

VISUAL ART | ISSUE SIX

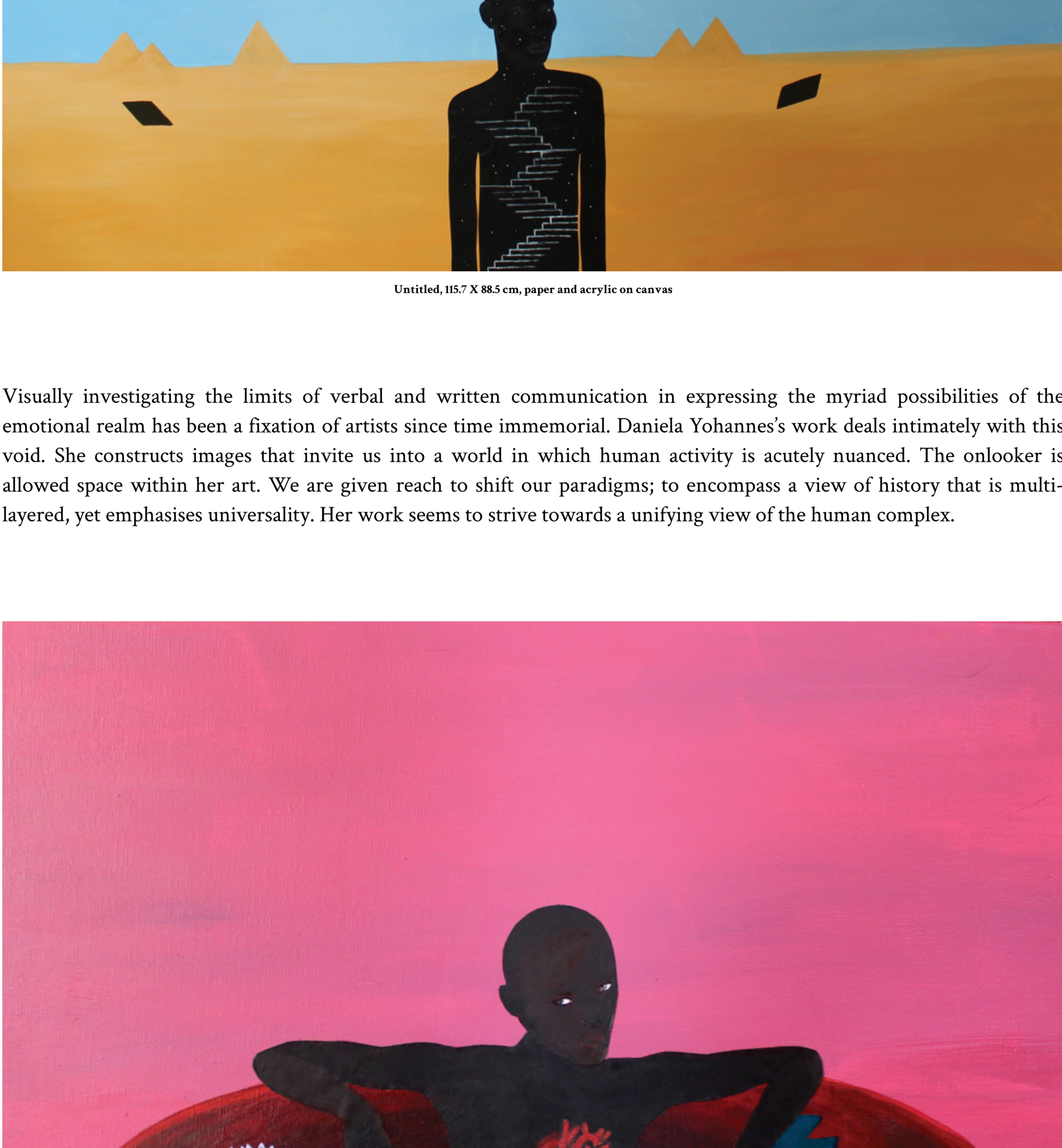
# Painter of the Invisible

Work + statement by DANIELA YOHANNES | With an essay by SHABAKA HUTCHINGS

*"They tried to base things on the truth, but the truth is no longer acceptable, you see.  
Not to the creative...you have to deal with the myth."*

