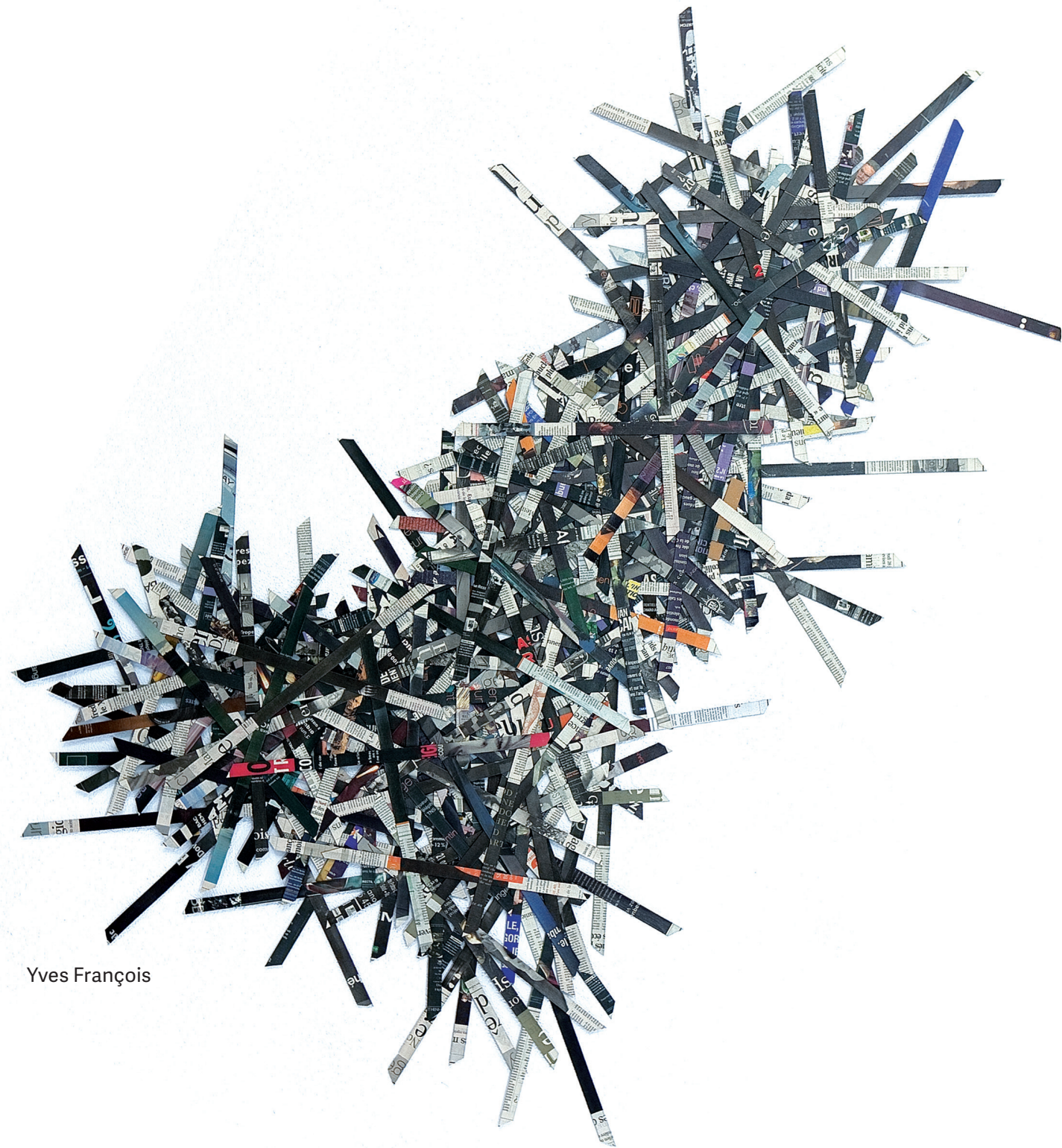
