

INFINITE SKULLS

OFFICIAL LIST
PARIS, FEB. 2025

Robbie BARRAT . Ronan BARROT

An exceptional encounter between a contemporary painter and an artist, researcher in artificial intelligence.

Ronan Barrot, over the years, created paintings of skulls each time he finished or interrupted a painting with the remains of the paint on his palette.

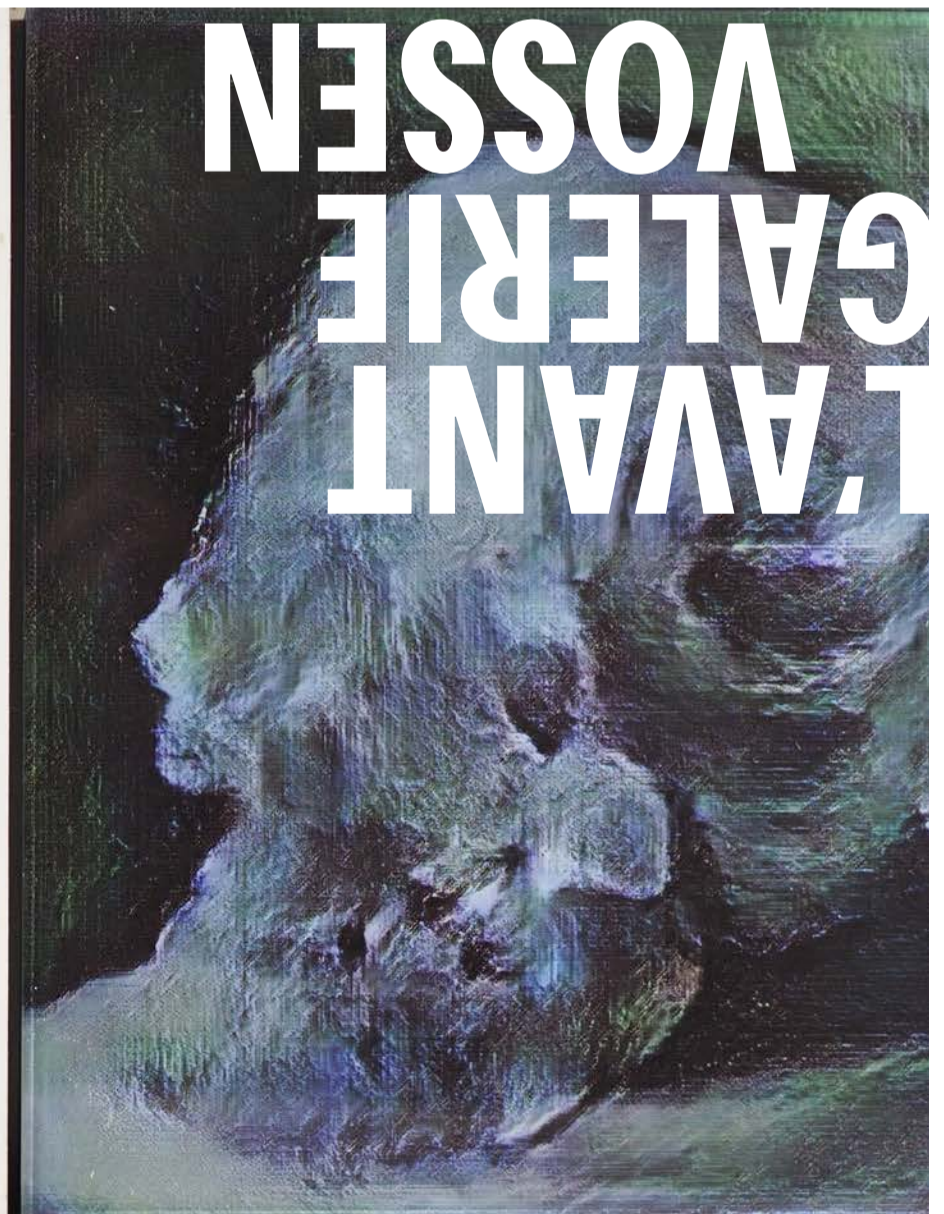
For Robbie to work on the project, 450 paintings of "Skulls" have been digitally scanned so that Robbie Barrat could train a neural network to create new images of «Skulls» from these 450 works. Once this neural network (a type of GAN) has learned to create new skulls, a near infinite amount can be produced. Robbie Barrat creates images that Ronan Barrot never saw but that his hand could have created.

Artificial intelligence is able today to create new images...

CATALOG
101 PAINTINGS OF
INFINITE SKULLS

AVANT GALERIE
VOSSEN
58 RUE CHAPON
75003 PARIS

INFINITE SKULLS #81 . Oil on canvas - UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm



../.The question arises of their status: Are they works of art in their own right? Are they possible inspirations for the artist? Are they the beginnings of a new artistic field? Is the algorithm capable of creativity?

This exhibition shows that, contrary to what was read in the media during the spectacular sale at Christie's, the machine does not create alone. Not being gifted of consciousness, the machine can not think. But it opens up a new field of possibilities, introducing a reflection on the act of creation in itself and the status of the images it generates.

Do these images create a new creative space for Ronan Barrot or do they provoke in him an irrepressible desire to «rework» them for them to become his? Can the painter continue to create serenely against the production of infinite images of the machine?

This exhibition demystifies the role of artificial intelligence in the creative process by showing the place of man at all crucial moments of its development. Neither magical nor sacred, these images coming from the artificial intelligence are above all the fruit of a human intention.

Instigating a meeting between Ronan Barrot's works, very thick in paint, and the production of images generated by Robbie Barrat, all in pixel, thanks to an artificial intelligence, seemed to us a possible way to approach these questions, without predicting the answers...

Ronan Barrot will soon be able to proclaim the paternity of 9 billion skulls created by Robbie Barrat! We don't here overpass the 100 000 milliard of poems

Written by L'Avant Galerie, reviewed and corrected by Milan Deroubaix.

The adversarial process of defining Art – by Etienne Gatti –

*« The sight of immediate reality has become an orchid
in the land of technology. »*

– Walter Benjamin –

How can we make a computer capable of creativity? How can we give it the capacity to imagine and create something new — as long as artificial intelligence, no matter how developed, is still based on our suppositions of how our own intelligence is built, and therefore condemned to the limits of our own imagination? Generative adversarial networks (GAN) may provide some insight into these questions. GAN are artificial neural networks that are capable of generating new images. More precisely, they are composed of two networks: a generator, which generates from noise (a series of coordinates

in N-dimensional space) images that can fool the discriminator, a second network that compares the generated image to a database of existing images and then rates its similarity on a scale of 0 to 1. By repeating this process of generation and comparison, the generator gradually learns to hone its “creativity”. It diverges, then converges. Thus, GAN borrow from our very human creative process, only with a clear limitation: if the convergence phase is prolonged, the process becomes a reductive funnel toward a straightforward copy. It’s as if these networks were being trained the same way that art was taught by mimesis in classic schools, but without the capacity to rise above it.

Even if this is no longer the norm in art education, the method persists through the postmodern idea of reference and creation by recombining previously explored forms. Although Ronan Barrot dislikes this notion of “art history as a rack of pots and pans in which to cook your grub”, like all artists, he draws upon his own body of images and references that have influenced him. Except that in his case, these images approach him more than he reaches out to them. As if suffering from a rare form of apophenia limited to his own paintings, Ronan sees meaning in a particular rhythm or color. As links form to his iconographic subconscious, references emerge, and hybrid paintings based on previous works appear. He either integrates or refutes what is presented to him by orienting his multicolored chaos in one direction rather than another, until a pattern emerges. This process is particularly salient in the Skulls series. The images emerge from each clean palette, their raw matter imposed by the other paintings in progress. In the initial chaos of colors, Ronan’s gaze searches not to meet another gaze, but only to identify eye-sockets, just enough to distinguish a human head.

The first images produced by a GAN developed by Robbie Barrat — artist, researcher in artificial intelligence engaged in a dialogue with Ronan Barrot supported by Avant Galerie — mean nothing to us. Here too, a chaos of colors is confronted with a corpus — the network’s database of 500 skull paintings by Ronan. Then, from this tentative exploration of images, emerge forms that are increasingly similar to Ronan’s Skulls. But the more the machine reproduces existing forms, the less it explores, the less it is creative. So Robbie must intervene in order to interrupt the process and extract from the constant flow of generated images those that can stand on their own. The network does not produce a series of unique images. Nor does it produce a complete series. It produces a continuum, a flow of iterations, each one unique, but whose finality lies not in its uniqueness but in the iteration itself. An algorithm has no aura, no authority, no capacity for transcendence. It does not produce ideas or make Art. Only human desire can meet these expectations — the desire to choose an original hue, a pleasing harmony of colors, an intriguing form. Human choice is everywhere.

Each concession to one of these skulls to achieve a material existence is the creative act of an avatar of a more global artwork. Choice sculpts these pieces. Each one exists both independently and as a product of the network and the series of choices that engendered it; in short, the generated skull images are both artworks and keys to unlock the artwork. The other key, to the door thus revealed, unlocks the contents of the database. Altering or modifying the dataset is the only way to communicate directly with the machine. For Epoch 1 (the first generation of skulls generated by Robbie's GAN), the database consisted of a selection of Ronan's Skulls presented exclusively from the perspective of the human gaze. The machine was thus restricted to considering these images from a very human point of view. Conversely, for Epoch 2 (the second generation, in square format), the dataset included skull images that were presented from all angles, even mirrored. By liberating the machine from the human gaze and our own biases in perception, we extend its capacity for exploration, its capacity to surprise us, its capacity to be creative. This time, the network truly appropriates the initial corpus, copying it, ruminating it, reinterpreting it, reformatting it, recreating it, and by doing so, becomes more fluid. It is no longer restricted by a predefined size format when the image is displayed full-screen. Each image loses in material aura what it gains in fluidity. The artwork itself gains the illusion of infinity, of which we catch a glimpse in the exponential proliferation of skulls. Each one is unique, but we lack the capacity to realize it. And yet, they are not so numerous — about 8,000 in total, of which 101 have a material existence. Nonetheless, our head spins from the nauseating vertigo of this infinite motif. While it is not easy to apprehend the concept of infinity, which can be neither represented nor quantified, it is amusing that we can access it through such a small number. Even more amusingly, we access it through the motif of the human skull, allegory of our own finitude.

There are many fruitful parallels between the creative processes of Robbie and Ronan — the flow of “by-product” skulls in a work, iteration rather than series, relationship to a corpus — but it's the confrontation between the “interior necessity” to paint and the machine that pushes new boundaries. Will artworks that rise above intentionality and interiority be judged with the same degree of authenticity? The answer is unclear. Like Walter Benjamin in his *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, we waver between an optimistic diagnosis in our desire to witness the future mutations of Art, and pure nostalgia for this lost orchid: the material continuity of the artwork within the artist's body of work.

Caroline Vossen and Albertine Meunier, “partner” and “partner in data crime”, made possible this encounter between Ronan Barrot and Robbie Barrat. Infinite Skulls is an exceptional exhibition in more ways than one: it's the first show produced by Avant Galerie, as well as the first to result from a dialogue between artists, gallery owner and artificial intelligence — in a nutshell, the exhibition of an artwork in common.

THE 101 INFINITE SKULLS SERIE IS COMPOSED OF

31 DUO

a duo is the genesis of the serie with one skull painting on canvas by Ronan BARROT and one generated skull on plexi by Robbie BARRAT

dimension : 22 x 44 cm

21 DIPTYQUE

a diptyque is two generated skulls on plexi by Robbie BARRAT, sometimes the same, sometimes different, corrected with oil paint or scratched by Ronan BARROT

dimension : 22 x 44 cm

19 TRIPTYQUE

a triptyque is three generated skulls on plexi by Robbie BARRAT, sometimes the same, sometimes different, corrected with oil paint or scratched by Ronan BARROT

dimension : 22 x 66 cm

6 MONO

one generated skull on plexi by Robbie BARRAT corrected with oil by Ronan BARROT, or not, at the size of the original skull painting

#64 only painting of the show made by Ronan BARROT and influenced by the infernal generated process created by Robbie BARRAT

dimension : 27 x 22 cm

24 SOLO

one generated skull on plexi by Robbie BARRAT where the dataset is composed of a modified dataset composed of tilted images of Ronan BARROT skulls paintings

dimension : 20 x 20 cm

glossary

ORIGINAL DATASET

450 paintings of skulls by Ronan BARROT

2018/24

All the plexis of the '2018/24' diptyque or triptyque are original from the 2018 Robbie BARRAT skull generation. The corrections by Ronan BARROT have been made during and after the show of 2019. The mounting of the work is done in 2024.

THE 101 INFINITE SKULLS SERIE IS COMPOSED OF

THE DUO

#1 . #2 . #3 . #4 . #5 . #6 . #7 . #8 . #9 . #10 . #11 . #12 . #13 . #45 . #50 . #56 . #57
#58 . #59 . #60 . #61 . #63 . #78 . #81 . #82 . #90 . #95 . #98 . #99 . #100 . #101

THE DIPTYQUE

#14 . #26 . #29 . #30 . #33 . #38 . #49 . #51 . #52 . #62 . #70 . #75 . #77 . #79 . #80
#83 . #85 . #87 . #88 . #89 . #91

THE TRIPTYQUE

#16 . #18 . #34 . #54 . #65 . #66 . #67 . #68 . #69 . #71 . #72 . #73 . #76 . #86 . #92 . #93
. #94 . #96 . #97

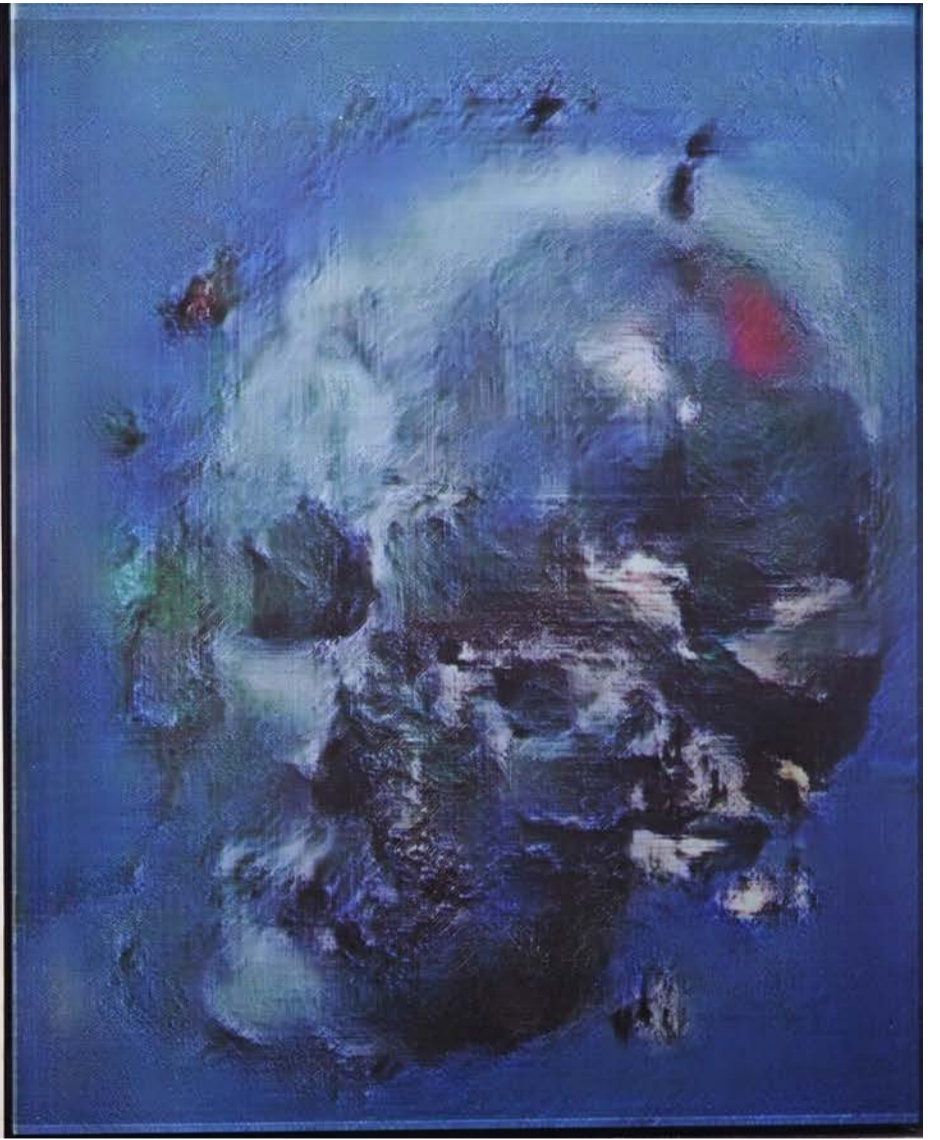
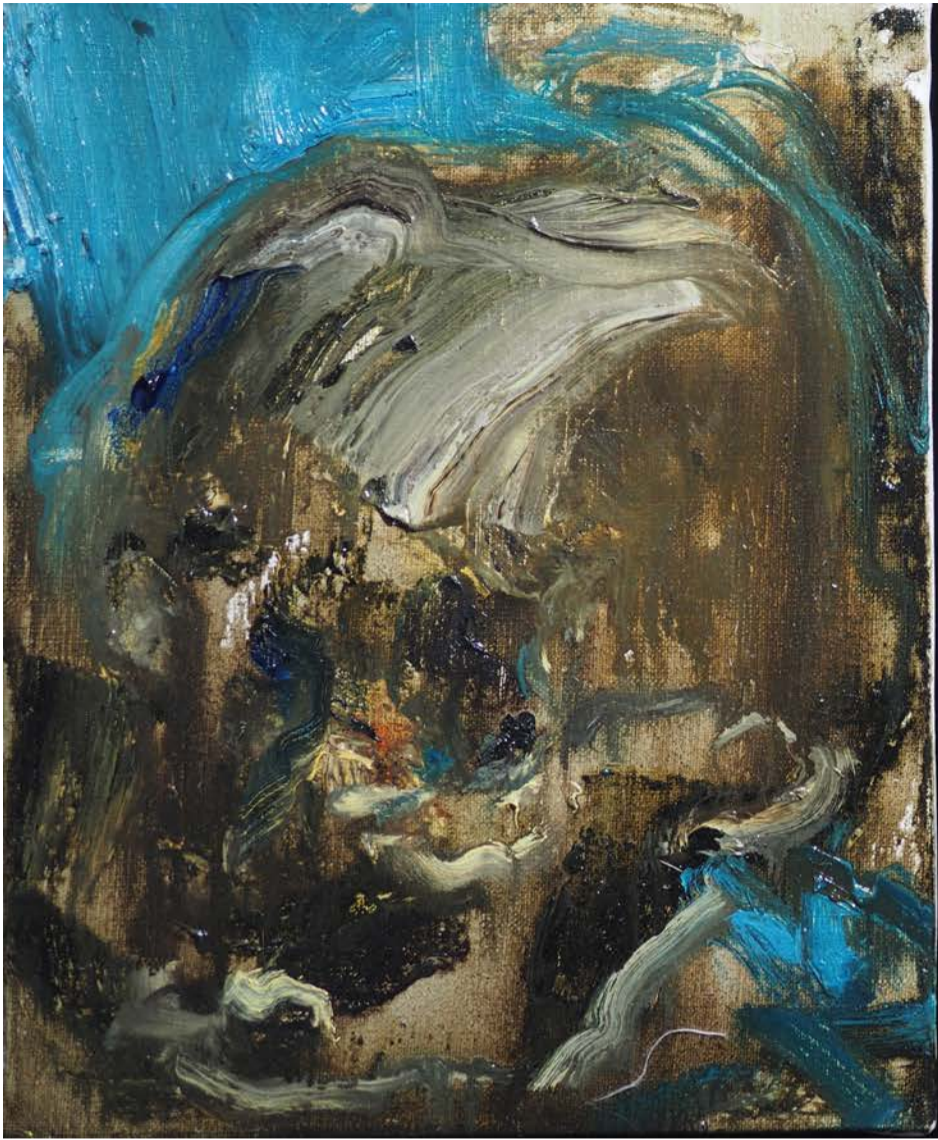
THE MONO

#48 . #53 . #55 . #64 . #74 . #84

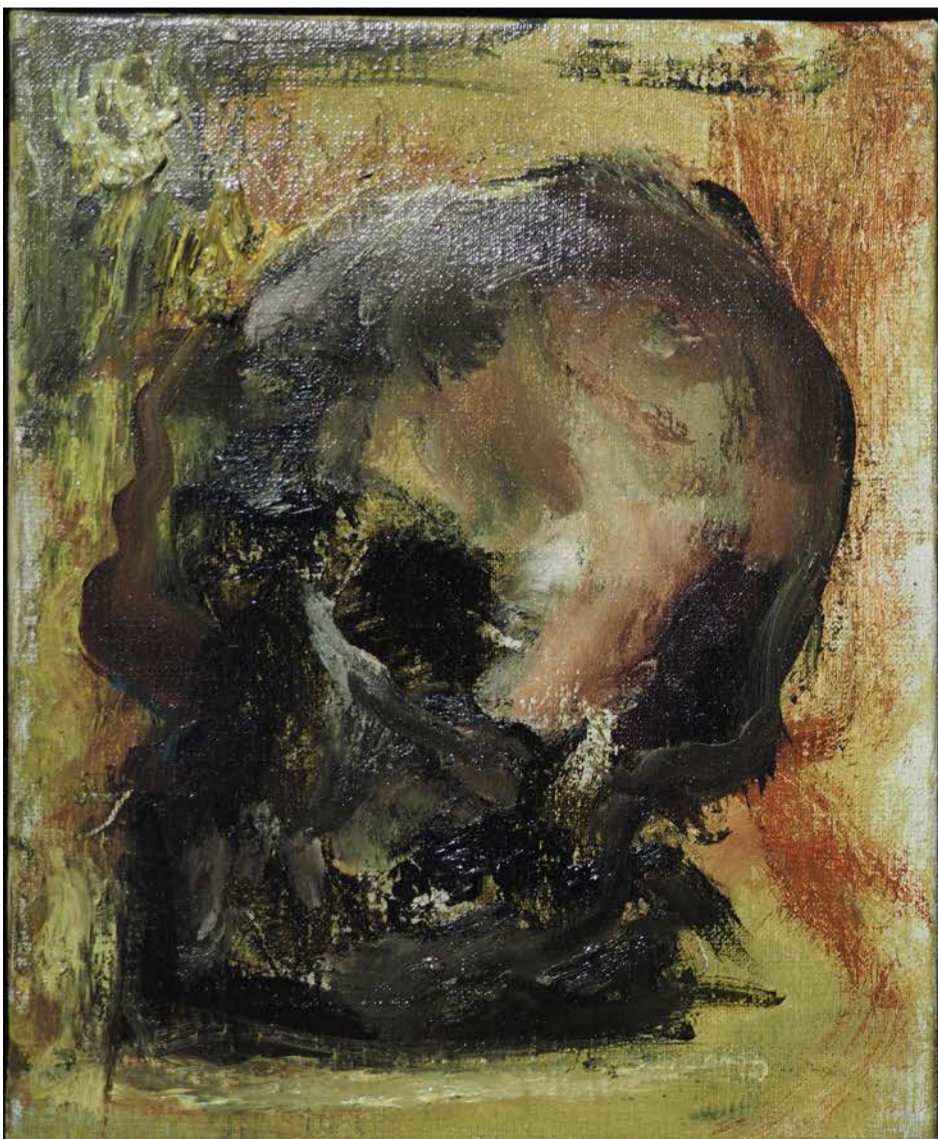
THE SOLO

#15 . #17 . #19 . #20 . #21 . #22 . #23 . #24 . #25 . #27 . #28 . #31 . #32 . #35 . #36
#37 . #39 . #40 . #41 . #42 . #43 . #44 . #46 . #47

