

AbstRacT

the hidden synchrony

OPEN CALL - reference document

INTRODUCTION

This exhibition takes a closer look at the synchrony in the complete *Synchromies* series by Swiss psychiatrist, psychotherapist and later turned photographer Oscar Forel (1891-1982). This was published in 1961 and forms part of the Huberte Goote Art Foundation Collection. The study of trees, their growth, their bark and identifying signs of events the tree had witnessed were the crucial aspects in this series – that are truly fragments of a larger whole.

As you encounter the 53 macro photographs differing in size and scale, projecting their harmonious and natural colours, they might visually draw comparison to famed and iconic artworks found the world over or evoke personal memories or nostalgia. These images are taken of different tree species found the world over. Their wonderful textures portrayed by Forel's photographs were captured by using an ordinary reflex camera on Kodachrome film, with a wide lens at 10-15cm.

Nature, from the soil to the sky, has been the inspiration for many artists over time and still is today. This is evident with the selection of South African artists from the Rupert Art Foundation Collection, who explored the wonders of textured conscious abstract innovations from the late 1950s. The South African art world was slow in accepting Abstract art – a movement characterised by its freedom from the representational and known for celebrating line, form and colour in its pure form.

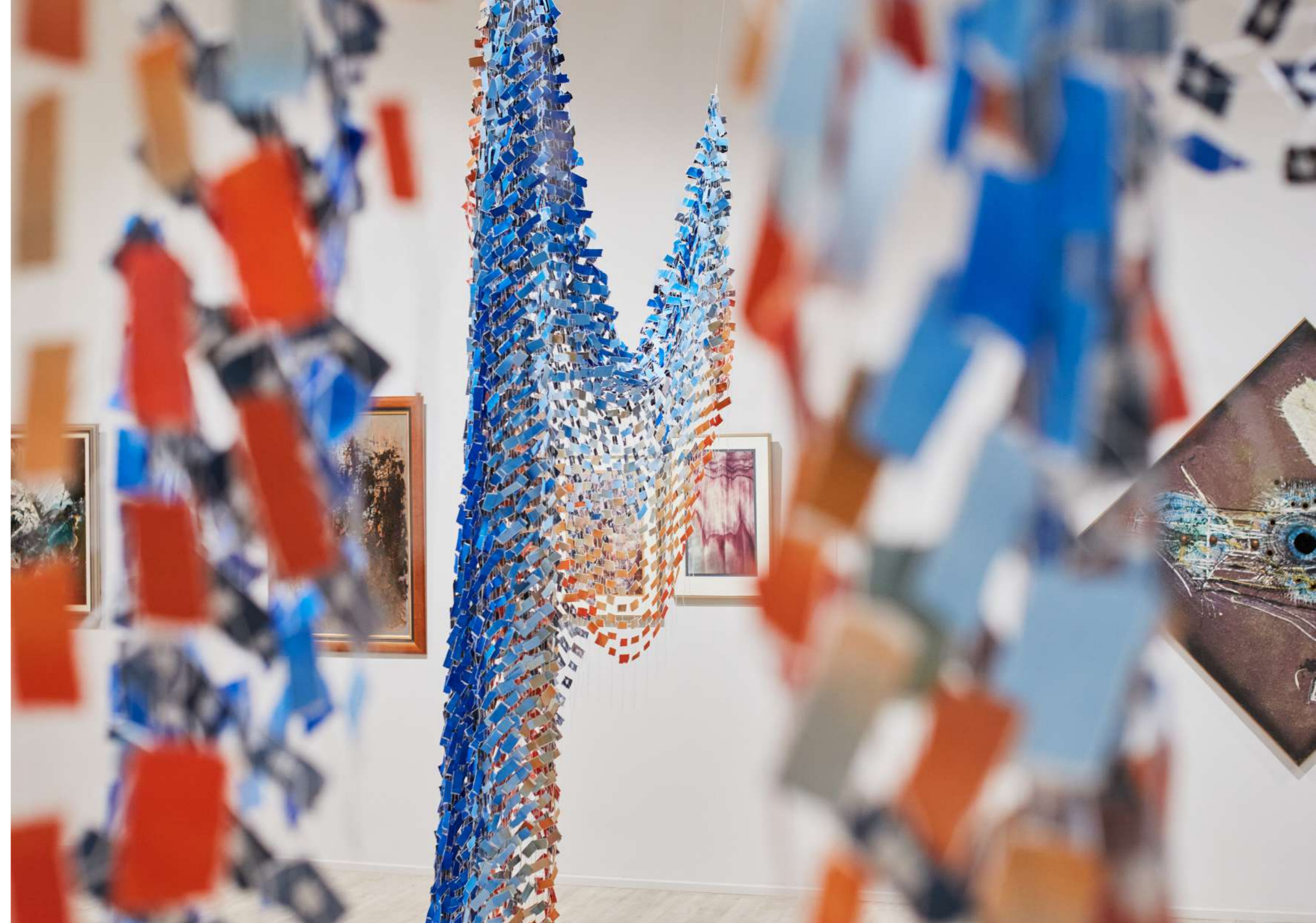
The selection of abstract works in this exhibition have been paired with *Synchromies*, to find harmony or reciprocal synergy. These pairings enhance the 'synchromy' – which Forel termed – derived from "symphony" with 'phonos' (sound) being replaced by 'chromos' (colour). Looking closely at a very topical issue while inviting you to explore the enchanted forms and colours that reveal the 'art' hidden in nature.

The bark of spruce, fir, pine, and beech, at different times of the year, invaded by fungus, seared by fire, coerced by their location into tortured, twisted shapes are similarly the types of marks, dynamic colour combinations and encrusted surfaces masterfully explored by artists such as Bettie Cilliers-Barnard (1914-2020), Christo Coetzee (1929-2000), Dirk Meerkotter (1922-2017), Georgina Ormiston (1903-1967), and Gunther van der Reis (b1927) to name a few.

As for Forel: he treated each surface as a rare discovery. He would wipe and clean the chosen bark with brush and sponge, and sometimes this would polish and bronze the surface, highlighting and revealing an array of colours and textures. He noted that *Synchromies* could have been subtitled *natura pinxit* – painted by nature. Just as the painters chose to free themselves from tradition by creating abstract marks on canvas, so Forel found abstract line, form and colour already existing in nature.

Today, a better understanding of plant life, its behaviour, growth and decay has become vital to the rehabilitation of our ecosystem. This study posits a close look at a very topical issue while inviting you to explore the enchanted forms and colours that reveal the 'art' hidden in nature.

Detail of:
Karla Nixon's *Where You Are*, 2024
Paper, acrylic paint, string and glue
Artist Collection



ARTIST INTERVENTIONS:

Acclaimed Land Artist Strijdom van der Merwe (b1961) conceptualised the installation, *A Study in Curvature*, made from 3mm bended plywood. It is in conversation with and inspired mainly by the photography of Oscar Forel and a close-up on *Whirl* by Paul du Toit, consisting of sculptural fragments that form part of the larger whole of the exhibition.

The approach was to recreate the feeling that Forel summons with his artworks – magnifying the minute details of the seemingly overlooked abstract art found within nature. *A Study in Curvature* is an attempt to elicit this sense of smallness by means of visual aid. In this instance the humble wood shaving is used as a vessel to emphasise this feeling of smallness.

Every curvature or shaving is a fragment of the whole. Each curved form is a celebration of the freedom in movement of the line. These shapes become sculptural in its appearance and change identity from nature to pure abstraction.

Durban-based multimedia artist Karla Nixon (b1990) conceptualised a three-part installation as response. This ranges from Plexiglass to the most delicate paper strips to encapsulate and echo the celebration of movement and intentional fragmentation of form as synchrony between the abstract artworks and Oscar Forel photographs in its surrounds.

These installations draw inspiration from, and reflect on, the significance of textiles as materials and objects that create a sense of security and personal expression in our lives. With these installations, and the spaces they create, Nixon is inviting the viewer to explore the delicate balance between chaos and harmony, fragility, and strength, and to consider the moments where these dichotomies meet.

Boundaries between two-dimensional and three-dimensional space to be blurred; to be painting and sculpture, collage, and textile.

