



"Coming Up #2" oil & wax on canvas 132 cm x 432cm 2004 - 2005,
collection Royal Bank of Scotland



Nick Gammon, Guethary, 2005

Exhibitions / Expositions:

2010	Espace Lhomond, Paris, "Ocean House Paintings"
2007	Mar and Partners, Turin, Italy
2006	Musée de Guéthary, Biarritz, France
2003	Stephen Lacey Gallery, London, UK. 'Size Matters' Yoo Apartments, London, UK Stephen Lacey Gallery, London, UK. Gallery Artists Group Show II Musée de Guéthary, Biarritz., France
2002	ART2002, London. Stephen Lacey Gallery, London, UK. 'Gallery Artists I'
2001	Aeroplastics Contemporary, Brussels, Belgium, 'Psychedelia'
1999	Stephen Lacey Gallery, London, UK. 'Oceans and other Paintings' Stephen Lacey Gallery, London. 'Pure Paint',
1998	Villa Waldberta, Munich, Germany, 'Drie Dyptichen"
1997	Reed's Wharf Gallery, London, UK. 'Gallery Artists' Walker Gallery, Liverpool, UK. 'Moores '97'
1996	Reed's Wharf Gallery, London., UK. 'Hard Edge', Barbican Centre, London, UK. 'Crosscurrents', Barcelona Art Fair, Barcelona., Spain Chateau de Sacy, Paris, France, 'London Exotics'
1995	Alfred, London, UK. 'Four For Fred'. Blue Gallery, London, UK. 'Totems and Pianos',
1993	Berning & Daw. London, UK.
1992	Spitalfiels Heritage Centre, London, UK 'Adam McEwan, Wilma Johnson, Nick Gammon'



"Coming Up #1" oil & wax on canvas 132 cm x 432cm 2003 - 2004
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Segno N° 211 Jan - Feb 2007,
"Le jardin paradisiaque de la chambre verte"
Jean François Larralde , Musée de Guéthary 2006
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Ulrike Grünewald, August 11 1996
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Magenta Green Room Painting, oil & wax on canvas, 150cm x 150 cm 2006

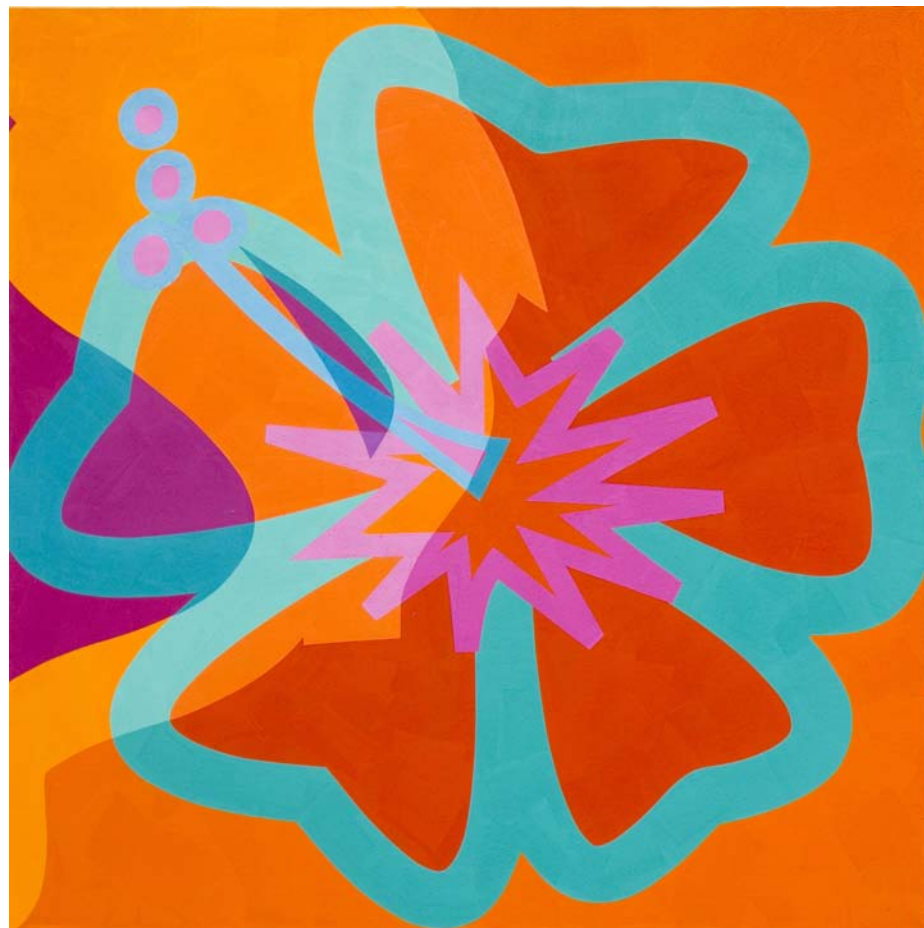
where's dora?

by olga gambari

translation Miriam Hurley and Claudia Ricci

catalogue note for "Where's Dorra" Mar & Partners, Turin 2007

Perhaps they were in his work already, in the abstract forms that he had painted for years, with a minimalism enamored of the historic lesson of America. Maybe they were camouflaged, transformed, in the profusion of colors that dominated the geometric precision of the patterns, marked out like mathematical modules. No doubt he had them in his eyes and in his heart. Now Nick Gammon dreams only of more and more flowers and leaves, all plants of paradise, symbols of an Eden in an exotic, tropical land. The shapes of hibiscus and monstera deliciosa have become modules, forms that detach from reality and turn abstract, with which he creates patterns as precisely considered as a theorem in everything from their compositional structure to their chromatic values. There is an essay by the American artist Ad Reinhardt, written for a 1949 exhibition, which had been painted in the Virgin Islands, where he lists, by negation, a series of subjects denials that in some way "live" in his almost monochrome paintings, based on the darkest hues of the Pantone colors. He names: "no seashells or undersea caves, no blinding sand or wild winds or superstitions ... no trace or taste of lobster or turtle, mango or mongoose, no rum or coca-cola, no bamboo or barracuda ... no fish or fowl ... sea or sky-scape, no abstractings from nature ...". His negations are in a way affirmations, suggesting that the dark monochrome abstract paintings in reality contain references to all these things. It ties in with the idea of a "paradise on the other side of the world", a concept that runs through Western culture, from classical literature, to the discovery of the "New World", and even the hippy's pilgrimage to India. Nick Gammon is a Welsh artist, who lived in Ireland and London, and travelled extensively in the United States and Central America before moving to Biarritz. The story behind his latest body of work begins way back in 1974, when he was twelve years old and started surfing in Wales. It's a sport, a passion, with a whole philosophy and mythology of its own, inspired by the search for freedom. Surfing means challenging the waves, the sea as nature's defining element, the epitome of water and sky, the infinite, life and death. Human beings seek to tame the ocean with a board, putting to use their courage, intelligence and intuition in a game in which one stands alone with the infinite. Surfing is also a word that excites the imagination with warm seas, sun-baked sand and skin, an easygoing lifestyle, free from the rules of everyday life, where you can go barefoot in boardshorts – a world often seen as a stereotype. Against a backdrop of tropical flowers, palm trees and sunsets. Hawaii is idealized as the archetypical tropical paradise for Americans, along with other exotic locales, and, of course, California. Here originates the coding of floral patterns inspired by tropical plants that once embellished shirts and sarongs and now are the patterns for all vacation and leisure clothing. This iconographic world mingles with Beach Boys music, a collection of movies including the famous John Milius film from 1978, Big Wednesday, and a line of heroes, surfers with "stage names", characters defining the type of life they incarnated. One such figure was Dora, to whom Gammon dedicated the first work in the Green Room series, in 2003, a large diptych dominated by blue: Where's Dora? As if he's surfing on waves, Gammon glides over a world of sensations and reflections, delving into a collection of codified images, hibiscus and lush leaves. In each work, he breaks up those forms, he jumps on them and through them, doubles them, observes them from different perspectives and overlaps them. They become abstract modules, outlines that are stylized to the point of verging on the, in the meticulous plan that underpins every work. The trajectory for the artist starts from realit geometric. Nothing is left to chance, as minimalism's lesson lingers in the highly precise layout of the compositional structure, in the exactness of the



Orange Green Room Painting, oil & wax on canvas, 150cm x 150 cm 2006

mark and then departs from it at the iconographic level. Realism becomes abstract, modular mannerism, a view that detaches from the familiar, recognizable landscape to delve into a narrative of sensations and perceptions. Here, in this parallel dimension, Gammon surfs, as if he were gliding through layers of water, taking on the distorted view that the eyes see under the water's surface, when looking up at the light from below, and all seems to be governed by new laws of sight and gravity. Gammon is interested in having his paintings work with perception. The concepts of optical and kinetic art therefore come into play, tied to shifting the bounds of forms, the application of color, and optical effects. Shadings, juxtapositions, sudden shifts in hue, combinations and tonings. Oil paint and wax expressed through a theoretical and technical experience that makes the surface move, creates dynamic planes, makes the fields of color vibrate and depart from the two-dimensional. This is a totally virtual concept of three-dimensionality that approaches a hallucinogenic vision. An essential element, both in terms of material and aesthetics, is wax, the final contribution to his works, informing refrains and pacing, turning the painting into a velvet fabric. "Even in profile, the surface seems to move, in the slight layering of the forms, flapping like a flag", Gammon says. So who was Dora anyway? Dora was a legend. He was someone who used to disappear from time to time, no-one knew where to. A bit of a pirate, slightly crazy, always with his board under his arm. It was in the sixties in California that the graffiti started appearing on walls, at Dana Point where he surfed, asking "Where's Dora?" No-one was ever quite sure. And it's still being painted on walls today, his name represents a whole way of life, it's a symbol of youth and rebellion.



TORINO

> **Mar & Partners.** Fino al 30 marzo mostra personale di **Nick Gammon** *Where's Dora?* con testo critico di Olga Gambari. Il ciclo di opere presentato in mostra è intitolato "Green Room", come il momento magico e selvaggio in cui l'onda si richiude completamente su se stessa creando un tunnel che il surfista insegue scivolando sulla propria tavola, in una metafora del pennello sulla tela, dello sguardo sul mare e della vita nel mondo.



Nick Gammon,
Magenta Green Room
Mar & Partners, Torino

LA STAMPA

SUPPLEMENTO AL NUMERO ODIERNO
VENERDI' 26 GENNAIO - GIOVEDI' 1 FEBBRAIO 2007

ALLA GALLERIA MAR & PARTNERS

Un caleidoscopio ispirato al surf

LISA PAROLA

La Mar & Partners inaugura una mostra personale dell'artista gallese Nick Gammon dal titolo «Where's dora?» presentata da Olga Gambari. Dopo gli studi alla Chelsea School of Art, dopo aver frequentato come assistente lo studio di Howard Hodking, inizia a viaggiare in Europa, negli Stati Uniti e in America Centrale e oggi la sua pittura è esposta in importanti collezioni e musei. Il ciclo che Gammon presenta a Torino è intitolato «Green Room»; per i surfisti quel momento magico e selvaggio in cui l'onda si richiude su se stessa creando un tunnel che si insegue scivolando sulla propria tavola. La storia di questi ultimi lavori comincia infatti nel 1970, quando Nick aveva dodici anni e cominciò a fare surf in Galles, una passione sportiva dietro a cui si cela una vera e propria filosofia e uno spirito, insieme una mitologia, all'insegna della libertà. Dopo le prime tele astratte, oggi la pittura di Gammon è legata a quel mondo ed anche uno degli esempi di nuova decorazione: nella forma ripropone echi warholiani, ma è anche vicino alle composizioni floreali dell'artista di Taiwan Michael Lin. A queste visioni Gammon dà sempre un nome: magenta, arancione, ro-



sa, blu, rosso, verde. E per buttarsi in questo mondo di colore, l'artista utilizza prevalentemente grandi formati su legno e su tela, raddoppiandoli spesso in dittici. Un vero e proprio caleidoscopio nel quale la superficie si espande per lasciare che lo sguardo degli spettatori, penetri e affondi come se la parete da cui pende il dipinto si aprisse su una dimensione parallela. «È in questa dimensione parallela - si legge nel testo di presentazione- che Gammon surfa, appropriandosi della vista ingannevole che gli occhi raccolgono sotto la superficie del mare, quando si guarda la luce dal basso, e tutto appare dominato da altre leggi della visione e della gravità».

