

JANE BUSTIN *SISTERS*



Right: *The Burning of Joan*, 2026
Aluminium, acrylic, steel, charcoal
177cm x 194cm overall

Cover: *Psychopomp (St Christina the Astonishing)*, 2020
Wood, copper, acrylic, dyed burnt silk
30cm x 30cm

“None are so ready to find fault with others as those who do things worthy of blame themselves.”

Mark Twain, *Joan of Arc*



Joan of Arc, 1854, JD Ingres



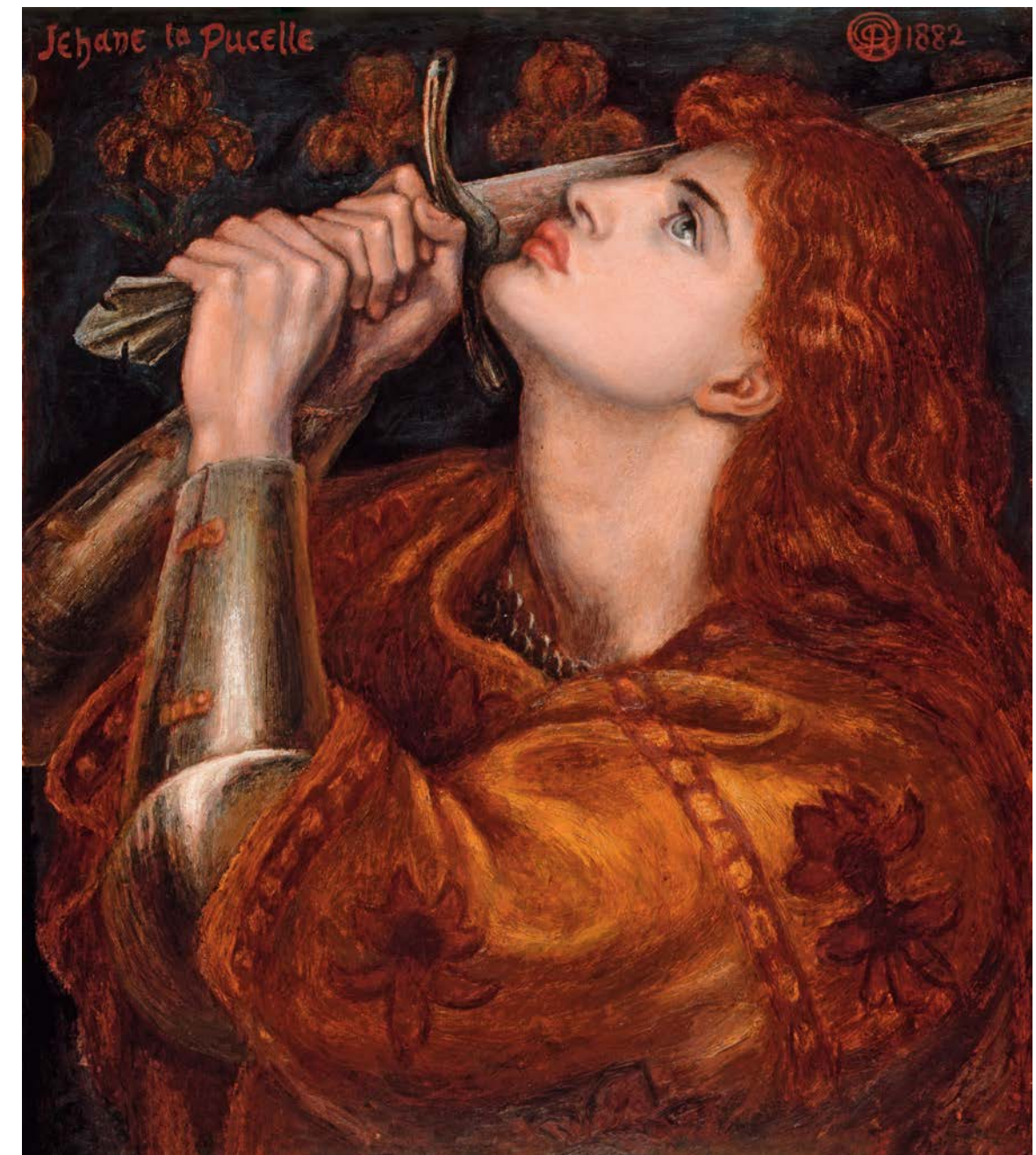
Sisters

When the body of the teenage Joan of Arc was burnt at the stake in Rouen in 1431, witnesses alleged that all that remained on the pyre was the young woman's heart, still full of blood. It was cast into the river Seine, along with her ashes, leaving no tangible relics of the young female warrior who liberated Orléans, clad in armour and in the name of her Christian God. In the absence of a body, relic, or any visual or written descriptions of how she looked, Joan of Arc has existed as a blankness, a figure full of narrative and contradictions but without any known contours. Jane Bustin's diptych *The Burning of Joan*—two aluminium panels painted in slightly varying shades of maroon set on a steel stake—seem to pulse like the dual ventricle chambers of the heroine's engorged heart, the strict geometry of the minimalism somewhat at odds with the passionate ardour of the young heroine's mythology. It acts as the conceptual anchor for *Sisters*: a suite of minimalist paintings that visualise in oblique and interconnected ways the intolerable binaries of femininity in cultural representations and offers a language of sensuous minimalism that seeks to overcome them.

