

Aspects of New British Art

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The art scene in England has, during the past decade, acquired a completely international outlook and with it a new attitude of vitality. That tenuous quality referred to variously as Englishness or provincialism has given way to something rather more urgent, broader in context and more adventurous in approach. There are two major contributing factors responsible for this change. First of all, the activities and interests of the critic Lawrence Alloway, who during the late fifties was involved with the aesthetic of large scale abstraction, and who contributed largely to the understanding and appreciation of American art in England. The second factor, which led inadvertently to the various misunderstandings about the meaning of the term Pop Art, was the rediscovery of source material in the everyday environment of the big city.

If expressionism was the inevitable ingredient of action painting, which in England was very short-lived, the main trends of the late fifties and the early sixties, whether in figuration or abstraction, were characterised by a certain detachment. Humanism, in the view of the younger artists, became independent of the anguished brush-stroke and the preoccupation with the human image as such. Figuration, like abstract painting, became the symbolic language of personal experience rather than social comment.

It would be true to say that a British style, or any overall tendency, or set of theories which are universally subscribed to, simply do not exist. The work of the 17 artists in this exhibition constitutes nothing less than 17 individual approaches to the function and the process of painting and sculpture, whether we mean by this, image-making (Joe Tilson, Bernard Cohen, Harold Cohen, Allen Jones, Jack Smith, Richard Smith, Henry Mundy, John Furnival, Sandra Blow, John Walker and Gillian Ayres), or the activation of the picture plane and the formal manipulation of space (John Hoyland, Mark Lancaster, Bridget Riley, Peter Sedgley, William Turnbull, and Brian Wall). Even this simple division is unsatisfactory since it is not true to the same extent in the case of every individual. Stylistic similarities can also be completely misleading. This arises from the fact that what we often think of as style is, in fact, nothing other than technique. If kinetic art is basically involved with the use of mechanics to provoke movement, no less technical devices are applied to op art, hard-edge, or assemblage, and certainly action painting. No wonder that articles about op art often read like manuals dealing with, say, the intaglio processes where any idea of content becomes subordinate to technical information. Nobody, however, would probably go as far as to talk about the acrylic movement in relation to artists employing plastic paints, although the use of a certain type of pigment is not so different from the use of predetermined repertoire of forms, or preselected ready-made elements.

According to Freud, art is the process by which fantasy is transformed into reality. If one accepts this as having any relevance whatever, it would seem unnecessary to talk of movements and groups unless we admit to sharing the same fantasies. Perhaps it would be more relevant to make connecting links according to the structural framework within which the artist functions, whether this framework involves materials or images, or else to associate those painters who share similar attitudes involving content and expression.

One generalisation that seems relevant here is that the most vital contributions to any of the main preoccupations (in construction, assemblage, abstraction, new figuration, op art, pop art, object making, coloured sculpture and typographical painting) do not stem from the influence of the older generation of British artists (Francis Bacon being possibly the only exception). The Englishness of English art, once a term of appraisal and reverence often used in relation to the work of painters like Ben Nicholson and Ivon Hitchens has no relevant application today. If Vorticism was the first intentional attempt at creating an international situation in Britain, and the abstract movement in the 1930's (led by Moore, Nicholson and Hepworth) the second,

one could say that in both cases it was the dialogue between Britain and Europe. Since the middle 1950's links between England and America rather than those with Europe, have inspired the majority of young artists. American art was an eye opener more than an influence, and an important factor in the total awareness of the physical as well as ideological possibilities in relation to art. Perhaps the notion that the expression of art can be realised in any form, with any subject matter and in any media, is the basis of art activity in England today. If this is a liberating factor, it is also one that makes greater demands on the artist himself, and his own inner resources. The techniques of expressionism can become superfluous in a comfortable environment. It must follow that the problems of communicating something of real consequence today are perhaps greater than hitherto.

Ultimately, where an artist stands in relation to style and expression is a matter of his intent, purpose and what he wishes to say, rather than the means he employs to achieve this end. In view of this, and in the context of this exhibition, it might be interesting to examine something of the 17 different approaches: [*Miss Reichardt's notes on the individual artists have been incorporated in the catalogue*].

One cannot claim that this exhibition is fully representative of what is going on in England at present, since painters like Patrick Caulfield, Howard Hodgkin, Robyn Denny, David Hockney and sculptors like Anthony Caro, Phillip King, William Tucker, to mention only a few, are not included for lack of space or lack of available works. Nevertheless the 17 artists represented here give an accurate indication of the current preoccupations in England, and the considerable variety of approaches and styles that have emerged during the past six years.

JASIA REICHARDT

The Conference of State Art Gallery Directors of Australia is most grateful to Miss Jasia Reichardt for selecting the exhibition and preparing the catalogue. The Conference joins with Miss Reichardt in expressing sincere thanks to the following for their generous help and co-operation: The Fine Art Department of the British Council in London; Dr. Charles Damiano, The Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery, Peter Cochrane of Arthur Tooth & Sons Ltd., McRoberts & Tunnard Gallery, Robert Fraser Gallery, Rowan Gallery, Kasmin Limited, Leslie Stack of Zwemmer Gallery, The Arts Council of Great Britain, Hanover Gallery, Marlborough New London Gallery, and the Photographer Hugh Gordon.

Catalogue sizes are given in inches, to the nearest inch, height before width. Unless otherwise stated, works have been lent by the artist or his dealer.

The Conference also wishes to thank the British Council in Australia for making this exhibition available in the Commonwealth. It was shown earlier in New Zealand where a catalogue with block illustrations was produced—what is presented here is substantially drawn from the New Zealand catalogue and the thanks of the Australian Conference to the New Zealand Art Council is gratefully acknowledged.

ITINERARY IN AUSTRALIA

Queensland	April 6 to April 30, 1967
New South Wales	May 17 to June 18
Tasmania	July 11 to August 31
South Australia	August September
Western Australia	September October

If possible the exhibition will also be shown in Canberra and Newcastle.

Gillian Ayres

Born 1930 London. Studied Camberwell School of Art 1946-50. Visiting teacher at Bath Academy of Art since 1959. Awarded Japan International Art Promotion Association Award 1963. Exhibited since 1956 in Great Britain, Sweden, New Zealand, Australia, Italy, France, Germany, U.S.A., and Japan. Married to the painter Henry Mundy, lives in London.

The paintings of Gillian Ayres make their impact through the exuberant ordering of dynamic and colourful forms. Her tightly controlled and essentially flat interplay between a limited number of components is a recent development from a looser and more gestural type painting. "Although I do not use things seen or remembered as a point of departure," she said in 1960, "I do not mind if a finished picture evokes a feeling of flowers, or whatever it may be, to different viewers."

1 HEIGHTS, 1964
plastic paint on canvas two panels 84x120

3 GHUZ, 1965
plastic paint on canvas 72x72

2 RAGA, 1965
plastic paint on canvas 69x81

4 KABUL, 1965
plastic paint on canvas 84x60



Sandra Blow

Born 1925 London. 1942-46 studied at St. Martin's School of Art; 1946-47 at Royal Academy Schools; and 1947-48 at Academia delle Belle Arte, Rome. Teacher at the Royal College of Art, London, since 1960. Won Second Prize at the John Moore's Liverpool Exhibition 1961, and Arts Council Purchase Award 1965. Since 1950 exhibited in Great Britain, Italy, U.S.A., New Zealand, Switzerland, Holland, Germany and Denmark. Lives in London.

Sandra Blow's new paintings still retain that evocation of landscape which in a more specific and deliberate way marked her textured and impastoed works of the early sixties, as well as the even earlier sack collages. Now texture has been replaced by luminosity of liquid transparent paint and thin veils of tonal colour, limited in its range and applied with intuitive spontaneity.

