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Yvette Kießling - Portfolio



Mbweni, growing secrets, 2023, print on aludibond, overpainting in oil, 120 x 90 cm



Michikichi, 2023, print on aludibond, overpainting in oil, 120 x 90 cm



Bustani ya Amani, 2023, print on aludibond, overpainting in oil, 100 x 80 cm

One way of gaining access to Yvette Kießling's work is to ponder the untameable. With her pieces, she continually tackles boisterous surroundings, including those made by human hands – not to restrain nature, to tame it, to tidy it. Her open-air works are no pictorial appropriations, no retroactive imposition of order. Rather, they open paths into the thicket.

Yvette Kießling's work follows the shift from indoors to outdoors, into the open air and into the studio. With this interchanging movement, she always returns to a concrete piece of the world – when that return is denied, the longing for it remains. Apart from painterly idylls, the plein air is Yvette Kießling's necessary and ultimately natural way of working. Her location hunts have created a personal map of creation spots.

Neither programme nor creed guide this dynamic, which rather feeds on the tension between location-specific impression and creative elaboration, reshaping, further working. These translate into the choice of representational techniques and means – etching and sketching, oil on canvas on wood, multi-coloured ink lithography, over-painting in oil on Aludibond. The flexible switch between media that arises from her working process becomes her mode of artistic adaptation.

Yvette Kießling's painting and graphic work is an open endeavour – which also explains her return to locations familiar from previous pictures, her recurring viewing. She reaches no closure, partially because the landscape, heavens, plants and ocean and river and mountain are themselves in flux and Yvette Kießling, in her ongoing works, must incessantly experience and see them anew and differently. Her works confront us not with landscape portraits, but with engagement with the idiosyncrasy of a place in the world: tropical growth in Zanzibar or Thailand; the Elbe's source, scarce in vegetation; the North Sea's vast land and great sky. On location, the perspective and framing are neither intentionally haphazard nor intricately calculated – they ensue, become harmonious with each image. Yvette Kießling's works are often drenched in colour, freeing themselves from local lighting moods and encountered colourings. Their opulence speaks of exuberant growth, of virulence and abundance.

The traditions underpinning this creation have deep roots, though such references are not Kießling's concern. We find, perhaps, echoes of Jacob van Ruisdael, of Caspar David Friedrich, of William Turner and Henri Rousseau. Yet inspiration is ultimately inaccessible, it arises neither solely from the outside nor from the inside.

It is expressed, one could say, when Yvette Kießling is confronted by situations and begins to paint. It lies within the synergy between that which she encounters, her wilfulness and the artistic tools at her disposal: intuition and inspiration as interplay.

When she works in series, she does not aim at the replication of motifs. Yet each individual piece initiates pictorial patterns that themselves trigger new permutations. It is pictorial thinking and seeing further, methodical and reflective. Piece after piece, often in series, deals with the complete grasping hold of form traits and colour structures. The focal points of sceneries vary, yet the pictures are never done with them. They are continually new approaches that, placed side by side, never form a mirror of the place in question. Each unicum flows into the next – the ungovernable grows into the work.



Amani, Makihio, 2022, print on aludibond, overpainting in oil, 100 x 80 cm



Amani, Monstera, 2023, print on aludibond, overpainting in oil, 100 x 80 cm



Amani, Verschlungen, 2022, print on aludibond, overpainting in oil, 100 x 80 cm

Yvette Kießling is a painter. In the past ten years, however, she has also intensively dedicated herself to the artistic possibilities of the graphic arts. This parallel work process and her immersion from the one medium into the other have produced astonishing interplays, which in the past years have become particularly visible in her pictorial sequence of river courses and most recently the Zanzibar cycle of 2017-2018.

Kießling's work is characterized by the fact that she partially positions herself in a pictorial tradition that developed between 1850 and 1900. Around 1900, artists, including those of the Expressionist movement, re-discovered techniques of carving, scratching and etching, to great success, and ushered in a renewed, deepened artistic relationship with nature, which the Impressionists had previously discovered with their plein-air paintings. Wassily Kandinsky especially juxtaposed colored lithography with its spontaneous style and colorfulness to the lino- or woodcut, as a technique that he claimed lay closest to both pastose painting and direct sketching. Yet the artist is also anchored in the present, as she also exposes the post-modern artificiality of her pictorial ideas. Her current Zanzibar project can serve as a good example: In it, she discovers a new pictorial language in order to connect an immediate experience of nature with a calculated pictorial process.

Yvette Kießling is continually driven to paint across from and within nature. She stands, swims or sits in the midst of her subject. While she pursues a specific topic or motif, her artistic executions are in no way subject to any system or plan. The environment determines the rhythm. One gains the impression that she switches the dynamic during the painting process: Her brushstrokes whip through the image like rough lashes that halt midway, followed by precisely utilised, featherlike and radial bundles of lines defining a leaf, plant or tree.

Her open system of diverse painterly structures follows the subject in front of her. Something that at first shows itself as an unordered mélange of dark, heavier earth and green, shimmering plants and trees that sway in the wind and light under a barely visible sky. Like an explorer, the painter uses her paintbrush to draw a path on the canvas through diagonal plants, upstretched branches and roots and builds up a stimulating tension between the thicket of the tropical nature and light-colored swathes, the long beams cutting through the twilight.

Graphic works form the starting point of these paintings. The Jozani Forest, a natural rainforest of mangrove trees, palms and ferns that has been preserved on the island of Zanzibar, inspired Yvette Kießling to execute a graphic project that developed over the course of her two stays in Zanzibar. Etchings are followed by early colored lithographs. The graphic cycle Zanzibar, comprising 100 unique prints, developed in 2018; it serves, she explains, as a motif pool for artistic possibilities for her painting.

