

Kate Gottgens
MALICE Aforethought

16 May - 6 July 2013

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It begins with the discovery of a book. Covered in beige cloth and embossed with red letters, it is an elegant enough object, but seems fairly innocuous at first. Its contents will have a hold on her for the passage of a year, governing what she has chosen to do with her days – that is, to paint. It is a book of Bauhaus-inspired mid-century modern houses – utopian fantasies of middle-class suburban bliss. Atomised. Depopulated. Sans the familial fallout. Geometries of pure possibility awaiting habitation. She starts to occupy these brut structures, feeling out the seductions and restrictions of their internal spaces, exploring empty rooms in which surrogate chairs and tables hint at scenes that might have unfolded here. In fact, it is difficult to discern a tense. Has the action already happened or is it about to occur?

At first she paints quite consciously with a sober fidelity to the architecture. The scale is compact. She is in control of her materials. But as the months pass, the emptiness of the rooms takes hold of her, unlocking old patterns laid down, like code, inside of her. Figures begin to enter the scenes. She works from an archive of found photographs, none of them her own. It is dizzying; the intimacies that can transpire between strangers. At times it feels necessary to establish some distance. She steps back from the canvas to orient herself, reasserting her omniscience, convincing herself of her innate capacity for criticality – her ability to step outside of the picture. But as the months go by, her fictions dilate. She grows looser with her mark-making, layering over dead-end detours, allowing herself to make the necessary mistakes. The canvases grow larger and she upscales her brushes, painting wet into wet, as if in a trance. Abstract shapes compete for prominence with half-remembered characters caught up in a succession of life-changing moments; goodbyes at airports, camping trips, an illicit encounter in a hotel room – the unpredictable shards of narrative that constitute an inner life. She is painting ecstatically now. Freely giving herself over to the force of it.

One day – it is after an exhibition date has been agreed upon with the gallery – she notices a familiar shape coming through in an otherwise abstract painting with a rough, almost sketchbook quality about it. An off-kilter ovoid loosely depicting a swimming pool, the shape triggers in her an instance of déjà vu. She steps back from the canvas to survey the paintings now all about her in the studio, seeking in their surfaces the same liquid sphere of fullness. At first, she cannot locate it. She sees only flatness and voids. But then she recognises it in the form of a table top in a small black-and-white interior. She finds it again in a UFO hovering in the dystopian ether. And in that shape repeating itself through her, she realises that these paintings are starting to make a strange kind of sense. Between them and among them a narrative of sorts is emerging.

by Alexandra Dodd

Kate Gottgens was born in Durban in 1965. She graduated from the Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town, in 1987. Previous solo exhibitions include *Merry Hell* and the *Dreambody* (2010), *Asleep Inside You* (2009) and *Little deaths* (2007). Gottgens has also exhibited in numerous group shows since 1988 in South Africa, United Kingdom and India.



