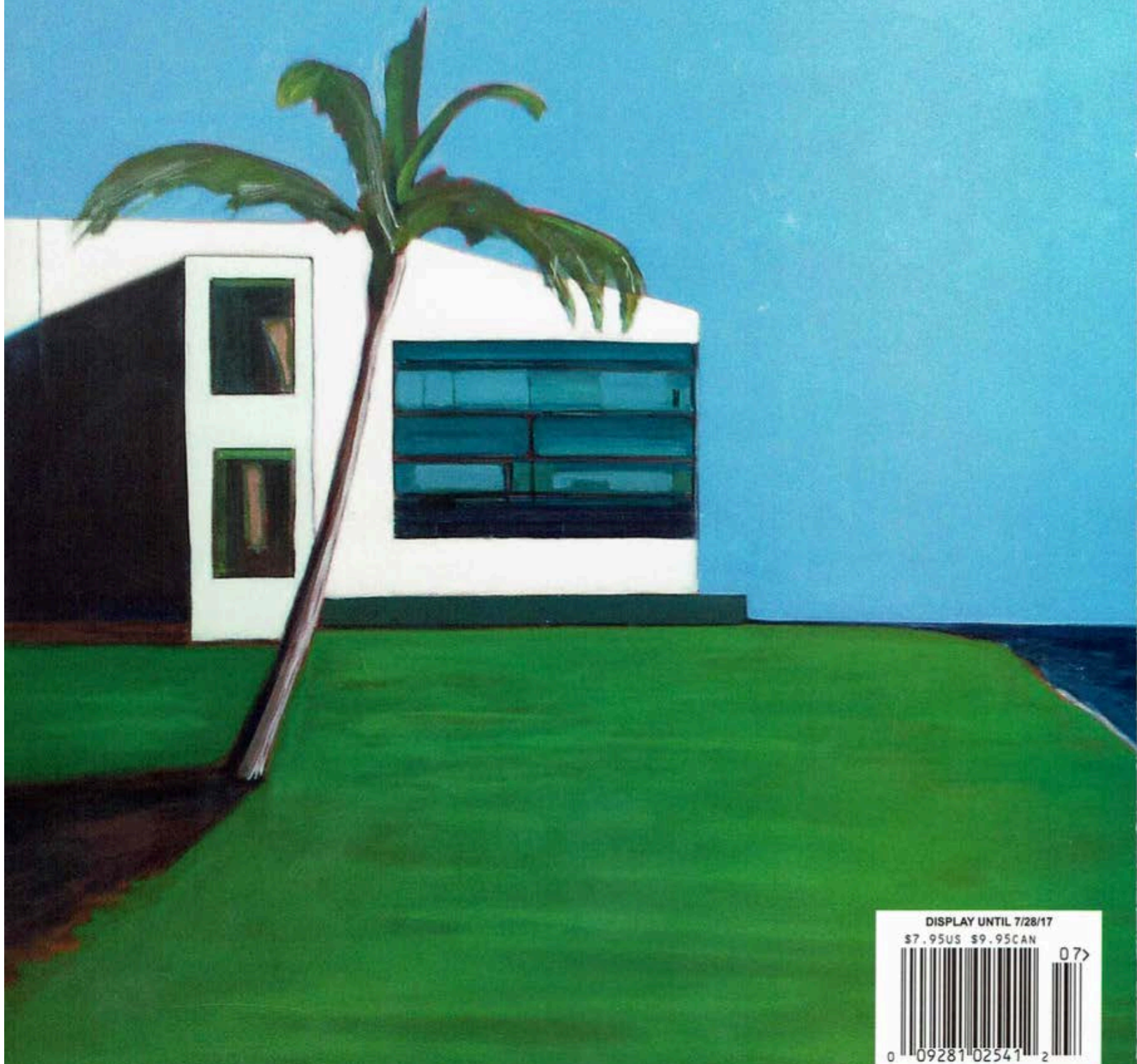


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MELISSA CHANDON

# American summer

**T**he key word in the title of the exhibition *Melissa Chandon: American Summer* is "American." Chandon paints an America past yet still present, cherished memories and surviving remnants.

