



# NATALIE LAVELLE PICTORIAL SPACE

October 13 - November 6, 2021

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FIVE WALLS

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## Silhouettes of a rectangle

By **Zali Matthews**

The art historian Richard Shiff once quoted American sculptor Richard Serra as claiming that squares typically appear heavier than rectangles of the same size. What Serra identifies here is an innate space, or 'gap', between a shape's physical attributes and pictorial qualities as perceived by the viewer. With his assertion comes the questions: why should rectangles appear lighter than squares? Where does the pictorial diverge from the physical, and where do they convene?

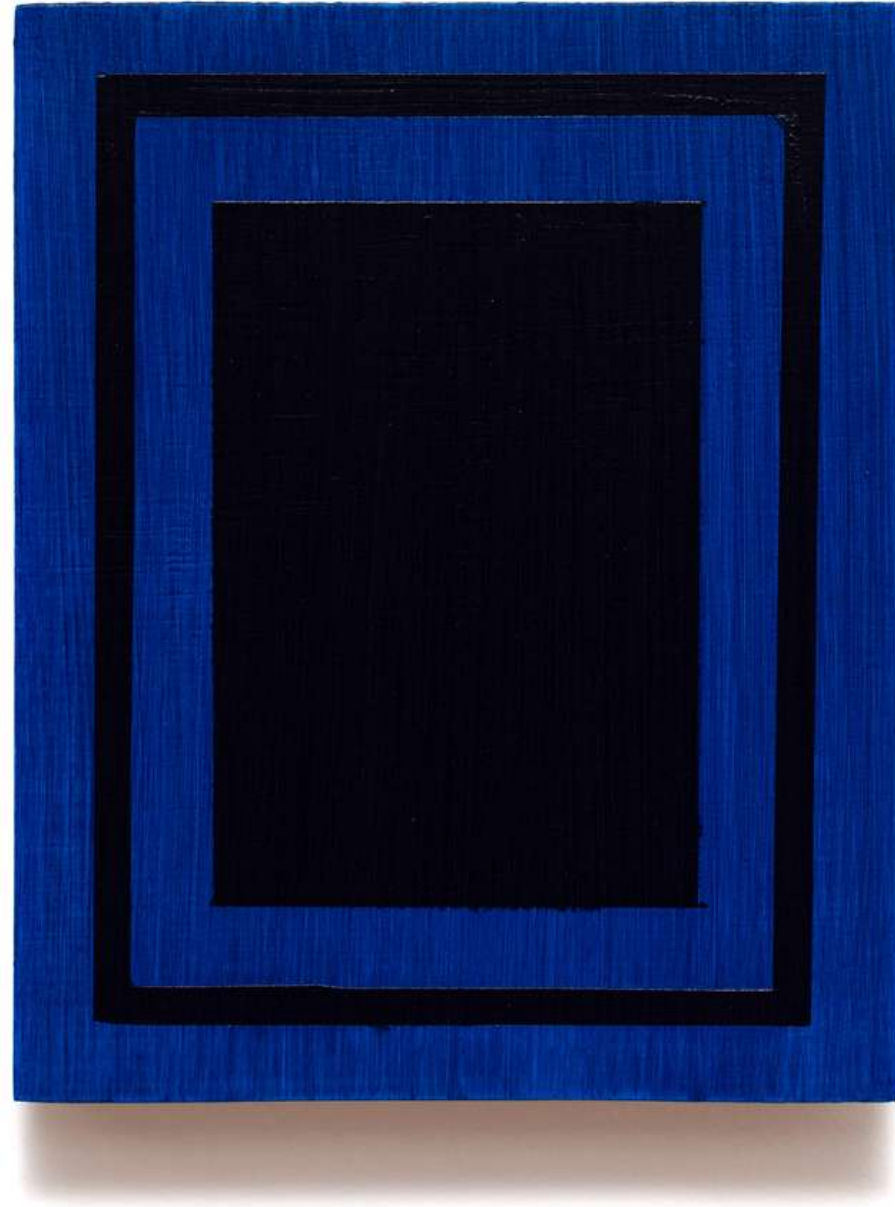
Natalie Lavelle's latest exhibition, Pictorial Space, ventures to answer these questions – or, rather, respond to them – with a variety of small-scale acrylic works on board and linen, each testing the boundaries between their pictorial and physical capacities. Painting forms a primary focus of these explorations: several works have been painted with wide, gestural brush strokes and light washes of colour. Semi-transparent and exposed, they depict paint as residual evidence of the artist's presence. Others are blanketed with thick layers of paint, each almost concealed by the next, so that only mere glimpses of colour can be found peeking out from underneath the works' film-like surfaces. In both cases, whether with exposure or concealment, Lavelle imbues paint with a sense of bodily presence and spatial depth.

Amongst these declarations of materiality and objecthood, Serra's proposal violently inserts itself as a rectangular motif, endlessly repeated across each work. Sometimes it appears as a fine outline, meticulously painted; a darkened, central void; a shadow emerging from layers of thin acrylic washes; or a wobbly contour drawn with a single finger. In each instance, the intention of this motif remains ambiguous; does it mean to draw attention towards the works' materiality, or describe a pictorial quality which refers to some illusory sense of shape, weight, or depth on a two-dimensional plane? Could it be intimating both at once?

