

Roberto Marra

Hold The Line

My story

My name is Roberto Marra. I am an Italian Canadian artist **who has been actively producing artwork** for over three decades. Over this time, I have shown my work in local as well as national public and private galleries; some of these are now part of collections in each of these areas. In addition, my art has been included in numerous literary projects by local and international poets and writers. Some of these being, Corrado Paina, Luciano Iacobelli, Gianna Patriarca and John Calabro. My own written work has also been published in **two books which are titled 'The Word' and 'The Emu Dialogues'**.

My more recent body of work is **contemporary in 'style'. It walks a line between sculpture and painting** and explores the aesthetic, psychological and philosophical functions of the line in art and life. My conceptualized infinite line is a central focus. It is an apt metaphor for the visceral energies that are at work in the creation of art and by extension, in human expression as a whole. The persistence, presence and open ended nature of art is a reflection of **an infinite line that runs through them**.

The 'style' of this work is original and, within its architecture, renders a unique form. Even so, I believe that, in some ways, it embodies the spirit of post-world war two Italian contemporary artwork created by masters such as Alberto Burri, Agostino Bonalumi, Piero Manzoni, Enrico Castellani, Lucio Fontana (Argentina) and so on.

Prior to these, I painted numerous colorful and dynamic acrylic abstracts that I have **come to consider sketches for the more sculptural, hybrid work that came later**. I have included samples of both series of paintings in this document along with an essay which best describes my underlying thoughts and motivations leading to them. This being the case, I will not belabor further here with other 'statements' about my work.

My objective has been to create original **paintings that are visually compelling as well as intellectually intriguing**. I appreciate you taking the time to review them here and look forward to your thoughts in their regard should there be interest or opportunity to share them.



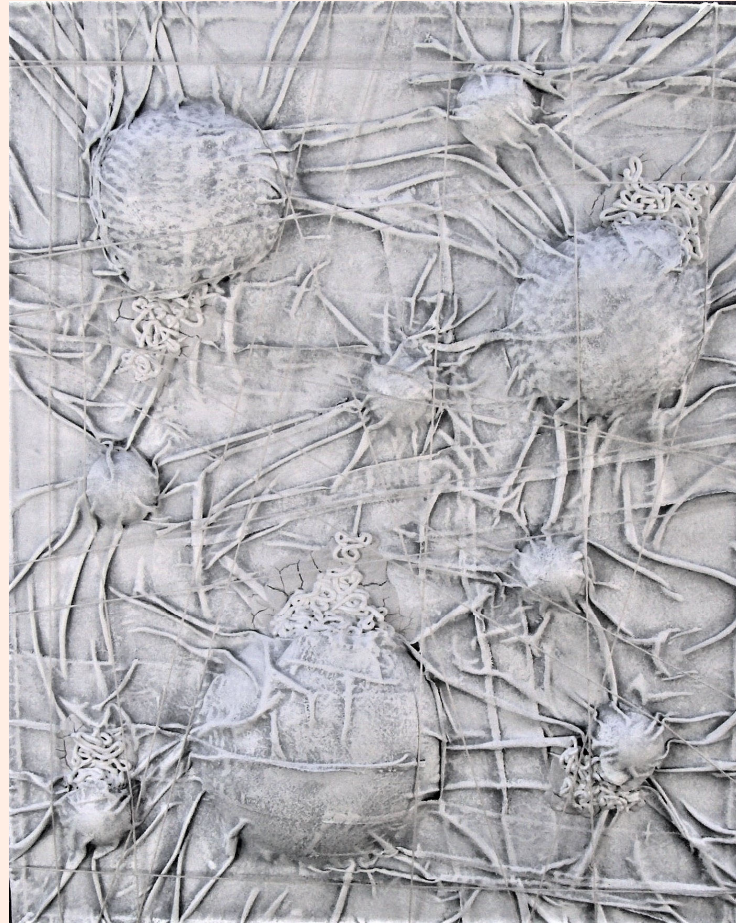
Requiem For The Missing Line, 2022 48 x 35 inches- acrylic paing, acrylic polymer, styrofoam, pipe insulation, bedsheet, gauze, stones, graphite



Away From The Shore Line, 2020 - 30 X 48 inches - acrylic paint, acrylic polymer, fish hooks, nylon string, newsprint, cardboard paint samples, glues, metal rods



