



JOAN THORNE

Light

Layers

Insight

**Barry Art
Museum**

The exhibition and catalog *Joan Thorne: Light, Layers, Insight* was organized by Jutta-Annette Page, Ph.D. Executive Director, Barry Art Museum in collaboration with Vittorio Colaizzi, Ph.D. Associate Professor of Art at Old Dominion University.

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Ranakapor, 2010, Oil on canvas, 66 x 56 inches, detail

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BARRY ART MUSEUM

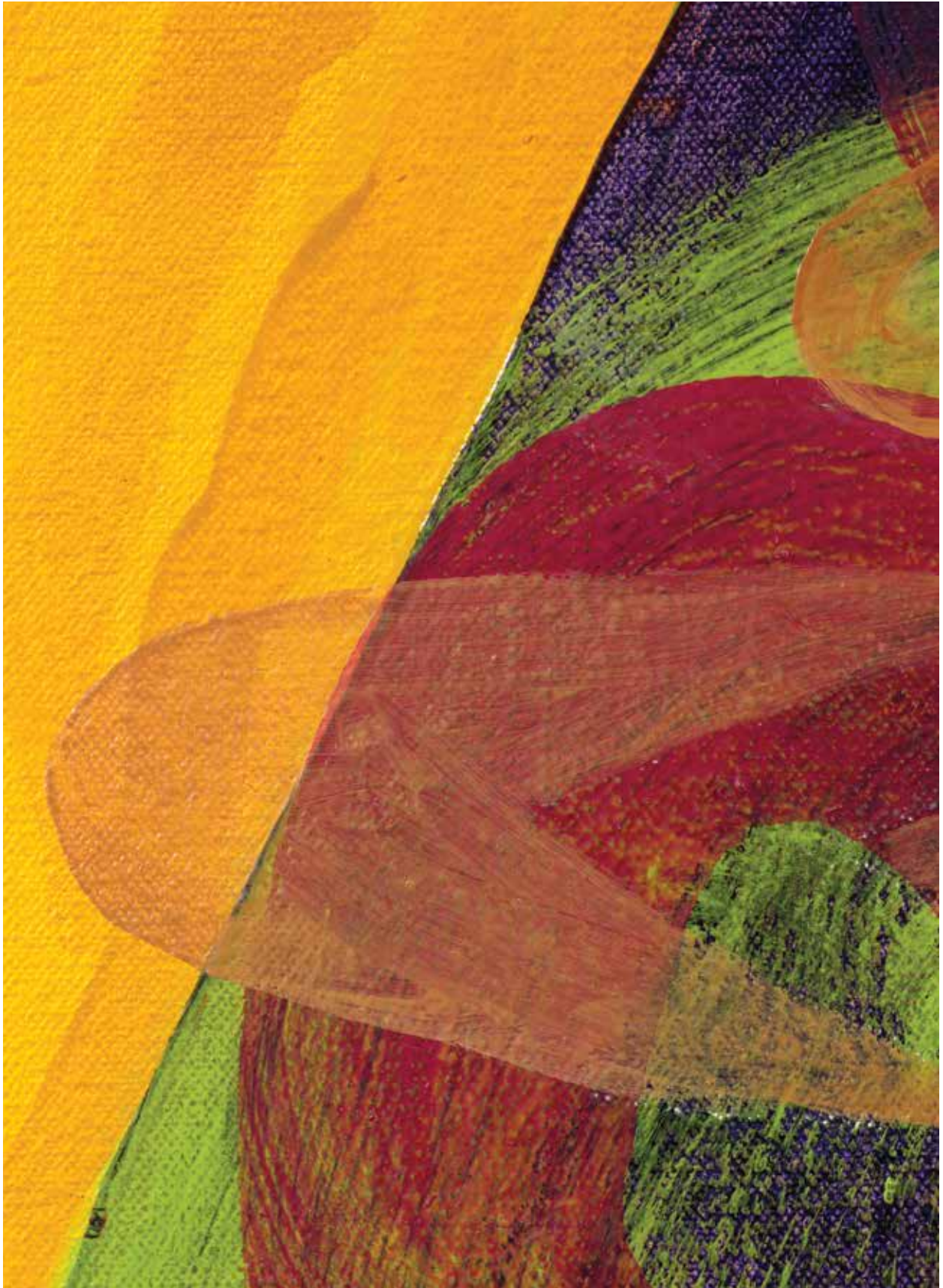
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Nazca, 2018, Oil on canvas, 34 x 44 inches, detail

Director's Foreword

BY JUTTA-ANNETTE PAGE

The Barry Art Museum at Old Dominion University, which opened in the fall of 2018, is launching its changing exhibition program with a retrospective of the singular American abstract painter Joan Thorne.

It was important to the museum to debut with a show focusing on a woman or minority artist whose body of work demonstrated a committed creative arc with a strong and unique artistic voice, and whose work resonated with the permanent collection. American modernist painting of the 20th century is a cornerstone of the museum's collection, laid by founders Carolyn and Richard Barry, and it is a core subject in the University's contemporary art history curriculum.

This retrospective highlights New York School artist Joan Thorne (born 1943) and consists of 28 large-scale oil paintings on canvas and 2 drawings from the early 1970s to 2018, selected from the artist's personal archive. Thorne trained at New York University and Hunter College in the 1960s under noted sculptor and art theorist Tony Smith (1912–1980). She burst onto the New York art scene as one of the few women in the Whitney Museum's 1972 Annual show, entitled *Contemporary American Painting*, alongside such luminaries as Georgia O'Keeffe, Helen Frankenthaler, Alice Neel and Audrey Flack. The Barry Art Museum owns work by two artists included in that show, Al Held and Jules Olitski. A solo show at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington the next year further established her national reputation, and international invitations followed to present her work in France, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico.

Her instinctive approach to painting is always energized by a strong sense of place experienced during extensive travel and artist residencies, including a *Prix de Rome in Visual Arts* awarded by the American Academy. Complex, independent layers of shapes and patterns in luminous colors characterize her intuitive brushwork. "It's as if music is playing color," remarked her friend and fellow New York artist Faith Ringgold. Large in scale, her paintings' strong visual effects both come to greater focus and dissolve when seen up close. A challenge to be captured digitally and in print, they invite contemplation and demand to be seen in person.

It is my privilege to acknowledge Dr. Vittorio Colaizzi, associate professor of art at Old Dominion University, for his perceptive curatorial guidance and illuminating catalog essay on the artist's work and Dr. Richard Vine, managing editor of *Art in America Magazine*, for his confidence in her work's significance and his thoughtful essay placing her artistic oeuvre in the broader context of modern and contemporary art.

This exhibition would not have been possible without the continued support of Carolyn and Richard Barry, whose dedication to contemporary art, artists and art education is unwavering and generous. Joan Thorne, the artist at the heart of this project, deserves our deep gratitude for entrusting our young museum with the presentation of her remarkable and incomparable work.

An Abstract Destiny: Joan Thorne in Context

BY RICHARD VINE

We are very accustomed these days to artists who declare themselves to be post-medium and/or post-studio practitioners, given to making paintings one day and video installations the next, engaging in performances as readily as they design a print or post a computer-modified photograph. Their topics seem to arise and vanish with the rapidity of items in a morning news feed or a thread of social-media chatter. At the same time, these formally versatile—and often globally nomadic—young artists are likely to identify themselves not by nationality, social class, or organizational membership so much as by their adherence to various transnational affinity groups based on sexual orientation, race, age, and taste.

Yet the nearly five-decade career of painter Joan Thorne is a reminder that the art world once—and until quite recently—functioned on a far different model: one of strong devotion to particular institutions and long-term engagement with specific aesthetic issues. Thorne created the bulk of her work in a New York environment in which Philippe de Montebello reigned as director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art for thirty-one years, William Rubin guided curatorial policy at the Museum of Modern Art for twenty years, Elizabeth C. Baker oversaw *Art in America* magazine for thirty-five years, and dealers such as Betty Parsons and Leo Castelli made their eponymous galleries indistinguishable from their lives and their persons. Artists—most working alone in their studios, without today's teams of assistants—were even more resolutely dedicated, some to a particular approach (e.g., Josef Albers to the systematic study of color dynamics), some to key formal problems sequentially posed and “solved” (e.g., Robert Rauschenberg's multiple periods and phases).

Reflecting this state of affairs, art historian Irving Sandler, who chronicled mid-twentieth-century American art firsthand, concluded his writing life with a novel, *Goodbye to Tenth Street* (2018), centered on the personal and professional struggles—and eventual suicide—of an Abstract Expressionist artist obsessed with the question of “authenticity.” Did his gestural canvases thoroughly and honestly reflect his innermost self, in all its spiritual aspiration and doubt, all its contradiction and turmoil? Nothing less was acceptable. In that war-shadowed era, artists made an existential commitment to their work. And abstraction was viewed, in “advanced” intellectual circles, as the place where art *per se* had arrived, historically and ontologically, after a long evolution from crude picture-symbols, through waves of ever greater imagistic vividness and verisimilitude, to an appreciation of form in and of itself. Finally, it was held, this progression culminated in a complete transcendence of representation. The turn to abstraction had a moral dimension, not unlike that of choosing a religion or marrying a spouse. One did not scroll and flit; the commitment endured and grew. Hence the seismic shock in 1967, when Philip Guston (1913–1980), having long before followed the familiar path from social observation and WPA didacticism to exquisitely “pure” gestural painting, suddenly switched back (way back, evoking art's “primitive” origins) to a brutish cartoon-style figuration.