Empty Chair, Black Dog
2013
Oil on Canvas
30 x 40 cm



Red Interior
2012
Oil on Canvas
69 x 105 cm



Suburban Street
2012
Oil Canvas
68 x 90 cm

Mother and Baby
2013
Oil on Canvas
80 x 77 cm





Boy Holding Dashund
2013
Oil on Canvas
78 x 80 cm



Girl with Dahlias
2012
Oil on Canvas
80 x 77 cm



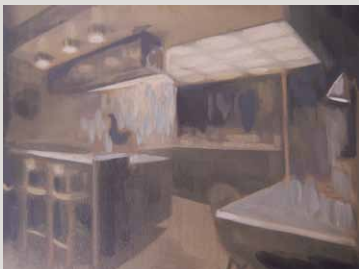


Mystery Couple
2012
Oil on Canvas
80 x 77 cm





Auction Lot
2013
Oil on Canvas
80 x 77 cm



Petty Crime 9 | 2012 | Oil on Canvas | 30.5 x 40.5 cm

Petty Crime 10 | 2012 | Oil on Canvas | 30.5 x 40.5 cm

Petty Crime 4 | 2012 | Oil on Canvas | 30.5 x 40.5 cm

Petty Crime 5 | 2012 | Oil on Canvas | 30.5 x 40.5 cm

Petty Crime 8 | 2012 | Oil on Canvas | 30.5 x 40.5 cm

Petty Crime 6 | 2012 | Oil on Canvas | 30.5 x 40.5 cm

Petty Crime 1 | 2012 | Oil on Canvas | 30.5 x 40.5 cm

Petty Crime 7 | 2012 | Oil on Canvas | 30.5 x 40.5 cm

Petty Crime 3 | 2012 | Oil on Canvas | 30.5 x 40.5 cm



Boy in the Sun
2013
Oil on Canvas
105 x 105 cm





Open Road
2012
Oil on Canvas
68 x 90 cm



Camper
2013
Oil on Canvas
84.5 x 120.5 cm



Interior / Float Glass
2013
Oil on Canvas
130 x 150 cm





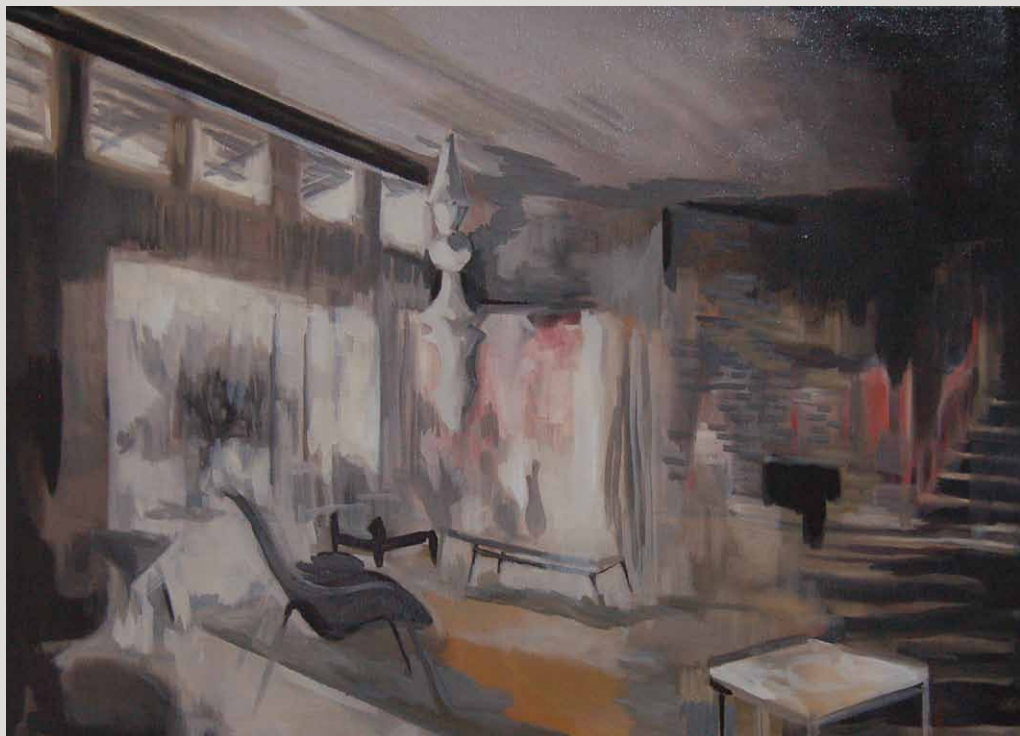
Campsite
2013
Oil on Canvas
116 x 151 cm



