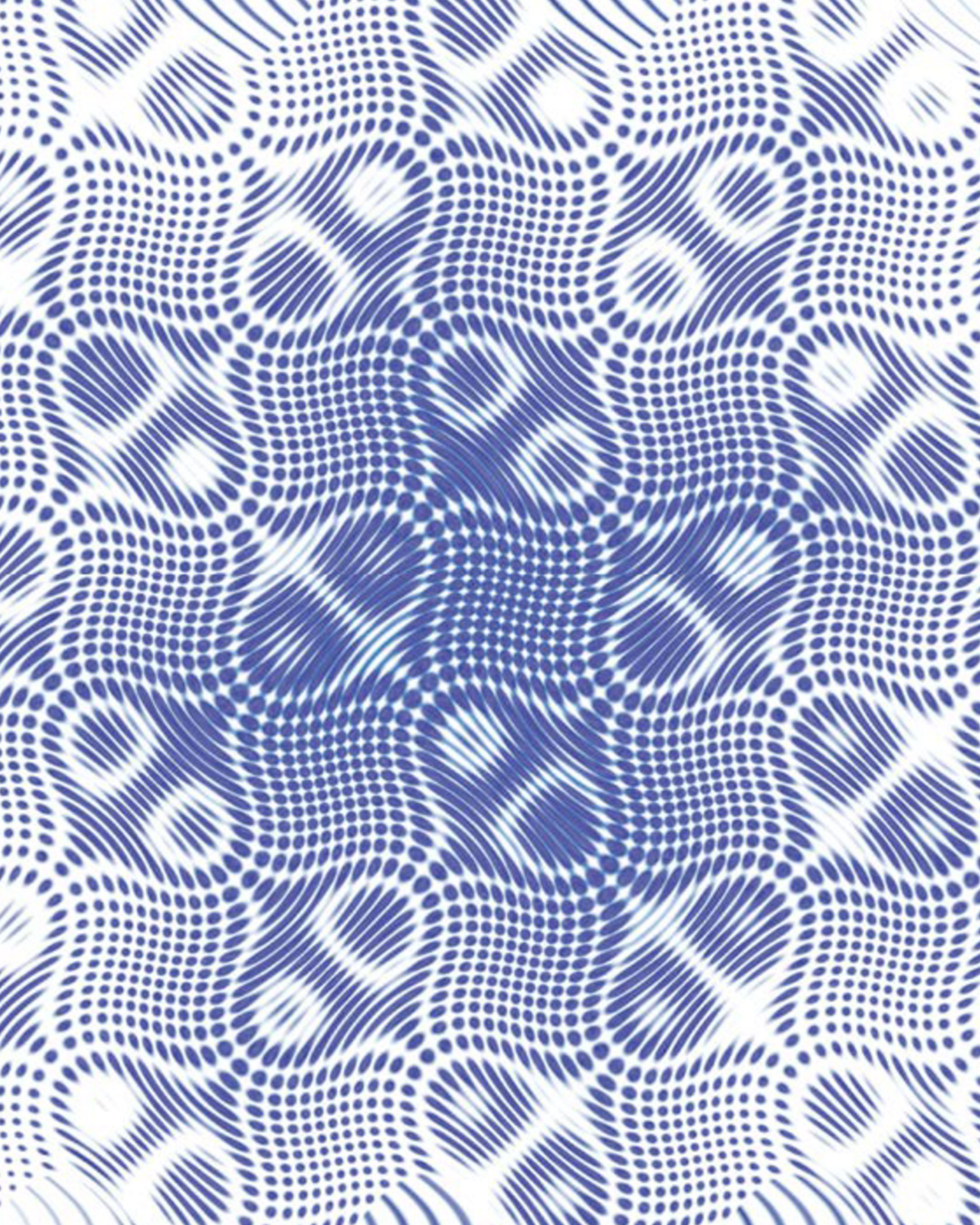
Art by Sandra Altwerger



ABSTRACTS

CURATED / JURIED BY Lyla Rye

DESIGNED BY Eliza Trent-Rennick



ABSTRACTS 2025

FOREWORD BY ARNIE GUHA

Abstraction is not an absence. It is a decision.

To abstract is to strip away the familiar scaffolding of representation and ask a more difficult question: what remains when narrative recedes? What persists when image is released from obligation to describe?

The works gathered in ***ABSTRACTS***, curated and juried by Lyla Rye, demonstrate that abstraction is not a single language but a constellation of methods. Across painting, digital media, photography, drawing, sculpture, and mixed media, the artists in this exhibition approach abstraction not as retreat, but as inquiry. Form becomes structure. Colour becomes an event. Gesture becomes argument.

Some works carve space. Some map pattern. Some lean into material process; others into digital construction. Some are quiet. Others declare themselves boldly. What binds them is not style, but intention, a commitment to exploring what visual language can do when it is freed from depiction.

In a moment saturated with image and immediacy, abstraction asks us to slow down. It resists instant readability. It rewards attention. It invites the viewer into a more active role: not decoding a message but participating in meaning.

Lyla Rye's curatorial vision has brought together an expansive and diverse group of artists, each working from a distinct vantage point. The result is not a unified aesthetic, but a dynamic field of approaches; evidence that abstraction remains a vital and evolving force within contemporary practice.

This catalogue, designed with clarity and care by Eliza Trent-Rennick, extends the life of the exhibition beyond the gallery walls. It documents not only the works themselves, but the range of conversations that abstraction continues to generate.

The Aird Gallery exists to provide a platform for artists across Ontario to present rigorous, thoughtful work. ***ABSTRACTS*** reflect that mandate fully. It demonstrates that abstraction is not a historical chapter closed in the twentieth century, but an ongoing experiment — one that continues to expand, fracture, and renew itself.

On behalf of the Aird Board and our partner societies, I extend sincere thanks to Lyla Rye for her discernment and generosity in shaping this exhibition, and to all participating artists for the strength and depth of their contributions.

Abstraction endures because it asks us not simply to look, but to engage. Thank you for engaging with the Aird and with our shared commitment to the arts in Ontario.

Arnie Guha

Executive Chair

ABSTRACT REFLECTIONS

CURATORIAL ESSAY BY LYLA RYE

When invited to pick works for this exhibition one of the first things I did was to look up definitions of “abstract”. As a person who has looked at a lot of art and as a maker myself, I wondered why I am drawn to it.

A scientific abstract is essentially a summary, but what would a visual summary look like? Could it be a blurry photo, or a pixelated one, or a perfectly clear one that is unrecognizable? Maybe coloured shapes in a painting that sum up salient chromatic features or optical phenomena? How about a smooth sculpture that removes all but the essential form? Yet many of these examples begin with a real world referent and this is not the only way abstraction comes about.

Another definition of abstract points to it as being most importantly conceptual (“existing in thought or as an idea” - Wikipedia), rather than a concrete thing. Though of course, concrete is a material thing and there are abstract sculptures made of concrete. Perhaps this definition is most salient to performance-based work that can never be truly represented through documentation and so exists most through the memory of the experience.

