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FRANKENSTEIN

Francesco Villicich



The *Frankenstein Series* is the visual incarnation of the plight to infuse life into lifeless matter. The tools employed are archetypes, choreographies of symbols, colour, darkness and, most importantly, light.

Francesco Villicich 2012

INSIDE COVER IMAGE:

Frankenstein 15, 2011

140 x 230 cm

oil and gesso on linen

Linton & Kay Contemporary presents

FRANKENSTEIN

an exhibition of works by
Francesco Villicich

24 May – 7 June 2012

LINTON
& KAY
GALLERIES



Frankenstein 10 "Talisman", 2011

122 x 152 cm

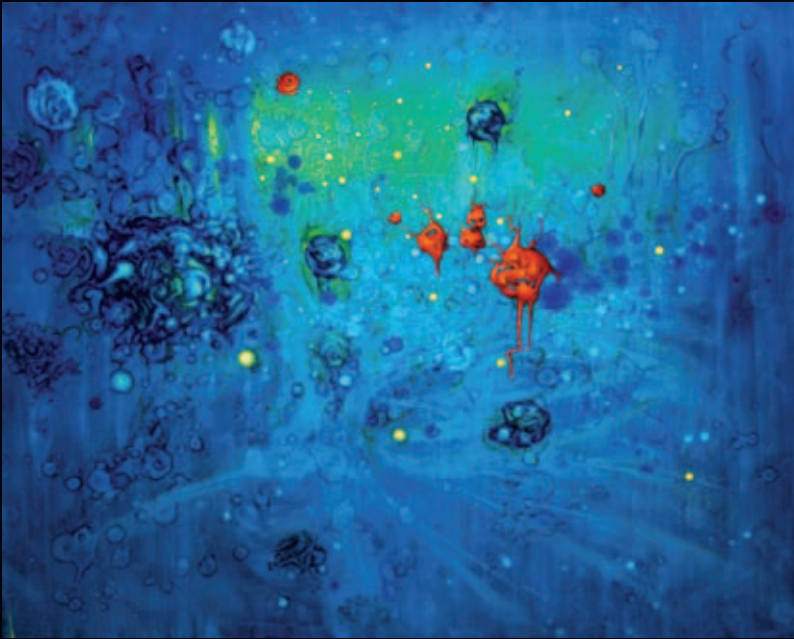
oil on linen



Frankenstein 20 "Ave Maria", 2011

152 x 120 cm

oil on linen



Frankenstein 6, 2011

122 x 152 cm

oil on linen

Introducing an Artistic Journey: Dr Stefano Carboni, Director, Art Gallery of Western Australia

Francesco Villicich is not your average artist. The process through which his paintings are conceived, develop, evolve, and are brought to conclusion is not a straightforward one-on-one relationship between he and the canvas, with a full knowledge and understanding of who is in charge. It is instead through a constant metamorphosis of inspiration and ideas that colours and forms take shape, almost as if it is the canvas itself that answers back to stimulations and dictates what comes next.

The basic narrative is evident since Francesco is, in essence, a landscape artist, superimposing the physical beauty of existing panoramas to the amorphous landscapes of his imagination. However, it is this imagination and the self-evolution of the works that play the most important part in the final result, especially in his latest paintings. Although sometimes their large size, the strong and unapologetic palette, the complexity in the layering of the forms, and the seemingly complicated message they convey may create an initial barrier between the canvas and the viewer, Francesco's works need patience and commitment in order to be fully appreciated and to offer a connection with the artist at a different level of understanding. The fulfilment and recompense one can achieve through this process is unlike many other experiences with works of art. This is

