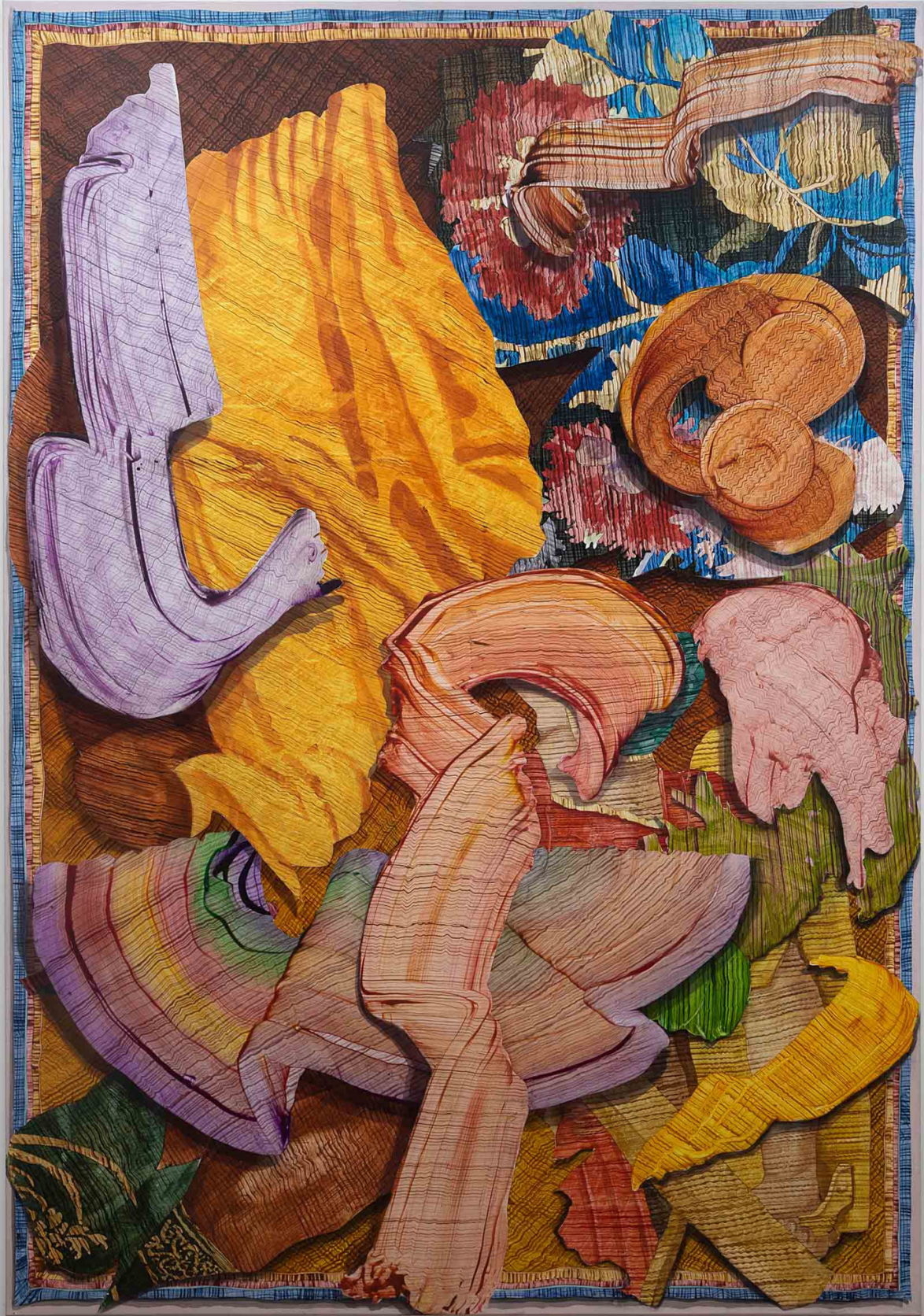


sullivan+strumpf

# GREGORY HODGE

FIGURES, LIGHTS, AND LANDSCAPES  
21 JULY - 13 AUGUST 2022



GREGORY HODGE, GOLD CLOAK, 2022

ACRYLIC ON LINEN, 230 X 160 CM

SOLD

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## Topographies of Paintings by Jo Higgins

Part of the joy of Gregory Hodge's paintings is there's no one way to read them. It's like visual orienteering; with a topographic map of symbols and gestures and hints of interiors that layer like a 'choose your own adventure' on the history and art of painting.

