

PRESS RELEASE

CAROL ROBERTSON - ABSTRACT REALITIES

ABSTRACT REALITIES PART 1: 8th October - 5th December 2004

Intervention - Robertson displays a painting dedicated to Vincent van Gogh's *Rain - Auvers* 1890, installed adjacent to the original work in Gallery 13 of the Museum.

National Museum and Gallery of Wales

Cathays Park, Cardiff CF10 3NP

Tel: +44 (0)29 2039 7951

Fax: +44 (0)29 2057 3321

www.nmgw.ac.uk

ABSTRACT REALITIES PART 2: 8th October - 11th November 2004

Exhibition - A comprehensive survey of recent paintings and works on paper including further paintings dedicated to Vincent van Gogh's *Rain - Auvers* 1890.

Howard Gardens Gallery

School of Art & Design, University of Wales Institute Cardiff,

Howard Gardens, Cardiff CF24 OSP

Tel: +44 (0)29 2041 6154/6156

ABSTRACT REALITIES PART 3: 12th October - 6th November 2004

Exhibition - New Paintings

Flowers Central

21 Cork Street, London W1S 3LZ

Tel: +44 (0)20 7439 7766

Fax: +44 (0)20 7439 7733

Email: central@flowerseast.com

www.flowerseast.com

Carol Robertson lives and works in London and is represented in the UK and USA by Flowers Gallery. She has a long-standing relationship with Wales, having studied at Cardiff School of Art in the 1970's and then visiting as a lecturer for the past twenty years. Now part of the University of Wales Institute Cardiff, the School of Art and Design has made her Research Fellow in Painting; a post to be held until 2006. It is in this capacity that she is mounting a major exhibition of recent work at the Howard Gardens Gallery. This comprises a body of recent oil paintings, supported by a range of works on paper including watercolours, pastel drawings, etchings and monotypes.

Her work employs a range of beautifully coloured and meticulously painted or drawn geometric formations, most commonly circles and stripes. Abstraction and the formality of using such simple motifs allow her pictorial freedom to draw upon a lifetime of memories and sensations. Her perceptions and emotional associations are re-evoked with powerful intensity and directness, particularly through colour. She creates situations of light and dark that contrast solidity and transparency with radiant luminosity. Illustrating her belief that ... " the language of colour is really about learning to see and feel " She states ... " I love colour. Colour is like music - a short cut to our senses and our emotions."

In works exhibited at Howard Gardens Gallery such as the *As I Am* and *Verses* series, red rings are emphatically over-painted by black, leaving a thin edge of red still visible in the margins. These broad black bands are variously contrasted with narrower concentric rings of blue, pink, grey or deep warm yellow, all set against a soft and pale ivory ground. As in much of Robertson's work, pulses of eclipsed or contrasting colour cause a retinal struggle between figure and ground; between delicate blurred edge and hard margin; between the clash of opposites or the quiet hum of subtle colour shifts.

To run concurrently with the Howard Gardens Exhibition, Robertson has linked up with the National Museum and Gallery of Wales to install a painting there, inspired by Van Gogh's *Rain - Auvers* 1890. Her homage *For Vincent Van Gogh: Rain - Auvers No. 1* will hang alongside the original in the Museum's wonderful French Impressionist and Post Impressionist Gallery. Robertson has been visiting the Museum and its collection for many years and has long declared her particular interest in this work. Van Gogh died on 29th July 1890, only a few days after completing this painting of the fields and hills just north of Paris, in the Auvers-sur-Oise district. This adds tremendous poignancy to an already melancholy work.

Of the painting Robertson says " It is the rain that stops me in my tracks." Although the treatment of rain as diagonal lines was a convention known to Van Gogh through the woodcuts of the Japanese artist Hiroshige, she finds " these hard unforgiving diagonal brush-strokes rake across the surface like cuts of a knife, with the spontaneity of making an unplanned move; effectively almost 'crossing out' or potentially destroying the painting." She believes that this unsigned work bears all the hallmarks of the " conscious mind in precarious balance with the fragile subconscious."

Within her own geometric conventions, Robertson paints a horizontally striped painting borrowing some of the colours of the original and echoing its double square format, increasing the scale to just over twice the size. The last intervention she makes is to cover the entire surface of this quiet and muted painting from top to bottom with diagonals. The diagonals change the whole dynamic of the work, directly analogous with rain, but running the same risk of crossing out or overly disrupting the surface. What is surprising is how well the measured diagonals harmonise with the rest of the work - they do manage to somehow integrate with and unify the surface.

In addition to this homage, she makes two further variations, radically different in format and composition, which form part of the exhibition at Howard Gardens Gallery. Also shown there are works that deal with the notion of 'actual rain', inspired in part by a residency at the Ballinglen Art Foundation in Ireland's north-west Co. Mayo. The changing weather conditions along this often wild and stormy Atlantic coastline have seeped into many recent paintings and watercolours.

New paintings on show at Flowers Central in London also deal with the atmospheric of weather, light, and the changing mood at different times of day. Paintings titled *Descending Sky*, *Come the Evening* or *Golden East* signify a shift towards a gentle, more reflective awareness. Another painting, *Soft Day*, recalls one of those misty days in Ireland when the sun never quite breaks through, but casts a strange pinkish glow upon the horizon.
Abstract Realities.

There is a fully illustrated catalogue available with foreword by Michael Tooby, Director of the National Museum and Gallery, Cardiff, and an essay by Sue Hubbard, freelance art critic, novelist and poet. Sue Hubbard's new book of poetry *Ghost Station*, published by Salt Publishing, contains several poems on artists' paintings including Van Gogh's *Crows over the Wheatfield*.