

An abstract painting featuring broad, horizontal bands of color. The top section is a bright, textured white or light yellow, overlaid with thin, dark, gestural lines. Below this, a wide band of vibrant red and orange dominates the middle. The bottom section consists of darker, more muted tones of red and brown, with some lighter, textured areas. The overall effect is one of dynamic movement and layered textures.

Flooded Paintings | Barnaby Furnas

January 21, 2019 – August 3, 2019

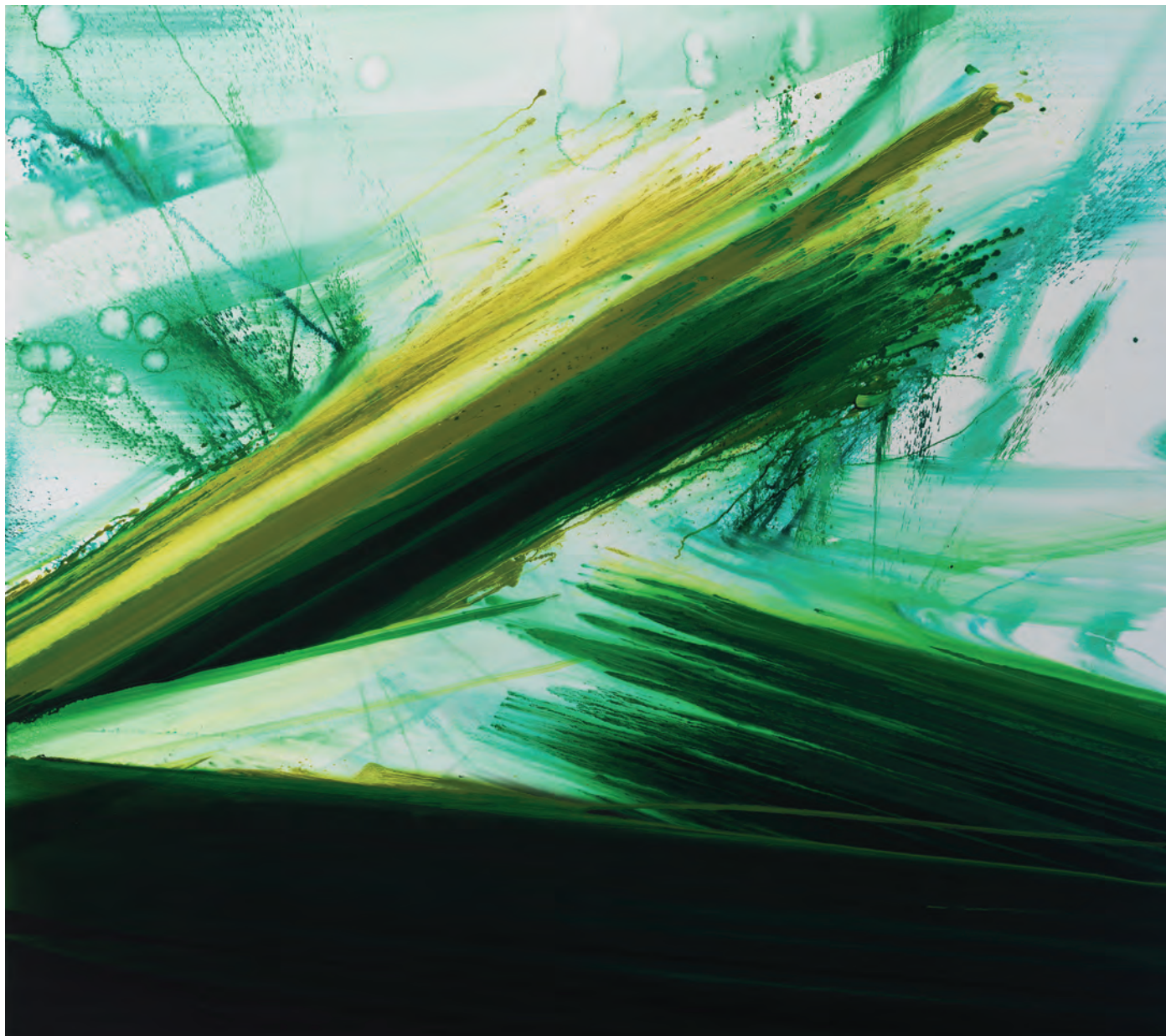
Barnaby Furnas

Barnaby Furnas's monumental abstract paintings may resemble giant brush strokes or wall-sized spills, but their origins actually lie in figurative depictions of biblical scenes. Born in Philadelphia and raised a Quaker, Furnas made his first *Flood* painting in 2005 as part of a commission for the Lever House on Park Avenue. For that project, titled *Apocalypse*, he envisioned the end times, with demons descending upon and dismembering the damned — people left behind after the Rapture. The accompanying canvas depicts the aftermath, a world awash in blood, rendered in strong red horizontal swaths that obscure a hazy blue sky and sun. He has since become as well-known for his *Flood* paintings dominated by washes of red as for his figurative work.

For his installation at 375 Hudson, Furnas has created works (all 2019) that respond to the architectural space with dynamic angles and “frothy” areas of paint squirts and splatters to rival the veined marble walls and dramatic patterned floor. These works represent a break from his previous *Flood* paintings in that most do not retain a hint of sky and sun. Furnas has fully embraced them as abstractions, taking pleasure in the medium of paint itself. More notably, and to his own surprise, he has also embraced colors in addition to his familiar reds, adding viridian, yellow, magenta, and silver to his palette.

Furnas, who received his MFA from Columbia University in 2000, cites as artistic influences Robert Rauschenberg's “flows” of the 1960s, for which the artist poured truckloads of asphalt, concrete and glue down hillsides, and the monochromatic paintings of Abstract Expressionist Barnett Newman, for their experience of color. Both influences are perfectly embodied in Furnas's canvases of poured color.

