



Oukpedjo Sadikou
Naissance d'un dieu inconnu, 2018
 Mixed media on canvas
 180 x 180cm

Palimpsest

In many cultures, pairs of opposites are seen as a unifying vital force. In many artworks, the harmony is produced by opposites, or alternatively, dichotomies disrupt the order of the familiar image, inviting the viewer to reexamine and thereby interpret the uninterpretable.

Sadikou and Sharon met for the first time in the International Ceramics Symposium at the Umm al-Fahm Art Gallery. For a week, it seemed that the French language was their only common denominator. Black man vs. white woman, creative drama vs. an almost stoic creative calm, an artist working confidently on a large scale, filling the space, vs. an artist who probes and prods, carefully examining her materials, works on an intimate, almost miniature scale. Apparently – perfect binary opposites. One week later, however, as they worked in parallel during Sadikou's residency at ST ART Studio in Jaffa Tel Aviv, it appeared that these binary opposites were simplistic if not clichéd, and once again, it became evident that in art, opposites and contradictions are more nuanced, open to dialogue and transformation.

In their unique way, each of the artists performs an impossible synthesis of materials or contents – Sharon between ceramics and concrete and Sadikou between human and animal – thus grappling with the impossible in their work. There are no winners or losers in the hybridization process performed by both artists. Nevertheless, again and again they return to the drama of the encounter. The representation of this drama flatly rejects the sense of perfection provided by beauty or any other external idealization. On the contrary, both are engaged in a recurring search for deeper, ancient and eternal truths.

Idit Toledano

Overleaf (left)

Sharon Pazner
Metropolis
 Mixed media
 25 x 25 x 3.4cm

Overleaf (right)

Oukpedjo Sadikou
Reflét 2, 2018
 Mixed media on paper
 100 x 70cm

Sadikou Oukpedjo

Sadikou was trained in the studio of Togolese artist Paul Ahi where he specialized in sculpting and drawing. He also tried to delve into the recesses of local artistic heritage and found a way to apply it in his own work. However, Sadikou claims that today his art is completely detached from Togolese or West-African traditions. He therefore entitles himself, like other myth makers before him, to offer a universal epic about the belligerent confrontation between nature and humanity that gives meaning to the existential condition and inspires his own art. The epic invented by Sadikou, however, is plotless; there is no protagonist and there are no victors. The only recurring motif in it is the struggle between humans and animals. Paradoxically, the forced detachment from his original culture does not leave him detached, disconnected, or in a constant search for roots. It does allow him to connect, simultaneously, to a time-honoured European romantic tradition as well as to many African mythologies addressing that same confrontation between humanity and nature, which shapes our world.

The serially depicted struggle produces hybrids – a fish with a human foot for a tail, an animal-headed man, or other dissected mutations. This creates a dramatic, intense effect that inheres passion and violence, but unlike other mythologies, Sadikou's does not offer a moral to the story as a way out. He refuses to offer explanations for his work and abandons the viewer to a space of endless inquiry and questioning.

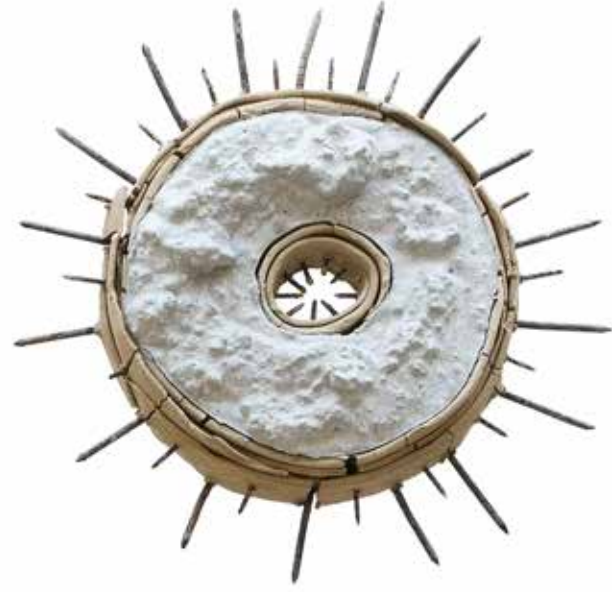
Sadikou's varied colouring techniques and changing finishing levels reinforce this deceptive shifting between completeness and incompleteness, leaving room for the imagination. The sense of suspended completeness betrays disorder, but also the possibility for change. The dissection of the heroic, mythic body of both African and European cultures embodies the ability to start anew, to structure a more equal footing in reality.