The overarching conceptual underpinning of Nixon's art practice has evolved with lived experiences, exploring diverse themes such as middle-class white suburbia, philosophical concepts around transience, and the impact of capitalism on the concept of home. However, a common thread of space and place runs through these explorations—relating to the human urge to define and find sanctuary in.

Everyday Wear, 2023 – Plexiglass, steel cable

Suspended above the viewer's head, the billowing form captures a moment in time. This piece, transparent and ethereal, establishes a sanctuary, a haven where viewers are enveloped in the interplay between colour and light; mimicking stained glass and evoking a ritual-like experience that invites viewers to connect with something larger than themselves.

Where You Are and *If I Could Piece Together*, 2024 – Acrylic paint, paper, glue, and string

Both pieces meticulously crafted from torn and reassembled painted paper, present delicate, lace-like forms that embody the essence of fragility and deliberate reconstruction. These paper creations showcase intentional discords and harmonies in shape and color. The use of paper serves as a versatile medium, allowing the boundaries between two-dimensional and three-dimensional space to be blurred; to be painting, sculpture, collage and textile.

Detail of:

Strijdom Van der Merwe's *A Study in Curvature*, 2023
3mm bended plywood
Artist Collection



OPEN CALL TO THE PUBLIC

The Rupert Museum would like to invite artists and creatives from any creative industry, platform or profession, to take inspiration from the exhibition *AbstRacT – the hidden synchrony* and enter the third Open Call. This exhibition comprises of works from the collections of the Huberte Goote Foundation, Rupert Art Foundation and artists.

This document includes all the artworks featured in the exhibition that was on show at The Rupert Museum in Stellenbosch. Online viewing is possible through the links listed below. Please note that the current exhibition at the Jan Rupert Art Centre in Graaff-Reinet showcases only a selection of works (due to a smaller exhibition area).

The OPEN CALL aims to inspire and activate engagement with the permanent collections managed by the Rupert Museum, as well as presenting upcoming artists and creatives the opportunity to exhibit and sell their work. Works are to be submitted electronically for possible inclusion in a selling group exhibition to be showcased in the Jan Rupert Art Centre located in Graaff-Reinet from February 2025 to September 2025. The call is open to anyone who would like to create a responsive work using any medium and style of their choice. As this is a responsive call, no work created before April 2024 may be submitted.

The amount of works to be selected for exhibition will be determined by the quality as well as the overall size of selected pieces. Due to travel and size restrictions in the exhibition space, the work submitted must comply (read more about the requirements on [OPEN CALL TO THE PUBLIC](#) - Rupert Museum). To get a sense of the exhibition space, open the link to view the previous instalment of the open call group exhibition: [IN-RESPONSE](#).

Links to view exhibitions virtually:

[AbstRacT with Strijdom van der Merwe](#)

[AbstRacT with Karla Nixon](#)



LEFT

FOREL, Oscar

Synchromies #48

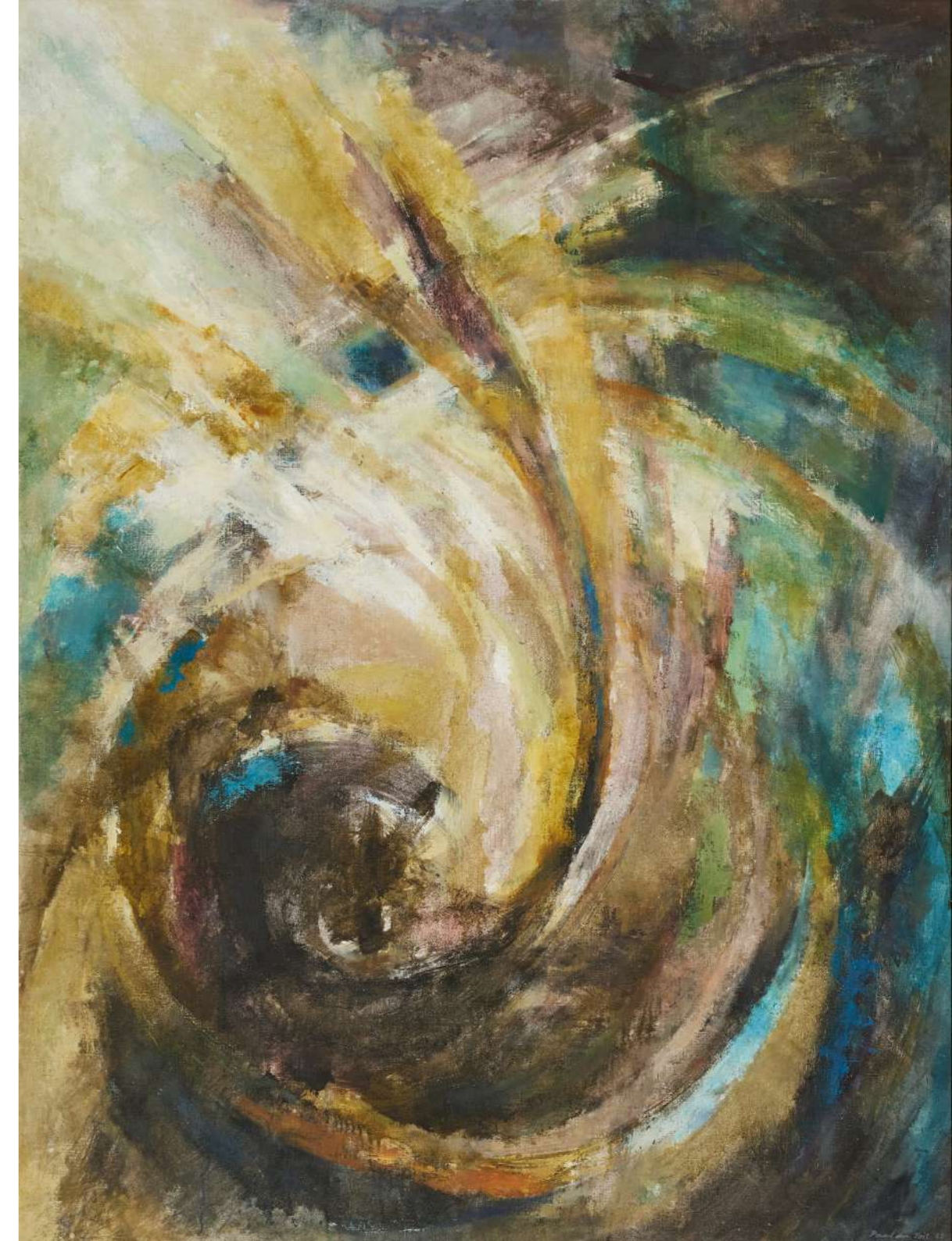
Picea excelsa - Derborence, Switzerland

RIGHT

DU TOIT, Paul (1965-2014)