So, what can you see? In the *Window*, at the back of the *Light Shop*, through the *Green House*? Can you *See the Wind*?

Where will you begin? Because for Hodge, every painting starts at the collage.

### Collage

From digital files marked 'painted gestures' 'fabric' or 'photographs' Hodge constructs his paintings through a long-standing process of layering, cutting and arranging these flattened textural and architectural elements into compositions in search of a subject.

But, as these collaged negotiations navigate their art historical references and autobiographical points of departures and problem-solve how to render these surfaces and source materials in paint, the loops and riddles and concealed layers of these negotiations *become* the subject.

These are paintings about painting; its practice and its history.

In assembling his compositions, Hodge takes the modernist precedent of cutting up things that don't necessarily belong together and layers in references to everything from trompe l'oeil still lifes to baroque ceiling painting, Pop Art, Abstraction and 17th century tapestries.

The result: paintings that are utterly contemporary.

Reinforcing these intellectual as well as visual collisions is Hodge's use of shadows and sharp edges. Forms and shapes appear to hover and stack, alluding to things unseen and unsettled.

That they are rendered in a singular painted surface feels constantly astonishing. There's an abrupt dismount from the giddiness of those large gestural swirls and marks when you remember they are in fact painstakingly, laboriously recreated.

In the topography of Hodge's paintings; these gestures are the foremost layer.

### Gesture

There's a wonderful tension in the movements of Hodge's recurring gestural motifs. They seem to bear witness to some dynamic flourish but their rendering has been rehearsed in much the same way a dancer's body knows a movement, or a surfer's a wave.

So it's perhaps not surprising if you feel yourself wanting to trace the gesture with your body, or feel it moving through you with the sensation of a memory. Hodge himself has even felt them standing in for bodies; has thought of them as an action or emotion. But this is not their primary function.

In paintings that seem to grapple with wanting to be representational - a glimpse of a *Winter House* here; the stand of a *Mannequin* there - these gestures are designed to disrupt any coherent reading of the symbols and surfaces, and to bring these densely packed paintings back to the subject of painting. Don't be distracted by them; look beyond them to the surfaces they set out to obscure.

## Surface

While they seem set furthest back from the surface, Hodge's backgrounds are in fact the final layer added to his paintings; a filling in and filling out of any remnant voids once the gestures and painted collage have been set in place. In this latest body of work, it is Hodge's interest in the surface of textiles, and tapestries in particular, that comes into focus.

In wanting to generate paintings that resemble woven surfaces, Hodge eschews a slick, pop finish for a deliberately handmade quality. While painted, not stitched, the labour of this mark-making is still evident, with specially handmade tools and brushes helping to render the warp and weft of the tapestries in paint.

Hodge uses highly pigmented, highly translucent acrylics and gels to create his paintings and the ways he deploys them on his surfaces, able to mimic everything from oil painted trompe l'oeil techniques to woven 17th century textiles, demonstrates his very contemporary understanding of these very contemporary materials.

In some ways, these visual and art historical loops and leaps mirror the reflexive nature of Hodge's tapestry source material. Tapestry designs are based on images taken from paintings and in re-interpreting and returning the tapestried painting back to the canvas, with their textures intact, Hodge adds another layer to the experience of seeing a painting and wanting to understand how it is made, never mind wanting to touch it...