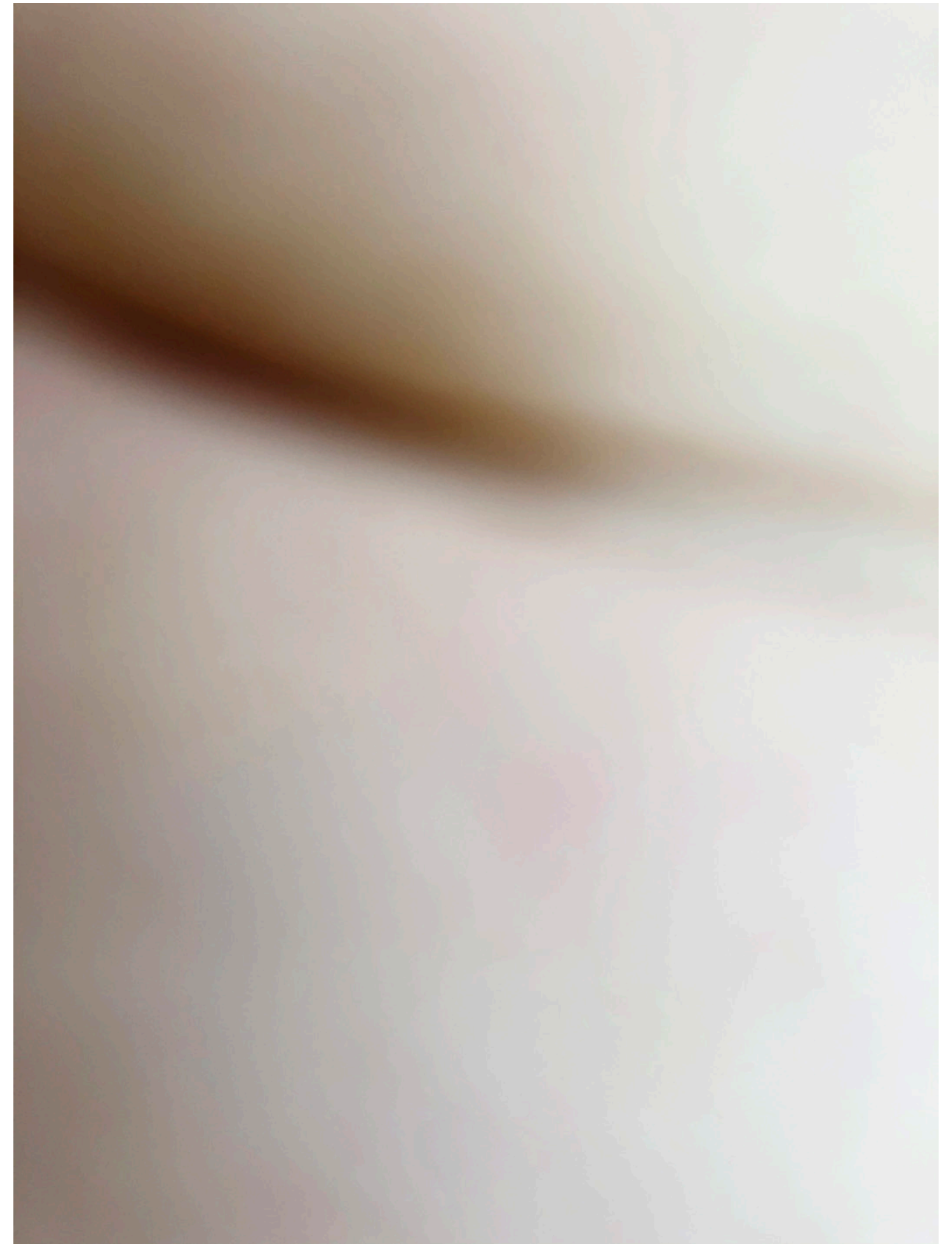


