



nara roesler

marcos chaves

blue blood

essay by ginevra bria

nara roesler são paulo

opening 7 de june

exhibition jun 7 – aug 16, 2025

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Nara Roesler São Paulo is pleased to present *Blue Blood*, a solo exhibition by Marcos Chaves (b. 1961, Rio de Janeiro), featuring new tapestry works alongside three objects, two of which date back to the 1990s. The exhibition builds upon an intervention the artist carried out in 2013 at the Eva Klabin Foundation in Rio de Janeiro, where Chaves presented rugs that were photographic replicas of fabric details from the foundation's collection.

In *Blue Blood*, Chaves displays the new red-toned tapestries on the walls—works that reproduce photographs taken by the artist of carpeted floors in historic European locations such as Palazzo Doria Pamphilij, built in 16th-century Rome; the staircase leading to Napoleon Bonaparte's (1769–1821) only surviving throne, at the Château de Fontainebleau in France, which dates back to the early 12th century and served as a residence for French royalty; and the Opéra Garnier, designed during the reign of Napoleon III (1808–1873), the thirteenth palace to house the Paris Opera, founded by Louis XIV. On the floor of one of the gallery's rooms, the artist will cover the entire surface with a large-scale version of the rug that initiated this research in 2013.

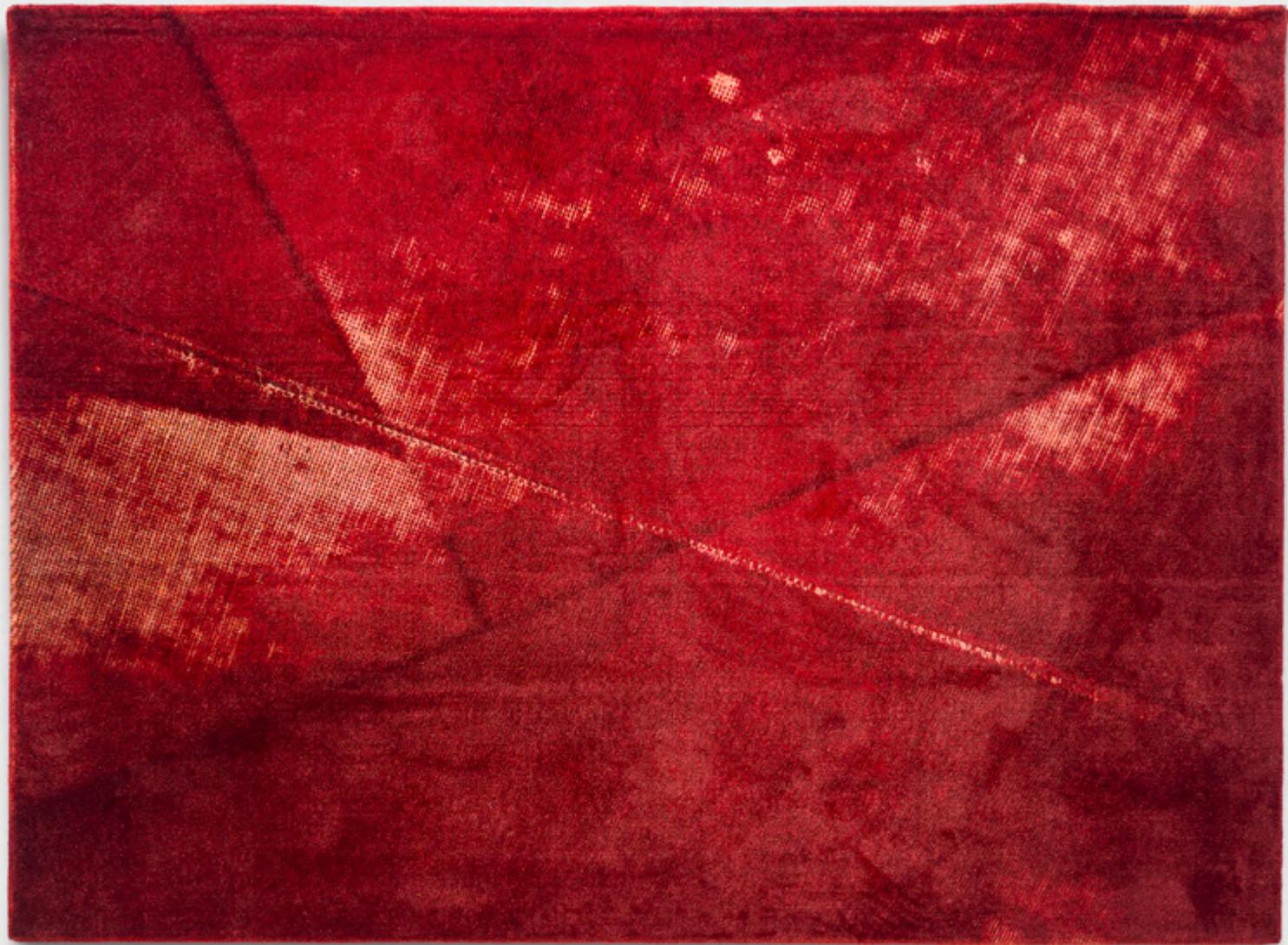
"I'm really drawn to the idea of gradient—of a color fading—and also to its French meaning: *dégradé*, something worn, decayed. Over time, you can see the many layers in these European carpets: the weave becomes prominent, forming a kind of grid. You also see the marks left by weight on the floor where the carpet lies, forming low-relief patterns. That sense of wear and the geometry that emerges are what I like about this work, which ends up being almost an homage to painting—as if I were painting with photography and the carpet's pile," says Marcos Chaves. Some works create a reversed perspective, like *Fontainebleau I* and *II*, which depict the steps leading up to Napoleon's throne.

The show also includes three object-based works—also in red—one of which is a new piece titled *MessAge 2*, featuring a Swiss army knife that pins a piece of velvet to the wall, embroidered with the phrase "Our love will grow vaster than empires," by English poet Andrew Marvell (1621–1678). The other two are readymades from 1992: *Jaws*, a handbag; and an untitled pair of high heels arranged to resemble either a heart or a fallopian tube.

Ginevra Bria, curator and author of the exhibition's critical text, emphasizes that "*Blue Blood* interlaces photography, installation, and sculpture." She continues, "Photography serves as the exhibition's backbone, borrowing titles from the contradictions inherent to noble supremacy, politics, and historically strategic unions—referencing power sites such as Fontainebleau, Pamphilij, and Garnier."

In *Blue Blood*, Chaves does not aim to attribute symbolic value to materials, forms, or colors; in his work, these elements gain a language of their own. Bria further notes that "between the slow fading of vertical and horizontal dimensions, each represented or enlarged element is hypostatized in a temporal movement, while the noble dynamism of reds is timeless. And ennobled."