Joan refused the traditional femininity of her time by rejecting marriage; wearing men's armour, wielding swords and commanding armies and declaring herself a conduit of divine intervention. She was tried for heresy and spurned as a cross-dressing deviant before her later canonisation as a saint in 1920. Characterised as both valiant warrior and meek maid; as both mystic and military leader; attuned to the ecstatic life of the soul, as much as the physical strength of the body; cast as both witch and saint, Joan has become a fitting cipher for the rejection of the categorisations that seek to pin women down into archetypes of one thing or the other, the unsatisfying choice of self-identification with either the virgin saint or the sexy sinner; the desexed Madonna or the passionate, embodied whore.

The diptych itself plays with apparent oppositions - it feels both exo and endothermic, absorbing light and energy as much as it blazes fluorescent orange at the canvases' perimeters. The impenetrability of its opaque surfaces conveys something of the virgin Joan's maidenly intactness while the painting itself casts light into the space beyond its borders, extending, as it were, beyond its confines to be both saintly and radiantly sensuous.

Bustin works with a knowingly sensual minimalism driven by narrative, colour and material that also expands itself beyond the framework of art history and the associated codes of geometric minimalism. While on first glance *The Burning of Joan* may echo Rothko's fields of sombre colour that epitomize the hyper-masculine language of Abstract Expressionism, Bustin's diptych is not a homage to the philosophical abyss but a portal back to the body of a young woman who burned with her own conviction to self-define and resolutely act on the basis of her intuition. Conveyed in the very pictorial language that historically rejected such sentiment and story-telling, it is minimalism meets jouissance.



Joan of Arc, 1882, D G Rossetti

Narratives diffuse throughout the show via materials and colour palette rather than representation. The Maid, a quadrilateral of minimalist panels of colour and metal cleaves *Joan of Arc* into quarters, densely vibrant blues above the mid-point line allude to her placement in celestial and spiritual realms, while aluminium and ivory beneath refer to the earthly 'maid's' physical virginity juxtaposed to the armour she donned in battle (drawing parallels with the dual virginity and warriorship of the mythological Amazons and the goddess Diana - which led to the invention of Joan as 'Jeanne d'Arc' in homage to the mythological huntresses with their bows or 'arcs').

Would You Have Me Be a Soldier in Petticoats? alludes to Joan's testimony to her prosecutors in defence of what was thought to be 'deviant' and unnatural cross-dressing, and visualises with claret violence the bloodshed of her biography, against another aluminium panel whimsically adorned with a ribbon of voile - the cold hardness of the metal, contrasting with the gauzy transparency of the fabric. This detail catapults us centuries into the future from fifteenth century Roenun and the battlefields of the Hundred Years War to the mid twentieth century, rendered through an optimistic ice-cream coloured palette, and seen in glimpses at the edges of *Nightgown* and *Mary and Three Prayers*. They juxtapose - somewhat covertly along their edges - Catholic prayer cards with racy lenticulars of 60s sex kittens dropping their petticoats and negligees depending on the angle of the spectator's gaze. The voile of proto-feminist Joan's abandoned petticoats symbolic of the right sort of socialised femininity in the 1400s finds material resonance in the negligees and bridal veils of the 1960s, items that defined another type of desirable female identity - both the tarty good-time girl and the virtuous blushing bride - two sides and expectations of the same identity, one that gave way to the twitching net curtains in the panopticon of suburbia that was quick to judge who were the good girls and who were the sluts.

Both lenticulars and holographic prayer cards draw on the same visual language of mass-produced kitsch: one for erotic titillation, one for spiritual meditation (both in their ways different forms of devotion). But hasn't Catholicism's history of sensuous images - of oozing martyred bodies and ecstatic sufferings of the flesh told us that the erotic and the sacred are not cleaved apart but spring from the same well, and the Magdalen is also the Madonna, the virgin, also the whore?

Bustin's use of lenticulars speaks to more than the two-dimensional good girl/ bad girl cheap erotic fantasy, but is an invitation to critique their place at the start of a tradition that has culminated in our current era of deepfakes and AI generated violence against women through pictures. The lenticulars that shimmer between clothed and unclothed, between 'virgin' and 'slut', seem to link the contemporary opinions of the manosphere with those of the medieval clerics. In other words that behind all pictures of women there is also always the shadow image of her nude and debased for the gaze - after all, much was made of the fantasy of Joan's comely body and she was exposed naked on her pyre to establish that she was in fact female. From seemingly innocent lenticulars to creepy AI, image culture reveals how the spectre of woman as depraved sinner is always latent behind the perfect impenetrable exterior (and painted surface) of the saint, and that the erotic thrill and justification for abuse has always been in the imaginary oscillation between the two.



