

An abstract watercolor painting on the left side of the page. It features several overlapping, organic shapes in shades of blue, orange, and purple. The shapes are soft and blended, with some darker tones in the center of the shapes, suggesting depth and texture. The overall composition is vertical and occupies the left half of the page.

BEING HERE

MARCIE JAN BRONSTEIN

WATERCOLOR PAINTINGS



MARCIE JAN BRONSTEIN



Being Here, How It Feels . 16" x 20" . 2019





INTRODUCTION

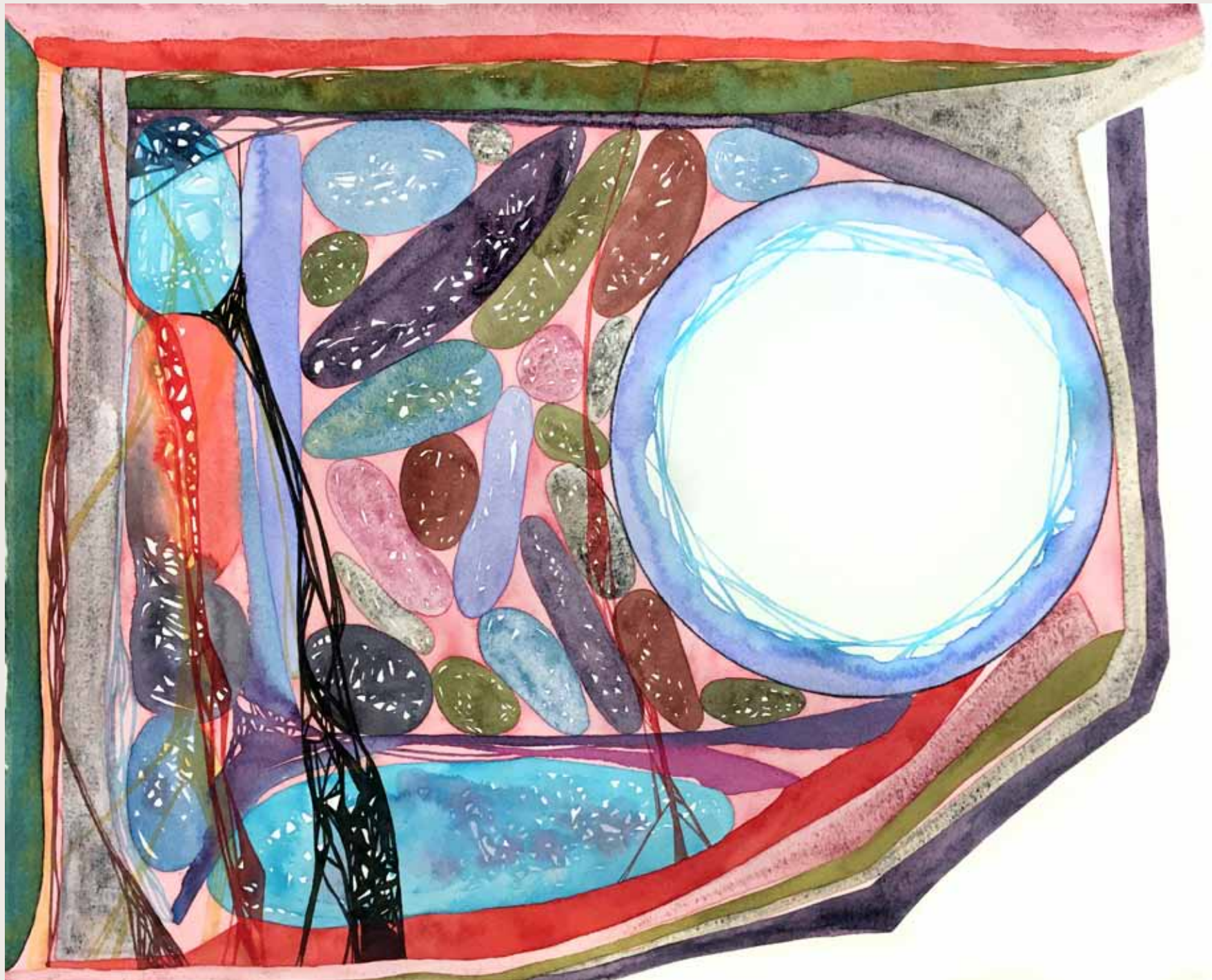
BY GEORGE KINGHORN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & CURATOR, ZILLMAN ART MUSEUM

As one of its inaugural exhibitions under the Museum's new name, The Linda G. and Donald N. Zillman Art Museum, we are pleased to present *Being Here*, which features a stunning selection of recent watercolor compositions by Marcie Jan Bronstein. In this exhibition, Bronstein beautifully harnesses the unique qualities of watercolor, often thought of as an unforgiving medium which doesn't lend itself to revisionist impulses, in images that are subtle in one instance and bold in another.

A focal point of the exhibition is a dramatic grid of nine works titled *Oasis*. Marks that suggest ropes or veils of transparent drapery inhabit these works. One may also see subtle references to architecture, such as seemingly stylized stairways and open portals of expansive light. Seen as a unit or as individual panels, the calming monochromatic colors employed in *Oasis*—ranging from pale blues, lavender, and buttery yellow—invite multiple interpretations from viewers.

In other compositions, Bronstein depicts crystalline forms as if the objects are mutating under a microscope's lens. One also sees the artist's weblike strands that reference occurrences at the cellular level or stretched ovoid forms that are reminiscent of polished beach rocks, coral or pill-like capsules. Through her varied marks, blooms of transparent watercolor and enigmatic forms, she creates rich opportunities for reflection and interpretation. It was a pleasure to work closely with Bronstein through the curatorial process on a show that features very recent works created especially for this exhibition. We are delighted to present *Being Here* as an inaugural show at the Zillman Art Museum.





Too Cool for a Title . 15" x 22" . 2018/20



A New Year . 16" x 20" . 2019

THE SEDUCTION OF MARCIE JAN BRONSTEIN'S WATERCOLORS

BY JENNA CROWDER

Marcie Jan Bronstein's watercolor paintings are desirous. They are sensual in their materiality, in the meditative and intuitive application of an atmospheric wash or a crisp glaze on toothed paper, and, especially, in what is left untouched by brush or paint. Bronstein is a responsive artist, guiding her brush across the surface of each painting as a finger traces the contours of a lover's skin. And, as sensitive and clear as Bronstein is in encouraging the work to come forth through her, it is the complement of technical prowess that balances and grounds these works.

Bronstein's paintings are relatively small, rarely exceeding twenty inches in either direction, and always made in serial. She paints on paper, which is sometimes handmade, sometimes mounted on board (and ultimately sealed) in a gesture that allows a viewer a rare, intimate closeness. Since works on paper are so often framed behind glass, these mounted, unframed paintings push the painting toward a viewer like a sculpture, with sides carefully attended to like an oil painting. Her palettes tend toward the vibrancy and contrast of the natural world: the warm, rich browns of leaf litter, the cool blue of winter sky, mushroom red, and lichen colors: gold, sage, lavender gray.

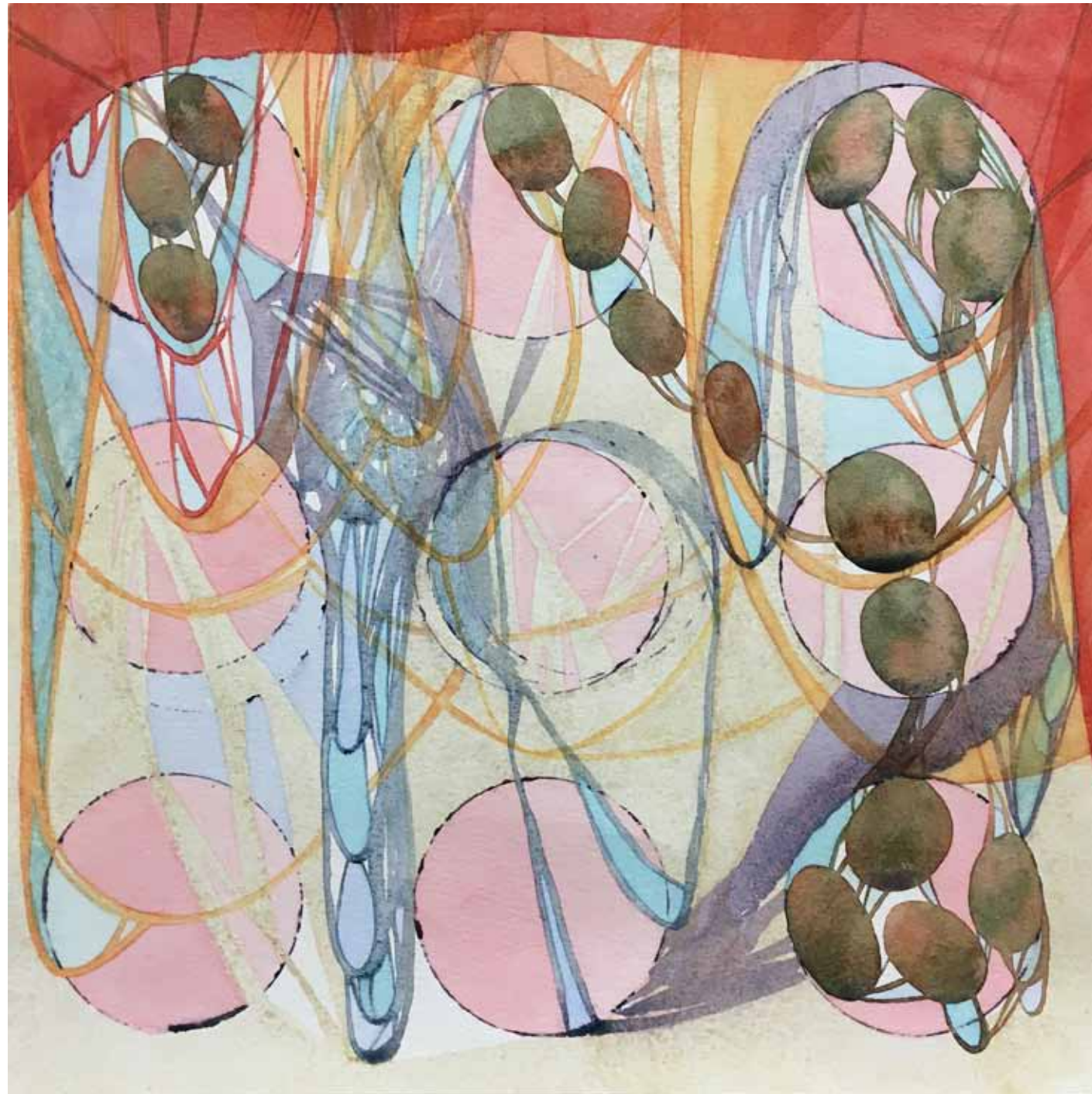
Bronstein describes her paintings as having—being—a record of touch, and one can feel this while looking at the work: how she gently floats the paint across the surface of the paper, waiting patiently for each layer to dry before moving on to the next; how she tilts the paper to accommodate her strokes and the flow of the paint.

