

JOHN LOKER

Flowers East

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17 FEBRUARY - 18 MARCH 1990

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It is perhaps no accident that John Loker's current major exhibition invites a variety of responses from the viewer: ambiguity has always played a key role in his work. However, that role has invariably been a creative and dynamic one: Loker's intention is never to mystify, rather to exploit the tensions inherent in the subtle visual pun, the ironic juxtaposition or the unconventional composition.

An artist who has often been concerned with redirecting our perceptions of the ephemeral by ostensibly formal means, Loker may now perhaps view his twenty-year relationship with the Angela Flowers Gallery as a pleasing parallel journey.

The development of his work over that period has naturally been a highly personal and organic process, with all the usual hiatuses, shifts of emphasis, varying intensities of mood and, in this particular case, even changes of medium; that this creative continuum has been codified and punctuated by a series of lucid exhibitions stressing the essential continuity of his vision, seems somehow entirely appropriate. For if continuity is the key to understanding any artist's work in the fullest sense, John Loker's art offers a particularly satisfying demonstration of the fact.

His work from the 70s is well enough known - although an inclination to use landscapes as the subject of his visual distillation for a time attracted the superficial label of "landscape artist", directing attention away from what the pictures (and Loker himself) were really about. In fact, then and now, his art owes less allegiance to genre or medium than to his own continuing search for new compositional ways to make pictures and for imagery that deals with the ideas that interest - and occasionally obsess - him.

Those ideas usually have a visual source or trigger-mechanism: Loker will become fascinated with a piece of imagery which, in his hands, gradually comes to take on new resonance, new layers of meaning and new implications. In the end it is often impossible to be sure which came first: was it the undeveloped idea, for which the original image was the catalyst, or was it the image itself which represented the starting point?

A case in point is his recurring "nose cone/spinning top" image which, in its iconic ambivalence (the "Dangerous Games" series simultaneously evokes both cynical destruction and innocent play), recurs in many of his recent paintings.

Another example - which perhaps takes us even closer to the difficult blurring of the edges between public symbol and private metaphor - is the painting "Bloc". Here a literal and prosaic real life scene was the source: one day in Austria Loker happened to witness a solemn procession of Skodas all carrying boxed electrical goods on their roofs; the convoy was making its way across the frontier between Austria and Hungary. That was all. However the image was immediately added to Loker's visual luggage, taken home and used; gradually it lost its literal trappings as he reworked it and incorporated it into various paintings until it took its place as another personal hieroglyph, this time a processional images of blocks slowly moving between zones, for private motives.

The image of a pylon viewed from an oblique aerial angle has also been incorporated into some of Loker's recent work. With its overtones of communication and relay, for him it was associated with themes of signals and transmissions. And yet this time the image was at least partially contrived, suggesting that this was one of those occasions where Loker felt impelled by the urgency of an idea to supply the visual trigger-mechanism himself: here he is simply made up the unusual viewpoint which gives the pylon its odd visual characteristic. A further departure was that it soon lost its lattice structure and metamorphosed into a solid form. Now more obelisk than pylon, it inhabits several recent canvases, one more private marker in a personal landscape.

The temptation to "read" Loker's paintings - to treat certain images as being loaded with literal rather than psychological meaning - is always present. At times it seems that he is almost aiming teasingly just short of that point where private metaphor ends and symbolism begins. If so, his aim seems uncannily precise; at times, the resulting perceptual tension seems to underscore the stresses, ambiguities and mood shifts of the pictures themselves. And if his fundamental artistic concerns have not changed radically since he first exhibited with Angela Flowers, John Loker has, two decades on, found elegant new means through which to explore and advance them.

