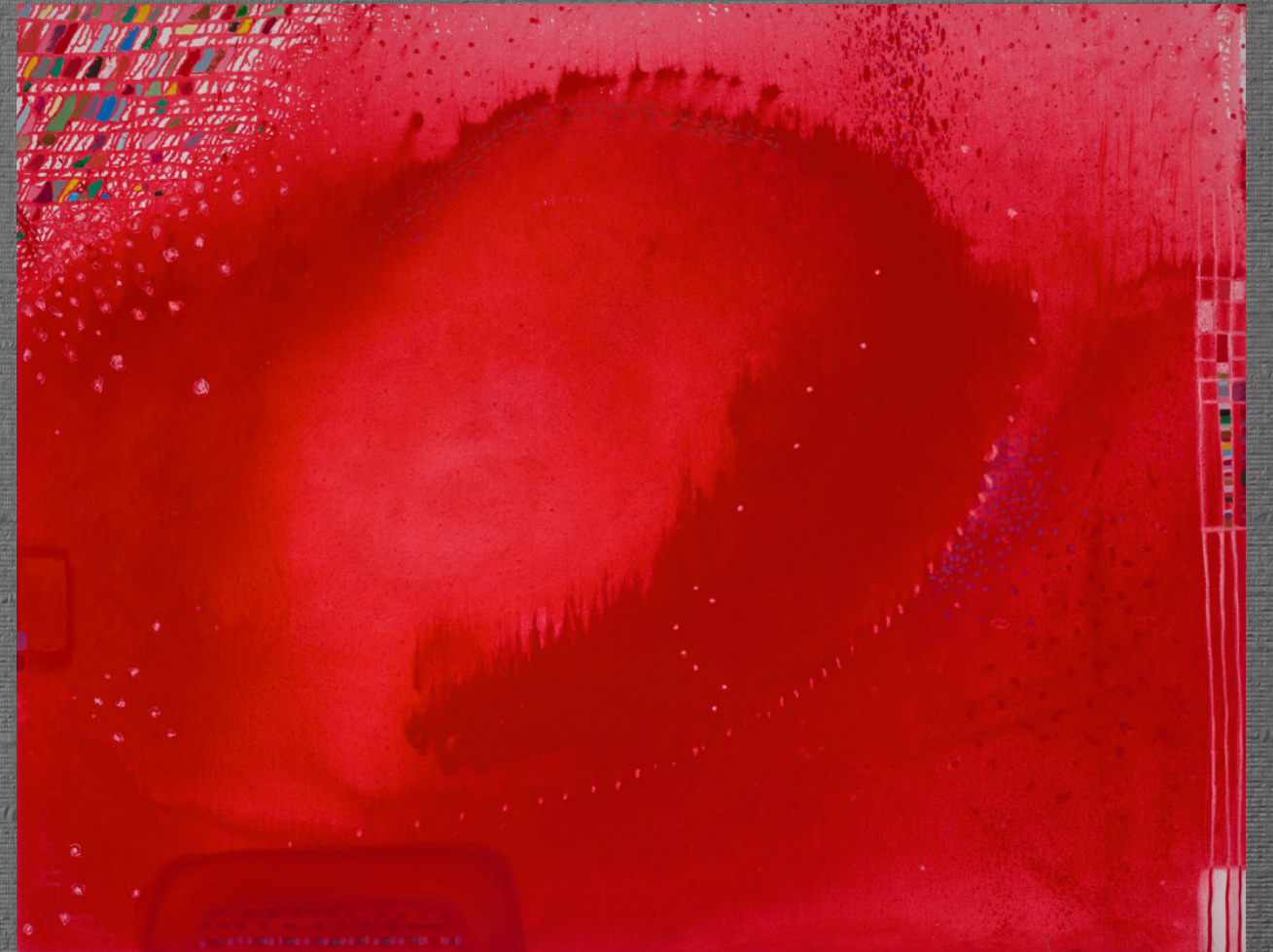


**ANNE NEELY: "ESSENTIAL OILS"**  
**A Retrospective**

**November 13, 2025 – January 30, 2026**



**Greenwich Academy | Luchsinger Gallery**

# ANNE NEELY: “ESSENTIAL OILS” A Retrospective

Greenwich Academy's Luchsinger Gallery is honored to present this exhibition of paintings by distinguished artist and alumna **Anne (Miller) Neely, GA Class of '64**. Anne Neely knows well the power of art to invite reflection, educate, and spark change. For many decades, she taught studio art and advanced independent art at Milton Academy, where she also curated exhibitions for the campus art gallery. At the same time, she was developing her own artistic practice, dividing her time between Massachusetts and a small fishing village in Down East Maine. Immersing herself in the rhythms of nature and the constant push/pull of the tides, she became fascinated by water as a life-giving force. Her deep connection to water manifested in a 2014 solo exhibition at Boston's Museum of Science titled *Water Stories*.

The painting *Lessons*, with its quotations of famous works by Van Gogh, Picasso, Cézanne, and Philip Guston, most clearly conveys Neely's interest in art history, a subject she ensured her Milton students grasped as well. *Studio Chair*, with its grid-like structures, thin veils, and outlined stool, echoes the work of Matisse and suggests a powerful personal narrative. *Studio Chair* was created during a recent residency in Brooklyn with the prestigious Sharpe-Walentas Studio Program. Neely's studio afforded a view of the Brooklyn Bridge, and her various meditations on this iconic structure served to settle her in her new environment. Her move to Brooklyn followed a year of grueling cancer treatments, and explosive works like

*Quiet Chaos* and *Emerging* suggest cataclysms that can be read on a personal, global, and even cosmic level.

