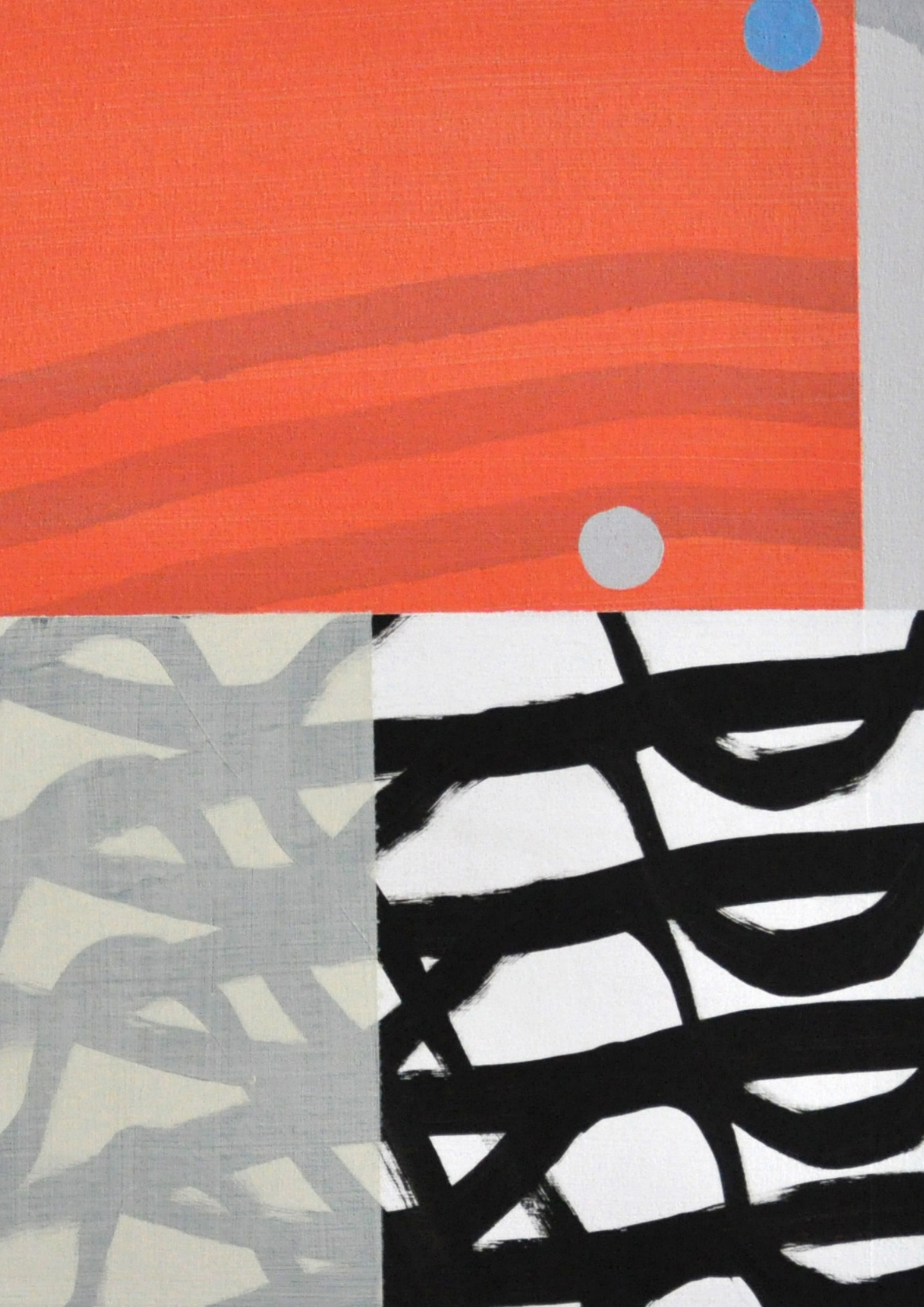


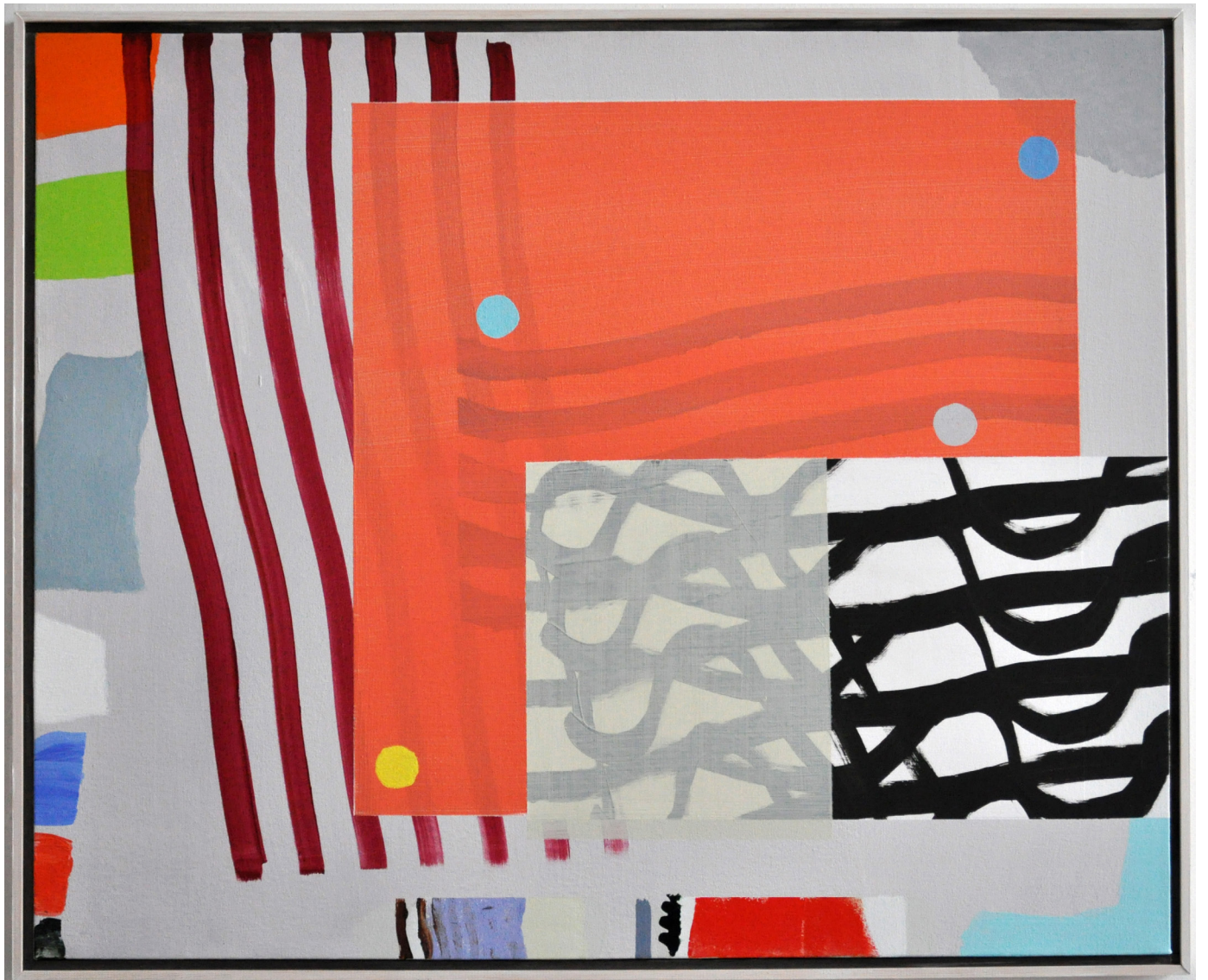
# Jeff Dellow

VISUAL STREAM





**Jeff Dellow**



August Prospect,  
2012, Acrylic on canvas,  
79cm x 96cm

# Visual Stream

I first met Jeff Dellow in late 2015, and since that time, I have become aware of a growing momentum within his paintings that seems to be rapidly developing. This exhibition presents some of his more recent paintings that have been created between 2013 and 2017.

