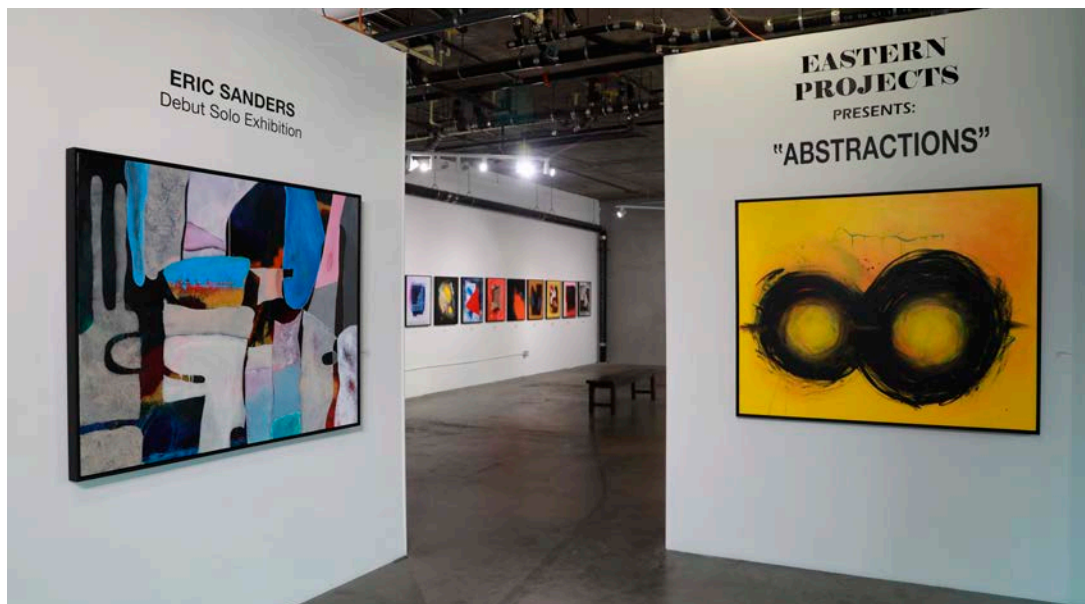


ERIC SANDERS: ABSTRACTIONS



ESSAYS BY SHANA NYS DAMBROT AND GARY BREWER

ERIC SANDERS: ABSTRACTIONS





REEVES
with synthetic bristles
for plaque control
and staining removal

PRIDE
Medical Examination
Nitrile
POWDER FREE

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Eric Sanders: Abstractions

ESSAY BY SHANA NYS DAMBROT

In the language of contemporary art, there are marks that are made with assertive attention, and forms that seem to generate themselves from the primordial. There are evocative colors found in nature, and further palettes that spring directly from the imagination. There's architectonic geometry and also more fractal paths and patterns; some gestures are tethered to the innate physical behavior of the artist's materials, while others are directed by a human psyche of experience, ideas, and emotions. The liveliest abstraction is fluent across such continuums, the better to facilitate a more perfect self-expression.

Eric Sanders is but a few years into a dedicated and prolific rediscovery of his love for artmaking, but his path through art history and atelier alchemy is steadily yielding remarkable results. Sanders' polyglot practice is built equally on careful material experimentation in the studio and his appreciation and attentive connoisseurship for the great painters of 20th century art, top of mind across the decades. His consciousness, bookshelves, and in some cases his walls are filled with sources of inspiration from a 20th-century pantheon that includes figures like Sam Francis, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Salvador Dali, Joan Mitchell, Willem de Kooning, Pablo Picasso, Cy Twombly, and Robert Rauschenberg.

In fact many of Sanders' titled series reflect this soulful, hybrid homage. But more often, the nomenclature refers to a personal phenomenology of experiences, translated through the operations of a modern painting studio into enduring objects, capturing fleeting moments in fixed works of art. One series of complex, geological formations is named for the influence of painter Anna Carll on Sanders' tastes, another for the "Reservoir" whose serial imagery gathers a diverse family of chromatic arrangements through a central formal motif, and so on.

As Sanders dips and culls the vast visual archive of abstraction, his genome of shapes and layers in mixed and pure color gets made with brushes, dabs, pours, and drags. Occasionally collage of paper and textured swatches augment and disrupt the surfaces. He achieves radiant advancement and teases out pictorial space through the pigments' own physical and chemical interactions, which result in myriad surface variations. Particular ways that colors as Sanders deploys them blend and streak into geological topography and striation enhance both the elements of brushwork and the organic sensibility.

There's a particular yellow Sanders favors, and a fearlessness about difficult hues like purple, pink, and orange. Often Sanders will use multiple materials such as ink-based pigments or craquelure treatments, also moving between analog and digital -- frequently within the bounds of single works. From vibrant, densely detailed passages to nuanced color-field grounds, and from hairline linework to robust gesturalism, Sanders directs the elements toward the focused manifestation of a given idea, even as he remains flexibly responsive to the momentum of his materials. It is as Robert Rauschenberg once said, "Curiosity is the main energy." ●





“I have always had an irrepressible desire to create. It is a profound need, and an essential part of who I am. If at the end of my life I have only created one truly beautiful painting, it will be worth all of the effort.”

Eric Sanders: Recent Paintings

ESSAY BY GARY BREWER

“Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it.”— Goethe

The journey of an artist can be a long path; the inspiration can come early in one’s youth, or it can blossom later, when a life rich in experience can turn its sight toward a new horizon. We are filled with the memories and experiences that shape us and inform our identity, but we can also transform ourselves and become a vessel open to new challenges and explore the contours of a new endeavor.

Eric Sanders worked for decades as a successful entrepreneur. In his youth he spent much of his time painting and drawing. Being raised in Princeton, New Jersey, he was one hour by train from both New York City and Philadelphia, two cities with great museums where Eric learned about the history of art. At a young age his passion for art was already taking shape, his aesthetic sensibility being formed by the great masterworks that deeply affected him. After graduating from college he went to work for his father, later buying the business. Throughout this time he still painted and was an avid lover of art, regularly seeing museum and gallery exhibitions. At the age of 50, after many years of building the business and acquiring others, he sold it and was left with an existential quandary: “What do I do with the next 30–50 years of my life?”

Two different forces came into play: one his love of art and his desire to explore what he could contribute to the language of painting; he dedicated himself to his art, building a beautiful studio and working with a passion and commitment. He also developed an organization that provides funds to groups that are helping disadvantaged communities throughout the world, with an emphasis on helping women and children.

The work in this solo exhibition *Abstractions*, at Eastern Projects Gallery, is one of his first forays into the art world. After the exhibition I made a visit to his beautiful studio in Manhattan Beach, where we engaged in a long conversation about his life, his interest in philanthropy and his art. All of the proceeds from the sale of his paintings go directly into his philanthropic organization: it is a beautiful symbiotic relationship of two passions, both a form of contributing something positive to the world.

His paintings are bold and fluid. He moves with great urgency and clarity to arrive at a sure and vivid burst of power. His sense of the physicality of the materials he uses is instinctual, giving many of the works on display a rich surface quality. As we spoke, he mentioned many of the artists who have influenced him and how at this stage in his journey he is trying to assimilate their work, sometimes by doing copies of painters he admires. During a studio visit I saw a wonderful copy that he had done of Arshile Gorky’s *The Liver is the Cock’s Comb*. I mentioned to Sanders how appropriate that was, as Gorky did copies of masterworks by Cezanne and Picasso for years to gain insight into their ideas and to forge a way toward his own vision. Another artist whose work he admires is the Los Angeles based



artist Sterling Ruby. On a recent studio visit with the artist, Sanders asked Ruby about a rich surface and color he had created in one of his paintings. He asked how he had achieved that effect. Ruby brought Sanders over to show him the huge oil sticks that he uses to create these dense, lush color surfaces. Sanders began utilizing these oil sticks in his work to create gestural strokes that are filled with an immediacy and boldness. Though the paintings in this exhibition are all abstract, he is also painting figurative works, exploring the boundaries of both, and seeking to synthesize these different forms into something fresh and new. It is fascinating to see the discipline and desire that Sanders' creative output displays. He is moving with determination and force to create and discover his own vision; it is an omnivorous engagement with art of the past and present, to explore and develop his own vision of painting.

In a painting such as *Hominis Ueniens*, Sanders uses a luminous green to activate an indeterminate space- it is light infused, in lush subtle hues. Using a material with crocodile skin patterning embossed on the surface, Sanders used it to 'print' darker shades of green on top of a lighter lime green- creating a stippled middle ground hovering like a rough hewn mist- subtly animating the space. A bold, gestural series of broad-brush strokes in the foreground explode in an Abstract Expressionist style, but also suggesting Japanese Sumi painting and calligraphy. The splatters of black paint reach out towards the edge of the canvas: a record of the energy and dynamism of his execution. Sanders spoke of Abstract Expressionism as an influence in these works, but he is searching for a way to bring them into a contemporary conversation.

In another painting, *Dirty Dozen Series I*, the artist approaches space in a more subdued way. Broad singular strokes of color are laid down in a straightforward way. The brushes are wide in relation to the scale of the canvas, which is small, at 30x24 inches. Each brushstroke largely fills the canvas. A series of color layers, each allowing the colors beneath to show through, are overlapping, from white to pink, magenta, cadmium red and a near black, that overlap each other in a simply balanced way, but at the same time, in a somewhat casual and random composition. There is a chromatic gestalt that creates a mood and a color chord that is deep and satisfying. Despite its small size, the paintings exude a weight and presence that arises from the colors compressing space: color energy in a pure form making itself felt in this beautiful little jewel.

The painting *Toy Soldier*, offers us an experience of gestural brushstrokes that act as discreet planes in a loosely geometric play of space and color. Sanders creates a fluid marriage of gesture and geometry: the planes receding in space, and each hue positioning itself in a rich orchestration of movement, color, and composition, activated with bold strokes of paint. Sanders' innate skill with the rich possibilities of surface is expressed here, in his lush use of paint. Atmospheric passages interact with drips and random bits of under painting showing through. His interest in exploring abstract space is free, expansive and liberating.

During my visit to his studio, I saw a painting completed after the exhibition; in my mind it is his most impressive piece to date. It is a large painting titled *Strange Days #3*; coming in at 84x120 inches. It allows Sanders to fully engage with the act of painting; the full sweep of his arm yielding powerful

expressive gestures that animate the splashes and drips of the magenta field of color. Using large-scale oil sticks to apply bold black and white lines and marks, the painting exudes a Dionysian energy of the creative pulse animating the universe. It is at this scale that the expressive freedom to move and release energy becomes nerve sensitive: not mediated by conscious thought, but flowing in an unrestrained movement, that I believe Sanders is at his best. The scale of the painting makes us feel the swooping movement of the artist's action. It again alludes to action painting but there is a decidedly West Coast vibe to the painting that gives it more joy than angst. The field of magenta is a rich mix of staining, pours and splashes of color; the energetic marks in black and white made with the oil sticks, ground the painting and create a palpable tension that is electric.

Sanders spoke candidly about his art; that his full commitment to painting is still relatively new. He conveyed an earnestness and humility that was refreshing, knowing that he is still in the beginning stages of realizing a vision unique to him. But his dedication and fearless approach to working his way through painting to self-discovery, is yielding powerful work- and his work ethic and desire will get him there.

He said of his approach, "I want to do two things: I want to make these paintings and sell them to use the money to fund my philanthropic efforts, so that is one part. I am also dedicating myself to developing my art, to discovering a unique vision of my own, I don't know if I will get there, but I hope to bring something new and innovative to the world of painting."



One of the methods he uses in developing his compositions is creating digital drawings and paintings, both as studies for paintings and as complete works in themselves. This multi-tiered approach adds something refreshing to the mix, a wild card that may move the paintings in unexpected ways. We live in a time of great creative potential, with access to technologies that allow us a freedom to create images, films, and designs, and to print and publish this work that is unprecedented. It will be interesting to see how these tools will shape Sanders' future creative output.


The marriage of his two passions is a beautiful thing. To reawaken a latent talent for painting and to have the desire and ambition to see where that will lead, and to combine that with the pragmatism of marketing and selling these paintings for the express purpose of funding a philanthropic effort, is both noble and poetic. To quote the Sanders Family Foundation's mission statement, "The foundation supports organizations fostering sustainable change in developing countries with a specific focus on initiatives directed towards women and children." Since its inception, the Foundation has allocated funds to organizations like Global Communities, the Global Livingston Institute, Groundswell International, Nuru International, Project Concern International, and World Neighbors. Sanders transfers 100% of the income generated by the sale of his artwork to his Foundation for reinvestment in philanthropic initiatives further underscoring his deep commitment to socially impactful endeavors.

The human need to create is a primal urge: the desire to contribute something to this world, to add another line to a poem that began with the birth of consciousness, is a truth that we all feel. We are meaning makers: creating stories, myths and symbols to represent the spiritual vitality of the life. To care, to give of oneself and to help others, is a profound part of living a meaningful life. Art is a profound contribution to the cultural life of our world. It is the creation of a language to communicate our deepest needs, the need we have to be moved by the resonate chords of this spiritual life we share.

Art in its purest expression is a form of altruism at its core. Philanthropy is another form of altruism. To expend the effort to create a foundation that seeks to better the lives of people in disadvantaged places around the globe, is an act of generosity and of caring for our common good. To combine art and philanthropy has a beautiful symmetry to it, a mutually beneficial act that is a humanistic expression that comes directly from the heart. ●

“All proceeds from my art sales go to *Art for Social Impact*, my non-profit foundation for distributing funds to charities I support.”



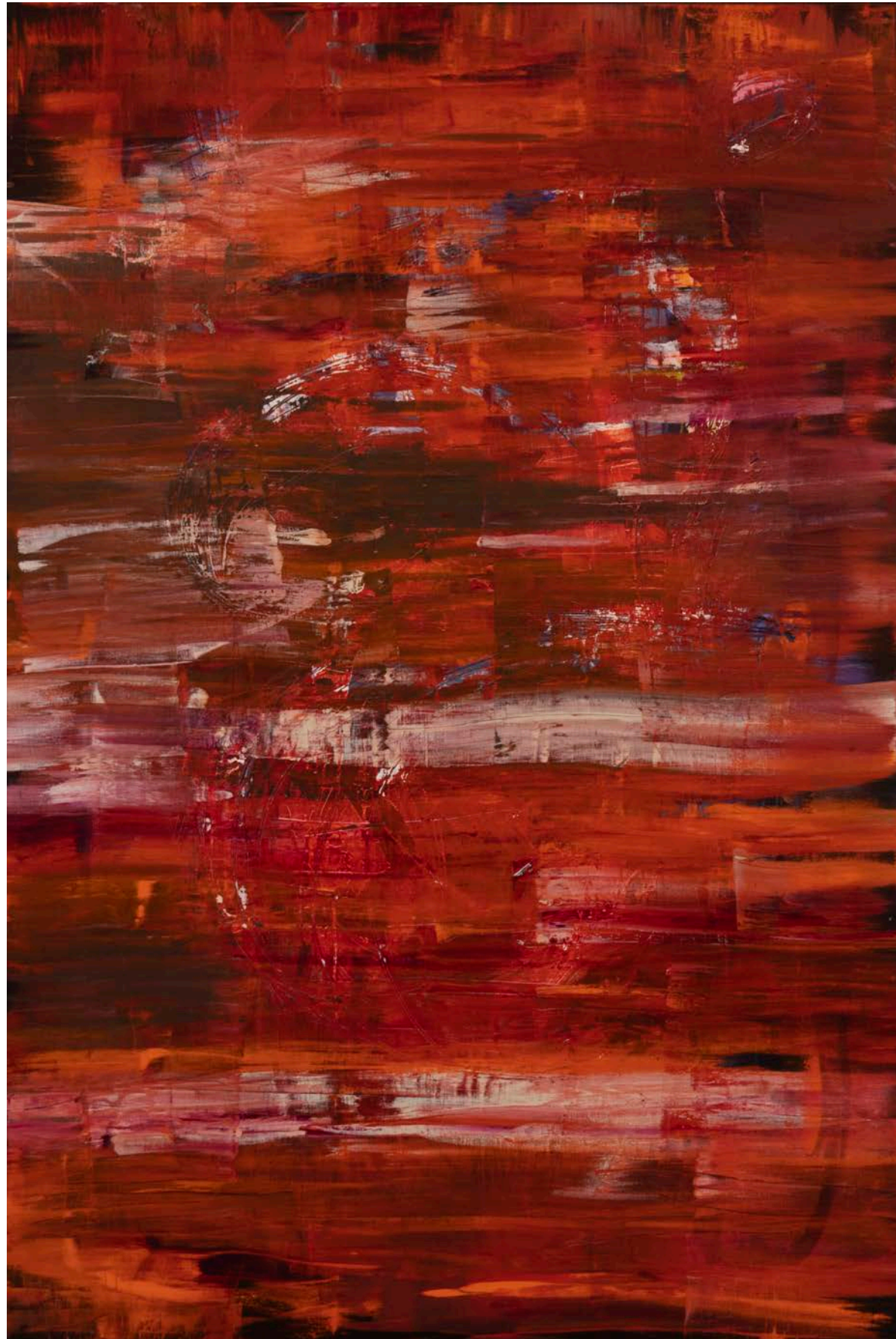


“ Life is an ongoing process of discovery. I consider myself incredibly fortunate to have found a way to bring together two consuming passions of mine into one wonderful journey: my love of painting and my passion for philanthropy. Creativity and self-actualization guide my path through life. It is deeply satisfying and fulfilling to have found a way to marry these different pursuits, to give something back to the world and to express my own creativity.”

