

ABSTRACT PAIRINGS

21 CORK STREET
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Bernard Cohen, Liza Giles, Michael Kidner, Tom Phillips,
Carol Robertson, Richard Smith.

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Private View: Wednesday 12 August, 6-8pm

Flowers Gallery is pleased to present *Abstract Pairings*, an exhibition that places two works by each of six British artists side by side, creating a sequence of encounters across different moments in their respective practices. Through the artists' engagement with colour and their exploration of form and spatial rhythm, the presentation examines how both modern and contemporary artists engage with abstraction. With two works by each artist on display, the exhibition reveals how they have continually revisited and reinterpreted the fundamental principles of the genre through the evolution of their approach to painting.



Michael Kidner, *Lilypond*, 1999, Tulle cardboard and acrylic on board;
'Homage to Rothko', 1956, Oil and gouache on paper

Featured are works by Bernard Cohen (b. 1933), Liza Giles (b. 1981), Michael Kidner RA (1917-2009), Tom Phillips CBE RA (1937-2022), Carol Robertson (b. 1955) and Richard Smith CBE RA (1931-2016), highlighting the diverse ways in which each artist develops a personal visual language, extending and challenging the possibilities of abstraction.

The temporal relationship between the works differs from pair to pair. Kidner's *'Homage to Rothko'* (1956) and *Lilypond* (1999) are separated by more than four decades, charting a shift from atmospheric colour towards the perceptual structure that would define his mature practice. Cohen's *Untitled* (1966) and *Five Full Size* (1974) introduce an increasingly fluid conception of pictorial space, while Richard Smith's *A Whole Year a Half a Day VIII* (1966) and *Abstract Design* (1971) reflect the artist's sustained interest in expanding painting beyond the limits of the flat surface, into a sculptural plane.

Elsewhere, the relationships are less about distance in time than the coexistence of parallel lines of engagement. Created in the same year, Giles' *Hampton* and *Melbourne* (2025) employ a common vocabulary of enlarged, cropped forms yet generate contrasting sensations of movement and scale. Tom Phillips' *Rilke's Angels* (2009) and *Stick Theory II* (2012) are animated by shifting patterns and vibrant colours, while Carol Robertson's *Light from Light (small)* (2016) and *Phases #4* (2020) emphasise the artist's continued meditation on the circle as a reductive framework in its symbolism of wholeness, completion, and infinity.

Certain themes emerge and recede across the exhibition. In Kidner's paintings, perception is activated through radically different means: the colour fields of *'Homage to Rothko'* give way to the shifting optical geometry of *Lilypond*. Cohen's increasingly open compositions challenge distinctions between centre and edge, while Smith moves beyond the canvas altogether, treating painting as a dimensional physical object. Giles' enlarged forms oscillate between architectural stability and movement, while Phillips reveals how repetition can generate both order and unpredictability. Though their approaches differ, each artist returns to fundamental explorations of structure, form, rhythm, colour, and spatial experience.

Taken together, these pairings suggest that abstraction is sustained not by adherence to a single set of principles, but by a continual process of revision. What emerges is a picture of abstraction as a progressive language and mode of enquiry within British art over the last seventy years, shaped by the productive tension between continuity and evolution.

Exhibition Opening Hours: Tuesday - Saturday from 11am - 6pm. Monday by appointment.