



peter neighbour
terra fluida –
a voyage across abstraction



🌀 red and green on white gesso · 2019
oil on canvas · 100 x 90 cm

⚡ the elements of grey (memory) · 2020
oil on canvas · 18 x 24 cm



In December 2019 Neighbour's work presented as chromatic abstraction: compositions of colour and texture.

An earlier cycle of paintings inspired by the Patagonian rainforest had left him fascinated by the colour grey and by the many different colour combinations – the so-called elements of grey – one could use to mix with white in order to make grey.

*In the painting **red and green on white gesso** (page 2)*

Neighbour achieves the grey composition by exploiting the white of the gesso-coated canvas surface and letting it combine optically with a dark mix of red/green paint; no white oil colour is used in this work.

The oil paint highlights the patterns found in the texture and structure of the canvas surface making them both integral to the composition.

terra fluida – a voyage across abstraction

The exhibition features abstract paintings both in oil on canvas and in gouache on paper from late 2019 to Summer 2021. Abstraction is a fluid concept and exists on a continuum. During this time Neighbour's style shifted from chromatic abstraction or colour field painting to one with abstract shapes and forms derived from the natural world. >



📍 surface tension · 2020
oil on canvas · 100 x 90 cm (not in exhibition)

Here too (page 4) the subject of this work, **surface tension**, is colour and texture.

The painting's surface – highly resinous, highly reflective and reminiscent of Bakelite – is formed by adding multiple layers of transparent oil colour glazes to the canvas.

These many transparent glazes of oil colour, each glaze mixed with semi-transparent white oil colour give the surface its structure and the image its depth.

> As 2020 began Neighbour's work presented as chromatic abstraction: colour and texture were formally inseparable and the painting's only subject matter. Nevertheless he was intrigued by the idea of including non-figurative, subject-free shapes and forms, in particular abstract shapes derived from – but not representing – reality. A voyage to Antarctica in January 2020 was inspirational. The fluidity and ambiguity of its unique landscape seemed an ideal source material for such abstraction. By late Spring he was painting in the studio.

There followed a series of new paintings, each with a rectangle, that for the first time introduced form to the composition in contrast to previous works of pure chromatic abstraction.