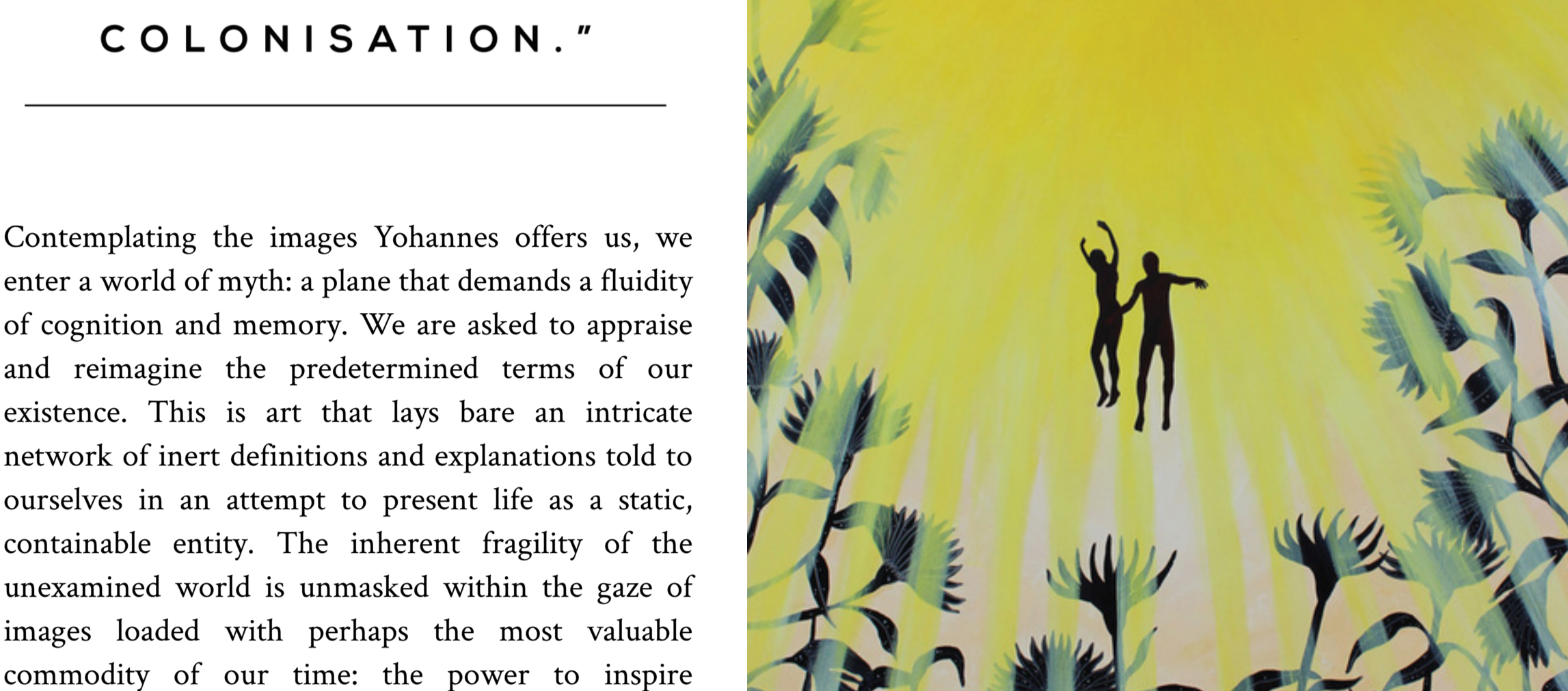
-Sun Ra

Parameters are a defining feature of modern life. The desire to understand our environment, our surroundings, and ourselves often runs in tandem with the will to put a full stop to gathering of information. One of the functions of art is to remind us of the existence of the infinite: the places intuited yet never quite articulated; the languages still to be formed to adequately describe our human condition.



