


*Falling  
Towards  
Light*

Ethan Shoshan



## *Casting Rainbows*



*"He was the color of the moth, once the dust is brushed off"*

It's a quest to find a history from the unspoken. Growing up I never really got a chance to know my family history. My parents were never home, always working to raise 3 children. All I can remember is every night, when my mother turned out the lights in the room my brother and I slept... in the darkness I was alone trying to focus my eyes through the nothingness. I would open and close my eyes to see if there is a difference and couldn't, I could only see tiny specks of color making out darkness, like a pixelated image in red, brown, green, blue, and purple.

My father would take me to a nearby park and push me on the swings; I would cut through the darkness in the air and imagine flying up to the light of the moon till I got nauseous...

I never had any interest in my family history till now, long after my father and grandparents are dead. They only alluded to the troubles of the past they hoped to forget... My father laughing as he showed me his eye and told me it was damaged from when he worked in the Israeli Army as a deep sea diver and got too close to a mine and had it operated on... and as a family we stood in my grandparents living room on couches covered in clear plastic vinyl watching the movie *Escape From Sobibor*. There were tears in my grandfather's eyes briefly before wiping them away.

I am only now coming to hear stories about their life back then, through photographs and notes from memoirs published through a Holocaust Resource Center in New Jersey. To me these are the most valuable object my family has; their story...

I've collected my grandparents clothes, some objects that speak to me of their past and of their life as an immigrant in the United States, put together, taken apart, and manipulated like the way our eyes adjust to the darkness.

I read these memoirs describing their experiences in context; the struggles and hardships under oppression and persecution extending beyond my family, and take the moth metaphor to heart - like the moth to a flame, burning the past life to start another.

I remember running after fireflies in the dark - trying to capture the light and see how a little creature can create so much magic... And so I've been experimenting with light and how we see it, separating colors through a clear film suspended on water and using paper to capture it. The colors are like looking into a single particle of light and distilling it.

I'm putting together the pieces of a puzzle for myself of how nature tends its own, learning from what I see developing, what home is, what family are, when there is only silence.

I am working on a pair of stone hearts, symbolic of my grandparents' commitment to each other as they built another life; their strength is an unspoken endurance.

When I was 16 I found my mom's diary. It dates back to 1972 - when she was 16 on a trip to Israel. It chronicles her experiences with family, being single and the quest for love. At the time I felt her questions similar to my own questions of ever finding "the one" - of saving yourself - of longing - of meaning in life - of caresses that never end. Never in all my years of growing up or the turmoil between my parents did any conversations around these questions materialize. The diary is the only insight I really have with my mother, again unspoken. At the time, I didn't have the energy to finish reading it, finding out how she met my father and brought him back to NYC to craft a life. I knew what I could understand since I was there but I didn't want to know nor could I recognize if she gave up any of her aspirations, hopes, or desires.

I remember watching TV at 7 years old - the Bionic Woman - as she faces another impending threat to the world and me confronting the mystery of mortality out of fear she may not save the world in time. A kid at 7 confronting death, pretty common - I ran screaming into my mothers room and asked her about the meaning of life; if I will die - and afraid of it. She seemed bothered by me and told me its fine and that I should go back to my room, that I have time, even though I look at the clock and imagine it ticking on my insides. I wanted to be consoled; held. Since then, I've kept my thoughts to myself, of looking for answers in the unspoken dialogues between my surroundings and relations with people.

Now, I gravitate to my family, still searching past the unrest of my time, for answers. Trying to find the other story in my story, as Robert puts its.

And all this digging into the past reminds me of what I'm really searching for, of what can be born from the flames; of finding home. With this displaced or misplaced feeling of things unsettled, I realize the life I'm living is a home, the friends I've made to be my family. Being queer you learn to adapt wherever you go, however unsettling, traumatic, intense, and passionate. Casting rainbows in water, a metaphor for my queer family; a self-reflexive understanding of elements, friends, relationships, communities, colors coming together to form something unique albeit ephemeral - a full spectrum of possibilities...

My proverbial gold at the end of the rainbow... - Ethan Shoshan, 2011

*"The culture and civilization of the  
twentieth century was fading before our  
very eyes as the train moved away in the  
distance.*

*We were left with hearts of stone.  
In our mouths there were no words.  
All that was left were heavy sighs."*

*Julius Gelber  
November 15, 1942*

*Previous Page*

*PLATE 1:*

*RESTING*

*enamel on photographic print*

*6" x 6"*

*(left)*

*PLATE 2:*

*EXCERPTS PRINTS*

*on vellum,*

*11" x 8 1/2"*

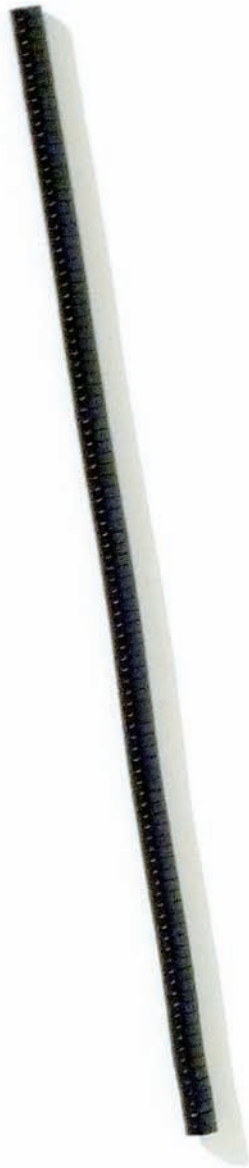
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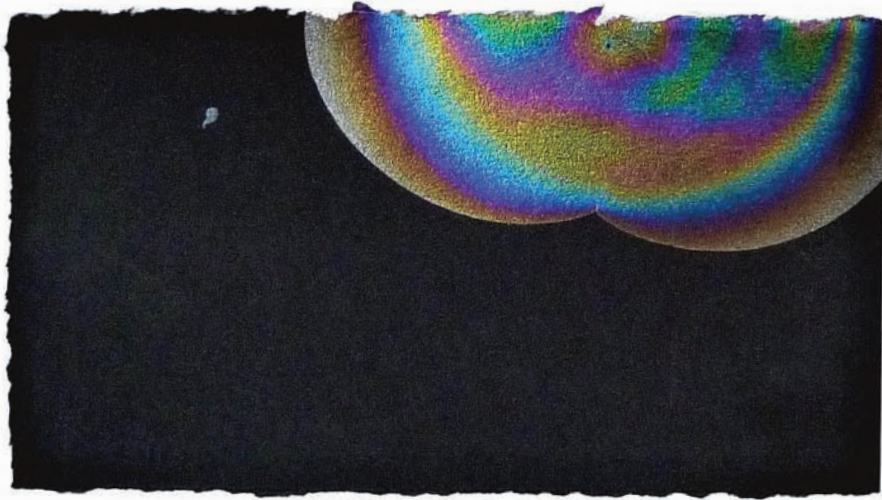
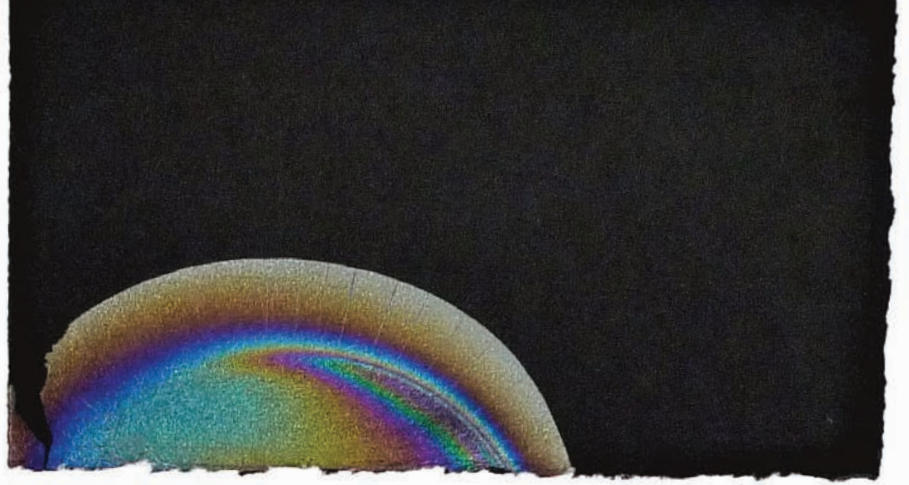
*PLATE 3:*