East meets West

Galeria Horizon 15.07.23–17.08.23



Yves François



Hiro Matsuoka

Art with an oriental spirit

In China, the thinker and the painter [...] before judging or creating a work [...] considered the preeminence of the spirit [...]. Before acting they had to discover a double principle of elevation and conduct.

Georges Duthuit

Art, as most of us understand it today, is a recent invention that, at most, we can place at the end of the C18th. In fact, as thinkers like Rancière never tire of pointing out, it is one of the many inventions of modernity: what the Greeks did, cave paintings, Romanesque church decorations, Byzantine icons or Arabic calligraphy, to cite some quite distinct examples, were not “art”, we insist, in the current sense but something much more complex and inseparable from magical-religious thought and the social and power structures of each moment.

The philosopher Laura Llevadot says that for the notion of art to appear as such the confluence of three factors was necessary: “the consolidation of aesthetics as a discourse that defines the work as an object of disinterested contemplation (Kant), the appearance of institutions such as museums or galleries that remove the work from its context (religious, power, etc...) legitimizing it as an autonomous work of art, and the existence of a market that gives it an exchange value capable of turning it into merchandise. Without that discursive, institutional and economic triangle there is no art”.

With modernity, in addition, there would also arise the rare need to annihilate the past: the vanguards found their profound meaning in the systematic denial of form and academia and, basically, in the condemnation of the great culprit of everything, that is to say, damn beauty. Ezra Pound’s *Make it New* continues to resonate strongly. Art, as we understand it today, would arrive accompanied by even more radical paradigm changes: in contrast to the classical idea of a quiet and stable universe, Aristotle’s first motionless engine. Modernity places us in a cosmos in perpetual expansion; as opposed to invariable creationism, not only of Christian origin. Modernity contrasts the permanent evolution of species; before the Stoic or Epicurean ideals of happiness centered on static peace and the conscious acceptance of reality, modernity equates stillness and death to the point that only that which grows indefinitely, like the economy, can be considered a valid model.

How can we resist that modern imperative called “progress”? Tàpies believed that the only (or the best) way was to recover the oriental spirit present in many cultures. While in the West, he said, and especially in our Judeo-Christian tradition, there is a tendency towards dualism (creator and creature, matter and spirit, body and soul), in the “cultures of Eastern spirit”, on the other hand, the desire for unity predominates, the desire of the One. The Catalan artist very consciously avoided talking about the East: “We are referring to people with an oriental spirit

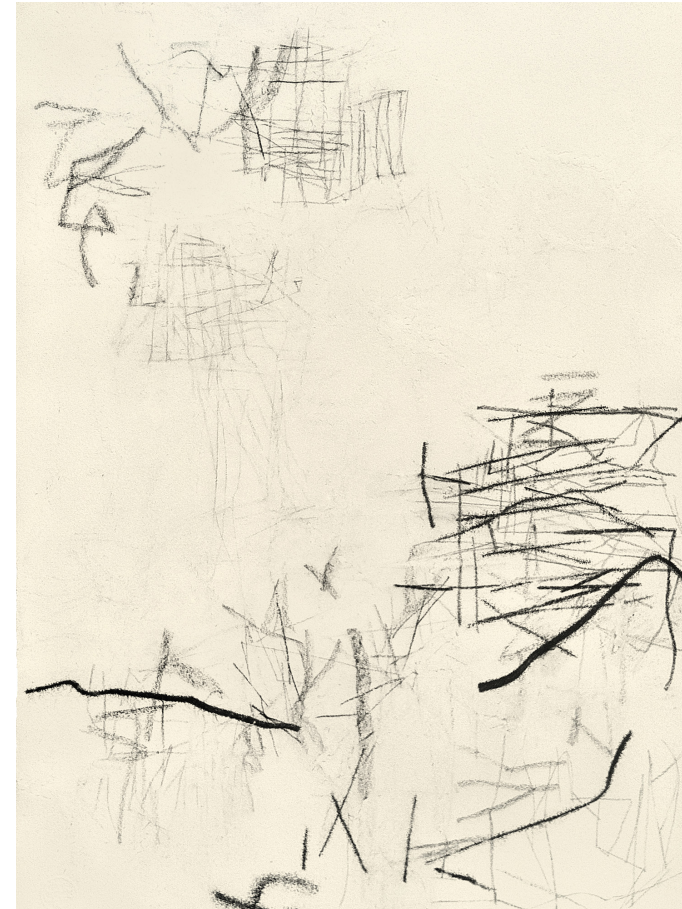
because their vision of the world is not limited today to those who are geographically located in the East, but rather it is a vision that is increasingly widespread and more attractive to a modern mentality”. A modern mentality that needs to deconstruct, in this process, modernity itself.

