

foreign & domestic

**Joseph Brock**

***Every Asterism***

September 4 - October 6, 2024

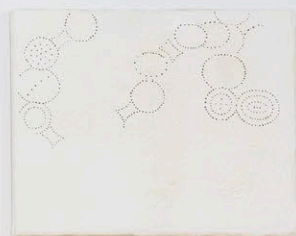
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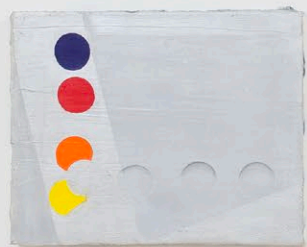




















JOSEPH BROCK  
EVERY ASTERISM  
SEPTEMBER 4-29, 2024

**Joseph Brock**  
**Every Asterism**

September 4 – October 6, 2024  
opening Wednesday September 4, 6-8pm  
24 Rutgers Street, New York, NY 10002

Foreign & Domestic is delighted to announce Joseph Brock's debut solo exhibition, *Every Asterism*, comprising twelve identically sized paintings in a horizontal format and at human scale. Clear acrylic medium is layered and sanded to create a panel-like substrate on canvas. Brock works into these surfaces with acrylic paints, graphite, color pencils and oil, to generate his hybrid and allusive abstractions. Brock's paintings function like windows, screens and mirrors, imbibing, circulating and emanating light.

Asterisms are recognizable patterns of stars, ad hoc visual classifications of the sky into geometric shapes, forming triangles, squares, diamonds, crosses, or a teapot, even. Brock's paintings channel a diverse range of visual influences: science fiction, Byzantine icons, anime, early Renaissance religious painting, devotional sculpture, the electronic miscellany of loading screens and landing pages, and defunct design languages of the recent past such as 'Y2K' or 'Utopian Scholastic'.

Like in music – Joseph Brock is a trained double bassist – each painting is a search for a phrase, a string of information with stable internal logic, to form the basis for future iterations in a relentless exploration of information space. Solving for the path, like machine learning or mycelium, sending out nascent threads and reinforcing the branches that minimize loss or maximize nutrition. Each painting is an algorithm for compressing memories, core, fleeting, or imagined, and storing the information spatially, like microchips, tree rings or star patterns in the night sky.

*Every Asterism* speaks of lineage and generation. Lineage in a musical education, from teacher to teacher to student. The lineages connecting paintings with in a single exhibition, a wider oeuvre, or an entire tradition. The lineage within a family; the boundary between history and the individual, between the pasts and the present.

*Every Asterism* is accompanied by several texts: 'Sunlight hits' by Douglas Ross; an interview of Joseph Brock's parents, Joe and Shawn Brock, by Joseph Brock; 'Gamepaths' by Giacomo Bianchino; and a coda by Joseph Brock. We are most grateful to the writers and interviewees for their contribution.

**About Joseph Brock**

Joseph Brock (b. 1993, Birmingham, Alabama) is a painter and musician based in New York City. Recent group exhibitions include *Analog Diary* (2024), *M. David & Co.* (2024), and *White Columns* (2024). Brock has staged musical performances at *White Columns* (2024), *Sara's* (2023), and *CANADA* (2023), and is a frequent collaborator with CultureHub (La MaMa and the Seoul Institute of the Arts), most notably as a Resident Artist (2020-2021). Joseph Brock received his B.A. in doublebass performance from NYU in 2015.

**About Foreign & Domestic**

Foreign & Domestic is a gallery located on the Lower East Side, opened by Alexander Meurice in July 2022. The gallery opened with the group exhibition *SIGNS*, co-curated with poet and performance artist Peter BD. The gallery has staged solo exhibitions by Ittiah Yoda, Nicholas William Johnson, Egle Jauncems, Joseph "Count Slima" Williams, Greg Carideo and Armando Nin.

Upcoming exhibitions include *Minotaurs*, curated by Harris Rosenblum; and Michael Iveson's first solo exhibition in New York. Foreign & Domestic takes its name from a group exhibition titled 'European, Foreign & Domestic' curated by Alexander Meurice at the Averard Hotel, an ostentatiously derelict west London townhouse turned exhibition space, which he ran from 2016 to 2018.

## **'Sunlight hits — On the occasion of Joseph Brock's exhibition *Every Asterism*' by Douglas Ross**

Your eye color was determined relative to Earth's equator. It's a planetary touch at such a small scale. Our eyes are mostly water and no two pairs are alike, however, we decided there are six eye colors. Years ago, an ophthalmologist let me know that all eyes are brown. More and less melanin, eumelanin, and pheomelanin in your outer iris bounce and scatter light wavelengths for others to see color. Professors of color say it's contextual. Our brains bestow a perception of color that cannot be shared (yet.) We each see color differently. That was still easier to fathom than the lesson - "I love you" means different things to different people. *Bounce, absorb, transmit* are words conveying the interaction between surfaces and light, and how those with the capacity to see receive it.

Joseph Brock's paintings can be bone-dry, then burnished, blended, swiped, sanded, stamped (lightly), gooped on and smoothed out to the limits. Light shines through (and light is sometimes masked). This is as much a light of Sainte-Chapelle stained glass and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* as it is we walked to get a sandwich this afternoon light. Each painting or object celebrates rough edges of the matter they are. Plasticizers and polymers might feel alien, but like everything else we have, they are the planet synthesized. Cosmatesque patterns aren't allegorizing any structure-of-the-universe revelation, of quark and gluon paths, but there is a nucleus here, of something, caught in the terror of stasis, of surveillance, trying to escape the social order. That same nucleus is power in reserve.

I don't know all the ways Joseph's immersion in science fiction TV and movies merges with his non-denominational Christian upbringing. Belief and suspension of disbelief, faith, and alternately, critiques of belief and knowledge as such. Geneses and the unknown, utopia and apocalypse, morality and metaphysical transcendence, and recurring messianic figures... We watched and talked about IMAX-wide science fiction movies and their packaging for a culture. (The packaging can appeal to Joseph for its authority and anachronisms.) Didn't we leave the theater talking about possible worlds we want to make, without technological fetishism? About painting and keeping the sublime modest, almost accidental; there are a lot of names for the Milky Way. Several of these adduce accidents of spilled hay and spilled straw. Cornmeal spilled by a thieving spirit dog is the Cherokee legend or image — "Gi'li'-utsun'stanun'yi" ... "The place where the dog ran."

