



LAURA NEWMAN

Out There

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Text by Pamela Helena Wilson

SATCHEL PROJECTS

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A painting comes alive for me when I can feel the air in it. Suggestions of compression and restriction contrast with a sense of breaking free and soaring in thin air. Color is saturated; space is warped; lines are active and almost three-dimensional. I'm interested in the point where form takes on meaning – where a triangle can also be read as a road in perspective, for example. Each painting suggests a model or a diagram even as it evokes a particular, fictional space. Although I want my paintings to appear fresh and immediate, in fact they are generally long in the making and built out of thousands of revisions and morphing forms and ideas.

My work takes part in an ongoing conversation with the work of a number of other artists who seek to explore abstract painting's capaciousness and its ability to internalize an array of ideas and to speak to contemporary life even as it uses a vocabulary of bodily and emotional experience that short-circuits name-ability. I believe that even in a time when there is a great deal of pressure on art to respond directly to social and political events, painting can offer the possibility of reaching beyond the constraints of settled meaning to exemplify a kind of openness, freedom and critical thinking.

-Laura Newman



Japanese House, 2025, acrylic, oil, ink, flashe and spray paint on canvas, 58 x 71 inches

An Aerial Roadmap of the Mind

Pamela Helena Wilson

When encountering Laura Newman's paintings it can be hard to place exactly where you are. The viewer enters a luminous world of translucent color, punctuated by jolts of hard edged geometry. Her choices are playful, intense, and forceful. Shapes and lines intersect, bend, overlap, and then expand outward. There is a deliberate dislocation in the way things fit together: edges don't quite meet and shapes pile up in places.

We could say these paintings are memories of place—nocturnal Brooklyn skylscapes or the sliding panels of a traditional Japanese house—that have been fully digested and reemerge on the canvas as compositions of shape, color, and space. Or maybe they are not places at all but built images in which space, structure, and color interact with form, the goal being not to make direct reference to the immediate world, but only to suggest it.

The images are not predetermined. Newman's practice is to start with a wash, some lines, or a shape, and then to proceed in an approach of improvisation and response until a structure takes form. Juxtapositions occur that react with each other in ways that bring resolution. The working process becomes the organizational foundation of the final image.

What is so distinctive about these works is the mixture of the intuitive and the deeply sophisticated. A seeming freedom, a lack of self-consciousness, prevails in the unusual choices she makes. Simultaneously there is a highly

developed visual vocabulary that Newman has created and developed over decades. In each painting or work on paper, she orchestrates thin washes, large stains, dry-brushed structural lines, and hard-edged shapes, executed in a multiplicity of paint mediums layered on top of one another, playing color against structure, against texture, around space.

Educated in the late 70's, weaned on abstraction, conceptual art, and the New York school, her visual language connects that history to many other influences—the work of the Renaissance painter Tintoretto and Matisse to name



Jacobo Tintoretto, Annunciation, 1582, Scuola Grande di San Rocco, Venice.

just two important figures in her lexicon. In Newman's *At Speed*, geometric bars of blue crisscross the field like bullet trains in the night alongside rectangles of blue, yellow and green that converge into a spatial field suggesting a futuristic cinematic cityscape. Here one might also think of Tintoretto and his use of dramatic foreshortening and perspectives shooting into the distance, a juxtaposition of figures and forms up close and very far away.

In Tintoretto's *Annunciation* in the Scuola de San Rocca, Venice, there is a structural wall in deep perspective rep-



Henri Matisse, *View of Notre Dame*, 1914, oil on canvas, 58 x 37 inches, Museum of Modern Art, New York

resented by a thick line vertically dividing the image. This relates to Laura's *Japanese House*, where a wide vertical white line sits on the surface and divides the picture plane. But this canvas might also echo Matisse, particularly his 1914 painting *View of Notre Dame*. Over a brushy blue field Matisse has reduced the composition to the barest minimum of a structure of black lines and a shape to suggest Notre Dame, seen outside his studio window, leaving room for the viewer to complete the image.

In Newman's *Japanese House*, diagrammatic lines cut through a field of poured washes of ink and acrylic, suggesting a structure with transparent walls, but it is not clear if we are outside looking in or inside looking out. In contrast to the relative drama of *At Speed*, here there is a calm tranquility generated by the structural geometries that play across the surface. But the wide vertical, frontal white band, which is crossed by an orange and brown horizontal strip, divides the canvas, disrupts the balance, and shifts the space.

