

Callum Innes

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Anamorphism and the moving body,
or the space of Callum Innes

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The works we will meet along this journey will only come to life at the moment of encounter. To encounter said works is twofold. On the one hand, it exposes the accumulative creational and creative process of Callum Innes. On the other hand, it is an invitation to deconstruct. The encounter reverses what was pasted, mounted, or painted; it segregates what was aggregated in the studio space. In the works exhibited, the notion of audienceship is at stake. What does one do within a gallery space? We are not mere receivers, passive bystanders. Instead, the works we will meet along this journey will only come to life at the moment of encounter.

Despite their two-dimensionality, Innes' works are multidimensional. First, we walk in. Then, our eyes fall on the work displayed. In this instance, we realise that what seems flat, is in fact, multilayered. However, this conclusion is not met unless one enters the space of the artwork. To enter the space of the work is to unravel its multilayeredness, to unpack its complexity. Effectively, understanding what Callum Innes offers is to be in the physical space of the work, to roam around it, revealing its intricacies. Only then does one leave the physical space and enter the abstracted space of the work. The navigational eye is not enough! As it peels the superposed layers, the body's movement reveals a topological aspect to the artwork, an anamorphic approach. As we peep from the side, what appears flat from the frontal encounter, is finally unveiled.

The displayed series each welcomes us into a distinctive world, a diversified experience. Although different, the works manifest several similarities. The tape drawings exemplify the topological rhetoric. Conceived by the superposition of black masking tapes on Hakuho Select Paper, this series provokes our perceptive norms within the gallery space. The flexibility of the paper and the background material emphasises the richness of the layers of the foreground. Foreground and background are highly contrasted.

Nonetheless, as we shift in space, we realise that the dichotomy mentioned above is irrelevant, as each layer facilitates the appearance of the second. Each layer lies on its forerunner. And at the intersection of these layers, the narrative of the work finally materialises. The essence of the work lies in a widened vision and perceptive field. The relatability of the work is in the process. Rather than mechanically conceptualising and creating each composition, the margin of human error, or what could seem less rigorous, humanises the work. The said process reminds us of the artist behind the visual arrangement, the conscious human, and the thoughtful journey.

On the contrary, the washed-out paintings series performs a reversed process.

In other words, the construction of the painting consists of the elimination of layers rather than an overlay, enhancing the topological play. Then a new colour is revealed, underlying the scraped-out Lamp Black. The work is quite physical as colours are not solely applied. The painting is activated in two instances. After the application of a given colour, Innes' story is set in motion at the moment of scrapping. Then, when these active layers are identified at the moment of encounter, the second attempt at animating the work occurs.

The contradictory processes do not make both series less similar. We are constantly reminded of our active role as viewers in the production of these works of art.

Finally, Resonance questions our conceptualisation of the frame and space. It prompts us to reconsider the space around us, as we expect to get immersed in it. The encounter imposes on us a halt to examine the work through the space surrounding us. It requires the viewer to pause and let their guard down. Moreover, it particularly becomes an object when it's exhibited. Whilst absorbed by it at first glance, it radiates and reprojects us out of it. The entire space is stimulated.

In the end, we intend this narration to be a sort of viewing guide. First, when we enter a room, we identify the artwork with our eyes. There is no doubt that we will take some time to stare at it frontally. Then we gaze at it while walking around. To gaze is also a reflective action. Not only are we active, but so is the work. Both our existences are intertwined; both presences are validated through this gaze. Boundaries of artist and viewer are abolished as both hold an active engagement towards the works proposed and exhibited. Innes did create. At a later stage, we create again and let the work be completed.