Many of Neely's paintings, including *What Remains* and *Rescue*, hover between figuration and abstraction. While we might recognize a boat, a beach, or some sort of infrastructure, these forms often remain veiled, elusive, or inscrutable. This is partly due to Neely's tendency to begin a work by pouring thinned oil paint across the canvas, a foundation for many subsequent layers applied with broad gestures, dabs, and drips in a very physical process. "I am most present in my paintings," she has said.<sup>i</sup>

Neely's approach to life seems to parallel this energetic painting style. Deeply committed to education, she has counseled and guided countless students to pursue fine arts careers, most notably contemporary artist Sarah Sze. Today Neely's paintings and prints feature in many notable collections, including the National Gallery of Art in Washington and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

From her GA experience, Neely most vividly recalls inspiring classes with English teacher Amiel Kostbar, and she still can recite poems Marion Kingsley had her memorize in Middle School. As GA approaches its bicentennial and reflects on its own history, we are pleased to showcase Anne Neely, a dynamic and creative voice for our time.

**Kristen Erickson**  
Director  
Luchsinger Gallery



Anne Neely at work on a painting in Maine. Photo: Ella Zona

The title of this exhibition comes from a poem by Emily Dickinson entitled "Essential Oils – are wrung."

Essential Oils — are wrung —  
The Attar from the Rose  
Be not expressed by Suns — alone —  
It is the gift of Screws —  
The General Rose — decay —  
But this — in Lady's Drawer  
Make Summer — When the Lady lie  
In Ceaseless Rosemary —

Dickinson's "Essential Oils" is a poem about making art, in her case, a poem. Making a poem is not just organic or instinctive but involves hard work—"the gift of Screws"—to express what the artist intends.

“For over four decades I have cherished the transformative act of making art. For many years my paintings were about beauty and foreboding in the natural world with an emphasis on water issues in the last decade. I have used my curiosity about this world to explore, respond, reinvent and express ideas through painting. Scientific knowledge was a base from which I began a painting about the environment and from there I would imagine. Now with far fewer days on the planet in front of me than behind, I have shifted my focus from the external world and turned inward, only to discover stories that have surrounded me all my life.”<sup>ii</sup>

