

# Selma Selman

## Art Basel Unlimited 2023



# Selma Selman

(1991, Bihać, Bosnia and Herzegovina) is one of the youngest and most exciting flag-bearers of a long tradition of critical and political performance from the ex-Yugoslav area, who works with performance, video, photography, drawing and painting. Her practice both embraces and blasts the stereotypes about Roma people by referring to her personal experience, life situations and stories, but also focuses on her own specific condition as a young woman artist of Roma origins from Bosnia. In her artworks, the ultimate aim is to protect and enable female bodies and enact a cross-scalar approach to collective self-emancipation of oppressed women. Her search for functional, contemporary political resistance has also led her to found *Get the Heck to School* in 2017, a socially engaged organisation aiming to empower Roma girls worldwide who face poverty and social ostracisation.



*Platinum*, 2021, performance, National Gallery, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Photo: Almin Zrno

Selma Selman earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts in 2014 from the Painting Department of the Academy of Arts at Banja Luka University. She studied sociology and anthropology at Central European University in Budapest before she graduated in 2018 from Syracuse University, New York with a Master of Fine Arts in Transmedia, Visual and Performing Arts. She currently lives and works between Bosnia, and the Netherlands, where she studies at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten.

Selman participated in 2022 at Documenta 15 (Kassel, Germany), and at Manifesta 14 (Prishtina, Kosovo). In 2021 the National Gallery in Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina) launched a survey exhibition of her work. In the last few years Selman had several solo exhibitions, in 2022 at Kunstraum Innsbruck (Austria), in 2021 at Kasseler Kunstverein (Germany) and participated in several group shows, in 2022 at Shedhalle (Zürich, Switzerland), in 2021 at Art Encounters biennale (Timișoara, Romania), in 2020 at Kunsthalle Wien (Vienna, Austria) and notably at the Roma Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2019 among others.



*Viva la Vida*, 2016, digital print mounted on dibond, 60,7 x 50 cm

# Art Basel Unlimited

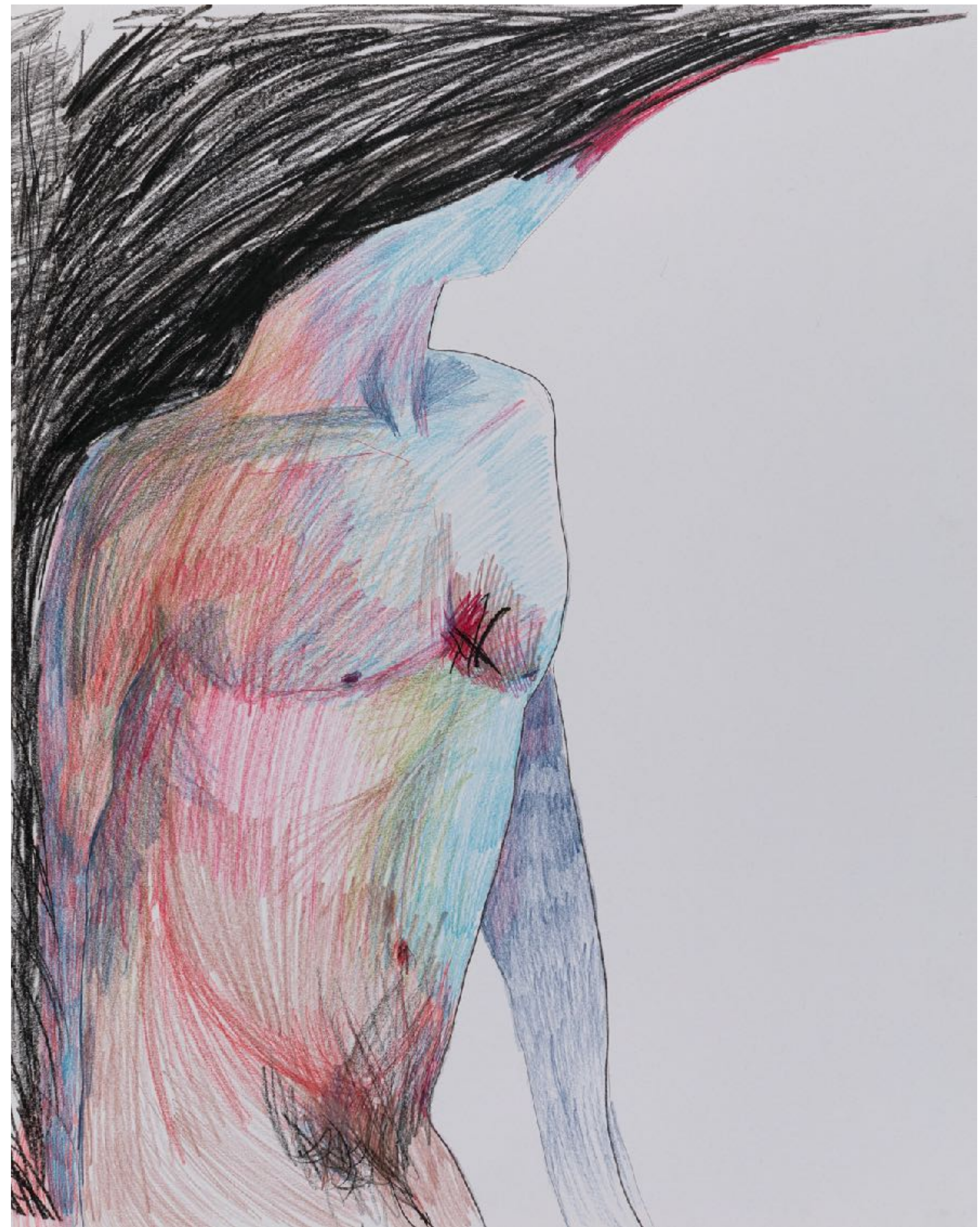
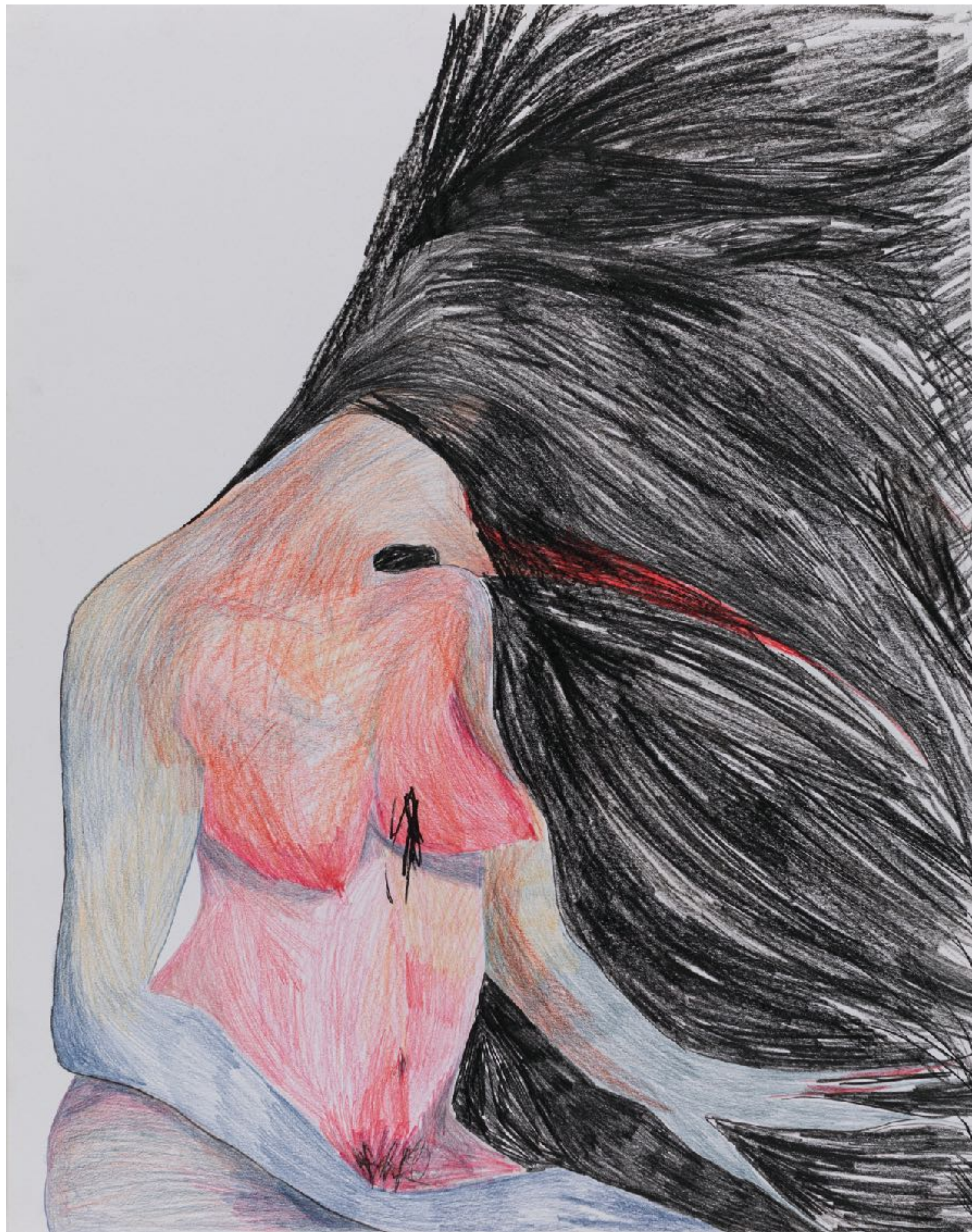
For Art Basel Unlimited, Selma Selman realized a new large-scale altar-like painting with parts of a dismantled car, turning a car top, doors and trunk lid into a six-part complex sculptural piece. On the newly conceived work, organic, tender shapes evoking hybrid, uncanny human bodies with elongated, spider-like limbs, with closed or multiple eyes fusion into one another, creating an unsettling contrast between the softness of forms and the cold metal car parts on which they are painted. Evoking both the fragility and the fierceness of female spiders that particularly express in its preparatory drawings, the piece, similarly to Selman's first painting-installation titled *Six pieces of Mercedes-Benz* (2022), continues a cycle that started with her video-performance *Mercedes Matrix* (2019), in which she is joined by male members of her family in dismantling a Mercedes-Benz, a symbol of affluence and status across Selman's original Romani community in the Balkans and indeed much of the globe.



