

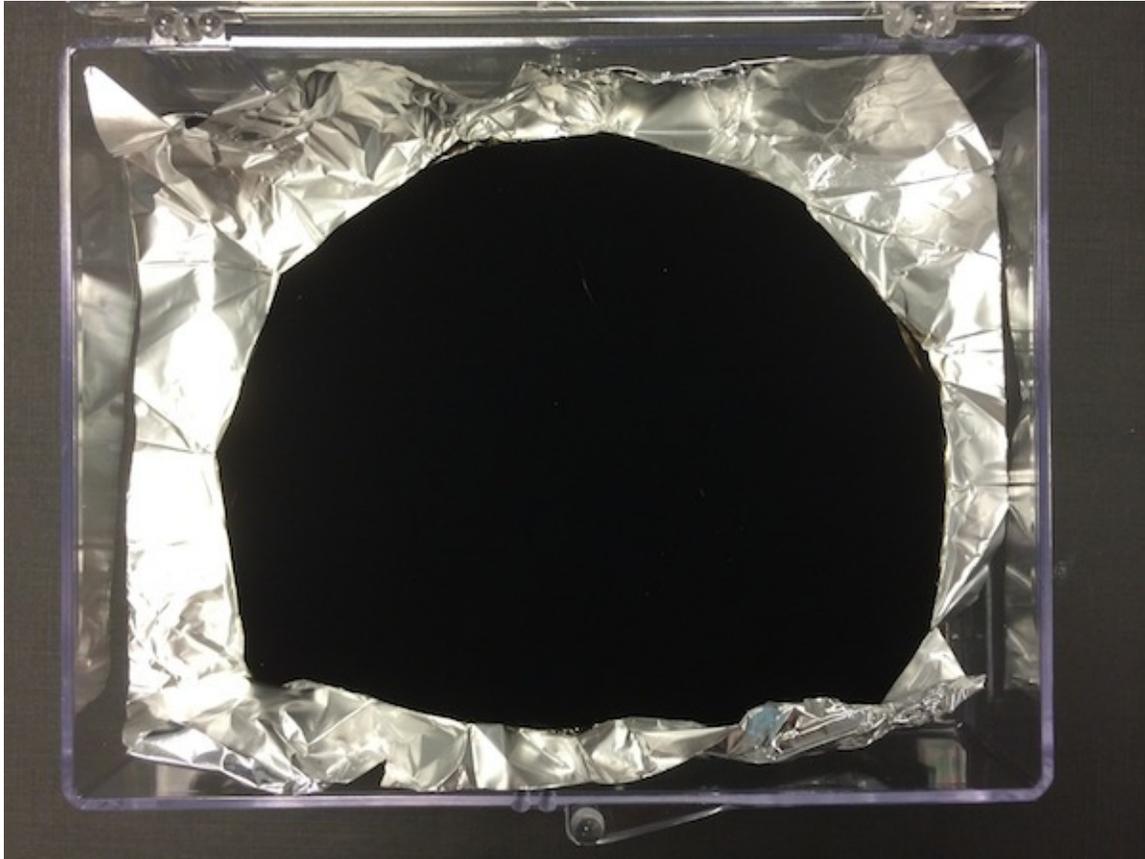
GLADSTONE GALLERY

ARTFORUM

500 WORDS

Anish Kapoor

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Vantablack pigment. Photo: Surrey Nanosystems.

Anish Kapoor's sculptures and installations use pioneering technology to address absence and void as sites of potential. Here Kapoor discusses his use of Vantablack, the blackest pigment known to date, which is being developed by the British engineering firm Surrey Nanosystems. A new series of paintings is on view at Gladstone Gallery in Brussels through April 17, 2015, and he will also have an installation of work at the Palace of Versailles that opens June 9 and runs through November 1, 2015.

VANTABLACK IS A PIGMENT currently under development. I described my idea for a project incorporating the substance to Ben Jensen, who runs Surrey Nanosystems in East Sussex. The paint made from it is so black that when you hold a bit of it in your hand, if it has a fold in it, you literally cannot perceive the crease. It absorbs 98 percent of all light, so it effectively becomes two-dimensional. It's the blackest material in the universe after black holes. I've worked with an idea of non-material objects since my void works from the mid-'80s, and Vantablack seems to me to be a proper non-material. The nanostructure of Vantablack is so small that it virtually has no materiality. It's

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thinner than a coat of paint and rests on the liminal edge between an imagined thing and an actual one. It's a physical thing that you cannot see, giving it a transcendent or even *transcendental* dimension, which I think is very compelling.

To me, the possibilities of pigment are fascinating: how it exists between materiality and illusion. Outside of my project, Vantablack is being developed for military stealth and technologies where one needs to restrict the use of light, such as inside a telescope where you want the light to focus just on the mirror without having wandering light particles around, in order to see distant stars.

I'm absolutely sure that to make new art, you have to make new space. Malevich's black square doesn't just make a proposition about non-images or black as an image; it suggests that space works in a different way than previously conceived. Whether it is literal space or poetic space, I'm sure that this equation is correct. Imagine walking into a room where you literally have no sense of the walls—where the walls are or that there are any walls at all. It's not an empty dark room, but a space full of darkness. When we imagine our own interiors, we have a sense that each of us carries a dark, inner, and quiet, or not so quiet, place within ourselves. To have that out there phenomenologically in the world is quite unnerving. This has haunted us through literature, science, and art—the invisible, the non-space, or the non-object. This is very dangerous territory, but I find the aspiration toward the Freudian womb to reach a lost self—which I think is implied in any spiritualism—interesting in terms of its relation to the sublime. Loss of self and fear go hand in hand. Inevitably, we bump into fear, death, and all the human realities of an emotional world—as an artist especially, but always as a human being.

— *As told to Julian Elias Bronner*