Garnier I, 2025
printed carpet
edition of 3 + 1AP
200 x 266 cm
78 x 105.5 in





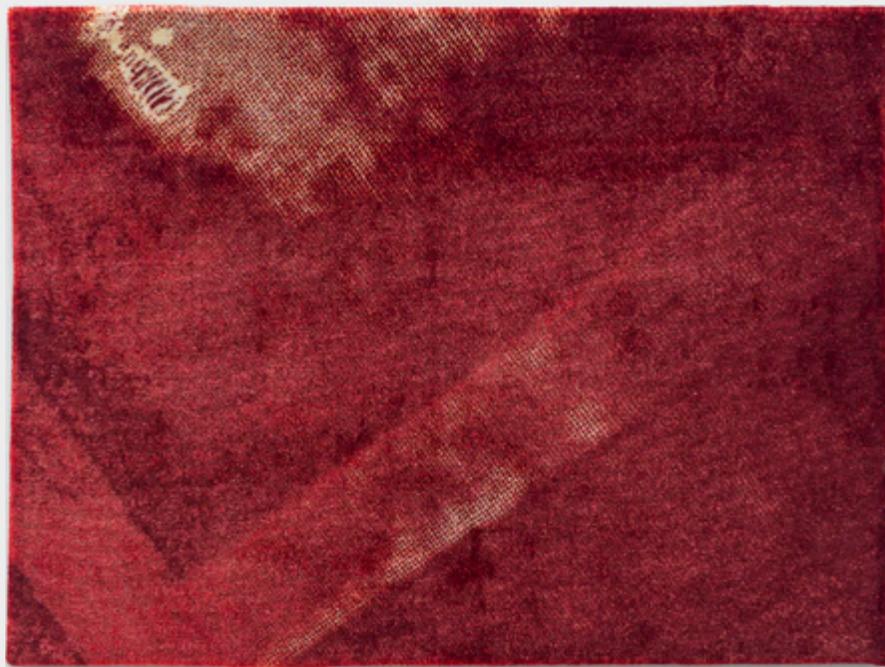
exhibition view
I only have eyes for you, 2013
Fundação Eva Klabin,
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

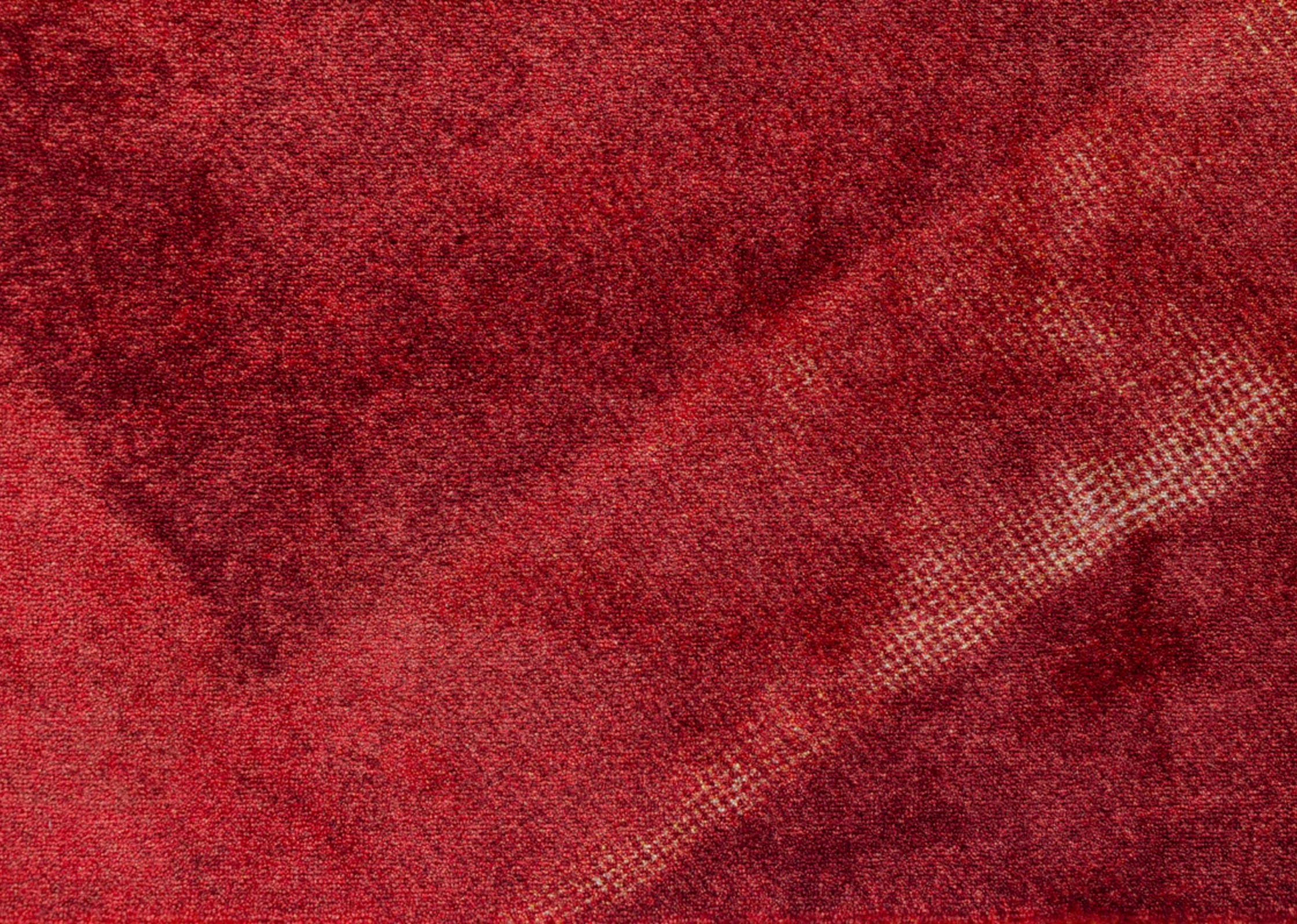


exhibition view
I only have eyes for you, 2013
Fundação Eva Klabin,
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil



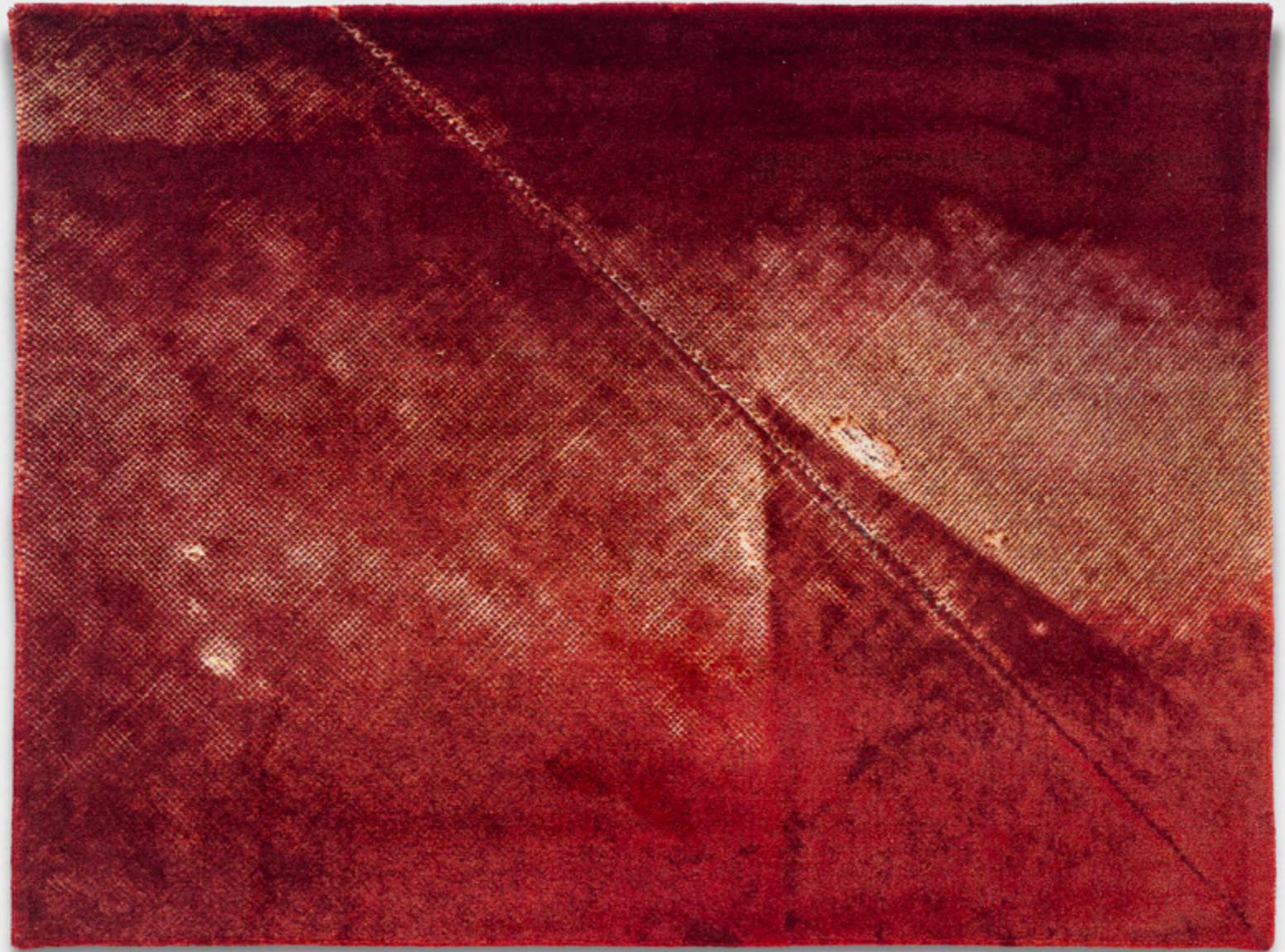
Garnier II, 2025
printed carpet
edition of 3 + 1AP
112,5 x 150 cm
44.3 x 59.1 in







