

LnS GALLERY

GUSTAVO ACOSTA

An Unexpected Collision

2 December 2023 - 27 January 2024





Wrapping the Countdown

2023
acrylic on cardboard
13 x 75 inches

GUSTAVO ACOSTA

Gustavo Acosta (b. 1958, Havana, Cuba) is a painter who describes his work as, “an investigation into the human condition, utilizing as testimony not the individual, but the individual’s creative footprint.” Inspired by American realism, architecture, and action painting, his interpretation of structures as an emblem of power explores the social and political aspects that buildings represent. Each rendering is executed in a manner that parallels the fragmented nature of experience as we both move through, and are affected by, our constructions. Throughout his career he has

developed an iconic language balancing vibrant, profound imagery of urban settings, at times intervened by a human presence or besieged by unruly nature, in compositions that conjure intense moods to reflect variances of reality.

Gustavo Acosta earned his BFA from the School of Visual Arts San Alejandro in 1977 and continued his studies at the Superior Institute of Art (ISA) in 1982, both in Havana, Cuba. His work forms part of the permanent collections of Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes (Havana, Cuba), Lowe Art Museum (Miami, FL), and El Museo del Barrio (New York, NY).



The Artist in his Studio
photo: Eliecer Jimenes Almeida



Fixed Game

2023
acrylic on cardboard
38 x 41 inches

Interview with GUSTAVO ACOSTA | Re: An Unexpected Collision

interviewed by: Sofia Guerra

Q1: What inspired this body of work? From subject to shape, and material take us through the thought process/ progression.

The ideas and the concept for this series came from the same work that I was doing before, from my last exhibition, *A Series of Unconnected Thoughts*. In some ways, through the years, nothing changed in my work. It's the same but it evolves little by little. I take different steps, I make errors and I rectify the errors but, I could say that today I work with the same motive, within the same ideas for more than four decades.

I love to design my work to fit the shape of the surface, and to insert my subjects into new shapes was crazy for me, and very unusual at the time. These (boxes) were all things that otherwise were to be thrown away, so I said why not. It's nothing new in art, other artists have been working in that kind of way for years. But I never thought in that way, to put my work on such materials.

Q1.2: What are those ideas?

Ideas I've consistently explored about the human condition, about memory, and how our memories are affected by

our personal internal changes, or by our situation or placement within the world. Every day, our minds are different from the day before. They're constantly affected by the things and events that happen around us. We are in a constant state of adjustment. It can be a lonely dialogue or exploration within ourselves, and at the same time is contingent on what happens around us. Through this I create a poetic way of thinking that translates into the visual work.

Because we are not isolated, but are part of something bigger, I become affected by all the different ways there are to understand art, to make art, and by the art of my colleagues. Even if I don't consciously pay attention to it, I discover that in some way, I start to look at those things and it alters my perception. For example, when I did my last exhibition here the work of Frank Stella (*Sunapee IV*, 1966) was hanging. To give background I am very traditional and fixed in my ideas of making art, using traditional shapes and surfaces. But when I was looking at the Stella, I said to myself 'Ok, I can make something like this,' and that was the start.

I was very curious, and it took months. I made a lot of sketches and small

works; it wasn't from one day to the next. I made the first five canvases, and I enjoyed it a lot. It was very good for me because any time I start to make little changes in my work, it goes in another direction with a different dynamic. This fuels a dynamism that I consistently need and repeatedly informs my work. It motivates me to keep working toward it every day. In this time, I had a commission to make an outdoor mosaic, and I knew I didn't want to make a piece in a rectangular shape that just covers the wall. I proposed a work that had the shape of *Sunapee IV*, or my version of it. I had also come across Korean lettering, or *hangul*, and thought it was very interesting. As I was thinking about these shapes my daughter was receiving a lot of boxes in the mail. I'm a little bit of a hoarder sometimes, and I was keeping the boxes with the prospect of using them for something practical, to reorganize my studio and put supplies in them. So, I started to disassemble the boxes and was intrigued by the shape, and the shape I used for the mosaic commission ended up being that of one of the boxes.

That was the beginning.

Q1.3: Are there any new subjects that you're including, that you find yourself gravitating towards with these new shapes?

I don't think so, but, when I started the work, I noticed that I could include some ideas that I hadn't considered for the work previously. Two examples are the one with the baseball field (*The Weirdest Dream*, 2023, img. 1), and the small one with a racket ball court with the graffiti in front (*Adult Playground*, 2023, img. 2).

