

HENRY FINKELSTEIN

PAINTINGS

VALLEY HOUSE GALLERY & SCULPTURE GARDEN

DALLAS, TEXAS



*The ability to simplify means to
eliminate the unnecessary so that
the necessary may speak*

- Hans Hofmann



1. *The Mill at Angoin*, 2025. Oil on canvas, 48 x 50 inches

HENRY FINKELSTEIN: PATHS AND DESTINATIONS

by John Goodrich

It is often said that the destination is nothing, the road is all. While the phrase may seem a little shop-worn these days, its relevance endures. Ralph Waldo Emerson, among many notables, argued, in so many words, that growth and experience are more valuable than results. Updating the maxim in 1964, Jasper Johns jotted into a sketchbook his artist's version: "Take an object / Do something to it / Do something else to it. [Repeat.]". What purer tribute to attentive wandering? Of course, destinations have their virtues, too. Re-reading Picasso's pithy statement, "I do not seek, I find," we're reminded of the remarkable lifework of a highly goal-oriented genius, one who reflexively imposed his own purposes on everything in view. A wanderer? Picasso was more like a hunter.

There's plenty of middle ground, fortunately, between wandering and hunting. Every capable painter — even one pursuing formal goals — knows that the artist must proceed by listening to nature rather than talking at nature; only then can its truths be reconstituted in paint. Over the decades, the painter Henry Finkelstein has proved himself to be not only a faithful observer,

but a superb composer as well. As his colleagues attest, the artist possesses an unusual mixture of inquisitiveness, rebelliousness and erudition. I think of him as that rare expressionist chastened by the very demands of painting. Not coincidentally, Finkelstein is a first-rate colorist keenly aware of the (often diverging) discipline of drawing. While his paintings reflect a broad knowledge of history, it's the workings of sunlight, personally experienced, that organize his perceptions, which in turn fuel his remaking of nature.

For the paintings in this exhibition, the sunlight happens to be that of Burgundy, France, where the artist has worked for the past two summers. As is his habit, he painted them under only natural light, and largely onsite, often carefully scaling them up from smaller drawings. The paintings, almost all of them landscapes produced in 2024 and 2025, favor a familiar palette of pinks, lavenders, and cooler versions of chartreuse, with shades that are never merely dark, but hum as absorbent purple-browns or deep greens. Close inspection reveals that most were painted over a pinkish ochre ground that occasionally shows through

the brushy overlayings of color. Formally they recall the deliberateness of Cézanne, but shot through with another kind of energy — something more like Soutine's, given their restless surfaces.