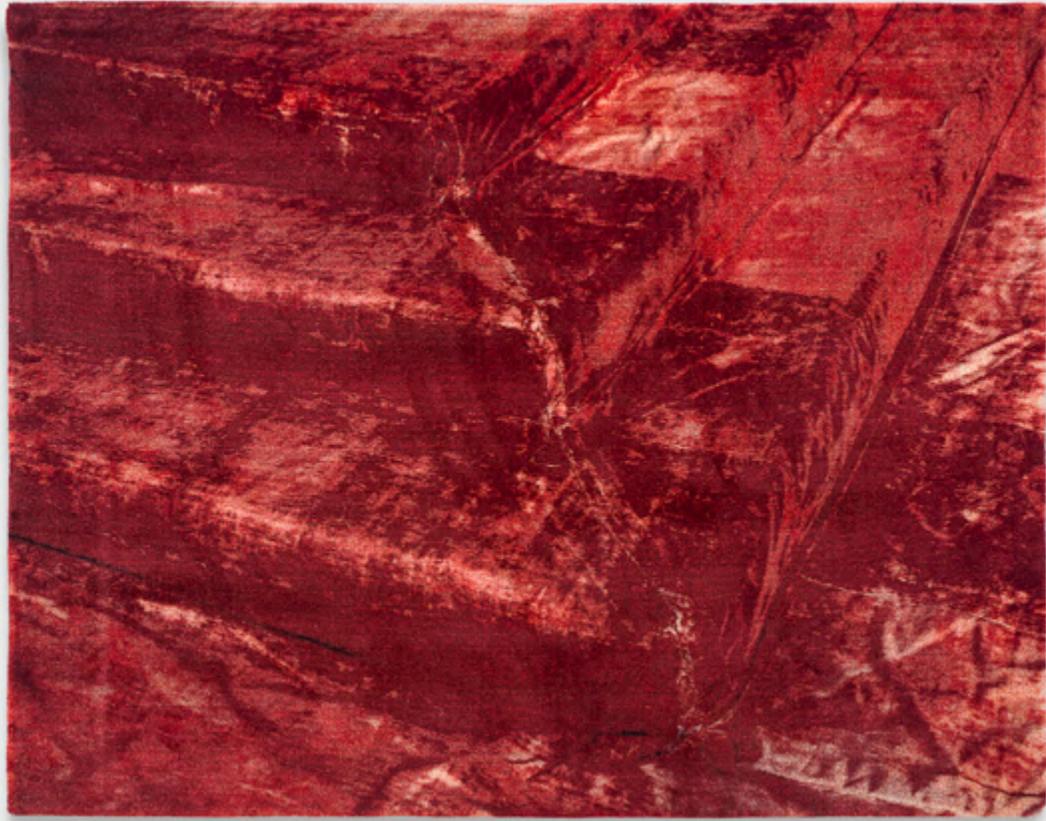
Garnier III, 2025
printed carpet
edition of 3 + 1AP
120 x 160 cm
47.2 x 63 in