Whirl, 1965. Oil on canvas

Rupert Art Foundation Collection

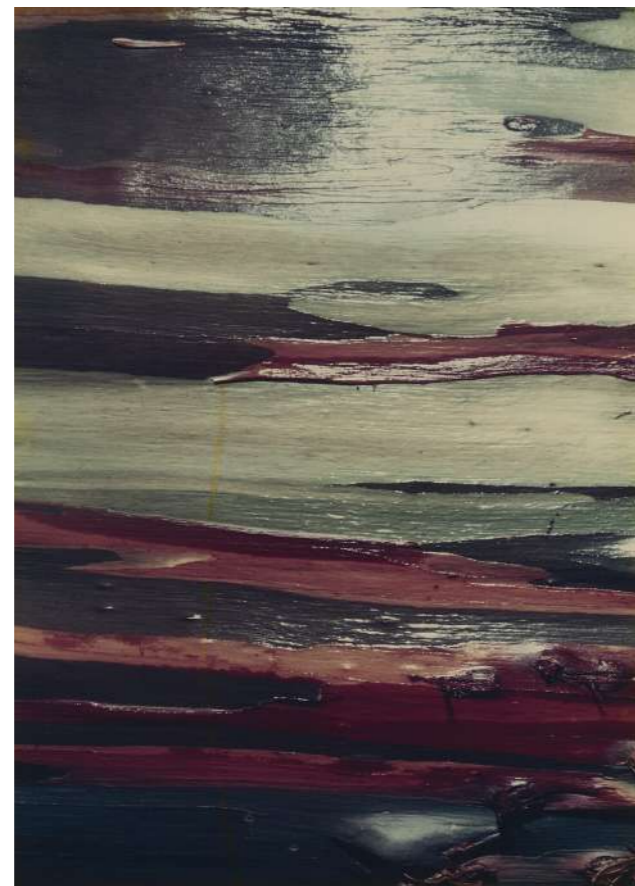


LEFT

FOREL, Oscar

Synchromies #46

Eucalyptus deglupta - Sri Lanka



CENTRE

FOREL, Oscar

Synchromies #5

Bark of a Japanese cherry - Japan



RIGHT

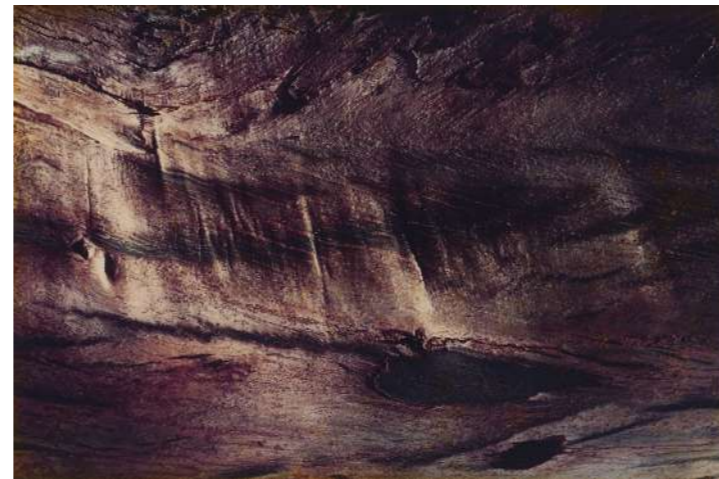
MEERKOTTER, Dirk (1922-2017)

Rotstempel, 1964.

Mixed media

Rupert Art Foundation Collection





LEFT
CILLIERS-BARNARD, Bettie (1914-2010)
Wentelend, 1964. Oil on canvas
Rupert Art Foundation Collection



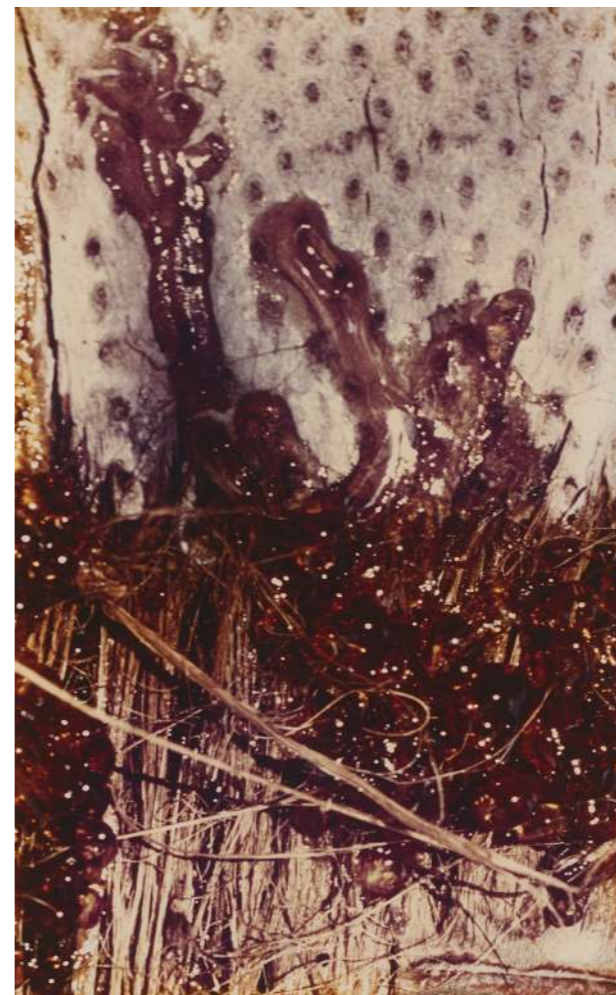
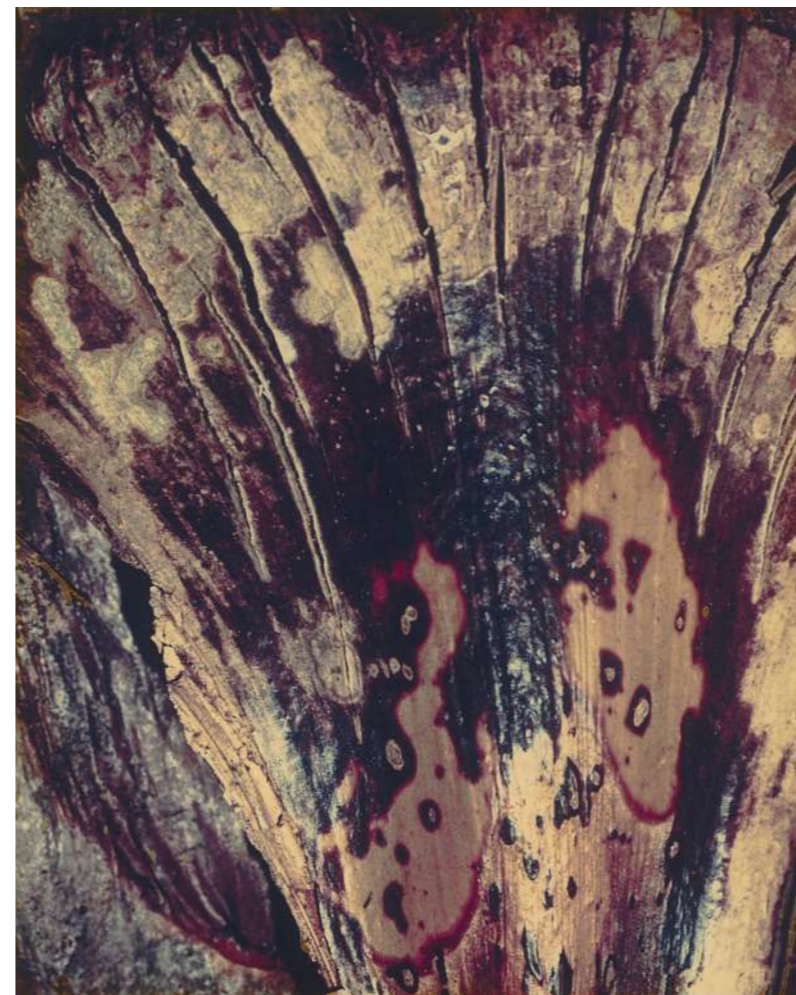
TOP LEFT
FOREL, Oscar
Synchromies #50
Betula alba - Lake region of Finland

BOTTOM LEFT
Synchromies #34
Eucalyptus - Tangier, Morocco



ABOVE LEFT
Synchromies #30
Pseudobombax septenatum - Barrigon,
Panama

ABOVE RIGHT
Synchromies #29
Banana-tree leaf - Turrialba, Costa Rica



LEFT
SHER, Julius (b1934)
Nude, 1963, Collage and oil
Rupert Art Foundation Collection

CENTRE
FOREL, Oscar
Synchromies #54
Phoenix reclinata - Fairchild Garden, Miami

RIGHT
FOREL, Oscar
Synchromies #24
Honolulu, Hawaii



Installation view of **Karla Nixon's**
If I Could Piece Together, 2024.
Paper, acrylic paint, string and glue
Artist Collection



