

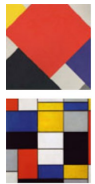


Wilhelmina Barns-Graham (1912 - 2004)

53

Like Terry Frost, and other St Ives artists W B-G had close associations with Yorkshire in the late 1950s. This work (*Black, white and yellow, composition February 1957*) though underpinned by a mathematical geometry, retains an explicit relationship (although she denied it) with the snow covered fields and dark field boundaries of Wharfedale that the artist transforms into a dynamic symphony of **line, form** and minimal **colour**. It was my awareness of this work that led me to use sampling transect lines as an artistic device in this painting, but combining their roll as structural elements with the visual language of de Stijl. This allows the transformation of a real topographical feature, the Foinne Bheinn ridge into an abstracted, idealised, and hence generalised combination of **line, form** and **colour** across the picture plane.

One Man's Mountain: artistic influences



Theo van Doesburg (1883–1931), Piet Mondrian (1872–1944)

53

This simplified representation of the Foinne Bheinn (*Foinaven*) ridge employs the abstract, pared-down aesthetic centred on basic visual elements such as geometric forms and primary colours embraced by the Netherlands-based De Stijl movement. This so called neoplasticism was partly a reaction against the decorative excesses of Art Deco. Indeed, the reduced nature of De Stijl art was envisioned by its creators as a universal visual language appropriate to the modern era, a time of a new, spiritualized world order. Led by the painters Theo van Doesburg and Piet Mondrian - its central and celebrated figures - De Stijl artists applied their style to a host of media in the fine and applied arts and beyond. Here that visual language is used to transform a specific topographic feature into an **abstracted, idealised** and **generalised** form.

One Man's Mountain: artistic influences



Wilhelmina Barns-Graham (1912 - 2004)

50

The repeated faulting, the stacking, and the dislocation along the sole thrust which characterises the imbricate duplex structures of the Cambrian strata at a variety of scales immediately brought to mind the works of WB-G during the *Progressive Movement Series* of 1980. Here, however, I have referenced *Passing Over 1982-6* from the *Tribute Series*. Writing of this work Lynne Green maintains that “*there is a real sensation ... of rapid propelled movement*” ... while ... “*on the abstract level moving forms activate space and animate ... other objects*”. Although my painting is in no way intended to represent a real geological section it is intended to convey dynamic movement in the same way as is patently the case in WB-G’s work. However, in the painting exhibited here there is specific reference to the movement and disruption associated with the tectonic forces that thrust the dislocated Cambrian strata north westwards

One Man's Mountain: artistic influences

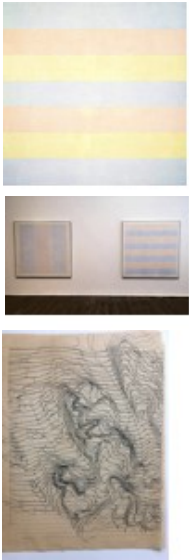


Wilhelmina Barns-Graham (1912 - 2004)

36 & 37

Thematic maps when well designed are graphic works of art in their own right. This is particularly true of Geological maps which in Northwest Sutherland were first produced in the late nineteenth century. Visually, one interesting pattern evident on these maps is the repeated outcrops of the *An t-Sron Group*. The similar repetition of the imbricated strata within the Cambrian are less evident as they are mapped in the same colour. This distinctive pattern recalls several works of **Geometrical Abstraction**. Here I have chosen to reference a work by one of my favourite exponents, Wilhelmina Barns Graham, and to reference one of her works from the ‘*Touch Point Series*’. *Expanding Forms (Movement over Sand) 1980*, can be understood as a metaphor for wind eddies sweeping across a beach. Here, the mapped pattern of outcrops is equally a metaphor the momentous earth movements that gave rise to the observed forms.

One Man's Mountain: artistic influences

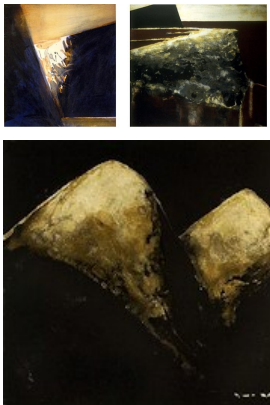


39, 41, 43

Agnes Martin (1912 - 2004)

I had long been familiar with the work of Agnes Martin, but became acquainted with it at close quarters during the marvellous retrospective exhibition at Tate Modern in the summer of 2015. There I sat in one room, still and mesmerised by the subtlety, tranquillity and peace exuded by the large square abstracts on the wall opposite me. Somewhere in my brain the experience triggered a memory of a scrap of paper on which I had constructed in 1964 a two dimensional representation of the three dimensions of a mountain massif in NW Sutherland (see bottom left). It was this thought that started the creative journey that this exhibition represents and these three abstracts were the first steps taken on that journey.

