



TIM BAVINGTON

SCOTT WHITE CONTEMPORARY ART



Cover: Detail of *Thunderbird*



TIM BAVINGTON



CHANGES



The Songs Do Not Remain The Same

Paintings, like CD's, have only one side that's worth paying attention to. LP's have two, as does every story that's more captivating than a one-sided one-liner. Tim Bavington's deliriously beautiful canvases plant one foot in each of these worlds. Marrying the straightforward directness of traditionally formatted paintings (and the user-friendly accessibility of CD's) with the unpredictable open-endedness of unexpected discoveries (and the bittersweet tinge of vinyl's bygone days), the Las Vegas-based painter's arrangements of soft-edged stripes, blurry blocks of color, and blinding flashes of light create mirage-like illusions that invite two distinct, if not opposed, types of viewing.

Both begin with the pop songs that inspire and structure Bavington's attractive abstractions. And that's where their similarities end. The first type of viewing favors interpretation. Dedicated to explanation, it focuses on meaning—on making sense of the relationship between the songs that serve as the paintings' titles and Bavington's renditions—or covers—of those songs in his signature palette of air-brushed acrylics arrayed in fairly staid compositions. I think of it as the analytic approach to his spray-painted versions of rock-'n'-roll riffs, the attempt to read his compositions systematically, as codes that convey the logical structure of melodies, guitar licks, music.

The second type of viewing treats the titles of Bavington's canvases as curious sidelights: little, added-on bonuses that may accentuate the experience of looking at his works but in no way determines, directs, or defines their significance. Rather than reading his abstractions as

visual translations of specific songs by determining and dissecting the setups that brought them into being, this looser, more subjective, and far more freewheeling type of viewing is all about each viewer's idiosyncratic interaction with a particular work: the physical sensations, optical kicks, and emotional impact of its colors and shapes and, most important, the visual rhythms these formal features create as they draw your eye, not to mention your mind and body, into the action. I think of it as the experiential approach to Bavington's savvy abstractions, which involves the willingness to suspend disbelief and leap, often head over heels, into the syncopated, back-and-forth beat of his deliciously improvised stripe paintings. When this happens, the mind's-eye actually dances in front of the painter's strangely capacious surfaces, falling into their atmosphere of cool, hedonistic grooviness, which is impossible to convince others of unless they feel it themselves—and then, of course, there's no point in arguing for it. Analysis simply falls into the background, where it plays a secondary, at best subsidiary role.

This more poetic and engaging type of viewing begins in the conviction that a work of art is a peculiar sort of suspended performance, a wonderfully illogical type of time-release event that is always ready to happen, again and again, whenever a viewer (or any number of viewers), brings his (or their) attentiveness to it. The only proviso is that the work must continue to deliver some kind of satisfaction—something unexpected, above and beyond, even thrilling. What counts is not what took place in the painter's studio or the thought-process that led up to

those actions or the system that the artist set up to get the work done. What matters is what all those elements generate: a work that actually works—that does its thing in the moment, long after the rudiments of the task of its making have disappeared into history and all that is clear is the work's ineffable, indescribable presence, which consists of the effects it triggers in the present.

This is what Bavington is after in his unsentimental yet moving art, and it is also the best way to get the most out of his stylishly sexy paintings. Comprised of fuzzy bands, floating rectangles, and, occasionally, extremely out-of-focus imagery, these artificially compartmentalized—and wildly inventive—rainbows come in an infinite variety of trippy tertiary tints that are all the more mesmerizing for blending, clashing, and sizzling with an equally subtle and even more lovely range of delicate, whisper-soft pastels. Bavington electrifies the mix by shooting it through with a keyed-up cornucopia of screaming neon bands and, most recently, a singularly kinky panoply of atmospheric drabs and diaphanous mattes, ordinarily dreary tones and subdued shades that he somehow manages to transform into jaw-dropping, mind-bending, soul-expanding orchestrations of visual resplendence, like nothing else out there. You have to see Bavington's virtuoso repertoire of coloristic high jinks to believe it; and even then, his sensuous riffs on the spectrum's natural tones and organic blends defy comprehension.

Back in 2002, Bavington came up with a way of making paintings that forced him out of his comfort zone. Like a lot of artists who got good at

