

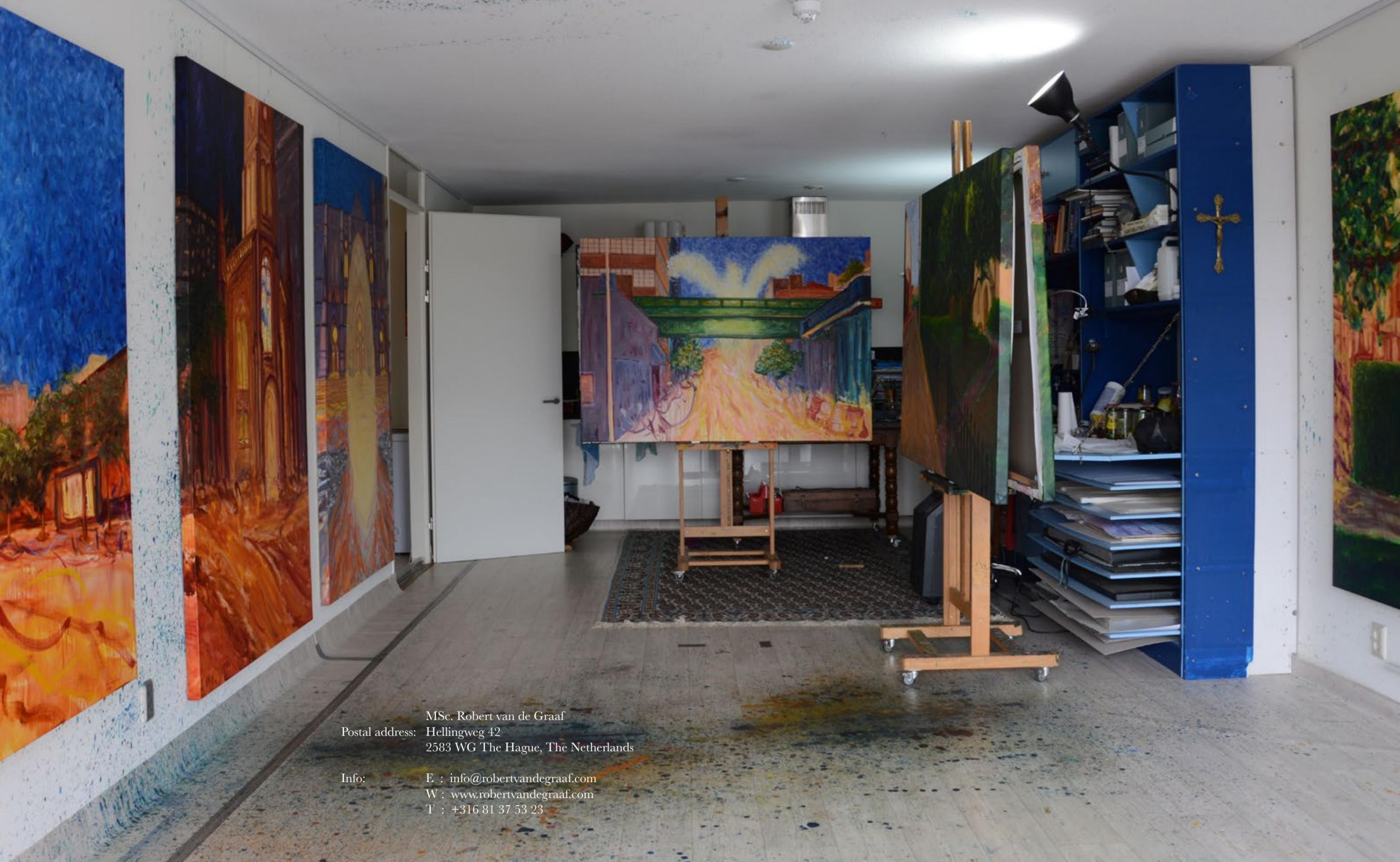
'SILENCE AND THE CITY'

PRESENTATION BOOK

ROBERT VAN DE GRAAF

VISUAL ARTIST, The Hague, The Netherlands

10th of September 2020



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Studio Exhibition presenting 'Silence and The City'



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INFO ABOUT SERIES

'SILENCE AND THE CITY'

The series 'Silence and The City' is inspired by New York City and the search for contemplation and inner silence in everyday life, about finding meaning in life and the connection of the spiritual world with everyday life.

Every individual is confronted with a universal question how to find meaning in life. Van de Graaf feels a strong connection with the vibrance of New York City, but is also aware that searching meaning in life is sometimes harder when life is going that fast. The contrast between contemplation and the busy city life of New York City in a normal setting has been a great inspiration for him. He admires the ability of the city to be a melting pot of all kinds of people and really fell in love with the city. With this series he fulfills his wish to devote at last one series on New York.

Van de Graaf draws inspiration from both the time he lived in New York City, 2006 - 2007, and his trip to New York in September 2017 and November 2019. When he was walking in New York City he was struck by moments of silence by different kind of places he documented. This documentation has been the starting point of this series.

The layout of New York City and its historic buildings are a major source of inspiration for the compositions of the paintings. Van de Graaf was struck by the beauty of the contrast between the oldest buildings in New York City, amongst others its churches, and the (modern) high rise buildings next to them. He experienced these silent places in the city like little islands of silence within the busy city life.

Van de Graaf is using several (architectural) metaphors in his paintings to express these themes. An example are the crossroads in the paintings which he uses as a metaphor for important moments in life when the choices of the turns you take determine directions in life. In this series he also introduces the square shaped canvas because all sides are equal and no direction is determined by its shape.

ARTIST STATEMENT

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Robert van de Graaf (1983, born in The Hague, the Netherlands) is interested in the connection between the mystical in this world, in all its manifestations (the sea, the sky, nature, human built environments, light and darkness), and the sense and the dimension of the spiritual world.

Van de Graaf draws his inspiration from myths, mystical places or stories (both from history and present times) and the philosophy of life. His artworks give substance to his ongoing journey to seek meaning in life.

Van de Graaf questions human destiny and how we as human beings can develop ourselves and grow on a spiritual level. He wishes his artworks to provide 'food' for the soul, both for himself and the viewer.

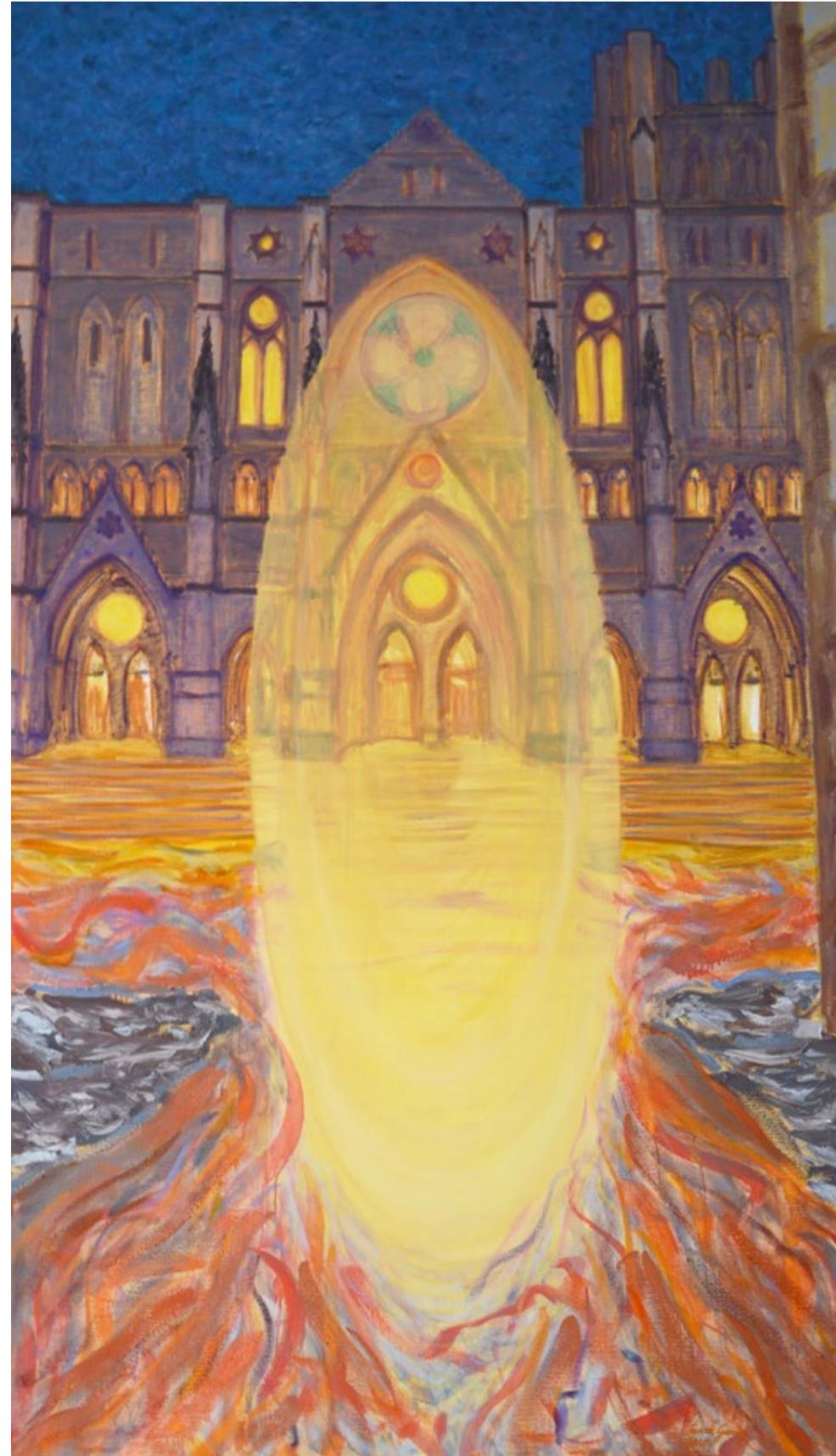
His artworks should be a (re)discovery for himself and the viewer and he wishes to stimulate a personal deepening. They are his reaction to the superficiality of modern society and the lack of 'soul food' for the younger generations.

Van de Graaf transforms the inspiration he draws from these themes into contemporary (symbolic) interpretations while referring to paintings of the old masters such as Rembrandt's 'The Storm on the Sea of Galilee' (1632) and El Greco's 'The Vision of Saint John' (1608-1614). The paintings move between figuration and abstraction, giving the viewer certain freedom of interpretation. At the same time the intensity of the paintings act like a gaze back at the viewer, a reflection of thoughts, crossing the line from observation to introspection and self-examination.

He has been professionally trained in painting and drawing from the age of 13 to 18 by the Dutch artist Erica Meyster (1949 - 2006), before studying Architecture at the Technical University in Delft (MSc 2009).

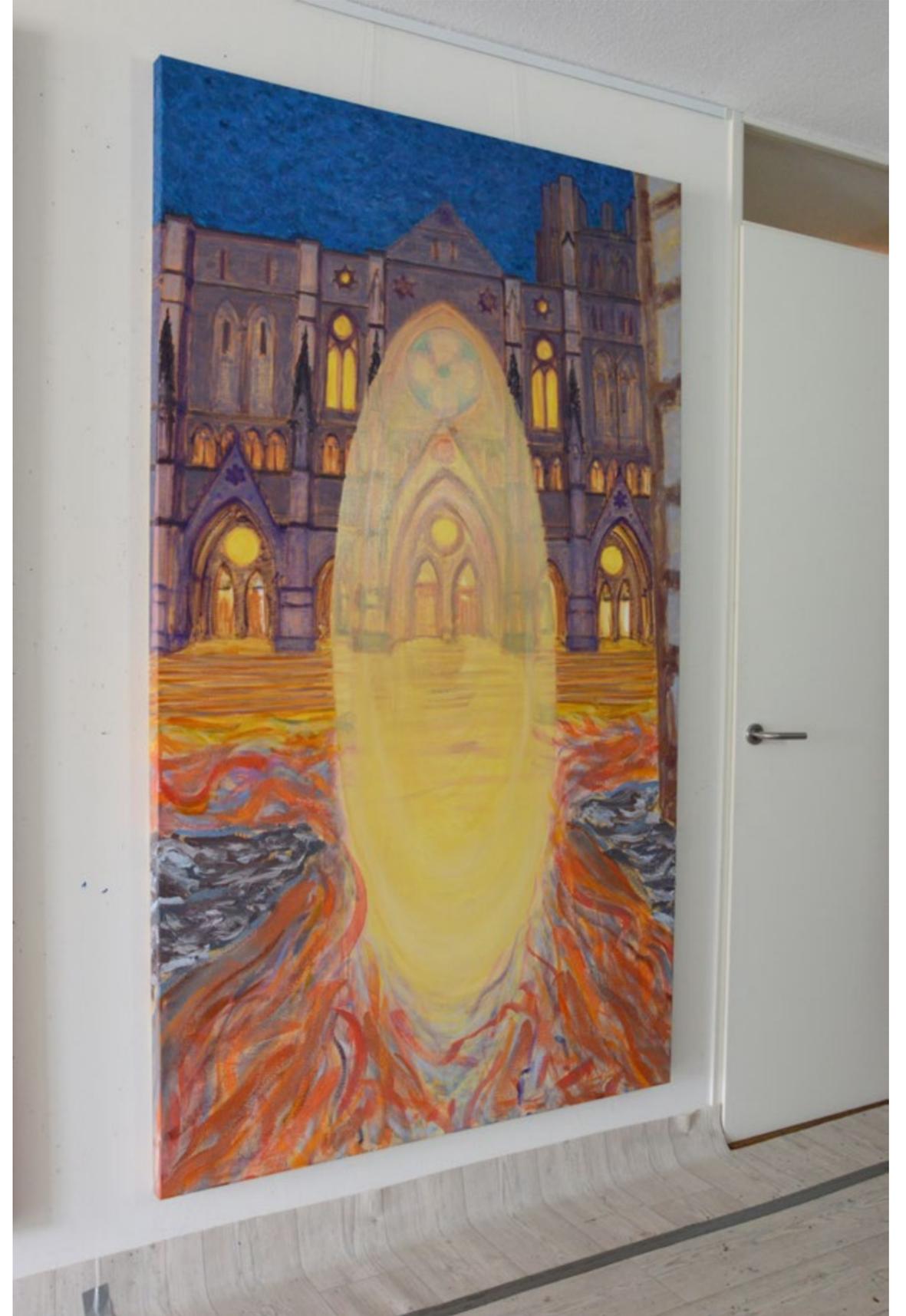
The area of interest that inspired him in the works he made during his youth has remained a source of inspiration in his current work. The moment he began to work with oil paint he fell in love with the medium and this continues to grow ever since.

Van de Graaf experiences the process of creating as inner battles, freedom and faith.



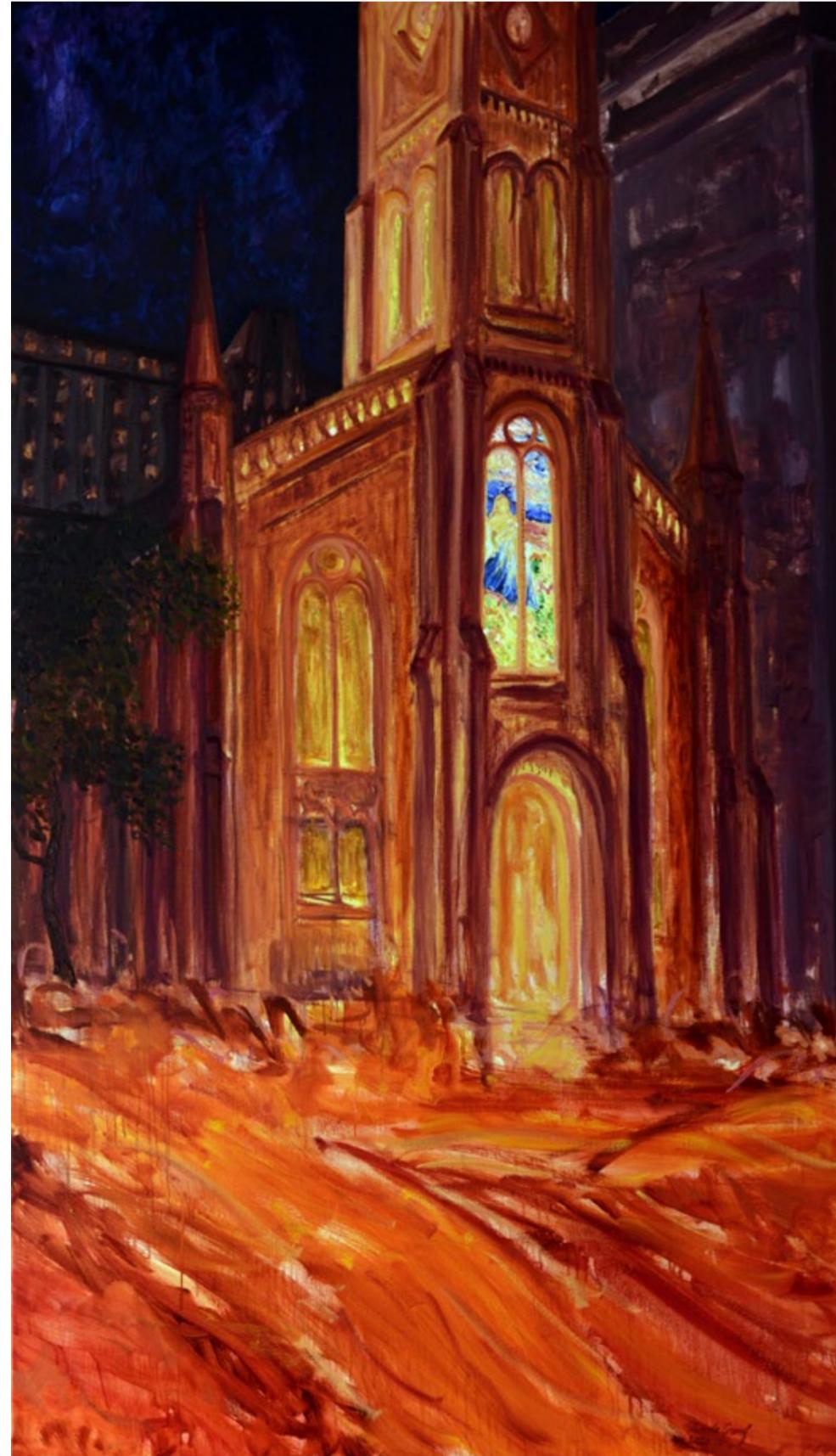
The painting is inspired by how finding contemplation and inner silence in the turbulence and chaos of life. The Cathedral Church of Saint John The Divine in NYC is one of the most beautiful and powerful cathedrals I have ever seen. I wanted to transmit this silence and inner power into a large ellipse shape which would push away the turbulence, making this silence as an island where time does not exist. In the ellipse you look at the starting point of the painting, like time stood still for a while.

