
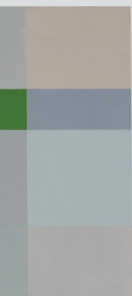




A MONTH OF MODERN



Wilhelmina Barns-Graham

Terry Frost

Adrian Heath

Patrick Heron

Roger Hilton

Bryan Kneale

Mary Martin

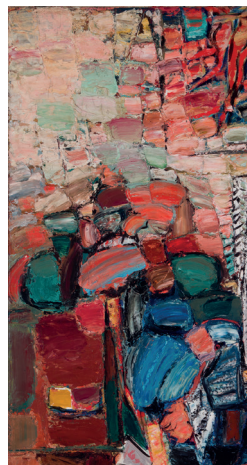
Ceri Richards

Richard Smith

John Wells

Gillian Wise

Bryan Wynter



A MONTH OF MODERN

A demonstration of abstraction, colour and form by post war British Masters.

16 April – 21 May 2016

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Modern! The Vitality and the Variety of British Modern Art

Mel Gooding

'The internationalism of modern art makes it difficult for the critic to claim a distinctive type of art for his own country. There is no British art since 1945—there is an art, more vigorous than any art Britain has known since the death of Turner (1855), which has made a distinctive contribution to the world-wide movement of the arts.' Casting around for a way to open this short introduction to the exhibition, aptly and provocatively titled 'a *demonstration* of abstraction, colour and form by post war British masters', I chanced upon these words by the greatest English critic of the mid-century, Herbert Read, introducing his own selection of British artists for an international publication, in 1959, on European and American 'art since 1945'. Read's bold assertion—implicit in those opening words—is that in the 1930s British painting and sculpture had for the first time since the mid-19th century, re-entered the international arena, and that this level and quality of engagement with modern ideas in art had continued well into the post war period. And he was right.

Indeed we could truthfully say that as art changed and developed beyond that period, and on into the present century, much of the best British art has maintained its force within the swirling currents of international modernity, carrying on the tide of post war and contemporary modern art a new and distinctive sculptural fantasia (Deacon, Kapoor, Woodrow, etc.), consolidating the exciting regeneration of figurative painting (Bacon, Auerbach, Caulfield, etc.), alongside the continuing and various adventures of abstraction (Riley, Hoyland, Beattie, etc.). To pick up on those later trends may be the task of a future exhibition, another 'Month of Modern', but here we have a marvellous selective recapitulation in miniature, so to speak, of Read's golden post war 'contribution to the world wide movement of the arts.' It is an enthralling demonstration of British art responding dynamically to the energies of modernist abstraction: to encounter these works is to become part of the action.

First of all, we can't but be struck by the sheer diversity of the art in that period of creative ferment. The variety of abstract styles and manners brought with it opportunities for apparently infinite experiment and discovery, for the expression of every kind of imaginative impulse: the pictorial or sculptural realisation of ideas of abstract order and geometric serenity; the description in purely non-figurative terms of natural energies and forms; the expression of pure joy in nature or art

or the intimation of psychological uncertainties and existential angst. Above all, this new freedom from naturalistic representation extended from the artist to the spectator: it is we who must, with a generous heart and an open mind, look in these pictures to discover for ourselves allusions and correspondences, perceptual immediacies and mental nuances. Abstraction turns the tables on us, gives us unprecedented imaginative liberty to think and feel for ourselves. To live with a vital abstract painting or sculpture is to be continually challenged, to be surprised and delighted by new responses.

Take, for example, two paintings here, made within three years of each other in the mid-1960s by John Wells, the quiet genius of Newlyn, much respected by his more celebrated fellow artists in Penwith (represented here by Bryan Wynter, Patrick Heron, Wilhelmina Barnes-Graham and Roger Hilton) but for many years hardly known beyond that magical terrain. They suggest a preoccupation with geometric form, in this case the rectangle. In the first, *Composition with Squares* (1964), drawn freehand with a pastel crayon, the composition of 'squares' is actually a cluster of irregular rectangular, brusquely coloured shapes, most of them, we might grant, *quite* like squares: they seem in perpetual motion, centrifugal or centripetal, agitated, as if confused, not only in their denomination as squares, but in their intention to be 'composed'. In the second, *Inverse Variation* (1967), the squares are ruled with exactitude, the oil paint thinned and applied with perfect evenness, their arrangement, as the title suggests, seemingly ordered according to a strict proportionate principle. Two moods, two states of mind, two ways in which the world might be conceived: two equivalents for contrasting states of mind.

Now consider *Interior with Piano* (1953–54) by Ceri Richards, the nearest thing to a naturalistic 'picture' in this exhibition. We are confronted by a complex kaleidoscopic image of brilliantly faceted colour-lights as if refracted through a prism. As the eye becomes accustomed to the flicker, it begins to find a kind of perceptible order, just as it does when we enter a brightly sunlit room from the shadow of a darkened hallway. The light appears to stream in from a window at top left, and catches the keyboard and curved frame and shape of a baby grand piano. The sheet music spreads its lyrical wings like a white bird about to take off; and is that a figure in the foreground, hardly discernible in the dazzle, bending over to study another music sheet? Light, colour, crystalline forms, organic forms: correspondences to the dissonant chromatic chords of a pianoforte cadenza. The mineral geometrics here have no thought-provoking function: rather they catch us up into the vividly immediate visual music of a moment's ecstatic sensations; we are rapt in a sensuous world of sound and light.

Both Gillian Wise's *Directed Path* (1966) and Mary Martin's *Rotation MM1* (1968) are constructions that form (detachable) parts in serial explorations of geometric permutations. We are asked to contemplate, by inference, the infinite diversity of such configurations, to see them as elements in the

dynamic structure of the world and of physical movement in the world. Martin's spiralling rectangular volumes, reflecting light, creating shadows, reduces Richards's scattered and disordered particles of colour to rigorously black and white, dark and light order; Wise takes a line for a rigorously directed walk—one of so many possible!—around a perfect configuration of white squares. The eye follows, thinking of alternatives. The mathematically ordered world, as modern physics has shown us, is never still, never rigid in its formal possibilities.

And neither is the phenomenal, elemental world in which have our being. Adrian Heath was a London-based painter, steeped in European abstract painting, finding (as his titles indicate) his characteristic forms and pictorial dynamics, block, vortex and interlock, spin, spiral and flow, in art itself. He was obsessed with the formal disposition across the canvas surface of colour, tone, brush-stroke, line and shape; but aware always that these vital forms and their relations are painterly equivalents to the forms and energies of nature. Bryan Wynter lived, by choice, in a remote windswept moorland cottage high above the sea near Zennor in West Penwith. He was a painter of immersive experience, a swimmer and canoeist, a kayak-rider of dangerous white-water rapids. In his later paintings (he died at 60, in 1975), with an almost perverse elegance, he reduced the powerful forces and currents of flow in the aquatic element (which provide his titles: *Meander*, *Confluence*) to swirling linear patterns and colour shapes that imitate, with an extreme abstraction, the play of light and shadow on water. It is as if these paintings are stylish elegies for the violent exhilarations of earlier, more chaotic sensations. Wilhelmina Barns-Graham, another acute observer of natural forms and forces—rock strata, tidal current and folding wave—in her *Blue Disks on Black no. 3*, (*Wind on Waves Series*), (1971) resorts to a premeditated, purely formalistic motif to suggest a phenomenal natural event. Different artists, different devices, different realizations: diversity in artfulness. This is a game of recognitions, correspondences and contrasts that one could go on playing as the eye and the mind move from one work to another in this fascinating and beautiful exhibition: British modernist art in this period offers infinite pleasures to the receptive heart and mind.