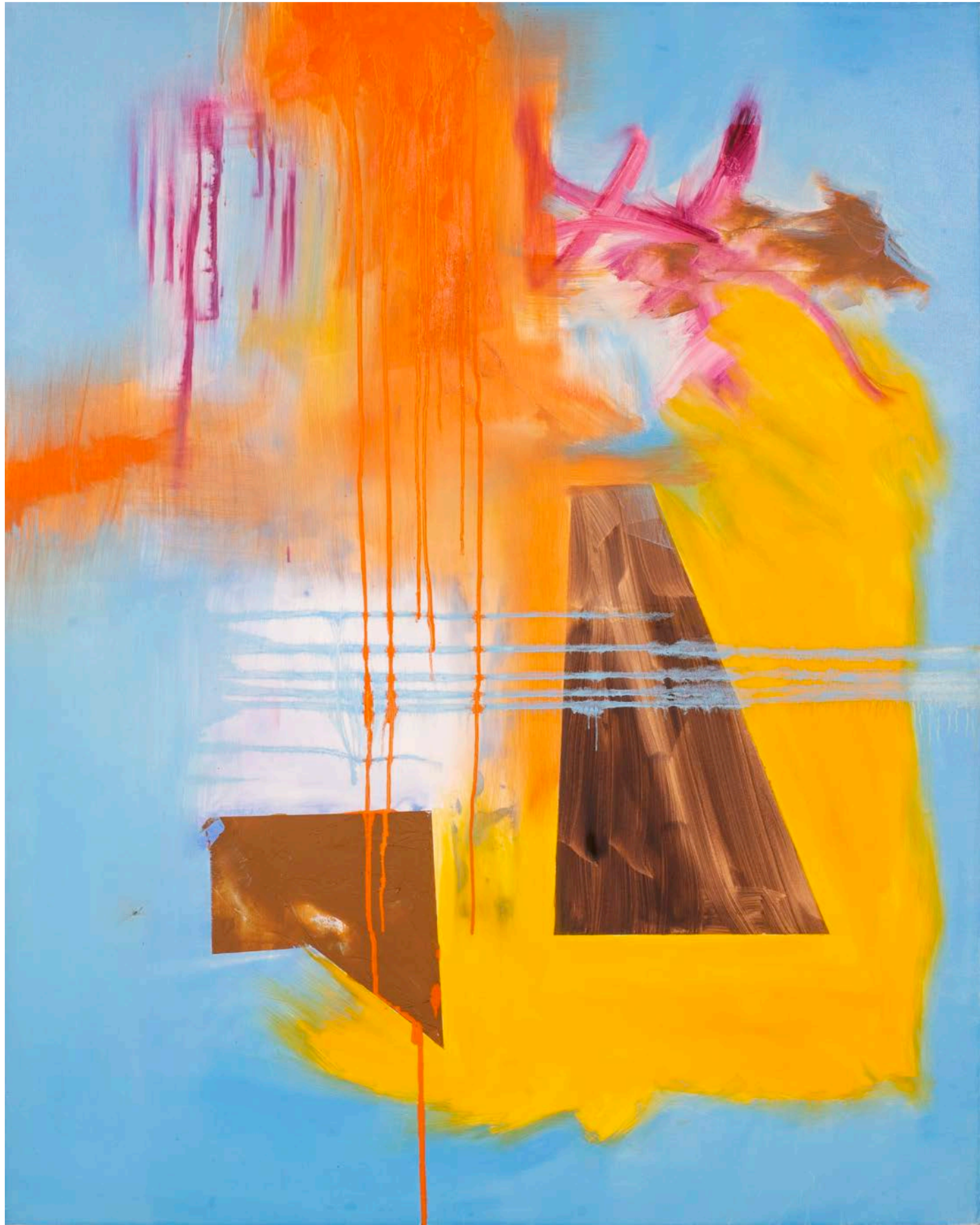




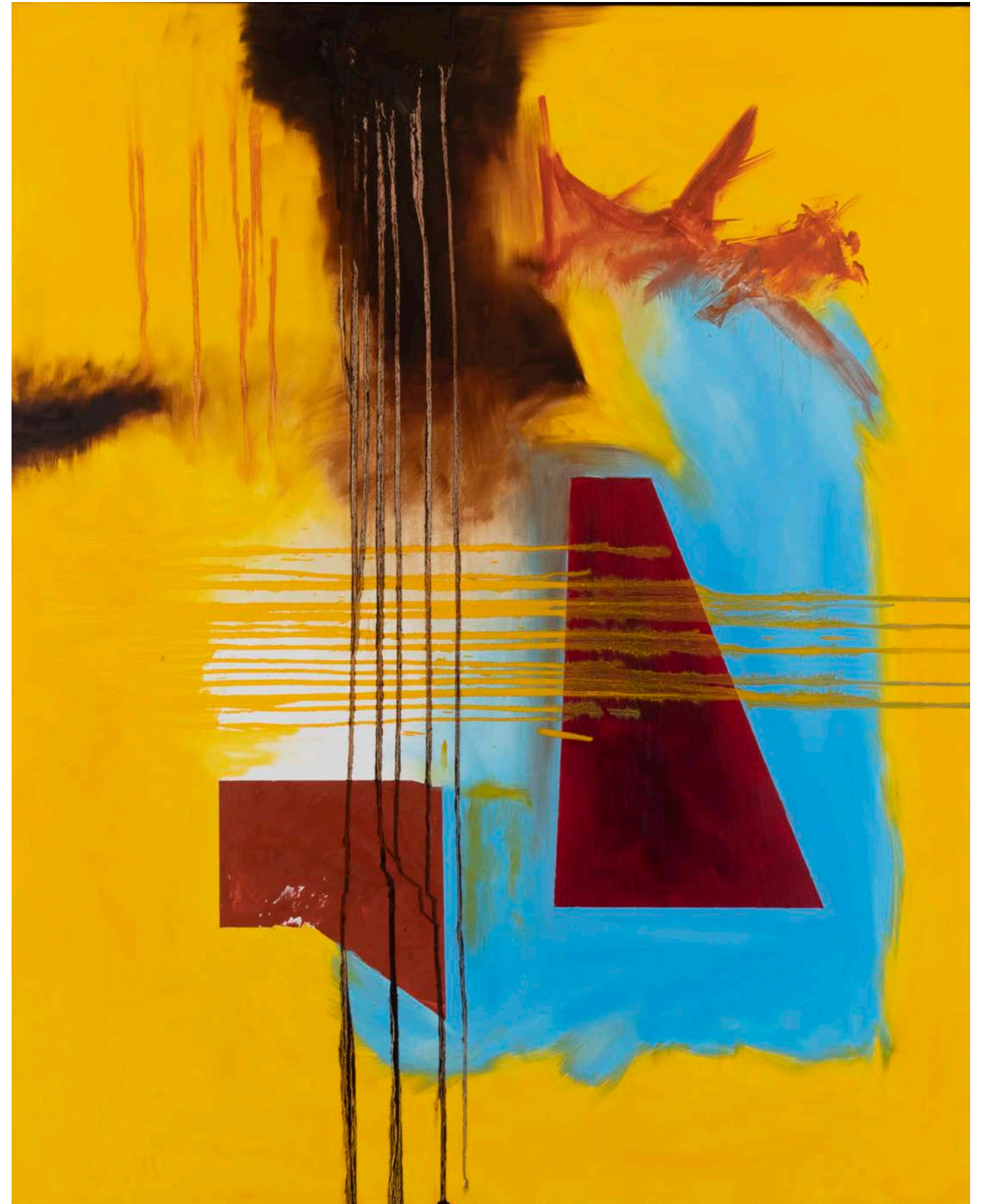




“ I began my artistic journey late in life. I’ve always felt like the proverbial kid in a candy store, freely exploring different styles and approaches—constantly looking beyond the limits of my knowledge to discover different artists and techniques. Each time I would find an artist whose work affected me deeply, I would make a copy of their work—to learn from their process and vision. I was a voracious consumer of ideas and images exploring different processes and experimenting with materials. Once I was able to narrow my focus to my own evolving style and medium there was an explosion of new work. This catalogue is a record of my journey and a memorialization of this explosion of creativity. ”



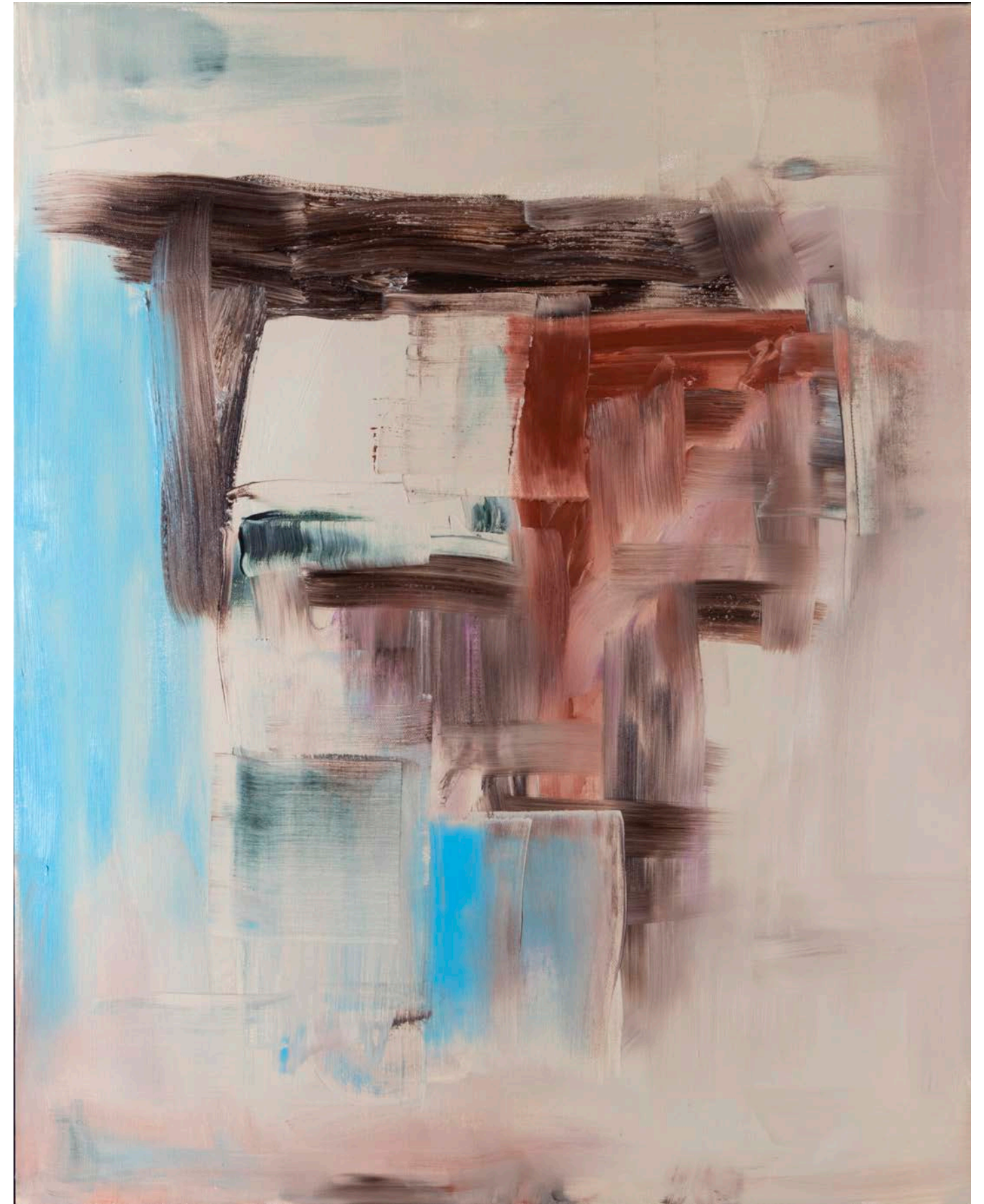
26 | *Trapezoids #1*, 2018, oil & mixed media on canvas, 60" x 48"



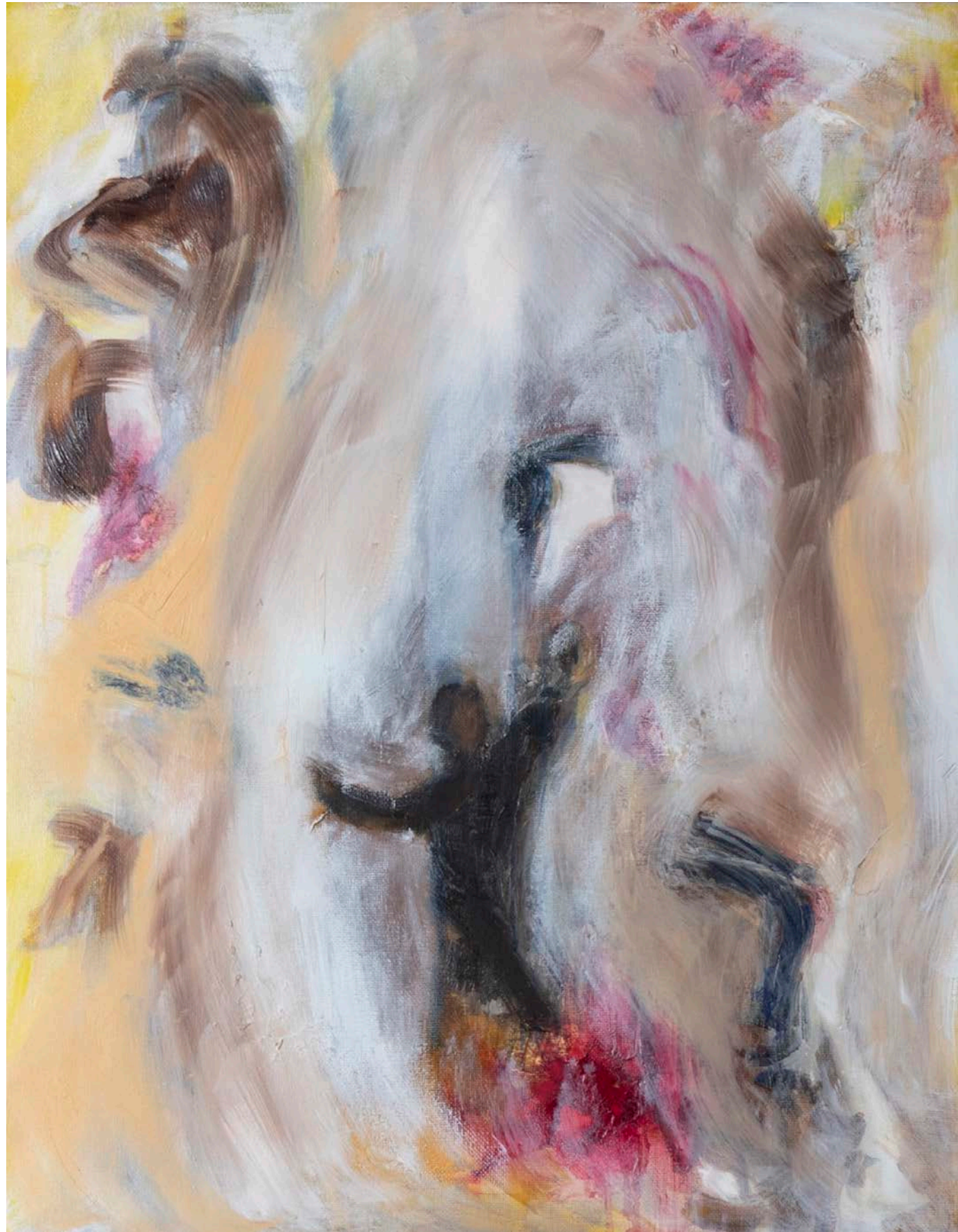
Trapezoids #2, 2018, oil & mixed media on canvas, 60" x 48" | 27



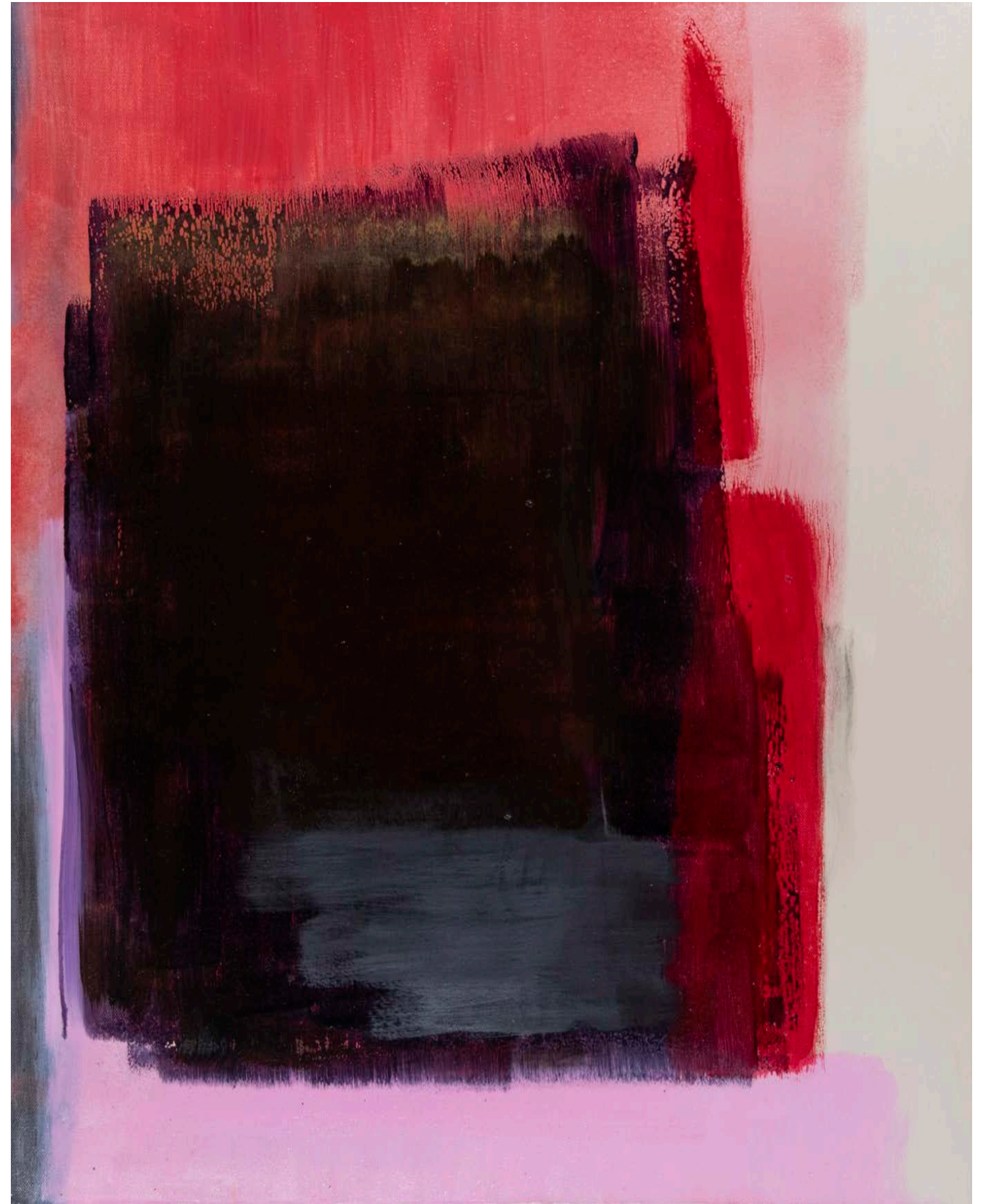
28 | *Anna Carl V*, 2019, oil on wood panel, 48" x 60"