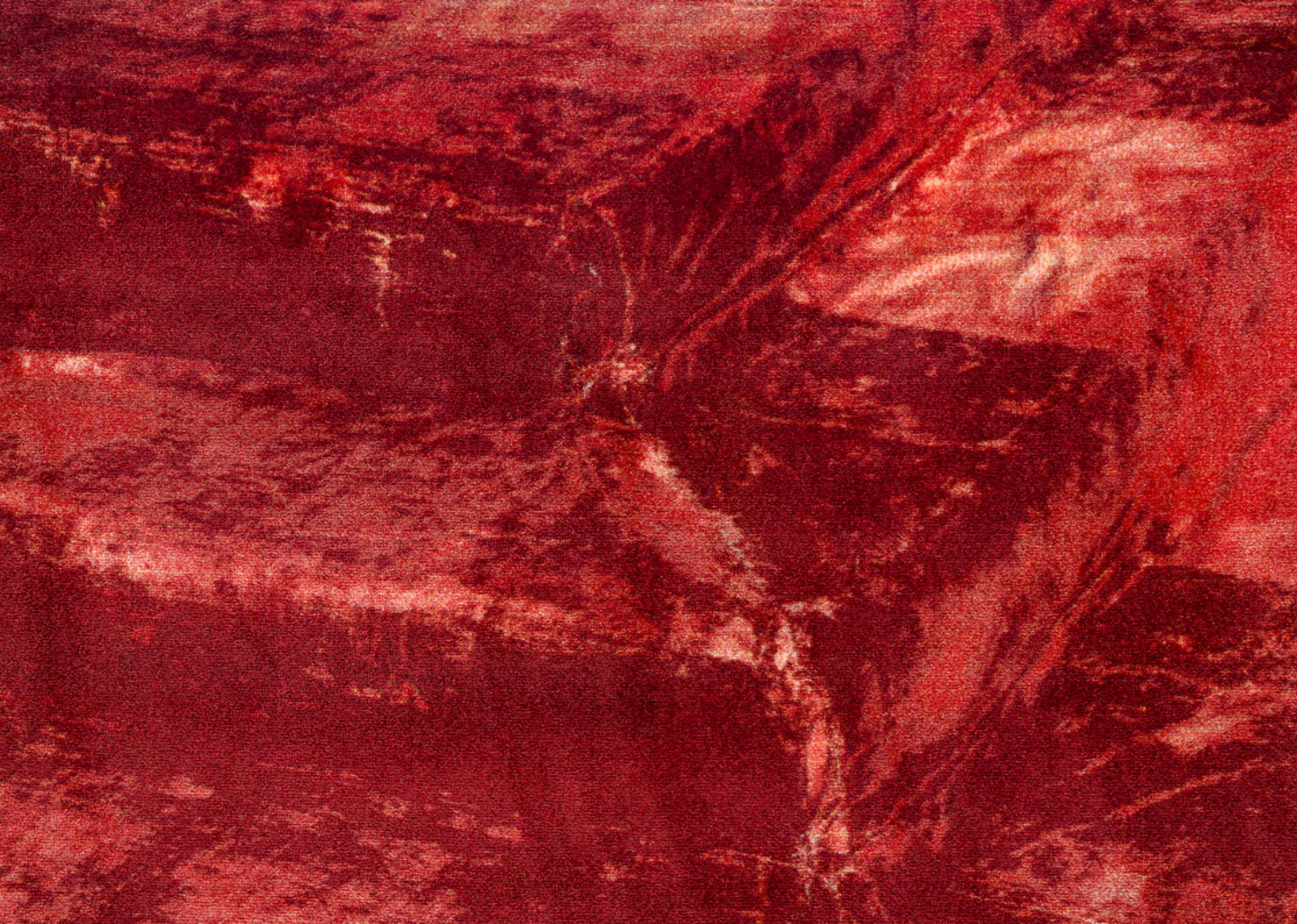


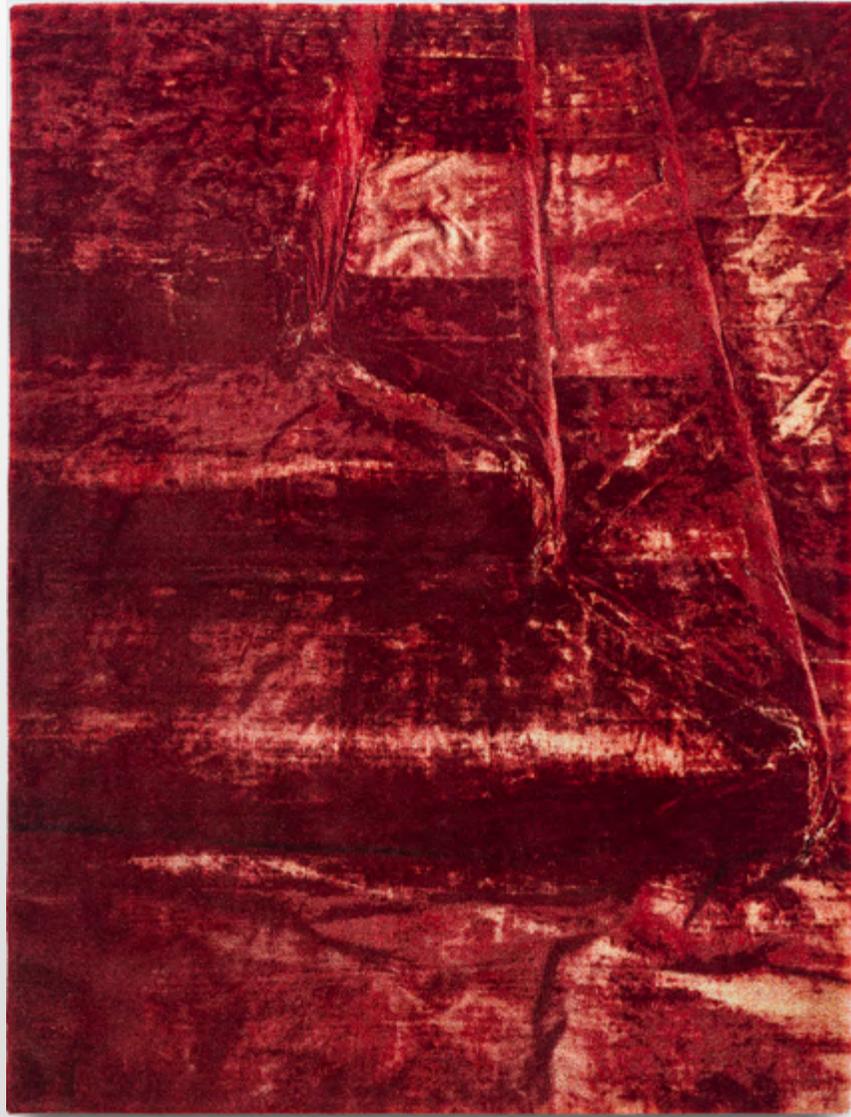
Garnier IV, 2025
printed carpet
edition of 3 + 1AP
160 x 120 cm
63 x 47.2 in



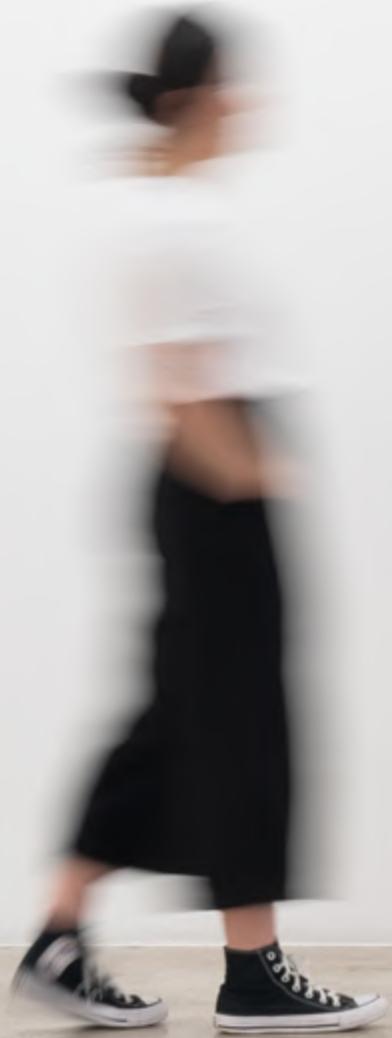
Fontainebleau I, 2025
printed carpet
edition of 3 + 1AP
150 x 200 cm
59.1 x 76.8 in

