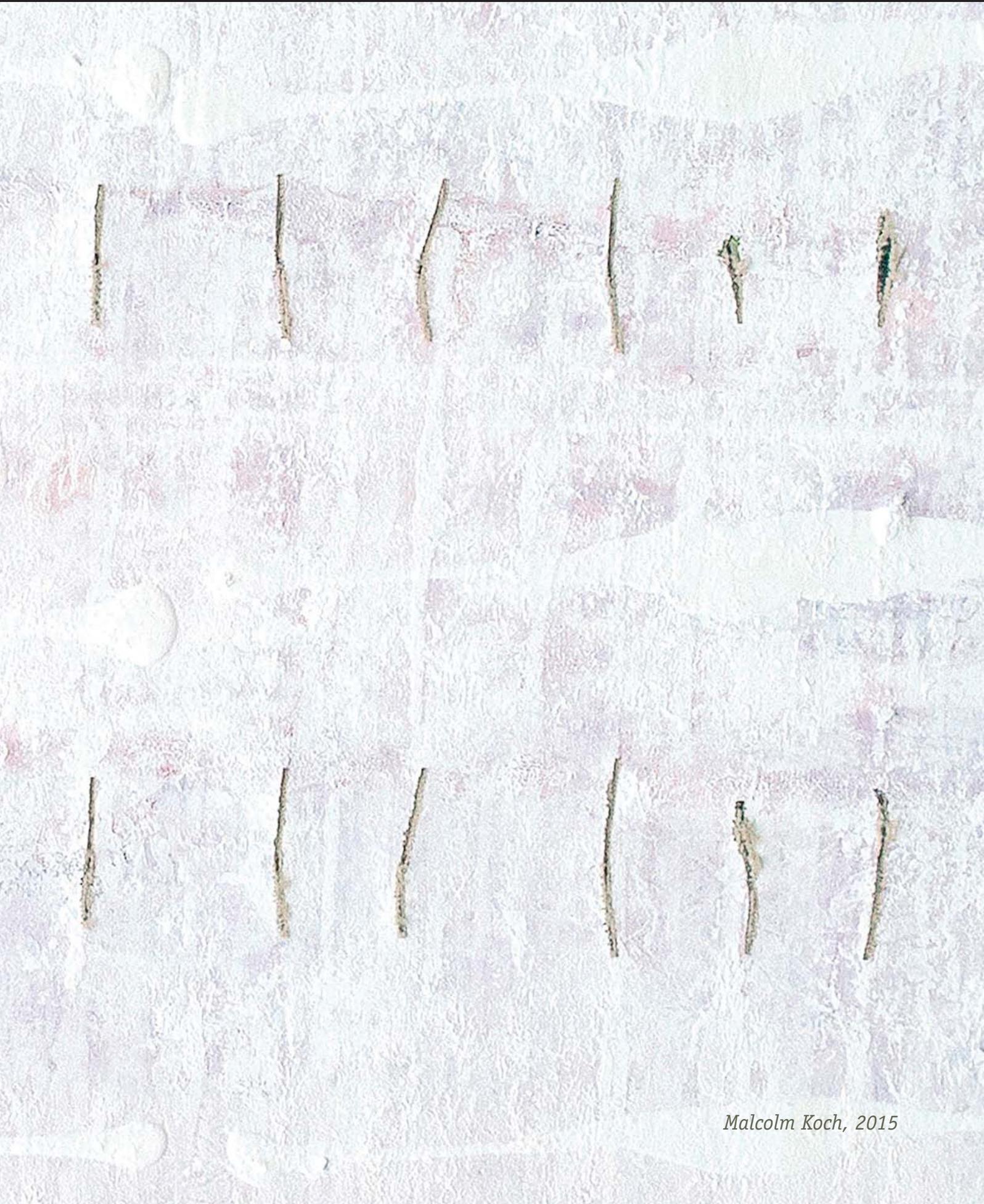


Membrane Art
An evolving expression



Malcolm Koch, 2015



Artist statement

In 2004 I had an aesthetic thought – if I could take a pristine canvas and fold it in some way, it would allow the surface geometry to play a part in creating an authentic interpretation of our natural world. Following these interactions the canvas is returned to the flat picture plane — creating a metaphor for how we observe. Since then, the discovery of this working practice has led to a distinctive visual language and body of work I call Membrane Art.

