

Press Release

Peter Joseph *The Border Paintings*

February 16 – April 24, 2021
504 West 24th Street, New York

Lisson Gallery is honored to present an exhibition of works by Peter Joseph, the artist to have held the longest continuous association with Lisson Gallery, since its inaugural year in 1967. Joseph was in the process of planning this exhibition of important paintings from the 1980s and 1990s, when he passed away at age 91 in November 2020.

Peter Joseph visited the exhibition *The New American Painting* at the Tate Gallery in 1959, at the age of 29, where he first experienced the work of Abstract Expressionist painters Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman. His own works before 1970 focused on primary color and performativity at scale, garnering critical and institutional acclaim, including exhibitions of indoor and outdoor installations at Camden Arts Centre and Kenwood House in 1966, even then reaching out towards the observer and to nature. However, a seminal moment for Joseph's practice came during a visit to the cinema in the late 1960s when he fell asleep during a Luis Buñuel film, waking to be bathed in just the residual light of the projector on the silver screen. Joseph sat staring at this blank space, the flickering void of the empty projection surrounded by a darker border delineating the cinematic frame. This experience inspired the nuanced relationship of light and color between a border and a central motif that would come to define his oeuvre for many decades to come, containing what he described, in conversation with Hans Ulrich Obrist, as "a delicacy about it. It wasn't just a simple tone or color. And I realized that this, to me, had more possibility in it for what I could only call a reflection."

Over the years, with Joseph's ever thoughtful focus, and 'less is more' philosophy, the outline of these *Border* works became thicker as he began to play with the relative color and size of the two rectangles. By the 1980s – after a significant number of these works were acquired by the great Italian collector, Giuseppe Panza (now part of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation) – the paintings evolved again, foregrounding the emotional charge of the sublime. Reflecting upon that original cinematic encounter, Joseph began to experiment with subtle tonal difference by juxtaposing complementary colours through studies, with the subsequent paintings, typically titled with the two constituent colors, for example *Light Pink with Cobalt Blue* (1994). Their simplicity sought to convey clarity and depth in both vision and feeling.

Throughout his career, Joseph cited early Venetian and Florentine painting, as well as Classical and Neo-Classical architecture as his primary influences, and subscribed to methodologies more typically associated with Renaissance painters and the likes of Claude Lorrain and Tintoretto, than of his minimalist contemporaries. He painted in natural light, from his studio in the English countryside, and believed the work should be viewed in similar conditions, so that they could be 'absorbed'. His appreciation for tonality and time-based sensibilities imbued his work with melody and harmony. As Nicholas Logsdail noted in his recent reflection on the artist's life for *Frieze* magazine: "He compared his paintings to music and often spoke of music as the first form of abstraction, with many great composers, from Johann Sebastian Bach onwards, more interested in sentiment than narrative. This was what Peter sought: to remove the content while retaining the meaning, thereby amplifying the emotion."

About Peter Joseph

Peter Joseph had, over the course of decades, dedicated his practice to seeking the potential in constraint. He rose to critical acclaim in the 1970s for his meditative, two-color paintings, which set one rectangle within a frame of a darker shade. These early works were characterized by perfect symmetry, where every decision about color and proportion could be seen to be redolent of time, mood or place. While comparable to the work of Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman, Joseph's was an anomalous strain of Minimalism: his allegiance lay as much with Renaissance masters as with his contemporaries. More recently his format had departed from his established 'architecture' to divide the canvas into two planes, horizontally or vertically, wherein loose brushwork, natural tones and patches of exposed canvas tap into new feeling. As Joseph said: 'A painting must generate feeling otherwise it is dead'.

