

CONNAUGHT BROWN

2 ALBEMARLE STREET, LONDON W1S 4HD

TEL 020-7408 0362, FAX 020-7495 3137

art@connaughtbrown.co.uk www.connaughtbrown.co.uk

“Abstracting From Nature”

6th May – 3rd July

As the dust settled across Europe in 1945 a generation of artists considered how to make contemporary art relevant. Paris became the centre for these trailblazing artists that argued figurative representation was redundant and the rigidity of geometric abstraction was out of touch.

In reaction, burgeoning movements such as Art Informel, Lyrical Abstraction and Tachisme threw aside both figuration and the influence of Mondrian and Malevich to embrace a new kind of organic abstraction filled with a powerful emotional resonance embedded in the existential crisis of post-war Europe. These artists turned to the colour harmonies of Wassily Kandinsky and the free-flowing forms of Jean Arp as the stimulus for a new kind of abstraction inspired by the natural world.

This summer Connaught Brown will exhibit some of the most famous European abstract artists of the 20th century that worked directly from nature. Amidst growing tensions in Europe and the approaching referendum, this return to post-war abstraction is particularly significant. As Britain decides its fate on the world stage, this vital exhibition will examine those artists that responded to the parallel crisis of the Second World War with a new lyrical abstraction.

A fascinating counterpoint to the major Abstract Expressionist retrospective at the Royal Academy later in 2016, this exhibition turns away from the better known New York art scene to focus upon the natural forms that developed in contemporary European abstraction.

In contrast to the monumental machismo of American Abstract Expressionism, the Parisian melting pot of émigrés sparked a movement of subjective, spiritual abstraction based upon a poetic framework of colour and natural forms. While Russian artists Serge Poliakoff and André Lansky scrutinized Kandinsky; French artists Maurice Estève, Roger Bissière and Alfred Manessier were inspired by the startling colour contrasts of Robert Delaunay. Creating a spontaneous and instinctive form of Lyrical Abstraction, Hans Hartung, Pierre Soulages, and Gérard Ernest Schneider, in turn, valued the freedom of colour in Kandinsky’s palette as the cadences of a piece of music. Emboldened by Kandinsky’s expressive use of colour, these artists argued that “painting should be looked at in the same way as music is listened to”.

Nature was also central to the new aesthetic of organic abstraction in European sculpture. In Antoine Poncet’s fluid work, the porous openings that articulate the form were said to “betray nature’s changes as they pass from closed to open”. Similarly, British sculptors such as Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore turned to the windswept coastline of St Ives and the Yorkshire Dales as inspiration for the natural movement at the heart of their sculpture. Other pivotal members of the St Ives School alongside Hepworth, such as Peter Lanyon and Roger Hilton, equally embraced the junction between the land, sea and skies of Cornwall in their interpretation of Lyrical Abstraction.

Artists: Afro; Jean Arp; Roger Bissière; Bram Bogart; Alexander Calder; Anthony Caro; Maurice Estève; Barbara Hepworth; Roger Hilton; Wassily Kandinsky; André Lansky; Peter Lanyon; Baltasar Lobo; Henry Moore; Antoine Poncet; Serge Poliakoff; Gérard Ernest Schneider; Maria Vieira da Silva; Mark Tobey.

For more information and images please contact Alice Godwin at
art@connaughtbrown.co.uk