5 UNTITLED 3, 1965
oil on canvas 66x60

6 UNTITLED 1, 1965
oil on canvas 48x72

7 UNTITLED 2, 1966
oil and ash on canvas 66x60

8 UNTITLED 4, 1966
oil on canvas 54x48



Bernard Cohen

Born 1933 London. 1949-50 studied at South West Essex School of Art; 1950-51 at St. Martin's School of Art; and 1951-54 at the Slade School of Art. 1954 was awarded French Government Scholarship, and in 1956 a Boise Travelling Scholarship. 1961 executed a number of murals for the International Union of Architects Congress in London. Taught at Hammersmith School of Art 1957-60, at Ealing School of Art 1959-64 and since 1964 at St. Martin's School of Art. Commissioned to paint a safety curtain for Theatre Royal Stratford-East, London, 1965. Since 1953 exhibited in Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, U.S.A., Germany, France, Italy, Canada and Sweden. 1966 represented Britain at the 33rd Venice Biennale. Married with two children. Lives in London.

Bernard Cohen: "Drawing for me is an informal activity in which ideas are encouraged to appear regardless of the quality or style they bring with them. I catch relationships that develop between free play of ideas, and sometimes they inform me of new and interesting possibilities. This prepares me for the act of painting, which, for me, is formal and ritualistic and at which therefore, the complexity of my ideas must for a while be resolved."

9 WYNDHAMS, 1962
oil on canvas 96x72

10 BELL, 1962-63
oil and egg tempera on canvas 84x84

11 CLASP, 1963
oil and egg tempera on canvas 84x84

12 LACQUERED, 1963
oil and egg tempera on canvas 72x96



Harold Cohen

Born 1928 London. 1948-52 studied at the Slade School of Art. 1952 was awarded Abbey Minor Travelling Scholarship. 1952-54 lecturer in art history at Camberwell School of Art. 1956-59 Fellow in Fine Art at Nottingham University. 1959 awarded Harkness Fellowship and spent two years in New York. 1961-62 taught at St. Martin's School of Art, Bromley College of Art, and Ealing School of Art. Since 1962 a lecturer in painting at Slade School of Art. 1963 awarded a prize in the open section of the John Moore's Liverpool Exhibition. Since 1951 exhibited in Great Britain, New Zealand, U.S.A., France, Japan, Italy, Germany, Canada and Sweden. 1965 held a retrospective exhibition at Whitechapel Art Gallery, London; and 1966 represented Britain at the 33rd Venice Biennale. Lives in London.

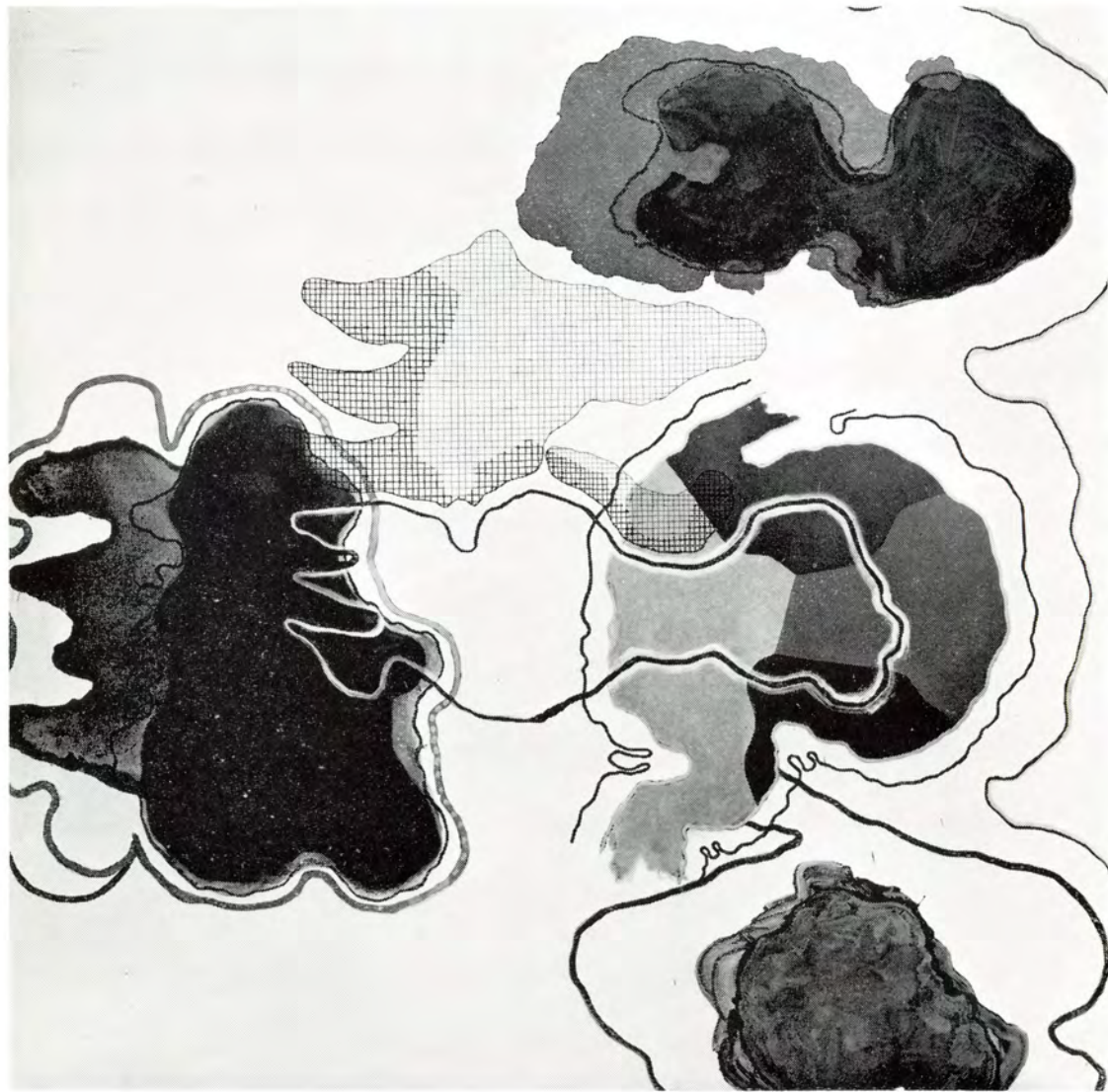
One could describe Harold Cohen's paintings of the past five years as complex, expansive abstractions, based on notions associated with topography and the landscape, or imaginary charts where the linear elements assume minute scale in comparison with the vast floating areas of colour. This contrast becomes the focus of intensity and tension within the painting.

13 BLOSSOM, August 1964
acrylic on canvas 102x102

15 FORECAST, August 1965
acrylic on canvas 84x84

14 AS IF, February 1965
acrylic on canvas 102x102

16 THIS ONE, August 1965
acrylic on canvas 84x84



John Furnival

Born 1933 London. 1951-55 studied at Wimbledon School of Art, and 1957-60 at Royal College of Art, London. 1960 won an Abbey Minor Travelling Scholarship, and in 1962 the First Prize in the Arnolfini Gallery Open Competition, Bristol. Since 1960 teaches at the Gloucestershire Colleges of Art. 1964 started the Openings Press in Woodchester. Exhibited in Great Britain, France, Spain, Italy, U.S.A. and Mexico. Married with two children, lives in Woodchester, Gloucestershire.

