

Vojtěch Kovařík

“Soulscape”

In conversation with
Aristide Maillol and Henri Rousseau

Derouillon,

Etienne Marcel

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Sur les murs de la galerie se déploie une mythologie d'un genre nouveau. L'artiste Vojtěch Kovařík (né en 1993) investit l'espace avec un cycle pictural inédit, auquel il a décidé d'ajouter une sculpture en marbre, medium rare dans sa pratique. Les figures peintes ou sculptées se présentent, autant par la massivité de leurs corps, par leur nudité, ou les sous-entendus glissés dans les titres, une galerie de héros et de dieux abandonnés à leur sort.

Le public constatera que la sculpture de l'artiste ne constitue pas la seule surprise ici. En effet, les œuvres de l'artiste reçoivent la visite de deux figures importantes de l'histoire de l'art du tournant du XXe siècle, Aristide Maillol (1861-1944) et Henri Rousseau, dit "le Douanier Rousseau" (1844-1910). Vojtěch Kovařík a fait le choix ici de se placer dans le sillage d'une certaine histoire de l'art, où la figuration du corps et, a fortiori, son inscription dans un décor autant que dans l'espace public, constituent un enjeu fondamental. Né en République tchèque et formé en tant que sculpteur, grandissant entouré des sculptures monumentales relevant du réalisme socialiste, Kovařík n'a cessé d'interroger depuis la façon dont les intérêts politiques ont enfermé les corps, surtout masculins, dans des postures d'autorité et de puissance. Rousseau et Maillol, deux références essentielles pour lui, constituèrent des antidotes, des points de fuite salvateurs. De Maillol, Kovařík reprend la façon dont il plaçait les corps — essentiellement féminins — dans un équilibre entre la massivité et la discrétion, comment Maillol sut détourner des commandes publiques, souvent politiques et patriotiques, en odes à la paix et au repos, les figures guerrières et héroïques laissant place à des allégories à la fois panthéistes et mélancoliques. Kovařík s'inspire ainsi de la façon dont Maillol nommait certaines de ses œuvres, telle *Mountain*. De Rousseau, Kovařík interroge le rapport tout à fait spécifique à l'espace, notamment quand le "Douanier" figurait ses personnages aussi plats que possible, refusant toute perspective, créant cependant des effets de contrastes et de reliefs tout à fait saisissants dans le décor. Chez Rousseau, quand le décor est seul — tel *Le Moulin* (1896) exposé ici, c'est le plan tout entier qui s'aplatit. Chez Kovařík c'est l'inverse. Les corps imposants offrent souvent l'illusion de la rondeur réelle, comme si de véritables sculptures s'encastraient dans la toile. Le fond, lui, assume généralement sa parfaite planéité, soit par la simple

abstraction colorée du fond, soit par la juxtaposition de différents motifs, dont certains arborent un relief tout à fait concret, mais dont l'artificialité ne fait que renforcer l'absence de toute impression illusionniste. *Before the End of the Golden Age* peut être comprise comme un hommage aux deux, où ce personnage, blotti en prière ou en désespoir, attendant la fin d'un âge d'or, convoque autant les formes massives-passives de Maillol que l'ambiance de mythologie étrange de Rousseau, où les personnages s'insèrent artificiellement dans des jungles factices, où chaque feuille a été peinte séparément, exactement comme Rousseau le faisait.

Les œuvres de Vojtěch Kovařík ne se situent pas dans le monde réel. La couleur des peaux autant que celle des fonds nous renvoient dans un monde aussi symbolique qu'éthéré, où tout est affaire de contraste et de dialogue. Les couleurs, souvent agressives, se côtoient jusqu'à atteindre une forme d'équilibre, curieusement harmonieux.

Influencé par les archétypes de Jung, Vojtěch Kovařík interroge toute une foule de mythes, de façon allusive et détournée. Les figures y apparaissent défaites, alanguies, pensives. Leur nudité autant que leur ampleur corporelle ne convoquent aucun héroïsme antiquisant, mais renvoient plutôt à une forme d'humanité, masculine, dépecée d'un certain appareillage centré sur la force, la domination et la certitude. Chez Kovařík, la mythologie n'est pas un récit fermé et traditionnel, mais un espace ouvert, un point de départ vers un monde à construire. Son Laocoon sculpté se débat moins avec les serpents qu'il ne les embrasse, comme si le nouveau portrait-robot de cette masculinité à venir reposait moins sur l'affrontement avec un adversaire que sur l'amour que l'on porte à ce qui nous est autre, à la manière de *Symbiosis*, où un être aussi monumental que spectral fusionne avec un jeune cerf noir.

Vojtěch Kovařík pose les fondations d'un autre futur "where life grows again", "où la vie jaillit à nouveau".



Across the gallery walls, a mythology of a new kind unfolds. The artist Vojtěch Kovařík (born in 1993) takes over the space with a new pictorial cycle, to which he has chosen to add a marble sculpture, a medium rarely seen in his practice. Whether painted or sculpted, the figures appear—through the massiveness of their bodies, their nudity, and the innuendo embedded in their titles—as a gallery of heroes and gods abandoned to their fate.