Wilhelmina Barns-Graham

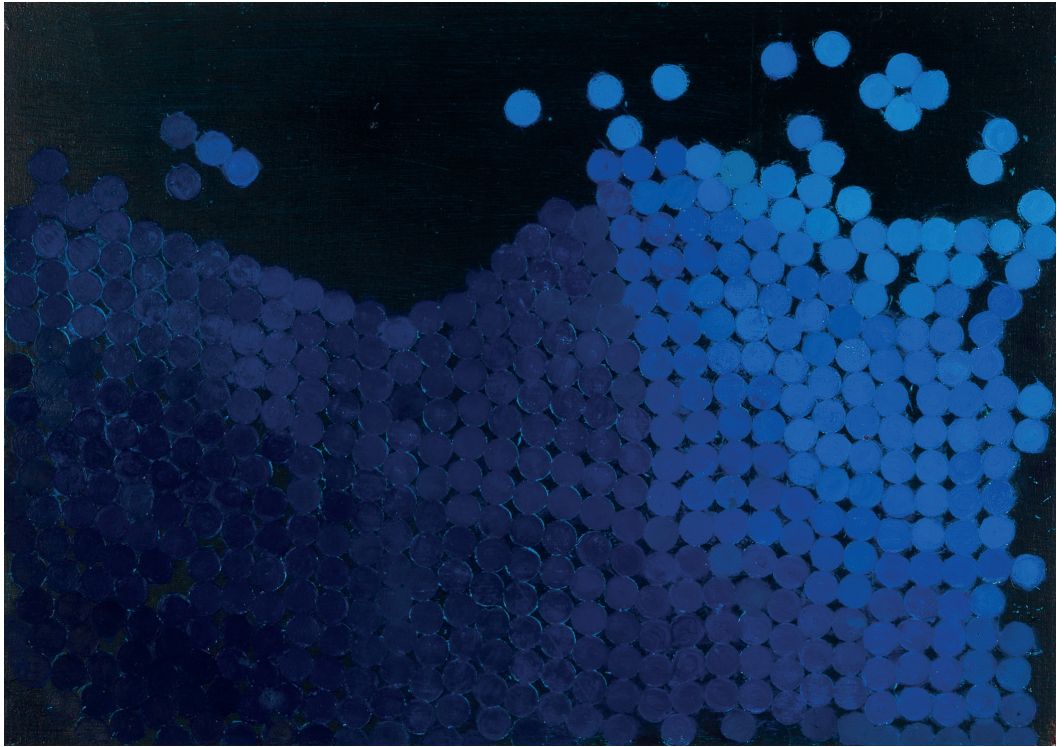
(1912 – 2004)

Wilhelmina Barns-Graham is regarded as the grande dame of British post war abstract painting. Wilhelmina Barns-Graham, known as Willie, painter, printmaker and draughtsman, was born in St Andrews, Fife on 8 June 1912. Barns-Graham attended the Edinburgh College of Art from October 1931 and finally graduated, after setbacks caused by illness, in 1937. The connection with the College did not end with graduation. Barns-Graham was awarded her first scholarship in June 1935, and further awards in each of the following five years. She and her friends such as William Gear and Margaret Mellis were acquainted with modern art in both London and Paris in the 1930s.

In 1940 due to both the war situation and Barns-Graham's poor health she was recommended by the enlightened principal at Edinburgh College of Art, Hubert Wellington, to go to St Ives. Wellington reckoned that it would be good for her health and her art, as he knew that interesting things were happening there. St Ives was emerging as a centre for the modernist avant-garde. Her peers in St Ives came to include Terry Frost, Roger Hilton, Patrick Heron and John Wells. From that date Barns-Graham's history is bound up with the School of St Ives, where she retained a studio until her death despite a move to St Andrews in 1960. Barns-Graham stayed on at St Ives after the war when it ceased being a centre of modernism and became an outpost, albeit an important one. She threw herself into the art politics of the place and played her part in creating a separate identity for the modernists, whose relationship with the many traditionalists was uneasy.

Barns-Graham's vibrant sense of colour is exceptional and she paints with great conviction and power, though often on a smaller scale than her peers, and always with the ability to surprise. As a draughtsman she was second only to Ben Nicholson and was more versatile. Her crisp drawings of rocks, landscapes and buildings continued to underpin all her work. The primacy of geometrics favoured by the St Ives artists was crucial to her formal development but her dynamic use of colour was entirely her own. Cubes and discs of spectrum greens and blue as seen here dance and play in the totality of white. Her images derive from acute observations of natural forms and places she has visited, pared to their bare essentials.

Barns-Graham's work is in public collections throughout the UK including Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Arts Council of Great Britain, The British Museum, Tate Gallery, Victoria and Albert Museum, Leeds and Manchester City Art Galleries and the Fleming Collection.



Blue disks on Black no. 3,
(Wind on Waves Series), 1971
oil & acrylic on board
signed & dated lower right
signed, titled, dated & inscribed verso
31.4 × 39.1 cm
Provenance: Private Collection

Adrian Heath

(1920 – 1992)

Defined by some as a British abstract artist, by others as more of a constructivist (despite working almost exclusively in paint), around the 1950s Adrian Heath was the main link between the abstract painters of St Ives and their Constructivist London counterparts. He shared exhibitions with Adrian Hill, Victor Pasmore, Malcolm Hughes, William Scott, Peter Lanyon, Patrick Heron and his lifelong friend Terry Frost.

Born in Burma, he studied art under Stanhope Forbes in Newlyn before attending the Slade School of Art in 1939. Captured and taken to a prison camp in Germany in 1942 (he joined the RAF when WW2 started), he met and taught oil painting to (Sir) Terry Frost. At the end of the war Heath went back to the Slade until 1947, and even if he spent a few months with Frost in St Ives (meeting Ben Nicholson), he preferred settling in London Fitzrovia where, from 1949, he started exhibiting his first abstract works with the London group (previously known as Fitzroy Street and Camden Town group).

Between 1951 and 1953 he held in his studio 3 exhibitions now considered legendary in the history of post-war British modernism, hosting and celebrating a convivial dialogue between the Constructivists and the St Ives School. The starting points of his art, however remote, were indeed the landscape and the female body, but he was more concerned with reconciling organic forms with geometric shapes than making any recognisable references to the tangible, physical world.

Alongside his artistic practice, between the 1950s and 60s he published an essay on Abstract art, was the chairman of the Artists International Association (AIA) and served

on the Arts Council's advisory art panel. He also taught for over 20 years at the Bath Academy of Art from the mid-50s (here he mixed with a different group of artists to those he had exhibited with previously, marking a change in his work—the art of De Kooning, seen in the exhibition of American art at the Tate in 1956, is often suggested as evident source of influence in the immediate following years), and at the University of Reading in his early 60s.