The creation of a leaf – first spontaneously through ink and brush, then slowly and in stages in the lithographic process – does not gain its unusual dynamic until the printing process. By printing up to five motifs in different colors over each other, the artist interweaves them to a degree that does justice to her “rainforest” subject, in an almost ironic way. For the core of the tropical world – which in East Africa is considered the cradle of humanity – has begun to crumble. The jungle with its so-called noble savages had ceased to exist even in Gauguin's times. Zanzibar, too, can no longer be experienced as an untouched paradise or interpreted à la Walden. The tropics have made way to a protected park landscape of cultural-historical construction, bringing with it the scoriae of their multilayered past – the myths, the peoples travelling through, the colonial powers, immigration and, last but not least, radical encroachments upon the environment.

By playing through numerous motif combinations in the lithography and thereby repeatedly bringing herself to the limit of artistic possibilities, rendering the danger of chaotic superimposition ever present, she takes up this historically multiple, ambivalent construct of tropical nature.

In her painting, this explicitly anti-classical depiction of nature, which is unwilling to open up for the viewer but rather closes itself to his or her perception, is even more prominent. For the depicted path with its moist mire often appears impassable – plants block the way and the view of the sky is obscured, with brown, green and red forming a lattice-like wall that in some works is no longer optically oriented up or down. The general topic of her Zanzibar works, it becomes clear, is a depiction of nature that pushes back against a liberating, clear view: A vast landscape, thicket, undergrowth looms before the viewer's gaze, forming a dense yet colouristically strongly differentiated wall comprised of over a dozen shades of green.

The impenetrability of the jungle and the inexhaustibility of its shades of green has fascinated painters such as Maurice de Vlaminck, Henri Rousseau or currently Peter Doig and Anthony Gross, who created a proliferating digital jungle for the London Underground in 2015. The outstretched arms of the vividly colored tropical plants, growing unchecked, contain both the conviction as well as, perhaps, a quiet warning that they will, in the end, outlive the metropolitan jungle of human civilization.



Maua ya mnazi, 2023, oil on paper, 36 x 30 cm



Frangipani, Mbweni, 2023, oil on paper, 36 x 30cm



Twins, 2022, oil on canvas, 170 x 170 cm

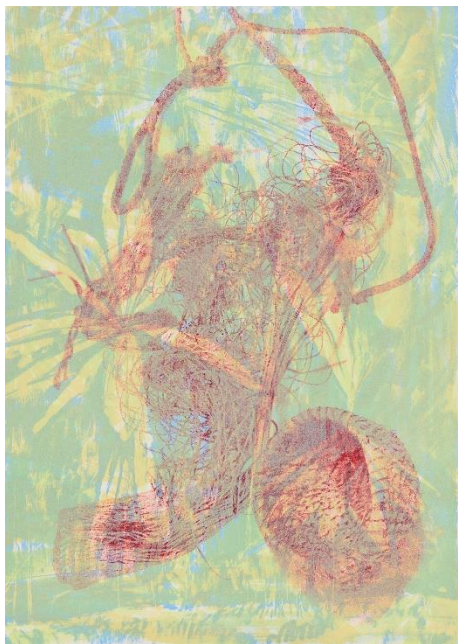
The subject of Yvette Kießling's paintings are landscapes – or more precisely her conception of landscape, whose essence she wishes to probe in depth. 'Landscape' here refers to an aesthetic dimension that describes the depiction of a section of nature selected by the artist. In her work, Kießling shows both the environment she grew up in and the one in which she moves day to day. For several years, however, she has also been travelling through the wilderness of the tropics with increasing frequency. She prefers to paint her landscapes in the plein-air mode, fully equipped on site. As Arno Rink's last master student, she is part of the close circle of the so-called New Leipzig School, but has developed an autonomous pictorial language. Her work contains neither the surreal nor the narrative elements that still formed the connecting element for the generation of painters to follow Rink and Rauch – instead, the painter shows natural-seeming reserves outside, or on the edge, of civilization. Even during her studies, she was already orienting herself more on the old masters of landscape painting, from Albrecht Dürer and Jacob von Ruisdael to the romanticist Caspar David Friedrich. And like him, she does not represent landscape as a reproduction of nature, but as a fusion between the seen and her idea of landscape. She searches for the individual, the unique, of the landscapes through which she wanders. Wild and primitive – such is the nature that helps her idea of landscape take form. Its realisation can therefore not take place in a studio or be drawn from photographic originals, but must take place directly on site, where her eyes are fed, supported, overwhelmed and – every now and again – intoxicated by all her senses. To pictorially capture a section of nature, the painter must first become a part of it. The character and style of her painting is determined by the subject.

Realistic landscape elements stand side by side with daring abstractions or storms of colour that are almost tachistic in their un-representationality. Her use of colour is rooted in an entirely individual understanding of material. She not only paints, but repeatedly scratches, carves and scrapes at the substance or, as in *White Indian Almond*, dabs the painting on with a special tamponage. She paints three layers of the painting – whose motif she has also developed from one of her lithographies – in an entirely classic manner. Finally, for the uppermost layer of paint, she thickly wrapped her index finger with loose canvas to press and smear the white plant structure onto the image with a powdery-seeming colour ductus. The artist uses her shades of colour as the image requires, not necessarily as she saw them. Any search for architecture of cultivated landscapes in her images would be in vain. The few figures in her works are more archetypes than characters. Unique topographic features and shifting weather influences determine Kießling's work in the open air. She masters difficulty upon difficulty when hauling her prepared painting and drawing materials, easel included, through impassable mountain regions or difficult-to-access forests, or sets to work on 30-kg lithostones in shaky boats.

Growing up in the rural climes of the Thuringian Forest, Kießling first painted her native landscape. Her focus later shifted, among other subjects, to the untouched banks of the river courses around Leipzig, such as those of the Mulde, Saale and – particularly frequently – the White Elster. For years she has been dedicating herself to the Elbe's course from the Czech Riesengebirge, which she has painted again and again, to the current's estuary in the North Sea by Ottendorf/Cuxhaven.

