

Alan Gouk

A retrospective, part one 1973-1989

*A special exhibition of select paintings spanning the earlier
part of the artist's career*

4 November – 2 December 2017

Felix & Spear, 71 St Mary's Road, Ealing, London W5 5RG

Tues-Fri 10.30-18.00 Sat 11.00-15.00

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Statement

"Although I had experimented freely with oils and acrylics in the late 1960s, my first characteristic paintings of the early 70s were in acrylics. Pomegranate Burst 1973-74 was a response to my first visit to New York in 1972, and marked a shift towards Hans Hofmann as a major influence. The attempt to invest acrylics with some of the tactile qualities of oil paint continued through the late 70s, with In The Wake Of the Plough, 1979, a nod to Hofmann's In The Wake of the Hurricane (Berkeley, California). Quercus marks a decisive shift to oils, and a hands-on way of building a painting that involves adjusting and readjusting of colour towards surface unity through the paint. My creative juices have always responded to the mixing and modelling of paint before anything else, before colour, before drawing (as one paints one draws). The form that takes shape is a semi-involuntary response to the interaction of colour with surface and the overall proportions of the support.



Across the Irish Sea, 1987, 86 x 150 cm, oil on canvas

I have no representational thoughts in mind as I work, but just as Mussorgsky was inspired by the drawings of his friend Haartmann to imagine a sound world in parallel without resorting to description (for the most part), in his Pictures From an Exhibition, so abstract painting can take inspiration from many sources without resorting to depiction, narrative or overt reference. Any kind of rhythmic movement of the brush or arm will carry mimetic connotations, like it or not. There is no use fighting it. Better to give it free rein. But this does not mean that we should acquiesce



Bougainvillea-Sitges, 1989-90, 96 x 300 cm, oil on linen

to overt or disguised figuration. Bougainvillea-Sitges 1989 is a response to a visit to that town, when we ran out of money, had to sleep on the beach, and Pat had her passport stolen. We were offered succour by a generous Hostal owner across the tracks from the railway station, and eventually bunked a ride on an early morning train to Barcelona, and the help of the British Ambassador. It was painted in one continuous afternoon session over some earlier underpainting. Is any of this history evident in the final result? Of course not! Just as "absolute" music is an unattainable ideal (perhaps Bach's The Art of Fugue is a rare exception, or one of Milton Babbitt's mathematical constructs), so in painting total Abstraction is a will-o-the wisp

ideal that reduces rather than enhances its potential. What one wants is clarity with abundance, "clear, demarcated, out there, resistant to the eye" (Adrian Stokes)."

Alan Gouk, 2017

ABOUT ALAN GOUK

Alan Gouk was born in Belfast in 1939 and studied architecture in Glasgow and London and then psychology and philosophy at Edinburgh University. From 1964 to 1967 he worked as an exhibitions officer at the British Council, helping to organise the British exhibition at the 1966 Venice Biennale, and making contact with many prominent artists of the time, notably Anthony Caro. In 1967 Gouk was a prize-winner at the John Moores Liverpool exhibition, and he also began at this time a long and inspirational teaching in the Sculpture Department of St. Martin's School of Art.

In the early Seventies, Gouk's work was included in shows at the Hayward Gallery, London, and the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, before being instrumental in establishing the painting and sculpture annual exhibitions at Stockwell Depot. He participated in "Four Abstract Painters" at the Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh in 1977, and had an important show at the Woodlands Gallery, Greenwich (with Geoff Ridgen) in 1982, but had to wait until 1987 for his first solo show in London, at Smith's Gallery. Also in 1987, Patrick Heron chose Gouk for "Artist for the Day" at Angela Flowers Gallery, and Gouk subsequently had solo shows at Flowers East in 1995, 1997, and 2001. He also had solo London shows at Sandra Higgins Fine Art in 1990, and at East/West Gallery in 1994 and 2002. In 2002 Gouk was again a prize-winner at the John Moores Liverpool exhibition.

Throughout his career Gouk has written extensively about art and has been published widely. His painting is in numerous collections including the Tate Gallery, London; the Arts Council; the Scottish Arts Council; and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.



