

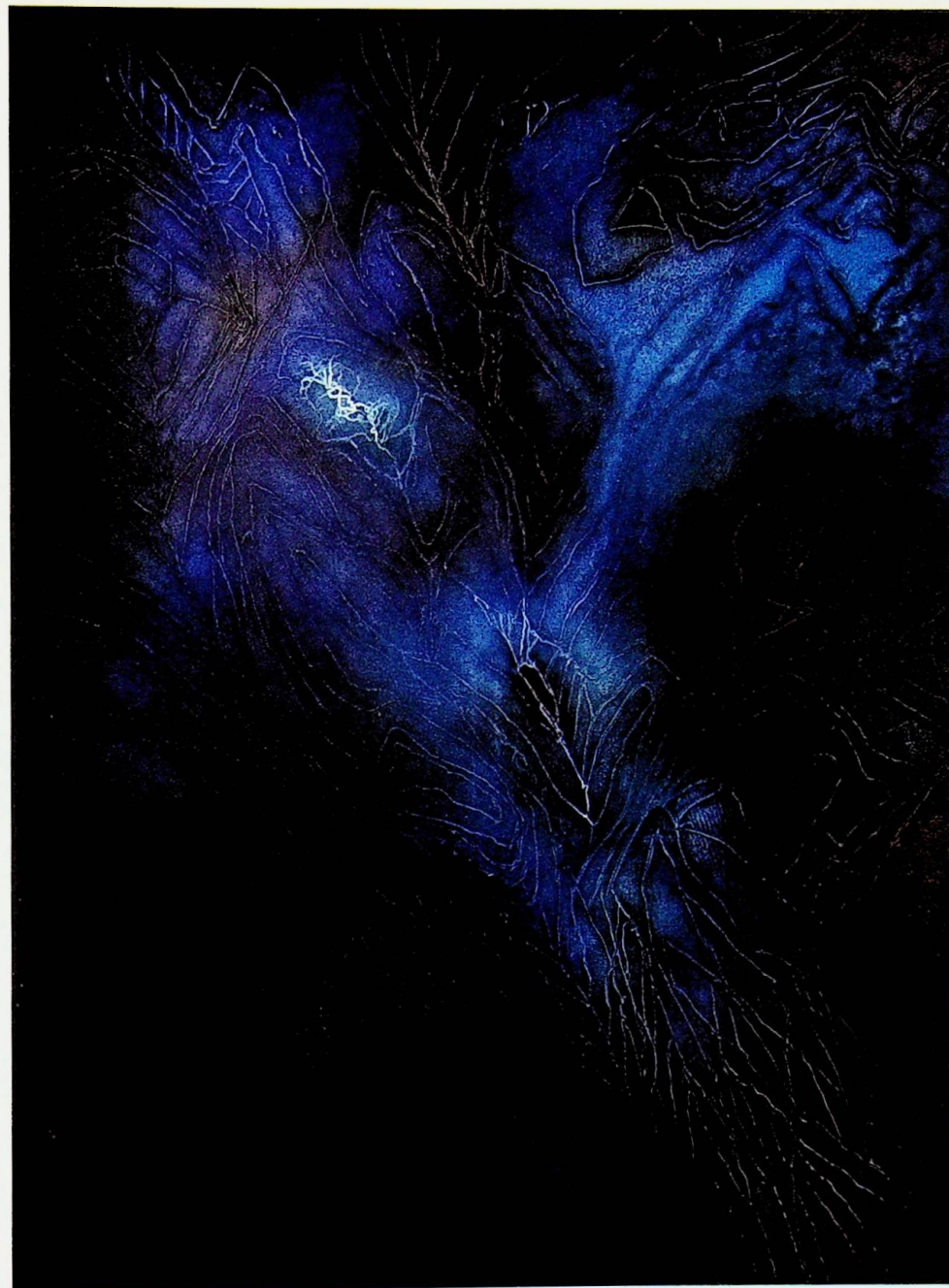
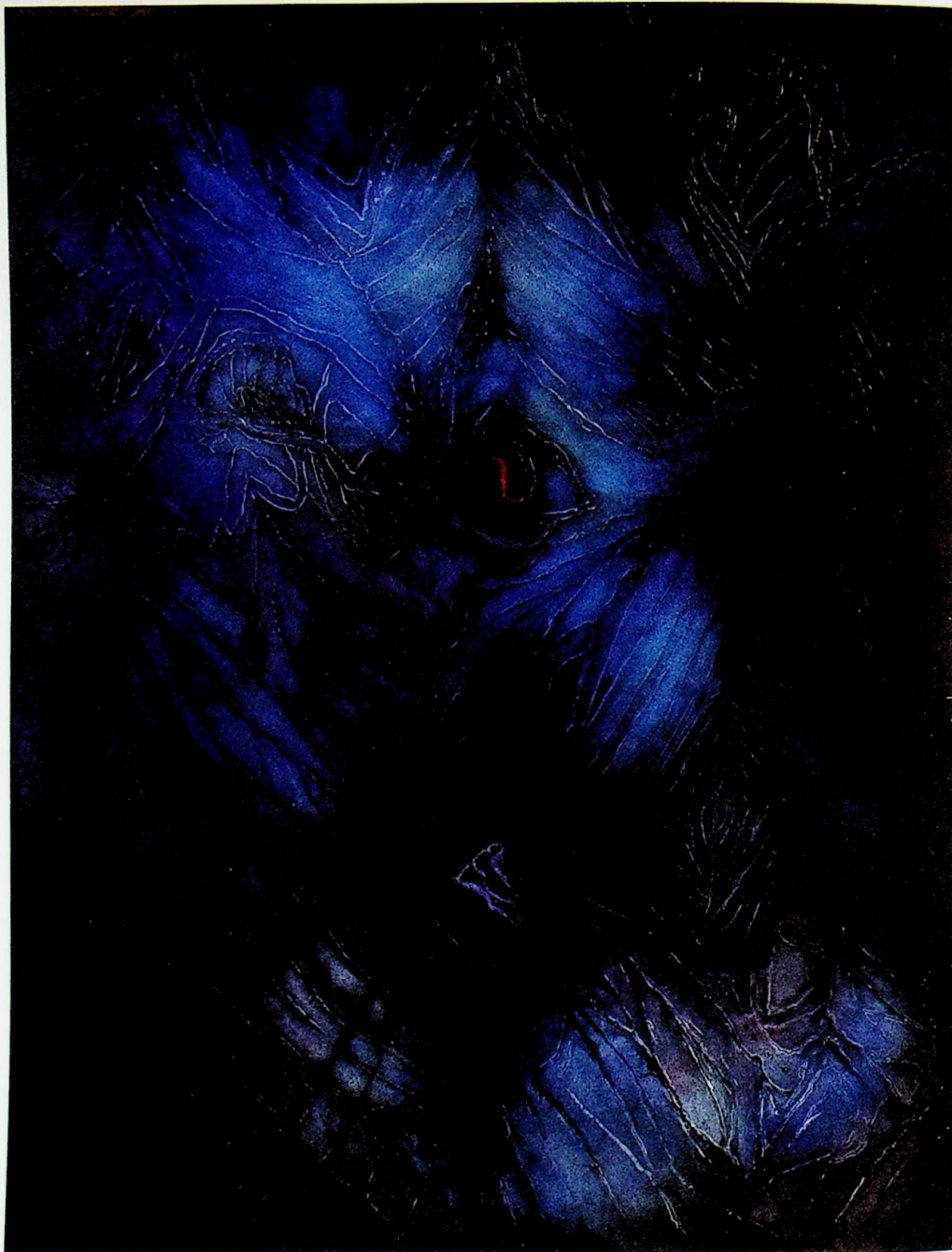
BISERKA BARETIĆ
ODAJE VATRE

Galerija Forum, 8. 2. - 9. 3. 2019.