Painting on metal – Mercedes-Benz, 2023, oil on scrap metal, 300 x 400 x 30 cm



*Mercedes-Benz drawing, 2023,  
colour pencil on paper, 48,3 x 61 cm each*



*Mercedes-Benz drawing, 2023,*  
colour pencil on paper, 61 x 48,3 cm each

# Mercedes Matrix





STATE OF THE ARTS

The Mercedes brand is a recurring topic in Selman's work. In the performance *Mercedes Matrix* (2019), accompanied by her Roma male family members, the artist dismantles a Mercedes-Benz car. While she is appropriating the Mercedes, a symbol of male power and affluence and status across the Balkans, she is at the same time sharing and embracing the fragile narrative of labour within Roma communities and transforms their daily business into artistic production, augmenting its symbolic value in the process. Questions of labour and economy are at the centre of this and other performative works by Selma Selman. The recycling of scrap metal in particular plays a pivotal role in her practice insofar as her family has supported itself in this way for generations. In several performances, she destroys metal goods, whether vacuum cleaners or washing machines, to harvest the valuable parts. In her video pieces Selman has been using her own body, voice and identity as a medium for political resistance, feminist empowerment and collective self-emancipation, but also questioning the relationship between art, labour and economy, all this with a sensitive, harsh and ironic approach.



*Mercedes Matrix*, 2019, video, 8'27", ed. 5+1 AP,  
installation view, Dom Omladine, Belgrade, Serbia, 2020



“Together with my family I performed *Mercedes Matrix* where I use art as a tool for transforming the value of an act of labor and art. In this work, art becomes a tool to question the labor of my family and my labor as an artist. The same acts of labor which are performed are simultaneously executed for my own survival as well as being executed by and for the survival of my family.”

– Selma Selman

*Mercedes Matrix*, 2019, video, 8'27", ed. 5+1 AP

# Paintings on metal



After being trained in painting, Selman chose metal waste as her artistic medium in order to question the perceived value and relations between metal waste, technology and art.

Selma Selman's paintings on scrap metal are a personal visual diary composed of – sometimes symbolic – self-portraits, portraits of her family, depictions, notes and impressions of everyday life scenes in Bosnia, situations she was confronted to, as well as reference to characters or works from art history that have been determining for her. The scrap metal onto which she realizes these works is a reference to her family's struggling existence, her father collecting such metal pieces to sell them in order for his family to subsist. By using this material for her paintings, the artist transforms this seemingly useless surface into a conveyer of her message, her origins into a strong base to build on and to transcend misery, discrimination and stereotypes.

„I have always had a very personal relationship with metal as my family and I have been collecting and recycling it to sustain ourselves since my childhood. My latest paintings on scrap metal portray impressions of everyday life, references to art history and text collages. Humor, wordplay and my incessant probing of the boundaries of art fuse painting and sculpture into small intimate objects.”

– Selma Selman



*Painting on metal, 2019-2020, acrylic on scrap metal, 197 x 42 cm*



*Painting on metal, 2023, acrylic on scrap metal, 200 x 100 cm*

WHEN YOU GET USED  
TO LIVING WITH  
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ANYTHING

Many of the works painted on metal resemble the tradition of concrete poetry: words are scattered across the surface in handwriting; others like the car pieces have a more painterly quality, with anthropomorphic imagery. For Selman, the appropriation of car hoods stands also as a critique of gender roles. Selman refers both to the re-appropriation of feminist gestures and to the multilayered symbol that the car holds in her personal life and in minority cultures.

