

GATEWAYS

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JOHN ZABAWA

Gateways is Los Angeles-based artist John Zabawa’s first solo show in the UK, featuring 24 oil paintings on canvas and wood. Their warm colours and abstract forms embody two branches of Zabawa’s art practice: a conceptual series of diptychs, and more figurative works, such as still life compositions of geometric fruit bowls and plants.

Zabawa conceived the *Gateway* diptychs, which juxtapose canvasses painted in bold single colours and rich brush strokes, to reveal a glimpse of the process behind his artmaking. “The way I think about painting is like sculpture: carving away at the excess material until a final form is revealed,” he says. “When I develop a visual idea, I always begin by thinking about two colours. In my experience, the eye recognises colour before it understands form — humans have an immediate, instinctive reaction to colour, and then milliseconds later, they understand what the object is. With these paintings, I aimed to distil scenes or figures into their bare essence, represented by two colours.”

Colour theory partly informs how Zabawa chooses these colours, as do his immediate surroundings. “It could be a red chequered napkin on a white tablecloth, or the green of eucalyptus leaves against the blue sky that catches my eye,” he says. “Recently, I have started creating softer, muted tones, that convey depth and subtlety.”

Representing a scene in its bare essence is a recurring approach throughout the show, apparent in *Two Lovers Sleeping* — an intimate moment expressed as an elegant geometric composition of cool yellow and green forms and lines. Elsewhere, Zabawa draws on other visual elements of his everyday life, such as branches of eucalyptus leaves held in a vase, or the assortment of objects found on his desk, where a painting within a painting is suggested in the background. “I aim to paint from my own life,” he says. “I believe that as an artist, your own story is truly all that matters.”

The Japanese aesthetic principle of *ma* — the artistic interpretation of negative space — also informs Zabawa’s work. “I find certain principles help me make sense of my practice, and my understanding of *ma* is one of them,” he says. “I love thinking of negative space as a tool when composing. I experience blank canvas fear all the time; approaching a new painting is always an exciting, scary feeling, and thinking about negative space in this way is very freeing.”

Zabawa hopes viewers find a visual excitement in his work that may move them to enjoy other art: “I hope my work can help bring people closer to art, and encourage them to make it a part of their lives. I think doing so allows you to see the world in a more beautiful way.”



John Zabawa

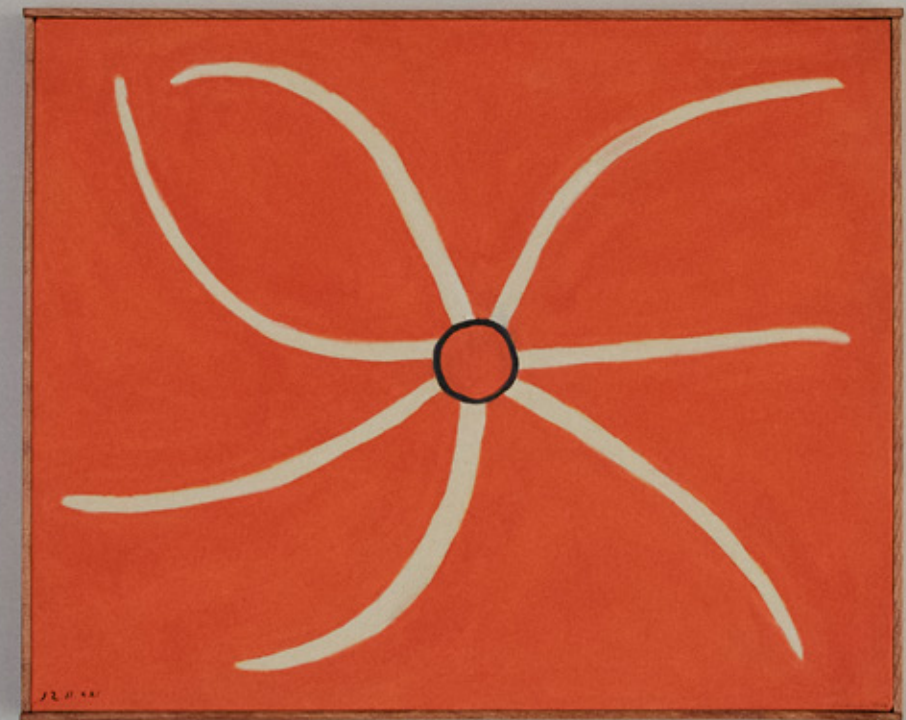
MULTIDISCIPLINARY ARTIST

John Zabawa is a multidisciplinary artist based in Los Angeles. His work spans an array of mediums including painting, illustration, music, and graphic design. He works in both figurative and abstract expressions, and offers his *Gateway* paintings — a series of diptychs combining two blocks of warm colour — as a glimpse into his thought process. “These works represent the way I think when making paintings,” he says. “I think of colours as emotions, and by combining them, I’m able to explore a feeling or emotional state in which I want to paint. Painting abstractly or figuratively is only a tool I use to convey a feeling within a picture.”