Pool
2013
Oil on Canvas
62 x 84 cm



Open Door
2013
Oil on Canvas
130 x 150 cm



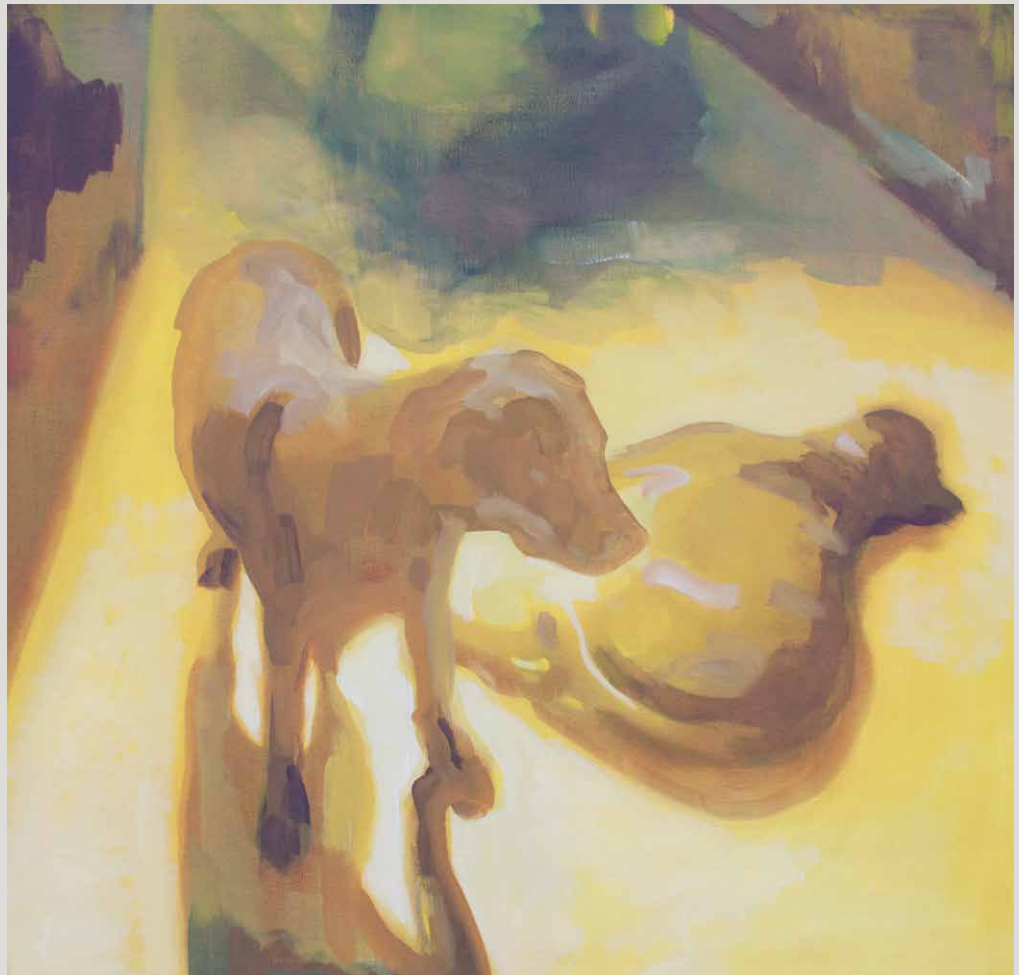
Interior 3
2012
Oil on Canvas
61 x 84 cm