Abstraction is often thought to make a work of art more universal, yet each of us comes to an artwork with a very particular cultural lens and

an individual repository of life experiences. And this doesn't begin to include how we might be influenced by what we had for lunch or how intimidated we are by that museum guard in the corner of the gallery. All these factors affect what we think about when we see an artwork on a particular day. This means, perversely perhaps, that abstraction can lead to the most intimately individual encounter for an open-minded and willing viewer.

This reminded me of a conversation I once had around the work of Agnes Martin, the Canadian/American painter who was known for making grids by hand. At first one might think of them as the ultimate act of abstraction but couldn't they actually be representations of graph paper, the folds of a map or squared off farm fields? Can anything be truly non-referential? And what does the act of removing referents do to an artwork? Maybe the one thing it really can do is bring attention, most eloquently, to the actions of the maker. Each tiny squiggle in Agnes Martin's grids reveal a very specific motion as her hand traced a line in a particular way at a particular moment of time.

Another Wikipedia definition of abstraction describes scientists "going from particular facts collected into one general idea". This made me think about developmental psychology and watching my daughter's acquisition of language, although, in fact, it occurred in the opposite trajectory. For a time she applied the word "dog" to all animals, then only to a subset of furry four-legged creatures. Her language skills were at a nascent stage so I couldn't interrogate her as

to whether this only included animals that walked versus those that hopped, climbed, glided or galloped. Yet what I found fascinating was that for a certain period the word “dog” encompassed a large, generalized group of animals and as such represented an abstract idea. For children, it seems, understanding moves in the opposite direction, going from the general to the specific. What about for artists?

It seems to me that in the visual arts, abstraction allows an artist to distill an idea, emotion, or sensory experience (add more to the list here…) to its essential communicative power. The artwork might have a very specific origin for the maker, but remains open-ended for viewers. Each audience member comes to that image, object, or situation with their own unique experience and worldview. As such, the abstract artwork exists as much in the mind of the viewer as it does in the thing itself.

Lyla Rye

ABSTRACTS 2025

LIST OF ARTISTS

Doug Adams
Maria-Bida Albulet
Sandra Altwerger
Hadeel Alzoubi
Jarrod Barker
Peter Barron
Peggy Bell
Leslie Bertin
Ioana Bertrand
Ilija Blanusa
Lorraine Thorarinson Betts
Monica Burnside
Mike Callaghan
Jeannie Catchpole
Emily Conlon
Anne-Marie Cosgrove
Damon Couto-Hill
Edward Donald
Holly Dunlap
Agata Dworzak-Subocz
Azar Ebrahimi
Jill Finney
Saremifar Firouzeh
Julie Florio
Elissa Gallander
Monica Gewurz
Kathy Granger Tucker
Arnie Guha
Diana Hamer
Katherine Hartel
Katharine Harvey
Janet Hendershot
Em Leighten Hern
Ted Karkut
HyunRyoung Kim
Rupen Kunugus
Maureen Lowry
Dimitrije Martinovic
Lisa Mason
Claudia McKnight
Carole Milon
Leah Oates
Ovidiu Petca
Ann Piché
Fraser Radford
Leena Raudvee
Dale M Reid
Heather Rigby
Liz Ruest
Colleen Schindler
Pearl Sequeira
Sara Shields
Shawn Skeir
Nancy Simmons Smith
Alayne Spafford
Marisa Swangha
Karen Taylor
Sarah Thompson
Terry Torra
Margaret Wasiuta
Holly Winters
Anna Yuschuk

Carving

SPACE



Rupen Kunugus

Stealth/DFS

Architectural paint on primed MDF

39.5" x 39.5"

$850



Alayne Spafford

Fiftyfive-12

Collage, acrylic, oil on canvas

48" x 36"

$5000



Lisa Mason

Hold On

Acrylic on canvas

18" x 18"

$600



Katharine Harvey

Art Deco III

Acrylic paint on ACM

40" x 50"

$8000



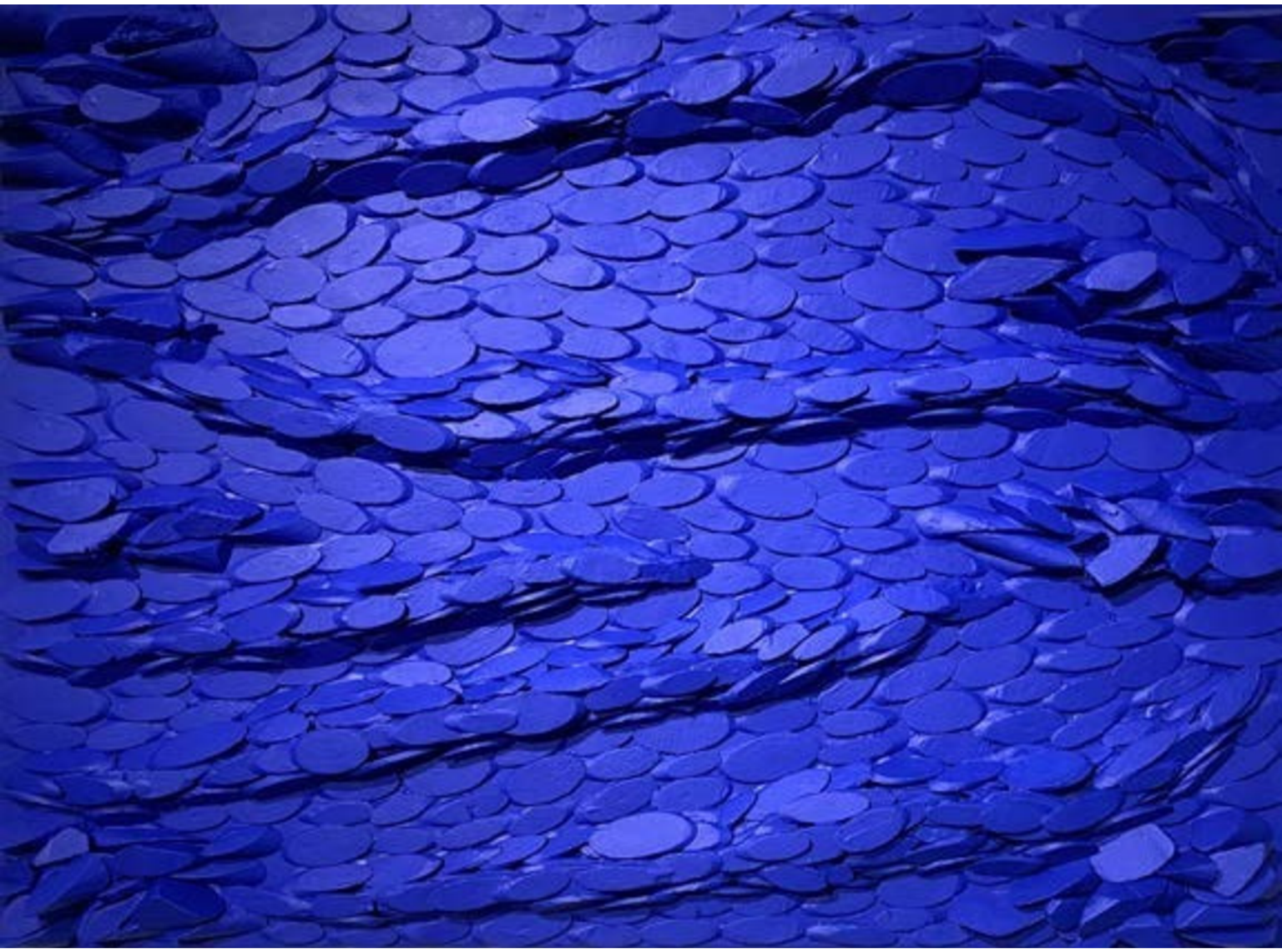
Heather Rigby

On Top Of The World

Pine-oak and enamel paint

9" x 12"