Visitors will notice that the artist's sculpture is not the only surprise here. Indeed, the artist's works are joined by two major figures from the history of art at the turn of the twentieth century: Aristide Maillol (1861–1944) and Henri Rousseau, known as “Le Douanier Rousseau” (1844–1910). Here, Vojtěch Kovařík has chosen to place himself in the wake of a particular art history in which the representation of the body and, above all, its inscription within a setting as much as within public space, constitutes a fundamental concern. Born in the Czech Republic and trained as a sculptor, having grown up surrounded by monumental sculptures rooted in socialist realism, Kovařík has continually examined the ways in which political interests have confined bodies—particularly male ones—within postures of authority and power. Rousseau and Maillol, two essential references for him, became antidotes, saving vanishing points. From Maillol, Kovařík borrows the way he placed bodies—predominantly female—in a balance between massiveness and restraint, and how Maillol managed to redirect public commissions, often political and patriotic in nature, into odes to peace and repose, with warrior and heroic figures giving way to allegories that are at once pantheistic and melancholic. Kovařík draws inspiration in particular from the way Maillol titled certain works, such as *Mountain*. From Rousseau, Kovařík explores a highly specific relationship to space, especially when the “Douanier” rendered his figures as flat as possible, refusing all perspective, while nonetheless creating strikingly powerful effects of contrast and relief within the setting. In Rousseau, when the setting stands alone—as in *Le Moulin* (1896), shown here—the entire picture plane flattens out. In Kovařík, the opposite occurs. The imposing bodies often create the illusion of genuine roundness, as though real sculptures were

embedded in the canvas. The background, by contrast, generally asserts its perfect flatness, either through simple coloured abstraction, or through the juxtaposition of various motifs, some of which carry a wholly tangible relief, yet whose artificiality only reinforces the absence of any illusionistic impression. *Before the End of the Golden Age* can be read as a homage to both, in which a figure huddled in prayer or despair, awaiting the close of a golden age, summons both the massive-passive forms of Maillol and the atmosphere of strange mythology found in Rousseau, where figures insert themselves artificially into makeshift jungles in which every leaf has been painted separately — precisely as Rousseau did.

Vojtěch Kovařík's works do not belong to the real world. The colour of the skin, as much as that of the backgrounds, transports us into a world that is as symbolic as it is ethereal, where everything is a matter of contrast and dialogue. The colours, often aggressive, exist side by side until they reach a form of balance — curiously harmonious.

Influenced by Jungian archetypes, Vojtěch Kovařík probes an entire host of myths in an allusive and indirect way. The figures appear defeated, languid, pensive. Their nudity and physical amplitude summon no antique heroism, but instead gesture toward a form of masculinity stripped of a certain apparatus built on strength, domination, and certainty. In Kovařík's work, mythology is not a closed and traditional narrative, but an open space, a point of departure toward a world yet to be built. His sculpted Laocoön wrestles with the serpents less than he embraces them, as if the new archetype of a masculinity to come rested less on confrontation with an adversary than on the love one bears for what is other — in the manner of *Symbiosis*, in which a figure as monumental as it is spectral merges with a young black stag.

Vojtěch Kovařík lays the foundations for another future, “where life grows again.”

Nicolas-Xavier Ferrand



Laocoon in the Embrace of Serpents, 2026

Marbre de Carrare

Carrara marble

44,5 x 44 x 25 cm

17 1/2 x 17 3/8 x 9 7/8 inches

Unique







Where Life Grows Again, 2026
Acrylique et sable sur toile
Acrylic and sand on canvas
305 x 245 cm (encadré)
120 1/8 x 96 1/2 inches (framed)









Mountain, 2025
Acrylique et sable sur toile
Acrylic and sand on canvas
155 x 204,5 cm (encadré)
61 x 80 1/2 inches (framed)







Aristide Maillol (1861–1944) is one of the defining figures of modern sculpture. Working primarily from the female nude, he developed a language of full, simplified volumes — monumental yet serene, powerful yet restrained — that broke decisively with the descriptive art of the nineteenth century.

Deeply shaken by the First World War, Maillol created four war memorials at his own expense across his home département: in Céret, Banyuls-sur-Mer, Elne, and Port-Vendres. For each, he chose to depict a draped female figure rather than the heroic or triumphant soldier typical of monuments of the period — a way of shifting the tribute away from glorification and toward mourning and peace. In *Port-Vendres*, inaugurated in 1923, the figure lies reclined, draped in the antique manner, holding branches of olive — a universal emblem of peace. The model was Dina Vierny. A bronze edition has been on display since 1964 in the Jardin du Carrousel at the Tuileries, where it forms part of an open-air ensemble of Maillol's sculptures near the Louvre.

