ALMINE RECH

Oliver Beer
Three Nymphéas

Nov 12, 2025 — Jan 10, 2026 | Shanghai

Almine Rech Shanghai is pleased to present 'Three Nymphéas', Oliver Beer's third solo exhibition with the gallery, on view from November 12, 2025 to January 10, 2026.

Above the Lake, the Sound of Perception

When we gaze at the stars, we are actually locking eyes with starlight that has traveled from decades, millennia, trillions of years ago, or even from the primordial source of all things. A similar kind of direct, readily accessible time travel occurs, in a way, when encountering Oliver Beer's solo exhibition, 'Three Nymphéas'. This is not to suggest that the British artist seeks to usurp the role of the Creator, but that through his unique and meticulously refined technique, the pond at Giverny—which captivated Monet for thirty years, over a century ago—genuinely resonates with us here and now in our auditory and visual senses.

Oliver Beer's trans-temporal dialogue with Claude Monet began with a 2023 commission commemorating the 150th anniversary of Impressionism. By then, the artist's *Resonance Paintings* series—conceived under the principle of "using the ear as a hand, sound as a brush"—had been in gestation for over a decade, and had entered a phase requiring deeper exploration in both technique and meaning. Over eighteen months, Oliver Beer immersed himself in Monet's world: losing himself in the hazy water lilies of the *Grandes Décorations* at the Musée de l'Orangerie, merging into the shimmer on the lake's surface at dusk in Monet's garden, and even managed to establish an auditory connection with the pond that the master of light himself could never have imagined, through underwater recording devices. Naturally, the two artists' meditative focus and almost monastic labor around a shared motif began to echo each other over time. After continuous experimentation, the first triptych, *Resonance Paintings – Nymphéas*, materialized in 2024: Sixteen notes were emitted from speakers beneath the horizontal canvas, causing sixteen powdered pigments on its surface to dance in a pure and varied way; the sounds recorded in the pond occasionally interjected, as if Monet's seasoned hand still wished to grasp the present brush, adding a touch of nature's own enchanting chaos to the exquisite natural order manifested by Oliver Beer on the canvas.

As the saying goes, "The benevolent delight in mountains; the wise delight in waters." In science and philosophy, this often manifests as a quest for the "coherence is one and distinguished into many"(理一分殊)[1]. For Monet, it was about expressing the "instantaneity," "the sense of envelopment," and "the same light suffused everywhere"[2] that he pursued throughout his life. When speaking of the fundamental motivation for his work, Oliver Beer referenced Aldous Huxley's feeling upon unlocking the brain's "reducing valve" to perceive the world as "the miracle, moment by moment, of naked existence."[3] At an age similar to when Monet first discovered the beauty of nature, [4] Oliver Beer found his own "blossom of Nymphs"[5], the vibration, a universal natural phenomenon. Whether it is the human voice being used to amplify a space's resonance, a small vessel's own note being awakened or visual pleasure being woven in a compositional manner; whether it is the exploration of more colors and notes in the latest triptych in the exhibition, or the many unrealized ideas for the future—we will have the privilege of continuing to follow this dedicated artist and repeatedly feeling, savoring, and cherishing life's constant miracles emerging from the mundane.

— Sun Man, curator and translator

1. "理一分殊" (lǐ yī fēn shū), a key concept in Neo-Confucianism originating from the Huayan and Chan Buddhist traditions of the Tang Dynasty, explores the unity of opposites between one and many, sameness and difference. American sinologist Stephen C. Angle translates it as "coherence is one and distinguished into many."
2. Written in Monet's letter to the art critic Gustave Geffroy in October 1890.
3. See "The Doors of Perception" essay by Aldous Huxley, first published in 1954.
4. At the age of fifteen, Monet began painting outdoors under the guidance of Eugène Boudin, while at sixteen, Oliver Beer started experimenting with reassembling concrete pipes into musical instruments.
5. The scientific name of the water lily, Nymphaea, is derived from the Nymphs, the goddesses embodying the spirituality of nature in ancient Greek mythology.