

JOHN LOKER
SPACE IS A DANGEROUS COUNTRY

13 January - 6 February, 2016

Flowers Gallery
21 Cork Street. London, W1S 3LZ

FLOWERS

JOHN LOKER: SPACE EXPLORER

GRAHAM VICKERS

If John Loker's subject matter often tends towards the abstract, it is not out of a wish to be enigmatic but rather out of wanting to render intriguing concepts without the distraction of recognisable elements. Journeys and intrusions, collisions and coincidences, explorations and mishaps – these are the things that interest him. The original objects or events that inspired the works may or may not be represented.

A decade ago John Loker was exploring a cycle road racing practice called 'Rolling Closure'. This is a traffic management term for closing and then reopening sequential parts of a public route so as to accommodate a race as it passes through. Intended to do no more than minimise disruption to traffic, it is exactly the kind of mundane idea in which Loker tends to find wider emotional or intellectual resonance simply by considering it. In this case it led to the working slogan 'minimum disruption to the normal state'.

A trip to Australia also saw the commonplace promoted into the thought-provoking when the artist was caught in a twister while driving. His reflexive action of turning on his windscreen wipers simply obliterated his view instead of clearing it. He lived to tell the tale and it duly led to the 'Wipers Series' of paintings in which sweeping arcs did not clarify the picture, but instead muddled it. In some instances he actually smeared what he had already carefully painted with a real wiper.

The current exhibition, then, is an inquiry into space – the space in which our planet exists. In contrast to the visual clichés of the movies, space is here represented by repetitive curvilinear patterns suggestive of inherent tension, the opposite of the cinema's conventional inky blackness which merely suggests an absence of attributes, not a presence of forces. The 'space' explored in these paintings is a restless entity into which external shapes intrude, perhaps at their peril. The inherent tautness of the space-waves becomes even more charged in those pieces painted on multi-layered glass with moiré patterns appearing in response to a changing viewing angle.

Unlike some of John Loker's earlier work, these paintings resist any literal 'reading'; they can only be experienced for their beauty, their dynamism and the emotions they provoke. The various elements intruding into this particular space are suffused with expressive colour and exude a sense of excitement but we are left to imagine why they are there and what their fate might be. We may learn from the artist himself that one painting revisits the 'Wipers' impulse by dribbling uncontrolled paint in a multi-coloured vertical stripe through an otherwise precisely rendered canvas; or that another was inspired by the ill-fated Columbia Space Mission, the one that disintegrated on re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere shedding a distinctively-shaped fragment referenced in one of the paintings. In general, though, while these pictures pose questions, they do not yield simple answers. All they offer are elegantly framed inquiries about mis-matched forces and the uncertainty of venturing into unknown territory. Any territory.

