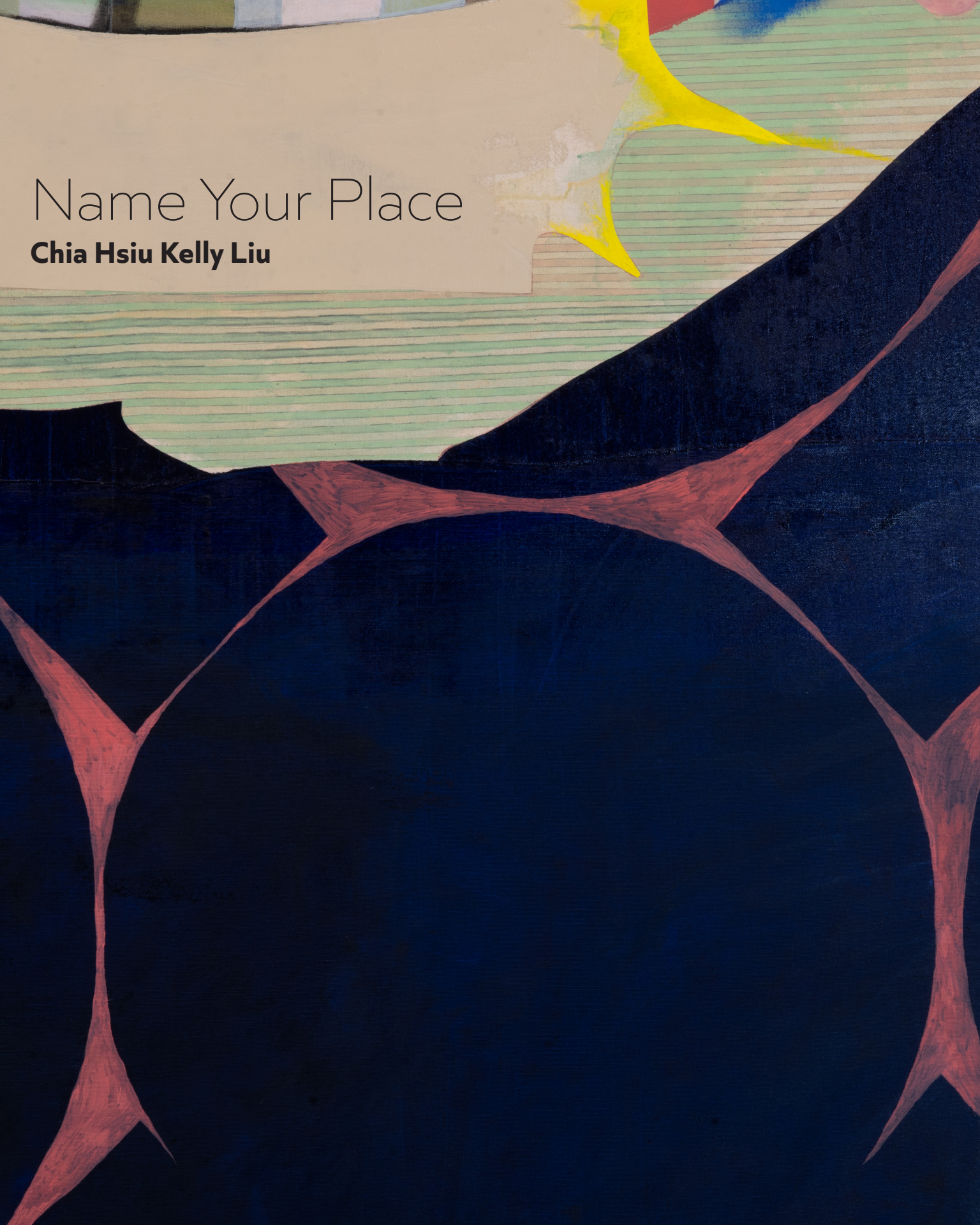




Name Your Place

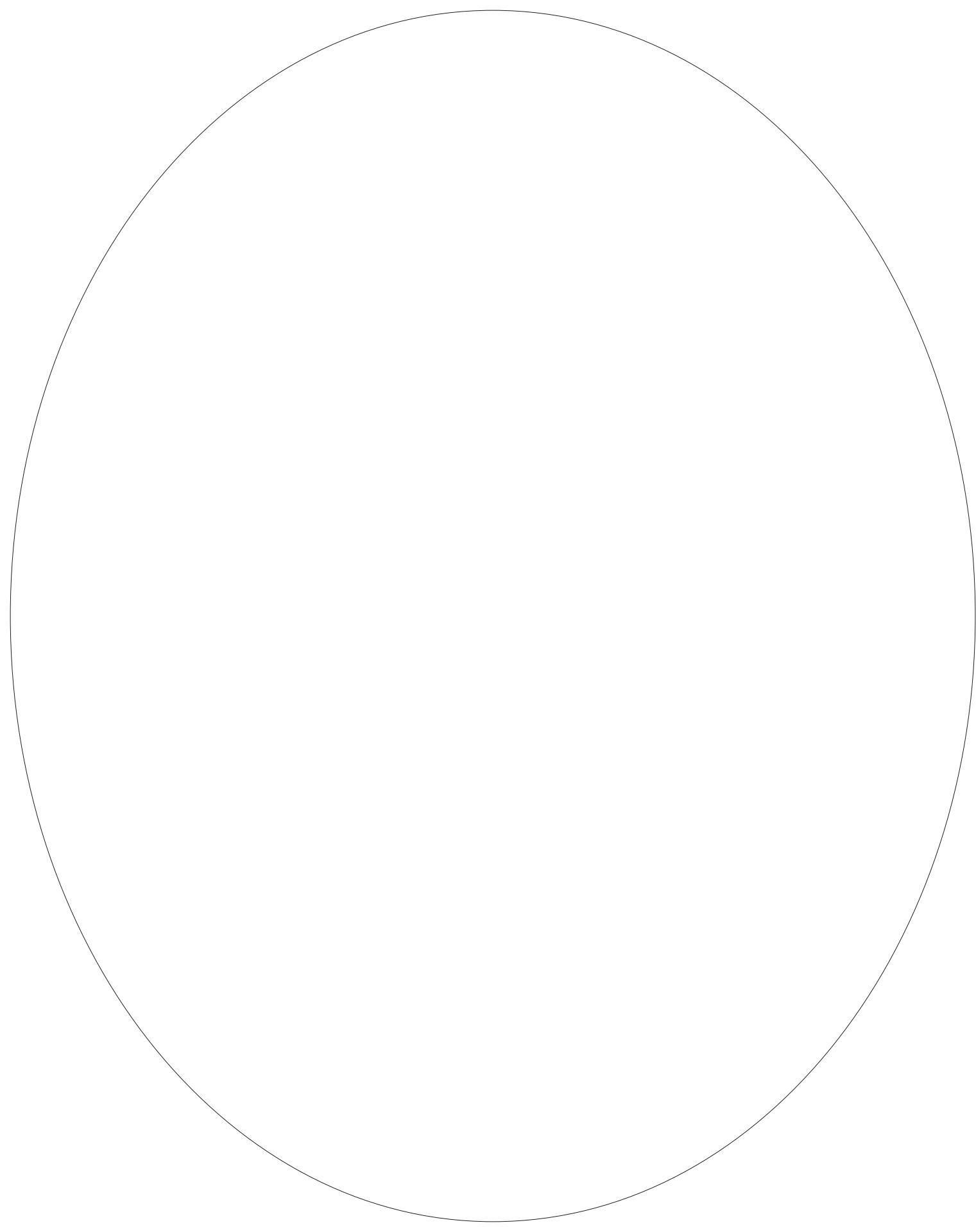
Chia Hsiu Kelly Liu

Name Your Place

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Introduction

*A wall stands between
me and the view;
a window I peer
through the eyes of a
five-year-old, and a
twenty-six-year-
old.*

*I was born in the **city**;
bathing under the **SUN**
through windows.*

Day after day, I woke up and walked through the department hallway, peeking out the window and wondering what makes the landscape I see valuable. It is just a normal street corner between two roads with red bricks and several cars.