$1200



Saremifar Firouzeh

Dancing Under The Leaves

Mixed media on canvas

30" x 40"

$1800



Holly Dunlap

Dulcinea I, 2020
Digital print
12" x 15"
$350, edition of 10



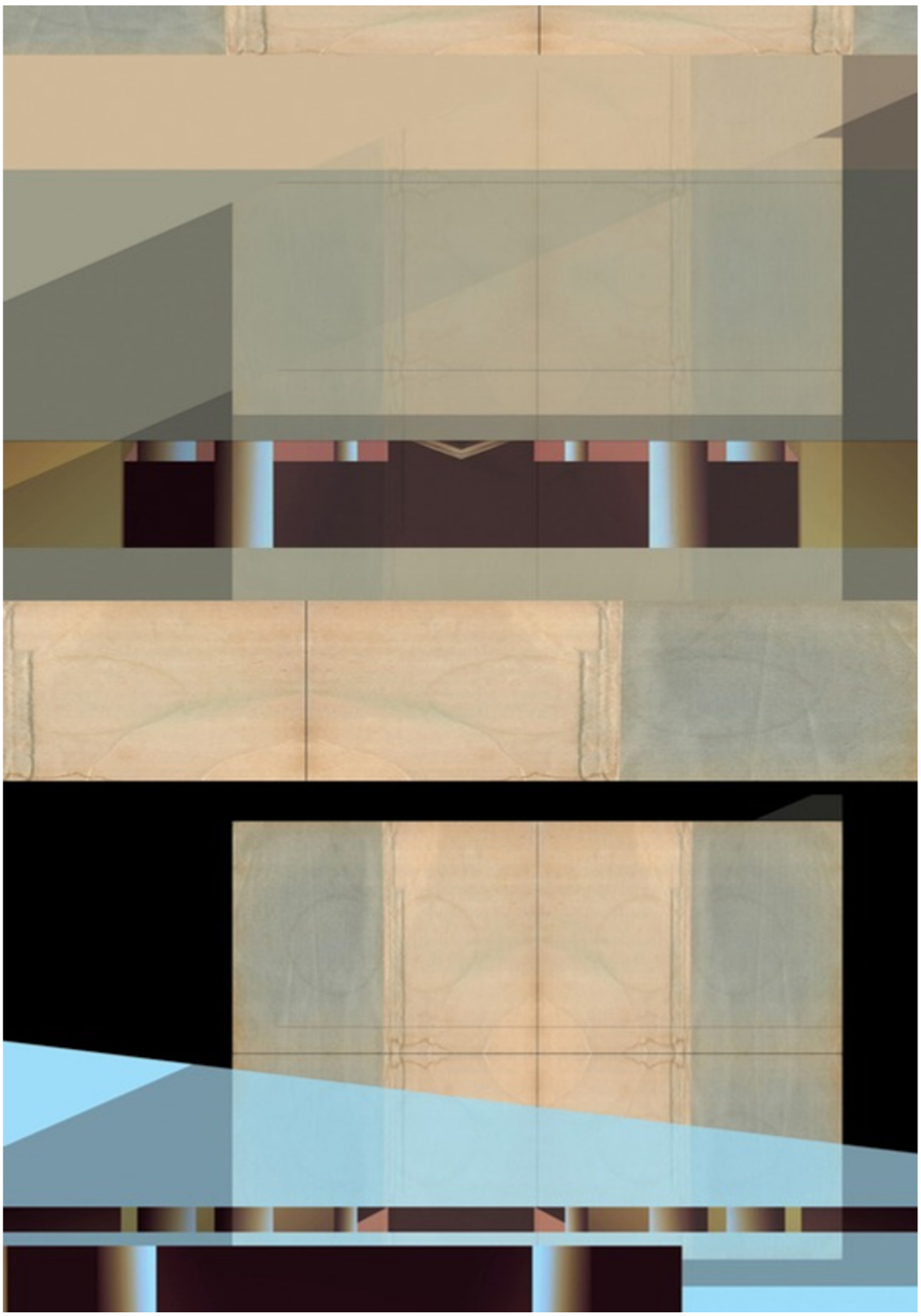
Julie Florio

Immemorial

Digital photograph on archival paper

17" x 22"

$250



Ovidiu Petca

Urban Aesthetics II, 2024

Digital art

26" x 37"

Guided by Progress



Fraser Radford

Storming The Citadel

Acrylic on canvas

30" x 60"

$3600



Lorraine Thorarinson Betts

Five November
Painting, acrylic on panel, black frame
12” x 12”
$600



Margaret Wasiuta

Land Of Desire 2

Acrylic on canvas

36" x 36"

$4000



Leslie Bertin

Portal Paths
Ink on yupo paper
mounted on wood
12"
$350



Carole Milon

Cross Currents
Graphite, ink, collage
on cotton rag paper
13" x 15"
$600



Elissa Gallander

Conversations #2, 2024

Bamboo and telephone wire

60" x 69" x 28" dimensions vary

$2000



Ilija Blanusa

Continuous 10

Pencil crayon

18" x 24"