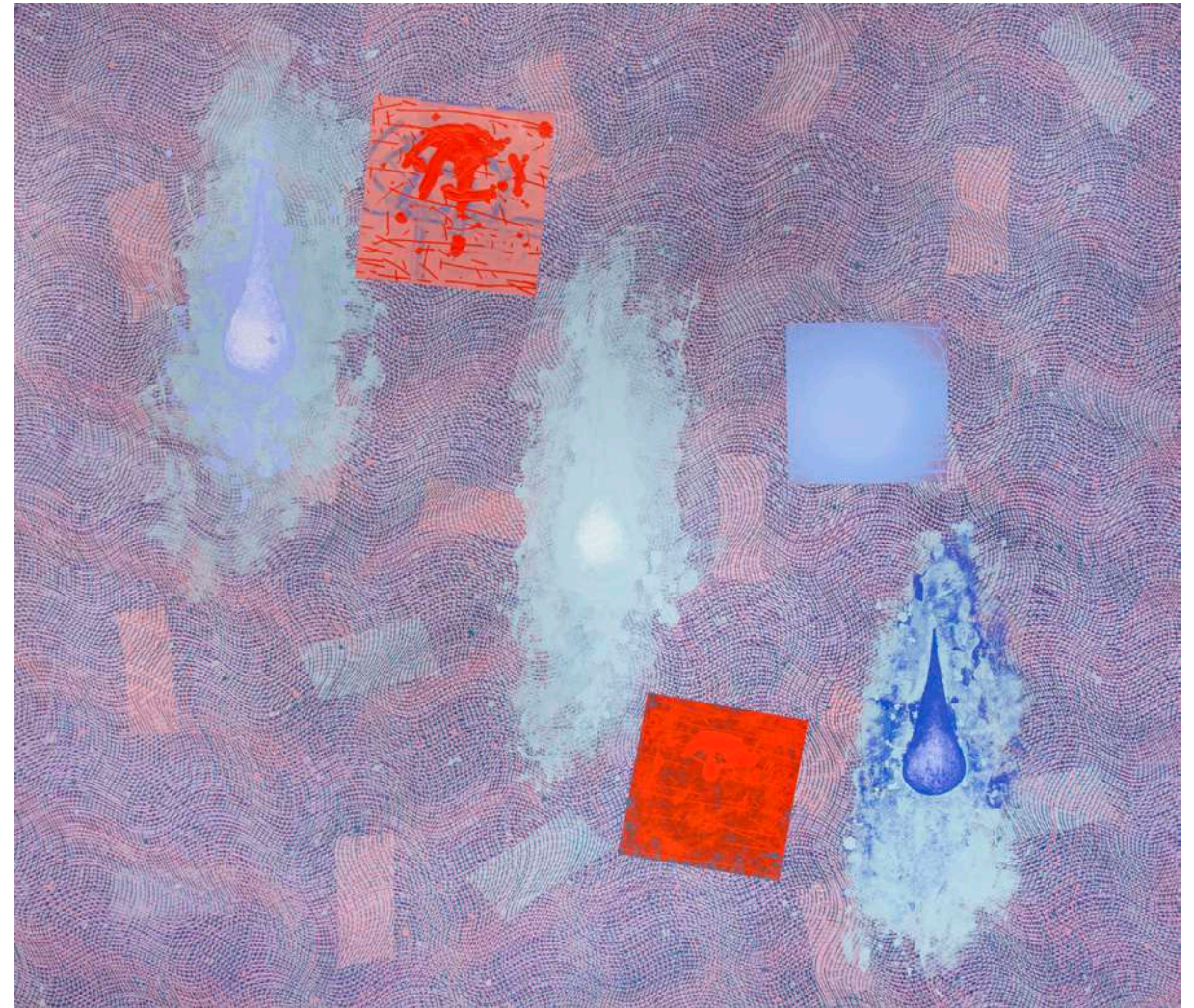
Space is a Dangerous Country - Float, 2014
Oil on canvas
160 x 175 cm
63 x 68 7/8 in



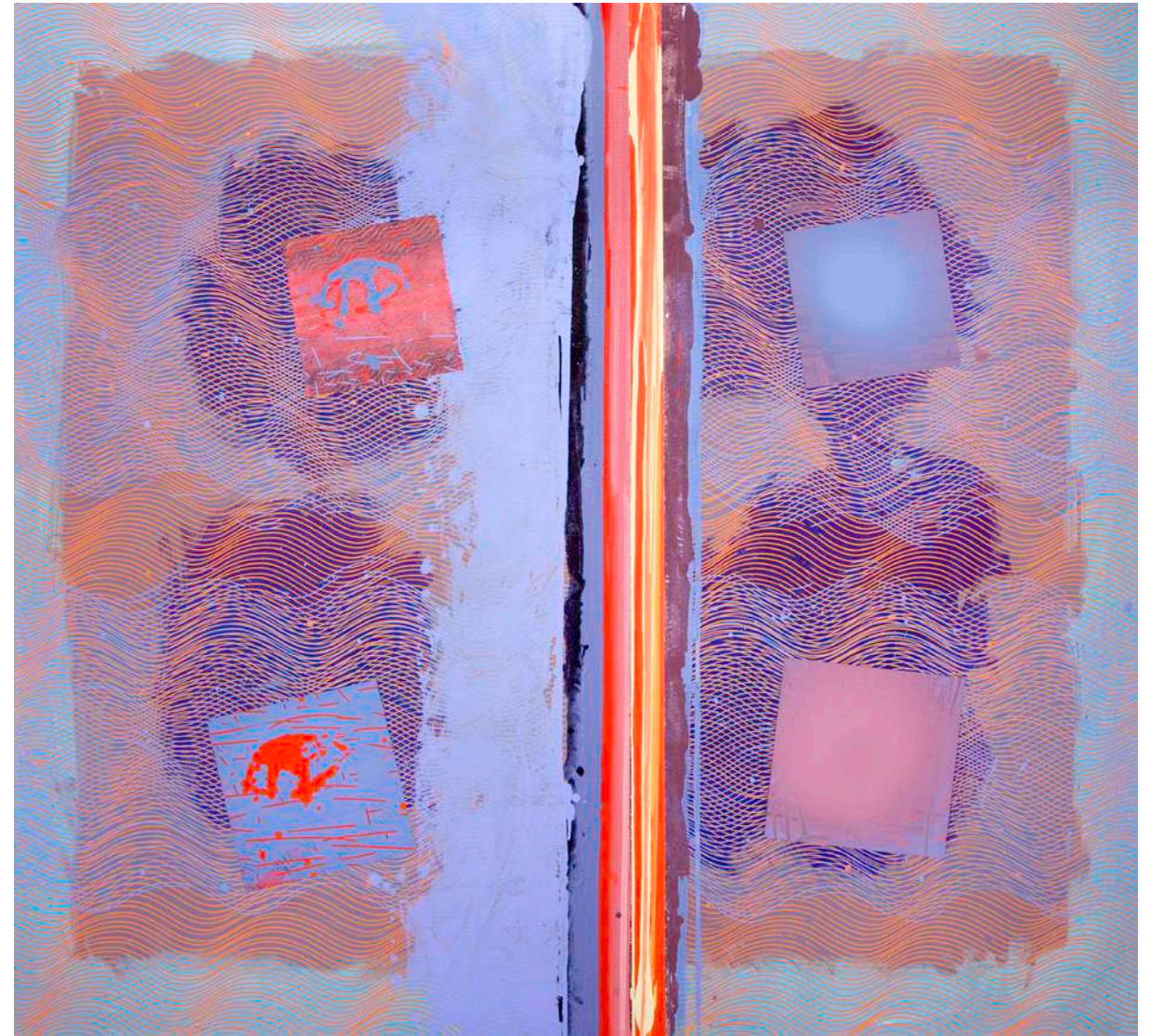
Space is a Dangerous Country - RE-entry, 2014
Oil on canvas
160 x 175 cm
63 x 68 7/8 in



