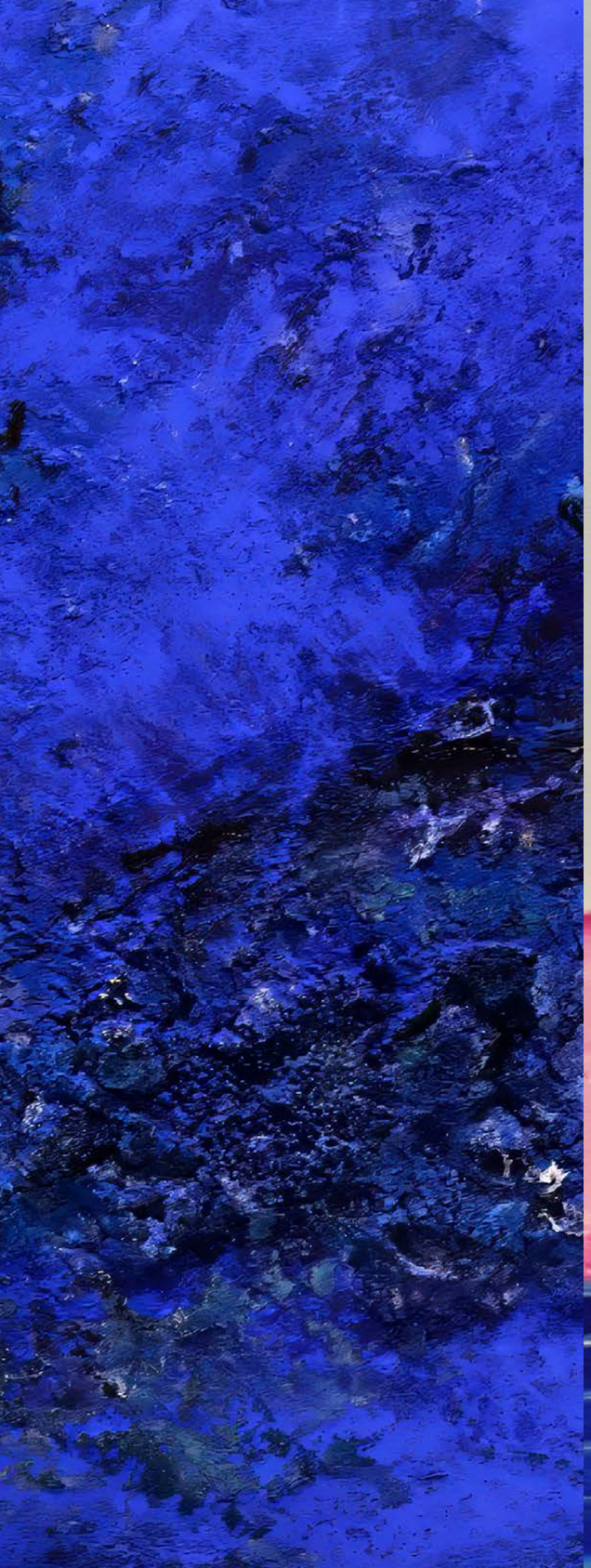


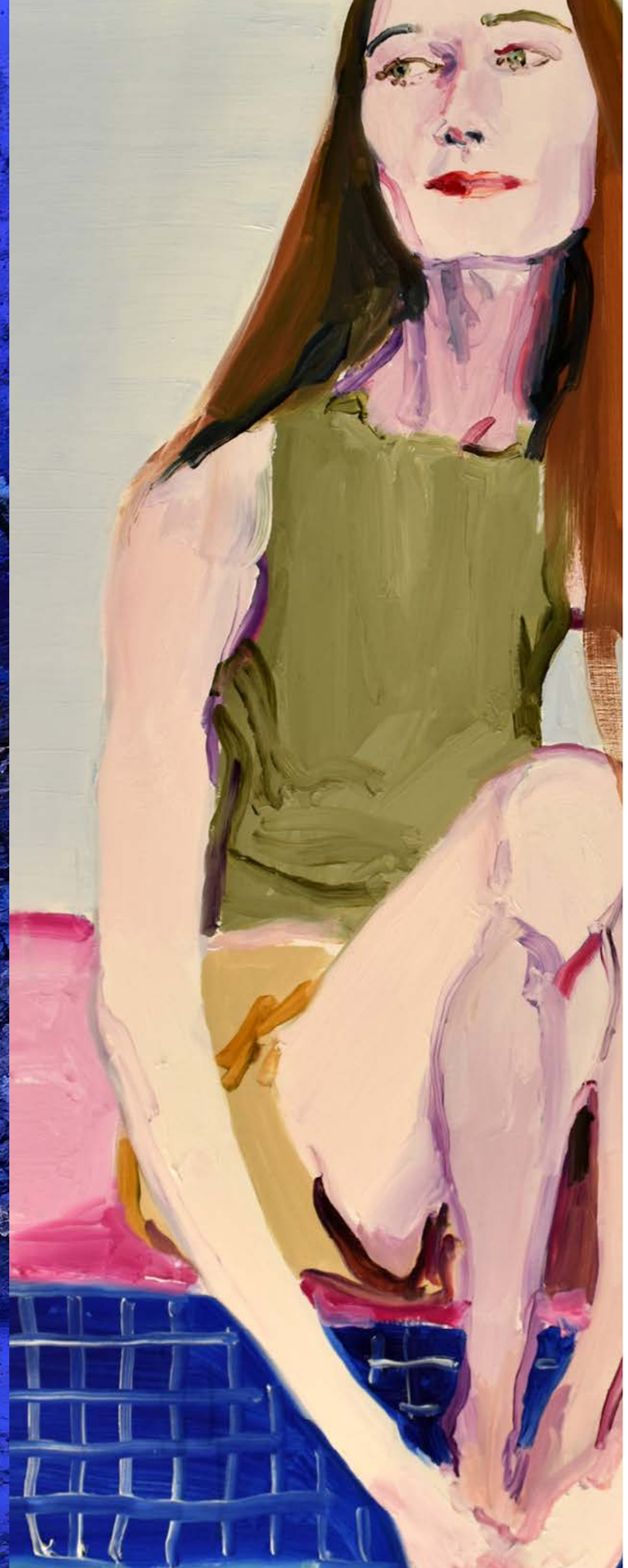
OPERA GALLERY

THE UNSEEN SELF

Cristina Babiloni / Xevi Solà
10 December 2026 - 8 January 2027
Beirut

OPERA GALLERY





FOREWORD

‘The Unseen Self’ brings together emerging Spanish artists Xevi Solà and Cristina Babiloni, placing their contemporary practices into a fluid visual dialogue. Though their methods diverge—one tethered to the psychological human form, the other to raw, terrestrial abstractions—both artists explore the boundaries of what lies just beneath immediate appearances. Across both practices, what remains visible on the canvas serves as a mere point of departure for exploring what cannot be fully seen, articulated, or known.

In Solà’s figurative oil paintings, characters inhabit carefully simplified, vibrant scenes that are at once familiar and deeply enigmatic. Sun-drenched swimming pools and leisure spaces provide the backdrops for these encounters, subverting idyllic spaces into moments of quiet, isolating anticipation. A tense gesture, an averted gaze, or the deliberate physical distance between two subjects hints at an underlying relationship, yet its exact psychological nature is purposefully left unresolved. Drawing heavily on imagery from photography and cinema, Solà reworks his sources through an intuitive use of bold colour fields that pulls focus entirely onto the figures, leaving their inner narratives suspended.

Conversely, Babiloni approaches the canvas as a raw process of physical construction and environmental discovery. Working with organic materials associated with the natural world, construction, and the industrial ceramic trade, she builds her heavy, cratered compositions through successive, highly tactile layers. Matter, colour, and texture dictate the artwork’s depth and movement, where rich shades of blue evoke marine ecosystems while textured horizons mirror active geological formations. These atmospheric associations remain fluid; Babiloni’s structural surfaces leave wide, generous room for individual viewer responses, allowing each work to be encountered entirely on its own terms.

In bringing these two distinct bodies of work together, ‘The Unseen Self’ considers what is held at a distance. In Solà’s work, the inner lives of his characters are present through subtle physical cues but never fully disclosed to the viewer. In Babiloni’s, the completed terrain carries the raw, permanent traces of an experimental building process where historic layers are transformed, buried, and concealed beneath others. Ultimately, the exhibition invites the viewer to look beyond the immediate surface of the paint to confront the hidden dimensions that ground our existence.

