

MERLYN EVANS

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EXCHANGE ARTIST IN RESIDENCE
THE SCHOOL OF THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO
FROM
THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF ART, LONDON, ENGLAND

EXHIBITION
THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO
FEBRUARY 24 TO MARCH 26, 1967

INTRODUCTION

Paintings in the present exhibition are for the major part painted in the last ten years. But representative examples retrospect to the commencement of the Thirties, when I first travelled to Europe at the age of twenty. A number of works like "The Execution", "The Meeting", the large "Metropolitan Crowd", and the "Waterloo Station" series, and engravings like the "Chess Players", "The Jail", "Man and the Machine", and "Victims of Demolition" span the Forties and Fifties, and, as can be noted from their titles, are directly concerned with "events" and "social commutation."

By temperament and preference, I have been, from the early age of seventeen, an abstract painter. Told however, that on no account would I be permitted to paint "from nature", I would, I am sure, rebel and be irresistibly drawn to representation. But I have enjoyed the freedom to do both, and therefore with a number of exceptions, a few portrait drawings and the pictures titled above, the paintings are abstract and presentational, not representational. I proceed from the general to the particular, from the abstract to the concrete, or the abstraction to the concrecence.

However, I am not fanatical about this. I am not alarmed if the painting in the course of its development may be seen to resemble something else, for instance, a plant, a leaf, a bird, a bone or a crystal. It often helps me to find a title for the picture; always a problem for an abstract painter. Hence titles like "Phyllomorph", "Kleidomorph" provide a way of recognising the picture and referring to the class to which it belongs. The english vocabulary is very short of words to describe shapes and forms. A. N. Whitehead remarked that we had no language to describe the "shapiness" of shapes. A motor car window, composed say of four intersecting ellipses, we call a "carresque", not a square with curved sides and rounded corners. I believe that this linguistic difficulty hinders ap-

preciation of abstract form, abstract colour, in their own right.

In 1926, there was already a very strong reaction against abstract painting in Russia, and artists who are now well known to us, moved to France and Germany. Dadaism and Surrealism were the radical opponents of Social Realism. In London in 1930, I met no one then practising abstract painting. There was a good deal of interest in Mexican artists like Diego Rivera, Jose Grozco, and David Siqueiros. Abstract painting I was told was "passe" "old hat", and it was impossible to show abstract pictures for several years. Nevertheless, I went to Paris and on to Berlin and found that abstract painting was still persevering, but was shortly by Goebbels and Hitler to be driven out of Germany. Many artists were involved, among them staff members of the now famous "Bauhaus". This time Britain and America rather than France provided the refuge.

The emotional tension rose with civil war in Spain, Fascism, Nazism, and Stalinism led us to World War II. Pictures of protest and tragedy were unavoidable. But the direct statement is not the only way, sometimes an artist can proceed by way of negation. What he does *not* paint, his restraint, can be just as evocative. A silence opposed to a shout.

My present paintings, as in the earlier work, are indirectly about a person, a personage, or persona; two people encountering, attracting, repelling; a group of people more rarely a proliferation, a crowd.

Visually, the concern is architectural equilibrium, presentational immediacy, or directness of optical impact for the spectator.

The four small recent collages once more reveal a magnetic pull towards a social commentation still rather tentative.

Merlyn Evans

The Luffliants, Tempera, 1934



BIOGRAPHY

MERLYN EVANS, Born Cardiff, 1910. Studied Art at Glasgow School of Art, Scotland. The Royal College of Art, London.

1931/33. Later in Paris, Berlin, Italy, Copenhagen.

1931 Awarded Haldane traveling scholarship.

1932 Awarded Royal Exhibition, Royal College of Art, London.

Exhibitions

1931 Exhibition of Modern Painting, Copenhagen.

1935 "Abstract and Non-Figurative Art," Paris.

1936 International Surrealist Exhibition, London.

1937 Exhibited two polychrome reliefs "Unity of Artists for Peace and Democracy and Cultural Development," A.I.A. Exhibition, 41 Grosvenor Square, London.

1937 Salon de Mai, Paris.

1938 Mars Group, New Burlington Galleries.

1939 The London Group, London.

One-man exhibition, City Art Gallery, Durban.

Nine Abstract Artists, Lefevre Gallery.