I am always accumulating information, photographs, etc. and I have a little archive that goes back years. At one point it was a physical archive but now it's on the computer and I just organize things in different files. With this work I saw the possibility to use these archived things. In some way, the same thing happened with *A Series of Unconnected Thoughts*. The images in that series of drawings were ones I had no plan to use in paintings, but I saw the possibility to use them in the drawings. The same thing happened, more or less, with the boxes. When you start to make a painting, there is a seriousness or pressure, and an impulse to get the more profound result. But when you're making a bunch of drawings you don't have that pressure, or as with the boxes there is no sense or limitation of obligation. You can just, in some way, enjoy the process. It's not a burden, it's just you.

Q2: The title of the show, 'An Unexpected Collision,' alludes to the conception of the series. What two (or more) factors do you see colliding in this show?

When I see my work in one set way as I have in the past, I resolve everything with a certain basis. With this change to the work, suddenly the basis is different. Even if it's just a change in shape. For me, after making art for more than 40 years, it's a big step forward, or back, I don't know yet, but it's a collision between my past work and this new direction. My family is a thermometer for everything in the immediate sense, largely based on the proximity between our life as a unit and my studio practice. The first reaction I received was skepticism accompanied by wide eyes, but that's largely because this is work that they, and everyone, aren't familiar with from me. They may like it, but they may wonder about the longevity or direction, it's a little bit of a shock. Now, I have 10 or 15 canvases lined up ready to work on, and now my mind says, 'a square, a rectangle? How boring,' and this new conflict is something I am going to have to resolve, and I'm sure that in these regular structures different things are going to start to happen.

Q2.1: Like what?

I don't know, but I am going to have to make changes in order to not see the

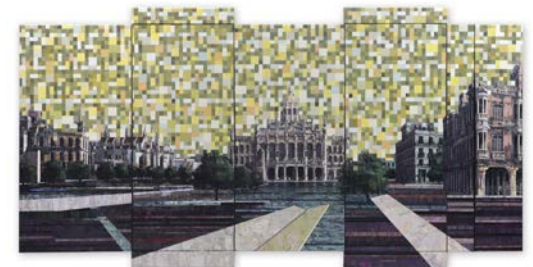
same shape – skew the impression of the shape, or how it relates with outside things. For example, the painting that I made for the project room, *The Missing Link* (2023, img. 3), at its base is one of those regular simple shapes I always did previously. In fact, it's actually a stretcher I had another painting on which I removed, and I used this rectangular stretcher to try and mimic the flaps and things that boxes have. But for now, I still have a lot of boxes to work on, and I'm thinking about other projects. Let us see what happens.



img. 1 | *The Weirdest Dream*, 2023
ill. pg. 12



img. 2 | *Adult Playground*, 2023, ill. pg. 15



img. 3 | *The Missing Link*, 2023, ill. pg. 14

Q3: If you had to summarize the show, or the concept behind the show, in one word, what would it be and why?

“Jump.”

I’m jumping into something where I don’t know what’s going to happen or how it will turn out; I cannot foresee the result. Maybe to use that word rather than collision, as collision is a bit of a strong word but it’s a little jump from the kind of work I have been making my whole life. I’m unsure if it’s going to land or fall flat – I have no idea – but I enjoy this part of it. It’s art, it’s supposed to be something that excites you, and where you have a good time even though at the same time it can also be very serious. For me it’s jumping into something that you don’t know very well, or where it will go. All we have is this kind of uncertainty for the future.

Q4: Having worked on so many different series before, where do you see this standing within that and where do you see your work going from here?

I think it was Paul Simon who wrote a song about how the artist has one trick. But this trick changes only slightly, and everything is the same as that first idea. You have to evolve it, whether it’s sung one way or another, its still the same thing. I think the same thing happens

in visual art. I am someone that even though I love Abstract, Concrete, Abstract Expressionist, or Representational art I can never be any other type of artist from what I am. I have a history and narrative behind my work, there is expression and symbolism that I love. I am not a purist in any way, and I have to find the most effective way to be coherent in my work to develop the message, the commentary about us, our society, and history using every tool my hands are capable of using.

Q5: Do you have a favorite piece in the exhibition? Which one, and why?

The Missing Link is a very important piece for me, but *Revelation at the Control Yard* (img. 4) also stands out as important. It’s a painting that combines different things, or ‘landmarks,’ from Cuba. One is a bus lot of sorts, and that’s why there are all those weird lines on the floor. The other are the mountains, an original or native piece of the country that are the symbol of Cuba.