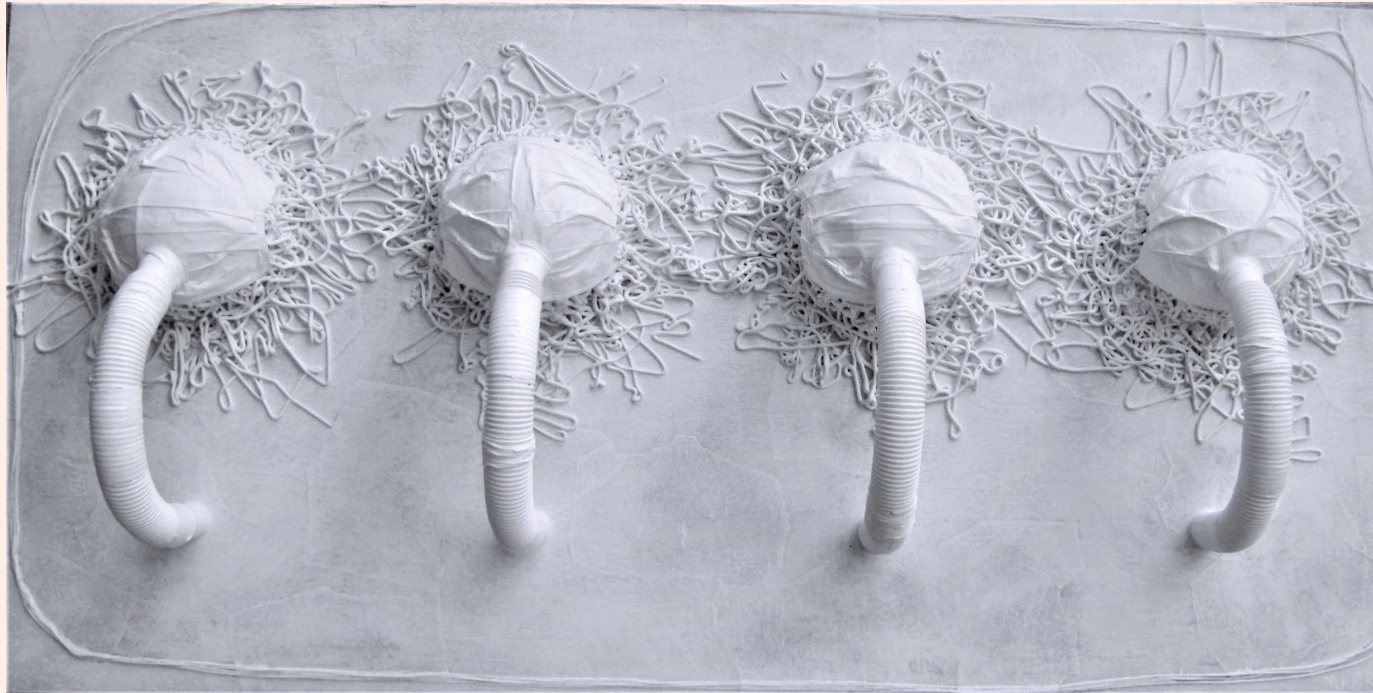
Subline 2016 - 24 x 15 inches - acrylic paint, acrylic polymer, thread - on cotton canvas



Viraline 19 2019 - 30 x 40 inches- acrylic paint, acrylic polymer, styrofoam, bedsheet, cotton string, wooden bowl, woven basket



Away From The Shore Line, 2020 - 30 X 48 inches - acrylic paint, acrylic polymer, fish hooks, nylon string, newsprint, cardboard paint samples, glues, metal rods



The Front Lines 2021 - 24 x 48 inches acrylic paint, acrylic polymer, styrofoam, plastic draining pipes, string, surgical masks



Tap The Line 2019 - 30 x 12 Inches - wooden rings, acrylic paint, acrylic polymer, bed sheet - on wood frame,



The Blood Line, 2022 - 30 x 40 inches - acrylic paint, acrylic polymer, red wire, metal clips, styrofoam, pacifier, bedsheet



Under Line 2014 - 30 x 24 Inches - acrylic paint, acrylic polymer, wire - on paper board



Broken Line - 2016 - 24 x 40 Inches - Mixed Media (acrylic paint, acrylic caulking) On Cotton Canvas



Hold The Line (Detail 2) 2016 - 30 x 26 Inches - Mixed Media On Canvas



Censored Line - 2016 - 67 x 67 Inches - (acrylic paint, acrylic caulking, burlap, bed sheet, cardboard, stickers) On Cotton Canvas



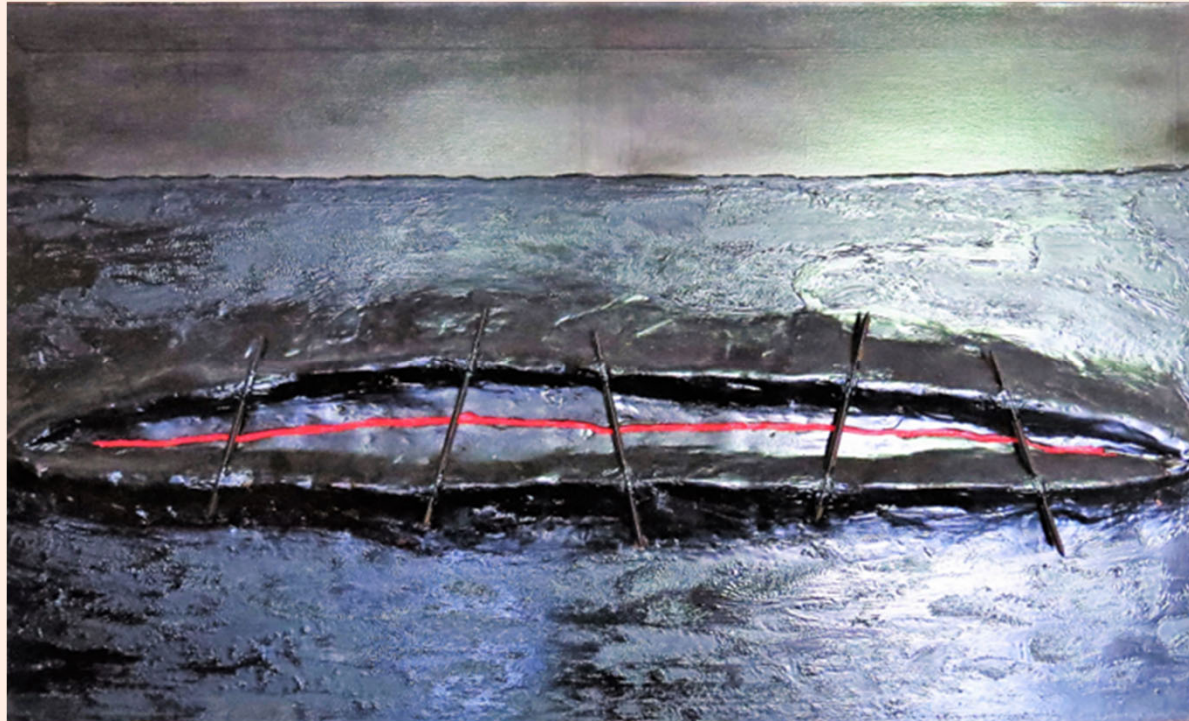
DEAD LINE, 2017, 48x24 Inches, acrylic paint, acrylic polymer, graphite wire, nails On Cotton Canvas



