

OLIVER MARSDEN
VISUAL HARMONICS

THE FINE ART SOCIETY
23 MAY - 13 JUNE 2007

P A I N T I N G ; T H E O B J E C T D A M I E N H I R S T

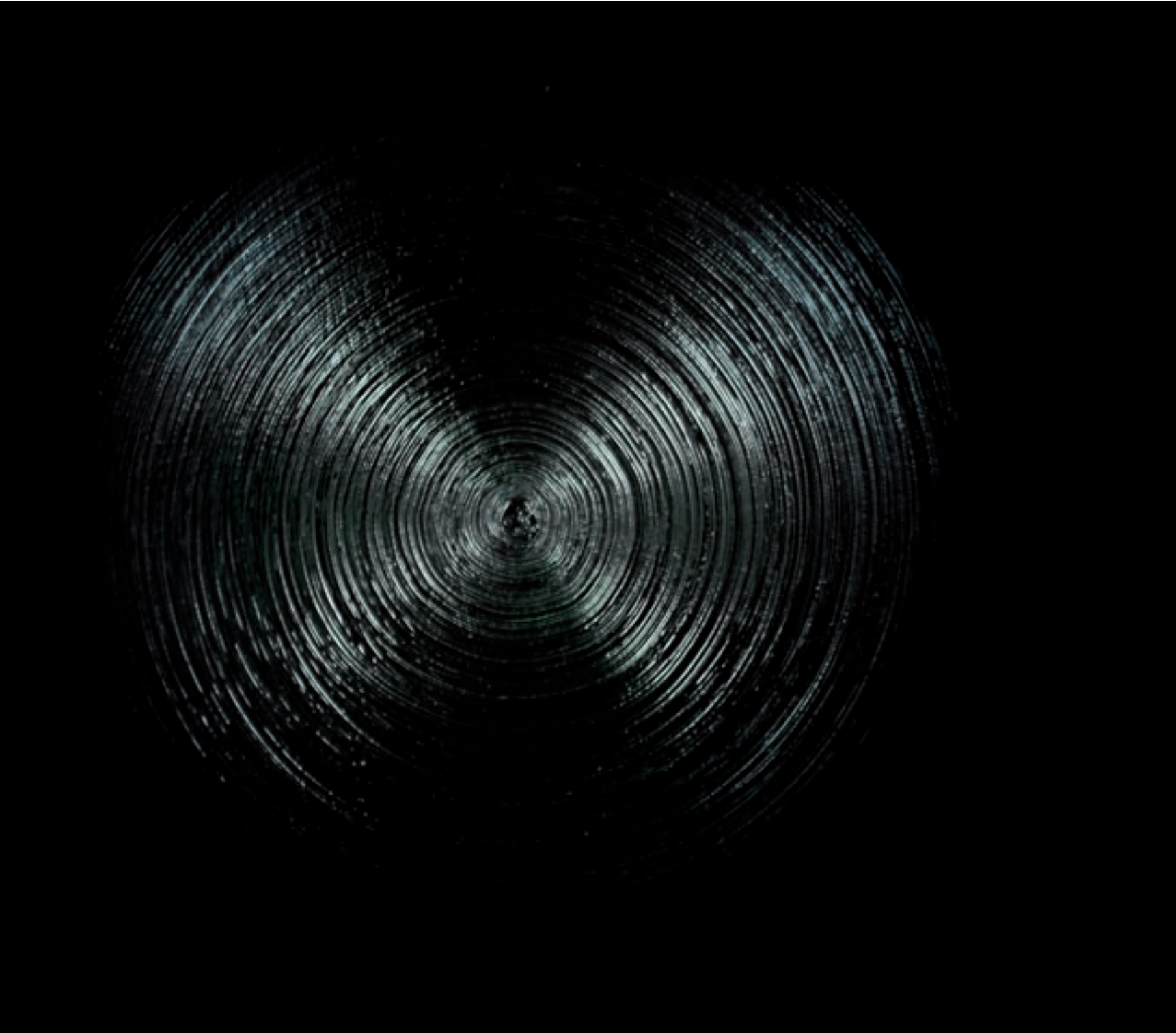
A friend at art school who made sculptures and collages once remarked that he felt like a painter, only he didn't use oil paints and canvas. Olly Marsden is an artist who seems to make sculptures of paintings—or sculptural paintings.

I always wanted to be a painter much more than a sculptor or an artist, but I was overwhelmed by the infinite possibilities of painting. I think it's got something to do with the void of a blank canvas where anything and everything is possible—beyond gravity, beyond life, in the realms of the imagination. Max Beckmann used to paint his canvases black to represent the void and everything he painted he saw as an object that he placed between himself and that void. Olly Marsden takes on gravity and movement and creates object/paintings that don't quite sit happily as paintings or sculpture—they are somehow both.

I believe that after Pollock created a distance between the brush and the canvas by flinging the paint, there was nowhere to go with painting... but people still go to St. Ives, still make action paintings. The urge to be a painter is still there even if the process of painting is meaningless, old fashioned. Today there are better ways for artists to communicate to an audience raised on television, advertising and information on a global level, but painting is still important.

Olly Marsden picks up the challenge and makes a kind of science of painting and creates pictures that have nothing to do with Richter or Poons or Bridget Riley or Albers or even Op. They're about the urge or the need to be a painter above and beyond the object of a painting. They are like sculptures of paintings.

They seem to suggest a sculptural idea of a painter. A scientific approach to painting. Art doesn't purport to have all the answers—neither do artists—but the celebration of movement and the gravity defying monochromes seem to stop time and balance seductively for our pleasure.



I first studied art in Leeds from an emotional, painterly perspective—‘paint how you feel’, painting as truth. But lies are a part of life, and painting, like life, has to take this on board if it’s worth doing. If you’re happy, you paint a happy yellow and red painting; if you’re depressed you paint a sombre brown and purple painting; or if you’re smart you give up painting and share your good feelings with your friends, or, when you’re down, cheer up and don’t drag people down to your level, don’t take anti-depressants... the difference between art and life. Olly manages to bring his paintings up to date with a mixture of gravitas and seduction created by a planetary circular motion—it’s the way the planet spins in space, the way the atoms move inside our bodies—so that as we look at them we can somehow feel them as well.

