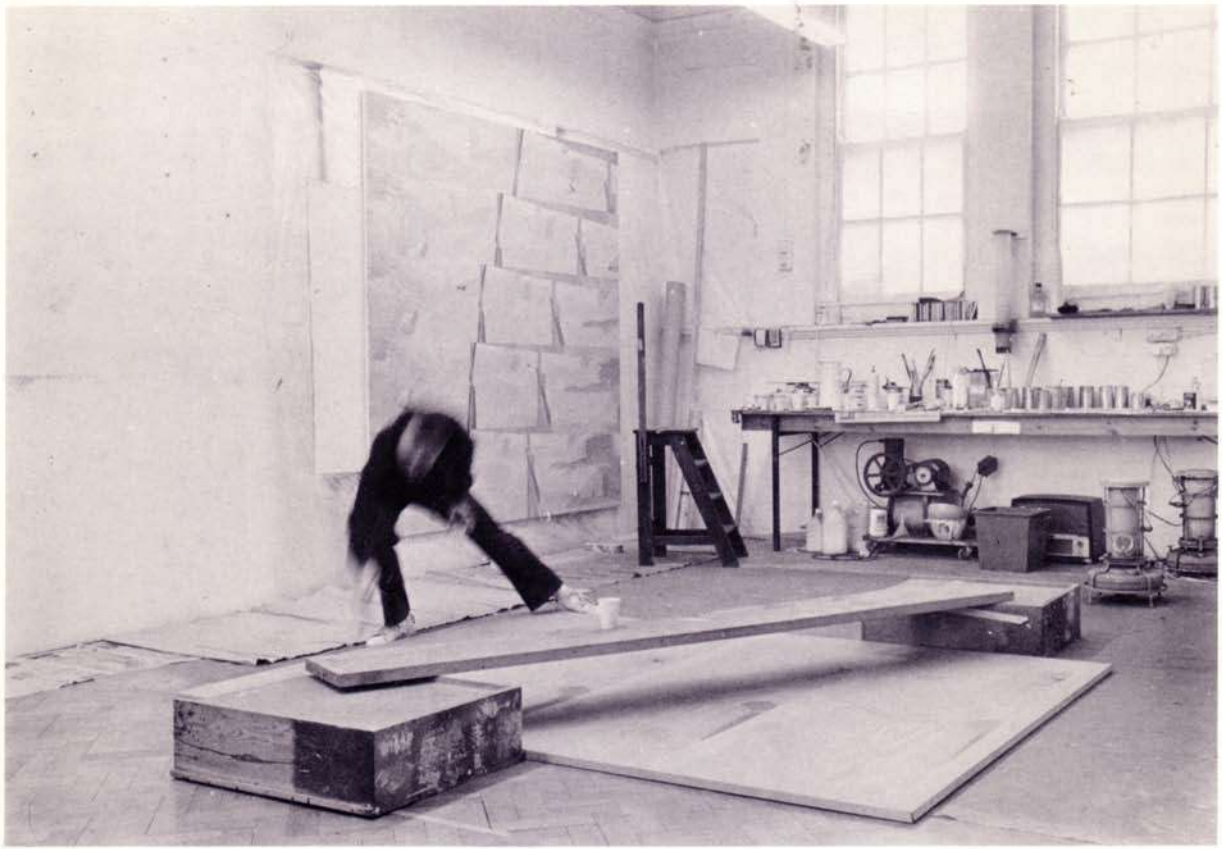
JOHN LOKER

TEN YEARS WORK



Cover
Four Sections 1 1979
117 x 130 cm Oil on paper

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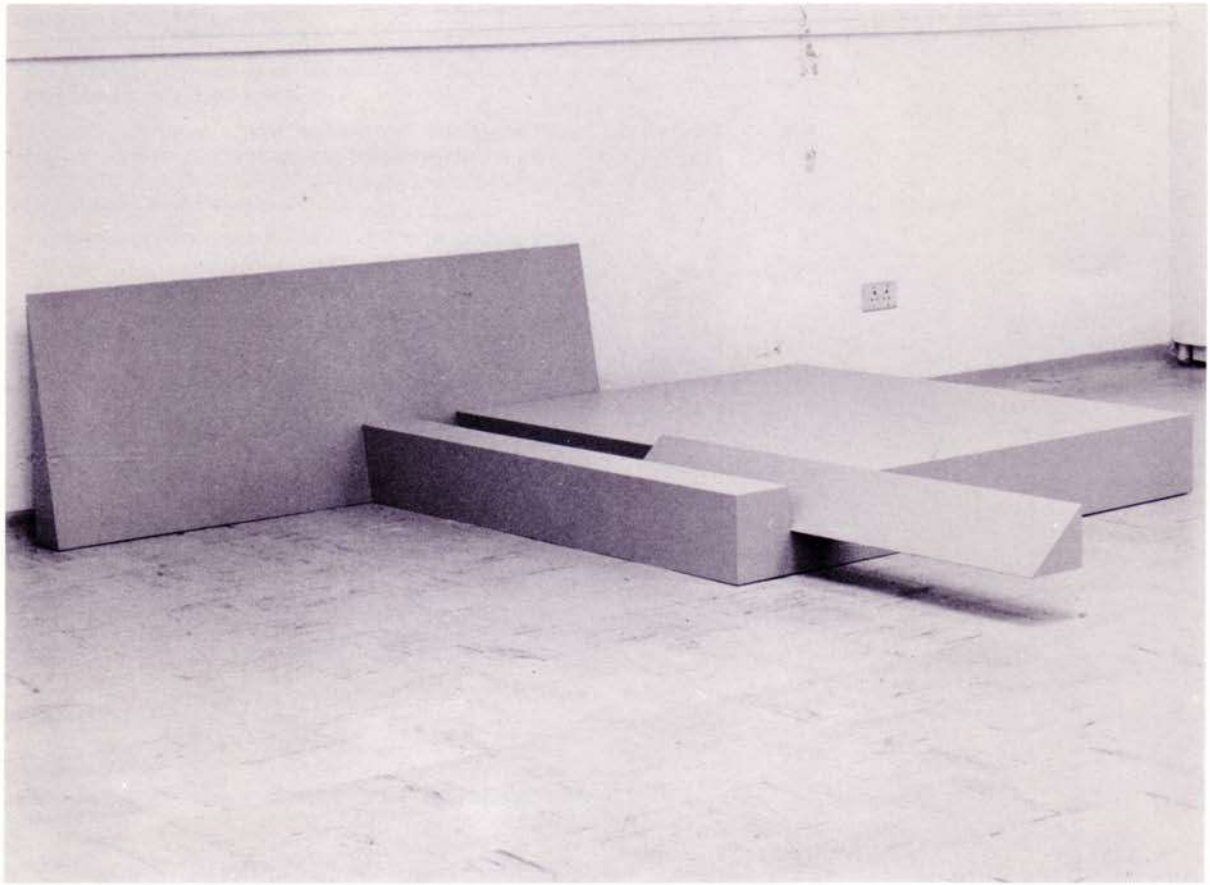


Untitled 1968
165 x 120 cm Fibreglass/resin
(destroyed)

FOREWORD

Ten years pass all too quickly, and yet the convenience of the calendar makes them the obvious period for review, supplying at least the appearance, if not the reality, of the Natural Break in any life. Especially is it so for the artist who pauses to look back over his career, for he is no more anxious than anyone else to consign himself entirely to history. And the retrospective contained by the decade affords him the nicest compromise between the conflicting aims of vanity, modesty, critical objectivity and legitimate professional ambition, broad enough in its scope to supply significant indication of achievement, but not so broad as to afford grounds for final judgement.