$250



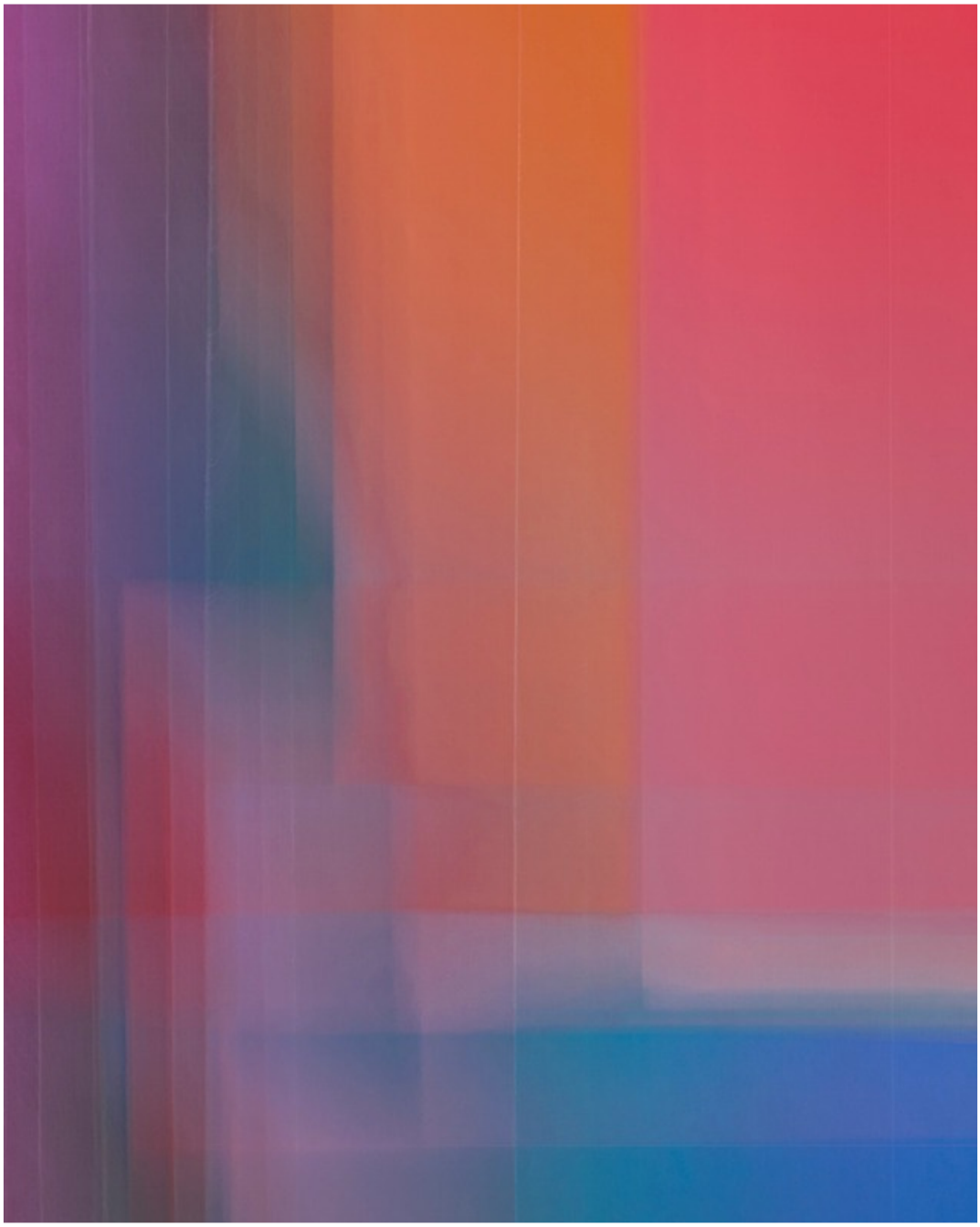
Liz Ruest

Unexcavated Strata

Digital collage

24" x 24"

$1300



Ann Piché

Colour Plane 9

Archival Digital Print

16" x 20"

$720 (unframed), edition 1 of 5

NATURAL ABSTRACTION



Maureen Lowry

Feelings Of Spring

Acrylic paint on canvas

36" x 48"

$2500



Monica Burnside

Unexplored Land

Oil on gallery style canvas

24" x 36"

$1700



Colleen Schindler

The Piece That's Closest To You
Oil Pastel on paper
29 x 21"
NFS



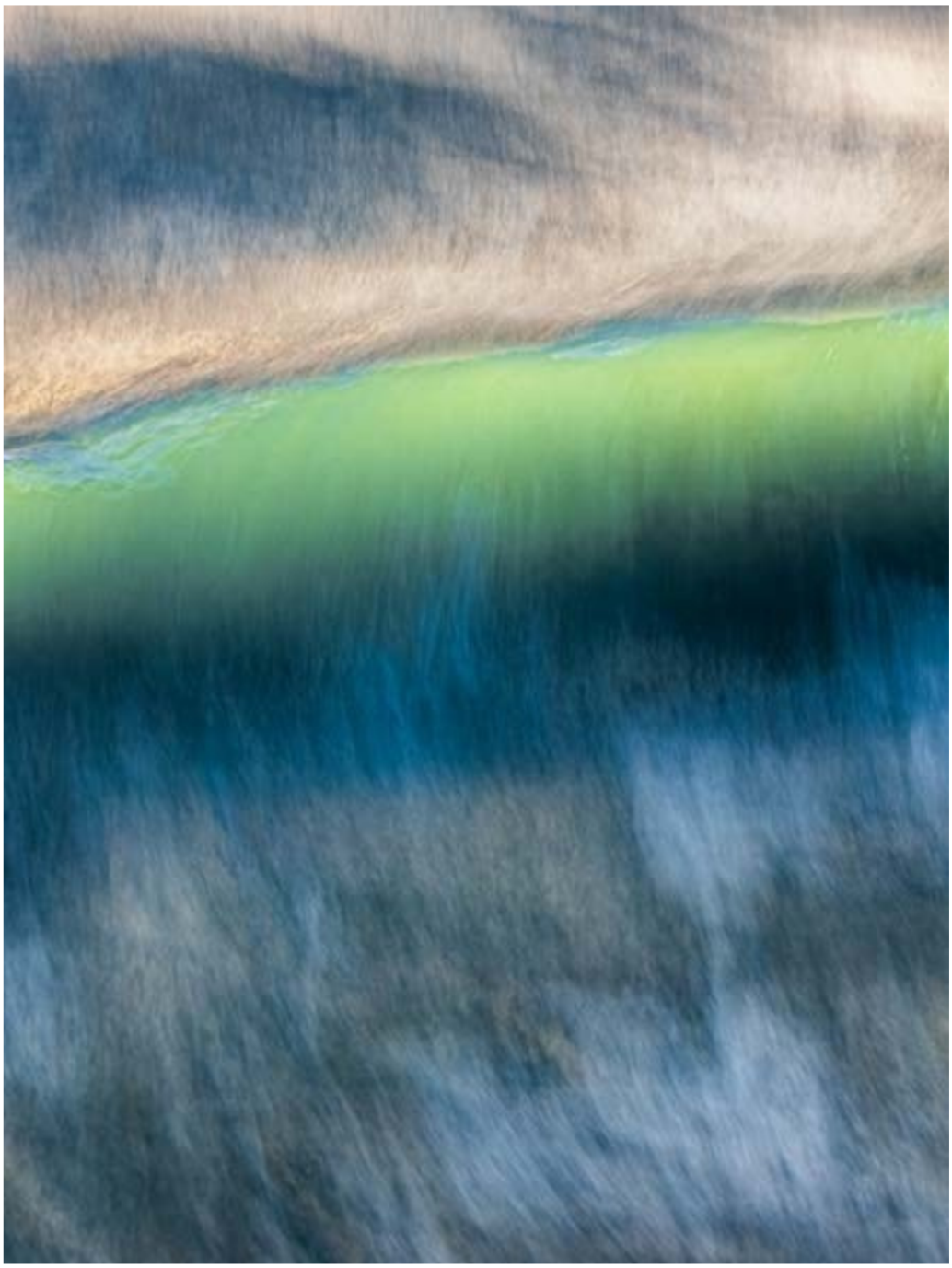
Maria-Bida Albulet

Awaken
Oil on canvas
36" x 48"
NFS



Marisa Swangha

Land Loss
Acrylic on canvas
11" x 14"
$900



Jill Finney

Breaking
Photography
24" x 32"
$500



Ioana Bertrand

Divergence
Acrylic on canvas
24″ x 18″
$600



Emily Conlon

Unearthed I
Etching, aquatint, and chine colle on Arches
18" x 15"
$100



Sarah Thompson

Winter Study 5

Charcoal and soft pastel on paper

8.5" x 12"

