



S L O W B U R N

SHAWN HUCKINS | K Contemporary, Denver, CO | July 2026

In *Slow Burn*, Shawn Huckins explores the uneasy intersection of beauty and environmental crisis. Long recognized for paintings that appropriate and recontextualize imagery from canonical American art history such as the romanticized landscapes of Albert Bierstadt or the colonial portraits of John Singleton Copley, Huckins has built a practice centered on interrogating national mythology, perception, and collective memory. With *Slow Burn*, these longstanding concerns register with a contemporary urgency.

The exhibition centers on paintings of wildfires, smoke-filled skies, and newly introduced “war clouds,” theatrically framed by painted curtains, transforming each work into a staged encounter between viewer and nature. At first glance, the paintings appear atmospheric and sublime, drawing from the seductive visual language of 19th-century American landscape painting. Upon closer inspection, however, the scenes obliquely suggest the impact of raging wildfires, the polluting effects of war, and the gradual deterioration of once halcyon settings. Huckins invites conversations surrounding environmental destabilization and humanity’s role within it.

Inspired in part by hazy sunrises shaped by drifting Canadian wildfire smoke outside the artist’s New Hampshire studio, he paints hyperreal curtains as a visual device to create both literal and psychological distance. The viewer occupies a place of comfort and insulation, witnessing devastation from afar while remaining implicated within the systems that produce it. Throughout the exhibition, fire and smoke operate simultaneously as symbols and realities: forces of destruction, transformation, spectacle, and warning.

The introduction of war clouds expands Huckins’ ongoing investigation into the sometimes tenuous relationship between truth and beauty. Just as nineteenth-century American landscape painting often transformed the questionable conditions of territorial expansion into scenes of awe and transcendence, *Slow Burn* examines how catastrophe itself can become aestheticized through images. Huckins’ meticulously rendered surfaces and luminous palette seduce the viewer even as the subject matter resists passive consumption. By framing disaster within familiar tropes of theatricality and beauty, the exhibition asks viewers to confront the increasingly mediated ways contemporary crises are experienced through screens, distance, spectacle, and historical memory.

Cover: ‘Sunset and Glowing Green Curtain Study,’ detail



'War Cloud and Floral Blue Curtain'