Saint John's Silence in Turbulent Streets / 2019 - 2020 / Oil on linen / 215 x 125 x 4,5 cm

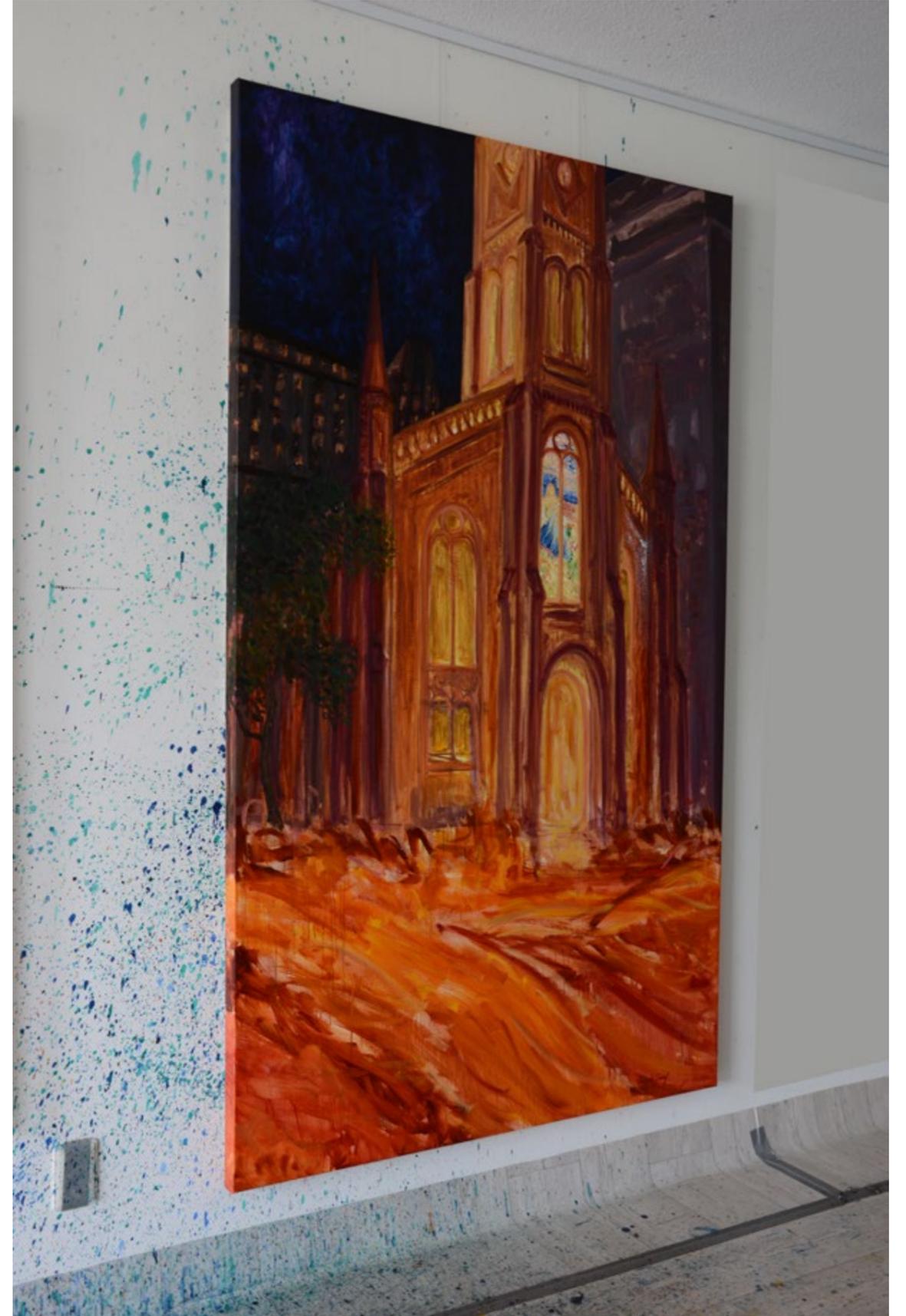
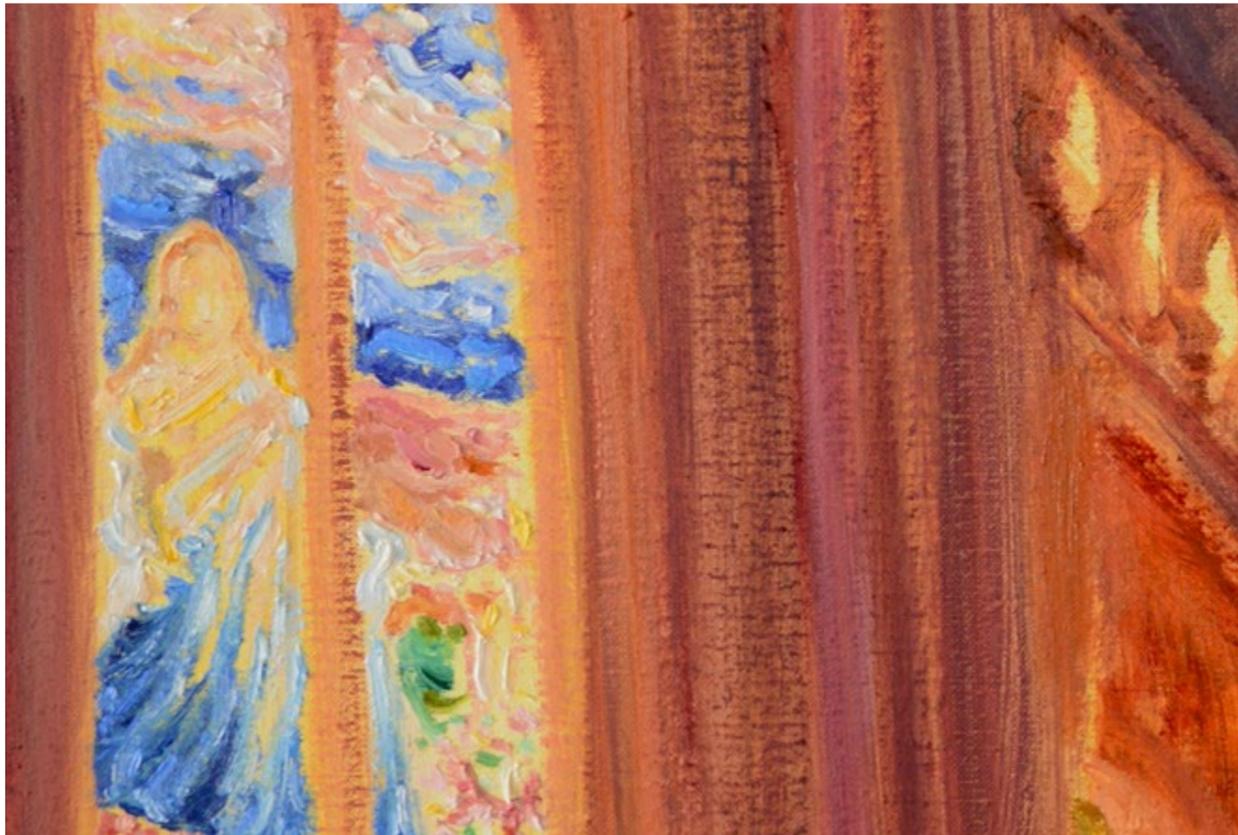


Saint John's Silence in Turbulent Streets / 2019 - 2020 / Oil on linen / 215 x 125 x 4,5 cm / Detail and side images

The painting is inspired by a moment during my research trip to New York City in September 2017. When I was walking back to my hotel after dinner I arrived at this busy crossroad and all of a sudden I was caught by the beautiful stained glass window of the Marble Collegiate Church across the street. It seem to create a sort of space of silence between me and the window, as if I was looking into another world within this silence, as if there was some sort of gate with Jesus to Heaven. I found it very fascinating that the busy vibrance of daily life could melt so well with that subtle silence on the same moment. This was the first moment when the islands of silence became clear for me.



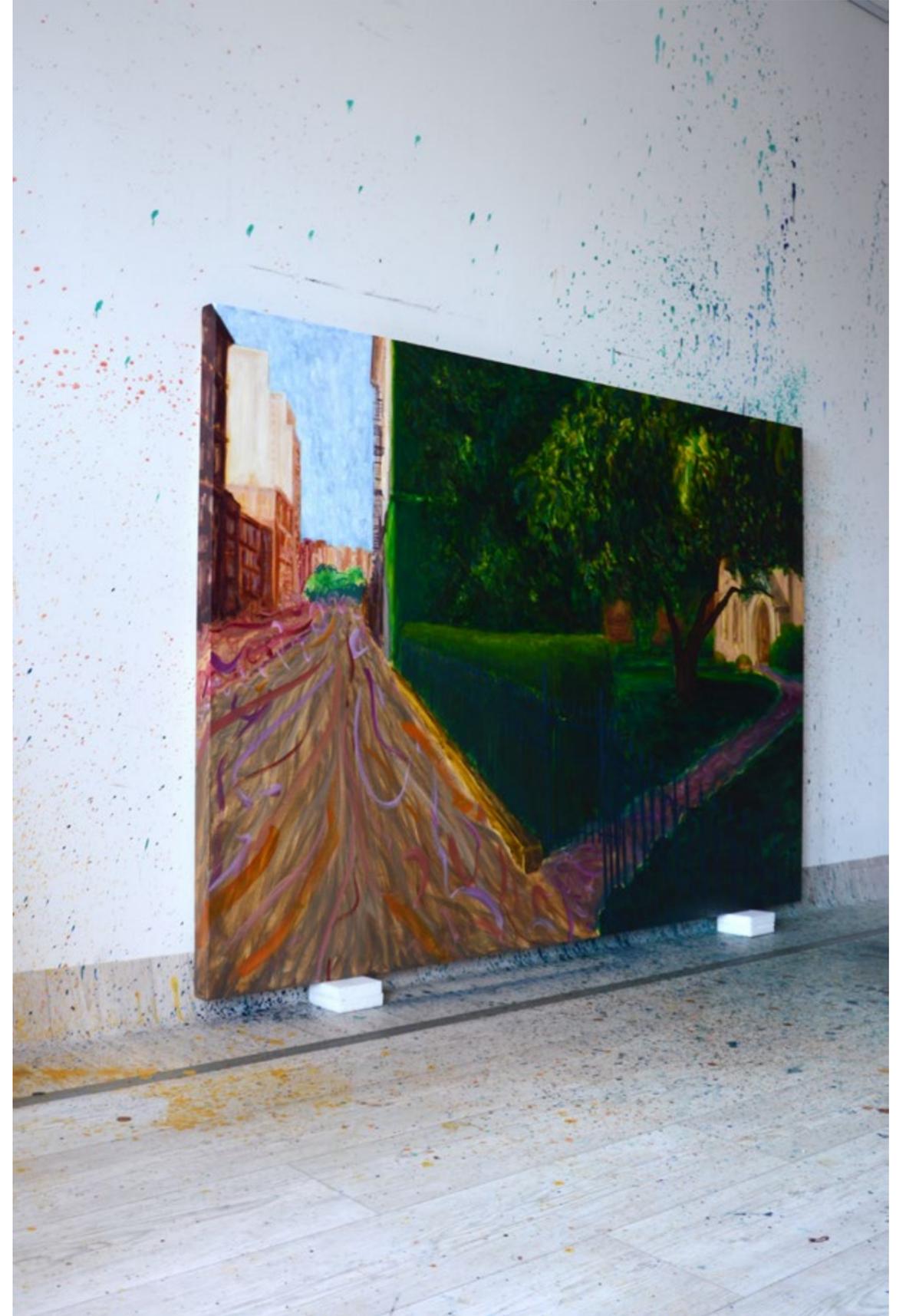
Crossroad of Different Worlds / 2019 - 2020 / Oil on linen / 215 x 125 x 4,5 cm



Crossroad of Different Worlds / 2019 - 2020 / Oil on linen / 215 x 125 x 4,5 cm / Detail and side images



I was very fascinated by this view when visiting New York City in 2017, it's when you pass Grace Church (802 Broadway, between 10th and 11th Street). This garden of the church feels as a sort of island of silence within the city. It is a sort of soul passage moving from the busy streets into this silent garden, like stepping into another world for and towards the soul. A passage and transmission to contemplation, to be able to grow as a human, on the level of the soul.

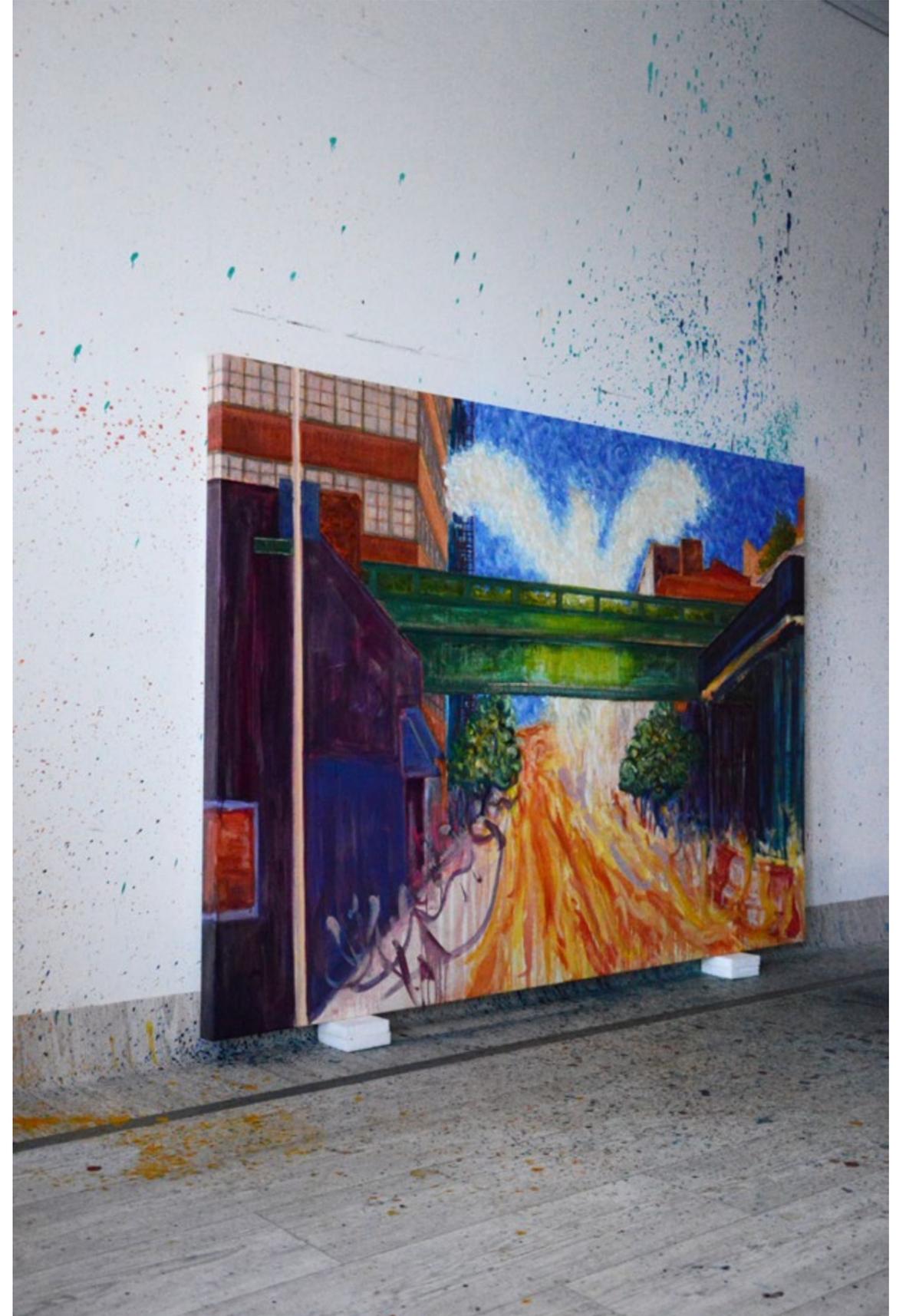
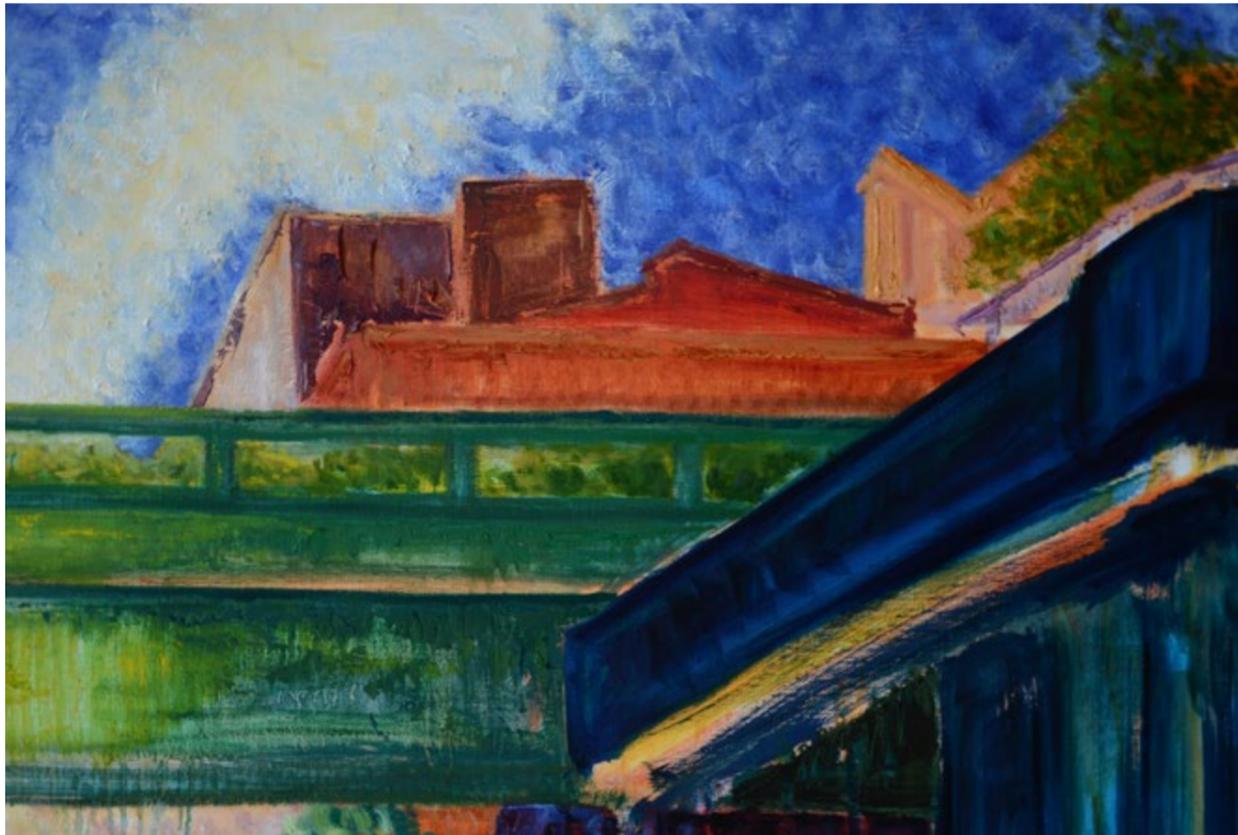