Sharon Pazner

Sharon's works echo her training as an architect – albeit a laboratory architect. She casts miniatures that are cognitive structures. These structures are free of schematic and systematic thought, which characterizes the architect seeking constructive, concrete solutions. As in any lab experiment, she has a hypothesis: she assumes what the result should be – clay and concrete are antagonistic. Nevertheless, Sharon sets out on a Sisyphean journey bound to end in broken promises. For the outside observer, this journey cannot but lead to failure. For Sharon, the process is paramount, and a perfect result is not the purpose. With eyes open wide, she insists on observing the rejection, exposing the fracture, sometimes even rummaging through it and then presenting it as such – fragile and weak from struggling.

By virtue of the plain, seemingly uninspiring materials Sharon chooses – concrete, clay, nails and pins, which she diverts from their ordinary industrial purpose – Sharon disconnects herself from any artistic continuity and as in a sterile lab, allows herself to assess the veracity of the assumption that some materials are not meant to coexist. She repeatedly revisits them and tries to examine, to bring together but also encourages them to separate, and then finds out that even in struggle, in rupture and rejection, there is mutual recognition. Even as the concrete resists the other material, it reaches out for contact, it converses, it acknowledges the other. Then, even the emerging cracks that gradually reveal themselves are accepted both for their beauty and their ugliness as a present existential situation. When the material is resistant and insists on retaining its elementary properties, it collapses, leaving behind it mainly the tell-tale remains of a lost struggle.

Unlike her previous works, in which she served the viewers *petit fours* and children's toys made of concrete and decorated with rusty nails and glass splinters, in her current exhibition, Sharon still serves sharp and rusty materials, but this time she is courageous enough to address the difficulty of connecting, of coping with rejection. Then, underneath the hard concrete and the intractable materials, among the rusty nails, circular, soft shapes are revealed. And in softness, even when it is thorny and surrounded by walls, there is acceptance and containment and a willingness to cope with what seems on the surface to be impossibly daunting.

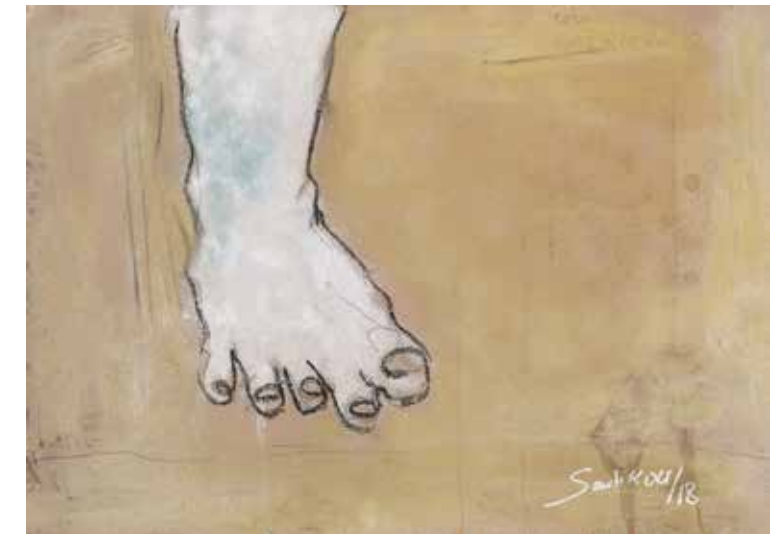


Sharon Pazner

Above and below:

Untitled, 2018

Mixed media
20 x 20cm



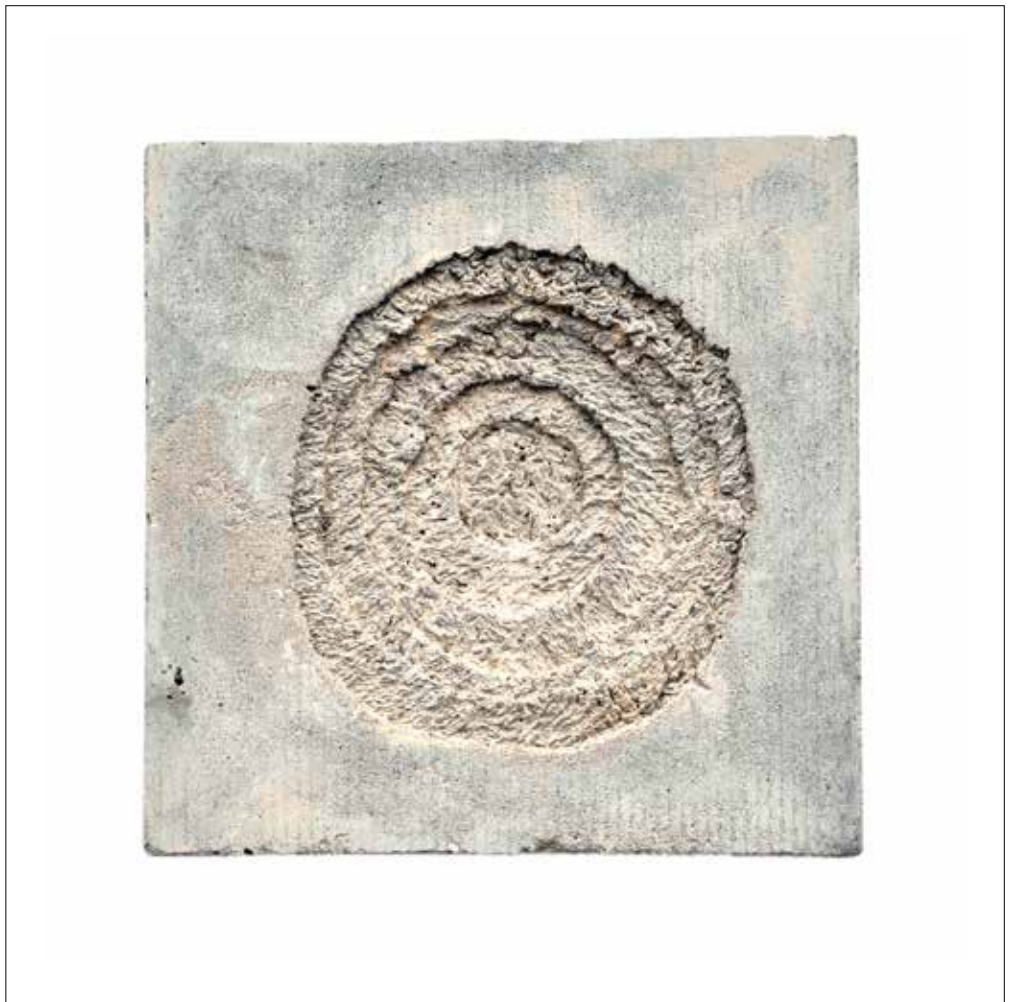
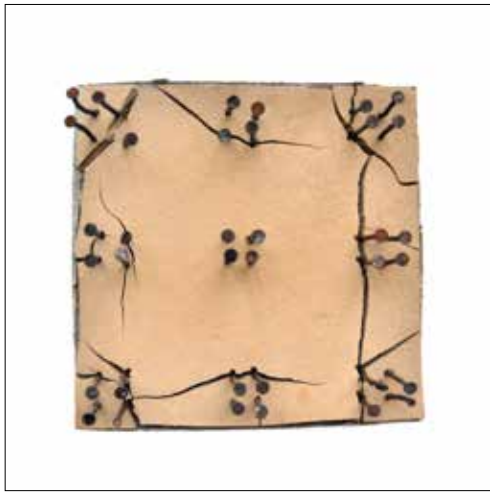
Oukpedjo Sadikou
Fetich 2, 2018
Mixed media on paper
200 x 70cm