*EXCERPTS PRINTS*

*on vellum,*

*11" x 8 1/2"*

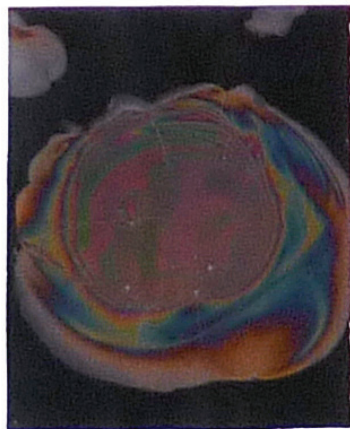
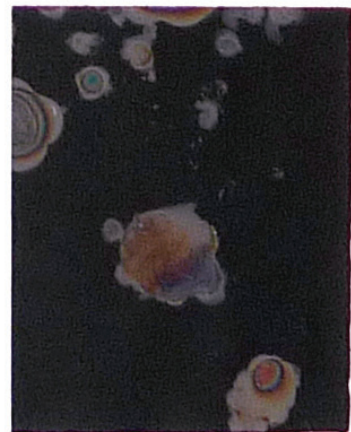
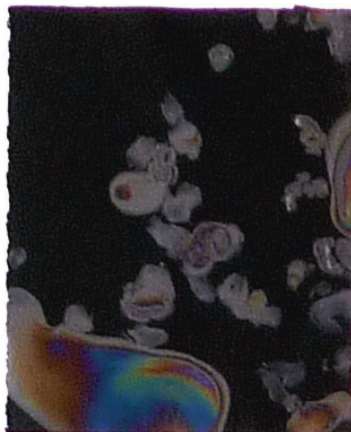
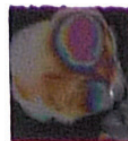
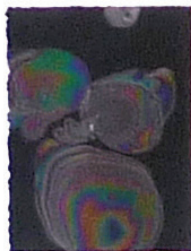
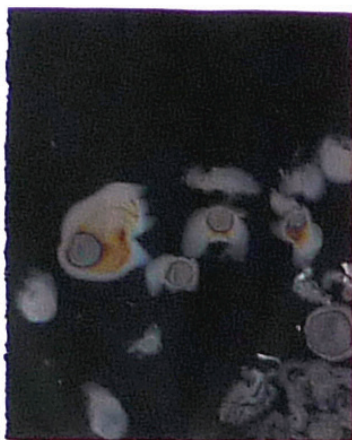
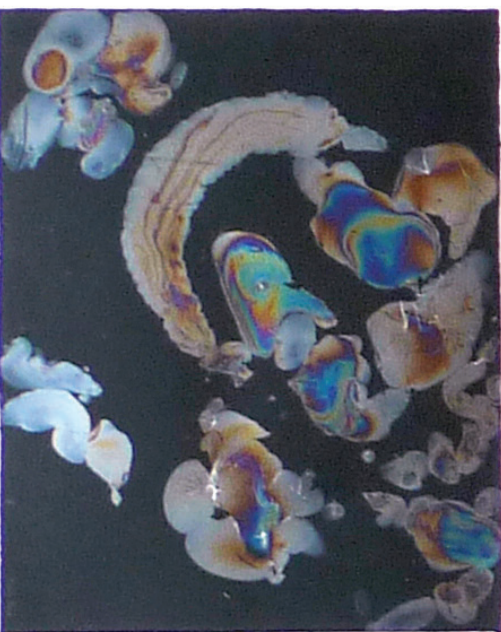