Often I'll produce a succession of undulations; in one direction, then the other, each changing axis, gaining texture and colour as the work progressively reveals its evolving form. Simple in concept, yet complex in execution, Membrane Art is a discernible aesthetic. Demonstrating that when presented with the stretched-out picture plane events don't disappear but simply change their geometric profile. So the viewer experiences the results of the work rather than an accrual of the method used — setting in motion a further process of deep reflection or meditation.



Malcolm Koch

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Malcolm Koch". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Introduction

The following is a compilation of the insights into my art practice. An aesthetic that has been the focus of my attention for over ten years. Over this period I've gone through a series of developmental stages that have led to a distinctive visual language and body of work. I hope this explanation will prompt further discussion into the understanding and validity of those insights.



What started out as an investigation to find an authentic aesthetic manifestation of our natural world, particularly the way we observe it, has materialised into something more concrete. I call this aesthetic Membrane Art — a practice of allowing the surface geometry to play a part in creating distinctive expression and unfolding events.

The initial proposition was to fold, or undulate, a loose canvas (take it off the frame) and paint on it – then compress the depth by stretching the canvas back onto the frame (flat picture plane). The undulating membrane would provide a re-enactment of nature (containing multidimensional values). Something akin to the geology over glacial time frames that has determined configurations of landscape. The flat plane generates the human visual experience, a visual metaphor for how we perceive.

However, before I could properly exercise this aesthetic thought, I needed a better understanding of how gravity plays its part in our natural world. So I let gravity do the work. By allowing paint to flow over the canvas landscapes (undulating hills and valleys) it becomes a working part of the imagination. Events form and accumulate within the space over a period of time. Then by unfolding and recognising what happened it becomes an extension of my cognitive ability to understand the geometric conditions and the state of materials that allowed such things to occur.

The discovery of this working practice showed me that I could transform the geometry of the canvas in its unstretched form to the stretched. Furthermore, I realised that I didn't just have to solely use the effects of gravity. With varying degrees of manipulation I could apply marks that either control paint flow, allow cuts to be made, or scrapings to form, or whatever action one chooses to apply, to create a distinctive and controlled expression that has grown to become a discernible aesthetic language. The actual membrane itself still underpins the aesthetics of each piece, although the degree of simplicity or complexity can be regulated and enhanced.

The impact of this work from the viewers experience is quite different. The viewer experiences the results of the work as a flat picture plane rather than an accrual of the method used. The aesthetic appreciation comes through the contemplation of each piece - setting in motion a further process of deep reflection or meditation.