Interior 2
2013
Oil on Canvas
61 x 84 cm



Dogs
2013
Oil on Canvas
80 x 77 cm





Sunday morning
2013
Oil on Canvas
85 x 120 cm



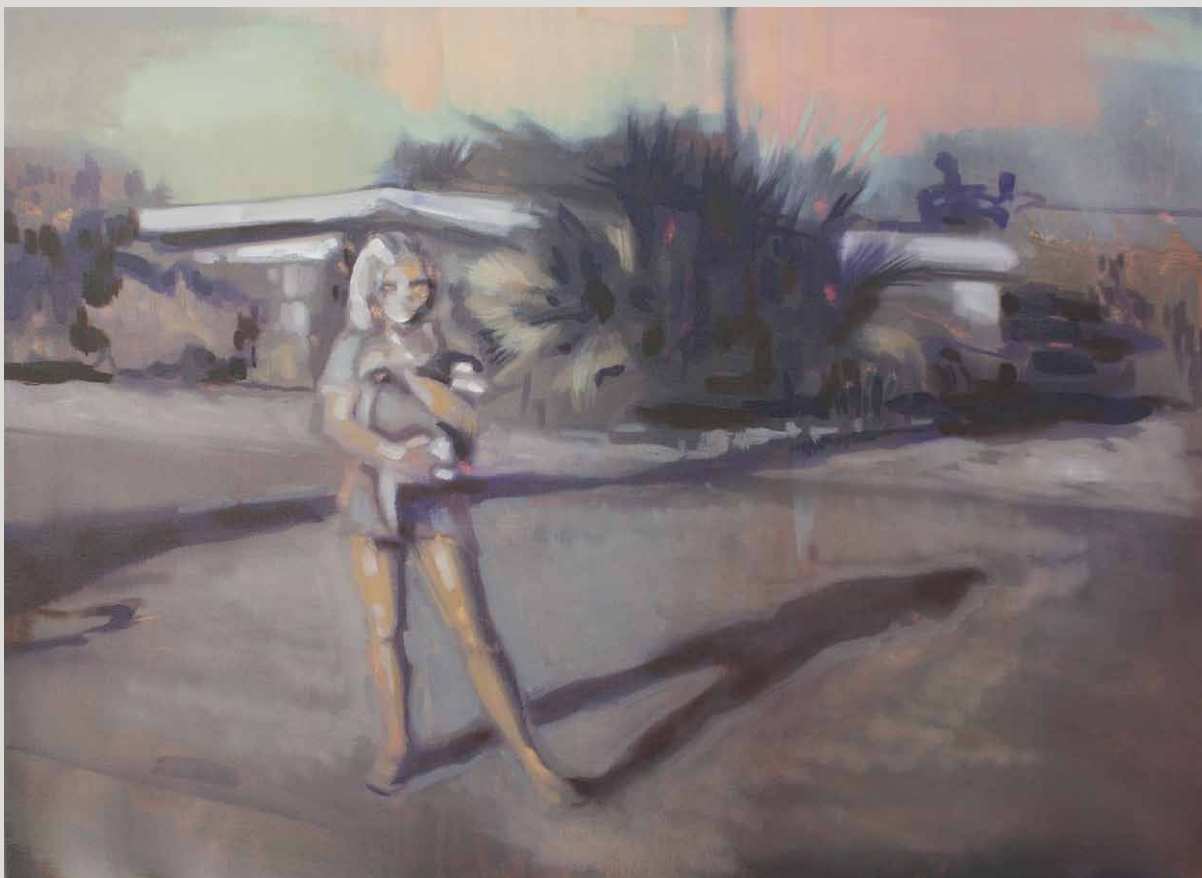
Patience
2013
Oil on Canvas
69 x 90 cm



Family Fragments
2013
Oil on canvas
105 x 105 cm



Fireflies
2013