One Man's Mountain: artistic influences



7 & 8

Ørnulf Opdahl (1944 -)

Ørnulf Opdahl lives and works on the island of Godøy (God's Island), on the west coast near Ålesund in Norway where he was born. Strongly influenced by the sublime sense of place so evident in the magnificent coastal landscape of his native West Norway, I have for many years admired his powerfully paintings that draw on and develop stimulating currents from both his own Norwegian landscape tradition and the philosophical or spiritual concerns of much post -1945 abstract art.

Opdahl is regarded as one of the most important painters working in Scandinavia today, his work moving between observation and abstraction with strong colours and bold forms used to build up his epic compositions.

One Man's Mountain: artistic influences

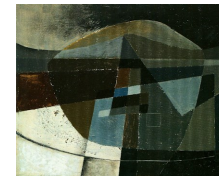


56 & 57

John Wells (1907-2000)

Wells was at the centre of artistic activity in post-war St Ives. He was a founder member of the Crypt Group in 1946 and of the Penwith Society of Arts in Cornwall in 1949. He shared an exhibition with Winifred Nicholson at the Lefevre Gallery, London, in 1946, showed at Downing's Bookshop in St Ives in July 1947 (with Hepworth, Nicholson and Lanyon). After 1964 his work had little exposure outside Cornwall until the revival of interest in St Ives artists, marked most clearly by the Tate Gallery's 1985 exhibition *St Ives: 25 Years of Painting, Sculpture and Pottery*, which included seven works by Wells. Although critical opinion of Wells's work has varied, Alan Bowness suggested in 1972 that his '*paintings and constructions ... have a purity and a quality that substantiate the claim that he is the most neglected major figure of the period*'

One Man's Mountain: artistic influences



63

John Wells (1907-2000)

Wells trained as a doctor, and practised in the Isles of Scilly. As David Lewis put it in the catalogue of the Tate Gallery's 1985 celebration of the St Ives group of artists ... "*those islands mysteriously suspended between sky and sea*", ... "*always marked Wells's painting, once he had switched careers. However non-figurative his work was, however influenced by the abstraction of his friends Barbara Hepworth, Ben Nicholson and Naum Gabo, there was always a whiff of Atlantic salt about it*". However, it is John Wells' ability to conceive the landscape in terms of powerful and evocative shapes on the picture plane augmented by his use of a subdued palette and perhaps even more so, by his subtle juxtaposition and gradation of tone that captures my imagination.

One Man's Mountain: artistic influences



10

**Wilhelmina Barns-Graham (1912 - 2004) and
John Piper (1903 - 1992)**



This painting in its treatment owes something to two different influences. First, the main elements of the composition, derive in treatment from early St Ives school landscape abstraction, here exemplified by WB-G's evocation of the snow covered Dales landscape in Wharfedale painted in 1957. This is particularly true of the upper part of the painting. Secondly, the rock drawings of John Piper, particularly those in his dark North Wales landscapes inform the foreground rendering of the outcrops of quartzite along the Arcuil (*Arkle*) ridge. Both artists appeal albeit in different styles for the way their work is underpinned by strong graphic and compositional sensibilities.

One Man's Mountain: artistic influences



26

David Milne (1882 - 1953)

Milne was one of Canada's great painters. His unique and striking images set him on a path of his own early in his life, an innovator of supreme ability. By 1911 his drypoint prints and etchings had informed a sparse watercolour technique that then in turn allowed him to develop in oils works achieved by progressively sparer means. Here it is not just the image that is perceived, but simultaneously the method by which it is realised becomes part of Milne's painting. In this watercolour the form is suggested by restrained mark making with water soluble coloured pencils on lightly washed and wet paper so that in a similar way to Milne's works, it allows both the image and its method of depiction to be clearly visible. The fusion created by even tonal values and simplified articulation.

One Man's Mountain: artistic influences



6

Bryan Wynter (1915 - 1975)

Wynter's paintings, particularly the series produced between 1964 until his death in 1975 have always had a powerful appeal for me. These works Michael Bird treats in his book on Wynter in a chapter entitled "*The Alphabet of Nature: pattern and process*". For Wynter, the canoeist, it is of course the process of river water flow and the patterns it creates that he explores. However, for me it is the patterns inherent in landscape reflecting the processes creating them over a range of time scales rather than the transient patterns and ephemeral processes of eddies in a stream that fascinate.



The landscape works of **Philip Hughes** have also been an influence, particularly where derived from maps (where art and science meet). Hughes is a trained engineer, a fact that patently informs many of his composite pieces.