This has resulted in a multiplicity of oil paintings as well as several printed lithographic works for the Grifffelkunst in Hamburg, or the extensive portfolio series *Elbe-Labe*, which she printed herself. Along with the natural but civilisationally proximate river courses, she is also drawn to the primitive, exotically wild landscapes that she hopes to find in the tropics. The Leipzig painter Matthias Weischer, with whom she and other artist friends spent two work trips in Morocco, describes her use of colour as follows: 'On the one hand, Yvette emphasises colour as material by dispensing with any kind of imitation and underlining its visual intensity. Yet on the other hand, she also uses colour to tinge the objects in the image and thereby create representational islands.' [...]

Yvette Kießling visits and travels through landscapes – in her native atmosphere and the exotic tropics alike – in which, after careful previous research, fairly concrete conceptions arise that she wishes to capture. Arriving on site, she tests her conceptions against that which she actually encounters, and dedicates herself to the previously determined section. She then paints by putting colours and gestures to use in a free and associative manner, as the scene demands, executing her previously imagined visual conception on site. The creation of the image is always informed and enriched by all the sensory impressions of painting in nature. In her visual compositions, Yvette Kießling vividly compresses that which she sees as the essence of the landscape in question.



Vyambo 55, 2023,
multi-coloured ink lithograph, 63 x 46 cm



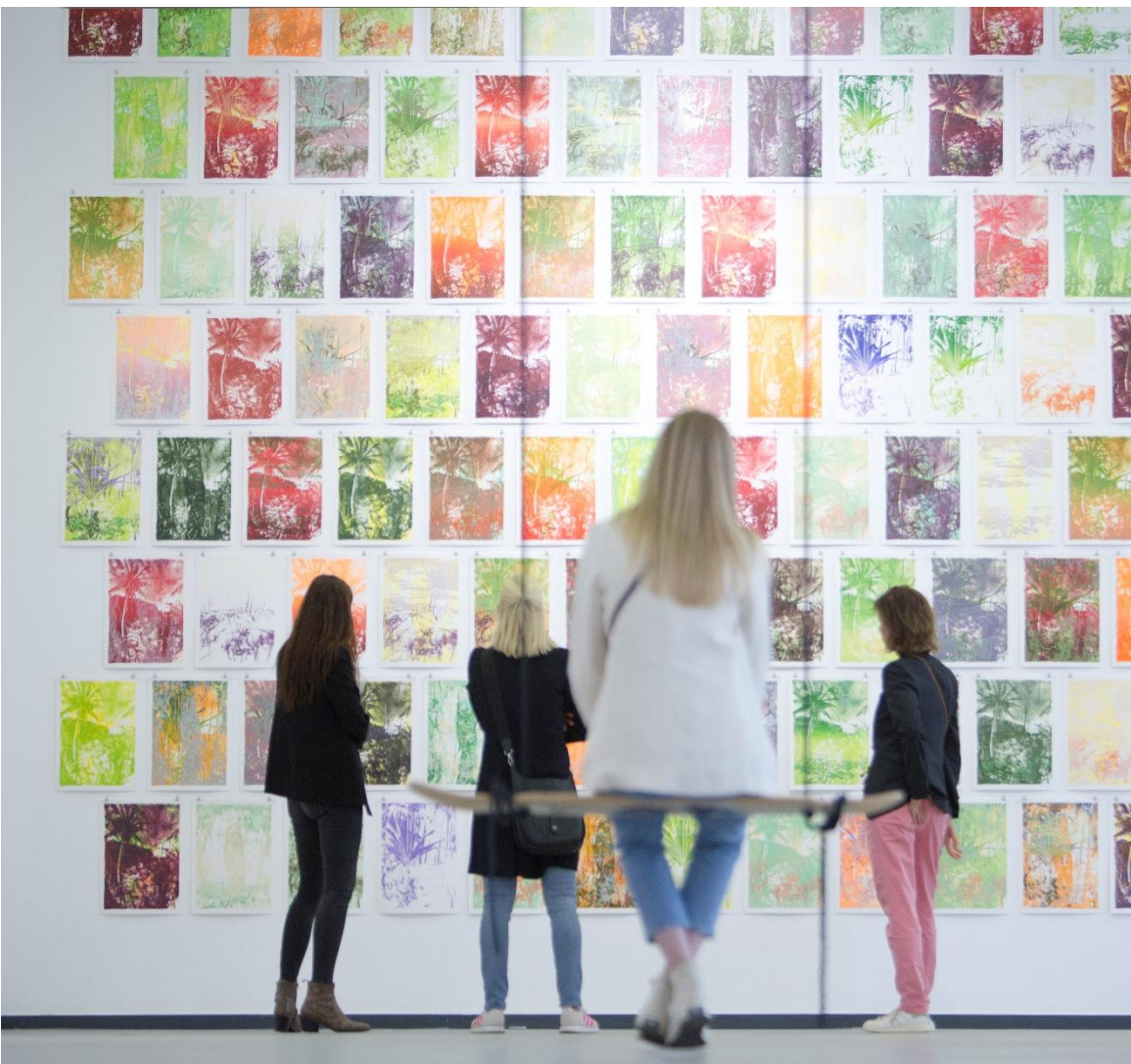
Vyambo 147, 2023,
[147 unique lithographs]



