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SHANSHUI

Yellow River Painting

Alberto Ruiz de Samaniego

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By: Alberto Ruiz de Samaniego

"Everything is, is thought, and is produced in and through the deviation
from equilibrium. Here again is the nature of things.

And the great Pan has just been reborn."

Michel Serres

"Omnia vertuntur"

Propertius

The bottom of the well is black, the bottom of the cave is dark; the pure wave, finally, is a burst of gleams, a spill, and a collapse. For every relationship, starting with the most primary—figure against background, for example—is inscribed only upon disorder. Here we are at the bottom of being. Behind power, behind the last potency, behind the universal impetus. In its vicinity, at its edges, noise and clamor populate the space.

At that edge—like a panic-stricken burst—César Barrio's painting springs forth. Through it, all forms will spill.

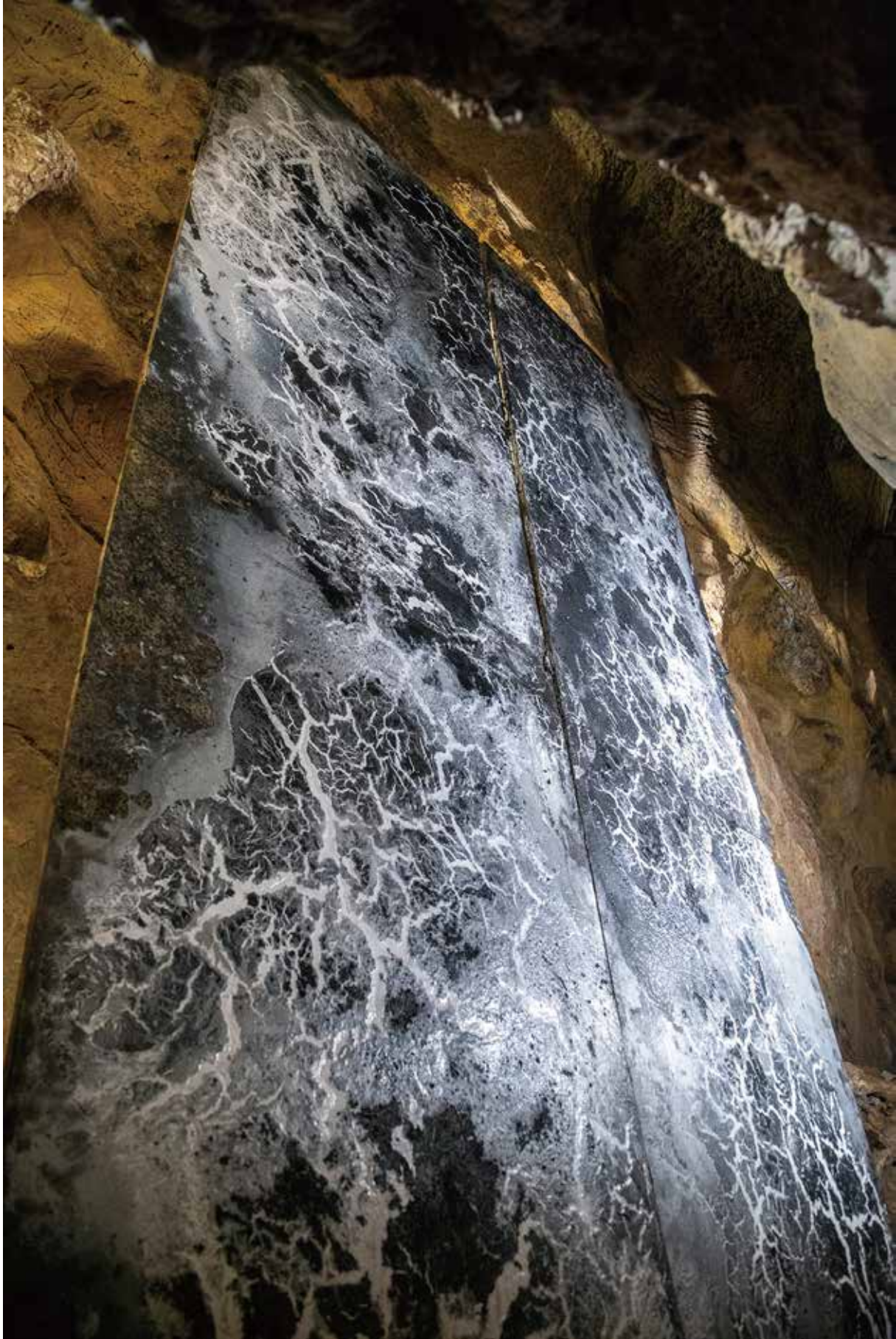
Every birth of the world, every beginning of appearance, is a grand spectacle. A true apparition. But also the most real: the law of irreversibility or downstream fall. That is what always lies behind all representation: the primordial noise or disorder at the bottom of the well.

