

JOAN THORNE RECENT PAINTINGS



FALK ART REFERENCE

P.O. Box 833
Madison, Connecticut 06443
Telephone: 203.245.2246
e-mail: peterfalk@comcast.net

This monograph is part of a series on American artists.
To purchase additional copies of this book, please contact:
Peter Hastings Falk at Falk Art Reference.

Published 2010

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from Joan Thorne.

Designed by Stinehour Editions and printed in the United States of America by Capital Offset Company.

ISBN-10 0-932087-64-7
ISBN-13 978-0-932087-64-5

Front cover image: *Mango*, oil on canvas, 66 x 56

JOAN THORNE

Recent Paintings

November 19 – December 19, 2010

Sideshow

319 Bedford Avenue · Williamsburg · Brooklyn, New York 11211

718-486-8180



*Fragments of the Leaf*¹²
FROM *ILLUMINATIONS*

I have stretched ropes from steeple to steeple; garlands from
window to window; golden chains from star to star, and I dance.

— ARTHUR RIMBAUD

The Ghost Picked Me: The Life and Art of Joan Thorne

PETER HASTINGS FALK

It's like the ghost is writing a song like that. It gives you the song and it goes away. You don't know what it means. Except the ghost picked me to write the song. — Bob Dylan

ASK JOAN THORNE to describe the creative sources of her imagery, and her reply will reflect annoyance tempered by patience. She defers to Bob Dylan, who, when asked the same question, replied, “The ghost picked me to write the song.”

Thorne and Dylan came of age in New York City in the early 1960s. Dylan arrived in 1961, determined to become a unique part of the new folk music movement. By the middle of the decade, his career had taken off. At the same time, Thorne was emerging from the shadows of the Abstract Expressionists, determined to make her own mark on painting.

Thorne grew up in Greenwich Village. Her mother was a Ukrainian immigrant from a musical family, who became an English teacher; her father, a surgeon. Recognizing their daughter's artistic talents early, in 1949 they enrolled her at age six in the Little Red Schoolhouse on Bleecker Street in Greenwich Village. Founded in 1921 by Elisabeth Irwin, a pioneer in educational reform, the school has continued to maintain its reputation as a progressive and nurturing catalyst for creative children. Pete Seeger, the folk singer, performed there so frequently that Thorne remembered him as if he were one of the teachers.

Among Thorne's schoolmates were a future actor, Robert DeNiro; a future political activist, Angela Davis; and Michael Meeropol, whose parents — Ethel and Julius Rosenberg — were found guilty as alleged Communists for conspiring to commit espionage and executed in 1953, when these children were in the fifth grade. And then there was the other tomboy in the class, her friend Kathy Boudin, whose father was a well-known radical lawyer. Boudin went on to join the Weather Underground and would take part in the infamous Brinks Robbery of 1981. “When we had a class reunion around 1990,” recalls Thorne, “we called her in prison and spoke to her. She had become very active in education and AIDS.”

The faculty at “Little Red” reinforced Thorne's role as the school artist. “Year after year, the teachers frequently hung my paintings in the hallway,” she says. “More than that, they really talked to me about them in a serious way. This made me feel that I was engaged in something very important. It was there I became a painter.”

Thorne's next source of inspiration came with what she describes as her first true communion with nature. During her summers at an upstate camp she loved to climb trees, upon whose branches she would perch for hours, sometimes to the consternation of the counselors. This lengthy tree-sitting was the consequence of her having become transfixed by the gradual changes in the light as it streamed through the leaves and branches, creating abstract patterns. All the while, she felt protected as if she were a part of the tree and the light.

In the early 1960s, Thorne was an undergraduate at New York University, where she was stimulated by a cross-disciplinary curriculum that brought experimental theater and philosophy to bear on her approach to painting, which up to that time had been largely figurative. She was impressed by avant-garde plays such as Edward Albee's *Zoo Story* and Jean Cocteau's seminal *Orpheus*, with their surrealist sets that reinforced themes of dreams and obsessions. Her artistic maturity came while she was pursuing her master's degree at Hunter College of the City University of New York. She began to trust an instinctive approach to painting, crediting her thesis advisor — Tony Smith — for having instilled in her the greatest confidence in her abilities. Whether in Smith's Greenwich Village loft or at his New Jersey home, Thorne recalls, “He never made me feel like I was a college art student. From the beginning, he treated me like a professional painter . . . He said, ‘You're going to continue to paint when you leave Hunter. You're very fortunate. Women are closer to the source. They're not afraid to use their intuition.’”



Smith's words resonated with the young painter. For the rest of the 1960s, she indeed tapped into her intuitions, performing extempore, and trusting that a unique style would eventually emerge. She acknowledges her roots not only in the Abstract Expressionists but also in their abstract predecessors such as John Marin, Georgia O'Keefe, and Arthur Dove. Ultimately, she is a painter's painter, also admiring the works of Monet, Van Gogh, Cézanne, and Soutine. "But the real source," she claims, "is a very primal place. First, I get possessed by an image, which may well have come to me in a dream. But the process of how an image appears and then disappears is an enigma. It's much more complicated than just saying, for example, that I was influenced by nature. I start to paint, and it just happens. It's like the painting is painting itself."

At the end of the decade, Thorne took a large studio on John Street in the financial district. In a neighboring studio, Jack Youngerman was painting hardedge abstractions of natural forms. Thorne's expansive space, with its soaring ceiling and skylight, proved to be her first effective platform for painting on a large scale. Here, her purposeful forays into the subconscious found her injecting new life into Abstract Expressionism at a time when a cacophony of artistic styles resounded in different directions, from Pop to Op, from Lyrical Abstraction to Minimalism. Complicating it all, Happenings signaled the emergence of conceptualism. In the midst of these different styles, her approach to painting may even be seen as an affirmation of the spirit and the peaking countercultural movement, which had adopted freedom of expression as its mantra.

At the same time, waves of activism continued to rage: the Vietnam War was exposed as a true quagmire; the civil rights movement marched painfully yet inexorably forward; and, the women's rights movement announced that a male-centric culture would have to change its ways. But the counterculture was also the generation of love, peace, and psychedelia — just as bent on the spiritual explorations of one's inner self as it was on exposing society's ills — all to the music of the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. Dylan, too, had transformed himself into a rock musician. With the five members of The Band, he recorded "The Basement Tapes" in a house dubbed "Big Pink." His lyrics and lines now seemed to float in an ethereal space, as if in counterpart channeling Thorne's surreal shapes and psychic environments. Her direction was powerfully reaffirmed in 1969 while traveling throughout the Yucatán Peninsula. "Something very strange happened to me there," she says. "Whether it was the temples and their spirits, I cannot say, but I immediately experienced an overwhelming sense of energy." Years later, she realized that she had unknowingly traversed the site of the world's largest meteor impact, the 100-mile-wide Chicxulub crater, credited by most scientists as the likely cause of the demise of the dinosaurs. Had she sensed the Earth's most explosive prehistoric moment? From that point on, her vivid dreams became the primary source for her vision and were reflected in the increasing intensity of her paintings. So singleminded was her pursuit that she ended her marriage to a mathematician out of fear that a lifestyle in the suburbs would be predictable and deadening.

