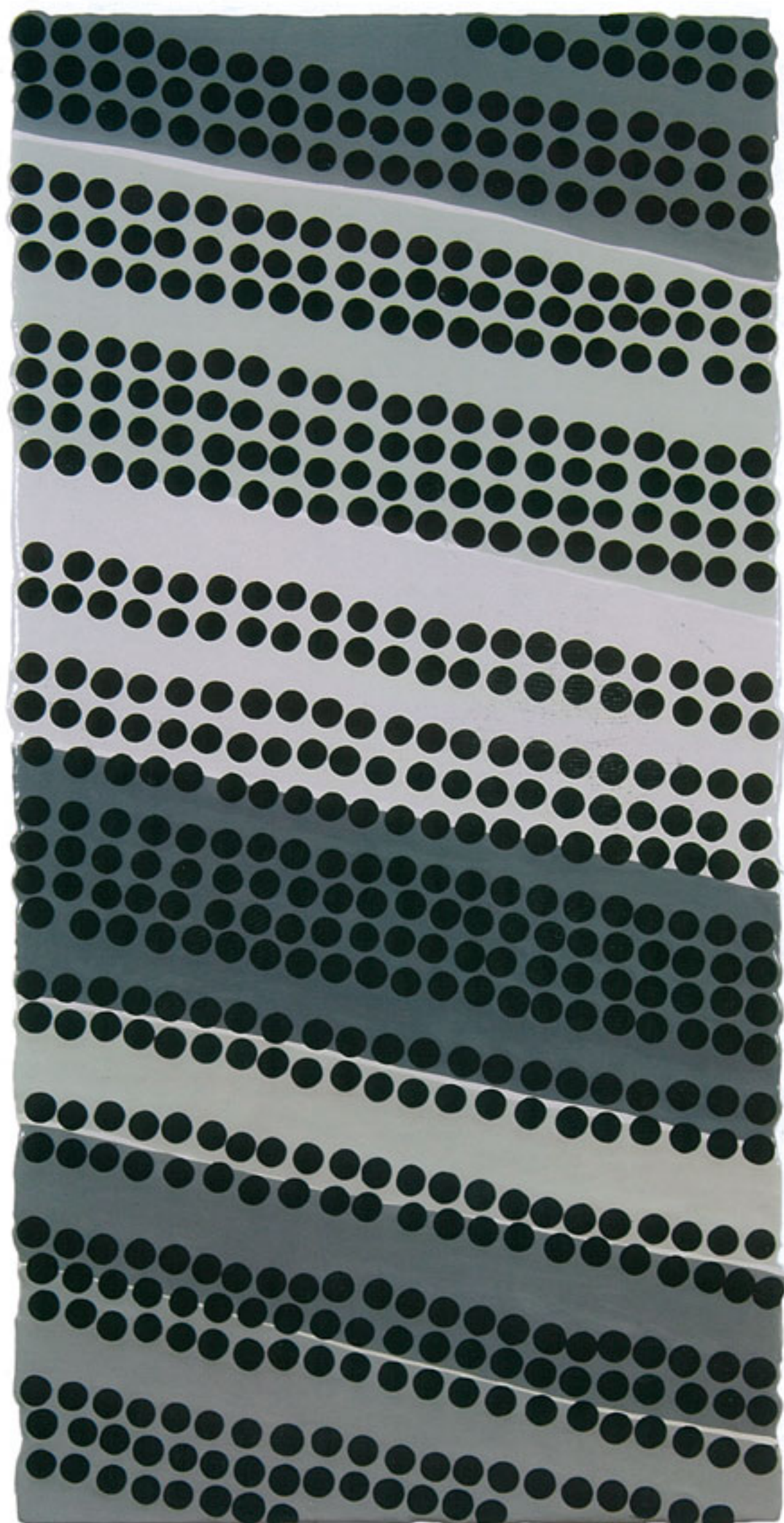
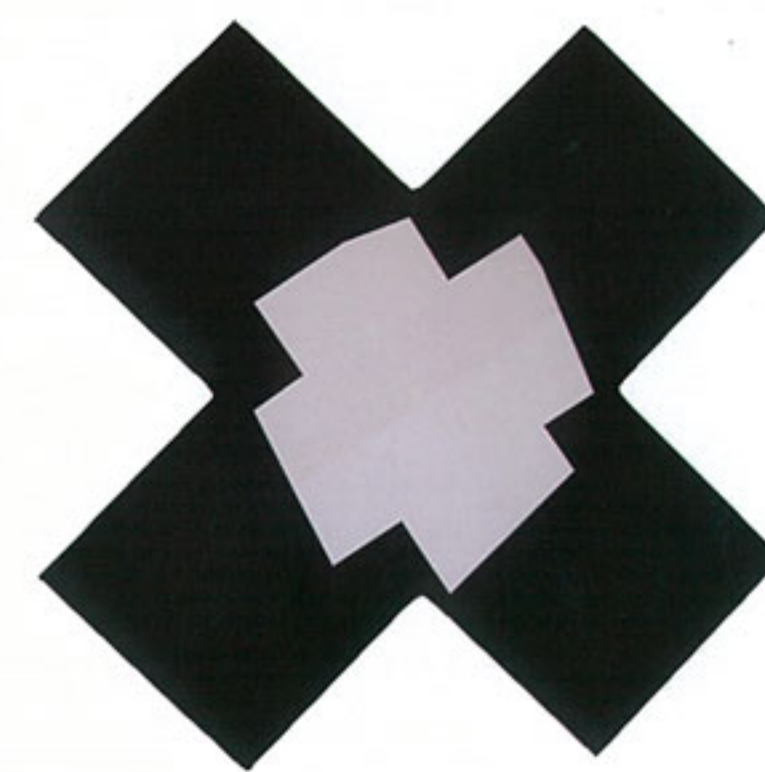


