



Rafaela de Ascanio

5th March - 9th May 2026

As part of its 2026 exhibition programme, Mayfair's cultural destination sketch presents *Goodnight Moon*, an exhibition of work by London and Madrid-based artist Rafaela de Ascanio. De Ascanio is a British-Spanish painter and sculptor whose work is inspired by art history, mythology, and stories of female power.

De Ascanio has also created a bespoke wallpaper especially for the exhibition, transforming the space into an immersive environment that invites guests to step into her world.

Her bold use of colour – influenced by her childhood in the Canary Islands – and layered imagery encourages viewers to look again at traditional ideas of power and individuality.

Hand-built clay sculptures appear alongside the paintings throughout the space. Drawing on imagery ranging from classical goddesses to contemporary cultural figures, de Ascanio presents women as confident, self-possessed, and unapologetic, offering a fresh perspective on how women have been represented throughout art history.

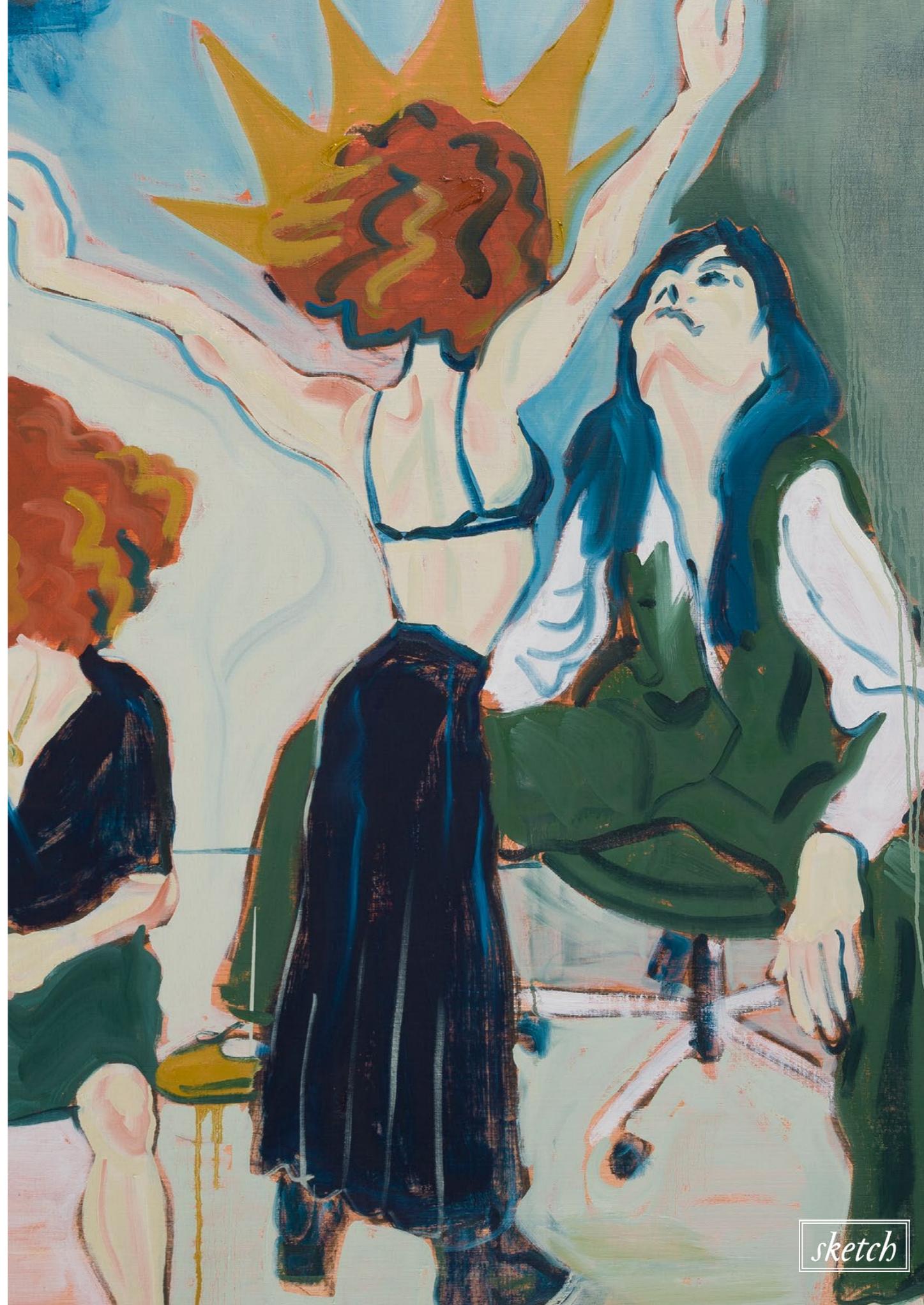


@rafaeladeascanio

@sketchlondon

@mtartagency

For all sales enquiries, please contact info@sketch.london



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Paintings



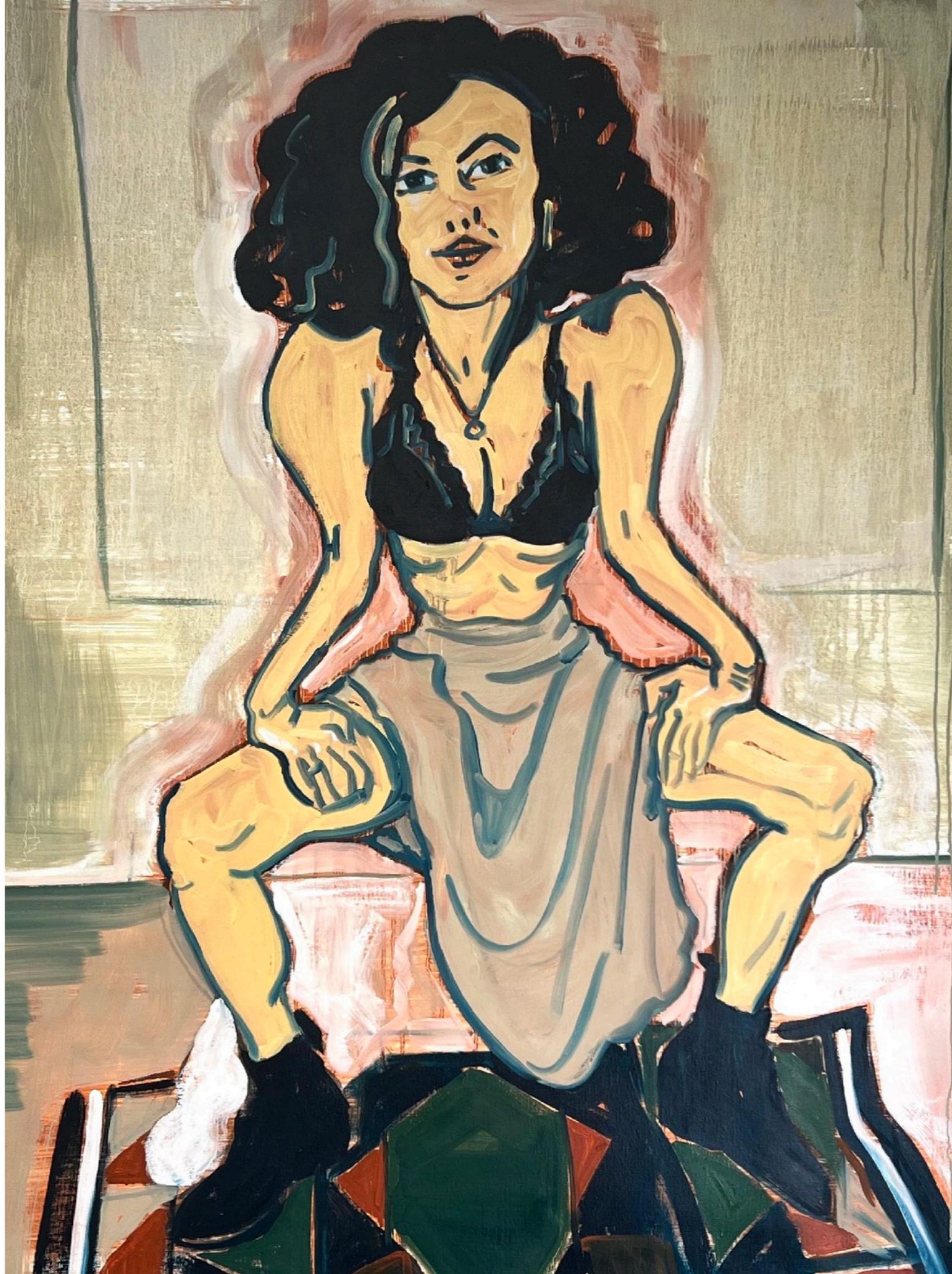
Goodnight Moon, Oil on linen , 150 x 235 cm, 2024 , £7000

Goodnight Moon refers to the classic children's book where a young bunny, tucked up in bed, bids goodnight to its surroundings. The painting is a reflection on a young girl's early education; what she sees at home in these formative years, ripples out into adulthood and later into society at large. This monumental power held by a mother, is both a heavy responsibility and, a privilege.



