

**AIDA
TOMESCU**

The Poetics of resistance

“Art begins with resistance - at the point where resistance is overcome. No human masterpiece has ever been created without great labour”

Andre Gide.

“...where the moon shudders before the linen screen.”

Thomas Bernhard

Everywhere in Tomescu's studio are signs of resistance... some of it on the floor. This resistance isn't driven by the kind of muscular flex that some painters seek to swell their paintings with, rather Tomescu's resistance dovetails with Gide's policy that without great labour the membrane surrounding creativity will not be broken.

One can sense this not a game for the weak-hearted though – these paintings are made at paintings' anaerobic threshold. The material carries evidence aplenty of resistance and endeavour, of contention and striving.

I remain fascinated by the experience of Tomescu's work over time and one ought to commit time - looking 'through' the work to feel its true character. This character is driven significantly by colour, its lightness and its density; its emotional clout and its delicacy.

Matisse said that “cutting into colour reminds me of the sculptor's direct carving” and certainly there are passages in Tomescu's work where we sense her probing and cutting at the body of the paint, getting under its skin.

Let's also not confuse the determined and committed way that Tomescu works her material and gesture with enactment. Her paintwork doesn't contain any boisterous flourish; rather it has firm obligations to structure. From the dense and granular, to the open and excavated areas, even the shards of script that trace the tooth of the linen - all are complicit in their duties to drawing and form.

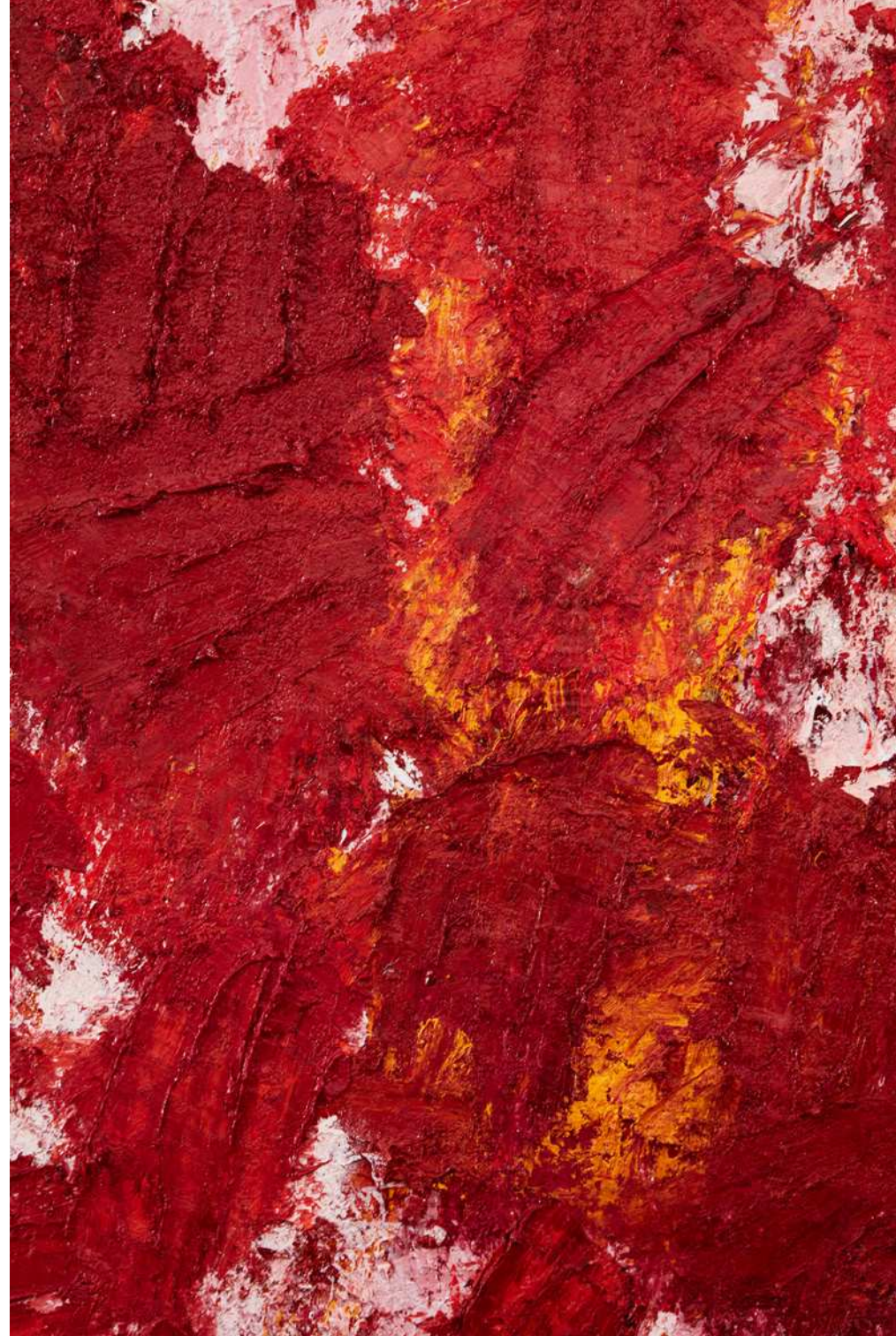
It strikes me too that one of Tomescu's capacities is the way in which collage, a long trusted process for her, is invoked in the way she lays material down. Stroke upon stroke, colour upon colour, all the while being prepared to disrupt the surface to unearth and further assert form.