What do you call normal? What leaves you feeling exposed, and what stirs your heart? I feel a rush of excitement as I enter the city, I feel a sense of thrill when I take in the landscapes around me. In my memory, my parents once took me to the front of a department store to look at their clocks. Every hour, the clock chimes and plays music, while the nutcracker robot and dolls, limited to swaying side to side, creak with the movement of its gears. I look at these figures smaller than me and think about how small I am in my dad's arms. An invisible order governs everything, shaping the flow of people—and it mirrors your perspective; navigate the world around you.

I was born in the city; bathing under the sun through windows. As far as I can remember, I've always lived in the same room. Beside my bed is a window, always fogged up in my memory from the humidity. I've looked out of it through the eyes of a five-year-old, and so far, as a 26-year-old, I still see the same view—a McDonald's sign that shines 24/7.

Introduction

The window witnessed; I once dropped my stuffed unicorn out of the window, I couraged myself to stick my head out of the eight-story window and saw my unicorn dropped on my neighbor's balcony. The scene outside has remained frozen in time: buildings that have hardly shifted in decades, the McDonald's sign glowing 24/7. Like an unshakable signal, yet like a traveler reminiscing a trip. Home is an abstract concept, a refuge from the weight of leaving it behind. It's a real city—far from utopian—but to me, it's a place of unknown. A place where unicorns sleep and where I once knocked on my neighbor's door.

When was the last time you took a look at your room? No matter how messy your room is, there must be a system where you put things in order. Start by drawing grids with a ruler, bind the messiness with shapes and colors until the chaos turns into structure, and hang it on the wall.

JUNGLE
oil and linen on cavas
73 x 56 inches
2024





TILES
oil and gouache on canvas
75 x 68 inches
2025

TILES
oil and gouache on
canvas
75 x 68 inches
2025





MAN AND BIRD
oil, gouache, and color
pencil on muslin
11 x 7 inches
2025

Hidden Order in the Cities

*Wiping tables, fixing cars,
and feeding pets all follow
the same **principle**:
keeping your life
organized.*

*I realized that what attracts
me is not **ordinary**, but
the **hidden order** in
the **daily**.*



THE RAINBOW BRIDGE
crayon color pencil and oil
pastel on paper
31 x 43 inches
2023



UNDER THE BRIDGE
crayon color pencil and oil
pastel on paper
43 x 31 inches
2023

My interest in the order of space does not come from nowhere. During my undergraduate studies in Taiwan, I was part of the Art and Design program focused on Architecture, where I discovered the joy of structure. It was also during this time that I was introduced to Wayne Thiebaud, an artist who had a great influence on me. Thiebaud's painting of two ice cream cones smiling at me. The content is interesting enough to be attractive, but what matters in Thiebaud's painting is the incredible sense of tranquility; and the ineffableness order he masters in. An interviewer described that Thiebaud's painting has a keen sense of color, and Thiebaud explained his painting as abstraction and Syncopation, a musical concept of shifts or displaces a standard rhythm by stressing beats that are generally not stressed.

Hidden Order in the City

Even though I was attracted at first by the cake and pie paintings that Thiebaud was most known for, what matters to me is his San Francisco landscape paintings. In this series, Thiebaud builds up the hundreds of sketches he made on the street, and combines the imaginary with the reality; I was inspired by the way he painted landscapes to the logic of design. In these paintings, Thiebaud carefully arranges every element of the landscape to highlight each key aspect of the buildings, all while maintaining the realist essence of the city; the straight lines of the road and traffic signal are depicted as pure abstractions, transforming the city into a utopia that resembles reality. There was a time when I became obsessed with painting flat colors and symmetrical landscapes, which I now see as an unintentional reflection of my admiration for Thiebaud's landscape paintings.

