

BERNARD JACOBSON GALLERY

Discursive Abstraction: Works on Paper from the 1950's to the present

**Larry Bell, Ed Cohen, Yvonne Estrada, Sam Francis,
Robert Motherwell, William Scott, Graham Sutherland,
William Tillyer and Brian Wood**

January 11 through February 25, 2012



Robert Motherwell, *Study in Watercolour #1
(in Green and Blue)*, 1968

Bernard Jacobson Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition that explores the nature of abstraction and how it is expressed specifically on paper. **Discursive Abstraction: Works on Paper from the 1950's until the present** opens on January 11th and will remain on view through February 25th, 2012. **Please join us for an opening in the gallery on Wednesday January 11th.**

The exhibition includes works by artists long associated with the gallery such as Larry Bell, Sam Francis, Robert Motherwell, William Scott, Graham Sutherland and William Tillyer. We are also pleased to include a few non-gallery artists with Ed Cohen, Yvonne Estrada and Brian Wood.

This exhibition quietly observes a group of works on paper over a 60-year period by a disparate set of artists, chiefly British and American, whose primary common denominator is an eye towards abstraction. Ideally it will give the viewer an opportunity to observe various means of expressing abstraction on paper that are both fluent and expansive - it is not about a hard edge or geometric visual language so much as an organic and ephemeral discourse.

Chronologically it begins with a lively and colorful work by British artist Graham Sutherland from 1951 that is by no means purely abstract. In *Terraced Hill with Stones*, Sutherland has reduced forms in nature to vastly simplified, purely aesthetic terms. Another notable early work in the exhibition is by William Scott, a prolific painter, poet, muralist and sculptor who expressed himself both abstractly and figuratively throughout his career. One of the few works in the show composed simply of pencil on paper, *Idea IV*, 1964 depicts abstracted artifacts of the everyday.

Robert Motherwell's dynamic *Study in Watercolour #1 (In Green and Blue)*, 1968 illustrates the artist's masterful ability to create palpable visual frisson and acuity of form via gesture. A splash of blue dances playfully across the page on top of a solid block of horizontal bright green. Motherwell was particularly fertile in making drawings. This preoccupation followed him from the 1950's with his interest in automatism (which he often referred to as 'doodling', inspired by the surrealist movement) through to the mid-1960's with the *Beside the Sea* and *Lyrical Suite* series to his *Gesture* series of the 1970's. Late Motherwell works on paper saw a return to earlier influences and obsessions as widely diverse and eclectic as James Joyce, "psychic automatism", Chinese brush painting, Mexican folk art, Pierre Bonnard, Paul Cézanne and Henri Matisse.

Sam Francis is splendidly represented here by two works on paper from the 1970's; *Blue Ball*, acrylic on paper and *Untitled*, 1974, gouache on paper. The former picture illustrates the open, spontaneous and playful gesture that was

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characteristic of the *Blue Ball* series whereas the latter picture is an example of a more contained and restricted composition. Each of these two works favorably bask in the richness and depth of the color blue.

Larry Bell who is best known for his minimal cube sculptures of tinted glass and steel has also made beautiful works on paper over his long and prodigious career. Shown in this exhibit, are four of Bell's "fraction" series from 2000. These fractions originated actually as an experiment; they are all small, mostly 10" square constructed collages that are made up of discarded fragments of Bell's previous series called the "mirage" works. These small exuberant "fractions" are full of details, color and a pulsing sensation perhaps made palpable by their uncommon perceptual effects.

William Tillyer is a British born artist/thinker philosopher with tremendous aesthetic flexibility. Tillyer, an accomplished painter, print-maker, watercolorist, draughtsman and sculptor who possesses phenomenal technical abilities in all media, could be seen specifically as a landscape artist. However, although creating breathtaking landscape imagery in a league of his own, Tillyer reaches and moves beyond that genre to engage in a relentless probing of the very essence of his particular medium especially in the instance of watercolor. Both of the Tillyer works in this show, *Metamorphosis 2010* and *Towards the Naming of Names in the Landscape 2010*, reveal luminous colour and synthesized form and space culminating in a fleeting ephemeral language. In a recent Tillyer publication John Yau writes: "While a small part of his genius has to do with history and circumstance - what one is tempted to call fate - the larger more important part has to do with the inventiveness with which he has repeatedly advanced his project, which, in formal and metaphysical terms, can be described as the collision between form and dissolution, solidity and transparency, dust and water."¹