Joan's rejection of archetypal femininity has meant that her influence has reverberated across different periods, most significantly in the suffragette movement who adopted her in the form of a patron saint with fashionably bobbed hair. In such the medieval warrior and proto-feminist saint speaks to the plight of other 'Joans', in different places and times, of the women burning not yoked to the executioner's pyre but the kitchen stove, trapped between fulfilling the expectations of the archetypally virtuous 'angel in the house' and the collapse of this restrictive fantasy that was ushered in by the consciousness raising of the 1960s.

The historical figure of Joan is joined here by other 'sister' saints: Tabitha (of Joppa, modern day Tel-Aviv), the only named female disciple who made clothes for the poor and rose miraculously from the dead, and her alter-ego as Dorcas; Christina the Astonishing, the psychopomp who witnessed hell and who suffered for the damned by inflicting pain on herself; and Dymphna, the young Irish woman who was killed by her father who lusted after her sexually. Bustin empties them of bodies, unlodging them from archetypal depictions and denying a framework of representation that chooses between sensuality and sanctity but can be both. They orbit here around the central premise of Bustin's sensuous minimalism, which stands for the duality of those 'sisters', past and present, with a language that holds contradiction and duality without resolution.

Catherine McCormack, 2026



joan

She couldn't stop thinking about it,

Was she amazing ?

Was the ability to survive a tragedy,
so much more worthy than avoiding one ?

Joan knew the dangers of putting on your amour to save the souls and bodies of others,
the power of ego to misinterpret saviour,
to believe in the higher planes
instead of keeping watch over the little ones,
as they played with their dolls amongst the splintered grass and rosy rhododendrons.

It was all those small battles,
little lies and swift dismissals that made the biggest sound.
Cries of alarm went unheard
and strange encounters were dismissed with the ease of an elbow falling off the table.

In such a small body, way up high on the hill,
their eyes stoped wide open with the darkest still pupils
and she knew,
they knew,
it was not going to be a good ride.
Something was going to drop,
a weight from above,
a slip from below,
a smothering of darkness
and a silence only found at the third hour in the morning when the birds are still and most are lost within a
world of other lands.

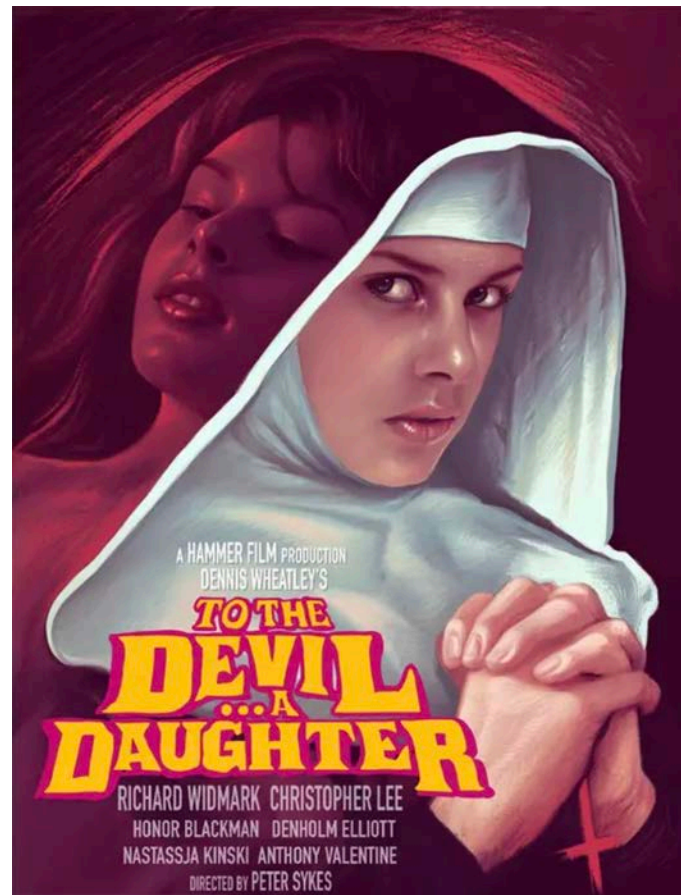
Could she still listen to those voices of dismissal?

Of your lightness,
your smiles,
your refusal to be dragged into the false narratives of knowing advice which was always so wrong ?

It was the kind of joy you felt when you rushed to the bathroom at family parties, felt the bliss, of the snap
of the lock on the door and stood in front of the mirror,
Took an intake of breath,
held on to the cold porcelain sink and barred your teeth.

I will not entertain you

Jane Bustin 2025.



*I've been searching for the daughter of the devil himself
I've been searching for an angel in white
I've been waiting for a woman who's a little of both
And I can feel her, but she's nowhere in sight*

One of these nights
The Eagles, 1975

In 1975 we weren't obsessing about algorithms and the degree to which we were being coerced and hopelessly conditioned and manipulated by big tech. In 1975 bands existed, radio DJs as diverse as Casey Kasem & John Peel were certainly shaping our listening patterns but they did through advocacy and enthusiasm.

Popular culture was popular. . . it hadn't yet corroded into populism and become the tool of grotesque manipulation and division that it has become now. Yet inside the lyrics of most bands, from The Beatles to the Doors, even the determinedly middle of the road lyrics of The Eagles, lay a broad set of pervasive assumptions about sexuality and role play.