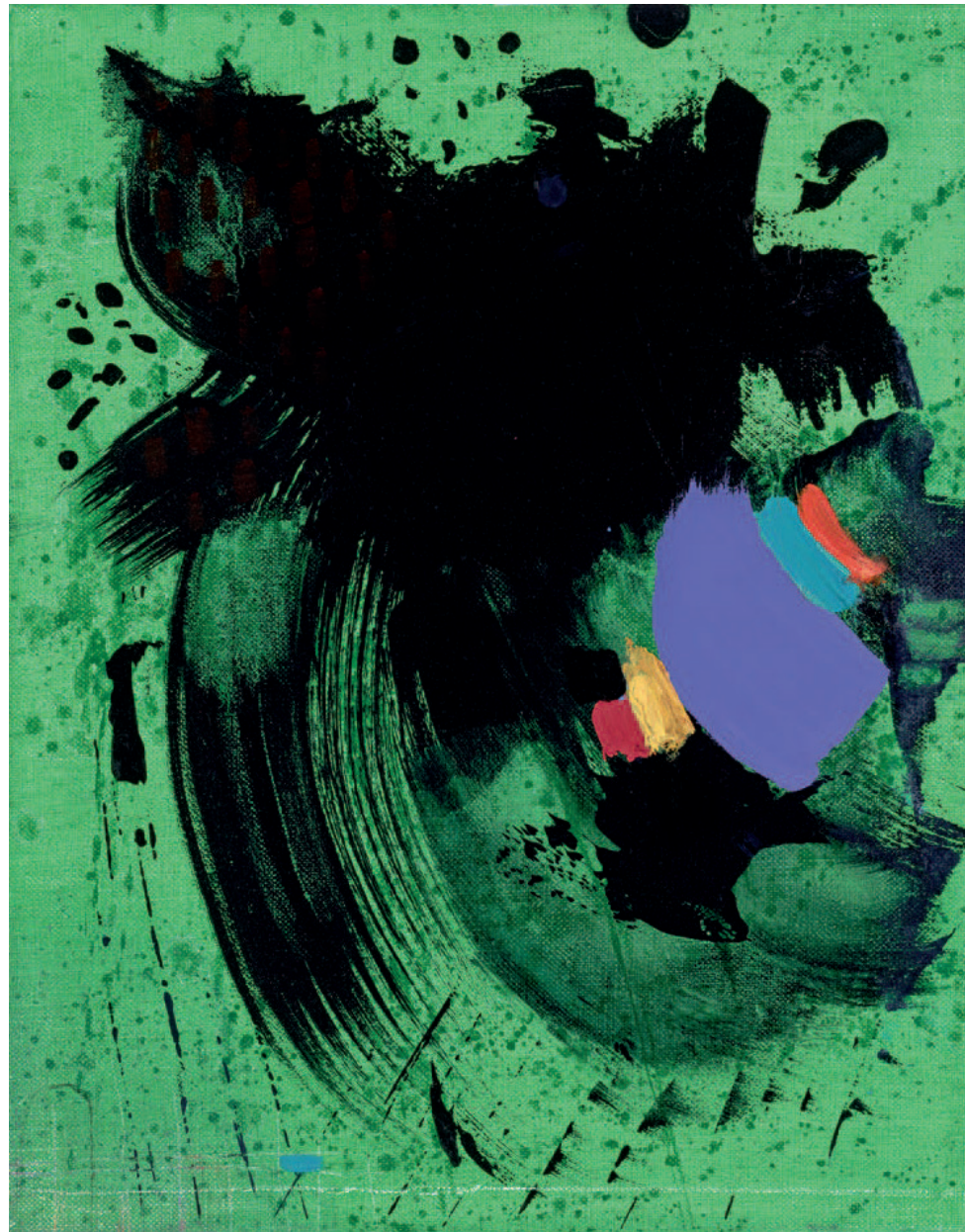


Studio Chair, 2025, 72" x 56", oil on linen

“There are so many ways an artist can be influenced. I love going back to the usual suspects like Goya, Rembrandt, Velasquez, Cézanne, Van Gogh, and Matisse because each time I look they teach me what great art can be and how to recognize it. Artists owe a debt to those who have come before them, as we stand on their shoulders that hold accumulated knowledge.”<sup>iii</sup>



Lessons, 2017-18, 80" x 60", oil on linen



*Blackbird Fly*, 2017, 14" x 11", oil on linen

"I construct a painting like a poem. I find the rhythm and essential movement by beginning organically to build a structure through a series of marks and colors that become more connected to one another as memory and imagination develop in the painting. I work in layers, washes, heavy gestural strokes, sweeps of the palette knife, and scratches, dots, and rectangles. The more I work on a painting the more physical I become until it feels like there is little distinction between where I leave off and where the painting begins."<sup>iv</sup>



*Cipher*, 2016, 14" x 11", oil on linen

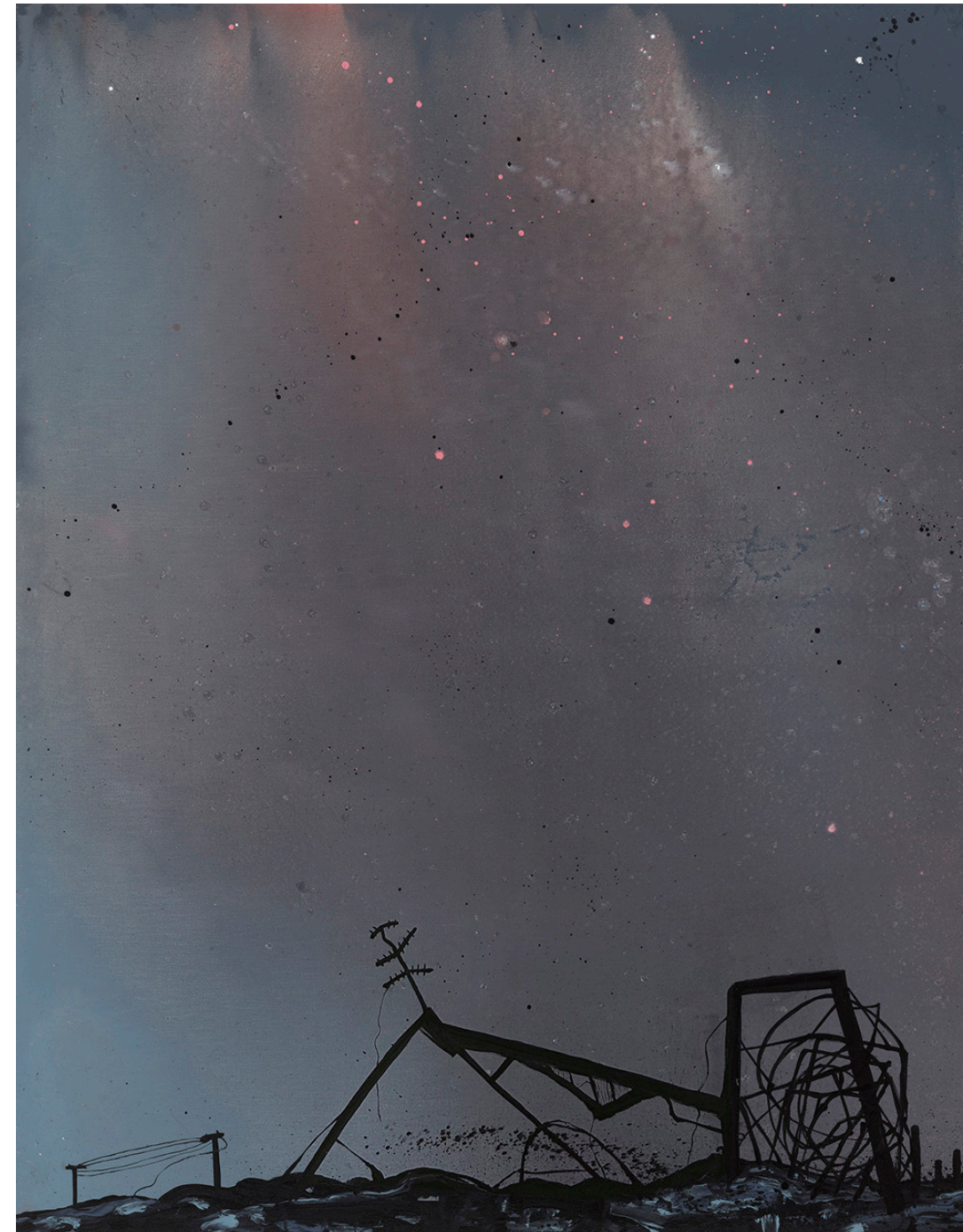
"In both the landscape and the personal narrative paintings, I set up similar compositional structures that hold the same challenges. Using different points of view, my painting language is culled from countless mark makings of lines, rectangles and different forms honed during years of printmaking. When I approach a painting, I ask questions from which a painting is built. One might say that by placing one layer on top of another, my paintings come to life"<sup>v</sup>