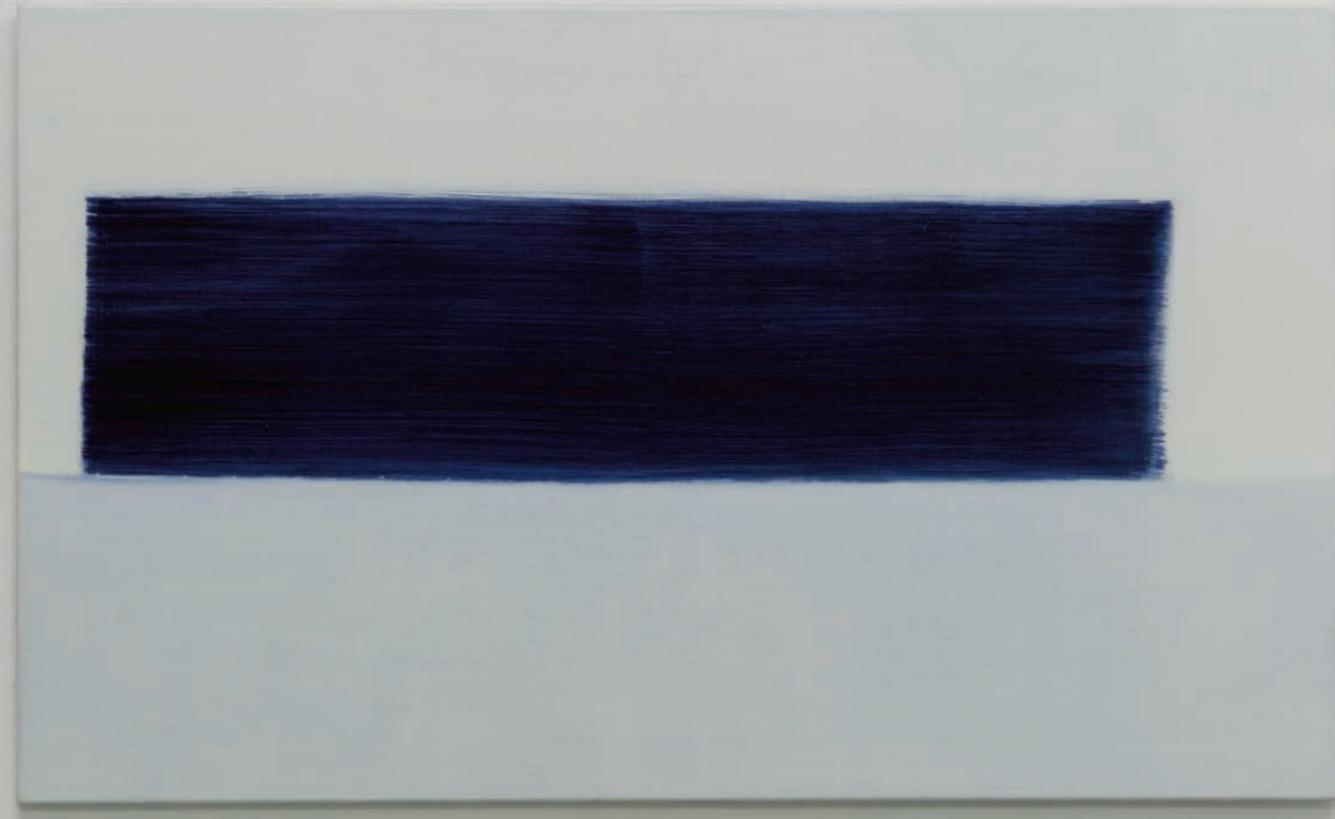
As Neighbour's approach to abstraction shifted along the continuum old and new styles overlapped in time. For example (page 10) another new series of small paintings – classically colour field in spirit – experimented with our optical response to flat fields of colour by layering different pairs of pure colour as transparent glazes one on top of the other multiple times so that these layers combined optically to make new colours on the canvas. >



↑ point wild #1 · 2020 · oil on canvas · 40 x 60 cm



↑ point wild #2 · 2020 · oil on canvas · 40 x 60 cm



☞ erebus & terror · 2020
oil on canvas · 100 x 90 cm

☞ 2021 exhibition
terra fluida of abstract shapes and forms

☞ violet and yellow · 2020
oil on canvas · 60 x 100 cm



❖ colour pairs

#1 (prussian blue and caput mortuum)

#2 (scarlet and cobalt blue)

2020 · oil on canvas · 18 x 24 cm each

❖ you're tearing me apart 2021

diptych · oil on canvas · 100 x 180 cm



> To illustrate the shift in style two canvasses (this page) painted nine months apart were hung together in the exhibition. Caught between realism and abstraction the two panels of this diptych – one from mid-2020 and one from late 2019 – straddle the abstraction continuum. On the left a work of realism abstracts a glacier's arabesque of cracks and fissures while on the right the colour field of grey is on closer inspection another network of broken lines, cracks and fissures caused by the interaction of paint and canvas surface: anything but flat. >



... taking shape from the
ground up · 2020
oil on canvas · 170 x 140 cm

... 2021 exhibition terra fluida
of abstract shapes and forms

taking shape from the ground up is another example of chromatic abstraction from 2020 made up of multiple layers of thin oil colour glazes (no white oil colour added in this case) with each new glaze taking weeks to dry.

