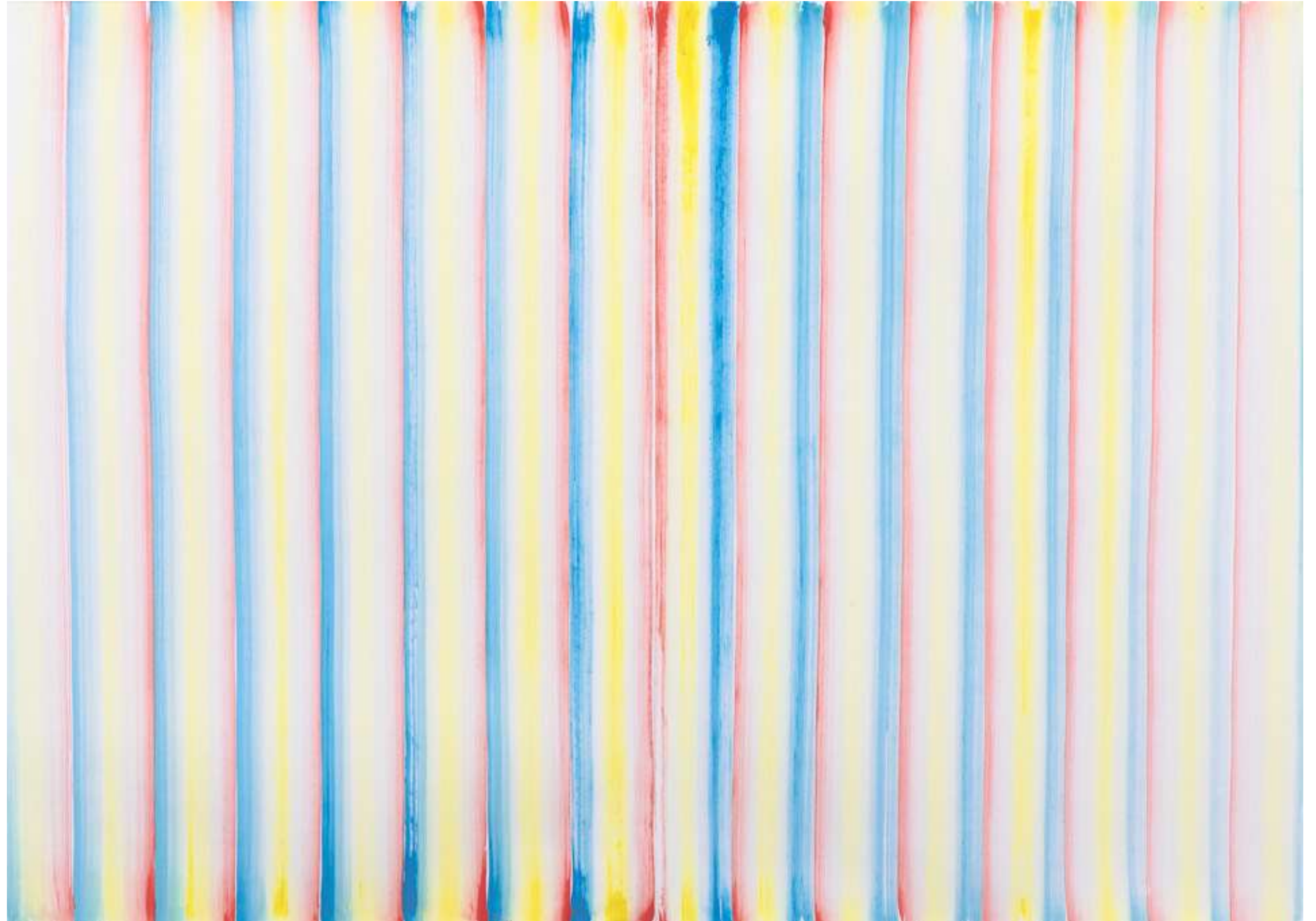


In Quiet  
Pursuit of the  
Self(less)

Soh Ee Shaun  
26 May - 8 July 2023

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**MULAN GALLERY**  
Contemporary Fine Art



“The Buddhist way of approaching art is non-aggressive. Aggressiveness brings competitiveness, money concerns, comparison, frustration, excitement, all kinds of things. If there's no aggression, that brings joy, openness, dance... You can look at things, you can experience things, you can feel things, you can touch things, and that's fantastic. There is a real sense of real richness taking place from that perspective of non-aggression, non-possessiveness.”

Chogyam Trungpa, *True Perception:  
The Path of Dharma Art*

# Joy, Openness, Dance

By  
DOMINIC CHUA

Joy, openness, dance - these three qualities so thoroughly pervade Ee Shaun's latest set of paintings that personally, I'd like to do nothing more than simply sit and gawk at them all day, or even do a little dance of joy before them. But introductions require a little bit more and I thus humbly venture the suggestion that one way we can approach Ee Shaun's latest series of paintings is to view them as snapshots of a deeper level of reality, taken at a range of different aperture speeds.

Let's begin with the quality of JOY so evident in the fields of colour in 'Peace Paintings' - fields which are reminiscent of the patchwork patterns found on monk's robes which themselves recall the rice fields through which Buddhist monastics once wound their way as they made their way from one Indian city to another. But even deeper than that - these patchwork pops of colour speak of both the interconnectedness and irreducibility of consciousness - yours and mine - on a cosmic timescale of centuries, millenia, even entire kalpas.

Allow your eyes to sweep across the different 'Peace Paintings' - rest them for a few moments on one, then move on to the next - and you can see how they depict, image to image, a shapeshifting rosary of lives in constant reconfiguration. In them, we catch a glimpse of ourselves blinking our way through lifetime after lifetime, as our lives smudge and bleed into each other.