Untitled, 115.7 X 88.5 cm, paper and acrylic on canvas

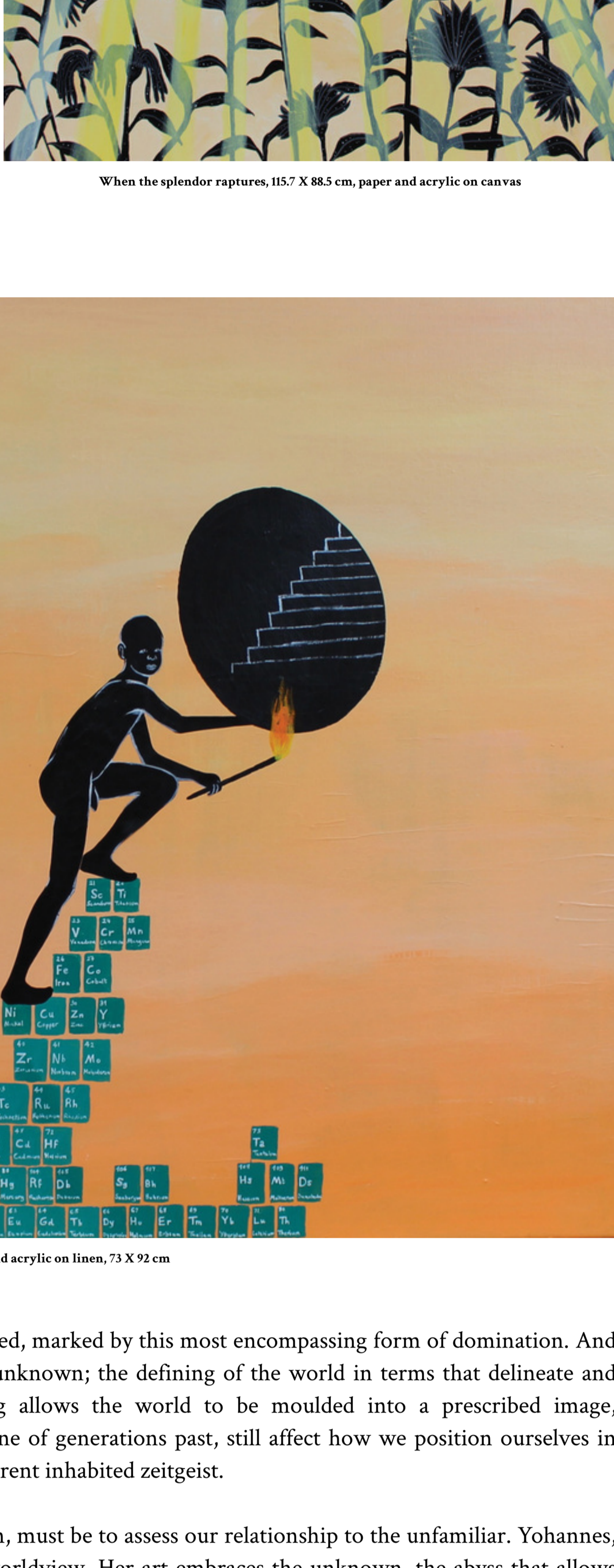
Visually investigating the limits of verbal and written communication in expressing the myriad possibilities of the emotional realm has been a fixation of artists since time immemorial. Daniela Yohannes's work deals intimately with this void. She constructs images that invite us into a world in which human activity is acutely nuanced. The onlooker is allowed space within her art. We are given reach to shift our paradigms; to encompass a view of history that is multi-layered, yet emphasises universality. Her work seems to strive towards a unifying view of the human complex.