Heath's oeuvre is well represented in a number of major public collections throughout Britain (including the Tate Gallery, the British Museum, the V&A and the Southampton City Art Gallery), as well as in Europe, Australia, South Africa and the USA.



Oval Theme, 1958
oil on canvas
stretched over board
signed & dated lower
right, dated verso
61 × 50.8 cm
Provenance: Artist's Estate

Adrian Heath

Study for 'Herculaneum', 1968

oil on canvas

121.9 × 91.4 cm

Provenance:

Private Collection

Exhibited

Lancaster House,
Sussex University, 1969
Camden Arts Centre,
London, 1975

Literature

Jane Rye, Adrian Heath, Lund
Humphries, 2012, p. 127, illus.



Adrian Heath



*Composition – Ochre,
Black & Grey, 1959*
oil on canvas
127 × 101.6 cm
Provenance: Artist's Estate



Untitled, 1968
acrylic, gouache
& pencil on paper
initialled & dated lower right
56.5 × 76.8 cm
Provenance: Artist's Estate

Roger Hilton

(1911–1975)

Defined by critic Norbert Lynton as 'the most daring and inventive, and successful, painter of his generation in Europe', Roger Hilton is considered a pioneer of abstract British art post-WW2. He began as a figurative artist, later moved into abstraction and then once again his later years saw him return to figurative work, experimenting with a range of media.

Son of a German doctor who changed his surname from Hildesheim when anti-German feeling was prevalent, Hilton was born in Middlesex in 1911. He received his artistic education both at the Slade School of Fine Art from the late 1920s and in Paris at the Academie Ranson in the 1930s, where he developed links with painters on the Continent and started exhibiting annually with the London Group.

During World War II he served with the commandos (like fellow painter Terry Frost), but was captured and spent three years as a prisoner of war. The following 10 years he worked as a school teacher in Dorset and at the Central School of Arts and Crafts, London, beginning his journey from figuration to painting in an abstract style (influenced by Mondrian's work and restricted palette while in the Netherlands) in the early 1950s and being compared with the Abstract Expressionists not long after. By the end of the decade, though, Hilton was already speaking of his wish to 'reinvent figuration' following his frustration with the limitations of abstract painting and, in many of the paintings from this period, his initial inspiration was derived from the female figure and the rhythms and colours of the natural world. This has generally been interpreted as a mark of his association with the St Ives artists. Hilton, in fact, started

spending an increasing proportion of his time in St Ives in Cornwall from 1957, settling there in 1965. He became a prominent member of the St. Ives School as well as gaining an international reputation: he won the first prize at the John Moores Exhibition in Liverpool in 1963, exhibited in various major British galleries as well as represented Britain at the Venice Biennale in 1964. In 1968 he was appointed CBE.

During the last period of his working life, especially from the early 1970s when he was confined to bed as an invalid precipitated in part by alcoholism, he created colourful small-scale, but highly regarded gouache returning to the childlike subjects of animals, boats and nudes that had characterized his early work. Hilton died not far from St Ives in 1975 and his works are now represented at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam and the Tate Gallery, London.



Deux Formes Debout, c.1949

oil on board

signed lower right;

signed & titled verso

50.8 × 26.7 cm

Provenance: Artist's Estate



Figures & Horses, c.1935
oil on board
26.7 × 50.8 cm
Provenance: Artist's Estate



Painting, Dec 1964
gouache & charcoal on wood
signed & dated verso
27 × 74 cm
Provenance: Artist's Estate

Roger Hilton



Untitled, 1973
gouache on paper
initialled & dated lower left
17.8 × 40.6 cm
Provenance: Artist's Estate



Untitled, c.1964
gouache, charcoal
& chalk on paper
25.4 × 17.8 cm
Provenance: Artist's Estate

Bryan Kneale

(b. 1930)

Bryan Kneale, born in the Isle of Man's capital in 1930, is an artist and sculptor who originally studied painting at Douglas School of Art in 1947 and then at the Royal Academy Schools, London for five years. During this time he won the Rome Prize and spent his time travelling in Italy where he was greatly influenced by the work of the Futurists and metaphysical painters. Kneale became known as an accomplished portrait painter using palette knives as a method of 'constructing' with paint until, in the 1950s, he was inspired by his brother-in-law to try welding and he moved from being a figurative painter to making sculpture.

In the early 1960s he held his first exhibition of sculpture, became a lecturer and taught at a number of highly respected colleges for most of his career, including the Royal Academy of Art.

One of the main characteristics of Kneale's sculpture is its emphasis on linkages, the way separate forms are joined together. Kneale works directly with metal (bypassing modelling in an intermediate material) and in an unpublished Tate interview he described his sculpture as 'three-dimensional drawing.' Since the mid-1980s Kneale's major source of inspiration has been the skeletons and joints of animals he studied and drew at the Natural History Museum in London. His sculpture of the 1990s has alternated between works based on animal structures and others which are abstract. 'I think all my work is about the problem of what one sees and what one knows and the attempt to fuse the two and in a special sense disrupt them.'

Kneale became the first abstract sculptor to be elected a Royal Academician in 1974 (he accepted the honour only on the condition

that he be allowed to curate a show of contemporary sculpture which resulted in a groundbreaking survey of some of the period's most exciting sculptors), is a Trustee of the Royal Academy of Arts and a Senior Fellow of the Royal College of Art.

Kneale has exhibited widely and his work can be found in many prestigious collections around the world, including The Tate in London, the Museum of Modern Art in New York and, of course, Manx National Heritage on the Isle of Man. He currently lives and works in London and is widely considered the Isle of Man's most distinguished living artist.



Time Balance, 1965
wrought iron on wood base
height 203 cm
(including base)
Provenance: Leicestershire
Education Authority

Mary Martin

(1907 – 1969)

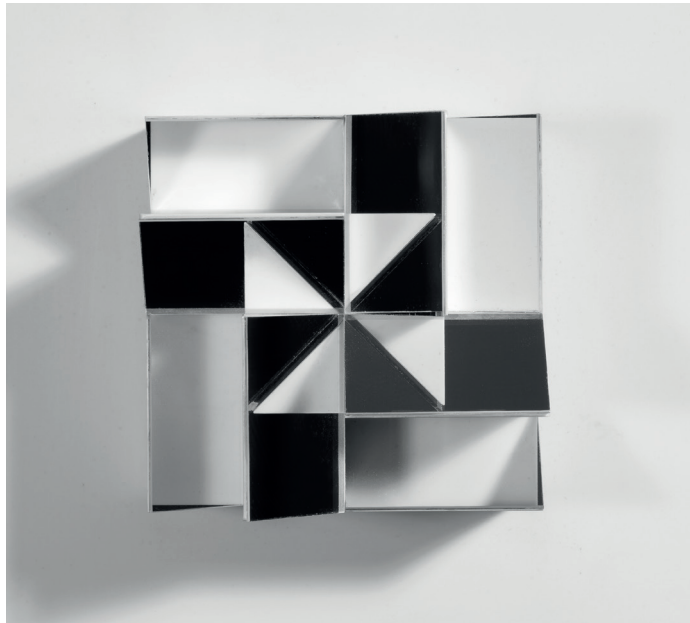
Mary Martin is a British artist best known for her paintings and constructions and her work with her husband Kenneth Martin.

