

7 Questions for Brazilian Artist Gabriela Giroletti on Painting as a 'Metaphor for Life'

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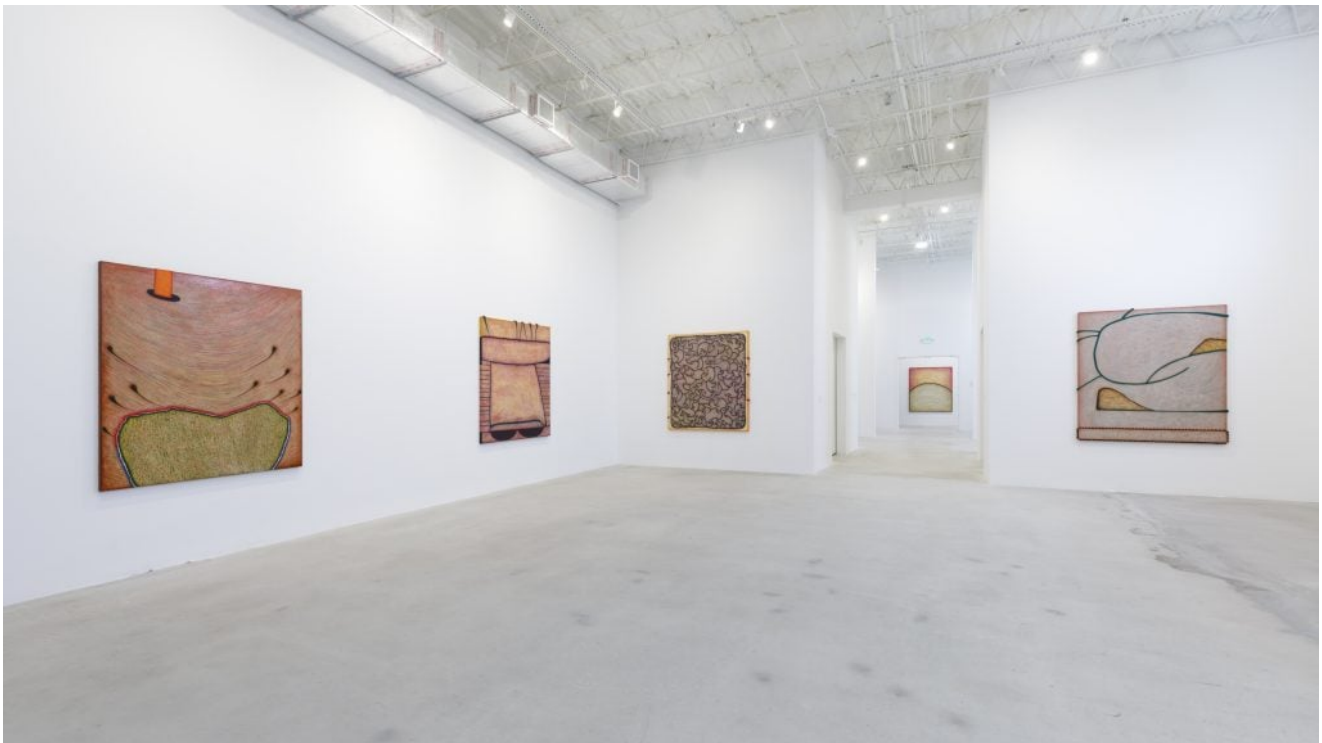
Gabriela Giroletti. Courtesy of the artist.

Originally from Brazil and currently based in London, Gabriel Giroletti (b. 1982) creates paintings that hover between recognizability and abstraction, exploring the ambiguities in between the two using both the physical medium of her work and visual image.



Giroletti received her bachelor's from Middlesex University and master's from the Slade School of Fine Art, University College London, in 2015 and 2016 respectively, and has subsequently exhibited widely in London and abroad. Currently, she is the subject of her first solo gallery exhibition in the United States at [Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery](#) in West Palm Beach, Florida, "[Gabriel Giroletti: Inevitable Orbits](#)." On view through September 7, 2024, the show features the artist's latest series of paintings that look to celestial bodies and the universe—and their relationship to the human body—as a point of departure to translate lived experience and sensation.

Marking the occasion, we reached out to Giroletti to learn more about the show and what inspires her to investigate the nebulous relationship between image and object.



