



Igor Josifov  
*taming fire*



*Art*

River of Memories (Diamond Form - Detail) - Reflection - 2013 (Front Cover)  
213 x 115 cm  
Burned Paper

Fire Reflection (Above)  
163 x 141 cm  
Burned Paper

# Curriculum Vitae

## Solo Exhibitions

2014: Art Paris, Paris, France

2-Dimensional, Onassis Cultural Centre, Athens, Greece

Taming Fire, Northcutt Steele Gallery, Billings, Montana, USA

Igor Josifov, Yellowstone Art Museum, Billings, Montana, USA

2012: Igor Josifov – Selected Works (2007 –2012), Museum of Contemporary Art, Skopje, Macedonia

Still Life, Galerie E.G.P, Paris, France

2-Dimensional, Abrons Art Center, New York, USA

2-Dimensional, Le Quartz dans le cadre du Festival DañsFabrik, Brest, France

2-Dimensional, Museum of Contemporary Arts, Skopje, Macedonia

2011: Igor Josifov, Galerie E.G.P, Paris, France

2-Dimensional, Maraya Art Centre, Sharjah, UAE

2010: Manumission, National Museum of Art, Cetinje, Montenegro

Igor Josifov – Selected Projects, MAI, San Francisco, USA

2-Dimensional, Chic Art Fair, Galerie E.G.P, Paris, France

2-Dimensional, MAI West, San Francisco, USA

2009: Being you, uses me, Alphonse Berber Gallery, Berkeley, USA

2-Dimensional, Opening of the Modern Wing at Art Institute, Chicago, USA

## Selected Group Exhibitions

2013: Permutation, Galerie E.G.P, London, UK

Permutation, Galerie E.G.P, Paris, France

2011: Al Ghaib – Aesthetics of disappearance, Al Qasba, Maraya Art Centre, Sharjah, UAE

Present Memories, Perforation Festival NYC, New York, USA

Pogledi/ Views, Blok Gallery in Belgrade, Serbia. Organized by the

Museum of Contemporary Art in Skopje, Macedonia

Still Life, IXth Biennial of Young Artists, Museum of Contemporary Art, Skopje, Macedonia

2010: Marina Abramovi: The Artist Is Present, MoMA, New York, USA

Works that disturb the moonlight, Alphonse Berber Gallery, Berkeley, USA

This House is empty, The Haunted House of Light, New York, USA

Degeneration – regeneration, Marina Abramovi Institute, San Francisco, USA

Lost bodies, Mala Stanica, National Gallery of Arts, Skopje, Macedonia

Pour l'Amour de Goya, Galerie E.G.P, Paris, France

Present Memories, Perforacije at Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb, Croatia

Mise en Scène, Galerie E.G.P, Paris, France

2009: 2-Dimensional, the Art Institute, Chicago, USA

A Touch of Violence, National Gallery of Arts, Tirana, Albania

2004: Museum of Skopje, Skopje, Macedonia

2000: The International Museum Children's Art, Oslo, Norway

## Selected Awards

2014: First Award for Original Work on Paper – Osten Biennial Of

Drawing, Skopje, Macedonia

2011: 1st Prize of the IXth Biennial for Young Artists in Skopje,

Macedonia for Izgubeni Tela 2003: 1st Prize, City of Skopje International Art Exhibition, 13 Noemvri, Skopje, Macedonia

2000: Award for Single Creation "Vision of the future" at the 14th

International Exhibition The Small Montmartre of Bitola, Bitola, Macedonia

1st Prize for Successful Creation, State Art Exhibition, Cultural Center, 'Ilindenski Denovi,' Bitola, Macedonia

1998: Special Diploma for "Society seen through the eyes of children"

at The International Museum of Children's Art, Oslo, Norway – In cooperation with the Norwegian Ministry of Education and the Norwegian Council for Cultural Affairs.

## Residencies

2014: Igor Josifov, Yellowstone Art Museum, Billings, USA

2008: Reflection On Originality, The Watermill Center, New York, USA

Manumission, performance, The Watermill Center, New York, USA

Emit, performance, The Watermill Center, New York, USA

Flooded, performance, The Watermill Center, New York, USA

Art Copy Copy Art, lecture and exhibition, The Watermill Center, New York, USA

# Taming Fire: An Essay

Fire has been mankind's steady yet tempestuous companion from the dawn of civilization. Thus, no one should be surprised that our cultural landscape is sprinkled with many references to fire, fueling our imagination, interlocking with history, and filling the airwaves with drama, heroism, and dare.

In *Taming Fire*, Igor Josifov embraces the challenge and proceeds by drawing portraits of iconic figures to engage our intellect, evoke feelings ranging from excitement to anxiety, and walk us down memory lane. He also veers to abstraction and unites contrasting elements, as in the blur series, merging human faces, snowmen, and fireballs. In the process, Josifov unleashes a creative drive and makes the fire submit to his will and whimsy.

