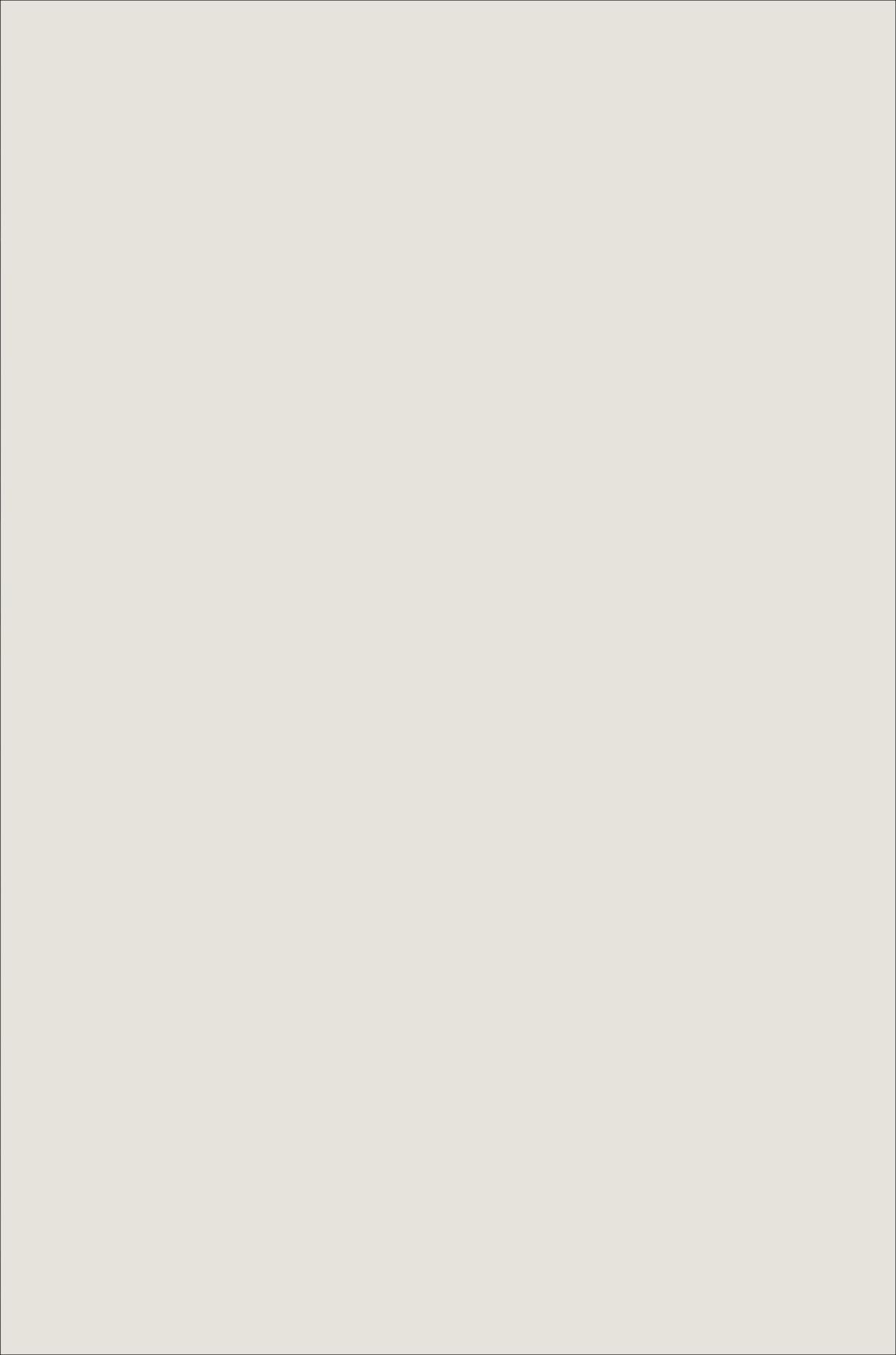




JASON

BROOKS

ORIGINS



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Marlborough
Contemporary



Origin IV, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 125 x 176 cm

O R I G I N

M I C H A E L B R A C E W E L L

Let us suppose that we are visiting an exhibition of work by this artist. All we know about him is his name and what we see. We have entered the gallery and seen two sculptures—figurines or statuettes; one strangely Gothic, yet skewed into the contemporary, disquieting, the other surrealistically Classical, bringing to mind the myths surrounding metamorphosis, science fiction, a curious psycho-sexual masque. And then we turn, and we are looking directly into the inscrutable gaze of a modern-looking young woman. Somehow the gravitational field created by this (imagined) selection of works, all by Brooks, begins to deepen and thicken with strangeness and ambiguity. A cluster of transmissions—sex loudest, perhaps, but the frequencies of this art-making seem to chop and change like the lights flickering on a remote rural circuit.

