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PETER LOWE
Selected works 1966-2016

22 June - 16 July 2016

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Foreword

When work of the Systems Group, which Peter Lowe had joined in 1969, was shown in the Matrix exhibition in Bristol in 1972 it met with a mixed reception. Constructive abstraction, though well established in continental Europe, was still relatively unfamiliar in the UK, and some critics of the exhibition thought such works were cold and clinical. But a more perceptive reviewer wrote that although explanations of systems-based art might make it seem austere, in reality it was not. He went on to comment on the visual pleasure provided by the works’ clean elegance, and by its constructional craftsmanship. It is these qualities of clarity and precision, together with a relative simplicity of form and meticulous concern for detail, which characterise the whole of Lowe’s oeuvre from his first abstract works in the late 1950s to the reliefs, constructions, paintings and prints he continues to produce today in his London studio.

In addition to its directly observable characteristics there is a fundamental aspect of all Lowe’s work which underpins the visual pleasure which an initial look at his works provides. This is the concept of rationality – that every work is influenced by some form of systematised geometric or arithmetic logic such as numbering sequences, permutations, the progressive rotation of a repeated element, or the spatial relationship between one geometric form and another. While appreciation of a work is not dependent on knowing which system governs its structure, the recognition and analysis of such systems can enhance the viewing experience by adding a dimension beyond the visual. One of Lowe’s colleagues in the Systems Group, Jeffrey Steele, even suggested to the Matrix reviewer that in looking at work of this kind, “the unconscious registration in the human mind of a mathematical relationship plays a major part in aesthetic pleasure.”

Lowe’s interest in constructive abstraction began as early as 1955 when, at the age of seventeen and in his second year at Goldsmiths College, he visited Paris and was fascinated by a sculpture exhibition which included works by Naum Gabo, Hans Arp and Alexander Calder. He then studied under, and was greatly influenced by, Mary and Kenneth Martin who had been members of the post-war
Constructionists – the first British art group to work within the European constructivist tradition. Lowe’s own work in this tradition was first shown in 1962 in the A.I.A. exhibition in London, The Geometric Environment. Since then his work has been in some 150 solo and group exhibitions, many throughout continental Europe. His work is also held in several national collections, including Vienna’s Museum of Modern Art, the Museum of Grenoble, Museum Sztuki in Lodz, Poland and the Museum of Art in Vukova, Croatia. In the late 1970s, his close association with the continental constructivist tradition was strengthened when he became a member of IAFKG (Internationaler Arbeitskreis für Konstruktive Gestaltung, later known simply as Arbeitskreis), a pan-European constructivist art group, and took part in a number of their shows and projects, including the construction of a large outdoor sculpture in the Fulda region in central Germany. In Lagamas in the south of France, he recently produced an outdoor installation which was mirrored in a musical work by the composer Eric Fischer. Both works were based on the same permutational system.

European artists to whom Lowe has often referred include especially Theo van Doesburg and the two Swiss artists, Richard Lohse and Max Bill. Bill’s concept of ‘concrete art’ (Art Konkret) is particularly relevant to Lowe. "We use the term concrete," wrote Bill, "to refer to those works that have developed through their own intrinsic means and laws and that bear no relation to external phenomena."

In this concrete sense, Lowe’s works are ‘whole’ objects in their own right, not abstractions from the visible world, and they reward being viewed as such. As this current survey demonstrates, the application of a relatively small number of basic geometric and arithmetic concepts or systems, can produce a huge range of different objects and variants (in two and three dimensions) which are, in simple terms, very satisfying to look at and to think about. This is art for the eye and for the mind.