*Clouds Got in the Way, 2024-25, 44" x 108", oil on linen*

"...you will see that my work has summoned up images of turbulence and explosions where white light forms burst forth over land and sea. Then, in other paintings, landscapes exist as horizons hidden amidst colored brushstrokes, ribbon-like, stretching vertically over the canvases. These "veil-like" structures evoke a world that is uncertain and unfolding. The landscapes are barely seen, but farther in the distance, there is a vastness that we yearn for. Even as my small brush fashions the crevasses into miniature landscapes, you might even think you recognize a place."<sup>vi</sup>

“Although my work has always had a specific content, the act of painting most compels me, guides me and gives me the opportunity to reinvent landscape, the natural world, and myself.”<sup>vii</sup>



*What Remains*, 2022, 72" x 56", oil on linen



*Primal Fire*, 2020, 56" x 72, oil on linen

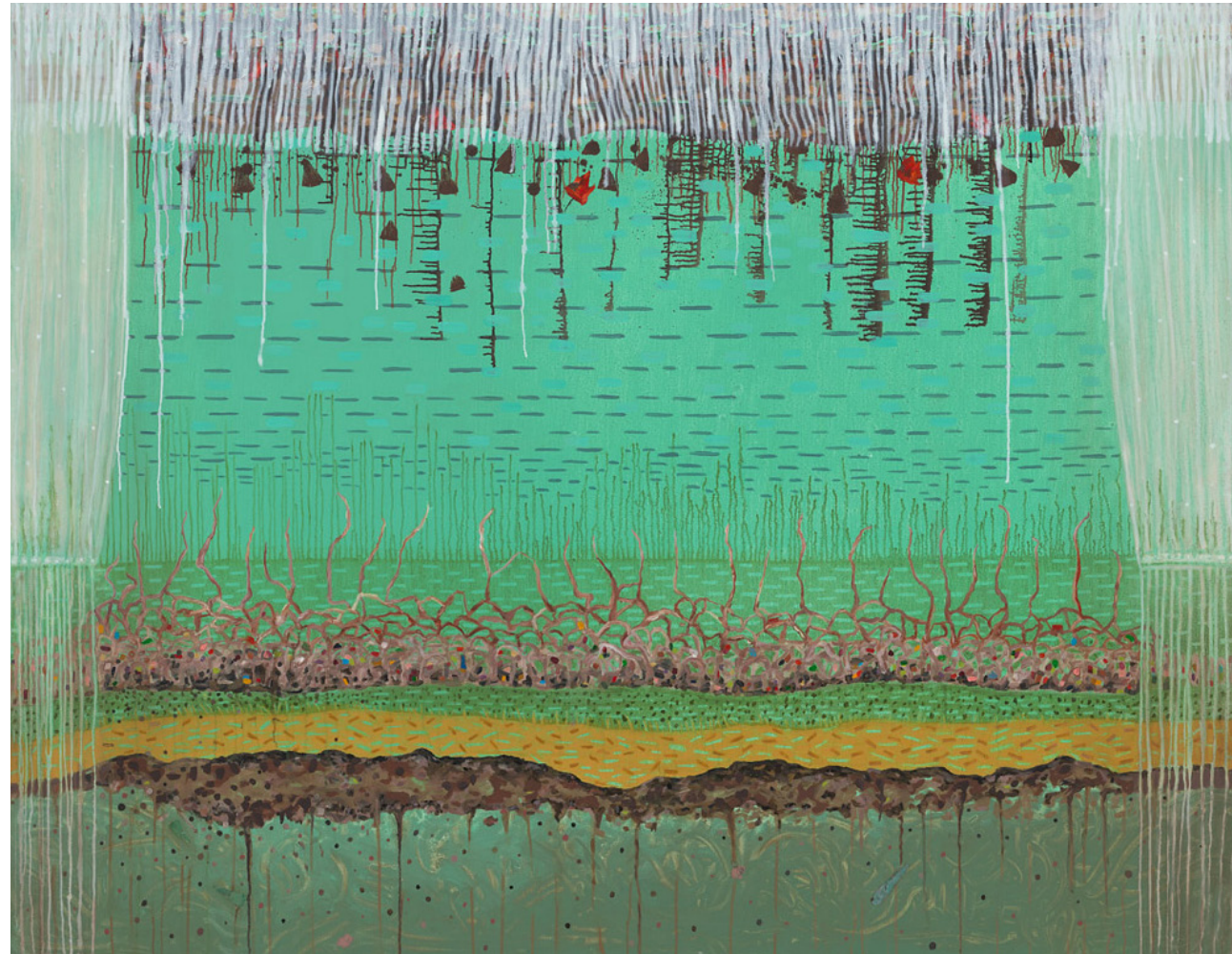
"The fires erupting in California in the summer of 2019 riveted my imagination. It made me feel as though there was no air left — that it had been sucked out of that part of the world. (The same was true of the Australian fires the following fall)...An intense experience even to imagine."<sup>viii</sup>