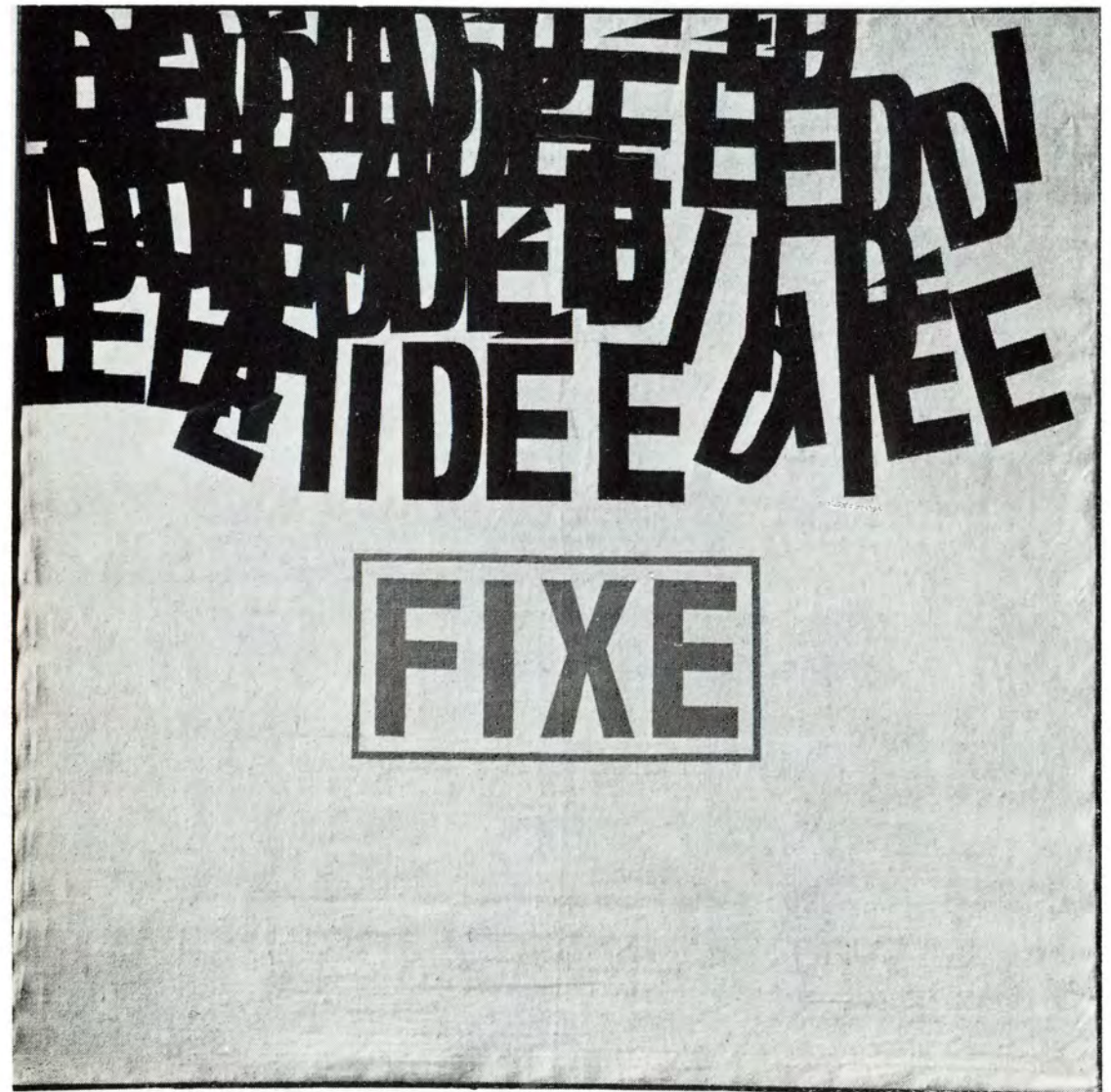
John Furnival constructs his paintings from letters, and the resulting picture is as much the expression of the visual equivalent of their semantic content, as the letters themselves become the substance and the form of the image.

17 IDEE FIXE, 1963
acrylic on canvas 72x72

19 BESTIARY, 1963
acrylic on canvas 72x72

18 SATOR ROTAS, 1963
acrylic on canvas 72x72

20 VOWEL PYRAMID, 1966
acrylic on canvas 40x60



John Hoyland

Born 1934 Sheffield. 1951-60 studied at Sheffield College of Art, and Royal Academy Schools, London. 1962-64 taught at Croydon College of Art, and since 1963 at Chelsea School of Art. 1963 Gulbenkian Foundation Purchase Award; 1964 Stuyvesant Foundation Travel Bursary, and International Young Artists Award, Tokyo; 1966 Arts Council of Northern Ireland third prize, Belfast. Exhibited since 1959 in Great Britain, Germany, Italy, U.S.A., Japan and France. Married with one child, lives in London.

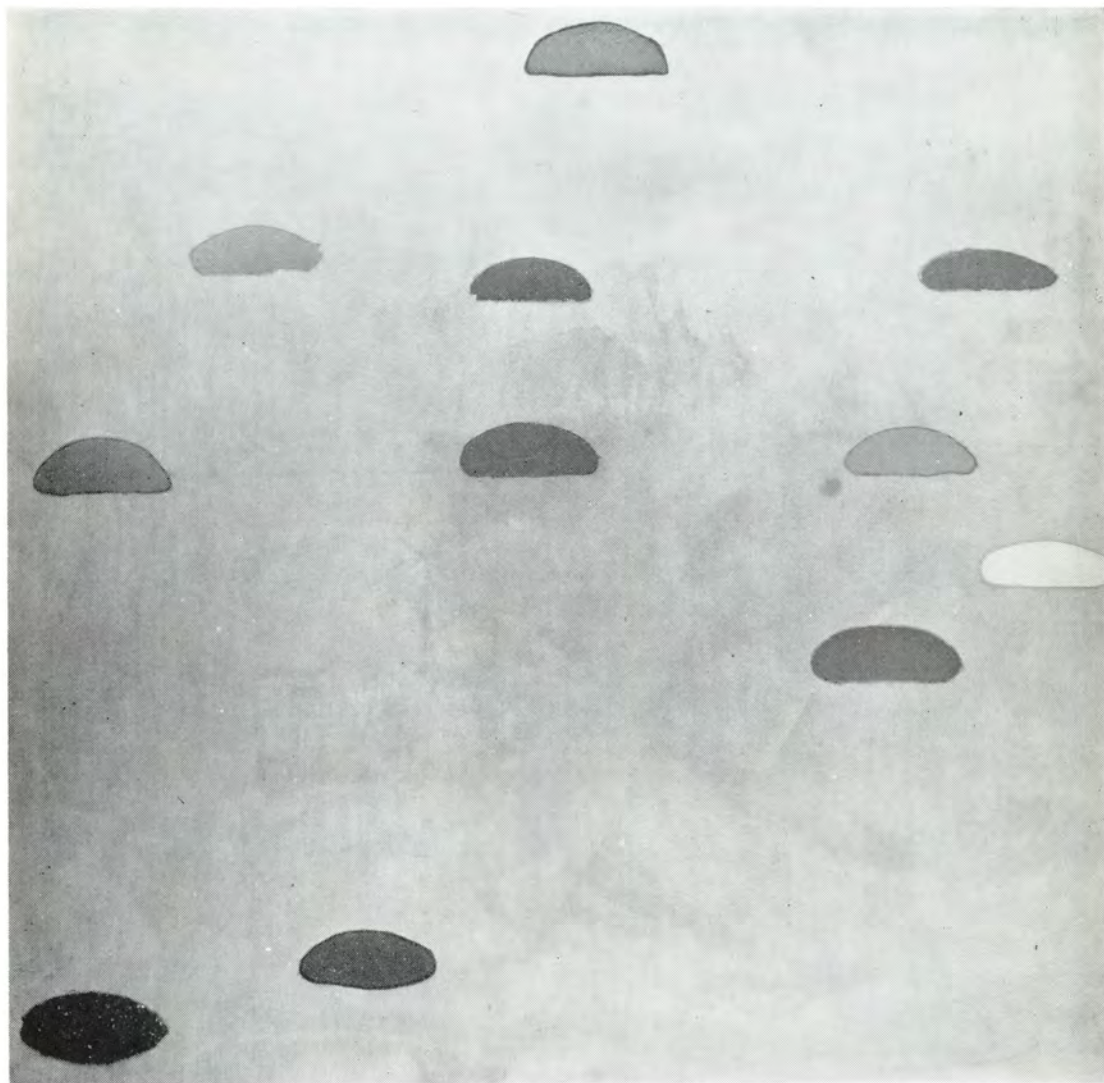
John Hoyland's paintings are deceptively simple. Usually within a vast area of green he places a string of closely related forms which endow the work with a sense of direction. Neither the contours nor the colours have the sort of definition which suggest that the painting deals with a single, precise, unambiguous statement.

