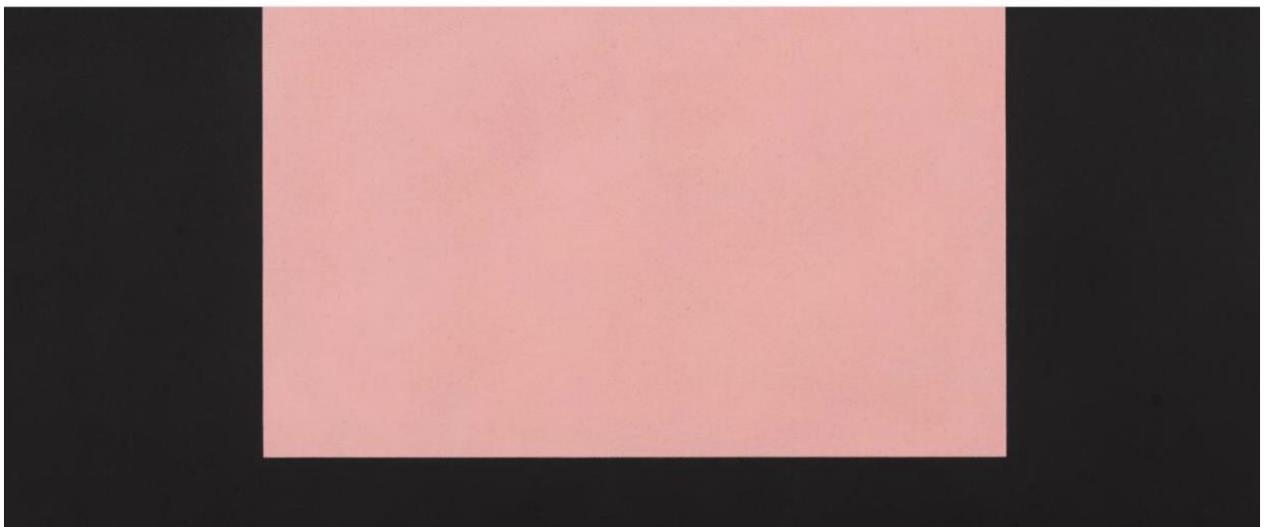


frieze

Remembering the Great Abstract Painter Peter Joseph

Lisson Gallery founder Nicholas Logsdail reflects on his life-long friendship with the artist known best for his geometric minimal aesthetic

N BY NICHOLAS LOGSDAIL IN **OPINION** | 04 DEC 20



I last saw Peter Joseph on the afternoon of 29 August 2020 where he showed me – as it turned out – his final, beautiful painting. As was customary, we retreated to have homemade chocolate cake and a cup of tea. When we were down to the last slice, his wife Denise asked who would like it, to which Peter answered, “If nobody wants it, I will have it, it’s absolutely marvellous.”

This was one of Peter’s favourite expressions when expressing admiration for an artwork, an artist, a writer, a poet, a piece of music or a good bottle of Pouillac (his favourite wine). Accompanying his approval was a thoughtful knowledge, full of observation and intelligence, as well as real connoisseurship. He knew more about art throughout the ages than anyone I’ve known and was, for the most part, self-educated.



Peter Joseph by Rich Stapleton, 2017. Courtesy: © the artist and Lisson Gallery, London

I am full of sadness at losing Peter. He was one of the first artists I showed at Lisson Gallery and until now, the longest standing.

In his 20s, Peter was busily working his way up in graphics and advertising when he was diagnosed with a brain tumour. Having undergone live-saving surgery, he did not regain consciousness for some time. On coming round, however, it was as if he had been reborn and often speculated that his personality had changed. Leaving everything from his previous life behind, he moved from London to Florence to study art, visiting the great churches and museums, and immersing himself in the art of the Renaissance.