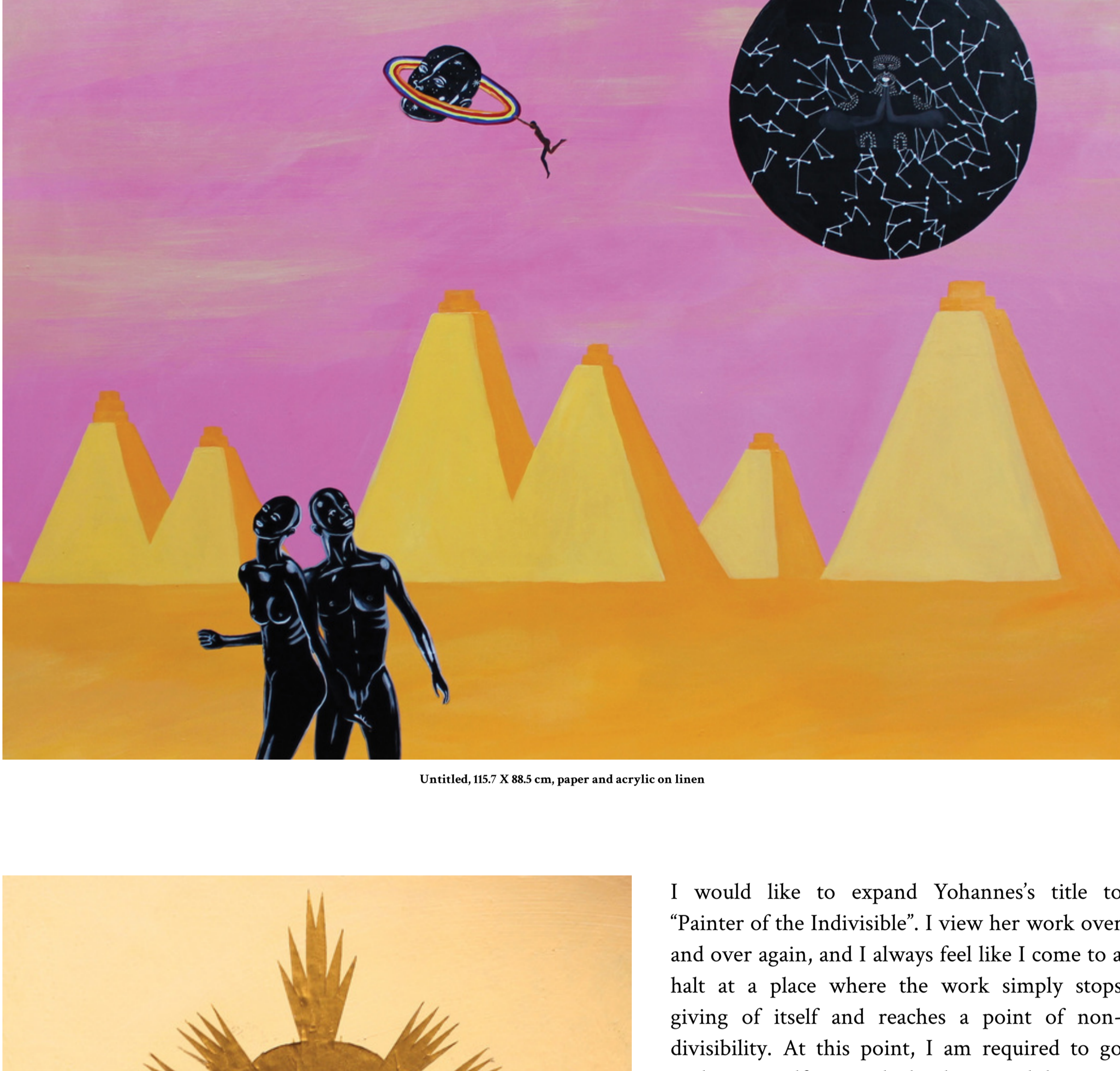
Deep End, 18 X 46 cm, magazine paper and acrylic on canvas

## "WE ARE ALL CHILDREN OF COLONISATION."

Contemplating the images Yohannes offers us, we enter a world of myth: a plane that demands a fluidity of cognition and memory. We are asked to appraise and exploit anything deemed unfamiliar. Colonial thinking allows the world to be moulded into a prescribed image, illuminating all forms of 'darkness'. These concepts, borne of generations past, still affect how we position ourselves in relation to agents that compromise the stability of our current inhabited zeitgeist.



