

ANNE CONNELL



STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART

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## PAINTINGS BY ANNE CONNELL

2 to 21 November 2009

Monday to Saturday 10am to 6pm  
Sundays and evenings by appointment

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I am very pleased to present a selection of recent paintings by Anne Connell, an artist whose work I have admired since I first came across her work at an exhibition in New York in 2001. I was struck by the way in which her small, exquisitely detailed panel paintings, characterized by a painstaking technique, displayed a rich vocabulary of motifs that reflected her close study of late medieval and Renaissance imagery, while at the same time representing these elements within a distinctively modern idiom. As a review of the exhibition in the *New York Times* aptly noted, *'Borrowing patterns and fragmentary images from Italian Renaissance painting for her small, lovingly made panel paintings, Connell creates a quietly luminous symbolist poetry that seems as once antique and post-modern.'*

Anne lives and works in Portland, Oregon. Although this is her first exhibition outside America, she has had several solo exhibitions over the last two decades; in Boston, Denver, New York and Portland. She has also participated in several group exhibitions, most recently in *The Masters ReMastered* at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Fort Collins, Colorado, earlier this year. Grants and awards she has received include a Senior Research Fellowship to Italy in 2002-2003 as a Fulbright Scholar – the first visual artist in many years to be so recognized – and several residencies at the MacDowell Colony, Yaddo and the Ucross Foundation.

Having first broached the possibility of hosting an exhibition of her work several years ago, I am particularly grateful to Anne Connell for her support, advice and patience in the course bringing this project to fruition. I would also like to thank my wife Laura, Lara Agius and Guy Peppiatt for their encouragement in this new endeavour.

Stephen Ongpin

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Anne Connell wishes to thank Elizabeth Gilbert, Allan Gurganus, and Andrew Solomon for their generous words and unstinting support. She is grateful to the Corporation of Yaddo and the Ucross Foundation for the sanctuary they provided during the year leading up to this exhibition, to Loren Nelson for his indefatigable documentary support, and to the Robischon Gallery for the safe transport of several of the paintings. Finally, she wishes to thank Stephen Ongpin for having the imagination to think that there might be a place in his gallery for the likes of her work, and for choosing it for SOFA's first contemporary venture.