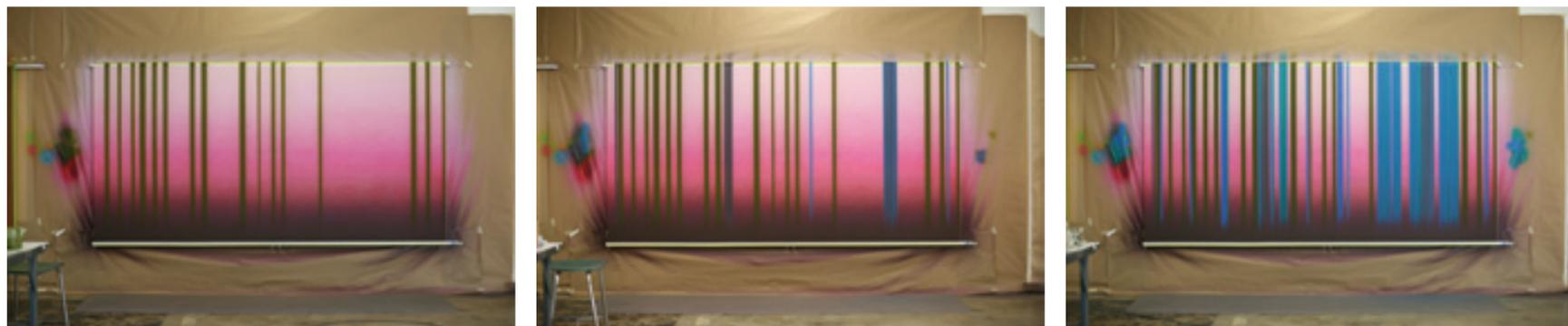
Thunderbird in progress

what they were doing, his facility for making handsome compositions in tasteful color combinations began to feel too easy, almost as if he were merely going through the motions or operating in default mode. So, to break the grip of habit and make things fresher, more unfamiliar, and adventuresome, Bavington turned to rock-'n'-roll. He drew up a color wheel with twelve hues, one for each of the twelve musical tones of the chromatic scale. He then chose a "tonic" color, which limited his palette to the eight hues that corresponded to the eight tones of the musical scale, or key, of songs. Here's how Dave Hickey puts it in *Gravity's Rainbows*:

Bavington would then translate a rock solo into equivalent colors, with appropriate bends. He would translate note lengths into band widths, use black for rests, indicate octaves by relative brightness, and distinguish legato from staccato by adjusting the degree of blur.
[Tim Bavington: Paintings, 1998-2005](#), Steidl, 2006, pp. 19-20

The guitar solos he chose functioned as vehicles that allowed him to make paintings with just the right balance of structure and improvisation, necessity and happenstance, rigor and whimsy, discipline and freedom.

For all kinds of reasons, many viewers missed this part of the picture. In learning that Bavington's compositions were translations or translit-



erations of specific songs, they assumed that the analytical perspective was sufficient and settled for treating the paintings referentially, as if they depicted, in variously encoded forms, the songs in their titles. To a certain extent, the poetry was lost as reading the lyrics replaced dancing to the music. The transformations that took place in the shift from sound to sight, which are essential to Bavington's canvases, not to mention his way of thinking, fell out of the foreground and sometimes disappeared altogether, lost in the background. Looking at his synthetic rainbows, jam-packed with eye-grabbing incidents, often became a matter of recognizing the songs they referred to and recollecting some of the memories associated with them.

Over the last ten years, Bavington has gone out of his way to nudge his art out of the confines of such narrowly analytical readings. His latest paintings play up their non-representational features, emphasizing that although their sources are popular songs, the rhythms they set in motion are visual: silent, but never quiet dramas that play out in the mind's-eye as they pulse through a viewer's perceptual organs and come alive in the feel of their beat. The act of translation transforms the particular song into something distinct from the original, which the painting does not represent or portray so much as it uses it as a springboard to go somewhere else.

Bavington's new works fall into five groups:

Stripes, like the six-foot-long *Eagles (Wolfmother)*, the six-foot-tall *Thick as Thieves*, and the seven-foot-long *Magic* hark back to his beginnings.

Their seemingly straightforward arrangement of hazy tertiaries in various widths, cycles, and refrain-like repetitions are most closely linked to the songs from which they originate. But the simplicity of these pieces is deceptive, tweaked by more subtle improvisations and intuitive highlights than before. In the past, each band of color was uniform, a consistent tone from top to bottom. As it faded out at its edges, it blended with the tints on its left and right, creating nuanced gradations that recall sunsets and the fades in Ed Ruscha's paintings. In Bavington's most recent pieces, he sprays thin, racing-stripe-style lines over selected bands, adding pictorial depth, sculptural volume, and psychological complexity to his compositions. Sometimes a rosy red zip inflects a fat band of burgundy. At others, a razor-thin slice of chartreuse sets off a serene section of olive drab. And at still others, hazy grays and gorgeous golds put visual kinks in the sensuous pinks, lovely lavenders, and diaphanous aquas that swim in and out of focus in Bavington's increasingly hallucinatory paintings.

Dissolving Stripes, like *Secret Agent (Solo)* and *Thunderbird*, resemble Bavington's classic Stripes, except for the blurry expanses of dull, light-swallowing color (teal grey and dusty grape) that run across their bottom edges. These uninterrupted swathes of emptiness bring time and transience front and center. Their blank uniformity, at the base of the picture-plane, threatens to cancel out the playful energy of the jaunty arrangements above and suggests that such lively energy and animated movement can easily—and instantly—disappear into the void, go silent, and die. Mortality and melancholy enter the picture, making



the rollicking pleasures Bavington's art delivers all the more cherished and dear because they are fleeting, unguaranteed, and human.

Stacked Stripes, like *Ball & Biscuit* and *Changes*, compress songs that unfold over time into untraditional, vertically formatted diptychs and, even rarer, double-diptychs. Bavington transforms flowing, linear narratives into time-defying setups that allow viewers to skip, skim, and skid all around each composition, mixing—and re-mixing—passages from the beginning, middle, and end like nobody's business. His colored bands segue gracefully from one to the next and also jump abruptly, creating both harmonious and dissonant visual symphonies that sometimes suggest duets and at others intimate choruses. In every case, these perfectly square paintings leave viewers with more room to maneuver than their dimensions and tidy geometry imply.