21 1-3-64
acrylic on canvas 78x66

22 21-7-64
acrylic on canvas 84x84

23 20-8-64
acrylic on canvas 84x84

24 30-1-65
acrylic on canvas 60x60



23

Allen Jones

Born 1937 Southampton. Studied at Hornsey College of Art 1958-59, and Royal College of Art 1959-60. 1961-63 taught at Croydon College of Art and later at Chelsea School of Art. Won the Prix de Jeunes Artistes in 1963 Paris Biennale. Since 1961 exhibited in Great Britain, France, U.S.A., Holland, Germany and Italy. Married, lives in London and New York.

Allen Jones uses figurative elements in an ambiguous or formal context. His painting of a skirt with multiple legs or the male/female images suggest a transformation of a recognisable subject matter into a pictorial device where the image operates on a purely associative level. Basically his work deals with a continuous process of metamorphosis between image and form.

25 3RD BIG BUS, RED, 1962
oil on three canvases two 12x12 one 60x61
City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham

26 PARACHUTIST II, 1963
oil on canvas 70x40
Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

27 REFLECTED MAN, 1963
oil on canvas 60x72
Arts Council of Great Britain



26

Mark Lancaster

Born 1938 Yorkshire. 1961-65 studied at Fine Arts Department, University of Newcastle-on-Tyne. 1965-66 taught at Fine Arts Department, University of Newcastle-on-Tyne. Lives in Newcastle and London.

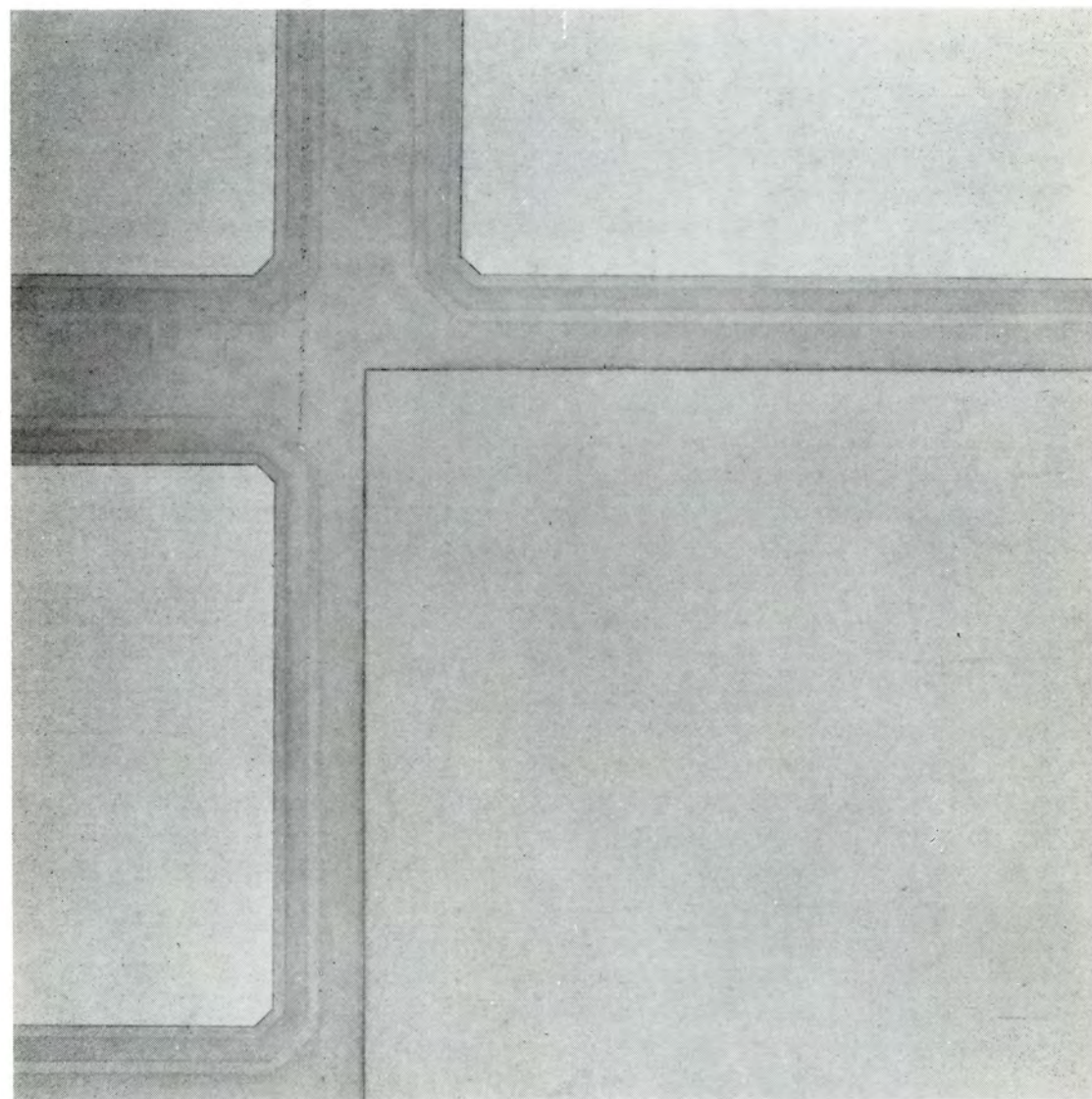
Mark Lancaster: "My paintings were largely governed by two experiences in New York, which became their subjects — certain New York buildings and Howard Johnsons restaurants. First seen in New York with blue-green and house-style in signs and interiors, and later in their most common forms on highways with orange roofs surmounted by blue-green tower — this inspired my use of close colour variations, especially the blue-green as in *Second Host*."

28 UNTITLED STUDY, 1965
acrylic on canvas 36x36

30 SECOND SETBACK, 1965
acrylic on canvas 36x36

29 SECOND HOST, 1965
acrylic on canvas 60x60

31 GORDY, 1965
acrylic on canvas 36x36



Henry Mundy

Born 1919 Birkenhead. 1933-36 studied at Laird School of Art, Birkenhead, and 1946-50 at Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts. 1961 won the William Frew Memorial Purchase Prize at Pittsburgh International; and First Prize in the open section of John Moore's Liverpool Exhibition. Since 1958 teaches at Bath Academy of Art. Exhibited in Great Britain, U.S.A., Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Canada and Holland. Married to the painter Gillian Ayres, lives in London.