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Feda Gavrilović

„Dugo smo se zadržali u odajama mora / Uz morske djevice što su im crvenim i smeđim algama ovjenčane kose / Dok nas glasovi ljudski ne probude, i mi davimo se.“ Tako otprilike (u prijevodu) zvuče posljednji stihovi T. S. Eliotove *Ljubavne pjesme J. Alfreda Prufrocka*. Vizija ljudske usamljenosti i unutarnje pustoši ljudskog duha provlači se u toj pjesmi kroz neobične i zadivljujuće metafore, kroz stihove nabijene nedefiniranom tugom, nemogućnošću izraza i neodlučnošću prouzrokovanom uvjerenjem kako je svaka odluka besmislena. Cijela ta samorefleksija lirskog subjekta – otkriva nam se u zadnjim stihovima – tek je san u dubokim „odajama mora“, ili u dubini svijesti. No, u tim smo prostorima slobodni za (kako piše) „stotinu neodlučnosti“ i „stotinu vizija i revizija / Prije tosta i čaja“, slobodni za razmišljanje i promišljanje o svom životu, koje je, iako možda tjeskobno, zapravo ugodno poput plesa s morskim djevicama: dubina mora štiti nas od stvarnosti poput vlažne maternice. A paradoksalno, kada nas probude ljudski glasovi, kada iz te duboke tišine kroz koju zvuk teško putuje izronimo na površinu svakodnevnih interakcija, kada treba „pripremiti lice za susret s licima koja ćeš susresti“, gušimo se (kao što bismo inače pod vodom) u tim brojnim neželjenim kontaktima. Unutarnji bijeg je, za lirskog subjekta *Prufrocka*, jedino mjesto gdje se osjeća ugodno, razliveno poput mačke (kako je metaforički označava u pjesmi: „žute magle“) u toploj listopadskoj noći.

I još je nešto prividno paradoksalno. Tek usred Drugoga svjetskog rata, dakle golemog i krvavog sukoba, Eliot je iz segmentirane svijesti individuuma pronašao viziju njegova povezivanja s društvom, poviješću, svijetom i metafizičkim smislom čovjeka; u poemi *Četiri kvarteta*. Kažem prividno paradoksalno, jer je taj rat označio kraj modernizma i utopijskih vizija pojedinačnih izmučenih i vizionarskih svijesti. Nakon njega, povijest su u svoje ruke uzeli tehnokrati, sa zadaćom da novi sanjari poput Hitlera ili Staljina ne provedu u praksu svoja rješenja za čovjekovo oslobođenje od tjeskobe suvremene civilizacije. Svijet postaje sve usustavljeniji, a umjetnost, kao izraz čovjekova tragičnog shvaćanja svoga mjesta u njemu, sve nepotrebnija, svedena na dekoraciju, sterilnu dosjetku i, na koncu, dobro utrživu robu. Mogućnosti slikarstva u takvom svijetu više su puta dovedene u pitanje, ali i oživljene. Kako umjetnost ne trpi nikakve utopije, pa ni ovu birokratsku, stvarateljima se poticajnim još uvijek čini zagledati se u često stravične predjele ljudske svijesti, kopati po smradnim podrumima Pocovih i Lovecraftovih obiteljskih kuća, uzrujavati se prekomjerno pri svakom iskustvu stvarnosti, mučiti sebe vječnim pitanjima, bizarno zavodljivim, kao što su to golišave, poluribaste sirene.

Biserka Baretić stasala je s generacijom slikara koji su nakon Drugoga svjetskog rata uporno ispitali nove mogućnosti slike. U njezinim enformelnim, apstraktnim kompozicijama (primjerice *Među zemljom* iz 1961.), kao i u nadrealnim figurativnim prikazima (*Kazališna kavana*, iz 1959.), područje bavljenja uvijek je bila tjeskoba i ljudska usamljenost. Umjetničko stvaralaštvo, sklad koji je moguće postići u isijavanju boje na platnu, kod nje predstavljaju temeljni smisao i opravdanje pojedinog života.

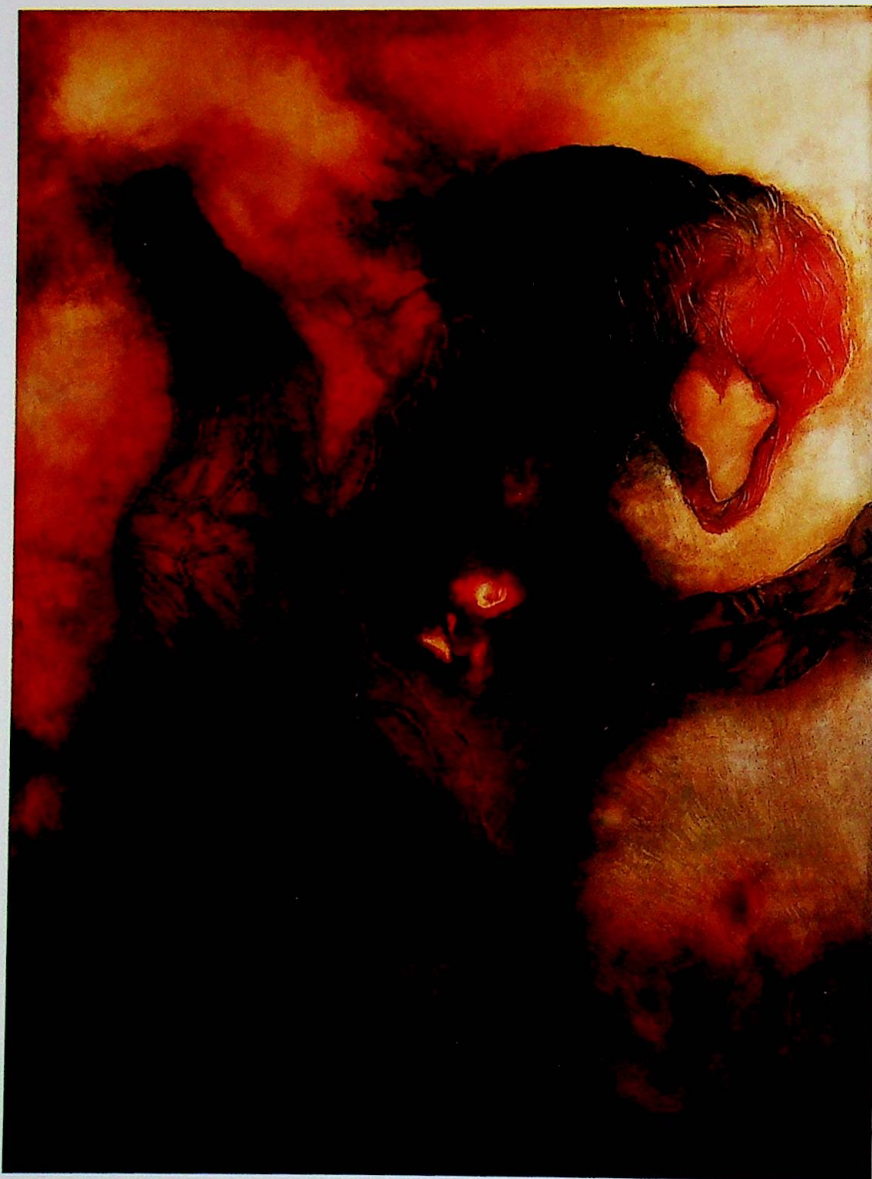
Takve svjetonazore možemo vidjeti i na njezinim novijim slikama koje su svjedočanstvo goleme energije u neprestanom izgaranju. Tu je, recimo, slika *Orfičko pjevanje*, spoj dviju njezinih kolorističkih preokupacija – užareno crvene i tamno plave. Njihov prijelaz i međusobno sljubljuvanje i pretapanje, jedinstvo u kojemu jedna izranja iz druge, podsjećaju na učinke sunčeva svjetla koje vidimo na nebu. Vječna ljudska fascinacija tim prostranim svodom nad nama prenosi se na fascinaciju koju pruža ova slika, pa bismo nju mogli označiti umjetničnim *Unutarjim nebom*, kao pandan njezinom *Unutarnjem moru*, velikom plavom diptihu iz kojega sjaje proplamsaji žute, kao mistične poruke iz dubina.