51

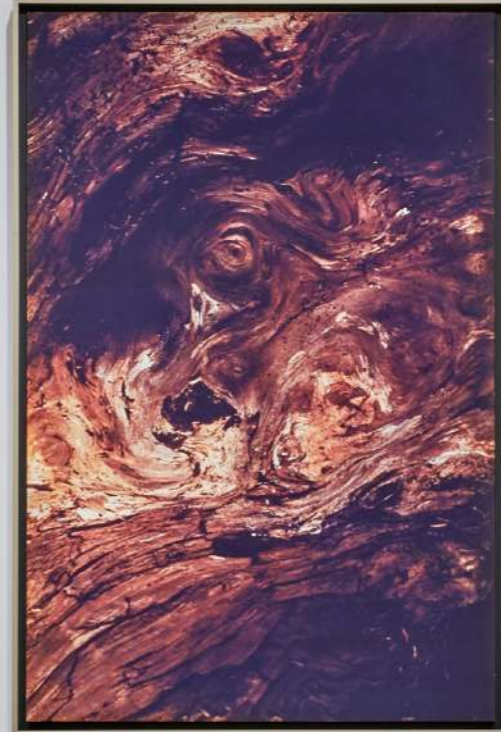
31



18



23



40

17



10



44



32

PREVIOUS PAGE

FOREL, Oscar

Synchromies #51

Banana-tree - Lacarno, Switzerland

Synchromies #31

Psidium quajava - Costa Rica

Synchromies #18

Aloe arborescens - Natal, South Africa

Synchromies #23

Eucalyptus - Los Angeles California

Synchromies #40

Picea excelsa - Derborence, Switzerland

Synchromies #17

Banana tree (convergency of large basal leaves) -
Sri Lanka

Synchromies #10

Bark of a coco-nut palm - North America

Synchromies #44

Veitchia joannis - Honolulu, Hawaii

Synchromies #32

Parrotia persica - Kew Garden, London

Detail of:

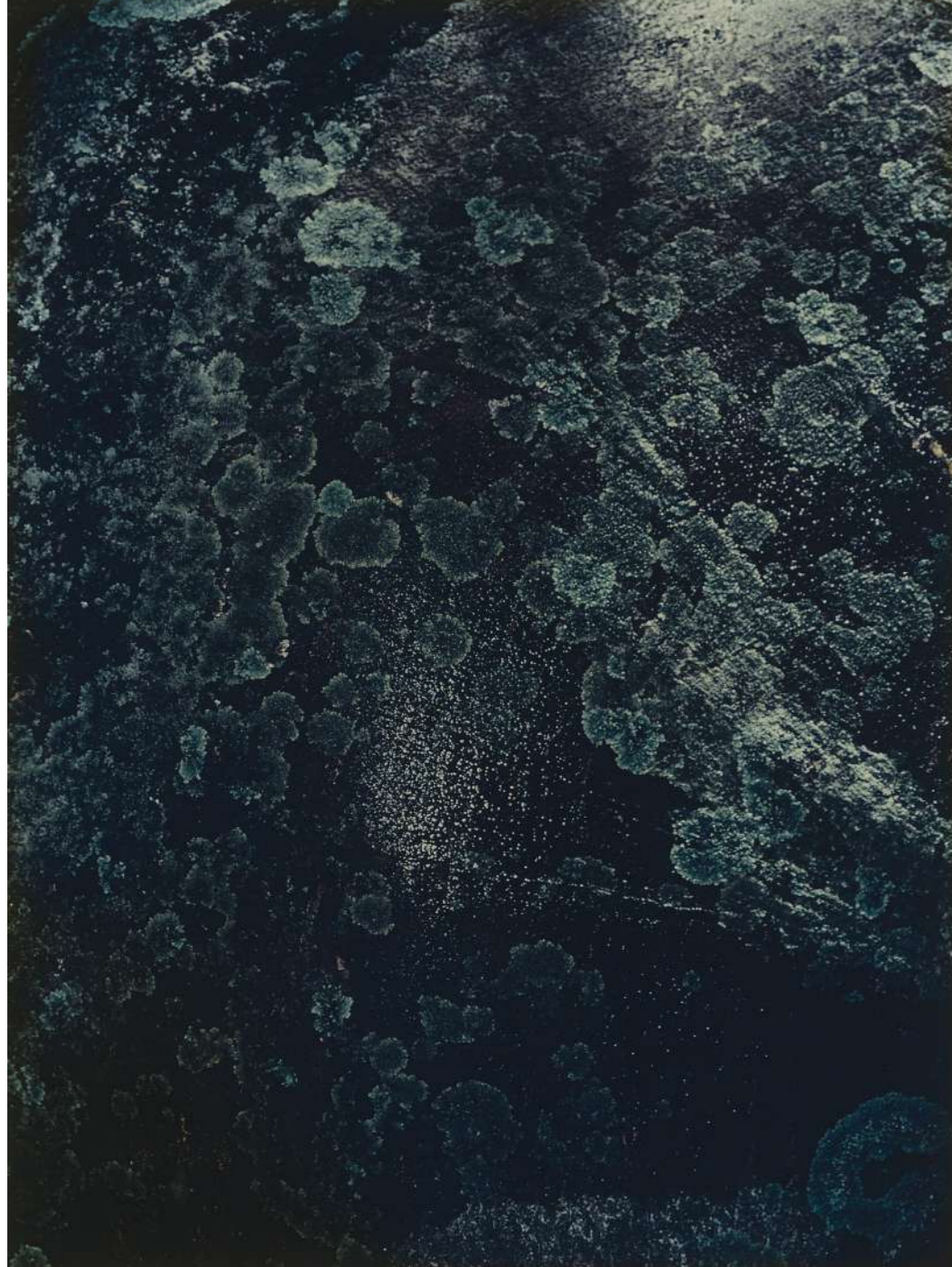
Karla Nixon's

If I Could Piece Together, 2024

Paper, acrylic paint, string and glue

Artist Collection





RIGHT
BOYS, George (1930-2014)
Daeraad, 1963. Oil on board
Rupert Art Foundation Collection

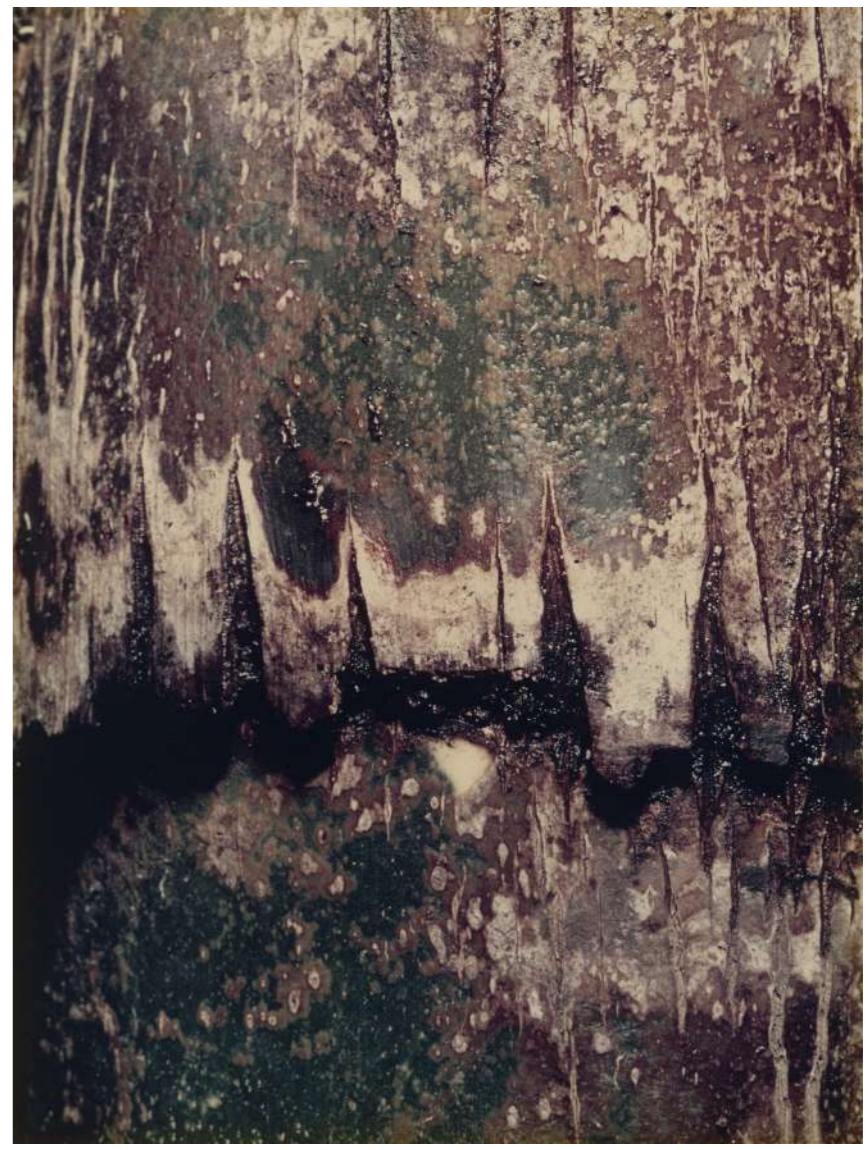
CENTRE
FOREL, Oscar
Synchromies #2
Eucalyptus deglupta - Koloa-Kauai, Honolulu