Our distinctness and identities are there ("Nice to meet you, I'm Mulberry") - but just for a moment - before the musical chairs of samsaric existence whisk us into our next seat, our next shape, our next colour ("And now I am Tangerine!").

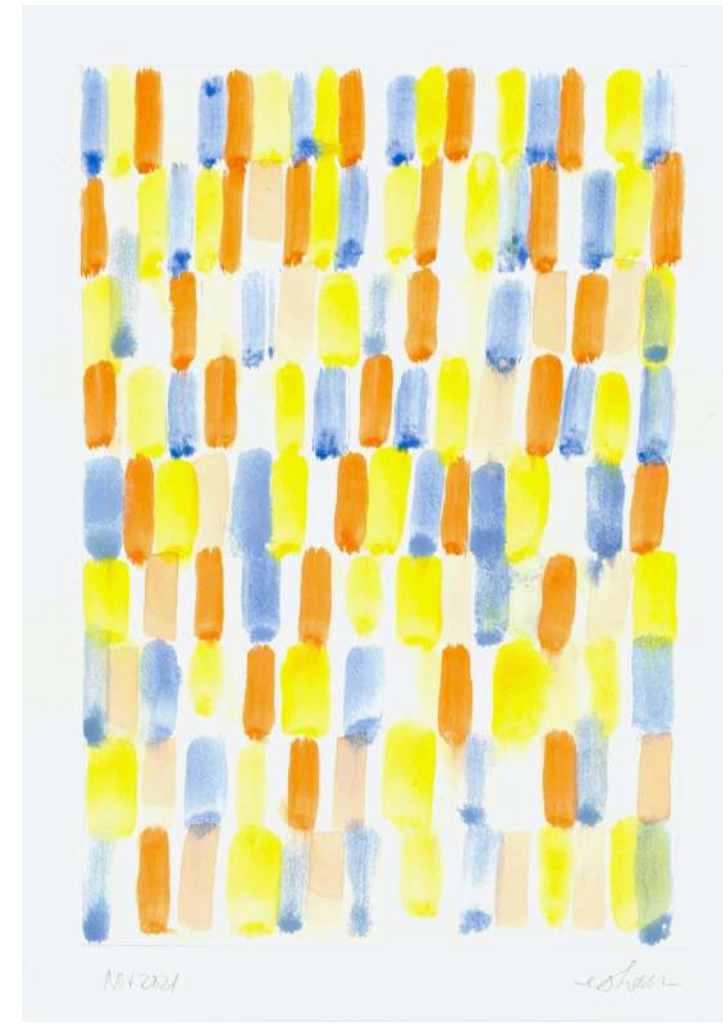
Curtain - because the paintings seem to positively gleam with light; the vignetting of colours at the edges powerfully suggest an inner illumination behind the soft hues. Portal - because they magnetise and draw you into themselves: our restless, jumpy minds are ever so gently handcuffed and led into that wide-open luminous space that's intimated, hinted at by the shimmering curtains of colour.

Then there's the OPENNESS of the streaks of barely-there colour that form the 'Meditative Field' subset - time magnified and expanded as minutes are collapsed into a single moment. You can imagine Ee Shaun in the act of painting seated before this very canvas in front of you, contemplating the passage of gravity-pulled paint finding its way across an expanse of white. And that's the effect which these paintings have - in their freezeframing of paint-oh-so-slowly-gliding-down, they are at once curtain and portal into a sustained state of pure consciousness.