Turn again, and the first sight of an *Origin* painting (in landscape format) declaims itself: a seeming molten, liquefying, congealing, drooling, dripping, flaring and trailing chaos of ridges and deltas and novas and marbled accretions of alternately Stygian and industrially-bright multi-coloured paints.

What first? The sensory impact is visceral and immediate. Colour becomes sensually tactile, as though inviting touch—for the fingers to luxuriate in the oozing mass, as much as the eye delights in the ripples and swirls and pendulous tongues and comet-trails of paint. All seems to proclaim movement—a happiness explosion, an orgiastic freak-out, a grand liberation.... In *Origin I*, for example, entering top left, a livid trail, widening and thickening and glistening to descend like a black relief map of a mountain range, down the centre of the painting. Here it seems as though the children's party of riotous colour has suddenly been taken up by the adults, with more determined, more dissolute intention. We may have the impression of a gouging, erupting, climactic opening up.... To either side the liquid colours seem to mimic, first, psychedelic oil-on-water light shows, and then a map of the Aegean Sea as seen from the edge of space. Flares and tributaries branch off and away....

Standing back, their gaze somehow drawn to focus on this central, gleaming descent of blackness, the viewer becomes aware (if they weren't already) of two lines, diagonally descending from left and right towards this dark centre of the painting. Look longer at the globular, dripping smears of colour that descend from these lines, and their further shape and solidity appears to become increasingly legible. Irrepressibly, the painting seems more sexual than sensual, insinuating primal desire as much as primal chaos.

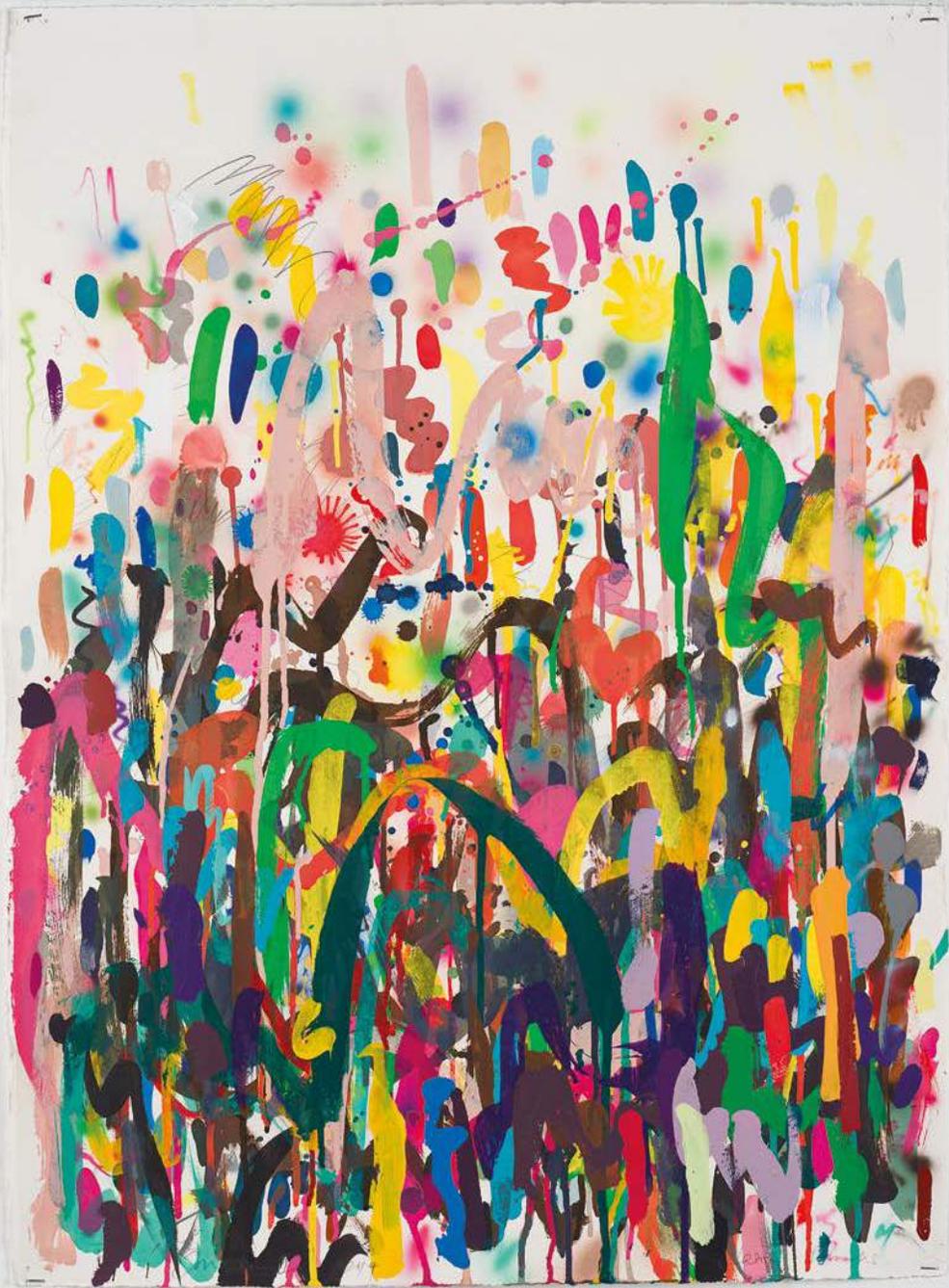
Returning to this imagined exhibition, having added *Origin I* to the experience of Brooks' work, a viewer might first realise the manner in which the artist appears to be largely indifferent, conceptually, to the distinctions between abstraction and figuration. His motives seem not to be shaped by either representation or the deconstruction of representation. Rather, his work might resemble