Lavelle's 'Unframed' works, also present in this exhibition, turn this conversation on its head. Removed from their frames and attached to metal supports, these works thrust themselves forward into the gallery space, prostrated. Not only is the viewer encouraged to walk around them, but also to look behind them, at the bare linen and the occasional splotches of colour which have bled through. In these works, the materiality of the linen and its supports, as well as their sense of spatial depth, forms a distinct impression upon the viewer. Even then, the hint of a rectangle remains in the silhouettes of their exposed edges.

Pictorial Space toes the fine – and uncertain – line between pictorial illusion and physical embodiment. The beauty in Lavelle's work perhaps lies in her willingness to lean into this tension instead of placating it, leaving this conflict unresolved.

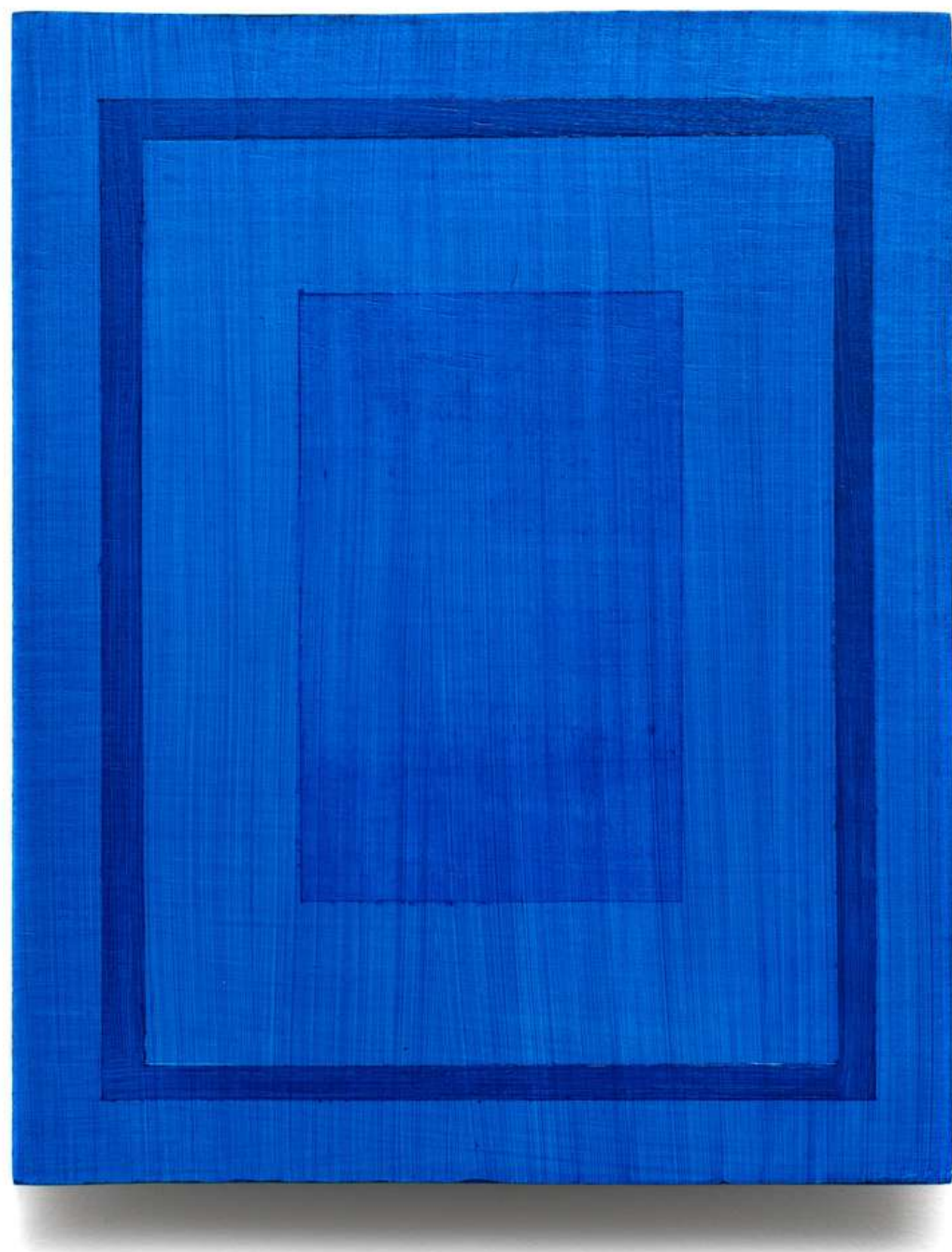
1. Richard Shiff, Experience Beyond Language, lecture presented at Nasher Sculpture Center, January 28, 2017.