Born Mary Adela Balmford in 1907 in Folkestone, she studied at Goldsmiths College, London in 1925–9 followed by 3 years at the Royal College of Art where she met Kenneth Martin who she married in 1930. Much of their exhibition history and biography is the same as they had such a close working relationship. She exhibited as a landscape and still life painter with the London Group from 1932 (she became a member in 1959) and at the Artist International Association (AIA) from 1934, mainly using her maiden name.

During the war she taught at Chelmsford School of Art from 1941 – 44 and her work, inspired by the mathematical rigour and search for a purity of rational thought that motivated early Modernist abstraction (particularly Constructivism), slowly evolved towards the abstract style: she painted her first abstract picture in 1950 and made her first reliefs the following year. Her wall reliefs use building materials echoing the reconstruction that was then occurring in postwar Britain. They are claustrophobic, nugget-like, dense, some exhibited encased in glass, with a will towards muteness that is found in later artists such as Bruce Nauman.

Gillian Wise said: 'Internal logic – this was Mary Martin's definition of the quality which any good work of art or architecture has to have'. She goes on to say that: 'If it is hard to identify the presence of internal logic in a painting, it is much harder to see success or partial success or not, in a relief form –subjected to so many variables.

Her first significant exhibition was together with her husband's work, at the Heffer Gallery, Cambridge, in 1954. Her work was included in group exhibitions of constructed art in England and abroad, notably *Konkrete Kunst*, Zürich 1960, and *Experiment in Constructie*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 1962. In 1960 she was commissioned to create constructed reliefs for the Orient Line's S.S. *Oriana*. In 1969, the year she died, she was awarded first-prize (jointly with Richard Hamilton) at John Moores Painting Prize, in Liverpool. Her work is held by the Tate Gallery, amongst others.



Rotation MM1, 1968
injected polystyrene & mirrors
12.7 × 12.7 × 8.9 cm
edition of c.200, published
by Unlimited of Bath
Provenance: Private Collection

Literature
Alastair Grieve, *Constructed
Abstract Art in England –
A Neglected Avant-Garde*, Yale
University Press, New Haven & London,
p.164, pl.215, illus. (other cast)

Ceri Richards

(1903 – 1971)

Ceri Richards is regarded as one of the most important British artists of the 20th century, and was the most successful Welsh artist of the period. Henry Moore, his former teacher, said he was the best draughtsman of his generation and an artist of unique creative and imaginative gifts and achievements.

Ceri Giralddus Richards was born in 1903 near Swansea in a working-class environment and a highly cultured household where music and poetry and nature played a central role. Aspects of this Welsh childhood influenced his art throughout his life and became the source of inspiration for his painting, drawing, printmaking and constructions.

He first attended evening class to study engineering drawing, but he soon left for the Swansea School of Art in 1921, during which time he first saw works of art by modern European artists. He then won a scholarship to study at the Royal College of Art in London from 1924 to 1927, approaching the works of the great masters of Abstraction and Cubism. Interested in Surrealism since the early 1930s, by this time Richards was one of Britain's most experimental (with regards to style and media used) young artists and his reputation kept growing.

He lived in London for the majority of the rest of his life, though taught for four years as the head of painting at Cardiff School of Art during World War Two. By the end of the 1940s he was exploring a different subject matter, from the theme of the cycle of nature to the music room interior, usually with a piano and female pianist (Richards became an accomplished musician himself, who was taught to play the piano in his childhood). During the 1950s and 60s Ceri Richards created

paintings, collages and constructions on the subject of the submerged cathedral. He was awarded some important commissions, appointed CBE in 1960, won the Gold Medal at the 1961 National Eisteddfods and the coveted Einaudi Painting Prize at the Venice Biennale of 1962. He died in London in 1971.

His centenary year in 2003 saw a revival of interest in his work, with a number of retrospective exhibitions and the publication of a monograph written by art critic, and Richards' son-in-law, Mel Gooding. Many of his works can be found in the Tate Britain collection, the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery in Swansea (where Richards' first solo exhibition took place in 1930), the National Museum Cardiff and the Pallant House Gallery, Chichester.



Interior with Piano, 1953–54

oil on canvas

signed & dated lower right

signed & inscribed verso

98 × 80 cm

Provenance:

Marlborough Fine Art, London

Private Collection, Wales

Exhibited

Welsh Arts Council, National

Museum of Wales, *Ceri*

Richards Memorial Exhibition, Cardiff, 1973; travelling

to Glynn Vivian Art Gallery,

Swansea, and The Royal

Cambrian Academy, Conwy

Richard Smith

(b. 1931)

A contemporary of David Hockney and Peter Blake, Richard Smith CBE is a painter and printmaker often associated with colour field painting. Smith's lifelong subject was to be surface appearance: the resounding shallows of consumer culture; the complex sheen of advertising and packaging.

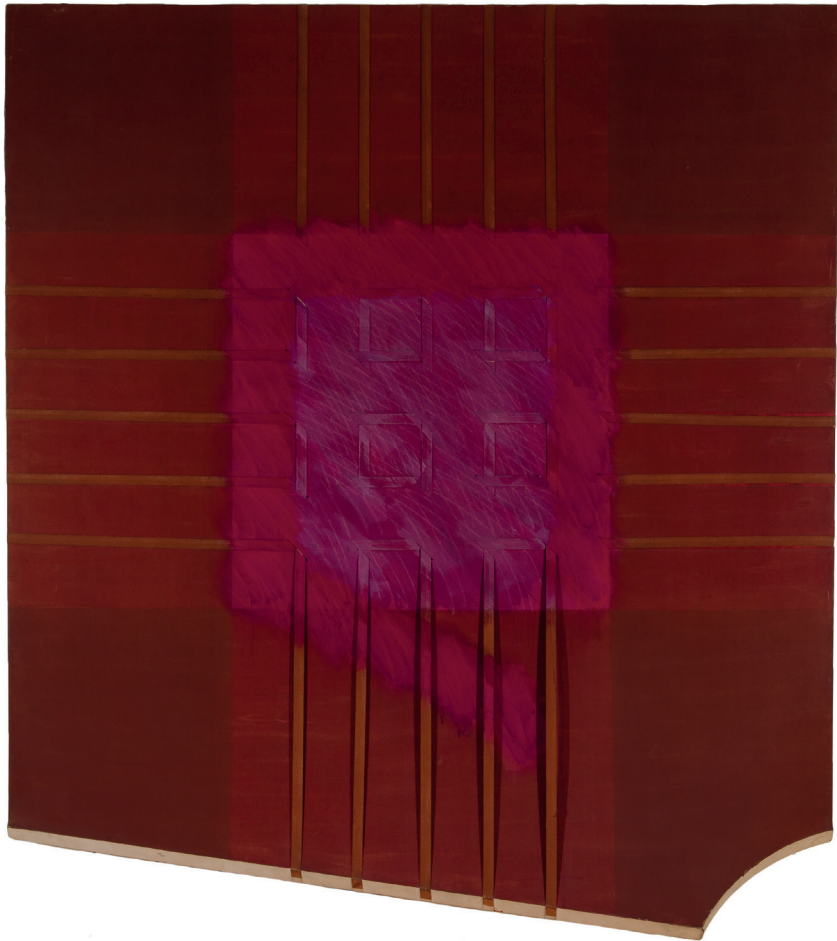
He was born in 1931 in Hertfordshire and attended the St Albans School of Art followed by post-graduate studies at the Royal College of Art, London from 1954–57. English painting was still pastoral and ruled by “good taste”, while his own works were big, splashy and content-free: living in a country still in the grip of austerity and rationing, he fell in love with the dynamism and glamour of America (during this time he saw the abstract expressionist pictures that came to the famous exhibition on contemporary American art at the Tate). Because of his work on packaging and advertising and the choice of titles such as *Packet of Ten* or *Special Offer*, he has come to be seen as a precursor of the generation of Pop artists developed only a few years later.

