



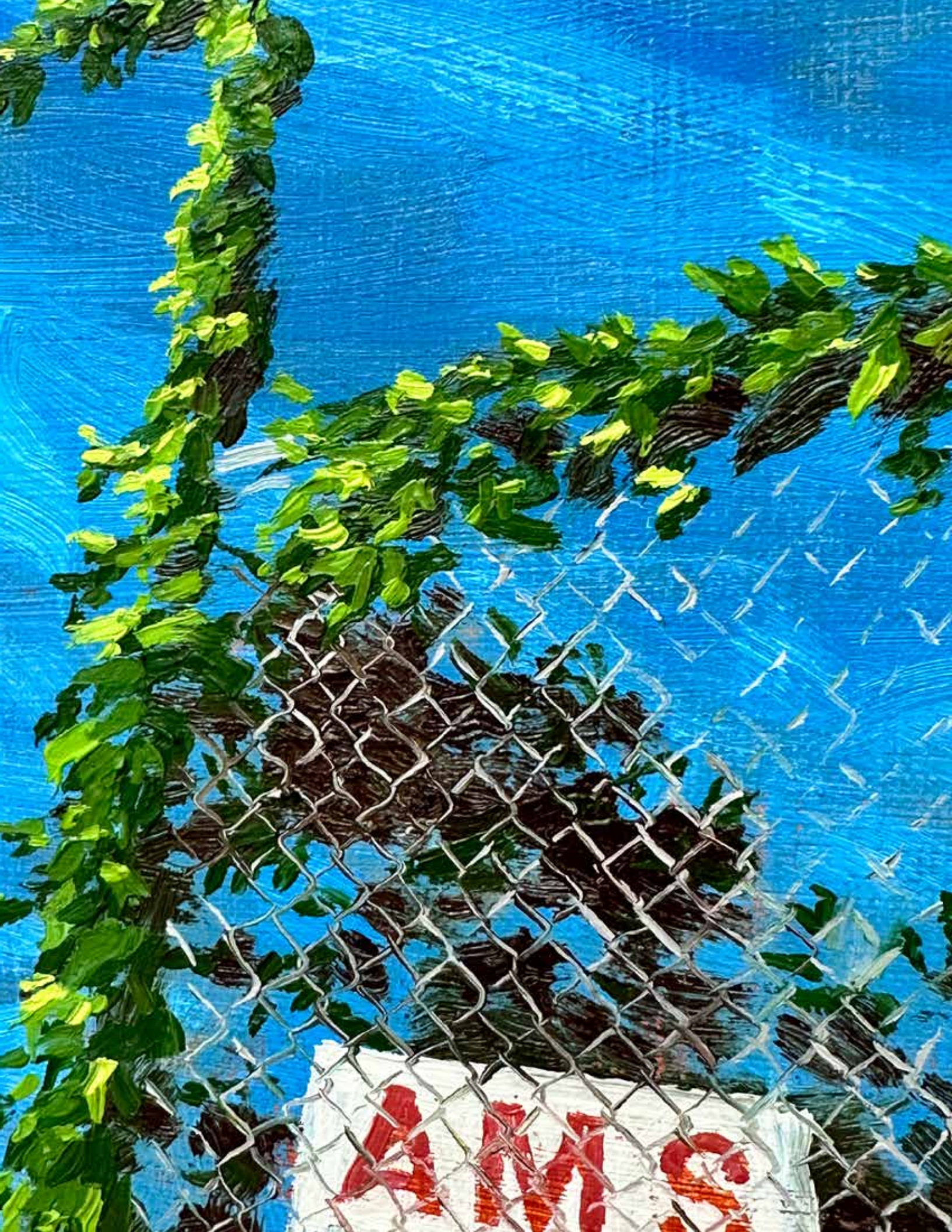
CHARIS AMMON

Where Do You Go When You Are On Your Way?

May 25 - July 1, 2023

ALEXANDER DIJULIO

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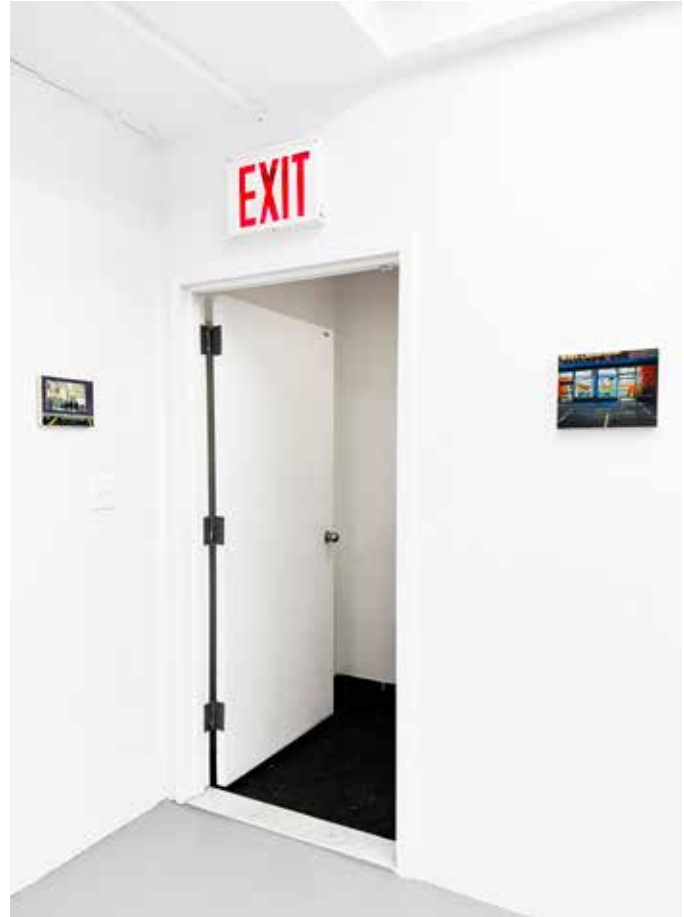