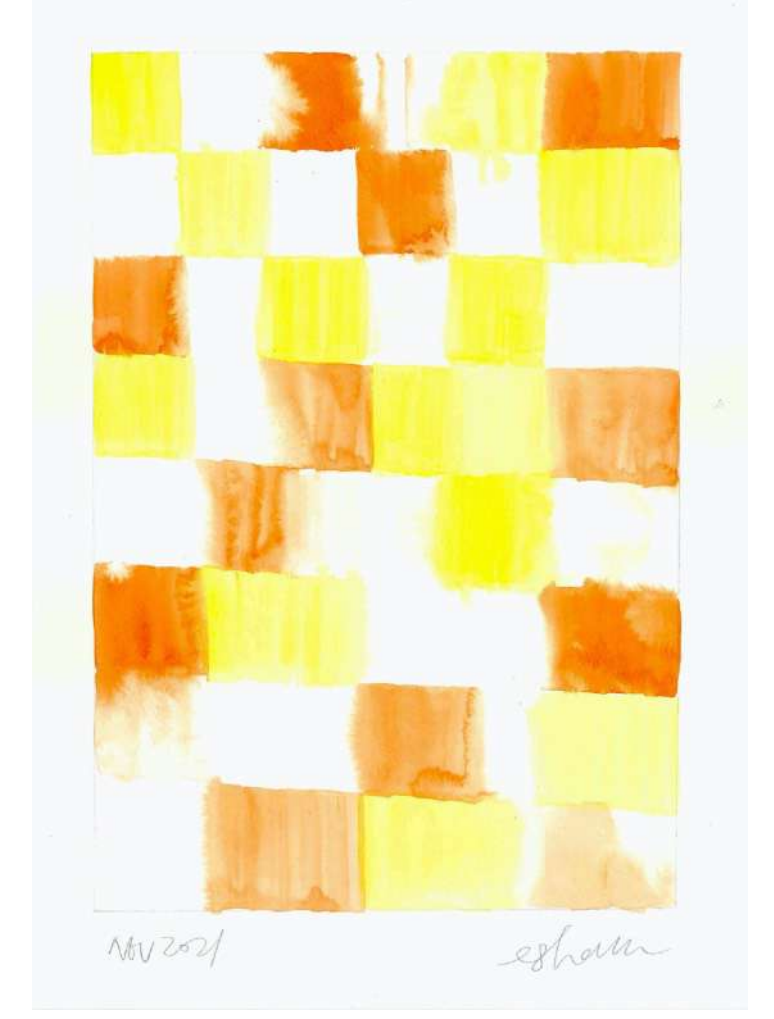
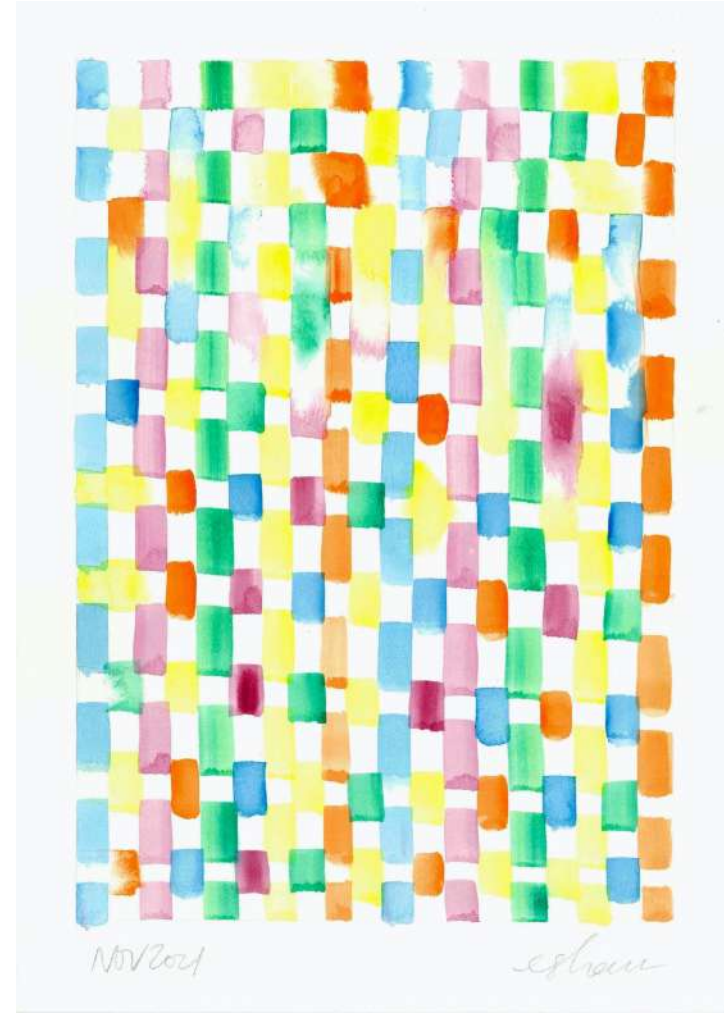
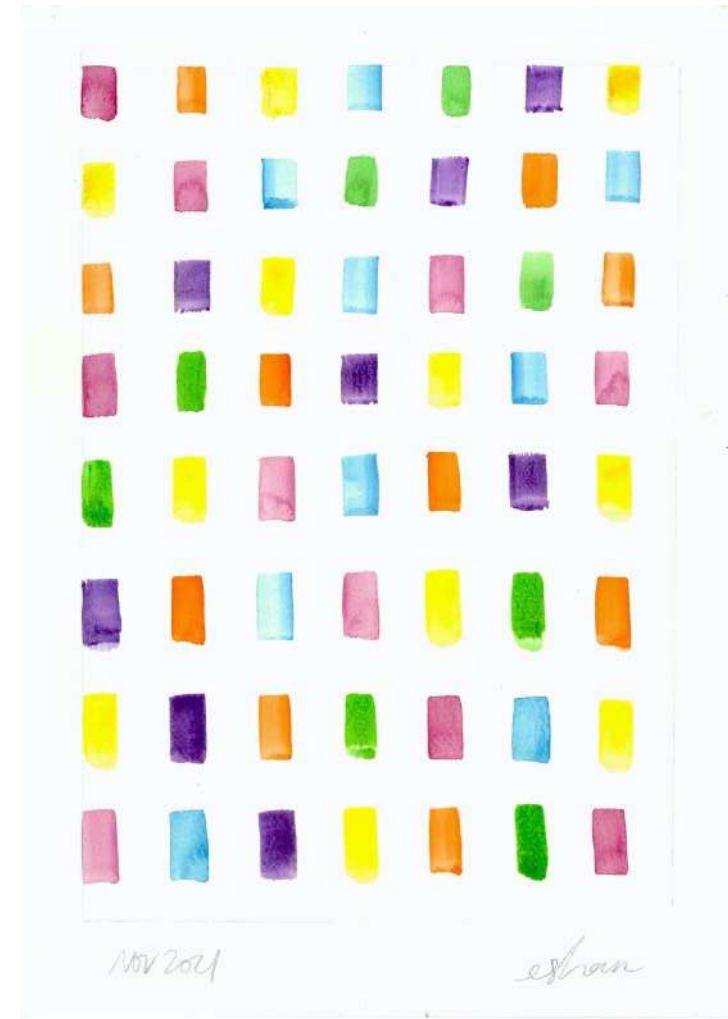
The final set of paintings are variations on the colours of Shakyamuni Buddha's aura - Ee Shaun has preserved their Pali names in three of these works - and they do bring to mind aura or spirit photographs. But that's about as far as the comparison goes, because these paintings literally DANCE! Their joyous, sinuous, swirling forms are at once dynamic and still, sculptural and also lighter-than-air, immanent and transcendent at one and the same time. You can almost glimpse a figure at the heart of each of them - or is that the mind's anthropomorphising tendency at work?