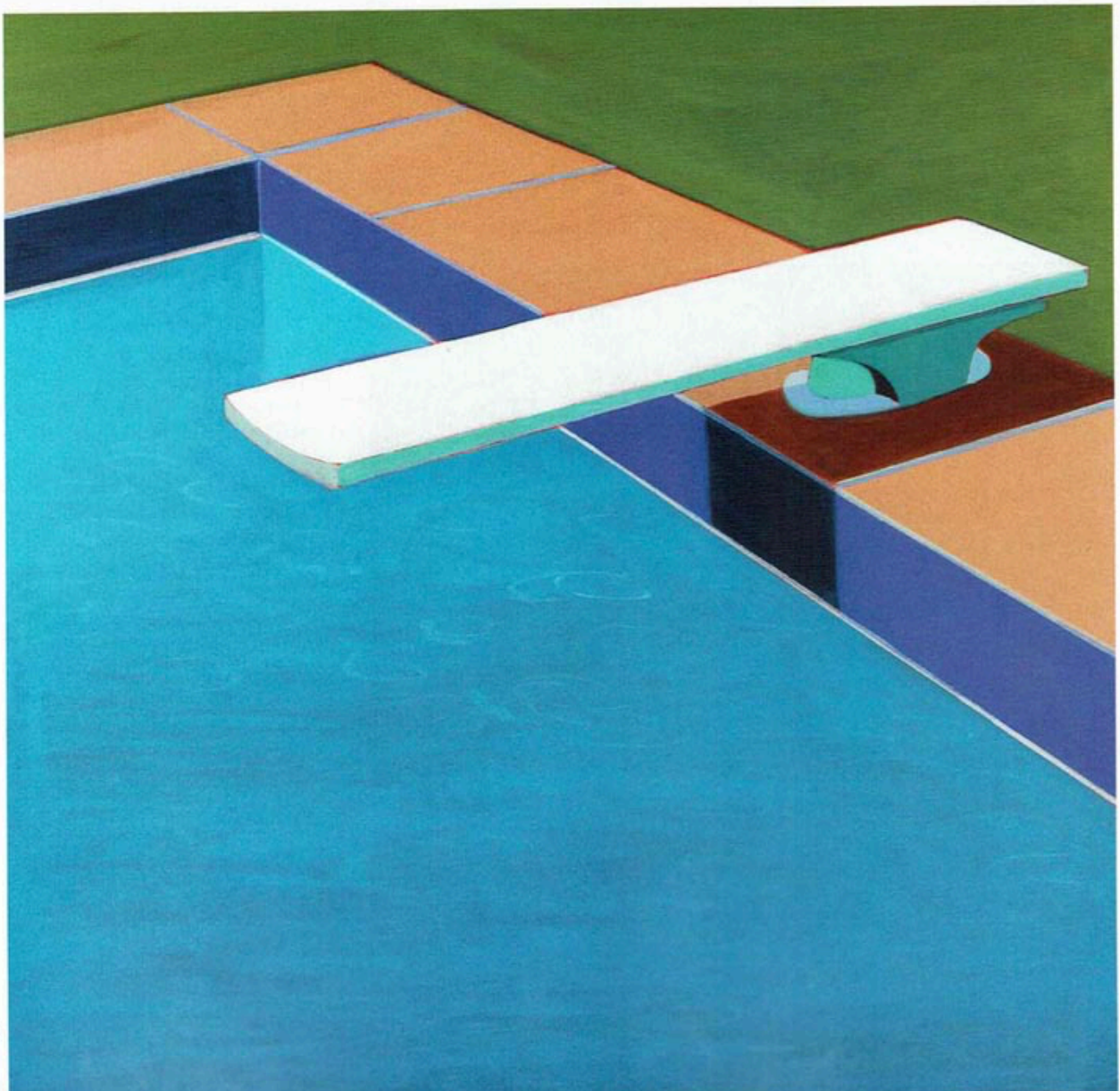
Simple things inspire Chandon, the shadow cast by a VW bus, water and reflections in a swimming pool, lone

