

JERED SPRECHER

Pete Schulte: As the pandemic wears on, I am wondering how this direct existential threat has impacted your view of the role of an artist in the broader culture, as well as your time producing art in the studio?

Jered Sprecher: Definitely a timely question. The pandemic as well as recent political and cultural upheavals provoke a lot of self-reflection, including questions of “What am I doing?” and “What good does it do?” I believe that as artists we do different things and those things change through the seasons of our lives. Sometimes we point to beauty, sometimes we point to injustice, sometimes we point to problems, sometimes we point to answers. We are always asking questions.

In the studio, as the past two years unfolded, it has been vital to make work that feels very much embodied, full throated. Some of the recent paintings and drawings have been mournful images. Lamentations. Flowers are a recurring motif. Tiny miracles that blossom and fade...producing seeds. I suppose I have doubled down on this evanescence, abstracting the flowers as though they were seen reflected in a window or flickering on a screen. For me as an individual it is important to carry on, to show up each day and do the work, whether that is in the studio, classroom, or as a spouse, parent, neighbor. These are all part of my vocation.

PS: Describe a pre-pandemic experience (personal or societal, small or large) when you recognized that your conception of reality had been definitively re-arranged. How has this experience shaped your life as an artist? Are the vestiges of this experience in any way visible in your work?

JS: I remember hearing my oldest son’s heartbeat for the first time, at that moment it was the most beautiful noise I had ever heard. (Now it is a three way tie amongst my kids.) That simple repetitive lub dub lub dub was amazing to experience. How simple it is, how ordinary, billions of hearts thumping away, how simple, how extraordinary. That lub dub as an artist helps remind me that simple seemingly inconsequential things can mean the world. That is pretty freeing as an artist. A leaf, a flower, a silhouette, the play of light can contain so much.





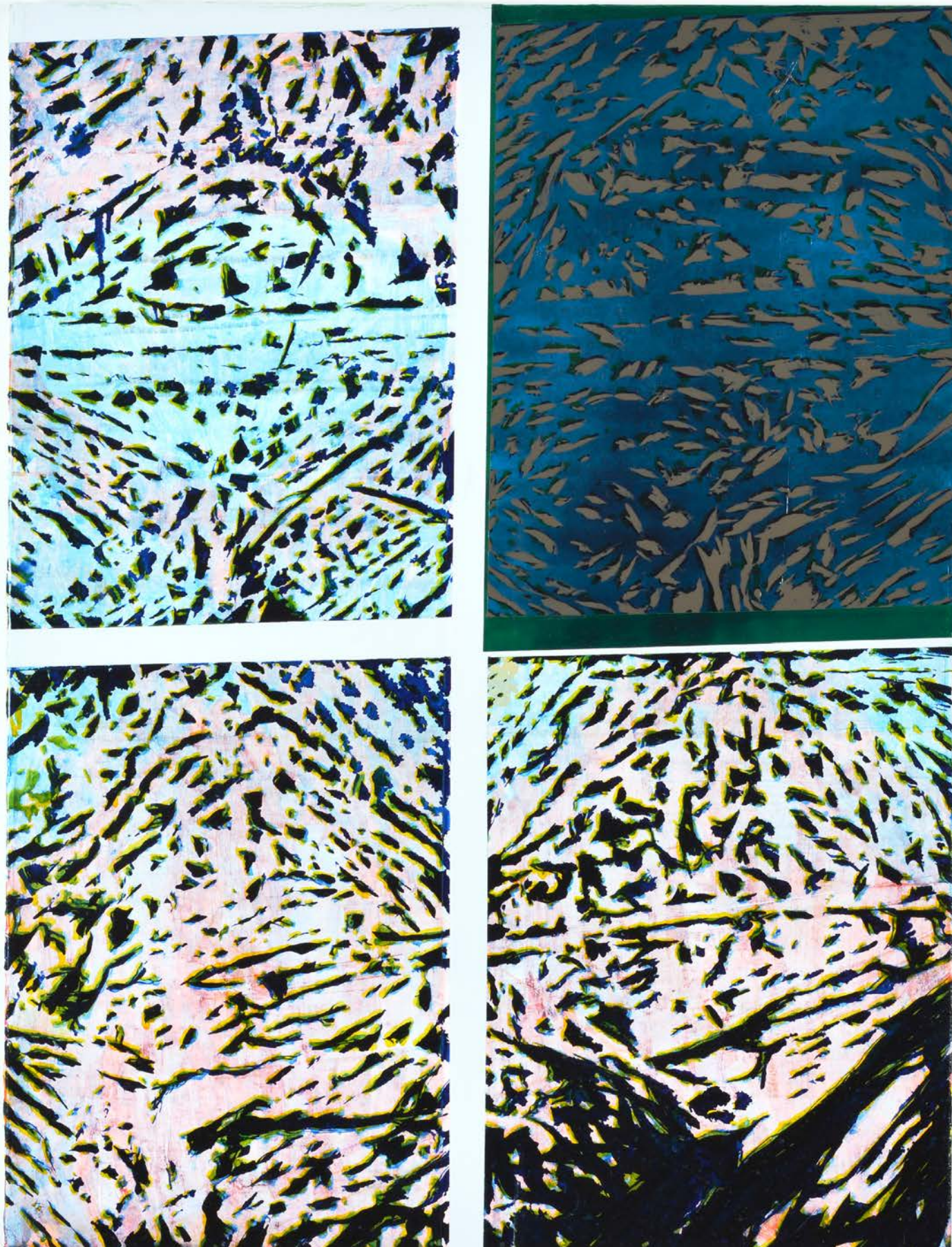
Eclipses Suns Imply (2018). 48 x 36 in.
Oil on canvas