One Man's Mountain: artistic influences



20, 21, 22, & 23

David Blackburn (1939 - 2016)

During his time at the Royal College of Art the Austrian artist and scholar, Gerhard Frankl helped Blackburn to choose the somewhat unfashionable medium of pastel. However, after the Royal College, Blackburn went to Australia to teach. He stayed there for three years, mostly in Melbourne. He travelled to the centre of Australia and was greatly influenced by the intense Australian light and the dramatic colours of the land itself. He began to produce large-scale works. Now a consummate exponent of this ephemeral medium, his work makes a radical departure from traditional pastel technique. Blackburn's pastels capture that elusive, penetrating quality that can never be relegated to the merely picturesque. Through abstraction, Blackburn purifies the concept of particular landscape experiences in a way that has always had a profound resonance for me.

One Man's Mountain: artistic influences



27, 28, 29 & 30

David Blackburn (1939 - 2016)

David Blackburn was born in West Yorkshire in 1939. He studied at the local art school and four years later won a scholarship to the Royal College of Art in London, a contemporary of David Hockney and Ron Kitaj. However it was Gerhard Frankl who led him to pastel as his chosen medium. Of Frankl's work, Blackburn said *"I'd never seen pastel used to produce such intensity and depth of colour. It had an extraordinary looseness and freedom, which suggested huge spaces, shimmering light and a feeling of cold. I found it a revelation."* It is Blackburn's landscape work in pastels particularly his landscape vision panels that have long inspired my work and that I have tried to emulate.



One Man's Mountain: artistic influences



20, 21, 22 & 23

David Prentice (1936 - 2014)

The painter David Prentice had an unusual trajectory as an artist. In the 1960s, his work was hard-edged, abstract. His art was about new forms, his hero Piet Mondrian. In the late 1980s, when he returned to full-time painting from teaching, it was to the tradition of English landscape painting. He painted both in oils and watercolour with the concern for structure and surface that had characterised his earlier work but now his subject was the constant form of the Malvern Hills, experienced through constantly changing weather. Nonetheless, it was his fluency as a 'painter' in soft pastels that attracted my deep interest. In this medium he excelled, with works inspired by the Lake District, North Wales and most recently by the mountains of Skye as here in *Dark Loch, Skye 2012*.

One Man's Mountain: artistic influences



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Kit Barker (1916 - 1988)

Like his contemporaries, William Scott, Roger Hilton and Peter Lanyon, Kit Barker had found his own painting language by the late 1950s. Although he remained a painter of landscape, his pictures retain an ambiguity, a property that appeals to me immensely. There is always a tension between recognisable image and the pre-eminence of the the process of painting itself, the mark making and the use of colour. Like Nicolas de Staël whose approach he followed, his composition, use of colour, and the relation of landscape to his brush marks characterise his style. Although his influence is apparent, in my work here, the *(de Staël like)* rectangular blocks of colour seen in *Harbour wall*, *Navigation Light (1960)* above are absent and his typical horizontal horizon line is replaced by the line of the Foinne Bheinn (*Foinaven*) ridge.

One Man's Mountain: artistic influences



The Grosvenor School of Modern Art (1925 - 1940) (*Linocuts*)

38

From 1926 when Claude Flight joined the wood engraver Iain McNab to help run the Grosvenor School, linocut block printing became a central concern of the School. Flight together with several very gifted pupil printmakers produced a collection of innovative, modernist prints that helped define the style which became Art Deco*. They celebrated many aspects of the rapidly changing world of modernity, many of which involved capturing movement. Whether the dynamism of machines, speed in modern transport systems, or rhythm and grace in sport, movement in all its manifestations was a hallmark of their work. It is this parallel of movement and repeated rhythm of the structural forms along the thrust plane in Sutherland that is referenced here. [**above details from: 'Steeplechasing' 1930, Sybil Andrews (1898-1992), 'High Swing' 1930, Cyril Power (1872-1951), 'Brooklands' 1929, Claude Flight (1881-1955)*]

One Man's Mountain: artistic influences

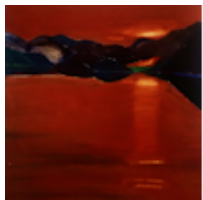


32

David Young Cameron (1865-1945)

Having trained at both Glasgow and Edinburgh Schools of Art in the late 19th century, Cameron was at first known and revered as a printmaker, and particularly as an etcher. However, it is as a painter that he first came to my attention through my father and my Scottish relatives. He had begun to focus on Scottish landscape subjects and from 1908 to 1917 he moved decisively from etching to painting in both oil and watercolour. By this time his works were receiving wide critical acclaim and he was well known both in the UK and abroad. Cameron's work had been criticized earlier for being too dark with a heavy use of brown tones. Around 1908 his work began to lighten in and later visits to France and Italy in the 1920s seemed to have a further influence on his works and brought about a much brighter palette. His painting can perhaps be characterised by an interest in tone and design over colour and detail.

