

Ian Davenport

SELECTED PRESS

In the studio with abstract painter Ian Davenport

Emily Tobin visits the abstract painter known for his cavalcade of bright hues and unconventional methods in his south London space

EMILY TOBIN
AUGUST 26, 2020



Photo by Joshua Monaghan

Ian Davenport approaches paint like a scientist might approach a new specimen – it is something to be tested, something to explore and challenge. Painting has been the subject of his research for the best part of 30 years. He was a key figure in the Young British Artists scene in London in the Nineties and the youngest person to be nominated for the Turner Prize in 1991. Even back then, he was preoccupied by the relationship between shape, colour and material. ‘My paintings are about fluidity, movement, liquidity and how movement affects installations and spaces,’ he says.

His studio in south London is something of a Tardis. Located off a residential street, it is a vast space that allows him to experiment with different techniques and scales. Ian creates many of his paintings by pouring paint down smooth surfaces in linear patterns. In a recent body of work, these kaleidoscopic lines puddle in swirls at the base of each painting, resulting in something nearing sculpture. There are the diagonal works in which paint is poured from opposite sides of the surface and merges in the middle, then there are the Splat pictures, which he creates by

squirting paint onto a vertical hanging surface and letting it trickle into random patterns. Each iteration is a form of experimentation. 'If you get really good and skillful, you have to find a way of usurping that skill and making it fresh,' he explains.

Ian mines the palettes of other artists for his work. *The Harvest Study (After Van Gogh) 3* uses the same shades of yellow, ochre, gold, copper and bronze that Vincent van Gogh employed to depict the countryside near Arles in the summer of 1888. In a different piece, he adopts Pierre Bonnard's blues, lilacs and pinks. Other works draw on the colours he saw in an episode of *The Simpsons*, the sprawl of scarlet and green observed in a poppy field, and the purple and cobalt from a meadow of bluebells. 'Lifting colours from another source makes for unconventional combinations that, for me, are more intriguing,' he says.

It comes as no surprise that there is a gleaming set of drums in the corner of the studio. Ian's work is intrinsically rhythmic; composition, order, timing and meter underpin all that he makes, while his colour combinations pulse and are made all the more impactful by their repetitions and reversals. Music, it appears, is an essential part of his artistic process.



Photo by Joshua Monaghan



Red Burst, 2019



Photo by Joshua Monaghan



He uses high-gloss enamel paint to create pieces such as *Cobalt Blue Hue*, 2020. Photo by Joshua Monaghan.

ELEPHANT

Ian Davenport: Pouring, Dripping, Puddling

EMILY STEER
AUGUST 28, 2018

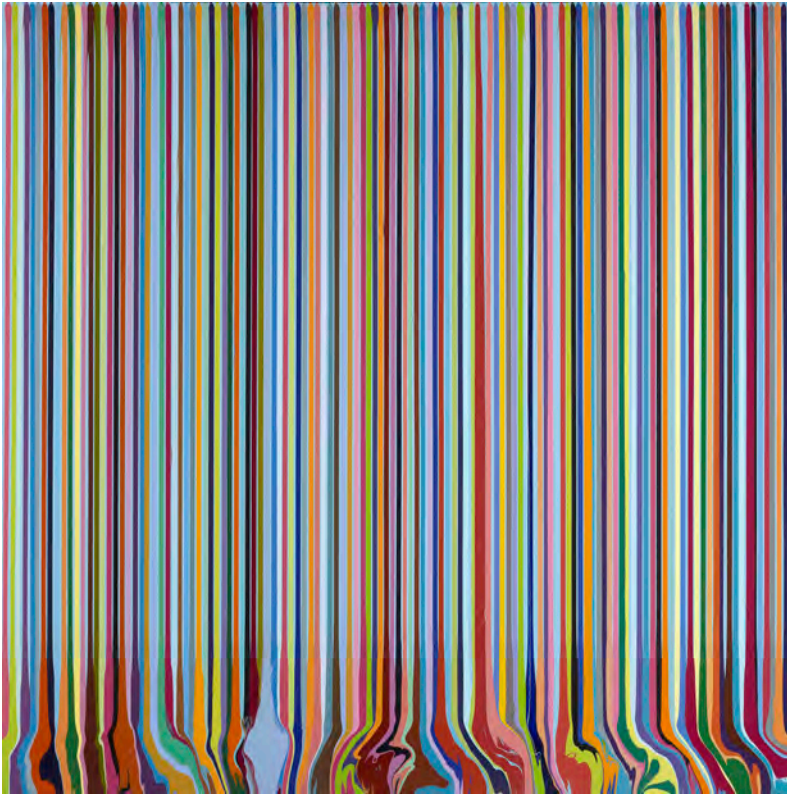


Photos by Enzo Barracco of Ian Davenport's studio, South London, August 2017 unless otherwise stated

"Sometimes the dialogue around art can become so convoluted and wordy and verbose that it puts people off." Ian Davenport has always shared a decidedly irreverent approach to art making with his YBA peers. Here, he talks to Emily Steer about making pancakes, the influence of Velázquez and kebab shops, and his monumentally scaled Poured Line paintings.

I first meet Ian Davenport on a frenzied, albeit invigorating preview day for the 2017 Venice Biennale. We speak initially for four minutes, one of many four-minute interviews the resolutely upbeat British artist gives that day to an apparently never-ending line of press. His presence in Venice marks the culmination of a project for Swatch, for which he created an original watch and an expansive 14m-wide painting, *Giardini Colourfall*, comprising over a thousand poured lines of paint and situated in the open air—in stark contrast with the many national pavilions, where the big names sit behind the odd, characterful walls of each country's structure.

“What I am interested in is visibility,” he tells me later, when we meet again at his South London studio. “I enjoyed putting work out into the public realm at Venice. I know it’s within the Giardini but it is a wide audience and there are a lot of families going there. In a gallery context, we’re trained to react to something in a particular way and it’s quite a conservative reaction. Out in the open space people were jumping in front of it and having their photograph taken and it was really nice. I think artists in general are very drawn to that and don’t want to just reach a rarefied audience. Having said that, I think it’s doing it in a way that doesn’t dumb down the work. I don’t make a distinction between what I do for Swatch or a work that is going to be shown at Tate.”



Light Blue, 2010. Acrylic paint on aluminium, mounted on aluminium panel, 200 × 200 cm. All non-studio images © the artist, courtesy the artist and Waddington Custot

Davenport has always had a decidedly irreverent approach to art making—one that is shared by many of his art-school peers (he graduated in 1988 from the YBA-spawning Goldsmiths and participated in the era-defining Freeze show)—although his practice isn’t derisive: rather than taking the piss, he simply offers a direct engagement with the work. “When I was at college that was something that came out of that whole art education process,” he tells me, “and growing up in the seventies and eighties with punk, seeing art and culture and wondering who it’s for. There is no big didactic message.”

He’s used cooking analogies numerous times to describe his process, comparing it at points to making pancakes or a stir-fry. “I made paintings where I was turning them upside down and making these big circle shapes,” he tells me of the pancake analogy. “It was a way of describing how these paintings were made to a person who might not be too familiar with it, and it’s kind of funny as well. Sometimes the dialogue around art can become so convoluted and

wordy and verbose that it puts people off. The jargon of it can be a bit heavy. You can still convey pretty difficult ideas to people, it's just about making it approachable.

"[The Circle Paintings] were probably the most technically difficult things I've ever tried to do and I think that interest in architecture came from those big dripped arch shapes, and then I started thinking what I really wanted to do was painting on buildings and walls. I went on a research trip to Florence to look at frescoes. I love the directness of them, it feels really honest and straightforward."

His recent Poured Line and Puddle Paintings are the result of long-perfected but simple techniques. In these works, often hundreds of lines of paint are precisely poured from top to bottom, sometimes diverging from their deeply satisfying regimentation to form an equally pleasing pool at the foot of the canvas. His Staggered Line works of 2010–12 have a notably human irregularity when viewed even from far back but his more recent pieces are almost flawless in pattern, creating a moment of tension as you approach the work when the lines begin to give way and reveal drips, crossovers and tiny sections where the paint may not have quite hit the canvas on its roll downwards. I wonder how many of these elements are strictly controlled by the artist.

"With the painters I really like, like Velázquez—and I'm not trying to compare myself to Velázquez—there's something lovely about the magicianship when he paints a collar and you look at it from far back and your brain understands it as lace, but when you get close you understand the marks. There's something so vital and assertive that is just amazing. It's a fine line between controlling it and making sure it doesn't become too contrived."



Yellow, Turquoise, 2001. Household paint on medium density fibreboard, 39.4 × 39.4 cm.

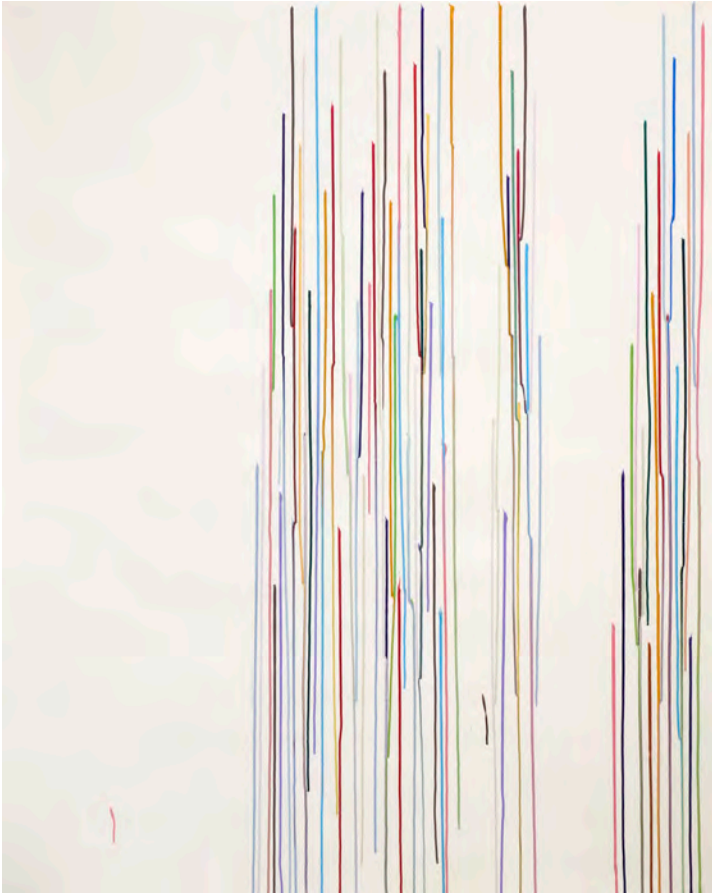


Once Davenport hits on a new process he works with it for a while (there are clearly defined chapters in his work) but this happening upon different processes—whether pouring, dripping or puddling—is often the work of chance. Walking around the studio, he highlights the tiny, delicate coloured splats of paint that have been left behind on the walls from a much larger work. Everyone in the studio loves them, he says, and they could spark a new way of working. Similarly, the luscious puddle of paint that sits at the bottom of many of his paintings took shape after he noticed the way this happened naturally when he was making poured line works. “I think it’s having the confidence to allow that to happen and thinking ‘that could be a great piece of art’ rather than having to have a theoretical reason there,” he says. “I think my generation of artists weren’t worried about that so much and made work that was very visually dynamic.”

Similarly, Davenport’s colour palette is led by the eye rather than theory and has, in the past, taken inspiration from sources as diverse and culture-clashing as Tintin, The Simpsons, Hans Holbein and Vincent van Gogh. “It’s not at all scientific,” he tells me as we stand in front of one painting with a particularly complex-looking colour combination. “I trust my eyes. I don’t really buy into the theory of colour. It’s not what I want to look at in a painting. When I was younger my mum bought me a book on Cézanne that said when you looked at the set-up of a still life in one of his paintings there was a pyramid and a cone and a triangle, and there were all these lines connecting it up. I thought he must be a scientific genius. I was talking to one of my tutors at college about it and he said, ‘No, Ian, he didn’t do that. He will have been looking at all the objects on a table and will have thought: I’ll tip up the bottle, I’ll angle the banana over here, actually the drapes need to be there...’ Of course that’s how he did it! It wasn’t to do with triangles and lines. Things are much more obvious.

“When I was at college I wanted to learn about Pollock and Morris Louis and people like that,” he says. “I looked into a lot of American painters like Brice Marden and other people I admired and I started reading a lot of discourse around it but I was trying to talk about kebab shops as well. There would be a conversation about rhythm and music

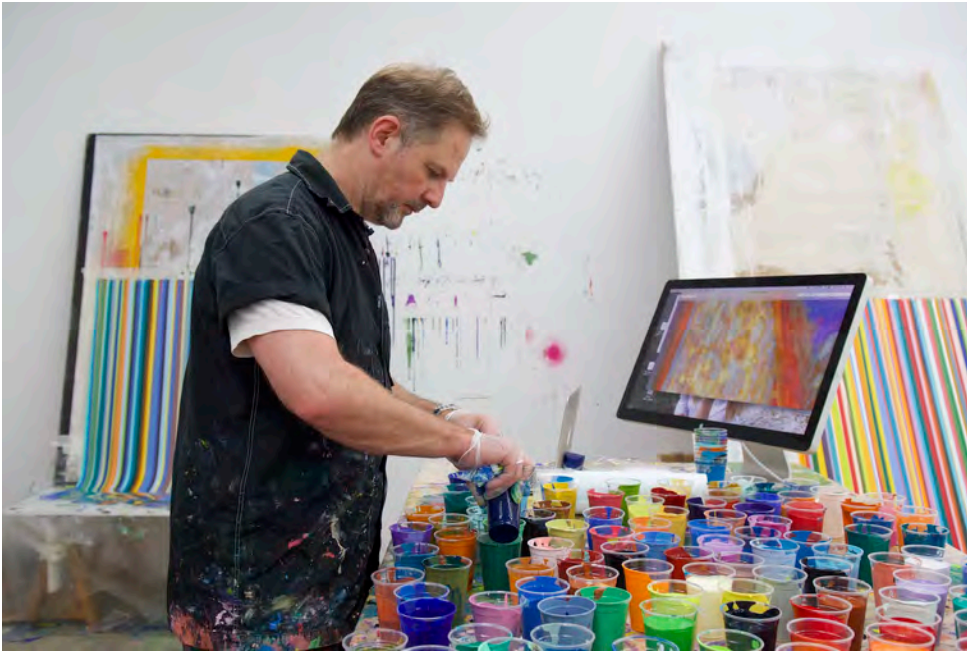
and melody and anti-melody, and I'd say: 'Yeah, but there's this great kebab shop at the end of the street with these fantastic stripy curtains and they were blowing in the wind. That's why I realized that the stripes could become a bit more irregular.'



Staggered Lines Three Columns, 2015. Acrylic on paper, 153 × 122 cm

Davenport's works are eventful; often large-scale, always impactful and undeniably enjoyable on the eye. He started out at Goldsmiths planning to be a sculptor but, in an unusual move for the art school that notoriously guides its students away from brushes and canvases, was encouraged to start painting. One tutor in particular noticed that he handled paint in a natural and unique way. "I put that together with just feeling more comfortable in the sculpture studios," he says, "and looking at how sculptors handle materials and question approaches to making art. It's a sculptural approach to painting but it's still painting."

It's common to see an artist's work gradually expand as their means do, but Davenport began working large-scale straight off the bat. "I was really lucky when I left Goldsmiths," he tells me. "There was someone who worked there and her partner had a massive warehouse on the river. I worked in this old dog biscuit factory, right by the Thames, and parts of it were completely abandoned, so if I wanted to make a really big painting I could. You have to remember I was in shows where people were cutting up dead animals and projecting naked ladies onto walls, so I had to deal with that. It was one way of literally creating space for myself, having presence, making something dynamic and me feeling I had a language that could compete in that kind of environment."



His studio space now is unexpectedly pristine and feels like a suitable mirroring of the controlled chaos suggested by his paintings, ordered and cleanly designed but also vivid and rhythmic. Towards the back of the studio, a cleanly gleaming silver drum kit sits ready for bashing. Rows and rows of coloured paint sit neatly ordered on tables. There's something a bit sci-fi about it, the way an advert on TV might suggest a car factory looks. "I actually had a very, very messy painting studio and got bored with it," he tells me. "I really enjoyed the fact it was so mentally messy. After about twenty years of that I thought: you know what, this is really uncomfortable.

The studio consists of Davenport and a few long-term gallery assistants who seem to fit into slightly different roles—often supporting with commercial projects, planning painting mock-ups in Photoshop and mixing colours. "It opens up more possibilities and it's a balance of using that in a fruitful way so it feels like you're being inventive with it," he says of his expanded team. "There are a lot of large projects. Physically mixing paint can be very time-consuming. It's fun but the results are hard won."

"We have the crazy Bee Gees falsetto choir in the studio," he tells me later. "When you've got other people around, it's a way that we can bond and it doesn't become too serious. I've always played music, drums and guitar, and now I look at the paintings and I realize there is a sort of parallel between musical rhythm and the pulsing lines and striping beats. A lot of abstract painters are interested in the discourse between music and visual art. Kandinsky was talking about it in the early twentieth century. The fact that I play music a lot makes it feel quite natural to me."