At the time, Joan Thorne—who had grown up in New York City—was in the midst of her higher education. As a child, she had attended the socialist-oriented Little Red School House, where her music teacher was Pete Seeger and her drawings (often depicting erupting volcanoes) were effusively praised and often displayed in classrooms and hallways. There, the tomboyish Thorne's sidekick was classmate Kathy Boudin (born 1943), who later joined the Weatherman Underground. Despite this background and the growing radicalism of the Vietnam era, the adult Thorne was never herself a political extremist, though she did maintain contact with several artists and writers with markedly far-left leanings.

After graduating from the academically rigorous all-girls Washington Irving High School, Thorne studied dance independently and began her formal art instruction, first as an undergraduate at New York University, then as an MFA student at the City University of New York's Hunter College, which was—and remains—highly regarded for its painting program. The life-determining professional choice that she made in her twenties—to be an abstract painter—was not without opposition or cost. Her father, a hand surgeon who hoped she would follow him into the medical profession, saw art-making as so socially useless and financially precarious that he disavowed her decision; they did not speak for a decade. Thorne's husband, a pure mathematician, was more supportive of her vocation, but the couple split after seven years due to a fundamental difference in life goals: essentially, his desire for suburban domesticity versus her longing for New York bohemianism. Thorne's choice was, in part, a reflection of implicit maternal urging; her mother, who had immigrated from Odessa at the age of twelve, was a brilliant lover of the arts whose own literary aspirations had been sacrificed to midcentury norms of female duty.¹

Meanwhile, painting itself was in crisis. At NYU, a very prominent conceptual sculptor told students, some of them Thorne's friends, not to bother at all with the medium; it was dead. Senior artists who still embraced painting, fiercely and often exclusively, tended to favor "correct" figuration. Another NYU artist-teacher, a well-known painter, pounded his walking stick in rage when Thorne showed him a composition of free-floating limbs and body parts. Despite what Irving Sandler had dubbed the "triumph" of Abstract Expressionism, which spawned two or three generations of adherents, many art schools and universities still did not grant degrees in abstractionist practice.

Even within the field, and especially in the Ab Ex domain, chauvinism prevailed. The highest compliment that could be paid to a woman artist was to say that she could "paint like a man." Thorne herself once overheard a professor explain to a group of students that her works, on view in a gallery they had just entered, were clearly too strong and "masculine" to have been painted by a woman—until a student pointed out the name on the wall labels. As Mary Gabriel's recent book *Ninth Street Women* reminds us, even such consequential figures as Lee Krasner, Elaine de Kooning, Grace Hartigan, Joan Mitchell, and Helen Frankenthaler had to struggle their entire lives to escape the shadow of the powerful art-world men with whom they associated (notably Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Albert Barr, and Clement Greenberg). Thorne, as a recent art-school graduate, sometimes asked male colleagues to present her slides to curators and dealers in hopes of having her work taken more seriously by virtue of a male recommendation. No wonder artists such as Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro felt a visceral need to assert feminist identity in the 1970s and beyond—a development Thorne deeply respects, though she does not identify herself or her work in sociopolitical terms.

The young artist was not without her mentors and peers, however. Thorne's supportive NYU instructors included abstract painters Estevan Vicente and Milton Resnick, as well as George Earl Ortman, known for his colorful geometric reliefs. At Hunter, her thesis adviser was famed abstract sculptor Tony Smith, who encouraged her to submit paintings in lieu of a written thesis. Smith also gave her a telephone number and urged her to call Mark Rothko. The modernist master invited Thorne to his studio but committed suicide two weeks before the appointed visit. Thorne was more fortunate in establishing friendly relations with major painters such as Robert Moskowitz and Jack Tworkov. She also got to know photographers and filmmakers Rudy Burckhardt, a major recorder of the downtown New York art scene, and Hans Namuth, who had documented Jackson Pollock's epochal drip technique in process. In the 1970s, Thorne joined the now-legendary African American artist Faith Ringgold as a teacher at the Women's House of Detention on Rikers Island. Since then, artist friends and colleagues have included Stephen Westfall, Stuart Diamond, Susan Crile, Thornton Willis, Vered Lieb, and Kathleen Gilje.²

In 1973, Thorne was working in an unheated painting studio, with no chair for a guest, when she was visited by museum director Gene Baro, who promptly offered her a first one-person show—at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Similar responses followed. Thorne was selected for the Whitney Annual Exhibition in 1973 and the Whitney Biennial in 1981. In 1986, she won the Prix de Rome, which stretched, at the director's invitation, into a two-year stint at the city's American Academy, followed by ten summers painting in Siena. In addition, Thorne has had residencies at places such as the esteemed Yaddo, MacDowell, and Edward Albee artist colonies. And like most artists of her generation, she learned deeply from the past, drawing inspiration and a kind of technical wisdom from a range of masters, among them Monet, van Gogh, Mondrian, and O'Keeffe. As these names suggest, Thorne considers herself first and foremost a colorist, seeing form primarily as a vehicle of light—a notion that recalls the American Luminist equation of radiance with transcendent spirit.

For more than a decade, Thorne was also a successful poet, placing works in such periodicals as *TriQuarterly* and the *New Yorker*, attending readings by Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac, and publishing a chapbook, *Eye to the Moon* (1970), with Folder Editions, a renowned small press that issued poems and artworks by the likes of Frank O'Hara, James Merrill, Willem de Kooning, and Jasper Johns. Among her literary friends were poet Robert David Cohen and the Folder Editions founder, Daisy Aldan.

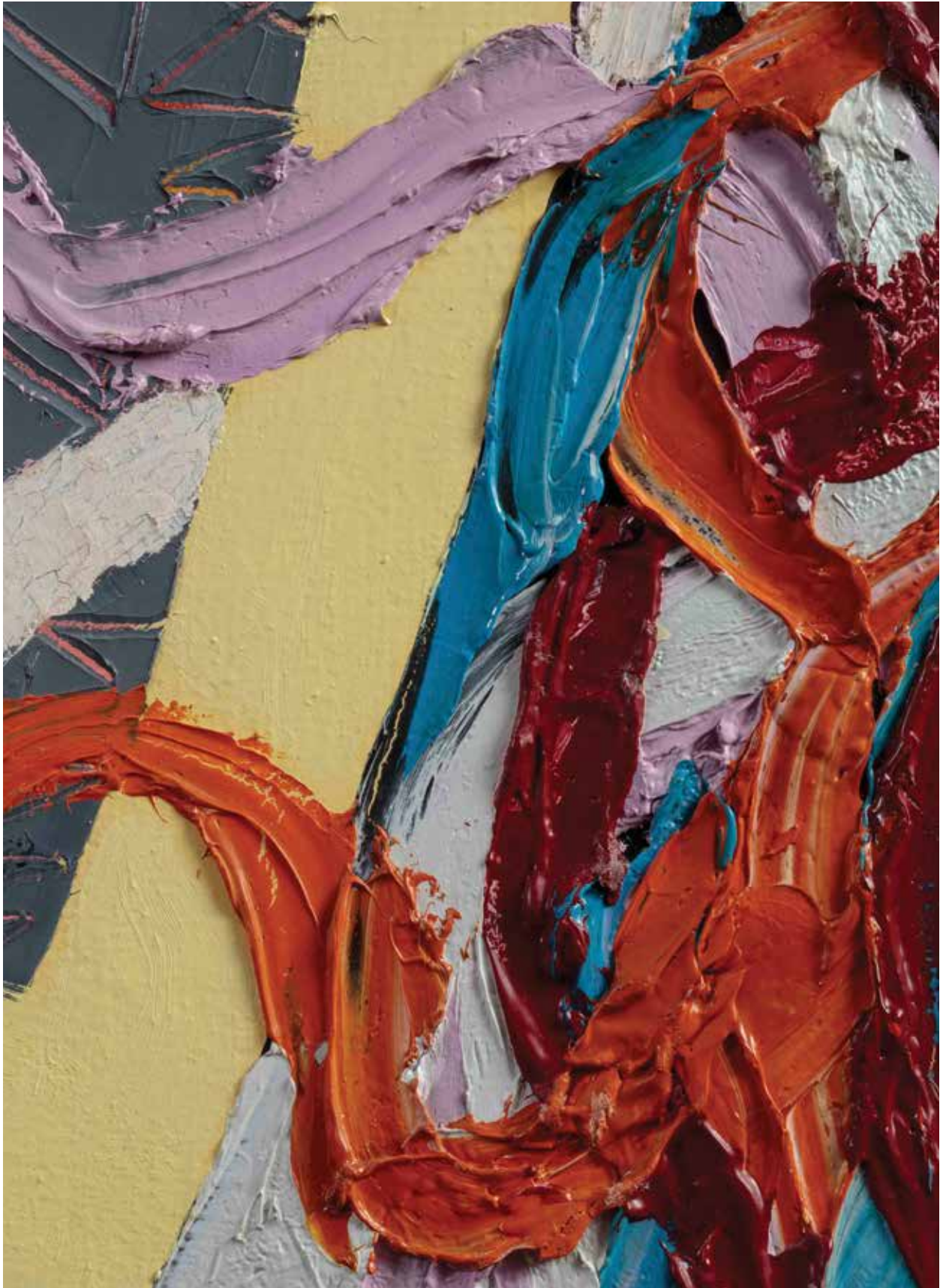
Barbara Rose, one of the most influential critic-curators of the second half of the twentieth century, praised Thorne for truly assimilating the lessons of Pollock's art. Accordingly, she included Thorne in two daringly predictive exhibitions: "American Art: The Eighties," at NYU's Grey Gallery in 1979, and "Abstract Painting of the 90s," at André Emmerich Gallery in 1991. Over the years, Thorne's work has been shown in many other top-level institutions and galleries, including Bard College, the Clocktower Art Gallery, the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, the Philadelphia ICA, Sidney Janis Gallery, the Grand Palais in Paris, Fischbach Gallery, and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery. She has had two mid-career surveys abroad—at a pair of museums in the Dominican Republic in 1998 and at the Museo de las Américas, San Juan, Puerto Rico, in 2000.