In 1971, Thorne met Faith Ringgold [b.1930] and joined her as a teacher at the Women's House of Detention on Rikers Island in a new program called "Art without Walls—Free Space." The program, which had been born from the civil rights movement, was aimed at enriching the lives of the inmates. Ringgold even painted an eight-



foot-square mural for the facility. She also encouraged the younger painter to remain true to her inner drive. “I became an artist because I wanted to tell my story,” says Ringgold. “Joan understood that path. Still, when people see her paintings they are constantly trying to relate the shapes and forms to reality. But they can’t be identified because they are other-worldly. They have a beauty about them that’s very compelling because of her highly developed technique, absolutely gorgeous colors, and musical metaphors. It’s as if music is playing color.”¹

In 1972, Thorne’s painting was included in the Whitney Museum’s last Annual Exhibition (thereafter it became the Biennial Exhibition). This show was developed under the museum’s director, John Bauer, who had begun as a curator there in 1952. Bauer featured works by aging members of the first and second generations of the New York School, enlivened by the emerging third generation. Only 21 percent were women, anchored by Georgia O’Keeffe [1887–1986], who had initially exhibited there forty years earlier. The first generation of the New York School was represented by one woman, Perle Fine [1905–1986], and four men: Adolph Gottlieb [1903–1974], James Brooks [1906–1992], Willem De Kooning [1904–1997], and Jack Tworikov [1900–1982]. Only one woman, Helen Frankenthaler [b.1929], represented the second generation, but there were many men, including Al Held [1928–2005], Jasper Johns [b.1930], Alex Katz [b.1927], Roy Lichtenstein [1923–1997], Kenneth Noland [1924–2010], Jules Olitski [1922–2007], and Cy Twombly [b.1928]. The young women of the third generation of the New York School included Nancy Graves [1940–1995], Sylvia Mangold [b.1938], Elizabeth Murray [1940–2007], Joan Snyder [b.1940], Pat Steir [b.1938], and Joan Thorne [b.1943]. There were many more young men of the third generation, including Dan Christensen [1942–2007], Chuck Close [b.1940], Larry Poons [b.1937], and Richard Pousette-Dart [1916–1992].

The Whitney portended for Thorne numerous museum and gallery exhibitions over the ensuing decades, kicked off by a solo show at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, in 1973. Shortly afterward, she met Jack Tworikov and was delighted to find that he was already an admirer of her works. “Jack became the father I really never had,” she says. “We had frequent dialogue about both painting and life . . . and he always treated me like an equal in painting.” By 1960, Tworikov’s boldly expressive brushstrokes had given way to the hard edges that defined his geometric abstractions. Despite their stylistic differences, Tworikov enjoyed keeping abreast of Thorne’s paintings because “they reminded him to always remain free.” Thorne last saw him when he visited her studio in June 1982 before heading to Provincetown, Massachusetts, for the summer. In late August, she had a vivid dream of climbing a mountain with him. As they struggled up the rocky incline, they carried buckets filled with melted butter. Dipping their brushes, they painted the huge rocks in butter as they climbed, nearly out of breath. Startled, she woke up. The next day she was unable to reach Tworikov, and friends told her that he was ill with cancer. He died a few days later.

In 1977, Thorne contributed to the first issue of *Re-View*, likely the first American magazine published, illustrated, and written by artists. Its founder, the painter and writer, Vered Lieb, lauded Abstract Expressionism in her editorial as a “necessary and inspirational part of our national heritage.” However, she reminded the third generation of the New York School that it had a new and higher responsibility. Harking back to art’s role as “the



Brochure cover for solo exhibition at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1973.

welcomed exposure, acceptance into the 1981 Whitney Biennial proved most important to Thorne. Despite the Biennial's bias toward conceptualism, which has persisted to the present day, there was an effort to maintain diversity and include artists who were still in hot pursuit of dragging, slashing, dripping, and scraping paint across a two-dimensional surface. De Kooning and Tworkov continued to represent the first generation of the New York School, joined by second-generation painters such as Held, Richard Diebenkorn [1922–1993], Ellsworth Kelly [b.1923], James Rosenquist [b.1933], and Wayne Thiebaud [b.1920]. Meanwhile, the participation by women had dwindled to 15 percent, shored up by Thorne, Murray Snyder, Jennifer Bartlett [b.1941], Lynda Benglis [b.1941], and Judy Pfaff [b.1946]. This vanguard of women continued to fight for greater recognition in a male-dominated art world where “art dealers admittedly recognized and promoted trends while the curators, relying on the gallery system to form the basis of their selections, offered a summary of recent goods.”³ Subsequent Biennials came under increasing attack, as did Thomas Armstrong, the museum's director from 1974 to 1990, who during his tenure endured loud public criticism that he was catering to the production of “art stars” by the leading galleries.

However, Thorne and her peers came of age struggling against sexism in the art establishment and its attendant lack of exhibition opportunities for women. Since 1985, this issue has been loudly exposed by the public protests of the Guerrilla Girls, whose members remain a well-kept secret. By 2006, representation of women at the Whitney Biennial improved to 29 percent, and by 2008 and 2010 to 40 percent. Despite these gains, in May 2009, Jerry Saltz, the art critic for *New York* magazine, accused the Museum of Modern Art of “a form of gender-based apartheid” because only 4 percent of its permanent collection on display consists of works by women.⁴ In 1987 the American Academy awarded Thorne the Prix de Rome in Visual Arts. She stayed in Rome for a second year and returned to Italy for the next twelve summers, painting in Siena.⁵ When Barbara Rose curated “Abstract Painting of the 90s” at the Andre Emmerich Gallery in New York in 1991, she again selected Thorne. Certainly, the inspiration for much of Thorne's imagery has been fueled by her extensive sojourns. In addition to her summers in Siena, she began the first of extended stays annually in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, which have continued to this day. And in 2008 and 2009 she spent months in India.

The painter, Thornton Willis [b.1936], a close friend since 1974, explained Thorne's roots and those of the third generation. “As much as we like to place artists in neat categories, Joan's art is unique. It comes from a highly personal vision, as does all moving art. For a long time, some conceptualists have been saying that painting is dead, but it remains very much alive. Joan's energy, and the energy of all great painters, is still coming out of those avant-garde movements of the early twentieth century. Certainly, her roots are in Abstract Expressionism, with surrealist imagery emerging to the forefront. These are our roots. After all, if an artist has no roots in the past,

only spiritual counterbalance to a materialistic world,” she wrote that works in *Re-View* would be “significant and representative of a ‘cultural consciousness’ of our time.” She was confident that the third generation had found itself on a new frontier that was “the fertile ground from which profound artistic expression will arise.”² The magazine caught the attention of Barbara Rose, who subsequently included Thorne, and some of the other featured artists, in her seminal 1979 exhibition, “American Painting: The Eighties,” at the Grey Gallery at New York University. The *New York Times* critic, Hilton Kramer, singled out one of Thorne's paintings to illustrate his review.