The allure of this primeval element is magical, intoxicating, and forever intriguing. The seduction borders on danger, destruction, and at the same time dreams of hope, lifted by the flames of shuttle missions dispatched to outer space and the remotest stars. This dual nature of fire suggests an endless reservoir of material for legends and a deep source of fascination for many artists around the world.

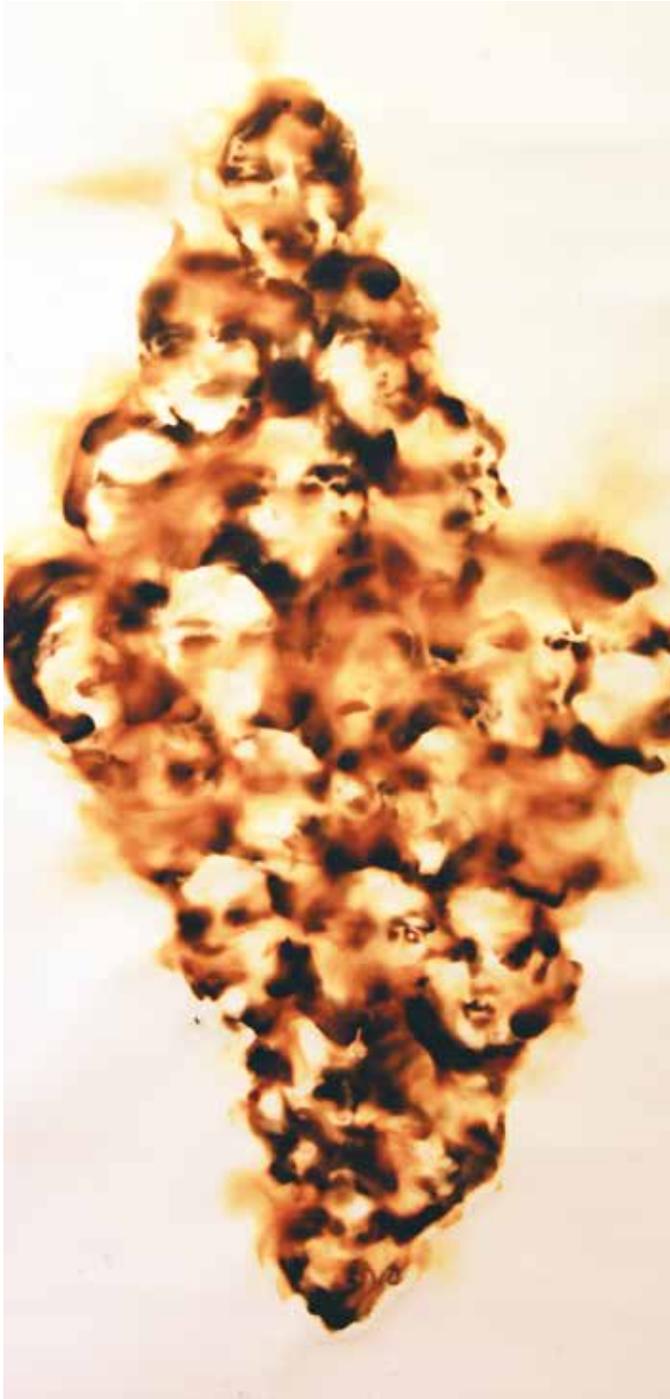
In Western civilization, the courtship begins with the Greek myth of Prometheus, who steals fire from the god Zeus on Mount Parnassus and gifts it to mankind. The gift of fire has become a symbol of progress and a constant reminder of how dangerous and fragile life is. In Romantic Europe, the ancient legend of Prometheus finds expression in Beethoven's *Fidelio*, a musical composition that honors Napoleon the conqueror, and likens him to the god who stole fire to enlighten humanity.

The bright flames have garnered attention from many great artists, from Bosch in the Renaissance, Arcimboldo, Goya, and in modern times Dalí, Miró, Tinguely, and the legendary Yves Klein, to the Chinese artist Cai Guo Qiang. Josifov steps into this pantheon with vigor and wrestles with this ancient and mythical force to leave an indelible mark on our collective experience.