It so happened that Angela Flowers gave John Loker his first London show almost exactly ten years ago, and only shortly after I myself had first become active in art journalism, employed by Charles Spencer as London correspondent to the magazine 'Art & Artists'. And so in a sense my own career has marched closely with his, my professional eye fixed inevitably as it were upon his progress and development. This show gives me too, therefore, the chance for some retrospection of my own, to reflect upon old judgements and hopes, and to test them against present achievement.

Any artist's work over an extended period will change, just as he himself will change and develop. Not everyone will do so to the same degree, of course, and so it is with the work; but even where superficial change appears to be extreme, a deeper, inherent sympathy will always serve to bind the work truly together, declaring it clearly, manifestly, to be all the work of the same hand. And here John Loker's work makes the demonstration for us, the sensibility and intelligence that inform it, the touch and discretion that characterise it, and the pictorial ideas and preoccupations upon which it is founded, having remained remarkably consistent through ten years of transition and evolution.

There were in that first show some long, narrow, abstract reliefs, technically sculpture perhaps, but concerned with essentially painterly values, dealing in two rather than three dimensions. They were, I wrote, "very beautiful, very ambiguous, bringing in their train a complexity of association..." By 1973, when I wrote again, that sculptural possibility had been quite removed, the work emphatically painting (some photographic works apart) and now implicitly figurative: "...landscapes treated diagrammatically or systematically, with human reference used occasionally to emphasise the scale... But the formalism which is their real concern breaks through... Loker's images probe their subject-matter yet preserve their autonomy... the Romantic connotations inherent in Landscape itself cannot be denied, only subdued."

By 1978, plus ça change: "(He) takes the landscape as the source of his imagery... and yet his subject is quite as much the vocabulary of signs and marks available to the artist, or the procedures by which they may be exploited... We are close in spirit to the Eastern sensibility, in which the means imposes itself and qualifies the end... We are given an experience that is other than the real thing, but to one side of it, and commenting upon it, and, in its own way, equally as real." And this brings us close to the heart of the matter.

For John Loker, through his particular gifts, makes a more general, more fundamental, more important point than the simple celebration of the painterly crafts and more obvious virtues, subtle, intriguing and beautiful though his paintings unquestionably are. And so I make no apology for quoting further from that last review. "The myth persists that artists today... are in retreat from visual, communicable expression, increasingly withdrawn into themselves, wantonly obscure, when all they have done is to extend their scope. They are islands no more than the rest of us, and share the common response to the natural world: and it would be wrong of us to assume, when that expression extends beyond direct depiction, that there has been no intelligible, indeed no intelligent response at all." Well, myth it is, and John Loker the most persuasive, most delicate of saboteurs to blow it up.

William Packer
Clapham October 1980

JOHN LOKER: Ten Years Work

John Loker's work has been described variously by critics as being about "time", about "scale" or about "moving through a landscape". More vague, but perhaps more truthful, was William Packer's comment (quoted in his Foreword): "These objects are very beautiful, very ambiguous, bringing in their train a complexity of association which belies their apparent simplicity." (Art and Artists 1970). A short review has to come to the point quickly. This longer analysis tries to present the ambiguities and unravel the complexities which have helped to make Loker's work consistently stimulating over the last ten years.

In conversation, Loker speaks directly and informatively about his work, taking care to relate each point he makes to his overall aims. The analysis which follows has been written in the same spirit, even where it must necessarily move point by point in chronological order. Most of what is written here is drawn from conversations with the artist during 1979 and 1980, and quotations without acknowledgement are in the artist's own words recorded on tape.

EARLY WORK

Brought up in Yorkshire, between Leeds and Bradford, Loker had the opportunity to paint both streets and fields, or to take his paints up into the Dales which lay not far from his home. The natural and the man-made worlds have always been equally important to him. When he left school at fifteen to study graphic design (at Bradford College of Art and Design), the same desire to take the best of both worlds stayed with him: he haunted the Painting School whenever he wasn't in Graphic Design, and spent four hours, five evenings a week, drawing in life classes.

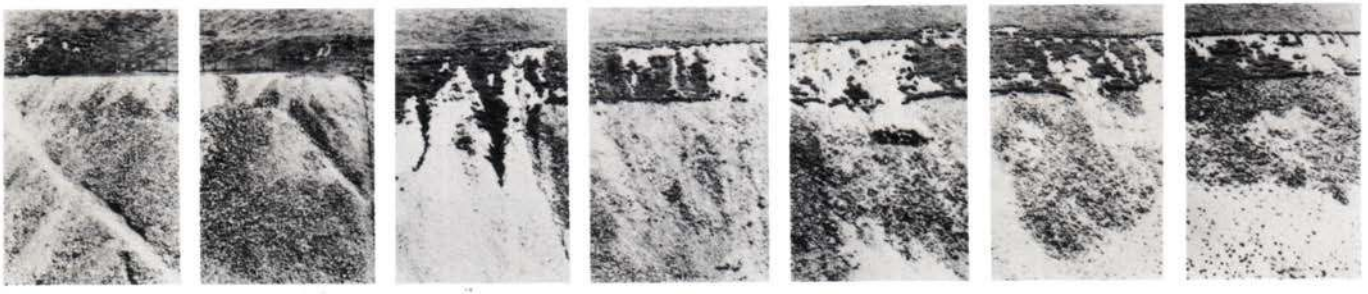
The prevailing orthodoxy at Bradford was that abstract painting was something no artist should attempt without first reaching a mastery of drawing – and that meant life-classes. However, Loker did in fact paint some abstracted paintings of trees at this time, a little like early Mondrians, and these were well received by his teachers. This no doubt encouraged him to think of pursuing a career in painting rather than graphic design, and by the time he was nineteen, his competence won him a place in the Painting School of the Royal College of Art in London. But before he could go to the College, he had to complete his National Service; as a conscientious objector he worked on the land, as a graphic designer (briefly, it was considered a soft option), and as a demolition worker.