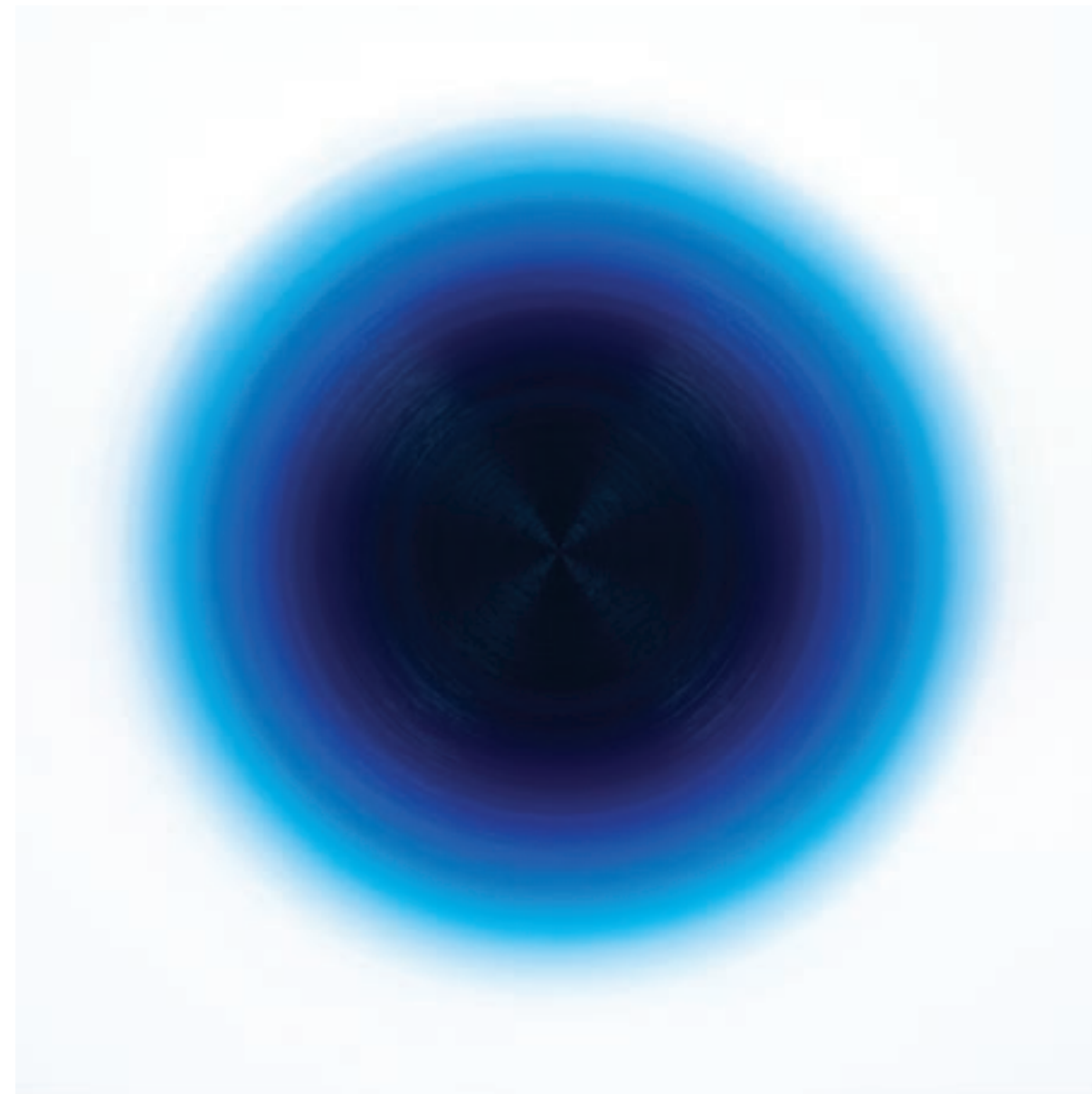
I believe painting and all art should be ultimately uplifting for a viewer. I love colour. I feel it inside me. It gives me a buzz. I hate taste—it’s acquired. I like the way Olly’s paintings look like they could have been made by a big machine—the machine being the artist in the future maybe.

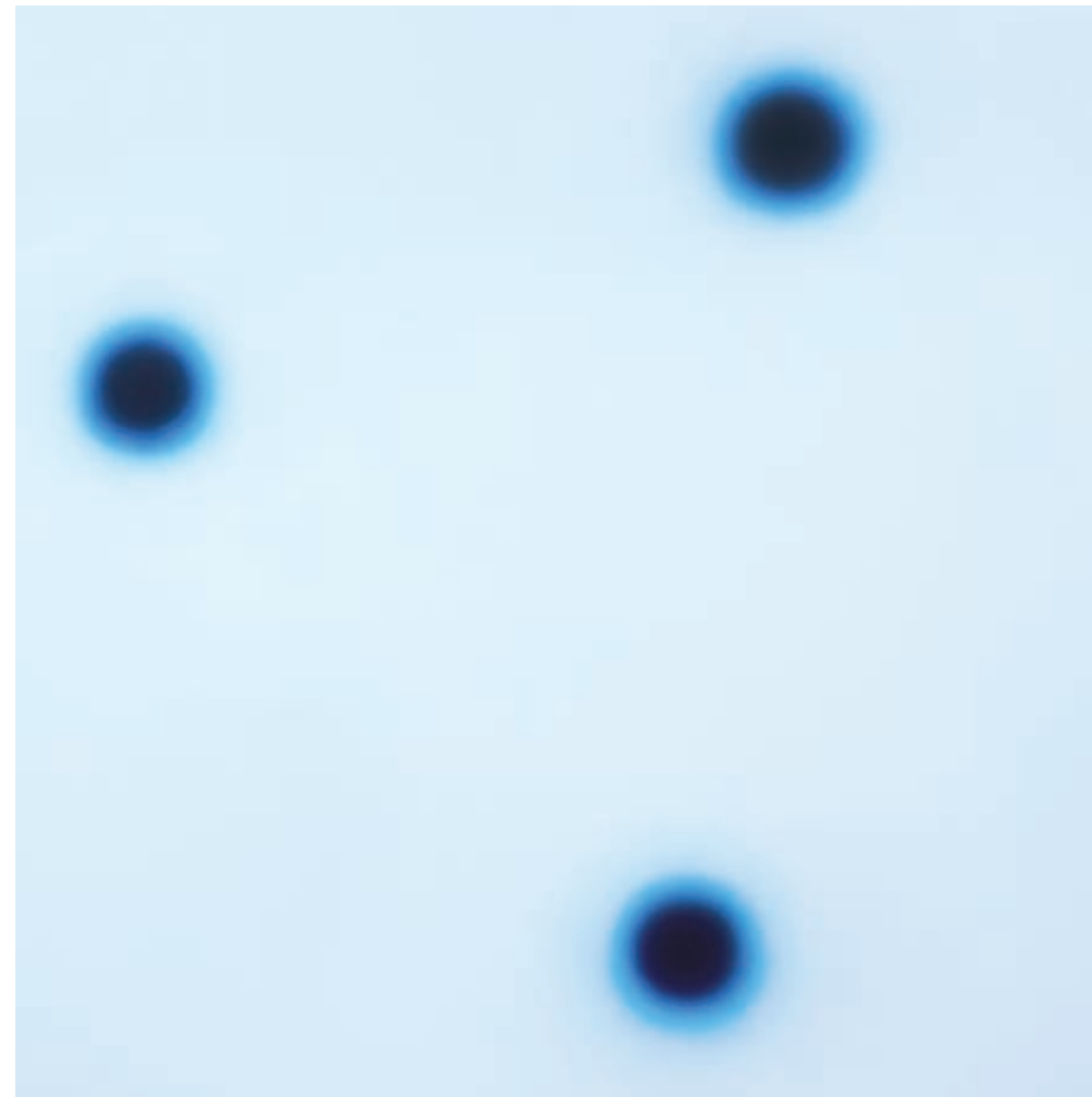
I love the fact that in Olly’s paintings the angst is removed. The Van Gogh horror of life is gone and replaced with a sense of limitless, fixed motion. Somehow in every painting there is a subliminal sense of unease; yet the colours and surfaces project so much joy. It’s hard to feel it, but it’s there—the horror underlying everything, the horror that can overwhelm everything at any moment.