Aristide Maillol

Monument aux morts à Port-Vendres, 1921

Plomb

Lead

168 x 223 x 80 cm

66 1/8 x 87 3/4 x 31 1/2 inches

Edition 5/6





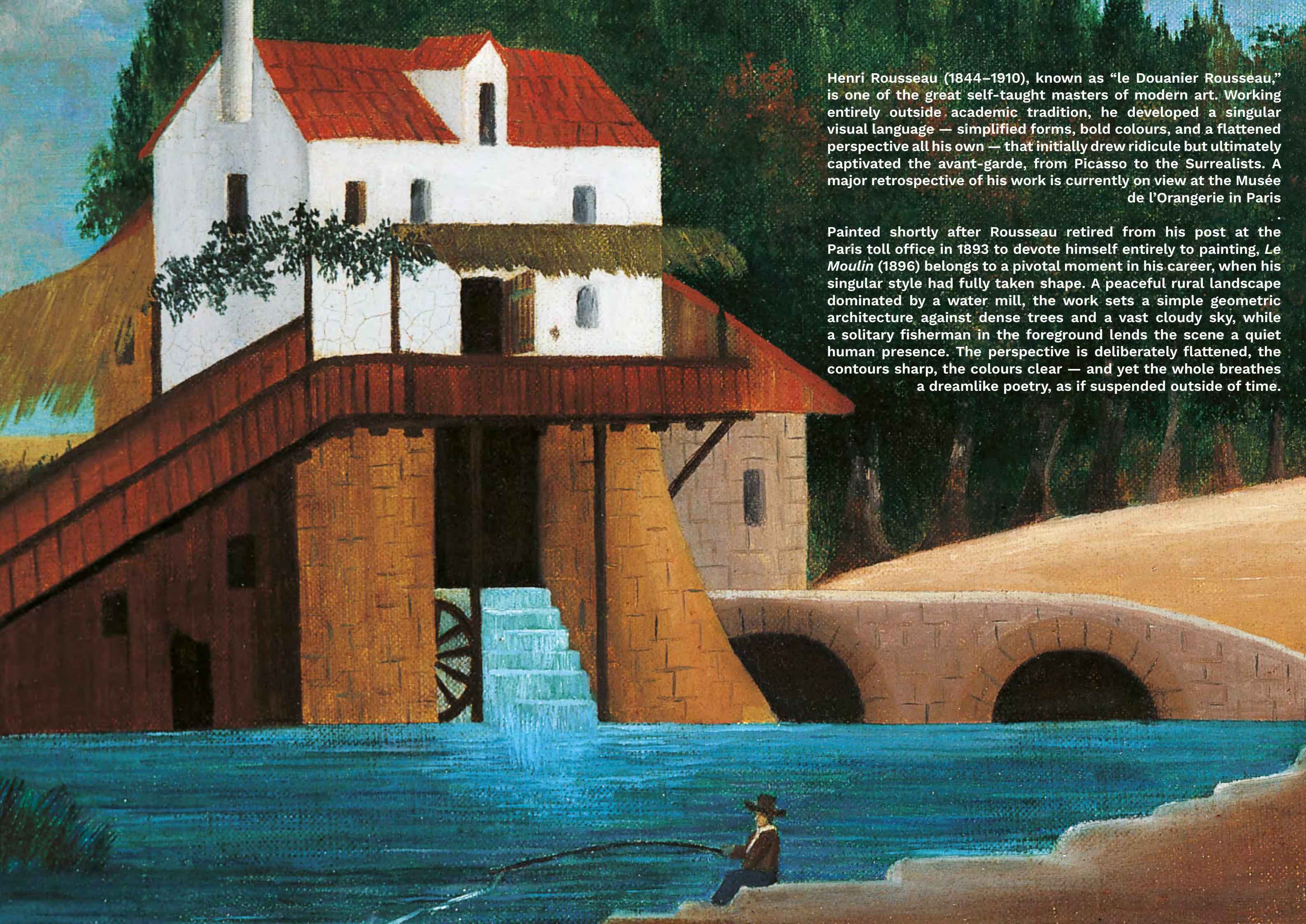
Aristide Maillol, *Monument aux morts à Port-Vendres*, 1921, Jardin du Carrousel at the Tuileries, Musée du Louvre, Paris.





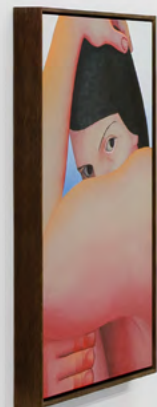
Henri Rousseau
***Le Moulin*, 1896**
Huile sur toile
Oil on canvas
50,5 x 72,5 x 7 cm (encadré)
19 7/8 x 28 1/2 x 2 3/4 inches (framed)





Henri Rousseau (1844–1910), known as “le Douanier Rousseau,” is one of the great self-taught masters of modern art. Working entirely outside academic tradition, he developed a singular visual language — simplified forms, bold colours, and a flattened perspective all his own — that initially drew ridicule but ultimately captivated the avant-garde, from Picasso to the Surrealists. A major retrospective of his work is currently on view at the Musée de l’Orangerie in Paris

Painted shortly after Rousseau retired from his post at the Paris toll office in 1893 to devote himself entirely to painting, *Le Moulin* (1896) belongs to a pivotal moment in his career, when his singular style had fully taken shape. A peaceful rural landscape dominated by a water mill, the work sets a simple geometric architecture against dense trees and a vast cloudy sky, while a solitary fisherman in the foreground lends the scene a quiet human presence. The perspective is deliberately flattened, the contours sharp, the colours clear — and yet the whole breathes a dreamlike poetry, as if suspended outside of time.



