

**Shaun McDowell**

*Opera in nine orbits*

11 April – 18 May 2024

*Vedrò con mio diletto  
L'alma dell'alma mia  
dell'alma mia  
Il core del mio cor  
Pien di contento  
Pien di contento*

*What pleasure it will give me  
to see the soul of my soul  
of my soul  
The heart of my heart  
filled with happiness  
filled with happiness*

– Antoni Vivaldi

Shaun McDowell makes striking paintings abundant in movement, drama, texture and harmonies. Working directly from the perceptible world, his apparently abstract pictures are the tangible expression of acute inner feelings, but charged with the visual overload of the surrounding world where nothing is fixed.

*Opera in nine orbits* is McDowell's first show at the Gallery since moving to the rolling hills of Torri in Sabina, Italy, and his first presentation of new work in six years. The exhibition presents a cycle of nine new paintings born from this setting in the natural landscape and historical setting of the Sabine region, an agricultural landscape of olive groves and woodland in the region of Latium. Laced through the works are the artistic, architectural, musical and environmental motifs of the Roman countryside.

Literally translating to “work”, the word *opera* is a craft of translation: the arrangement and relation of distinct elements to create something capable of transcendentally affecting the senses. The paintings in *Opera in nine orbits* are not primarily made with a brush: smooth areas of just-present colour are rendered by the rubbing, stubbing, smearing and spreading of paint across the board by hand; heavier built-up passages of paint are punctuated with elegant, staccato marks: using an economy of line and movement, the paintings synthesise and symbiose not unlike the crescendos and diminuendos they evoke.

Each painting in the exhibition is executed on a hand-profiled elliptical panel – a deceiving form for human perception, and allusion to ancient Sabine shields adopted by the Romans. The paintings are encased by handmade frames, some water-gilded with gold, pure silver and platinum leaf, and each one an individual orbit containing surface, space and atmosphere to not only see but to feel. The number of works echoes the motif of nine paintings that comprised *Confessions and Love Pictures*, McDowell's first show at the Gallery in 2008.

Shaun McDowell (b. 1981, Sussex, UK) lives and works in Torri in Sabina, IT. Recent exhibitions include *Tree and Leaf*, Hannah Barry Gallery, London, UK (2021); *O Sole Mio*, Parasol Unit, London, UK (2020); *When Net Becomes Form*, Galería Alegria, Barcelona, ES (2020); *ABSINTHE*, Collective Ending, London, UK (2018); *Soirée*, Fiery Friary, London, UK (2018); *You see me like a UFO*, Marcelle Joseph Projects, London UK (2018); *Islands of ours*, Andrews Gallery, Titanic Belfast, Belfast, UK (2017); *Navigator*, Hannah Barry Gallery, London, UK (2016). In Torri in Sabina, he has established the residency programme *Demoni Danzanti*, hosting artists in collaboration with curatorial partners, inviting residents to draw inspiration from the region's rich cultural heritage and the beauty of its natural surroundings. Since its inauguration in 2022, the project has hosted three artists for residencies selected by Marcelle Joseph, Sarah Reynolds, Alex Wellesley Wesley, A.topos Venice and Jon Sharples.