Much of Minimalism, despite and because of its denial of narrative and sentimentality, reinforced certain stereotypes about masculinity. The shiny obdurate materiality of Carl Andre's copper or Donald Judd's milled aluminium refused the form, psychology and tactility of Barbara Hepworth, Eva Hesse and Ruth Asawa to name but a few. Despite this determination to resist organicism in favour of material essentialism, Judd's aluminium and Andre's copper retain a shimmery sensuality that is at odds with apparent ambition.

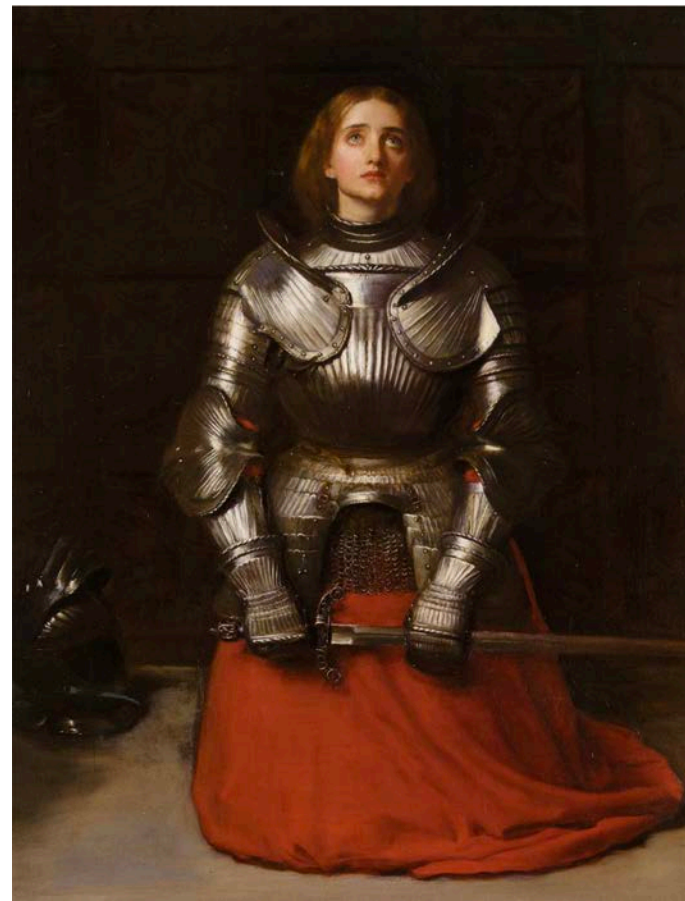
Jane Bustin's newest paintings explore the vocabulary of minimalism with her clear crisp geometry and material choices but she does so not to avoid narrative, rather she uses her material and colour as a neo-symbolist, drawing our attention to their potential for intimacy, for reflection and for the play of light.

Bustin's arrangement of distinct panels into diptychs and triptychs infer something of 19th century Japanese traveling mirrors in terms of scale and intimacy. Bustin draws the viewer in very close to inspect the multiple faces, edges and adjustments that she makes to the composition. This has the impact of keeping us mobile as we are compelled to move so as to experience the dimensionality of the works.

The colours she uses carry a boudoir blush about them and then just when you understand that these rest on yet another set of assumptions, Jane has inserted small 70s lenticular images, mostly on to the flanks of the works, where nightgowns slip magically to the floor depending on your movement.

There is humour, irony and provocation in these retro-sexual images, but the reality is that these qualities infuse the entire composition with myriads of contradictions.

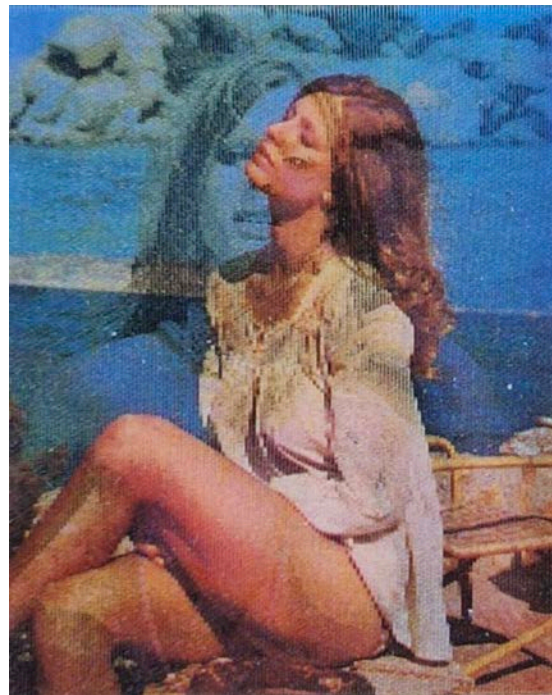
Bustin has then taken the step of setting this material symbolism against the backdrop of art history and the history of Joan of Arc in particular. It is almost as if we are seeing her paintings themselves through a historical lenticular lens, one that with the most modest shifts opens them to vastly differing readings, interpretations that reveal the persistence of the dichotomous view of women but signal a newer form of resistance.