The next year, Thorne was included in an exhibition of critics' picks at the Grand Palais in Paris, sponsored by the Société des Artistes Indépendants. When Joan Mitchell [1926–1992] invited her to stay for several days at her home in nearby Vetheuil, Thorne was surprised to discover that Mitchell painted only at night, from about eleven o'clock until just before sunrise. While the Paris exhibition provided

there is no future. With this perspective, Joan has always been respected among artists as a strong painter whose expressions are uniquely her own.”⁶

Art critics have frequently referred to Thorne’s paintings as “highly independent,” “aggressive,” and “confrontational” yet requiring a period of contemplation in order to decipher their meanings. One critic, astutely perceiving the influence that experimental theater had upon her in the 1960s, stated, “There is no counterpart to nature in these paintings. Rather, like Cocteau’s Orpheus passing through the mirror, they disclose a hidden, mysterious realm that lies behind the appearance of things and perhaps behind the painting itself.”⁷

Indeed, Thorne’s paintings make no promise of delivering us to an empyrean realm; rather, it is the voyage itself we experience. Her biomorphic and crystalline shapes are not chimerical, nor are her purposeful weavings born of paroxysms. The entire surface is activated by undulant shapes and colors, not out of a horror vacui, but rather a striving for the numinous. Thorne is that *rara avis* who even dreams of shapes, brushstrokes, and the tonalities of her colors, be they earthy or vibrant. Earlier in her career, when a painting was finished its title would often appear to her based upon her primal perception of a sound she heard emanating from it, such as *Ung* and *Kopt*. While the depth of her intuitive approach has retained its vitality for four decades, her latest works favor brushwork over heavy impasto to weave their story. Certainly, the spur for the birth of each painting has remained the same: a voyage, to an exotic place as well as to the subconscious. Ultimately, her quest is one of experiences of worlds of light and color, known and unknown, to be vividly recorded. Her mission is most succinctly expressed, again, by Bob Dylan: “The world don’t need any more songs. There’s enough songs. Unless someone’s gonna come along with a pure heart and has something to say. That’s a different story.”⁸

FOOTNOTES:

1. Author’s interview with Faith Ringgold, 8 Jan 2010. In addition to providing art instruction, a creative writing program was founded in 1972 by Carol Muske-Dukes, California’s poet laureate. More improvements came in 1985 when Rikers opened the nation’s first jail-based nursery. In 1988 the women were moved to the Rose M. Singer Center, a new women’s facility in East Elmhurst, New York. The men on Rikers Island immediately covered over Ringgold’s mural, “For the Women’s House”, with white house paint. Years later, after a tedious restoration, the mural was installed at the Singer Center.

2. In 1977, Vered Lieb and her husband, Thornton Willis, published *Re-View: Artists on Art*, in SoHo. Their inspiration was the magazine *View*, which, from 1940 to 1947, had introduced America to Dada and Surrealism. Publication of *Re-View* ceased in 1979 when Lieb began writing for *Artforum* and *Arts* magazines. Lieb’s quotes are from her editorial in *Re-View: Artists on Art*, 1, no. 1 (October 1977) New York.1–4.

3. Bruce Lineker, “The Annual and Biennial Exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1932–1989: A History and Evaluation of the Impact upon American Art.” Introductory essay in Peter Falk, *The Annual & Biennial Exhibition Record of the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1918 1989* (Madison, CT: Sound View Press, 1991) 47.

4. Phoebe Hoban, “The Feminist Evolution,” *ArtNews* (December 2009): 87.

5. The prestigious Prix de Rome was first awarded in 1896 and allowed artists to live and work at the American Academy in Rome for a year. With the exception of two sculptors, no women won this award until the 1960s, when four of its fifty-four winners in the Visual Arts were women. That 8 percent representation grew to about 15 percent in the 1970s. During the 1980s, when Thorne won, the rate had risen to 32 percent. That number increased to 38 percent during the 1990s and to 44 percent during the first decade of the twenty-first century. During the 1980s, notable winners in the Visual Arts category included: Al Held (1981); Philip Pearlstein (1982); Frank Stella (1983); Alex Katz (1984); Beverly Pepper (1986); Vito Acconci, Bruce Nauman, and Joan Thorne (1987); Judy Pfaff (1988); and Roy Lichtenstein (1989).

6. Author’s interview with Thornton Willis, 3 February 2010.

7. Ann Dumas, “Joan Thorne,” *Arts* (January 1991): 82.

8. Dylan quotes from www.slideshare.net/chrislandry/bob-dylan-on-creativity-presentation.

Joan Thorne in her SoHo studio ca.1972. Photograph by Hans Namuth. Courtesy Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona. ©1991 Hans Namuth Estate.

Joan Thorne: Traveling in Search of Light

ROBERT C. MORGAN

UPON RETURNING FROM Joan Thorne's studio one day in late December, after two hours of viewing her recent series of ebullient, yet enigmatic abstract paintings, I began the process of reflecting on how I might talk about her work. What should I say about these paintings? Having followed Thorne's evolution as a painter for more than three decades, it should not become a problem. Moreover, Thorne is a painter with a formidable career, ranging from exhibitions in prestigious New York galleries, such as Fischbach, Willard, Emmerich, and Graham Modern, to museums in the United States and Latin American, not to mention other important European venues. But sometimes what a writer knows reasonably well about an artist's work becomes the most difficult to put in words. In this sense, language carries limitations with regard to the manner in which we may choose to speak. This is particularly true of painting, and especially in the case of Joan Thorne, where the medium holds an intrinsic fictional character, a relentless rebuff, which makes it difficult to say anything at all. Even so, I believe there is a point to writing about painting, and that is to accept its delimitations and to approach the work less in a confrontational way than through an oblique angle of vision. If one is fortunate, the words will come pounding through the surface. Yet there is no guarantee of success. Language always falls a little short. I suppose there is a certain humility upon recognizing the unburdened elegance of truly significant painting. One might, in fact, consider such work at the origin of all that we may ever care to write.

During the discussion in Thorne's studio, the name of Matisse emerged in relation to one of Thorne's paintings called *Alma del Mar* (page 10). In fact, the disposition of angles competing with organic shapes, the variety of gestural movements, and ostensibly clashing colors in this painting had little in common with Matisse. So how did he come into the conversation? Suddenly I recalled a Matisse exhibition in Boston from many years ago that focused on the late cutouts, which he called *gouache découpée* (literally: cut-up gouache). In reflecting on these magnificent shapes and colors, I began to think that maybe Thorne's recent paintings were connected obliquely, that is, indirectly to Matisse. Put another way, perhaps there is a structural (less formal) semblance between Thorne's *Alma del Mar* ("Soul of the Sea") and the *gouache découpée* that Matisse created in his wheelchair in the south of France between 1948-54. Assuming this was the case, Thorne is using a very different material medium. *Alma del Mar* is not a gouache on paper, but an oil painting. Yet given her experience with the medium, she had developed a fresh and immediate way of working, a distillation of energy one might consider exemplary. Although nothing is physically cut in Thorne's paintings, the brilliant shards and organic edges suggest an inventive approach to the concentration of light through color value and energetic gesture, often intractable in their sensory gravitational pull. Thorne's recent paintings suggest different extrusions of light as they form and reform themselves across the canvas. In fact, the structural semblance between the two artists is not so much in the shapes, gestures, and colors, but in the production of light that emanates through the surface.

Is her sense of light, in fact, the focus of her paintings? She concurs that it is. Even so, it is not the light of the American Luminists in the nineteenth century. Nor is it the light of the American frontier. It was coming from other sources, from more out of the way sources, from other lands and other places. At a certain point, Thorne confessed that she was a traveler in search of light. She travels regularly to the Caribbean, Brazil, Turkey, and recently to India where she discovers sites in which the presence (or absence) of light has affected the history of the regions and altered the appearance of ancient Hindu monuments and Jain temples carved in granite, and where the shapes of light seem to cut through nature, revealing obtuse angles and curvaceous tendrils, lingering in the twilight of dawn and dusk.