A confidence and wealth of intelligence is engrained in the way that Dellow paints, for anyone viewing these paintings it becomes clear that there is no real substitute for the accumulation of the lived experience. Through his refined sense of touch of surface and new personal discoveries in paint, Dellow plays with and expands the viewers perceptual and sensual experience. Dellow cloaks his observations from the world, inviting the viewer to enter an open contemplative visual space. Then in the moment of looking, the shivers of recognition reverberate deep within the consciousness of the viewer.

Dellow, through making, is growing and developing new ways to expand the physical range of touch and colour in his paintings. Whilst being analytical and critical about his creations, he retains the free pursuit of more intuitive and instinctive approaches to the creation of touch, form and space. Paintings like August Prospect offer a territory of transitional spaces taking the viewer through elements of contrast that support and contact each other. These spaces contain bustling encounters of colour, line and shape that draw you in and out of their surface; stacked

painted lines, that jostle and disappear underneath hard-edges, and areas that seem to fall away into other painted voids. Abstract shapes are delicately cultivated, and sit alongside spaces of fresh vivid colour and sharp black and white. These parallel black areas are then softened by a layer of oyster white, which calms the black spatially. The paintings contain atmospheric transparency; an optical balance of fact and implied fiction that seems to allow glimpses beyond the surface.

Dellow has been working in South London since the late seventies when he moved to the Greenwich Artist Studio Association on King George Street. Since the closure of this studio in the mid-nineties, he has been working in Deptford. Dellow organises his studio in a way that offers him a challenging and imaginative environment within which to stimulate the discovery of new possibilities and to guard against the possibility of falling into a simple formula. In his studio you are confronted by a wall that is covered in a grid system made up of small paintings on panel. He paints and places these panels on this studio wall in close proximity to each other. Placed together they act as a catalyst for the cross-fertilisation of ideas between paintings, individually the panels allow great contrasts of scale and touch.

This way of working has achieved a level of intensity that has informed the way



Woodlands Gallery, Greenwich 1989

Dellow thinks about painting. He sees a parallel between this playful method and Gilles Deleuze's concept of the actual and virtual. He suggests that the 'actual' contains alternative possibilities of how the painting could be developed or improved, these are 'virtual' ideas and give way to a 're-actualizing' of a developed state. Dellow engages in finding a way to review composition progress, and finds that "this is often a way of refreshing the intention of the work." He feels that there are similarities in this imaginative process with Karl Popper's ideas of the growth of knowledge and the process of 'becoming' in the thinking of Deleuze<sup>1</sup>.

There is both form and content here; his observations and experiences are knitted deeply into the fabric of the paintings he makes. Just as Deleuze and Guattari used the rhizome as a metaphor for an alternative way of thinking about the growth of knowledge, so Dellow views the cultivation of knowledge as a less pre-determined or one directional path. Instead he sees this growth as a more dynamic, procedural and creative act. In 1968, as a student at St Martins School of Art, Dellow often attended events organised by the Arts Lab on Drury Lane where he encountered experimental performance, poetry, visuals, film and video art that seemed rewarding in terms of developing his own ideas of what painting could be. It was clear to him that there could be an organic

crossover between these various types of expression.

This bleed of the world into the work can be seen in Dellow's ongoing fascination with the film *Stalker* (1979) by Andrei Tarkovsky. In the film, there is a scene where the camera pans across the ground slowly, showing objects scattered under water. This acts as a pointer to their histories; a display of moments represented rather like a visual stream of meaning.

In the film, the stalker is a guide for a writer and a professor as they journey towards a special place through a strange uninhabited and dangerous land called the Zone. The stalker describes the Zone as being a place where "our moods, our thoughts, our emotions, our feelings can bring about change", and he also adds that "old traps vanish, new ones take their place; the old safe ones become impassable, and route can be either plain and easy, or impossibly confusing... everything that happens here depends on us, not on the Zone"<sup>2</sup>.

The seeming capacity of the Zone to respond to our feelings, is similar to the act of engaging with these paintings. Dellow's paintings have a kind of power about them, a layered experience that rewards the viewer through their revisiting. These are paintings that seem to be re-created each and every time that



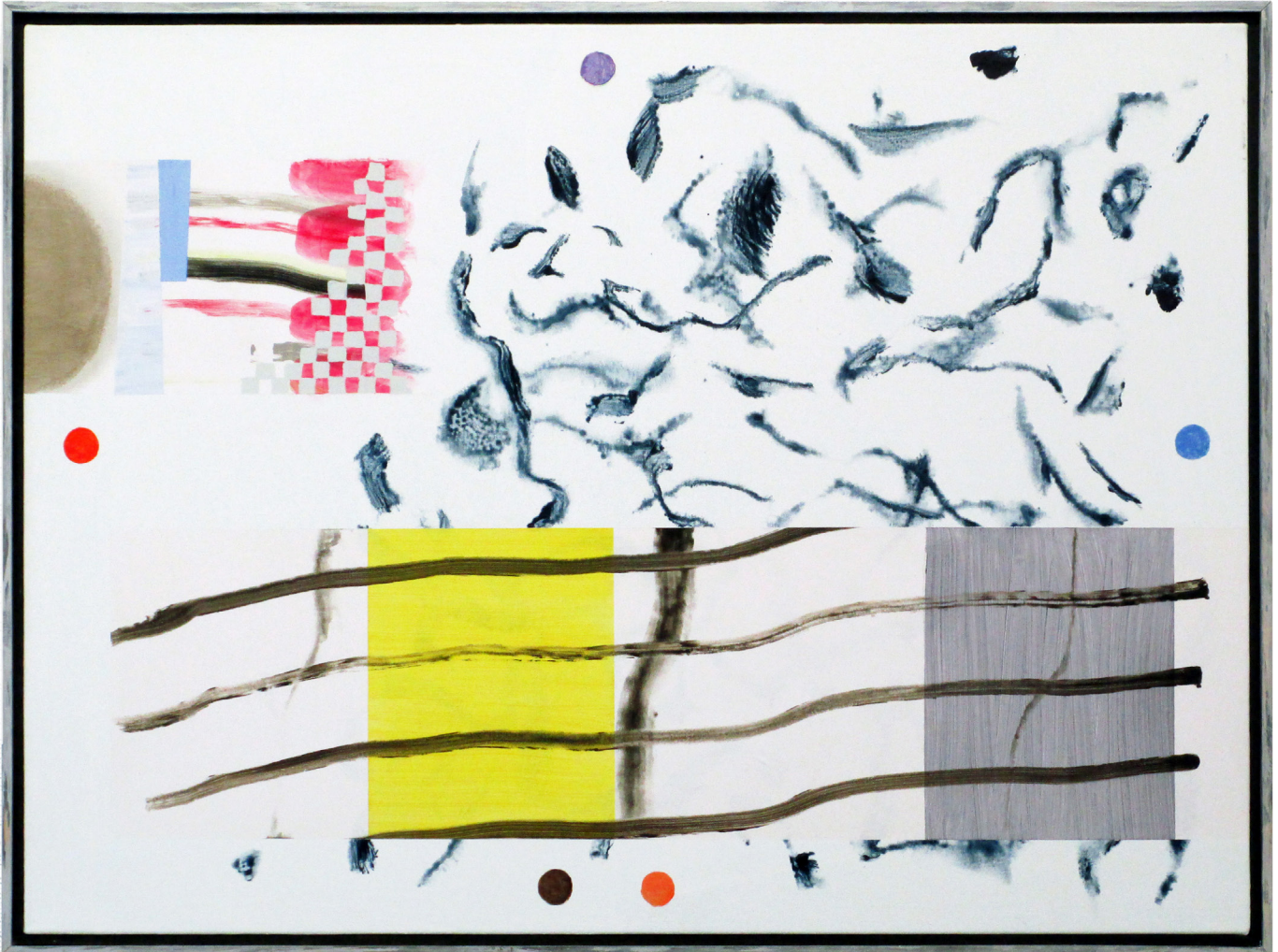
Beyond the Surface, APT Gallery 2004

they are seen. The abundance of visual devices highlights the incalculable possibilities that are present within painting; through the building up and layering of these elements the viewer is offered an opportunity to partake in a kind of visual detour. Instead of being strongly urged towards an amplified focal point, the viewer embarks into a rich visual space that offers open ended dialogue.

