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The Human Abstract  
Symposium  
3<sup>rd</sup> June 2015 11.00h-16.00h

**FC TC001 Tiered Lecture Theatre**  
**Francis Close Hall**  
**University of Gloucestershire**

What is so radical about abstraction that it still elicits a prodigious fear in the general populace of Britain? And why is it so prevalent now, having supposedly been buried with Modernism? Imagery is as democratic as any forum can be in that to see it is to consume it (although, like any communication, not everyone can or will). If codes and symbolism are present, they are hiding in the light. Furthermore, interpretation does not rely upon the conventions of formal education, but on the empathetic and logical faculties integral to our humanity.

Perhaps the assumption is that somehow the persona of the artist is concealed by the geometric, and in particular, the ultimate non-hierarchical structure: the grid. This should not matter, but maybe the cult of the individual is so culturally engrained that to deflect from self-proclamation is subversive enough to generate suspicion.

The symposium will centre on ways in which fora are created by both geometry and space (both pictorial and social: the gallery, for example). The focus will include how these tropes are being reconsidered in current practice.

Abstracts & Biographies

**Brandon Taylor**

**System and Agency in the Non-Objective Work**

This presentation explores some of the tensions between 'systems' and 'rules' in art and the inescapable fact that works of art are made. Is it possible for art-making to be bound by regulative practices without ceasing to be cases of real agency? Is it possible for art-making to be free of regulative practices without falling into chaos? Such questions have haunted both visual art and literature from the beginnings of modernism, and show no signs of easy resolution. In what form do these dilemmas present themselves to artists today?

Brandon Taylor is Professor Emeritus of History of Art at Southampton University and currently Tutor in History and Theory of Art at the Ruskin School of Art, Oxford. His most recent publications are *After Constructivism* (Yale University Press 2014) and *St Ives and British Modernism* (Pallant House Chichester 2015).

**Katrina Blannin**

**Patches: A Journey Through Influences on my Practice**

Connections between ideas are illustrated through groupings of artists whose influence has significantly fostered the development of Blannin's own painting and writing practices: Paul Cézanne and Lawrence Gowing, Kenneth & Mary Martin, Jeffrey Steele.

Katrina Blannin is an artist, living and working in London. She studied at Portsmouth under the painter, Jeffrey Steele and then the Royal College of Art. She has exhibited internationally including John Moores 2012 and in *The Fine Line*, Identity Art Gallery, Hong Kong. She is Co-Editor of Turps Banana magazine and was formerly Co-Director of Lion & Lamb Gallery. Recent work follows an evolving methodology. Squared grids provide the starting point for a kind of 'diagram' or 'mosaic' of tessellated triangular forms and hexads.

### **Andrew Bick**

will be expanding on the paper he gave at Leeds Art Gallery in 2014, **Why I wish Marlow Moss had confronted Ben Nicholson; arguments across art history as a means of rearranging contemporary positions**, to consider his own dialogue with artists such as Jeffrey Steele and Gillian Wise and reflect on the project at No4a Malvern as a catalyst for future research.

Andrew Bick is an artist and curator. His practice is based on a critical analysis of the complex and ambivalent nature of our relationship to late modernism. He is research coordinator for Practice as Research within the School of Art and Design and Reader in Fine Art.

Currently his painting is included in NOW-ISM: Abstraction Today at the Pizzuti Collection, Columbus, Ohio. Major public space exhibitions include Slow Magic at Bluecoat, Liverpool in 2009. In 2014 he co-curated *Conversations with Marlow Moss*, for &Model Gallery, Leeds, in association with the Marlow Moss exhibition at Leeds Art Gallery. He has written for Art Monthly, the Brooklyn Rail, Kultureflash and Abstract Critical. He is currently Chair of the board of Tannery Arts London and on the advisory board of Drawing Room.