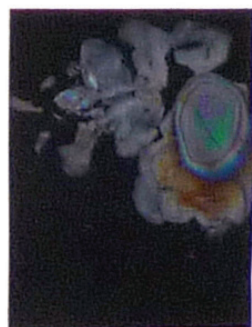
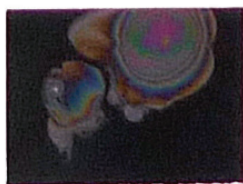
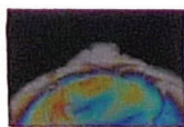
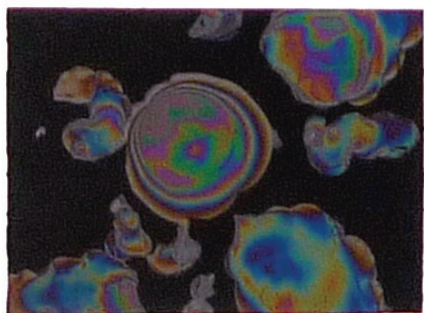
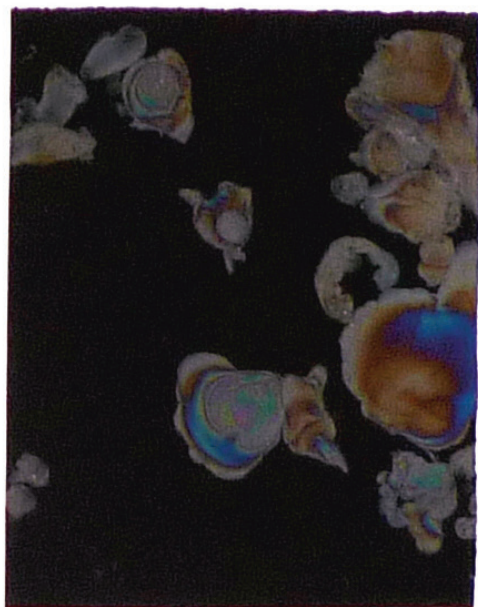
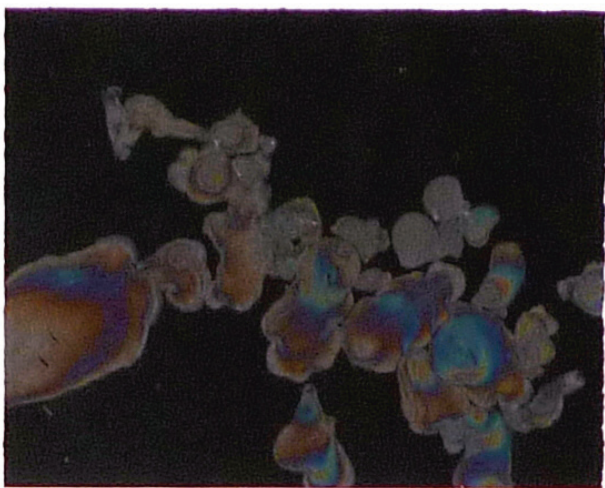


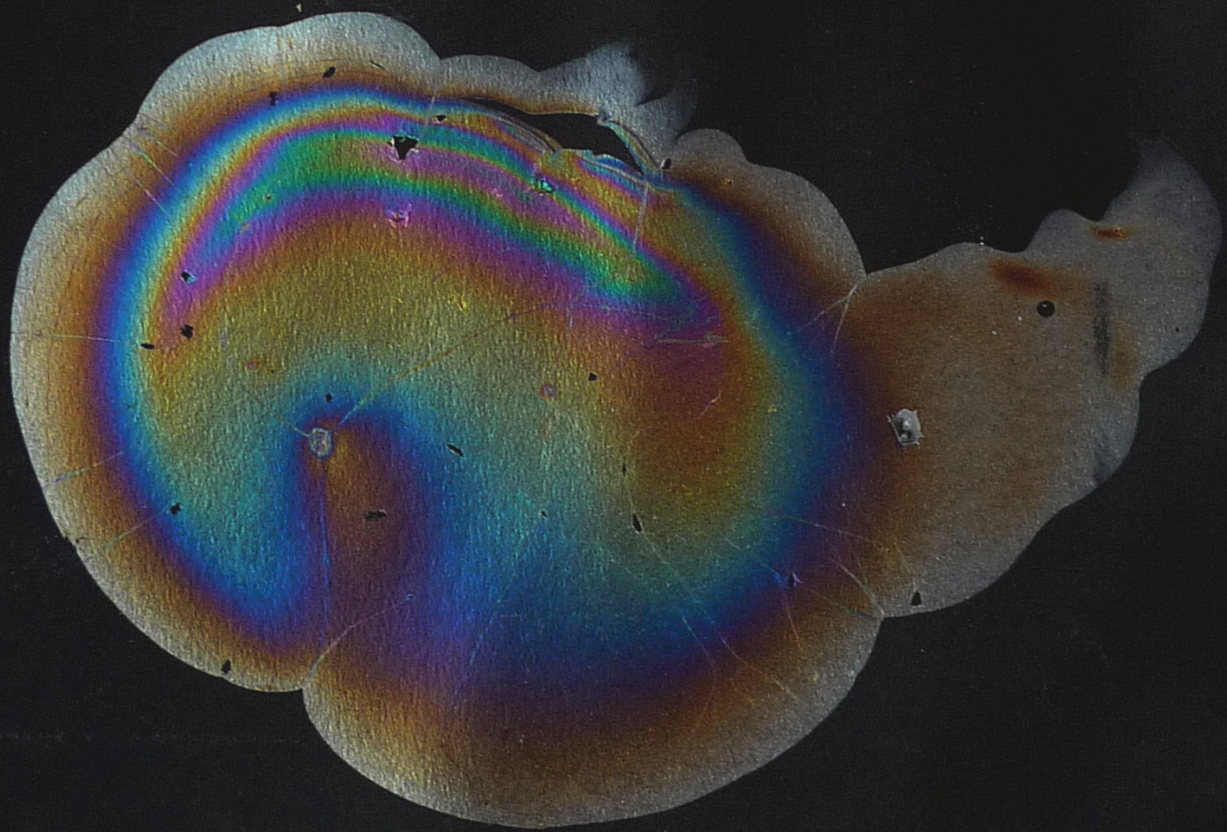
(left)  
PLATE 4:  
WE'RE HOLDING ON BY  
AN INVISIBLE THREAD  
OF ATTRACTION  
2 nails, magnets,  
15" x 1/2" x 1/2"

(right)  
PLATE 5:  
DIVIDING  
enamel on cotton rag paper,  
2 parts, overall dimension,  
9 1/2" x 11"