Reljefno istaknute linije na platnima Biserke Baretić otkrivaju početnu linearnu strukturu koja drži te kompozicije bogatog namaza boje, tamnog, opalescentnog sjaja. One nas vode površinom slike pokazujući nam njezino tijelo, koje se otkriva u brojnim oblicima i formama koje možemo i ne moramo prepoznati. Te forme nisu uvijek smirujuće i meditativne, kao na već navedenim slikama ili na slici *Strune sfere*. One mogu sugerirati i strašna bića, poput onih na radovima *Moloh*, *Himera*, *Ja prica* ili *Užareni svod*. Žute i crvene boje, kao i linearne konstrukcije, podsjećaju nas ovdje na vatru, razorni element koji guta sve pred sobom (klasični atribut pakla) i sugeriraju destruktivnost tih čudnih stvorova. Skladno pjevanje i beskrajne sfere transformiraju se tako u danteovski nadrealne protagoniste unutrašnjih čovjekovih dvojbi i mučenja.

Ali vatra nije tek bezumno razorni element. Ukroćena, ona pomaže čovjeku u njegovu opstanku, a izgaranje je u povijesti civilizacije odigralo važne uloge za tehnološki napredak: od prvih ognjišta do raketnih pogona za istraživanje svemira. Mentalna, odnosno psihička izgaranja jednako su važna za umjetnika. Kada im se prepusti kao svojevrsnom rituelu pročišćenja samozapaljenjem, on može ukrotiti te vatre, zagospodariti njihovom silnom energijom, a potom njome pomoći drugima da i sami spoznaju i prihvate svoje demone, te učine od njih ljupke i poslušne kućne ljubimce.

Neobična bića iz imaginarija Biserke Baretić, te beštije iz kriptozoološke enciklopedije ili iz noćne more osobe s bujnom maštom, djeluju kao demoni naše osobne svijesti s kojima se borimo u Eliotovim „morskim odajama“ na dnu našeg bića. Koliko god ti stvorovi bili strašni, u njihovim toplim bojama i zatvorenim oblicima osjećamo neku prisnost. Ta hibridna čudovišta djeluju na nas kao dobro ugrijana soba srednjovjekovnog redovnika, ili atelijer strašnog i šašavog Hieronymusa Boscha. U sigurnosti tih prostora (odaja) možemo promišljati strahote svijeta i paklena bića, pa im se ponekada i nasmijati (ali krišom, da ih ne naljutimo), jer su na koncu to sve tvorevine našeg uma. *Unutarnje more* Biserke Baretić mjesto je spoznaje sebe i sigurnosti u vlastitu ličnost, koja sjaji kao svjetionik. To je i more iz posljednjih stihova *Prufrocka*, u kojemu u ovom slučaju plivaju čudesne i zlokobne zvijeri, ali i spomenuta vizija sveopćeg jedinstva, cjeline i međupovezanosti svega što postoji iz stihova *Četiri kvarteta*: „rijeka je u nama, more oko nas.“

Himera, 2017., ulje na platnu, 200 x 150 cm /
Chimera, 2017, oil on canvas, 200 x 150 cm