During a recent studio visit, Bronstein showed me a photograph taken of her as a young child. In it, she sits, alert, on a couch; her little hands lift a camera to her face, pointing it at a stuffed doll beside her. We can

only imagine what she sees through the lens. This photograph, she says, is a kind of evidence that she has been making images since she was four years old. It's how she understands and navigates the world. In high school, the darkroom was a refuge for her; in college, she moved between drawing, painting and photography, working significantly in portraiture, of friends, herself. Through the process of making 35mm slides of her work, she was captivated by her paintings as transparencies, and, while living in Italy in the early nineties, began a decade-long investigation of painting photographs by hand, using watercolor on wet prints. For several years, Bronstein taught art on cruise ships and cultivated a personal practice of observing the natural world through painting. She has piles of painting sketchbooks and stacks of countless little watercolors, all part of her way of privately engaging with the hundreds of places she journeyed to around the world.

In 2018, at a residency at the Millay Colony for the Arts, she created the series *Seeking, Finding*—watercolor paintings infused with overt mythological sensibility, conjuring sacred caves, cairns, and hand-built stone walls. She created an expansive sense of space within these paintings, beckoning us through layers of veil and tongue and rock. One painting, entitled *The Gift of Summer* (page 30), is a wall of warm stones painted with sedimentary watercolor, stacked and suspended in a coral mortar. A window, near the center top, feels just out of reach and eludes our view. It is technically masterful and incredibly evocative. It's also referential: on the sill of the window rests a perfectly round pearl of stone, a citation of Louisa Chase's 1983 painting *Pink Cave*, featured in the encyclopedic tome *The Book of Symbols* (Taschen, 2010) that Bronstein took with her to Millay. This pebble is one of many careful details that symbolically tethers Bronstein and her work to the cross-pollinating art historical genealogies linked to feminism, mysticism, landscape, and eroticism.

The tension between the seduction of the material itself and the spaces of the untouched white paper in Bronstein's work is perhaps most erotic of all—a keen withholding that stirs the pang of want. These portals



Easy Happiness . 16" x 16" . 2018

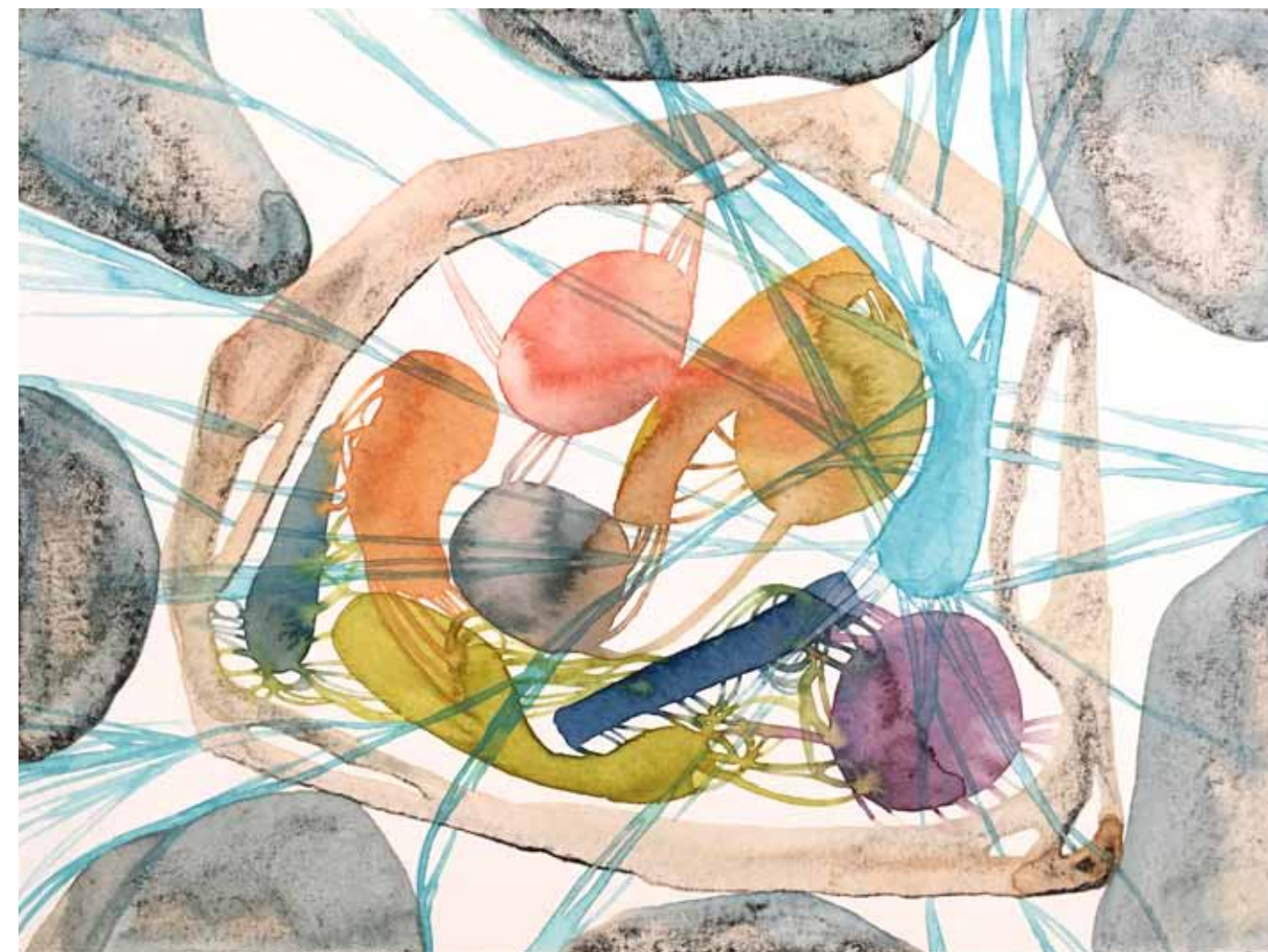
appear in several series, including *Beginner's Mind*, *Oasis*, and *Seeking, Finding*. Elsewhere we find doors, cocoons, and temples—invitations toward shelter or sanctuary.

