

THE BOSTON GLOBE

Arts & Reviews

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Thaddeus Beal: New Paintings

At: OH+T Gallery, 450 Harrison Ave.,
through Jan. 27. 617-423-1677,
ohtgallery.com.

Math, physics, mysticism

For years, lawyer-turned-painter Thaddeus Beal has been layering his works with patterns, playing with ideas from chaos theory and fractal geometry. Higher math and quantum physics can verge on a kind of mysticism, and in Beal's engrossing new show at OH+T Gallery, he moves in that direction, too.

Recently, the artist spent time in Morocco, and these new works may also touch on Islamic influences, such as Sufi mysticism. Beal won't reveal his technique, but it's clear he layers paint, then scrapes and gouges it off. He uses other materials as well. The results look almost like artifacts, ancient tablets that have been written over and over, then worn down by centuries.

Most, like "Structured Response," feature a star in the middle of a circle; the star radiates outward, creating other patterns, other stars. There's a grid, and forms also undulate, coalescing from circles. All these designs waft over the surface or are gouged into it; they glow forth or recede into shadow. They throb into and out of the viewer's vision; as one pat-



tern emerges, another seems to dissolve. To finish it off, Beal gives the piece a patina that looks mottled and rusty — another layer of meaning, suggesting the passage of time.

Despite all the visual information, there's more breathing room in Beal's new paintings. The work isn't any less obsessive, but it has reached a point where all the visual information gathers into a shimmer and hovers on the edge of vanishing. It's not so much a dramatic departure as a new level of consciousness, inviting us to see the same old things in a wonderfully new way.