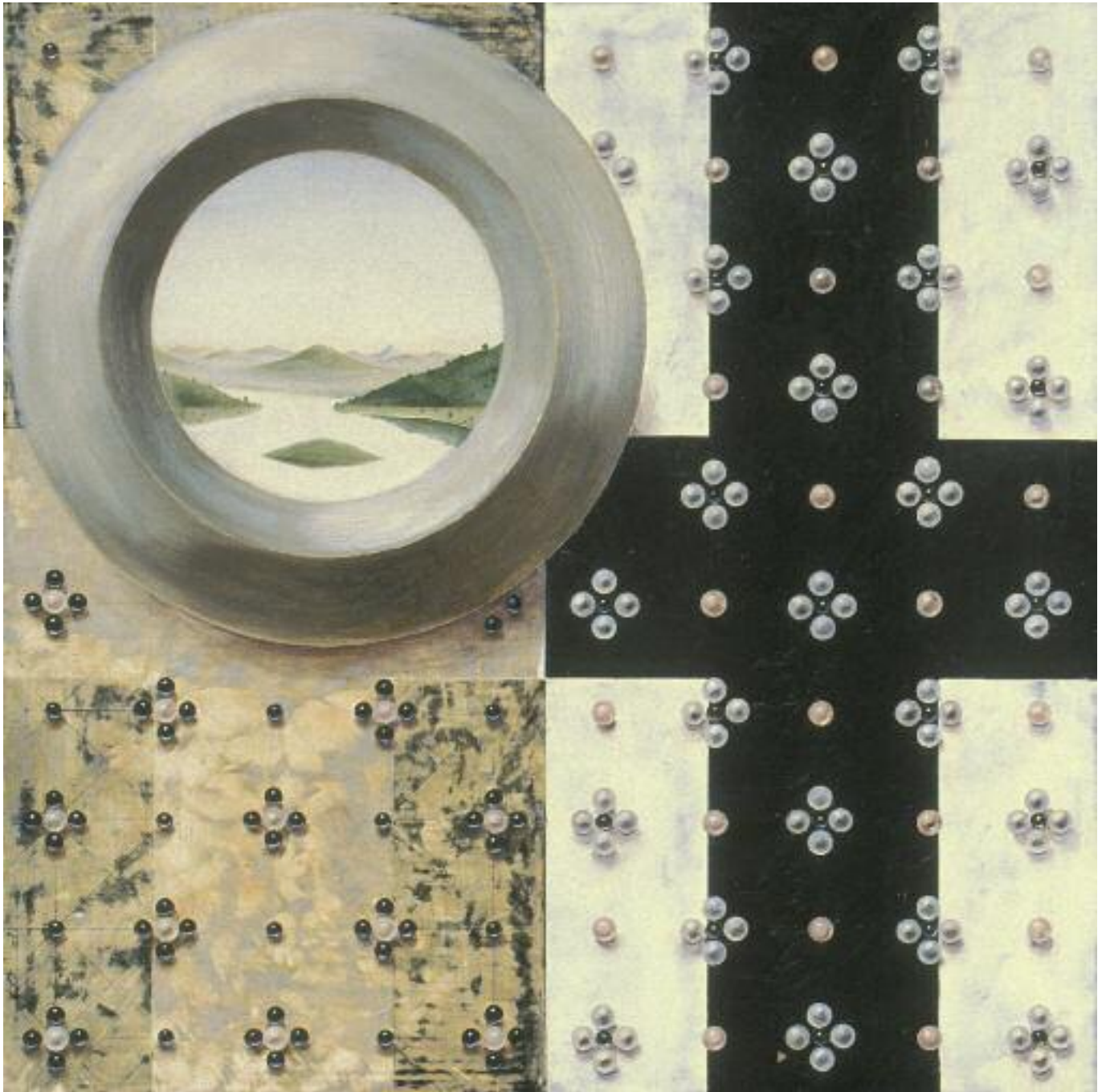


I. Ducciesco

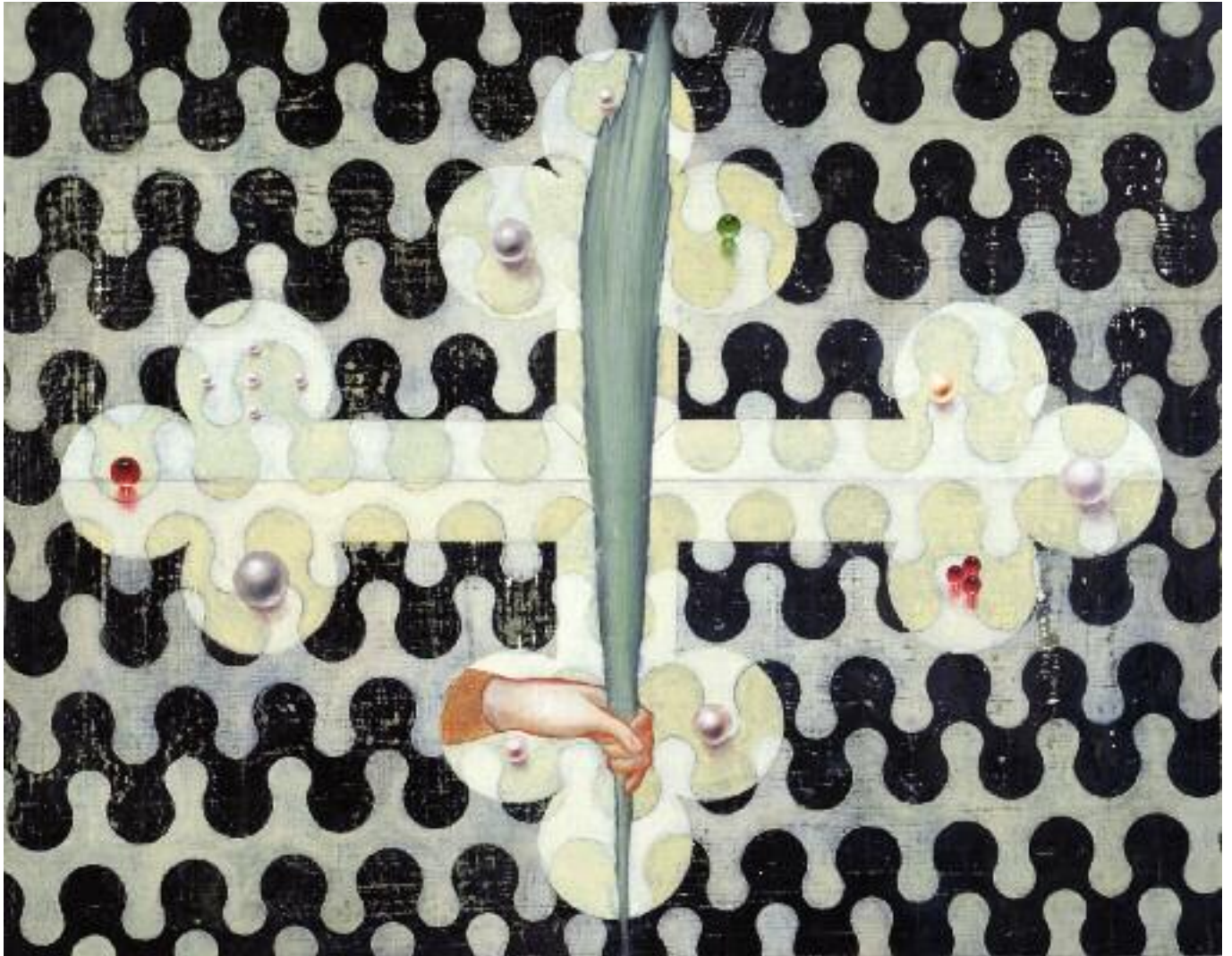
Anne Connell invents worlds. Tiny, immaculate, and fascinating glimpses of worlds, to be precise. (And “precise” is the correct word to use here, because Anne paints with the detailed rigor of a master jeweler.) There is no actual place on earth that quite resembles her contrivances, but they have always evoked in me a deep sense of homesickness, nonetheless: a tangible longing to make myself very small and very quiet, so that I could slip somehow right into that world which does not – but which absolutely should – exist. That sense of enchantment, of magic, shimmers in every corner of this fabulist’s work, and it is not easily forgotten.