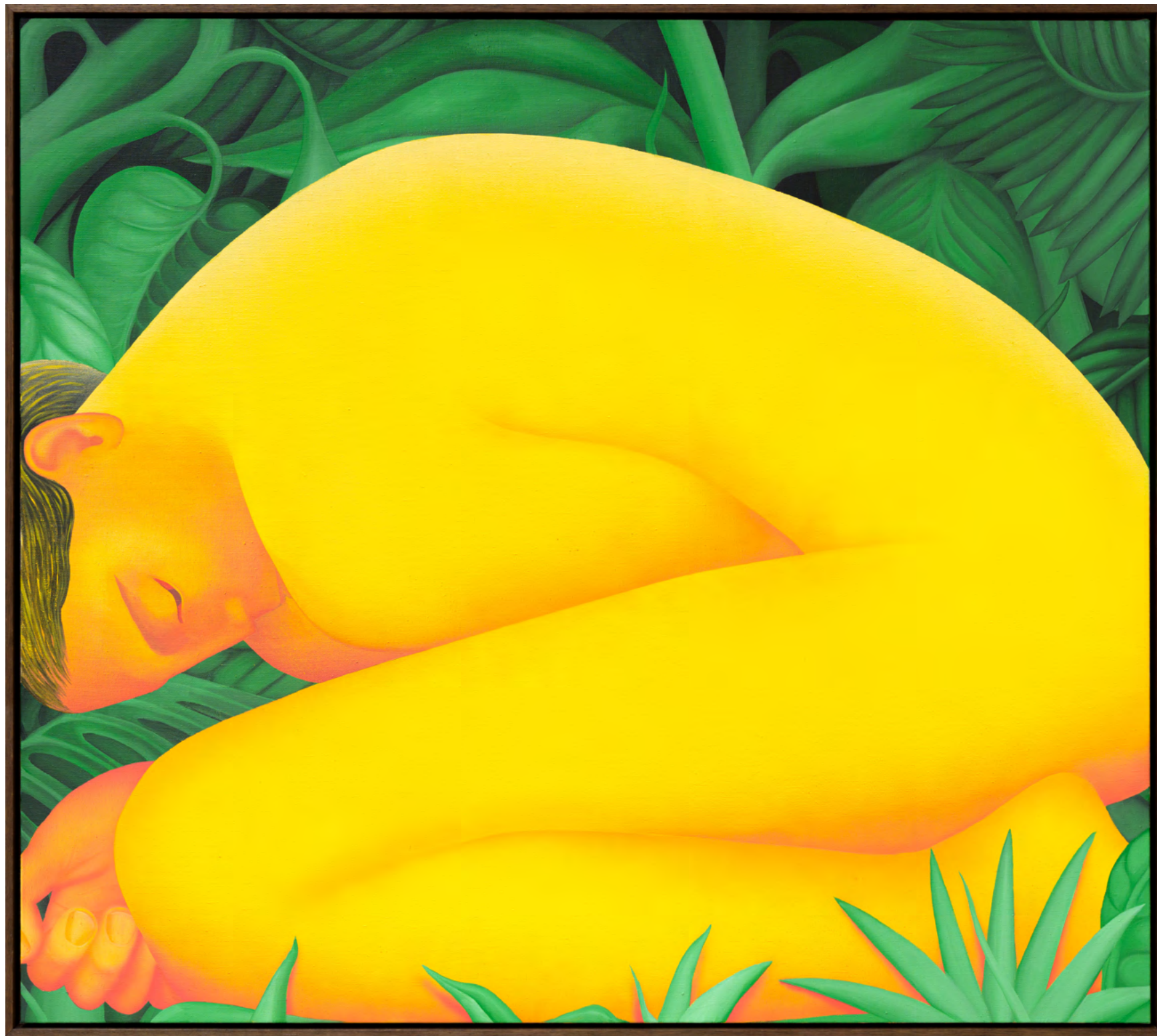
Before the End of the Golden Age, 2026

Acrylique et sable sur toile

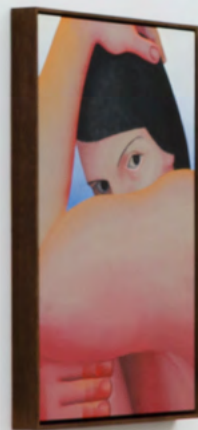
Acrylic and sand on canvas

160 x 179,5 cm (encadré)

63 x 70 11/16 inches (framed)



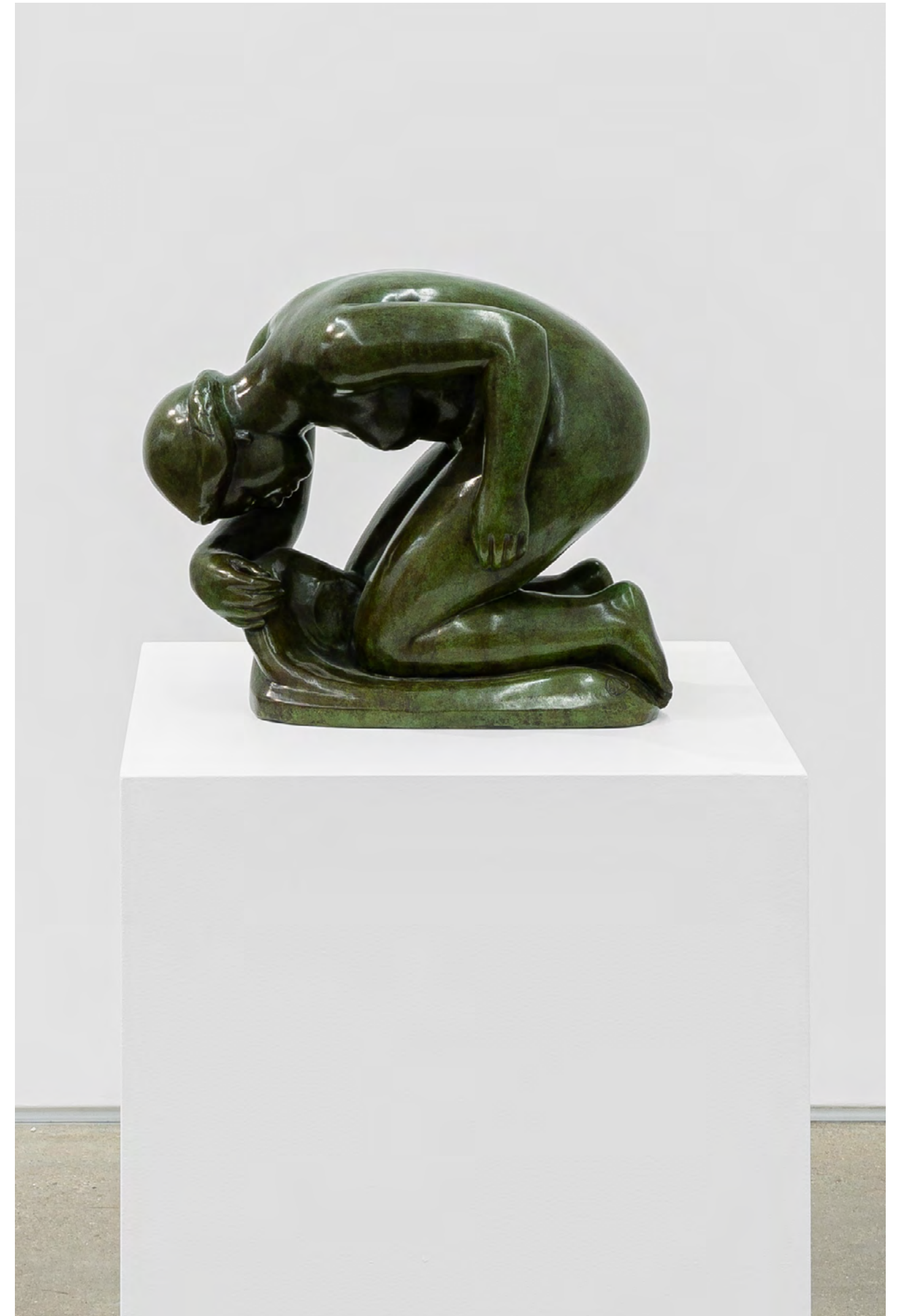




Among the last works Aristide Maillol completed before his death in 1944, *Dina à la natte* distills his lifelong pursuit of clarity and geometric simplification to its essence. His model Dina is shown kneeling, her body folded inward, her braided head resting gently on her arm — a posture of quiet interiority that recurs across his late work and stands as one of its most tender expressions.

