

CHARLOTTE JACKSON FINE ART PRESENTS:

DAVID SIMPSON

Gold Variations
Interference Paintings



Dec 16-Jan 16, 2011

The first glance is gold: Straw gold, rose gold, copper gold, the white gold that almost becomes platinum and the dark gold that almost becomes brass. But these are David Simpson paintings, so that first glance will quickly shimmer and shift across the spectrum to pewter-violet, ice-blue, to petal pink, or even earthy beige. And then back again, with a rake of light across their seemingly seamless surfaces, that trails the whole range of color in its wake.

David Simpson is a master of interference, and with his latest show, *Gold Variations / Interference Paintings*, offers us some beautiful and radical examples of his unique techniques. Those who are familiar with Simpson's work will know the story behind their shocking color-shifts. Simpson uses special interference paints, made of micro-particles coated with titanium oxide, or mica. The paint is only available in six pigments, so the endless variations of color have to do with Simpson's meticulous experimentation and with his rigorous skill and application techniques, which allow the flecks of mica to be used to best advantage. The surfaces must be very carefully constructed, canvases are stretched taut as possible, and the surface is treated with layers of gesso sanded to a velvet finish. The interference paint is then layered and removed, layered and removed. A single painting might have as many as thirty coats.

In a way Simpson's paintings transcend the very notion of paintings, because they transcend pigment. These paintings work with the medium of light itself to create color. The particles of mica act as tiny mirrors, reflecting light back and forth off of each other in ever more complicated patterns. The light waves, rebounding, joining, shift the spectrum of color as the viewer moves around the painting or as the light moves across its surface.

These paintings are studies in indeterminacy and chance-the angles at which those microscopic particles fall within the matrix of the painting's surface can only be controlled up to a point, and the way that the light will bounce and refract within the multiple layers cannot be predicted. It is easy to see Simpson's lifelong fascination with cosmology and science here. Simpson is almost as likely to talk to you about string theory or fractals as about Rothko or Rococo.

Simpson's long term interest in music is evident in the exhibition's title, *Gold Variations / Interference Paintings*, the aptness of which goes beyond the pun linking it to Bach's *Goldberg Variations*. Bach's famous, complex piece is comprised of thirty variations of the main theme, using not its melody but its bass line. It is easy to see how Simpson's endless variations, created from a "bass line" of only six pigments, share a similar sense of both rigor and play with Bach's masterpiece. But the experience of the pieces themselves have a deeper tie to music. As Simpson says, "The interference paintings, I hope, might create moods something like music does. In groups of three or more, they do seem to me to exist in time as does music. In fact, so does the color shift..." which has its own rhythms. Simpson continues, "Sometimes the shift is subtle, sometimes dramatic-creating different moods, like loud or softer passages in music."

But, as always, the viewer will in some way forget all of this: Skills, techniques, theories of light and color, urgent questions of contemporary art, the physics of indeterminacy and even music theory will all fade to the background. The viewer, entirely caught up in the experience of light and color that these paintings offer, will be absorbed in trying to discover their every nuance. Copper gold will flash and fade to mute ochre, and then transform, inexplicably, to sky blue and then, in a shimmer, turn back into gold. And that is pure alchemy.













Gold Variations #1-#5, 2011
Acrylic on canvas (interference pigment)
24 x 16 inches
DS147



Gold Variations #1-#5, 2011 (detail view)



The Power Behind The Throne, 2011
Acrylic on Canvas (interference pigment)
48 x 48 inches
DS175



