

Colour and Sequence in 1960s British Art

An Arts Council Collection Touring Exhibition

David Annesley (b.1936)

David Annesley studied at St Martin's School of Art in London (1958–62), initially enrolling on the painting course before switching to sculpture. Annesley's lyrical sculptures of the 1960s are mostly constructed from welded steel and coated in brightly-coloured paint. They explore multiple iterations of basic shapes and forms: boxes, triangles, rippling curves and rings. The large circular form in *Blue Ring* (1966) is based on the breadth of the artist's outstretched arms, a pose reminiscent of Leonardo Da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man* (c.1490). The steel structure of the sculpture is hidden beneath a thick layer of blue paint, which disguises the making process and creates an overall sense of lightness.

John Dee (b.1938)

John Dee studied sculpture at Reading University (1956–60) and at the Slade School of Art in London (1960–62). During the 1960s, Dee developed a distinctive body of sculpture combining sensual, undulating forms with strong colour and strict symmetry. In 2016, Dee reflected: 'Several of my works in the 1960s were given titles with a non-religious biblical association. That of *Exodus*, for example, drew attention to the shift in structural emphasis from vertical to horizontal and, in a second version, the migration of colour from a wall-based painting to floor-based sculpture. *Revelation* concluded both this series and another running parallel concerning (for want of a better word) the oracular. These mostly bilaterally symmetrical works played with the possibility of pure geometry metamorphosing into an impure form capable of human interaction, even communication. ... *Revelation* is fully opened, a book of colour waiting to be read.'

Bernard Farmer (1919–2002)

Bernard Farmer studied at Chelsea Polytechnic School of Art and exhibited his work with the London Group of artists. He received attention during the 1960s for abstract compositions featuring zones of brightly-coloured paint set against a neutral white background. Farmer often used acrylic paint, which enabled him to build up areas of colour to the picture surface with speed and freedom. As the artist once explained, the simplicity of the composition is crucial: 'the more simple I can make an image the better I like it... the less can always expand the mind, whereas more either constricts or becomes too much.'

Michael Bolus (1934–2013)

Born in South Africa in 1934, Michael Bolus settled in London in 1957, studying at St Martin's School of Art. He initially worked in stone, but quickly turned to sheet steel and aluminium, preferring a more constructed approach to sculpture. This shift in materials enabled Bolus to explore ideas of structural and compositional balance, as well as repeated form and colour. *4th Sculpture* (1965) sits directly on the gallery floor, occupying our space. Although the form of *4th Sculpture* is three dimensional, the artist's concern with flatness rather than volume is evident. Cut and folded sheets of steel become planes of colour, and the shape of the sculpture appears to shift and change depending upon the angle from which it is seen.

Robyn Denny (1930–2014)

Robyn Denny studied at St Martin's School of Art and then at the Royal College of Art in London. In 1960, Denny was involved in the *Situation* exhibition of abstract painting at the RBA Galleries, and came to be associated with the 'Situation Group' along with fellow artists including Gillian Ayres, Bernard Cohen and Gwyther Irwin. Throughout the 1960s Denny exhibited widely across Europe and in New York, and he represented Britain at the Venice Biennale in 1966. The influence of American post-painterly abstraction is evident in *Over Reach* (1965–66), where Denny has employed hard-edged blocks of colour upon a large canvas. The strong vertical and symmetrical forms emphasise the scale of the painting, giving space and form to the flat planes of muted colour.

Barry Flanagan (1941–2009)

Barry Flanagan studied architecture at Birmingham College of Art before attending the sculpture course at St Martin's School of Art in London. *heap 4* (1967) is a fine example of the radical sculpture Flanagan made during the 1960s, described by the art historian Charles Harrison as 'disturbingly organic'. Flanagan often worked with soft materials such as sand, muslin, rope and hessian – malleable materials which are free to form themselves. In *heap 4*, one of a series of 'heap' works, sand-filled hessian bags are informally piled on top of one another, with gravity dictating the final form.