PS: Several years ago, I had a memorable studio visit with the artist Nayland Blake. We spoke for over an hour after he inquired about the “audience of my heart”. In this regard, I am also thinking of Guston’s painting, *Pantheon* (1973), wherein he lists the names Masaccio, Piero, Giotto, Tiepolo, and de Chirico. In each case, there seems to be more at play than simply name-checking favorites of the moment. In the midst of all of the art that you look at and experience, much of which undoubtedly comes and goes either by evolving taste or fashion, who/what constitutes the audience of your heart (i.e. those that have sunk into the fiber of your being and will never let go)? Please explain.

JS: I love this question. There are so many artists I want to list, giants who impart so many gifts and keep me company in the studio. Agnes Martin is amazing, each painting, drawing, print is so finely tuned though never overworked. There is a presence and matter of factness to her work that slows down time, allowing the viewer to be aware of themselves in relationship to the world around them. Looking at an Agnes Martin painting is like resting your hand against a granite rock or a two thousand year old tree. Giorgio Morandi’s ability to animate his material and the image are humbling to encounter. Each painting is self-contained and generously welcomes the viewer into its shallow proscenium stage. You feel the light, you feel the gravity, and cannot help but empathize with each jar and vase, especially as they relate to one another. Edouard Manet’s paintings really perceive and digest the change of speed of life and technology during his life. The paintings he made are both in and out of time, old and new. Anni Albers for engaging the use and beauty of textiles and bringing to the forefront the woven matrix. She was a student filled with wonder and respect for the long history of textiles and their possibilities. That curiosity matched with rigor is so palpable in her work.

Melissa Staiger: While looking through your body of work, I noticed your exploration of fragmentation – being a whole. If a painting were to have a superpower, “Invisible as Music,” would be that it activates all of my senses. I hear snippets of sounds from ASMR, the sound of in-between radio station music, then clear notes. This painting has a buzz of dominant colors and makes me want to touch and smell flowers. It is a kindred spirit to a Pipilotti Rist film. Does your process start with a drawing, collage or on the computer?

Jered Sprecher: Pipilotti Rist is an interesting comparison. I definitely feel a kinship to the lush sensory environment’s that she creates. For the painting, “Invisible as Music”, I really want to engage the senses through flickering lights and darks as well as saturated colors. When the viewer approaches the surface of the painting, they see the varied haptic marks on its surface.



Window/Day/Night (2021). 30 x 22 in.
Oil on canvas

This particular painting started from a single photo that I took of a reflection in a window. It contained the dual reality of the flowers on the other side of the glass and the city street reflected on its surface. There is a subtle grid that I introduced through the painting process. This painting really pulled quite directly from a source photo.

