An abstract artwork featuring a vibrant pink background. A large, irregular shape in the center is filled with a textured, brownish-gold color, resembling sand or a coarse fabric. This central shape is surrounded by areas of deep green, which has a fine, woven texture. The overall composition is layered and textured, with various colors and materials visible.

MAURICE COCKRILL

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Maurice Cockrill – 'The Open Gate'

Blessed with a soul well travelled along paths of interpreting our worlds through paint, Maurice Cockrill stuns us with the vivacity and instinctual approach of a cultivated mind through his new series of works entitled 'The Open Gate'. A subtle, lyrical thunder blast of post-modern symbolism with an old soul, the paint is rendered into polarities of violence and softness using an exquisite sense of colour.

Throughout the decades, Cockrill has opened his eyes to the world again and again, each time shifting the paint in a new way to reflect each layer of vision. He is famous for his breadth of techniques and themes, saying: 'the artists I've admired most, like Picasso, are the protean ones. I'd rather be changing shape than just be doing the same thing time after time.' His paint in the 70's explored the minutiae surface of objects through the factual effects of photo-realism. Later Cockrill's work began to explore the emotional vicissitudes of memory and homeland, plying the paint in raw, vigorous gestures. The colours were dark, sometimes menacing, and the landscapes: industrial slagheaps of his boyhood. The personal symbols that emerged from this phase propelled a whole output of more abstracted works reflecting the serpentine rivers winding through the landscapes of his homeland in Wales. The lyrical curves in the works of this exhibition reveal Cockrill's preoccupation with organic forms, especially water and the phases of a river. The curves in paintings such as 'Jade Garden' (catalogue no. .) can be seen as river-maps flowing round the canvases – reminiscent of his series of pictures such as the 'Conwy River Cycle' (1998) – painted in Conwy estuary in North Wales, close to where the artist grew up. Rivers are important to Cockrill as they evoke the cycle of life – birth, maturity, decay and regeneration – that echo these central human preoccupations. The artist explains that a proximity to nature – whether in North Wales, or to his back garden in South London – helps him to address the realm of emotions rather than reason.



Now in 'The Open Gate' series, these serpentine shapes have merged with personal symbols and forms from time spent in other lands – merging the past and present. The colour fields that split canvases such as 'Moonlit Bride' and 'Mirror Mirror', create a divide and tension of opposites – polarities finding their unifying paradox in the interweaving forms and colours. A 'Mandorla' is the overlapping spaces of two circles intersecting – it is the ground upon which the opposites of the two spaces find their reconciliation. There is a sense here that the process of painting these opposites: of violence and softness, darkness and joy, Cockrill is in fact painting himself into the space of the 'Mandorla'.

A point has been reached in these new works where there is a sense Cockrill has finally found what he has been looking for – the openness, freedom, technical expertise, the use of colour and paint, are communicating complex ideas with a unifying simplicity, not unlike the methods found in Chinese scrolls, or Japanese films. Three large, heavy jade-handled paintbrushes dangle from hooks in his studio, mighty weights to wield. Traces of other lands, other philosophies.

As Keeper of the Royal Academy Schools since 2004, Cockrill's studio perches atop the Royal Academy, reachable by a flight of Dickensian, dusty and treacherous wooden stairs. When not teaching his students, it is here he paints, listening to jazz, drinking green tea or reading. Far from epitomising him as a monk however, there are glimmers of a cheeky fascination with the more violent crime-ridden side of life as revealed in the title of his work 'Still Alive in the Trunk' – from the award winning TV series 'The Sopranos'.

Cockrill works at the heart of the Visual Arts world, and remains one of the most original artists working in Britain today. 'The Open Gate' series is possibly the strongest work Cockrill has created to date, and we are delighted to be exhibiting his new solo show at the Adam Gallery.

Maurice Cockrill's work is in many private and public collections including the British Museum, Arts Council of Great Britain, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, and the Royal Academy of Arts. Cockrill's first major group exhibition was Art in the City at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London in 1967. Since then, he has held solo exhibitions internationally, such as at the Kunstmuseum, Dusseldorf (1985), Annandale Galleries, Sydney, Australia, and Bernard Jacobson Gallery, London and New York. A retrospective of his work (1974-1994) was held at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool (1995) and a further retrospective was held at the Royal West of England Academy (1998).

Prizes have included the John Moores Liverpool Exhibition (1974), the Arts Council of Great Britain, Flags and other projects (1977), Arts Council of Great Britain major award (1977-8), the Arts Council Works of Art in Public Spaces (1978-9), British Council Award (1985) and being shortlisted for the Jerwood Prize (1994). Cockrill was elected an RA in 1999, has been Keeper of the Royal Academy Schools since 2004 and lives and works in London.