Vyambo 49, 2023,



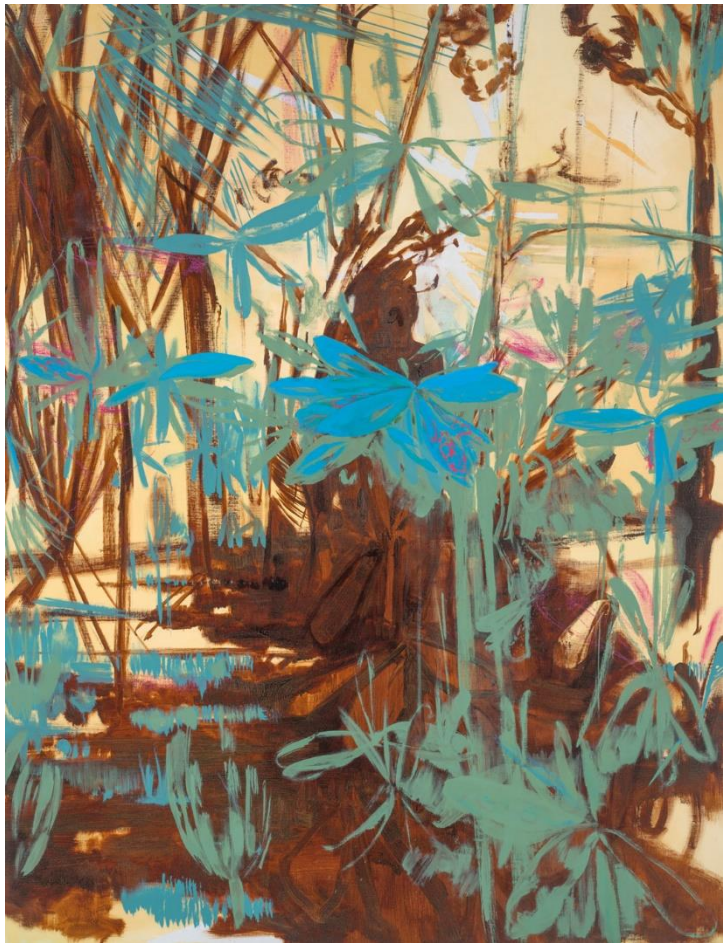
Installation of the series Morogoro, 2020, multi-coloured ink lithograph, 49 x 36 cm [100 unique lithographs]
Exhibition: Morogoro, 2020, Barlachhalle K, Hamburg



Installation of the series Morogoro, 2020, multi-coloured ink lithograph, 49 x 36 cm [100 unique lithographs]
Exhibition: Morogoro, 2020, Barlachhalle K, Hamburg



Installation: Zanzibar, blue, yellow, violett | Zanzibar, pure | Zanzibar, Saidy, 2019, oil on canvas on wood, je 150 x 115 cm
Exhibition: Morogoro, 2020, Barlachhalle K, Hamburg





Installation of the series Amani, 2022, multi-coloured ink lithograph, 49 x 36 cm [100 unique lithographs]
2022, Alte Baumwollspinnerei, Leipzig



The lithographs of the series Amani, 2022 are each unique and are created from a variation of a total of six different bases: four printing stones are combined with two motifs arranged on aluminium plates. One stone is based on two abstracted photographs of the historic library and laboratory building in Amani/ Usambara Mountains, Tanzania, both of which date back in substance to their foundation in the German Empire.



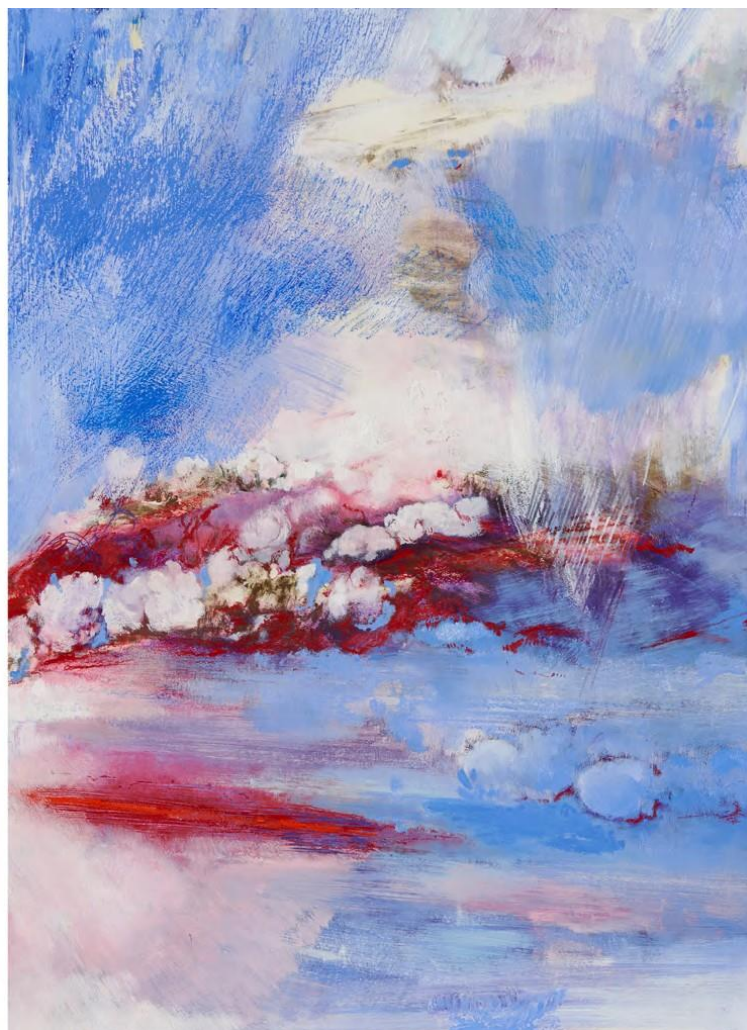
Amani 94, 2022,
multi-coloured ink lithograph, 63 x 46 cm



Amani e.a., 2022,
[100 unique lithographs]



Amani 9, 2022,



Elbwiese, Labská louka, energie, 2020, multi-coloured ink lithograph on aludibond, overpainting in oil, each 82 x 60 cm [Diptychon]

Yvette has found her site of power. Since 2014, she has been occupying herself with the Elbe's source, Labská louka (Czech for 'Elbe meadow'), located almost 1400 meters up near the town of Špindleruv Mlýn (Spindler's Mill) in the highlands of the Czech Republic's Riesengebirge.

The artist created the large-sized painting *Elbequell* ('Source of the Elbe', 170 x 190 cm, oil on canvas on wood) in 2016, her glazed brush strokes capturing a landscape's expanses in delicate shades. A plane is visible in the foreground, while the suggestion of mountains melts into blue before a cream-coloured sky behind. This plane – the Elbe's meadow, from which the river springs – is rendered in incarnate, a pale flesh tone, structured with olive green and dark accents that lead towards the oval pools of water, brightened with white. The use of red, pink and white, jointly forming a further, more intense flesh tone, centrally divides and draws this plane in from the horizon: What results is a painterly pull towards the dark zone and to the overflowing surfaces of water. The painting's aura is sensual, corporeal. Its title with its missing final 'e' leaves its further progression open – like the pool that reaches the picture's edge. *Elbequell*...