Oil on Canvas
61 x 84 cm



Girl Holding a Cat
2012
Oil on Canvas
68 x 90 cm



Poolside
2012
Oil on Canvas
80 x 77 cm

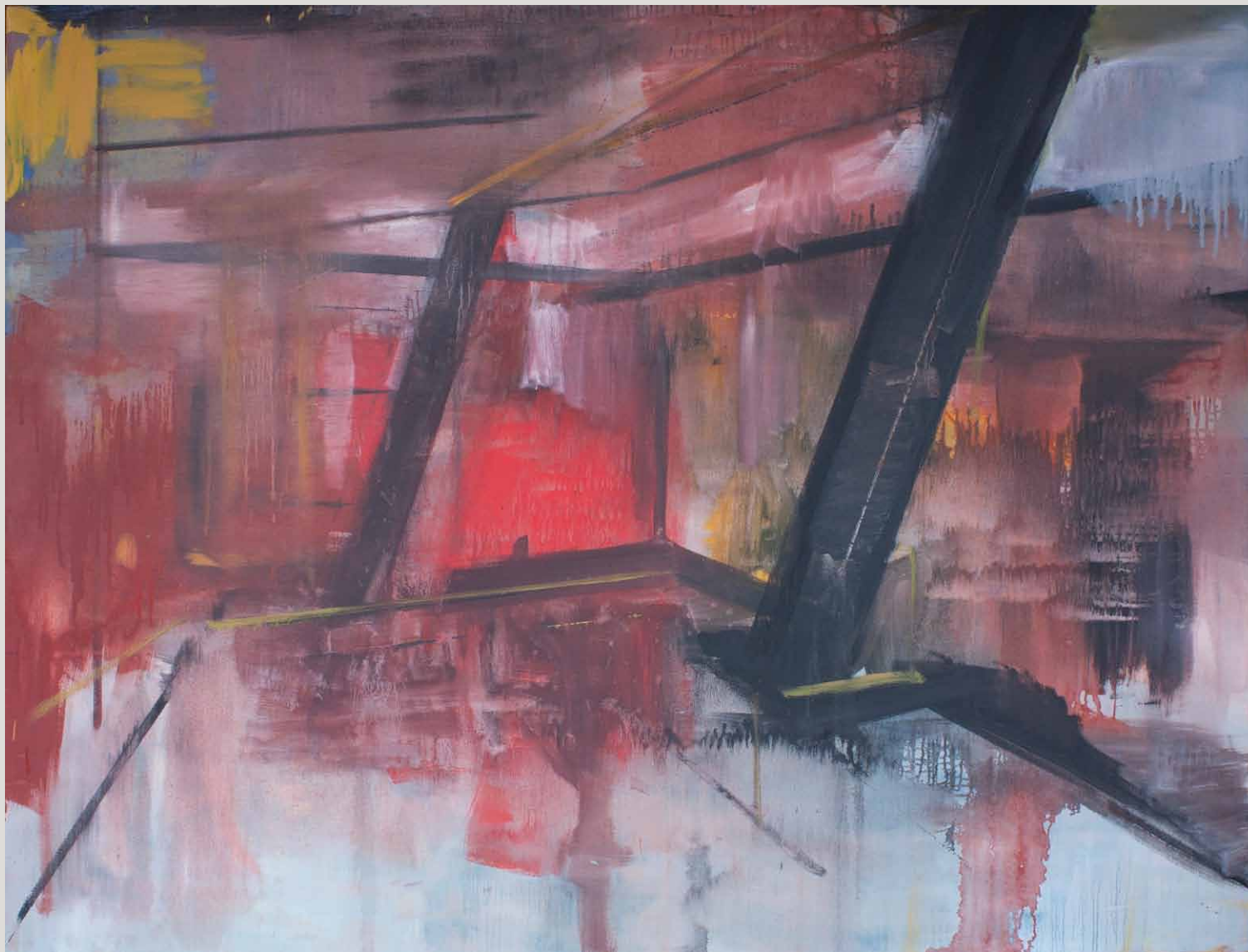




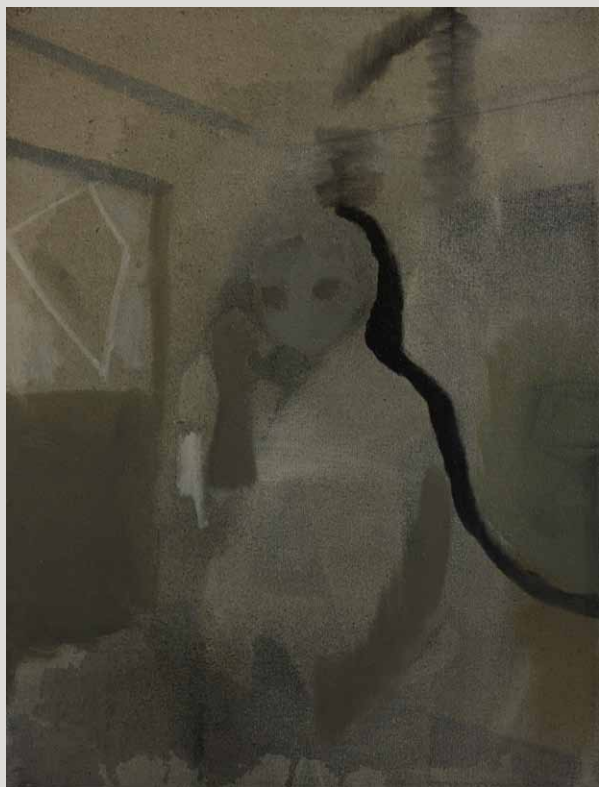




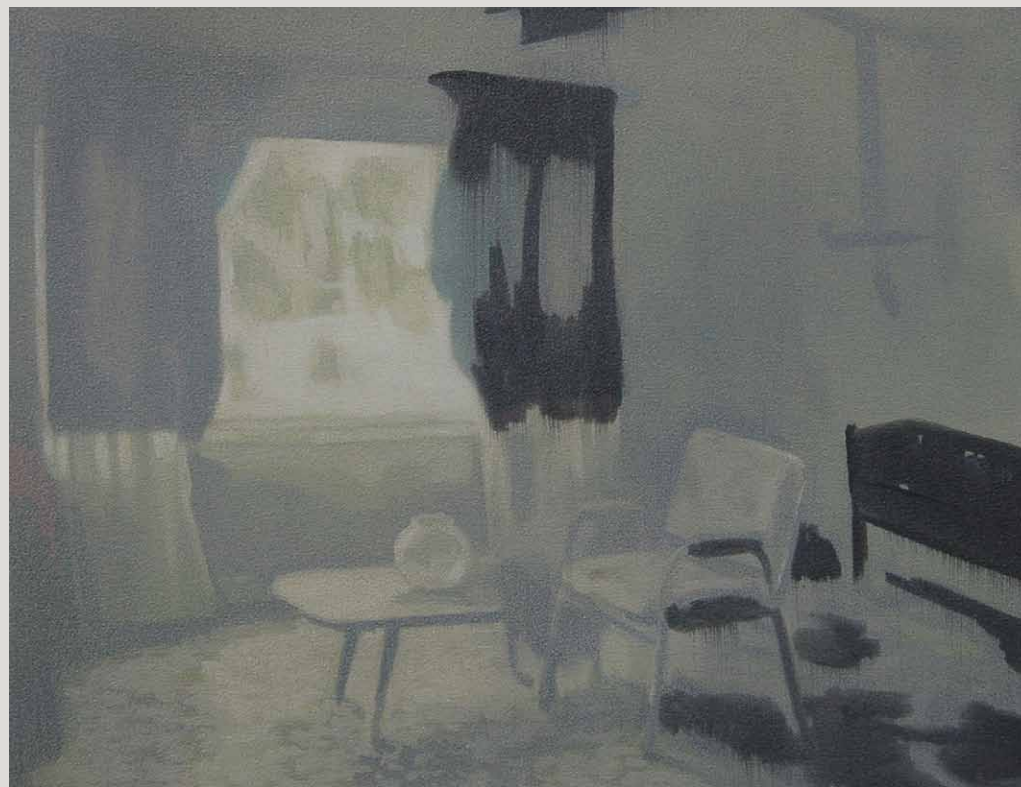
Empty Pool 1
2012
Oilon Canvas
84 x 120 cm



