

# ROBERT VAN DE GRAAF

Robert van de Graaf is a Dutch painter based in The Hague. He studied architecture at the Technical University of Delft but had been painting since he was a teenager, trained privately by the Dutch artist Erica Meyster. He works in oil, often large, building up layers with brushes and palette knives. He wakes up every morning next to the North Sea, and his current series, *An Invitation from the Sea and Skies*, comes directly from that view.



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*The Light Searching the Soul*  
Oil on linen, 2026



*Thérèse and Joan of Arc*  
Oil on linen, 2025

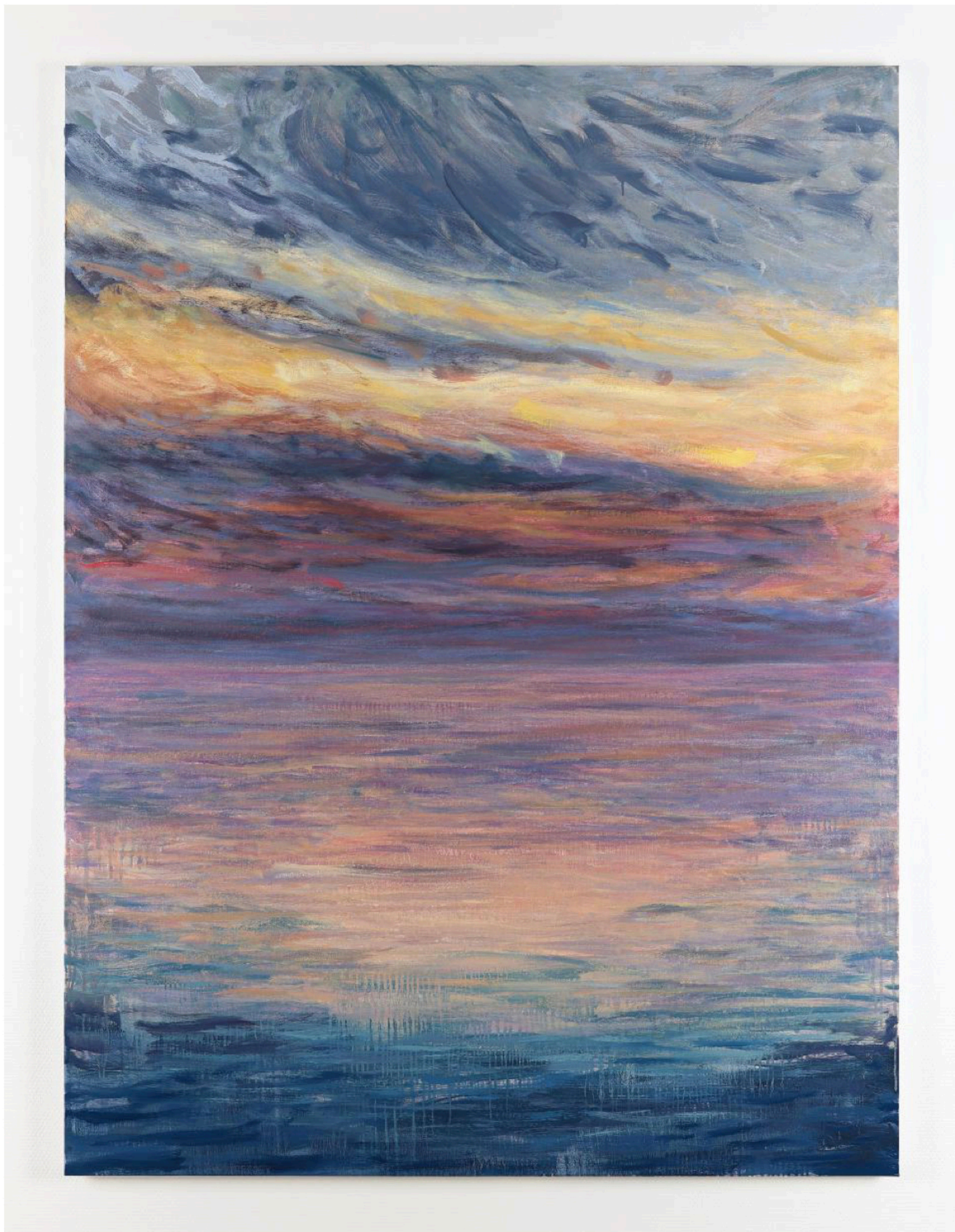
**Q: You trained as an architect and had private painting lessons as a teenager. How did those two worlds eventually merge into what you do now?**