2026

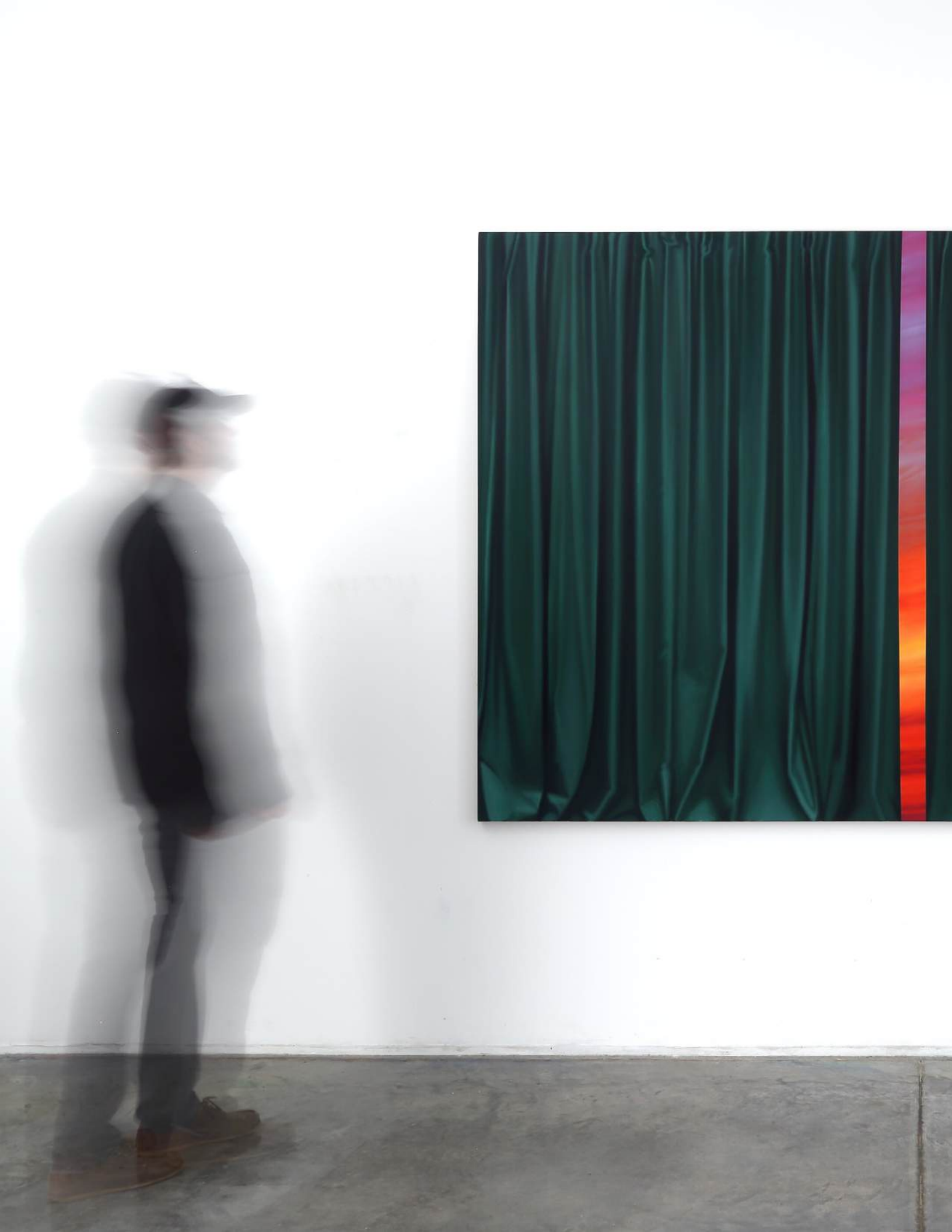
oil + acrylic on canvas

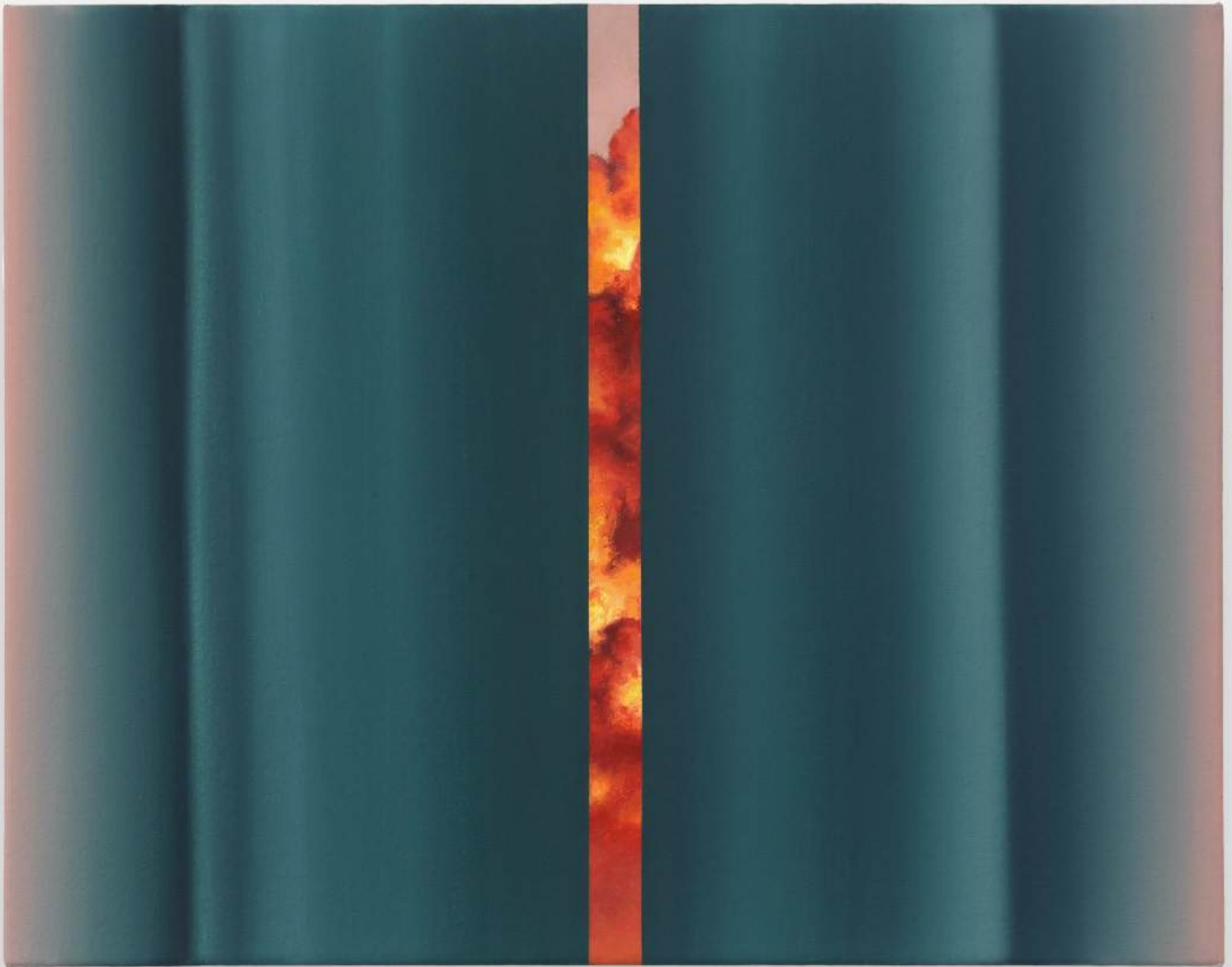
37 x 30 in. (93.98 x 76.2 cm.)