Matthew Macaulay

### References

1. Karl Popper 1972 Objective Knowledge Poppers evolutionary formula PS1 problem situation - TT tentative theories - EE1 error elimination - PS2 problem 2. linked to Giles Deleuze. Routledge Critical Thinkers, Claire Colebrook. p.4 diversity of becoming.
2. Tsymbal, E (2008) Sculpting the Stalker: Towards a New Language of Cinema, p. 350.



Typhoon  
2017, Acrylic on canvas  
75x100 cm

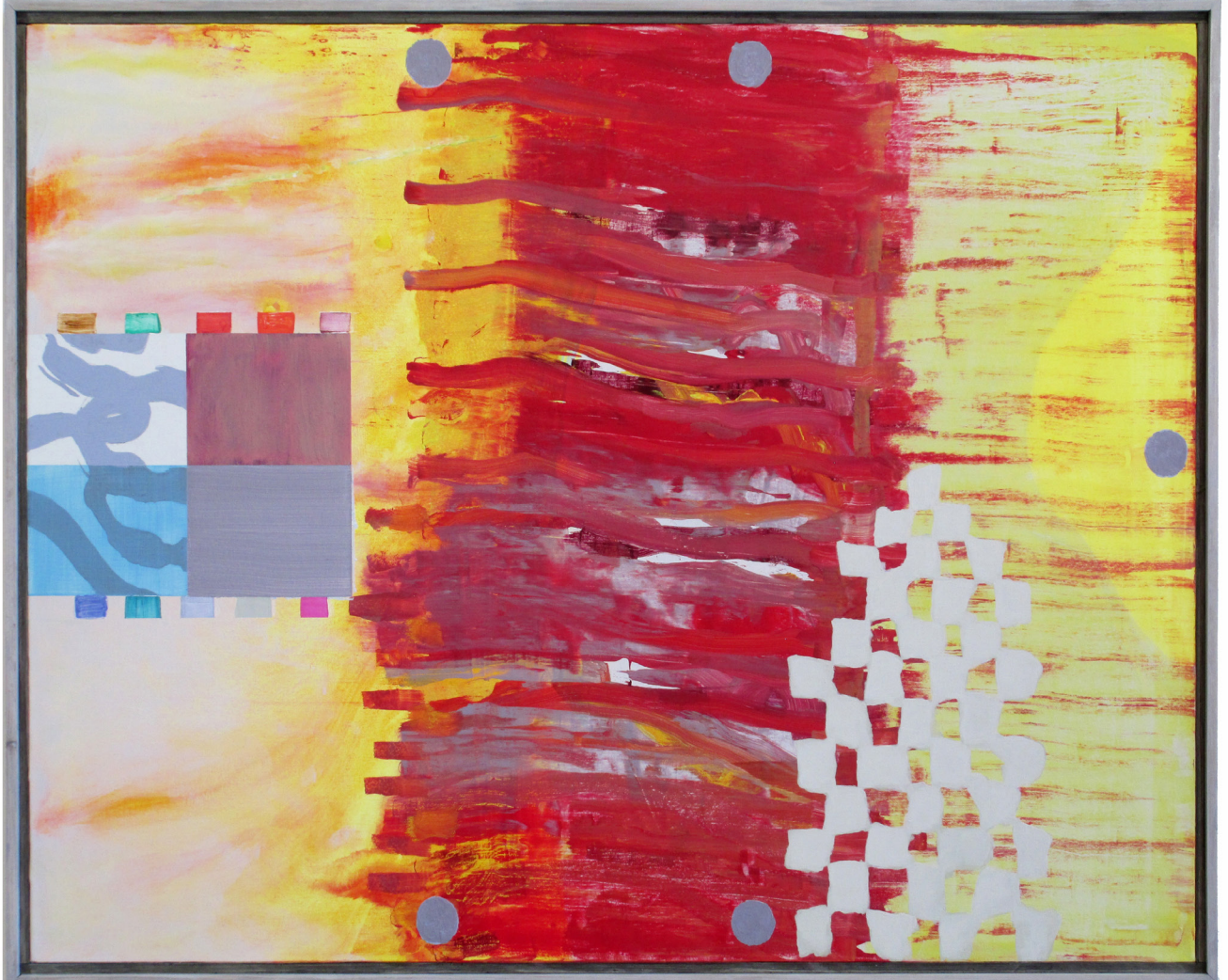




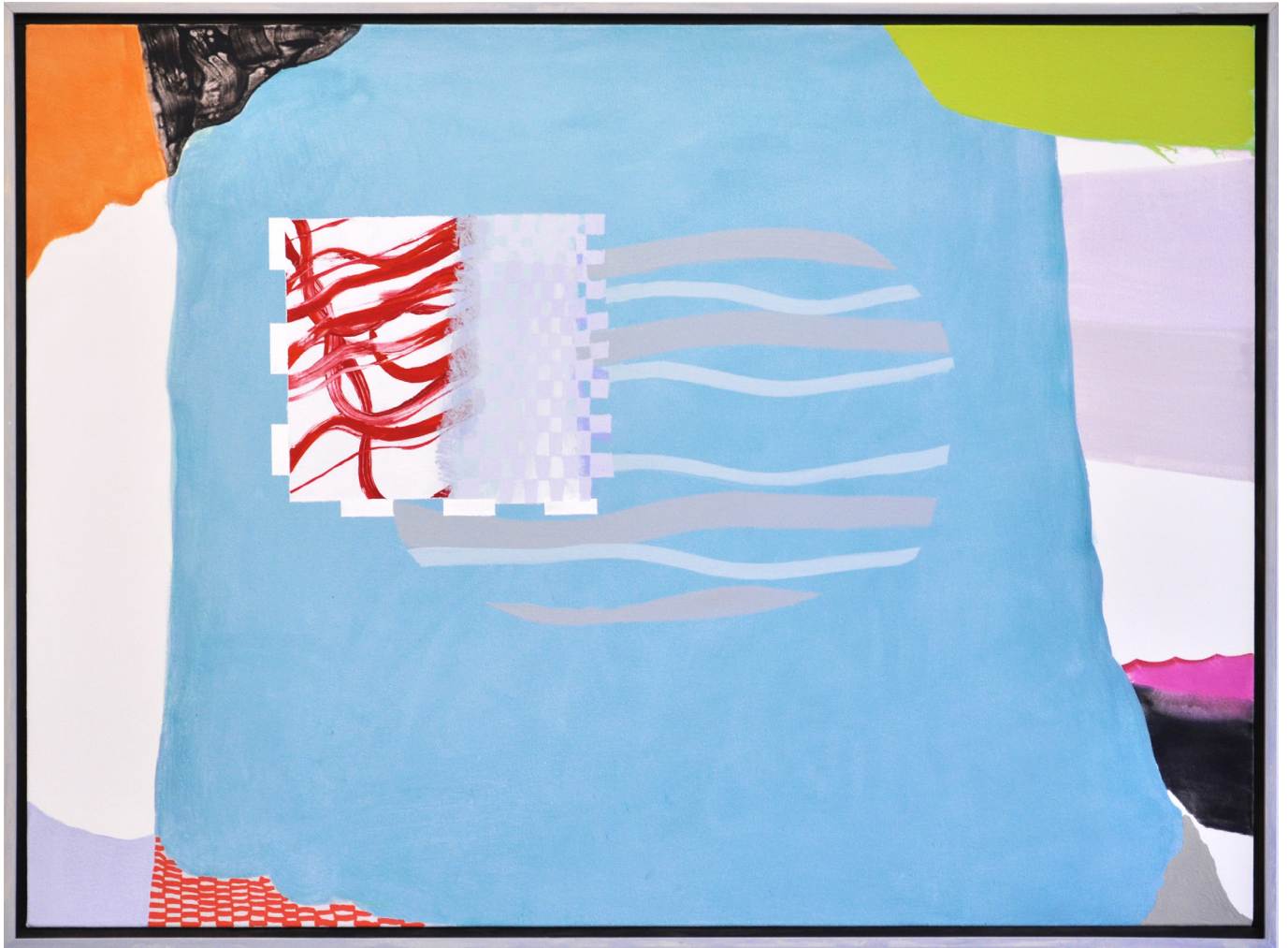
Retiarius  
2017, Acrylic on canvas  
75x100 cm