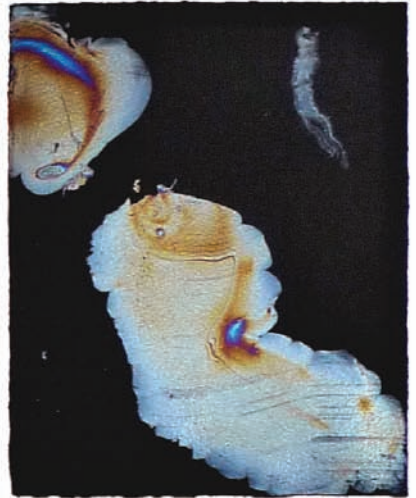
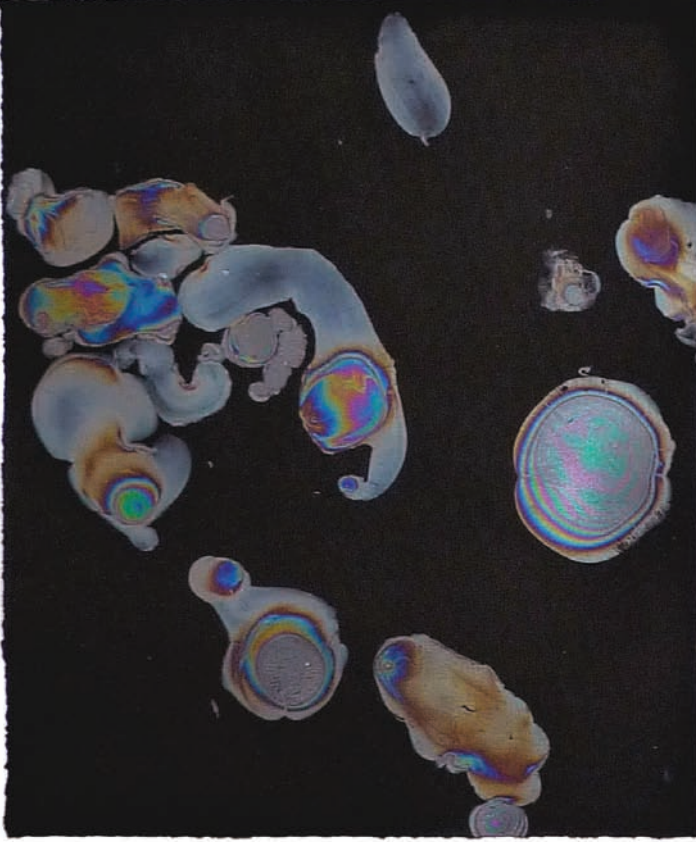
PLATE 6:  
*FAMILY TREE*  
enamel on cotton rag paper,  
17 parts, overall dimension,  
4½' x 8'





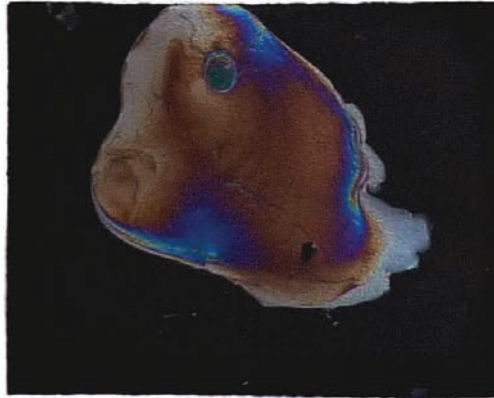






(left)  
 PLATE 7:  
 BEGINNING  
 enamel on cotton rag paper,  
 14" x 11½"

(right)  
 PLATE 8:  
 FAMILY TREE  
 enamel on cotton rag paper,  
 3 parts, overall dimension,  
 26" x 24"

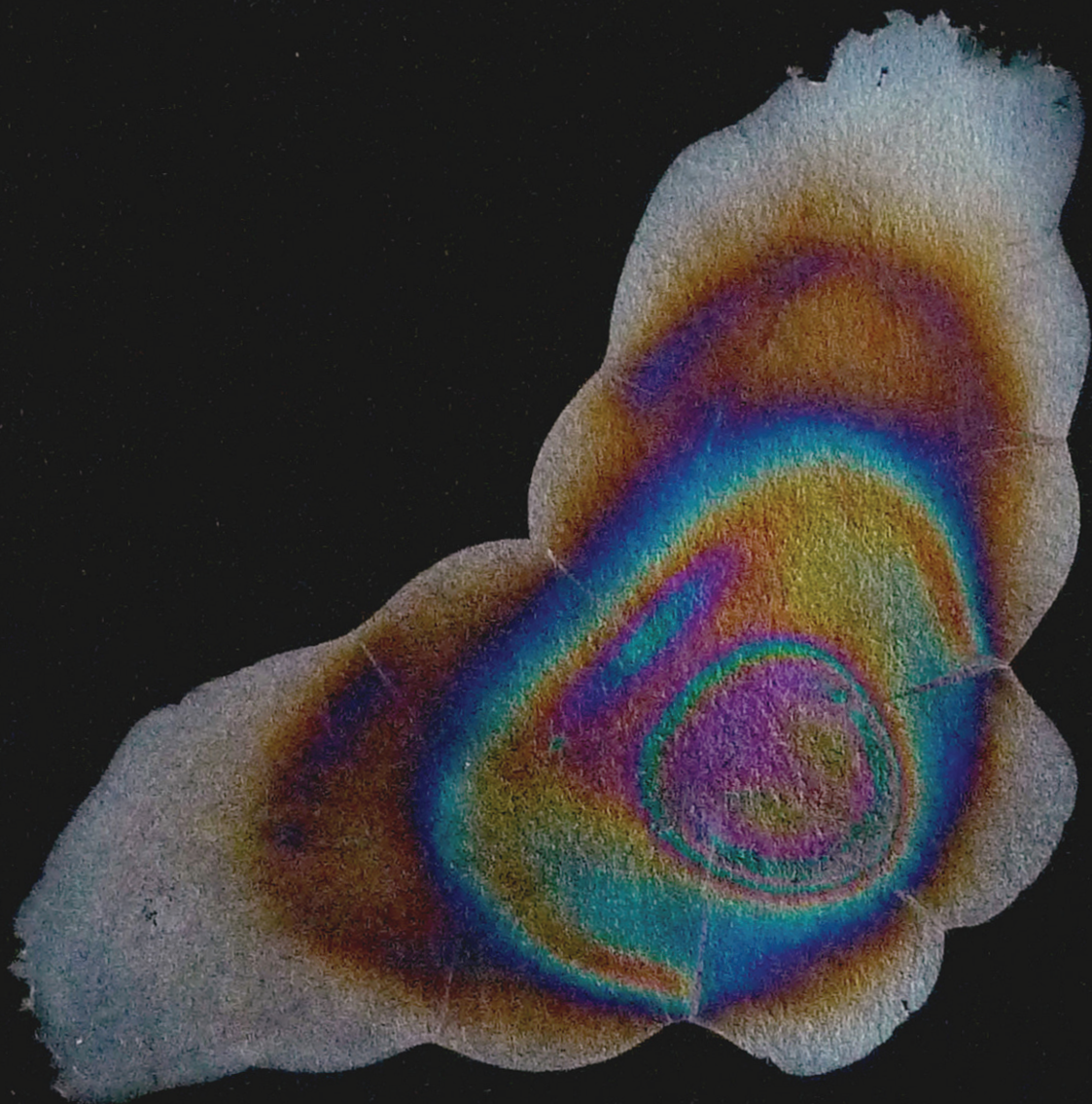


Overleaf  
 PLATE 9:  
 STUDIES FOR A HEART  
 OF STONE  
 salt, acrylic, gypsum cement  
 pair, overall dimensions,  
 6" x 7" x 3½"

