



Martin Kline

Martin Kline

Dreams of Venice

May 1 – 30, 2015

Gallery NAGA

67 Newbury Street
Boston, Massachusetts
02116

www.gallerynaga.com

cover:

Venezia (detail)

2012

encaustic on panel

42x48x3^{1/2"}

Martin Kline: Dreams of Venice

Essay by Alex Bacon

For the last two decades Martin Kline has been a frequent visitor to Venice, Italy. His experiences there have resulted in a series of aptly titled works crafted in Kline's upstate New York studio. Struck by the quality of color and light particular to that water-limned city, along with Venice's captivating art and history, Kline has produced about twenty individual panels reflecting a range of interests. Since Kline conceives most of his work serially, though in an open-ended rather than closed fashion, it is likely that this number will increase, as inspiration strikes.

Kline's connection to Romanticism clearly informs this series. Each painting could be characterized as an abstract study of the coloristic experience of water and light in a Mediterranean climate, and in each, one discovers evidence of Kline's interest in the changing experience of sea and sky in Venice, at different times of day, and at different times of the year. The surface of each panel, even the most apparently monochromatic, offers gradations of tone and color. Some paintings follow a clear progression through the spectral range suggested by Kline's chosen palette, which consists of whites, purples, greens, and blues; while in select others—dark, close-valued, and subtle—Kline focuses on a single color and traces slight variations of hue within it. In several other works, dry gold pigment is introduced, alluding to Venice's historical wealth and pageantry. For example, the title of one, *Bucentaur*, refers to the state galley used by Venetian doges and the symbolic rite of marriage to the sea, which took place in the Adriatic annually on Ascension Day.

Other paintings have an inky, murky darkness, like water reflecting dim moonlight, as in *Venezia*. Here one finds the poetic milky silver that liquid surfaces assume when the sky is overcast, but somehow still luminous, or when one glimpses a canal, pond, puddle, or lake from such an oblique angle that all one sees is the light captured within that surface. These paintings suggest bodies of water where different reflections, objects, and shadows highlight its various parts differently.

Sometimes colors are paired together, as in a panel that is predominantly white, with a horizontal passage of turquoise through the center. The resulting shadows created from the built up layers of encaustic darken parts of the surface, producing additional tones and creating literal pictorial depth. The painting entitled *Lido* makes a coloristic association to a specific location, namely, the seven-mile long sandbar island that is Venice's beach. Titles such as, *Scarpa*, *Ca' D'oro*, *Casanova*, *Aqua Alte*, and *Laguna*, reveal Kline's associative instincts, in which experience and memory conjure times of day, historical figures, and specific settings.



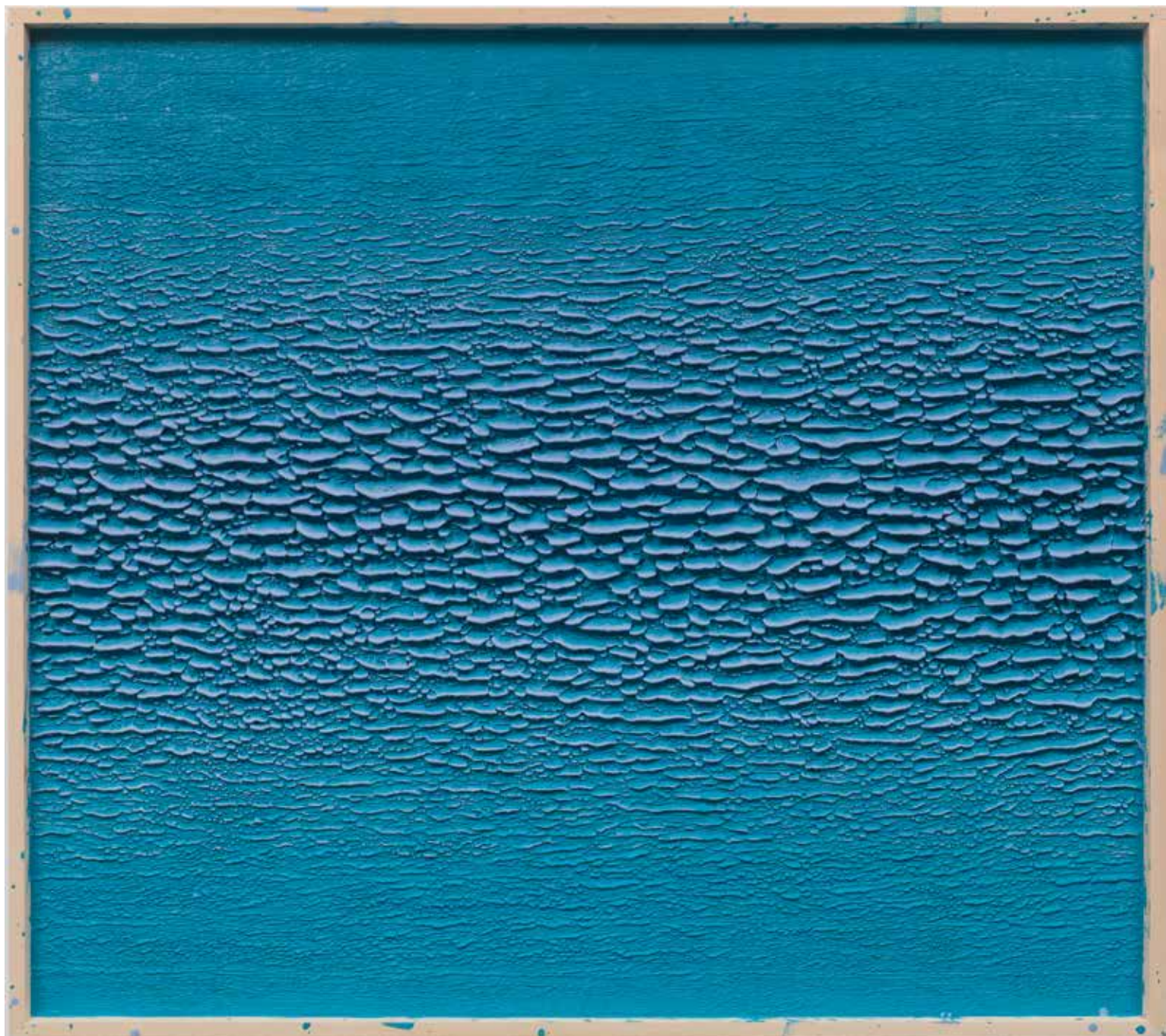
Death in Venice 2014 encaustic on panel 60x60x3^{1/2}"

