

# Waddington Galleries

PRESS RELEASE

## **PATRICK HERON: PAINTINGS 1970-1984**

25 February – 20 March 2004

*'I have myself always believed...in the hand-stroked, hand-scribbled, hand-scrubbed application of paint: putting paint on a flat surface with a brush is just about the greatest possible pleasure I know.'* - Patrick Heron, 1970

This is the third in a series of posthumous exhibitions at Waddington Galleries tracing the career of Patrick Heron. It covers two distinct periods: the so-called 'wobbly hard-edge' paintings of the 1970s (Heron's allusion to the hard-edged abstraction of the New York painters), and the looser, more lyrical style of the early 1980s.

As James Beechey points out in his catalogue essay, the works of the earlier period tend to have 'a single colour stretched across three-quarters or more of the canvas, while the more complex elements are clustered towards its right-hand edge – so that, as [Heron] noted writing about Bonnard years before, 'interest is as intense half an inch from the picture's edge as it is at the centre.' The rich variety of these surfaces is essential to their effect. Describing *Emerald Penetrating Reds on Right : April - July 1977*, Heron likened the large green area to the surface of the sea, 'when a certain playful, gusty breeze is whipping up small wave-crests...over an otherwise tranquil surface.' For Beechey, the size and ambition of these canvases rank them among the outstanding paintings made in England since the Second World War, 'exhilarating in their physicality, often awesomely complex in their organisation...electric in their vibrations.'

In 1979, illness and the death of his wife Delia left him unable to paint for two years. His return to work announced a strong desire for renewal: a looser handling of paint was accompanied by a lighter airier palette and a greater willingness 'to bugger things up and try something crazy'. Working more slowly on the eye than the earlier work, these paintings show a new measure of control while enjoying a greater freedom of rhythm and dissonance. As Alan Gouk remarked in 1985, Heron had 'once more found his touch'.

Patrick Heron was born in Headingley, Leeds, in 1920. He studied at the Slade School of Fine Art, London, between 1937 and 1939. From 1945 Heron wrote as an art critic for *The New English Weekly* and *The New Statesman and Nation*. In 1956 he returned to Cornwall where he lived and worked until his death in March 1999. Heron was awarded a C.B.E in 1977. From 1980 to 1987 he was a Trustee of the Tate Gallery, London. He received Honorary Doctorates from Exeter and Kent Universities, Winchester School of Art and the Royal College of Art, London. A major retrospective of Heron's work was organised by the Tate Gallery, London, in 1998.

A fully illustrated catalogue will accompany this exhibition  
For further information and images, please contact Sarah Whitfield

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