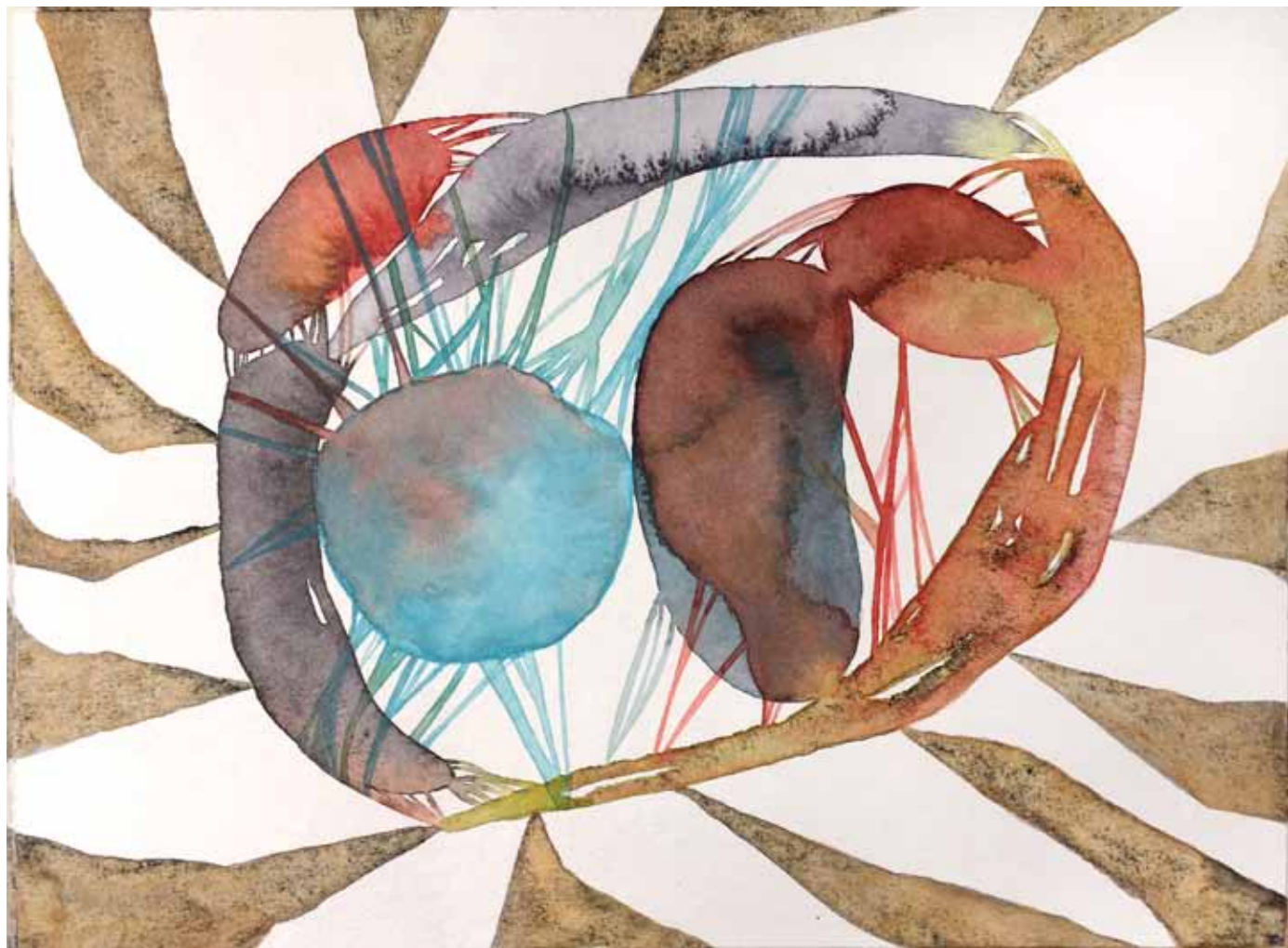
In his poem "Song of Myself," Walt Whitman writes:

*You shall no longer take things at second or third hand,
nor look through the eyes of the dead,
nor feed on the spectres in books,
You shall not look through my eyes either,
nor take things from me,
You shall listen to all sides and filter them from your self.*

Taking together the transparency, the desire, the sense of built worlds, Bronstein's watercolors do act as records of time, of touch. They describe and model a particular kind of knowing that comes from being in and enveloped by the world, unfettered and alive.

~ Jenna Crowder is a writer, editor and artist living in Portland, Maine. Her writing has appeared in *Art Papers*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *Temporary Art Review*, *BURNAWAY* and *The Rib*.