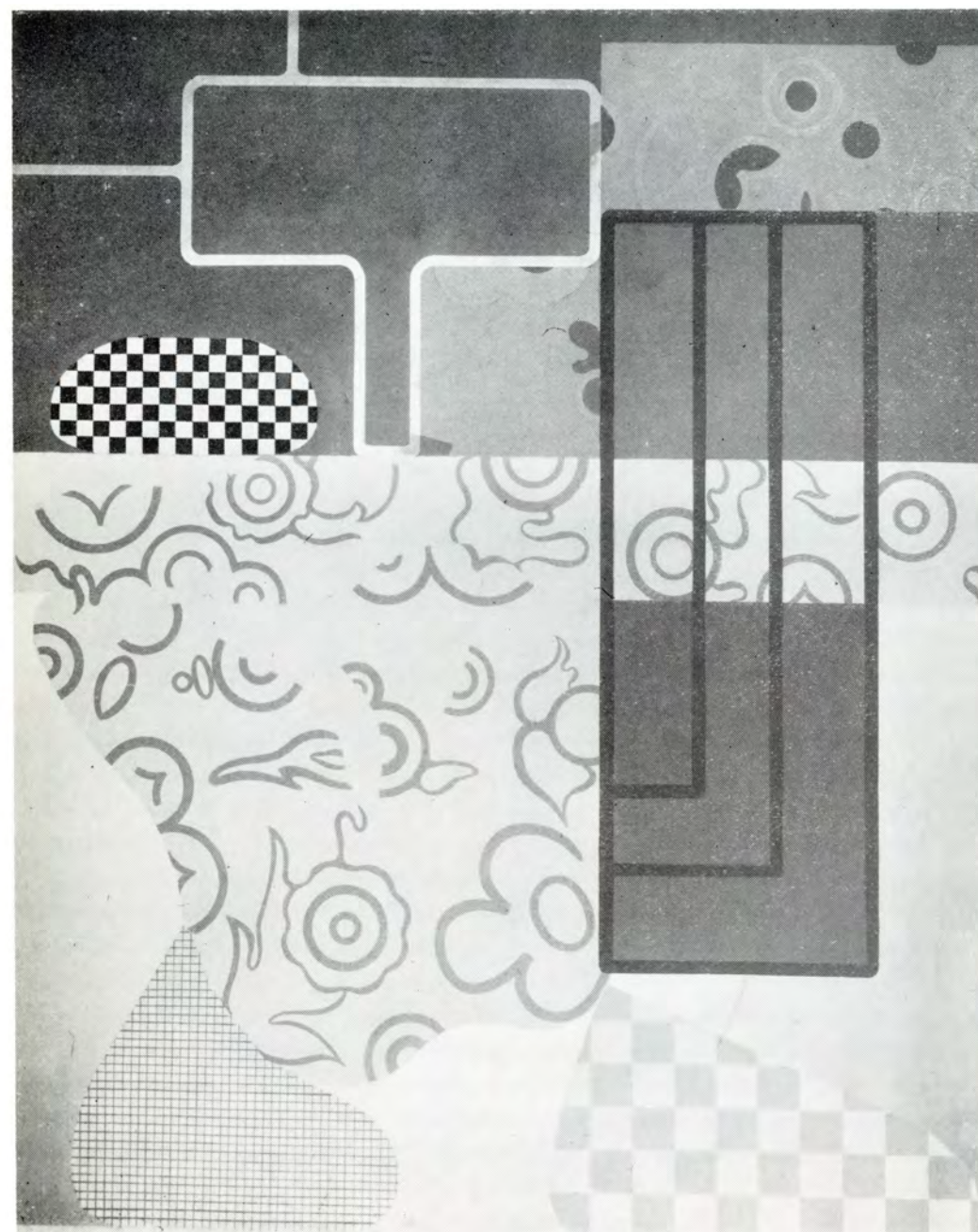
Henry Mundy's intensely lyrical paintings have the quality of intimate encounters in a neutral environment. The dominant but soft linear quality is transformed in the latest works into a more systematic formal organisation of outlined shapes and regular patterns.

32 SEPARATED, 1963
pva on paper on canvas 44x57

34 MANCHESTER BY-PASS, 1964
gouache and collage on paper 30x43

33 MATRIX, 1963
pva on paper on canvas 48x59

35 GARDEN PLAN, 1965
oil and collage on board 72x63



Bridget Riley

Born 1931 London. Studied at Goldsmith School of Art 1949-52, and Royal College of Art 1952-55. Taught at Loughborough College of School Art 1959-60, Hornsey School of Art 1960-61, and 1962-64 at Croydon College of Art, and worked part time at the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency. Exhibited in Great Britain, U.S.A., France and Germany. Lives in London.

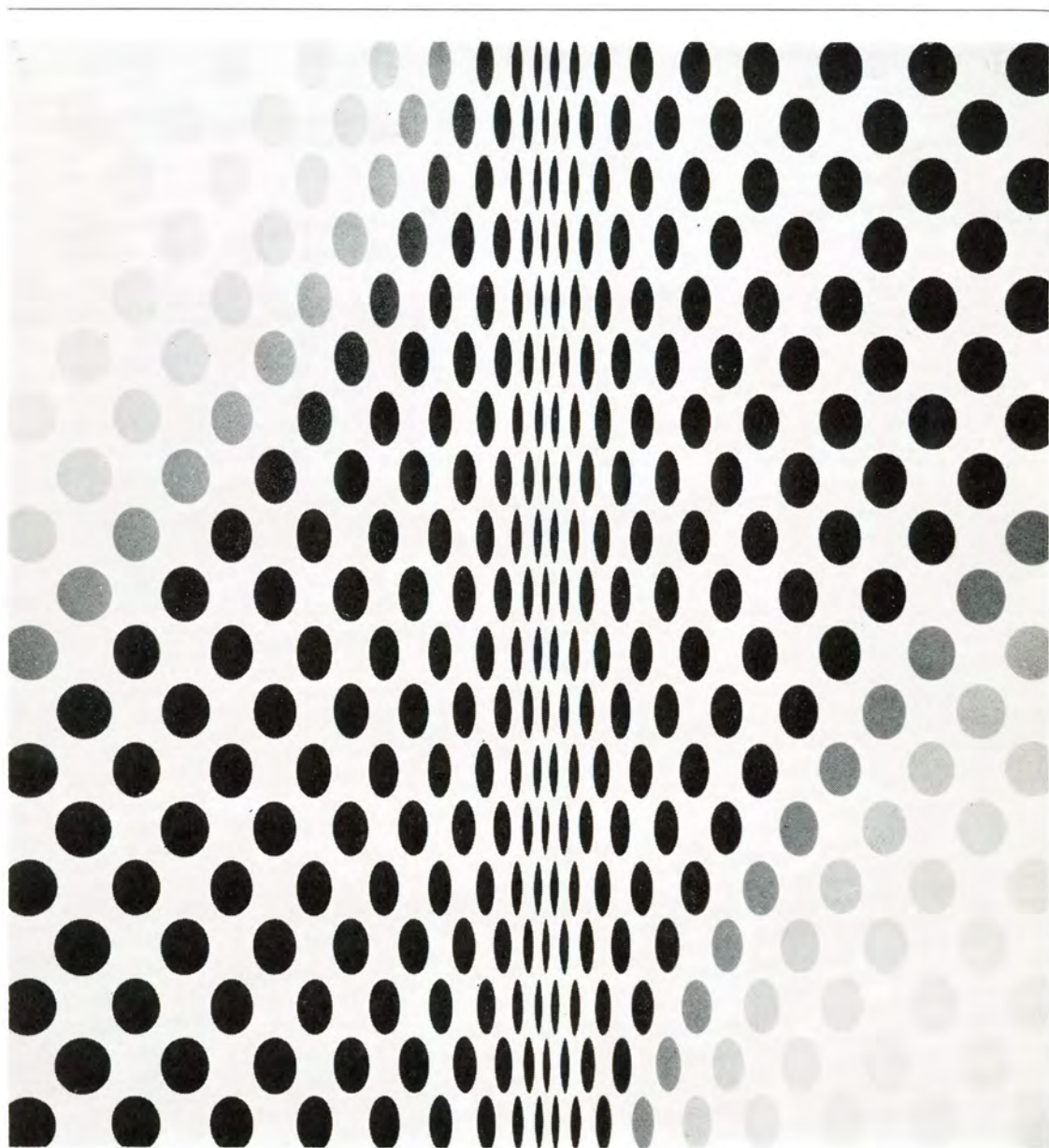
Bridget Riley limits herself to black, white and the tones of grey between the two — “black and white are like red and green only more so,” she said. The superficial effect of her paintings is that of purely optical dynamics, but the content is in fact becoming more centrally significant. One of the most original and inventive artists working within the idiom of op art.

36 PARADOXES, 1962
tempera on board 24x44

37 SHUTTLE I, 1964
emulsion on wood 44x44
Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

38 METAMORPHOSIS, 1964
emulsion on board 44x42
Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

39 OVER, 1966
emulsion on board 40x40



Peter Sedgley

Born 1930 London. 1944-48 studied architecture at the School of Building in Brixton. 1949-58 worked as architectural assistant. Self taught as a painter. Started painting in 1961. Since 1964 exhibited in Great Britain, Switzerland, France, Italy and U.S.A. Lives in London.

