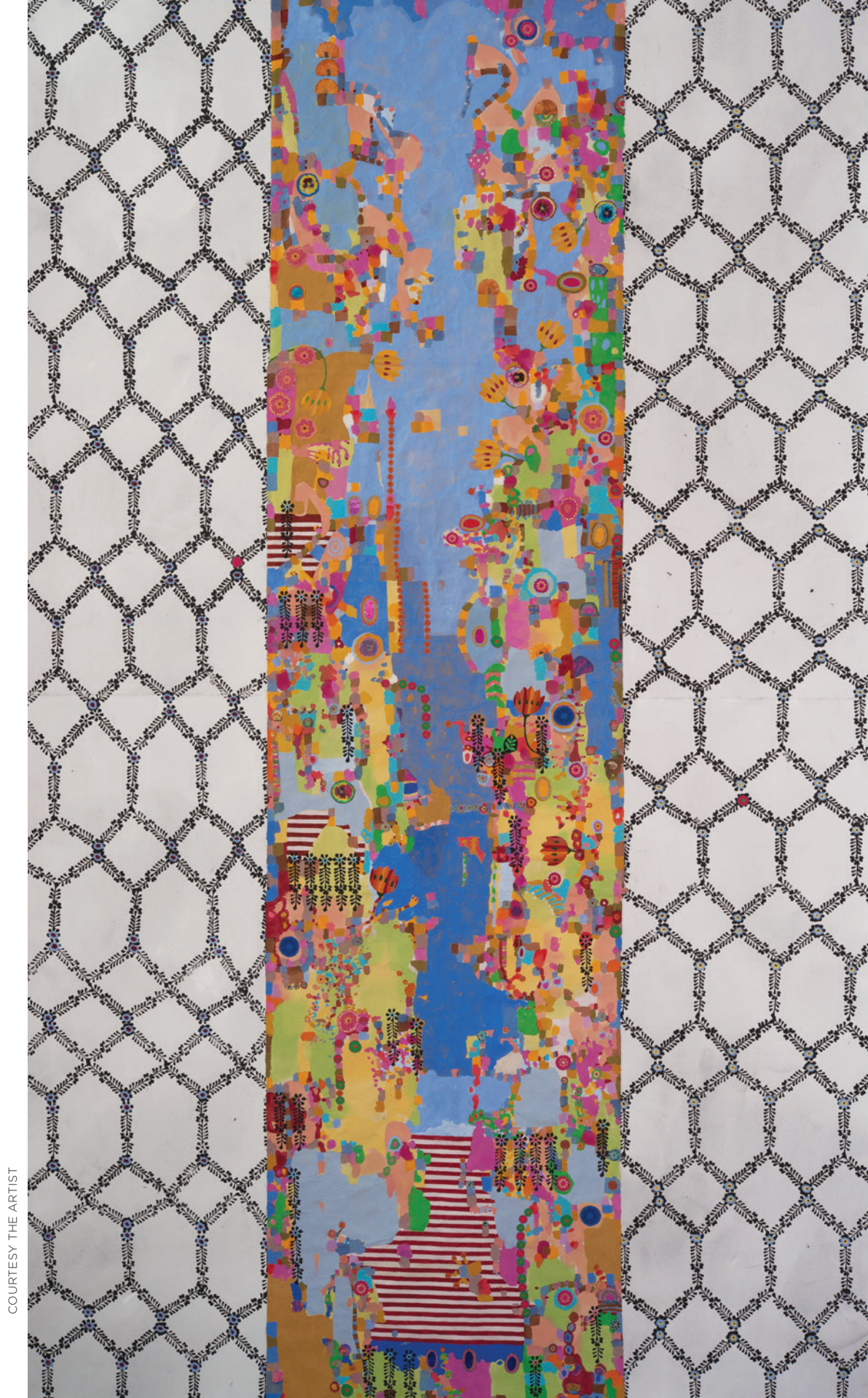


DIANE PIERI

*Wall Garden
Vista, 2015*

Gouache, Flashe
paint, casein, printing
blocks, inks, foil, gold
leaf on Lokta and
BFK Rives papers,
82 x 49 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST

JIM RINGLEY

Up Close at the Westchester In-N-Out

A simple family routine
as a symbol for time,
mortality, and beauty

Draw a line mapping the elevation of a typical airplane flight and you will see a reasonable description of the human lifespan: the rapid, steep incline of youth, the long, mostly stable segment at cruising altitude followed by the descent, the distinct period that seems to want announcement that we're almost there. Depending on your relative position or perhaps the mood of your present outlook, life may appear as an arduous and tiresome slog or a fleeting miracle.

When they were of kindergarten age, I took my son and daughter on occasion to park just beyond the cyclone fencing at our local one-gate airport. I would pack sandwiches and juice boxes, pick the kids up at school around noon, and we'd spend an hour or so watching for planes from the car or just outside on the weedy shoulder of the road. Little two-seater prop planes came and went, doing who knows what, passing low enough overhead that we harkened to the soft muttering of their engines, the whispering slip of air around the wings and tail. The kids would eat and stare intently out the windows while I watched white-tailed kites treading the air over a dry, brushy-looking pasture at the end of the runway. No one had to say anything. It gave us time to think. Once in a while noisier turboprop commuter planes buzzed in rushed and businesslike from Los Angeles or San Francisco but the airplane we came to see was the one big jet that flew in and out of our airport twice daily. By local standards the airplane is large, and instead of propellers, it flies with two jets near the tail. While the birds searched the field for rodents, we scanned the sky over an adjacent vineyard for a twinkling of bright white, a glimpse of the faraway landing light that told us the big plane was coming in. Often one of the kids spotted it first.

The arrival of the big plane was the highlight of our outing, the way it swooped in loud and twice as big as any of the other aircraft. Little kids love that kind of magic. They live close to wonder. After the big plane touched down, we'd buckle up again and head home.

After some time went by, I realized we hadn't been to our lookout in a long while. Moreover, I knew we wouldn't be going back. The worn, sun-bleached car seats had gone to a thrift store and the kids had grown through a couple of shoe sizes and into longer school days. Our small-town air traffic didn't impress them anymore. Their interest shifted from airplanes and fire engines to