Ian Davenport's Stunning Waterfall of Color Turns Heads at Dallas Contemporary

Up Close With a Masterpiece — and the Artist

MAX THROWBRIDGE
OCTOBER 10, 2018



La Mer (After Bonnard), 300 x 300cm (with floor) Acrylic on aluminium mounted on aluminium panel, 2018

It was utterly my most memorable moment of the Venice Biennale in 2017: the midmorning Venetian sun cast radiance over the Venice Park, Giardini della Biennale, like a thin veil of veneer, perfectly reflecting the vibrancy of color that poured from Ian Davenport's masterpiece painting, *Giardini Colourfall*.

So mesmerized by its dominance, I gravitated towards the linear kaleidoscopic fresco, a staggering 46-feet wide and 13-feet tall of colorful paint and puddles. I will never forget the powerful vivacity and awe that encompassed my first morning at the Venice Biennale 2017, standing in the presence of this waterfall of color.

Now, this prodigious artwork highlights Davenport's exhibition at Dallas Contemporary.

British abstract artist Ian Davenport's career flows much like his artistic and investigative method, with meticulous precision, but also influenced with an element of chance. "I was thrilled to have the opportunity to make a monumental painting in such a wonderful context," Davenport recalls.

"In 2016 I was invited to do a temporary installation project at the Jemoli department store in Zurich, whilst the building was being refurbished. I was able to wrap the sides of the building in an enormous printed image of one of my paintings. By a stroke of good luck, the creative director of Swatch, Carlo Giordanetti, came to the opening event and really liked my work. We got talking, and he mentioned about Swatches' involvement with the Venice Biennale and their interest in art — as main sponsors for the Biennale, Swatch has its own pavilion, and it sounded like it could be a potentially great opportunity."

Not long after his first encounter with Giordanetti, they connected again in Milan.

"I met Carlo again by coincidence outside the Pinacoteca di Brera Art Museum," Davenport says.

"I had been looking at Old Master paintings and gathering research. We talked about the paintings by Raphael and Perugino in the museum collection, and it became clear that we shared similar interests about Italian and Renaissance art history. I explained how I use the colors from Old Master paintings as inspiration for my own work. After this meeting in Milan, Carlo asked me to collaborate with Swatch and create an artwork for their pavilion."

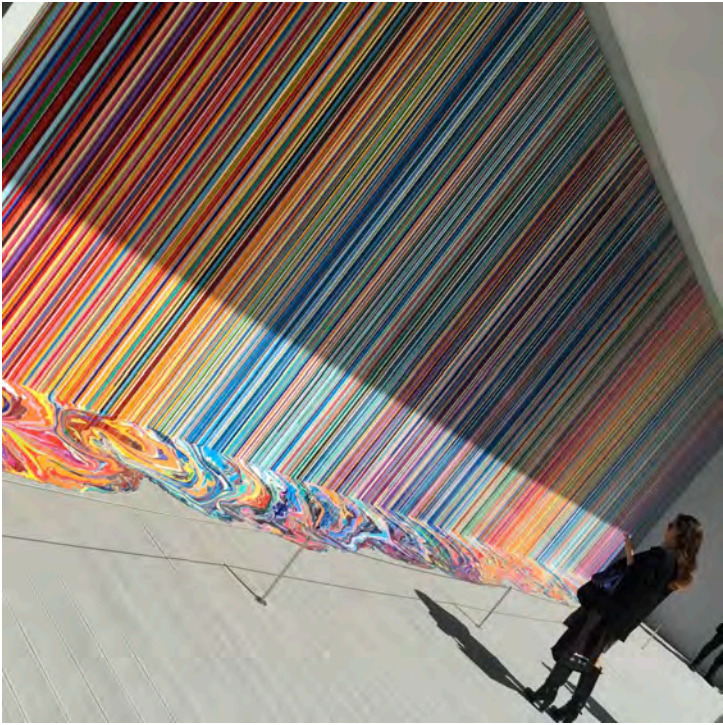
Prior to the Swatch commission, in 2006, Davenport created a major public outdoor artwork underneath *Southwark Bridge* in London — resulting in a monumental mural, a landmark not far from the Tate Gallery.

"One of the things, which are very important for an artist, is reaching as wide an audience as possible, but this doesn't have to be an audience that is necessarily familiar with contemporary art," Davenport says.

"Southwark has to deal with 'streetscape' and the relationship between artwork and architectural buildings, buses, lorries, large numbers of people in the local surroundings. To make a painting that can be viewed as you're traveling in a car is quite a challenge. It resulted in 150-foot long mural made in materials to withstand the harsh conditions of its outdoor location."

For the Venice Biennale commission, Davenport investigates his method further from *Poured Lines* to *Puddle Paintings*, introducing a dimensional aspect to his vertical panels. The linear enamel and schematic colors are perfectly controlled, yet the crescendo — a moment of chance — ends with a puddle, a dimensional continuation.

Now with a captive contemporary art-enthused audience, Davenport says, "With the pavilions' incredible position in the Giardini della Biennale I knew I must take full advantage of its potential impact and the extraordinary morning light. Making a painting that over 600,000 people may see is very exciting."



Ian Davenport's masterpiece painting, *Giardini Colourfall*.

Known for his artistic vision of movement and light, Davenport enlightens to the fact that, “Venice is famous for painters who explore color and light and I felt it was an opportunity to continue that tradition and make a 21st-century fresco for the Biennale.”

With many complex aspects to consider, Davenport shares. “Sight lines needed to be carefully thought about — how the composition of the painting would hold attention from far away and then as the viewer moves closer; offering up a different experience,” he says. “I decided to compose the painting in a sequence of colors that was repeated twice, to give the work symmetry, balance and a sense of classicism.

“There is a sculptural element too, as paint flows from the wall onto the floor and one can see the liquid paint flood out almost like a lava flow, or a multi-colored waterfall.”

No small feat, and with opportunity comes challenges, as Davenport elaborates, “Logistically speaking, a studio team of five people worked on the painting for over four months doing all the preparation including mixing hundreds of liters of paint, setting the work up, varnishing it, doing fine detailed touch ups etc. Then I worked on the painting every day for a month and was completely exhausted by the end of the process. I felt I aged a good 10 years!...

“When we finally got to Venice, the actual installation was also an enormous challenge. The week we were installing, there was a high tide, and St Mark’s Square was flooded. The banks of the docks, used to unload the painting were drenched and the boat, with our crates, just managed to travel underneath the low-lying bridges. Fortunately, the boat arrived early — the sailors said if they had left it an hour later, they wouldn’t have been able to get under the bridges as the water level had raised so much!

“Venice has extraordinary weather: Venetians laugh about the fact it has ‘four seasons in one day.’ We experienced storms, rain and sometimes sunshine at 80 degrees, all within a 24-hour period. Definitely some logistical challenges!”

A STAR IS BORN

Ian Davenport’s career has seen a fluid motion of success and luck — with significant highlights along the way.

“I had a lot of early success, at my first exhibition at Waddington Galleries in 1990, aged 23,” he says. “The Tate purchased one of my paintings from the exhibition. A year later I became the youngest person to be nominated for the Turner Prize. To continue that momentum was difficult.”

Later, projects came at Birmingham’s Ikon Gallery, Tate Liverpool, and Dundee Contemporary. There was his Southwark commission in 2006, which Davenport says, “was very special for the way it brought my work to an entirely new public audience.”

Still, the Venice Biennale takes the cake. “It is most certainly a significant moment,” he says. To reference the importance of *Giardini Colourfall*, Davenport exclaims, “It’s the centerpiece for the [Dallas Contemporary] exhibition, and the recent accompanying works have developed some of the similar ideas.”

To wit, Davenport is no stranger to the Dallas art scene.

“We hosted Ian’s one-person exhibition in ‘94,” says art advisor and Dallas Art Fair co-founder Chris Byrne. “It was exciting to welcome him to our Dallas gallery [Turner & Byrne Gallery]. I remember being quite impressed with his approach to the work. He compared the making of his paintings to two distinct activities: the precise steps and gestures of ballet and an assembly line worker who refines their movements each time they repeat the same task.

“Ian’s exhibition was well received in Dallas — several young collectors, as well as the Dallas Museum of Art, purchased work for their collection.”

Dallas-based art collectors, Eva and Hooman Yazhari are also Davenport fans.

“Ian’s piece was one of our earliest acquisitions and holds a special place in our collection,” says Eva. “It is the first piece we see when we enter our home. The print’s vibrancy married to serenity, with a clever twist at the foot of the piece, never fails to make us smile. We also love the virtuosity of printmaking, which Ian displays in making such a complex piece. When we met Ian at MTV Re:Define this year, we enjoyed his wit and down to earth character.”

Curator of the exhibition, Peter Doroshenko, executive director at Dallas Contemporary enthused: “Creating and expanding a unique signature style of working since the late 1990s, Ian Davenport has never looked back. The deep thought processes behind each work creates a layering of information that few artists can maintain. Having Davenport’s first museum exhibition in the USA at Dallas Contemporary will highlight his rich history and newest artworks.”

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

The Telegraph

La Biennale di Venezia 57th International Art Exhibition,
in pictures

May 12, 2017



Credit Marco Secchi/Getty Images

The 57th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia will be open to the public from May 13 to November 26, 2017. There will be 120 artists exhibiting their work hailing from 51 different countries.

An Installation Sponsored by Swatch created by Ian Davenport and called 'Giardini Colorful' is seen at Biennale Giardini

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/05/12/la-biennale-di-venezia-57th-international-art-exhibition-pictures/installation-sponsored-swatch-created-ian-davenport-calledgiardini/>

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PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

ARTNEWS

2017 VENICE BIENNALE Scenes from the Venice Biennale: Day 2

May 10, 2017

Katherine McMahon



Venice Biennale-goers enjoying the weather in front of Ian Davenport's *Giardini Colourfall*.

The second day of the Venice Biennale press preview began today. Below, a look around more of the action in and around the Arsenale and Giardini.

<http://www.artnews.com/2017/05/10/scenes-from-the-venice-biennale-day-2/>

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

artnet® news

Editors' Picks: 8 Art Events to See in New York This Week
September 5, 2016



Ian Davenport, Cadmium Yellow. Courtesy of Paul Kasmin.

“Ian Davenport: Doubletake” at Paul Kasmin Gallery The British artist is debuting a new series of paintings inspired by “the chromatic essence of historical masterpieces,” as the press release notes. Expect glitchy color combinations, which create drippy psychedelic moments pooling at the bottom of the canvases.

Location: 293 Tenth Avenue

Price: Free

Time: Opening reception: September 8, 6:00–8:00 p.m.

—Kathleen Massara

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

MUSÉE

October 8, 2013



IAN DAVENPORT'S
COLORFALL AT PAUL
KASMIN GALLERY

Colorfall is Ian Davenport's latest exhibition at Paul Kasmin Gallery, a cavalcade of hues that is quite refreshing. Davenport uses a syringe to "drip acrylic paint onto aluminum and stainless steel panels," which allows gravity to create perfectly straight lines of color that end in brilliant explosions of heterogeneity.¹ Perhaps it is nature's integral role in the outcome of these paintings that imbues each piece with a level of comfort and familiarity; or, better yet, that these paintings are a beautiful product of nature *and* man, a union that has always been fraught with turmoil. In any event, *Colorfall* establishes itself as a reflection of the mind, and humankind's relationship to the world.



© Ian Davenport, *Cobalt, Vermillion, Cobalt*, 2013. Courtesy of Ian Davenport and Paul Kasmin Gallery, NYC.

Cobalt, Vermillion, Cobalt (as seen above) is emblematic of the exhibit at large: neat rows of variegated colors cascade inevitably down the steel panel, until they hit an invisible wall and envelope each other, a breakdown into chaos. At the very top of the painting, you can see tiny spaces in between the columns of color, which give away the work's solid, piercing blue background. Each piece had this same basic format. However, a different background color was used for each painting, accompanied by a unique, hue-informed vibe; regardless of the myriad colors utilized, every work had its own presence, a phenomenon I believe was directly correlated to these disparate background colors.

Colorfall is a mirror for the human mind. Despite the prismatic assortment of colors, I still had the tendency to look for a pattern, some sort of repeating sequence that would "unlock" each piece's meaning. Humankind has always strained to understand its physical surroundings, and in this endeavor, it has attempted to make order out of chaos. Davenport has not only captured this propensity for structure, but used it against the mind of the spectator.



© Ian Davenport, *Cutout*, 2013. Courtesy of Ian Davenport and Paul Kasmin Gallery, NYC.

As I stared intently at a piece called, *Cutout*, I discovered a curious side effect of Davenport's paintings: the images, like optical illusions, burn themselves into your mind, transforming the surrounding white walls into canvases of their own (these secondary phenomena appear to be the negatives of their originals). *Colorfall* therefore, is assured a lasting impression in viewers' minds. Again, I believe these paintings are so relatable, because they appeal to a human need for expression itself. These strict, colorful lines, while providing three-dimensional depth to each piece, inevitably end in an eruptive release of some kind of frustrated energy. The will of separate individuals becoming the action of the collective.

There were two paintings in this exhibit that contradicted the rest. One of them (shown below) was *Idanthrone*, a painting that gave the impression of an upward climb, as opposed to a downward progression. Within *Idanthrone* lay a solemnity, a stark religious tone intensified by a darker background. In juxtaposition with say, *Cutout* or *Cobalt, Vermillion, Cobalt*, you can see just how powerful Davenport's technique really is; the alternation of colors has, and always will be the messenger of meaning.



© Ian Davenport, *Idanthrone*, 2013. Courtesy of Ian Davenport and Paul Kasmin Gallery, NYC.

Review by Paul Longo

¹Paul Kasmin Gallery press release for Ian Davenport's *Colorfall*, 2013.



IAN DAVENPORT

BY KATY DONOGHUE

"I GUESS WHAT I FOUND WAS THAT MY OWN COLOR TASTES HAD BECOME A LITTLE BIT PREDICTABLE TO ME, SO I JUST NEEDED SOMETHING TO KIND OF SUBVERT IT"

In late spring, *Whitewall* visited the studio of Ian Davenport in South London. The long, open space had a few of his latest paintings on the far and left side walls. In front of a larger work stood a homemade platform, which Davenport uses to carefully drip lines of varying colors of paint. The sheets of metal he works on were tilted, allowing gravity to pull the paint down at a moderate pace. For his upcoming exhibition "Colorfall" at Paul Kasmin Gallery in New York (opening on September 12, 2013), Davenport will show a new group of paintings in which he has explored the sequence of other famous artists' paintings.

These new works are dizzying and brilliant. We had a hard time focusing on any one line, preferring to take them in all at once as our eyes' natural inclination to settle on one spot proved futile. Over tea, Davenport talked to us about his newest technique of moving paint around, telling us he's always felt more like a sculptor than a painter.

WHITEWALL: *What are you working on for the September show at Paul Kasmin Gallery?*

IAN DAVENPORT: For the exhibition at Paul's, what I want to do is create some big works playing around with the chromatic background and taking it to quite an extreme. I've been playing around with using colors from other artists' works. I was putting quite odd juxtapositions next to each other, and it just seemed to work, and I would put really odd colors together because that's what the painting looked like in front of me and there's no way that you kind of do that normally. You wouldn't kind of go, "This is a really horrible gray—I'll put it next to that pink and then brown."

WW: *What artists have you been looking at?*

ID: Say, someone like Carpaccio, who makes these wonderful crowd scenes. You have all these tiny little figures next to each other and there will be a beautiful kind of dark green jacket and then a kind of really deep red and then maybe a lovely pale kind of gray. So it's kind of like just following the sequence, and he obviously thought very carefully how those people sit next to each other. He was after exactly the same thing, except he did it with people 500 years ago.

WW: *You must be looking at painting totally differently.*

ID: Yes, it was quite a surprise to kind of scan right into a painting and really see how someone's constructed it in that way, because that's not my normal thought when I look at painting. I guess what I found was that my own color tastes had become a little bit predictable to me, so I just needed something to kind of subvert it.

WW: Tell me about how these paintings are made. You use a syringe at the top and let gravity roll the paint down?

ID: Exactly—it just seems to be engineered perfectly to make these great lines. And then over a period of time I also realized that in addition to kind of running down really nicely it made these great puddles and movement on the floor. So I just wanted to find a way of keeping that, so I devised a system of bending metal onto the floor and then letting the paint dry, and then we'd bend it back.

It creates this really sort of odd dynamic where you have something quite classical and something really messed up. There's this quite paradoxical thing going on between something quite organized and something's that just let loose.

WW: What were you making before these?

ID: I made some painting where I was pouring. I had this slightly ludicrous idea about making a really enormous drip. I wanted to see what was the biggest drip I could make?

I would pour this enormous great big shape of gloss paint out, and if you kept on pouring, I realized it would form a really beautiful circle, and then if you stood that panel up it would kind of drip down. But on such a big scale that becomes an arch or, you know, quite a monumental architectural shape. A lot of the paintings have been to do with dripping and pouring, taking that technique and then really exploring and taking it to somewhere else.

WW: I was reading that in school you were always intrigued by the sculpture students rather than the painting students, because they got to try different techniques out all the time.

ID: Definitely, yeah. I've even said I'm more of sculptor who makes paintings. I really do think that's kind of true. I have quite a sort of sculptor's way of looking at materials. I think it's just the way I relate to materials. In primary school I would always get told off for mixing glue into the paint. I think I always wanted to mess around with the material to see what it did.

