



Divine Divide
Natalie Lavelle

11 - 22 August 2026

Material Encounters

Is an artwork ever encountered in the same way twice?

The light has shifted since morning. Bodies move through space carrying with them their own thoughts, memories and ways of being. What initially appears black unfurls into a glistening pearlescence.^[1] Silver catches the light before dissolving again.^[2] A bronze surface oxidises as it touches the air.^[3] When these works are encountered for the first time, it may also be the last time they are in quite this way.

Divine Divide continues Magandjin/Brisbane-based artist Natalie Lavelle's sustained inquiry into the material life of painting, returning it to its most fundamental conditions: paint, canvas and frame. Named simply as the pigment that constitutes it, each work offers an opportunity to lean into the immediate sensuous experience of the painting itself, where the meeting between artwork and audience is unique to that moment in time.

Medium and scale are important mechanisms in the construction of these works, heightening the material qualities of painting without significantly altering its form. Lavelle's process begins by laying the canvas flat and priming it with large gestural strokes. This is followed by successive layers of earthy and metallic pigment, washed across the canvas. Linen can only hold so much at a time before reprieve, so it is quickly guided into place before time has its chance to intervene. While this method appears spontaneous, it is the result of a process of undivided attention that is meticulous but never absolute. Despite the accumulation of these

layers, the paint never quite reaches the edge of the canvas, leaving the linen exposed and drawing attention to the limits of its surface. In this way, the final work is the result of a continual exchange between artist intention and medium behaviour. While Lavelle establishes the conditions of the painting's formation, the material ultimately determines its own outcome.

Moving beyond the painted surface, Lavelle turns her attention to an often-overlooked component of painting: its frame. In *Untitled (Silver/Pearl/Bronze)*, protruding steel brackets transform the frame into part of the painting's material structure, through which the relationship between surface, form and space can be experienced. Within *Divine Divide*, this inquiry into material structure continues through the recurring vertical line that anchors each painting. A divide may ordinarily suggest separation, a turning away from one another. Here, however, this surface and spatial divide marks a place of meeting and departure, a single point within a continuum that has no defined beginning or end.

Underlying Lavelle's inquiry is a lineage extending through Colour Field Painting and Minimalism. These movements reject the realm of symbolic interpretation through a return to the material qualities of painting. Paint is paint. Canvas is canvas. Frame is frame. While composed into seemingly permanent, cohesive forms, every material encounter is ephemeral, enticing viewers to return to each work and experience it anew.

- Felix Reid

[1] *Untitled (Roman Black)*, diptych, 2026.

[2] *Untitled (Silver/Pearl/Bronze)*, 2026.

[3] *Untitled (Bronze)*, 2026.

Front cover: *Untitled (Silver/Pearl/Bronze)*, 2026.

Back cover: *Untitled (Copper/Silver)*, 2026.

Photography: Louis Lim



Jan Manton Gallery
54 Vernon Terrace, Teneriffe QLD 4005
Tue - Fri: 10 am to 4 pm, Sat: 10 am - 3pm
info@janmantonart.com
0419 657 768

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