In this sense, they are more like Tibetan thangkas, that serve as a support for meditation in their depiction of enlightened Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Ee Shaun himself hints as much when he titles the opening painting 'Rainbow Body'. In Tibetan Buddhism as well as Bon shamanism, it is held that those who have attained an exceptional level of realisation are able to perceive the essence of everything - themselves included - as pure light in perpetual motion. And, at the point of physical death, the practitioner's body dissolves into ribbons of rainbow light.

Ultimately, the ideas presented in this Introduction are mere conceptual doodlings. The important thing is for you to encounter the works in their immediacy and directness. The rainbow ribbon that threads together the artworks presented in *In Quiet Pursuit of the Selfless* is the fact that these are not just depictions and illustrations of enlightened states of mind but dharmic art that can draw you - if you allow them - into the very state that they depict. May Ee Shaun's artworks draw aside the veil that conceals us from the fresh, natural state of our minds. May we be blown open by these paintings into the richness of this colorful and challenging world, and may this, in turn, rouse our compassion to awaken such appreciation in others!



Peace Paintings #6, #20, #17, #3, #1, #4  
Watercolour on paper  
29.7 x 42 cm  
2021



Peace Paintings #8, #13, #12, #11, #10, #7  
Watercolour on paper  
29.7 x 42 cm  
2021

