



RENÉE ESTÉE

Choral Ode

COMA - Darlinghurst

14 July - 19 August, 2023

COMA



Thought

COMA is pleased to present a solo exhibition, titled '**Choral Ode**', by New York-based artist **Renée Estée (b. 1993)**, on view 14 July – 19 August in the Darlington Gallery. This is the artist's first solo presentation with COMA.

Utilising painting as a gateway to otherworldly realms, Renée Estée negotiates spaces of correspondence and transition, liminal thresholds between life and death. Drawing parallels to Greek Mythology, where protagonists undertake perilous journeys to bring back loved ones, these paintings contemplate the possibility of traversing the afterlife and returning with people, stories, and messages. Each artwork contributes to a larger chorus, echoing the strophe, antistrophe, and epode of a Grecian choral ode—an ode sung by the chorus, transitioning from one side of the stage to the other.

At the heart of this body of work is an elegiac aura—love letters, poems, and farewells. The inclusion of numbers, birth dates, and hours, momentarily ground us in the reality of linear existence, emphasising passages and markers of time that direct and indicate the way that we mourn and remember. Physically the maze-like structure of the presentation intends to disorient and collapses sequential readings of these numbers and figures, suggesting that time is in fact a construct, and life, death and existence fall into each other.

Choral Ode contemplates the notion of souls dwelling beneath the earth, while also considering the presence of angels, ghosts, and

spirits residing above us. The repeated imagery of small tombstones across the canvas symbolises the portals, archways, entryways, windows, and doorways that Estée employs to connect us to these omnipresent sentients and lead us to other spaces, both physical and metaphorical. Some paintings evoke a sense of being below ground, while others suggest rising up, floating, or flying above. This feeling is mirrored by the undulating formation of the paintings in the space, as they rise and fall at different levels, so that we are below, above and within the works all at once.

The exhibition is somewhat shrine-like for Estée, as small charms, pearls, and lace adorn the surfaces of the paintings in acts of commemoration and memorialisation. Lace, pearls, and other keepsakes from childhood serve as threads that connect the artist's personal history and familial narratives, creating a visual archive of collective memory.

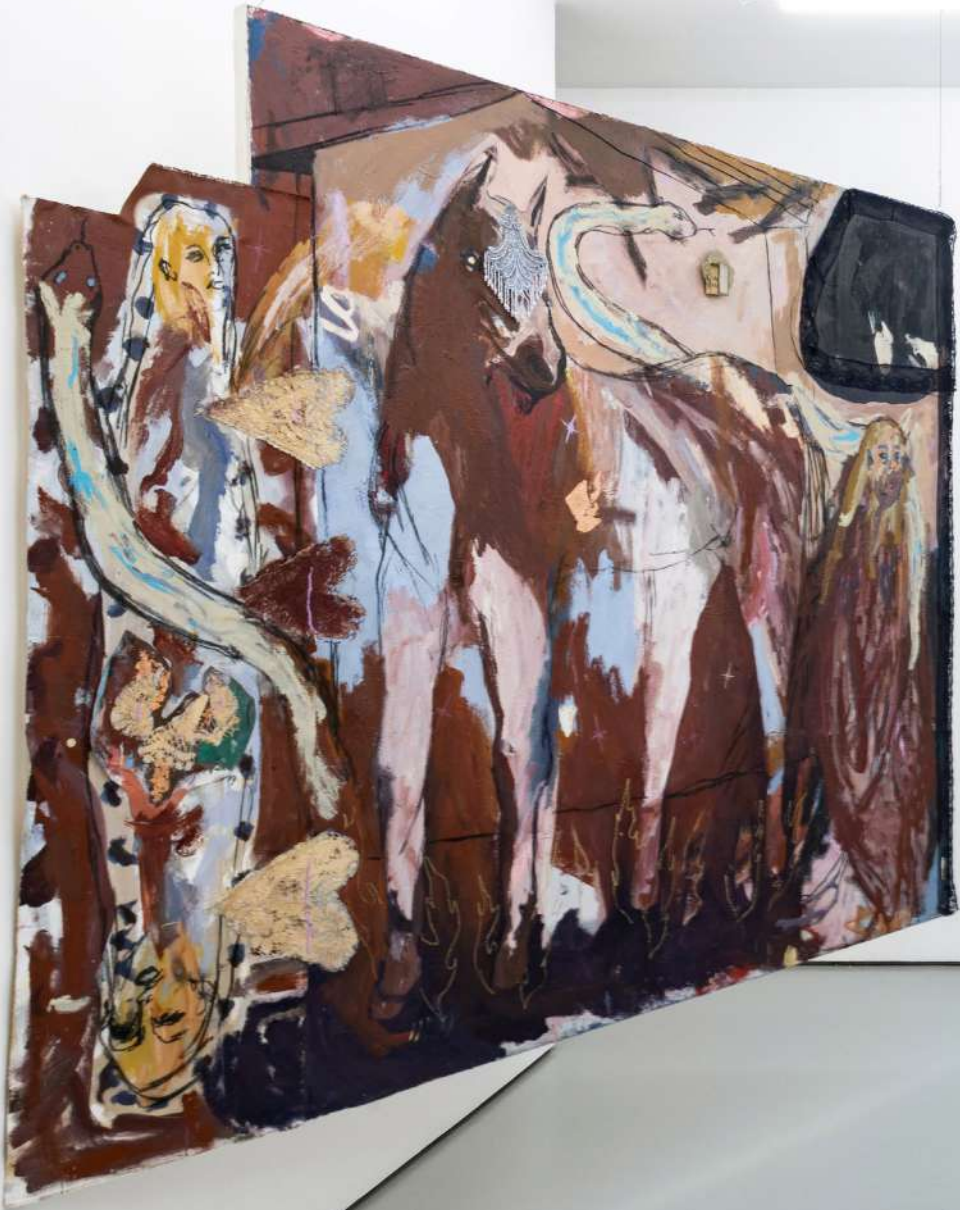
Notably, these works explore farewells not only to individuals but also to spaces and environments. The artist's experience changing geographical locations naturally inspired reflections on the concept of home and the interplay of distance and connection. The Australian landscape took on a newly profound significance—a marker of personal history and identity. *Choral Ode* is a reflection of the myths and stories we create as a result of loss, contemplating the impermanence of existence and the beauty of memory.