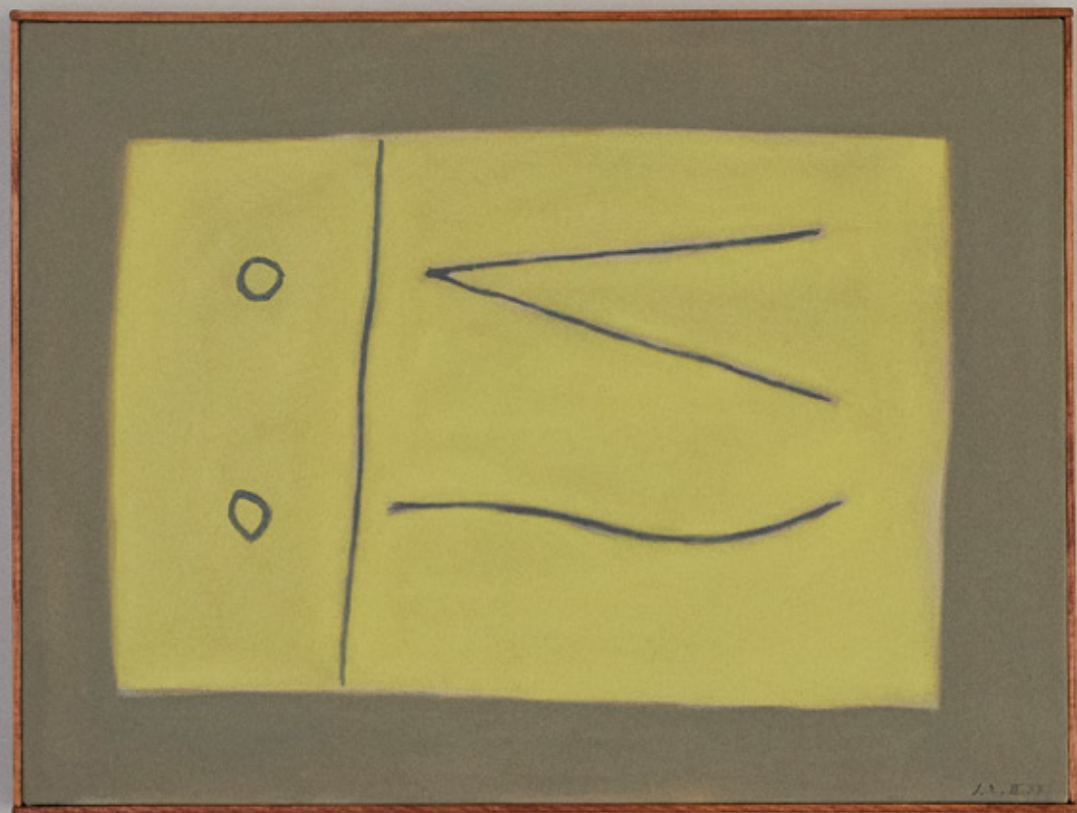
After graduating from high school, Zabawa moved to Chicago to study at Columbia College Chicago, where he immersed himself in graphic design, fine art, and industrial design. “Studying design has influenced my art practice. It gives me perspective and understanding about process, methodology, and conceptual thinking,” he says. He held his first show of paintings in Chicago in 2018, titled *So Many People*, before moving to Los Angeles, where he now lives and works. The abundant plant life there has since found its way into his work, including the distinctive form of eucalyptus leaves. “There are so many eucalyptus trees near my home,” he says. “I’ve become enamoured with them. I’m obsessed with their geometry. It’s poetry how that tree grows. I think being inspired by flora is something many Angelenos can relate to.”



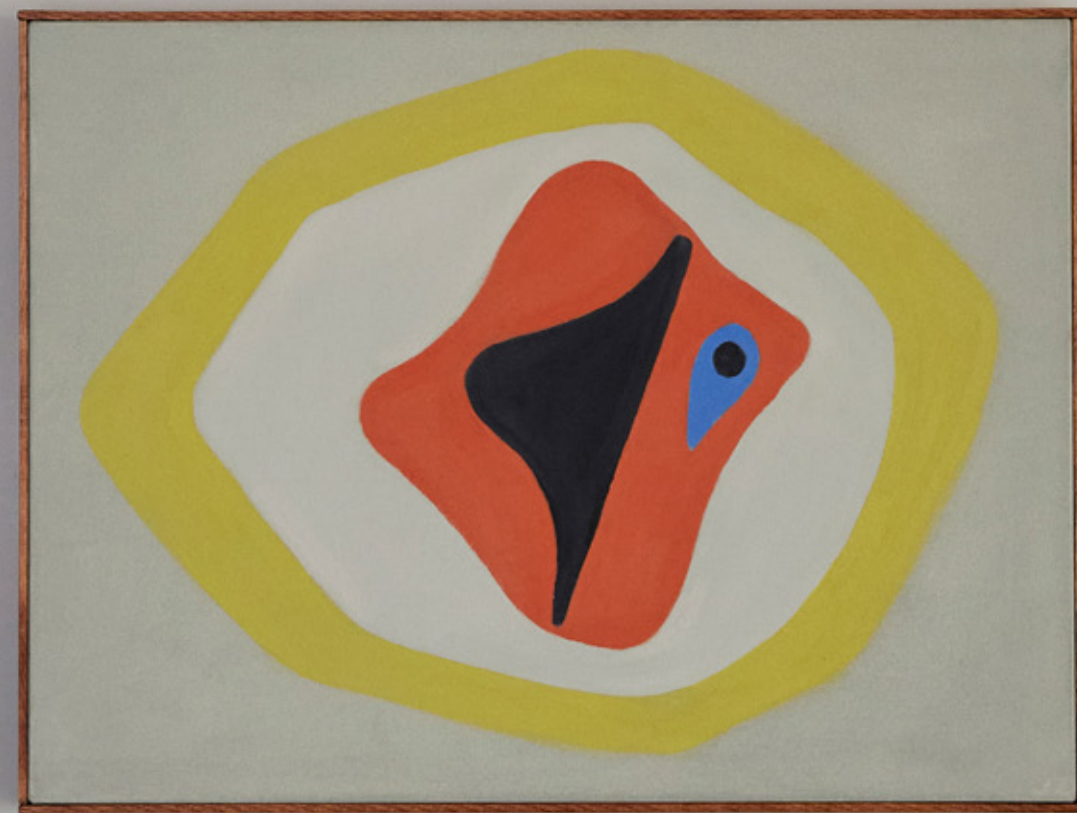
TELEGRAMS (2021)