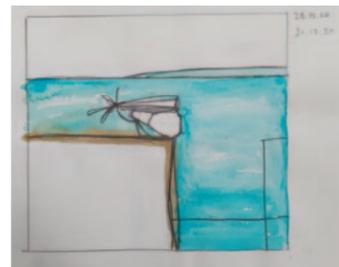
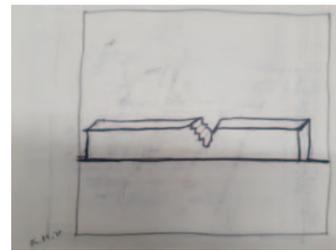
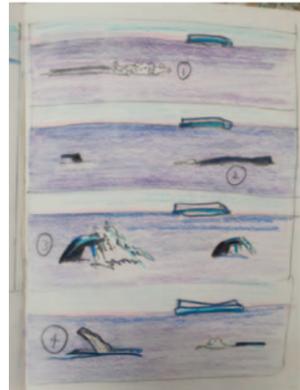
The painting's resinous and highly textured surface gives the work a sculptural feel as it catches the ever-changing daylight, gleaming and glistening here and there across its highly reflective surface.

Contrasting areas of red and blue (alizarin madder lake and cobalt blue) are juxtaposed across the picture plane in order to pick out a filigree of large and deeply textured brush marks left in the painting's chalky gesso ground by the artist as he prepared the canvas for oil colour.