Refreshing somewhere between 60 and 120 Hz on Joseph's phone lock screen is displayed *The Creation of the World and the Expulsion from Paradise* painted by Giovanni di Paolo di Grazia in 1445. Surrounding terrestrial Earth in the painting, concentric circles portray our universe with precision describing the unity of nature as a slick transcendental machine. God, gliding down from above, gives motive force to a deep blue ring suspending gravityless and organized clumps of primordial mud. A biblical garden and its cast members roll out to the right of that orb, reducing it to a sort of picture-in-picture detail. Today, we see this panel through craquelure that's like a grid of lightning. We saw it together at the Met. The Di Grazia panel was once part of a large altarpiece, and considering many paintings of Joseph's, he has a proclivity towards its scale, though we know that scale is decided as much by historical stimuli and an artist's body as it is by practicality and economics.

Beyond this extraordinary religious pic, I and others online know Joseph to circulate reproductions of paintings, prints, and material fragments from what's now called the Middle Ages, and through the proto-Renaissance, also with intermittent image-forms from ancient West, East, and Southeast Asia, all with religious or spiritual functions. Above all, each image signals Joseph's identification of a proportion — in a figure, in an ornament, in negative spaces — proportions and forms that tend toward equilibrium but never presume it will be achieved. Fewer are the dated yet impossible-to-date interior design and fashion found photos that Joseph shares. In contrast to these archeologic, archival obsessions, there are Joseph's occasional video reposts embodying an immediate now of Black people's lives in America, just as selectively cropped, but by temperament.

I feel Da Vinci wasn't wrong that painting is a science, or at least in the sense that Breaking is a sport. What happens when you break the world into a five-part poem, laterally, inwards, outwards? The five visible sides and n-dimensions of a painting move or rest in concert, hanging in spaces holding us too. What is more culturally reified and codified than painting, and paintings in the West? The assumed linear history of arrangements and formats, figures, perspectives, grounds, appropriations, supports (substrates, as people say,) frame, picture plane, petroleum, plants, and pigments, and out of this a frequent demand that the object metacritically questions its reason for being, to be what it is and against what it is at the same time. Nevertheless, there is inspiration. A quiet seriousness of pleasure and permission.

## Interview with Joe and Shawn Brock, by Joseph Brock

### Joseph

Where are you both from and where were your parents born?

### Shawn

I was born in Birmingham, Alabama as one of eight but my parents were born in Fayette, Alabama a small town in northwest Alabama. Growing up we referred to it as the country.

### Joseph

You know I remember that big willow tree next to the house and I remember Grandpa and the Easter egg hunting.

### Joe

I was born in Birmingham too and was raised by my non-blood "grandmother", Mary who had also taken my biological mother in and raised her. Mary, who I always called Mom, was a savvy restaurant business owner with a huge heart and a generous spirit. She literally gave away as much as she sold.

### Joseph

Do you have any memories of images or art or visual culture?

### Joe

The Last Supper of Christ– It hung in just about all churches. Many times they had it painted on the back walls of the church. Even the images of Christ that hung, some figures were black some were da Vinci like. It was my first concept of understanding what art was.

### Shawn

I think mine is the same however, you know, they actually put the picture of the Last Supper of Christ in Bibles. It would almost always be on the second page. Another that stood out to me was the picture of the crucifixion– Christ on the center cross, the thief on one side, and the murderer on the other. So there's three crosses, his [Christ's] cross is always higher out of the ground and his head hung down with the crown of thorns on his head. His hands are pierced in the center, his feet always crossed just a little bit, with the nail through both feet.

### Joseph

Why do you think that had such an imprint on you as a kid?

### Shawn

Oh my, because the one primary and faithful thing that my family always did when growing up was go to church, so I would always see that picture. It was something I saw week after week after week.

### Joe

When I would visit churches, I remember losing my attention looking at stained glass windows, wondering. They were pretty and they were odd but a little spooky to me as a child. You look at them but you can't see out of them. Sometimes they would have artwork in them, like Jesus as a shepherd with a shepherd's rod. They had visual content. It was an art that I was not aware was an art as a child.

### Joseph

That's very interesting. It seems like what was spooky was kind of like this thing that was beautiful to you also seemed to obscure in some way. It's providing something that's containing your attention and not letting you perceive through it.

### Joe

I'm looking at the other windows and I can see through with clarity. So, what are these there for? I could recognize the beauty of the colors, but it wasn't– they're not practical. It didn't make sense. And so, I'm wondering why they got this in church?

### Shawn

I loved the stained glass, whether it had images, like you were saying of Christ with the rod and the sheep, or not, if it was just abstract. The sun would shine through and it would make colors inside the building. What I remember from a young girl was clothing patterns. My mom was a seamstress and I really love that she made our clothes and her clothes. In high school, I started making my own clothes. But, you know, on the front of the pattern there was a color image of what the clothing would be. The most beautiful thing was making a garment, picking out the material, taking your time to sew and piece together a garment that resembled the image that was on that outside pattern through process, through time, and through effort. I love that process of transformation! I especially loved picking out the material. I don't have to have it red because it's red on the outside of that pattern. What color do I like?

## 'Gamepaths' by Giacomo Bianchino

I turned off the path and belted down through the scrub, hoping by some short-cut to come out again near the carpark. The bush thickened, and after five minutes of running I lost the path. I stopped to look around. Had I followed a gamepath? Or was I here because someone wanted me to be? I looked again.

Freud walked three times to the same street. Afraid of the attention he was arousing, but more afraid of this involuntary return, he walked back to the Piazza.

Walkers in the Black Forest often find themselves lost, having followed what they mistook for ways to pass through. The trails are *Holzwege*, hewn by the woodcutters as they gather their lumber. If there is a reason here, it's not the one that you came looking for.