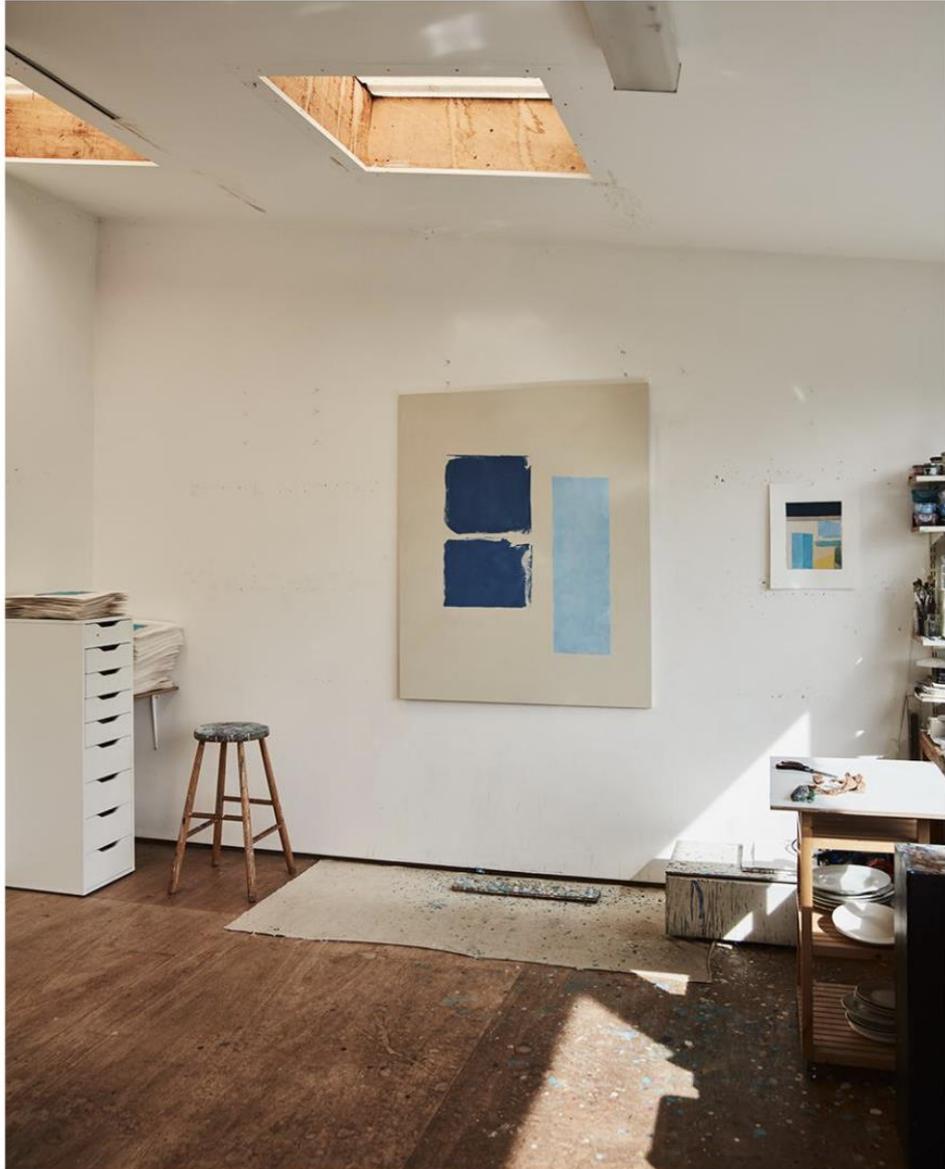
Peter found an affinity with artists such as Piero della Francesca, Claude Lorrain, Guido Reni and Tintoretto, as well as the British painter Richard Wilson (who he always regarded as superior to John Constable and J.M.W. Turner). Although he started as a figurative painter, what interested Peter about all of these artists was their use of light, colour, scale and proportion. He was also fascinated by the hard-edge paintings of Ellsworth Kelly, the obtuseness of Donald Judd, and the colour tonalities of Dan Flavin and Barnett Newman. Above all, one of Peter's abiding loves was for the emotional impact of Mark Rothko's paintings.



Peter Joseph, *Yellow over Red* and *Yellow over Blue*, 1971, 48 x 40 cm. Courtesy: © Peter Joseph and Lisson Gallery

His artistic epiphany came in 1970 while watching what he described as a ‘well put together but ultimately slightly boring’ French avant-garde film at the BFI in London, where he was a regular visitor. Having fallen asleep during the film, he awoke to the flickering screen of the projector still running after the reel had finished. Peter sat mesmerised, watching the off-white central space of the screen shimmering against its black border. This was the beginning of the body of work known as the ‘border’ paintings – always titled with the two constituent colours, say *Pink with Dark Green* (1989) or *Dusty Lilac with Sienne Brown* (1994) – which developed slowly, contemplatively, poetically and thoughtfully over the next 40 years.

Peter would say there was no composition involved in his work, only a concentration on the colour tones and the way light hit the surface and interacted with the relative scale of the two rectangles. He compared his paintings to music and often spoke of music as the first form of abstraction, with many great composers, from Johann Sebastian Bach onwards, more interested in sentiment than narrative. This was what Peter sought: to remove the content while retaining the meaning, thereby amplifying the emotion.



Peter Joseph's Studio by Rich Stapleton, 2017. Courtesy: © the artist and Lisson Gallery, London

Peter's paintings hold a powerful charge that waits patiently to be received. His following among both international museums and collectors, including the super collector Count Giuseppe Panza, was one of absolute commitment and loyalty.

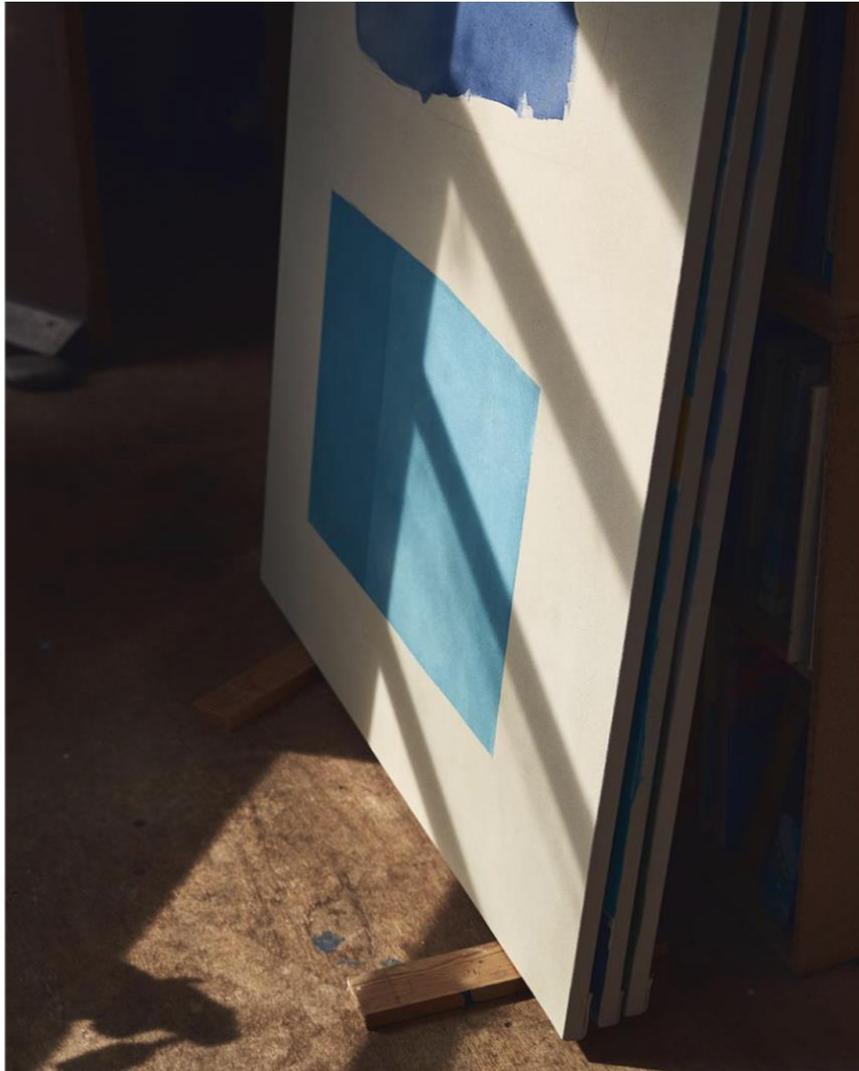
In 2004, after almost four decades of developing his practice, Peter began to adopt a much freer painting style. Partly, he told me, this was because he felt there was not much more he could say emotionally. By then in his mid-70s, he began to work with less formal rigour, although the essence of his approach to scale, colour, light and tone remained. He continued to paint every day in his home studio, on a hillside overlooking a remote wooded valley near Stroud in Gloucestershire.