Dr Alan Fowler
April 2016
Selected works

Peter Lowe in his London studio (image courtesy of Durril Weller)
**Early constructions: 1966-1969**

clockwise from top right

*Permutation of rows (7)*, 1968  Perspex on board  25 x 25 x 3 cm

*4 layers 4 rows*, 1968  Perspex on board  45 x 45 x 6 cm

*Rotation of 2 layers*, 1968  Perspex on board  50 x 50 x 10 cm

*Structural relief*, 1966  Perspex  84 x 60 x 13 cm
Sculptural works: 1965-1975

below

*Study for interlocking squares*, 1968-70
Perspex with wooden stand  72 x 72 cm

right

*Construction based on seven*, 1969
Perspex  36.5 x 11 x 11 cm

clockwise from top right

White relief 2, 1975
Painted wood & fibreglass
81 x 81 x 13 cm

Volume & Void, 1973
Painted wood   51 x 51 x 8 cm

Grey relief, 1982
Painted wood   52 x 52 x 10 cm

Grey relief 2, 1977
Painted wood   45 x 45 x 3 cm
Rotations and spirals: 2000-present day

clockwise from top right

Hidden circles, 2006   Unique inkjet print   92 x 92 cm
28 octagonal variants, 2010   Vinyl collage on clear perspex   71 x 51 cm
Spiral, 1990   Unique inkjet print   40 x 40 cm
Triangles in a dodecagon, 2001-04   Acrylic on canvas   112 x 112 cm
Polygons: 2010-present day

clockwise from top right

*Decagons on blue*, 2013  Unique vinyl print on plywood  93 x 98 cm
*Double crosses*, 2012  Unique inkjet print  92 x 54 cm
*Hexagonal sequences*, 2015  Acrylic on canvas  90 x 90 cm
*Integration of three colours on blue background*, 2012
Unique vinyl print on plywood  100 x 100 cm
Unique computer drawings: 1981-2000

clockwise from top right

Drawing 45, 1991
Drawing 48, 2000
Drawing 56, 2000
Drawing: Volume & Void, 1981
Drawing: Sequence of 4, 1990

all drawings are created using computer aided design
each work is a unique print measuring 41 x 58 cm
PETER LOWE

Lowe was born in Hackney, London, in 1938. At the age of 16 he entered Goldsmith’s College in London and was taught by Kenneth and Mary Martin. It was during this time that he moved away from a figurative style and towards abstract art.

In 1962 Lowe took a teaching post at the Leeds College of Art, where he worked under Henry Thubron. He also taught at the Barry Summer School in Wales in the 1960s as an assistant to Kenneth Martin before returning to London and taking a teaching post at Goldsmiths’ College in 1965. He held his post at Goldsmiths’ for 35 years, retiring in 2000.

Lowe lives and works in South London.

Solo exhibitions:

1974 Gardner Centre, University of Sussex
   Lucy Milton Gallery, London
1980 Galeria Pavillon, Nowa Huta, Krakow
   Sally East Gallery, London
1981 Galerie Jeanne Buytaert, Antwerp
1987 Foranea, Vimercate, Monza, Italy
1990 Arte Struktura, Volume and Void, Milan
1991 Galerie Jeanne Buytaert, Antwerp
1994 Clare Hall Gallery, Cambridge
1999 Wellcome Institute of Neurology, London
2005 The Walk Gallery, London

Group exhibitions:

1957 Young Contemporaries, R.B.A. Galleries, London
1963 Six English Painters, Drian Galleries, London
   Drian Artists, Drian Galleries, London
   The Geometric Environment, A.I.A. Gallery, London
   Plus Minus Inventions (with Colin Jones), A.I.A.
   Gallery Construction England, Arts Council
1964 Then and Now, City Art Gallery, Leeds
1966 Relief Constructions, I.C.A., London
   Constructions, Axiom Gallery, London
1967 Unit-Series-Progression, Arts Council (tour)
1968 Cinétisme-Spectacle-Environment, Maison de la Culture, Grenoble