Burning Down the House
2013
Oil on canvas
115 x 150 cm



Dial Tone
2012
Oil on Canvas
40 x 30 cm



Glass Bowl
2012
Oil on Canvas
40.5 x 50 cm



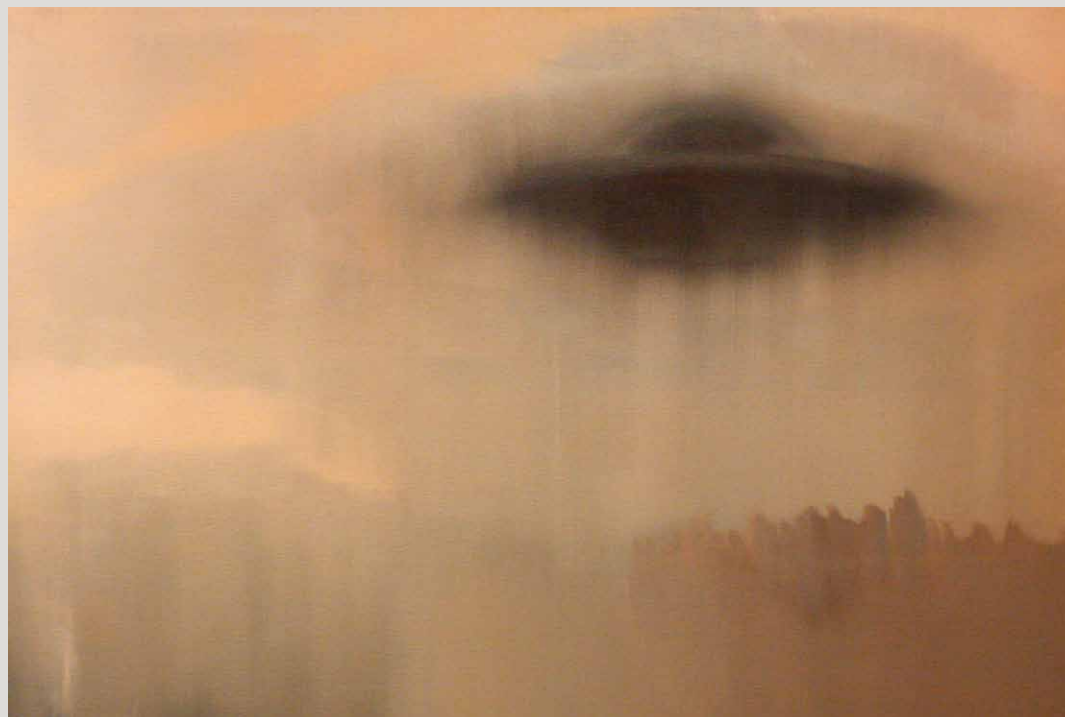
Float Glass 2
2012
Oil on Canvas
35.5 x 46 cm



Newlands Pool
2012
Oil on Canvas
36 x 46 cm



Empty Pool 2
2013
Oil on Canvas
30 x 40 cm



u.f.o.
2012
Oil on Canvas
61 x 84 cm