Soul Passage / 2019 - 2020 / Oil on linen / 125 x 180 x 4,5 cm / Detail and side images

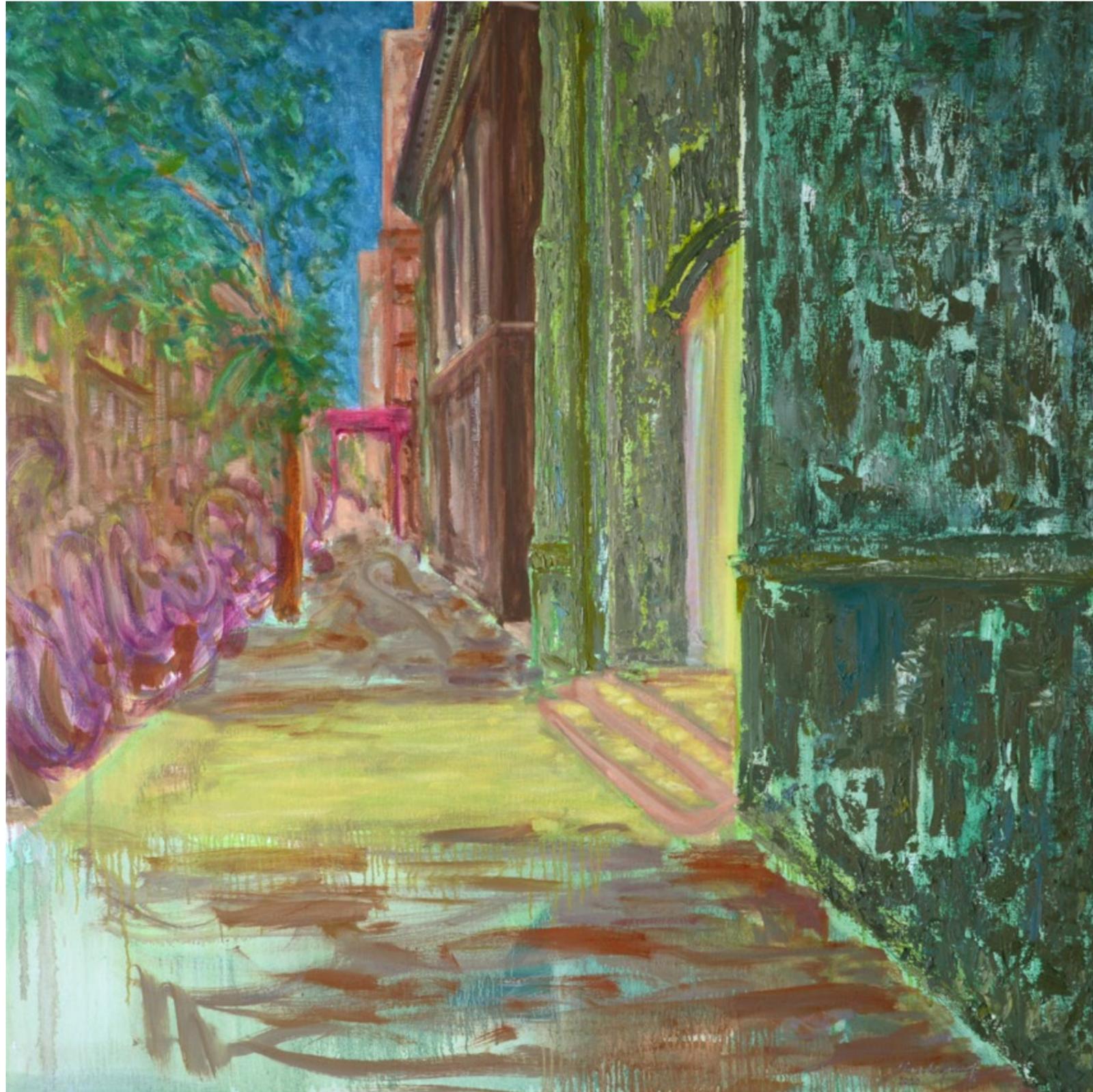


The painting is based on the question where to find meaning in this world. Where do you find hope, contemplation, inspiration and deepening? I think artists, art galleries and museums play an important role in providing this. The Angel of Chelsea is a symbol for bringing meaning to our life through art, the angel just keeps an eye on the process.. The painting is based on the crossroad in Chelsea, NYC, 10th Ave & 24th Street. In this series I painted the people in the streets as energies of souls with different kind of auras. I like this approach because I can paint the actual energy in the streets, the souls of a city. The souls of people which are all equal and color of aura corresponds by being good or better, bad or worse.

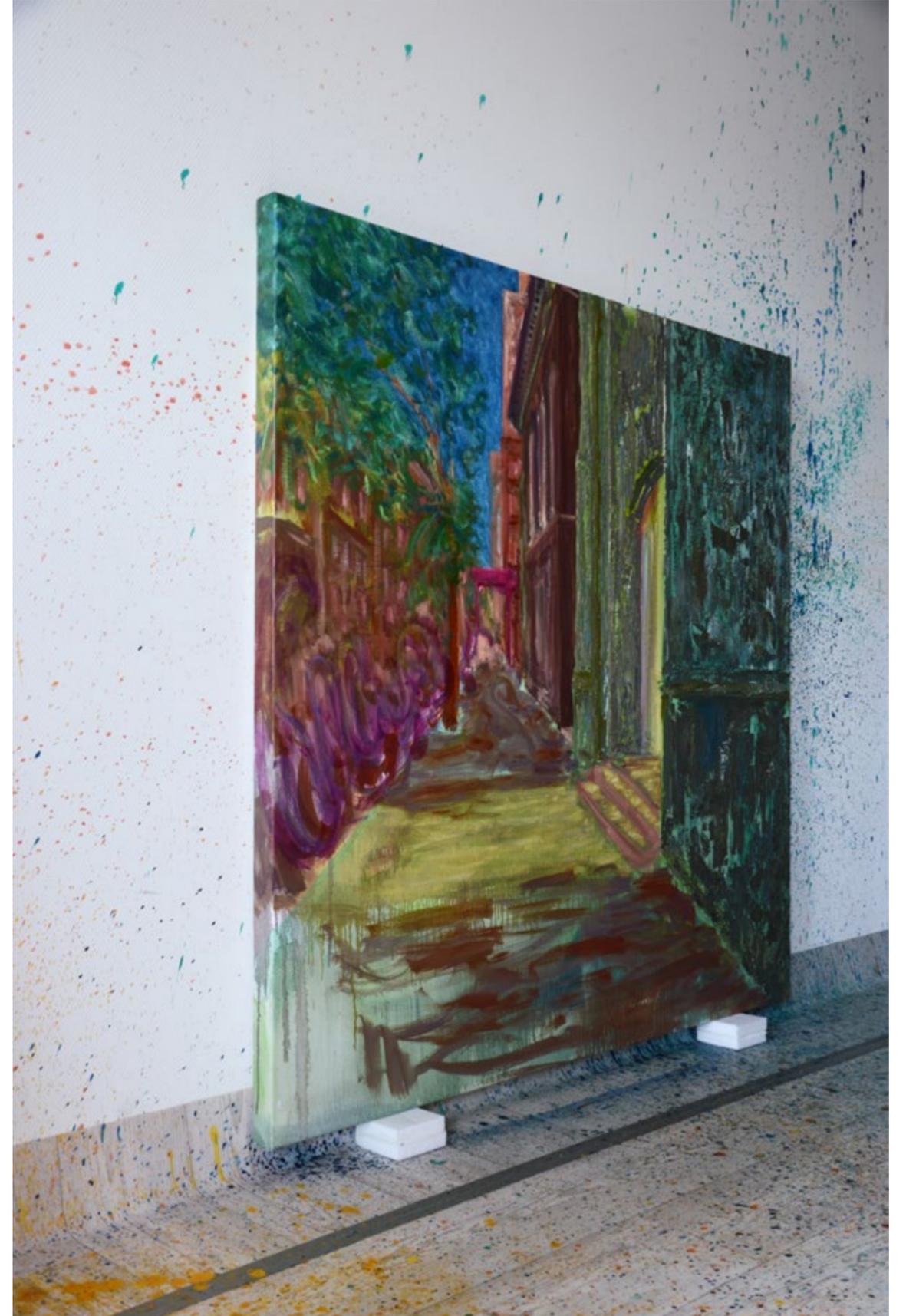
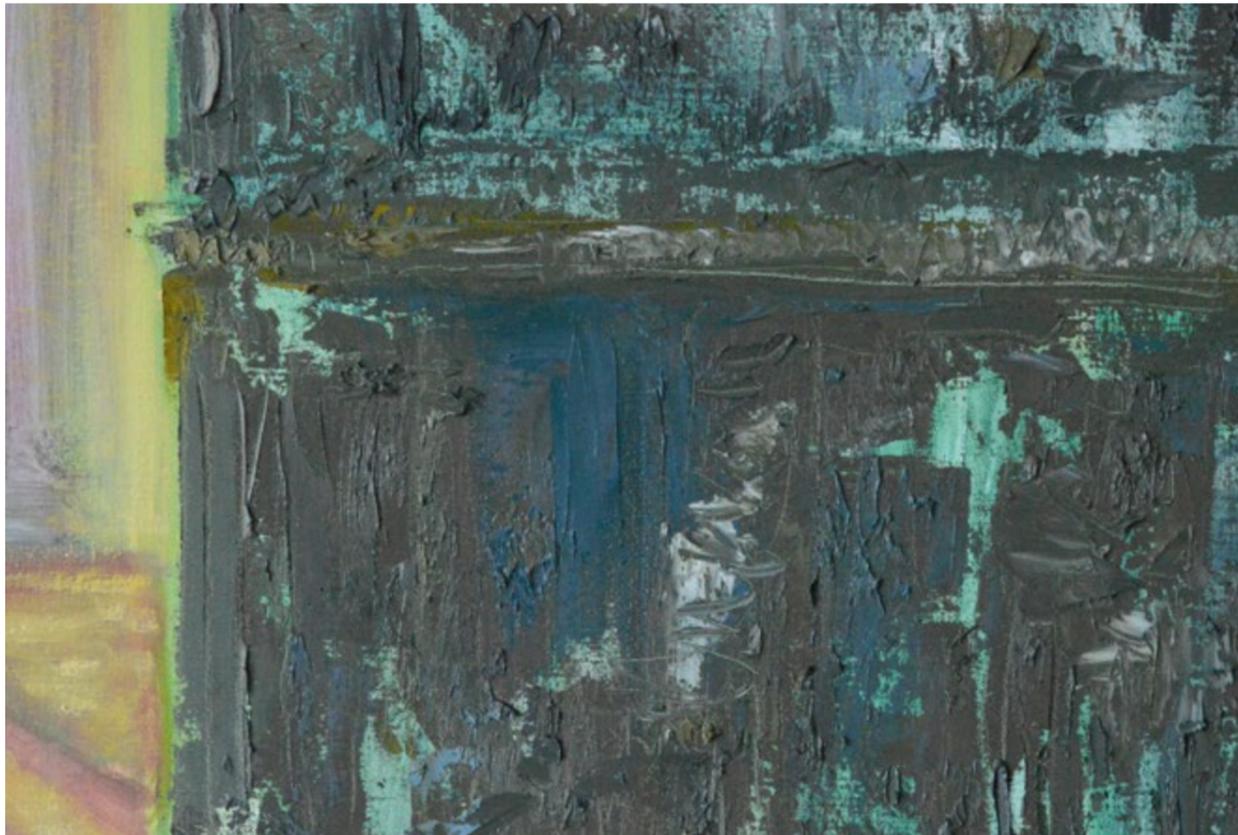
The Angel of Chelsea / 2019 - 2020 / Oil on linen / 125 x 180 x 4,5 cm



The Angel of Chelsea / 2019 - 2020 / Oil on linen / 125 x 180 x 4,5 cm / Detail and side images