Blue Frame  
2021  
acrylic on board  
20cm x 16cm  
Photo by Louis Lim  
\$220



Red Frame  
2021  
acrylic on board  
20cm x 16cm  
Photo by Louis Lim  
\$220

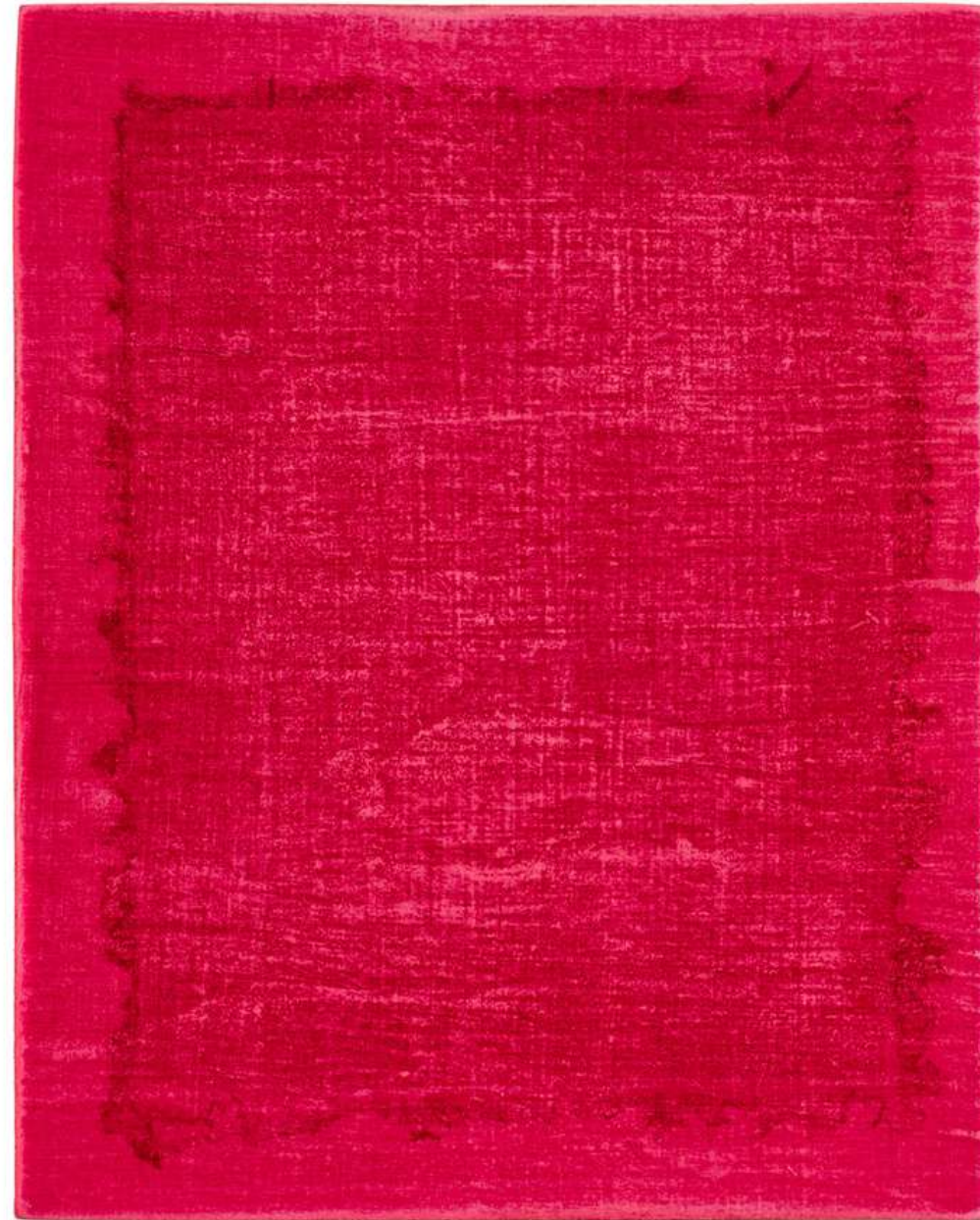


Untitled (Blue/Blue Frame)  
2021  
acrylic on board  
25cm x 20cm  
Photo by Louis Lim  
sold