> Meanwhile the largest painting from 2020 (page 13) is also an example of chromatic abstraction. In this work contrasting red and blue areas are juxtaposed across the picture plane to pick out a filigree of large and deeply textured brush marks left in the painting's chalky gesso ground by the artist as he prepared the canvas for oil colour.

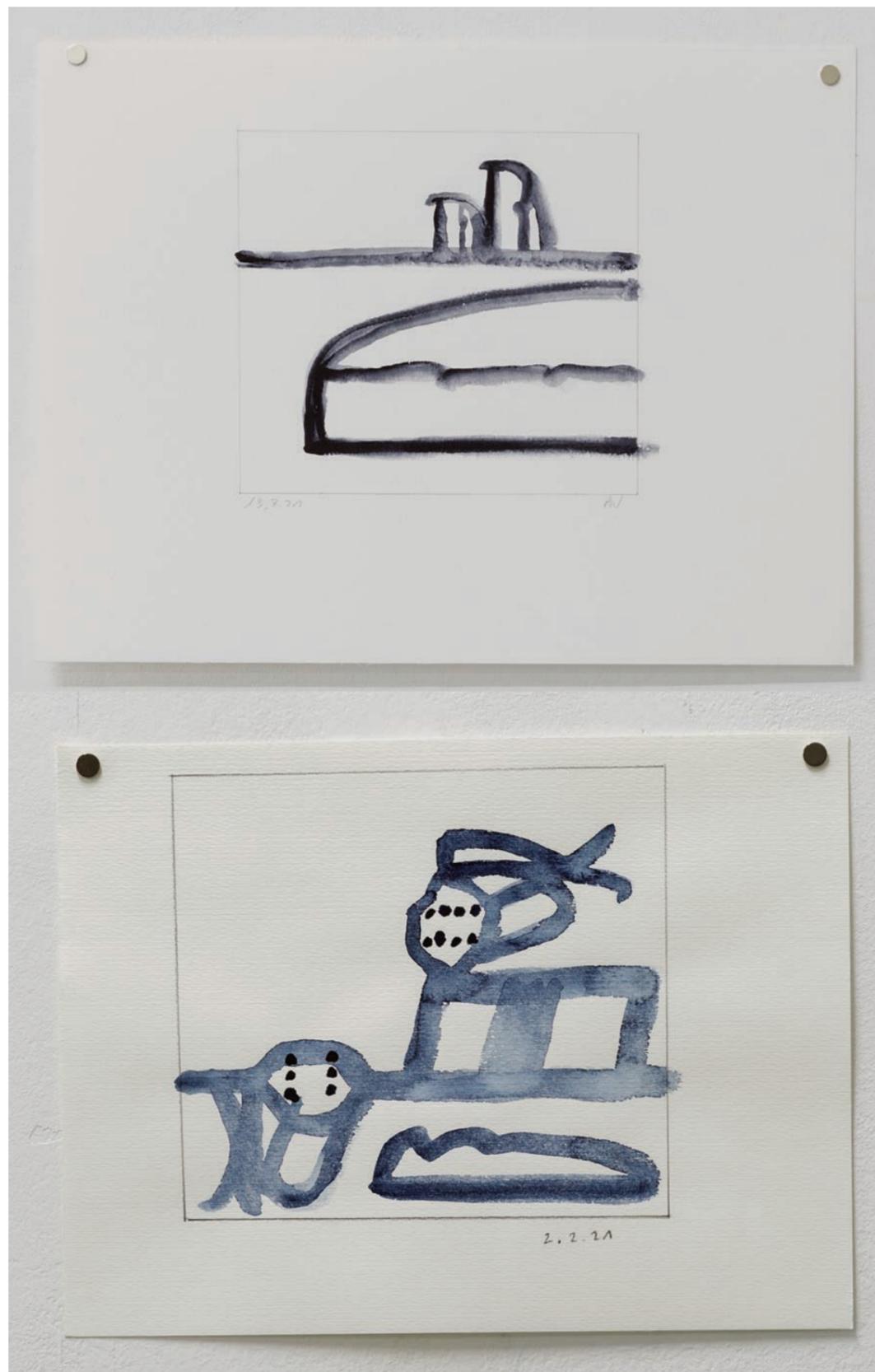
Nonetheless after the series of paintings with rectangles no other paintings with other non-figurative forms were produced and by Autumn 2020 it felt that the style shift had stalled almost before it started. With Covid-19 cancelling his planned November exhibition Neighbour took time out from painting and wondered how he might move things forward. >