After this break of two years, Loker arrived at the Royal College brimming with confidence in his ability as a draughtsman, only to find himself without an easy path forward. "I followed the year which had Hockney" (who had been a fellow student at Bradford) "Boshier, Phillips and that whole Pop Art thing which I didn't go along with at all... it was like fashion, and I felt an artist had to go his own way." Instead, he felt himself attracted to American painting (Pollock, Rothko and second generation abstractionists Stella, Tobey, Poons) even while he realised that his own training had in no way prepared him to continue their researches. So he found himself inevitably led back to look at the earliest abstract painters – Monet and Mondrian, Delaunay and Malevitch – in the attempt to square his own 'classical' training with a contemporary idiom.

In this way began a ten year period of experimentation which ended with the 'mature' works shown in his first one-man exhibition in 1970. Before approaching the work in that exhibition, we should first look at what guided him through this experimentation and the context of other artists' work in which it was made.

THE 1960's

At the Royal College, to judge by his remark quoted above, it was largely a question of temperament (a certain high seriousness) which divided Loker from his contemporaries, the most successful of whom were grouped together by Bryan Robertson in "The New Generation" exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1964. Loker's paintings shared some formal means with some of theirs, for instance the use of flat colours and hard edges; but against their prevailing interest in consumerism, packaging, the light-hearted and the ephemeral, he found himself led towards the monumental and the philosophical. By the end of his years at the College, Léger had become his chief inspiration, although Loker's canvases, unlike Léger's, were entirely abstract and sought to create the illusion of real space, by, among other means, the use of thick stretchers which stood out from the wall and were sometimes irregular in shape.

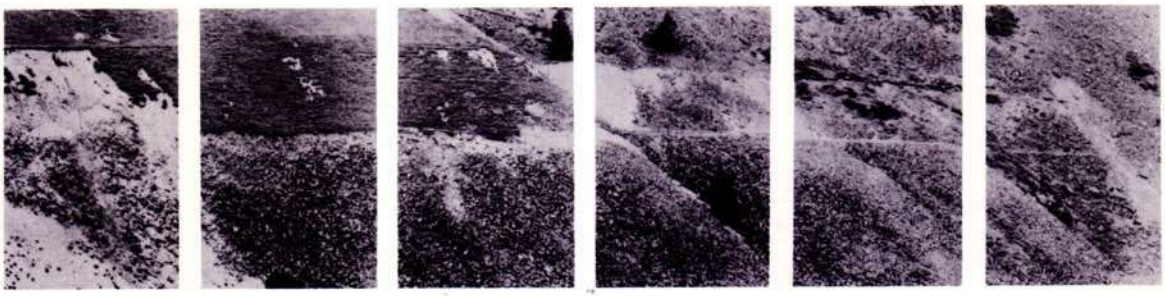


Greenside 2 1973
46 x 195 cm Photographic print

Gradually, the changes came. Elements of representation began to creep back into his work by 1965 with subjects like still-lifes and interiors. Loker now describes the paintings of this period as being "an overtly self-conscious attempt at being philosophical. You could sit around and talk for hours about the questions they raised." The questions were of the kind which are traditional and central to art, but which can quickly become academic when discussed for too long: ways of expressing real relationships in the relation of two-dimensional pictorial forms; ways of presenting different realities at the same time, or illusion as reality...

Like many other artists in the late 1960's, Loker decided that he wanted to recover his art once more from the half-world in which there is a play between illusion and reality, and to bring it wholly into the real world inhabited by sculpture. Sculpture, as Ad Reinhardt once remarked, is something on which you bark your shins. Loker wished to give his work this kind of undeniable reality, and so exaggerated the three-dimensional quality of his earlier shaped paintings that they began to crawl down the wall and onto the floor. In 1967 he made some large box-like structures in plain matt colours which, while still hugging the angle of wall and floor, intruded into the room like serene, unidentifiable furniture. (See page 2). These pieces were still "philosophical" in that they were intended to challenge the viewer: the surfaces were given that immaculate finish which presents an object (a sculpture by Don Judd or Sol Lewitt for example) as a perceptual proposition, a thing and an idea at the same time.

Loker describes the change: "I became very interested in the shape of forms relative to colour... the questions now were visual ones, and their resolution was through experience rather than... debate. The desire to make real objects was the desire to bring art into a questioning of everyday experience... painting wasn't enough." Among the art movements of the late 1960's to desert conventional materials in order to question everyday experience (Art Povera, Minimalism) was Conceptual work. Significantly, despite his love of philosophising, Loker never showed the least interest in taking that direction: his love of craftsmanship, and valuing of perceptual experience before theory, have been constant guides in his development. Secondly, although the constructions just referred to, and some of the later works, have much in common with 'sculptural environments' which other artists were producing at that time, Loker has always considered himself a painter. Before elaborating his motives for returning to traditional painting techniques around 1973, we must first describe the work which resulted in his first one-person exhibition.



HORIZONTALS

Neither allusion to real space nor reference to the natural world are immediately apparent in Loker's geometric constructions called 'Horizontals'. (See page 4). A body of these constructions was shown in his first one-person exhibition, at Angela Flowers' Gallery, and at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, in 1970. One reviewer, Peter Fuller, wrote: "The two major works (shown at Angela Flowers) seem to have an English sense of balance and propriety, despite their exaggerated, attenuated length, which makes them something quite different from the brasher, bigger, bolder object-pictures of equivalent Americans." Works by some of the "equivalent Americans" inviting comparisons with Loker's constructions had been seen by the artist when they were gathered together in an exhibition at the Tate in May–June 1969 called "The Art of the Real". The manifesto on the cover of the catalogue for that exhibition stated that each work should "offer itself in the form of a simple, irreducible, irrefutable object" and should make "no direct appeal to the emotions." It may have been just this appeal to the emotions, or some trace of illusionism, that Fuller detected in Loker's 'Horizontals'.

The 'Horizontals' were planned in drawings in a compositional sense only: each unit was cast in fibreglass and polyester resin and finished laboriously by hand with 'wet and dry' abrasive. It was only in the final stages that the colour of each piece was established in relation to its shape. While Loker's constructions of the 1960's had been coloured (and angular), the neutral greys of these 'Horizontals' were designed to complement the serenity of their form. If this preoccupation with colour in relation to form emerges as a constant in his work, the exaggerated size of these 'Horizontals' can be related also to his earlier interest in the 'monumental', and the large-scale canvases of the Americans of the 1950's and 60's.

One characteristic of monumental painting is its challenge to the spectator to measure his or her own scale against the scale within the painting by means of an ambiguous viewing distance. Move close to Loker's 'Horizontals' in order to see the details of the 'wedges', or the hard perfection of the surface, and you lose sight of the whole; move away and the surface dissolves into grey mist. The work must be viewed by 'scanning', and there is a play on field perception (taking place away from the centre of the retina) similar to the experience of facing some of Morris Louis' paintings, in which an empty centre provokes an emotional response to the peripheral detail.