NICK GAMMON

MAR & PARTNERS, V. PARMA 64

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Where's Dora? oil & wax on canvas, 150cm x 270cm x 2, 2003
collection Alessio Lucca





“40 Seconds 1-3”
collection Quiksilver, St Jean de Luz, France

I began this group of paintings in 2003, and to put them in context, they mark a shift in my work that coincided with a move from the West of Ireland to Guéthary, near Biarritz, where we live in the faded glamour of a grand hotel of ‘La Belle Epoque’. The building is so close to the sea its like a Venetian Palazzo, albeit one engulfed in huge waves from time to time.

My work has often occupied the slippery ground between the painting as an object and the painting as a picture where paint is both stuff and light and where colour behaves strangely. It flickers and undermines the solid mass of the paint, canvas and wood. Where image can become object and object become image.

An interesting thing about the flower motif is that, as with a rectangle or a Madonna, it is common property, ubiquitous on wallpaper and textiles. As such, it has changed much of its previous representative function. By which I mean that the flowers in my paintings no longer represent flowers themselves but often Eden like ideals, such as liberty or joy or paradise; notions that are frequently unattainable.

Nick Gammon, Guéthary 2006.



Coming Up no. I, 2004 - 2005, oil and wax on canvas, 132 cm x 432 cm

The Paradisiacal Green Room Garden

by Jean François Larralde

catalogue essay for “Some Flowers from a Green Room”

In his earlier work, Nick Gammon made abstract paintings composed of flat layers of hard edge and contrasting colours in which he rejected figuration, abstract gesture and any distinction between figure and ground in favour of an “all over” colour field not organised around a focal point. The surface of this work was characterised by a rigorous geometric system and geometric forms, which would be often impassive, if sometimes allusive, (as in for example his “Ocean” series), but always pure and articulated in a serialist or systematic fashion. This was an attempt to get to grips with unique, timeless and universal values. His search for these absolutes, expressed itself in a vivid chromatic treatment that was extremely controlled and pure. But at the beginning of 2003, despite a tacit acknowledgement of rigorous neo-constructivist thought, he forsook the imagery of this school of thought and began a second experiment based on the theme of the flower. The resulting paintings, made between 2003 and 2006, are exhibited here at the Musée de Guéthary for the first time this spring.

In this new manner he found, more and more, pleasure in drawing, painting and composition. And as such Gammon in this new period, began to dedicate himself to the dreamlike spaces which allow his imagination to soar: His practise is to first draw on a computer, or to make preparatory sketches before applying these drawings to canvases of cotton or linen and sometimes onto wood in the case of the tondos. Moreover, he employs encaustic, an ancient medium of beeswax and turpentine mixed with oil paint. Gammon begins a painting by drawing on canvas, putting in place the contours and different elements, modifying them and so forth, but by always following the linear plan of his original drawing which paradoxically allows him the freedom to concentrate upon and improvise upon his colouration and handling. He builds his picture plane with multiple flower motifs, which at the same time introduce different compositional weights; constructing his images, from balanced arabesques that cross the canvas. Then Gammon increases the dynamic of his motifs; accentuating the graphic character, and underlining the constants between different motifs and giving gravity to the volumes. Finally he applies colour, introducing occasionally shadows that enliven the composition.



“Where’s Dora?”

As the whole evolves, forms become more fluid, the composition more rhythmic whilst sexual connotations become more explicit. Sometimes he goes back and employs different methods to give a sense of depth as if he wanted to keep, at least, a vestige of perspectival space.

The huge scale of these floral motifs conveys a monumental decorative effect, where sometimes there isn’t a front or back picture plane, but all dematerialises, into a dreamlike space generated from a vocabulary of abstract signs. It is with such imagery such as this that Gammon is able to evoke “a paradise” where his paintings can exist. Gammon forges his colour with rigour and intensity imposing upon it his passion for its beauty, inspired by oceanic splendours and by his numerous voyages made in the footsteps of Gauguin and Matisse the better to retain their absolute truth.

His paintings give an extraordinary feeling of innocence, spontaneity and freedom which only belongs to him. Colour is the essential element of his pictorial language and an important aspect of this is in its expansiveness, (a characteristic which Rothko admired in Matisse’s colour). Gammon knows how to find an abstract dimension, which in the clear light of his green room of stylised flowers and leaves is distilled into an enchanting dream, for him, the pictorial spaces of his canvases have the expanse of serene imagination. He tightens his drawing, purifies his colour; in an indefinite meditation, as if dreaming. For Gammon, Oceania constitutes firstly a theme which attracts his imagination. His fascination for a mythical Oceania has revealed to him a whole universe of colour; of light and of decorative motifs such as the flower and the leaf, the ornamental amarant cultivated for its long tresses of red flowers and the tropical hibiscus with its beautiful flowers. In Nick Gammon’s paintings the flower appears as a symbol characterising primordial nature; here the flower becomes symbolic of childhood, of dreams, and in a certain way of an Edenic state.

To travel in his world, in the paintings of Nick Gammon, is to search for light, which originates in the green room. All the flowers and leaves of the green room have a longing for paradise, for a state of supernatural grace and here, paradise is represented as a garden in which the luxurious and spontaneous flora are the fruit of dreams. Sometimes the garden takes a circular form, like a Buddhist paradise peopled by angelic symbols.



“Stand Your Ground Eddy” and “Hold On #1”

But the paradise of Nick Gammon, that of the green room, has no precise location, because this convergence is aimed less at a place than than at a state; the return to an Edenic, centred equilibrium, where in addition to the green room, the paradisiacal garden, filled with flowers, plants and running waters, is the garden of clear perception. In common with the philosophers, particularly Avicenne, Gammon comprehends the ascension to paradise in terms of symbols and allegories; the green room appears to assimilate his pictorial world into a promised land, to a terrestrial image of paradise and to voyage longing for paradise, for a state of supernatural grace and here, paradise is represented as a garden in which the luxurious and spontaneous flora are the fruit of dreams. within Gammon's paintings, can only be accomplished within oneself.

In 1936 whilst his work was in a transitional phase triggered by his project for Dr Barnes of Philadelphia, Matisse in a declaration to his friend Tériade explained, “the loop is looped”, and with the force of a manifesto said finally, “in the last paintings, I have used what I have acquired during the last twenty years, my core, my essential self.”

In this exhibition at Musée de Guéthary, Nick Gammon returns to deep sources in his art; sources which are connected, inevitably, to the search for an inner equilibrium, to the perception of new feelings. His quest for a new inner light becomes an encounter with a new exterior light.

François Larralde © 2006



“Coming Up #2” at Musée de Guéthary

Le jardin paradisiaque de la chambre verte par Jean François Larralde

Pendant une première période Nick Gammon exécute des peintures abstraites dont la surface est couverte de plages de couleurs uniformes et bien délimitées. Dans ce travail réfractaire à la figuration et à la gestuelle de l'expressionnisme abstrait la distinction entre figure et fond disparaît au profit du all-over correspondant à une répartition uniforme de la couleur sur la surface du tableau qui n'est plus organisée autour d'un centre d'intérêt. La surface des toiles de Gammon y est agencée selon une géométrie rigoureusement symétrique. Ses formes géométriques sont le plus souvent inexpressives, parfois allusives, comme dans sa série “Océans”, toujours épurées et souvent articulées entre elles de manière sérielle. Il tente de parvenir à la signification unique et identique à travers tout l'art a-temporel de l'univers. Sa quête d'absolu, voire de vide s'exprime dans une monochromie traitée d'une manière extrêmement soignée et pure. Mais au fil des ans, Nick Gammon, tout en reconnaissant l'intérêt qu'il porte à la rigueur de cette pensée néo-constructiviste, s'est progressivement éloigné de l'image produite sous son influence. Et il a mené, une seconde expérimentation basée sur le thème de la fleur, à partir de l'année 2003.

Dans cette nouvelle manière il trouve de plus en plus le plaisir de dessiner et peindre une composition florale qu'il étudie préalablement sur ordinateur ou dans des esquisses préparatoires avant de l'appliquer sur la toile rectangulaire de coton ou de lin -et sur bois pour les tondos- en s'aidant d'une technique à l'huile enrichie de cire d'abeille à la térébenthine, «l' encaustic» un ancien medium. Ainsi, Nick Gammon consacre sa nouvelle période à ses espaces oniriques, primaires et primordiaux, que ses huiles offrent à son imagination parfaitement libérée de la réalité du monde. Nick Gammon commence par dessiner sur la toile rectangulaire en traçant les contours des divers éléments, il met en place les grandes lignes de la composition avant de les renforcer ou de les modifier, mais en suivant toujours le plan linéaire du dessin original, avec pour résultat paradoxical, de permettre de se concentrer et d'improviser sur les couleurs et la facture.

Il construit ses surfaces sur la base de plusieurs motifs floraux en introduisant plusieurs



“Magenta Green Room Painting” at Musée de Guéthary

centres de gravité dans la composition. Il répartit ses éléments de manière équilibrée à l'intérieur de chaque toile, les éléments végétaux s'insérant dans les arabesques qui traversent la toile. Puis Gammon accroît le dynamisme de ses motifs; il accentue le caractère graphique de la toile, souligne les constantes entre les motifs et fait gagner à la toile beaucoup plus d'ampleur. Enfin il procède à l'application des couleurs sur son support en introduisant parfois des ombres pour aviver la composition. A mesure que la composition évolue, les formes deviennent plus fluides, la composition plus rythmée, tandis que les connotations sexuelles se font plus explicites. Parfois il se remet à employer divers procédés visant à donner l'illusion de la profondeur comme s'il voulait conserver au moins un vestige d'espace perspectiviste. L'effet éminemment monumental produit par les motifs végétaux vient parfois de leur gigantisme décoratif. Parfois il n'y a pratiquement plus de premier ni d'arrière plan, l'espace unifié se fond en un tout déréalisé qui se traduit clairement en un espace onirique et en un vocabulaire de signes abstraits. C'est par des images comme celle-là que Nick Gammon parvient le mieux à évoquer “quelque paradis” où il ferait des peintures. Gammon dessine la couleur sans relâche ni relâchement, impose à celle-ci sa passion pour sa beauté de plus en plus intrinsèque au fur et à mesure qu'il évolue vers les splendeurs océaniques inspirées par ses nombreux périples, sur les traces de Gauguin et de Matisse, pour ne plus retenir que leur absolue vérité. Ses peintures donnent une extraordinaire impression de naïveté, de spontanéité et de liberté qui semblent n'appartenir qu'à lui. La couleur est l'un des éléments essentiels de son langage pictural. Mais un aspect bien particulier de celle-ci, son pouvoir d'expansion, tel que Rothko l'admire dans l'œuvre de Matisse. Nick Gammon a su trouver une dimension abstraite qui, dans la claire lumière de sa chambre verte, en fleurs et feuilles stylisées, n'est plus qu'un rêve féerique. Pour lui, l'espace de sa toile a l'étendue de son imagination si sereine. Il abrège le dessin, purifie la couleur pour se recueillir, illimité, dans le rêve. Pour Gammon, l'Océanie constitue d'abord un thème qui aime son imaginaire. Une Océanie de rêve qui fonctionne comme la partie de ses rêves les plus ardents : sa fascination pour une Océanie mythique lui a révélé tout un univers de couleurs, de lumières, et de motifs décoratifs comme la fleur et la feuille d'amarante ornementale cultivée pour ses fleurs rouges en longues grappes et l'hibiscus tropical à belles fleurs. Dans la peinture de Gammon, la fleur apparaît comme le symbole de ,



“Orange Green Room Painting” at Musée de Guéthary

l'harmonie caractérisant la nature primordiale, la fleur s'identifie ici au symbolisme de l'enfance du rêve, et, d'une certaine façon, à celui de l'état édénique.