I also love *Resemblance* (img. 5), for different reasons, but I love them all separately for their own reasons. *Resemblance*, is very important because of the shape, it reminded me of floor plans to old churches, and provided so many different angles. The one of the people playing baseball, *The Weirdest Dream*, is also important to me, and it’s those kind of works that are the ones I feel will become very important for me in the near future; the ones that will get me through to another place. They’re helping me draw a new path.

Q5.1: Do they have something in common that makes you feel that way?

These works, in some way, go back to artworks I made a long time ago. So, it starts, or continues, a cycle and when those coincidences happen a lot of interesting ideas start to form. It’s that feeling I get when I can connect one thing from the present to one thing in the past, and it creates a synergy that starts to operate within itself, and I love when that happens. It feels like things start to go smoothly, or line up, and it’s a very comforting feeling.



img. 4 | *Revelation at the Control Yard*, 2023, ill. pg. 11



img. 5 | *Resemblance*, 2023, ill. pg. 9





Scenic View

2023
acrylic on cardboard
16 ½ x 15 ¼ inches



Resemblance

2023
acrylic on cardboard
62 x 65 inches



Eye Contact

2023
acrylic on cardboard
18 ¾ x 15 ½ inches



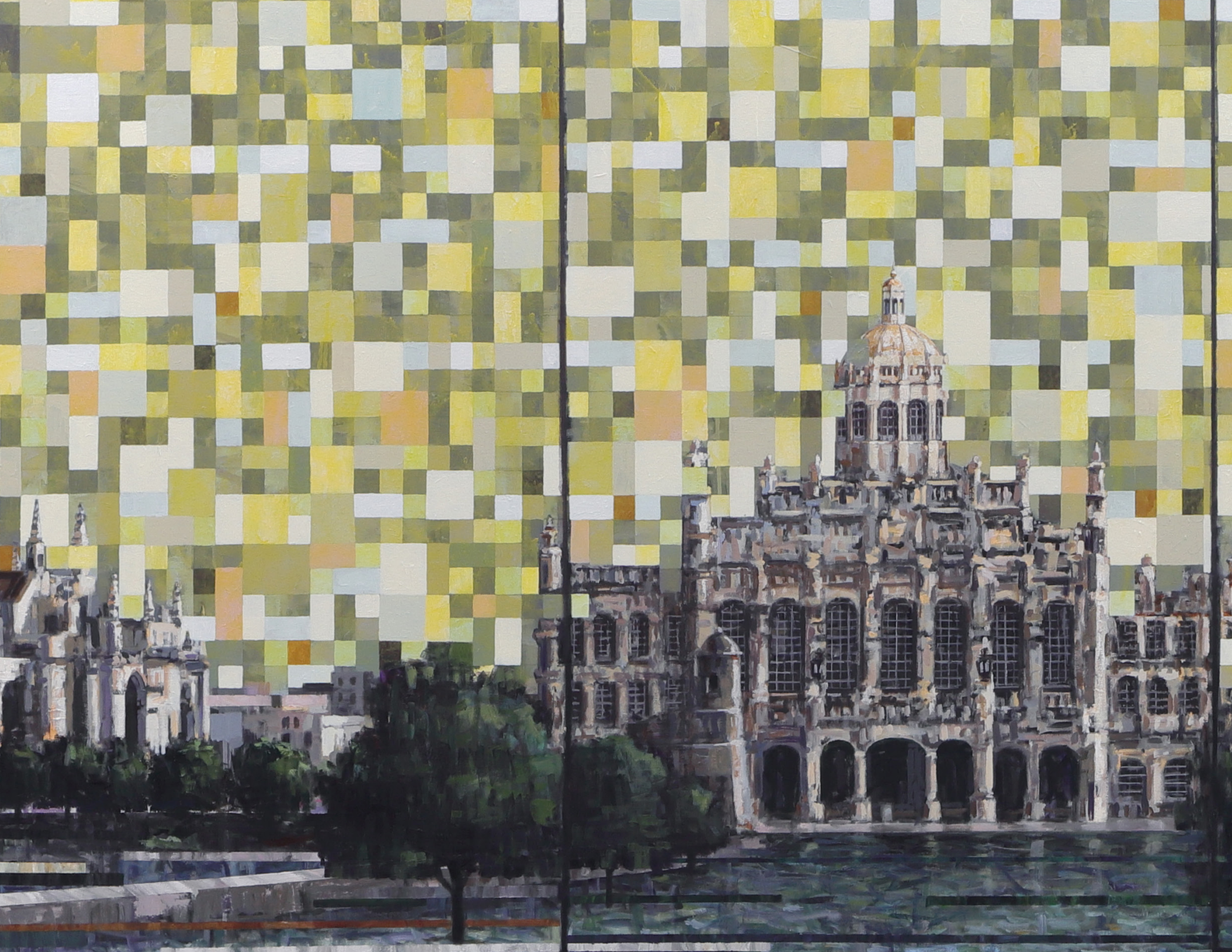
Revelation at the Control Yard

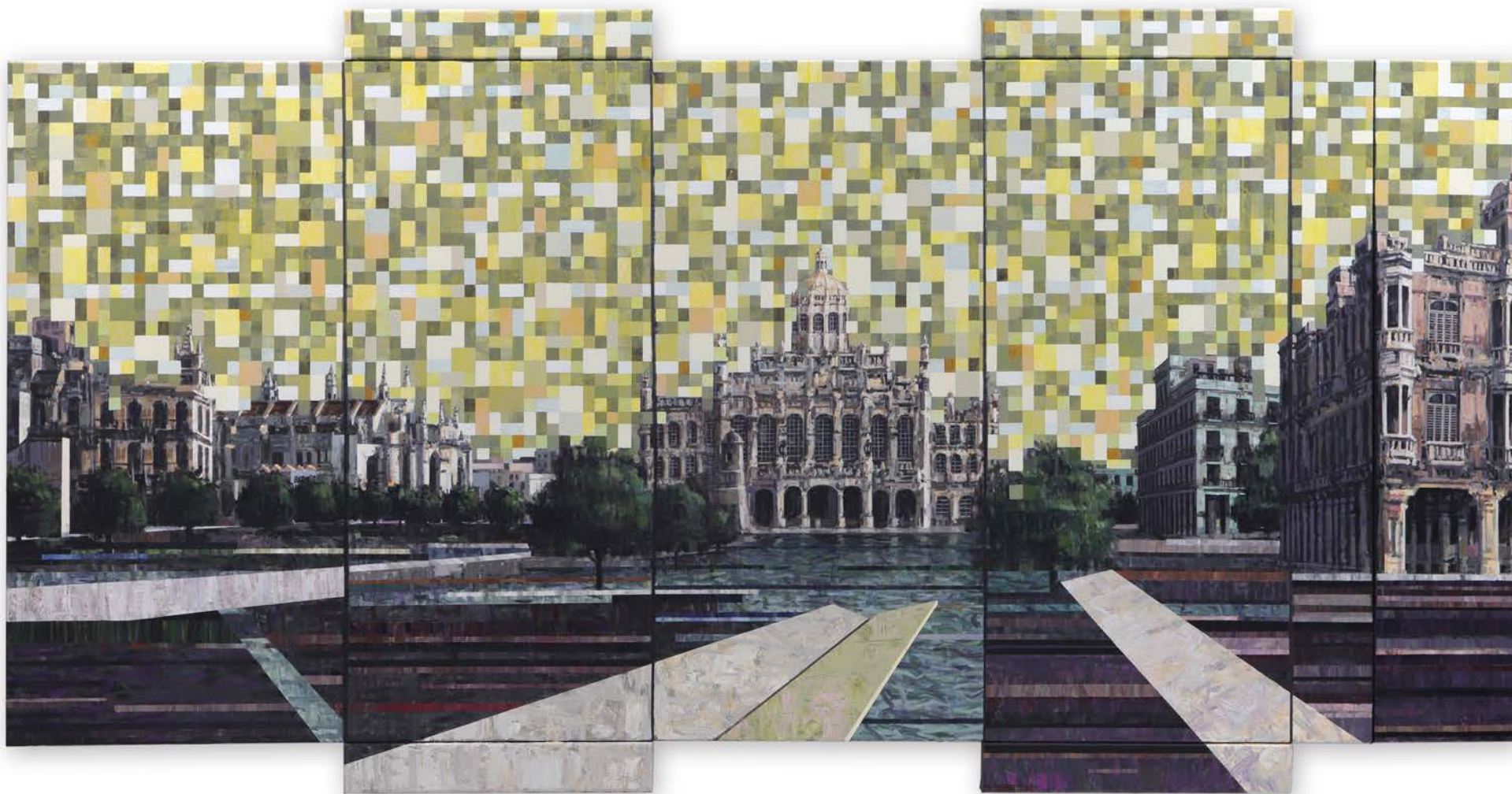
2023
acrylic on cardboard
59 x 97 inches