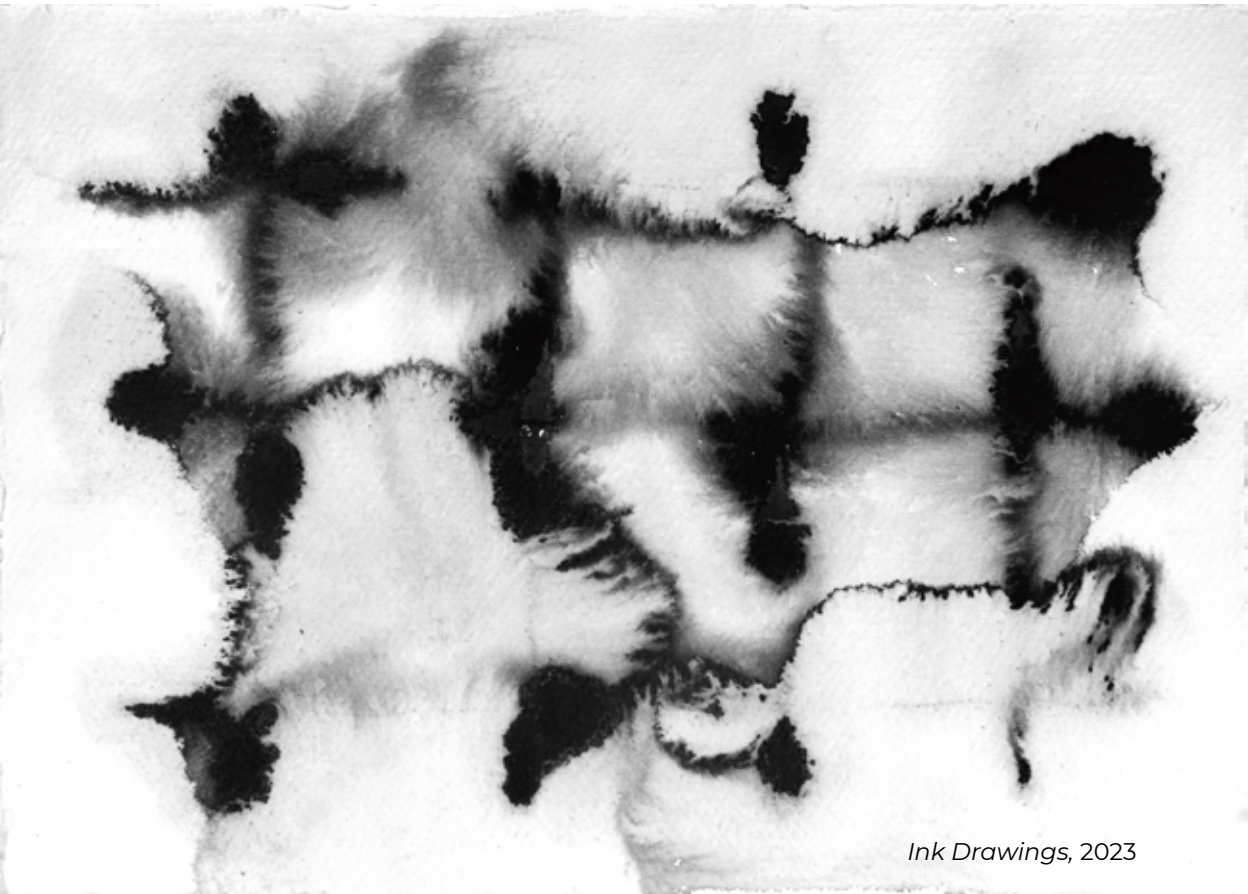
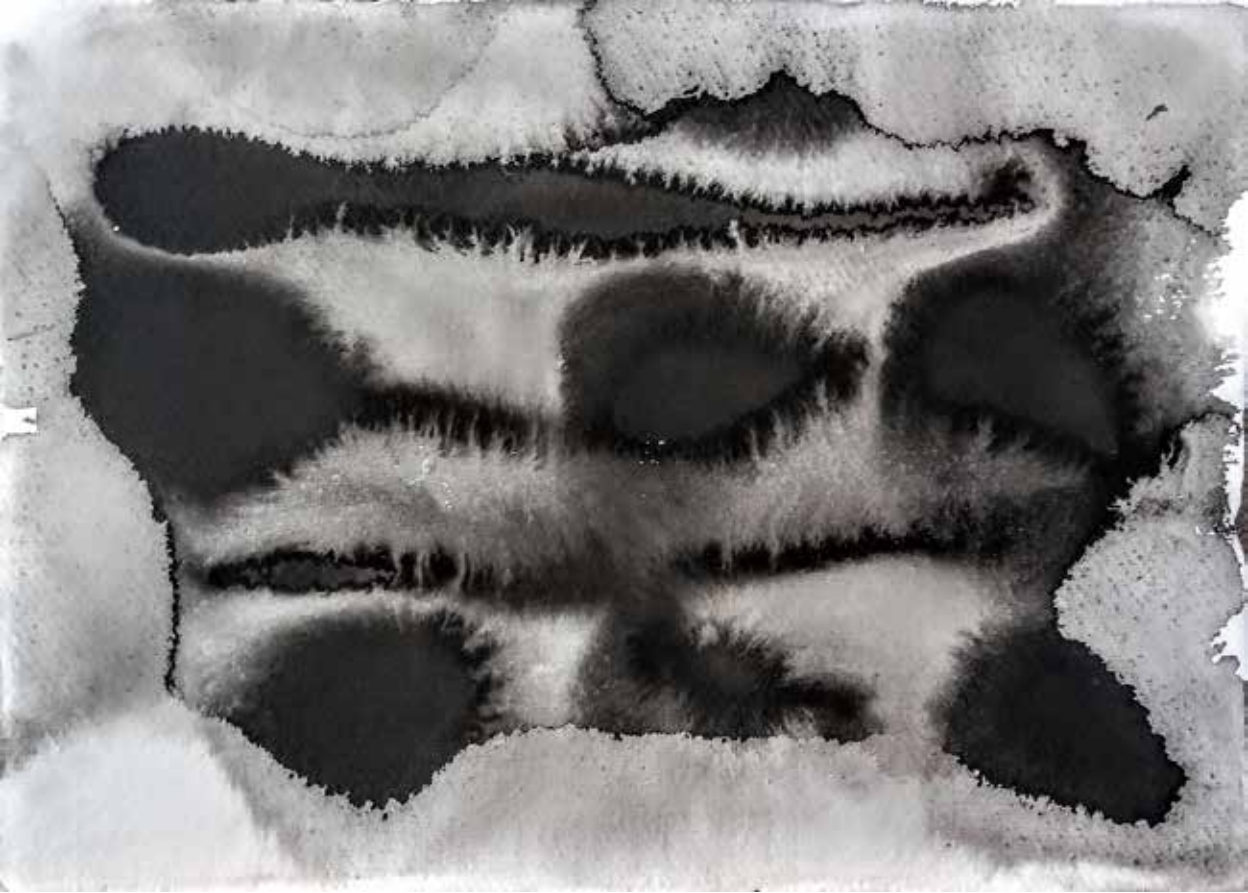
What César Barrio transcribes is the immense clamor of being. Painting as hydraulics, an irreversible chain of flows and floating volumes. The painter seeks to know the law of this infinite series; he must settle—for it is no small thing—for enunciating it, writing it, pursuing it in line and paint, caressing—fascinated—its tremors, grazes, and rhythms. It is, fundamentally, a Faustian pact of sorts: is it possible, perhaps, to fix the torrential pull of the irreversible and overflowing? Then, does painting constitute a kind of rare and absolute exception: the one that seeks to achieve balance in the very midst of the fall or the current?