And then when I got to art college I had a teacher that said, "Well, you naturally seem to be doing these things, why don't you keep playing with that?" I'm really interested in gesture as well. In some of the early paintings I was dipping small canvases into paint, and in England if you're having a cup of tea you dip a biscuit into your cup of tea. Then there is the whole thing about baptism, so I'm quite fascinated by what it means playing around with really sort of ordinary things that you see around you. Like taking a random element like that puddle, something that you see all the time, and then making it into an element of a painting. That's something that's disregarded or not necessarily seen as being an element that one can use in painting.

WW: Did you always want to be an artist?

ID: Oh yeah, definitely. I was quite lucky. My mom went to art school, and for women of her generation it was really difficult . . . so she was always a bit frustrated, and I think a lot of kids get given a football or a baseball bat or whatever, and we got given paints and pencils. From the beginning we were encouraged to do it.

WW: You were in that first YBA show. What was that like?

ID: I think, looking back, it was extremely helpful. I mean, at the time I didn't like it particularly. I didn't like being part of something that went against everything about being an individual. And actually none of the concerns were really shared by the artists; there isn't an overriding aesthetic. I think people were ambitious; they were trying to push themselves, and I think they wanted to try and be successful. There's a certain amount of ambition, and those were the shared goals anyway rather than an aesthetic one.

WW: What keeps you coming back to this drip motif in your paintings?

ID: I was talking to my print guy the other day, who was saying, "How long do you think you can make these works for?" I said we could just do them forever; you could just carry on and on. So there's an element of me that kind of really likes doing them, I'm not sure how long . . . I like that idea of being able to do groups of work in tandem. That would be a great thing.

But what I also don't particularly want to do is have an army of assistants. The thing I like about making art is making art. That's why I became an artist. I don't want to design things on the computer and give it to somebody.

WW: Your idea isn't enough.

ID: Yeah, to me it's like that just getting dirty and doing that. I just get a thrill out of it. That bit where you get lost for that two hours—that's just a really good feeling.

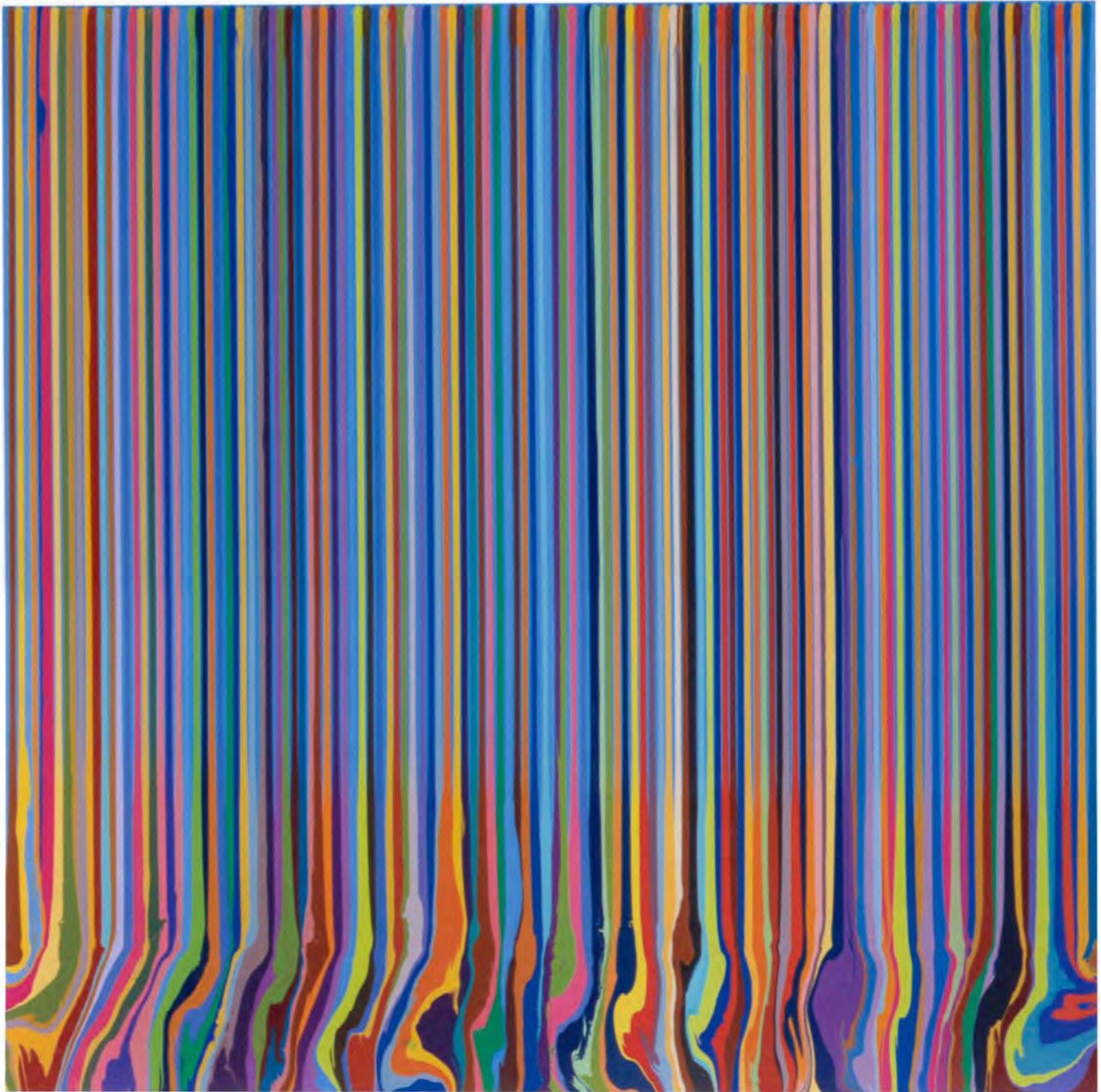


Ian Davenport
Puddle Painting: Red
2009

Acrylic paint on stainless steel,
mounted on aluminum panel
98 x 147 inches
Photography by Prudence Cuming
Associates, London
Image courtesy of the artist and
Paul Kasmin Gallery.

Opposite page: portrait
by Prudence Cuming
Associates 2013.

Image courtesy of the artist and
Paul Kasmin Gallery.



Ian Davenport
Puddle Painting: Light Cerulean Blue
2008
Acrylic paint on aluminum, mounted on aluminum panel
40 x 31 inches
Photography by Prudence Cuming Associates, London. Image courtesy of the artist and Paul Kasmin Gallery.



Ian Davenport

Poured Lines: Studio Black No. 2

2006

Water-based paints on paper

24 x 20 inches

Photography by Prudence Cuming
Associates, London.

Image courtesy of the artist and Paul
Kasmin Gallery.

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

THE  TIMES

September 8, 2012

exhibitions

COURTESY OF THE FINE ART SOCIETY



Ian Davenport's artwork, part of *The Materiality of Paint*, appears to bleed on to the floor

The Materiality of Paint

New show

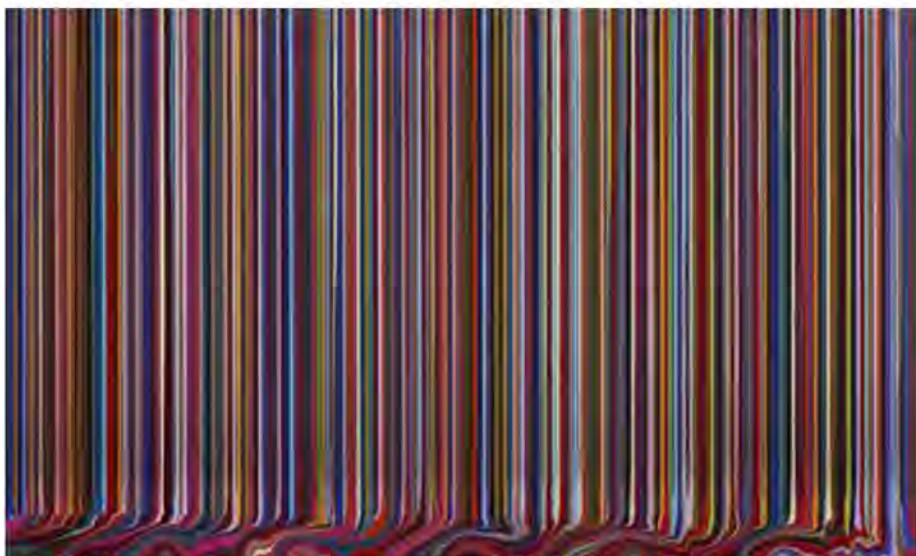
A group show exploring the physical, sculptural qualities of paint, featuring Ian Davenport, Jason Martin, Rob and Nick Carter,

Boo Ritson, Piers Secunda, and others. *The Fine Art Society, W1 (020-7318 1895), to Sept 29*

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

The Observer
September, 2009

Artist Ian Davenport on how he paints



Puddle Painting: Black (Wave) by Ian Davenport (acrylic paint on stainless steel, 2009)
Photograph: PR

The guys in the sculpture department at my art college had it right. They always seemed to be playing around and experimenting. It always struck me that the painters didn't do that, that they stuck to using materials in a conventional way.

I did all the things you're not supposed to do - you aren't meant to put oil paint and water paint together, so that's immediately the first thing I did. Of course it was totally hopeless, but I felt that breaking these rules really opened something for me. As an artist I think that you should always question what you're told.

If you put paint on to a canvas with a brush, you know what it will do. But what if you use something else to apply the paint? It's going to do something different, perhaps something you never expected. I've put paint on in so many different ways - I've poured it on with watering cans, added it on with little pins, blown strands of it with fans, both large and small. Once, when my studio used to be on a film set, I hired an industrial wind machine and tried to use that. I watched in horror as my studio moved from one end to the other.

More recently I've been applying paint with a syringe, which is an incredibly precise instrument for controlling liquid. It has allowed me to concentrate on colour and the sequence of colours rather than focusing all my attention on the paint and how it flows.

Lots of different things inform my choice of colours. Sometimes it's purely intuitive, putting colours together and seeing how they look. At other times I might lift a palette from an old painting, or, as I recently did, from the opening sequence of *The Simpsons*.

I feel like I have discovered a language that I can now play around with. I never set out to create this style of work though. And that's the great thing about art - you're never too sure where you're going to end up. It really is a personal journey.

• Ian Davenport was born in Sidcup in 1966. His solo show, *Ian Davenport: Puddle Paintings*, at the Waddington Galleries will run from 10 October to 7 November. He is represented by [Waddington Galleries](http://www.waddingtongalleries.com), London

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

Telegraph
August 19, 2006

Ian Davenport's mural takes its cues from disco and turns a grimy London tunnel into a symphony of stripes, says **Serena Davies**

Dance to the music of lines

It may be a three-minute walk from Tate Modern, but a big grimy tunnel on Southwark Street in London is hardly an obvious place for a piece of extraordinary modern art. Next month, however, it becomes the permanent home of Britain's largest ever outdoor painting. This is no common or garden mural: for one thing, it's vandal-proof. For another, it's exceptional for a fine artist to make an outdoor painting at all, let alone one on this scale.

Ian Davenport, ertswhile Turner-Prize nominee and celebrated purveyor of "poured lines" paintings, has made an artwork to fit under Western railway bridge, near Blackfriars Road, which is 48 metres in length.

That's longer than the Sistine Chapel. And with 1.2 million people passing under the bridge every day, it will have visitor numbers to compete with Michelangelo's.

Poured Lines (the title isn't the biggest selling point) is a regeneration project commissioned by Land Securities (the property Goliath responsible for nearby office developments) and Southwark Council, with Tate onboard in an advisory capacity. It will transform a

dirty thoroughfare into a symphony of stripes. These have been painted onto a run of enormous steel panels, each three metres high, stretching the width of the bridge.

Davenport has spent the past few months making the piece at a German factory: the only place in the world that could supply the especially devised graffiti-proof vitreous enamel paints in the industrial quantities required.

‘I lift a lot
of colours
from *The Simpsons*’

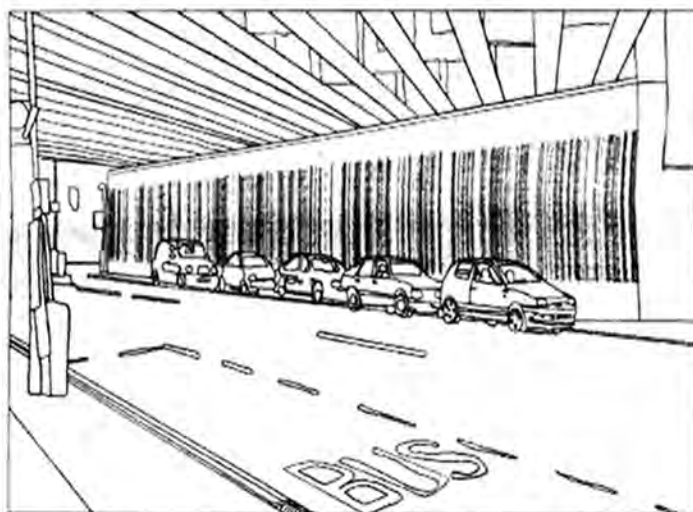
"It has certainly been a very tough commission," Davenport says, relaxing in his studio a few weeks before the official unveiling next month. "The amount of paint needed was phenomenal. And a public artwork is very different from a private one. It's been about a year and a half getting all the consents. We had to do endless tests. There's a one in a billion chance someone might fall over because they don't like the colour yellow, and other

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

ridiculous considerations.”

Davenport is joking about the yellow. But his work can be psychedelic, and could well prompt an altered state of consciousness. He covered a whole wall of Tate Britain with *hypnotic lines of rainbow hues for the Days Like These* exhibition in 2003. A darker, glossier abstract currently hangs opposite Rembrandt and Guido Reni in the National Gallery's *Passion for Paint* exhibition. It looks like a kind of colour dance. In fact, the most frequent analogy to Davenport's work is a musical one. He takes it up: "It's like disco," he says. "Very dancy, very rhythmic." Or, as he's called it in the past, "Josef Albers meets *Saturday Night Fever*".

A graduate of Goldsmith's art college, Davenport was one of the few painters to emerge out of the now-legendary Damien Hirst-curated *Freeze* exhibition of 1988 ("Really, very few people saw it," he says, laughing). A hit from the start, he secured his 1991 Turner Prize nomination at the age of 25. His art bridges the funky, instant-impact aesthetics of the Hirst brigade and more traditional tastes,



and his gallery, Waddington's, favours painters of an older generation, Peter Blake and Craigie Aitchison included. In fact, Davenport's most obvious forebears are the abstracts of the American colour-field painters of the 1950s.

But Davenport is also passionate about pop and cartoons. Roadrunner and Wile E Coyote get into the conversation. "And I lift a lot of colours from *The Simpsons*," he says, proudly. These he finds in the standard palette of household emulsion, his medium of choice for his indoor work. According to critic and fan Michael Bracewell, Davenport

is where "high Modernism meets Texas homecare".

Although on a far larger scale than previous pieces, the Southwark painting is typical of Davenport's current way of working. "I've been making paintings like these along similar lines for about 10 years," he says, oblivious to the pun. (Before that, he was more into blobs and circles, a serene set of "arch" paintings being the most impressive result.) The Southwark piece has been made by pouring paint from syringes placed at the top of the panels and tilted at an angle to enable the liquid to run down smoothly.

The colours are controlled, but the way they then slip-slide and melt cannot be precisely predicted. "I make my paintings by using the organic nature of paint," Davenport says. "I control liquid, I use colour, and I try to choreograph these different elements together. There's a lot of internal rigour to the process, but at the same time it is about chance."

A sneak preview of *Poured Lines* on a stormy August morning reveals luminous hues on a bright white background. As the lorries thunder through this deafening space, subtle lighting makes the artwork glow. From the other side of the road, the row of panels – some bright, some pastel, some frenetic, some calm – produce a wave-like effect across the trajectory of the painting. Shining through the smog, it is a hugely welcome – and just plain huge – addition to this borough's ever-burgeoning "artscape".

'Poured Lines' is unveiled on Sept 6; an exhibition of prints associated with the project will be on show at the Alan Cristea Gallery, 31 Cork St, London W1S (020 7439 1866) from Sept 13.

FT Magazine
August 26/27 2006

ARTS PAINTING

In the lines of duty

Commissioned to create one of the largest pieces of public art in London, Ian Davenport kept a diary of the last fraught months of its creation – in an enamel factory in Germany

In September 2001 I was commissioned by Land Securities and Southwark Council to make a painting as part of a regeneration project in Bankside, London. They wanted to use a public artwork to help boost the pace of change in this area and improve one of the main routes into Bankside itself.

My painting, "Poured Lines: Southwark Street", will be nearly 50m long and 3m high. When it is installed next month, it will become one of the largest permanent artworks in London. It will run along one wall beneath the railway bridge over Southwark Street, near Blackfriars Bridge and on one of the main approaches to Tate Modern.

The painting has no narrative: it doesn't depict a specific object or thing. My work is about expressing many different things at the same time. I hate to be pinned down to a particular meaning or set of preconceived ideas. It's about how I use materials, colour, rhythm, movement, timing, control and chance.

We arrive in Germany very tired from so little sleep. The Omeras enamel factory where we'll be working is about 50km from Dresden, very near the Czech border.

The weather conditions locally can be very extreme, and snow is forecast. We look over our studio in the factory, which has been cleared well, but it's really cold, even inside.

Settle into the apartment where Sue and I will stay, which is very nice.