Elizabeth Gilbert





2. Parted Per Pale



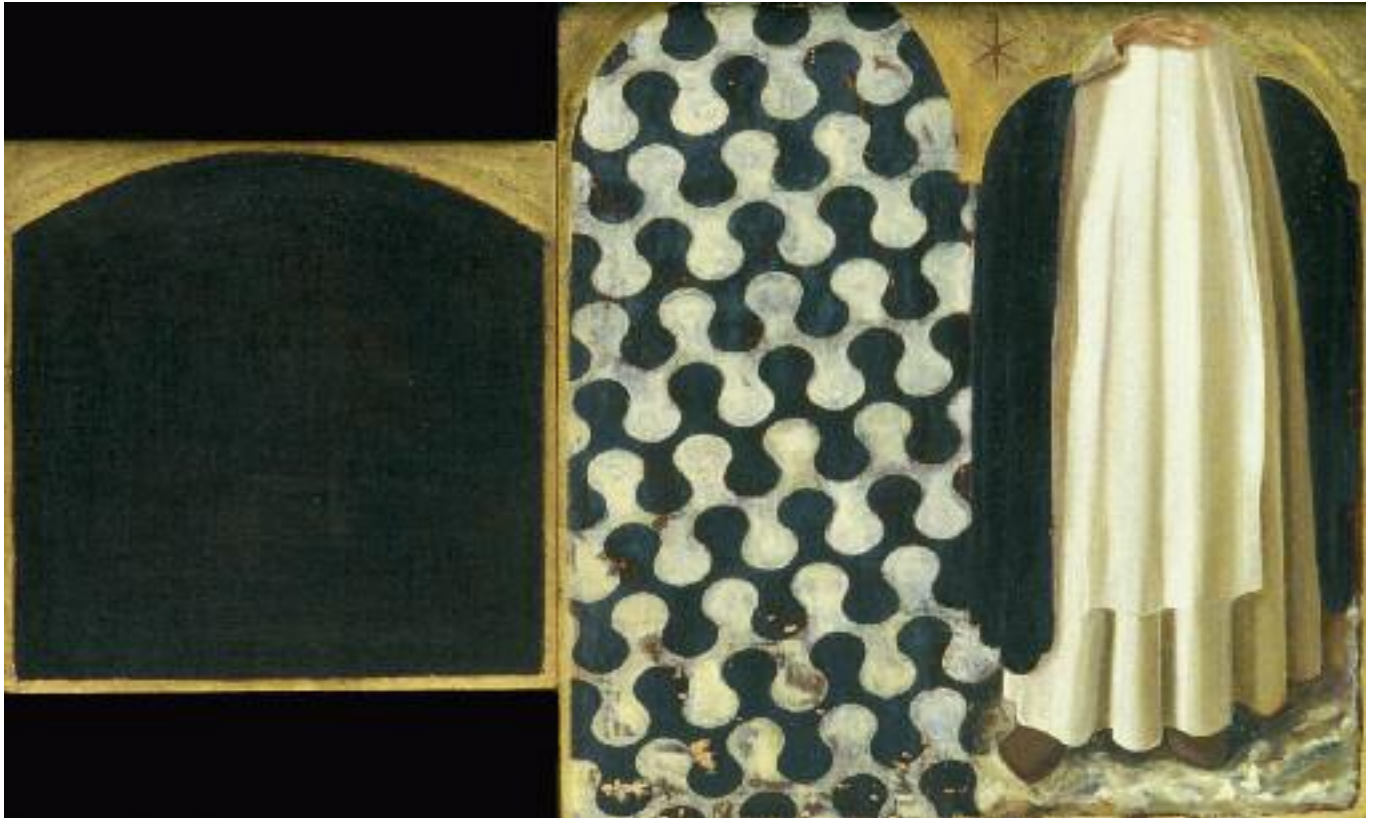
3. Oblation



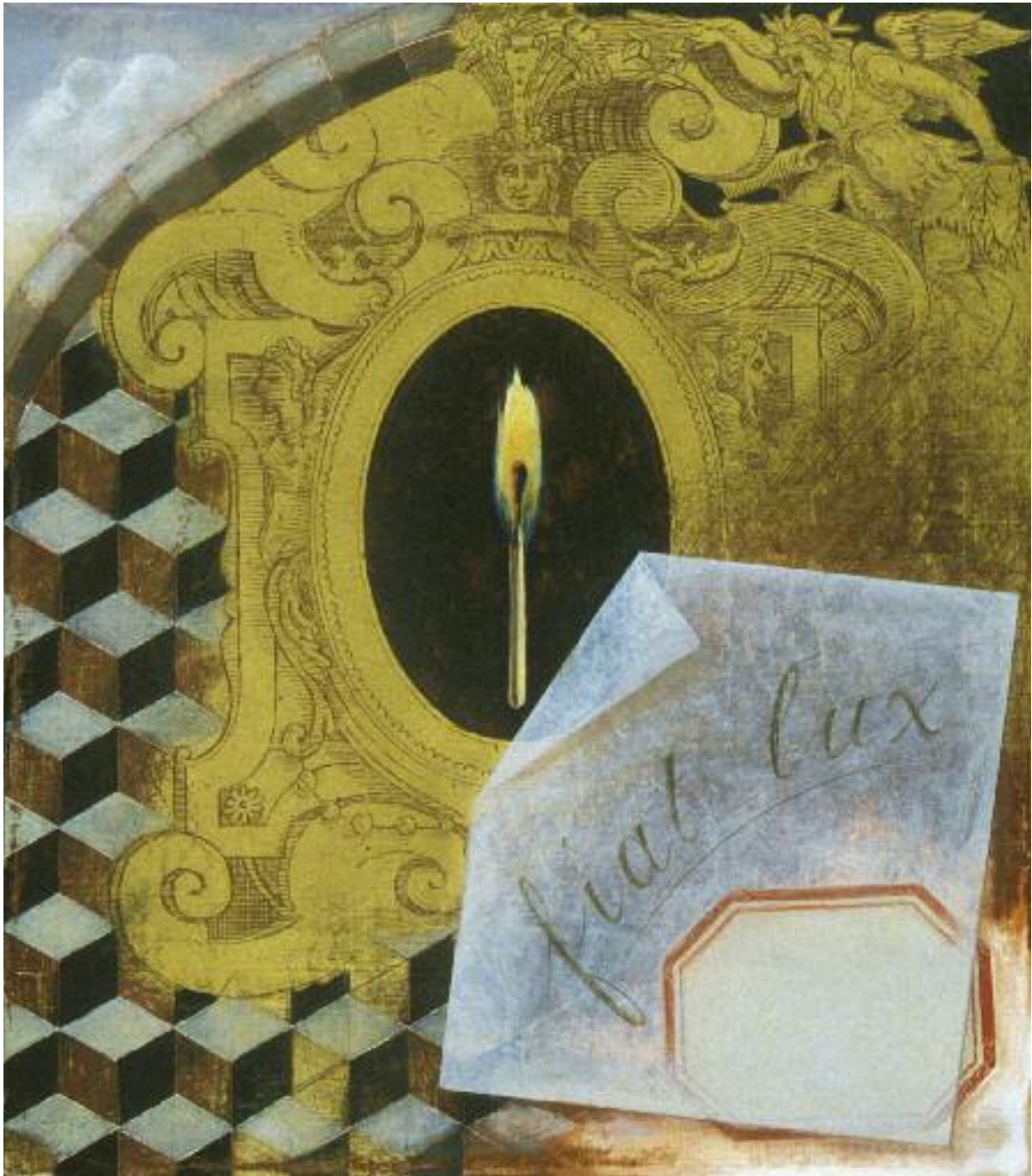


4. A Conjured Ubiety





5. Fra



6. Fiat Lux (2)

Combining a futuristic vision with a Renaissance technique, Anne Connell makes sumptuous icons for our age. Heraldic as flags, private as recurring dreams, her Vermeer-sized paintings - once seen - offer endless and consoling echoes. Connell's vision, though steeped in art history, stays quicksilver with its present-tense urgency. Her work resounds with a belief in art's imperative to question, always enriching, life's elegant inevitable surprises.