Berkeley's Brother, 2019, oil on canvas, 30" x 24" | 29



30 | *Dante's Gate*, 2019, oil on canvas, 19" x 15"



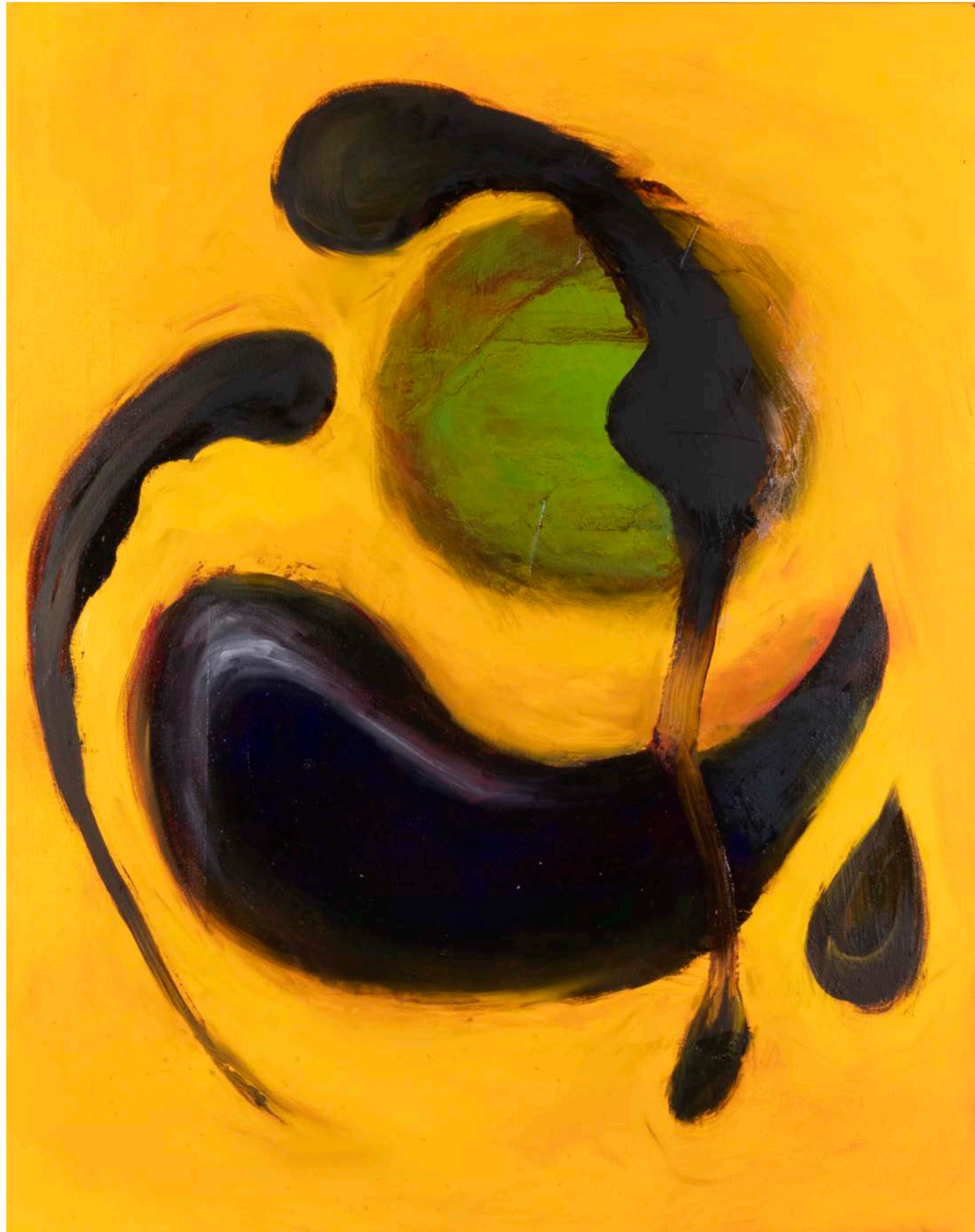
Dirty Dozen Series No. 1, 2019, oil on canvas, 30" x 24" | 31



32 | *Dirty Dozen Series No. II*, 2019, oil & mixed media on canvas, 30" x 24"



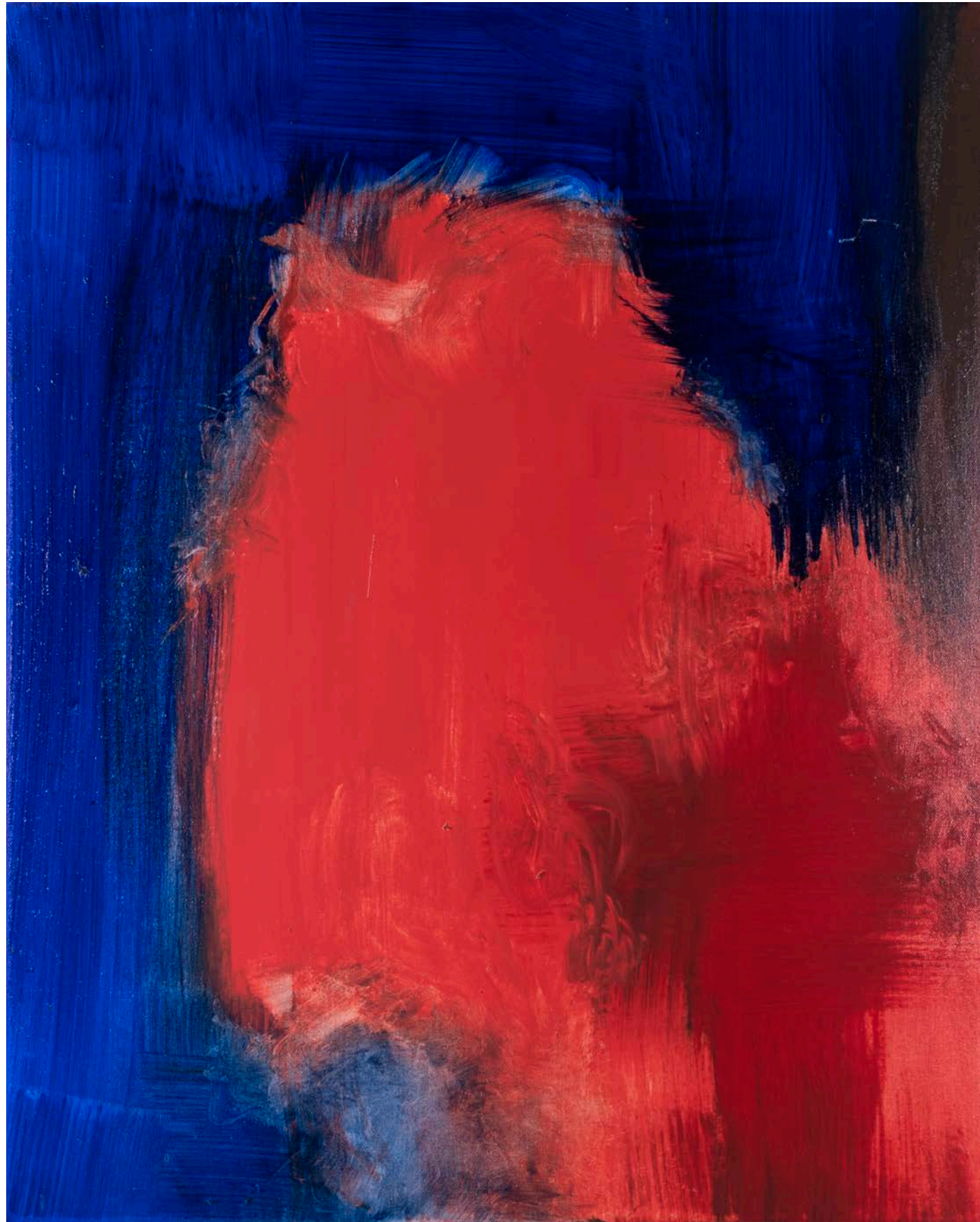
Dirty Dozen Series No. III, 2019, oil & mixed media on canvas, 30" x 24" | 33



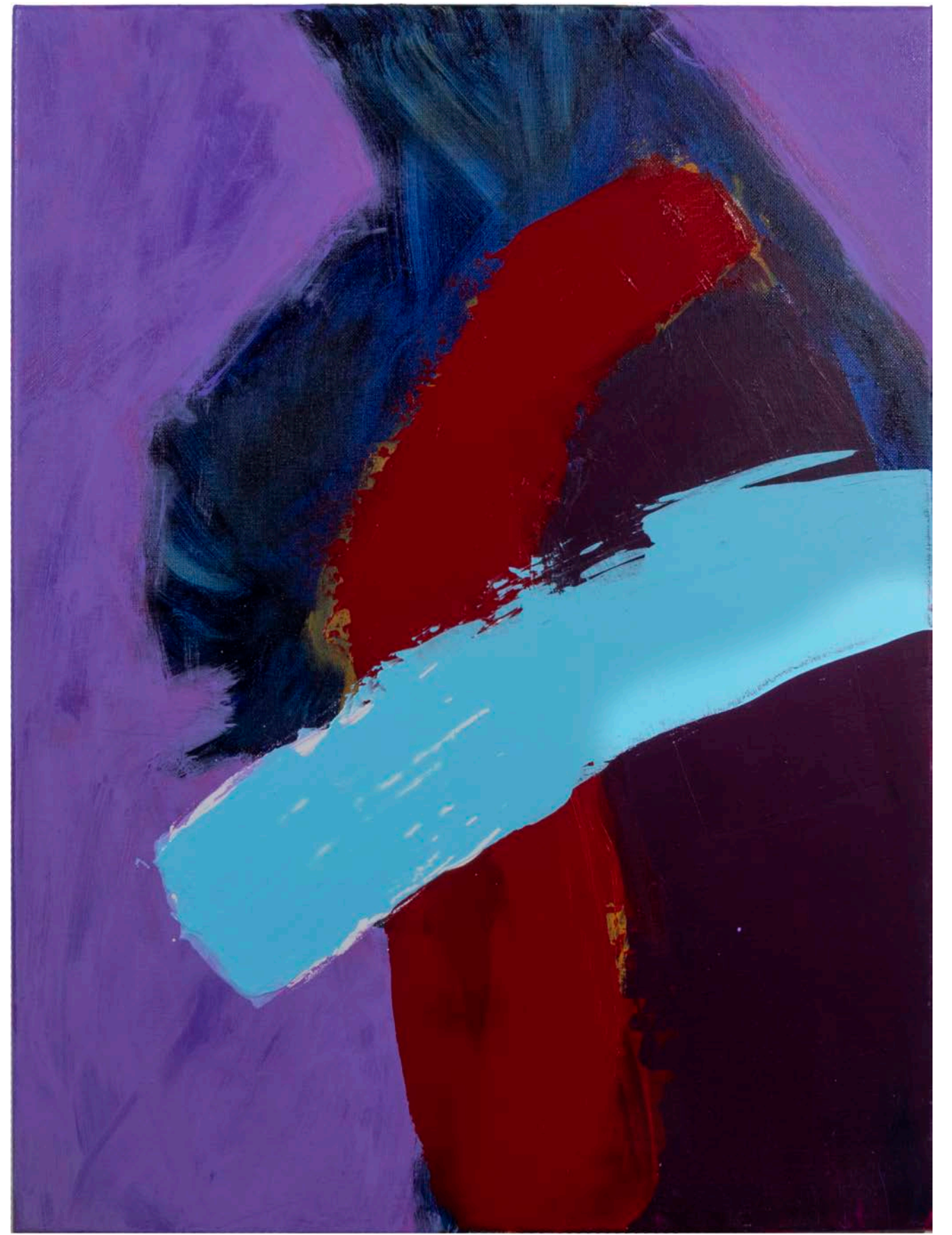
34 | *Dirty Dozen Series No. IV*, 2019, oil & mixed media on canvas, 30" x 24"



Dirty Dozen Series No. V, 2019, oil & mixed media on canvas, 24" x 30" | 35



36 | *Dirty Dozen Series No. VI*, 2019, oil & mixed media on canvas, 30" x 24"



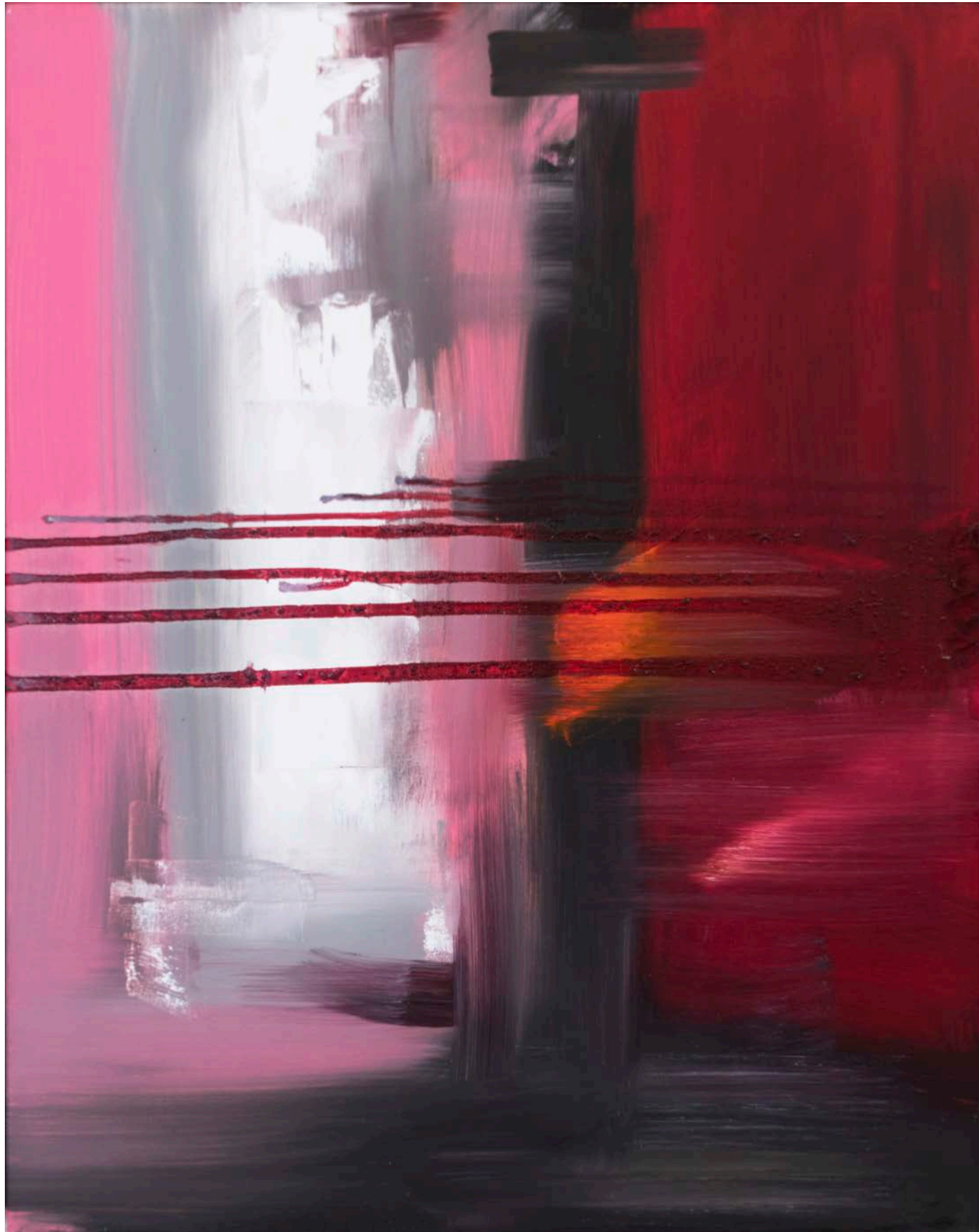
Dirty Dozen Series No. VII, 2019, oil & mixed media on canvas, 24" x 18" | 37