1947 40 years of Modern Art, Institute of Contemporary Art.

1949 One-man Exhibition, Leicester Galleries, London.

Salon de Mai, Paris.

1950 Aspects of British Art, Institute of Contemporary Art.

1951 "60 Paintings for '51," Arts Council of Great Britain.

1952 One-man exhibition, Leicester Galleries, London.

Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings by Merlyn Evans, Midland Group Gallery, Nottingham.

1953 "Twentieth Century Form," Whitechapel Art Gallery, London.

One-man exhibition, Leicester Galleries, London.

"Figures in their setting," Contemporary Art Society.

Tate Gallery, London.

1953-54 2nd International Bienal. Sao Paulo.

1954 Executed a mural painting entitled "Metropolitan Crowd."

Exhibited in the Festival Hall, London, for 5 years.

British Painting and Sculpture, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London.

1955 One-man exhibition, Leicester Galleries.

Exposicion Internacional de Pintura, Valencia, Spain.

Four contemporary Artists, Museum and Art Gallery, Portsmouth.

- 1956** 4th International Exhibition of Drawing and Engraving, Lugano.
Contemporary British Art, Copenhagen and Oslo, British Council.
"The Seasons," Contemporary Art Society, Tate Gallery, London.
Retrospective exhibition, paintings, drawings and etchings.
Whitechapel Art Gallery.
Contemporary British Prints, British Council, Tour of Norway and Denmark.
- 1957** 2nd International Exhibition of graphic art, Ljubljana.
1st Bi-Annual International Exhibition of Prints, Tokyo.
Recent Artists Prints (British Council), Tour of France.
Contemporary British Painting, Balzac Gallery, Paris.
British Graphic Art 1957, St. Georges Gallery, London.
- 1958** "Vertical Suite in Black," St. Georges Gallery, London.
One-man exhibition, Leicester Galleries, London.
Philadelphia Print Club annual exhibition of Etching. Edinburgh Festival Exhibition of English drawings, Aldeburgh Festival.
1st John Moores Exhibition, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.
- 1959** Designed two large sculptural reliefs for the Building Exhibition at Olympia.
Recent paintings by 7 British Artists, Australia State Galleries, British Council.
2nd Biennale exhibition of sculpture and graphic art, Carrara, Italy.
II Documenta-Kassel, Germany (prints).
2nd Bi-Annual International Exhibition of Prints, Tokyo.
North West Print-makers, Seattle.
"The Graven Image," Whitechapel Art Gallery, London.
- 1960** Grabadores Britanicos museo nacional de Arte Contemporaneos, Madrid.
Recent Paintings by 6 British Artists, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London.

Recent Paintings by 6 British Artists, Mexico
(British Council).

"Critic's Selection," Tooth's Gallery, London.

30th Biennale, British Pavilion, Venice.

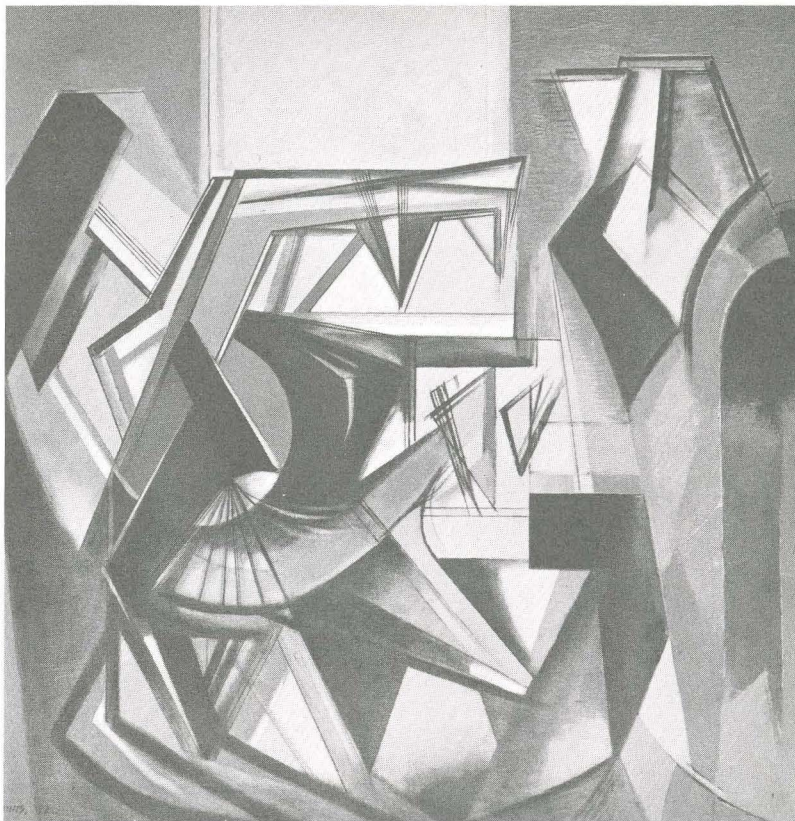
British Printmakers, Stockholm.