Ulysses never came back to Ithaca, but kept going beyond the fingers of Hercules, after years of circling his home. Dante met him in hell.

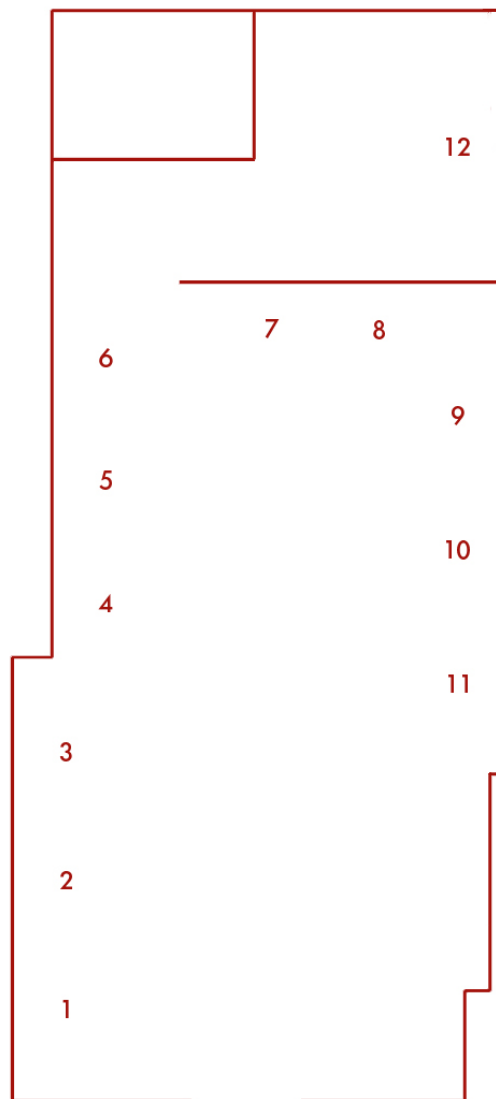
Three bullfighters stand in a ring. One is still; one holds out his goading cloth; the third tries to climb the fence. Below them and between them, the bull; but only its back and lowered horns.

The frame cuts into things. Sometimes they bleed. Sometimes you follow the line and find points. Sometimes you must look again.

## Coda by Joseph Brock

In high school and college, I became preoccupied with the idea of lineage. My bass teachers—one in Alabama, the other in New York—each had their own methods, yet both traced their instructors back to the 19th-century Frenchman, Édouard Nanny. I would download Nanny's scores online, mine by some unwritten law of inheritance. I haven't looked much further back than my great-great musical grandpa. I'm content with my own mythology of his time at the Paris Conservatory and the musicians who followed, each thread more tangible as it nears my own.

Recently, the scent of my father's Fahrenheit cologne in the car brought back memories of the countless hours spent in transit to my bass lessons. Harder to trace are the cultural vapors that float around my childhood. Why does UK drum and bass, a genre unfamiliar to me, conjure up such strong memories of growing up a black southern kid in the early 2000s? Is the young brain a sponge to such things? There's a certain ecstasy in capturing fleeting moments of understanding and in speculating on that original unconscious imprint. This tracing is a tool to map future threadways and fictional histories. It's no wonder fantasy is my favorite pastime. There's a use to all this.



1. *Platformer (S.1)*, 2024, acrylic on canvas, 16 x 20 in.

2. *Whavbe (S.1)*, 2024, acrylic, color pencil, and oil pastel on canvas, 16 x 20 in.

3. *Kearsten (S.1)*, 2023, acrylic and oil on canvas, 16 x 20 in.

4. *Outer Virgulas (S.1)*, 2024, acrylic, crayon, and color pencil on canvas, 16 x 20 in.

5. *Gallnut Mini (S.1)*, 2024, acrylic, crayon, colored pencil, graphite, oil pastel and oil on canvas, 16 x 20 in.

6. *Fravbe (S.1)*, 2023-24, acrylic, crayon, graphite, and oil pastel on canvas, 16 x 20 in.

7. *Teenage Troubles (S.1)*, 2024, acrylic and graphite on canvas, 16 x 20 in.

8. *Firmament (S.1)*, 2023, acrylic and oil on canvas, 16 x 20 in.

9. *Kamehameha (S.1)*, 2024, acrylic, graphite, and crayon on canvas, 16 x 20 in.

10. *S.T.i.G (S.1)*, 2024, acrylic, crayon, graphite, and oil pastel on canvas, 16 x 20 in.