Allan Gurganus



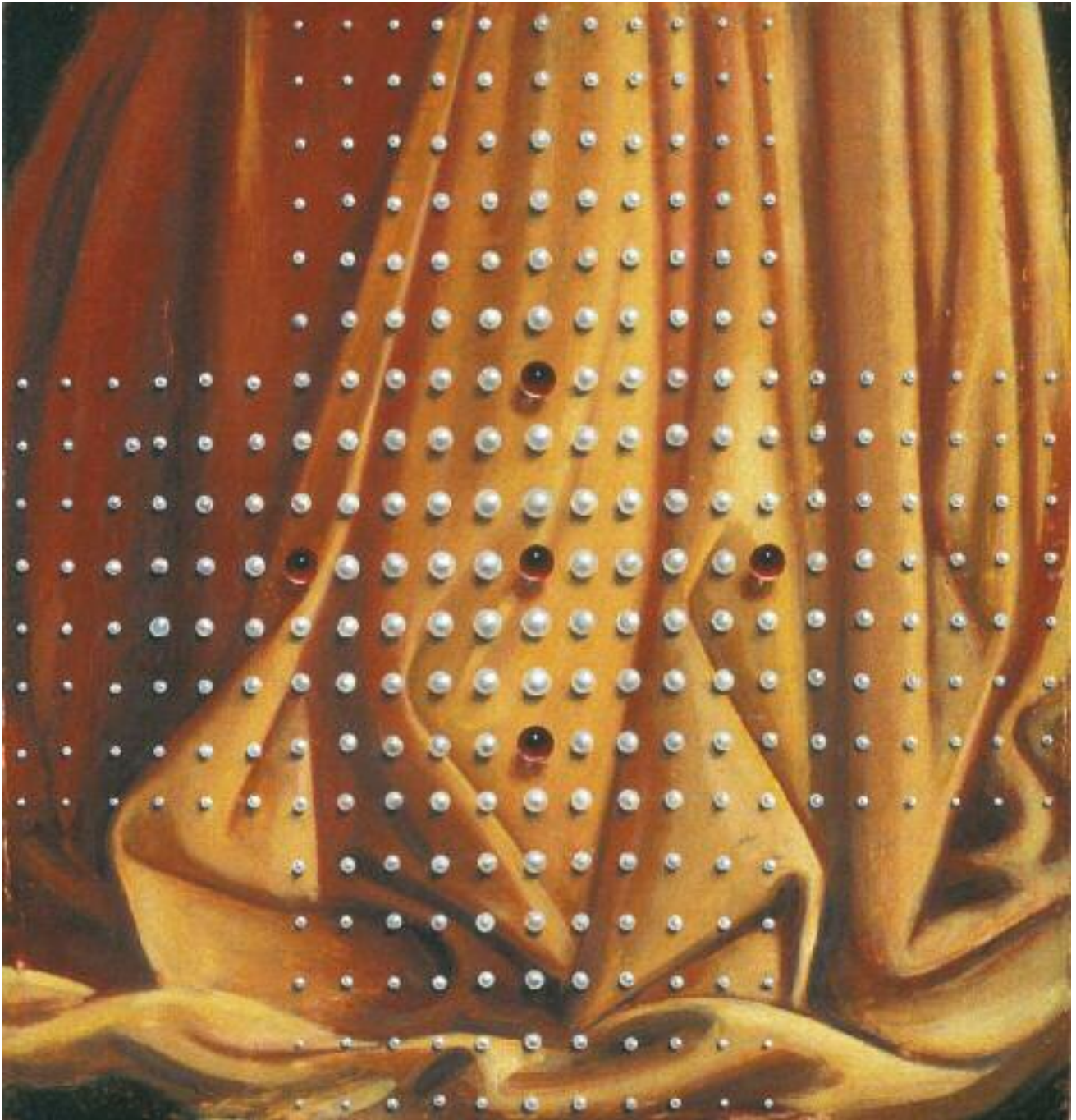


7. The Token



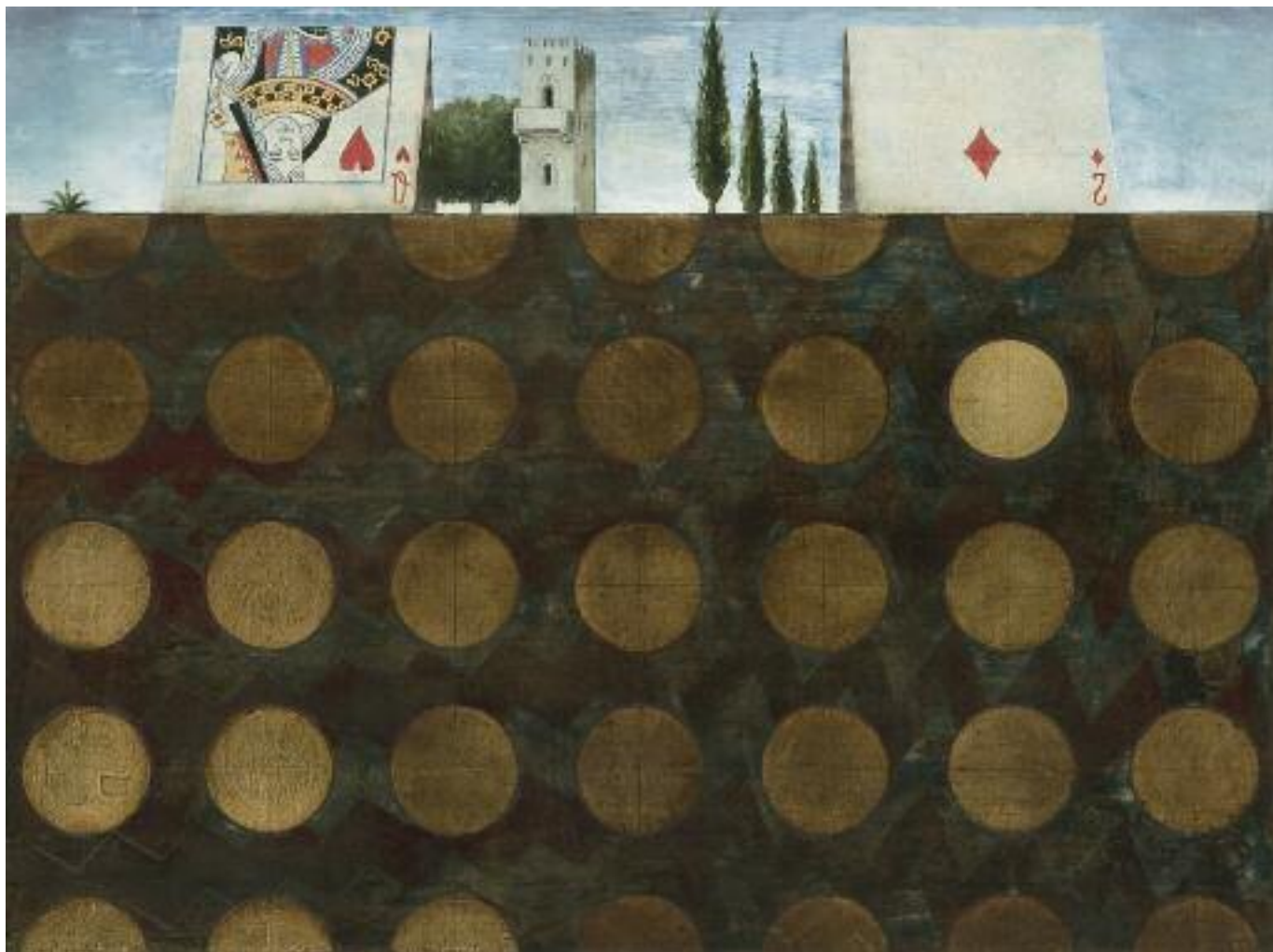
8. Ordonnance, with Devices





9. Arrangement in Orange





10. In The Offing



11. Escarpment

Meticulous precision is a quality often associated with the machine age, but an equally exact manual execution reached and passed its apotheosis long before the first steam engine met its track. Such sharp perfection, born of infinite patience, relates to a time when creativity was not strongly associated with chaos, as it is in modern psychodynamic thought. Though Anne Connell's exquisite paintings draw on this old-fashioned idea of ingenious order, and though they incorporate elements of specific antique paintings that the artist admires, they are neither post-modernist nor appropriationist, because their purpose is neither to comment on the transience of history nor to reflect the fallacy of authorship. Their impact is visual rather than conceptual, but they contain a wistful philosophy; they suggest a continuity that encompasses the continuity of loss. Though they are sometimes playful, they