To try to produce it is the essence of human history, when our actions seek to respond to this exceptionality.

Faustian: the painter who descends into the grotto wants to trace the series back to its source, while striving to remain faithful to

Score of a Submerged Cathedral, 2022, Órguens Cave, Castellón, Spain





Ink Drawings, 2023

the impulse until the end. For the fabulous shows itself but hides the path of that ascent and its traces. It confuses and devastates or drags with daimonic force. Behind the pictorial act, something is always hidden or concealed: it withdraws after having come, impetuously or with dove-like steps.

Sometimes, from that conflagration, from that abrasive phenomenon, remnants remain like embers, traces of ash, tangles like threads of shadow hanging exhausted, trembling.

Because the chain flows from fire to sea. The threshold of potency is a curtain of fire, and then painting emerges from dancing flames. Red heart of the blaze. He who descends into the cave seeks, in touching the darkness of the earth, to reach a morning of sunlight. There lies another definition of this pliant action.

Painting certainly has a Faustian destiny: it would like to go beyond that curtain of fire, but the push of its fluid and energy carries it, indeed, outward, the spilling of itself, the light of day in which it calms and fades. Each fragment of earth or matter is a memory of suns.

Each work is a local fire. And a sign, the mark of a memory that aspires to repeat the matrix, the topology of form, the bas-relief and relief traced by the cosmic hand. That rare and solar formalized energy must then be stored in boxes, glass containers, vessels that are doors of rarity, icons of singularity.

But, as he ascends the chain, with the increasingly agitated irreversible river, the painter moves toward the sun, from one local fires to the next. The red of energy, the black of the improbable sign, fire-yellows, turbulence at the silt-filled delta, green-blues of sludge and mud: these are the colors of the work. Even, around that head of the Sun King, swarm small spots of parasites, of murmurs.

The light flickers in the boxes, when new intuition appears, thunderous; when the new element comes from human hands that open it. Each work is a reservoir of Sun, a container of energies: field of singularities. Epiphany, or spaces of dazzling. Painting as mimesis... of a sun. Yellow river painting.

In the beginning was the blot or the catastrophe, instability, the irregular and the irredeemable. The painter is like a sailor, a bird, or a peasant: he must trust and rely on the tides or flow of nature. Painting grows in torrents and emanations. Also in uncertainty. It is an art of water and air, of fire and vapors. Subtle, volatile: an art of formidable propagation. Formidable for its irreversible variability.