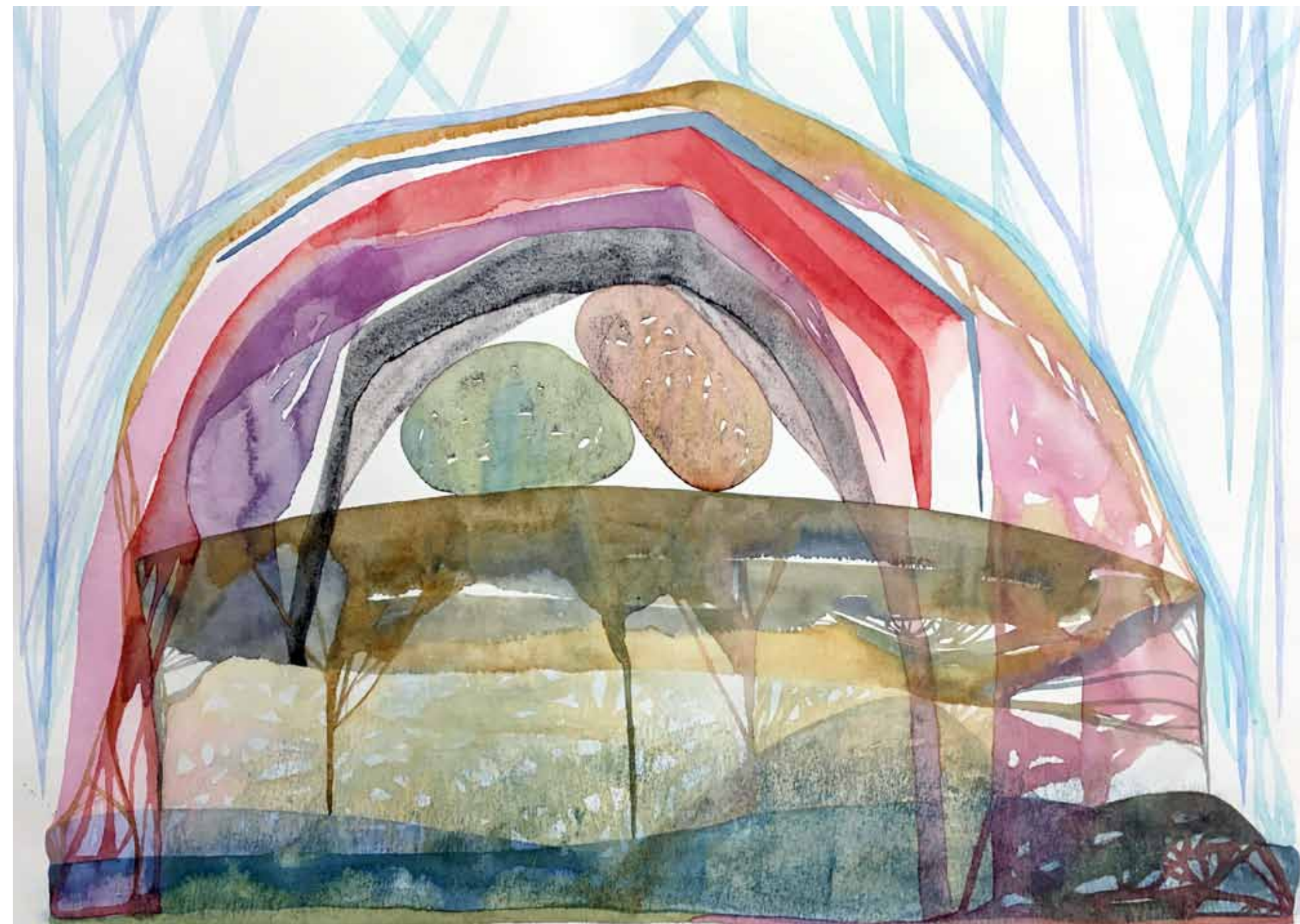
Heart . 6" x 8" . 2018/20



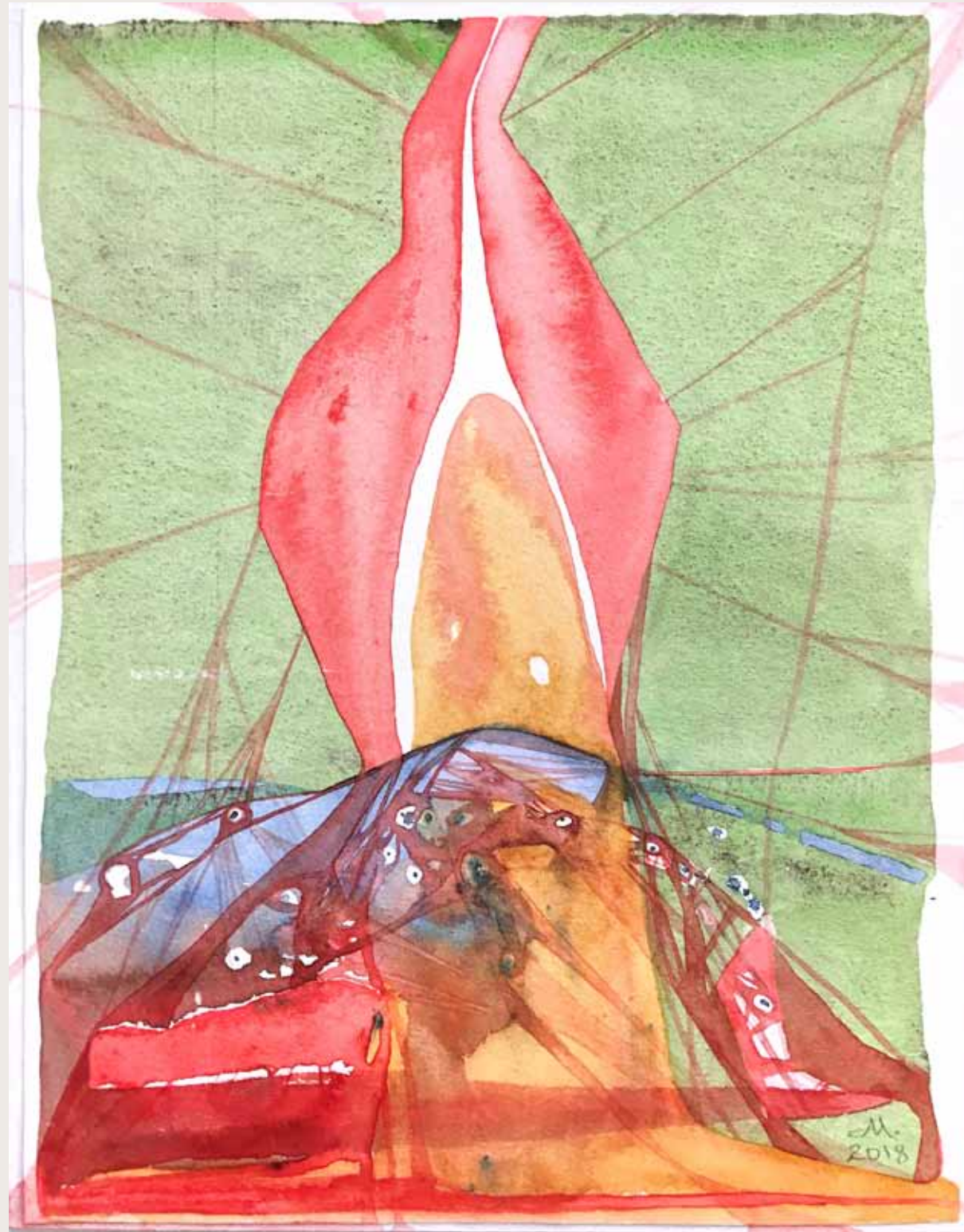
Family . 9" x 12" . 2019/20



Honesty . 6" x 8" . 2018



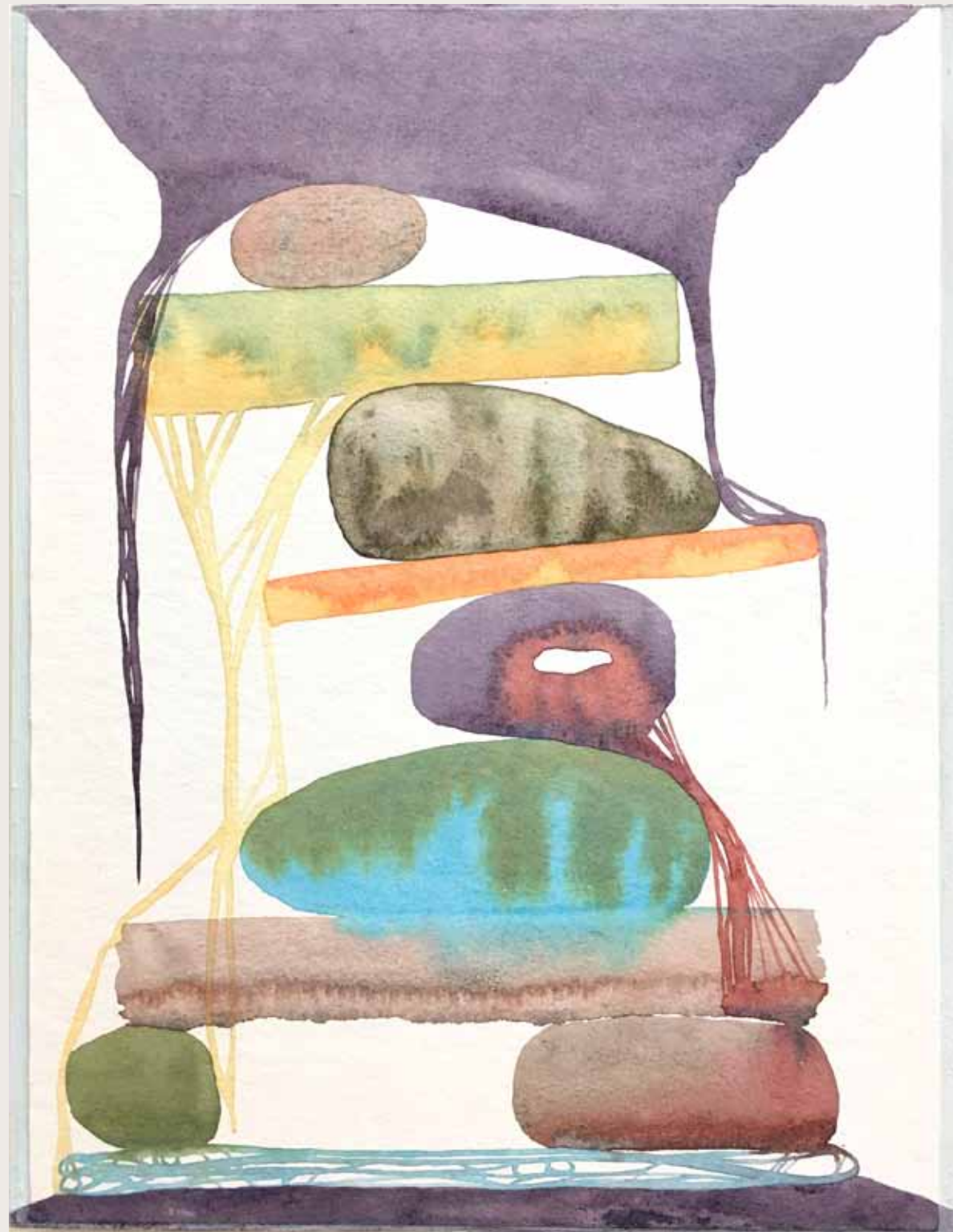
Decades of Marriage . 15" x 22" . 2018



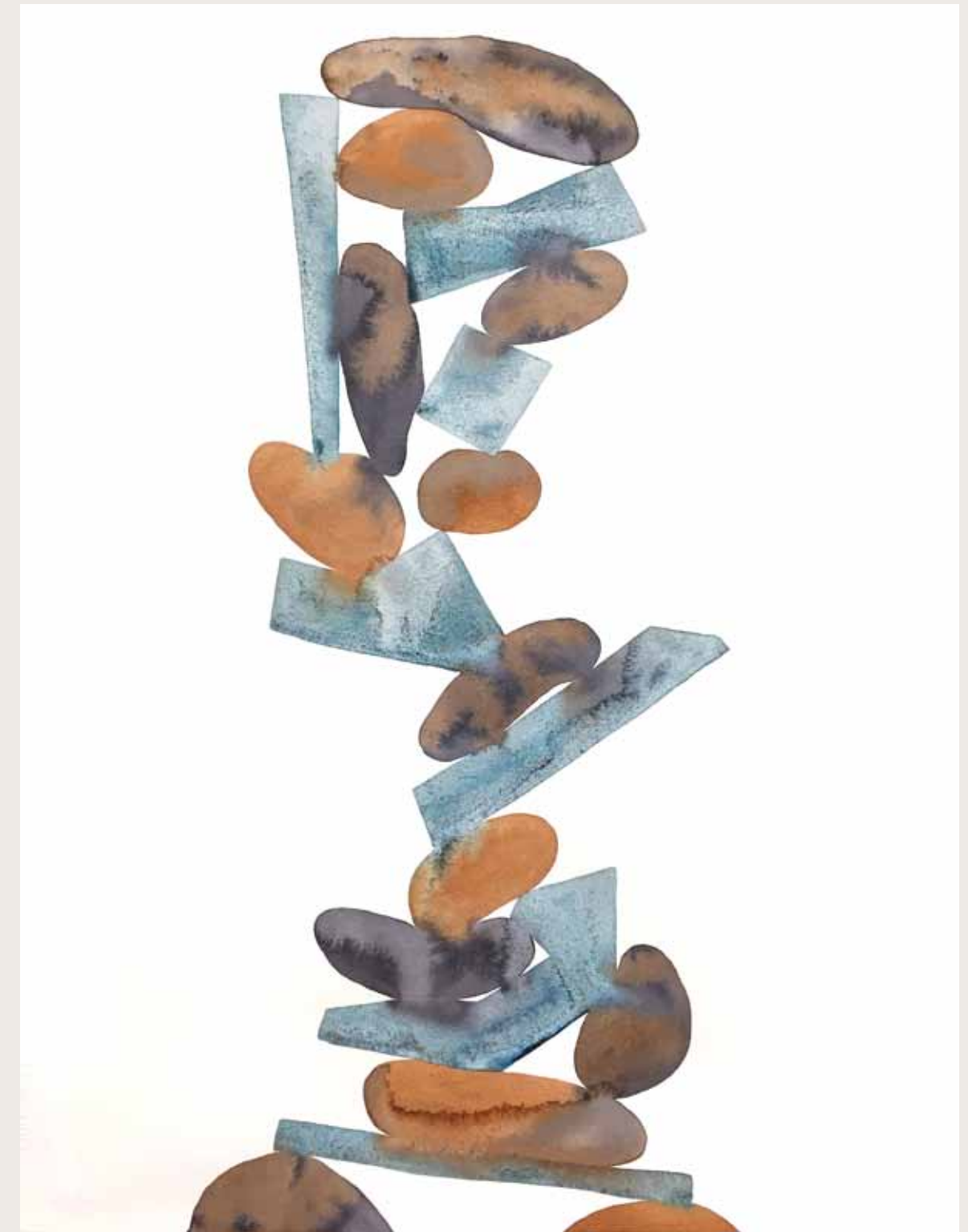
Ode to Georgia
12" x 9"
2018



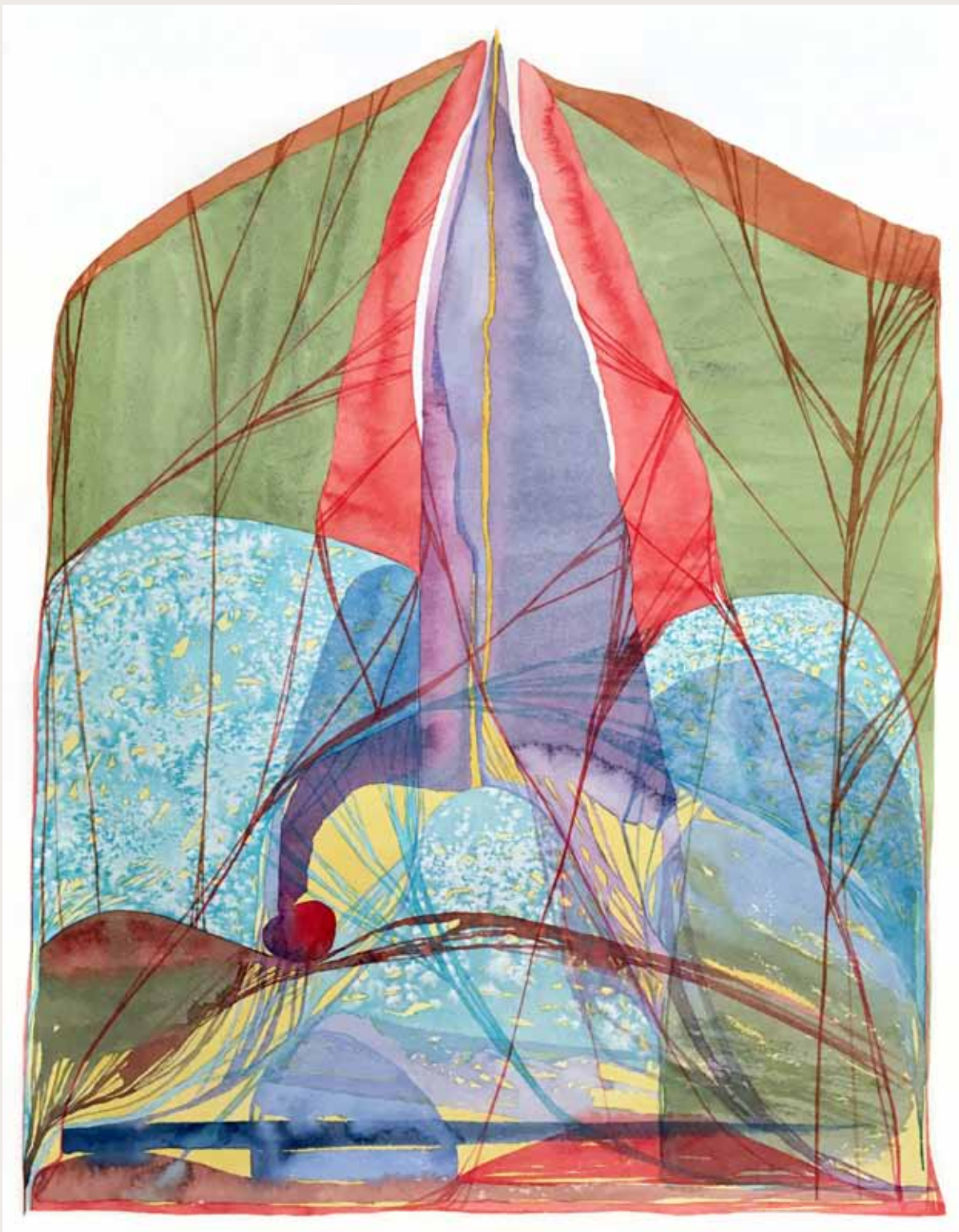
Composure
12" x 9"
2018



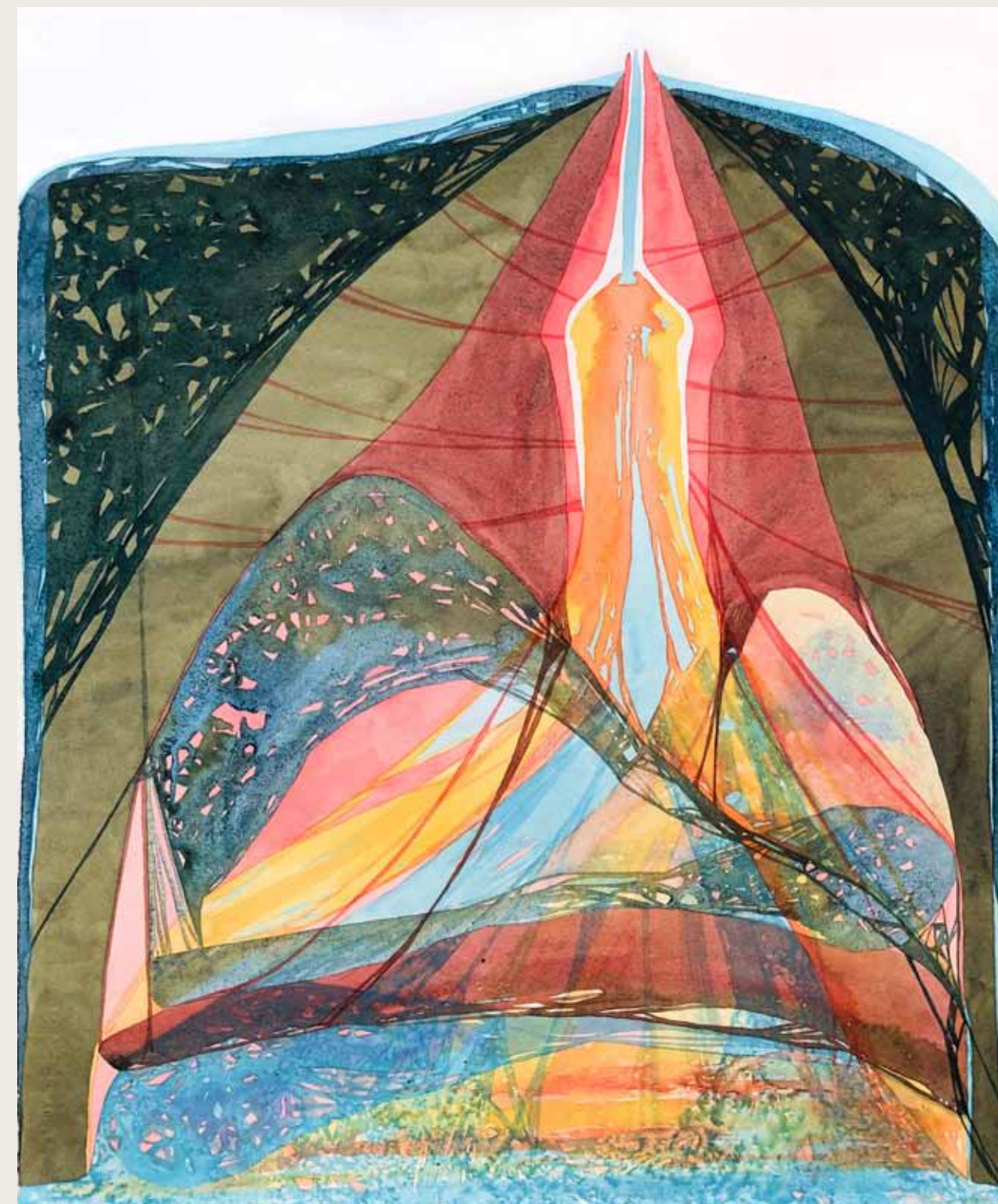
Carrying On