*A: Although I see the world of architecture and that of a painter as two separate worlds, there are certain aspects I use in my creation process, like how I turn inspiration into abstracted translations, the use of clear shapes in my compositions, and finding a sense of balance in a work. I am also looking for a certain spatial quality in my work, both composition-wise and in the way of painting: adding layer on layer, keeping each layer visible, and being able to look through the painting.*

*My private lessons at such a young age allowed me to develop 'my natural painting style' because I was guided in my own process instead of being forced to paint in a particular technique.*

*These two separate worlds merge into each other in adding knowledge, experience, and working methods within the creative process, from the beginning of the process till the final painting.*

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*Clouds Whispering Harmonies of Love to the Sea*  
Oil on linen, 2025

**"The process is driven by both feeling and reflection, as well as ratio and meaning."**

**Q: An Invitation from the Sea and Skies is your current series. How did that begin?**

*A: I live and work next to the North Sea and wake up every morning seeing the sea and the skies from our home. It was a natural process to decide I wanted to dedicate a series to these beautiful views because I am inspired by them. The different appearances of the sea and the skies have such a wide range, which is amazing to witness every day.*

*For me, looking at the sea and skies are moments for enjoying the extraordinary beauty and to relax, but also to slow down, to contemplate, and to find silence.*

*This 'Invitation from the Sea and Skies' to really explore and celebrate its inspiration and beauty came to me after I realised that these views have such a great importance for me on multiple levels.*

**Q: You reference Caspar David Friedrich, Anselm Kiefer, Joan Mitchell and the old masters. That's quite a range. Who are you closest to right now?**

*A: Actually, all the references represent a different part of inspiration for me.*

*At the moment, I feel closest to the theme of the 17th-century Dutch Old Master landscape painters like Jacob van Ruisdael and Jan van Goyen. But also to Caspar David Friedrich in terms of giving emotional and spiritual reflections by using the landscape as a vehicle.*

*Joan Mitchell is also a reference in this series for her wide range of mark-making.*

*Although I use more figuration and recognisable elements in this series, and the works may feel a bit quieter, I still worked from very expressive gestural marks towards very delicate marks in every work.*

**Q: The Show Me the Way series focuses on Joan of Arc and Saint Thérèse of Lisieux. What drew you to those particular figures?**

*A: They inspire me with their great wisdom, their lives lived in strong connection to the spiritual world, and their trying to grow as a person on a spiritual level. Joan of Arc in a very expressive, loud way and Saint Thérèse in a very calm and private way.*

*Their wisdom provokes internal reflection, which makes me want to try to improve as a person as well.*