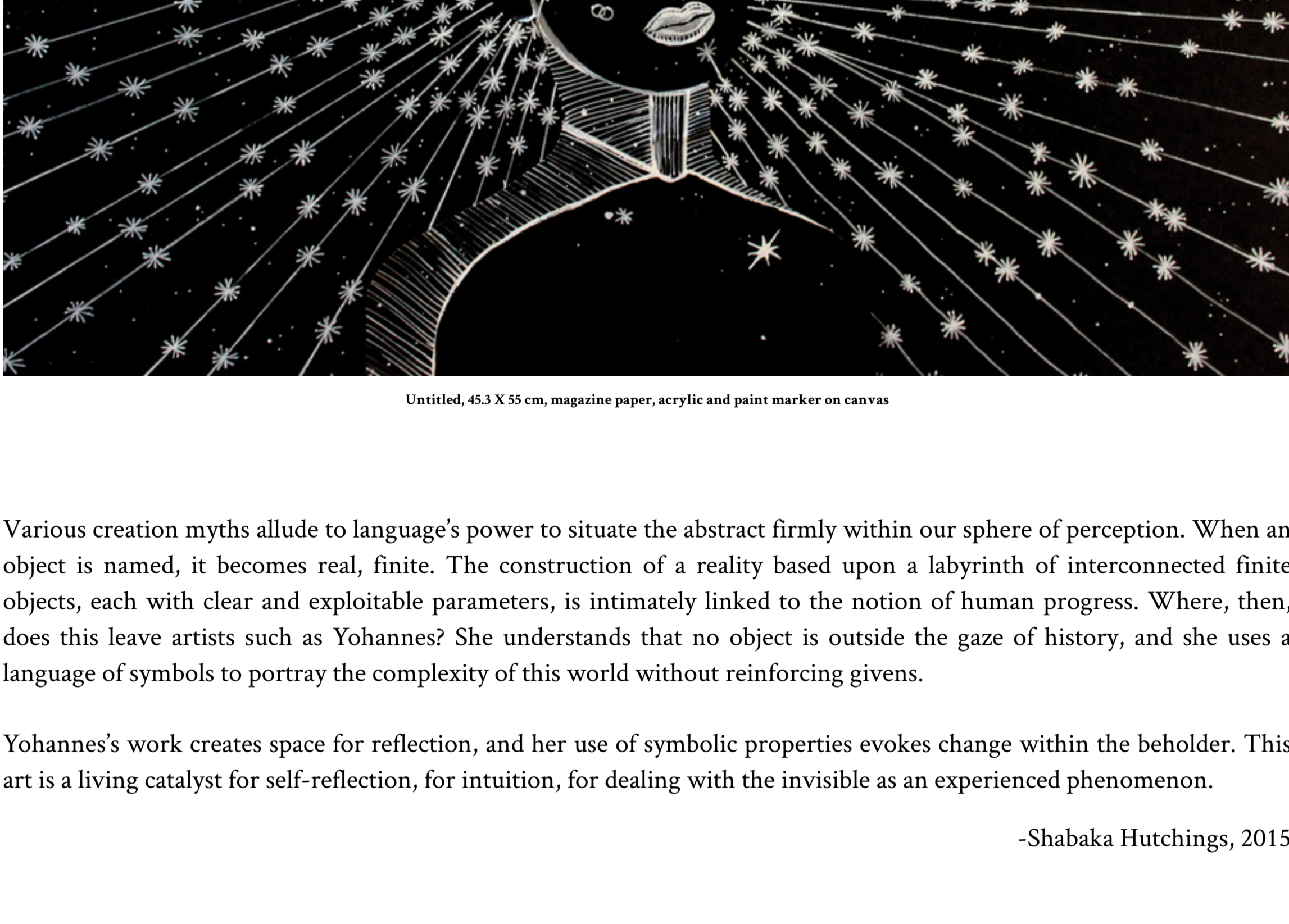
When the splendor raptures, 115.7 X 88.5 cm, paper and acrylic on canvas