Today, my painting experience has changed from then, and my subject matter and art forms are also different from Thiebaud's. Yet the richness of his paintings always remains one of the best in my mind. I learned the intimacy of living with objects in Thiebaud's painting, and the incredible logic and order an artist can create. He taught me the importance of observing my daily, and every sense should be a treasure for an artist. I realized that what attracts me is not ordinary, but the hidden order in the daily.

SPRING

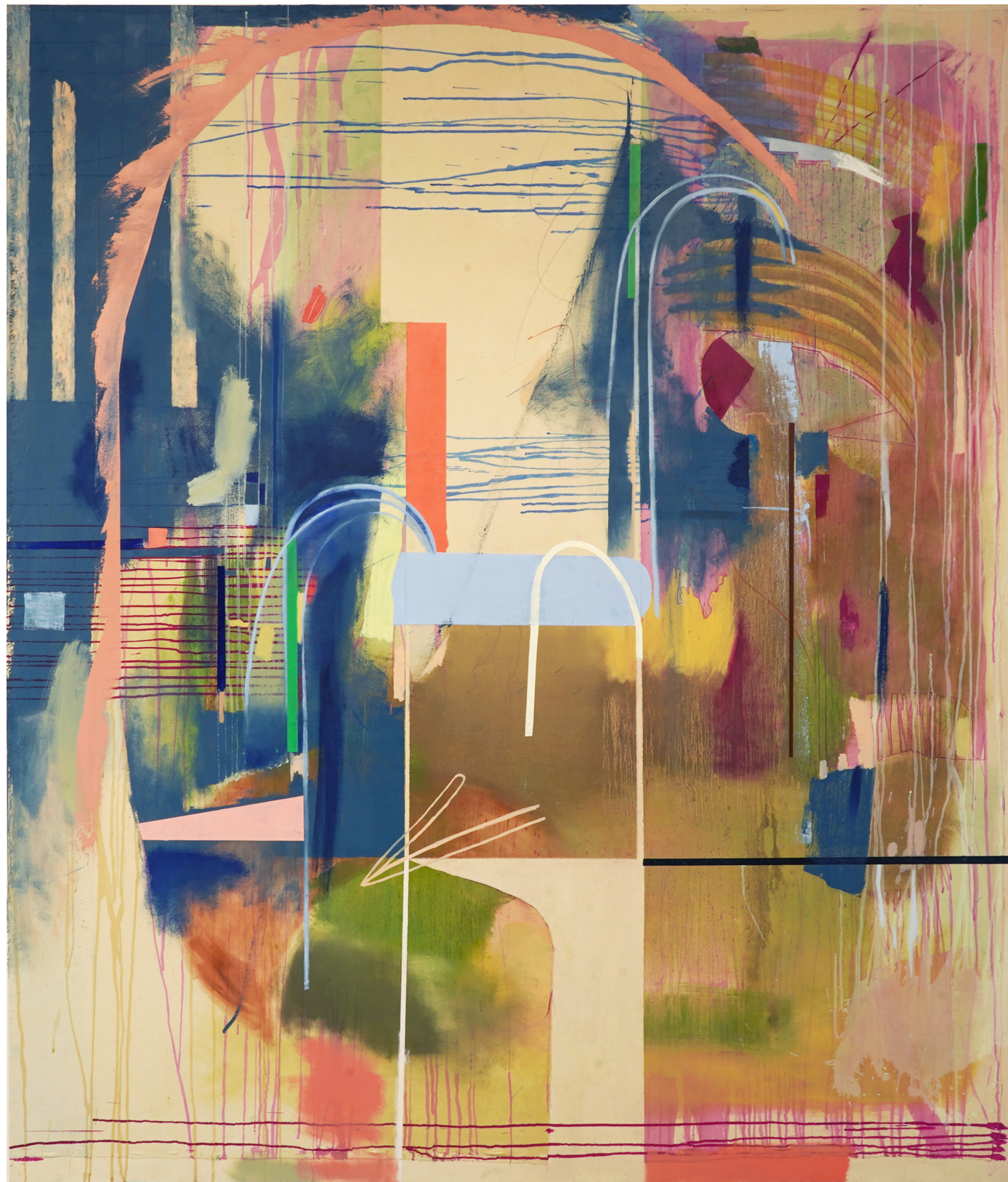
oil, gouache, and graphite

on canvas

90 x 78 inches

2025





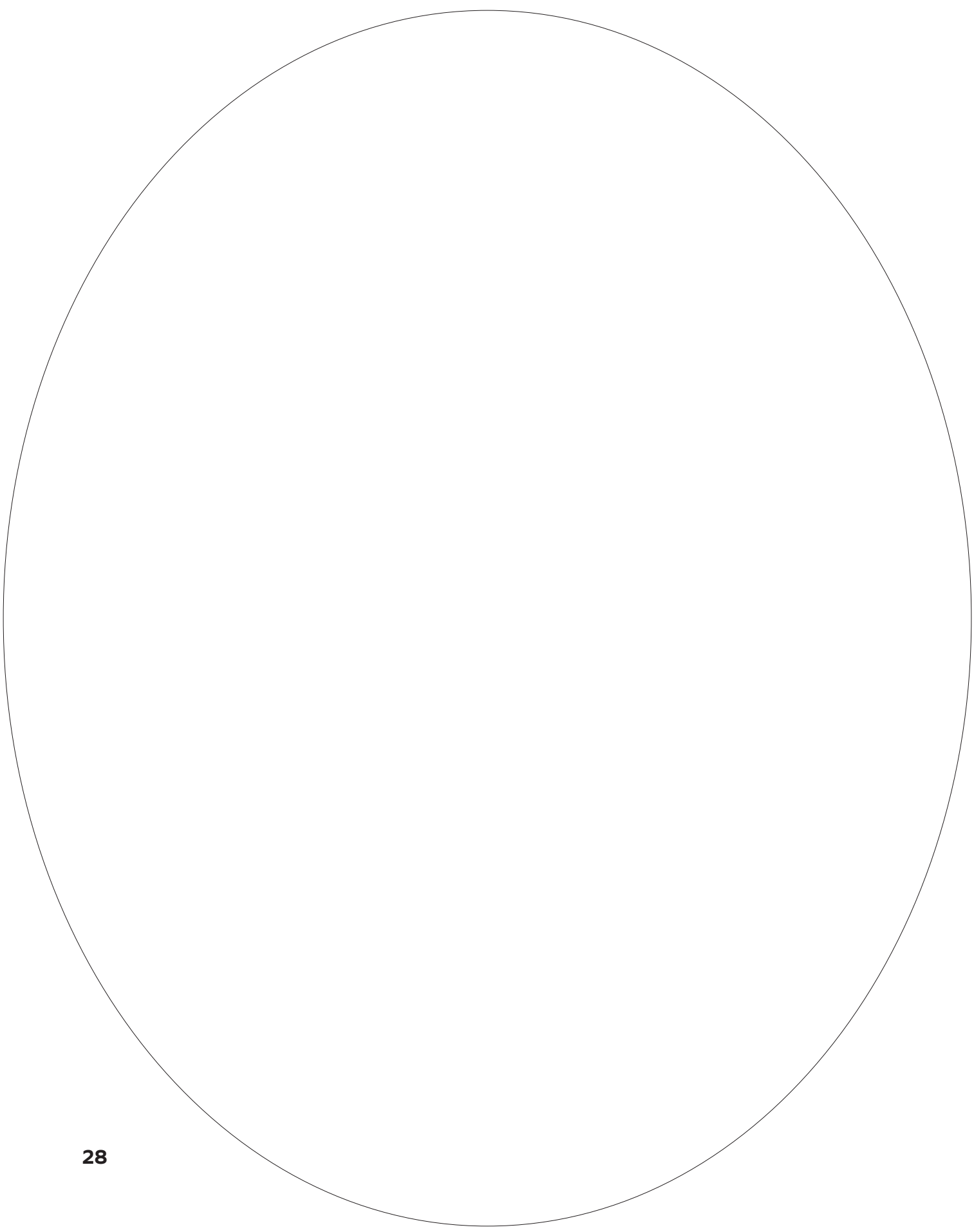
SPRING
oil, gouache, and graphite
on canvas
90 x 78 inches
2025