After lecturing at Hammersmith College of Art, in 1959 he was awarded the prestigious Harkness Fellowship to live and teach in New York for two years, where he produced paintings combining the formal qualities of American abstract painters which made references to the American commercial culture.

From 1963 his production gradually became more minimal and Smith began to examine the two-dimensional properties of painting and to find ways in which a painting could express the shape of reality as he saw it. His work became correspondingly optimistic and expansive: it spread outwards across the wall, and eventually, on three-dimensional

constructed canvases, out into the room. During the 1970s and 1980s, his canvas was taken off the usual wooden stretchers, with strings hung from the edges or tied in knots; these works were coined the ‘kite’ pieces and were no longer restricted to hanging rigid on the wall.

In 1970 Smith was the British representative at the Venice Biennale and had a career retrospective at the Tate in 1975, when he was still in his 40s. He resettled permanently in New York in 1976. Smith's greatest triumph as a painter was to blend various artistic movements and make them his own. His works are in the collection of the Tate Gallery, London and the MoMA in New York.



Roberta, 1972
acrylic on shaped canvas
with canvas straps
218.4 × 200 cm
Provenance: d'Arte Moderna,
Bologna

Literature
Richard Smith: Seven
Exhibitions 1961–75, London,
Tate Gallery, 1975, p. 97, illus

John Wells

(1907 – 2000)

“[...] certainly the most important abstract artist of his generation in Britain today”. With these words Patrick Heron in 1950 defined fellow artist John Wells. Born in London in 1907 from a bacteriologist, Wells studied at University College Hospital, London and during his time as a medicine student he received his artistic training by taking evening classes at St Martin’s School of Art during 1927-8. Although soon included in important group exhibitions, he practiced as a GP in the Isle of Scilly during the Second World War and began considering working as a full-time artist only at the age of 38. His artistic inclination didn’t stay latent during his medical career: he wrote poems, read art publications and kept painting showing fascination for the abstract art, influenced by Ben Nicholson.

Cornwall, the sea and the flight of birds became the pivot of Wells’ exploration of natural forms: his scientific approach revealed his search for the intrinsic structure beneath their surface elements, especially since his encounter with Naum Gabo and Constructivism in 1940. This struck Wells so deeply that he immediately started incorporating the study of geometry into his abstract works in an effort to render a spatial construction on canvas.

Among the co-founders of the Penwith Society of Art and the Cryptic Group, in the late 1940s, Wells shifted his interest back towards the landscape, drawing him closer to the works of his contemporaries in the St Ives School, which common ground was a “romantic attachment to the landscape, rather than a commitment to abstraction” (M. Rowe, 1998), but always pursued his individual research.

Between 1945-55 he produced a body of work that can be representative of his entire career, focusing on the elaboration of the ideas generated over the previous years in his discussions with Barbara Hepworth, Ben Nicholson and Naum Gabo. Although experimenting with bigger sized paintings (adopted by both European and American artists of the 1950s), Wells’ predilection for the small scale reflected not only his artistic research in the microscopic, but also his interest in the limited-sized and meditative work of Paul Klee.

Wells’ reputation became increasingly marginal in his maturity. Wells worked sporadically and his paintings had little exposure, leaving a portion of his oeuvre unseen until his 1998 major retrospective, just 2 years before his death. Alan Bowness suggested in 1972 that his ‘paintings and constructions... have a purity and a quality that substantiate the claim that he is the most neglected major figure of the period’.

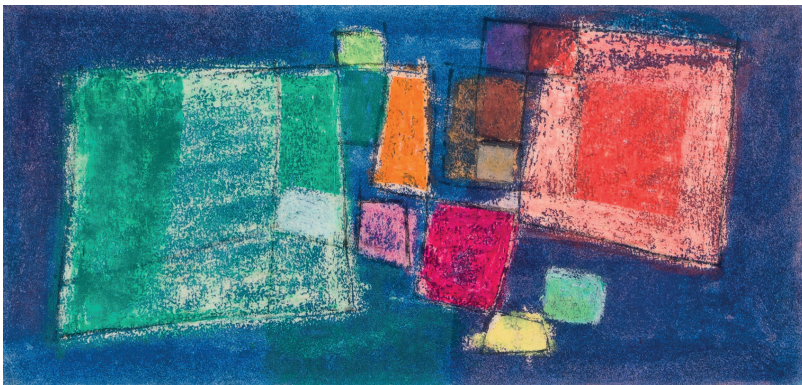
The Tate Gallery celebrated the centenary of his birth with an exhibitions held at the Tate St Ives.



Untitled, c.1960
oil on board
estate stamped verso
60.5 × 129.5 cm
Provenance: Artist's Estate

Exhibited
City of Bradford Art Gallery, 1961

John Wells



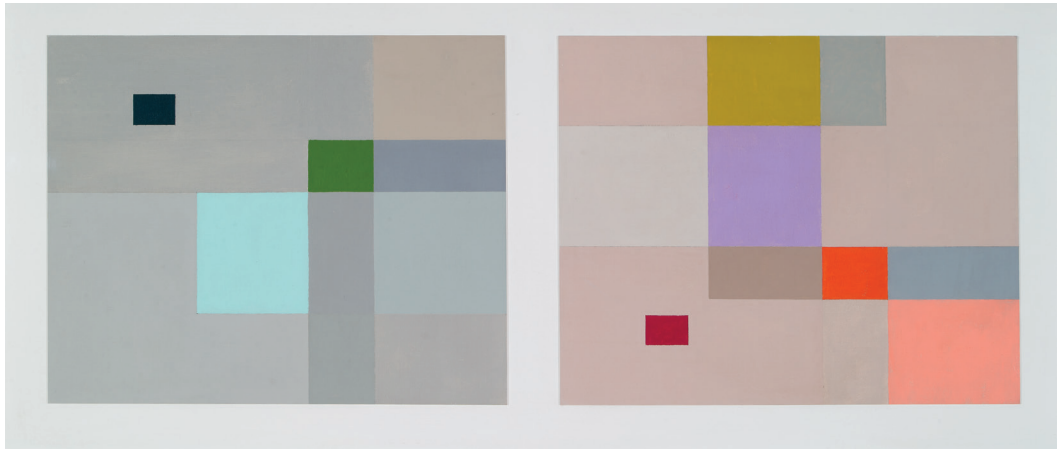
Composition with Squares, 1964

pastel on paper

studio stamped

10 × 20.5 cm

Provenance: Artist's Estate



Inverse Variation, 1967

oil on board
signed, dated, studio stamped
& inscribed verso
54.6 × 121.3 cm
Provenance: Artist's Estate

Exhibited

Penwith Society 1967
Edinburgh Festival 1968
Penwith Society 1976
Tate St Ives

Gillian Wise

(b. 1936)

Gillian Wise is an English contemporary visual artist who was born in 1936. She is mostly known for her constructivist works (from the 1950s onwards) and the application of concepts of rationality and aesthetic order to abstract paintings and reliefs taking these principles of the Modern Movement well into the 21st century.