LEFT
FOREL, Oscar
Synchromies #33
Ficus racemosa - Costa Rica





Installation view of **Karla Nixon's**
Everyday Wear, 2023.
Plexiglass and steel cable
Artist Collection





PREVIOUS PAGE

LEFT

VAN DER REIS, Gunther (b1927)
Composition II, 1964. Acrylic on board
Rupert Art Foundation Collection

CENTRE TO RIGHT

FOREL, Oscar
Synchromies #26
Phoenix reclinata - Fairchild Garden, Miami

Synchromies #22
Palm-tree - Koloa-Kauai, Hawaii

Synchromies #53
Bark of an old palm-tree - Jamaica



CURRENT PAGE

LEFT TO RIGHT

FOREL, Oscar
Synchromies #35
Clinostigma ponapense - Honolulu, Hawaii

Synchromies #8
Xylia xylocarpa - Burma, Sri Lanka

Synchromies #19
Pachira sessilis - Panama

Detail of:
Karla Nixon's
Everyday Wear, 2023.
Plexiglass and steel cable
Artist Collection





LEFT
ORMISTON, Georgina (1903-1967)
Autumn Frolic, 1962. Oil on gesso
Rupert Art Foundation Collection

TOP RIGHT
FOREL, Oscar
Synchromies #4
Palm Tree - Botanical Garden, Honolulu

BOTTOM RIGHT
FOREL, Oscar
Synchromies #28
Acer rufinerve - Kew Garden, London



FOREL, Oscar
Hidden Art in Nature, Carpets



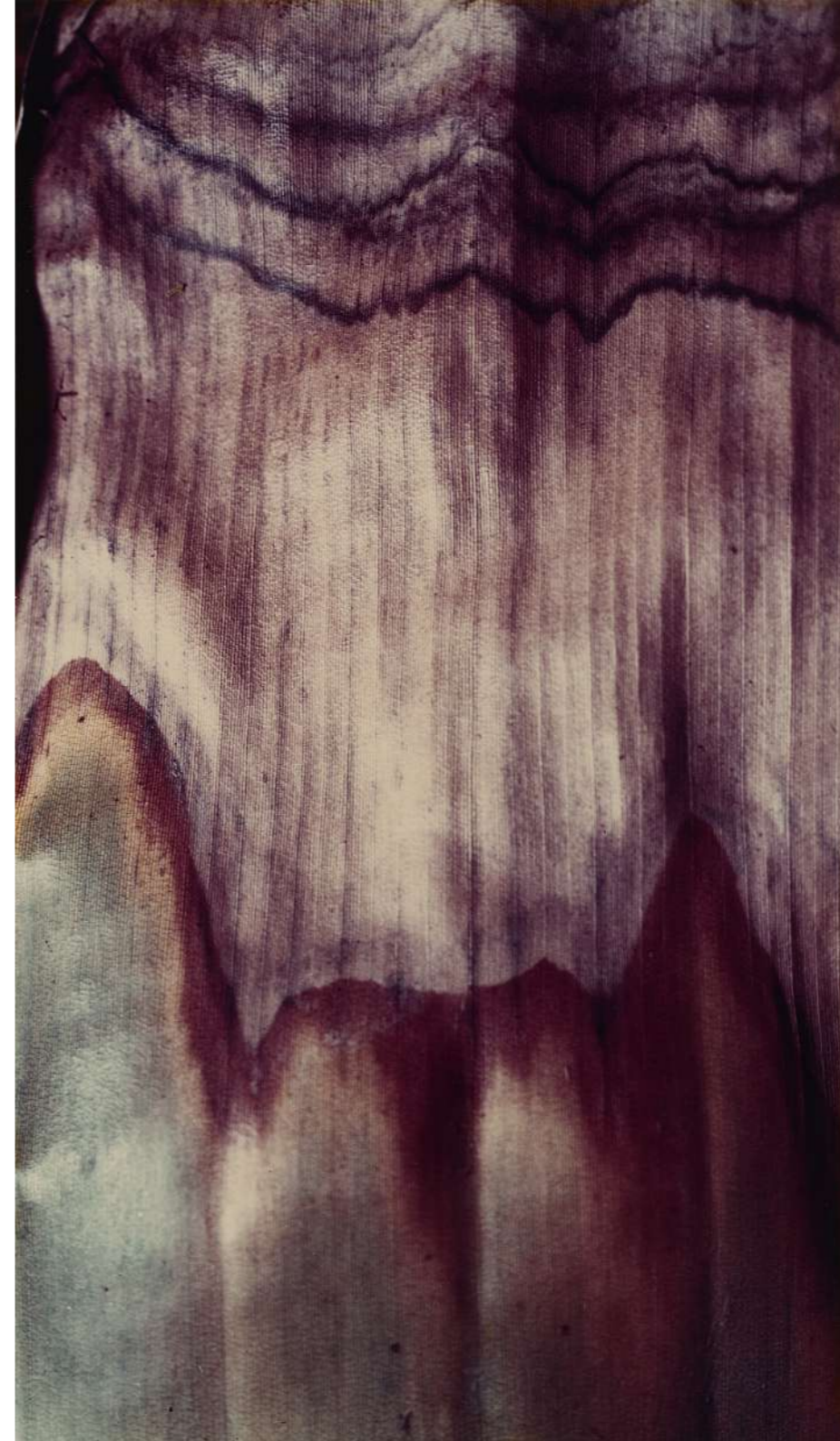
Installation view
Strijdom van der Merwe
A Study in Curvature, 2023.
3mm bended plywood
Artist Collection

LEFT
FOREL, Oscar
Synchomies #6
Euphorbia ingens - Natal, South Africa



RIGHT
HIGGS, Cecil (1898-1986)
Sea anemones, 1959. Oil on canvas
Rupert Art Foundation Collection





LEFT
CILLIERS-BARNARD, Bettie (1914-2010)
Late Afternoon, 1964. Oil on board
Rupert Art Foundation Collection

CENTRE
FOREL, Oscar
Synchronies #43
Palm-tree - Koloa-Kauai, Hawaii

RIGHT
FOREL, Oscar
Synchronies #38
Strelitzia nicolai - Los Angeles, California



LEFT
COETZEE, Christo (1929-2000)
Diamond spaceship landing, 1963.
Mixed media
Rupert Art Foundation Collection