Space is a Dangerous Country, 2015
Oil on canvas
180 x 210 cm
70 7/8 x 82 5/8 in



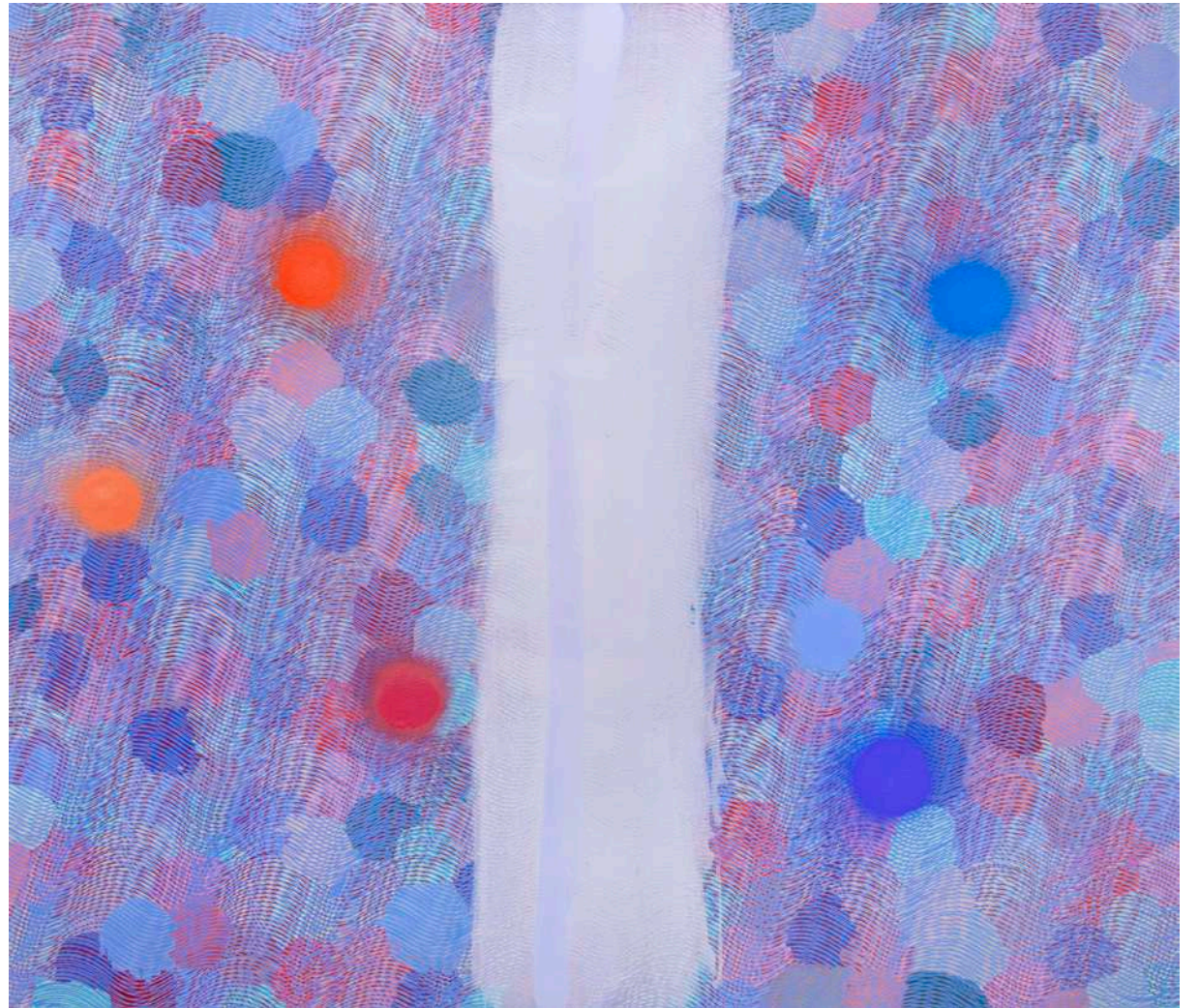
Space is a Dangerous Country - Worlds Divide 1, 2014
Oil on canvas
160 x 175 cm
63 x 68 7/8 in