Lucky Day, 2011
Acrylic on Canvas (interference pigment)
60 x 60 inches
DS177



Cherubim, 2011
Acrylic on Canvas (interference pigment)
60 x 60 inches
DS178



Copper Gold, 2011
Acrylic on Canvas (interference pigment)
60 x 60 inches
DS179



Foil, 2011
Acrylic on Canvas (interference pigment)
34 x 34 inches
DS164



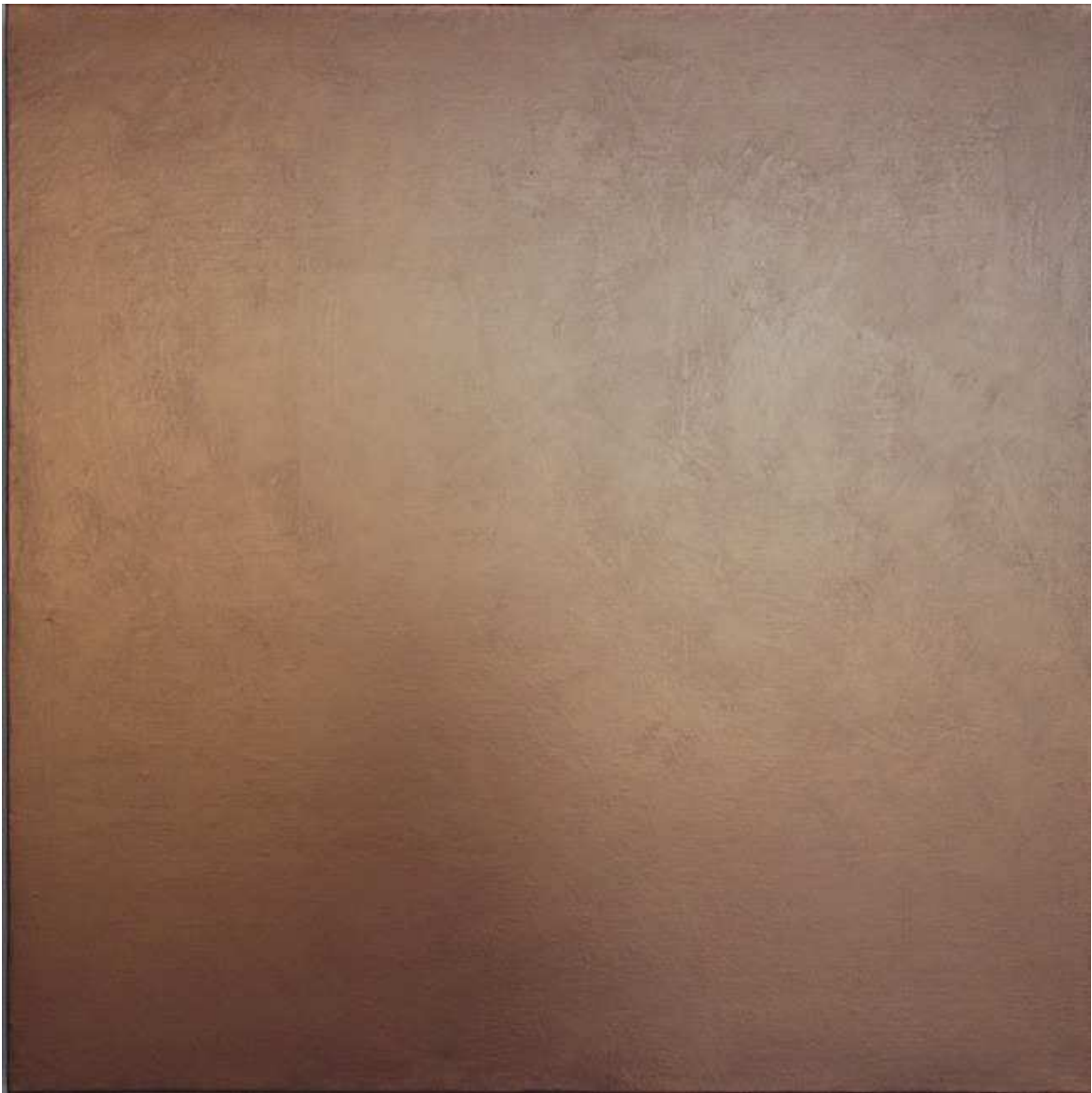
Dream Land, 2011
Acrylic on Canvas (interference pigment)
34 x 34 inches
DS165