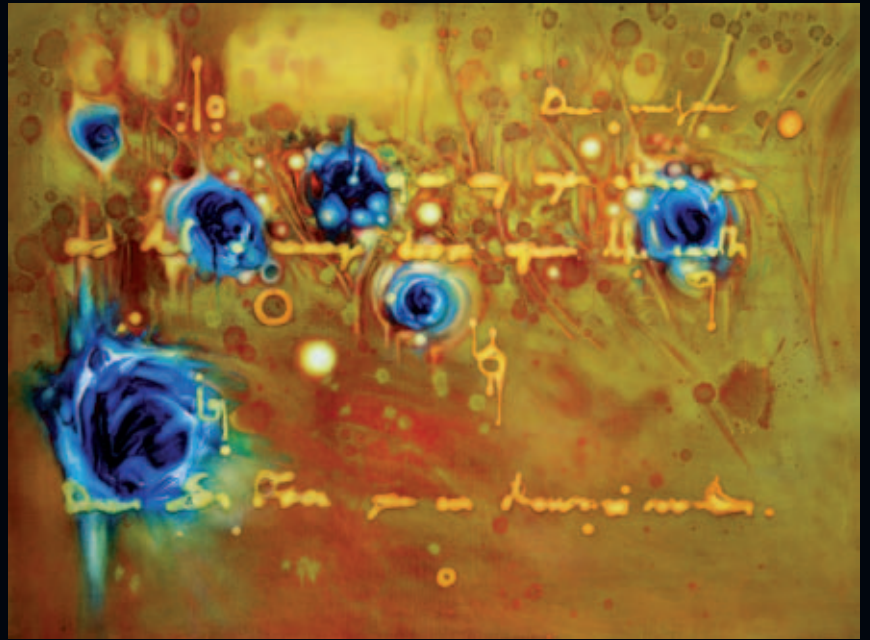
what makes him an accomplished artist, true to the core of his practice.

The present body of work is a further step in this direction, with growing layers of complexity that throw at us everything he cares about: the four elements, the depth of the landscape, the mystical writings of ancient alphabets as well as verses by Australian poets, the organic growth of the vegetal and the mineral worlds, and the organs of the human body. All this is based on the concept of infusing life into his creations similarly to Frankenstein's attempt to give life to his creature in Mary Shelley's account. Avoiding the later, romanticised reinterpretations of the tale of Frankenstein, Francesco goes straight to the philosophic and poetic core of Shelley's work, extracting its raw essence and appropriating it through

Frankenstein 4, 2011

91 x 121 cm

oil and gesso on linen

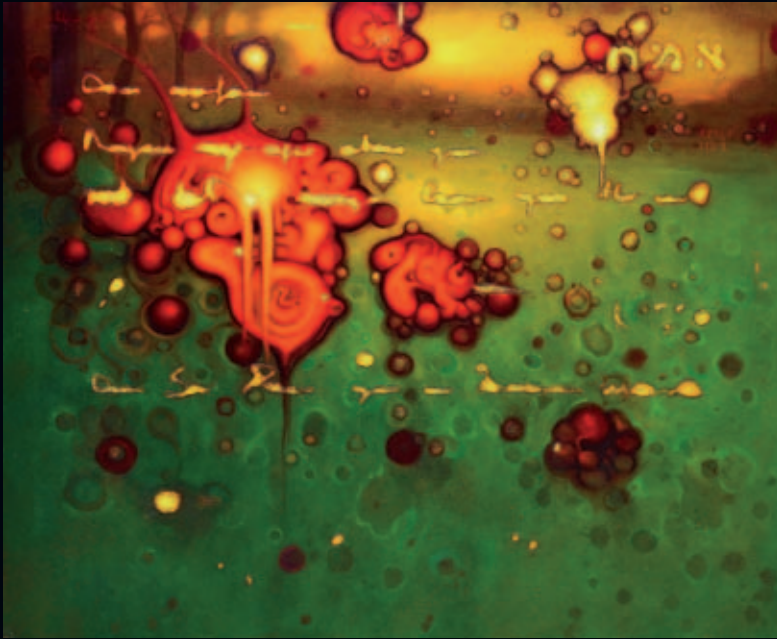


his paintings. As the viewer will experience, the “Frankenstein” paintings are numbered in the exhibition in chronological creative order, from the earliest to the most recent. It is evident that Francesco has progressively moved from the dark tonalities of the initial moments, when he took the first steps of his journey, to the recent, luminous paintings where this journey progressed to attain its positive end.

A couple of additional thoughts came to mind while I was viewing and discussing with Francesco his recent works. One relates to their musicality in a broad sense. His paintings possess, in my opinion, an inner orchestral rhythm that makes them come to life not only to the eye but also to the ear, in particular through the music of Russian composers. It is almost as if I could hear the soundtrack of Mussorgsky’s *Night on Bald Mountain*, or even more of Stravinsky’s ballet music for *The Rite of Spring*. I find this association particularly uncanny because Francesco was an acclaimed classical dancer of international renown before he retired and became a full-time artist. He will probably find it amusing that I see a strong association between his two most important artistic endeavours.