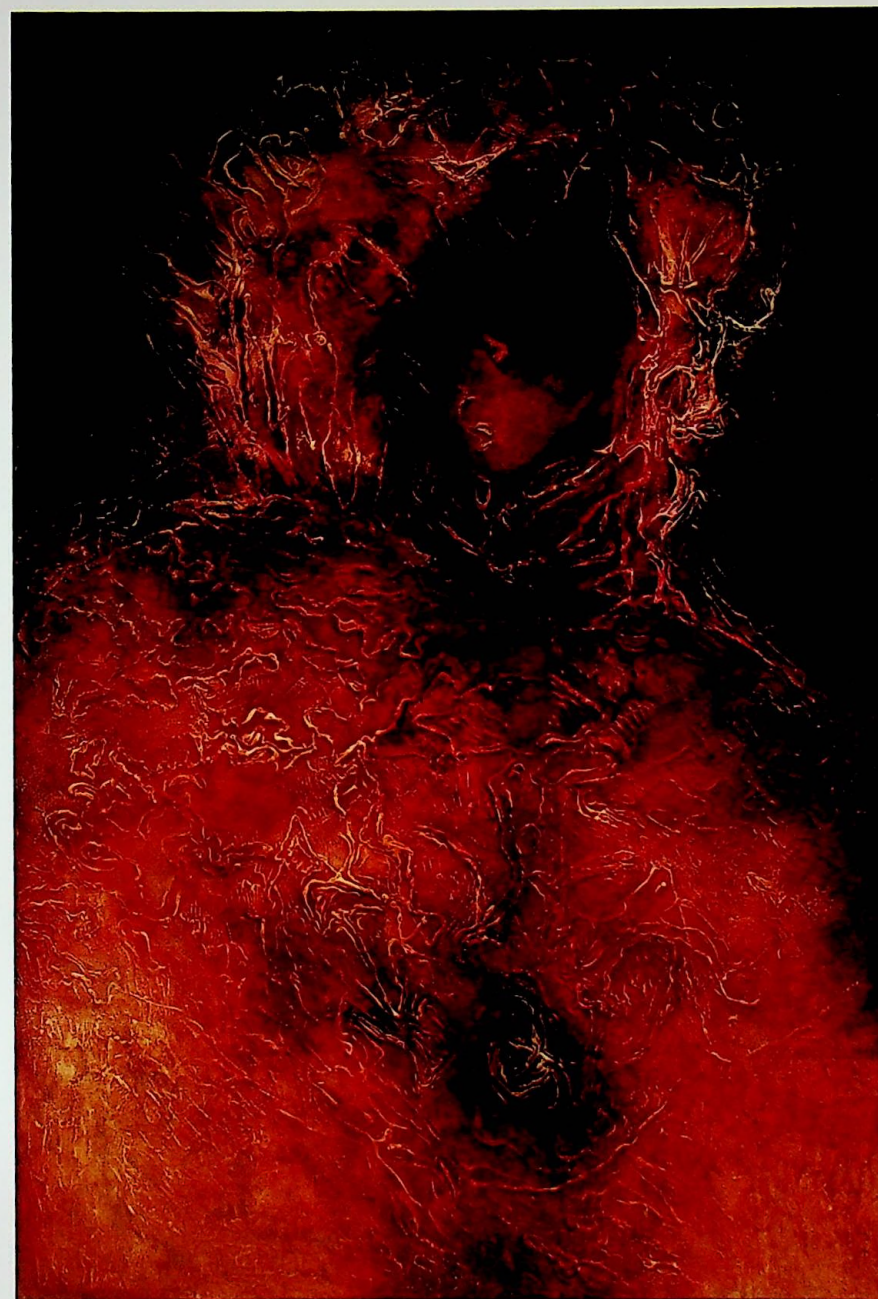
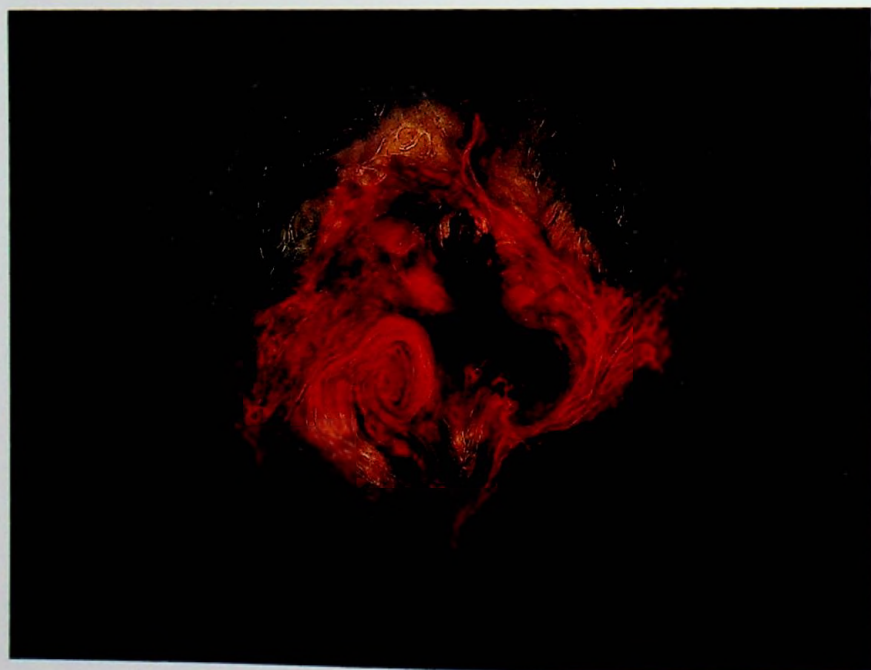