## Autobiography

If you *could* touch the painting's surface; could peel away the layers, buried in there you might find the autobiographical fragments that set the direction for Hodge's construction of his images.

For the first time, untitled but intact pencil and marker drawings that might have once operated as preparatory sketches, have been included in this finished body of work. Based on photographs of Hodge's surrounding landscapes or things in his environment, fragments of some of these drawings can be discovered in other, larger-scale paintings.

Hodge's choice of source images is intuitive but can be understood as a response to different experiences and places with the people in his life.

We don't need to know there might be an obscured portrait of Hodge's family deep in the layers of the painting we're looking at - just that this is part of his new approach to generating representational imagery. This imagery though, ultimately resists being descriptive - it's not for Hodge to tell you what you can see - and through its fragmenting instead offers an abstract understanding of the processes of image making.

## **Frame**

So how do you set your course through the experience of looking at Hodge's paintings?

They are complicated to look at and complicated to make and there is no one way to unravel them. But even as they threaten to tip over the edge of the canvas, Hodge's framing devices at least offer to contain the experience.

These frames, represented here as the fringed edges of tapestries, are a compositional device but they also reflect Hodge's interest in, and consideration of, the ways that textiles hang from the wall; how they fall and the shadows they cast as a consequence. This trompe l'oeil device creates an illusion of depth but where the painted collaged elements and gestures overreach, this also propels them forward in space.

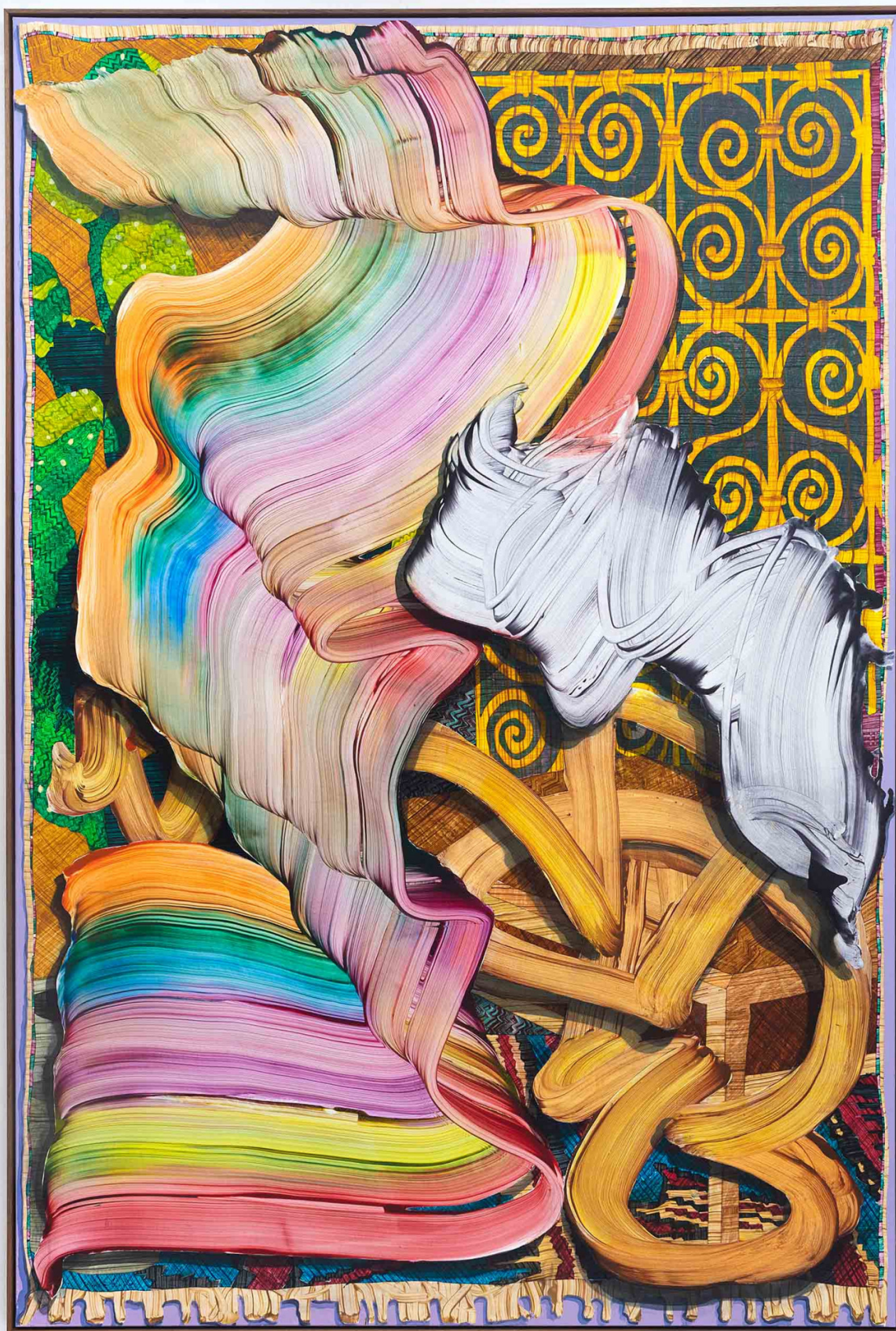
This is no staying put here.