Technical discussion



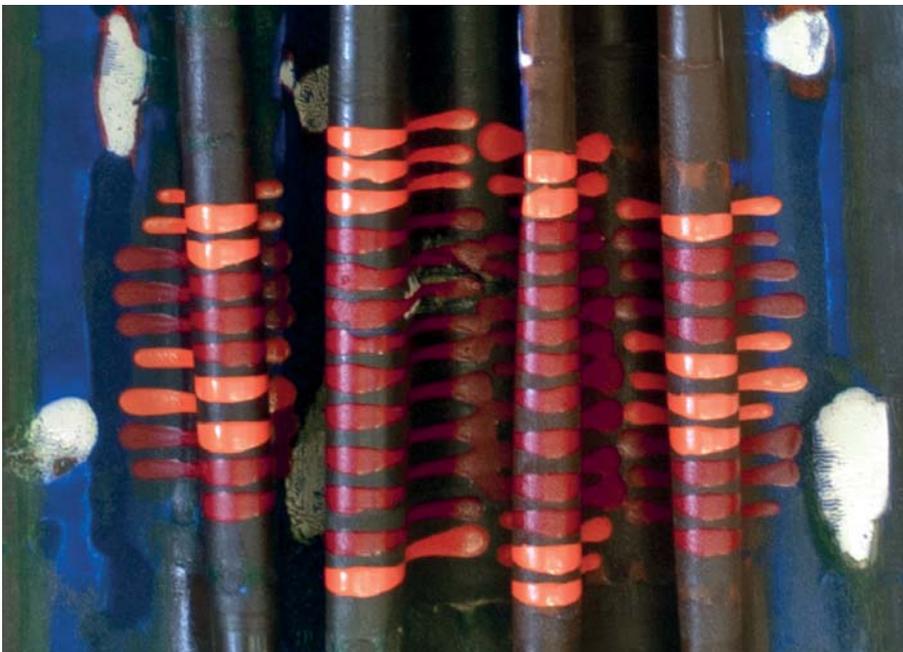
An aesthetic thought

Membrane Art starts as a simple proposition — from undulation to flat.

The undulations represent the internal workings of nature. Conversely, the flat plane becomes a medium for human interpretation and, similarly with most abstract representations, an object of deep reflection or meditation.



The side view of the undulated membrane in a fixed position.



The top view of the undulated membrane in a fixed position.

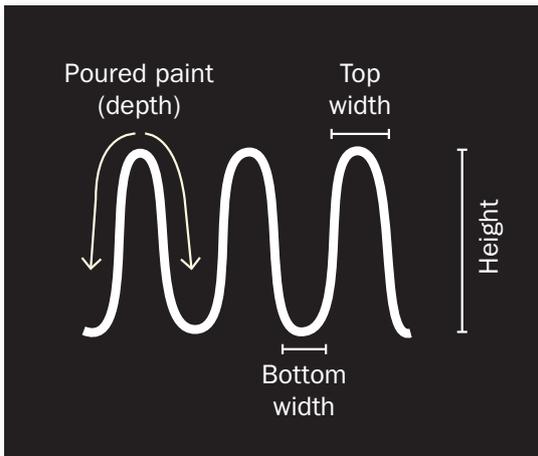


The unfolded state (flat plane) of the above painting. Illustrating the compression of depth before it is fully stretched to a frame.

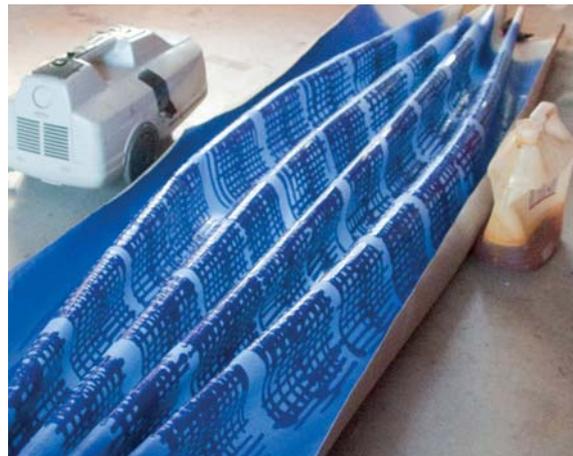
Undulation: *Dimensional values*

The journey from undulation to flat brings about distinctive aesthetic manifestations. The membrane could be fixed or unfixed.