Peter Joseph, Brown, *Yellow & Two Blues*, 2018, acrylic on cotton duck, 1.2 × 1 m. Courtesy: © Peter Joseph and Lisson Gallery

Interestingly, Peter's most recent paintings reveal that he had, once again, moved on to a new phase in his practice. In some respects, these works marked a return to the 'border' paintings. Here, however, the rectangles were depicted as if they were objects floating in space, one in front of the other, lending them a sense of being frozen – or even falling – within the picture frame.

A deeply private man, Peter was extremely disparaging of the vicissitudes of the art world. After leaving his London studio in Belsize Park and retreating to Gloucestershire, he led a reclusive life. Yet, his work was some of the most beautiful and spiritually moving of any British painter, and he created for himself an artistic idiom largely disconnected from that of other artists of his time in the UK, Europe or the US. The extraordinary studies he made for his works remain principally in the possession of his estate, since he looked upon them as a very private and precious personal resource.



Peter Joseph's Studio by Rich Stapleton, 2017. Courtesy: © the artist and Lisson Gallery, London

Peter was highly resistant to being lauded in his lifetime: he would go to extremes to avoid exposure in ways he wasn't comfortable with and turned down opportunities to show his work if he wasn't interested in the context. Yet, surely now he will be discovered for the magnitude of his achievement as a great master of colour, light, space, proportion, the foreground, the background and the mysterious intermediate space in between.

Peter died peacefully at the age of 91. In my last conversation with him, he was marvelling at the beauty of the sky that he could see from his hospital room. He also told me, with a customary touch of irony, that he was looking forward to sitting in his new studio at the bottom of the garden with a slice of his favourite chocolate cake and a cup of tea. I like to imagine that's where he is now. Peter is survived by his wife Denise, an excellent poet and artist in her own right, who was devoted to his work and ideas.

Main image: Peter Joseph, *Light Pink with Black* (detail), 1987, acrylic on cotton duck, 1.8 × 1.6 m.
Courtesy: © Peter Joseph and Lisson Gallery

ARTnews

Peter Joseph, Painter of Quietly Powerful Abstractions, Is Dead at 91



Peter Joseph.

©2017 RICH STAPLETON/COURTESY LISSON GALLERY

Peter Joseph, who is best known for his minimalist paintings often featuring squares and rectangles, has died at age 91. Reached by *ARTnews*, **Lisson Gallery**, which has represented Joseph for much of his career, said that the artist died of complications related to a broken hip.

Born in London in 1929, Joseph studied art in Florence, Italy, and was greatly influenced by the Renaissance masterpieces he encountered there. He had a brief stint as a figurative painter, but, inspired by Ellsworth Kelly, Donald Judd, and Mark Rothko, he began to nurture his interest in geometry, color, and space, and some of his earliest works featured elegant plays of different shapes and hues.

Joseph began exhibiting his work in exhibitions in London in the 1960s at venues including Lisson Gallery, Marlborough Fine Art, Camden Arts Centre, and Signals Gallery. The artist received the first prize in the Nottingham-based Midland Group Gallery's John Player Painting Competition in 1968, and it was in the following decade that his star would begin to ascend in the international art world.

Over the next several decades of his career, Joseph created two-toned paintings that served as contemplative experiments with form and color. In the 1970s, his work was exhibited at the eighth Bienal de São Paulo, the Hayward Gallery and the Royal Academy of Arts in London, Galerie Nancy Gillespie—Elisabeth De Laage in Paris, and elsewhere. He once said, "A painting must generate feeling otherwise it is dead."

Joseph's works in recent years have departed from this signature early format. His pieces from the past decade have taken a more lyrical approach to abstraction, playing with brushstroke weights and exploring what happens when asymmetrical forms are placed beside each other. The artist lived and worked in Gloucestershire, United Kingdom, in his final years, and he showed work at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, the Modern Art Oxford museum, the Fundação Serralves in Portugal, the Stadtische Kunsthalle Düsseldorf in Germany, and other international institutions.

In a statement, Lisson Gallery founder Nicholas Logsdail, a longtime friend of Joseph, said, "I mourn with great sadness the loss of this wonderfully original painter and Renaissance man. He was one of the first artists I showed at Lisson Gallery and until now, the longest standing."