Viewing *Slate*, one might think of the Williamsburg bridge and a string of Buddhist flags fluttering in the air. But again, this interpretation is too literal and ultimately false. Here deep blue planes of color overlap, bars of turquoise float in space on top of a lighter blue scaffold of lines. Possibly what is so compelling about the painting is how little it has to do with landscape while at the same time being so suggestive of it. The elements of the painting remain fugitive, alluding to memory, interiority, and presence. Rather than *depicting* place in any of these paintings, Newman stages it, allowing color, form and material to function as transmitters of psychic, emotional and spatial experience.



At Speed, 2025, acrylic, oil, flashe, ink, and spray paint on canvas, 48 x 40 inches



Swoosh, 2025, acrylic, ink, and flashe on canvas, 16 x 22 inches



Carnival, 2025, ink, flashe, acrylic, and spray paint on linen, 24 x 18 inches

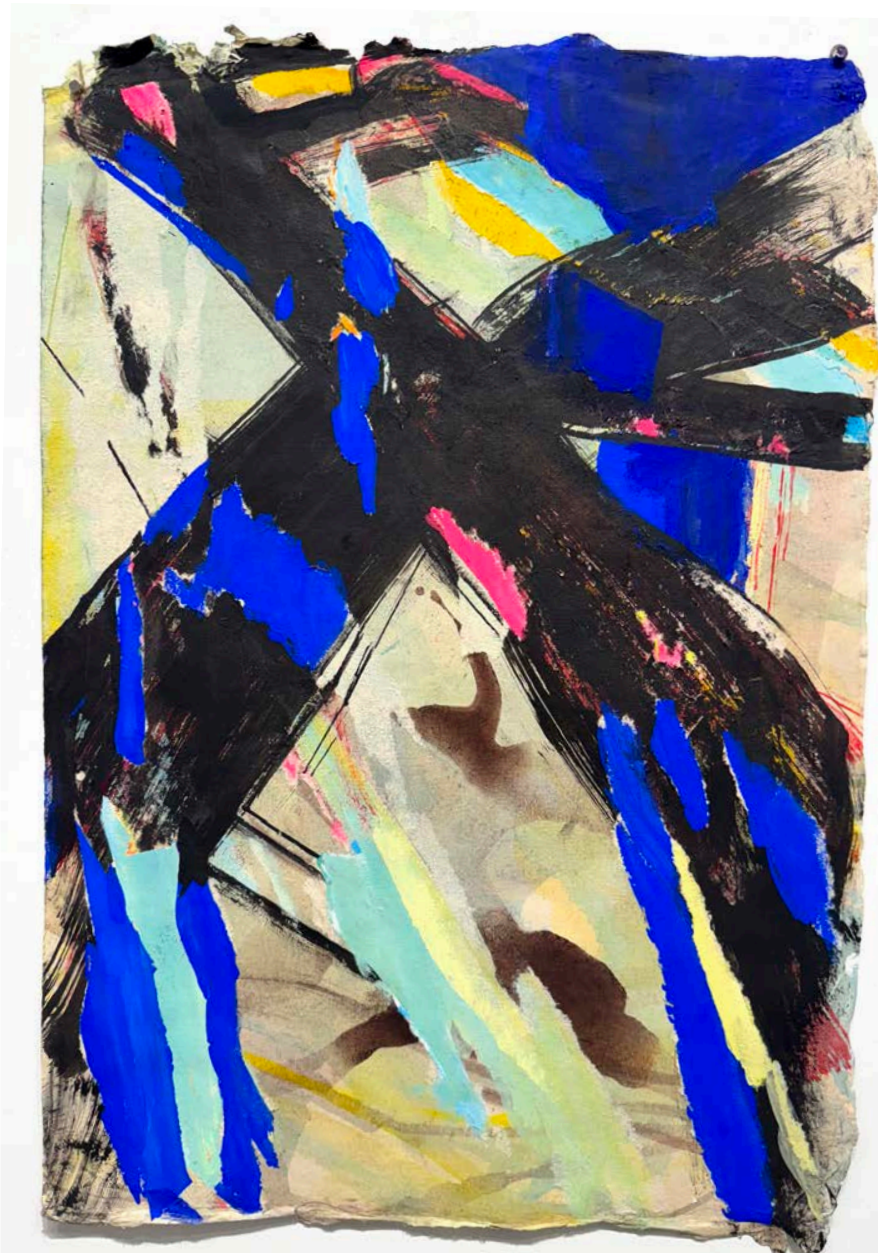




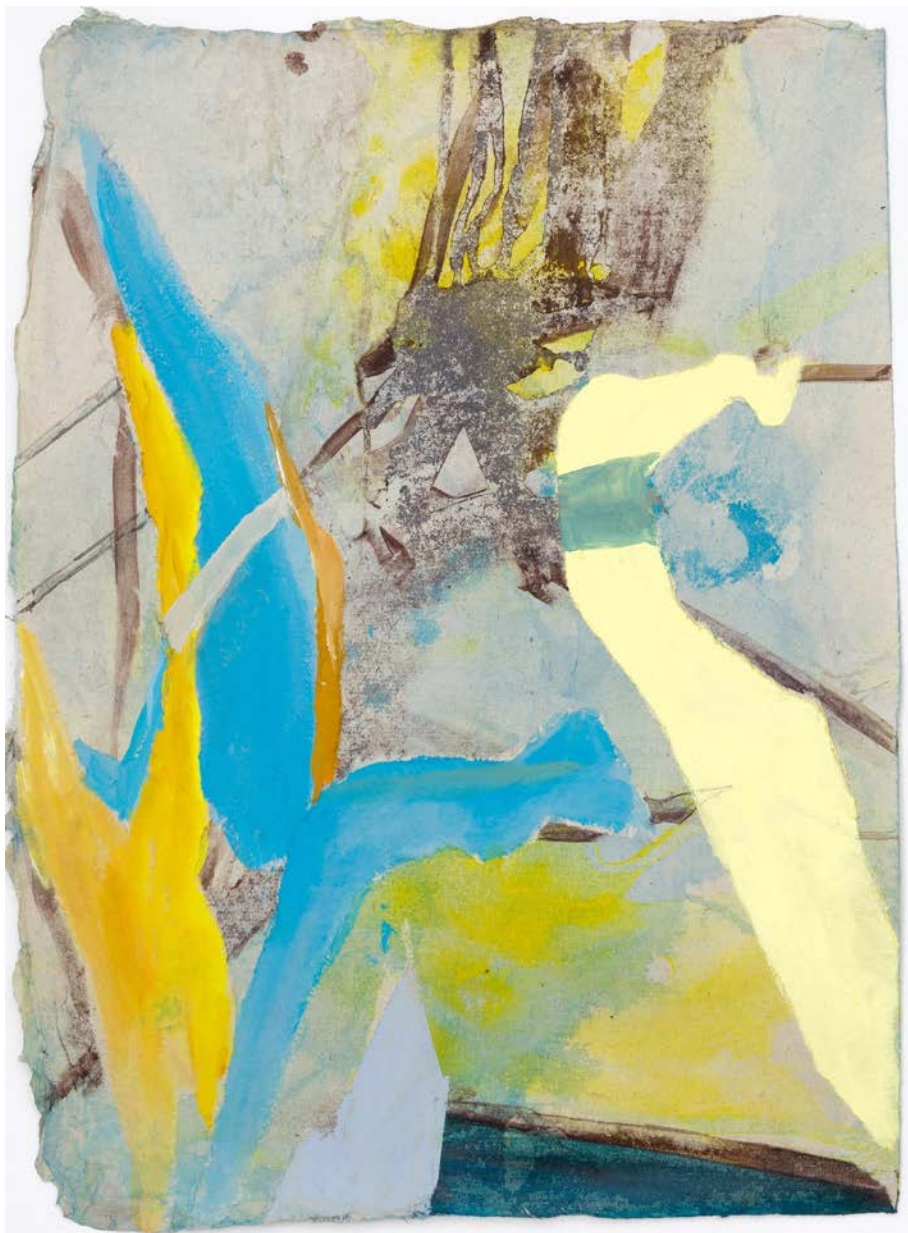
Laura Newman: *Out There*, installation view