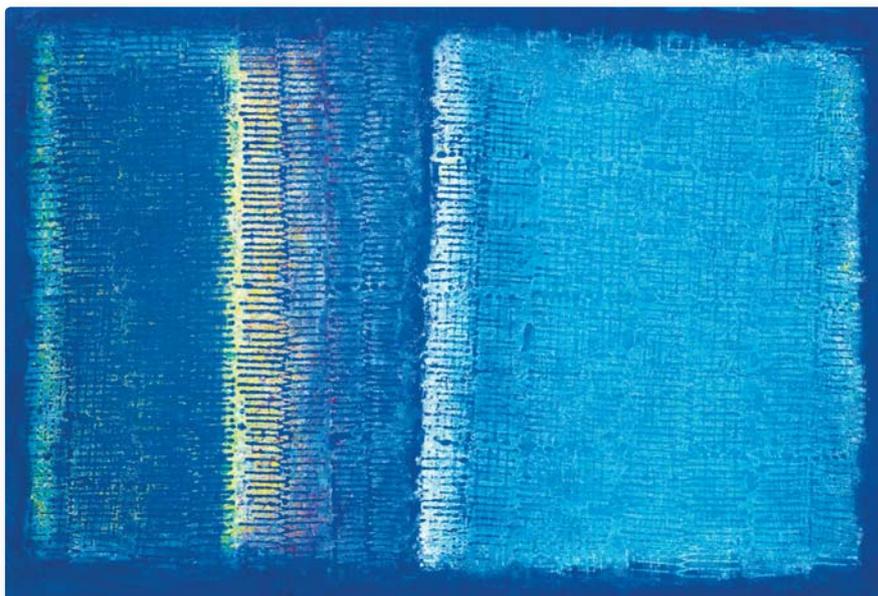
The following illustrates one example. The membrane may be folded into many kinds of undulations (geometric states) before it is stretched out and presented in a two-dimensional form.



Side view of an undulated membrane (surface):
The membrane is folded to allow for the dimensional values to manifest. As paint flows from the top it may then pool at the bottom within the given width.



Work-in-progress: This fixed undulated membrane shows an early stage of its development. After a succession of undulations in various directions, it will go onto to become the image below.



Compressed view of the membrane: The membrane is stretched (flattened and fastened) to a frame. The events, which contain dimensional values, don't disappear but are compressed on the two-dimensional picture plane.

Works-in-progress

The following examples are at various stages of development. The membrane maybe folded into many kinds of undulations (geometric states) before it is out stretched and presented in a two-dimensional form.



Hanging works on display:

Undulations can take any form. They could be fixed or unfixed, angled or straight, shallow or deep, loose or tight, crumpled or smooth. It may be comprised of one or many scenarios. Whatever the undulations, it creates the basic structure for the work.



Vision obscured:

This work-in-progress shows how paint flows from the top to the bottom of the canvas to create dimensional values. However the results are ambiguous until it is revealed on the flat picture plane.

Undulations are part of the journey: If one doesn't compress the depth (mount the work on a two-dimensional picture plane), the spatial perspectives or events developed on the undulation does not extend beyond what it is and therefore challenge or engage human perceptions, thus missing the point.

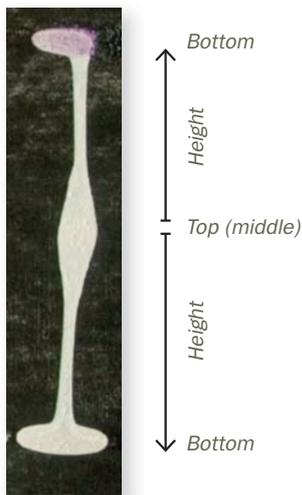
Flat: *Dimensional qualities retained*

Below shows the 'paint' as seen when the membrane is opened and out stretched. Dimensional values don't disappear they just take a different spatial form on the flat (two-dimensional) picture plane.

Characterising the undulated values on the flat plane:

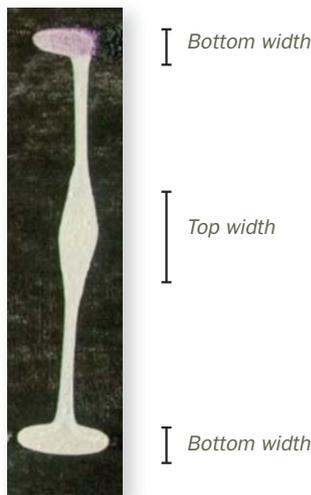
Height

This flattened view of 'paint' shows the direction that it flowed to define the heights. The middle becomes what was the top of the membrane.