$275


Seeking
Pattern



Anna Yuschuk

Primary Drift Green

Acrylic on canvas

48" x 36"

$5000



Kathy Granger Tucker

Transatlantic Message



Holly Winters

Three Ancestors With Ovum And Embryos

Acrylic on watercolour paper

18" x 24"

$300



Arnie Guha

Pink Lemonade

Digital painting and collage

24" x 24"

$500



Karen Taylor

Under The Microscope - Fennel Cells

Acrylic and graphite on paper

9" x 12"

$120


Relishing Chaos



Damon Couto-Hill

Sour Patches

Acrylic on collaged canvas

$25^{5/8}$″ x 20″

$900



Jarrod Barker

Liminal Space #4

Acrylic on canvas

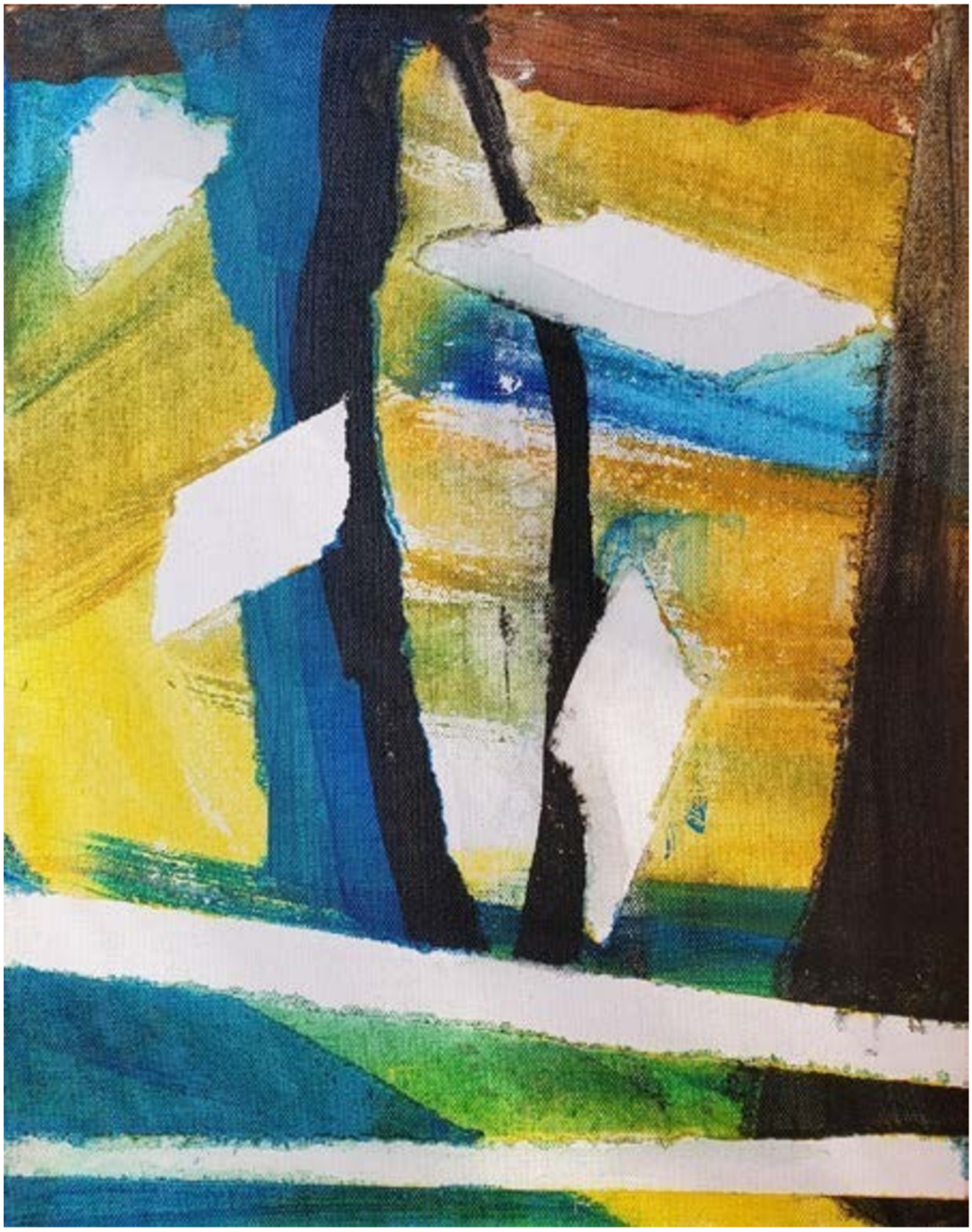
16" x 20"

$700



Leena Raudvee

Undergrowth
Acrylic paint, collage on corrugated plastic board
12" x 16"
$475



Katherine Hartel

Ukraine War Zone

Acrylic on canvas

12″ x 9″

$250



Doug Adams

Joys Of Diversity
Mixed media
22″ x 30″
$2500



Em Leighton Hern

Black

Acrylic and mixed media

20" x 20"