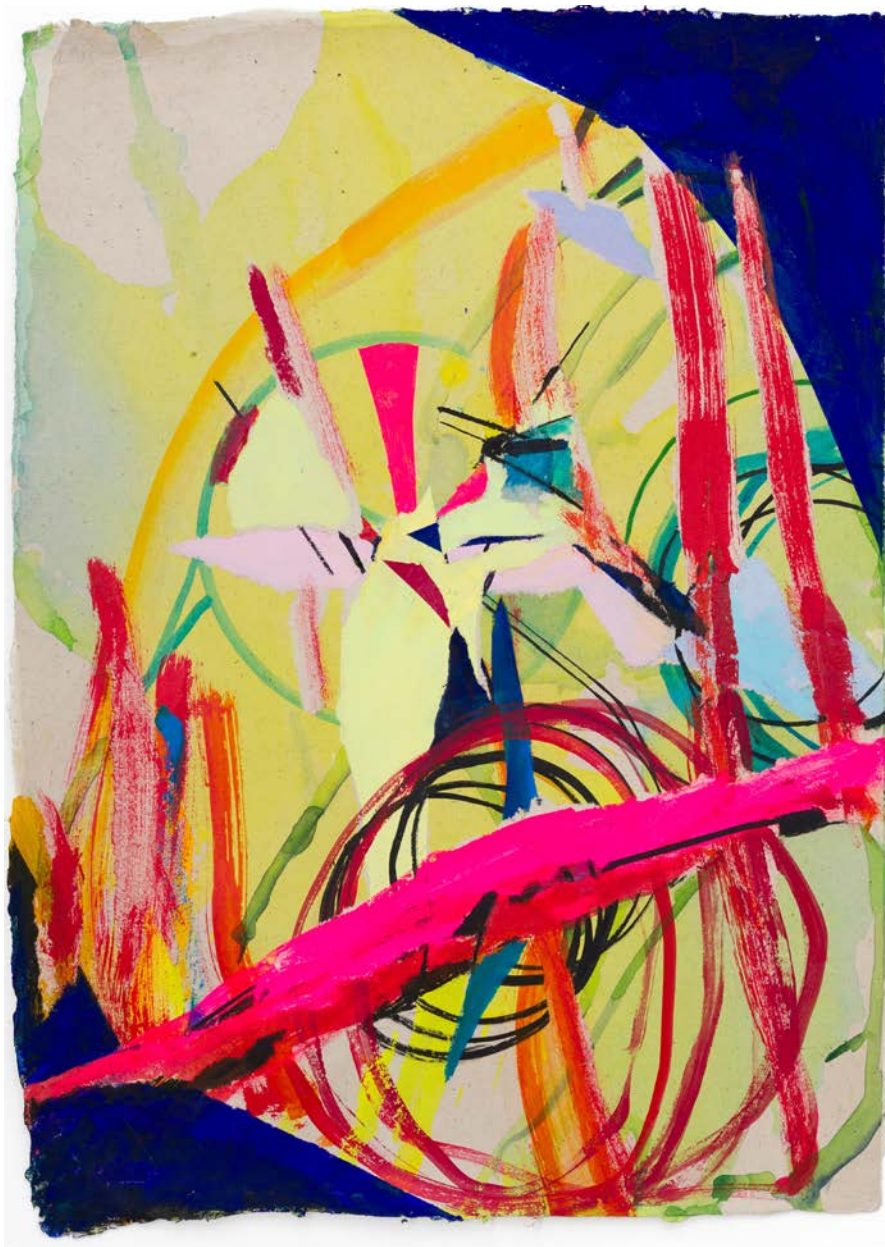
Arcade, 2025, acrylic and ink on wasli paper, 22.5 x 16.5 inches



