

bernard jacobson gallery

some of the artists I have worked for

10th September – 5th October 2019

How does one attempt to sum-up 5 decades working as one of the world's leading art dealers? *Some of the artists I have worked for* endeavours to do just that with a dazzling personal selection by Jacobson of some of the remarkable artists he has shown in his eponymous gallery since it first began in 1969. This is a selection to surprise and delight, featuring work spanning more than 130 years and some of the most important names in modern and contemporary art; ample proof if any were needed of why Bernard and his gallery have stood the test of time and become treasured art 'institutions'.

Whether close to his heart or personally known to him, Jacobson has never been afraid to plough his own furrow and has championed the work of artists he loves regardless of fashion. His career has spanned print and book publishing and artistic genres from Modern British to Abstract Expressionism, as well as being a critically acclaimed author and co-founder of the original Modern Painters Magazine. Jacobson is above all else, a life-long and vocal advocate for great art, a true connoisseur with a fervent desire to share his passion with us.

A – is for Ivor Abraham and the beginning of Jacobson's journey as an art dealer. A near neighbour in Jacobson's childhood home of Willesden, Abrahams was a compelling and utterly Bohemian presence and one which was to compel his first art purchase. Jacobson recalls; *'The messy studio was full of plaster moulds in glaring chalky white and the occasional bronze sculpture. There I saw Gorgophone for the first time, in 1959, and I rather rashly agreed to buy it. I had to pay the cost of £40, spread in equal payments over one year. A lifetime later, a matter of ten years, I became his publisher and eventually his dealer too. People of great influence and no influence fell in love with his work and his art would even end up with Claes Oldenburg, Roy Lichtenstein and several other artists.'*

Over the decades which followed, Jacobson was to go on to forge working relationships with many of the artists represented in this exhibition; Leon Kossoff, David Hockney, Peter Blake, Frank Stella, Bruce McLean, Bram Bogart, Robyn Denny and Pierre Soulages are just a few who have worked with him down the years.

Jacobson even appears in one of the paintings represented here; the double portrait by Howard Hodgkin, *In the Black Kitchen*, which features Jacobson and his wife Karin in the

bernard jacobson gallery

kitchen of their house on 57th Street. Jacobson recalls, *'I bought the painting and teased the artist by asking him, which one is Karin and which one is me?'*

With a store of personal recollections which span frequent studio visits to the great Henry Moore – and the starry, Hollywood world of Ed Ruscha, there is still one artist who can lay claim above all others for Jacobson because of the sheer luminous, beauty of his work. Jacobson says, *'Sam Francis was a mischievous magician. He could make a picture just right, whether it was on canvas or a watercolour or an etching or lithograph. He just had that God-given gift. Why and how I don't really know. I loved the man. I loved all his work.'*

Few art dealers can claim a greater record as a champion of the overlooked and undervalued; beginning with the great Modern British artists such as Ben Nicholson and more recently, Robert Motherwell; an artist for whom Jacobson has written the first biography and devoted multiple scholarly exhibitions. Jacobson's attention has now turned to Georges Braque, the most recent artist to 'join' the gallery and one which he feels has been overshadowed by his contemporary, Picasso. He explains: *'I thought the century's greats were Picasso, Braque and Matisse. What had happened to Braque? I would like to work very hard for Braque and so hopefully restore him to the reputation he truly deserves.'*

This exhibition is also an invitation to look again at some of the undisputed masters of Modern Art - but with an entreaty from Jacobson of the fundamental importance of beauty and the sublime in great art. This has animated and sustained Jacobson from his teenage encounter with Gauguin's, Nevermore at the Courtauld through to his great and abiding love of Cézanne. Of Cézanne he comments, *'the watercolours of Cézanne, the very best ones, bring me to a heightened place and yes, can bring me to tears - the sheer beauty and honesty is just overwhelming...barely a day goes by when I don't think of the man or his work. Do you know that Gauguin did that very same thing? Erase that name from art and you may as well erase the name Mozart in music or Flaubert in literature'*.

Which artist can best lay claim to being Jacobson's 'Desert Island' artist? Of those with whom he has forged a personal bond, this must surely be William Tillyer, an artist Jacobson has steadfastly championed for all his 50 years and whom he describes as having, 'quietly and discreetly, risen from a minor figure in the art world to a great one in our current century'. However, the very last word must surely go to Matisse and a connection which goes deep to the core of what made first made Jacobson want to be a dealer in 1969. He says, *'It's not just that there would be virtually no Sam Francis, Motherwell, Kelly, a million artists without Matisse. It's more that he touches a nerve deeper than all. No wonder Picasso was so in awe*

bernard jacobson gallery

of him and fearful of his greatness. He's the man! The pleasure, the generosity of spirit, the visual sensations, the satisfaction, the otherworldly happiness is awesome as much as it is seemingly endless.'

When much of the contemporary art world seems to have lost itself in a hurtling rush towards celebrity, money and notoriety, this presentation is a timely reminder and entreaty to slow down and appreciate the beauty, passion and love which lies at the heart of great art. These are the deceptively simple watch words which have guided and sustained Jacobson over his 50 years as an art dealer and it's impossible not to share his enthusiasm when presented with the riches of this gorgeous exhibition.

PRESS ENQUIRIES

mail@jacobsongallery.com | +44(0)207 734 3431