SUN (2021)



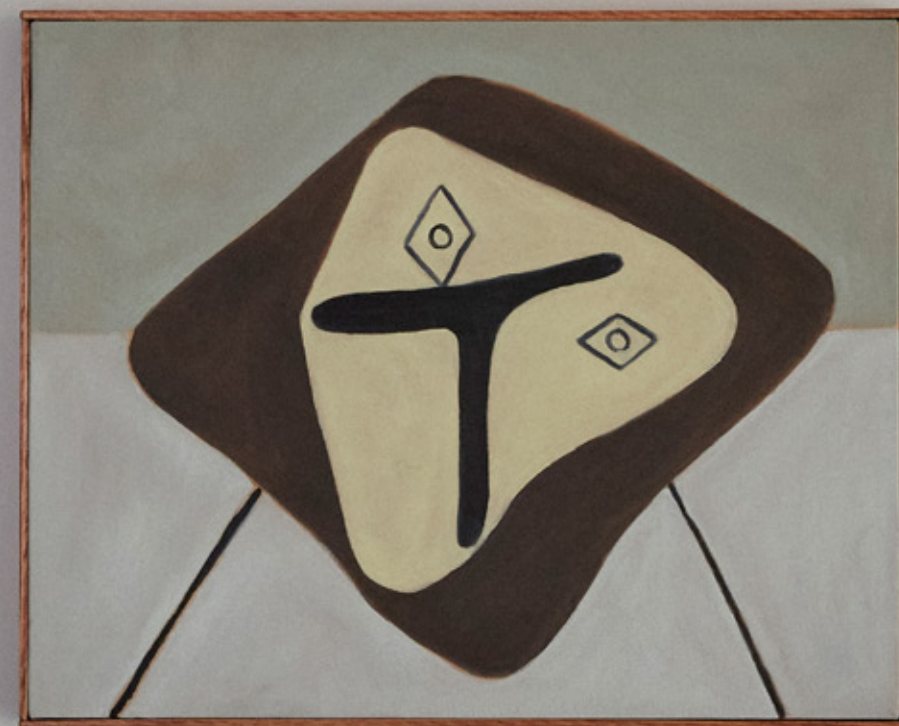
TWO LOVERS SLEEPING (2021)



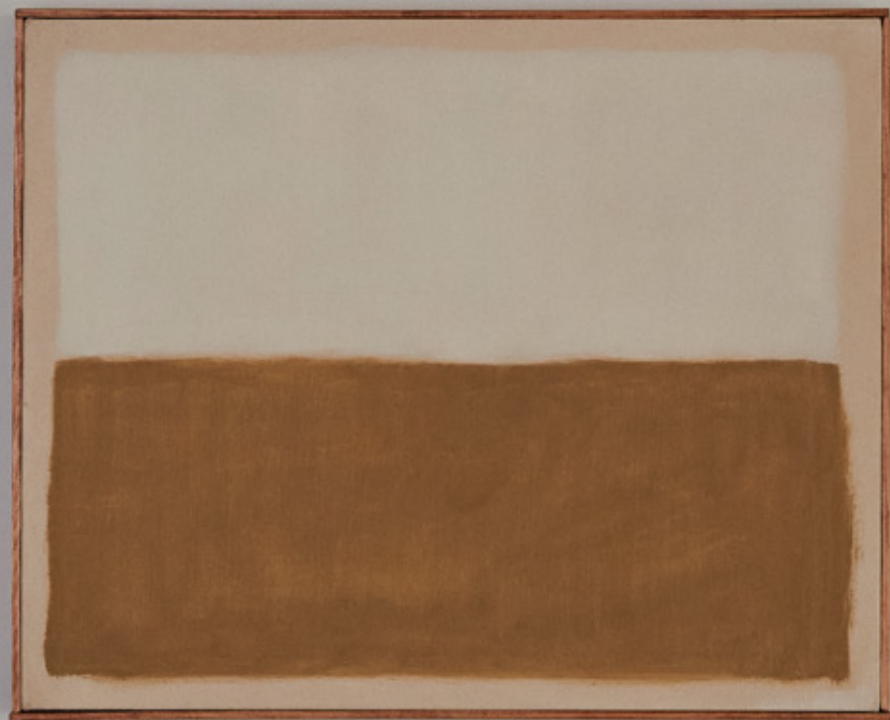
FACE STUDY I (2021)



