GROSSO MODO:

The Fine Art of Transgression

A Philosophical Essay as a Means of Neoabstract Realism

Yellow Composition, 2026 · Plate 23

33 PAINTINGS · FIVE PILLARS · THREE MOVEMENTS

GROSSO MODO

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A Philosophical Essay as a Means of Neoabstract Realism

THALES CASTRO

GROSSO MODO: The Fine Art of Transgression

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eBook ISBN: 979-8-90473-615-6
Paperback ISBN: 979-8-90473-616-3
Hardcover ISBN: 979-8-90473-617-0

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Works were created in 2025 and 2026. Dimensions are not stated; all images are reproduced from photographs of the original works.

First edition, 2026.

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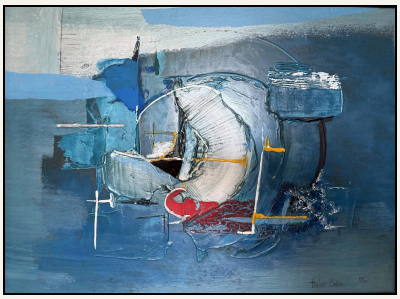
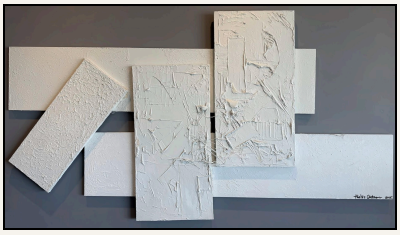


PG 01 *Embryo Lucidity*

PG 02 *Carnival Festivities*

PG 03 *Oriental Silver*



PG 04 *East-West Fragmentations*

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THE COLLECTION · PART ONE

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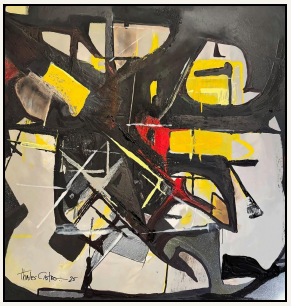

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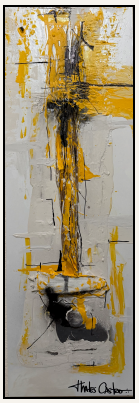

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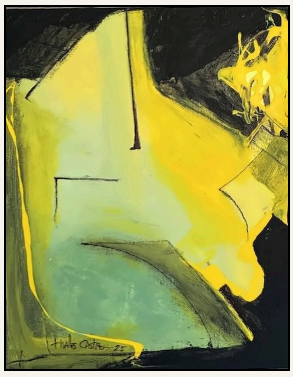

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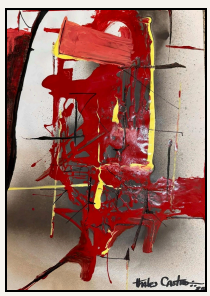

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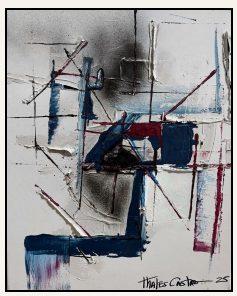

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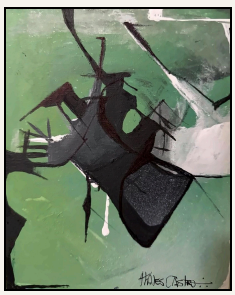

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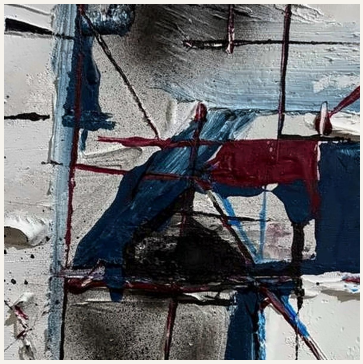
SURFACES & MEDIA

"Canvas, drywall, wooden frame, and paper each respond with their own temperament, as if the scenario were offering a succession of thresholds."

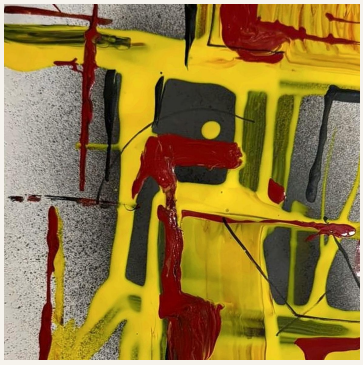
FOUND KEYS ON DRYWALL
Those Keys

IRON CLIPS ON CANVAS
Twin SisterS



GYPSUM PLASTER ON CANVAS
Bluest Skyline

CHARCOAL AND PLASTER
Functional Asymmetries



TEMPERA ON PAPER
Innermost Uprising

ACRYLIC AND CRAYON ON CANVAS
Arteries Patchworks

INTRODUCTORY WORDS

Grosso modo, *in the rough*

LITERAL COMPONENTS

Grosso derives from the Latin *grossus*, meaning thick, coarse, or rough. *Modo* signifies manner or way. *Grosso modo* thus expresses a style marked by roughness, enshrined in a tempo of intentionally broad, imprecise expression. It also evokes something presented coarsely, with a deliberate lack of precision, aligned with a renewed aesthetic perspective.

. . .

Our journey is intentionally blunt and provocative. Such an approach illuminates the path of beauty toward an expansive dive into landscapes of renewed creation. Each piece resonates with the micro dynamic of a larger entirety, a non-centric constellation where the distant yet interconnected voices of Miró, Pollock, Kandinsky, Rothko, Richter, de Kooning, Cardoso Ayres, Francisco Brennand, Tomie Ohtake, and the archaeological art of Serra da Capivara (Piauí, Brazil) captivate both eyes and spirit. Our imagery becomes a lucid enigma and a steadfast compass that points toward **convergence, equilibrium, and resignification** within the maze of existential inquiry.

With a total of 33 paintings, GROSSO MODO projects colorful shattered schemes and exhales quiet and brutal storms of meaning. Each artwork feels like a miniature universe unfolding, its textures rising and sinking like tides pulled by some invisible moon. Nothing rushes, nothing shouts; instead, the work leans into stillness, inviting the viewer to wander slowly through layers of thought and light, discovering soft whispers of form hidden beneath bolder gestures. As the collection grows, its inner voice grows too, arching into something almost mythic. The paintings no longer simply occupy a room; they inhabit it, coaxing the air into a gentle hum of story and sensation. They converse with one another in silent syllables, weaving a tapestry of transformation, restraint, and longing. To stand before them is to feel time loosen just slightly, encouraging a pause, a breath, and a surrender to the heightened melody that turns intention into art quadrants. Therefore, be brave and dare to touch the razor's edge of the step forward…

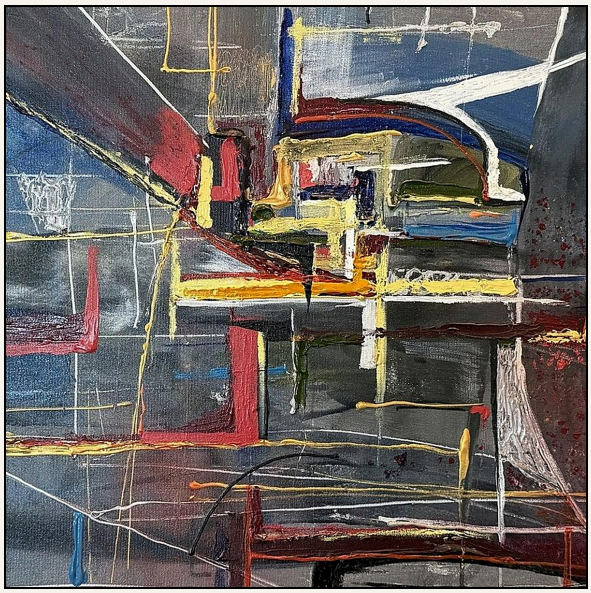
These 33 pieces weave an articulated, multilevel texture of signals. My paintings are not communications; they are revelatory tokens. Each painting that composes GROSSO MODO rises like a constellation in a private cosmology, a trembling portal asking to be seen before it fades. The cabalistic thrust of 33 becomes a catapult of purpose, propelling the entire collection into a realm where language and breath converge. Together, these *œuvres* embody a living manifold of doubt and navigation, where prism palettes become morphic tremors and silence becomes witness. In their gathering, the mundane bifurcates into incandescent questions about time, presence, reality, vagueness, and the acute asymmetrical geometry of perceiving.

From the tempered hopes of *Cautious Optimism* to the straightforwardness of *Dire Meridian*, and from the rebellious shimmer of *Non-Conformity Utopia* to the harsh yet sublime tranquility of *Seashore Landscape* and *Lasting Fortitude*, the viewer is invited to dissipate through undisclosed foreshadowings, as if every brushstroke were both an anchor to the world and an escape from it. Consequently, form mutates, truth bends, and intensities scatter.

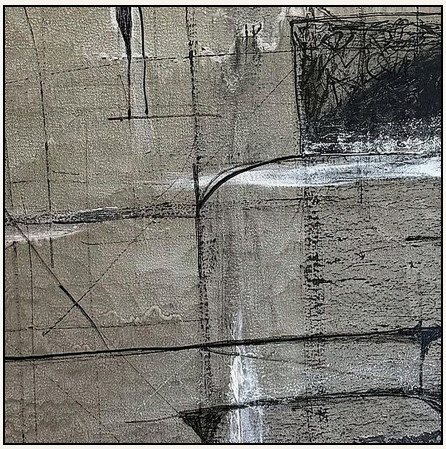
The book unfolds in concentric circles. The prelude traces a long, non-linear trajectory from my first canvases to this collection; the inspirational pillars name the thinkers who stand behind each gesture; and Symbiosis carries those pillars into the theory of international relations, the discipline to which I have devoted most of my academic life. The three movements that follow, Convergences, Equilibrium, and Resignificance, present the thirty-three works themselves, while the closing chapters return to the world stage, reading the canvas as an international system and transgression as a grammar of power.

This architecture is not decorative. It reflects a conviction that art and statecraft share common ground: both are attempts to give provisional form to forces that resist containment. The painter, like the diplomat, works with incomplete information, contested borders, and the permanent risk of misunderstanding. Where the diplomat signs treaties, the painter signs surfaces, and both know that every signature is a wager on a future that cannot be fully controlled. GROSSO MODO is therefore offered not as a catalog of images but as a field of encounters, where each viewer is invited to negotiate meaning on equal terms with the work.

