

LARA JULIAN

OPTICAL ADVENTURES: 10 YEARS OF PAINTING COLOUR

**LARA JULIAN**



*P.Y.R.6.8.A19-23 (2023)*

Acrylic on canvas

H200 x W130 cm

## LARA JULIAN

In Lara Julian's paintings, colour is never static, but shifts constantly in pulsating strands of paint that reverberate against one another, as if in perpetual motion. The artist has said of her work, 'I'm playing with perception, I'm playing with movement, with rhythm, and with composition'. Colour is the uniting force in her work, which, she explains, 'is developed from the materiality of colour ... I seek to visualise colour as matter and energy through a systematic exploration of colour systems'.

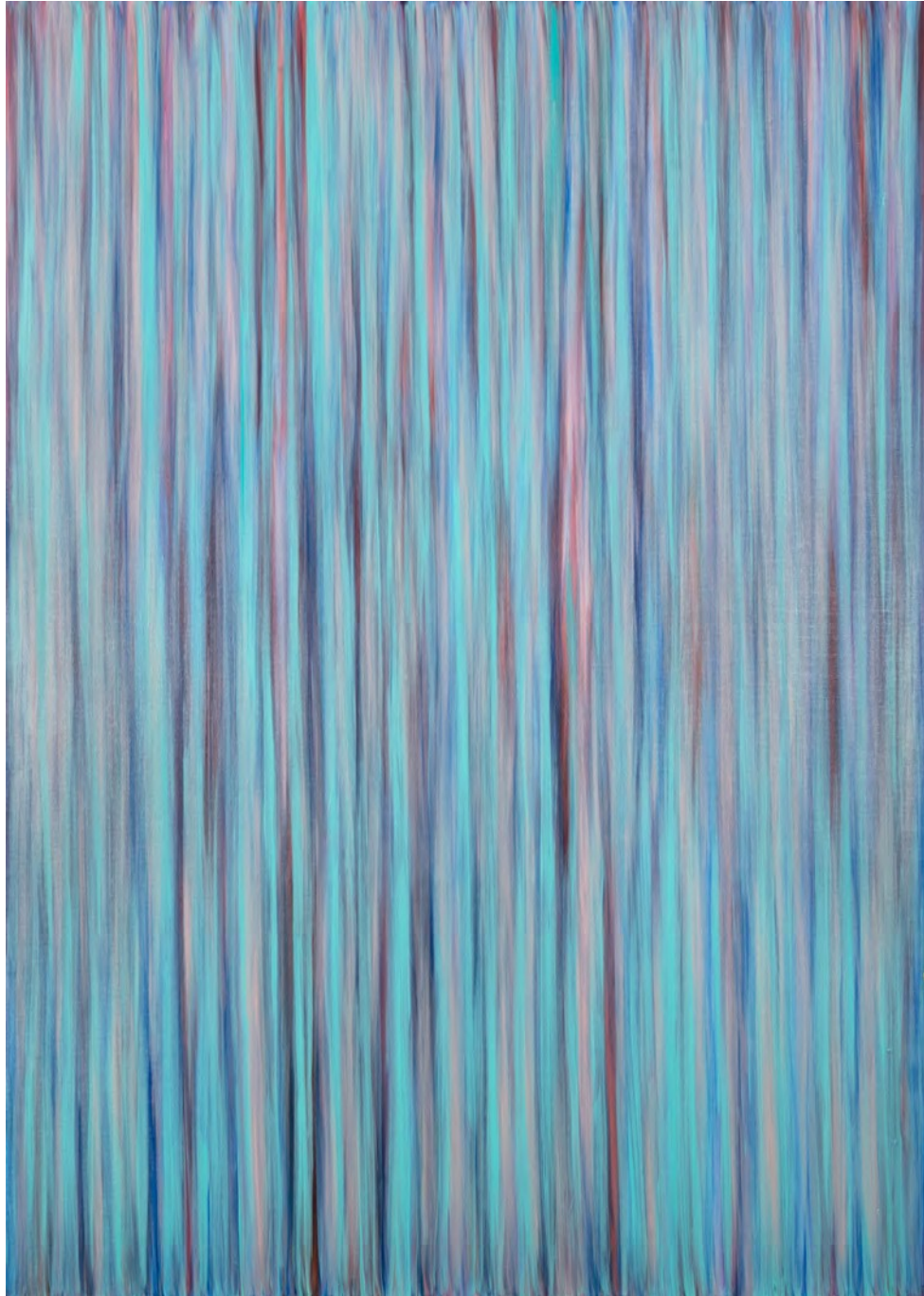
For the past six years, Lara Julian has pursued this exploration through the formal idiom of painted lines, a choice that situates her within an artistic historical lineage including Bridget Riley, Patrick Heron, and Carlos Cruz-Diez, whose dynamic painting *Physichromie DDC 1*, 1981, provides the inspiration for Lara's work *B.P-B.B-G.7.7.019-21*.