Le voyage en peinture de Gammon est une quête de lumière dont la chambre verte en serait l'origine. Les fleurs et les feuilles de la chambre verte ont la nostalgie du paradis, d'un état de grâce surnaturel, ici, le paradis est représenté comme un jardin dont la végétation luxuriante et spontanée est le fruit de l'activité onirique; parfois le jardin prend une forme circulaire à la manière des paradis Boudhiques peuplés de symboles angéliques.

Mais le paradis de Gammon, celui de la chambre verte, n'a pas de localisation bien précise car cette convergence troublante vers une chambre verte est moins dirigée vers un lieu que vers un état: le retour à l'état édénique suppose l'atteinte d'un état central, d'un équilibre. De même que le jardin paradisiaque est peuplé de fleurs, de plantes et d'eaux vives, de même les fleurs de la chambre verte sont le jardin de sa claire perception intérieure.

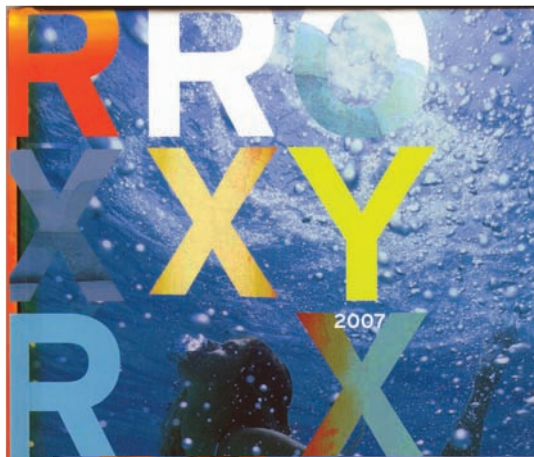
Comme pour les philosophes, (et en particulier Avicenne), Nick Gammon entend l'accession au paradis en termes de symboles et d'allégories; la chambre verte apparaît comme une demeure de vie et le peintre assimile son monde pictural à une terre promise. Un voyage dans la peinture comme celui qu'effectue Gammon ne peut s'accomplir qu'à l'intérieur même du peintre.

Cet ensemble de peintures fait renaître chez Nick Gammon le souci de souligner la pureté des moyens d'expression dans une sorte de retour aux sources.

En 1936, alors que sa peinture traverse la période de mutation déclenchée par le projet pour le docteur Barnes à Philadelphie, Matisse explique que la boucle est bouclée; dans une déclaration à Tériade qui a valeur de manifeste et qui s'achève par ces mots: "dans les dernières peintures, j'ai rattaché des acquisitions des ces vingt dernières années à mon fond essentiel, à mon essence même."

Cette exposition au Musée de Guéthary, a permis à Gammon de naturellement retourner aux sources profondes de son art en associant invariablement la quête d'un équilibre intérieur à la perception de sensations neuves: sa recherche d'une lumière intérieure nouvelle passe par la rencontre avec une lumière extérieure nouvelle.

François Larralde © 2006



“EN voisin et ami, le peintre Gallois Nick Gammon, amoureux du pays Basque (il vit à Guethary) a prêté son talent à Roxy. Maillots, bagages et accessoires s’élèvent au rang de support d’œuvre d’art en une série limitée signée.”

Roxy Press release



Pays Basque

SUD OUEST

MERcredi 10 MAI 2006

MUSÉE DE GUÉTHARY. Le peintre gallois Nick Gammon inaugure la saison à la villa Saraleguinea. Une exposition sur le fonds romain découvert dans la commune est prévue pour l'automne

L'ouverture au patrimoine

Philippe Hemmert

Directeur depuis quinze ans du musée de Guéthary, Jean-François Larralde a quitté ses fonctions l'an passé. Avec le départ de celui qui avait fortement marqué l'esprit du lieu, la villa Saraleguinea va nécessairement évoluer dans son mode de fonctionnement. Première incidence de cette mutation, c'est une direction collégiale qui a désormais pris les rênes de l'institution.

Elle réunit les Amis du musée, la municipalité et plusieurs personnes qualifiées. Le carnet d'adresses de cette équipe inédite n'étant toutefois pas aussi riche que pouvait l'être celui d'un spécialiste de l'art contemporain, c'est un nombre restreint d'expositions qui composeront dorénavant la saison à Guéthary. Trois séquences de deux mois, entre mai et octobre, contre six auparavant. Des sessions qui seront par ailleurs spécialisées.

Fidèle à l'image établie, l'ouverture printanière se fera comme par le passé avec des plasticiens contemporains. En l'occurrence, cette année, le Gallois Nick Gammon (voir ci-contre). L'été, place sera faite à la sculpture, afin de faire écho à la collection Swieciniski, installée à demeure dans les murs de cette belle villa néo-basque, nichée dans un cadre tout à fait inspiré.

Nick Gammon. Le plasticien d'origine gallois est le premier invité d'un musée qui a sensiblement modifié son fonctionnement

Nick Gammon et les fleurs du paradis

Peintre originaire du Pays de Galles où il est né en 1958, Nick Gammon est un habitué des expositions dans les grandes villes européennes : Barcelone, Bruxelles, Munich, Milan, Londres... Il a toutefois choisi de s'établir au Pays Basque en 2002 et vit depuis lors à Guéthary. Ce déménagement depuis l'Irlande, où il résidait auparavant, a coïncidé avec un développement considérable de son travail et les œuvres qui en résultent seront présentées pour la première fois à la villa Saraleguinea.

« Some flowers from a green room » est le titre de cette exposition, qui, comme son nom l'indique, met en scène des motifs floraux. Lesquels jouent sur l'apparence des vagues de la mer et sont inspirés bien souvent du « tube », le fameux rouleau dans lequel se glissent les surfeurs. « Ces fleurs représentent à mes yeux des idéaux tels que la liberté, la joie, ou

encore le paradis, des notions bien souvent inatteignables » confesse l'artiste.

► Jusqu'au 8 juillet, ouvert de 14 heures à 18 heures sauf mardi et dimanche. A l'occasion de cette exposition, le musée de Guéthary proposera deux conférences : la nuit des musées le 20 mai à partir de 21 heures et le samedi 3 juin à 17 heures. Renseignements : 05.59.54.86.37 ou 05.59.26.57.85.

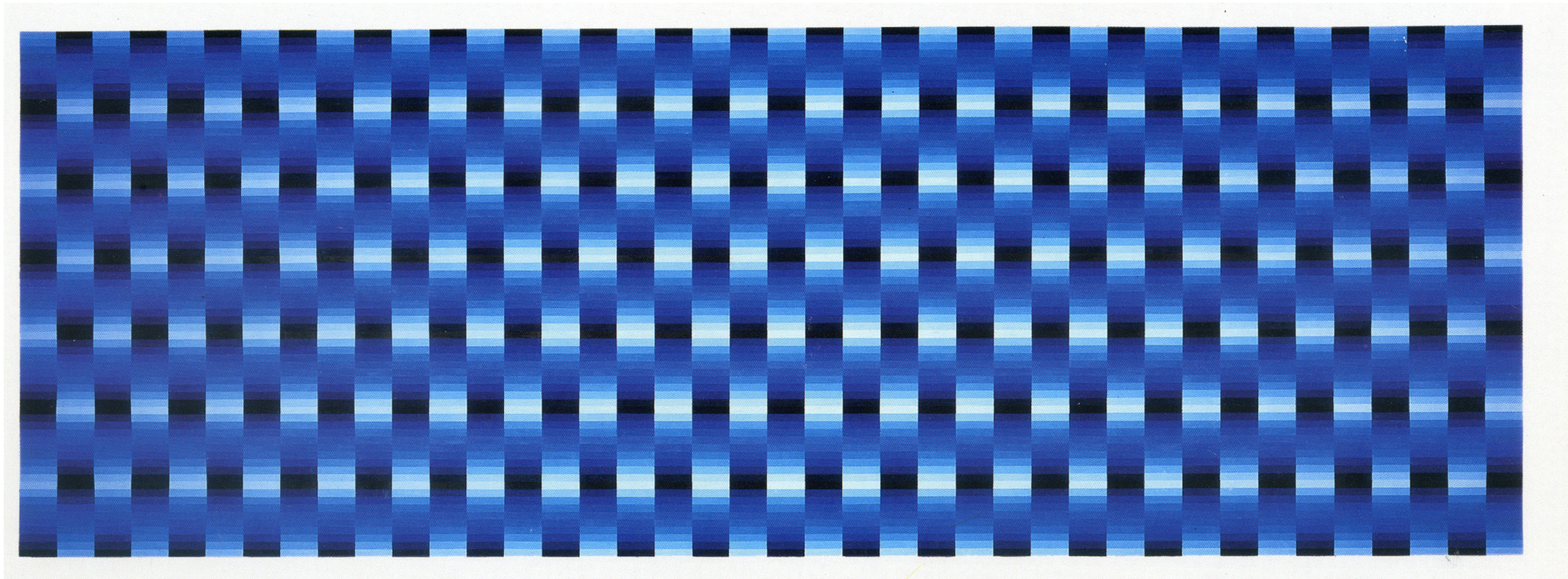
thématique, l'expo 2006 sera du reste dédiée au fonds romain mis à jour à Guéthary en 1984.

A l'époque, un atelier de salaison de poisson avait été découvert dans la commune. Il était destiné à confectionner le « garum », un condiment très prisé des Romains. Les fouilles de

l'époque révélèrent des céramiques, des sigillées, ainsi qu'une exceptionnelle pierre funéraire datant du I^{er} siècle.

Aujourd'hui, en lien avec l'association luzienne Itsas Begia, le musée s'apprête à faire revivre la découverte de ce site antique et prévoit notamment de réaliser une maquette de l'ancienne usine de salaison.

Du 9 septembre au 28 octobre, l'exposition sera accompagnée d'une série de conférences sur la présence romaine en Aquitaine. Avec, en point d'orgue, les journées du patrimoine qui trouveront donc à Guéthary, cette année, un fort point d'ancrage.