Venetian (Black Light)  
2017, Acrylic on canvas  
75x100 cm



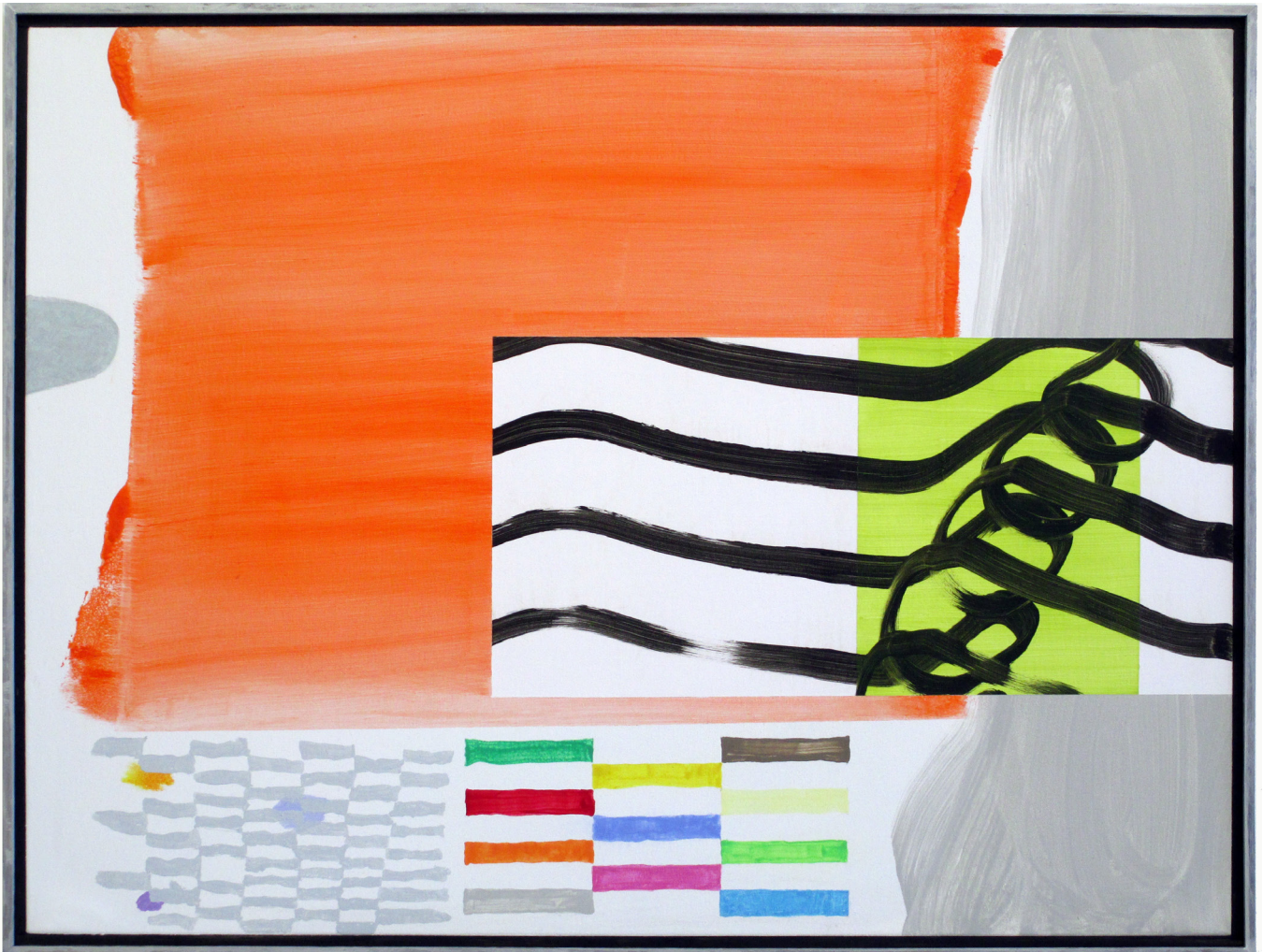
Sanguine  
2017, Acrylic on canvas  
75x100 cm



