

Graham Boyd

Picturing the Sublime In the Work of Graham Boyd

Saturday 23rd May – Sunday 7th June 2009

*Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves
Waited for rain, while the black clouds
Gathered far distant, over Himavant.*

T S Eliot, 'The Waste Land'

The land is parched, waiting for the rains to come. There is a special tension in the air, electric, heavy with foreboding of a storm about to break. The landscape is manifest as latent energy, liquid weight; leviathan oceans of rain press hard against the leaden sky, buckling the atmosphere, pressing on our heart.

An early experience of the vast and ancient landscape of Central Africa impelled Graham Boyd to endeavour to translate that experience through paint; not by conventional pictorial means, burdened by all the weight of narrative and representation, but through a direct engagement with the materiality of the medium.

The paintings evoke a personal experience of nature through a nuanced distribution of 'weight', the weight of opposing colours and tonalities pitched against the beat of the mark-making across the plane of the canvas. Boyd paints the experience of nature via the experience of paint, to make not a picture of nature but a painting of the perception and transformative effect of nature on the self.

Although Boyd's approach to picture-making bears a certain relationship to the language of painting which has its roots in American Abstract Expressionism and Colour Field painting of the 1950s and 1960s as exemplified by such artists as Hans Hofmann, Barnett Newman and Larry Poons, its real resonance lies with the European tradition of landscape and its relation to the notion of the sublime. Cézanne's paintings of Mont Sainte-Victoire and Piet Mondrian, whose Pier and Ocean series, where the artist reduced the ocean to a field of horizontal ciphers and the posts of the pier to similarly attenuated vertical glyphs, have close affinities with Boyd's practice of using abstraction as a means to approach more closely the hidden and ineffable aspects of nature.


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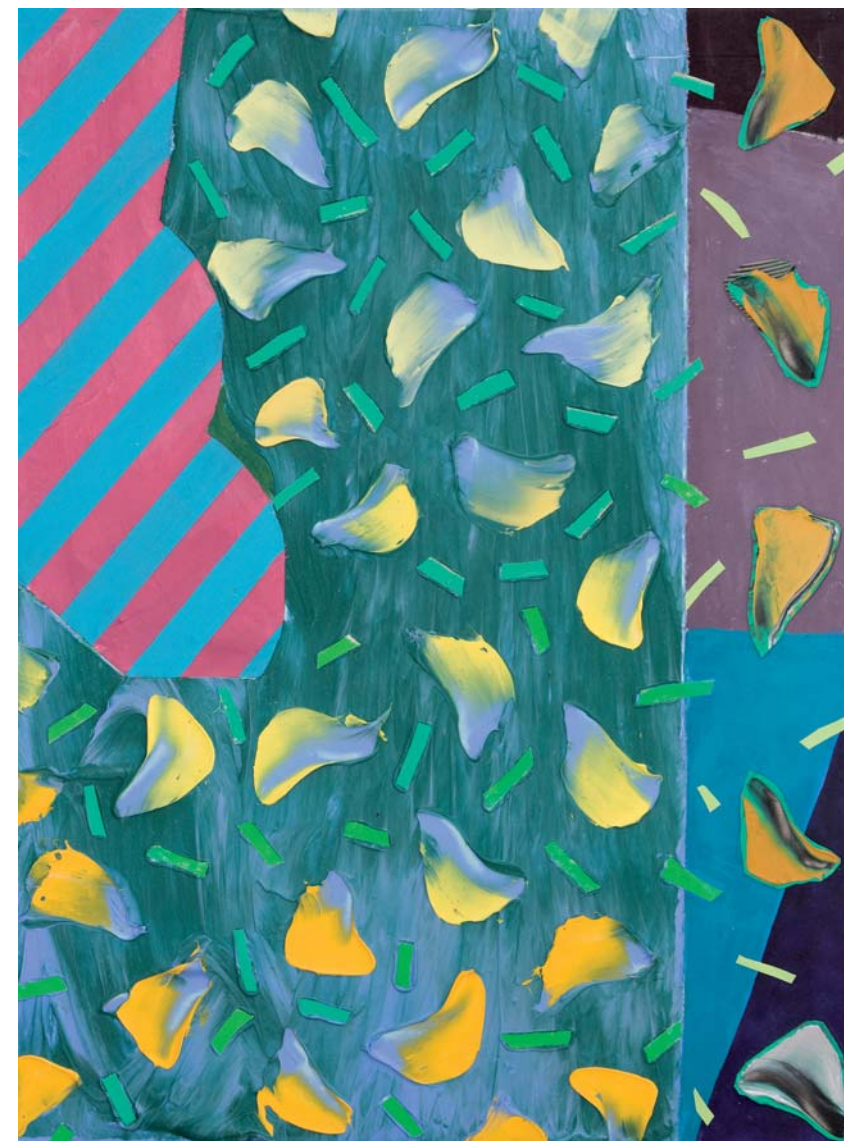
Areas of the painting that at first appear to be the original thinly stained canvas turn out to be painted elements collaged onto the surface at the very end of the working process. In this way the canvas once again becomes an active agent in the work, rather than a passive receiver. Even discrete gestural marks, notionally spontaneous and immovable, are sometimes cut out from other paintings, allowing the artist to orientate them into just the right position to ensure the equilibrium of the painting.

The collage elements return the surface to its original virginity, a chance to begin again, suddenly in the clotted depths of the creamy facture, a lake of aquamarine green opens up, a calm chroma in the midst of a riot of succulence. A flock of golden spatulettes arc through an ochre field, opticalised to a purple haze beneath a gelatinous glaze. Colour and space become feeling, the quiddity of the painted surface is that feeling.