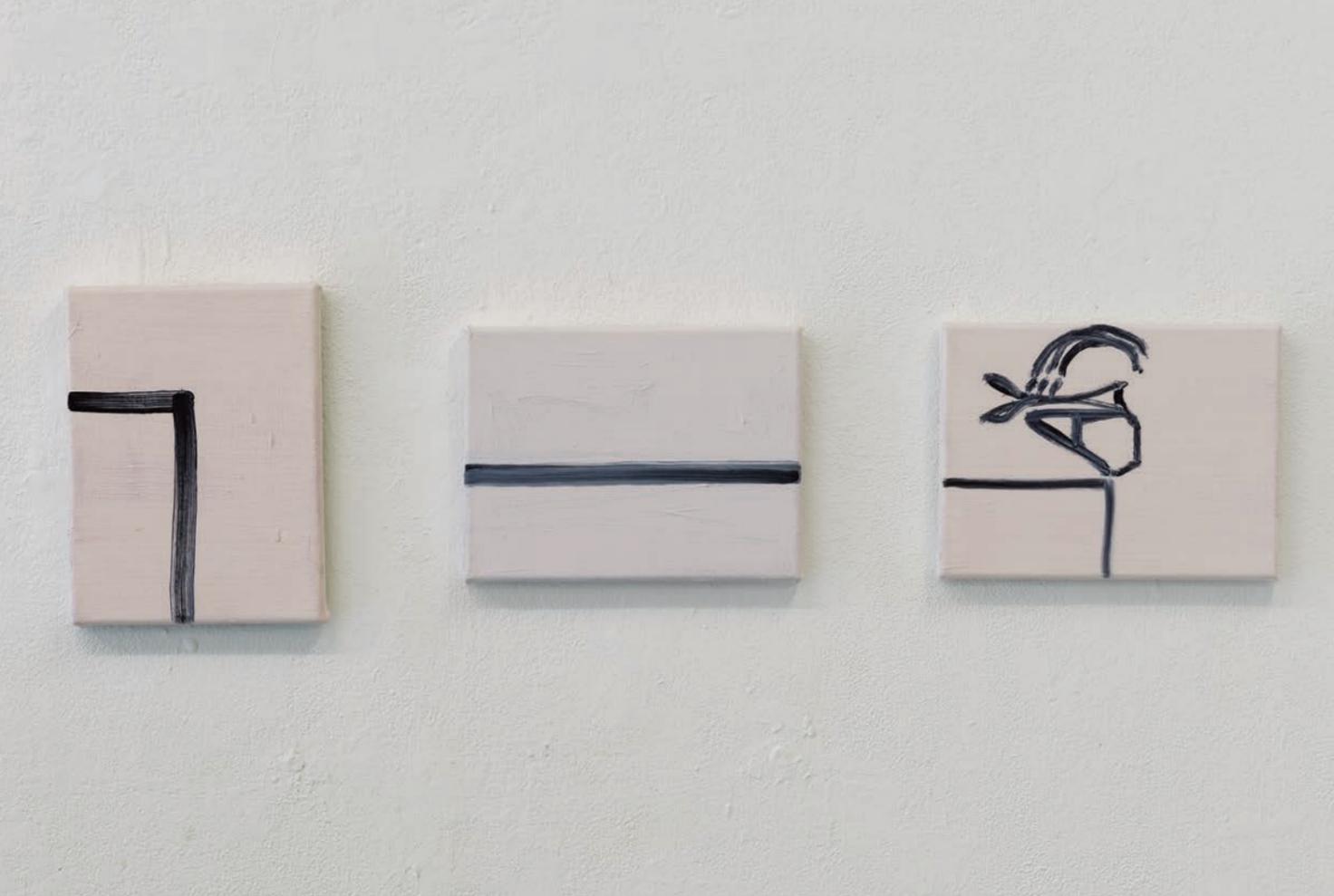


> As well as needing more motifs he felt the work needed the sort of movement and fluidity he knew from comic strips and cartoons. A few weeks before Christmas he began to look again through all of his source material and turned to the sketch book (pages 14, 16 & 17) to try out his ideas.

And so from December 2020 to March 2021 he filled several note books with cartoon-like sketches including recurring motifs such as the right angle, the horizontal line, the mask/blindfold on a right-angle, the mask as part of a horizontal line and the "hieroglyph". Other sketches were schematic versions of snow-covered glaciers, ice floes with leopard seals, whales in a feeding frenzy and boulders of ancient volcanic rock. >



- ⚡ on such a full sea · 2021
gouache on archival paper · 18 x 20 cm
- ↔ life has its ups and downs · 2021
gouache on archival paper · 18 x 20 cm
- ⚡⚡ two edges (two scenarios) · 2021
gouache on archival paper · 27 x 30 cm
- ⚡ point wild · 2021
gouache on archival paper · 27 x 30 cm
- ⚡⚡ rectangle at large · 2021
gouache on archival paper · 18 x 20 cm
- ⚡ a new normal · 2021
gouache on archival paper · 18 x 20 cm