CENTRE TO RIGHT
FOREL, Oscar
Synchronies #14
Palm-tree - Honolulu, Hawaii

Synchronies #11
Bamboo bud - Koloa-Kauai, Honolulu

Synchronies #21
Clinostigma ponapense - Honolulu, Hawaii

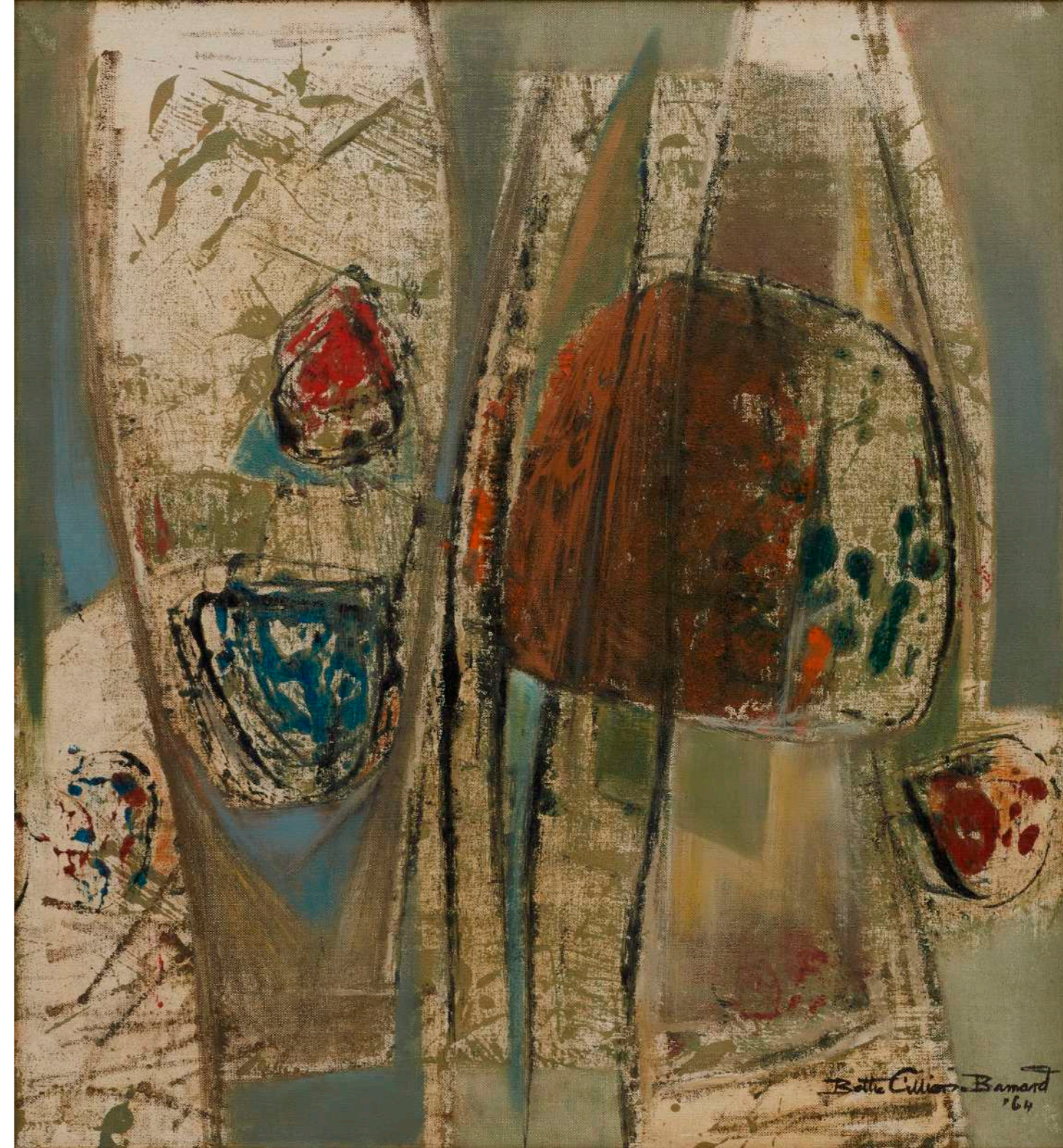


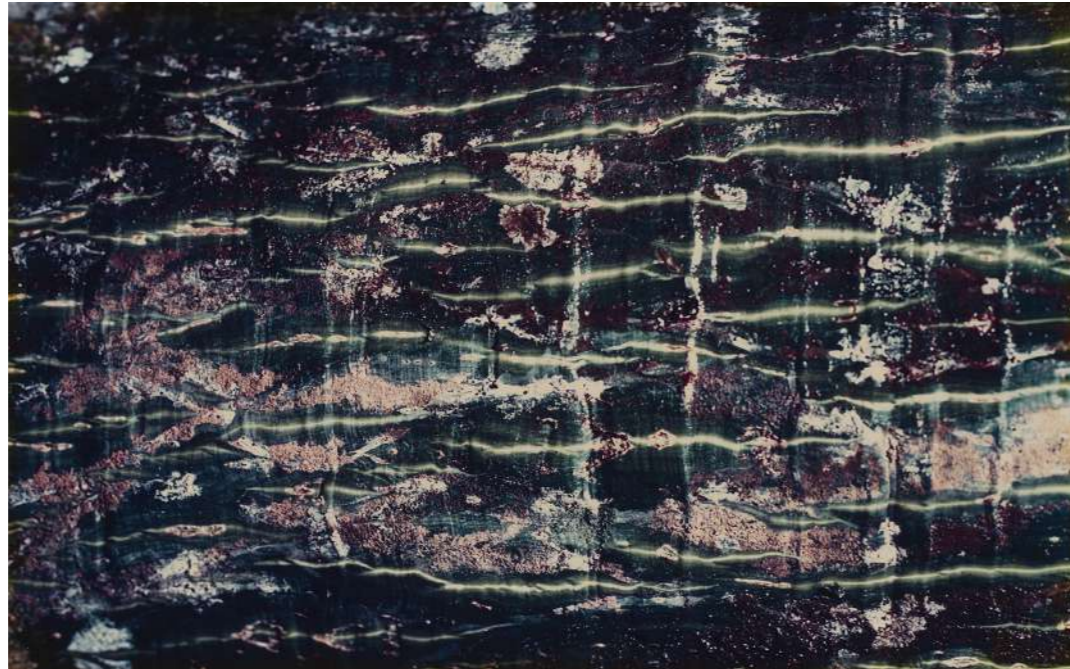
VAN DER MERWE, Strijdom
Close up of *A Study in Curvature*, 2023.
3mm banded plywood
Artist Collection

RIGHT
CILLIERS-BARNARD, Bettie (1914-2010)
Rotsjuwele, 1964, Oil on canvas
Rupert Art Foundation Collection