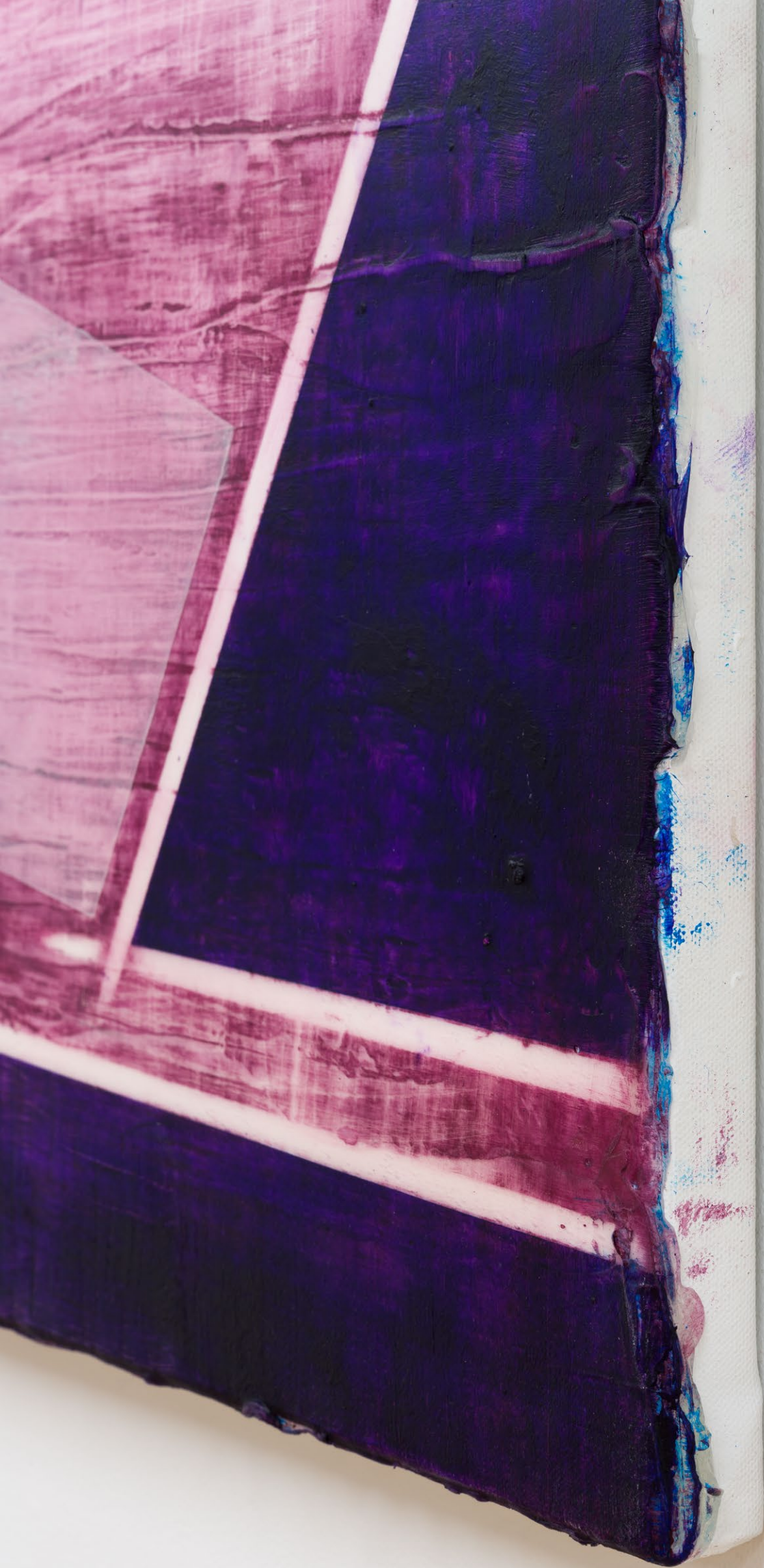
11. *Kemble's Cascade (S.1)*, 2024, acrylic, crayon, and color pencil on canvas, 16 x 20 in.

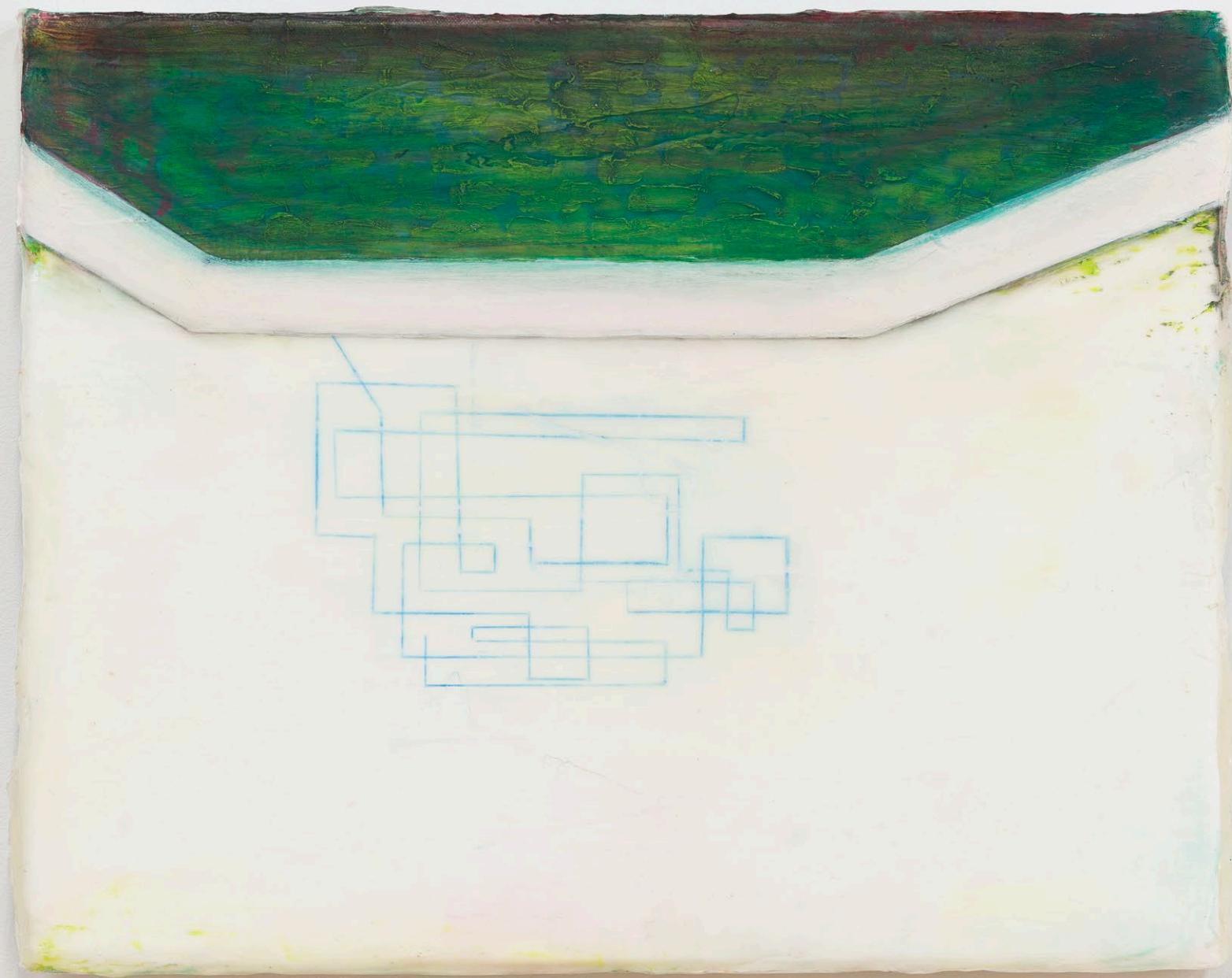
12. *Prophetic Encounters (S.1)*, 2024, acrylic, oil, charcoal, and tape on canvas, 16 x 20 in.