Thursday, February 23

This will be the largest work I have made and it's very demanding, so I'm eager to get started. I have done other large-scale projects – a recent wall painting I made for Tate was 17m long, and my University of Warwick commission was 8m high. But this is on a totally different level.

The panels I'm using are sheet steel, which makes them very durable, and they've already been coated in white enamel. After I've worked on them, they'll be fired in a huge furnace at more than 800°C to



Making the piece is a complicated affair. After a lot of research, enamel on metal appeared the most suitable materials for the work, as it needs to be hard wearing, and the colours available in vitreous enamel are very clear and bright. The only factory that can cope with the size of panels we need is in Schwarzenberg, in eastern Germany. So after a year and a half of planning and organising, the time has finally come to pack my bags.

Tuesday, February 21

Sue Arrowsmith is accompanying me to Germany. Sue is also an artist – and my wife – and has agreed to assist me with the

harden and fuse the material. They are 3m high and each weighs about 40kg, so they're awkward and heavy to move around. In London they will be mounted on the wall to form one continuous piece.

For this work I have developed a way of painting using a large 50ml syringe to pour liquid enamel down the panels in repeated lines. It sounds nuts, but works very well. The painting is based on various of my earlier works where carefully controlled lines of paint were poured down gallery walls in repeated stripes. I proposed this approach for the commission as it's visually so immediate but also unfolds for the viewer over

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

a longer period of time. I don't want to tell people how to react to the work, I want them to make their own judgments, but for me it is about the experience of looking – of sensation.

The pouring method, using gravity to pull the liquid paint down the surface, means no line falls identically, creating beautiful random effects. On such a large scale, the mass of vertical lines and the vibrant colour should make quite an impact. I have become so practised at this pouring technique that most of my attention is focused on the way I put colours together to run in sequences and how they are choreographed.

Friday, February 24

Test working on the newly manufactured panels and see how they react. Most of the trials were on a much smaller size so it will take a bit of time to get used to the larger scale.

Sunday, February 26

We look round Schwarzenberg, the little town where we are staying, and its castle. It's a very pretty place with cobbled streets and a nature reserve – very different to London, which we're both missing like crazy.

Monday, February 27

We start the week by trying to sort out the colours I need to use for the painting. There is a basic palette from which we intend to create a wider range. The ground enamel mix doesn't behave in the same way as conventional paint – perhaps a better comparison would be ceramic glazes, because the colours change after they've

been fired. Red terracotta enamel will become bright scarlet after it has been through the furnace. Most colours are in the same chromatic range but some change dramatically after being fired. Deep royal blue begins its life as a light lilac. Sometimes this can be very confusing. Bearing in mind I normally work with a palette of hundreds of colours – and more than 300 hues will be used in this piece – we'll have to do a lot of tests before we can begin work on the final panels.

The enamel comes as a pigment, a finely ground glass that is mixed with a special pine oil and then pushed through milling rollers to make a thick viscous liquid. It is quite dangerous to work with and easy to forget that in essence it is glass. We have to wear gloves when handling the material and make sure not to rub our skin as it's such an irritant. Mixing the colours will be Sue's main job.

It is extremely cold outside with temperatures about minus 15, and the heater is on the blink...

Wednesday, March 1

Make some small samples. It's proving difficult working with Omeras. The factory specialises in architectural enamel cladding and has little experience of working directly with artists. I suppose they have a different perspective on the job. For me it's an incredible opportunity to make one of the biggest public artworks in London, one that might even become a new London landmark, with millions of people passing it every year.



Vertical take off: Ian Davenport with one of the panels of "Poured Lines", Southwark Street, and, right, the enamels he used to make it



August 2017 2006 FY magazine 25

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

ARTS PAINTING

Frustrating that it's difficult to make the factory excited by the potential.

Thursday, March 2

Fired test panels today - a qualified success.

Sunday, March 12

Very heavy snow. It is about 3ft deep, and it takes ages to dig the car out. Try to go for walk, but it's too deep so we stay inside and get a little bored. However the snow is very beautiful. We've never seen anything quite like this in the UK.

Monday, March 13

Fire some medium panels. Relative success. Small sample is very good. I do some tests with white only, which is not firing properly.

Tuesday, March 14

White tests go OK. As suspected, white needs to be thinned more than the other colours - it's a much heavier pigment than the other enamels. Experiment with transparent glazes. Finally start work on full-size samples.

Thursday, March 16

Scheisse! (My German is improving.) One panel has a mark in it caused by the steel bubbling in the furnace - apparently a one-in-100 chance. This means it can't be used.

Thursday, March 23

I am painting every day with only short lunch breaks. We will have to work hard to finish the project on time! Behind already... I've found a way of using the computer to alter images of painted studies. Using my scanned colour studies and drawings I can adjust the colour balance and tone contrast, giving me loads more quick references to work from.

Thursday, March 30

On a quick trip back to London, Sue and I walk down Southwark Street, and it's good to see how the improvements to the area are taking shape. The space under the bridge where my painting will be installed has changed dramatically, with new lighting and extensive cleaning and repainting. The whole area is unrecognisable and the fabulous old buildings such as the Corn Exchange are now complemented by contemporary architecture.

Friday, March 31

Visit the British Museum to see the Michelangelo drawings. Ask Sue to call me "Il Divino", Michelangelo's nickname. She reminds me that although she has many names for me, "Il Divino" won't be one of them. Tried to pack as much culture as possible into the week, it was great to see exhibitions.

Saturday, April 1

Back to Germany

Tuesday, April 4

Start using works on paper as "cartoons" for the project. Very Michelangelo! I am now able to print out studies from my computer to act as "aide memoirs" - they are helping speed up the painting.

I have many different sources of influence. As well as Renaissance frescoes, I am interested in television cartoons, films and music. There is no one dominant theme in my work, it's not didactic - I am interested in how human beings look and perceive the world, hopefully seeing something new in the work every time they pass.

I use materials and work with gravity and other natural phenomena to make my paintings - sometimes I feel I am more of a sculptor than a painter, dictating to the material and simultaneously working with it. The meaning and making become completely intertwined.

Friday April 7

Was cheered up by seeing more of the panels fired. They look great. I'm incredibly pleased.

Need to make sure the panels are numbered so that they're in the correct order when they are installed. I must paint 1.8m to 2m in length a day to be on target for our finish date for the middle of May.

Tuesday, April 25

After repeated reminders to be careful, the factory ruins three further panels today. Again an accident, but out of 25 panels, six have now been damaged. This is a very tricky situation. We need the factory to help us, so I try to be as diplomatic as possible, but I'm in a foul mood.

Wednesday, April 26

The panels were fired today and came out fine, so the process seems to be working better, and people are concentrating when handling my work. I think this is due to the arrival of Klaus, the floor manager, who has returned to work after a knee operation. The factory guys got a real bollocking from him. He says they won't damage anything again. I believe him.

Each panel takes roughly a day to paint but as they are made in sequence damaging one effectively means two or three others can't be used. It's clear that I can't make much more than one panel a day so Sue and I rethink our schedule to finish at the beginning of June.

Saturday, April 29

It snows again! It is now nearly May. The novelty has worn off, and it's not fun any more.

Monday, May 1

I've been reading about Michelangelo for inspiration. Apparently after the first six months of work on the Sistine Chapel all the painting had to be destroyed, as the mix for the fresco was going mouldy. Even he got things wrong.

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

Tuesday, May 2

This week I decide to spend my mornings supervising the firing and the afternoon painting. That way I can make sure there is no careless damage. There has also been a change in perception about the project from the management team, after having a film crew around last week to film me. They can now see how artists working in enamel could be good for future business.

I am making the stripes wider in the painting. To begin with there were about 50 lines in each panel, there are now 35 or 40. As I am becoming more experienced with the enamel, the piece is much bolder. I've also been "cutting back" into the space much more to let the work "breathe".



Act of creation: Davenport applies stripes of enamel to a panel

Wednesday, May 3

Definitely feel we're all learning how to work together. There are fewer mistakes if I oversee what's going on at every stage. Though more time consuming, it's certainly less stressful.

I have started to add water to the enamel, which means I can vary the tones in the work quite dramatically as I alter the transparency, similar to the way one works with watercolour.

Friday, May 26

Lots of late nights this month working, but the majority of the painting is now done. I am so tired I feel relief more than anything else. My back aches from moving the heavy steel around, and my eyes are sore from spending months looking close-up at the bright colours. I finish the last panel about 9pm. I am glad there is only some touching up to do for next week.

PHOTOGRAPHS: EDWARD WEBB

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

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PHOTOGRAPHS: EDWARD WEBB

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

Times online
August 26/September 1 2006

Below a shabby railway bridge an awesome piece of public art is about to be unveiled. **Charlotte Mullins** met the artist

In an overcast summer day, the artist Ian Davenport stands under the western railway bridge on Southwark Street, South London, and contemplates the scale of his latest and most ambitious painting. At nearly 165ft (50m) long, it will be one of the largest public artworks in the country when it is unveiled on September 6.

But for now it is under polythene sheeting, with only two of its 48 steel panels uncovered for me to see. Hundreds of vertical stripes slither down the 10ft-high panels in every colour imaginable — crimson and canary yellow, pale mauve and mint, black and white. Some lines are dark and dense, others chalky and translucent; all appear luminous.

On our previous meetings Davenport has been reserved, wary. He hates dwelling on his connections to Damien Hirst and Young British Artists. (He was part of the renowned Freeze exhibition in 1988 that kick-started the YBAs — “I wish people would move beyond that,” he grumbles.) But talking about *Poured Lines*, he comes to life, pointing out the various qualities of the paint, a vitreous enamel that has been fired at over 800C. “On the panels you have lines that are incredibly vibrant and others that are watery,” he explains. “In the middle of the line, because the paint is thicker, it is quite sharp and bright,

Poured Lines has been commissioned by Land Securities and Southwark Council as part of the regeneration of the area around Tate Modern. IPC, the publishing company, is due to move its headquarters to Southwark Street next year. Near by, Zaha Hadid is designing the new Architecture Foundation’s building to resemble a giant mirror-plated anvil. Southwark Council and Land Securities were keen to commission an iconic piece of public art, and Davenport’s proposal fitted the bill. The painting has taken two and a half years to complete. In the spring, Davenport spent three months at a German enamels factory with his wife, the artist Sue Arrowsmith, methodically pouring the lines before the panels were fired.

Back at his studio in southeast London, he explains that the reason for using enamel was to make the work as permanent as possible. But was it difficult working in such an industrial environment? “I felt comfortable working in a place where they were screenprinting Tube signs. It felt normal. I was doing my job and they were doing theirs. Each panel weighs 40kg, so it was hard labour to move 48 of them around. And I’m getting on a bit!” says the 40-year-old. While we tend to think of abstract artists as painting an inner vision, Davenport draws inspiration from the world in which he lives, whether it’s a

simple forms — circles, arches, lines — he explores how paint responds to being dripped, pooled and tipped over surfaces such as aluminium, canvas and walls. After his early success — he was nominated for the Turner Prize in 1991, aged 25 — he went on to win the Pizza Express Prospects Contemporary Drawing Prize in 2002 with a large striped wall painting.

This series came about by chance, when he discovered that he could use a syringe to inject paint into the top corner of a wall and rely on gravity to pull it down into a line. But initially he had problems with colour. “Whenever I had tried to do something on the wall before, I used loads of bright colours, and it didn’t have a relationship to the surface it was on. Then I realised that white was the most important colour, because the surface was white, so I bought pots of pale pastel emulsion and played around with them. I thought: ‘Oh God, what have I done now.’ Then Sue came in and said: ‘Yes, that’s exactly right; you need those soft colours, you can interface them with other things.’”

Increasingly, Davenport has turned to printmaking to complement his physically demanding work. His latest series of etchings, to be published by the Alan Cristea Gallery, is based on some of the hundreds of drawings he created while planning *Poured Lines*. “I think all my work is diaristic,” he

Earning his stripes:

but towards the edges it becomes a lot softer. So despite this hard material there is a human, handmade quality to it.”

He dashes across the busy road to illustrate how different the work will look from afar. Standing on one of the pavement approaches for Tate Modern, you can see the work in its entirety. Even with only two panels on view the coloured lines seem to dance and hum.

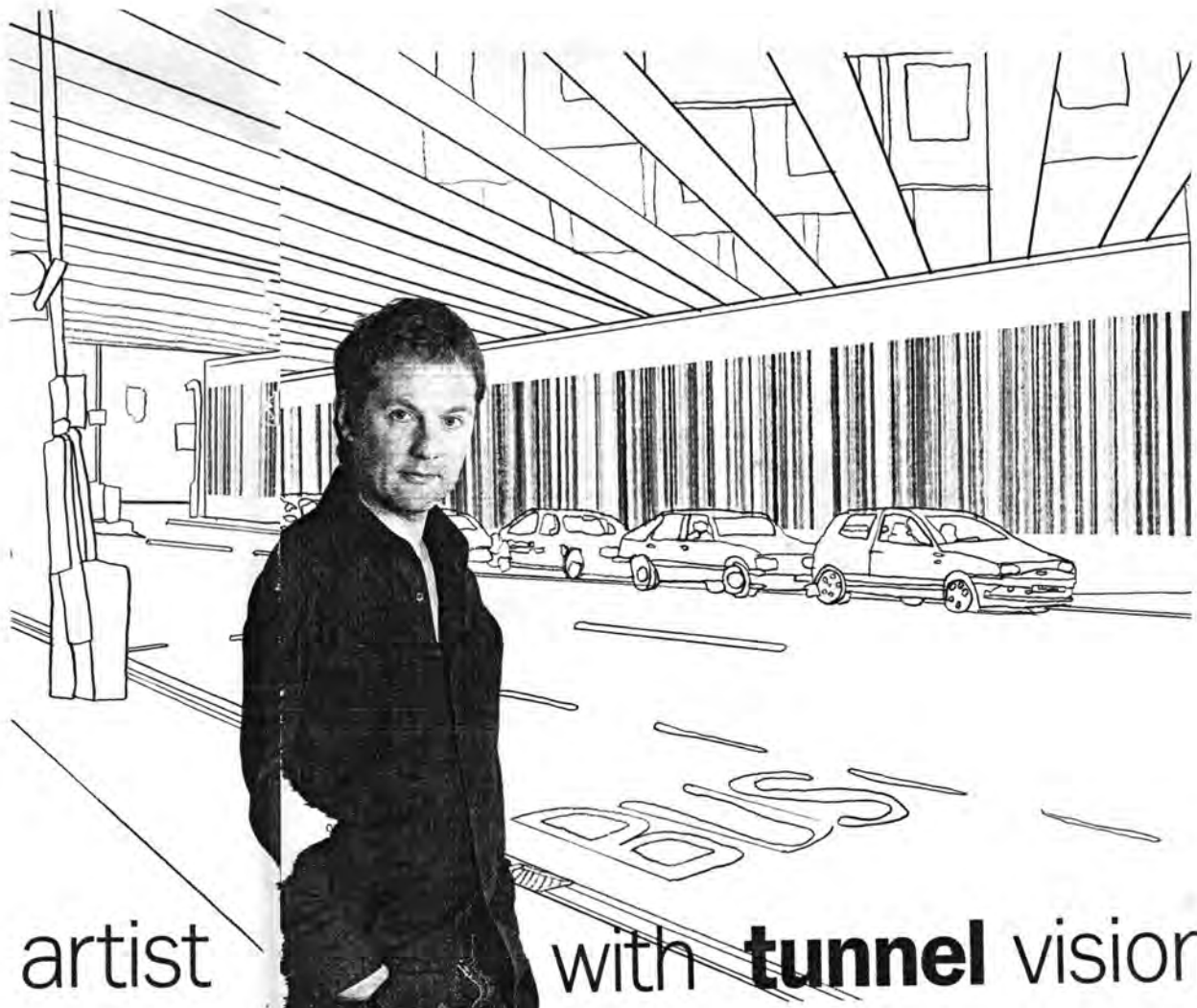
chalky fresco in Florence, the saturated colours of *The Simpsons* or a fluttering door curtain in a kebab shop.

Davenport’s own studio is factory-sized but looks more like a paint storeroom. Tins of household gloss are stacked on shelves and the floor is splattered with hundreds of colours. Since graduating from Goldsmiths College in 1988, alongside Gary Hume and Damien Hirst, he has adopted a very physical way of painting. Using

says of the Southwark commission. “When I first started painting it, the lines were thin and close together. I was anxious, tight, but as I began to loosen up the spacing became wider and more relaxed.” The serendipitous result is that the work will appear to open out and breathe as passing cars accelerate away from the nearby traffic lights.

Poured Lines is likely to be a much-loved addition to what is set to

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



artist

with **tunnel** vision

become London's cultural quarter, lighting up the space under the formerly gloomy, low-slung bridge, and countering the endless traffic noise by undulating with its own rhythms, riffs and moods. ■

Poured Lines, western bridge, Southwark Street, London SE1, will be unveiled on Sept 6. Ian Davenport: *New Editions*, Alan Cristea Gallery, 31 Cork Street, London W1 (020-7439 1866), Sept 13-Oct 11

WIN A LIMITED-EDITION IAN DAVENPORT PRINT

Land Securities and Southwark Council are giving away a limited-edition print, worth £1,500 (pictured, one of an edition of just 25) by Ian Davenport. To win, answer the following question: what are the names of the architects responsible for

redesigning the old Bankside Power Station into what became Tate Modern? To enter, go to timesonline.co.uk/timespromo One entry per person – enter code x5001. Competition closes at midday on September 5. Usual terms and conditions apply.