*Meditative Field #1*  
Acrylic on paper  
84cm x 59.4 cm  
2023



*Meditative Field #2*  
Acrylic on paper  
84cm x 59.4 cm  
2023

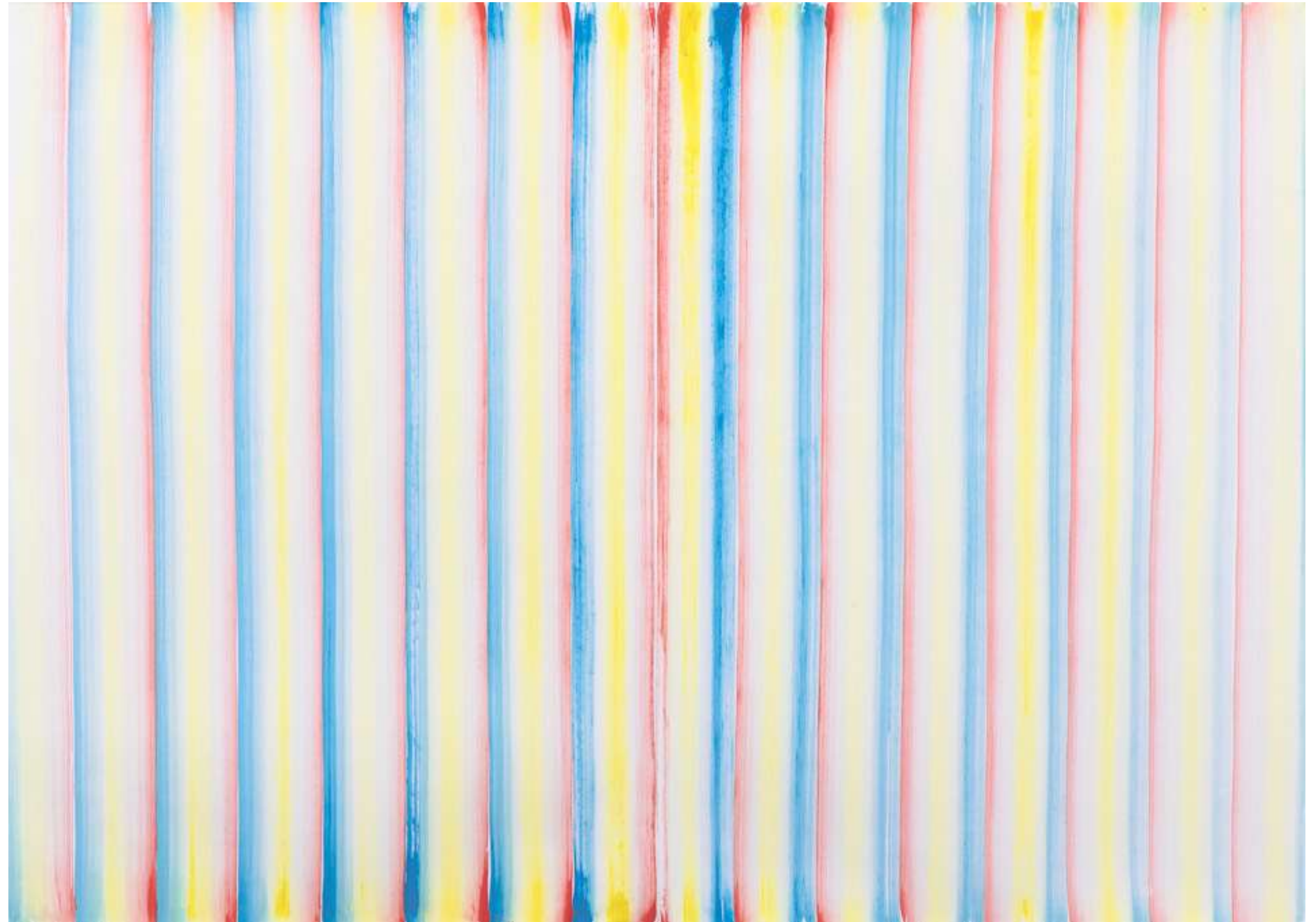




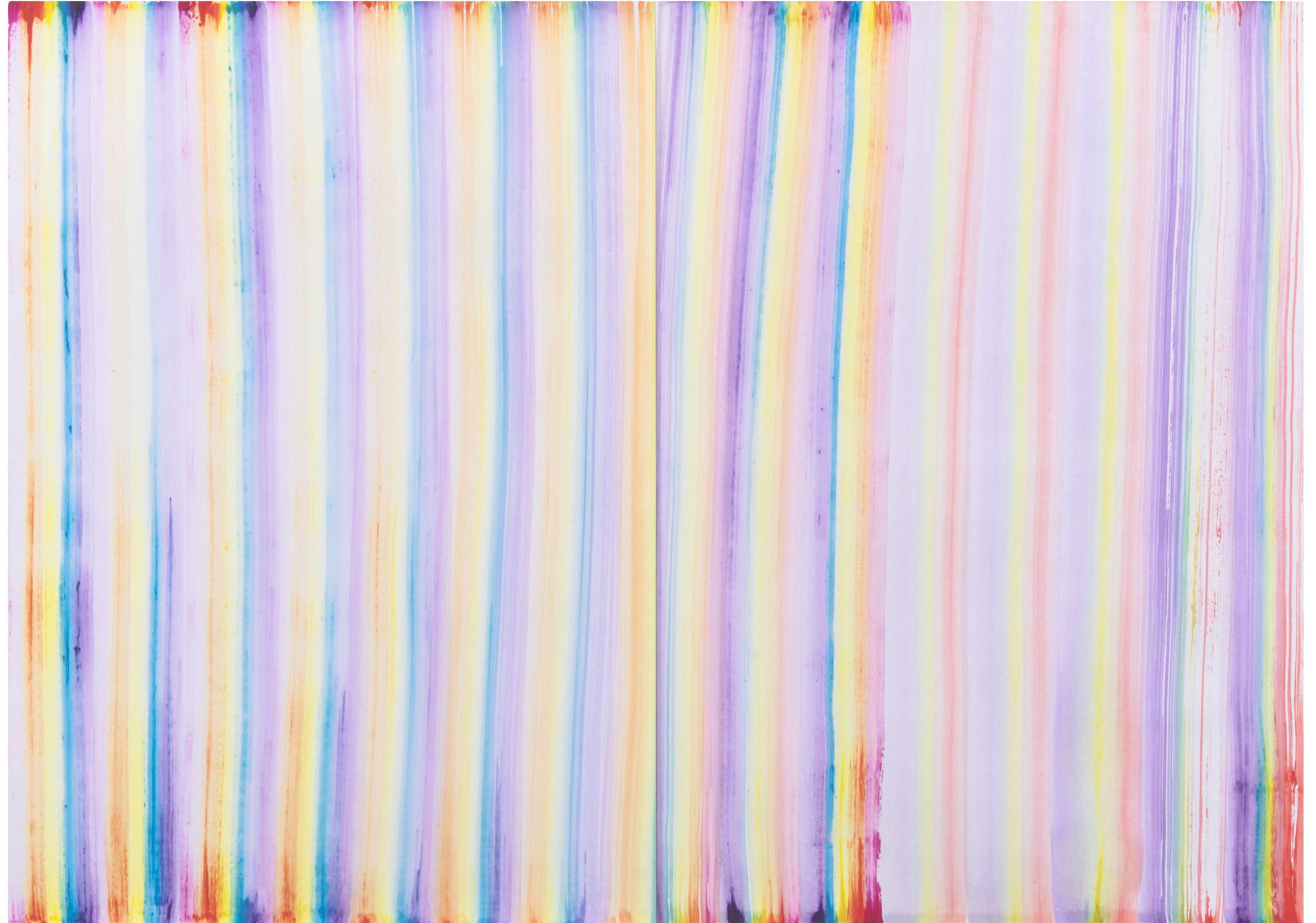
*Meditative Field #3*  
Acrylic on paper  
84cm x 59.4 cm  
2023