Mirages, like *Kosmos*, *Manic*, and *Magic Pie*, are among Bavington's most pictorial and illusionistically sophisticated works. Like his Dissolving Stripes, they physically bring time into the picture. But rather than hinting at the fact that the music will inevitably end, they suggest the opposite: that the high points overwhelm the senses, creating intoxicating moments of flashbulb-bright brilliance that are both blinding and thrilling, too hot to handle rationally and too cool to stay away from. In *Magic Pie*, a handful of bands, in yellow, orange, blue, and pink, runs top to bottom, like digital renditions of Barnett Newman's zips. Behind them, the rest of the painting resembles an ethereal version of Clyfford Still's sublimely electrifying abstractions, as if filtered

through Gerhard Richter's seductively out-of-focus oils-on-canvas. *Kosmos* and *Manic* riff off of Ed Ruscha's paintings containing EKG-style diagrams, transforming their linear simplicity into pulsating jolts of sizzling energy.

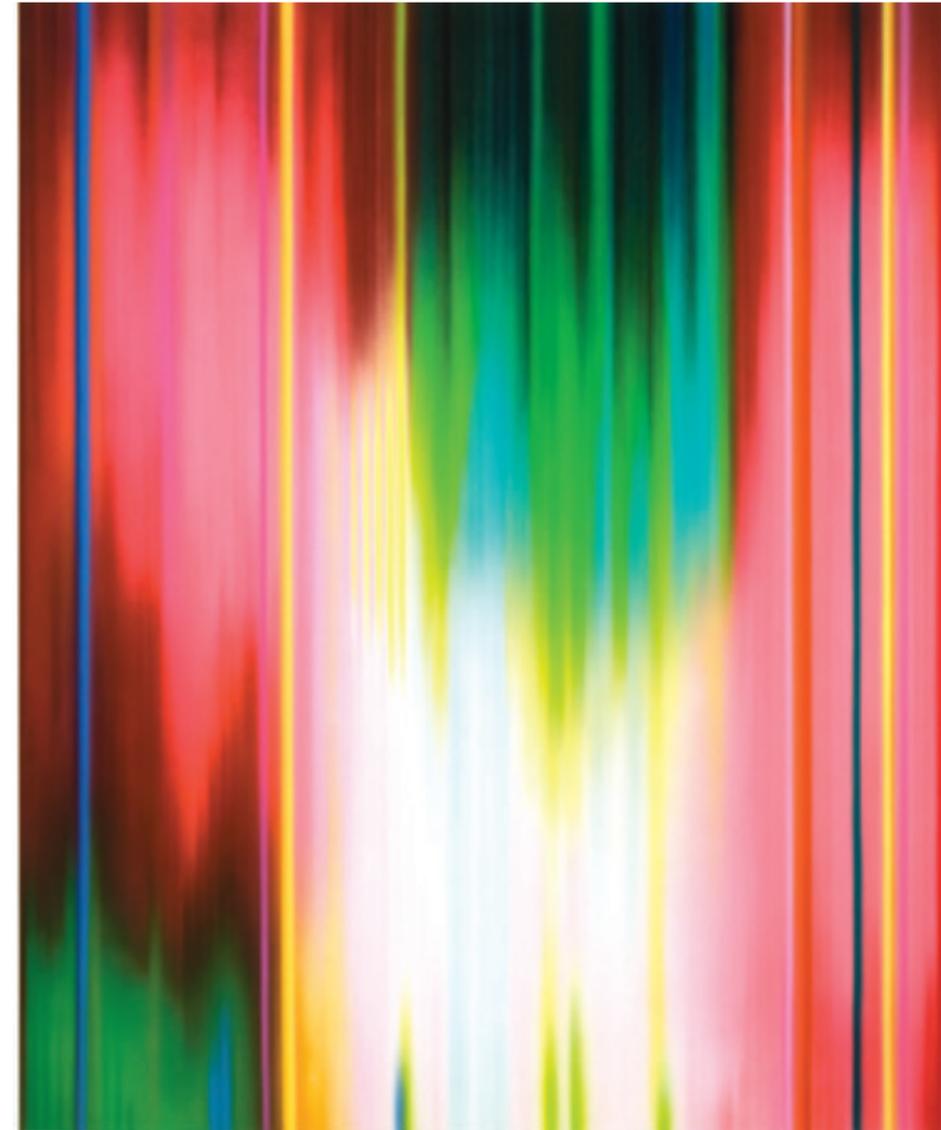
Receding Grids, like *Blue Fretboard*, break Bavington's habit of basing his paintings on songs. Rather than referring to a song at all, this painting is based on electronic toys like *Guitar Hero*, which guide fun-seeking kids of all age through rock-'n'-roll's greatest hits by flashing lights on the right chords at the right times. Bavington's nearly ten-foot-long painting combines the sumptuous, coloristic solidity of Donald Judd's wall sculptures with the dreamy intangibility of Howard Arkley's pop paintings, tweaking both by embracing inconsistency and asymmetry. This out-of-sync, improvisational quality is integral to Bavington's art, as is its DIY, participatory impulse that *Blue Fretboard* highlights.