GRAHAM VICKERS

JANUARY 1990



Signals 1989
Oil on canvas
240 x 270 cms



Divide 1990
Oil on canvas
240 x 270 cms



Signals II 1989
Oil on paper
81 x 83 cms



Signals III 1989
Oil on paper
65 x 77 cms



Signals IV 1990
Oil on paper
78 x 71 cms

Signals V 1990
Oil on paper
49 x 96 cms



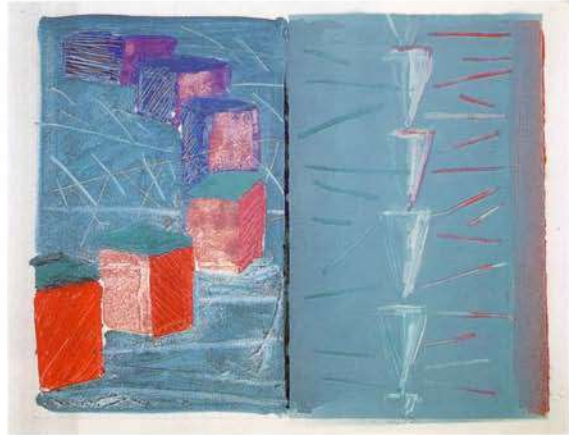
Exclamation 1989
Oil on paper
48 x 62 cms