For all her formal training, Thorne has always been an intuitive—indeed, semi-mystical—painter. The key early work *Amphra* (1972), for example, resulted directly from a dream she had while visiting Mayan ruins. But her approach is not iconographic in the systemic fashion of the Swedish spiritualist painter Hilma af Klint. Thorne’s work is free of esoteric symbols and arcane references to levels of existence. Rather, it is a direct transcription of her sense of the world as pure energy, a view that combines traditional Eastern aesthetics with contemporary Western science. She is often subject to synesthesia—the experiencing of color as sound, and sound as color—and believes that it powerfully intimates the fluid, interwoven nature of reality. (She is a great admirer of the stuttering-figure, time-lapse motion studies of Eadweard Muybridge, Marcel Duchamp, and the Futurists.) Given the continuous flux of molecules and subatomic particles, she contends, all solidity and stasis is an illusion wrought by the inadequacy of our everyday perceptions. She aims to overcome that illusion through the chromatic vivacity and scintillation of her thickly painted canvases.

In the early stages of her career, Thorne’s approach was physically direct. To create works like *Graw* (1974) or *Ka* (1974), she would lay a huge swath of canvas on the floor and “dance” around it in Jackson Pollock-fashion, feeling herself immersed in the compositions that she created frenetically with gestural brushwork, bare hands, and gouging implements. Later, in such works as *Oseah* (1981) and *Maga* (1988), a figure-ground relationship asserted itself—a coming to terms with the way we persist in seeing our environment as discrete objects subject to distinct vectors of movement and interrelationship. The flow of energy is now balanced by a constellation of forms; the dance is contained within the field of the composition and a constant visual dialogue between flatness and depth. What we know about quantum mechanics has been placed in dynamic rapport with what our retinas register, deceptively, on a daily basis. Indeed, much of Thorne’s work is made in response to her travel experiences. The colors, land masses, skylines, vegetation, and architectural structures of Europe, the Caribbean, New England, South America, and Southeast Asia are reflected indirectly in the jagged lines, abstract forms, chromatic harmonies, and worked surfaces of her canvases.

Over the years, many competing styles have come and gone in New York and the global art scene: Conceptualism, Minimalism, Pop, East Village punk, Neo-Expressionism and the New Figuration, socially engaged Relational Aesthetics, etc. Yet, through it all, Thorne has remained steadfast in her artistic and metaphysical vision. Each atom is mostly space, and the cosmos itself is mostly dark matter. A vacuity—a “nothingness”—lies at the heart of all being; but impassioned scrutiny of that void can mysteriously, *ex nihilo*, yield everything.

- 1 Biographical details in this essay are from conversations and email exchanges with the artist, New York, October 2019.
- 2 Thorne also admires and maintains contact with peers Ruth Ann Fredenthal, Dona Nelson, Judy Pfaff, Rosemarie Castoro, Connie Fox, John Parks, John Moore, Stuart Hitch, Miriam Bloom, Hermine Ford and Carol Pepper-Cooper.



Eero Aarnio, 1980, Oil on canvas, 50 x 50, detail

Joan Thorne and the Mirror of Modern Painting

BY VITTORIO COLAIZZI

While an undergraduate at NYU, Joan Thorne saw Jean Cocteau's film *Orpheus* from 1950. During the narrative, certain characters magically travel from one place to another by passing through the surface of a mirror. This image stayed with Thorne, remaining for her "the symbol of a passageway into and through the painting,"¹ enabling her to "travel into the painting as if [...] going through the mirror." Inspired by the impermeable glass surface that opens to another world, Thorne imagines her canvas as "layers going back in space and coming forward."² The cascading colors, riotous textures, and interpenetrating, shifting spaces together demonstrate this artist's vision harnessing the transportive, hallucinatory, yet frank and declarative potential of her medium. Critic and historian Isabelle Graw would cite this vision as an example of the "vitalistic fantasies"³ that permeate painting. However, the relentless rooting-out of myth does not bring one closer to truth in a study of painting, because such a method ignores the consequences of myths. Artists act on them.

At another point in Cocteau's story the glass is shattered, only to reconstitute itself by means of the director's oft-repeated technique of running film backwards. Cocteau's exploitation of film's specific properties prefigures the emphasis on painting's inherent but often hidden qualities of flatness and objecthood that would become central in the New York art world of the early 1960s. This was catalyzed, albeit not endorsed, by the criticism of Clement Greenberg, as well as the work of minimalist artists such as Frank Stella and Donald Judd. The latter, who was also a critic, wrote that "the image within the rectangle . . . is a relic [that] has to go entirely."⁴ Thorne's lush and energetic vistas effectively counteract this literal turn by re-admitting not only pictorial depth but also a metaphoric but palpable vitality. Nevertheless, due to the methodical execution and relatively clear layers in her paintings, some of the deliberation of the 1960s underpins her painterly abandon. In this way, her singular voice has remained in productive tension with a critical perspective that would cling to painting's objecthood.

"I think of my paintings as mystical. Which is usually a dirty word, but I don't care. I'm using geometry but not conceptual geometry. Even when I'm using triangles there is no way you could say it's conceptual. They look like they come from the subconscious."⁵

For Thorne, "conceptual" is the opposite of her intuitive and "mystical" approach, which is also a repudiation of linear and positivist critical ideologies that would deem painting obsolete, a claim she has often encountered. However, critic John Yau has applied some of Sol LeWitt's famous "Sentences on Conceptual Art" to painters of Thorne's generation who, like her, worked in the wake of minimalism and yet sustained a spirit of inquiry and rigor in what some considered a dead end.⁶ LeWitt's first sentence is indeed not too far from Thorne: "Conceptual Artists are mystics rather than rationalists. They leap to conclusions that logic cannot reach."⁷ It would be reckless to call Thorne a conceptual artist, but as the tracing-paper templates of shapes she sometimes uses to work out compositions attest, the challenge that her work issues

is to imagine a world in which such a tag is not solidified, neither defining nor excluding the experiences she offers.

A renewed emphasis on the spiritual as an instigator of abstraction has revitalized what seemed, at the turn of the millennium, to be a moribund practice that is incapable of registering difference. Recent attention to painters Forrest Bess and Hilma af Klint has shown this to be untrue, as their esoteric visions, along with those of Chris Martin, have inspired new generations. Martin admits to poaching a wave motif from artist and teacher Paul Feeley, calling it “everybody’s form, or anybody’s form,”⁸ and Thorne in turn claims that rhythmic patterns can induce trance-like states that open pathways to the subconscious. For instance, she has been inspired by abstract marks in the ancient rock paintings at Serra da Capivara in Northeastern Brazil, and both her recent, delicate veil-like surfaces that unfold in looping brushstrokes and her earlier, impacted and angular stratifications create cumulative rhythmic patterns.

This rhythm is a function of the painterly gesture, which, by the time Thorne adopted it, was a fraught artistic convention. A central feature of the paintings of Willem De Kooning as well as of Thorne’s friend and mentor Jack Tworkov, the monumental brushstroke had been regimented by Stella and satirized by Roy Lichtenstein. Thorne’s gesture does not reinstate an unexamined expressionism; rather it is part of her deliberate and concrete deployment of a vocabulary that internalizes modernism as an inheritance while exercising a dogged belief in its continued potential.

In 1973, Thorne painted *Amphra* on a tall unprimed canvas, simultaneously emphasizing its factual basis and the surreal atmosphere it conjures. Eccentric, overlapping planes, waving tendrils, and dappled marks evidently made by the artist’s fingers are scattered over a space encircled by a ring of yonic apparitions. Although the overtly feminine imagery—about which the artist simply said, “Isn’t it obvious?”⁹—has never directly repeated in her work, Thorne claims that this painting contains the language of all her subsequent work. The impacted and incised radial burst of *Graw* (1974), the electrified energy of *Erodo* (1980), the depth and volume of *Buca* (1982)—so heretical to the flatness of orthodox modernism—and the endless motion and light of *Nazca* (2018) all continue, elaborate, and intensify a constant dialectic of pervasive and localized sensation. “I think all my life I’ve been painting ecstasy,” she has reflected.¹⁰ In this, Thorne’s work echoes a major issue in modernist painting; its tendency towards totalization combined with the preservation of incident. One of the pre-eminent figures in this dialectic is of course Jackson Pollock.