Field Trip

2023
acrylic on cardboard
6 ¾ x 9 ¾ inches





The Missing Link

2023
acrylic on canvas
65 x 127 inches



Adult's Playground

2023
acrylic on cardboard
19 ¼ x 28 ¾ inches



The Weirdest Dream

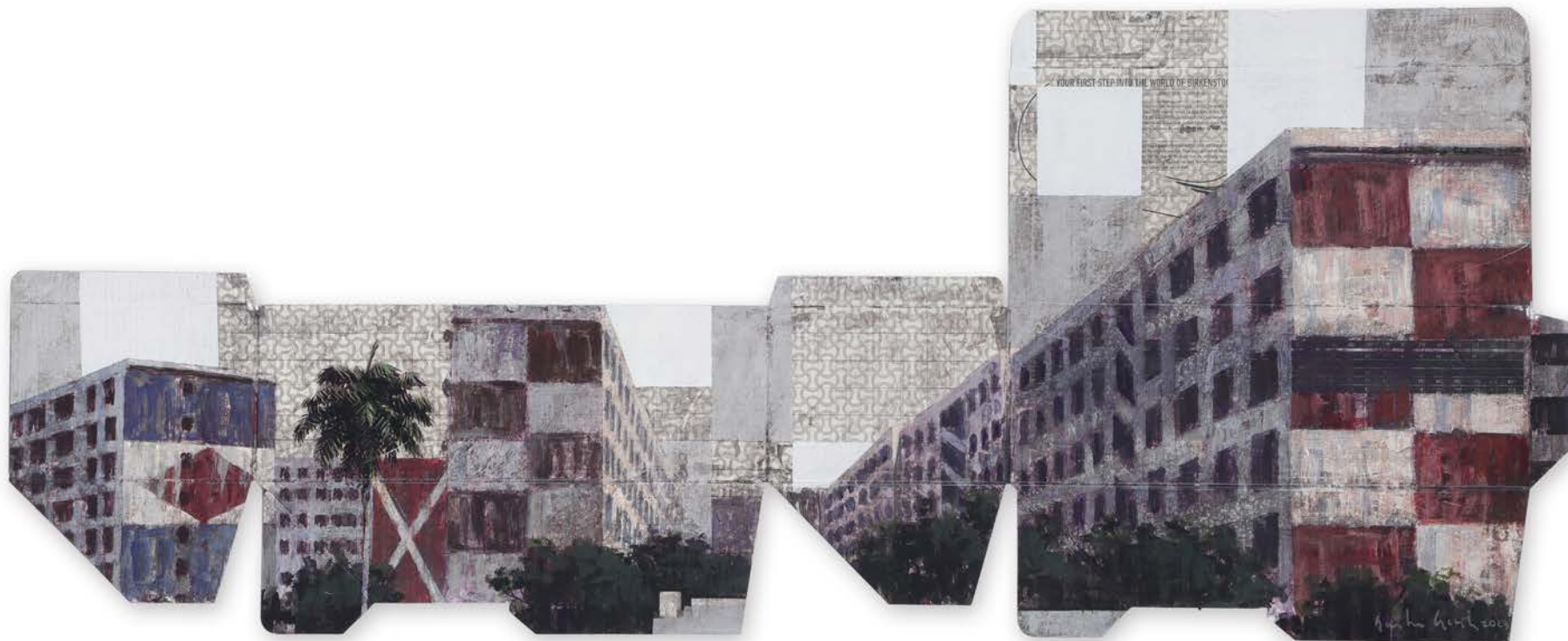
2023
acrylic on cardboard
60 x 87 inches





Fake Fall

2023
acrylic on cardboard
29 ¾ x 25 inches



Malevich in Mind

2023
acrylic on cardboard
15 x 36 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches



Singing Lessons

2023
acrylic on cardboard
24 x 37 inches



The Canon, Definition and Meaning

2023
acrylic on cardboard
14 ¼ x 49 ¾ inches

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GALLERY HOURS

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11:00am-6:00pm

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12:00pm-5:00pm

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By Appointment