Embryo Lucidity
March 2000 · Acrylic on canvas



Carnival Festivities
March 2008 · Acrylic on canvas



Oriental Silver
January 2015 · Acrylic on canvas

East-West Fragmentations
2015 · Mixed technique: acrylic and gypsum plaster on MDF wood structure

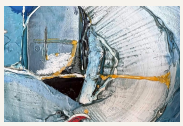
Vertical Bloodline
2019 · Mixed technique: acrylic and gypsum plaster on canvas

Natura non facit saltus*: nature makes no leaps, and neither does the hand. Each work is a slow sediment, a gradual passage from one becoming to the next.*

NOT PART OF THE GROSSO MODO COLLECTION

PRELUDE

A Long Non-Linear Trajectory (2000–2025)

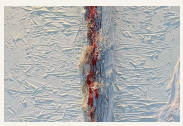


2000 · Genesis

2008 · Transition

2015 · Introspection

2015 · Rupture



2019 · Lineage

2025 · Consolidation

Nothing emerges *ex nihilo*: GROSSO MODO is the sediment of a long, non-linear trajectory. *Embryo Lucidity* (March 2000) was painted as my life as a professor and researcher of international relations was beginning in Recife; *Carnival Festivities* followed eight years later (March 2008); in 2015 came *Oriental Silver* and *East-West Fragmentations*, a mobile composition that left the canvas behind; in 2019, *Vertical Bloodline*. Six more years would pass before GROSSO MODO. I have painted many other works, but I chose to showcase only these five as an emblematic syntagma of inspirational, non-linear changes and multilayered influences: the local and the global, woven into a single symphony of rhythms. Together they bear witness to a proven track record of inspiration, audacity and continuous redefinition, through the lens of the professor, the researcher and the international political analyst.

PLACE	Locality is the ground of my visual identity. Recife, Pernambuco, and the Brazilian Northeast live in these marks: the Atlantic horizon and its oceanic blues, the rhythm of carnival that names the 2008 canvas, the crossings of a city built between rivers. My sketch marks are local before they are global.
LINE	In 2000, the line was extruded and contained, like a cartographer's instrument. By 2008, it multiplied into poured grids; by 2015, it became a drawn architecture of graphite and ink. In GROSSO MODO, it breaks its leash: the black script of *Cautious Optimism*, the golden lattice of *Night's Fall*.
SKETCH AND MARK	The crosses of 2000 were the first letters of a private alphabet; in 2008 they became brackets and L-shaped frames; in 2015, spare glyphs and hooked strokes. Later, those glyphs hardened into matter: keys, iron clips, crumpled paper.
FORMAT AND CENTER	*Embryo Lucidity* orbits a single disc; *Carnival Festivities* splinters that center into competing nodes; *Oriental Silver* rises vertically. *East-West Fragmentations* breaks the rectangle itself: white panels tilt, overlap and project from the wall like states jostling within an order; its very title announces the fragmentation at the heart of this book. GROSSO MODO completes the passage: a non-centric system of fragments without a capital.
TEXTURE AND COLOR	Oceanic blues in 2000, a carnival of red, yellow and blue in 2008, silver relief in 2015, then the white gypsum plaster of *East-West Fragmentations*, built on a structure of MDF wood, where texture alone carries the drama. That plaster returns on drywall in GROSSO MODO, now charged with red, yellow and black.

Embryo, carnival, silver, fragments, and then roughness: the same hand, the same hunger, waiting a quarter of a century to be named.

PRELUDE · A CONNECTING DIALOG ACROSS SEVEN YEARS

Bloodlines

Vertical Bloodline (2019) and *Arteries Patchworks* (2026)

Vertical Bloodline
2019 · Mixed technique: acrylic and gypsum plaster on canvas

Arteries Patchworks
2026 · Plate 24

Seven years separate these two works, yet they share a single spine. In 2019, *Vertical Bloodline* drove a red vertical through gypsum plaster on canvas, wrapped in raw fibers and smoke-dark ash, anchored at its base by a red horizon. In 2026, *Arteries Patchworks* answers with a twisted column of white paper cutting through a field of red, the same axis now inverted in color: what was blood upon white becomes white upon blood. Is this repetition or return? Does the artist evolve, or does he circle the same wound from different altitudes? I offer provocations rather than answers:

- *If the bloodline stood vertical in 2019, why does it return as a path in 2026? Is lineage destiny, or decision?*
- *Is the white of plaster a silence, or a sovereign territory waiting to be crossed?*
- *Can a mark claim originality when it quotes its own past, or is self-citation the most honest form of authorship?*
- *In a world system that recycles its old wars into new ones, why should art be exempt from recurrence?*

As in consular diplomacy, where a single meaning must cross from one sovereignty to another, each work translates the other into a new tongue: a poetic translation of the same red across the borders of time and of international relations. The trajectory is not a line but a spiral.

INSPIRATIONAL PILLARS

# of My Creation Process

In this constellation of origins, the choice of surface becomes an act of sovereignty. A plurality of media abruptly emerges. Canvas, drywall, wooden frame, and paper each respond with their own temperament, as if the scenario were offering a succession of thresholds. The marks do not simply land; they infiltrate, resonating capillarily like subterranean tremors beneath the crust of visibility. Acrylic bursts with immediacy, charcoal carries the residue of ancient embers, tempera fixes mineral to intention, and oil stretches the moment into a slow, luminous drift. Together, these mediums form a ceremonial lexicon, a rite of emergence where every stroke is both incision and ignition.

Neolithic insignia are mirrored within universes. Creation becomes the topology of tension, a prairie where force meets resistance and where the hands fuse with rusted veins, messianic drives, untouched hopes, and intoxicated wonders. Therefore, my work expels layered sediments like the imaginary geolocation of a haven for ephemeral certainties.

There is a measured refusal to submit to the predictable or the foreseeable. Through neoabstraction pathways and a revisionist, non-centric realism, I work to intermingle the boundaries between clarity and ambiguity, between order and chaos, opening windowpane spaces where resilience is not imposed but redrawn. Suddenly, a genuine private moment occurs in the communion; the viewer stands before seismic activity. The audience is aggressively pulled into a peculiar gravitational field, compelled to negotiate clarity and discernment. Dilemmas cast stratagems of end-game fissures. Defiance is destiny.

In that awkward political transaction, each person becomes both witness and participant, thus unlocking textures that shift with proximity, memory, and desire. Naiveté is daunting and resentful. The end result is not a resolution but an awakening: the appalling mystique of relinquishing the ebb tide of the self through the mirror of another's gesture.

I Heraclitus

The pre-Socratic fire-seer

From this ground, the first pillar rises: Heraclitus, the pre-Socratic fire-seer. He would say these tangled waves of imprinted thought are flames caught mid-motion. Invisible points are lashed facets of the ever-living fire that shapes and devours the world. His inspiration emphasizes biogenesis and thresholds where primitive voices wrestle, where harmony is forged through conflict, and where the brushstroke behaves like a spark leaping from utopias. Nothing is still; everything flows. Each mark is a momentary crystallization of flux before dissolving back into earthly matter.

II John Locke

The open field of experience

As the second pillar, John Locke offers fertile conceptual ground. His idea of the mind as a *tabula rasa*—an open field shaped by lived experience—mirrors the way these works unfold through layers of symbiosis and juxtaposition. Rather than dictating ready-made truths, each piece invites viewers to construct their own vortices of interpretation, echoing Locke's belief that understanding grows from sensory experience and continual re-evaluation.

Through this lens, the artwork becomes a space of wild transformation, where identity, perception, and emotion are gradually assembled through texture, movement, and the quiet accumulation of marks. This pillar becomes storm cells of awareness: systems of thought gathering density and momentum.

III Friedrich Nietzsche

Force, will, and the breaking of idols

The third pillar ascends with Nietzsche, revealed not as a sculptor of serenity but as the driver of force, will, power, and destructive movement. Perhaps he would see in my gestures the creative and erratic ruptures that are necessary for transformation. Nietzsche encapsulates the artist as a breaker of idols, clearing space for new intensities to arise. The brushstroke becomes a blade, a strike that cuts through stagnation.

Through Nietzsche, my collection is not a gallery of images but a choreography of breakpoints, each piece a testament to the necessity of destruction as the precondition for creation. My landscapes are blades. Meaning is not inherited; it is seized, forged. The capital of brute-power-interest (CASTRO)—as a catharsis—equals a first chart. Bewilderment is an endogram into existence through collisions.

IV Sigmund Freud

The cartographer of the unconscious

The fourth pillar emerges from the depths: Freud, the cartographer of the unconscious. The syntagma of the untold, the hidden prospects, and our own phantasmagoria bear constant velocity in my style. I sense that Freud would interpret each orbital line as a surge from the interior, an architectural membrane. Hence, a streamlined beacon erupts through a psychic membrane, swelling with impulses that seek embodiment.

My designs become diagrams of archaeologies, culminating in tangible forms that evoke or release, as temporary stabilizations, what otherwise remains unspoken. The synthesis of this esoteric revelation draws conclusions from beneath. An inward Talmud assimilates and depicts the route as it is made in foreign lands.

V Hannah Arendt

The politics of appearance

The fifth pillar is Hannah Arendt: the zenith of the politics of appearance and the courage to detect and point out the origins of aggression-oriented dictatorships. Arendt's inspiration rises as the philosophical thread of appearance, plurality, and the power to begin anew. She introduces not an inward flame nor an unconscious storm, but a worldly principle: the idea that creation itself is a public act of initiation, a gesture that enters the shared space of human relations of dominion.

The most radical capacity of human beings is natality: the ability to start something unexpected. GROSSO MODO embodies this force. Each painting is a first step, a cut into the predictable, a refusal of inherited inevitability. Inspired by Arendt, my art resists totalitarian tendencies. Every exquisite appropriation of sentiment is burned. Thus, each work becomes a space of metaphoric appearance where symbology steps forward and demands presence. Meaning unfolds not inside the collection alone, but in the meeting of minds.

The intentional roughness and deliberate imprecision of my renditions speak in this register: a multiplicity of forces coexisting without dissolving into harmony. Plurality is not noise; it is the breathing strength of the endeavor. Our reality refuses such closure. Its irregularities, its transient shifts, and its endowed stigmas form a quiet rebellion against tyrannical and dazzling neatness. Where totality imposes smooth surfaces, each painting asserts the right to remain uneven.

. . .

And so we travel. All five pillars are aligned in a geopolitics of creative burst to withstand the immense weight of living. Together, they form the cosmology through which GROSSO MODO exalts the very issue of brute tension, communicative transformation, and patent revelation. Every spark has mosaic intentions that compose a theatrical stage for improvisation *ad infinitum*.

