Sandra Blow:
Early Works
25 November 2022 - 14 January, 2023



COMPOSTION, 1960. *SANDRA BLOW*

Huxley-Parlour are delighted to present their second exhibition by British Artist, Sandra Blow. Sandra Blow: *Early Works* exhibits large scale canvases across the first three decades of her artistic career, and is testament to her position as a pioneer of Modern British Abstraction.

Early Works charts Sandra Blow's early and developing experiments with gesture and material abstraction from 1959 through 1973. These first few decades defined Blow's artistic production as one which probed pictorial space and colour, questioning the very tenets of meaning production within the artistic sphere. Her emphasis on form and preoccupation with process, intention and composition, are testament to her position as one of the boldest voices in British Abstraction since the inception of the movement.

Blow's earliest work belies the influence of her first romantic partner, Italian painter Alberto Burri, whose work Blow described as being linked to her own 'like an umbilical cord'. After meeting at the Academia di Bella Arti in Rome in 1947, Blow became influenced by his wrought approach to material and motif. Her large, geometric canvases took heavy influence from the post-war Art Informel; a movement which saw renewed value in unorthodox materials, such as cement, clay, and sacking to create canvases rich in texture and dimension. Works in the exhibition such as *Composition*,

1960, capitalise on an earthy palette and a thick application of materials to create canvases rich with spatial dimension and colour. Here, Blow found a freedom in her experimenting with the composite elements of a work, allowing her materials to 'speak' for her with 'presence', creating a fundamental subversion of contemporary painting.

Blow made the first of many trips to St Ives in 1957 at the behest of her contemporary, British painter Patrick Heron. In Cornwall, her practice developed in tandem with the cadence of the St Ives school and the sublime rhythms of the Cornish landscape. Here, Blow's use of 'encrusted' gesture dwindled in favour of compositions which aimed to balance geometric 'bands', parabolic curves, and vigorous colour. *Early Works* also includes what Sandra Blow terms her Tea Paintings, all created in the mid Sixties while she was teaching at the Royal College of Art in London. Here, she used white paint, ash, tea, and glue to explore the creative possibilities of a sparse aesthetic approach. It was these paintings that prompted critic, Norbert Lynton to declare Blow 'found her voice' in the Sixties.

Early Works also demonstrates Sandra Blow's experiments with form and pictorial space continuing into the Seventies. In both *Green Projection*, 1971, and *Untitled*, 1973, Blow incorporates an aluminium bar and frame into her composition, calling into question the formal parameters of the picture plane.

Sandra Blow (1925-2006), born in London. She studied at St Martin's School of Art where she graduated in 1946. Blow travelled across Europe in 1947, settling for a year in Italy where she enrolled at the Accademia di Belle Arti. Blow's work has been exhibited often at Gimpel Fils Gallery and the annual Summer Exhibition at the Royal Academy. Her work has been exhibited internationally in a solo show in New York and the 29th Venice Biennale. In 1957 and 1958, her work was included in several group shows of young British artists in Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland, West Germany and the USA. In 1961 she became a tutor in the painting school of the Royal College of Art, where she remained working until 1975. She was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy in 1971 and, in 1978, was elected a full Royal Academician. In the same year her work was included in the group exhibition, Hayward Annual 1978, held at the Hayward Gallery, London. Her work was included alongside Ben Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth and Patrick Heron at the Tate Gallery exhibition St Ives 1939-1964 in 1985. She had her first full scale retrospective exhibition at the Royal Academy's recently opened Sackler Galleries in the spring of 1994 and a further retrospective at Tate Britain in 2005.

Notes to Editors

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The exhibition is free to the public and open at 3-5 Swallow Street, from 10:00am to 5:30pm, Monday - Friday and From 1:00pm - 5:30pm on Saturdays.

For more information, visit our website here.

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