*Fog Buoys*, 2022, 36" x 88", oil on linen

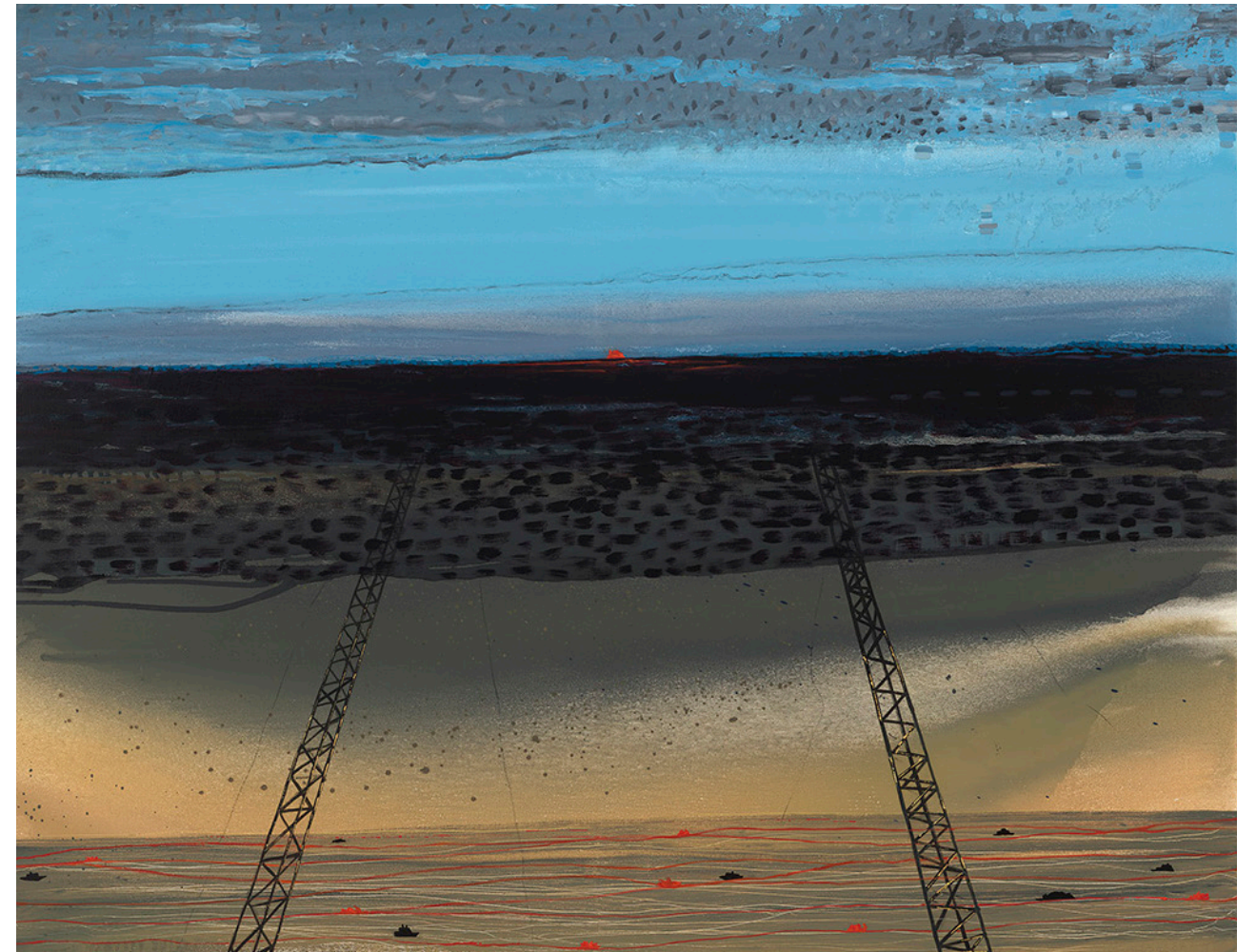
"When I first came to Jonesport [Maine], all I wanted to do was paint what I saw, the immense beauty and space surrounding me. Within a few years this urge to represent began to chew my insides so much, made me feel so inadequate, that I decided to internalize what I saw instead, and save the joyful, restorative act of just-looking for just looking. I began to work more from my imagination and to think of my brushstrokes as part of a visual language for emotions and ideas. Everywhere I looked there was life, and within life, stories from the land: the ever-changing thirty-year-old perennial garden, the dense firs that wanted thinning, the dying birch trees that needed to be cleared away. Stories became more important than appearances. Moss creeping over a fallen tree, the slow continuous march of deconstruction, reminds me that everything is alive, rich with color and form, even as it decays into hues of rust and ochre. In late summer the crickets pitch against the stillness, joining the lobster boats' roar, alto and soprano.