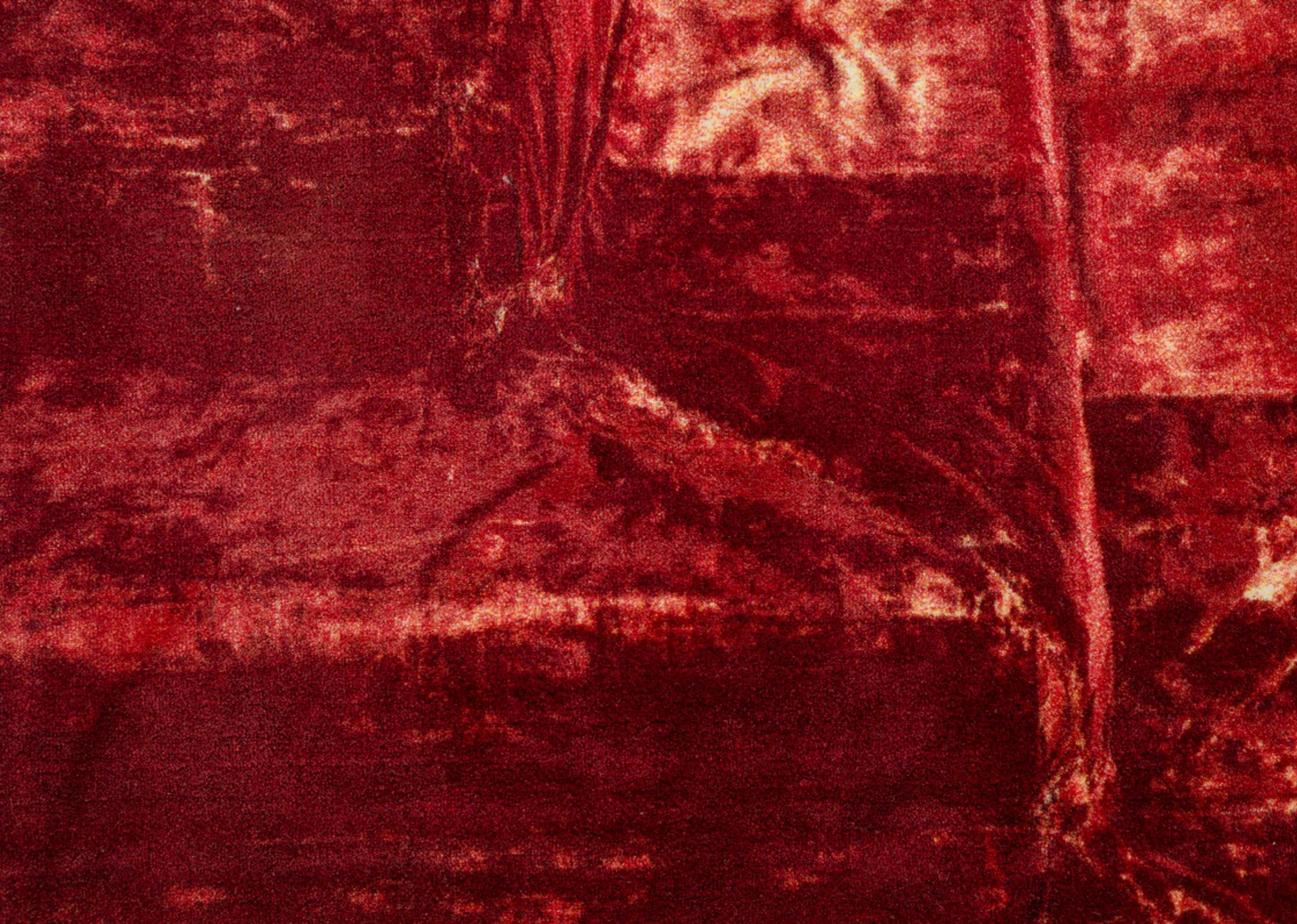


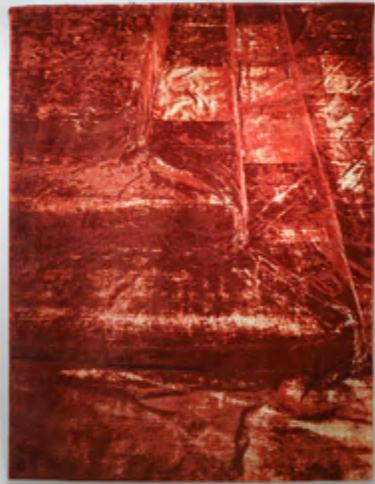




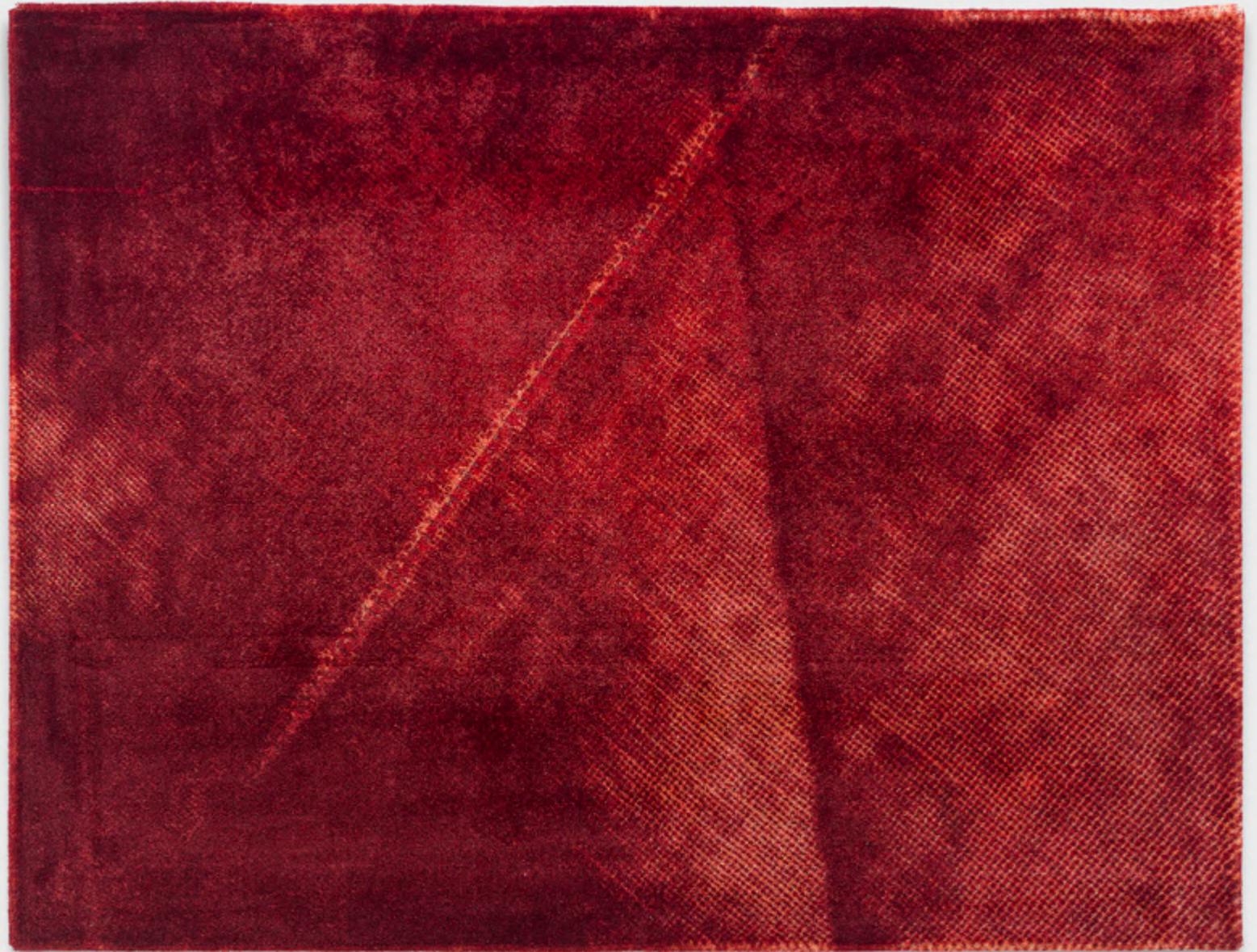
Fontainebleau II, 2025
printed carpet
edition of 3 + 1AP
200 x 150 cm
78.7 x 59.1 in