In the studio with abstract painter Ian Davenport

Emily Tobin visits the abstract painter known for his cavalcade of bright hues and unconventional methods in his south London space

EMILY TOBIN
AUGUST 26, 2020



Photo by Joshua Monaghan

Ian Davenport approaches paint like a scientist might approach a new specimen – it is something to be tested, something to explore and challenge. Painting has been the subject of his research for the best part of 30 years. He was a key figure in the Young British Artists scene in London in the Nineties and the youngest person to be nominated for the Turner Prize in 1991. Even back then, he was preoccupied by the relationship between shape, colour and material. ‘My paintings are about fluidity, movement, liquidity and how movement affects installations and spaces,’ he says.

His studio in south London is something of a Tardis. Located off a residential street, it is a vast space that allows him to experiment with different techniques and scales. Ian creates many of his paintings by pouring paint down smooth surfaces in linear patterns. In a recent body of work, these kaleidoscopic lines puddle in swirls at the base of each painting, resulting in something nearing sculpture. There are the diagonal works in which paint is poured from opposite sides of the surface and merges in the middle, then there are the Splat pictures, which he creates by

squirting paint onto a vertical hanging surface and letting it trickle into random patterns. Each iteration is a form of experimentation. 'If you get really good and skillful, you have to find a way of usurping that skill and making it fresh,' he explains.

Ian mines the palettes of other artists for his work. The Harvest Study (After Van Gogh) 3 uses the same shades of yellow, ochre, gold, copper and bronze that Vincent van Gogh employed to depict the countryside near Arles in the summer of 1888. In a different piece, he adopts Pierre Bonnard's blues, lilacs and pinks. Other works draw on the colours he saw in an episode of The Simpsons, the sprawl of scarlet and green observed in a poppy field, and the purple and cobalt from a meadow of bluebells. 'Lifting colours from another source makes for unconventional combinations that, for me, are more intriguing,' he says.

It comes as no surprise that there is a gleaming set of drums in the corner of the studio. Ian's work is intrinsically rhythmic; composition, order, timing and meter underpin all that he makes, while his colour combinations pulse and are made all the more impactful by their repetitions and reversals. Music, it appears, is an essential part of his artistic process.



Photo by Joshua Monaghan



Red Burst, 2019



Photo by Joshua Monaghan



He uses high-gloss enamel paint to create pieces such as *Cobalt Blue Hue*, 2020. Photo by Joshua Monaghan.

ELEPHANT

Ian Davenport: Pouring, Dripping, Puddling

EMILY STEER
AUGUST 28, 2018

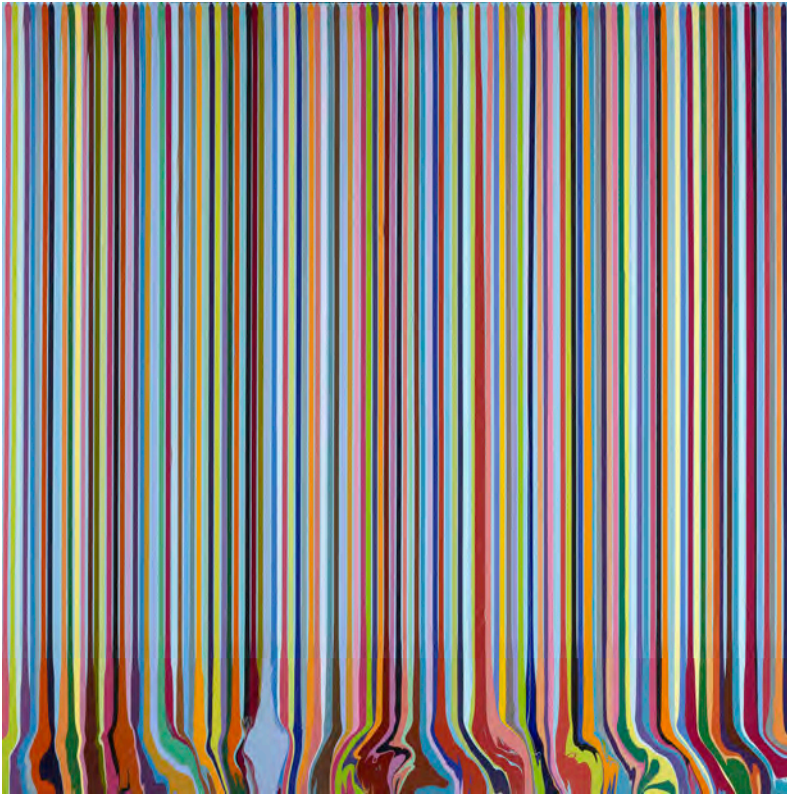


Photos by Enzo Barracco of Ian Davenport's studio, South London, August 2017 unless otherwise stated

"Sometimes the dialogue around art can become so convoluted and wordy and verbose that it puts people off." Ian Davenport has always shared a decidedly irreverent approach to art making with his YBA peers. Here, he talks to Emily Steer about making pancakes, the influence of Velázquez and kebab shops, and his monumentally scaled Poured Line paintings.

I first meet Ian Davenport on a frenzied, albeit invigorating preview day for the 2017 Venice Biennale. We speak initially for four minutes, one of many four-minute interviews the resolutely upbeat British artist gives that day to an apparently never-ending line of press. His presence in Venice marks the culmination of a project for Swatch, for which he created an original watch and an expansive 14m-wide painting, *Giardini Colourfall*, comprising over a thousand poured lines of paint and situated in the open air—in stark contrast with the many national pavilions, where the big names sit behind the odd, characterful walls of each country's structure.

“What I am interested in is visibility,” he tells me later, when we meet again at his South London studio. “I enjoyed putting work out into the public realm at Venice. I know it’s within the Giardini but it is a wide audience and there are a lot of families going there. In a gallery context, we’re trained to react to something in a particular way and it’s quite a conservative reaction. Out in the open space people were jumping in front of it and having their photograph taken and it was really nice. I think artists in general are very drawn to that and don’t want to just reach a rarefied audience. Having said that, I think it’s doing it in a way that doesn’t dumb down the work. I don’t make a distinction between what I do for Swatch or a work that is going to be shown at Tate.”



Light Blue, 2010. Acrylic paint on aluminium, mounted on aluminium panel, 200 × 200 cm. All non-studio images © the artist, courtesy the artist and Waddington Custot

Davenport has always had a decidedly irreverent approach to art making—one that is shared by many of his art-school peers (he graduated in 1988 from the YBA-spawning Goldsmiths and participated in the era-defining Freeze show)—although his practice isn’t derisive: rather than taking the piss, he simply offers a direct engagement with the work. “When I was at college that was something that came out of that whole art education process,” he tells me, “and growing up in the seventies and eighties with punk, seeing art and culture and wondering who it’s for. There is no big didactic message.”

He’s used cooking analogies numerous times to describe his process, comparing it at points to making pancakes or a stir-fry. “I made paintings where I was turning them upside down and making these big circle shapes,” he tells me of the pancake analogy. “It was a way of describing how these paintings were made to a person who might not be too familiar with it, and it’s kind of funny as well. Sometimes the dialogue around art can become so convoluted and

wordy and verbose that it puts people off. The jargon of it can be a bit heavy. You can still convey pretty difficult ideas to people, it's just about making it approachable.

"[The Circle Paintings] were probably the most technically difficult things I've ever tried to do and I think that interest in architecture came from those big dripped arch shapes, and then I started thinking what I really wanted to do was painting on buildings and walls. I went on a research trip to Florence to look at frescoes. I love the directness of them, it feels really honest and straightforward."

His recent Poured Line and Puddle Paintings are the result of long-perfected but simple techniques. In these works, often hundreds of lines of paint are precisely poured from top to bottom, sometimes diverging from their deeply satisfying regimentation to form an equally pleasing pool at the foot of the canvas. His Staggered Line works of 2010–12 have a notably human irregularity when viewed even from far back but his more recent pieces are almost flawless in pattern, creating a moment of tension as you approach the work when the lines begin to give way and reveal drips, crossovers and tiny sections where the paint may not have quite hit the canvas on its roll downwards. I wonder how many of these elements are strictly controlled by the artist.

"With the painters I really like, like Velázquez—and I'm not trying to compare myself to Velázquez—there's something lovely about the magicianship when he paints a collar and you look at it from far back and your brain understands it as lace, but when you get close you understand the marks. There's something so vital and assertive that is just amazing. It's a fine line between controlling it and making sure it doesn't become too contrived."



Yellow, Turquoise, 2001. Household paint on medium density fibreboard, 39.4 × 39.4 cm.

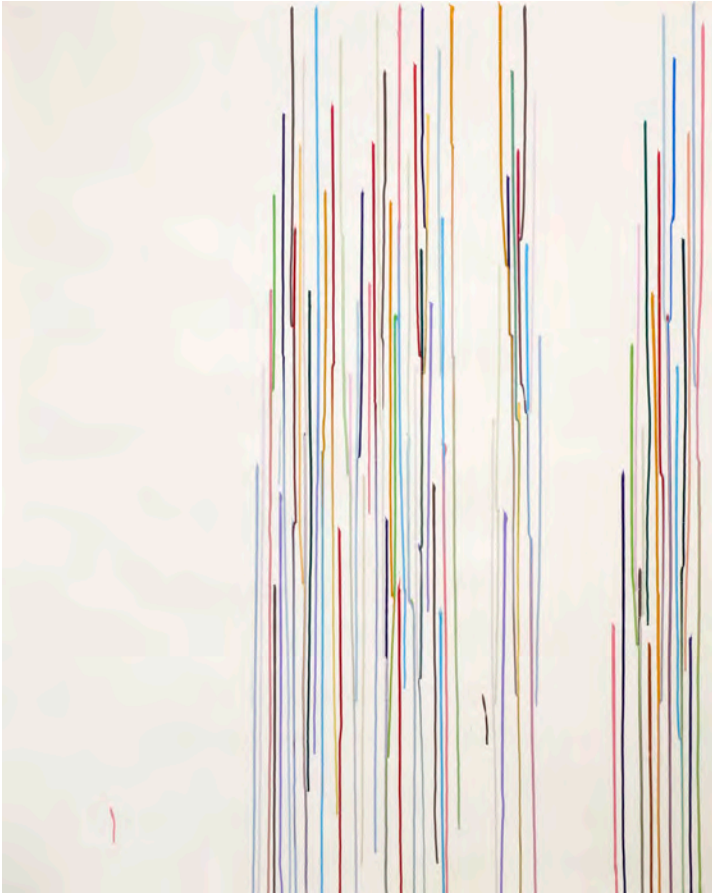


Once Davenport hits on a new process he works with it for a while (there are clearly defined chapters in his work) but this happening upon different processes—whether pouring, dripping or puddling—is often the work of chance. Walking around the studio, he highlights the tiny, delicate coloured splats of paint that have been left behind on the walls from a much larger work. Everyone in the studio loves them, he says, and they could spark a new way of working. Similarly, the luscious puddle of paint that sits at the bottom of many of his paintings took shape after he noticed the way this happened naturally when he was making poured line works. “I think it’s having the confidence to allow that to happen and thinking ‘that could be a great piece of art’ rather than having to have a theoretical reason there,” he says. “I think my generation of artists weren’t worried about that so much and made work that was very visually dynamic.”

Similarly, Davenport’s colour palette is led by the eye rather than theory and has, in the past, taken inspiration from sources as diverse and culture-clashing as Tintin, The Simpsons, Hans Holbein and Vincent van Gogh. “It’s not at all scientific,” he tells me as we stand in front of one painting with a particularly complex-looking colour combination. “I trust my eyes. I don’t really buy into the theory of colour. It’s not what I want to look at in a painting. When I was younger my mum bought me a book on Cézanne that said when you looked at the set-up of a still life in one of his paintings there was a pyramid and a cone and a triangle, and there were all these lines connecting it up. I thought he must be a scientific genius. I was talking to one of my tutors at college about it and he said, ‘No, Ian, he didn’t do that. He will have been looking at all the objects on a table and will have thought: I’ll tip up the bottle, I’ll angle the banana over here, actually the drapes need to be there...’ Of course that’s how he did it! It wasn’t to do with triangles and lines. Things are much more obvious.

“When I was at college I wanted to learn about Pollock and Morris Louis and people like that,” he says. “I looked into a lot of American painters like Brice Marden and other people I admired and I started reading a lot of discourse around it but I was trying to talk about kebab shops as well. There would be a conversation about rhythm and music

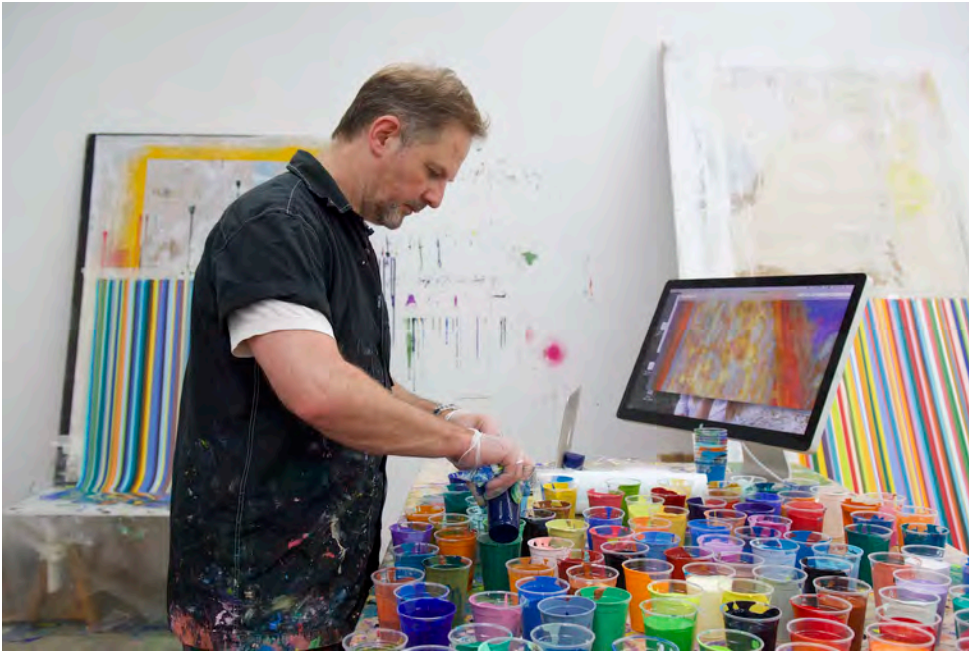
and melody and anti-melody, and I'd say: 'Yeah, but there's this great kebab shop at the end of the street with these fantastic stripy curtains and they were blowing in the wind. That's why I realized that the stripes could become a bit more irregular.'



Staggered Lines Three Columns, 2015. Acrylic on paper, 153 × 122 cm

Davenport's works are eventful; often large-scale, always impactful and undeniably enjoyable on the eye. He started out at Goldsmiths planning to be a sculptor but, in an unusual move for the art school that notoriously guides its students away from brushes and canvases, was encouraged to start painting. One tutor in particular noticed that he handled paint in a natural and unique way. "I put that together with just feeling more comfortable in the sculpture studios," he says, "and looking at how sculptors handle materials and question approaches to making art. It's a sculptural approach to painting but it's still painting."

It's common to see an artist's work gradually expand as their means do, but Davenport began working large-scale straight off the bat. "I was really lucky when I left Goldsmiths," he tells me. "There was someone who worked there and her partner had a massive warehouse on the river. I worked in this old dog biscuit factory, right by the Thames, and parts of it were completely abandoned, so if I wanted to make a really big painting I could. You have to remember I was in shows where people were cutting up dead animals and projecting naked ladies onto walls, so I had to deal with that. It was one way of literally creating space for myself, having presence, making something dynamic and me feeling I had a language that could compete in that kind of environment."



His studio space now is unexpectedly pristine and feels like a suitable mirroring of the controlled chaos suggested by his paintings, ordered and cleanly designed but also vivid and rhythmic. Towards the back of the studio, a cleanly gleaming silver drum kit sits ready for bashing. Rows and rows of coloured paint sit neatly ordered on tables. There's something a bit sci-fi about it, the way an advert on TV might suggest a car factory looks. "I actually had a very, very messy painting studio and got bored with it," he tells me. "I really enjoyed the fact it was so mentally messy. After about twenty years of that I thought: you know what, this is really uncomfortable.

The studio consists of Davenport and a few long-term gallery assistants who seem to fit into slightly different roles—often supporting with commercial projects, planning painting mock-ups in Photoshop and mixing colours. "It opens up more possibilities and it's a balance of using that in a fruitful way so it feels like you're being inventive with it," he says of his expanded team. "There are a lot of large projects. Physically mixing paint can be very time-consuming. It's fun but the results are hard won."

"We have the crazy Bee Gees falsetto choir in the studio," he tells me later. "When you've got other people around, it's a way that we can bond and it doesn't become too serious. I've always played music, drums and guitar, and now I look at the paintings and I realize there is a sort of parallel between musical rhythm and the pulsing lines and striping beats. A lot of abstract painters are interested in the discourse between music and visual art. Kandinsky was talking about it in the early twentieth century. The fact that I play music a lot makes it feel quite natural to me."