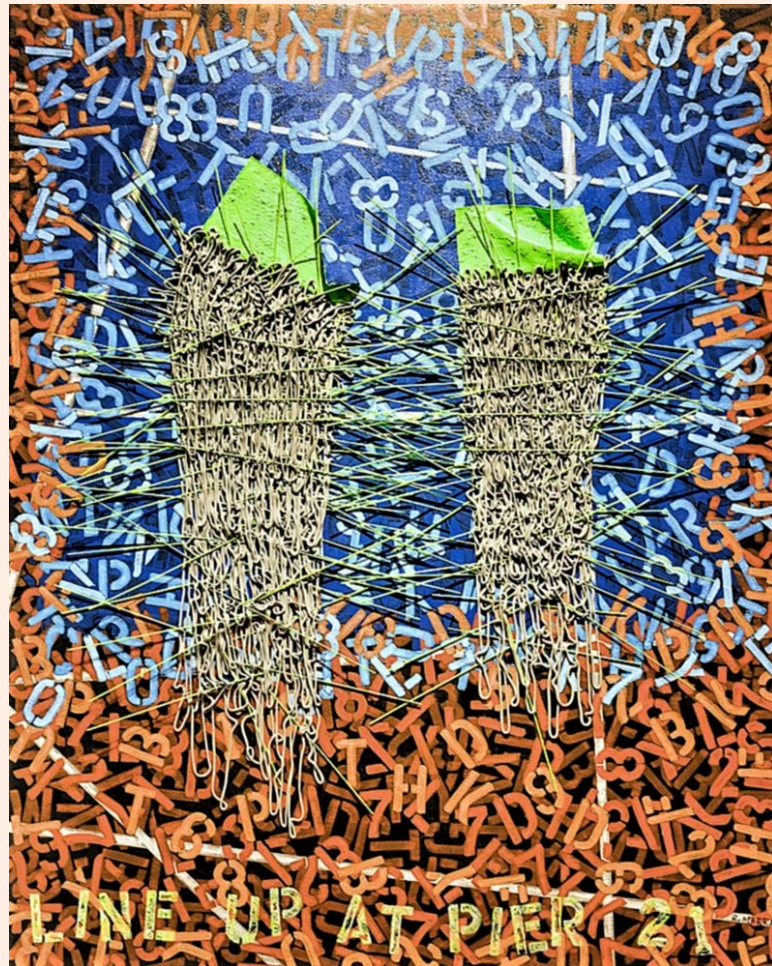
Sky Lines - 2018 -48 x 40 Inches, acrylic paint, acrylic polymer, graphite, string, plaster, wood on Cotton Canvas



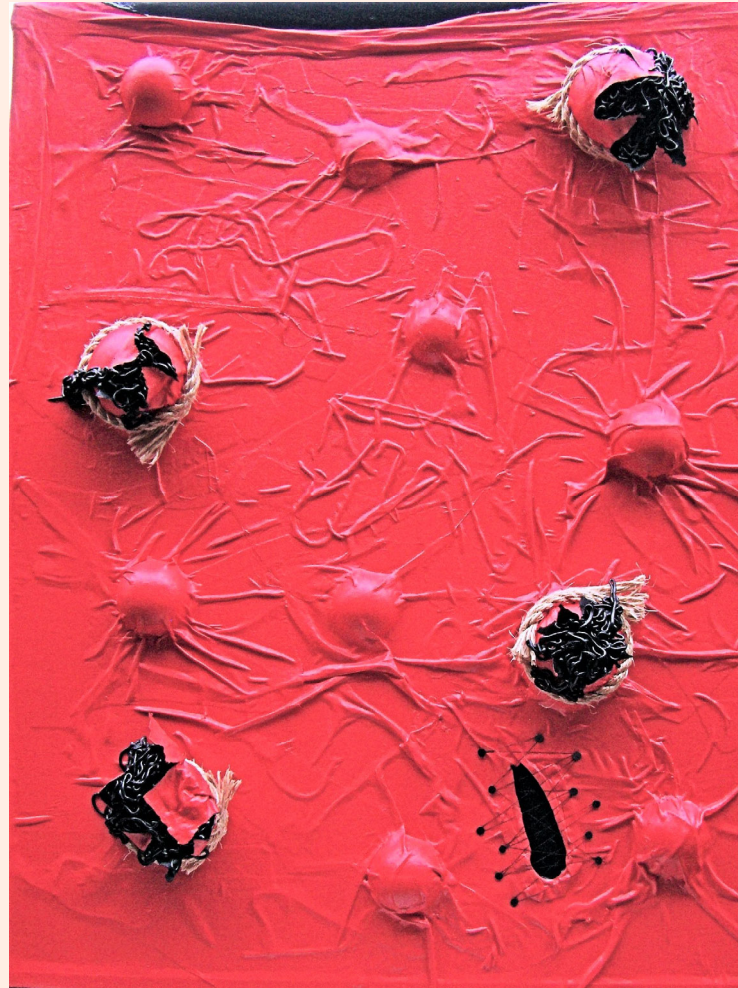
Over The Line - 2016 - 34 x24 Inches - acrylic Paint, acrylic polymer, bedsheet - on cotton canvas



Red Line 1999 - 40 x 24 Inches - tar, graphite, acrylic paint, wooden sticks, plaster - on cotton canvas