Because of the often spectacular way water alters the light and color of its contents and surroundings, it has proven a fecund subject for a range of artists to interpret at different moments in history. These include Jean-Baptiste Tiepolo, whose own response to Venice in part inspired Kline's tribute – as in an oval-shaped panel entitled *Tiepolo's Mistress*, a favored format of that 18th-century painter – along with Claude Monet's intensely brilliant and rich palette, and John Singer Sargent's luminous watercolors, Caspar David Friedrich's moody nighttime land and seascapes, and in more recent times, Vija Celmins and Hiroshi Sugimoto. In its privileged art historical role, water as subject matter represents the balance between certain poles in our conception of how the world around us generates experiences—phenomenological, visual, or otherwise and how we make sense of them: between objecthood and immateriality, opacity and translucency, flux and stasis.

In their seascapes, both Celmins and Sugimoto drain their subject matter of chroma, evoking timelessness in a black and white monotone. Through painstakingly hand-rendered representations that seem to aspire to the photographic in their apparent verisimilitude, Celmins' seascapes could be anywhere. The same could also be said, formally speaking, for Sugimoto's photographs, but his dates and titles carefully mark each with a particular time and a place.

In this way both artists introduce a certain balance, different for each, between representation and abstraction, in the process insisting on the collapse of objectivity and non-objectivity in certain natural phenomena, like water. While Kline shares with Celmins and Sugimoto a hybrid investigation of water's components, he takes a nearly opposite tack from them in his suggestion of water's physical aspects, and in his use of color. This places Kline in relation to a different tradition, one that is closer to the coloristic and painterly work of artists like Matisse and Brice Marden, who use light and color as the foundation for a profound formal investigation.

Kline's relief-like paintings are sculptural and shadows are evident when natural or indoor light strikes the surface of the raised ridges of the encaustic and accentuates the tonal gradations. We see not the actual color of Venice's water, but the personal color sensibility of one man and his interests. While Kline's work demonstrates a strong connection to Romanticism in its emotive, and perhaps even spiritual, yearning, Kline's personal approach to nature is an abstracted one, radiant and intense in color and bathed in light. We don't find literal representations of Venice in Kline's work, rather, deeply felt experience is conveyed by these paintings. Only when Kline's paintings are underway, or are finished, does he title them and connect them to his specific associations, or, one could say—to his dreams.



Seiche 2012 encaustic on panel 48x54x3^{3/8}"

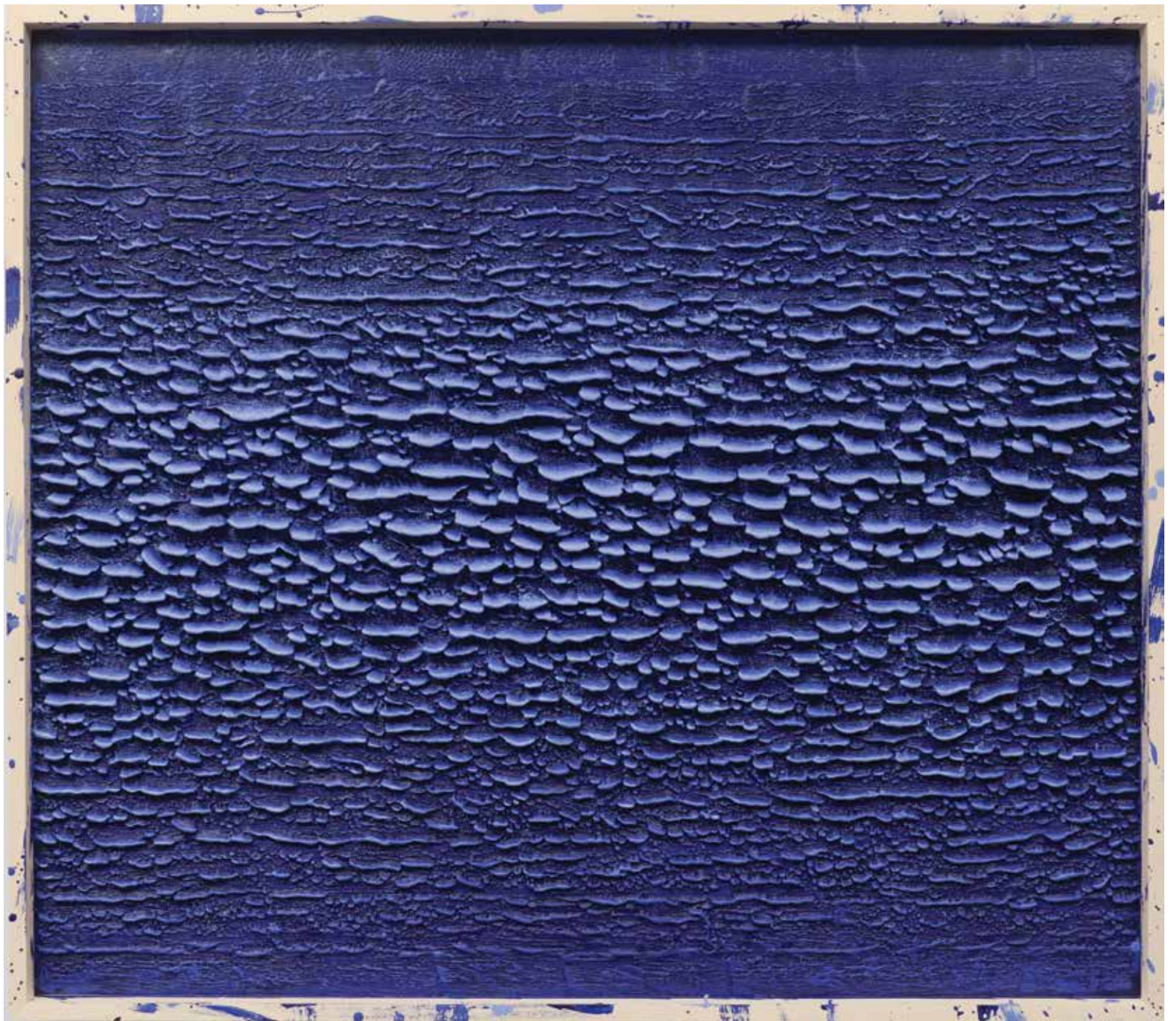
When one stands before a painting by Martin Kline, we intuit the suggestion of shimmering water from a medium, encaustic, that was once liquid and is now frozen. Kline's signature use of encaustic-pigmented wax that is heated and liquefied—is an excellent structural analogue for water for several reasons. Because of its translucence, encaustic affects the play of light that passes over and through it. All of these characteristics are actively manipulated by Kline in this series to contribute to the sense of each as a unified field that seems to somehow exude its own luminosity, rather than simply reflect that present in the space around them.