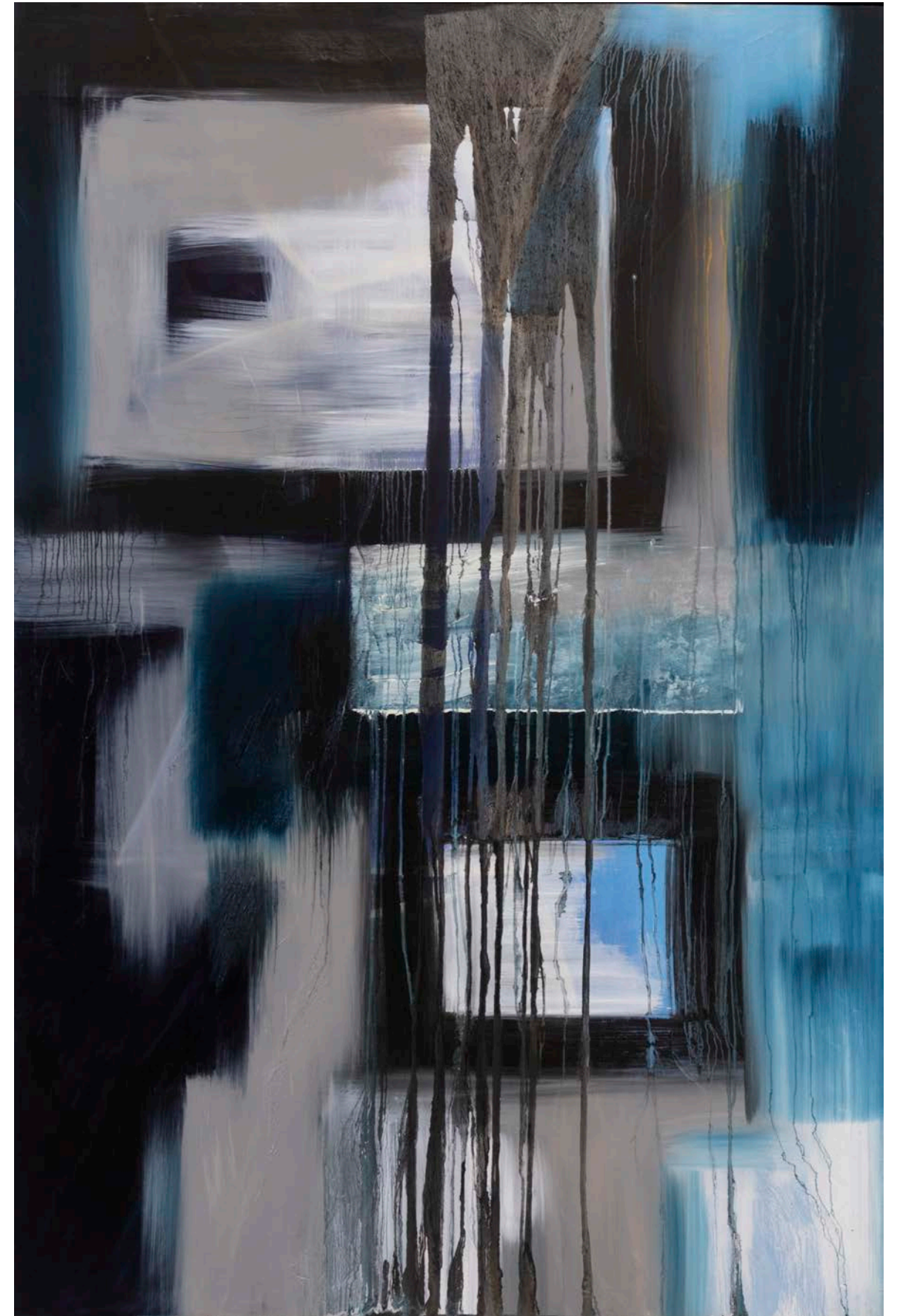
38 | *Dirty Dozen Series No. VIII*, 2019, oil & mixed media on canvas, 30" x 24"



Dirty Dozen Series No. IX, 2019, oil on canvas, 24" x 30" | 39



40 | *Dirty Dozen Series No. XII*, 2019, oil on canvas, 30" x 24"



Framed, 2019, oil & mixed media on canvas, 72" x 48" | 41



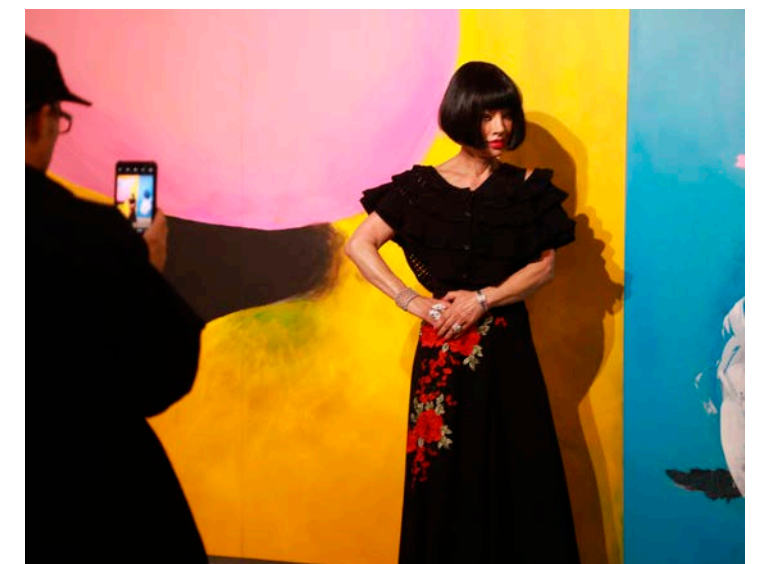
42 | *Gender War II*, 2019, oil paint & mixed media on wood panel, 27" x 36"



Hominis Ueniens, 2019, oil paint & acrylic on wood panel, 60" x 48" | 43



“Originally a digital creation, I decided to recreate this piece as a large scale painting to be the centerpiece of the exhibition. Working at that scale was surprisingly difficult. I had to crawl onto the canvas to paint the center portions. Fortunately the end result was worth the effort. The piece was the most popular at the show – prompting many selfies in front of it.”





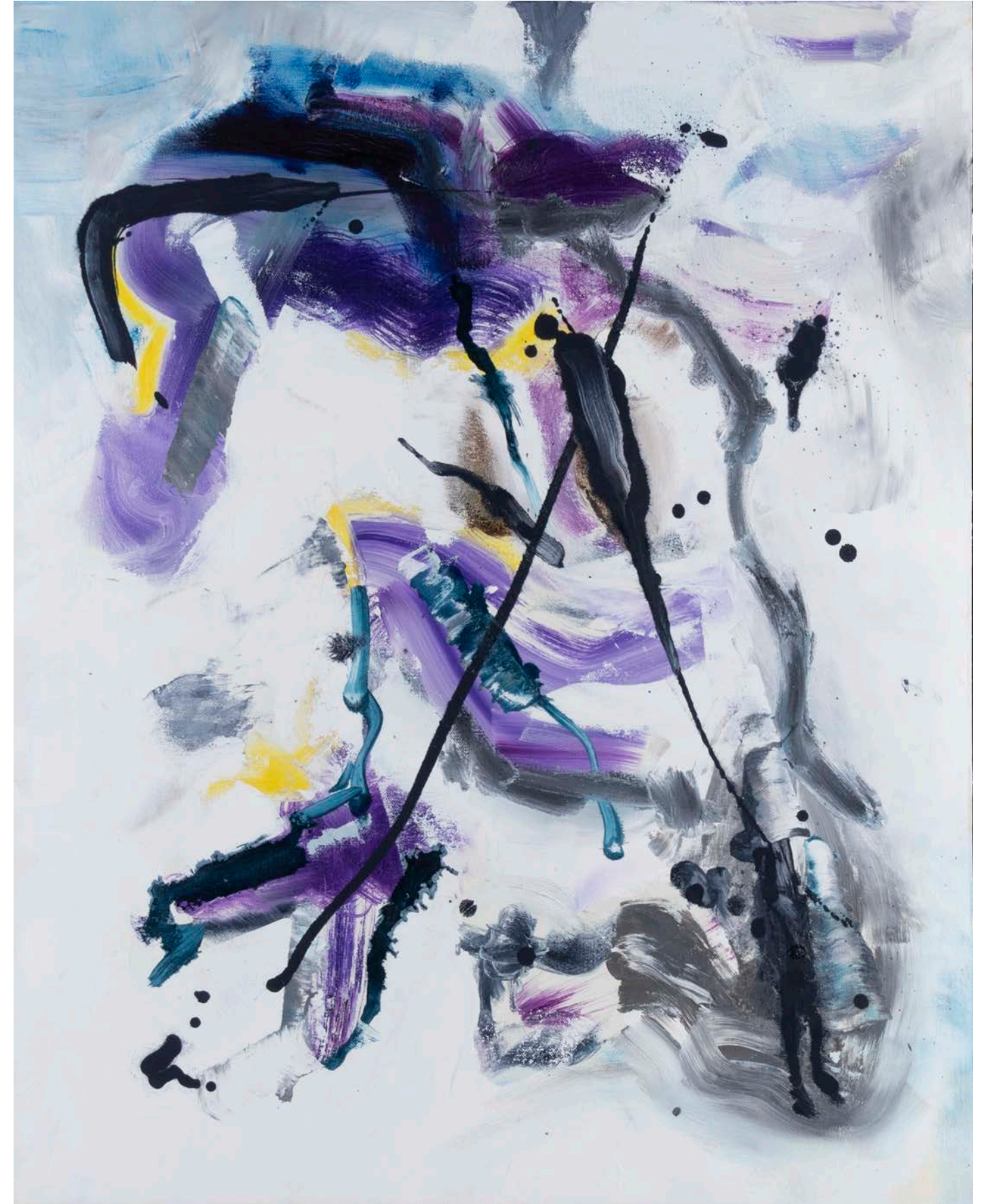
46 | *Kiss Ass*, 2019, oil and mixed media on canvas, 2019, 60" x 72"



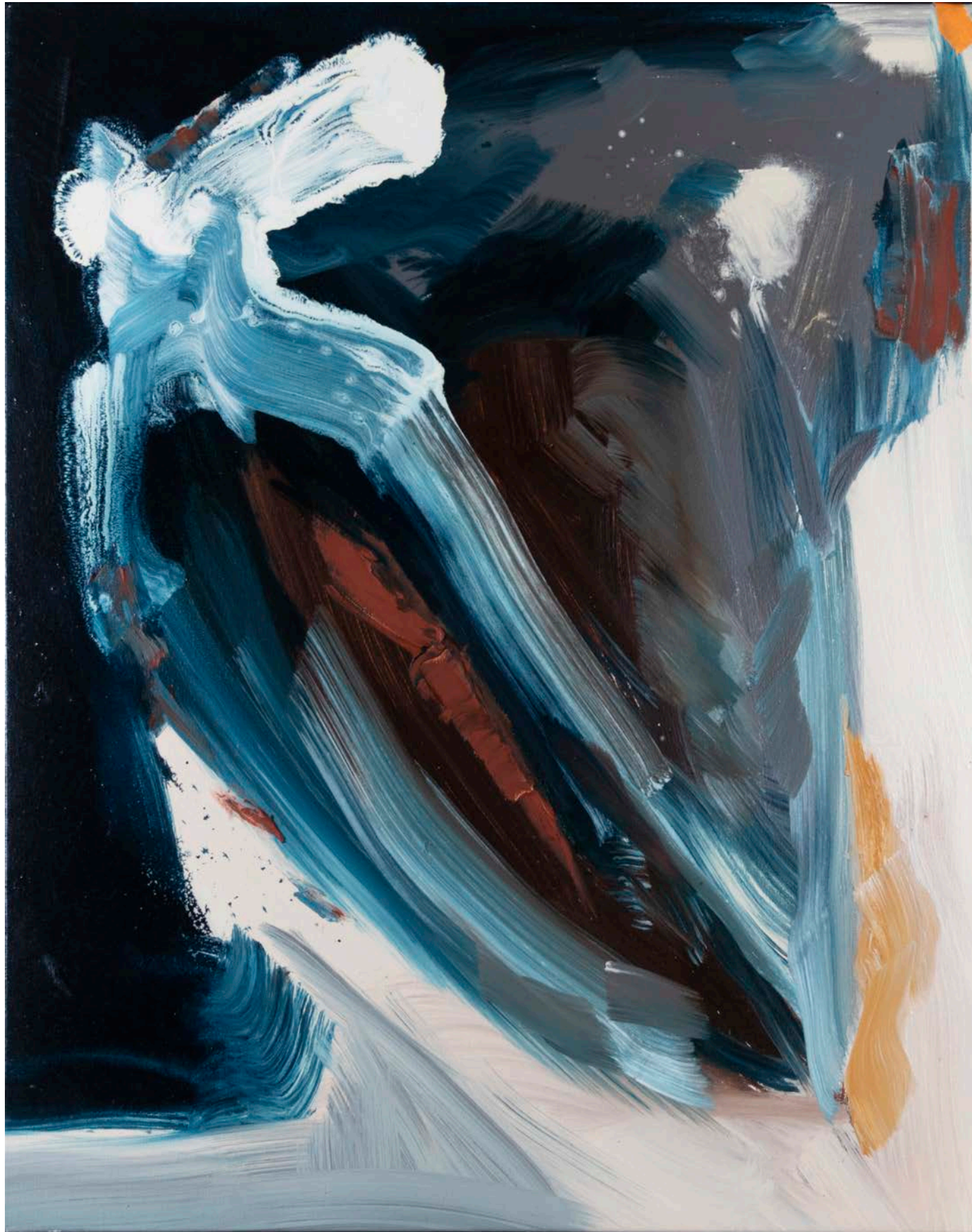
Magnificent Seven - Abstract Series No. 1, 2019, oil & mixed media on canvas, 30" x 24" | 47



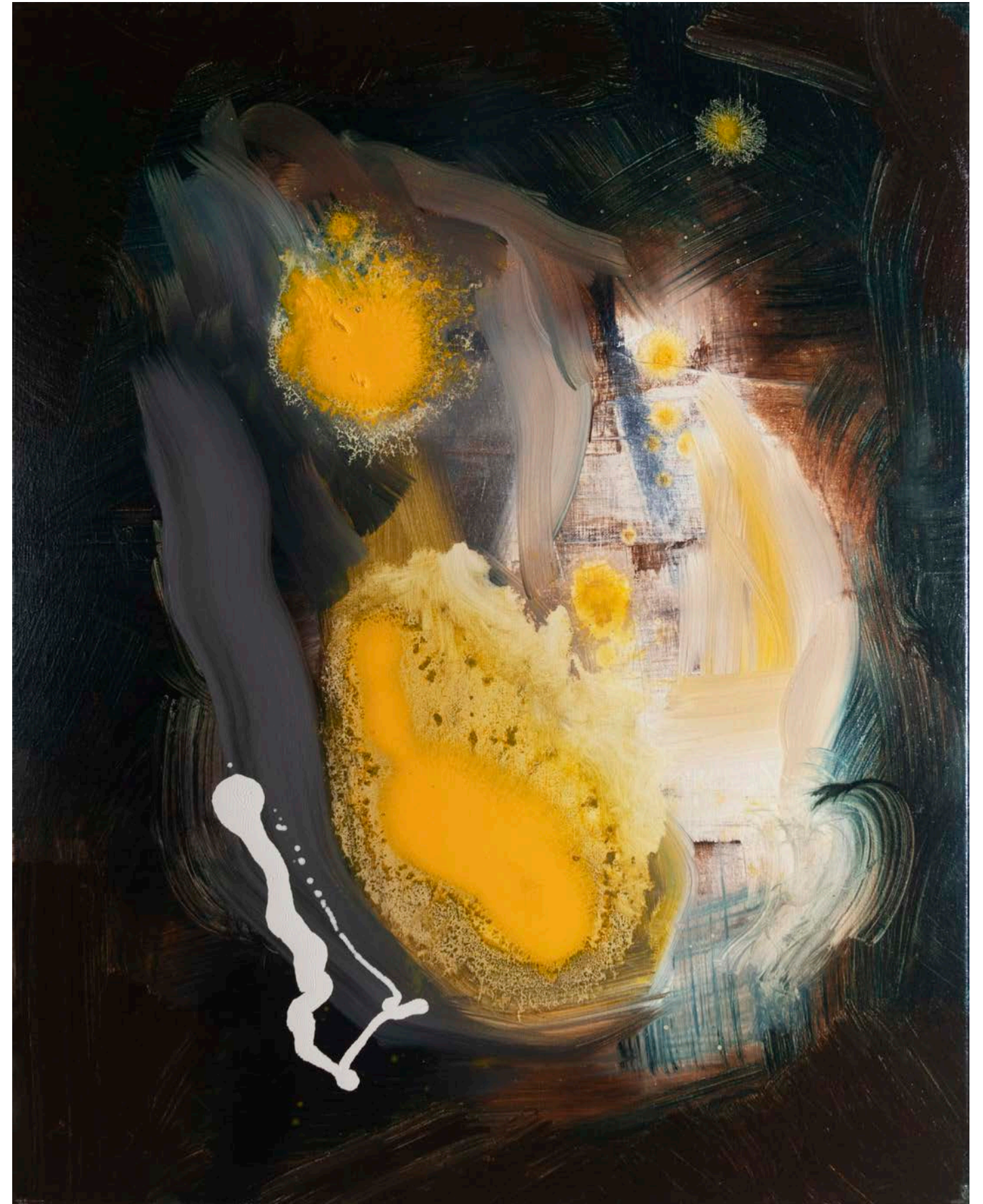
48 | *Magnificent Seven - Abstract Series No. II*, 2019, oil on canvas, 30" x 24"