The spring, la source, the origin, l'origine du monde – starting with Christian iconography and its springs and wells open for symbolic interpretation to the 19th century with works like Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres's *La Source* (1820–1856) or Gustave Courbet's *L'Origine du Monde* (1866) and *La Source* (1868) – is a well-known theme in occidental art history. Religious symbolism casts the source as the miracle of creation, salvation and (eternal) life. In the 19th century, works on this theme are frequently nude depictions of naiads, the spring's nymphs, by water. Aside from their significance for fertility and sexuality, these female figures can also be interpreted in relation to questions of artistic creation and inspiration –

which into the 20th century seem to have been preserved for man alone. Female models and muses served as the male artist's inspiration, they were not to act as creators themselves. Kießling, a 21st-century artist, frees herself from such mythological and figural supports, instead drawing directly from her scenic motif. Since the first painting described above, she has produced diptychs that also deal with the Elbe's source. Using as her starting point a lithograph of two single pages (82 x 60 cm each) she had created for Hamburg's Griffelkunst Society 2016, she developed over-paintings with oil paint and oil pens on the coloured variants left over from the printing process, previously concealed on Alu-dibond. The template for the original lithograph was created on paper in situ – the artist seeks this place out multiple times per year and works en plein air. The Elbe's source is a place in which she can work slowly and calmly, where intense seeing and feeling are possible. It is vital that she feel the energies and real scenery physically as well – photographs cannot serve as substitutes. In muted tones of mostly brown, green and red, the original lithograph depicts the Elbe's meadow in the foreground, a rockier zone with coniferous trees (firs and mountain pines) in the middle ground and a sloping mountain in the background left, the *Violík* (Violet Rock).

The 15 over-paintings *Elbwiese*, Labská louka, she has created in rapid succession since 2017 are based on this multi-toned ink lithograph. Some let much shimmer through, some less, and above all go much further in regards to content. Previously, Yvette Kießling's work was strongly influenced by her engagement with what she found in a specific place: She worked in, with and about a specific location, such as the Jozani Forest in Zanzibar, Tanzania.

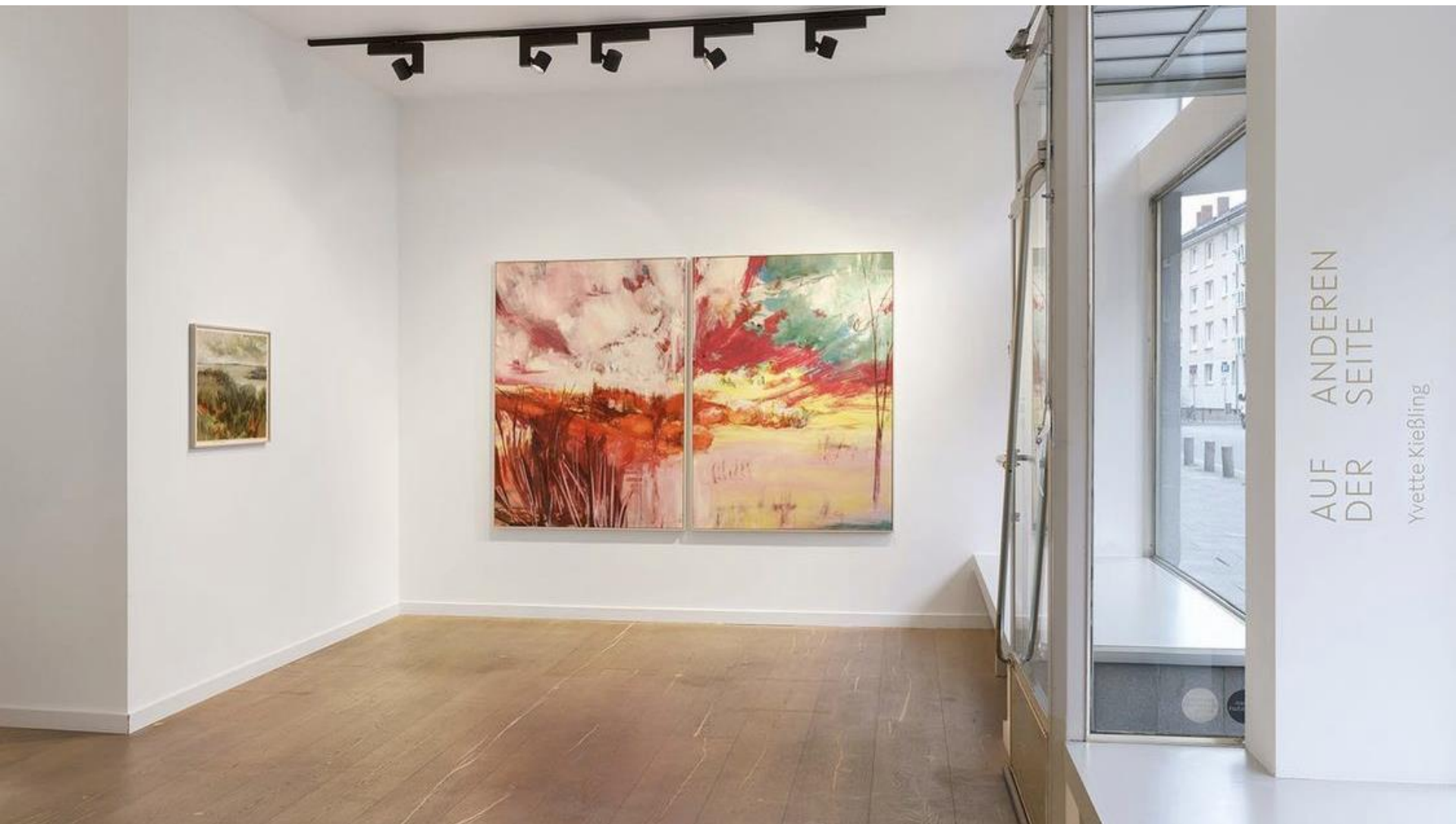
Something different is now happening in these works, something new: The Elbe's meadow, drawn from memory and personally captured on the undercoat, serves as the sounding board, as an agitable neuroplexus for the over-painting. Like the Elbe flows from the Elbe's meadow, the over-painting flows from the lithograph's base. Yet not by itself – an echo requires an input. That input, in this case, is the artist – the diptychs created so far are a grappling with her inner processes and states. The source inspires, sets an example, prompts creation. The artist responds, draws from herself, gives birth. She creates likenesses of her interior, a pictorial meditation with a very strong, feminine self reference. Obsessively, ecstatically, the works are created one after the other: *Ursprung* (origin), *weiß* (white), *Plateau* (plateau), *Schlund* (gorge) (2017), *opposing* (2018), *in die Tiefe* (in the deep), *Fichten* (firs), *Schauer* (shower), *weiße Ebene* (white plane), *Hochland* (highland) (2019), *Wehen* (pangs), *energie* (energy), *Offenbarung* (enlightenment), *komplementär* (complementary) (2020) and *Ponge* (2021). This is not a series: Each diptych stands alone and was started afresh, allowing colours and thematic approaches to carry on from one work to the next. The sketching and accentuation of the conifers and mountain vary. Each diptych is a carefully thought-out construction with emphases of design and content reflected in part and yet openly in the selected individual titles. The intense flesh tones so familiar from *Elbequell*, a translation of the area's blossoming heather, are put to use once more in the works from 2017 and reach their dramatic zenith in *Schlund*. Plunging fantasies of creation and destruction, life and death are worked out here – for the flowing, ever-renewing is confronted by the potentially ominous, the uncontrollable. [...]