Aristide Maillol
Dina à la natte, 1940
Bronze
Bronze
34,5 x 41,5 x 23,5 cm
13 5/8 x 16 3/8 x 9 1/4 inches
EA 1/4





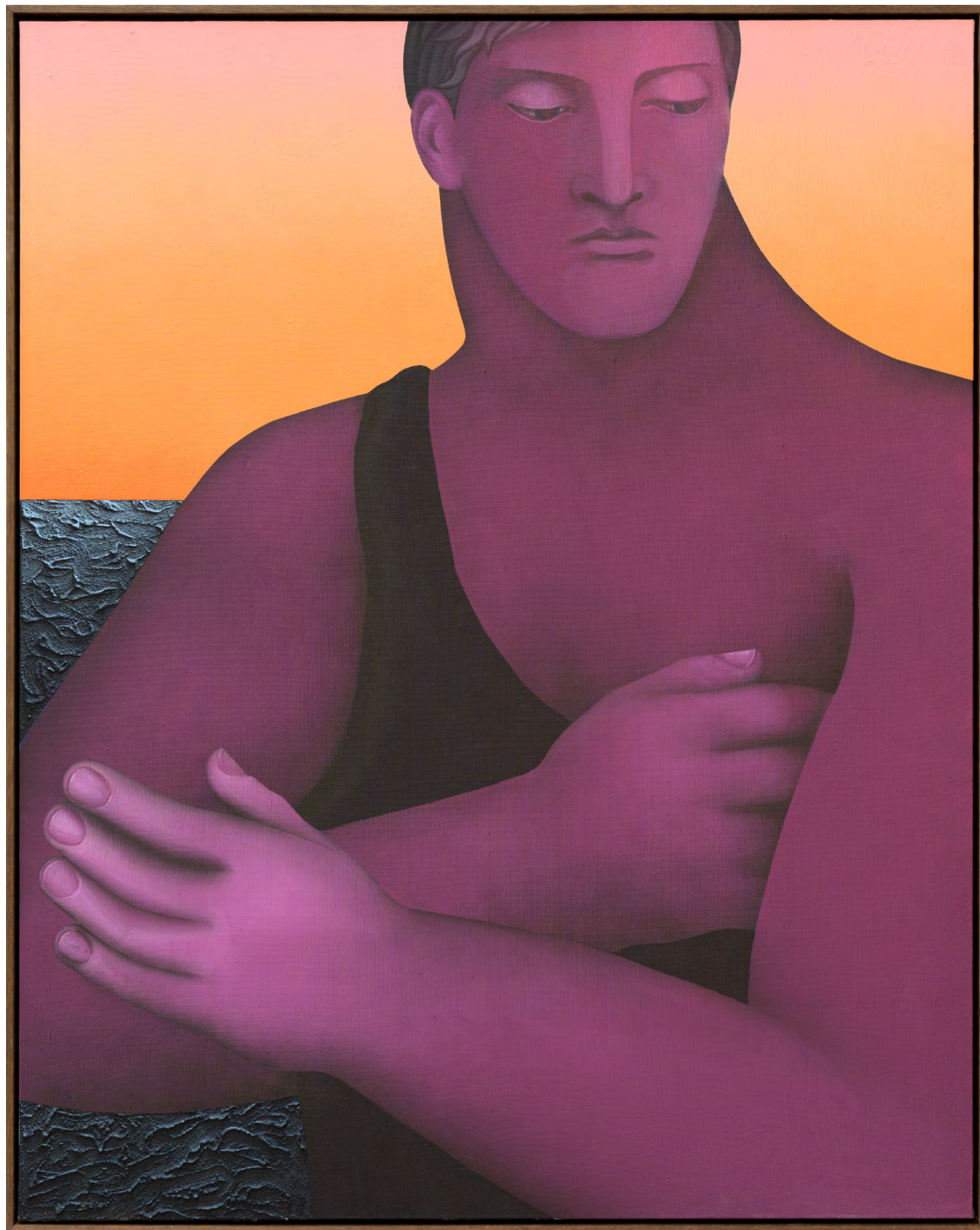


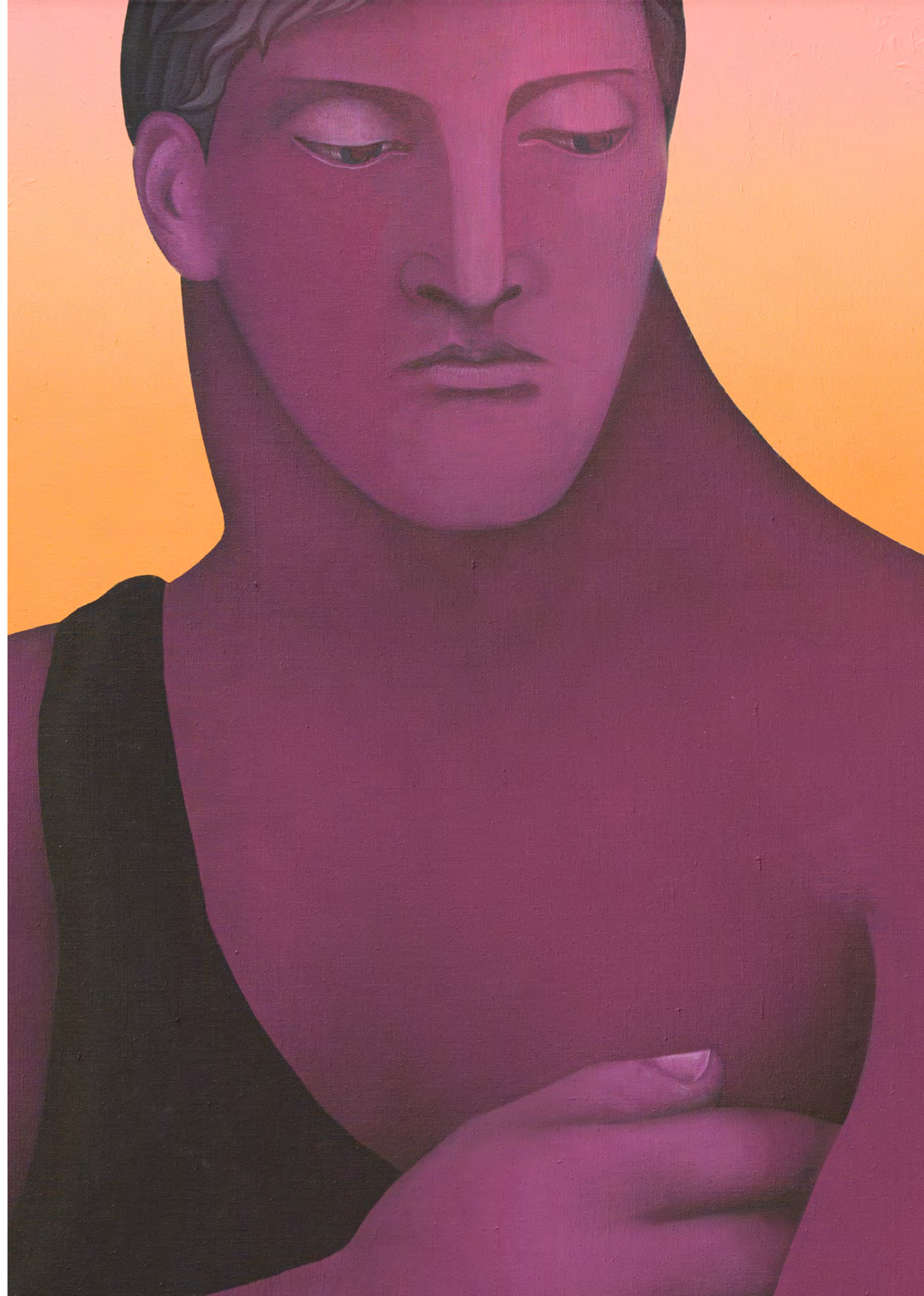