$750



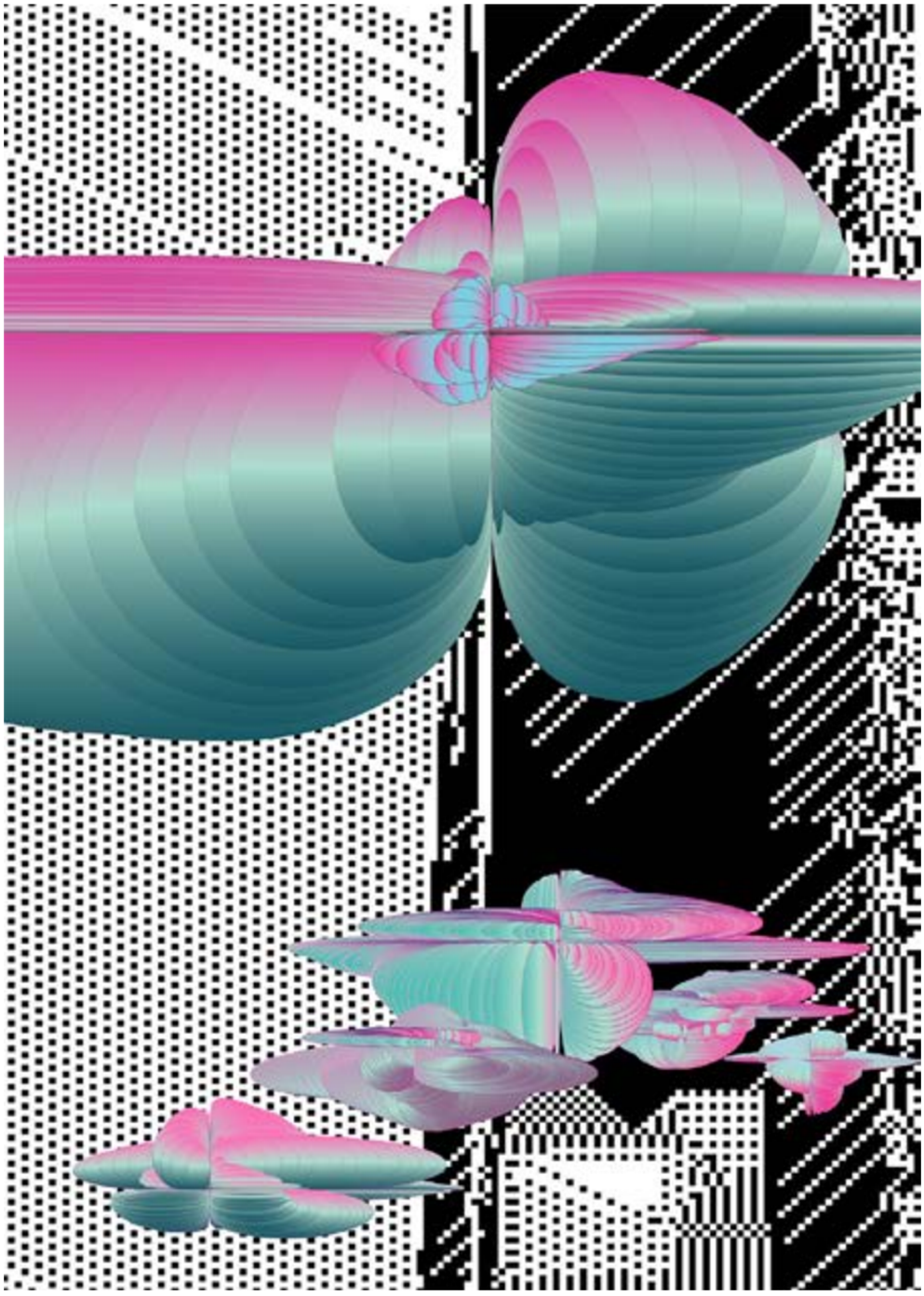
Peter Barron

Disintegration And Destruction #21

Collaged mixed media on paper

15" x 11"

$250



Agata Dworzak-Subocz

Synergy_31
Digital art
50 x 70 cm
$500



Shawn Skeir

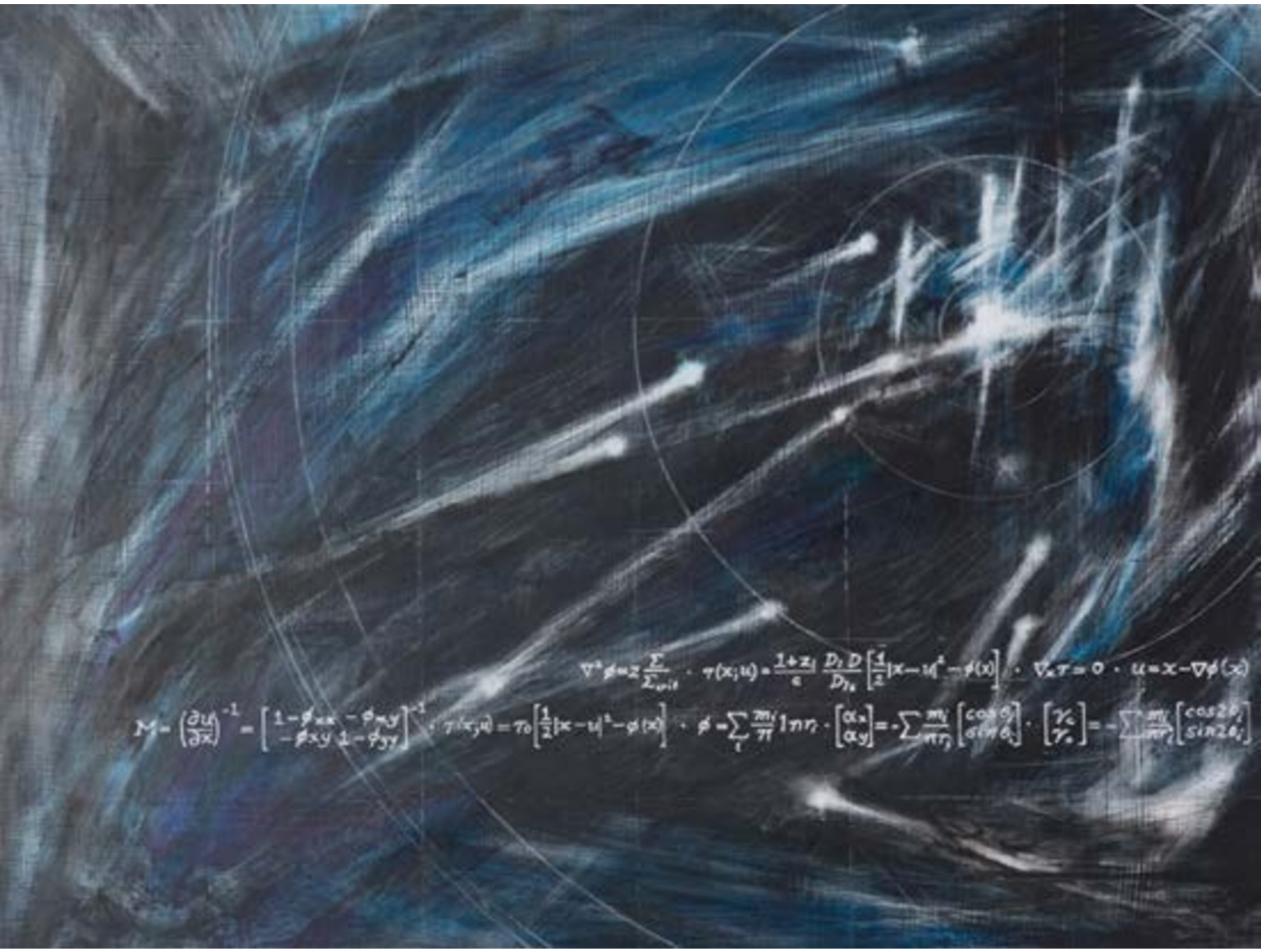
Abstract (Red And Blue)