A second form of 'play' can be found in the relation of the 'wedges' to their support: play between detail and broad form, between image and ground, foreground and background. The last piece in this series ("Six Section Horizontal" 1970) is partly cast in translucent polyester resin, through which it is possible to see the wall on which the work is hung. Originally, Loker intended to draw triangles in coloured chalk, from a template, on the wall. The triangles, viewed through the resin panels, would seem to float between the support and the surface. (In the event, the walls at the I.C.A. were too rough to draw on, so Loker pinned up the coloured templates instead.)

"Six Section Horizontal" is fifty feet long, and was planned to hang in a corridor where it would always be viewed by someone moving along its length. A third way in which the Horizontals could be interpreted, then, was through the medium of time. In the fifty foot painting, it takes real time to get from one end to the other; in all of them, the repetition of similar forms, and the intervals between them, suggests a feeling of rhythm. This was produced most self-consciously in "Horizontal 5", where the symmetry of two panels has been broken by lifting one panel fractionally higher than the other: the resulting 'caesura' creates rhythm and tension in the line. The strict discipline of these constructions, and the subtlety of the demands made on the viewer, combined perhaps with a desire to start again after his first one-person exhibition, led Loker to search for a fresh approach in his next body of work.

REFERRING TO REALITY

One day in 1971, while walking in the vicinity of Slough, Loker found himself struck by the continuity between the industrial townscape to one side and the rural landscape on the other. Wishing to document his vision of the city reabsorbed into the country, he took a series of photographs while he was moving on an arc of three imaginary concentric circles at some distance from the town. Then he selected a pair of photographs from each arc, butted together each pair side by side, and mounted the three pairs on card. His intention in making this, "Six Horizons" 1971, was simply to create a post-card – a record of the experience of a place. The photographs were selected, their pairing was arbitrary, and the joints were touched up; but nevertheless it was basically a record of fact.

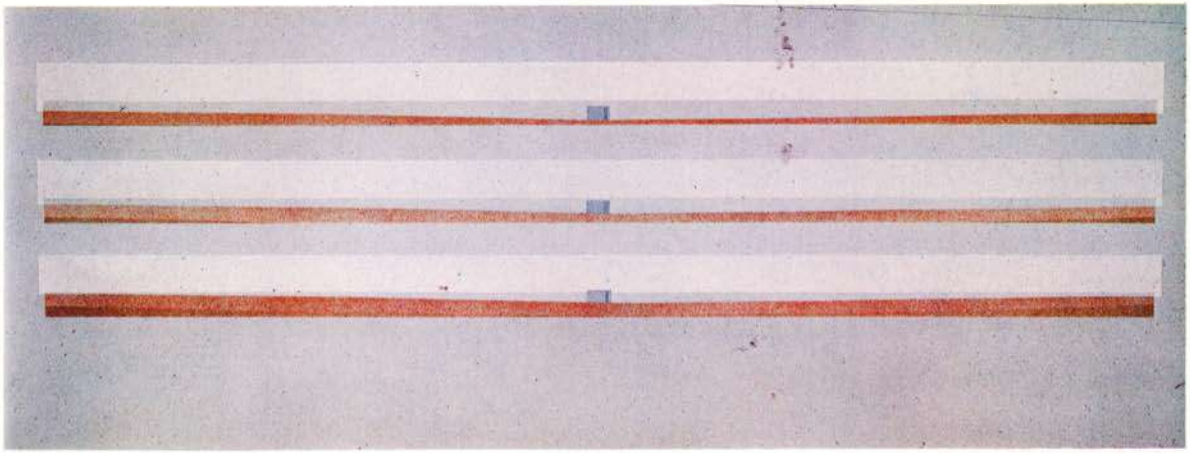
The process here described is the inverse of that employed in the 'Horizontals'. Where before Loker started with an idea (the coincidence of a form and a colour) which he elaborated into something concrete, here he started from a perception of the real world which became altered by the process of recording. The differences between these ways of working are more apparent than real, but they are worth stressing here because "Six Horizons" heralded a fruitful stream of work, as if the dry plains of geometric abstraction had been suddenly irrigated from the reservoirs of representation.

The emergence of landscape as a theme in his work may have been a means of recovering contact with the emotions of the unselfconscious world of childhood. But of greater practical importance was the use of the "instant" mechanical medium of photography to short-circuit the laborious hand-craft methods he had been using to achieve a mechanical perfection of finish. One problem with the 'Horizontals' had been that Loker's ideas had developed faster than it was possible for him to produce work. Effectively, the use of photographs as source material allowed him a ready made finished product from which to move again towards a freer expression.

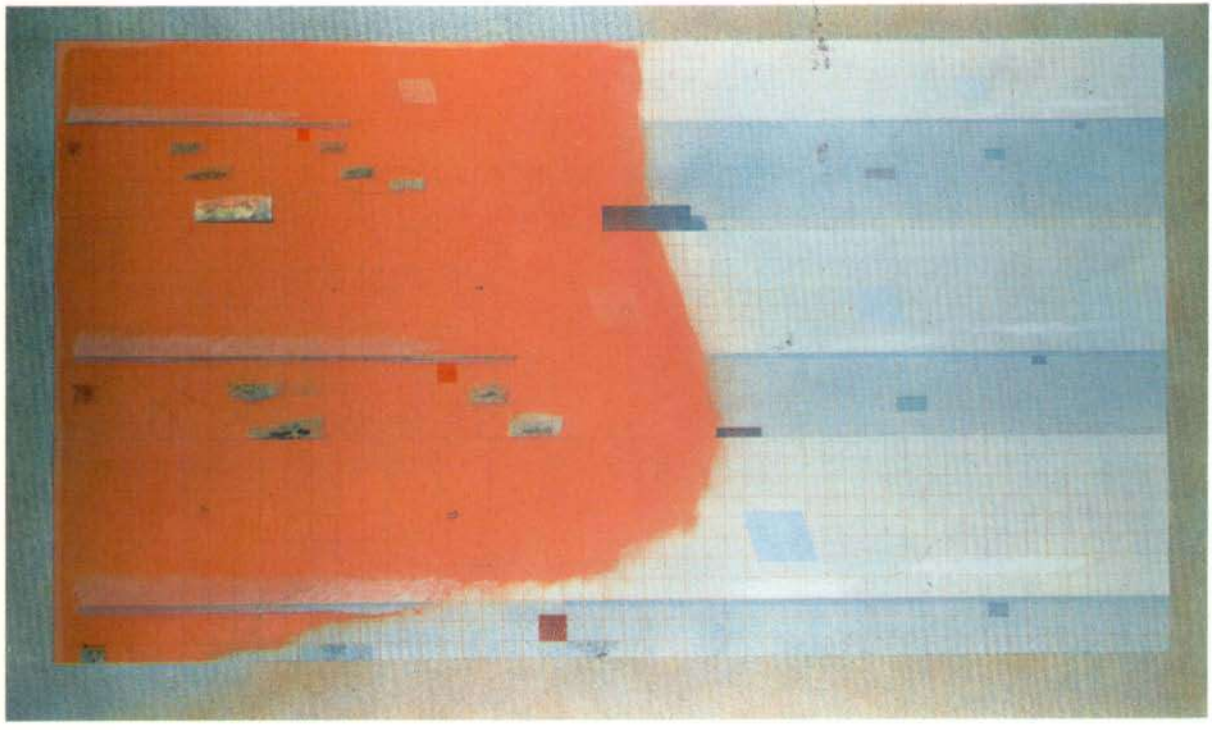
A few days living in a van on the Dorset coast in the summer of 1971 allowed Loker to build up photographic source material which would keep him painting for two years. Here he found a complete expression, in the natural world, of his formal concerns in the 'Horizontals' series. A concrete pill-box on a shingle beach provided the focus of a wide-angle shot of the double horizon formed by the dunes and the sea. As the photographer moved forward, the scale of the pill-box seems hardly to change, while its relation to the horizons gives a sure indication of the relative position of the observer. These photographs provided material for the 'Horizons' and 'Dorset Coast' editions of photographic prints, and also for the paintings series: 'Coast', 'Coastal Horizons' and 'Horizons'. (See pages 12 & 15).