There are three other paintings I want to discuss without any desire to prove anything about them, simply to show the ramifications of what they are in relation to themselves and to one another. The titles are *Mango* (front cover), *Khajuraho* (page 12), and *Istanbul* (page 11). As the artist has made clear, her titles never precede the paintings. They come after the fact. If painting is about a discovery, rather than illustration, the exact geography of

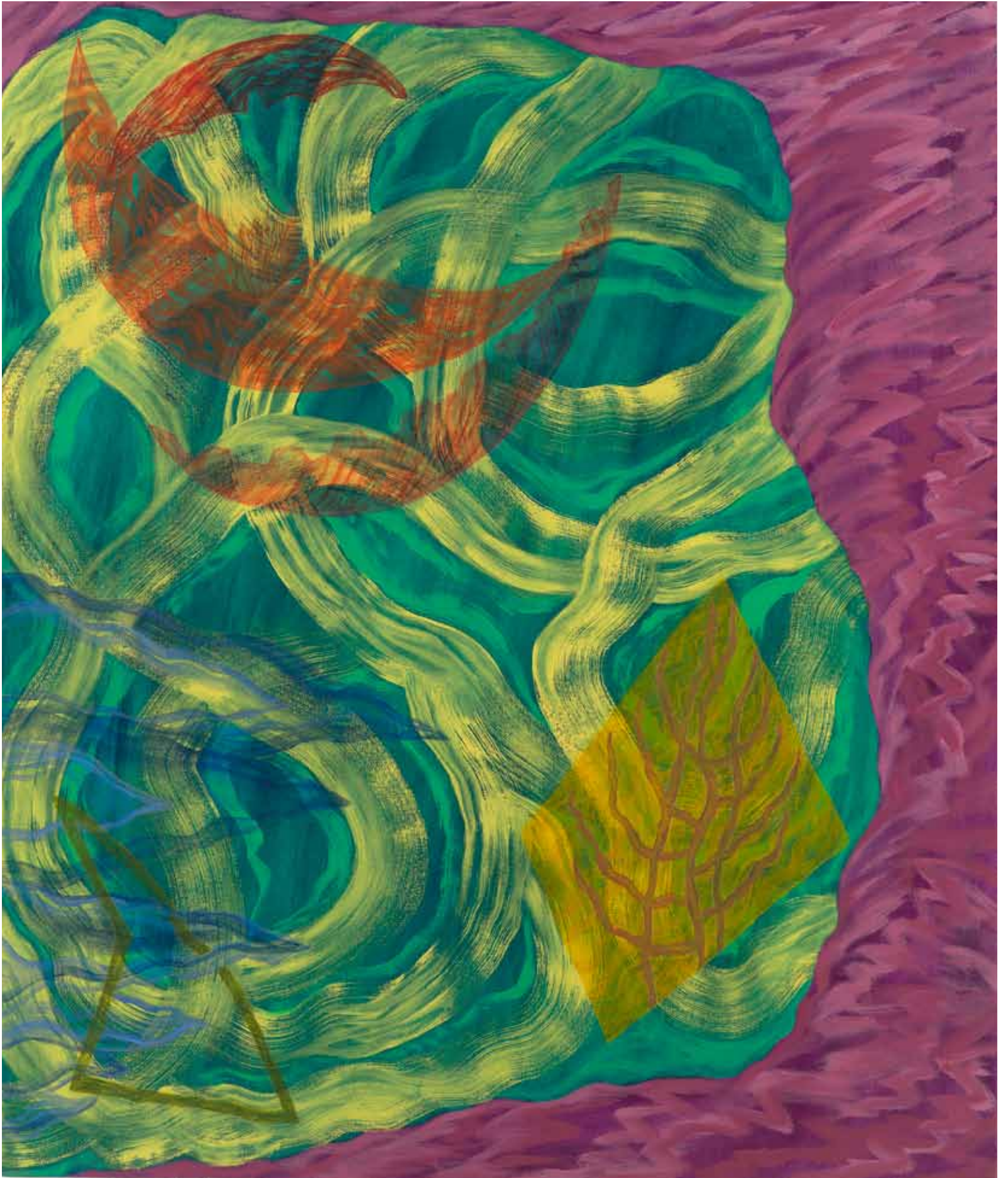
the light begins as an internal mixture, a chaotic nemesis, before it become clear. Mango is a tropical fruit, but the painting is not. (Magritte resolved that a painting can only be what it is, and that, in some sense, it exists in opposition to words.) Here the colors, red, orange, blue, and green, dominate the painting. Like other paintings in this series, flatness competes with illusion. In *Mango*, there are three layers – the ground, the dominant space, and the tendril-like transparent shapes that float or hover in front of the picture plane. Each element in the painting has its own defining texture, reminiscent of Frank Stella's *Circuits* from the 1980s, with one important exception. Whereas Stella refrains from the use of allegory or narrative, Thorne does precisely the opposite. Each shape and each texture in *Mango* alludes to a tropical allegory – a place in the mind, perhaps, like the French writer Raymond Roussel. Nevertheless, we understand *Mango* not simply as a return to formalism, but as a structural ensemble in the process of signifying a narrative expression, a tilt in the register of Modernism where painting once again renews its inner-voice and in doing so reflects the whole of nature as a neurological system dispersing synaptic charges.

Khajuraho is a place in India known for its Hindu temples and erotic stone carvings. Here transcendence is given to human bodies, the gods and the goddesses, posing in acts of defiant copulation, thus revealing the in-depth delights of Vatsyayana, accompanied by omnipresent monkeys who in the legend of Ramayana serve as attendants to these eternal hedonistic deities. In the painting, the expressive narrative is made manifest throughout the structural ensemble in red, white, orange, blue, and turquoise. The crescent moons and small boat-like forms move optically over the figurative ground, rehearsing the simultaneity of gestural marks, space, and the piercing light opening through the varied hues. The painting is less the sum of its parts than a holistic pulsation of color, space, and organic particles that transport energy from the surface to the retina, thus inciting a sensation of balance perfectly held in overt tension.

In the painting, titled *Istanbul*, there are vestiges of the past, a more direct form of extended allegory, where the conjugation of signs evokes a kind of trans-sensory experience. Located on the Bosphorus above the Dardanelles, Istanbul is an ancient city that tries to function as a modern metropolis. The past and present are perpetually clashing against one another, as are sacred and secular divisions that embody historical traces of conflict between East and West. The sounds of traffic compete with evocations for prayer among practicing Muslims throughout the day from dawn to dusk, as amplified Arabic voices are drowned in the reigning din of urban chaos. Despite the constant fractures and modulations between these various oppositions, one senses the intimacy that breathes through the scented air of Istanbul, a city where mosques and minarets share space with glass and steel artifices.

Again, the painting comes to rescue this intimacy of feeling that carries a heavy dose of complexity. A wedge of turquoise (the French word for Turkish) cuts into the center of the painting from the upper left corner with considerable force like the blade of a caliph. Various shapes, in deep blue and orange, each containing highly concentrated organic gestures, dominate the remaining space. Violet strands spiral through and around the caliph's blade suggesting women's necklaces, bangles, and a drifting scarf. Within this painting is the capturing of this meeting place between the hemispheres in terms of pure sensation. It is a painting that heralds some of Delacroix in its exuberance while bringing the romantic intrigue of the place into full view. Thorne's *Istanbul* argues in favor of the interiority of abstraction as the means to make this happen.