The In-Between

by Reid Sharpless

Usually when we are on our way somewhere, our attention lands, if not on the past or the future, then on a screen. The smoothest way to live in our system is abstracted out of our present, embodied experience. In her solo show *Where Do You Go When You Are On Your Way?* painter Charis Ammon introduces some friction: what happens if we insist on being here, now?

Descend the stairs to Alexander DiJulio's gallery in the Lower East Side, and you'll find yourself in intimate quarters surrounded by small, observational paintings of city surfaces and sidewalk vistas, each no larger than a hardcover book. Each painting depicts a moment of encounter between Ammon and the places she passes on her daily commute: a stolen glance at the sky, impossibly blue, above the red canopy of an Exxon gas station; a fluorescent laundromat interior at dusk, viewed from the curb; a patched slab of sidewalk etched with the



installation view from *Where Do You Go When You Are On Your Way?*

names, doodles, and romantic proclamations of passersby; a gray rectangle painted on a cinderblock wall belonging to the MTA. Seeing her work from a distance, one is tempted to place Ammon solidly in the realist tradition. But an in-person viewing reveals that she is at least as concerned with texture, the behavior of the medium, and the presence of the hand as she is with illusion. Each painting is built up with brushstrokes, bringing the physical process of painting to



Zag (detail), 2023. oil on canvas over panel, 8 x 10 inches

the forefront alongside representation of urban surfaces. This movement encoded in paint adds a temporal dimension to her work—as if by the detail of brushwork, Ammon is signaling what kind of dwell time we might share together, looking at a part of our world that was once invisible to us. In the variety of strategies we see in the paint, we can find the artist’s love of the medium, eye for color, dedication to experimentation, and knack for rendering complex things simply, often with a single stroke.

As a show concerned with exploring the in-between and the liminal, there is no narrative thread running through *Where Do*

You Go When You Are On Your Way?. Nowhere do the paintings collapse into narrative relationships with each other—they avoid even that sense of arrival. Each contains its own story, but just as a walk through the city reveals, there are many stories existing side-by-side here, and from that multiplicity the show draws its power.

Ammon is a painter’s painter; in her work you can clearly see a love of the medium, an artist asking new questions of what oil paint can do. She’s also a peoples’ painter, someone who champions a pedestrian perspective. The paradox when viewing her work is that, despite the anonymous urban surfaces that often comprise her subject matter, each painting feels warm with familiarity and presence. Observing these pieces of our shared urban experience enshrined in paint, there’s a sense of I’ve seen that, too. By pairing the shared surfaces at the periphery of our attention, the conspicuous absence of the human figure, the moodiness of her composition, and the evidence of her hand on the canvas, Ammon imbues her work with a haunting quality. The work haunts the beholder, both in the presence of the artist’s eye and hand,

and in the sense of the life breathed into the transitional spaces and textures of our day when we allow our attention to land and dwell on them. These paintings are invitations to stop, to pull ourselves back to the present, and even if just for a moment, to see something together.

So, *where do you go when you're on your way?* With her question, Ammon has aligned the project of her show alongside those of writers and artists such as Oulipo writer Georges Perec (“An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris” and “The Infra-Ordinary”), psychogeographic theorist Guy Debord (“Theory of the Dérive”), and more recently, artist and writer Jenny Odell (“How To Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy and Saving Time: Discovering a Life Beyond the Clock”). This discourse pursues anticapitalist ways of seeing, knowing, and creating. And in her studio practice, Ammon joins them by elevating the shared spaces and liminal moments of our day as a kind of beachhead for reclaiming presence and connection with the people and world around us.



Charis Ammon with *Burst*, 2022 from the exhibition *SPRINGS ETERNAL* at the Fireplace Project, 2023

A punk ethic of presence emerges from the show—each painting a moment when anonymous urban space blooms under our attention with presence and possibility, suddenly alive with the confluence of history, memory, and ecology. A vine growing on the periphery of our attention becomes this vine, weaving itself through a chainlink fence, seeking altitude and light. And the attention economy, bent on colonizing the mind, loses its claim on our mental landscapes; it cannot compete with here, now. Ammon directs our attention toward the cracks and seams of our routines, where, just as in the cracks and seams of the city, a little bit of life might take root and grow.