Safety Zone - House 2 1989
Oil on paper
81 x 96 cms



Safety Zone/Blue 1989
Oil on paper
79 x 60 cms



Divide/Column 1989
Oil on paper
69 x 87 cms



Interaction 1989
Oil on canvas
120 x 140 cms

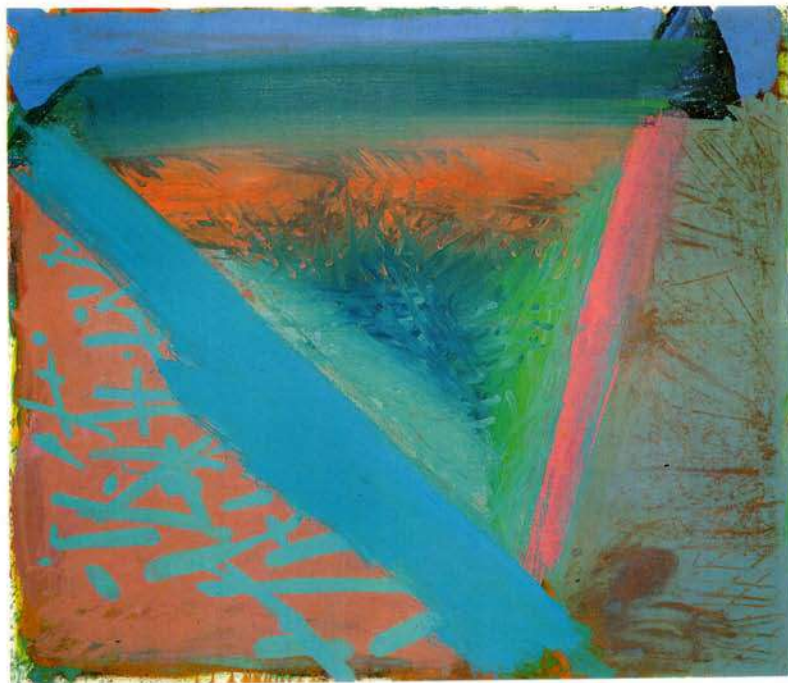


Endless Spinning Column 1988
Oil on paper
79.5 x 63.5 cms

Safety Zone 3 Trophy 1988
Oil on paper
69 x 75.5 cms

Blue Cathedral 1988
Oil on paper
69 x 75.5 cms

Blue Cathedrals' Column 1988
Oil on paper
50 x 58 cms



Soft Centres 1989
Oil on canvas
120 x 140 cms



Triangulation 1988
Oil on paper
85 x 114 cms



Waiting 1987
Oil on paper
44 x 58 cms



Dangerous Games 3 1988
Oil on paper
85 x 114 cms



Cathedral/Beacon 1988
Oil on paper
75 x 97 cms



Bloc 1989
Oil on canvas
240 x 270 cms



Safety Zone Reclamation 1988
Oil on paper
120 x 140 cms



Blue Cathedral 1988
Oil on canvas
300 x 350 cms



Group Therapy 1988/89
Oil on canvas
180 x 275 cms

JOHN LOKER	1979	Three Artists' Drawings, Wetering Galerie, Amsterdam	1988	Royal College, 150 Years Small is Beautiful, Part 6, Flowers East, London
1938	Born Leeds			
1954-58	Studied Graphic Design at Bradford College of Art and Design	Gallery Artists: Drawings and Prints, Angela Flowers Gallery, London	1989	Big Paintings, Flowers East, London
1960-63	Studied Painting at the Royal College of Art	Sixth Bradford International Print Biennale, Bradford		Monoprints, Flowers East, London
1963	Awarded Abbey Minor Travelling Scholarship	The British Art Show: Arts Council of Great Britain, touring exhibition	1990	Angela Flowers 1990, Barbican Centre London
SOLO EXHIBITIONS				
1969	Studio Exhibition, London	1981	Landscape, The Print-Maker's View, Tate Gallery, London	PUBLIC COLLECTIONS
1970	Horizontals and Drawings, Angela Flowers Gallery and ICA, London	1982	5 Via De Wetering Galerie, Stichting Beeldende Kunst, Helmond	Arts Council of Great Britain
1973	Angela Flowers Gallery, London		Landscape Prints, Brighton Polytechnic Gallery	Bradford City Art Gallery
1975	Studio Exhibition, London		8th British International Print Biennale, Bradford	British Council
	Park Square Gallery, Leeds	1984	International Drawing Biennale, Rijeka, Yugoslavia	Contemporary Art Society
1978	Angela Flowers Gallery, London		Big Paintings, Angela Flowers Gallery, London	Department of the Environment
	Wetering Galerie, Amsterdam		A View from my Window, Angela Flowers Gallery, London	Dudley City Art Gallery
	Park Square Gallery, Leeds		Fourth Biennale of European Graphic Art, Baden-Baden	Ferens Art Gallery, Hull
1980	Angela Flowers Gallery, London		Tolly Cobbold Eastern Arts 5th National Exhibition, Fitzwilliam, Cambridge and Tour Small is Beautiful, Angela Flowers Gallery, London	Hunterian Collection, Glasgow
	Wetering Galerie, Amsterdam		9th British International Print Biennale, Bradford	IBM
1981	Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol	1985	Big Paintings, Angela Flowers Gallery, London	Leeds City Gallery
	Newlyn Orion, Newlyn		4th European Print Biennale, Baden-Baden and Tour Side by Side, Contemporary British and Malaysian Art, Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong	Manchester City Art Gallery
	Cartwright Hall, Bradford		Arnolfini Anniversary Show	Power Institute of Fine Art, Sydney
	Newcastle Polytechnic Gallery, Newcastle	1986	Process and Product, Turnpike Gallery, Leigh, Greater Manchester	Rugby City Art Gallery
1982	Angela Flowers Gallery, London		Whitegates, Bradford Festival, Bradford	Tate Gallery
	Wetering Galerie, Amsterdam		Contemporary Artists, Cartwright Hall, Bradford	Unilever
1983	Works on Paper 1970 -1983, Angela Flowers Gallery, London		Small is Beautiful Part 5, Landscapes, Angela Flowers Gallery, London	Van Reekumgaler, Apeldoorn
1984	Galerie du Monde, Hong Kong		Passage West, Angela Flowers	Victoria and Albert Museum
1985	Angela Flowers Gallery, London		Ireland and Crawford Arts Centre, Cork	Wakefield City Art Gallery
1986	Wetering Galerie, Amsterdam			Worcester City Art Gallery
	Studio Exhibition, London			
1988	Angela Flowers Gallery, London			
1989	A Decade of Prints, Flowers East, London	1987		
	Wetering Galerie, Amsterdam			
1990	Flowers East, London			
SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS				
1978	Het Landschap, Gemoentelijke Van Reekumgalerie, Apeldoorn, Holland			
	Landscapoe to Land Art, Henie-Onstad Kunstcenter, Hovikodden, Norway			
	John Moores, Liverpool			

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199/205 RICHMOND ROAD
LONDON E8 3NJ
TELEPHONE 01-985 3333
FAX 01-985 0067

TUES-SUN 10.00-6.00

Designed by Thumb Design Partnership 1/90/6525

Photography by Adrian Flowers Studio and Hansen/Dorley-Brown

Printed by Dot for Dot