Logsdail continued, "He was a great visual poet who will surely now be discovered for the magnitude of his achievement, as a great master of color, light, space, proportions, the foreground, the background and the mysterious intermediate space in between."

LISSON GALLERY

Artpil
25 January 2019

ARTPIL

Peter Joseph

JAN 25 – MAR 2, 2019 / LISSON GALLERY

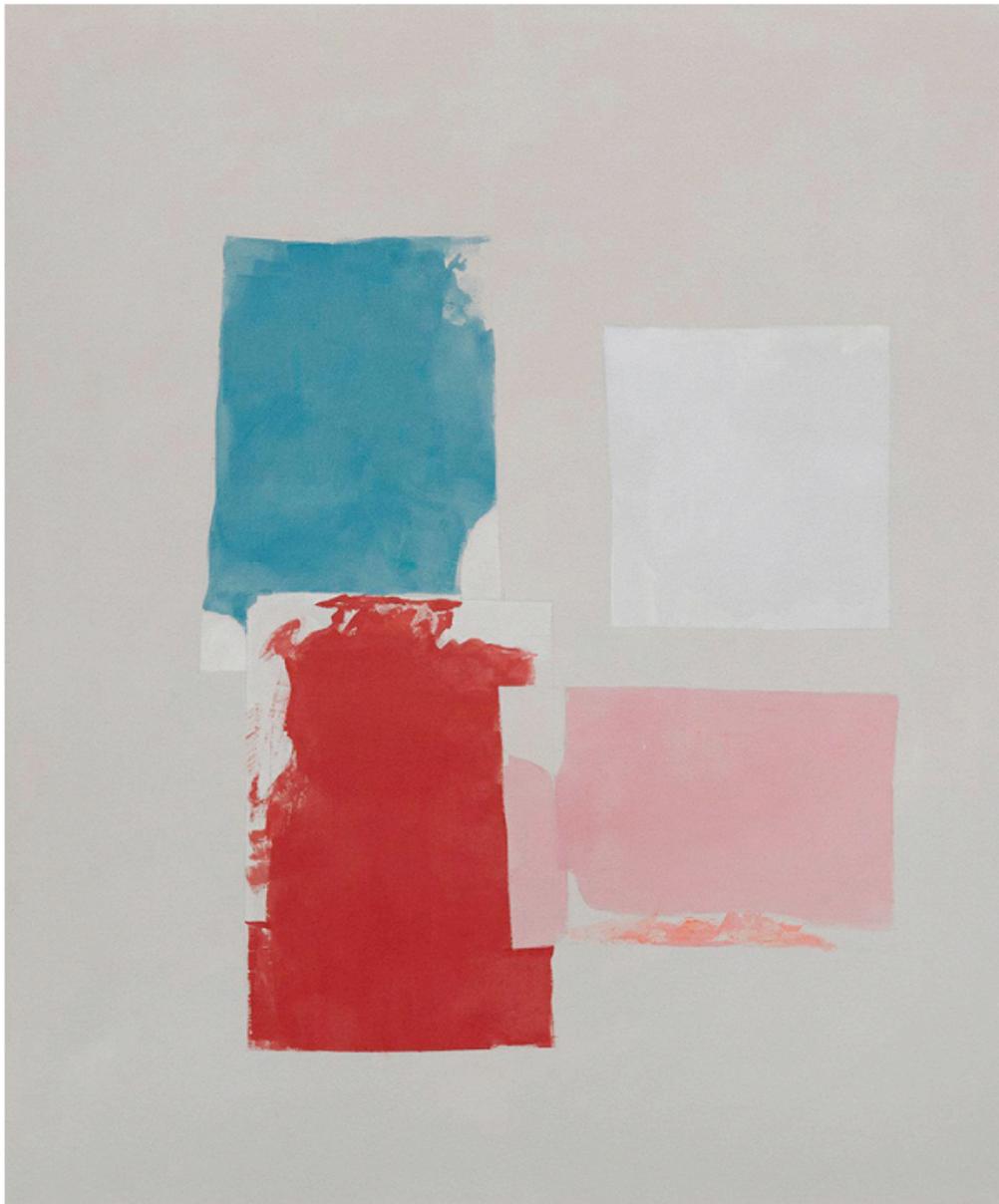
LISSON GALLERY / JANUARY 25, 2019 | art, exhibitions, news + events



Peter Joseph

"These paintings are vulnerable. They are expressions of what I call feeling, attempts at trying to make sense. I'm simply trying to exist and be honest, hoping that some time I can produce something that people need or want or recognize in some of their own feelings..." – Peter Joseph, 2018

Lisson Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of new work by British artist, Peter Joseph, his seventeenth with the gallery. He is the longest standing artist shown by Lisson Gallery, with his first exhibition in London in 1967, representing over fifty years of collaboration and friendship with the founder, Nicholas Logsdail. Recognized for his early paintings of simple, formally symmetrical shapes in a carefully considered color palette, the works in this exhibition continue Joseph's recent experimentation with a looser structure and extend a departure from the closed boundaries of his early work.



Peter Joseph

At the age of 90 the artist still paints daily from his home, nestled within a steep valley in the Cotswolds, where he contemplates canvases two at a time, until that moment at which he decides the works are ready to leave the studio. The new paintings are rendered in sunny shades of pastel colors with a prevalence of blues, teals and turquoises, balanced between abstract lyricism and evocations of natural phenomena, all with a view to their ultimate expression of some lived feeling, inexplicable to Joseph in any other way than through his paintings.