In the paintings from this motif, the images are presented in soft tones of grey paint against a sprayed background of rich but subtle colours. This background was a continuation of Loker's earlier concern (in the shaped paintings) to tackle the figure/ground relationship to the maximum benefit of the figure: but what started as an attempt to present a 'neutral ground' (as with Seurat's painted frames) became something expressive of space itself.

The summer of 1973 found Loker with his camera in the Lake District, expanding on the themes of the 'Dorset' series

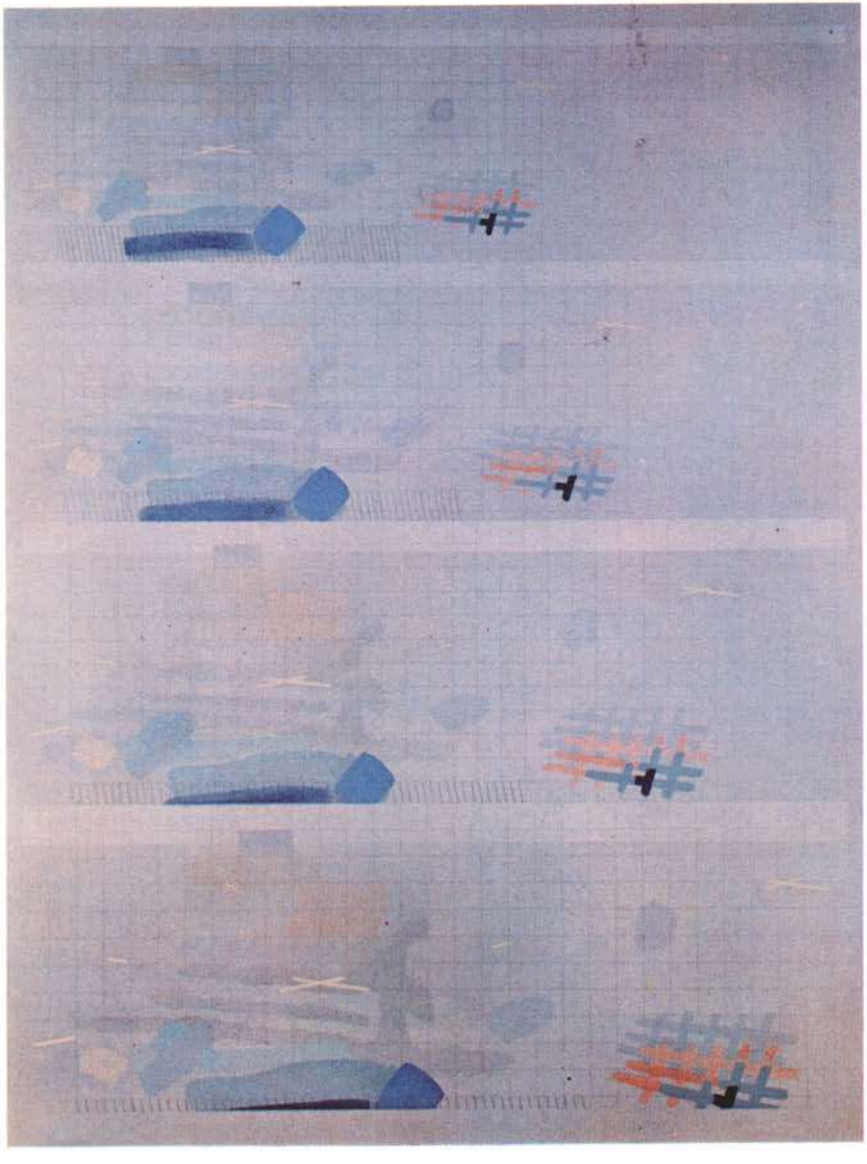


Coast 2 1973
90 x 244 cm Acrylic on canvas
Collection: Rugby City Art Gallery



Extracts – Orange 1974
180 x 300 cm Acrylic on canvas

Horizontal Shifts 2 1979
150 x 244 cm Oil/acrylic on canvas



Vertical Extracts 1978
244 x 180 cm Acrylic on canvas

through the documentation of the workings of a lead mine. (See page 6). The artist stopped at intervals during his progress along an escarpment to take photographs of the slope opposite, the last several shots being taken from a single viewpoint. When the prints were cut and squared up together, the resulting panorama was then divided up arbitrarily into separate 'frames'. These were determined by formal and conceptual considerations (not by the camera framing), in order to play on the horizons and perspectives implicit in the landscape rather than those imposed by the camera. (Loker stresses here the arbitrary and abstract nature of his method, unlike work by many younger artists using photography in the 1970's, which tended to be either more rigorously conceptual or concerned with the romantic qualities of place.) This project in the Lake District resulted in several photographic works, entitled 'Greenside', but only one painting on canvas.

The emphasis in the 'Greenside' works, as it had been in the 'Dorset' series, is on the artwork as a record, a document of observation which should be read with care by the viewer. A third example of this kind of work is the "Coastal Horizon with Figures" 1973 belonging to Wakefield City Art Gallery, on which the artist has worked over a photographic print with pencil and acrylic. The movement of some figures along a sea front draws attention to the passing of time implicit in the shifting of the observer between the three views recorded. The sense of scale, which in the 'Horizontals' was projected by the spectator onto the work, is here to be found in the work itself. Lastly, "Coastal Horizon with Figures" hints at a previously unexplored, or certainly well-hidden, dimension of Loker's work: the idea of an incident, of a wayward human presence; even, perhaps, of sentiment.

