

# bernard jacobson gallery

William Tillyer

Radical Vision

12<sup>th</sup> January – 10<sup>th</sup> February 2018

Nature and the universal unity of all matter is an abiding theme for Tillyer; we repeatedly see work redolent of the North Yorkshire countryside, beginning with the earliest painting here, *Beach and Sea, Seaton Carew* (1956) or the bridge over the River Esk in *Relentless 7* (2016). These are not simple representations of nature however, Tillyer's art is imbued with the inherent tension of 'creating' landscapes, demonstrated with almost monastic economy in the 'conceptual' works from the 60s including the white, hinged triptych with tree form of *Falling Pinnacle* (1961).

Industrial and domestic materials are all employed, underlying the symbiotic relationship between the prosaic and the sublime which perhaps should not surprise us in the work of a down-to-earth Yorkshireman. Timber mouldings, drawer handles, string, wire and card all make appearances in works including *Meander* (1966), *Fifteen Drawer Pulls* (1967) *Studio Shelf with Circle 27* (1979).

There is also the grid, perhaps one of the best-known of Tillyer's 'signatures', employed as both motif and structural unifier in works including *Kudos* (2006) and *Peninsular* (1981), signifying layers of complex meaning fundamental to Tillyer's practice. Tillyer stands in an artistic lineage including Constable and Cezanne which understands the 'hard-worked artifice required to achieve the effect of naturalness' (1). The grid stands as a reminder, as well as a clever pictorial device to allow us to 'read' his work across 3 dimensions whilst activating the space 'behind' the work.

Finally, there is a fundamental poetry and romanticism which animates and pulsates through all Tillyer's work and which perhaps exerts the greatest emotional 'pull' for the viewer. There is the lyrical sense of 'journey' and spiritual connection inherent in works including *Eight Clouds* (1966) and *Palmer, Clouds That Drop Fatness On The Earth* (2012).

It was the great English Art Historian, Norbert Lynton, who first coined the phrase, *Radical Vision* to describe the practice of William Tillyer, in the key works from 5 decades selected for

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this exhibition we can see the accuracy of his judgment – and a new appreciation of the work of this quiet Yorkshireman.

*'In Tillyer we have an artist who is 'inviting us to look beneath the surface... physically, emotionally and conceptually...All Tillyers are full of character. They are always stimulating. All Tillyer's are full of character. They are always stimulating. Many of them are beautiful. The enchantment they offer is not at odds with his questioning of art but springs from it.'* (2)

1 & 2 - Norbert Lynton, *William Tillyer: Against The Grain*. 21 Publishing.

## **PRESS ENQUIRIES**

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