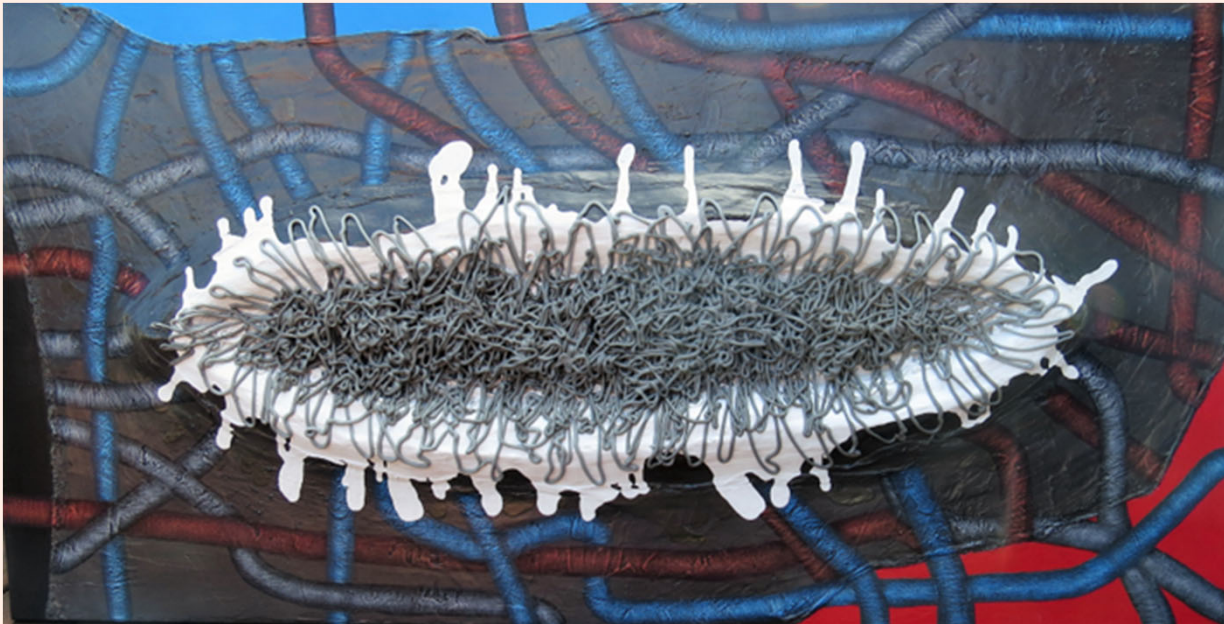
Line Up At Pier 21 (2018) - acrylic paint, acrylic polymer, thread, wood) On Cotton Canvas - 60 Inches x 42 Inches



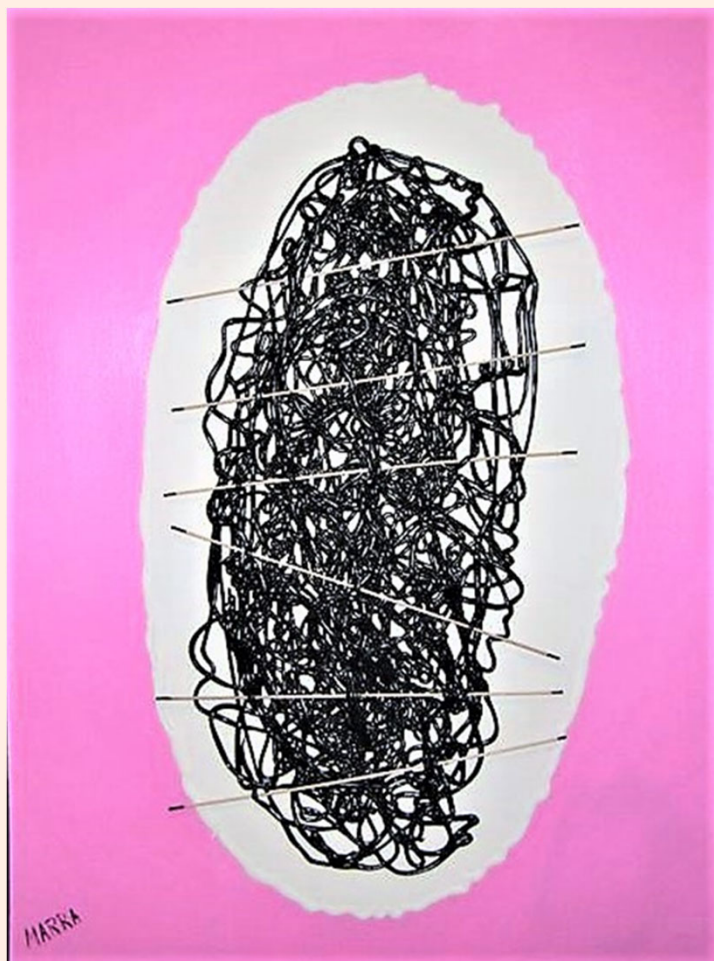
In Fila Per La Corona 2021 - 30 x 40 inches - acrylic paint, acrylic polymer, tacks, nylon string, rope, bed sheet



Break Line 2015, 40 x 30 Inches - acrylic paint, acrylic polymer, plaster, wooden sticks, graphite - on paper board



Converging Lines, 2016 - 60 x 30 Inches - acrylic paint, acrylic polymer, styrofoam, plaster on wooden table