*Meditative Field #4*  
Acrylic on paper  
84cm x 59.4 cm  
2023



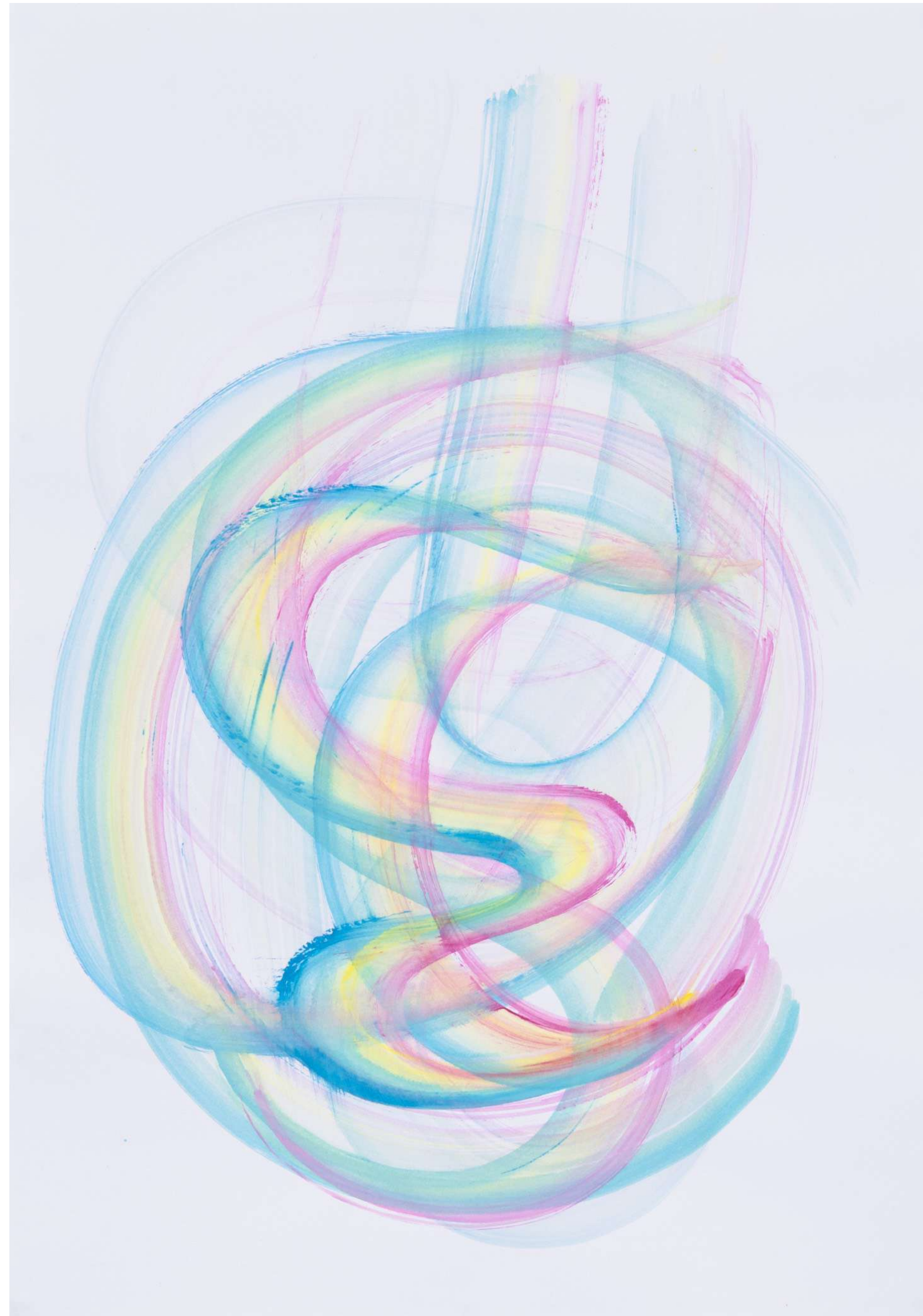
*Meditative Field #5*  
Acrylic on paper  
84cm x 59.4 cm  
2023