Ian Davenport's Stunning Waterfall of Color Turns Heads at Dallas Contemporary

Up Close With a Masterpiece — and the Artist

MAX THROWBRIDGE
OCTOBER 10, 2018



La Mer (After Bonnard), 300 x 300cm (with floor) Acrylic on aluminium mounted on aluminium panel, 2018

It was utterly my most memorable moment of the Venice Biennale in 2017: the midmorning Venetian sun cast radiance over the Venice Park, Giardini della Biennale, like a thin veil of veneer, perfectly reflecting the vibrancy of color that poured from Ian Davenport's masterpiece painting, *Giardini Colourfall*.

So mesmerized by its dominance, I gravitated towards the linear kaleidoscopic fresco, a staggering 46-feet wide and 13-feet tall of colorful paint and puddles. I will never forget the powerful vivacity and awe that encompassed my first morning at the Venice Biennale 2017, standing in the presence of this waterfall of color.

Now, this prodigious artwork highlights Davenport's exhibition at Dallas Contemporary.

British abstract artist Ian Davenport's career flows much like his artistic and investigative method, with meticulous precision, but also influenced with an element of chance. "I was thrilled to have the opportunity to make a monumental painting in such a wonderful context," Davenport recalls.

"In 2016 I was invited to do a temporary installation project at the Jemoli department store in Zurich, whilst the building was being refurbished. I was able to wrap the sides of the building in an enormous printed image of one of my paintings. By a stroke of good luck, the creative director of Swatch, Carlo Giordanetti, came to the opening event and really liked my work. We got talking, and he mentioned about Swatches' involvement with the Venice Biennale and their interest in art — as main sponsors for the Biennale, Swatch has its own pavilion, and it sounded like it could be a potentially great opportunity."

Not long after his first encounter with Giordanetti, they connected again in Milan.

"I met Carlo again by coincidence outside the Pinacoteca di Brera Art Museum," Davenport says.

"I had been looking at Old Master paintings and gathering research. We talked about the paintings by Raphael and Perugino in the museum collection, and it became clear that we shared similar interests about Italian and Renaissance art history. I explained how I use the colors from Old Master paintings as inspiration for my own work. After this meeting in Milan, Carlo asked me to collaborate with Swatch and create an artwork for their pavilion."

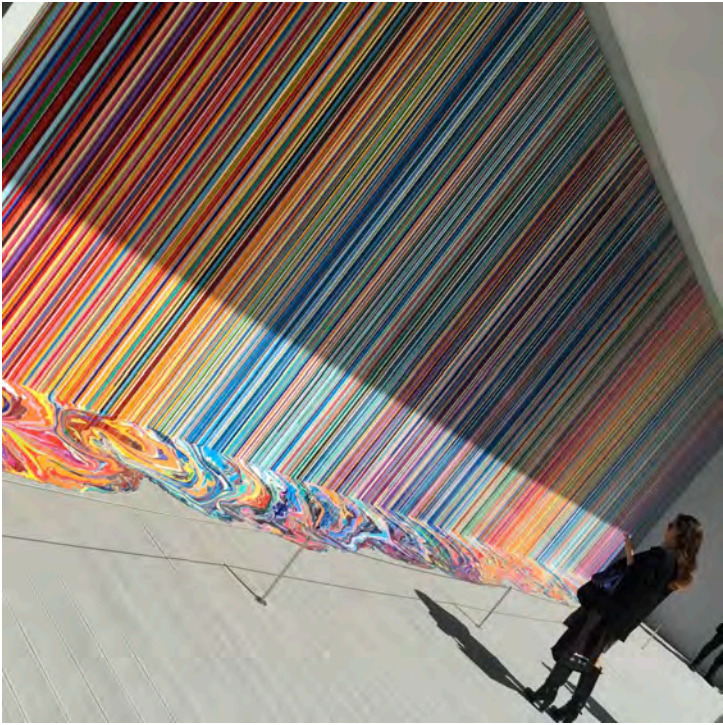
Prior to the Swatch commission, in 2006, Davenport created a major public outdoor artwork underneath *Southwark Bridge* in London — resulting in a monumental mural, a landmark not far from the Tate Gallery.

"One of the things, which are very important for an artist, is reaching as wide an audience as possible, but this doesn't have to be an audience that is necessarily familiar with contemporary art," Davenport says.

"Southwark has to deal with 'streetscape' and the relationship between artwork and architectural buildings, buses, lorries, large numbers of people in the local surroundings. To make a painting that can be viewed as you're traveling in a car is quite a challenge. It resulted in 150-foot long mural made in materials to withstand the harsh conditions of its outdoor location."

For the Venice Biennale commission, Davenport investigates his method further from *Poured Lines* to *Puddle Paintings*, introducing a dimensional aspect to his vertical panels. The linear enamel and schematic colors are perfectly controlled, yet the crescendo — a moment of chance — ends with a puddle, a dimensional continuation.

Now with a captive contemporary art-enthused audience, Davenport says, "With the pavilions' incredible position in the Giardini della Biennale I knew I must take full advantage of its potential impact and the extraordinary morning light. Making a painting that over 600,000 people may see is very exciting."



Ian Davenport's masterpiece painting, *Giardini Colourfall*.

Known for his artistic vision of movement and light, Davenport enlightens to the fact that, “Venice is famous for painters who explore color and light and I felt it was an opportunity to continue that tradition and make a 21st-century fresco for the Biennale.”

With many complex aspects to consider, Davenport shares. “Sight lines needed to be carefully thought about — how the composition of the painting would hold attention from far away and then as the viewer moves closer; offering up a different experience,” he says. “I decided to compose the painting in a sequence of colors that was repeated twice, to give the work symmetry, balance and a sense of classicism.

“There is a sculptural element too, as paint flows from the wall onto the floor and one can see the liquid paint flood out almost like a lava flow, or a multi-colored waterfall.”

No small feat, and with opportunity comes challenges, as Davenport elaborates, “Logistically speaking, a studio team of five people worked on the painting for over four months doing all the preparation including mixing hundreds of liters of paint, setting the work up, varnishing it, doing fine detailed touch ups etc. Then I worked on the painting every day for a month and was completely exhausted by the end of the process. I felt I aged a good 10 years!...

“When we finally got to Venice, the actual installation was also an enormous challenge. The week we were installing, there was a high tide, and St Mark’s Square was flooded. The banks of the docks, used to unload the painting were drenched and the boat, with our crates, just managed to travel underneath the low-lying bridges. Fortunately, the boat arrived early — the sailors said if they had left it an hour later, they wouldn’t have been able to get under the bridges as the water level had raised so much!

“Venice has extraordinary weather: Venetians laugh about the fact it has ‘four seasons in one day.’ We experienced storms, rain and sometimes sunshine at 80 degrees, all within a 24-hour period. Definitely some logistical challenges!”

A STAR IS BORN

Ian Davenport’s career has seen a fluid motion of success and luck — with significant highlights along the way.

“I had a lot of early success, at my first exhibition at Waddington Galleries in 1990, aged 23,” he says. “The Tate purchased one of my paintings from the exhibition. A year later I became the youngest person to be nominated for the Turner Prize. To continue that momentum was difficult.”

Later, projects came at Birmingham’s Ikon Gallery, Tate Liverpool, and Dundee Contemporary. There was his Southwark commission in 2006, which Davenport says, “was very special for the way it brought my work to an entirely new public audience.”

Still, the Venice Biennale takes the cake. “It is most certainly a significant moment,” he says. To reference the importance of *Giardini Colourfall*, Davenport exclaims, “It’s the centerpiece for the [Dallas Contemporary] exhibition, and the recent accompanying works have developed some of the similar ideas.”

To wit, Davenport is no stranger to the Dallas art scene.

“We hosted Ian’s one-person exhibition in ‘94,” says art advisor and Dallas Art Fair co-founder Chris Byrne. “It was exciting to welcome him to our Dallas gallery [Turner & Byrne Gallery]. I remember being quite impressed with his approach to the work. He compared the making of his paintings to two distinct activities: the precise steps and gestures of ballet and an assembly line worker who refines their movements each time they repeat the same task.

“Ian’s exhibition was well received in Dallas — several young collectors, as well as the Dallas Museum of Art, purchased work for their collection.”

Dallas-based art collectors, Eva and Hooman Yazhari are also Davenport fans.

“Ian’s piece was one of our earliest acquisitions and holds a special place in our collection,” says Eva. “It is the first piece we see when we enter our home. The print’s vibrancy married to serenity, with a clever twist at the foot of the piece, never fails to make us smile. We also love the virtuosity of printmaking, which Ian displays in making such a complex piece. When we met Ian at MTV Re:Define this year, we enjoyed his wit and down to earth character.”

Curator of the exhibition, Peter Doroshenko, executive director at Dallas Contemporary enthused: “Creating and expanding a unique signature style of working since the late 1990s, Ian Davenport has never looked back. The deep thought processes behind each work creates a layering of information that few artists can maintain. Having Davenport’s first museum exhibition in the USA at Dallas Contemporary will highlight his rich history and newest artworks.”

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

The Telegraph

La Biennale di Venezia 57th International Art Exhibition,
in pictures

May 12, 2017



Credit Marco Secchi/Getty Images

The 57th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia will be open to the public from May 13 to November 26, 2017. There will be 120 artists exhibiting their work hailing from 51 different countries.

An Installation Sponsored by Swatch created by Ian Davenport and called 'Giardini Colorful' is seen at Biennale Giardini

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/05/12/la-biennale-di-venezia-57th-international-art-exhibition-pictures/installation-sponsored-swatch-created-ian-davenport-calledgiardini/>

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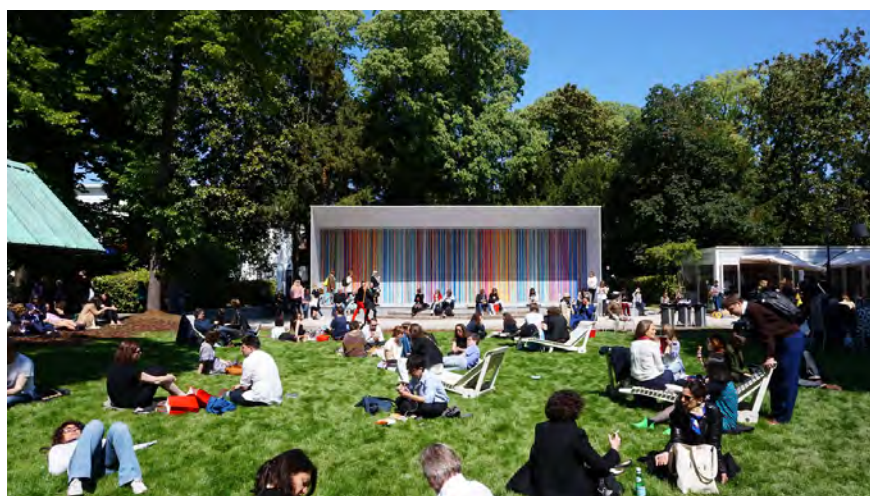
PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

ARTNEWS

2017 VENICE BIENNALE Scenes from the Venice Biennale: Day 2

May 10, 2017

Katherine McMahon



Venice Biennale-goers enjoying the weather in front of Ian Davenport's *Giardini Colourfall*.

The second day of the Venice Biennale press preview began today. Below, a look around more of the action in and around the Arsenale and Giardini.

<http://www.artnews.com/2017/05/10/scenes-from-the-venice-biennale-day-2/>

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

artnet® news

Editors' Picks: 8 Art Events to See in New York This Week
September 5, 2016



Ian Davenport, Cadmium Yellow. Courtesy of Paul Kasmin.

“Ian Davenport: Doubletake” at Paul Kasmin Gallery The British artist is debuting a new series of paintings inspired by “the chromatic essence of historical masterpieces,” as the press release notes. Expect glitchy color combinations, which create drippy psychedelic moments pooling at the bottom of the canvases.

Location: 293 Tenth Avenue

Price: Free

Time: Opening reception: September 8, 6:00–8:00 p.m.

—Kathleen Massara

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

MUSÉE

October 8, 2013



IAN DAVENPORT'S
COLORFALL AT PAUL
KASMIN GALLERY

Colorfall is Ian Davenport's latest exhibition at Paul Kasmin Gallery, a cavalcade of hues that is quite refreshing. Davenport uses a syringe to "drip acrylic paint onto aluminum and stainless steel panels," which allows gravity to create perfectly straight lines of color that end in brilliant explosions of heterogeneity.¹ Perhaps it is nature's integral role in the outcome of these paintings that imbues each piece with a level of comfort and familiarity; or, better yet, that these paintings are a beautiful product of nature *and* man, a union that has always been fraught with turmoil. In any event, *Colorfall* establishes itself as a reflection of the mind, and humankind's relationship to the world.



© Ian Davenport, *Cobalt, Vermillion, Cobalt*, 2013. Courtesy of Ian Davenport and Paul Kasmin Gallery, NYC.

Cobalt, Vermillion, Cobalt (as seen above) is emblematic of the exhibit at large: neat rows of variegated colors cascade inevitably down the steel panel, until they hit an invisible wall and envelope each other, a breakdown into chaos. At the very top of the painting, you can see tiny spaces in between the columns of color, which give away the work's solid, piercing blue background. Each piece had this same basic format. However, a different background color was used for each painting, accompanied by a unique, hue-informed vibe; regardless of the myriad colors utilized, every work had its own presence, a phenomenon I believe was directly correlated to these disparate background colors.

Colorfall is a mirror for the human mind. Despite the prismatic assortment of colors, I still had the tendency to look for a pattern, some sort of repeating sequence that would "unlock" each piece's meaning. Humankind has always strained to understand its physical surroundings, and in this endeavor, it has attempted to make order out of chaos. Davenport has not only captured this propensity for structure, but used it against the mind of the spectator.



© Ian Davenport, *Cutout*, 2013. Courtesy of Ian Davenport and Paul Kasmin Gallery, NYC.

As I stared intently at a piece called, *Cutout*, I discovered a curious side effect of Davenport's paintings: the images, like optical illusions, burn themselves into your mind, transforming the surrounding white walls into canvases of their own (these secondary phenomena appear to be the negatives of their originals). *Colorfall* therefore, is assured a lasting impression in viewers' minds. Again, I believe these paintings are so relatable, because they appeal to a human need for expression itself. These strict, colorful lines, while providing three-dimensional depth to each piece, inevitably end in an eruptive release of some kind of frustrated energy. The will of separate individuals becoming the action of the collective.

There were two paintings in this exhibit that contradicted the rest. One of them (shown below) was *Idanthrone*, a painting that gave the impression of an upward climb, as opposed to a downward progression. Within *Idanthrone* lay a solemnity, a stark religious tone intensified by a darker background. In juxtaposition with say, *Cutout* or *Cobalt, Vermillion, Cobalt*, you can see just how powerful Davenport's technique really is; the alternation of colors has, and always will be the messenger of meaning.



© Ian Davenport, *Idanthrone*, 2013. Courtesy of Ian Davenport and Paul Kasmin Gallery, NYC.

Review by Paul Longo

¹Paul Kasmin Gallery press release for Ian Davenport's *Colorfall*, 2013.



IAN DAVENPORT

BY KATY DONOGHUE

"I GUESS WHAT I FOUND WAS THAT MY OWN COLOR TASTES HAD BECOME A LITTLE BIT PREDICTABLE TO ME, SO I JUST NEEDED SOMETHING TO KIND OF SUBVERT IT"

In late spring, *Whitewall* visited the studio of Ian Davenport in South London. The long, open space had a few of his latest paintings on the far and left side walls. In front of a larger work stood a homemade platform, which Davenport uses to carefully drip lines of varying colors of paint. The sheets of metal he works on were tilted, allowing gravity to pull the paint down at a moderate pace. For his upcoming exhibition "Colorfall" at Paul Kasmin Gallery in New York (opening on September 12, 2013), Davenport will show a new group of paintings in which he has explored the sequence of other famous artists' paintings.

These new works are dizzying and brilliant. We had a hard time focusing on any one line, preferring to take them in all at once as our eyes' natural inclination to settle on one spot proved futile. Over tea, Davenport talked to us about his newest technique of moving paint around, telling us he's always felt more like a sculptor than a painter.

WHITEWALL: *What are you working on for the September show at Paul Kasmin Gallery?*

IAN DAVENPORT: For the exhibition at Paul's, what I want to do is create some big works playing around with the chromatic background and taking it to quite an extreme. I've been playing around with using colors from other artists' works. I was putting quite odd juxtapositions next to each other, and it just seemed to work, and I would put really odd colors together because that's what the painting looked like in front of me and there's no way that you kind of do that normally. You wouldn't kind of go, "This is a really horrible gray—I'll put it next to that pink and then brown."

WW: *What artists have you been looking at?*

ID: Say, someone like Carpaccio, who makes these wonderful crowd scenes. You have all these tiny little figures next to each other and there will be a beautiful kind of dark green jacket and then a kind of really deep red and then maybe a lovely pale kind of gray. So it's kind of like just following the sequence, and he obviously thought very carefully how those people sit next to each other. He was after exactly the same thing, except he did it with people 500 years ago.

WW: *You must be looking at painting totally differently.*

ID: Yes, it was quite a surprise to kind of scan right into a painting and really see how someone's constructed it in that way, because that's not my normal thought when I look at painting. I guess what I found was that my own color tastes had become a little bit predictable to me, so I just needed something to kind of subvert it.

WW: Tell me about how these paintings are made. You use a syringe at the top and let gravity roll the paint down?