In this unified totem, Heraclitus provides the universal dynamics of fire and flux; Locke is the birthplace of open-ended constructions of creative knowledge; Nietzsche synthesizes the force that destroys to create through willpower; Freud enhances the subterranean pulse of our deep-seated archaeology; Arendt alerts us to cultivate decadent eyes against totalitarian catacombs. Together, they create a five-dimensional, non-centric philosophical art scaffold:

ONTOLOGICAL	*What exists, and what are the drifts of reality?* The dynamic flux through the mutagenesis of life.
EPISTEMOLOGICAL	*How do we form meaning?* Through vivid experience and knowledge.
AXIOLOGICAL	*What drives the guiding principles of creation?* Force, destruction, and power through human will.
PSYCHOLOGICAL	*What shapes interior life?* The unconscious mystic and its long-range unsettlements.
MYTHOLOGICAL	*What ancient symbols portray the emerging perils of totalitarianism?* Constant vigilance and active collective participation are the forces that shape the narrow cracks of everyday life.

DETAIL · BLUEST SKYLINE · PLATE 30

SYMBIOSIS

Five Pillars Transcending *into International Relations*

Bridging philosophy, art, and the theory of world politics

Every pillar of GROSSO MODO casts a second shadow, and that shadow falls across the theory of international relations. For more than two decades, I have taught that discipline at the graduate level, and I have learned that its great schools are, at heart, competing ways of seeing: each one selects what counts as real, what counts as power, and what counts as change. I have examined these schools at length in my *Teoria das Relações Internacionais*;[1] here, I ask a different question: what happens when they meet the canvas? To bring the five thinkers into the arena of world politics is not a detour from art but a return to its source, the place where form and force negotiate the same frontier.

I Heraclitus · *flux, conflict, and power transition*

"War is the father of all and the king of all," says one of his surviving fragments.[2] Heraclitus is the remote ancestor of every reading of world politics that refuses to

1. Thales Castro, *Teoria das Relações Internacionais*, 2nd ed. (Brasília: FUNAG, 2016).
2. Heraclitus, fragment DK 22 B53, in Charles H. Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

treat an order as permanent. Empires rise and decline, hegemonies burn and are rekindled, and equilibrium is a moment of tension rather than a state of rest. No one steps twice into the same river of power. I paint with that river in mind. I rarely let a color dry before the next arrives; wet layers drag into one another, and a drip crosses a field of color the way a rising power crosses the comfort zone of an established one. In *Erratic Ruptures* and the two *Volatile Structures*, the surface is caught at the exact instant of a transition, when the old order still shows through the new.

II John Locke · *consent, institutions, and the constructed world*

Locke's state of nature is not a war of all against all; it is a condition of liberty bounded by natural law, made precarious only by the absence of a common judge.[3] From that seed grew the liberal tradition of consent, rights, and institutions, and the hope that cooperation can be built even among rivals. His *tabula rasa* also anticipates constructivism. If minds are shaped by experience, so are the identities and interests of states; in Alexander Wendt's celebrated formula, "anarchy is what states make of it."[4] My canvases enact this premise. I prepare a surface, but I never decide its meaning in advance. The white ground of *Scattered Sunflowers* and *Clear Understanding* is a commons where meaning is negotiated rather than decreed, and every viewer becomes a signatory to its provisional charter.

III Friedrich Nietzsche · *will to power and the revisionist impulse*

The will to power haunts the realist canon. Hans Morgenthau, founding father of postwar classical realism, built his theory on the lust for domination rooted in human nature, an idea that carries a Nietzschean echo.[5] In world politics, the transvaluation of values belongs to the revisionist state, which refuses an order it did not author and seeks to rewrite its hierarchy. Nietzsche's genealogy also

3. John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (1689), bk. II, ch. 2; Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), bk. II, ch. 1.
4. Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992): 391–425.
5. Hans J. Morgenthau, *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946); Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887).

teaches suspicion: every reigning concept hides the interests that made it. In my studio, this pillar arrives with the palette knife. When a composition becomes too balanced, too obedient, I cut it. The blade-like stroke of *Sanctioned Incisions* or *Erratic Ruptures* is a revisionist act: it breaks the idol of harmony and imposes a new ranking of forces upon the field.

IV Sigmund Freud · *perception, fear, and the psychology of statecraft*

In 1932, under the auspices of the League of Nations, Albert Einstein asked Freud a single question: why war? Freud replied that aggressive drives cannot be abolished, only diverted, and that whatever fosters the growth of civilization works against war.[6] The lesson is that war and peace are decided by human beings under fear, pride, trauma, and memory, and that misperception is as decisive as material power. My paintings keep that subterranean layer in view. I often bury a first gesture under later ones and then scrape back until it resurfaces as a scar: the stain beneath the stain. What the statesman conceals, the brushstroke confesses, as *Anxiety Portrait* and *Innermost Uprising* attest.

V Hannah Arendt · *power as acting in concert*

Arendt separates power from violence. Power, she writes, "corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert"; violence appears precisely where power is being lost.[7] The distinction illuminates legitimacy, the attraction of a nation's culture and example, and the idea of an international society in which order rests on shared rules as much as on force. Her defense of plurality warns against any single, sealed narrative of world order. On the canvas, plurality is a composition without a hegemon: colors coexist, contest, and cooperate, yet no single tone is permitted to annex the whole field.

Arendt also gave international relations one of its most enduring moral coordinates. Writing about the stateless refugees of interwar Europe, she identified the most elementary of all entitlements: "the right to have rights," the right to

6. Albert Einstein and Sigmund Freud, *Why War?* (Paris: International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation, League of Nations, 1933).
7. Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1970), 44, 56.

belong to a political community at all.[8] She wrote from experience: a refugee from Nazi Germany, she was stateless for years before finding asylum in the United States. Her report on the Eichmann trial added a second warning, the "banality of evil": catastrophe administered not by monsters but by functionaries who had ceased to think. Violence can destroy power, she insisted, but it is utterly incapable of creating it.

These insights pass directly into my painting. Arendt located the common ground of terror in loneliness, the experience of not belonging to the world at all. *Together Loneliness* answers with forms that stand side by side and still reach across the gap. *Twin SisterC* and *Twin SisterS* stage plurality in its purest state: two beings who resemble each other yet never coincide. Above all, her concept of natality, the human capacity to begin something new, which she called the miracle that saves the world,[9] is the political name for what happens each time a brush touches an empty surface. Every canvas is a small act of foundation, a public appearance that did not exist before. GROSSO MODO is thus a space of appearance where many voices act in concert without being reduced to one.

None of these pillars enters the studio as a quotation. They arrive as pressures on the hand. Heraclitus is present when I refuse to let a surface rest; Locke, when I leave a zone of bare ground for the viewer to inhabit; Nietzsche, when the knife cuts a composition that has become too comfortable; Freud, when I scrape back to recover a buried gesture; Arendt, when I keep several voices of color in the same field without allowing one to silence the others. Inspiration, in this sense, is not borrowing but friction. A thought from philosophy or from world politics becomes useful to me only when it resists the material and forces a decision I would not otherwise have made.

The materials themselves carry that friction. Drywall and wooden frames are not neutral supports; they are territories with their own stubbornness, absorbing pigment in some places and repelling it in others. Plaster and gypsum build relief that behaves like terrain, with ridges, valleys, and passes. Iron clips pin layers

8. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, new ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), chs. 9, 13; Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking Press, 1963).
9. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 247.

together like treaties that hold only under tension. Acrylic dries fast and forces quick decisions; tempera and crayon slow the hand and invite second thoughts. Disruption, therefore, is not an accident I tolerate but a method I cultivate: each new material interrupts the habits of the previous one, and each interruption opens a door to a form I could not have planned.

Together, the five pillars map international relations theory, from the dynamics of change to the grammar of legitimacy, and GROSSO MODO paints where these avenues meet. It also descends from modernism, the causal and necessary rupture in recent art history that made it possible; today, in the postmodern and contemporary march, the artist advances at full throttle, and new creations become possible.

I call this relationship a symbiosis because neither partner survives intact without the other. Theory without the image risks becoming a cartography of abstractions, blind to fear, prestige, and memory; art without theory risks mistaking the private gesture for the whole world. Joined, they form a single organism of inquiry, in which the canvas tests concepts and concepts sharpen the canvas. That is the non-centric wager of this book: to read power through pigment, and pigment through power, from a vantage point in the South that refuses to be merely the periphery of someone else's map. Each plate that follows should be read in that double vision, at once aesthetic and political, intimate and international.

The line is where theory and practice meet in my studio. I begin without a sketch, laying a field of color quickly, and then cut it with lines that behave like borders, treaties, and trajectories: some ruled and deliberate, others thrown in a single breath. Neoabstract realism names this double movement. It is abstract because it renounces the depiction of objects; it is realist because it refuses to abandon the forces that act on every surface of the real world: power, fear, interest, and memory. Each painting passes through three moments that mirror the cycle of statecraft: assessment, when I read the surface as a strategist reads a map; decision, when the gesture commits pigment irreversibly; and consequence, when the work answers back and demands a new adjustment. Invention, here, is discipline in its most demanding form, and freedom in its most exact one.

33	5	10
ENTRIES	PILLARS	DISTANT VOICES

Across all **33 entries**, **5 inspirational pillars**, and **10 distant voices**, 3 shapes evoke ancient pictography and undomesticated glyphs, binding them into a single, vibrating metadata narrative. As such, my pivotal undertaking behaves like a prehistoric utterance, a vestige of a language older than memory, carving channels through silence and possibility.

As one moves through the collection, the pigment sweeps accumulate into a shifting atlas of instinct, charting the unstable frontier between presence and disappearance. Calmness is nothing but a relic. Lucidity is therefore galvanized through ambivalent manners and through a fallaciouscope of destiny. Each one of us shares survival weapons when we are awed by platitudes of inspiration and beauty.

In gazing dialectics, all these numbers function as both mooring and aperture, as if each line were a directional instrument toward an unnamed horizon.

GROSSO MODO

A Manifesto *of Some Sort*

> *These lines embody the harsh tale of resilience, enshrined in a feeble tone of voice and color where an epiphany reigns sovereign.*

THALES CASTRO

Imperfect Keywords Within Its Own Origins

The conceptual contours of GROSSO MODO are contained in its own phrasal expression, which speaks in loud silence of intentional roughness. It demonstrates the deliberate rejection of sterile precision. The ends and the means all melt into a decisive geopolitics of cuts, shapes, and strokes.