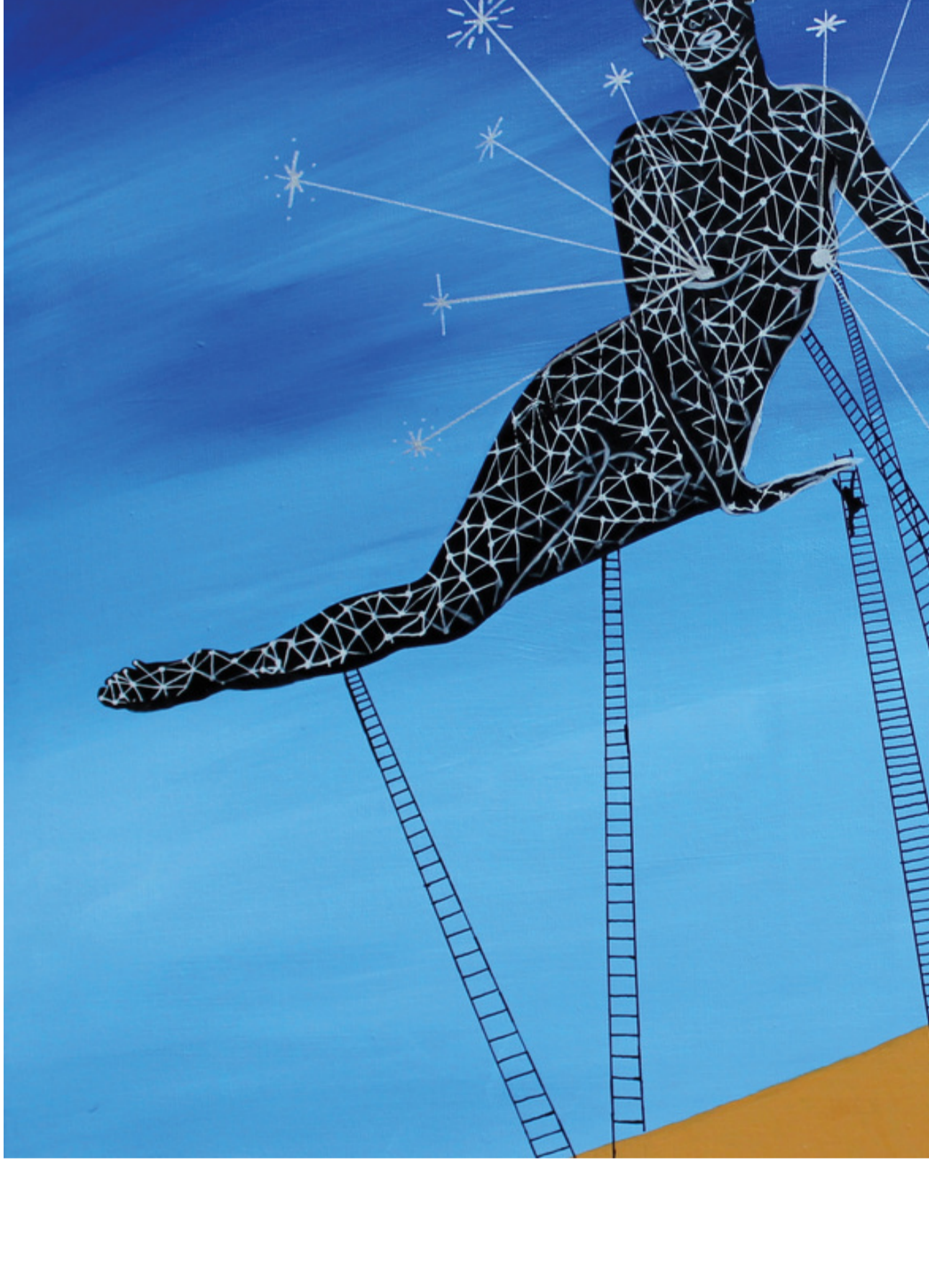
The Net, paper and acrylic on linen, 73 X 92 cm

We are all children of colonisation. Our histories are joined, marked by this most encompassing form of domination. And what is colonisation but a sordid relationship with the unknown; the defining of the world in terms that delineate and exploit anything deemed unfamiliar. Colonial thinking allows the world to be moulded into a prescribed image, illuminating all forms of 'darkness'. These concepts, borne of generations past, still affect how we position ourselves in relation to agents that compromise the stability of our current inhabited zeitgeist.

One of the first steps towards mental decolonisation, then, must be to assess our relationship to the unfamiliar. Yohannes, "Painter of the Invisible," tackles this in her work and worldview. Her art embraces the unknown, the abyss that allows potential for infinite growth. It searches for and accepts the prevalence of mystical forces in our lives, and allows us to utilise our experiences as a means of reconciling ourselves to the lessons they offer.