ID: Exactly—it just seems to be engineered perfectly to make these great lines. And then over a period of time I also realized that in addition to kind of running down really nicely it made these great puddles and movement on the floor. So I just wanted to find a way of keeping that, so I devised a system of bending metal onto the floor and then letting the paint dry, and then we'd bend it back.

It creates this really sort of odd dynamic where you have something quite classical and something really messed up. There's this quite paradoxical thing going on between something quite organized and something's that just let loose.

WW: What were you making before these?

ID: I made some painting where I was pouring. I had this slightly ludicrous idea about making a really enormous drip. I wanted to see what was the biggest drip I could make?

I would pour this enormous great big shape of gloss paint out, and if you kept on pouring, I realized it would form a really beautiful circle, and then if you stood that panel up it would kind of drip down. But on such a big scale that becomes an arch or, you know, quite a monumental architectural shape. A lot of the paintings have been to do with dripping and pouring, taking that technique and then really exploring and taking it to somewhere else.

WW: I was reading that in school you were always intrigued by the sculpture students rather than the painting students, because they got to try different techniques out all the time.

ID: Definitely, yeah. I've even said I'm more of sculptor who makes paintings. I really do think that's kind of true. I have quite a sort of sculptor's way of looking at materials. I think it's just the way I relate to materials. In primary school I would always get told off for mixing glue into the paint. I think I always wanted to mess around with the material to see what it did.

And then when I got to art college I had a teacher that said, "Well, you naturally seem to be doing these things, why don't you keep playing with that?" I'm really interested in gesture as well. In some of the early paintings I was dipping small canvases into paint, and in England if you're having a cup of tea you dip a biscuit into your cup of tea. Then there is the whole thing about baptism, so I'm quite fascinated by what it means playing around with really sort of ordinary things that you see around you. Like taking a random element like that puddle, something that you see all the time, and then making it into an element of a painting. That's something that's disregarded or not necessarily seen as being an element that one can use in painting.

WW: Did you always want to be an artist?

ID: Oh yeah, definitely. I was quite lucky. My mom went to art school, and for women of her generation it was really difficult . . . so she was always a bit frustrated, and I think a lot of kids get given a football or a baseball bat or whatever, and we got given paints and pencils. From the beginning we were encouraged to do it.

WW: You were in that first YBA show. What was that like?

ID: I think, looking back, it was extremely helpful. I mean, at the time I didn't like it particularly. I didn't like being part of something that went against everything about being an individual. And actually none of the concerns were really shared by the artists; there isn't an overriding aesthetic. I think people were ambitious; they were trying to push themselves, and I think they wanted to try and be successful. There's a certain amount of ambition, and those were the shared goals anyway rather than an aesthetic one.

WW: What keeps you coming back to this drip motif in your paintings?

ID: I was talking to my print guy the other day, who was saying, "How long do you think you can make these works for?" I said we could just do them forever; you could just carry on and on. So there's an element of me that kind of really likes doing them, I'm not sure how long . . . I like that idea of being able to do groups of work in tandem. That would be a great thing.

But what I also don't particularly want to do is have an army of assistants. The thing I like about making art is making art. That's why I became an artist. I don't want to design things on the computer and give it to somebody.

WW: Your idea isn't enough.

ID: Yeah, to me it's like that just getting dirty and doing that. I just get a thrill out of it. That bit where you get lost for that two hours—that's just a really good feeling.

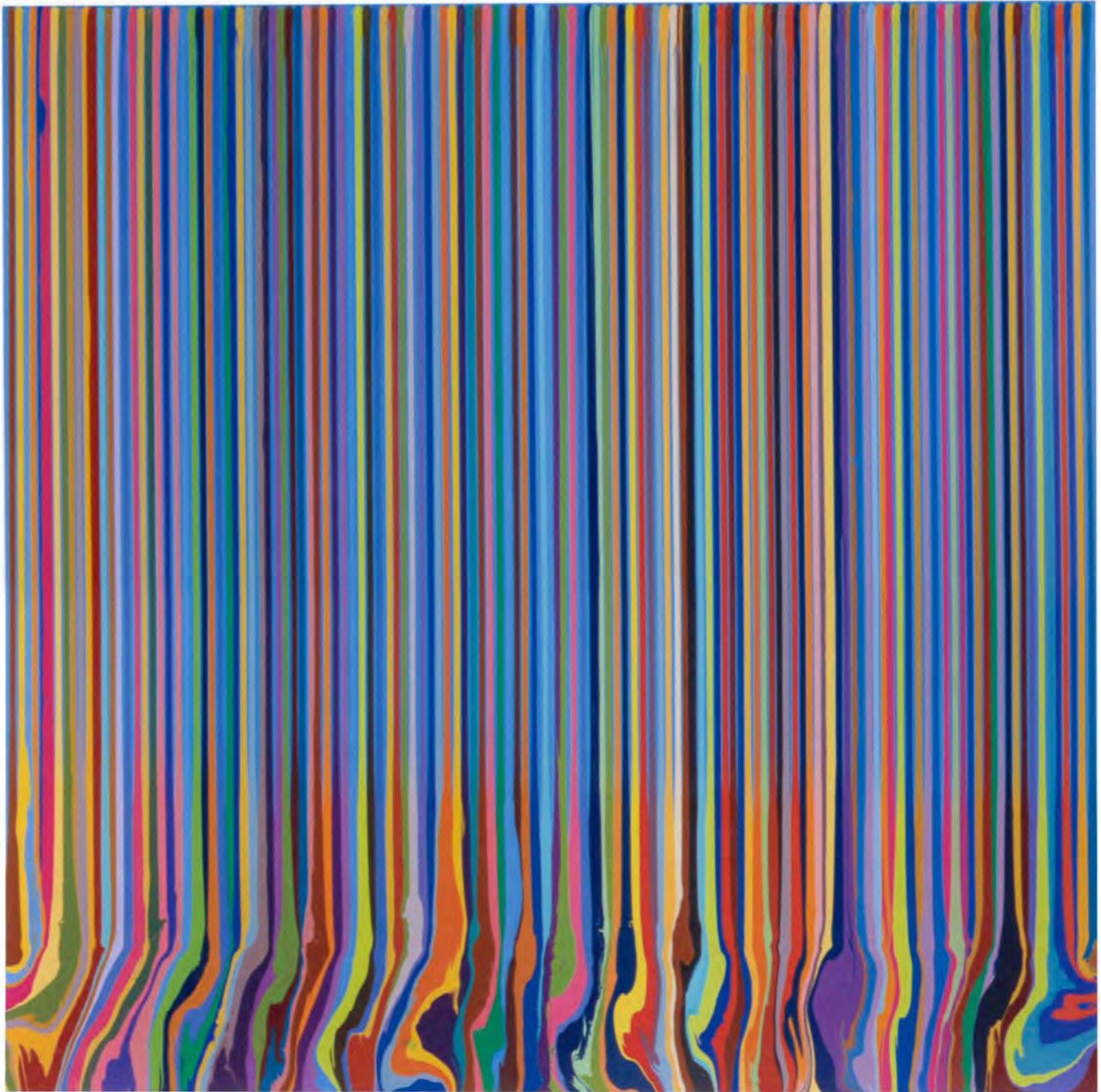


Ian Davenport
Puddle Painting: Red
2009

Acrylic paint on stainless steel,
mounted on aluminum panel
98 x 147 inches
Photography by Prudence Cuming
Associates, London
Image courtesy of the artist and
Paul Kasmin Gallery.

Opposite page: portrait
by Prudence Cuming
Associates 2013.

Image courtesy of the artist and
Paul Kasmin Gallery.



Ian Davenport
*Puddle Painting: Light Cerulean
Blue*
2008
Acrylic paint on aluminum, mounted on
aluminum panel
40 x 31 inches
Photography by Prudence Cuming
Associates, London. Image courtesy of the
artist and Paul Kasmin Gallery.



Ian Davenport

Poured Lines: Studio Black No. 2

2006

Water-based paints on paper

24 x 20 inches

Photography by Prudence Cuming
Associates, London.

Image courtesy of the artist and Paul
Kasmin Gallery.

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

THE  TIMES

September 8, 2012

exhibitions

COURTESY OF THE FINE ART SOCIETY



Ian Davenport's artwork, part of *The Materiality of Paint*, appears to bleed on to the floor

The Materiality of Paint

New show

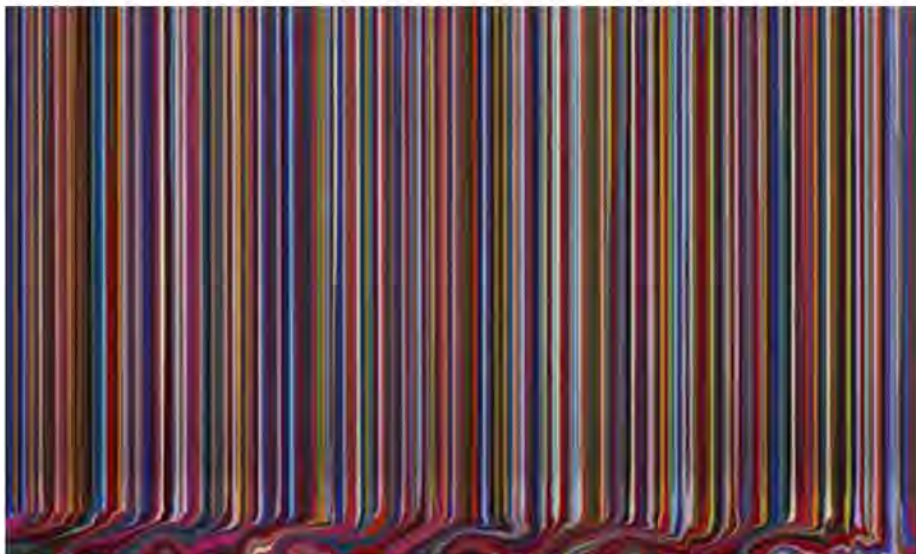
A group show exploring the physical, sculptural qualities of paint, featuring Ian Davenport, Jason Martin, Rob and Nick Carter,

Boo Ritson, Piers Secunda, and others. *The Fine Art Society, W1 (020-7318 1895), to Sept 29*

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

The Observer
September, 2009

Artist Ian Davenport on how he paints



Puddle Painting: Black (Wave) by Ian Davenport (acrylic paint on stainless steel, 2009)
Photograph: PR

The guys in the sculpture department at my art college had it right. They always seemed to be playing around and experimenting. It always struck me that the painters didn't do that, that they stuck to using materials in a conventional way.

I did all the things you're not supposed to do - you aren't meant to put oil paint and water paint together, so that's immediately the first thing I did. Of course it was totally hopeless, but I felt that breaking these rules really opened something for me. As an artist I think that you should always question what you're told.

If you put paint on to a canvas with a brush, you know what it will do. But what if you use something else to apply the paint? It's going to do something different, perhaps something you never expected. I've put paint on in so many different ways - I've poured it on with watering cans, added it on with little pins, blown strands of it with fans, both large and small. Once, when my studio used to be on a film set, I hired an industrial wind machine and tried to use that. I watched in horror as my studio moved from one end to the other.

More recently I've been applying paint with a syringe, which is an incredibly precise instrument for controlling liquid. It has allowed me to concentrate on colour and the sequence of colours rather than focusing all my attention on the paint and how it flows.

Lots of different things inform my choice of colours. Sometimes it's purely intuitive, putting colours together and seeing how they look. At other times I might lift a palette from an old painting, or, as I recently did, from the opening sequence of *The Simpsons*.

I feel like I have discovered a language that I can now play around with. I never set out to create this style of work though. And that's the great thing about art - you're never too sure where you're going to end up. It really is a personal journey.

• Ian Davenport was born in Sidcup in 1966. His solo show, *Ian Davenport: Puddle Paintings*, at the Waddington Galleries will run from 10 October to 7 November. He is represented by [Waddington Galleries](http://www.waddingtongalleries.com), London

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

Telegraph
August 19, 2006

Ian Davenport's mural takes its cues from disco and turns a grimy London tunnel into a symphony of stripes, says **Serena Davies**

Dance to the music of lines

It may be a three-minute walk from Tate Modern, but a big grimy tunnel on Southwark Street in London is hardly an obvious place for a piece of extraordinary modern art. Next month, however, it becomes the permanent home of Britain's largest ever outdoor painting. This is no common or garden mural: for one thing, it's vandal-proof. For another, it's exceptional for a fine artist to make an outdoor painting at all, let alone one on this scale.

Ian Davenport, ertswhile Turner-Prize nominee and celebrated purveyor of "poured lines" paintings, has made an artwork to fit under Western railway bridge, near Blackfriars Road, which is 48 metres in length.

That's longer than the Sistine Chapel. And with 1.2 million people passing under the bridge every day, it will have visitor numbers to compete with Michelangelo's.

Poured Lines (the title isn't the biggest selling point) is a regeneration project commissioned by Land Securities (the property Goliath responsible for nearby office developments) and Southwark Council, with Tate onboard in an advisory capacity. It will transform a

dirty thoroughfare into a symphony of stripes. These have been painted onto a run of enormous steel panels, each three metres high, stretching the width of the bridge.

Davenport has spent the past few months making the piece at a German factory: the only place in the world that could supply the especially devised graffiti-proof vitreous enamel paints in the industrial quantities required.

‘I lift a lot
of colours
from *The Simpsons*’

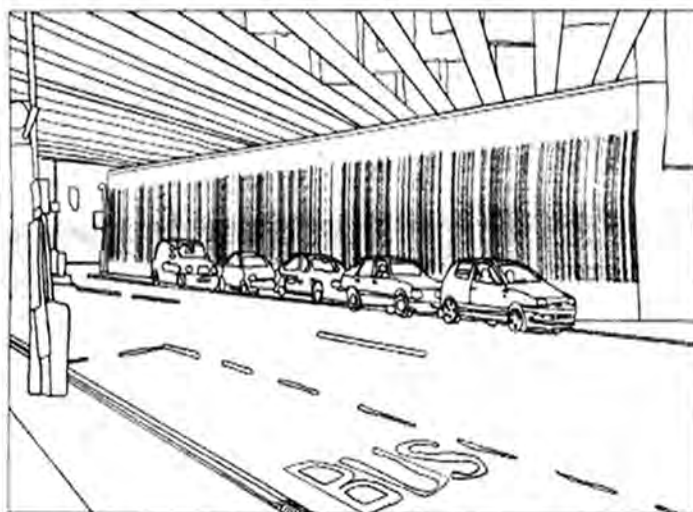
"It has certainly been a very tough commission," Davenport says, relaxing in his studio a few weeks before the official unveiling next month. "The amount of paint needed was phenomenal. And a public artwork is very different from a private one. It's been about a year and a half getting all the consents. We had to do endless tests. There's a one in a billion chance someone might fall over because they don't like the colour yellow, and other

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

ridiculous considerations.”

Davenport is joking about the yellow. But his work can be psychedelic, and could well prompt an altered state of consciousness. He covered a whole wall of Tate Britain with *hypnotic lines of rainbow hues for the Days Like These* exhibition in 2003. A darker, glossier abstract currently hangs opposite Rembrandt and Guido Reni in the National Gallery's *Passion for Paint* exhibition. It looks like a kind of colour dance. In fact, the most frequent analogy to Davenport's work is a musical one. He takes it up: "It's like disco," he says. "Very dancy, very rhythmic." Or, as he's called it in the past, "Josef Albers meets *Saturday Night Fever*".

A graduate of Goldsmith's art college, Davenport was one of the few painters to emerge out of the now-legendary Damien Hirst-curated *Freeze* exhibition of 1988 ("Really, very few people saw it," he says, laughing). A hit from the start, he secured his 1991 Turner Prize nomination at the age of 25. His art bridges the funky, instant-impact aesthetics of the Hirst brigade and more traditional tastes,



and his gallery, Waddington's, favours painters of an older generation, Peter Blake and Craigie Aitchison included. In fact, Davenport's most obvious forebears are the abstracts of the American colour-field painters of the 1950s.

But Davenport is also passionate about pop and cartoons. Roadrunner and Wile E Coyote get into the conversation. "And I lift a lot of colours from *The Simpsons*," he says, proudly. These he finds in the standard palette of household emulsion, his medium of choice for his indoor work. According to critic and fan Michael Bracewell, Davenport

is where "high Modernism meets Texas homecare".

Although on a far larger scale than previous pieces, the Southwark painting is typical of Davenport's current way of working. "I've been making paintings like these along similar lines for about 10 years," he says, oblivious to the pun. (Before that, he was more into blobs and circles, a serene set of "arch" paintings being the most impressive result.) The Southwark piece has been made by pouring paint from syringes placed at the top of the panels and tilted at an angle to enable the liquid to run down smoothly.

The colours are controlled, but the way they then slip-slide and melt cannot be precisely predicted. "I make my paintings by using the organic nature of paint," Davenport says. "I control liquid, I use colour, and I try to choreograph these different elements together. There's a lot of internal rigour to the process, but at the same time it is about chance."

A sneak preview of *Poured Lines* on a stormy August morning reveals luminous hues on a bright white background. As the lorries thunder through this deafening space, subtle lighting makes the artwork glow. From the other side of the road, the row of panels – some bright, some pastel, some frenetic, some calm – produce a wave-like effect across the trajectory of the painting. Shining through the smog, it is a hugely welcome – and just plain huge – addition to this borough's ever-burgeoning "artscape".