Often inspired by nature and classical architecture, he approaches his paintings with a consistent conceptual practice similar to that of an architect's draft. Joseph begins his paintings by studying off-cuts of colored paper and canvas. In these pieces he works to select two or more tonalities that he finds complement or create an interesting juxtaposition with another. Using this "sketch" he then mixes paint to the same color as the study, applying it to the canvas in washes of translucent color. As Joseph notes, "For me, it's like an architect who makes a drawing on paper in two dimensions and then realizes the vision in real space." The paintings in the exhibition will be accompanied by a selection of these studies, demonstrating Joseph's process.



Peter Joseph

Writing on the artist's new works in a recent catalogue, the New York-based critic and curator Alex Bacon describes, "This sense of things coming together and falling apart, in constant motion while still expressing an ultimate impression of balance and stability is what captivates us when looking at Joseph's recent work. It is also how I imagine – even if he works intuitively – the artist judges the success or failures of his paintings. Even if there are intellectual issues to be gleaned from these formal considerations, we must start there, with the terms set out by the paintings. To begin with, these means, and our experience of them as viewers, are unabashedly romantic – insofar as they suggest the tone, rather than the shape, of our sensate experience of the world."

LISSON GALLERY

Artnet news
22 June 2017

artnet® news

Artist Peter Joseph Reimagines the English Countryside in New Show at Lisson Gallery

In this new video, the artist talks about his methodical painting practice, and the rural landscape that inspires his new work.



British painter Peter Joseph will present his most recent artwork at [Lisson Gallery](#) in New York this summer. In a new video, embedded above, he speaks about the sources of his inspiration, and how the lush hills and valleys of the Cotswolds around the artist's home in Gloucestershire, England, are translated into abstract colors and shapes in his recent work.

Joseph began his career in advertising, and is the longest-standing artist represented by Lisson—he first showed at the London outpost in 1967. To celebrate a nearly 50-year relationship that has included 16 London-based exhibits, the artist is making his New York debut at the gallery's Chelsea location.



Interior of Joseph's studio. © Peter Joseph; Courtesy Lisson Gallery Photo by Jack Helms.

In this presentation of all-new works, the 88-year old painter is embracing a slower, more contemplative process that results in diaphanous color fields layered atop one another like collages.

Joseph creates preliminary "sketches," using colored paper and fabric until he finds an appealing spatial composition. He uses that template as a guide for painting thin layers onto canvas, methodically recreating the exact desired effects of light and shape. For his New York debut, both the "sketches" and the final works will be presented to highlight Joseph's unique mode of application.

LISSON GALLERY

Cereal

3 October 2016

<http://readcereal.com/peter-joseph/>

CEREAL



PETER JOSEPH – STUDIO VISIT

3 OCTOBER 2016

PHOTOS: *Rich Stapleton*

WORDS: *Ruth Ainsworth*

Early in our conversation, Peter Joseph tells us, “To me painting is everything, and there’s nothing that we have in society that’s the equivalent. Real painting leaves you absolutely immobile, because you’ve met something; you’ve met yourself.”

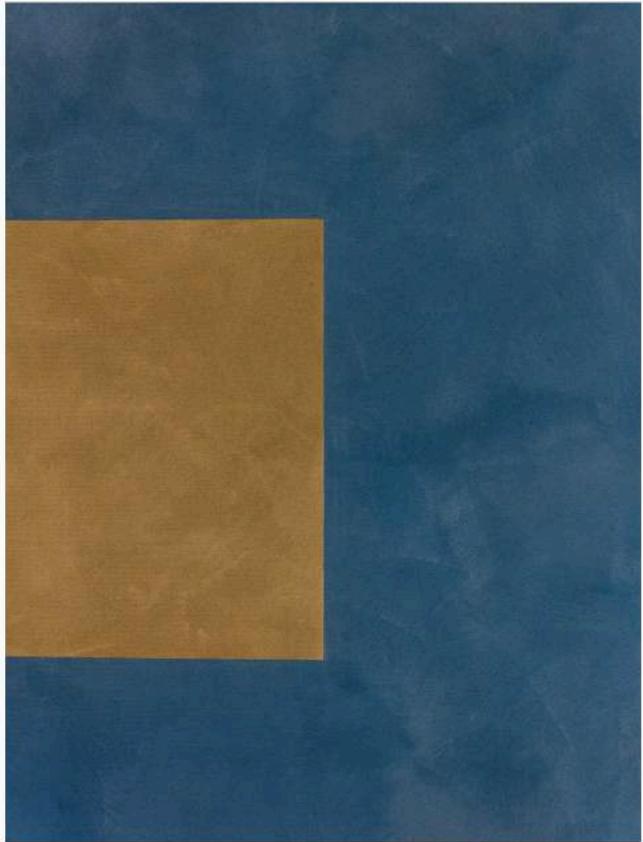
Since the sixties, and after leaving behind a career in advertising, Peter has spent his life painting and contemplating painting. Represented by Lisson Gallery, he is their longest standing artist, and has exhibited internationally with numerous other galleries. He lives in the countryside outside Stroud, Gloucestershire, with his wife Denise, an animal rights activist. The studio, which he designed, is a minimal, dark oblong, which, despite objections from conservative neighbours when it was built almost 30 years ago, sits discreetly among a handful of other cottages.