Taking greater liberties with the structures his art starts out with, Bavington amplifies the mystery and the magic. Aimed at viewers of all stripes, his latest paintings make ample room for unexpected discoveries that resonate with everyone differently.

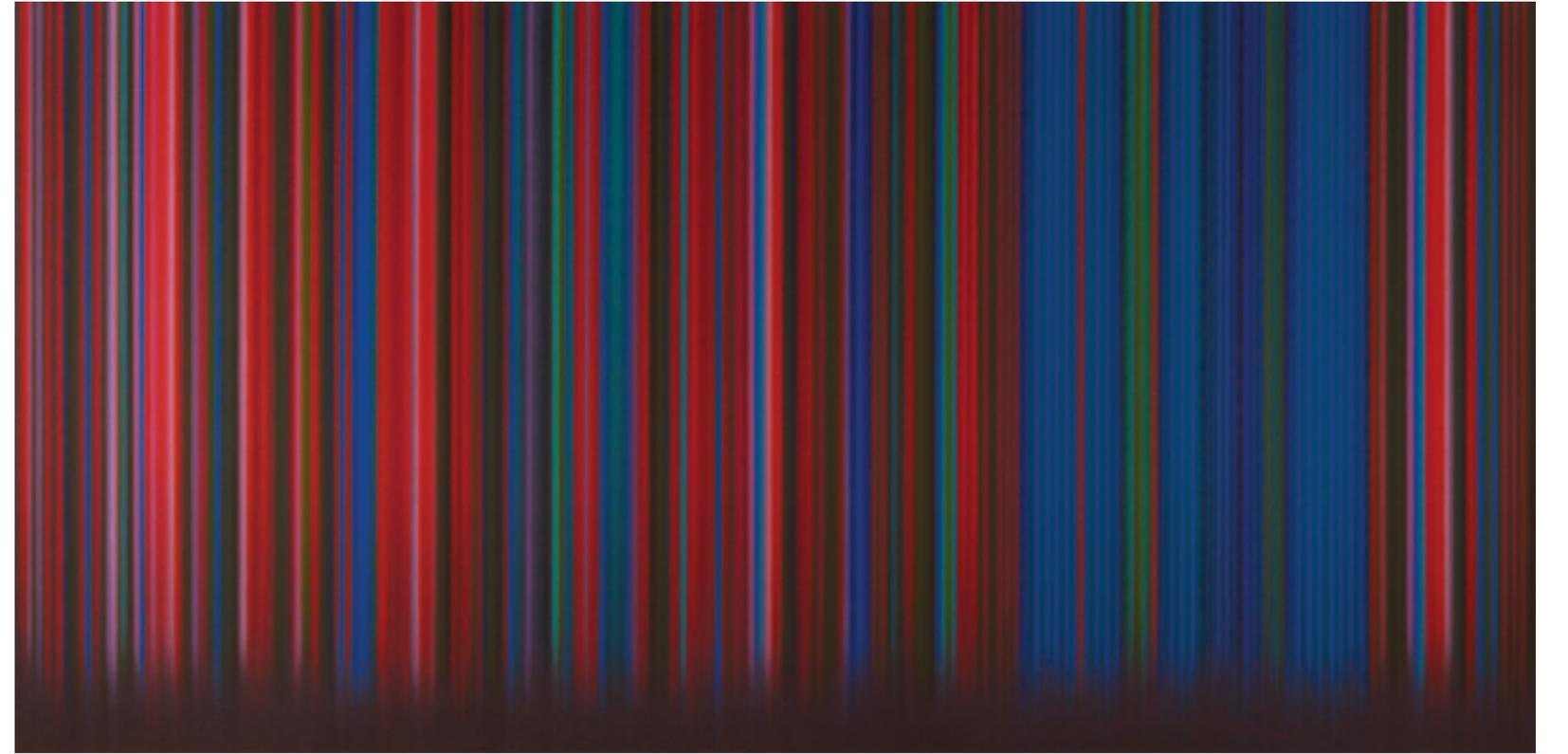
David Pagel



Magic Pie, 2011
synthetic polymer on canvas
96 x 78 inches