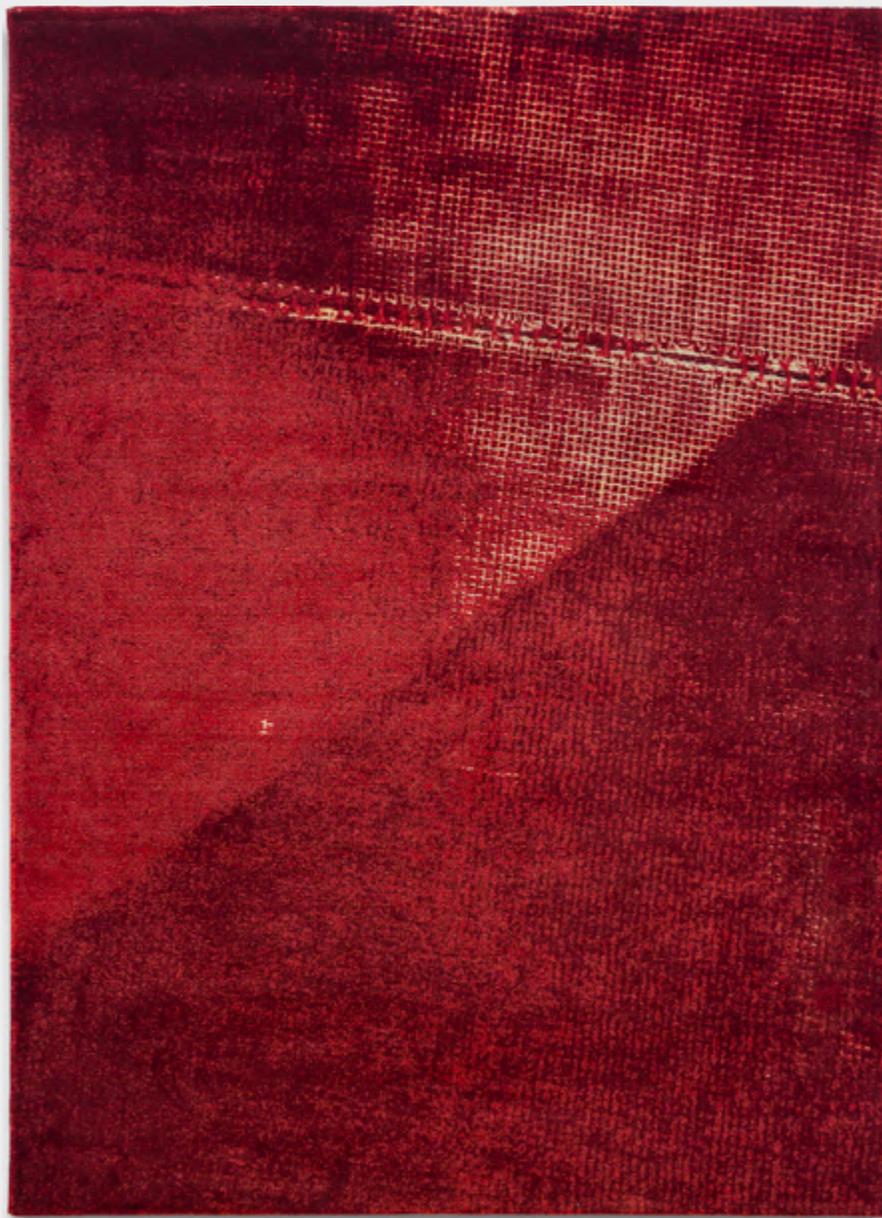






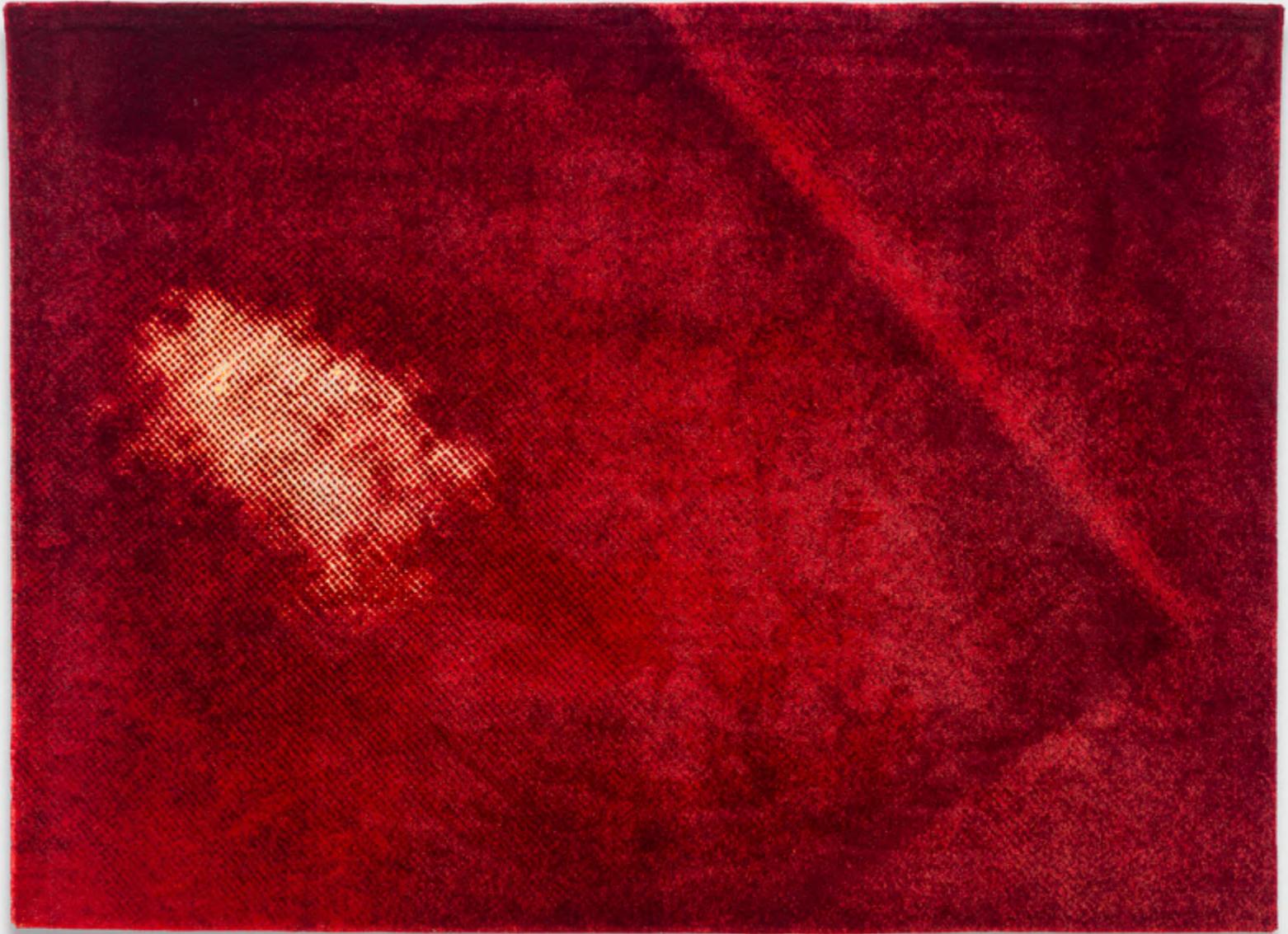
Garnier V, 2025
printed carpet
edition of 3 + 1AP
120 x 160 cm
47.2 x 63 in