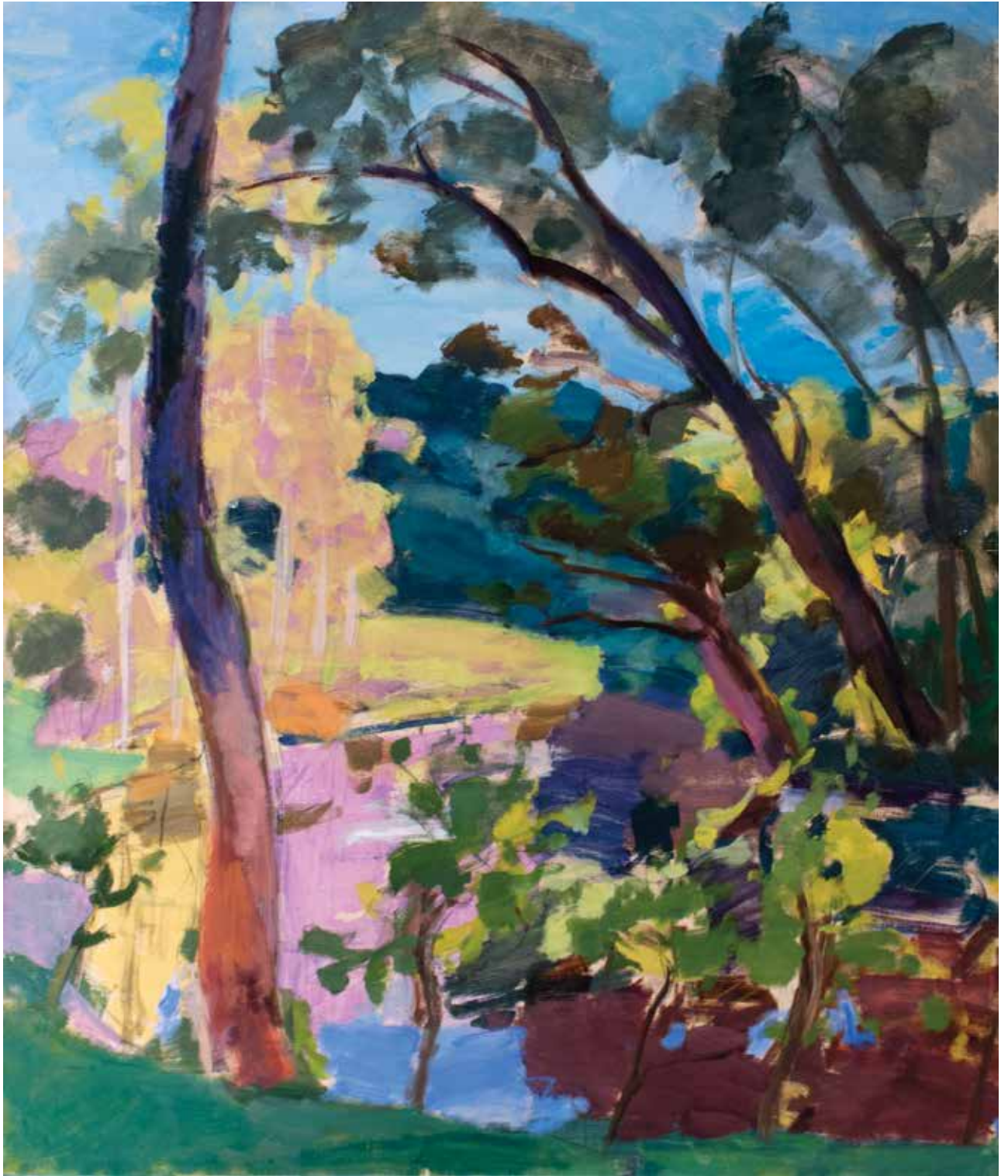
In a painting like "Houses at Besanceuil," every element is made to matter. That is to say, the eye arrives at each object in its own particular time. Dominating the composition, the shadowed façade of a house — wedge-shaped in its drive into the depths — flows powerfully towards the painting's center, its passage spelled out by the repeated verticals of cypresses. The artist's colors assign a particular character, a visual weighting, to each instance of light. Earthy oranges establish the broad warmth of the façade, lit by the angling sun's rays, while a brilliant reddish-white note locates a small, squat tower at the building's distant corner; receiving the full force of the sun, the tower sounds the painting's brightest point. A smaller house, half shadowed, resides at the painting's right edge. Here, sunlight palpably models its bulk, its pale orange wall turning in shadow to a deep, absorbent sienna, and its terracotta hued roof to a dark warm purple. In a canyon of space between the two structures, a piling of colors — rich, dark ochre-browns, deep teal, and pale cerulean hills in the distance that look like water — sound a new zone, in a new formation of light. Startlingly, the distant cerulean echoes the hue of a bush at the base of the large façade, but thanks to underlying pigments, each occupies space in a totally different way — here, limpidly pale, there, richly remote. The artist obviously knows how to regulate space with linear perspective, but in this world it is sunlight, transcribed into charges of color, that define and animate. Finkelstein recalls how a curious Frenchwoman, passing by the artist at work one day, exclaimed, "La couleur gonfle les volumes." (The color inflates the volumes.) And indeed, Finkelstein's colors do erupt, but according to a lyrical, unfixed plan. In a 2010 interview, the artist described the progression of a painting this way: "...if I'm not continuing to build on

it, discovering new things within the initial intention, I'm taking away from it." One of the artist's favorite painters is Bonnard, and in Finkelstein's paintings one detects echoes of the French master's circuitous architecture of sensations.

In "View from Besanceuil," at 48 x 60 inches the exhibition's largest painting, one senses, again, the rhythmic releasing of events, from large to small. The artist evidently placed himself at the foot of a great, rounding hill, so that everything — fields, houses, stone walls, and their thin, racing shadows — measures out the point-by-point ascent to the hill's crest. Trees are of two types: robust puffballs that, half lit and half shaded, anchor points about the slope, and two spindly poplars, widely spaced, rising to barely pierce the arc of the hill. In the mid-distance, the poplars play intimately on our impression of the scene, spanning the long, articulated journey between eye level and crest, between what's below our eye and what's above. It's not too much to say that for a moment the cosmic seems proximate; one feels the orb of the earth, its curvature spelled out in the racing diagonals of shadows. It's as if the aspirations of Abstract-Expressionism, with the sweeping movements and enveloping space, have taken representational guise.