However far removed from a direct record of fact (by the artist's selection, cutting, touching up), a photograph always retains the illusion of transparency to reality. During 1972-73, Loker felt increasingly that he found this to be an inadequacy in the medium of photography, and turned to paint in order to build something which would be more of an 'equivalent' to landscape. For instance, the sense of a bed of shingle can better be described by a rough surface of sprayed paint than by the smooth surface of a photographic print; a new-born opaque image may be a better equivalent than a transparent illusion. The drawings in pencil and acrylic of these years were the essential prologue to the next body of work, in which the emphasis returns again to the finished paintings rather than the process of making and recording.

EXTRACTS AND SHIFTS 1974-79

The 'Extracts' and 'Shifts' series of paintings (See pages 10, 11, 12 & 17) are clearly related to the series, inspired by the Dorset Coastline, described above. Equally clearly, they are more complex and present some formal differences which can be isolated immediately. First, the high proportion of neutral 'ground' has given way to a more completely worked surface. In lifting away the borders which isolated the images in the canvases from the context in which they are hung, we can feel that Loker was at the same time tearing down barriers between himself and his environment. In his growing confidence he threw off the role of detached observer/recorder and stepped into the landscape himself. Instead of finding a subject in the viewfinder he now created on the canvas from scratch. Loker's work has always been too considered to relinquish entirely the ambiguity which a 'frame' can give; but in the big painting "Extracts – Orange", for instance, he produced something like the 'all-over surface' pioneered by the Americans, and the feeling of participation which goes with it.

The second development which is immediately apparent is that the number of 'views' has been increased from three to four or five. This is the other side of the same coin: the liberation of the painting process from its starting point in recorded landscape. By increasing the number of viewpoints, the relation of the first 'view' to its last metamorphosis has become increasingly difficult to see, and the viewer is encouraged to read the painting in terms of its internal structure, rather than looking 'through' the canvas as through a window.

Dispensing with windows, let's follow Loker into a landscape. Imagine you are moving along, and you stop every few miles to look at the view. As you travel towards them, the distant features of the landscape ahead change little; those to one side move away and shift in shape; and those in the foreground change considerably or disappear. If you are heading diagonally into the landscape, each time you stop you will notice that features on one side have expanded more than those on the other.

This is the perceptual sensation Loker recreates in these paintings, and he achieves it simply by changing the scale and

relative position of a set of marks. The pattern of marks in the first 'view' (which is an 'equivalent' to landscape, produced in response to a 'landscape feeling', not a specific landscape) is extended down the canvas by means of a grid, in much the same way as a drawing is 'scaled up'. The rate of change of the scale is not regular, although it is marked out precisely once the intuitive decision has been made.

Loker always works from the top of the canvas down: composition demands that the most expanded set of marks lies at the base of the canvas. Since we 'read' a canvas, like a page, from the top, the resulting impression is of a journey backwards, with the 'foreground' rushing in from the sides.

The grid is the bones of the painting; the brushmarks are the flesh which both clothes and expresses the grid. Loker first lays a grid over the whole surface of the canvas, then starts painting marks which are a response both to his primary conception (the 'landscape feeling') and to the grid itself. Generally he will work over the whole canvas at once, preserving the spontaneity of each mark as it is repeated, but sometimes the coherence of the top 'view' will absorb his attention while the other sections wait. Loker stresses that the discipline of the grid represents freedom: since the position of each mark is given, it is possible for him to allow the marks to change, to work in a looser and more spontaneous way than if he were working on a blank canvas.

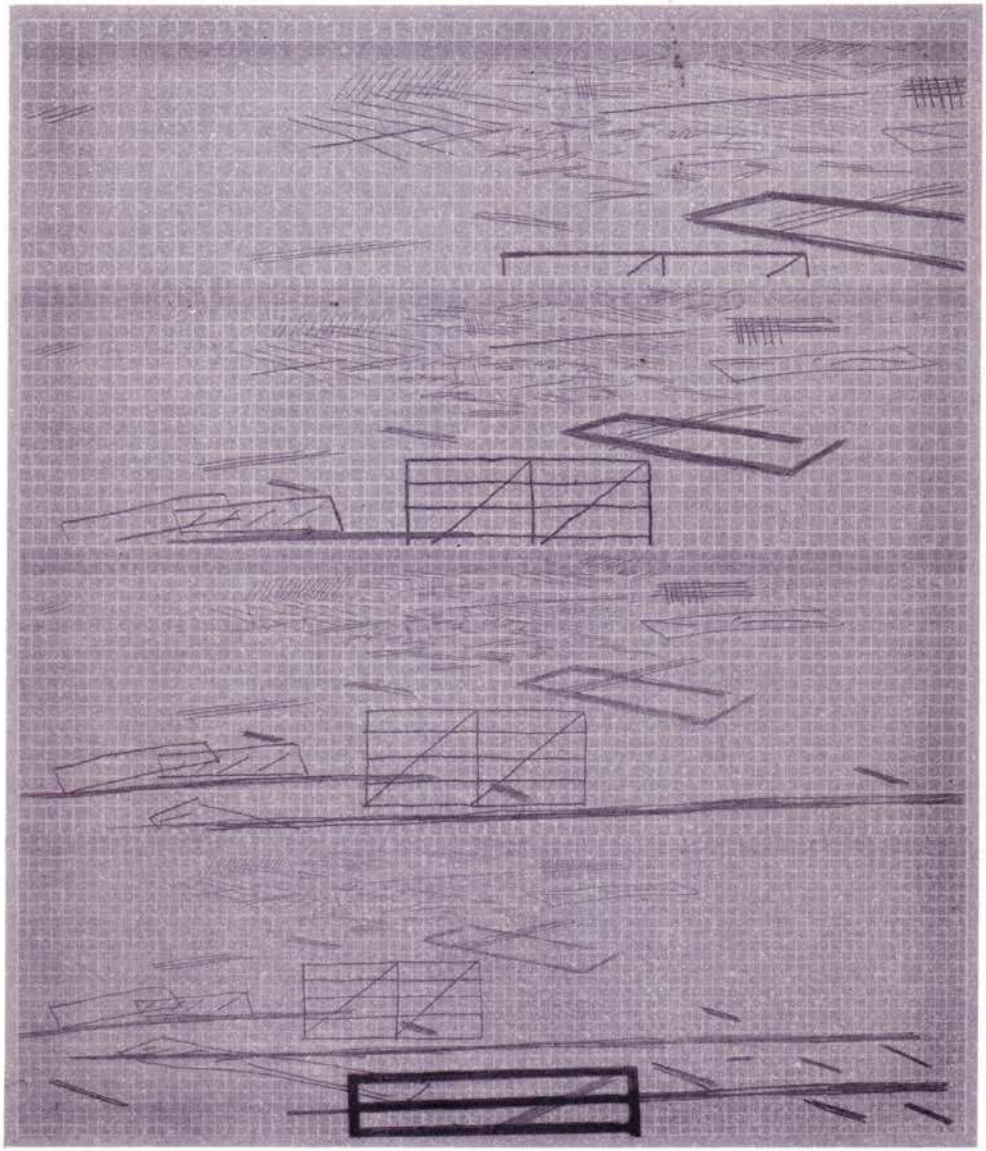
The painting finished, Loker then uses a spray to cover up whatever grid remains naked. The spraying partially obliterates the paint as well as the grid, and so he must then work over every mark again, strengthening some and leaving others toned down. Apart from when drawing the grid, he works with the canvas on the floor of the studio, suspended over it on a plank. This knee-breaking position is necessary to avoid drips from the very fluid paint he uses.