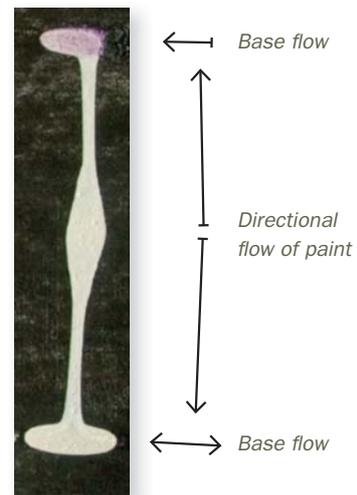
Width

How wide the membrane is apart at the top and bottom at the time the paint was poured defines its width and sets the boundaries for the control of paint flow.



Time/depth

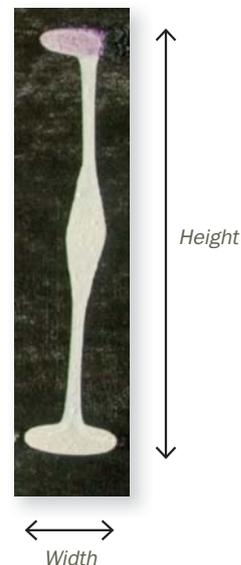
A sense of time and depth is illustrated by the movement of paint. This is controlled by the viscosity of the paint, slope and surface conditions of the membrane, ie, steepness, wet, dry, texture, etc.



When paint is poured, it starts off fast then it slows and thickens as it accumulates at the base of both sides.

The viewers perspective:

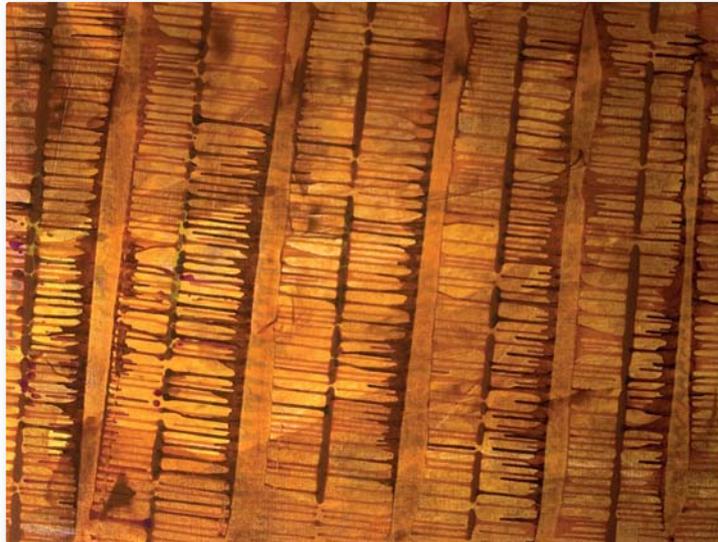
Once stretched and mounted to a frame, the dimensional values created on the undulations are redefined and replaced with new values on the flat (two-dimensional) picture plane. This is the compression of depth — a metaphor for how we perceive.