catalogue of works



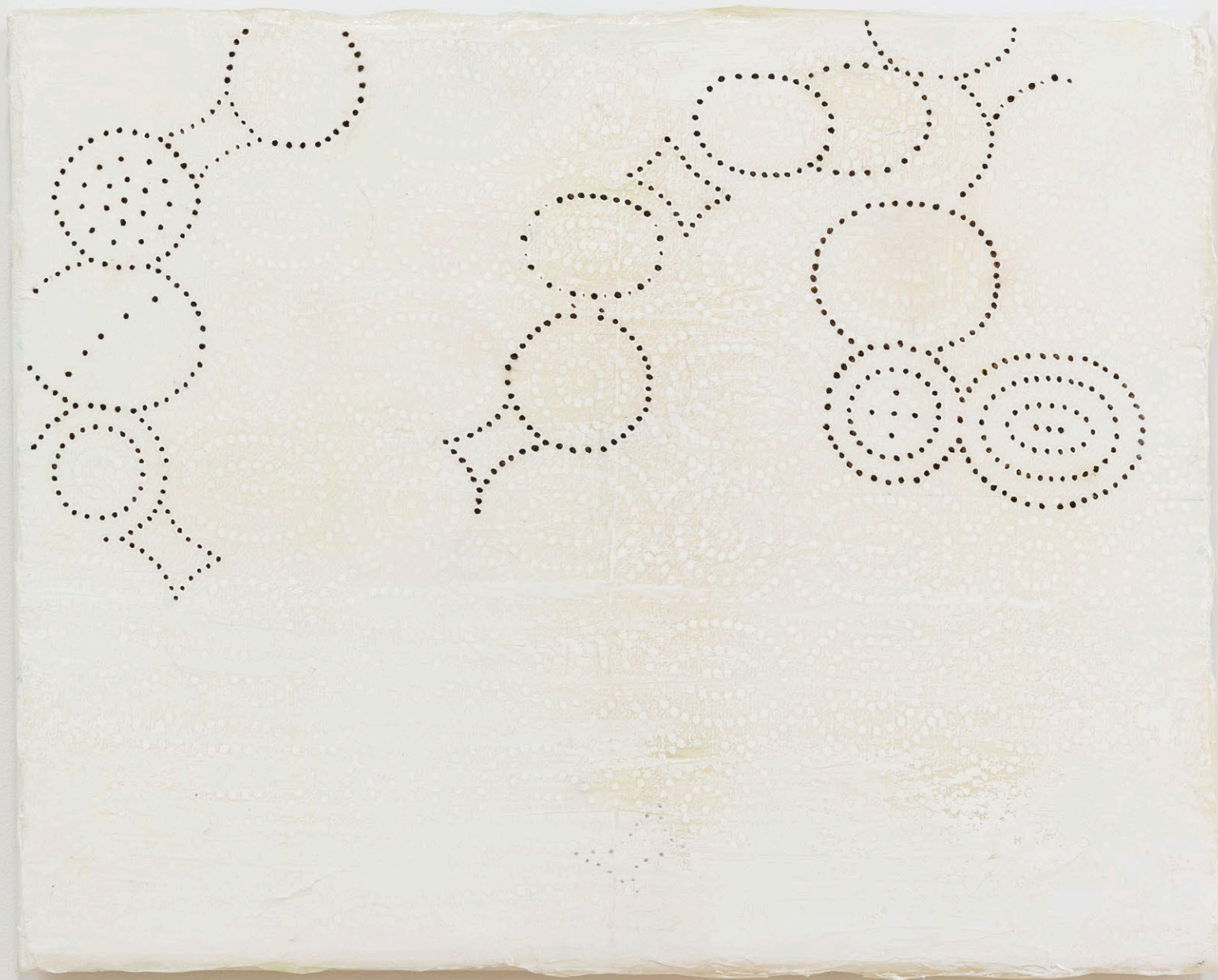
**Joseph Brock,**  
*Platformer (S.1)*



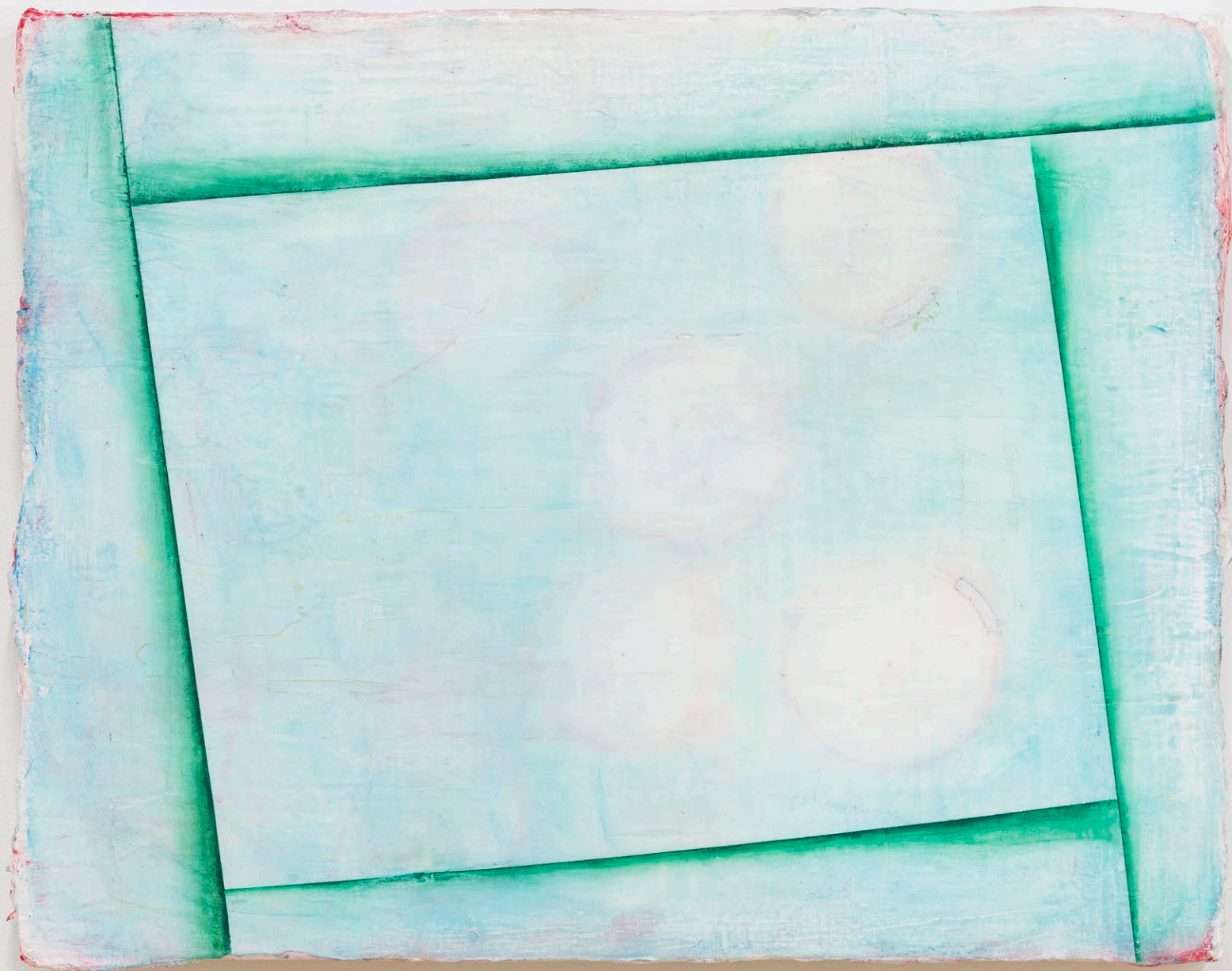


**Joseph Brock**  
*Whavbe (S.1)*



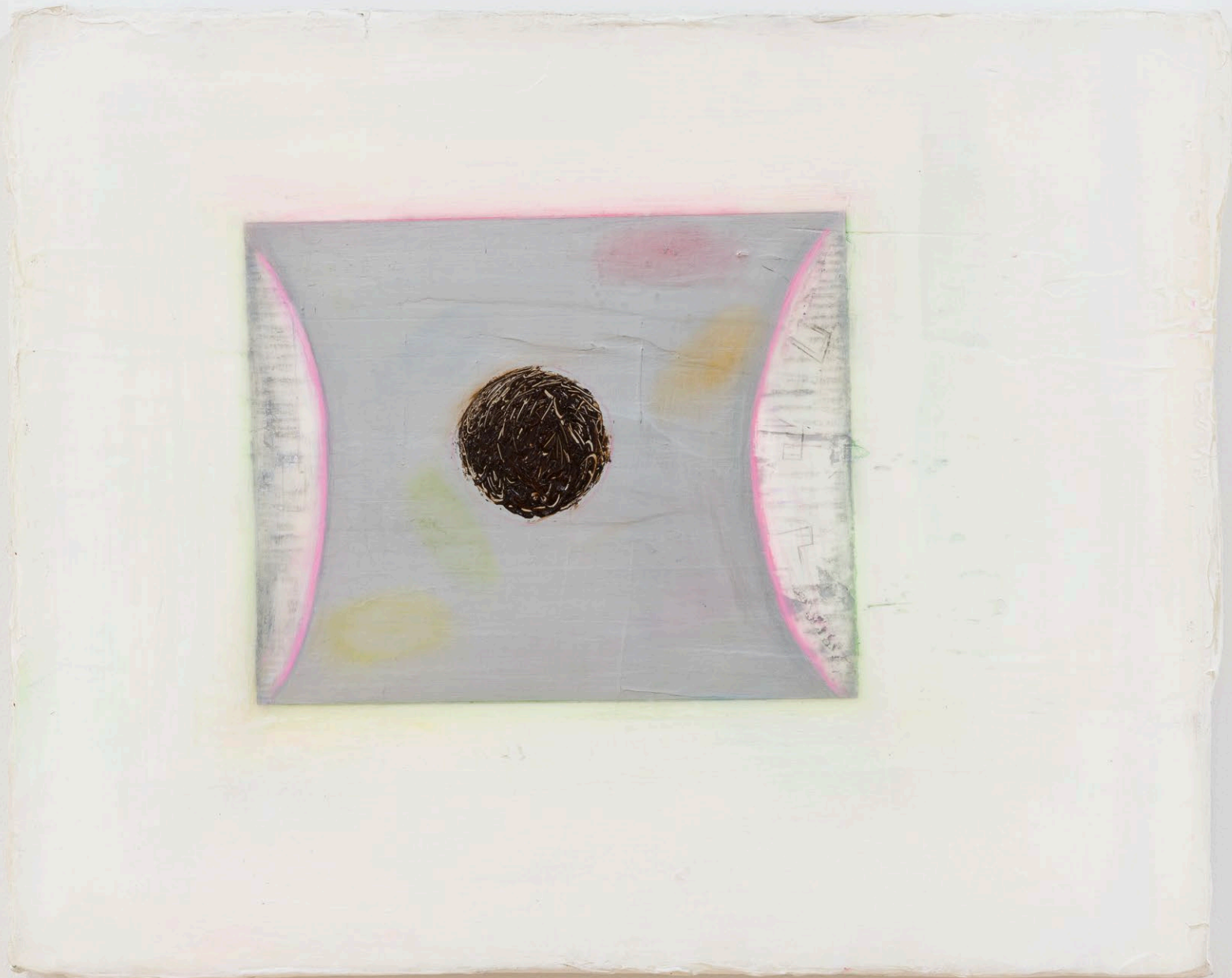