Charis Ammon: Beyond Vision

by Frances Lazare

In her first solo show in New York, Texas-born, New York City-based painter Charis Ammon debuts a series of intimately scaled and impressionistically rendered snapshots of her daily commute. In 17 paintings on display at the Alexander DiJulio Gallery—a relatively new venture by the eponymously named curator and gallerist—the painter treads the line between the careful and the quick in minute city scenes that engage the history of observational painting, bringing close attention to the accumulated but overlooked moments of everyday life. Ammon’s sketch-like renditions of shop front windows and ghost bikes recall the Pop turned hyperrealist painter Idelle Weber’s late, ultra-precise canvases that unflinchingly inventory discarded consumer products or Janet Fish’s intimate still lifes of mass-produced glasses and cellophane-wrapped fruit. Yet, unlike these Photorealists before, Ammon is not interested in imperious recordings; she forgoes precision for hedonism, opting for unusual viewpoints and excessive layers of wet-on-wet oil

paint that simulate the quick glances one takes roving through a crowded cityscape.

The history of Realist painting from the 19th century on is arguably shaped by this very kind of visual urban spectatorship—emblemized by the figure of the sauntering flâneur—in which the overload of sense impressions created by commerce and crowds is increasingly mediated via technology, engendering a kind of mobile, cinematic gaze. Ammon’s installation at Alexander DiJulio recalls this trajectory—culminated in the fetishized perfection of Photorealists like Weber and Fish at the end of the 20th century—her painting’s sequential and even placement on the gallery’s clean white walls invoking an almost filmic effect. Ammon acknowledges the role of technologically mediated vision in her practice. After all, her daily walks are filtered through quick snaps on her iPhone.

Yet, Ammon is more interested in codifying the kinds of sensory information that exceed vision; her paintings evoke the auditory, the olfactory, the tactile, and textural as vital modes of perception within an urban

environment that is shifting, contingent and very much alive. Ammon telegraphs her interest in such sensorium via material experiment, the impasto and brushy marks on the painter's heavily worked surfaces implying the ubiquity of human touch even on a towering urban landscape. In many of the paintings included herein, Ammon employs the frontality of windows, walls, and fences as a structuring compositional device that establishes foreground and background, while accretions of pigment capture the specificity of these various surfaces without recourse to the ultra-real. In several key sites, as on the facade of a laundromat or the awning of her neighborhood florist, the painter allows glimpses of underpainting to peek through, asking us to bring our attention to what lies below the surface of even the most ordinary fixtures, and the continuous nature of material buildup in the urban environment.

Indeed, Ammon is fascinated by how “we sculpt the earth and space around us with our hands, machines, and ideas,



Morning Sun, 2023 in the studio, Brooklyn, NY

and in turn, our environment shapes us,” a kind of reciprocity that is nearly impossible to capture photographically. Ammon views her paintings as souvenirs of this kind of embodied beholding, keepsakes that bear traces of authentic experience and refer to a concrete, physical world while simultaneously creating a myth with regard to their origins within it. Her paintings, in other words, register what the theorist Susan Stewart recognized as the profound gulf between representation and experience. With sketchy outlines and abstracted shapes, Ammon shows that in attempting to describe the experience of



Charis in her Brooklyn studio, Summer 2023

beholding the external world—including the crowded window display of a 99c store or a row of washers in the laundromat—the artist necessarily invents and distorts the specific objects of this experience. If, for Stewart, the impossibility of impartial description generates a deep longing and persistent nostalgia, which drives compositional devices aimed at closing this gap, Ammon suggests there is pleasure to be found in the interstitial places between memory and reality. As the artist recalls, “I recognize myself in this flux.”





1.
Zag, 2023
oil on canvas over panel
8h x 10w inches





2.

Red Hot, 2023

oil on canvas over panel

5h x 7w inches



3.