This points us towards a particular aspect of the quality of light in Venice. Because it is lined extensively by waterways, the light that comes down from above is also reflected up from below. This is what gives that cityscape its famous brilliance. Referencing this, Kline often captures in his scintillating aggregation of encaustic surfaces the sense of sunlight reflecting up off of a body of water. This luminosity is thus, technically speaking, bordered by, if also the result of, water, rather than contained within it. It is thus through Kline's handling of color and light that he most convincingly alludes to water. Kline's horizontal format is evocative of landscape, while his building up of thick impasto accretions of encaustic suggests a literal, almost geological, layering of materials. Conversely, the unevenness of each projected element suggests a nautical reference, that of the small wave crests that are a feature of Venice's waterways when seen from land, or by boat.

However, Kline has not mimetically catalogued either the surface appearance of a body of water, or the Venetian horizon line, these being the two worldly analogues the paintings suggest most. Instead, while each formal and material aspect of the Venetian paintings adds up to a unified experiential whole, that whole is not, in its totality, analogous to any one exterior factor. Rather, while each component has parallels in the natural world, each comes from a different part of that natural world.

What we are left to conclude is that, as with all the best abstract art, Kline's Venetian paintings draw much of their power from these outside contributing factors, and that their particular gravitas ultimately lies in their evocation of an aesthetic experience unique to painting alone. For only in the particular aesthetic world constructed in each individual Venetian painting do all these components add up to an experiential whole. In the shallow, physical space of one of Kline's panels a variety of qualities of light and space, solids and liquids, add up to a unique singularity. The immediacy, physicality, luminosity that these works embody all contain qualities that distantly suggest seascapes seen from above or laterally, from both close and afar, and that are variously solid and mutable.

None of these paintings were executed in Venice. Harnessing the distance from Italy to his studio, Kline is able to capture the overall sensation that accompanies his experience of Venice. The goal of this group of works is not to simply record one artist's experience of that place, since that will always be inherently singular as each person's experiences are particular to his or her particular biological, cultural, geographic, and social make-up.



Venezia 2012 encaustic on panel 42x48x9^{1/2}"

Instead, the purpose of these works is to convey what Kline felt when confronted by his immersion into Venice, setting up a situation whereby the nature of that experience, rather than its exact contours, is summoned for the viewer. Kline takes up the abstract and shared language of paint, color, and light to elicit a response from us. We encounter in these works Kline's particular conception of his experience, which is both intuitive and conceptual because it is part observed, part remembered, and part translated from one medium—the transient, mutable and specific one of human vision and memory—to another, the comparably more concrete, actual, and phenomenologically present one of painting.

By way of the painterly terms of color and light, Kline's new Venetian series enacts the structural, rather than symbolic, underpinnings of his memory and the fusion of his experiences. The resulting paintings thus act on the viewer in abstract rhythmic terms like tempo, intensity, and duration. In a given Venetian painting, the original referents are reduced to a touchstone or an anecdote of personal importance to the painter. The sheer phenomenological and optical experience presented by viewing each painting in the here-and-now lures the viewer into a sensual exploration of memory and knowledge. Martin Kline conveys something experientially significant in this compelling series.