THE COURIER (2021)



FACE STUDY II (2021)



KENT COTTAGE (2021)



RED FIGURE AND FERN (2021)



VIEW OF ELYSIAN PARK (2021)



EUCALYPTUS AT DAWN (2021)



EUCALYPTUS AT NIGHT (2021)



MANDARINS WITH PEELS (2021)



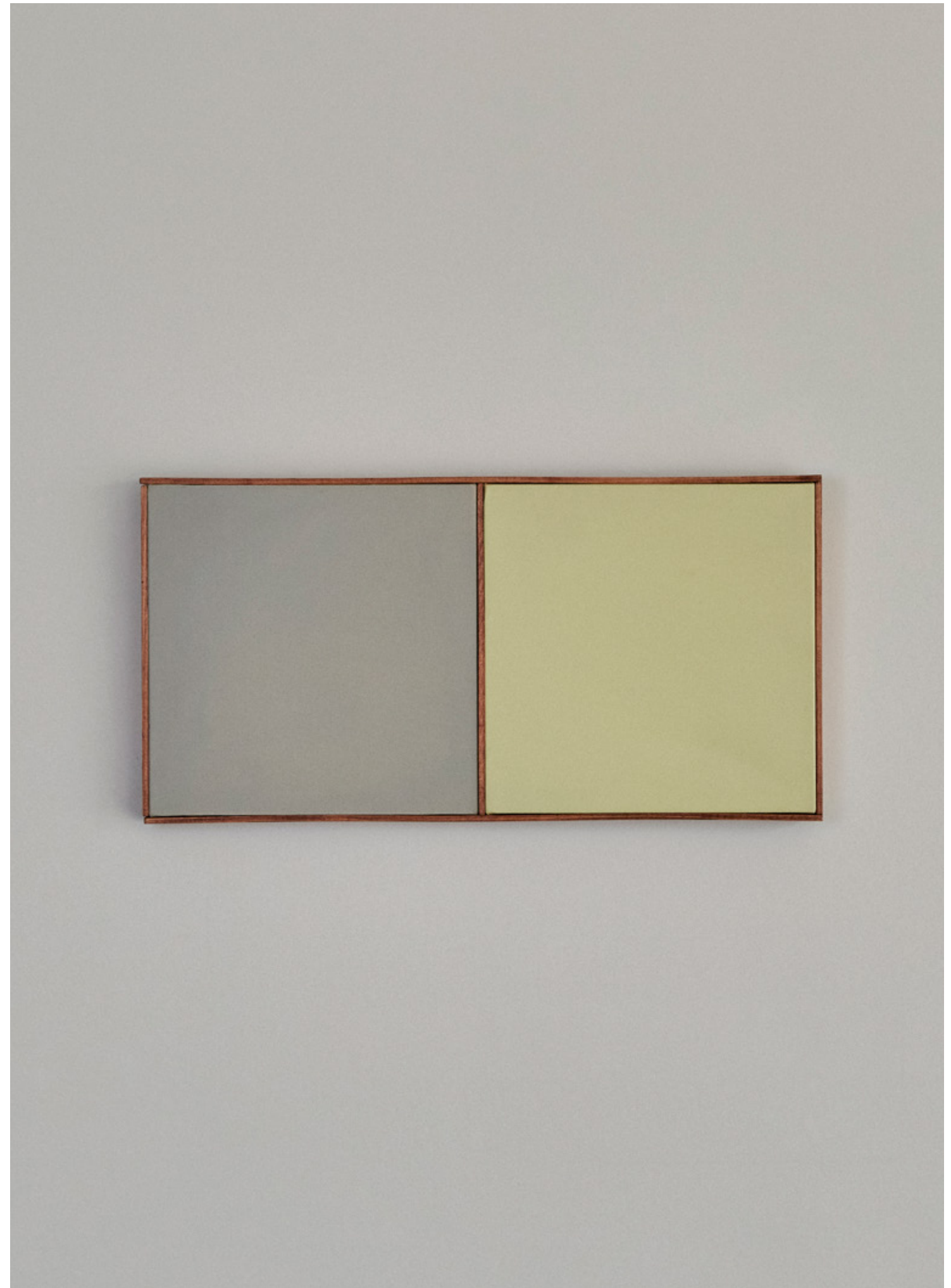
PERSIMMONS (2021)



MORNING BLUEBERRIES (2021)