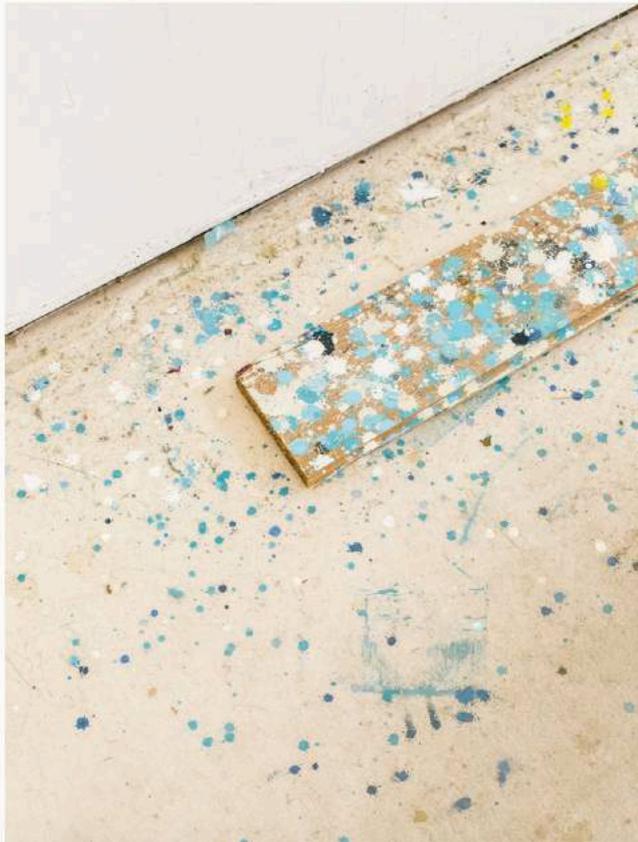
‘I love it out here, because nature is the nearest I know to the experience you have with art. The kind of heady experience you can get sometimes. And the quiet amongst just nature, I find that is immensely important to me. Painting now is such a business of city life, frankly, money making. Who you know and who you don’t know. I find it nonsense because I only need myself to go every day as I do, painting.’

THE SCRAPS OF CANVAS BECOME SMALL COLLAGES, OR STUDIES, WHICH HE SCALES UP INTO THE FINAL WORK, BUT ARE BEAUTIFUL IN THEIR OWN RIGHT. TENS OF THEM SIT IN NEAT STACKS IN THE CORNER WHERE HE PAINTS. HE WILL LEAVE THESE FOR DAYS, OR SOMETIMES WEEKS, BEFORE DECIDING IF THEY HOLD THE POTENTIAL TO BECOME A PAINTING

The layout of the studio reveals two clear priorities – daylight and the view over the valley. A wall of large windows overlooks the woodland (beech, oak and sycamore) on the opposite slope. Long tables run in front of the windows and two of Peter’s most recent works hang on the two back walls. The rest of the studio is devoted to storing books and finished work. I enquire about one that’s partly visible. ‘That’s going to be killed off!’ he tells me.

A table is piled with small scraps of canvas, all marked with brush strokes in Peter’s intuitively but rigorously modulated colour palette. This is the personal vocabulary of his work, and the starting point for his paintings. ‘You start to see one colour, and another, and that’s only the beginning of course; trying to put them together so they make a meaning.’ I recall something he said earlier about designing adverts and, ‘moving around these pieces of type mass, dark and light... I was interested in the movement of masses and the balance of them within a certain area.’ He would later see this as his introduction to abstraction.





The scraps of canvas become small collages, or studies, which he scales up into the final work, but are beautiful in their own right. Tens of them sit in neat stacks in the corner where he paints. He will leave these for days, or sometimes weeks, before deciding if they hold the potential to become a painting. Of the paintings themselves, he says, 'This is more real, this is the real thing. Painting to a human scale.'

The paint is applied to respond to light, or even behave like it. He explains, 'The paint is put on thin so that the light actually changes. When the light goes over it, the painting begins to fill up: it's like a pool. It requires two transparent layers; only one other thin layer is enough to make a slight difference, a slight gloss, which you see as a mark.'

Peter spontaneously decides to pull out an older work he has not looked at for years, and we all awkwardly help him peel back the tape and bubble wrap. It is an entirely different experience to the newer work. The latter's discreet forms of colour inhabit the space of a canvas coloured ground, poised in relationship to one another. In the older work a small rectangle rests in the centre of a darker border; the two tones, although one light and one dark, somehow create one continuous field. Peter painted in this way for 34 years before what he calls the organisation of the paintings changed.

But light, colour and tone are not only aesthetic concerns for Peter. Sifting through his CDs, which he always plays while he paints, he mentions Schubert and Schumann, in particular. 'They relate to me. The tonality is all important because it's like a voice of suffering and hoping – everything about a wonderful complex human being.'

A question I had left unasked from our meeting was how Peter might want someone to approach his work. I found a possible metaphor to answer it in an anecdote he told about encountering a Grecian temple in Sicily many years ago, before the area became heavily commercialised by the tourist trade. 'I went over the hill, and there were the three of us, on our own, nothing around, and there it was. The nobility of it, standing in this massive landscape, in this quiet way, so beautiful.'

lissongallery.com

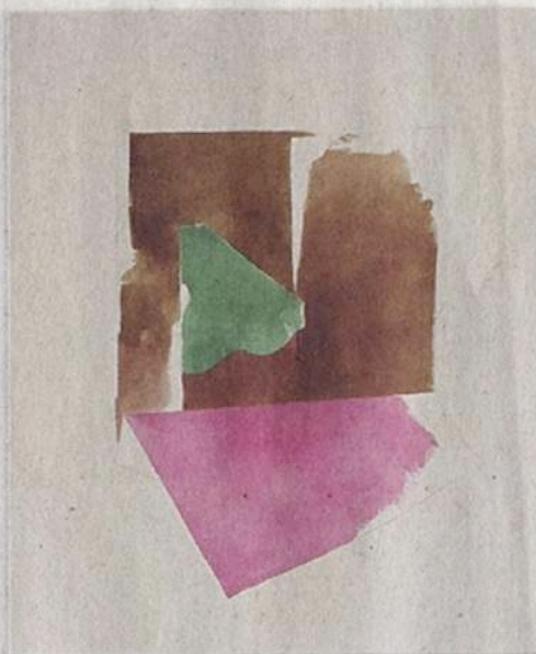




LISSON GALLERY

Le Libre, FR
15th January 2015

Lyrisme



COURTESY GALERIE GRETA MEERT.

