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Jim Long at CUE Art Foundation

In this recent exhibition, curated by Rackstraw Downes, the viewer encountered four enormous tondos, each 126 inches in diameter. These all-over compositions consist of thousands of precise veinlike lines of taupe paint, at once suggesting enlarged Petri dishes filled with specimens and the fissured surface of an undersized planet. There are ever-so-slightly variations in hue, value and intensity within each of the works. They were painted on various lots of raw canvas purchased between



Jim Long: (left to right) *For Jagannatha 2, 1 and 3*, 2003-04, oil on canvas, each 126 inches in diameter; at CUE Art Foundation

2003 and 2005, thus there are slight variations in their tones. Long explained to me that he adjusted the color of the paint for each canvas in order to create the perfect contrast. Because of the enormous amount of time it took to craft each painting, the tonality of the paint in the individual works changed slightly each time he mixed the paint

Titled *For Jagannatha 1, 2, 3, and 4*, roughly translated from Sanskrit as "Protector of all that moves," these paintings were inspired by a normally uninteresting object- a piece of masking tape covered with drips of paint found on a friend's studio floor in 1988. Long returned to his studio desiring to make something as random as the tape. He experimented, creating drip drawings with paint, ink and alcohol, but it was not until he floated a thin layer of oil paint in a pan of water, placed a disc of Mylar on top and removed it that he discovered the random yet ordered result he was searching for. These 13-inch-diameter "drawings" were scaled up freehand by Long to become the large paintings exhibited at CUE.

Long has been referred to as a "fractal artist" because his paintings, in some sense, refer to self-replicating fractal structures in which small fragments are similar in form to the larger whole. Long's small Mylar experiments, dutifully reproduced on a larger scale, take on new readings, illustrating the imbedded logic in nature. Beginning with something as unremarkable as a piece of masking tape, Long has begun a fascinating investigation of nature, of our perceptions and of painting as representation.

-Melissa Kuntz