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BREON O'CASEY THE WORLD BEYOND

13 June - 11 August 2018



Deer, 2003, Bronze, Edition of 5



Reclining Nude, 2010, Acrylic on Canvas

Displaying a selection of powerful and poetic work, 'The World Beyond' will explore the relationship between the paintings and sculpture of Breon O'Casey (1928 – 2011), whose unique style is characterised by simple forms and lines, fluctuating between figuration and abstraction. Exhibition highlights will include previously unseen paintings and early sculpture, as well as a selection of hand-crafted jewellery.

Breon O'Casey, a versatile artist and craftsman, made his mark as a fully-fledged St Ives artist in the late fifties. He began his career working as an assistant to sculptors Denis Mitchell and Dame Barbara Hepworth, before becoming a prominent member of the St Ives school. Highly productive throughout his career, he successfully mastered a wide variety of materials and making processes including weaving, painting, printing, jewellery-making, and later, sculpture.

He grew up in a home filled with colourful works by Europe's modern masters, where his father, the great Irish playwright Sean O'Casey, dreamed of being a painter himself. Infused with his father's passion for art, it is not surprising that Breon was inspired to paint. 'It was like sharing a house with Matisse,' he recalled.

'I am an abstract painter, closer, in my work, to the older definition of a still-life painter than a landscape painter. A painter, that is, who works best in the confines of his studio, and who sees the world through a collection of pots and pans, apples and oranges (or circles, triangles and squares) rather than the fields, trees and skies. To look outside at the vast vista of unending landscape flowing in all directions, is for me too difficult to try and get down on paper. I shut the door and work in my windowless studio..'

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Using geometric shapes and a colourful palette, he had a tendency to work in three contrasted shapes placed in a parallel row, rather like still life objects. '(...) two is a pair, but three is magic – it's the shorthand for infinity. It's a row. It's the shortest row you can have, but somehow means continuity'. These repetitive patterns and shapes may also be reminiscent of the influence of Celtic culture in his upbringing - predominantly apparent in his abstract landscapes.

Breon O'Casey's work also explores familiar themes such as birds, foliage, boats and other animals. The human figure is another preoccupation to which he frequently returns, and many of his works echo his fascination for ancient and non-western art – particularly in the primitive style of his sculpted figures, such as 'Acrobat' (illustrated on the next page).

Whilst Breon came to sculpture in the latter part of his career, he was in fact making objects from an early age – creating collages, tapestries, and even using nails in his wall pieces ('Untitled (shower)', Acrylic on board & nails), among others – confirming his feeling for materials and for working with his hands. 'Sculpture took the place of weaving and jewellery as the antidote to painting. At first as a sideline, a relief from the anxieties of paint. But gradually it has taken on a more important role and I can say now that it is at least as important to me as painting and I devote an equal amount of time and thought to it.'

In both his paintings and sculpture, Breon O'Casey's care and patience for the materials stand out, alongside an elegant simplicity & lack of showiness. 'The World Beyond' will display beautiful vibrant works of an organic, unfussy quality – emphasising a parallel in his vision across painting and sculpture.

**'The world beyond
staying just the same,
only more so.'**

Extract from *Nine Triangles* by Christopher Reid

The exhibition will run from 13 June until 11 August 2018, and a fully illustrated catalogue will be available upon request.

The gallery is open Monday to Saturday, 10am - 6pm.

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IMAGE SHEET



Rainforest, 2010-2011, Acrylic on Canvas on Board

Notes to Editor

With an ever-growing market, Breon O'Casey has exhibited widely and his work can be found in many permanent collections including the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Tate Collection, Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, Leeds City Art Gallery, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and the Pforzheim Museum, Germany among others.



Acrobat, 1998, Bronze, Edition of 3