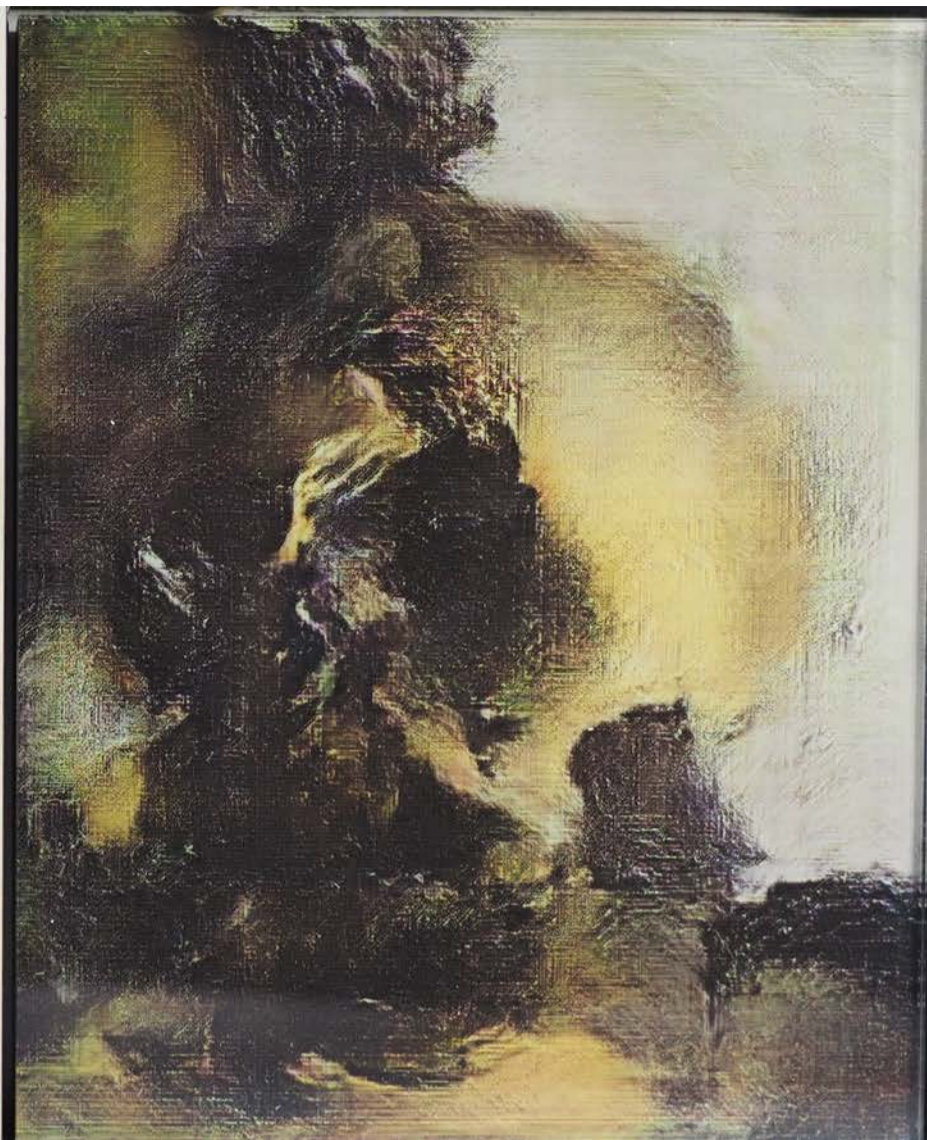
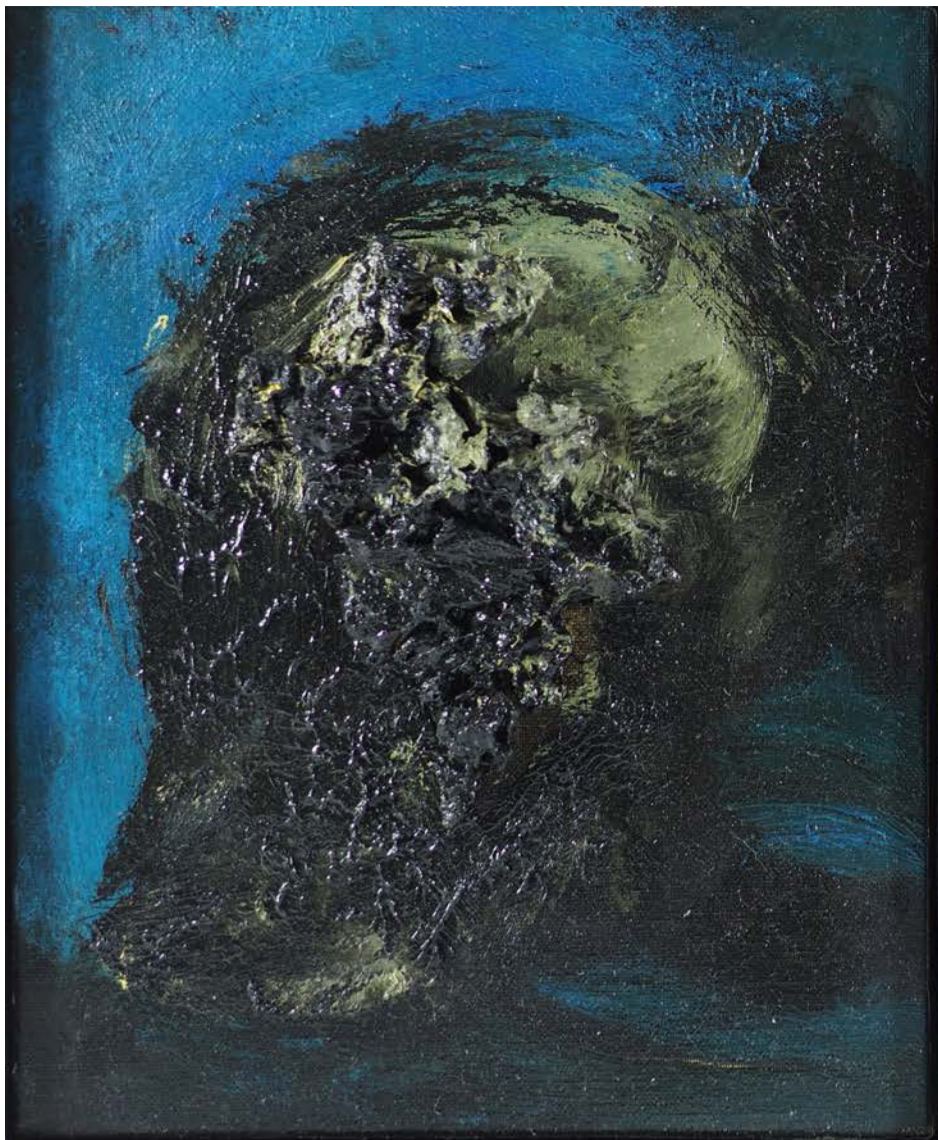
● works sold



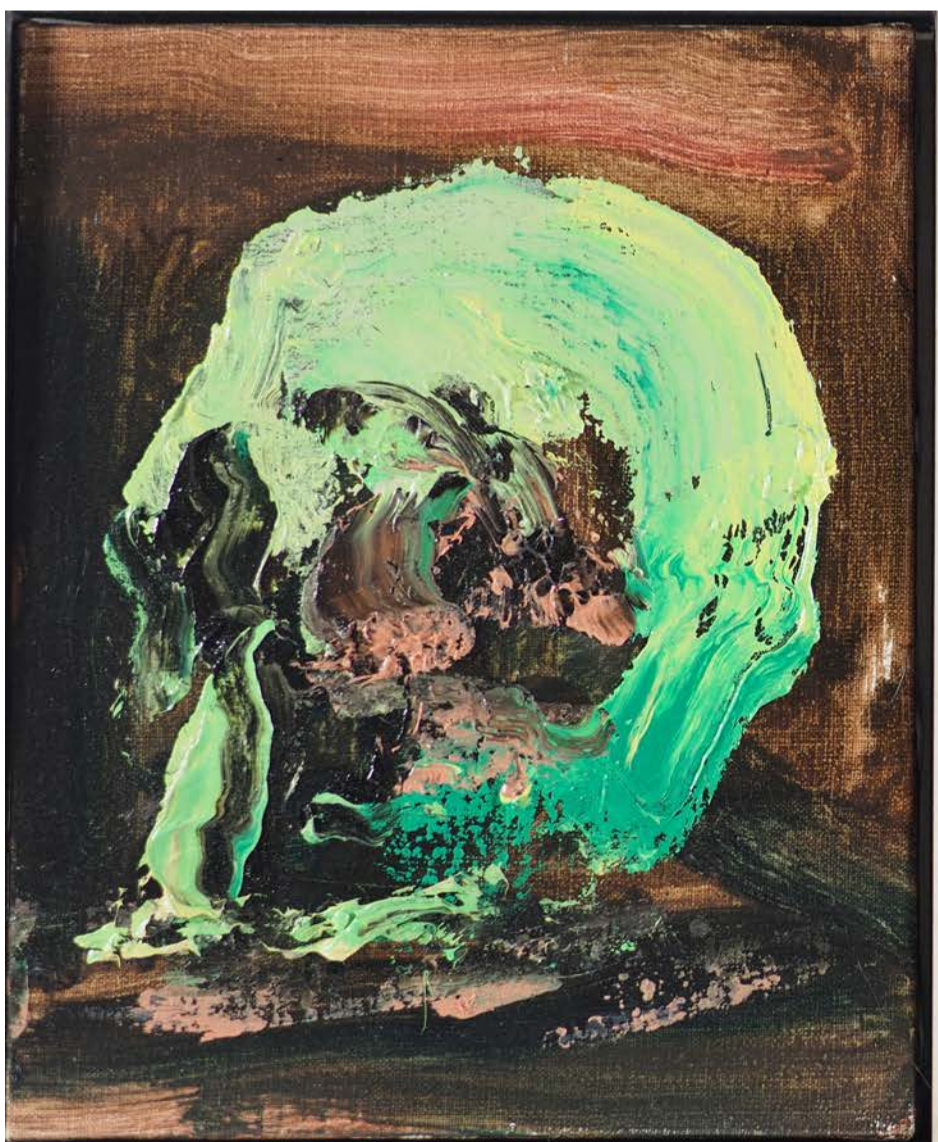
INFINITE SKULLS #1 . Oil on canvas , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ● 2018 DUO



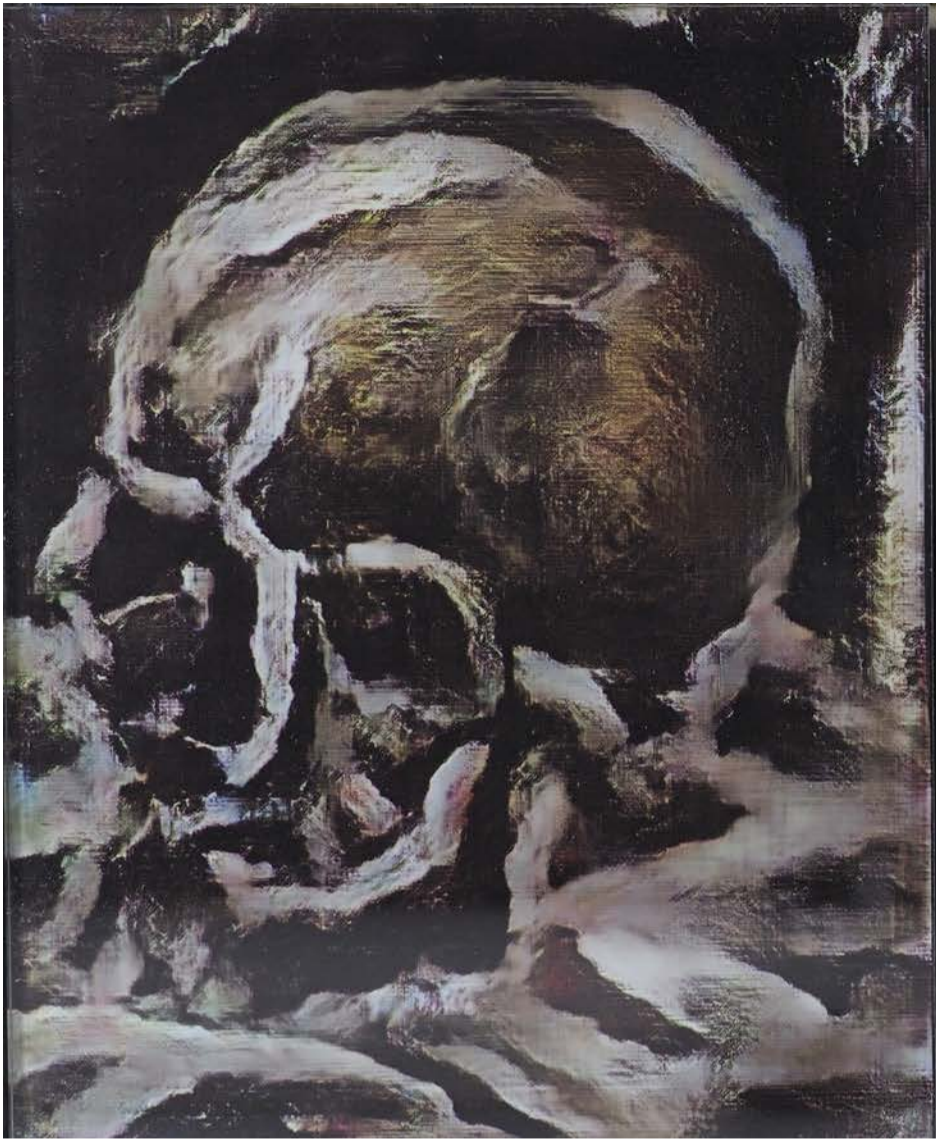
INFINITE SKULLS #2 . Oil on canvas , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ● 2018 DUO



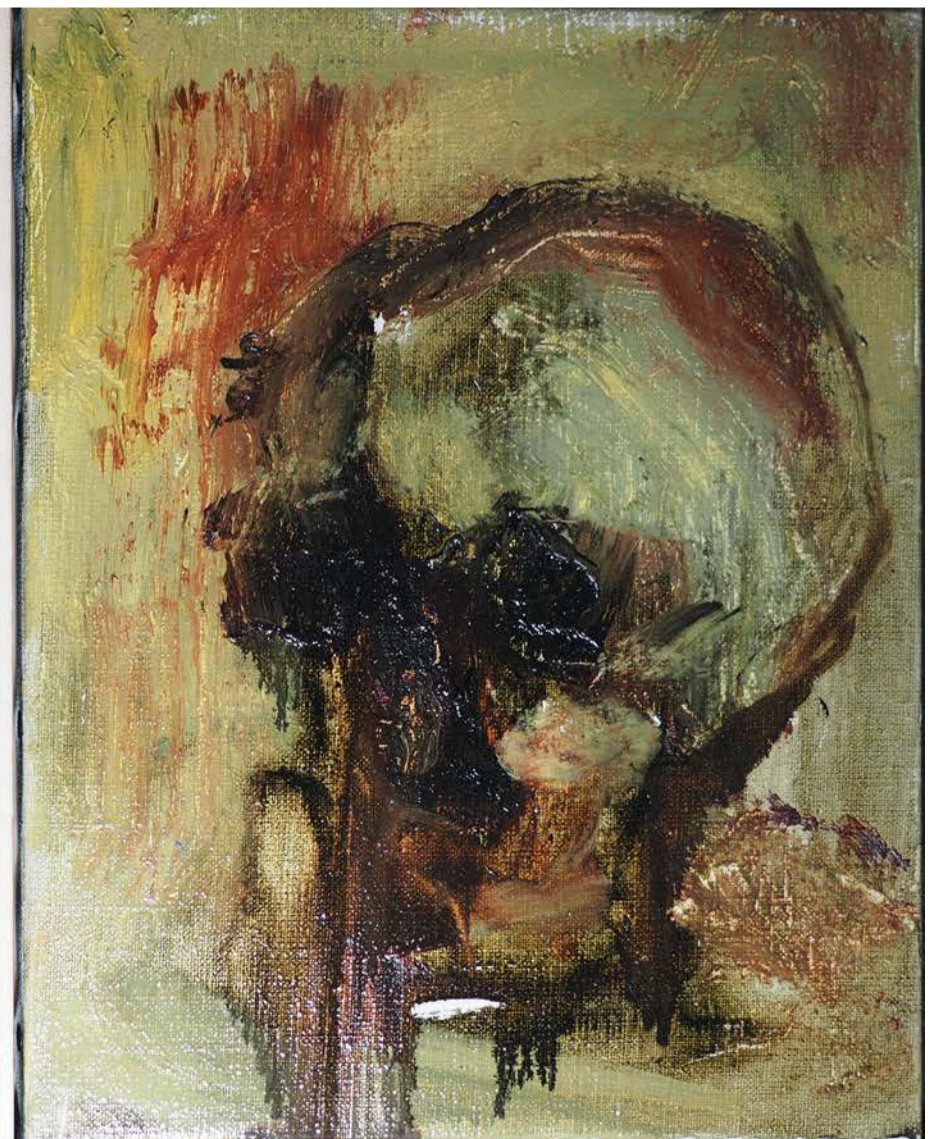
INFINITE SKULLS #3 . Oil on canvas , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ● 2018 DUO



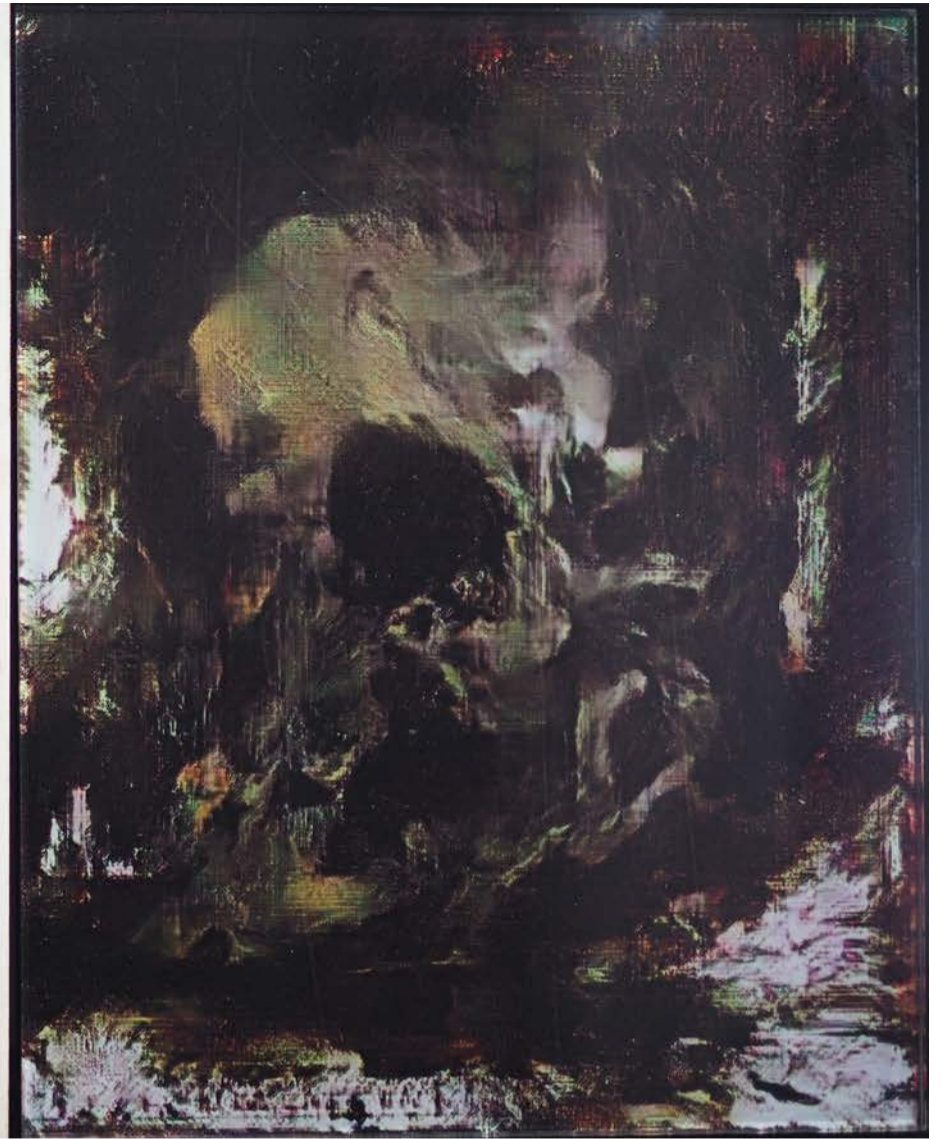
INFINITE SKULLS #4 . Oil on canvas , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ● 2018 DUO



INFINITE SKULLS #5 . Oil on canvas , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ● 2018 DUO

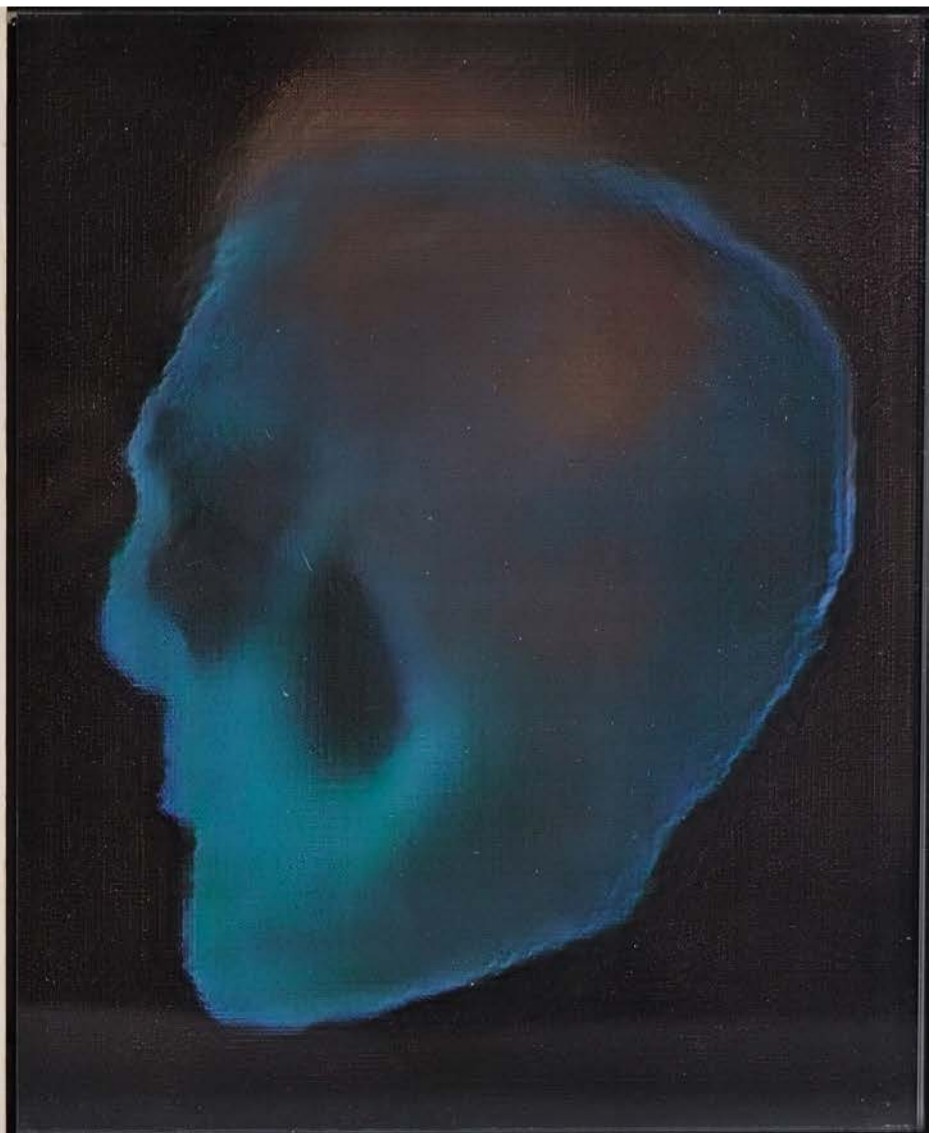


INFINITE SKULLS #6 . Oil on canvas , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ● 2018 DUO



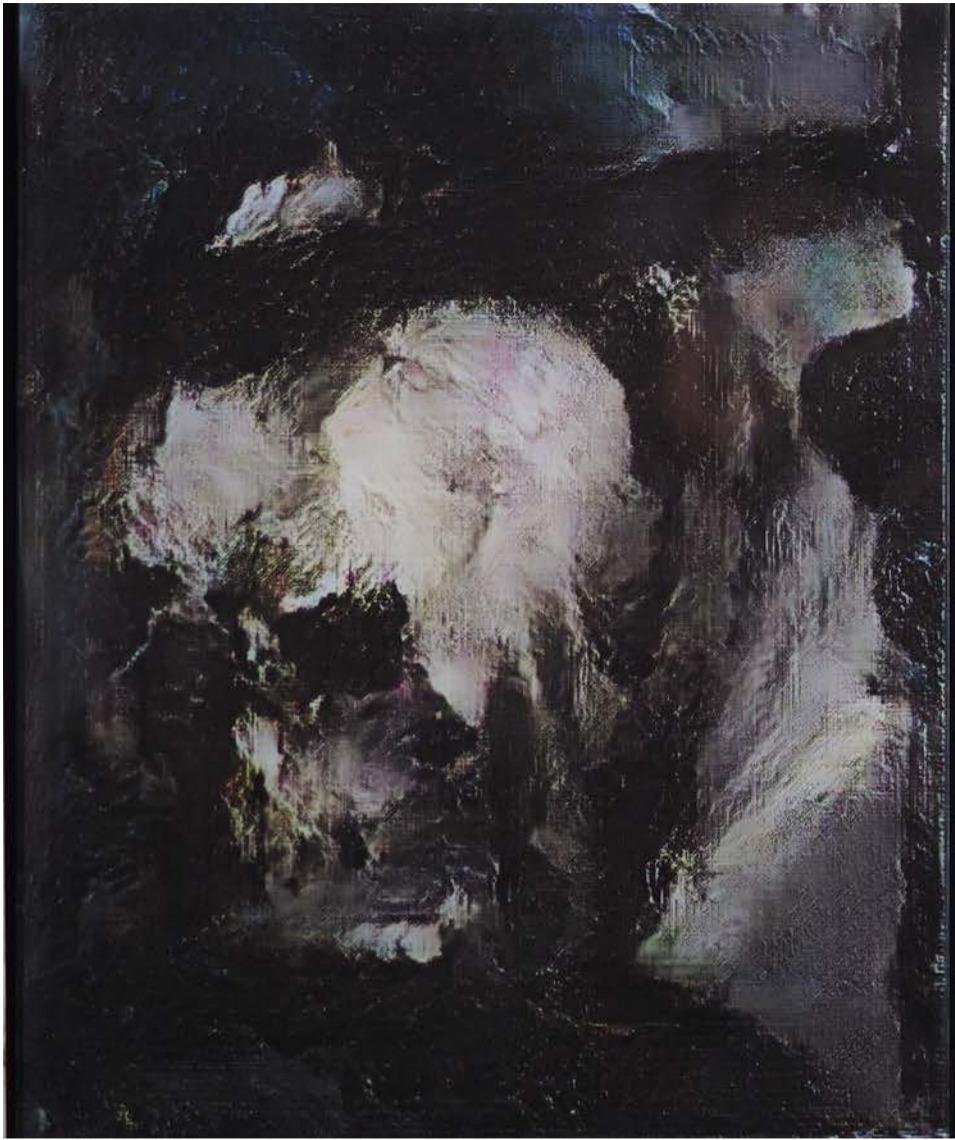
INFINITE SKULLS #7 . Oil on canvas , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ●

