

Press release

Oliver Beer

Resonance Paintings—Blue Notes

28 January—18 March 2023
Opening Saturday 28 January 2023, 11am—1pm

Thaddaeus Ropac
Salzburg Villa Kast
Mirabellplatz 2, 5020 Salzburg



Oliver Beer, *Resonance Painting (Ombra Felice)*, 2022. Pigment on canvas. 90 x 90 cm (35.43 x 35.43 in).

The exhibition *Blue Notes* presents new works from Oliver Beer's acclaimed *Resonance Paintings* series, the culmination of a decade-long exploration of sound. This most recent body of paintings expresses what the artist calls 'the intrinsic relationship between physical form and musical harmony'.

By placing a loudspeaker beneath a horizontally-oriented canvas that has been scattered with very fine, dry pigment, Beer reveals the forms of musical

harmonies. These appear on the surface of the canvas in undulating, geometric patterns of blue and white as the vibrations of the sound waves in the air move the pigment: 'The pigment is so fine that it moves with the air and takes on the shape of the sound. And so, it lets me paint with music. I can use sound as my paintbrush.'

This series has its origins in his early experiments from 2009, when he first placed a handful of flour on

a vibrating Irish drum and discovered the patterns formed by sound waves. 'When I'm composing the pictures, you can see the harmony appear out of thin air, and then you very quickly learn how to create specific shapes and gestures from the musical harmonies,' explains the artist. 'I've always perceived the shape of sound and the relationship between visual forms and music – and with this body of work I've been able to deepen this experience, to make music visible and paint with sound.'

The blue colour of the works, also referenced in the title of the exhibition, was inspired by a blue and white vessel that the artist found on a shelf in his grandmother's house. Intrigued, the artist followed the history of cobalt oxide blue, discovering its pervasive past: 'It's so universal, you find this blue and white in almost every single country around the world, as if the colour were itself contagiously appealing. I followed the journey of that colour on my grandmother's shelf all the way back through commercial and colonial routes, through the Portuguese, Dutch, British empires; through Japan, Korea and China, and ultimately back to Iran where it was first invented. Following the journey of colour tells a story of commerce and colonialism, as well as cultural variation and reinterpretation of that colour.'



Oliver Beer, *Resonance Painting (You're too Precious)*, 2022. Pigment on canvas.
90 x 90 cm (35.43 x 35.43 in).



Oliver Beer, *Resonance Painting (Venus as a Boy)*, 2022.
Pigment on canvas.
50 x 35 cm (19.69 x 13.78 in).

All works in the exhibition were made with the same blue pigment and using only sound to touch the canvas. Beer's diverse paintings elicit a myriad of different subtle shades. They also reveal a variety of patterns and shapes generated by the sound waves, that behave very differently according to the harmonies that Beer works with, at times taking on almost figurative forms.

With the *Resonance Paintings* series, Beer works as a painter with musical geometries to create dense and complex layered works that draw inspiration from personal memories, as well as they reference historical narratives, the history of music and the legacies of minimal, conceptual and abstract painting.

I knew I was making the show for Salzburg, which is this incredible musical city. It's a city that plays an important role in the genealogy of contemporary music. I mean that certain musical ideas born in Salzburg have become almost ubiquitous as they have evolved through their influence and variations

over the decades and centuries. This idea of variation and evolution in music is also incredibly important in visual art. And that's really what this show is like: an attempt to explore variation at the meeting point of visual art and music. I hope that when people see the paintings, they will feel the music that's made them.—Oliver Beer



The artist in Seoul Photo: CHAHYEKYUNG

About the artist

Oliver Beer (b. 1985, lives and works in London and Paris) trained in musical composition before reading Fine Art at the Ruskin School of Art, University of Oxford, and film theory at the Sorbonne, Paris. He creates sculptures, installations, videos and immersive live performances that reveal the hidden properties of objects, bodies and architectural sites. Drawing on his musical training, his social and familial relationships often become the blueprint for multi-disciplinary works that engage with intimate and universal concerns, such as the transmission of musical memories and the personal and cultural meanings invested in the things we possess. For his *Resonance Project*, vocal performances stimulate the natural harmonics of built structures, generating a disarmingly visceral relationship between the

audience and interior space. In turn, by slicing and reassembling common objects to construct new meanings and forms, Beer's sculptural practice dissects the material world and the traces we leave on it.

Beer's work has been the subject of many solo and group exhibitions, notably at Met Breuer, Metropolitan Museum of Art and MoMA PS1, New York; Centre Pompidou, Opéra Garnier, Fondation Louis Vuitton, Palais de Tokyo and Chateau of Versailles, Paris; the Musée d'Art Contemporain, Lyon; Ikon Gallery, Birmingham; WIELS, Brussels and the Sydney, Istanbul and Venice biennales. Beer was included in the British Art Show 9 and has also held residencies at the Palais de Tokyo, the Watermill Centre, Sydney Opera House and the Fondation Hermès.



Oliver Beer, *Resonance Painting (And Your Bird Can Sing)*, 2022. Pigment on canvas. 50 x 35 cm (19.69 x 13.78 in).

For any enquiries:

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