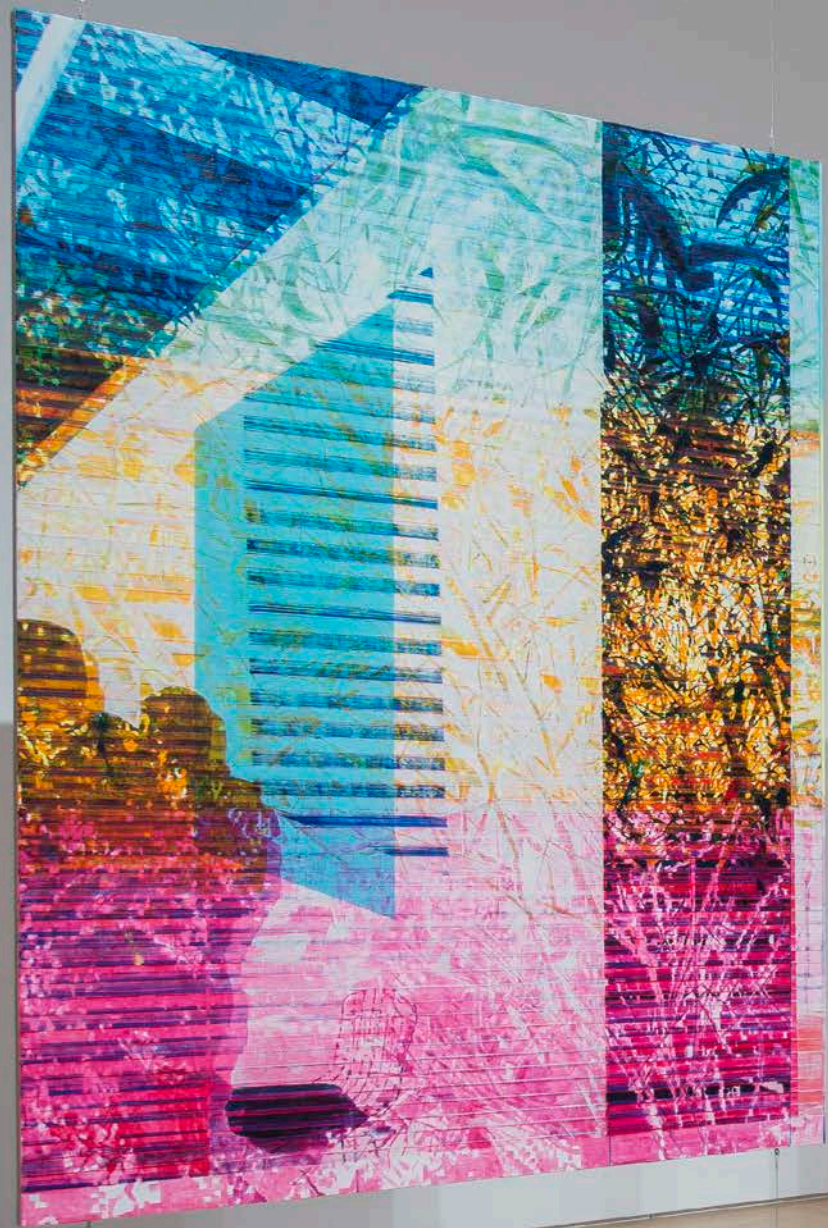
My working method in the studio can greatly vary. As I look around my studio, there are paintings that began from cleaning my brush on canvas. I make drawings and collages to play with ideas or images, these usually end up as stand alone works rather than preparatory works. If anything, I need to have many things going on in the studio. While I am working on one piece it often gives me the answer to another painting or drawing that I have been stuck on. Drawing, collage, photography, or the computer, any of these may be the starting point.

MS: The title “8.25 Minutes” initially made me think of a reflection in a window over a period of time changing. How many colors and nuances live and move in reflective surfaces. Were these paintings akin to film? They kind of have a movement of their own hanging in space.

