

# bernard jacobson gallery

William Tillyer

## The Balcony Watercolours

10<sup>th</sup> February – 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2011

Bernard Jacobson Gallery is delighted to announce its forthcoming exhibition of *The Balcony Watercolours: Venice Nice Estoril* by acclaimed British artist William Tillyer.

Following our successful William Tillyer season in 2010, this exhibition will present new watercolours executed during the latter part of last year while Tillyer toured southern Europe. Views of both the Mediterranean and the Atlantic are seen from hotel balconies in a style that is at times explosive, at others reflective.

The works display astonishing variety given the simplicity of subject matter explored, viz: looking out to sea from a balcony. The images can be joyful and celebratory, or dark and dramatically beset by nature's forces. It is a world in motion, with different interactions, played out by colours ranging from deep and dense in places to the faintest of wisps. It is a turbulent world that is both emerging and disappearing; some forms are recognizable, others abstract inventions by the artist.

These watercolours, while deeply rooted in tradition, are the result of uncompromising abstraction. In the foreground we see the geometric, stepped lines of the balcony; while above, the sea, sky, trees, clouds and sun are rendered as pools, sweeps and splashes of pigment. Some scenes are overlaid with a grid, a visual motif the artist has employed since the 1970s, signifying for him the interrelatedness of things.

Tillyer's work defies easy categorization: from his uncompromising proto-conceptual assemblages of the 1960s and quasi minimalist grid prints of the 1970s to the rich organic landscape paintings of the late 1980s and constructed abstract paintings of the 1990s. A fundamental consistency of purpose, however, underpins this output: his unceasing fascination with the physical world; his firmly held belief in the interconnectivity of opposing forces; and his investigations into the nature of the art object and its role in the world. It is characterized by continuing themes of binary opposition; the interplay of movement and stasis. As in his series of "Fallingwater Variations" or his native North Yorkshire landscape, the watercolours are at once about a nature charged with movement, like flowing water or moving

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clouds, set against something still and more geometric, like a bridge or the building 'Fallingwater' built by Frank Lloyd Wright.

As the artist has explained: "In opposing, one hopes to create a relationship, a synthesis. I think a primary concern for many artists, writers, musicians, is to create a harmony between what are the divergent interests of each particular artist... a kind of bringing together.... to try and bring opposites together, like black and white, or the geometric and organic, and have them live or marry."

His choice of watercolour, rather than a linear or graphic approach, places Tillyer firmly in the long tradition of British landscape watercolour painting. To an extent this show complements the Tate Britain's forthcoming major survey exhibition of this singularly British genre, Watercolour.

William Tillyer, born in Middlesbrough, North Yorkshire, 1938, is an artist of international acclaim. He has exhibited widely and his work is represented in many public collections including Tate, London; and the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Having studied at the Slade School of Fine Art in London and with Stanley William Hayter at the famous Atelier 17 in Paris, Tillyer has travelled the world over four decades making a significant contribution to British art.