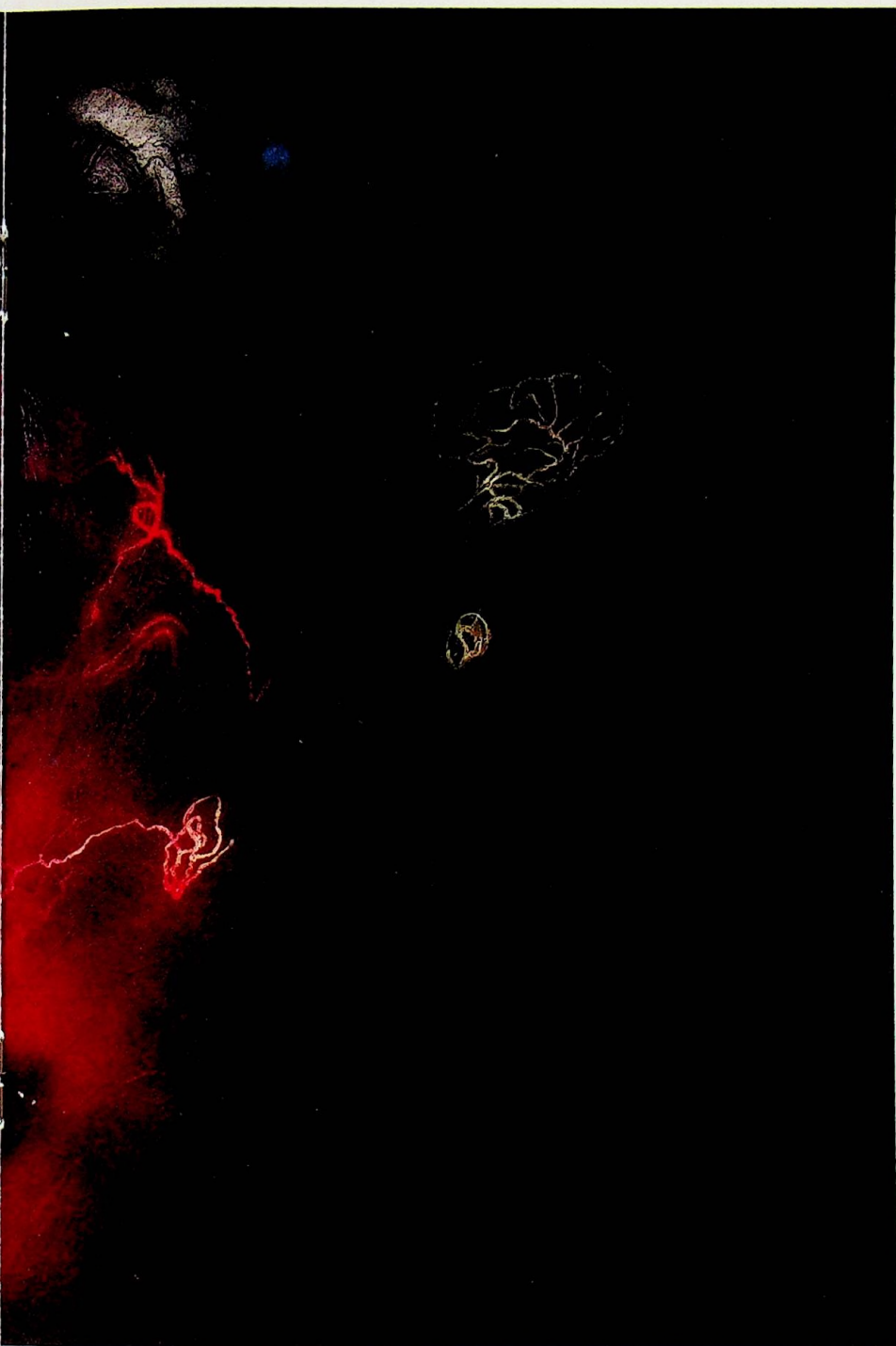
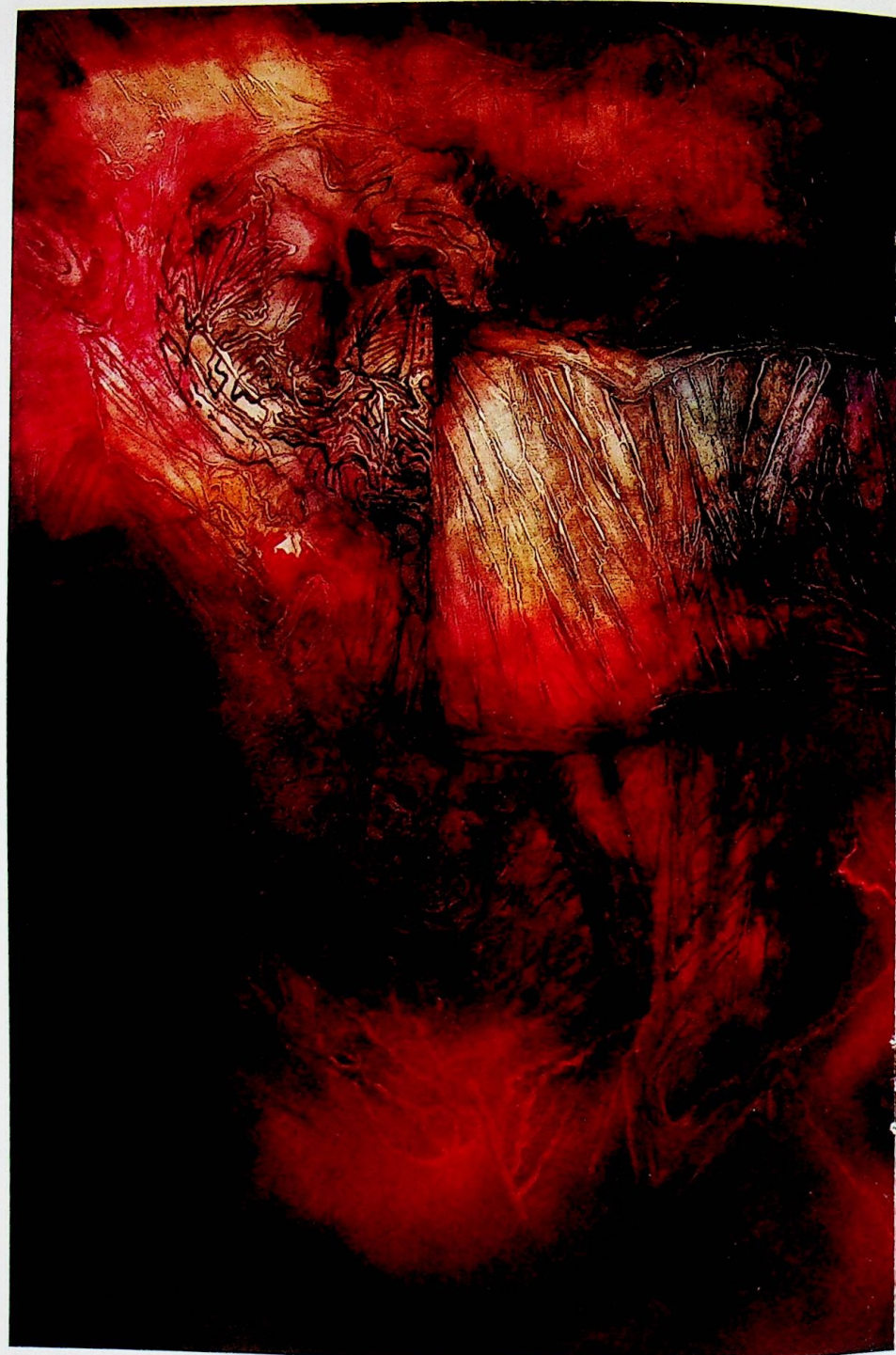
la priča, 2016., ulje na platnu, 200 x 150 cm /
I a Bird, 2016, oil on canvas, 200 x 150 cm



na strani 11: *Moloch*, 2014., ulje na platnu, 150 x 100 cm /
 page 11: *Moloch*, 2014, oil on canvas, 150 x 100 cm

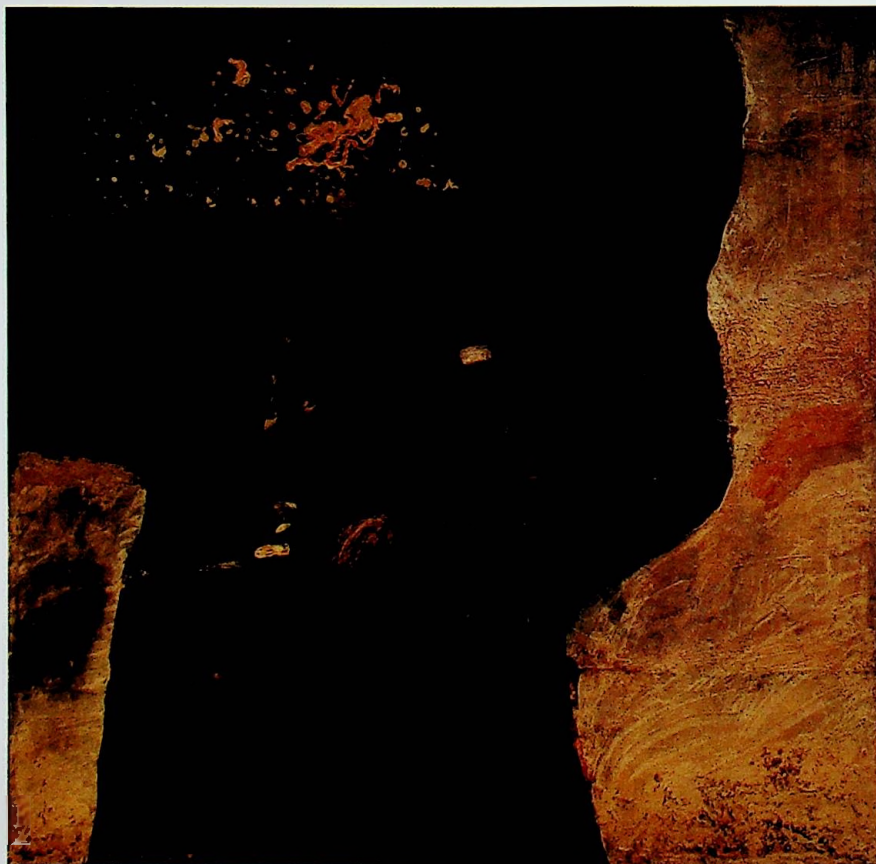
Hvatač snova, 2013., ulje na platnu, 150 x 200 cm /
Dream Catcher, 2013, oil on canvas, 150 x 200 cm