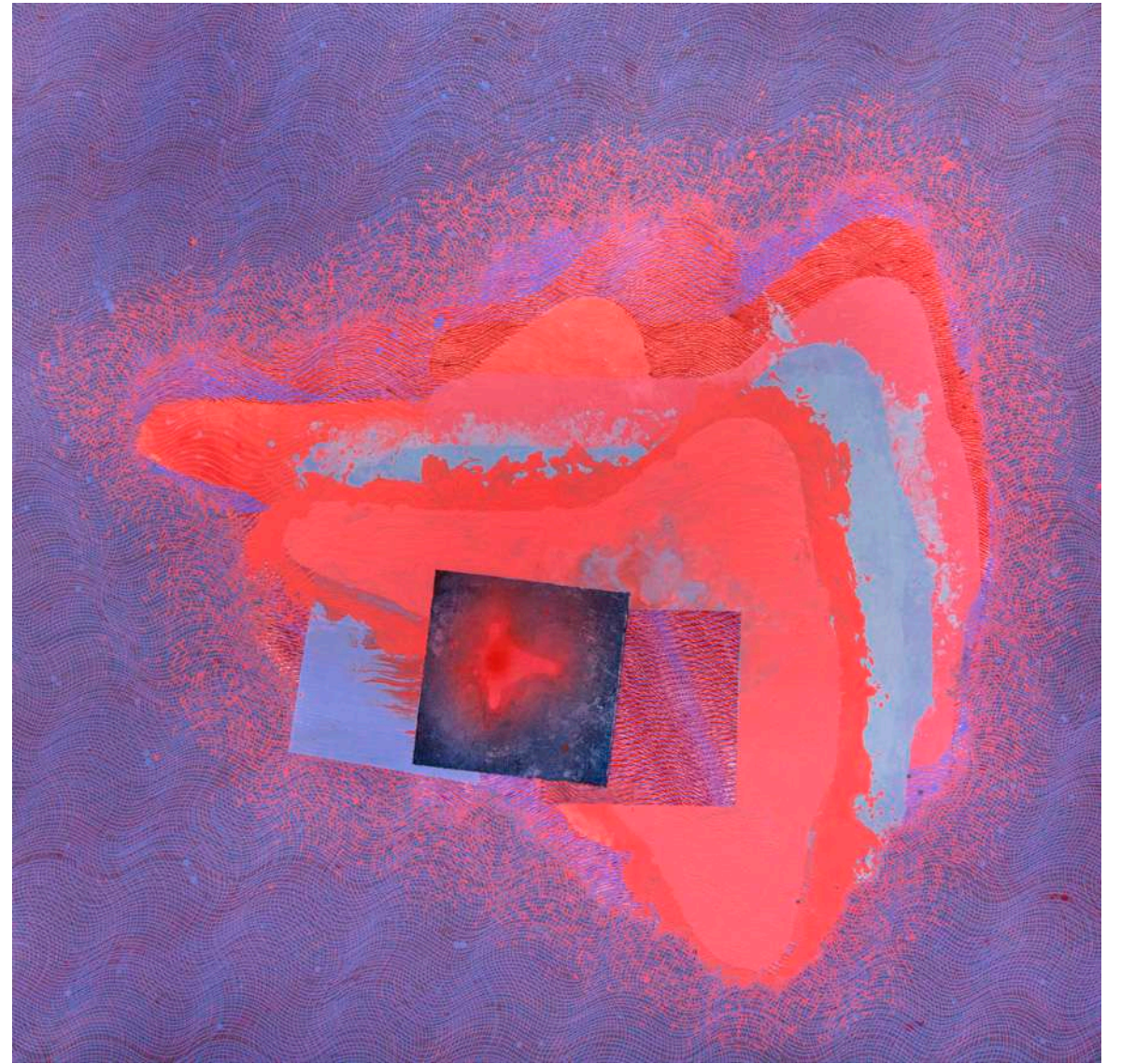
Space is a Dangerous Country - Worlds Divide 2, 2015
Oil on canvas
160 x 175 cm
63 x 68 7/8 in