Installation view of "Gabriela Giroletti: Inevitable Orbits" (2024). Photo: Jacek Gancarz. Courtesy of Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, West Palm Beach.

Your solo show "Inevitable Orbits" recently opened, can you tell us about the body of work on view and any primary themes or ideas behind it?



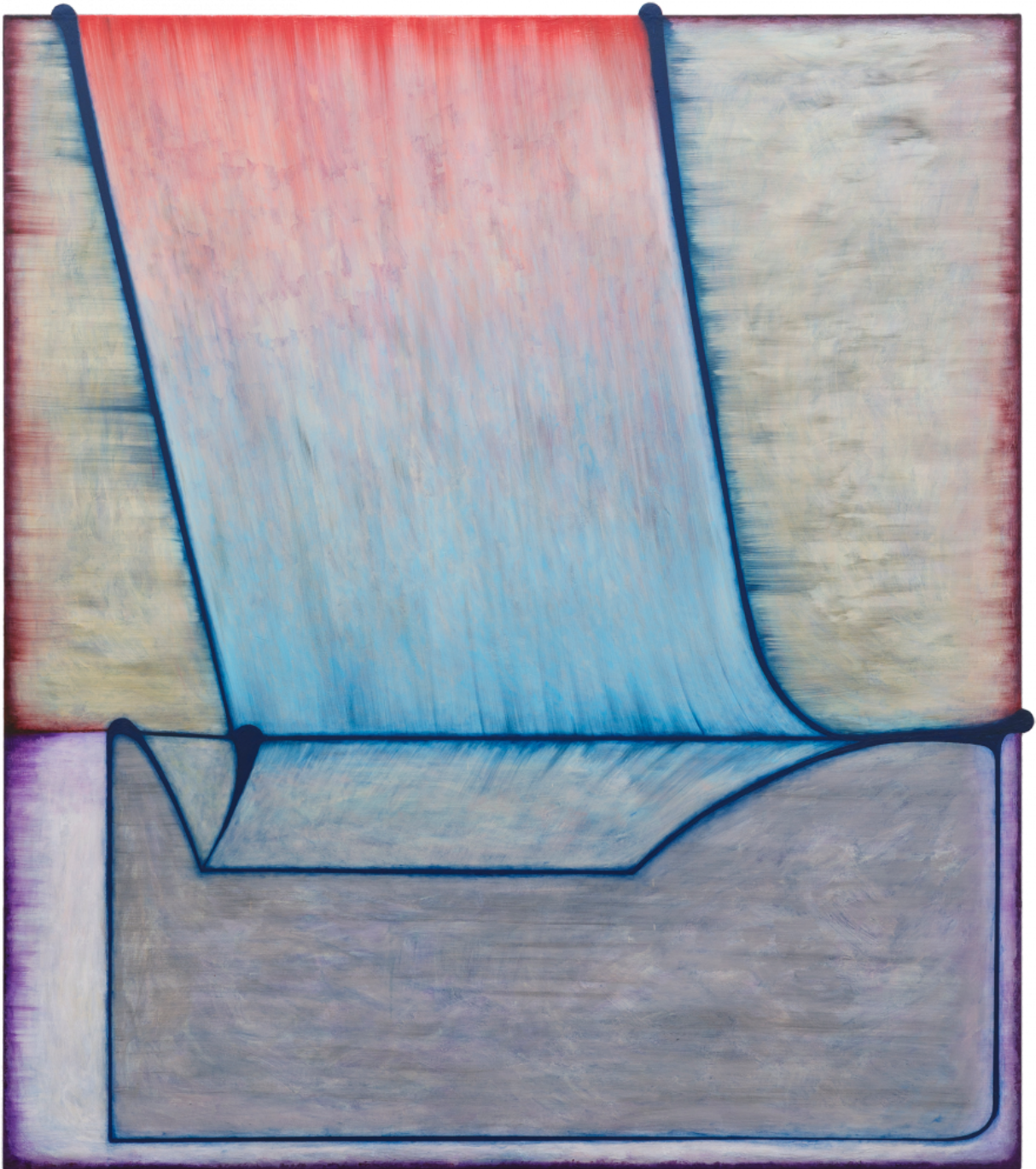
My work explores the experience of making paintings as a metaphor for life, thinking about touch, transformation, and invention. Both the imagery and the physicality of the work is inspired by ideas around nature. Each new body of work tends to emerge from thinking very broadly about natural themes or elements, such as water, air currents, and weather disturbances, and my feelings around them. The paintings in "Inevitable Orbits" were made

with reference to celestial beings and happenings in the sky, but these references are abstracted through the painting process. They are a point of departure rather than the subject of the work.