Apparare  
2017, Acrylic on canvas  
75x100 cm



Yellow Fix  
2017, Acrylic on canvas  
75x100 cm



Arena  
2017, Acrylic on canvas  
75x100 cm

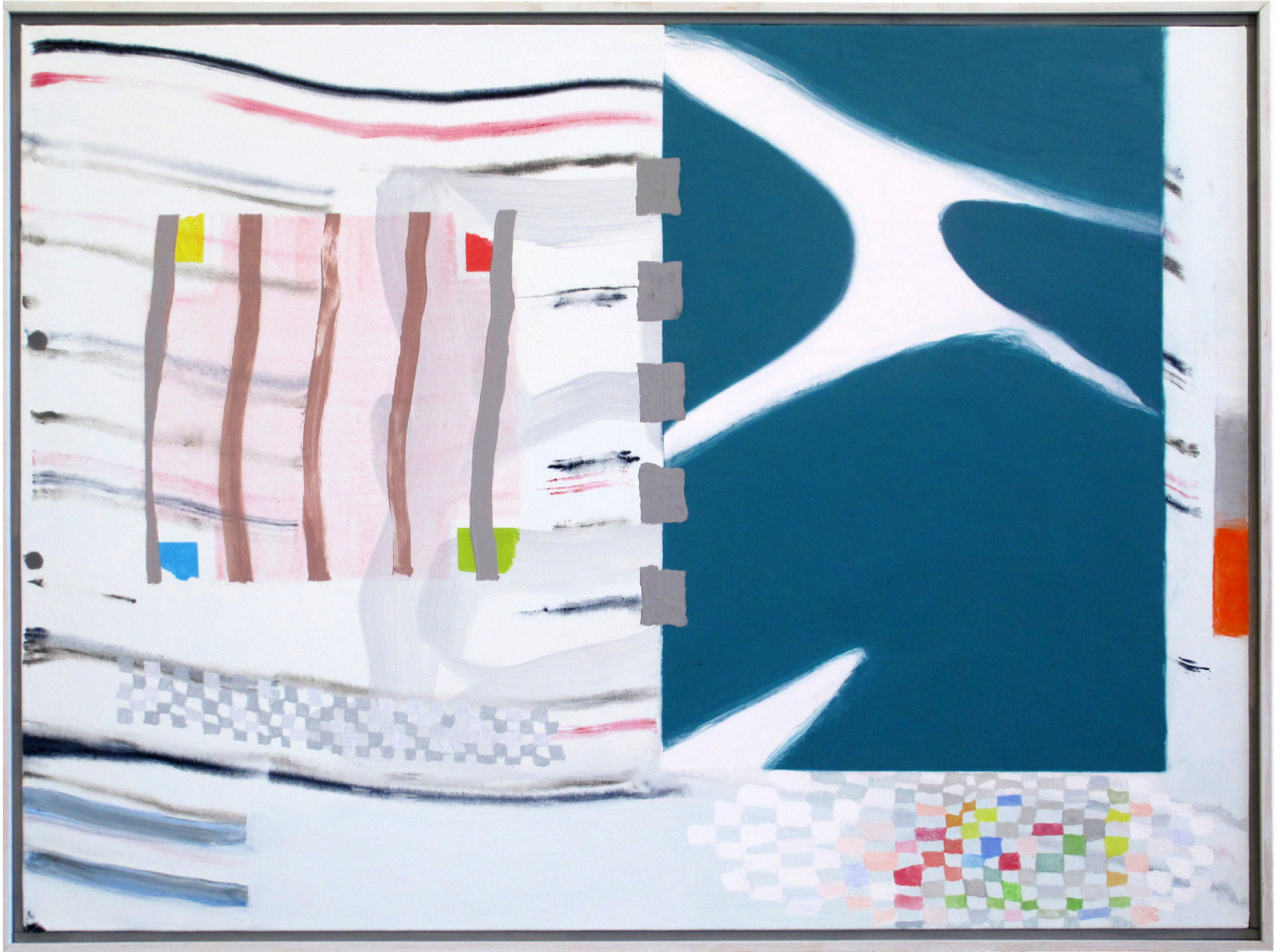


Left Field  
2017, Acrylic on canvas  
75x100 cm



Velo  
2016, Acrylic on canvas  
75x100 cm

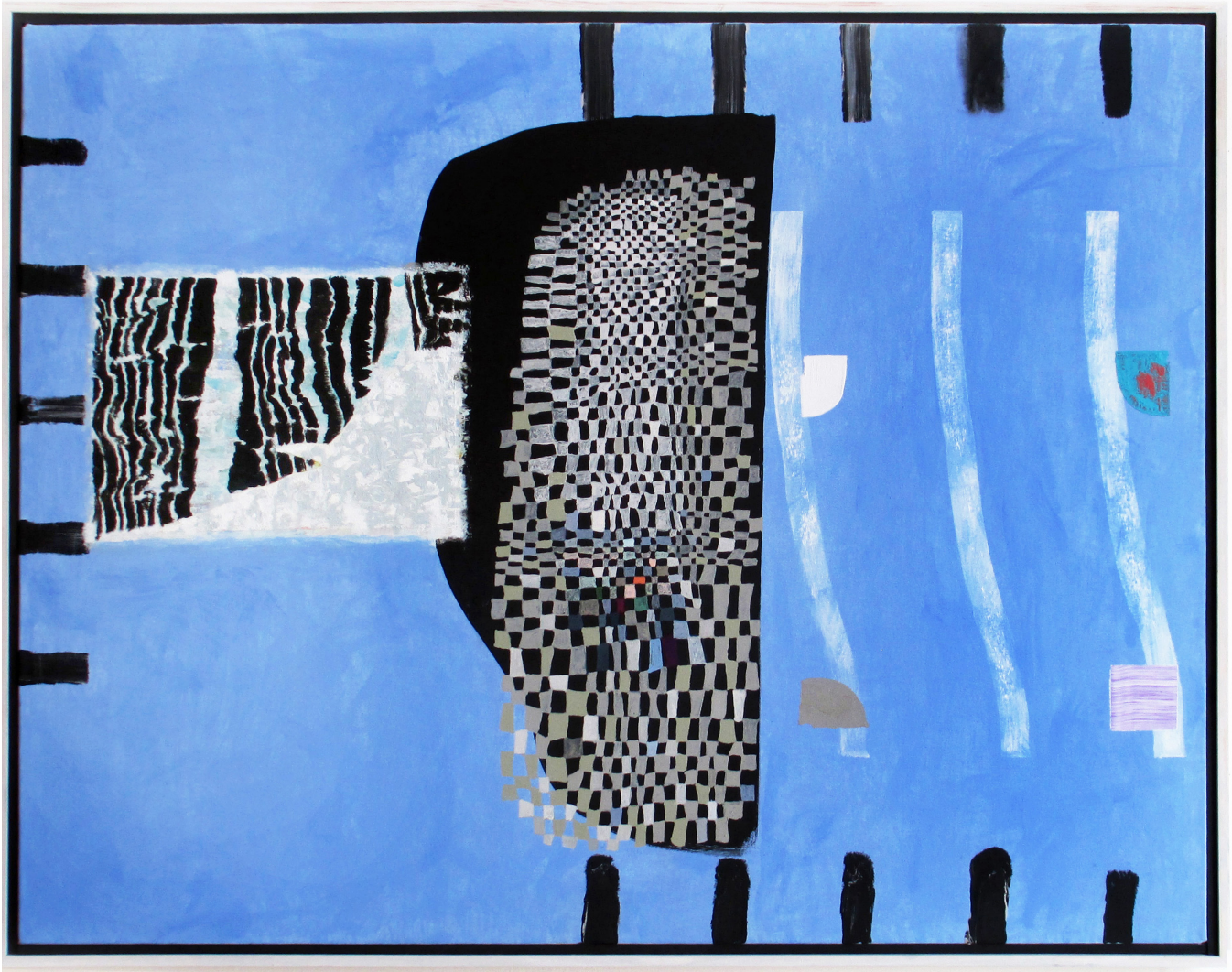




Dispatch  
2016, Acrylic on canvas  
75x100 cm



Shift Zone  
2016, Acrylic on canvas  
75x100 cm



VIGIL F  
2016, Acrylic on canvas  
75x100 cm



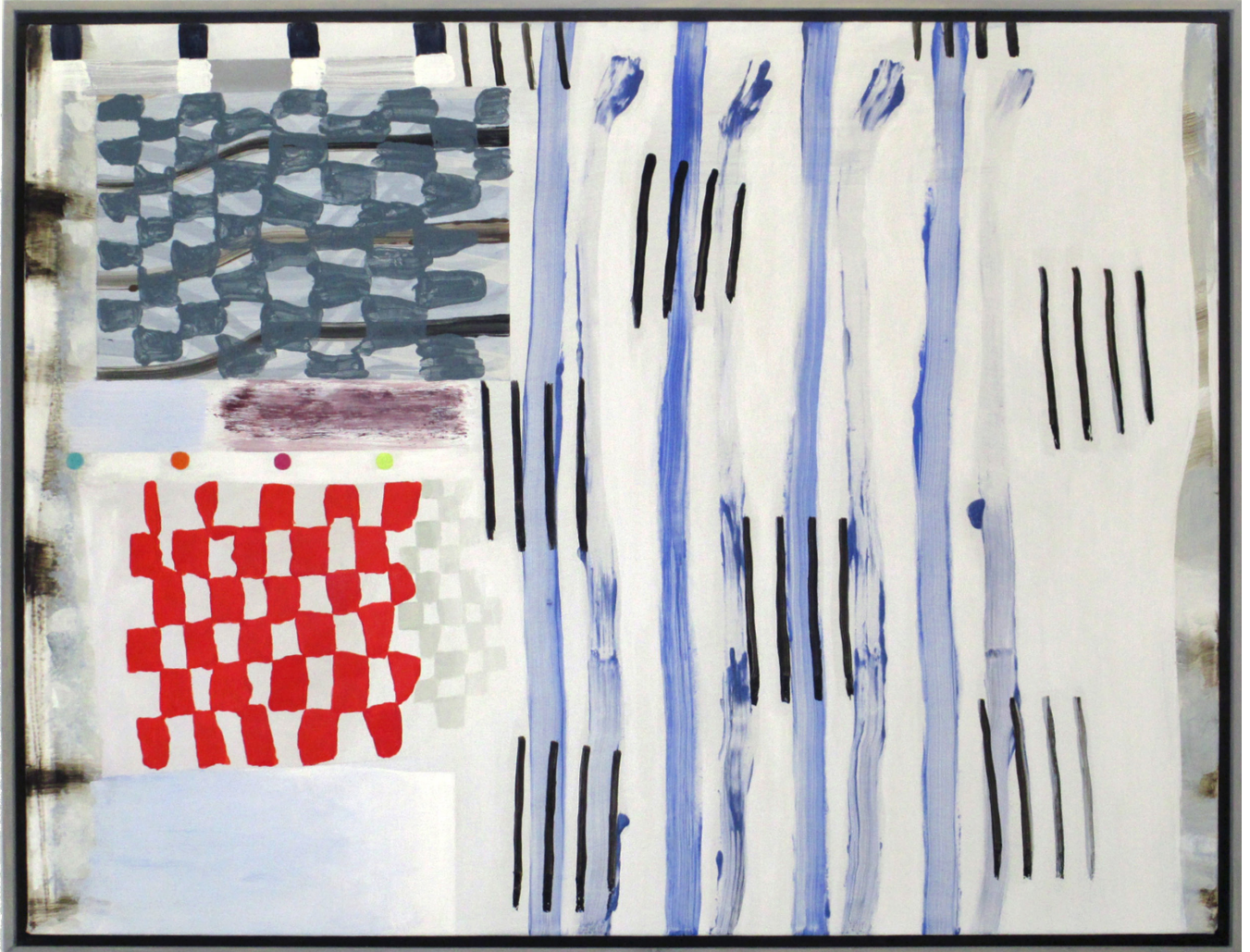
Refractor  
2016, Acrylic on canvas  
72x92 cm