Magnificent Seven - Abstract Series No. III, 2019, oil on canvas, 30" x 24" | 49



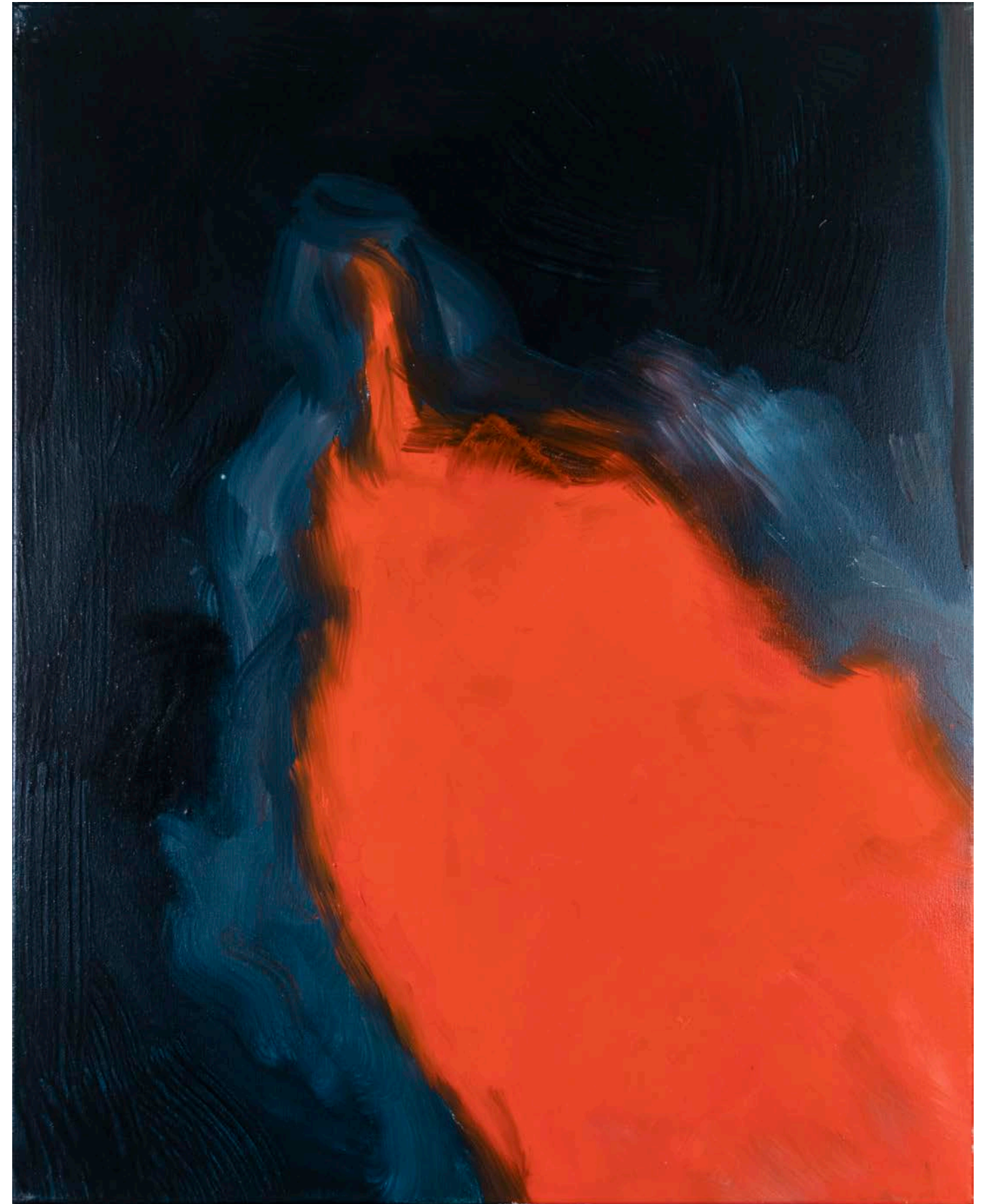
50 | *Magnificent Seven - Abstract Series No. IV*, 2019, oil on canvas, 30" x 24"



Magnificent Seven - Abstract Series No. V, 2019, oil & mixed media on canvas, 30" x 24" | 51



52 | *Magnificent Seven - Abstract Series No. VI*, 2019, oil & mixed media on canvas, 30" x 24"



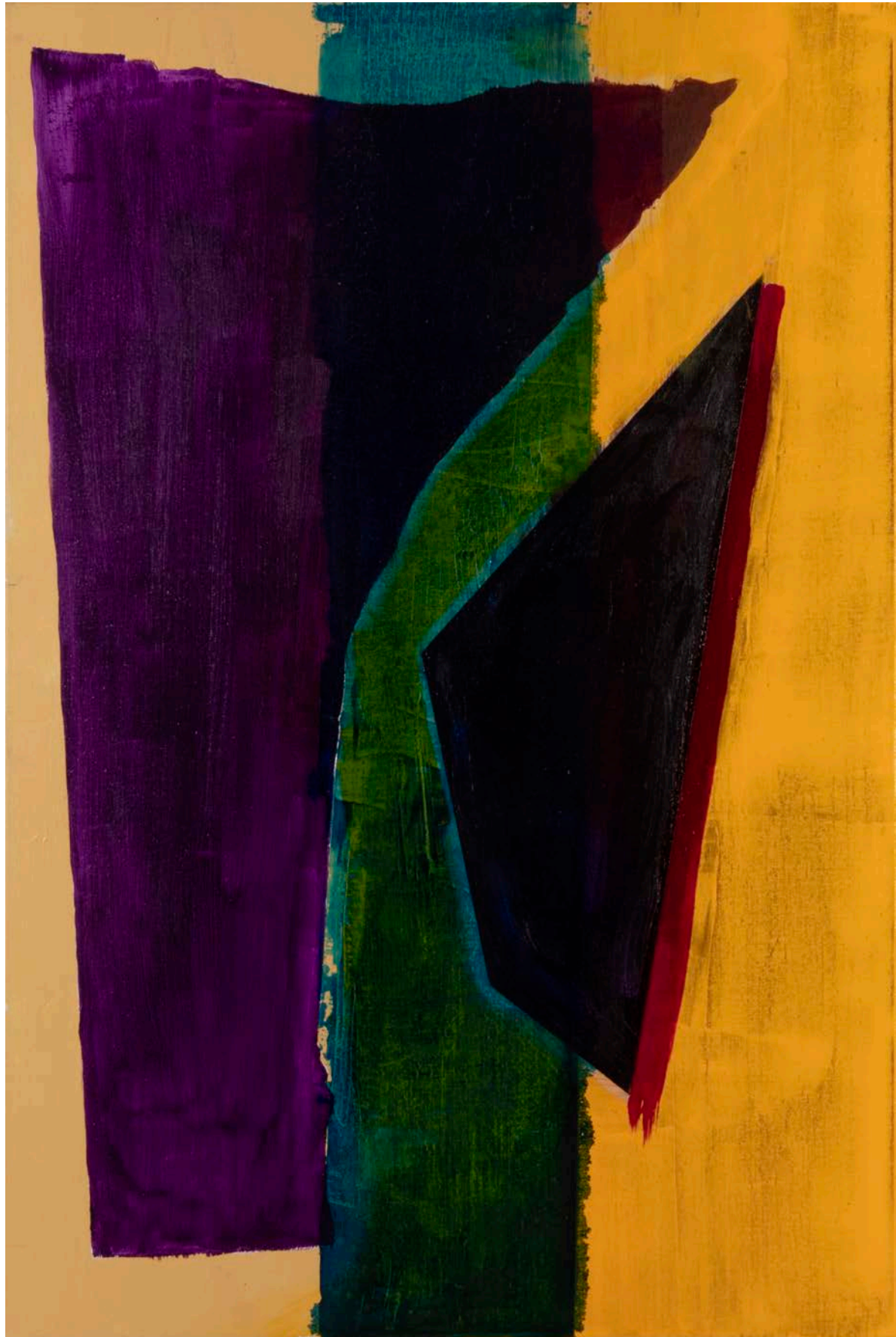
Magnificent Seven - Abstract Series No. VII, 2019, oil on canvas, 30" x 24" | 53



54 | *Permeable Preamble II*, 2019, oil paint & mixed media on canvas, 30" x 24"



Pilgrim's Harvest, 2019, oil on canvas, 30" x 24" | 55



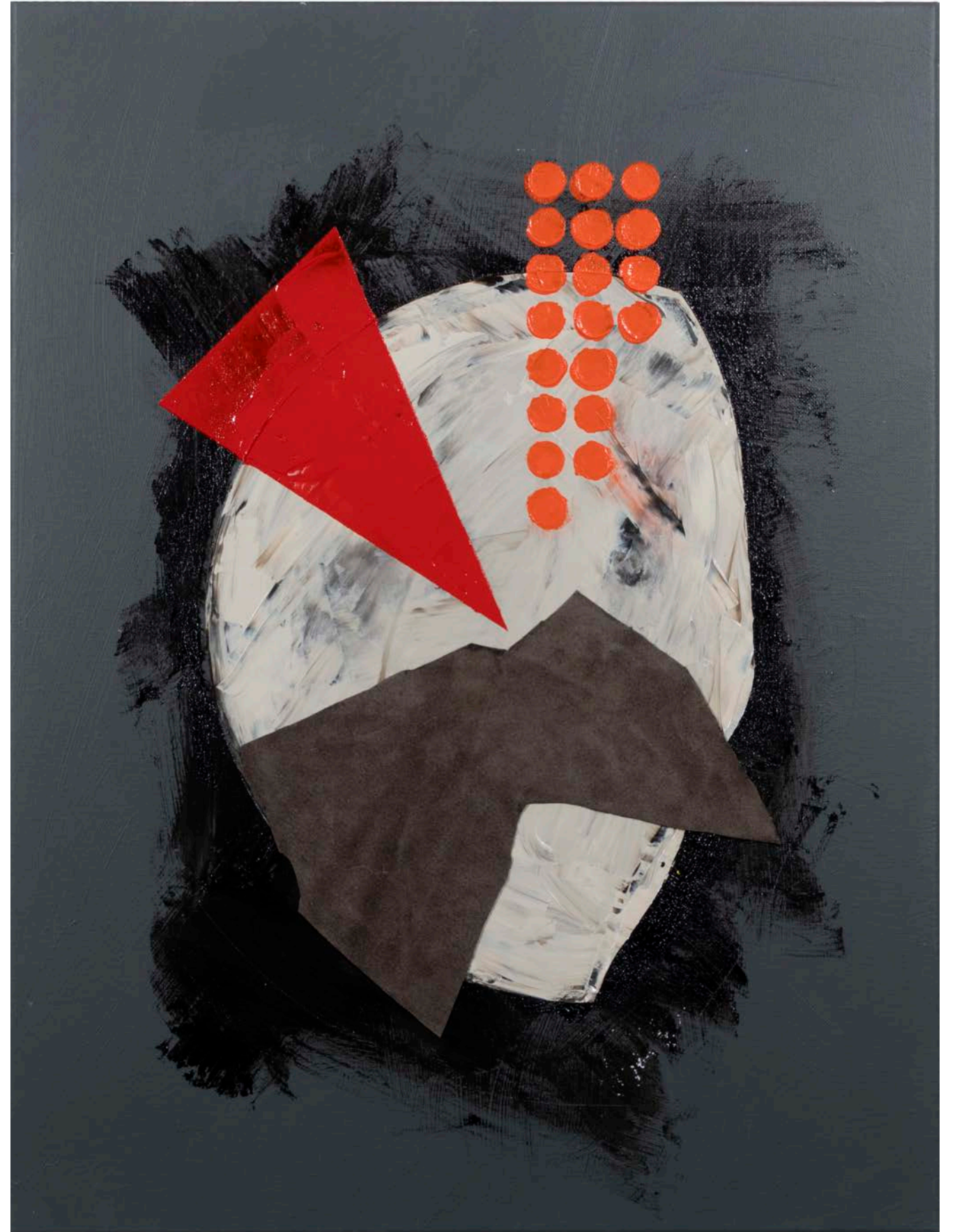
56 | *Reservoir Abstract Series No. 1*, 2019, acrylic and alcohol ink on canvas, 36" x 24"



Reservoir Abstract Series No. 2, 2019, acrylic and oil paint on canvas, 36" x 24" | 57



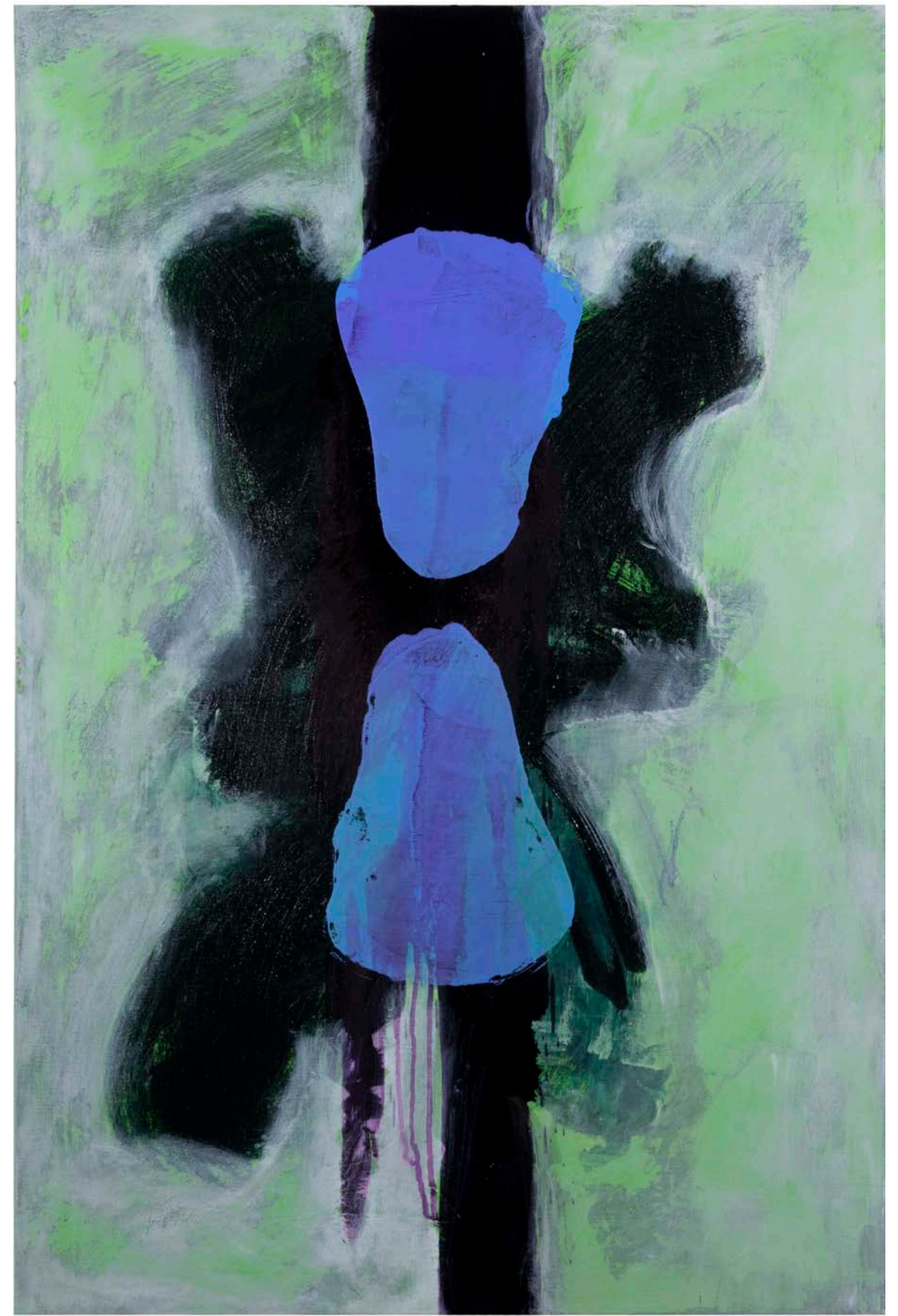
58 | *Reservoir Abstract Series No. 3*, 2019, acrylic on canvas, 30" x 24"



Reservoir Abstract Series No. 4, 2019, acrylic and mixed media on canvas, 24" x 18" | 59



60 | *Reservoir Abstract Series No. 5*, 2019, acrylic on canvas, 24" x 18"