The British "Guggenheim Award" paintings,

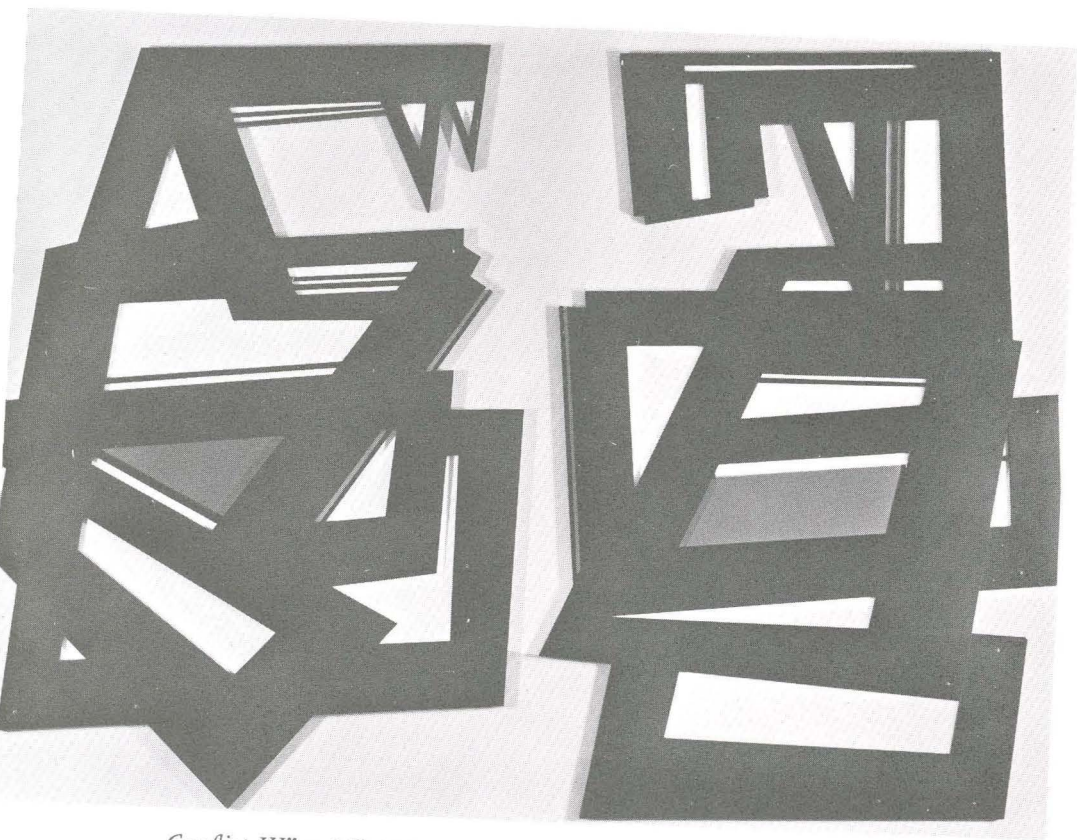
R. W. S. Galleries, London.

Das Junge England, Neue Galerie de Stadt, Linz,
Austria.