But while Heron used stripes because they are empty of meaning, so enhancing 'the concentration upon the experiences of colour itself', Julian, like Riley and Cruz-Diez, sees colour not as an isolated sensory function, but as a loaded core human experience, all the time accruing generations of historical and cultural baggage.

Some sense of this complexity of meaning is reflected in the development of Lara Julian's work over the past decade. This period forms the focus of this exhibition, and begins with her time as an art student, first in New York, and then at the Slade School of Fine Art in London.

Interestingly, it is not just her affinity with colours, but her treatment of lines that contributes to the evolution of her current style. Her now familiar meditative strokes, sometimes long, sometimes short, but always vertical, are preceded in much earlier paintings by looser, descriptive, and more circular gestures.

LARA JULIAN



*B.P-B.B-G.7.7.019-21 (2019-2021)*

Oil on canvas

H195 x W135 cm

## LARA JULIAN

Such paintings bely their spontaneous, rapidly-executed appearance: the colours are applied in a systematic, disciplined way, according to their position on the Munsell Colour Wheel. (A colour space devised in the early 20th century that categorises colours according to hue – basic colour, chroma – colour intensity, and value – lightness). Formulaic, quasi-scientific titles continue this theme, and emphasise Lara's aim to create a controlled optical experience over an emotional one.

Stepping back periodically is essential for her to judge the effect she is creating, but it is just as important for the viewer, whose experience of the painting shifts according to angle and proximity. Close up, observant viewers may find themselves perplexed by the highly textured surface of many of Lara Julian's paintings: unlike impasto, Julian's surface effects bear no relation to the highly controlled brushstrokes that run uniformly from top to bottom.

In fact, despite the painterly effect, the topographies of Lara's paintings render them somewhat ambiguous – made by moulding primer by hand, or with a palette knife, they are constructed prior to the application of the paint, and constitute a sort of sculpted ground layer. It's an approach that runs counter to traditional artistic practice, that aims to create as smooth a painting surface as possible: once dry, Lara Julian's primed canvases are so coarse and uneven that they wear through her fine No.1 brushes.

LARA JULIAN



W.B.Y-R.6.8.A18-20 (2018-2020)

Acrylic on canvas

H210 x W200 cm

## LARA JULIAN

Her early student sketches are evidence of Lara's assiduous understanding of the history of art. But though her unique artistic vision Lara has developed a unique style based on fundamentals that have remained unchanged. In her piece *B.P-B.Y.Y-R.7.8.A17-21*, a meditation on Byzantine mosaics, specifically those of the Basilica di San Marco, in Venice, the gold and vivid ultramarine blue dominate. And in her work *W.B.Y-R.6.8.A18-20*, the greys of J.M.W. Turner's *Snow Storm – Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth*, 1842, provide the inspiration.