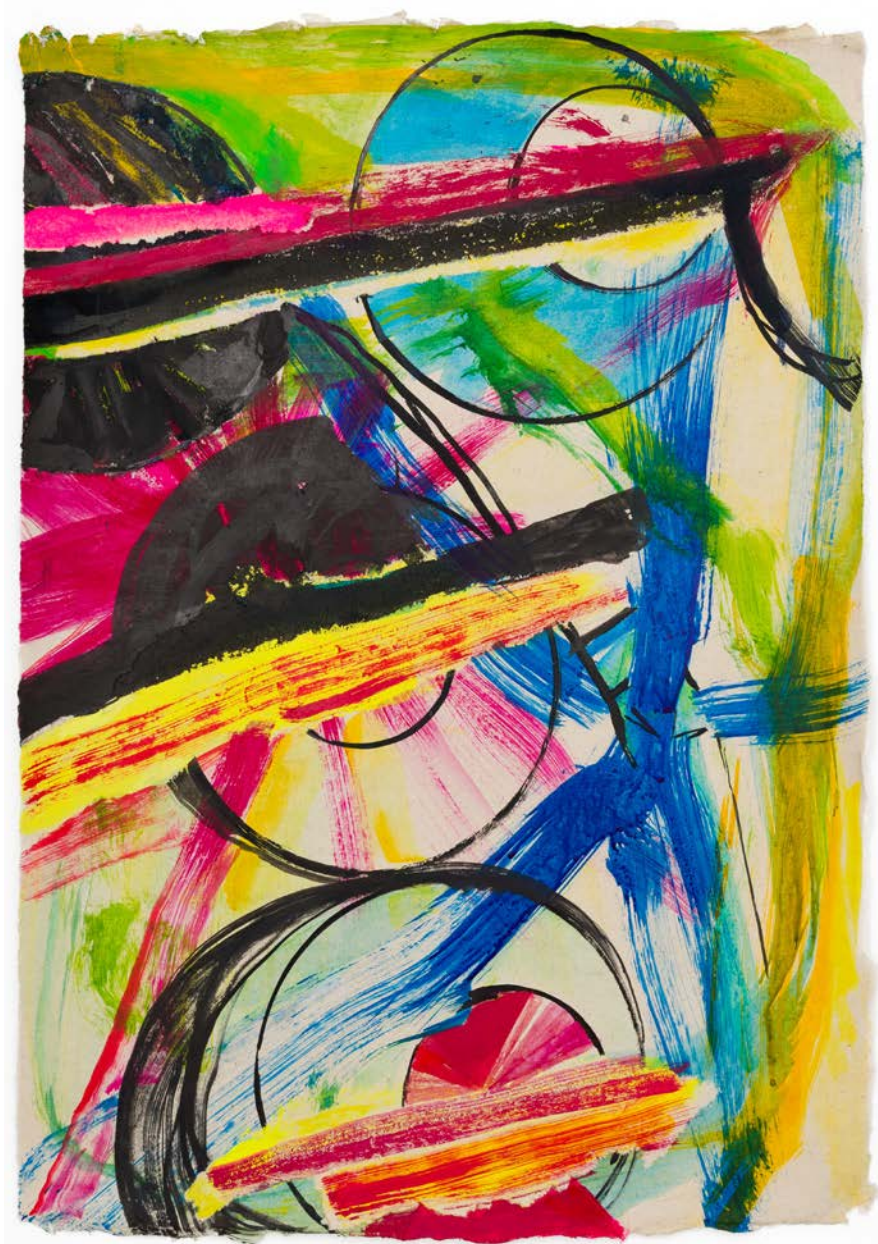
Blue X, 2024, acrylic and ink on wasli paper, 22.5 x 15.5 inches