Anthony Caro (1924–2013)

Anthony Caro played a central role in the development of British sculpture in the second half of the twentieth century. Caro worked as an assistant to Henry Moore in the 1950s, but abandoned his early figurative work after encountering the sculpture of the American artist, David Smith. A highly influential tutor at St Martin's School of Art, Caro was committed to sculpture as a social activity. He abolished individual studio spaces and insisted on discussing sculpture with his students in group 'crits'. *Slow Movement* (1965) is one of many abstract works that Caro produced in the 1960s, constructed by welding and bolting pieces of industrial scrap steel together. There is a tension between the three elements of the work, which together forge a sense of passage, articulating the surrounding space.

Antony Donaldson (b.1939)

After graduating from the Slade School of Fine Art in London in 1962, Antony Donaldson developed a distinctive body of work, using flat planes of dazzling colour depicting pin-ups, strippers or fast cars. Despite his links to Pop art, a clear interest in abstraction, particularly American hard-edge painting and the Dutch De Stijl, underpins Donaldson's work. In 1966 Donaldson moved to Los Angeles and during the following two years he made a series of paintings influenced by the architecture of the 1930s cinemas then still existing in Hollywood. *Hollywood Pix* (1967) references the landmark cinema on Sunset Boulevard. The work features two related forms which appear to hover against the backdrop of an infinite clear sky. The use of an airbrush and spray gun enabled Donaldson to create a new sense of deep space and to make a surface seemingly untouched by human hand.

Anthony Hill (b.1930)

Alongside Mary Martin, Kenneth Martin and Victor Pasmore, Anthony Hill was one of the leading figures of the mid-twentieth century Constructionist Group. In 1956 Hill abandoned painting and began to construct reliefs using new mass-produced materials such as acrylic and aluminium. His compositions make reference to mathematical formulae. *Relief Construction G2* (1966) is one of many reliefs produced by Hill during the 1960s to feature aluminium sections that jut out from the base plane at 120°. As the units are identical, the only way of telling one from another is by variations in the light reflected from their sloping surfaces, revealing their precise, sequential placement.

John Hoyland (1934–2011)

John Hoyland was a leading British abstract painter and printmaker who came to prominence in the 1960s. In 1964, Hoyland visited New York and made contact with influential artists and critics including Robert Motherwell, Helen Frankenthaler, Kenneth Noland and Clement Greenberg. *15.5.64* (1964) is characteristic of Hoyland's work of this period: strong colours buzz next to one another, while the repeated shapes create and yet confuse a sense of depth. Hoyland's titles, which refer only to a date, defy interpretation and add another layer of abstraction. Despite being widely recognised as an abstract artist, Hoyland disliked the term, explaining: 'It smacks always of geometry to me, of rational thought. There's no geometry, there's no rectangles in nature, no real straight lines. There's only the circle, the one really powerful form in nature I keep getting drawn back to.'

Eduardo Paolozzi (1924–2005)

One of the pioneers of Pop art, Eduardo Paolozzi produced collages, prints, graphic art, film, pottery and sculpture. Paolozzi's work changed radically during the early 1960s when he began welding prefabricated cast aluminium pieces to form sculptures. These works have an architectural character that recall the wilder edges of science fiction. *Dollus II* (1968) is one of several chrome-plated steel sculptures produced later in the decade. Paolozzi was attracted to chrome because of its qualities of light and illusion. This material offered the artist a new way of thinking about three-dimensional form, and the resulting works are often ambiguous. The balanced symmetry of *Dollus II*, for example, is disrupted by the highly-polished chrome surface, which reflects and distorts its surroundings.

Jeffrey Steele (b.1931)

Jeffrey Steele experimented with representational modes of painting during the 1950s whilst working as a radio technician. A scholarship from the French government enabled Steele to visit Paris in 1959, where he encountered the work of Josef Albers and Victor Vasarely. From this point onwards Steele committed himself to a lifelong exploration of abstraction. He reduced his work to the barest essentials: a blank white canvas articulated with black oil paint. From a simple binary relationship between these two elements, Steele developed a new approach, starting with an exploration of repeated shapes including ovals, ellipses, triangles, squares and other polygonal forms. *Ilmatar* (1966–67) is one of the works produced by Steele at this pivotal moment in his career.

