

bernard jacobson gallery

William Tillyer

Season

Part Four | New Paintings, Clouds

19th May – 19th June 2010

'Painting is a science and should be pursued as an inquiry into the laws of nature. Why, then, may not a landscape be considered as a branch of natural philosophy, of which pictures are but experiments?'

'The sky is the source of light in Nature and it governs everything'.

John Constable

The concluding exhibition of our four-part William Tillyer Season will give first airing to the artist's latest body of work. Inspired by his return to North Yorkshire after a residency in Spain, and executed over the last eighteen months, the works see Tillyer revisit his enduring preoccupation with the English landscape. Following on the heels of our three retrospectives, the show reveals the undiminished ambition with which Tillyer continues to bring fresh insight to the underlying obsessions of his experimental oeuvre.

Centred upon a cloud study motif derived from John Constable's quasi-scientific attempts to map the construction of the skies, (as well as Tillyer's own long-running obsession with clouds as a symbol of interconnectivity within the material realm), these are works that demand to be seen in relation to the historic English landscape tradition even as they push towards a new conception of the genre.

Unfolding across both plane surface and Tillyer's trademark Open Surface lattices, the works see the artist push his control of paint as an allusive tool. In the plane surface Flatford Chart Paintings nine gesso panels, arranged in a chart structure, utilise the interrelation of differently diluted paints to recapture a sense of the material flux embodied in our skies. The viewer hovers between the panels and the accumulations of thicker and thinner paint - suspended in their mysterious interrelations, as they might be staring into the ethereal expanses of sky on a summer's day. The latticed Helmsley Sky Study pieces meanwhile see Tillyer control the movement of paint about and through a regular perforated lattice, suspended some two inches from a white background. Here the focus becomes the paint's conditioning as it

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weaves through the lattice. The viewer is caught up in the struggle of image and materials, paint and support, rationalising human form and motive, organic paint.

Throughout the works, therefore, Tillyer succeeds in creating new affinities between materials and subject matter, forcing reflection upon man's interrelation to nature, arts relation to the world. As Mel Gooding has observed, 'they serve to remind us that the landscape is made by man and that great Nature itself is shaped by the symbolic imagination, known and recognised in our diverse picturings of it'.

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.

A fully illustrated catalogue with a text by Ben Wiedel-Kaufmann, placing the new work within the context of Tillyer's wider oeuvre and evolving philosophy, will be released to coincide with the exhibition.

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.

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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 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.