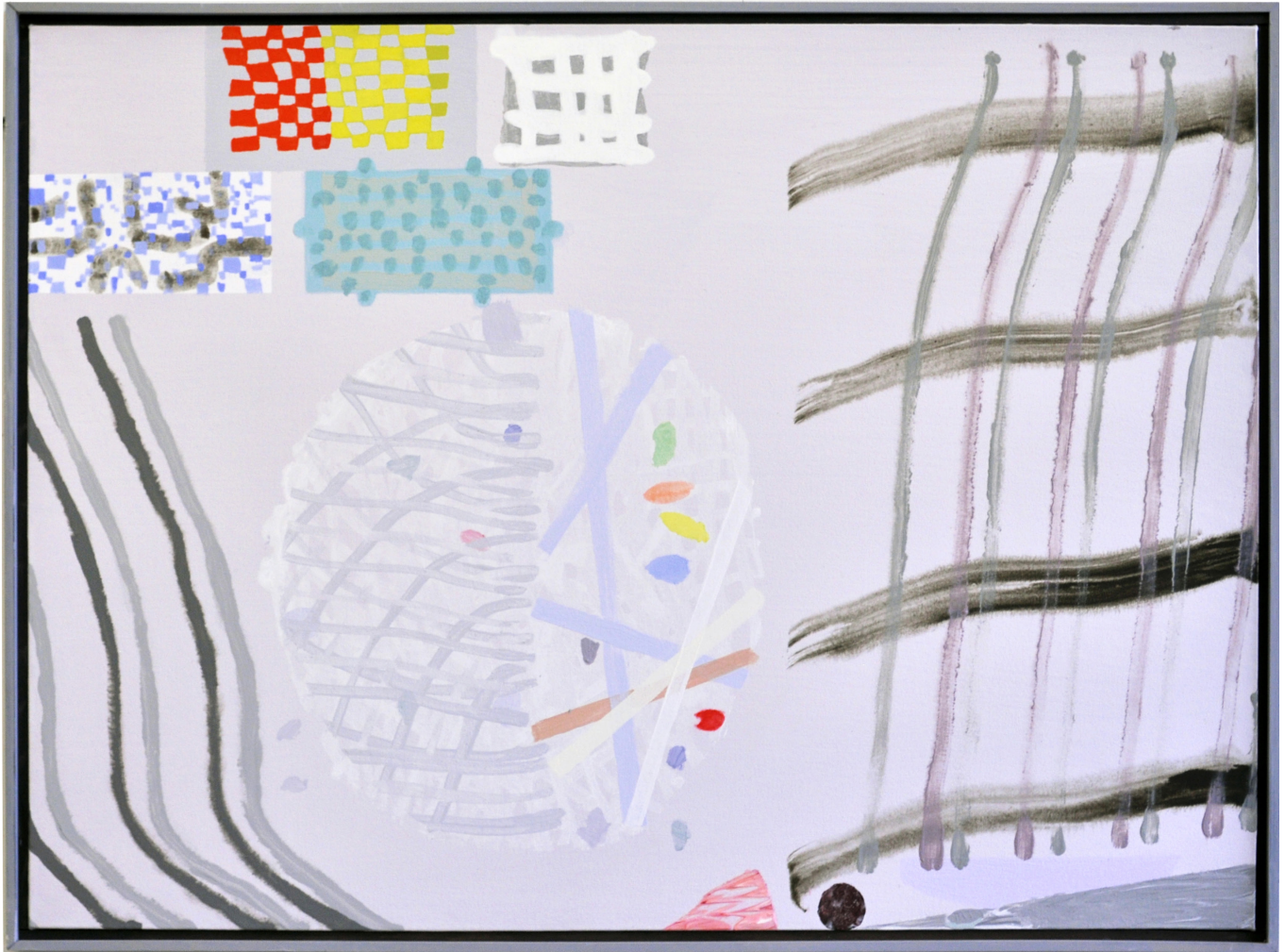
Orange Fix  
2016, Acrylic on canvas  
72x92 cm