Renée Estée (b. 1993) is an Australian-born, New York-based artist. She's a recent Hunter MFA Graduate (Dec 2022) and graduated with a BFA Honors (First Class Honors) from the Victorian College of the Arts (Melbourne, Aus) in 2016.

Linking ideas and imagery of the Australian Outback, Hauntology, Orphism and contemplations of afterlife beliefs, Estée's practice highlights myth-making and rituals surrounding mourning, celebration and commemoration. Operating as visual love letters and epitaphs, her large-scale oil paintings coalesce figuration and abstraction to conjure spaces where she can commune with the deceased and contend with future loss. Taking on apparitional characteristics; figures materialize from layered, loose, gestural mark-making that merge in and out of their surrounding environments, whilst animals wander in the peripheries, simultaneously observing departures and transformations taking place. Carving out spaces from thick impasto marks alongside thin washes and surface stains, Estée considers painting's ability to omit and transfigure.



Renée Estée

*Carry Home (I saw houses
in the river, I saw fields
on fire, I saw the end once
more)*, 2023

oil paint, oil bar, fabric pearl
appliqué, gold leaf, lace
trim, found fabric, charcoal,
found object, collaged
canvas on canvas

182.5 x 222 cm

71 7/8 x 87 3/8 inches

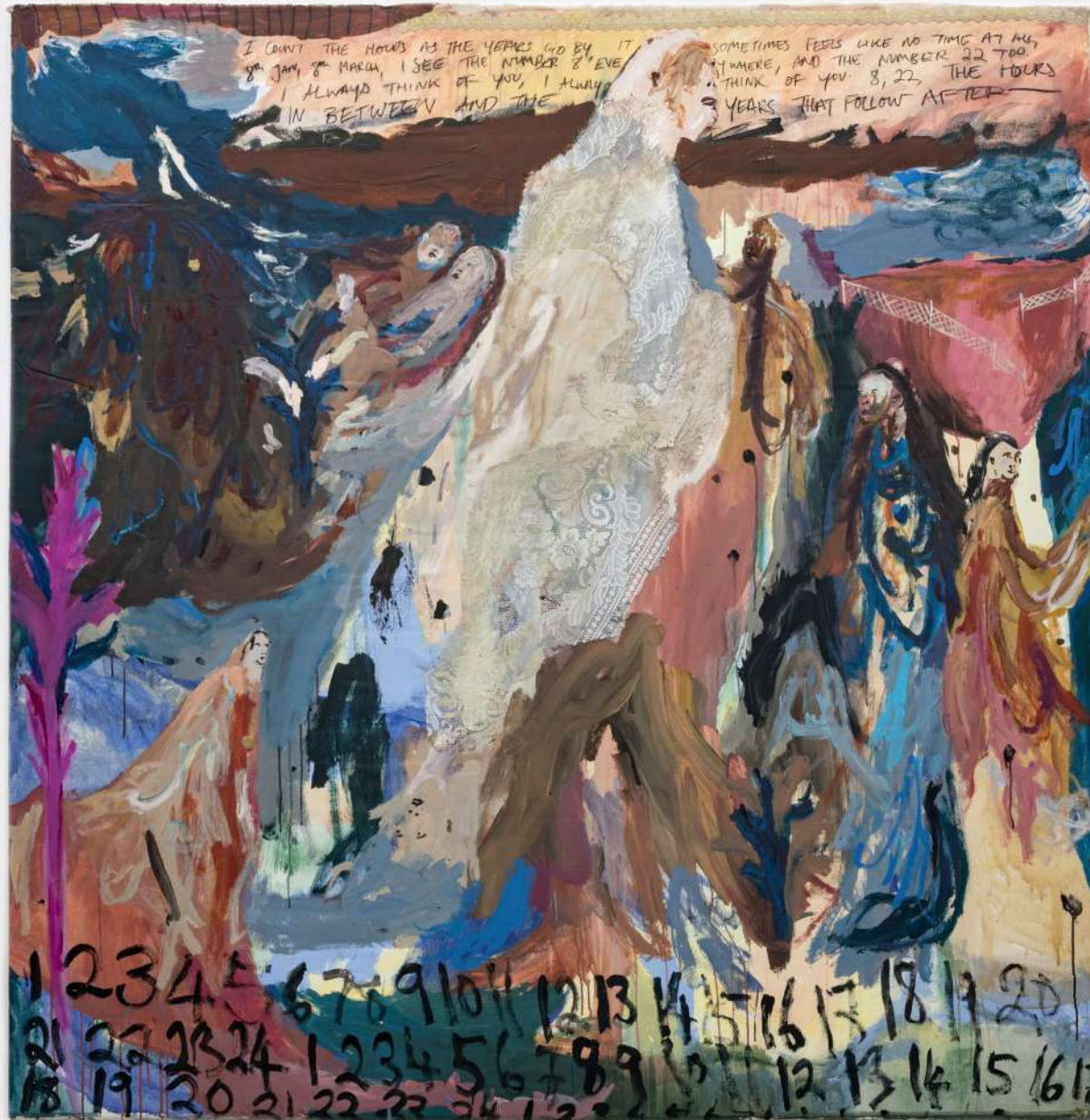


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'Love