Lady Luck, 2011
Acrylic on Canvas (interference pigment)
34 x 34 inches
DS166



Pennies, 2011
Acrylic on Canvas (interference pigment)
34 x 34 inches
DS167



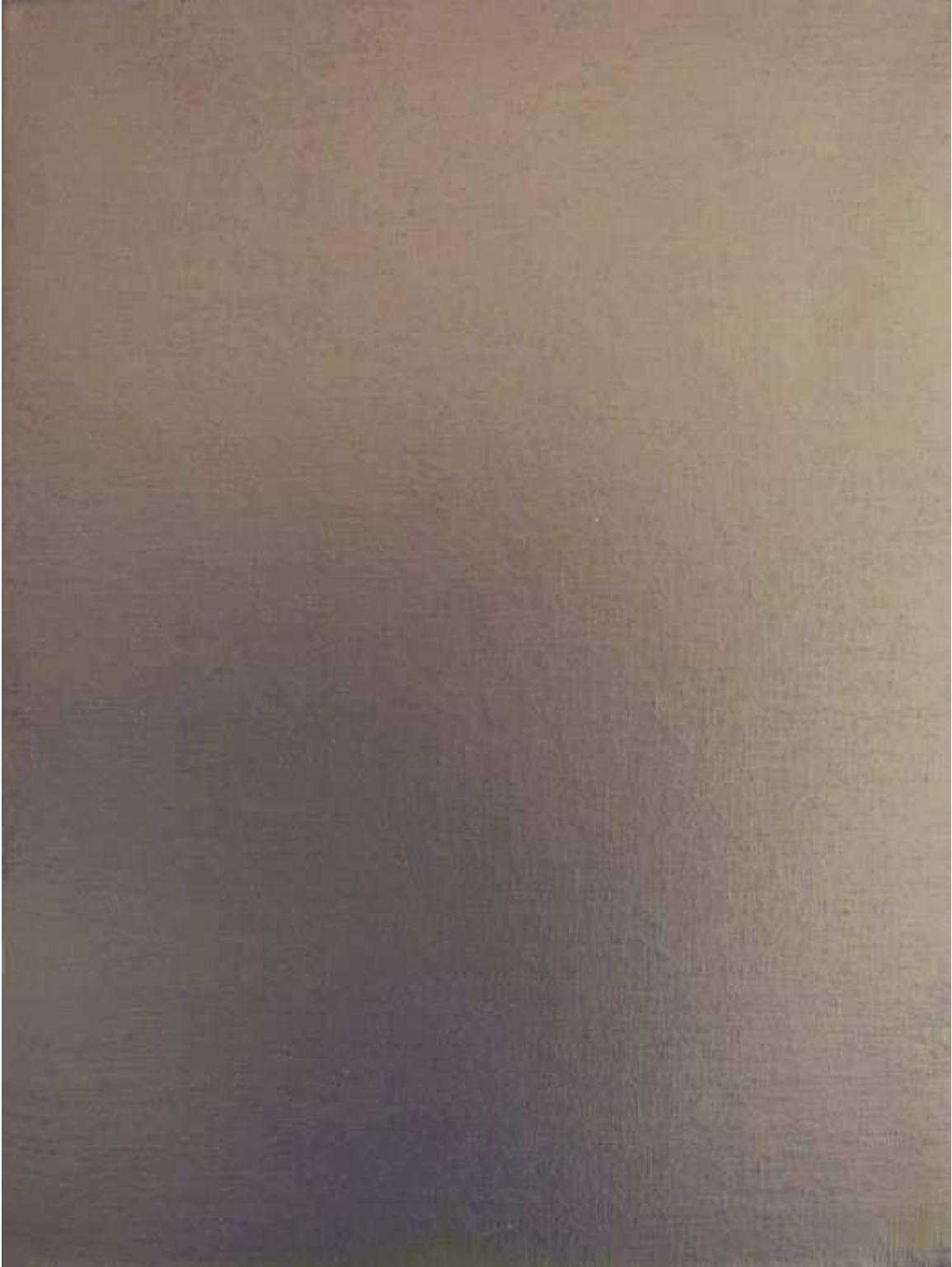
Rose Gold, 2011
Acrylic on Canvas (interference pigment)
34 x 34 inches
DS168



Gold Field, 2011
Acrylic on Canvas (interference pigment)
34 x 34 inches
DS169



Lucky Lady, 2011
Acrylic on Canvas (interference pigment)
48 x 48 inches
DS173



Alchemical Antithesis 1, 2011
Acrylic on canvas (interference pigment)
12 x 16 inches
DS160



Alchemical Antithesis 3, 2011
Acrylic on canvas (interference pigment)
12 x 16 inches DS162



Alchemical Antithesis 4, 2011
Acrylic on Canvas (interference pigment)
12 x 16 inches DS163



Alchemical Antithesis 2, 2011
Acrylic on canvas (interference pigment)
12 x 16 inches DS161

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Charlotte Jackson Fine Art, Inc.

In the Railyard at:

554 S. Guadalupe, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

Telephone: 505.989.8688 Fax: 505.989.9898

cjfa@charlottejackson.com - www.charlottejackson.com