Gilles Dyan
Founder and Chairman
Opera Gallery Group

Noumis Barakat
Director
Opera Gallery Beirut

CRISTINA BABILONI

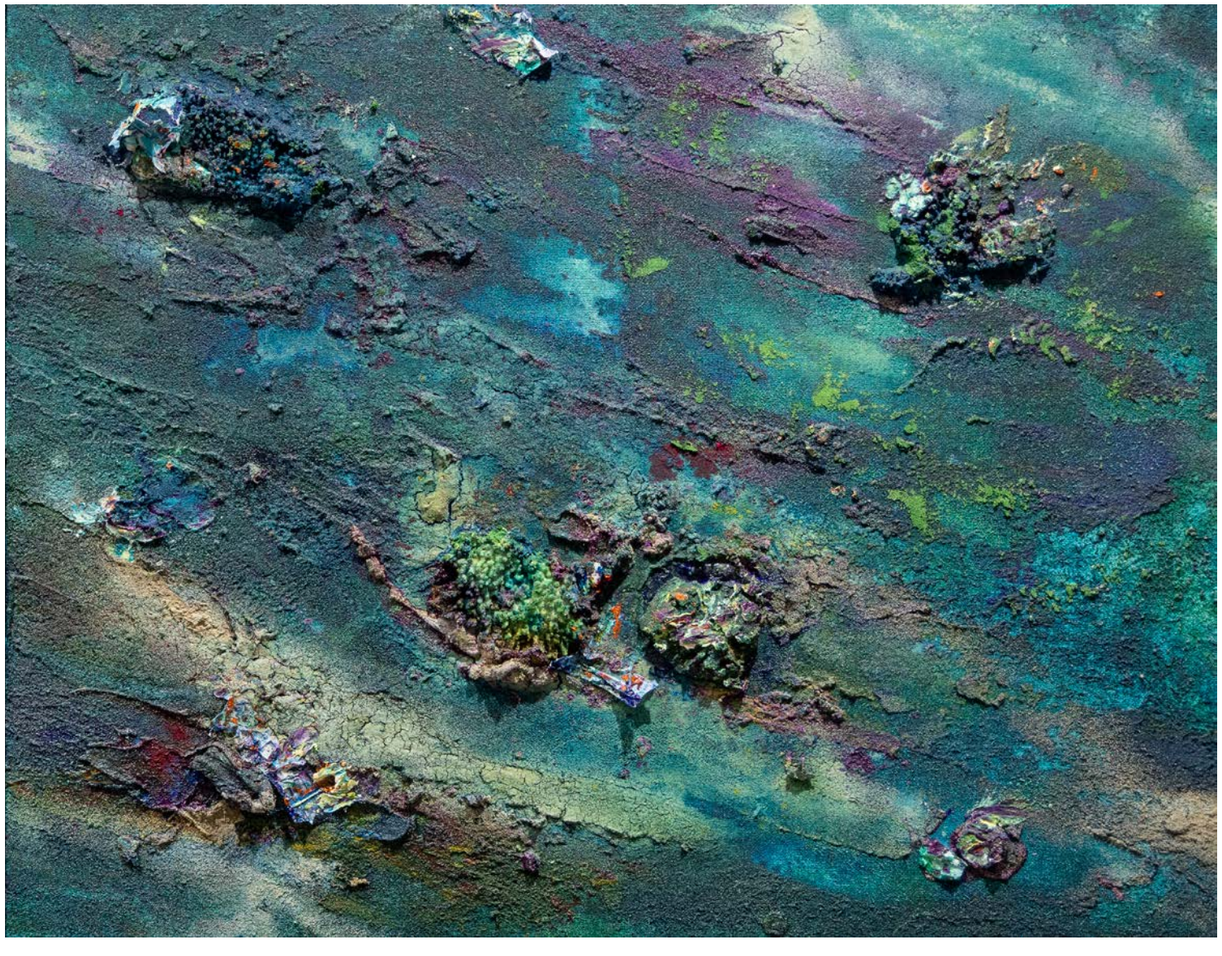


Beyond Lilies I and *II*
2026

Diptych
Mixed media on burlap
Signed, titled, dated and inscribed
with dimensions on the reverse

114 x 146 cm | 44.9 x 57.5 in. (each)





Reflections
2026

Mixed media on burlap
Signed, titled, dated and inscribed
with dimensions on the reverse

170 x 220 cm | 66.9 x 86.6 in.