Thunderbird, 2011
synthetic polymer on canvas
72 x 144 inches

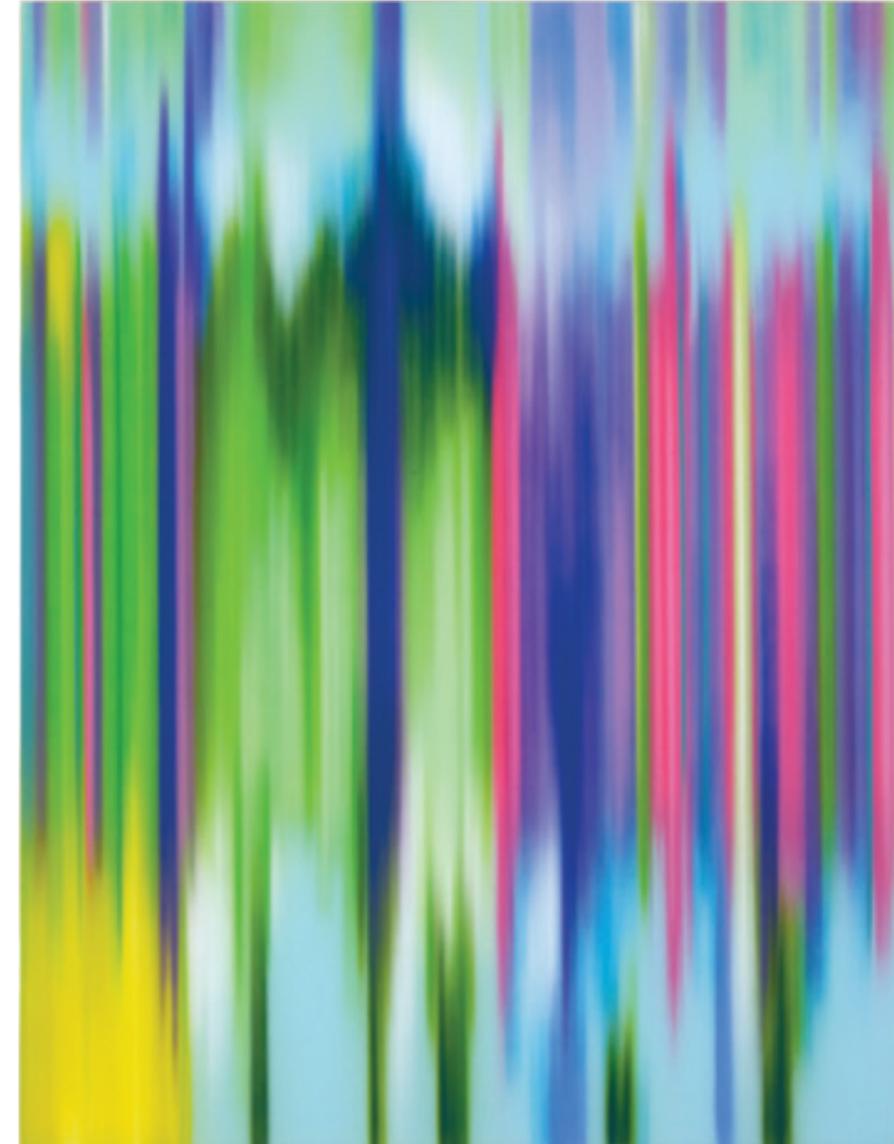


Blue Fretboard, 2011
synthetic polymer on canvas
12 x 112.5 inches

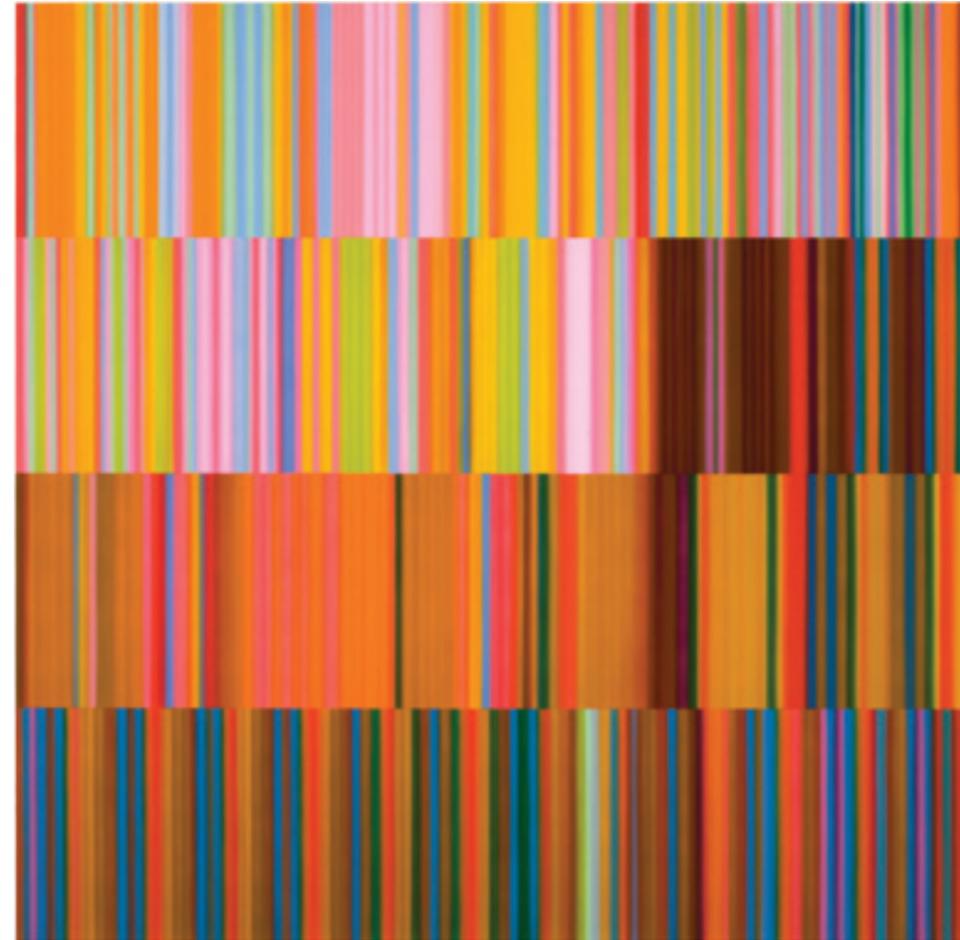




Kosmos, 2011
synthetic polymer on canvas
84 x 64 inches



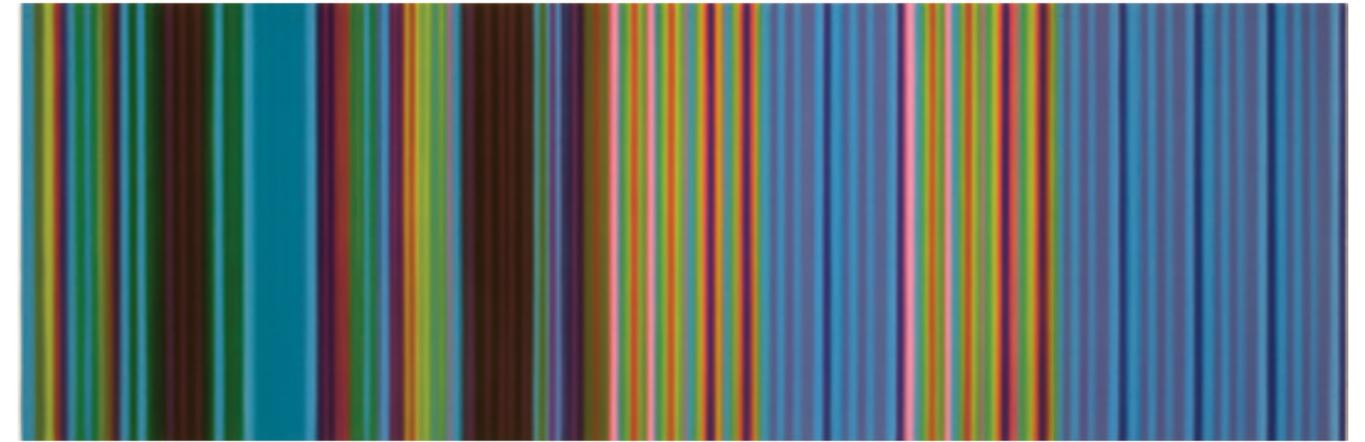
Changes, 2011
synthetic polymer on canvas
60 x 60 inches