The same hill appears in "Willow II," but in an entirely different role: centrally placed and almost occluded by the spreading canopy of a foreground tree. Still we feel the same fierce interaction between light and space. The tree, a ball of broken sections of lit and shaded leaves, expands physically across the painting's center, testing the tight, enclosing rim of the hill beyond. Once more, large forces — descending sunlight, the light-volumizing tree, the hill's restraining contour — counter smaller inflections: the notes of yellow green grass and the deep blue shadows that anchor the launching-point of the tree.

In another notable painting, "Church at Lancharre," the main subject looms, subdued in hue, yet crystalline in



2. *Pond at Pommerit*, 2023. Oil on canvas, 56 x 48 inches, Private Collection



3. *Garden in Sercy*, 2024. Oil on canvas, 46 x 46 inches

its geometry. Twin towering structures — a tree at left, a building (a rectory?) at right — bracket the church's tower, while the dense, textured green at the horizon counters its height.

"It's against my religion to think of color divorced from drawing," the artist disclosed in a recent conversation. And indeed, these paintings are gestures in light; objects acquire their identities, not through depiction of details, but through the presence shaping powers of brush strokes of color. As the artist told the painter Bill Scott in a 2013 interview, "I'm looking for things that can be expressed only through visual means, in the same way that a composer would strive to convey that which requires sound and time to reach an audience."

Henry Finkelstein's paintings do, in fact, require time to fully absorb. They reward, however, every moment of looking. Is the artist a wanderer or a hunter? Standing in front of the paintings, such distinctions hardly matter. Suffice it to say we experience the artist's inspired observations, guided at every point by nature, and in turn guiding his pursuit of painting's possibilities. Sometimes, means and ends are naturally, inextricably joined.

John Goodrich is a painter, writer, and teacher who lives in the NYC area. His reviews and essays have appeared in *Review*, *The New York Sun*, *Artcritical*, *Hyperallergic*, *The Brooklyn Rail* and many other publications.

4. *Under a Walnut Tree, St. Alvere*, 2022. Oil on canvas, 50 x 58 inches, Private Collection





5. *St. Alvere Still Life*, 2022. Oil on canvas, 42 x 48 inches, Private Collection



6. *Willow and Pink Barn*, 2025. Oil on canvas, 48 x 52 inches



7. *View from Besanceuil*, 2025. Oil on canvas, 48 x 60 inches



8. *Willow in Sercy*, 2024. Oil on canvas, 48 x 57 inches

9. *Pond at Pommerit II*, 2023. Oil on canvas, 48 x 50 inches, Private Collection