Preoccupation with fire has roots in Josifov's performance of *Manumission*. In this work, he uses leather horse blinders etched and burned with Islamic and Christian motifs to explore the history of conflict between the two religions. He completes the work by adding portraits of children. In "Manumission," Josifov tackles the notion of liberating slaves, and in working with his chosen medium of fire, he realizes that the process, while meditative, also constitutes a double-edged sword, evoking feelings of both liberation and enslavement to the intoxicating



Collecting Memories / (Detail) - 2014  
Dimensions Variable  
Burned Paper - Installation



River of Memories 3 - 2013  
193 x 115 cm  
Burned Paper

nature of this element. This addictive quality of the fire drives his desire to discover new techniques and reflect upon his personal growth as an individual and as an artist. Josifov thus assumes the role of a 'modern Prometheus' in *Manumission*, undertaking the mission to liberate slaves, an act that is just as significant as the gifting of fire.

Working with fire is a dangerous preoccupation, and this is an essential element in understanding Josifov's art-making, as well as his deeply invested self-identity as an artist. He is consumed by a process of self-imposed control, patience, and intense concentration to deal with the danger and uncertainty he manufactures, qualities which are reflected in the very act of choosing the life of an artist. These realizations are a hallmark of his identity. 'Being an artist is a dangerous profession, when in a way you give your life for art, and it is a constant commitment if your heart is truly in it. For me, it is my first and last relationship, something that I can't get from human beings, but I can see it in the art or artist. That's what beauty is about, and beauty can be dangerous. It's a dangerous dance artists play.'

Drawing with fire is very demanding and requires extreme alertness. 'I have to be in the right state of mind while I'm burning paper. After each burning act ensues a dialogue like a painter applying paint to canvas. It inspires me to make new works, explore different types of paper, themes, and scales. Each time, I face a different challenge, because I never know what the final work will look like. It often comes as a surprise, which makes me want to become the master of the technique and to perfect the application of fire to paper.'

When painting, he adopts Klein's quote, which suggests that the drawing represents the prison while the color represents the freedom. In this case, fire is the liberating force for Josifov.

In burned drawings, Josifov starts with a controlled approach applied to the image, but once submitted to fire, the work is freed and left to chance. However, he is also mindful of Picasso's truism, that is, 'when you paint you need to know when to stop.' The same applies to burning. You have to know when to stop or it will become dangerous, or the entire piece will dissolve. The process as a whole has the magical quality of rebirth, where from destruction life emerges. It also conjures up the universal image of giving birth through a violent act.

The technique has led to the discovery that the application of fire might allow for two to three works from one act of burning. 'I find it fascinating how much the fire has to offer and how liquid and

alive it becomes. It has really been a joy to befriend fire and create works that are being recognized and collected."

Until recently, Josifov considered his most important and primary medium to be his body. However, with the introduction of fire into his art practice, he splits his creativity to let himself become immersed in the very intoxicating process of drawing with fire. It has become one of his favorite processes in art-making and a new-found obsession.

Josifov was raised in an artistic family, an upbringing that exposed him to numerous art movements and artists through art education and travels around the world. Now, as an adult, he is discriminatory in his likes, gravitating to artists with certain lifestyles who are multi-dimensional, original contributors to art history.

As a student of art history, he is mindful of Marcel Duchamp's and John Cage's influences on contemporary art in focusing our attention on the mind, experimentation, and chance as an active force in art-making. Josifov is also a great admirer of Yves Klein, Jackson Pollock, and Christian Boltanski, to name but a few. The allure in Klein's work was immediate from the moment he set his eyes on his "dangerous paintings, and the artist lifestyle. His works spell energy and a charismatic approach to life. Klein's concept of art is priceless," says Josifov with great admiration.

In the fire process, Josifov brings to mind the performative act introduced by Pollock in his Action Paintings. Josifov is also awestruck by Boltanski's installations, for they evoke strong emotions and realism. The presence of death, memories, ghosts, and playing with shadows are subjects Josifov shares with this artist.

In *Taming Fire*, performance art takes a back seat and the burned drawings become a multi-layered artwork that comes to the fore. The multi-layered effect has become three-dimensional, while in his recent performance art Josifov succeeds in delivering a two-dimensional incarnation of an eight-hour endurance feat reenacted in a number of venues throughout the world. In *2-Dimensional*, the artist lies in a plexiglass box underfoot, while a split-screen live video feed projects the viewer's reaction to the unresponsive face of the artist. In either of these cases, the invitation is open to the public to join in as performers. To complete the art experience when viewing his work has become an essential participatory component of the work, giving a nod to Duchamp's hovering ghostly presence.