Joan of Arc, 1865, John Everett Millais

Would you have me be a soldier in petticoats, 2025
Aluminium, acrylic, tulle
120cm x 92cm





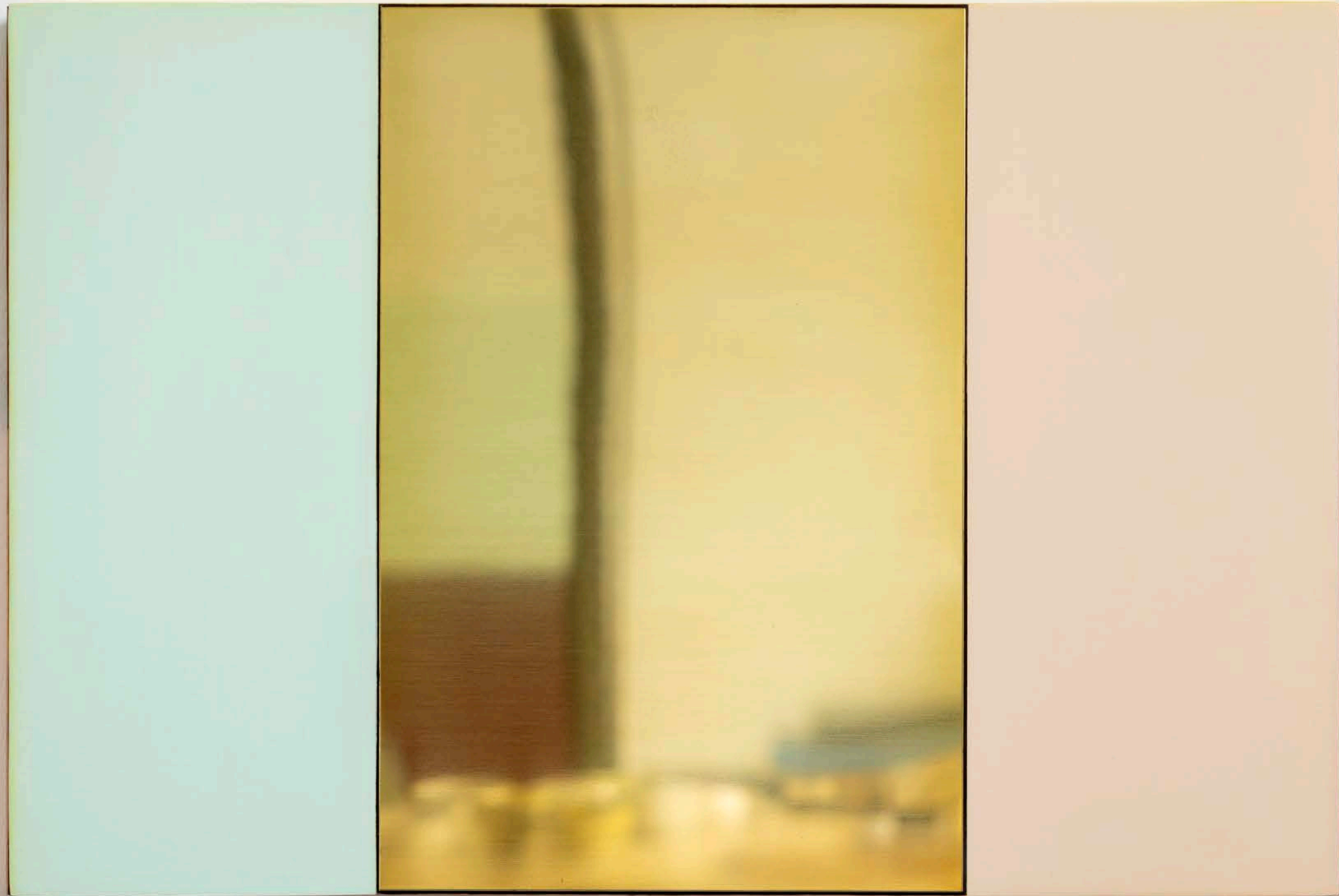
The Maid, 2025
Aluminium, acrylic
120cm x 92cm