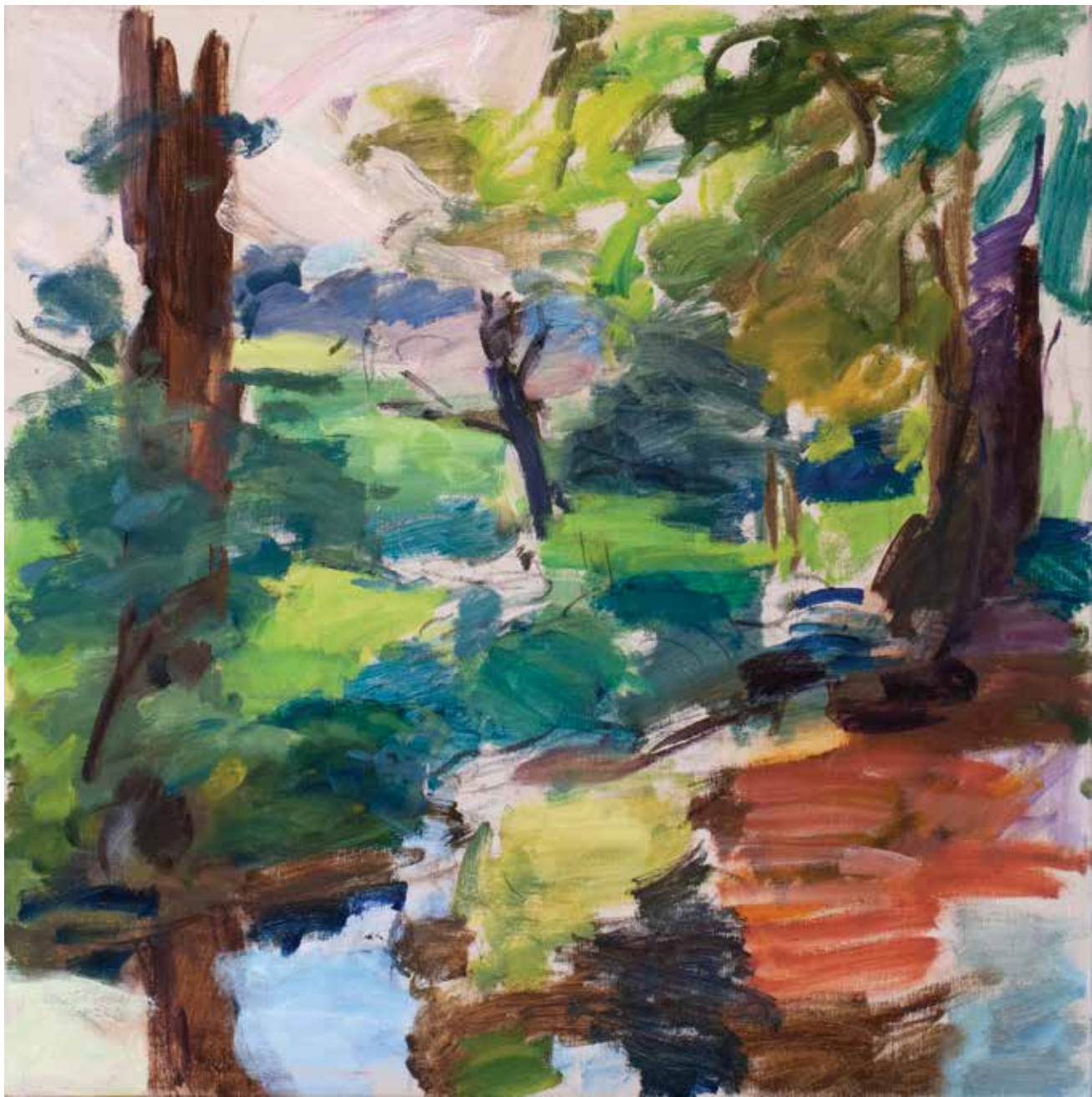




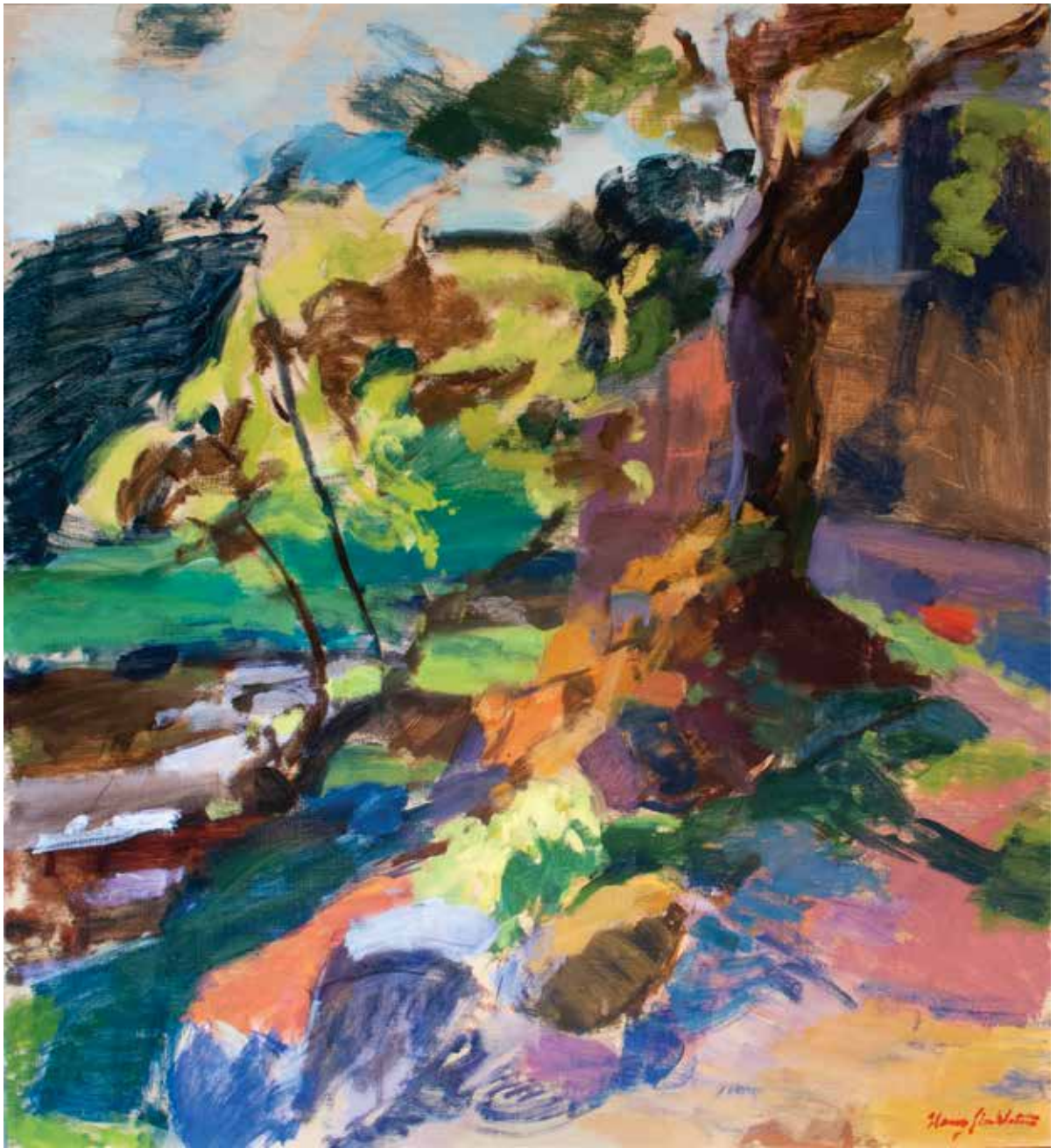
10. *Mme. DeMiranda's House*, 2024. Oil on canvas, 48 x 54 inches