### **Dan Roach**

#### **Excuse me if I'm repeating myself; repetition, recurrence and reiteration in a painting practice**

- a short paper on the role of repetition and recurrence in image making

Dan Roach, born 1974, Barrow in Furness  
Gained BA Fine Art (First Class) from Worcester University and MA Fine Art from University of Gloucestershire. Nominated for inaugural Abstract Critical Newcomer Award 2011 and was runner up in the 2012 Marmite Prize for Painting. Represented by Emma Hill Eagle Gallery, London.

### **Katie Pratt**

#### **Invisible Geometry: Examining the Illusion of Choice in Abstraction**

That choice is a smokescreen, used by the empowered as a device to confuse, divide and scatter, is a frequently-cited cultural and political phenomenon. Within any one artist's practice, the variance between decisions can be marginal, and yet the impact of faint shifts can be vast. Can regulation in decision-making equate to physical geometric boundaries? What is the influence of increasing or diminishing choice on painted abstract imagery? How can this be indexed to socio-political principles? This paper will examine the conundrum of analogy between depiction and values.

Katie Pratt is an artist and Course Leader for MA Fine Art at the University of Gloucestershire. She completed her MA in Painting at the Royal College of Art in 1998 and won the Jerwood Painting Prize in 2001. Her AHRC Fellowship, *Blind Faith*, at the University of Southampton was completed in 2005. Other recent exhibitions include *Doglegs, Chicanes & Beelines Fine Art Society* London, *Against Grids, Lasker, Heron, Pratt*, John Hansard Gallery, Southampton.

The paintings begin with a rapid gesture and form a systematic analysis of the splashes that are generated. They are a forum for her consideration of organisational, strategic and political structures.

[www.katiepratt.net](http://www.katiepratt.net)

### **Dr. James Fisher - Chair**

James Fisher (b. 1972) attained BA(Hons) at the University of Brighton, MA (RCA) in Painting and PHD in Fine Art from the University of Gloucestershire in 2009. He was awarded an Abbey Scholarship at the British School at Rome in 2001. Fisher's solo exhibitions include *Uchiwa-e* Eagle Gallery, London (2011); *My Hopes are not Entirely Hopeless* Aldeburgh Music, Suffolk (2009); *I came here a stranger* Eagle Gallery, London (2008); *As a stranger I depart* Campden Gallery, Chipping Campden (2008) and *The Wanderer* Rochester City Art Gallery (2005). He has exhibited in Italy, Ireland and the UK

This symposium is accompanied by an exhibition at No4a Gallery Malvern, running from 23/5/15-13/6/15 in which the selected artists examine ideas of *The Human Abstract*, from their various positions. The participating artists of this exhibition, curated by Katie Pratt, are Andrew Bick, Jo Bruton, Clare Goodwin, Lothar Götz, Maria Lalic, Peter Lamb, Angus Pryor and Brandon Taylor. The individual artists in this group each employ varying degrees of intuition counterbalanced with either geometry or chance. They also share a sensitivity to architecture and space.

Both exhibition and Seminar are intended to be the starting point of a new research position with the School of Art and Design at University of Gloucestershire, which will interrogate ideas around the abstract and the human in new ways, generating a series of new projects and positions over the next few years.

11.00h Registration and Coffee

11.20h Katie Pratt  
Welcome address

11.30h Brandon Taylor  
**System and Agency in the Non-Objective Work**

12.30h Katrina Blannin  
**Patches: A Journey Through Influences on my Practice**

13.00h locally and sustainably-sourced Lunch

13.45h Dan Roach  
**Excuse me if I'm repeating myself; repetition, recurrence and reiteration in a painting practice**

14.30h Andrew Bick  
**Why I wish Marlow Moss had confronted Ben Nicholson; arguments across art history as a means of rearranging contemporary positions**

15.15h Katie Pratt  
**Invisible Geometry: Examining the Illusion of Choice in Abstraction**

15.45h Panel Discussion and Round Up  
Chair Dr. James Fisher