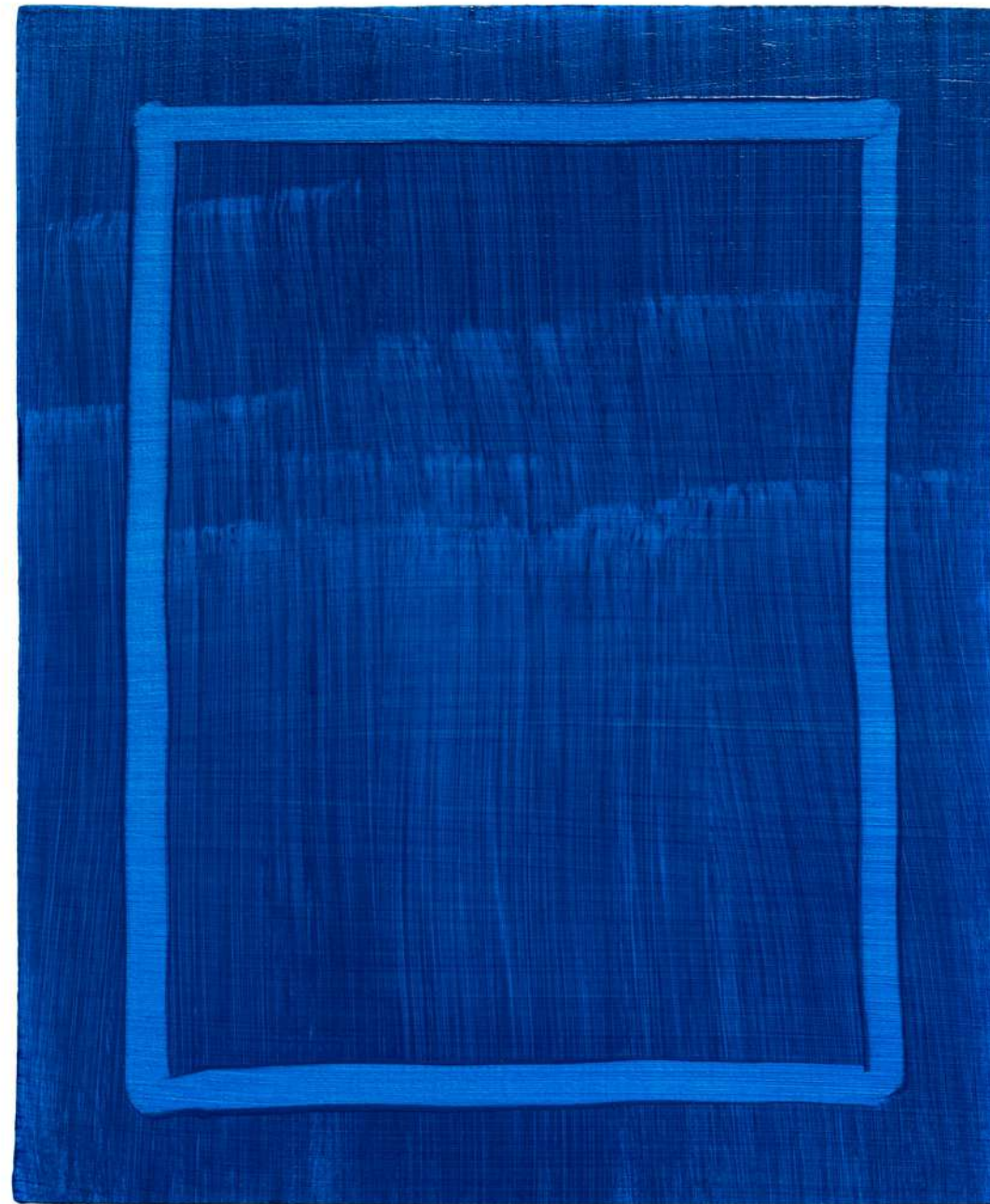


Untitled (Dioxazine Purple Frame)  
2021  
acrylic on board  
25cm x 20cm  
Photo by Louis Lim  
\$250



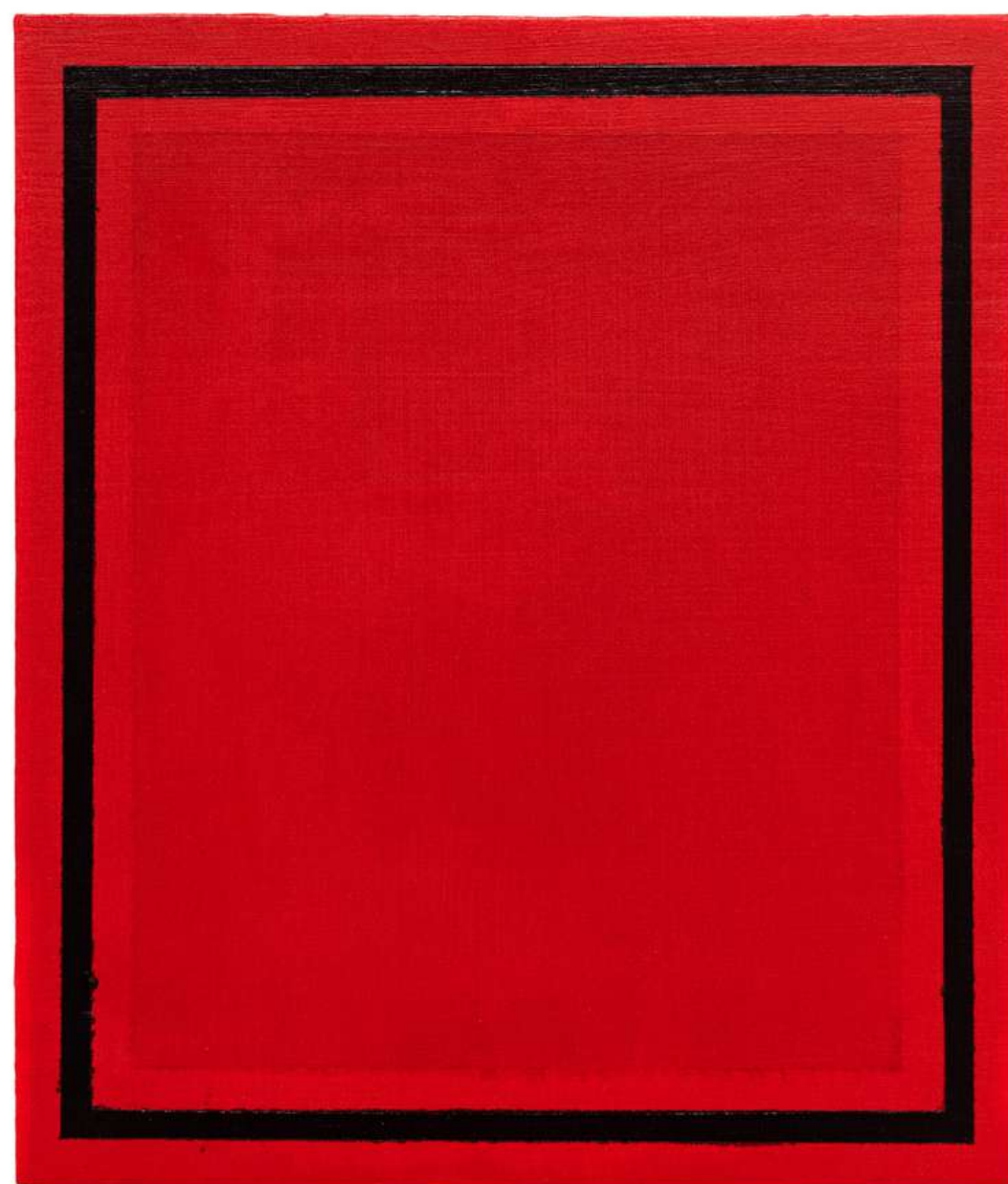
Untitled (Crimson Bleed)  
2021  
acrylic on board  
25cm x 20cm  
Photo by Louis Lim  
\$250