Here we find its rugged roadmap:

- Edifices of questions rise through the desert mist among shadows of perplexity and illusion.
- This is not carelessness; it is a deliberate choreography of relentless freedom.
- Beware, for this reflects an artistic impulse of suggestion—rather than declaration—revealing the beauty of incompleteness as it reverberates through intercultural dialogs.
- The world turns inward upon itself.
- Lines and curves dissolve into an arid suffocation, where ambiguity reigns in every drenched second of elusive poetry.
- Night and day, the path summons an alluring yet treacherous milestone, stirred by an unfinished spark toward the endless horizons of the mythical universal psyche.

II In a Manner of Path-Seeking Definitions

I create in a disruptive language that purposefully honors fine inconclusions. My work is a structural composition born from instinct, yet guided by the principles set forth in the present manifesto. I embrace the coarse, the texturized turbulence, and the unpolished, because these qualities reveal a hidden, magical truth of our soul.

GROSSO MODO is my way of saying: art does not need to conform or to confine; rather, it should unleash the liberated voices enshrined within oneself. There is defiance in each paintbrush. It can endorse boundaries between clarity and ambiguity, between an envisioned status quo and resistant entropy, between ruthless establishment and disorderly trajectories.

This is my fine artistic transgression: a quiet resistance against the tyranny of self-imposed errors. We are all blamed for the lingering effects of revived tragedies. The frequently used word “somewhat” represents the format of seeking a learning process through a polyphonic kaleidoscope of threads: nothing more than a propositional, non-centric neoabstract realism is thus unveiled.

III Some Intentional Principles Along the Line

Every stained stroke is a deliberate draft; every contour cuts a brutal *tour de force* of sovereign choice. Flawed irregularity is not aberrant error; it is a unique expression perforated by a stream of thought. Such an invitation letter has been sent to you. Are you ready to embrace its cardinal points, as provided below?

— Conversations over empty rhythms. My art does not impose meaning; it invites interpretation. It is a conversational hypnosis, not a cold monologue.

— Resilience as the fuel for fierce creation. Challenges become catalysts. My native poetry transforms trembling drawings of uncertainty into discovery, complexity into harmony, despite the coordinated mayhem of the plane.

— Adventurous intercultural bridges as lean design. I weave global experiences into my work, drawing from diverse traditions, all repossessed and reprocessed into a novel significance. Everything melts into an unwavering commitment to paradigm ruptures. Art becomes a primal universal language model, where we all carve our destiny into stone despite so many labyrinths. Are you, as yourself, truly ready?

IV The Vision and the Quest

I imagine art as a luminous capital of resonance and reflection, an arc that recalls distant voices, ideas, handshakes, and worlds. Through the prism of a non-centric neoabstract realism and the spirit of GROSSO MODO, I sculpt dreamscapes shaped by the endeavor itself. Entanglements bloom into mountainous storms, revealing the emotional topographies that underlie singular human experiences.

When I began painting in 2000, the world already hinted at a fragile absurdity. I brought diplomacy, academia, and poetic aesthetics into these paintings, weaving them into a partially unified visual language. A quarter of a century later, these paintings stand within a vivid cadence. My work does not pursue impeccability; it lingers in presence, glazing the horizon with a pale, persistent light.

These manifestations project a hymn to the untamed beauty of humanity in its stages of birth, shifting forms, and cultural-anthropological traces. Everything becomes a trembling echo: an ode to what exhales beneath the surface yet often remains unseen and unconquered.

v Invitation and Perspectives

Reconstructed paradigms seek momentum as an unrepentant call remains open to those willing to listen. And so, a warning: do not look for evasive scholastic alignment of any nature here. On the contrary…

…seek the uncensored and non-conformist pulse. Seek the tensioned utopias. Seek the quiet rebellion whispering beyond the granular remains.

In the ambiguity, decipher the uneven pattern of understanding the unbearable. The quest will always remain an unvanquished destiny. As such, every encounter becomes an assertive answer, granting legitimacy to the process of becoming truly connected to your unconscious living matter.

And in the quiet interval between gesture and meaning, my work suspends itself in a mode of pure presence. It invites each viewer to inhabit a moment of reflective inwardness, wherein one may apprehend the fleeting insight that creation is not an evasion of the real, but a recursive return to its very ground. GROSSO MODO was conceived in a world that no longer exists, in which a nascent phenomenology of grasp, perception, and embodiment emerged.

These paintings matured in a supernatural, centuries-long soliloquy through a process of foreign realization, even though their material composition occurred solely in 2025 and 2026. And from that threshold, may you step forward, recognizing that every act of seeing is, in itself, a transformative intervention that binds the world anew. Welcome back: embody bravery and dive beyond!

PART ONE

Starting Point

Convergences

> *Roughness becomes an epistemic method: by resisting precision, I intend to reveal the soul's raw tectonics. All crude plastic artistry is not the absence of form; rather, it is form refusing to kneel. These rustic blueprint hermeneutics represent a recurring identity self-affirmation.*
>
> THALES CASTRO

PLATES 01–10

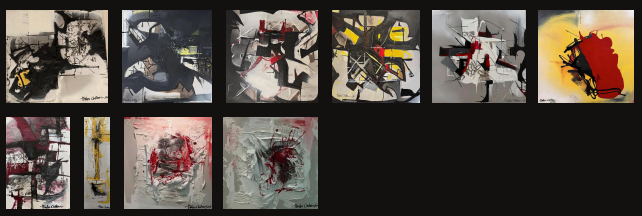


PLATE 01

Those Keys

2025 · Mixed technique on drywall

DETAIL *Those Keys* · Plate 01

PLATE 02

Usually Dusk

2025 · Mixed technique on drywall

PLATE 03

Some Dilemmas

2025 · Mixed technique on drywall

PLATE 04

Anxiety Portrait

2025 · Mixed technique on drywall

DETAIL *Anxiety Portrait* · Plate 04

PLATE 05

Clear Understanding

2025 · Mixed technique on drywall

PLATE 06

Cautious Optimism

2026 · Acrylic on drywall

PLATE 07

Erratic Ruptures

2025 · Acrylic and tempera on paper

PLATE 08

Scattered Sunflowers

2025 · Acrylic, tempera, and plaster on wood frame

PLATE 09

Volatile Structures I

2025 · Mixed technique on drywall

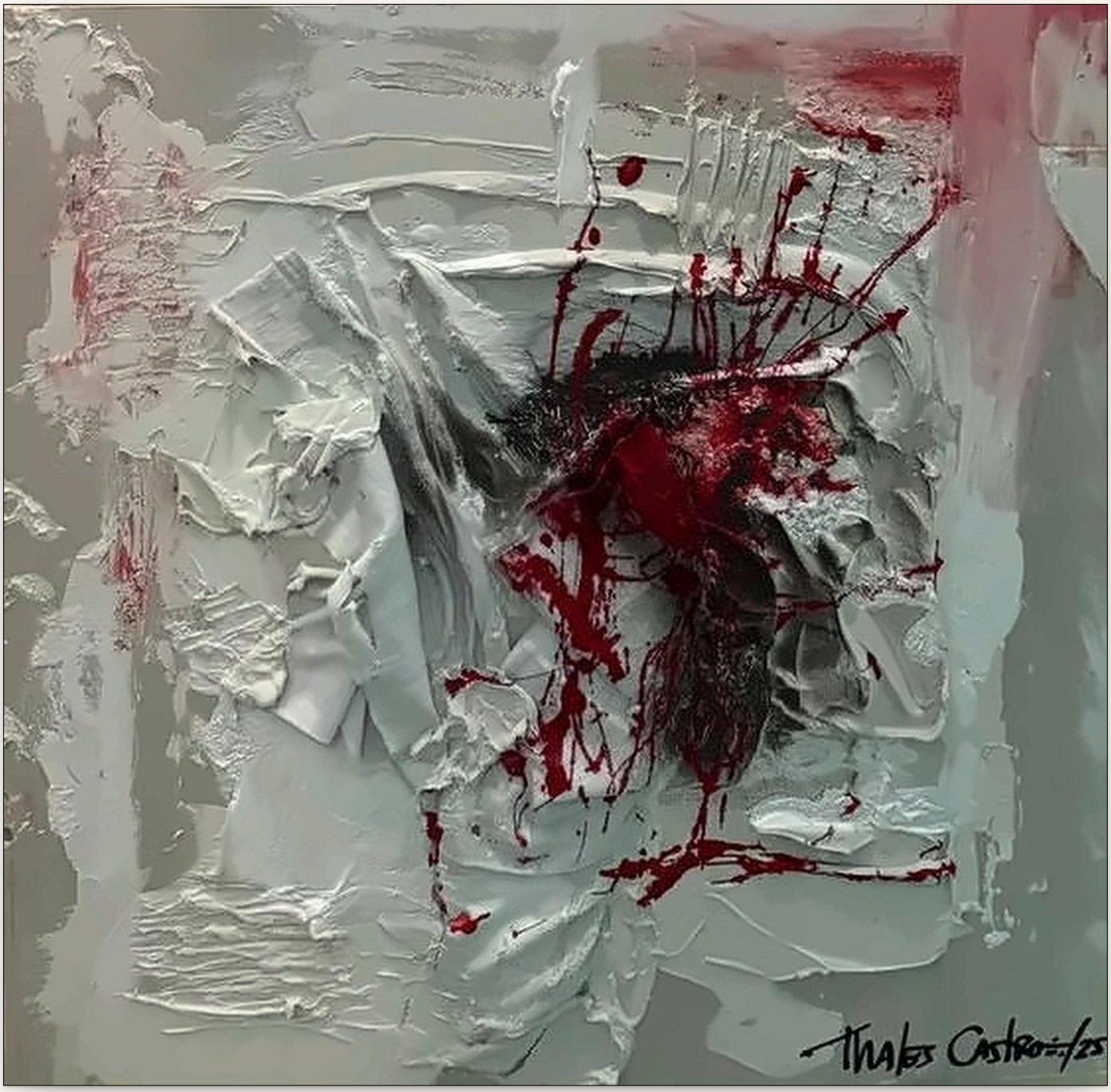


PLATE 10

Volatile Structures II

2025 · Mixed technique on drywall

PART TWO

Middle Ground

Equilibrium

> *Where clarity ends, primal meaning begins its pilgrimage. Scholastic precision is nothing but a polite cage, thus revealing the true nature of diplomacy.*
>
> THALES CASTRO

