

Waddington Galleries

PRESS RELEASE

PATRICK HERON

25 October - 18 November 2000

'...all figurative art is abstract and all abstract art is figurative.'

Patrick Heron

Waddington Galleries present an exhibition of works by Patrick Heron, the late painter and art critic, considered by many to be one of the leading figures in twentieth century British Art. As Mel Gooding wrote, in his extensive monograph published in 1994, Heron was 'a visual inventor of the first rank, an originator of images and a colourist of genius'. The paintings shown in this exhibition illustrate Heron's early development between the years 1945 and 1955. His experimentation with the colour, texture, form and rhythm of paint acknowledges a debt to the great French modernists such as Braque, Matisse and Bonnard and foreshadowed his abstract paintings of the late 50's, 60's and 70's. These paintings are characteristic of a time in which the artist was consolidating a style unmistakably his own.

Although Heron spent his formative years in Cornwall, from 1945 until 1956 he was based in London. The works shown comprise a wide range of subject matter that includes still life, landscape and portraiture many of which refer to the shapes, textures and light quality of the Cornish landscape. This is clearly apparent in works such as *Mousehole : 1946* and *The Blue Window : 1952*. As Heron later reflected on this period, 'The feeling of a sort of marriage of indoor and outdoor space, through the aperture of the window frame, itself roughly rectilinear and parallel to the picture surface, was really the main theme of all my paintings – or nearly all – between 1945 and 1955'. He increasingly came to emphasise the 'exclusively pictorial experience' as opposed to searching out meanings and symbols in his paintings. Colour for Heron was the indispensable means for rendering pictorial space. He wrote in 1958 'My main interest, in my painting, has always been in colour, space and light...and space in colour is *the subject* of my painting today to the exclusion of everything else'.

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 began to write as an art critic for periodicals such as *The New English Weekly* and *The New Statesman and Nation*. In 1956 Heron 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. In 1993 Heron was made an Honorary Fellow of Bretton Hall College at the University of Leeds. In 1998 the Tate Gallery, London, exhibited a major retrospective of Heron's work.

A fully illustrated catalogue accompanies the exhibition.
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