'First Sun and Green Curtain'
2026
oil on canvas
64 x 96 in. (162.56 x 243.84 cm.)





'War Cloud and Glowing Green Curtain Study'

2026

oil + acrylic on canvas

14 x 18 in. (35.56 x 45.72 cm.)



'Wildfire Sunset Behind Sheer Curtain'

2026

acrylic on canvas

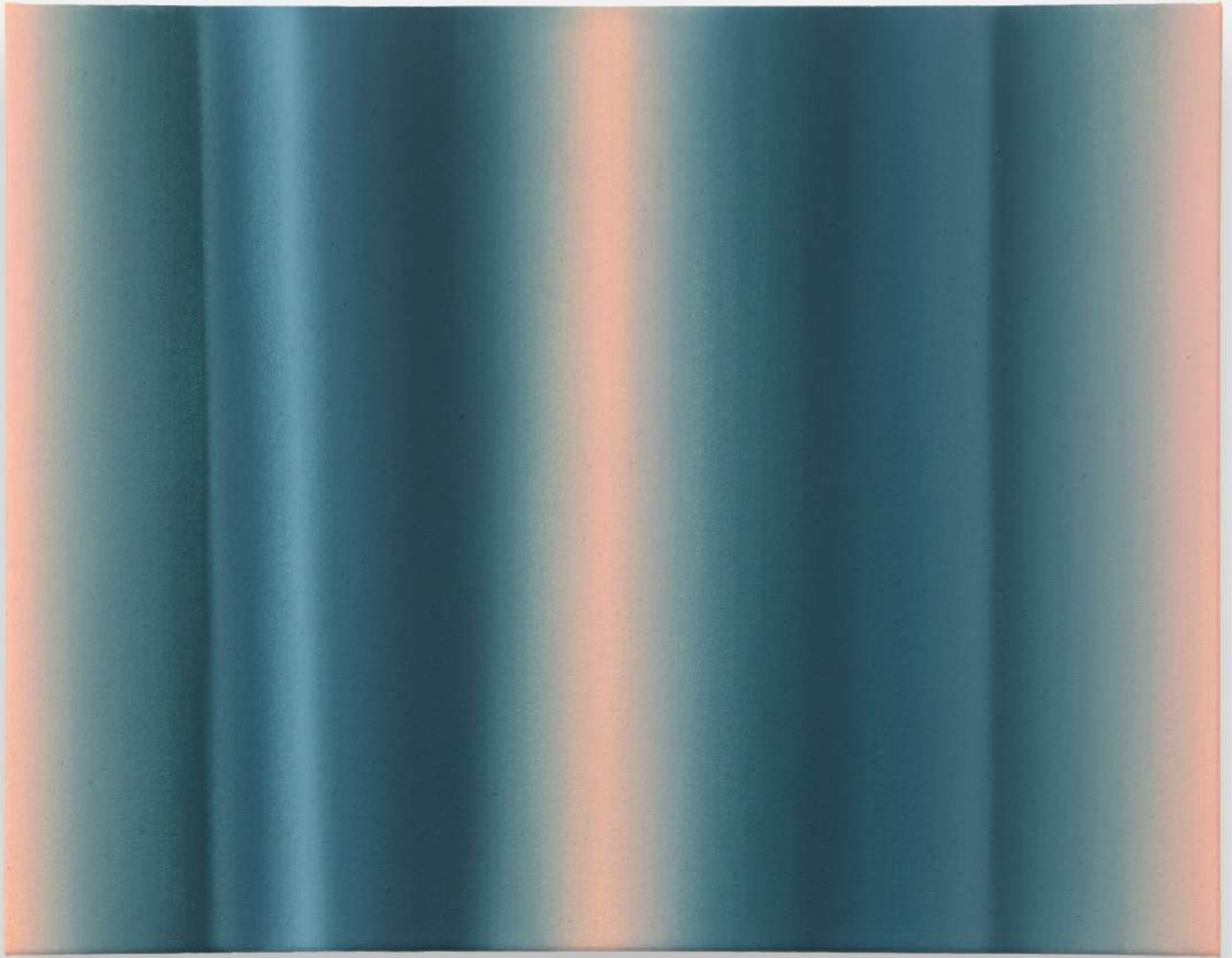
60 x 48 in. (152.4 x 121.92 cm.)



'Wildfire Sunset Behind Sheer Curtain,' detail



'Wildfire Sunset Behind Sheer Curtain,' detail



'Glowing Green Curtain Study'
2026
oil on canvas
14 x 18 in. (35.56 x 45.72 cm.)