PLATES 11–20

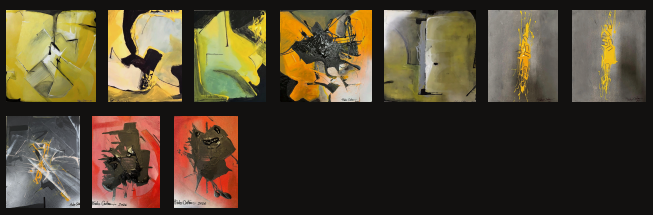


PLATE 11

Lasting Fortitude

2025 · Mixed technique on drywall

PLATE 12

Meaningful Quest

2025 · Acrylic and tempera on canvas

PLATE 13

Assigned Peacefulness

2025 · Acrylic and tempera on canvas

PLATE 14

Non-Conformity Utopia

2026 · Mixed technique on drywall

DETAIL *Non-Conformity Utopia* · Plate 14

PLATE 15

Seashore Landscape

2025 · Mixed technique on drywall

PLATE 16

Twin SisterC

2025 · Acrylic on canvas with iron clips

PLATE 17

Twin SisterS

2025 · Acrylic on canvas with iron clips

PLATE 18

Night's Fall

2025 · Acrylic on canvas with iron clips

DETAIL *Night's Fall* · Plate 18

PLATE 19

Distant Proximity

2026 · Acrylic on canvas

PLATE 20

Together Loneliness

2026 · Acrylic on canvas

PART THREE

Epilogue Notes

Resignificance

> *Nothing is ever final; everything is rewritten by context, pulse, verve, time, lust, and introspection. Resignificance is the existential right to reinterpret one's own narrative through a revisited aesthetic compass. Meaning does not descend; it surfaces slowly, like a secret tide, because transgression is not an act; it is a stance against the predicted self.*
>
> THALES CASTRO