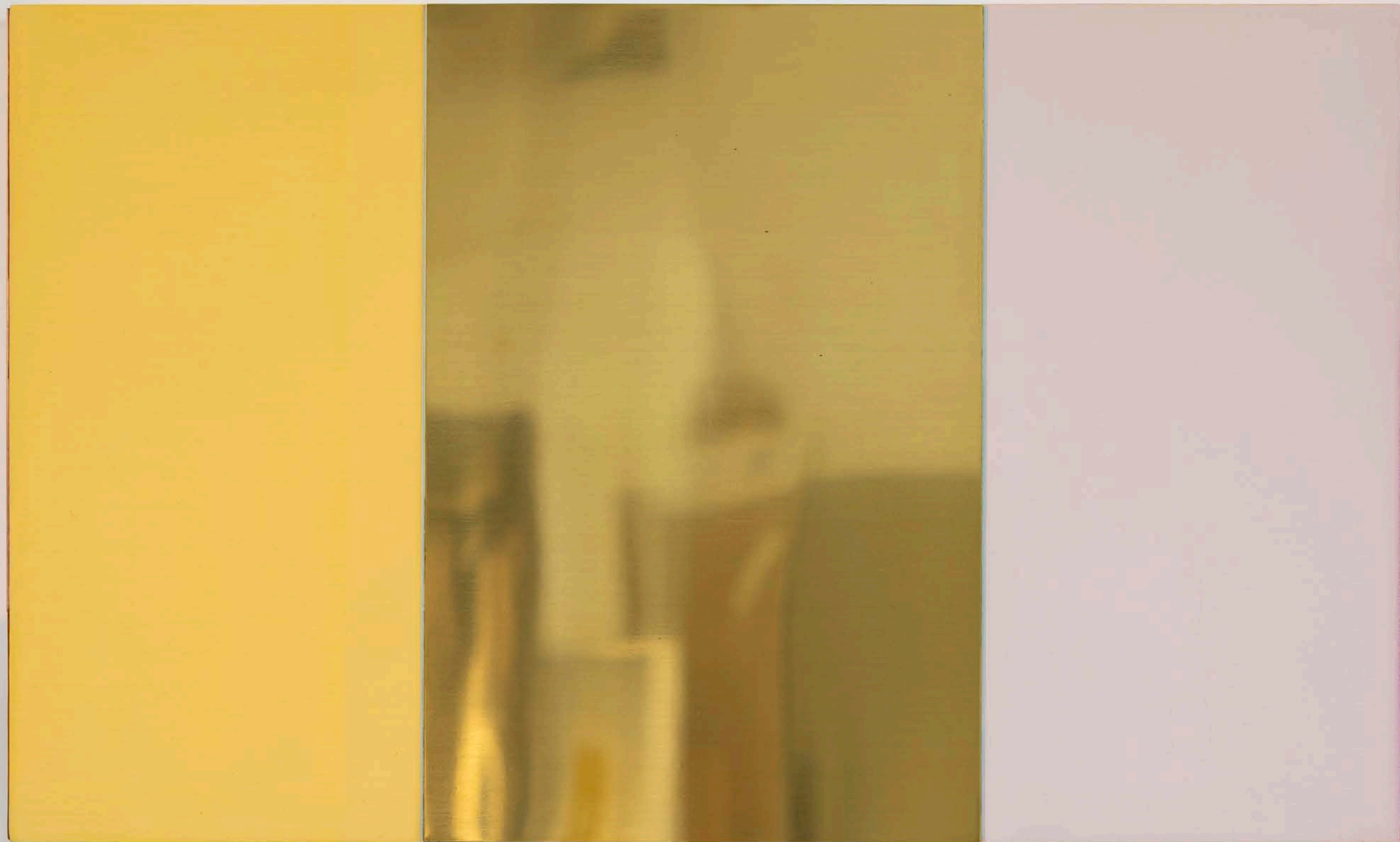
Nightgown, 2026
Wood, brass, acrylic, 1970's lenticular
30cm x 40cm





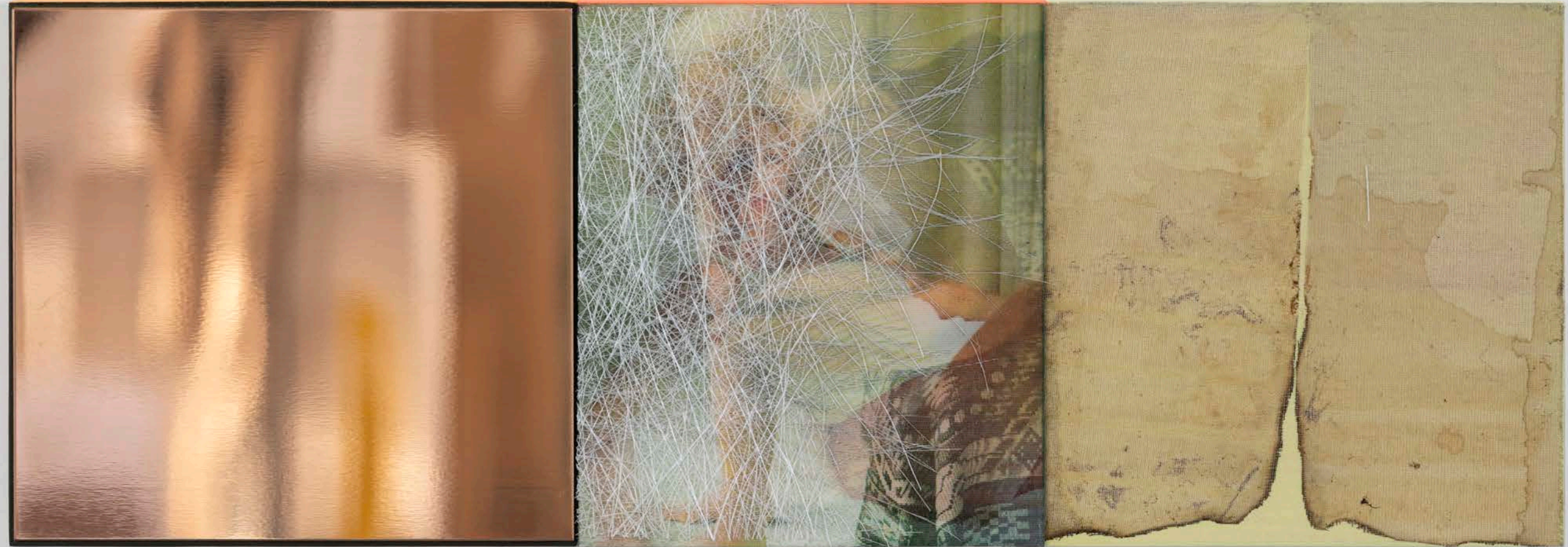
Lady Export, 2026
Wood, brass, acrylic, 1970's lenticular
30.5cm x 46cm