Josifov's body of work is a reflection on identities, nationalities, and drawn borders that invite disputes, not to mention globalization and its effects, in particular that of fast-paced technology on contemporary society. As a proud Macedonian steeped in his country's long history and conflict, and very much a globe-trotter, he traverses these worlds by expressing them through a variety of media that combines painting and performance art. His explorations into identity touch upon the



Grace on Fire - Reflection - 2013 (Top)  
76 x 60 cm  
Burned Paper

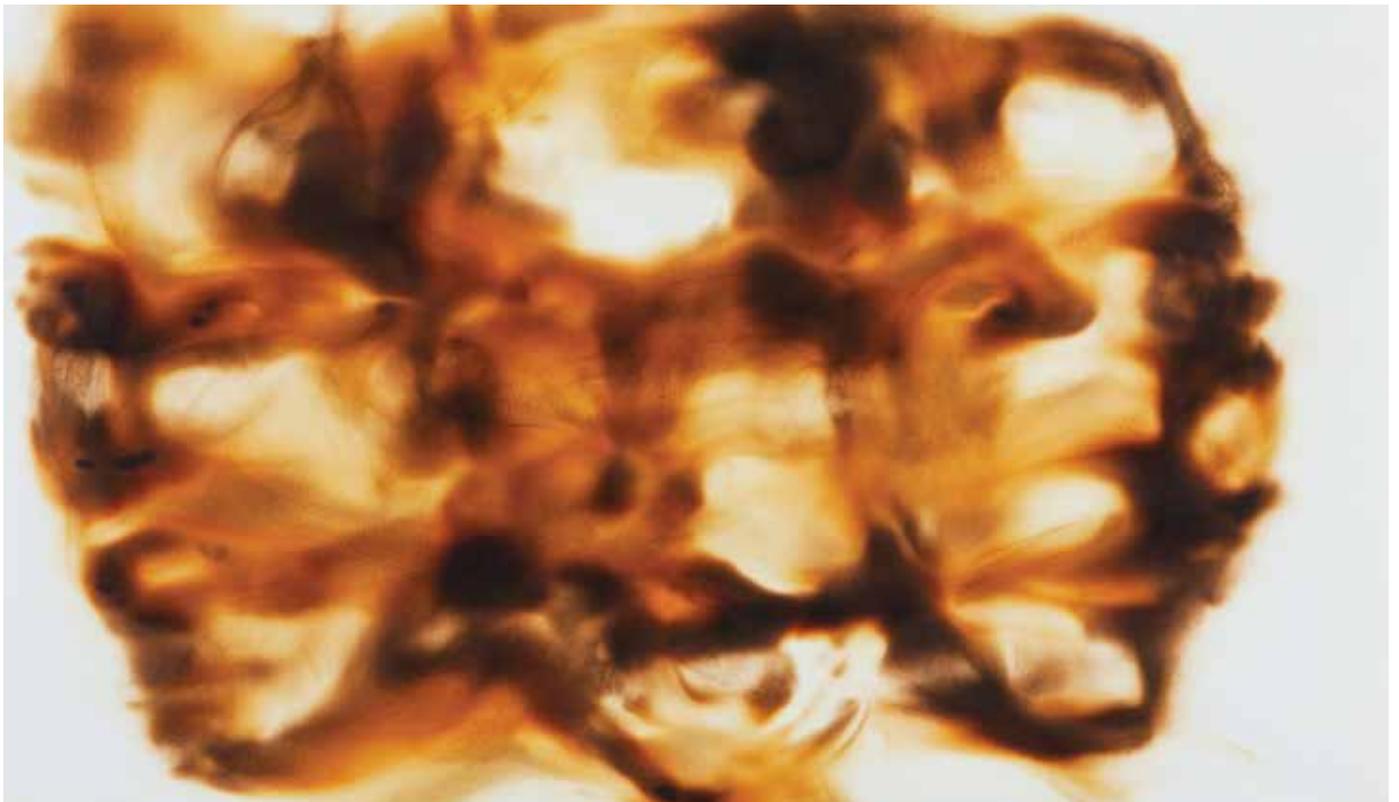
Grace on Fire - 2013 (Bottom)  
76 x 60 cm  
Burned Paper



Nelson Mandela - 2013  
115 x 115 cm  
Burned Paper



Fire Walk - 2013 (Top)  
27 X 36 cm  
Burned Paper



Fire Faces Motion / (Detail) - 2013 (Bottom)  
45 x 60 cm  
Burned Paper



David Bowie - Reflection - 2013 (Top)  
115 x 177 cm  
Burned Paper



Yoko Ono - Fire Reflection - 2014 (Bottom)  
115 x 115 cm  
Burned Paper

public, political, and religious experiences of his lifetime. His personal biography and lived-experiences of a Macedonian reverberate and weave throughout his work. Born in 1986 in Kavadarci, Macedonia and presently counting San Francisco as his alternative home base. Josifov attended the School of Applied Arts in Skopje, Macedonia and started his secondary education in San Francisco, California.

From his artist's statement, we surmise that drawing faces is a fascination he has had since early childhood. He used to stare at faces and ponder their changing expressions. Now as an artist, the face has become a rich subject matter of endless exploration, recording the psychological depth of individuals, and perhaps a way of coming to terms with haunting images and memories of conflict and war.