'Poured Lines' is unveiled on Sept 6; an exhibition of prints associated with the project will be on show at the Alan Cristea Gallery, 31 Cork St, London W1S (020 7439 1866) from Sept 13.

FT Magazine
August 26/27 2006

ARTS PAINTING

In the lines of duty

Commissioned to create one of the largest pieces of public art in London, Ian Davenport kept a diary of the last fraught months of its creation – in an enamel factory in Germany

In September 2001 I was commissioned by Land Securities and Southwark Council to make a painting as part of a regeneration project in Bankside, London. They wanted to use a public artwork to help boost the pace of change in this area and improve one of the main routes into Bankside itself.

My painting, "Poured Lines: Southwark Street", will be nearly 50m long and 3m high. When it is installed next month, it will become one of the largest permanent artworks in London. It will run along one wall beneath the railway bridge over Southwark Street, near Blackfriars Bridge and on one of the main approaches to Tate Modern.

The painting has no narrative: it doesn't depict a specific object or thing. My work is about expressing many different things at the same time. I hate to be pinned down to a particular meaning or set of preconceived ideas. It's about how I use materials, colour, rhythm, movement, timing, control and chance.

We arrive in Germany very tired from so little sleep. The Omeras enamel factory where we'll be working is about 50km from Dresden, very near the Czech border.

The weather conditions locally can be very extreme, and snow is forecast. We look over our studio in the factory, which has been cleared well, but it's really cold, even inside.

Settle into the apartment where Sue and I will stay, which is very nice.

Thursday, February 23

This will be the largest work I have made and it's very demanding, so I'm eager to get started. I have done other large-scale projects – a recent wall painting I made for Tate was 17m long, and my University of Warwick commission was 8m high. But this is on a totally different level.

The panels I'm using are sheet steel, which makes them very durable, and they've already been coated in white enamel. After I've worked on them, they'll be fired in a huge furnace at more than 800°C to



Making the piece is a complicated affair. After a lot of research, enamel on metal appeared the most suitable materials for the work, as it needs to be hard wearing, and the colours available in vitreous enamel are very clear and bright. The only factory that can cope with the size of panels we need is in Schwarzenberg, in eastern Germany. So after a year and a half of planning and organising, the time has finally come to pack my bags.

Tuesday, February 21

Sue Arrowsmith is accompanying me to Germany. Sue is also an artist – and my wife – and has agreed to assist me with the

harden and fuse the material. They are 3m high and each weighs about 40kg, so they're awkward and heavy to move around. In London they will be mounted on the wall to form one continuous piece.

For this work I have developed a way of painting using a large 50ml syringe to pour liquid enamel down the panels in repeated lines. It sounds nuts, but works very well. The painting is based on various of my earlier works where carefully controlled lines of paint were poured down gallery walls in repeated stripes. I proposed this approach for the commission as it's visually so immediate but also unfolds for the viewer over

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

a longer period of time. I don't want to tell people how to react to the work, I want them to make their own judgments, but for me it is about the experience of looking – of sensation.

The pouring method, using gravity to pull the liquid paint down the surface, means no line falls identically, creating beautiful random effects. On such a large scale, the mass of vertical lines and the vibrant colour should make quite an impact. I have become so practised at this pouring technique that most of my attention is focused on the way I put colours together to run in sequences and how they are choreographed.

Friday, February 24

Test working on the newly manufactured panels and see how they react. Most of the trials were on a much smaller size so it will take a bit of time to get used to the larger scale.

Sunday, February 26

We look round Schwarzenberg, the little town where we are staying, and its castle. It's a very pretty place with cobbled streets and a nature reserve – very different to London, which we're both missing like crazy.

Monday, February 27

We start the week by trying to sort out the colours I need to use for the painting. There is a basic palette from which we intend to create a wider range. The ground enamel mix doesn't behave in the same way as conventional paint – perhaps a better comparison would be ceramic glazes, because the colours change after they've

been fired. Red terracotta enamel will become bright scarlet after it has been through the furnace. Most colours are in the same chromatic range but some change dramatically after being fired. Deep royal blue begins its life as a light lilac. Sometimes this can be very confusing. Bearing in mind I normally work with a palette of hundreds of colours – and more than 300 hues will be used in this piece – we'll have to do a lot of tests before we can begin work on the final panels.

The enamel comes as a pigment, a finely ground glass that is mixed with a special pine oil and then pushed through milling rollers to make a thick viscous liquid. It is quite dangerous to work with and easy to forget that in essence it is glass. We have to wear gloves when handling the material and make sure not to rub our skin as it's such an irritant. Mixing the colours will be Sue's main job.

It is extremely cold outside with temperatures about minus 15, and the heater is on the blink...

Wednesday, March 1

Make some small samples. It's proving difficult working with Omeras. The factory specialises in architectural enamel cladding and has little experience of working directly with artists. I suppose they have a different perspective on the job. For me it's an incredible opportunity to make one of the biggest public artworks in London, one that might even become a new London landmark, with millions of people passing it every year.



Vertical take off: Ian Davenport with one of the panels of "Poured Lines", Southwark Street, and, right, the enamels he used to make it



August 2017 2008 FY magazine 25

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

ARTS PAINTING

Frustrating that it's difficult to make the factory excited by the potential.

Thursday, March 2

Fired test panels today - a qualified success.

Sunday, March 12

Very heavy snow. It is about 3ft deep, and it takes ages to dig the car out. Try to go for walk, but it's too deep so we stay inside and get a little bored. However the snow is very beautiful. We've never seen anything quite like this in the UK.

Monday, March 13

Fire some medium panels. Relative success. Small sample is very good. I do some tests with white only, which is not firing properly.

Tuesday, March 14

White tests go OK. As suspected, white needs to be thinned more than the other colours - it's a much heavier pigment than the other enamels. Experiment with transparent glazes. Finally start work on full-size samples.

Thursday, March 16

Scheisse! (My German is improving.) One panel has a mark in it caused by the steel bubbling in the furnace - apparently a one-in-100 chance. This means it can't be used.

Thursday, March 23

I am painting every day with only short lunch breaks. We will have to work hard to finish the project on time! Behind already... I've found a way of using the computer to alter images of painted studies. Using my scanned colour studies and drawings I can adjust the colour balance and tone contrast, giving me loads more quick references to work from.

Thursday, March 30

On a quick trip back to London, Sue and I walk down Southwark Street, and it's good to see how the improvements to the area are taking shape. The space under the bridge where my painting will be installed has changed dramatically, with new lighting and extensive cleaning and repainting. The whole area is unrecognisable and the fabulous old buildings such as the Corn Exchange are now complemented by contemporary architecture.

Friday, March 31

Visit the British Museum to see the Michelangelo drawings. Ask Sue to call me "Il Divino", Michelangelo's nickname. She reminds me that although she has many names for me, "Il Divino" won't be one of them. Tried to pack as much culture as possible into the week, it was great to see exhibitions.

Saturday, April 1

Back to Germany

Tuesday, April 4

Start using works on paper as "cartoons" for the project. Very Michelangelo! I am now able to print out studies from my computer to act as "aide memoirs" - they are helping speed up the painting.

I have many different sources of influence. As well as Renaissance frescoes, I am interested in television cartoons, films and music. There is no one dominant theme in my work, it's not didactic - I am interested in how human beings look and perceive the world, hopefully seeing something new in the work every time they pass.

I use materials and work with gravity and other natural phenomena to make my paintings - sometimes I feel I am more of a sculptor than a painter, dictating to the material and simultaneously working with it. The meaning and making become completely intertwined.

Friday April 7

Was cheered up by seeing more of the panels fired. They look great. I'm incredibly pleased.

Need to make sure the panels are numbered so that they're in the correct order when they are installed. I must paint 1.8m to 2m in length a day to be on target for our finish date for the middle of May.

Tuesday, April 25

After repeated reminders to be careful, the factory ruins three further panels today. Again an accident, but out of 25 panels, six have now been damaged. This is a very tricky situation. We need the factory to help us, so I try to be as diplomatic as possible, but I'm in a foul mood.

Wednesday, April 26

The panels were fired today and came out fine, so the process seems to be working better, and people are concentrating when handling my work. I think this is due to the arrival of Klaus, the floor manager, who has returned to work after a knee operation. The factory guys got a real bollocking from him. He says they won't damage anything again. I believe him.

Each panel takes roughly a day to paint but as they are made in sequence damaging one effectively means two or three others can't be used. It's clear that I can't make much more than one panel a day so Sue and I rethink our schedule to finish at the beginning of June.

Saturday, April 29

It snows again! It is now nearly May. The novelty has worn off, and it's not fun any more.

Monday, May 1

I've been reading about Michelangelo for inspiration. Apparently after the first six months of work on the Sistine Chapel all the painting had to be destroyed, as the mix for the fresco was going mouldy. Even he got things wrong.

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

Tuesday, May 2

This week I decide to spend my mornings supervising the firing and the afternoon painting. That way I can make sure there is no careless damage. There has also been a change in perception about the project from the management team, after having a film crew around last week to film me. They can now see how artists working in enamel could be good for future business.

I am making the stripes wider in the painting. To begin with there were about 50 lines in each panel, there are now 35 or 40. As I am becoming more experienced with the enamel, the piece is much bolder. I've also been "cutting back" into the space much more to let the work "breathe".



Act of creation: Davenport applies stripes of enamel to a panel

Wednesday, May 3

Definitely feel we're all learning how to work together. There are fewer mistakes if I oversee what's going on at every stage. Though more time consuming, it's certainly less stressful.

I have started to add water to the enamel, which means I can vary the tones in the work quite dramatically as I alter the transparency, similar to the way one works with watercolour.

Friday, May 26

Lots of late nights this month working, but the majority of the painting is now done. I am so tired I feel relief more than anything else. My back aches from moving the heavy steel around, and my eyes are sore from spending months looking close-up at the bright colours. I finish the last panel about 9pm. I am glad there is only some touching up to do for next week.

PHOTOGRAPHS: EDWARD WEBB

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

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It snows again! It is now nearly May. The novelty has worn off, and it's not fun any more.

Monday, May 1

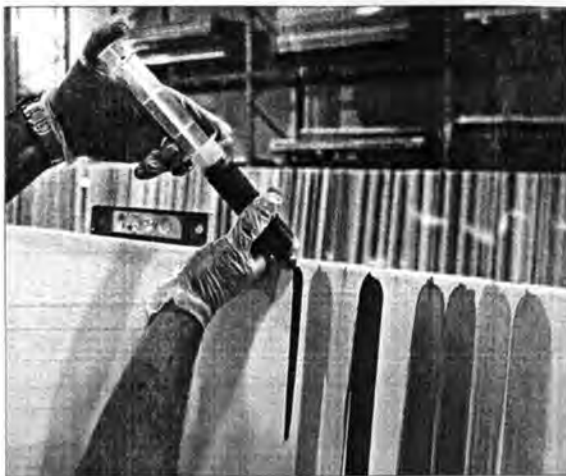
I've been reading about Michelangelo for inspiration. Apparently after the first six months of work on the Sistine Chapel all the painting had to be destroyed, as the mix for the fresco was going mouldy. Even he got things wrong.

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

Tuesday, May 2

This week I decide to spend my mornings supervising the firing and the afternoon painting. That way I can make sure there is no careless damage. There has also been a change in perception about the project from the management team, after having a film crew around last week to film me. They can now see how artists working in enamel could be good for future business.

I am making the stripes wider in the painting. To begin with there were about 50 lines in each panel, there are now 35 or 40. As I am becoming more experienced with the enamel, the piece is much bolder. I've also been "cutting back" into the space much more to let the work "breathe".



Act of creation: Davenport applies stripes of enamel to a panel

Wednesday, May 3

Definitely feel we're all learning how to work together. There are fewer mistakes if I oversee what's going on at every stage. Though more time consuming, it's certainly less stressful.

I have started to add water to the enamel, which means I can vary the tones in the work quite dramatically as I alter the transparency, similar to the way one works with watercolour.

Friday, May 26

Lots of late nights this month working, but the majority of the painting is now done. I am so tired I feel relief more than anything else. My back aches from moving the heavy steel around, and my eyes are sore from spending months looking close-up at the bright colours. I finish the last panel about 9pm. I am glad there is only some touching up to do for next week.

PHOTOGRAPHS: EDWARD WEBB

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Times online
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Below a shabby railway bridge an awesome piece of public art is about to be unveiled. **Charlotte Mullins** met the artist

In an overcast summer day, the artist Ian Davenport stands under the western railway bridge on Southwark Street, South London, and contemplates the scale of his latest and most ambitious painting. At nearly 165ft (50m) long, it will be one of the largest public artworks in the country when it is unveiled on September 6.

But for now it is under polythene sheeting, with only two of its 48 steel panels uncovered for me to see. Hundreds of vertical stripes slither down the 10ft-high panels in every colour imaginable — crimson and canary yellow, pale mauve and mint, black and white. Some lines are dark and dense, others chalky and translucent; all appear luminous.

On our previous meetings Davenport has been reserved, wary. He hates dwelling on his connections to Damien Hirst and Young British Artists. (He was part of the renowned Freeze exhibition in 1988 that kick-started the YBAs — “I wish people would move beyond that,” he grumbles.) But talking about *Poured Lines*, he comes to life, pointing out the various qualities of the paint, a vitreous enamel that has been fired at over 800C. “On the panels you have lines that are incredibly vibrant and others that are watery,” he explains. “In the middle of the line, because the paint is thicker, it is quite sharp and bright,

Poured Lines has been commissioned by Land Securities and Southwark Council as part of the regeneration of the area around Tate Modern. IPC, the publishing company, is due to move its headquarters to Southwark Street next year. Near by, Zaha Hadid is designing the new Architecture Foundation’s building to resemble a giant mirror-plated anvil. Southwark Council and Land Securities were keen to commission an iconic piece of public art, and Davenport’s proposal fitted the bill. The painting has taken two and a half years to complete. In the spring, Davenport spent three months at a German enamels factory with his wife, the artist Sue Arrowsmith, methodically pouring the lines before the panels were fired.

Back at his studio in southeast London, he explains that the reason for using enamel was to make the work as permanent as possible. But was it difficult working in such an industrial environment? “I felt comfortable working in a place where they were screenprinting Tube signs. It felt normal. I was doing my job and they were doing theirs. Each panel weighs 40kg, so it was hard labour to move 48 of them around. And I’m getting on a bit!” says the 40-year-old. While we tend to think of abstract artists as painting an inner vision, Davenport draws inspiration from the world in which he lives, whether it’s a

simple forms — circles, arches, lines — he explores how paint responds to being dripped, pooled and tipped over surfaces such as aluminium, canvas and walls. After his early success — he was nominated for the Turner Prize in 1991, aged 25 — he went on to win the Pizza Express Prospects Contemporary Drawing Prize in 2002 with a large striped wall painting.

This series came about by chance, when he discovered that he could use a syringe to inject paint into the top corner of a wall and rely on gravity to pull it down into a line. But initially he had problems with colour. “Whenever I had tried to do something on the wall before, I used loads of bright colours, and it didn’t have a relationship to the surface it was on. Then I realised that white was the most important colour, because the surface was white, so I bought pots of pale pastel emulsion and played around with them. I thought: ‘Oh God, what have I done now.’ Then Sue came in and said: ‘Yes, that’s exactly right; you need those soft colours, you can interface them with other things.’”

Increasingly, Davenport has turned to printmaking to complement his physically demanding work. His latest series of etchings, to be published by the Alan Cristea Gallery, is based on some of the hundreds of drawings he created while planning *Poured Lines*. “I think all my work is diaristic,” he

Earning his stripes:

but towards the edges it becomes a lot softer. So despite this hard material there is a human, handmade quality to it.”

He dashes across the busy road to illustrate how different the work will look from afar. Standing on one of the pavement approaches for Tate Modern, you can see the work in its entirety. Even with only two panels on view the coloured lines seem to dance and hum.

chalky fresco in Florence, the saturated colours of *The Simpsons* or a fluttering door curtain in a kebab shop.

Davenport’s own studio is factory-sized but looks more like a paint storeroom. Tins of household gloss are stacked on shelves and the floor is splattered with hundreds of colours. Since graduating from Goldsmiths College in 1988, alongside Gary Hume and Damien Hirst, he has adopted a very physical way of painting. Using

says of the Southwark commission. “When I first started painting it, the lines were thin and close together. I was anxious, tight, but as I began to loosen up the spacing became wider and more relaxed.” The serendipitous result is that the work will appear to open out and breathe as passing cars accelerate away from the nearby traffic lights.

Poured Lines is likely to be a much-loved addition to what is set to

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



artist

with **tunnel** vision

become London's cultural quarter, lighting up the space under the formerly gloomy, low-slung bridge, and countering the endless traffic noise by undulating with its own rhythms, riffs and moods. ■

Poured Lines, western bridge, Southwark Street, London SE1, will be unveiled on Sept 6. Ian Davenport: *New Editions*, Alan Cristea Gallery, 31 Cork Street, London W1 (020-7439 1866), Sept 13-Oct 11

WIN A LIMITED-EDITION IAN DAVENPORT PRINT

Land Securities and Southwark Council are giving away a limited-edition print, worth £1,500 (pictured, one of an edition of just 25) by Ian Davenport. To win, answer the following question: what are the names of the architects responsible for

redesigning the old Bankside Power Station into what became Tate Modern? To enter, go to timesonline.co.uk/timespromo One entry per person – enter code x5001. Competition closes at midday on September 5. Usual terms and conditions apply.