Installation: Elbwiese, Labská louka, ausufern, 2022, print on aludibond, overpainting in oil, each 164 x 120 cm [Diptychon]
Exhibition: Auf der anderen Seite, 2022, Galerie Leuenroth, Frankfurt am Main



Installation: Elbmündung, Ústi Labe, 2021, three-toned ink lithograph, each 84 × 63cm [Diptychon] | Elbmündung, 2021, oil on paper, each 52 × 34 cm
 Exhibition: Auf der anderen Seite, 2022, Galerie Leuenroth, Frankfurt am Main



Installation: Elbwiese, Labská louka, ausufern, 2022, print on aludibond, overpainting in oil, each 164 x 120 cm [Diptychon]
Exhibition: : Auf der anderen Seite, 2022, Galerie Leuenroth, Frankfurt am Main

Moors are inhospitable places, their nature particularly untouched—the jungles of the sweeping heaths. They consist of millennia-old plant particles and form landscapes of unmatched suspense. Such places fascinate the Leipzig painter Yvette Kießling, who seeks out, for her pictures, those landscapes in which she senses a special aura. In her oil paintings, she develops equivalencies for what she experiences in nature. Her aim is to capture the tensions and harmonies she senses in a place and to translate them into her pictorial language.

Over the past years, the painter has discovered her landscapes both along European streams — especially the Elbe and the Rhine — and in far-flung areas like the tropical regions of the Usambara Mountains in Tanzania. After extended stays in such places, the moorlands around Lower Saxony's Bremervörde now make up her newest area of study. Unlike the thick, noisy tropical landscapes, the moors, with their quiet expanses, appear downright hostile. Their great age and the “dense energy” she perceives lend them a special appeal.

Yvette Kießling paints en plein air: face to face with nature, never mind the wind or weather. All works presented in this catalogue were created under open skies. For the impression of a landscape that interests the painter is so multifaceted that it cannot be adequately captured in photographic or similar reproductions. These impressions transcend the visual appearance and include both knowledge about the site — here particularly the millennia-old history of the plants condensing in the peat — and the lived experience — the daylight and its transformations—as well as her own constitution and inner state at the moment of her natural encounter. Of course, no picture can directly capture either the cold that creeps below one's clothes on a rainy autumn day, or the cranes that descend in flocks upon the moor, commanding attention from time to time with their loud calls —

but these are all aspects of the painter's impression of the landscape that she seeks to express in her paintings. Yvette Kießling is uninterested in reproducing a scenic situation as she visually perceives it. She is not fixated on documenting each individual element's concrete number and location, or its specific hue. Rather, she translates what she sees in the manner in which the image demands. The painter compares the process of translating the discovered scenic sphere into the pictorial medium to freestyle musical improvisation. With an ingenious system of revisionary colour applications, she develops her images successively. Her particular handling of oil paints allows her to capture the process of experience: After laying out the image's structure, she adds its pieces—the plants, clouds, sky, shadow surfaces etc.— step by step, yet always permits herself to remove them again, scratching them out or wiping them off with turpentine. In this continual process of creating and taking away, Yvette Kießling subjects herself to the landscape and presses onwards until she recognises her impression of the site in the picture.

Part of her experimentally playful painting process is her treatment of an *imprimatura*, a colourful background increasingly found in Yvette Kießling's pictures. Responding to these at times vibrant and loud shades (magenta, orange, violet or ultramarine) poses a particular challenge in the painting process. The initially selected musical backdrop —to stick with our image of musical improvisation — can be described as the developing painting's tone. In selecting the prepared, colourfully composed pictorial medium, the artist relies on her spontaneous judgment while regarding the landscape and mood of the day. It is this fearlessness and spontaneity in Kießling's painting — expressed also in her colour choices, quick strokes and strong interest in the oil paint's substance — that produces the strong dynamic inherent to her paintings.

Her rapid painting method is reflected in various open structures. The pictures often peter out towards their fronts or sides, leaving the backdrop visible on the edges and condensing the image towards its centre. This creates the exciting compositions and unique dynamic that characterise Kießling's pictorial interpretations of landscapes.

