AIDA TOMESCU

From the scarlet-word

28 November 2026 – 30 January 2027
Private View: 27 November, 6-8 PM

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'Each series, irrespective of media, is like a new beginning; informed by previous experience and yet restlessly, determinedly eschewing the easy, known path in search of new life.' Deborah Hart, Senior Curator, National Gallery of Australia

With each new exhibition, Aida Tomescu's work advances imagery previously established in her paintings. 'From the scarlet-word' (2026) emerges with unexpected freshness, unsettling the metaphors of earlier work, and signals something special, whistling in a new tune. The free, adventurous line of her drawings with the introduction of coloured pastels positioned in the realm of painting, acts in synchronicity with vibrant pigments in a notable departure from previous series. Painting and drawing rub on each other, and no longer constitute separate blocs.

Chromatic lightness and transparency has entered her work. The colour is clear and radiant. The heat of Cadmium scarlet applied and reworked gradually without admixtures of other colours reinforces the sensation of excitement and adventure, and three small paintings from the Phosphor series bring in spaciousness and radiance offering a sense of pause, and complementing the high-energy of the larger works. Open, ever-changing passages of white built deliberately layer upon layer, construct localised densities, lending depth and substance.

One of the most distinctive qualities about Aida Tomescu's paintings is intensity. This intensity is sustained throughout the course of the series and never lets up. It is there in the delicacy and fluid passages of the new work. The subtlety that is more apparent in this show is always part of Tomescu's rigorous approach and the gradual construction of her painting. The build-up of her work is circular, insistent, simultaneously intense and playful. There is tension and there is always elevation.

Image: *From the scarlet-word*, 2026, Oil & Sennelier pigment on Belgian Linen, 206 x 160 cm (Each panel)

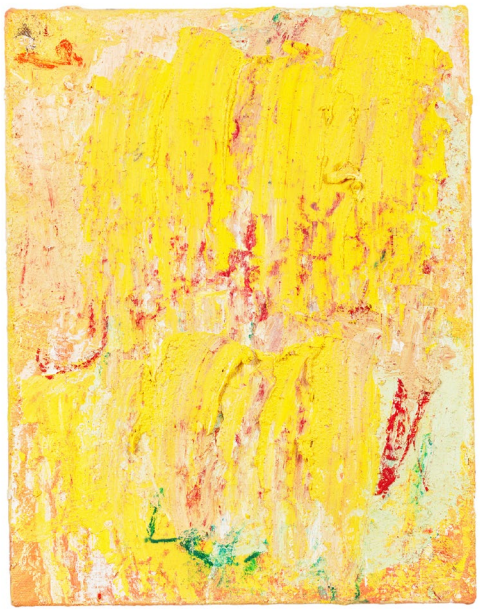
For Tomescu '*The structure developed in the course of the work is living, not static, nor fixed or final. Form emerges gradually through all of the connections and relationships developed across the surface. It builds fullness through an intricate chain of transitions. We don't suspect its workings on the image and on us, yet it is precisely because of its elusive grace that a painting comes to life.'*

The idea of a painting holding multiple meanings is characteristic of Aida Tomescu's work. Fluid, semi-transparent registers intervene to edit, undo and redo connections until a new configuration moves across the canvas and an enduring presence emerges. For her, painting is a question of relationships and nothing exists in isolation in a work; everything plays an active part, makes very exacting demands and fundamentally holds the content of the painting.

Tomescu's work has long incorporated literary references generating its rhythm during the journey of its making. It develops connections between multiple sources always charged by the present. 'From the scarlet-word' is a verse from Paul Celan, whose poetry continues to offer rich thematic material. For her *'Celan poems progress through imagery and tiger associative thinking ..yet never a narrative.'* She responds to the purity of form and the structural musical precision of his poetry. *'As repetition becomes variation, Celan coins new words, words that connect to others and become composites, while others break down into syllables and each syllable acquires its own unique identity and weight.'*

Aida Tomescu's works are almost always the result of repeated painting over, scraping back, veiling and eliminating what does not clarify her new direction, without ever loosing their immediacy. The painting grows from the original intentions and conception and acquires a complex life of its own. It always leads *'to somewhere new, a unity altogether more stimulating.'*

'I am interested in painting, where themes and connections arise simultaneously and there is no sequential order establishing a narrative. In the midst of the painting, when things are going well, you often feel that you are drawing on the sum of many experiences that are somehow essentially related. In other circumstances, all those experiences might seem very disparate, yet in the realm of the work they come together into complete accord, bringing multifaceted subjects into a whole, unified thought.'



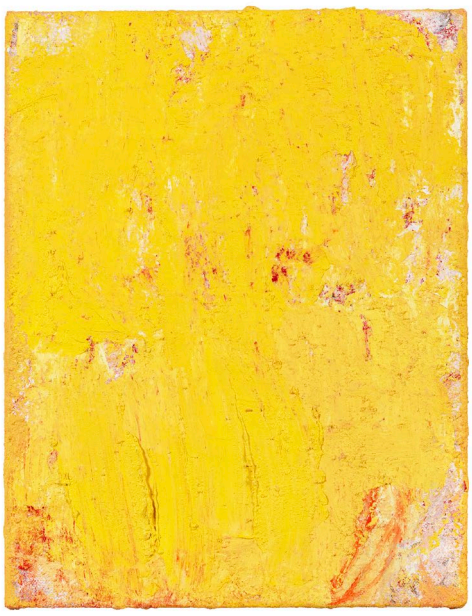


Image: *Phosphor 2 & 3*, Oil & Sennelier pigment on Belgian Linen, 46 x 36 cm (Each)

About Aida Tomescu

Aida Tomescu is one of Australia's foremost abstract painters. The literary references and intensively worked surfaces of her paintings are the result of a breadth of interests and a rigorous work ethic, combining a vital physical presence with a powerful handling of scale, to create what she describes as "living structures", forming from within.

Born in Bucharest, Romania, Tomescu has forged her acclaimed career in Australia since 1980. She graduated from the Institute of Fine Arts, Bucharest, in 1977, and later completed a postgraduate Diploma of Art at the City Art Institute in Sydney, in 1983. The inaugural winner of the prestigious LSFA Arts 21 Fellowship in 1996, Tomescu was awarded the Sulman Prize in the same year. In 2001 she received the Wynne Prize and in 2003 won the Dobell Prize for Drawing at the Art Gallery of New South Wales.In a career spanning almost five decades Aida Tomescu has consistently held solo exhibitions including in London, Hong Kong, New York, Auckland, Melbourne and Sydney, and her work continues to be included in major curated shows in Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand and the United Kingdom. Aida Tomescu is represented in all major art museums, and in regional galleries, universities and corporate collections within Australia and internationally including: The National Gallery of Australia, The National Gallery of Victoria, The Art Gallery of New South Wales, The Art Gallery of South Australia, Queensland Art Gallery, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Auckland Art Gallery, New Zealand, and the British Museum, London.



Exhibition Opening Hours: Tuesday – Saturday, 11am – 6pm

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Image: Detail: *From the scarlet-word,* 2026