11. *Mme. DeMiranda's Garden*, 2024. Oil on canvas, 44 x 48 inches



12. *Pond at Bois Brehan*, 2017. Oil on canvas, 32 x 32 inches



13. *The Mill at Pommerit*, 2023. Oil on canvas, 50 x 46 inches, Private Collection



14. *Apple Tree by a Pond*, 2021. Oil on canvas, 48 x 57 inches, Private Collection

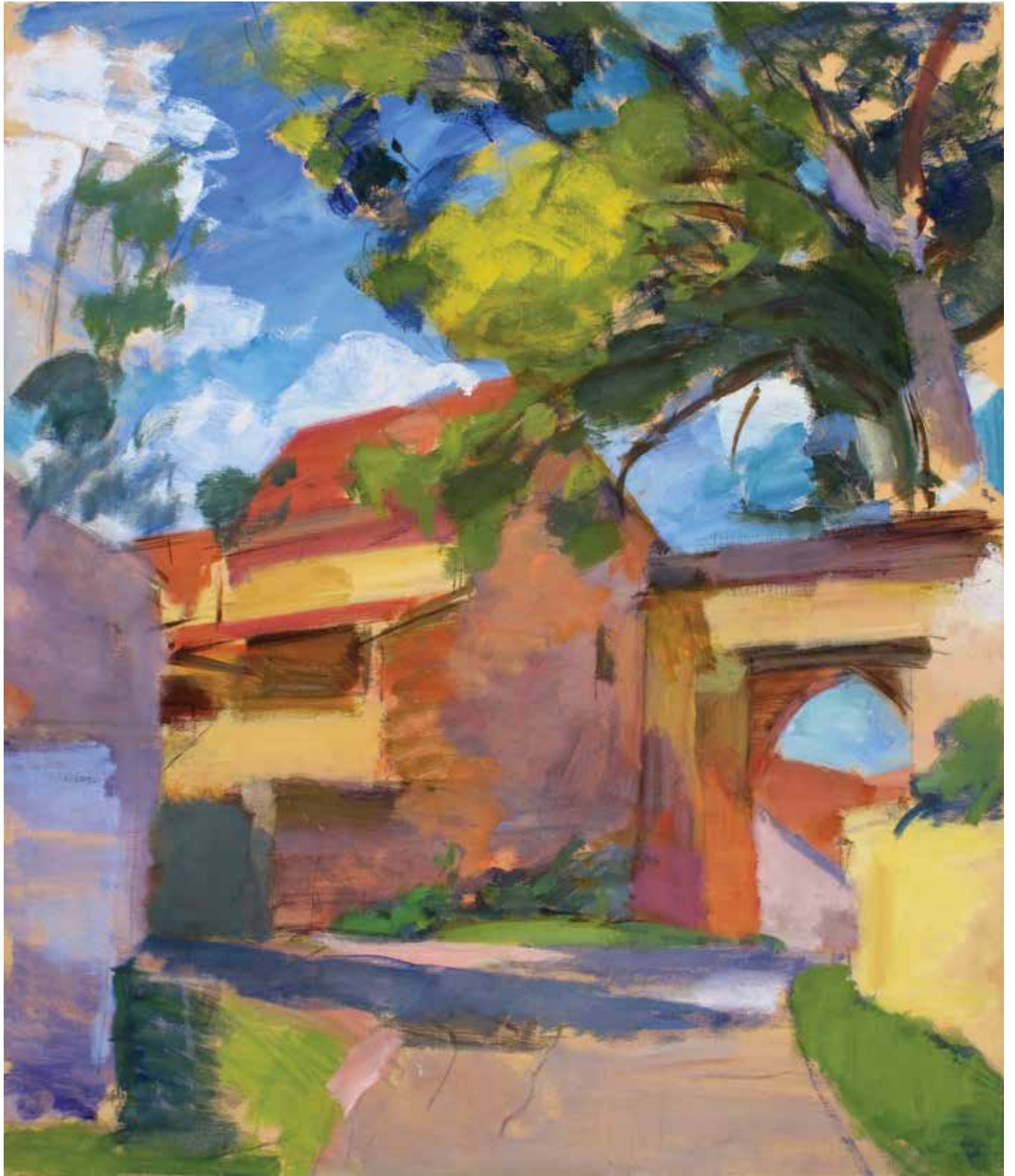


15. *Ruin by a Churchyard*, 2023. Oil on canvas, 42 x 50 inches, Private Collection

16. *Willow II*, 2024. Oil on canvas, 44 x 46 inches



17. *The Arch at Lancharre*, 2024. Oil on canvas, 47 x 40 inches





18. *House at Besanceuil II*, 2025. Oil on canvas, 44 x 54 inches



19. *Plane Trees at Sercy*, 2025. Oil on canvas, 42 x 46 inches

20. *Two Oak Trees, Gray Day*, 2025. Oil on canvas, 46 x 46 inches



21. *Terraced Gardens at Besanceuil*, 2024. Oil on canvas, 48 x 56 inches





22. *View from Wright Hill Road*, 2020. Oil on canvas, 46 x 50 inches, Private Collection



23. *Along the Trieux*, 2023. Oil on canvas, 48 x 54 inches, Private Collection



24. *House at Besanceuil*, 2024. Oil on canvas, 42 x 51 inches



25. *Still Life with Green Book*, 2017. Oil on canvas, 42 x 48 inches, Private Collection