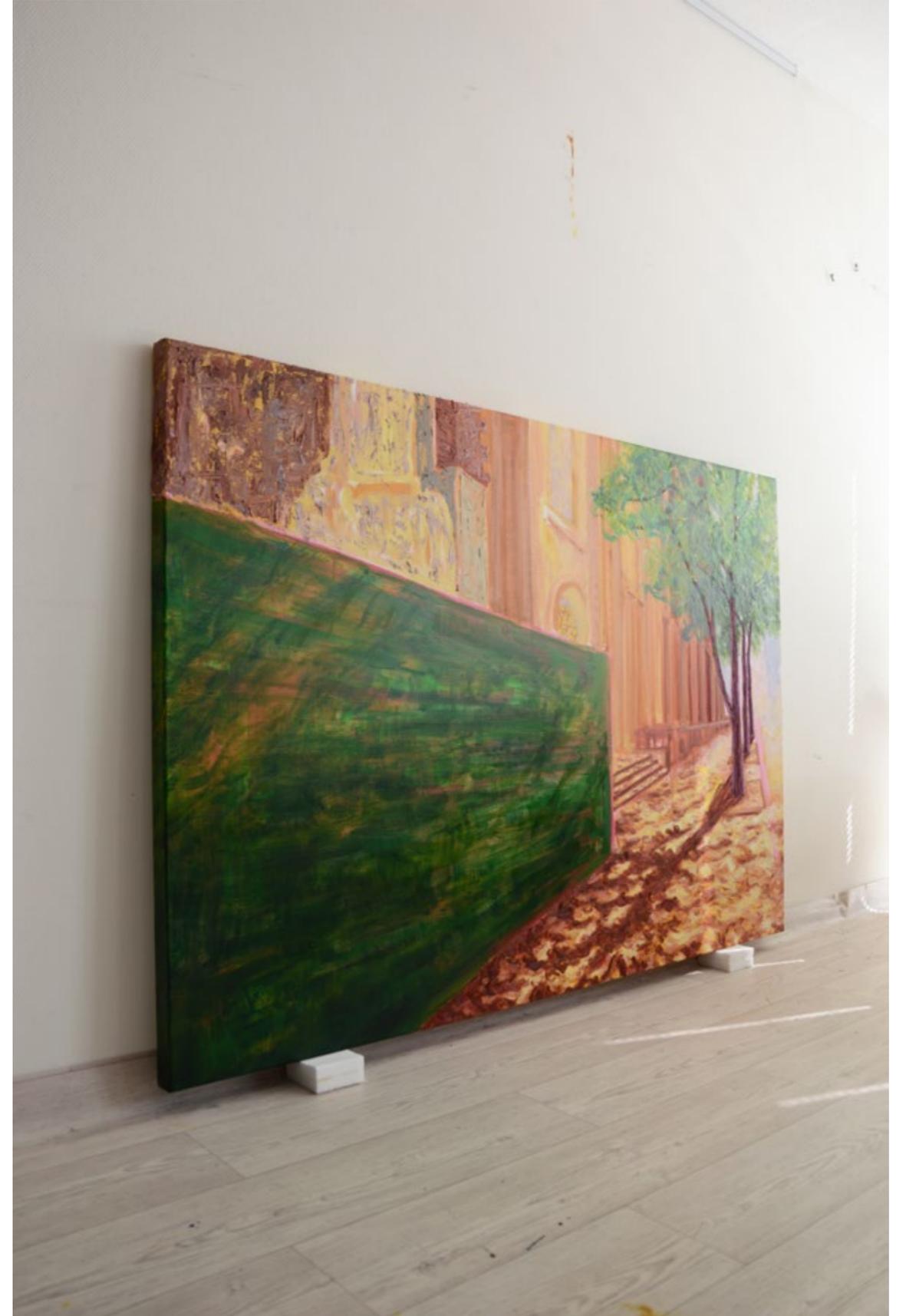
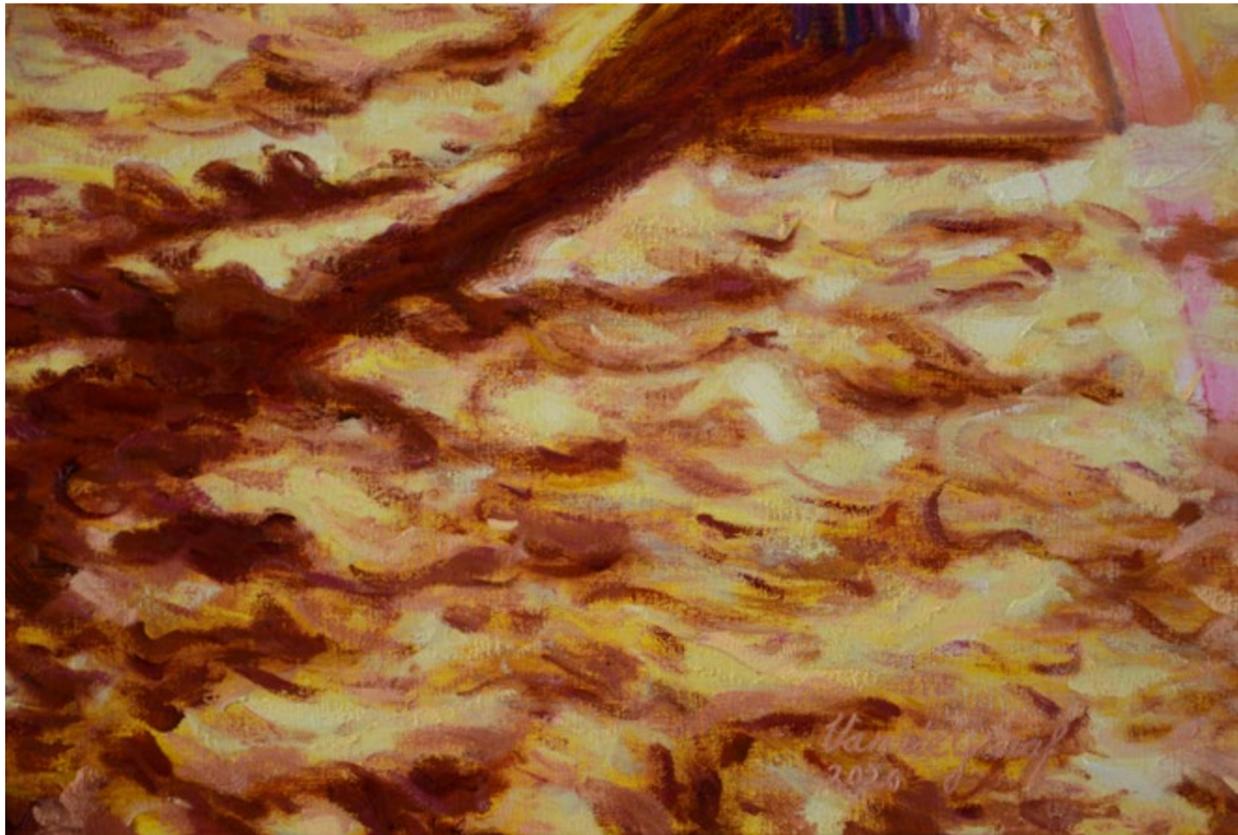
This painting is inspired by walking through life and New York City. The fundament in life of trust and faith (in any form), the opening towards the light, the choice, the tumult of life, the day, the night, love and joy, the movement and energy of life. The church on the right (Madison Avenue Presbyteria Church, NYC) is painted with thick layers of paint as the fundament of life, not as the institute of religion, but as a symbol of faith in the spiritual world, which is always present, through all layers of life.



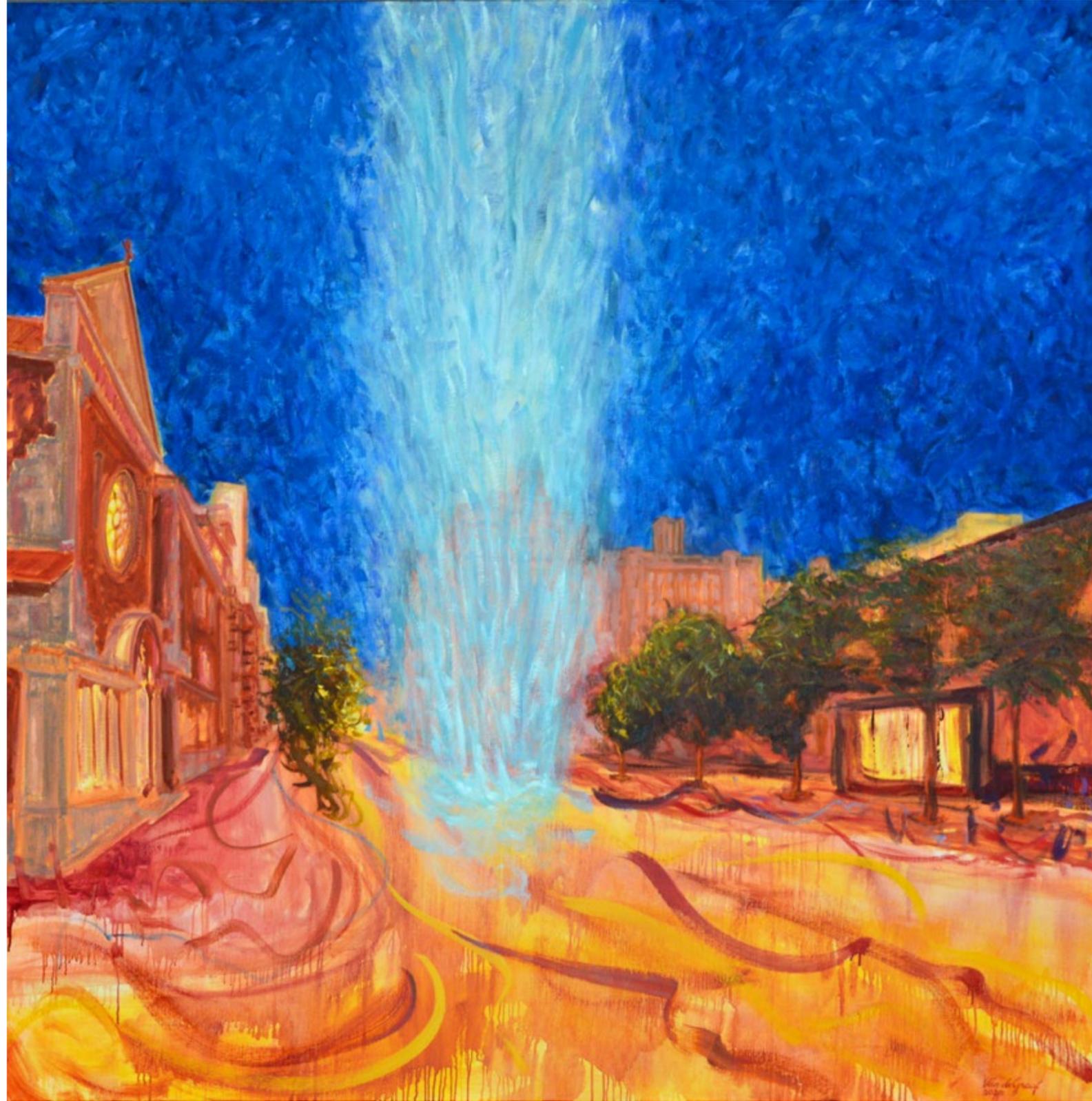
The Walk of Life / 2019 - 2020 / Oil on linen / 140 x 140 x 4,5 cm / Detail and side images



In this painting I used metaphors for the Past, Present and Future in life using the architecture and layout of New York City. The construction wall represents change and future, while the church and the wall facing the construction site represent the past and the marks of history. Walking through the streets of light and shadow you dissolve into Eternity at the end of the road.

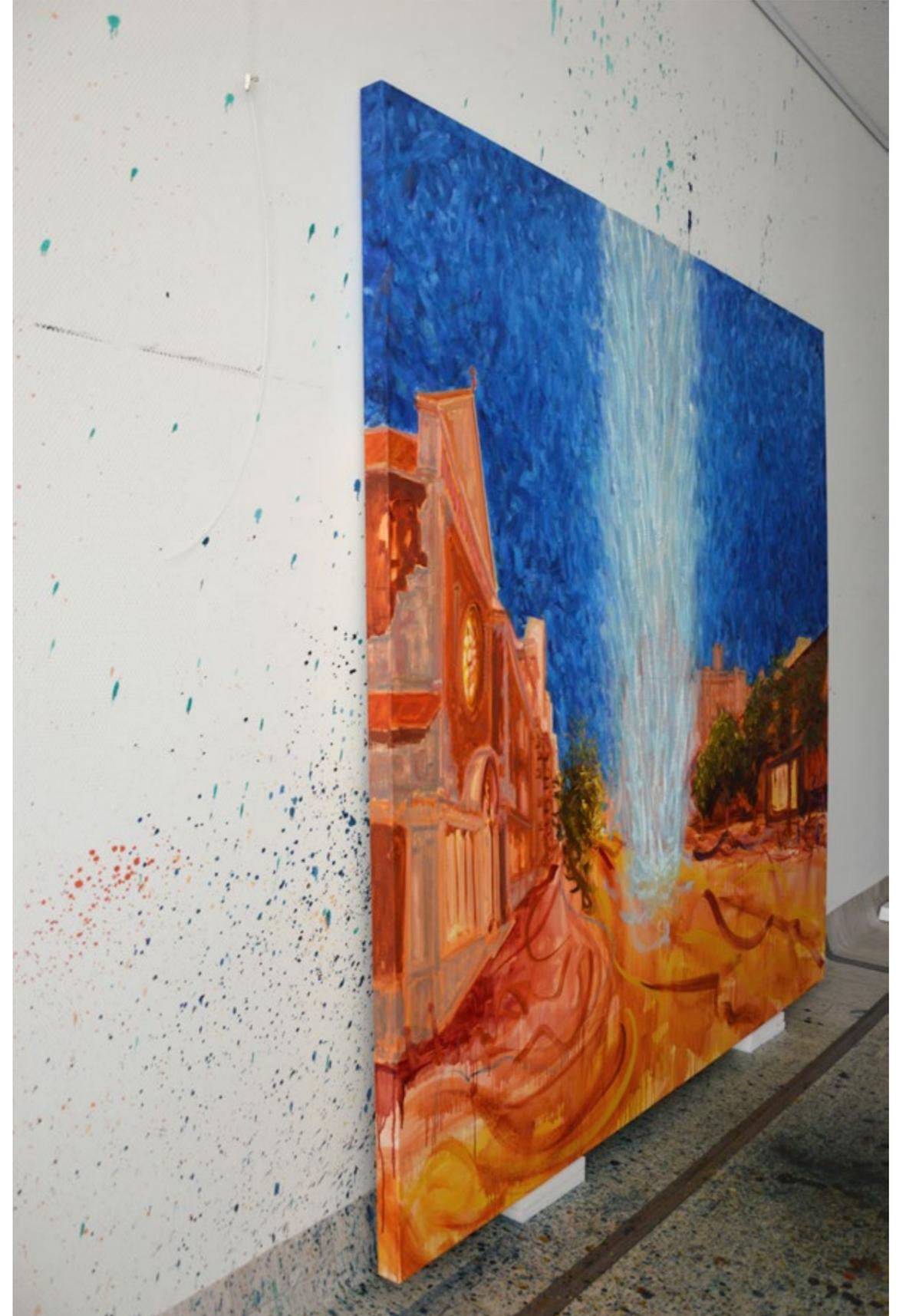


The Past, Present, Eternity / 2019 - 2020 / Oil on linen / 125 x 180 x 4,5 cm / Detail and side images



This painting is inspired by the crossroad at the 'Church of the Guardian Angel' in New York City. The painting is about crossroads in life, in both daily life as in spiritual life, about how these two can come together and the difficulty of integrating spiritual life into daily life. It discusses moments during life when you are confronted with difficulties and you can experience guidance of the spiritual world, of the angels by your side.

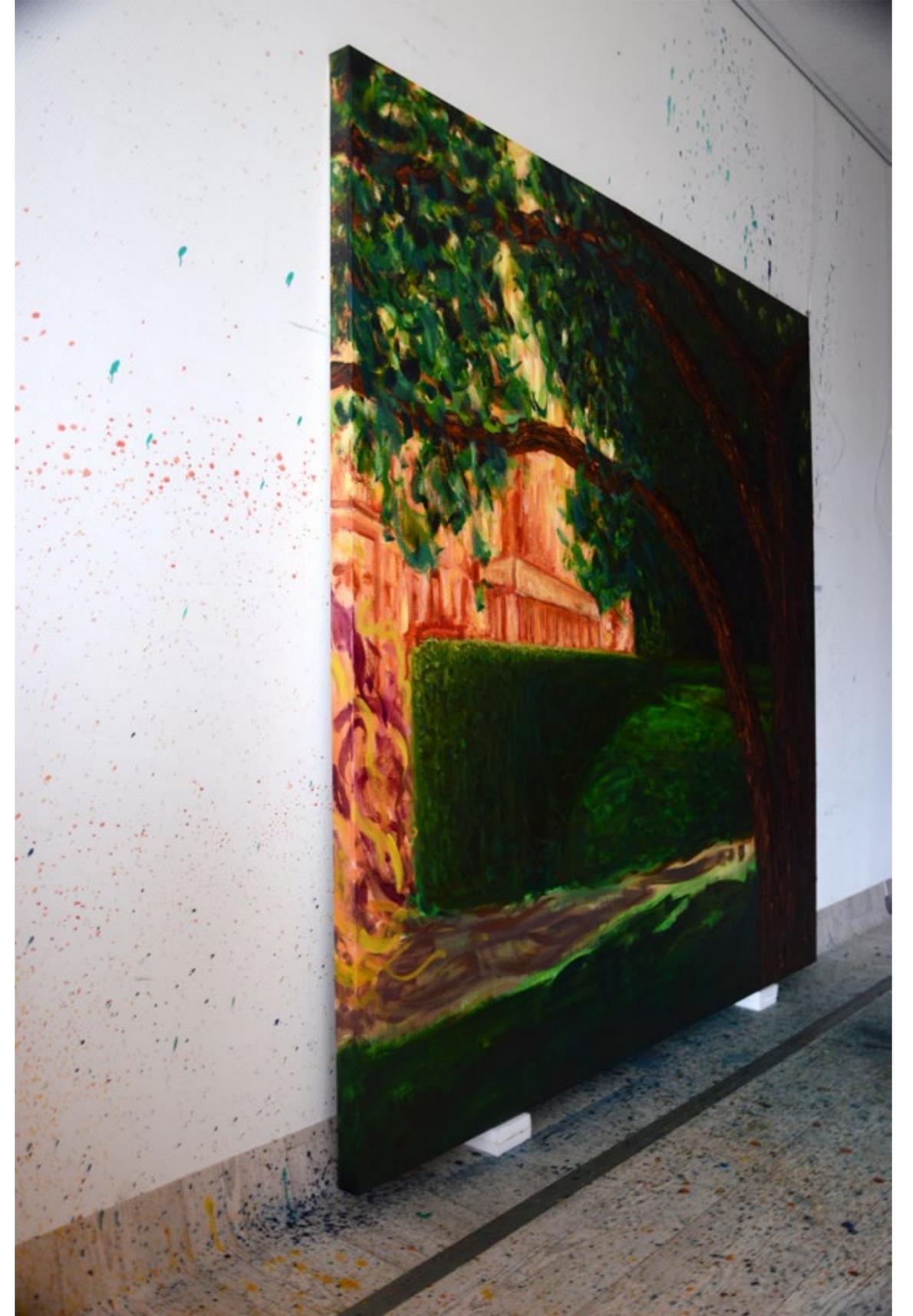
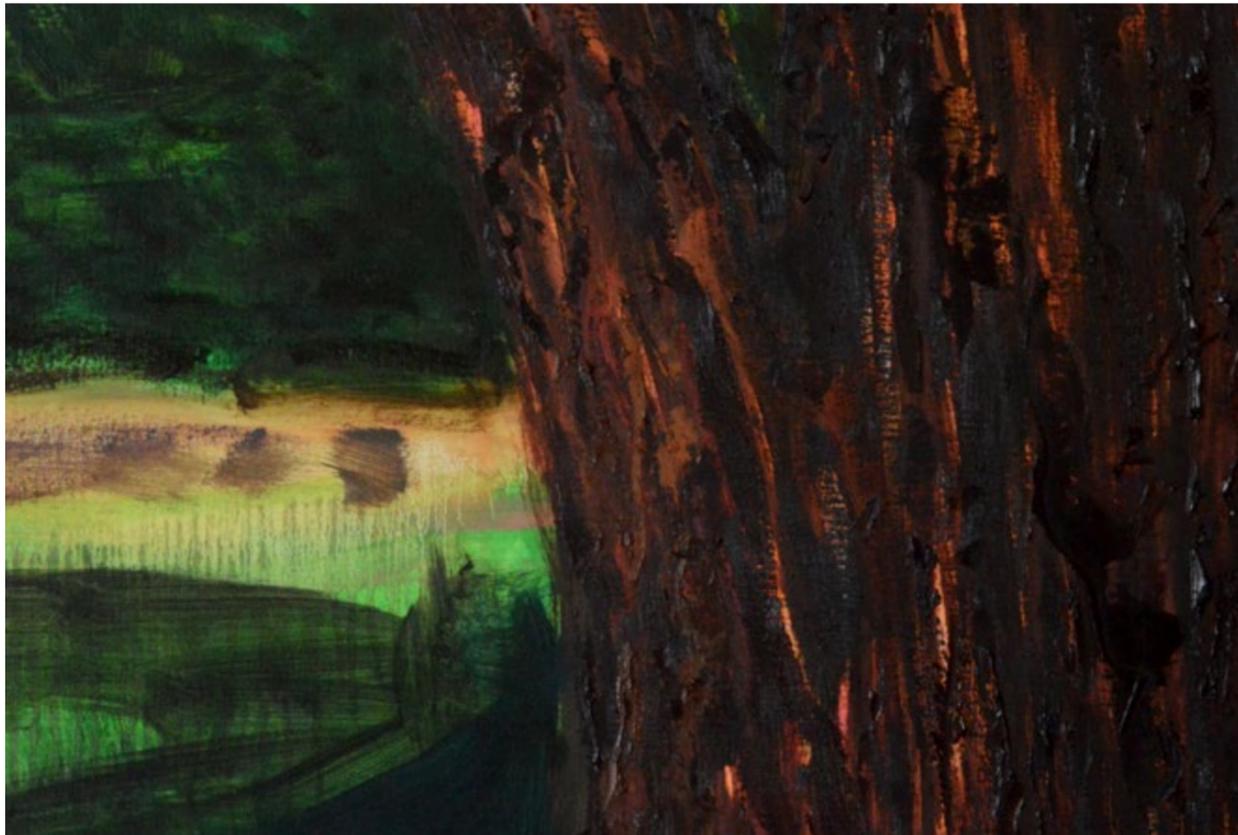
The Crossroads of Life / 2019 - 2020 / Oil on linen / 180 x 180 x 4,5 cm