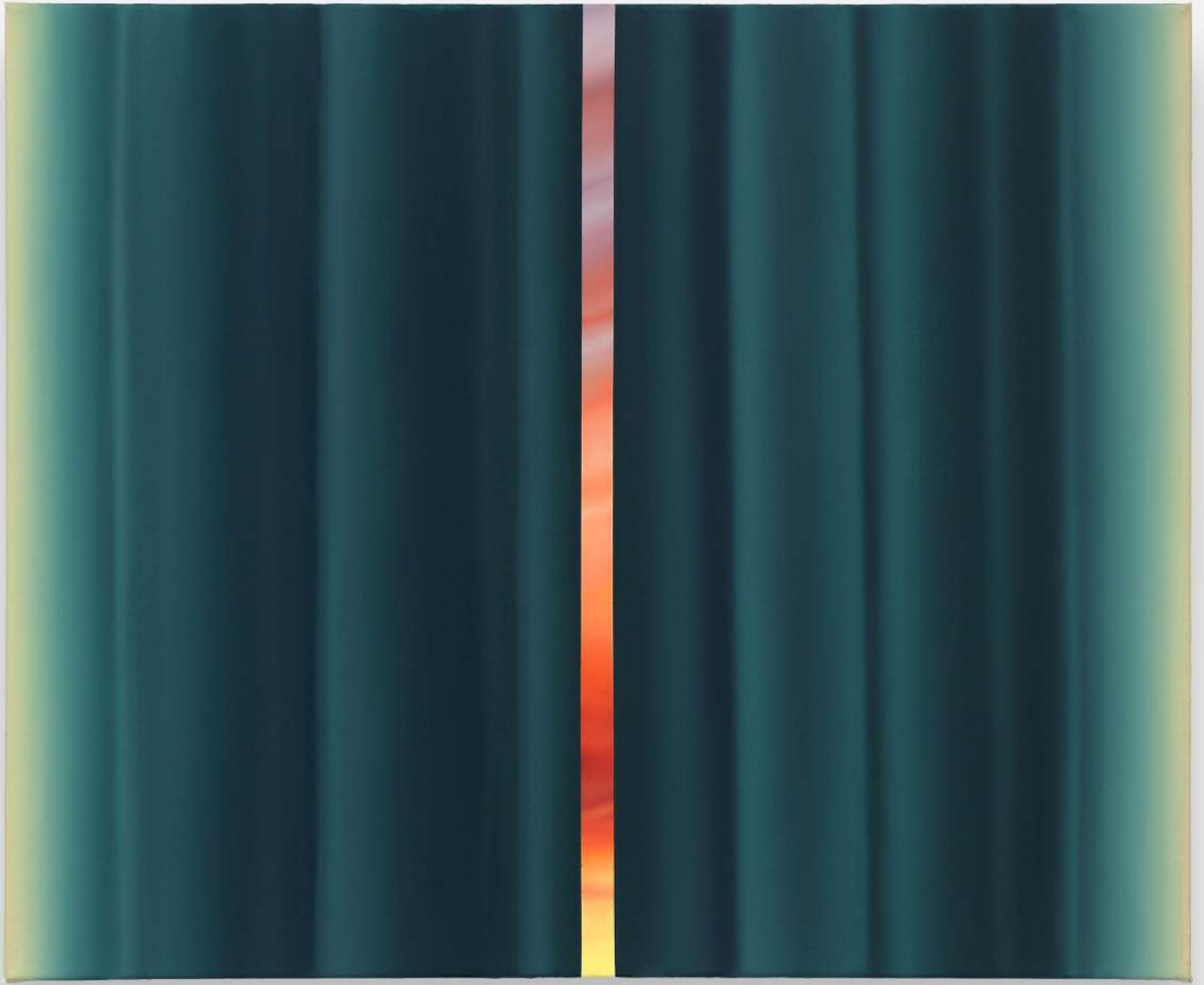
'First Sun and Toile De Jouy Curtain'

2026

oil on canvas

28 x 23 in. (71.12 x 58.42 cm.)





'First Sun and Glowing Green Curtain'
2026
oil + acrylic on canvas
23 x 28 in. (58.42 x 71.12 cm.)



