

PHIL DARRAH

Canadian [b. 1940, Worthing, UK]

In 1997 I moved my home and studio from the city of Edmonton to an acreage in Mulhurst Bay. This move, in conjunction with preparations for an exhibition in Greece, and the recent death of my mother, brought about significant changes in my approach and practice.

Up to this time I had considered myself to be exclusively an abstract painter. At first, I found myself in the process of “taking stock” of those painting issues and assumptions that had been a feature of earlier working periods and I began to re-examine some of them. The September 2002 exhibition in Greece was entitled “Recollections” and was the first public acknowledgement of this process.

I had begun to allow the things in my immediate environment that I habitually looked at with fondness, to have a greater presence in my paintings. The Purple Martin birdhouse in my yard is invariably the first thing I see as I look out of my bedroom window. This shape with its serrated edges, formed by the three tiers of platforms, that constitute the birdhouse, struck a visual chord for me and being similar, in my perception at least, to the serrated edges, of an architectural niche in a wall in Karnak in Luxor, which in 1989 had also had a powerful impact, began to be a starting point in the centre of each picture. It became for a while, a “given” and virtually all the paintings between 1998 and 2003 had this shape, usually in the centre, as a point of departure.

Another potent visual source is the antique Hindu Sarongi, which hangs in our living room, and is periodically used by myself (and by my late wife, Isla), as a teaching/drawing tool. This amazingly proportioned instrument, with its positive and negative volumes, has over time, become combined or “mixed up” with the birdhouse as a central starting motif.

During the 2002 Greek tour of museums and later in 2004, I made a few drawings of both landscapes and more particularly, antique ceramics. In 2002 a white Lekythos, in the collection of Charles Politis, held great resonance for me and I made a few impromptu sketches on the backs of envelopes.

Some of these drawings subsequently led to and some were incorporated into, a painting based on this wonderful ceramic. I came to consider this painting a sort of double tribute. On the one hand, to the antique master ceramicist and painter and on the other, to Picasso, who I began to believe had stood before this very Lekythos, in admiration. So, some of my paintings, when derived from a very rich and resonant source, are a way of bringing in to my experience (much in the way that children “act out” scenarios and come to an understanding of “fixing” of situations), the essence of the subject. Later the painting process digests the literal and my personal abstract language takes over.

In 2004, I found myself most affected by the museum and architecture at Mycenae and upon my return, launched into a series of paper works and paintings based on some small ceramic figurines. These figurines have a simple striped decorative motif and as I had worked with stripes before, held natural interest and provided an increasingly persuasive and renewed preoccupation. In my current work I have begun to explore; the vertical column, the horizontal tableaux and have begun to use elements such as circles in combination with the bar structures.

This range of elements and the relationship of the bars to a “ground” differentiates the new work from the much earlier stripes. I have deliberately not spoken of tonality, coloration or light, as this is perhaps the most intuitive aspect of my work, be it semi figurative or digested abstraction. Suffice to say that it changes from darker tonality to lighter coloration in concert with the development of the drawn motifs.

ARTIST STATEMENT

I am engaged with percept and to a much lesser extent, concept. What is happening visually in the world around me, instances of light, seasonal change, particularly in a rural environment, and a constant fascination with the raw materials of painting, provide for me, a compulsive collection of imperatives.

I work intuitively with changing thematic boundaries. The themes, for example “Beach Scenes”, or more recently “Palettes” often have quite prosaic origins but may come assume importance as they open pictorial territory. The stuff I work with is paint, opacity, translucency, surface, shape, scale change, placement and visual weight, etc.

“Is this blob big enough and what about that open area?” is the mundane conversation of making something.

Hopefully, something that transcends the ordinary and becomes sublime. – Phil Darrah

EDUCATION

1957 - 1960 Harrogate School of Art, Yorkshire, UK

1961 - 1964 The Slade School of Fine Art, University College, Awarded Honours, London, UK