Because the paintings are rectangular the corners become sectors of intense visual energy. What occurs there is key to the dynamic of the surface. It is as if the corners have escaped their geometric moorings and float free; chevronned or combed monochrome rectangles now 'herd' the characteristic 'interval marks' into fractal architectures of fluid dynamics, like flocks of starlings, swirling atoms or swarms of polychrome insects. Boyd's paintings are as irrevocable and coherent as the curve of a wave crashing onto the shore, as arresting as a shoal of silver fish turning as one in the depth of a blue ocean.

Richard Dyer © 2009

Richard Dyer is News Editor and London Correspondent for *Contemporary* magazine, Art Editor of *Wasafiri* and Assistant Editor of *Third Text*.



Durumadoo Acrylic on canvas 123 x 92 cm



Forecast Acrylic on canvas 45 x 58 cm



Beat Acrylic on canvas 92 x 123 cm



Ticker Acrylic on canvas 92 x 123 cm



Caught in the Blue Acrylic on canvas 92 x 123 cm



Offshore Acrylic on canvas 51 x 71 cm



Wazzos Acrylic on canvas 92 x 123 cm



Au Bal *Acrylic on canvas* 58 x 79 cm



Sur La Plage *Acrylic on canvas* 113 x 167 cm



Winter Journal 2009
The Guest Acrylic on canvas 33 x 42 cm



Winter Journal 2009
Second Entry Acrylic on canvas 45 x 51 cm



Winter Journal 2009
Soiree Acrylic on canvas 33 x 43 cm



Winter Journal 2009
Going Organic Acrylic on canvas 45 x 58 cm



Winter Journal 2009
Finding a Way Acrylic on canvas 45 x 58 cm



Winter Journal 2009
Listening to Grey Acrylic on canvas 40 x 49 cm

GRAHAM BOYD

BIOGRAPHY

1928 Born in Bristol
 1951 Watford School of Art, NDD
 1953-5 Resident in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe)
 1972-3 Exchange Assoc. Professor, Plymouth State College, University of New Hampshire, USA
 1983 Participant in 2nd Triangle Workshop, New York, USA
 1987 Guest Artist, Triangle Workshop, Barcelona
 1976-93 Principal Lecturer in Fine Art, Head of Painting, College of Art & Design, University of Hertfordshire
 1995 Guest Artist, International Multi-Media Symposium, Faial, Azores

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

1962 Artists International Association, London
 1963 Molton Gallery, London
 1967 Artists International Association, London
 1968/71/82 Oxford Gallery
 1979 Oxford Centre for Management Studies
 1980/88/94/95/01 Herts College of Art & Design, (Hertfordshire University)
 1983 Spacex Gallery, Exeter
 1986 London College of Furniture
 1991 Sandra Higgins Fine Arts, London
 1997 With Helene Fesenmaier, Harriet Green Gallery, London
 1999 'Colour Transactions', deli Art, London
 2003 With Sheila Girling, Pilgrim Gallery, London
 2004 Striking Lights', deli Art, London, Bushey Museum and Art Gallery, The Pavilion Gallery, Chenies Manor, Rickmansworth
 2004/06 The Salt Gallery, Hayle, Cornwall
 Courtyard Arts Gallery, Hertford
 SE1 Gallery, London
 2008 Graham Boyd at Eighty – Parndon Mill Gallery, Harlow

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1950/51 Young Contemporaries
 1954 Daily Express Artists Under 35
 Artists International Association 25,

RBA Gallery, London
 John Moores, Liverpool
 Artists International Association, 'Big Pictures'
 1957 Waddington Galleries, London
 1962/63/71 London Group
 1965/66/73/74 Royal Academy
 Royal Glasgow Institute of Fine Art
 1967 John Moores, Liverpool
 1968 Belfast 68 - Arts Council of Northern Ireland
 1969 John Moores, Liverpool
 1971 "Shapes in Spaces", Annelly Juda, Woburn Abbey
 London Group, Cleveland International Drawing
 1983 Triangle Artists, Pine Plains, New York, USA
 1986 The Triangle Show, Smiths Gallery
 1987 Triangle Barcelona Exhibition
 Audun Gallery, Chelsea
 1989 Atkinson Art Gallery, Southport
 AIR Gallery, London
 1992 The Capsule, London
 1993 Gerrit Rietveld Academie, Amsterdam
 International Multi-Media Symposium
 Casa da Cultura da Horta, Faial, Azores
 1996 International Multi-Media Symposium, Sociedade Nacional de Bellas Artes, Lisbon
 International Multi-Media Symposium, Conde Duque, Madrid
 1997 Atlantic Fusion, Trinity Buoy Wharf, London
 2002 deli Art in Bristol, The Crypt Gallery
 Lemon Street Gallery, Truro
 2004 The Pilgrim Gallery, London
 2006-7 Bushey Museum & Art Gallery

COLLECTIONS

Walker Gallery, Liverpool
 Trinity College, Oxford
 Oxford Centre for Management Studies
 William Underwood Co. Boston, USA
 Triangle Artists Workshop
 City University - London
 The Catalunya Institute of Contemporary Art, Barcelona
 University of Hertfordshire
 B.M.W. Financial Services
 The Landmark Trust



Lochinvar *Acrylic on canvas* 44 x 46 cm

Cover:

Where I Might Be *Acrylic on canvas* 112 x 142 cm

High Street, Chipping Campden, Gloucestershire GL55 6AG
Tel: 01386 841555 Fax: 01386 848970
info@campdengallery.co.uk www.campdengallery.co.uk

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Sunday 11.00am – 4.00pm


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