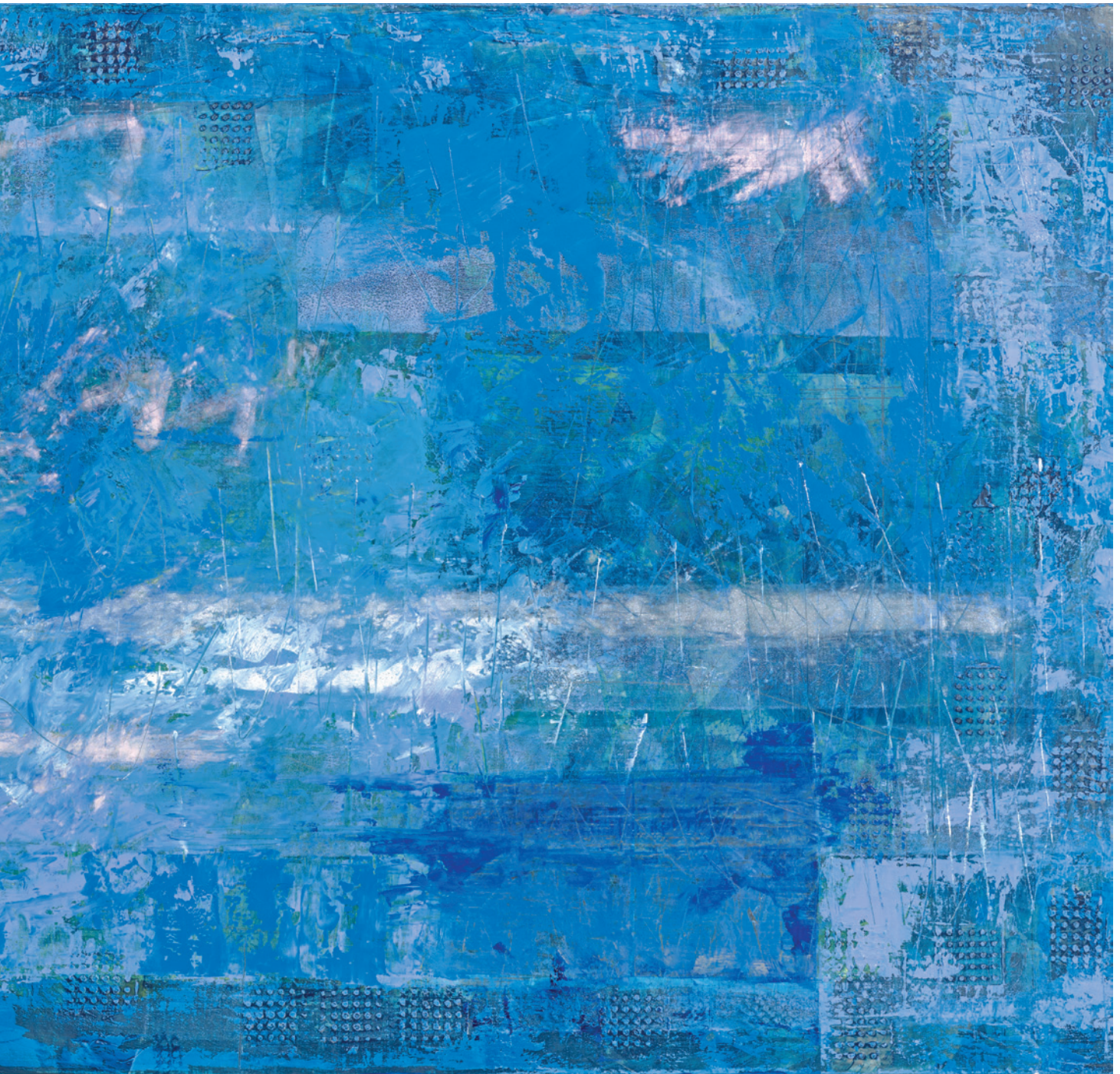




▲ *As the Stars Rise*, 80 x 170 cm, 2016
(oil on linen).

INTO THE DEPTHS OF AIR



THE PICTORIAL UNIVERSE OF VIRGINIA CHÉVEZ

Pura López Colomé*



▲ *Air*, 120 x 245 cm, 2015 (oil on linen).