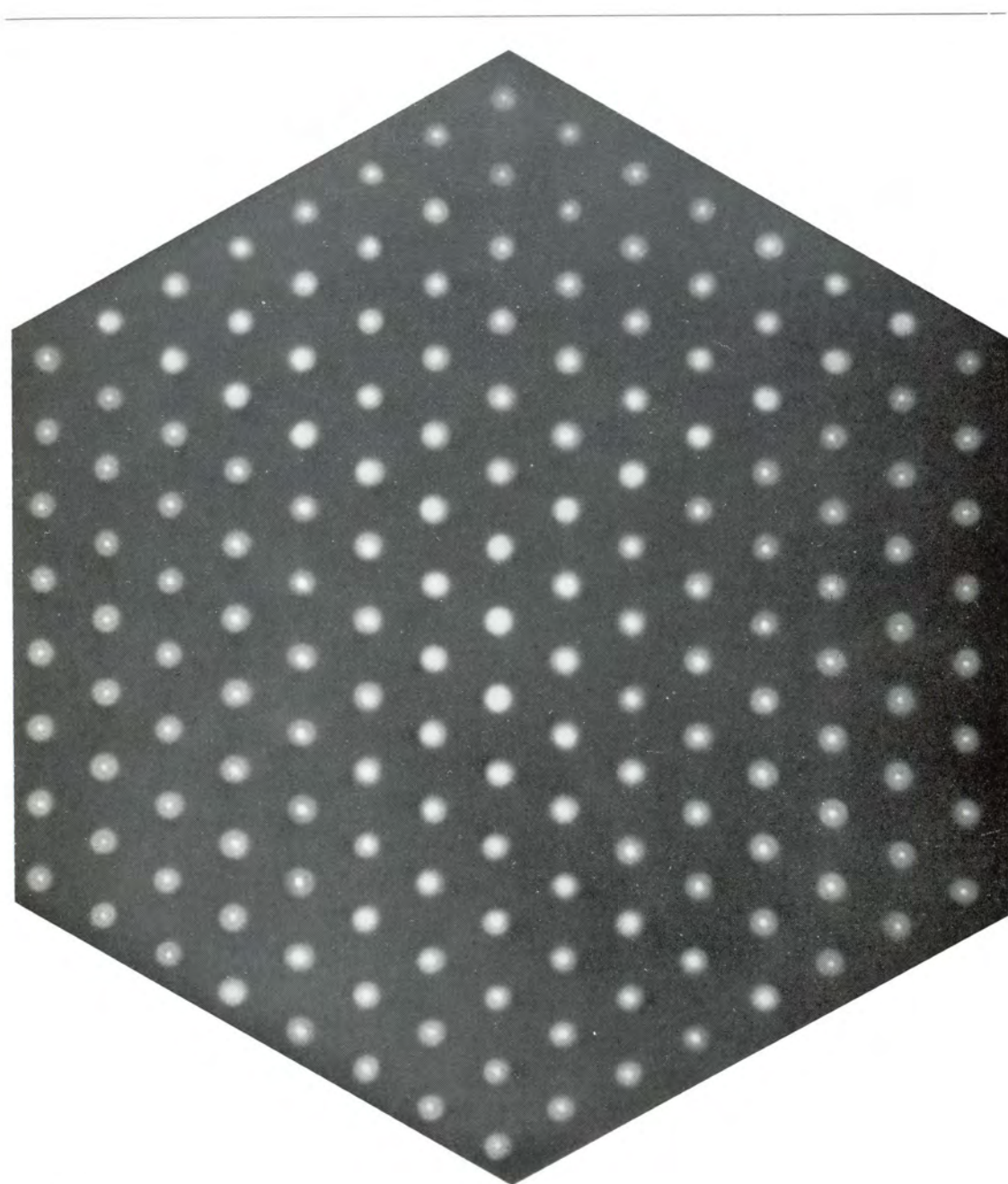
Peter Sedgley — the technique he employs dictates both the structure and the ultimate content of the paintings. He works within the idiom of op art although the implications of his chromatic paintings and the associations they provoke (e.g. those with music) extend beyond the obvious retinal effects.

40 EVENT, 1966
pva on canvas hexagon 58x53

41 SPRAY, 1966
pva on canvas hexagon 58x53

42 AROUND, 1966
pva on canvas hexagon 58x53

43 GO, 1966
pva on board 36x36



Jack Smith

Born 1928 Sheffield. Studied at Sheffield College of Art 1944-46, at St. Martin's School of Art 1948-50, and the Royal College of Art 1950-53. Won First Prize in the open section of John Moore's Liverpool Exhibition 1956. Taught at the Chelsea School of Art. Exhibited in Great Britain, Italy, Germany, Australia and U.S.A. Married, lives in London.

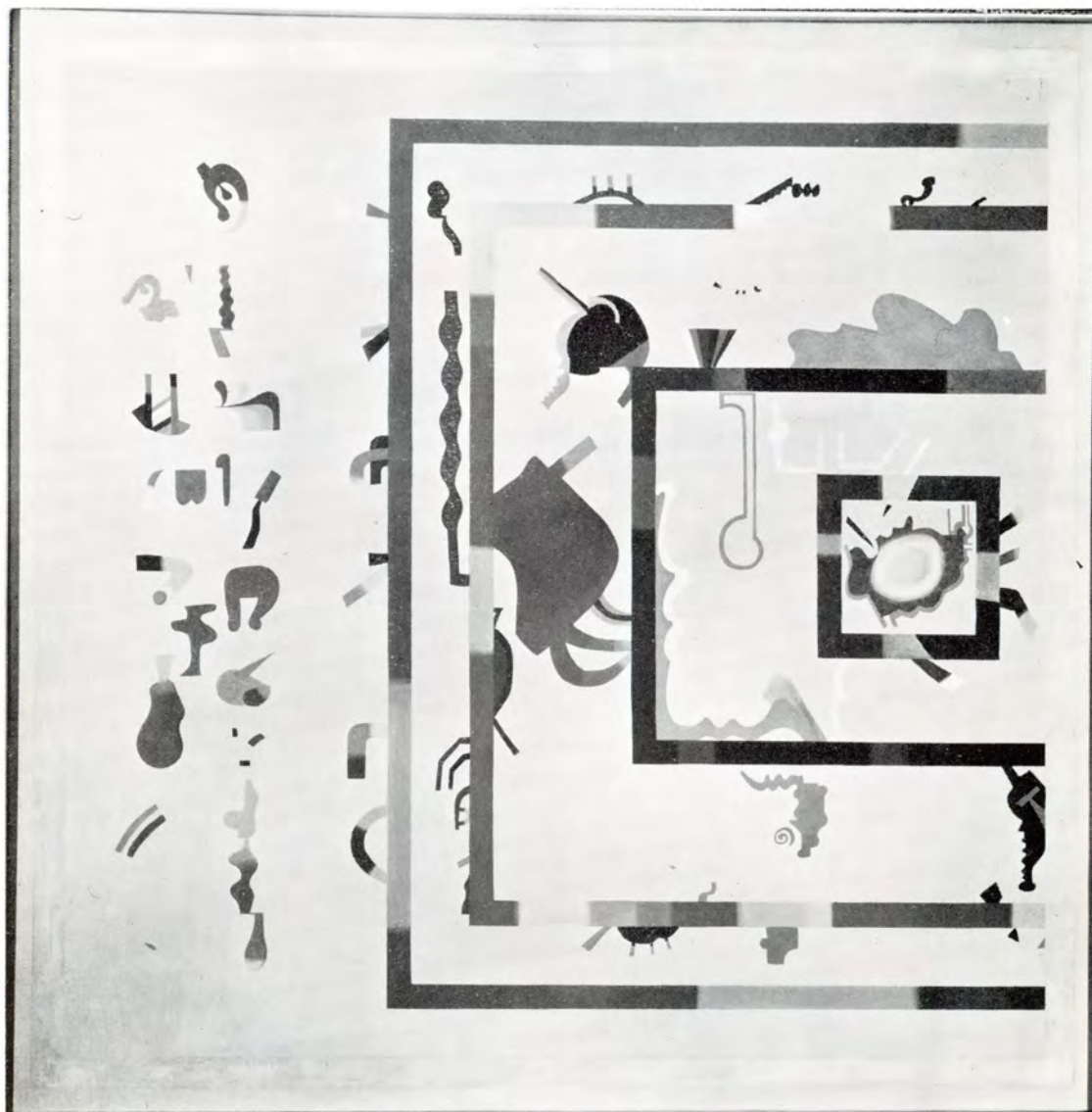
Jack Smith writes about his paintings which contain kaleidoscopic abstracted elements in the form of successive events within the picture area: "I think of my paintings as diagrams of an experience or sensation."