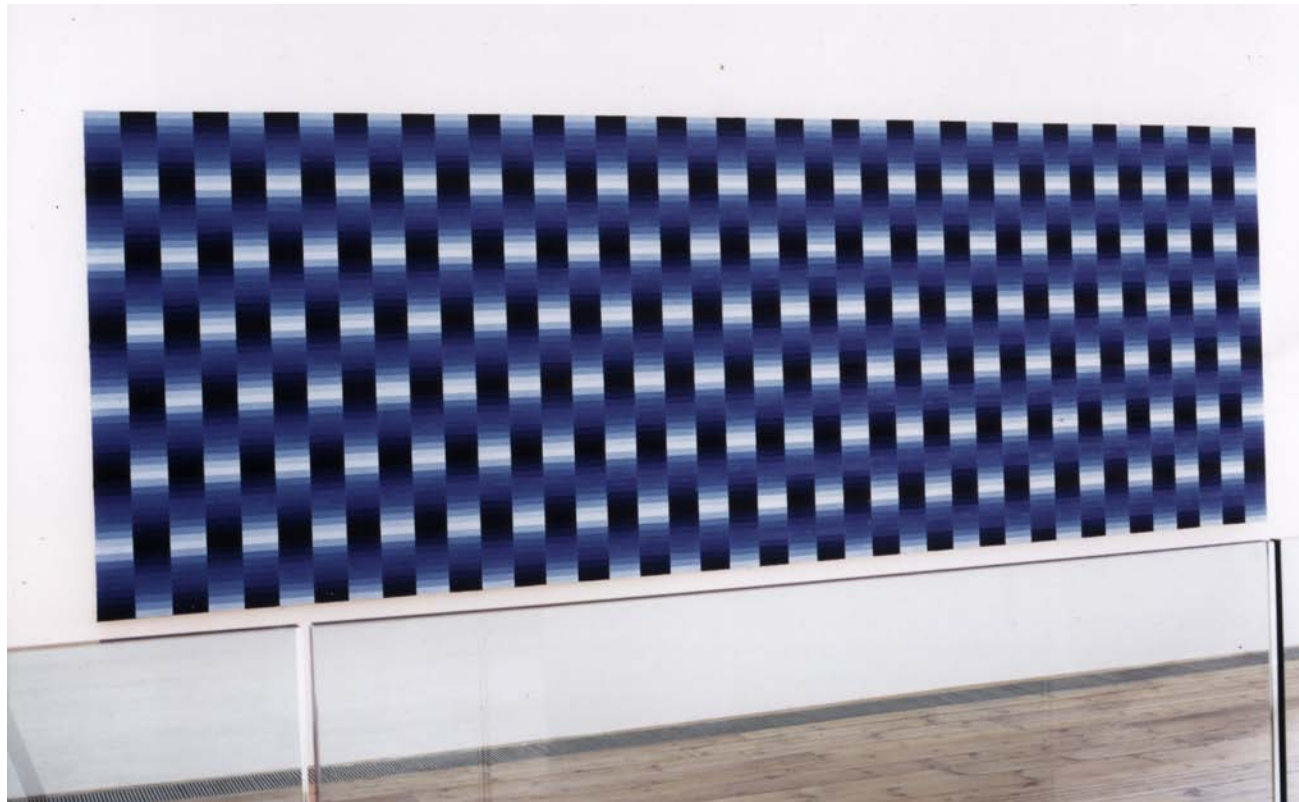


Ocean N° 1, oil & wax on canvas, 164cm x 470cm 1995 - 1997, collection Royal Bank of Scotland

Following the drift: on the paintings of Nick Gammon

**By Mel Gooding
(catalogue essay for ‘Oceans and Other Paintings’,**

Stephen Lacey Gallery, London 1999)



“Ocean #1” at Stephen Lacey Gallery, London

We have a duty towards music, namely, to invent it. (Stravinsky)

Stand upon the Atlantic shore; look west into the infinity of ocean: never for a moment still, never for a moment without variegation of light, no second of its radiance by day or its flecked darkness at night the same; what is before you is beyond description, beyond words. There are things that can be said, but they cannot convey the experience; a recital of facts can give only a clue to the immensity: 'I live in the west of Ireland, the furthest west,' writes Nick Gammon in a note on his work. 'I 500 miles further and you hit St John's, Newfoundland, due south and the next landfall is Morocco, due north on longitude 10 degrees 30' west and you're off the end of the world. The sea surrounds me, it is ever present. I live on a kind of satellite, a splinter of rock in the Atlantic. 'Living and working such a place, with such a sense of being at such a point on the surface of the earth, seven tenths sea, Gammon acknowledges freely the relation of his painting to the stupendous phenomenon of the ocean. The roaring alongside, unlike Elizabeth Bishop's sandpiper, he does not take for granted, nor that every so often the ground is bound to shake. 'In winter the ground shivers and groans when the swell grinds the reef in front of my house ... The sea is inescapable here.'

Rather he is like the singer in Wallace Stevens' The Idea of Order at Key West, the artist whose orderings are audible and human, who is the maker of the song he sings: 'The ever hooded, tragic-gestured sea / Was merely a place by which she walked to sing.' For the music of Ocean no. 1 and of Ocean no. 2, is indeed an ordered music, its intervals, in hue and tone, and in its formal patterning, constant and repeated; it is an incantation of colour, as insistent in its rhythms and intonations as a piece by Philip Glass, perhaps, or by Arvo Pärt, it is a song of celebration. That kind of formal order (and this applies to all Gammon's work) can be traced partly to his interest in systems, in the generation of form and effect by constraints that determine the artistic outcome, though he cannot predict it. Unlike systems artists proper, however, Gammon is not concerned with the discovery of a mathematical, or geometric, truth, with the revelation of a beautiful and timeless idea in a visible form, of something behind the things we observe in the sensible world to be endlessly diverse and variegated. I might say, he is after quite the opposite, and paradoxically achieves it through the use of formal devices that are derived from systematic procedures. And in this he works, of course, like a composer. As Stravinsky observed, we may love the sounds (and sights) of nature: 'they may suggest music to us, but they are not yet themselves music ... They are promises of music; it takes a human being to keep them ... tonal elements become music only by virtue of their being organised ...'



“Ocean’s and Harmonic Constants” at Stephen Lacey Gallery, London

Gammon knows that, strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a pictorial language (writing, for example, works by means of abstract symbolic reference to natural language) any more than there exists a musical language: there are, as he puts it, in an idiosyncratic list, 'only conventions, rules, tricks and methods, devices and precedences, manners and etiquette, that we use in the hope that someone will follow the drift.' As a painter he has devised his own rules in order to make works that will keep the promises of nature, that will bring into concrete form the phenomenal elements that wait to be organised into artistic realisation: 'if it was only the dark voice of the sea/That rose . . ./If it was only the outer voice of sky/And cloud . . ./However clear, it would have been deep air/The heaving speech of air; a summer sound . . ./And sound alone.' (my italics) It would remain, that is to say, the 'constant cry . . ./Inhuman, of the veritable ocean.' Gammon's Ocean paintings 'sing', as Stevens' poem has it, 'beyond the genius of the sea.'

The paintings are actually made up of thousands of small blue rectangles (in the case of Ocean No 1 there are 2,800; in No 2 there are 2,560) that range through a regular sequence of ten tones from dark indigo to ultramarine and copper blue to a near-white, and is then reversed. In Ocean No. 1 this sequence, of horizontal-format rectangles, runs from top to bottom in forty vertical columns parallel from left to right (or vice-versa) across a canvas field nearly sixteen feet wide; in Ocean No. 2 the rectangles are vertical in format, and they are configured across four vertical canvases seven foot by three foot. In both, the mix of wax with the oil medium gives the surface of the painting a reflective sheen that increases the shimmer created by the repetition of the individual tonal elements in sequence. Approach closely and it becomes clear that slight and unavoidable variations in surface facture also play a part in the visual complexity of the work. As Gammon points out, the powerful optical effect is not illusionistic, or trompe l'oeil, it is, in fact, a consequence of a visual fact. It is not unlike that dazzle occasioned by sunlight shimmer on disturbed water; or that impossibility of maintaining focus on any one of a succession of incoming coastal waves: the eye is actually tricked by the conflicting demands on the retina of successive waves, of light or colour or moving matter; into switching between one and the other; and is never allowed to find more than a momentary fixed focus. In the paintings the effect itself is of a constant rippling up and down (No. 1) or from side to side (No. 2), and of an unceasing undulation, like that of the seas rhythmic sway and swell, but rhythmically ordered by an optical regularity disturbed only by those slight textural irregularities remarked above, as indicating the essential shift in those works towards objective abstraction.'



“Ocean's and Harmonic Constants” at Stephen Lacey Gallery, London

As the eye seeks to sum up the composition and resolve it into the image of an object, its attention is drawn instead to the many small points of conjunction. This creates rhythm literally in the field of vision; it is no longer symbolic imagery but actual visual experience.' Of course we may read this as descriptive of our experience of Gammon's own painting; he emphasises that the work exists to activate the space Gammon quotes John Milner on Mondrian's Pier and Ocean series of 1914-15, around it, to provide what he calls 'a specific aesthetic charge within that space'; that is something in painting that is achieved primarily by the image i.e. the 'actual visual experience', and in the Ocean paintings specifically by 'rhythm in the field of vision'. (I say, primarily, because we cannot avoid the fact that paintings are objects whose placement in a space is crucial to their effects upon the spectator; especially when they are objects as imposing as these paintings.) For, of course, Mondrian's Pier and Ocean series presents us with images, just as do Gammon's paintings (in the Mondrians there are, indeed, recognisable elements of what Milner calls 'symbolic imagery') and that 'actual visual experience' is experience of the image. The question arises, at the heart of any critical approach to Gammon's work: what are these images of? The first answer is always self-referential: the images are of bands of colour, whose tonal relations are predetermined, deployed in a certain order and relation, usually symmetric, if sometimes complexly so. They create effects of light. In the case of the Ocean paintings, as their titles imply, these effects, created by scale and presence, and by the blue colour/tone sequencing described above, what Gammon calls 'a multiplicity of blue', are of a kind that recalls our experience of the sea, but they do not imitate its actual turmoil or the evanescence of its 'constant cry' in the 'meaningless plungings of water and the wind'. They are the outcome of an act of invention; they perform their duty towards art taking blue and white light from nature and transforming it into a particular configuration of given forms. They are images then of an idea of order expressions of what Stevens invokes as the 'Blessed rage for order . . . the maker's rage to order words of the sea . . . 'Rage' may not seem the proper term for Mondrian's Pier and Ocean meditations, but there is a close and particularly apt parallel: 'Observing sea, sky and stars, I sought to indicate their plastic for through a multiplicity of crossing verticals and horizontals'. raphers for the sets of co-ordinated measurements that are used to predict tides and, refers also, of course to the measured intervals that constrain the deployment of the triads of colour/tone up and down the paintings. Their severely vertical format relates them to the earlier Totem paintings, which work by means of similar, but less complicated visual strategies and to the more recent Chromatic series whose ordering device is slightly more complicated. In each case the optical effects are achieved by The title of the Harmonic Constant series derives from the term used by oceanographers for the sets



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of co-ordinated measurements that are used to predict tides and, refers also, of course to the measured intervals that constrain the deployment of the triads of colour/tone up and down the paintings. Their severely vertical format relates them to the earlier Totem paintings, which work by means of similar, but less complicated visual strategies and to the more recent Chromatic series whose ordering device is slightly more complicated. In each case the optical effects are achieved by a fairly loosely applied mathematical rhythm a programme more intuitive in its origins, however, than systematic. Subtle distinctions of saturation of hue and density of colour ensure that as the eye plays up and down the columns it encounters differing intensities of optical pressure. The perceptual outcome is of a soft and subtle radiance that is unique to Gammon’s painting and justifies his ambition: ‘I try to make my paint like light.’ These paintings have great decorative charge they bring to the spaces they enter energetic light and colour. Like the Ocean paintings they proclaim their objectiveness (their unorthodox formats emphasise this aspect of their presence) but only to intensify their expressive ‘vital import’ the power of the image that they carry to the eye. They seem to absorb light in order to regenerate it as intense colour; as layered atmospherics create beautiful sunsets. This is one response; there may be any number of others: these are *Not* paintings of specific things in nature but signs like a score for its harmonies. ‘Impressed by the vastness of Nature’ wrote Mondrian, in the sentence that followed that above, ‘I was trying to express its expansion, rest and unity.’ That is what art is for:

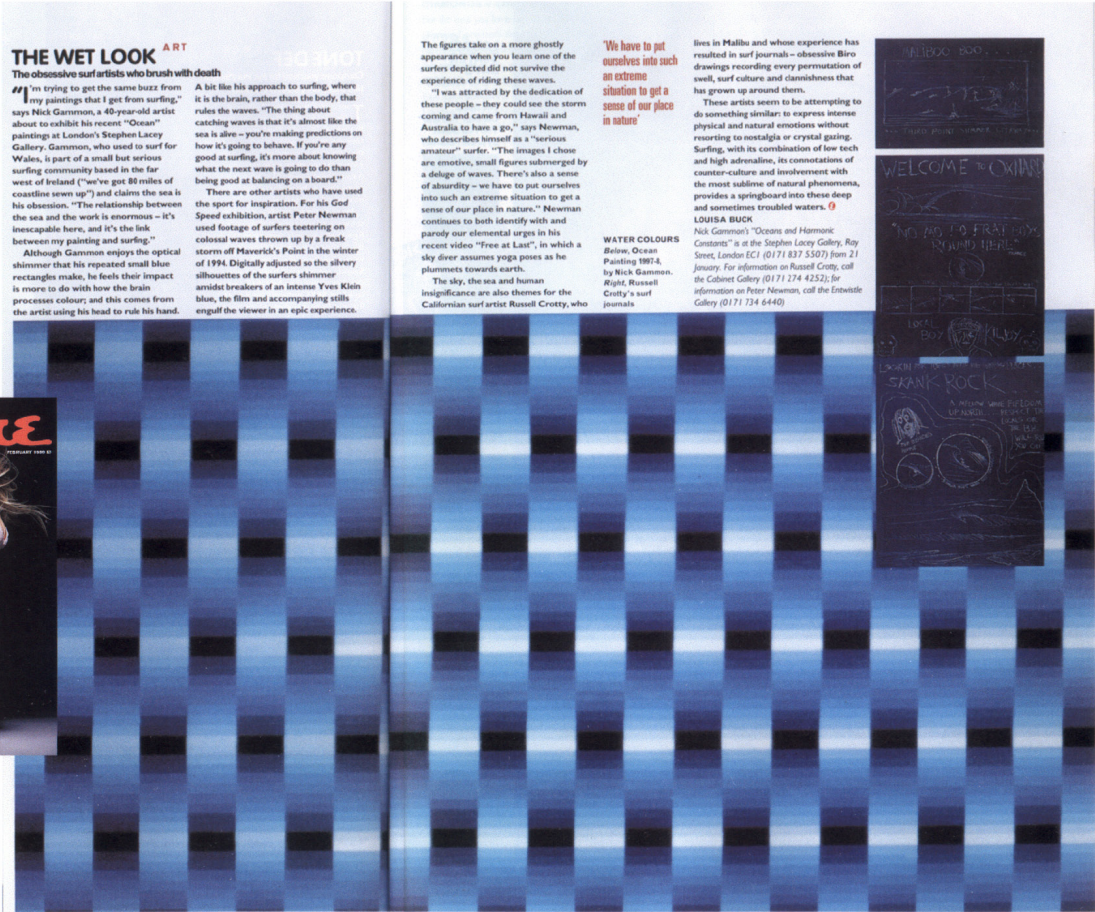
‘It was her voice that made
The sky acutest at its vanishing ...
And when she sang, the sea
Whatever self it had, became the self
That was her song, for she was the maker’

Mel Gooding, London, December 1998

Mel Gooding, © 1998

Notes and references

The epigraph is from Stravinsky’s ‘Poetics of Music’, (Harvard, 1942) chapter 3; the later quotation is from, Chapter 2. All quotations from Nick Gammon are from a personal communication with the present writer. Elizabeth Bishop’s Sandpiper begins: ‘The roaring alongside he takes for granted/and that every so often the world is bound to shake.’ The Idea Of Order at Key West is from Wallace Stevens, ‘Collected Poems’ (Faber and Faber, London, 1955); all subsequent poetic quotations are from this great poem. John Milner is quoted from: ‘Mondrian’ (Phaidon, London, 1992) The term ‘vital import’ is from Suzanne Langers’ Problems of Art’ (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1957) chapter 5: ‘...“vital” because it is always some mode of feeling, sense, emotion, consciousness that is conveyed by a successful work of art; “import”, because it is conveyed. Vital import is the element of felt life objectified in the work..’



I'm trying to get the same buzz from my paintings that I get from surfing," says Nick Gammon, a 40-year-old artist about to exhibit his recent "Ocean" paintings at London's Stephen Lacey Gallery. Gammon, who used to surf for Wales, is part of a small but serious surfing community based in the far west of Ireland ("we've got 80 miles of coastline sewn up") and claims the sea is his obsession. "The relationship between the sea and the work is enormous - it's inescapable here, and it's the link between my painting and surfing." Although Gammon enjoys the optical shimmer that his repeated small blue rectangles make, he feels their impact is more to do with how the brain processes colour; and this comes from the artist using his head to rule his hand. A bit like his approach to surfing, where it is the brain, rather than the body, that rules the waves.

"The thing about catching waves is that it's almost like the sea is alive - you're making predictions on how it's going to behave. If you're any good at surfing, it's more about knowing what the next wave is going to do than being good at balancing on a board." There are other artists who have used the sport for inspiration. For his God Speed exhibition, artist Peter Newman used footage of surfers teetering on colossal waves thrown up by a freak storm off Maverick's Point in the winter of 1994. Digitally adjusted so the silvery silhouettes of the surfers shimmer amidst breakers of an intense Yves Klein blue, the film and accompanying stills engulf the viewer in an epic experience. The figures take on a more ghostly appearance when you learn one of the surfers depicted did not survive the experience of riding these waves. "I was attracted by the dedication of these people - they could see the storm coming and came from Hawaii and Australia to have a go," says Newman, who describes himself as a "serious amateur" surfer. "The images I chose are emotive, small figures submerged by a deluge of waves. There's also a sense of absurdity - we have to put ourselves into such an extreme situation to get a sense of our place in nature." Newman continues to both identify with and parody our elemental urges in his recent video "Free at Last", in which a sky diver assumes yoga poses as he plummets towards earth.

The sky, the sea and human insignificance are also themes for the Californian surf artist Russell Crotty, who lives in Malibu and whose experience has resulted in surf journals - obsessive Biro drawings recording every permutation of swell, surf culture and clannishness that has grown up around them.

These artists seem to be attempting to do something similar: to express intense physical and natural emotions without resorting to nostalgia or crystal gazing. Surfing, with its combination of low tech and high adrenaline, its connotations of counter-culture and involvement with the most sublime of natural phenomena, provides a springboard into these deep and sometimes troubled waters.

© LOUISA BUCK

Nick Gammon's "Oceans and Harmonic Constants" is at the Stephen Lacey Gallery, Ray Street, London EC1 (0171 837 5507) from 21 January. For information on Russell Crotty, call the Cabinet Gallery (0171 274 4252); for information on Peter Newman, call the Entwistle Gallery (0171 734 6440)

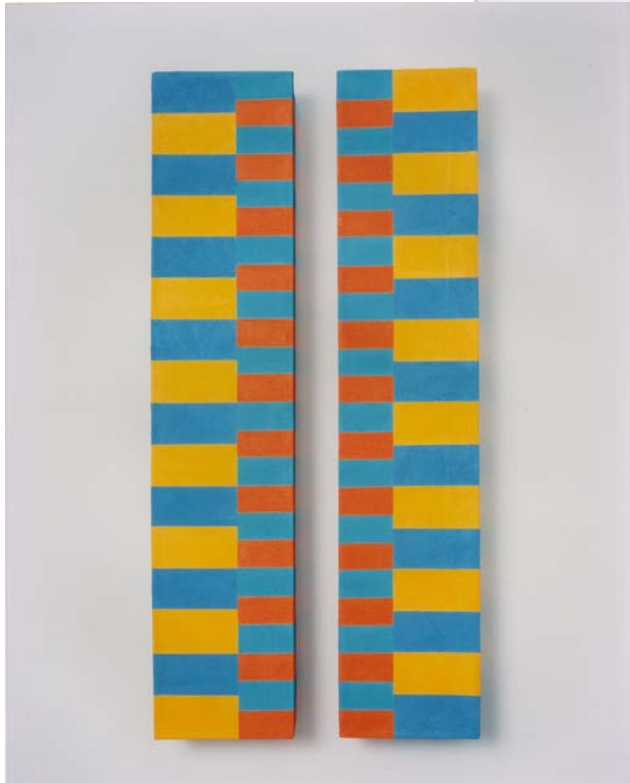


**London “Sunday Telegraph”
21/02/99
John McEwan**

“.....Nick Gammon's stripe paintings have an unmistakable colour and authority, now extended by the first two of a proposed set of seven Ocean paintings; he does not the sea, he suggests the always thrilling experience of seeing it.”

**London “Evening Standard”
20/01/99**

The iridescence of water is the inspiration behind Nick Gammon's new work. One set of paintings depict gentle tidal waves of colour. The larger-scale Ocean Paintings are made up of tiny blue rectangles which like Bridget Riley's abstract lines, seem to roll accross the surface of the canvas.”



NICK GAMMON

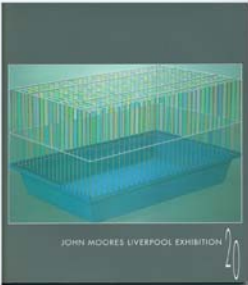
BARCELONA NO. I

Oil on canvas

112.5 x 19; 112.5 x 19 cm

Barcelona No. I is one of a group of diptychs with the collective title *Totems* which I began in 1994. In common with the rest of the paintings in this series, it employs a set of simple compositional devices which allows me to emphasise the more slippery, intangible aspects of my work. I'm not wildly interested in the aesthetics of geometry, nor for that matter the ratio of 2 to 3. Rather, I'm interested in the way the colour behaves, or in the differences of scale in the painting and how these abstract notions of colour and scale become concrete during the making of the piece. How this kind of green works with that kind of orange; what makes this kind of light work with that kind of scale, becomes what the painting is about. I'm involved in making pictures that twitch and float despite the weight of their waxy paint and the boxy support and despite the rigidity of their geometry.

Nick Gammon was born in Pembroke in 1958. He studied at Chelsea College of Art 1976-77 and Bath Academy of Art 1977-80. During the 1980s he worked as an assistant to Howard Hodgkin. His recent exhibitions include one-man shows at Berning and Daw London 1993 and Blue Gallery London 1995, the installations *192 192* London 1994 and *Four For Fred* Alfred London 1996, *Hard Edge* Reed's Wharf Gallery London 1996 and *Crosscurrents* Barbican Centre London 1996.