Hidden Order in the City

TILES (L)
oil and gouache on
canvas
75 x 68 inches
2025

SPRING (R)
oil, gouache, and graphite
on canvas
90 x 78 inches
2025





\\

I believe in the value of hard work. The act of stretching canvas with the strength of my fingers, feeling the deep fatigue that comes from muscle soreness, is intimately tied to the process of creating. Just like polishing a painting, one would refine a piece of hardware with attention and care. Wiping tables, fixing cars, and feeding pets all follow the same principle: keeping your life organized.

My grandfather’s house is in Sanyi, a town in the Miaoli County of Taiwan, known for its rich history of woodcraft. Most of the men of his generation were carpenters or had apprenticed in the art of wood carving. The air is filled with the fragrance of Hinoki wood and the sharp hum of saws. Alongside my connection to Sanyi’s wood carving tradition, my understanding of wood is also shaped by my father’s profession. He works in the building materials industry and often shares insights about how wood is crafted and how building materials affect people’s memory; he once told me that wealthy clients tend to like building materials with an aged effect because it reminds them of their childhood. Wood, in its many forms, is a fascinating and versatile material.

Not far from my grandfather's house is a river, a place where I spent much of my childhood. It's called ho^ˇba, which means "river" in Hak-ka, a common language in Taiwan. I associate ho^ˇba with the sensation of standing on the cool, moss-covered stones of the riverbed. This riverbed was built by people to make it easier to pass through the river, people often drive their cars directly onto the riverbed to wash them. The water, chilly and refreshing, creates a peaceful backdrop to the sounds of buckets splashing. The riverbed feels as soft as a carpet, yet carries a sense of danger, as if I could be swept away at any moment. I remember the sensation of gripping the ground with my toes, even though the water level was probably only slightly above my feet. Standing on the smooth, square-shaped riverbed has become one of my core childhood memories.

The tension between my fingers and toes with a plane continued. Working with canvas requires similar physical endurance. As I rotate the painting, I need to use my fingers to tighten the edge of the canvas. I use all my strength to lift a painting taller than me and use my feet to push against the canvas to position it on the wall. This effort reflects a desire for privacy in my art, a space where I can be fully immersed in the work without external distractions. Each movement, each adjustment, immerses in my memory and becomes a new painting.