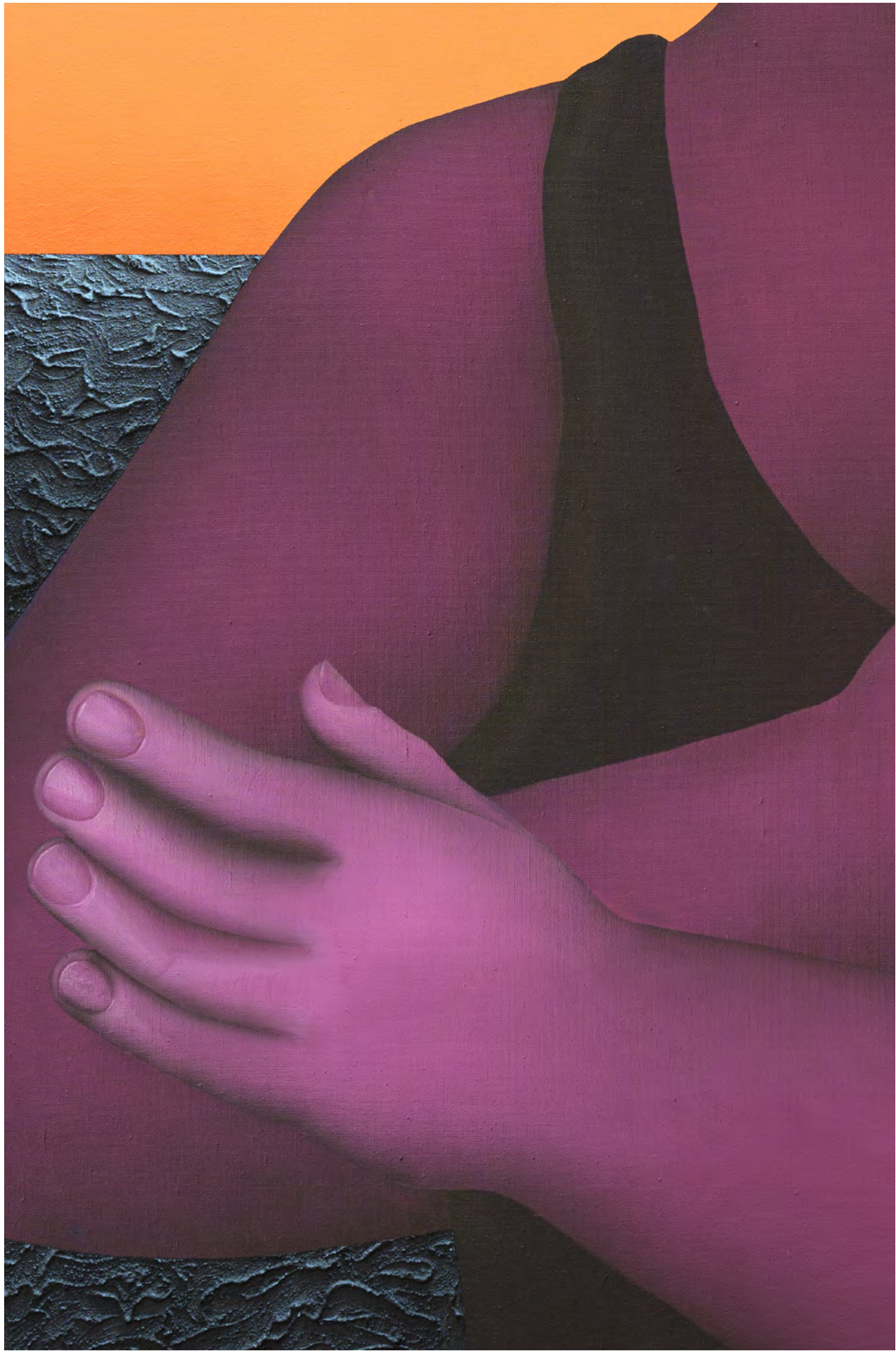
The Night After Stealing Fire, 2025
Acrylique et sable sur toile
Acrylic and sand on canvas
205 x 205 cm (encadré)
80 3/4 x 80 3/4 inches (framed)