Peter Joseph (1929 – 2020) was born in London, and lived and worked in Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK. He has had solo exhibitions at Unité d'habitation Le Corbusier, Briey-en-fôret, France (1998); Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, UK (1994) and Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL, USA (1983). He has been included in major group shows at Sotheby's S|2, London, UK (2018); FRAC Nord-Pas de Calais, Dunkirk, France (2014); Nouveau Musée National de Monaco, France (2013); Neues Museum Weserburg, Bremen, Germany (2010); Musée d'art moderne et contemporain, Geneva, Switzerland (2008); MuHKA, Museum voor Hedendaagse Kunst, Antwerp, Belgium (2007); Northern Gallery of Contemporary Art, Sunderland, UK (2005); Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany (2002); Fundacao Serralves, Porto, Portugal (1999); Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Wolfsburg, Germany (1991); Stadtische Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, Germany (1984) and the Royal Academy of Arts, London, UK (1977). His work can be found in many public collections including Art Gallery of New South Wales, Australia; Arts Council of Great Britain; British Council, London; De Menil Foundation, Texas, USA; Fogg Art Museum, Philadelphia, USA; Fonds Regional d'art contemporain, France; Kunsthau, Zurich, Switzerland; Migros Collection, Zurich, Switzerland; Museum of Modern Art, Geneva, Switzerland; Panza Collection, Milan, Italy; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, US; Southampton City Art Gallery, UK; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands; Tate Gallery, London, UK; Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK; Walker Art Gallery, Minneapolis, US.

About Lisson Gallery

Lisson Gallery is one of the most influential and longest-running international contemporary art galleries in the world. Today the gallery supports and promotes the work of more than 60 international artists across two spaces in London and two in New York, one in Shanghai, as well as temporary spaces opened in 2020 in East Hampton and London's Mayfair district. Established in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, Lisson Gallery pioneered the early careers of important Minimal and Conceptual artists, such as Art & Language, Carl Andre, Daniel Buren, Donald Judd, John Latham, Sol LeWitt, Richard Long and Robert Ryman among many others. In its second decade the gallery introduced significant British sculptors to the public for the first time, including Tony Cragg, Richard Deacon, Anish Kapoor, Shirazeh Houshiary and Julian Opie. Since 2000, the gallery has gone on to represent many more leading international artists such as Marina Abramović, Ai Weiwei, John Akomfrah, Carmen Herrera, Susan Hiller, Tatsuo Miyajima and Sean Scully. It is also responsible for raising the international profile of a younger generation of artists led by Cory Arcangel, Nathalie Djurberg & Hans Berg, Ryan Gander, Haroon Mirza, Laure Prouvost, Pedro Reyes and Wael Shawky.

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LISSON GALLERY



Peter Joseph
Ochre with Dull Red 1998
Acrylic on cotton duck
142.2 x 150.8 x 4.1 cm
56 x 59 3/8 x 1 5/8 in
JOSE980010



Peter Joseph
Bright Pink with Lilac 1990
Acrylic on cotton duck
150 x 151.5 x 4 cm
59 x 59 5/8 x 1 1/2 in
JOSE900001



Peter Joseph
Light Green with Dark Green 1987
Acrylic on cotton duck
146 x 160 cm
57 1/2 x 63 in
JOSE870104



Peter Joseph
Blue Colour with Black Border 1981
Acrylic on cotton duck canvas
157.5 x 136.8 x 3.5 cm
62 x 53 7/8 x 1 3/8 in
JOSE810001

LISSON GALLERY



Peter Joseph
Sky Blue with Turquoise Blue 1994
Acrylic on cotton duck
160 x 172 cm
62 7/8 x 67 5/8 in
JOSE940006



Peter Joseph
Light Blue with Red 1989
Oil on canvas
130.5 x 146 x 3.5 cm
51 3/8 x 57 1/2 x 1 3/8 in
JOSE890149



Peter Joseph
Light Pink with Cobalt Blue 1994
Acrylic on cotton duck
153.7 x 165.7 x 3.8 cm
60 1/2 x 65 1/4 x 1 1/2 in
JOSE940005



Peter Joseph
Dark Grey with Dark Blue Surround 1983
Acrylic on cotton duck canvas
177.8 x 152.9 x 3.8 cm
70 x 60 1/8 x 1 1/2 in
JOSE830003