*Painting on metal, 2019-2020, acrylic on scrap metal, 120 x 135 x 13 cm*





Selma Selman's solo booth at viennacontemporary, 2022



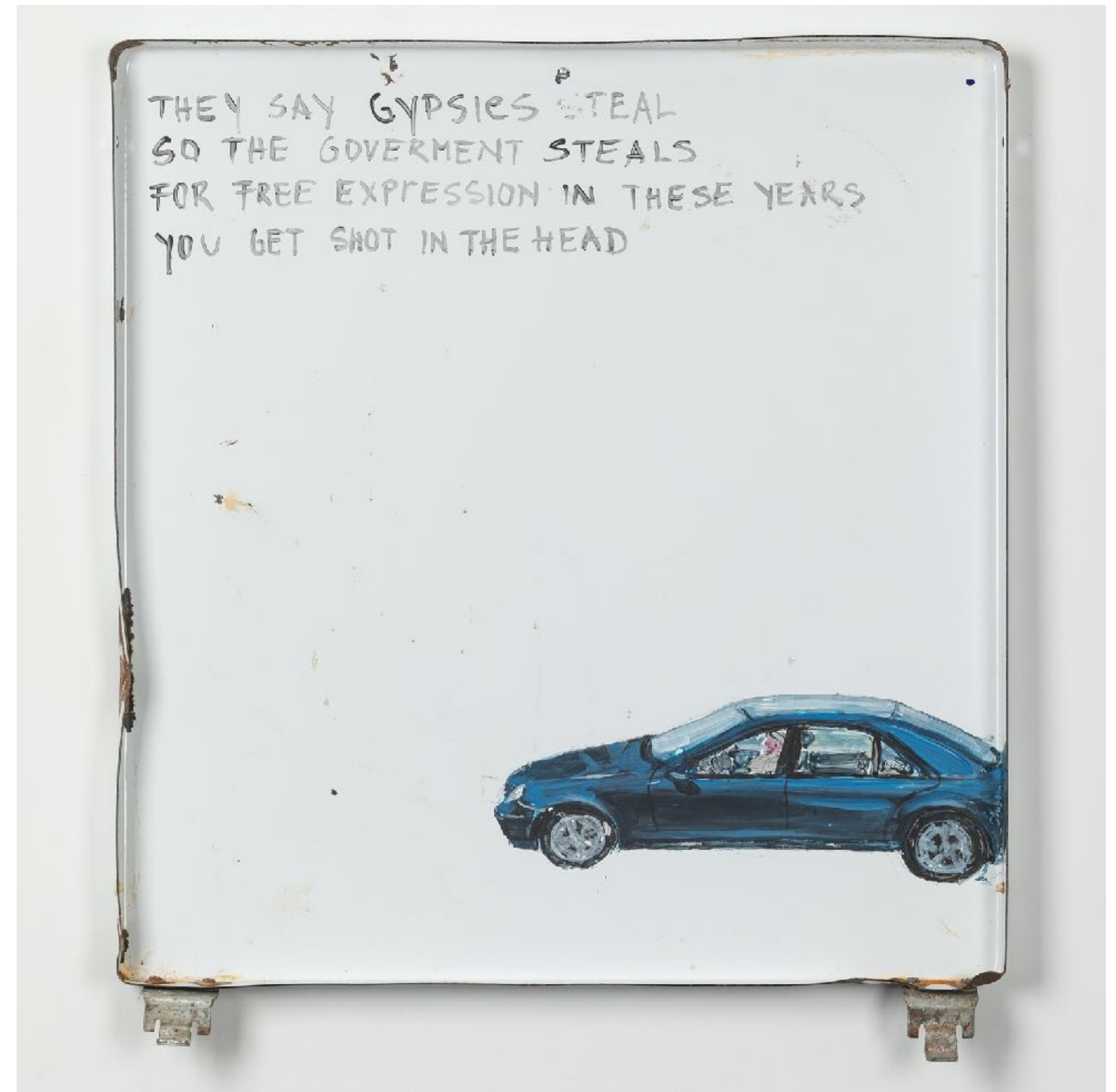
Painting on metal, 2020-2021, acrylic on scrap metal, 107 x 33 x 33 cm



Painting on metal, 2020-2021, acrylic on scrap metal, 106 x 55 x 14 cm



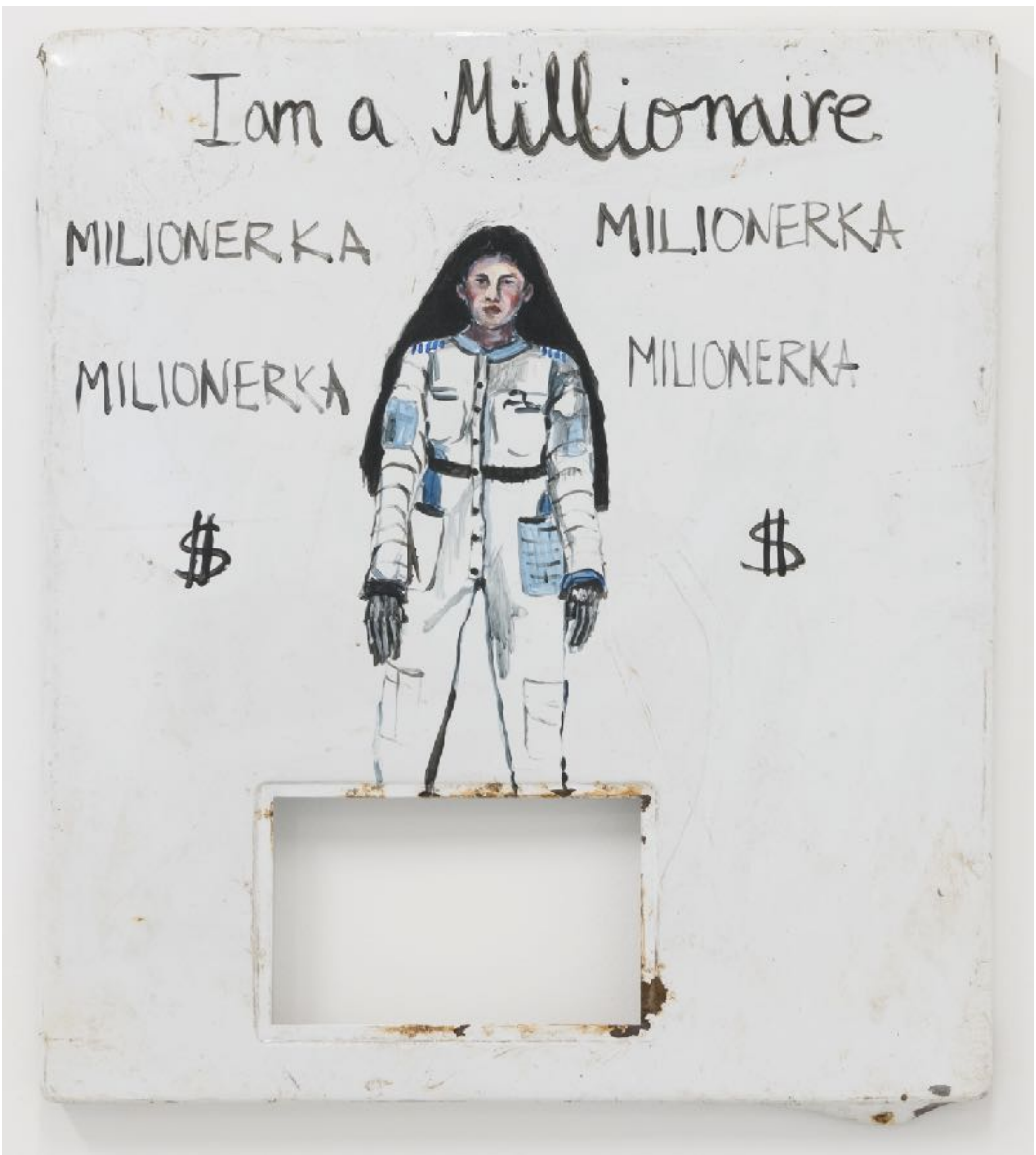
Selma Selman's solo booth at ARCOmadrid, 2022