## **Navigating Topographies**

However you decide to navigate the terrains of Hodge's paintings, any one of these recurring markers can help guide your way.

For Hodge, these new directions in his paintings feel like the start of something both daunting and exciting and as these material and intellectual nuances continue to be articulated, the question is: where do they take *you*?



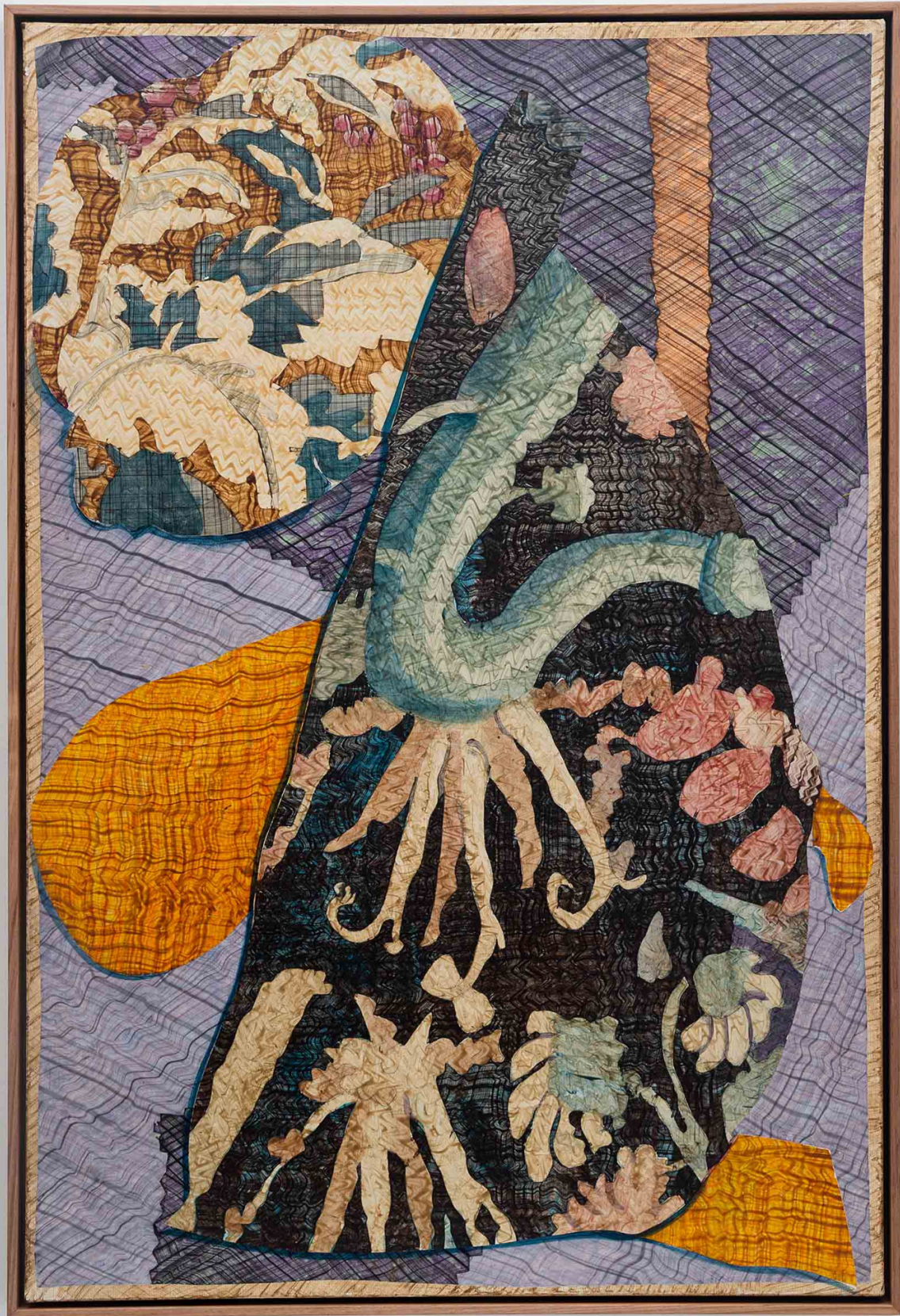


GREGORY HODGE, WINDOW, 2022  
ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 195 X 130CM  
SOLD  
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GREGORY HODGE, ARRANGEMENT, 2022  
ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 90 X 60 CM  
SOLD





GREGORY HODGE, MANNEQUIN, 2022  
ACRYLIC ON LINEN, 230 X 160CM  
SOLD  
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GREGORY HODGE, SEE THE WIND, 2022  
ACRYLIC ON LINEN, 230 X 160 CM  
SOLD  
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GREGORY HODGE, YELLOW EDGE, 2022  
ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 90 X 60 CM  