44 INSIDE AND OUTSIDE
ROUNDAABOUT, 1964
oil on canvas 48x48

45 OCEANAIR No. 2, 1964
oil on canvas 42x42

46 INSIDE AND OUTSIDE No. 2, 1964
oil on canvas 42x42

47 INSIDE AND OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES, 1965
oil on canvas 42x42



Richard Smith

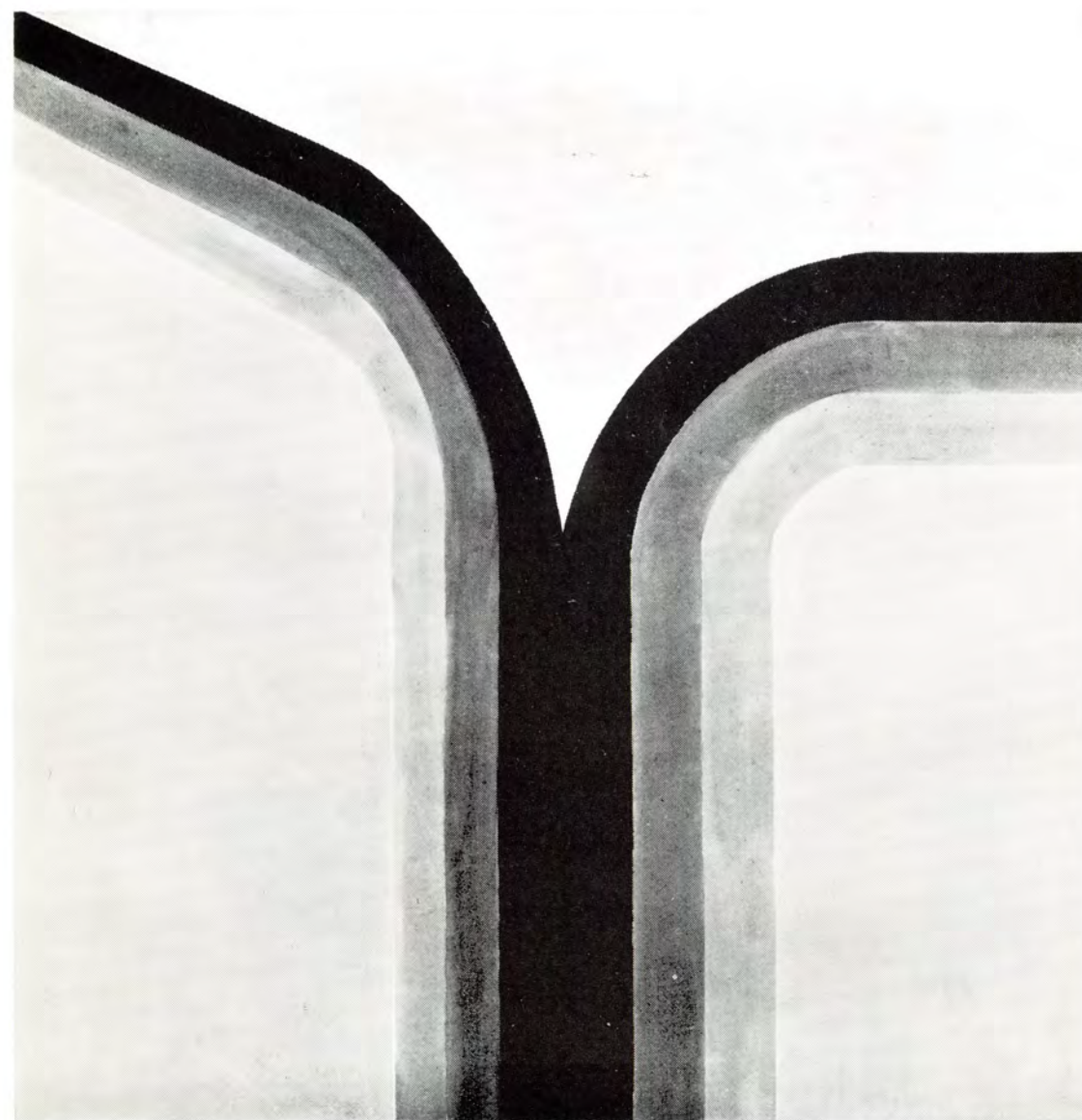
Born 1931 Letchworth. Studied at Luton School of Art 1948-50, St. Albans School of Art 1952-54, and the Royal College of Art 1954-57. 1957 awarded Royal College of Art minor Travelling Scholarship. 1957-58 taught at Hammersmith College of Art, and 1961-63 at St. Martin's School of Art. 1959-61 lived in New York on Harkness Fellowship. 1963-65 lived in New York. Won the Mr. and Mrs. Robert C. Scull Prize at Venice Biennale 1966. Since 1957 exhibited in Great Britain, Italy, Paris, U.S.A., Holland, Germany, Canada and Italy. Married, with one child, lives in London and New York.

Richard Smith: "Colour starting-points came mostly from colour photography, other than this general sense of blossoming, ripening and shimmering. Fruit, for example, not flowers. But I see fruit as fruit photographed rather than set out in reality on a greengrocer's stall. When I see real things, other things get in the way of them: shine, solidity, or the way they reflect light. But in a photograph you only have one image on one plane, with a single unified texture, and without the disturbances of shifting light. Even in the early paintings the references, though to landscape, were to photographed landscape: sometimes filtered or over or under-exposed."

48 PAGODA, 1963
oil on canvas 84x102

49 YRS, 1963
oil on canvas 60x68

50 4 CORNERS 4, 1965
acrylic on canvas 48x48



Joe Tilson

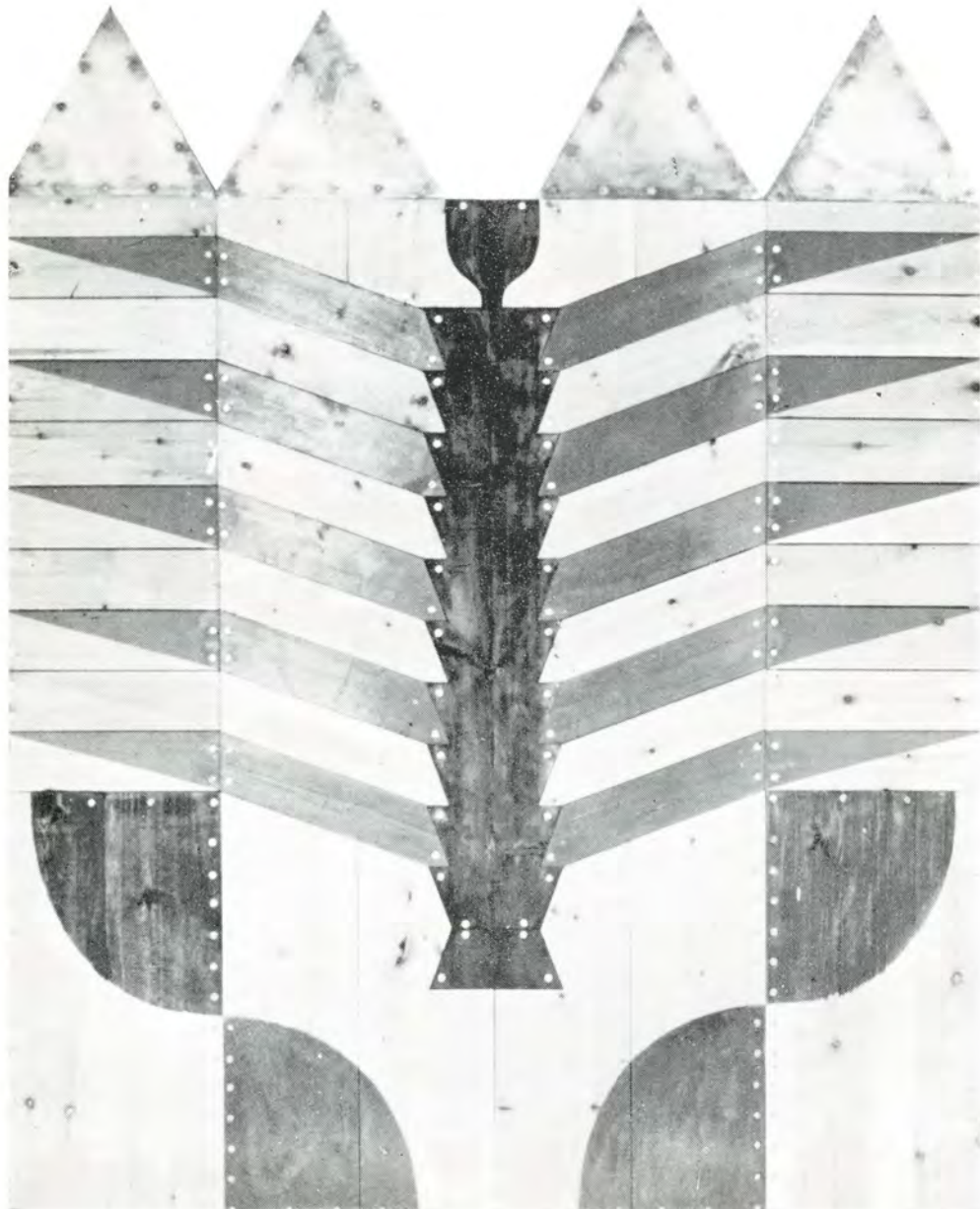
Born 1928 London. Studied at St. Martin's School of Art 1949-52, and the Royal College of Art 1952-55. Taught at St. Martin's School of Art 1958-63, Slade School of Art 1962-63, and at King's College, University of Newcastle-on-Tyne. Won Knapping Prize in 1955; a prize in the John Moore's Liverpool Exhibition 1957; Gulbenkian Foundation Award 1960; San Marino Biennale Gold Medal 1963; and a prize in the VI Exposition Internationale de Gravure in Ljubljana. Exhibited in Great Britain, Italy, Germany, Yugoslavia, Holland, France, U.S.A., Denmark, Switzerland, Sweden and Argentina. Married, with three children, lives in London.