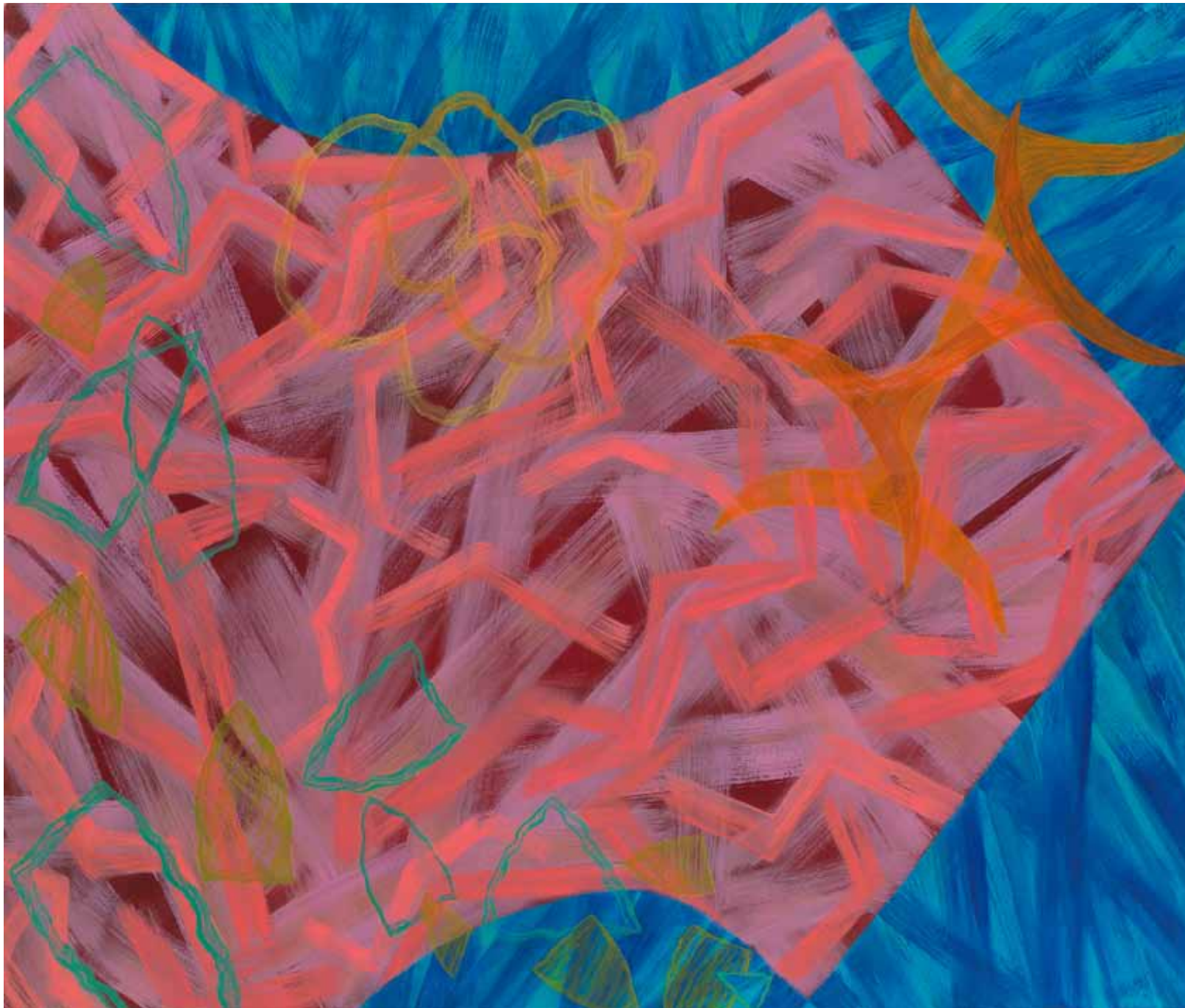
Robert C. Morgan is an international critic, artist, curator, and essayist who lives and works primarily in New York City. He holds both an advanced degree in Sculpture (MFA), a Ph.D. in contemporary art history, and currently lectures at Pratt Institute and the School of Visual Arts in New York. In addition to his many books – including El Fin del Mundo del Arte (1998), Bruce Nauman (2002), Del Arte a La Idea: Ensayos sobre arte conceptual (2003), and The Artist and Globalization (2008) – he received the first Arcale award in International Art Criticism from the Municipality in Salamanca.