The second thought is about the three-dimensionality of his paintings and the tactile feelings that they impart to the viewer. These amoeba-like forms and dripping bodies almost beg to be touched and handled in order to exorcise the uneasy feeling of mystery that they initially convey. For this reason I was ready to ask the question as to how Francesco, as an artist, would satisfy this type of curiosity and “touchy-feely” need on the part of viewers like me. He provided an unexpected and immediate answer to the question I never needed to ask: he is also a sculptor and has created some three-dimensional works which, employing found material and a generous amount of paint, provide a natural extension and complement to his paintings.

As I wrote at the beginning, Francesco Villicich is not your average artist. His passion and commitment to his work and his desire to communicate his feelings, fears, and love are unlike many artists whom I know. His spirit is romantic in the literary and musical sense, prioritising feelings over order, vision over reality, ideals over practical solutions, and impracticability over mundane concerns.



Frankenstein 12, 2011

91 x 111 cm

oil and gesso on linen

The Frankenstein Series: **Alessandra D'Arbe**, Curator, Perth 2012

The artist's personal research and affinity with nature during the course of his life led him to the realisation of a landscape as a living entity, with emotional capacity and self-determination.

In his work, the ultimate goal is comparable to that of the character of Victor Frankenstein from Mary Shelley's romantic novel who passionately attempted to infuse life into his creature. The landscape appears almost dissected revealing its inner side, with simple elements such as stones and earth looking like arteries and joints, the branches and pathways as veins and tendons. Trees become organs and flowers the heart and soul, the shaded distances are like skin pigmentation which, like a vessel, carries the whole, intertwining man and nature as one.

The landscape is scarred and sick as is Frankenstein's creature, which is born with inner beauty and purity until ultimately exposed to injustice and fear. This scratched and incised surface reflects the state of its strained soul.

Once drawn into this newly created land the viewers receive enough elements to relate to their own world, yet plenty is left to the imagination therefore their unique interpretation becomes a creative act in its own right. In enabling such an experience the artist has had to mercilessly expose his inner most self, and inevitably invites the viewer to do the same. Observing the paintings becomes an endlessly growing experience as the image constantly

seems to perform a metamorphosis, a persistent choreographic flow of movement with an inner energy which rewards the intensity dedicated in the painting's observation.

The paintings are rich in symbols and recurring elements of graffiti, incision and calligraphic undulation: these archetypes seem to serve as the spark for life-evoking rituals performed to give birth to a magical land, a poetic vision in which colour and movement bare the essential elements of earth, air, fire and water.

The writings appear from wide and varied sources of inspiration: the 'Pustaha' or divination books of the ancient Batak tribes of Sumatra; a particular phrase of Australian poet Peter Porter; various passages from Mary Shelley's Frankenstein; the old Hebrew word 'EMET' which is connected to the legend of the Golem and, most importantly, memories, names and streams of emotions which for the artist are profoundly related to the essence of life.