Ghost Bike, 2023

oil on canvas over panel

5h x 7w inches



4.
Tangled, 2023
oil on canvas over panel
8h x 10w inches



5.
Red Horizon, 2023
oil on canvas over panel
5h x 7w inches



6.
Birdsongs in Brooklyn, 2023
oil on canvas over panel
5h x 7w inches



7.
Cascade, 2023
oil on canvas over panel
5h x 7w inches





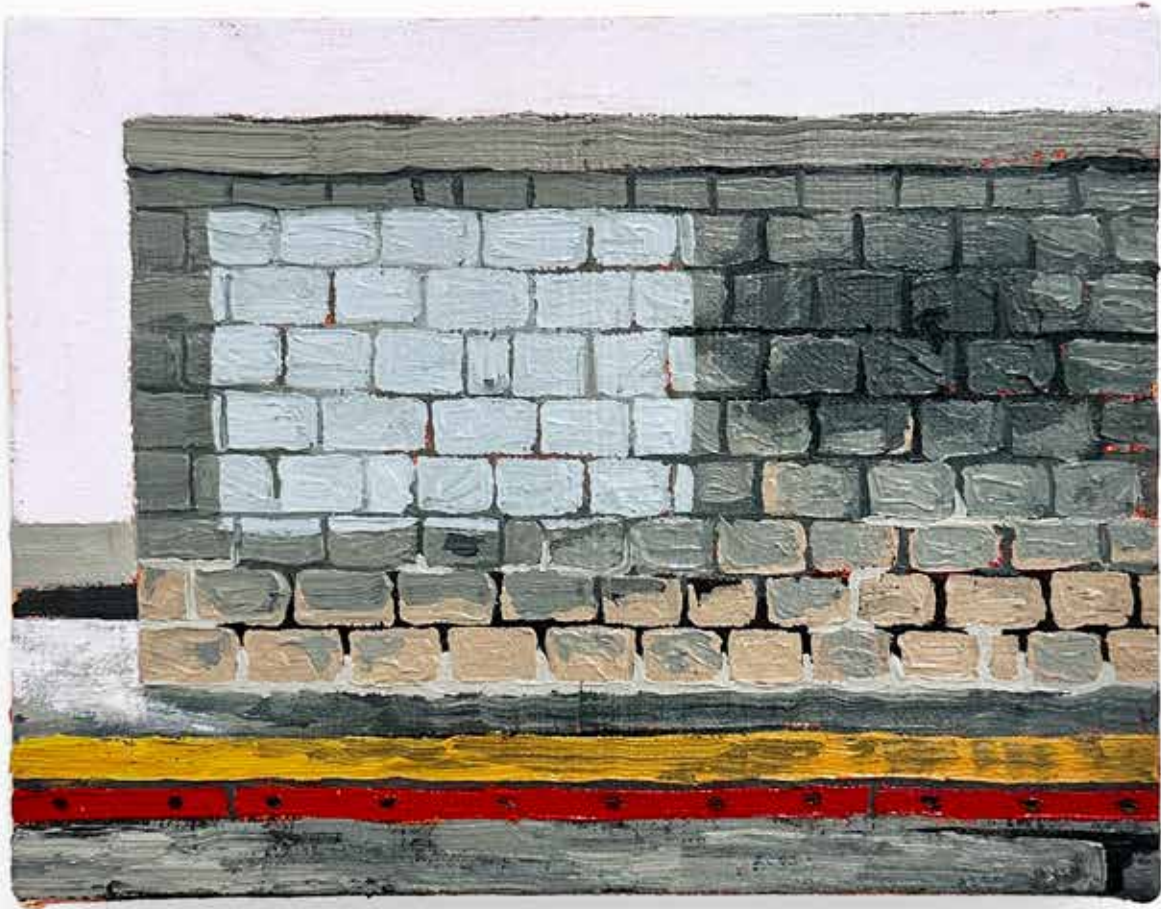


8.

Pressed, 2023

oil on canvas over panel

6h x 8w inches



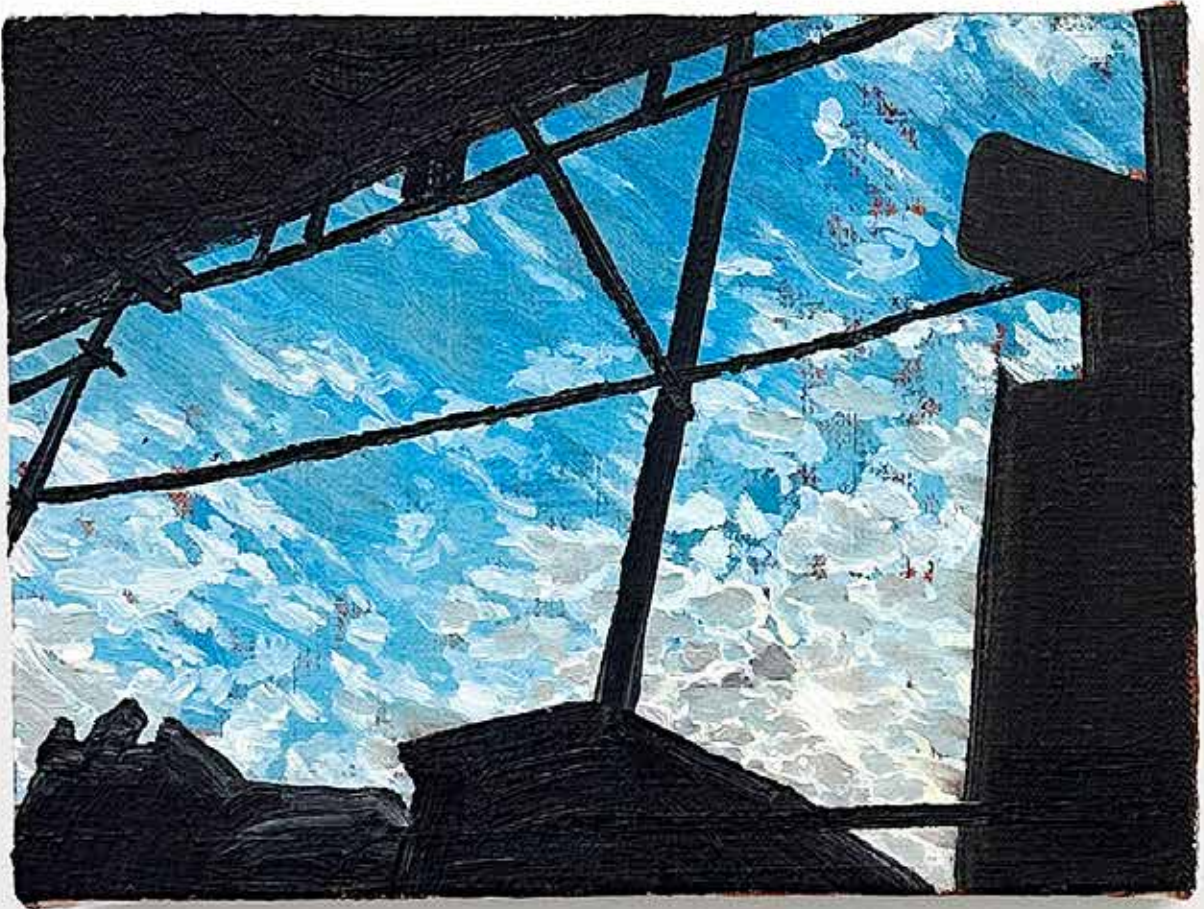
9.
Roll Over, 2023
oil on canvas over panel
6h x 8w inches