Tess Jaray (b. 1937)

Following her studies at St Martin's School of Art (1954–57), and the Slade School of Fine Art (1957–60), Tess Jaray travelled to Italy and France, where she drew influence from Renaissance architecture. Jaray's paintings of the 1960s are often suggestive of an interior, with simple lines, repeated forms and flat zones of colour employed to delineate space, structure and scale. As the artist explains: '*St Stephen's Way* (1964) was titled after the Cathedral in Vienna, which I saw for the first time in 1957, when I was 19 and just before I went to the Slade. The colour makes some reference to the tiling of the roof, and the faintly Gothic feel to the painting was in part, though in part only, my memory of the power of the Gothic interior of the cathedral, particularly arresting in those days when it was barely lit. It has remained in my mind ever since seeing it that first time.'

Bridget Riley (b.1931)

Bridget Riley studied at Goldsmiths College (1949–52) and at the Royal College of Art (1952–55) in London. Riley represented Great Britain at the Venice Biennale in 1968 where she was the first British artist to be awarded the International Prize for Painting. *Movement in Squares* (1961) is an important early example of Riley's mature and distinctive style, and the artist herself sees the work as marking the beginning of her breakthrough into pure abstraction. Working only in black and white, Riley used simple geometric shapes – squares in this instance – to create an intense and unsettling optical experience. The height of the squares remains constant across the entire canvas, but minute differences in the width creates the sense of a structural contraction towards the centre of the painting.

Joe Tilson (b.1928)

Joe Tilson worked as a carpenter and cabinet maker before serving in the RAF until 1949. After military service he studied at St Martin's School of Art and then at the Royal College of Art in London. One of the leading figures of British Pop art, Tilson received critical acclaim for paintings and collage constructions which combine themes of consumer culture and mass media with an enduring interest in ancient civilisations and myths. In *Zikkurat 7* (1967), for example, the joyful rainbow-like colours appear to reflect the world of popular culture, however the overall composition makes direct reference to the stepped pyramidal structures built by ancient civilisations in Mesopotamia.

Phillip King (b. 1934)

After studying Modern Languages at the University of Cambridge, Philip King attended the sculpture course at St Martin's School of Art (1957–58). A trip to Greece in 1960 exposed the young artist to ancient Greek architecture, and the *Documenta* exhibition in Germany that same year introduced King to contemporary American abstraction. Upon his return to London, King destroyed his work to date, stating that he had 'established new ideas about fundamental forms and sculpture being off the pedestal and extending on the ground and stretching out.' *Point X* (1965) demonstrates King's appetite for working with non-traditional sculptural materials and his interest in exploring the possibilities in basic shapes, repetition and symmetry. The use of fibreglass in *Point X* gave King the ability to arrange forms in radical new ways. The repeating, mirrored forms of triangles, circles and squares are split into two separate groups and appear to hover weightlessly in space.

Bernard Schottlander (1924–99)

Bernard Schottlander came to the UK as a Jewish refugee, having fled Nazi Germany in 1939. He settled in Leeds, where he worked as a welder and took an evening course in sculpture at Leeds College of Art. Following further study, Schottlander devoted himself entirely to sculpture in 1963. As well as exhibiting his work in galleries he won a series of commissions for large public outdoor works which combined his skills in industrial design and sculpture. *Auto Ditto* (1966) is a perfect example of Schottlander's abstract and geometric style which he had firmly established by the mid-1960s. The overall composition of the work makes direct reference to Asante gold weights from West Africa, which the artist collected.

William Tucker (b.1935)

William Tucker studied History at the University of Oxford before enrolling on the sculpture course at St Martin's School of Art in 1959. Around 1963 Tucker began using repeated units within a single sculpture, and he also established that each work must sit directly on the floor. *Thebes* consists of three identical sections, each comprising a right-angled triangle with an undulating hypotenuse. Different colours are used to separate each unit. The colour acts as a skin to the work, disguising the materials from which it is made and creating a sense of weightlessness. In contrast, the tilting red and yellow units suggest the effect of gravity, anchoring the work to the ground.

Kim Lim (1936–97)

Born in Singapore, Kim Lim moved to London in 1954, where she studied at St Martin's School of Art (1954–56) and then at the Slade School of Art (1956–60). She often spoke of how the similarities and differences between Eastern and Western art influenced her approach to sculpture and she was particularly inspired by formal simplicity. Her work of the 1960s expresses a particular emphasis on rhythm and repetition, with forms becoming flatter and never any bigger than the artist could handle herself. These parameters can be identified in *Candy* (1965), a work which explores balance, colour, form and the notion of 'less elaboration and more strength', a concept Lim associated with art from earlier civilisations.