the shape of jazz

tom martinelli / robert melee /
odili donald odita / li-trincere



robert melee



li-trincere

the shape of jazz

Omette Coleman's *The Shape of Jazz to Come*, released in 1959, marks a decisive moment in the history of avant-garde jazz. Forsaking most concepts of traditional harmony, Coleman's music eschewed playing over familiar chord changes, moving instead into a free-associative terrain. Beginning with a brief theme, as in many typical jazz tunes, each song then ventures off into bars of improvisation which sometimes feature several musicians playing simultaneously, and frequently leave the original melodic material far behind. This was music of unparalleled freedom—angular, piercing, discordant, roaming—yet also swinging and often even jocular.

Jazz is so commonly associated with this kind of improvisation that it's easy to ignore the importance of structural elements, even in Coleman's brand of jazz. Interpolation and formal variation of themes, melodies, and chords remain pivotal aspects in all of jazz, including the most freewheeling, squawking-sax variety. Coleman's brash album title could thus be interpreted in another way: after Coleman's own devaluation of chord progressions, jazz musicians would rely on other kinds of structuring devices to give form to their music. A famous example of this restructuring is the extensive use of abstract shapes by composer Anthony Braxton.

Here the relationship between musical and painterly abstraction is implied: Coleman made it explicit by placing a Jackson Pollock painting on the cover of his landmark *Free Jazz* album. This creative correlation of the formal elements of painterly abstraction and the improvisational territory of modal or free jazz remains a vital part of recent abstract painting. **The Shape of Jazz** furthers this connection by presenting four artists whose highly structured work reveals the expressive, suggestive potential of abstract forms.

Odili Donald Odita's paintings—hard-edged and geometric—address the formalist conception of abstraction as a neutral visual language. Undoing age-old desires for formal 'purity', the paintings propose a complex set of references and connections in its place, through visual elements hinting at broader implications and historical concerns. Yet these propositions are achieved precisely through a refined formal vocabulary.

Tom Martinelli combines patterns and modular units with irregular and aleatory applications of paint to work within the structured space of his paintings. This tension between geometric regularity, repetition, and difference gives the paintings an openness and spontaneity even within the controlled visual language (a dialectic that often becomes the painting's content). With an emphasis on the interrelation between surface, color, and edge—hallmarks of abstraction—Martinelli's work also looks to non-Western forms of abstraction.

Robert Melee's bottle cap paintings add a formal disjunction to Minimalism and Op Art. Situated between painting and sculpture, the paintings are fashioned from enamel covered beer bottle caps nailed to wood panels in a grid, and then covered in plaster and high-gloss enamel paint. Part of Melee's larger take on 'high-meets-low' kitsch—which includes photographs, videos, live performances, and sculptures—the paintings put forward a uniquely irreverent version of abstraction—crafted through a rigorous, however playful, sense of form.

Foregoing the traditional picture support, **Li-Trincere's** 'shaped' paintings explore the formal possibilities created by alternative arrangements of pictorial space. In these alternatives, the paintings are analogous to the loss of conventional harmony in jazz as it also ushers in freer shapes and structures. Uncontained within a rectilinear frame, her paintings work off the new geometric relationships afforded by an x-shaped canvas. This allows for the juxtaposition of abutting colors and the activation of the edge as an element in the composition.

Through such varied approaches to abstraction, these artists suggest the expressive capacity of different kinds of structural elements, formal devices, and types of interpolation. Foregoing the academic rigidity of much formalist endeavor, their work is marked by a dynamic energy akin to that underlying Coleman's own watershed excursion into a tonality to come.