2018 DUO



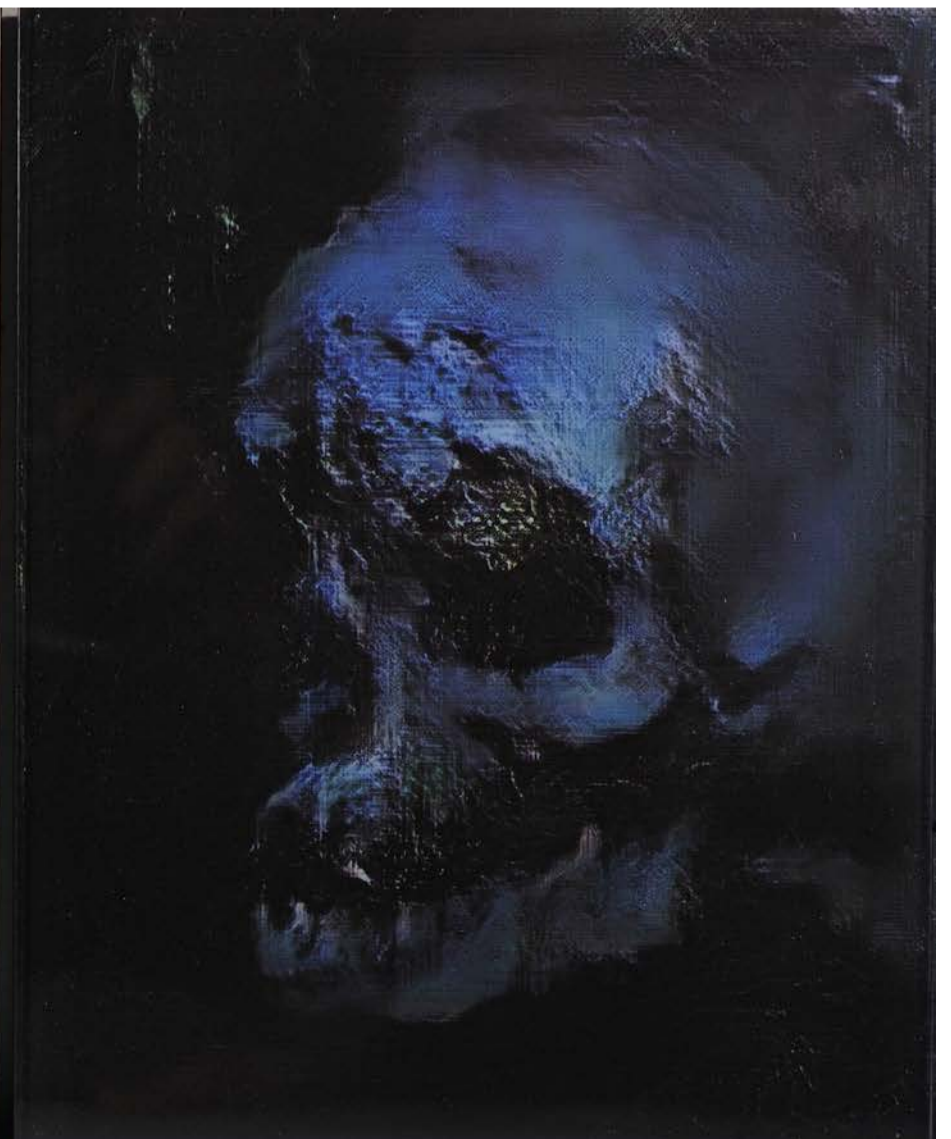
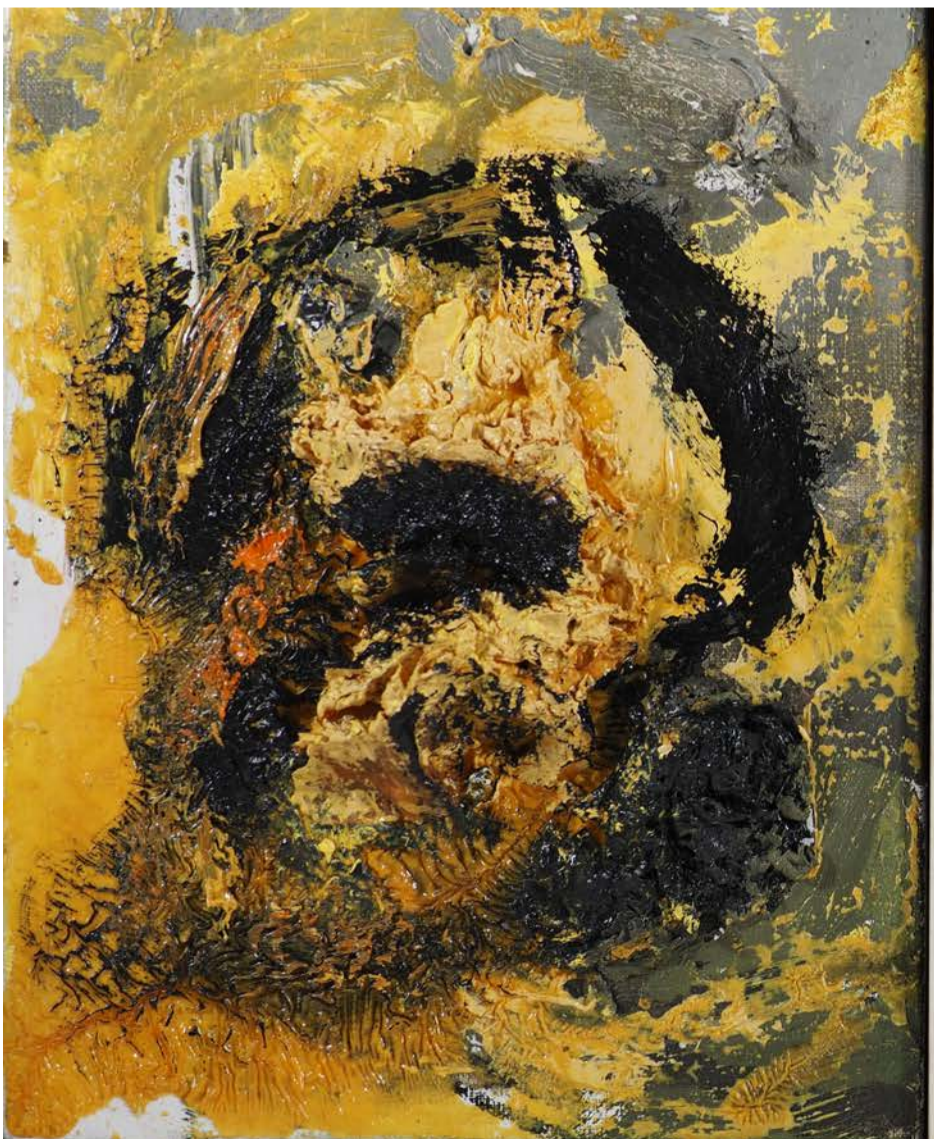
INFINITE SKULLS #8 . Oil on canvas , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ●

2018 DUO



INFINITE SKULLS #9 . Oil on canvas , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ●

2018 DUO



INFINITE SKULLS #10 . Oil on canvas , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ●

2018 DUO



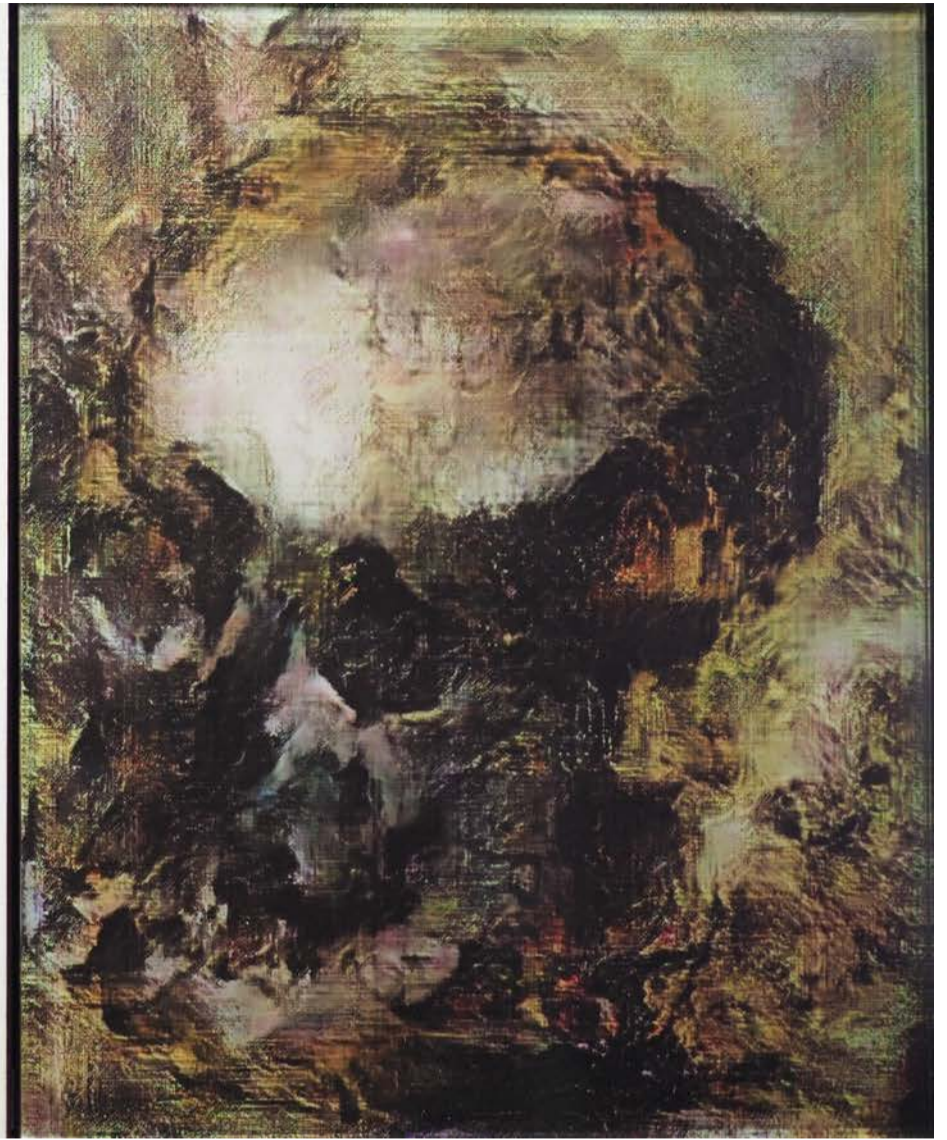
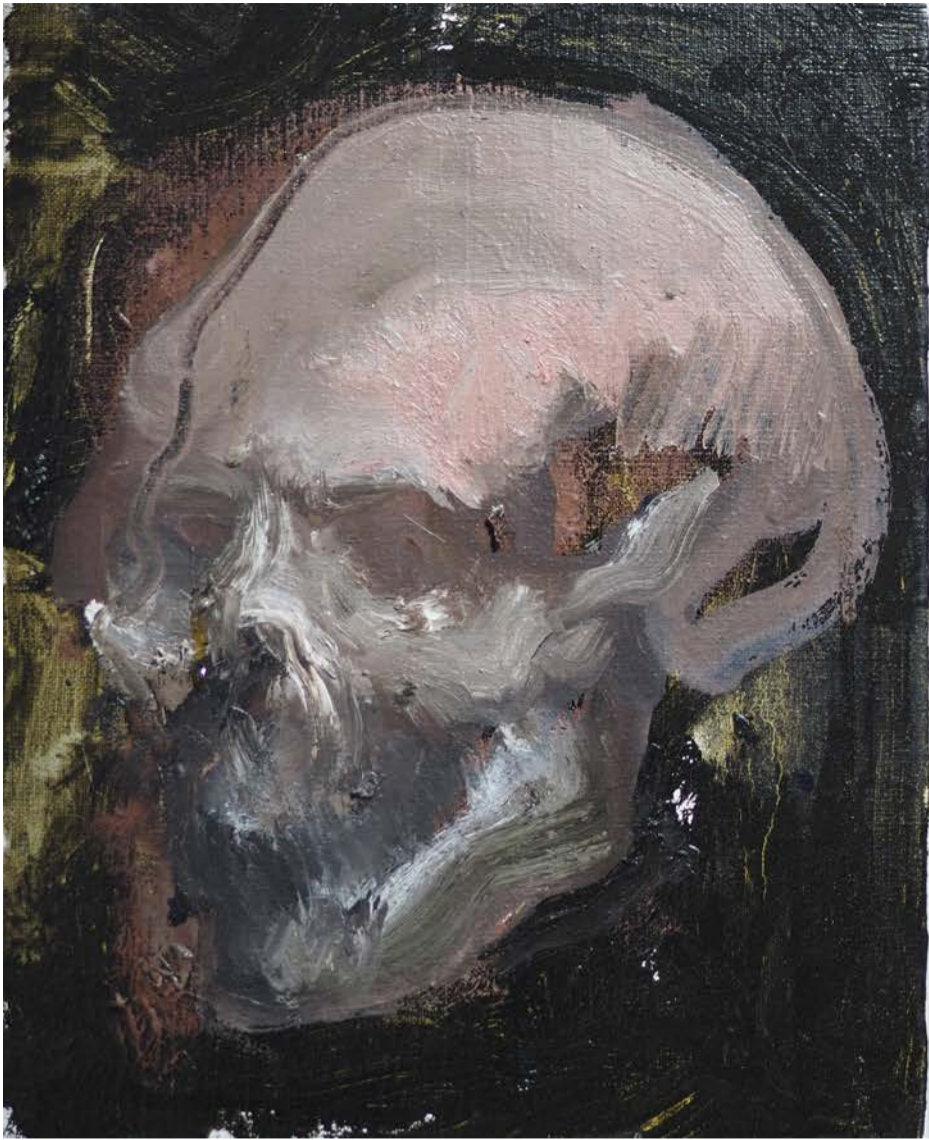
INFINITE SKULLS #11 . Oil on canvas , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ●

2018 DUO



INFINITE SKULLS #12 . Oil on canvas , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ●

2018 DUO



INFINITE SKULLS #13 . Oil on canvas , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ●

2018 DUO



INFINITE SKULLS #14 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi & scratches . 27 x 44 cm

2018 ● DIPTYQUE



INFINITE SKULLS #15 . UV print on plexi
20 x 20 cm ● 2018 SOLO



INFINITE SKULLS #16 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 66 cm

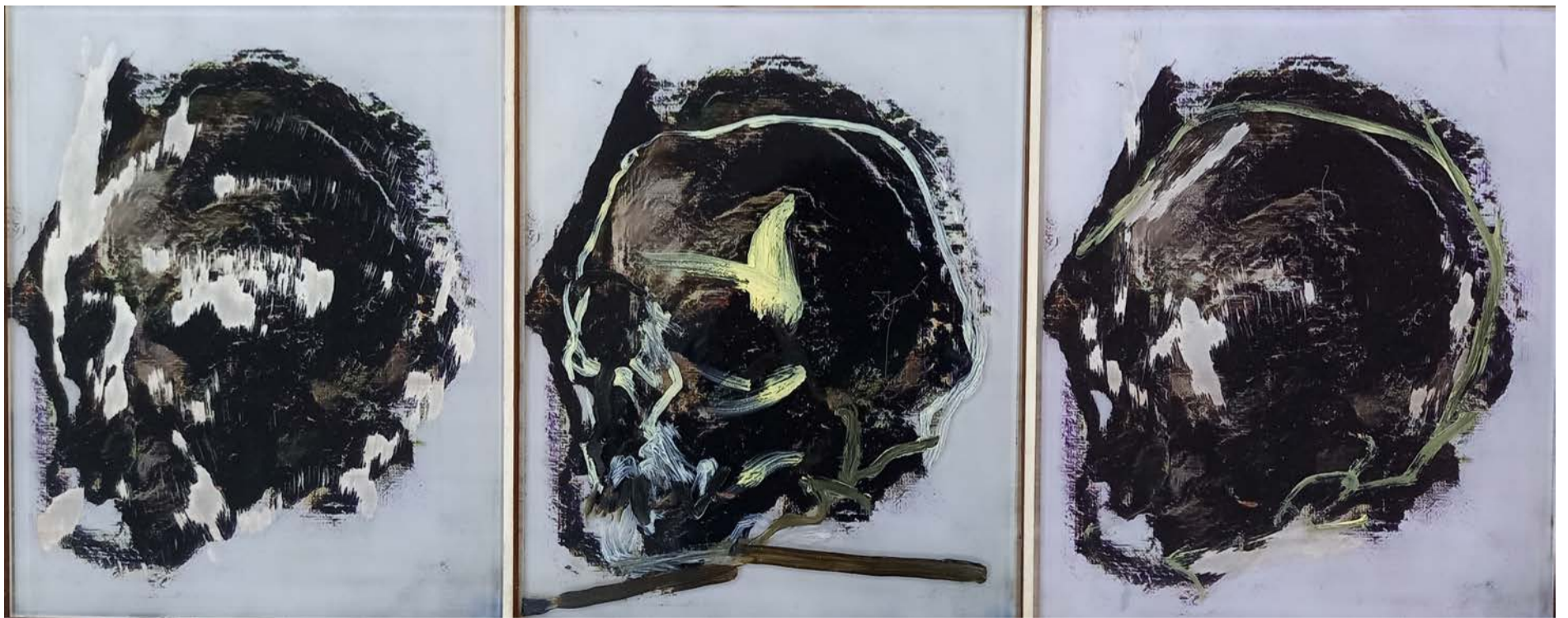
2018/24 TRIPTYQUE



INFINITE SKULLS #17 . UV print on plexi
20 x 20 cm ● 2018 SOLO



INFINITE SKULLS #19 . UV print on plexi
20 x 20 cm ● 2018 SOLO



INFINITE SKULLS #18 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi & scratches . 27 x 66 cm 2018 ● TRIPTYQUE



INFINITE SKULLS #20 . UV print on plexi
20 x 20 cm 2018 SOLO



INFINITE SKULLS #21 . UV print on plexi
20 x 20 cm ● 2018 SOLO



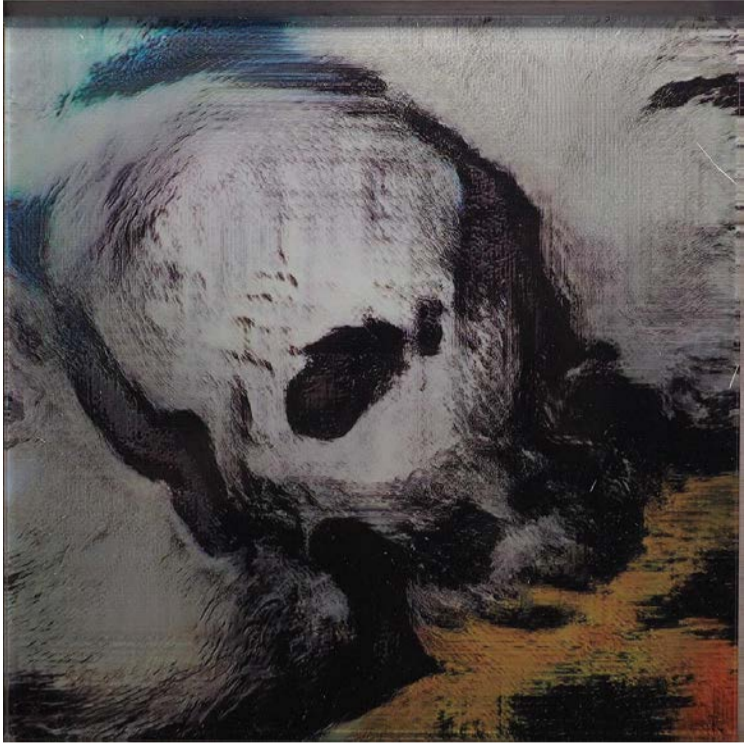
INFINITE SKULLS #22 . UV print on plexi
20 x 20 cm ● 2018 SOLO



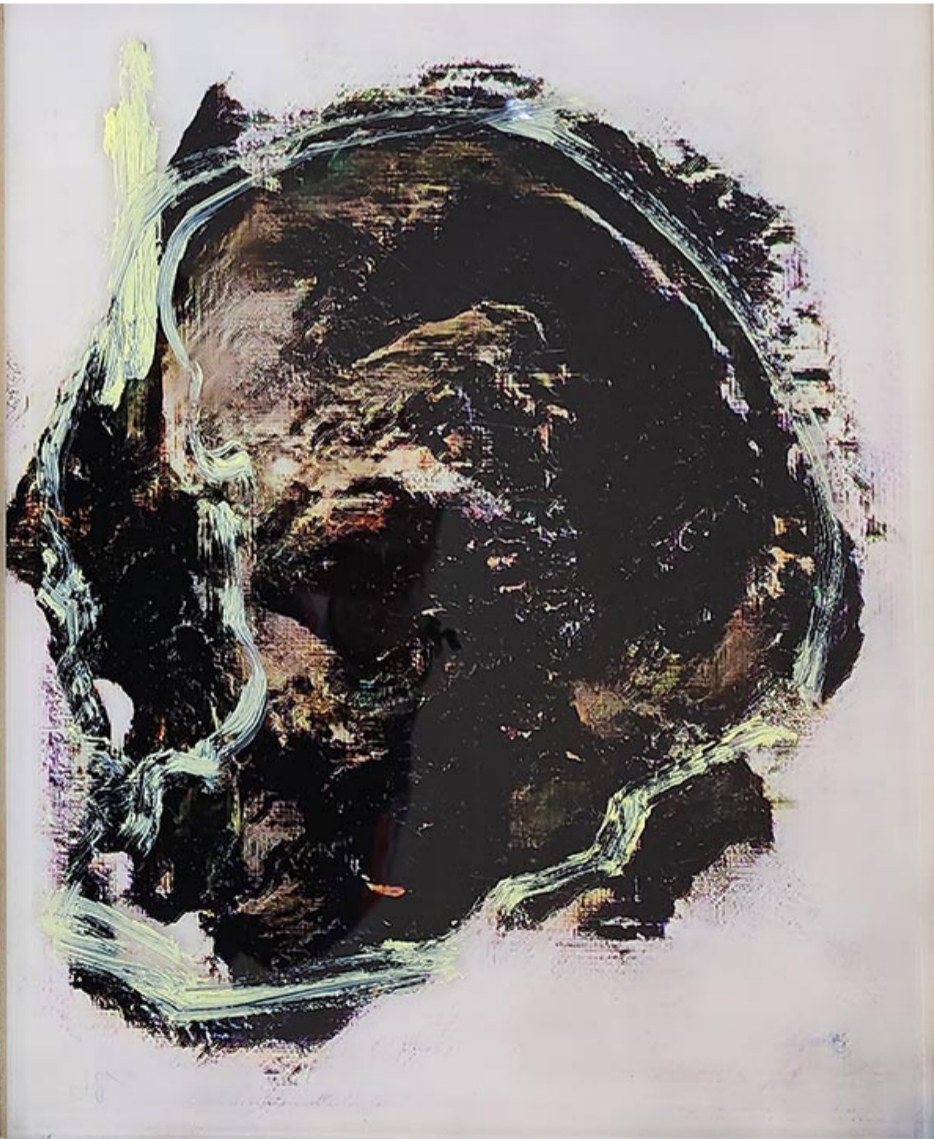
INFINITE SKULLS #23 . UV print on plexi
20 x 20 cm ● 2018 SOLO



INFINITE SKULLS #24 . UV print on plexi
20 x 20 cm ● 2018 SOLO



INFINITE SKULLS #25 . UV print on plexi
20 x 20 cm ● 2018 SOLO



INFINITE SKULLS #26 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ● 2018 DIPTYQUE