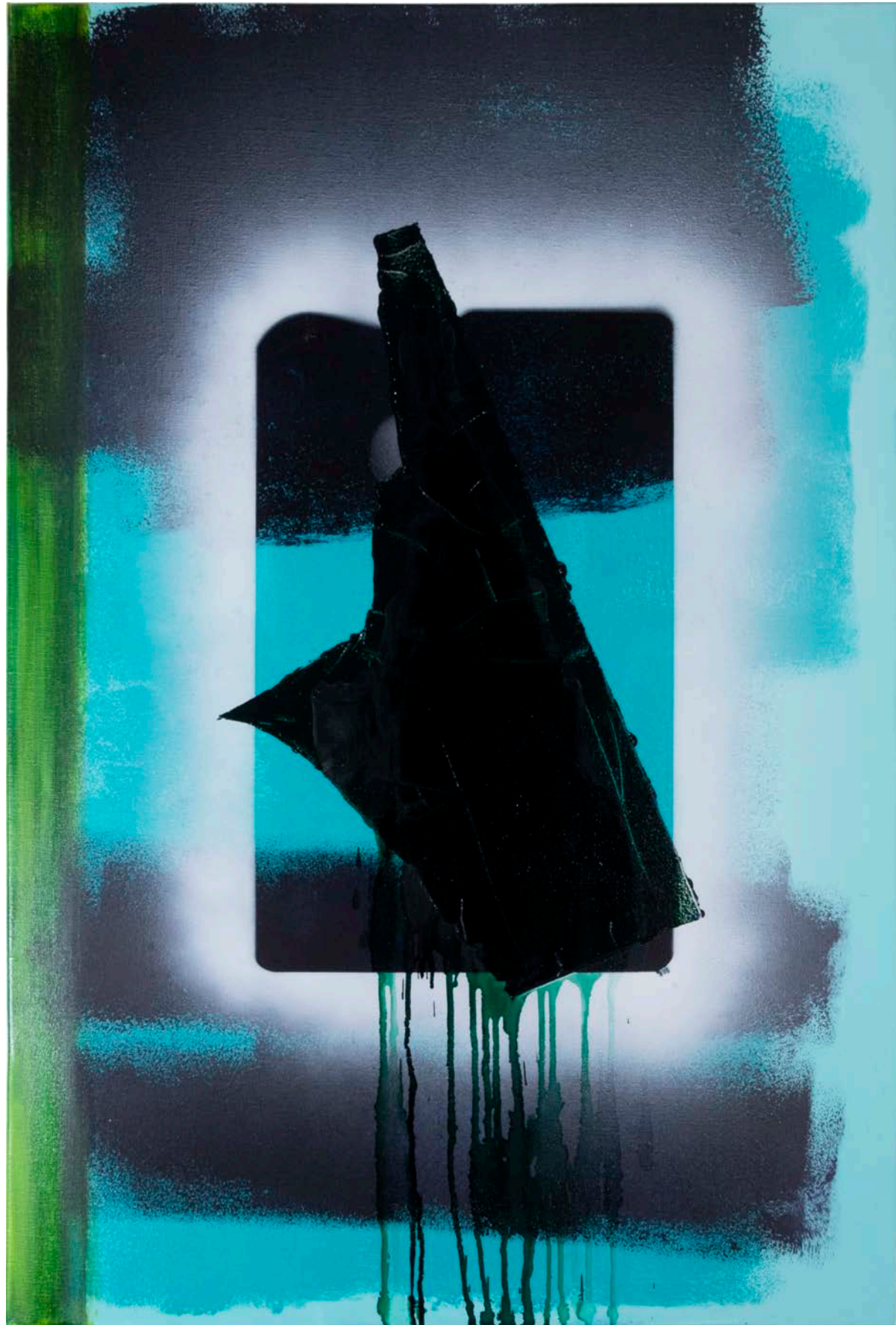
Reservoir Abstract Series No. 6, 2019, acrylic and alcohol ink on canvas, 36" x 24" | 61



62 | *Reservoir Abstract Series No. 7*, 2019, oil and acrylic on canvas, 24" x 18"



Reservoir Abstract Series No. 8, 2019, acrylic on canvas, 30" x 24" | 63



64 | *Reservoir Abstract Series No. 9*, 2019, acrylic, alcohol ink and spray paint on canvas, 36" x 24"



Reservoir Abstract Series No. 10, 2019, acrylic on canvas, 30" x 24" | 65



66 | *Reservoir Abstract Series No. 11*, 2019, acrylic on canvas, 30" x 24"



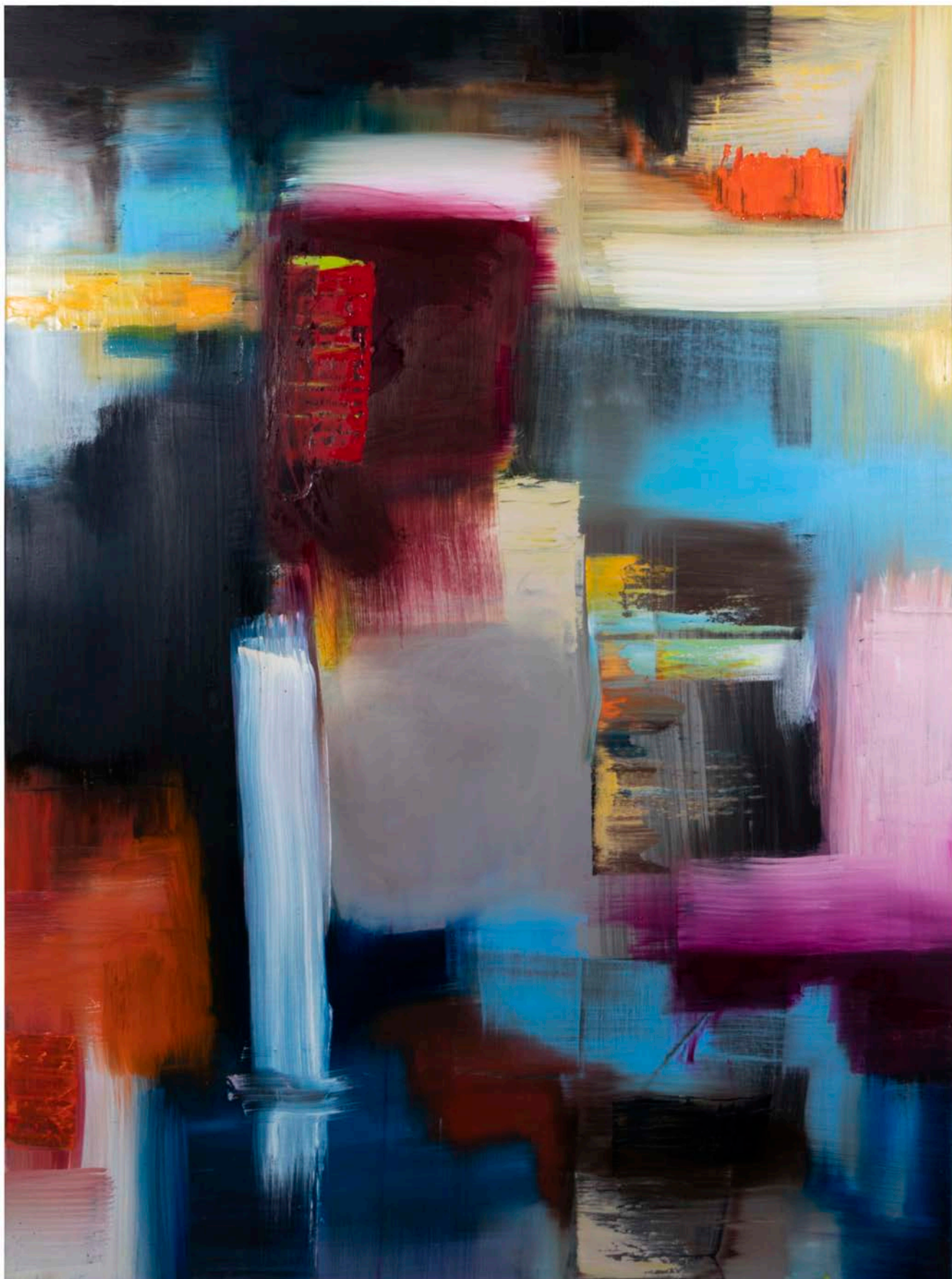
Smurf Braille, 2019, oil on canvas, 30" x 24" | 67



68 | *Subcutaneous*, 2019, oil paint & mixed media on wood panel, 30" x 40"



The Gender War, 2019, oil and acrylic on wood panel, 48" x 60" | 69



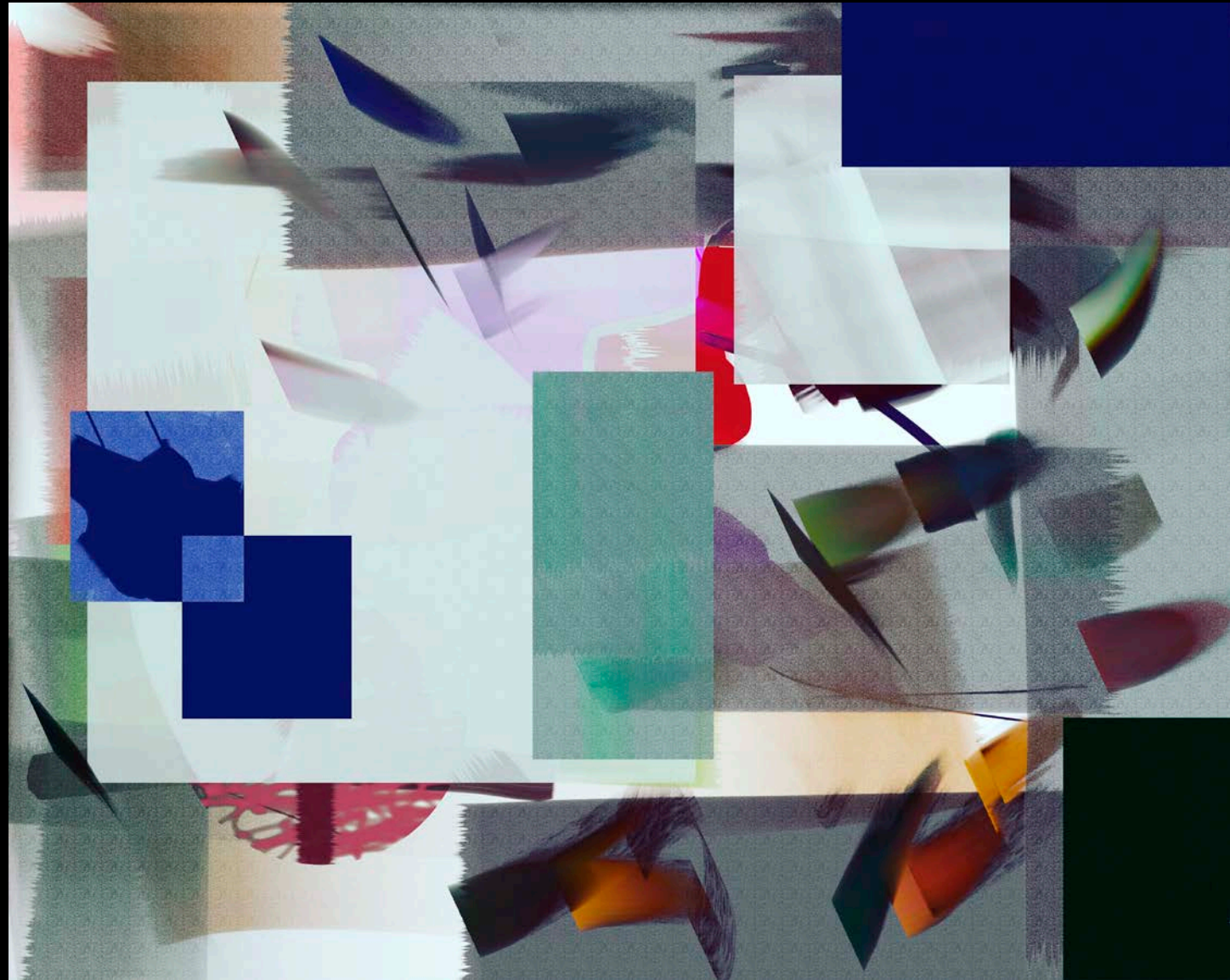
70 | *Toy Soldier*, 2019, oil on canvas, 48" x 36"



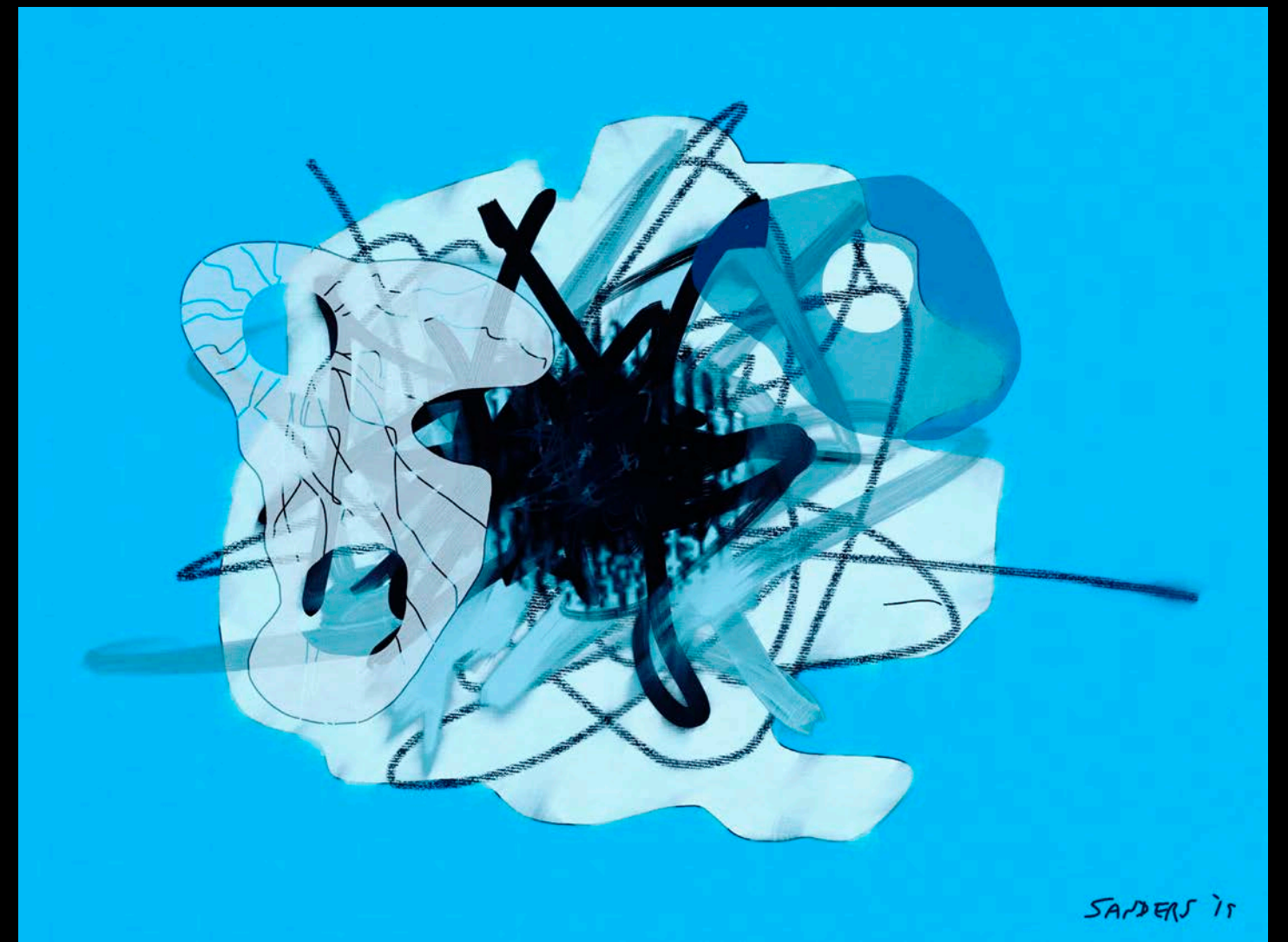
Yushen Zwickel Reborn, 2019, oil on canvas with mixed media, 48" x 36" | 71

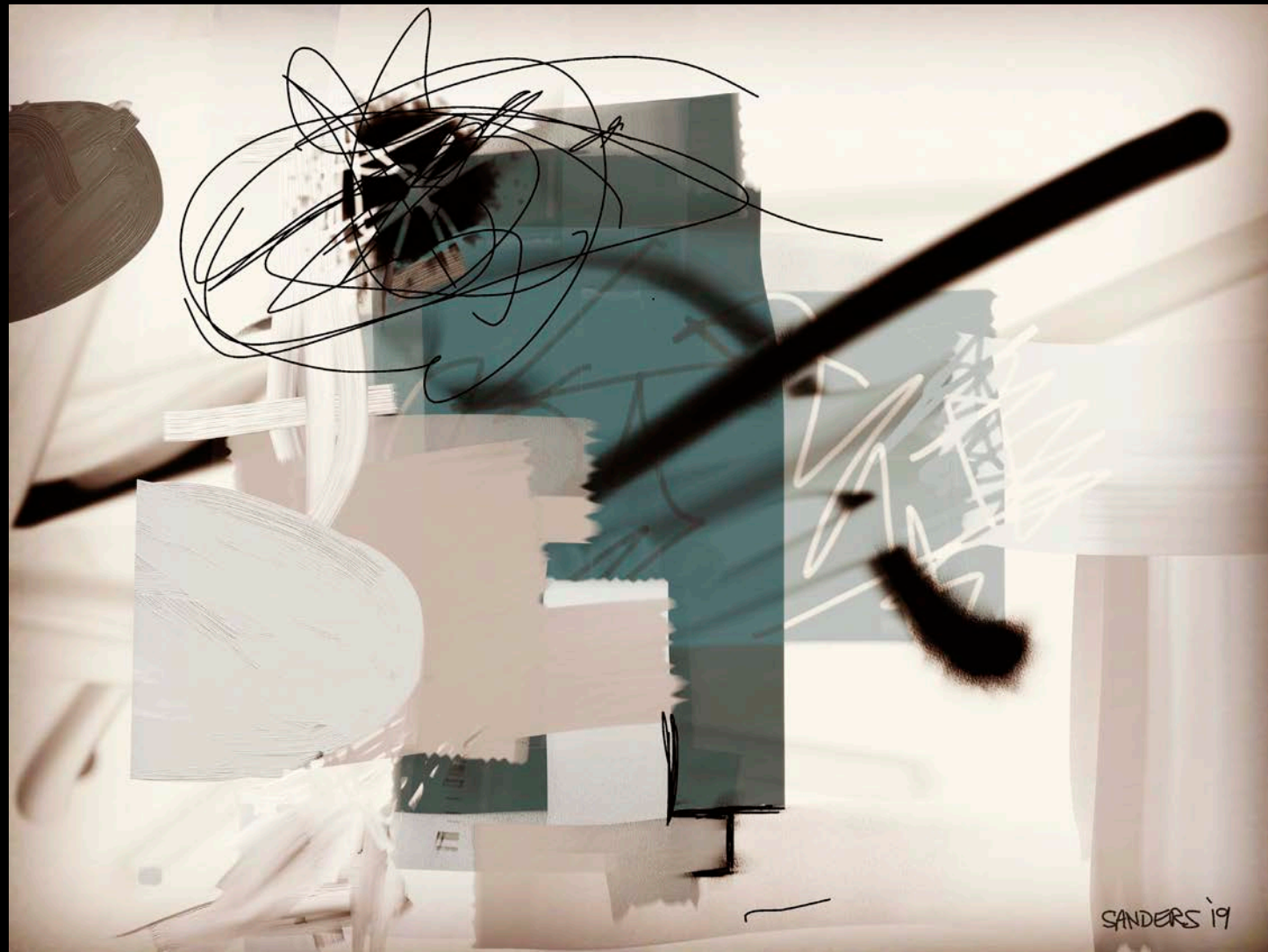
“What I love about working in digital media is the convenience: it can be done anywhere- airport terminals, while watching TV at night, etc. Though it is not as satisfying tactilely- one misses the surface richness and the physicality of paint, it is my favorite way to work out concepts for later paintings. Sometimes I find the pieces have a special quality that demands that they exist exclusively as a digital piece and do not need to be translated into a painting.”



