

# DRAWING ROOM

Drawing Room Tannery Arts 12 Rich Estate Crimscott St London SE1 5TE  
+44 (0)20 7394 5657 [www.drawingroom.org.uk](http://www.drawingroom.org.uk) [kate@drawingroom.org.uk](mailto:kate@drawingroom.org.uk)

## **ABSTRACT DRAWING curated by Richard Deacon**

**20 February – 18 April 2014 (private view Wed 19 February)**

Richard Deacon is curating Drawing Room's fourth artist-curated exhibition. Artist-curated exhibitions are one of the more important strands of our programme, providing opportunities for audiences to gain privileged and revelatory access to the ideas that inform the work of key contemporary artists.

This exhibition is an exploration of the idea of 'abstraction' in drawing. It includes work by artists from different generations and parts of the world who employ various strands of abstract drawing – inscriptive, calligraphic, ornamental, generative, individuating and identifying.

Artists include: **Tomma Abts, Roger Ackling, Anni Albers, Tauba Auerbach, David Austen, David Batchelor, Victor Ciato, Garth Evans, Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian, John Golding, Lothar Götz, Frederick Hammersley, Victoria Haven, Susan Hefuna, Eva Hesse, Dom Sylvester Houedard, Anish Kapoor, Hilma af Klint, John Latham, Bob Law, Sol LeWitt, Kazimir Malevich, Sam Messenger, Gordon Matta-Clark, Emma McNally, Nasreen Mohamedi, Jackson Pollock, Dorothea Rockburne, Mira Schendel, Kishio Suga, Darrell Viner, Alison Wilding, Richard Wright.**

Richard Deacon writes:

"Abstraction in art does appear to be a peculiarly early twentieth century development. And abstract drawing can seem to be a contradiction – or at very least a tautology since all drawing might be considered abstract. It is therefore puzzling that the very earliest known cultural artefact – a piece of ochre dated to 70/75,000 BCE from the Blombos cave in South Africa – has an abstract design, a sequence of inscribed X's, cut into one side. This predates by some forty thousand years the appearance of figurative mark-making, itself often accompanied by both abstract patterning and shadow or imprint marks left by their makers. From here on there are convergences and divergences.

On the one hand representation inevitably involves shortcuts and the elasticity of mind needed to generate associations which in turn leads to a generalisation of meaning, from thing to sign to symbol to letter. On the other repetition and adornment lead to pattern, pattern generates surface and, in the intricacies of that surface, the same elasticity of mind causes the imagination to conjure forms.

This exhibition has no ambitions to be a universal survey, but in selecting a show around the idea of abstract drawing, these various strands – inscriptive, calligraphic, ornamental, generative, individuating and identifying - have all featured. In recalling that very old piece of ochre something else also becomes clear. The mark invents the object and makes it real."

Richard Deacon was born in 1949, Bangor, Wales and lives and works in London, UK. He is considered one of the most important British sculptors of his generation and has exhibited internationally since the early 1980s. Deacon was educated at Central St Martins School of Art in London during a period (1969-72) when the perception-based, formal approach of an earlier generation of sculptors was being challenged. He experienced behaviourist teaching methods that attended to process, including performance and event, to arrive at a completed form.

Drawing has been an important part of his practice, sometimes for contrary reasons - he deliberately did not make drawings in preparation for the wooden pieces of the early 1980s, for example. These sculptures were, however, preceded by an intense period of drawing that rehearsed many of the shapes he subsequently used. Drawing was used in an opposite and very particular way in works made out of sheet materials - particularly metal - to inhibit the visualising of a finished object. He drew curves and profiles on paper which were then cut out and used as templates to produce parts which were assembled together. These drawings were always one to one and got used up in the creation of the object. He has also been profoundly interested in the difference between plan and elevation and how the combination of the two somehow creates, but does not explain, volume. The sense in which the folding or crumpling of a sheet also creates both structure and volume, a kind of self-supporting skin, has also produced a considerable body of work.

A number of key principles underlie Deacon's highly varied output. The first is an engagement with processes and means of manufacture which he believes confers upon the resulting work its own guarantee of meaning. The same principle applies to his drawings in which he uses line to construct autonomous images. This comes from a desire that his work possess a sense of fact – that it is implicitly meaningful rather than 'textual'. Whilst insistent that the forms he creates are not shaped by a desire to represent something in the world, they nonetheless, through association and context, do echo nameable things in the world.

The selected work will reflect the foundation of Deacon's practice in which the poetic is linked with the technical and sensuality with rigour.

'Abstract Drawing' coincides with Richard Deacon's retrospective exhibition, opening at Tate Britain 5 February 2014.

A catalogue, co-published with Ridinghouse, will illustrate all works and include essays by Richard Deacon, Anna Lovatt and Dawn Ades.

Drawing Room explores ideas around contemporary drawing and makes them visible in the public domain. As the only public gallery and non-profit organisation in the UK and Europe dedicated to contemporary drawing, it provides a unique resource for the promotion of drawing, its practice, theory and methodology. Drawing Room is located in Bermondsey, south east London, in premises shared with the studio organisation Tannery Arts. Drawing Room is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation (NPO). Its programme is supported by Drawing Biennial Fundraiser exhibitions, project grants, Patron and Drawing Circle membership schemes and donations.