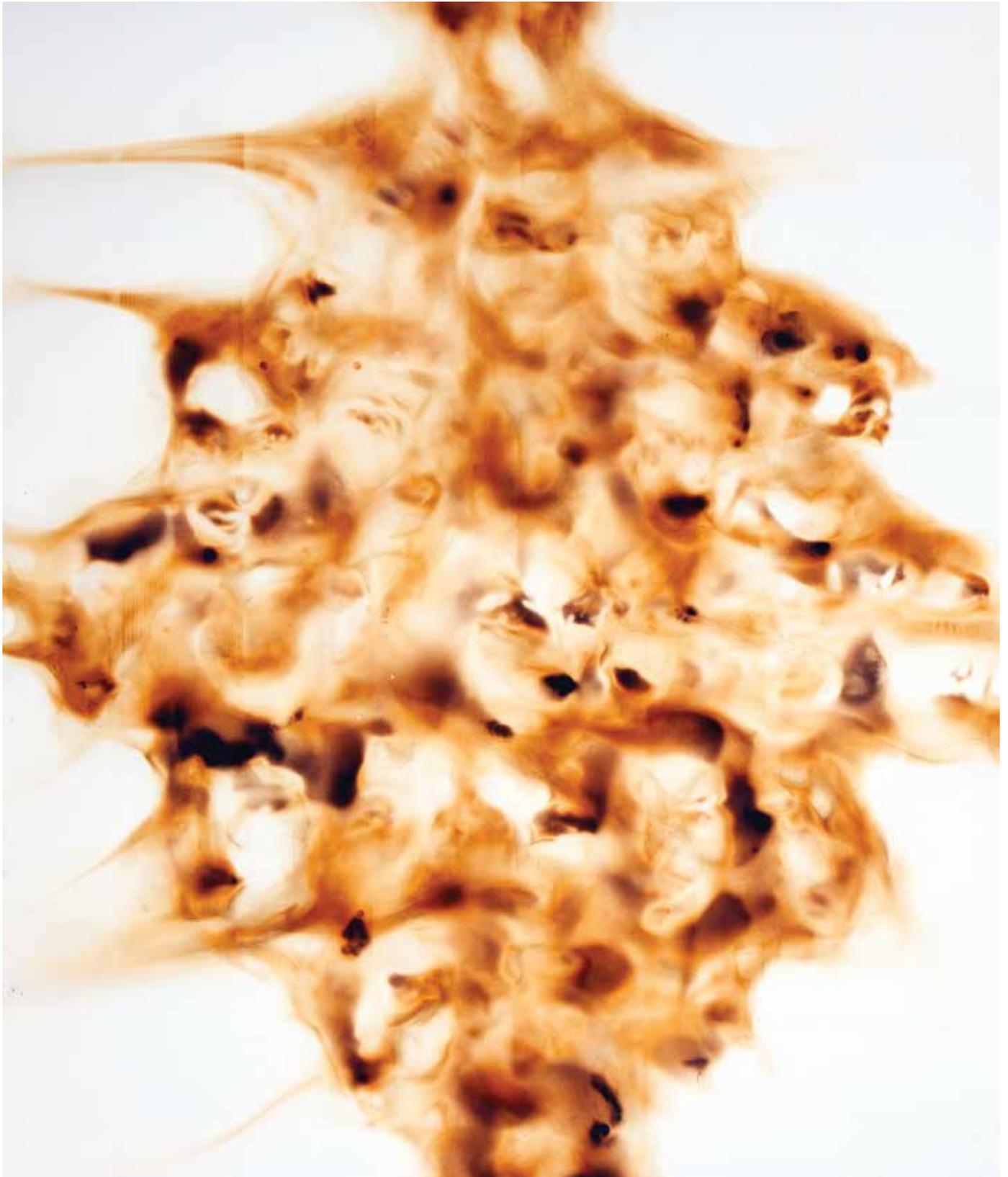
In this journey, Josifov traverses a path from the iconic to the anonymous by highlighting different emotional states. When the sketched face merges with fire in large-scale works, the second layer absorbs the pressure of the heat, and the ground paradoxically creates liquid forms, faces that appear washed by water, a river that carries memories and unresolved secrets.

Of interest is the focus on pop culture icons, a selection that defines him and his contemporaries. It's a way of understanding himself better and becoming the insider. His chosen media enable him to explore and uncover the psychological depth in each of these individuals. By and large they run the gamut of famous people from Nelson Mandela and Marcel Duchamp to James Dean, David Bowie, Kate Moss, and others who remain anonymous. Each is counted as a passing memory and a contributing member of our society and culture with potent legacies that ignite our imagination and inspiration.