10.
Cup A Silhouette, 2023
oil on canvas over panel
6h x 8w inches



11.
Space Available, 2023
oil on canvas over panel
6h x 8w inches

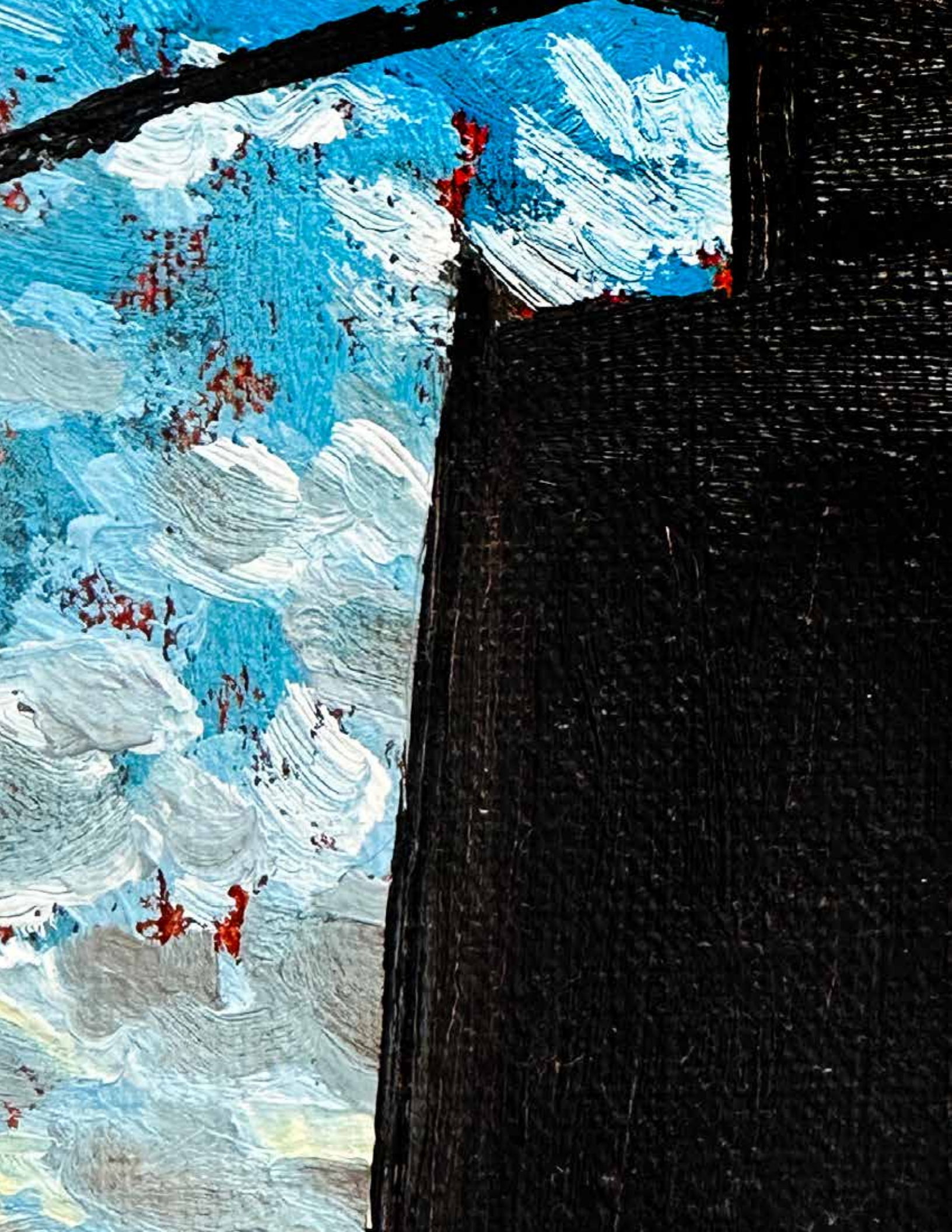


12.
Morning Sun, 2023
oil on canvas over panel
6h x 8w inches



13.
On the Line, 2023
oil on canvas over panel
6h x 8w inches







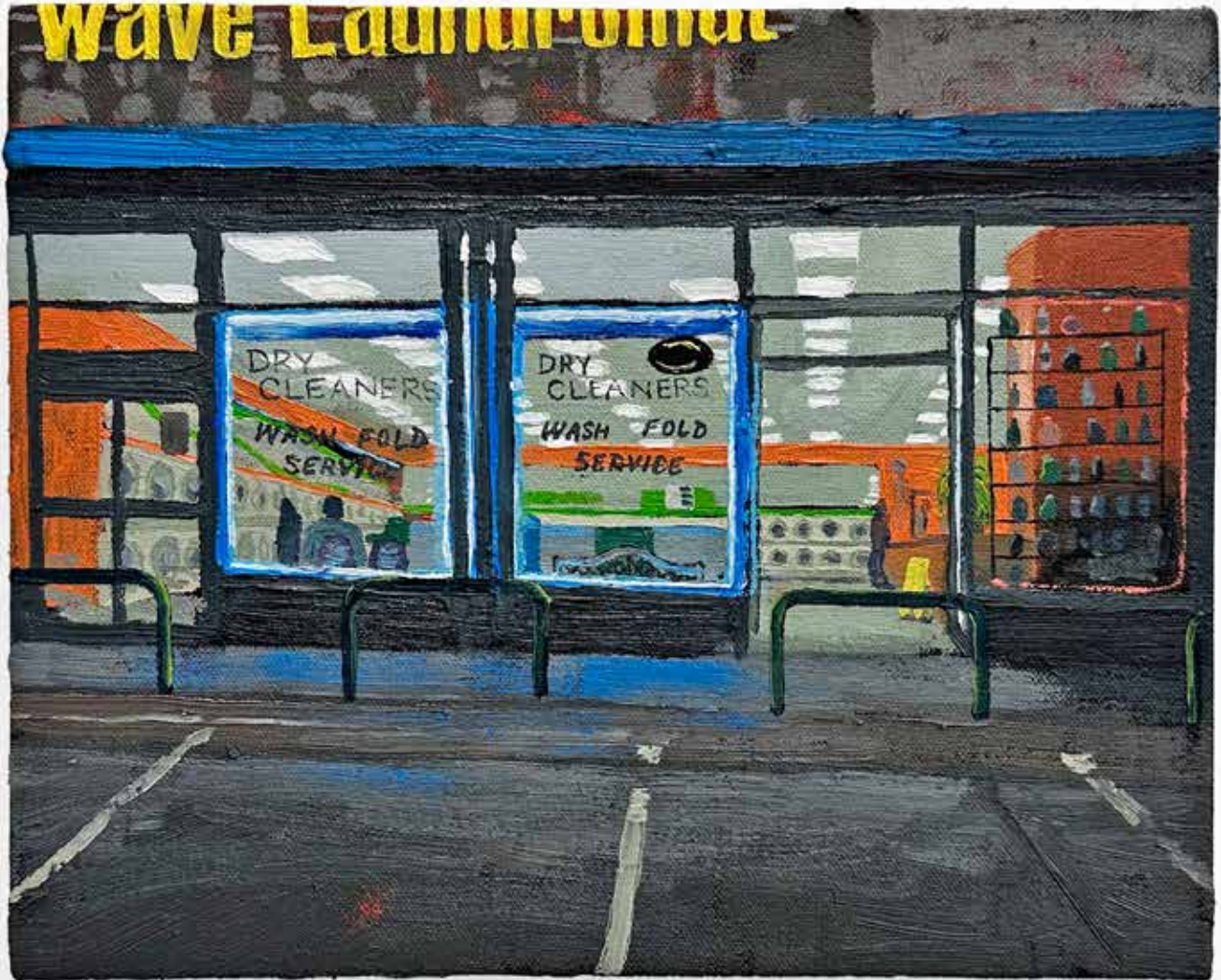
14.
Blue and Orange, 2023
oil on canvas over panel
5h x 7w inches