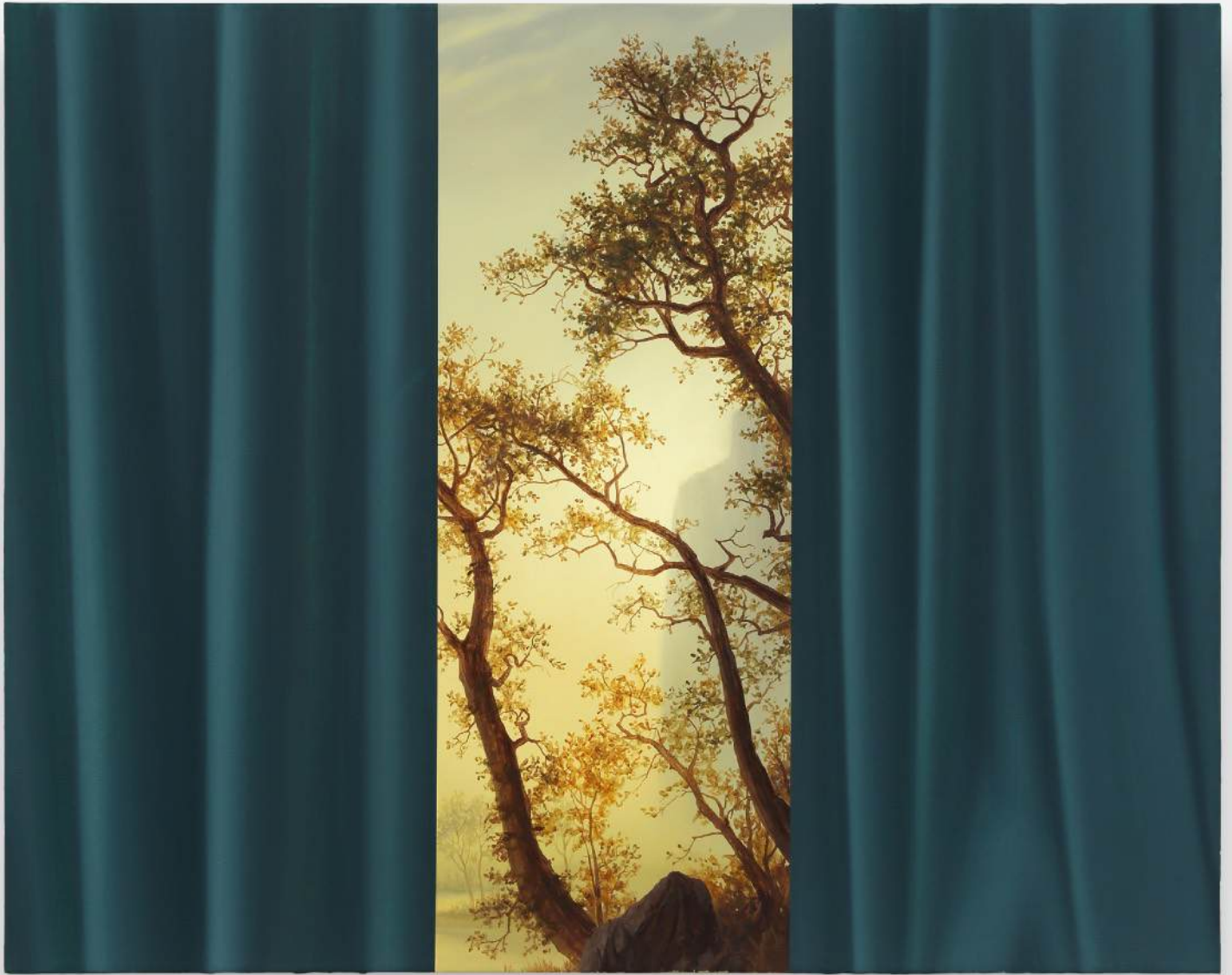
'Wildfire Sunrise Behind Black Sheer Curtain (1)'

2026

acrylic on canvas

36 x 30 in. (91.44 x 76.2 cm.)