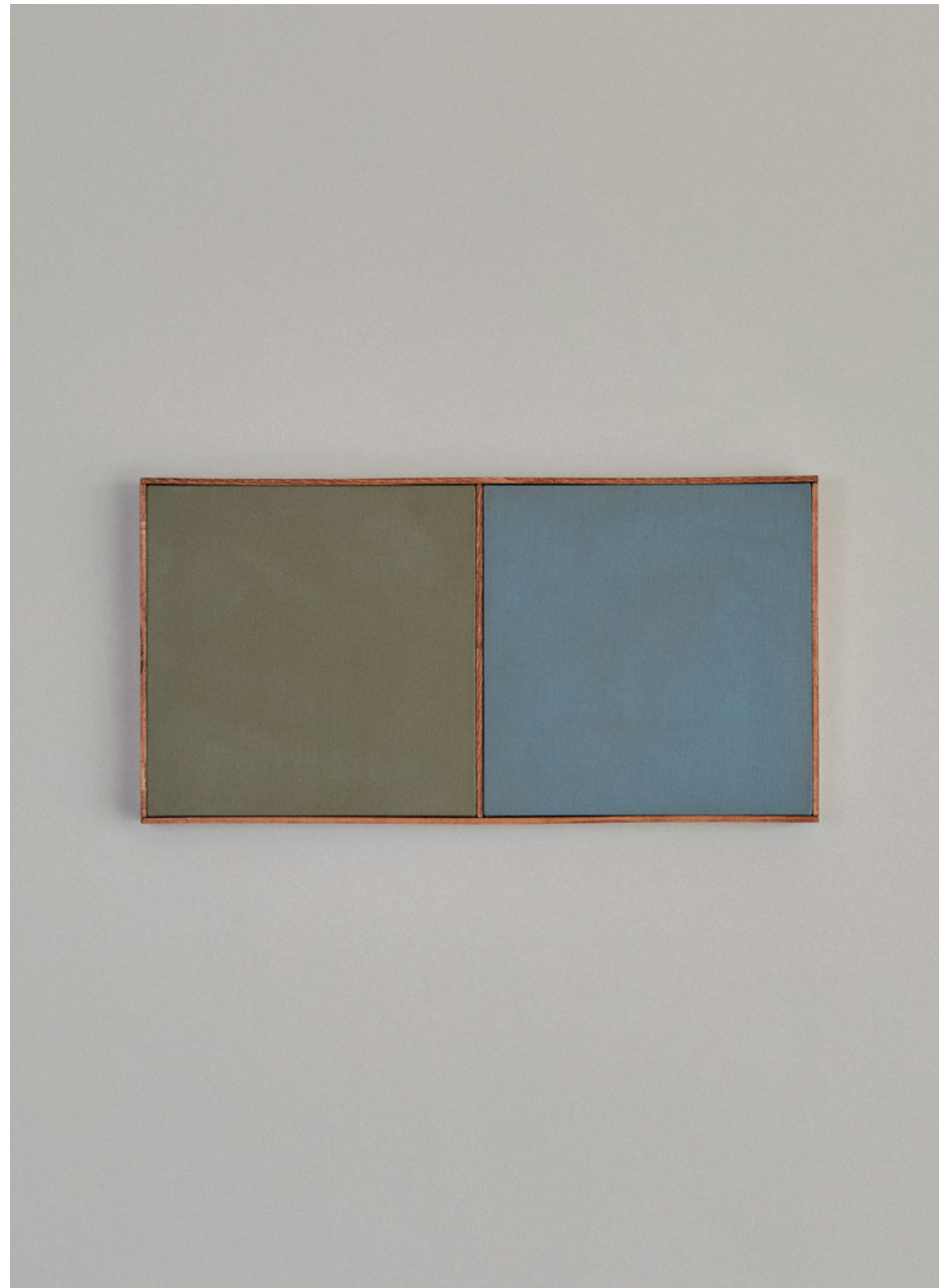
GATEWAY I (2020)