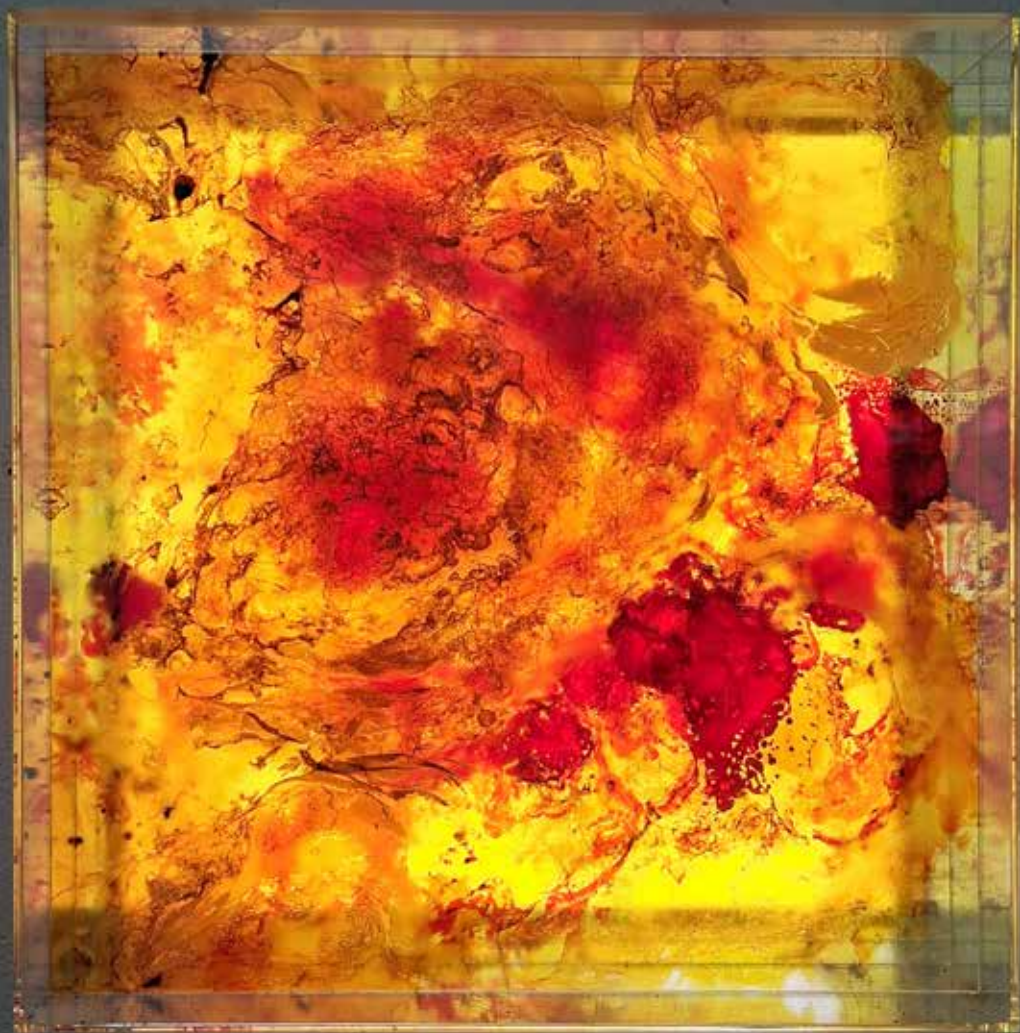
Painting: sumptuous disorder.

But, as a true painter, César Barrio is anti-Platonic: he does not release or abstract, does not vacate, but irrigates, inoculates, propagates, confuses, invades... over the white domain of paper or canvas, or the crystallized transparency of glass.



Score of a Submerged Cathedral, 2022, Òrguens Cave, Castellón, Spain





That floating and random animation belongs to a conception of the world that responds to unpredictable, mixed, diffuse, even viscous mobility, rather than to a reasonable and straight—calm and economical—order of things.

Fluid mass or chaotic phenomenon: chaosmos of river and air and turbulence, of rugged slopes and volcanoes: pure exteriority, absolutely uncontrolled, abstract or eidetic. Quite the opposite: exposure, storm, time (in both senses: chronological and meteorological).

Painting, finally, of Plutonic materialism. Painting of... natural history.

Like a river in flood, pictorial excess erases the boundary, mad proliferation of a variety that keeps growing and moving, producing remains, chromatic residues, emanations, and deltas. It is the universe conspiring with breaths and networks, knots and deviations: turbulences.

Here the key term is deviation: time itself began with the deviation of its systems. It may also be called disorder, mutation, mismatch, noise.

Therefore: chance that always disrupts meaning—if we can still speak of meaning. In any case, continuous change of order. This deviation disorients the previous series, the succession, the meaning, and sets new

paths, other sedimentations. Time, like pictorial action, only begins with that intervention. Irreversibility never appears without that factor of asymmetry: asymmetry, the appearance/disappearance of meaning. The origin of the torrent, of the unpredictable flow.