Alex Bacon

New York, April 2014

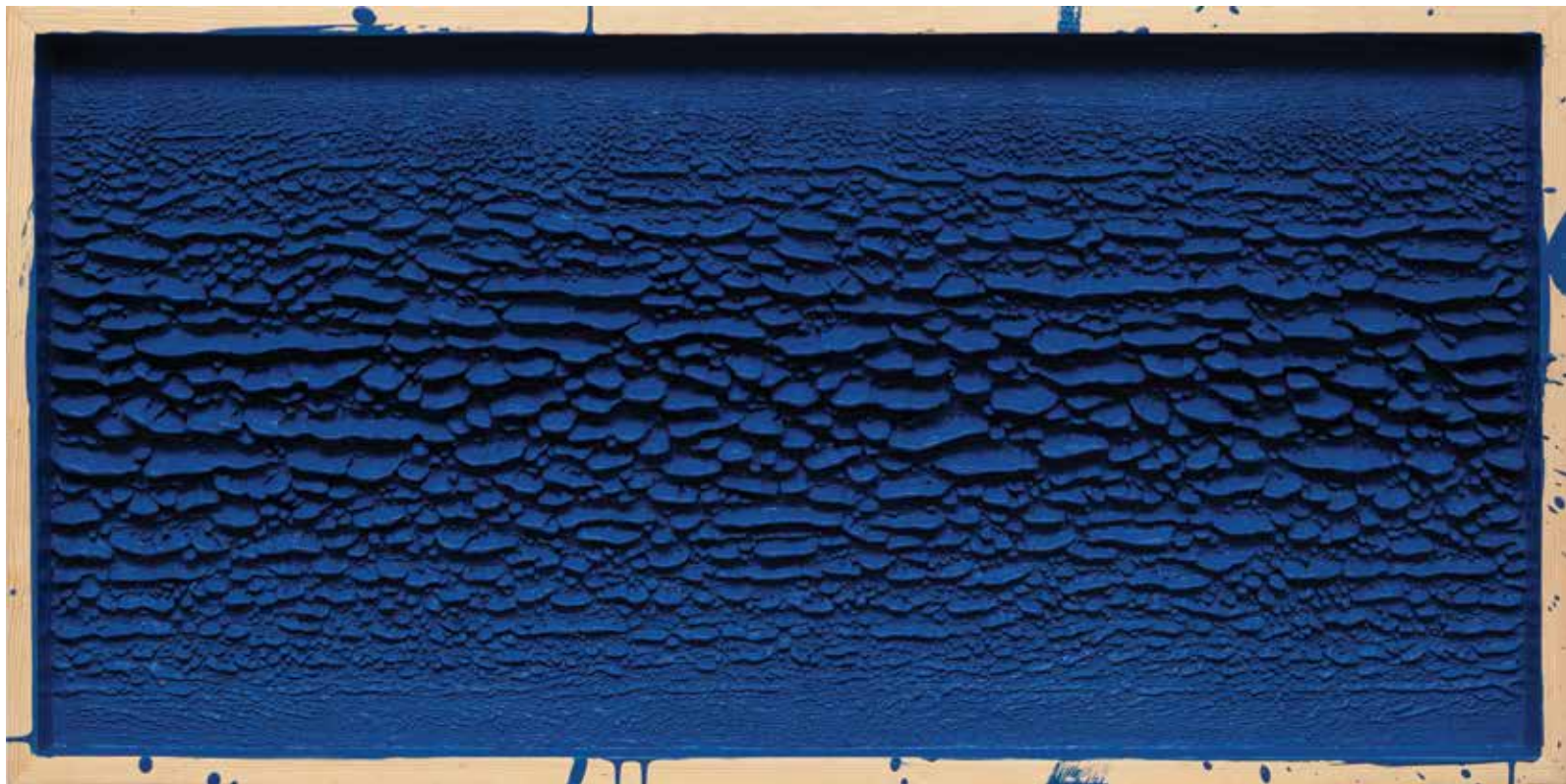
Alex Bacon is a scholar, writer, and curator based in New York City. He is a regular contributor to the Brooklyn Rail, has taught at the School of Visual Arts, New York, and has served as a guest critic in the graduate painting department of the Rhode Island School of Design and AKV/St. Joost. He has curated several exhibitions, including: Correspondences: Ad Reinhardt at 100 (Ad Reinhardt Foundation, New York); Politics of Surface (Berthold Pott, Cologne); 173 E. 94th St./Chaussée de Waterloo 550 (Paul Kasmin in collaboration with Middlemarch, Brussels); 24/7 (Monte Carlo, Miami Beach); and Lumination (Patricia Low Contemporary, Gstaad). He has spoken at numerous institutions, including Harvard; Princeton; the ICA, London; RISD; the Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt; and the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. He has been writer-in-residence at the Miami Rail, and a judge for the Wynn Newhouse Awards. He is currently finishing up his PhD in art history at Princeton, with a dissertation on the first decade of Frank Stella's career. Among his publications Bacon is co-editor, with Hal Foster, of a collection of essays on Richard Hamilton (MIT Press, 2009), as well as the author of texts in catalogs and edited volumes on artists such as Francis Alÿs, Richard Pousette-Dart, Gilbert & George, Robert Irwin, Zak Kitznick, and Reinhardt.