Where Water Remembers I, II and *III*
2026

Triptych
Mixed media on burlap
Signed, titled, dated and inscribed
with dimensions on the reverse

120 x 120 cm | 47.2 x 47.2 in. (each)





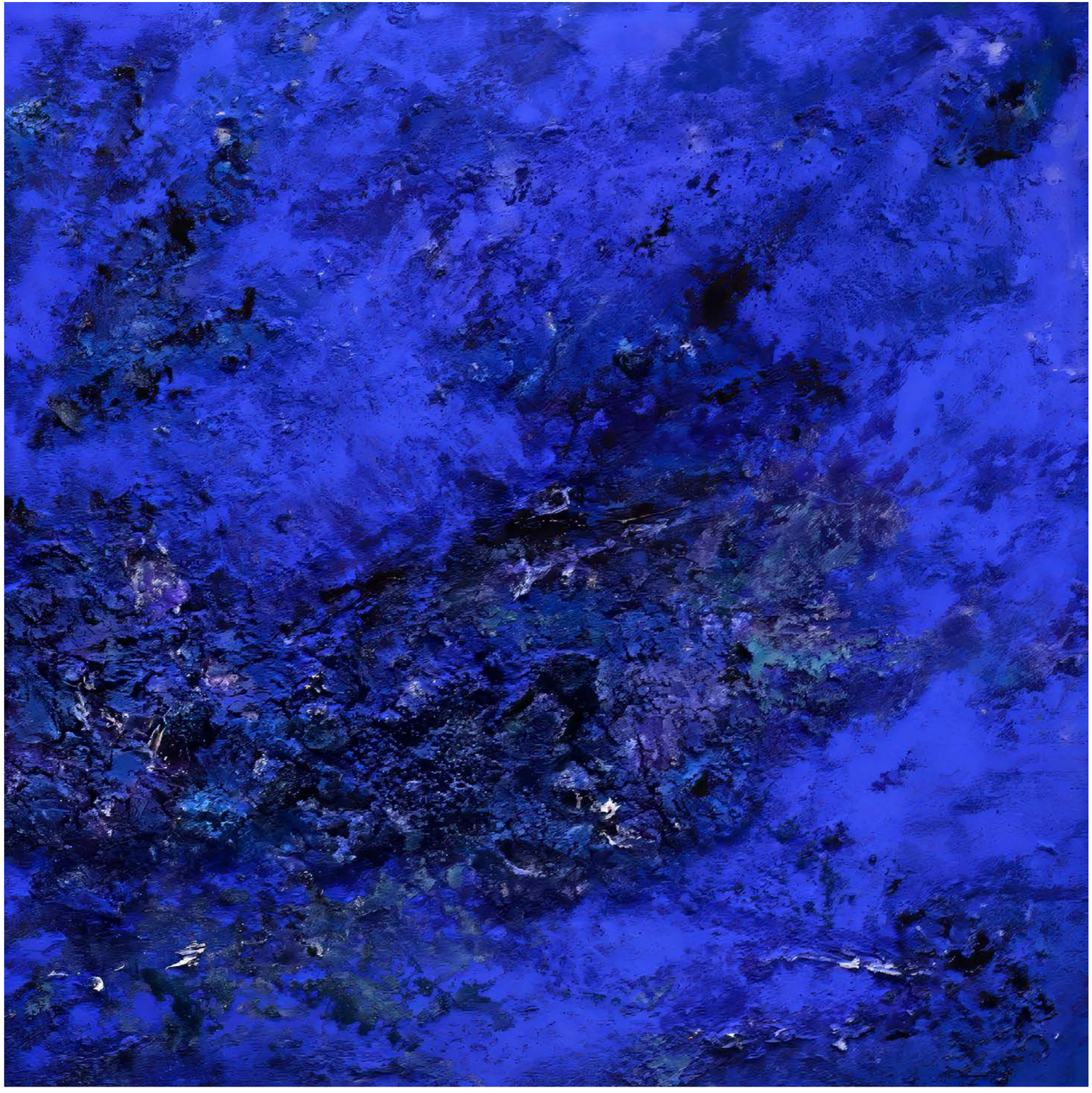




Deep Sea III
2024

Mixed media on burlap
Signed, titled, dated and inscribed
with dimensions on the reverse

160 x 160 cm | 63 x 63 in.