are also mystical. That shimmering, smooth surface, the decorative elements that rise sensually from the picture plane, the elegant fragments that seem almost flirtatiously to ask why and how they were selected, all seduce without giving away their secrets. You see at once that the work is beautiful, but you can tell that it is not simply about its own beauty.

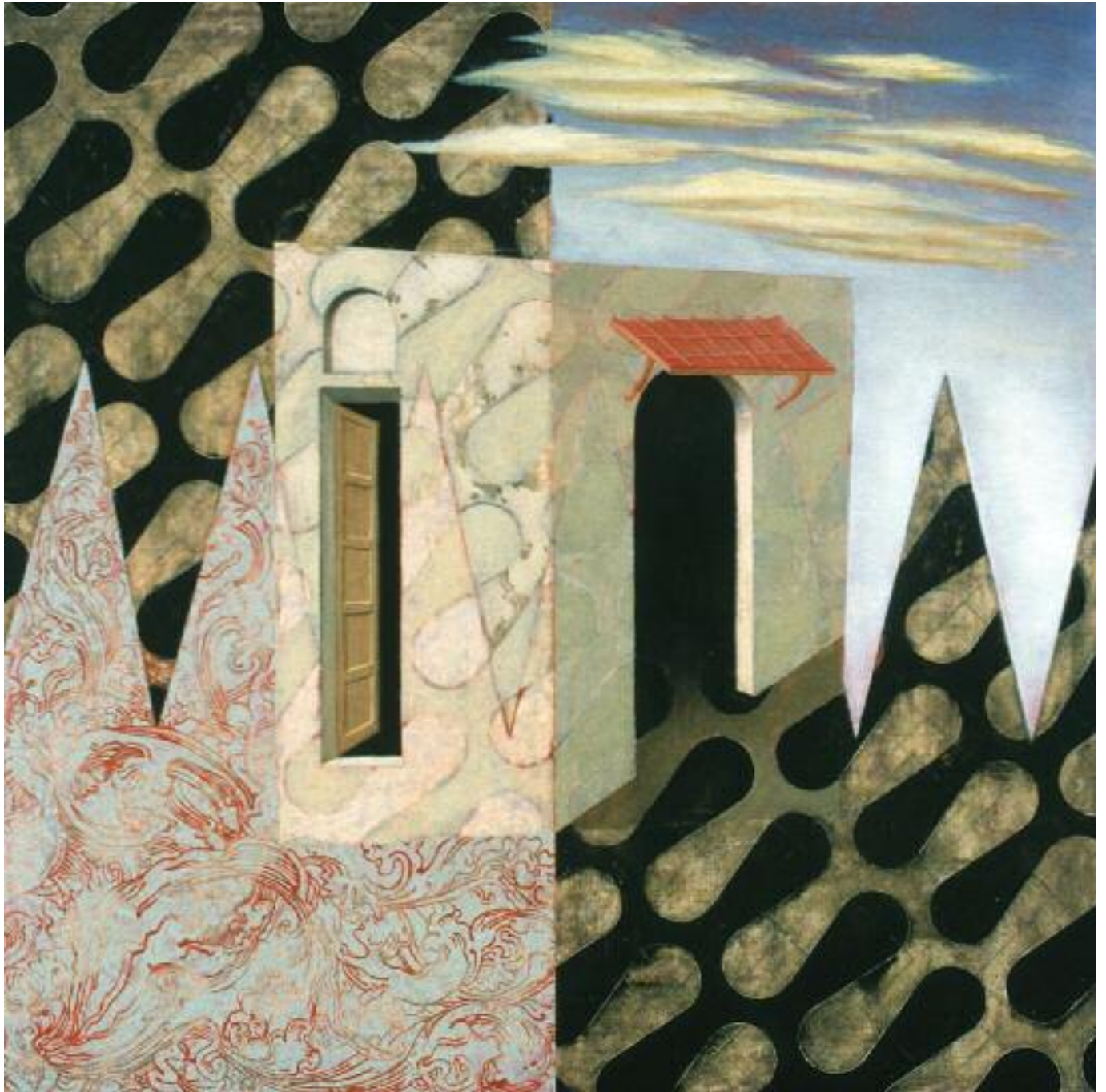
If what these paintings have to tell us could be translated into words, Anne Connell, a capable wordsmith, would have translated it. No – what we find in her orderly compositions is something profound and inchoate, an exquisite longing for how things were when they were better, a yearning that is entirely contemporary, the present moment's insistence on precedents. If Anne Connell had lived in the Renaissance, her work would have used elements from Praxiteles, and if she'd been in fifth-century Athens, she'd have found her way to cave paintings, and the effect would have been identical, because her work is not about any particular past; it is about the sad, humorous, reassuring fact of the past itself.