*Taming Fire* is a culmination of performance art and fire paintings that blur the boundaries of these independent genres to morph into a singular artist act. What follows is an intense exploration of working with fire as a medium. It further establishes Josifov as an international artist who performed at the MoMA in New York as well as at the Maraya Art Center in the United Arab Emirates while his burned drawings have already been exhibited in Paris and London at Galerie E.G.P. in Skopje, Macedonia at the Museum of Contemporary Art, and in San Francisco at The Theatre Lofts in *Taming Fire*, an exhibition curated by Hanna Regev.

Igor continues to explore the effects of fire on wood and aluminum, while pushing paper to its limits with each new face. The collected ashes and fragments of faces will turn into sprawling installations in different venues. The installations are a means to divert the viewer into contemplating the fragility of life. As for fire, it remains an alluring challenge and a force to be reckoned with, and tamed.

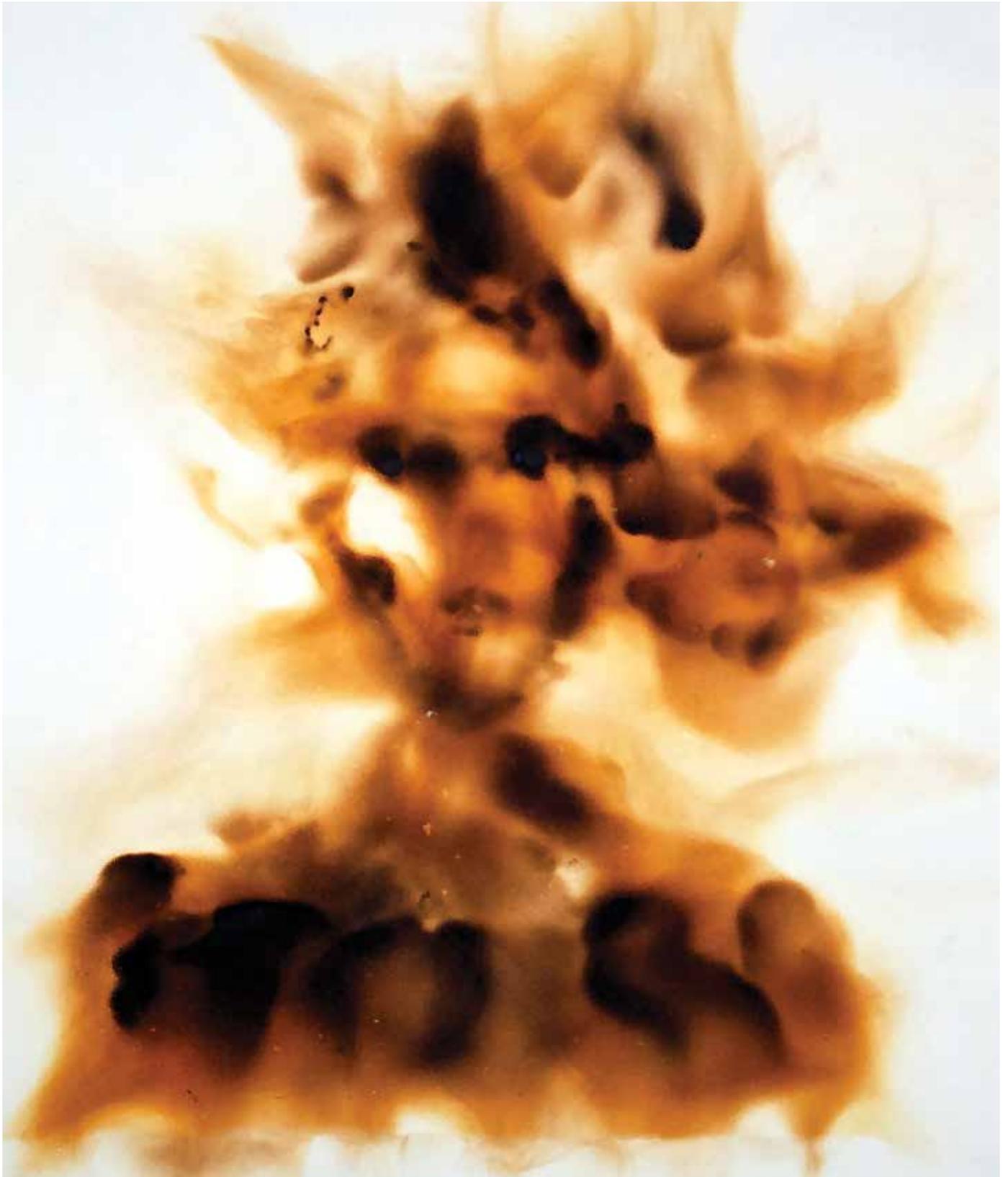
Hanna Regev  
*Contemporary Art Curator and Author*