LARA JULIAN



*B.P-B.Y.Y-R.7.8.A17-21* (2017-2021)

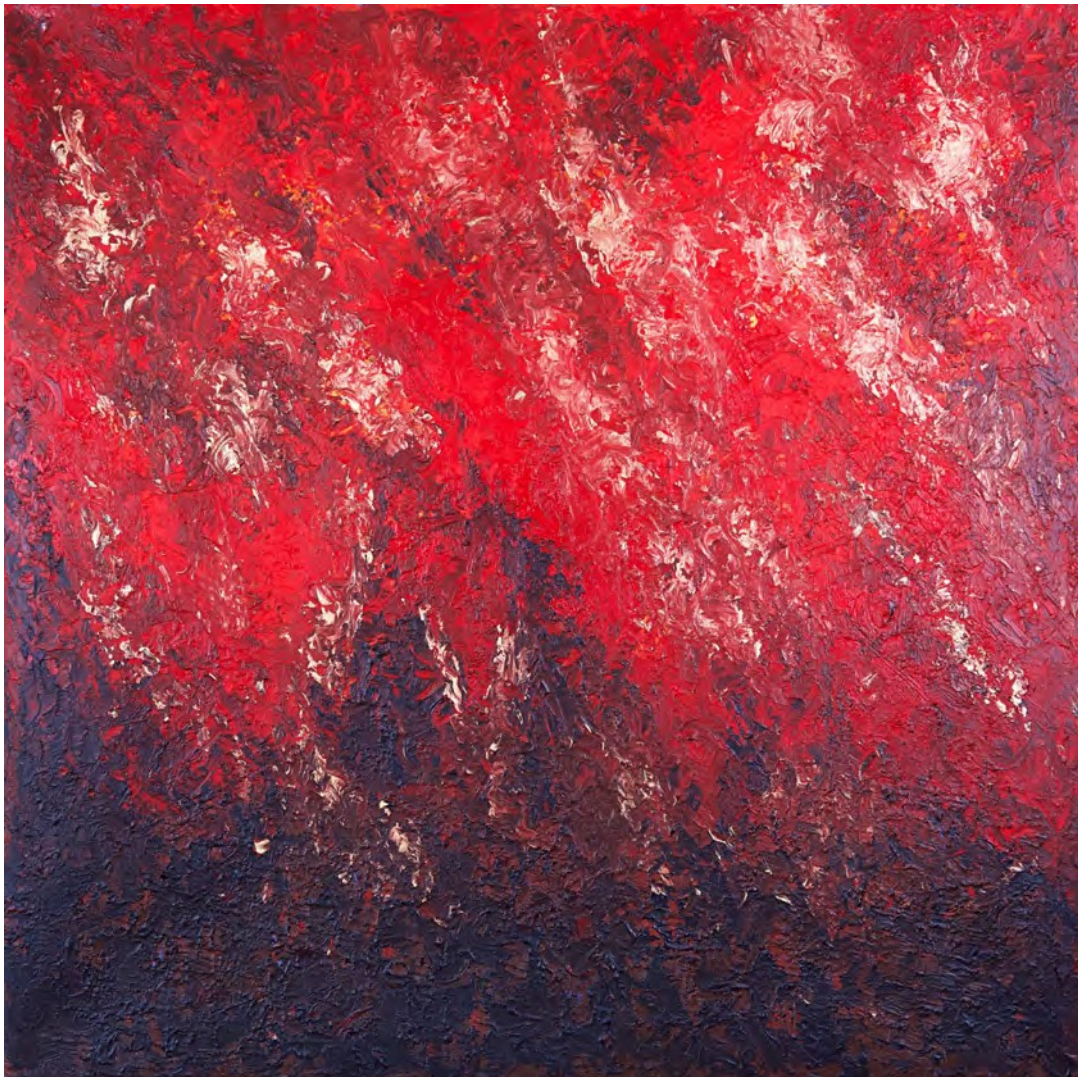
Acrylic on canvas

H210 x W200 cm



## LARA JULIAN

Lara's style is not limited to their use of colours and lines. In her work *R.10.2.S19A*, the alla prima application of the paint was in a single session with no drying between applications. This is a homage to one of Lara Julian's great inspirations, Diego Velasquez. Created in 2018, its evocative combination of gold, red, Burnt Sienna, and Payne's Grey, was applied directly onto the canvas; the colours were applied from the tube and blended with a palette knife.