This painting is inspired by being in a state of introspection and contemplation and seeing daily life passing by. The lonely / silent place you can find yourself in sometimes while daily life is just rushing by. The spectator is standing in the space of silence and contemplation. Sometimes you can get a bit lost in your inner journey and then that spark of light from daily life is pulling you out. The silent place in the painting is inspired by the garden in front of the Grace Church in New York City, 80 Broadway, betw. 10th and 11th Street.

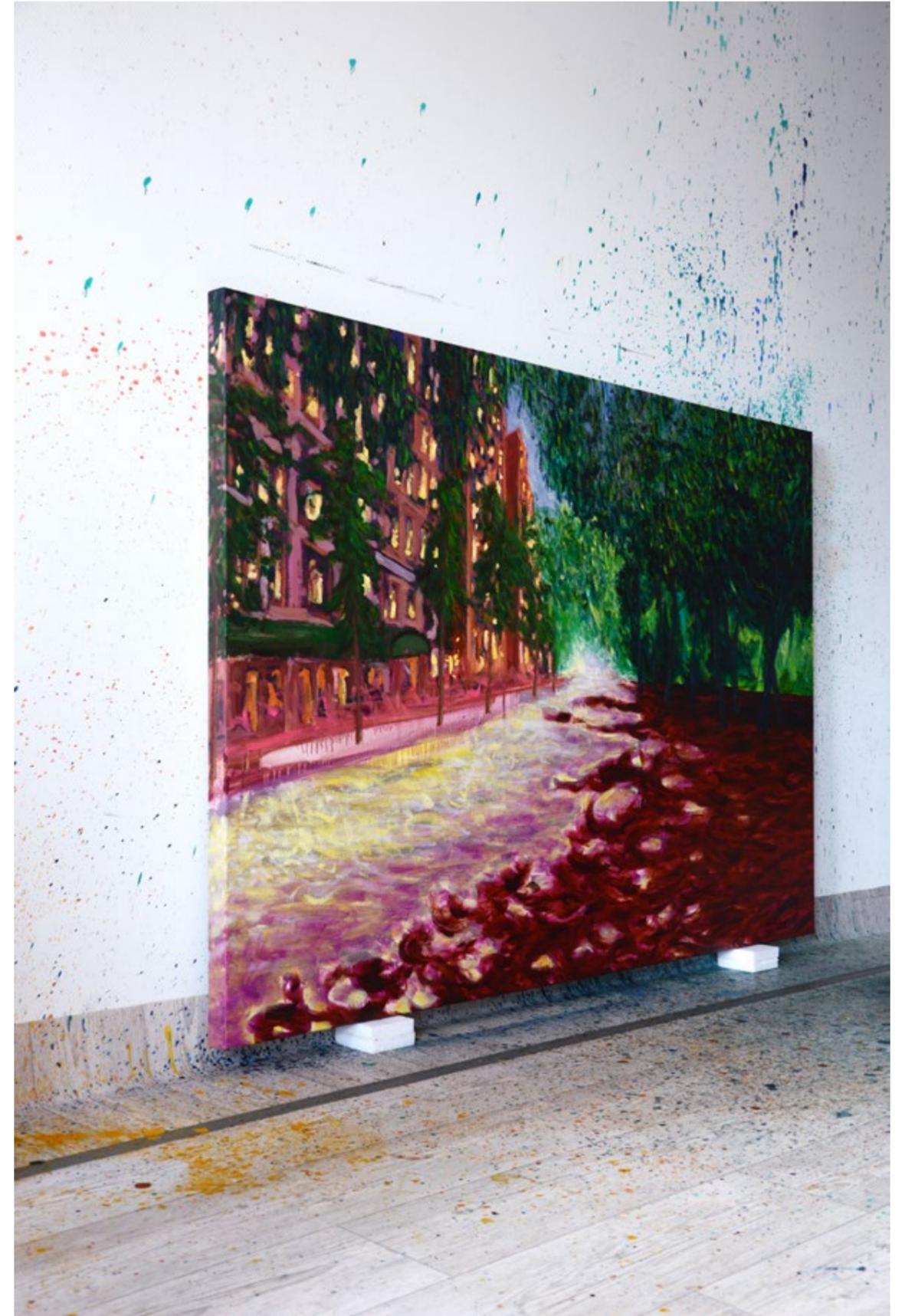
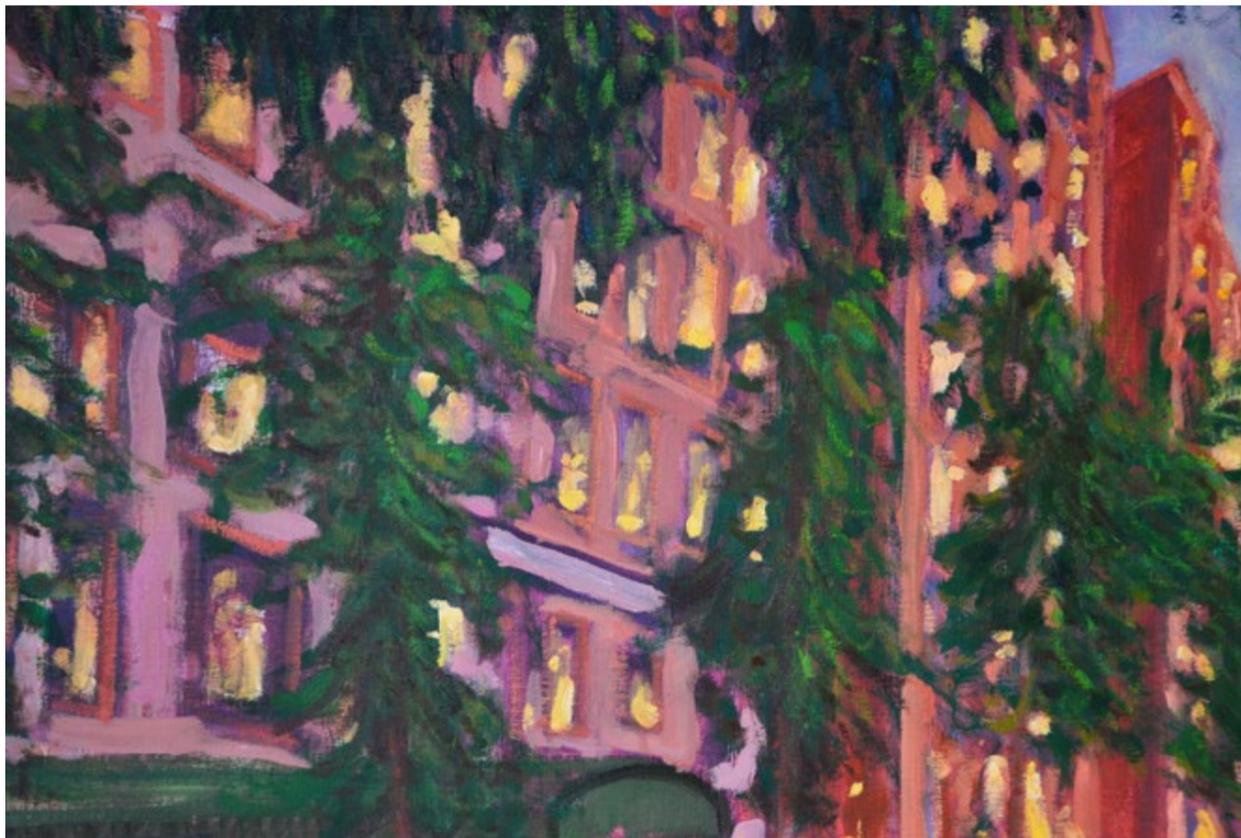
Inner Space of the Soul / 2019 - 2020 / Oil on linen / 180 x 180 x 4,5 cm



Inner Space of the Soul / 2019 - 2020 / Oil on linen / 180 x 180 x 4,5 cm / Detail and side images



Inspired by New York City, directions in life and the endless roads of dreams. Walking through the streets of New York City with endless possibilities, where streets seem to dissolve in eternity, where dreams are the light in the streets and melt with islands of silence within the city. Gedicht (geschreven 09 april 2020): 'Verlichte wegen van dromen, leiden mij door het ongewisse. Beschermd door vertrouwen, geef ik me over aan het licht, die mij de weg wijst welke ik moet gaan. Niet wetende waar te arriveren, zijn alleen mijn dromen, de liefde en geloof mijn bakens onderweg.'

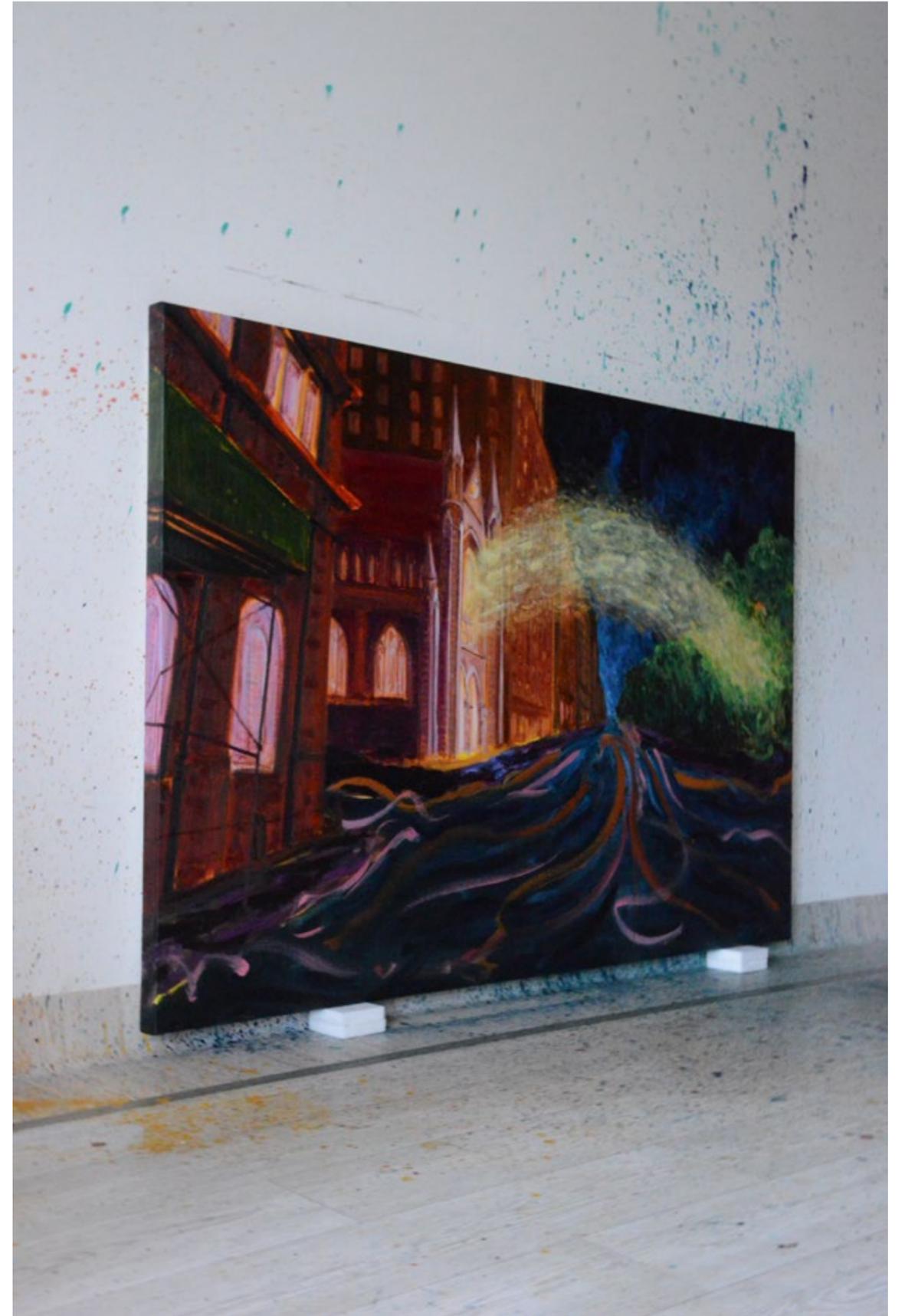
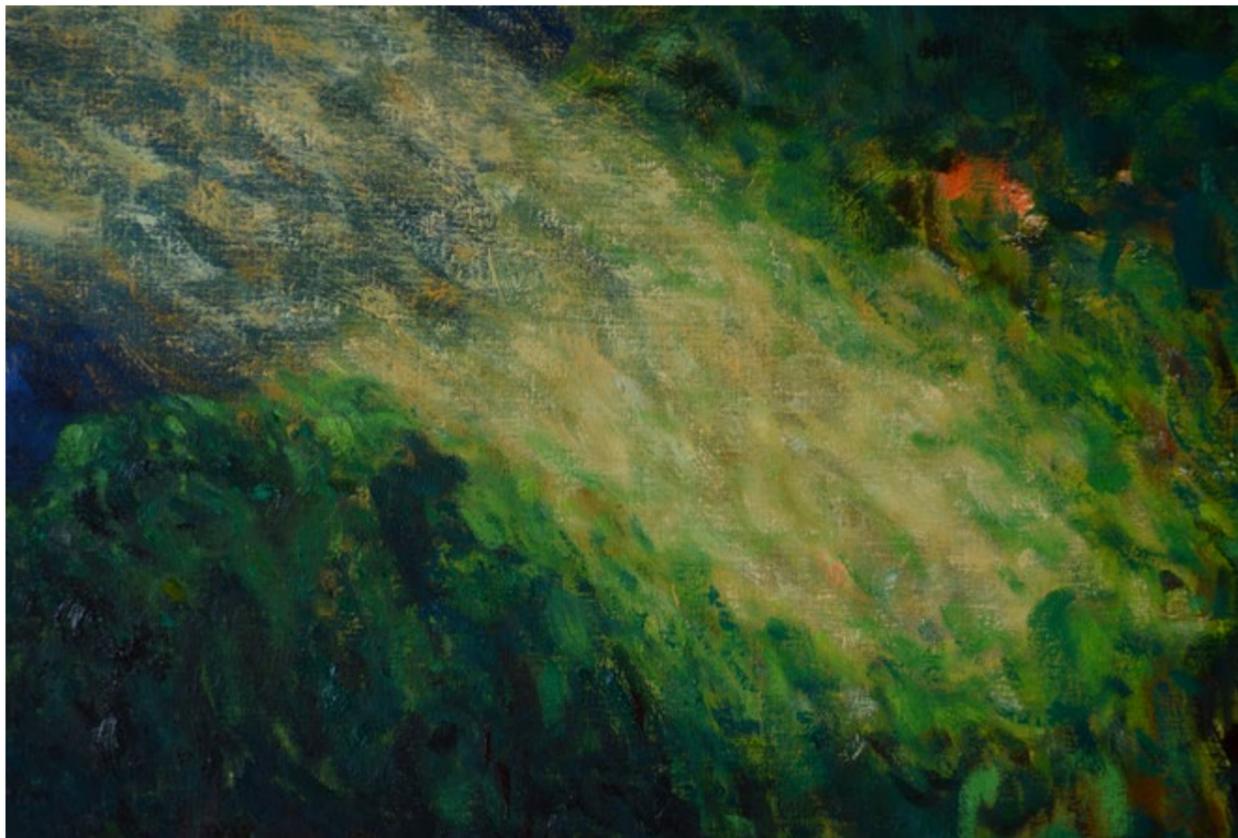
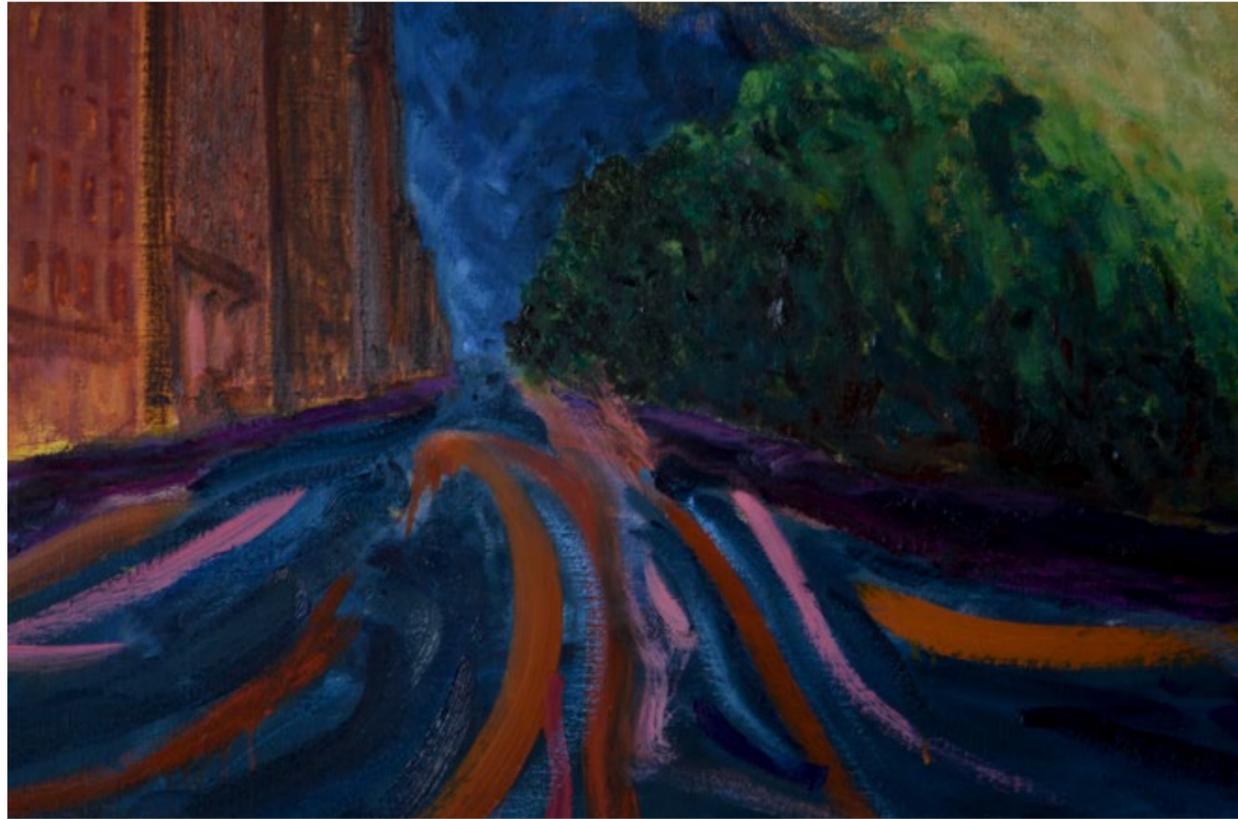