PLATES 21–33

PLATE 21

Functional Asymmetries

2025 · Acrylic, charcoal, and plaster on drywall

DETAIL *Functional Asymmetries* · Plate 21

PLATE 22

White Sun

2026 · Mixed technique on drywall

PLATE 23

Yellow Composition

2026 · Acrylic and crayon on canvas

DETAIL *Yellow Composition* · Plate 23

PLATE 24

Arteries Patchworks

2026 · Acrylic and crayon on canvas

DETAIL *Arteries Patchworks* · Plate 24

PLATE 25

Reddish Aurora

2026 · Acrylic on canvas

PLATE 26

Sanctioned Incisions

2025 · Acrylic and tempera on paper

PLATE 27

Dire Meridian

2025 · Acrylic and tempera on paper

PLATE 28

Innermost Uprising

2026 · Acrylic and tempera on paper

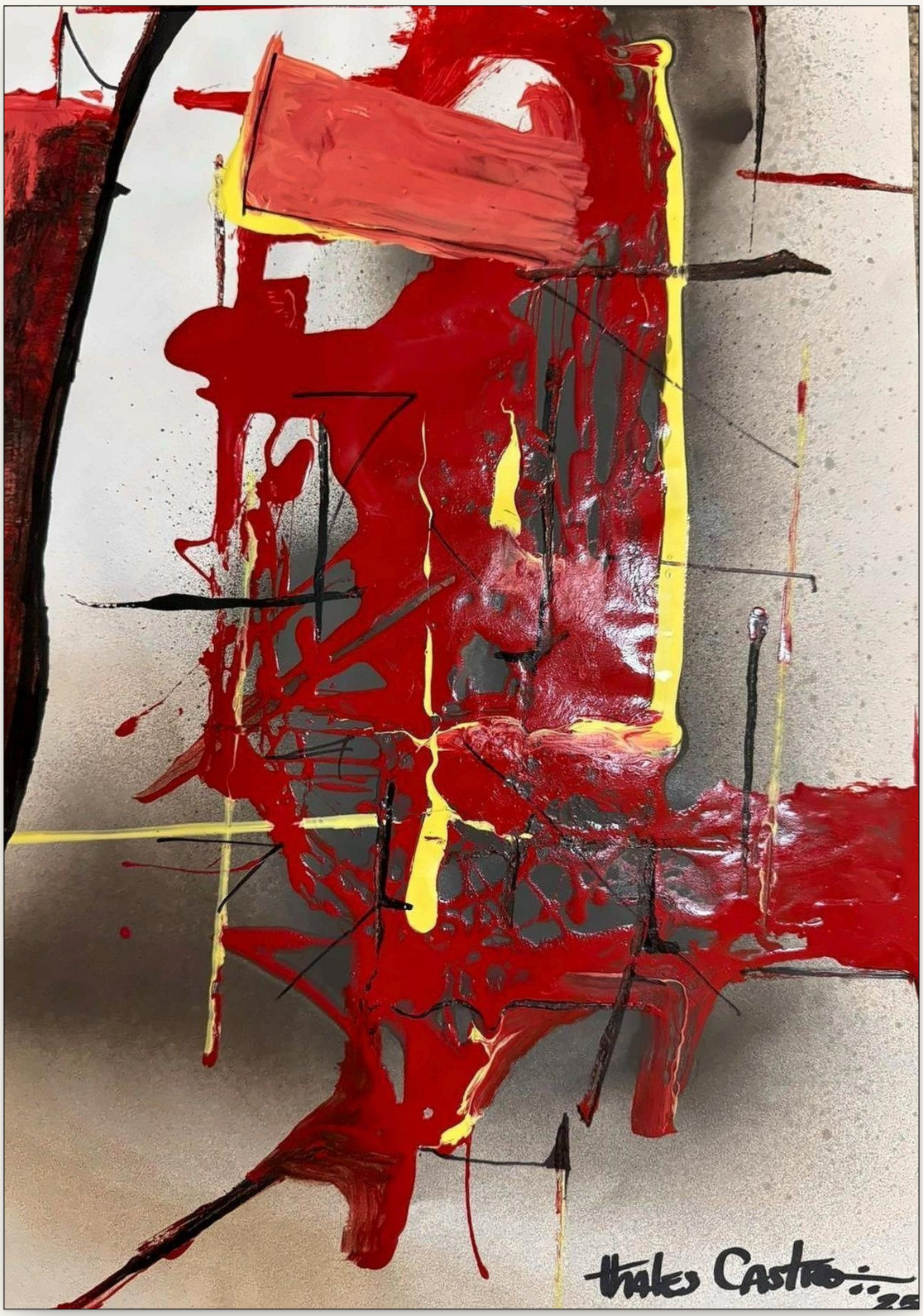


PLATE 29

Extensive Viewpoints

2026 · Acrylic and tempera on paper

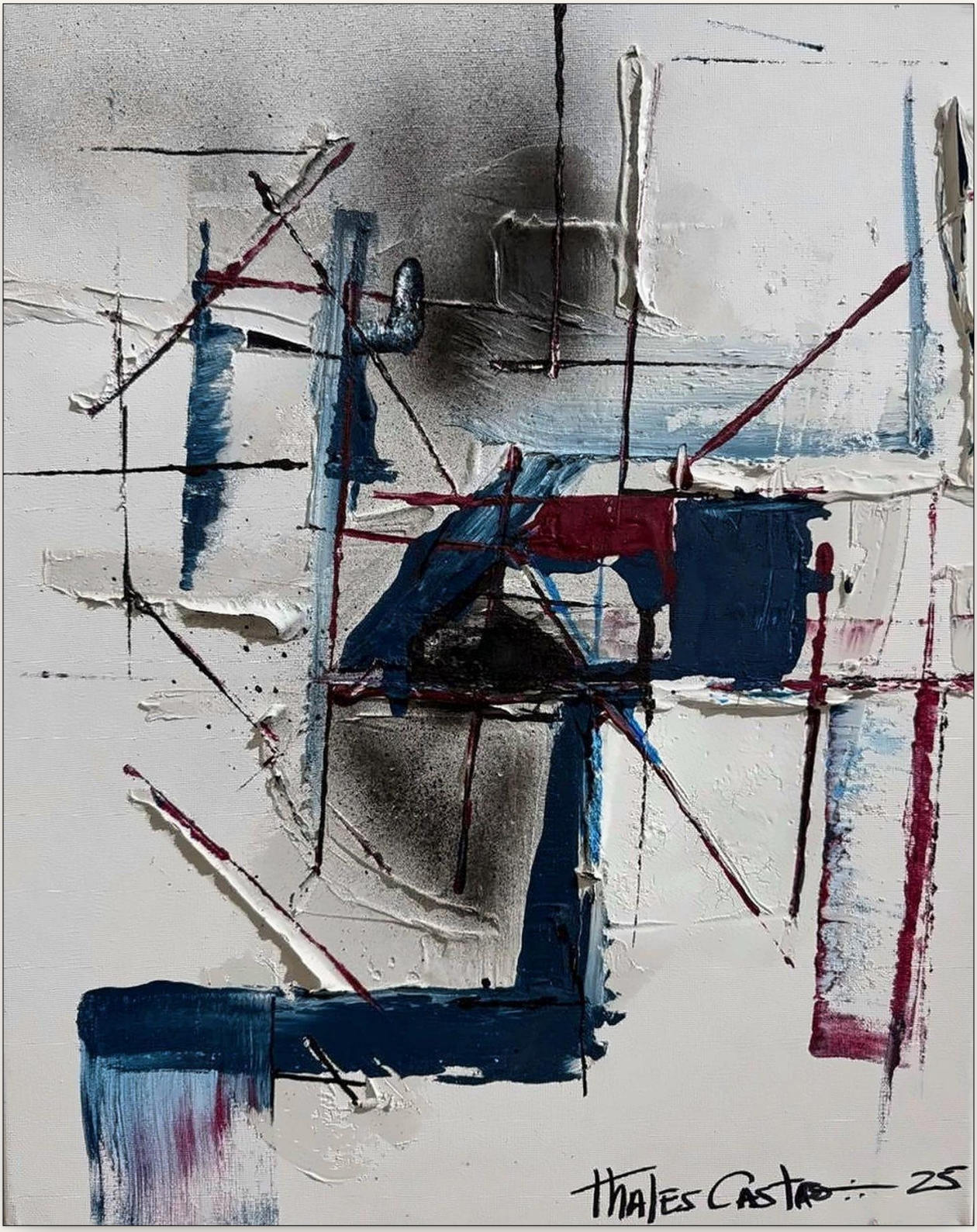


PLATE 30

Bluest Skyline

2025 · Acrylic and gypsum plaster on canvas

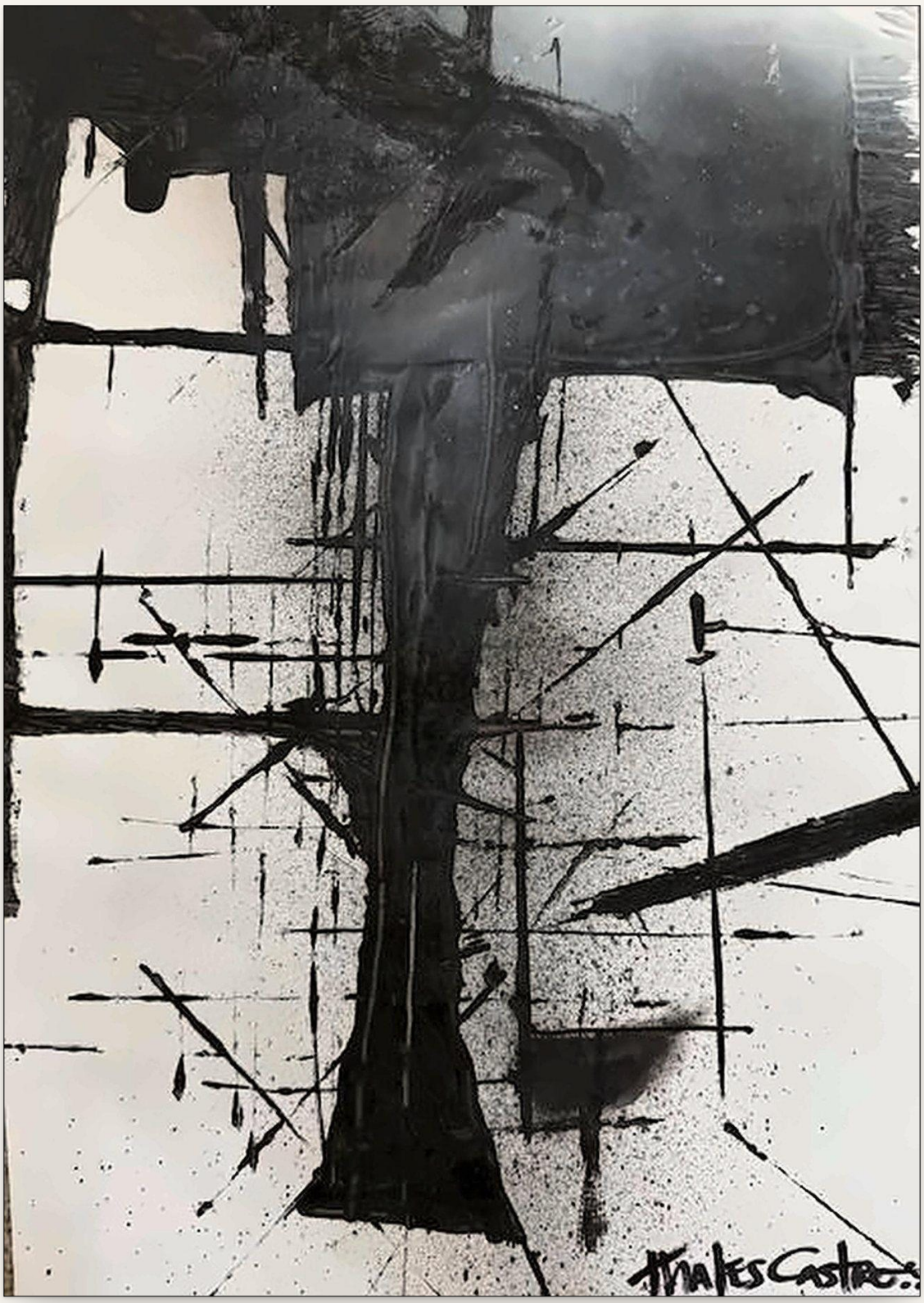


PLATE 31

Spinal Cord

2025 · Acrylic and charcoal on paper

PLATE 32

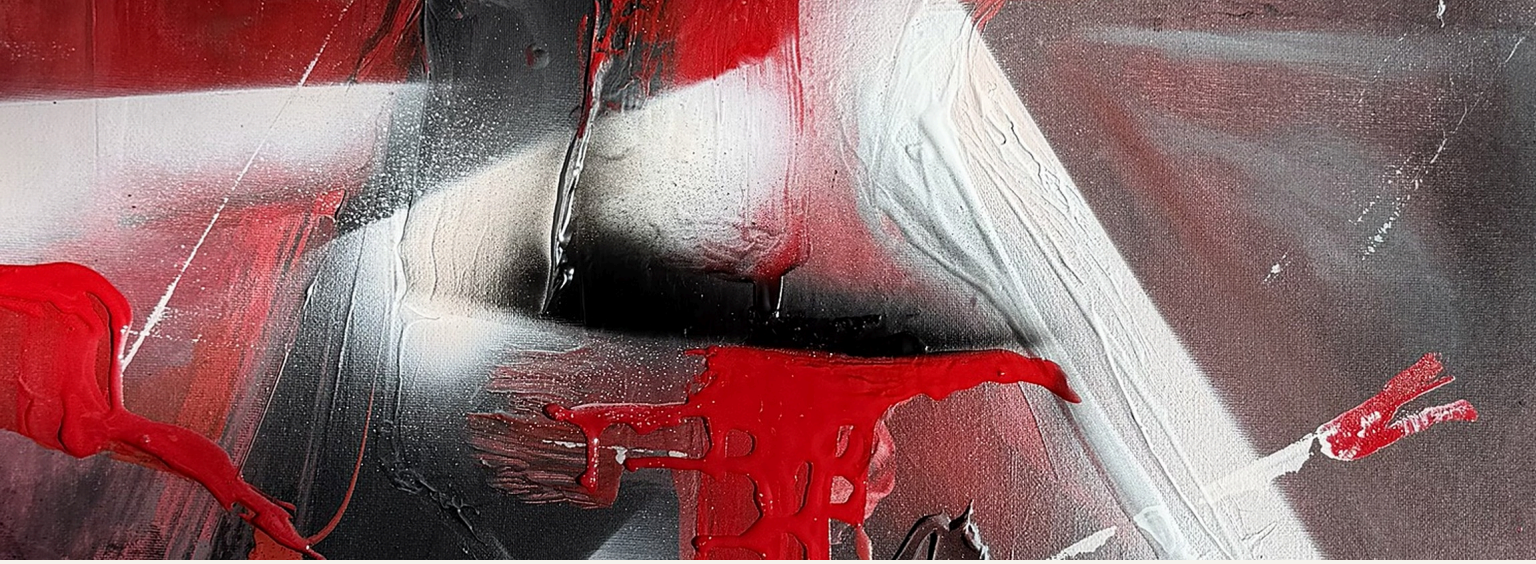
Grassy Knoll

2025 · Acrylic on canvas

PLATE 33

Fallen Leaves

2025 · Acrylic on canvas



DETAIL · REDDISH AURORA · PLATE 25

POST-TRUTHS

A Hypnotic Drive for *Aesthetic Fragmentation*

A Native Spearhead for Redefinition's Philosophical Tabula Rasa

Every fragment is a sovereign. Coarse aesthetic fragmentation is not the breaking of a whole but the disclosure that the whole was never an entirety unto itself: a federation of splinters held together by tension rather than by decree. Ortega y Gasset wrote that I am myself and my circumstance;[1] so it is with every fragment, which is itself and the borders that surround it. What the eye calls ruin, the hand calls method. In GROSSO MODO, each shard of pigment negotiates its border with the next, cedes ground, reclaims it, and signs a provisional treaty of color that no brushstroke is obliged to honor forever. Redefinition begins precisely there, at the seam where one form ends and another dares to begin.

International relations remains the mainframe clockwork setting of this endeavor. Its gears are not hidden; they turn audibly beneath every surface. Anarchy, sovereignty, the security dilemma, the balance of power, the frozen logic of the Cold War now thawing into a new hot war, the asymmetries between center and periphery: all are rehearsed here as plastic grammar. The drywall becomes a

1. José Ortega y Gasset, *Meditaciones del Quijote* (Madrid: Residencia de Estudiantes, 1914).

Westphalian frontier; the iron clip, an instrument of coercion; the keys, an archive of locked negotiations; the stain that crosses its own boundary, an unauthorized intervention. More than two decades of teaching, consular diplomacy, and the measurement of power have taught me that the international system is a clockwork without a clockmaker: precise in its mechanisms, imprecise in its outcomes. *Grosso modo*, the world is governed roughly.

A non-centric reading refuses the tyranny of a single meridian. There is no Greenwich of meaning, no hegemonic vantage point from which the composition must be decoded. Recife and Jacksonville, the Global South and the North Atlantic, the archaic rock of Serra da Capivara and the algorithmic present: each is a center only for as long as it is looked at, and then it yields. Fragmentation is thus multipolarity made visible, the canvas as a system of states, each patch of color pursuing its own interest, all bound by the same gravitational field.

Post-truth is now an arena of world politics: when emotion and belief outweigh verifiable fact in shaping public opinion, states fight over narratives, and disinformation turns perception into a contested frontier. Painting exposes the seams a polished surface would conceal: every visible brushstroke refuses the counterfeit smoothness on which post-truth depends. In my studio, corrections are never hidden; they remain on the surface as evidence of how the image was made, a record no viewer is asked to take on faith.

Redefinition is not reform; it is re-foundation. To redefine is to accept that every order is provisional, every alliance of tones reversible, every peace a pause between two gestures. Herein lies the true philosophy: the artist, like the diplomat, does not abolish conflict but composes with it. The fragment does not mourn its lost totality; it governs itself, negotiates, survives. And in that coarse survival, beauty is no longer an ornament of order but the residue of its incessant renegotiation.

POST FACTO DISCOURSE

Nothing is whole; everything is in negotiation. Between the clockwork of nations and the coarse gesture of the brush, I sign no final treaty. I offer only a tabula rasa, *where every viewer is summoned to redefine the world anew.*

THALES CASTRO

DETAIL · EXTENSIVE VIEWPOINTS · PLATE 29

INTERNATIONAL SCENARIO AS AN AMORAL COMPASS

Canvas as Global Power Relations

A Neoabstract Realism Thrust

Levels of analysis, polarity, and the view from the South

THREE IMAGES, THREE SCALES

International politics, as I discussed in my *Elementos de Política Internacional*,[1] can be read at three levels: the nature and choices of human beings, the internal character of each state, and the anarchic structure of the system as a whole, which constrains every actor regardless of intention. GROSSO MODO reproduces that architecture. The first image is the gesture, the impulse of the hand. The second is the single painting, a bounded unit with its own frontier at the edge of the canvas. The third is the collection, a system of thirty-three sovereign works without central authority, each defined by its position relative to the others. When I hang the paintings together, I watch them as a diplomat watches a conference room: who dominates, who withdraws, who forms a bloc.