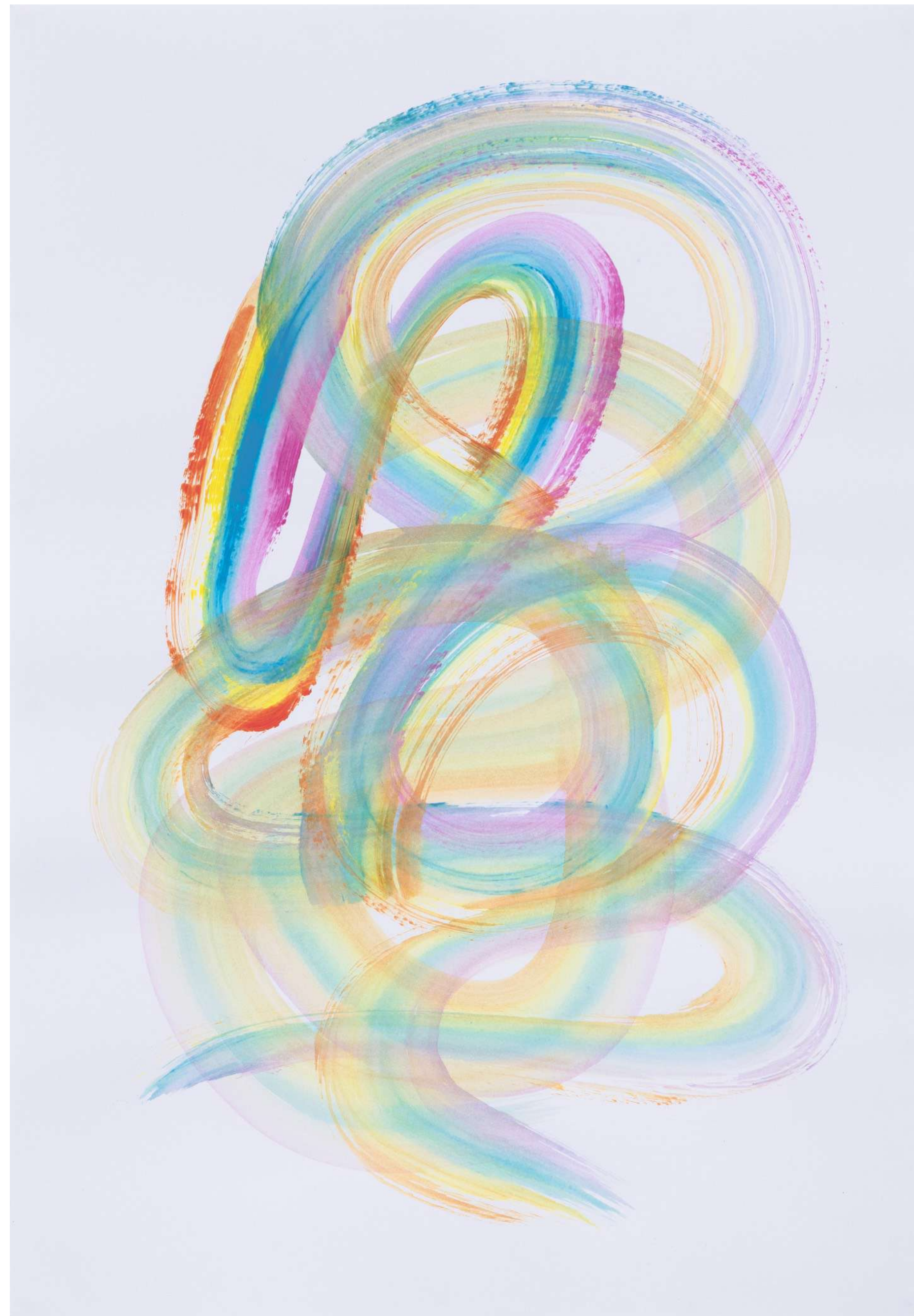


*Essence of Light*  
Acrylic on paper  
170cm x 67cm  
2023

*Rainbow Body #1*  
Acrylic on paper  
42cm x 59.4cm  
2023



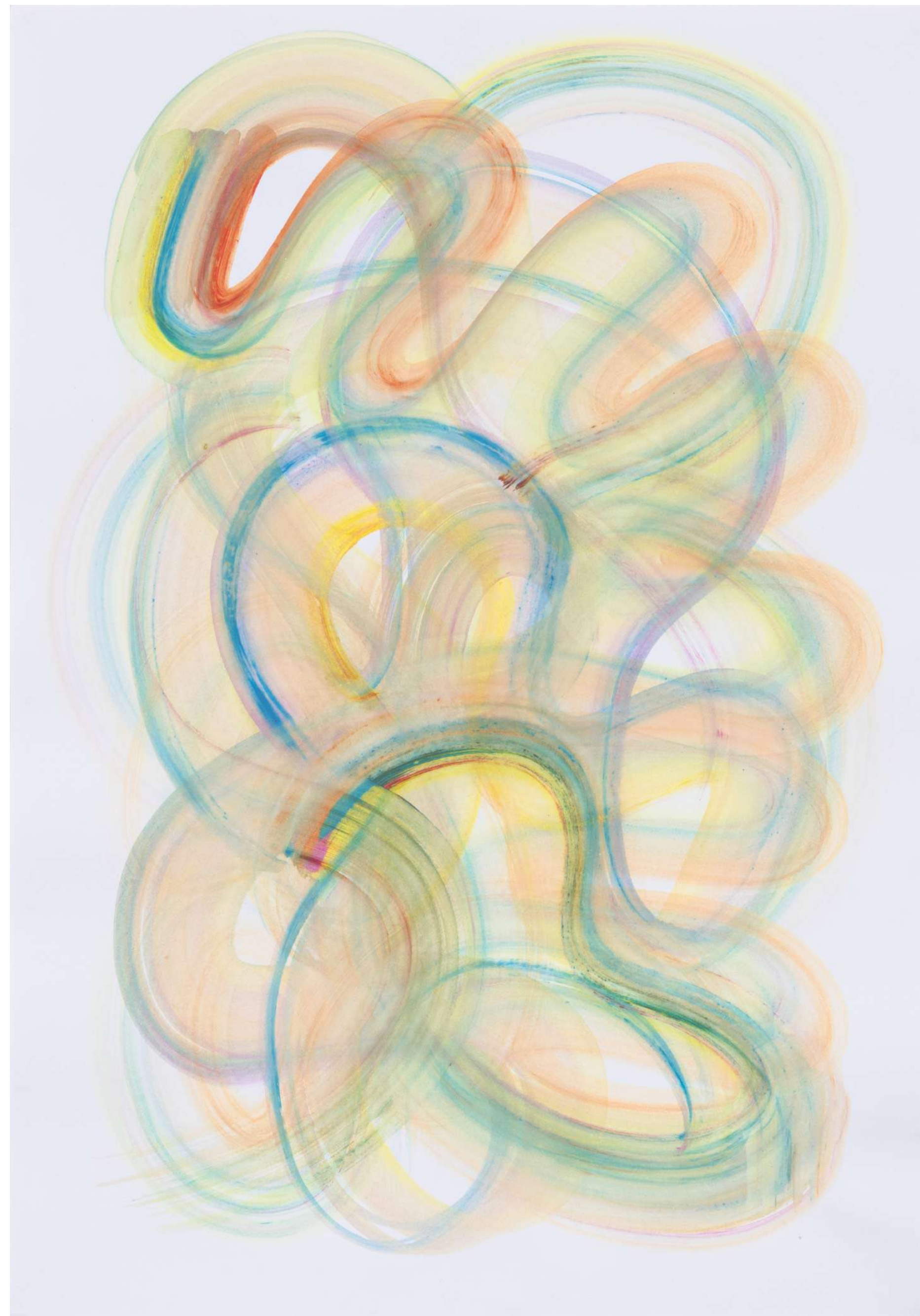
*Rainbow Body #2*  
Acrylic on paper  
42cm x 59.4cm  
2023



*Rainbow Body #3*  
Acrylic on paper  
42cm x 59.4cm  
2023



*Harita: Harmony*  
Acrylic on paper  
42cm x 59.4cm  
2023





*Mañjetṭha: Wisdom*  
Acrylic on paper  
42cm x 59.4cm  
2023



*Lohitaka: Blessings*  
Acrylic on paper  
42cm x 59.4cm  
2023



*Nīla: Compassion*  
Acrylic on paper  
42cm x 59.4cm  
2023



# Artist Statement

These new paintings are a result of my MA Fine Art studies at Falmouth University between 2021 to 2023. Several years ago, I became interested in how painting could be used as a modality for mindfulness, self-care and well-being. These ideas were inspired from my own practice of Buddhist meditation and *Taijigong* (太极拳, an ancient Chinese system of energy work and healing), as well as my interests in colour as a contemplative structure and object for meditation, and its empty nature at the intersection of light, matter and perception. The new paintings have become personal expressions of energy, optimism, emptiness, purity, and the spiritual. They also connect ideas of movement and stillness, control and letting go.