Oukpedjo Sadikou
Fetich 1, 2018
Mixed media on paper
188 x 57cm



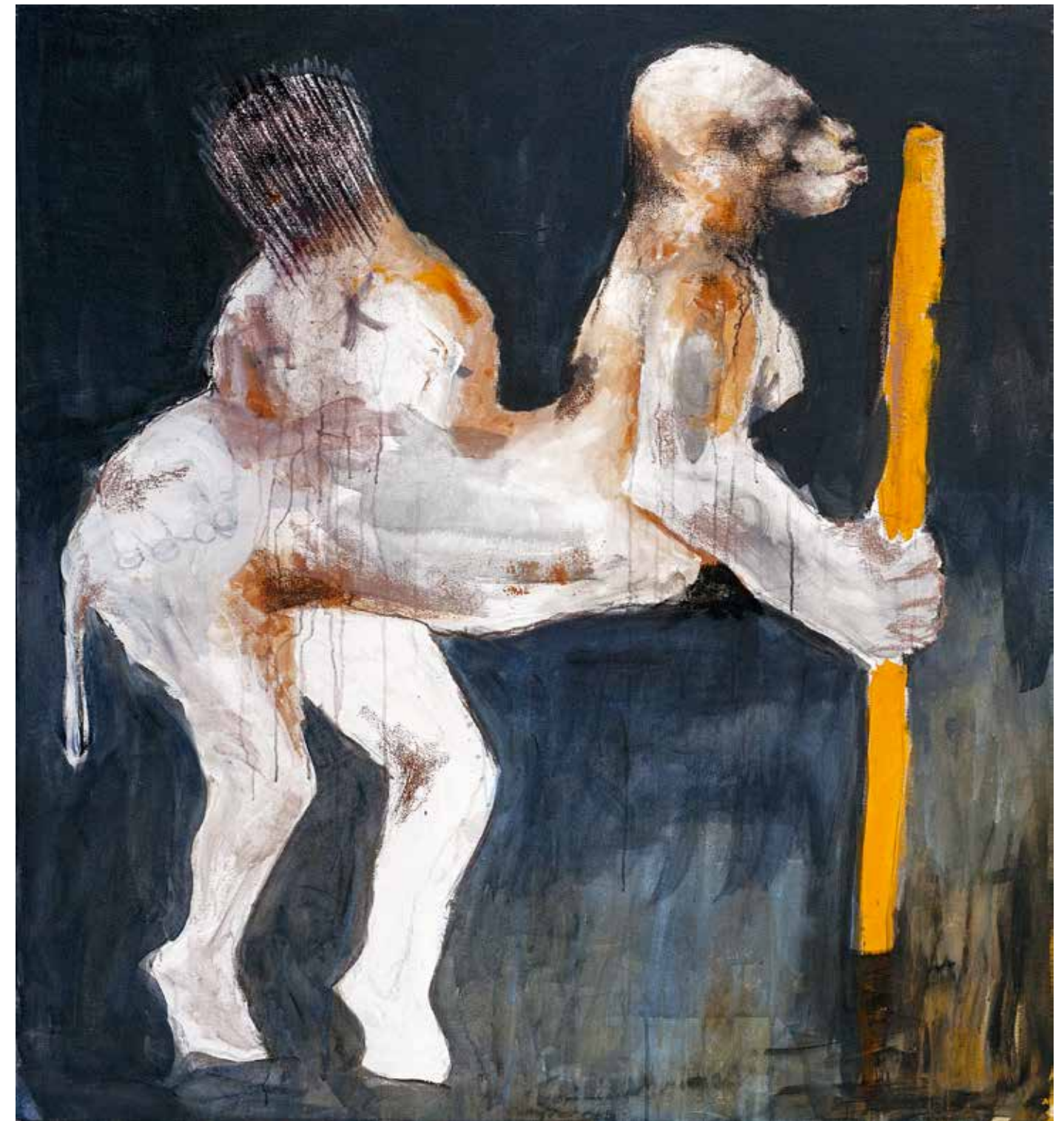
Oukpedjo Sadikou
Transcendence, 2018
Mixed media on canvas
150 x 150cm