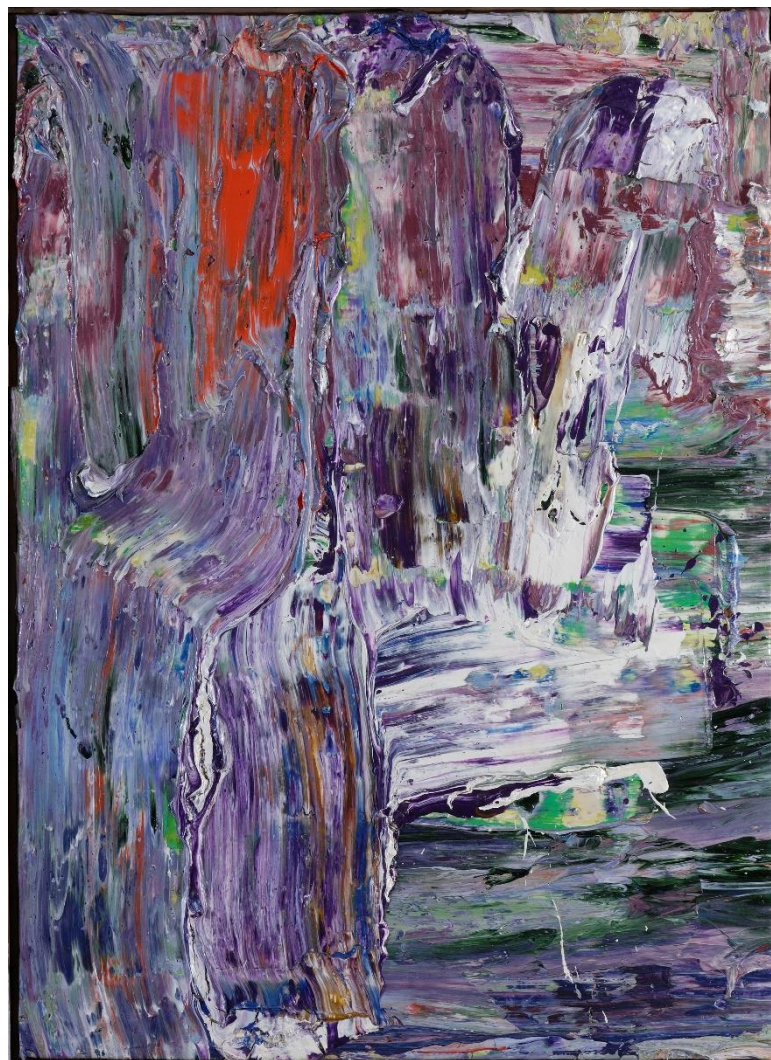
Quercus, 1981

Oil on flax, 71 x 152 cm



Bougainvillea-Sitges, 1989-90

Oil on linen, 96 x 300 cm



In the Wake of the Plough, 1979
Acrylic on cotton duck, 175 x 124 cm



The Lamp, 1982-83