Garnier VI, 2025
printed carpet
edition of 3 + 1AP
266 x 200 cm
104.7 x 76.8 in

Garnier VII, 2025
printed carpet
edition of 3 + 1AP
200 x 266 cm
78.7 x 104.7 in



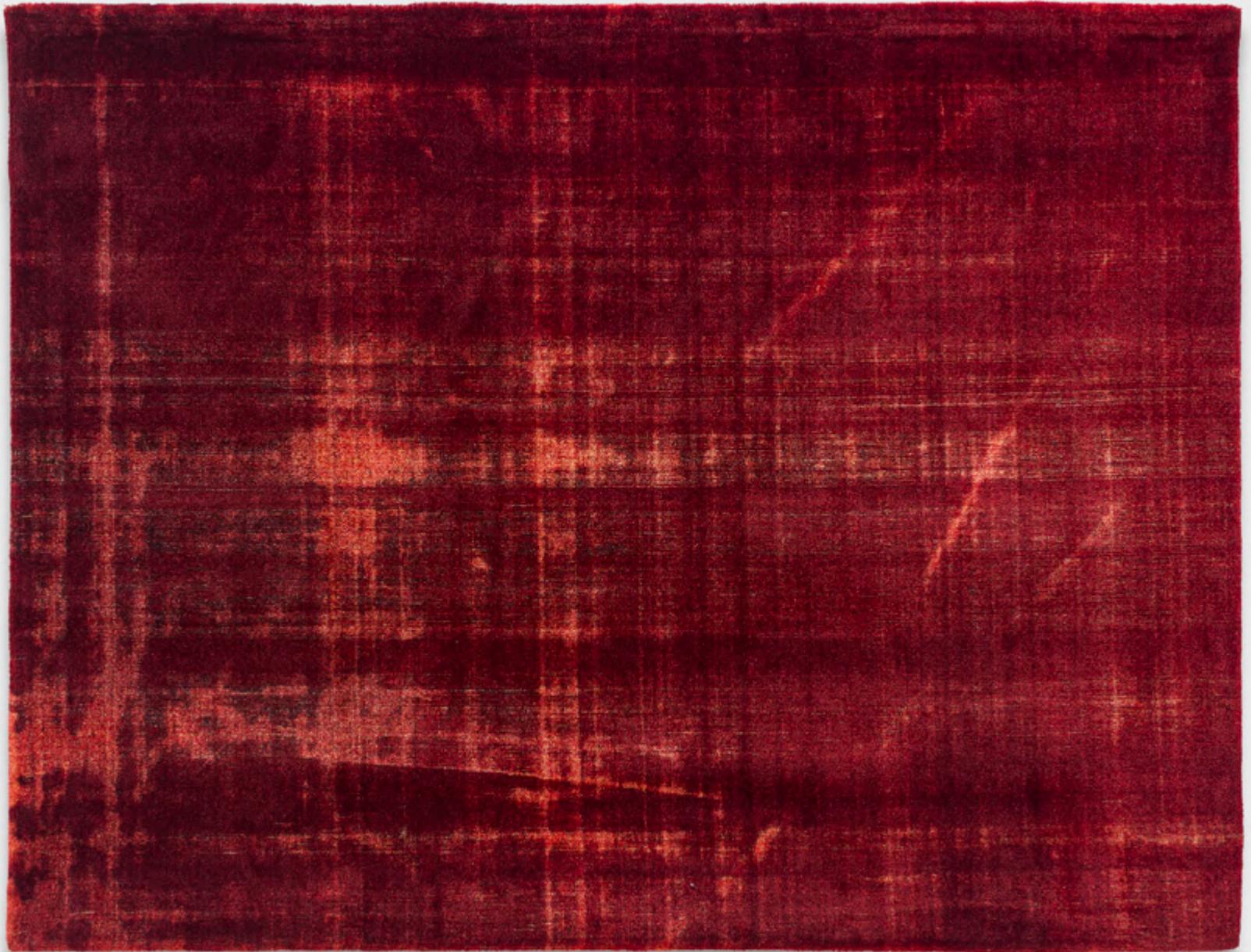




Garnier VIII, 2025
printed carpet
edition of 3 + 1AP
266 x 200 cm
104.7 x 78.7 in



Pamphilj I, 2025
printed carpet
edition of 3 + 1AP
150 x 200 cm
59.1 x 78.7 in





Pamphilj II, 2025
printed carpet
edition of 3 + 1AP
150 x 112,5 cm
59.1 x 44.3 in



Untitled, 1992
suede shoes
unique
28 x 28 x 8 cm
11 x 11 x 3.1 in



“Marcos Chaves’s work belongs to that historical lineage, to the lineage that began to give the object increasingly the value of thought and less that of sensible form: an object, therefore, more ethical than aesthetic. Chaves certainly considers the potential opened by the ready-made and is aware of its contemporary unfoldings. He is not interested in the formal product, in the artistic object, in “aesthetics.” For him, constructing the artwork can be about extracting a common object from its functional environment, combining it with others, altering its logical context, adding words and other means from outside the strict field of visibility, playing with mental associations, humor, and chance. These are his ‘aesthetic’ procedures.”

– Ligia Canongia, in *vazio e totalidade* (emptiness and totality), *ArteBra*, Brasília, 2002.

Jaws, 1992
velvet purse
unique
45 x 33 x 15 cm
17.7 x 13 x 5.9 in





Marcos Chaves
Our love will grow
vaster than empires, 2025
pocketknife and
engraving on velvet
edition of 3
30 x 10 x 16 cm
11.8 x 3.9 x 6.3 in



OUR LOVE
WILL GROW
FASTER THAN
EMPIRES





exhibition view
*Marcos Chaves: as imagens
que nos contam*, 2021
Museu de Arte Moderno Rio
de Janeiro (MAM Rio), Brazil



exhibition view
*Marcos Chaves: as imagens
que nos contam*, 2021
Museu de Arte Moderna Rio
de Janeiro (MAM Rio), Brazil

exhibition view
Marcos Chaves, 2017
Nara Roesler New York, USA



blue blood ginevra bria

Blue blood sparks from a 2013 intervention at Fundação Eva Klabin, in Rio de Janeiro. Marcos Chaves (1961, Rio de Janeiro) in *I Only Have Eyes for You* presents six installations in six domestic spaces of the Casa Museu in Lagoa. In the entrance hall, the carpets were photographic replicas of fabric details from the Foundation's collection. In that part of the house, Klabin acknowledged human nature and beauty in her home, welcoming them from those carpets on as a nocturne Amphitryon.

Considering this intuitive attitude, Chaves alters the original meaning of objectivity through daily life nobility. Such a perception of hyperbolic irony introduces *Blue blood*—an institutional-range survey composed of three unedited series of works, leading through a conclusive, immersive intervention.

In complete admiration of the painting practice, which Chaves has rhizomatically approached and formalized, Blue blood intertwines photographs, installations, and sculptures. But as an exhibition pivot, photography borrows the work titles from the supremacy contradictions of nobility, politics, and unions of historical *raison d'être* (quoting venues of nobiliary power such as Palazzo Pamphilj, the Opéra Garnier, and Château de Fontainebleau, between Italy and France).

Concerned with form and the purity of shape, Chaves reveals how even imperial stains and holes are embodied as canvas and pigments, hierarchic falls, rejecting symbols and forms of abstraction. *Blue blood*,

through the focus on nonobjective objectivity, intends to liberate, through photography, sculpture, and floor interventions, painting from the burden of recognizable colonial identities, turning the still life portrait of a decayed era into powerless living forms.

Red blood became blue

There is no dispute about a universal and ancestral dimension to blood. But why does blue, antithetically, bolster the symbol of blood signifying the noble sovereignty of European royalty and monarchy? The concept likely originates in medieval Spain as '*sangre azul*', and is attributed to the rich, powerful families of Castile.

Within the emergence and the meaning of certain medieval theoretical metaphors, the expression 'blue blood' originates from political and historical representations. By this, Professor Gil Anidjar touches upon the issue of blue blood in his book *Blood: A Critique of Christianity*. In one note, Anidjar writes: "What the blood carries and preserves, in other words, is still what we would call a system of beliefs."¹ The mortal king, indeed, was God-made, but the immortal king was representatively man-made.

By transposition, the concept of 'Blue blood' in Marcos Chaves' unpublished new series of work expands some of the ideas of Kantorowicz in *The King's Two Bodies*, where he develops a political theological concept, which follows the appropriation of bodily celestial metaphors and its imperialistic secular questions. And the celestial body, in Blue blood signified by the historical definition of blue blood, establishes the development of the modern conceptions of person, authorization, and representation, portraying the signs of time as an ideology of abstraction through a demanded-silent, mystified reverence.

Red becomes blue blood

In *Blue blood*, the synthesis of power and abstraction occurs between two beacons: in the physiology of vision and in the conundrum of a de-objectification of things. Through photography, the purist ideology of hegemony and abstraction is constantly disrupted, then, by impurities and contradictions of the fabrics, within its own rhetoric of the canvas medium, within the practice of political or religious points of view, and from without, from the concrete world of historical circumstances. Chaves, since 2015, throughout nine years, has been analyzing these factors between Rome and Paris, two historically imperial capitals.