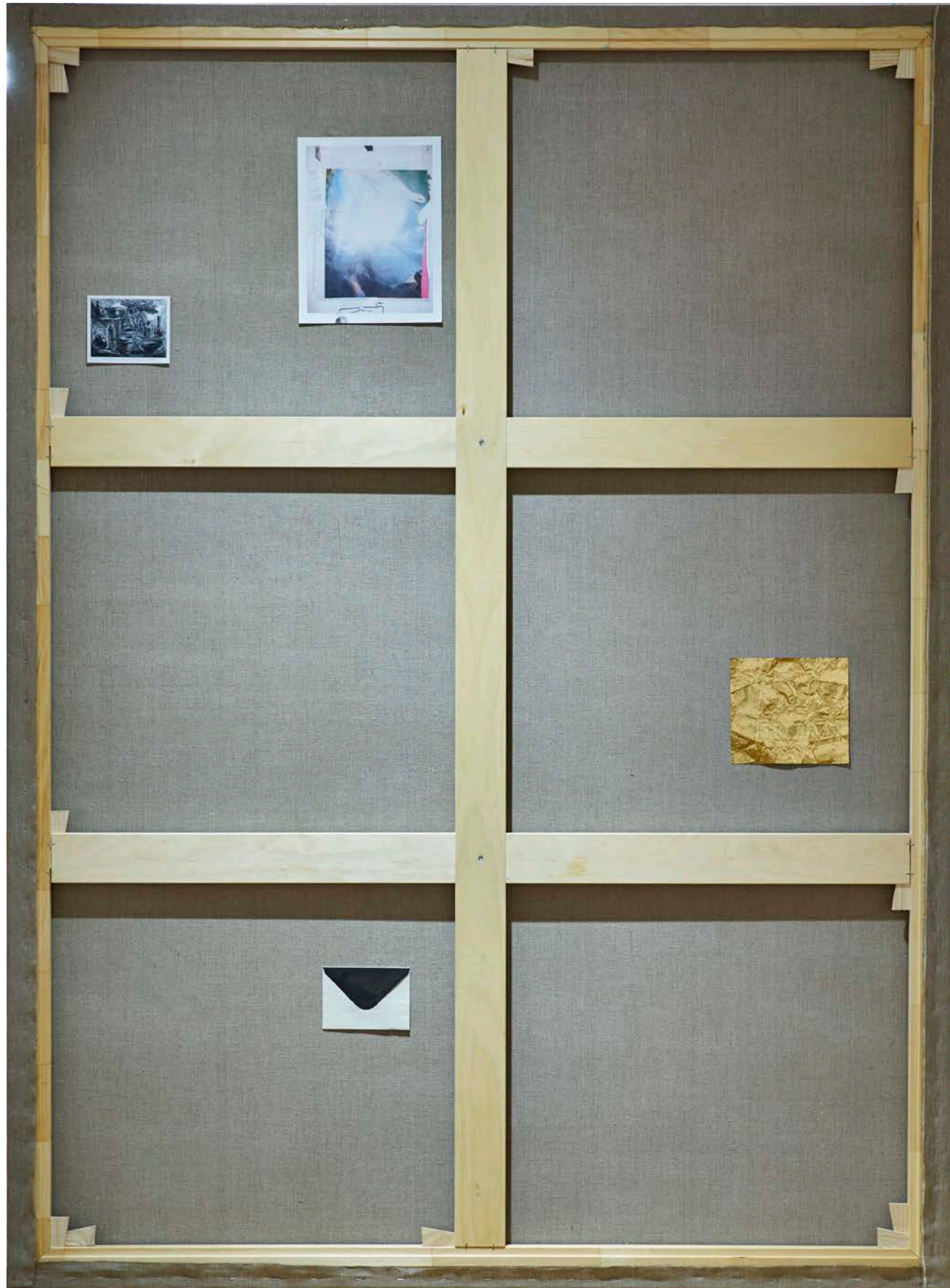
JS: The passage of time is certainly important in this work. “8.25 Minutes” refers to the time it takes light to travel from the sun to the earth. With the carpet and the room created by the hanging paintings, the viewer is encouraged to inhabit the space. I envision it like a glass house, where you are looking out, but also seeing reflections of the interior space on the surface of the glass, inside and outside pressed onto that thin fragile plane. Each of the paintings comprising “8.25 Minutes” is meant to be radiant, yet fleeting and transitory.

MS: In “8.25 Minutes,” please tell me all your secrets in the drawings, photocopies and varied paper ephemera. What is the narrative? Or is there one?