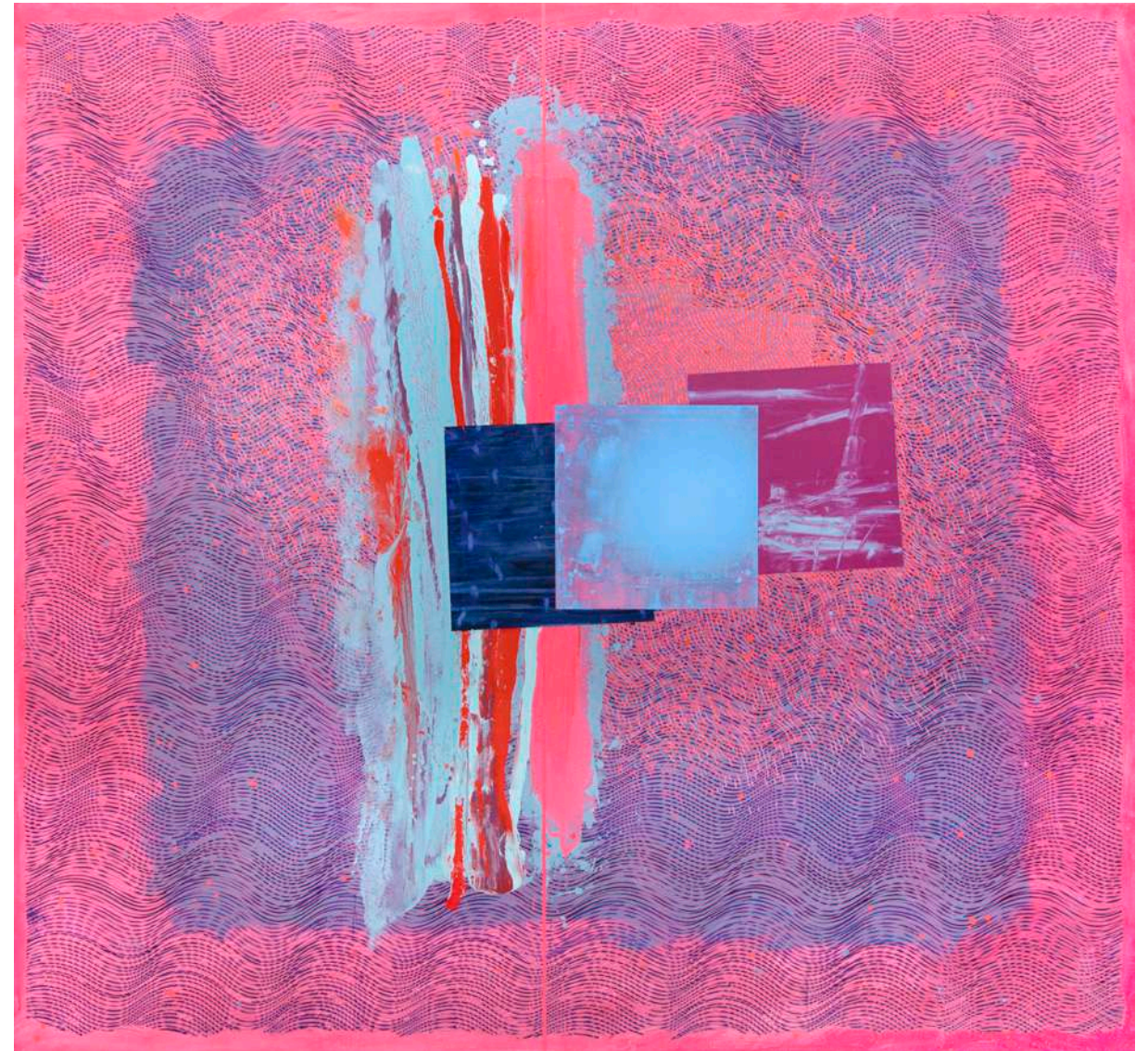
Space is a Dangerous Country - Fade Out, 2015
Oil on canvas
180 x 210 cm
78 3/4 x 88 5/8 in