you





Renée Estée

I Count The Hours In Between, 2023

oil paint, ink, charcoal, found
fabric/lace, bronze charm on
canvas

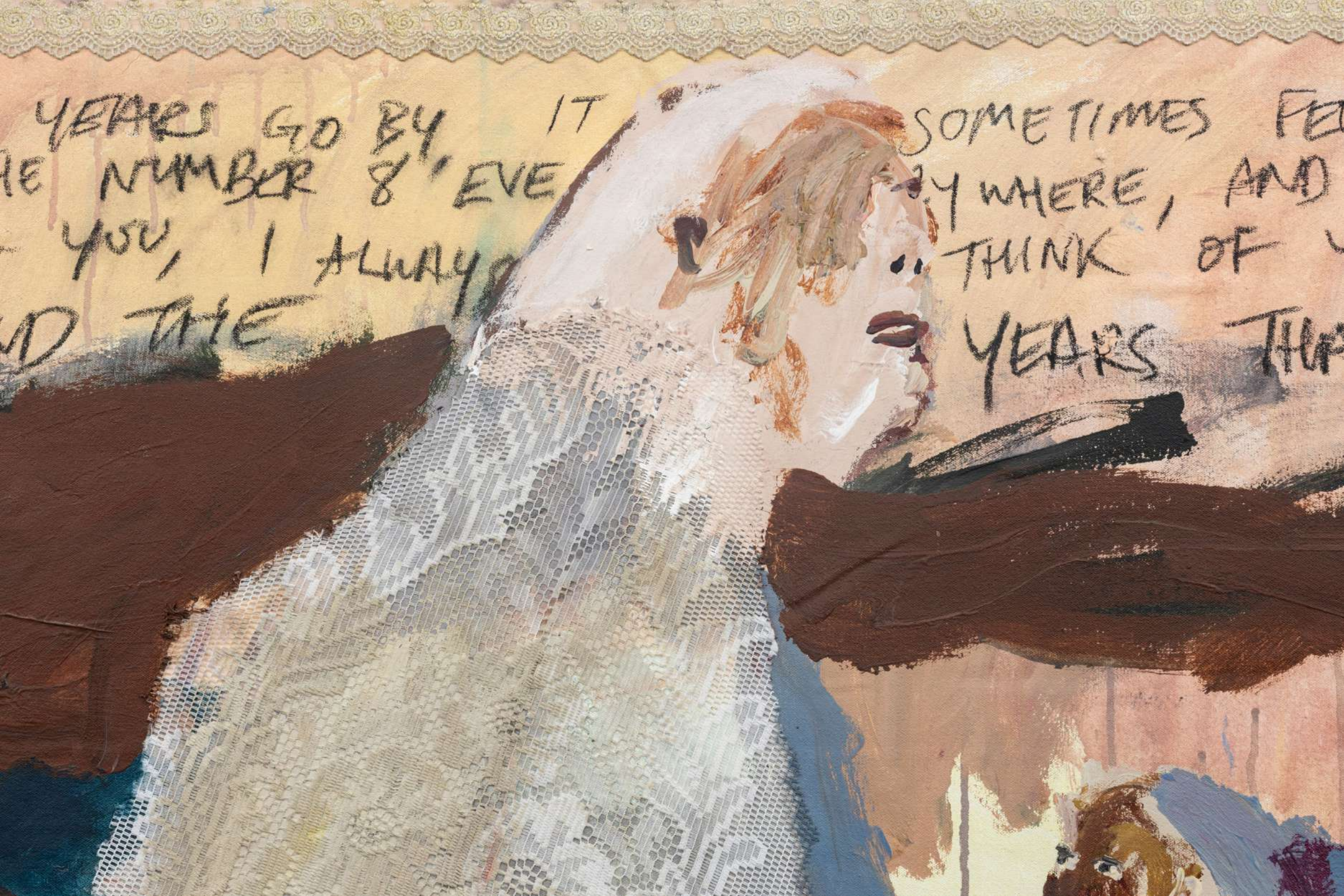
214 x 206 cm

84 1/4 x 81 1/8 inches

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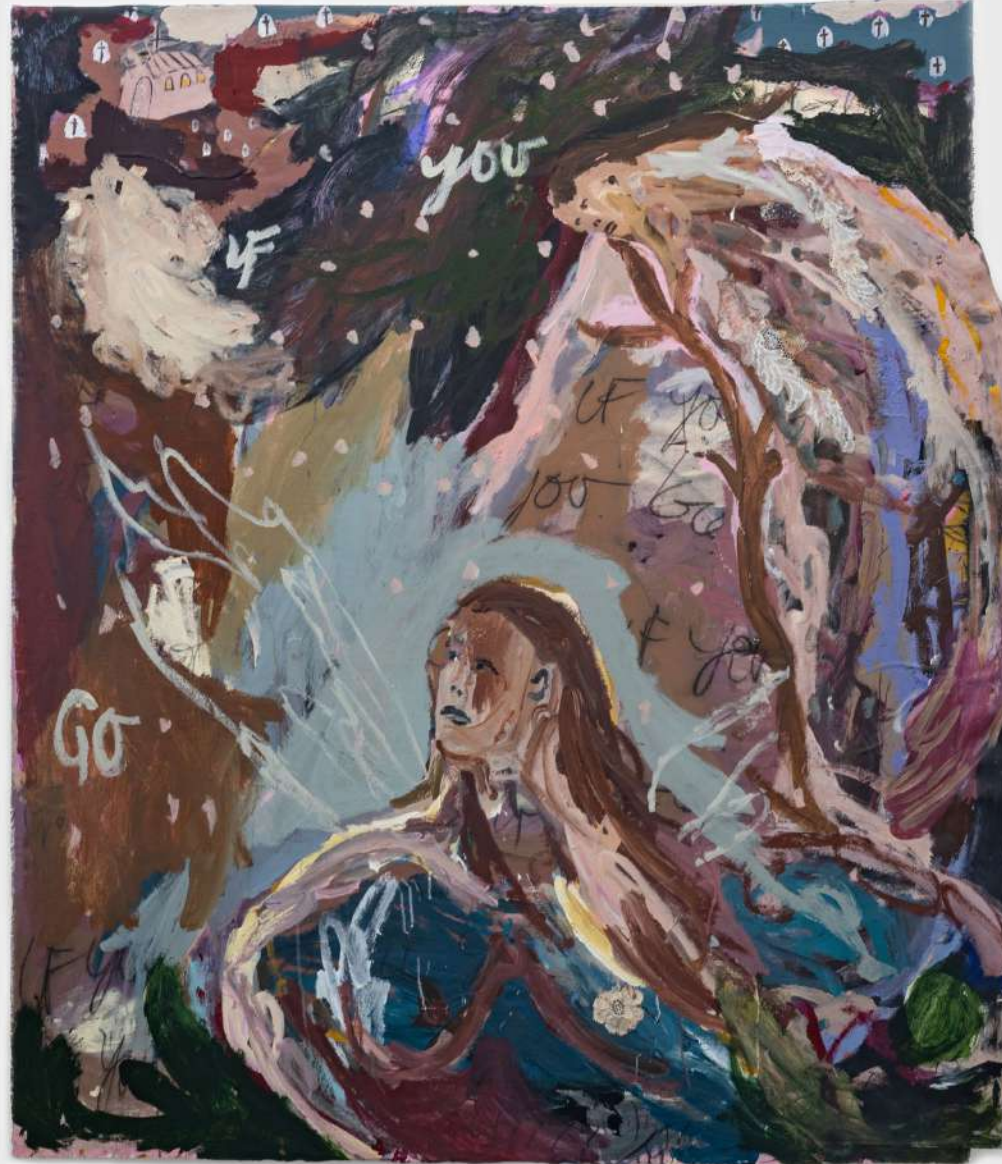
YEARS GO BY IT
THE NUMBER 8 'EVE
YOU, I ALWAYS
AND THE

SOMETIMES FEEL
BY WHERE, AND
THINK OF
YEARS THA



“bodies of water serve as entrances to the homes inhabited by spirits. As such, people perceive these places as liminal zones between their world and the spirit world where the possibility of death was imagined to lurk.”

– Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology and Heritage Studies pg. 33