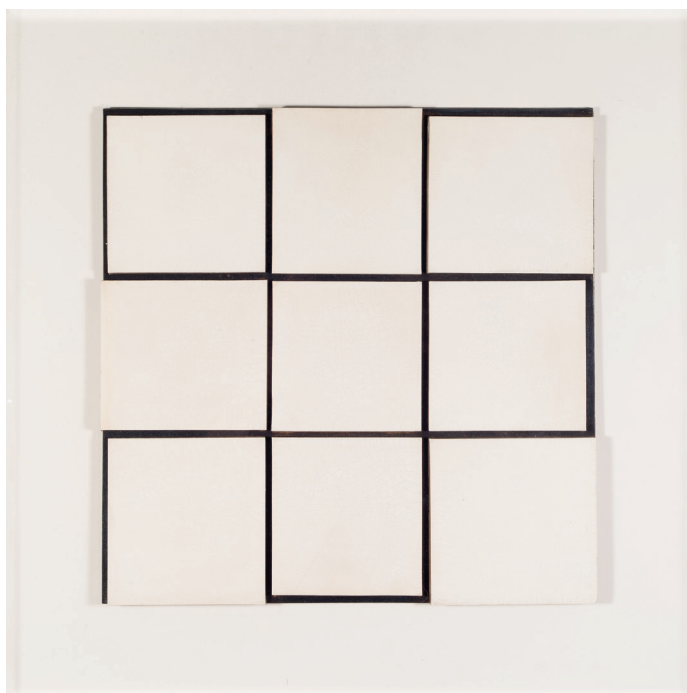
Wise studied art at the Wimbledon and Central schools of Art in 1954–7. She became interested in the writings of the American 'Concretionist' artist Charles Biederman, with whom she corresponded and who put her in touch with Anthony Hill and the (only) English Constructivist group, making her, in the early 1950s, the youngest member of the group which centered on Victor Pasmore and included Adrian Heath, John Ernest, Anthony Hill, Kenneth Martin, and Mary Martin.

Wise first exhibited with the Young Contemporaries 1957. In the 1960s and -70s her work became much more widely shown with exhibitions in England and London (including the ICA, the Whitechapel Gallery and the V&A), Paris, Chicago and at the Biennale of Tokyo and Nuremberg. She also gained a UNESCO Fellowship award, a British Council scholarship to study Russian constructivism in Leningrad, and was also commissioned by the Arts Council to curate the Constructivist section of the 1978 Hayward Annual, followed in the same year by her inclusion in the Arts Council's Constructive Context show. In the early 1980s Wise was commissioned to design the large-scale mural construction in the Barbican Centre in London.

She taught at the Chelsea and St Martins schools of Art between 1971 and 1974; later Wise spent several years teaching and

studying in the USA at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Harvard University and the University of California. While in the USA she was twice nominated in the UK as an RA (her absence in the USA and, later, Paris prevented her election).

Living in France for much of her later career, her exhibitions in the UK became infrequent, although she was shown several times in Paris and Chicago in the 1990s, at the British Art Fair and Southampton City Art Gallery in the 2000s as well as the Tate Britain's year-long display, *Construction England* in 2010. Examples of her work are also held in many collections abroad and in Britain including the Tate, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Government Art Collection, the Arts Council and the Henry Moore Institute.



Directed Path Series, 1966
rubber sheets (from
a Xerox) on aluminium
signed, titled & dated verso
30.5 × 30.5 cm
Provenance: The Artist
Private Collection

Exhibited
Towards a Rational Aesthetic:
Constructive Art in Post-war
Britain, Osborne Samuel, 2007,
cat.53

Bryan Wynter

(1915–1975)

The one English artist seen by some as the only rival artist to the major American Abstract Expressionists was Bryan Wynter. Born in London in 1915, Wynter studied at Westminster School of Art in 1937–38 and at the Slade School of Art until 1940. After the end of World War II, during which he worked as a conscientious objector, he settled near St Ives, in Cornwall. His choice of living in the isolated and exposed house called 'The Carn' fed deeply his artistic production, but at the same time didn't stop him from establishing contacts with intellectuals in the area. He was associated with the St Ives group, but even if his artistic interest was commonly inspired by the English Neo-Romantic movement of the 1940s and the local (Cornish) landscape, Wynter's works were also influenced by Surrealism.

In 1947 Wynter co-founded the Crypt group, was a member of the Penwith Society of Arts and taught at the Bath Academy of Art from 1951 to 1955. In those years traces of a more abstract-style start to emerge in his art, especially after his encounter with 'Doors of perception' (A. Huxley, 1954) and the description of how the use of mescaline (then legal) freed up his vision of reality.

1956 was a turning point in Wynter's career: he decided to take mescaline regularly for a research study on its consciousness-changing qualities, and he encountered the Abstract Expressionists in the Tate Gallery. Bypassing the will in both a Surrealist and Abstract Expressionist vein, the subconscious was free to operate and this allowed him to shape a new (to him) approach to painting (although the construction on the canvas was still a necessity—he was not an action painter).

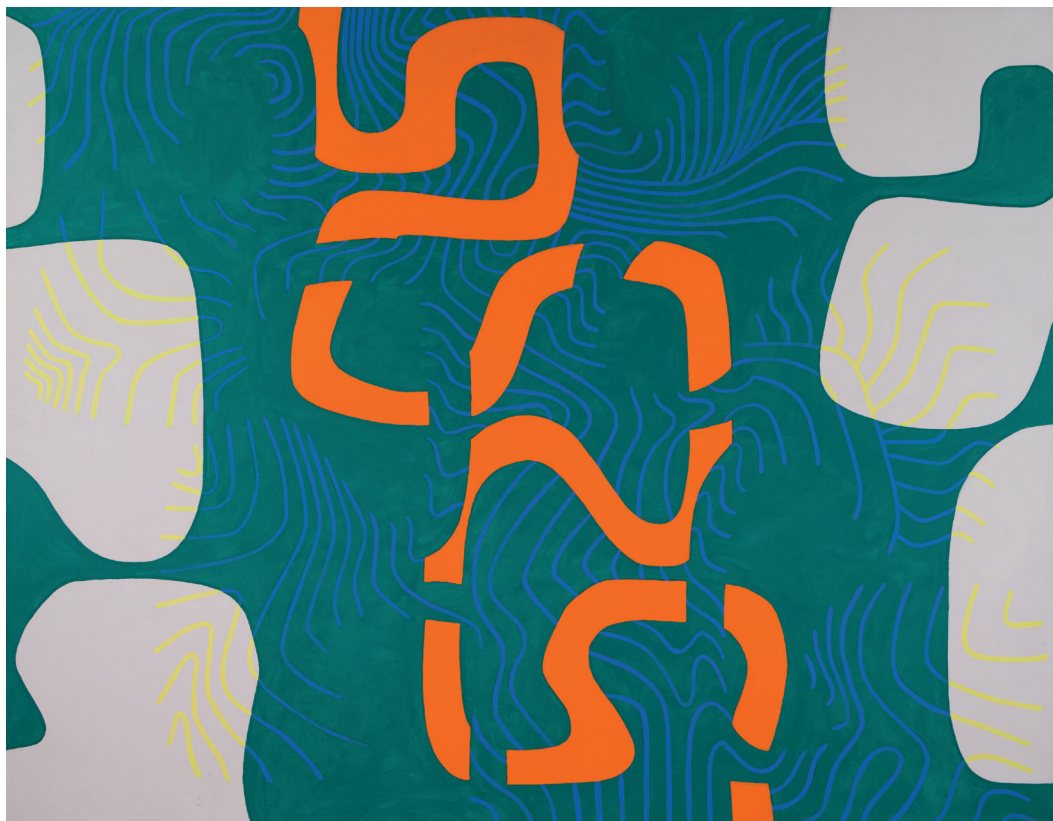
Through to the early 1960s his style turned inarguably abstract and distinctive; what is considered his most significant oeuvre was produced in those 5 or so years. Although still largely inspired by landscape in his late career, in a series of paintings based on water movement Wynter replaced the old muted, earthy tones by bold and psychedelic colours that evoked the conciliation of natural and spiritual life, in conjunction with his exploration of kinetic constructions that he called IMOOS (images moving out onto space).