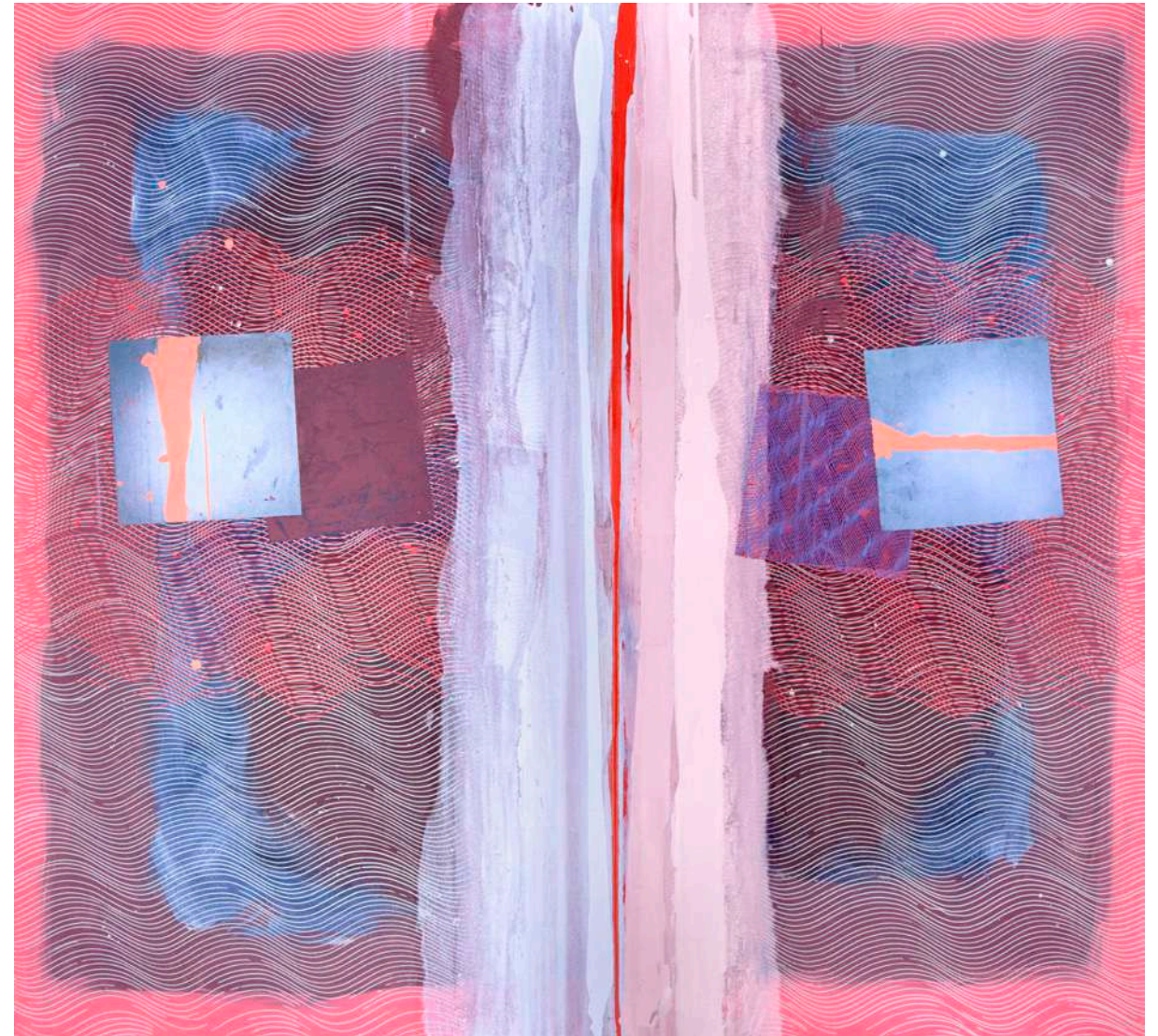
Space is a Dangerous Country - Columbia / Disaster, 2015
Oil on canvas
200 x 225 cm
78 3/4 x 88 5/8 in