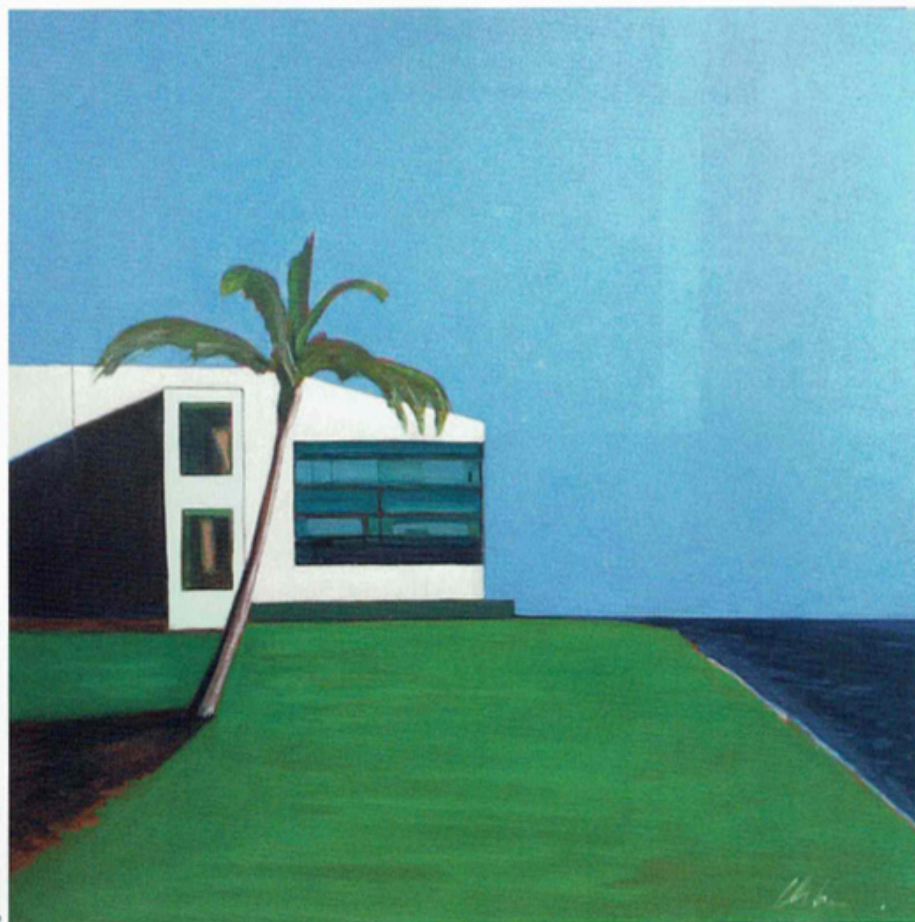
buildings. She reduces the detail of her subjects to the minimum needed to establish their form—what she calls their "core essence"—and she accentuates their colors animated by the bright California sun.

The paintings are both nostalgic and contemporary...timeless, in fact. VW buses still carry surfboards and swimmers still jump from diving boards but the paintings, void of people, suggest a simpler life in a

simpler time. They invite the viewer into their simplified space, free to populate it with their own stories.