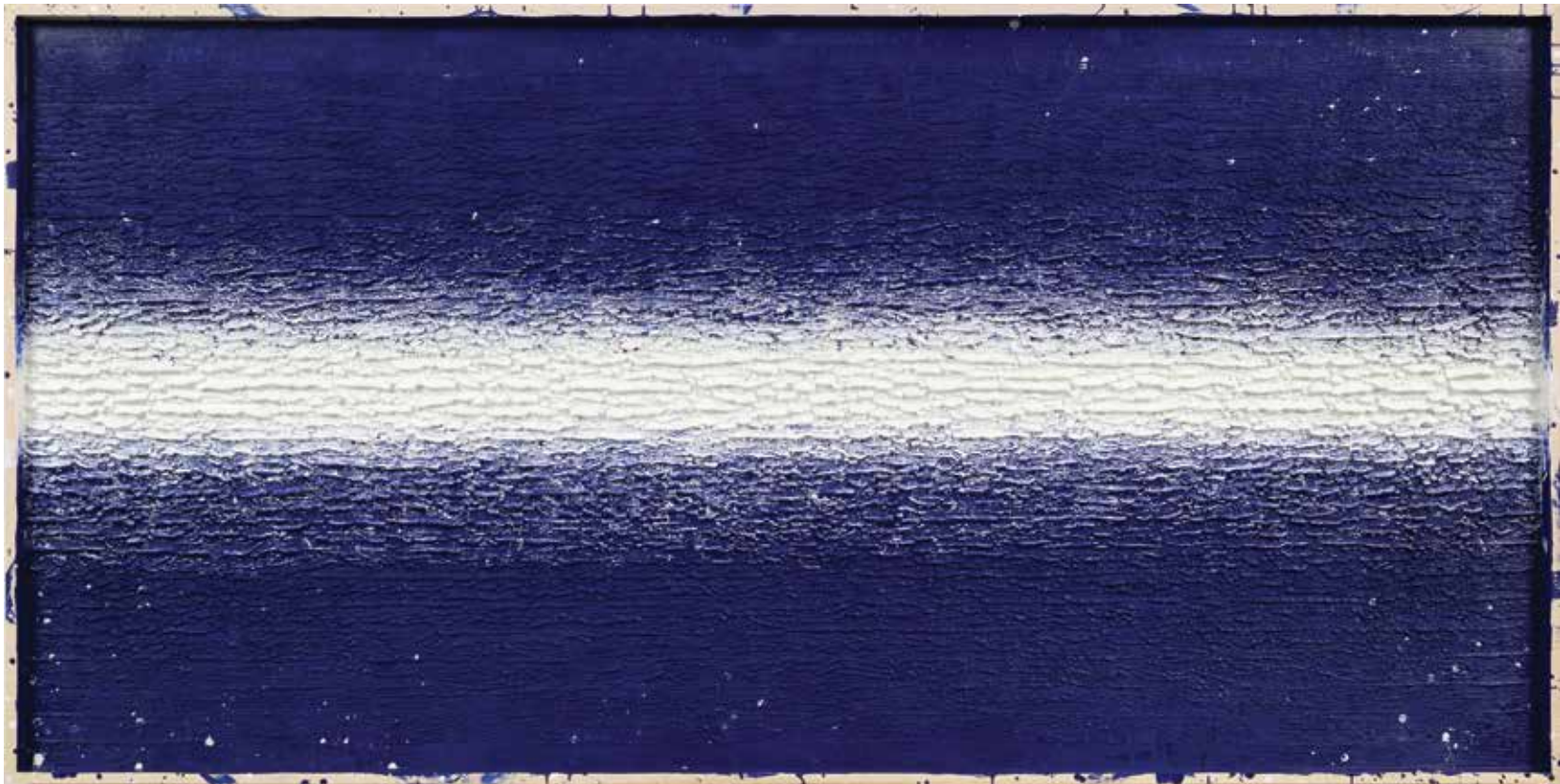
The Merry Gondolier 2012 encaustic on panel 50x40x5"



Little Lido 2015 encaustic on panel 15x30x2^{7/8}"



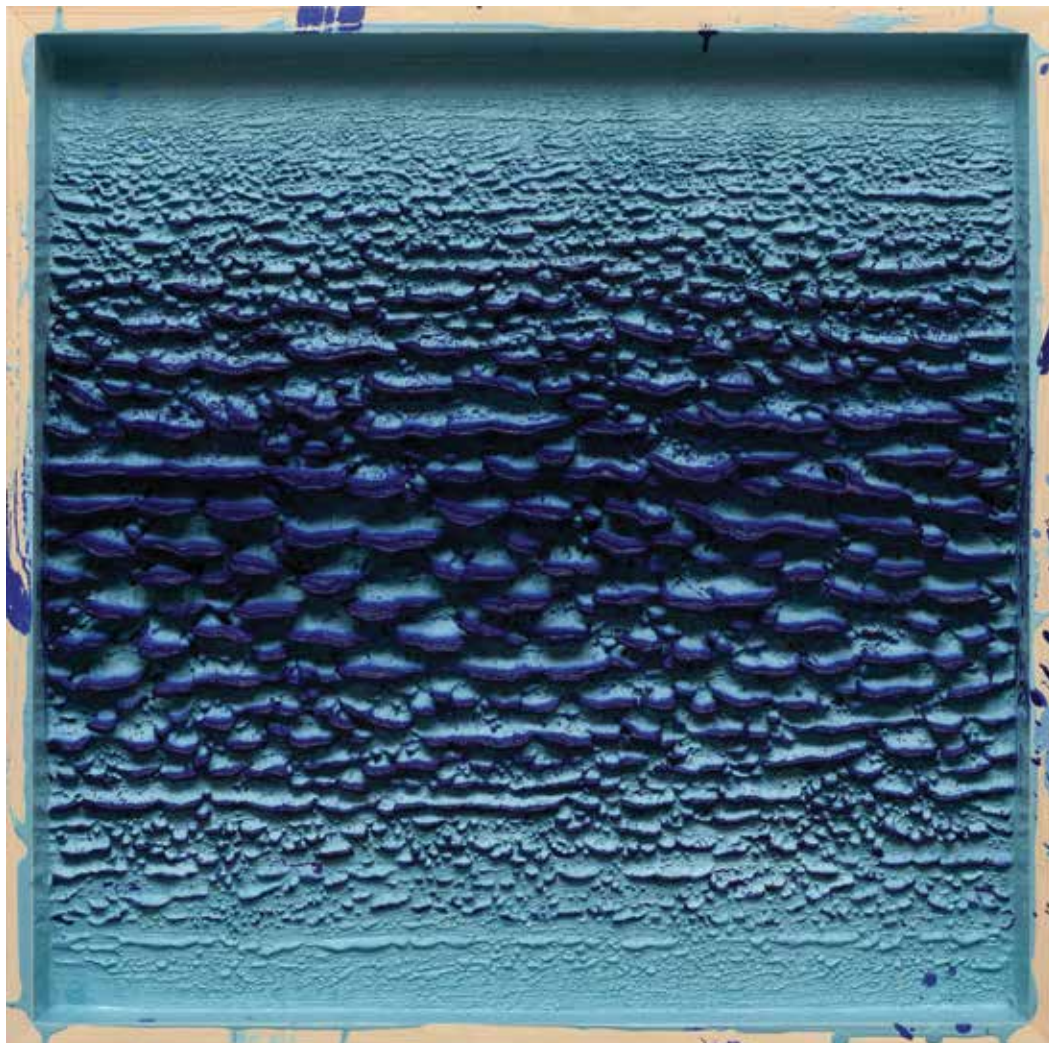
Lido Blue 2015 encaustic on panel 20x40x2^{1/2}"