Space is a Dangerous Country - Divide, 2013
Oil on canvas
200 x 215 cm
63 x 68 7/8 in



Space is a Dangerous Country - Violence Afoot 1, 2015
Oil on canvas
160 x 175 cm
78 3/4 x 88 5/8 in



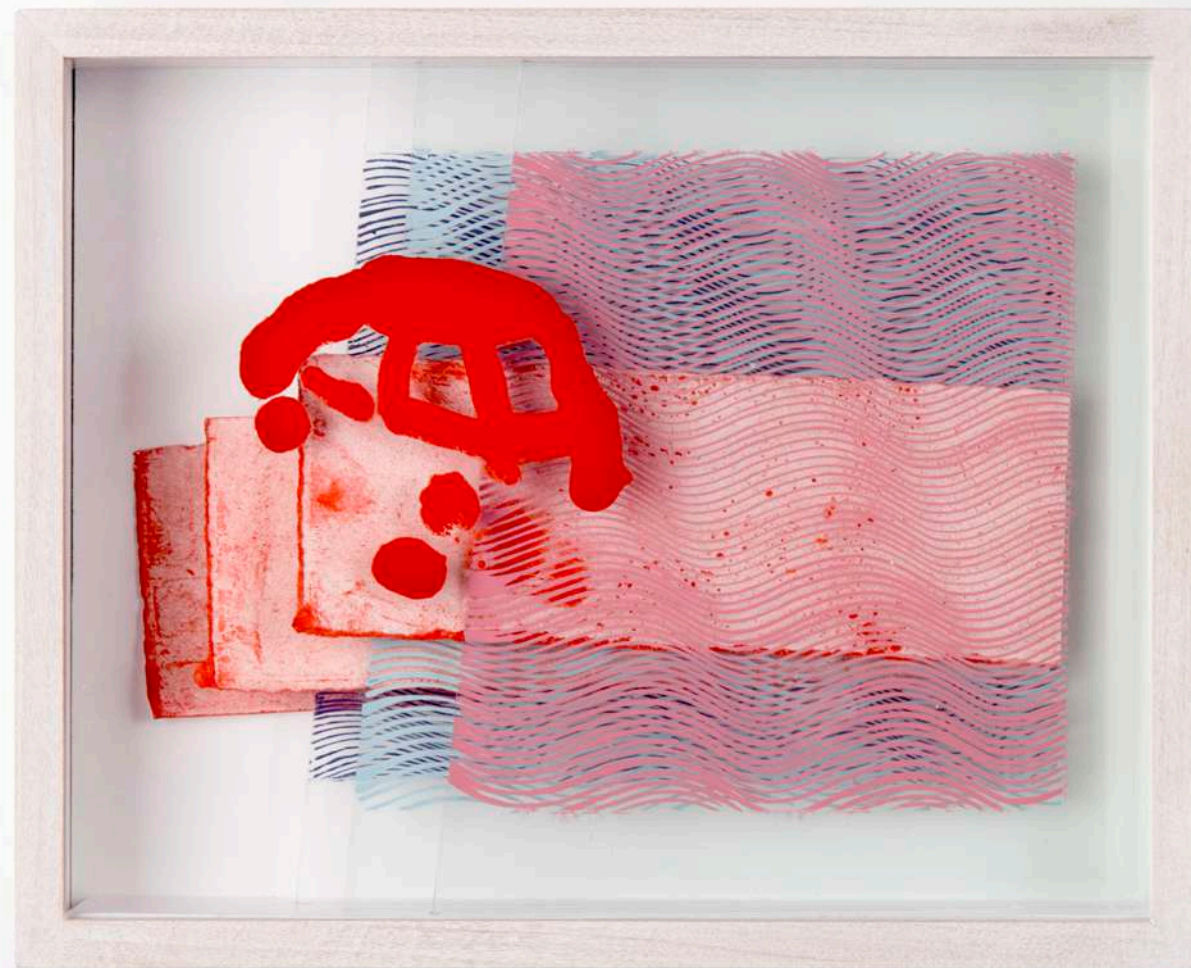
SIADC - Remnants 1, 2015
Oil on glass
35 x 35 cm
13 3/4 x 13 3/4 in