Renée Estée

If You Go, If You Go, If You Go (Where Do You Go When You Go?), 2023

oil paint, oil bar, acrylic, charcoal, lace,
glitter, collaged canvas on canvas

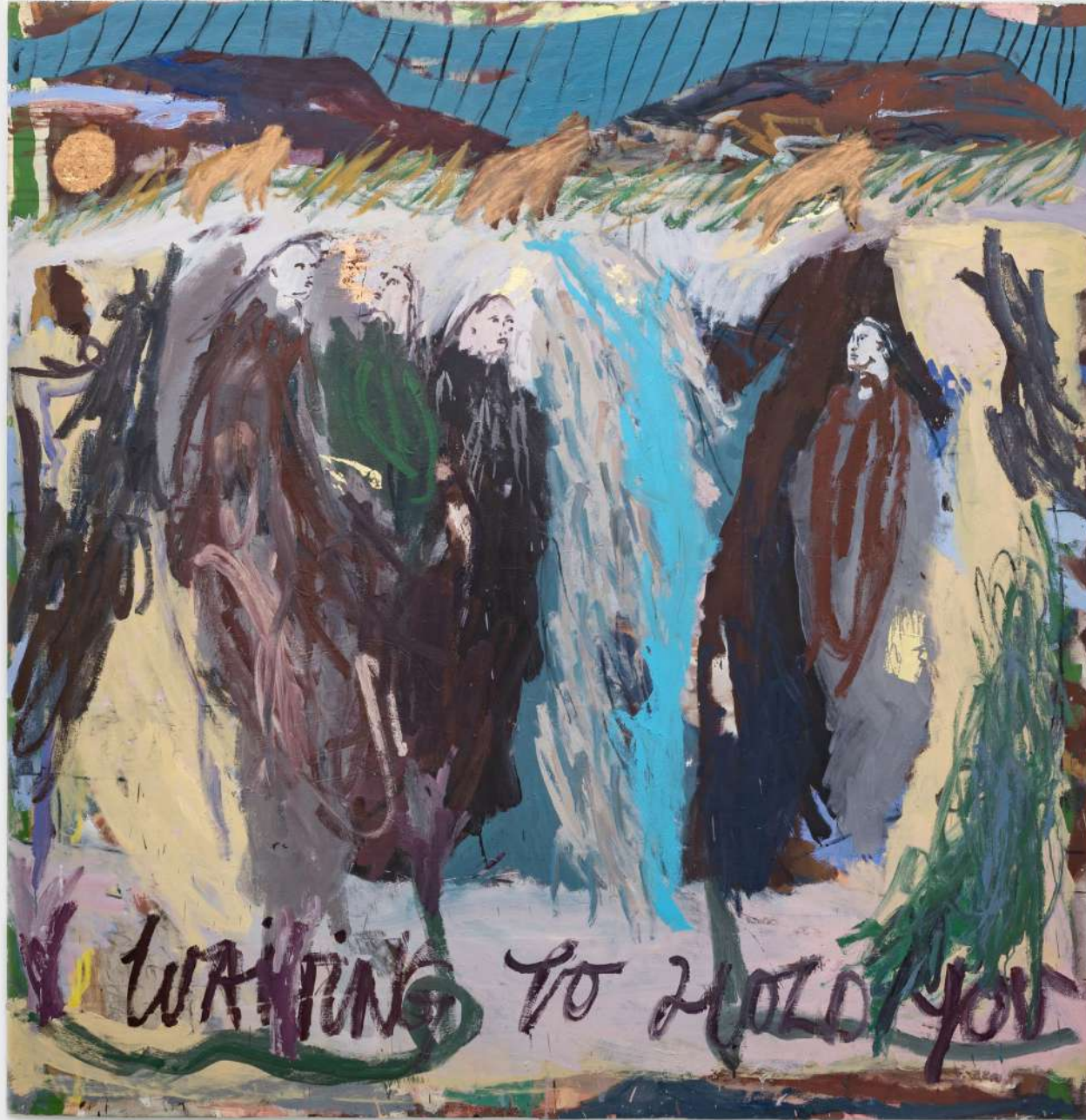
165 x 160 cm

64 15/16 x 63 inches

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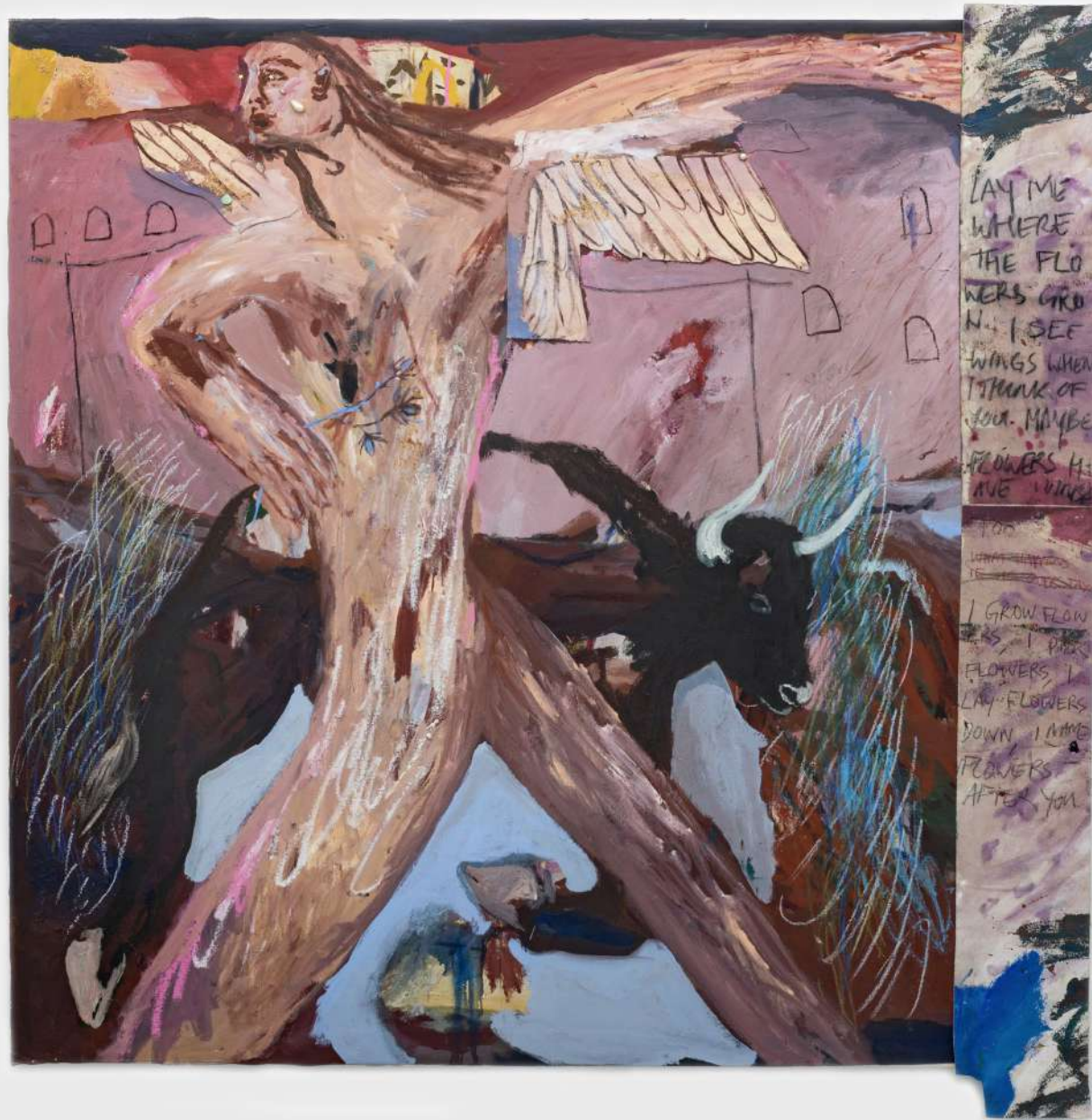




Renée Estée
Waiting To Hold You, 2023
oil paint, oil bar, gold leaf,
charcoal on canvas
189 x 184 cm
74 3/8 x 72 7/16 inches