26. *Pond at Savigny sur Grosne*, 2025. Oil on canvas, 60 x 44 inches





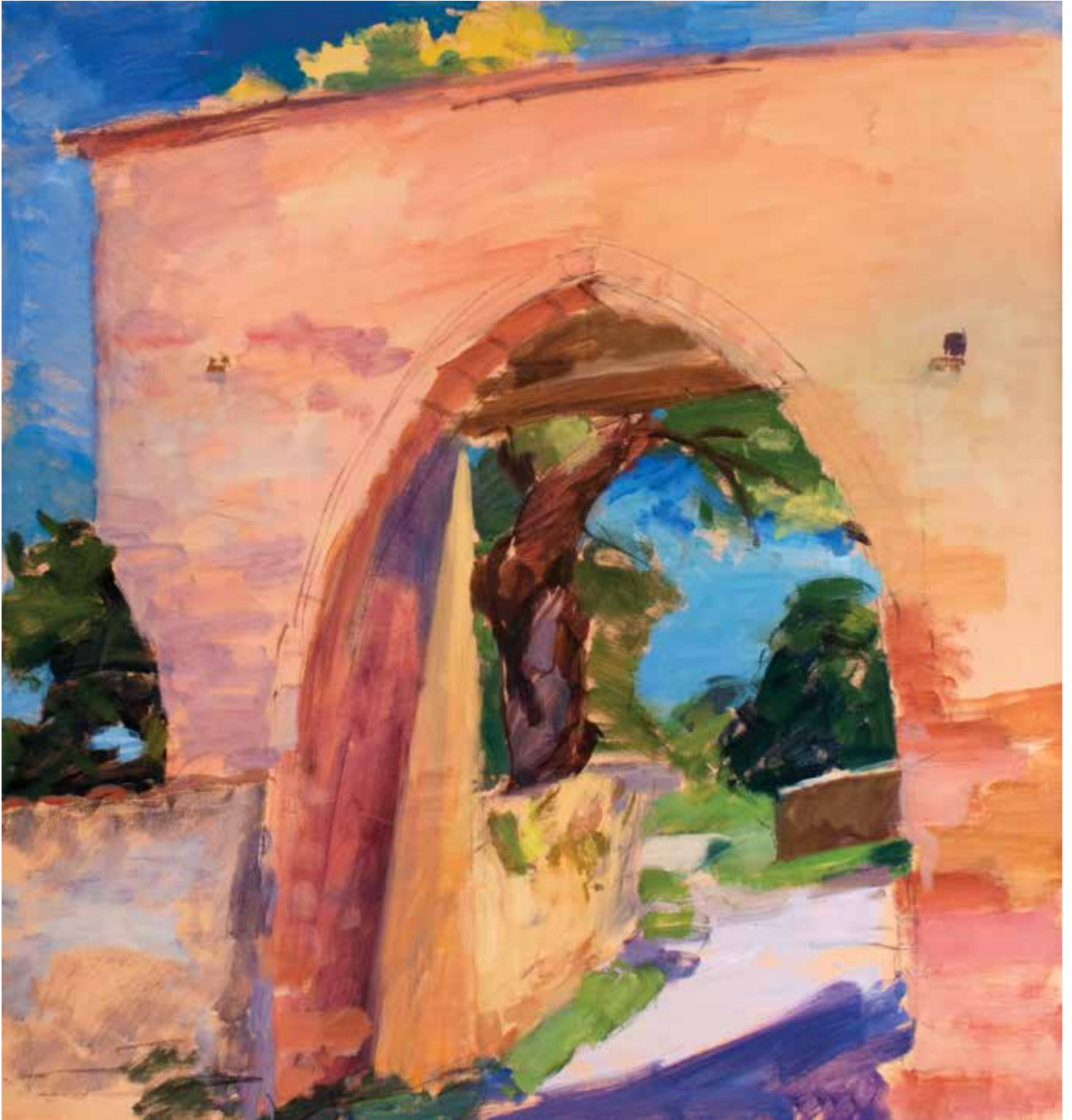
27. *Houses at La Chapelle sous Brancion*, 2024. Oil on canvas, 42 x 52 inches



