

Sam Phillips talks to Frank Bowling RA about his new works on paper

Journey to the sublime



Moondance, 2010, by Frank Bowling RA

'The older Francis Bacon became, the more wild he became,' says Frank Bowling of his artist friend. 'I would watch him take off to Rome or Paris, fishing after company he had just met. I don't feel like doing that as I get older. I want to stay here and paint. Being an artist, where do you stop? You go on.'

Bowling's commitment to paint shows no sign of wavering after a career of more than 50 years. As a new biography by Mel Gooding describes in entertaining detail, since migrating from Guyana at the age of 19, his journey as a painter has taken him through some of the key territories that have defined modern art. These include the expressionist figuration of Bacon, a strong influence during his years at the Royal College of Art in the early 1960s; Pop Art, to

which Bowling made a distinctive contribution in the mid-1960s; and the large-scale, colour-field abstraction also dominant in this period, which he embraced from 1966 after he made a second home in New York. 'Everyone said that you couldn't get past Barney Newman's work, so I headed there as a young and ambitious artist would,' he says.

Newman's presence has returned in his new works on paper on view in the RA's Tennant Gallery. 'I'm still there – I'm using the primaries, I'm running the material as rich as one can right down the middle.'

After the gel-thickened acrylic is poured on the paper, Bowling improvises. Some of these works call to mind landscapes (above left), as do his canvases on show at the Summer Exhibition. 'I have the same intent as the landscape tradition once did – to reach for the elegiac, the sublime, with paint. But landscape became a tool for mimicking nature. Painting had to catch up and the Americans have shown us the way.'

Frank Bowling Tennant Gallery, Royal Academy of Arts, 27 May–23 Oct **Crossings: From New Amsterdam, Berbice to New Amsterdam, New York via Holland and London** Rollo Contemporary Art, London, 020 7580 0020, www.rolloart.com, until 1 July **Frank Bowling** by Mel Gooding (£29.95, RA Publications), for readers discount offer see page 77.

Screen icons

Making his first screenprint in 1980 was an epiphany for painter Albert Irvin RA: 'Having a marvellous printmaker working with me was like having two heads, like a Janus figure. There was an important contribution coming into my work that was separate from my own creative process.' The printmaker was Chris Betambeau, founder of Advanced Graphics London, the studio with which Irvin continues to collaborate.

This summer the Friends Room shows some of the finest of the artist's limited editions from the past three decades, including *Marshalsea XXIII* (2005, right). The thick, expressive marks shine with the same piercing colour as those of the huge canvases for which he is best known. But his prints have shaped, as well as echoed, his paintings. 'Printmaking is essentially layering, and this has fed back into my painting. Now I build up my canvases from back to front, with a



Albert Irvin Sir Hugh Casson Room for Friends, Royal Academy of Arts, 14 June–25 Sep; **Albert Irvin: Inextinguishable** Peppercanister Gallery, Dublin,

News in brief

New Academician

Grayson Perry has been elected an RA in the category of Printmaking. The 2003 Turner Prize winner is best known for his prints, ceramic vases and embroidery. See page 38.

A-level Summer Exhibition Online

Until 15 August, you can view A-level students' work at www.royalacademy.org.uk/alevel. The selection panel includes Michael Landy RA.

New Blackadder ceramics

A new selection of exclusive ceramic gifts goes on sale at the RA Shop this summer and online at www.royalacademy.org.uk/shop, including a range of ceramics inspired by the work of Dame Elizabeth Blackadder RA (see page 35).

Exceptional opening hours

The RA closes from 1pm (last admission 12.30pm) for the Summer Exhibition Preview Party on 2 June. The Academy will also close for the day on 20 June to prepare for the Summer Exhibition Ball. Gallery 3 of the Summer Exhibition will close at 4pm on 27 June to prepare for the Annual Architecture Lecture.

Advance booking for Degas

We anticipate huge interest in the RA's autumn show 'Degas and the Ballet: Picturing Movement' (17 Sep–11 Dec). Friends must book timed tickets, which will be required on entry, in advance. Timed tickets will also be needed for Friends Preview Days. For further information on how to book, please visit www.royalacademy.org.uk/friends or call 0844 209 0051. Timed tickets are not available through the Friends Office.

American Associates

This season's exhibition outings in New York for AARAT members includes Richard Long RA at the Sperone Westwater Gallery (designed by Norman Foster RA), Gillian Wearing RA at Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, and Picasso at Gagosian. From 24–26 June members can enjoy an art-filled weekend in the UK. For details, call 001 212 980 8404 or visit www.aarat.org

RAs design wine labels

The RA Restaurant now offers limited-edition bottles of wine with designs created by RAs. Tracey Emin RA's label adorns a 2009 Bordeaux, £36, and Gary Hume RA has designed labels for a 2010 Sauvignon & Vermentino, and a 2009 Merlot & Cabernet, both £17.50. Wines have