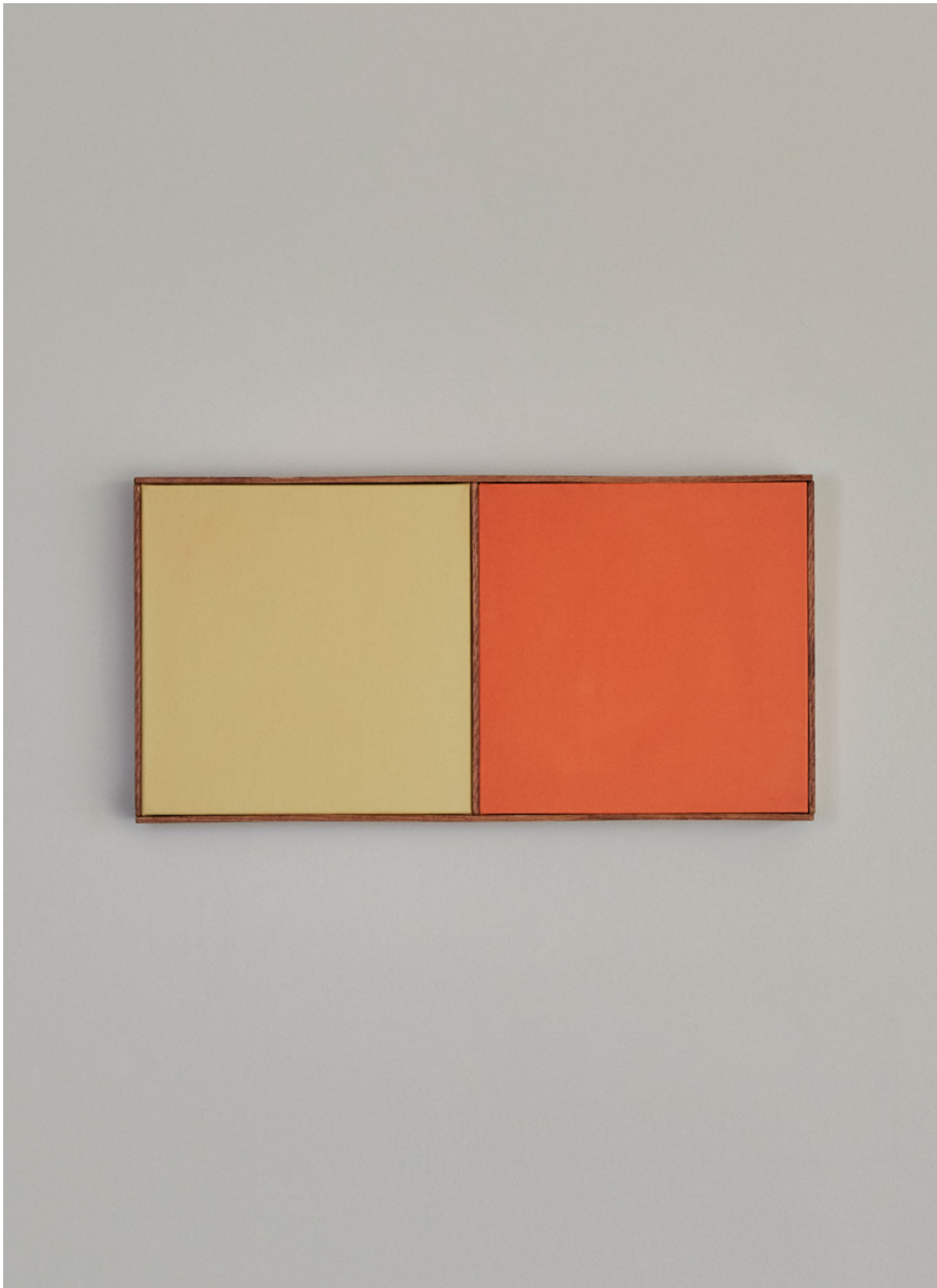
GATEWAY II (2021)



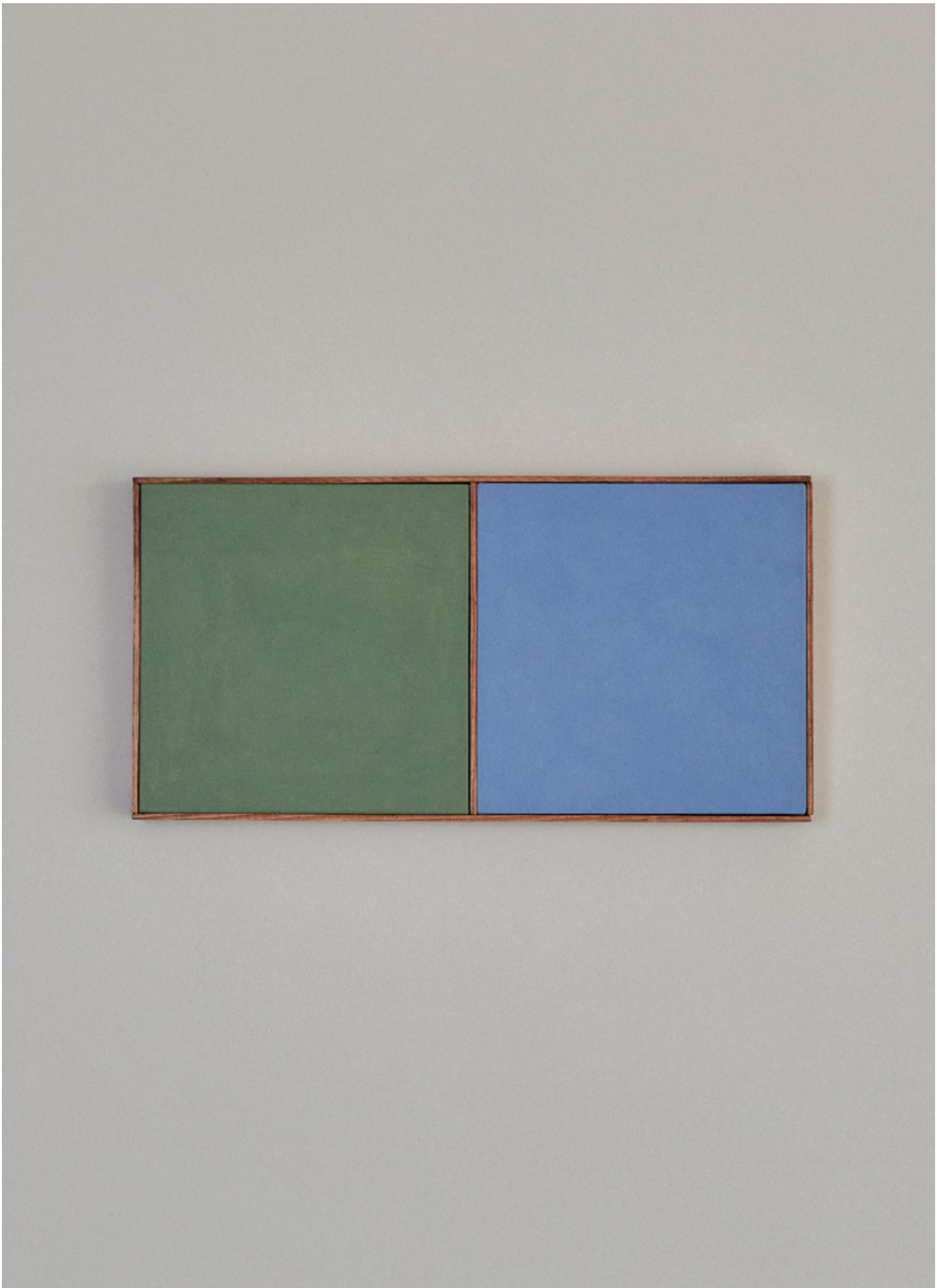
GATEWAY III (2021)