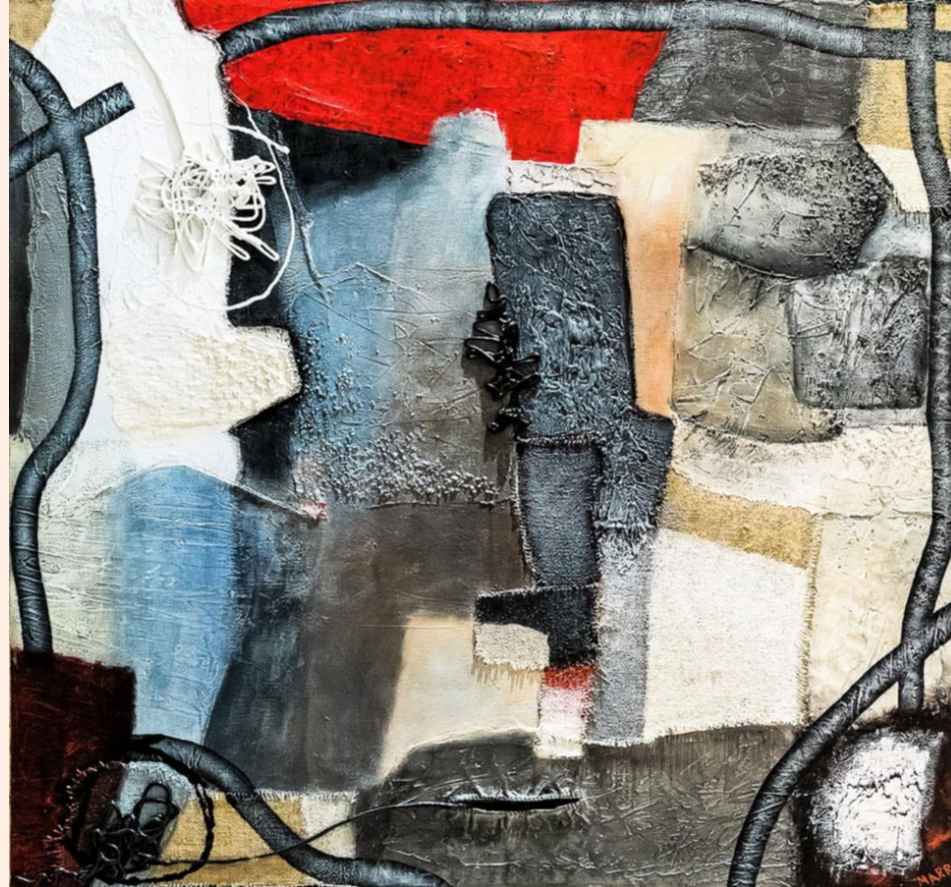
Spiked Line 2014 - 30 x 20 inches - acrylic paint, acrylic polymer, wooden sticks - on artist grade paper



Side Lines 2016 - 40 x 24 - plaster, acrylic paint, acrylic polymer, wire, burlap - on cotton canvas



Side Lines 2015, 40 x 30 Inches - acrylic paint, acrylic polymer, cotton thread, steel wire, graphite, plaster, burlap - on paper board



Border Line 2015-47 x 44 Inches-acrylic paint, acrylic polymer, burlap, bed sheet, plaster, stones, sand, gauze-on cotton canvas 2



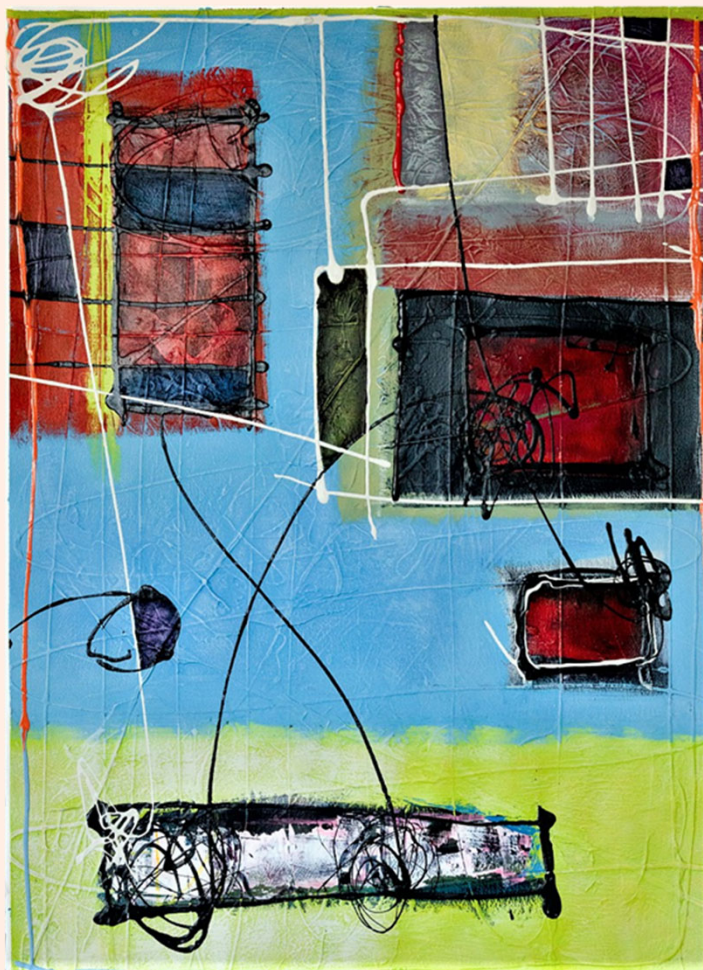
Crossing The Line(2) - 2014 - 30 x 28 Inches - Mixed Media