THEORY ON THE CANVAS

Each school of international relations finds its plates. Structural realism appears in

1. Thales Castro, *Elementos de Política Internacional* (Curitiba: Juruá, 2005).

Volatile Structures I and *II*, where heavy masses dictate the behavior of every smaller form. The security dilemma of *Some Dilemmas* and the Hobbesian fear of *Anxiety Portrait* belong to classical realism. Liberal hopes for cooperation inspire the measured bridges of *Cautious Optimism* and *Clear Understanding*. Constructivism animates *Meaningful Quest* and the paired *Twin SisterC* and *Twin SisterS*, whose resemblance is learned rather than given. Critical theory finds its emblems in *Functional Asymmetries* and *Dire Meridian*, whose dividing line recalls the meridian of Tordesillas that once split the world between two Iberian crowns. Polarity runs from the paired tensions of *Convergences* to the single light of *White Sun* and the multipolar dawn of *Reddish Aurora*. I did not paint these works to illustrate theories; the correspondences emerged afterward, when the finished surfaces began to argue with the concepts I teach. That is the direction of the symbiosis: the canvas first, and the theory as its echo.

CENTER, PERIPHERY, AND AUTONOMY

I painted GROSSO MODO in Jacksonville, Florida, but through the Global South lenses of Recife and my practical experience there. Latin American thought gave the discipline original concepts: the structuralism of Raúl Prebisch and ECLAC, the dependency analysis of Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, and the Brazilian diplomatic quest for autonomy. GROSSO MODO translates that heritage into matter: its roughness refuses the polish that metropolitan taste demands of peripheral art.

GLOBALIZATION AND THE SOUTH

Seen from the South, globalization is neither a fable nor a fate but a complex and largely generous force. Open markets, trade, and the diffusion of technology have lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty within a single generation, connected producers in the Brazilian interior to consumers on every continent, and turned Brazilian agribusiness, aircraft, and energy into global competitors. Investment, competition, and the free circulation of ideas reward societies that dare to compete. The same flows are uneven, however: they punish weak institutions and expose fragile economies to sudden shocks. My surfaces carry both sides of

that ledger. Smooth passages of acrylic promise exchange and continuity, then meet cracks where unequal flows collide; yet every crack leaves room for a new composition. Recife, a port shaped by sugar, slavery, and resistance, taught me that the world arrives by sea and is transformed before it is sent back.

The South did not enter world politics as a passive object. Bandung in 1955, the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961, the Group of 77 in 1964, and the call for a New International Economic Order in 1974 converted numbers into voice. Today, an enlarged BRICS renews that ambition under emerging multipolarity, and the discipline itself is learning to listen beyond the North Atlantic. On the canvas, such coalitions are clusters of minor colors that, once joined, alter the balance of an entire field.

THE SOUTH ATLANTIC AND THE WEIGHT OF HISTORY

From the South, geopolitics is never abstract. The Blue Amazon of Brazil's maritime domain, the South Atlantic zone of peace and cooperation, the green Amazon, and the critical minerals and rare earths of the energy transition make the South a decisive theater of this century. The plaster, wood, and iron of my paintings recall that every global supply chain begins in someone's soil, and their scarred surfaces keep that memory visible.

SOVEREIGNTY, ATTRACTION, AND MEASUREMENT

Sovereignty is a norm proclaimed universally and violated selectively. My frames promise inviolable borders, yet pigment crosses them and iron clips puncture them. A painting also exercises another kind of power: the quiet attraction that holds a stranger's gaze without coercion, the same attraction that culture lends to a nation abroad. My research on the International Power Index weighs the relative capabilities of states; painting registers what no index captures: fear, prestige, memory, and resolve. Between the number and the gesture lies the true territory of world politics, mapped only roughly, grosso modo.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The fine art *of transgression*

GROSSO MODO embraces the essence of things rather than their ornament. Blindly moved by bleeding stains, primary color palettes, and uneasy lines—conceptual, material, and emotional—my practice privileges intention over excess and rugged deliberation over tender accuracy. What matters is not the exhaustive detail, but the underlying force that gives form its overwhelming presence. Passion summons a broad array of artistic shining lights.

In this space-time between the rough and the deliberate, the path invites reflection, leaving room for the viewer to complete what is suggested rather than bluntly declared. Keen courage is will, and centripetal force encompasses a bold understatement of purpose.

The fine art of transgression operates as a philosophical instrument: it unsettles inherited boundaries in order to expose their contingency. By crossing what is deemed proper, stable, or untouchable, the redeemable legacy does not negate genuine primal rudiments; it tests these left-behind relics and reforms them. Transgression, here, is not excess for its own sake but a disciplined refusal of comfort, compelling the viewer to confront the limits of their moral, aesthetic, and ontological assumptions. Sheer face value is intrinsically sharpened by the eyes of the proposition.

Propelled by the five inspirational pillars, an ancient call arises from foreign countries and distant cultures, interconnected by labyrinths of belonging. A boundary is only sacred when there are no more exclusive evidences of its sustainability paradigms. Impetus resembles clarity as an intervening variable. This collection represents a fortitude leverage against fixed form and scholastic splendor.

Enigmatic as it is, my resolve, therefore, has the urgency to rest in a placid topography of the finite ends to a means.

The Rough Grammar of Power

Any account of transgression must eventually face the oldest grammar of international politics: classical realism. Its lineage begins with Thucydides, who traced the Peloponnesian War to "the growth of the power of Athens, and the alarm which this inspired in Lacedaemon," and who placed in the mouths of the Athenian envoys at Melos the harshest sentence of the tradition: the strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must.[1]

Niccolò Machiavelli asked rulers to follow the *verità effettuale della cosa*, the effectual truth of things, rather than imagined republics. His *virtù* is the capacity to impose form upon *fortuna*, the river that floods the plain unless dikes are built in time; his *necessità* compels a prince to act against ordinary morality to preserve the state. Thomas Hobbes completed the model. In the *Leviathan*, the absence of a common power produces a war of every one against every one, driven by competition, diffidence, and glory, in which life is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." Sovereigns, he observed, stand toward one another "in the state and posture of gladiators"; and covenants, "without the sword, are but words."[2]

Three tenets follow, each with a counterpart in GROSSO MODO.

Self-help. In an anarchic system, no higher authority guarantees survival; each unit must secure itself by its own means. No curator-Leviathan presides above my canvases. Each stroke must defend its own space and survive the advance of its neighbors. *Lasting Fortitude* portrays that solitary endurance.

The security dilemma. The measures one state takes to make itself secure tend to make others feel less secure, and their responses leave everyone more exposed than before. In painting, a dark mass placed for balance provokes a counter-mass, in an arms race of impasto. *Some Dilemmas* and *Anxiety Portrait* record that spiral of mutual fear.

Power-driven decision-making. For the realist statesman, prudence is the supreme virtue: choices are weighed by their consequences for relative power,

1. Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Richard Crawley (London: J. M. Dent, 1910), 1.23, 5.89.
2. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (1532), chaps. 15, 25; Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651), chaps. 13, 17.

under uncertainty. The brush decides under the same conditions. Each drip is a wager in which *virtù* meets *fortuna*, and once the paint has fallen, it cannot be negotiated back. In *Night's Fall*, the iron clips act as Hobbes's sword: they are what keeps the covenant of the canvas from dissolving into words.

Color is where this grammar becomes visible. In GROSSO MODO, red is rarely decorative: it is the color of sovereignty under pressure, of blood and of claims, spreading across *Reddish Aurora*, *Arteries Patchworks*, and *Sanctioned Incisions* like a contested jurisdiction. Black is fear and concealment, the Hobbesian diffidence that thickens into the heavy masses of *Distant Proximity* and *Night's Fall*. Yellow works as a signal flare, the alarm that precedes escalation, slicing through the grays of *Night's Fall*. White is the truce and the blank of the treaty table, but also Locke's *tabula rasa*, never quite empty. Blue, in *Bluest Skyline* and *Seashore Landscape*, is distance itself: sea, sky, and the long horizon of strategy. Gray, finally, is the fog of war, where every decision is taken half blind.

Beneath the color lies a schematic layer. Ruled lines cross the surfaces like borders drawn by negotiators who never saw the terrain; diagonals act as vectors of force; small rectangles recur as enclaves, embassies, or buffer states; and frames within frames recall nested sovereignties. None of these schemata is ever completed. A line stops short of its target, a grid breaks under impasto, a rectangle is half erased. The realist recognizes the pattern: structures exist and constrain, yet they are constantly eroded by the material pressure of events. Here the philosophical pillars return. Heraclitus explains why no grid holds; Nietzsche, why it must sometimes be broken; Freud, why its buried lines resurface; Arendt, why the space it encloses must remain plural.

GEOPOLITICS · THE WEIGHT OF GEOGRAPHY

Territory, Position, and Permanence

Realism explains why states seek power; geopolitics explains where that search unfolds. Born at the end of the nineteenth century, it treats the state as bound to its territory and asks how position shapes destiny. Its classical debates still frame strategy today: whether sea power, with its fleets, bases, and commerce, outweighs

the land power of continental heartlands; whether the decisive arena lies in the interior of Eurasia or along its coastal rim; and whether geography, the most permanent factor in foreign policy, can ever be overcome by technology or will.

Its key tenets endure: the permanence of geography, the contest between land and sea power, the value of position and chokepoints, and the frontier as a living membrane. On the canvas, territory becomes topography. *Seashore Landscape* is a littoral where land and sea power meet; *Grassy Knoll* is high ground, a small heartland of green; *Spinal Cord* evokes the Andean backbone that structures a continent; and *Fallen Leaves* closes the collection with the autumn of empires, a reminder that every hegemony is seasonal.

TRANSGRESSION AND THE INSTRUMENTS OF THE SOVEREIGN

Handshake, Sword, and Secret

Transgression is, at bottom, the crossing of a limit. Sovereign states reach beyond their borders through three instruments: the handshake of diplomacy, the sword of military force, and the secret of intelligence. GROSSO MODO paints all three, because each one is a form of disciplined transgression.

The handshake. Diplomacy is the application of intelligence and tact to relations between independent states. Its essence remains a gesture: two hands crossing the space between adversaries without erasing it. Brazil, since the Baron of Rio Branco, has settled its frontiers by treaty, not conquest. As my consular years taught me, it is a calculated trespass into the space of the other, made so that coexistence is possible. On the canvas, it appears wherever two forms touch without merging: in *Distant Proximity*, in *Together Loneliness*, and in the fragile bridges of *Meaningful Quest*.