A voice is hidden somewhere
 in the wings of raw material. It is never
 satisfied. It seeks itself in a grayish yes,
 in a blackened *no* of its own nights,
 its own deaths.

I try to discover identity and find only absence. I pursue matter that presents itself alone, all alone, before my eyes and suddenly, I am no longer there. I awake in a place of *linen* on the banks of a river whose name can almost be transposed thereby, *Nile*, and I discern what is at the core of that original plant, or perhaps that original word, from which a true creation in resonance hopes to emerge. Although for now, it shows itself solely as a timeless blankness: blank eyes, blank mind. Once born, it breathes among dense substances, encouraging through oils, through pure and impure waters that hope to become a hue, that may aspire to elevation and thus, transform our individual way of seeing things.

A voice is hidden somewhere in the wings of raw material. It is never satisfied. It seeks itself in a grayish *yes*, in a blackened *no* of its own nights, its own deaths. It believes it has found itself and comes to an end in the mirror that has created it; it wants to reverse itself because it needs other eyes to rest upon it, hummingbirds immobilized in an instant, avian pupils that bear away the reds, the eyes of blood, to other destinations. It is the voice that conveys. It does not feel comfortable traveling down a single path, and so it is forked through a scratching, a modifying among strange syllables in Sanskrit, or perhaps in modern languages of ductile riverbeds, transcribed and blurred, or in the solidity of facts, of indivisible unity: spells for a single season of the spirit. In that world,

* Poet.

** Translated by Tanya Huntington, writer.

All photos by Gabriel Figueroa and Marco A. Pacheco, courtesy of the Casa Lamm Cultural Center.

what seems to be a word can be read. It hurts to pierce it like a lance with one's gaze, causing its color to burst open, feeling the spring of a nameless mountain, an amorphous reality that is very much alive.

I am at the same time spectator and witness. An elongated surface is broken into symmetry. Another binds the senses together in an oval, a circle, half-moons floating over a pristine, amniotic lagoon. I choose then to put my hands to work, to open what seems to be a screen in search of recognizable silhouettes, of sanity bit by bit, because I know—my personal salvation—that all great abstract art is figurative deep down: and yet behind the veil, I find myself in a closed chamber, *camera obscura*, *hortus clausus*. I try to straighten out what appears to be upside down and end up singing a syllable, very long, in sharps and flats. A syllable or stem cell that that puts everything in place, each separate shard of this spiritual kaleidoscope. Compassionate.

Does the artist sustain this event born of canvas, this emblem that an embroidery needle has perforated to leave its mark, a metaphor that multiplies its meanings? "The art of oil painting— / Daubs fixed on canvas—is a paltry thing/



◀ *Waves*, 68 x 110 cm, 2016
(oil on linen, wood).



Waves 2, 68 x 110 cm, 2016 ▶
(oil on linen, wood).



◀ *Perhaps Everything Is Wanted*,
140 x 140 cm, 2016 (oil on linen).

I see in the art of Virginia Chévez
the primordial clay of an idiophone,
a unique instrument with a sound of its own.



Deep Is the Air, 140 x 140 cm, ▶
2016 (oil on linen).



▲ *Circle of Peace*, diameter 90 cm, 2016 (oil on linen).

Compared with what cries out to be expressed," Milosz claimed as a young man. Words he would later repent. Because nothing is static, all is *perpetuum mobile*. Because it saw the clay of our origins among its hues and folds. And as he rectified later in life: "It would seem I have been summoned / to celebrate things because they exist [...] The soul has its scruples." As for me, I see in the art of Virginia Chévez the primordial clay of an idiophone, a unique instrument with a sound of its own, given that its body *is* both resonating and resonant matter, no strings attached, or membranes, or columns of air...

If the search for the divine may be carried out within oneself, accompanied by an irrepressible desire to reverse and reveal, there is no better way than art. And that includes everything granted by the creator of flesh and bone, equivocation and accuracy, virtue and pettiness, plague and aroma, beauty and misery: hence, the work-entrails will appear beneath the spotlight of the great theater of the world, an ancient linen as it were, but cast in a more recent mold. The artist, aware of being on the verge of exhibiting what some may consider to be imperfections, starts "to scratch, to dirty, and to write... to weigh down the work." To light a fire as a form of expression, to "make it hot," so that it may succeed in inhabiting the depths of air. **MM**