Blue/Yellow, 2024, acrylic and ink on wasli paper, 22.5 x 16.5 inches

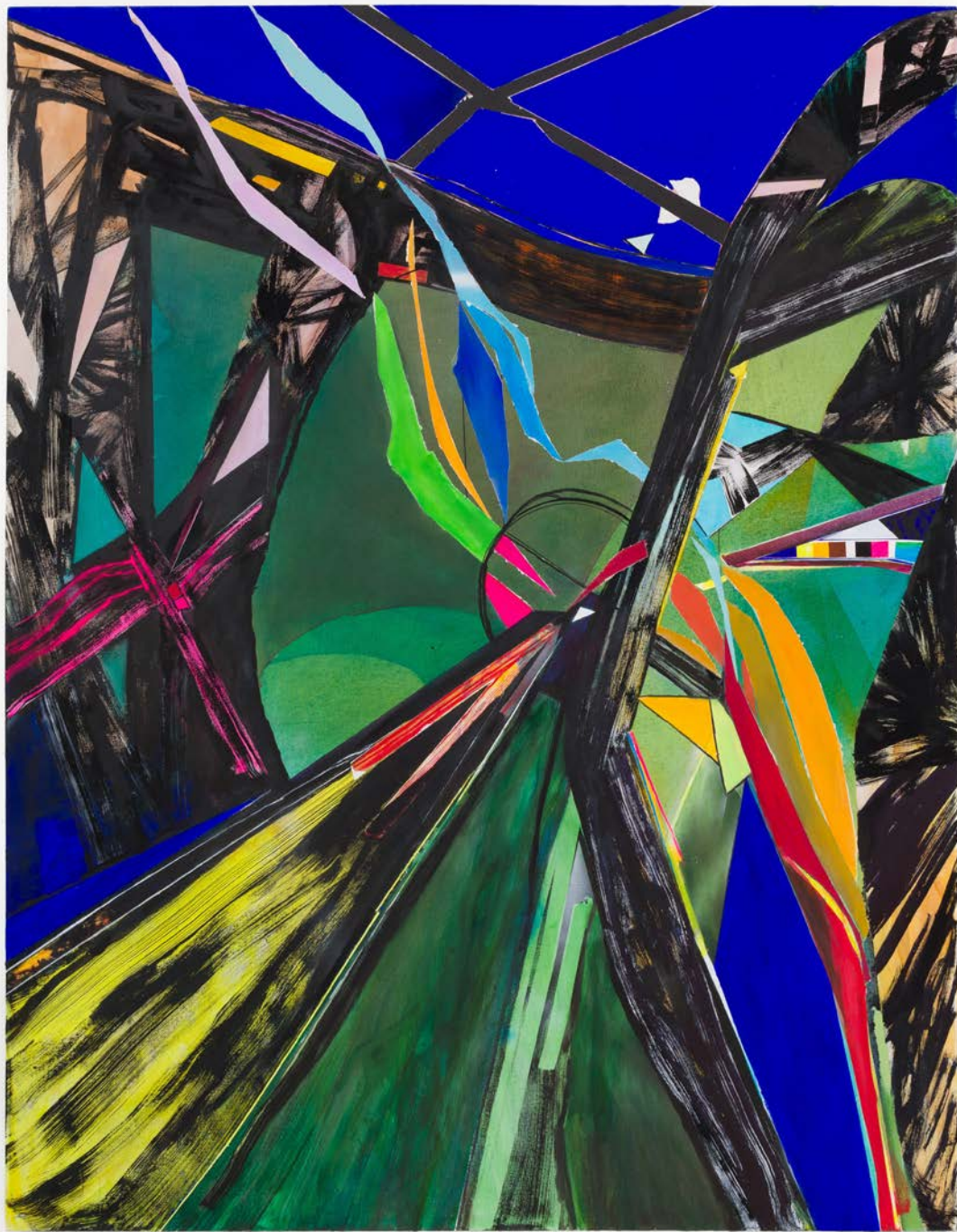


Flowers, 2024, acrylic and ink on wasli paper, 22 x 16 inches



Circles, 2024, acrylic and ink on wasli paper, 22 x 15.5 inches

ADDITIONAL WORKS

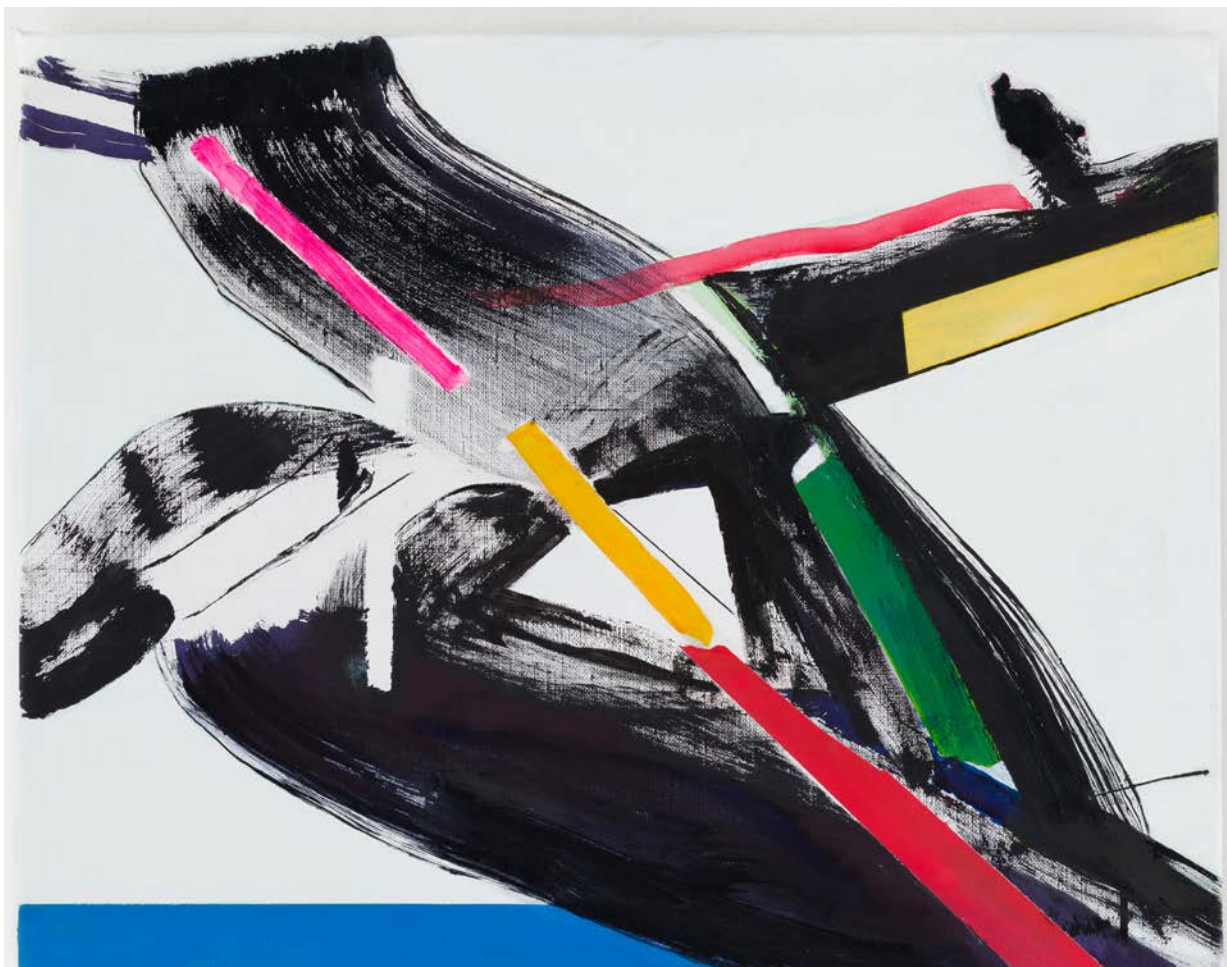




This Page: *Islands*, 2024, acrylic and ink on linen, 13 3/4 x 10 3/4 inches
Facing Page: *Rotor*, 2024 acrylic, ink, flashe, and oil on canvas, 72 x 56 inches



Butterfly, 2024, flashe, acrylic and ink on linen, 16 x 20 inches



Rocker, 2024, acrylic, ink, and oil on canvas, 16 x 22 inches



Orbit, 2025, flashe, acrylic and ink on linen, 22 x 16 inches



Glitter, 2024, acrylic and ink on linen, 12 x 9 inches



Laura Newman is a Brooklyn-based painter who makes improvisational abstract paintings and works on paper. She has been awarded fellowships from major institutions including the Guggenheim, the Rome Prize, the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the New York Foundation on the Arts. Residencies include The MacDowell Colony, Yaddo, The Virginia Center for the Creative Arts and The American Academy in Rome. She has had solo exhibitions at James Fuentes, New York (online), Victoria Munroe Fine Arts, New York, The University of Connecticut, Storrs, and was included in group exhibitions at The American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York, 490 Atlantic Gallery, Brooklyn, Morgan Lehman Gallery, New York (online), Waterhouse and Dodd, New York, and The University of Indiana, Columbus, among many others. Her work has been discussed in The Brooklyn Rail, ArtCritical, The Drawer-Revue de Dessin, Artforum, The New York Times, and Bomb Magazine. Born in Cleveland, Ohio, Newman was educated at Cooper Union, The California Institute of the Arts and The Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. She is a Professor of Art at Vassar College.

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