Acrylic and liquid glass on wood panel

30" x 30"

$2700


Searching
FOR
ORDER



Diana Hamer

Chaos And Order 2

Acrylic

22” x 28”

NFS



Dale M Reid

Oyster Mushroom 2

Silver gelatin print

16" x 16"

$3400



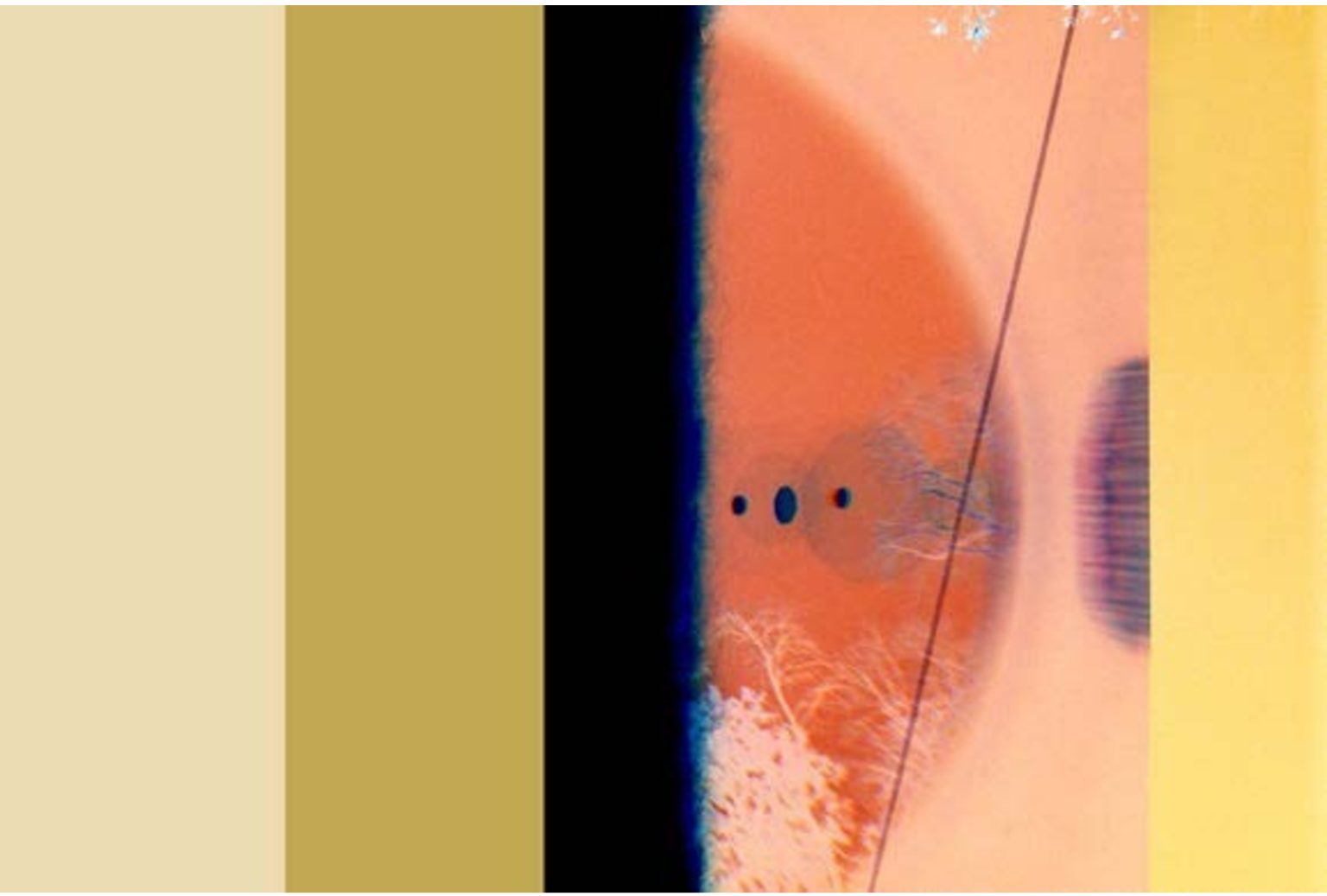
Ted Karkut

India 2

Charcoal, colour pencil, maple leaves, and turmeric on paper

32.5” x 28.5”

$800



Leah Oates

Transitory Space, Prospect Park, Brooklyn, NYC

Color photography shot in camera on 35 mm film

16" x 20"

$1200



Peggy Bell

There's Enough

Acrylic on linen on birch panel

24" x 24"

$1000



Nancy Simmons Smith

Fractured Landscape
Acrylic
36″ x 36″
$2200

Sensory Perception



Azar Ebrahimi

Like A Flower II

Oil on canvas

16" x 12"

$450



Terry Torra

Wayfare

Oil on canvas

36" x 48"

$10,000



Sara Shields

Soma Garden

Acrylic on canvas

16" x 12"

$2000



Sandra Altwerger

Sky West
Acrylic on canvas
48" x 48"
$4500



Mike Callaghan

Calmerait
Digital painting
24" x 16"
$750



Edward Donald

This Evening Place
Pencil on paper
$4^{3/4}$″ x 6″
$500



Claudia McKnight

The Texture Of Silence
Desiccated oil, cheddar, and liquid soap on aluminum
8.5” x 12”
NFS