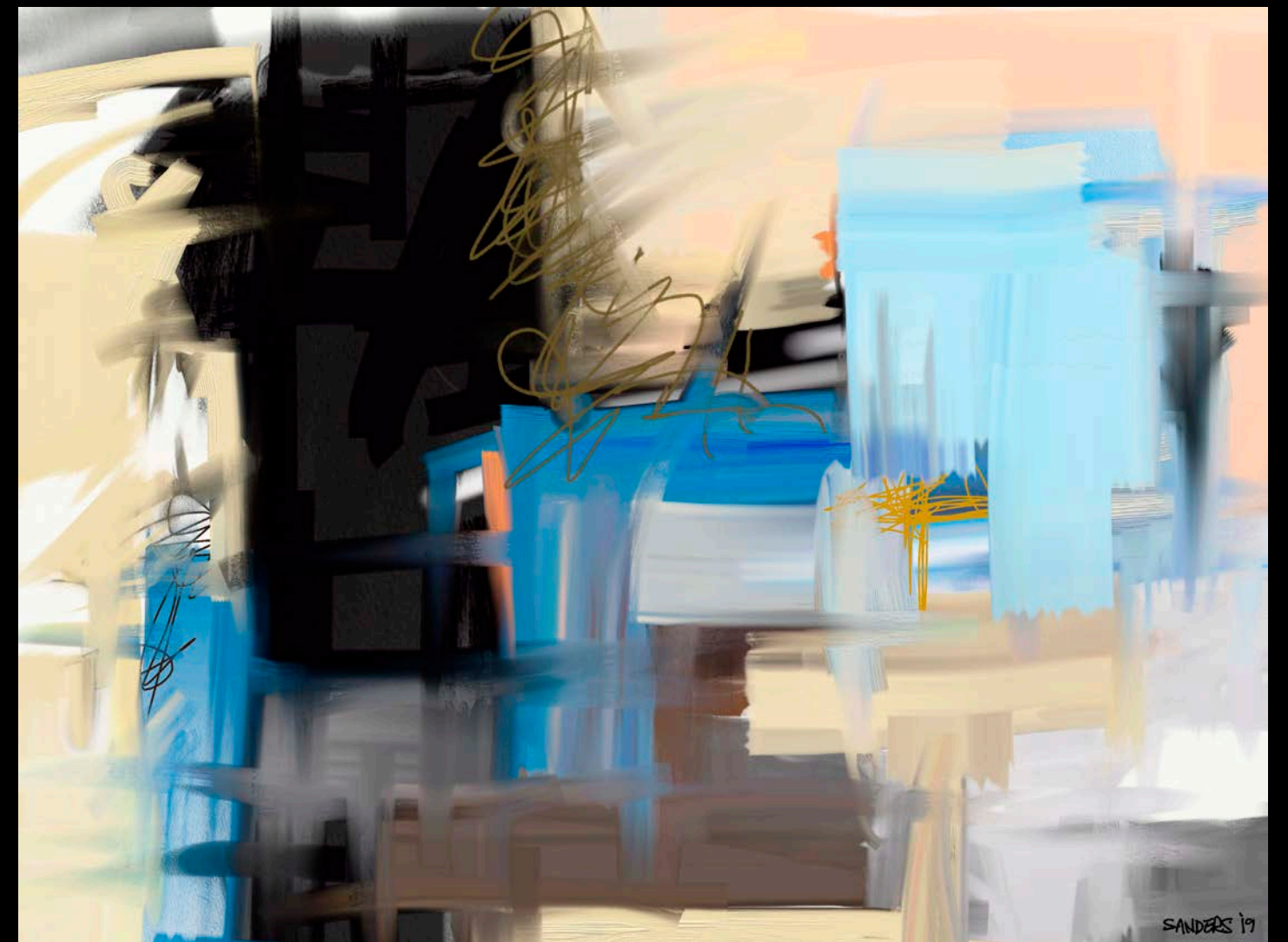
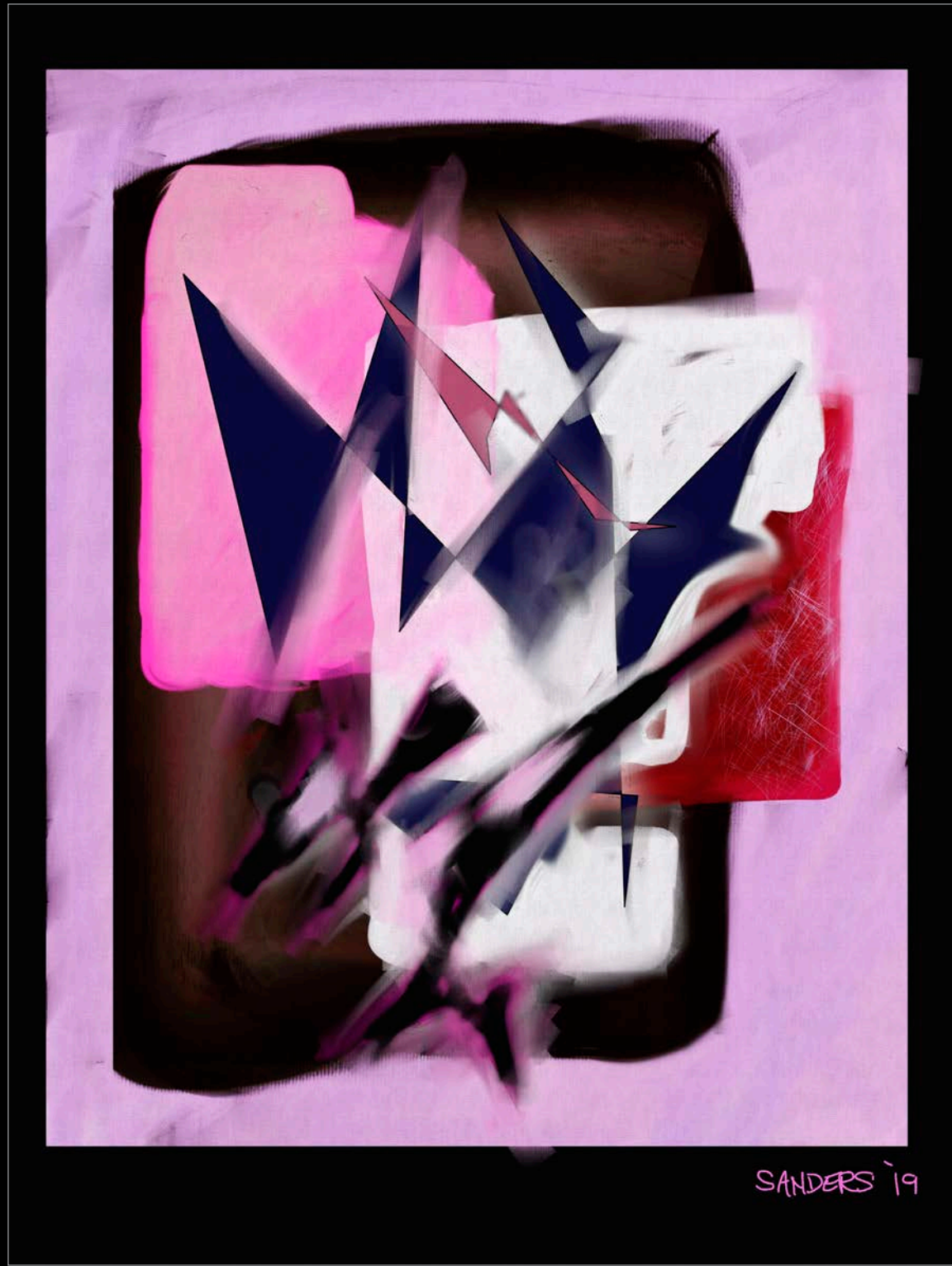