Frágil
2023

Mixed media on burlap
Signed, titled, dated and inscribed
with dimensions on the reverse

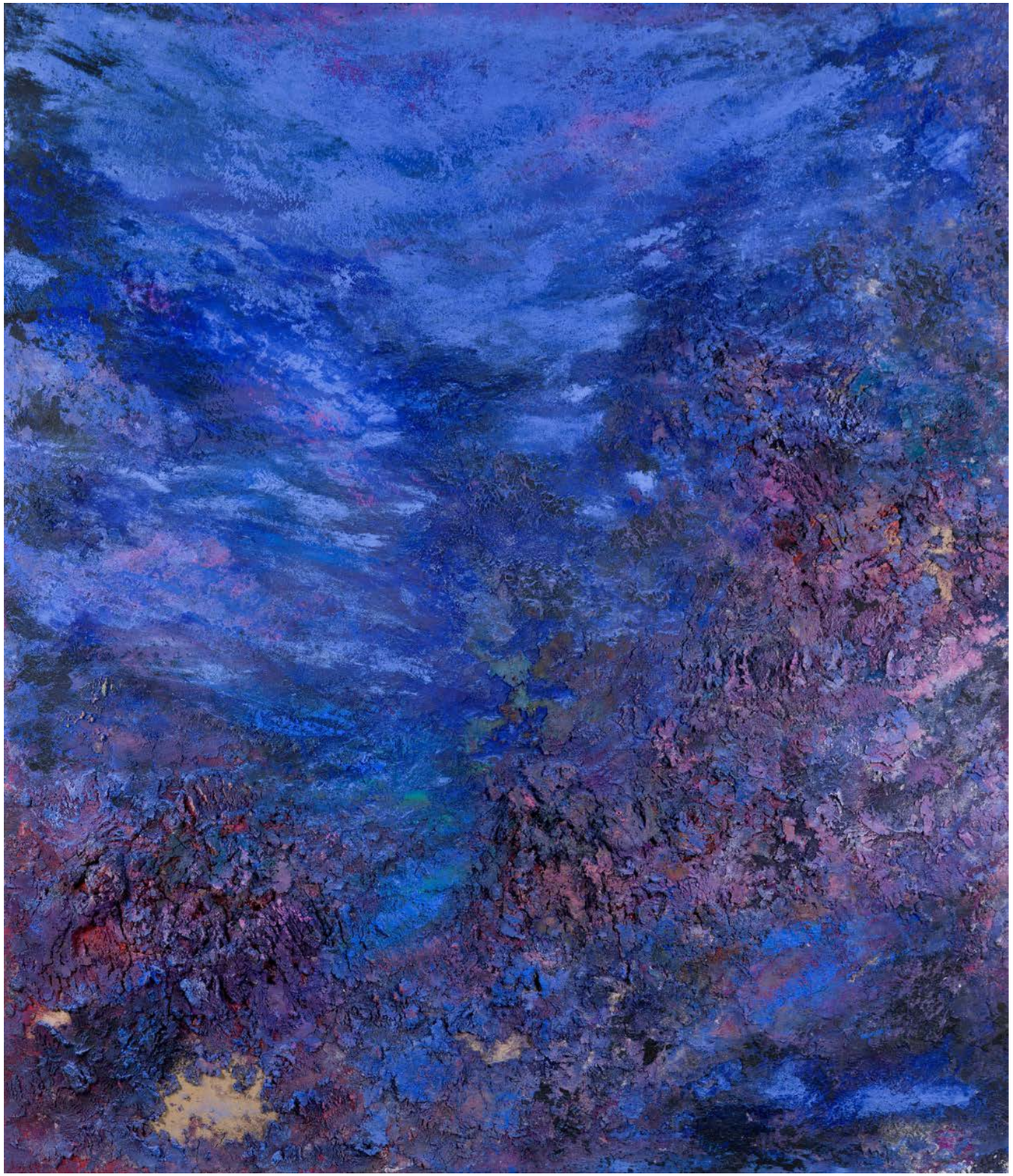
Diameter: 220 cm | 86.6 in.