Following Spread  
 (left)  
 PLATE 10:  
 PORTRAIT OF A  
 FAMILY BECOMING  
 enamel, photographs, glass,  
 leather, silk, found silver rings,  
 10" x 3½" x ½" each

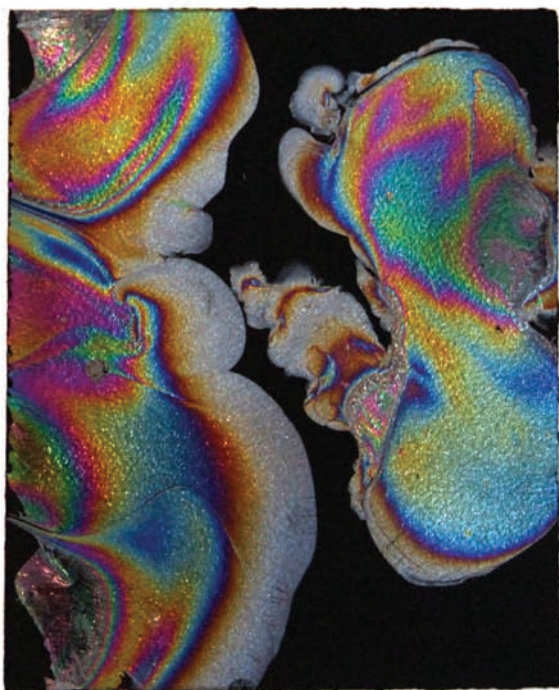
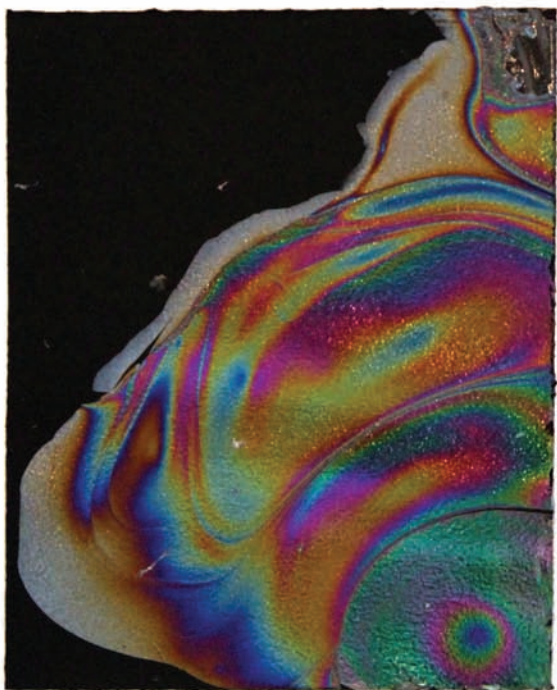
(right)  
 PLATE 11:  
 A START FOR SOMETHING  
 DIFFERENT  
 enamel on cotton rag paper,  
 10" x 8"







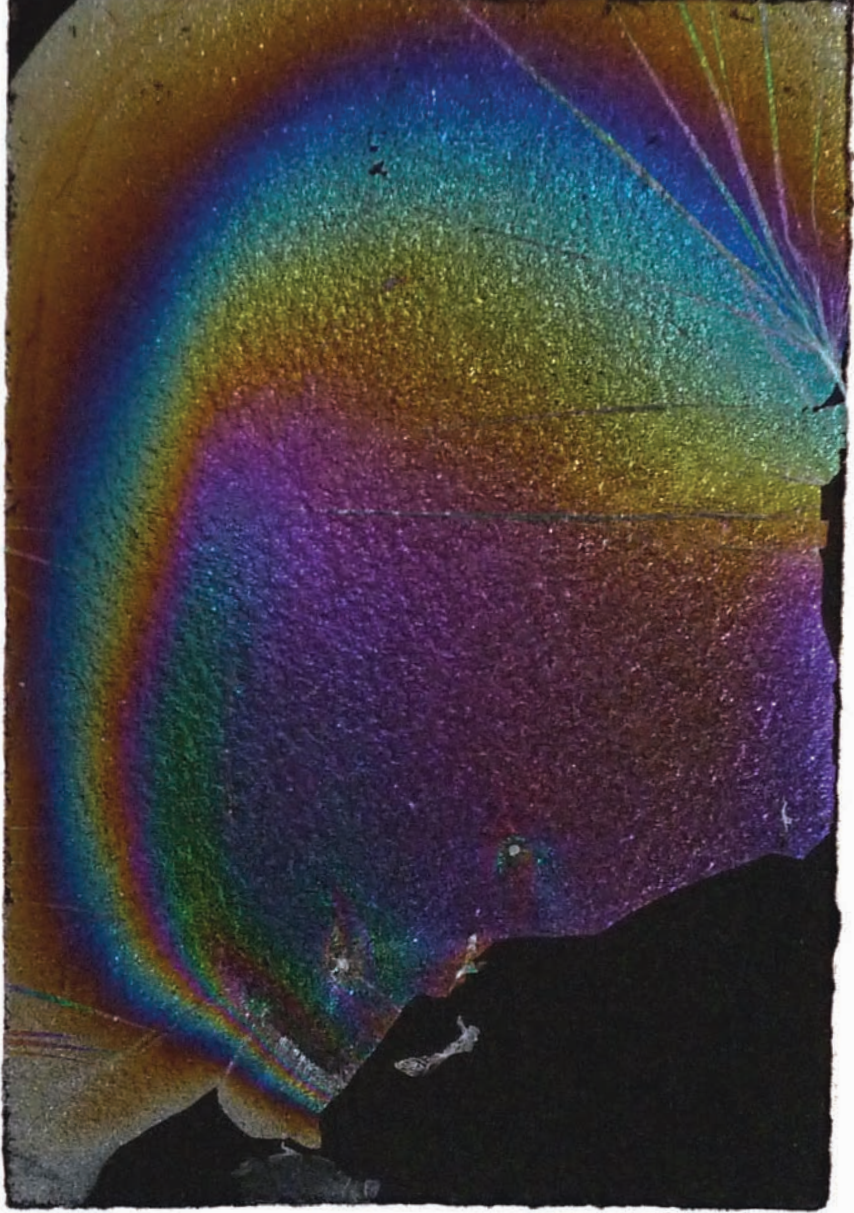












*Previous Spread*

*(left)*

PLATE 12:

*GYPSY*

*enamel on cotton rag paper*  
*4 parts, overall dimension,*  
*21" x 17*

*(right)*

PLATE 13:

*HOME IS WHERE*  
*MY FRIENDS ARE,*  
*WHERE MY HEART IS,*  
*AND THAT I CAN*  
*CARRY IT AROUND*  
*WITH ME*  
*WHEREVER I GO*  
*clothes, suitcase*

*(left)*

PLATE 14:

*BEGINNING AGAIN*

*enamel on cotton rag paper,*  
*16" x 12"*

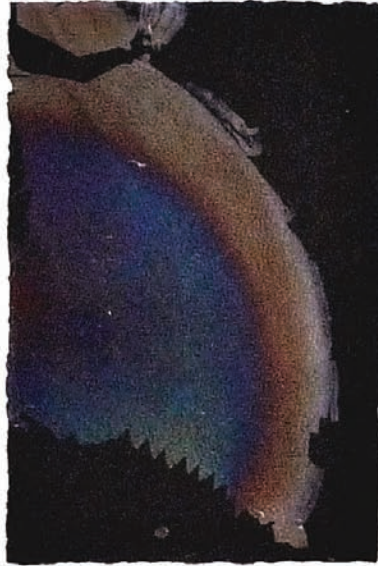
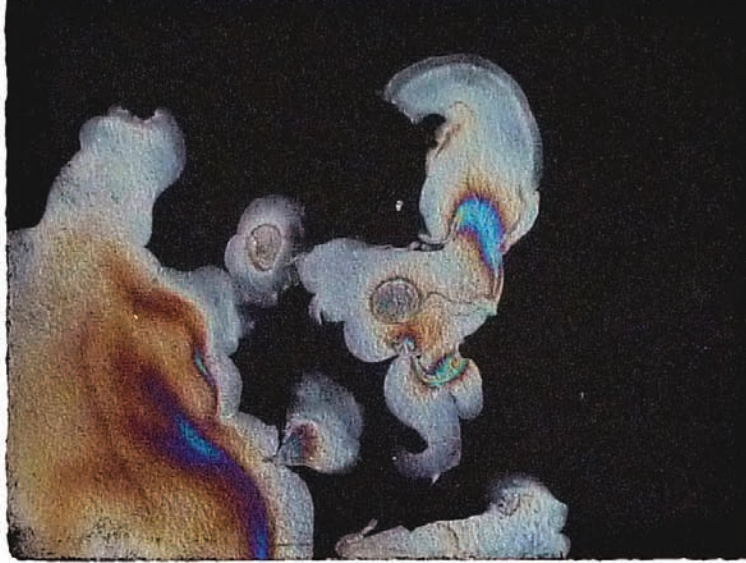
*(right)*

PLATE 15:

*BROKEN MIRROR*

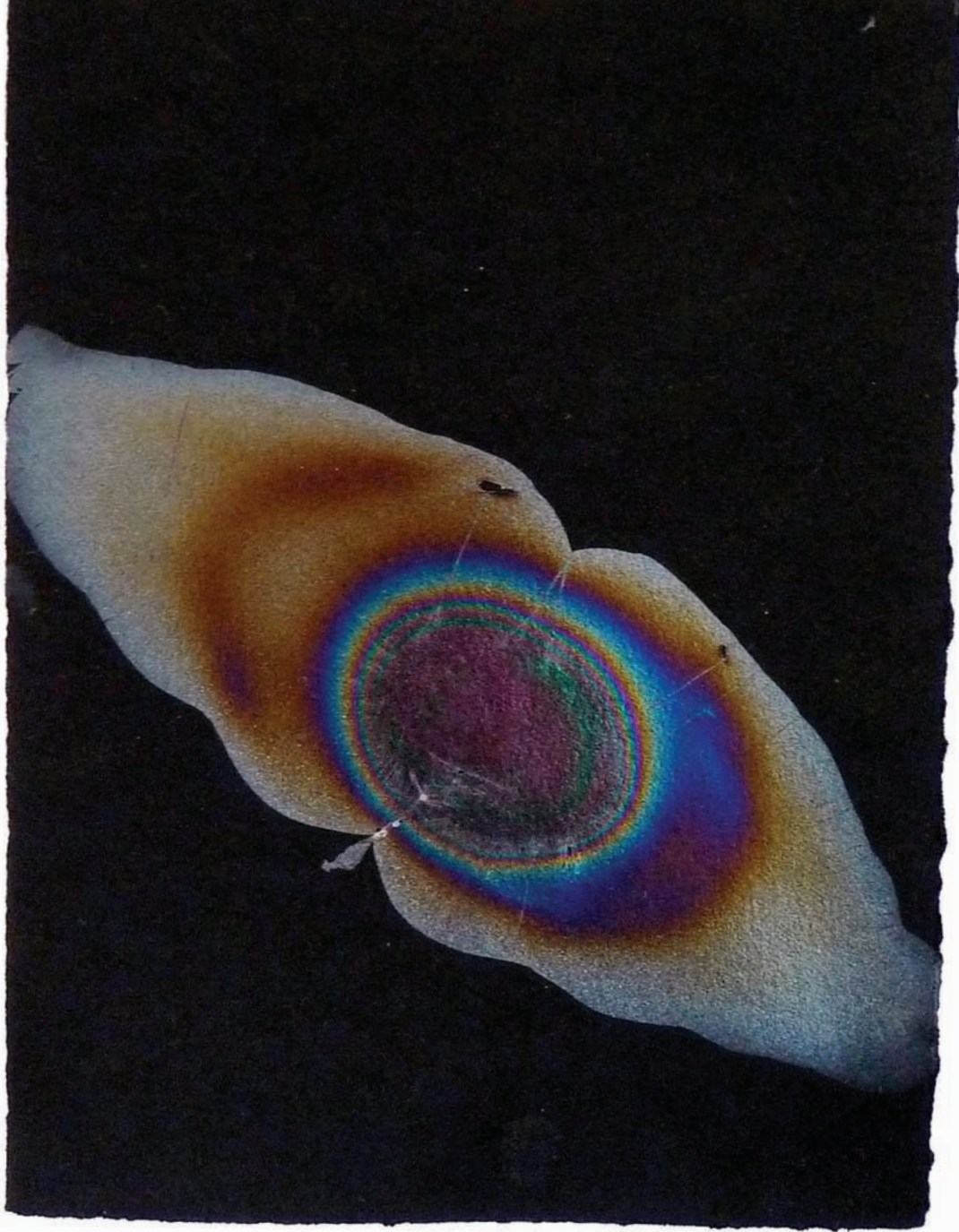
*enamel on cotton rag paper,*  
*6" x 4"*