But that is not enough. Any artist who wants to participate in this Eastern spirituality must accept that the Self is the first obstacle in this journey towards primordial unity. Reconciling with reality means accepting the matter which we are made of. The question we should ask, ultimately, is this: Is there something that, in an essential sense, can be called “I”? and, supposing that this existed, would it be possible for art to represent it? Philosophers such as the empiricist David Hume (18th century) laid the foundations for a possible contemporary response challenging all those who accepted, uncritically, the existence of an “I” (self) that would be immutable and identical to himself. But Hume went further: for the British philosopher, “penetrating” the precinct of the supposed “I” would be equivalent to always encountering some particular perception, namely that we would not be talking about an “I” but a multitude of “selves” which would only be bundles or collections of different impressions.

In this sense, the idea of a (permanent) identity apart from the (mortal and changing) body can be very romantic (and very rational, Descartes believed) but terribly biased: “In the most intimate of everything, the body is found” affirmed theologian Patrick Vandermeersch. Perhaps the heartbeats of that body and the way in which its rhythm has taken over culture constitute the authentic pillar on which the most fundamental experience of faith rests.” A faith both material and spiritual at the same time. A faith that moves the creators who are now exhibiting in the Horizon gallery in Colera, artists who try to build bridges between the West and the East, staying away from the appearance of a too bright and superficial present. The great Junichiro Tanizaki explained it very well in his *In Praise of Shadows*: “We do not dislike everything that shines, but we do prefer a pensive luster to a shallow brilliance.”

Eudald Camps

Translation by Helen McNally



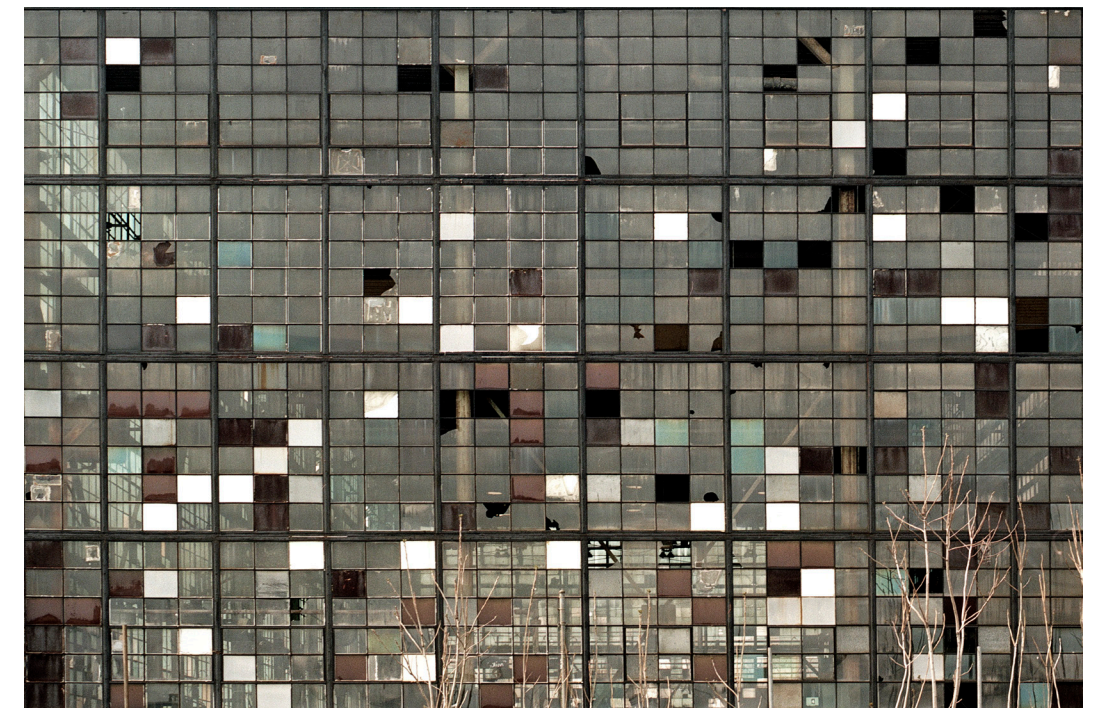
Christine Hiebert



Takesada Matsutani



Alex Nogué



Tom Blaess

**Christine Hiebert
Enric Ansesa
Hiro Matsuoka
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Takesada Matsutani
Claudio Bado
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Tom Blaess**

**Nicole Hassler
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Àlex Nogue
Gabriel
Christoph Müller
Yves François
Jaume Amigó**