Thorne recounts a visit from the critic and curator Barbara Rose: “[S]he said to me, you’re the only artist I’ve ever met who understood Jackson Pollock. She said you’re able to . . . use what he did and make it your own. Which I thought was the highest compliment an art critic could give me.”¹¹ Rose made this visit in the late 1970s, as she was selecting work for the 1979 exhibition *American Painting: The Eighties*. Over twenty years after Pollock’s death and long after other claims to his legacy made by or on behalf of Helen Frankenthaler, Robert Morris, or Allan Kaprow, Rose was not proposing an inevitable result, but a free adaptation. Thorne does not simplistically pursue excess, attempting to do Pollock one better by jettisoning still more conventions. Certainly her surfaces insist upon their presence, but they also effervesce into an equalizing pictorial energy, which, as Greenberg had put it thirty years earlier, “threatened—

but only threatened—to reduce the picture to a relatively undifferentiated surface.”¹² Even more than the “undifferentiated surface,” Greenberg’s “only threatened” describes Thorne’s relationship to painting’s history, in that she finds fertile space to work between the polarities of the optical and the literal.

A recent example of this almost-undifferentiated surface is *Siam* (2013), in which an easy rhythm of swirling cobalt blue is complicated by staccato diagonals of a subtle but distinct cerulean, as well as green zigzags over the top. Pockets of deep red flicker among the chalky blues, while several abstract figures emerge: saw-toothed turquoise branches at the lower left and a cluster of open-ended ellipses punctuated with points at the upper right. Irregular blue shards at the top and bottom frame this roiling surface, implicating not only their function as frame, but also the viewer’s cooperative role in assembling the picture. Standing both inside and out, we take in its totality and its divisions, its fact and fiction.

In an essay on the late Belgian painter Marthe Wéry, art critic and philosopher Thierry de Duve gives an account of the making of a painting in which the seduction of the all-over contends with the seduction of specific incident.¹³ Similarly, Thorne approaches the all-over and its corollary, the monochrome, obviously without ever acceding to it, nor its attendant demotion of the pictorial in favor of so many mollifying spectacles.¹⁴ Thorne paints to keep attention upon the plane, but, as her interest in film shows, she does not hermetically seal that plane into an artificially constricted purity. De Duve argues that the monochrome is not a mere genre among genres, but an instance of painting contending with its history each time it is put forth. Thorne also, in a radically moderate mode, posits a definition of painting that is operative, not essential. Her paintings are never pure, but with an eye to modern painting’s rich tradition, they model a way painting can be: open to the wider world and dependent for their full resonance on the viewer’s acceptance of her invitation to travel through their layers.

- 1 Joan Thorne, email to the author, email October 18, 2019.
- 2 Interview with the artist in her New York studio, February 20, 2014.
- 3 Isabelle Graw, “Introduction,” *The Love of Painting: Genealogy of a Success Medium* (Berlin: Sternberg Press), 26.
- 4 Donald Judd, “Kenneth Noland—In the Galleries,” *Arts Magazine*, Sept. 1963, “Donald Judd: Complete Writings: 1959-1975 (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design; New York: New York University Press, 1975), 93. See also Clement Greenberg, “Modernist Painting,” in John O’Brian, ed., *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 4: Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957—1969* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 85-94, especially the postscript, 93-94 in which Greenberg denies the linkage of flatness and quality and emphasizes his placement of quotation marks around “purity.”
- 5 Conversation with the artist, Jutta Page, and the author in her New York studio, August 23, 2019.
- 6 John Yau, “Back When Painting was Dead,” *Hyperallergic*, February 11, 2018. <https://hyperallergic.com/426149/back-when-painting-was-dead/> Accessed October 20, 2019.
- 7 Sol LeWitt, “Sentences on Conceptual Art” in Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson, eds., *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), 106.
- 8 Chris Martin, in Jennifer Samet, “Beer with a Painter: Chris Martin,” *Hyperallergic*, March 22, 2014. <https://hyperallergic.com/115587/beer-with-a-painter-chris-martin/> Accessed October 20, 2019.
- 9 To the author, August 23, 2019.
- 10 To the author, February 20, 2014.
- 11 Conversation with the artist, Jutta Page, and the author in her New York Studio, August 22, 2019.
- 12 Clement Greenberg, “The Crisis of the Easel Picture,” *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 154.
- 13 Thierry de Duve, “Marthe Wéry or Freedom in Painting,” Thierry de Duve, Denys Riout, René Denizot, Christian Debuyst. *Marthe Wéry: Un débat en peinture / A Debate in Painting* (Bruxelles: Lettre volée, 1999), 71-74.
- 14 For more on this historical process and Thorne’s resistance to it, see my “Joan Thorne: Analytic Ecstasy,” *Woman’s Art Journal*, vol. 37, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2016): 37-45.



Amphra, 1972, Oil on canvas, oil stick, graphite, 102 x 71 inches



Ka, 1974, Oil on canvas, 96 x 86 inches



Graw, 1974, Oil on canvas, 103 x 72



Onin, 1979, Charcoal and oil stick on paper, 50 x 38 inches



Erodo, 1980, Oil on canvas, 50 x 50 inches



IBA, 1980, Oil on canvas, 54 x 54 inches



Ka 2, 1980, Charcoal and oil stick on paper, 50 x 38 inches



Oseah, 1981, Oil on canvas, 64 x 67 inches



Aba, 1982, Oil on canvas, 53 x 53 inches



Brizet, 1982, Oil on canvas, 50 x 50 inches



Buca, 1986, Oil on canvas, 75 x 97 1/2 inches



Vetulonia, 1987, Oil on canvas, 89 ¾ x 76 ¾ inches



Maga, 1988, Oil on canvas, 69 1/2 x 65 3/5 inches



Alas de Olimpo, 1997, Oil on canvas, 66 x 56 inches



Merengue Del Tigre, 1998, Oil on canvas, 66 x 56 inches



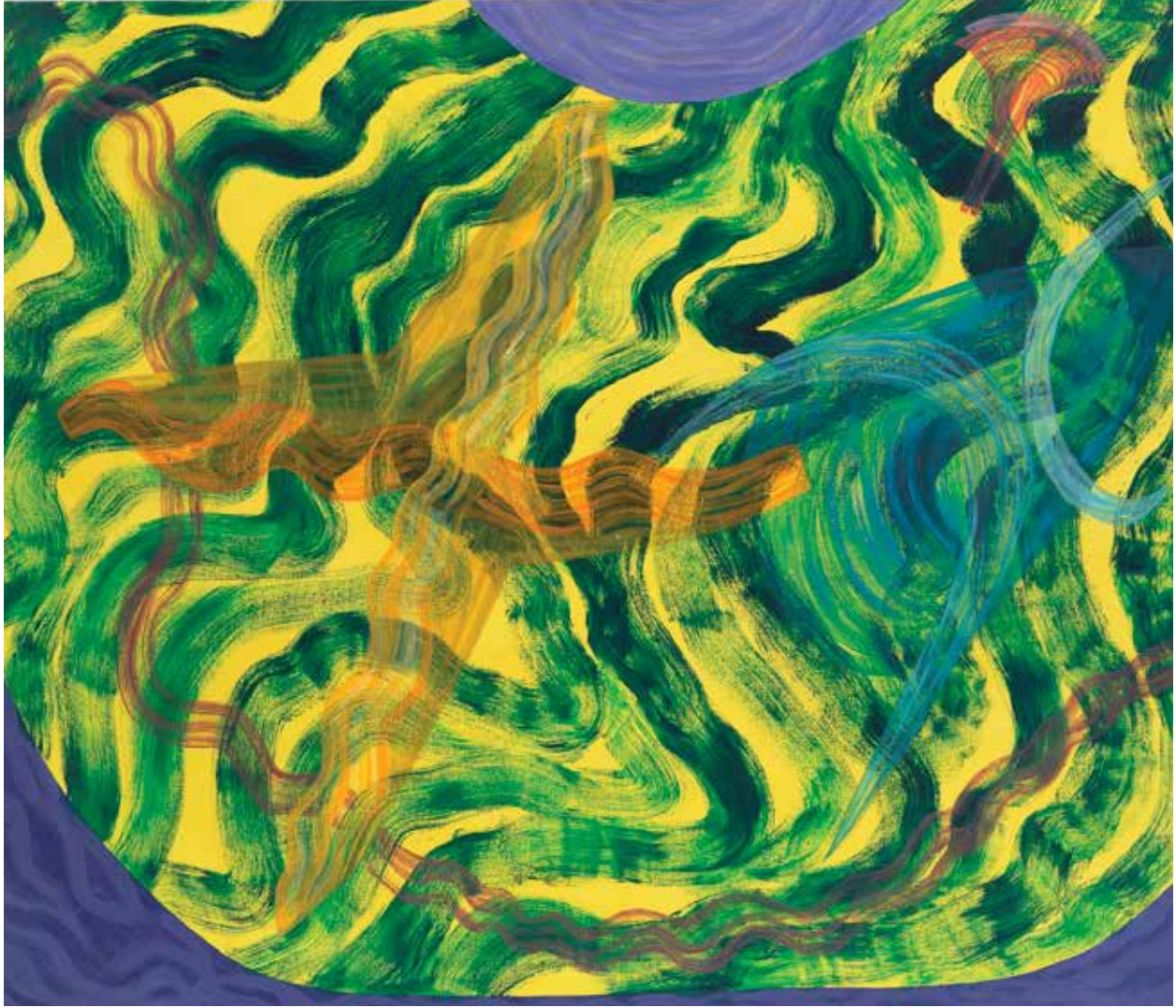
Delos, 2000, Oil on canvas, 56 x 66 inches