A BOX
oil and linen on canvas
54 x 44 inches
2024





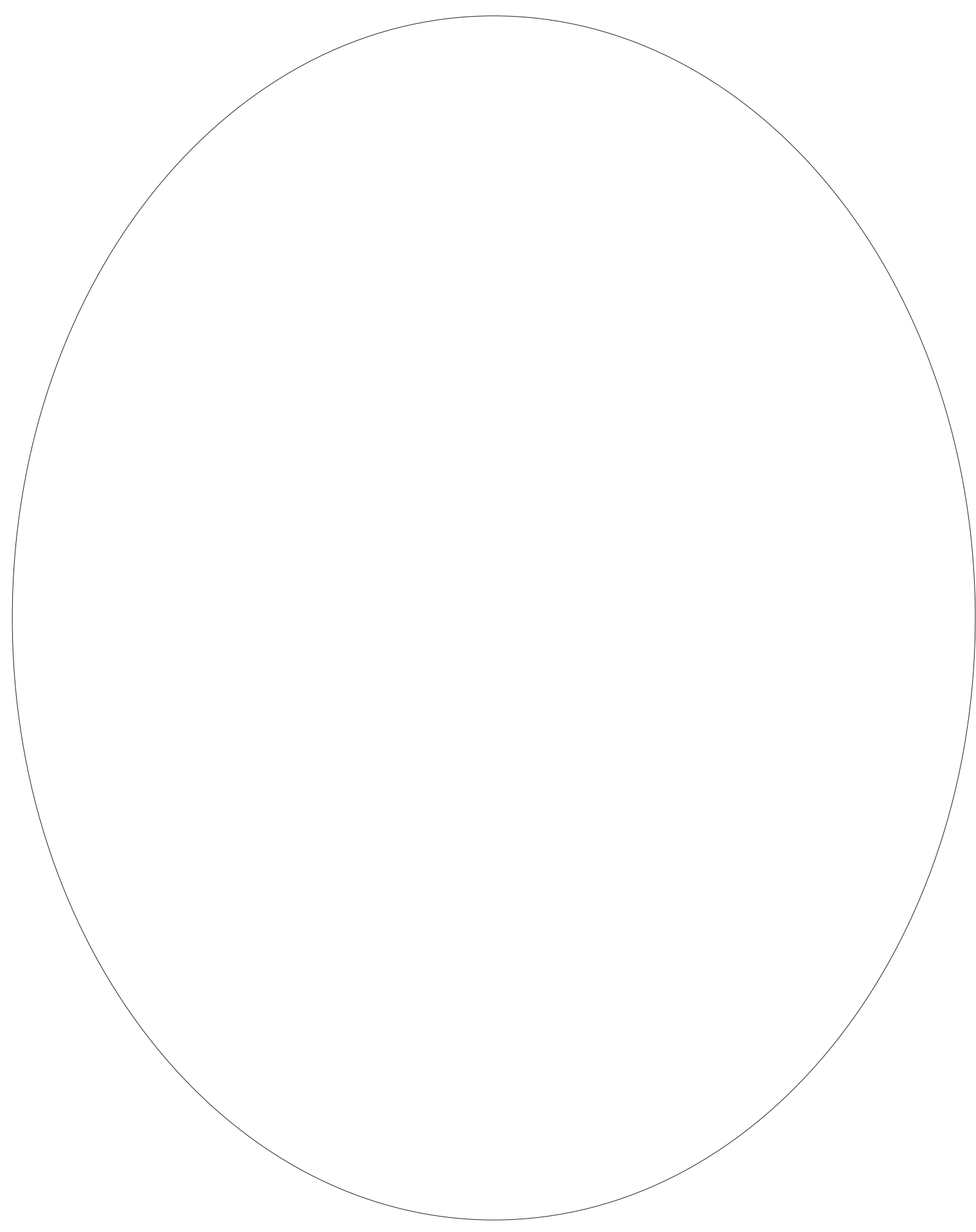
GATEWAY
oil on linen
19.5 x 23.5 inches
2024



PIANO PERFORMANCE
gouache on paper
14 x 10 inches
2024



SPACE MODEL
gouache on paper
14 x 10 inches
2024



The Parallel

*They all look similar from a
great distance,
especially from an aerial
view.*

*From the bird's-eye view,
you will see branches from the
top, a river as a plane,
and a duck as a dot.*

Differences are easier to distinguish than similarities. If you look at any cities you have lived in or been to, they all look similar from a great distance, especially from an aerial view. From the bird's-eye view, you will see branches from the top, a river as a plane, and a duck as a dot.