The painter developed the intense vibrancy of her pictures during her residencies in Tanzania, where capturing the lush tropical vegetation called for strong colours. She has since retained her willingness to wield strong hues, and now increasingly applies them to those pictures she bases on European landscapes as well. On Bremervörde's moors, she has thus created paintings that are fascinating expressions of the quiet of the wide moorlands, with its air of loneliness and calm, in startling tones and unexpected dynamic energy.

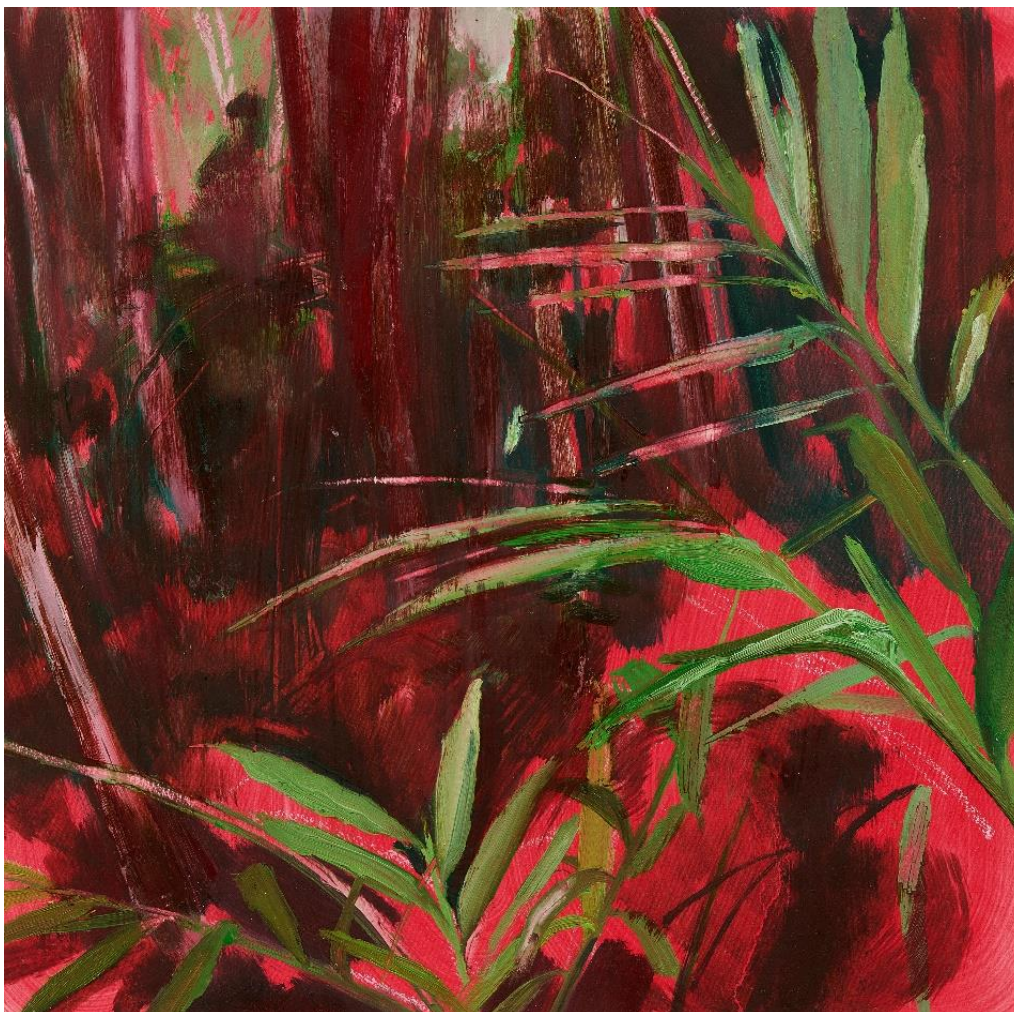
Yvette Kießling often returns to the places that she has already explored through painting once before. In the past years, this has produced an array of scenic spaces that serve as the objects of her visual world: the Elbe's source and estuary, the Usambara Mountains. Hopefully, the moor, too, will play a lasting role in the painter's oeuvre and develop into a site of long-term artistic examination — one from which paintings may emerge that lend onlookers a new understanding of this extraordinary natural sphere.



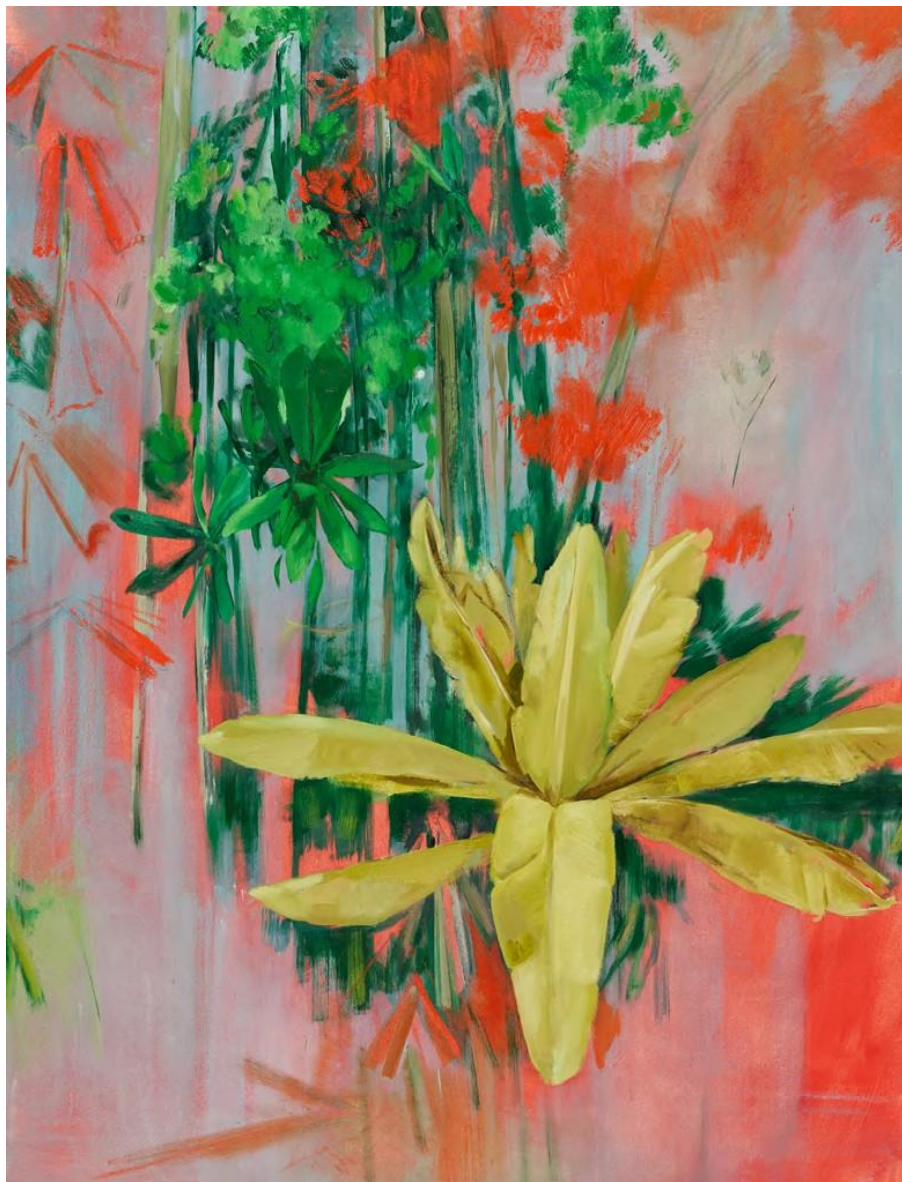
Installation: Große Lichtung mit Hunden, 2013, oil on canvas, 170 x 190 cm
Permanent exhibition, Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig, Leipzig



