



MICHAEL KIDNER

DREAMS OF THE WORLD ORDER: EARLY PAINTINGS

12 September - 20 October 2012

Private View Tuesday 11 September 6 - 8pm

Exhibition catalogue will be available

Blue Green Pink
(*Time Magazine*)
No.2 c.1964
Oil on linen
152 x 122 cm

Flowers
82 Kingsland Road
London E2 8DP
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These compositions have a tenderness and poetry. [...] It is an image with real magic, self-sufficient yet redolent of reality.

David Sylvester

New Statesman, April 1962 (Review of Grabowski Gallery, 1962)

Dreams of the World Order, Early Paintings explores four areas of Michael Kidner's painting practice: *After Image*, *Stripe*, *Moiré* and *Wave*. Works are predominantly from the 1960's and are prime examples of Kidner's progressive experiments with optical effects and rational procedures, inspired by his preoccupation with how space, pattern, and form function. A year after his death in 2009, a roll of paintings was discovered at his Hampstead Hill Gardens studio. This exhibition provides a unique opportunity to view these iconic works, (some of which have not been displayed since they were created,) alongside others from the same period.

Blue, Green, Violet and Brown Relief, 1966 which was previously exhibited as part of *Recent British Painting*, Tate 1967, will be shown alongside a variation of the painting *Yellow, Pink, Green*, 1964. The latter was illustrated in a *Time Magazine* article titled *Op-Art: Pictures that Attack the Eye* 1964. Coining the term 'Op Art' and featuring an interview with the Curator William Seitz, the article preceded Seitz' exhibition, *The Responsive Eye*, 1965, at MOMA, New York. There Kidner was shown alongside his contemporaries, which included among others Bridget Riley and Victor Vasarely.

Professor Irving Sandler, (Art Historian and Critic,) wrote in his essay which was published on the occasion of Kidner's retrospective exhibition at Flowers Gallery, London in 2007:

In 1961, Kidner's preoccupation with the dynamics of colour led him to investigate how it functioned optically, that is how the eye perceived colour. His resulting pictures would later be labelled Op Art, and he was arguably the first Op Artist in Britain. Kidner's examination of visual perception had its ancestry in the science of linear perspective developed by Leon Batiste Alberti, and other fifteenth century artists.

Based on pre-planned sequences of parallel bands of closely valued colour, the design of each canvas is legible. At the same time, the entire surface vibrates, pulsates, and flickers, disturbing the focus of the eye.

This period led to a crucial realisation for Kidner; the belief that art based on rational procedures had the capability to solve personal and social problems. In this belief he was at one with the Russian Constructivists and German Bauhaus among others. It was in the overlapping fields of optical effects and systemic structure that he was to find the creative substance that was to inform his whole career.

Kidner is quoted as saying:

From the early 1960s I began to have a new sense of direction in my work. [...] At the same time all sorts of developments were taking place both in the art world (Pop Art, Op Art, Conceptual art and happenings,) and in world events, (the ban the bomb marches, the Vietnam war, the downsizing of British pretensions to influence) and there was a considerable normative pressure to make an art that reflected one or all of these. This constantly perturbed me but did not deflect me from my path. I did not know where it would all lead, but I could not do otherwise.

But what I could not escape was a sense of unease linked with my perception that the discoveries of science have undermined all the certainties associated with a belief in God. I felt that to confront this issue I needed to get a better understanding of the language of science, which everyone agreed was mathematics. For me the use of systemic procedures and, in particular, of wave forms became a way of paddling along the shore of a personal sea of ignorance. At least I was getting my feet wet.

The Wild Folly of my Youth
Michael Kidner, August 2009

Studies from *Dreams of the World Order: Early Paintings* were previously shown at the Royal Academy of the Arts, London in 2009, shortly before Kidner's death in November. The recently discovered works of art are an exciting and enriching addition to his residual body of early paintings.

Born in Northamptonshire, 1917, Michael Kidner studied History at Cambridge University. In the early 1950s a growing interest in painting led him to Paris, where he was influenced by Cezanne and Cubism. On return to England his attentions diverted to American Abstract Expressionism.

Select solo exhibitions: Serpentine Gallery, London, Royal West Academy, Bristol, Henry Moore Institute, Leeds and Royal Academy of Arts, London.

Select group exhibitions: Hayward Gallery, London, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, Tate Britain, London, and Mackintosh Museum, Glasgow, MAMCO, Geneva.

Select public collections: Tate, British Council, Government Art Collection, Arts Council England, MOMA, NY, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon, Muzeum Sztuki and Lodz, Poland.

With special thanks to the Estate of Michael Kidner and Tate Archive.

For further information and images
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