Oil on flax, 91.5 x 249 cm



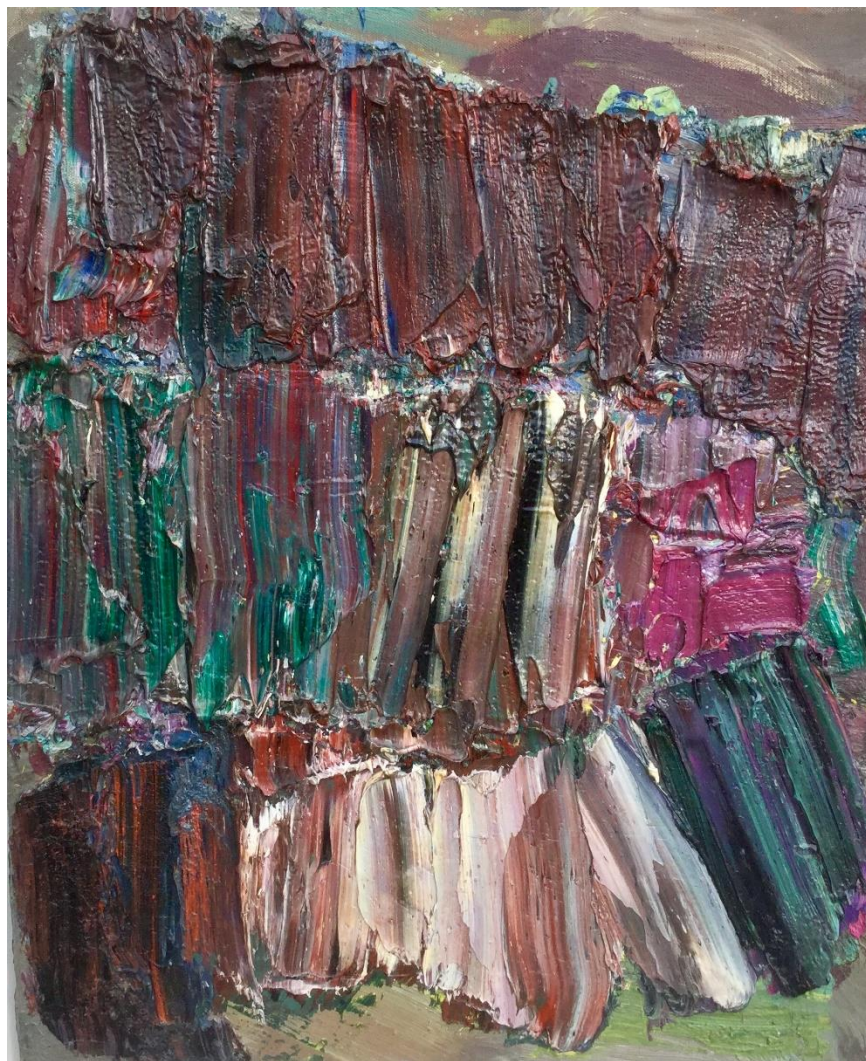
Copper Canyon, 1987

Oil and acrylic on canvas, 76 x 112 cm



Mize's Surprise, 1987

Oil on board, 51 x 73 cm

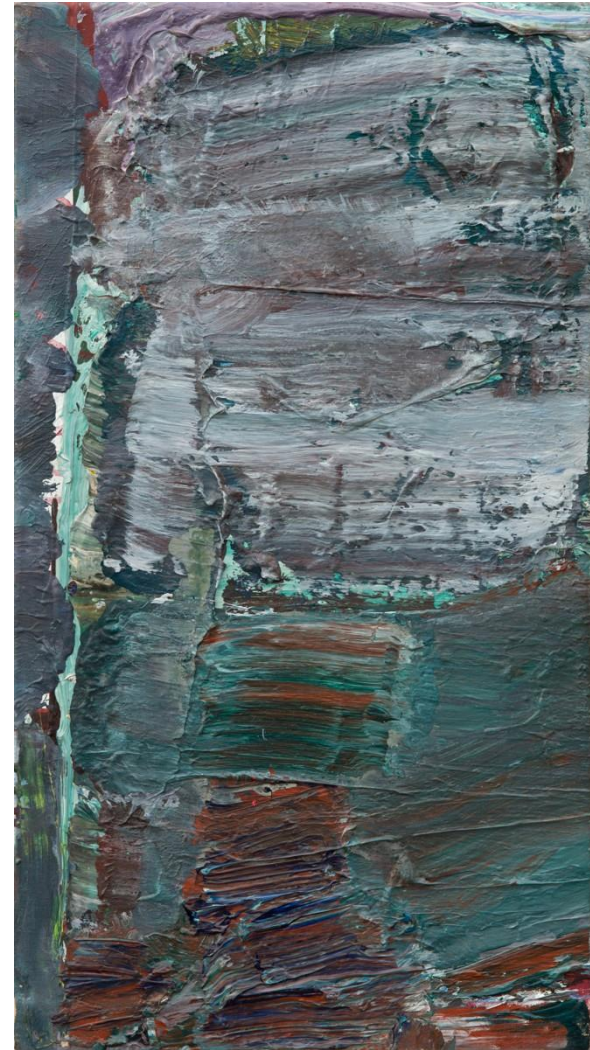