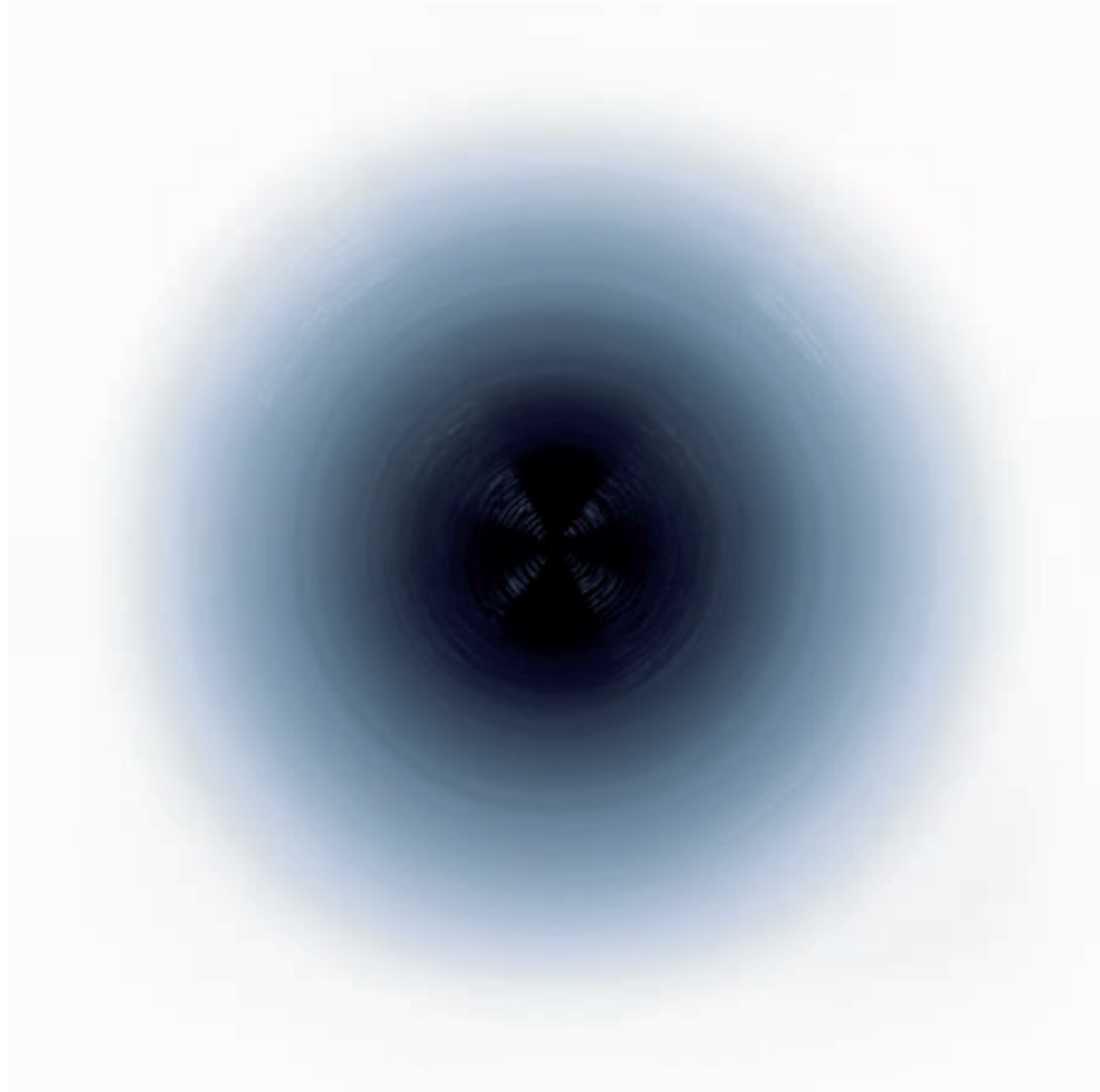
So is he a sculptor who wants to be a painter, a cynical artist who thinks painting is now reduced to nothing more than a logo, or an angst scientist trying to make meaningful objects of contemplation? Art is about life—there isn’t anything else. As an artist you ultimately somehow make art for people who haven’t even been born yet. Olly Marsden’s paintings are what they are—perfect paintings, which feel absolutely right, right now in this ever changing world.