Untitled, 115.7 X 88.5 cm, paper and acrylic on linen



Untitled, 35 X 35 cm, magazine paper, acrylic, gouache on wood panel

I would like to expand Yohannes's title to "Painter of the Indivisible". I view her work over and over again, and I always feel like I come to a halt at a place where the work simply stops giving of itself and reaches a point of non-divisibility. At this point, I am required to go within myself to unlock the possibilities of further depths. I am forced to imagine, to create stories about the images, to delve into the world of new myth. This process unravels one of Yohannes's most poignant contributions; her work's capacity to highlight the value of myth and new symbolism in our contemporary times.

## 'HER ART EMBRACES THE UNKNOWN'

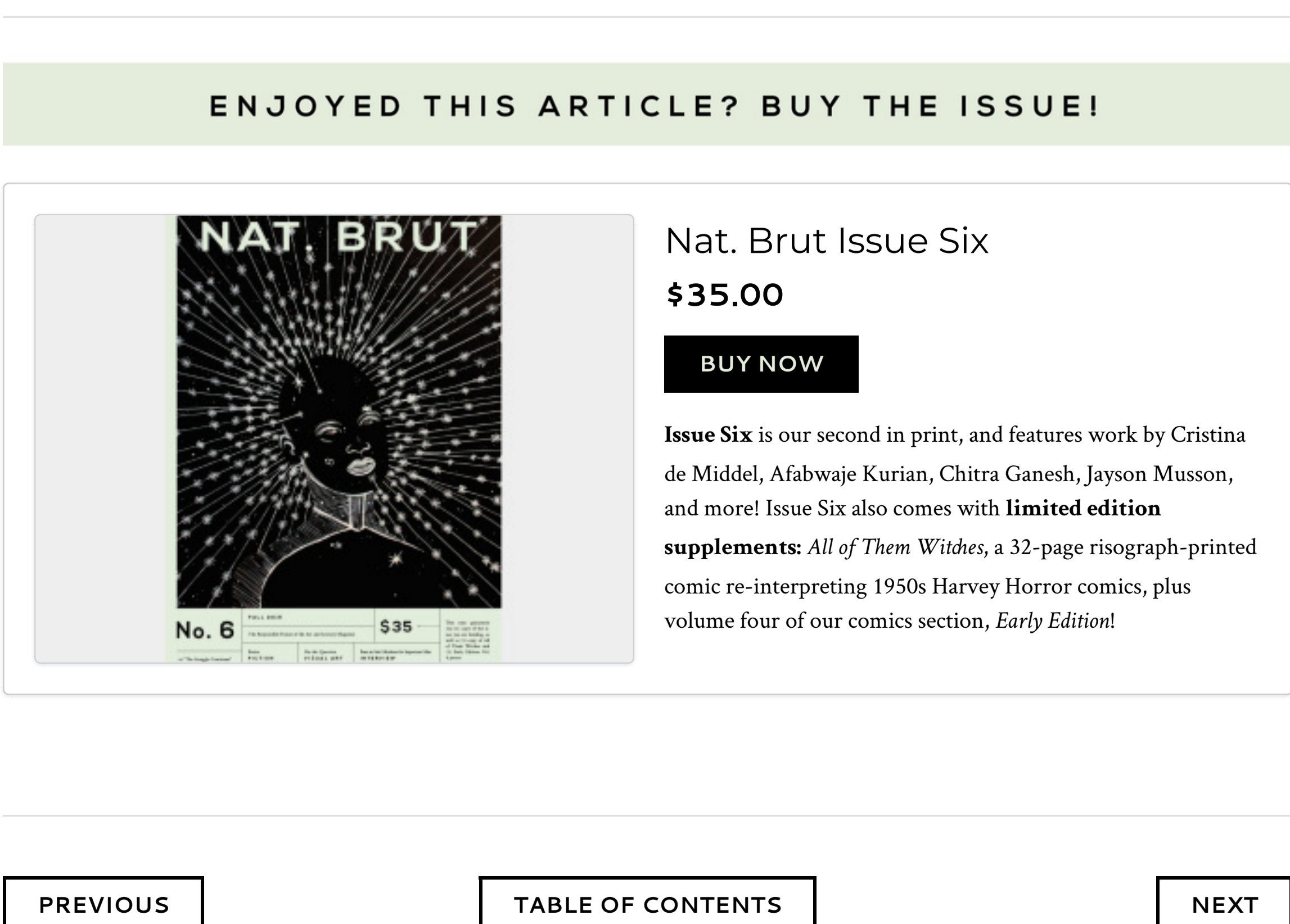


Untitled, 45.3 X 55 cm, magazine paper, acrylic and paint marker on canvas

Various creation myths allude to language's power to situate the abstract firmly within our sphere of perception. When an object is named, it becomes real, finite. The construction of a reality based upon a labyrinth of interconnected finite objects, each with clear and exploitable parameters, is intimately linked to the notion of human progress. Where, then, does this leave artists such as Yohannes? She understands that no object is outside the gaze of history, and she uses a language of symbols to portray the complexity of this world without reinforcing divisions.

Yohannes's work creates space for reflection, and her use of symbolic properties evokes change within the beholder. This art is a living catalyst for self-reflection, for intuition, for dealing with the invisible as an experienced phenomenon.

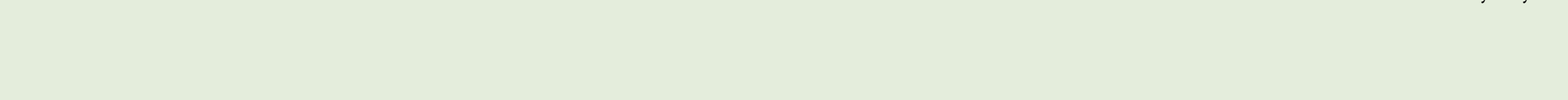