Zoë and Ava
Oil on linen
130 x 195 cm
2025
£6000

Looking beyond childhood the women who we surround ourselves with continue to shape us, in my case for the better. A group of London friends, self named 'Gays Allowed', had come to visit me in Madrid. Post karaoke session Zoë and Ava played around on the evening streets. I wanted to capture that haziness, where the electric lights cast a blue tone on the scene, recording it like an ephemeral dream.



Guerrera
Oil on linen
110 x 135 cm
2024
£4500

Carmen is a dancer and my favourite instructor at the women's only gym focusing on empowerment. She, like me, is from the Canary Islands and her tuneful accent playfully barks orders at her army of cyclists, boxers and ballerinas. When she posed for me at the studio my thoughts were on reclaiming our politicised bodies and these conversations were reflected in her dynamic movements.

Sculptures



Las Dos Rafaelas
Glazed ceramic
54 x 32 x 48 cm
2026
£7000

Even before visiting Frida's house in CDMX, I had sketched a watercolour of this image, now printed in a mirror formation on the wallpaper in this installation. Frida's home reminded me of the many things we are simultaneously, especially when brought up across two cultures. I cannot put into concrete words what each of the Rafaelas represents as they are constantly fluid, contradicting and aligning with one another. It is a double self portrait at an age where I finally feel comfortable showing both extremes together.



Tinaja, glazed ceramic, 50 x 25 x 25, 2025, £6000



An hour outside of Madrid is a town named Talavera de la Reina, famous for its tiling and ceramic traditions. The *alfafaro* there taught me the various names the traditional vases of Spain have - a *Cantano* for water, *Alcancías* - olive oil, *Tinaja* - wine. These jars symbolise abundance and this particular shape, the *Tinaja*, was the perfect vessel to paint Mica who leapt across the studio in cartwheels and yoga stances filling it with exuberant joy.