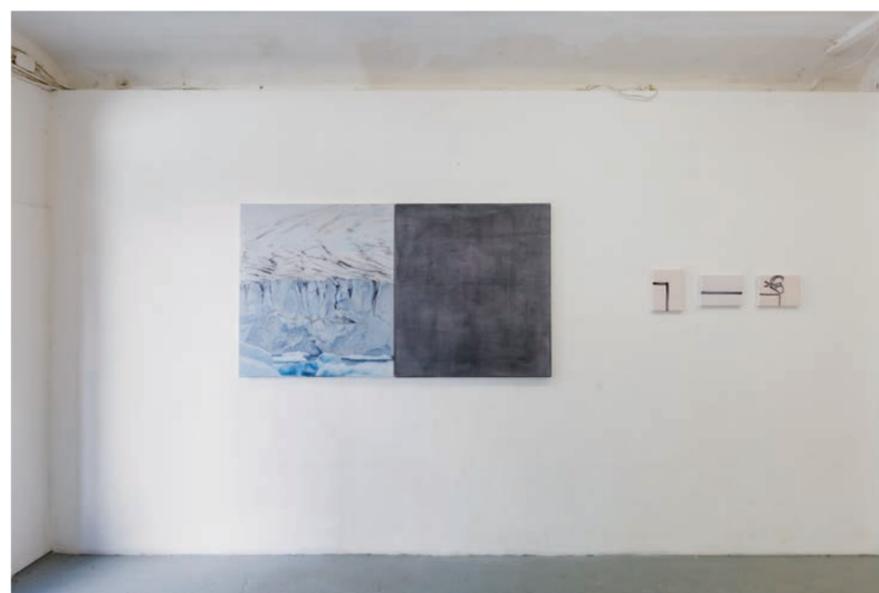


the beginning of infinity 2021 · oil on canvas · triptych · 18 x 66 cm

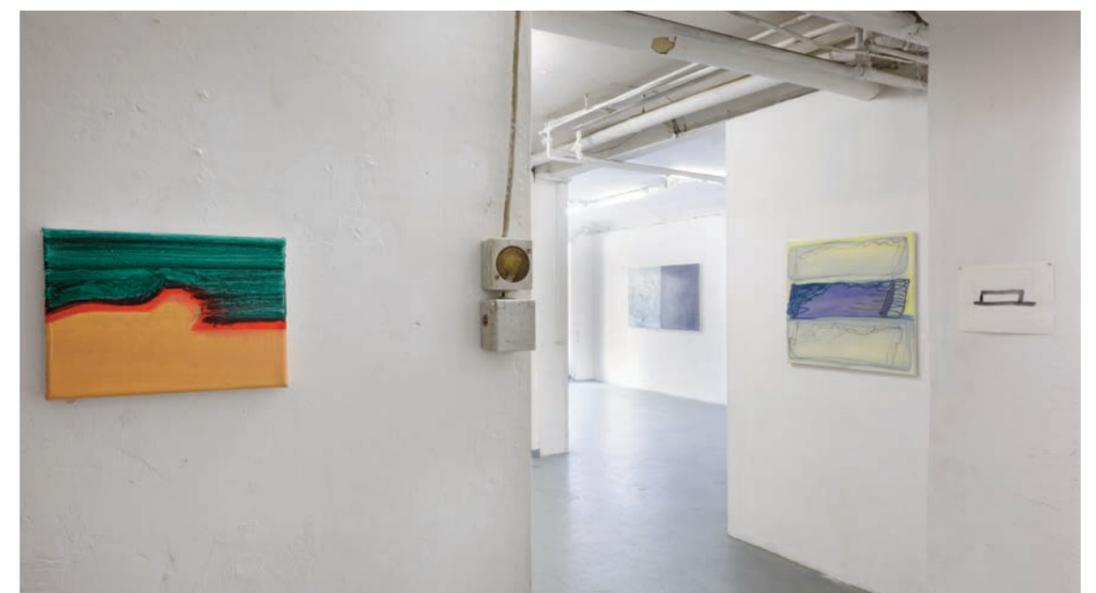


anatomy of a dissolute 2021 · oil on canvas · 18 x 24 cm

2021 exhibition terra fluida of abstract shapes and forms



2021 exhibition terra fluida of abstract shapes and forms





> These sketches had been mainly monochrome so in late March introducing colour (page 15) felt like the next step. Several motifs were developed as watercolour studies in which the original motifs were repeatedly simplified and abstracted leaving their source – the Antarctic landscape – far behind. >