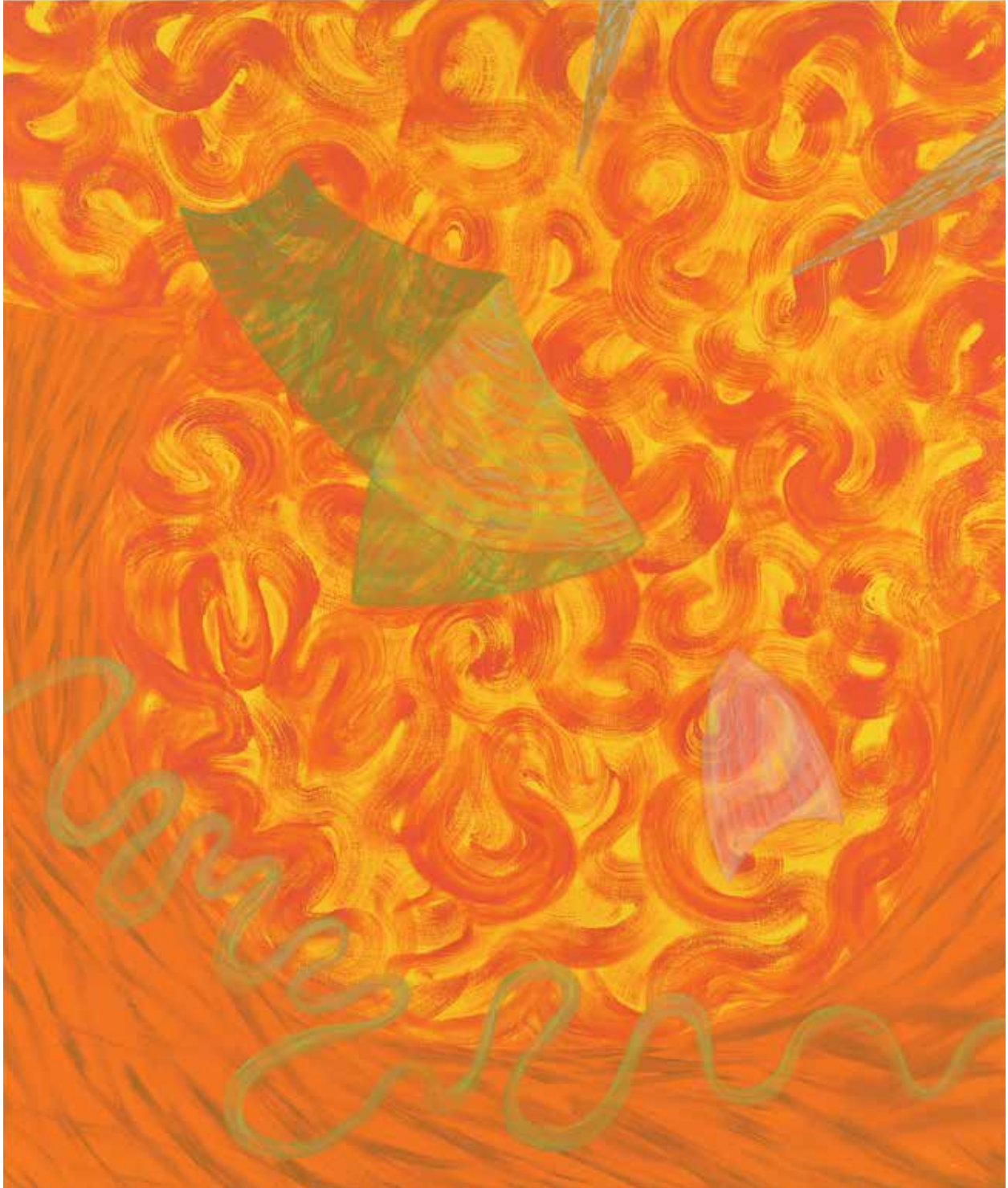
Oracolo, 2001, Oil on canvas, 63 x 55 inches



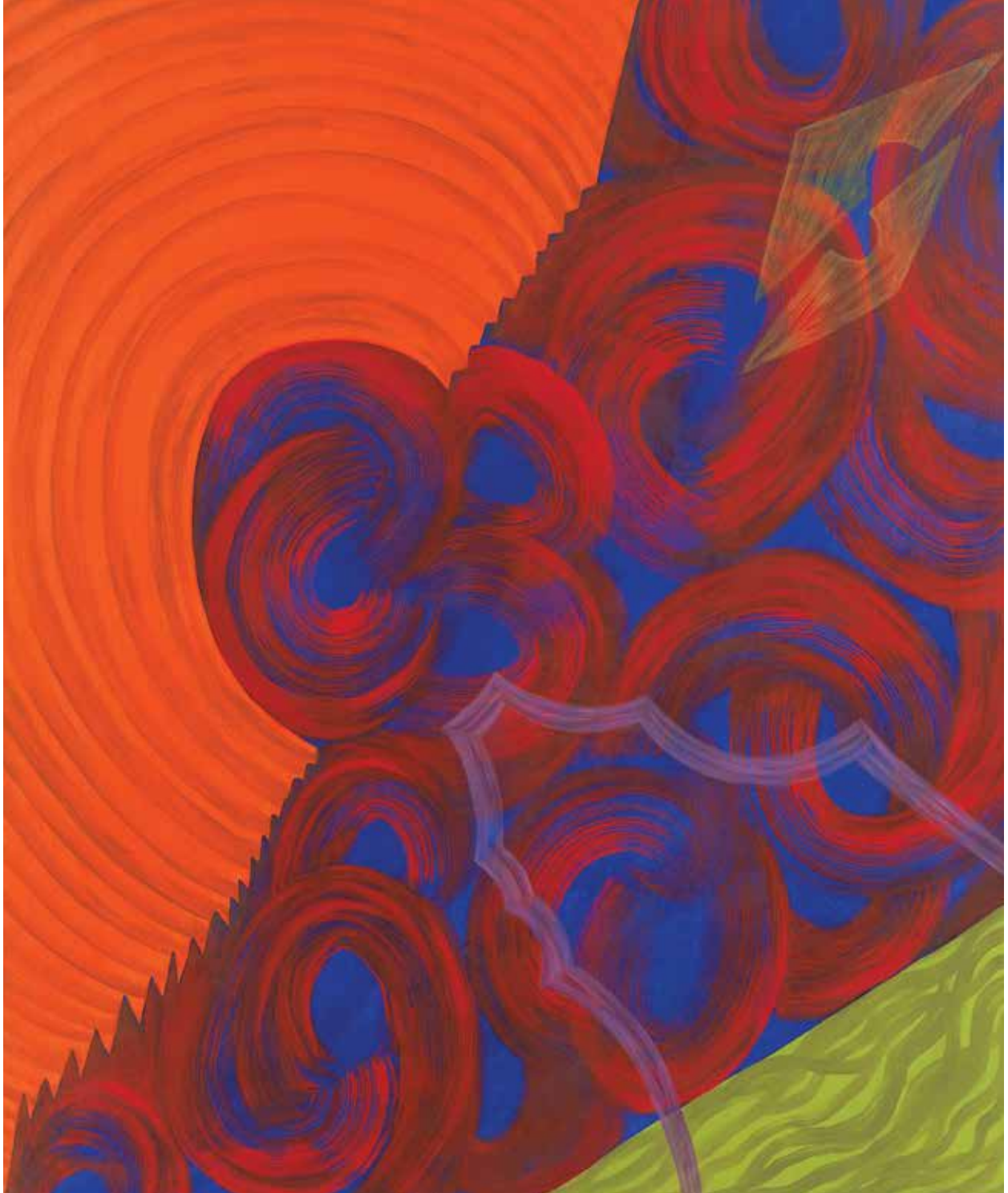
Esperanza, 2005, Oil on canvas, 66 x 56 inches