**Joseph Brock**  
*Outer Virgulas (S.1)*





**Joseph Brock**  
*Gallnut Mini (S.1)*







**Joseph Brock**  
*Fravbe (S.1)*





**Joseph Brock**  
*Teenage Troubles (S.1)*

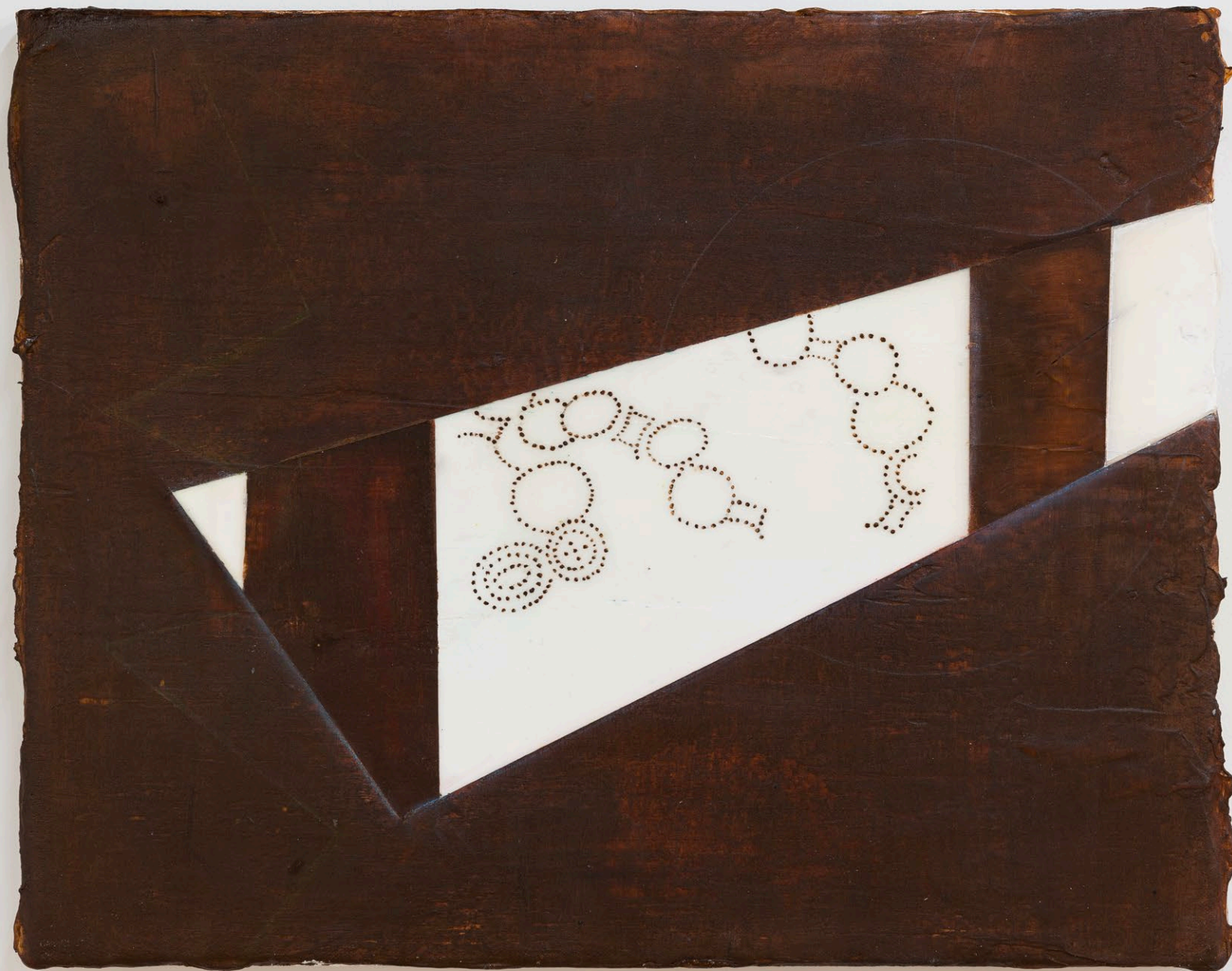




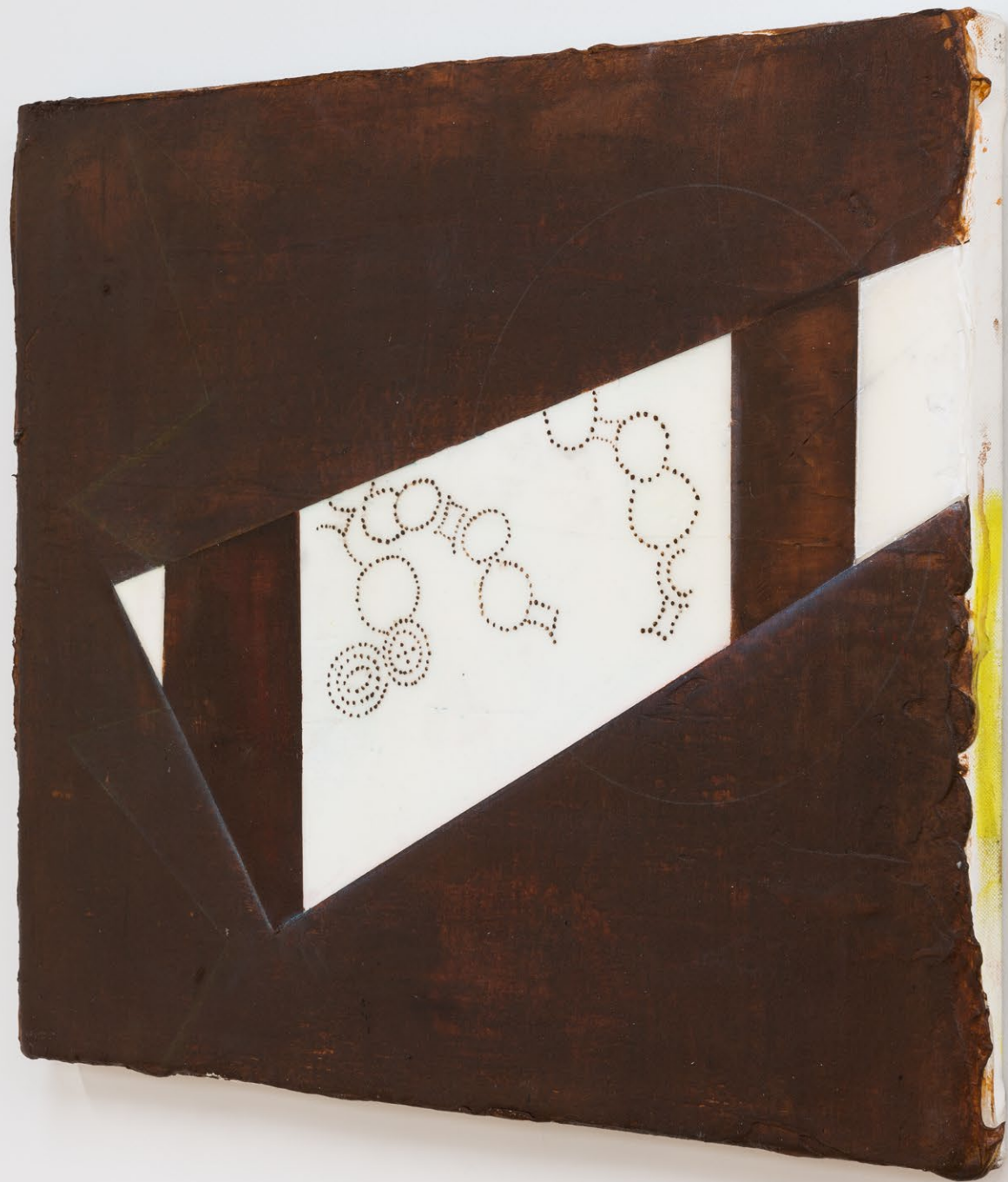