Finished works



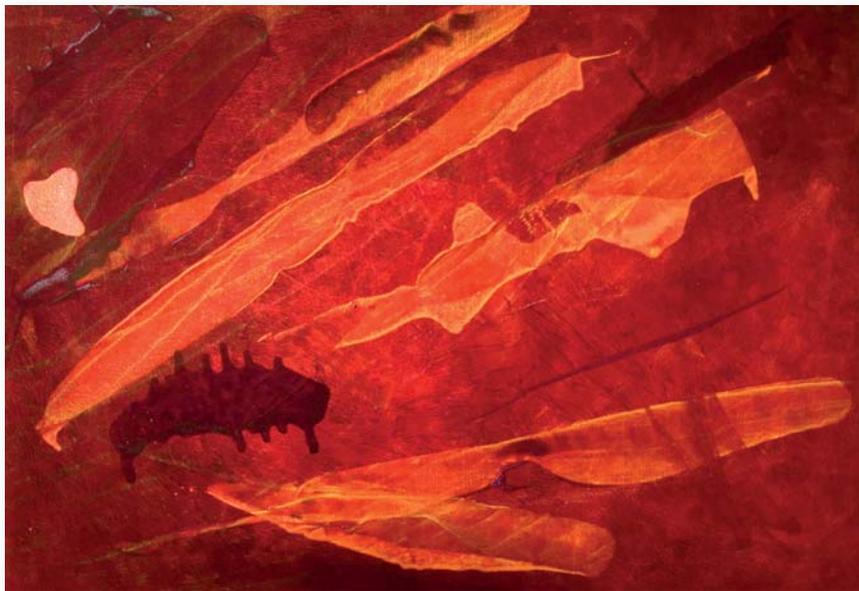
Membrane scrapes on one fixed undulation



MA: Scrape through blue
Oil on Belgian linen, 2007
960 x 1360 mm

MA: Five scrapes
Oil on Belgian linen, 2007
920 x 1260 mm

Membrane cuts and scrapes on multiple undulations



MA#47
Oil on Belgian linen, 2014
864 x 1372 mm

MA: Scrape under red
Oil on Belgian linen, 2007
922 x 1342 mm

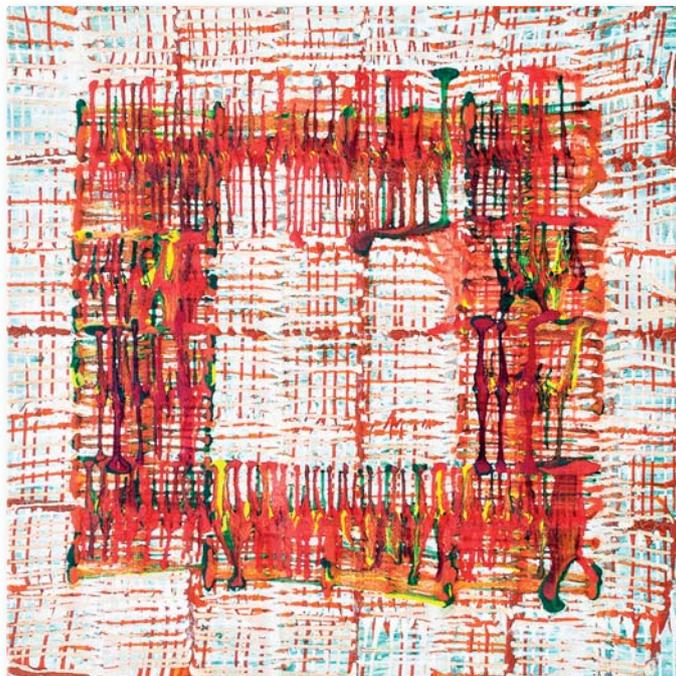
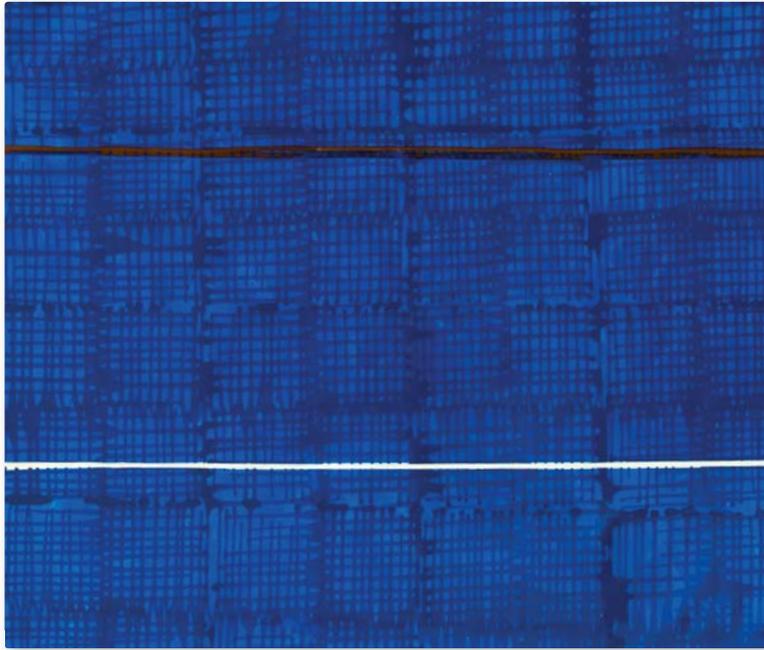
Paint pourings on one fixed undulation