I would like to thank the artists who have inspired me greatly over the years: Agnes Martin, Sean Scully, Stanley Whitney and Mary Heilmann, as well as my supervisors Dr Kate Fahey, Ian Monroe, Josie Cockram, and my Falmouth course mates who have given me feedback on my work. To my wife Caroline, for supporting me in this endeavour, my son Antwone for his unwavering critique of my paintings, my parents for their constant encouragement, and Dominic for his beautiful writing. Last but not least, to my Shifu Sim Pern Yiau, for his invaluable teachings over the last decade. My gratitude goes out to all of you.



*Taijigong practice in Bukit Timah Nature Reserve (2022)*

Soh Ee Shaun (b. 1980) is an artist, illustrator and educator working in Singapore. Ee Shaun's artistic practice involves exploring non-linear, improvised forms that express the subconscious mind, a response to Singapore's systematic planning, regularity and austerity. Often unplanned, his abstract, non-conceptual paintings are an experiential and experimental process, as he juxtaposes shapes, lines, and planes into a geometry of harmonious colours and playful forms. In recent years, Ee Shaun's interest in mindfulness and meditation has led him towards contemplative, rhythmic and energetic colour field paintings that reflect and record the passage of time, while exploring the tension between movement and stillness.

Since 2005, Ee Shaun has created artworks for clients including Apple, Disney, Facebook, Adidas, Lacoste, Herman Miller and Shake Shack. In 2008, he was commissioned with FARM by DesignSingapore Council to design the Singapore Pavilion, 'Supergarden', for the 11th Venice Architecture Biennale. His largest public art installation, Move!, was commissioned by the Land Transport Authority of Singapore for the Bishan Circle Line in 2009. His installations have been featured at The National Gallery Singapore, Singapore Design Festival, iLight Marina Bay Sands and the 2019 Berlin Festival of Lights. Ee Shaun was a finalist for the 2012 Sovereign Asian Art Prize and currently teaches at the School of the Arts, Singapore.

# MULAN GALLERY

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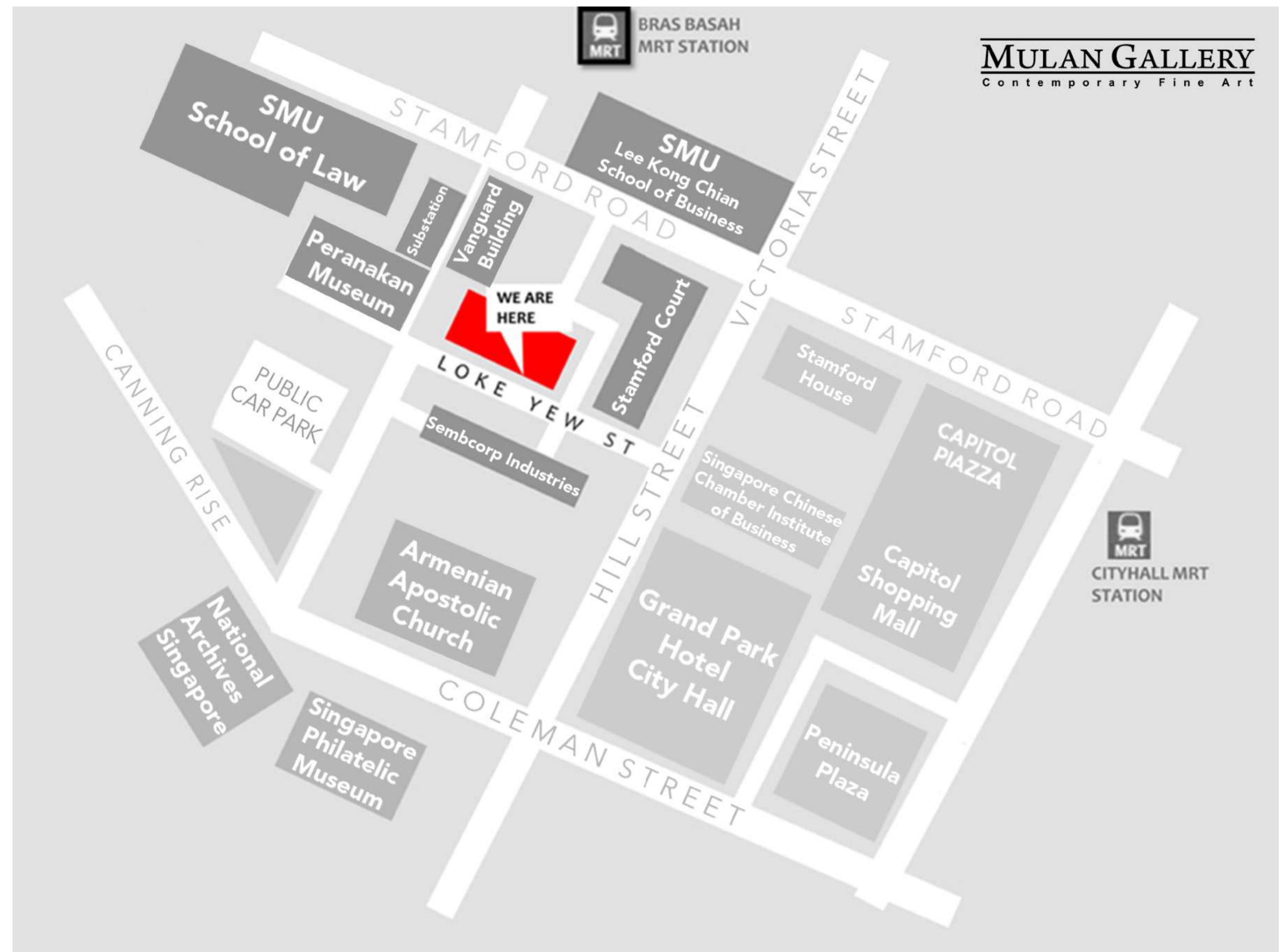
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Closed on Sundays, Mondays and Public Holidays



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