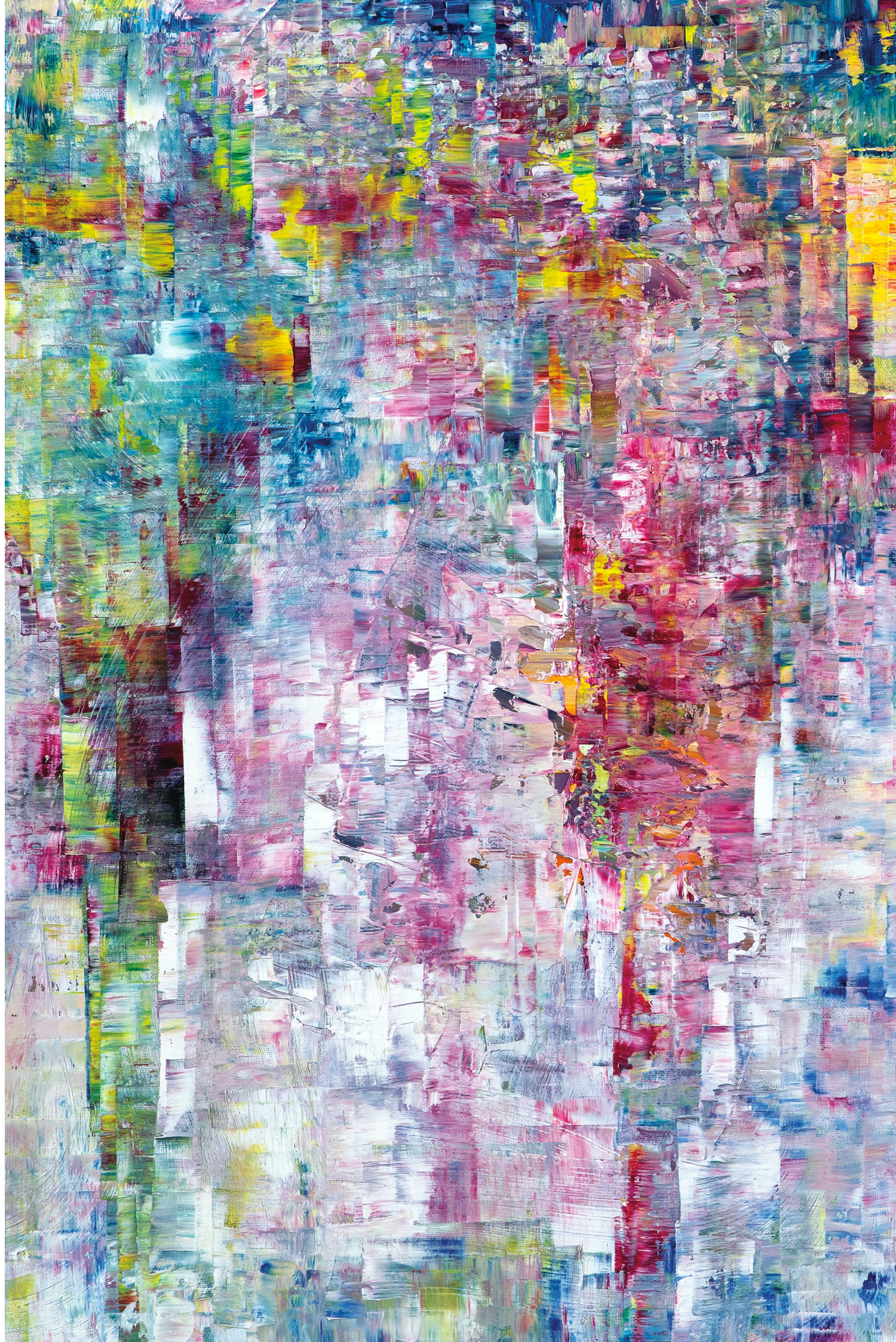
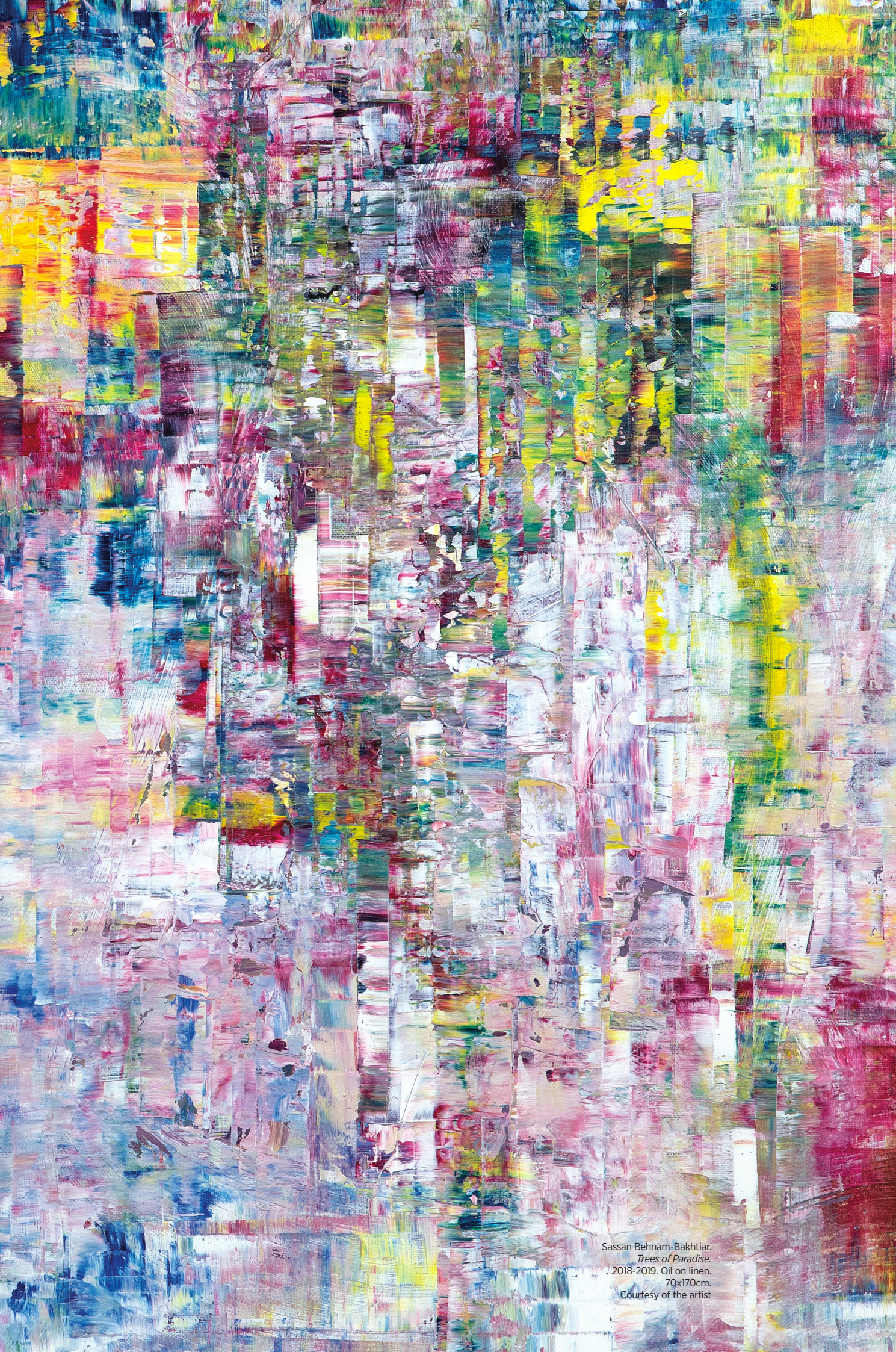