John Moores 1997

**Nick Gammon
catalogue statement**

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Free Range is Better Than Battery
John McEwan

“STRAVINSKY once described the state as “an anonymous and senselessly levelling patron”, as opposed to the private patron who had “played a role of prime importance in the arts”. Private patronage is the endorsement of the real world and has the vigour of freedom. It is to public patronage what a freerange hen is to a battery chicken. This is why The John Moores Liverpool Exhibition at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool (until February 15), is so special. Founded by the late Sir John Moores of Littlewoods, it is now admirably supported by his family. Its object is biennially to survey and reward the best of British painting, judged by a committee of artists and experts with no guideline beyond excellence.

The Moores is in the finest tradition of northern industrial wealth put to the public good, its charm and strength that it local but not provincial. When it began it was unique and art was still a cottage industry. Now there are many prizes and art has become big business massively subsidised by the state. But the Moores, with its lengthening history, has a prestige all of its own. “Hockney in ‘67, who knows in ‘97?” is the question on this year’s fly-sheet.

It is encouraging to report that the latest Moores shows a renewed sense of purpose. The reintroduction of the great dinner announcing the winners - discontinued years ago after the winning artist got drunk and a member of the corporation died of a heart-attack - represents a vote of confidence. And the committee, which included George Melly, has selected the best collective show for years - cutting 1,800 entrants to an all-time-low of 48.

Should it be a small show with attitude or a big one slurping with the milk of human kindness?, is the perennial question. To some extent the choice is dictated by fashion. A dominant trend demands a tight show, trendless times are less easy to package. The last few Moores have suffered the post-modernist doldrums of anything goes; but this one sides with Minimalism. The canvases are invariably of a size beyond domestic reach, the bold form and bland content perfectly judged to arrest but not disturb. The show packs a punch, but it is very much better whole than in parts. Ostensibly it divides into abstract and figurative pictures: enunciated by Sybille Bedford’s composition of broad colours hanging next to Jason Brooks’ portrait painted to resemble an enlarged black and white photograph. One painting is “abstract”, the other “figurative”, but the cerebral concern for form as subject is identical.

(Both painters are paid-up members of what might be called “Abstracts Anonymous”. So are the majority of these 30 some-things. So is Dan Hays whose *Harmony in Green*, green tonalities seen through an empty hamster cage, is an uninspiring, if suitably emblematic, winner of the £20,000 First Prize.

Personality, development, wit, risk are in short supply. Stephen Farthing’s *Portrait of Lady 2* meets all these criteria. At 47 and as Oxford’s *Ruskin Master*, his age and distinction now probably prevent him from ever winning the Moores, but his artistic zest is exemplary.

Abstracts Anonymous prevail amongst lesser prize winners with the honourable exceptions of Tony Bevan, Gary Hume - winner of this year’s *Jerwood Painting Prize* - Callum Innes and David Leapman with a better painting than the one that won First Prize last time. Those who can justifiably kick the cat for not being chosen are Basit Beattie, Neil Gall, Nick Gammon, Alan MacDonald, Chrls Ofili, Amanda Thesiger, Virginia Verran and Blaise Drummond, with his appealingly idiosyncratic variation of a 19th-century map of the Mormon trail westward.....”

10

THE SUNDAY REVIEW

Arts

Free-range is better than battery

Art

John McEwan

John Moores Exhibition

Carl and Karin Larsson

Austerity to Affluence

Essence of Humour

TRAVINSKY once described the state as “an anonymous and senselessly levelling patron”, as opposed to the private patron who had “played a role of prime importance in the arts”. Private patronage is the endorsement of the real world and has the vigour of freedom. It is to public patronage what a free-range hen is to a battery chicken. This is why *The John Moores Liverpool Exhibition* at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool (until February 15) is so special. Founded by the late Sir John Moores, creator of Littlewoods, it is now admirably supported by his family. Its object is biennially to survey and reward the best of British painting, judged by a committee of artists and experts with no guideline beyond excellence.

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The walls of *Carl and Karin Larsson: Creators of the Swedish Style* at the Victoria and Albert Museum (until December 18, sponsors Ikea/SAS) are covered with quiet and winsome domesticity was in fact too good to be true. Carl Larsson being a manic depressive who felt smothered in the bosom of his family, an irony compounded by Hitler’s creepy adoption of Swedishness as the Nazi dream. The V & A turn the show into one big Swedish promotion, ending with a section on post-war Larsson style that is indistinguishable from the adjacent museum shop. A Larsson to print money indeed.

A more diverting design exhibition is *Austerity to Affluence: British Art and Design 1945-1963* at the Fine Art Society (until November 16). Paintings and sculpture by the contemporary likes of Kenneth Armitage, Francis Clough and Alan Davie are included, but this is predominantly an exhibition of every sort of design, from furniture to haute couture.

It testifies to the period’s frequent elegance (Ercel Race chairs) and surprising modernity (the *Triumph*). Interesting too that it regards 1950s attitudes as prevailing until 1962. The catalogue is a collector’s piece and will have many retail their “clear-outs” or rummaging lumber-rooms for unforeseen collectables.

Essence of Humour at Crane Kalman Gallery, 218 Bromsgate Road, SW3 (until December 6) is a welcome reminder that art need not be a grim lying-in-state. Modern art is particularly subject to pomposity, so it is refreshing to see the irreverent, comic and ironic sides of many famous modern and contemporary artists, from *Picasso* to Patrick Caulfield. The theme is financially complemented by 25 per cent of the proceeds going to Comic Relief.

work”. “On sunny clear days we sat under the big birch behind the house”, and so on.

The presence of Denis Hare among the show’s visitors was a reminder that home-spun Swedish socialism of the Larssons’ “nothing for consumers” had emerged as the true ideal of Harold Wilson’s unlamented government, mistakenly ruled in on a promise of white-hot technological change.

B

ARE boards, striped carpets and covers, simple furniture, painted geraniums, unfussy dressed children decorating white walls with hand-painted floral designs, these were the essence of the Larsson style. It was exemplified by the life they led in the home they built at Sandhamn, lovingly described in such containing best-sellers as *A Home and On the Sunny Side*.

Carl Larsson (1859-1918), still today his country’s best-loved artist, got all the praise, but his pictures merely illustrated the interiors created by his wife, Karin Larsson (1859-1928). She was the real originator of what is now also called Swedish style, which was actually a Nordic offshoot not so much of gloomy William Morris as the brightness and light of the Glaswegian style of Mackintosh or the Viennese of Hoffmann.

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Essence of Humour at Crane Kalman Gallery, 218 Bromsgate Road, SW3 (until December 6) is a welcome reminder that art need not be a grim lying-in-state. Modern art is particularly subject to pomposity, so it is refreshing to see the irreverent, comic and ironic sides of many famous modern and contemporary artists, from *Picasso* to Patrick Caulfield. The theme is financially complemented by 25 per cent of the proceeds going to Comic Relief.

Tony Bevan’s ‘Head Horizon’ Honourable exception at the abstract-dominated Moores



NICK GAMMON stellt sein Triptychon am Samstag, 31. Januar, von 14 bis 18 Uhr in der Villa Waldberta vor.

Die Ruhe des Ozeans

Nick Gammon zeigt seine Arbeiten in der Villa Waldberta

FELDAFING - Er hat ihn vermisst. Nicht ganz so, wie befürchtet. Doch es war schon ein schwieriger Moment, als Nick Gammon am letzten Tag des vergangenen Jahres einen Abschiedsblick auf dieses Blau warf. Auf die Weite, die manchmal türkis erscheint und manchmal grau. Weit weg vom geliebten Ozean sollte ihn die Reise bringen. Als er dann, am Ziel in der Villa Waldberta angekommen, den See durch die Bäume schimmern sah, war der Stipendiat aus dem Norden ziemlich froh. Denn ohne die Nähe zum Wasser zu leben, ist für Nick Gammon eine schlimme Prüfung.

Wie wichtig Natur und Meer für Gammons künstlerisches Schaffen sind, ist nicht auf den ersten Blick erkennbar. Die Werke des gebürtigen Walisers, der schon auf einer Halbinsel im Westen Irlands wohnt, sind abstrakt. Schmale, hohe Säulen aus Leinwand, mit geometrischer Struktur, mit farbigen Rechtecken in unterschiedlicher Größe und Anordnung überzogen, bilden die Totem-Serie. Auch in Feldafing hat Gammon drei solcher Arbeiten gefertigt. „Waldberta Triptychon“ heißen die jeweils aus zwei Teilen bestehenden Werke.

Trotz des Titels sind religiöse Aspekte nicht das eigentliche Thema des 39jährigen. Doch der Rückgriff seiner Bildersprache auf biblische und kirchliche Symbolik ist

Über theoretische Fragen wie diese gibt Gammon höflich, aber ohne rechtes irisches Feuer Auskunft. Echte Begeisterung kommt erst auf, als es um Wirkung, Farben, Dynamik, kurz, um das Leben der Werke geht. Der Künstler nennt das „the work works“, die Arbeit arbeitet. Und tatsächlich ist Bewegung ein wesentlicher Bestandteil des Triptychons. Die Kombination der Farben, das Wechseln der kleinen Rechtecke zwischen Grün und leuchtendem Orange, zwischen Rot und samtigem Violett versetzt die Totems in ein vibrierendes Zittern. Der Dialog zwischen den Pfählen, die mal symmetrische, mal entgegengesetzte Aufnahme einer Farbkombination an anderer Stelle verstärkt den Eindruck der rhythmischen Lebendigkeit.

Die Intensität der Farben ändert sich je nach dem Raum, in dem Gammons Werke hängen. Und je nach dem Licht, das in den Raum fällt. Das Spiel mit Helligkeiten und Schatten kalkuliert der Künstler ein, darin liegt das Geheimnis seiner Arbeiten. Vielleicht hat er das dem Ozean abgeschaut, der nur wenige Meter von seinem Atelier entfernt auf Irlands Küste zurollt. Auch die See verliert ihre Farbe: Je nach den Sonnenstrahlen oder dem düsteren, unvermittelt zur strahlenden Bläue wechselnden Himmel. Und noch etwas erinnert in den

Münchner “Süddeutsche Zeitung” 28/01/98

“Die Ruhe des Ozeans” Anne Goebel

FELDAFING - Er hat ihn vermisst. Nicht ganz so, wie befürchtet. Doch es war schon ein schwieriger Moment, als Nick Gammon am letzten Tag des vergangenen Jahres einen Abschiedsblick auf dieses Blau warf. Auf die Weite, die manchmal türkis erscheint und manchmal grau. Weit weg vom geliebten Ozean sollte ihn die Reise bringen. Als er dann, am Ziel in der Villa Waldberta angekommen, den See durch die Bäume schimmern sah, war der Stipendiat aus dem Norden ziemlich froh. Denn ohne die Nähe zum Wasser zu leben, ist für Nick Gammon eine schlimme Prüfung. Wie wichtig Natur und Meer für Gammons künstlerisches Schaffen sind, ist nicht auf den ersten Blick erkennbar. Die Werke des gebürtigen Walisers, der schon auf einer Halbinsel im Westen Irlands wohnt, sind abstrakt. Schmale, hohe Säulen aus Leinwand, mit geometrischer Struktur, mit farbigen Rechtecken in unterschiedlicher Größe und Anordnung überzogen, bilden die Totem-Serie. Auch in Feldafing hat Gammon drei solcher Arbeiten gefertigt. „Waldberta Triptychon“ heißen die jeweils aus zwei Teilen bestehenden Werke. Trotz des Titels sind religiöse Aspekte nicht das eigentliche Thema des 39jährigen. Doch der Rückgriff seiner Bildersprache auf biblische und kirchliche Symbolik ist deutlich: Die Anordnung der drei Exponate, die beinahe bis zur Dekke des hohen Ateliers reichende Doppelsäule in der Mitte und die beiden kleineren rechts und links, erinnern an ein Kreuz. Und ihre langgestreckte, himmelwärts sich reckende Form gleicht der in die Vertikale strebenden Linie gotischer Kathedralen.