The sword. Carl von Clausewitz taught that war is the continuation of politics by other means, never an end in itself.[3] The modern state claims a monopoly on the legitimate use of force, and its power to hurt is often most effective when held in reserve, as coercion rather than conquest. The sword is transgression in its most

3. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 87.

literal form, the violation of a border, a body, or a will. My brushstroke sometimes takes that form: the blade-like incisions of *Sanctioned Incisions*, the fractures of *Erratic Ruptures*, the iron clips of *Night's Fall*.

The secret. Intelligence is the hidden instrument of statecraft. Ancient strategists already prized foreknowledge above armies, and modern states treat strategic intelligence as the knowledge they must possess to protect their welfare and security. Having addressed audiences at the Department of State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, I know how much of world politics happens beneath the visible surface. Painting has its own secrets. Layers bury layers; a stain survives only as a shadow. *Those Keys* guard an archive of locked negotiations; *Innermost Uprising* and *Night's Fall* keep their darkest strata for the patient observer.

The triad is inseparable. Diplomacy without force is ignored, force without diplomacy is blind, and both are reckless without intelligence. Each instrument crosses a different boundary: the handshake crosses enmity, the sword crosses territory, and the secret crosses privacy. In GROSSO MODO, a single gesture can carry all three. It reaches out, it cuts, and it conceals. That is why I call this art transgressive: not because it despises limits, but because it knows that every limit worth defending must also, at times, be crossed.

In the studio, this transgression follows a recognizable sequence. First comes the handshake: I approach a surface with a field of color that invites rather than imposes. Then comes the sword: a cut, a scrape, a black line thrown across the field that breaks its first agreement. Last comes the secret: I cover part of what I have done, leaving only traces for the attentive eye. *Night's Fall* holds all three moments at once, its gray ground offered openly, its yellow strokes slashing across the surface, and its darkest layers withheld beneath the clips. The painting is finished not when the conflict is resolved but when its terms become legible to anyone willing to look closely.

These closing pages are, in a sense, a confession of method. Every painting in GROSSO MODO passed through the three instruments before it was finished. First came the approach, an open field of color offered without conditions. Then came the rupture, a cut, a scrape, or a black line that broke the first agreement. Last came the concealment, a layer laid over what had been done, leaving only traces for the

patient eye. The sequence is never identical, and it is never complete: some works stop at the handshake, others remain in the moment of the sword, and a few keep their secret almost entirely. What unites them is the conviction that a surface, like a state, reveals its character only under pressure.

Seen from the South, this conviction carries a particular weight. The instruments of statecraft have long been wielded upon the periphery more often than by it, and the canvas offers a modest form of reversal: here, the hand that draws the borders also decides when to cross them. That is not a claim to power but a claim to authorship, the right to compose one's own grammar of order and transgression. In that sense, these paintings are less a commentary on world politics than an exercise in sovereignty conducted on a small scale, one surface at a time, with no other weapon than color and no other treaty than the viewer's attention.

There is also a quieter lesson in these instruments, one that the studio teaches better than the lecture hall. Diplomacy, force, and intelligence all depend on timing: the handshake offered too early is weakness, the sword drawn too late is futility, the secret kept too long becomes irrelevance. Painting obeys the same clock. A layer of acrylic must be cut while it is still soft; plaster must be shaped before it sets; a drip must be allowed to fall at the precise moment when control would only stiffen it. The neoabstract realist works, therefore, not against time but with it, reading the drying surface as a statesman reads the hour of decision. Every finished canvas is the record of a sequence of such moments, each one irreversible, each one a small wager on what the surface could still become. In that patient negotiation with time, the painter and the diplomat share the same discipline: to act decisively, and then to accept that what has been done can no longer be undone, only answered.

Classical realism provides the grammar, geopolitics the stage, and art the testimony. My transgression is a realism without resignation: it accepts the anarchy of the surface, the persistence of fear, and the gravity of territory, yet insists that a gesture can still begin something new. My final treaty offers no perpetual peace, but a durable, rough, and honest negotiation with the world as it is.

BIOGRAPHIC SYNTHESIS

Thales Castro

ARTIST · POLITICAL SCIENTIST
INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS CONSULTANT
RECIFE, BRAZIL · JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA

I am a non-conformed, non-centric neoabstract realist artist whose work explores the harsh balance between structure and emotion. GROSSO MODO represents a means of achieving goals through the vibrance of art transgression in coarse lean. My art transforms recognizable forms into layered compositions that invite viewers to look beyond the obvious and engage with deeper meanings. Each piece is a conversation between reality and abstraction—a space where interpretation becomes innermost and personal. The individual is the dynamic key to my works.

My academic background in Pennsylvania (Indiana University of Pennsylvania, BA *cum laude* and MA) and in Brazil (Federal University of Pernambuco, PhD) has shaped my creative process, giving me the tools to think critically and contextualize my ideas. For nearly a quarter of a century, from 2000 to 2024, I was a professor and researcher at the Catholic University of Pernambuco (UNICAP). Today, I am a lawful permanent resident of the United States and an adjunct professor in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration at the University of North Florida (UNF).

Diplomacy has played a significant role and left its mark on my journey, amalgamating foreign cultures, distant lands, and hidden folklore rites into one syntagma. Since 2010, I have served as Honorary Consul of the Republic of Malta in Recife, Brazil, and from 2010 to 2019 I presided over the Pernambuco Consular Society. I am also a founding member and was president (2023–2024) of IPERID, the Institute for Strategic Research on Diplomacy and International Relations, based in Recife, Brazil. I have been profoundly shaped by the grammar of negotiation and compromise through the conquest of transnational paradigms.

Diffused air, anthropomorphic density, gravitational forces, fond memories, and hidden traumas all melt into primal voices and the Paleolithic mystique of power relations in art metaphors.

The lecture hall has carried me across the world. From 2008 to 2018, I took part as a professor and researcher for Latin America with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS – Konrad Adenauer Foundation), headquartered in Berlin, Germany, lecturing on Brazilian foreign policy, Latin American politics, democracy, and international security; these and other invited engagements took me to eight countries on three continents: India, Japan, Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, Malta, Portugal, and Germany. I also delivered lectures at the U.S. Department of State (INR) in Washington, DC (2018 and 2019), at Itamaraty, Brazil's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and at the Brazilian War College.

Beyond academia, I am the founder and CEO of COGNITRENDS Global Strategic Intelligence, LLC (www.cognitrends.com), a strategic-intelligence firm advising clients across the United States, Latin America, and Europe.

My first art exhibition, *Diplomacia & Arte*, took place in 2019 in Recife, Brazil, where I showed part of my compositional drive. Resilience has defined my journey since I started painting, inspired by an introductory art course during my time-worn years at the American School of Recife (1980–1994). I have faced challenges that tested my commitment, yet every obstacle became an opportunity to grow and refine my voice on the horizon.

GROSSO MODO is the zenith of twenty-five years of artworks, inspirational drive and psychoanalytic transformations: the offset of a lingering maturity. That is why this book opens with a Prelude, tracing the long, non-linear trajectory from *Embryo Lucidity* (2000) to *Vertical Bloodline* (2019) that made the collection possible. *Avante!*

LIST OF WORKS

STARTING POINT: CONVERGENCES

01 *Those Keys*, 2025
Mixed technique on drywall

02 *Usually Dusk*, 2025
Mixed technique on drywall

03 *Some Dilemmas*, 2025
Mixed technique on drywall

04 *Anxiety Portrait*, 2025
Mixed technique on drywall

05 *Clear Understanding*, 2025
Mixed technique on drywall

06 *Cautious Optimism*, 2026
Acrylic on drywall

07 *Erratic Ruptures*, 2025
Acrylic and tempera on paper

08 *Scattered Sunflowers*, 2025
Acrylic, tempera, and plaster on wood frame

09 *Volatile Structures I*, 2025
Mixed technique on drywall

10 *Volatile Structures II*, 2025
Mixed technique on drywall

MIDDLE GROUND: EQUILIBRIUM

11 *Lasting Fortitude*, 2025
Mixed technique on drywall

12 *Meaningful Quest*, 2025
Acrylic and tempera on canvas

13 *Assigned Peacefulness*, 2025
Acrylic and tempera on canvas

14 *Non-Conformity Utopia*, 2026
Mixed technique on drywall

15 *Seashore Landscape*, 2025
Mixed technique on drywall

16 *Twin SisterC*, 2025
Acrylic on canvas with iron clips

17 *Twin SisterS*, 2025
Acrylic on canvas with iron clips

18 *Night's Fall*, 2025
Acrylic on canvas with iron clips

19 *Distant Proximity*, 2026
Acrylic on canvas

20 *Together Loneliness*, 2026
Acrylic on canvas

EPILOGUE NOTES: RESIGNIFICANCE

21 *Functional Asymmetries*, 2025
Acrylic, charcoal, and plaster on drywall

22 *White Sun*, 2026
Mixed technique on drywall

23 *Yellow Composition*, 2026
Acrylic and crayon on canvas

24 *Arteries Patchworks*, 2026
Acrylic and crayon on canvas

25 *Reddish Aurora*, 2026
Acrylic on canvas

26 *Sanctioned Incisions*, 2025
Acrylic and tempera on paper

27 *Dire Meridian*, 2025
Acrylic and tempera on paper

28 *Innermost Uprising*, 2026
Acrylic and tempera on paper

29 *Extensive Viewpoints*, 2026
Acrylic and tempera on paper

30 *Bluest Skyline*, 2025
Acrylic and gypsum plaster on canvas

31 *Spinal Cord*, 2025
Acrylic and charcoal on paper

32 *Grassy Knoll*, 2025
Acrylic on canvas

33 *Fallen Leaves*, 2025
Acrylic on canvas

To create is to fracture the expected until the unexpected becomes inevitable in the doctrine of intentional roughness. Life is crossed not at gates of certainty, but at thresholds of imperfection, and that is the most genuine beauty approaching us every day. Have you brought the quintessential key?

Thank you! *Obrigado!*

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COLOPHON

GROSSO MODO: The Fine Art of Transgression presents thirty-three works by Thales Castro, created in 2025 and 2026, arranged in three movements: Convergences, Equilibrium, and Resignificance.

Set in TeX Gyre Pagella, a Palatino-style serif, with captions in Inter. Plates are reproduced from photographs of the original works and color-balanced to the paintings.

Seven works are accompanied by detail pages: *Those Keys*, *Anxiety Portrait*, *Non-Conformity Utopia*, *Night's Fall*, *Functional Asymmetries*, *Yellow Composition*, and *Arteries Patchworks*.

WWW.THALESCASTRO.COM

Thales Castro

* All paintings reproduced in this book are available as print-on-demand posters in different sizes. For a handwritten autograph on a printed poster, please contact the artist directly at www.thalescastro.com.