



Maybe, oil on canvas, 66cm x 91.5cm



Soliloquy, oil on canvas, 50,5cm x 61cm.



On top of it, oil on canvas, 71cm x 56cm.

Nathalie, a series of paintings (2017)

Maybe depicts a young woman sitting on the floor, resting her elbow on a chair. She is in thought, rolling a crystal ball on the floor. The smart jacket she took off earlier is draped over the chair. The crystal ball alludes to her wondering thoughts ("maybe..."), to what may be in the future as well as what could have been if things had taken a different turn in the past. All permutations of her possible life and identity are concentrated in this sphere. She is 'lost' in thought, has 'lost' her smart suit, is alone and vulnerable. It perhaps compares to a child being 'lost in play'. In such timeless involvement nothing else seems to exist and we may be truly ourselves. The chair represents the constraints of tradition by having one intrinsic purpose.

The jacket points to the other paintings of the series. In *On top of it* the same young woman is portrayed in a dominant pose wearing it. She seems to be 'on top of it', self-assured and nearly looking down on us yet we don't know if this attitude and confidence is real. Has it been put on, in the same way the clothes and accessories have been? The jacket here is a symbol for the temporary and partial adaptation of an identity that is 'worn' for protection and to help project a persona. As we inhabit different roles in different circumstances the question is how we bring these divergent elements together and how true we can be to ourselves as a whole whilst being a conglomerate of identities.

Soliloquy is a double portrait that brings together the veins of *Maybe* and *On top of it*. It portrays the same woman, Nathalie, twice. On the left she appears vulnerable and looks out at us holding the crystal ball in her hands. She stands close to the other, very different, image of herself that is self-assured, dressed in the sharply cut suit and gazes out to the side of the canvas. We don't know if she is looking over her shoulder in order to look away from her other self, holding up her hand in denial or if she is doing so because something is posing a threat. In the latter case the raised hand might be understood as a move to protect her exposed self. *Soliloquy* is a picture of communication, reconciliation and empathy. Two opposing aspects of this woman's identity meet on one canvas. The picture talks about the relationship we have with ourselves, how different parts of us come together in exchange, how they feel about each other and finally form one.

Jess de Zilva, June 2017