Inner Space of the Soul / 2019 - 2020 / Oil on linen / 125 x 180 x 4,5 cm / Detail and side images



The painting is about keeping the faith in troubled times, about dreams and moving against the flow. The bridge of light flows from one place of silence towards another source of silence, nature. It is a bridge of contemplation and silence with hectic daily life rushing beneath it. The painting is also inspired by the song I really love, 'Bridge over Troubled Water' by Simon and Garfunkel.

Bridge over Troubled Road / 2019 - 2020 / Oil on linen / 125 x 180 x 4,5 cm



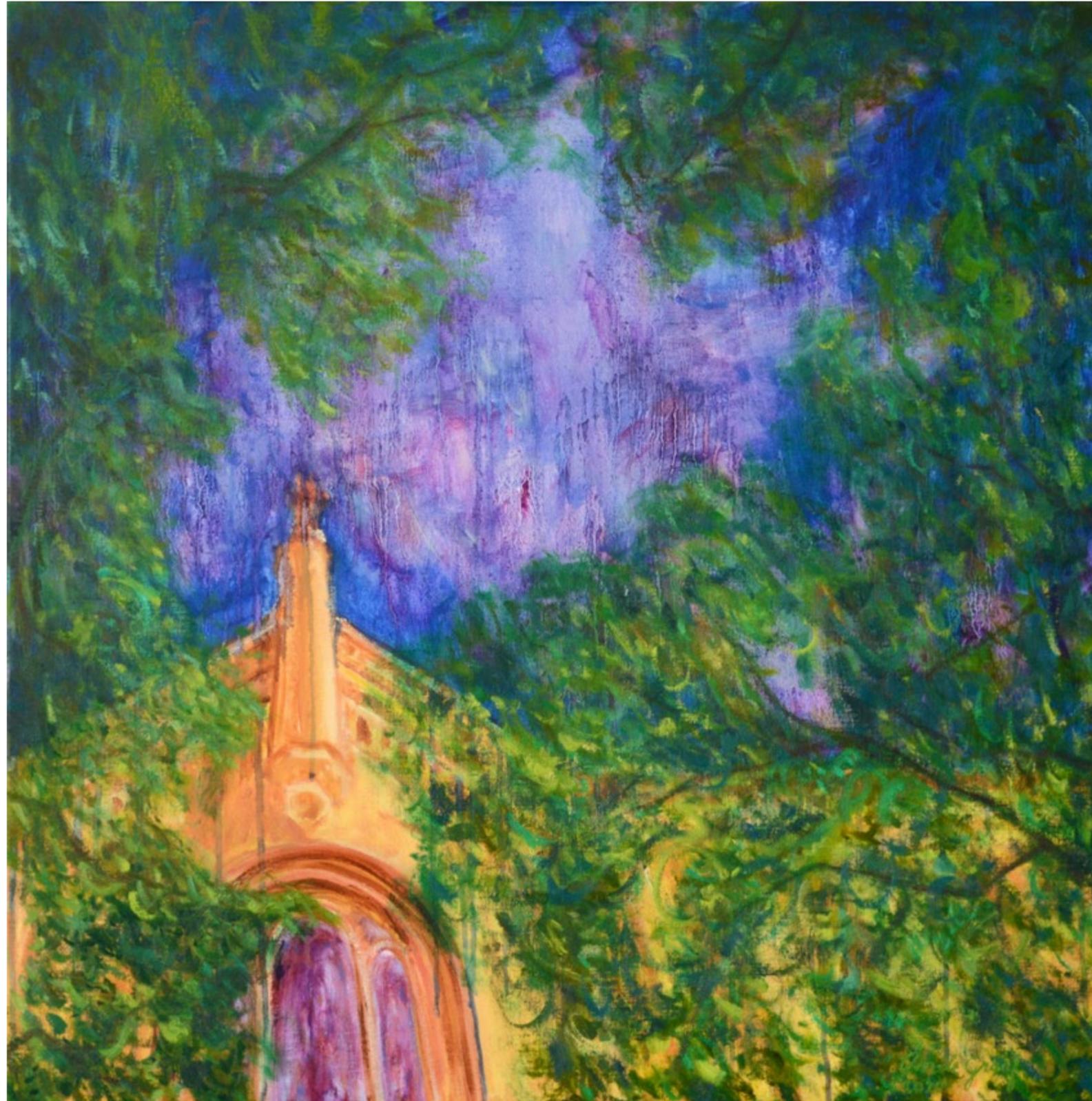
Bridge over Troubled Road / 2019 - 2020 / Oil on linen / 125 x 180 x 4,5 cm / Detail and side images



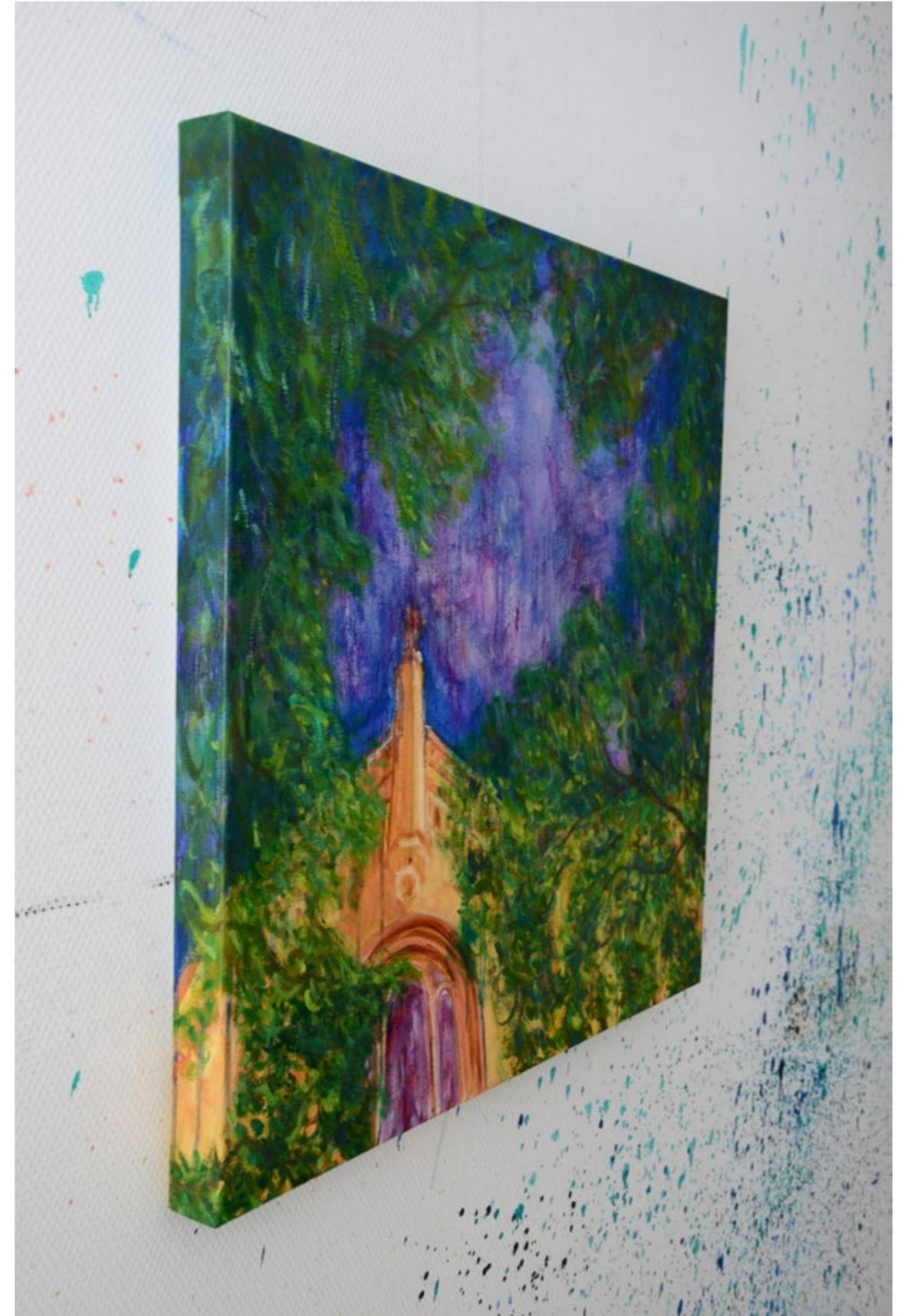
When walking through New York City I was struck by the contrast of these silent places, like this church (St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church), and the vibrant life rushing by. I like to think about these churches as houses of silence and light. I find it interesting that the high-rise buildings are built in a much later period than the church and seem to embrace the house of silence. It almost feels like a sort of utopian island within the city, where the promise for, and the longing to, the light and answers about our destination is kept in the middle of our daily lives. In the painting it is not about religion as an institute, but rather about its philosophy to become better persons, develop ourselves and move closer to the light.



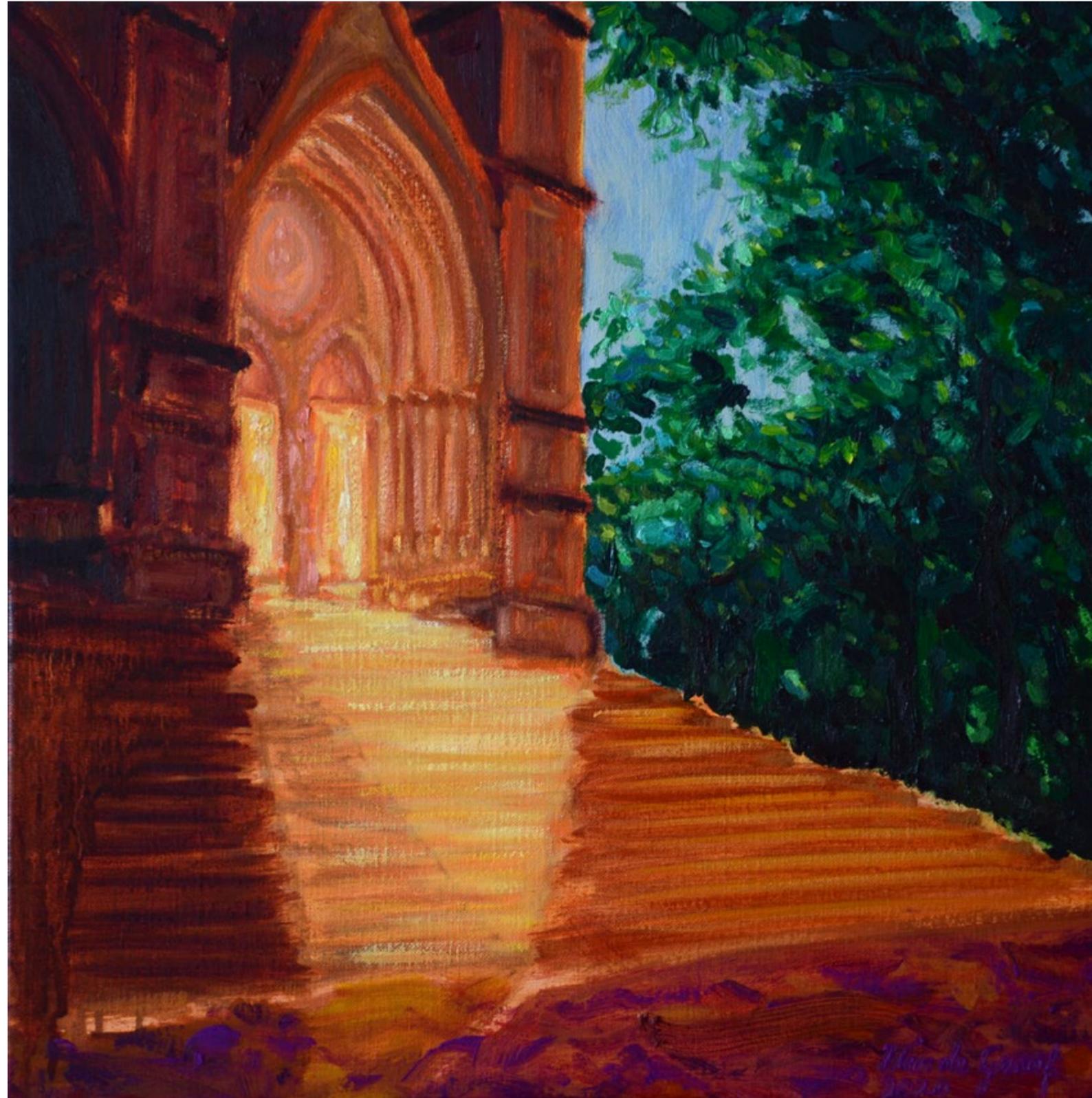
Silence and The City / 2019 - 2020 / Oil on linen / 70 x 70 x 4,5 cm / Detail and side images



Inspired by life, contemplation and New York City (church of image is Marble Collegiate Church). When walking in busy city there can arise these islands of silence / passages to silence in your view if you look close enough from uncommon / different angles. While standing in busy city life, your mind can move to this timeless zone of silence and contemplation and dissolves into sense of Paradise. A reference of this painting is Da Vinci's 'St. John the Baptist' where in this painting the upwards pointing gesture of St. John the Baptist towards Heaven indicates the importance of salvation by God and His Angels.