# THE REAWAKENING







Sassan Behnam-Bakhtiar.  
*Trees of Paradise.*  
2018-2019. Oil on linen.  
70x170cm.  
Courtesy of the artist

*The traumas which irrevocably transformed **Sassan Behnam-Bakhtiar's** world forever, also gave birth to a beautifully mystifying ability to visualise energy. Ayesha Shehmir discovers the inscribed memories and experiences which solidified the artist's understanding of life beyond physical reality*





Cold, hungry, completely alone and on the brink of death, Sassan Behnam-Bakhtiar's journey of self-healing is one of utmost hope and perhaps, if it exists, a miracle. It was at this moment the now well-established multidisciplinary artist lost himself, and it was this experience after which he found himself, too. The feelings of persistent and utter hopelessness triggered irreversible mechanisms in him, giving rise to an ability to manipulate energy and in turn, encounter a larger force at play. "It is interesting to see how being in a two by one metre block in the dark with below zero temperature, no water and food for a prolonged period of time, resulted in modifying my physical and mental behaviour, accessing new traits of character which was, in a way, already present in my being," says Behnam-Bakhtiar, pausing, "I still don't know what happened to me, but I remember the time something triggered in my being while meditating."

Behnam-Bakhtiar began painting from as young as four in Neuilly-sur-Seine, France, where he regularly visited museums, studying works by the likes of Claude Monet and Paul Signac. Presented in a contemporary context, today his deft technique of *peinture raclée* is reminiscent of Persian mosaic craftsmanship and simultaneously comprises influences of European art history.