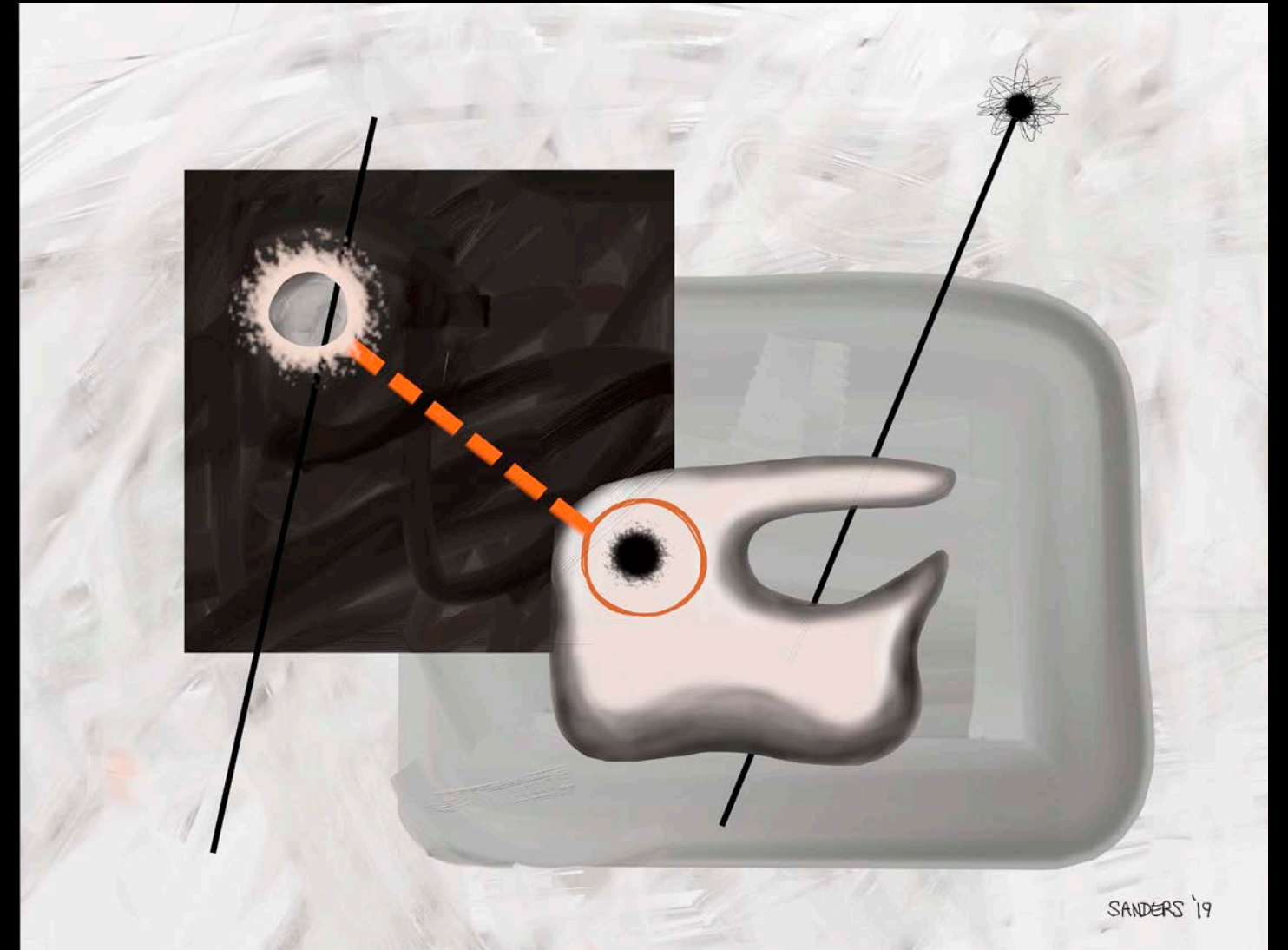


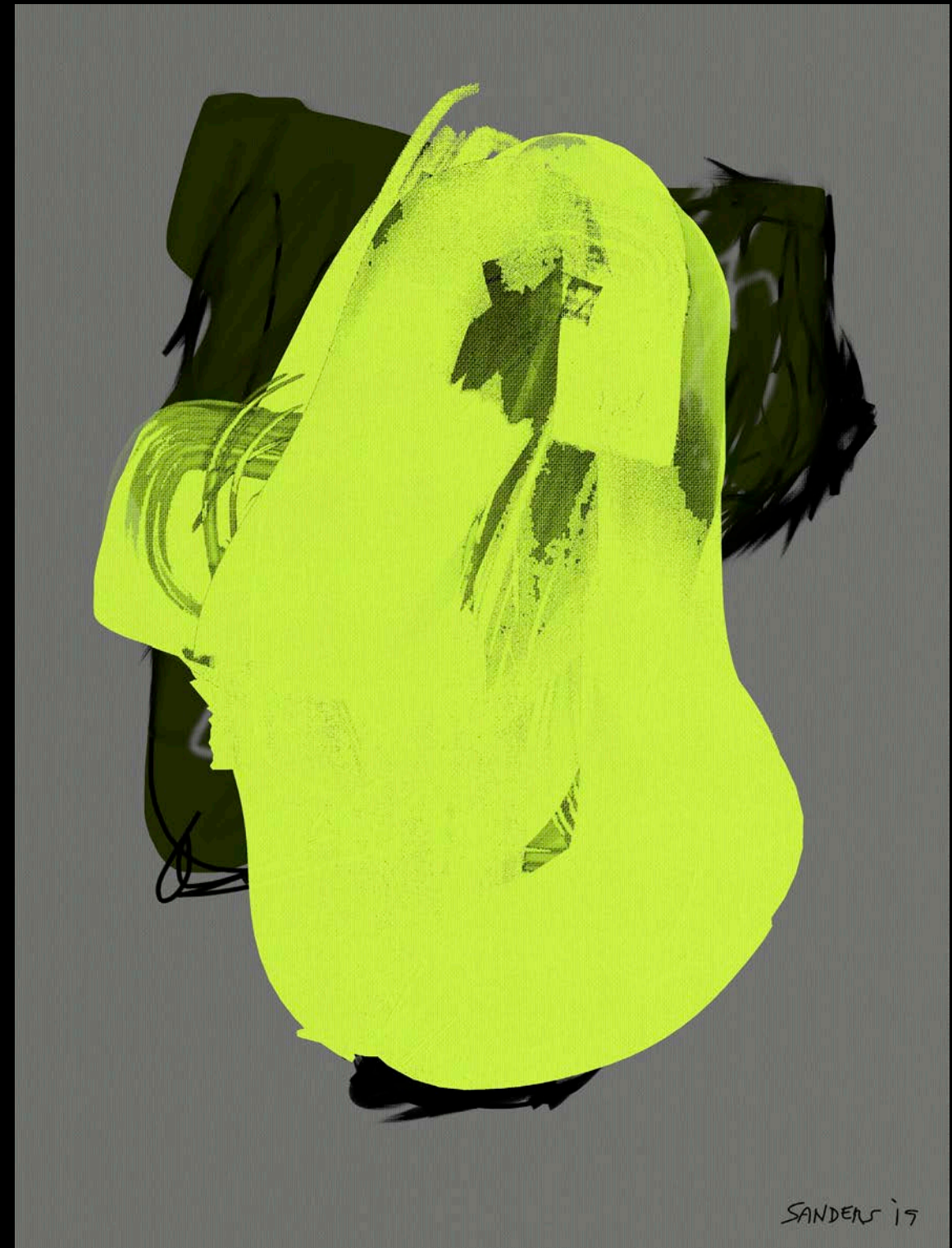


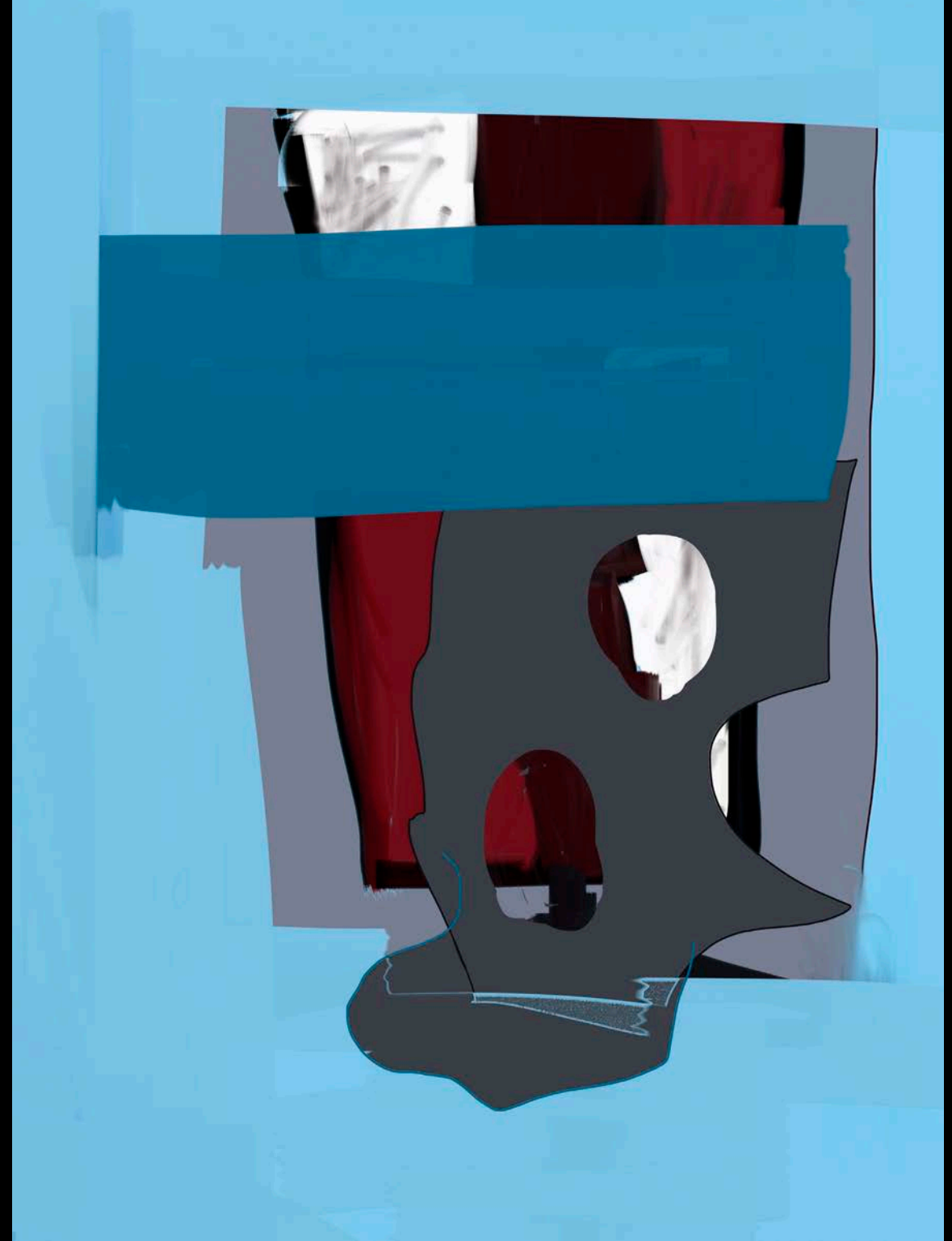
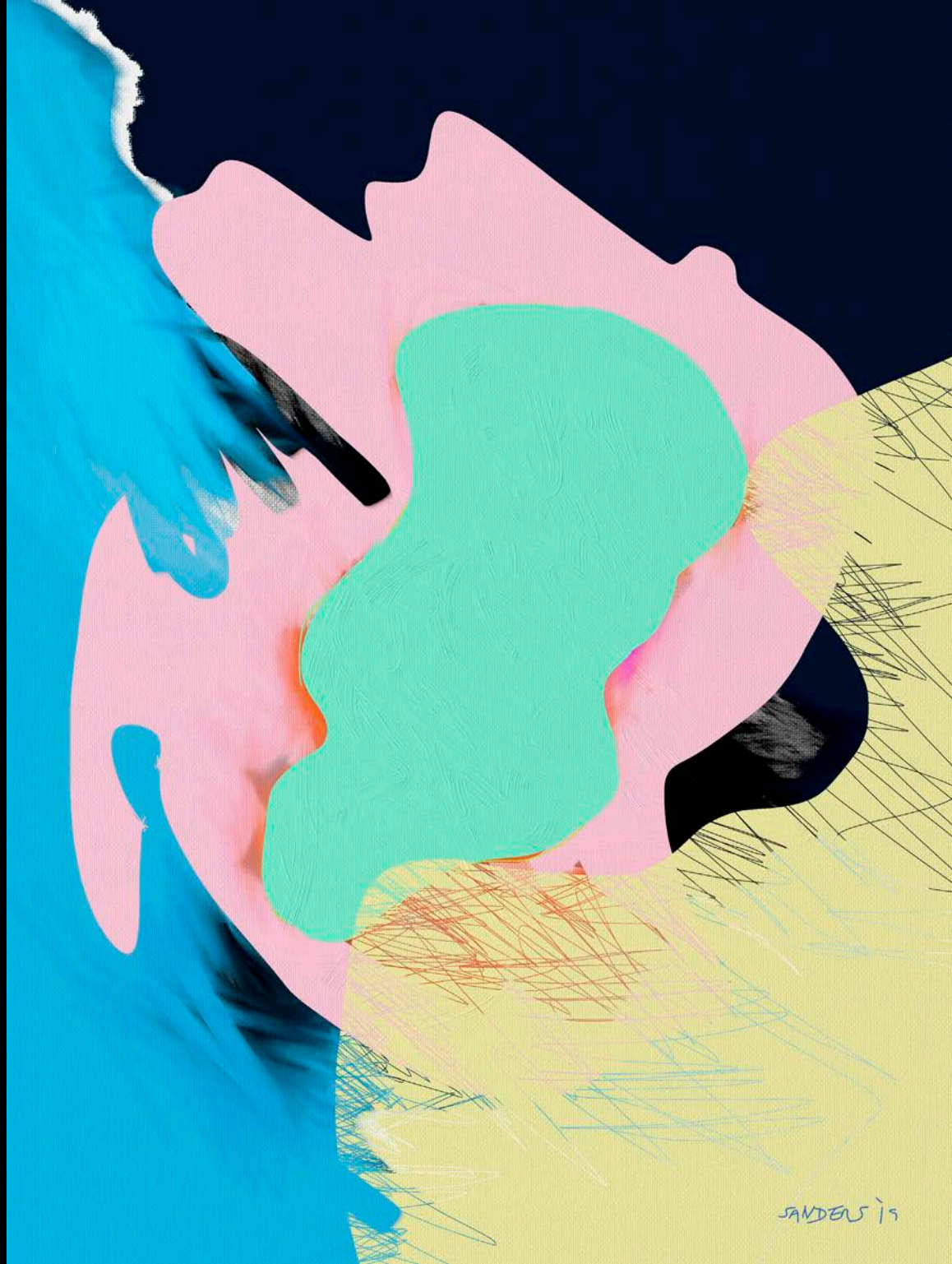


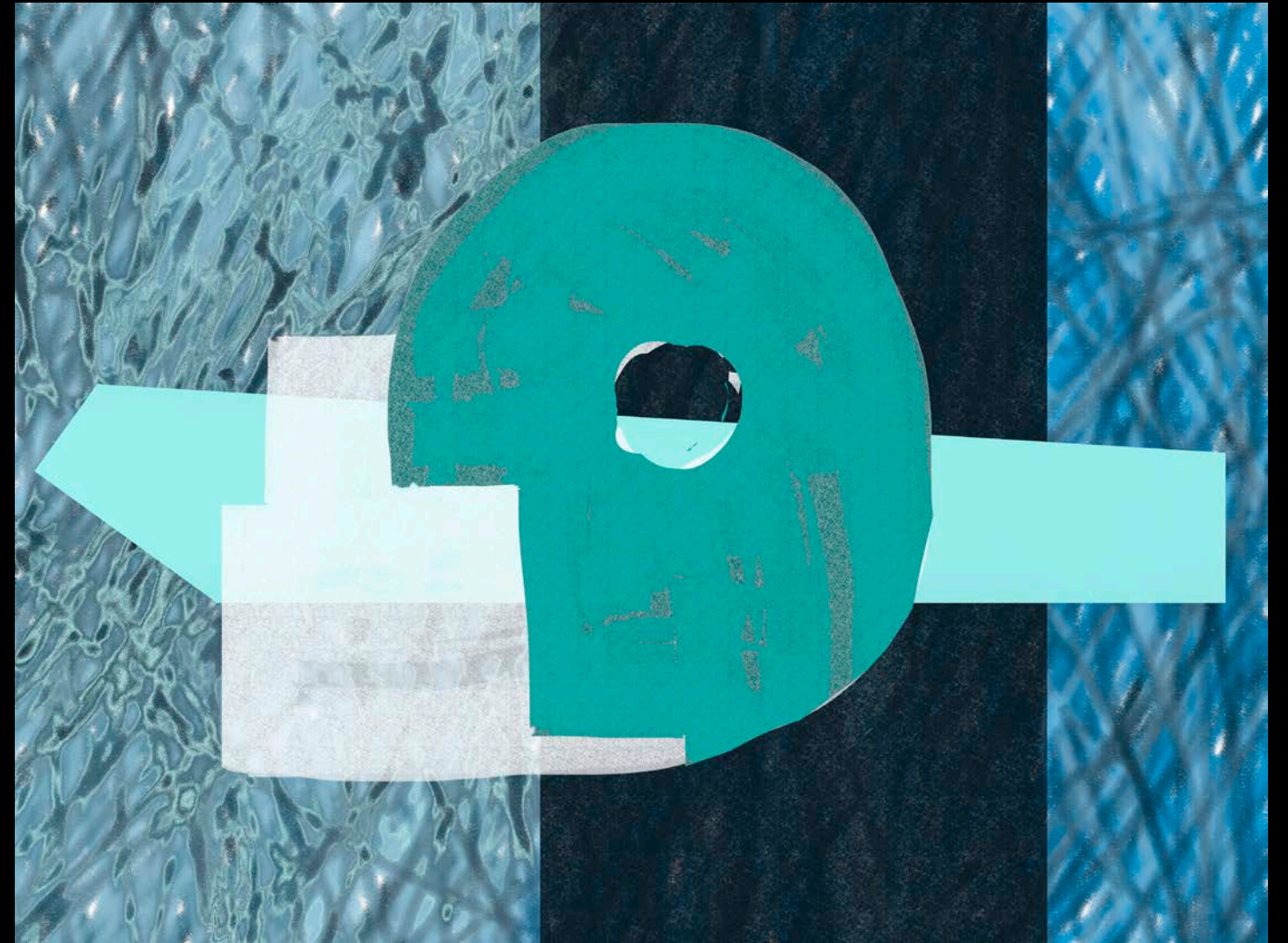
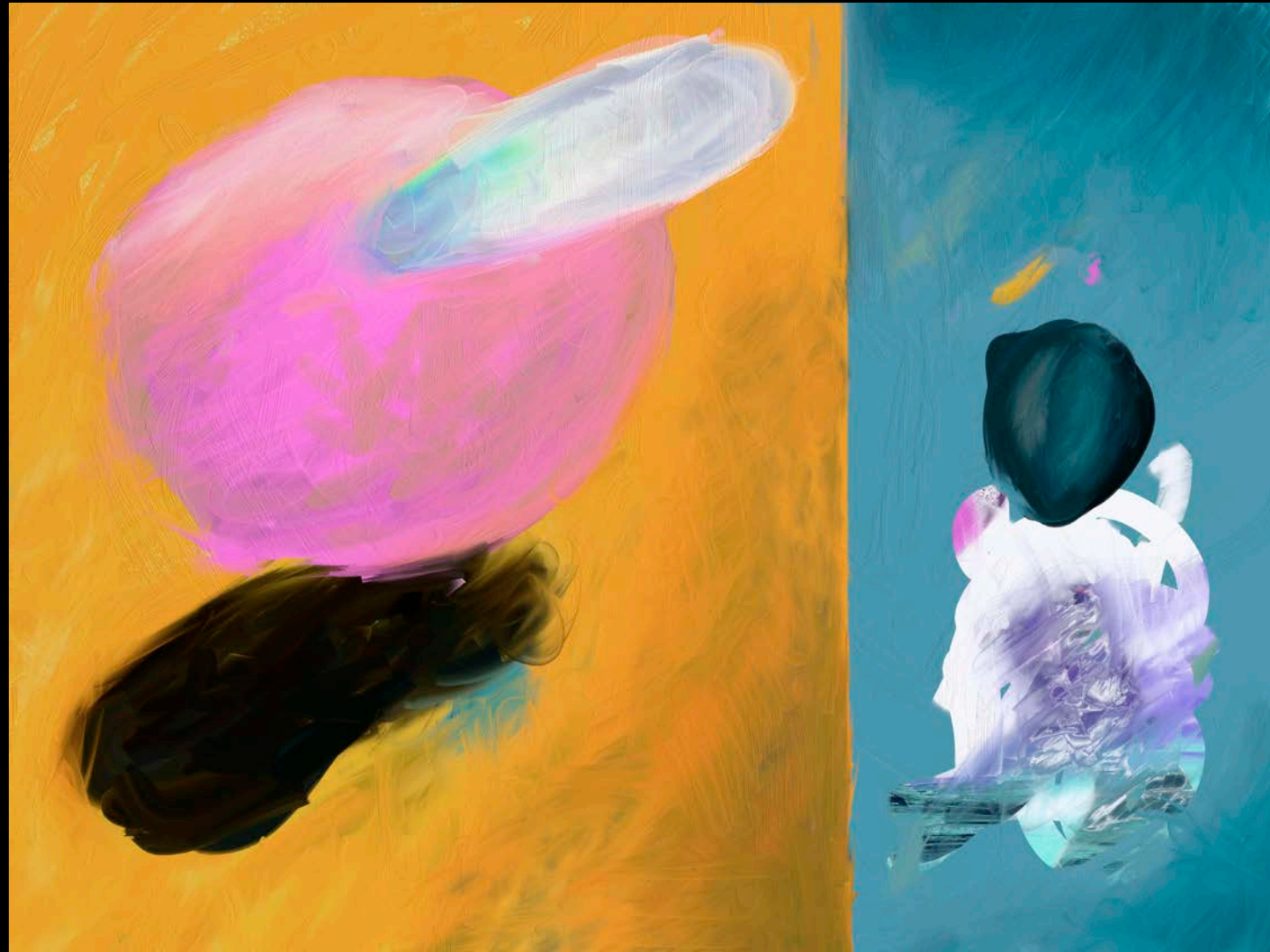


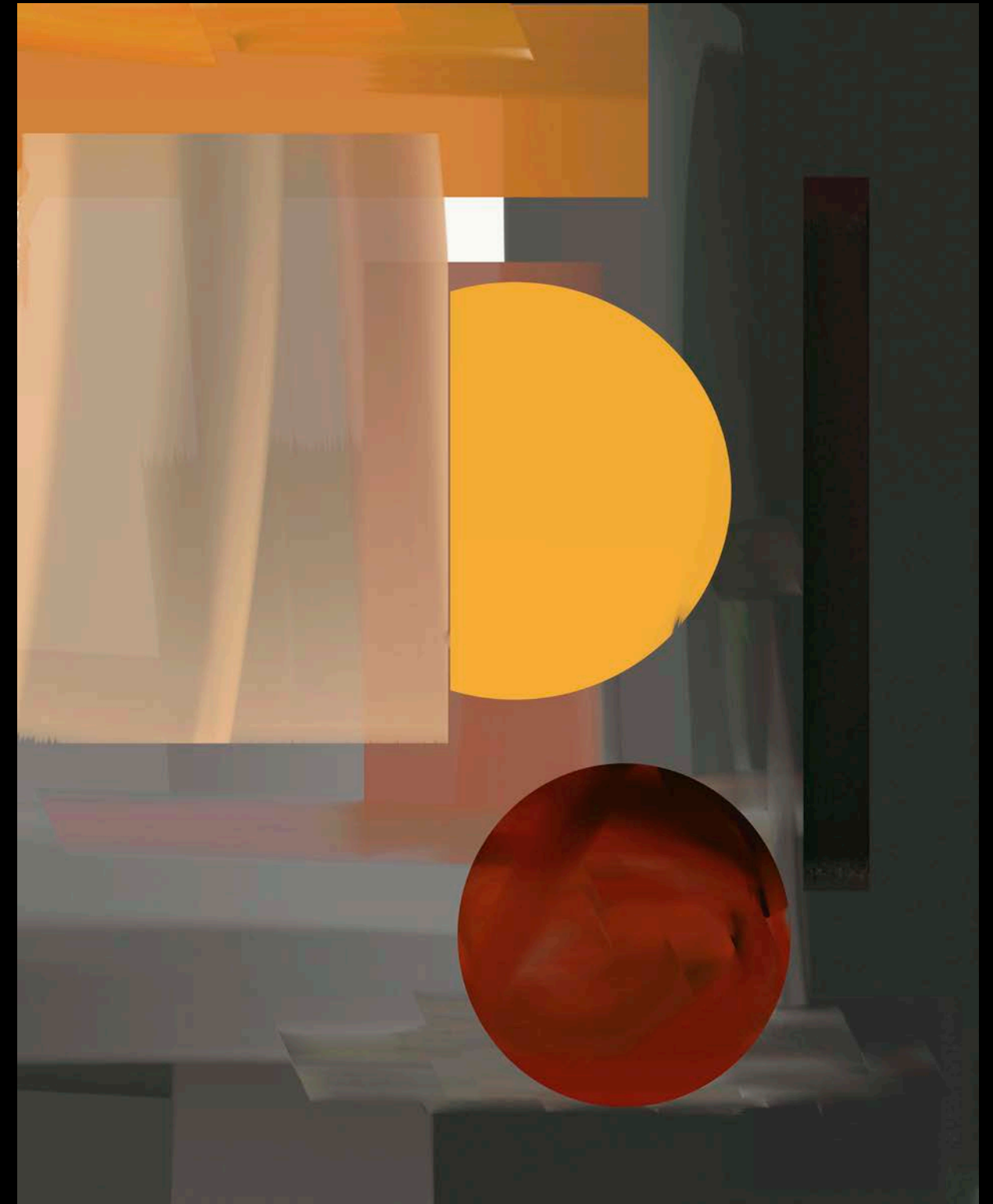












ERIC SANDERS: ABSTRACTIONS

Eastern Projects Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

September, 2019

Works © Eric Sanders

Essay © Shana Nys Dambrot

Essay © Gary Brewer

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Robert Gallagher – my longtime friend who inspired me to fuse together my artistic journey with my philanthropic efforts – a small contribution that had very large ramifications.

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