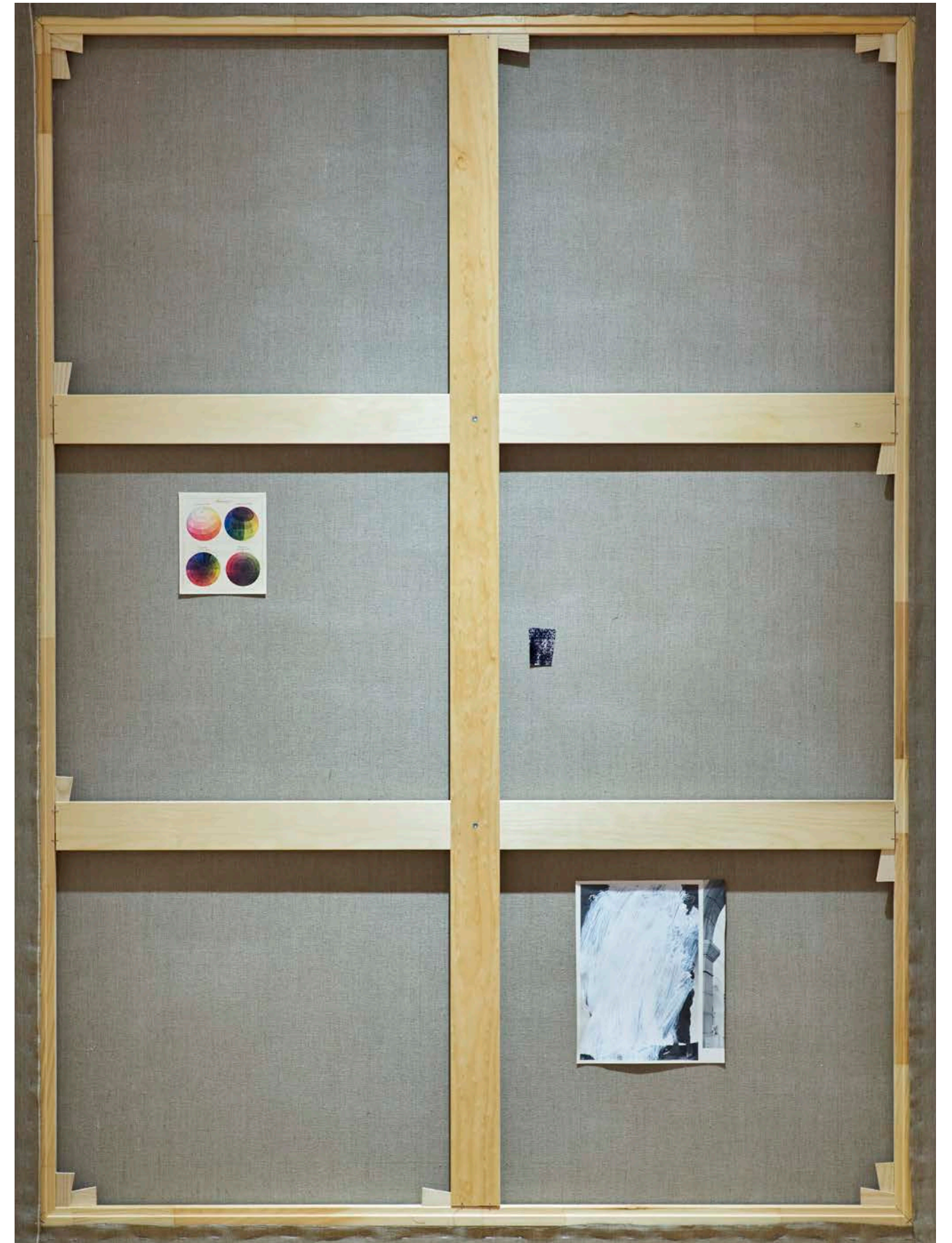
JS: Small incidental drawings, photocopies, pages torn from books are piled up around my studio and tacked to the walls. They are little heartbeats or like the scraps of envelopes that Emily Dickinson composed her poetry on, which she called her “gorgeous nothings”. These drawings and other ephemera are the breadcrumb trail that helped lead me to create “8.25 Minutes.” A few examples of the drawings and such attached to the back of the paintings are thin pencil sketch of a mushroom cloud, handwritten notes with poetic fragments, Goethe’s color wheel, an archaeological photo from Pompeii, an envelope edged in black, and a postcard image of the wallpaper from Anne Frank’s bedroom. Each drawing evokes a moment or instance in time, fragments of experience.