João Ribas is an art critic, curator, and editor based in New York.

projects at Clifford Chance

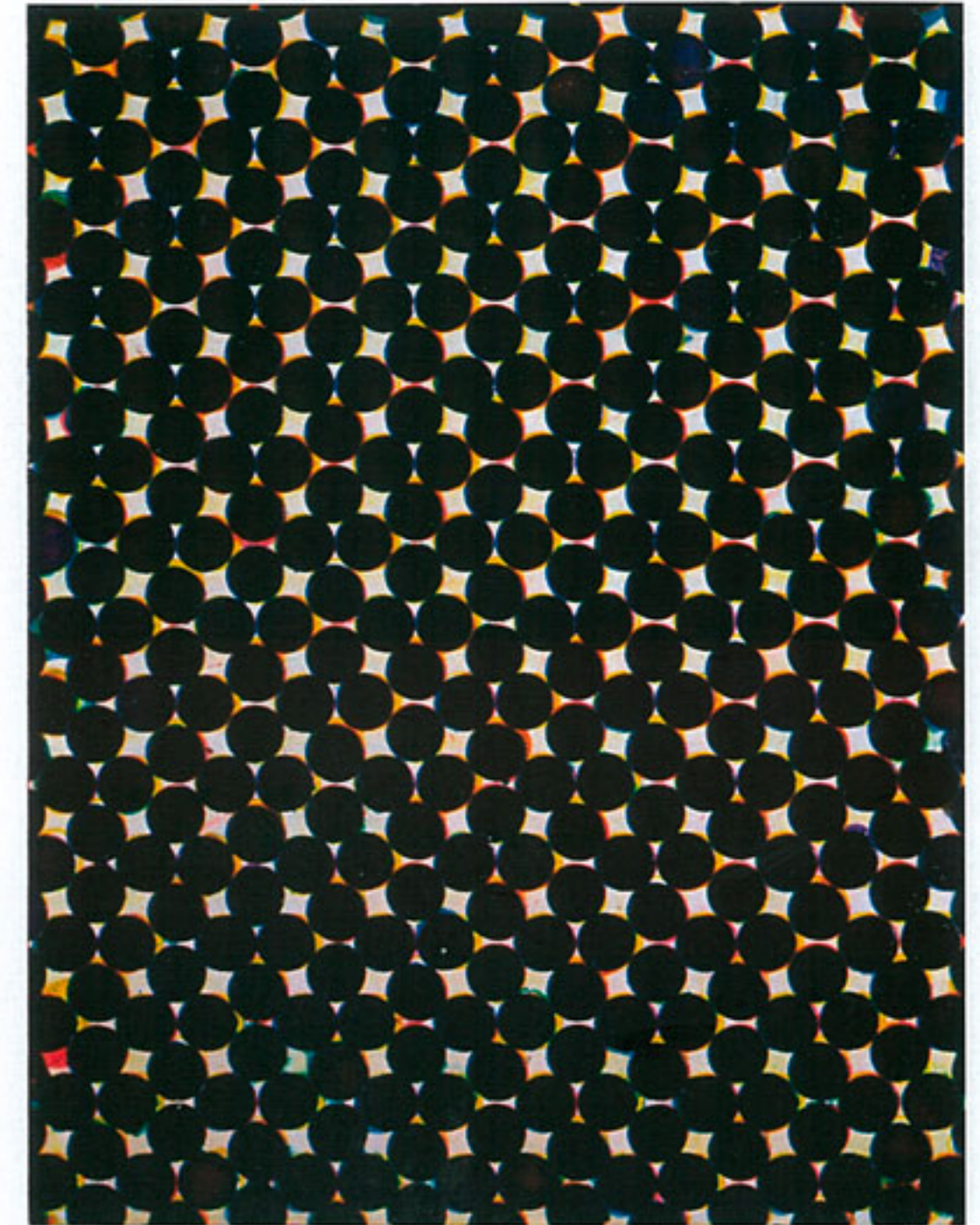
We are pleased to present **The Shape of Jazz**, the thirteenth exhibition in the Projects at Clifford Chance series, in conjunction with Clifford Chance's third annual Evening of Jazz. This show expresses the surprising combinations of formal elements that correspond to experiencing both music and art. The paintings and mixed media works of these four contemporary artists—**Tom Martinelli, Robert Melee, Odili Donald Odita,** and **Li-Trincere**—demonstrate how the legacies of free jazz and abstract art are holding strong. If jazz explores how aural improvisation can create invisible shapes of tonality, these artists' works show what the visual structures of these shapes of sound might be. Form, color, surface, and edge build imagery that speaks to the immediate sensation of experiencing music as something tangible.

Dinaburg Arts LLC
Curator, Clifford Chance US LLP



odili donald odita

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Tom Martinelli (Courtesy of Minus Space)
Robert Melee (Courtesy of Andrew Kreps Gallery)
Odili Donald Odita (Courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery)
Li-Trincere (Courtesy of Dinaburg Arts and the artist)

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Cover image by Tom Martinelli
Graphic design by Abby Walton

the shape
of jazz

9/13/2006 – 11/12/2006