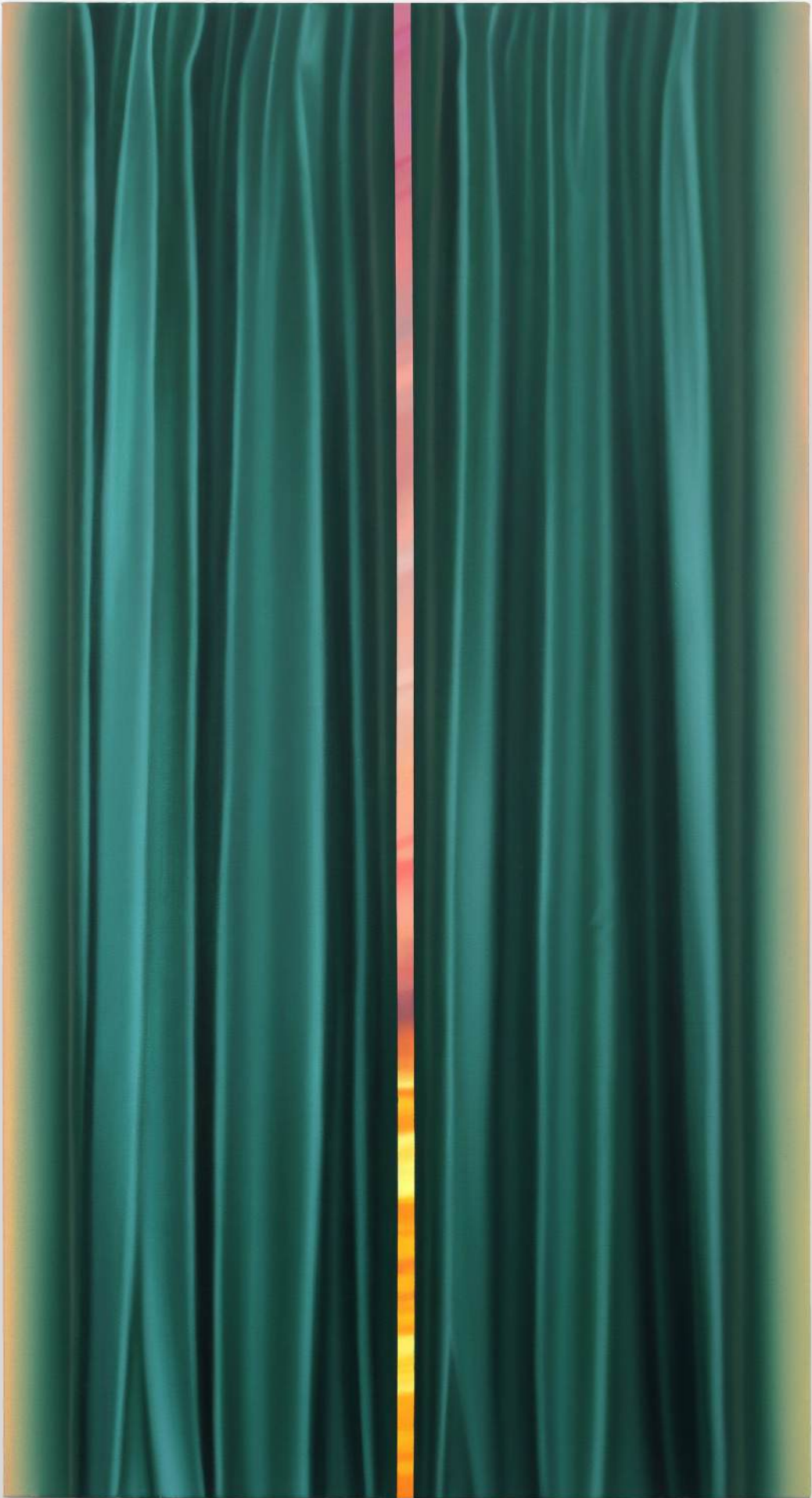


'Valley Sunrise and Green Curtain (after Bierstadt)'

2026

oil + acrylic on canvas

32 x 40 in. (81.28 x 101.6 cm.)





Previous Page and Current:

'First Sun and Glowing Green Curtain (2)'

2026

oil on canvas

58 x 31 in. (147.32 x 78.74 cm.)



'First Sun and Toile De Jouy Curtain (2)'

2026

oil on canvas

32 x 26 in. (81.28 x 66.04.)