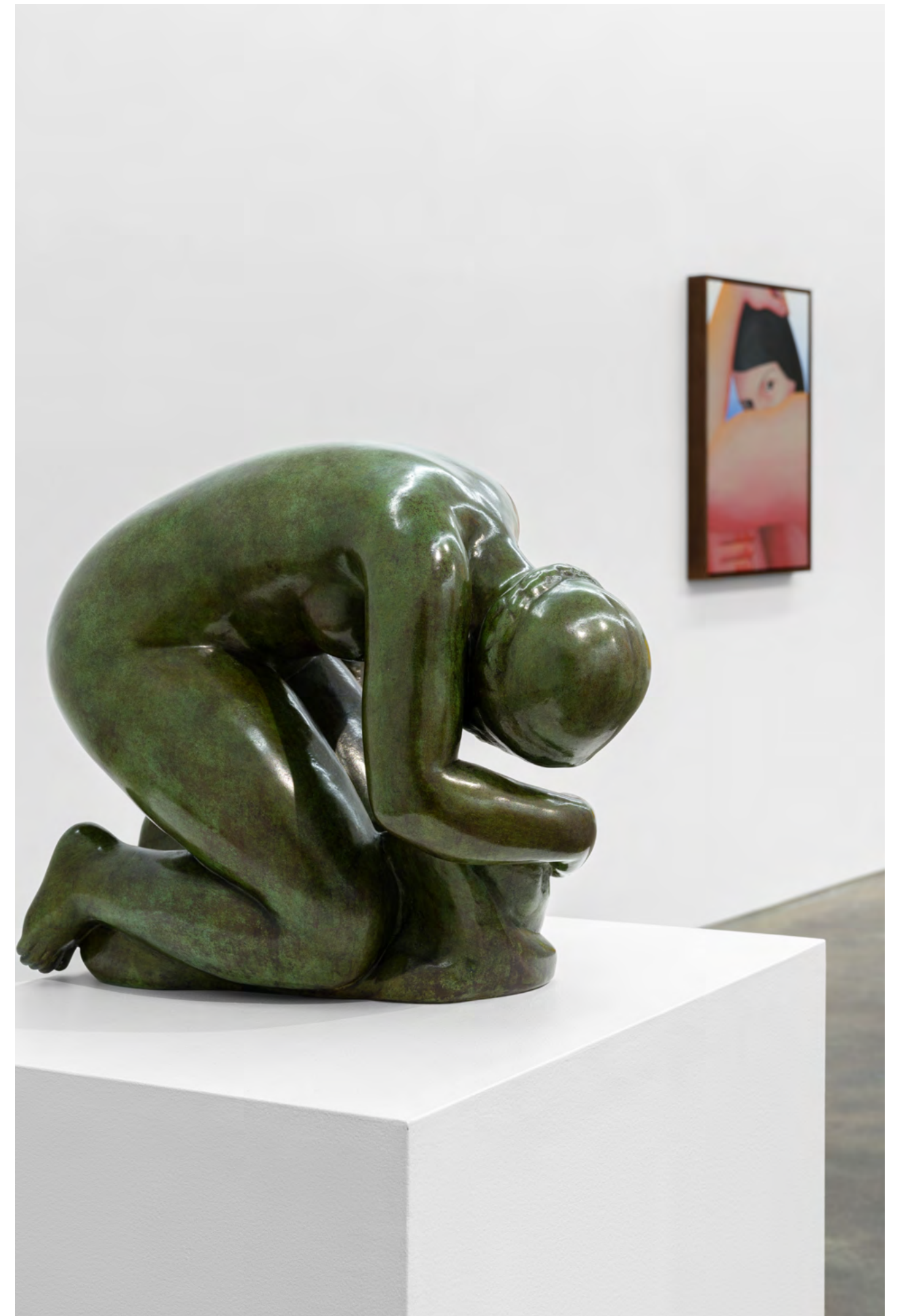


Estranged from the Self, 2026
Acrylique et sable sur toile
Acrylic and sand on canvas
200 x 159,5 cm (encadré)
78 3/4 x 62 3/4 inches (framed)











Beyond the Edge of Light, 2025
Acrylique et sable sur toile
Acrylic and sand on canvas
83,5 x 63,5 cm (encadré)
32 7/8 x 25 inches (framed)







Derouillon,

Vojtěch Kovařík

Born in Czech Republic in 1993

Lives and works in Rožnov p. Radh, Czech Republic

Biography

Vojtech Kovarik (Born in 1993, Czech Republic) lives and works in Rožnov p. Radh, Czech Republic. He graduated with a master’s degree at the Faculty of Arts of the Ostrava University (CZ) (2019) and from Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw (PL) (2017).