Reflecting Behnam-Bakhtiar's cultural identity, the colourful works comprise a signature style of scraped painting – oscillating between abstract and figurative structure, while in some way recalling pixelated computer graphics. The canvas becomes a resonance body, prompting the viewer to integrate the intertwined colours into an intense, subjective dialogue of pain and joy.

Behnam-Bakhtiar strives to inject new life into canvases, revealing an unknown realm to the physical world. "A world that indeed exists and is felt by us," he expresses. "A world of energy where everything is intertwined and connected – energy bouncing from all living beings inwards and outwards, vibrating all ►

Sassan Behnam-Bakhtiar  
pictured amongst his  
artworks in his studio in  
France. Courtesy of the  
artist



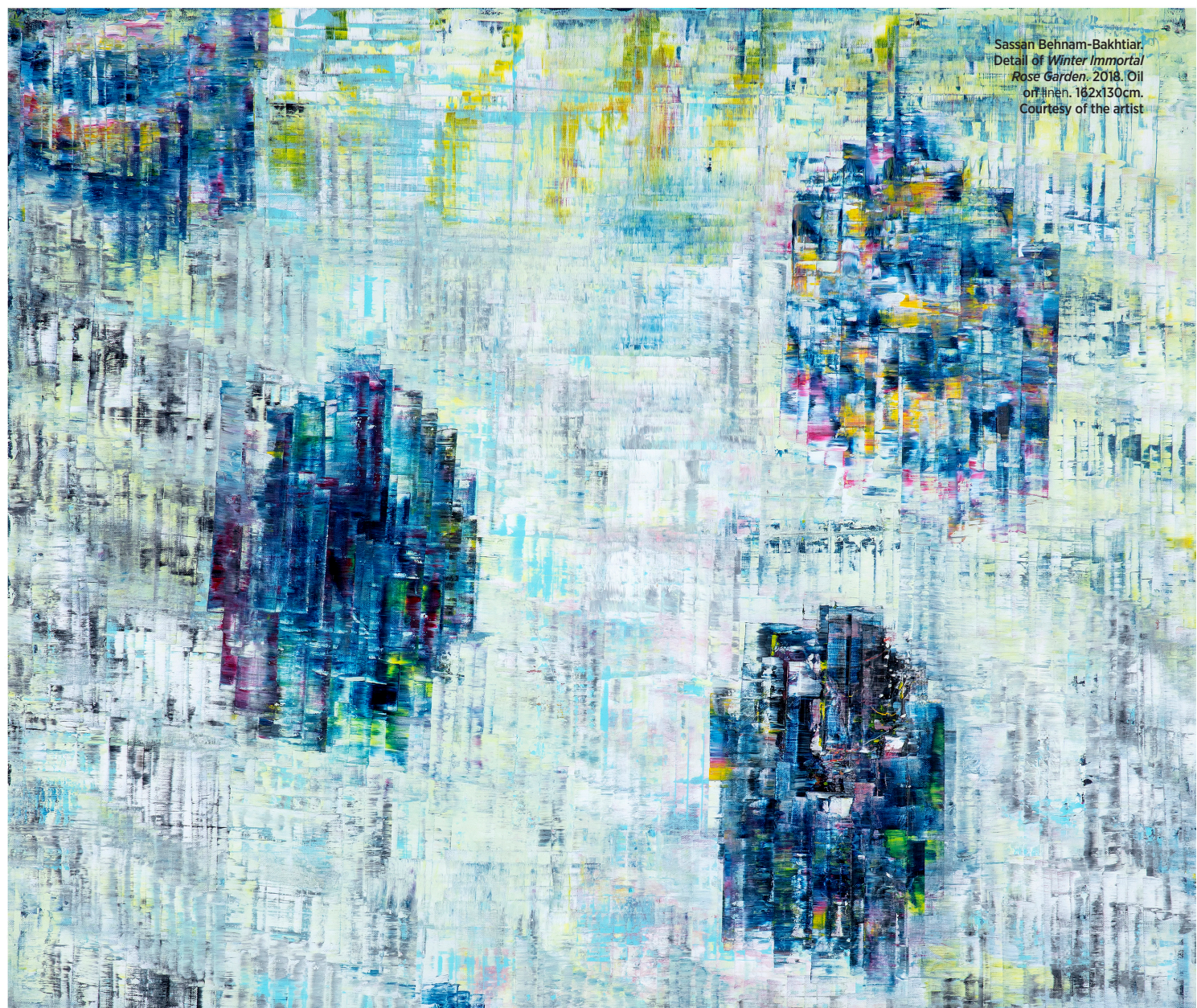








Exhibition view of Sassan Behnam-Bakhtiar. *Fabric of Life*. 2019. Oil on linen. 116x89cm. Courtesy of Setareh



Sassan Behnam-Bakhtiar. *Detail of Winter Immortal Rose Garden*. 2018. Oil on linen. 162x130cm. Courtesy of the artist