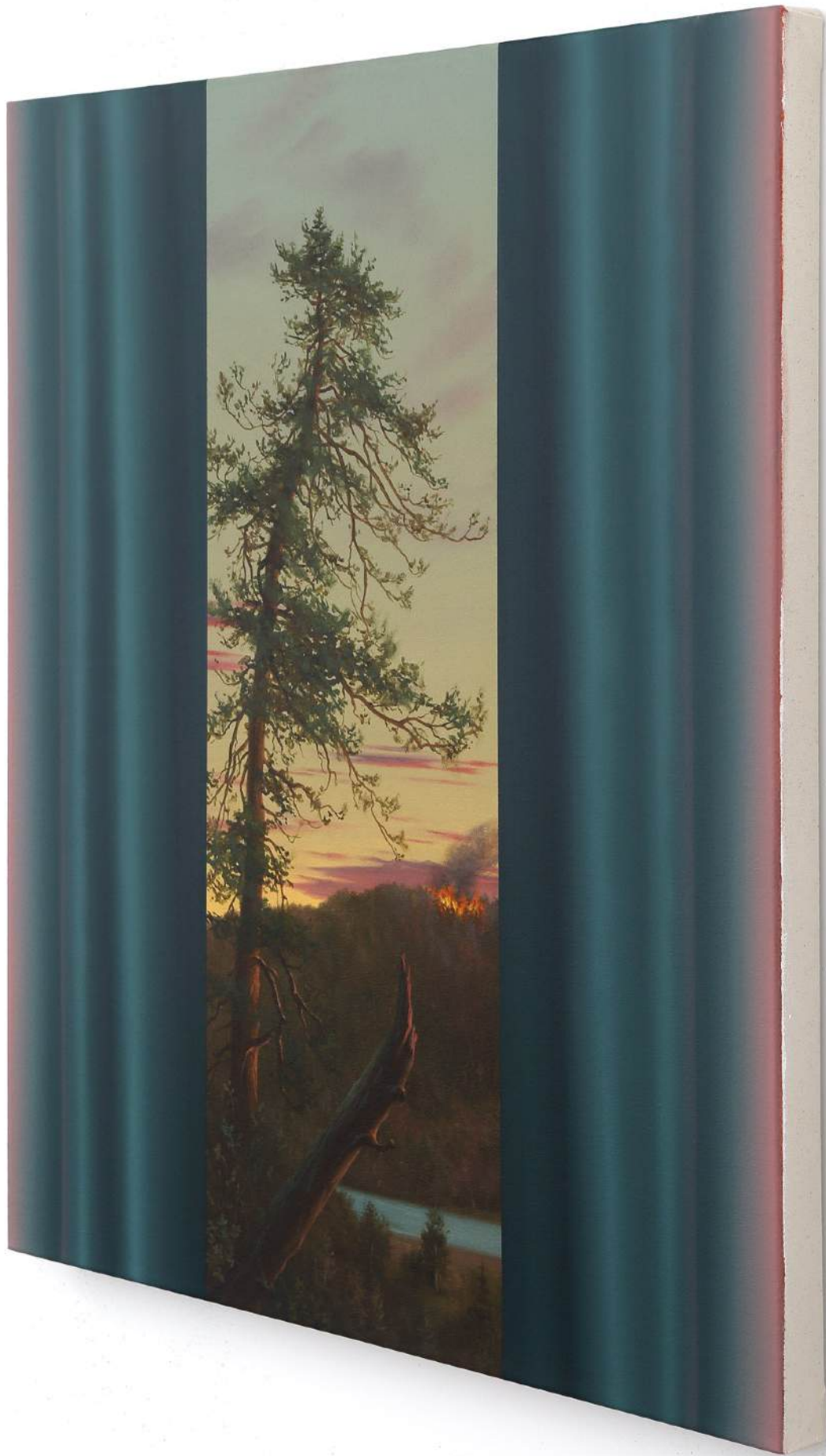


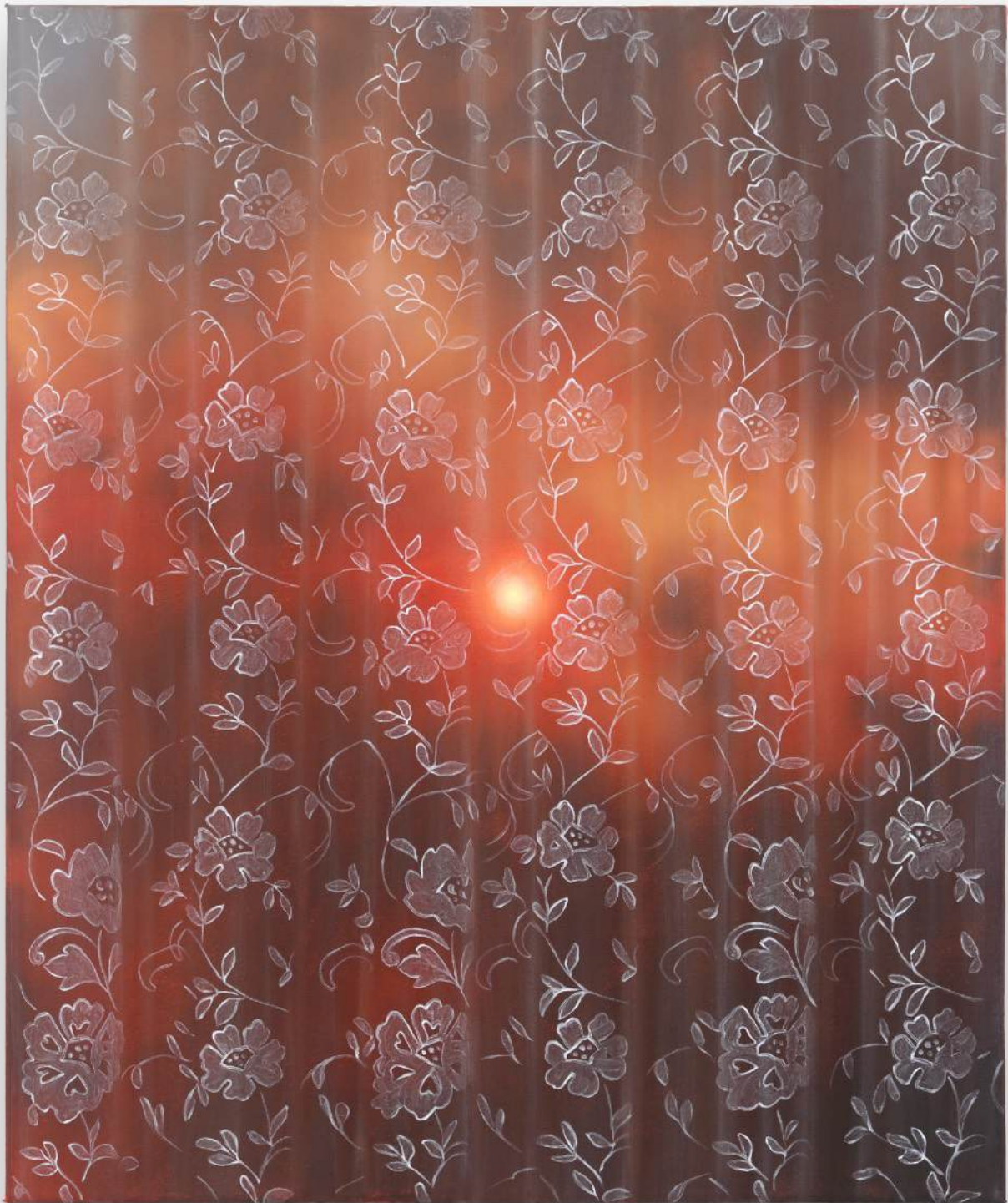
'Sunset and Glowing Green Curtain Study (after Church)'

2026

oil + acrylic on canvas

32 x 26 in. (81.28 x 66.04 cm.)





