

Waddington Galleries

PRESS RELEASE

IAN DAVENPORT *NEW PAINTINGS*

2 - 25 July 2003

Since the late 1980s, Davenport has pursued an approach based on process and material. He follows a set of simple techniques that determine the appearance of the paintings while allowing for variations dictated by accident. The element of chance within a highly structured system gives his paintings a tension that belies the simplicity of the image and the smoothness of the surface. As Davenport has observed, 'Process is a tool, it's not the point of the paintings. The point is the richness of the final outcome which is intertwined with a set of procedures.' In these new paintings household paint is poured from an everyday container, such as a watering can, directly onto a panel creating a round shape that Davenport has described as a 'big flat pancake'. The panel is then flipped over to allow the excess paint to drip on to the floor. This creates the first of several layers of colour that give these works their rich density and subtle structure. The process of layering, and the thickness of the gloss paint, allow these works to read as shallow reliefs, bringing home the truth of the artist's recent admission, 'I've never really thought of myself as a painter, more as a sculptor who makes paintings.'

Although these paintings are rooted in an abstract aesthetic, they are very much the product of contemporary city life. Davenport has described the importance to him of commercially available colours that he sees on a day to day basis: the glossy surfaces of cars, for example, or the gaudy décor of a local kebab shop, or the flat acid colours of television cartoons such as *The Simpsons*. 'It's got a lot to do with the things you look at and pick up on when you're just walking around London: the bright signs, advertising, a section of corrugated iron. Ideas emerge from these things...'

The immediate impact on the eye made by these paintings conceals the length of time they take to be completed. Given the nature of the thick glossy medium, each layer of paint may need around two or three months to dry, which means that a single painting could take up to two years before Davenport is satisfied that it is finished. It is a process that suits an artist who says he is 'looking for something that's both immediate and prolonged.'

Davenport was born in Kent in 1966. He studied at Goldsmiths' College of Art in London, graduating in 1988 with a B.A. in Fine Art. His first solo exhibition was held at Waddington Galleries

in 1990, and in the same year his work was also seen in *The British Art Show*, which toured to Leeds City Art Gallery and the Hayward Gallery, London. He was nominated for the Turner Prize in 1991. In 1997, he was commissioned to create a site-specific installation for Banque Paribas in London. Davenport's work has been exhibited both here and abroad, and is included in many public collections such as the Tate, London, the Weltkunst Collection, Zurich, and the Dallas Museum of Art, Texas. In 1999, Davenport had a major solo exhibition at Dundee Contemporary Arts in Scotland and was a prizewinner at the 21st John Moores Liverpool Exhibition. In 2000, the artist was awarded the Primo del Golfo, La Spezia, Italy and had a major solo exhibition at the Project Space, Tate Liverpool. Last year Davenport was awarded the *Prospects* first prize at the Essor Project Space, London. Most recently, the artist was included in the exhibition at Tate Britain *Days Like These: Tate Triennial Exhibition of Contemporary British Art 2003*. The installation he exhibited: 'Untitled Poured Lines (Tate Britain)' 2003, is his largest work to date. The artist lives and works in London.

A fully illustrated catalogue which includes an interview between Ian Davenport and David Batchelor accompanies this exhibition

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