Coal Hower, 1981

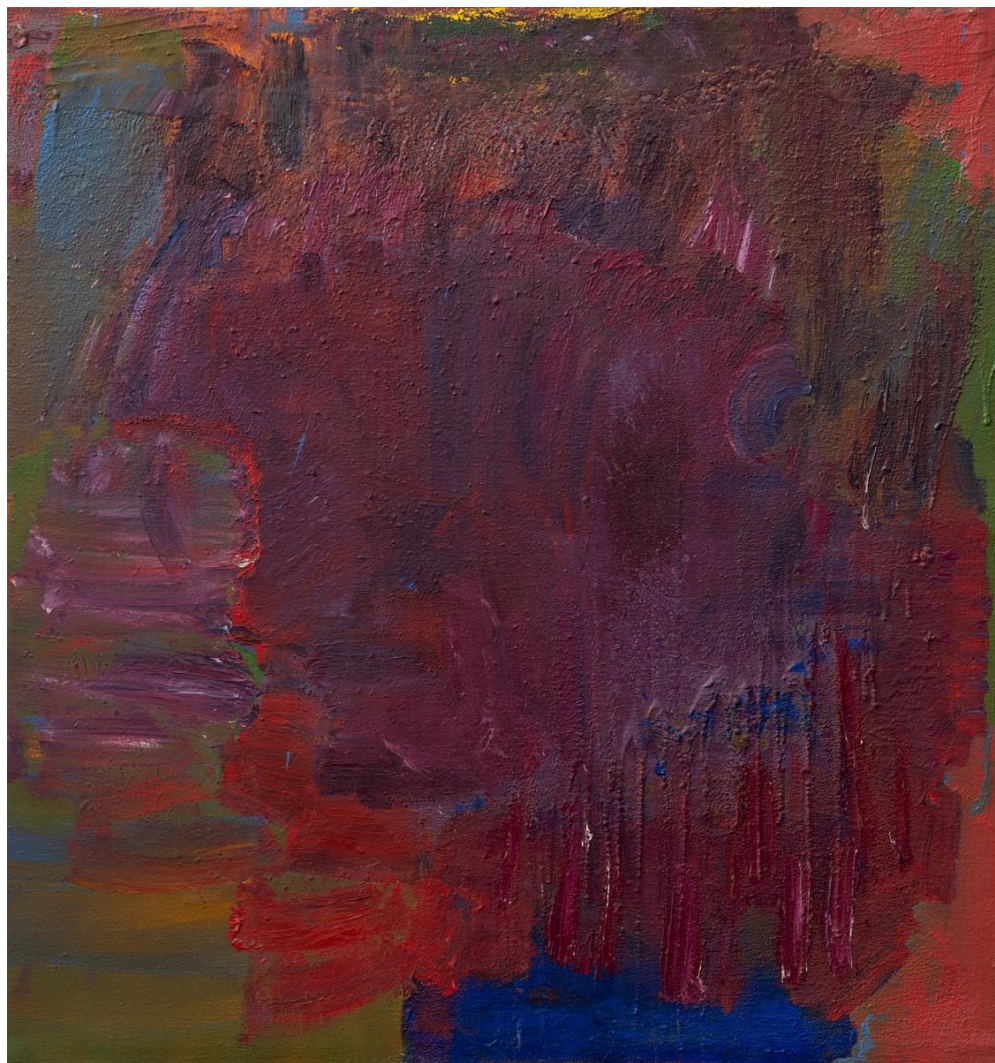
Oil on canvas, 61 x 51 cm



Nightjar Footprints, 1989
Oil on canvas, 148 x 56 cm

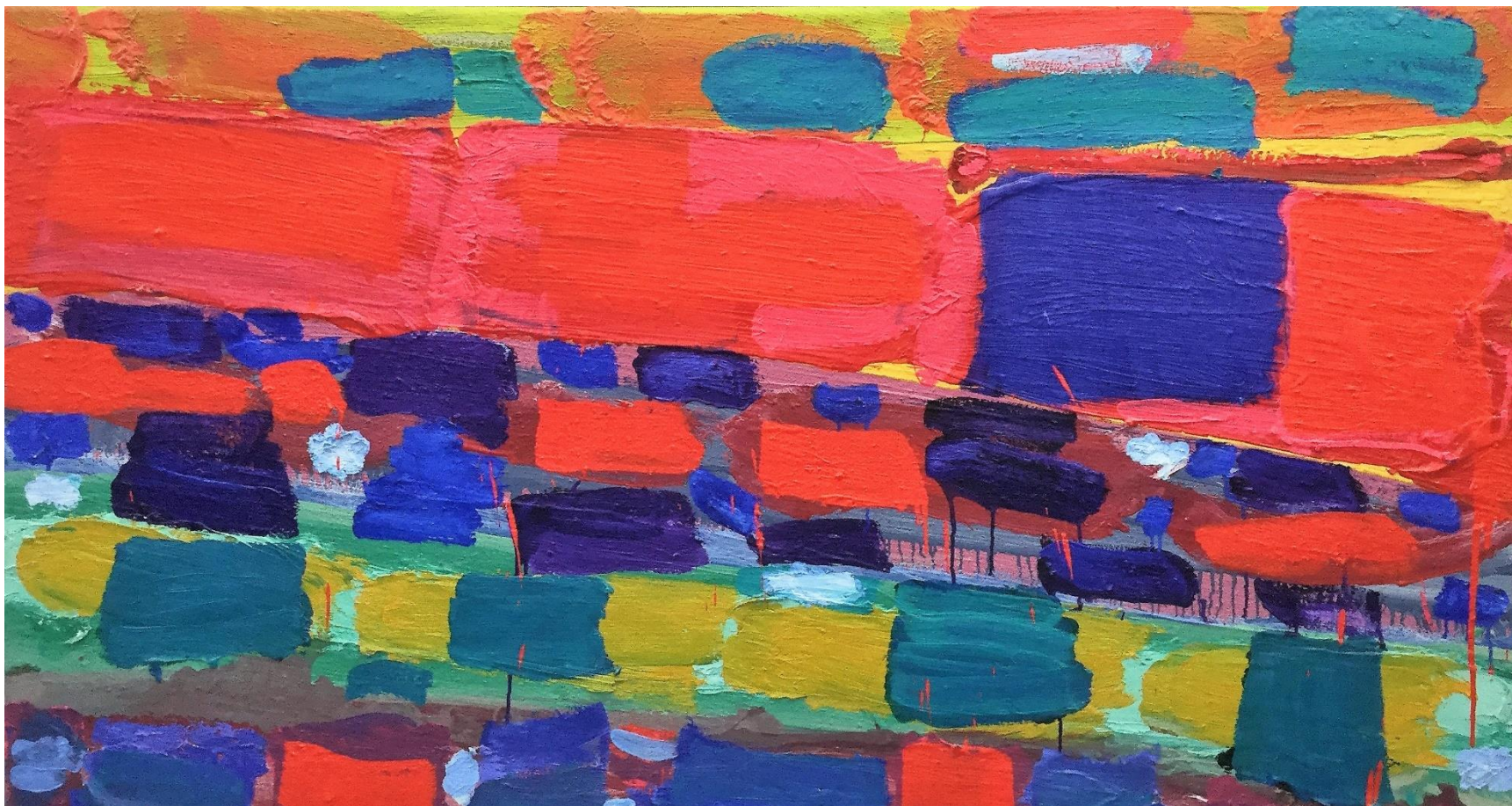


Keel Haul, 1981
Acrylic on canvas, 98 x 54 cm