HARMONICS^{VISUAL}S

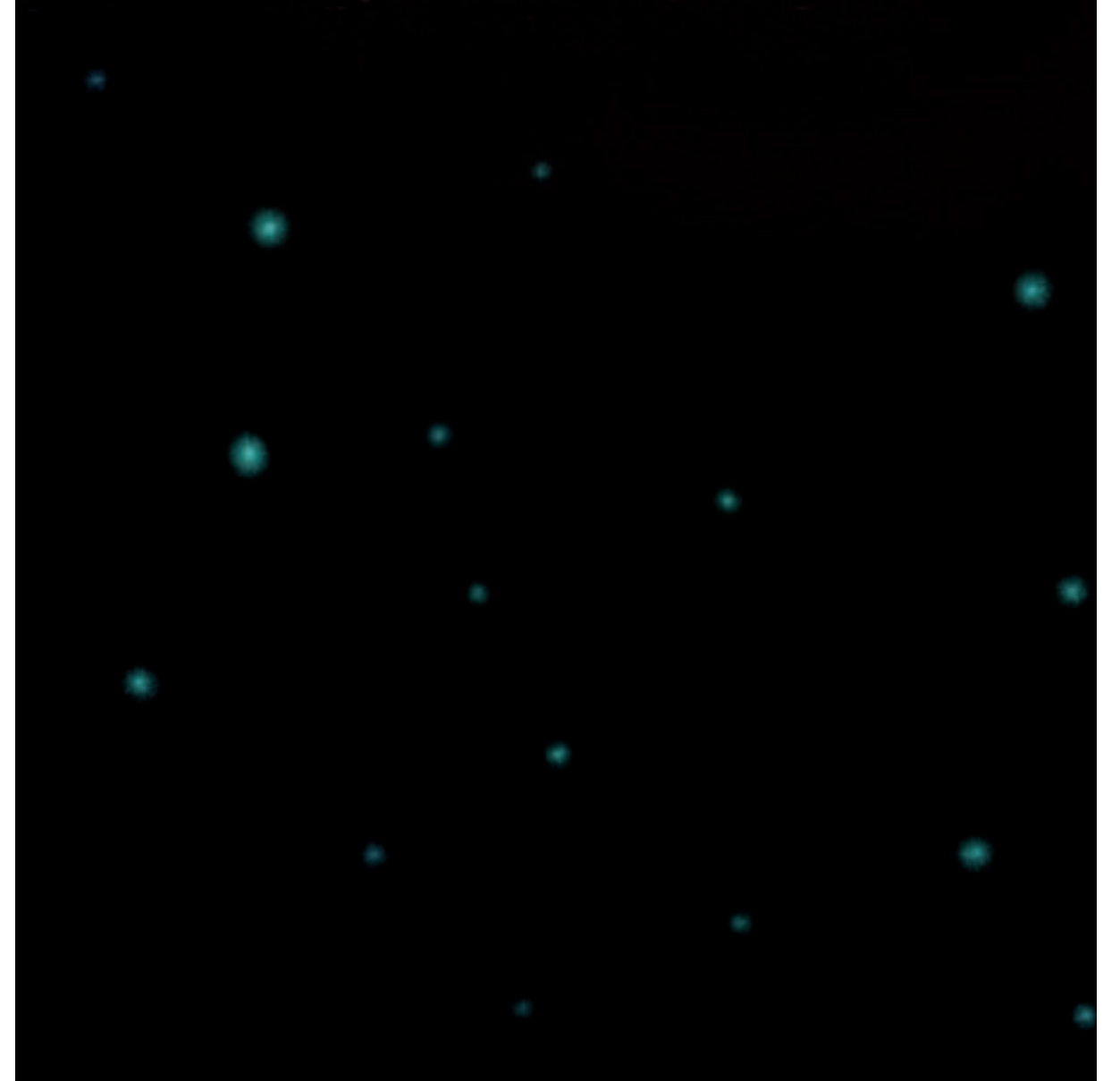
for Love







COLD BLACK HARMONIC II 2007

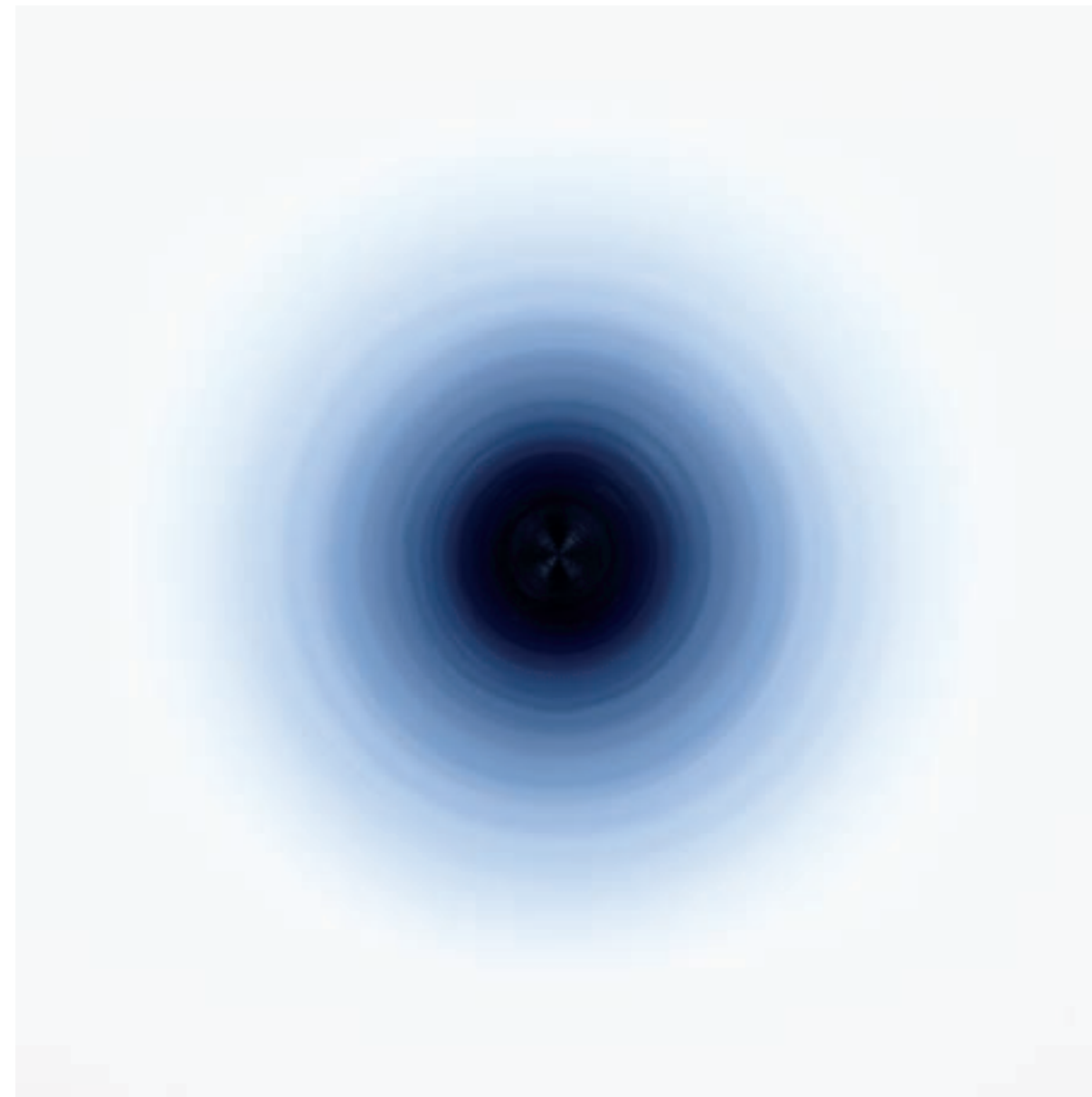


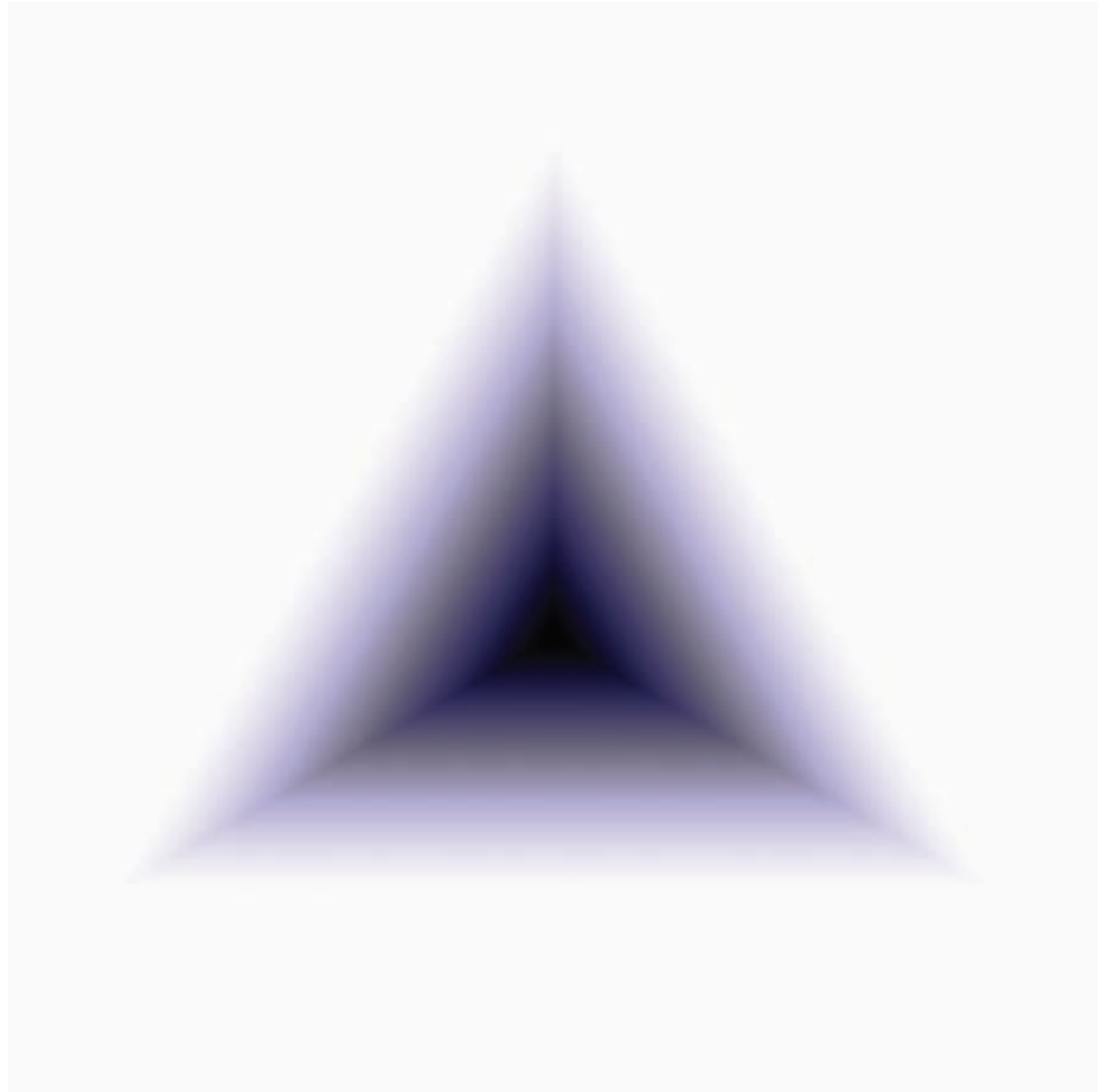
BLOW XXI 2006











TRINITY 2006



DUST (IN GOD WE TRUST) 2007





POUR III 2005

POUR IV 2005

POUR I 2005

POUR II 2005

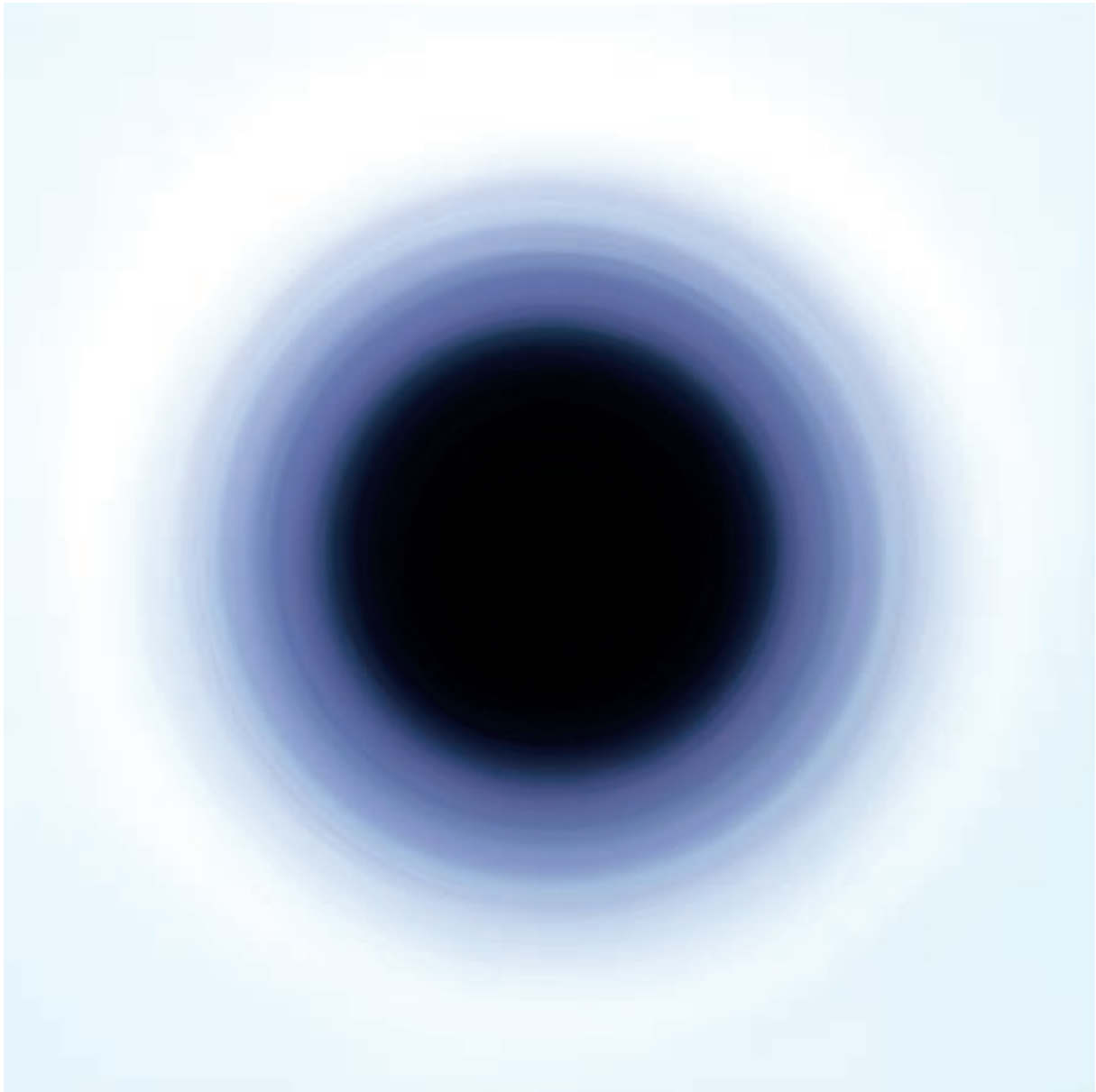




BLOW XIV 2007

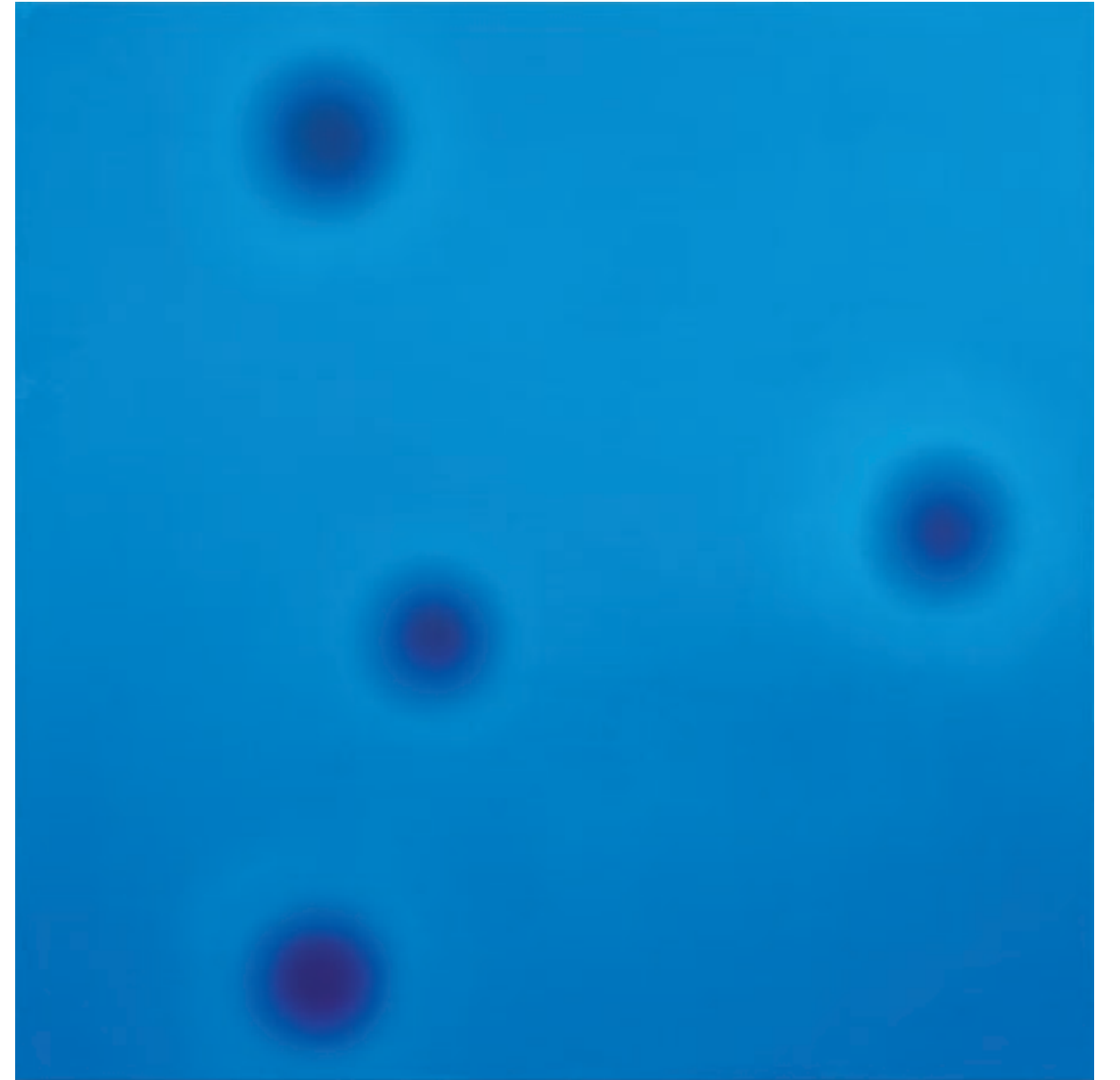


DELAY I 2007

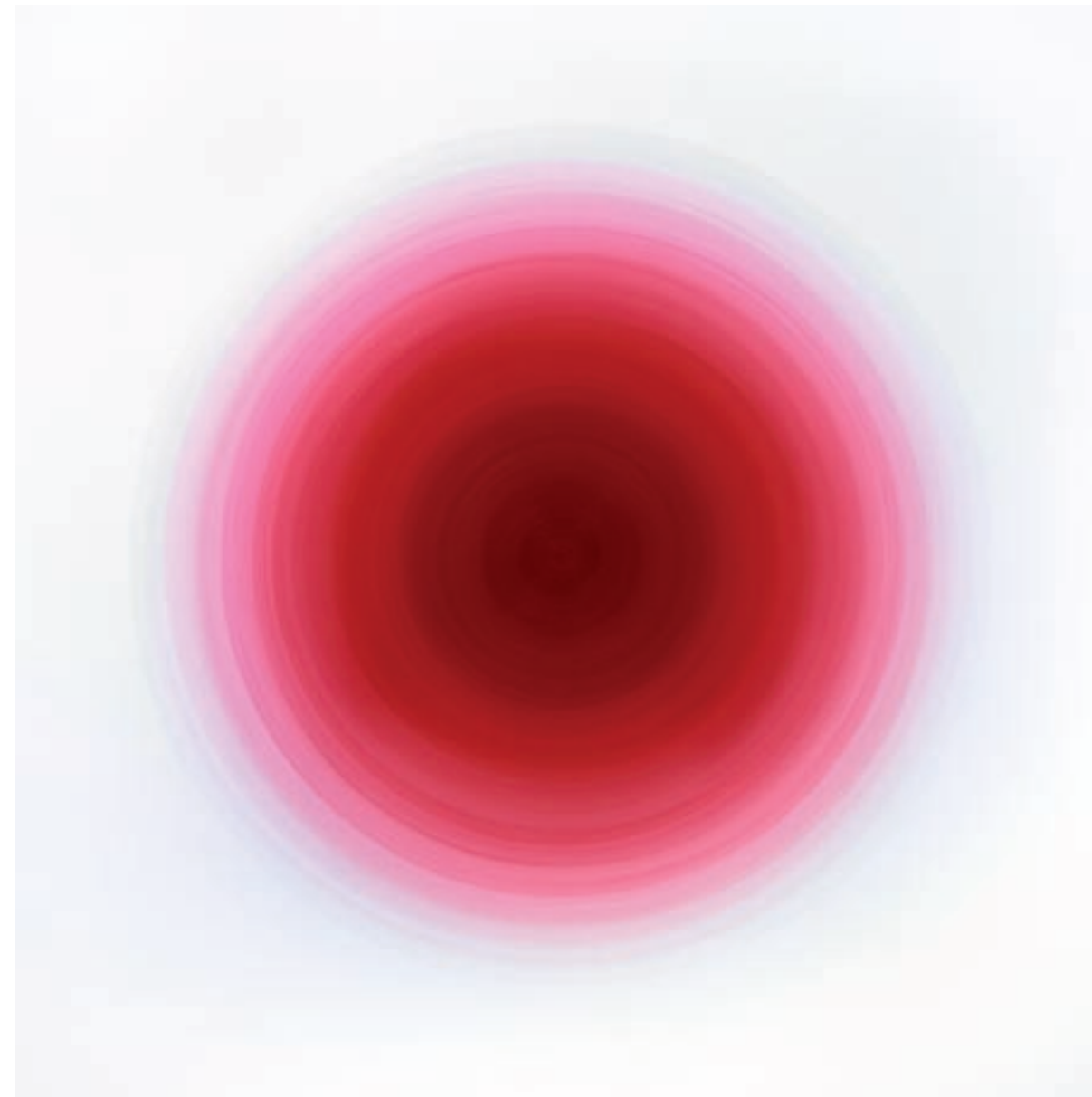




NODE 2006



LIQUE VI 2006



HOLDING THE LIQUID MOMENT
COLIN GLEN

Oliver Marsden has been 'freeing up'—learning from paint, enjoying its liquid possibilities. His latest body of work shows evidence of a further development in his use of painting as 'a way of focusing thought'. He is demanding more of the medium, himself and the audience. The immaculate perfection of surface evident in his previous paintings, the **NODES**, the floating **HALOS** and the pulsating points of the **LIQUE** series has been challenged and expanded by the artist's deepening research into the physical materiality of paint and its visual qualities. This has enabled him to further articulate and yet blur the boundaries of our experience, not only our understanding and perception of sound and vision (the waveforms of light and vibration) but also between thought and action. This has engaged him in discovering that to paint is to make anew, akin to Michael Fried's use of Jonathan Edwards' assertion: '...the world exists anew every moment... the existence of things every moment ceases and is every moment renewed.'