Los Velos, 2009, Oil on canvas, 56 x 66 inches



Khajarah Sun, 2010, Oil on canvas, 59 x 50 inches



Arco Iris, 2010, Oil on canvas, 59 x 49 inches



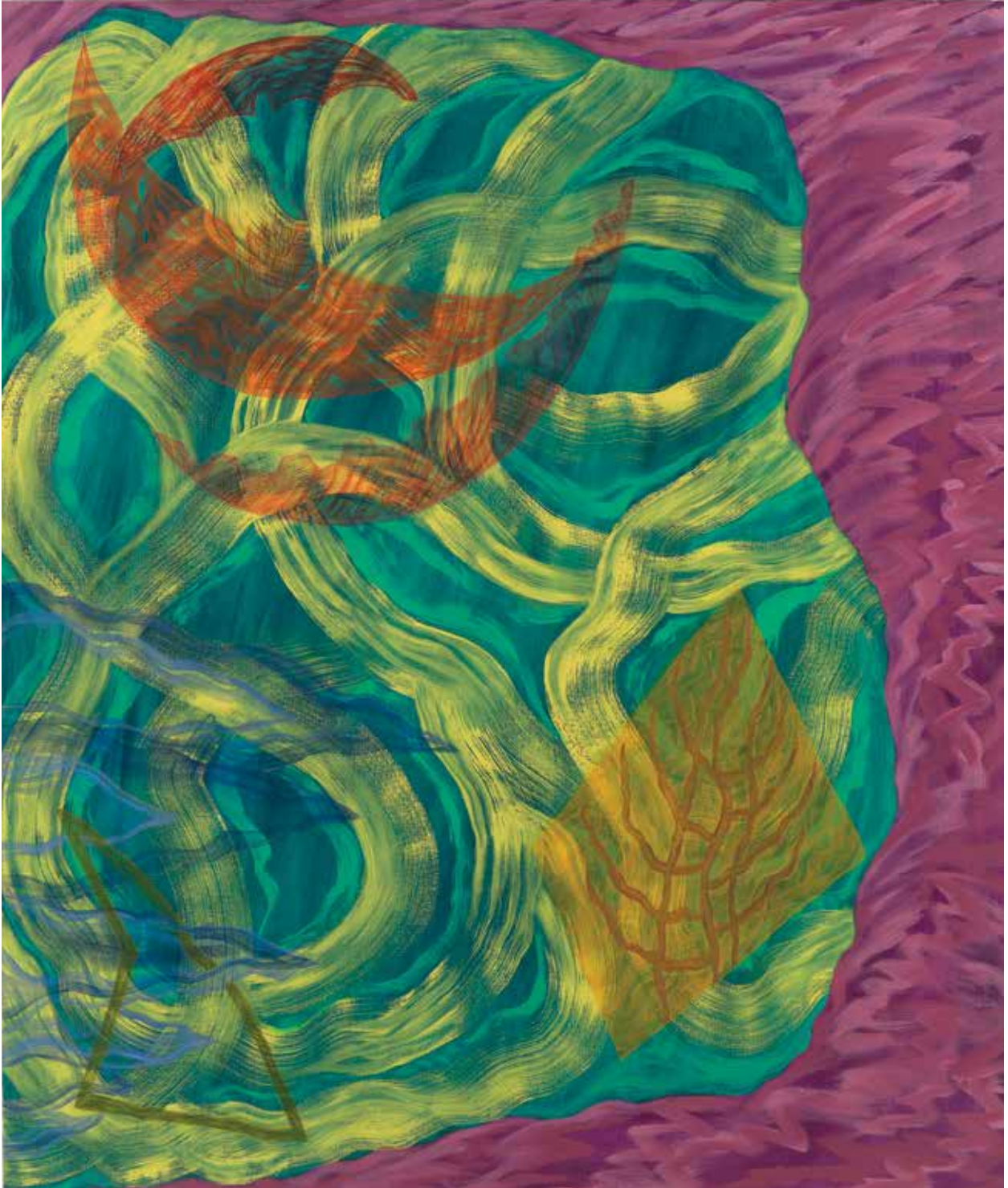
Hampi, 2010, Oil on canvas, 56 x 66 inches



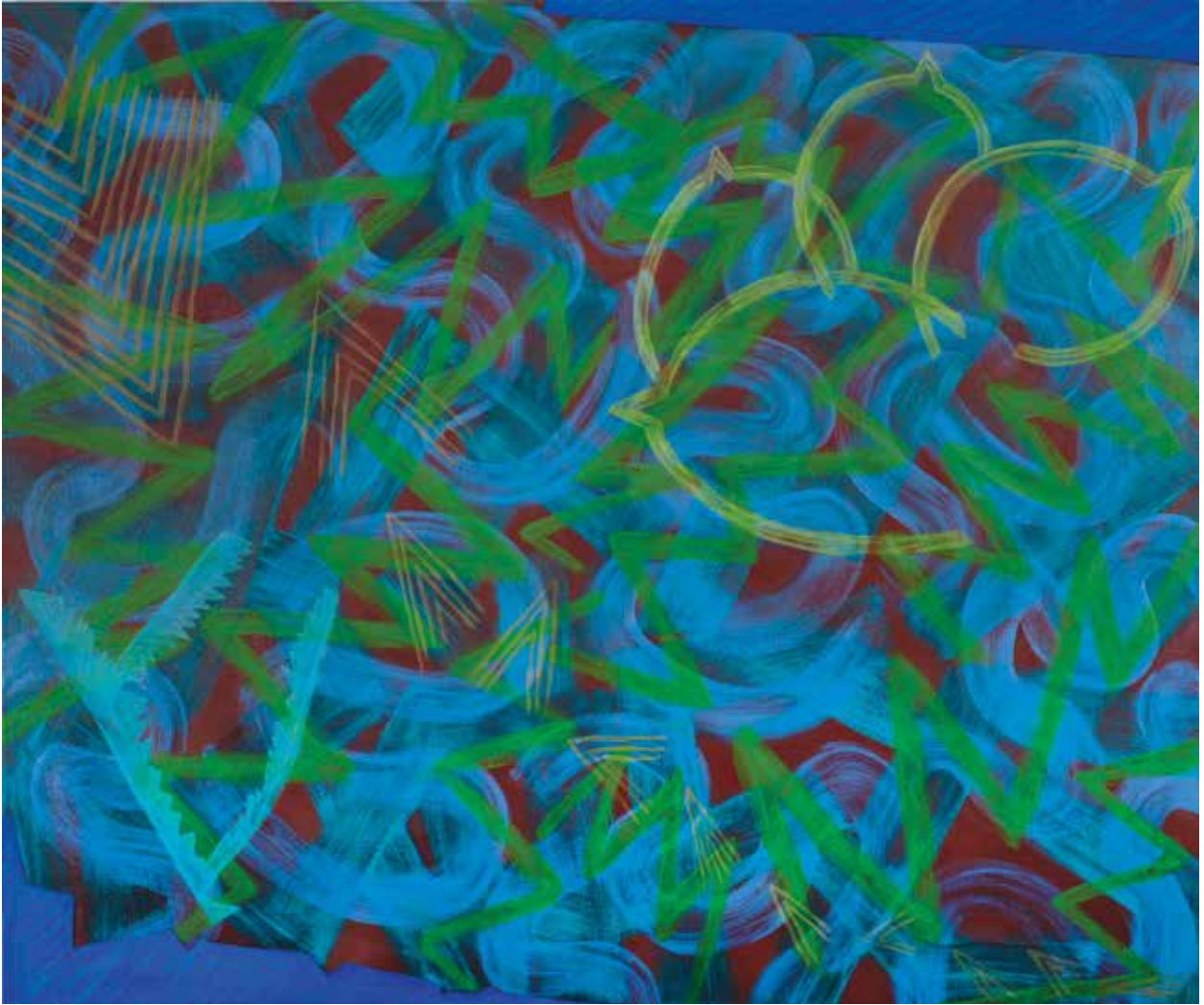
Yangon, 2010, Oil on canvas, 66 x 55 inches