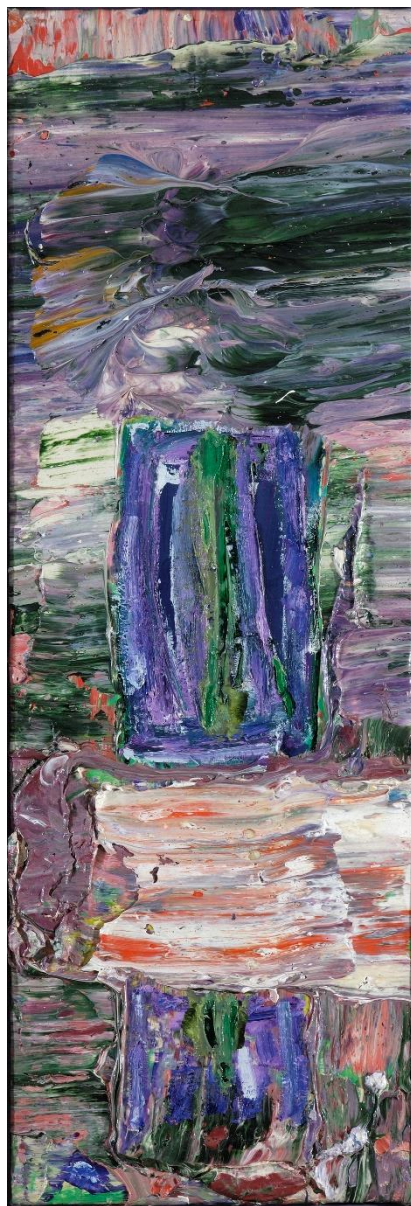
Pomegranate Burst, 1973-74

Acrylic on flax, 172 x 162 cm



Across the Irish Sea, 1987

Oil on canvas, 86 x 150 cm

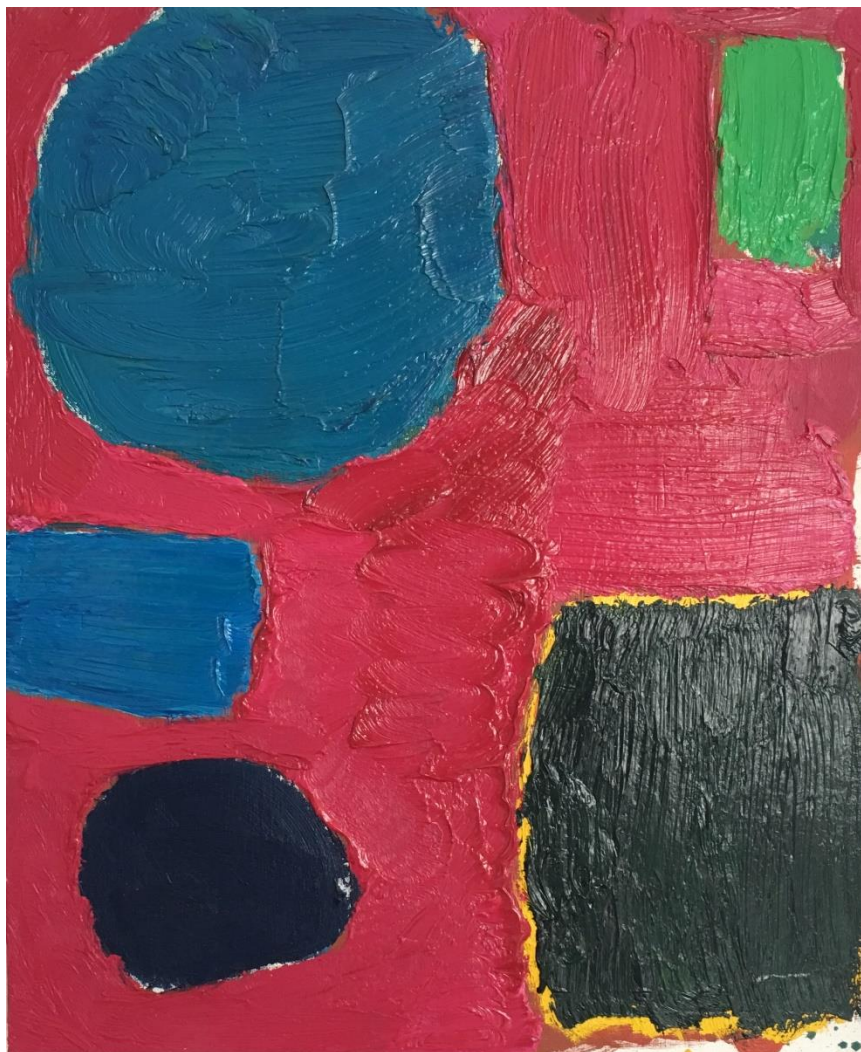


Pigskin Pushover, 1979
Acrylic on cotton duck, 178 x 56 cm



Seed Pod, 1988

Oil on board., 76 x 63 cm



Incandescent Ruby Rose and Dark Green Shape, 1987

Oil on board., 76 x 63 cm

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