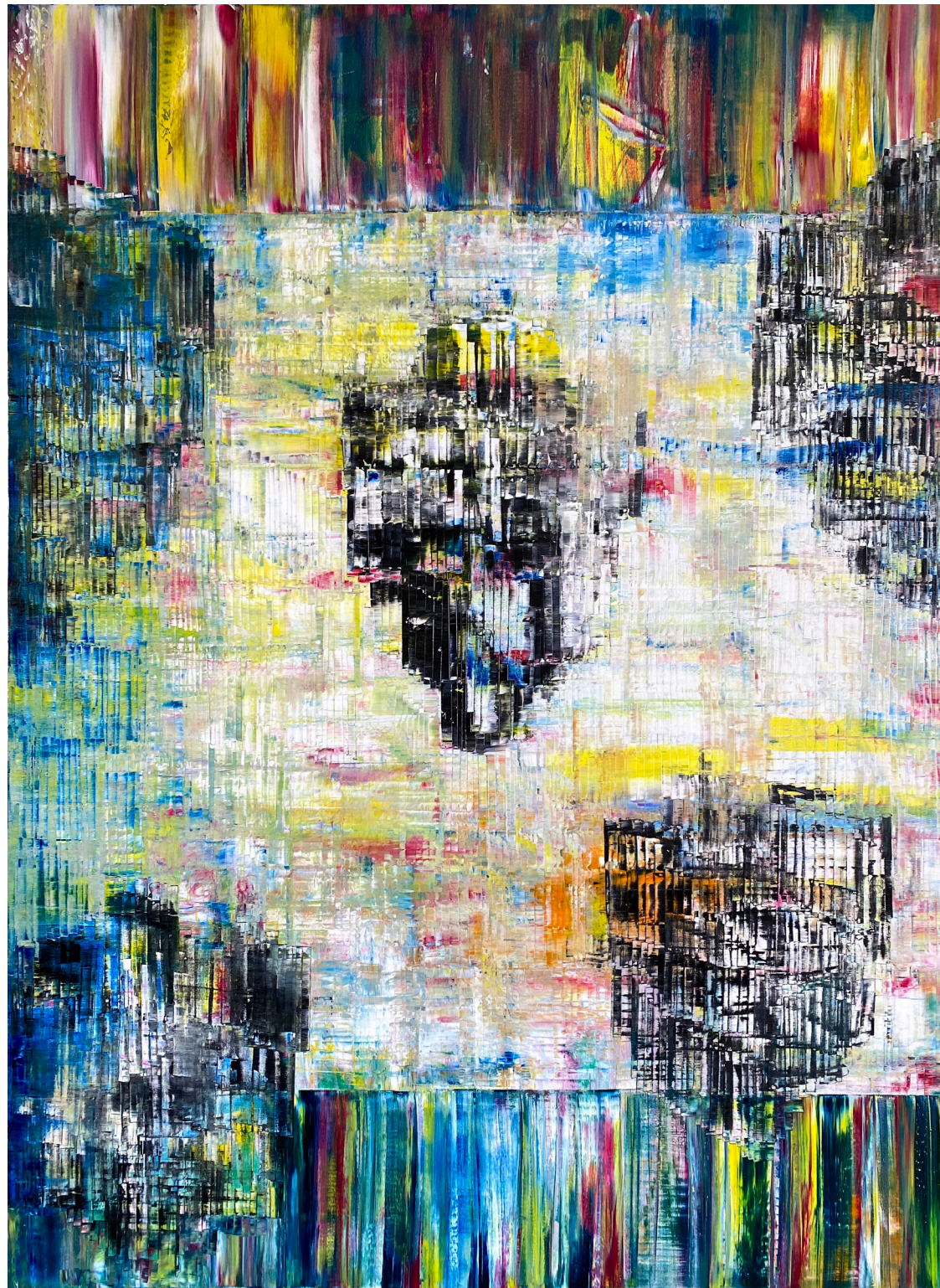
“WE NEED TO  
MANIFEST OUR  
DORMANT ENERGIES,  
EXPAND OUR AURA,  
PUSH BEYOND  
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GROUND OURSELVES  
AND PROVIDE  
SECURITY AND SAFETY  
FOR OURSELVES AND  
LOVED ONES [...]”

around us constantly.” The abstract works relay the engrossing energies that are almost tangible to the artist, unveiling a potential gateway into a hidden world where we can achieve an eternal connection with our inner being, or the ‘self’. “We are powerful beings, with untapped knowledge and power,” he says. “Power being energy – what we are made of and the most vital element in understanding ourselves, and I want my work to remind people of that and bring it out in everyone.”