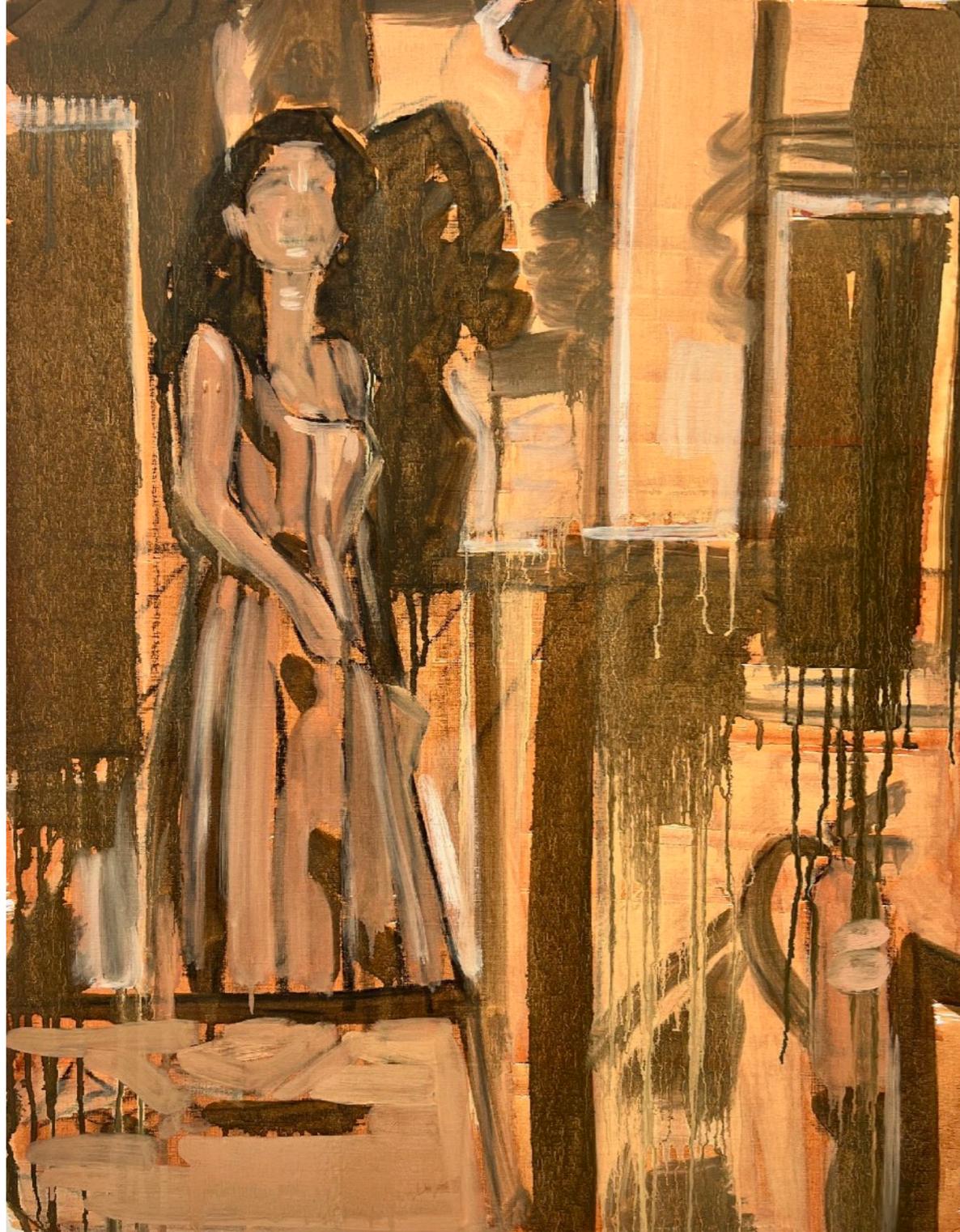




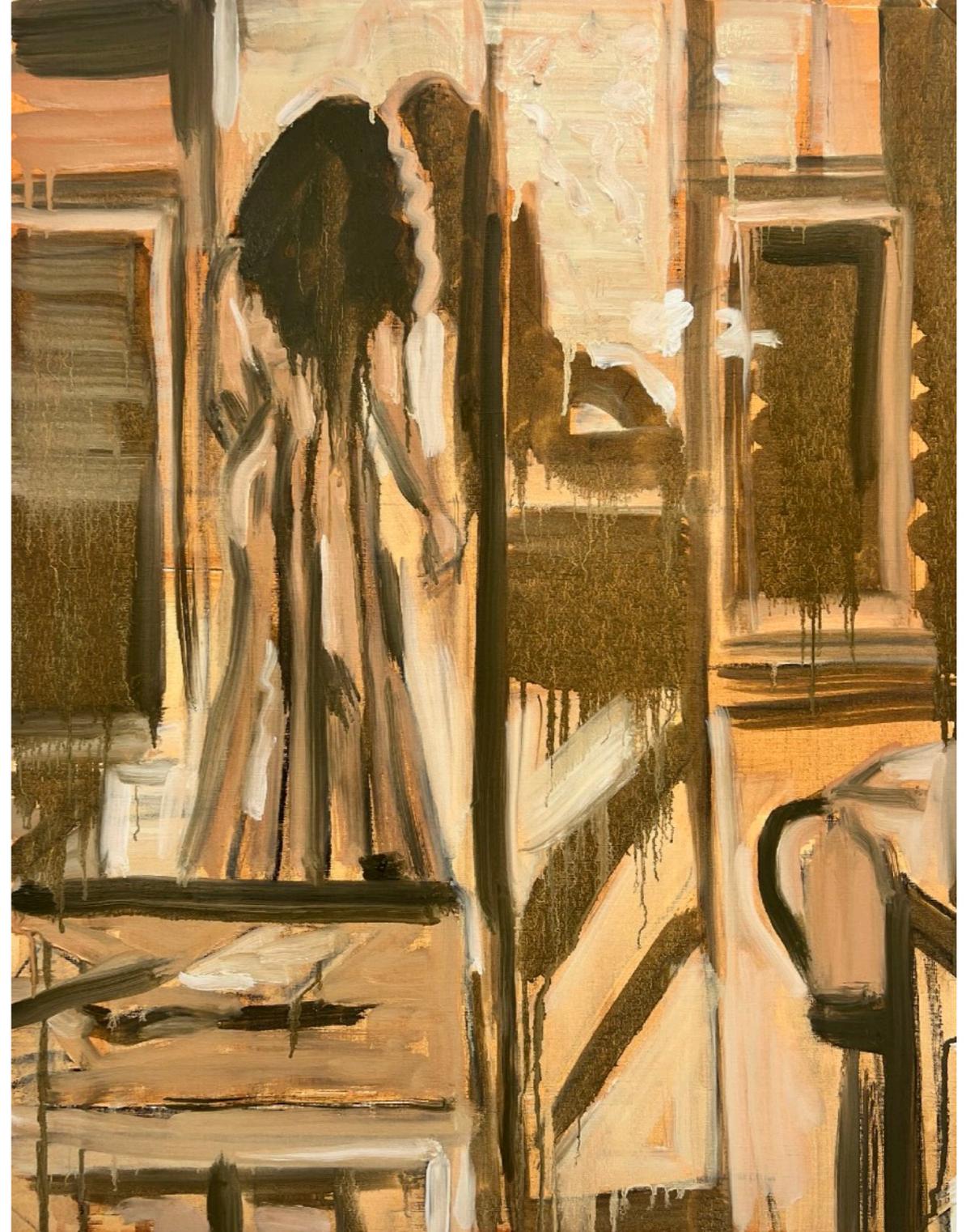
Björk Ensnares Laocoön
2023
Glazed ceramic
47 x 48 x 49 cm
£7000