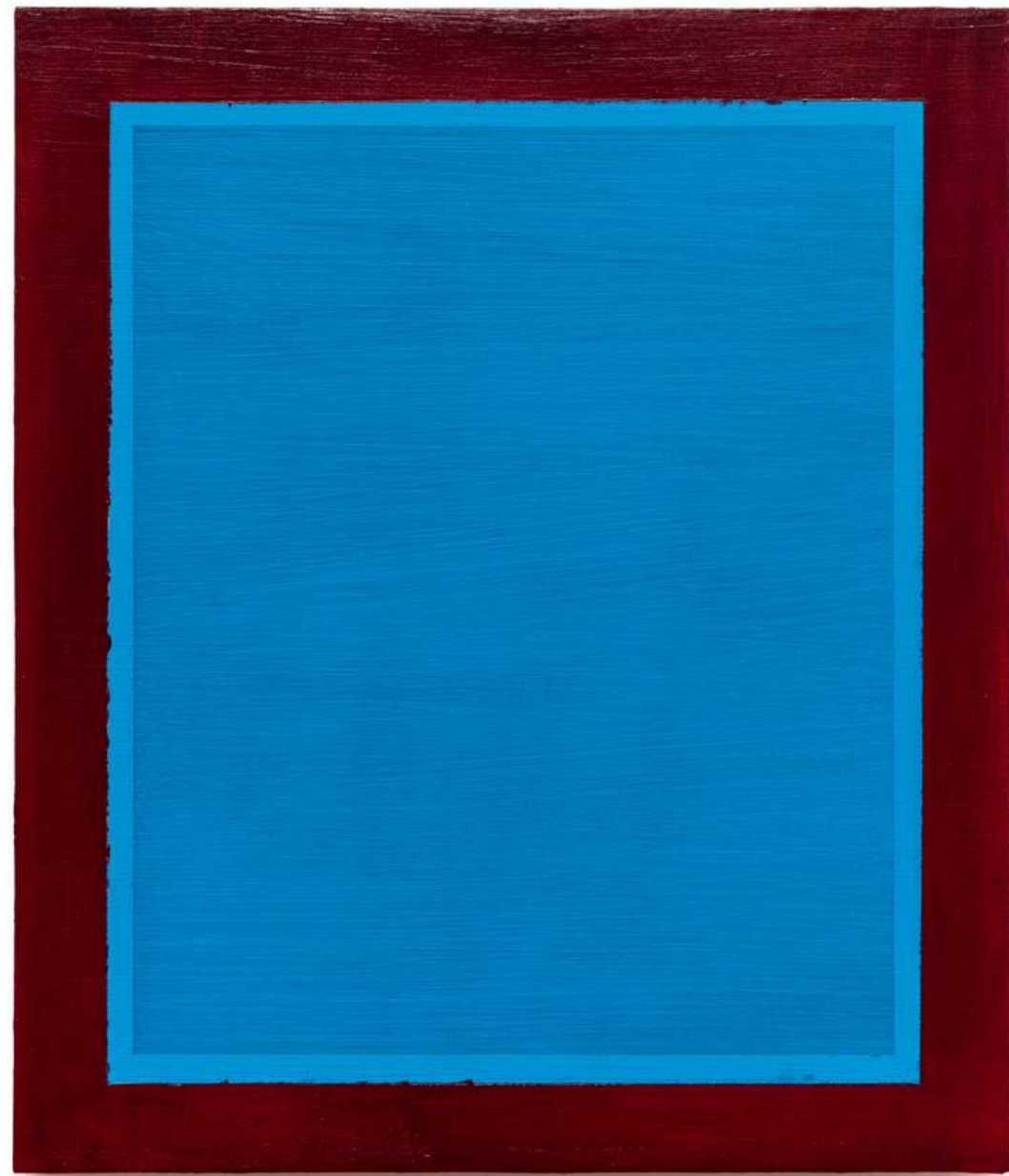


Untitled (Blue Gestures)  
2021  
acrylic on board  
25cm x 20cm  
Photo by Louis Lim  
\$250