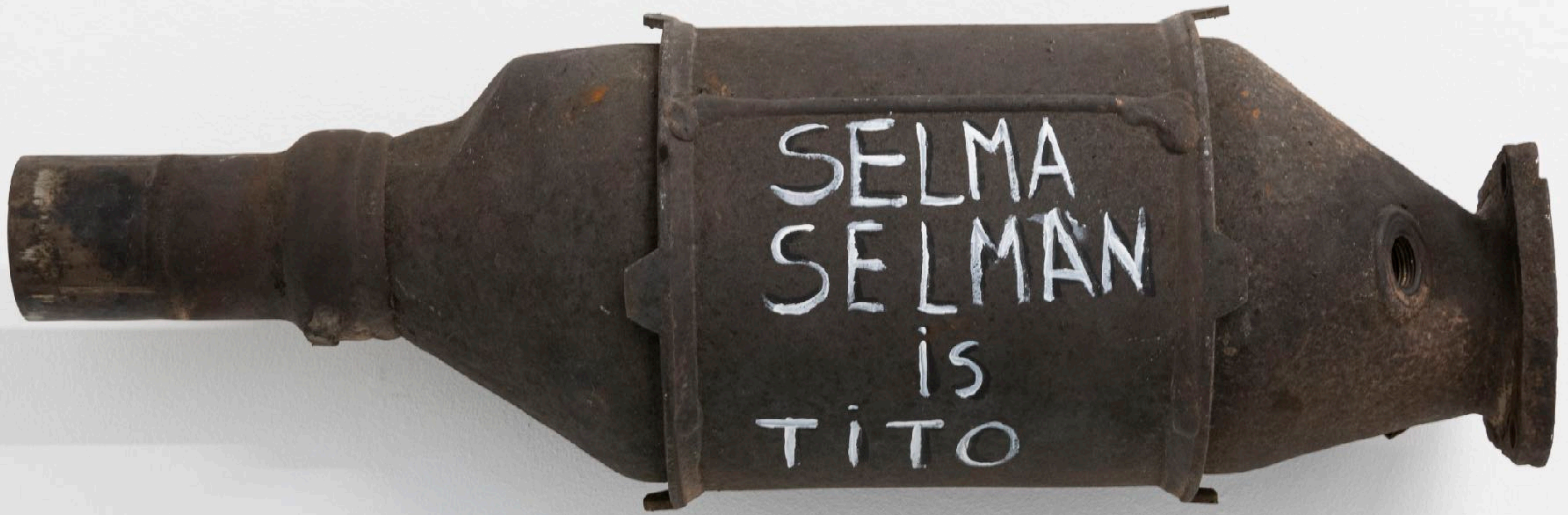
Painting on metal, 2019-2020, acrylic on scrap metal, 58 x 50 x 6 cm each



Painting on metal, 2020-2021, acrylic on scrap metal, 266 x 135 x 55 cm



Painting on metal, 2020-2021, acrylic on scrap metal, 62 x 53 x 4 cm



SELMA  
SELMAN  
is  
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Available paintings on metal



*Painting on metal, 2019-2020, acrylic on scrap metal, 95 x 95 cm*



*Painting on metal, 2021, acrylic on scrap metal, 92 x 92 cm*





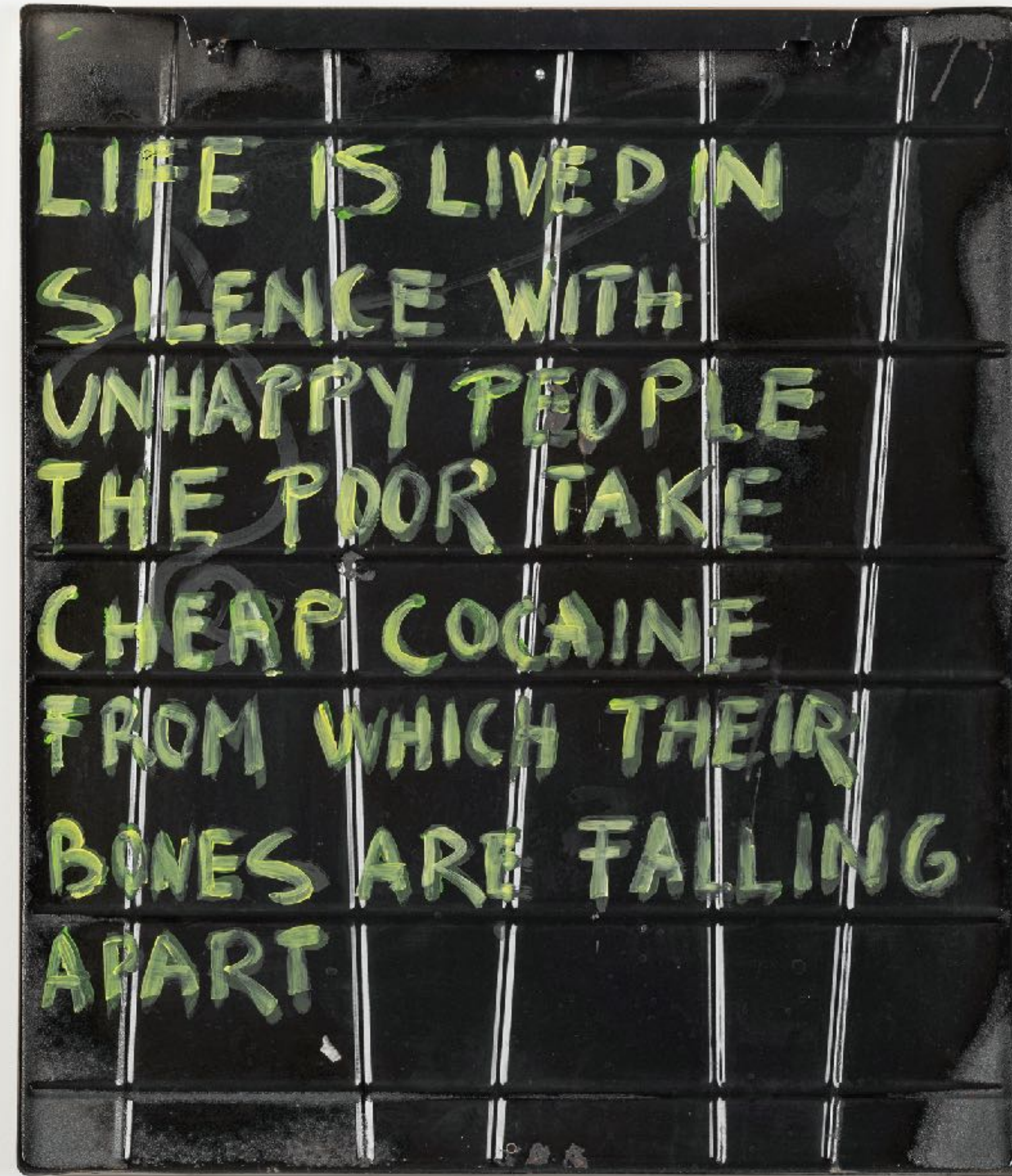
Painting on metal, 2021, acrylic on scrap metal, 90 x 90 cm