April Red  
2015, Acrylic on canvas  
75x100 cm



Zona Rosa  
2015, Acrylic on canvas  
75x100 cm

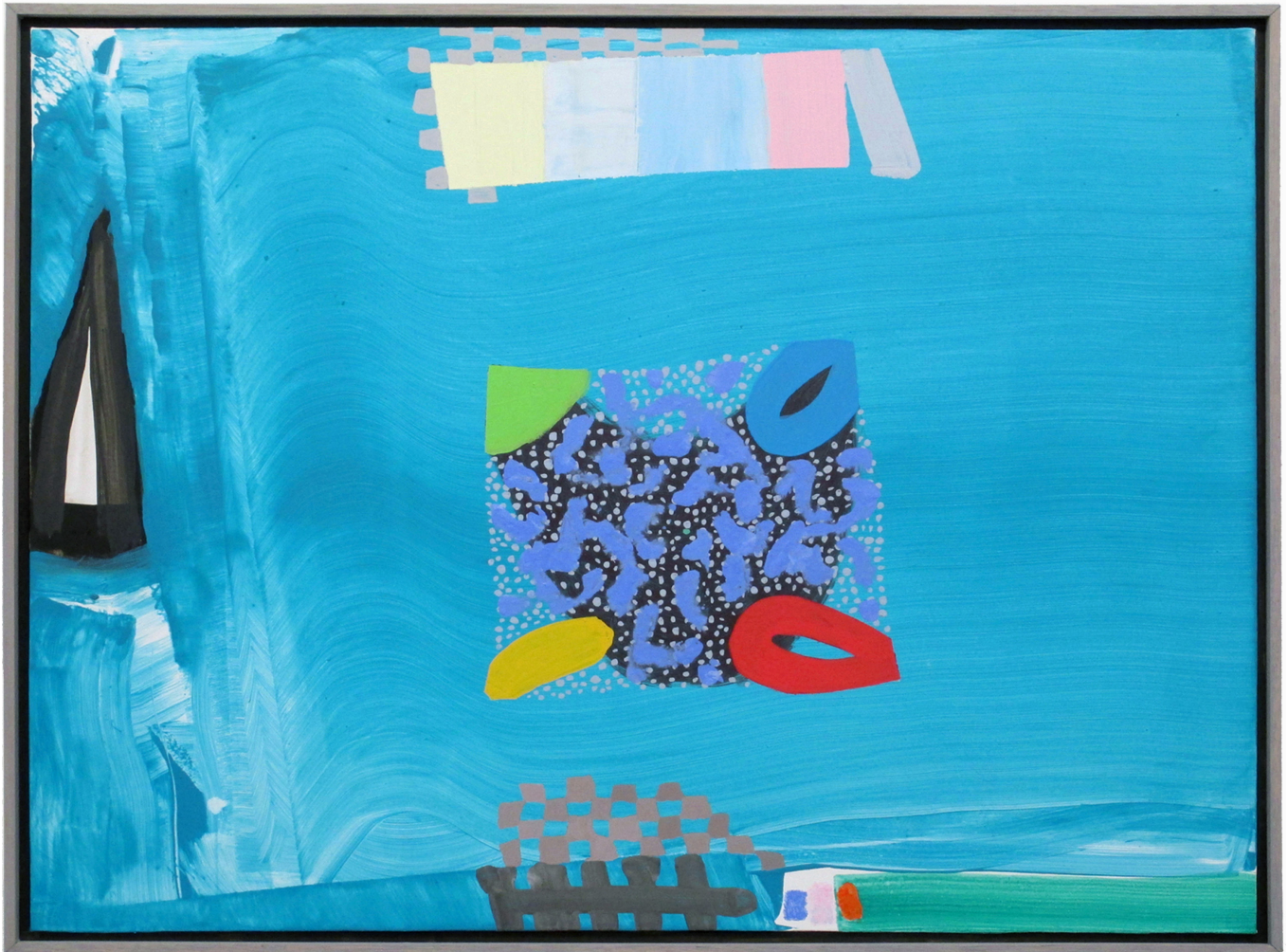


Noel's Chore  
2015, Acrylic on canvas  
75x100 cm

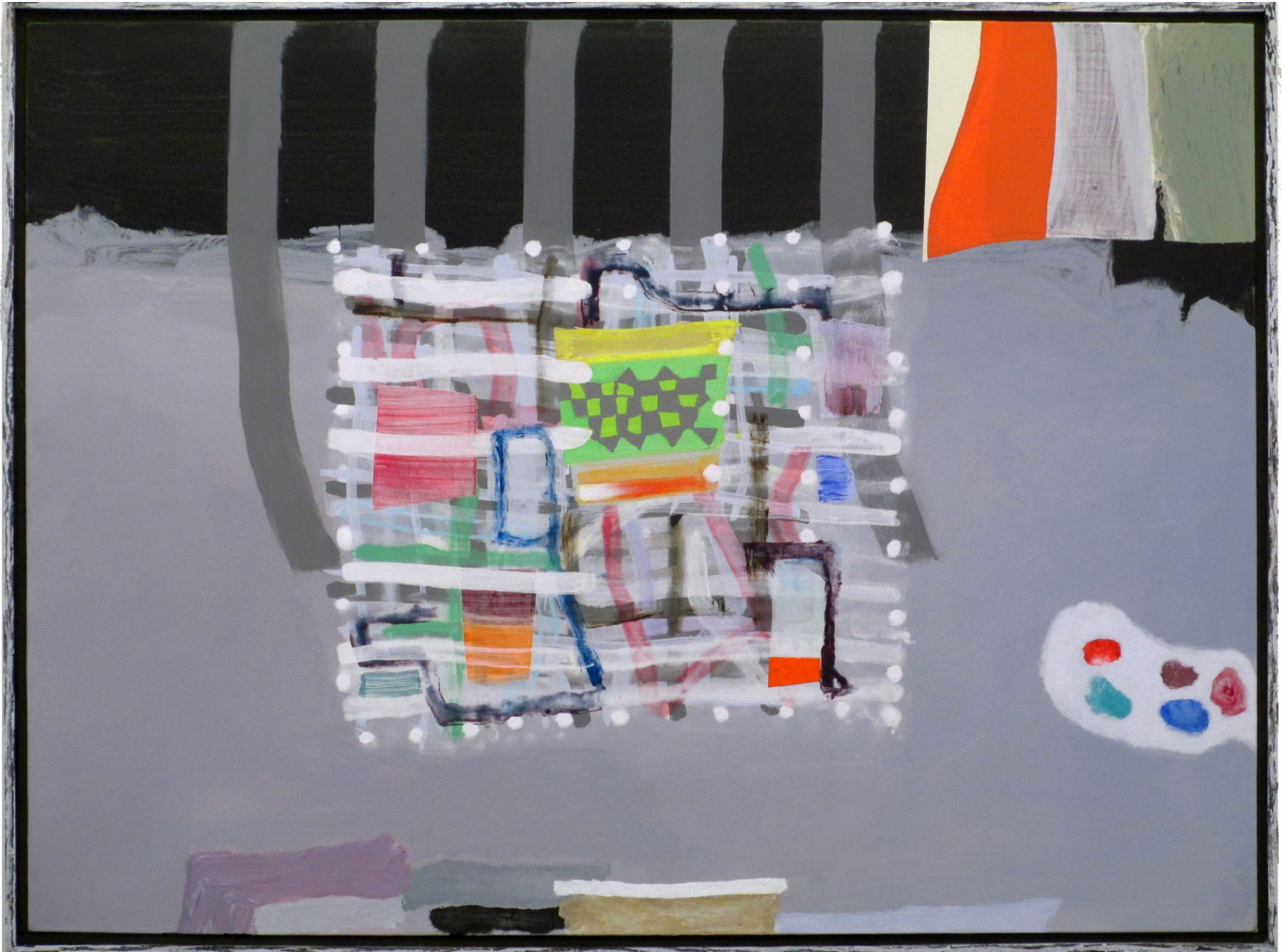




Eco Verte  
2015, Acrylic on canvas  
75x100 cm



April Blue  
2015, Acrylic on canvas  
75x100 cm



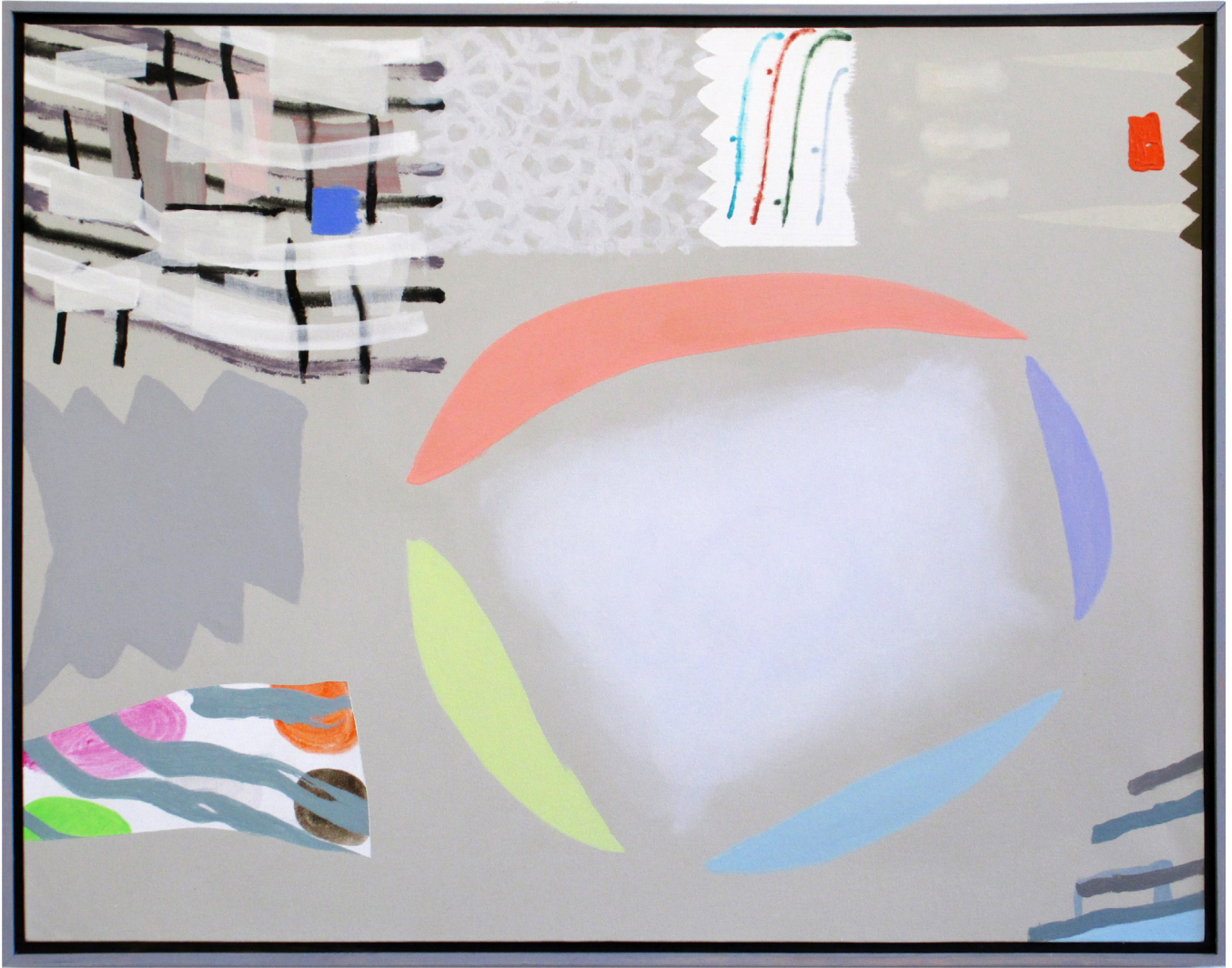
Abacus  
2014, Acrylic on canvas  
75x100 cm



