

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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AN ARTIST TRADES GARBAGE FOR CANVAS

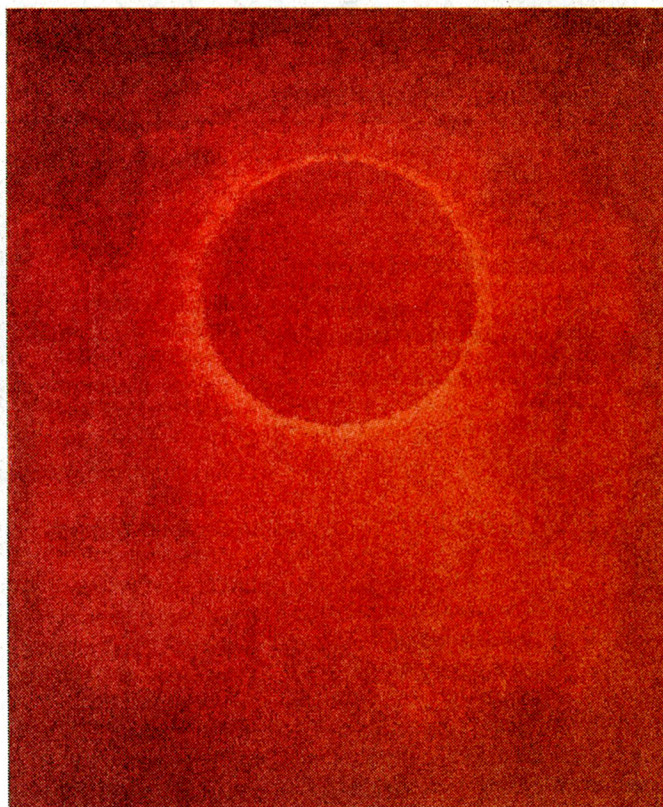
BY JENNY CHE

IN THE LAST FEW YEARS, Dan Colen has confronted the art world with a string of items typically relegated to the garbage bin: He's tacked chewing gum on a canvas, used trash as a material and rendered realistic bird droppings. For his latest works, however, he's gone back to a quieter medium: paint.

His nine new "Miracle" paintings will be shown at Gagosian Gallery in New York's Chelsea neighborhood from Sept. 2 to Oct. 18. Mr. Colen sees the paintings, each around 9 feet wide, as pictures of creation, evoking Big Bangs, a womb and a sparkling arch. To the artist, powdery wisps in a darker, blue-tinged piece feel like ghosts. He calls his new paintings "cosmic landscapes."

The Rhode Island School of Design graduate, now 35, was a prominent figure in the downtown arts scene of the early 2000s, which included his friends photographer Ryan McGinley and the late artist Dash Snow.

In the "Miracle" series, paint offered him more room for discovery than a substance like gum, Mr. Colen says. Simply using gum, for example, "made it a painting of gum," he says. "It was material



© Dan Colen/Christopher Burke (photo)

DAN COLEN'S 2013 'TBT,' one of his 'Miracle' series.

in content." (Buyers, though, weren't put off; a 2008 work of gum and paper sold for \$1.09 million at Sotheby's last year.)

Another inspiration for Mr. Colen has been animated Disney movies. The smoking candle set on the worktable upon which the puppet is made in the 1940 "Pinocchio" influenced his earlier series of candle paintings.

For the "Miracle" series, Mr. Colen took inspiration from another Disney animated film, "Fantasia," also made in 1940 and set to classical music. Mr. Colen says that he was fascinated by the idea of pursuing the film's "sublime" qualities.

Some of Mr. Colen's works of trash and gum, created between 2006 and 2011, are currently on view as part of a retrospective of the artist's career at the Brant Foundation Art Study Center in Greenwich, Conn., into September. He has exhibited at the biennial of New York's Whitney Museum of American Art and at the Royal Academy

in London, and last year had shows at the biennial in Lyon, France, and in Edinburgh.

► See more of Mr. Colen's 'Miracle' paintings at WSJ.com/review.