Behnam-Bakhtiar’s works have been exhibited in several prestigious galleries. In 2018, London-based Saatchi Gallery presented an exhibition called Oneness Wholeness, which was home to the artist’s works on human spiritual evolution. In 2019 an exhibition entitled Extremis took place at Düsseldorf’s Setareh Gallery, where, for the very first time, the artist exposed the hauntings of his past, beautifully juxtaposing life and death through the works. This September will see the launch of an upcoming exhibition aptly called Rebirth, which will inaugurate the new cultural centre of Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat in the South of France, where the artist presently works and resides.

“I don’t believe in being in a particular location purely due to the activity of the markets in that region,” explains Behnam-Bakhtiar. “It is true that being present in specific cities for an artist can have advantages, however, my work always leads me to where I [want to] go and it has led me to the South of France for the time being for its natural energy and light. The vibes this place gives me and its effect on my work is all I care about. I can paint with my heart and soul here, at least for the time being.”

Part of a larger study, Behnam-Bakhtiar’s newest body of work entitled *Age of Energy* is centred on discovering a new language deemed by the artist as necessary for our evolution, awakening and health. Each work in the series such as *Age of Energy NBTL* ►



Sassan Behnam-Bakhtiar.  
*Black Immortal Rose  
Garden*. 2020. Oil on linen.  
200x150cm. Courtesy of  
the artist



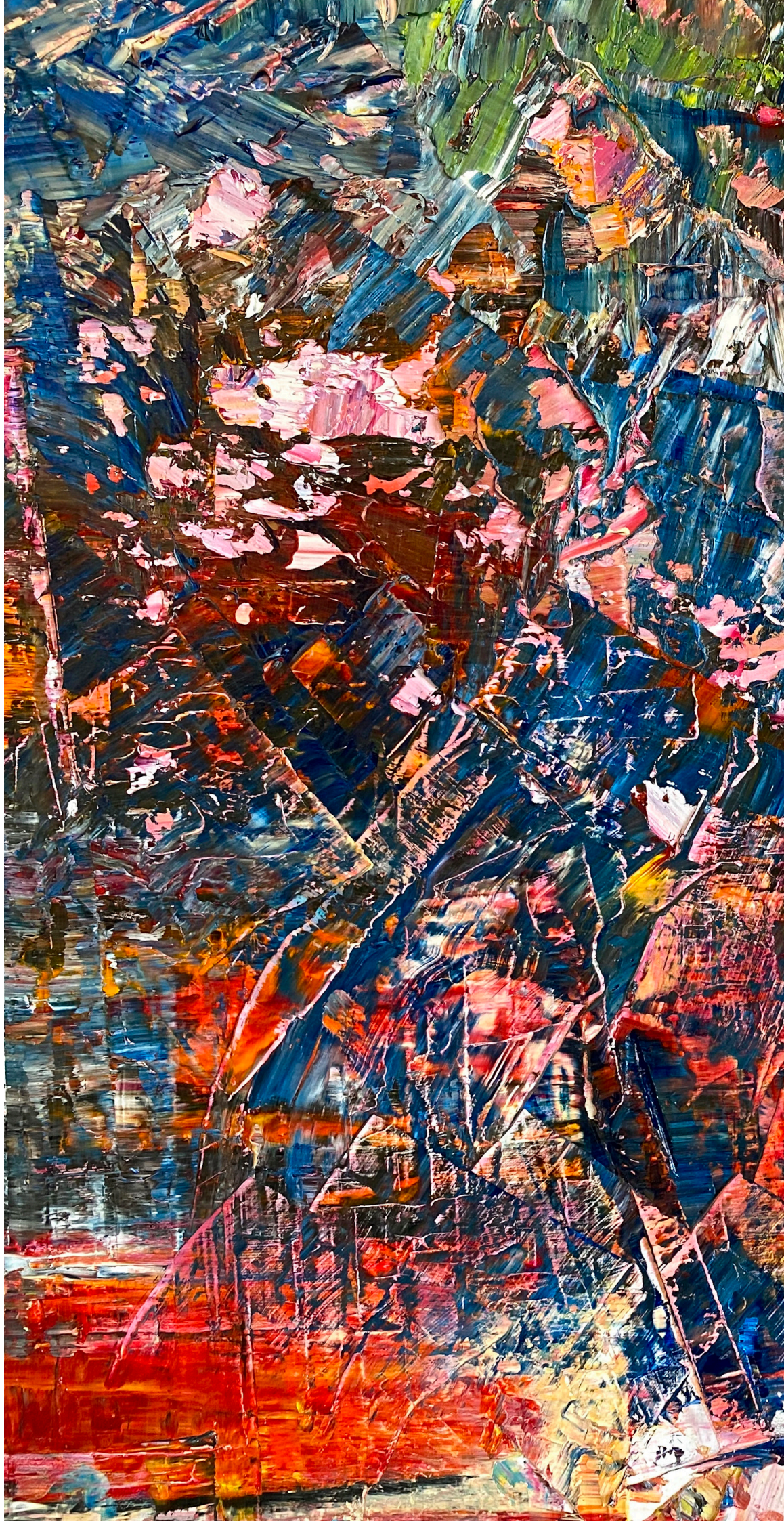
“IT IS VITAL TO LET OLD ENERGY GO IN ORDER TO CREATE SPACE FOR NEW ENERGY. ENERGY THAT VIBRATES WITH YOUR TRUE INTENTIONS BACKED BY KINDNESS, CARE, LOVE AND POSITIVITY [...] THAT IS THE KEY TO UNLOCKING THE SECRETS OF LIFE”