GATEWAY IV (2021)



GATEWAY V (2021)



GATEWAY VI (2021)



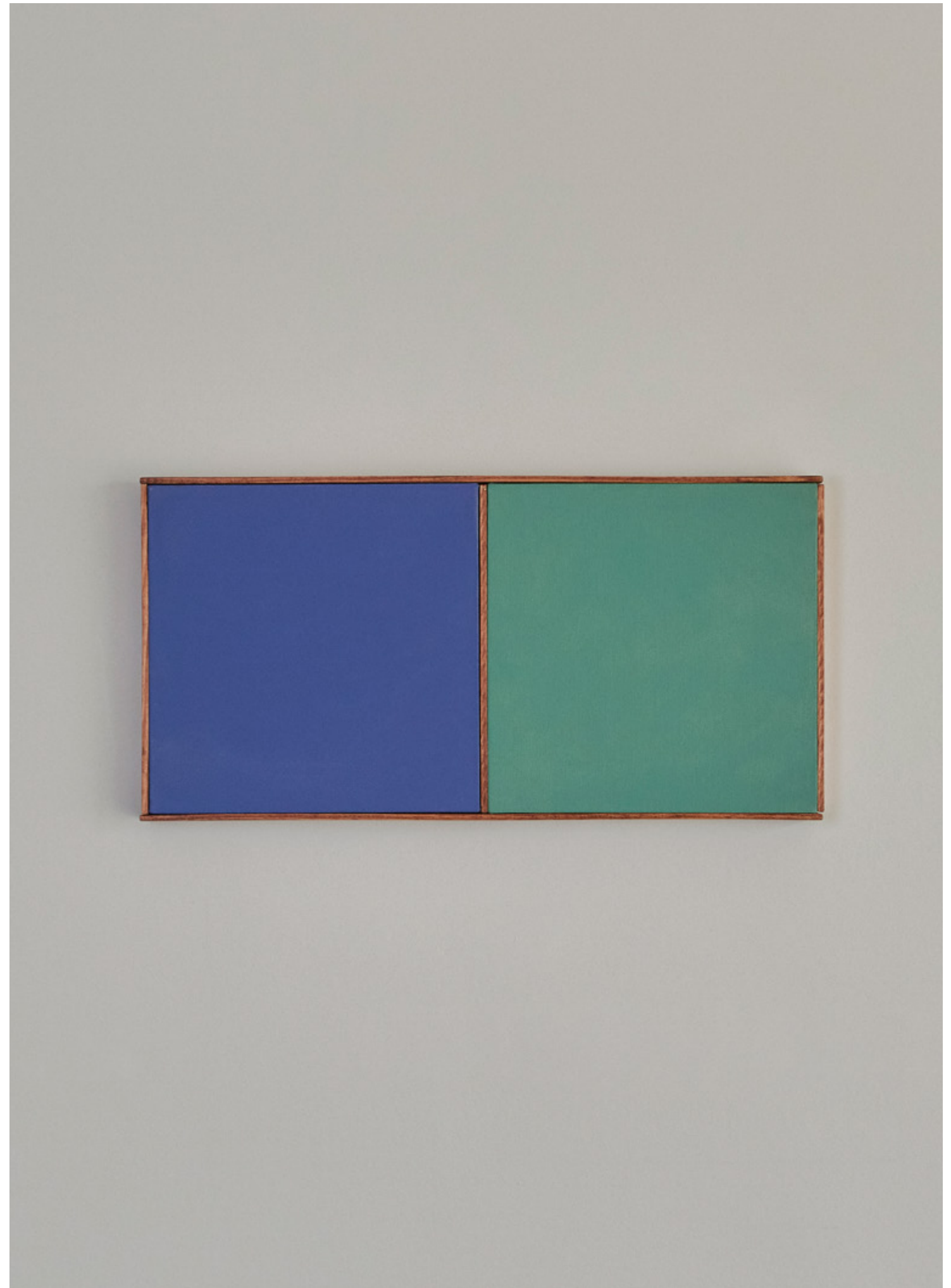
GATEWAY VII (2021)



GATEWAY VIII (2021)



GATEWAY IX (2021)



GATEWAY X (2021)