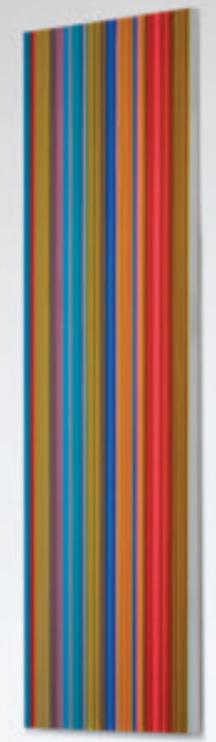


Secret Agent (Solo), 2011
synthetic polymer on canvas
84 x 64 inches

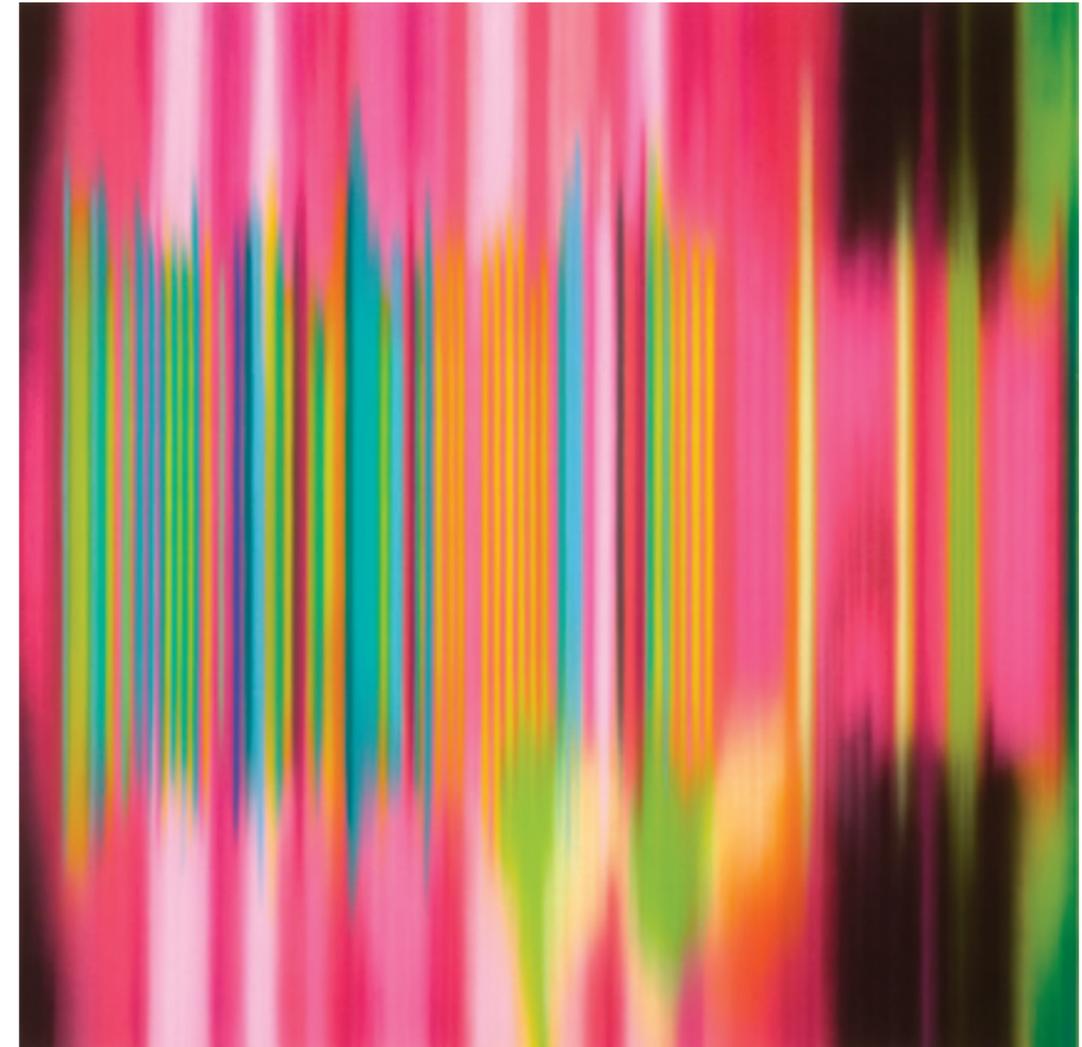


Eagles (Wolfmother) 2011
synthetic polymer on canvas
24 x 72 inches





Manic, 2011
synthetic polymer on canvas
64 x 64 inches



Ball & Biscuit, 2011
synthetic polymer on canvas
48 x 48 inches



Magic, 2011
synthetic polymer on canvas
36 x 84 inches



Thick as Thieves, 2011
synthetic polymer on canvas
72 x 24 inches



TIM BAVINGTON

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

1966 Born in England; lives in the United States

EDUCATION

1999 M.F.A. University of Nevada, Las Vegas
 1990 B.F.A. Art Center College of Design, Pasadena, California

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2011 **CHANGES**, Scott White Contemporary Art, San Diego, California

2010 **Decade**, Mark Moore Gallery, Santa Monica, California
Out of Time, Out of Tune, Greg Kucera Gallery, Seattle, Washington

2009 **Up In Suze's Room**, Jack Shainman Gallery, New York, New York

2008 **Hello, Hello**, LeeAhn Gallery, Seoul, South Korea
There We Were, Now Here We Are, Mark Moore Gallery, Santa Monica, California

2007 **Recent Paintings**, Jack Shainman Gallery, New York
So It Goes, Eleven Fine Art, London, England

2006 **Drawings: 1998-2006**, G-C Arts, Las Vegas, Nevada

2005 Galerie Richard, Paris, France
 Jack Shainman Gallery, New York, New York
 Space Gallery, London, England
 Heather Marx Gallery, San Francisco, California

2004 Mark Moore Gallery, Santa Monica, California

2003 Greg Kucera Gallery, Seattle, Washington
 Pulliam Deffenbaugh Gallery, Portland, Oregon

2001 Feigen Contemporary, New York, New York

2000 Mark Moore Gallery, Santa Monica, California
 Angstrom Gallery, Dallas, Texas