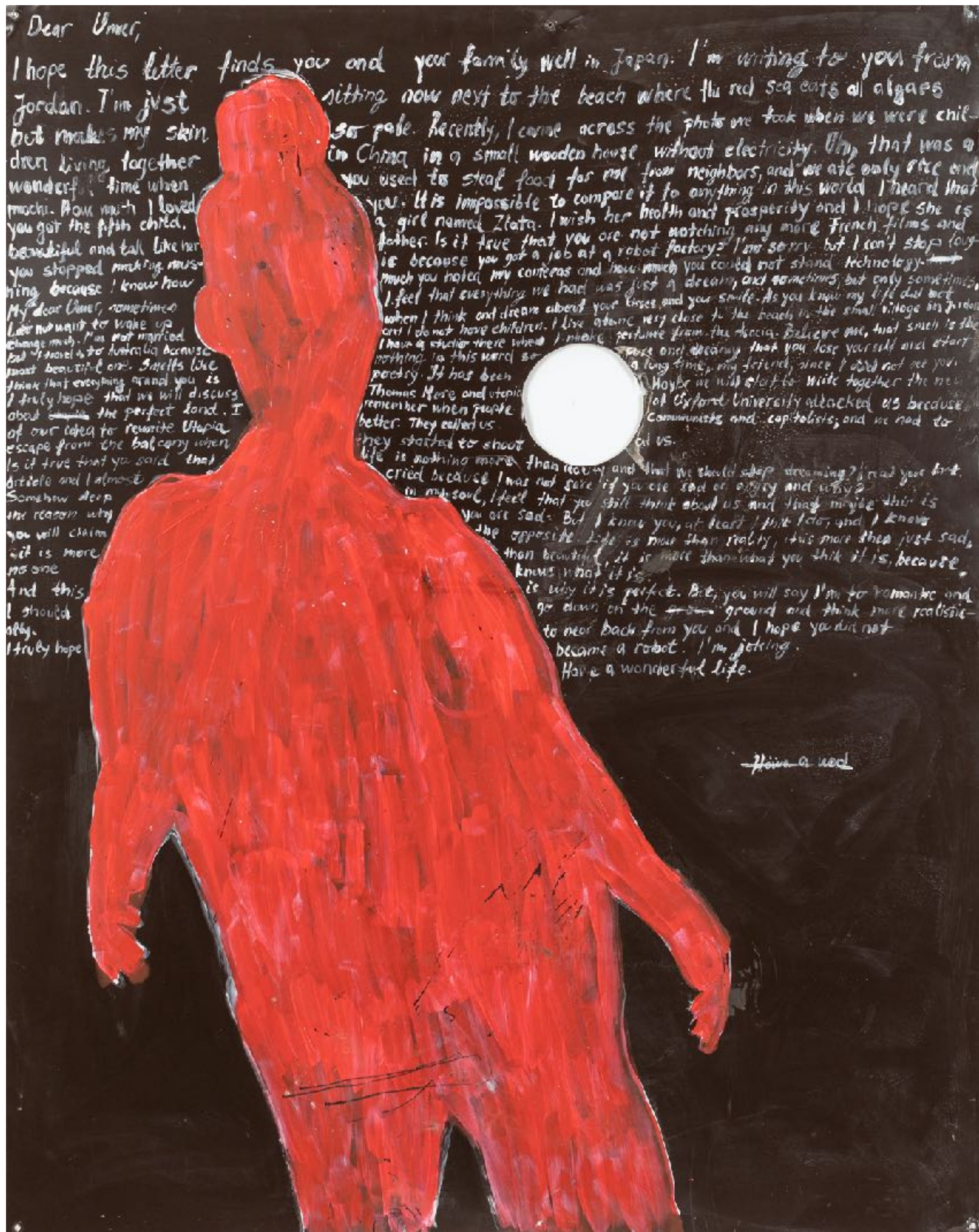
Painting on metal, 2019-2020, acrylic on scrap metal, 10 x 10 x 3 cm