-Shabaka Hutchings, 2015



Untitled, paper and acrylic on linen 50 X 64.4 cm

My work is my compass, my navigation tool. It serves a vital role for me both on a personal and a spiritual level. It's a way to express my deepest emotions and to connect to the outside world.

My practice has enabled me to turn inward, to ask questions. I make art to try to understand myself, my environment, and the greater world beyond. My long-term goal is to continue on this path of self-exploration, making life itself the subject of study.



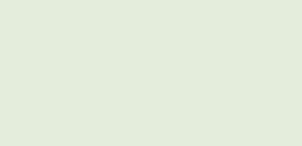
Conversations with the invisible, paper and acrylic on linen, 72.8 X 54 cm

## 'MY WORK IS MY COMPASS, MY NAVIGATION TOOL'

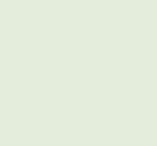
I always approach a painting by first creating the character. I've recently come to realise that, in many ways, the characters I paint are not only facets of myself, but are also universal, and represent every other soul on this planet. Once created, the character then dictates the painting. This is the process I enjoy most - allowing the characters time to reveal themselves to me and lend me the narrative to follow.

Curiosity and the pursuit of self-expression have put me on a path linked with themes of spirituality, mythology, the supernatural, and the world of ritual, all of which are reflected in my art. My artistic life has blended with my spiritual life, and now the two are forever bound.

-Daniela Yohannes

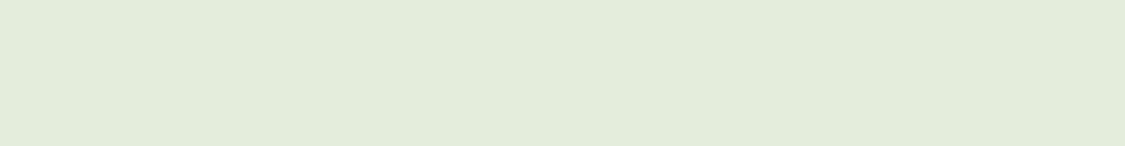


**Daniela Yohannes** is a Paris-based artist of Eritrean-Ethiopian heritage whose work explores the often unseen dimensions of life that bring us together as human kind. All images courtesy of the artist.



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