One Man's Mountain: artistic influences



7 & 8

Keith Grant (1930 -)

Keith Frederick Grant attended art classes at the Working Men's College, Camden, and eventually at Willesden Art School (1952-55) and then the Royal College of Art (1955-58). Early on he developed a particular enthusiasm for 'The North', visiting Scotland, Iceland and Norway, which he first visited in 1957. It is his imaginative and expressive paintings of 'northern' landscapes that appeal to me and have coloured my own approach to similar subjects.

He became Head of Painting at Maidstone College of Art, (1969-71) and during this time he made frequent visits to Scandinavia, finally settling in the village of Gvarv, Telemark, in Norway where he now lives with his family. Although he travelled widely, he remained devoted to the north, working in Arctic Greenland in 1989.

One Man's Mountain: artistic influences



46 & 47

Will Mclean (1941 -)

Although **Joseph Cornell** (1903-72) the American sculptor as one of the pioneers and most celebrated exponents of assemblage art, particularly his highly distinctive 'boxes' is an obvious influence in these works, it is the Scottish artist **Will Mclean** who is the primary inspiration here.

Maclean is internationally recognised as a foremost exponent of **box construction art**. Using found objects which he deconstructs and reconstructs in a display of visual thinking that is compelling, he has developed a unique visual language. Reductive and honed, his metaphorical art is based on his deep interest in Highland culture. He reaches out to universal themes of navigation, emigration, whaling and fishing, and global exploration. There is always a strong narrative content in these fascinating, sometimes elusive works.

One Man's Mountain: artistic influences



Peter Lanyon (1918 - 1964)

38

Victor Passmore (1908 - 1998)

This work of course owes a debt to all of those British artists who explored construction as a vehicle for abstraction: particularly Ben Nicholson, but many others such as Peter Lanyon and late Victor Passmore as illustrated here. Although the style media and motivation varies widely, all of these works introduce a sculpture element whilst it remaining essentially if not strictly two dimensional.

Additionally, in my own case this approach has also been influenced by printmaking, especially my experience of making complex collagraphic plates.



One Man's Mountain: artistic influences



Frederick Varley (1881 - 1969)

21

Frederick Horsman Varley was born in Sheffield in 1881. During the first 31 years of his life he studied art in both Sheffield (Sheffield School of Art) and Belgium (Academie Royale des Beaux-Arts). In 1912, long time friend Arthur Lismer encouraged Varley to move to Canada where he met Tom Thomson an influential and unofficial member of the **group of seven**. Together they began to paint the landscapes of Northern Ontario. However, Varley went to France as an “overseas artist” and painted scenes of battlefields and cemeteries. Like all men who have seen war, he was deeply disturbed by what he experienced. His work began to reflect this and although he returned to painting remote northern landscapes they possess an expressive angst reminiscent of Munch that appeals to me.

One Man's Mountain: artistic influences



Sheila Fell (1931 - 1979)

33

Alan Bowness gave Sheila Fell a sympathetic and sensitive review in the Observer in 1962 headed ‘**Leaning out of the Dream**’ in which he quotes her as writing that ... *“a painter can be rooted in reality, but by his efforts, transcend it. Or he can be rooted in his dream but lean out of it towards reality”*. He then goes on to maintain that ... ‘with the second category Miss Fell provides a very exact description of herself. She is a painter haunted by a vision of Cumberland - not the unpaintable tourist poster landscape of lakes and mountains, but the world of a child growing up in the dark unvisited country around the village ... a landscape of cottages, farm animals, men at work in the fields, and behind them the fells ... the colour moves in a restricted range ... the forms are obsessional and repetitive’. The strong earthy presence of **place** in the work and the strength of her vision (dream) of **place** are captivating and the power with which she captures and conveys **place** is stunning.

One Man's Mountain: artistic influences



Sheila Fell (1931 - 1979)

51

Sheila Fell was born in Cumberland studied first at Carlisle School of Art and then went on to study at St. Martin's School of Art (1949–1951). She never returned to live in Cumberland but its landscape dominated her work for the rest of her life. In the words of L S Lowry, her friend and mentor for more than 20 years, she was the finest British landscape artist of the mid-20th century. She was influenced by Permeke and Cezanne and increasingly in her subject matter and approach by Van Gogh. Tragically she died after a fall at her flat in London in 1979 aged 48 just as a surge of creative power in the late 1960's gained an A.R.A in 1969 and a membership of the Royal Academy (ie an Academician) in 1974, a formidable achievement for a woman at that time. Her works today can be seen to influence a host of young and modern landscape painters, including myself.

One Man's Mountain: artistic influences