Über theoretische Fragen wie diese gibt Gammon höflich, aber ohne rechtes irisches Feuer Auskunft. Echte Begeisterung kommt erst auf, als es um Wirkung, Farben, Dynamik, kurz, um das Leben der Werke geht. Der Künstler nennt das „the work works“, die Arbeit arbeitet. Und tatsächlich ist Bewegung ein wesentlicher Bestandteil des Triptychons. Die Kombination der Farben, das Wechseln der kleinen Rechtecke zwischen Grün und leuchtendem Orange, zwischen Rot und samtigem Violett versetzt die Totems in ein vibrierendes Zittern. Der Dialog zwischen den Pfählen, die mal symmetrische, mal entgegengesetzte Aufnahme einer Farbkombination an anderer Stelle verstärkt den Eindruck der rhythmischen Lebendigkeit.

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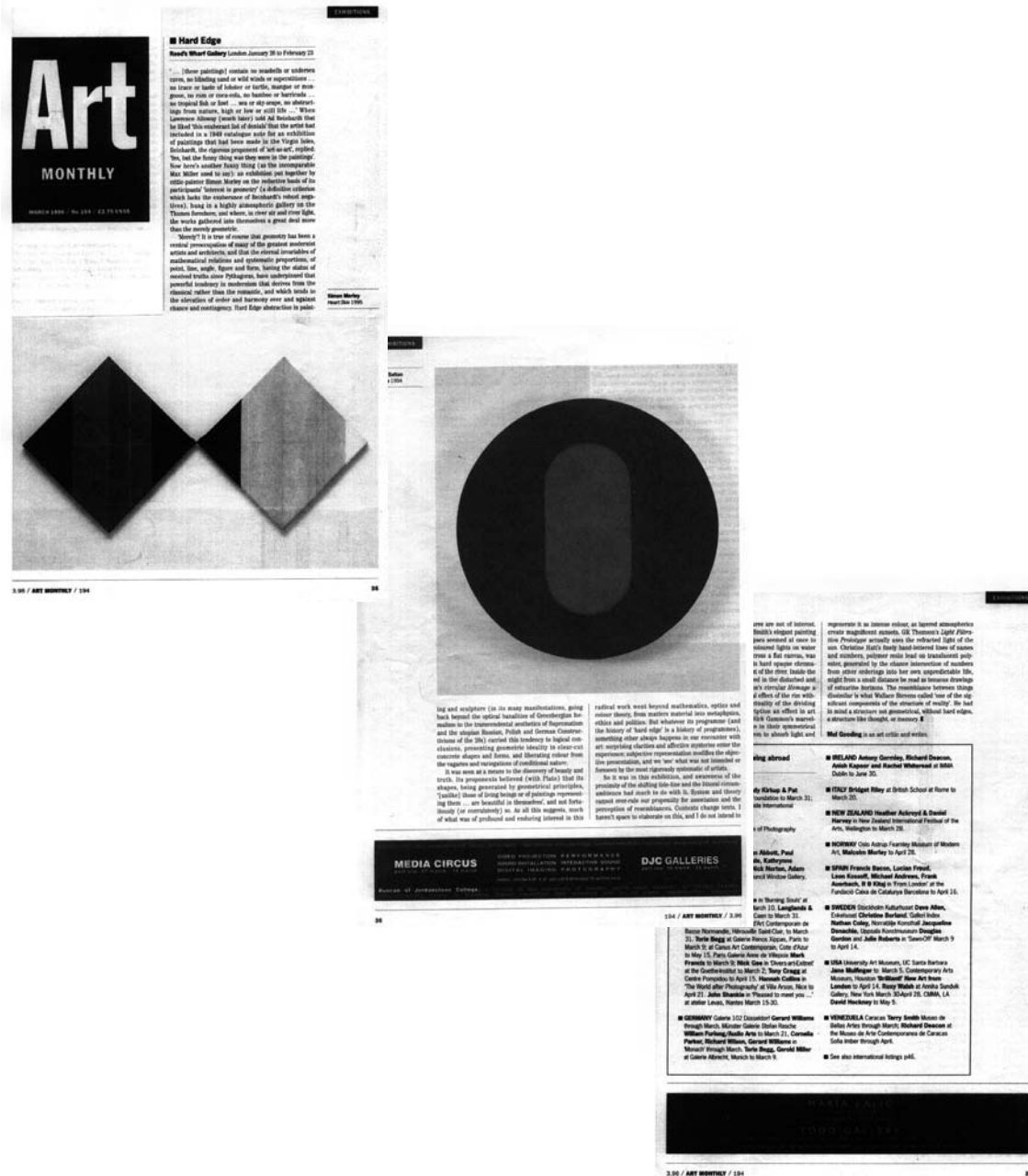
ANNE GOEBEL

“Hard Edge “Reed’s Wharf Gallery London

January 26 to February 23

Mel Gooding

“.... [these paintings] contain no seashells or undersea caves, no blinding sand or wild winds or superstitions. . . no trace or taste of lobster or turtle, mangoe or mongoose, no rum or coca-cola, no bamboo or barracuda ... no tropical fish or fowl. ... sea or sky-scape, no abstractings from nature, high or low or still life...”When Lawrence Alloway (much later) told Ad Reinhardt that he liked ‘this exuberant list of denials’ that the artist had included in a 1949 catalogue note for an exhibition of paintings that had been made in the Virgin Isles, Reinhardt, the rigorous proponent of ‘art-as-art’, replied: ‘Yes, but the funny thing was they were in the paintings’. Now here’s another funny thing (as the incomparable Max Miller used to say): an exhibition put together by critic-painter Simon Morley on the reductive basis of its participants ‘interest in geometry’ (a definitive criterion which lacks the exuberance of Reinhardt’s robust negatives), hung in a highly atmospheric gallery on the Thames foreshore, and where, in river air and river light, the works gathered into themselves a great deal more than the merely geometric. ‘Merely’? It is true of course that geometry has been a central preoccupation of many of the greatest modernist artists and architects, and that the eternal invariable of mathematical relations and systematic proportions, of point, line, angle, figure and form, having the status of received truths since Pythagorus, have underpinned that powerful tendency in modernism that derives from the classical rather than the romantic, and which tends to the elevation of order and harmony over and against chance and contingency. Hard Edge abstraction in painting and sculpture (in its many manifestations, going back beyond the optical banalities of Greenbergian formalism to the transcendental aesthetics of Suprematism and the utopian Russian, Polish and German Constructivisms of the 20s) carried this tendency to logical conclusions, presenting geometric ideality in clear-cut concrete shapes and forms, and liberating colour from the vagaries and variegations of conditional nature. It was seen as a means to the discovery of beauty and truth. Its proponents believed (with Plato) that its shapes, being generated by geometrical principles, [‘unlike] those of living beings or of paintings representing them. .. are beautiful in themselves’, and not fortuitously (or convulsively) so. As all this suggests, much of what was of profound and enduring interest in this radical work went beyond mathematics, optics and colour theory, from matters material into metaphysics, ethics and politics. But whatever its programme (and the history of ‘hard edge’ is a history of programmes), something other always happens in our encounter with art: surprising clarities and affective mysteries enter the experience; subjective representation modifies the objective presentation, and we ‘see’ what was not intended or foreseen by the most rigorously systematic of artists. So it was in this exhibition, and awareness of the proximity of the shifting tide-line and the littoral circumference had much to do with it. System and theory cannot over-rule our propensity for association and the perception of resemblance’s.



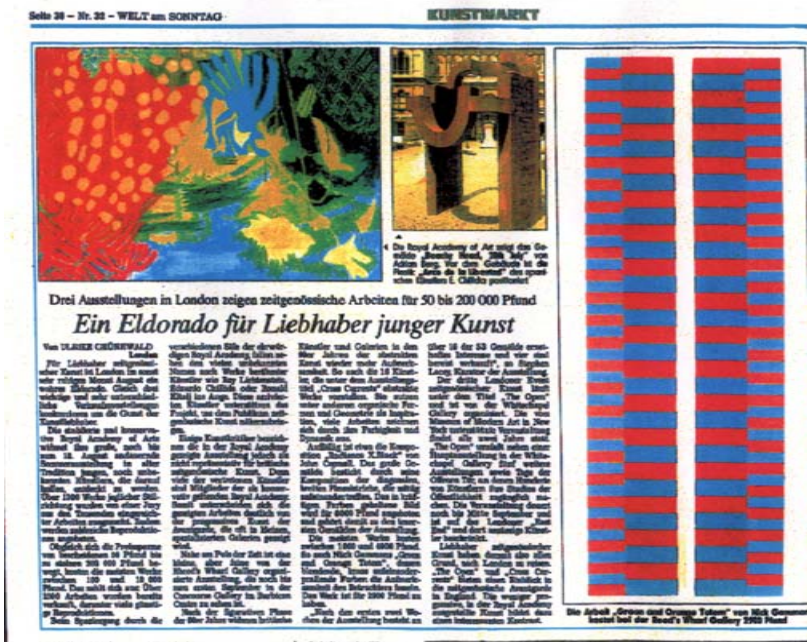


“Ultramarine Totem” at Reed’s Wharf Gallery, London

Contexts change texts. I haven't space to elaborate on this, and I do not intend to suggest that systematic procedures are not of interest. Even so, my pleasure in Maggie Smith's elegant painting *Hard Core*, in which bright ellipses seemed at once to shift like a scatter of reflected coloured lights on water and to be flat ovals deployed across a flat canvas, was intensified by the challenge of its hard opaque chromatics to the silver-grey opaline light of the river. Inside the edge of the yellow lozenge centred in the disturbed and complex brown of Trevor Sutton's circular *Homage* a subtle staining softens the optical effect of the rim without compromising the sharp actuality of the dividing line: without recourse to description an effect in art resembles an effect in nature. Nick Gammon's marvellous *Totems*, formally deliberate in their symmetrical colour-pattern counterpoint, seem to absorb light 3,nd regenerate it as intense colour, as layered atmospherics create magnificent sunsets. GR Thomson's *Light Filtration Prototype* actually uses the re-fracted light of the sun. Christine Hatt's finely hand-lettered lines of names and numbers, polymer resin lead on translucent polyester, generated by the chance intersection of numbers from other orderings into her own unpredictable life, might from a small distance be read as tenuous drawings of estuarine horizons. The resemblance between things dissimilar is what Wallace Stevens called 'one of the significant components of the structure of reality'. He had in mind a structure not geometrical, without hard edges, a structure like thought, or memory.

Mel Gooding is an art critic and writer.

Mel Gooding © 1997



WELT am SONNTAG | 11 August 1996

Von ULRIKE GRÜNEWALD

London

Für Liebhaber zeitgenössischer Kunst ist London im sonst sehr ruhigen Monat August ein wahres Eldorado. Gleich drei wichtige und sehr unterschiedlich Verkaufsausstellungen konkurrieren um die Gunst der Kunstliebhaber. Die etablierte und konservative Royal Academy of Arts widmet ihre große, noch bis zum 18. August andauernde Sommerausstellung in alter Tradition jungen, noch unbekannten Künstlern, die darauf hoffen, entdeckt zu werden. Über 1300 Werke jeglicher Stilrichtung wurden von einer Jury aus' den Tausenden eingereichter Arbeiten ausgesucht. Zudem werden zahlreiche Reproduktionen angeboten. Obgleich sich die Preisspanne von bescheidenen 50 Pfund bis zu stolzen 200 000 pfund bewegt, kosten die meisten Werke zwischen 100 und 10 000 Pfund. Das zählt sich aus: Über 2500 Arbeiten wurden bereits verkauft, darunter viele günstige Reproduktionen.