LEFT
FOREL, Oscar
Synchromies #1
Eucalyptus - Los Angeles California



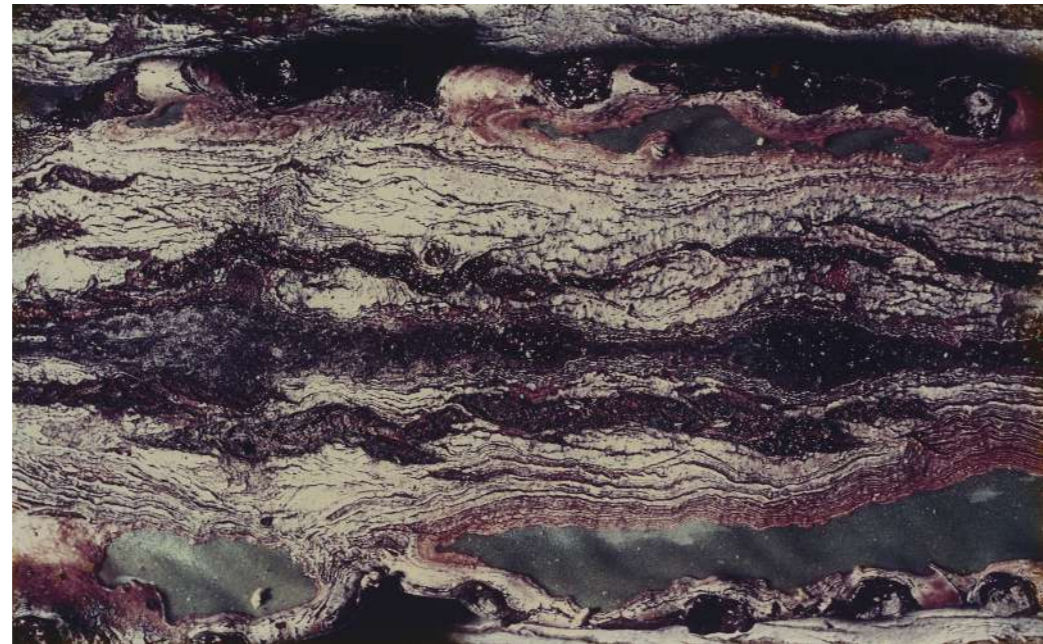


TOP LEFT
FOREL, Oscar
Synchromies #37
Ficus retusa - Honolulu, Hawaii

BOTTOM LEFT
Synchromies #12
Pseudobombax ellipticum - Honolulu, Hawaii

CENTRE
Synchromies #20
Bombax (Bombacaceae) - Honolulu, Hawaii

RIGHT
Synchromies #41
Ceiba insignis - Botanical Garden, Los Angeles

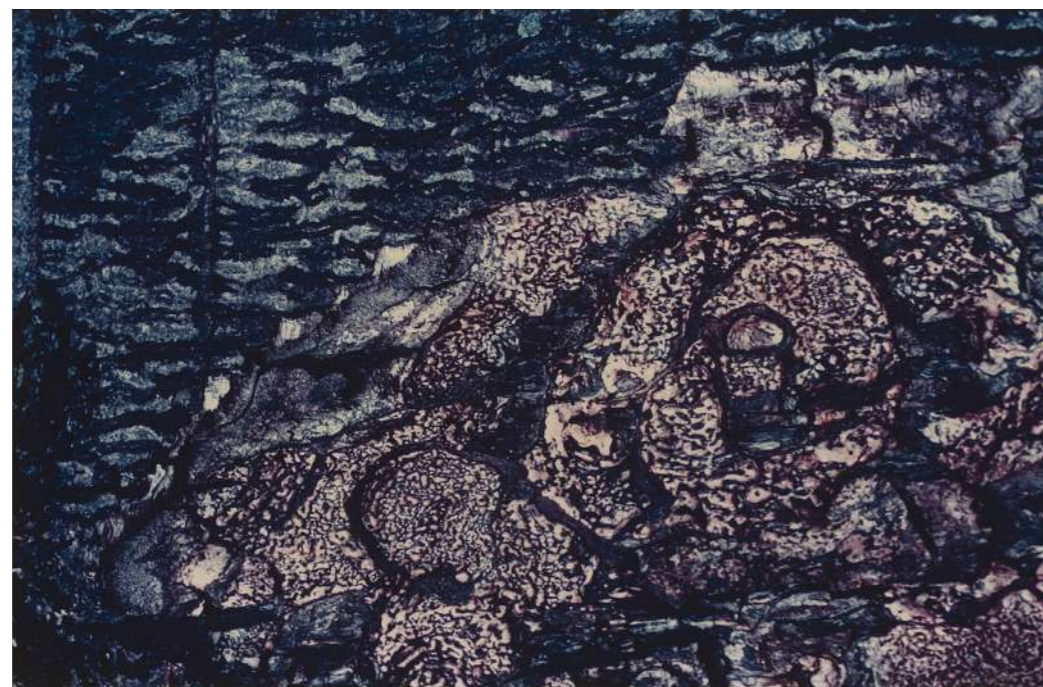


TOP

FOREL, Oscar

Synchromies #52

Euphorbia disclusa - Abyssinia



BOTTOM

FOREL, Oscar

Synchromies #42

Eucalyptus - Botanical Garden, Los Angeles

FAR RIGHT

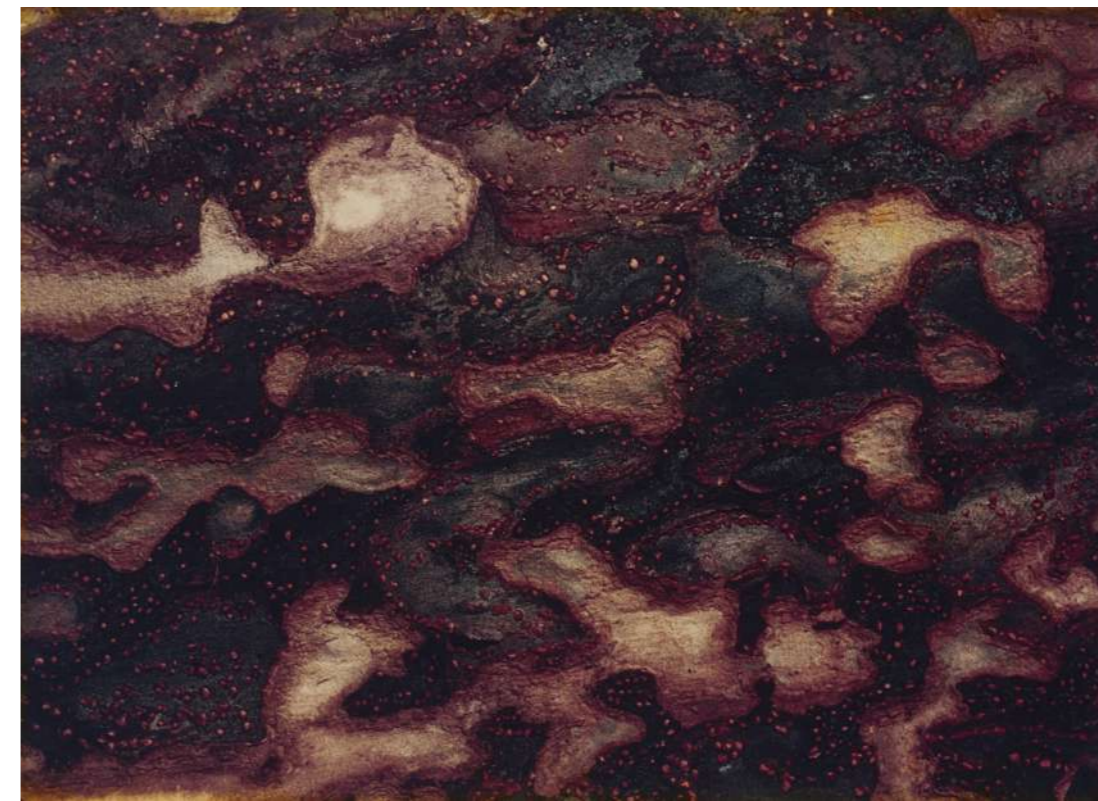
Installation view of **Karla Nixon's**

Where You Are, 2024.

Paper, acrylic paint, string and glue

Artist Collection





LEFT
VERSTER, Andrew (1937-2020)
Diptych D, 1986. Oil on canvas
Rupert Art Foundation Collection

TOP
FOREL, Oscar
Synchromies #15
Eucalyptus deglupta - Koloa-Kauai, Hawaii

BOTTOM
FOREL, Oscar
Synchromies #9
Bark of an unidentified tree - Island of Madre, Italy

Installation view of **Karla Nixon's**
Where You Are, 2024.
Paper, acrylic paint, string and glue
Artist Collection





LEFT
LAUBSCHER, Erik (1927-2013)
Landscape: Riviersonderend
1964. Oil on board
Rupert Art Foundation Collection

TOP
FOREL, Oscar
Synchromies #7
Musa paradisiaca -
Kanda Rikillagaskada, Sri Lanka

BOTTOM
FOREL, Oscar
Synchromies #3
Eucalyptus - Botanical
Garden, Honolulu



RIGHT
DU TOIT, Paul (1922-1986)
Onpeilbare Dieptes, 1983. Acrylic on canvas
Rupert Art Foundation Collection