Festina lente: the art of Maurice Cockrill

Maurice Cockrill has been surprising us for so many years that surprise might almost be what we expect. There is something restless and kinetic about his work; also, perhaps, something unsettling. I mean not only that these are the qualities of any particular painting, but also that the constantly dynamic progress of the work as a whole – progression might be a better term – from one painting to the next, from one series to the next, from one scale and one medium to another, induces a kind of nervous exhilaration, or a sense of agitated wonder. His imagination is mercurial; his creative methodologies are resourcefully experimental; his invention is diverse and virtuosic. Each new phase of his painting presents us with yet another high definition performance, something not anticipated, as if he was incapable of repeating the previous act, and felt impelled every time to respond to Diaghilev's imperious injunction: 'Étonne-moi!'

To surprise himself also is, of course, part of Cockrill's creative intent. He has long learnt to let the paint think for him, so to speak; to trust the medium to find the image, to allow the medium to be the message. This is partly a matter of a versatile and resourceful technique: Cockrill has constantly found new ways to arrive at desired effects while avoiding premeditation. He may set out not knowing quite what he wants, but he knows without doubt or question when he has found it. There are elements of both Zen and surrealism in these strategies. He is a consummate master of the unpredictable linear sign, of the arabesque, the interweaving serpentine, the quick and sudden automatic gesture. He is a brilliant and original colourist.

In all this, Cockrill draws on a deep understanding of the diverse histories of modern and post-modern art, including those of both realist and abstract expressionism. This insight is developed through intuitive openness, meditative reflection and long practice. He has, as well, a canny grasp of formalist device, a purposive structural intelligence and a ready visual wit. There are everywhere in his paintings the discernible traces of his creative negotiations with the art of the past, with that of the modernist masters and with that of his best contemporaries. This energetic exchange gives his paintings a particular and characteristic vibrancy of formal and thematic reference. His quick and pungent manner, at once unpredictable and unmistakable, is his own: the product, paradoxically, of sometimes prolonged contemplation. For Maurice Cockrill knows when to wait, and when not to; how to be uncertain the better to achieve a surprising certainty of image and effect. When the work arrives in our sight, we applaud the brilliant performance, and immediately think: what will he do next?

Mel Gooding



1 His Little Princess
mixed media on canvas 120 x 100cm



*On this precious night
How I wish that I could show,
If I am to view them,
To someone who knows how to feel,
These blossoms and this moon.*