It is worth repeating that the paintings of these two series were not worked from notes. Loker's landscapes are generalised, not specific, an abstracted rebirth of sensations (emotions, perceptions) which have been stored in his nerve-ends and memory. It is a rebirth which recognises the importance of the painting process: "I can look at that painting now and not know what the hell I'm going to do about it." This is not romantic evasion, but an admission of the need for hard work, and of the need to keep making new discoveries. "It's always been a physical thing for me. The moment I start working, I start thinking relative to making a mark. It's like trying to think without words, thinking about a painting." Something of the complexity of the thought-process involved emerges from an analysis of the device of the grid as Loker uses it.

"The grid", Fenella Crichton remarked in a review of Loker's work (Art International December 1975), "is fast becoming the most overworked device in contemporary art, as it so often merely provides a framework for decoration. But in (Loker's) new paintings the grid is used to indicate the scale, which is what his paintings are all about." Scale certainly is an important element of the paintings, and one function of the grids. But the grids are also a means of counteracting the loss of a wide area of neutral ground (as was found in the 'Dorset Coast' series). The grid, as the 'ground' had been, was a way of controlling the degree to which the paintings would be seen as total space (scaleless) or as window-space (having a referential scale). "Grids became a way of stopping the painting becoming a total space... all the art of the 1960's was denying real space, defining its own space, doing away with illusion, window-space." Where Renaissance draughtsmen would peer through a grid in order to plot the real world onto two dimensions, Loker's grid works the opposite way, enabling him to give bodily form and scale to the imaginary painting in his head. Space, scale and surface are each controlled and evolved through the use of the grid.

This kind of visual thinking is common to both painters and sculptors, and was present in Loker's work before he started to make use of the grids. Yet he has a strong allegiance to painting: "I always considered myself a painter not a sculptor... one of the essential things on going from the paintings to (the constructed works) was that I wanted to become factual – to say that if this is red, it's not a red film on a surface, it's a red piece which is three inches deep... making a block of colour rather than a surface of colour." Eventually this realisation provoked its own reverse: "I became aware that within a painting (a coloured mark) has an unlimited feel to it. I didn't need to make a three inch block of colour – I can make a three mile block of colour by inference... painting's still so viable because it can do so many things, and it's so flexible."

It has been the challenge posed by the flexible nature of painting which has provoked Loker to continue experimenting, even to undermine the structure on which the 'Extracts' and 'Shifts' series were founded: "I first tried to get rid of the grid in the "Four Shifts" (Alkyd on paper)..." and



Shifts (Gate) 1978
79 x 59 cm (plate) Two colour etching

from then on the grid began to play a consciously reduced role. He would use it: "to set something up, and then lose it, deny it. I didn't mind it staying as a clue..." but already he was looking for a new, looser way of ordering his experience in painting.

SECTIONS

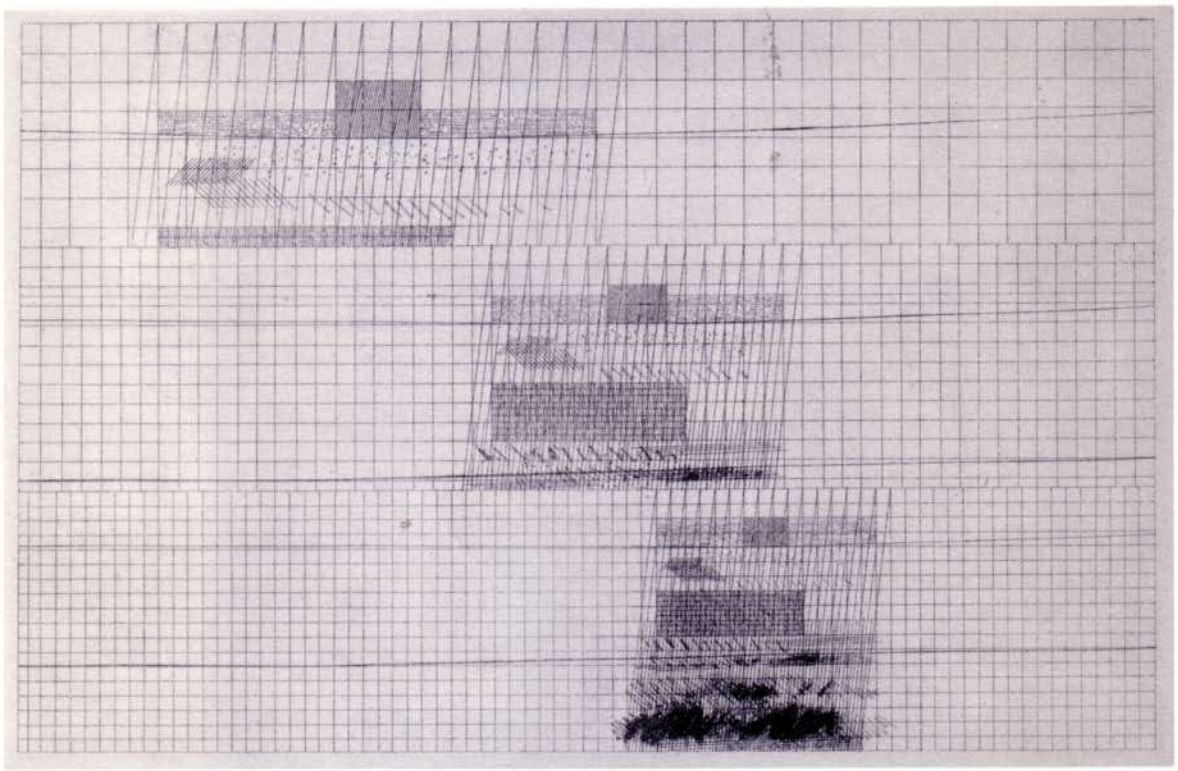
The 'Sections' (See cover) differ from the previous series in that each of the component 'views' has no systematised relation to the others. From a number of identical format paintings (in oil on paper) Loker chooses four and arranges them in such a way as to balance the composition and to deepen and multiply the elements of 'landscape feeling' which went into their making. It would be unwise to generalise further about a method of working which has to date produced only a few finished paintings, but it is clear that in one sense they isolate the core of his paintings of the previous five years. Where each composition was there elaborated in a context of time, scale and movement, each composition in the 'Sections' is presented rudely, jostling its neighbours without any of these clues. It is clear not only that the artist has imposed less control over the finished work, but that the viewer must work harder to unearth the rhythms which the juxtapositions evoke. Yet even while this flexible method of construction seems to be the opposite of the stabilisation provided by the grid, traces of the grid and of the normalising border area are still to be found in the matrix of the standard-format paper support and in the heavy black frames onto which they are pinned. It seems certain the struggle will go on.