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

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| 2019 | Out of the Box, Peter Robertson Gallery, Edmonton, AB |
| 2019 | In So Far As, Sopa Fine Arts, Kelowna, BC |
| 2017 | Phil Darrah, Peter Robertson Gallery, Edmonton, AB |
| 2016 | Phil Darrah, Peter Robertson Gallery, Edmonton, AB |
| 2015 | Over The Edge, Two-Person Exhibit, Sopa Fine Arts, Kelowna, BC |
| 2014 | Phil Darrah / Recent Work, Peter Robertson Galley, Edmonton, AB |
| 2014 | Phil Darrah / Painting and Drawing, Sopa Fine Arts, Kelowna, BC |
| 2011 | Songs and Anthems, Peter Robertson Gallery, Edmonton, AB |
| 2009 | Full Circle, Sopa Fine Arts, Kelowna, BC |
| 2008 | Philip Darrah / Excursions, Peter Robertson Gallery, Edmonton, AB |
| 2007 | Songs of Love, Sopa Fine Arts, Kelowna, BC |
| 2005 | Renewal, Vanderleelie Gallery, Edmonton, AB |
| 2003 | Recollections, The Exhibition House, Falatados, Tinos, Greece |
| 1997 | Phil Darrah, Francis Winspear Commission, Preparatory Works, Vanderleelie Gallery, Edmonton, AB |
| 1994 | Phil Darrah, Recent Paintings, Vanderleelie Gallery, Edmonton, AB |
| 1991 | Phil Darrah, Recent Paintings, FAB Gallery, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB |
| 1982 | Recent Abstract Works on Paper, Horizon Galleries, Edmonton, AB |
| 1981 | Phil Darrah, Recent Paintings, Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton, AB |

- 1981 Phil Darrah, Recent Works on Paper, Horizon Art Galleries, Edmonton, AB
 1977 Philip Darrah, an Exhibition of Recent Paintings, Curated by Lelde Muehlenbachs, Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton, AB
 1976 Solo Painting Exhibition, Project Control Services, Edmonton, AB

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2023 Sopa Spotlight V2, Sopa Fine Arts, Kelowna, AB
 2022 Works Within a Continuum, Wallace Galleries, Calgary, AB
 2019 Home Grown, Wallace Galleries, Calgary, AB
 2019 All Hands On Deck, Sopa Fine Arts, Kelowna, BC
 2017 Sumer Group Show, Peter Robertson Gallery, Edmonton, AB
 2017 ...In and of Itself, Sopa Fine Arts, Kelowna, BC
 2014 Art on the Block, Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton, AB
 2013 Art on the Block, Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton, AB
 2012 7 Years in The City, Art from the Art Gallery Alberta collection, Edmonton, AB
 2008 Seeing Through Modernism 1970 - 1985 (Part 2), The University of Alberta FAB Gallery, Curated by Dr. Anne Whitelaw, Edmonton, AB
 2008 Seeing Through Modernism (Part 1), Art Gallery of Alberta, Guest curator Dr. Anne Whitelaw, Edmonton, AB
 2006 David Cantine and Phil Darrah, Abstraction, Peter Robertson Gallery (formally Vanderleelie Gallery), Edmonton, AB
 2005 Grand Opening, Group Exhibition, Sopa Fine Arts, Kelowna, BC
 2004 Edmonton Excels, Half a Century of Painters, University of Alberta's Department of Art & Design, Edmonton, AB
 2002 Flash Point, Painting exhibit, FAB Gallery, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB
 2002 Just Dessert, Paintings, Faculty Club, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB
 1999 Faculty Group Show, FAB Gallery, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB
 1995 Works on Paper, group exhibit, Vanderleelie Gallery, Edmonton, AB
 1994 Group Show, Vanderleelie Gallery, Edmonton, AB
 1994 ECAS (Edmonton Contemporary Artists Society), Commerce Place, Edmonton, AB
 1994 Trimark Investments Corporate Collections, Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton, AB
 1992 Abstraction, Which Way From Here? (From the collection of the Lethbridge University Art Gallery), Triangle Gallery, Calgary, AB
 1992 ECAS Inaugural Exhibition, Commerce Place, Edmonton, AB
 1991 City Hall Acquisitions, Edmonton City Hall, Edmonton, AB
 1990 Staff Show, FAB Gallery, Department of Art & Design, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB
 1989 Abstract Painting - Canadian & American, Virginia Christopher Gallery, Calgary, AB
 1989 Fall Show, Woltjen / Udell Gallery, Edmonton, AB
 1989 Alberta Drawing, Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton, AB
 1989 Acquisitions '89, Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton, AB
 1989 Alberta Painting, Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton, AB
 1989 Faculty Show, FAB Gallery, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB
 1989 Edmonton '90 Studio Watch, Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton, AB
 1989 Art For All, fundraising exhibit, Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton, AB
 1989 In House Exhibit, Clinical Sciences Building, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB
 1988 Art For All, fundraising exhibit, Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton, AB
 1988 Studio Watch, curated by Russel Bingham.
 1988 Department of Art & Design Staff Exhibition Part 2, FAB Gallery, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB
 1988 Wescan Fund Raising Exhibition, Edmonton, AB
 1987 Collaboration in Clay, Bank of Montreal Building, Edmonton, AB
 1987 In Touch With Abstract Art, McMullen Gallery, Edmonton, AB