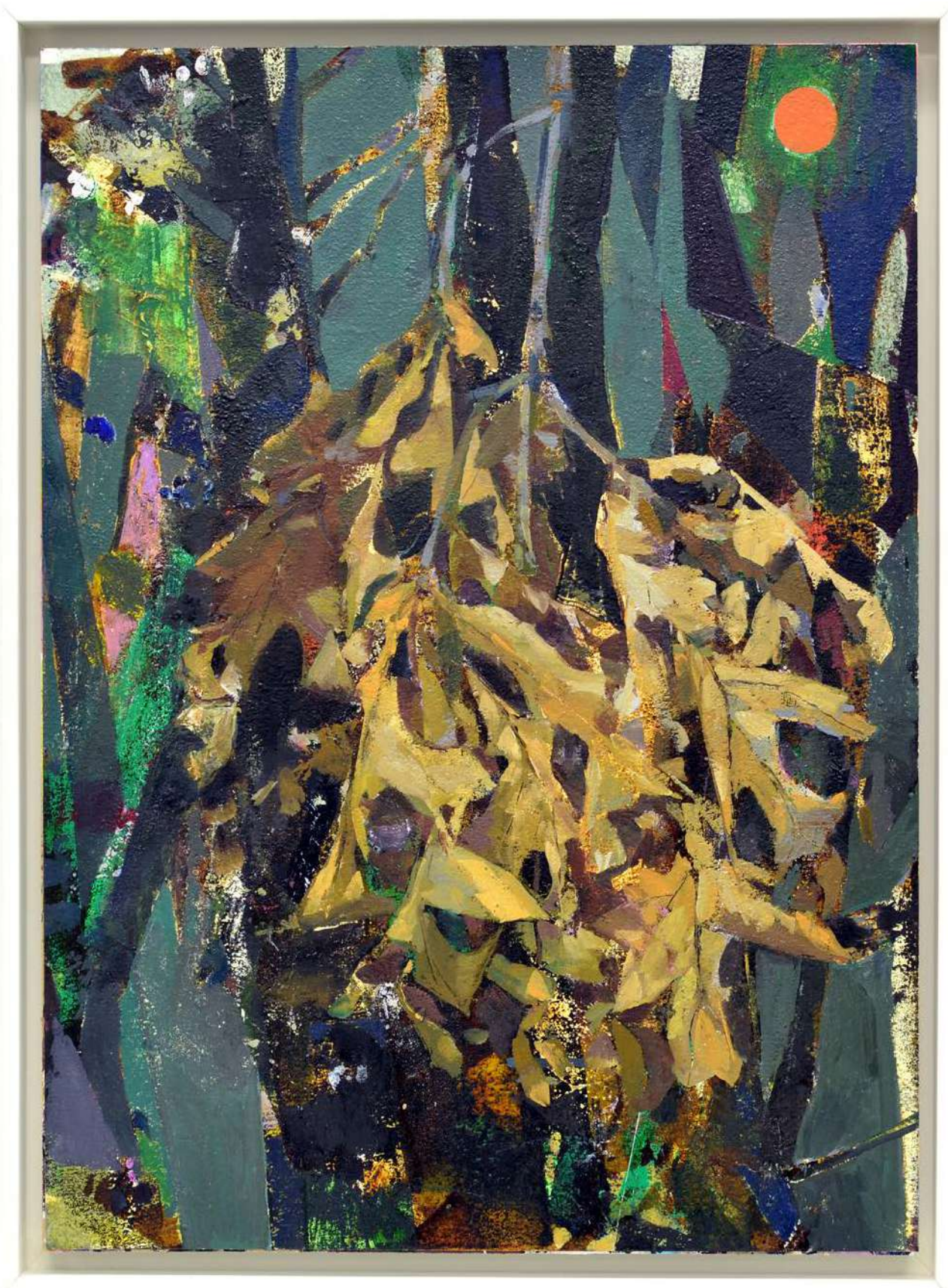
8.25 Minutes (2017). 10 ft. x 16 ft. x 20 ft.
Six oil on linen paintings, wool carpet, hanging hardware, drawings, photocopies, and varied paper ephemera
(photo by EG Schrepf, Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland Park, KS)