Joe Tilson, who makes painted wooden reliefs which often operate like visual puns, says: "I am interested in the transient, expendable, mass-produced dream world of the big stores; in television, advertising, the movies, the mass media, and life in the city. I am concerned with reality and dreams — the reality that I can discover via my senses, shaped by intellect, becomes this thing I do. I make objects that stand on their own, with their own life and meaning."

51 XANADU, 1962
painted wood and metal relief 79x63
Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

53 CONJUNCTION 9 AN ACRE OF GRASS
1965-66
oil on canvas on wood panel 72x96

52 LOOK !, 1963
painted wooden relief 37x33
Dr. Charles Damiano, London



William Turnbull

Born 1922 Dundee, Scotland. War service in the R.A.F. 1947-48 studied at Slade School of Art. 1948-50 lived in Paris. Since 1951 has taught at Central School of Arts and Crafts, London. Since 1950 exhibited in Great Britain, Germany, U.S.A., France, Italy, Sweden, South America, Japan, Holland and Switzerland. Married, with two children, lives in London.

William Turnbull is painter and sculptor. His paintings are immense fields of colour forced into context by a stripe of colour, or an element hesitating on the edges of the canvas. "It is those painters who are concerned with the act of perception that interest me most and this is a bigger argument than figurative or not." His flat, linear sculptures, which seem to slice the space in which they are placed, are imbued with the same stringency as his vast canvases.

54 1-1965
oil on canvas 80x60

56 ECHO, 1966
steel painted grey 62x74

55 17-1965
plastic paint on canvas 100x75

57 COLTRANE, 1966
steel painted blue 42x85

John Walker

Born 1939 Birmingham. Studied at Birmingham College of Art 1955-60, and Académie de la Grande Chaumière, Paris 1960-61. 1962 won Abbey Minor Travelling Scholarship and First Prize in the National Young Artists' Drawing Competition; 1965 won Third prize in the open section of the John Moore's Liverpool Exhibition. 1962-65 taught painting at Birmingham College of Art. Exhibited in Great Britain since 1959. Married with two children, lives in London.

John Walker incorporates collage elements into his paintings which are usually done in series. The actual forms occupy a proportionately small area within the vast expanse of empty canvas. "In my painting abstract forms may have figurative associations — it is very difficult to make absolutely clear distinctions between the two. Somehow, one does not reject one's past development, one simply adds to it."

58 LIME, 1966
acrylic on canvas parallelogram 108x180

60 ANGUISH No. 12, 1966
acrylic on canvas 96x84

59 NEARLY, 1966
acrylic on canvas 96x84



58

Brian Wall

Born 1931 London. 1945-50 worked as glass blower and attended evening classes at Luton School of Art. Started painting in 1948 and sculpture in 1956. 1956-60 assistant to Barbara Hepworth. Taught at Ealing School of Art and Bath Academy of Art, and since 1964 has been Head of Sculpture Department at Central School of Arts and Crafts. Exhibited in Great Britain, France, Spain and U.S.A. Lives in London.

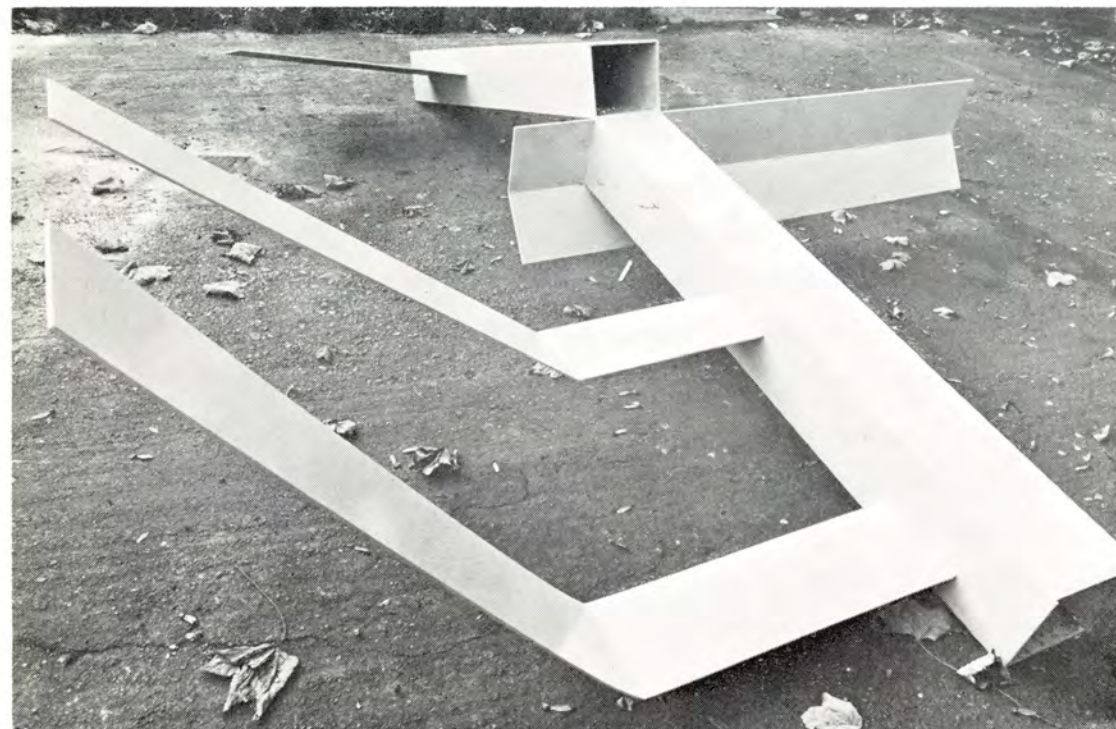
Brian Wall's welded steel sculptures have developed from a more rigorous constructivist approach, towards more inventive and dramatic works in which a series of identifiable geometric forms are placed in relation. Painting his sculpture some years before the advent of coloured sculpture in England, Wall has consistently explored the possibilities of reconciling formal concept with its organic development.

61 THREE ELEMENTS, 1965
steel painted black 24x42

63 DOUBLE, 1966
steel painted black 44x35

62 BROKEN WHITE, 1965
steel painted white 32x96x120

64 CANON, 1966
steel painted black 36x36x13



62