To create his paintings, whether figurative or abstract, Furnas likes to use processes that mimic the subject matter — squirting ink from syringes for spurting blood, for example, or pouring paint for floods. While the works appear gestural, Furnas doesn't exactly make the gesture, and often doesn't even touch the canvas directly. Instead, he pours high-pigment paint onto a pitched canvas — combining closely related hues as well as complementary colors — then engages in his own brand of “spill management” by spraying, pouring, wiping, and staining. Historically, this was achieved through an elaborate setup that involved scaffolding and a team of assistants. But the new works were made using a system created for Furnas by MIT Media Lab engineers at the Artmatr studio on 17th Street. They



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devised a hoist for the canvases and a robotic contraption that he can equip with various instruments to create the sought-after effects: hoses, squeegee, airbrush, syringes, water nozzle, all of which Furnas can control with a joystick. Previously, he wasn't able to reach into the middle of the largest works, with most of the paint manipulation happening from the periphery and from planks installed overhead that required a precarious balancing act on his part. The new setup allows him greater access to the entire canvas, and the ability to work alone at a large scale.

Letting gravity do most the work, Furnas coaxes the paint along with such tools as squeegees and handheld spray misters to dilute the paint and inks. "You can guide it, but you can't control it," Furnas says. Depending on the amount of water sprayed on the canvas, the different pigments may blend or bleed into each other, or a certain pigment may be drawn out — a dark ink might shoot off bright magenta tendrils, for example. "I get to decide if it's good. I stare at it for a long time. I wait. Quakers believe that you will tell yourself the answer if you give yourself the time and space." Of course, the paintings don't always turn out the way he wants, so he may reposition the canvas and pour again, or scrap it and start over.