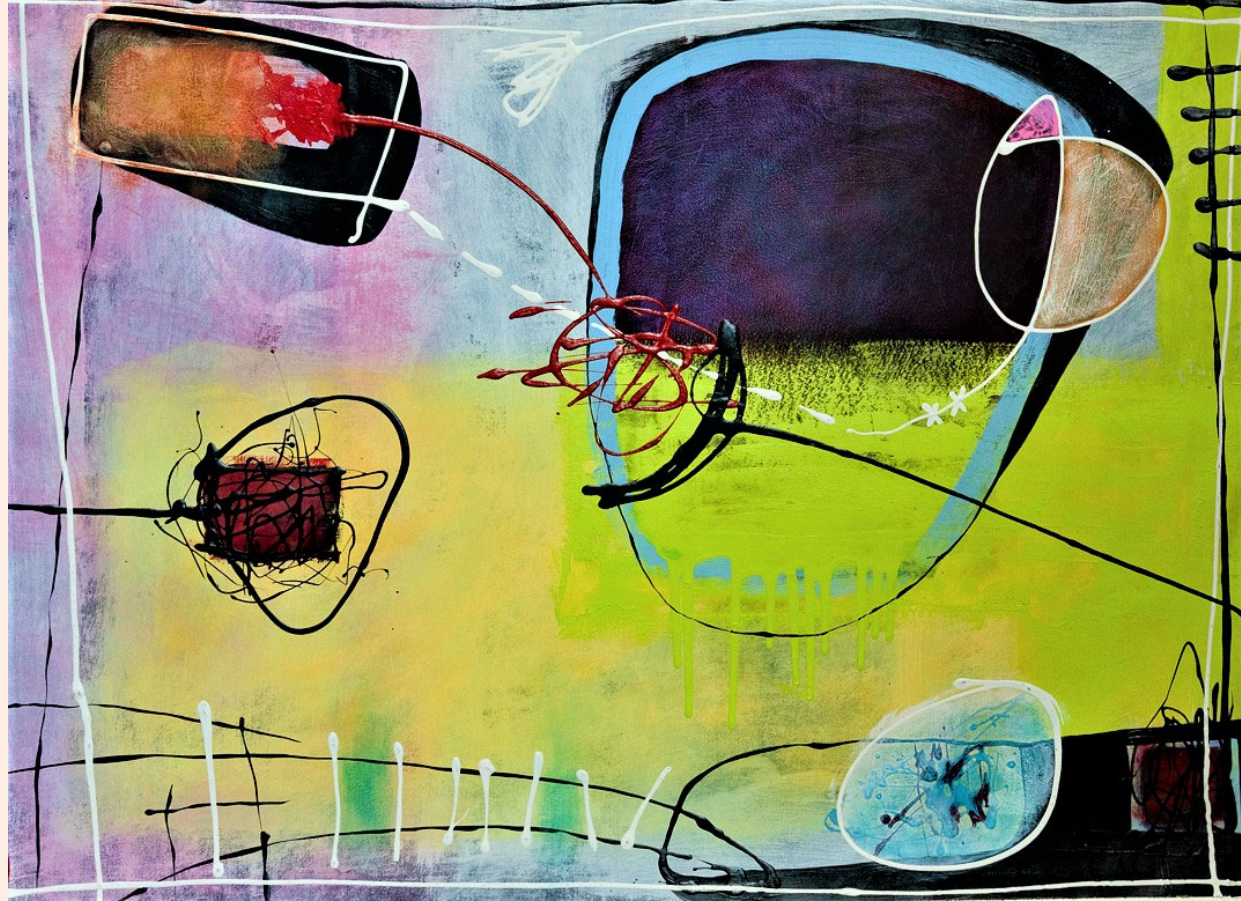
Stutter Lines, 2014 - 5 x 4 ft. - acrylic paint, burlap, bedsheet, acrylic polymer, cardboard, glues



L7 - 2006 - 40 x 26 Inches - Acrylic On Artist Grade Paper



L12 - 2013 - 30 x 24 Inches - Acrylic On Artist Grade Paper



L10 - 2013 - 30 x 24 Inches - Acrylic On Artist Grade Paper



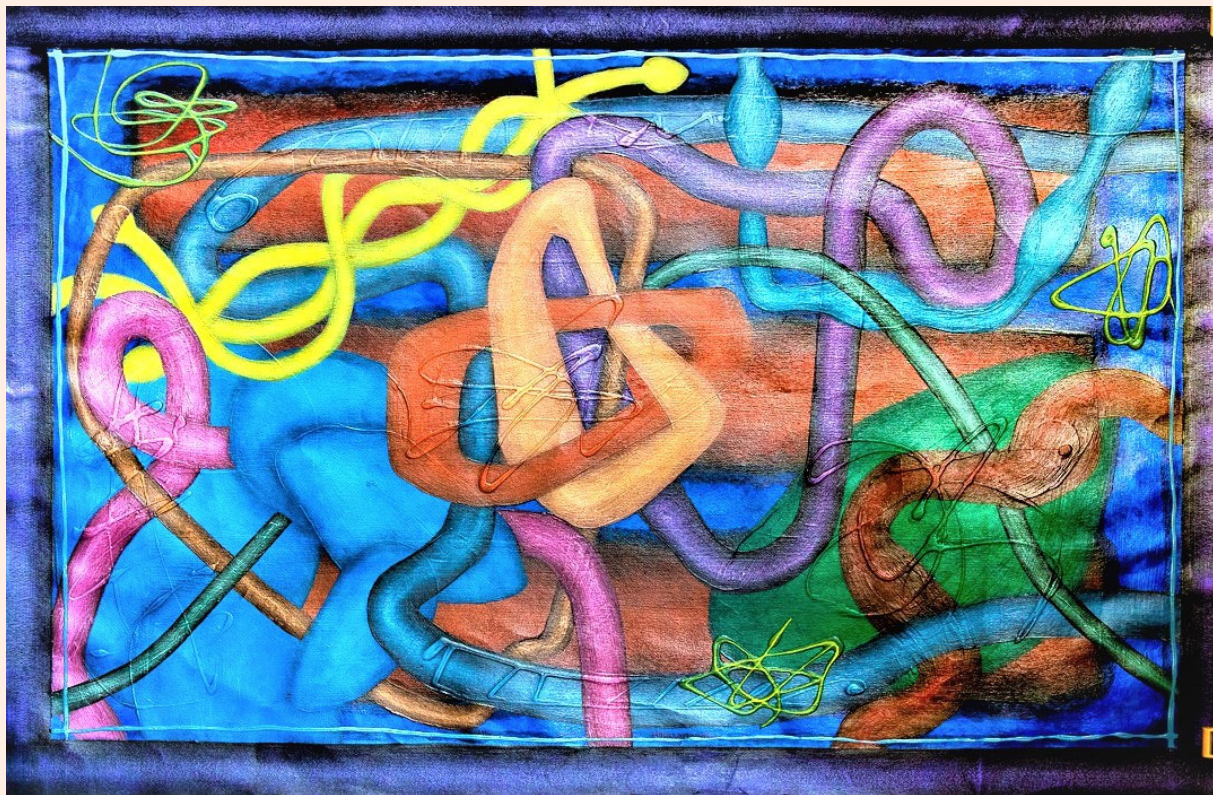
L3 - 2006 - 40 x 26 Inches - Acrylic On Artist Grade Paper