What must the painter do here? Only locally foster a certain situation and its most fertile or profitable—subtle, complex, concrete—directions.

The painter must intercept and channel. The directions, the flows—diverse, different, surprising—compose themselves. They are the meanings created locally, with the highest integrative demand, which must avoid and therefore interrupt excessive repetition or redundancy, bifurcate or divert every tendency or series of the same: here is another definition of painting.

White is covered in blotches.

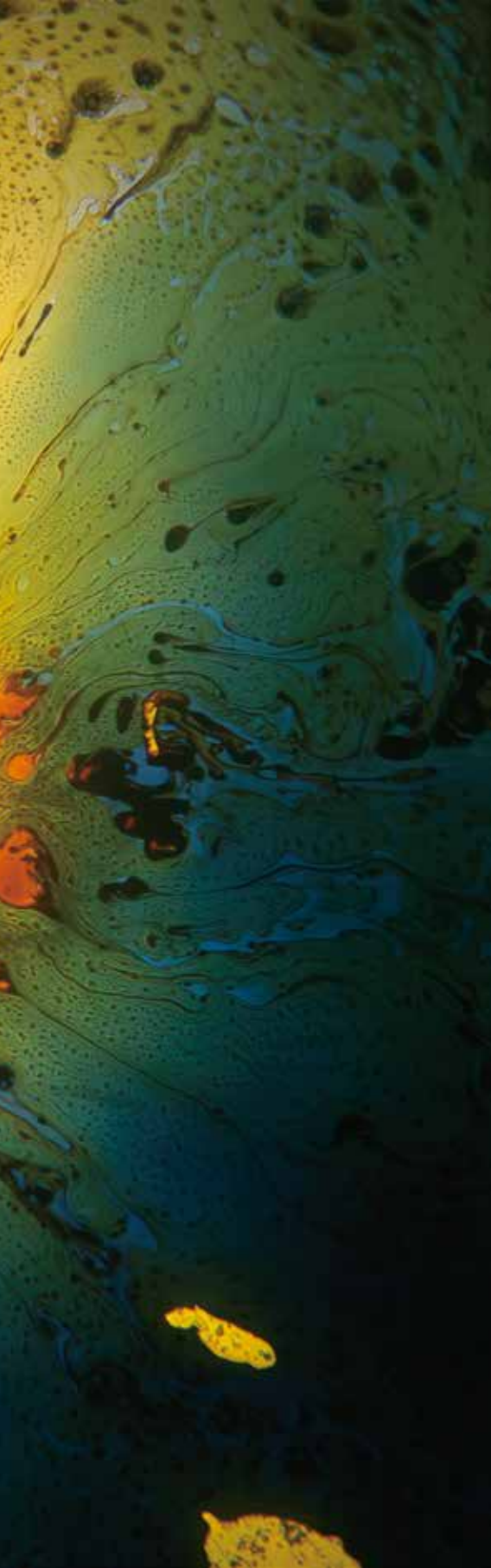
Like time, painting only begins with the sowing of disorder.

The pictorial action multiplies, in short, complexity. It excites production, exalts, accelerates the exchange of elements. But it can also become dangerous.

Novelty, in its excess, can cause suffocation, exhaustion. Thus it is also the painter's task to rarefy, refine, lighten, erase, modulate, allow the weightless and joyful flow without the whole being dragged too swiftly