Andrew Solomon



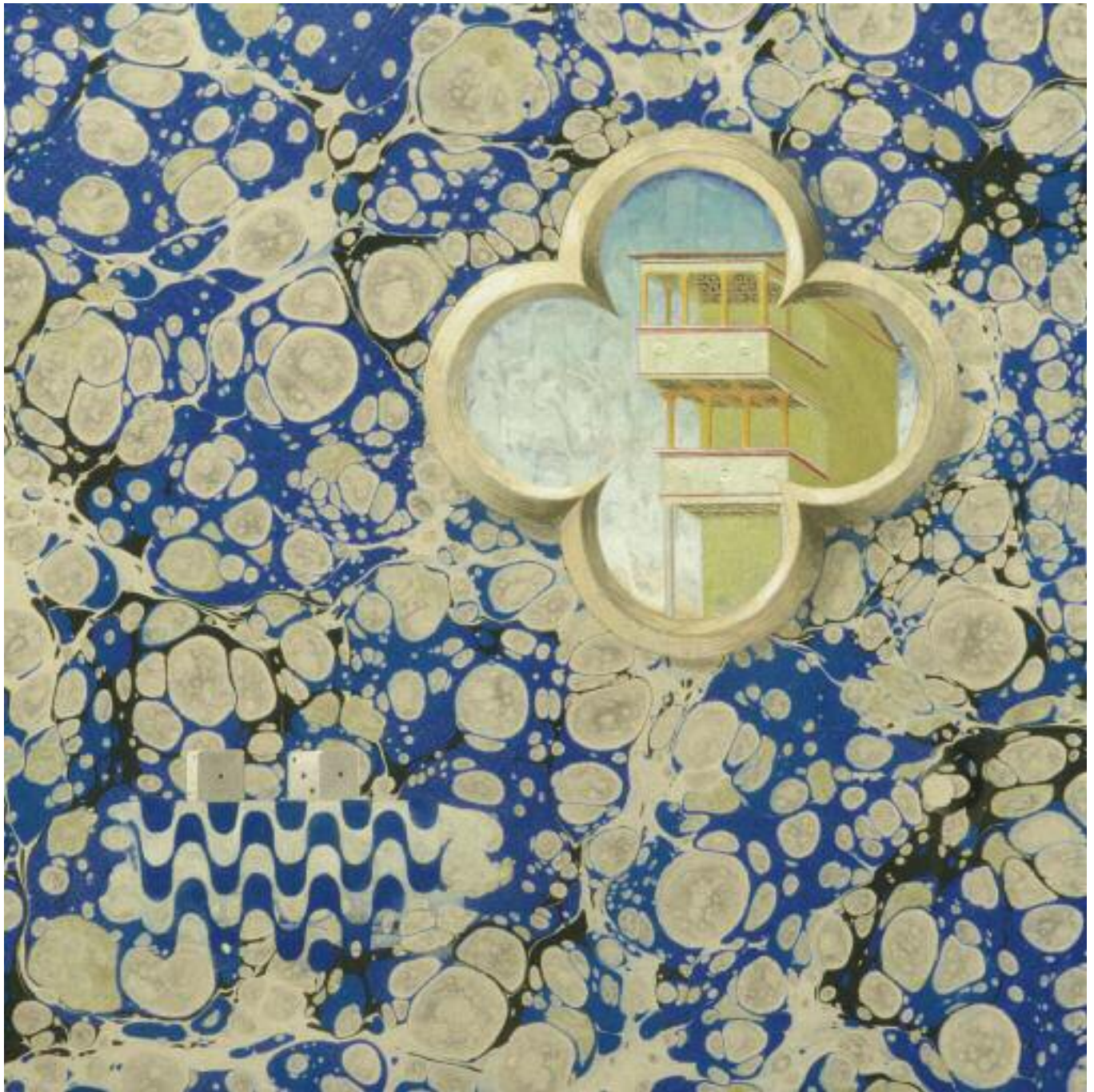


12. Eclogue



13. A Suggestion of Allegory





14. Still Life with Loggia



## CHECKLIST

- No.1  
*Ducciesco* 2009  
Oil on panel  
30.5 × 30.5 cm. (12 × 12 in.)  
The architectural detail in the oculus is from *The Temptation of Christ on the Mountain* (c.1308-1311), a panel from the dismembered *Maestà* of Duccio di Buoninsegna, in the Frick Collection, New York. The wavy pattern is a variation on the heraldic partition line called *rayonnée*, or radiant.
- No.2  
*Parted Per Pale* 2007  
Oil on panel  
30.5 × 30.5 cm. (12 × 12 in.)  
In heraldry, a pale is a band, or ordinary, placed vertically in the middle of a shield; *parted per pale* is the heraldic term which describes the division of the field into two equal parts by a vertical line. The view seen through the oculus is a detail from Piero della Francesca's *Triumph of Federico da Montefeltro* (c.1465) in the Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.
- No.3  
*Oblation* 2009  
Oil and gold leaf on panel  
30 × 38.1 cm. (11 3/4 × 15 in.)  
The hand holding the palm frond is a detail from the *Annunciation* (1344) by Ambrogio Lorenzetti, in the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Siena.
- No.4  
*A Conjured Ubiety* 2009  
Oil on panel  
18.5 × 21.6 cm. (7 1/4 × 8 1/2 in.)  
The central image is a detail from a predella panel of *The Rescue of Saint Placidus and the Meeting of Saints Benedict and Scholastica* (c.1411-1413), attributed to Fra Angelico, in the Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence. The ribbon pattern can be seen in groin vaults in the Bargello in Florence and elsewhere.
- No.5  
*Fra* 1994  
Oil and gold leaf on panel  
22.5 × 37 cm. (8 7/8 × 14 5/8 in.)  
The detail on the right is from a panel of Fra Angelico's altarpiece of *The Virgin and Child with Saints and Angels* (c.1437) in the Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria in Perugia. The pattern is a variation on the heraldic partition line called *nebulé*, or nebuli (from the Latin *nebulā*, cloud).
- No.6  
*Fiat Lux (2)* 2008  
Oil and gold leaf on panel  
20.3 × 17.8 cm. (8 × 7 in.)  
The incised strapwork frame is from a late 16th century German printer's mark.
- No.7  
*The Token* 2009  
Oil and gold leaf on panel  
19.7 × 21.5 cm. (7 7/8 × 8 1/2 in.)  
The painting depicted on the postcard in the envelope is *A Young Lady of Fashion* by Paolo Uccello, datable to the early 1460s, in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston. The treeline is from Leonardo da Vinci's *Annunciation* of c.1473-1475, in the Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence.
- No.8  