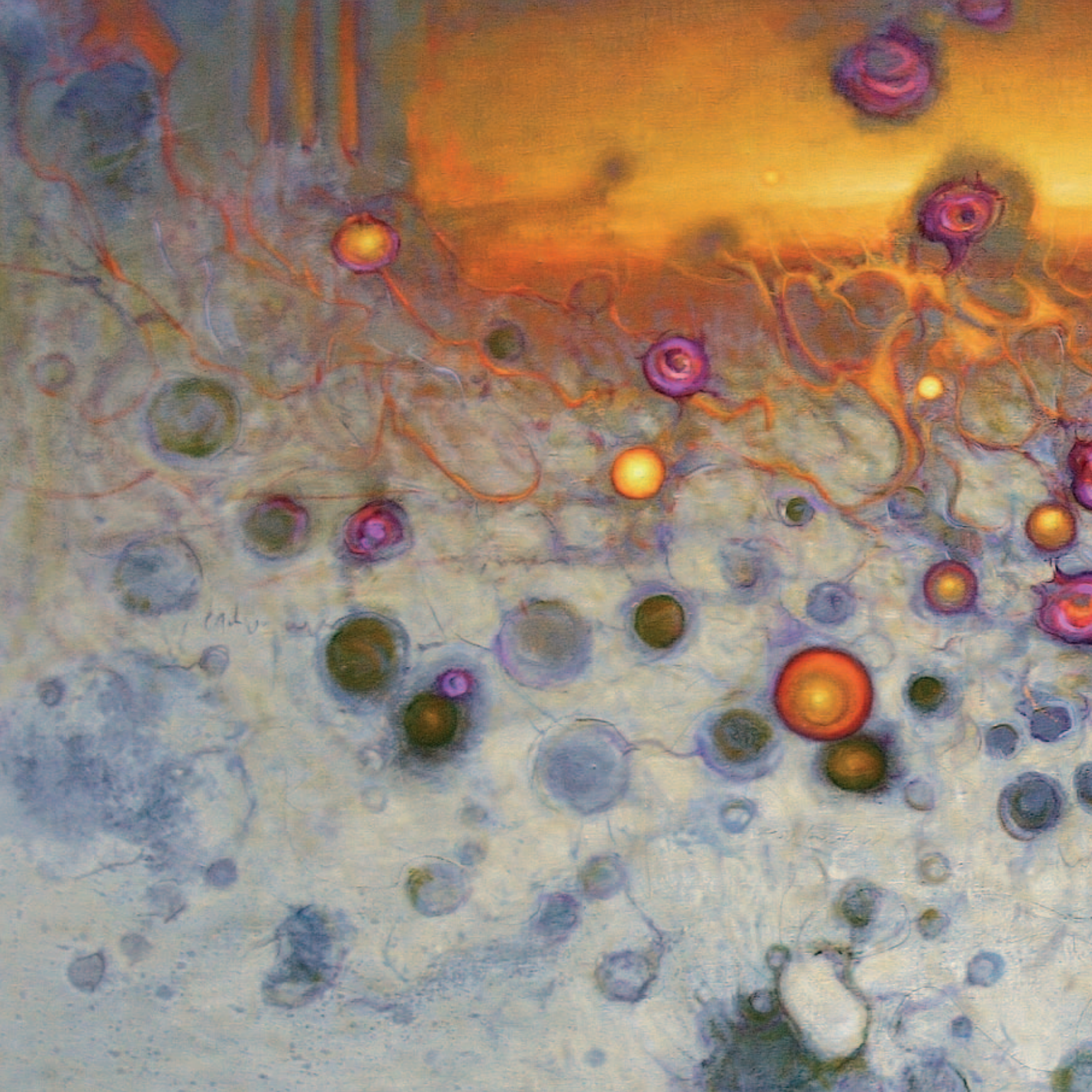
This series of works is, in fact, a celebration of life, both spiritual and emotional, and one cannot help but wonder if the lyrical world depicted here is simply where Frankenstein's creature would have finally felt at home.