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Renée Estée

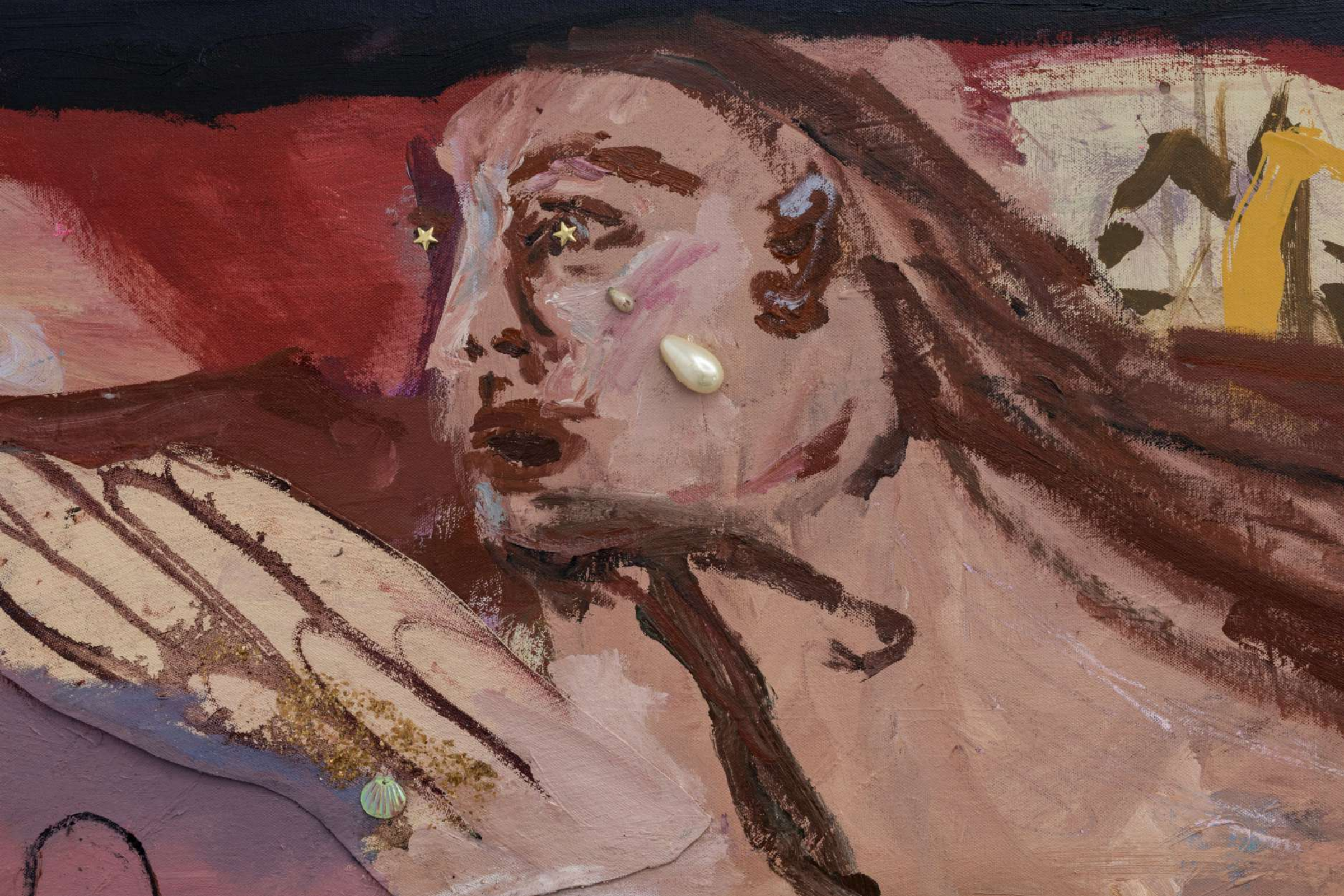
Final Wish, 2023

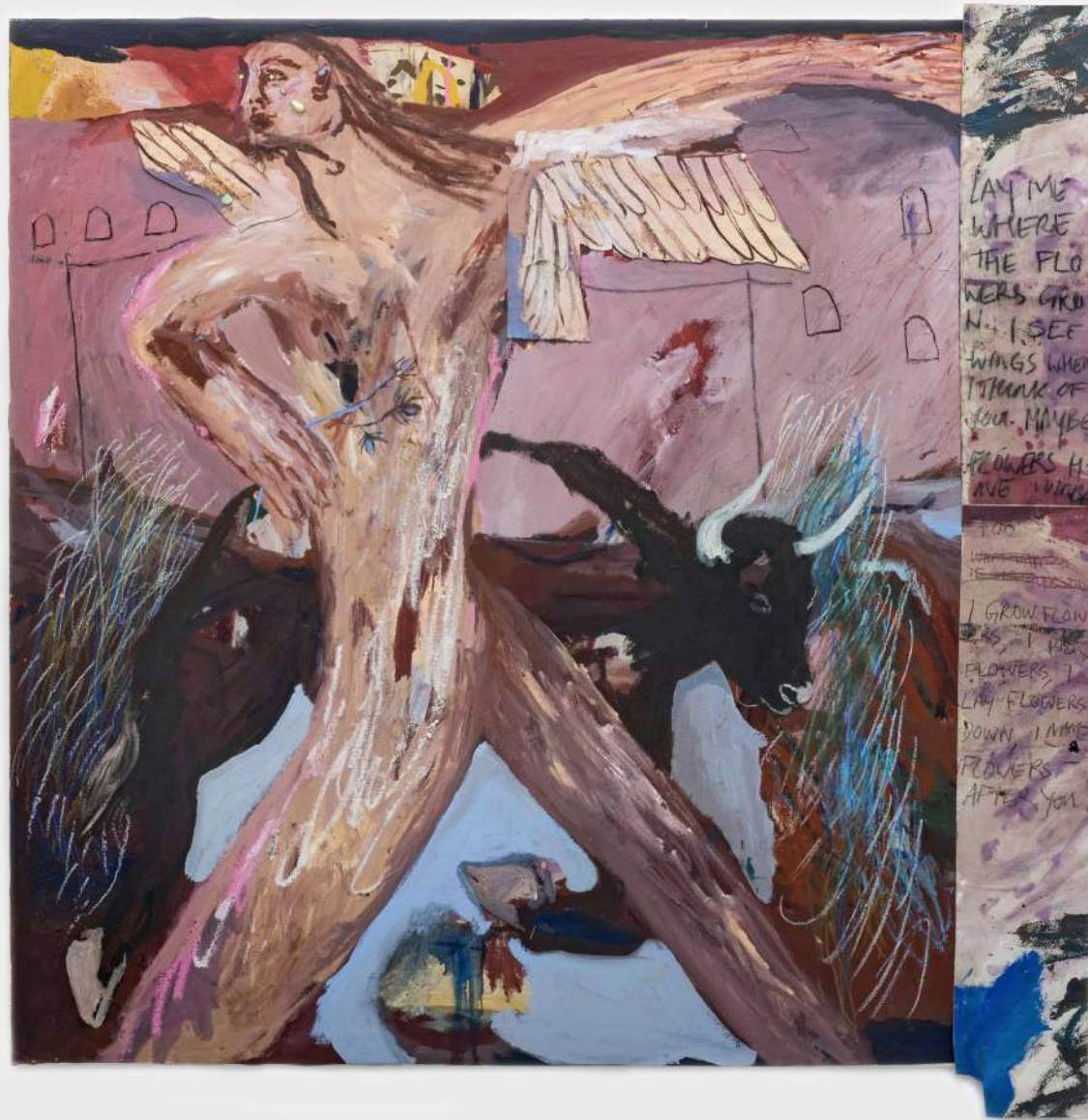
oil paint, oil bar, charcoal, gold and silver charms, pearls, glitter, gold leaf, collaged canvas on canvas

199 x 196 cm

78 1/2 x 77 3/16 inches

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Final Wish - "I wanted the text to the right of the painting to read both as someone's final wish or final last words, as well as a lament for the person gone. 'Lay me where the flowers grow. I see wings when I think of you, maybe flowers have wings too. I grow flowers, I pick flowers, I lay flowers down, I name flowers after you.' "