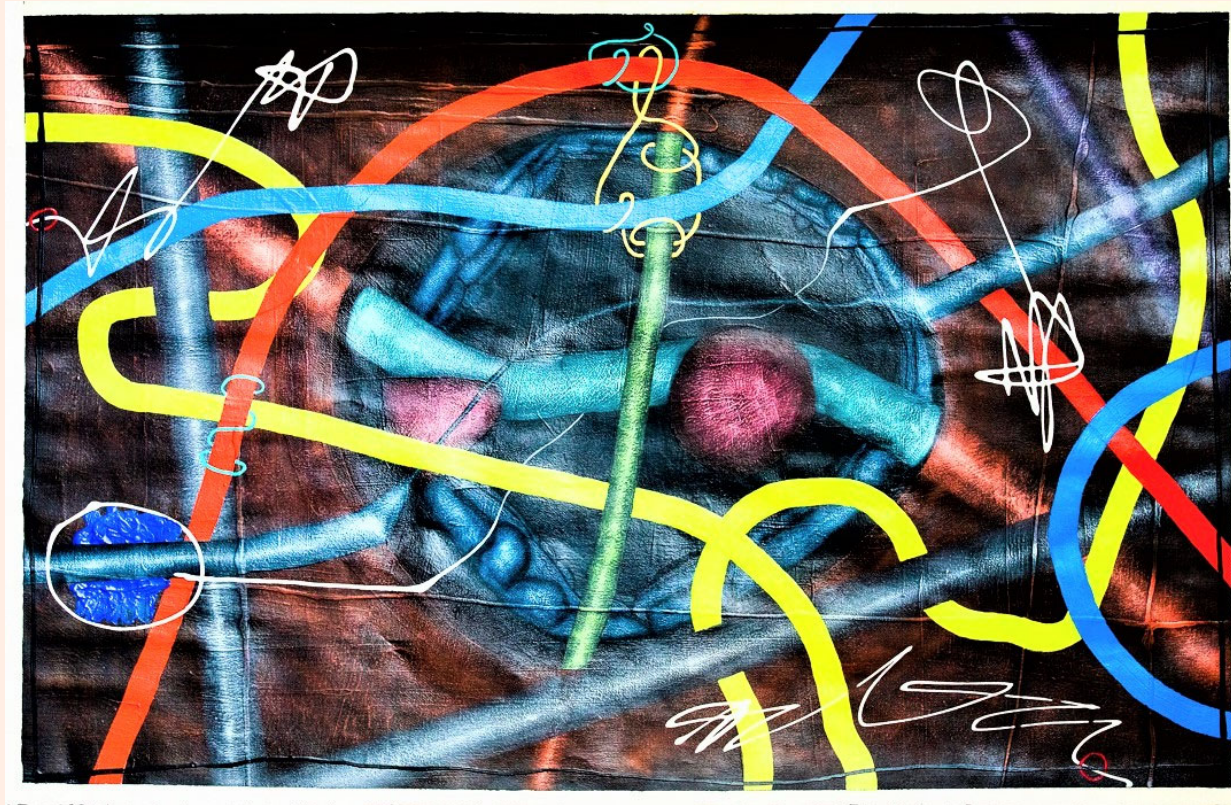
L6 - 2006 - 40 x 26 Inches - Acrylic On Artist Grade Paper



L9- 2006 - 32 x 24 Inches - Acrylic On Artist Grade Paper



L2 - 2006 - 40 x 26 Inches - Acrylic On Artist Grade Paper



L2 - 2006 - 40 x 26 Inches - Acrylic On Artist Grade Paper



L1 - 2006 - 40 x 26 Inches - Acrylic On Artist Grade Paper



L5 - 2006 - 40 x 26 Inches - Acrylic On Artist Grade Paper



L8- 2006 - 36 x 24 Inches - Acrylic On Artist Grade Paper



L11 - 2013 - 30 x 24 - Acrylic On Artist Grade Paper

Hold The Line

In his book titled 'On Modern Art' (1948) **Paul Klee asserted that, of the 3 formal factors (line, tonal value and colour) the line was the most limited.** According to him; "line is solely characterized by measurement, tone is characterized by weight and measurement and colour is characterized by quality, weight and measurement". **My curiosity led me to think about the merit of this** statement and to eventually pursue creative initiatives to determine whether the line was, in fact, as limited as he described.

Consequently, the line became the central focus of my creative endeavors. I made efforts to create lines that bore the weight and colour that Klee asserted were not there. My first works were abstract and painted with acrylic paint on paper. Within them, I magnified the line, fattened it, added texture, colour and variable tones, but soon after I shifted away from the bloated finite lines I was rendering. In time, I began moving towards a more sculptural and conceptual approach which focused on the expression of my idea of an infinite line. **A proliferating line that folds onto and into itself without end**, filling and transforming the two dimensional space it progressively occupies. The volume that the expanding dense mass I created in my work offered varied tonal weights as well as colour quality. In part, this was the result of the light, shadows and colour that the coiled mass absorbed from the atmosphere around it. Whether my lines were magnified and finite or infinitely proliferating I found that they could convey more than simply measurement.