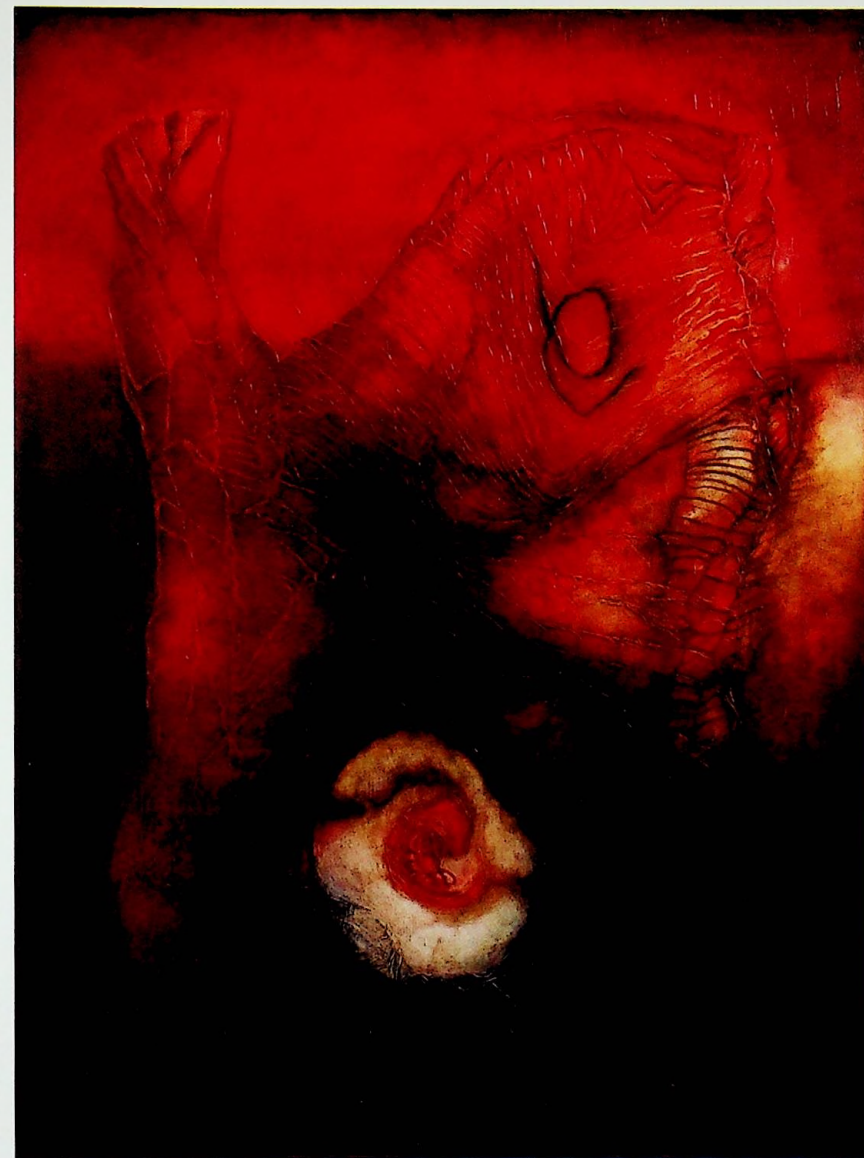


na strani 12 i 13: *Orfičko pjevanje*, diptih, 2009. - 2018., ulje na platnu, 150 x 200 cm /
pages 12 and 13: *Orphic Singing*, diptych, 2009 - 2018, oil on canvas, 150 x 200 cm

Medu zemljom, 1961., ulje na platnu, 121 x 118 cm /
Inter-Earth, 1965, oil on canvas, 121 x 118 cm



Užareni svod, 2015., ulje na platnu, 200 x 150 cm /
Incandescent Vault, 2015, oil on canvas, 200 x 150 cm



CHAMBERS OF THE FIRE

Feda Gavrilović

"We have lingered in the chambers of the sea / By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown / Till human voices wake us, and we drown". Thus T. S. Eliot in the closing lines of *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. A vision of human loneliness and the inner wastelands of the human spirit wind through this poem in its uncommon and marvelous metaphors, through verses replete with some undefined grief, some incapacity for expression and some indecisiveness caused by the belief that any decision is pointless. The whole of this self-reflexive lyrical subject, the last verses reveal to us, is just a dream in the chambers of the sea, in the depths, that is, of the consciousness. But in them we are free for (as is written) "a hundred indecisions / And for a hundred visions and revisions, / Before the taking of a toast and tea", free to think over and think through our lives that, if fretful, are actually as pleasant as a dance with the mermaids: the depth of the sea protects us from reality like a humid womb. And paradoxically, when human voices awaken us, when from this profound silence through which sound makes its way with difficulty, we emerge onto the surface of everyday interactions, to "prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet", we are asphyxiated (as otherwise we would be underwater) in these numerous undesired contacts. The internal flight, for the lyrical subject of *Prufrock*, is the only place where he feels comfortable, winding here and there like a cat (as the "yellow fog" is metaphorically signified in the poem) in the warm October night.

Something else is apparently paradoxical. Only during World War II, that vast and bloody conflict, was Eliot able to find from the segmented awareness of the individual a vision of his connection with society, history, the world and the metaphysical meaning of humanity in the poem *Four Quartets*. Apparently paradoxical, for this war marked the end of Modernism and the utopian visions of various tortured and visionary consciousnesses. After it, the technocrats took hold of history, with the assignment of making sure that no new dreamers of the like of Hitler and Stalin should be able to put into practice their solutions for human liberation from the anxieties of contemporary civilization. The world becomes increasingly systematized, but art, as expression of man's tragic understanding of his place in it, is less and less necessary, brought down to decoration, the quip and ultimately a commodity that could be rung up well. The chances for painting in this world were several times called into question, and yet revived. As art cannot abide utopias of any kind, not this bureaucratic version either, for the creative artist it still seems stimulating to stare into the often terrifying areas of the human consciousnesses, to scabble through the noisome cellars of the family houses of Poe and Lovecraft, get wildly upset at every experience of reality, cudgel oneself with the eternal questions, bizarrely seductive, like the flaunting fishy mermaids.

Biserka Baretić grew to maturity with the generation of painters who after World War II persistently tested out the new capacities of the painting. In her Informel and Abstract compositions (*Inter-Earth*, 1961) and in the surreal figurative depictions (*Theatre Café*, 1959) the area with which she engaged was always angst, human isolation. Artistic creation, the harmony that can be gained from the radiation of paint on canvas is in her the basic sense and justification of the individual life.