Three sequences 1. *Light tables Series*, 2025

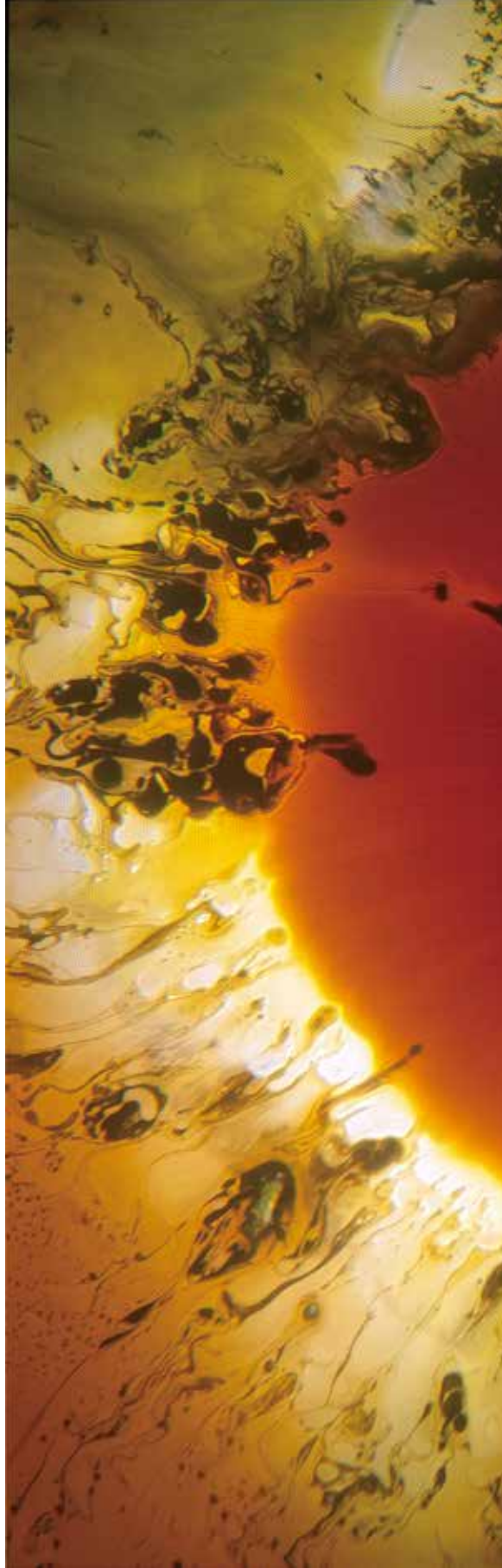


Three sequences 2. Light tables Series, 2025





Three sequences 3. Light tables Series, 2025





downstream toward ruin, disengagement and, ultimately, death, rubble, or destruction.

César Barrio's pictorial gestures resemble chromatic breaths.

They correspond, effectively, to the modulations or articulations of that original expression of flow, that wind that is Pan's voice.

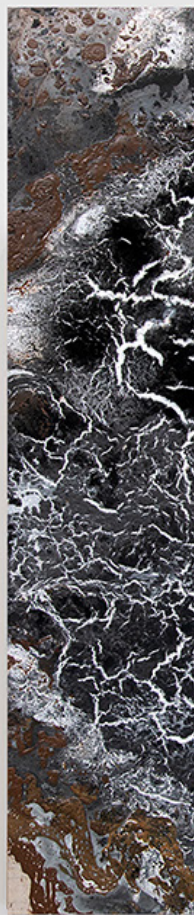
They are also the first interruptions of that current or breath: ruptures, pauses, elongations, bifurcations that block or coagulate movement, cut it, close it or propel it, assist it: modulate it. Valves.

They excite multiplication and zig-zagging, provoke channels and deltas in that viscous flow.

Painting, in the end, is distilled through such deviations and bottlenecks, that flow strangled by knots and condensations, one could almost say drop by drop: the drop would be, indeed, the minimum unit of the phenomenon, the phoneme of the pictorial breath. It is up to each work to distribute them in its own way.

The breath of that raw or unleashed voice that painting always seeks and circles around—without ever fully reaching it but being scorched in the attempt—would be what life presents at birth. It is like Pan's scream: a great yellow river, dancing like a vast curtain of flames.

Living flame of love. It is the flame as inflamed air, in the enduring words of Saint John of the Cross.









*"The highest and deepest level [of creation] is
achieved when one acts halfway between in-
tention and non-intention."*

Shen Zong

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