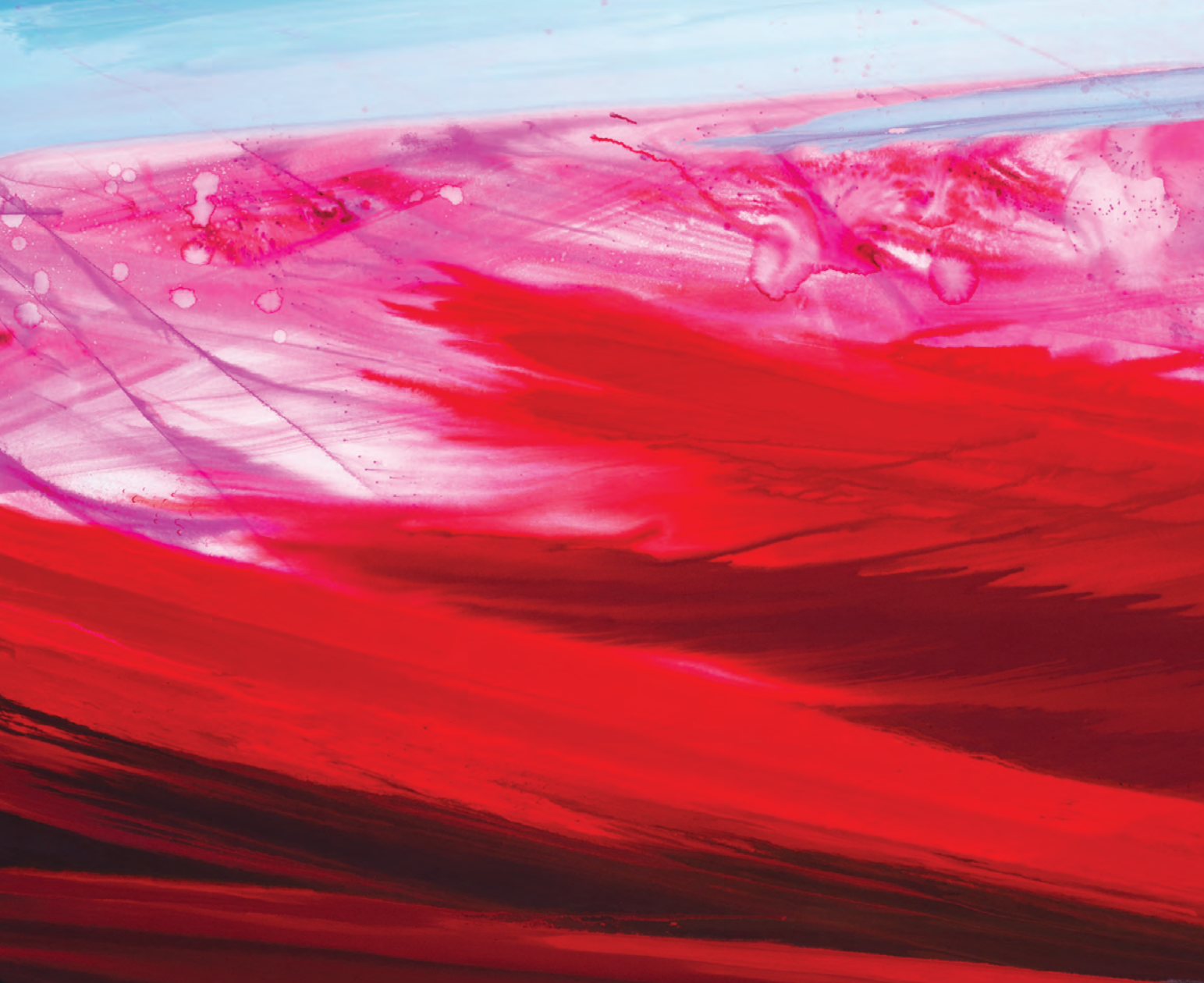
While the preparation to create a *Flood* painting can take days — stretching the canvas, applying gesso, laying a background — an actual pour takes only 30 or so minutes. "The simplest gesture takes the most time," says Furnas. "Those 30 minutes for me are pure bliss; when that much paint is moving at once there's no time to be bothered by anything else." Unlike his figurative paintings, where he can step back, scrutinize and revise — "they're a battle every step of the way," he says — the poured works provide purely formal, meditative moments in which he surrenders to the medium and the process, and derives satisfaction from bringing order to disorder.

With their paradoxical qualities of actual stillness and implied movement, Furnas's bold paintings are attention-grabbing, yet invite quiet contemplation. "To witness something that has so much stimulation yet isn't moving," says Furnas, "that's where I find pleasure in art."