1987 Walter C. Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre, Edmonton, AB
 1987 Faculty Exhibition, FAB Gallery, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB
 1987 Alberta Art Foundation, New Acquisitions, Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton, AB
 1987 Collaboration in Clay, travelling exhibit in conjunction with Calgary Ceramics
 1987 Contemporary Edmonton Art, curated by Russel Bingham, Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton, AB
 1987 Art For All, fundraiser, Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton, AB
 1987 Abstract Art in Edmonton, Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton, AB
 1987 Studio Watch, selected by Ken Moffet, Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton, AB
 1986 Art For All, fundraiser, Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton, AB
 1985 Staff Exhibition, Department of Art & Design, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB
 1984 Drawings, Woltjen / Udell Gallery, Edmonton, AB
 1984 Alberta Invitational Art Show, CNIB, Edmonton, AB
 1984 60th Anniversary Exhibition, Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton, AB
 1983 Selected Gallery Artists, Woltjen / Udell Gallery, Edmonton, AB
 1983 Alberta Invitational Art Show, CNIB, Edmonton, AB
 1983 Fall Show, Woltjen / Udell Gallery, Edmonton, AB
 1983 Grand Opening, Woltjen / Udell Gallery, Edmonton, AB
 1983 My Favourite Picture Show, Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton, AB
 1982 Recent Accessions, Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton, AB
 1982 Emerging Canadian Artists, Evelyn Aimis Fine Art, Toronto, ON
 1982 The Threshold of Color, Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton, AB
 1982 A Selected Group Exhibition, Downstairs Gallery, Edmonton, AB
 1981 Some Drawings by Some Albertans, Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton, AB
 1981 Recent Acquisitions, Glenbow Museum, Calgary, AB
 1980 Group Show, Martin Gerard Gallery, Edmonton, AB
 1979 Abstract Paper Works, Edmonton Art Gallery Extension, Edmonton, AB
 1979 Draw111, Students Union Gallery, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB
 1978 Faculty Show, Department of Art & Design, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB
 1977 University of Alberta Staff Show, Ring House Gallery, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB
 1977 New Abstract Art, Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton, AB
 1976 Drawing Exhibition, Edmonton Art Gallery Extension, Edmonton, AB
 1976 Circa '76, Latitude 53, Edmonton, AB
 1975 Alberta Contemporary Drawing, Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton, AB
 1973 Two-Man Drawing Exhibit, Latitude 53, Edmonton, AB
 1972 Alberta Contemporary Drawings, Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton, AB
 1962 Young Contemporaries 62, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, UK
 1961 Bradford Spring Exhibition, Walker Art Gallery, Bradford, UK

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

INSTRUCTOR

1968 – 2003 Department of Art & Design, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB

ADDITIONAL EDUCATION, RESIDENCE, AND EXPERIENCE

1972 Research Grant, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB
 1974 Travel Grant, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB
 1982 Canada Council Travel Grant
 1983 The Emma Lake Workshop, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, SK
 1986 Collaboration In Clay, The Works, Edmonton, AB

2003 SAS Travel Grant, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB

SELECTED PUBLIC COMMISSIONS

- 1985 The Cineplex Odeon Corporation, "Western Projections", West Edmonton Mall, Edmonton, AB
- 1996 The Francis Winspear Music Centre Foundation, "Calix", Edmonton, AB

SELECTED CORPORATE COLLECTIONS

Ministry of Public Buildings & Works, UK.
Glenbow Museum, Calgary, AB
Alberta Art Gallery, Edmonton, AB
Alberta Foundation for The Arts, Edmonton, AB
Bonderove & Company, Edmonton, AB
Fort McMurray Community College, Fort McMurray, AB
First City Trust, Edmonton, AB
Shoctor, Hill, Mousseau & Starkman, Edmonton, AB
Apple Computer Corporation, Edmonton, AB
Canada Council Art Bank
Cineplex Odeon Corporation, West Edmonton Mall, Edmonton, AB
City Hall, City of Edmonton, Edmonton, AB
The Treasury Branch, Edmonton Centre, Edmonton, AB
Lethbridge University Art Gallery Collection, Lethbridge, AB
Doreen Sulyma Professional Corporation, Edmonton, AB
Canadian Airlines International
Lombard Odier, Hong Kong
The Fraser / Nag Partnership, Dubai, U.A.E.
Dr. Jerrold Diamond Professional Corporation, Edmonton, AB
Dr. L. Russet Professional Corporation, Edmonton, AB
The White Piano, University of British Columbia, Okanagan Campus, Kelowna, BC