*Japanese poem - Anonymous; Tenth century
MC*





4

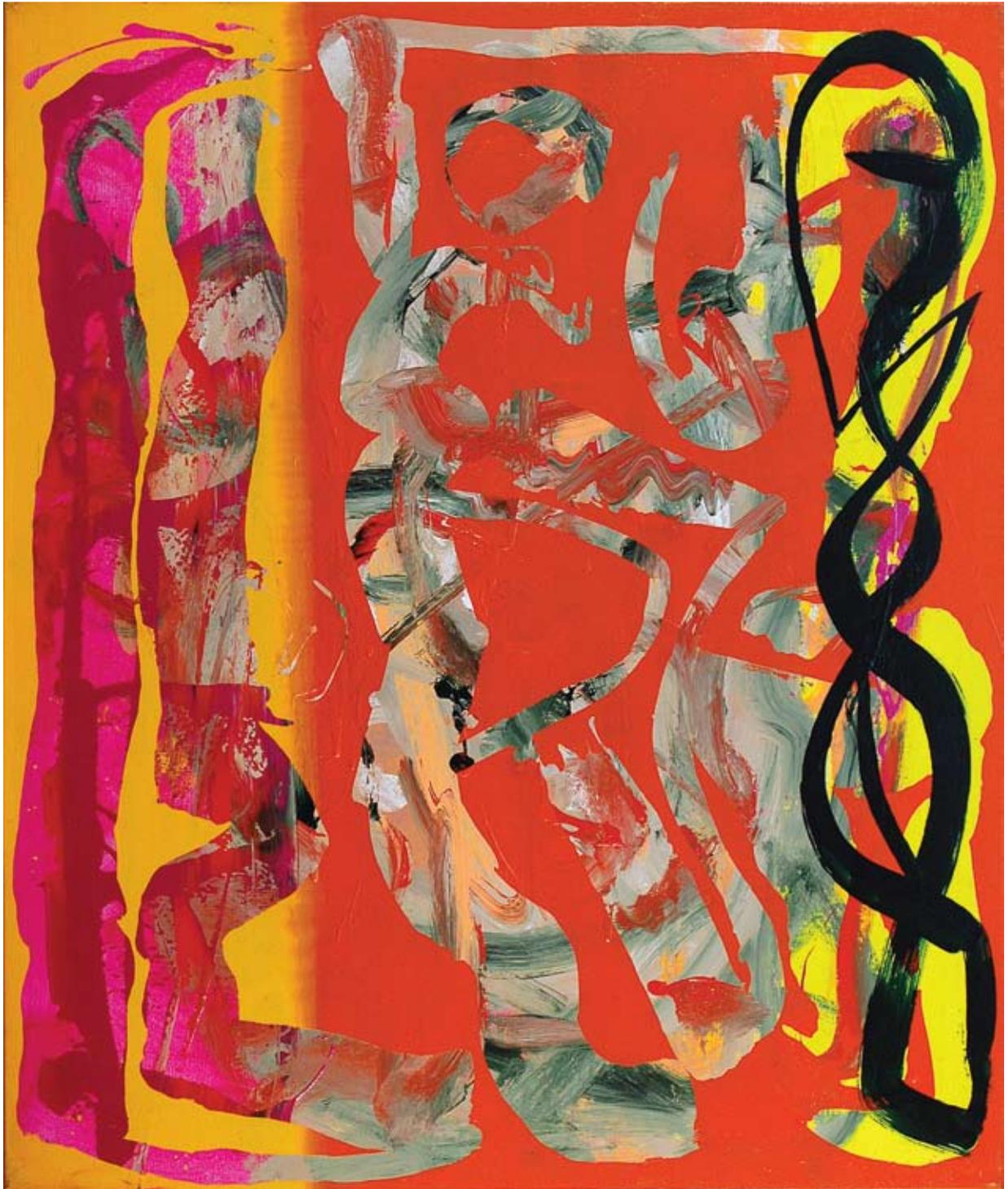
Broken Nocturne - Lemon
mixed media on canvas 100 x 80cm



5 Jade Garden
mixed media on canvas 60 x 50cm



6 Child Bride
mixed media on canvas 30 x 25cm



7 Salome
mixed media on canvas 120 x 100cm

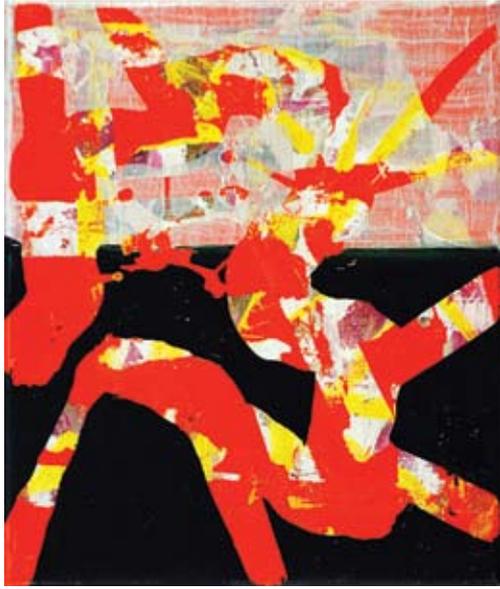


8 Anticipated Blues
gouache on paper 29 x 39cm



9

At The Swimming Hole
mixed media on canvas 120 x 100cm



10 Little Warrior
mixed media on canvas 30 x 25cm



11 Flame
gouache on paper 40 x 28cm





13 The Liberator
mixed media on canvas 60 x 50cm











18 Rain on the Soldier
gouache on paper 39 x 29cm











23

Mirror Mirror
mixed media on canvas 60 x 50cm







26 White Column
mixed media on canvas 30 x 25cm



27 Broken Ladder
mixed media on canvas 41 x 31cm





Maurice Cockrill - Biography

- 1936 Born, 8 October, Hartlepool, UK
- 1958-60 Studied at Wrexham School of Art, National Diploma in Design and Painting Special
- 1960-64 University of Reading, Art Teacher Diploma & BA in Fine Art
- 1967-80 Lecturer, Faculty of Art, Liverpool Polytechnic
- 1982 Moves to London
- 1982-85 Occasional visiting tutor at Schools of Art in Manchester, Portsmouth, Farnham, Winchester and Nottingham
- 1985-88 Visiting tutor at Royal College of Art and Central School of Art
- 1984-94 Visiting tutor at Saint Martins School of Art
- 1994 Nominated for the Jerwood Prize
- 1995 Artist in Residence at G.O.F.A. University of N.S.W. Australia
- 1995-97 Visiting tutor at Royal Academy Schools
- 1999 Elected to the Royal Academy of Arts
- 2002 Visiting Artist, Vermont
- 2004 Visiting Artist, Vermont Studio Center
- 2004 Elected the Keeper of the Royal Academy of Arts and Head of the Royal Academy Schools
- 2005 Honorary Member of Royal West of England Academy
- 2006 President of the Royal Cambrian Academy
- 2006 Professor of Contemporary Fine Art in Liverpool John Moores University
- 2007 Honorary Member of Royal Watercolour Society
- 2007 Guest Professor, Xi'an Academy of Fine Art, China
- 2008 Honorary Fellow of Glyndwr University

