

Chris Rivers

Universal

20 August – 21 September 2024

Pontone Gallery is proud to present a new exhibition by British painter, Chris Rivers. 'Universal' consists of a suite of sixteen paintings, four of which are of the elements: earth, fire, water and air; and twelve depict the individual signs of the zodiac. The artist presents us with his compendium of the cosmos, each image a whirlpool of sumptuous colour, fluid gesture and corporeal paint.

Rivers is, above all, a virtuoso manipulator of his medium and takes endless pleasure in its materiality. He strokes and sweeps oil paint to make roiling slicks of opaque colour play against shiny, glassy glazes. Turbid skins and crusts of caked impasto catch the eye and set up illusions of depth in the picture plane. Clusters of marks, spread and brushed out against grainy washes of broken earth hues, allude to elemental incidents, explosions and eruptions in the vastness of space. The colour palette asserts itself in a frenzy of cerulean blues, cool violets, rich madder-reds and blushing crimsons. New to his technique is the introduction of metal leaf – copper, silver, gold and platinum laid into the background or strewn in patches across the surface, glinting and gleaming in evocation of the celestial skyscape.

The zodiac often appears as a theme in medieval and early Renaissance art. Rivers references this occult fascination and echoes its desire to make order out of elemental complexity. The coherent, story-telling structure and sequence of the Zodiac works as a mechanism to counteract and accommodate the numinous and sublime terror of what appears to be the infinite chaos of space.

Rivers' immersive and beautiful sequence of paintings assimilates the constellations and their essential constituents. His is a creative process that pulls apart and reassembles, modifies and transmits with the stroke of a brush to explore the artist's signature themes of transformation and transcendence.