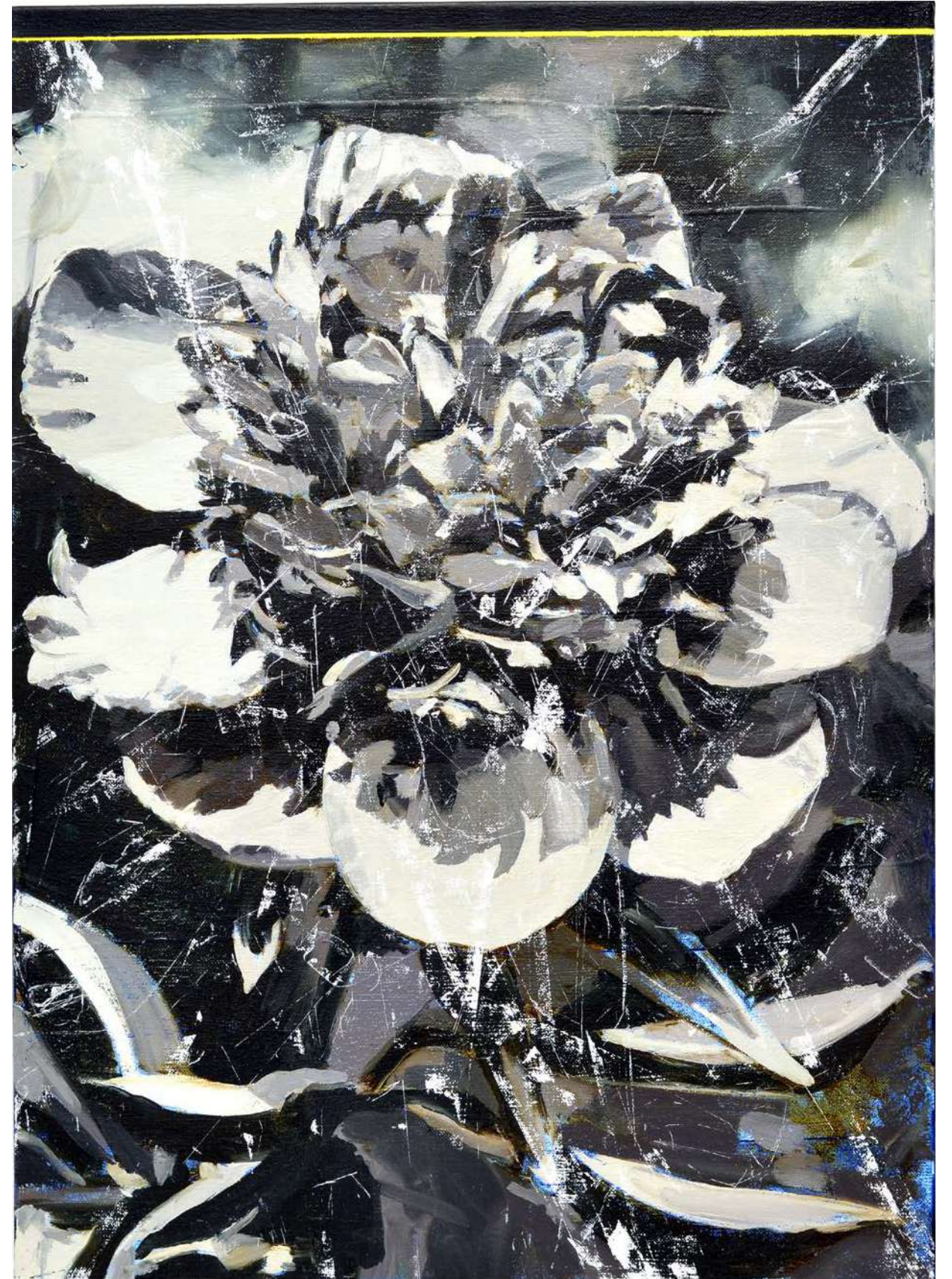
back side of 8.25 Minutes (with the drawings attached)



back side of 8.25 Minutes (with the drawings attached)



Whisper (2021). 16 x 12 in.
Oil on paper on panel



Stone (2021). 24 x 18 in.
Oil on canvas



Invisible as Music (2019). 90 x 146 in. Oil on canvas