

**Colin Booth**  
recent paintings

## Colin Booth: recent paintings

Unusually, for a contemporary artist, there is no crisis in these paintings. This is not an art of psychological trauma, artistic doubt; it is a visual world of objects, pattern, surface and limited space. These patterns and forms are simultaneously unknown and reassuringly familiar: as in the convivial spillage of drinks upon the table. They are, of course, no more than what they are, pools of paint of a determined colour, volume and viscosity: impenetrable beyond cause and effect. They are the subject and the object.

But there is a shift in this perfect union effected by an obscure system of placement, the product of a personal aesthetic: fundamental to the artist and perhaps entirely automatic, in spite of a superficial reminiscence of an incomplete grid. Grids are mute, even dumb, absolute yet somehow equivocal and wait for the moment of articulation. This is entirely in keeping with an apparent objective of the works to remain inexpressive.

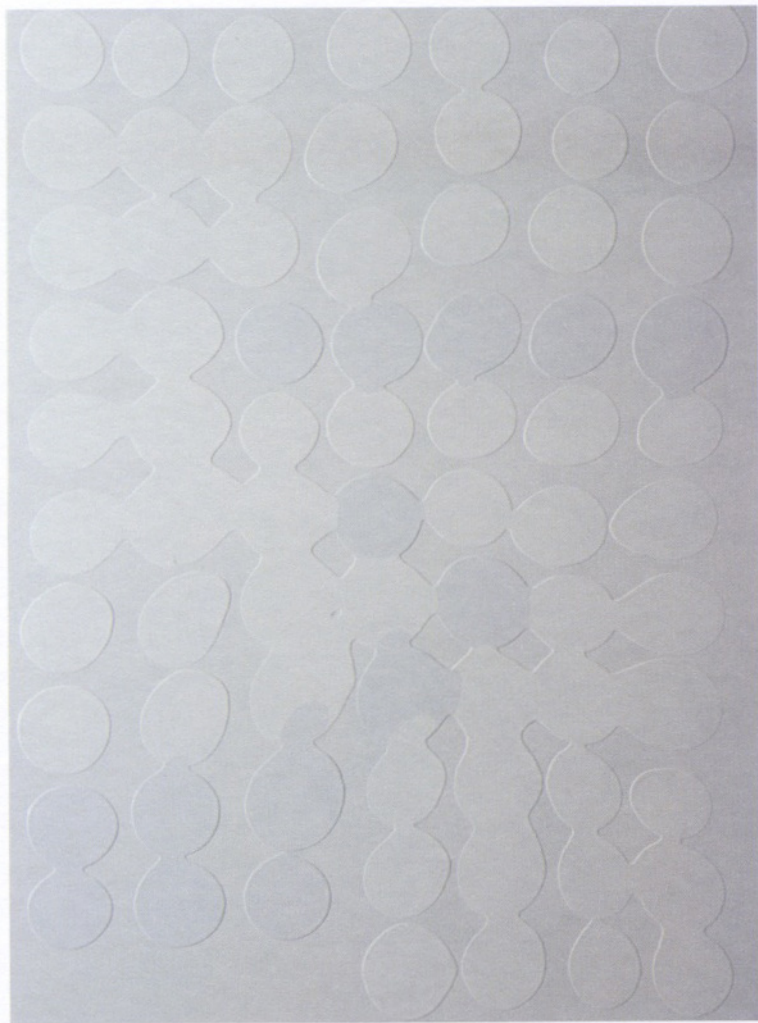
These pools of paint are made in the twentieth century spirit (tradition) of non-art objects as art but they appear to have little to do with the work of Judd, Nauman or Flavin let alone Duchamp. Modernism is alive and well but these paintings do not set out to challenge history, tradition, art or painting; rather they seem to set out to reaffirm these things. There is no sense of irony or satire in these works, only a simple, sincere belief in the potential of painting as a medium and the potency of a pictorial

imagination. Are these works a new response to an old enquiry or simply a delight in the self-consciousness of art and the demands that art makes upon an interested spectator?

The simplicity of the process involved makes all attempts at deconstruction seem futile and redundant. There is paradox here. Nature, through viscosity, surface tension and gravity, is used to confirm the social standing of the art object. Does the beauty of the meniscus, taken out of context, reveal the refinement of a human mind?