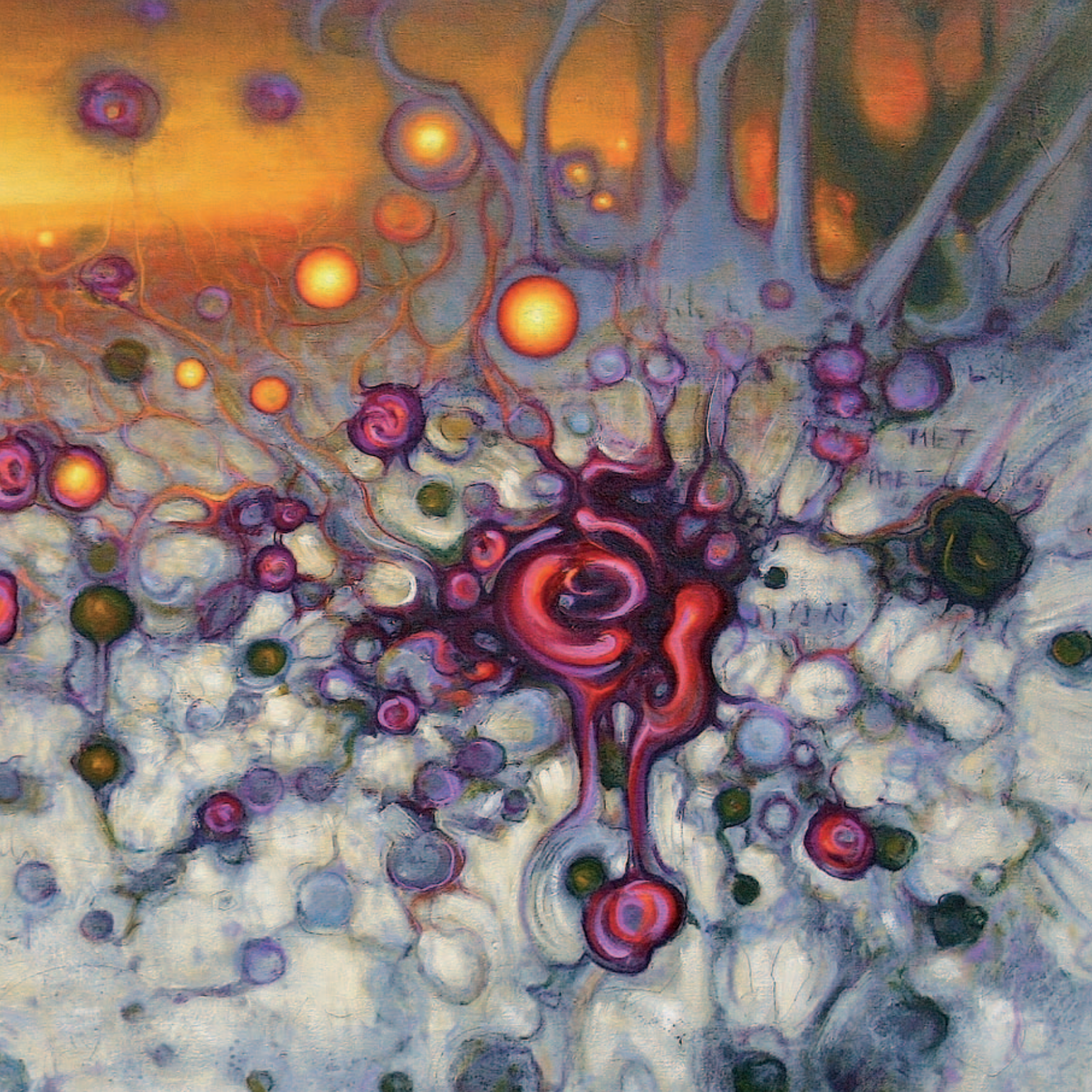


Frankenstein 24 "Friedrich", 2012

91 x 101 cm

oil on linen







Frankenstein 27, 2012

122 x 91 cm

oil on linen



Frankenstein 23, 2012

101 x 84 cm

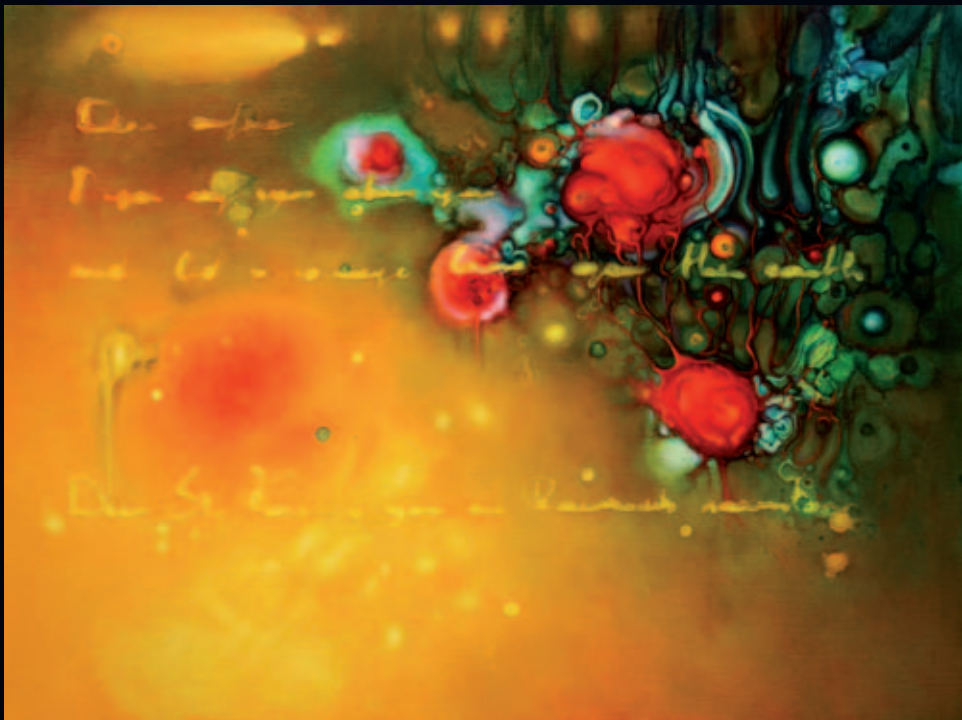
oil on linen



Frankenstein 25, 2012

83 x 101 cm

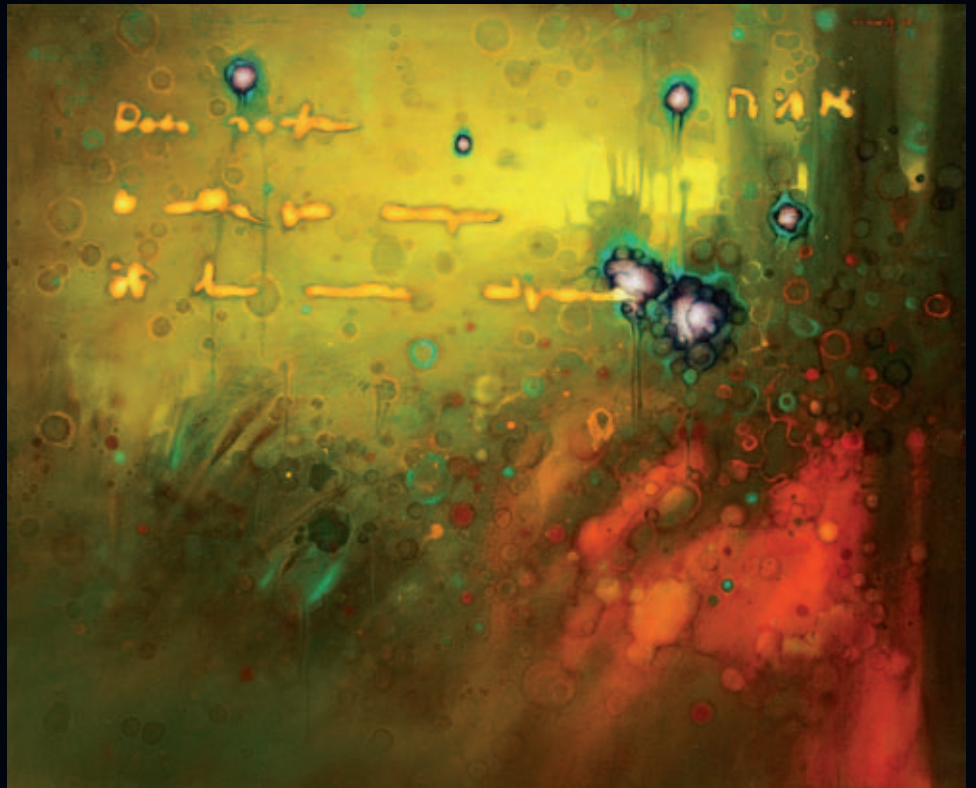
oil and gesso on linen



Frankenstein 1, 2011

91 x 121 cm

oil and gesso on linen



Frankenstein 11, 2011

91 x 111 cm

oil and gesso on linen



Frankenstein 7, 2011

107 x 167 cm

oil and gesso on linen



Vitae 1, 2012

113 x 30 x 20 cm

wood, iron, wire, nails,
oil paint, enamel paint

The artist in his studio, 2012

Perth, Western Australia



BIOGRAPHY: Francesco Villicich

Artistic inclinations emerged in Villicich from a young age. Born in Parma, Italy, in 1965, Villicich studied music, dance and visual arts, receiving professional training in classical ballet from the age of twelve under the direction of the great dancers Liliana Cosi and Marinel Stefanescu, as well as completing a diploma as 'Maestro d'Arte' in Fine Arts at the Istituto d'Arte 'Gaetano Chierici' in Reggio Emilia.

After finishing his education, Villicich embarked on a career in ballet becoming a principal dancer and, from the age of thirty, an international freelance guest principal artist, performing in many places around the world including England, Germany, Portugal, France, Spain, Japan and Italy. Despite this intense lifestyle, Villicich always found time to express himself through the visual arts. In 1997, at the height of his dance career, Villicich was invited to exhibit his paintings in his first solo exhibition in Windsor, England. Following this, he held various solo and group exhibitions in Italy, gaining recognition from both public and critics and was included in *Dizionario Comanducci*, a prestigious international encyclopaedia of artists.