INFINITE SKULLS #27 . UV print on plexi
20 x 20 cm ● 2018 SOLO



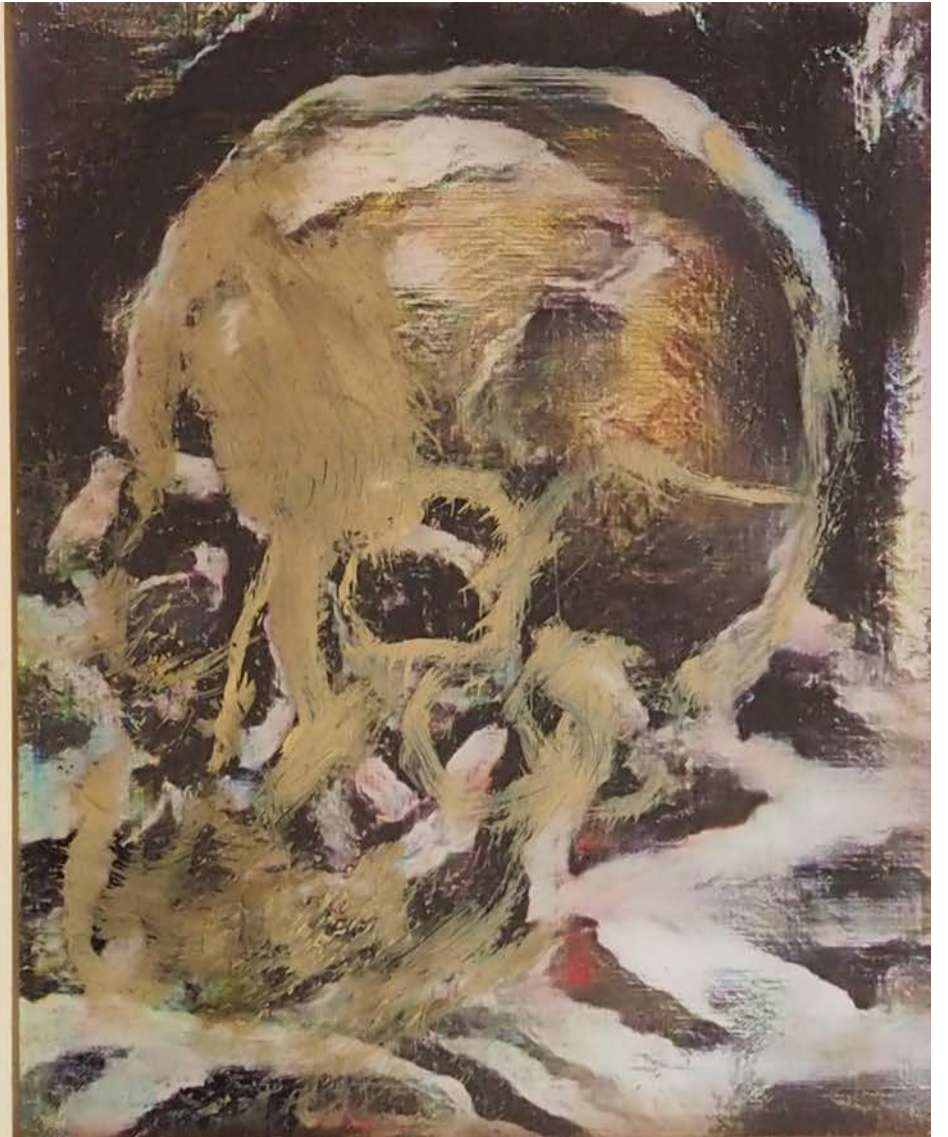
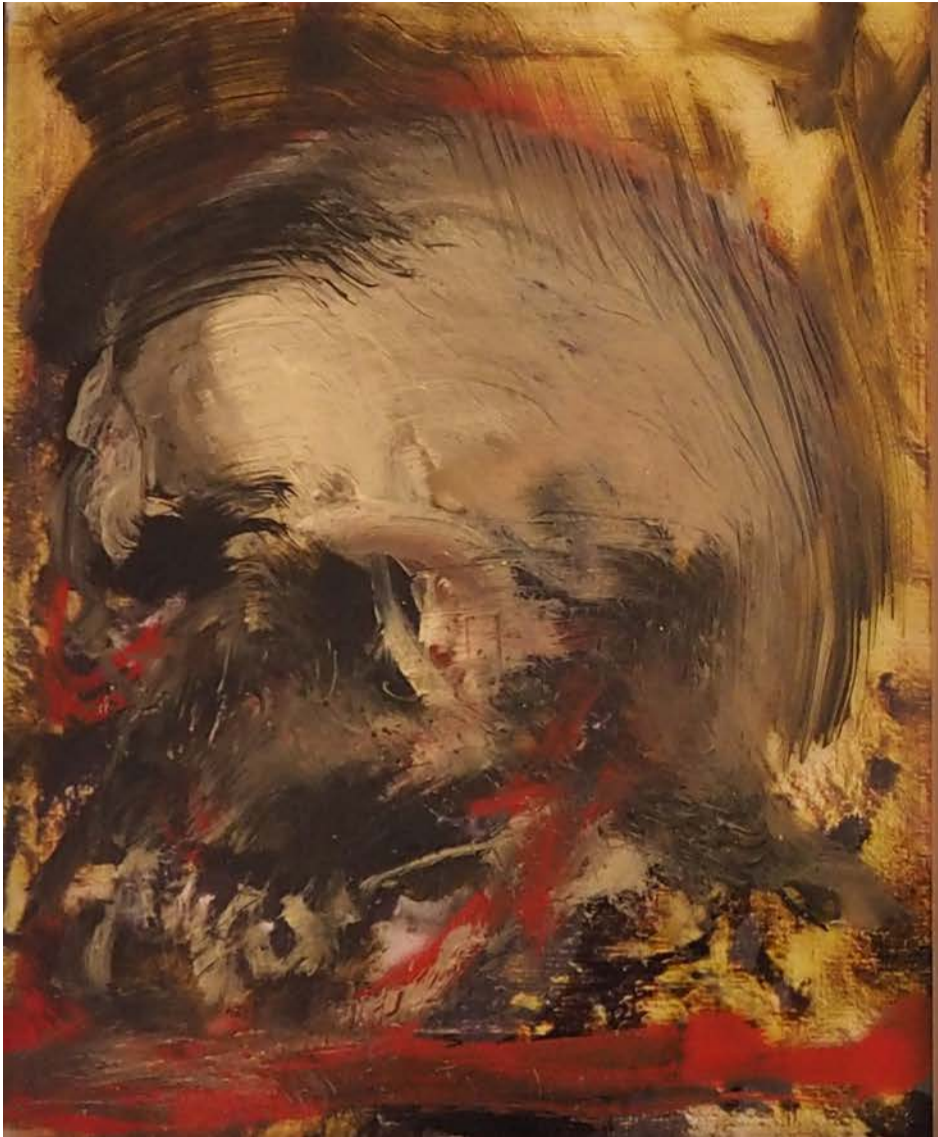
INFINITE SKULLS #28 . UV print on plexi
20 x 20 cm ● 2018 SOLO



INFINITE SKULLS #29 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm

2018/24

DIPTYQUE



INFINITE SKULLS #30 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm

2018/24

DIPTYQUE



INFINITE SKULLS #31 . UV print on plexi
20 x 20 cm ● 2018 SOLO



INFINITE SKULLS #32 . UV print on plexi
20 x 20 cm ● 2018 SOLO



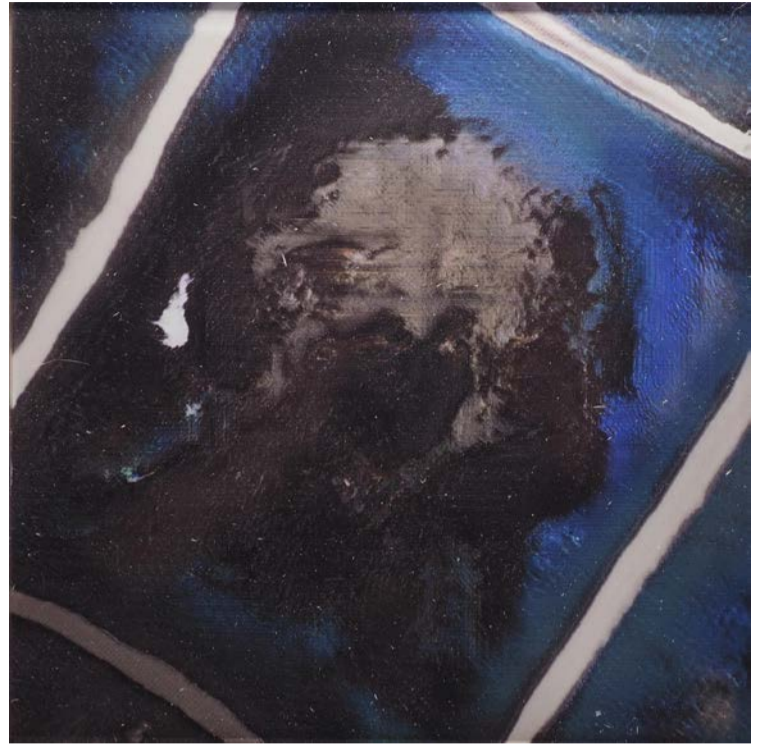
INFINITE SKULLS #33 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ● 2018 DIPTYQUE



INFINITE SKULLS #34 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi & scratches . 27 x 66 cm ● 2018 TRIPTYQUE



INFINITE SKULLS #35 . UV print on plexi
20 x 20 cm ● 2018 SOLO



INFINITE SKULLS #36 . UV print on plexi
20 x 20 cm ● 2018 SOLO



INFINITE SKULLS #37 . UV print on plexi
20 x 20 cm ● 2018 SOLO



INFINITE SKULLS #38 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm

2018 DIPTYQUE



INFINITE SKULLS #39 . UV print on plexi
20 x 20 cm ● 2018 SOLO



INFINITE SKULLS #40 . UV print on plexi
20 x 20 cm ● 2018 SOLO



INFINITE SKULLS #41 . UV print on plexi
20 x 20 cm ● 2018 SOLO



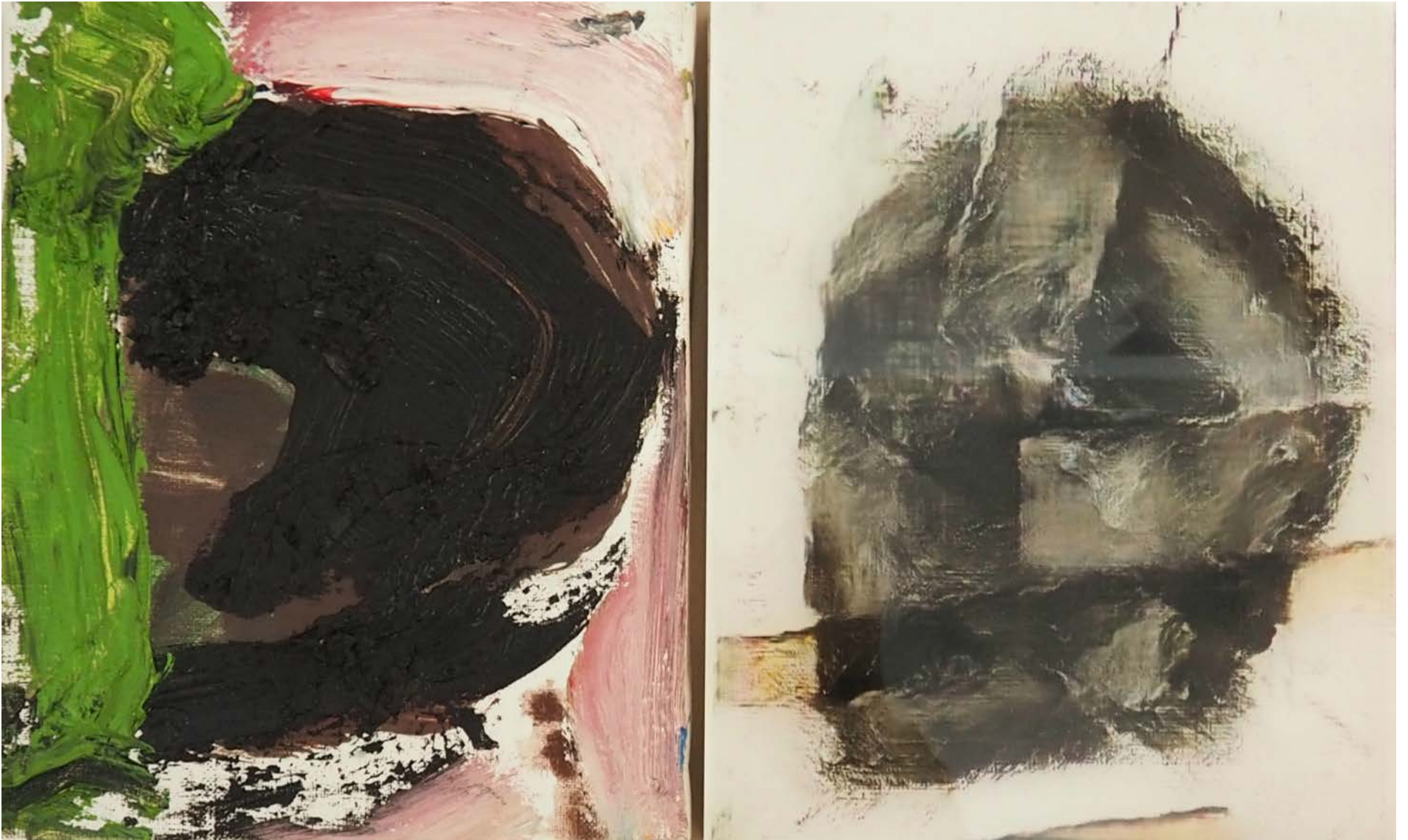
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20 x 20 cm ● 2018 SOLO



INFINITE SKULLS #43 . UV print on plexi
20 x 20 cm ● 2018 SOLO



INFINITE SKULLS #44 . UV print on plexi
20 x 20 cm ● 2018 SOLO



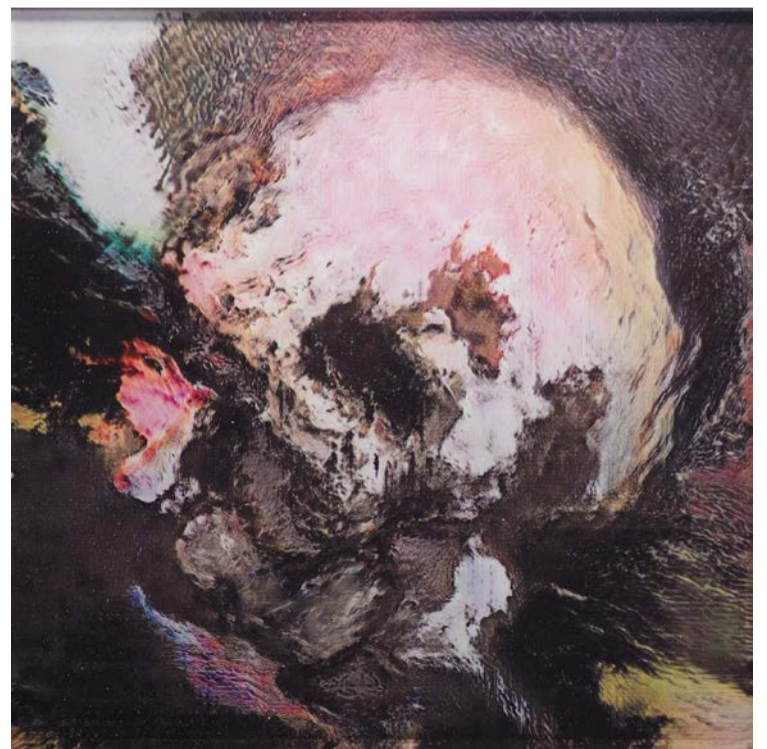
INFINITE SKULLS #45 . Oil on canvas , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ●

2018/24

DUO



INFINITE SKULLS #46 . UV print on plexi
20 x 20 cm ● 2018 SOLO



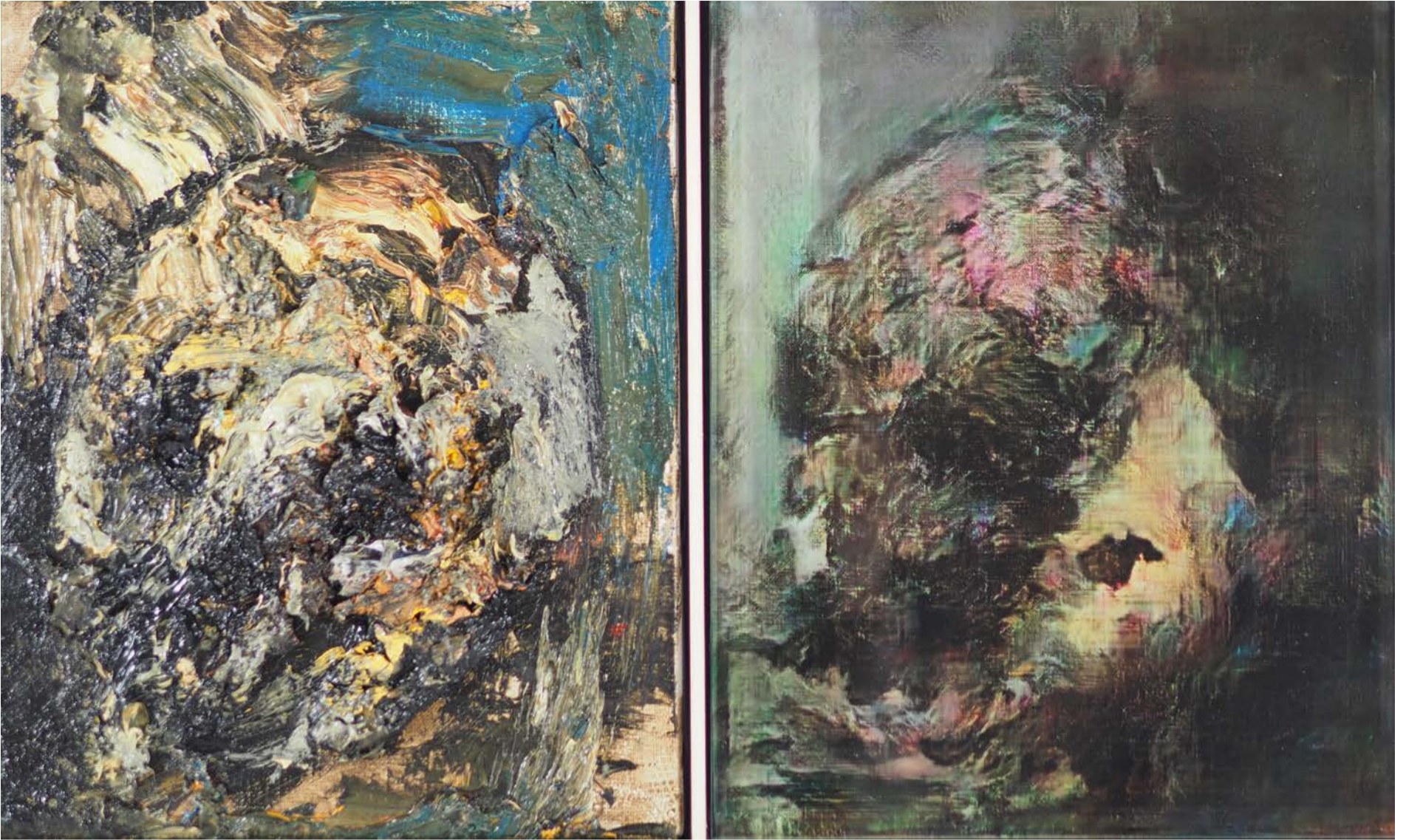
INFINITE SKULLS #47 . UV print on plexi
20 x 20 cm ● 2018 SOLO



INFINITE SKULLS #48 . UV print on plexi . 27 x 22 cm ● 2018 MONO

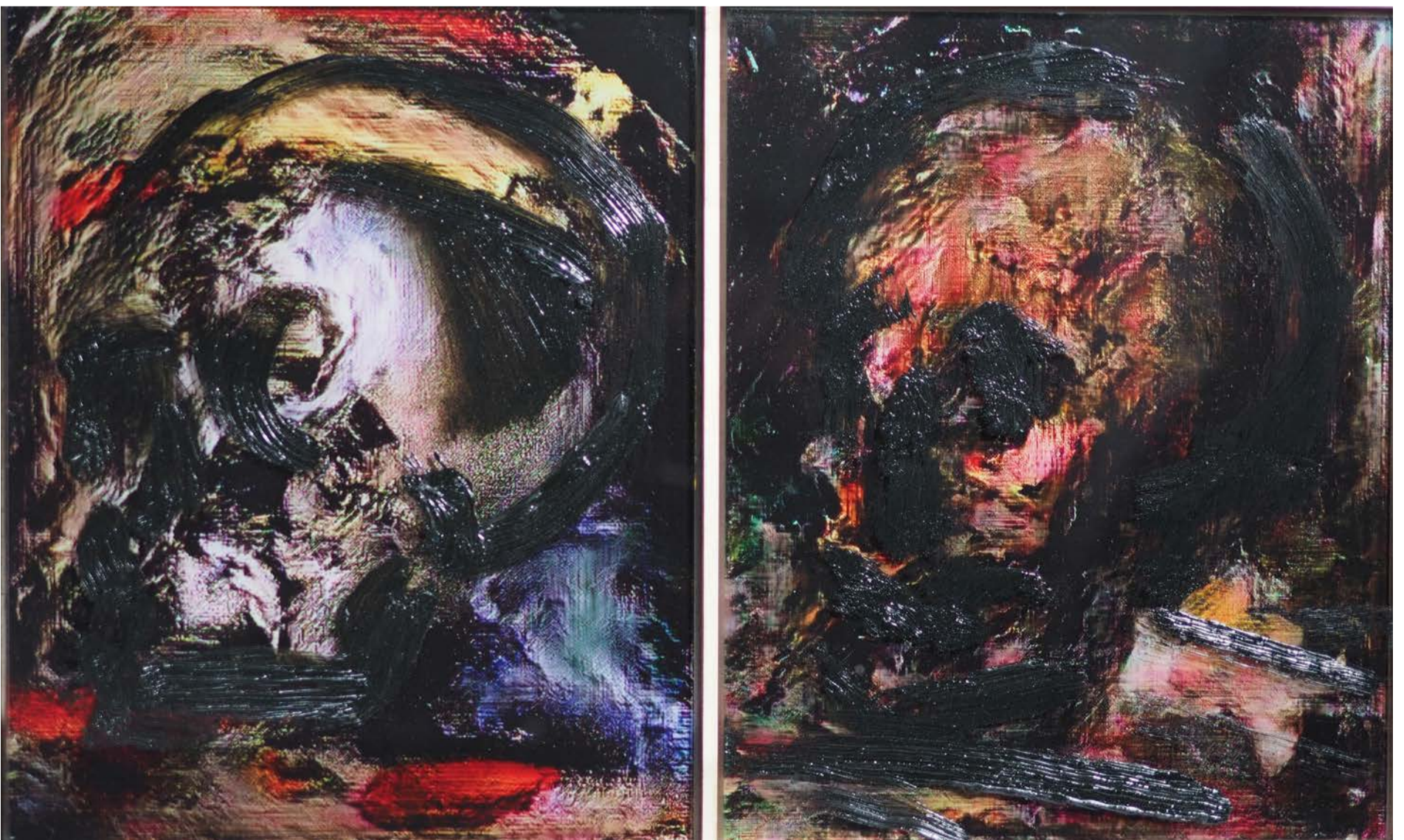


INFINITE SKULLS #49 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ● 2018 DIPTYQUE



INFINITE SKULLS #50 . Oil on canvas , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ●

2018 DUO

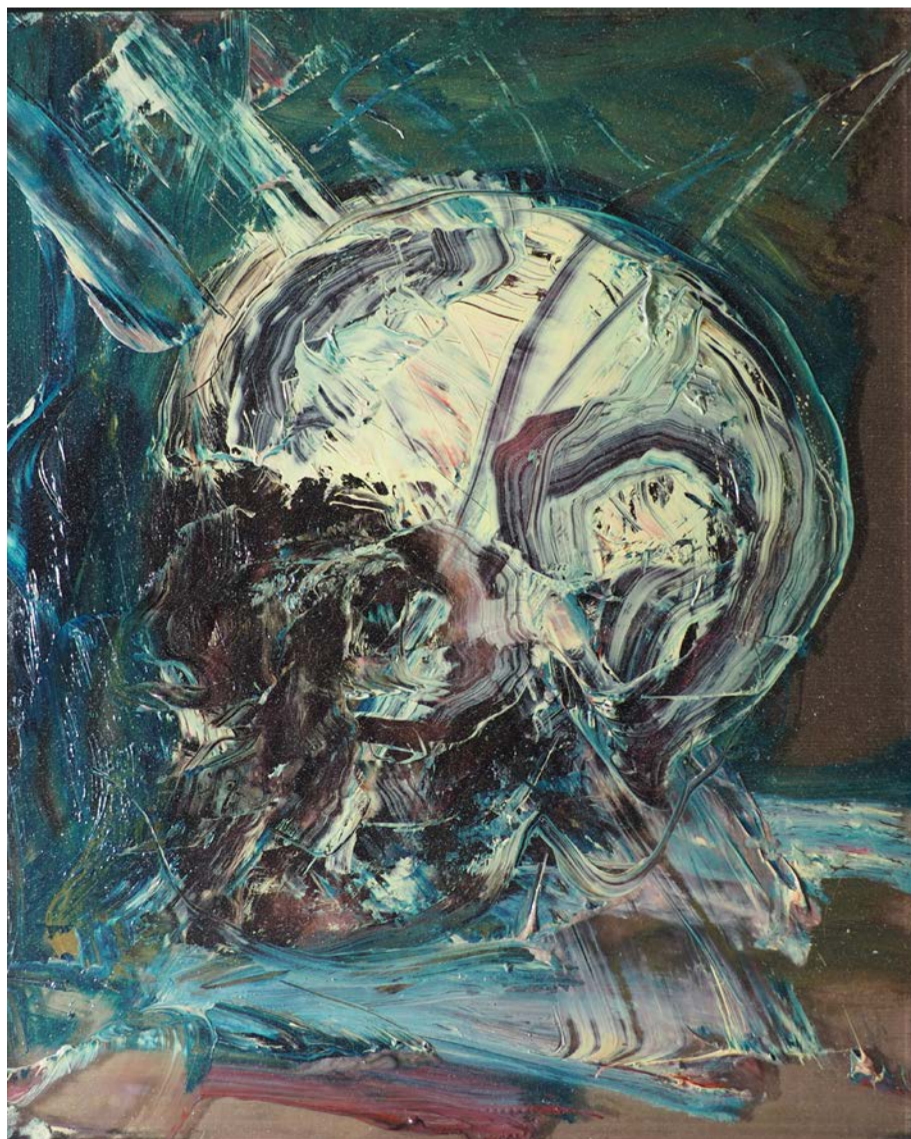


INFINITE SKULLS #51 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ●

2018 DIPTYQUE



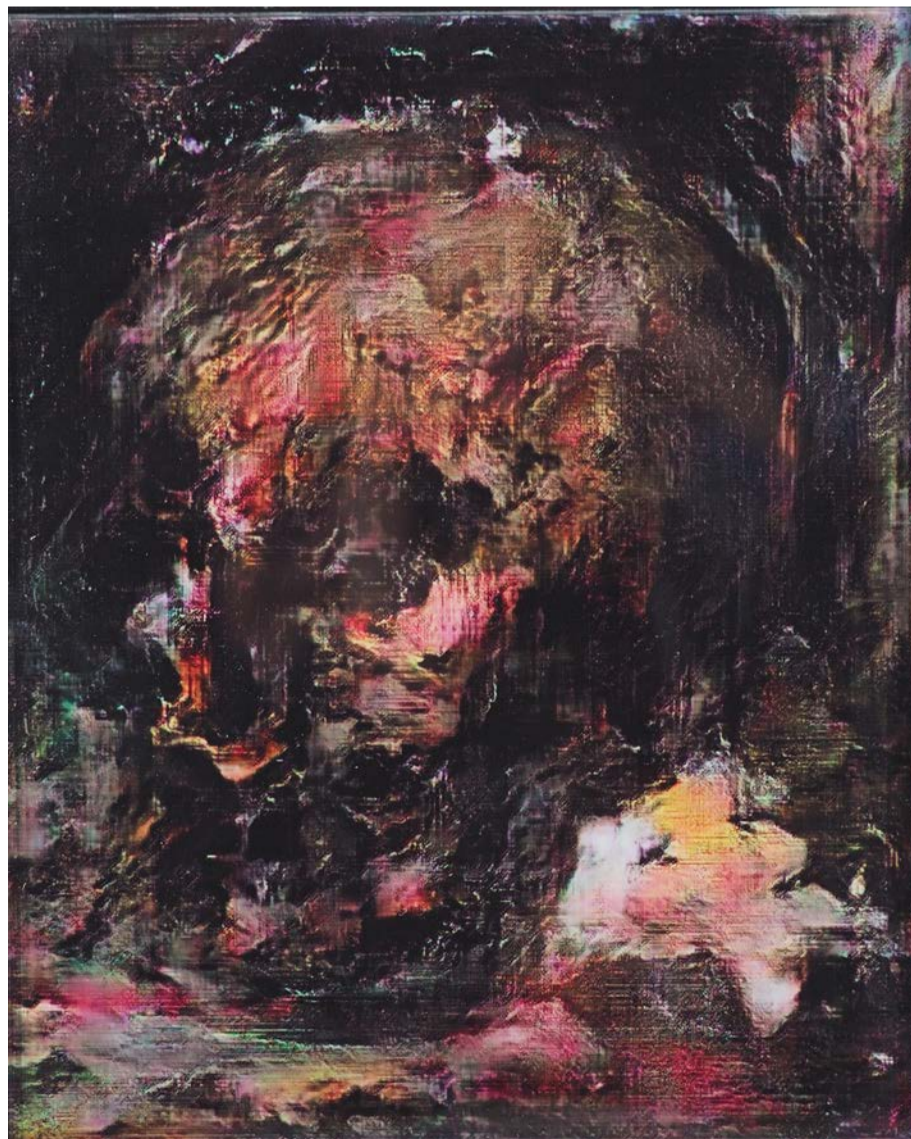
INFINITE SKULLS #52 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ● 2018/24 DIPTYQUE