Sensualité chromatique

Peter Josef est l'un des plus fins coloristes qui soit en peinture. Dans ses œuvres précédentes au caractère plus géométriquement construit, chaque tonalité, seule ou en duo, se démarque par sa rareté, par sa luminosité, par sa capacité quelque peu romantique à éveiller les sens et à susciter des émotions. Éminemment rétinienne, sa peinture, sans appartenir à un courant particulier tout en entretenant des affinités avec le minimalisme et le Color-Field américain, s'est constituée son propre champ d'expansion et d'expression. C'est peu dire qu'en une forme de lyrisme chromatique libre, malheureusement trop peu apprécié en

ces décennies de domination conceptualiste, il apporte avec autant de délicatesse que de ferveur une vague de fraîcheur qui embaume le regard et conquiert l'esprit. Ses œuvres les plus récentes exposées chez Greta Meert renforcent encore cette impression de légèreté aérienne qui agit comme un souffle d'air bienfaisant car elles prennent le large par rapport aux rigueurs des compositions antérieures. On pourrait dire qu'on atteint au luxe pictural, le vrai, celui d'une élégance naturelle qui rejette toute sophistication aux oubliettes. Un luxe qui ne s'affiche pas comme tel, qui joue plutôt la discrétion, voire la modestie mais se

révèle par la subtilité des teintes et des matières dont certaines, quasi éthérées, enivrent plus qu'elles ne séduisent. Pour la première fois, l'artiste anglais montre en quelques duos son processus créatif. Il expose côte à côte, le dessin et collage préparatif exécuté en petit format et la réalisation picturale sur toile. Deux mondes pour une même composition, une même image. L'étude et l'exécution qui la sublime. Un double ravissement. (C.L.)

→ Peter Joseph, "The new Painting". Galerie Greta Meert, 13, rue du Canal, 1000 Bruxelles. Jusqu'au 31 janvier. Du mardi au samedi de 14h à 18h.

LISSON GALLERY

Artdaily.org
March 2014



The New Painting: Exhibition at Lisson Gallery presents new works by abstract painter Peter Joseph



Installation view of the exhibition.

LONDON.- An abstract painter who came to prominence in the mid-sixties with environmental works and paintings of simple shapes in near primary colours, Peter Joseph has recently completed a series of freer and more openly lyrical works. This new vocabulary, or *The New Painting* as he calls it, finally breaks away from the formal restraint of over thirty years, featuring angular and biomorphic shapes floating over a neutral ground, which occasionally disintegrate or collapse into semi-translucent ethereal washes. Joseph's consistent conceptual discipline is still evident in his practice of first collaging together small swatches of painted canvas, before transferring and flattening these small, collaged works in order to re-enact or re-create them as largescale paintings.

The new paintings feature the tonal evocations of previous series, but here the references are, according to the artist, the landscape and skies of his Gloucestershire home of 30 years, also reflecting his fascination with the powerful significances of classical Greek architecture. The marks of the brush strokes, becoming forms on a ground which gives a new space of transparency, are embodiments of atmospheres, memory or location. However, "Representation is, as always, something that belongs to words and not to pictorial substitutes," Joseph says. "For the artist, the subject of the painting is his life."

As one of only a handful of artists to show in the first year of the Lisson Gallery in 1967 (alongside Derek Jarman and Dom Sylvester Houédard among others), Peter Joseph is the gallery's longest serving artist. This will be his fifteenth exhibition at Lisson Gallery.

Peter Joseph has, over the course of decades, dedicated his practice to seeking the potential in constraint. He rose to critical acclaim in the 1970s for his meditative, two-colour paintings, which set one rectangle within a frame of a darker shade. These early works are characterized by perfect symmetry, where every decision about colour, tone and proportion can be seen to be redolent of time, mood or place. While comparable to the work of American artists such as Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman, Joseph's is an anomalous strain of Minimalism: his allegiance lies as much with Renaissance masters as with his contemporaries. In the late 1990s his format departed from his established 'architecture' to divide the canvas into two planes, horizontally or vertically, wherein loose brushwork, natural tones and patches of exposed canvas tap into new feeling. As Joseph says: 'A painting must generate feeling otherwise it is dead'.

Peter Joseph was born in London in 1929. Self-taught as an artist, he came to non-figurative painting from beginnings in advertising and graphic design. He lives and works in Stroud, Gloucestershire. Joseph has held solo shows at Unité d'habitation Le Corbusier, Briey-en-Fôret (1998); Museum of Modern Art, Oxford (1994) and Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (1983) and has been included in major group exhibitions at Nouveau Musée National de Monaco (2013); Museum für Moderne Kunst Weserburg, Bremen (2011); Musée d'art moderne et contemporain, Geneva (2007); Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg (1991), Städtische Kunsthalle Düsseldorf (1984) and the Royal Academy of Arts, London (1977). He won the John Player Painting Competition in 1968. Work by Peter Joseph is in numerous important collections, including the Tate Gallery, London; the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; the Walker Art Gallery, Minneapolis; the Fogg Art Museum, Philadelphia; the Kunsthaus, Zurich and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

LISSON GALLERY

Artnews.org
November 2010

artnews.org

Carmen Herrera and Peter Joseph

28 November 2010 - 29 January 2011



© Carmen Herrera
Installation view, Lisson Gallery

CARMEN HERRERA AND PETER JOSEPH

November 28, 2010 - January 29, 2011

There is much that Peter Joseph and Carmen Herrera share in their lifelong dedication to abstraction. Both senior figures, their work avoids being heroic. Paintings often hinge on the juxtaposition of colour brought together in a way that creates a certain unity; titles are usually statements of material, visual fact. Joseph is best known for his two-colour paintings, those of the 1960s being boldly geometric, relying on primary colours and optical effects; for Herrera the more lyrical abstraction of her early paintings gave way to a focus on pure geometry. The precision of her work in black and white from the beginning of the 1950s, the simplicity of their geometric structure and austerity of her palette, prefigure and anticipate the optical, kinetic and hard-edge minimalism of 1960s New York with artists such as Ellsworth Kelly, Frank Stella and Kenneth Noland.