(2019/2020) and *Age of Energy ORTL* (2019/2020) is an extension of the artist's signature scraped painting style, depicting a hidden world imperceptible to the naked eye. “My work is a result of the realisations that I've had in my life,” reveals Behnam-Bakhtiar. “Being lost in life then found like never before due to the circumstances I was in, changed my life forever and awakened a sense in my being I never thought was possible. My paintings during the last four to five years show the lessons I have learned.”

The trees featured in the new paintings serve as visual reminders that our inner energies retain the power to completely transform our existence. “We need to manifest our dormant energies, expand our aura, push beyond boundaries set by our societies, ground ourselves and provide security and safety for ourselves and loved ones, as do these trees depicted in each of the works,” he expresses. “Essentially, they give out the energy and vibe of safety, security and stability, which most of us today as human beings are missing. If a tree does these processes naturally like clockwork, to a point of even absorbing negative energies and transforming them to positive energy, just imagine what we as human beings are able to achieve if we truly put our minds to it.”

Inspired by nature's endless capability of gracefully recreating itself, Behnam-Bakhtiar firmly believes humanity can do the same. *Age of Energy WTL* (2019/2020), an oil on canvas work comprising a deep, vivid interlock of sea blues, sun oranges, shades of yellow and white, conveys that one can cleanse their spiritual being and free their soul of the negative energies and calamities of the past. “When you hold onto old energy through your mind, feelings and thoughts, you are blocking nature's recycling process as these aren't physical,” he says. “It is vital to let old energy go in order to create space for new energy. Energy that vibrates with your true intentions backed by kindness, care, love and positivity. We always need to think in terms of energy and its vibrations. That is the key to unlocking the secrets of life.” ➤

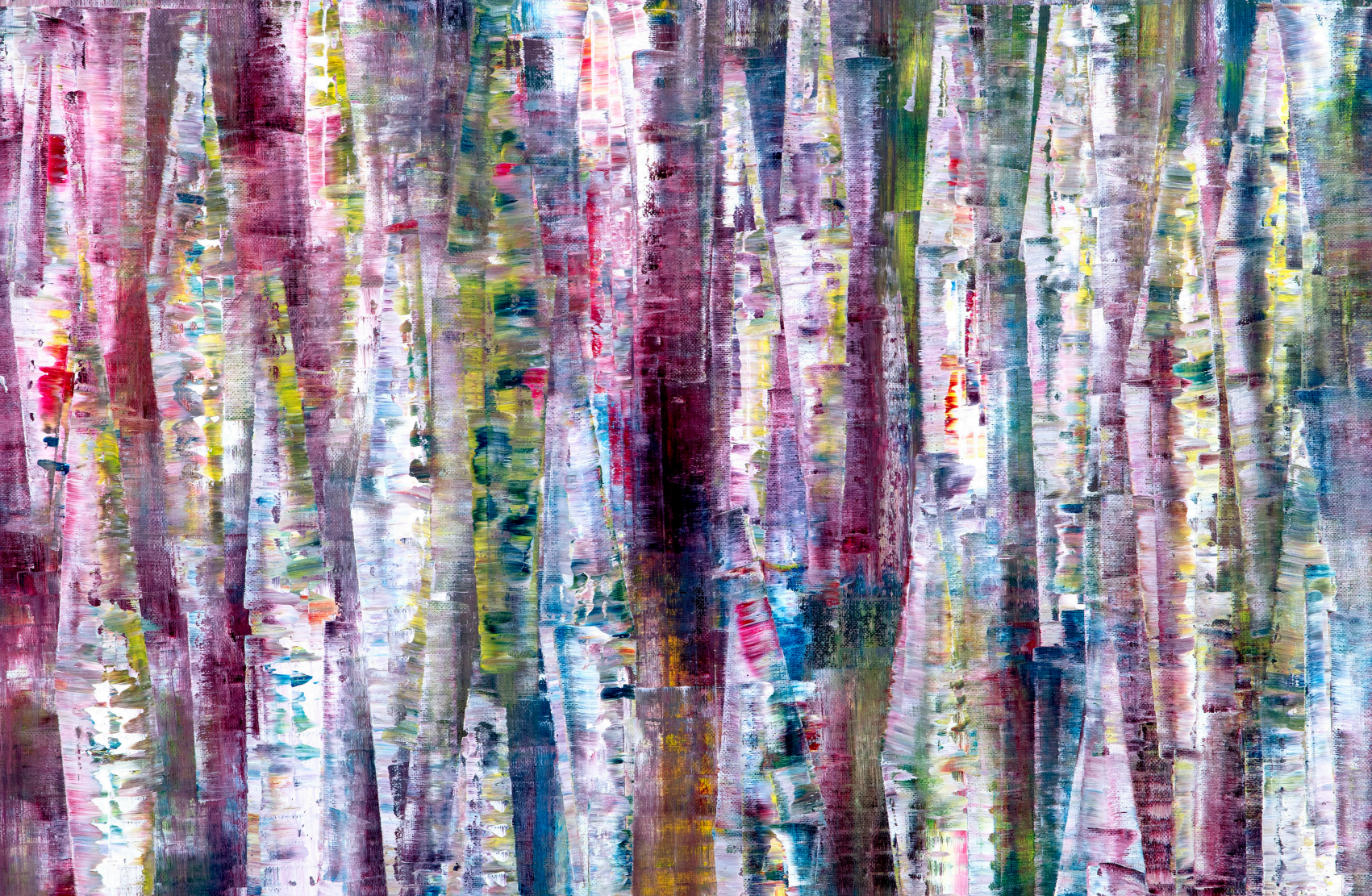
Right: Sassan Behnam-Bakhtiar. A detail of *Age of Energy NBTL*. 2019/2020. Oil on linen. 270x160cm. Courtesy of the artist