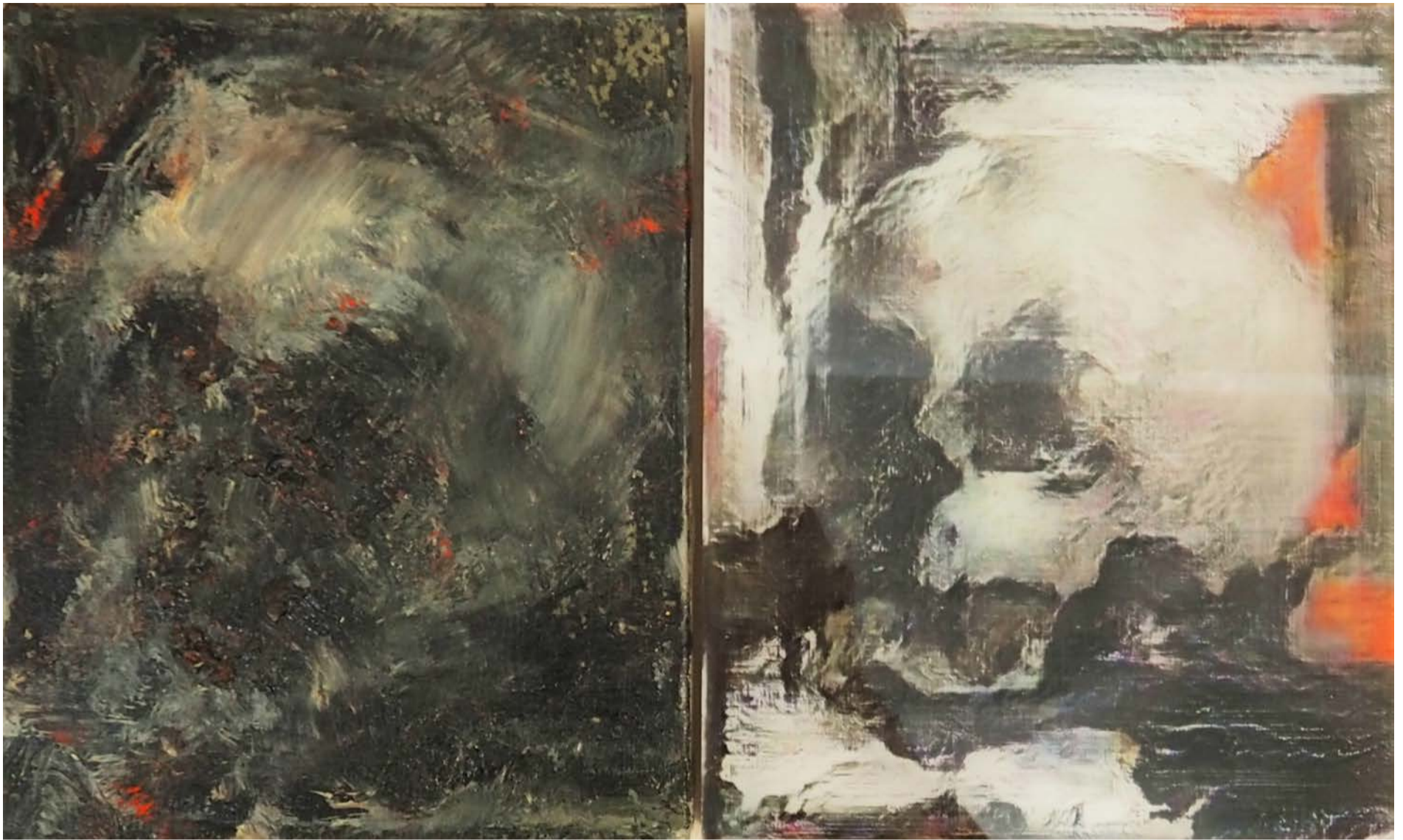
INFINITE SKULLS #53 . Oil on plexi, UV print on plexi . 27 x 22 cm ● 2018 MONO



INFINITE SKULLS #54 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 66 cm ● 2018 TRIPTYQUE



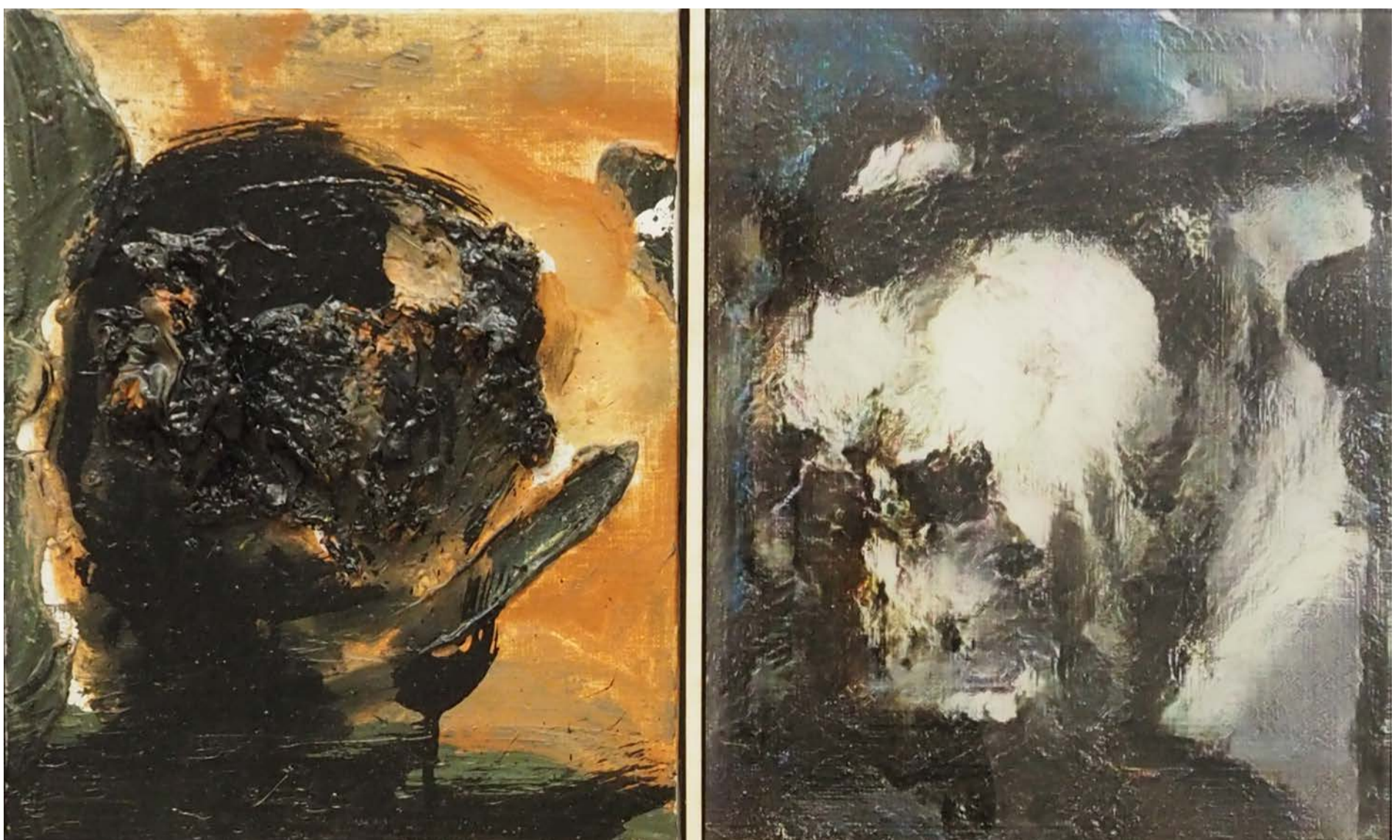
INFINITE SKULLS #55 . UV print on plexi . 27 x 22 cm ● 2018 MONO



INFINITE SKULLS #56 . Oil on canvas , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm

2018/24

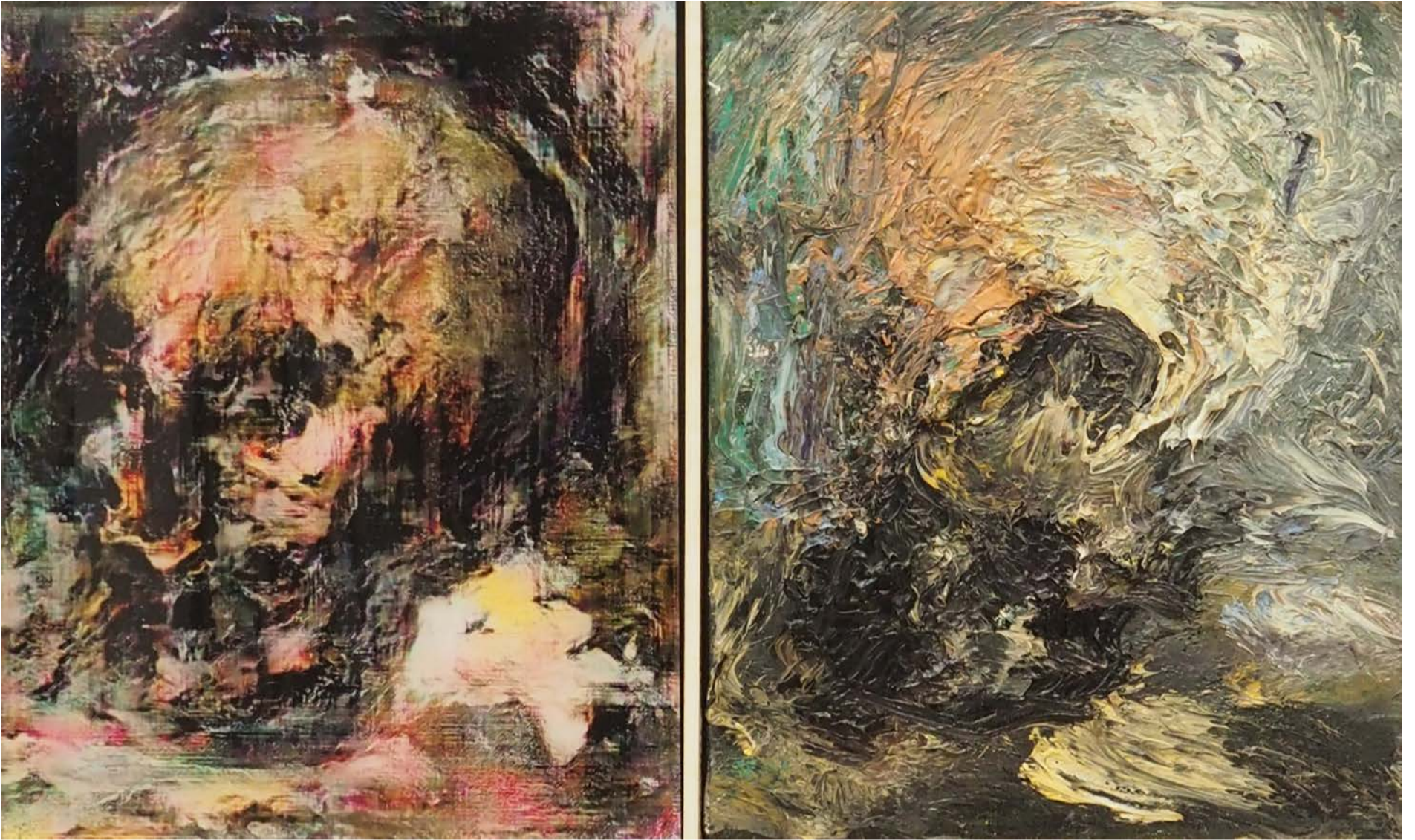
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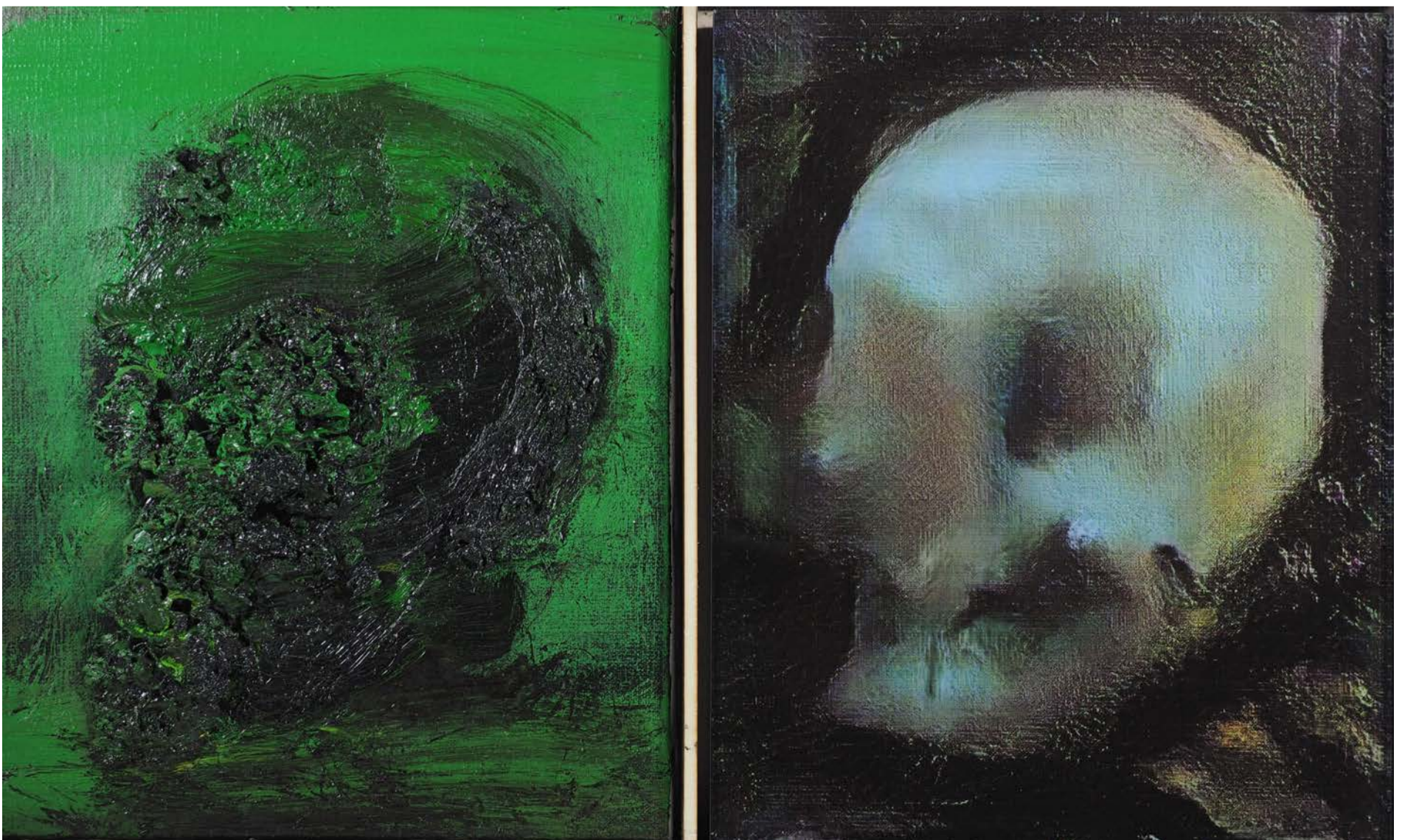
INFINITE SKULLS #57 . Oil on canvas , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm

2018/24

DUO



INFINITE SKULLS #58 . Oil on canvas , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ● 2018/24 DUO

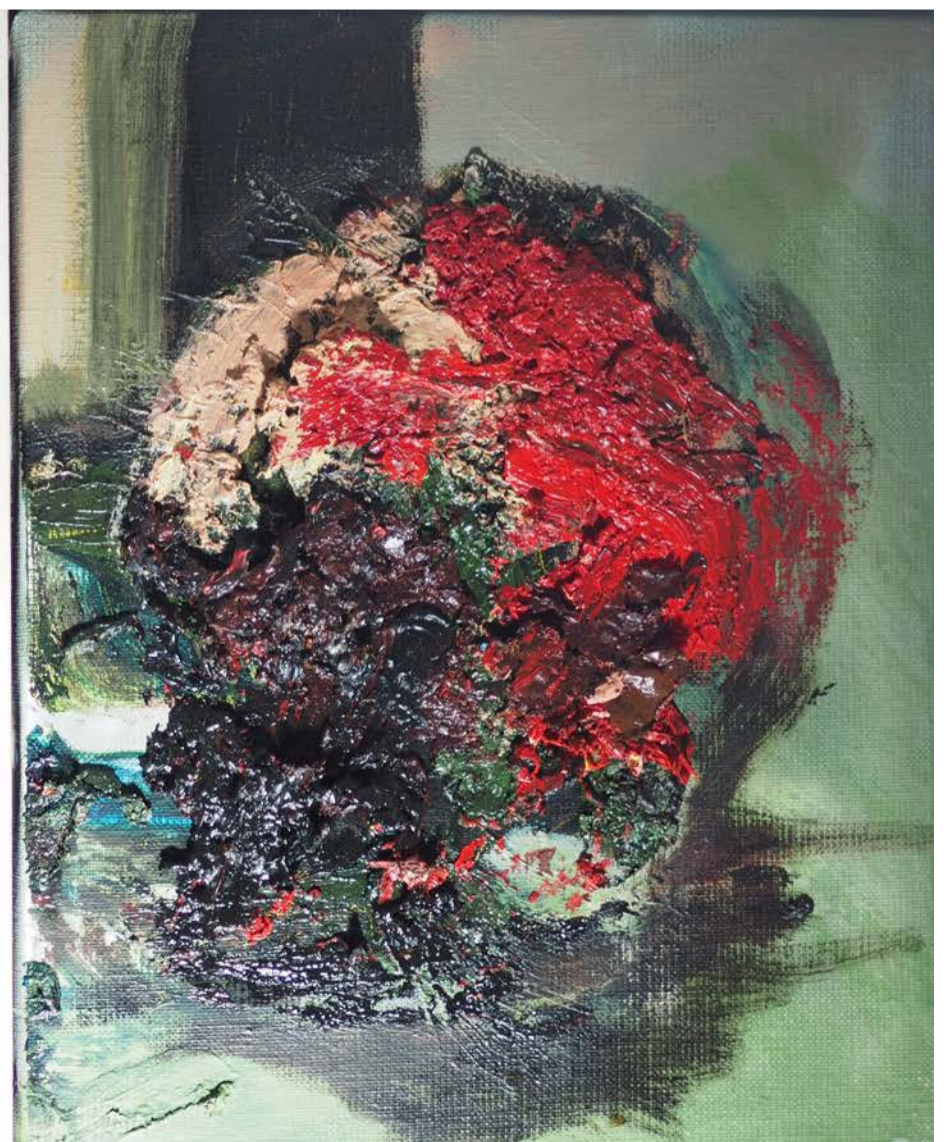


INFINITE SKULLS #59 . Oil on canvas , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ● 2018 DUO



INFINITE SKULLS #60 . Oil on canvas , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ●

2018 DUO

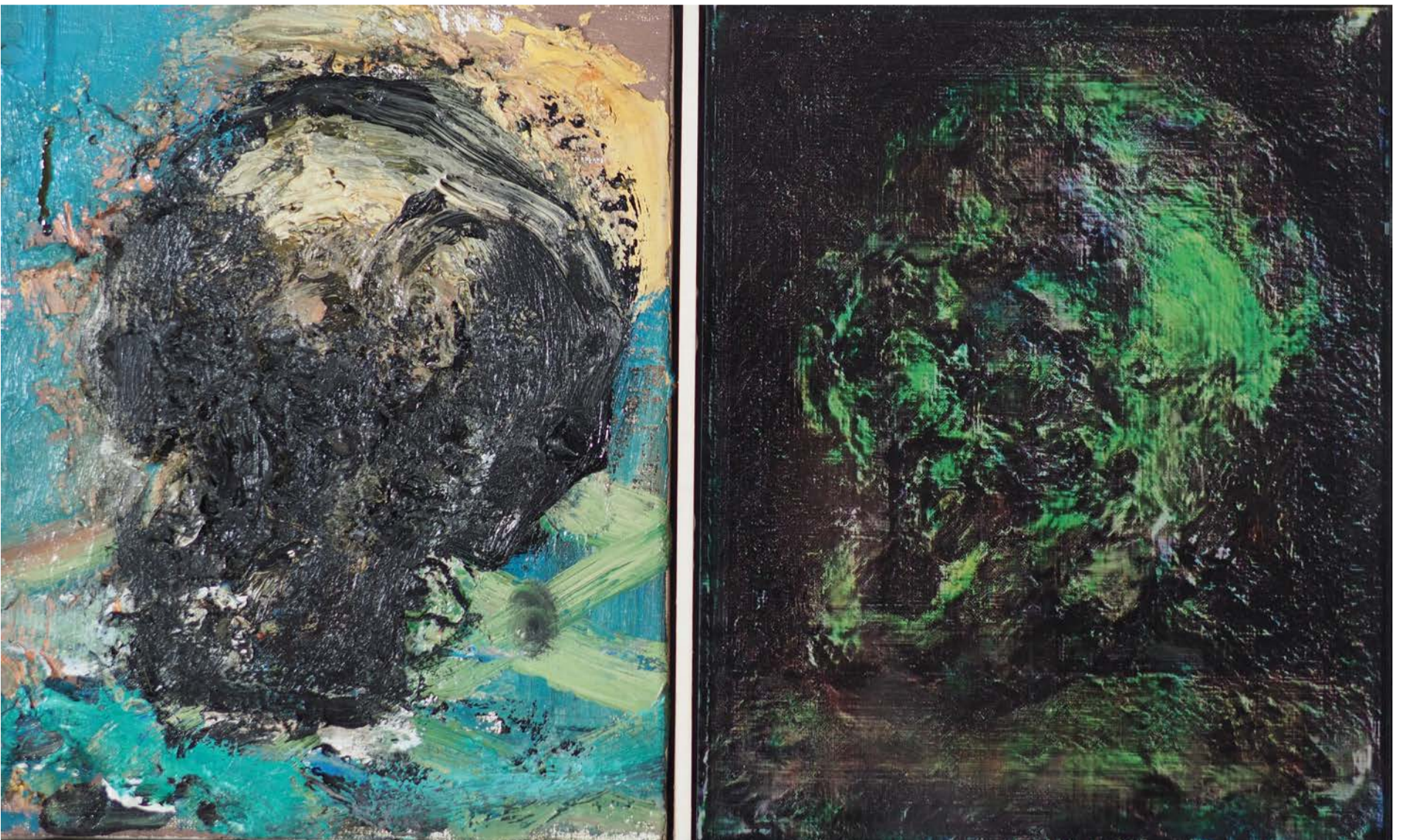


INFINITE SKULLS #61 . Oil on canvas , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ●