*Painting on metal, 2019-2021, acrylic on scrap metal, 33 x 33 x 5 cm*



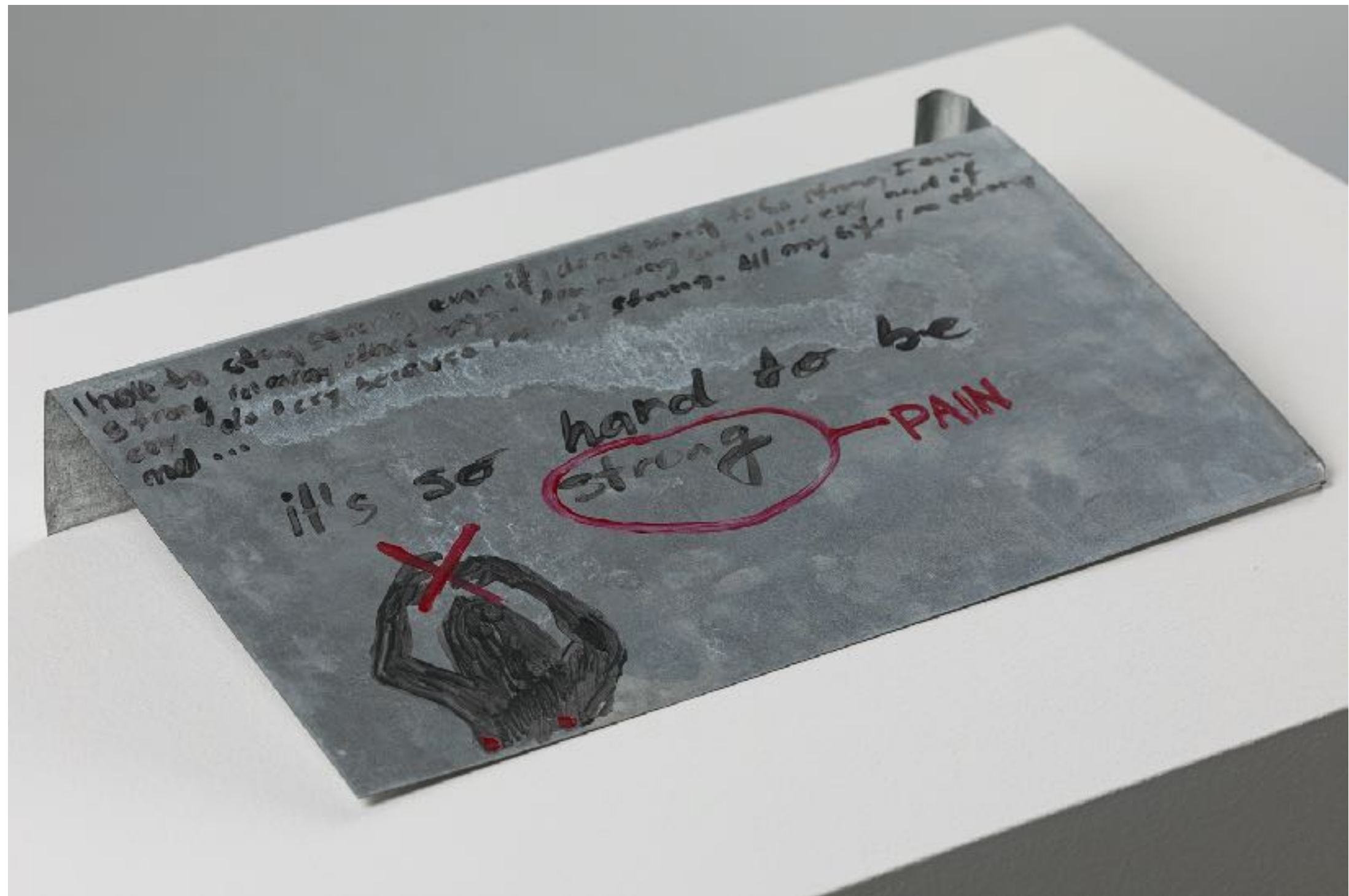
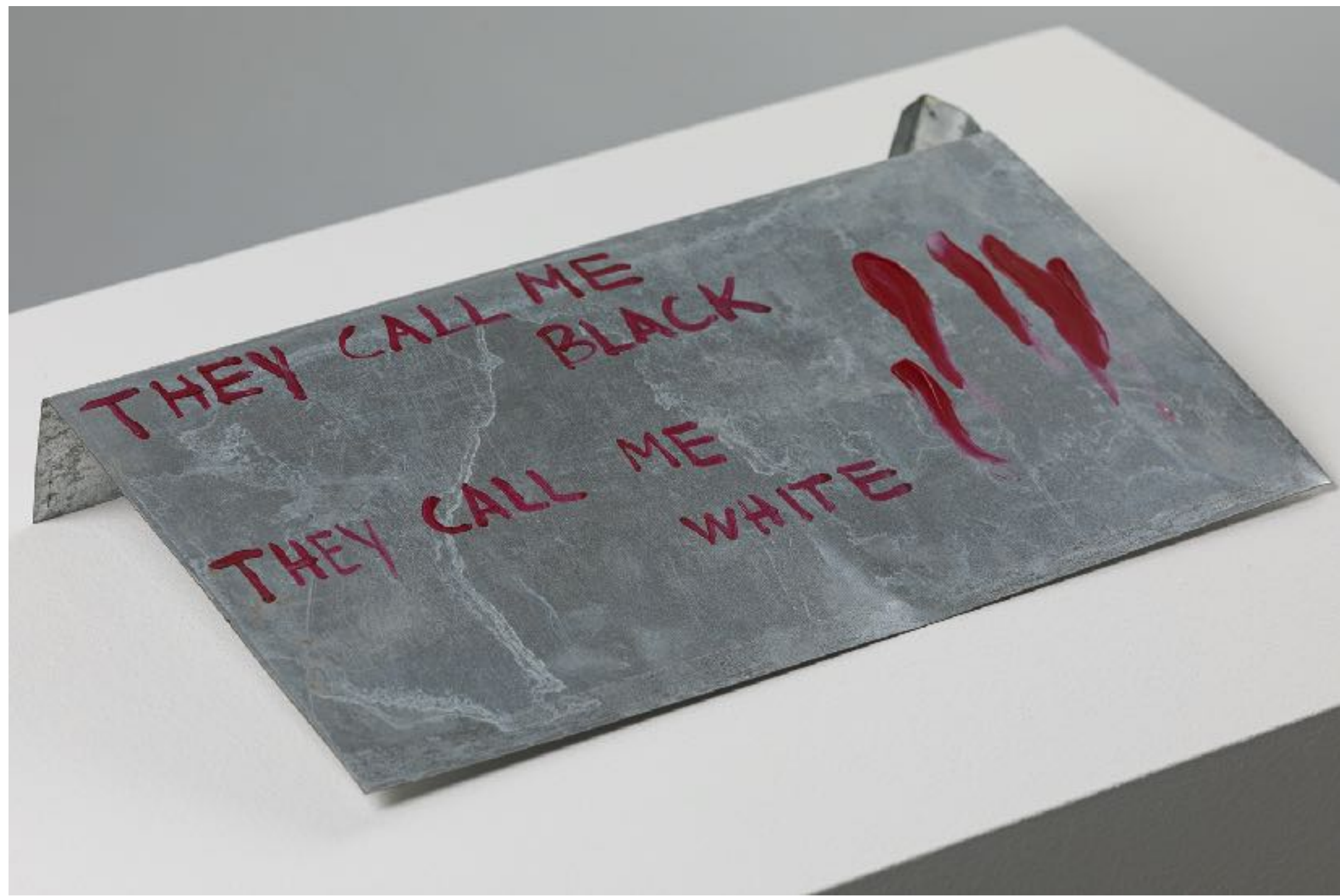
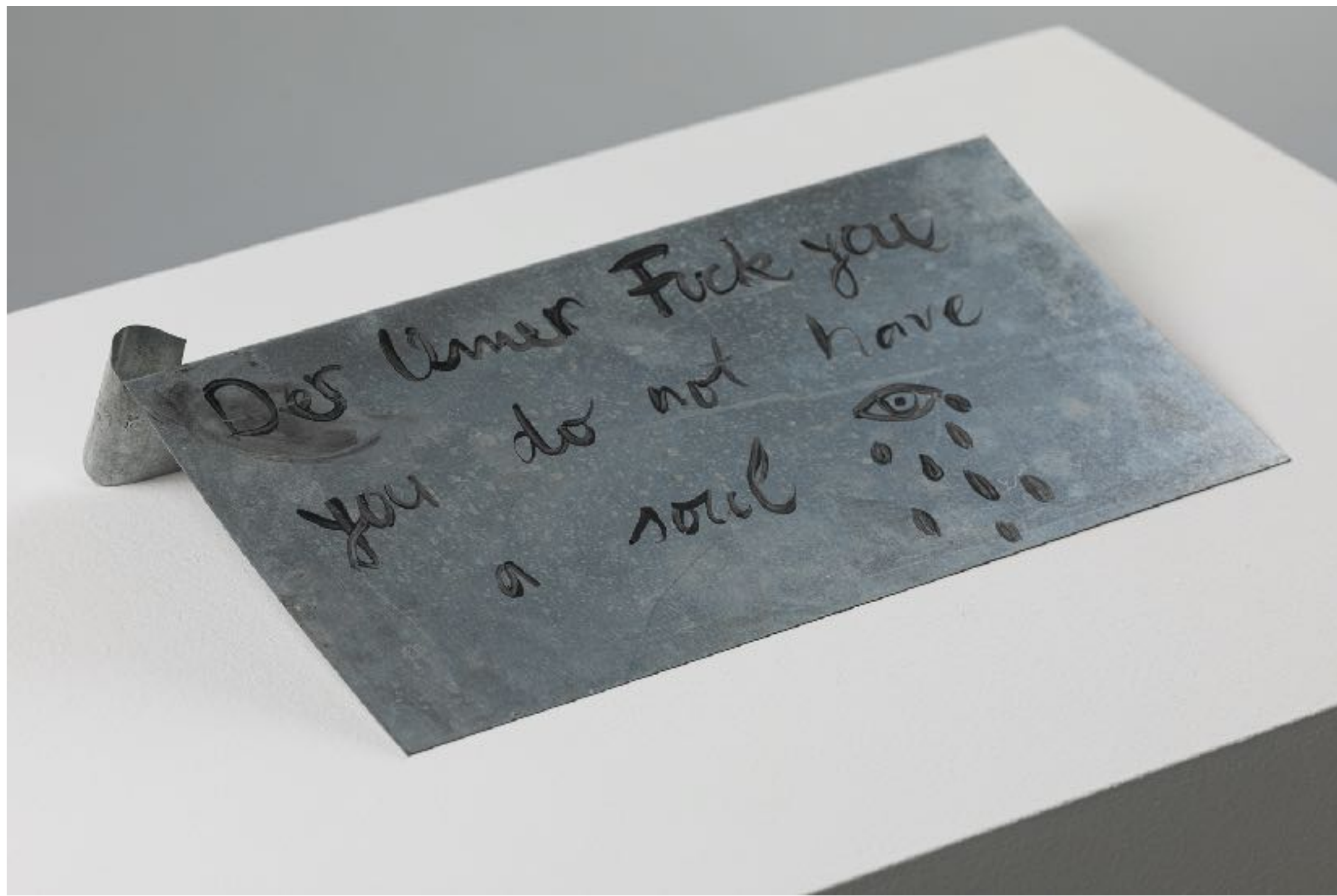
*Painting on metal, 2019-2020, acrylic on scrap metal, 63 x 54 x 2 cm*