The tension or balance between the painted image and physical, material aspects of a painting are noted aspects of your work. How do you navigate this dichotomy? What drives this exploration?



My work has always explored ambiguity and contrasts: abstraction and figuration, simplicity and complexity, landscape and the body, accident and intention, and so on. Paintings are fundamentally objects that convey images—this intrinsic duality interests me greatly. It started with a dislike for the weave of the canvas—I found its readymade texture too even and therefore very disruptive as a starting point. I began applying thick layers of paint to obliterate that quality and that led me to start thinking about and treating paint as substance as well as color. Paint’s corporeality is now very much the point around which my work revolves. A tactile surface calls for the work to be experienced with your whole body, not only with your eyes, which mirrors the experience I have making the work. The best compliment I can possibly get is when someone says, “I want to touch your work.” And so, it felt like a very natural progression for me to explore the sculptural potential of painting as well as its pictorial possibilities.



Gabriela Giroletti, *Seas of Skies* (2023). Courtesy of Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, West Palm Beach.

Within the present exhibition, what do you hope viewers experience or take away with them?

I do not wish viewers to try to decode my work, to find hidden narratives or symbols. I would like the work to instill a sense of wonder, optimistic contemplation, and for it to unravel some of the elemental energy of this world (and other worlds). In a similar way to poetry and experiential music, I want my paintings to suggest things but to let the viewer finish the work themselves by engaging their bodies and lived experience.



What does your creative process look like, where do you start? Is it all very intuitive and spontaneous or all planned out?

I walk in nature, take pictures, make quick drawings, and take mental notes. Those references are drawn and redrawn until the image is reminiscent of many things. I usually start with a very basic line drawing that becomes the structure from which I begin painting. But it's only ever a starting point, the composition changes considerably during the painting process. I guess it's a combination of planning and intuition while also engaging deeply with my materials and with each stage of painting.



I make oil paint and oil bars from scratch when I can. Knowing the configuration of my materials allows me to manipulate them into different results. I like using unorthodox painting tools, such as combs, metal scrubs, forks, and syringes—I am always making trips to D.I.Y. shops to see what I can apply paint with. Work also comes from work, as I react and experiment while painting. I often end up discovering things halfway through one work that I then go on to fully explore in the next.



Gabriela Giroletti, *Cloudburst* (2024). Courtesy of Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, West Palm Beach.

Can you describe the role of color in your work? How do you approach or choose your color palette for each work or body of works?