Tim Scott (b.1937)

Tim Scott studied architecture at St Martin's School of Art in London (1954–59) whilst also attending the sculpture course on a part-time basis. He went on to teach at St Martin's alongside Michael Bolus, Phillip King and William Tucker, becoming the Head of the Sculpture Department in 1980. *Quinquereme* (1966) is one of three sculptures by Scott inspired by and named after a Roman galley ship. An ancient Roman quinquereme had five levels of oarsmen, in contrast to the trireme which had three, and the quadreme with four. *Quinquereme* was one of the first works in which Scott began experimenting with vertically positioned sheets of acrylic, in contrast to his earlier acrylic works where the sheet is bent or formed to create a sense of volume. Despite its structural complexity, *Quinquereme* is composed of a limited selection of simple geometric shapes which are repeated throughout the structure.

William Turnbull (1922–2012)

William Turnbull worked as an illustrator before studying painting and then sculpture at the Slade School of Art (1946–48). In 1948, Turnbull moved to Paris and drew inspiration from artists including Constantin Brancusi and Alberto Giacometti. Turnbull married the artist Kim Lim in 1960 and they travelled extensively together, seeking out diverse cultures and approaches to making art. Soon after, Turnbull began experimenting with welded steel sculpture. *Double Red* (1966) is one of a series of large totem-like painted steel structures that exploits the tensile strength of steel to create sculpture that is on the cusp of becoming two-dimensional. Both of the upright elements are differently angled and articulated yet each appears to echo the movement of the other.

Mary Martin (1907–69)

Mary Martin studied at Goldsmith's College of Art (1925–29) and at the Royal College of Art (1929–32) in London. Along with Victor Pasmore and her husband Kenneth Martin, she was one of the early pioneers of the post-war British Constructionist Group. Throughout her career, Martin applied mathematical principles such as the Golden Section and the Fibonacci Sequence to her constructions and reliefs, emphasising geometric form and incorporating new materials such as acrylic and aluminium. *Compound Rhythms with Blue* (1966) features half-cut cubes, coloured planes and reflective surfaces, which combine to create a complex composition that shimmers with an endless sequence of reflection and repetition.

Peter Sedgley (b.1930)

Initially educated in Architecture and Building, Peter Sedgley worked as an architect's assistant before turning to art, influenced by Goethe's theories and the imagery of the Surrealists. He was one of the few British artists included in the major exhibition, *The Responsive Eye* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and, with Bridget Riley, was considered a leading figure in British Op art. Internationally renowned, Sedgley has produced a vast and diverse body of work over half a century and is recognised as a pioneer in the development and application of kinetic and luminescent technology within the visual arts. He aligns his work to the creation of an ambient spatial theatre in which the viewer becomes both spectator and participant while further exploring colour in relation to the metaphysics of vision.

Jeremy Moon (1934–73)

Before becoming an artist Jeremy Moon studied law at Cambridge University. From 1960, he took up painting as well as ballet, choreography and poetry alongside his day job in advertising. A visit to the second *Situation* exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1961 inspired Moon to enroll at the Central School of Art in London. *Cape Red* (1965) exemplifies Moon's mature style. His hard-edged approach to abstract painting involved the application of flat areas of vibrant colour often to a shaped canvas. Moon's passion for dance inspired his painting, and a choreographic element is clear in much of his work through the movement, balance and harmony of the repeated forms arranged on flat fields of colour.

Richard Smith (1931–2016)

Following his studies at the Royal College of Art in London (1954–57), Richard Smith moved to New York in 1959 to teach. Smith's work at this time drew influence from the scale, colour and gesture of American abstract painting, while embracing the visual languages of popular culture and consumerism. Smith's work of the 1960s explored the space between abstraction and representation, and between art and everyday life. His paintings are cinematic in scale and reference the bold designs of billboards, packaging and advertisements. An interest in three-dimensionality is also visible, as seen in the three successive forms in *Trio* (1963). As the artist noted, colour is important: 'the actual image in my paintings tends to dissolve into this high colour thing'.