CONCLUSION

I have taken some time describing the physical construction of Loker's work in the belief that the labour of making a painting is too little appreciated, and that it is fundamental to whatever significance the artist wishes his work to carry. There is a danger that the labour involved in taking a photograph may become the norm when we think about making images. Loker paints in the belief that "it is not possible to put over in a photograph... how you see and what the experience is in a general way of being, and moving, and existing around something rather than stopping and recording it." Painting is in itself a time-consuming and emotional activity – "Whether one is talking about the emotion of painting or emotion about a person or place... to put it on canvas is not easy anyway. Even with Abstract Expressionism, which looks as if it's done very quickly and has caught that feeling, that emotion... when you realise how difficult it is to make two colours, say, a red and blue, both wet in the space of a day, you also have to realise that time is involved, and a lot of consideration and skill."

Despite this emphasis on the process of making the paintings, and its variation from one series to the next, it is worth nothing as an approach to the work unless it is seen to be a part of a wider process which involves the artist's whole way of understanding the world – and this, of course, is far harder to describe here. What has been called repeatedly above a 'landscape feeling' encompasses thoughts, memories, and feelings which are Loker's own but are similar to those of any one of us. Ever since Blake, Constable, Turner and the Industrial Revolution, we have tended, as a society, to project our hopes, fears and fantasies into the landscape. Loker has no time for the idea that making art is a self-contained technical process: "The common argument: 'We're all making objects, art is dead,' is an absolute misunderstanding of what painting is all about", he said in a recorded interview (An Element of Landscape, 1974). "It's never been about object making or making paintings as such. That could only be said by someone who's never really understood art and is prepared to reject it on false grounds. Art is about finding out."

Lewis Biggs
October 1980



Coast Extracts 2 1975
24 x 38 cm (plate) Etching

JOHN LOKER

CHRONOLOGY:

1938	born in Leeds
1954-8	studies graphic design at Bradford College of Art and Design
1958-60	National Service, conscientious objector
1960-63	studied painting at Royal College of Art, London
1963	awarded Abbey Minor travelling scholarship
1964-	lives in London, teaching when necessary
1971	visit to Dorset coast: 'Dorset' series
1973	visit to Lake District: 'Greenside' series
1976	Arts Council Major Award
1977	walked part of the Pennine Way: 'Pennine' drawings visit to Barvas, Isle of Lewis: 'Barvas' studies from nature

ONE MAN EXHIBITIONS

1969	Studio Exhibition – London
1970	Horizontals and Drawings – Angela Flowers Gallery and I.C.A. – London
1973	Angela Flowers Gallery – London
1975	Studio Exhibition – London Park Square Gallery – Leeds Angela Flowers Gallery – London
1978	Angela Flowers Gallery – London Wetering Galerie – Amsterdam Park Square Gallery – Leeds
1980	Angela Flowers Gallery – London
1981	Arnolfini Gallery – Bristol Newlyn Orion – Newlyn Cartwright Hall – Bradford Newcastle Polytechnic Gallery – Newcastle

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1963 London Group – RBA Galleries – London
Young Contemporaries – RBA Galleries – London
1965 Post Biennale – RCA Galleries – London
1966 British Painting – Lyon
1967 Edinburgh Open 100 – Edinburgh
1968 Preview London – Camden Art Centre – London
1969 John Moores – Liverpool
1972 Art Spectrum – Alexandra Palace – London
John Moores – Liverpool
1973 Five New Paintings – Angela Flowers Gallery – London
British Drawings 52-72 – Angela Flowers Gallery – London
An Octet from Angela Flowers – Scottish Arts Council Gallery – Edinburgh
1974 John Moores – Liverpool
An Element of Landscape – Arts Council of Great Britain Touring Exhibition
New British Prints – New York and USA Tour
1975 British Art Mid 70's – Jahrhunderthalle, Hoechst and Forum – Leverkusen
CAS Art Fair – Mall Galleries – London
7th International Festival of Painting – Cagnes-Sur-Mer
Six Artists' Drawings – Touring Exhibition
1976 Workshop Prints – Curwen Gallery and Tokyo
Six Bradford Artists – Cartwright Hall – Bradford
Artists of the Angela Flowers Gallery – Gulbenkian Gallery – Newcastle
Aspects of Contemporary Art – Arts Club – London
Arts Council Collection 75/76 – Hayward Gallery – London
Artists Market Christmas Show – Warehouse Gallery – London
1977 Ten Artists – Angela Flowers Gallery – London
Small Works, CAS Purchases – Royal Academy – London
Aspects du Paysage – British Council – Paris
1978 Het Landschap – Gemoentelijke Van Reekumgalery – Apeldoorn – Holland
Landscape to Land Art – Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter – Hovikodden – Norway
John Moores – Liverpool
1979 Three Artists' Drawings – Wetering Galerie – Amsterdam
Gallery Artists: Drawings and Prints – Angela Flowers Gallery – London
Sixth Bradford International Print Biennale – Bradford
1980 The British Art Show: Arts Council of Great Britain Touring Exhibition

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Reviews:

William Packer	*Art and Artists*	October 1970
Peter Fuller	*Arts Review*	October 1970
William Packer	*Art and Artists*	November 1973
Fenella Crichton	*Art International*	December 1975
William Feaver	*The Observer*	March 1978
William Packer	*The Financial Times*	March 14 1978
Frances Spalding	*Arts Review*	April 1978
William Packer	*The Financial Times*	April 1 1980
Brian Walworth	*Arts Review*	April 1980
Fenella Crichton	*Art Monthly*	December 1980

Other reviews:

Lily van Ginneken	*de Volkskrant*	June 2 1978
J.C. v.d. Waals	*Financieel Dagblad*	June 16 1978
Willem van Beek	*Kunstbeeld*	July - August 1978
Walter Barten	*Financieel Dagblad*	June 18 1979
Lily van Ginneken	*de Volkskrant*	June 8 1979
Frans Duister	*Het Parool*	June 13 1980
Walter Barten	*Financieel Dagblad*	June 13 1980
Philip Peters	*Galerie*	June - July 1980

Interview:

Jeremy Rees *An Element of Landscape:* Arts Council of Great Britain, 1974

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Arts Council of Great Britain
Bradford City Art Gallery
British Council
Contemporary Art Society
Department of the Environment
Dudley City Art Gallery
Ferens Art Gallery, Hull
Hunterian Collection, Glasgow
Leeds City Gallery
Manchester City Art Gallery
Power Institute of Fine Art, Sydney
Rugby City Art Gallery
Tate Gallery
Van Reekumgalery, Apeldoorn
Victoria and Albert Museum
Wakefield City Art Gallery
Worcester City Art Gallery

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