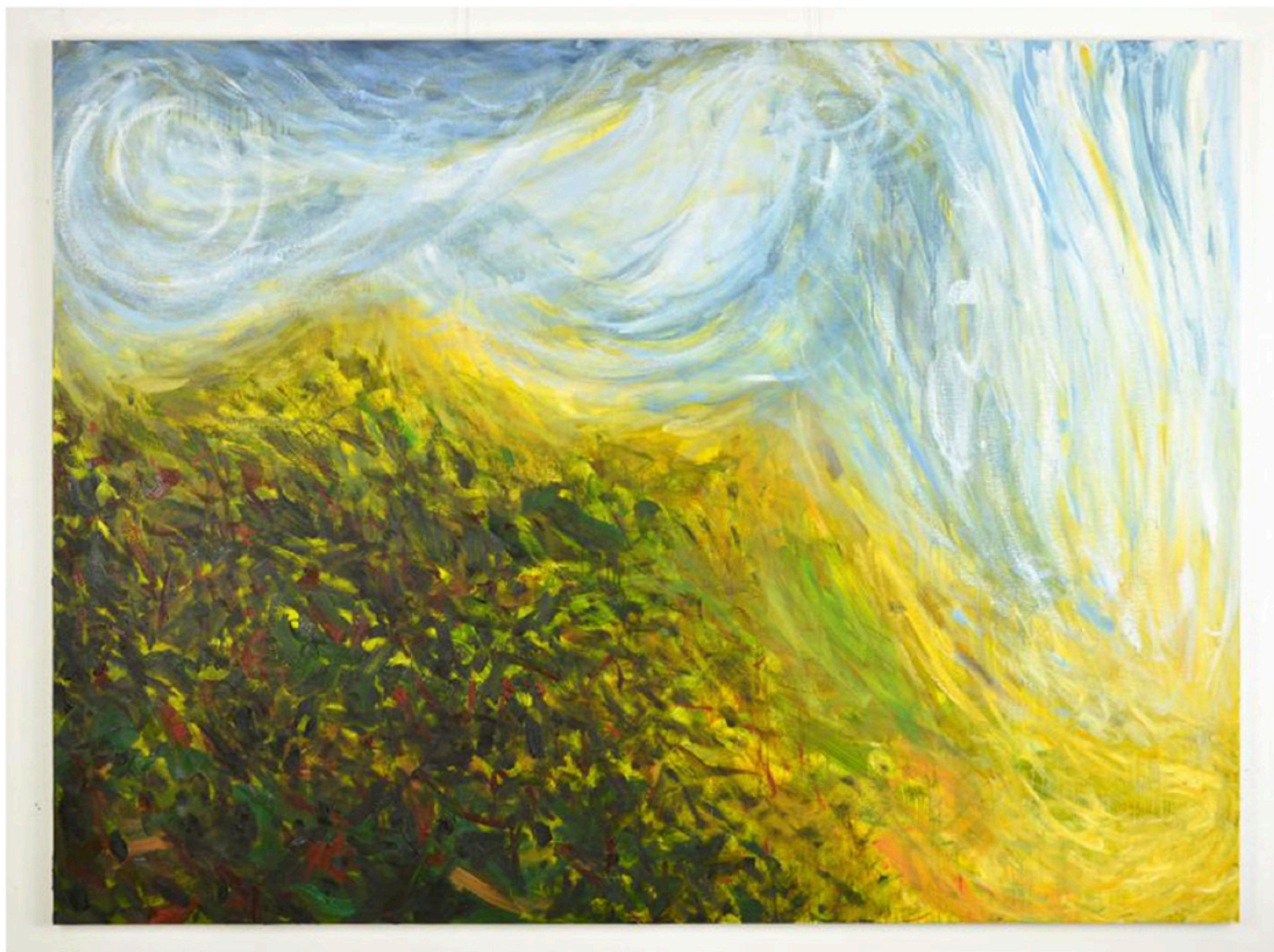
*I am especially drawn to Saint Thérèse's spiritual path, the 'Little Way' (as described in her autobiography, 'Story of a Soul'), which gives a simple approach to the spiritual life that seeks to do ordinary things with extraordinary love. No heroic actions needed, just trying to do the little things right, sounds great.*

*My wife and I also pay regular visits to the Basilica of Saint Thérèse. I really like the atmosphere and energy of being there, and it feels like food for my soul.*

**Q: You work with both brushes and palette knives, and the marks range from very energetic to quite delicate. How do you know which gesture a painting needs?**

*A: That actually unfolds through the creation process, when I feel what the painting needs or in which direction the painting takes me.*

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*The Battle of Joan of Arc and Her Angels*  
Oil on linen, 2024

*The outburst of more gestural and intuitive marks in the beginning of a work starts to quiet down and get more direction as the process evolves. The process is driven by both feeling and reflection, as well as ratio and meaning.*

*After the first energetic gestural layer, I continue to build and react to the setup, allowing each layer to stay more or less visible, so you can look through the work.*

*The whole range of the marks starts to work together, responding to each other and unfold to the viewer through time. The timeline of the process reveals itself by this way of stacking the marks, layer by layer.*

*I also use marks and gestures that follow feeling or meaning, which determines the kinds of gestures that are used.*

**Q: You had a solo at the Salon des Arts in Maastricht, curated by Ad Himmelreich. What's next for you?**

*A: A lot of things are happening. I have a studio exhibition scheduled for a Dutch collector, who already owns multiple works of mine, a new publication of my work in ARTLO magazine, and another publication coming in the magazine Al-Tiba9.*

*Through the gallery Al-Tiba9, my presence on Artsy is progressively expanding, and I hope new, interesting opportunities will also cross my path from there.*

*Also, I am starting a collaboration with the art curator and advisor Sonia Borrell to join her StudioToGallery program, and I am working towards getting more international shows in the near future.*