12" x 9"
2018



It All Adds Up
20" x 16"
2018



The Force of Friendship
20" x 16"
2018



You Know What You Feel
20" x 16"
2018



This Space, Right Now . 6" x 8" . 2018/20



Trying to Hold On To My Father
30" x 22"
2019



Room to Grow . 16" x 20" . 2018



The Gift of Summer . 16" x 20" . 2018



This is The Way . 16" x 20" . 2018

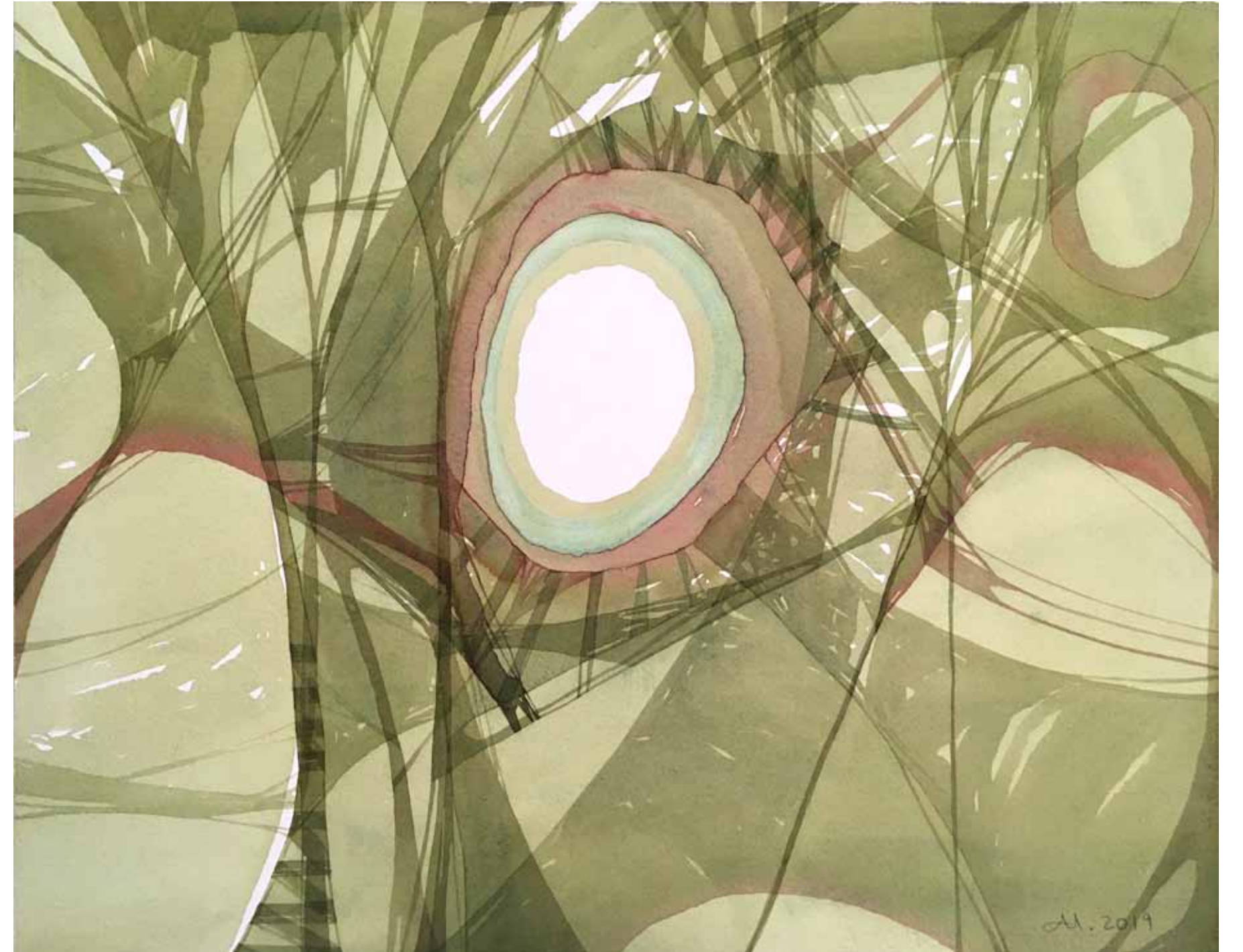


While You're Busy Making Other Plans . 16" x 20" . 2018

Oasis