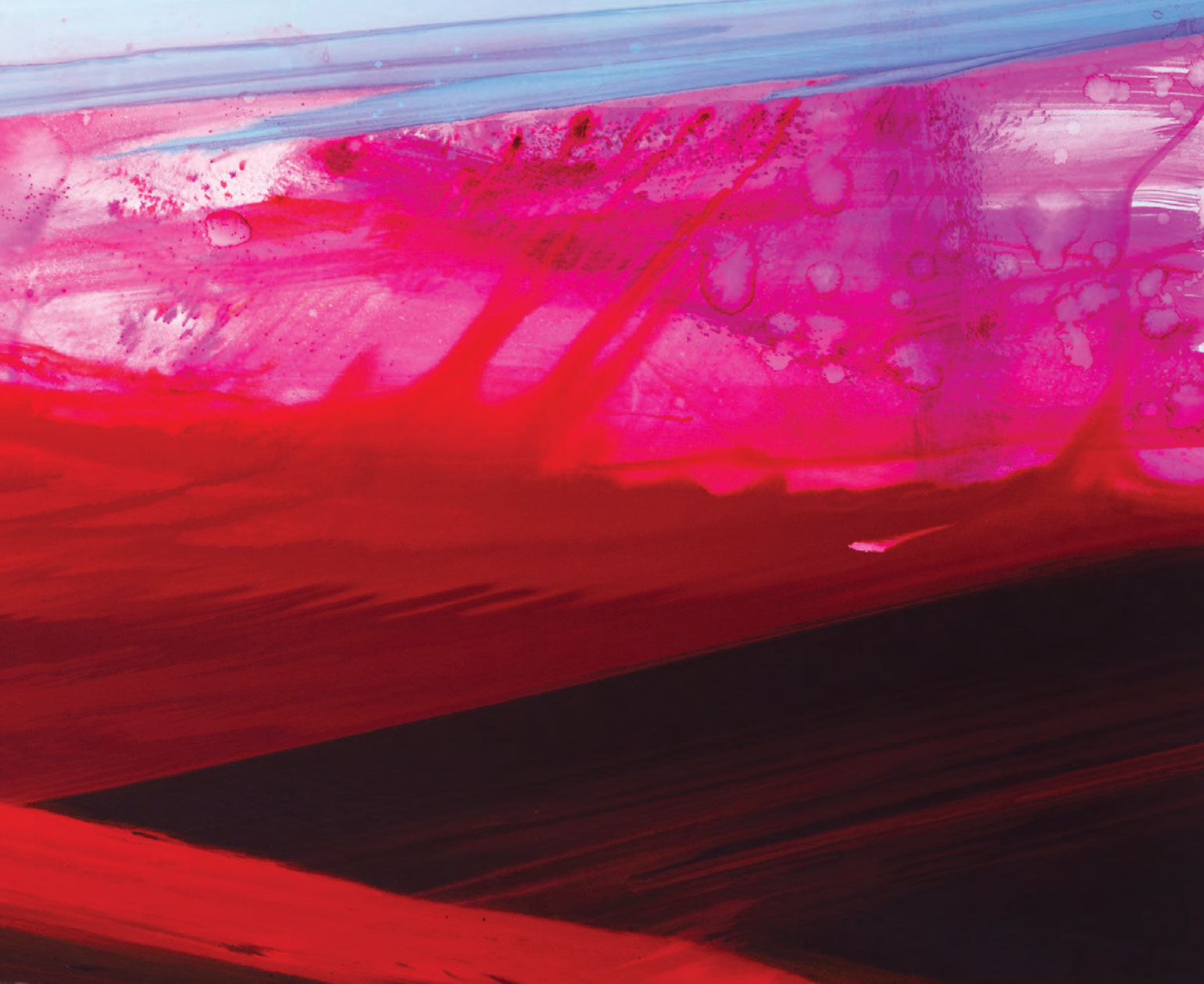
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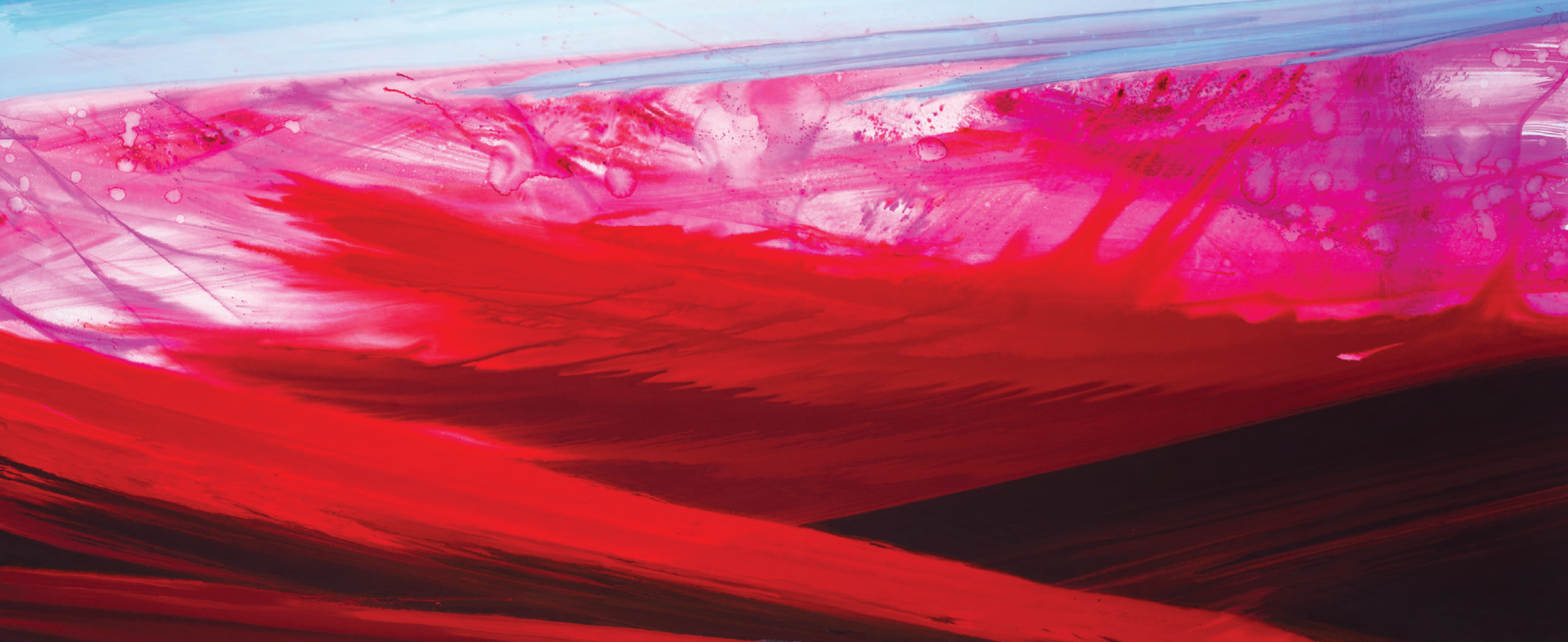
untitled (viridian), 2019, Acrylic, pigment dispersions, dye and pencil on canvas, 7.16 x 8 feet