Alma Del Mar, oil on canvas, 66 x 56



Istanbul, oil on canvas, 63 x 55



Khajarah, oil on canvas, 56 x 66



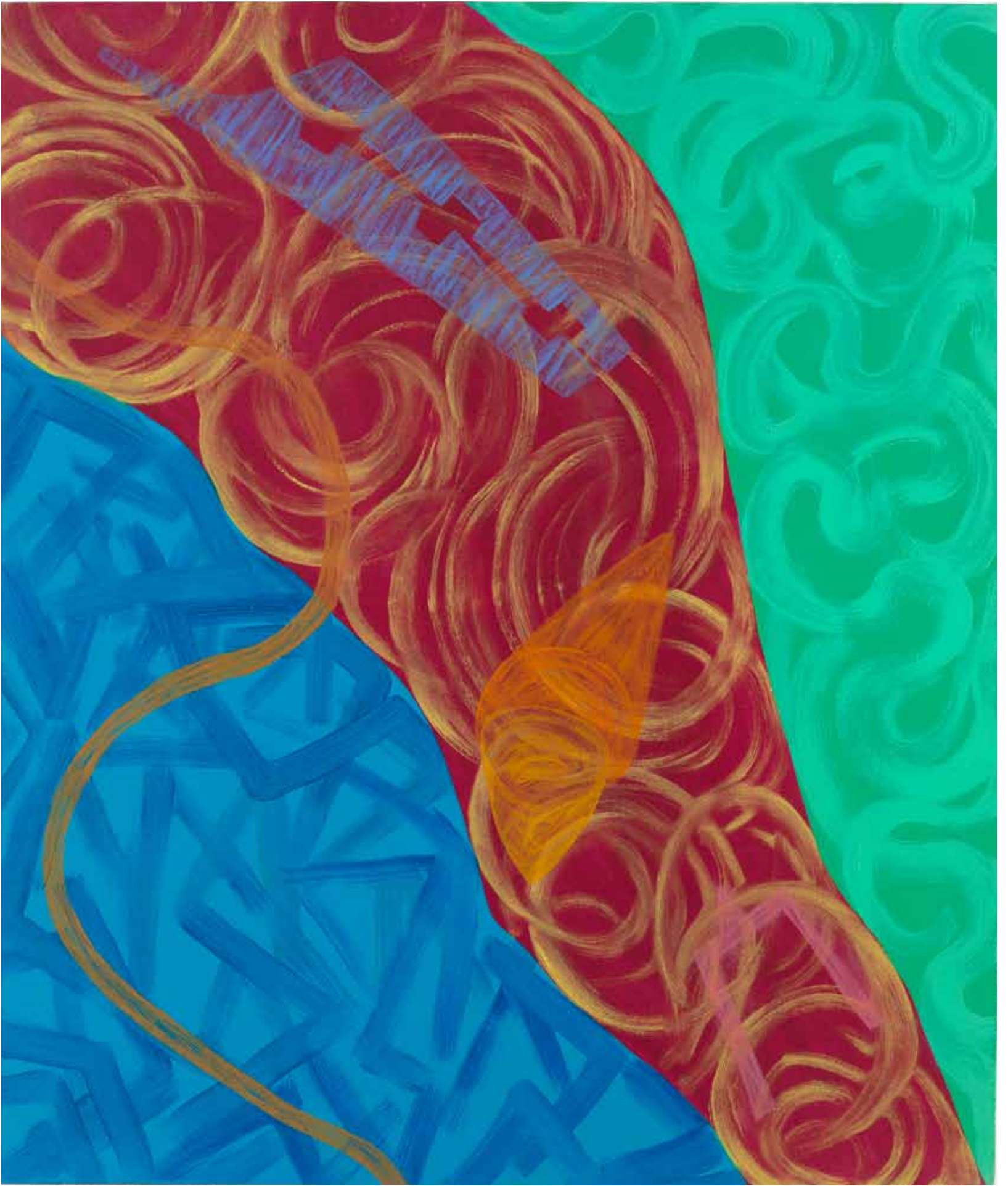
Khajarah Sun, oil on canvas, 59 x 50



Ranakapur, oil on canvas, 66 x 56



Hampi, oil on canvas, 56 x 66



Kerela, oil on canvas, 59 x 50



Shiva, oil on canvas, 66 x 56



Mt. Abu, oil on canvas, 56 x 66



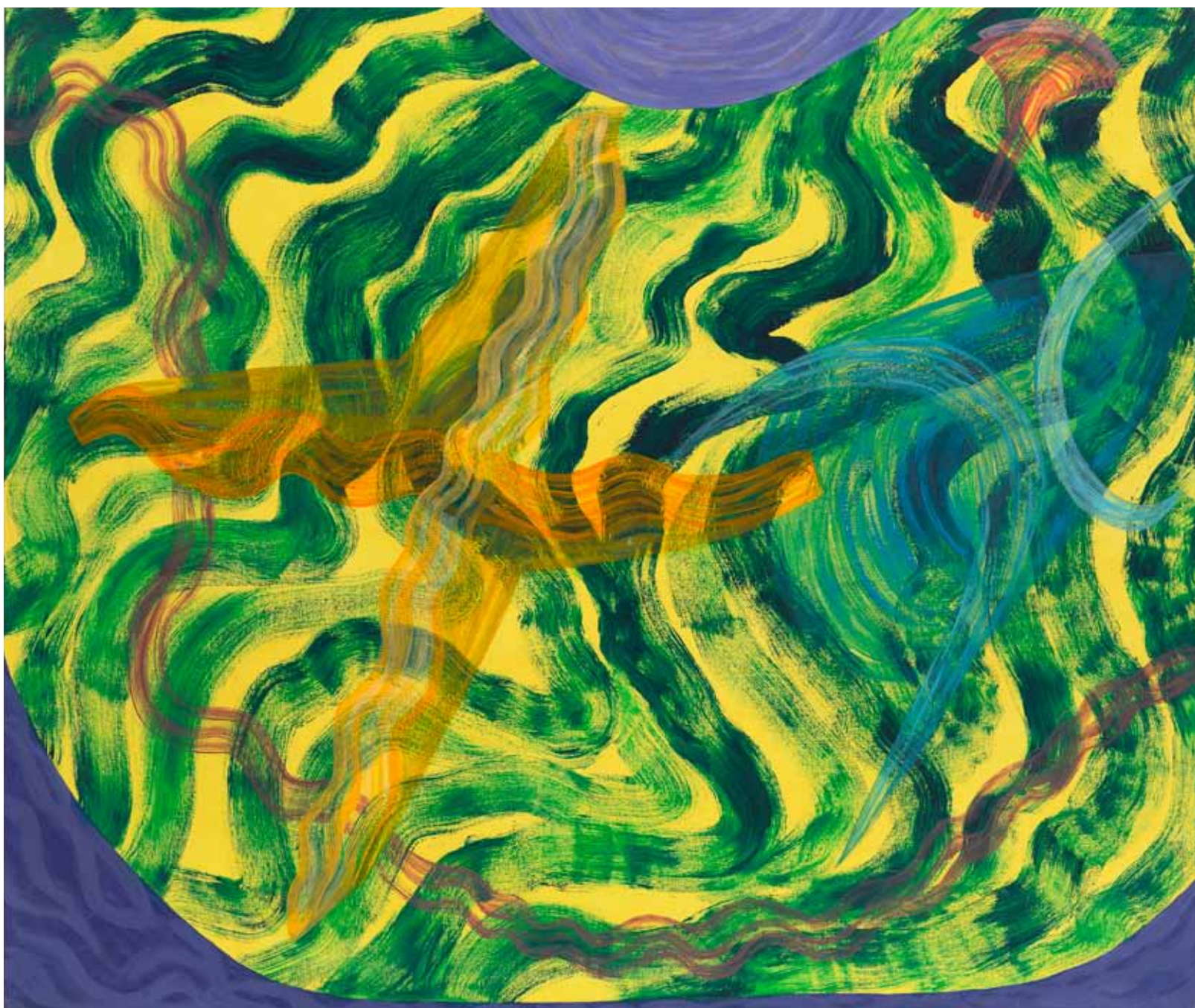
Tatua, oil on canvas, 66 x 56



Arco Iris oil on canvas, 59 x 49



Constanza, oil on canvas, 34 x 44



Los Velos, oil on canvas, 56 x 66



Dazzle, oil on canvas, 34 x 44



A Song, oil on canvas, 59 x 49



Playing, oil on canvas, 34 x 44



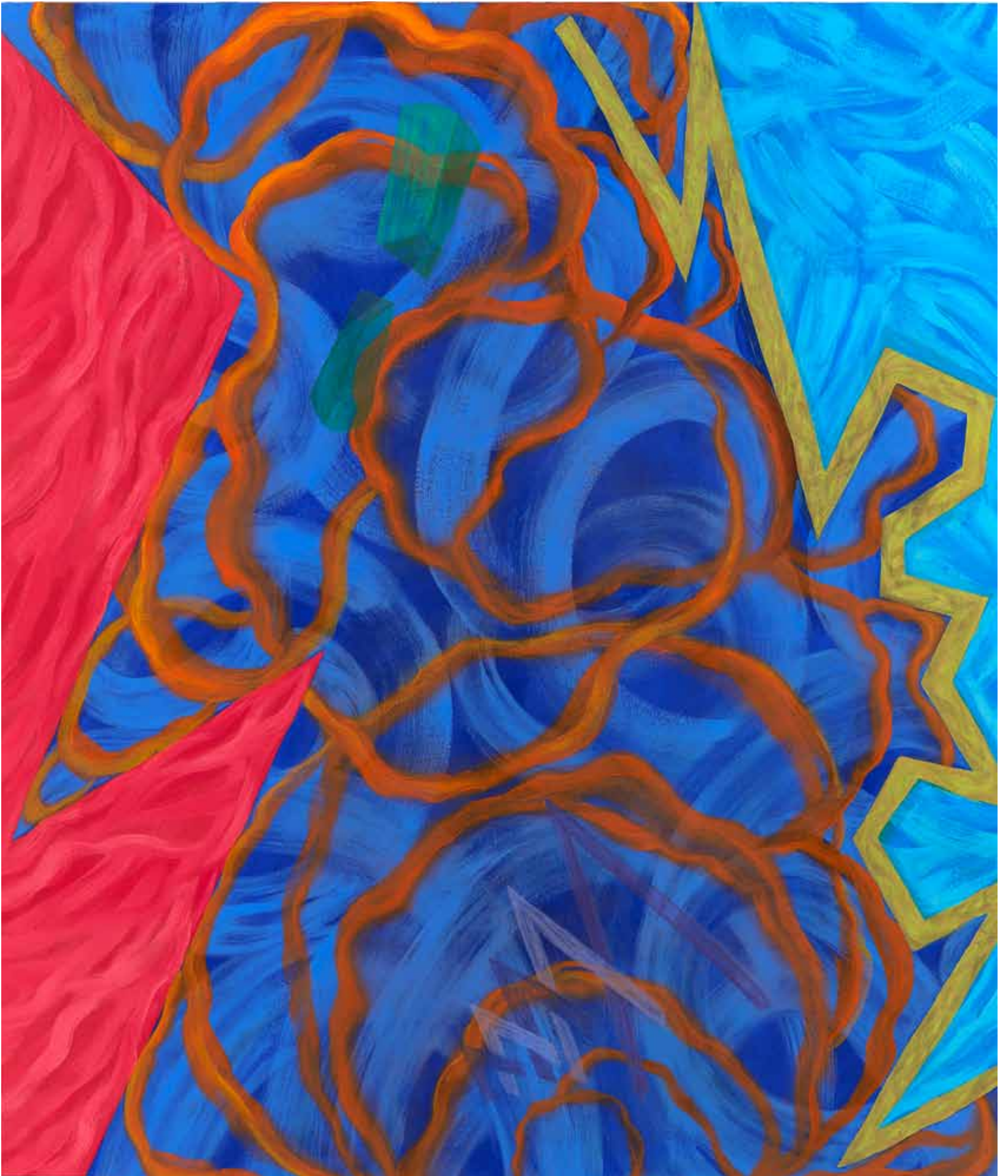
Your Eyes, oil on canvas, 56 x 66



Ranakapur, oil on canvas, 34 x 44



Fuego, oil on canvas, 66 x 56



Jarabaco, oil on canvas, 66 x 56

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2010

Sideshow Gallery-New York

2005

Chris Winfield Gallery, Carmel, California

2001

Andre Zarre Gallery, New York

2000

Retrospective: Museo de Las Americas, San Juan,
Puerto Rico

1998

A Retrospective: Museo Voluntariado De Las Casas
Reales, Casa de Bastidas, Santo Domingo, Dom., Rep.
A Retrospective: Museo Patronato Plaza de la Cultura
Santiago Apostol, Santiago, Dom., Rep.

1996

Ramapo College, New Jersey

1990

Graham Modern , New York

1989

Ruth Bachofner Gallery, Santa Monica, CA

1988

Graham Modern

1986

Ruth Bachofner Gallery, Los Angeles
William Halsey Gallery, Simon Center for the Arts,
College of Charleston, Charleston, SC

1985

Graham Modern

1983

Lincoln Center Gallery, Lincoln Center, New York
Dart Gallery, Chicago
Gloria Luria Gallery, Bay Harbor Island, FL

1982

Nina Freudenheim Gallery, Buffalo, NY
Willard Gallery, New York

1980

Willard Gallery, New York
Dart Gallery, Chicago

1979

The Clocktower: Institute for Art and Urban Resources,
New York

1977

Galerie Veith Turske, Cologne Art Fair, Cologne, Germany

1975

Alfred University, Alfred, NY

1974

Fischbach Gallery, New York

1973

Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2010

Sideshow Gallery, New York,
Janet Kurnatowsky Gallery, New York

2005 -10

Sideshow Gallery

2009

Sideshow Gallery "Works On Paper" Curated by Vared Lieb and
Richard Timperio.

2003

Biennale Internazionale Dell'Arte Contemporanea, Florence, Italy
Gallerie Alessandro Bagnai, Florence, Italy

2002

Gallery Uno Spazio Su Misura, Milan, Italy

2001

"PAINTED: Viewpoints of Recent Developments of Abstract
Painting in New York," curated by James Little at the Joe and
Emily Lowe Art Gallery, Hofstra Museum, Hofstra University,
Long Island, New York

2000

The Painting Center, New York, "Straight Painting," curated
by James Little

1998

R.B. Stevenson Gallery, La Jolla, California, "Illuminated
Under White Light"

R.B. Stevenson Gallery, La Jolla, California

1996 Museo Voluntariado de Las Casas Reales, Casa de Bastidas
Encuentro", Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

1995

Bertha and Karl Leubsdorf Art Gallery, Hunter
College, New York "News, Surprise and Nostalgia"
Corporate Art Directions, "Loan Show Lobby of 909 Third Ave.,"
New York

1994

Andre Zarre Gallery, The Exuberant 80s,
Andre Zarre Gallery, Through Thick and Thin

1993

Altos de Chavon, "Los Artistas Residentes," Dominican Republic

1991

Andre Emmerich Gallery, "Abstract Painting of the 90's",
curated by Barbara Rose.
New York Stock Exchange, Invitational Graham Modern, "Selections"

1989