The works on paper of Ed Cohen, a New York based artist, belie a deep interest in & engagement with gesture, immediacy and spontaneity. Cohen pours fluid acrylic paint onto his surfaces be it canvas, wood or paper, and allows the flow of the paint to manifest & materialize accordingly - creating highly erotic and moody imagery that evokes interior and exterior landscapes which probe a subconscious terrain. Cohen culls inspiration from multiple disciplines including literature (he is an avid reader) - especially poetry, music, nature and among other art forms, there is a particular focus on Japanese Enso paintings from the 17th century. In referencing Cohen's titles for his pictures, Nathacha Appanah writes in a recent catalogue: "Put together, the titles could form a long poem that would speak of the ungraspable beauty, mystery and fortuity of life."²

Yvonne Estrada is a Colombian born artist living and working in Brooklyn. Her works on paper are methodically composed lyrical abstractions created by adding layer upon layer of gesture to reveal highly delicate and intricate imagery rooted in the natural world. Estrada's approach though labor-intensive and elaborate has a spontaneous and playful character.

Brian Wood is a Canadian-born artist living and working in New York City who utilizes painting, drawing, printmaking, and photography. Whether working within one medium, or combining several to create hybrids, Wood's images evoke innumerable states of consciousness in their investigation of pre-linguistic primal experience. In this exhibition, his two graphite drawings demonstrate immediacy and economy of line and his two ink drawings on mylar open into intense and complex space.

Works in the exhibition vary in medium from graphite to watercolor, collage, fluid acrylic, colored pencils, gouache, crayon, ink on mylar, mixed media etc. and will attempt to differentiate methods of process including pouring, spilling, pooling, laminating, staining, laboring, gesturing and so on.

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We would like to gratefully acknowledge Winston Wächter Fine Art, New York for kindly loaning works by Ed Cohen. Cohen currently has a solo show on view through January 21st. We also wish to thank the Von Lintel Gallery, New York for kindly loaning works by Yvonne Estrada who also has a solo show currently on view. Please see details below for both.

For further information regarding the exhibition, please contact Jeannie Freilich at Jeannie@Jacobsongallery.com or Tel 212 879-1100

Ed Cohen - Untying the Knot
December 8 through January 21, 2012
Winston Wächter Fine Art
530 West 25th Street
New York, NY 10011

Yvonne Estrada - Blue
January 12 through February 18, 2012
Opening reception: January 12
Von Lintel Gallery
520 West 23rd Street
New York, NY 10011

1. "William Tillyer - Watercolours" by John Yau, 21 Publishers, 2010 pg. 16
2. "Letter to Ed on Visiting his Studio" by Nathacha Appanah, Winston Wächter Fine Art, 2011 New York, pg. 1

Notes to Editors

Bernard Jacobson Gallery was founded in 1969, publishing and distributing prints by artists including Robyn Denny, Lucian Freud, David Hockney, Leon Kossoff, Henry Moore, Richard Smith, Ed Ruscha and William Tillyer. By the mid 1970s, having established himself as one of the major dealers in the international print boom, Jacobson began to show paintings and sculpture. The early 1980s saw the gallery open branches in Los Angeles and New York, expanding the range of international artists to include West Coast American artists such as Joe Goode and Larry Bell as well as modern British masters such as David Bomberg, Ivon Hitchens, Peter Lanyon, Ben Nicholson, William Scott, Stanley Spencer, and Graham Sutherland. From 1997, the gallery moved more firmly into American and international art, with shows of artists such as Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski, Larry Poons and Frank Stella. Recently, the gallery has held shows by the American artists Robert Motherwell and Helen Frankenthaler, Robert Rauschenberg, Roy Lichtenstein and Tom Wesselmann, while European painters include Bram Bogart and Pierre Soulages and British artists William Tillyer, Bruce McLean and Mark Vaux. In 2004, the gallery moved to 6 Cork Street in London's Mayfair, uniting Bernard Jacobson Graphics and Bernard Jacobson Gallery under one roof.

This year has seen the gallery open a new space in New York on East 71st Street with an inaugural exhibition entitled 60 Years of British Art followed by 21 Americans, the latter showing work by major American artists including Robert Motherwell, Helen Frankenthaler, Roy Lichtenstein and Robert Rauschenberg. The London gallery has just concluded the show Robert Motherwell: Works on Paper, the first ever exhibition dedicated to drawings and paintings on paper by Motherwell to be held in Britain. Bernard Jacobson Gallery also has a strong presence at major international art fairs participating at Art Brussels, London's Pavilion of Art and Design, Art Hong Kong, and the prestigious Art Basel where ArtInfo voted it one of the top booths of 2011 for a vast and impressive selection of works by Robert Motherwell.

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