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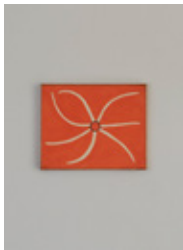
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exhibition location
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TELEGRAMS (2021)
Oil on wood.
— pg. 6


artwork
W 280mm
H 356mm
D 38mm



SUN (2021)
Oil on canvas.
— pg. 7

artwork
W 505mm
H 407mm
D 40mm

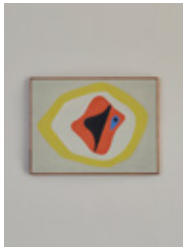
framed
W 520mm
H 420mm
D 40mm



TWO LOVERS SLEEPING (2021)
Oil on canvas.
— pg. 8

artwork
W 609mm
H 456mm
D 40mm


framed
W 620mm
H 468mm
D 40mm



FACE STUDY I (2021)
Oil on canvas.
— pg. 9

artwork
W 608mm
H 455mm
D 40mm

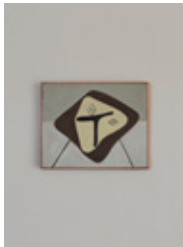
framed
W 619mm
H 468mm
D 40mm



THE COURIER (2021)
Oil on canvas.
— pg. 10

artwork
W 610mm
H 456mm
D 40mm

framed
W 623mm
H 468mm
D 40mm



FACE STUDY II (2021)
Oil on canvas.
— pg. 11

artwork
W 507mm
H 406mm
D 40mm


framed
W 520mm
H 420mm
D 40mm



KENT COTTAGE (2021)
Oil on canvas.
— pg. 12

artwork
W 505mm
H 407mm
D 40mm


framed
W 516mm
H 420mm
D 40mm



RED FIGURE AND FERN (2021)
Oil on canvas.
— pg. 13

artwork
W 507mm
H 407mm
D 40mm

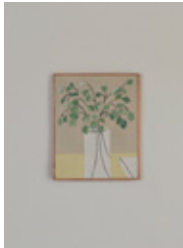
framed
W 519mm
H 420mm
D 40mm



VIEW OF ELYSIAN PARK (2021)
Oil on canvas.
— pg. 14

artwork
W 506mm
H 406mm
D 40mm


framed
W 520mm
H 420mm
D 40mm



EUCALYPTUS AT DAWN (2021)
Oil on canvas.
— pg. 15

artwork
W 406mm
H 506mm
D 40mm

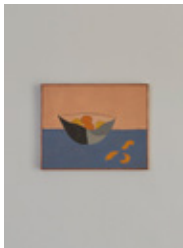
framed
W 420mm
H 518mm
D 40mm



EUCALYPTUS AT NIGHT (2021)
Oil on canvas.
— pg. 16

artwork
W 405mm
H 507mm
D 40mm

framed
W 420mm
H 520mm
D 40mm



MANDARINS WITH PEELS (2021)
Oil on canvas.
— pg. 17

artwork
W 506mm
H 402mm
D 40mm

framed
W 520mm
H 415mm
D 40mm



PERSIMMONS (2021)
Oil on canvas.
— pg. 18

artwork
W 506mm
H 406mm
D 40mm

framed
W 520mm
H 420mm
D 40mm



MORNING BLUEBERRIES (2021)
Oil on canvas.
— pg. 19

artwork
W 606mm
H 456mm
D 40mm

framed
W 620mm
H 470mm
D 40mm



GATEWAY I (2020)
Oil on canvas.
— pg. 20

artwork
W 623mm
H 305mm
D 40mm

framed
W 638mm
H 316mm
D 40mm



GATEWAY II (2021)
Oil on canvas.
— pg. 21

artwork
W 612mm
H 302mm
D 40mm

framed
W 626mm
H 316mm
D 40mm



GATEWAY III (2021)
Oil on canvas.
— pg. 22

artwork
W 614mm
H 304mm
D 40mm

framed
W 628mm
H 318mm
D 40mm



GATEWAY IV (2021)
Oil on canvas.
— pg. 23

artwork
W 612mm
H 304mm
D 40mm

framed
W 625mm
H 319mm
D 40mm



GATEWAY V (2021)
Oil on canvas.
— pg. 24

artwork
W 614mm
H 304mm
D 40mm


framed
W 627mm
H 318mm
D 40mm



GATEWAY VI (2021)
Oil on canvas.
— pg. 25

artwork
W 615mm
H 302mm
D 40mm


framed
W 626mm
H 316mm
D 40mm



GATEWAY VII (2021)
Oil on canvas.
— pg. 26

artwork
W 611mm
H 303mm
D 40mm

framed
W 624mm
H 316mm
D 40mm



GATEWAY VIII (2021)
Oil on canvas.
— pg. 27

artwork
W 612mm
H 305mm
D 40mm


framed
W 625mm
H 317mm
D 40mm



GATEWAY IX (2021)
Oil on canvas.
— pg. 28

artwork
W 612mm
H 304mm
D 40mm

framed
W 626mm
H 317mm
D 40mm



GATEWAY X (2021)
Oil on canvas.
— pg. 29

artwork
W 615mm
H 304mm
D 40mm

framed
W 629mm
H 317mm
D 40mm

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