

MICHAEL KIDNER

AFTER IMAGE (WORKS 1956 - 2009)

82 Kingsland Road
London E2 8DP

T: (0)20 7920 7777

9 MARCH - 30 APRIL 2022

info@flowersgallery.com
www.flowersgallery.com

Flowers Gallery is pleased to announce a retrospective exhibition by the late British artist and pioneer of Optical Art, Michael Kidner RA (1917-2009). This exhibition at the Kingsland Road gallery presents a significant range of works across his career from 1956 to 2009.

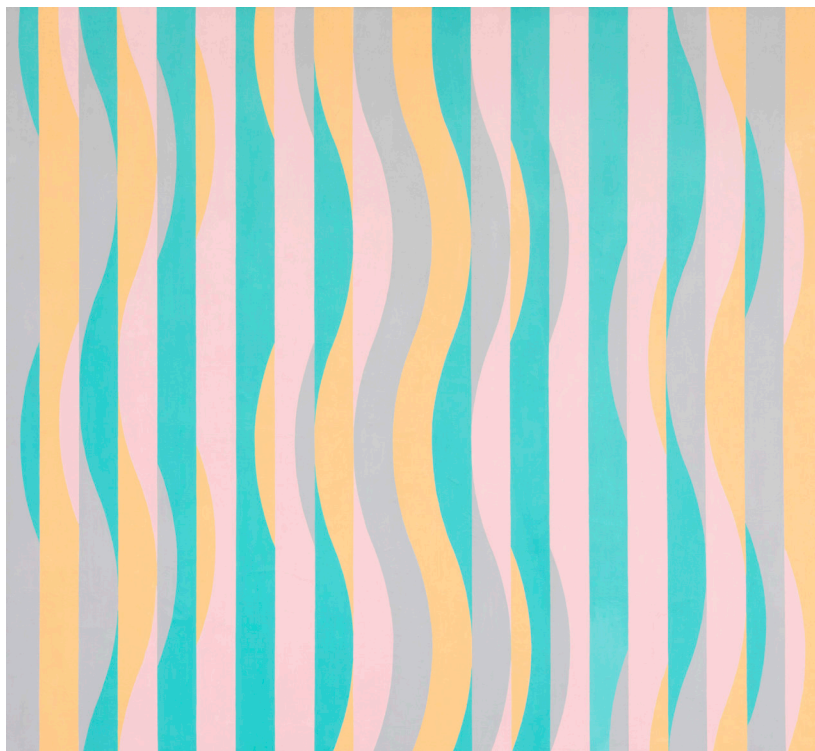
Art critic and historian Irving Sandler described Michael Kidner as *"arguably the first of the Op artists in Britain."* Both rational and playful, Kidner's art has combined visual responses to the principles of mathematics, science, and chaos theories, alongside an interest in the irrational and unpredictable nature of the human condition. He said, *"Unless you read a painting as a feeling, then you don't get anything at all."*

Early in his career, before developing his own distinctive style, Kidner's work was informed by abstract expressionism and the paintings of Mark Rothko in particular. Several works in the exhibition from this period, featuring expressive fields of radiant colour, are direct homages to Rothko.

From 1961 onwards, Kidner's study of optics and visual perception led to his pursuit of a pure form of imagery and he sought a phenomenological approach to the fluctuating effects of light and colour within the space set by the canvas. This can be seen in some of his earliest paintings such as *Untitled After Image* (1959). Kidner said: *"Once I realised that my interest in colour rather than the figure or landscape could become the subject of a painting, I was off to a new start. An after-image was the purest experience of colour I could recall and because it occurs on the retina of the eye, it looks brighter than any surrounding colour."*

Kidner developed a number of strategies to approach colour and composition, including stripes, columns, moiré patterns and waveforms. Of his stripe paintings such as *Violet Ochre & Blue Stripes* (c.1963), he said: *"I wanted to approach colour rationally, give it a job to do and let the unconscious expression look after itself."* The subsequent wave and moiré paintings introduced new systems to counteract what he called the 'indeterminate' length of the stripe and contain the content of the image within the picture plane.

Describing his wave paintings such as *Blue, Green, Violet and Brown Relief*, and *Butterfly Wings* (both 1966), Kidner said: *"I hoped that two waves which were out of phase would suggest the beginning and the end of a cycle and in that sense introduce a limit, while nevertheless continuing forever."* The wave form also provided the basis for Kidner's columns, which derived from the movement of three-dimensional wave forms in space.



Butterfly Wings, 1966, oil on canvas, 183 x 168 cm

The dazzling optical effects of moiré (or 'interference') patterns, as seen in *Blue, Green and Grey* (1963), were created by intersecting stripes of two colours with a third colour at an angle. Of this development, Kidner said, "I was now satisfied that the content of the picture was visibly connected to its structure."

Many of the works from 2000 onwards, such as *Eye Candy* and *Morocco* (both 2002), were defined as pentagon paintings. As Kidner explained, the pentagon "...got rid of the vertical and the horizontal so evident in the earlier Constructivist work." He said, "I saw it as relating to my discomfort with the certainty of religion as compared with the uncertainty of science and, finally, I could think of no better metaphor for space."

This exhibition is an adaptation of a recent retrospective *Love is a Virus from Outer Space* at Daugavpils Mark Rothko Art Centre, Latvia, which took place from October 2021 – January 2022.

For further exhibition information and images please contact Hannah Hughes: press@flowersgallery.com

ABOUT MICHAEL KIDNER

Michael Kidner was born in Northamptonshire, UK, in 1917. He studied History and Anthropology at Cambridge University, UK, and then Landscape Architecture in Ohio, USA, before joining the Canadian Army during WWII. After the war, Kidner returned to the United Kingdom, and embarked on a career as an artist. His work was first displayed in New York in 1965 in *The Responsive Eye* at the Museum of Modern Art, a group exhibition that subsequently toured the United States; and then in a solo show at Betty Parsons Gallery, New York, in 1967. During the 1960s Kidner was associated with the Systems group of artists and was included in an Arts Council touring exhibition of Systems art in 1972–73 that originated at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London, some of which was displayed at Tate Britain in 2016. A retrospective at the Serpentine Gallery, London, in 1984 introduced a new generation of British artists to his work, and he was elected as a Royal Academician in 2004. His work is represented in many public collections, including Arts Council England, British Council, Government Art Collection, and Tate, UK; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon; and Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź, Poland.



From left: *After Image*, c.1960, oil on linen, 96.5 x 122 cm; *Green (For Grabowski)*, 1968, acrylic on cotton duck, 168 x 121.5 cm



NOTES TO EDITORS

Opening Hours: Wednesday - Saturday 11am - 6pm

Image Credits: © Michael Kidner Art, courtesy of Flowers Gallery

Twitter @FlowersGallery

Facebook @FlowersGalleries

Instagram @FlowersGallery