15.
Flowers in Their Wheels, 2023
oil on canvas over panel
5h x 7h inches



16.
Shadow Beat, 2023
oil on canvas over panel
5h x 7w inches



17.
Blue Wash, 2023
oil on canvas over panel
8h x 10w inches



18.
Lemon Glow, 2023
oil on canvas over panel
6h x 8w inches





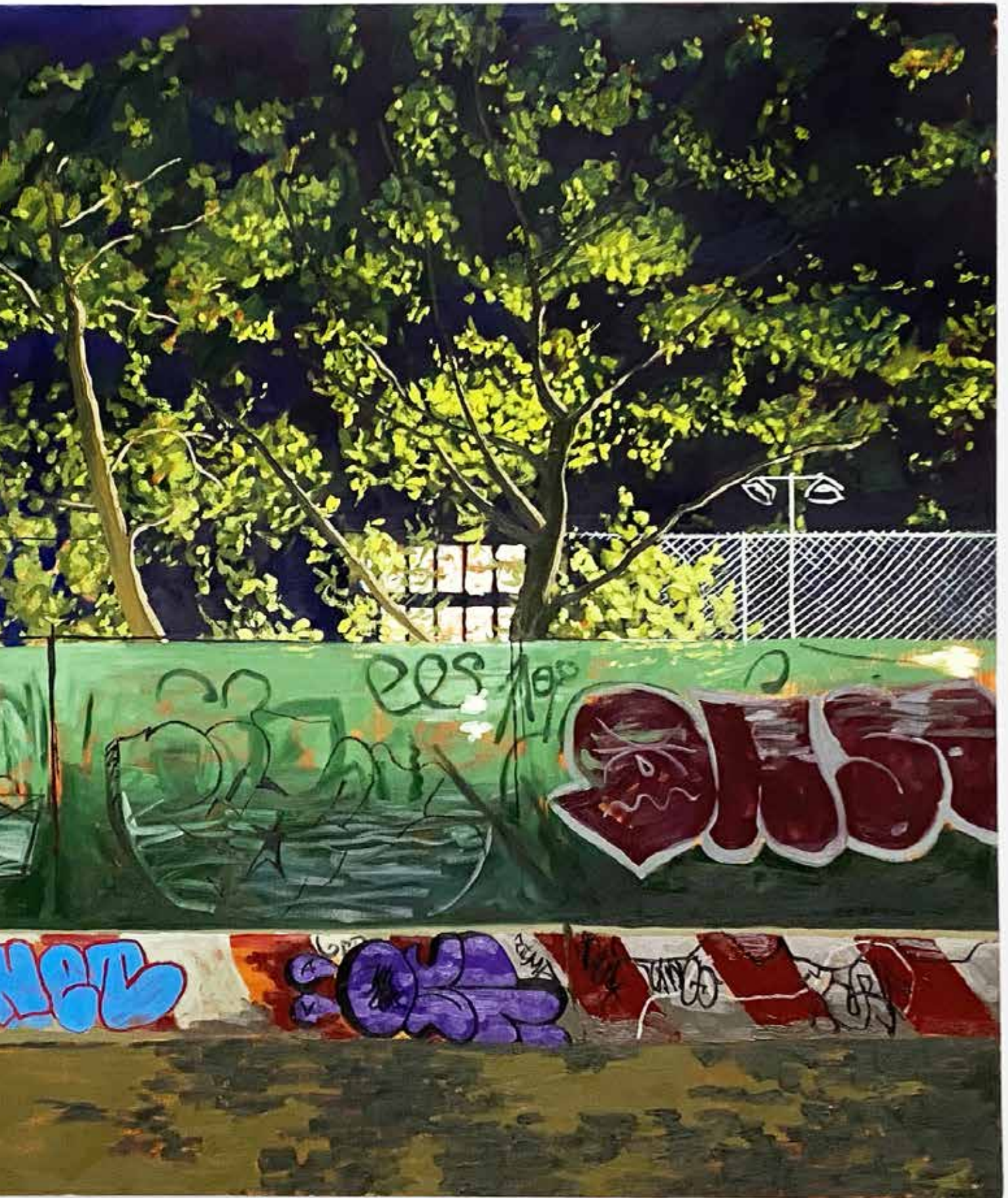


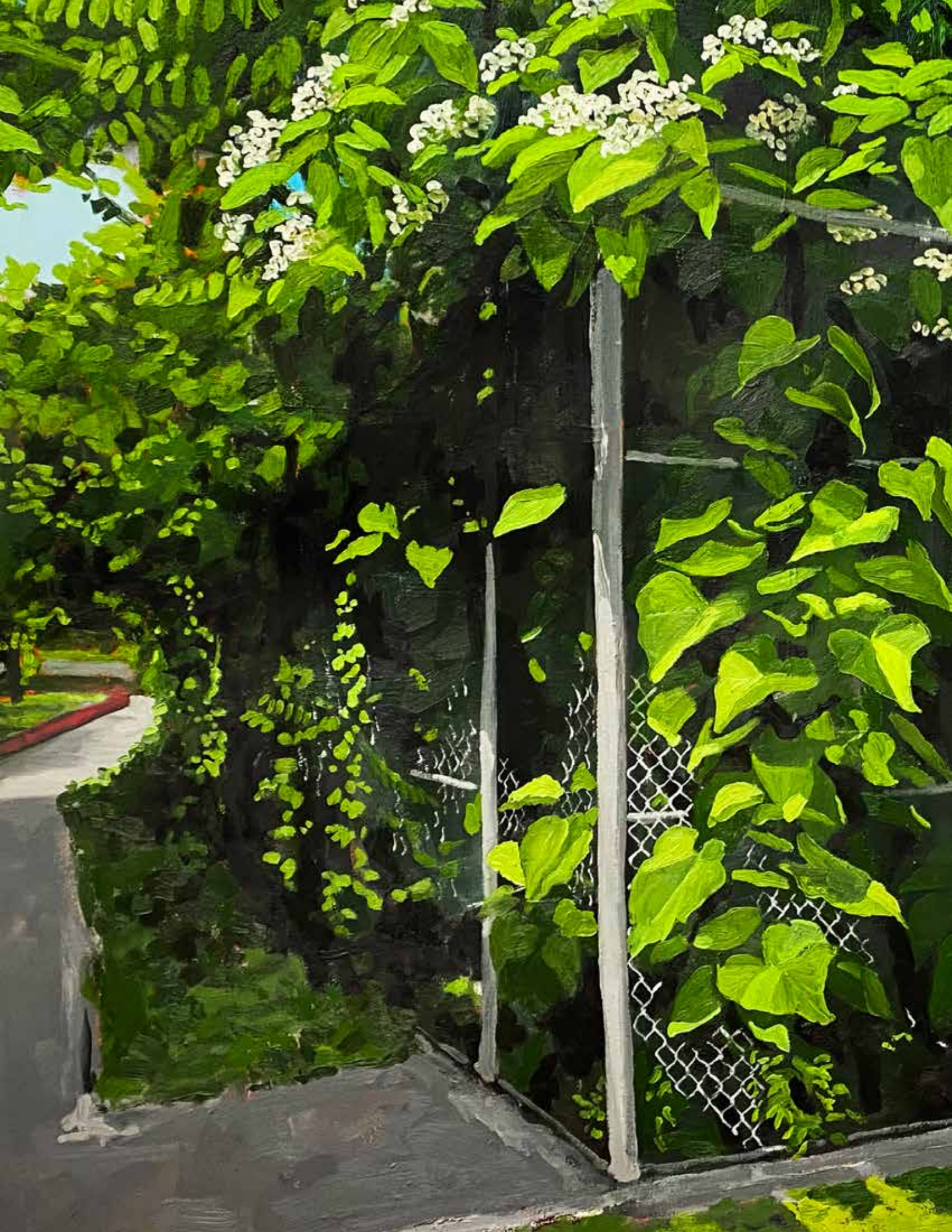
19.
Burst, 2023
oil on canvas
48h x 60w inches

