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20 February 2014

Drawing in Abstract Painting: Ten Perspectives



Graham Boyd, *Black Magic*, 2013, acrylic on canvas, 122 x 131 cm

The Tate's forthcoming show of [Matisse's Cut Outs](#) serves as a reminder that this artist was one of the two most outstanding draughtsmen of the 20th Century. It doesn't matter to me that he didn't consider himself to be an abstractionist, his understanding of the role of drawing, both as an activity in its own right, but also in its relationship to the expressiveness of colour was highly significant. I remember a quote, something like – 'drawing is the pathway down which colour follows'. Not always the case but an important emphasis.

In the remarkable development of these paperworks, he managed to achieve a directness and vitality of colour through cutting with scissors into sheets of coloured paper. He thought of this as drawing, whilst also using the analogy of a sculptor cutting into a block of stone or marble. 'Instead of drawing an outline and filling it in with colour ... in which case one modifies the other ... I am drawing directly with colour'. There was something so radical about the cutting being instantly involved with colour. Film shows him working with great rapidity – right angles, arabesques, zig-zags, a kind of fluid geometry that seemed at times to flow and when placed interacted with surrounding spaces to evoke light and energy, regardless of figurative or abstract connotations.

I'm not sure if it was Matisse who said: 'Drawing is a means of making ideas precise...' but it sounds like his voice.

- Graham Boyd
Recent paintings by Boyd are on display the [Gibberd Gallery](#), Harlow until 28 February

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Peter Stott said...

Never quite understood this Matisse 'drawing in colour' thing. He means shaping blocks of colour? Does he mean by drawing, ... [Read more](#)

Posted 10:07pm on 21 Feb 2014

Peter Stott said...

...Like people have seen form in the 'Snail'. I bet no form whatsoever has been perceived or conceived of in ... [Read more](#)

Posted 10:19pm on 21 Feb 2014

Gabe said...

Unfortunate that you don't like his cut-outs. You're missing out. [Read more](#)

Posted 8:01am on 22 Feb 2014

John Bunker said...

Robin, This could be just what you are looking for! <http://drawingroom.org.uk/exhibitions/abstract-drawing> Have you seen this show? It's just up the road from ... [Read more](#)

Posted 8:22pm on 23 Feb 2014

Robin Greenwood said...

Thanks John, but I'm not the one looking for the mythic drawing related to abstract art, Sam is. And I ... [Read more](#)

Posted 10:35pm on 23 Feb 2014

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Alice Browne, Overlap, 2013, oil on linen, 52cm x 45cm

When I think about it, drawing seems to be an innately abstract act: reducing matter and ideas to a series of lines and symbols for something that we may understand (such as these letters), or simply a trace of the movement a marking tool has taken, presumably at the end of a human hand. I have always enjoyed hand-writing text, and the flow of ink on paper.

Sometimes after creating layers of colour in a painting, I start drawing. I change my grip on the brush and alter the fluidity of the paint. What I chose to do can cut through everything and develop its own readable layer. The lines can be reminiscent of string, wire or fabric, but most often of outlines of a suggested form. They leave space for the imagination to fill, as well as being unequivocal. Drawing for me usually involves instantaneous decision-making between eye/mind and hand, which can be rewarding. On the flip-side, initiating this bold directive can be destructive and very hard to renege on. Drawings can be persistent; no matter how many times I paint over, they remain.

- [Alice Browne](#)



Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, Painting that Began in the Sky, 2013, oil on linen, 47 1/2 x 47 1/2 inches

Abstraction frees drawing from the task of description, allowing line to separate