Further paradox exists in the way that the paintings consistently affirm that they are objects. The flatness of the painting is affirmed by the *bas-relief* of the pools of paint. The thinness of the canvas is denied by the thickness of the support. All this should be ironic but it isn't. Even the use of white as a vehicle for revealing the form of the meniscus undermines its own function: producing an illusive and ephemeral effect, especially when it is white against white. Other colours would be more assertive of the form.

What of the structures? If these pools were natural, it would be the placing that would seem awkward and unnatural. They are where they are but where are they? The transition from the horizontal to the vertical undermines all attempts to rationalise: presents a form without a purpose, an effect without a cause. Whatever mechanism brings these placings about, it is one with

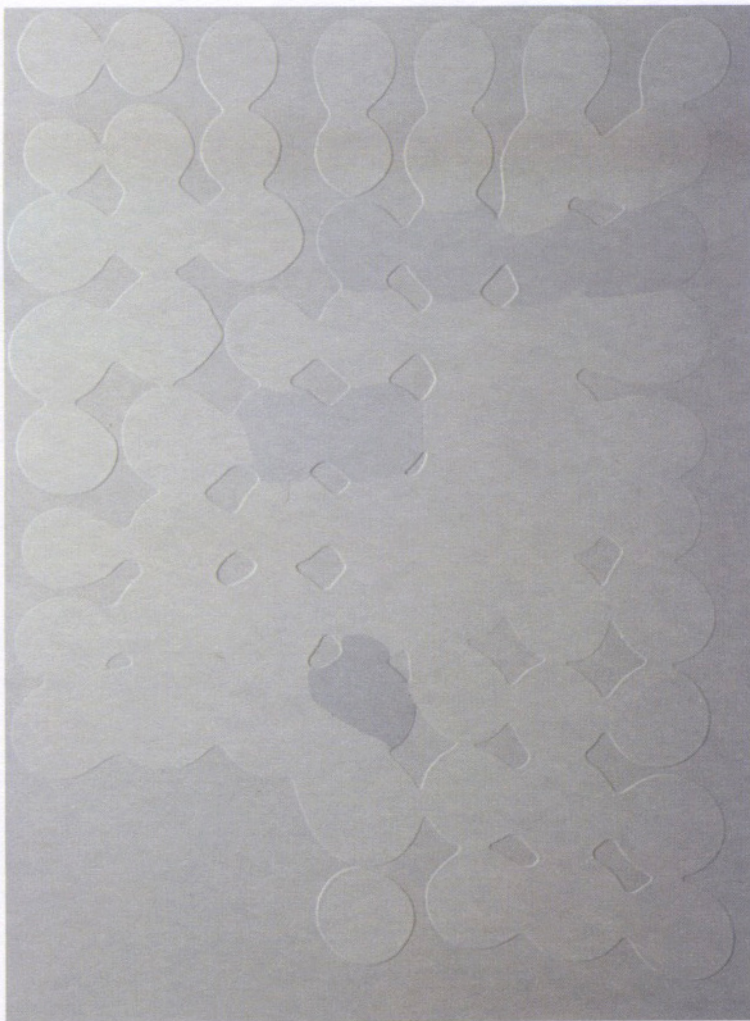


*Repetitions / 2000*  
acrylic on canvas  
109 x 81cm

very forgiving tolerances: such as to imply a lack of determinism.

Are these works forms where nothing can be pictured? Certain viscosities and certain volumes occupy determined spaces through the laws of nature. Can these paintings be territorial disputes? The ancient Chinese game of Go? Certain factions keep to themselves, maintain their own integrity,

others embrace, if they are both white, but invade and occupy when their colours are different. Perhaps there is a commentary on creativity in this process of division: objects are differentiated from one another, they occupy available space and look to be intent on occupying more? A schematic of a microcosmic process where amoebic forms divide and subdivide ad infinitum: exposing the appalling banality of any attempt to find



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meaning in life itself. These objects exist only to replicate, to fill up emptiness. Individuality is here subsumed in the generic. In either case, it's war. But these works appear to advance the cause of peace. Perhaps it is this illusive property that is sought? The metaphysics of blind faith when all attempts to fix things in their place by other means have failed. These works are finite when the mind is not. As

objects they assert themselves: display a natural beauty presented out of context but infected by the personal aesthetic of the artist. Perhaps there is a poetry in these pools and the white (light of the moon) that Lorca would recognise. In this sensate display, the eye is seduced and the mind encouraged to contemplate.

**Laurence Preece**, January 2001