His recent exhibitions include: “Soulscape” (solo), Galerie Derouillon, Paris (2026); “Inner World”, Mendes Wood DM, Sao Paulo (2025); “From Lines to Matter” (solo), Museum Kampa, Prague (2024); “Under the weight of the world” (solo), Power Station, Dallas (2024); “My World”, curated by Hans den Hartog Jager, Singer Laren (2024); “X COLLECTION 202: PORTRAIT OF A MAN”, X Museum, Beijing (2024); “Habiter le Monde”, Château Aubenas, Centre d’Art Contemporain, Aubenas (FR); “La Cinquième saison”, Art Basel Paris en collaboration avec le Musée du Louvre, Jardin des Tuileries, Paris (2023); “Lost in Time” (solo), Galerie Derouillon, Paris (2023); “The Labours of Hercules” (solo), Mendes Wood DM, Brussels (2023); “ARS22: Living Encounters”, Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Helsinki (2022); “Destinies of Stones Faces” (solo), Galerie Derouillon, Paris (2022); “Baltic Triennial”, CAC Vilnius (2021); “In the Thickets of Unexplored Places” (solo), Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo (2021); “1920 - 2020: Figures and Portraits”, Massimo de Carlo, Milan (2021); “Hidden Garden” (solo), Galerie Derouillon, Paris (2020).

Public collections: Blenheim Foundation (UK) Deji Art Museum, Nanjing (CN); Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo (IT); Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami (US); K11 MUSEA (HKG); Kistefos Museum, Jevnaker (NO); LACMA (Los Angeles County Museum of Art) (US); Musée d’art Moderne de la ville de Paris (FR); Museo Jumex (MX); National Gallery of Victoria (AU); National Gallery Prague (CZ); Rachofsky Collection, The Warehouse, Dallas (US); The Bunker Artspace (US); The Ekard Collection (NL); X Museum (CN); Zuzeum Museum (LV).

CV

Solo Exhibitions

- 2026 “Soulscape”, Galerie Derouillon, Paris (FR)
- 2025 “Inner World”, Mendes Wood DM, Sao Paulo (BR)
- 2024 “From Lines to Matter”, Museum Kampa, Prague (CZ)
“Under the weight of the world”, Power Station, Dallas (US)
- 2023 “Lost in Time”, Galerie Derouillon, Paris (FR)
“The Labours of Hercules”, Mendes Wood DM, Brussels (BE)
- 2022 “Dusk of the Gods”, Mendes Wood DM, New York (US)
“Destinies of Stone Faces”, Galerie Derouillon, Paris (FR)
- 2021 “Solo show”, FIAC OVR, Galerie Derouillon, Paris (FR)
“In the Thickets of Unexplored Places”, Mendes Wood DM, Sao Paulo (BR)
- 2020 “Mendes Wood DM”, Villa Era, Vigliano Biellese, Milan (IT)
“Hidden Garden”, Galerie Derouillon, Paris (FR)
- 2019 “Landscapes of Muscle”, Galerie Dukla, Ostrava (CZ)
“Heaven Hell Paradise”, Galerie města Třince, Třinec (CZ)
“Temple of Doom”, Berlínskej Model, Praha (CZ)
- 2018 “ARMAGEDON”, Galerie OFF/FORMAT, Brno (CZ)

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2025 “Visions of the World”, Museum Kampa, Prague (CZ)
“Double Vision: The Rachofsky Collection and the Hartland&Mackie/Labora Collection”, Warehouse Dallas Art Foundation, Dallas (US)
- 2024 “My World”, curated by Hans den Hartog Jager, Singer Laren (NT)
“X COLLECTION 202: PORTRAIT OF A MAN”, X Museum, Beijing (CN)
“Habiter le Monde”, Château Aubenas, Centre d’Art Contemporain, Aubenas (FR)
- 2023 “Cinquième saison”, Art Basel Paris en collaboration avec le Musée du Louvre, Jardin des Tuileries, Paris (FR)
“The Rings of Saturn”, Galerie Derouillon, Paris (FR)
- 2022 “ARS22: Living Encounters”, Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Helsinki (FI)
“Fire Figure Fantasy: Selections from ICA Miami’s Collection”, Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami (US)
- 2021 “BT14: 14th edition Baltic Triennale”, CAC Vilnius (LT)
“1920 - 2020: Figures and Portraits”, Massimo de Carlo, Milan (IT)

- “Ten years anniversary show”, Mendes Wood DM, Sao Paulo (BR)
- 2020 “What Fruit it Bears”, Peres Projects, Berlin (DE)
- 2019 “A Snake Without A Head Is Just A Rope”, Sim Smith, London (UK)
Bracia, 18a Gallery, Warsaw (PL)
“12th Prize of Art Critique for Young Painting”, Galerie Kritiků, Praha (CZ)
- 2018 “4 + 4 Days In Motion”, Desfourský palác, Praha (CZ)
“Tales of Talent”, Galerie Wolfsen, Aalborg (DK)

Public Collections

- Blenheim Foundation (UK)
Deji Art Museum, Nanjing (CN)
Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo (IT)
Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami (US)
K11 MUSEA (HKG)
Kistefos Museum, Jevnaker (NO)
LACMA (Los Angeles County Museum of Art) (US)
Musée d’art Moderne de la ville de Paris (FR)
Museo Jumex (MX)
National Gallery of Victoria (AU)
National Gallery Prague (CZ)
Rachofsky Collection, The Warehouse, Dallas (US)
The Bunker Artspace (US)
The Ekard Collection (NL)
X Museum (CN)
Zuzeum Museum (LV)

Education

- 2016 - 2019 Master’s degree at the Faculty of Arts of the Ostrava
University (CZ), Drawing Studio
- 2017 Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw (PL), Department of Painting
- 2013 - 2016 Bachelor’s degree at the Faculty of Arts of the Ostrava
University (CZ), Drawing Studio
- 2009 - 2013 Secondary school of Applied Arts in Uherské Hradiště (CZ),
Department of Ceramic Design

Awards

- 2019 Winner of 12th Prize of Art Critique for Young Painting, Galerie Kritiků,
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