Painting on metal, 2019-2021, acrylic on scrap metal, 125 x 100 cm



Painting on metal, 2021, acrylic on scrap metal, 100 x 93 cm



Writing on metal, 2021, acrylic on scrap metal, 22 x 38 x 7 cm | 25 x 41 x 6 cm (2 pcs)

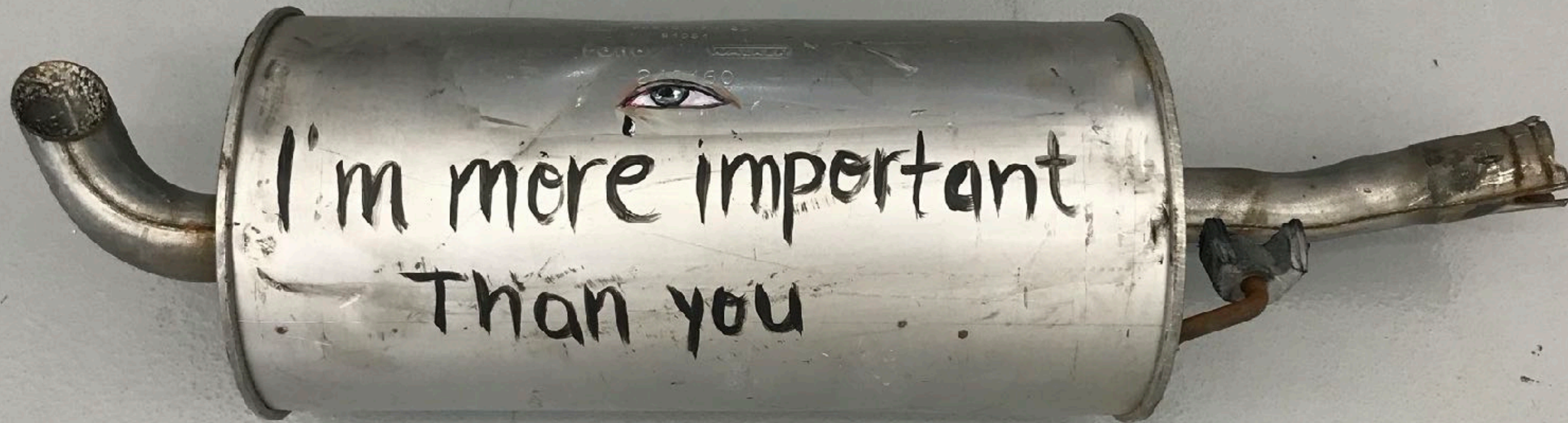
Scream, 2021, acrylic on scrap metal, 12,5 x 6,6 cm



*Golden spoon - Selma Selman, 2023, acrylic on scrap metal, 15 x 3 x 1 cm*



*Bread, 2021, acrylic on scrap metal, 19,5 x 19,5 x 7,5 cm*



*I am more important than you*, 2022, acrylic on scrap metal, 27 x 83 x 21 cm

Available photographs



*I pissed on your land*, 2019-2020, giclée print, 2 pieces, 35 x 50 cm each, ed. 5+1 AP

*Mona Lisa*, 2017, giclée print mounted on dibond, 70 x 58 cm, ed. 5+2 AP





*Mercedes Matrix*, 2019, inkjet print on paper, 50 x 70 cm | 100 x 150 cm, ed. 5+2 AP



*Mercedes 310*, 2014, giclée print on Hahnemühle rag baryt paper  
2 pieces, 50 x 70 cm each, ed. 5+2 AP



*Viva la Vida*, 2016, digital print mounted on dibond, 60,7 x 50 cm, ed. 5+2 AP

# Available drawings



*Superpositional Intersectionalism*, 2020,  
colour crayon and pencil on paper, 43 x 35,5 cm each



Selma Selman's work *Superpositional Intersectionalism* is a series of drawings, some done with her right hand, some with her left hand. Selman says she was inspired by the phenomenon of quantum superposition in physics, or the ability of a single particle to occupy two places at once. "When I transposed that concept to the way I experience my body and identity, or identities in general, I started playing with the idea of intersectionality. I decided to create these hybrid creatures that showcase multiple identities, revealing the fluidity that's embedded in them," she explains.

The drawings look surreal, dream-like; multiple body shapes melt into one another. They reveal a female character, which morphs from one entity into another, questioning notions of gender expression and internal personal identities. Escaping fixed definitions, the artist's protagonists are presented with distorted faces, unimaginable bodies and animal-like features. In this set of drawings, Selman continuously allows herself to explore the divisions of our world and confronts the language of antagonism with her own imaginary narratives of bodily longing.



*Superpositional Intersectionalism*, 2020,  
colour pencil on paper, 35,5 x 43 cm each

