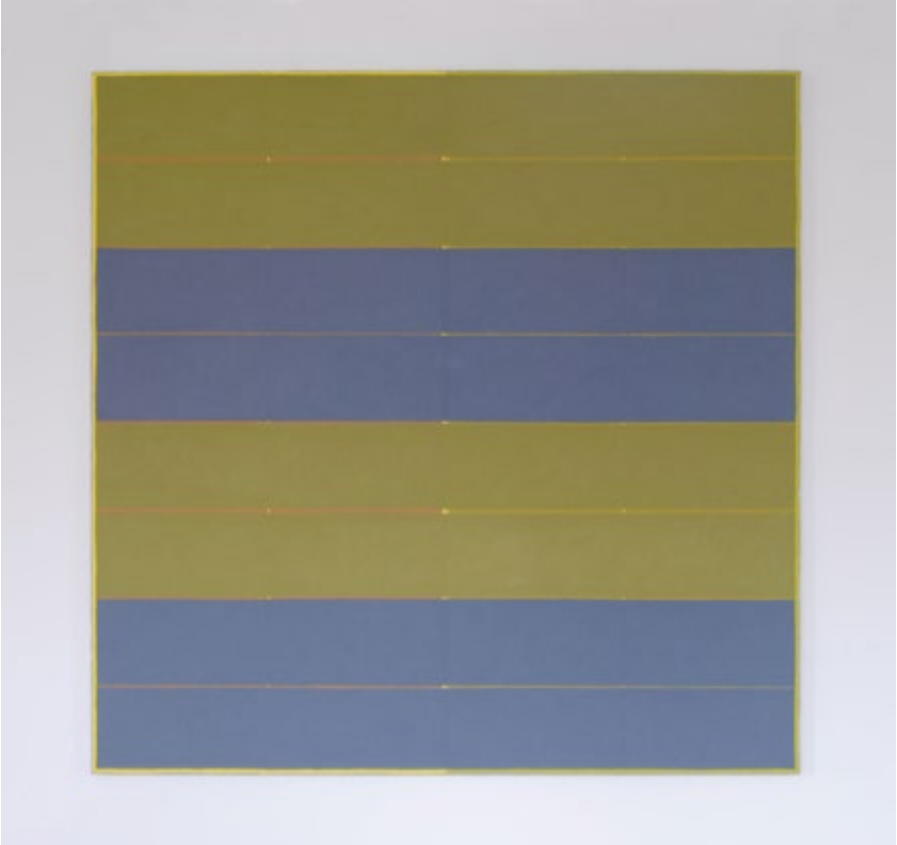


RICHARD BELL

[eye and mind series #4]



28 May - 25 June 2016

New Work

This exhibition continues the Mercus Barn 'Eye and Mind' theme (referring to the essay by Maurice Merleau-Ponty), and contributes to the enduring discourses on colour presentation-perception in constructive and painterly abstraction:

'The painter takes his/her body with him says Valéry. Indeed we cannot imagine how a mind could paint. It is by lending his / her body to the world that the artist changes the world into paintings.' (Merleau-Ponty 'Eye and Mind' 1964).

The somatic-material process of colour-performance is (in this context) concerned with memory (fragments: concealed / revealed / layers); in the sense that colour relationships have potential to provide new energies, definition and systematization: at times creating entropy / loss of predictability.

The notion of entropy is used here to define transformative and transient energies perceived as new material colour-fields, boundaries and edges. Colour - as a means to unsettle, evoke / provoke feeling (sensation), and yet provide organised colour-space has underpinned the painting practice of Richard Bell since the early 1980s.

The paintings are not presented as mathematical motifs. They perform as visual-plastic metaphor; as linkage to language-poetics, socialization of knowledge, and changing surface colour / light in landscape.



Ad Reinhardt remarked *'In abstract painting the aesthetic realities of rhythmic colour relationships were developed far from the simple compositions and arrangements of illustrations and pictures.'* (*'Abstraction vs Illustration'* 1943).

The surface (texture) of colour-relations in these paintings is, at times, the unexpected outcome of the process / performance of making. This moment of indeterminate-effect is perhaps akin to the notion of 'experimentalism' (David Saunders in conversation with Andrew Bick, *'Abstract Critical'* 5 July 2014) and/or the experimental method in systematic art and music.

As Merleau-Ponty suggests, the viewer is always an active agent-being in the world; able to re-articulate, re-perform and interpret. The respondent, moving through the space-seeing / responding becomes intrinsic to the work.

These new paintings offer this equivalence to a 'palimpsest' reading of the work: the layering and revealing of colour / non-colour surface and space; rendering the modulations towards a more counter-intuitive composition.

This then is a suggestion of the before / after - leaving a trace of the event as memory; a changed aesthetic disposition (affectively) residing in the body and being.

'Quality, light, colour, depth, which are there before us only because they awaken an echo in our bodies and because the body welcomes them.' (Merleau-Ponty, *'Eye and Mind'*, 1964).

Notes on 'Eye and Mind' by Richard Bell, April 2016





Front: *Untitled No. 1* Back: *Untitled No. 2*, oil on linen canvas, 80x80 cm, 2016

Brief Biographical Note

This is the first exhibition of paintings by Richard Bell to be seen for 8 years. His paintings were last shown at the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts in the exhibition called 'Constructed' 40 years of the UEA collection in 2008.

In 1986 he co-initiated the touring exhibitions called 'Colour Presentations' and subsequently 'Complexions' in 1989 shown in England and Holland. He has also been represented in various thematic and mixed exhibitions since the 1980s.

The period 1980–1990 was for the artist an intense period of developing a more 'painterly' approach to the complexity of formal colour relationships; language, interpretation and questions of indeterminacy/certainty.

Following a period of some 20 years when the artist worked full time within education public policy (his art practice restricted to a slow pace), he has now completed a new project of work. This exhibition further develops concerns for the interruption of colour-space through the process of revealing the performance of the painting as an event in time.

The artist's work has been purchased for a number of collections including the Arts Council of Great Britain, The Sainsbury Centre for the Arts (UEA), and Forum Konkret Kunst, Erfurt (Germany).

The exhibition consists of ten paintings (8 x oil on linen canvas and 2 x oil with wax on board, 2014–2016). Two earlier paintings are included to reference concerns of layering surface-colour. Preparation works and studies are also included.

For more information on Richard Bell click [here](#)