SOLD  
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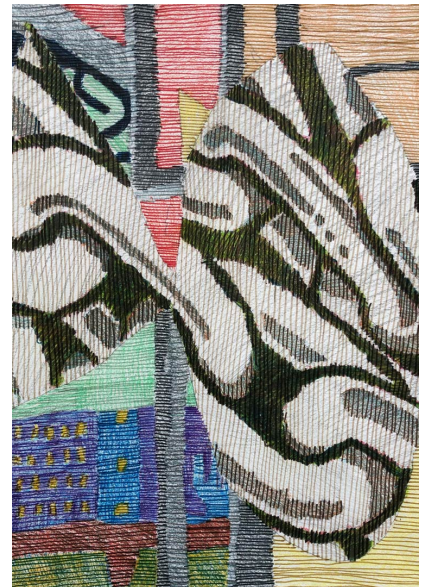
GREGORY HODGE, SEA FOAM, 2022  
ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 90 X 60 CM  
SOLD  
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GREGORY HODGE, UNTITLED DRAWING 2,  
2022  
PENCIL AND MARKER ON PAPER, 30 X  
42 CM  
SOLD  
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GREGORY HODGE, UNTITLED DRAWING 3,  
2022  
PENCIL AND MARKER ON PAPER, 30 X  
42 CM  
SOLD  
> ENQUIRE



GREGORY HODGE, UNTITLED DRAWING 7,  
2022  
PENCIL AND MARKER ON PAPER, 30 X  
42 CM  
AUD\$ 2,200  
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GREGORY HODGE, ARRANGEMENT 2, 2022  
ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 90 X 60 CM  
SOLD

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GREGORY HODGE, RED PATTERN, 2022  
ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 90 X 60 CM  
SOLD

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