Dreams of Venice 2014 encaustic on panel 48x96x3^{1/2}"



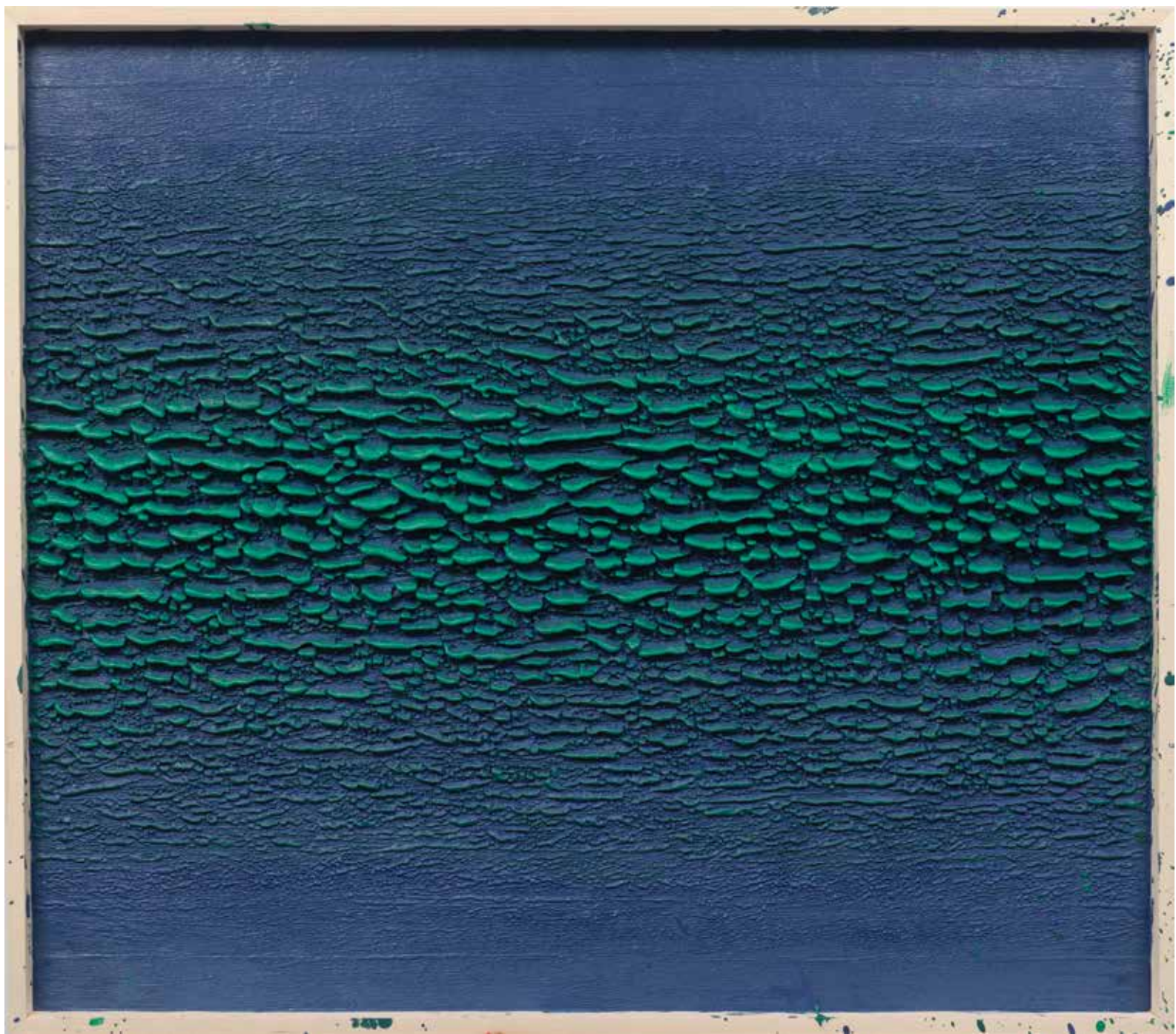
Little Tadzio 2015 encaustic on panel 12x24x2^{7/8}"