- Renée Estée



Renée Estée

*It Comes and Goes (Sometimes I
Think of You)*, 2023

oil paint, gold leaf, found gem,
charcoal, collaged canvas on
canvas

184 x 189 cm

72 7/16 x 74 3/8 inches

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Renée Estée

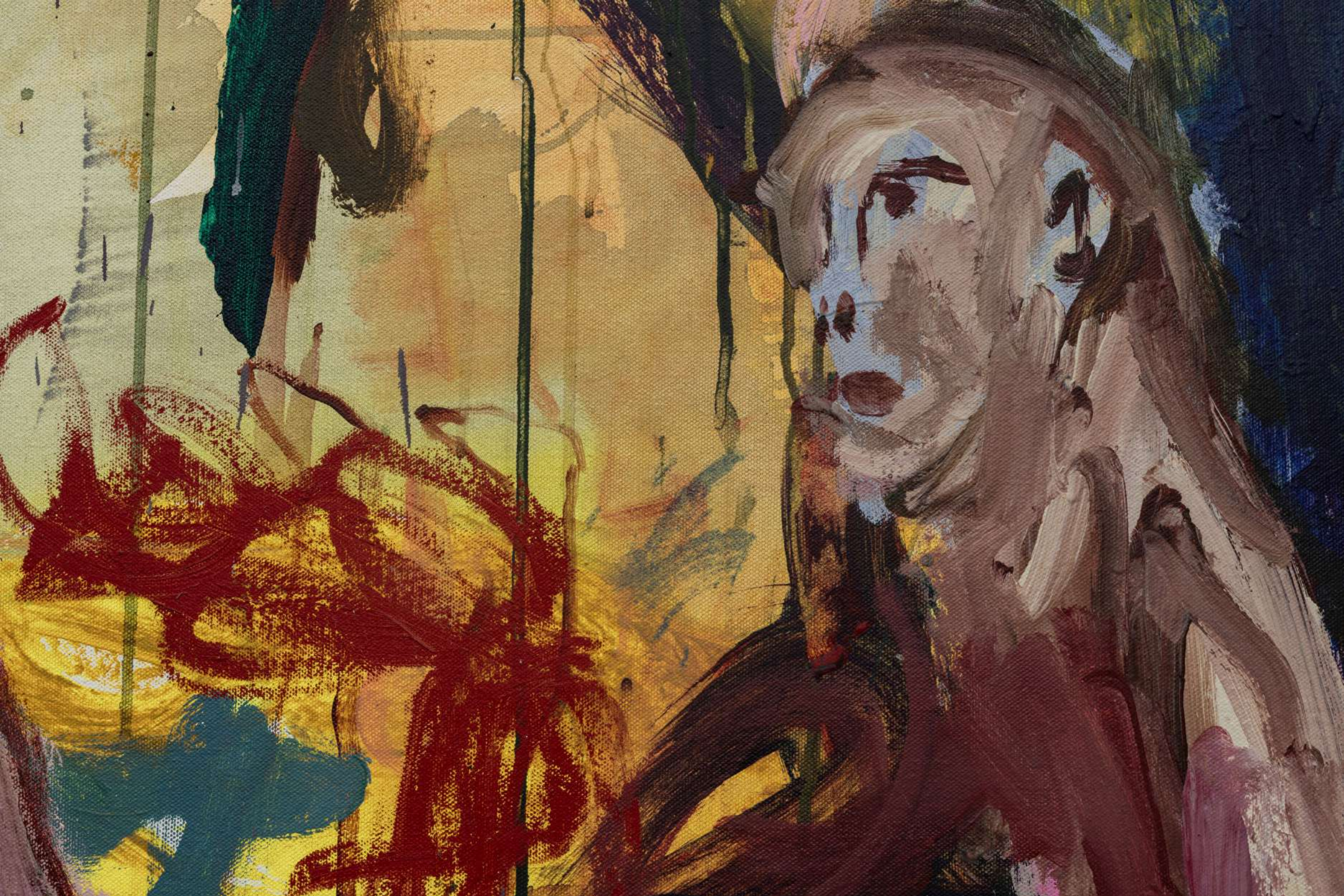
*I thought I saw you there, out on the
other side, 2023*

oil paint, oil bar, collaged canvas, glitter
on canvas

161.5 x 150 cm

63 9/16 x 59 1/16 inches

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Renée Estée

Not only I, 2023

oil paint, oil bar, china marker, charcoal,
gold leaf on canvas

184.5 x 169 cm

72 5/8 x 66 17/32 inches

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Renée Estée

There Was A Time I Held You Close,
2023

oil paint, ink, watercolor, charcoal,
gold leaf, bronze charms, oil bar on
canvas

196.5 x 185 cm

77 3/8 x 72 13/16 inches

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“Animals in the paintings are really important as spirit guides, types of psychopomps that move between realms, between this life and afterlife...The horse carries not only the figure, but the viewer as well, is significant to me. Through the image of the horse, experiences of transience and relocation, and an exploration of changing environments may be evoked.”

– Renée Estée



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