It has been suggested that his late body of work, outside the then current artistic trends, is related to his health problems. Bryan Wynter died in Cornwall of a heart-attack in 1975, 10 years before the large Tate exhibition, *St Ives 1939–1964; Twenty Five Years of Painting, Sculpture and Pottery*. His works are held in major British collections, such as the Arts Council, the British Council, the Tate, the National Galleries of Scotland and Southampton City Art Gallery.



Confluence IV, 1965
oil on canvas
signed, titled & dated verso
142.2 × 122 cm
Provenance: Artist's Estate

Exhibited
Arts Council, Belfast, 1966, no.1



Meander II, 1967

oil on canvas
signed, titled & dated verso
167.6 × 213.4 cm
Provenance: Artist's Estate

Exhibited

Waddington Galleries,
London, 1967, no.10
Penwith Society, 1969, no.39
Plymouth City Art Gallery,
1970, no.109, ill.
Falmouth School of Art, 1975, no.4
Penwith Society, 1976, no.1
Hayward Gallery, Retrospective,
Arts Council, London, 1976, no.66
Penwith Society, 1982, no.20
Tate Gallery, Retrospective, St
Ives, 2001

Literature

Michael Bird, Bryan Wynter,
Lund Humphries, 2010,
p.180–182, pl. 160

Bryan Wynter



Untitled, c.1958
gouache over monoprint
on paper
68.5 × 51 cm
Provenance: Artist's Estate



Untitled (guitar), c.1958
mixed media monotype
on paper
63.5 × 48 cm
Provenance: Artist's Estate

Michael Canney

(1923–1999)

Michael Canney was born in Falmouth. Studied at Redruth and Penzance Schools of Art and St. Ives School of Painting under Leonard Fuller, in 1947–51 at Goldsmiths' College School of Art, where he was a contemporary of Bridget Riley and, as he became more focused on abstraction, meeting Victor Pasmore.

Moving in the West Country art community, he also met Ben Nicholson, Naum Gabo and Barbara Hepworth, collaborating with Hepworth on a sculpture exhibition in 1957. He was close friends with Peter Lanyon and Patrick Heron as well as mixing with art circles, which included Robert Adams and William Scott, but his early paintings were greatly influenced above all by the impressionists and the Cubists: Cezanne was his artistic hero.

Michael Canney served in Italy during the war, and became absorbed by the art he encountered there; an important contemporary meeting came when he met de Chirico at art classes in Florence. Back home, Canney completed his art training at Goldsmith's College between 1947 and 1951. The influence of Cezanne persisted, but gradually Canney was moving further towards pure abstraction. Having taught for a short while in London, Canney moved back to Cornwall in the mid-fifties to become curator of the Newlyn Art Gallery in 1956.

He now brought to the region an important internationalism, and was integral to organising the visit of Rothko in 1958. He began publishing articles on the art scene, displaying a journalistic and intellectual interest in art that would persist alongside his creative impulses. Canney's work moved from cubist and constructivist sensibilities to a greater degree of gestural freedom during these years; then in the

1960s he turned more sharply to hard-edged, geometric abstraction.

After a period in California, during the mid-sixties Michael Canney was appointed to the teaching staff of the West of England College of Art in Bristol, alongside his friend Paul Feiler. He taught there until retiring to Tuscany in 1983. The Fine Art Society held an exhibition of Michael Canney's 'Oils, Alkyds, and Reliefs' in March 2007.



Abstract, c.1960
gouache
12 × 12.5 cm
Estate stamped verso
Provenance: Private Collection



Abstract, c.1960
gouache
12 × 11.5 cm
Estate stamped verso
Provenance: Private Collection

Terry Frost

(1915 – 2003)

Sir Terry Frost is considered one of Britain's most respected, successful and acclaimed abstract artists of the Twentieth Century, his career spanning seven decades. Terence Ernest Manitou Frost was born in Leamington Spa, Warwickshire in 1915. He left school at 14 and started attending evening classes in art when he was sixteen.

Frost joined the Territorial Army in 1933 and the commandos upon the declaration of war. He was captured in 1941 and became a prisoner of war in Germany. In the same camp he met Adrian Heath, who helped him discover his artistic talent and encouraged him to move to Cornwall, where an artistic community had formed that included Ben Nicholson and Barbara Hepworth.

He attended the St Ives School of Art in 1946 and went on studying at the Camberwell School of Art in London the following year. Here he enjoyed the flourishing artistic scenes of both London and St Ives and expressed a clear interest for abstraction and making his first non-representational painting in 1949.

The motifs of the Cornish landscape dominated throughout Frost's career and provided a rich source of inspiration for much of his work. In St Ives he became a member of the Penwith Society and was part of a close circle of emerging British modernists working with abstraction, including Roger Hilton, Patrick Heron, Peter Lanyon, John Wells and Bryan Wynter.