**Joseph Brock**  
*Firmament (S. 1)*

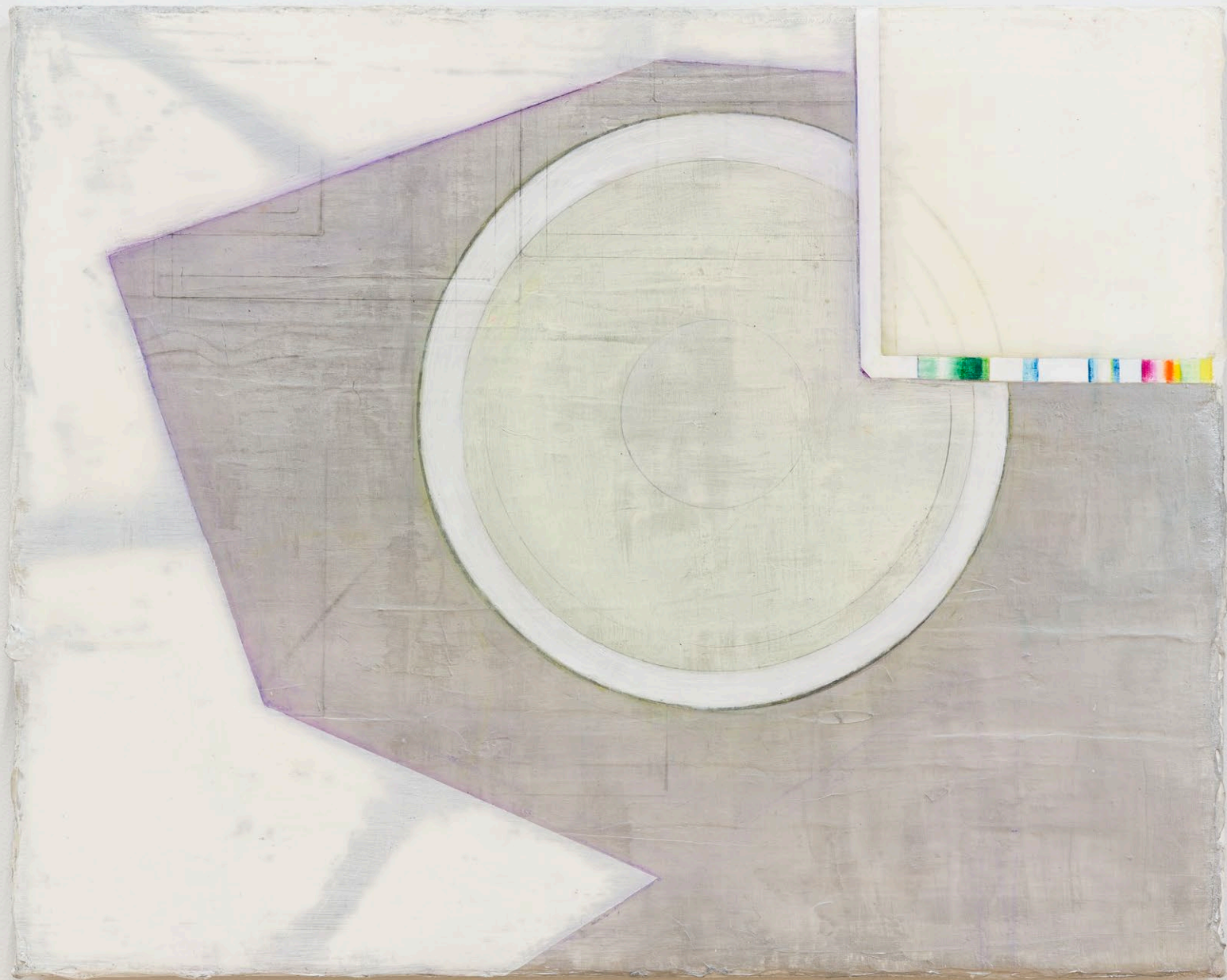




**Joseph Brock**  
*Kamehameha (S.1)*







**Joseph Brock**  
*S.T.i.G (S.1)*





**Joseph Brock**  
*Kemble's Cascade (S.1)*





**Joseph Brock**  
*Prophetic Encounters (S.1)*





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24 Rutgers Street, New York, NY 10002, USA  
info@foreigndomestic.io // +1 (929) 426-4978 // @foreigndomestic // www.foreigndomestic.io