They are my personal symphony, calm and urgent simultaneously."<sup>ix</sup>



*Marsh Bed*, 2019-22, 56" x 72", oil on linen

"In 2004, reading *Water*, by Marq De Villiers, I initiated a decade-long search to find ways to paint unseen aquifers and to interpret the growing dilemmas around rivers, streams, lakes, and oceans. Water is mysterious, powerful, and staggeringly beautiful; but unfortunately water is in such peril that it will deeply affect our future. To cherish water, like anything in life, is to pay homage, gratitude, and honor the things we love. So my paintings evoke beauty, but also linger on the edge of foreboding as they address these water issues environmentally, ecologically, and culturally in our times."<sup>x</sup>



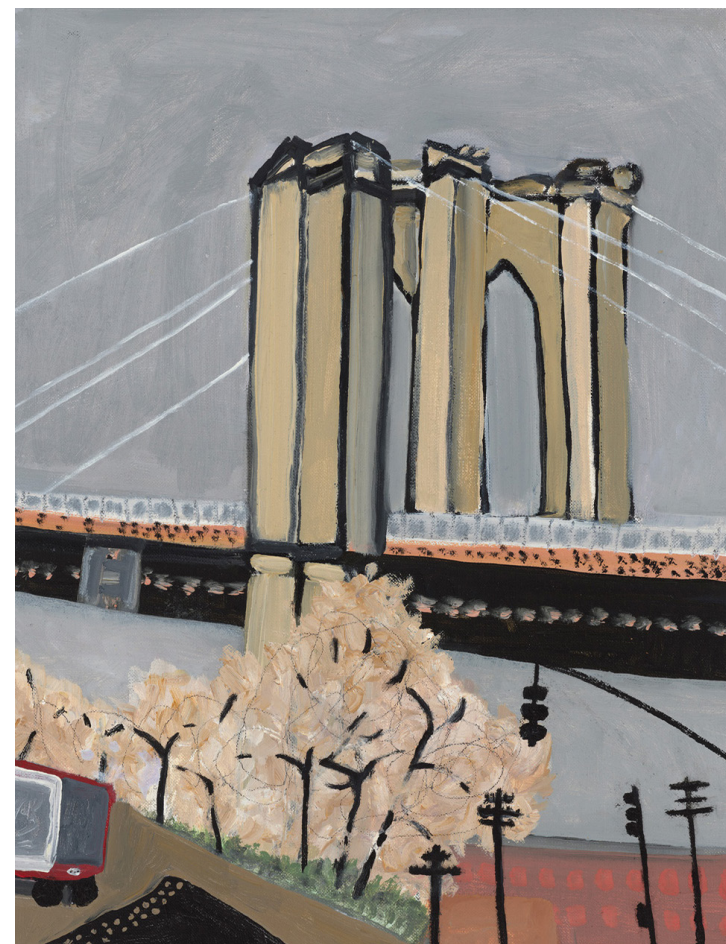
*Rescue*, 2024, 52" x 60", oil on linen

"This coastal town in Washington County, Jonesport, is filled with families of lobstermen, shellfish and seaweed factories, trucks loaded with produce from the sea, old people living in older houses, a marine supply store, a lumber yard, a hardware store, and a Post Office where the conversations are about septic systems, loam, and the weather. In the last thirty years most of my paintings have begun or were imagined or conceived of in this place... On flat gray days, every sound becomes louder, the trees turn greener, and grasses brighten. The horizon has dissolved into the sky, leaving the ocean without definition. Large shapes are swallowed up easily here."<sup>xi</sup>



*The Hudson (Three Barges), 2025, 56" x 72", oil on linen*

“My year at the Sharpe-Walentas Studio Program was a year of changes. When I entered the program my painting practice had been based on what I saw in nature and how I felt about it in relation to the beauty and then the foreboding of the planet’s destruction. As I began to step away from this body of work, I realized that my lens had shrunk as I was processing the cancer that had just recently lived inside of me. It was Sarah Sze who fashioned the words most accurately, when visiting, to describe my work as: “The sense of looking through the body as if I had inverted my binoculars.”<sup>xii</sup>



*The Bridges of Brooklyn, 3 and 5, 2025, 14" x 11", oil on linen*

With regard to recent work created during her residency at Sharpe-Walentas:

“Small paintings of bridges also appear in my studio because I am here in Brooklyn, looking at the suspension bridges surrounding me. Their presence, like Matisse’s women, stretches out with many curves reclining, momentarily frozen into simplified finite forms.”<sup>xiii</sup>



*Quiet Chaos*, 2025, 16" x 20", oil on linen

"I think of my paintings as walking a delicate line of being about something and being just about painting. I often begin with an environmental idea, but ultimately my mark making flows subconsciously, joining one layer of paint with the next and, consequently, one idea with another."<sup>xiv</sup>

"I have art books scattered on the floor of the studio to help me figure out a painting or just give me courage. I read Philip Guston's dialogues with others and his quotes because he deeply understood where painting came from. I remember a conversation Guston had with Willem de Kooning at an exhibition opening in 1970. Discussing what the real subject of Guston's work was, they both said 'Freedom.' Guston went on to say, 'That's the only possession the artist has - freedom to do whatever you can imagine.' That statement has always stayed with me."<sup>xv</sup>