- 1961 "Mural Art Today," Victoria and Albert Museum.
The National Gallery of Rhodesia. Three Exhibitions.
4th International Exhibition of Graphic Art,
Ljubljana. Awarded Prize.
6th Bienal Exhibition, British Pavilion, Sao Paulo.
Designed sculptural relief in brick for Southampton
General Hospital.
The Inaugural exhibition, Sorsbie Gallery, Nairobi,
Kenya.
- 1962 British Art and the modern movement, 1930-1940,
National Museum of Wales, Cardiff.
Contemporary Welsh Artists, National Museum of
Wales, Cardiff.
The Hallmark collection, Whitechapel Art Gallery,
London.
Museu de Arte Moderno de Rio de Janeiro. (Merlyn
Evans, Lynn Chadwick, William Scott.)
- 1963 "The Graven Image," R.W.S. Galleries, London.
Awarded Prize.
"British Art in the Sixties," Tate Gallery, London;
Helmhaus, Zurich.
"Engravings," Gallery Ivan Spence, Ibiza.
- 1964 International Exhibitions of Prints in Japan.
Profile III, Bochum, Germany.
Pittsburgh International Exhibition.
One-man show, University Museum in Philadelphia.
- 1965 "English Eye" exhibition, New York.
- 1966 Art Council of Great Britain Purchase Award. Gold
Medal at National Eisteddfod in Wales.
Permanent acquisition of painting by Tate Gallery,
London.
- 1967 7th International Exhibition of Graphic Art,
Ljubljana.
International Exhibition of Graphic Art in Vancouver.



Two Figures by a Window, Oil, 40" x 40", 1952



Conflict III x 84", 1959

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Surrealism by Herbert Read. 1937

Contemporary British Art by Herbert Read. 1951

Pelican books.

Abstract Art by Frederick Gore. 1956

The Modern Movement in Art by R. H. Wilenski. 1957

A concise History of Modern Art by Herbert Read. 1958

A catalogue of Retrospective exhibition. Whitechapel Art Gallery. 1928-1956

Introduced by Bryan Robertson. Preface R. H. Wilenski.

The Letters of Wyndham Lewis. Edited by W. K. Rose, 1963

DIRECTORIES

Who's who in Art. 1962

Who's who. 1964

Encyclopedie de L'Art International contemporain.

ARTICLES

Prism des Arts. No. 5 October 1956

Les Arts Graphiques. October 1956

Quadrum No. 5 J. P. Hodin. 1958

Quadrum No. 5. J. P. Hodin. 1958

Art News (America). John Russell. 1958

Art International. Summer 1962. Gustave von Groschwitz

Ici Londres. Maurice Desselle. 1956

Arts Graphiques. John Wallace. October 1956

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

1957 Took part in film called "Artist's proof."

1959 Designed two large sculptural reliefs for the Building exhibition at Olympia.

1961 Designed a mural for the Southampton General Hospital Pathological laboratory.

Designed jewellery for International exhibition of Modern Jewellery 1890-1960. Victoria and Albert Museum, Goldsmith's Hall, London.

1962 A television Broadcast. A film called "Art in the Making" Granada I.T.V.

WORKS IN PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Arts Council of Great Britain. London.
British Council. London.
Tate Gallery. London.
Slade School of Fine Art. London.
Victoria and Albert Museum. London.
Jesus College Art Collection. Cambridge.
King's College. Cambridge.
Balliol College. Oxford.
Worcester College. Oxford.
National Museum of Wales. Cardiff.
Newport Art Gallery. Newport.
National Gallery of Scotland. Edinburgh.
Kelvingrove Art Gallery. Glasgow.
Whitworth Art Gallery. Manchester.
Laing Art Gallery. Newcastle.
Castle Museum and Art Gallery. Nottingham.
Towner Art Gallery. Eastbourne.
Library Exhibition Gallery and Museum. Rugby.
City Art Gallery. Wakefield.
Derbyshire Education Committee.
Leicestershire Education Authority.
National Gallery of South Australia. Adelaide.
National Gallery of Victoria. Melbourne.
National Gallery of New South Wales. Sydney.
National Gallery of New Zealand. Wellington.
South African National Gallery. Capetown.
Durban Museum and Art Gallery. Durban.
Municipal Art Gallery. Johannesburg.
Museum of Modern Art. New York.
New York Public Library. New York.
Dallas Museum of Fine Arts. Texas.
Philadelphia Museum of Art. Philadelphia.
University Museum. Philadelphia.
Toledo Museum of Art. Ohio.
University of California. Los Angeles.
Zadok Collection. Milwaukee.
Fine Arts Museum. Cincinnati.
The Sorsbie Gallery. Nairobi.