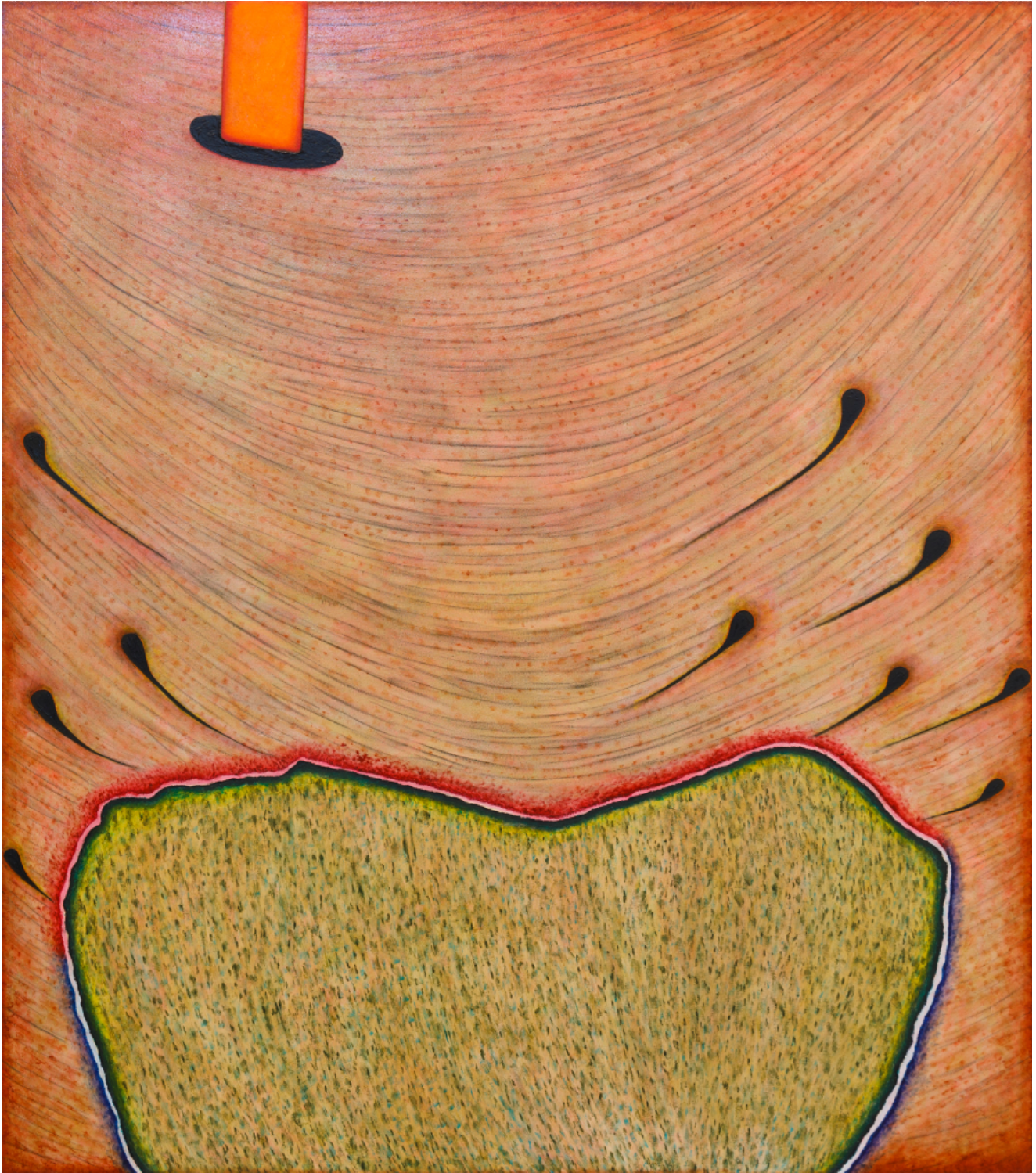
Color is an essential component of my work. It plays a crucial role in building up the image and the surface. I will typically have an idea of the temperature I want the painting to have, and I start with that, often working in pairs and trios. Color is relative: it's only by placing things next to each other that I can really begin to work things out. My drawings never have color so that is something that is resolved entirely on the surface of the painting.

For me, color needs to be palpable in some places and very translucent and watery in others. I like to make use of the full potential of oil paint, a material that is so elastic and adaptable. I also like having a very dark ground and work my way to light from there. The way I build a strong color coherence for each family of works is to start with one color from the previous work. The next painting will always continue the conversation that the previous one started.



Where do you most commonly look for or find inspiration? Are there any artists or art movements, contemporary or historical, that you would cite as personal influences?

As I mentioned, my work references nature, but also architecture, calligraphy, sculpture ... I look at everything and everywhere for inspiration. Having said that, paintings and painters always have precedents: Álvaro Lapa, Prunella Clough, Thomas Nozkowski, Terry Winters, Richard Smith, and Hiroshi Sugito are some of mine. The Brazilian Modernist architect Oscar Niemeyer is a great example of non-painter influence for me.



Gabriela Giroletti, *Notifications from the Sun* (2024). Hjellegjerde Gallery, West Palm Beach.

Can you tell us about what you are working on now, or hope to start work on soon?

I am currently making work for my first solo presentation in Brazil, with Galeria Leme in São Paulo in November. It made sense that the works were made closer to where I'll be showing them, so I'm spending a few months in southern Brazil, in my hometown Porto Alegre. I'll also be presenting new works in the autumn at the Armory Show in New York with Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery.



“Gabriela Giroletti: Inevitable Orbits” is on view at Kristin Hjellegjerde, West Palm Beach, through September 7, 2024.

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