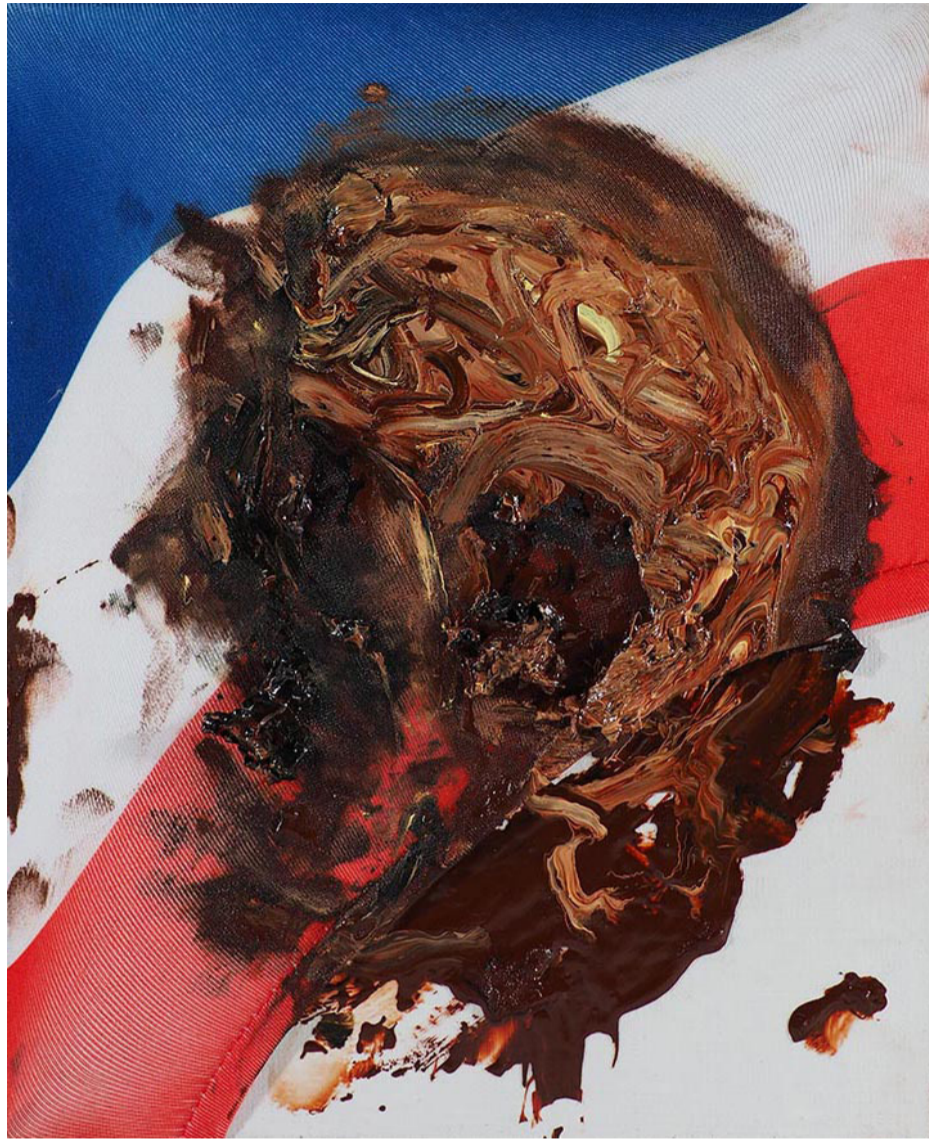
2018 DUO



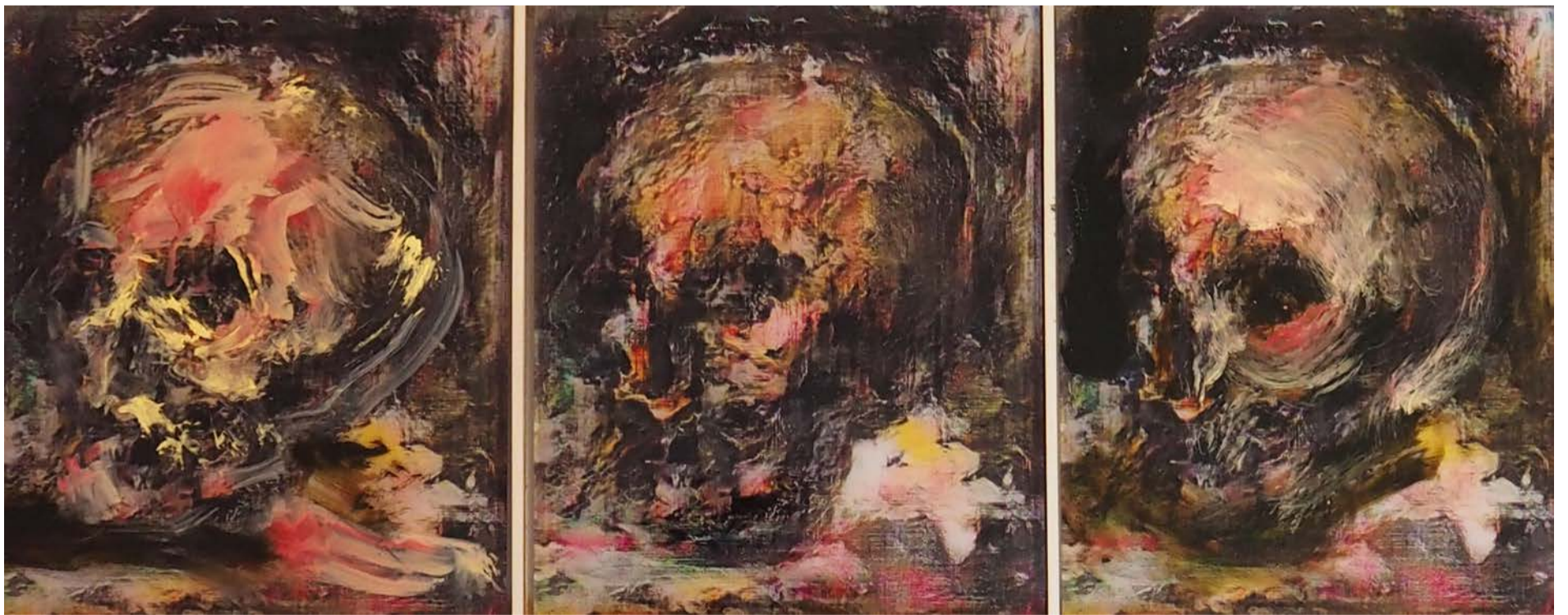
INFINITE SKULLS #62. Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ● 2018 DIPTYQUE



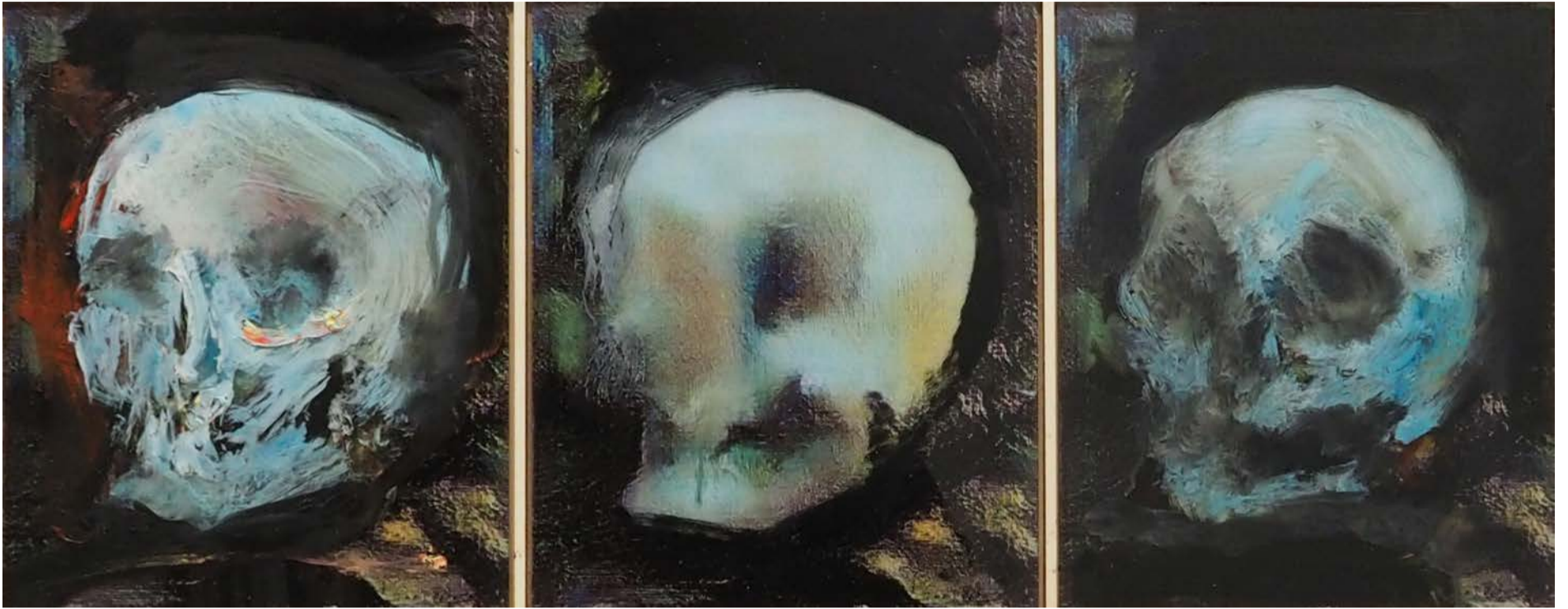
INFINITE SKULLS #63 . Oil on canvas , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ● 2018 DUO



INFINITE SKULLS #64 . Oil on canvas and material . 27 x 22 cm ● 2018 MONO

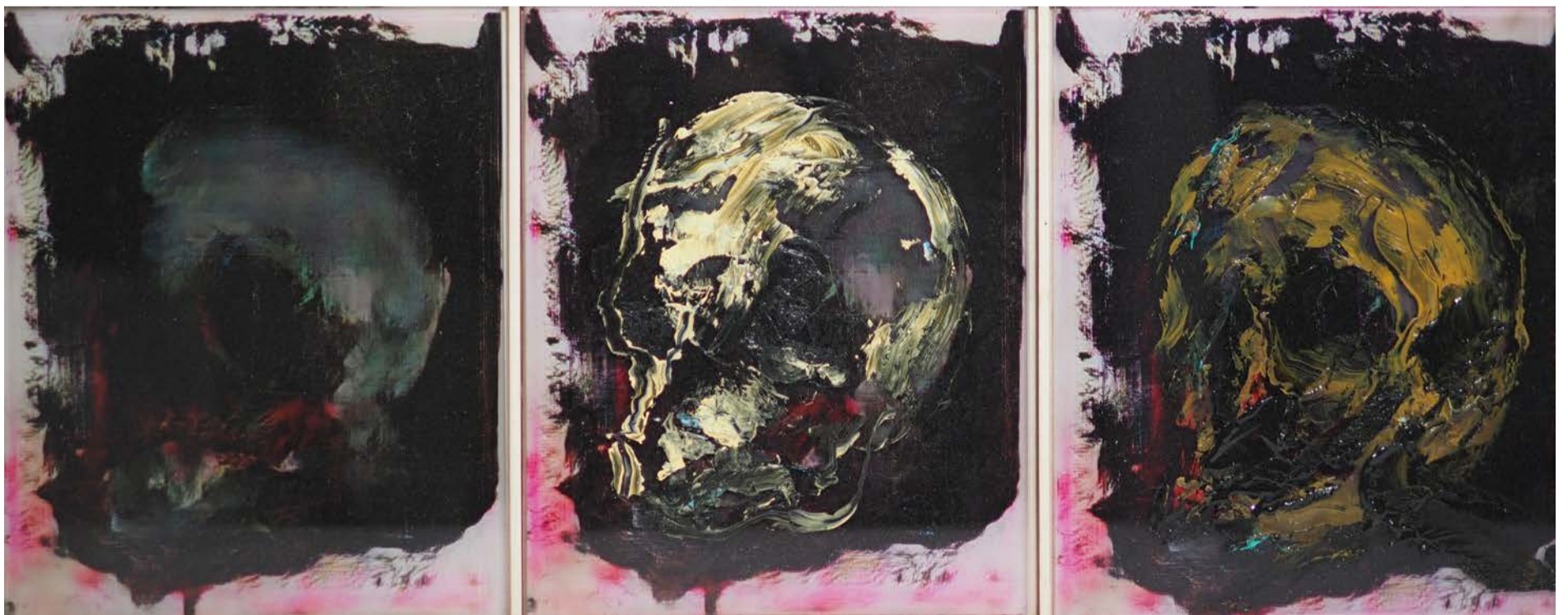


INFINITE SKULLS #65 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 66 cm ● 2018/24 TRIPTYQUE



INFINITE SKULLS #66 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 66 cm

2018/24 TRIPTYQUE



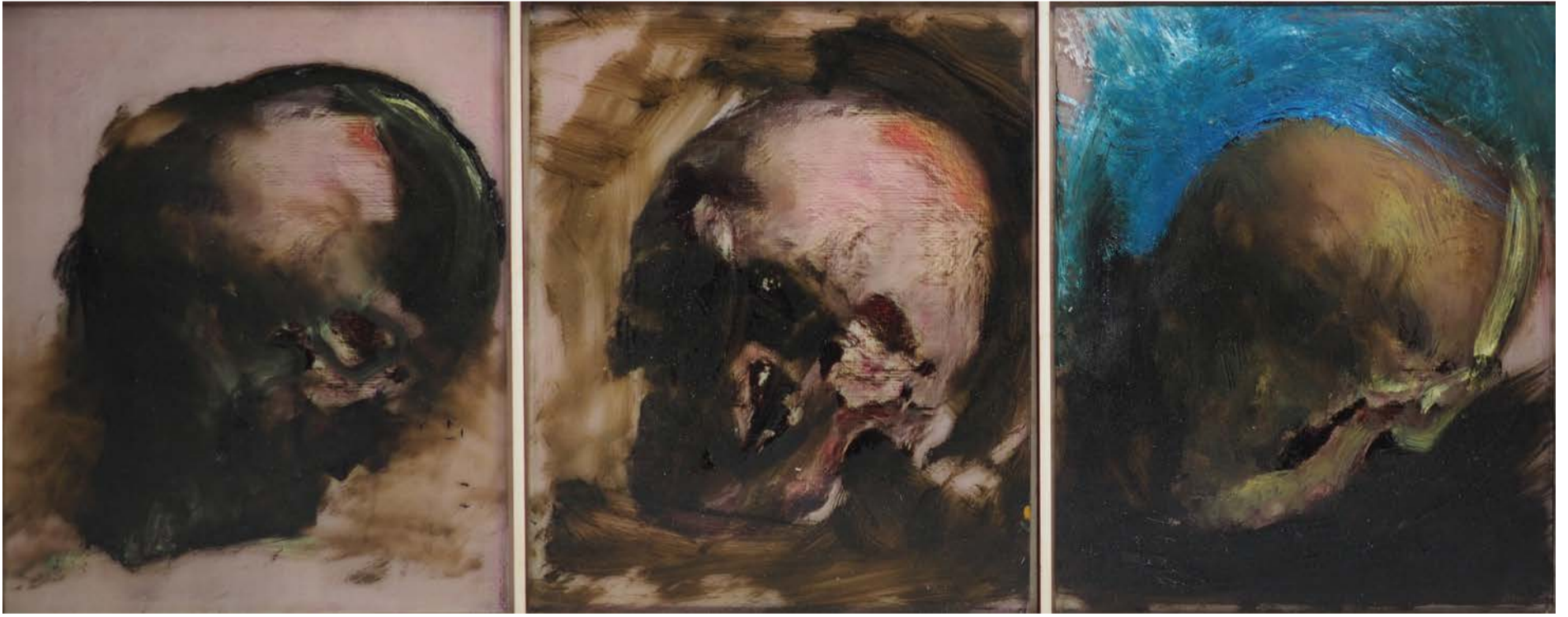
INFINITE SKULLS #67 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 66 cm



2018 TRIPTYQUE



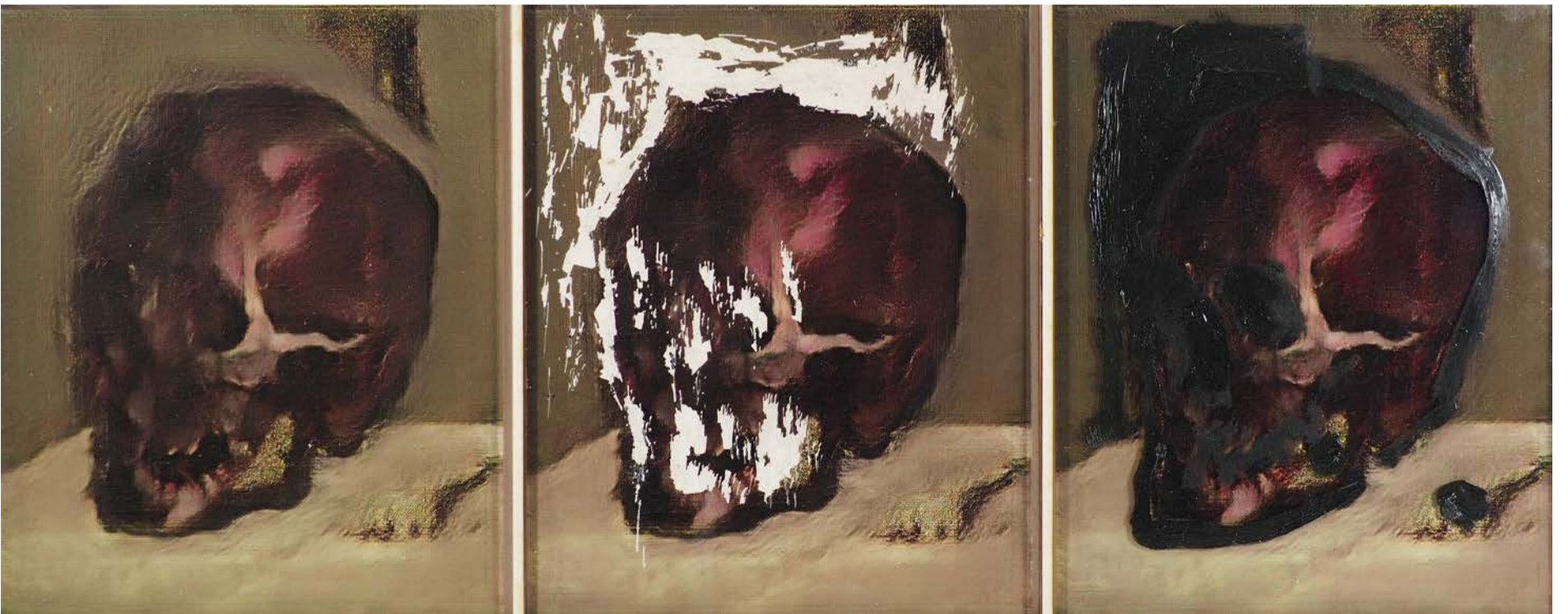
INFINITE SKULLS #68 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 66 cm ● 2018 TRIPTYQUE



INFINITE SKULLS #69 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 66 cm ● 2018 TRIPTYQUE



INFINITE SKULLS #70. Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ● 2018 DIPTYQUE



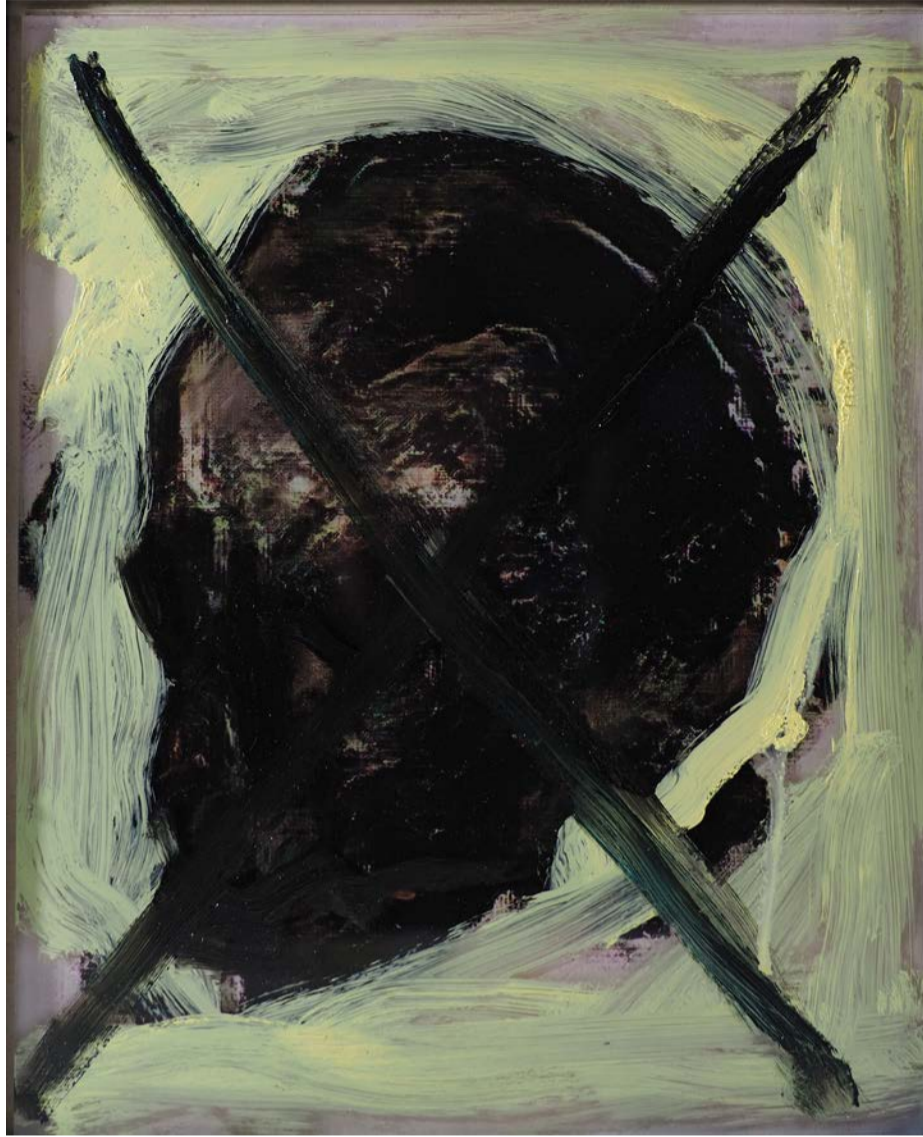
INFINITE SKULLS #71 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi & scratches . 27 x 66 cm ● 2018 TRIPTYQUE



INFINITE SKULLS #72 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 66 cm ● 2018 TRIPTYQUE



INFINITE SKULLS #73 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 66 cm ● 2018 TRIPTYQUE



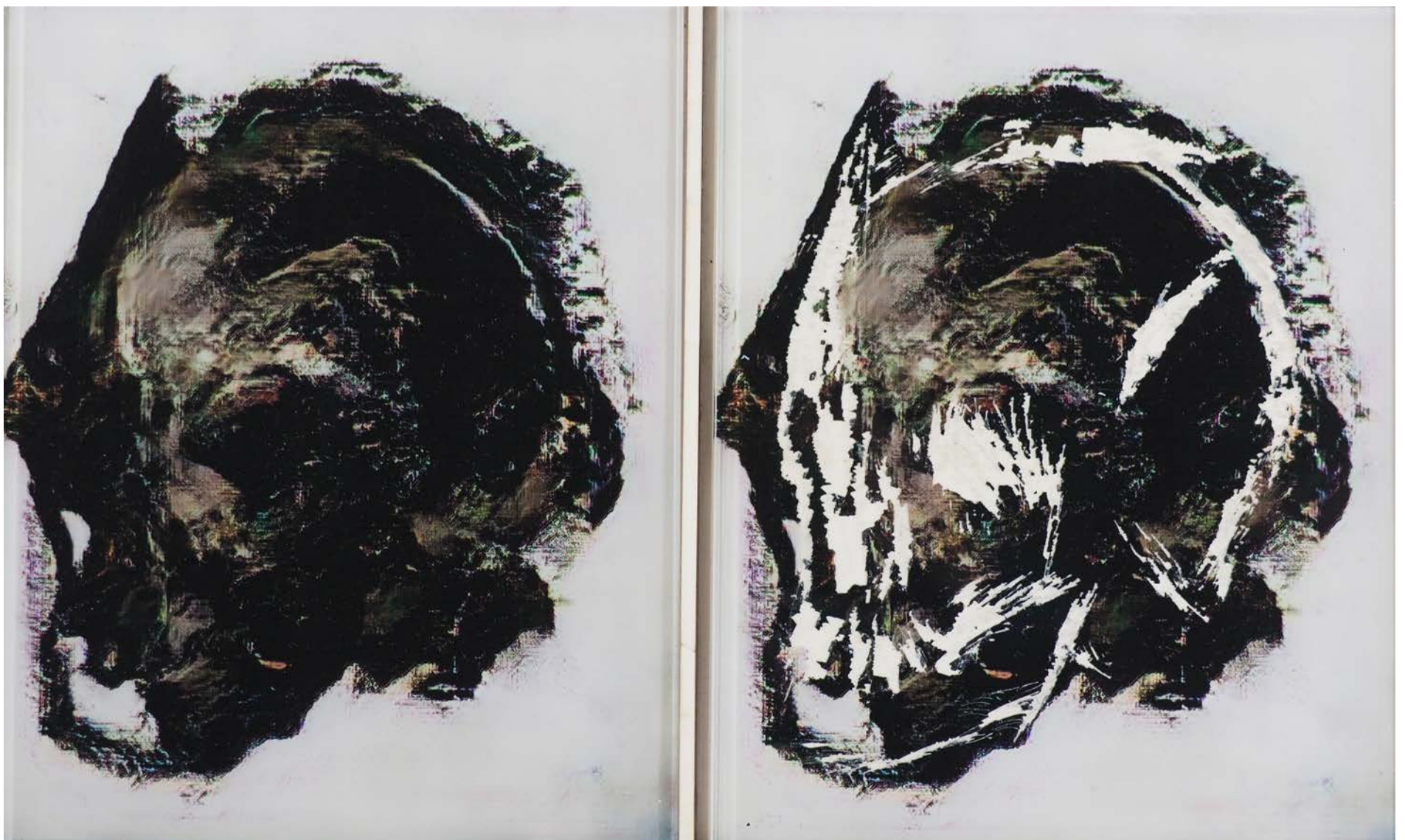
INFINITE SKULLS #74 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 22 cm ● 2018 MONO