1968 Constructions, Greenwich Theatre Gallery, London
   Constructions from the Arts Council Collection
1969 Systeemi-Systems, Amos Anderson Taidemuseo, Helsinki
1970 Space Dimensions, De Zonnehof, Amersfoort, Netherlands
1971 Matrix, Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol
   Welsh Arts Council Gallery, Cardiff
1972 Systems-Drawings-Reliefs, Lucy Milton Gallery, London
   Systems, Whitechapel Gallery, London (and tour)
   Dekkers, Dilworth, Lowe, Wilmink,
   Galerie Nouvelles Images, The Hague
   Salon des Réalités Nouvelles, Paris
   Constructive Art, Leicester Museum and Art Gallery
1973 Systems II, Polytechnic of Central London
   Basically White, I.C.A., London
   IAFKG (International Work Group for Constructive Art), Cultuurcentrum de Warande and
   Cultuurcentrum Waregem, Belgium
1974 10th Biennale, Palais de l’Europe, Menton, France
   British Painting ’74, Hayward Gallery, London
   IAFKG, Museum der Stadt, München Gladbach,
   IAFKG conference, Kunstcentrum Badhuis,
   Gorinchem, Netherlands
   Sequenzen Zwischen Weiss und Schwarz,
   Museum der Stadt, Gelsenkirchen, Germany
   7 Englische Konstruktivisten, Stadt
   Kunstsammlungen, Gelsenkirchen
   Ways of Making, Welsh Arts Council
   Rationale Konzept ’75, Galerie Pa Szepan,
   Gelsenkirchen
1975 Plus Minus, IAFKG, Southampton Art Gallery
1976 Arte Inglese Oggi 1960-76, Palazzo Reale, Milan
   Rational Concepts, Art Museum, Nijmegen,
   Netherlands
   Rational Concepts, English Drawings, Kunstcentrum
   Badhuis Gorinchem Engelse en Nederlandse
   Rationale Tekeningen, De Volle Maan,
   Delft, Netherlands
1977 Gallery Swart, Amsterdam (with John Mitchell)
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Exhibition Title</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Dilworth, Hughes, Lowe &amp; Steele</td>
<td>Annely Juda Fine Art, London</td>
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<td>1978</td>
<td>Maximal Minimal</td>
<td>Amos Anderson Museum, Helsinki (and tour)</td>
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<td>1979</td>
<td>Fourth Dimension in a Quadrilateral</td>
<td>Kunstverein, Unna, Germany</td>
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<td>1980</td>
<td>Dispositions</td>
<td>Palac Kultury, Warsaw</td>
<td>1980</td>
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<td>1980</td>
<td>Rajz/Drawings</td>
<td>Pecsi Galleria, Pecs, Hungary</td>
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<td>Annely Juda Fine Art, London</td>
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<td>1981</td>
<td>Art &amp; Design from the University of East Anglia</td>
<td>York City Art Gallery</td>
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<td>1981</td>
<td>CRASH</td>
<td>Wright Museum of Art, Beloit College, Wisconsin, USA</td>
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<td>1981</td>
<td>Oeuvres Contemporaines</td>
<td>Musée de Grenoble</td>
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<td>1981</td>
<td>5th International Graphic Exhibition</td>
<td>Istituto per la Cultura, Catania, Italy</td>
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<td>1981</td>
<td>Malcom Hughes, Peter Lowe &amp; Alan Reynolds</td>
<td>Galerie Renée Ziegler, Zurich</td>
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<td>1982</td>
<td>Malcolm Hughes, Peter Lowe &amp; Alan Reynolds</td>
<td>Galerie Renée Ziegler, Zurich</td>
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<td>1982</td>
<td>Drawing Triennale</td>
<td>Museum of Architecture, Wroclaw, Poland</td>
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<td>1983</td>