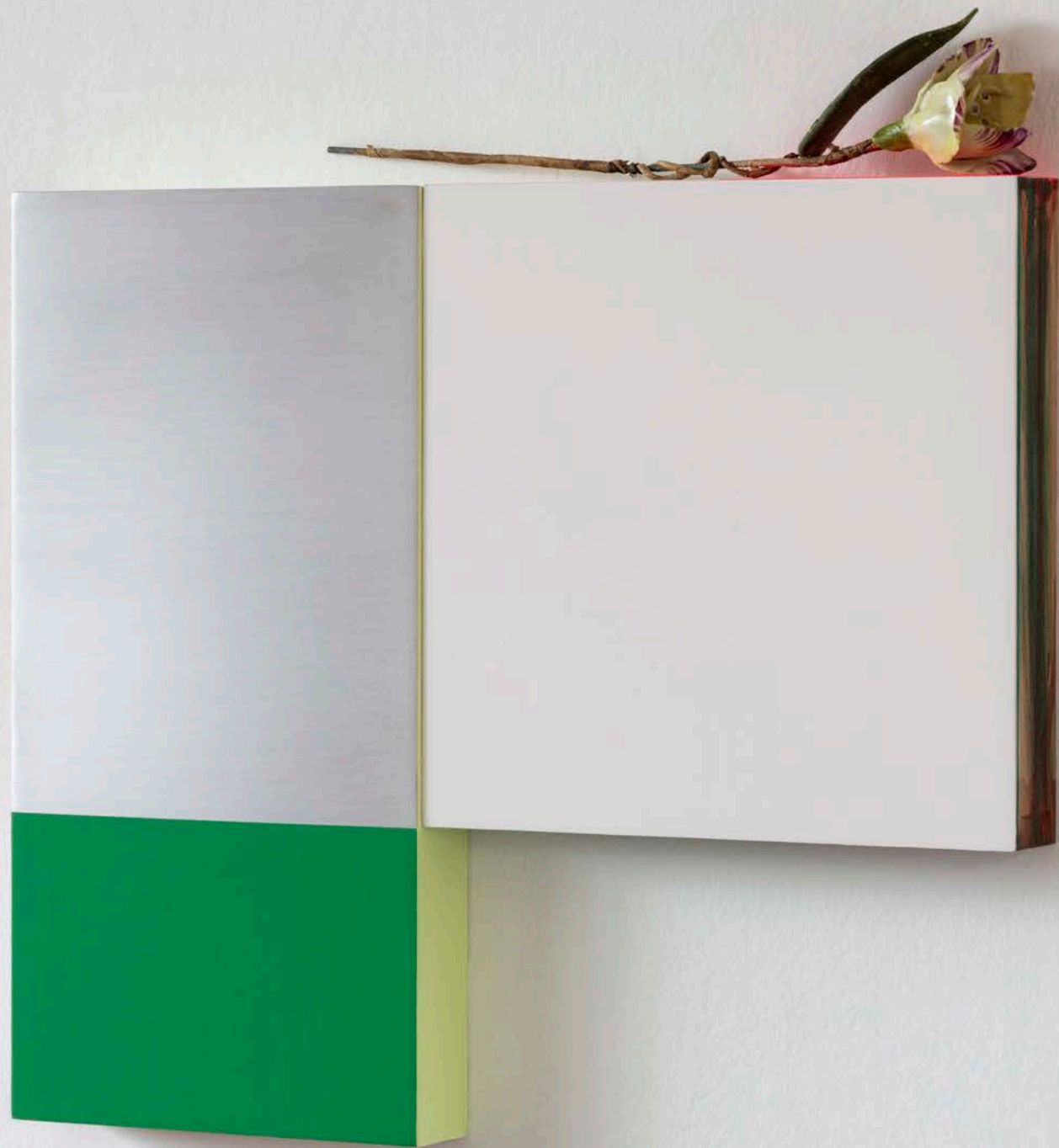


Mary and three prayers, 2026
Wood, brass, acrylic, 1970's lenticular
30cm x 50cm x 3.5cm