To experience a work such as **ROSE HARMONIC IV 2007** is to move towards a situation where the visual balance and tension of the work stimulates what Marsden calls a 'state of resonance', a 'humming' sensation. Each stage of movement to and from the dense centre of the piece is made infinitely subtle. This is achieved through the process of layering and revealing each application of paint in the material realisation of emitted sound waves, producing what the artist has termed a 'liquid speaker'. Yet the title of the work, in declaring an inventory of each colour, both annotates its literal constituents and suggests, in the manner of a Joycean list, the poetic qualities inherent in even such quotidian details: Titanium White, Carmine, Magenta, Guttegom Lak Extra, Brilliant Rose, Sheveningen Violet, Alizarin Crimson, Madder (Crimson) Lake Deep Extra. The artist takes his informed research in the science of complex systems and applies it to his practice of combining and mixing colour.

Marsden's work has been developed as physical engagement—a bodily enacting of the ideas honed and refined since his years following his study at Edinburgh College of Art under the guidance of Glen Onwin where he first engaged with the study of physical properties, the liquid complexities of paint. He has notched up a sparkling array of interests—among them quantum physics and eastern mysticism, crystallography, Beuysian philosophy, Jungian psychology, computer-generated imaging. However, it was in an Archimedes-like eureka moment in 2003 that he gained an awareness that through painting he could let the material speak for itself rather be illustrative of pre-conceived experiments: while watching water drip into a bucket in 11A, his studio in the centre of Gloucester, he was fascinated by the waves that were emitted and echoed back into the centre. These waves were so simple and yet revealed such complexity that he decided to make work which both represented the form of the wave pattern and connected with the same physical rhythms for its production. **NODE I 2003** was the