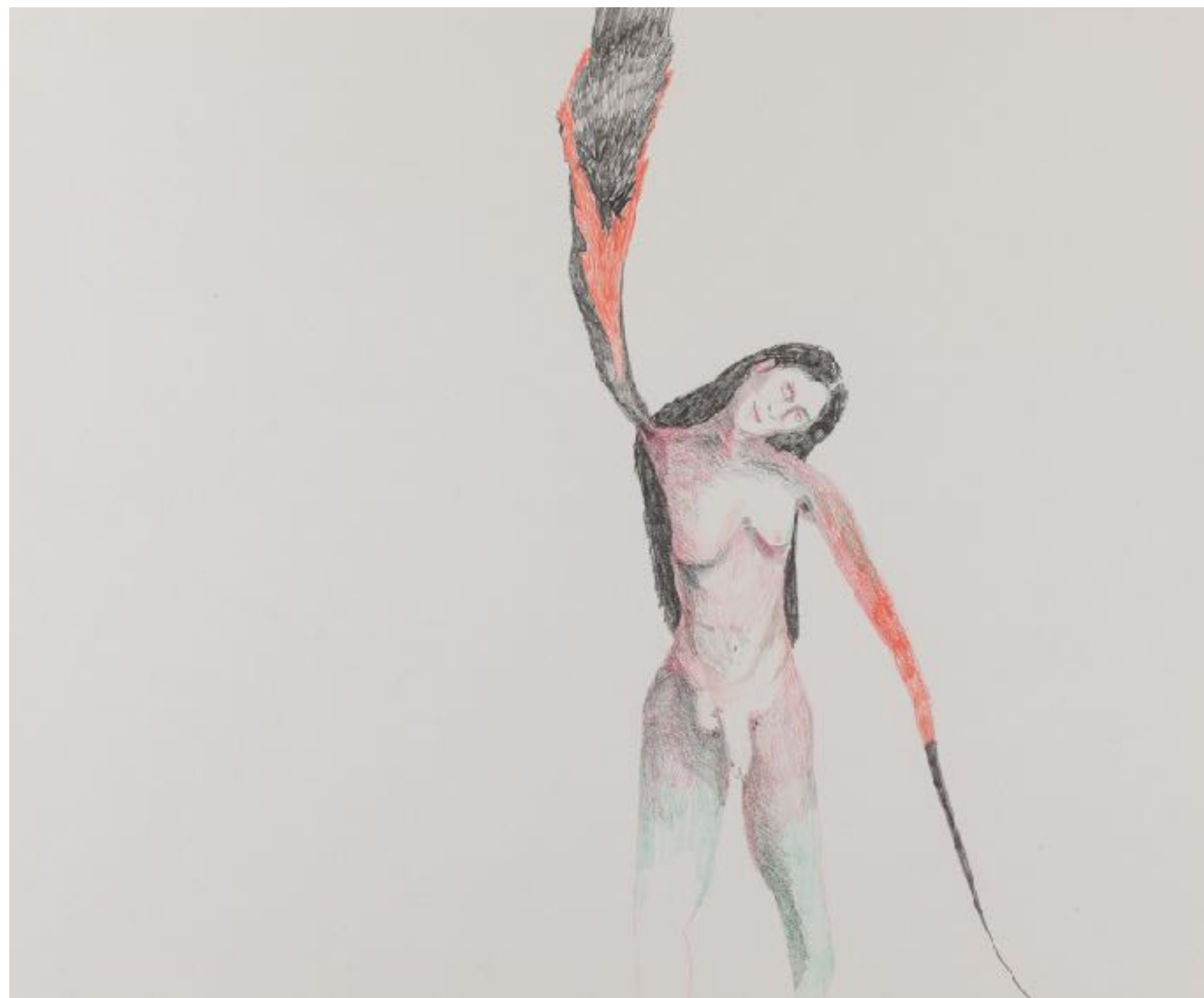


*Superpositional Intersectionalism*, 2020,  
graphite and colour pencil on paper, 61 x 48 cm



Middle and right: *Superpositional Intersectionalism*, 2020/2021,  
graphite and colour pencil on paper, 35 x 43 cm





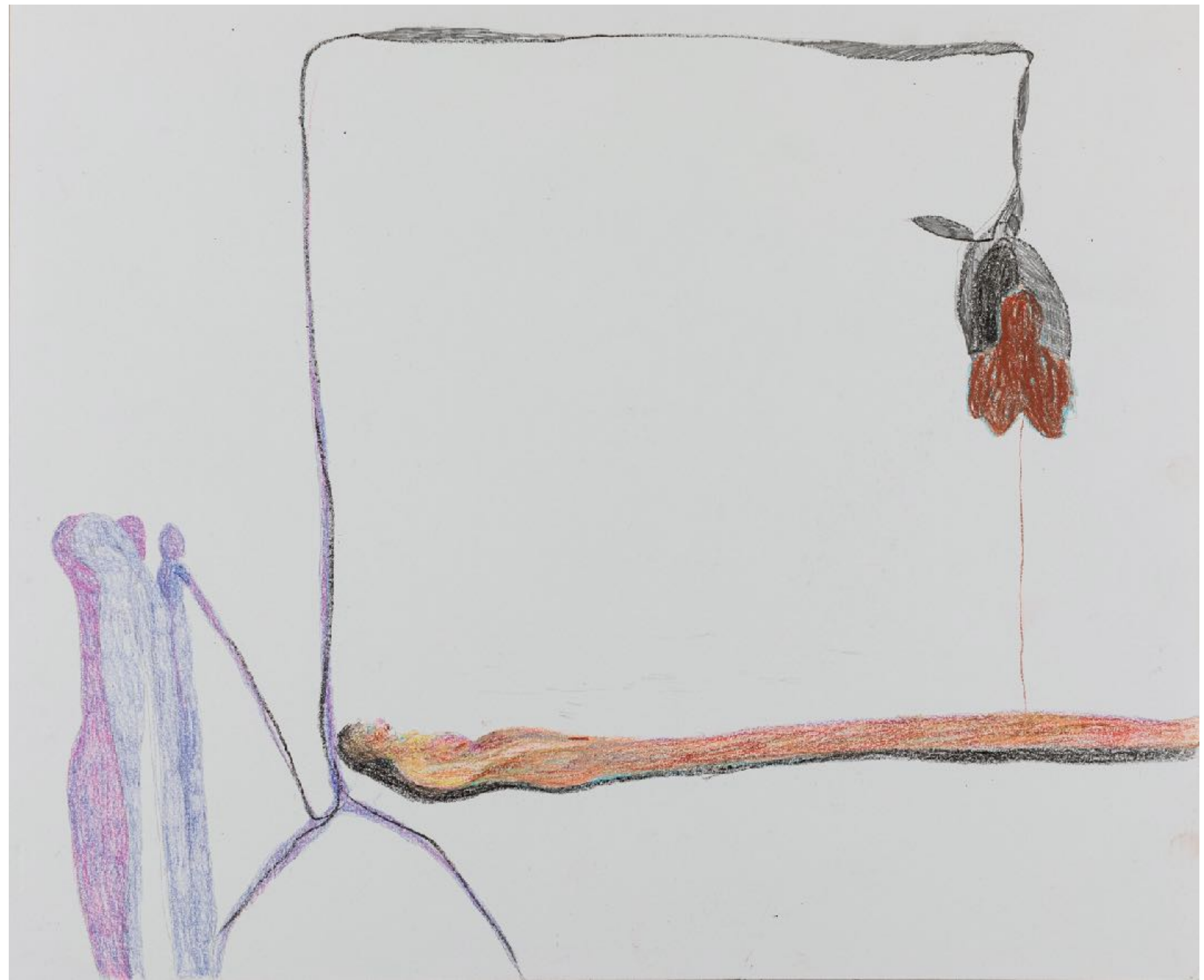
Left and middle: *Superpositional Intersectionalism*, 2020, colour crayon and pencil on paper, 40 x 50 cm each

*Superpositional Intersectionalism*, 2021, colour pencil on paper, 61 x 48 cm

Her series of drawings form an intimate body of works as they reflect the struggle, sufferance and discomfort she experiences with her own female body and the numerous gender-based expectations, roles and attributes that society and especially her own family are attaching to it. Selma Selman's transcendental work is indeed full of tensions, rips and tears as she continuously tries to mend the wounds, narrow the tremendous gap between her origins – and all burdens that they mean for her – and her autonomous existence as a contemporary artist.



*Superpositional Intersectionalism*, 2017,  
colour crayon and pencil on paper, 53 x 43 cm



*Superpositional Intersectionalism*, 2017,  
colour crayon and pencil on paper, 35 x 43 cm





*Untitled, 2017,*  
colour crayon on paper, 35 x 43 cm

Left and middle: *Untitled, 2017,*  
colour crayon on paper, 43 x 35 cm



*Self Portrait - Sleep Guards*, 2018,  
colour crayon on paper, 35 x 43 cm



*Superpositional Intersectionalism*, 2017,  
colour crayon on paper, 35 x 43 cm

“Through my drawings I propose possible manifestations of *Superpositional Intersectionalism*. My drawings expose and neutralize perceived conceptual oppositions and contradictions - allowing audiences to see the fluidity and possibility built - in to all relations, spaces and times. My drawings visualize different ways of reorganizing identities, bodies and cultures.”

- Selma Selman



*Self Portrait (Pussy)*, 2017,  
colour crayon on paper, 28,1 x 21,7 cm



*Self Portrait (Cat)*, 2017,  
colour crayon on paper, 28,1 x 21,7 cm



*Superpositional Intersectionalism*, 2017,  
colour crayon on paper, 30,4 x 23 cm

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