watercolor on paper on panel
nine 16" x 20" paintings
2019

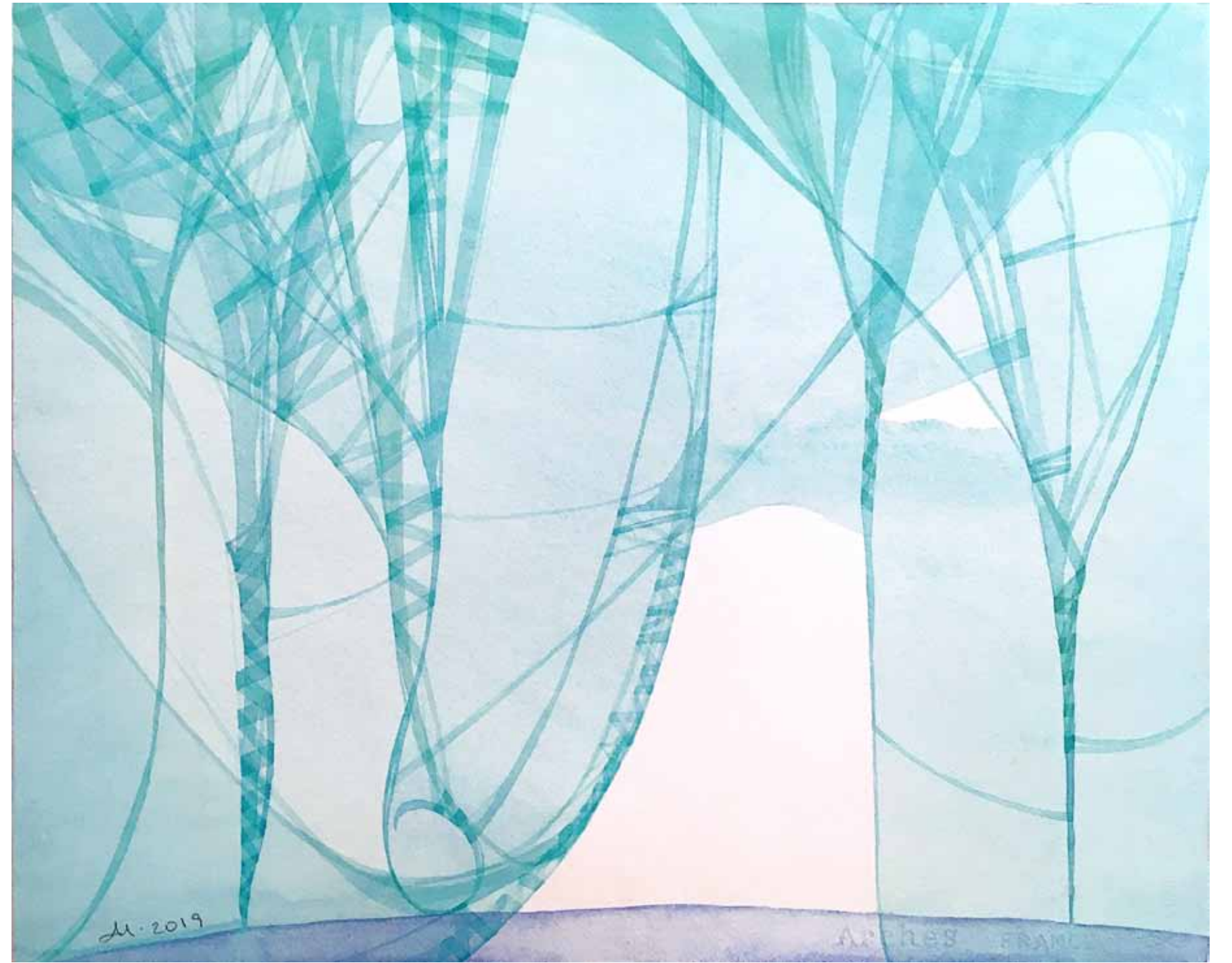
top to bottom, left to right:
That Difficult Day . Late August . Dusk
Early Morning . Tomorrow . Birthday
Early Evening . Dawn . 4 am







4 am . 2019



Dawn . 2019

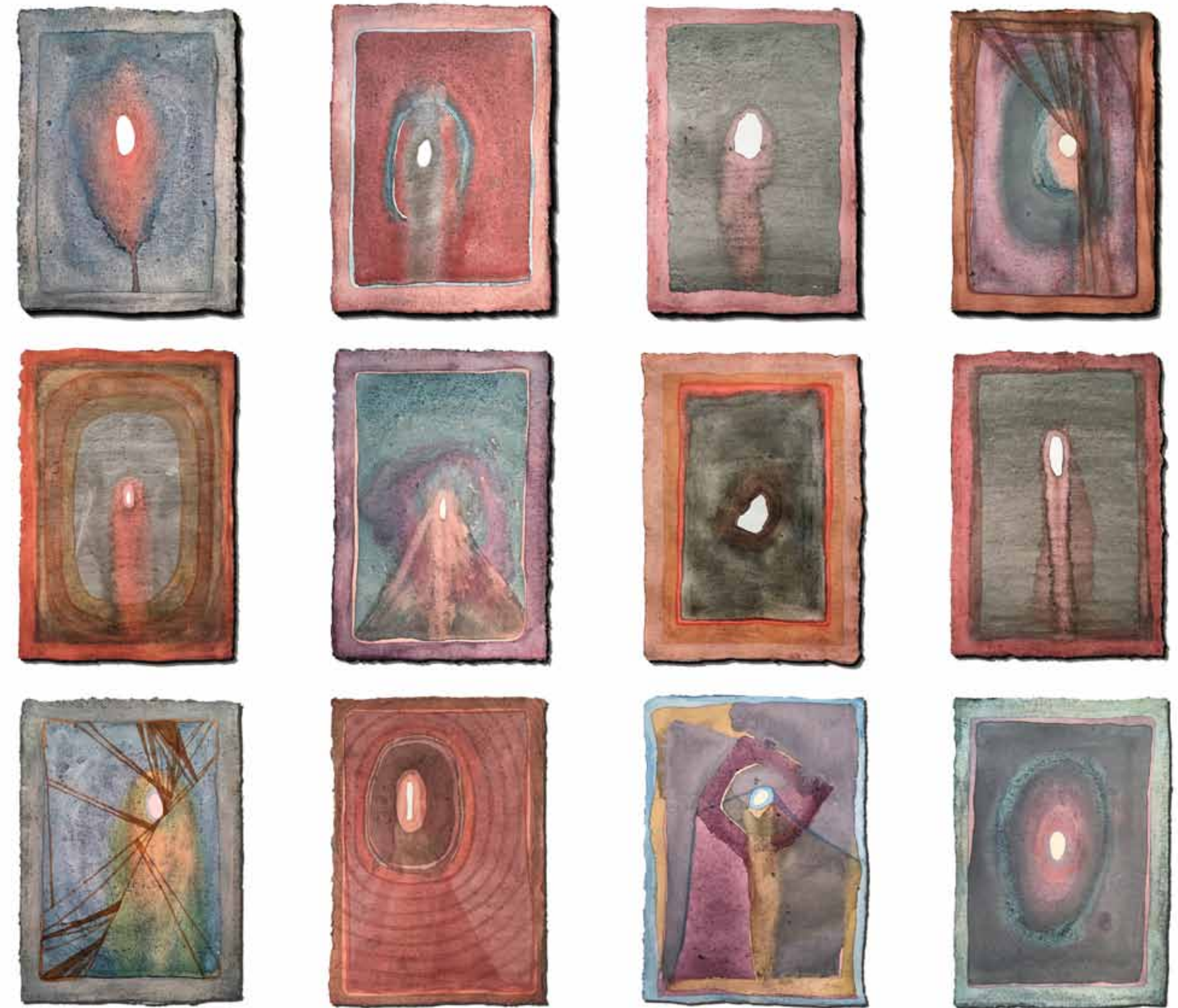


Early Morning . 2019



Early Evening . 2019

Beginner's Mind
watercolor on handmade Khadi paper
11.75" x 8.25" paintings
2019 – ongoing series