MA: Twenty six
Oil on Belgian linen, 2007
1400 x 1710 mm

MA: Yellow to blue
Oil on Belgian linen, 2008
965 x 1117 mm

Paint pourings on multiple undulations (fixed)



MA: Entrapped blue
Oil on Belgian linen, 2004
1005 x 1280 mm

MA#45
Oil on Belgian linen, 2014
1118 x 1118 mm

Paint pourings on multiple undulations (unfixed)



MA#46
Oil on Belgian linen, 2014
610 x 1676 mm

MAW#001
Watercolour on paper, 2013
837 x 764 mm

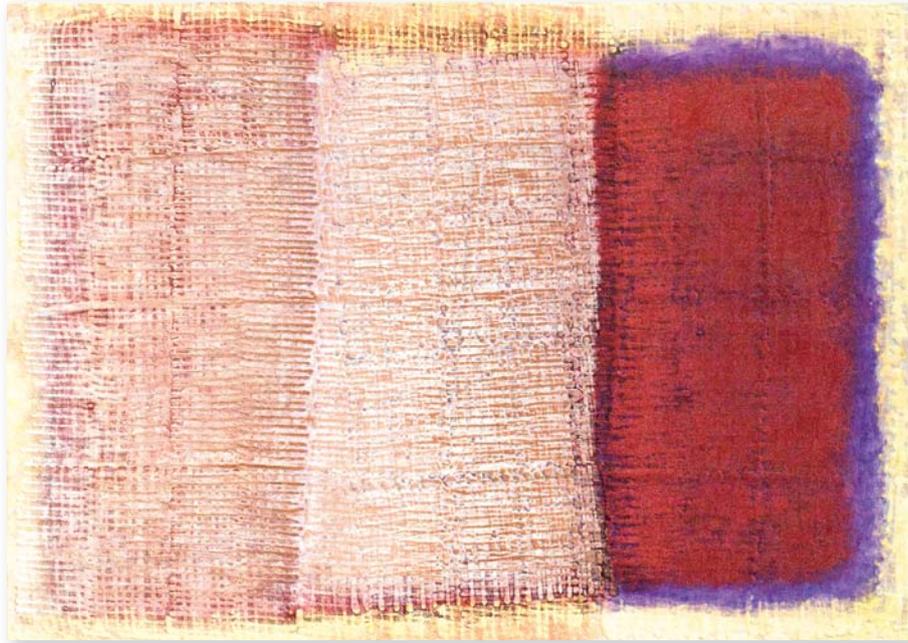
Membrane stamping (paint duplications)



MA: Bruised reality
Oil on Belgian linen, 2006
1476 x 1903 mm

MA: Time Folds
Oil on Belgian linen, 2007
840 x 1820 mm

Paint pourings on multiple undulations, and surface layering of paint



MA #11
Oil on Belgian linen, 2011
1205 x 1705 mm

MA#41
Oil on Belgian linen, 2013
955 x 1560 mm

Membrane cracks and peelings, and surface layering of paint



MA#44a
Oil on Belgian linen, 2015
927 x 1338 mm

MA#48
Oil on Belgian linen, 2015
914 x 1219 mm

Selected exhibitions



*Stephen Sinclair Gallery
2009*



*Red Opus Art Space
2011*



*Adelaide Convention Centre
2014*