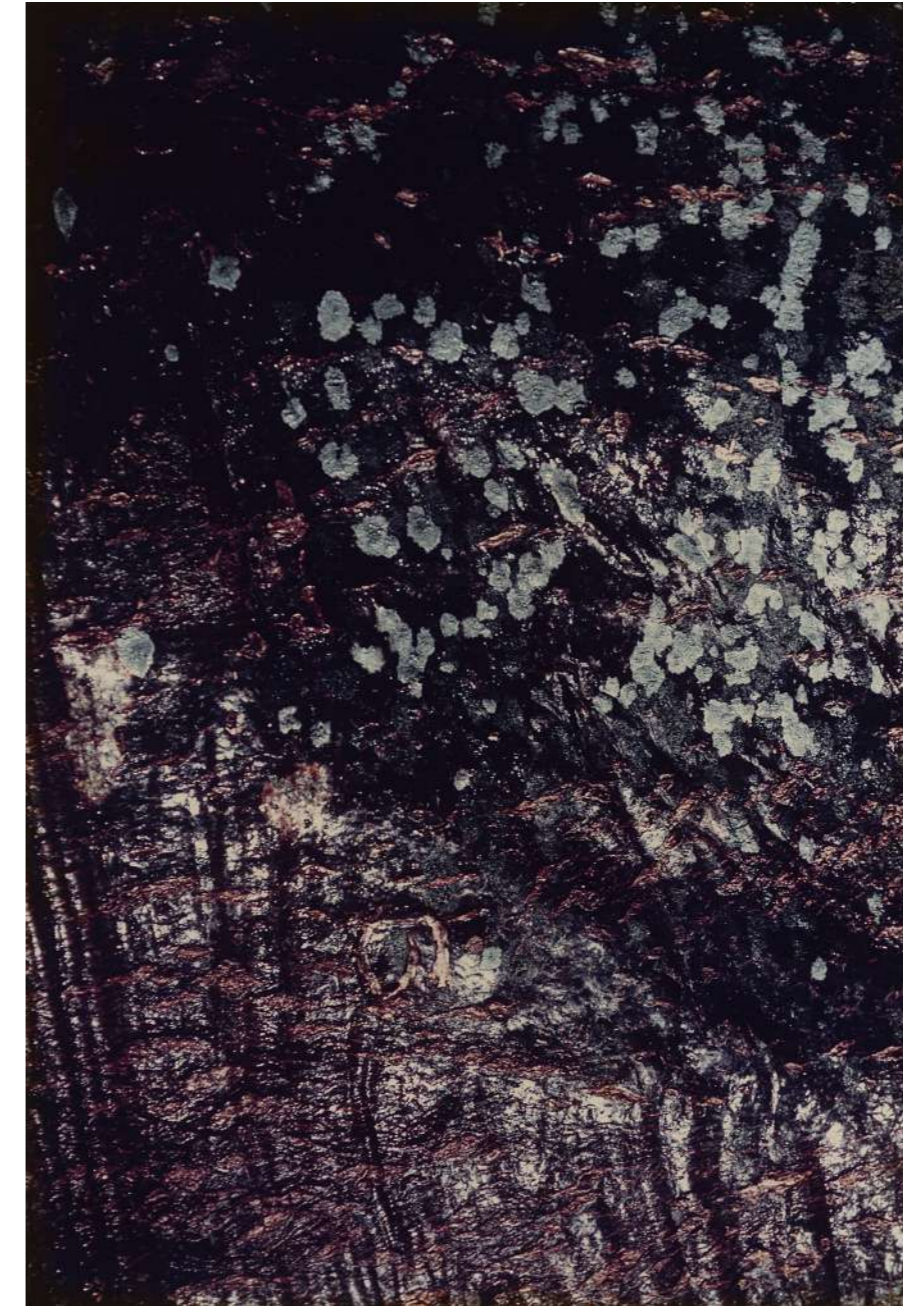


CENTRE
FOREL, Oscar
Synchromies #36
Eucalyptus - Koloa-Kauai, Honolulu

RIGHT
FOREL, Oscar
Synchromies #39
Sequoia (base of tree trunk partly burnt) -
San Francisco, California

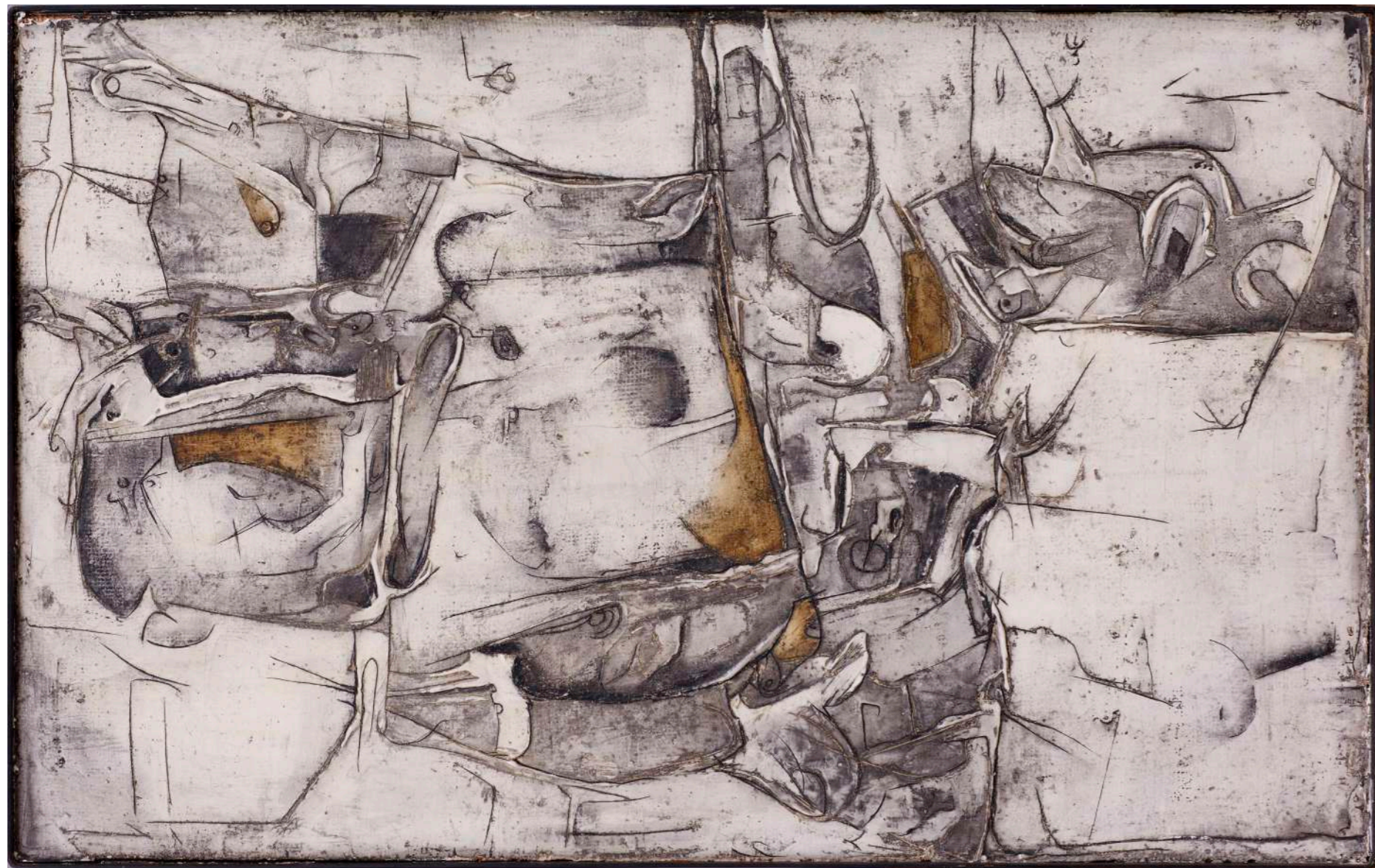


Eben van der Merwe '64

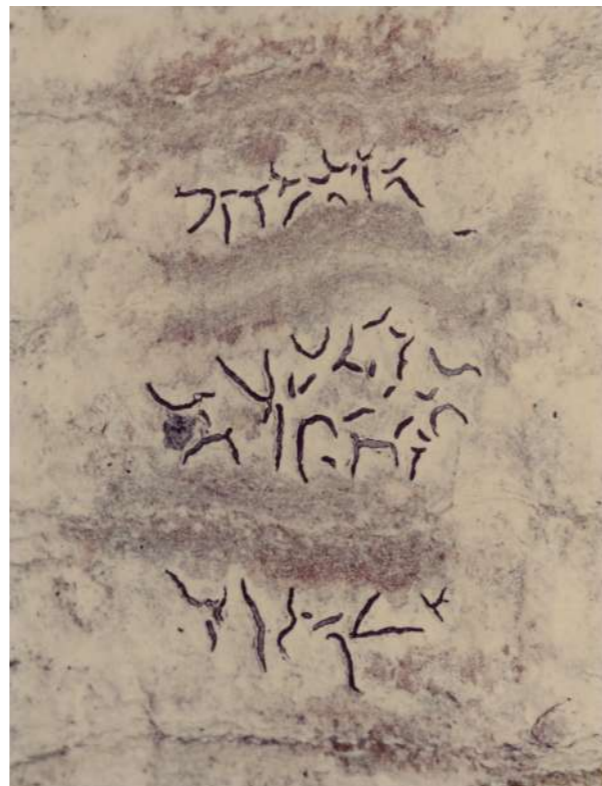


LEFT
VAN DER MERWE, Eben (b1932)
Landscape, 1964. Oil on board
Rupert Art Foundation Collection

RIGHT
FOREL, Oscar
Synchronies #27
Cassia (Leguminosae) - Costa Rica



SASH, Cecily (1925-2019)
Concept nr 2, 1963. Oil on plaster
Rupert Art Foundation Collection



LEFT
FOREL, Oscar
Synchronies #55
Fagus sylvatica - Foothills of Jura
mountains, Switzerland



TOP
Synchronies #45
Bark of a birch - St Prex, Switzerland



BOTTOM
Synchronies #25
Hawaiian 'electric tree' - Honolulu, Hawaii

OPEN CALL 2024
Enquires at
opencall@rupertmuseum.org
rupertmuseum.org