Looking to the past, to ancient cultures where women were gods, priests and emperors, and creating a bridge to the woman of today, I reimagined the greek goddess Athena as the iconic signer Björk. Björk symbolises an individual who has great power in her unique creativity. She doesn't compromise. Like Athena, we can admire her, sing her songs and give praise in our own contemporary manner. Women like her who move in the realm of culture are figures that transport us to another state where the image of a woman is in focus.

Works on Paper



Left: *Patricia II*
Oil on paper
65 x 50 cm
2025
£900

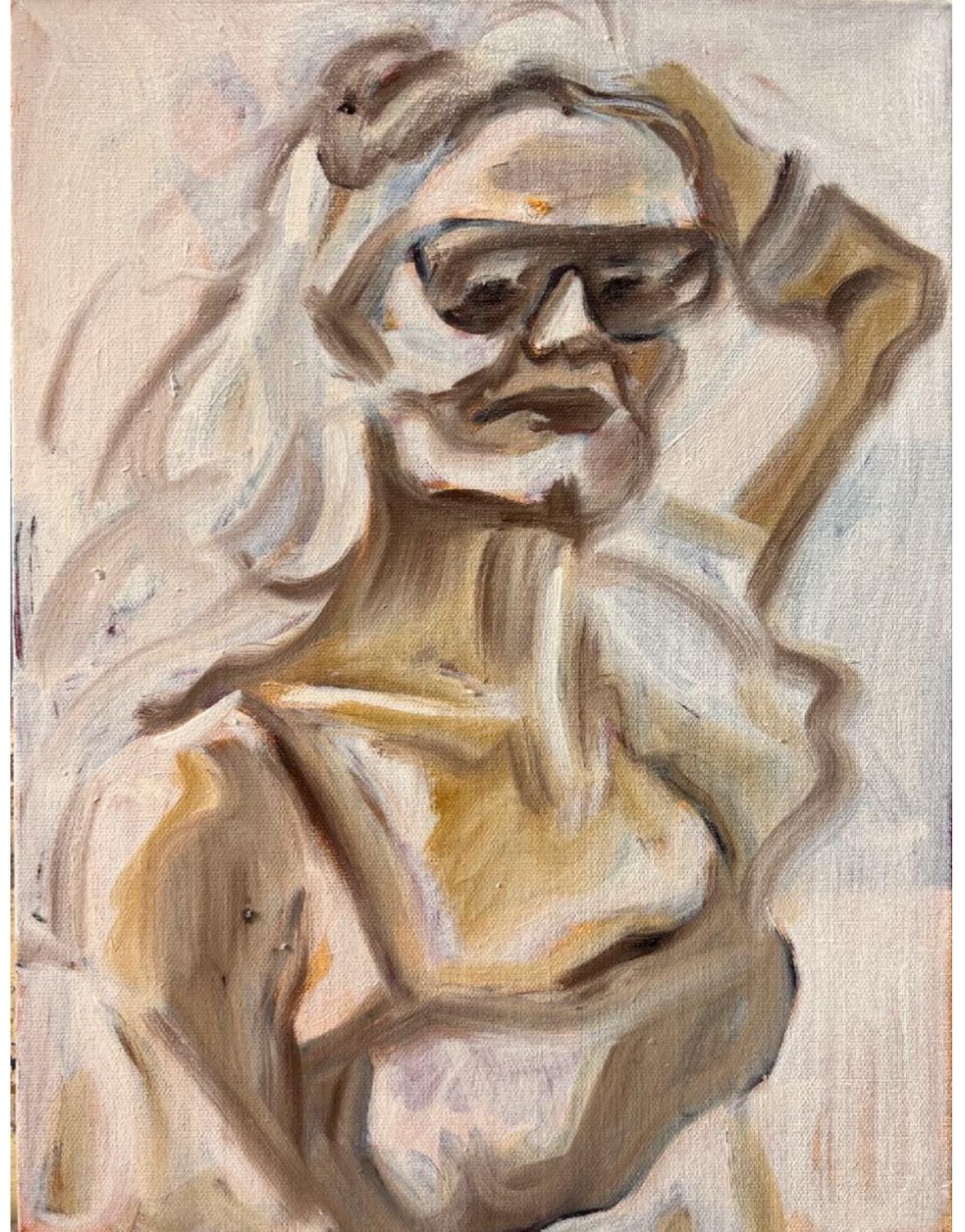


Right: *Patricia I*
Oil on paper
65 x 50 cm
2025
£900

'Patricia I' and 'II' are of an actress who performed her writings in a cafe. I found her so compelling, I fell into her well. She noticed the connection too and held my hands while she recited parts holding my gaze, while everyone watched this public intimacy between two women who had met only once before. I sweated while she spoke of longing for her body to be kissed, and wept when she took her small daughter's hand and said 'no me puedo imaginar la ultima vez que te acuestas a mi lado' - 'I cannot imagine the last time you lay down beside me'. I painted these two little sketches from photos I took that night. When I tried to translate it to a larger painting, I'd lost the flow and I reworked it till it became a stogy mess, rolled up for the rubbish pile.



Left: *Windswept*
Oil on paper
31 x 41 cm
2024
£600



Right: *Decomposing*
Oil on canvas
31 x 41 cm
2024
£1200

Except from a letter to my mentor early 2025:

...'I made these paintings. Starting with Christabel. On oil paper. The best. I love the hardness and the throw away nature of the paper. Not expensive. Not fussy. She was so beautiful that day. Free and wild and lost and annoyed that my daughter was being irritating and I'd brought her along to our meet up. I liked how snappy she was with her. It was refreshing not being so precious. Everyone doing this gentle parenting. But for darling, sexy Christabel who flared her nostrils at her and told her not to be spoilt cause mummy was talking.'

Statement

I am a multidisciplinary artist working primarily in painting and sculpture, creating immersive installations in which the female figure takes centre stage. My practice bridges ancient eras, when women were revered as gods, priestesses, and queens, with the complex, politicised realities of womanhood today. Through this dialogue, I seek to construct a visual lineage that connects sacred archetypes with contemporary representations of women, as they exist in daily life and in the media.

Materiality and craft are central to my process. Working with clay through the slow, manual rhythm of coil building, I engage in a grounded and tactile dialogue with form. This act of making connects me to ancestral gestures of creation and labour, revaluing this historically feminine space as sites of agency and embodied knowledge. In parallel, my recent painting practice draws inspiration from Velázquez, whose restrained palette I reinterpret to frame human observation through a female lens. In the studio, women pose for i-phone portraits later painted onto clay and canvas. Here, I invite conversations about their lived experiences, opening a space of shared reflection. These intertwined processes allow an exploration between the corporeal, spiritual and practical, where ancient standards meet the immediacy of the present.

Recent research has led me back to Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*, which proposes the humble container, not the violent and 'heroic' spear, as the first industrial tool; a vessel for collecting foraged food, and everyday narratives. This framework resonates with my studio practice where I collect stories shared by everyday women, gathering them into sculptures and paintings, to be documented and held.

Past projects have culminated in a physical installation, a chamber covered in watercolored wallpaper, paintings and sculpture, where the visual story is activated by performance. In these spaces, I aim to extend dialogues across communities, exploring how collective storytelling and material practice can foster connections within the networks that shape contemporary womanhood.

