

Foreword

We are both honoured and delighted that Bridget Riley has agreed to be the subject of the first of the new *Flashback* series of exhibitions. The Arts Council Collection has had a long and close relationship with her, ever since the first, prescient purchase of her work in 1962, when David Sylvester was advising on acquisitions. Riley has had two important solo exhibitions at the Hayward Gallery, in 1970 and 1992, and in 2002 she and Robert Kudielka curated with great insight the widely acclaimed exhibition of work by Paul Klee, *The Nature of Creation*. There have been many touring exhibitions of her prints and works on paper over the years, but it would be true to say that the three paintings now in the Collection are among our most well known and best loved works, having been loaned to an astonishing total of eighty-three exhibitions in the UK and overseas since they were purchased. Most travelled of the three paintings is *Movement in Squares*, the painting that signalled a radical departure for the artist, and became the starting point for an oeuvre which has developed with exemplary rigour over four decades. It is a particular honour that the artist has for the first time set herself the task of anatomising the moment when that breakthrough was made. Bridget Riley's acute and revealing essay in this book recounts, in almost mystical terms, the complex intellectual and visual experience of revelation, recalled now with something of the same sense of excitement.

What the *Flashback* exhibition demonstrates is the evolution of those intellectual and sensory enquiries, and how they have brought the artist to realise the powerful, magisterial paintings that she has made in the last five years. Bridget Riley has most generously loaned work from the studio to complete the exhibition, including some works on paper that have never before been seen, and it has been a joy to work with her in conceiving and shaping the selection. Michael Bracewell's essay here is a great addition to the scholarship around Riley's work, and has grown out of numerous conversations and studio visits in the past year, as the exhibition took shape, and which I know both of them enjoyed greatly.

My especial thanks must go to Karsten Schubert for his unfailing support of our project, and to Ham Darroch and Amanda Sim in the studio for their meticulous and sensitive preparations.

The four tour venues for the exhibition are institutions also notable for their collecting of work by Riley, and it is a subtext of the *Flashback* series to highlight the, sometimes unsung, riches of regional collections in Britain. I should like to thank my colleague Ann Jones for energetically tracking down all the Bridget Rileys in public collections as well as for her work on the exhibition overall. We are indebted to

our colleagues at all four venues for their enthusiasm and support of the exhibition and I should particularly like to thank Fiona Philpott, Myra Brown, Linda Pittwood and Lucy Johnson at the Walker Art Gallery, Andy Horn at Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, Andrew Moore, Harriet Godwin and Heather Guthrie at Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery, and Tim Craven and Alice Workman at Southampton City Art Gallery.

I should like to thank Andy Craig, Julia Homersham and Jonny Aldous for the care and attention they have lavished on the technical and practical aspects of the project. Thanks are due to Mary Richards and Sarah Auld in Hayward Publishing and the designer Tim Harvey for making this elegant publication, and to Westerham Press, whose long association with the artist is manifest in the painstaking and faithful reproduction of images that create a true and lasting memory of the exhibition.

Finally, all our thanks go to Bridget Riley herself, for all that we learn from her and her paintings, and for the immense pleasure that brings.

Caroline Douglas
Head of Arts Council Collection