the object-residue of an addiction to process, in which process conflates desire, satiation, surface, tension, release and texture.

In its seeming—perhaps imagined, possibly intended—intimation of raw sexual and libidinal energy, this series of *Origin* paintings might be descended from Courbet's notorious painting *The Origins of the World*, 1866, in which a woman's parted legs and explicitly revealed genitalia are depicted in a manner which seems crypto-mystical, celebratory, pornographic, curious, mesmerised and imbued with some strange mix of lust and faint repulsion. As potential descendants of Courbet's painting, by contrast this series might seem to come from a colder, faster and far more impersonal age.

But are these romantic paintings? Positing pure abstraction, yet seemingly holding back from declaring an allegiance to any particular or distinct aesthetic or ideological mannerism, they first confound Romanticism in its erotic (classical) form, and then become colder and stranger. Like other excursions made by Brooks into abstraction—or representations of abstraction—there seems on further speculation to be a sense in which these paintings steer a steady course between nihilism and anarchy. For example, consider first the negation of subject; second, the impossibility of allowing the gaze to rest with any certainty on a particular point of focus; third, the illusion of surface and fourth, the impossibility of projecting any 'meaning' onto these works, save for an acknowledgement of sensory stimulus and interpretive provocation. In short, the *Origin* paintings appear to owe no allegiance to any cause save stimulation—and therein, perhaps, lies their 'point'.

There is a mysterious or enigmatic quality to this artist's work. The sense of image selection seems at once profound and arbitrary—almost as though 'subject' was a means of enabling him to carry out some activity, the alibis for which are painting, drawing and conceptualising. This mystery has a coldness at its core and a certain brutality or ruthlessness. Brooks appears to refract his selected subjects through an art-making process that is as indifferent to their 'identity' (philosophical or material) as it is committed to its own undeclared but deeply felt intentions. These intentions being...?