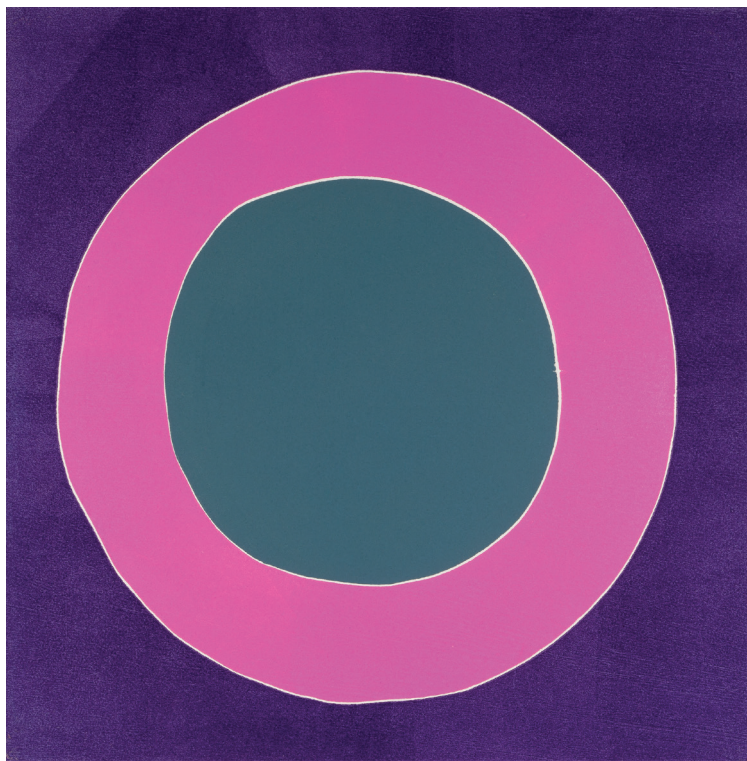
In 1951 he worked as an assistant to Barbara Hepworth (this experience gave him the impulse to produce his later collages and painted constructions), had his first solo show in London the following year and by the late 1950's Frost was established as a leading

abstract artist. Although Frost's work rejected specific images, gradually he was building a vocabulary of signs – chevrons, discs, crescents, arrowheads, lozenges, triangles, spirals and horizontal shafts.

Between 1952 and 1974 Frost taught at Leeds College of Art, Bath Academy of Art, Coventry Art College, Reading University, and the University of California. He then returned to Cornwall setting up a home and studio in Newlyn till his death in 2003.

Frost had numerous British and International solo exhibitions in his lifetime, including at the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, the ICA, a touring Arts Council retrospective, the Mayor Gallery, Tate St Ives, the British Council in New York and an RA retrospective in 2000. He was made an RA in 1992 and awarded a knighthood in 1998.

Frost's work is held in numerous private and public collections around the world including the Tate, the MoMA and the National Gallery of Canada.



Orchard Tambourine (7c), 2002
woodcut
signed front right
33.5 × 33.5 cm
Provenance: Private Collection

Terry Frost



Swing Rhythm, 2003
screenprint & collage
numbered & signed by the artist
64 × 87 cm
Provenance: Private Collection



Yellow and Blue for Bowje, 2000
screenprint with woodblock
signed in pencil lower front
37 x 42 cm
Provenance: Private Collection

Patrick Heron

(1920 – 1999)

Patrick Heron was an abstract painter, textile designer and writer on art whose work was devoted to the analysis of natural forms and colours. He is widely considered one of the greatest British painters of the Twentieth Century.

Heron was born in Yorkshire in 1920, the son of an entrepreneur who moved to Cornwall to set up a garment factory. Still a schoolboy, he started painting and his first design for his father's textile business was a success. Heron knew from an early age he wanted to be an artist and, before the war, he studied at the Slade School of Art. He then registered as a conscientious objector, but his chronic asthma forced him back to Cornwall.

In 1945 he moved to London, started working as an art critic (he contributed to various journals during his career and is still considered amongst the best English critics of the post-war artistic period) and in 1947 had his first one-man exhibition in London, his works being still figurative and inspired by Braques and Matisse. It's in those years that his interest for abstraction started to emerge.

After teaching at the Central School of Arts and Crafts in London in the early -50s, in 1956 Heron moved to Eagle's Nest at Zennor, near St Ives (where he lived for the rest of his life), met the leading artists of the St. Ives School and soon started painting non-figurative canvases. The influence of the Cornish natural environment in his art was profound, and of his house in particular, which was fully recognised as the source of his painting. Heron used the term 'abstract-figuration' in an attempt to define this type of abstraction still indispensably relying on the outside world —such tie with reality was lost in the works

of Abstract Expressionists (seen by Heron at the famous exhibition held at Tate in 1956).

From 1960, the year of his first solo show in New York, and for the following 4 decades Heron regularly exhibited in Britain and internationally, visited and worked in Australia multiple times, kept writing and publishing on art, gave several lectures in a number of Universities in the UK and abroad and worked on public commissions (including the Tate St Ives).

He was a Trustee of the Tate Gallery from 1980–1987, turned down a Knighthood under Margaret Thatcher (Heron was a lifelong socialist and pacifist and hated the Tory governments of the 1980s and -90s) and declined to become an RA. The Tate Britain held a major retrospective exhibition of his work in 1998, the year before he died.

Patrick Heron's works are held in many public collections in Britain (including the British Museum, the National Portrait Gallery, the Tate, the V&A, the Southampton City Art Gallery and the Otter Gallery, Chichester) and internationally.

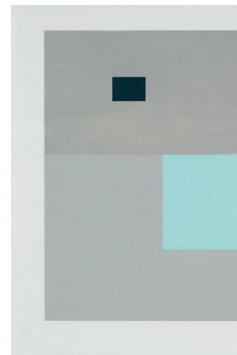
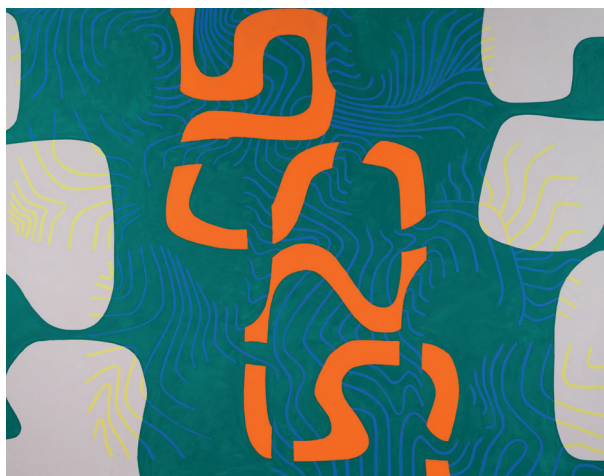
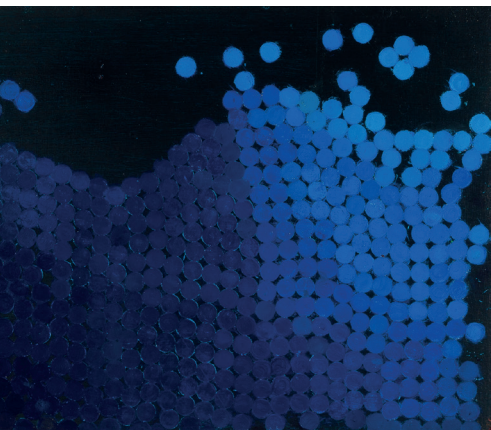


January 5, 1984
Gouache on paper
signed, inscribed
and dated verso
34.9 × 54.2 cm
Provenance: The Artist
Waddington Galleries,
London (their ref B13658)
Private Collection,
Japan (1988–2015)



3 November, 1986
gouache on paper
signed, inscribed
and dated verso
31.1 × 40 cm
Provenance: The Artist
Waddington Galleries,
London (their ref B 16746)
Private Collection,
Japan (1988–2015)

Curated by Candida Stevens
Introduction by Mel Gooding
Artist Biographies by Silvia Gonzato
Design by Praline
Photography by Dan Stevens
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