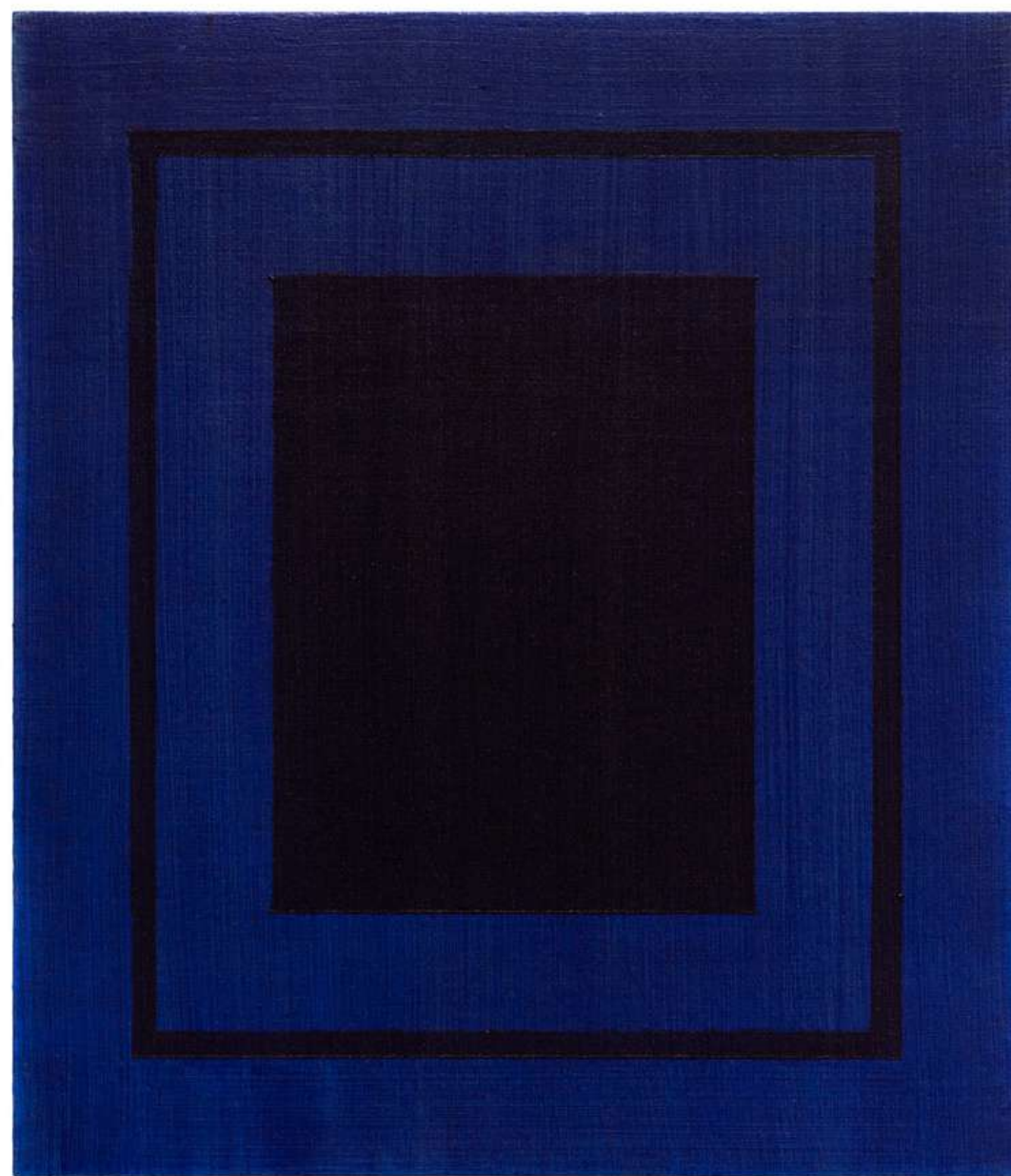




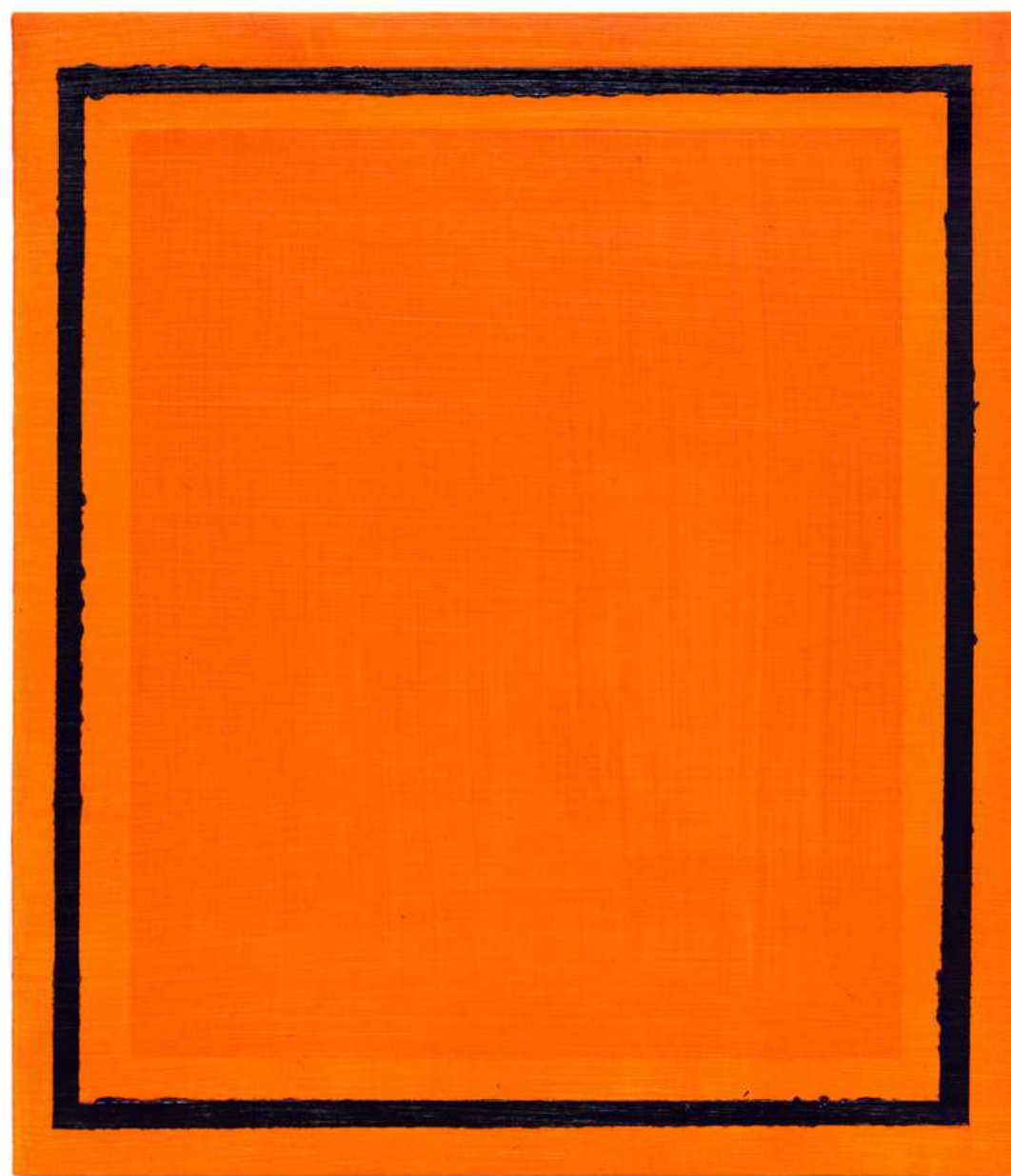
Pyrrole Red Rectangle  
2021  
acrylic on board  
35cm x 30cm  
Photo by Louis Lim  
\$440



Crimson/Light Blue Frame  
2021  
acrylic on board  
35cm x 30cm  
Photo by Louis Lim  
sold



Blue/Burnt Umber Frame  
2021  
acrylic on board  
35cm x 30cm  
Photo by Louis Lim  
\$440



Vat Orange Rectangle  
2021  
acrylic on board  
35cm x 30cm  
Photo by Louis Lim  
\$440