*The Sky is Falling*, 2023, 14" x 11", oil on linen



*Eruption (Geyser)*, 2024, 28" x 22", oil on linen

"Titles underscore intention and hopefully lead the viewer into the heart of the painting. When a painting is finished I try to find a balance between the language of the paint and the message of the title. I give each painting control over its own destiny by letting the paint be wordless until it can be matched with a similar verbal energy. In the end, finding a word/title for a painting becomes an equally exciting endeavor."<sup>xvi</sup>



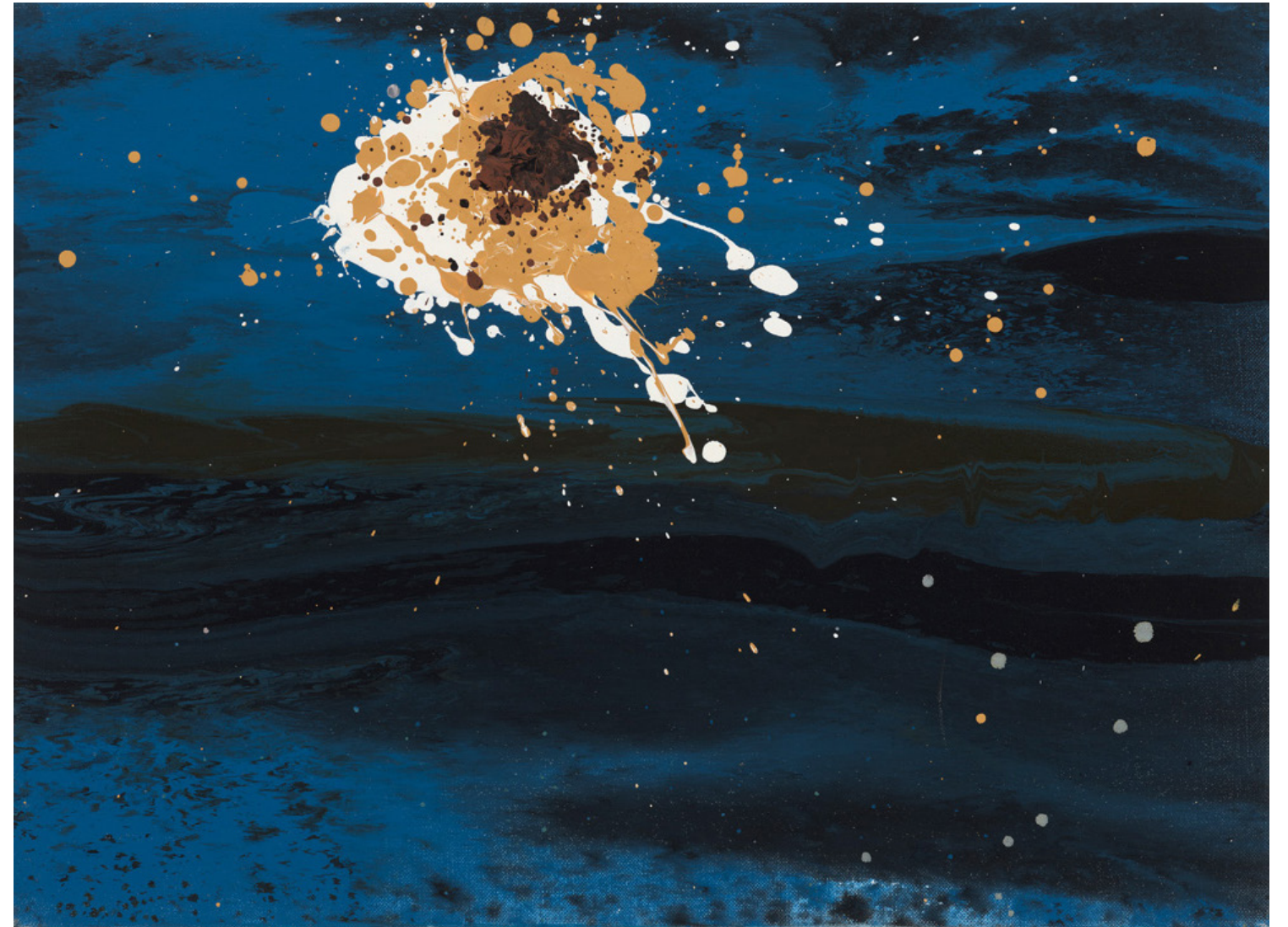
*Emerging*, 2024, 24" x 36", oil on linen

"Over time my work evolves as I give myself more freedom to respond to being "present."  
The element of surprise is alive in my work. Forward movement is key in art and life."<sup>xvii</sup>

“Aside from the titles, my paintings provide a conduit for the viewer to enter through nature. A recognizable reference might act as a door to draw the viewer further into the painting.

It’s at that point that the viewer can either move on or linger. In those few seconds, hopefully the viewer finds the life force/energy in my work that he/she is hungry for and chooses to linger. It is that energy which sparks the viewer’s imagination and enables them to travel, traverse, or go into the painting. I think deep down, all artists want a connection between the viewer’s energy and the energy in the painting.