Nord Stream II
2023

Mixed media on burlap
Signed, titled, dated and inscribed
with dimensions on the reverse

260 x 210 cm | 102.4 x 82.7 in.





Samudra
2020

Mixed media on burlap
Signed, titled, dated and inscribed
with dimensions on the reverse

210 x 180 cm | 82.7 x 70.9 in.



CRISTINA BABILONI **(b. 1981)**

Cristina Babiloni, born in 1981 in Castellón de la Plana, Spain, is a contemporary multidisciplinary artist of French and Spanish descent, who lives and works in Castellón. While Babiloni's artistic practice primarily explores painting, she has also developed affinities for other discplines such as sculpture, drawing, and artistic objects.

The prominence of matter and the diversity of formats is the pillar of her work. In her compositions, she uses materials and elements often associated with construction or the ceramic industry. Her creative process follows a circular approach to materials, which she applies in the form of collage—a method that could be described as "brutalist", where texture, energy, and composition play an essential role. Through this methodology, Babiloni transforms matter into her own visual language, one that reflects on sustainability, permanence, and the relationship between nature and humanity.

At its core, her artistic style is distinguished through the use of vibrant and dynamic colour palettes that create immersive natural scenes, conceived to evoke subjective connection, introspection, and awareness of our interdependence with the environment. The fragility of ecosystems and the search for harmony between the natural and the human are central themes in her work.

Babiloni has exhibited internationally, with solo shows in Madrid, New York, and Andorra, and her work has been presented at prestigious art fairs such as ARCO Madrid. Her work forms part of major private collections, including the J.P. Morgan Chase Art Collection, as well as institutional and corporate spaces aligned with her philosophy. A significant solo exhibition was held at Fundación Bancaja in Valencia, Spain, in 2025, highlighting the ongoing evolution of her artistic practice and distinctive vision.

Beyond her exhibitions, Babiloni actively collaborates with foundations and charitable projects, reinforcing her commitment to sustainability, social causes, and art as a vehicle for awareness. Her artistic trajectory, together with the integration of her psychological insights into her creative practice, consolidates Cristina Babiloni as a unique voice in contemporary art—one capable of strengthening our bond with nature, transforming matter into emotion, and contemplation into reflection.

XEVI SOLÀ





Duck
2026

Oil on canvas
Dated ‘12.9.26’ on the upper right; titled, inscribed, dated again and signed ‘DUCK / OIL ON CANVAS / 2026 /xevi solà’ on the reverse

92 x 73 cm | 36.2 x 28.7 in.

Coke
2026

Acrylic on canvas
Dated ‘2.9.26’ on the lower right; titled, inscribed, dated again and signed ‘COKE / ACRYLIC ON CANVAS / 2026 / xevi solà’ on the reverse

116 x 89 cm | 45.7 x 35 in.









Afternoon
2026

Diptych
Oil on linen
Dated '14.6.26' on the lower right; titled, dated again and signed 'AFTERNOON / 2026 / xevi solà' on the reverse

162.5 x 130 cm | 64 x 51.4 in. (each)

Bamboo
2026

Oil on linen
Dated '14.6.26' on the lower right; titled, dated, signed 'BAMBOO / 2026 / xevi solà' on the reverse

130.5 x 162.5 cm | 51.4 x 64 in.





Sunrise
2026

Oil on linen
Dated ‘22.6.26’ on the lower right; titled, dated and signed ‘SUNRISE / 2026 / xevi solà’ on the reverse