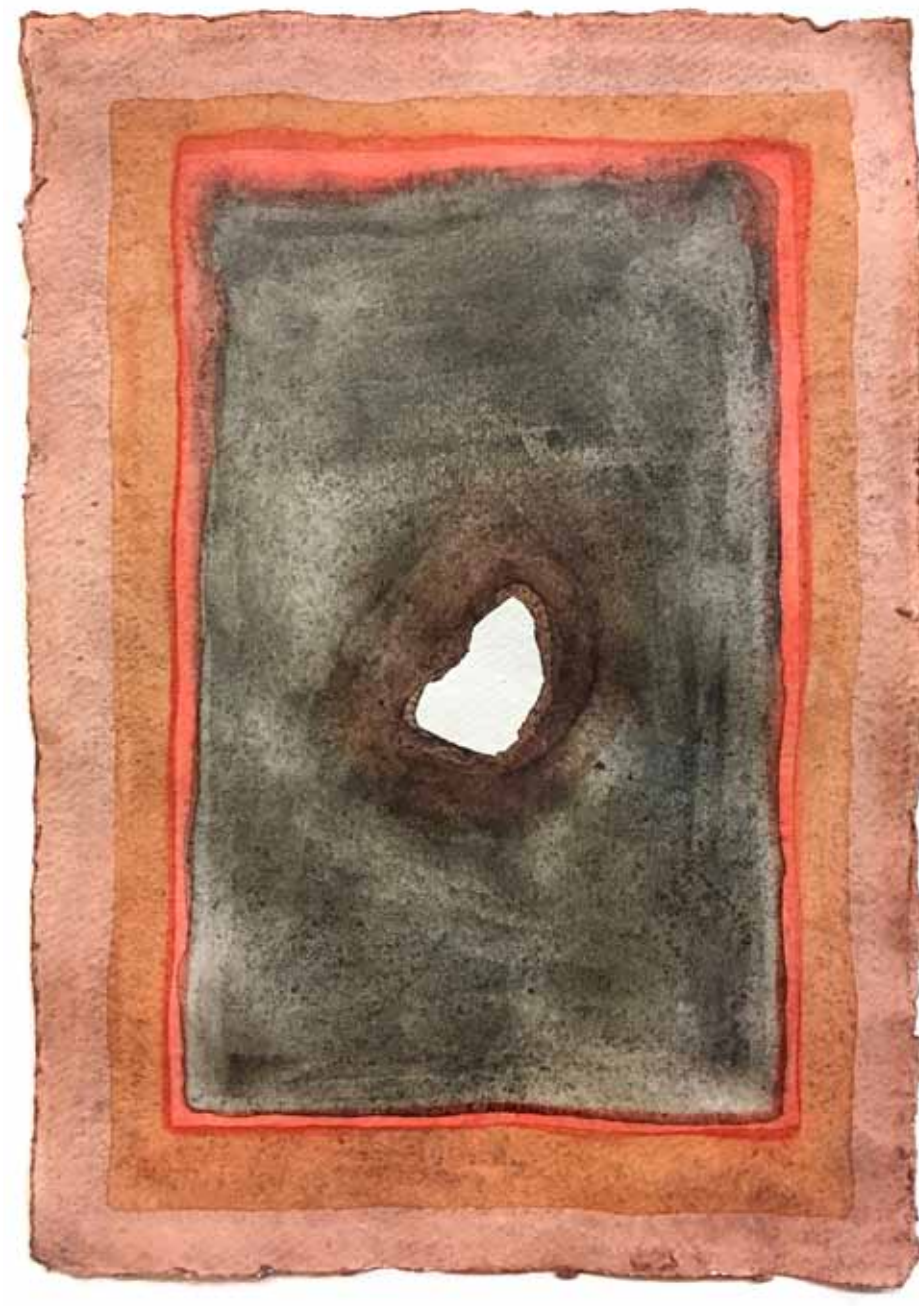




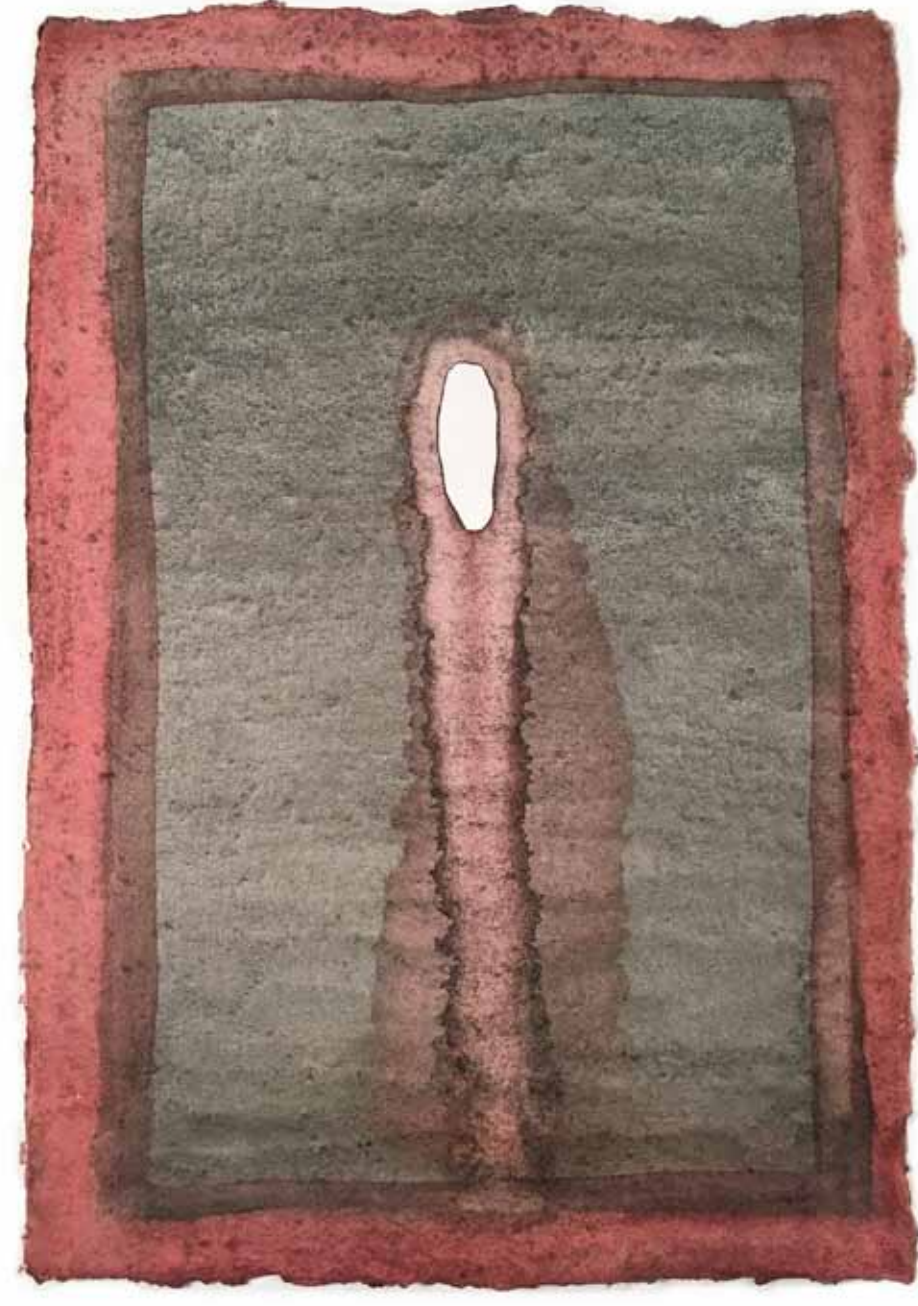
Metamorphosis



I Have Seen The Spectre



Naked



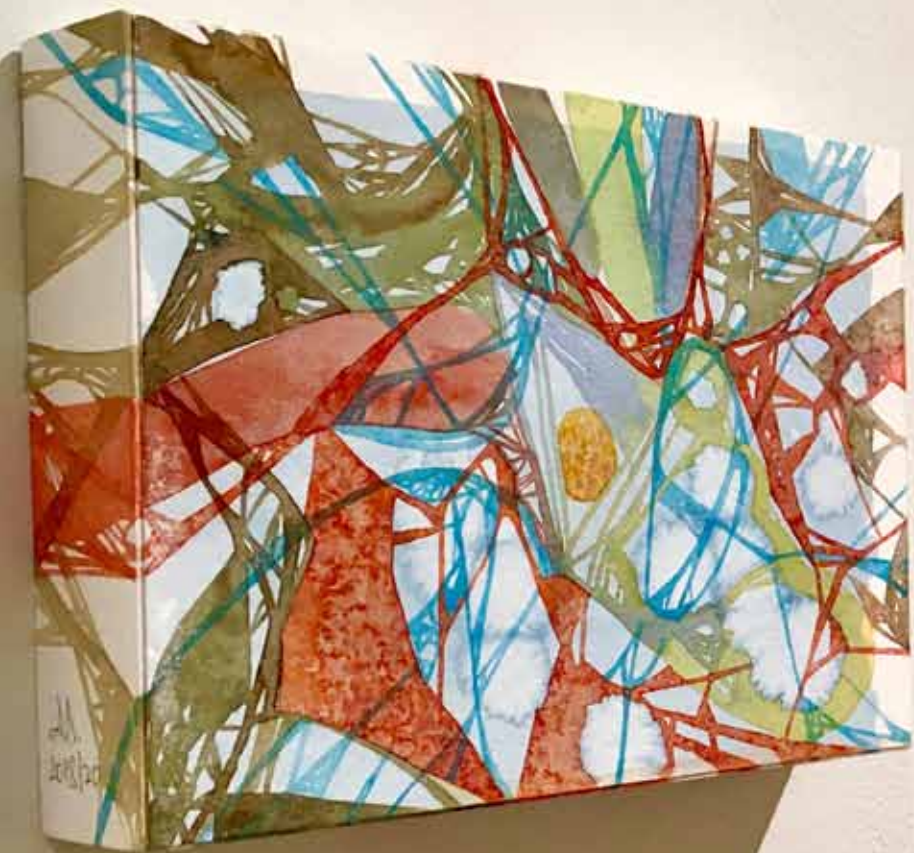
The Fourth Dimension



ZILLMAN ART MUSEUM

40 HARLOW STREET . BANGOR, MAINE . AUGUST 4 - DECEMBER 23, 2020





Martin Jax Brueschke - American born 1961
The Sun, Right Now, 2018-2020
Watercolor on paper on panel
Center of the sun



"I paint intimacy, vulnerability, fragility and interdependence..."

Marcie Jan Bronstein is a visual artist whose work stands on three decades of dedication to hand-painted photo-based art and meditative practices. A symbolist painter, she uses the special qualities inherent to watercolor (bleeding, flowing, layering) to create sensual, playful, diaristic, psychological works. All paintings are created without a sketch, a plan, or a mark of pencil on the paper. And while she always works in series, each work is an improvisation on the theme. Images are discovered and composed completely in the moment, and with watercolor, this means that each mark made has a kind of finality. As with Asian brush painting, mindfulness is key.

A graduate of The Fashion Institute of Technology and Hampshire College, her work has been exhibited, published, and commissioned for thirty years. Bronstein is the author of three books and the creator of a number of large-scale public works. From 2014-18, she traveled the world teaching creative watercolor painting to hundreds of passengers on ships. In 2018, her work was selected for the Biennial at the Center for Maine Contemporary Art, and she was awarded a residency at the Millay Colony of the Arts. A number of the paintings in this catalog were created during that month at Millay.

Since 1996, she has lived and worked in a reconstructed barn on the coast of Maine, with her family of artists and their cat Bacio.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

- 2020 Zillman Art Museum, University of Maine: "Being Here" (solo), Bangor, ME
Penobscot Marine Museum: "Penobscot Bay Artists" (invitational), Searsport, ME
- 2018 Center for Maine Contemporary Art Biennial (juried), Rockland, ME
- 2017 The Annex Art Center (invitational), Castine, ME
- 2014 Photographic Resource Center: Flash Forward Festival (invitational), Boston, MA
Slocumb Gallery: "Positive/Negative: Pages" (juried), Johnson City, TN
- 2013 New England Photography Biennial (invitational), Framingham, MA
Aarhus Gallery: "Infinite Horizons" (invitational), Belfast, ME
- 2012 Parallax, The Women's Photography Exhibition (invitational), Notre Dame, MD
- 2009 Maine Museum of Photographic Art: 50 Photographic Artists, Falmouth, ME
- 2007 Center for Maine Contemporary Art: "Altered Nature" (invitational), Rockport, ME
Elan Fine Arts: gallery artist, Rockport, ME
- 2006 Photomedia Center: "Illuminating the Negative" (solo), Erie, PA
- 2005 Elan Fine Arts: gallery artist, Rockport, ME
Blum Gallery, College of the Atlantic: "Portrait/Self Portrait" (juried), Bar Harbor, ME
Center for Maine Contemporary Art: "Winter in Maine" (juried), Rockport, ME
- 2002 Center for Maine Contemporary Art: "Plugged In" (juried), Rockport, ME
- 2002 Elements Gallery: gallery artist, Rockland, ME
- 2001 LSU: "Works On Paper 2001" (juried, exhibition prize Winner), Baton Rouge, LA
- 1999 Elements Gallery "The Doll Series" (solo), Rockland, ME
Elements Gallery "Dogs In Cars" (solo), Rockland, ME
Maine Coast Artists: "After Dark" (invitational), Rockport, ME
The Frankfurt Airport: "First Designer's Avenue" (invitational), Frankfurt, Germany
- 1997 Creative Photographic Arts Center: "Photographs 1992-1997" (solo), Lewiston, ME