*R.10.2.S19A*

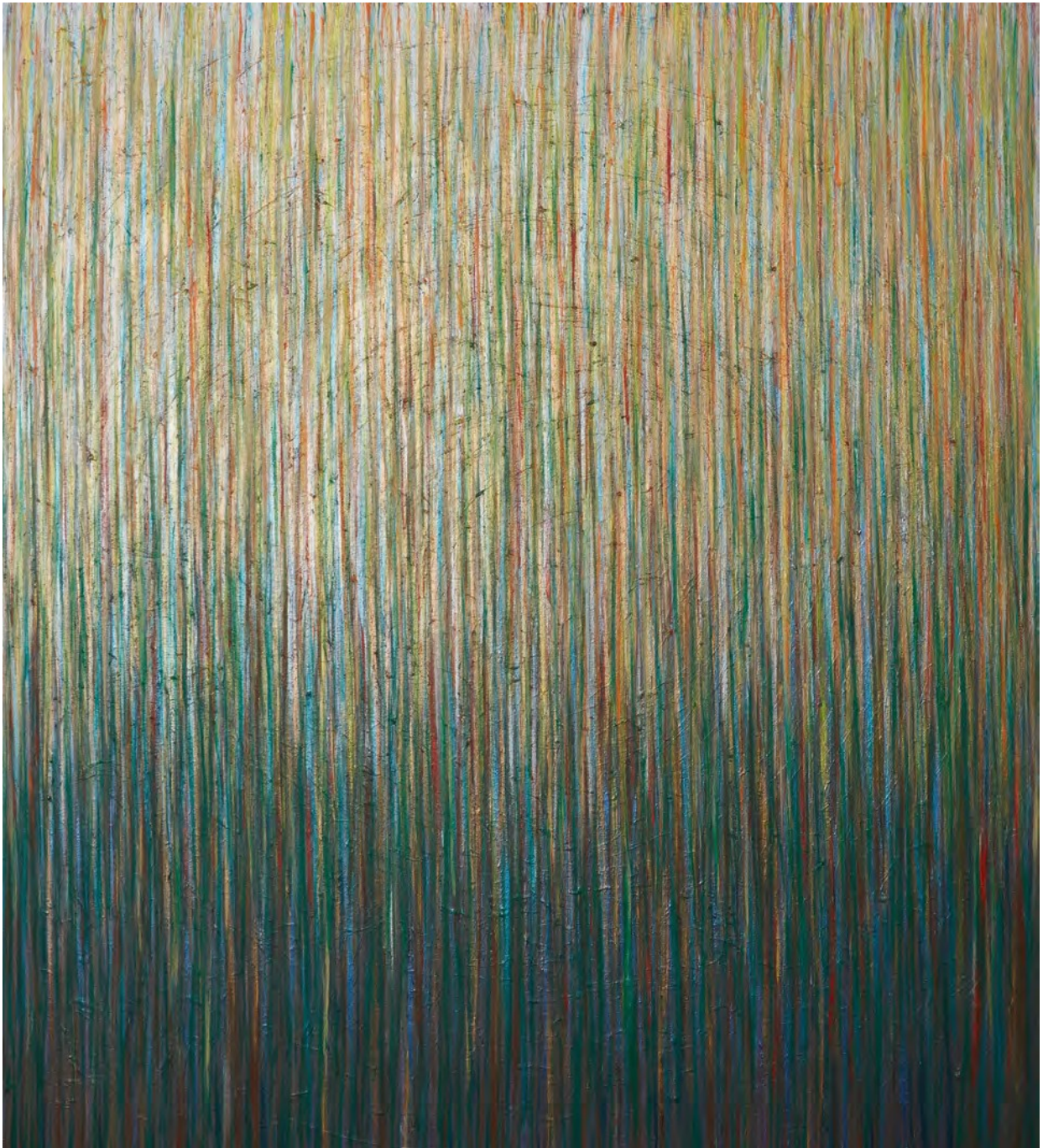
Acrylic on canvas

H100 x W100 cm

## LARA JULIAN

If alla prima requires an assured, confident, and fast hand, the majority of Lara's paintings are labour intensive epic productions; Often made over several years. Condensed and concentrated into lines, pure colours are applied to the canvas unmixed. The act of allowing them to mix optically, in the eye of the viewer, is another tribute to the past. Specifically Georges Seurat, whose post-impressionist colour theories were a huge influence on Bridget Riley. Riley is a direct inspiration for Julian's work *Y.Y-R.G-Y.G.7.10.A18-21*, an acrylic painting that emulates the optical effects of Riley's 1983 oil painting, *Java*, breaking the dominant green into its constituent colours in order to create a 'chromatic vibration'.