However for Herrera she refutes the tag of Op Art feeling it too simplistic a description of what she was attempting to achieve. Likewise Joseph, regarding himself as a classicist, considers the association with minimalism unconvincing, citing early Venetian and Florentine painting as a more appropriate touchstone.

Cuban artist Carmen Herrera was born in Havana in 1915, moving frequently between France and her homeland throughout the 1930s and 40s, before finally settling in New York in 1954. Born in 1929 Joseph is the only artist to have shown with Lisson Gallery since it opened in 1967. Despite the visionary nature of her work and association with artists of great reputation, including Barnett Newman and Leon Polk Smith, Herrera's paintings were the subject of few exhibitions – until a large-scale survey at Ikon Gallery, Birmingham in 2009 – a story familiar to many women artists of her generation, emerging during the post-war years. For Joseph, a self-taught artist moving from advertising, his has been a more consistent career, yet one characterised by a similarly serious attention to the potential of abstraction within tightly defined constraints. Both artists' careers ran parallel to the generation of minimal artists such as Agnes Martin, Robert Ryman and Brice Marden but at the time neither received the attention that the quality of their work deserved.

Herrera's life has been cosmopolitan; her practice reflects this international background. Her work is characterised with reference to the lineage of modernist abstraction and in particular Latin American antecedents, non-representational concrete painting, thus establishing cross-cultural dialogue within this international tradition. The journey of Herrera's enduring commitment to abstraction can be traced from a kind of romanticism that informed her work of the 1940s, through to a shift made in 1950. Subsequently she has consistently refined her focus on space and colour, paint characteristically applied in flat, solid areas. Works are organised based on the harmony and tension of opposing chromatic planes, combining symmetry and asymmetry as a means to give structure to the surface. Reducing her work to the play between two colours, Herrera creates an experience of sophisticated intensity. Works such as *Cerulean with Lemon Yellow* (1984) and *Blue with Orange* (1984) have a precision and optical rhythm achieved through the most economic of means.

At the heart of Herrera's work is a striking formal simplicity and attention to colour. Devoid of any referential aspects, her paintings combine line, form and space to convey an intense physicality. Returning to Cuba from Paris around 1935, Herrera studied architecture. Seen here, paintings such as *Black and White* (1987) reveal the influence of this discipline whereby the white zigzag dissolves into the gallery environment. The physical limits of the canvas are thus extended to leave black shapes floating in space. This piece relates especially to *Escorial* (1974) a painting suggested in part by the floor plan of the Royal Palace of the Escorial in Madrid, the torture gridiron of St. Lawrence or the chiaroscuro of Zurbarán, but also to a series of earlier works titled *Blanco y Verde*. Made throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s here green triangular forms 'dance' across walls, their white ground combining with that of the actual gallery architecture. For both artists a sense of rationality or order reigns.

While sharing a deliberation on the possibilities that arise out of such propositions there are crucial differences between the artists. For Joseph a similar vision can initially be seen in his work of the 1960s with common interest in self-imposed structures and parameters, colour and geometry. However by the early 1970s paintings had evolved into variations of a single format – a rectangle of a flatly painted colour surrounded by a border of a different, darker hue – to convey introspective moods through the precise meeting of light and dark, the juncture of two colours in a particular proportional relationship. These smaller, more private and meditative works, coincided with his increasing interest in poetry, philosophy and music. More recently there has been a shift toward an increasing improvisation, seen here most clearly in a sequence of studies from 2010 where blocks of acrylic on canvas are collaged on to paper. They create a sense of freedom which exists outside of the perceived restrictions of their geometry. The broken surface of these works share much with recent paintings, the subtle juxtaposition of forms reveal a complex rhythm akin to a musicality and harmony. Largely centred on a vertical subdivision and the nuance established via tonal colour, pieces such as *Deep Red Brown and Pink* (2010) or *Alazarin Red and Dark Ochre* (2009) rely on closely related quality of hue; *Blue with Lilac and Bright Blue with Warm Grey* (both 2008) have their modulated surfaces further complicated by the introduction of a third form via discrete overdrawing or colour respectively. Despite the clear marks of application, use of colour is not gestural; it is much more concerned with the delineation of surface and establishment of tangible planes. There is a sense that abutted shapes are pitched at a point of mutual reliance.

Importantly Joseph's new works do establish a further kinship to Herrera, that of a shared connection to Barnett Newman. An intuitive painter, Joseph has few contemporary affinities. He intends his work be 'absorbed', their formal sensibility creating an emphasis on the actual experience, the temporal nature of viewing, of experiencing over time. Geometry is employed to suggest a spiritual dimension, a unity of surface that develops as a personal meditation.

Joseph credits Newman and Rothko with evoking a kind of emotional space in their work; for Herrera her direct association with Newman, a neighbour and close personal friend, resulted in an intense dialogue regarding the very nature of abstraction itself.

Nigel Prince