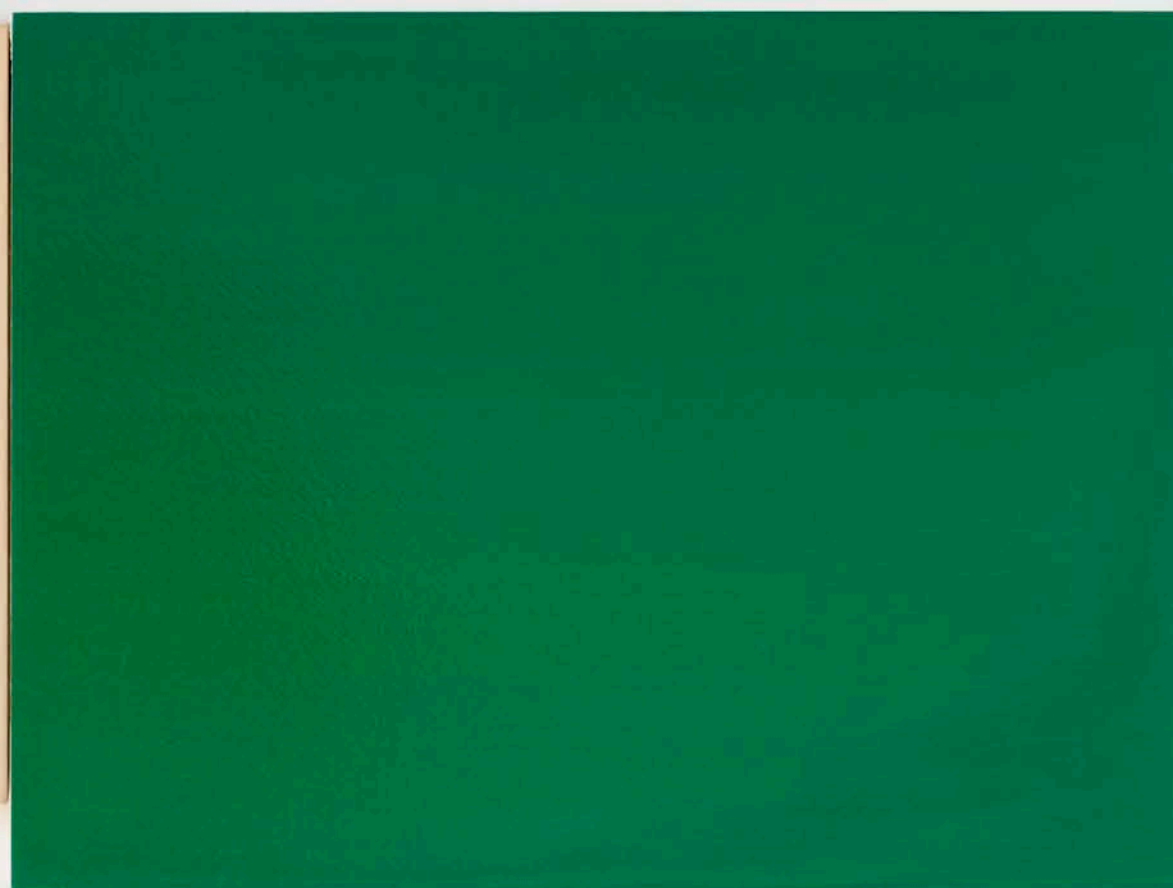
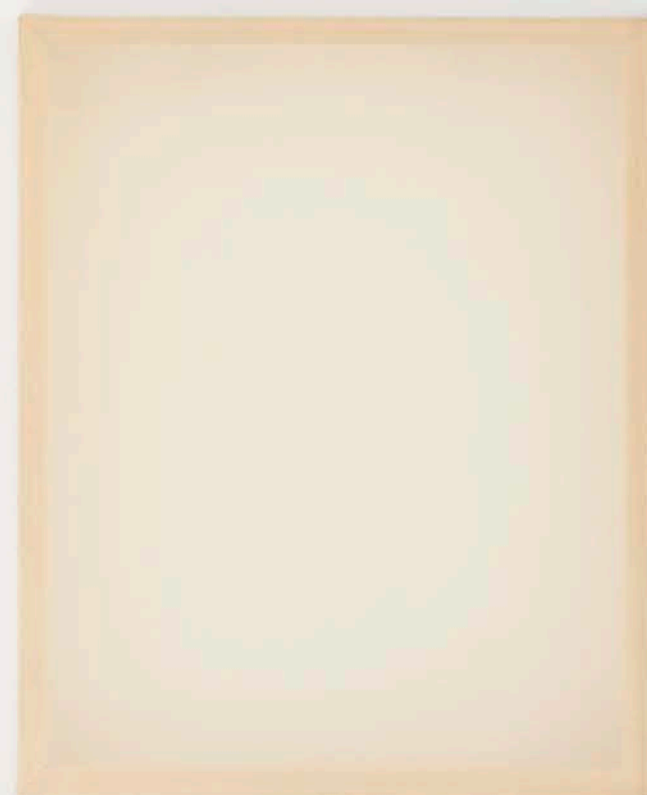




Pensive, 2026
Copper, wood, 1970's lenticular, voile, tea, acrylic, fibre glass mesh
12cm x 35cm



St. Dymphna, 2020
Wood, aluminium, acrylic, C19 porcelain Lily
30cm x 35cm



St. Tabitha, 2013
Polyurethane, wood, acrylic, oil
31cm x 91cm overall



St. Dorcas, 2024
Polyurethane, wood, acrylic
31cm x 91cm

FOX JENSEN McCRORY
FOX JENSEN