I also began going beyond aesthetics and into the realm of human experience. Investigating the line's psychological role and function began to further inform my work. One needs to look no further than language to find evidence of the important role it has, for example; hold the line, in line, out of line, over the line, front of the line, back of the line, shoreline, skyline, underline, deadline, toe the line, sideline, borderline, crossing the line, and more. Our adopted ideas in relation to the line play a major role in the development, coordination and regulation of our lives as well as our surrounding world. Our inherent sense of the line and its applications provides the same functions in life as it does in art. In part, it has contributed to our ability to measure, organize and navigate through our universe in a manner that assists us in being self - determinant within it. Ironically, the experienced freedom from being self-determined and confident navigators in our world eventually becomes compromised and limited. The rules associated to organization, measurement and order that lines assist in creating require parameters that also introduce limits and restrictions.

Artistic expression in all its forms seems to be the most effective way to capture the human spirit and imagination. Art is an extension of all the things that it sets out to better understand or represent. It is in constant evolution and is as fundamentally unstable as the world it attempts to reflect.

Individually or as a group, whether celebrating life or contending with one's "mortal coil", self-expression has always been a fundamental part of the human narrative. Art has borne witness to a chaotic universal landscape that frequently shifts, as do those that populate it as they search for stable and predictable formulas to operate effectively within. The open ended nature of art embodies the idea of **an infinite line**. It reminds its audience that the human story is open ended and is constructed with a string of lives that are interwoven and tethered together over time and experience. As such, the infinite line is an apt metaphor for our collective and personal existence. When interpreted in this manner it becomes symbolic of not only the collective human journey but also of **the creative drives that motivate and shape the journey's progress**. Beginning from an internal spark that energizes such a line forward towards its full expression, to the countless narratives and creative projects that are generated as a result of it.

My artwork directs its lenses towards the underlying synergic mechanisms of this expressive journey. It unveils and brings forth what pre-exists unseen beneath the skin of the canvas and simultaneously tracks it onto the surface.

≈ Searching For an Infinite Line ≈

If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as

it is, Infinite”

William Blake

It is understood that a line has a beginning which can be called point A. As point A is stretched in a desired direction a body is formed, this being the line itself. Point A is ultimately stretched towards a distant point B, which is where **the line generally ends. The artist Paul Klee stated that “this is a dot that went for a walk”. The idea of an infinite line implies that there is no ending.** Point B does not exist.

The point A of my infinite line is meant to suggest the pure source, the underlying spark which gives motivation and life to self-expression. The extension of A is the coiling line evolving from beneath the canvas surface. As it evolves, the infinite line proceeds to divide itself into multiple lines which materialize on the surface—footprints that it will leave behind once it inevitably makes its way forward. The body of the proliferating line, endlessly folding and unfolding into itself, inevitably becomes a record of its journey. **It is an expression, as well as a reflection of an evolving narrative.**

Breaking through the canvas skin the line goes on to impact all that exists on the surface, and in turn becomes impacted by everything it encounters there. As a result of this interactive exchange, all parts are transformed into something different, something new. The reality of existing on a two dimensional surface sets in as disparate lines and surface matter strive towards synthesis on a space they must now share and divide. All parts are simultaneously independent, and yet, inter-dependent. This is similar the open-ended and unsteady relationship that one is constrained to establish with the surrounding universe. In effect, due to the absence of B, those viewing my work are invited to witness and participate in, the unremitting and transformative relationship between what emerges from below the surface skin and what pre-exists upon it. This is suggestive of a dynamic exchange that occurs between **the self, the world and the rest of those who inhabit it.**

My aim is not in producing a finished static work of art, but art that is unresolved, moving and seething with the creative energies that lie beneath the canvas as well as under the skin of both artist and audience. As the coiled biomorphic-like mass emerges from underneath, it appears to strive towards something that remains nebulous and inconclusive. No aesthetic synthesis or resolution is possible and no stability is ever truly achieved. **The line’s ending point is absent** and as a result of this an aesthetic conclusion, a completed **picture is unattainable.**

The infinite line as I describe it challenges the conventional aesthetic and psychological functions of the line as a whole. The nature of the infinite line is to embody life, growth, death and rebirth simultaneously. Its constant evolution is made possible by the dismantling of the very things it has a hand in creating; beliefs, an idea, an action, a narrative—a painting replaced by another, then another. These are **all temporary lines that eventually give way to other lines**. On one hand, the infinite line facilitates new possibilities and opportunities which accommodate personal as well as collective journeys. Journeys inspired by needs and desires. On the other hand, in a dialectical fashion, it rebels and eventually destroys what it creates once the creation becomes so fixed that it limits progressive change; synthesis, antithesis, thesis, synthesis and so on. **This dynamic is temporarily frozen and, in effect, “caught in the act” on the surface of my paintings. As a result of this**, the apparent balance of my work, in all its parts, appears as though bullied towards become destabilized by what is emerging from its depths. Ironically, what has proliferated from the below the canvas simultaneously plays a fundamental role in the composition it threatens to displace.

This is similar to when a **revolutionary idea threatens to unhinge the world** to which it is introduced—the idea eventually settles into the same world that it is a product of and eventually, will likely become unhinged itself as soon as another provocative idea emerges to take its place.

The infinite line can never truly be applied to determine a definitive measure of people, places or things as the conventional line often is. Without discrimination or exclusion, the infinite line carries within it the promise of new beginnings but it never provides an answer to the question, to what end? Even though it plays a role in establishing temporary moments of reassuring clarity and order, its unfixing nature, as well as its need to evolve, generates a constant shifting and chaos that cannot offer absolutes or stable conclusions. Evidence of an ever-present infinite line can be tracked through the arts in their efforts to understand the human stain or to pin down all the possibilities that are **nestled in the husks of infinite tomorrow’s. Even so, its intrinsic characteristics render it largely ineffable**, unpredictable and free.



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