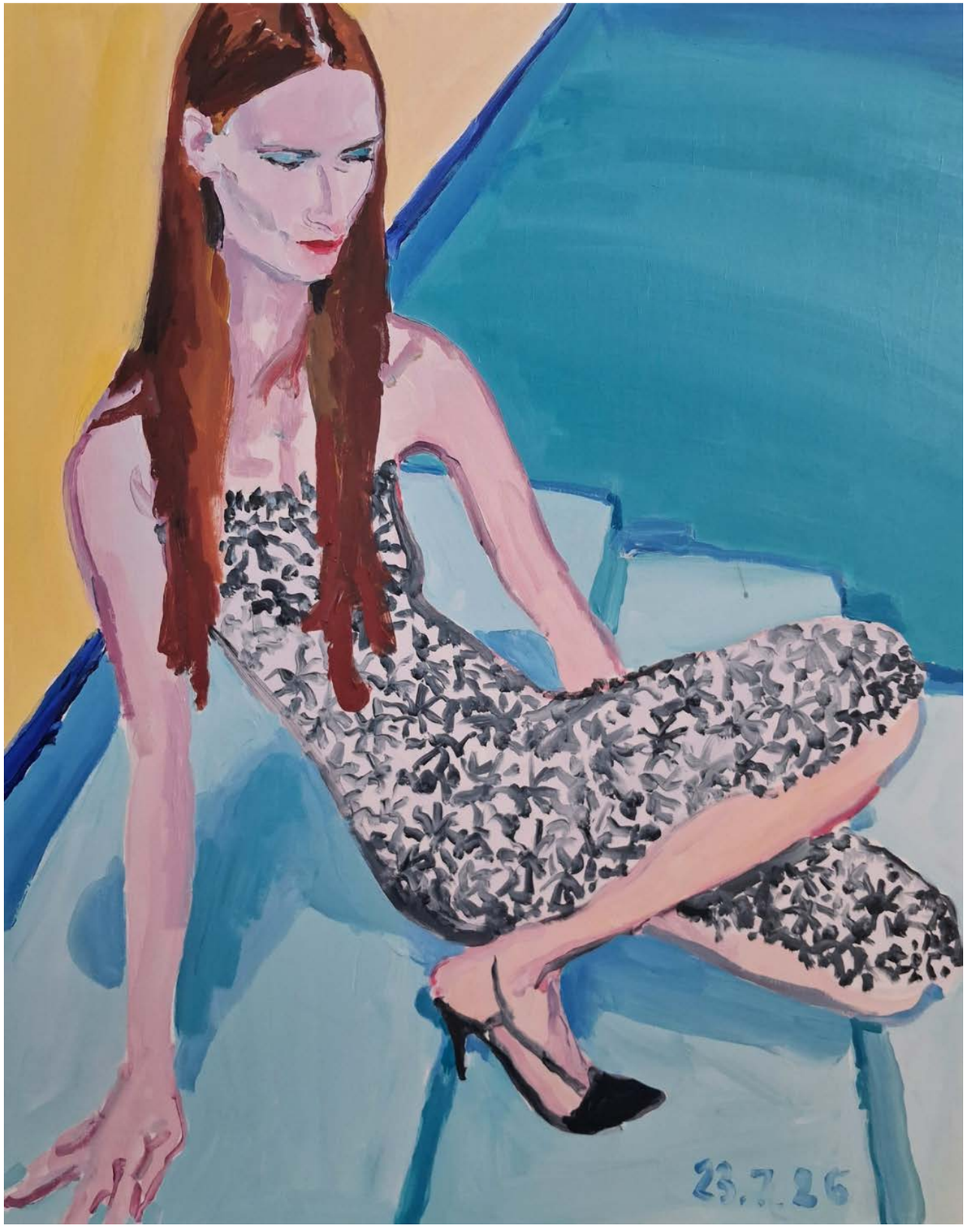
130.5 x 162.5 cm | 51.4 x 64 in.

Hola
2026

Acrylic on linen
Dated ‘29.7.26’ on the lower right; titled, dated again and signed ‘ HOLA / 2026 / xevi solà’ on the reverse

81 x 65 cm | 31.9 x 25.6 in.





Stairs
2026

Acrylic on linen
Dated ‘23.7.26’ on the lower right; titled, dated again and signed ‘STAIRS / 2026 / xevi solà’ on the reverse

92 x 73 cm | 36.2 x 28.7 in.

Pool 2
2026

Acrylic on linen
Dated '3.8.26' on the lower left; titled, dated again
and signed 'POOL 2 / 2026 / xevi solà' on the reverse

81 x 65 cm | 31.9 x 25.6 in.





6 P.M.
2026

Acrylic on linen
Dated ‘7.8.26’ on the lower right; titled, dated again and signed ‘6 P.M. / 2026 / xevi solà’ on the reverse

73 x 60.5 cm | 28.7 x 23.8 in.

Autumn Rain
2026

Oil on canvas
Dated '9.9.26' on the lower centre; titled, inscribed, dated again and signed '"AUTUMN RAIN" / (OIL ON CANVAS) / 2026 / xevi solà' on the reverse

132 x 162 cm | 52 x 63.8 in.