☞ bombe sans surprise #1 · 2021 · oil on canvas · 72 x 80 cm

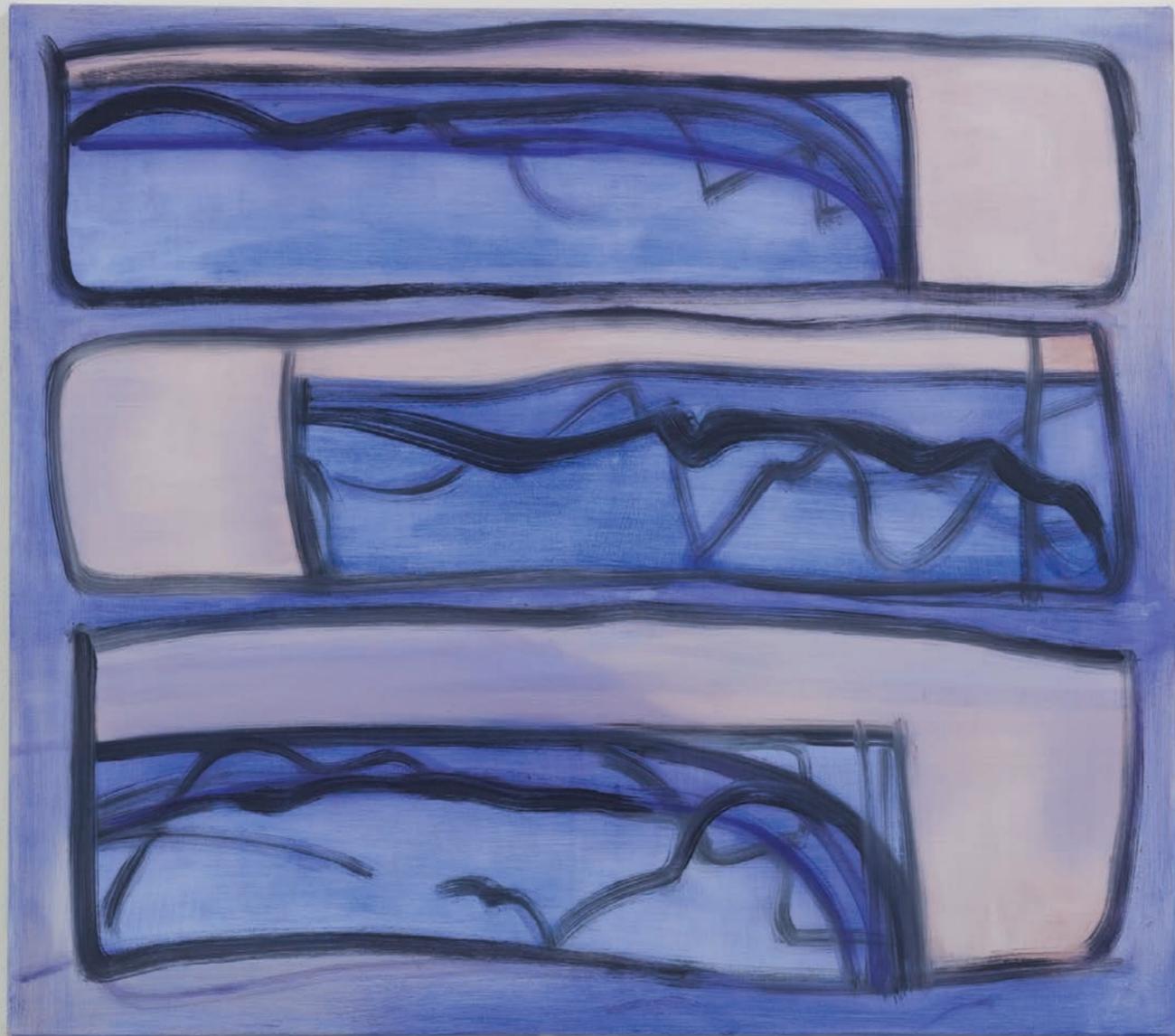
☞ 2021 exhibition terra fluida of abstract shapes and forms, from left:

going with the flow · 2021 · oil on canvas · 72 x 80 cm

bombe sans surprise #1 · 2021 · oil on canvas · 72 x 80 cm

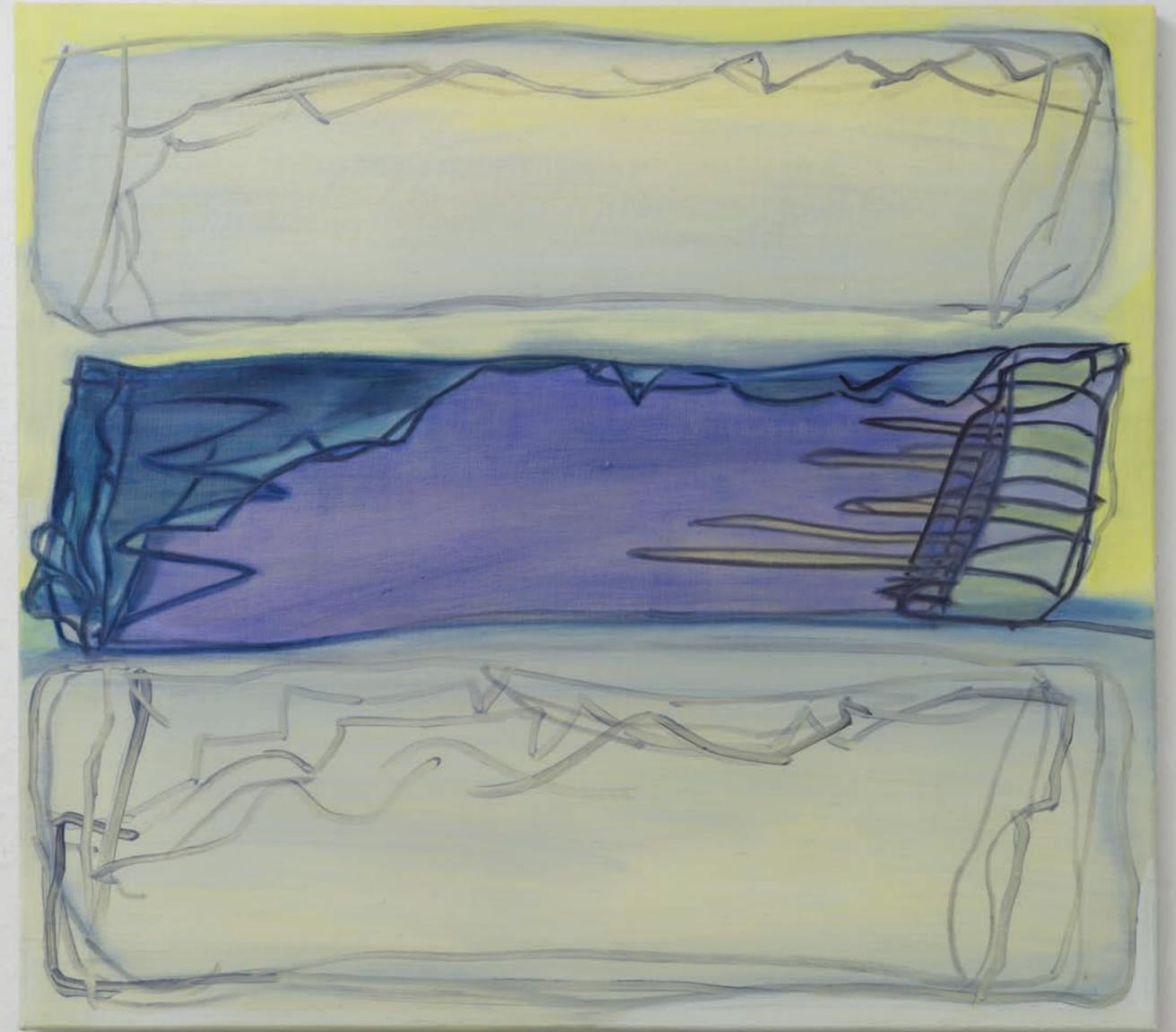
bombe sans surprise #2 · 2021 · oil on canvas · 80 x 72 cm

a shared fate · 2021 · oil on canvas · 72 x 80 cm



📍 you go your way and I'll go mine · 2021 · oil on canvas · 72 x 80 cm

📍 breaking away · 2021 · oil on canvas · 72 x 80 cm



> In early May several of these watercolours were chosen as preliminary drawings or *modelli* for larger oil paintings. By July 2021 the shift along the abstraction continuum had taken place. <