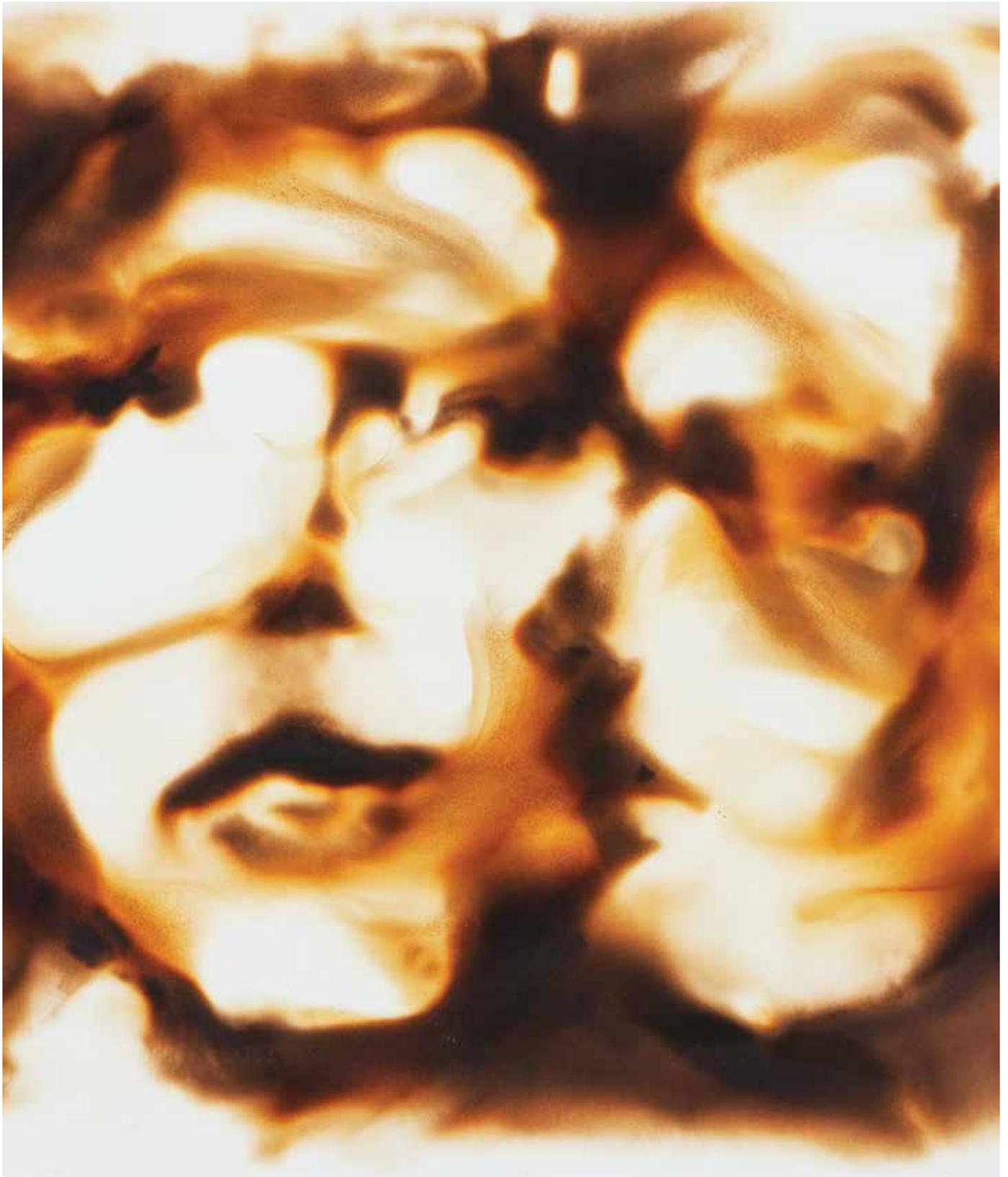
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213 x 115 cm  
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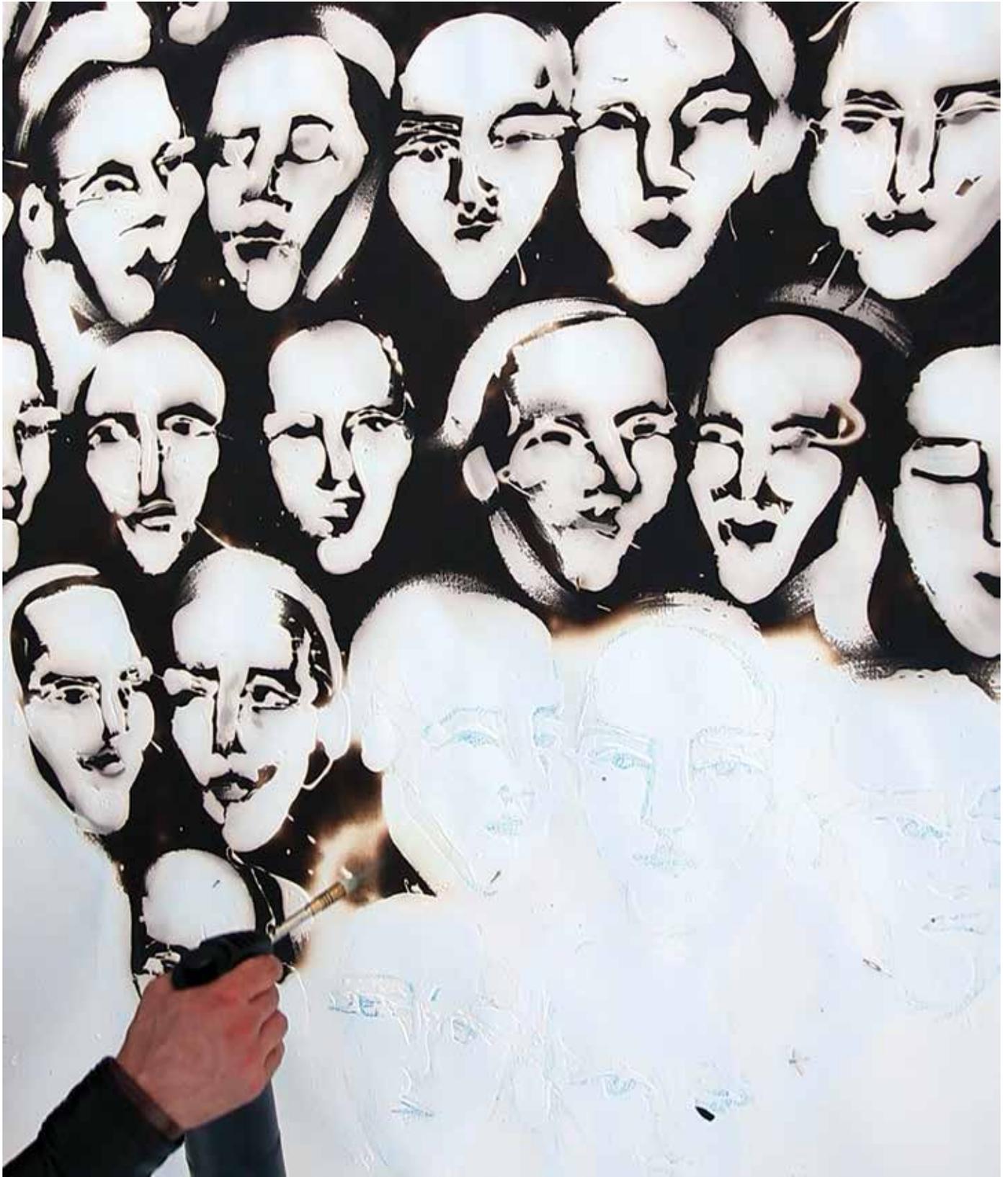
Faces of Memories X - Reflection - 2013  
162 x 115 cm  
Burned Paper