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2011 **OPEN**, Mark Moore Gallery, Culver City, California
softcore HARD EDGE, Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, California, forthcoming

2010 **Borderland Abstraction**, Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, Omaha, Nebraska
Interval: Gene Davis, Kenneth Noland & Tim Bavington, Scott White Contemporary Art, San Diego, California
Tim Bavington & John Chamberlain, Gallery Seomi, Seoul, South Korea
softcore HARD EDGE, The Art Gallery of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, Canada

2009 **Seeing Songs**, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts
Small Is Beautiful, Seomi & Tuus, Seoul, South Korea
Bowie, Clark & Faria, Toronto, Canada

2008 **Las Vegas Diaspora**, Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach, California, curated by Dave Hickey (catalogue)

2007 **Las Vegas Diaspora**, Las Vegas Art Museum, Las Vegas, Nevada, curated by Dave Hickey (catalogue)
SOUNDWAVES: The Art of Sampling, Museum of

Contemporary Art San Diego, San Diego, California, organized by Stephanie Hanor
Painting <=> Design, Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, California, curated by David Pagel (catalogue)

2005 **EXTREME abstraction**, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York, curated by Louis Grachos & Claire Schneider (catalogue)
Pattern, Dae Jun City Museum, Dae Jun, Korea (catalogue)

2004 **Specific Objects: The Minimalist Influence**, Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, San Diego, California, curated by Hugh Davies

2003 **Structure**, Patricia Faure Gallery, Santa Monica, California
Flair, Heather Marx Gallery, San Francisco, California
Drawings, James Kelly Contemporary, Santa Fe, New Mexico