Hadeel Alzoubi

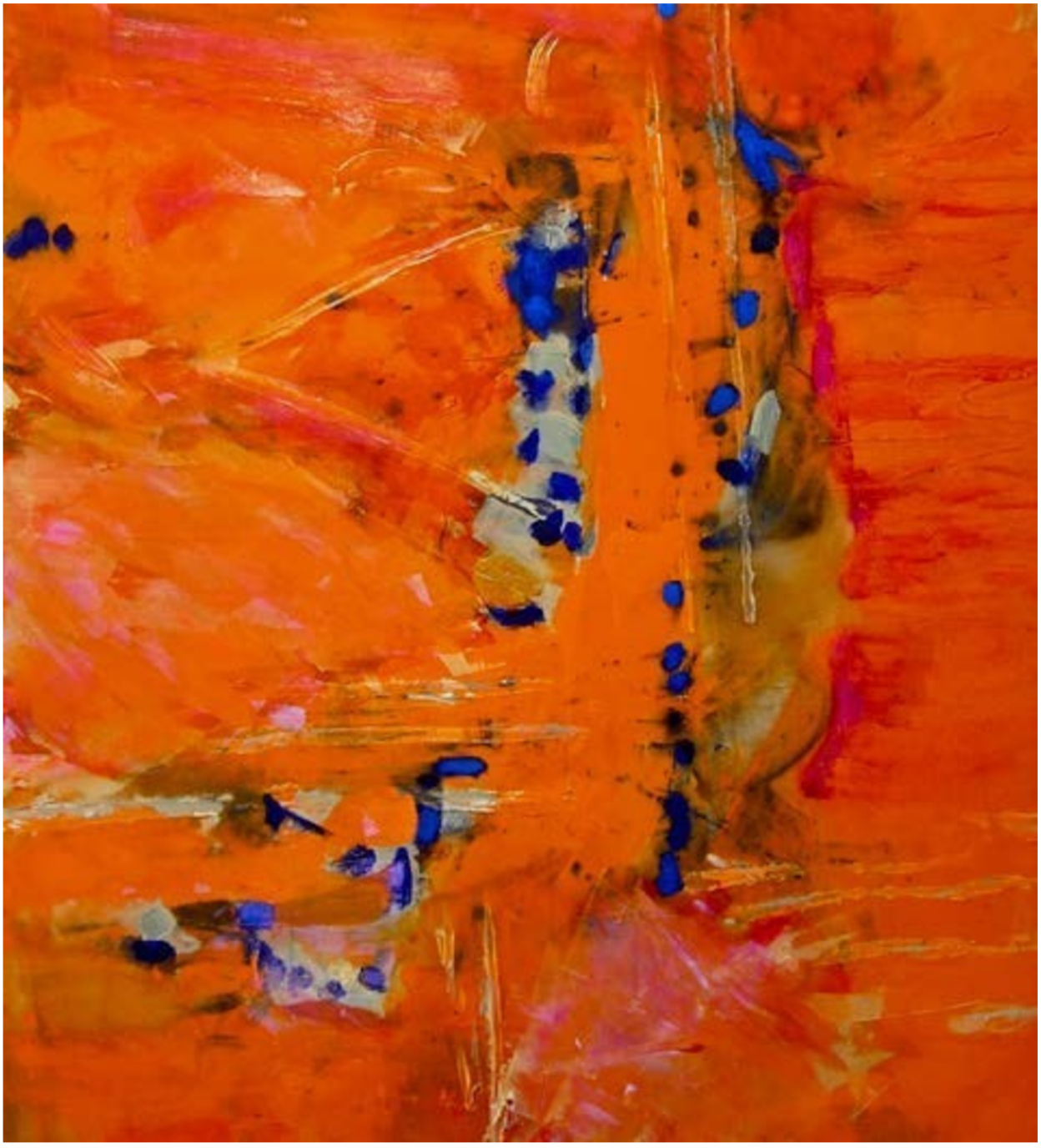
Perplex No. 14
Concrete, acrylic mediums and glitter on canvas board
16" x 16"
$2650



Monica Gewurz

Urban Mirage

Mixed media, natural pigments,
metallic foil and acrylics
24” x 18”
$800



Silent Reversal
(The Hanged Man)
Acrylic and polymers on canvas
46" x 42"
$4400

Janet Hendershot



HyunRyoung Kim

Untitled 12-1
Acrylic on canvas
24" x 36"
$6000



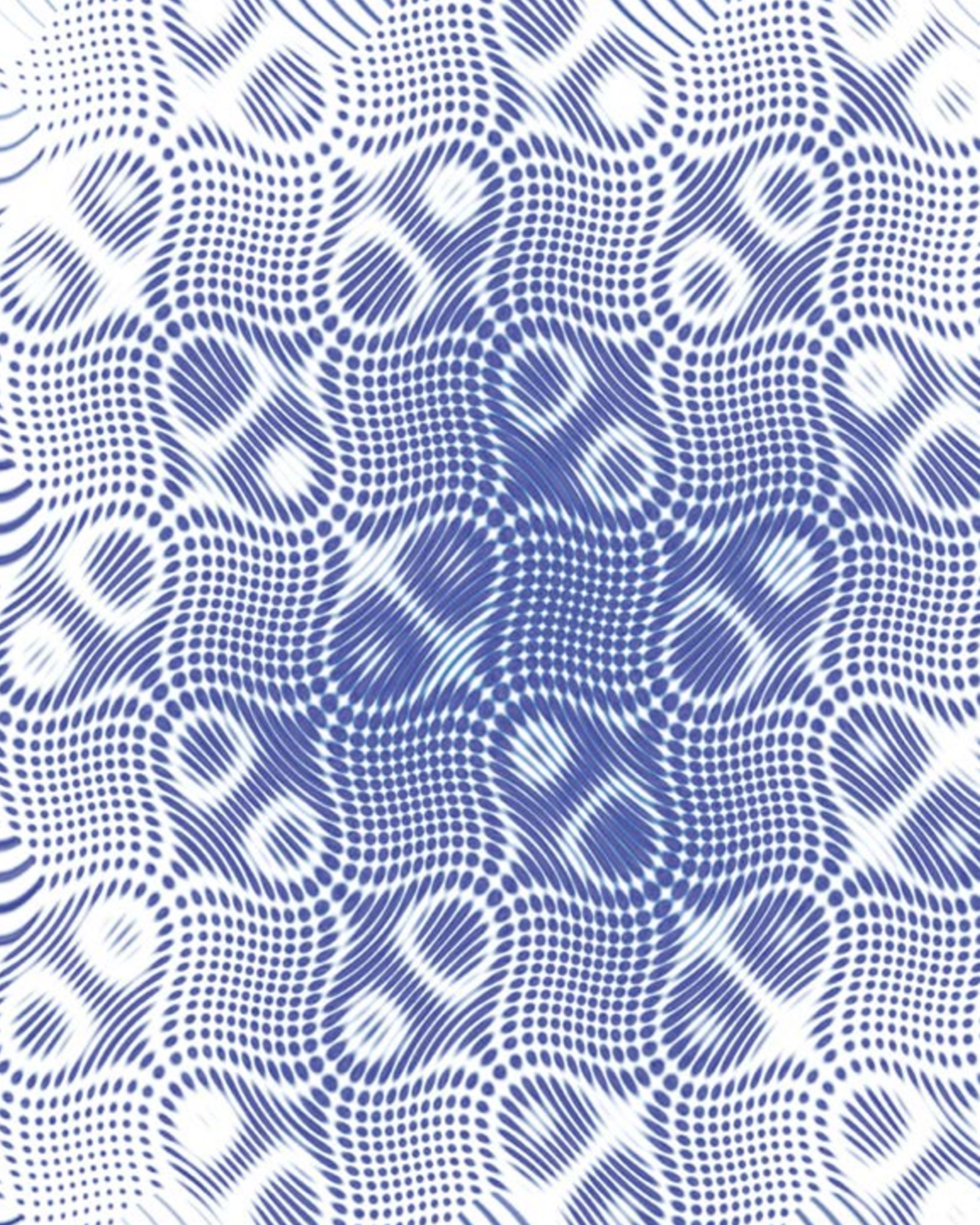
Jeannie Catchpole

Pink

Acrylic on Canvas

60" x 48"

$4200





Art by Saremifar Firouzeh

John B. **Aird** Gallery
Galerie John B. **Aird**

airdgallery.org | @airdgallery