LARA JULIAN



Y.Y-R.G-Y.G.7.10.A18-21 (2018-2021)

Acrylic on canvas

H200 x W180 cm

## LARA JULIAN

Her Monumental Series, painted in acrylic, typifies her approach at present. But Lara is continually experimenting. Not just with different media, but on a much smaller scale. At times she favours oils over quick-drying acrylics, and the glorious red depths of her work *R.5.10.O.20*, exploits the blending capabilities of oils, which can be layered into translucent, luminous glazes. Lara also uses watercolours, and often uses this material when exploring ideas, later translated to canvas.



*RB.7.5.S18W*, watercolour painting on handmade 300gsm paper

## LARA JULIAN

Meditations on colour, optical adventures, historical art explorations: Lara Julian's paintings manage to provide both a refuge for the eyes and mind, and an intellectual puzzle for the willing viewer. She questions the nature of painting and sculpture. Not just as material entities, but as experiences: on one hand she creates experiments in perception, but just as persuasively she goes against the notion of colour as a repository of cultural and historical memory. Somehow, in the shimmering surfaces and depths of her paintings, these two notions settle happily together: the dynamic process of objects reflecting particular wavelengths of light is as mysterious and subtly shifting as the meanings and associations that colours accrue each day, and each century that passes.

Florence Hallett

LARA JULIAN



R.5.10.O.20 (2020)

Oil on canvas

H190 x W135 cm

## LARA JULIAN

### THE ARTIST

Born and raised in Siberia, Lara Julian had a successful career in the banking industry, before dedicating herself to painting full-time in 2009. She studied at the Slade School of Fine Art in London, and has exhibited widely in both solo and group shows in London, Amsterdam, Venice, and New York. Inspired by geometry, architecture, and science, Lara's intimate and thoughtful paintings invite the viewer to observe colour as a physical existing object.

### ARTIST'S STATEMENT

My work is developed from the materiality of colour. Employing a diverse range of media, I seek to visualise colour as matter and energy through a systematic exploration of colour systems. My aim is not to represent my own emotions, but to set up combinations that are objectively and conceptually grounded, yet draw viewers into a meditative state through which they generate their own responses.

**Exhibitions**

2022: *The Colour of Time*, Solo Exhibition, J/M Gallery, London, UK

2021: Collaboration 67 Pall Mall x Lara Julian, 67 Pall Mall, London, UK

2021: The Collector's Eye – Collaboration LEMA x No 20 Arts, LEMA, London, UK

2021: *Art from the Heart 2021*, Online Charity Exhibition, Zuleika Gallery, London, UK

2019: *Lines of Reason*, Solo Exhibition, D Contemporary, London, UK

2019: *Approaches*, D Contemporary, London, UK

2018: The Expanded Field of Drawing. Recent Works. The UCL Slade School of Fine Art, London, UK

2017: *City of Darkness and Light*, 508 GALLERY, London, UK

2017: *Unity in Variety VII*, The Nehru Centre, London, UK

2017: *Language*, Framers Gallery, London, UK

2017: *Expressions*, Solo Private Viewing, Mayfair Apartment, London, UK

**Art Fairs**

International Art Fair, Amsterdam, 24-26 August 2017

'Viva Arte Viva', Venice Art House Gallery, Venice, Italy, 1-22 June 2017 (during the 57th Venice Biennale)

Artexpo New York 2017, New York, 21-24 April 2017

Bath Art Fair, Bath, UK, 7-9 April 2017

Oxford International Art Fair, 24-26 February 2017

'Royal Art Prize Exhibition', Royal Opera Arcade Gallery, London, 21 April – 5 May 2016

'Autumn Group Show', La Galleria Pall Mall, London, 3-10 October 2015





A larger selection of works is available upon request.  
In order to view the artworks that are not included in  
this portfolio please book an appointment via email.

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