untitled (crimson), 2019, Acrylic, pigment dispersions, dye and pencil on canvas, 7.5 x 15 feet (detail)





untitled (crimson), 2019, Acrylic, pigment dispersions, dye and pencil on canvas, 7.5 x 15 feet (detail)

375 Hudson Street/Lobby Gallery

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Acknowledgments

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We thank the artist Barnaby Furnas and the MARIANNE BOESKY GALLERY, 507 and 509 West 24th Street, New York, NY 10011, www.boeskygallery.com, (T) 212.680.9889 for the loan of the paintings in this exhibit.

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About Stephanie Cash

Stephanie Cash is a New York-based editor and writer. She was the Executive Editor of BURNAWAY in Atlanta in 2013-18, and a staff editor at Art in America magazine in New York from 1993 to 2012.

About Jay Grimm Art Advisory

Jay Grimm is an independent arts professional with over 25 years of experience in the New York gallery world. For more information please contact Jay@jaygrimm.com, (T) 917.690.0035

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Photography: Object Studies

For more information about Barnaby Furnas, please contact www.boeskygallery.com.

375 Hudson Street is one of 12 buildings in the Hudson Square Properties portfolio, a joint venture of Trinity Church Wall Street, Norges Bank Real Estate Management and Hines. Hines serves as the venture's operating partner.

Cover: untitled (magenta), 2019, Acrylic, pigment dispersions, dye and pencil on canvas, 7.5 x 12 feet (detail)