Above: Sassan Behnam-Bakhtiar, *Forest of Life*. 2019. Oil on linen. 61x80cm. Courtesy of Setareh

## “We are powerful beings, with

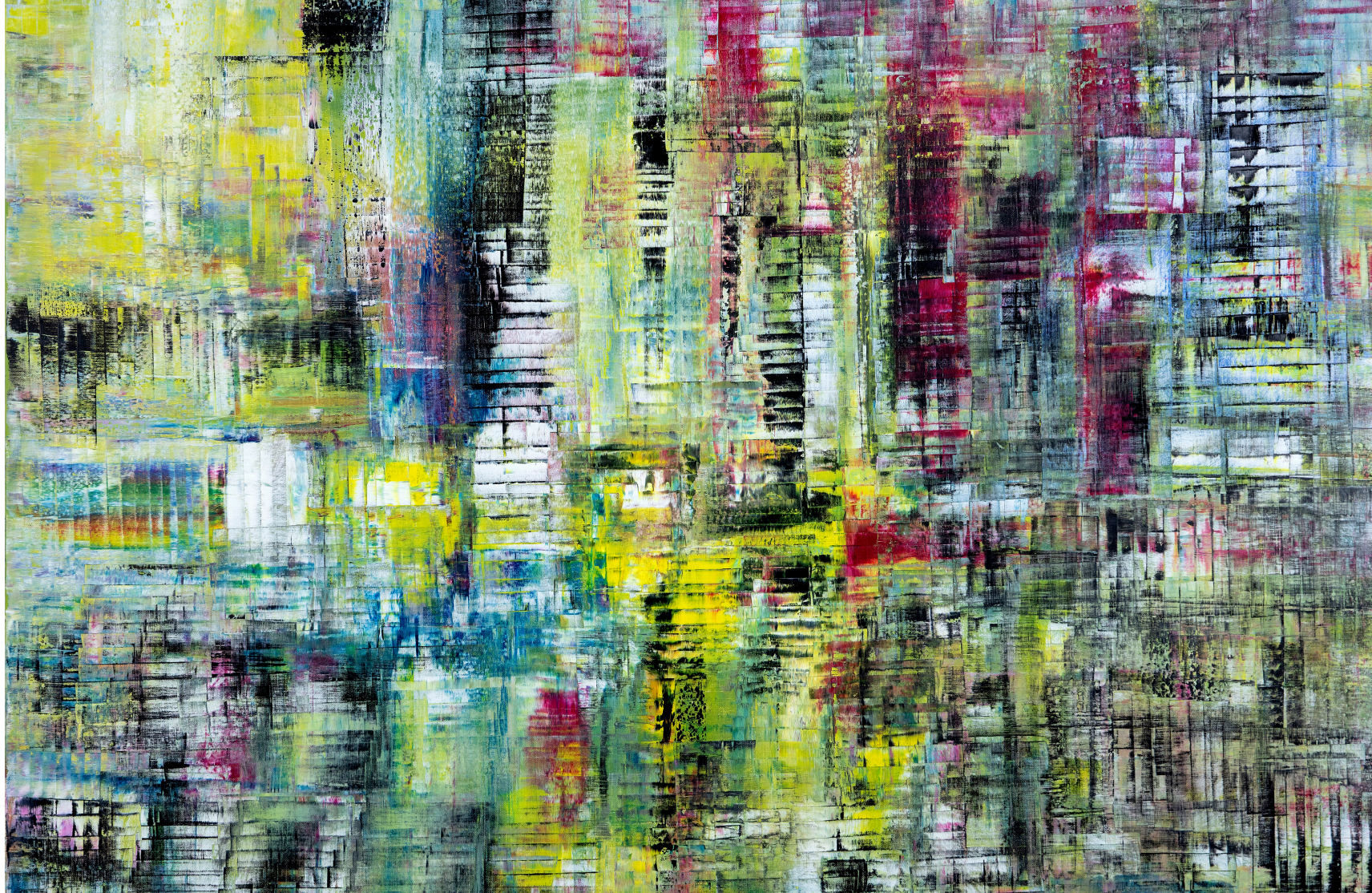
Passionately in search of releasing the past and reinventing oneself, the artist perpetually investigates distinct approaches to his art. “I have been mixing my paints during the last five years always searching for something new,” he explains. A testament to the rare process employed when forming a painting; each appears to alter tones under different lighting – hence why the artist has obtained quite a reputation with photographers; it can be a nightmare for them to capture his work.

