



## HOUSTON

### Gary Lang: "WANDERWONDER" at McClain Gallery

Gary Lang's tondos vibrate with optical intensity. They are powerful, hypnotic, exuberant and psychedelic. Lang is a superb colorist who has been creating these circular paintings for nearly 30 years. He attributes his color choices and combinations completely to chance, insisting that they are largely unplanned beyond a preliminary color palette. Lang prefers, however, to speak about where the act of creating these paintings takes him. The title refers to an approach to painting that is not bound by a predetermined result but "wanders" wherever the colors take him. The repetition of applying circular stripes of paint by hand frees him from anxiety. While working, he exists purely in the instant, describing the experience as an "extended trance" during which he feels totally alive. "Painting is a way of unraveling the mystery of self," Lang says. "Through painting, you draw yourself into the moment."

When one walks into McClain Gallery filled with nine of Lang's new targets (all but two are from 2016), the effect is both breathtaking and beautiful. The placement of colors—light beside dark, warm against cool, complementary next to primary—causes these concentric rings to visually protrude from the surface one moment and recede deeply behind the picture plane the next. Lang paints them by hand, but he does affix the canvases to large metal turntables mounted on the wall in his Southern

California studio. That way, he can slowly turn them as he paints the rings of color. He gave up taping very early on, because he found the hand-painted lines to be more humanistic.

Lang prefers the circle because it is a perfect form, with no top, bottom or sides and no suggestion of landscape. The circle paintings emit spiritual energy, and Lang describes them as "tools for connecting to the life force." They are paradoxically simple yet complex, direct but mysterious, full of both grace and conflict. They are equitable and democratic, transcending language, religion, race and culture. Universally accessible, they are devices that place the viewer squarely in the moment and are best experienced on a purely sensual level.

—DONNA TENNANT

"BLUELIGHTTHREE," 2015, Gary Lang  
ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 72" DIAMETER  
PHOTO: COURTESY McCLAIN GALLERY