

Keeping Time

This publication brings together the major themes and preoccupations of Callum Innes's practice over the last fifteen years. Innes works in series, and the publication offers the opportunity to trace the evolution and inter-dependence of these, from the artist's earliest Cento paintings to his most recent Exposed Paintings, via Agitated Verticals, Quotations, Isolated Forms, Formed Paintings, Repetitions, Identified Forms, Monologues, Resonance Paintings, and paintings made with shellac. Taken together, the series form an impressive body of work, and one through which it is possible to trace the development of a singularly rigorous visual language.

Innes's particular process involves the removal as well as the application of paint. Pitting paint against turpentine or, less often, shellac, he balances painting and un-painting somehow off-balance, the one not cancelling the other out, but adding to it, illuminating it, clarifying it. His combination of creation and destruction destabilises the received idea that while making something takes a long time, unmaking it is most often the work of a moment. In doing this, he introduces into the experience of his paintings a new kind of time. Turpentine, his favoured agent of destruction, works against oil paint at a particular rate, the physicality of which is inscribed into each painting. The movement of turpentine against paint is also the movement of artist against canvas, and as the turpentine either washes exuberantly across the paint, or eats painstakingly into it, Innes might be said to be conducting, keeping time, providing the temporal and spatial armature within which and against which the paint and the turpentine play.

Innes is perhaps best known for his Exposed Paintings, an on-going and complex series in which the canvas is divided geometrically into several unequal areas: some painted; some in which paint has been applied and then dissolved; and some where the ground remains unpainted. Among the earliest of his mature ways of working, the Exposed Paintings are the ones that seem to engage him the most – they form by far the most substantial group in this publication, and represent the artist's most insistent idiom. The development of his painterly language is intrinsically linked to the development of this series, regularly punctuated though it is with examples from others.

The titles of the paintings in the series of Exposed Paintings consist of the words identifying them as part of it, immediately followed by the technical names of the colours used: *Exposed Painting, Dioxazine Violet* or *Exposed Painting, Scheveningen Black, Cadmium Red Deep*. The use of 'exposed', a word whose primary visual reference is to photography, connects the process at work in the paintings back to that involved in making a photograph, aligning Innes's exposure of painted colour to turpentine with the photographic exposure of coated paper to light. Immediate in their impact, Innes's paintings, like photographs, remain intimately connected to the durational time of their creation.