28. *Willow III*, 2025. Oil on canvas, 40 x 50 inches



29. *Blue Still Life*, 2022. Oil on canvas, 52 x 48 inches, Private Collection



30. *The Arch at Lancharre II*, 2024. Oil on canvas, 46 x 44 inches

31. *The Church at Lancharre*, 2024. Oil on canvas, 50 x 48 inches



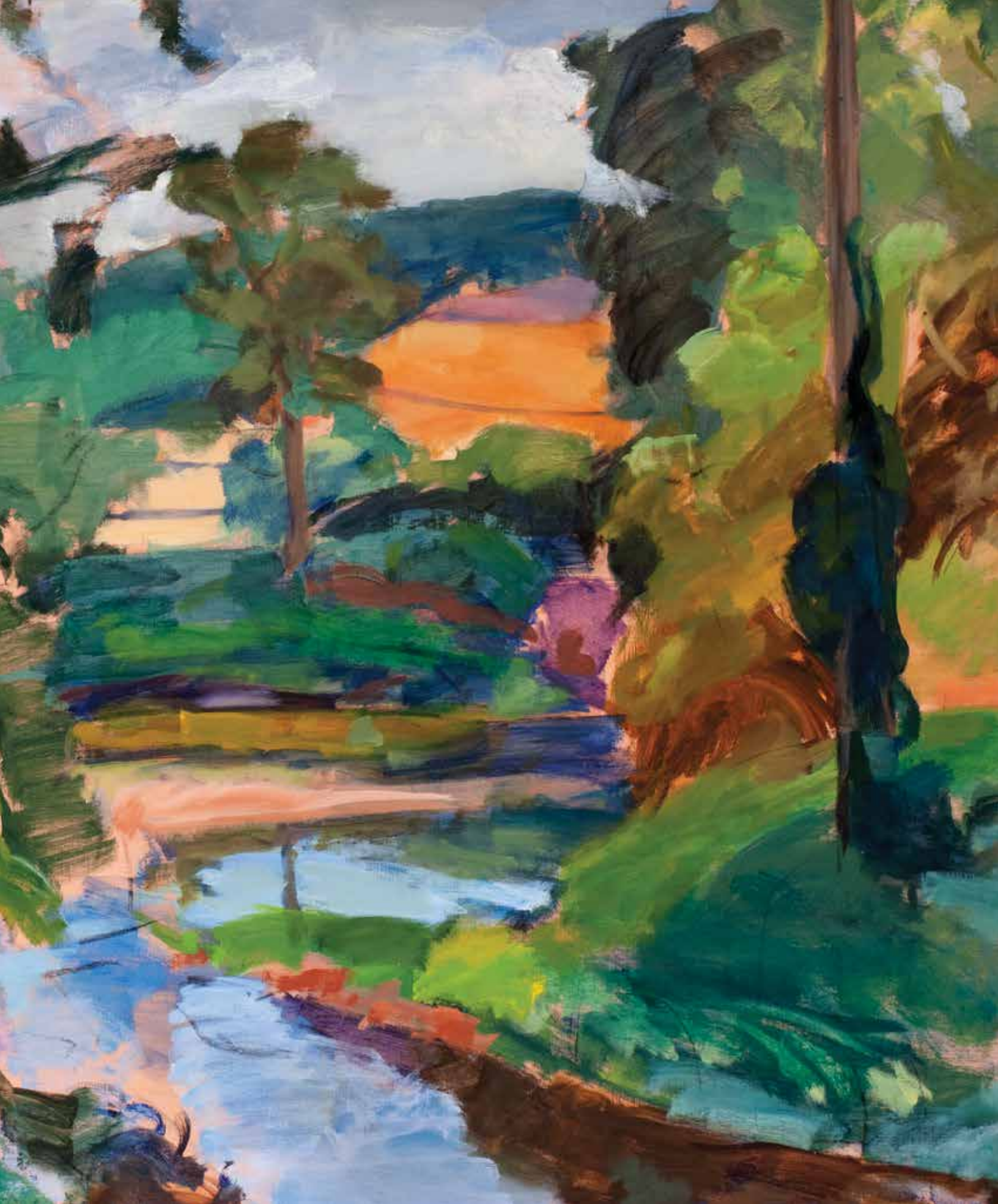
32. *Houses at Besanceuil*, 2025. Oil on canvas, 46 x 54 inches





Henry Finkelstein is the son of the New York painters Gretna Campbell and Louis Finkelstein. He began painting at an early age. At 12, his family moved to Aix en Provence. After visiting a museum in Albi dedicated to Toulouse Lautrec he became passionate about the use of color, which continues to be central to his work. He went on to study at Cooper Union and later at the Yale Graduate School of Art primarily studying with artists of the Abstract Expressionist generation. In 1983-84 he lived in Italy on a Fulbright Grant. He began teaching at the Hartford Art School in 1984 and has taught at many schools since then including the Pratt Institute, the New York Studio School, The National Academy of Design, The New York School of the Arts, and the Art Students League of New York. In 1996 he was elected as a National Academician. He has exhibited at the Valley House Gallery in Dallas, TX for the past 25 years. He has also shown at Kraaushaar Gallery in New York and the Portland Museum of Art in Maine, along with other galleries throughout the United States and France.

He currently divides his time between West Cornwall, CT and France with his wife Pamela and their dog Theo. Their daughter Lucia works and resides in Brooklyn, NY.





This catalogue is published on
the occasion of the exhibition of
Henry Finkelstein, Paintings
April 25 - May 23, 2026

Valley House Gallery & Sculpture Garden
6616 Spring Valley Road
Dallas, Texas 75254
Tel 972 239 2441
www.ValleyHouse.com

Cover: *Houses at Besanceuil*, 2025, detail
Back: *The Mill at Angoin*, 2025, detail
Photo of Henry Finkelstein: Pamela Silver
Design: Elise Ho
Printing: Jayroe Printing
ISBN 978-1-879154-72-8
© Henry Finkelstein