Beim Spaziergang' durch die verschiedenen Säle der ehrwürdigen Royal Academy, fallen neben den vielen unbekannten Namen auch Werke berühmter Künstler wie Roy Lichtenstein, "Eduardo Chillida oder Ronald Kitai ins Auge. Diese arrivierten Künstler Urnterstützen das Projekt, um dem Publikum zeitgenössische Kunst näherzubringen. Einige Kunstkritiker bezeichnen die in der Royal Academy gezeigte Ausstellung jedoch als nicht repräsentativ für britische zeitgenössische Kunst. Denn viele der vertretenen Künstler sind Mitglieder der als konservativ geltenden Royal Academy. Somit unterscheiden sich die gezeigten Arbeiten deutlich von der progressiven Kunst der Avantgarde, die oft in kleinen, spezialisierten Galerien gezeigt wird. Nahe am Puls der Zeit ist eine kleine, aber feine von der Rheed 's Wharf Gallery organisierte Ausstellung, die noch bis zum ersten September in der Concourse Gallery im Barbican Centre zu sehen ist. Nach der figurativen Phase der 80erjahre widmen britische Künstler und Galerien in den 90er Jahren der abstrakten Kunst wieder mehr Aufmerksamkeit. So auch die 16 Künstler, die unter dem Ausstellungstitel "Cross Currents" abstrakte Werke vorstellen.," Sie nutzen unter anderem organische Formen und Geometrie als Inspiration, viele Arbeiten zeichnen sich durch ihre Farbigkeit und Dynamik aus. Auffällig ist etwa die Komposition "Radiance X.Black" von John Copnall. Das große Gemälde besticht durch seine Komposition der diagonalen, breiten Pinselstriche, die mittig aufeinandertreffen. Das in kräftigen Farben gehaltene Bild wird für 8000 Pfund angeboten und gehört damit zu den teuersten Gemälden der Ausstellung. Die meisten Werke kosten zwischen 1000 und 4000 Pfund. So auch Nick Gammons "Green and Orange Totem", dessen blendende, krass aufeinanderprallende Farben die Aufmerksamkeit des Betrachters fesseln. Das Werk ist für 2900 Pfund zu haben. "Nach den ersten zwei Wochen der Ausstellung besteht an über 16 der 53 Gemälde ernsthaftes Interesse und vier sind bereist verkauft", so Stephen Lacey, Kurator der Ausstellung. Der dritte Londoner Event zeitgenossischer Kunst läuft unter dem Titel "The Open" und ist von der Whitechapel Gallery organisiert. Die vom Museum of Modem Art in New York unterstützte Veranstaltung findet alle zwei Jahre statt. "The Open" umfaßt neben einer Hauptausstellung in der Whitechapel Gallery fünf weitere Ausstellungen sowie Tage der Offenen Tür; an denen Hunderte von Künstlern ihre, Studios der Öffentlichkeit zugänglich machen. Die Veranstaltung dauert noch bis Mitte September und ist auf das Londoner "East End" und dort ansässige Künstler beschränkt. Liebhaber zeitgenössischer Kunst haben derzeit also allen Grund, nach London zu reisen. "The Open" und "Cross Currents" bieten einen Einblick in die zeitgenössische Avantgarde in England. Die weniger progressive, in der Royal Academy ausgetstellte Kunst bildet dazu einen interessanten Kontrast.



“Small Totem” at Kensington Park Road, London

Colourful statements of intent

Abstracts from a small gallery make a splash at the Barbican, writes William Packer

A change is as good as a rest and, like most of us, a gallery sometimes needs to get away for a bit to get a good look at itself. The Reed's Wharf is not the first gallery to do just that, nor the first to take advantage of the ample if awkward spaces of the Barbican's curving Concourse Gallery.

But the exercise is interesting and worthwhile nevertheless, surprising us, and no doubt the gallery itself, by the evident strength and variety of the Reed's Wharf stable of painters. For a comparatively new gallery that has only a constricted, albeit spectacular, space to have established itself so quickly is no small thing.

To make a show of current British abstract painting in the present critical climate is to make a statement of a most positive kind. To interest the more recalcitrant and influential of our art world masters, Turner Prize jurors, for example, such work may have to satisfy certain criteria of avant-garde orthodoxy - it must bear a conceptual

glance of some sort, "investigate the language of paint" perhaps, "address the issues of perception" or "break down the structure of image and process". But the truth is that, in terms of both interest and practice, the work springs from a wider, more general and intuitively established base.

All painting, of whatever kind, has always investigated the language of paint, deconstructed process and image, addressed the issues of perception and intention, to a lesser or greater extent. But it is done naturally, intuitively and unselfconsciously. That, in great part, is what painting is about.

And with abstract painting especially, with no external reference to accommodate, the work is inevitably about the act of painting, the nature of the mark or gesture, the quality of touch and surface, by all or any of which the image will be achieved. Such solipsism is interesting in itself, but it will always be the quality and distinction of what is done, in the way that it is done, that will distinguish the interesting from the banal, the good from the bad. The problem is only that the dry and conceited are too easily the last refuge of the inept or overcritical, and work that stands too self-consciously upon them is too likely to have little else to justify it.

There is nothing of that sort at the Barbican, but only work to represent a broad range of serious engagement, by some is artists old and young, from the hard-edge dazzle systems of Nick Gammon to the lush and atmospheric expressionism of Diane Howse.

The senior and more established artists are, it must be said, the more immediately impressive, with John Copnall in particular holding centre-stage with his large canvases and strong, clean colour. He does, indeed, make the point very clear,

that there can be no painting without structure and order: in his case the structure and hence the pictorial space are direct functions of his ordering of the broad overland

swatches of colour, transparent or opaque, that play out from a given point. And yet for all the control, there is nothing to prepare us, or him, for the vibrant promise of the

image itself, which structure and process merely serve. Each canvas is an adventure.

Barrie Cook is less obviously exuberant, with his systems of columns, discs and stripes sprayed into a state of judicious imprecision to hold an ambiguous space, like echolens or the filament of a bulb. One system will invade another, either by intrusion from one side or another or by superimposition, making the space even more ambiguous. They are delicate, discreet and very beautiful things.

Trevor Sutton is the most discreet, a master of extraordinary subtlety, discretion and refinement, whose work gives the lie to the bold that minimalism is necessarily empty and sterile. He shows a number of fairly small canvases of which the surface, which is to say the image, is divided by a single line, straight or gently curved - half and half, side by side, above or below. And who would believe that

a simple abstract of a cool, light green to a darker olive, or a brown above grey, could be so richly and imaginatively seductive.

Erica Lumsley shows new paintings done in Ireland, to which an organic or calligraphic figure is either laid pattern-like across the surface, or selectively obscured by a simplifying veil or screen. Jason Goddard-larley lays an ochre ground of mud, warm or cool, which he then smears, scrapes or otherwise modifies into a rhythmic and freely calligraphic curve all-over image, like a pattern of paper streamers or a bag of ribbons or thicket of leaves.

Solipsistic as ever, the image comes out of the process of making and marking and so goes round and back again. It is the character of everything in this intriguing show.

Cross Currents: Concourse Gallery, Barbican Centre, Silk Street EC2A, until September 1. Also at Reed's Wharf Gallery, Mill Street SE1, until August 28.

Financial Times July 23 1996

“Colourful Statements of Intent”

William Packer

“... a broad range of serious engagement by some 16 artists both old and young, from the hard edge dazzle systems of Nick Gammon to the lush and atmospheric expressionism of Diane Howse....

...Solipsistic as ever; the image comes out of the process of making and marking and goes round and back again. It is the character of everything in this intriguing show.”



“Green and Orange Totem” at Kensington Park Road, London (exhibited in
“Crosscurrents” at the Barbican Centre, London



Sunday Telegraph Review July 28, 1996

Art

John McEwan

**Cross Currents, Concourse Gallery ,
Barbican Centre,**

Artists from Reed's Wharf Gallery, notable for its championing of abstract art, particularly abstract painting. Trevor: Sutton's tonal zones and Nick Gammmon's bright strips mark the limits, both in colour and subtlety. Smaller works by the artists can be seen in the kinder daylight of Reed's Wharf Gallery, Mill Street SE1 (O171 252 1802) until August 29. The gallery is on the shoreline and it is perhaps no coincidence that the work of many it's artists - Janet Nathan's gritty collages, Jason Gathorne-Hardy's mud paintings - has an estuarine quality. From £500.
© John McEwan 1996



18 MONDAY, APRIL 24, 1995 ***

The Daily Telegraph

THE WEEK AHEAD

NEW SHOWS. London galleries throw open their doors with a spate of new spring shows this week. Visual melodies are worked out with Nick Gammon's colour keyboard paintings at the Blue Gallery, while angst riddles David Hockney's lonely figures at Jill George. Spink's annual watercolour show opens on Wednesday and Waterman beckons with serene still lifes by Martin Monney until April 29. Finally, Lisa Bough Daniels and Nigel Ellis lighten up Coopers and Lybrand with a show called Generation Works at the firm's Embankment Place headquarters.

LAURA STEWART

The Daily Telegraph April 24 1995

Laura Stewart

"...London Galleries throw open their doors with a spate of new spring shows this week. Visual melodies are worked out with Nick Gammon's colour keyboard paintings at the Blue Gallery....."



“Ishka” series at Berning and Daw



Time Out Magazine March 17-24 1993

David Lillington

**BERNING AND DAW
Nick Gammon**

“Living alongside the various new species of artists (with their ironies, their ‘deconstruction’ and X -ray vision) are the traditional, constructivism-influenced abstract painters. They survive by adapting, by learning to look in two directions at once. Nick Gammon’s stripe paintings are garish, to suggest frivolousness, but also hold out the idea that colour is a positive force on the psyche, as abstractionists have always claimed. Similarly, the mathematical aspect of his composition is deliberately spurious. (there’s nothing wildly significant about the series 2, 8, 16, is there?), but also shows unrepentant respect for the work, if not the theories, of earnest serialists. The paintings don’t look like landscapes and have no nameable light effects (they are more like outsize piano keys in the colours of golfing umbrellas), but it is clear that landscape and light are being referred to. All this works well: the strategy is successful. Gammon’s work is loud. It has its ironies, but it also has weight. Painting isn’t dead, it just keeps mutating.”

©David Lillington 1994



“Ishka” series at Berning and Daw



“Sunday Telegraph Review” 28 March 1993

John McEwen on Robert Gober and other new shows

“..... Nick Gammon is another young painter with a commendable show of new work, at Berning and Daw, 8 Flitcroft Street, WC2, (until March 31). He is an unabashed colourist, so it is no surprise to learn that until recently he was Sir Howard Hodgkin’s studio assistant. His strident abstractions take the form of variously arranged bands and stripes, clashing and harmonising by turn. He too looks back - to Sixties painting - but invests it with his own colour-saturated vitality and building-block assertion. He now lives in Ireland and entitles his pictures Uisce, Erse for ‘running water’; a worthy metaphor of their medley of constants and variants.....”

John McEwan © 1993



“Totems” at Water Street, London

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