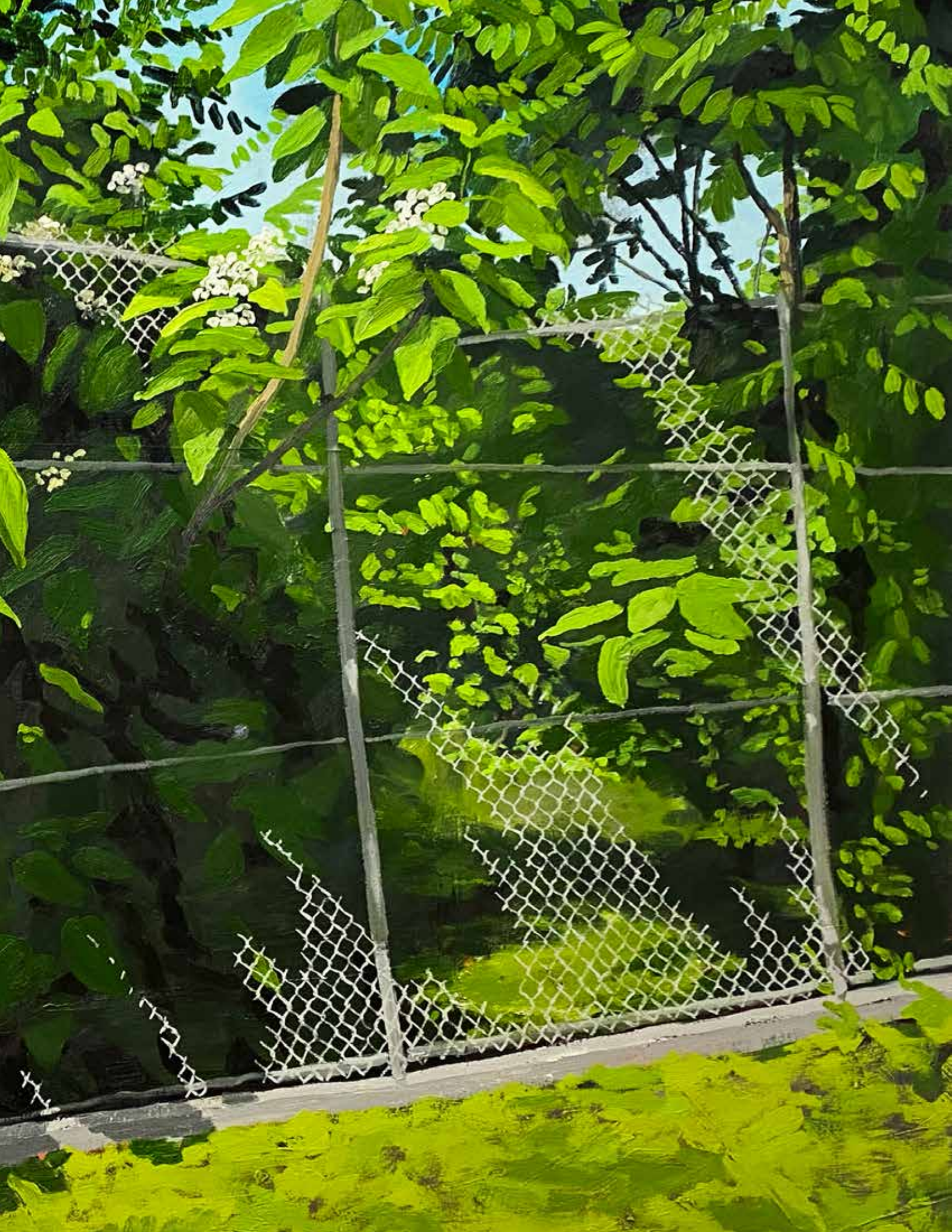




20.
Stretch, 2023
oil on canvas
48h x 60w inches







This catalog was published on the occasion of the first New York solo exhibition of Charis Ammon at Alexander DiJulio:

Charis Ammon
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Critical text--*Beyond Vision*--by Frances Lazare

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