*Pool with Diving Board in Turquoise* is, at one time, geometric abstraction and representation. It recalls the swimming pools of David Hockney and the delineated color relationships of her mentor Wayne Thiebaud. Its scale, 4 by 4 feet, is enveloping. It's possible to experience the



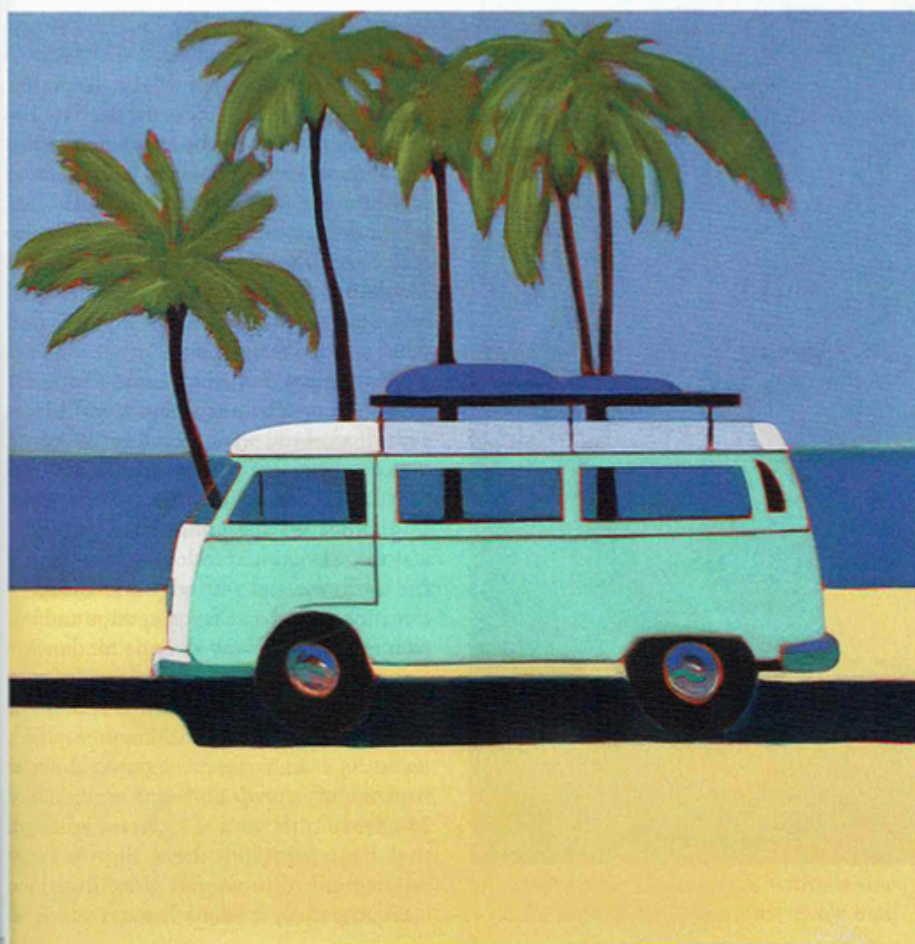


**1**  
*Pool with Diving Board*  
in Turquoise, acrylic  
on canvas, 48 x 48"

**2**  
*Post Modern House*  
with Indigo Ocean,  
acrylic on panel,  
48 x 48"

**3**  
*VW Bus with Palms,*  
acrylic on canvas,  
40 x 40"

**4**  
*Three Boats and*  
Turquoise Dock,  
acrylic on canvas,  
48 x 48"



space as well as the light and the way it highlights while casting shadows and deepening colors.

Chandon's paintings have a strong graphic quality making her simplified vernacular forms iconic. Thiebaud observed, "Common objects become strangely uncommon when removed from their context and ordinary ways of being seen."

Chandon was trained in classical technique and has adapted it to her own needs. Her base is three layers of fire engine red latex paint. She then does a traditional underpainting, working out her composition and values from light to dark. And then, color.

Her paintings remind the viewer that there are simple things and simple pleasures that haven't been, and don't need to be, lost. "I've gathered my vision of Americana from across the country," she says, "from my early years in Albuquerque, New Mexico, to working on the family ranch in the Sacramento Valley, and onto urban life in hope that sharing my view of the American landscape may help to bring about a conscious effort to preserve the shared heritage of our recent past." ●