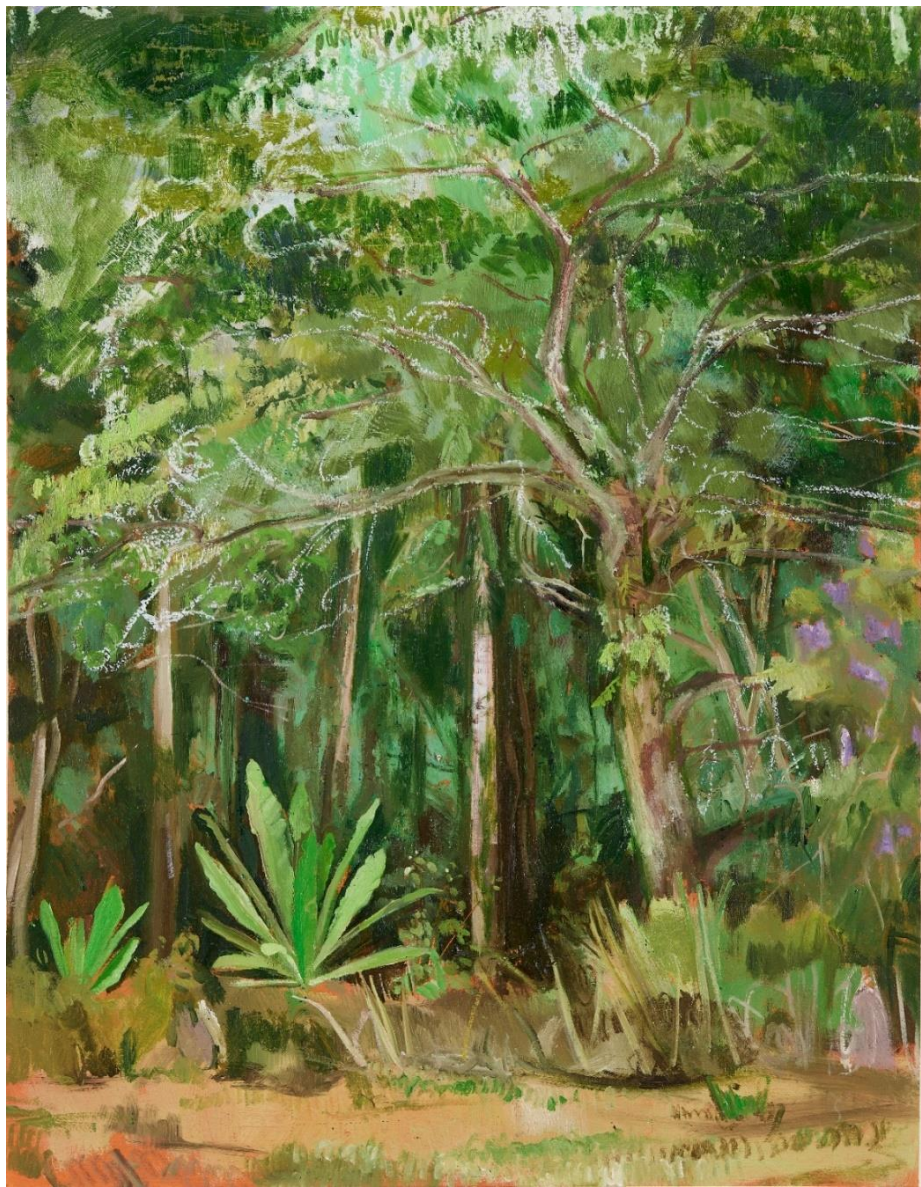
Mawingu, 2023, oil on paper, 21 x 25 cm



Cardamom, Amani, 2023, oil on paper, 33 x 33 cm



Banana tree, Kho Kut, 2019, oil on canvas on wood, 150 x 115 cm



Mpumu na mweti, 2022, oil on paper, 63 x 46 cm



Mwangaza kwenye miti, 2023, oil on canvas, 60 x 50 cm



Msanaka msituni jozani, 2023, oil on canvas, 60 x 50 cm



Mnazi msituni jozani, 2023, oil on canvas, 60 x 50 cm





Ngorongoro, Leraï, 2022, oil on canvas, 68 x 48 cm | Working in the Ngorongoro Crater, Tanzania, 2021



Fenster nach Übersee, 2020, oil on canvas, 170 x 190 cm