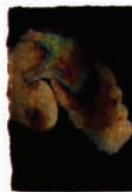
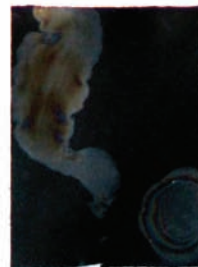
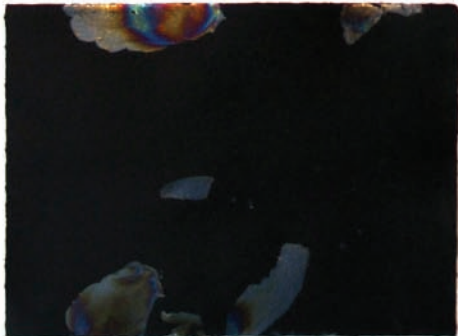
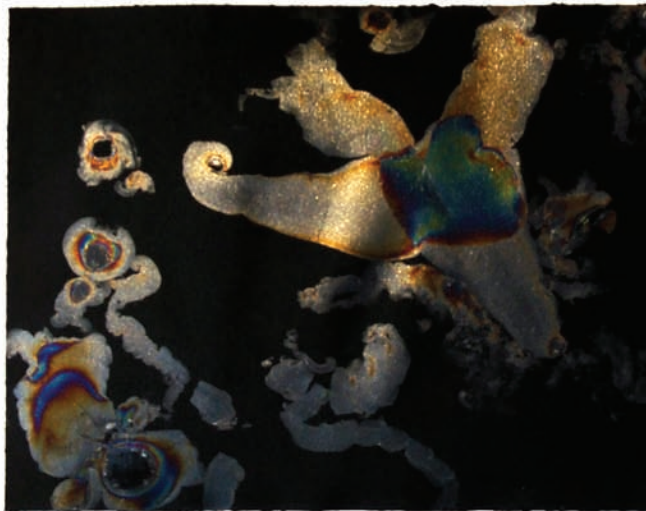
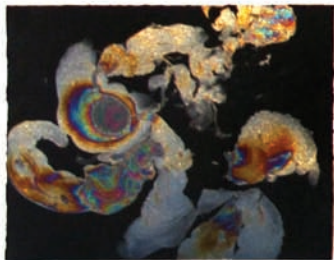
(left)  
PLATE 16:  
WHY DO I FEEL LIKE  
EVERYONE IS  
PUSHING ME DOWN...  
I HOPE THAT SOMEDAY  
SOMEONE WILL  
PUSH ME UP  
graphite, magnets, shelf,  
10" x 10" x 10"

(right)  
PLATE 17:  
BREATHING  
enamel on cotton rag paper  
3 parts, overall dimension,  
13" x 12"