result. In order to continue his study of water, Marsden moved to Frampton-on-Severn, a remote hamlet which boasts both a river and a canal. Here, in the natural yet changeable light, the **NODE** series developed as a meditation upon the primal elements of colour-space and simple geometrical balance. He began to see the paintings as transmitters and reflectors of light.



CHIMAERA I 2002

It is a sign of the maturing of his work that the artist should move on from the earlier influences and extend into territory which is of his own finding. His creation of new models of the visible were apparent in a work such as **CHIMAERA I 2002** which moved beyond the computer model of organic structures from which it was derived, through its transformation into paint. He took as a premise 'how you understand reality affects how you act' and in his recent water and sound inspired work, has allowed the painting to be its own realisation. In doing so he has blended his own observations with his research into the Cymatics of Hans Jenny or the quantum physics of David Bohm, to form the notion of 'liquid reality'. He makes new experiences, beyond the capacity of the machine. These are experiences without precedent, they are like new places to visit, and to that extent can be both unsettling as well as mesmerising.

He has re-discovered the vital quality of painting—its capacity, both in its production and its reception, to be an experience of the present and an experience of 'presentness'. This enigmatic term was coined by Michael Fried in 1967 while defining Minimalism. It is appropriate that Fried went on to elaborate; 'presentness is grace' he said, for Marsden refers to his paintings as 'illuminations', as little glimpses into the workings of the universe. And it is this unblinking ability to unify the literal with the intangible in the form of a delay in paint, the holding of the liquid moment, that defines Marsden's current practice.

