

bernard jacobson gallery

William Tillyer

Season

Part One | The Prints

5th – 27th February 2010

Celebrating William Tillyer and Bernard Jacobson's long-running working partnership, Spring 2010's four-part exhibition series will begin with a look at Tillyer's extensive printed output. In the forty years since the artist first visited Jacobson at his Mount Street print gallery, the latter has published close to two hundred editions of his work. The cross-section of works on display exemplify the fruits of such commitment - establishing Tillyer as one of the most constantly innovative print-makers working today.

At the time of that first encounter Tillyer was seven years out of the Slade. Having won a scholarship to apprentice at Stanley William Hayter's world famous Parisian print studio Atelier 17 following his graduation, by 1970 he already had a considerable graphic output behind him, with showings at Young Contemporaries and Arnolfini. With Jacobson's forthcoming support, Tillyer was able to work through his ideas on a more ambitious scale, expanding the lattice-based etchings he was working on at the time into woodcut, lithography and screenprint. The results launched him to the top ranks of the buoyant 1970s print market, winning the notice of major institutions and top awards at the 1972 Second International Print Biennale in Krakow.

The show begins with some of these early 1970s editions. These works use printed lattices to create what Pat Gilmour, head of the Tate's Print Department, termed, 'a cool and unpeopled world' in which to reflect the surrounding flux of nature'. The lattices themselves were rendered through a wide variety of innovative techniques. As Gilmour explained, 'part of the poetry of the prints lies in the appropriateness with which a particular technique has been used to convey a particular experience'. The emptiness of the scenes and their muted reference to man's influence in abandoned landscapes, plays evocatively against the rigid order of the grid from which they are constructed - the juxtaposition creating an ambience recalling none so much as the eery isolation of Georges Seurat's work.

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Tillyer has continued to explore such juxtapositions as a staple of his practice, offsetting his radical approach to pictorial conventions and mastery of diverse techniques against an array of themes from traditional still-life scenes to dynamic abstractions; stiles in his native Yorkshire to the grand expanses of America's West Coast. Across these diverse subject matters Tillyer has forged a graphic oeuvre that remains both innovative and considered, technically proficient and emotionally charged.

The exhibition confirms Tillyer as one of the most prolific and innovative print-makers of our time. Reacting to, mirroring and at times leading his developments in other media, Tillyer's prints form a perfect starting point for the forthcoming exploration of his wider oeuvre. A new series of etchings is published in conjunction with the show.

About the William Tillyer Season exhibition series

To mark the 40th anniversary of the day that William Tillyer walked into Bernard Jacobson's newly opened print gallery in Mount Street, Mayfair, carrying a portfolio of his etchings - a meeting of historic importance to the two young men - the Bernard Jacobson Gallery is proud to announce a four-part exhibition season devoted to the work of one of the most consistently challenging British artists of recent history.

PART ONE | THE PRINTS

5th - 27th February

The first show will look at Tillyer's extensive print output. Although his degree was in painting, he was also lucky enough to study etching under Anthony Gross at the Slade and in 1963 won a scholarship to apprentice at Stanley William Hayter's world famous Atelier 17 in Paris. Since that point printmaking has always played a significant role in Tillyer's practice, both informing and feeding from his work in other media. Relentlessly innovative, his print work covers the gamut of techniques from etching to digitally manipulated imagery.

PART TWO | THE PAINTINGS

3rd March - 3rd April

A painting retrospective will confirm his innovation. From the uncompromising, non-referential, proto-conceptualist works of the '60s to the rich organic distillations of the late '80s or the

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audacious theatricality of his most recent works, Tillyer has constantly defied categorisation. The show will highlight the range of his output while also illuminating the fundamental consistency of purpose that underpins this - 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.

PART THREE | THE WATERCOLOURS

9th April - 15th May

Tillyer is without doubt the most accomplished practitioner of that most English of art forms, the watercolour. A survey of 40 years work will demonstrate that Tillyer has rescued the medium from the world of Prince Charles and local watercolour societies and placed it as firmly in the world of contemporary art as it was for Constable and Turner.

PART FOUR | NEW PAINTINGS: CLOUDS

19th May - 19th June

The final show will be the first glimpse at this artist's latest body of work. The series sees him return to his recurrent theme, the English Landscape. It will reveal an artist exploring new solutions to the problems that have occupied him for more than half a century. Coming as it does at the end of the season it will complete a portrait of a man whose relentless innovations and enduring commitment are singular, inspirational and ongoing.