Graham Modern, "Synthesis"

1988

Andre Zarre Gallery, "More Than Color", New York
Graham Modern, "Preview From The Past"

1987

One Penn Plaza, "Romantic Science", New York
American Academy in Rome, "American Acad. in Rome
Annual Exhibition", 1987 Prix de Rome Paintings, Rome

1986

Graham Modern, "Diptychs, Triptychs, Polyptychs"

1985

Pam Adler Gallery, "Paintings 1985," New York
The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, "The Art of the
1970's and 1980's", Ridgefield, CT
Albright-Knox Art Gallery, "An Affair of the Heart", Buffalo, NY
Kamakazie Gallery, "Non-Objective Painting", curated by
Stephen Westfall, New York
Graham Modern, "Summer Yellows"
College of Charleston, "Charleston Show", Charleston, SC

1984

Visual Arts Museum, "Heroic/Poetic", New York
Sidney Janis Gallery, "American Women Artists", New NY
Nina Freudenheim Gallery, Buffalo, NY

1983

One Penn Plaza, "Luxe Calme et Volupte: Nine Abstract
Artists & Their Use of Color", curated by John Yau, New NY
Graham Modern, "Small Works/Fine Works" Nine Abstract
Artists & Their Use of Color", curated by John Yau, New NY
Graham Modern, "Small Works/Fine Works"

1982

Mattingly Baker Gallery, Dallas (two-person show)
Guild Hall Museum, "Artists from the Edward F. Albee
Foundation", East Hampton, NY

1981

Whitney Museum of American Art, "1981 Biennial
exhibition", New York
Susan L. Usdan Gallery, "The Broken Surface", Bennington
College, VT. Traveled to Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York
Sidney Janis Gallery, "New Directions", curated
by Sam Hunter, New York
Nina Freudenheim Gallery, "Paper Work", Buffalo, NY

1980

Societe des Artistes Independents, Grand Palais, "L'Amerique
Aux Independents", Paris
Sidney Janis Gallery, "Seven Young Americans", New York
Landmark Gallery, "Drawings 1980"
Guild Hall Museum, "Paper-works for the Serious Collector",
East Hampton, NY

1979

Willard Gallery, New York
Neilson Gallery, "The Implicit Image", Boston
Susan Caldwell Gallery, "Generation", NY
Grey Art Gallery, "American Paintings: The Eighties",
curated by Barbara Rose, New York. Traveled to The
Contemporary Art Museum, Houston; American Cultural Center, Paris
Nina Freudenheim Gallery, Buffalo, NY

1974

Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, "Tenth
Anniversary Exhibition", Ridgefield, CT
State University of New York, "Tight and Loose", Potsdam & Albany

1973

Whitney Museum of American Art, "Whitney Annual", NY
Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, "Spring Annual", Ridgefield, CT
Hamburg Museum, "GEDOK American Women Artists
Show" Hamburg, Germany

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY
Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, CT
Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY
Codetel, a subsidiary of GTE, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, Texas
Krannert Museum, University of Illinois, Champaign, IL
Museo Voluntariado de las Casas Reales Casa de Bastidas, Santo Domingo,
Dominican Republic
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas
Prudential Corporation, Corporate Collection, New York, New York
Portland Museum, Portland, Maine
M. Smorgon Family Collection of Contemp. Art, Melbourne, Australia
Sloan Kettering Hospital, New York, NY
Dr. Mark Reiner, New York, NY

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

2005

James Kalm, "Works on Paper" review of a show at Side
Show Gallery, Brooklyn, New York for the *Brooklyn Rail*.