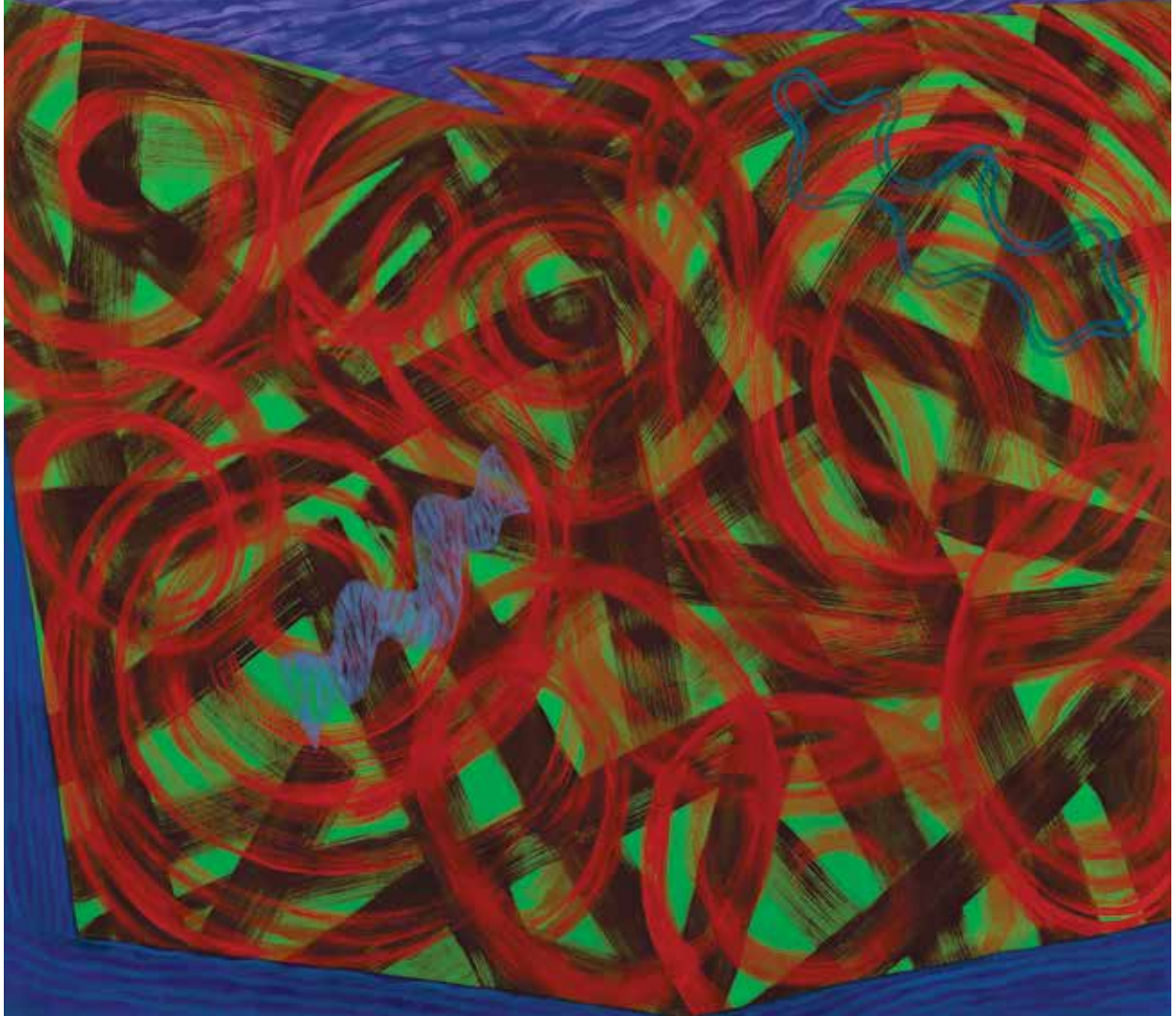
Ranakapor, 2010, Oil on canvas, 66 x 56 inches



Alma Del Mar, 2010, Oil on canvas, 66 x 56 inches



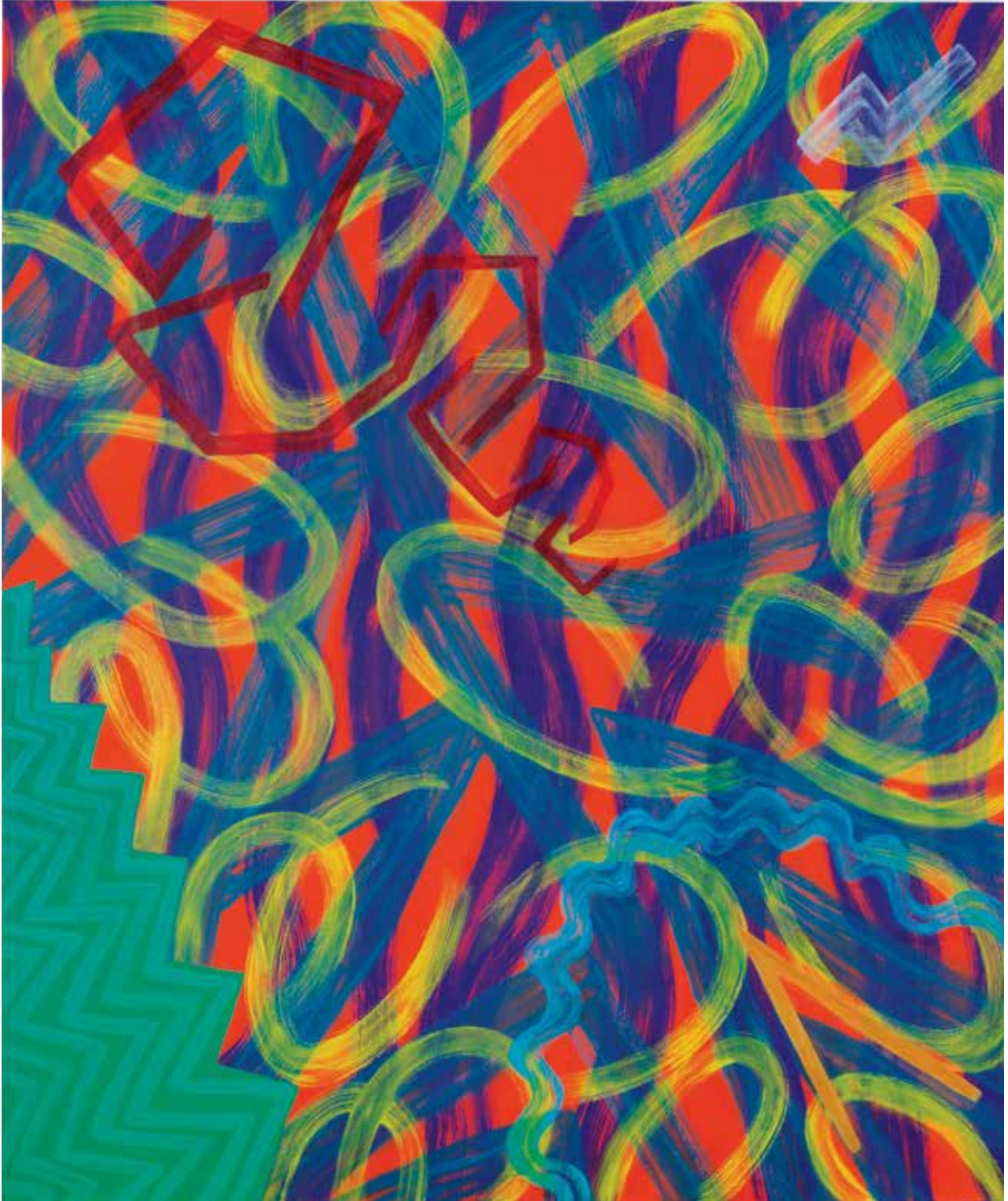
Siam, 2013, Oil on canvas, 56 x 66 inches



Mandalay, 2014, Oil on canvas, 60 x 69 inches



Naga, 2015, Oil on canvas, 38 x 46 inches



Ananda, 2015, Oil on canvas, 66 x 56 inches



Nazca, 2018, Oil on canvas, 34 x 44 inches

Biography of the Artist

EDUCATION

1968 Master of Arts, Hunter College, City University of New York, New York

1965 Bachelor of Science, New York University, New York

SOLO EXHIBITIONS (SELECTED LIST)

2019 *Visionary Color and Light – Paintings of the 1980s*, Quogue Gallery, Quogue, NY, July 11 – 31, 2019

2017 *The Ghost Picked Me to Paint the Song*, Freddy Gallery, Harris, NY, October 7 – 29

2015 *Black and white into color*, National Arts Club, New York City, NY

A Passion for Color, Gallery on Main, Windham, NY, October 17 – December 17

2013 *Joan Thorne – Recent Paintings*, Sideshow Gallery, Brooklyn, NY, October 12 – November 10

2010 *Joan Thorne – Recent Paintings*, Sideshow Gallery, Brooklyn, NY, November 19 – December 19

2005 Chris Winfield Gallery, Carmel, CA

2001 André Zarre Gallery, New York City

2000 *Joan Thorne – A Retrospective*, Museo de Las Americas, San Juan, Puerto Rico, March 7 – April 16

1998 *Joan Thorne. Una Retrospectiva*, Museo Voluntariado De Las Casas Reales Casa De Bastida, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Joan Thorne Una Retrospectiva, Museo Patronato Plaza de la Cultura Santiago Apostol, Santiago de los Caballeros, Dominican Republic

1996 Ramapo College, NJ

1990 *Joan Thorne*, Graham Modern, New York City, October 25 – November 24

1989 *Joan Thorne*, Ruth Bachofner Gallery, Santa Monica, CA, April 29 – June 3

1988 *Joan Thorne – The Rome Paintings*, Graham Modern, New York City, April 28 – May 26

1986 *Joan Thorne*, Ruth Bachofner Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

1986 *Joan Thorne. An Exhibition of Drawings*, William Halsey Gallery, Simon Center for the Arts, College of Charleston, SC, April 22 – May 18

1985 *Joan Thorne*, Graham Modern, New York City, May 22 – June 21, 1985

1983 Lincoln Center Gallery, Lincoln Center, New York City

1983 *Joan Thorne – Recent Paintings*, Dart Gallery, Chicago, IL, November 4 – December 5

1983 Gloria Luria Gallery, Bay Harbor Island, FL

1982 Nina Freudenheim Gallery, Buffalo, NY

Willard Gallery, New York, October 2 – 27

1980 Willard Gallery, New York, February 7 – March 5

1980 Dart Gallery, Chicago, IL

1979 Clocktower Gallery, Institute for Art and Urban Resources, New York City

1977 Galerie Veith Turske, *Internationaler Kunstmarkt (IKM)*, Cologne, Germany

1975 Alfred University, Alfred, NY, December

1974 Fischbach Gallery, New York City

1973 *Joan Thorne: Paintings*, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, December 15 – January 7

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (SELECTED LIST)