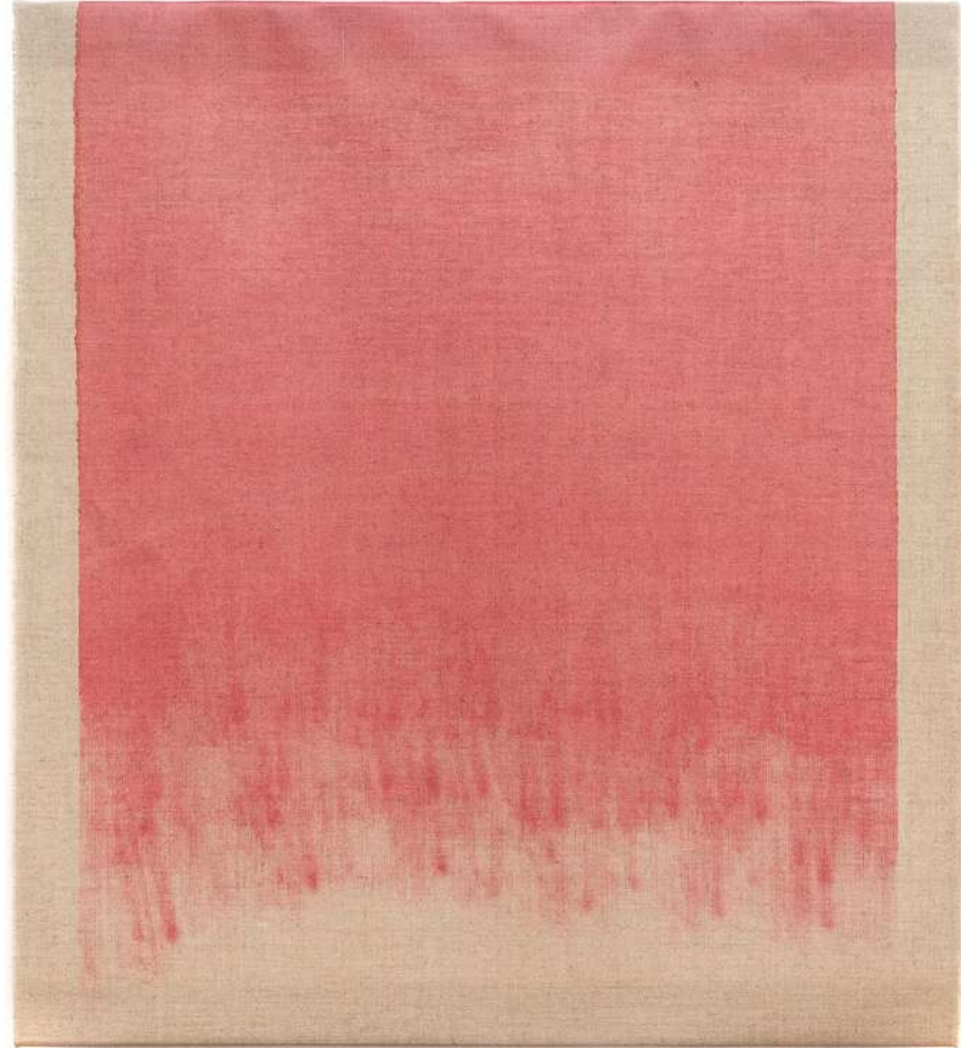




Unframed (Phthalo Blue)  
2021  
acrylic on Italian linen and steel  
67cm x 60cm x 21cm  
Photo by Louis Lim  
\$880

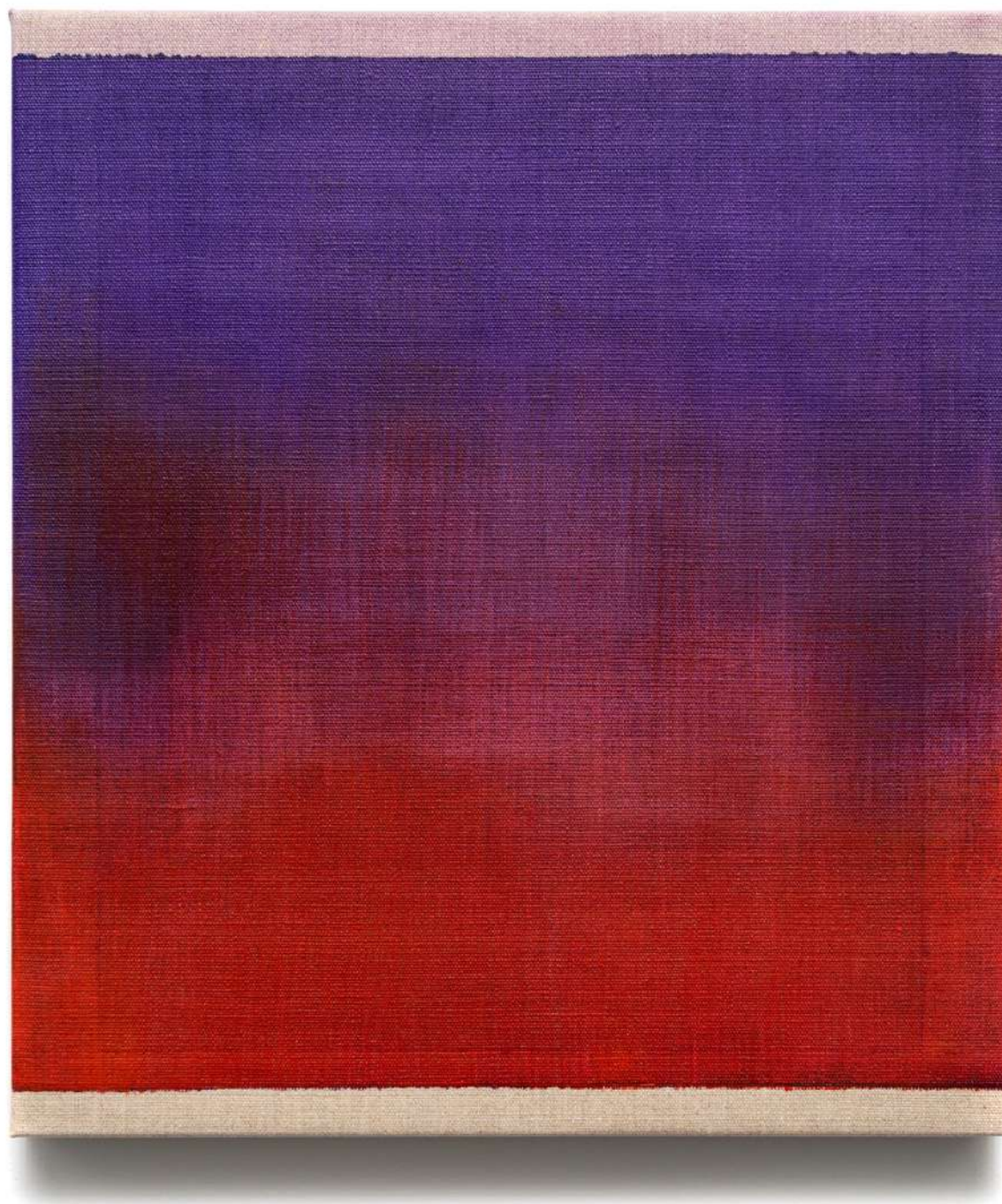


Side View  
Unframed (Phthalo Blue)  
2021



Unframed (Quinacridine Crimson)  
2021  
acrylic on Italian linen and steel  
67cm x 60cm x 21cm  
Photo by Louis Lim  
\$880





Untitled (Dioxazine Purple and Pyrrole Red Frame)  
2021  
acrylic on Italian linen  
45.5cm x 40.5cm  
Photo by Louis Lim  
\$880