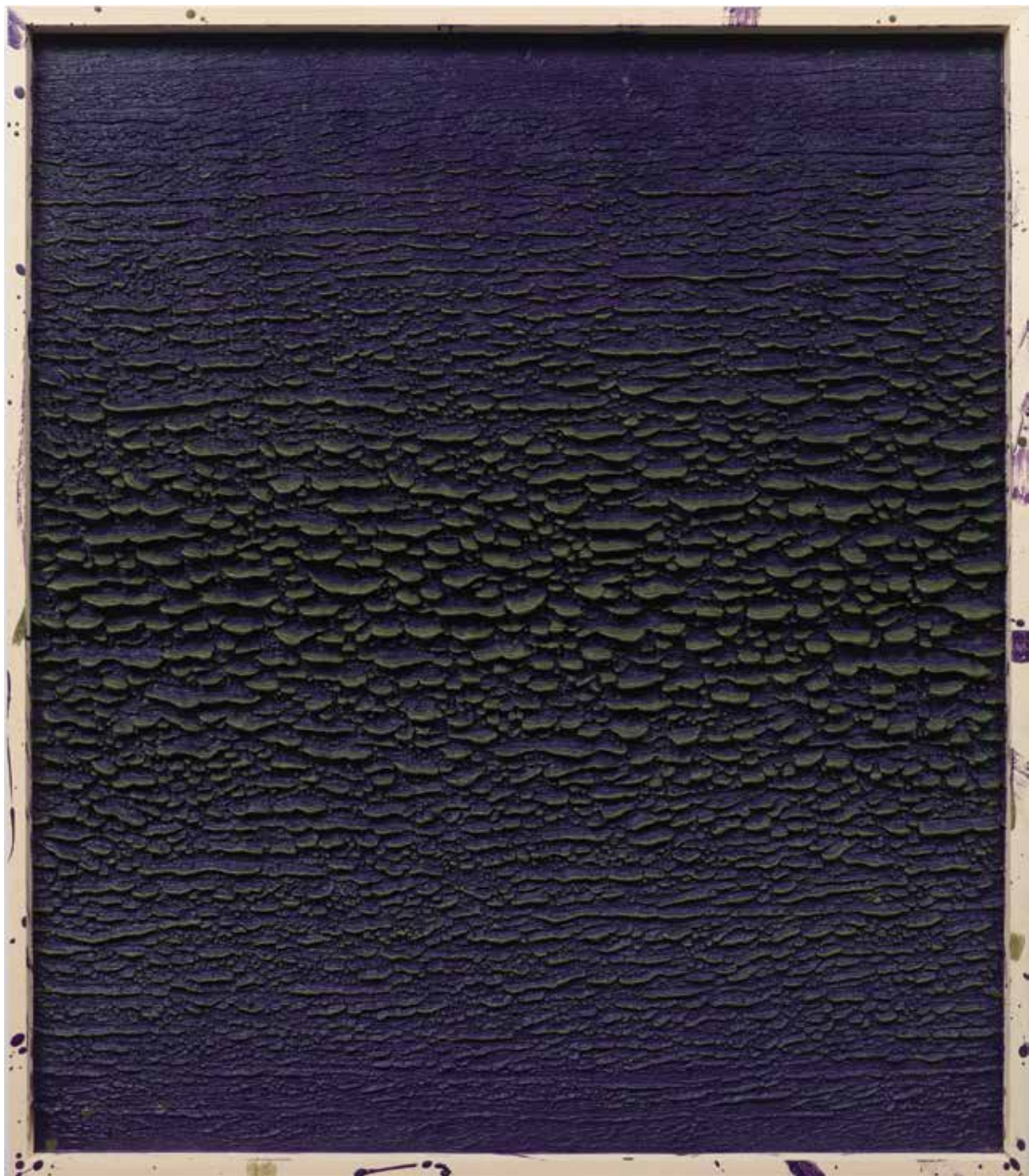
Little Serenissima 2015 encaustic on panel 24x24x3^{1/2}"



Veronese e Tiziano 2012 encaustic on panel 48x54x3^{1/2}"



Turner in Venezia 2012 encaustic on panel 42x48x3^{3/8}"



Nocturne in Venezia 2013 encaustic on panel 48x42x3^{1/2}"



Venetian Bloom 2015 encaustic on panel 9x9x2^{1/2}"



Doge's Bloom 2015 encaustic on panel 12x12x2^{3/4}"

MARTIN KLINE

Born 1961, Norwalk, Ohio

Lives and works in Rhinebeck, New York and New York City

Education

1983 Bachelor of Fine Arts, Ohio University,
Athens, Ohio

One Person Exhibitions

2015 Boston, Massachusetts, Gallery NAGA, *Dreams of Venice*
Rhinebeck, New York, The Gallery at Milan Hollow Farm,
Dreams of Venice

2013 Geneva, Switzerland, Gowen Contemporary, *Tabula Rasa*
Houston, Texas, Meredith Long & Company,
Martin Kline: Recent Paintings and Sculpture

2012- Roslyn Harbor, New York, Nassau County Museum of Art,
2013 *Martin Kline: Excerpts in Encaustic*

2012 New Britain, Connecticut, New Britain Museum of American
Art, *Martin Kline: Romantic Nature*

2011 Houston, Texas, Meredith Long & Company,
Excursions with Martin Kline
Geneva, Switzerland, Gowen Contemporary,
Abstraction Rooted into the World

2009 Houston, Texas, Meredith Long & Company,
Nature into Structure

2008 New York, New York, Jason McCoy Inc., *Monochrome*

2007 Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Haggerty Museum of Art,
Martin Kline, Nature and Culture

2006 New York, New York, Jason McCoy Inc., *Made in Japan*

2005 New York, New York, Jason McCoy Inc.,
Truth Awakens as Fiction: The Art of Martin Kline,
Copenhagen, Denmark, Jason McCoy Inc.,
Copenhagen Suite: New Oilstick Drawings

2004 New York, New York, Jason McCoy Inc., *Stainless Steel Painting*

2002 New York, New York, Marlborough Chelsea, *Painting Sculpture*

2000 New York, New York, Marlborough Gallery, *New Works*

1996 New York, New York, 65 Thompson Street, Gagosian Gallery,
Grids
Columbus, Ohio, Allez les Filles Gallery, *Martin Kline*

1995 Zurich, Switzerland, ACP Gallerie, *Large Watercolors*

1994 New York, New York, Stephen Mazoh, *Yuccas*

1993 Zurich, Switzerland, ACP Gallerie, *17 Drawings*

1992 New York, New York, Stephen Mazoh, *Recent Drawings*

1985 Portland, Oregon, Oregon Institute of Technology, *Drawings*

1984 Portland, Oregon, Sumus Gallery, *Egyptian Themes*

1983 Athens, Ohio, Small Space Gallery, *Line Drawings*

Group Exhibitions

2013 Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Art Museums,
Sackler Museum, *Wax Works*

2011 Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Art Museums,
Fogg Museum, *The Western Tradition: Art Since the Renaissance*
New York, New York, Marlborough Chelsea,
Powders, a Phial and a Paper Book
Mexico City, Mexico, Isabel la Católica, *Piel/Skin*