- 1997 A.I.R. Gallery: "Generations" (invitational), New York, NY
 Cleary, Gottlieb, Steen, Hamilton: "Emerging Artists" (2 person), New York, NY
- 1996 Sylvia White Gallery: "The Horse Show" (juried), Los Angeles, CA
 Danforth Gallery: "Visions of the Mind" (juried), Portland, ME
- 1995 Gallery 2/20: "Work in Progress" (invitational), New York, NY
- 1993 Nuova Libreria Galileo & Studio Poletto (solo), Mestre, Italy
- 1994 Galleria Il Diaframma/Kodak Cultura: "Foto Colorate" (5 person invitational), Milan, Italy
- 1992 Artemare 1992: "L'uomo e il Mare" (juried), Riposto, Italy
- 1990 UC Medical Center (solo), San Francisco, CA
- 1987 Hampshire College (solo), Amherst, MA

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

- 2019 ArtMaze Contemporary Art: featured artist, Summer, Issue 13
- 2018 Your Impossible Voice Literary Journal: cover painting, Winter Issue
- 2017 Portland Press Herald: feature article, Portland, ME
 Yale University, Perch Arts & Literary Journal: featured paintings, New Haven, CT
 New England Review: cover painting, Middlebury, VT
 Maine Home and Design: "Maine Artists To Watch," Portland, ME
 Princeton Art Brushes: Artist Spotlight
- 2016 Art Revealed Magazine: portfolio and interview, London, UK
- 2015 After The Pause Poetry Journal: cover & portfolio of paintings
- 2008 The Maine Sunday Telegram: featured author, Portland, ME
- 2003 Non Satis Scire: Hampshire College Magazine: cover + portfolio, Amherst, MA
- 2001 Object Lessons: Beauty and Meaning in Art, Madison, WI
- 1998 The Free Press: "Two Artists in a Barn," Rockland, ME
- 1997 The Maine Sunday Telegram: review of solo exhibition, Portland, ME

- 1994 Creativity: "And then there was NON...", New York, NY
 ZOOM: "Al Diaframma," Milan, Italy
- 1993 Il Gazzettino: "Un'americana che dipinge le foto" (review), Venice, Italy
 Il Gazzettino: Musica & fotografia (review), Mestre, Italy
 Progresso Fotografico (portfolio), Milan, Italy
- 1992 La Nazione (feature), Florence, Italy

PUBLIC ART / COMMISSIONS / GRANTS

- 2005 Bellevue Hospital: 250 photographs for new hospital wing, New York, NY
- 2005 Maine Arts Commission: Good Idea Grant, printed portfolio of works
- 2004 Public Percent-for-Art Program: 30' x 15' installation, Stevens School, Belfast, ME
- 2002 Public Percent-for-Art Program: 24 works, Family Crisis Center, Denver, CO
- 1994 Saks Fifth Avenue: art selected for all Fifth Avenue windows, New York, NY
- 1990 Neiman Marcus: art selected for Union Square windows, San Francisco, CA

RESIDENCIES / WORKSHOPS

- 2018 Millay Colony of the Arts (Full Fellowship), Austerlitz, NY
- 1986 Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester, NY
- 1985 Vermont Studio School, Johnson, VT

EDUCATION

- 1992 Lorenzo de Medici: Diploma Magister Linguae: Italian language, Florence, Italy
- 1988 Hampshire College: BFA, Amherst, MA
- 1986 Fashion Institute of Technology: AAS, Magna Cum Laude, New York, NY



This catalog was printed on the occasion of the exhibition
BEING HERE : MARCIE JAN BRONSTEIN
The Linda G. and Donald N. Zillman Art Museum
University of Maine . Bangor, Maine . August 4 - December 23, 2020
organized by George Kinghorn, Executive Director & Curator
Zillman Art Museum



**ZILLMAN
ART MUSEUM**
UNIVERSITY OF MAINE

essay by Jenna Crowder
photography & design by Marcie Jan Bronstein
printed by Smartpress

front cover: *It All Adds Up* (detail) . 2018
back cover: *Being Here, How It Feels* . 2019



Bronstein beautifully harnesses the unique qualities of watercolor in images that are subtle in one instance and bold in another.

~ George Kinghorn, Executive Director & Curator, Zillman Art Museum