<td>Rajz/Drawings</td>
<td>Pecsi Galleria, Pecs, Hungary</td>
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<td>1985</td>
<td>Art and Science</td>
<td>Venice Biennale</td>
<td>1985</td>
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<td>1985</td>
<td>Arbeitskreis Kunstsommer, Kunststation, Kleinsassen, Germany</td>
<td>Systematic Constructive Drawings, York University</td>
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<td>1985</td>
<td>Utopia and Reality-Project, Lodz, Poland</td>
<td>Konkrete Multiples, Galerie L’Idée, Zoetermeer, Netherlands</td>
<td>1985</td>
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<td>1986</td>
<td>Biennial of Graphic Art</td>
<td>Ljubljana, Slovenia</td>
<td>1986</td>
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2003  *Das Entgrenzte Bild*, Wilhelm-Hack-Museum, Ludwigshafen, Germany (and tour)
2004  *Multiple, Graphic und Objekt*, Galerie St Johann, Saarbrücken, Germany
      *The London Group Open*, Menier Gallery, London
2005  *40 Grafika Opera Prima*, Muzeum Milana Dobesa, Bratislava, Slovakia
      *Expanded Painting*, Karlin Hall, Biennale Z, Prague
      *Symposiu Gorinchem*, Stadhuys, Gorinchem
      *Elements of Abstraction*, Southampton City Art Gallery
      *22 of the Future for the Future of Vukovar*, Muzeum Sztuki, Lodz
      *Casa per l’Arte*, Fondazione Paolo Minoli, Cantù, Italy
      *White-Black*, Vasarely Museum, Budapest
2007  *Nabytky 2004-2006*, Muzeum Chelmskie, Chelm, Poland
      *Towards a Rational Aesthetic*, Osborne Samuel Gallery, London
2008  *The Rational Eye: Geometric, Optical, Kinetic and Programmed Art*, International Centre of Graphic Arts (MGLC), Ljubljana
      *Oko Zwiedzione*, Galeria EL, Centrum Sztuki, Elblag, Poland
      *A Rational Aesthetic*, Southampton City Art Gallery
      *Construction and its Shadow*, Sculpture Galleries, Leeds Art Gallery
      *From Intuition to Certitude*, Chiesa dell’Immacolata, Castello di Lipari, Italy
      *L’arte nel Bicchiere, La Collezione d’Arte Moderna di Franco*, Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy
      *Construction & Systems Art from Britain*, The Conversation, Von Bartha Collection, Basel
2012  *Modern Art and Universalism, Correspondences*, Muzeum Sztuki, Lodz
      *Reflections on Concrete Art (Bill Culbert, Peter Lowe, Victor Pasmore & Jeffrey Steele)*, Laurent Delaye Gallery
      *Experiment in Time*, Laurent Delaye Gallery, London
      *Concretos Paralelos*, Centro Culturale Britanico, Sao Paulo, Brazil
      *Keywords*, Institute of International Visual Arts, London and Tate Liverpool
2013  *Die Kunst Geht in die Stadt*, Erfurt, Germany
2014  *From David Bomberg to Paula Rego*, The London Group, Southampton City Art Gallery
      *Conversations Around Marlow Moss*, &Model Gallery, Leeds
      *Automatic Art*, GV Gallery, London
      *The Social Bases of Abstract Art*, Updown Gallery, Ramsgate
      *A Fine Line: Concrete, Constructivist and Minimalist Art*, Austin Desmond Gallery, London

**Work in public collections**

- Arts Council Collection, London
- Victoria and Albert Museum, London
- Musée de Grenoble
- Museo de Arte Moderno, Fundacion Soto, Venezuela
- University of East Anglia
- National Museum, Warsaw
- Peter Stuyvesant Foundation, Amsterdam
- Kemin Kaupunki Taidesmuseo, Kemi, Finland
- Stedelijk Museum, Schiedam
- Alvar Alto Foundation, Pino Torinesi, Turin
- Museum of Modern Art, Zagreb
- Commanderie Sint Jan, Nijmegen
- Museum of Art, Chelm, Poland
- Tate Britain
- Southampton City Art Gallery
- Mondriaanhuis, Amersfoort, Holland
- Peter C. Ruppert Collection, Würzburg
- Henry Moore Institute, Leeds