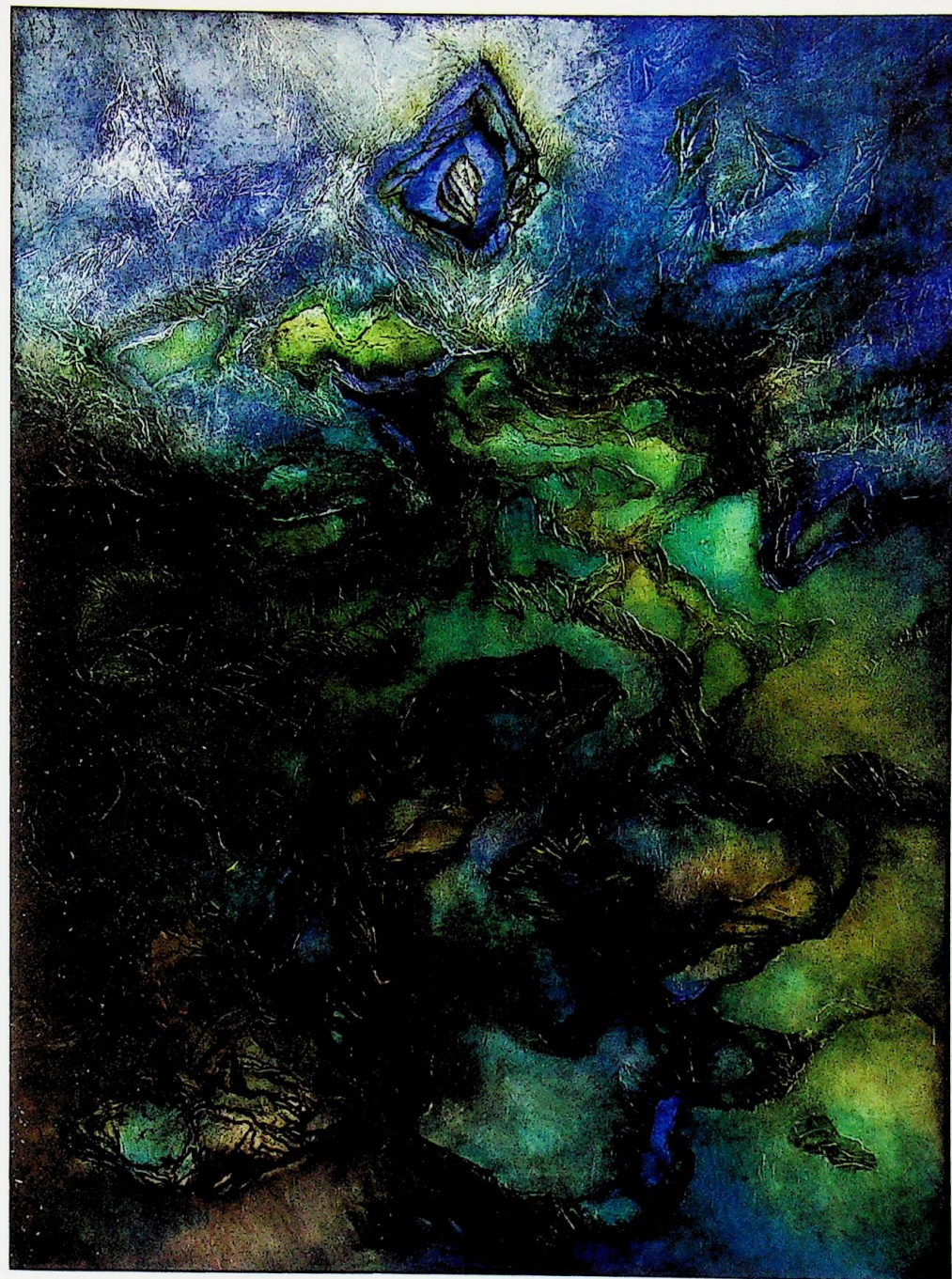
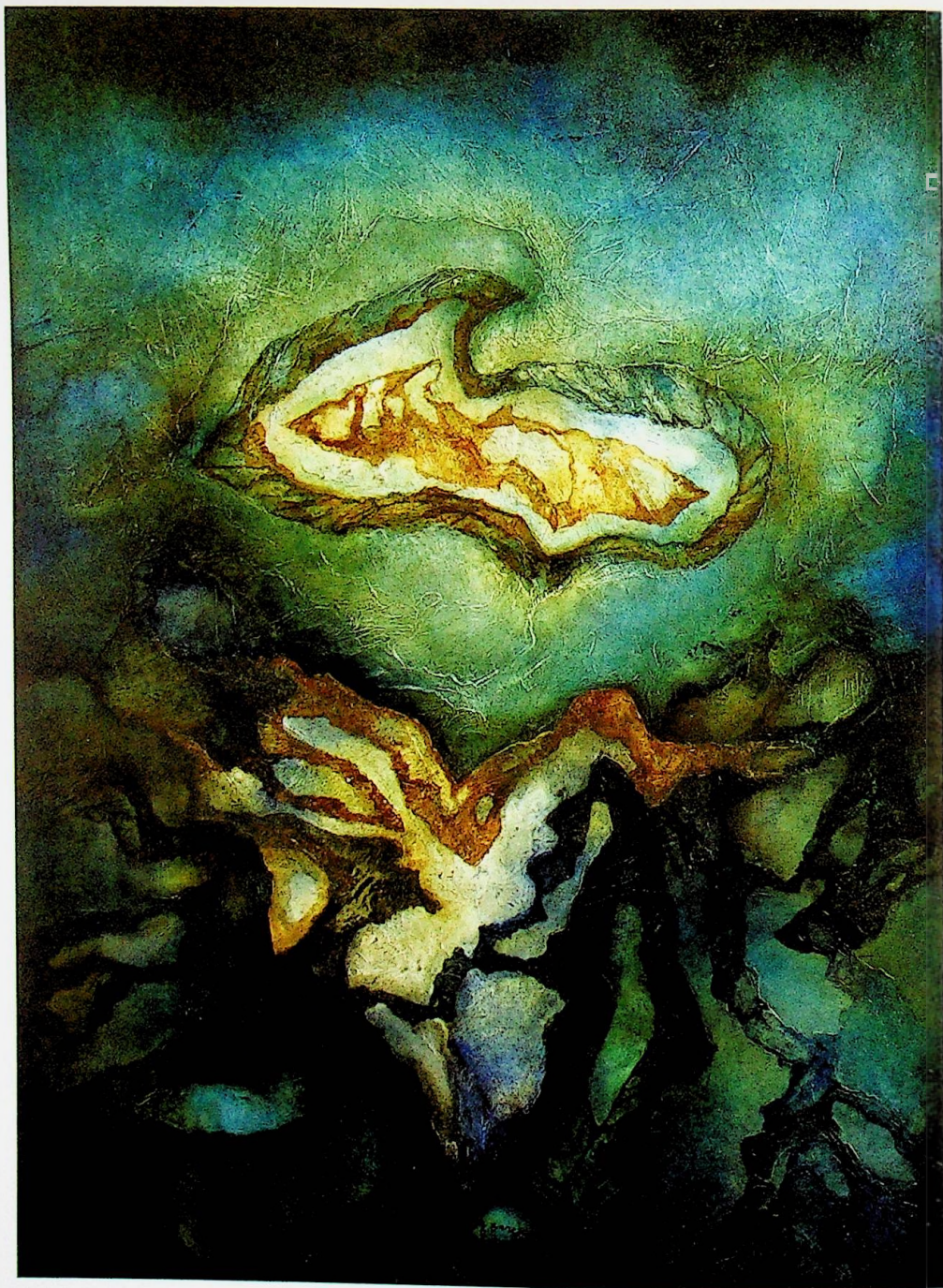
We can see similar worldviews in her recent paintings, telling of a vast energy in constant combustion. Here is, for example, the painting *Orphic Singing*, a combination of two of her colourist preoccupations – incandescent red and dark blue. Their passage and intermerging and joining, the unity in which one emerges from the other, recall the effects of sunlight that we see in the sky. The eternal human fascination with this great vault stretching over us is transferred to the fascination that this painting offers, and we might designate it the artist's *Inner Sky*, a match for her *Inner Sea*, a great blue diptych from which gleam flarings of yellow, mystical messages, as it were, from the depths.

