

art enthusiasts turned up at Lisson Gallery for his opening, only to find their way blocked by sheets of corrugated iron—mirroring the closure of Argentinian banks after the collapse of the peso. Now, he returns to the gallery with a large-scale installation featuring industrial materials and barbed wire, themed around immigration, and the separation and fear that surround it.

BEYOND BORDERS: ARCHITECTURE OPEN AT 66 PORTLAND PLACE

3rd July—17th September
RIBA
66 Portland Place,
W1B 1NR
architecture.com

A trio of installations challenge our idea of shared boundaries—be it globally, locally or domestically—in the latest Portland Place

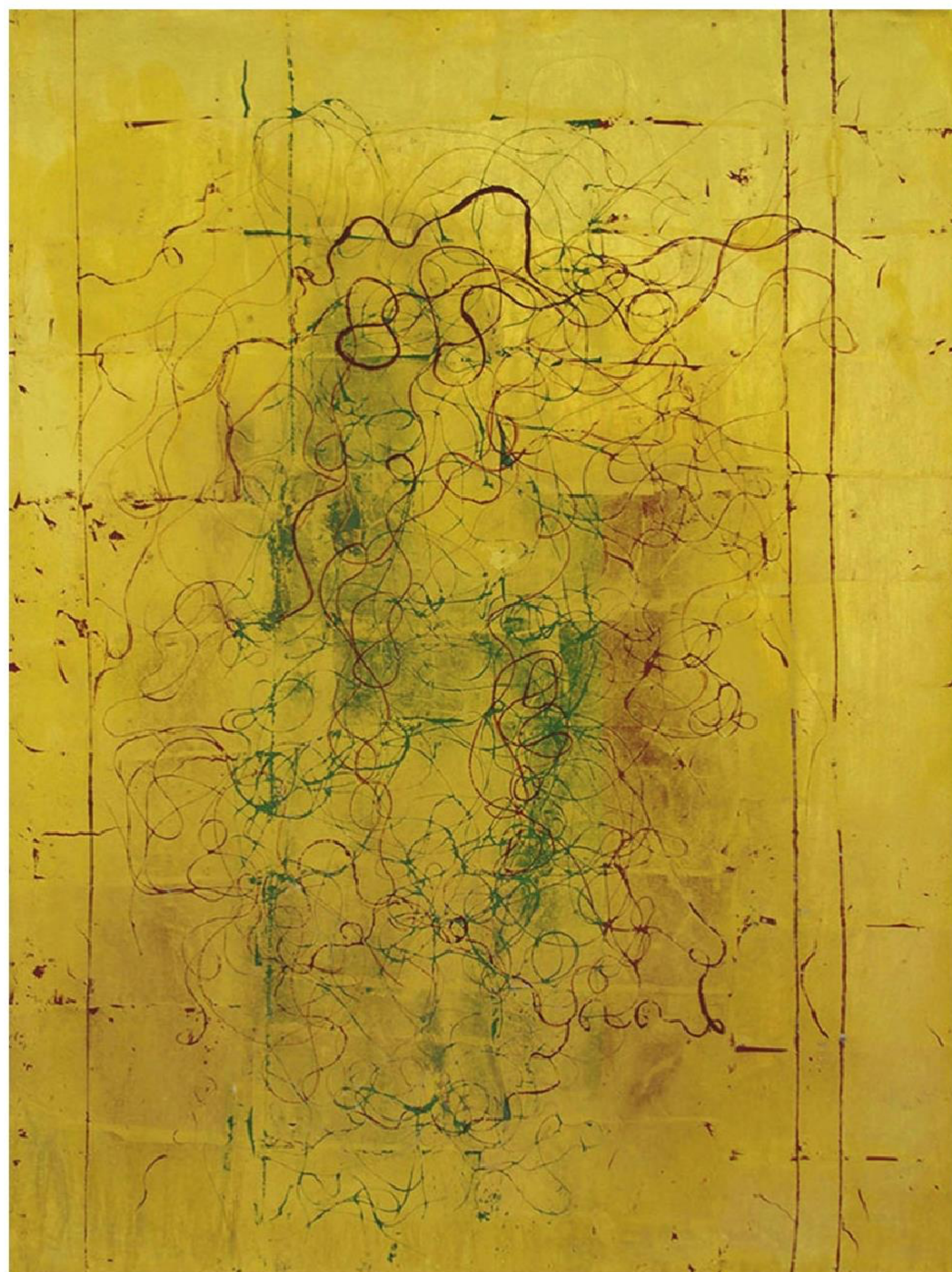
exhibition, with periscopic viewing chimneys from Max Dewdney Architects, a mobile base for refugees to gather and eat from Merrett Houmøller Ltd, and gates-come-benches, designed by MMAS as part of a project to adapt sections of the ‘peace walls’ that divide communities in Northern Ireland.

ABLAZE: SUMMER EXHIBITION

29th June—26th August
Cube Gallery
16 Crawford Street,
W1H 1BS
cube-gallery.co.uk

A group exhibition displaying almost 40 different paintings and sculptures from six artists—Myung Nam An, Mo Cornelisse, Paul Kessling, Fran Mora, Meredith Pardue and Kate Shaw—in a beautifully diverse showcase of multimedia art: from ceramic sculptures, to ‘paint pours’ and collage.

Flowers, (Neon) by Fran Mora



PICTURE FROM AN EXHIBITION UNCREATED LIGHT I, BY MERNA LIDDAWI

“I was born into the Orthodox Church, so the first images I was exposed to were icons. But it wasn’t until I started studying art that I revisited that part of my life,” says Merna Liddawi, the Jordan-born, Worthing-based artist exhibiting at Asia House this September. “Rediscovering the Byzantine icon marked a turn in my artistic career.” She studied gilding and icon painting, followed by a master’s in fine arts, as well as extensively researching the philosophy and theology that surrounds this iconography.

Uncreated Light is a reflection of this study, created using a method known as water gilding—a traditional technique used by early Renaissance and Byzantine painters. “I enjoy the contemplative, meditative nature of it,” says Merna. It’s a method that requires a high level of skill—and even higher levels of patience. “The way you traditionally gild an icon is to wash the wood, in this case birch plywood, with several layers of gesso,” a white paint mixture that acts as an absorbent primer. “I make my own gesso using chalk and rabbit glue, which is a natural adhesive made by

boiling rabbits’ connective tissue to form a sticky, gelatinous paste.” Once dried, it is repeatedly sanded to create a super-smooth surface.

Merna then uses different techniques to make marks and patterns, before applying a spongy layer of clay or ‘bole’. This is covered with gold leaf using a solution of rabbit skin glue, water and vodka—“Yes, vodka! It stops the water from beading”—a fiddly and lengthy process. The image is then burnished with stone to make it brilliantly smooth and shiny, before being painted with egg tempera. It is then sealed with shellac.

Uncreated Light I is one of three pieces in an exhibition that “blurs the boundaries between painting and drawing”. Each uses a different type of gold leaf. “I wanted to bring the icon into a contemporary setting,” Merna continues. “I hope that people might see something of its legacy and beauty, but be able to connect with it, no matter what their faith.”

REVELATION

31st August—29th September
Asia House
63 New Cavendish Street, W1G 7LP
asiahouse.org