Why should we externalise energy? “I always answer that you need to set your mind free, let it focus inwards and bring out the dormant energy within,” Behnam-Bakhtiar explains. “There is a state of being connected with the self and life which lets the human mind become free.” The layered paintings serve as direct reminders that we must all transcend and evolve into a more conscious form of ourselves to experience the finest version of the world. This transformation will give rise to, or at least bring us closer to, the highest level of human achievement, which can be identified in a space between consciousness and unconsciousness. “This is why it is important to visualise and bring forth our thoughts and make them into reality,” says the artist. “My paintings are these visual representations brought on the canvas.”

A meticulous play on the eyes, the mesmerising paintings from *Age of Energy* challenge rigid definitions of life and the mind, serving to reshape the everyday realities we are so familiar with.





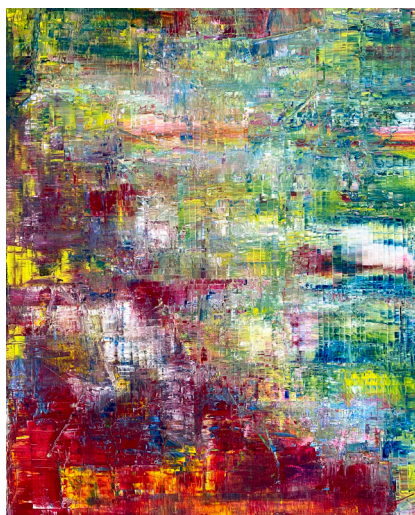


Above: Sassan Behnam-Bakhtiar. *Soul Groove*, 2019. Oil on linen. 130x162cm. Courtesy of the artist

## untapped knowledge and power”



Left: Sassan Behnam-Bakhtiar. *Rituals of Life*. 2018/2019. Oil on linen. 480x270cm. Courtesy of Setareh



Sassan Behnam-Bakhtiar. *Green Tree of Life*. 2020. Oil on linen. 100x73cm. Courtesy of the artist

Behnam-Bakhtiar is a walking reminder that any hardship in life – be it emotional drainage, feelings of abandonment, misfortunes or past traumas – can be overcome by shifting our energies and reinventing our thoughts. “Being in extreme situations can bring forth a heavy baggage to be dealt with,” he expresses. “To be able to rise beyond these fragile yet important times in order to bring forth a needed human and spiritual evolution will be rewarding beyond measure.”

Catalysts for extraordinary growth, these life-changing experiences not only marked the beginning of Behnam-Bakhtiar’s quest to paint unseen energies, but resulted in him reawakening as an artist and as a being.

“Setting the mind truly free nowadays is an extremely hard task to achieve,” he admits. “With the right path, the feeling of the self and energy will arrive and only then, one can befriend the mind. The day you are able to feel and manifest your energy, you have already reached a higher state of being. Getting there is a different path for everyone – a good first step is to look inwards.” Rising beyond the fast-paced daily routines and nuances we all know too well to pause and search within is the first step to enlightenment – in order to find ourselves, “one should start by getting lost.” ■

[sassanbehnambakhtiar.com](http://sassanbehnambakhtiar.com)  
*Rebirth is on view at Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat Cultural Space (Villa Namouna) from 11 September until 11 October 2020*