O R I G I N I

Origin I (Test), 2015, 76.4 × 57.5 cm, acrylic and graphite on paper



Origin I (detail), 2013, acrylic on canvas, 125 x 176 cm



Origin I, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 125 x 176 cm



O R I G I N I I

Origin II (Test), 2015, 76.4 x 57.5 cm, acrylic and graphite on paper



Origin II, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 125 x 176 cm



Origin II (detail), 2015, acrylic on canvas, 125 x 176 cm



O R I G I N I I I

Origin III (Test), 2015, 76.4 x 57.5 cm, acrylic and graphite on paper



Origin III, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 125 × 176 cm



O R I G I N I V

Origin IV (Test), 2015, 76.4 x 57.5 cm, acrylic and graphite on paper



Origin IV (detail), 2015, acrylic on canvas, 125 x 176 cm



Origin IV, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 125 × 176 cm



O R I G I N V

Origin V (Test), 2015, 76.4 × 57.5 cm, acrylic and graphite on paper



Origin V, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 125 x 176 cm

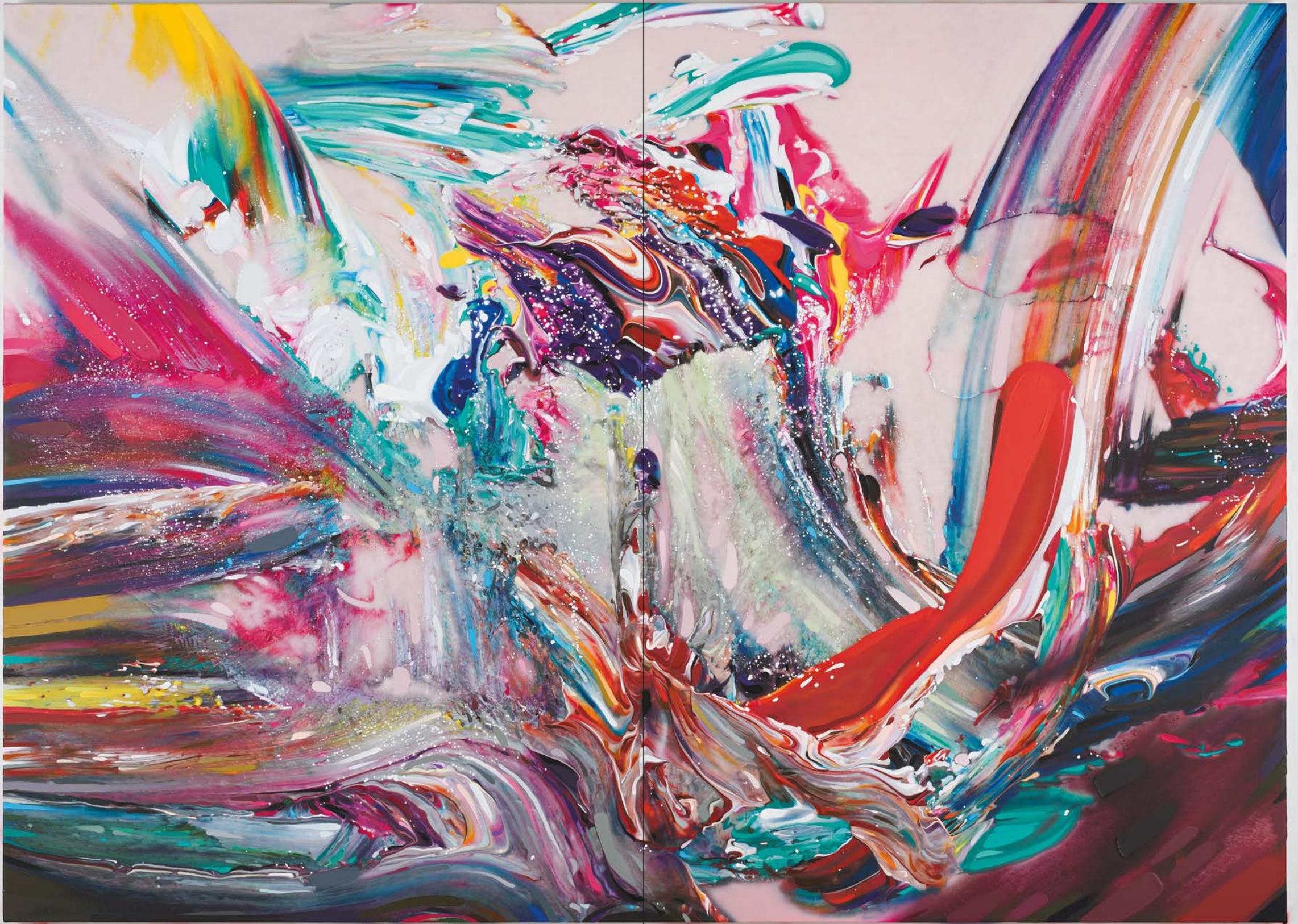


Origin V (detail), 2015, acrylic on canvas, 125 x 176 cm

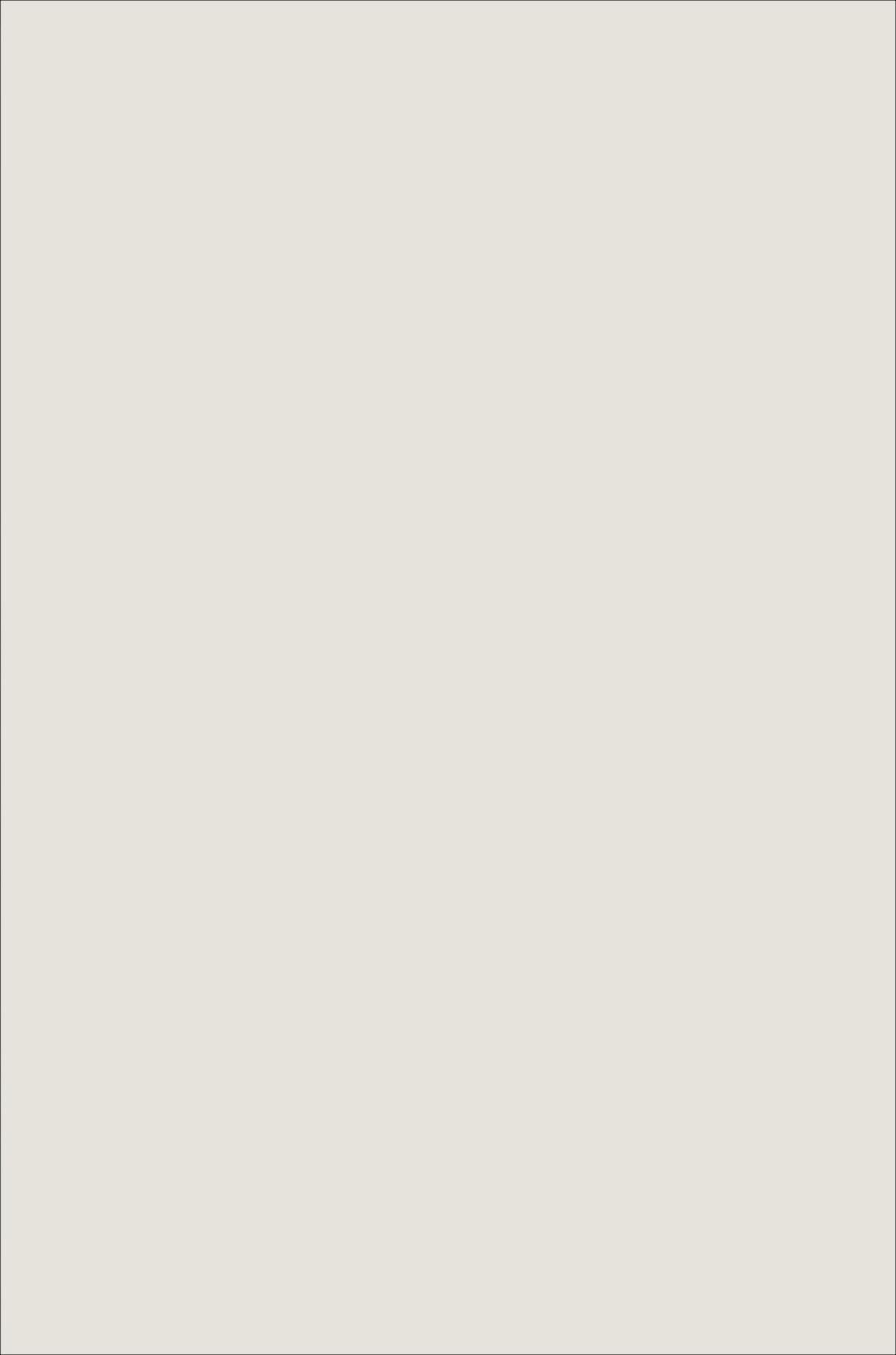


O R I G I N V I

Origin VI (Test), 2015, 76.4 x 57.5 cm, acrylic and graphite on paper



Origin VI, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 125 × 176 cm





Studio view. Origin VII and Origin VIII in progress

Jason Brooks

Born

1968, Rotherham, England

Lives and works

London

Education

1991–92 MA Fine Art, Chelsea College of Art & Design, London

1988–91 BA Fine Art, Cheltenham & Gloucester College of Art & Design, Cheltenham

1987–88 Goldsmiths College, London

Solo Exhibitions

- 2015 Origins, Marlborough Contemporary, London
- 2013 Ultra Flesh, Marlborough Contemporary, London
- 2008 National Portrait Gallery, London
- 2006 Stellan Holm Gallery, New York
- 2005 Auto, Max Wigram Gallery, London
- 2002 Archimede Staffolini Gallery, Nicosia
- 2001 Harewood House, Harewood, Leeds
- 2000 Entwistle, London
- 1998 Entwistle, London