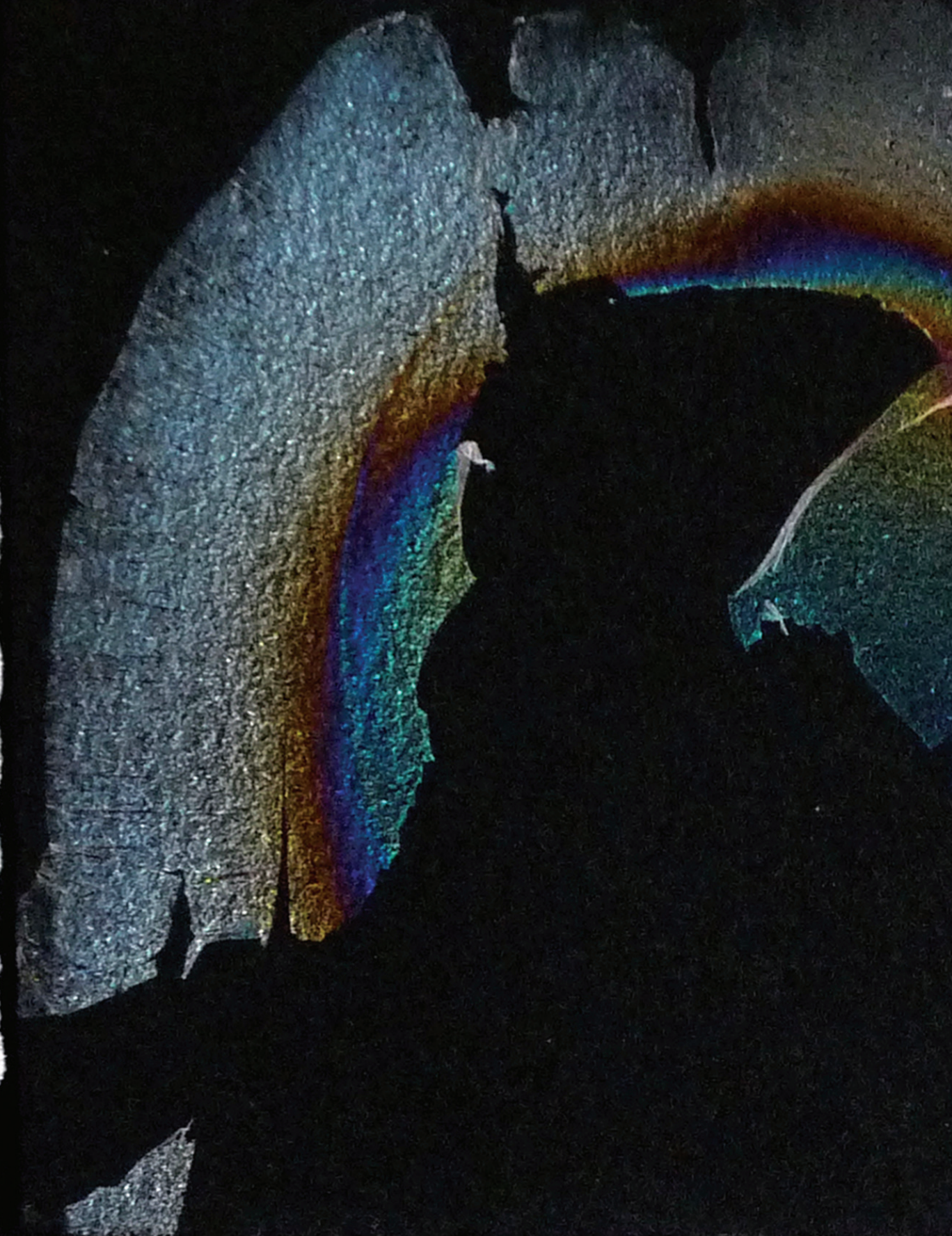


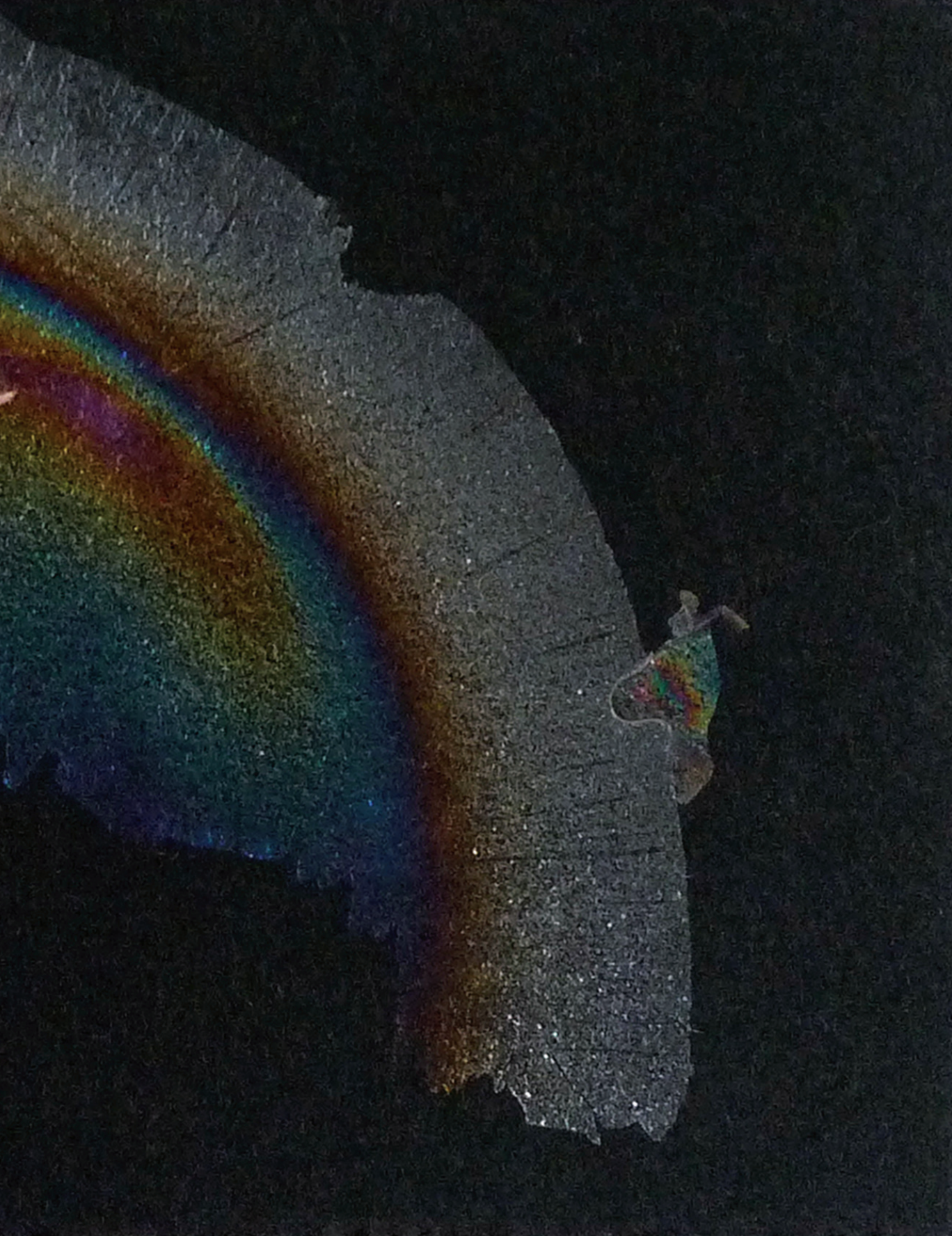
(left)  
PLATE 18:  
*SEARCHING*  
enamel on cotton rag paper  
8" x 6"

(right)  
PLATE 19:  
*FAMILY TREE*  
enamel on cotton rag paper  
8 parts, overall dimension,  
44" x 43"



(overleaf)  
PLATE 20:  
*BROKEN RAINBOW*  
enamel on cotton rag paper,  
4" x 6"





## *Falling Towards Light*

February 12 – 26, 2011

Presented by

Commonwealth & Council

Hosted at

Gallery 3209,

Los Angeles, CA

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Ethan Shoshan

[www.disiterate.com](http://www.disiterate.com)

Commonwealth & Council

[www.commonwealthandcouncil.com](http://www.commonwealthandcouncil.com)

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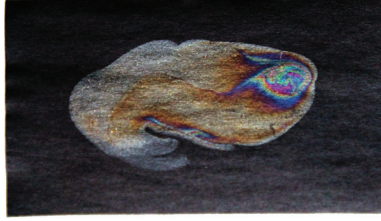


PLATE 21:  
*IGNITED*  
enamel on  
construction paper,  
6" x 4"

Commonwealth & Council presents *Falling Towards Light*, a solo exhibition incorporating light as substance and medium by NY-based artist Ethan Shoshan, hosted by Gallery 3209 in Culver City.

For his first solo exhibition in Los Angeles, Shoshan unpacks his grandfather's timeworn suitcase from his immigration to the United States, full of forgotten dusty clothes and papers. Shoshan contemplates the description of his grandfather discovered in his great-uncle's journal during World War II as a "moth," considering light as a metaphor for flight (departure and arrival), and archives the unspoken and fractured narratives of one's "family tree." In the works on paper, droplets and swirls of clear enamel fleetingly cling to their surfaces. The visible colors on these fragile and deteriorating surfaces reflect upon and direct our vision to look through the materiality displayed.

The works—papers capturing light, magnetic sculptures substituting the body for relationships, a pair of stone hearts emphasizing the human condition—explore concepts of diaspora and quests for home, acceptance, prosperity, and community—the proverbial gold at the end of the rainbow.

Ethan Shoshan is a social ecologist who uses relational aesthetics to highlight the importance of everyday gestures. His last project, with i/EQ Community Arts Collective, *Escape to Uranus*, a queer sci-fi utopic odyssey focused on inverting racial and gendered societal roles through a multimedia exhibition and fashion performance. He has exhibited and performed on the streets and at the Kitchen, Aljira, PØST, Envoy Enterprises, Collective Unconscious, Bronx Academy of Arts and Dance, Galeria De La Raza, Le Petit Versailles, 92nd St Y, and other venues. His previous projects have been reviewed in *The New York Times*, *Art In America*, *BlackBook*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *Artforum*, and *Washington Post*, and have aired on *Public Access TV*. He is currently in residency at *Commonwealth & Council* and is curating an exhibition exploring individual archival histories, an adaptation of his last solo project at *The Center for Book Arts* in NYC for 2012.