How can you recreate the view that only exists in your mind?

Back to the similarities; I see the negative space and the repetitive forms that resulted from functions, just as the Bauhaus emphasizes. I see those most ordinary, subtle sounds in the unintentional places in the city, quietly blooming, astonishingly beautiful. Under the sharp shadow, a clean color plane emerges, where every crisp edge overlaps with a hidden background.



CITY TRILOGY_WALKING MAN
oil and gouache on muslin
11 x 7 inches
2025

CITY TRILOGY_ROOM
oil and gouache on muslin
11 x 7 inches
2025





CITY TRILOGY_GRIDS
oil and gouache on muslin
11 x 7 inches
2025



CITY TRILOGY (L/M/R)
oil and gouache on muslin
11 x 7 inches
2025



NEW YORK (L/R)
oil on cavas
46 x 20 inches
2024

I was looking down at the neighborhood and found a deep blue wall, sparkling in the sun. Shadows blend into the colors. The square blue plane was like a geometric bird in the neighborhood, and I remind myself that Ellsworth Kelly looked into nature and plants; abstraction did not come from nowhere.

I can almost see reflections of memories welling up in a foreign city. These overlapping moments make me feel less alone. On ordinary streets, the texture of gravel beneath my sneakers is worldwide, material and structure are linked with rationality and habits, woven into a blanket of the world you see.



NEW YORK
oil on canvas
46 x 20 inches
2024

BALTIMORE
oil on linen
17 x 18.5 inches
2024



Rotating World

*We can tell that the painting
has been **rotated** several
times during its creation
process.*

*So who knows?
When the **door** opens,
I could be on **another**
side of the earth, or
upside down in a sky-
scraper office.*

BIG WAVE (L/R)
oil, gouache, and graphite on canvas
76 x 92 inches
2024

This six-by-seven-foot painting is divided into four sections with countless lines and shapes. A big semicircle painted with Titanium White that looks like the upper half of an egg; radiates straight and spiral lines and covers the whole picture. However, this egg is also a background, an undescrivable shape that looks like an arrow pointing to the left side and appears in front. This arrow is pink with dark-color traces of dripping paint, but the direction of this drip is going to the right. In other words, the drips in this painting move in various directions, but every drip follows vertical and horizontal lines, creating many grids unintentionally.



My eyes are attracted by these lines flowing everywhere; this chaotic drips-formed grid makes me feel like I'm inside a high-speed elevator; scary but excited about when I'm going to land. We can tell that the painting has been rotated several times during its creation process. So who knows? When the door opens, I could be on another side of the earth, or upside down in a skyscraper office.

A light yellow horizon line runs through the entire screen, separating the upper and lower parts of the painting; the sound of a train coming into the station rings. Directly beneath this yellow line, there is a translucent greyish-blue patch with the line extending to the right side underneath. We can see some paint smeared by the Linseed oil and formed into oil stains, along with clean pencil lines. We can see dried-out bubble gum and dirty stains in the station, along with the straight track. A light blue stork resembling a wave, flows in the painting from the right, bridging the left and right sides. This wave comes from a cement-colored flat surface, next to it is a bright red patch; both shapes are composed of radial lines released by the white semicircle in the middle left, which makes them interesting triangular shapes. The wave brings me to a busy station where no one notices me; drifting with the drips that move with the rotation of the canvas, waiting for the next shift.





BIG WAVE
oil, gouache, and graphite on canvas
76 x 92 inches
2024



MOONLIGHT
oil, gouache, and graphite on canvas
60 x 34 1/2 inches
2024





HELICOPTER
oil on muslin
25 x 41 1/2 inches
2024

Photography Credits

Sadeq Alkhouri

Front Cover/Back Cover
p.12-27. All Photography
p.40-47. All Photography
p.57-67. All Photography

Vivian Marie Doering

Photography on p.11.
p.31-35. All Photography
p.49-53. All Photography