It’s such a visceral, almost physical experience.”<sup>xviii</sup>



Harvest Tumor, 2024, 16" x 22", oil on linen

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>i</sup> Anne Neely, in *Anne Neely: Hidden in Plain Sight*, Cue Art Foundation exhibition catalogue, November 2- December 16, 2017.
- <sup>ii</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>iii</sup> Anne Neely, personal conversation with Kristen Erickson, September 1, 2025.
- <sup>iv</sup> Anne Neely, quoted in Devi Lockwood, "Interview with Anne Neely, the painter behind 'Water Stories,'" *One Bike, One Year* (Sept. 15, 2014), <https://onebikeoneyear.wordpress.com/>
- <sup>v</sup> Anne Neely, Artist's Statement, in *Anne Neely: Hidden in Plain Sight*, Cue Art Foundation exhibition catalogue, November 2- December 16, 2017.
- <sup>vi</sup> Anne Neely interview in ETTY Yaniv, "DUMBO Open Studios 2025 with Anne Neely," *Art Spiel: Contemporary Art and Culture*, April 11, 2025, <https://artspiel.org/anne-neely-dumbo-open-studios-2025>
- <sup>vii</sup> Anne Neely, Artist's Statement, <http://www.anneneely.com/pages/pastwork.html>
- <sup>viii</sup> Interview With Anne Neely, *Directional Forces*, 2020, [http://www.anneneely.com/media/Neely\\_Interview\\_DirectionalForces.pdf](http://www.anneneely.com/media/Neely_Interview_DirectionalForces.pdf)
- <sup>ix</sup> Anne Neely, "Fearful Symmetries," "A Necessity: Fearful Symmetries," *AGNI*, Nov. 2018, literary magazine of Boston University, <http://www.anneneely.com/pages/news.html>
- <sup>x</sup> Anne Neely, in exhibition catalogue for *Water Stories: Conversations in Paint and Sound*, Museum of Science, Boston, July 2014-January 2015, [http://anneneely.com/media/Neely\\_Water\\_Stories\\_Book.pdf](http://anneneely.com/media/Neely_Water_Stories_Book.pdf)
- <sup>xi</sup> Anne Neely, "A Necessity: Fearful Symmetries," *AGNI*, Nov. 2018, literary magazine of Boston University, <http://www.anneneely.com/pages/news.html>
- <sup>xii</sup> Anne Neely, on her Sharpe-Walentas Studio Program Residency, 2024-25, <http://www.anneneely.com/pages/sharpe-walentas.html>
- <sup>xiii</sup> Anne Neely interview in ETTY Yaniv, "DUMBO Open Studios 2025 with Anne Neely," *Art Spiel: Contemporary Art and Culture*, April 11, 2025, <https://artspiel.org/anne-neely-dumbo-open-studios-2025>
- <sup>xiv</sup> Anne Neely, personal conversation with Kristen Erickson, September 1, 2025.
- <sup>xv</sup> Anne Neely diary entry. Guston quote from William Corbett, "Prologue: Marlborough Gallery, October 1970," *AGNI*, No. 35, 1992, pp. 165.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Interview With Anne Neely, *Directional Forces*, 2020, [http://www.anneneely.com/media/Neely\\_Interview\\_DirectionalForces.pdf](http://www.anneneely.com/media/Neely_Interview_DirectionalForces.pdf)
- <sup>xvii</sup> Anne Neely, personal conversation with Kristen Erickson, September 1, 2025.
- <sup>xviii</sup> Ibid.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Anne Neely is a painter and printmaker who divides her time between Boston, Mass. and Jonesport, Maine. She has been awarded residencies at the Sharpe-Walentas Studio Program in DUMBO, Brooklyn, the Millay Colony for the Arts in New York, the Ballinglen Arts Foundation in Co. Mayo, Ireland, and the Cill Rialaig Arts Center in Co. Kerry, Ireland. Neely's work has been shown at Lohin Geduld Gallery in New York, Alpha Gallery in Boston, as well as galleries in San Francisco and in museums around the country. Most recently, she had a solo exhibition at the Museum of Science, Boston entitled *Water Stories*, about water issues in America. Neely's work can be found in the collections of the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; The Brooklyn Museum, NY; The Davis Museum, Wellesley, MA; The Rose Art Museum, Waltham, MA; The deCordova Museum and Sculpture Park, Lincoln, MA; The Farnsworth Art Museum, Rockland, ME; Grunwald Center for Graphic Art, UCLA; The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; The National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; The Portland Museum of Art, Portland, ME; The Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC; and The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Her work has been reviewed in *Art in America*, *Art News*, *The New York Times*, and *The Irish Times*, and a book was published to accompany her exhibition *Water Stories* at the Museum of Science, Boston.

## ARTIST'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to Kristen Erickson for all her wonderful ideas and immense help in shaping this exhibition. Thanks to the following people for their support and belief in me and my work: Douglas Fricke, Mara Henze, Dr. Neil Horowitz, Harry Cooper, Sarah Sze, Alexi Worth, Suzette McAvoy, Shalini Le Gal, Alex Katz Foundation, Sharpe-Walentas Studio Program, Sarah Bedford, Jon Franzen and Kathy Chetkovich, Liz Moss, Jorge Arango, Heidi Whitman, Liz Awalt, Sidney Worthen, Julie Ward, Bonnie Gossels, Dr. Melissa Schneider, Barbara Divver, Kevin and Kris Musumano, David Etnier and Laura Sewall, and Susan Paine.

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Cover: *Conflagration*, 2019, 56" x 72", oil on linen