In 2015, in Rome, Chaves visits Palazzo Pamphilj (1644-1650) where Diego Velázquez (1599-1660) composed one of the most remarkable portraits in the history of art, depicting Pope Innocent X. Inspired by Titian (1500 c.a. – 1576), Velázquez abandons the browns and blacks of his earlier paintings and submerges his composition in various tones of red, allowing the Pope's traditional costume to dominate the scene. Condensing the missing fragments of such an intricate genealogy, Chaves portrays the red pigments of the theological power, preserved at the level of forms and fibers, as an apt focus for the by now traditional discourse of *ut pictura theoria*, with its metaphysics of purity, flatness, and anti-illusionism. ²

Between 2021 and 2024, in Paris, the physiology of the "blue blood" vision, for Chaves, grounds on the red velvets of the 1821 Napoleon III (1808-1873) style Opéra Garnier. And while Chaves horizontalizes the focus of his camera on a specific portion of the indoor ground, the whole auditorium, designed like a jewelry box, is the highlight of the Palace. It is covered with gold and

red velvet, and the vivid colors of the ceiling painted by Marc Chagall (1887-1985) give it a warm tone, allowing the audience to sink into a dream-like atmosphere.

Almost sixty kilometers southeast of the Opéra Garnier, in Châteaux de Fontainebleau (1528), where Napoleon spent the last days of his reign, Chaves shoots secretly at the red podium of Napoleon's throne, to trace the wounds of time, among suture stitches and worn-out discolorations. In these three different museal architectures, the pictorial conquest of the external visual world, portrayed in *Blue blood*, for Chaves, is intrinsically intertwined with the history of spaces, materials, and matters, where countless narratives that preserve the ontological context of certain periods and cultures lie.

Both the origins of the material and the way or period in which it was used were responsible for defining associations that spring to the mind of the artist and the observer who knows part of its history.³ It's worth mentioning that from Rembrandt (1606-1669) to Raphael (1483-1520), artists in Europe used paints containing red pigments extracted from brazilwood bark, formally *Paubrasilia echinata* (pau-brasil), the origin of the name Brazil.⁴ Dissecting every detail of the colonial history of a pigment, fabric, or stain is crucial here: it is a retrieval of ontological data that allows us to establish new relationships with pictorial works, and, why not, new epistemological directions.

This retrieval is of particular interest to painters who wish to develop a dialogue with the art of the past and the alchemical heritage of painting, and in its poetics, it enhances a self-referential discourse (painting that deals with painting), thus safeguarding archaic pictorial traditions and the history of material technology.

Part of the visual research intended by Blue blood is the taxonomy of what could be called a *pictorial archaeology* of materials, which refers to the act of recovering and organizing the historical details of a material that is as rare as symbolic.

The symbologies and analogies related to the process of making *vermilion* pigments are complex and numerous, as natural as artificial. Is it possible that all the craftsmen and compilers of medieval manuals and treatises were fully aware of all these symbologies? According to Bucklow, the possibilities are great, as it is justified by the enormous number of recipes for producing vermilion in medieval treatises, he explains: "The totality of the beauty of *vermilion* was a secret of the painter, but a secret they wanted to share, hence the numerous recipes and experiments."⁵ What Bucklow means is that, of all the recipes for producing pigments found in ancient manuscripts, *vermilion* recipes are the most common and abundant.

Therefore, Chaves' gaze, in *Blue blood*, suggests that this indicates a need, desire, or effort to convey a genealogical message, portrayed as raw surfaces pierced through by diagonal segments bisecting the composition.

[1] Gil Anidjar, *Semites: Race, Religion, Literature*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2008, p. 167.

[2] William John Thomas Mitchell, 'Ut Pictura Theoria: Abstract Painting and the Repression of Language.' In *Critical Inquiry*, Winter, 1989, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Winter, 1989), The University of Chicago Press, pp. 348-371.

[3] In ancient times, the term cinnabar was used to refer to numerous red pigments, a word commonly used to identify the natural toxic substance known as mercury sulfide, extracted from mines all over Europe. In turn, the term vermilion has roots connected to the Persian *kirmiz*, a name originally used in the Middle East to describe a lacquer of animal origin, or the color carmine itself. The term vermilion was later used by Western Europeans to refer to the substance resulting from the artificial synthesis of mercury sulfide, also known as cinnabar, a process probably developed in the Near East or China. Apparently, the Portuguese term *vermelho* is the only language whose roots are directly linked to this pigment. The existence of a natural version and an artificial version with the same characteristics and the constant confusion between other red pigments have made it practically impossible to discern the origins of all these terms with absolute certainty.

[4] Researchers from the National Gallery in London, the Canadian Conservation Institute, Shell, and the Edinburgh School of Chemistry in Scotland may have solved the problem by identifying a component of the dye that resists light: urolithin C. This chemical compound was extracted from the tincture of brazilwood (*Caesalpinia echinata*, reclassified as *Paubrasilia echinata*) produced at the National Gallery following a historical recipe: the wood chips are boiled in water and the liquid, after being filtered, is given a mixture of aluminum sulphate and sodium carbonate until its pH becomes neutral. For this reason, researchers are trying to identify the presence of the *Paubrasilia echinata* in the paintings to determine the authenticity of contested artworks. But, so far, it's not an easy task, since most of these pigments break down under the action of light.

[5] Spike Bucklow, *The Alchemy of Paint*. First edition, Editions Marion Boyars, London, 2009, p. 225.

marcos chaves

b. 1961, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where he lives and works

Despite having begun his career in the mid-1980s, amidst a generation focused on painting, Marcos Chaves' (Rio de Janeiro, 1961) production is characterized by the use of diverse mediums including photography, installation, video, texts and sound. His use of various media does not obstruct the coherence of his production, and dialogues with his profoundly critical work, allowing for open-ended interpretations all while maintaining an underlying tone of humour and irony.

Chaves often appropriates unexceptional elements of everyday life, puts them in the limelight and highlights the extraordinary that may inhabit the commonplace. His production engages with a longstanding tradition of artists who have studied the relationships between image and written language, notably by titling his works ambiguously or funnily, using twofold meanings between objects and their names, finally instigating further reflection from the viewer. His works channel insightful and witty observations from everyday life, capturing the irony, eccentricity and absurdity that often lies in details we might be missing.

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selected solo exhibitions

- *Marcos Chaves: as imagens que nos contam*, Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro (MAM Rio), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2021)
- *Marcos Chaves no MAR*, Museu de Arte do Rio (MAR), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2019)
- *Eu só vendo a vista*, Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Niterói (MAC-Niterói), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2017)
- *Marcos Chaves – ARBOLABOR*, Centro de Arte de Caja de Burgos (CAB), Burgos, Spain (2015)
- *Logradouro*, Centro Universitário Maria Antonia (CeUMA), São Paulo, Brazil (2004)

selected group exhibitions

- *Histórias Brasileiras*, Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand (MASP), São Paulo, Brazil (2022)
- *Utopias e distopias*, Museu de Arte Moderna da Bahia (MAM-BA), Salvador, Brazil (2022)
- *Alegria – A natureza-morta nas coleções MAM Rio*, Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro (MAM Rio), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2019)
- *Inside the Collection—Approaching Thirty Years of the Centro Pecci (1988–2018)*, Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea Luigi Pecci, Prato, Italy (2018)
- *Troposphere—Chinese and Brazilian Contemporary Art*, Beijing Minsheng Art Museum, Beijing, China (2017)
- *Biennale Images Vevey* (2018)
- *17th Cerveira Biennial*, Portugal (2013)
- *54th Venice Biennale*, Italy (2011)
- *Manifesta 7*, Bolzano, Italy (2007)
- *All About Laughter—Humour in Contemporary Art*, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2006)
- *1st and 4th Mercosul Biennial*, Brazil (2005)
- *25th São Paulo Biennial*, Brazil (2002)

selected collections

- Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea Luigi Pecci, Prato, Italy
- Centro de Arte de Caja de Burgos (CAB), Burgos, Spain
- Ella Fontanals-Cisneros Collection, Miami, USA
- Instituto Itaú Cultural, São Paulo, Brazil
- Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro (MAM Rio), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

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