*Ordonnance, with Devices* 2006  
Oil on panel  
30 × 30.5 cm. (11 3/4 × 12 in.)  
All of the hand details can be found in two panels by Fra Angelico of *Eighteen Blessed of the Dominican Order* and *Seventeen Blessed of the Dominican Order and Two Dominican Tertiaries*, fragments of the original framing structure of the high altarpiece (c.1418-1423) of San Domenico in Fiesole, both now in the National Gallery, London.
- No.9  
*Arrangement in Orange* 2008  
Oil on panel  
29.2 × 29.2 cm. (11 1/2 × 11 1/2 in.)  
The drapery detail is from Benozzo Gozzoli's fresco of angels worshipping in the apse of the Cappella dei Magi (1459), in the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi, Florence.
- No.10  
*In the Offing* 2004  
Oil and gold leaf on panel  
22.8 × 30.5 cm. (9 × 12 in.)  
The small tower and trees come from a detail of a fresco by Benozzo Gozzoli of *The Conversion of the Heretic* (c.1464-1465) in the apsidal chapel of Sant'Agostino in San Gimignano.
- No.11  
*Escarpment* 2007  
Oil and gold leaf on panel  
26.4 × 30.5 cm. (10 3/8 × 12 in.)  
Both the gilded *pastiglia* of the pierced quatrefoil surround and the fragmentary landscape come from a predella panel of *Saint Benedict Meeting Saint Paul the Hermit in the Wilderness* (c.1411), thought to be an early work of Fra Angelico, today in the Pinacoteca Vaticana.
- No.12  
*Eclogue* 2009  
Oil on panel  
30.5 × 30.5 cm. (12 × 12 in.)  
The fruit tree comes from Benozzo Gozzoli's frescoes in the Cappella dei Magi (1459), in the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi, Florence. The drapery detail was adapted from a *Madonna of Humility* (c.1418), attributed to the workshop of Lorenzo Monaco, in the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri.
- No.13  
*A Suggestion of Allegory* 2007  
Oil on panel  
30.5 × 30.5 cm. (12 × 12 in.)  
The doorways in the centre can be found in Giovanni di Paolo's predella panel of *A Franciscan Saint Receiving Pilgrims Led by Saint James the Great*, of the early 1430's, in a private collection, while the clouds are loosely borrowed from the *Saint Bernardino Preaching before the Palazzo Pubblico of Siena* (c.1448) by Sano di Pietro, in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo in Siena.
- No.14  
*Still Life with Loggia* 2003  
Gouache on *carta marmorizzata*  
33 × 33 cm. (13 × 13 in.)  
The loggia seen through the quatrefoil window comes from a fresco of the *Homage of a Simple Man* (c.1295), by the Painter of the Saint Francis Cycle in the Upper Church of the Basilica di San Francesco in Assisi. The paper substrate is handmade *carta marmorizzata fiorentina*.



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