Collections

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| British Museum | John Moores, Liverpool |
| Arts Council of Great Britain | D.G. Bank Atkinson Art Gallery, Southport |
| Welsh Arts Council | Granada Television |
| Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool | Merseyside Arts |
| Ulster Museum, Belfast | Kunstmuseum, Düsseldorf |
| Hertfordshire Education Committee | Contemporary Art Society |
| The Leicester Collection | Deutsche Bank |
| London Borough of Candel | Unilever |
| University of Liverpool | Centro Cultural Arte Contemporaneo, Polanco, Mexico |
| Liverpool Daily Post | Riggs Bank AG, London |
| Alexander Howden Group | Royal Academy, London |
| Borough of Milton Keynes | Contemporary Art Society for Wales |

Selected Solo Exhibitions

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|------|---|---------|---|
| 2009 | Adam Gallery , London 'The Open Gate' | 1995 | Galerie Helmut Pabst, Frankfurt |
| 2009 | Charleston, East Sussex, UK | | Retrospective 1974–1994, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool |
| 2007 | Cheltenham Museum and Art Gallery | | Bernard Jacobson Gallery, London 'Place of Fire' |
| 2007 | Francis Kyle Gallery | | Galerie Clivages, Paris The Ash Series |
| 2006 | Dover Arts Club | | Annandale Galleries, Sydney, Australia |
| 2004 | Archeus Fine Art, London | | Djanogly Gallery, University of Nottingham, Retrospective |
| | Royal Cambrian Academy, Conwy, Wales | 1994 | Galerie Helmut Pabst, Frankfurt |
| | Attic Gallery, Swansea | | Galerie Molinaars, Breda, Holland, Works on Paper |
| | Williamson Art Gallery, Birkenhead | 1993 | Bugdahn und Kaimer, Düsseldorf |
| | Galerie Bruno Mory, Besanceuil, France | 1992 | Bernard Jacobson Gallery, London |
| | Hillsborough Fine Art, Dublin | | Newlyn Art Gallery, Penzance |
| 2002 | Archeus Fine Art, London | | Spacex Gallery, Exeter |
| 2002 | Royal Academy, London, Friends' Room Exhibition | 1992 | Plymouth Art Centre, Plymouth |
| 2001 | Galerie Helmut Pabst, Frankfurt | 1988 | Bernard Jacobson Gallery, New York |
| 2000 | Galerie Bugdahn und Kaimer, Düsseldorf | 1987–90 | Bernard Jacobson Gallery, London |
| | Galerie Vidal-Saint Phalle, Paris | 1986 | Galerie Bugdahn und Szeimies, Düsseldorf |
| 1999 | Annandale Galleries, Sydney Australia | 1985 | Kunstmuseum, Düsseldorf |
| 1998 | Galerie Bugdahn und Kaimer, Düsseldorf | 1984–85 | Edward Totah Gallery, London |
| | Royal West of England Academy, Bristol. Retrospective | 1983 | University of Nottingham Gallery |
| | Purdy Hicks Gallery, London | 1981 | Festival Commission, Milton Keynes |
| | Galerie le Triangle Bleu, Stavelot, Belgium | 1981 | Bluecoat Gallery, Liverpool |
| | Galerie Helmut Pabst, Frankfurt | 1979–80 | Lime Street Station, Liverpool |
| | Ogilvy and Estill Gallery, Conwy, Wales | 1979 | St. Paul's Gallery, Leeds |
| 1997 | Galerie Clivages, Paris | 1976 | Liverpool Academy Gallery |
| | Galerie Helmut Pabst, Frankfurt | 1974–79 | Bluecoat Gallery, Liverpool |
| | Belgrave Gallery, London; works on paper | 1971 | Serpentine Gallery, London |
| 1996 | Annandale Galleries, Sydney, Australia. Drawings | | Peterloo Gallery, Manchester |
| | Bernard Jacobson Gallery, London 'A Portable Kingdom' | | |

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