Standort  
2014, Acrylic on canvas  
75x100 cm



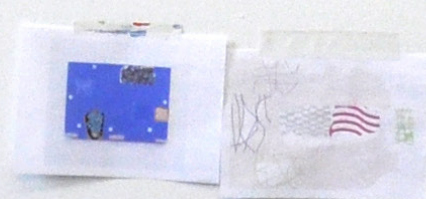
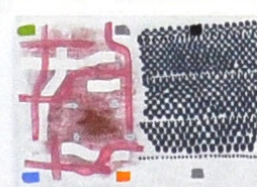
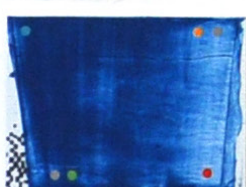
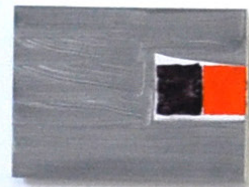
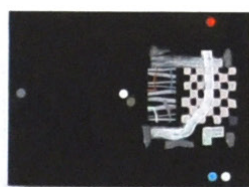
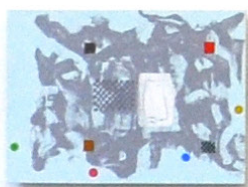
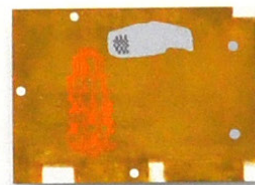
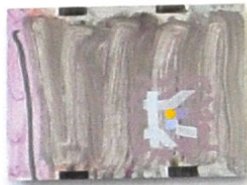
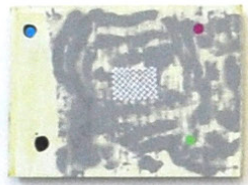
Netherlander  
2014, Acrylic on canvas  
75x100 cm



Expander  
2014, Acrylic on canvas  
75x100 cm



Birch Monitor  
2014, Acrylic on canvas  
75x100 cm









# Visual Stream

Jeff Dellow in conversation with Matthew Macaulay

**MM** When do you remember first finding abstraction persuasive?

**JD** The first thing that had an effect on my selection of the genre, was the Art of the Real show at the Tate Britain in either 1968 or 1969; It was followed up by a lot of shows about pop art.

The whole direction of contemporary painting seemed to be largely American influenced, there seemed to be a two-direction choice, a forking in the road, the first being either visually figurative or to do with advertising, and the second being to do with the Art of the Real. I thought the Art of the Real had a more persuasive effect.

**MM** So why was this?

**JD** Just by comparison of the two, it seemed more persuasive, it had far more depth of thinking, than the contemporary culture aspect. The Art of the Real felt deeper, longer and more profound. I think other shows that substantiated that feeling happened for some time.

**MM** I wondered what magazines would you be reading during this time?

**JD** Art in America, Studio International... and when I was on my degree course at Maidstone College of Art I followed these things every week. I tried each month to read every magazine.

**MM** Did the articles themselves seem important?

**JD** They did, there was also a kind of openness in the articles. The articles were good, but the art also backed up the idea of method and constructive possibilities among materials.

Following the Art of the Real in the late sixties it was more like minimalism, minimalist art was a lot more compelling. There were several people at the college that I went to that were working in that genre already, so that was exciting.

**MM** This show happened whilst you were studying at St Martins College of Art, what was it like there when you were on your foundation year?

**JD** Well in St Martins you had the whole sculpture ethos, and that was interesting. The painting being produced was much more over towards the second choice, or my second choice, which was more towards popular culture and pop art. There were only a few people dealing with abstraction, when one walked around the studios you could see some were, but the influence of British pop art was strongly represented.

**MM** What kind of work did you make after this foundation.

**JD** Well it was likely Frank Stella that led the way, after his monochromes, I started pictures of sort of grids with coloured pencils, I then scaled up to an air brush.

I started making pictures that generally had a rotational system, just free drawn rotational system usually 45 degrees on invisible grids on canvases that were 6ft tall by maybe 8ft or 10ft across, where the divisions were narrow panels with rotational bands of colour. These would form a field, a kind of rotational field. A lot of these paintings relied on drawing a directional system, a freely drawn order.

This led me on to constructing a kind of vat of paint that would hold about two gallons, that was lined with waterproofing. I would align these panels of canvas and dip them in colour of thinned down acrylic.

At this time manufactures were making acrylic aping the viscosity of oil paint, so you actually had to thin it all down and get this volume of paint.

Before I went to art college I worked in a chemical company that made acrylic paint.

**MM** So, this is Rohm and Hass, when did you work there?

**JD** Yes, from leaving school from about 1963 or 1964, before going to art college in 1968.

It was top quality acrylic paint; it was more like the paint that the Americans were talking about, this kind of thinned down deeply saturated colour, with an acrylic binder.

**MM** Who were these Americans talking about paint?

**JD** Helen Frankenthaler, Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland and all those people who were using un-primed canvas, and using those attitudes that would assist the flow of the paint.

All of that was something I was familiar with prior to going to art school, particularly working in the Labs at Rohm and Hass. The paint production there was all around me, there were physically huge vats of paint.

**MM** You spent some time in Africa in 1990 was this a profound experience? Do you think it left an impression on your work?

**JD** Yes, it was extremely exotic, it was in Zimbabwe and the first time I had been on the continent of Africa. It was one of those experiences that was both humbling and inspirational. I think there was already a fascination with nature, but when you get immersed in a place it is radically different.

There were also other practical things such as that you could not get planed three by one timber, some people would say that you could find the wood you need in the surrounding area and get it cut at a saw mill.

When I got there, there was only some materials available, they were mainly acrylic paints, petty weird acrylic paints at that. The other thing that was available was the sort of material that beer matts are made off, they had big rolls of it, it was a kind of six-foot-wide roll of durable card.

**MM** The visit to Africa was to attend an artists' workshop, what did they get you to do here?

**JD** You started in the morning, and you did what you wanted to do. It was very inspirational that the sculptors started at six am and stopped at six pm, this was because it got light at six am and dark at six pm, I mean total darkness, no street lights.

It was self-resourced, the things I responded to the things that were there; the kind of insects and the way they divided the land with stones, staging things out. The colour was surprising, because the light quality was almost overhead sunlight, that kind of blanked out colour, so sharp contrasting that it heightened light and dark.

Whilst there I was asking a chap who was a practicing ceramicist, and he pointed out key things about where he could get his colour

in the earth for his glazes; he was digging this up. We went on a walk and he showed me a lot of things, he talked about typical trees and these igneous granite blocks that looked rather like Henry Moores sculptures. Quite bizarre really.

It got me to thinking fantastic greys, green lichens and earth rich reds. Then the colours of insects and predators, they had colours like black, white and yellow; there were bees as big as golf balls.



QUIET title  
2014, Acrylic on canvas  
75x100 cm

Visual Stream - Jeff Dellow

Lanchester Research Gallery, Coventry, UK

11th January - 2nd February 2018

Lanchester Research Gallery

Graham Sutherland Building, Cox Street, Coventry, CV1 5PH

@Jeff Dellow and Matthew Macaulay

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner without written permission from the Jeff Dellow and Matthew Macaulay, except in the context of reviews.

Curated by Matthew Macaulay

Edited and designed by Matthew Macaulay

Photography by Jeff Dellow, with exception of black and white portrait on page 31, this was taken by Will Adams

**VAR**

**Coventry**  
University 

**Coventry**  
UK CITY OF CULTURE 2021 

PRINCIPAL PARTNER

