

KETTLE'S YARD

Bridget Riley

colour, stripes, planes and curves

24 September – 20 November 2011

Teachers' Support Notes



Bridget Riley in front of 'Justinian', 1988, © Bridget Riley 2011.
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Education Private View

Thursday 13 October 2011, 5.15-7pm

The gallery is open Tuesday – Sunday, 11.30am-5pm

The house is open Tuesday – Sunday 2-4pm (extending to 1.30-4.30pm in summer)

We can arrange group visits to the gallery either outside or during opening hours. All house visits must be outside opening hours.

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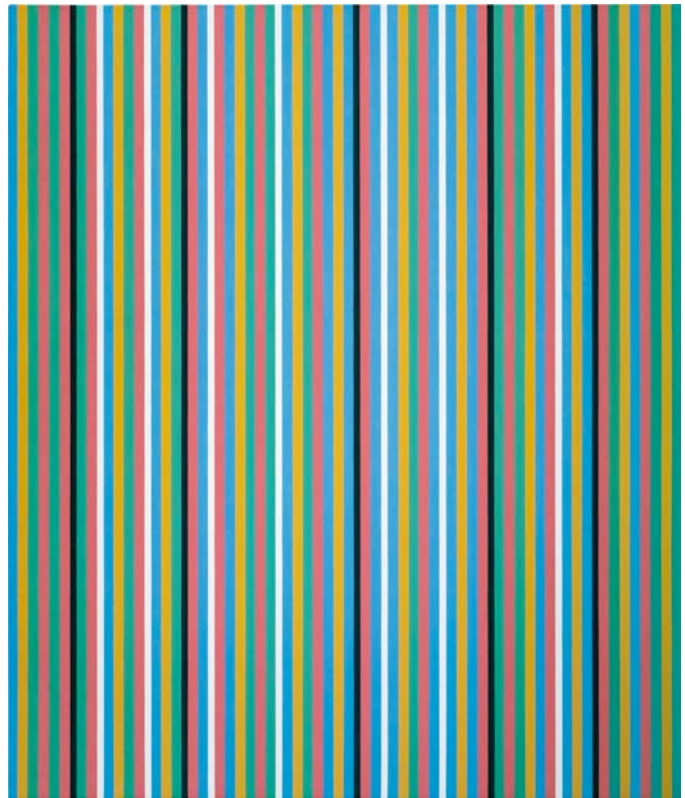
The exhibition

2011 sees Bridget Riley celebrating her 80th birthday. It also brings the 50th anniversary of *Movement in Squares*, the break-through black and white painting that marked her out as one of the world's leading abstract painters. This exhibition, organised uniquely for Kettle's Yard, takes paintings and studies from the last thirty years to trace her progress through four chapters of stripes, planes, curves and stripes again. Working on large canvases, Riley often returns to her previous paintings for inspiration, keeping a selection in her studio to refer back to. The majority of paintings in this exhibition are from that selection.

An illustrated catalogue with a conversation between Bridget Riley and Michael Harrison, Director of Kettle's Yard, accompanies the show. A PDF version is available on request from the education team.

What's in the show?

Deeply influenced by the discoveries of Seurat and the Impressionists, Bridget Riley's approach to colour was radically affected by a visit to Egypt in the winter of 1979-80. There she found 'artists after her own heart', who had used a palette of four colours: red ochre, yellow ochre, a turquoise and a blue plus black and white, which had been used in that part of the world for thousands of years. These colours became the basis for a series of vertical stripe paintings exploring their potential for interaction. 'It was a very sturdy, solid group of colours with infinite flexibility.' As the series went on so the palette expanded in rhythmic compositions of startling variety.



Rose Rime, 1982, © Bridget Riley 2011.
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Working across the canvases, Riley set herself the task of getting from one side of the canvas to the other, creating contrasts between colours and bright and dark patches, between positive and negative. As she describes, 'this cannot be done mechanically. It can only be done by working over the whole area and that is actually composing.' (Riley/Harrison conversation)



A desire to dig deeper into pictorial space, coupled with her careful study of Cézanne, especially his practice of drawing with colour, led to a new structure – the introduction of planes formed by the junction of intersecting verticals and diagonals – and of colours and contrasts.

Vespertino, 1988, © Bridget Riley 2011.
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Wanting to bring curves back into her painting, Riley used large areas of colour in flat planes to create compositions of lyrical and exuberant rhythms. These paintings appear looser but are still supported by the by frame of vertical and diagonal lines. As Riley describes, ‘ These [paintings] were very free but, like all freedoms, they need an underpinning’ (Riley/Harrison Conversation)



Two Greens and Blue, 2000, © Bridget Riley 2011.
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More recently, Riley has returned to vertical stripe painting in her *Rose Rose* series. Using a close harmony of hue and tone, spiked by strong contrasts, Riley employs the same rigorous discipline to achieve a new sensuality and warmth in her work.

Quotes

'Colour is the proper means for what I want to do because it is prone to inflections and inductions existing only through relationship; malleable, yet tough and resilient.'

from 'The Pleasures of Sight', 1984

'Through all of this group of stripe paintings a shallow depth evolved which was something I wanted to deepen, to dig into, and from a stripe to a plane is only a small step.'

Conversation with Michael Harrison, 2011

'I want to bring about a situation in which my work can throw up surprises.'

from a conversation with Michael Craig-Martin, 1992

'In the studio I studied the intervals of both the blacks and whites so that together they made a rhythm and built a shallow space – one airing the painting and the other hammering out the structure'

Conversation with Michael Harrison, 2011

Weblinks

Riley describing her use of repetition and rhythm circa 1965

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_G9eGzxQq2U&feature=related

Lecture given by Riley in 2003. Minutes 45-55 contain a description of her trip to Egypt and subsequent work

<http://channel.tate.org.uk/#media:/media/26080505001&context:/channel/search?searchQuery=riley>

1988 audio interviews

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbcfour/audiointerviews/profilepages/rileyb1.shtml>

Useful contextual information from the 2003 Tate Britain Riley retrospective

<http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/riley/>

Audio slideshow linked to the 2011 exhibition at the National Gallery

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-11791205>