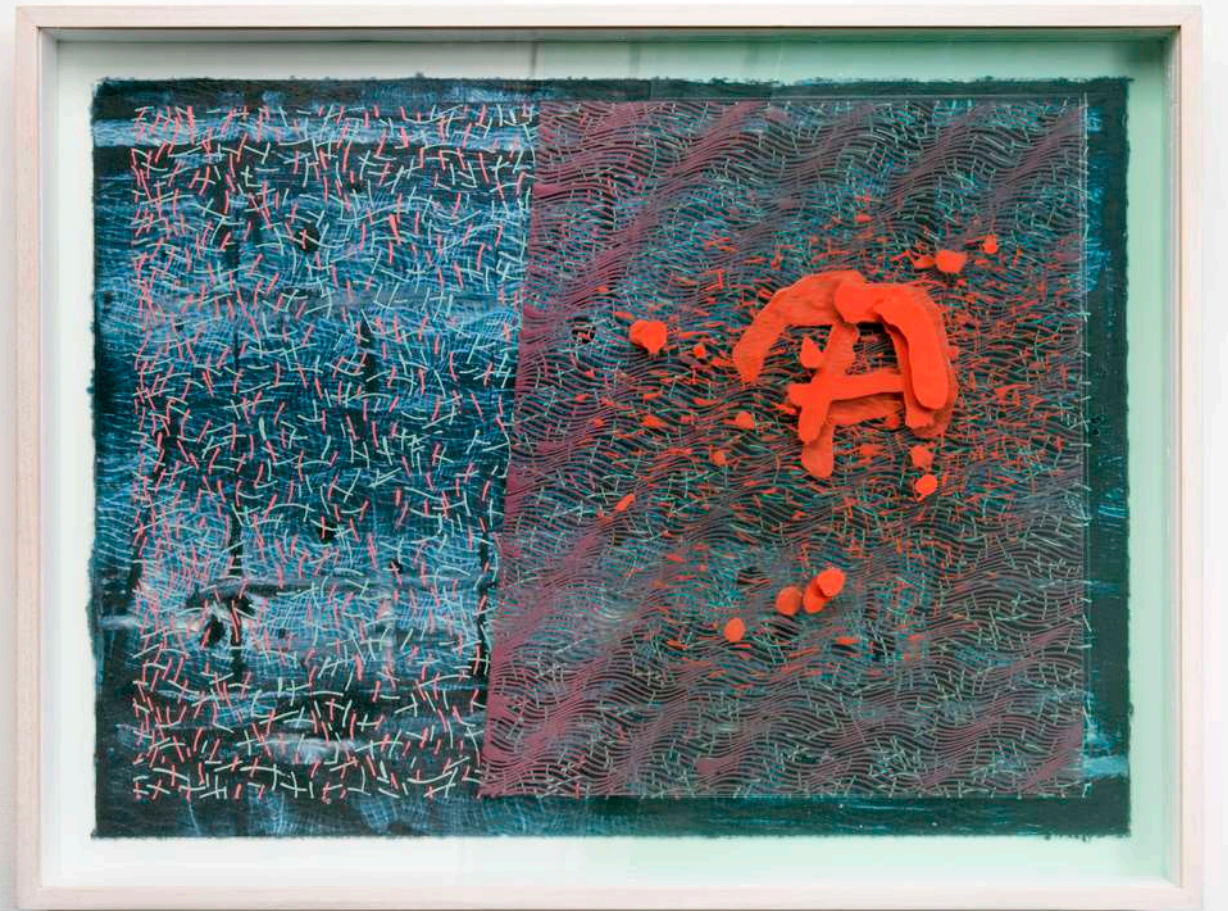
SIADC - Remnants 2, 2015
Oil on glass
35 x 35 cm
13 3/4 x 13 3/4 in



SIADC - Notebooks, 2015
Oil pigment on glass and paper
27 x 27 cm
10 5/8 x 10 5/8 in



SIADC - Breakup, 2015
Oil on perspex & card
46.5 x 61.7 x 6.5 cm
18 1/4 x 24 1/4 x 2 1/2 in



Snow Melt, 2015
Oil on glass
26.5 x 30.5 cm
10 3/8 x 12 1/8 in



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