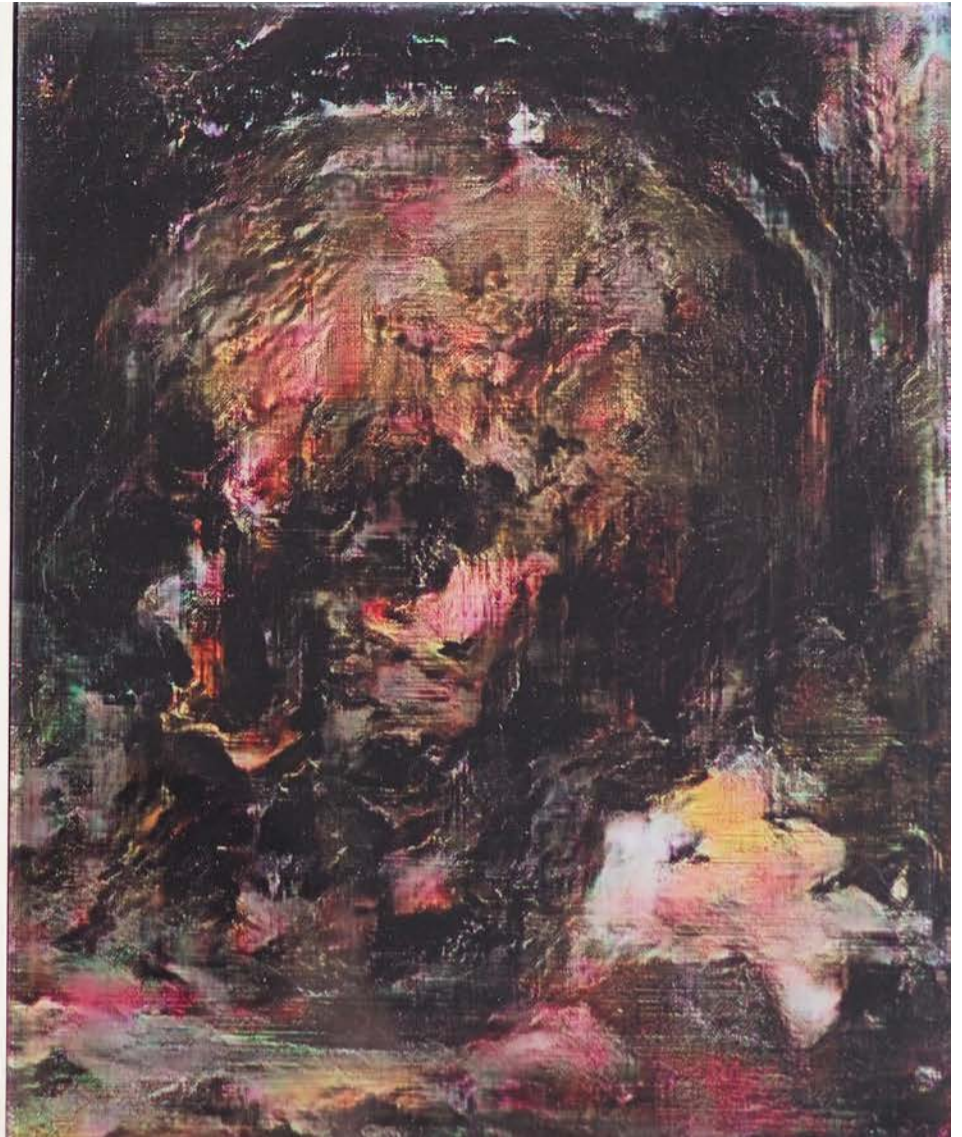
INFINITE SKULLS #75 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ● 2018 DIPTYQUE



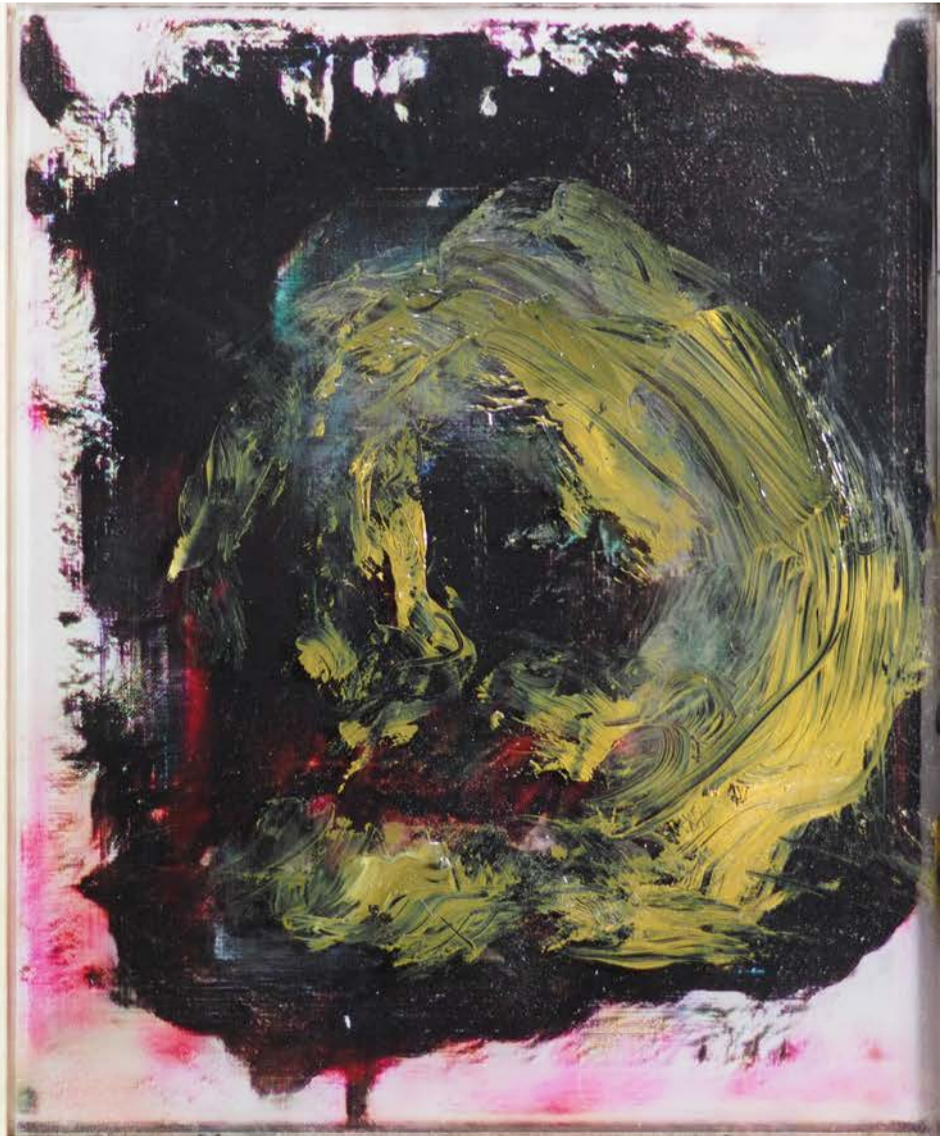
INFINITE SKULLS #76 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 66 cm ● 2018 TRIPTYQUE



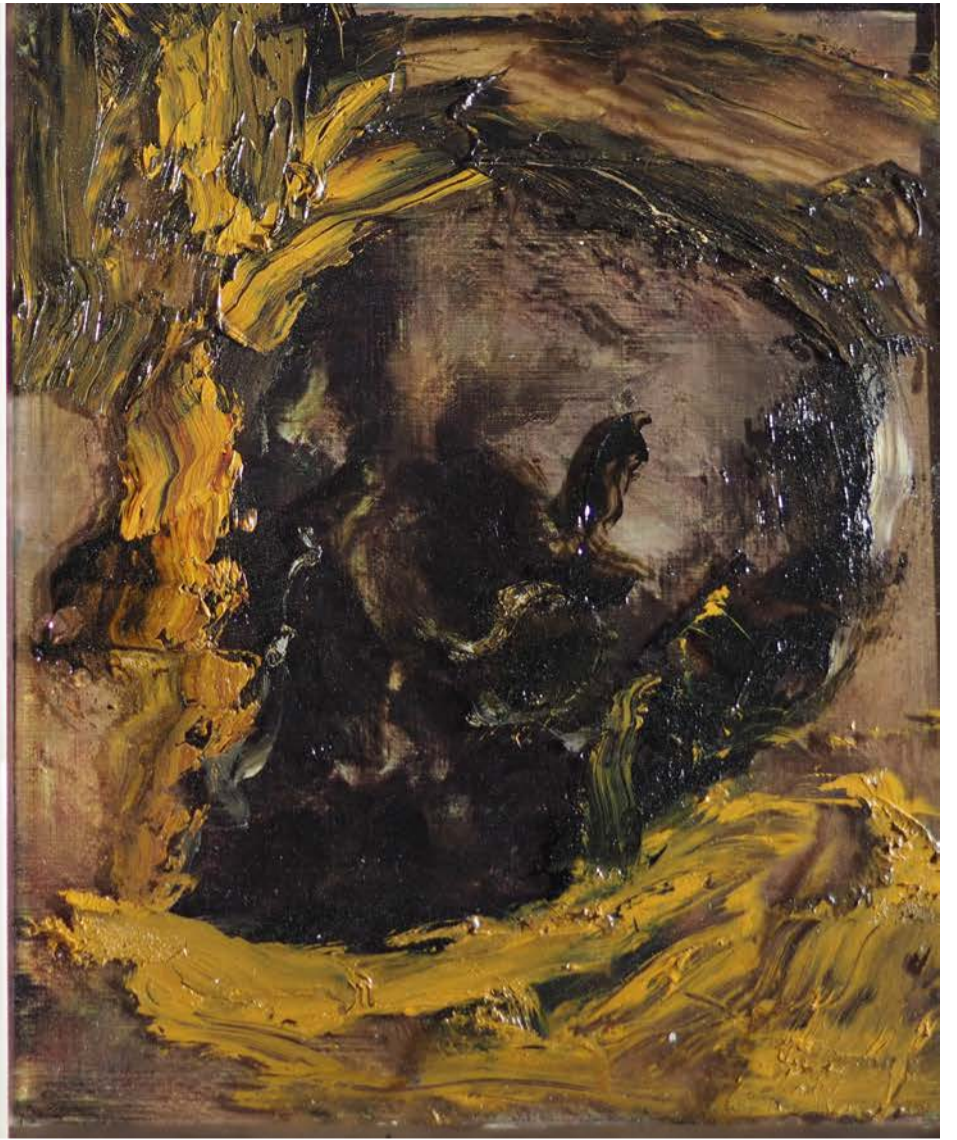
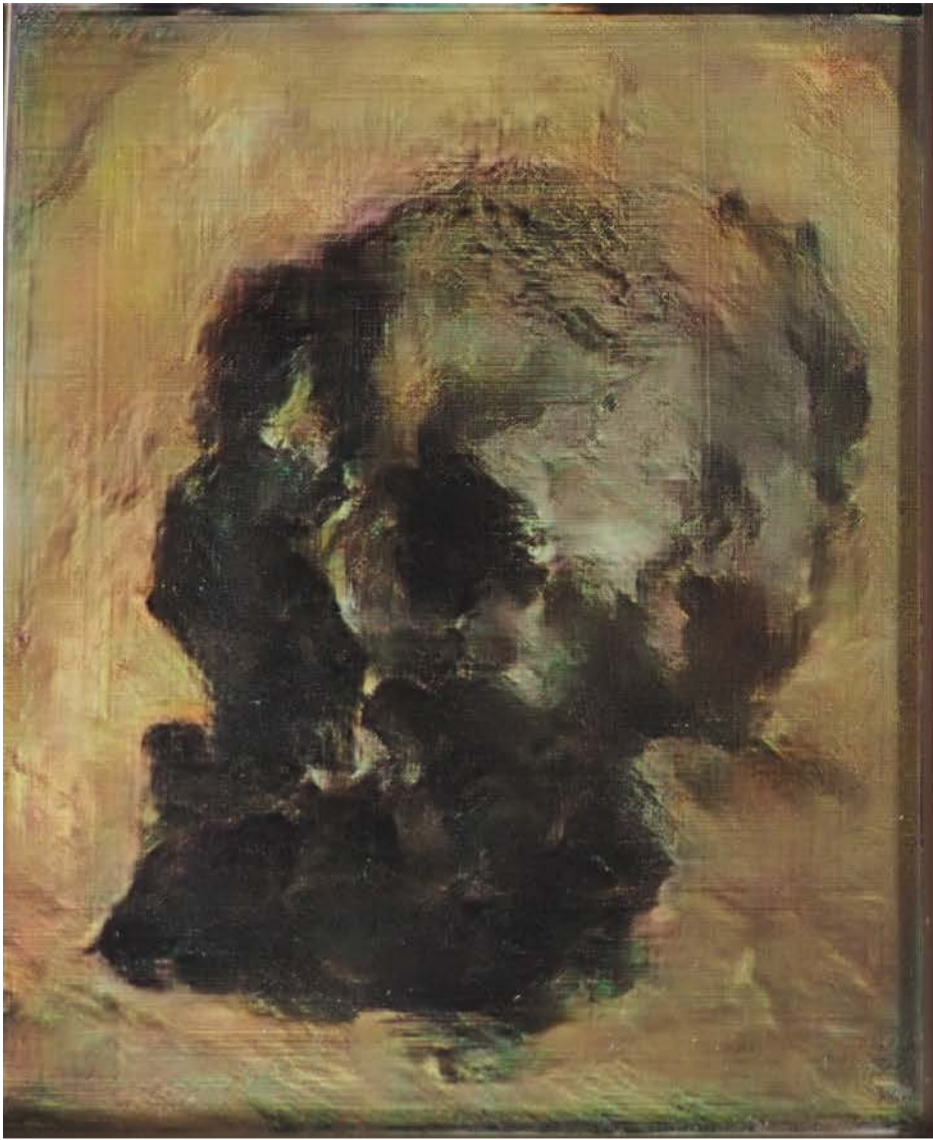
INFINITE SKULLS #77 . UV print on plexi & scratches . 27 x 44 cm ● 2018 DIPTYQUE



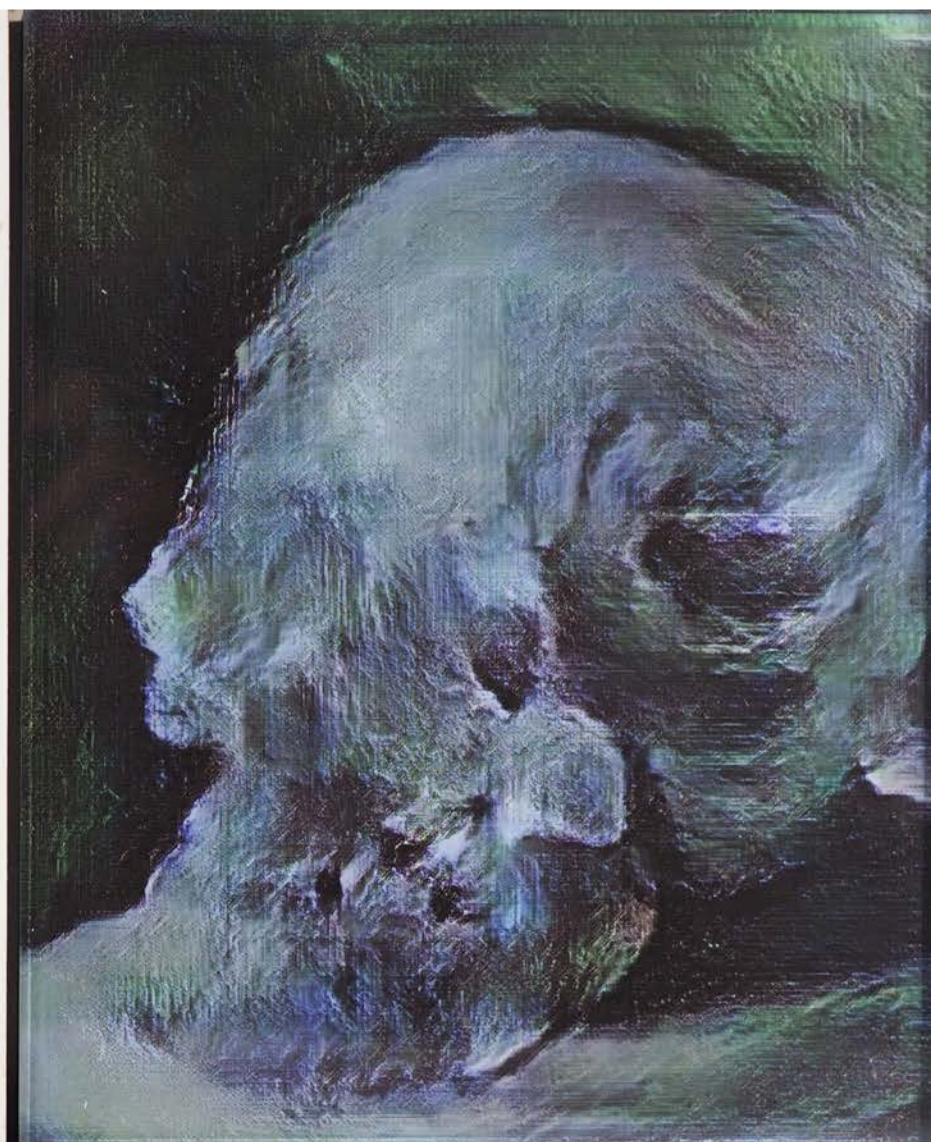
INFINITE SKULLS #78 . Oil on canvas , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ● 2018 DUO



INFINITE SKULLS #79 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ● 2018 DIPTYQUE



INFINITE SKULLS #80. Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ● 2018 DIPTYQUE



INFINITE SKULLS #81 . Oil on canvas , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ● 2018 DUO



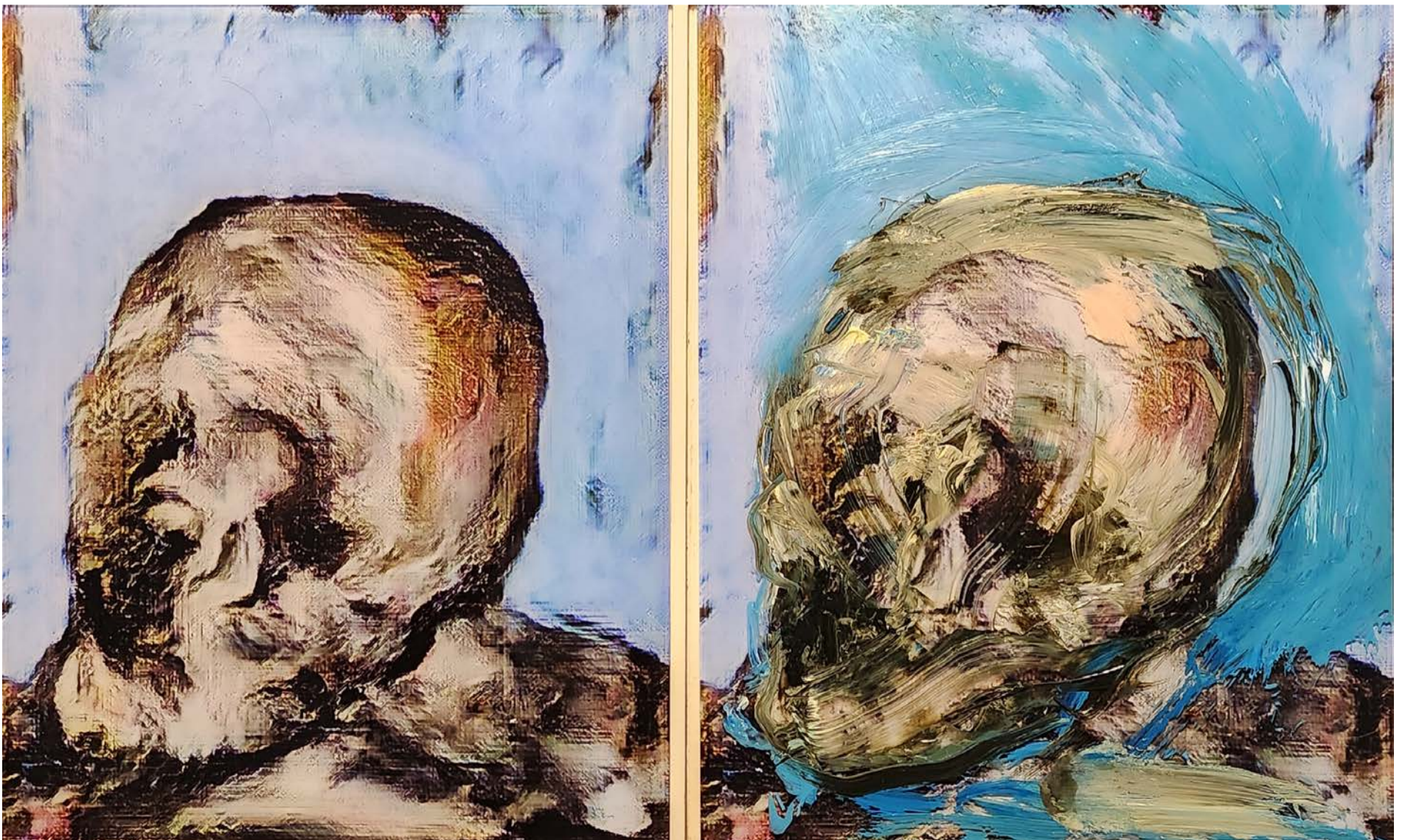
INFINITE SKULLS #82 . Oil on canvas , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ● 2018 DUO



INFINITE SKULLS #83 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ● 2018 DIPTYQUE



INFINITE SKULLS #84 . Oli on plexi, UV print on plexi . 27 x 22 cm ● 2018 MONO



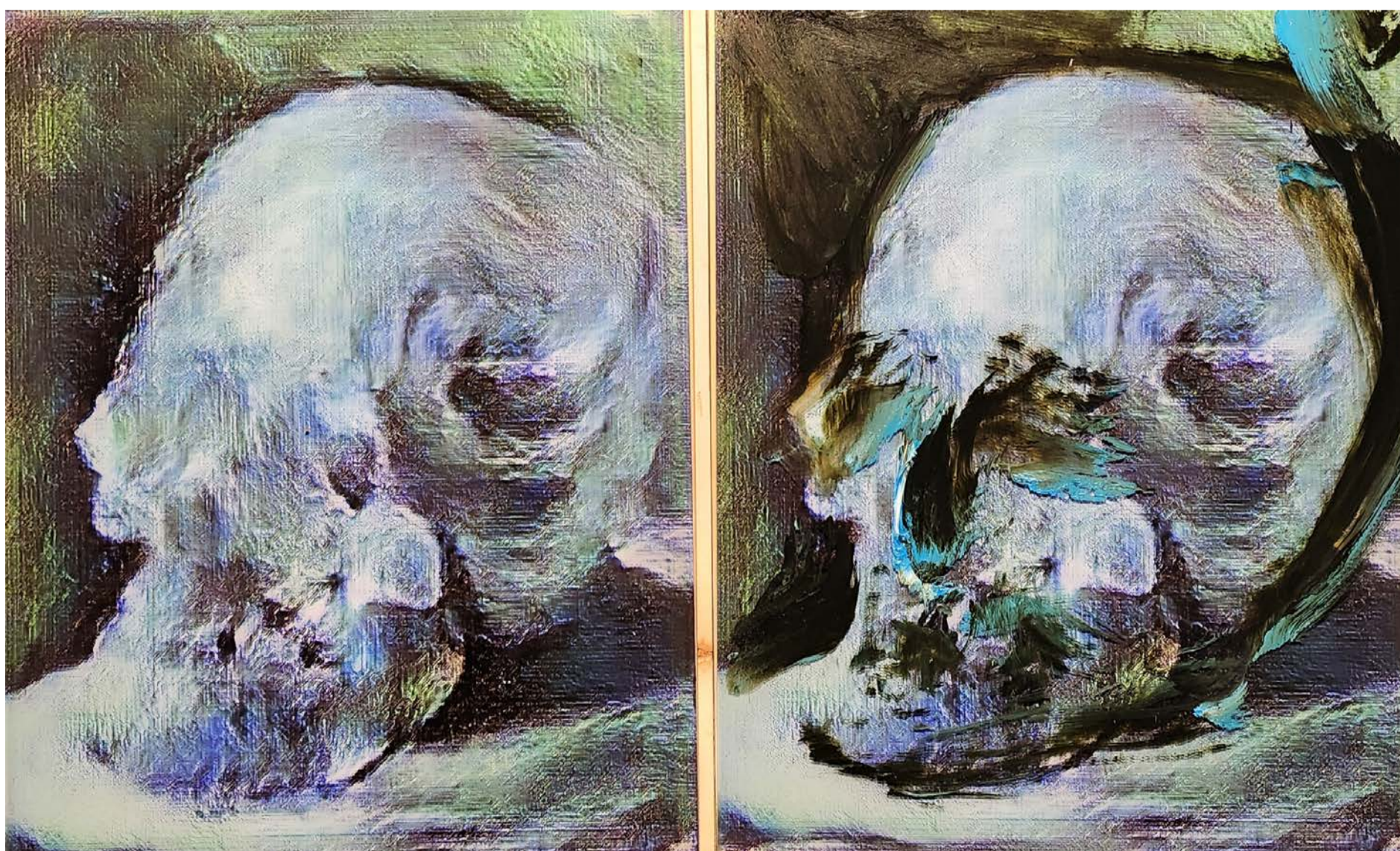
INFINITE SKULLS #85 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm 2018/24 DIPTYQUE