OLIVER MARSDEN B I O G R A P H Y

B O R N 1973, UK LIVES AND WORKS Gloucestershire, UK

E D U C A T I O N

1997 MFA Drawing & Painting, Edinburgh College of Art
1996 ECA Exchange, Cleveland Institute of Art, Ohio
1995 BA Hons 1st Class Drawing and Painting, Edinburgh College of Art
1994 Erasmus Exchange, École des Beaux Arts Montpellier, France
1992 Foundation, Cheltenham College of Art
1984 Wycliffe College, Stonehouse, Gloucestershire

S O L O E X H I B I T I O N S

2007 **VISUAL HARMONICS** The Fine Art Society, London
2005 **SEQUENCE** The Blue Gallery, London
2003 **RE:ACTION** The Blue Gallery London
2002 **NEW WORKS** The Hub, Edinburgh
2001 **SUFFUSION** The Blue Gallery, London
2000 **CODE 000** The Blue Gallery, London
1999 **AMORPHEAN** The Letham Gallery, Auckland
1998 **AMORPHEUS** Spencer Brownstone Gallery, NYC
AMORPHEUS Royal Botanical Gardens, Edinburgh
LIQUEMORPH The Blue Gallery, London
1997 **LIQUIFORM** Spencer Brownstone Gallery, NYC

C O M M I S S I O N S

2004 **FADE** The Lighthouse, Canary Wharf, London
2003 **FOCUS** The Grove Spa, Watford

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2007 **SOME VACANT ACCOMODATION** Stroud Valleys Art Space
2006 **YOUNG AND BRITISH** JGM Galerie, Paris
2005 **RE.SOUND** Sound Animation Performance, The Space, Stroud
2004 **PAINTINGS THAT PAINT THEMSELVES OR SO IT SEEMS** Kresge Art Museum, Michigan, USA
2003 **SINE** 11A Studios, Gloucester
2002 **ARTAID 2002** Bloomberg Space, London
2001 **SATURATED SKINS** Vavasour Godkin Gallery, Auckland
2000 **MANIFESTO** The Blue Gallery, London
1999 **WINTER SHOW** Vavasour Godkin Gallery, Auckland
BUNDLE SpencerBrownstone Gallery, SoHo, NYC
1998 **THE PRIVY OFFSITE** Alannah Weston, London