Electric - 2014  
79 x 94 cm  
Burned Paper



Grace - Mirror / (Detail) - 2013  
35.5 x 50 cm  
Burned Paper



Still photography  
Taming Fire Performance  
Premiers Fall of 2014, Apple, California



Self Portrait Installation  
North Cut Steel Gallery  
Billings, Montana, USA

*"Paper burns, ashes crumble, matter convulses under the lash of fire ... Macedonian artist Igor Josifov has chosen to create by burning. His self-portrait offers a silhouette with seared edges. The technique is surprisingly violent and accurate. Here the immolation does not destroy but sculpts and traces delicate outlines with paper's noble form.*

*Perhaps a projection of the passions that inflame us and so shape our personalities? The work involves a spectacular and terrifying performance, traversing that moment of uncertainty that could slide into total destruction. All that remain are sketches, patterns that catch the eye and surprise – which we distinguish from far away, in a counterintuitive movement backward – captivating us and piquing our curiosity."*

Dauphine De Cambre

[www.theartchemists.com/2014/05/31/lavant-garde-igor-josifov-autoportrait-2014/](http://www.theartchemists.com/2014/05/31/lavant-garde-igor-josifov-autoportrait-2014/)

Upcoming Exhibits of Taming Fire: San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York City.

For more information please go to [www.igor-josifov.com](http://www.igor-josifov.com)

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