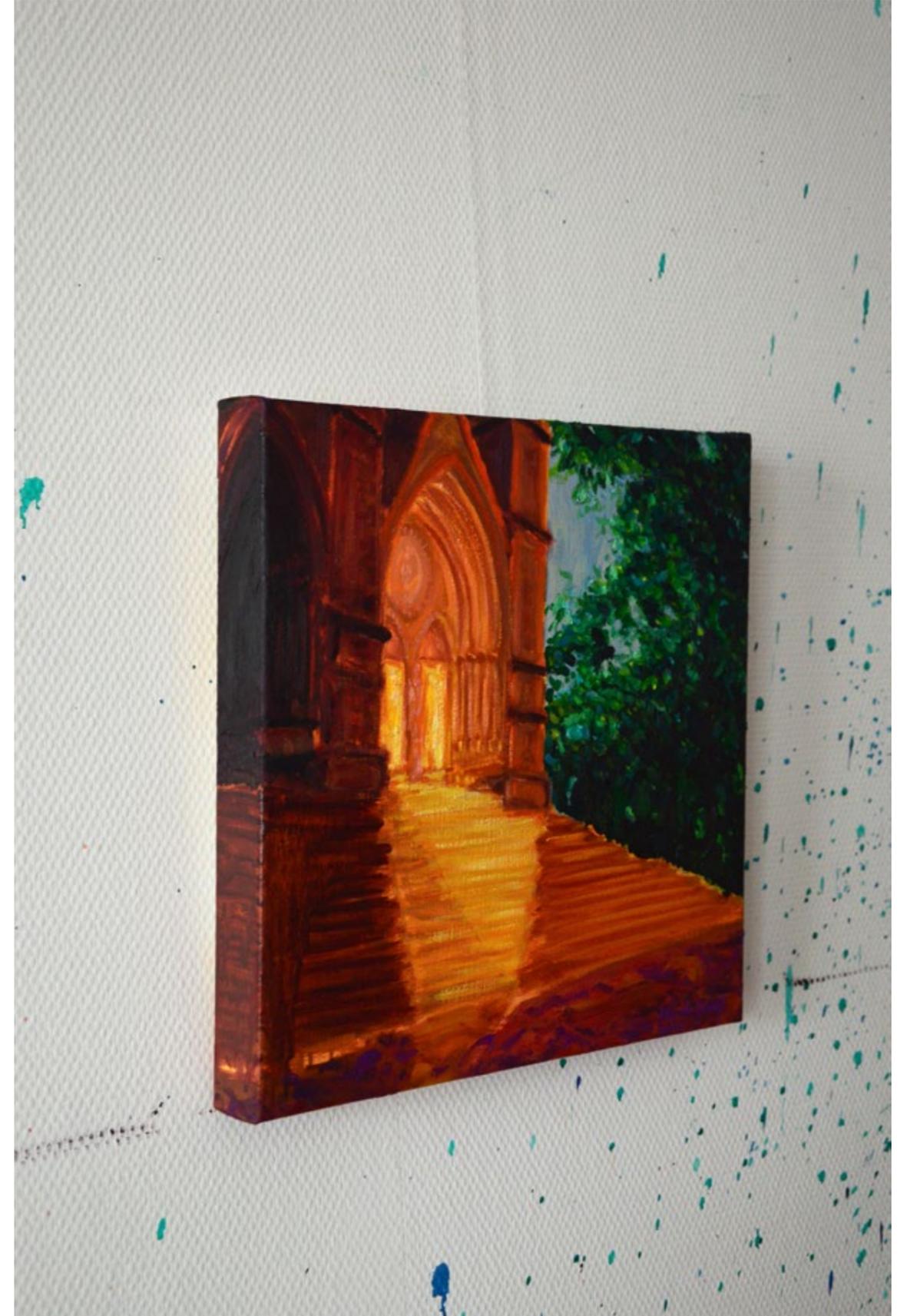


Island of Silence to Paradise / 2019 - 2020 / Oil on linen / 70 x 70 x 4,5 cm



The work is inspired by the choices we have in life on a spiritual level, moving towards darkness, towards the light or just passing by in the tumult of life. I see the cathedral openings as a metaphor for the direction you choose to go in your inner self, one opens a piece of darkness, the other opens a piece of the light in yourself. This painting reminds me of a phase in the song 'Hotel California' 'You can checkout any time you like, but you can never leave'. I agree on that, you can't hide from the direction you choose for yourself. The process of growing on a spiritual level keeps on returning and you can only checkout when the big boss decides you are done, until then you can never leave.

Stairway of Choice / 2019 - 2020 / Oil on linen / 40 x 40 x 4,5 cm

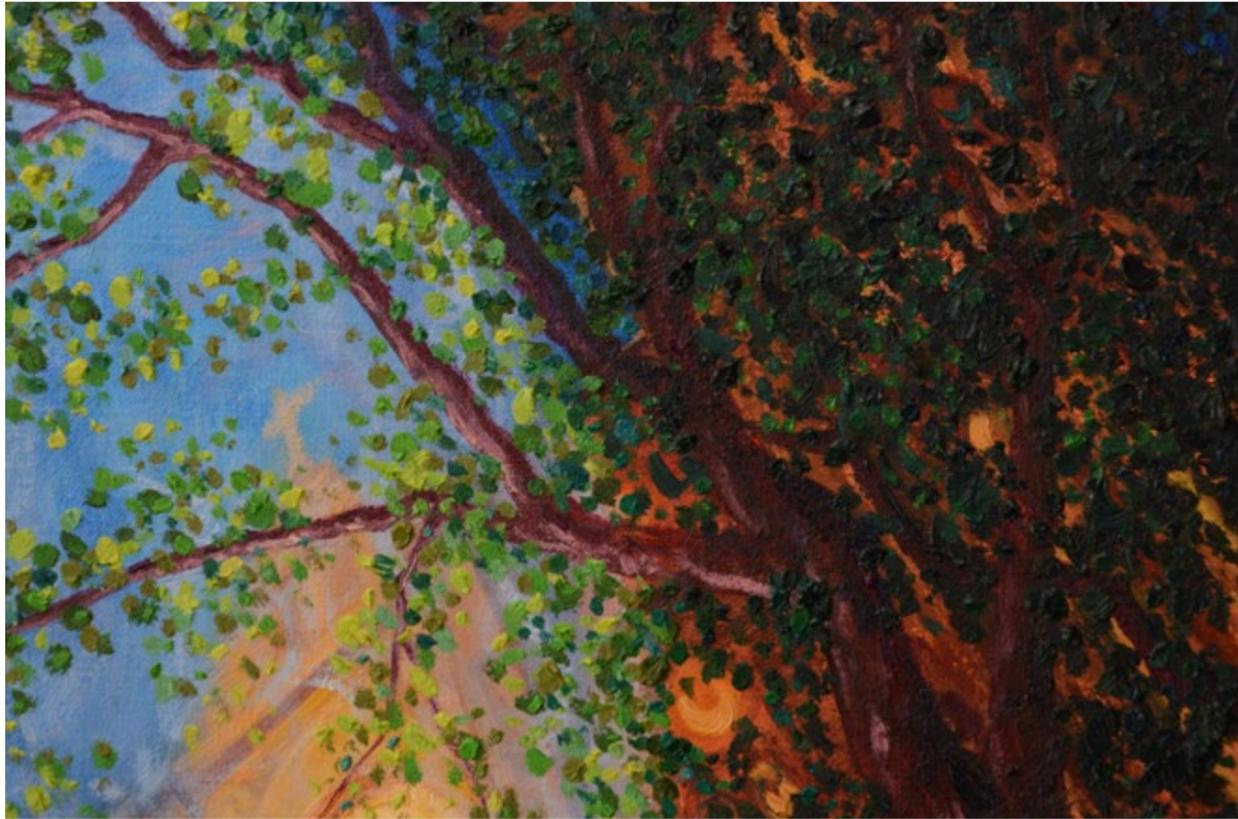


Stairway of Choice / 2019 - 2020 / Oil on linen / 40 x 40 x 4,5 cm / Detail and side images

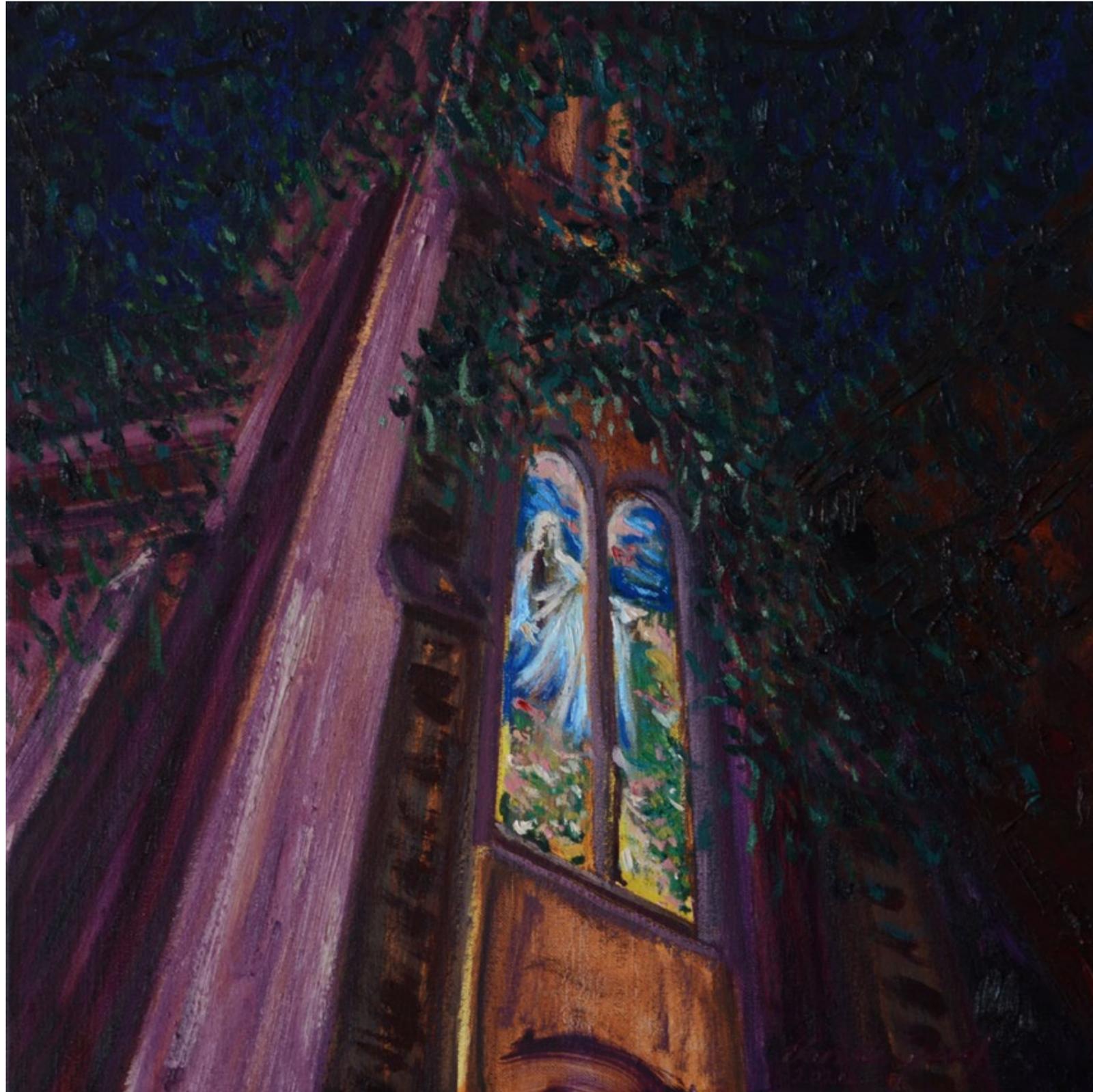


The series is inspired by New York City and contemplating and finding direction in daily life. Started in September 2019 pre- COVID 19, when busy energetic streets were the most normal thing in the world. The direction in this painting is reaching to the spiritual world, to heaven, trying to connect daily life with the spiritual. The Cathedral Church of St. John The Divine (NYC), the viewpoint of the spectator and the trees all strongly point upwards and give a feeling that these elements are all longing to embrace the connection with the spiritual world.

The Light of Silence / 2019 - 2020 / Oil on linen / 40 x 40 x 4,5 cm



The Light of Silence / 2019 - 2020 / Oil on linen / 40 x 40 x 4,5 cm / Detail and side images



When I was walking through the busy streets of New York City in the evening (Sept. 2017) I was enchanted by this beautiful stained glass window of the Marble Collegiate Church. The window felt like a gateway to another world, a silence in the middle of the city, a light which drew me in a timeless bubble of silence. Through the sound of the city I also heard the rustle of the leaves. I felt so happy to experience these two contrasts could mingle so well, that they could exist next to each other in such great harmony. That was the inspiration for this painting.

