

I love funk and soul based music. I used to have a club in London and this was about when I was about 18. The possibilities when I was growing up in the part of London where I grew up were to be a criminal or were to be a rock star. I thought of a third possibility. I had a big and religious idea about history. The importance of culture, which was profoundly important. I always wanted to do something deeper, and I started out with a very deep interest in rhythm and blues, which is of course the religious music of black people in America. That gradually turned into an interest in painting. I came to painting quite late, although I was always good at it but I came to it seriously late.

Q: Do you do any preparatory works?

No, sometimes I do the watercolours after the paintings, so the paintings are studies for the watercolour. Everything with me is backwards. I did the watercolour for wall of light and wrote underneath it wall of light, in 1984. In 1999, I painted the first painting having forgotten that I had made the watercolour. This is how I work. I am not working with plans. I work out of the kind of repetitive motive obviously as you have seen but it is like it is kind of like a way person who plays blues. Always plays similar but not identical chords, but it always comes out a little different. My area of freedom is the way my relationship is with this, which is open. I have made colours to put on paintings and have spent a long time making it as it takes a long time to mix the colour and I have picked up another one that I have already made and just go and paint with that, after mixing the other. There is no rhyme or reason to it.

Q: How can you get form or structure into a painting if your emotion is so strong or connection to it is so subjective?

This of course is an extremely complicated issue and it brings up the whole history of painting and what has happened to painting. Painting became so subjective that it lost all form and then it was unable to communicate any more. It was just like someone screaming at you. Not making any words. The in and out part is so mysterious, how people are objective and subjective, moment by moment, that really if someone was to be an artist, really they were to have to find some medium that they were to have to find some medium that they were to find some way in which that they can be in and out in that perfectly lines up with what they are and that's what you have to figure out and I think that my relationship to the world is so affectionate that I am not really very interested in invention.

My paintings have changed and I have thought about things that I haven't thought about things that I haven't thought of, not the idea. On the other hand, if you get the artist, I don't want to mention anybody's name as I don't want to be negative about another artist, but let's say that there is an artist whose work is very objective and it's a question of invention, thinking of things, then eventually, this thing becomes empty. One has to find a way to give structure and to release a lot of emotion at the same time and to provoke a lot of powerful emotion at the same time, and this is so difficult to do, and I really think in the end, it is a question of work and authenticity. Art will ultimately find you out and ultimately reveal whether your work is true, maybe not for a long time, but ultimately you will be captured. Sorry not it is a definite answer.

Q: Is it true the way that you paint the stripes is more important than the painting itself?

They are very important to me. The painting at the end must effect me. That is how I judge the painting. I don't judge my painting on whether they are successful as formal compositions because I consider that to be remedial. The process of painting, the moment that one is painting, in a sense with me particularly, is very intense. It is a deeply, emotional moment when I am putting that down, and then the painting must effect me. I must make a bond with it. Then it is finished. Then do I care about it? Not really.

Q: Do you ever have a painting that you think that you went too far with by putting an extra layer of paint on?

Oh, yes. As a friend of mine who I once had an argument with (who has gradually begun to forgive me) said to me, I'm glad to see that you can admit that you can see that you did something wrong! You know when somebody says something like that ten years afterwards, there is a lot of weight on it. I said to him, well actually, my life has been full of mistakes. And that is the answer to the question. I am sure that a lot of times that I did it wrong. I mean I make so many paintings that I must have made it wrong a lot of times, and since I am not working like Mondrian, I am not working towards some kind of irrefutable plane of perfection, there is a lot of wrongness in my paintings. They are all over the place, in fact, I titled a painting that is in a collection in Germany (one that I am actually very proud of) How Not, meaning how not to do it! This is how not to do it. This is a picture of how not.

Q: How do you come to give your paintings their titles?

Let me give you one title. Wall of Light. This deals with the opposition of two very powerful words with the word OF in between. One is Wall which signifies barrier, and one is Light which can signify knowledge, happiness, being able to see and feel and I am juxtaposing those two elements against each other in the ultimate metaphysical hope. Light can transform the wall into a Wall of Light. When I was thinking about that I was also thinking about Monet who painted Rouen cathedral and I think he was trying to make the stone of the cathedral turn into light. So in these wall of light paintings that is what I am trying to do, so in a sense I am trying to make a structure light. But to return to the question earlier which was very provocative, if I simply tried to paint light, very direct, I think it would be impossible, so one needs something to in a sense transform so in that title, lets say before, you would paint this what it is, and you would paint it and try to transform it and change its reality, and by introducing the word wall, I am in a sense replacing the traditional subject object with the idea of the wall structure, that being the wall and then try to change it. So I am only doing what Chardanne did, except it is different. That is just an example of one of my titles.