Group Exhibitions

- 2015 I never thought I'd see you again: Painting History, Marlborough Contemporary, London
- 2012–13 Beyond Reality, British Painting Today, Galerie Rudofinum, Prague
- 2011 Do You Believe?, 3812 Contemporary Art Projects, Hong Kong
- 2010 Straw Dogs, Spring Projects, London
TATTOO, The LGBT Community Center, New York
Hyping the Real, Stephane Simoens Contemporary Fine Art, Knokke, Belgium
- 2009 Capturing Claudia, Colnaghi Gallery, London
40 Artists, 80 Drawings, The Drawing Gallery, Powys
- 2008 Unforgiven, Stellan Holm Gallery, New York
Formula One Project, Renault/ING, Monaco & London
Fresh Eyes, ING Headquarters, London
George Stubbs, Leeds City Art Gallery, Leeds *
Larger Than Life, Stellan Holm Gallery, New York
- 2007 Timer, Triennale Bovisa, Milan
- 2006 Heads, Flowers East, London & Harewood House, Harewood, Leeds
Darkness Visible, Ferens Art Gallery, Hull & Southampton City Art Gallery
Drawing Breath, The Gallery at Wimbledon College of Art, London
- 2005 Appearance, Whitewall Waterfront, Leeds *
ID: Recent Purchases on the Theme of Identity Made through the Contemporary Art Society's Special Collection Scheme, Ferens Art Gallery, Hull
- 2004 John Moores 23, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool *
Blow Up!, St Paul's Gallery, Birmingham, UK *
- 2003 Yes! I am a long way from home, The Nunnery, London and UK tour *
- 2002 Babel 2002, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul *
- 2001 I am a Camera, The Saatchi Gallery, London *
- 2000 Psycho Some, Lombard Fried, New York
No FuN Without U: The Art of Factual Nonsense, Jeremy Cooper, London *

- 1999 Painting Lab, Entwistle, London *
The NatWest Art Prize 1999, Lothbury Gallery, London *
The Flower Show, Harewood House, Harewood, Leeds
John Moores 21, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool *
Fresh Paint, Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow National Dependency, Jerwood Gallery, London
- 1998 New Neurotic Realism, The Saatchi Gallery, London *
Postcards on Photography, Cambridge Darkroom, Cambridge and UK tour *
Near, Sharjah Art Museum, Sharjah *
- 1997 Likeness: Representing Sexualities, Manchester City Art Gallery, Manchester
John Moores 20, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool *
- 1996 Trojan, Paton Gallery, London *
- 1995 Fellows' Show, Pittville Gallery, Cheltenham
- 1994 Pet Show, 63 Union Street, London & UK Masks, Soho Gallery, London
BT Commission, Waterloo Station, London
- 1993 To Boldly Go..., Cubitt Gallery, London
BT New Contemporaries, Serpentine Gallery, London and UK tour *
- 1992 Abstractions from the Domestic Suburb Scene (SIN), Benjamin Rhodes Gallery, London

* Catalogue published

Awards/Residencies

- 1999 The NatWest Art Prize (winner)
- 1997 John Moores Painting Prize (joint-winner)
- 1994 British Telecom, London (residency)
- 1990 British School, Rome (residency)

Collections

- ABN AMRO, London
- The Berardo Collection, Museum of Modern Art, Lisbon
- Brandes Family Collection, Tel Aviv
- British Telecom, London
- Cheltenham and Gloucester Building Society, Cheltenham
- Cohen Collection, Cheshire
- Coopers & Lybrand, London
- Cranford Collection, London
- Dakis Joannou/Deste Foundation Collection, Athens
- Harewood House, Harewood, Leeds
- James Moores Collection, Liverpool
- JPMorgan Chase Art Collection, London
- Lenhardt Collection, Arizona
- National Portrait Gallery, London
- Neuberger Berman, New York
- Pavlina Paraskevaidou Collection
- The Saatchi Gallery, London
- The Speyer Collection, New York
- Swagemakers Collection, Netherlands
- Unilever, London
- Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool
- William Morris Agency, Los Angeles

Jason Brooks
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10 June – 18 July 2015

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