December
2026

Acrylic on canvas
Dated '17.10.26' on the lower right; titled, inscribed, dated again and signed 'DECEMBER / ACRYLIC / ON / CANVAS / 2026 / xevi solà' on the reverse

150 x 200 cm | 59.1 x 78.7 in.

Two Models
2022

Oil on canvas
Titled, inscribed, dated and signed
'"TWO MODELS" / OIL ON CANVAS /
2022 / xevi solà' on the reverse

160 x 132 cm | 63 x 52 in.



XEVI SOLÀ **(b. 1969)**

Xevi Solà is a Spanish painter whose intuitive and painterly figurative works invite the viewers to consider how much they can know about a subject at first glance. Sensitive to subtle gestures and facial expressions, Solà's paintings might be understood as a new way of understanding psychological portraiture, reimagined with a unique lightness of touch and a sympathetic eye. Often, he paints from found imagery, bringing the subjects of fashion shoots, mugshots and Hollywood films together, united by his deft and sensitive visual language. Solà was born in 1969, in Santa Coloma de Farners, Spain. He graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts at University of Barcelona in 2007 and now lives and works in Girona, Spain.

Solà belongs to a rich tradition of painters who bend the rules of traditional figuration in order to capture a more elusive likeness. Like 20th and 21st century artists including Alice Neel, Lucian Freud, Alex Katz, Chantal Joffe and Elizabeth Peyton, he is more interested in painting the essence of a subject than their exact physical likeness. To this end, he works quickly in order to avoid second-guessing the marks that he commits to the canvas. In Solà's words, "I think that in contemporary painting it is better if you act on instinct, when we try to leave consciousness aside and only use what we have learned automatically." Within this paradigm, he references Picasso as the most important figure.

Though he often works from photographs, Solà's paintings are far from being reproductions. Many of his scenes are composites of multiple images, deliberately filtered through the artist's own sensibility and technique. He describes his works as speaking of his own mistakes, successes, mood and dreams. To this end, he works in an idiosyncratic colour palette that draws equally from historical artworks whose colours catch his attention and from his own imagination.

There is a certain quietness to Solà's work; he is interested in telling the stories of his subjects using small details rather than sweeping gestures. In doing so, he loads each subtle movement with a number of possible symbolic resonances. The figures themselves, of course, remain silent—so it is left up to the viewer to imagine the story behind the image. In this heightened world, every movement, every brushstroke, means something.

In 2010, Solà's work was included in the Biennale d'Art of Girona and in 2014 he was awarded the Young Art Award at the Taipei Contemporary Art Fair. His works can be found in a number of important public and private collections around the world.

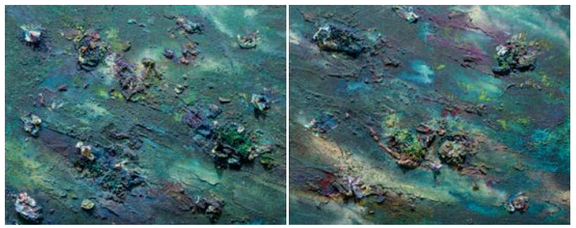






INDEX

CRISTINA BABILONI



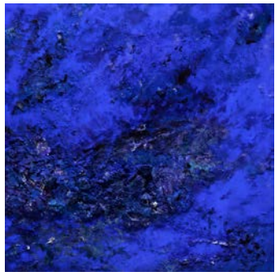
8-9
Beyond Lilies I and *II*
2026



10-11
Reflections
2026



12-13
Where Water Remembers I, II and *III*
2026



16-17
Deep Sea III
2024



18-19
Frágil
2023



20-21
Nord Stream II
2023



22-23
Samudra
2020

XEVI SOLÀ



28-29
Duck
2026



30-31
Coke
2026



34-35
Afternoon
2026



36-37
Bamboo
2026



38-39
Sunrise
2026



40-41
Hola
2026



42-43
Stairs
2026



44-45
Pool 2
2026



46-47
6 P.M.
2026



48-49
Autumn Rain
2026



50-51
December
2026



52-53
Two Models
2022

This catalogue was created for the exhibition
‘The Unseen Self’
Presented by Opera Gallery Beirut
from 10 December 2026 to 8 January 2027

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
We extend our gratitude to all the individuals
who contributed to this exhibition.

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Studio views © Enrique Palacio

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