'Wildfire Sunrise Behind Floral Lace Curtain'

2026

acrylic on canvas

36 x 30 in. (91.44 x 76.2 cm.)



'War Cloud and Glowing Blue Curtain'

2026

oil + acrylic on canvas

60 x 48 in. (152.4 x 121.92 cm.)



'War Cloud and Glowing Blue Curtain,' detail



'Among The Sierra Nevada and Green Curtain (after Bierstadt)'

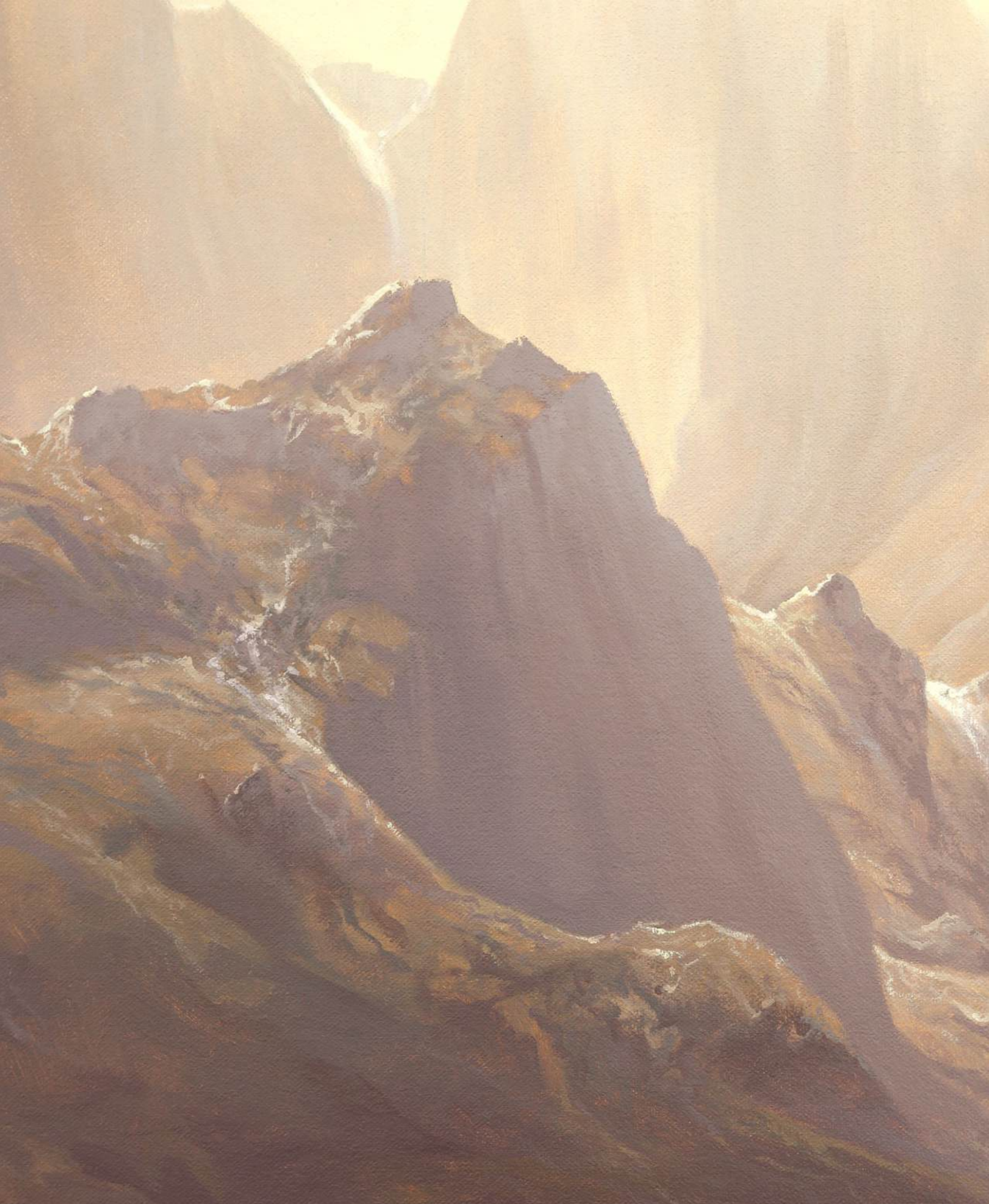
2026

oil + acrylic on canvas

65 x 98 in. (165.1 x 248.92 cm.)



'Among The Sierra Nevada and Green Curtain (after Bierstadt),' detail



'Among The Sierra Nevada and Green Curtain (after Bierstadt),' detail





CONTACT:

**K Contemporary
1412 Wazee St.
Denver, CO 80202**

gallery@kcontemporaryart.com

505/416-5902