Bio

Rafaela de Ascanio (1986) is a painter and sculptor, from the Canary Islands, based in London and Madrid.

She studied Fine Art at Central Saint Martin's and completed a Masters Degree in Curating under Martin Caiger-Smith at the Courtauld Institute of Art.

In 2019 Rafaela attended the Turps Banana Painters School, with mentors Benjamin Senior and Phil Allen, later joining the correspondence course with mentor Hannah Murgatroyd.

Solo exhibitions include Berntson Bhattacharjee and Liliya Gallery, and duo shows at Tristan Hoare and Lamb Gallery. Rafaela is represented by MT Art Agency.

She has also exhibited at Cob Gallery, Arusha Gallery, 180 The Strand, Lychee One, Quench Gallery, Niru Ratnam Gallery and Hauser and Wirth London.

Last summer her painting *Autorretrato* was shortlisted for the Ruth Borchard Self Portrait Prize 2025, and exhibited at Russel Cotes Museum, Bournemouth.

In 2021 she won the Young Masters Focus on the Female Prize, and in 2022 was on The Wick Culture Spotlight as well as being shortlisted for the Mother Art Prize.

Her work has been published in Dazed, Frieze, Twin Magazine, Elephant, FAD, Where's the Frame?, Ceramics Now, The Financial Times and The Art Newspaper.

In 2026 Rafaela has been invited for a three month ceramic residency in Ceramica Suro, Guadalajara, Mexico and a solo exhibition opening in March at Sketch in London.

CV

Awards & Residencies

Ceramica Suro Residency, Guadalajara, Mexico
2026 Shortlist Ruth Borchard Self Potrait Award
2025 Shortlisted for Mother Art Prize 2022
Winner of Young Masters Focus on the Female
Emerging Women's Artist Award 2021

Education

Turps Banana Correspondence Course 2025
Turps Banana Painting Programme 2019
Courtauld Institute, MA Curating the Museum
2010

Courtauld Institute of Art, BA History of Art 2008
Central Saint Martin's College, Fine Art
Foundation 2006

Performance & Curation

Queer Campervan, Uniqlo Tate Lates, Tate
Modern 2017
Queer Campervan, Peckham Festival, 2018
BLOOD. TEARS. FAITH. DOUBT., Arts Council
Collection & Courtauld Gallery, London 2010

Solo and Duo Exhibitions

2026
Goodnight Moon, solo, Sketch, London

2023
Sexing the Cherry, Tristan Hoare Gallery

2022
The Pump House, Berntson Bhattacharjee

2021
Universal Yearnings, Liliya Art Gallery
Back to Back, Bowes Pariss Gallery

2019
The Deccan Traps, Aindrea Emelife
Contemporary

2018
The Body is a Blessed Juicy Fruit, Lamb
Gallery

Selected Group Exhibitions

2025
Ruth Borchard Self Portrait Prize 2025, Russel
Cotes Museum, Bournemouth and Vortic Art
Earthly Bodies, Brushes with Greatness

2024
Theia, Niru Ratnam Gallery
Works on Paper, Quench Gallery
Apocalypse Now, Tristan Hoare Gallery
A Dream Within a Dream, Haricot Gallery

2022
Wave, Cob Gallery
Conjure, Arusha Gallery
Fancy a Bite?, Studio West Gallery
The Amber Room, 180 The Strand
Swamp Legends, Terrace Gallery

2021
Focus on the Female, Cynthia Corbett Gallery
Inside | Outside, Janet Radey Fine Art
Cracked, Tristan Hoare Gallery

2020
Monster/Beauty: The Female/Femme Gaze,
Lychee One Gallery, curated by Marcelle
Joseph
Paintings On, And With Paper, Cob Gallery
*Clay Today: A Showcase Of Ceramics In
Isolation*, Cynthia Corbett Gallery

2019
Turps Banana Off-Site Painters, Turps Gallery,
curated by Phil Allen & Marcus Harvey
Summer of Ceramics, Doddington Hall,
Lincolnshire
Nobu Knows Art, Nobu Hotel Shoreditch,
curated by Aindrea Emelife
A Room of One's Own, Koppel Gallery Central

2018
Adventures and Curiosities, Hauser and Wirth
Elephant Parade, South Molton Street, London