- 2020** *Invitational Exhibition of Visual Arts*, American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York, NY
- 2019** National Arts Club, *Women Out of Doors*, New York, NY
Market Art and Design, Bridgehampton Museum, Bridgehampton, NY
Art On Paper Fair, Pier 36, New York, NY
- 2010/11** Janet Kurnatowski Gallery, Brooklyn, NY
- 2005** Works on Paper, Sideshow Gallery (Vered Lieb and Richard Timperio, curators), Chicago, IL
- 2004** *Contemporary Women Artists: New York*, University Art Gallery, Indiana State University, Terre Haute, IN
- 2003** *Biennale Internazionale Dell'Arte Contemporanea*, Florence, Italy
- 1995** *News, Surprise and Nostalgia*, Bertha and Karl Leubsdorf Art Gallery, Hunter College, New York City
- 1994** *The Exuberant 80s*, André Zarre Gallery, New York City
- 1991** *Abstract Painting of the 90's*, André Emmerich Gallery, Barbara Rose (curator), New York City
Invitational, New York Stock Exchange, New York City
- 1987** *Romantic Science*, One Penn Plaza, New York City
Prix de Rome Paintings. American Academy in Rome Annual Exhibition: American Academy in Rome
- 1986** *Diptychs, Triptychs, Polyptychs*, Graham Modern, New York City
The Art of the 1970s and 1980s, The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, CT
An Affair of the Heart, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY
Non-Objective Painting, Kamakazie Gallery (Stephen Westfall, curator), New York City
Summer Yellows, Graham Modern
- 1984** *Heroic/Poetic*, Visual Arts Museum, New York City
American Women Artists, Sidney Janis Gallery, New York City
Emblems of Imagination, Islip Art Museum (Karen Shaw, curator), Islip, NY
Luxe Calme et Volupté: Nine Abstract Artists & Their Use of Color, One Penn Plaza (John Yau, curator), New York City
Abstract Painting: Painting by Women Artists, N.Y.C.W.C.A., New York City
Artists from the Edward F. Albee Foundation, Guild Hall Museum, East Hampton, NY
- 1981** *New Directions*, Sidney Janis Gallery (Sam Hunter, curator), New York City
Biennial exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York City
- 1980** *L'Amérique aux Indépendents*, Société des Artistes Indépendents, Grand Palais, Paris, France
Seven Young Americans, Sidney Janis Gallery, New York City
Paper-works for the Serious Collector, Guild Hall Museum, East Hampton, NY
- 1979** Willard Gallery, New York City
Generation, Susan Caldwell Gallery, Inc. (Michael Walls, curator), New York City
American Paintings: The Eighties, Grey Art Gallery (Barbara Rose, curator), New York City; The Contemporary Art Museum, Houston; American Center for Art and Culture, Paris, France
Nina Freudenheim Gallery, Buffalo, NY
- 1978** Willard Gallery, New York City
Thick Paint, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL
- 1977** *Woman in Art: Working Papers*, Albany, New York; United States Courthouse, TX
Paintings, New York, Davidson Art Center, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT
Paintings from the Aldrich Museum Collection, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT
- 1974** *Tenth Anniversary Exhibition*, Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, CT
Whitney Annual Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York City
GEDOK American Women Artists Show, Kunsthaus Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY
Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, CT
Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY
Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati, OH
Currier Museum of Art, Manchester, New Hampshire
Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX
Indianapolis Museum of Art, IN
Krannert Art Museum, University of Illinois, Champaign, IL
Museo de las Casas Reales, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX
Portland Museum of Art, Portland, ME
List Visual Arts Center, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA
The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY
Lincoln Center Poster Collection and Gallery, New York, NY
Smorgon Collection, Museum of Contemporary Art, Melbourne, Australia
Sloan Kettering Hospital, New York, NY
Roselyn C. Swig, Artsource, San Francisco, CA

FELLOWSHIPS, GRANTS, AWARDS

2006 Adolf Gottlieb Foundation Grant for Painting
2003 Prize in Painting, Biennale Internazionale, Florence, Italy
2001 Grant in Painting, Pollock Krasner Foundation
1987 Grant in Painting, Pollock Krasner Foundation
1986 Prix de Rome in Visual Arts, American Academy in Rome
1986 Grant in Painting, Pollock Krasner Foundation
1983 Fellowship in Painting, National Endowment for the Arts
1980 Grant in Painting, New York State Council on the Arts
1979 Fellowship in Painting, National Endowment for the Arts
1976 Grant in Painting, Rhode Island State Council on the Arts
1975 Grant for Painting, New York State Council on the Arts
1974 Grant in Painting, Rhode Island State Council on the Arts
1972 Artist of the Year Award, Aldrich Foundation

ARTIST RESIDENCIES

1993 Altos de Chavon, Dominican Republic
1991 (and '79,'76,'74), Yaddo, Saratoga Springs, NY
1981 MacDowell Colony, Inc., Peterborough, NH
1977 (and '78) Edward Albee Foundation, Montauk, NY
1977 Edna St. Vincent Millay Colony, Austerlitz, NY

Bibliography

- Barrios, Mario Alegre. "Thorne en el espejo de su obra." *Dentro El Nuevo Dia*, Sunday, March 1998, p. 5.
- Canal, Emily. "Fresh Art on the Fringe: Alternative Art Spaces Multiply Throughout New York." *The New York Observer*, November 23, 2010.
- Colaizzi, Vittorio. "Joan Thorne: Analytic Ecstasy." *Women's Art Journal* 37 no. 1 (Spring/Summer, 2016).
- Johnson, Ken. "Joan Thorne 'Recent Paintings.'" *The New York Times*, Art & Design, Art in Review, November 25, 2010.
- Kalm, James. "Works on Paper." *The Brooklyn Rail*, ArtSeen (July – August, 2005).
- Manson, Douglas. "Joan Thorne." *Art In America*, March 28, 2011.
- Marceles, Eduardo. "La Pintura metafisica de Joan Thorne." *Vida Hoy*, November 2, year.
- Morgan, Robert C. "Joan Thorne: Mythical Journeys, Power and Flight in Joan Thorne." New York City: Andre Zarre Gallery, 2001.
- Morgan, Robert C. "Painted in New York City: The Presence of the Past in Viewpoints of Recent Developments in Abstract Painting." Hempstead: Hofstra University, 2001.
- Morgan, Robert C. "Straight Painting." *In Straight Painting* (brochure). New York City: The Painting Center, 2000.
- Panero, James. "Joan Thorne's Musical Paintings." *The New Criterion* (November, 2013). Accessed October 23, 2019. <https://newcriterion.com/blogs/dispatch/joan-thornes-musical-paintings>.
- Pechman, Ali. "Review." *ARTnews*, January 2014.
- Southgate, M. Therese. "Naust." *The Journal of American Medicine Association (JAMA)* 280, no. 11 (September 1998): 948.
- Vine, Richard. "Review: Museo Voluntariado De Las Casas Reales, Casa De Bastidas, Santo Domingo, Dom. Rep." *Art In America Magazine*, June, 1998.
- Westfall, Stephen. "Wild Beauty." In *Joan Thorne – Retrospective*. San Juan: Museo de Las Americas, 2000.

Works in the Exhibition

All works are by Joan Thorne and were loaned from her archive. They are listed in chronological order.



Amphra, 1972
Oil on canvas, oil stick,
graphite
102 x 71 inches



Ka, 1974
Oil on canvas
96 x 86 inches



Graw, 1974
Oil on canvas
103 x 72 inches



Onin, 1979
Charcoal and oil stick
on paper
50 x 38 inches



Erodo, 1980
Oil on canvas
50 x 50 inches



IBA, 1980
Oil on canvas
54 x 54 inches



Ka 2, 1980
Charcoal and oil stick on
paper
50 x 38 inches



Oseah, 1981
Oil on canvas
64 x 67 inches



Aba, 1982
Oil on canvas
53 x 53 inches



Brizet, 1982
Oil on canvas
50 x 50 inches



Buca, 1986
Oil on canvas
75 x 97 1/2 inches



Vetulonia, 1987
Oil on canvas
89 3/4 x 76 3/4 inches



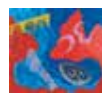
Maga, 1988
Oil on canvas
69 1/2 x 65 3/5 inches



Alas de Olimpo, 1997
Oil on canvas
66 x 56 inches



Merengue Del Tigre, 1998
Oil on canvas
66 x 56 inches



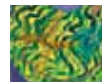
Delos, 2000
Oil on canvas
56 x 66 inches



Oracolo, 2001
Oil on canvas
63 x 55 inches



Esperanza, 2005
Oil on canvas
66 x 56 inches



Los Velos, 2009
Oil on canvas
56 x 66 inches



Khajarahho Sun, 2010
Oil on canvas
59 x 50 inches



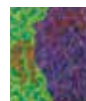
Arco Iris, 2010
Oil on canvas
59 x 49 inches



Hampi, 2010
Oil on canvas
56 x 66 inches



Yangon, 2010
Oil on canvas
66 x 55 inches



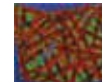
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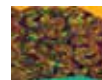
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60 x 69 inches



Ananda, 2015
Oil on canvas
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Naga, 2015
Oil on canvas
38 x 46 inches



Nazca, 2018
Oil on canvas
34 x 44 inches



Ka 2, 1980, Charcoal and oil stick on paper, 50 x 38 inches, detail

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