The lines picked out in relief on the canvases of Biserka Baretić reveal an initial linear structure that holds these compositions, rich in their applications of colour, their dark and opalescent shining. They lead us along the surface of the painting, showing us its body, which is revealed in the numerous shapes and forms that we might but need not recognize. These forms are not always soothing or meditative, as on the already mentioned paintings or in the painting *Strings of the Sphere*. They can suggest frightful creatures like those in *Moloch*, *Chimera*, *I a Bird* or *Incandescent Vault*. Yellows and reds, as well as the linear constructions, remind us here of fire, a destructive element that engulfs all before it (the classical attribute of Hell) and suggest the destruction of these strange creatures. Harmonious singing and infinite spheres are transformed into the Dantesque surreal protagonists of human doubts and torments.

na strani 20 i 21: *Unutrašnje more (Sujetionik)*, diptih, 2018, ulje na platnu, 200 x 300 cm /
pages 20 and 21: *Inner Sea (Lighthouse)*, diptych, 2018, oil on canvas, 200 x 300 cm

Fire, though is not just a mindless and destructive element. Tamed, it is an aid to man in his survival, and combustion in the history of civilization has played important roles in technological progress, from the first hearths to rocket propulsion for the exploration of space. Mental or psychological combustion is equally important for the artist. When given into, as a kind of ritual of purging through self-immolation, it can tame these fires, master their mighty energy, and with it help others to know and accept their demons, making them into charming and obedient household pets.

The uncommon beings from the imaginary of Biserka Baretić, these beasts from the cryptozoological encyclopaedia, or from the nightmare of some person with a fervent imagination work on us like demons of our personal consciousness, with which we do battle in Eliot's chambers of the sea, at the bottom of our souls. However dreadful these creatures might be, in their warm hues and closed forms we can feel some kind of intimacy. These hybrid monsters work on us like a well warmed room of a medieval monk, the studio of a terrible and silly Hieronymus Bosch. In the safety of these chambers we can ponder the horrors of hell and demonic beings, and sometimes laugh at them (on the sly, not to put them out of sorts) for in the end they are all creations of our mind. The *Inner Sea* of Biserka Baretić is a place of self-knowledge and of assuredness in our own personality, security that shines out like a lighthouse. It is also the sea of the final lines of *Prufrock* in which in this case strange and ill-omened predators swim, as well as the mentioned vision of universal unity, of wholeness and the interlinking of everything that exists from the lines of *Four Quartets*: "the river is within us, the sea is all about us".



IVAN BARETIĆ

Biserka Baretić, fotografija, 1965. / Biserka Baretić, photograph, 1965

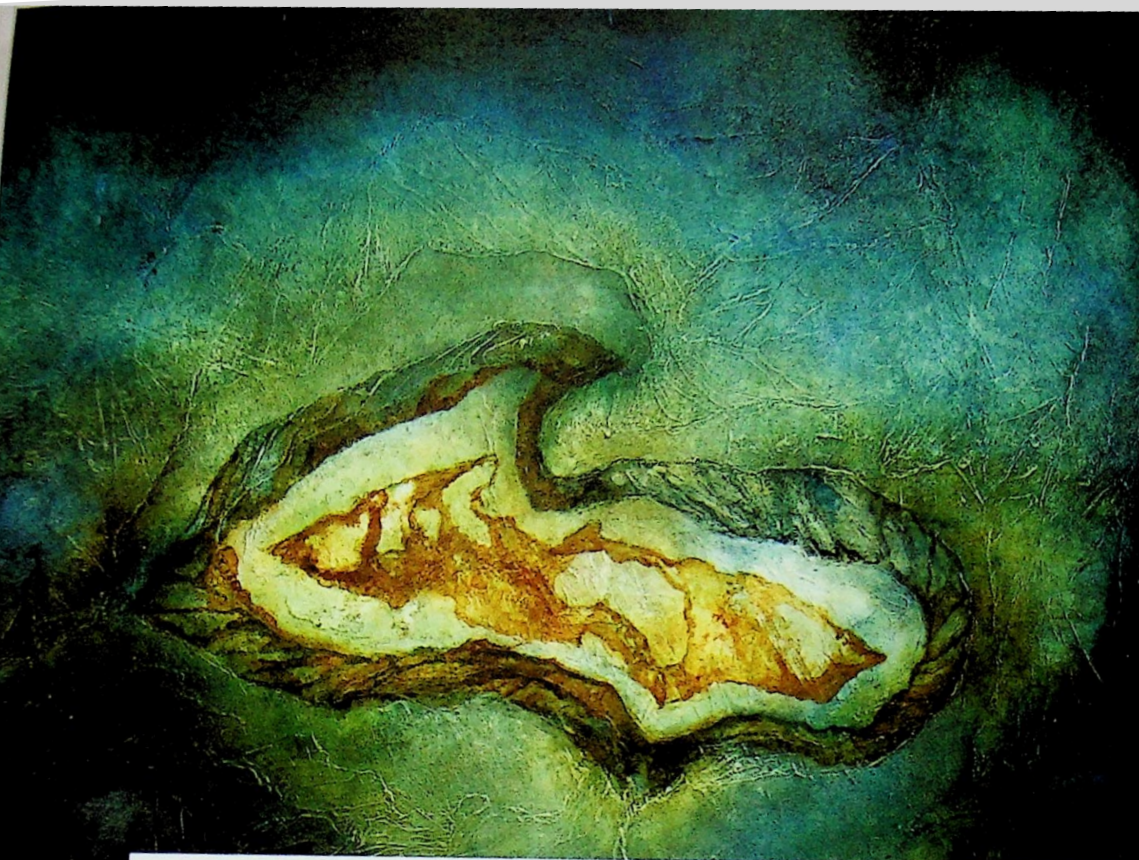


MILAN PAVIĆ

Biserka Baretić, fotografija, 1954. /
Biserka Baretić, photograph, 1954

BISERKA BARETIĆ (Zagreb, 1933.)

1. *Medu zemljom*, 1961., ulje na platnu, 121 x 118 cm /
Inter-Earth, 1965, oil on canvas, 121 x 118 cm
2. *Orficko pjevanje*, diptih, 2009. - 2018., ulje na platnu, 150 x 200 cm /
Orphic Singing, diptych, 2009 - 2018, oil on canvas, 150 x 200 cm
3. *Hvatač snova*, 2013., ulje na platnu, 150 x 200 cm /
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Milan Pavić: Biserka Baretić, photograph, blowup, 1954



BISERKA BARETIĆ

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