2001

Morgan, Robert C., "Mythical Journeys, Power and Flight,"
essay for the catalogue of one person show at Andre Zarre Gallery, New York
Morgan, Robert C., "PAINTED: The Presence of the Past,"
essay for the catalogue of the show at the Joe and Emily
Lowe Art Gallery, Hofstra Museum, Hofstra University, Long Island, NY
Marceles, Eduardo, "La Pintura metafisica de Joan Thorne,"
Vida Hoy, November 2, New York

2000

Westfall, Stephen, "Wild Beauty," essay in catalogue for
retrospective exhibition at Museo de Las Americas, March, April
Morgan C., Robert, "Straight Painting," essay for brochure
of the exhibition at the Painting Center, New York, October
Barrios, Mario Alegre, Sunday, "Thorne en el espejo de su obra,"
Por Dentro El Nuevo Dia, Sunday, March 5.

1998

Vine, Richard. *Art In America Magazine*, June, review of retrospective museum exhibition at: Museo Voluntariado De Las Casas Reales, Casa De Bastidas, Santo Domingo, Dom. Rep. Southgate, Therese M. MD, Cover of JAMA *The Journal of American Medicine Association*, September 16.

1991

Dumas, Ann. "Joan Thorne." *Arts Magazine*, January.

1989

Clarke, Orville O. "Joan Thorne." *ArtScene*, May.
Geer, Suvian. "Joan Thorne." *Los Angeles Times*, 5 May.

1988

Malon, Lenore. "Joan Thorne." *Artnews*, October, p. 184.

1986

Smith, Nancy. "Thorne Exhibition Assaults the Senses." *The News and Courier*, Charleston, S.C., 27 April.
Cohen, Ronny H. "Drawing Now in N.Y.C.: The Pictorial Image of the 1980's." *Drawing Magazine*.
Gardner, Colin. "The Art Galleries." *Los Angeles Times*, 11 April, p. VI 18.
McDonald, Robert. "Enigmatic Abstractions." *Artweek*, 26 April.
Rose, Barbara. *American Painting 20th Century*. New York: Rizzoli International Corp.

1985

Westfall, Stephen. "Dance Electric." *Art in America*, December, p. 98-101.
Schwabsky, Barry. "Joan Thorne." *Arts Magazine*, October.
Glueck, Grace. "Joan Thorne." *The New York Times*, 26 July.
Raynor, Vivien. "Joan Thorne." *The New York Times*, 14 June.
Russell, John. "Painting 1985." *The New York Times*, 1 February.
Brenson, Michael. "Luxe Calme Et Volupte." *The New York Times*, 8 January 1985.
enson, Michael. "Luxe Calme Et Volupte." *The New York Times*, 8 January 1985.
Smith, Edward Lucie. *American Art Now*, New York: William Morrow & Co., Inc.

1984

Harrison, Helen. "A Show to Challenge Our Perceptions." *The New York Times*, 3 June.

1983

Artner, Alan G. "Joan Thorne, Lynda Benglis." *Chicago Tribune*, 25 November.
Yau, John. "Joan Thorne's Visionary Universe." *Arts*, September.
Cohen, Ronny. "Joan Thorne." *Artnews*, January.
Westfall, Stephen. "Joan Thorne." *Arts*, January.

1982

Parks, Christa Lancaster. "Joan Thorne." *Arts*, October.

1981

Trucco, Terry. "Sensations of the Year." *Portfolio*, September-October.
Whitney Museum of American Art, *1981 Biennial Exhibition*. Exhibition catalog.
Schjeldahl, Peter. "The Hallelujah Trail." *The Village Voice*, 24 March.
Zaya. "Llamenaslo Pluralismo." *Guadalimar*, March-April.
Smith, Roberta. "Biennial Blues." *Art in America*, April.

1980

Bouissit, Maiten. "Peinture: le nouveau débarquement des Américains." *Le Matin de Paris*, 19 May.
Artner, Alan G. "Art: Joan Thorne." *Chicago Tribune*, 23 November.
Walker, James Faure. "Babylonian Oasis." *Artscribe*, April, pp. 16-23.
Wohlfert, Lee. "Young Artists New Yorkers are Talking About." *Town & Country*, September, pp. 199-207
Kramer, Hilton. "Seven Young Americans." *The New York Times*, 18 April.
Zimmer, William. "Seven Young Americans." *SoHo Weekly News*, 18 April.
Larson, Kay. "Seven Young Americans." *The Village Voice*, 28 April.
Michael, Jacques. "Artists Américains Pour 1980." *Le Monde*, 23 April.

1979

Tennant, Donna. "Technique Preoccupies Painters in Lee Gallery Show." *Houston Chronical*, 12 October.
Foster, Hal. "A Tournament of Roses." *Artforum*, November, p. 63-67.
Rickey, Carrie. "Joan Thorne." *Artforum*, September.
Yau, John. "Joan Thorne at the Clocktower." *Art in America*, November.
Perreault, John. "Rose and the Thorns that Scratch." *SoHo Weekly News*, 27 September, p. 59.
Frank, Peter. "Rates of Exchange." *Village Voice*, May.
Rose, Barbara. *American Painting: The Eighties*, Grey Art Gallery, New York. Exhibition catalog.
Kramer, Hilton. "Neo-Modernists-A Sense of Deja-Vu." *The New York Times*, 23 September, p. D 31.

1978

Institute of Contemporary Art, Eight Abstract Painters, Philadelphia. Exhibition catalog.
Ratcliff, Carter. Thick Paint, University of Chicago, Chicago. Exhibition catalog.
Weintraub, Linda. "Eight Abstract Painters." *Arts Exchange*, Philadelphia.

1974

Heinemann, Susan. "Joan Thorne", *Artforum*, December.
Frackman, Noel. "Joan Thorne." *Arts*, November.

1973

Baro, Gene. *Joan Thorne*. Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Exhibition catalog.

1972

Picard, Lil. *GEDOK American Women Artists Show*, Hamburg Museum, Hamburg, West Germany. Exhibition catalog.
Goldberg, Lenore. "Four Painters." *Changes Magazine*, October.

AWARDS

2006 - Adolf Gottlieb Foundation Grant for Painting
2001 - Pollock Krasner Foundation Grant in Painting
1986 - Prix de Rome, American Academy in Rome
Pollock Krasner Foundation Grant in Painting
1983 - National Endowment for the Arts, Fellowship in Painting
1980 - New York State Council on the Arts, Grant for Painting
1979 - National Endowment for the Arts, Fellowship in Painting
1976 - Grant in Painting, Rhode Island State Council on the Arts
1975 - New York State Council on the Arts, Grant for Painting
1974 - Grant in Painting, Rhode Island State Council on the Arts
1972 - Artist of the Year, Aldrich Foundation



Artist studio

Photograph by Hans Namuth