2002 **New In Town**, Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon, curated by Bruce Guenther
Neo Painting, Young Eun Museum of Contemporary Art, Kwang ju-city, Korea, (catalogue)

2001 **The Magic Hour**, Neue Galerie Graz am Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz, Austria, curated by Alex Farquharson (catalogue)

2000 **New American Talent**, The Jones Center for Contemporary Art, Austin, Texas, curated by David Pagel (catalogue)
Ultralounge, University of South Florida Museum of Contemporary Art, Tampa, Florida, curated by Dave Hickey (catalogue)

COLLECTIONS

Allbright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York
 Arkansas Art Center, Little Rock, Arkansas
 Blake Byrne Collection, Los Angeles, California
 William H. Brady III, Los Angeles, California
 Cleveland Clinic, Cleveland, Ohio
 Creative Artists Agency, Beverly Hills, California
 Denver Art Museum, Denver, Colorado
 General Mills Corporation, Minneapolis, Minnesota
 Istanbul Modern, Istanbul, Turkey
 Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska
 MGM Mirage Corporation, Las Vegas, Nevada
 Marnell Corrao Corporation, Las Vegas, Nevada
 Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, California
 Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York
 Neiman Marcus Corporation, Dallas, Texas
 Nevada Cancer Institute, Las Vegas, Nevada
 Palm Springs Art Museum, Palm Springs, California
 Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon
 Progressive Insurance Corporation, Cleveland, Ohio
 Sammlung Mondstudio, Hamburg, Germany
 Thomas & Mack Co., Las Vegas, Nevada
 United Talent Agency, Beverly Hills, California
 Vivendi Universal, Los Angeles, California
 Frederick R. Weisman Art Foundation, Los Angeles, California
 Steve and Elaine Wynn Collection, Las Vegas, Nevada
 The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas

SELECTED ARTICLES / REVIEWS

Kilston, Lyra. "Exhibition Reviews", *Art In America*, (September 2010).

Pagel, David. "Tim Bavington at Mark Moore Gallery", *Los Angeles Times*, Friday, April 30, 2010.

Pincus, Robert L. "Stars and Stripes: three painters' colorfield paintings", *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, Thursday, April 29, 2010.

Johnson, Ken. "Tim Bavington: 'Up in Suze's Room'", *The New York Times*, Friday, September 25th, 2009.

Moriarity, Bridget. "My Brilliant Career: Tim Bavington", *Art + Auction* (September 2009): 32.

Knight, Christopher. "His Stripes are a Wonderwall", *Los Angeles Times*, Friday, March 21, 2008.

Swenson, Kirsten. "Sin City Slickers," *Art in America* (February 2008): 62.

Knight, Christopher. "Embracing and refining Las Vegas gaudy," *Los Angeles Times*, Tuesday, November 20th, 2007, sec E, 1.

Baker, Kenneth. "Tim Bavington at Heather Marx," *ARTnews*, (May 2005): 148.

Pagel, David. "Colorful stripes to music, like a rock 'n' roll EKG", *Los Angeles Times*, Friday, April 9th, 2004, sec E, 34.

Miles, Christopher. "Tim Bavington at Mark Moore Gallery", *Artforum* (November 2002): 192.

King, Sarah S. "Sin City Sampler", *Art In America* (July 2002): 51- 53.

Pagel, David. "Aperto Las Vegas", *Flash Art* (March-April 2002): 57.

Indyke, Dottie. "(Las) Vegans", *Art News* (May 2002): 176.

Knight, Christopher. "Tim Bavington Sprays Exhuberant Visual Music", *Los Angeles Times*, Friday, July 12th, 2002, sec F, 19.

Smith, Roberta. "Tim Bavington and Yek", *New York Times*, Friday, September 28th, 2000.

CATALOGUES

Las Vegas Diaspora. Curated by Dave Hickey, published by Las Vegas Art Museum, Las Vegas, Nevada, 2007.

Gene Davis: Interval. Essays by Jean Lawlor Cohen and Andrea Pollen, published by The Kreeger Museum, Washington, DC, 2007.

Optic Nerve, Perceptual Art of the 1960's. Essay by Joe Houston, published by the Columbus Museum of Art/Merrill, Columbus, Ohio, 2007.

Painting <=> Design. Essays by Libby Lumpkin and David Pagel, published by Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, California, 2007.

Tim Bavington, Paintings 1998-2005. Essay by Dave Hickey, published by Steidl, Gottingen, Germany, 2005.

EXTREME Abstraction. Curated by Louis Grachos & Claire Schneider, published by Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York, 2005.

Lorser Feitelson and the invention of hard edge painting. Essays by Henry T. Hopkins and Michael Duncan, published by Louis Stern Fine Arts, West Hollywood, California, 2003.

Neo Painting. Published by the Young Eun Museum of Contemporary Art, Quangju-City, Korea, 2002.

The Magic Hour, The Convergence of Art and Las Vegas. Edited by Alex Farquharson, published by Neue Galerie, Graz, Austria, 2001.

New American Talent 15. Essay by David Pagel, published by the Texas Fine Arts Association, Dallas, Texas, 2000.

Ultralounge, The Return of Social Space (with cocktails). Essays by Dave Hickey and David Pagel, published by DiverseWorks, Houston, Texas, 1998.

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