Sharon Pazner
Untitled, 2018
Mixed media



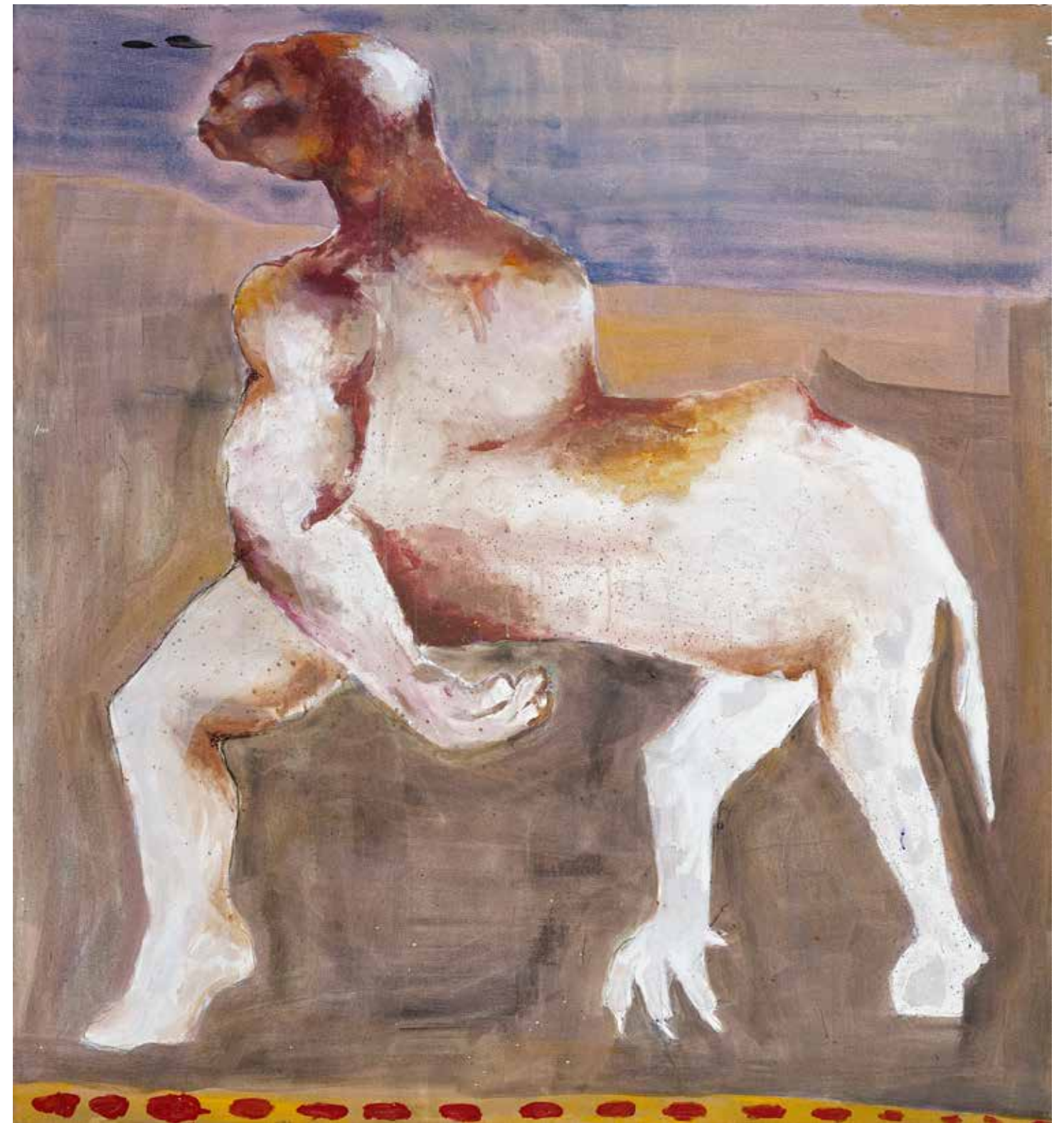
Oukpedjo Sadikou
Pelerinage, 2018
Mixed media on canvas
125 x 135cm



Oukpedjo Sadikou
Mère des anges Bergé ou dieu ? un poids lourds à porter, 2018
Mixed media on canvas
135 x 125cm



Oukpedjo Sadikou
Reflét 1, 2018
Mixed media on paper
100 x 70cm



Oukpedjo Sadikou
Untitled, 2018
Mixed media on canvas
135 x 125cm