2010 New York, New York, Lehmann Maupin,
Painting and Sculpture at Lehmann Maupin
New York, New York, Jason McCoy Inc., *I am Nature*
West Palm Beach, Florida., Eaton Fine Art, Inc., *Anti Icon*

2007 New York, New York, Paula Cooper Gallery, *Grids: Carl Andre*,
Jennifer Bartlett, Hans Hacke, Martin Kline, Sherrie Levine, Sol LeWitt,
Atsuko Tanaka, John Trembly, Dan Walsh, Jackie Winsor

2006 New York, New York, Denise Bibro Fine Art, *Head Over Hand*

2005 New York, New York, SUNY, Samuel Dorsky
Museum of Art, *Encaustic Works 2005*
New Paltz, New York, Jason McCoy Inc.,
Summer Exhibition: Gallery Artists

2004 Madrid, Spain, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia,
Los Monocromo
Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Art Museums,
Fogg Museum, *The Western Tradition: Art Since the Renaissance*

2003 New York, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art,
Recent Acquisitions: Works on Paper
Cleveland, Ohio, Cleveland Museum of Art,
Drawing Modern, Works from the Agnes Gund Collection
Houston, Texas, Museum of Fine Arts Houston,
*Process and Possibility: Contemporary Drawing in the Museum of Fine
Arts Collection*
New York, New York, Marlborough Chelsea, *Group Exhibition*
Atlanta, Georgia, Marcia Wood Gallery, *Encaustic Now/ Series 2*
Chicago, Illinois, Flatfile Contemporary, *Inaugural Exhibition*
Chautauqua, New York, Chautauqua Center for Visual Art,
Al Held, Martin Kline, Kim Anno: Watercolors

2002 New London, Connecticut, Connecticut College, Cummings Art
Center, *Encaustic Painting*
New York, New York, Marlborough Chelsea,
Sculpture, Gallery Artists
New York, New York, Paul Rodgers gW Gallery, *Mono-Chrome*
New York, New York, Chambers Fine Art,
Rocks and Art, Nature Found and Made

2001 New York, New York, Marlborough Gallery, *Summer Exhibition: Gallery Artists*
Glens Falls, New York, The Hyde Collection Art Museum
Fredonia, New York, SUNY College at Fredonia, Michael C. Rockefeller Arts Center Gallery
Youngstown, Ohio, Butler Institute of American Art
Wayne, New Jersey, William Patterson University, Ben Shahn Gallery
Tuscaloosa, Alabama, University of Alabama, Sarah Moody Gallery of Art, *Watercolor: In The Abstract*

2000 New York, New York, Marlborough Gallery, *Summer Exhibition: Gallery Artists*
New York, New York, Gagosian Gallery (Chelsea), *Art 2000*
New York, New York, Matthew Marks Gallery, *Drawings and Photographs*

1999-2000 Montclair, New Jersey The Montclair Art Museum, *Waxing Poetic: Encaustic Art in America*
Knoxville, Tennessee, Knoxville Museum of Art, *Waxing Poetic: Encaustic Art in America*

1999 New York, New York, Marlborough Gallery, *Summer Exhibition: Gallery Artists*

1998 Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, Bard College, *Trace*
New York, New York, James Graham & Sons, *Drawings*
New York, New York, Jason McCoy Inc., *Summer Group Show*

1997 New York, New York, Robert Steele Gallery
Union, New Jersey, James Howe Fine Arts Gallery of Kean University, *Intimate Universe (Revisited)*
New York, New York, Elizabeth Harris Gallery, *Purely Painting*

1996 Bad Ragaz, Switzerland, Grand Hotels Resort, *Ornamente und Strukturen*

1995 Kornwestheim, Germany, Galerie der Stadt Kornwestheim, *Ornamentale Tendenzen: Martin Kline, Claude Sandos, Susanna Taras*

1994 Portland, Oregon, Butters Gallery, *October Group Show*

1993 New York, New York, Leo Castelli Gallery, *Drawings, 30th Anniversary Exhibition*
Venice, Italy, Peggy Guggenheim Collection, and New York, New York Guggenheim Museum SoHo, *Drawing the Line Against AIDS*
Paramus, New Jersey, Bergen Museum of Art and Science, *A Moment Becomes Eternity: Flowers as Image*

1992 New York, New York, Metro Pictures Gallery, *Freedom of Expression '92*

1991 New York, New York, Lorence Monk Gallery, *Drawings*
New York, New York, Michael Walls Gallery, *Entr'Acte*

1990 New York, New York, Michael Walls Gallery, *The Summer Exhibition 1990: Thirty Artists*

1987-1989 Sarasota, Florida, Jack Voorhies Gallery, *Group Exhibitions*

1986 Pocatello, Idaho, Idaho State University, *Big Sky Biennial IV*
Portland, Oregon, *Art in the Mayor's Office*
Coos Bay, Oregon, Coos Art Museum, *Gary Forner, Martin Kline, Nan Yragui*

1985 Stockton, California, Stockton, *National Print and Drawing Exhibition*
Salem, Oregon, Oregon State Fair, *All Oregon Art Annual*
Portland, Oregon, Portland Art Museum, and Coos Bay Art Museum, *Oregon Biennial*
Condon, Oregon, *Summit Spring's Art Slate '85*

1984 Portland, Oregon, Portland Art Association, *Gallery Artists*
Salem, Oregon, Oregon State Fair, *All Oregon Art Annual*

Collections

Albertina, Vienna, Austria

Atlantic Pacific Fellowship, Miyakonojo, Japan

Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, Maryland

Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York

The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio

Harvard University Art Museums, Fogg Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts

High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia

John Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland

Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, Missouri

The Kennedy Museum of Art, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York

The Morgan Library & Museum, New York, New York

The Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Houston, Texas

New Britain Museum of American Art, New Britain, Connecticut

Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon

Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, New Jersey

Triton Foundation, Belgium

Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Connecticut

The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York

The Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut

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