Tomescu is alive to the complimentary ambitions that painters and writers, poets in particular can share in. One thinks of Titian's *Poesie* series based on Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and of painters like Guston and Keifer who responded to the humanist themes of poets such as Yeats, Elliot and Celan.





In a carpet made of water, in a carpet made of earth
2017
Oil, silver and gold pigment on
Belgian linen 184x154 cm
opposite: detail



In Thomas Bernhard's *Under the Iron of the Moon*, from which the title of this exhibition is taken, we see him exploring themes of nature and death, faith and meaninglessness. His writing too, is a kind of collage - a gritty caustic expressionism, layering love and loathing, sweetness and acidity in equal measure.

As much as Bernhard's writing wrestles with the pathos and desolation of post-Nazi Europe, my sense is that it is to the materiality of his language that Tomescu responds and to the hope and fundamentally redemptive possibility of endeavour.

Humour can unexpectedly leaven the atmosphere in Bernhard's writing and there is a warmth and humanity that finds a corollary in Tomescu's painting. Her work side steps the wry, sardonic demeanour that infects much contemporary painting, favouring compassion and joy in the way that she paints.

Amidst the energy and power there is tenderness...there is time and space for the gentlest mark, small, discreet and vital.

The paintings that comprise *Under the Iron of the Moon* are dramatic and forceful. Colour is corporeal, gesture is authoritative.

These qualities are given most latitude in two grand diptychs where the scale allows maximum opportunity for the cadence and command to amplify.

Though the final group of works that Aida painted - a modestly scaled quintet, curiously serve to equalize this.

When I first saw them I thought of Twombly, less so in terms of gesture, but rather for his saying "white paint is my marble". Little more than 30cm tall, these paintings are almost purged of demonstrable colour though of course it is there everywhere, colour hibernating under a cool permafrost.

The white pigment that one registers first is happily touched by the colours beneath so that the white carries traces of pink and silver, blue and the deepest red.

These small canvases might be seen as notations against the expanse and grandeur of the diptychs especially. However regardless of scale, every gesture, every cut, every movement is made with consideration and love of a sonnet.



opposite:
In a carpet made of water (I)
 2017
 Oil and silver pigment
 on Belgian linen 36 x 26 cm
 overleaf:
In a carpet made of water (IV)
 2017
 Oil and silver pigment
 on Belgian linen 36 x 26 cm

*My interest has always been to arrive at a
unified image with fullness and clarity, to find a reality
which affirms its own existence.*

*There is a silent moment in painting when we experience
an absolute, total intelligence in the work through which
everything comes together.*

The logic that develops is stronger than any emotion.

*The painting begins to project back and I become aware of
another presence; the subtle, vulnerable structure
built from paint.*

Aida Tomescu





Under the Iron of the Moon I, diptych
2017 Oil and silver pigment on canvas
184 x 306 cm



Under the Iron of the Moon (II) diptych
2017, Oil and silver pigment on Belgian linen
184 x 306 cm



Angels and bed - quartet 2017
Oil and crayon on Belgian linen
46 x 36 cm each panel

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