INFINITE SKULLS #86 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 66 cm

2018/24

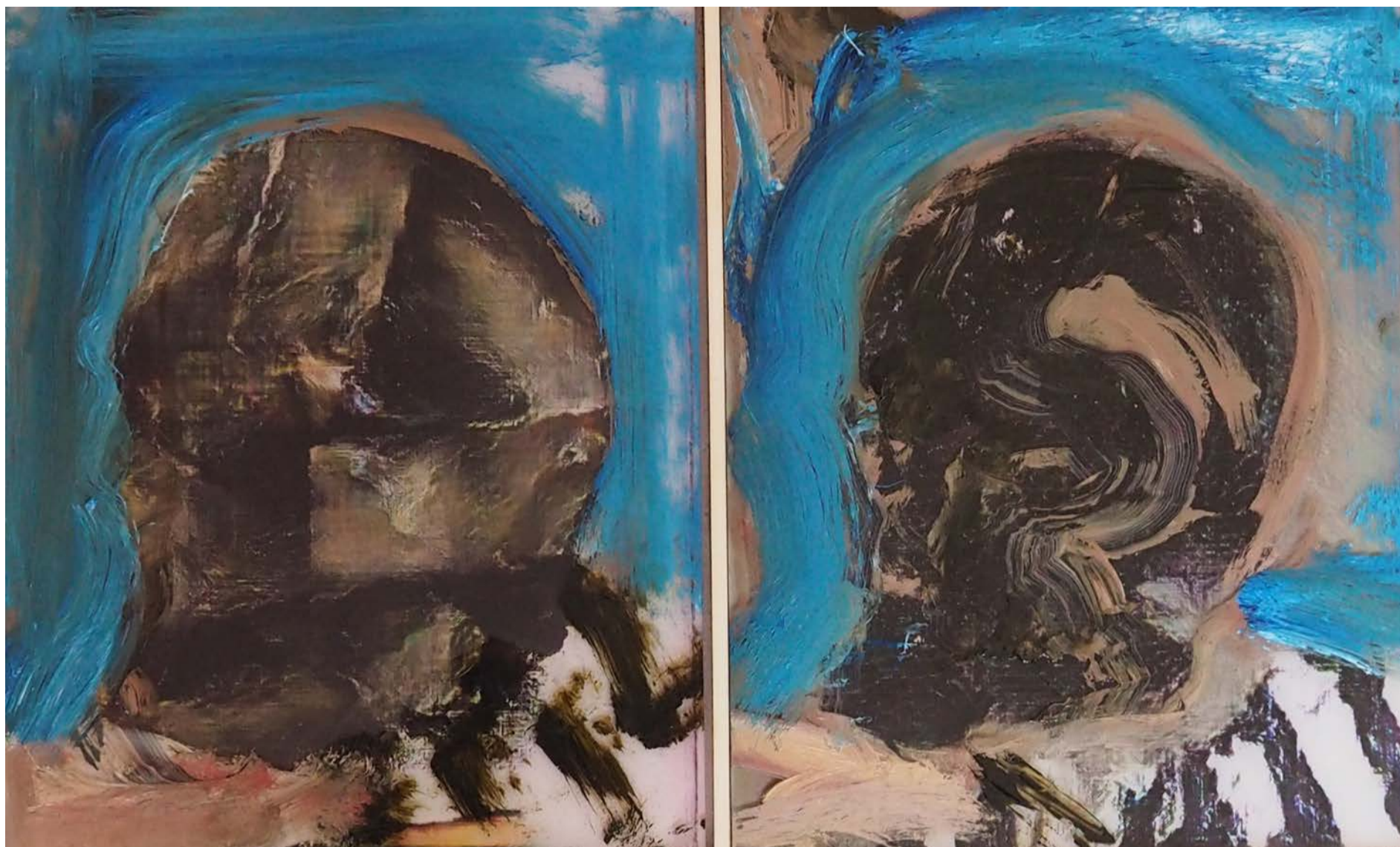
TRIPTYQUE



INFINITE SKULLS #87 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ●

2018/24

DIPTYQUE



INFINITE SKULLS #88 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ● 2018/24 DIPTYQUE



INFINITE SKULLS #89 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ● 2018/24 DIPTYQUE



INFINITE SKULLS #90 . Oil on canvas , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ● 2018/24 DUO



INFINITE SKULLS #91 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ● 2018/24 DIPTYQUE



INFINITE SKULLS #92 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi & scratches. 27 x 66 2018/24 TRIPTYQUE



INFINITE SKULLS #93 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 66 cm 2018/24 TRIPTYQUE



INFINITE SKULLS #94 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 66 cm

2018/24 TRIPTYQUE



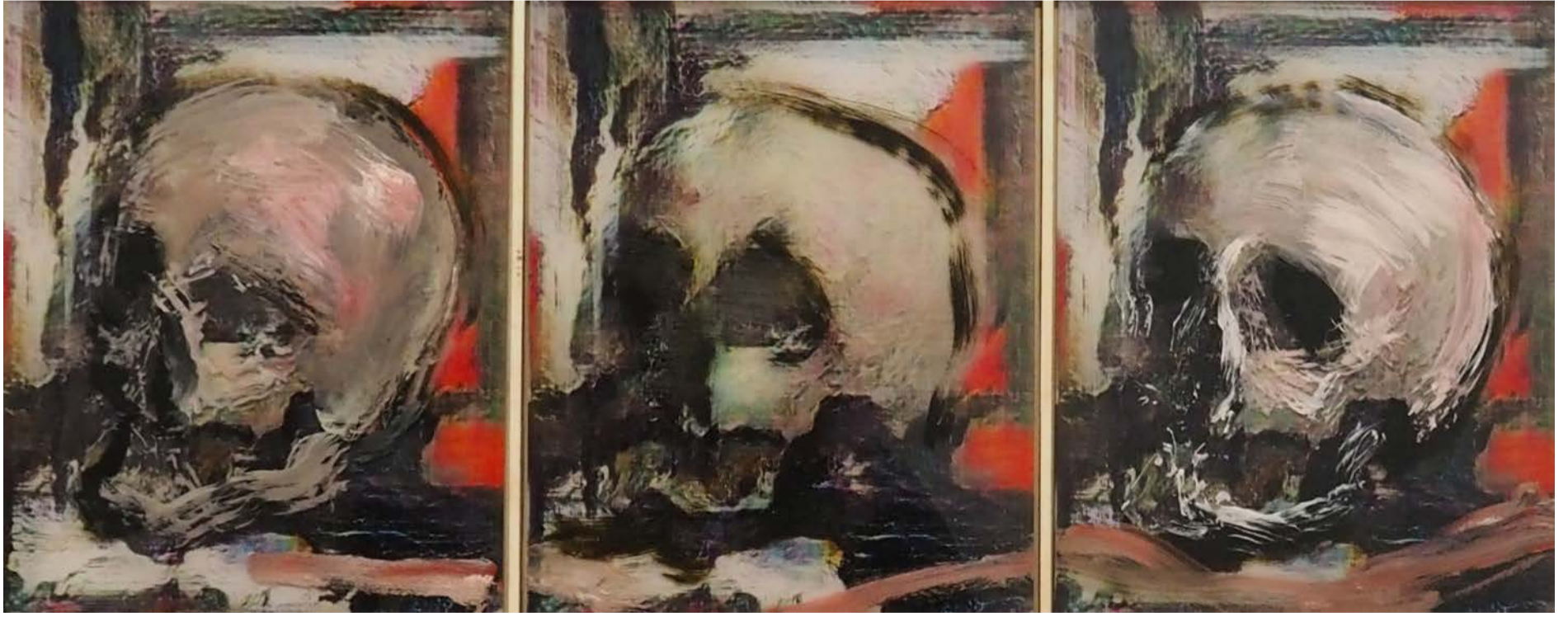
INFINITE SKULLS #95 . Oil on canvas , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ●

2018 DUO



INFINITE SKULLS #96 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 66 cm

2018/24 TRIPTYQUE



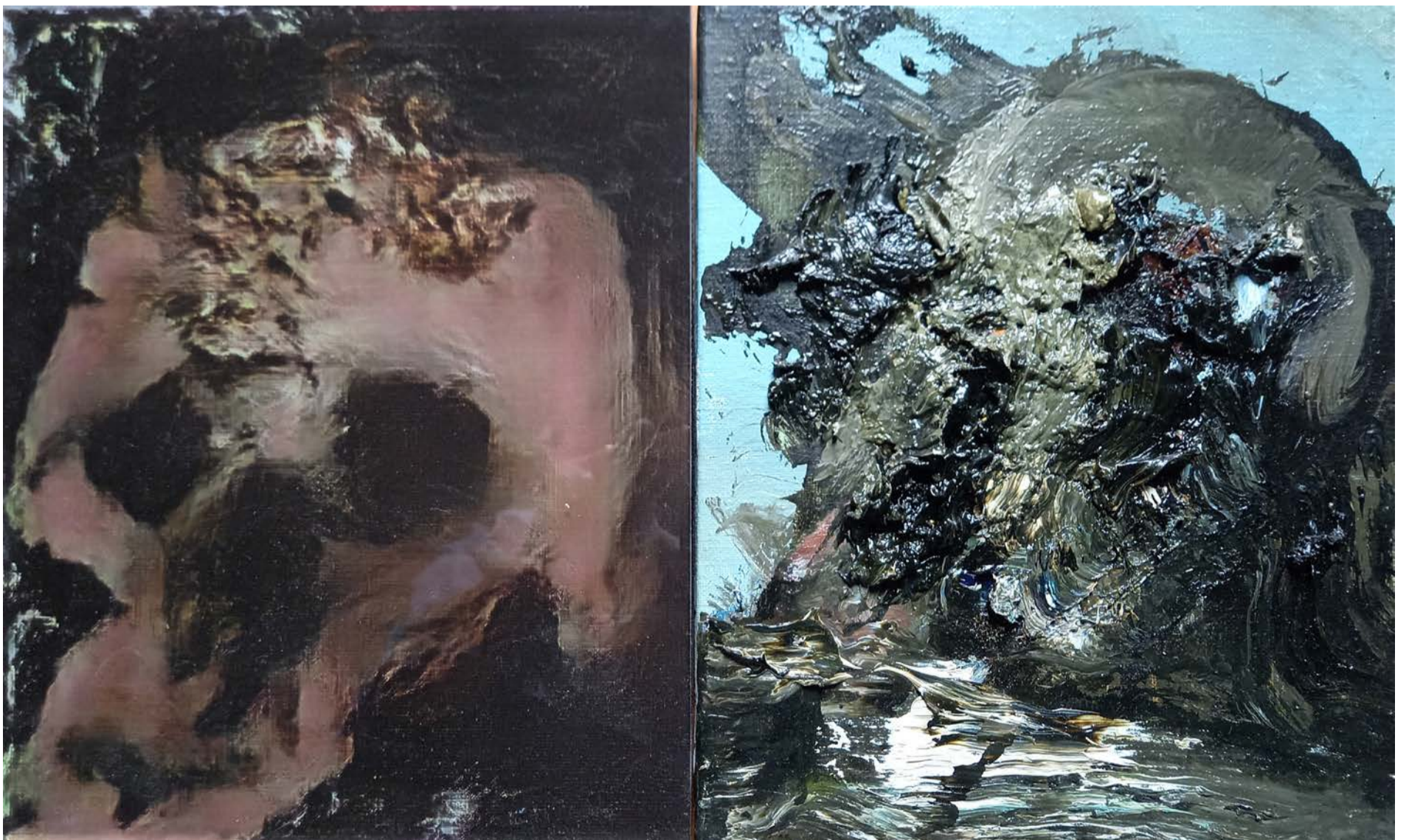
INFINITE SKULLS #97 . Oil on plexi , UV print on plexi . 27 x 66 cm

● 2018/24 TRIPTYQUE



INFINITE SKULLS #98 . Oil on canvas , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ●

2018 DUO



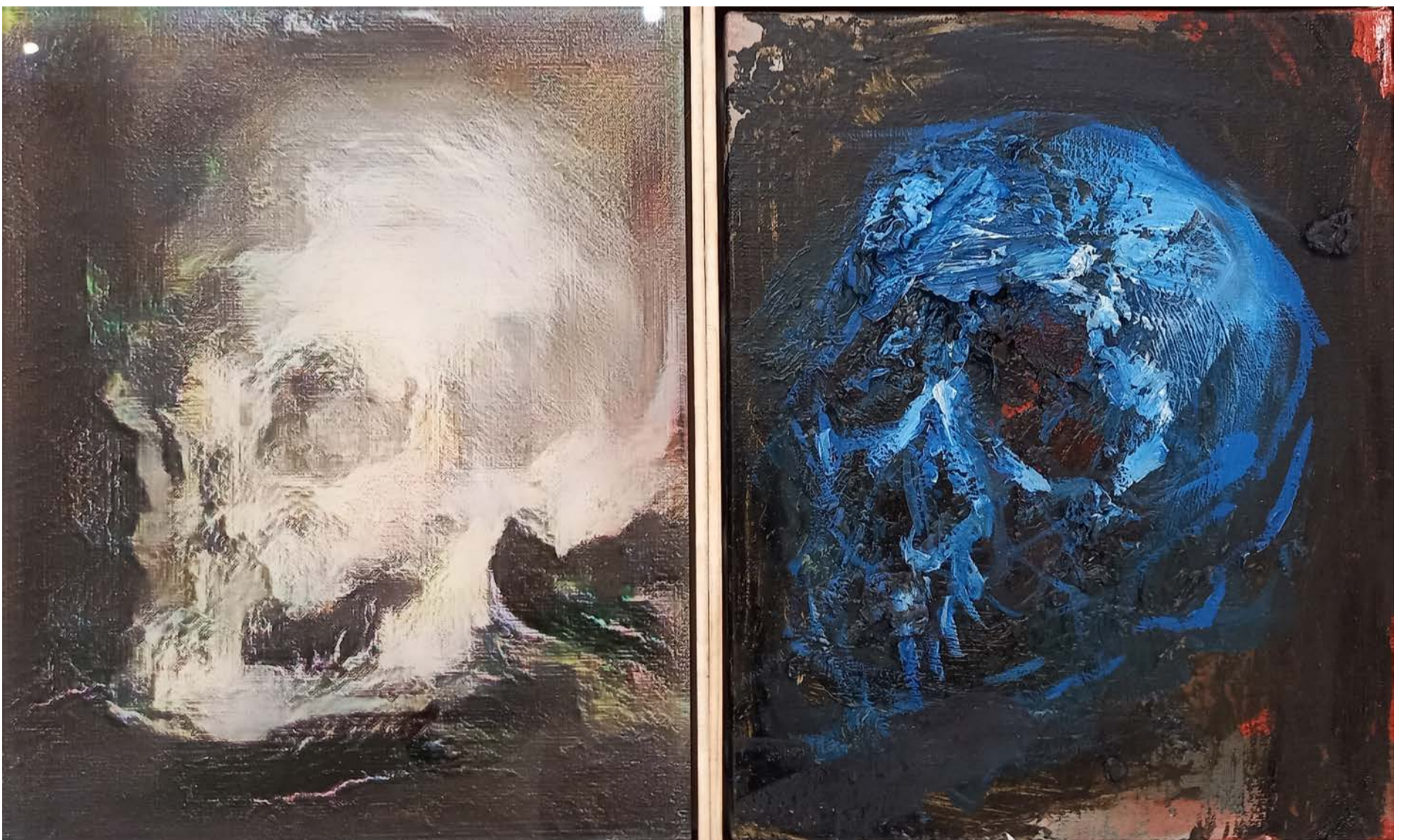
INFINITE SKULLS #99 . Oil on canvas , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ●

2018 DUO



INFINITE SKULLS #100 . Oil on canvas , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ●

2018 DUO



INFINITE SKULLS #101 . Oil on canvas , UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm ●

2018 DUO

BARROT/BARRAT**An Unexpected Guest in the Studio****- by Fabrice Bertrand**

Regarding the debate between Ronan Barrot and Robbie Barrat organized by Étienne Gatti at Schoolab on February 5, 2019.

MEMENTO MORI

For Ronan Barrot, because he is human and therefore connected to the world through millennia of memories and sensory apprenticeship, a skull is a meaningful object. Such obviousness is anthropological: a skull is an anatomic part of his and each of his kin's bodies. It is what literally holds his mind together. Homo sapiens knew as much—in the bony carcasses of preys he hunted, under the skin of every relative he interred, that skeletal structure displayed the clearly recognizable features of his own face.

Because Ronan Barrot is a painter and because he has probed the Flemish masters, Caravaggio, Georges de La Tour, because he has read Hamlet and paid attention to Delacroix, the skull for him falls within the familiar purview of the pictorial “vanity” and, as such, precipitates in its cavernous gaze a reminder of his mortality and temporality.

His relation to the world and his memory have shaped the sense-producing network that links him to that object, the serial declensions of which he is and has been presenting for decades. For Barrot, his skulls operate as notes in a sketchbook, as painterly mementoes. They are the conclusive, intimate ritual signing a painting off. He preserves some of his palettes of paints and combined mediums in their instant-bound thickness as exploitable memory banks from which an ulterior resurrection may spring up. Should their impasto take years to dry out, there's nothing to worry about: pictorial memorizing takes its own good time and sediments according to the pigments' rhythms. Thus the viscous, half random matter left at the exhausted end of the palette is laid to rest, layer upon layer into skull after skull, as a subjective database that Ronan Barrot later queries in order to generate new canvasses, new combinations that, keeping track of his choices, preserve the memory of what has been found for him to continue doing.

LOCUS SOLUS

The GANs Robbie Barrat devises have no clue as to what a skull is. Their memory banks, selfenclosed the way tableaux vivants are in Raymond Roussel's Locus Solus novel, are not connected to the world. Quite the contrary: their very performance requires they be kept in vitro, shut out from any external reference. Starting from random noise, they operate a-historically through selfwinnowing until they reach iteratively a granularity discreet enough to fit the model they're bonded to (the images of Ronan Barrot's skulls). They neither learn how to paint nor what is a skull. Queried to paint some other

thing, they'd draw a digital out-of-whack blank (doesn't compute). They strive toward a pre-established shape, ever unconcerned with what said shape stands for, even less with what it conjures up and what echoes in it. Their sole criterion of success lies within their uncontested equivalence to their bond. Out of the endless flow the brutal force of computing generates, Robbie Barrat, because he is a human being and an artist, culls out images his gaze deems meaningful. As a programmer, he fed at a later stage "anomalies" (which are such for him only) into his algorithm. As he himself explains by means of a vocabulary quite explicitly anthropomorphic, the proposals then indiscriminately spewed forth by the machine catch his interest when he makes it sick, when he "messes the software up" and brings it to "hallucinate." Which it to say, not when the machine errs—since it merely knows code-driven notions of convergence and divergence—but rather when it baffles the purely human gaze of the viewer, of the one who selects pictures out of the flow. Because of their surprising, unforeseeable aspect, their drifting off from the model, the monsters, the freaks, the modern Prometheus which Barrat gives rise to when he adjusts his algorithm's "weights" (the convergence rules) steer his choices and serve as criteria to his esthetic memory, allowing him to pick up images from the uninterrupted flow the digital network produces. It is his gaze that instills anxiety: the algorithm, self-unknowing as it is, does not know angst. On a scale made infinitely larger by randomness that nonetheless rests on the same sensory basis, Barrat selects his material of interest in the flow of his images just as Barrot chooses his in the movable material of his exhausted palette. In both cases, the resurrective, that which gives life to the inert, is the choice-driven gaze.

THINKING/SORTING

Barrat and Barrot collaboration occurred in two phases, two "epochs" as the artists ironically decided to label them in reference to the initial date a digital operating system selects in order to compute time. These two moments of their partnership again include a first, divergent, almost confrontational, movement, followed by a convergent one.

A manner of abduction takes place at the origin of the project: five hundred images of skulls painted by Ronan Barrot are hijacked from him and assimilated by the database required by Barrat's artificial neuronal networks to feed their discriminator as it guides the generator through its algorithmic learning. This learning then gives birth to a series of skull images that more and more resemble their models.

In this first stage, the machine manages to generate more and more persuasive imitations of the original canvases (an anxiety-inducing mirror effect)—and uneasiness stems from this very closeness in that it falsely but unavoidably assigns to the machine a capacity for dreadful autonomy. The status of the painter, of the human being that embodies it, comes into question.

Such angst is however quickly dispelled by way of a dialogue, of a succession of interchanges between the painter and the digital artist. Barrot says of Bar-

rat that he sees him as “a new partner in the studio”, that is to say neither a plain imitator nor quite a competitor: rather a new gaze cast upon his work, filtered through the X-ray stream emanating from a machine devoid in itself of any personal will and committed to imitation. Thus begins the second “epoch”. Barrat scrutinizes Barrot’s skulls, deduces from his observations a direction, an orientation that allows him to prod by successive tweakings his algorithms toward the production of images he deems more intriguing and disconcerting. The sorting and winnowing he performs becomes a reflection a gaze nurtures. Conversely, Barrot peruses these digital artefacts and quickly detects what is non-pictorial—ie dead—in them: a listless stroke, a lackluster clash of colors, a motionless, dull, vibration. Since he cannot “teach” the machine anything as it does not give a hoot about painterly gestures, he sets on directly to add to, serially to correct the Plexiglas on which Barrat’s images are printed, be it in laying on an extra coat of paint or scoring the plastic from behind. He reinjects life into what is inert, scraping and clouding probably with a slightly infuriated glee a material that doesn’t speak his language.

All is a matter of flows, selections, dialogues and sorting. First flow: Barrot’s five hundred skulls, pregnant with history, time and proficiency, yet proceeding themselves alongside his painter’s practice from an accumulation of choices and happenstances over twenty years. Second flow: (potentially infinite yet depending on the hyper-accelerated temporality of digital computing) the evolving but disembodied one Barrat-programmed artificial neuronal networks release. The machine, striking irreflectively, heedlessly spews out images while gradually refining its imitative competence by way of an autonomous, autistic trial-and-error looping process. Barrat chooses, according to criteria once more determined by a purely human sensitivity and subjectivity, to extract a section both quantitatively negligible and qualitatively significant from this flow so as to reorder his algorithms in an attempt to steer them away from slavish imitation. From his selection of images, the aesthetic dialogue Barrot then initiates with Barrat spawns a new gaze that reclaims through successive manipulations the inert material. In fine, a choice is made to create diptychs pairing skull and image of skull. This elected duality, which establishes no parity but remains a confrontation, a final interchange subjectively shaped from two flows through reflective sorting, in turn generates an analogic meaning, an idea of convergence in the form of an avowed parody of plagiarism.

NOTA BENE

THE ONLY RELEVANT AND OFFICIAL CATALOG OF THE 101 INFINITE SKULL PAINTINGS IS THIS NEWSPAPER CATALOG.
THE FINAL CATALOG WILL BE SIGNED BY THE ARTISTS, ROBBIE BARRAT AND RONAN BARROT.

BASED ON AN OLD ARCHIVE EXHIBITION NUMEROTATION (0000xx.jpg), THERE WAS A CONFUSION BETWEEN THE 2019 EXHIBITION NUMEROTATION AND THE 101 FINAL ID# OF THE INFINITE SKULLS SERIE.

THE ARCHIVE OF THE 2019 EXHIBITION NUMEROTATION IS ACCESSIBLE AT THE ADDRESS BELOW.

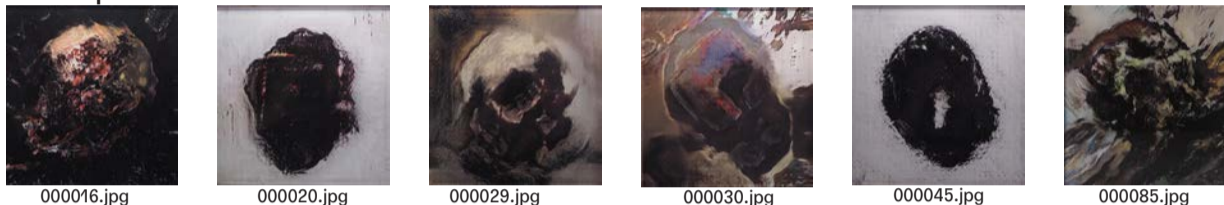
archives.avant-galerie.com/2019/stock-AvantGalerie-visuels-lowdef/
Index of /2019/stock-AvantGalerie-visuels-lowdef

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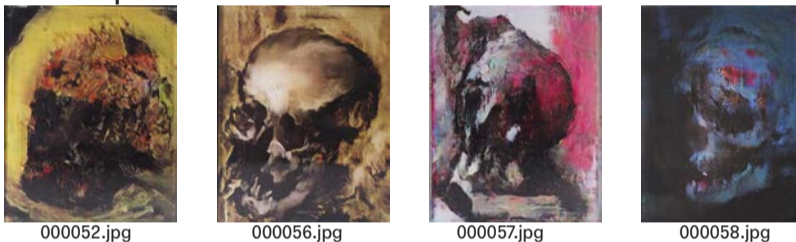
etc

Find below, works which were part of the February 2019 exhibition but not part of the 101 INFINITE SKULLS SERIE final selection, made by artists and the Avant Galerie Vossen.

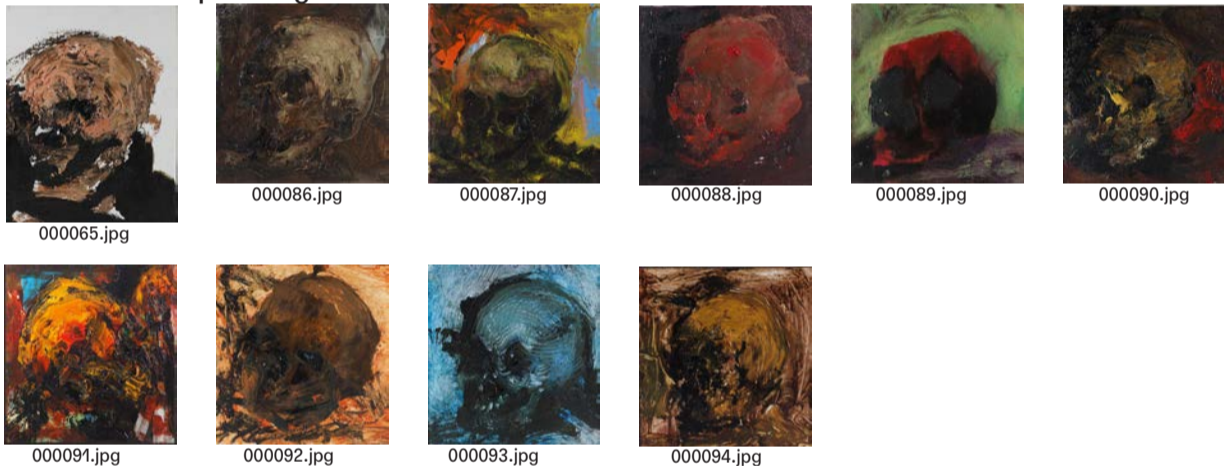
Solo Epoch 2



Mono Epoch 1



Ronan Barrot paintings



L'AVANT GALERIE VOSSEN

INFINITE SKULLS #81 . Oil on canvas - UV print on plexi . 27 x 44 cm



**OFFICIAL LIST
PARIS, FEB. 2025**

**CATALOG
101 PAINTINGS OF
INFINITE SKULL**

**AVANT GALERIE VOSSEN
58 RUE CHAPON
75003 PARIS**

INFINITE SKULLS

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www.avant-galerie.com

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Robbie BARRAT . Ronan BARROT