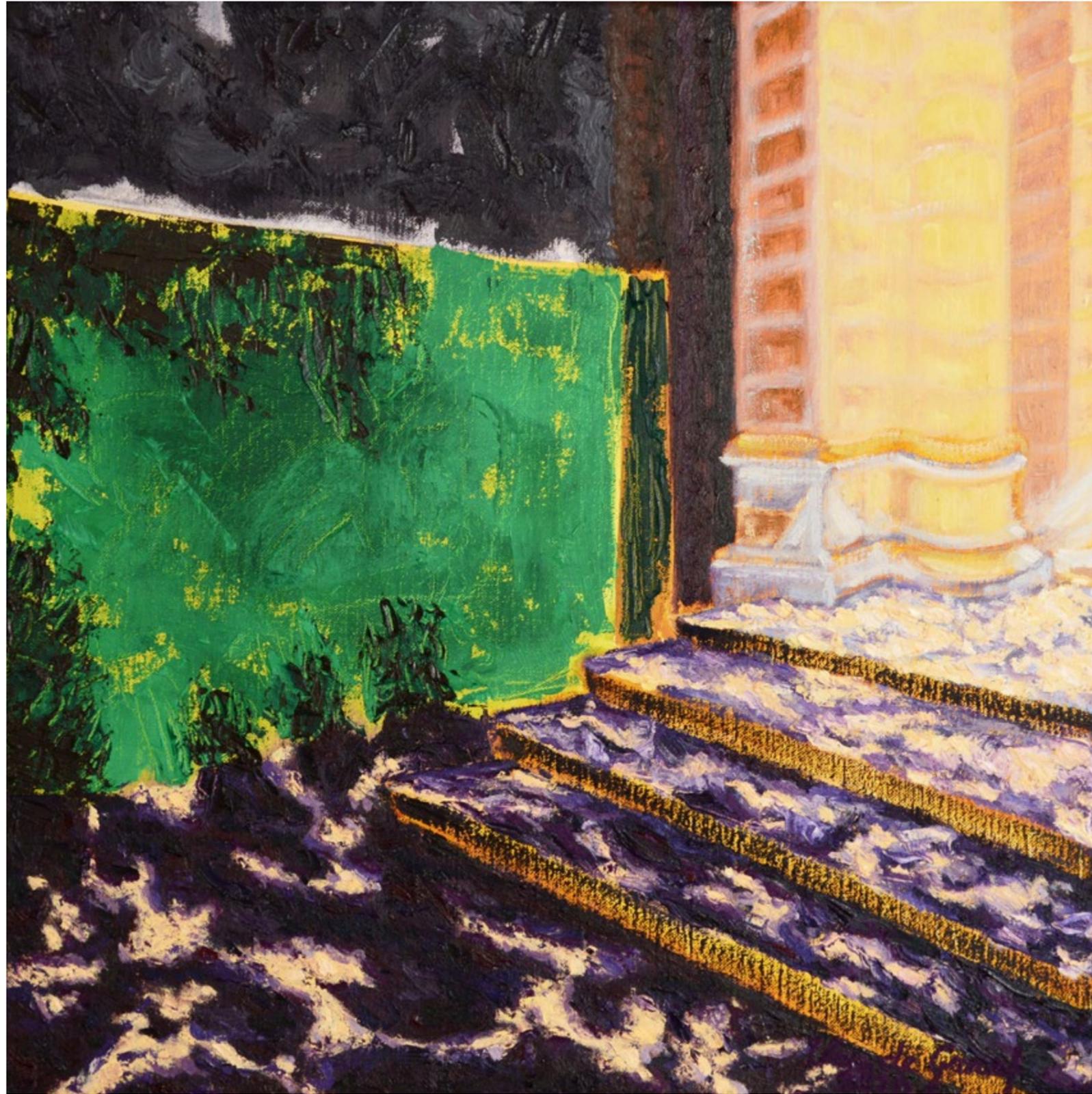




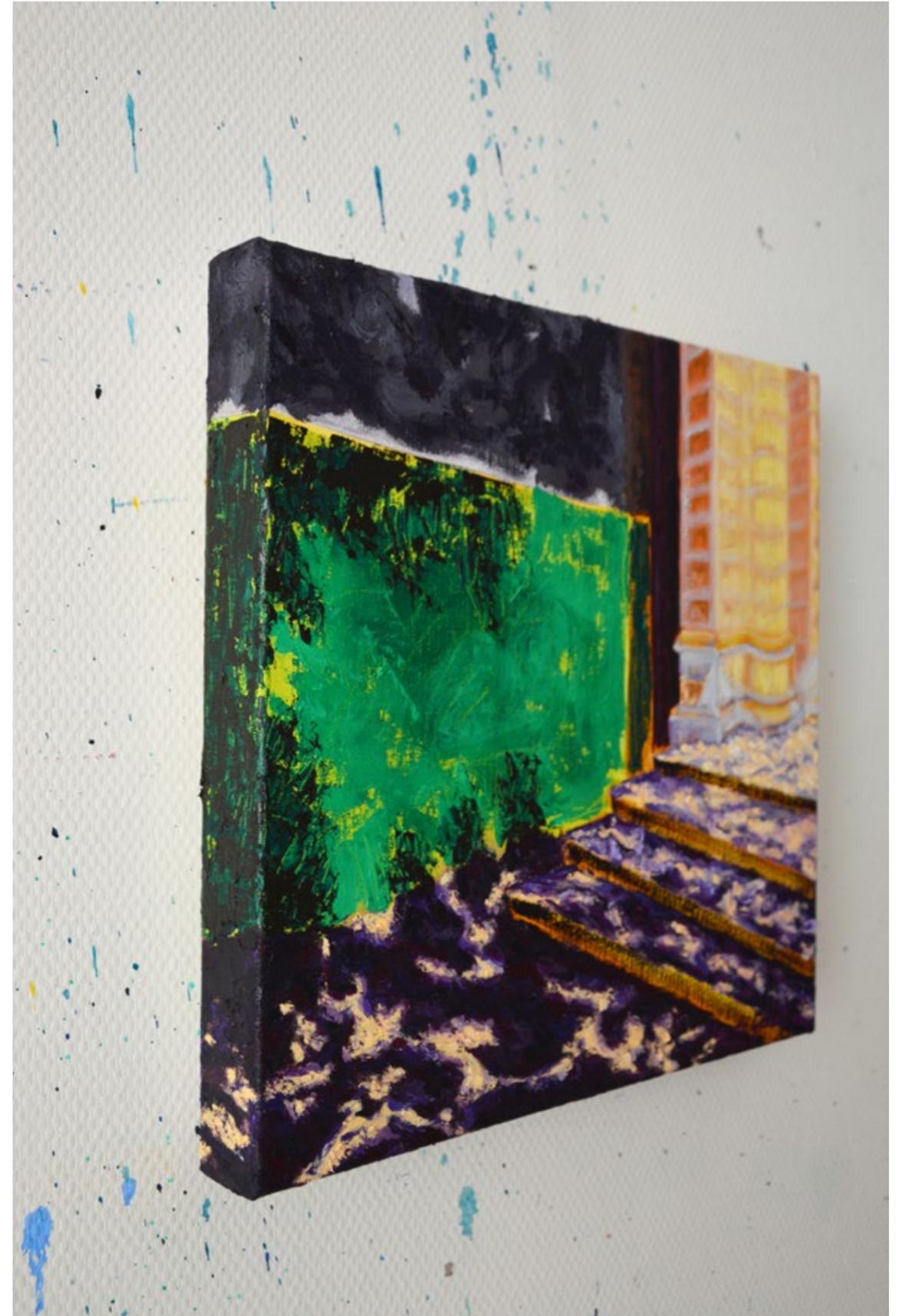
During my trip to New York City in September 2017 I spoke to this nice Afro-American lady who was contemplating in the silent and beautiful garden of the 'Church of the Transfiguration Columbarium' looking at a statue in the garden. It was Lucifer, the fallen angel. She said to me; 'Be aware of the fallen angel, he is everywhere in this world'. That was the inspiration for this painting.



Be Aware of the Fallen Angel / 2019 - 2020 / Oil on linen / 40 x 40 x 4,5 cm / Detail and side images



'Little words, like a loving breeze, speak to my being, to break the hard shadows of navigating through life. In the hope of the time, which in every moment can contain a turn towards love, I move my human being to these little words of love, for they will enlighten and fade the shadows.' On painting entrance of Marble Collegiate Church, NYC



Walls and Shadows of Life / 2019 - 2020 / Oil on linen / 40 x 40 x 4,5 cm / Detail and side images



Crossroad of Different Worlds / 2019 - 2020 / Watercolor, graphite and Conte on paper / 42 x 29,7 cm



Soul Passage / 2019 - 2020 / Watercolor, graphite and Conte on paper / 29,7 x 42 cm



The Angel of Chelsea / 2019 - 2020 / Watercolor, graphite and Conte on paper / 29,7 x 42 cm



The Past, Present, Eternity / 2019 - 2020 / Watercolor, graphite and Conte on paper / 29,7 x 42 cm



The Crossroads of Life / 2019 - 2020 / Watercolor, graphite and Conte on paper / 29,7 x 42 cm





The Road of Dreams / 2019 - 2020 / Watercolor, graphite and Conte on paper / 29,7 x 42 cm



The Road of Dreams / 2019 - 2020 / Oil sticks, graphite and Conte on paper / 29,7 x 42 cm



Bridge over Troubled Road / 2019 - 2020 / Watercolor, graphite and Conte on paper / 29,7 x 42 cm



"Silence and The City"

May 2020

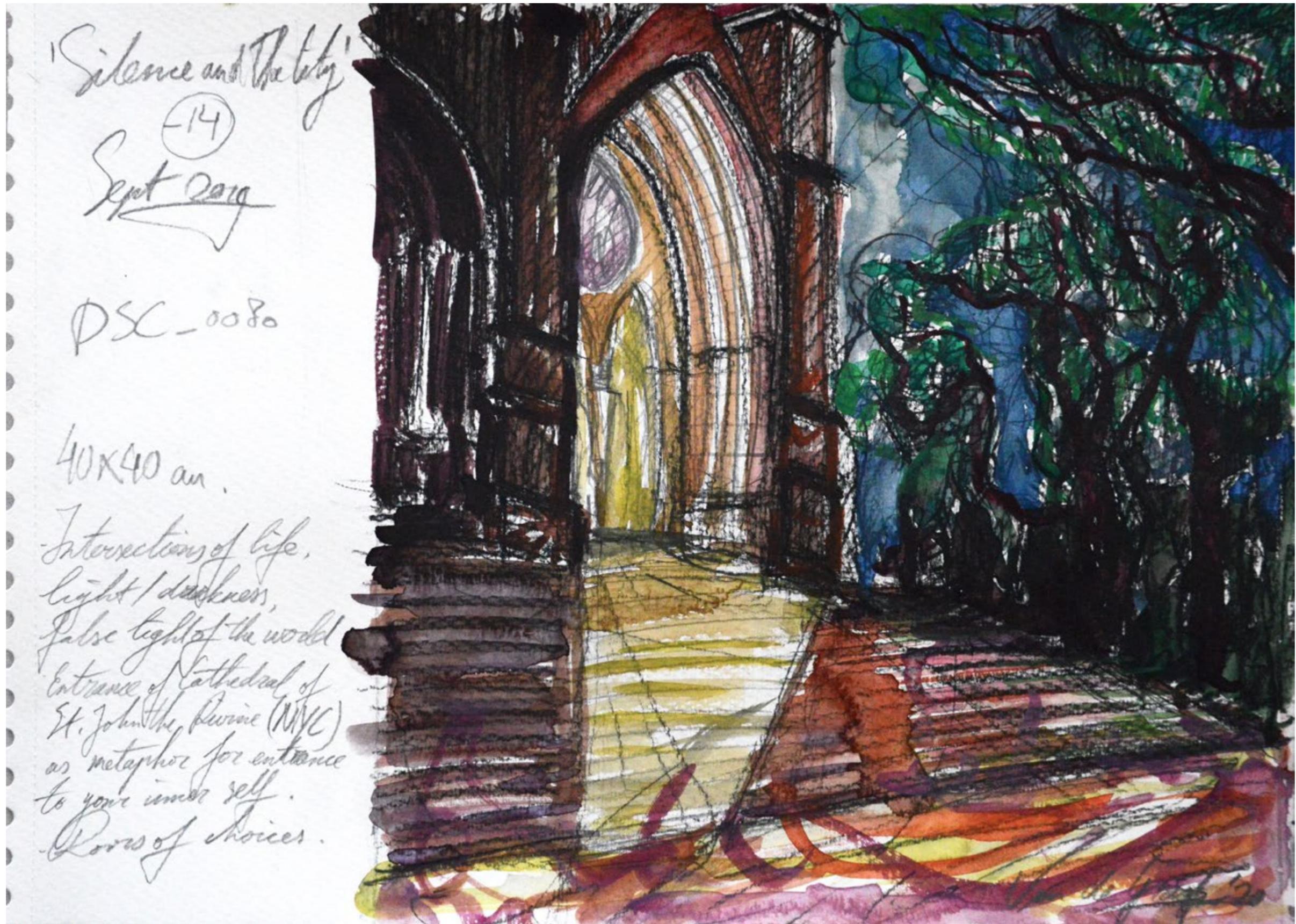
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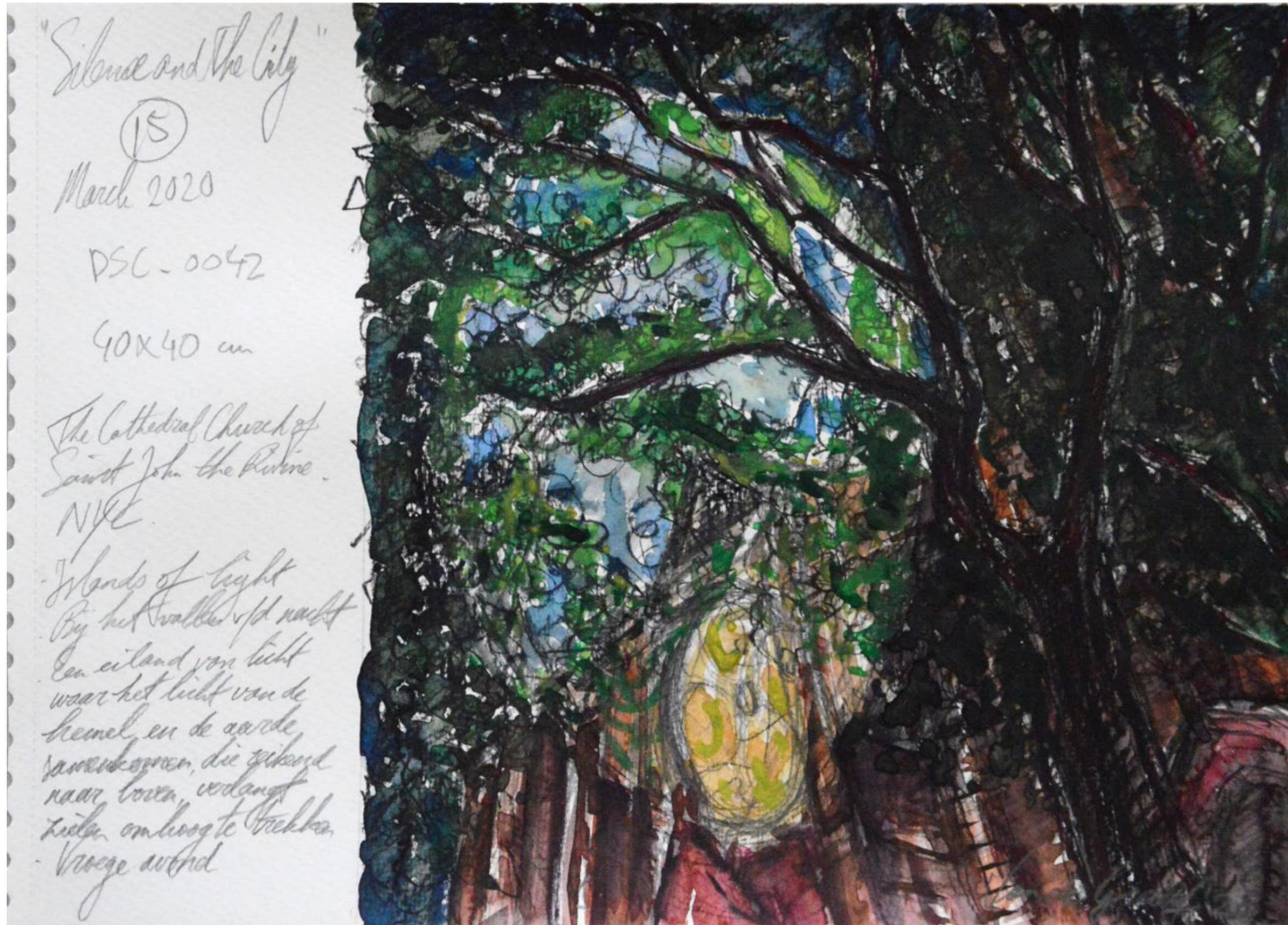
70x70 cm

- Leonardo: "All wisdom is from above"
- Intimate play of the organic growth trees vs the rigidity and upwards movement of the church
- Directions and movements, finding passages/openings in yourself, in your mind towards the soul
- Looking through the trees of life.
- Marble Collegiate Church, NYC

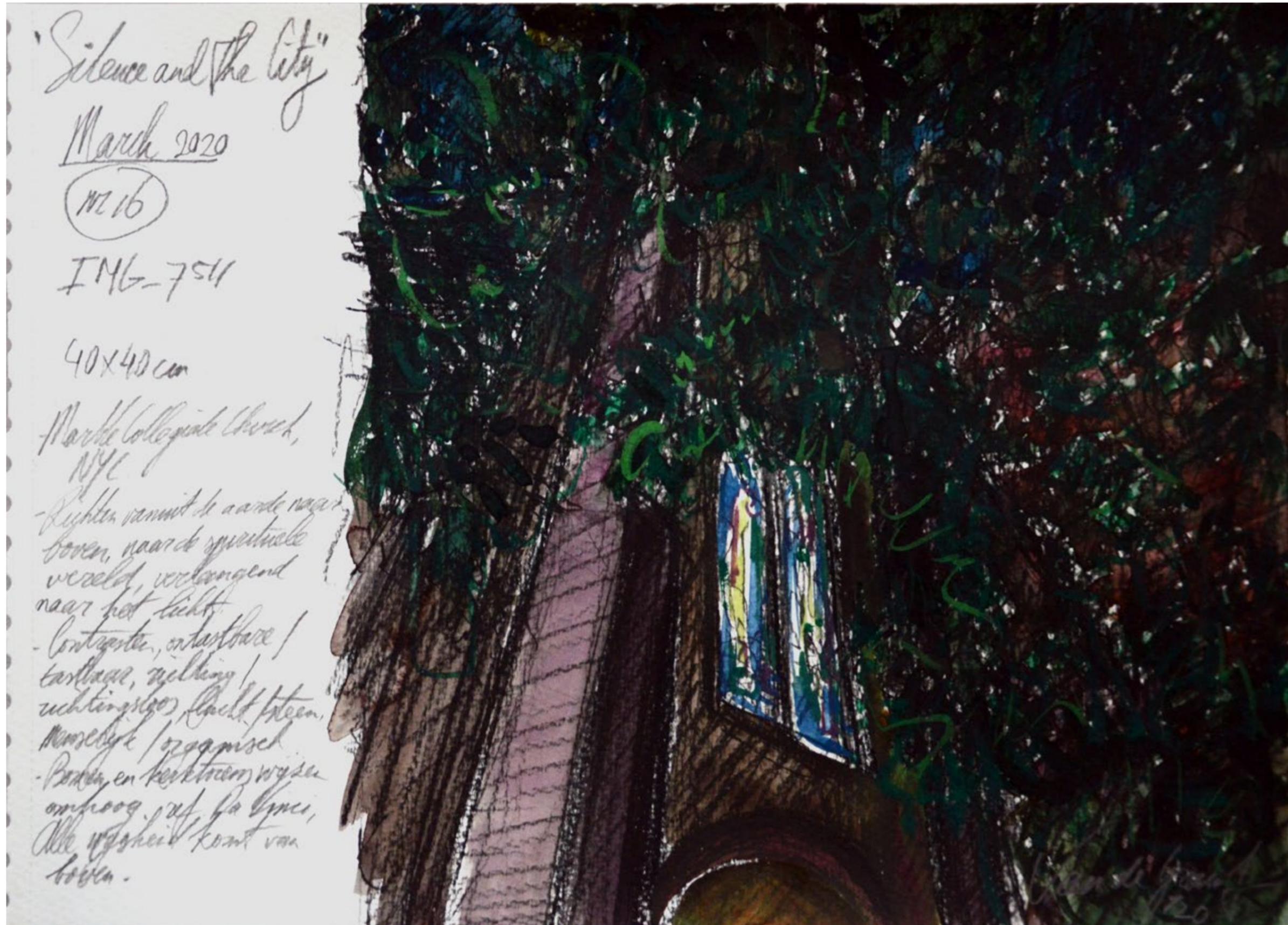
Island of Silence to Paradise 20



Stairway of Choice / 2019 - 2020 / Watercolor, graphite and Conte on paper / 29,7 x 42 cm



The Light of Silence / 2019 - 2020 / Watercolor, graphite and Conte on paper / 29,7 x 42 cm





Walls and Shadows of Life / 2019 - 2020 / Watercolor, graphite and Conte on paper / 29,7 x 42 cm