

WADDINGTON CUSTOT

PRESS RELEASE

Ian Davenport: Reflections

21 September–21 November 2026

Private View: Tuesday 29 September 2026

Waddington Custot, London



Waddington Custot is pleased to present *Reflections*, a survey exhibition that celebrates the remarkable breadth of Ian Davenport's (b.1966) career, spanning the late 1980s to the present and including works on paper, among them early experimental pieces from when Davenport had first graduated from Goldsmiths college, alongside the *Puddle Paintings*, for which he is best known.

Reflections marks Davenport's 11th solo exhibition with the gallery since his landmark debut at Waddington Galleries in 1990. The relationship began in 1988 after London art dealer Leslie Waddington visited the degree show at Goldsmiths College of Art. Michael Craig-Martin, Davenport's tutor at Goldsmiths, had encouraged Waddington to pay attention to the young artist, whose distinctive voice was already taking shape.

The exhibition opens with the early, monumental work 'Untitled (Large White)' (1991). This canvas, measuring over 6 metres in width, formed part of the body of work that led to Davenport's nomination for the Turner Prize that year, making him the youngest artist ever shortlisted.

As early as the 1980s, Davenport was developing his unconventional, process-led approach to painting. On view in the exhibition are two works from *Erased Lines* (1988), a series in which household paint was used together with white spirit to create translucent, dripping marks. Alongside this, the *Electric Fan Studies* (1989 and 2006) find Davenport using electric fans to spread gloss paint into thin, thread-like strands. The early 'Electric Fan Study on Black' (1989) embraces chaos and frantic energy, with white streaks buzzing across a black ground. At the same time, in Davenport's *Watering Can Drawings* (1992), diagonal trails criss-cross to form a fluid mesh across the paper. Watering the garden during a hot summer in London, Davenport observed the sprinkles created by the hose-pipe. He began copying those movements, swinging watering cans filled with diluted household paint onto the paper to mimic what he described as 'balletic' twists and turns.

Building on his interest in physical, gesture-based approaches, Davenport produced arch and circle paintings, many dating to the late 1990s and early 2000s, such as 'Black, Red, Black (Arch)' (1998). By pouring paint from the centre of a panel, he worked with gravity, rotating panels to manipulate the flow. The resulting forms are smooth and geometric, haloed by a thin line of impactful colour.

Reflections also traces the development of Davenport's most iconic artistic method. Using syringes, he pours paint in precise colour sequences, delighting in the limitless potential of the compositions and the paradox between control and chance. In the exhibition, works like 'Black Puddle' (2010) and 'Blossom' (2023) showcase the artist's mature style and mastery of colour relationships. It is these lines of colour that are synonymous with Davenport's public installations, including 'Poured Lines', Southwark Bridge, London (2006), 'Giardini Colourfall' at the Venice Biennale (2017) and 'Poured Staircase' at the Chiostro del Bramante, Rome (2022). They are complemented by Davenport's recent splatter paintings, which the artist sees as a counterpoint to the poured lines. The series is full of 'ricochets and splinters of colour', marked by a sense of playfulness and vitality.

The exhibition is accompanied by a new publication that offers a broader insight into the ideas that underpin Davenport's practice. It features previously published texts, essays and reviews by leading critics and art historians, including Michael Bracewell, Joseph Constable, Norman Rosenthal, Richard Shone, Michael Stanley, Jonathan Watkins and Sarah Whitfield. Alongside these contributions is a conversation between Ian and his brother, the writer Philip Davenport, as well as the artist's personal reflections, bringing a more informal and intimate perspective to his practice. All texts are interwoven with images of artworks, studio photographs and archival material. The catalogue is available to purchase via the Waddington Custot website.

NOTES TO EDITORS

About Ian Davenport

Since becoming the youngest-ever Turner Prize nominee in 1991, Ian Davenport has created ambitious installations across the world. These include 'Poured Lines', a 48-metre-wide painting for Southwark Bridge in London in 2006, 'Giardini Colorfall' for the Venice Biennale in 2017, and 'Poured Staircase' at Rome's Chiostro del Bramante in 2022. His work is held in major public collections including Tate, MoMA, the Centre Pompidou and the British Museum, and he has presented significant solo exhibitions at IKON Gallery, Tate Liverpool and Dallas Contemporary.

About Waddington Custot

Waddington Custot was formed through the partnership of French art dealer Stephane Custot and long time London art dealer Leslie Waddington, in 2010. Located in Cork Street since 1958, formerly as Waddington Galleries, the gallery has a rich heritage and an international reputation for quality and expertise in works by modern and contemporary masters, with a particular focus on monumental sculpture. The gallery has cemented its reputation over several decades for high quality and well-researched exhibitions of significant artists operating in the mid-twentieth century and beyond.

Image

Ian Davenport, 'Electric Fan Study: Blue, Orange and Pink', 2006, household paint on paper, 33 ⅛ x 23 ¾ in, 84 x 59.5 cm. Courtesy the artist and Waddington Custot

Credit Line

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