In 2003, Villicich decided to leave his dance career and the ballet world to dedicate his artistry entirely to painting. He, therefore, made the choice to isolate himself in a chalet in the mountains of northern Italy to begin an intense period of research to find his personal 'poetics' and connection with nature. Following this

period of two years, Villicich then moved to Perth in 2006 with his fiancée who joined the *West Australian Ballet* as a dancer. Villicich held his inaugural exhibition in Australia, in 2008, at the *Moore Building* in Fremantle entitled *Paesaggi*, which was opened by the *Minister for Culture and the Arts*, The Hon. Sheila McHale, who also wrote the foreword for the forty page catalogue published in conjunction with this exhibition. Villicich then went on to hold several solo and group exhibitions in Perth and interstate.

Both Villicich's art and career have been featured in various important newspapers and magazines including *The Times* (London), *Corriere della Sera* (Milan) as well as *The West Australian* and the *Sunday Times* in Perth. His paintings are part of collections around the world including Italy, France, England, Germany, Canada, United States, South Africa, China, Japan and Australia.

Villicich is currently represented by *Linton and Kay Contemporary* in his city of residence, Perth.



Frankenstein 28, 2012

84 x 66 cm

oil on linen



Frankenstein 17, 2011

102 x 102 cm

oil and gesso on linen

List of Works

Frankenstein 1, 2011
91 x 121 cm
oil and gesso on linen

Frankenstein 2, 2011
60 x 91 cm
oil and gesso on linen

Frankenstein 3, 2011
91 x 121 cm
oil and gesso on linen

Frankenstein 4, 2011
91 x 121 cm
oil and gesso on linen

Frankenstein 5, 2011
150 x 200 cm
oil on linen

Frankenstein 6, 2011
122 x 152 cm
oil on linen

Frankenstein 7, 2011
107 x 167 cm
oil and gesso on linen 2011

Frankenstein 8, 2011
120 x 180 cm
oil and gesso on linen

Frankenstein 9, 2011
60 x 66 cm
oil on linen

Frankenstein 10 "Talisman", 2011
122 x 152 cm
oil on linen

Frankenstein 11, 2011
91 x 111 cm
oil and gesso on linen

Frankenstein 12, 2011
91 x 111 cm
oil and gesso on linen

Frankenstein 13, 2011
83 x 101 cm
oil and gesso on linen

Frankenstein 14, 2011
60 x 100 cm
oil, canvas, staples, nails, hair,
on linen on board

Frankenstein 15, 2011
140 x 230 cm
oil and gesso on linen

Frankenstein 16, 2011
101 x 121 cm
oil and gesso on linen

Frankenstein 17, 2011
102 x 102 cm
oil and gesso on linen

Frankenstein 18, 2011
60 x 90 cm
oil on linen

Frankenstein 20 "Ave Maria", 2011
152 x 120 cm
oil on linen

Frankenstein 21, 2011
71 x 154 cm
oil on linen

*Frankenstein 22 "The flowers of
Spring", 2012*
121 x 151 cm
oil on linen

Frankenstein 23, 2012
101 x 84 cm
oil on linen

Frankenstein 24 "Friedrich", 2012
91 x 101 cm
oil on linen

Frankenstein 25, 2012
83 x 101 cm
oil and gesso on linen

Frankenstein 26, 2012
60 x 90 cm
oil and staples on linen on board

Frankenstein 27, 2012
122 x 91 cm
oil on linen

Frankenstein 28, 2012
84 x 66 cm
oil on linen

Frankenstein 29 "Zatoichi", 2012
152 x 198 cm
oil on linen

Vitae 1, 2012
113 x 30 x 20 cm
wood, iron, wire, nails, oil paint,
enamel paint

Vitae 2, 2012
103 x 32 x 23 cm
wood, iron, wire, nails, oil paint,
enamel paint

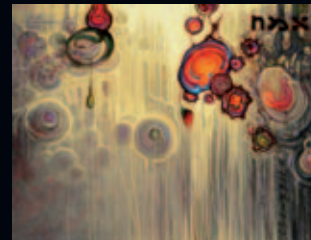
Vitae 3, 2012
105 x 30 x 25 cm
wood, iron, wire, nails, linen,
oil paint, enamel paint



Frankenstein 18, 2011

60 x 90 cm

oil on linen



COVER IMAGE:

Frankenstein 29
"Zatoichi", 2012

152 x 198 cm

oil on linen



CENTRE IMAGE:

Frankenstein 5, 2011

150 x 200 cm

oil on linen

This publication supports the exhibition:

Frankenstein

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Linton & Kay Contemporary

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Frankenstein 16, 2011

101 x 121 cm

oil and gesso on linen

Use to find
ground in a way one
again

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