1997 **THREE PLUS ONE** Beaux Art, Cork St., London
1996 **INSIDE, OUTSIDE, ABOVE AND BELOW** Spencer Brownstone Gallery, NYC
IMPORTS, EXPORTS AND DEPORTS Cleveland Institute of Art, Ohio
CONTEMPORARY ART AT THE COURTAULD Courtauld Institute, London
SCOTTISH SOCIETY OF ARTS Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh
ARTISTS OF FAME AND PROMISE Beaux Arts, Cork Street, London
HUNTING ART PRIZE Royal College of Art, London
1995 **134TH ROYAL GLASGOW INSTITUTE OF THE FINE ARTS** McLellan Galleries, Glasgow
CANVASSING PERCEPTIONS Philip Godsall, The Gallery, London
FINE ART GRADUATES SHOW Brewery Arts Centre, Kendal

S E L E C T E D A R T I C L E S A N D R E V I E W S

2005 *Independent*, 28 May—3 June 2005, Going Out Art London, **OLIVER MARSDEN: SEQUENCE**, The Blue Gallery
Scotland on Sunday, 30 January 2005, Iain Gale, **SIX OF THE BEST PAINTERS POINT THE WAY FORWARD**,
Zing Magazine, Issue 17, Autumn 2002, Roy Exley, **SUFFUSION**
2001 *Nature*, vol 414, Nov 2001, Martin Kemp, **SEEMINGLY SCIENTIFIC: OLIVER MARSDEN'S ABSTRACT PAINTINGS**
2000 *Time Out London*, No. 1568, **OLIVER MARSDEN: 'PSYCHEDELIC MINIMALIST'**
1999 *Weekend Herald* (New Zealand), 7 November 1999, T J McNamara, **SURREAL CIRCLES**
dART International, Vol 2., No. 1, Winter 1999, April Kingsley, **OLIVER MARSDEN: AMORPHEUS**
1998 *The New Yorker*, Short List, 16 November 1998
The List (Scotland), July 1998, Claire Prentice, **AMORPHEUS**
1996 *Coagula Art Journal*, NYLB review, December 1996, **INSIDE, OUTSIDE, ABOVE AND BELOW**

S E L E C T E D C A T A L O G U E S

2007 **VISUAL HARMONICS**, Fine Art Society, 2007, foreword by Damien Hirst, essay by Colin Glen
2001 **ALTERNATIVE REALITIES**, November 2001, **SUFFUSION** exhibition catalogue, essay by Roy Exley
1996 **CONTEMPORARY ART AT THE COURTAULD**, October 1996, **THE EAST WING EXHIBITION** catalogue, essay by Jane Bhojroo

A W A R D S

2000 Princes Trust Award
1998 Hope Scott Trust Development Award
Scottish Arts Council Development Award
1996 Andrew Grant Scholarship, Edinburgh College of Art
William Gillies Travel Scholarship, Royal Scottish Academy
1995 Arthur Anderson Prize, Best Young Artist, Royal Glasgow Institute
George Jackson Hutchieson Award, ECA

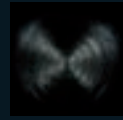
C O L L E C T I O N S

MURDERME Damien Hirst, UK
Kresge Art Museum, East Lansing, Michigan, USA
David Roberts collection, UK
St. James Group, UK

WORKS ILLUSTRATED



CYAN HARMONIC I 2007
Oil on canvas (Titanium White, Cyan Blue, Ultra Marine, Sheveningen Blue)
120 × 120 × 4.5 cm



PRUSSIAN HARMONIC 2006 (detail)
Oil on canvas
200 × 200 × 4.5 cm



LIQUE VII 2007
Acrylic on canvas (Ultramarine, Titanium White)
157.5 × 157.5 × 4.5 cm



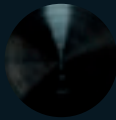
COLD BLACK HARMONIC II 2007
Oil on canvas (Titanium White, Cold Black, Sheveningen Black)
110 × 110 × 4.5 cm



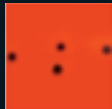
BLOW XXI 2006
Oil on canvas
70 × 70 × 4.5 cm



VIOLET MAGENTA HARMONIC I 2007
Oil on canvas (Titanium White, Brilliant Rose, Magenta, Violet)
110 × 110 × 4.5 cm



INDIGO DUB 2007
Oil on board 152 cm diameter



LIQUE VIII 2007
Acrylic on canvas (Pyrrrole Orange)
142.5 × 142.5 × 4.5 cm

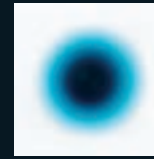


PRUSSIAN HARMONIC 2006
Oil on canvas
200 × 200 × 4.5 cm



TRINITY 2006
Archival giclée print on Hahnemühle 308gsm paper
110 × 110 cm edition of 9

DUST (IN GOD WE TRUST) 2007
Pigment on sandpaper
295 × 228 mm



TURQUOISE HARMONIC II 2007
Oil on canvas (Titanium White, Cobalt Blue, Turquoise Light, Turquoise Blue Deep, Caribbean Blue)
200 × 200 × 4.5 cm



POUR III 2005
Acrylic on MDF
322 × 299 × 12 mm



POUR I 2005
Acrylic on MDF
300 × 298 × 4 mm



POUR IV 2005
Oil and acrylic on MDF
316 × 303 × 4 mm



POUR II 2005
Acrylic and graphite on MDF
299 × 299 × 4 mm



ROSE HARMONIC III 2007
Oil on canvas
70 × 70 × 4.5 cm



BLOW XIV 2007
Oil on canvas
71 × 66 × 4 cm



DELAY I 2007
Oil on canvas (Brilliant White)
71 × 66 × 4 cm



ANTRAMENT BLACK VIOLET HARMONIC 2006
Oil on canvas
160 × 160 × 4.5 cm



NODE 2006
Archival giclée print on Hahnemühle 308gsm paper
110 × 110 cm edition of 9



LIQUE VI 2006
Acrylic on canvas (Phthalo Blue)
120 × 120 × 4.5 cm



ROSE HARMONIC IV 2007
Oil on canvas (Titanium White, Carmine, Magenta, Guttegom Lak Extra, Brilliant Rose, Sheveningen Violet, Alizarin Crimson, Madder [Crimson], Lake Deep Extra)
110 × 100 × 4.5 cm



CHIMAERA I 2002
Acrylic on canvas
106 × 122 × 4 cm




NODE I 2003
Acrylic on canvas
68 × 73 × 6.5 cm

T H A N K S

and love to Dorothy, family, friends and all those who offer help, guidance and inspiration;
FAS, Toby, Damien, Colin, Pete Lavery, Tim, and Specialblue for making this catalogue possible

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telephone +44 (0)207 629 5116, fax +44 (0)207 491 9454
tc@faslondon.com, www.faslondon.com
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