

bernard jacobson gallery

William Tillyer

The Watering Place

11th October – 20th December 2013

We are delighted to announce an exhibition of new works by British artist William Tillyer (born 1938). This is to mark the artist's 75th birthday. The exhibition will consist of works from two new series: 'The Watering Place' and 'Palmer'. The exhibition will coincide with the artist's retrospective exhibition at MIMA, Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, which opens to the public on 25th October 2013.

Tillyer's *The Watering Place* takes its name from the Rubens masterpiece in the collection of the National Gallery, London (1615-22). This work was also the inspiration for a painting of the same name by the English artist Thomas Gainsborough (before 1777) and later for John Constable's *The Hay Wain* (1821), both paintings also in the collection of the National Gallery, London. Tillyer's eponymous *Palmer* series refers to the romantic and visionary landscape painter Samuel Palmer (1805-1881) and both series can be seen as part of that same English romantic landscape tradition.

Both series convey Tillyer's deep engagement with painting, particularly abstraction and the tradition of landscape painting. They also reveal the undiminished ambition with which the artist continues to bring fresh insight to the underlying obsessions of his experimental oeuvre; his investigations into the nature of the art object and its role in the world; and his search for materials and techniques not usually associated with painting.

The paintings are created from acrylic paint, mesh and canvas. The paint is pushed through a fine mesh creating an intricate surface which is carefully built up and controlled by the artist. Later, when the paint has hardened, the mesh is mounted on canvas. In some works, further layers of paint are added; in others not.

In *The Watering Place* there is a fiery sky shot through with blue and green swirls, clouds and veils, and two glowing, orange orbs. In their colour and surface, the paintings reference the North Yorkshire moors where the artist has lived for most of his life. The landscape around him has long been a source of inspiration, which he first explored in an early student piece, entitled *The Vortex*, 1958, depicting a "vortex of sky above the moors".

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The subtitle of the paintings in the Palmer series Clouds Dropping Fatness on the Earth refers to the pervading religious and spiritual symbolism in Samuel Palmer's work, described by the artist's son Albert in the following passage:

"Had the artist depended for his material solely on the fields, and woods, and hills around him, and had he used that material in a sordid way, he might have given us faithful representations of those he selected, but there would have been inevitable repetition, and he would never have shown us as he has undoubtedly done, the very spirit and quintessence of the loveliest and most poetic pastoral scenery - scenery which we may imagine as that of ancient England, when shepherds piped upon their pipes, and the clouds dropped fatness."

Tillyer has had a lifelong fascination with clouds and his interest in Constable and Turner is not a coincidence. Constable's "Cloud Studies" seem constantly at the front of his mind when addressing the landscape. For him, clouds represent the conjunction of nature and man. Throughout the landscape, man's activities release ever increasing amounts of moisture into the air, which forms into clouds and is then poured back into the land as rain. The Clouds Dropping Their Fatness alludes to this naturally occurring water cycle of evaporation, condensation and precipitation.

In his work, Tillyer attempts to convey the relationship of nature and industry; believing that the presence of industry in nature is an inevitable consequence of our modern world and that each is contingent on the other, he ascribes equal importance to both. The intrusion of humans upon the landscape is a central theme. The presence of the man-made, mesh imposes a degree of order on the more natural, fluid, substance of paint.

The exhibition reveals an artist in full-flight, building upon the accumulated experiences of half a century of committed practice to make works which drive towards a novel conception of the landscape tradition and painting in general.

To mark the artist's 75th birthday, the following exhibitions will take place this autumn:

William Tillyer: Against Nature

Retrospective exhibition at MIMA, Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art

25th October 2013 – 9th February 2014

www.visitmima.com

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William Tillyer: Haven, at Inspired by Gallery, The North York Moors Centre, Danby, N.
Yorkshire,

28th September to 3rd November 2013

William Tillyer: The Tyranny of the Picture Plane and Other Pressure Tools, Platform A Gallery,
Middlesbrough,

24th October to 4th December 2013