

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GEOFFREY CLARKE: INTUITIONISM

Prints and Works on Paper

4 March - 9 April 2020



Adoration of Nature , 1951, Etching and Drypoint, Edition of 5

Pangolin London is excited to be presenting an exhibition of works on paper and sculptures by Geoffrey Clarke. Known first and foremost as a sculptor, Geoffrey Clarke was also an exceptional print maker. Using his father's press whilst studying at the Royal College of Art, Clarke began a body of work which used sign and symbol to communicate what he described as a 'philosophy of Intuitionism', an idea he developed over the next six decades.

Clarke's earliest works from 1948-9, some of which are exhibited at Pangolin London for the first time, show a young, adept draughtsman, experimenting with a new medium and exploring influences from Klee to Picasso and from medieval landscapes to prehistoric cave painting. The following year however sees a distinct and exciting change in style and approach, one that shaped the rest of Clarke's career.

Clarke's confident leap from clearly definable figures to a comprehensive new visual language is nothing short of astonishing. Sign and symbol, line and arrow, powerfully communicate Clarke's elongated figures and tribal-looking heads. Many have commented on the spiritualism

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RIGHT:
Figure, 1952, Welded Iron,
Unique.

ABOVE:
Man and raincloud, 1951,
Etching.

of these works and this is certainly to be considered, with many of the titles exploring our human existence, faith and belief. However, they can also be seen as a fast and furious expression from an artist who has discovered a new voice. In 1950 alone, Clarke created seventy-seven new monochrome etchings, most of which were small-scale and often unique.

Judith LeGrove, author of the complete catalogue raisonné of Clarke's prints, notes that the context for this change in visual language is as wide ranging as Clarke's interests. From theosophy and psychology to world religion and astronomical models, Clarke's new direction can be seen as an effort to meld together his own creation story. Clarke's degree thesis, written in 1951 and titled 'Exposition of a Belief', gives a glimpse of how seriously he took this new direction. It is an introspection, a treatise and a philosophy on Clarke's search for truthful expression, as he wrote: 'The artist thus follows a philosophy of Intuitionism, where instinct and intellect are combined with the opportunity of higher attainments by the use of symbols.'

Whilst Clarke's print output decreased dramatically in 1951, partly due to writing his thesis and creating his first large scale sculpture *Icarus* for the Festival of Britain, his confidence increased and he began to introduce colour. Due to his way of using colour, the process is much more laborious, perhaps explaining why he began to work with other printers and why many more of these prints are editioned rather than unique experiments. In these and later coloured prints, Clarke's experience in stained glass seems to shine through. Glorious colours such as in *Blue Head*, 1951, give a rich depth to the print as well as recalling the lead lattice work of his early stained glass works, such as *Figure in a Landscape 'St Anthony'*, 1949, now in The Stained Glass Museum, and *Ely* - a forerunner to his monumental contribution to the windows at Coventry Cathedral.

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Clarke's new visual language is expressed not only through his prints but also through the sculpture he made alongside. *Complexities of Man*, 1950, which was shown at the Venice Biennale in 1952 and now resides in the Tate Collection, shows in forged iron a three-dimensional expression of prints such as *Man*, 1950, whereas prints like *Warrior*, 1956, can be seen as a precursor to Clarke's later sculptures in aluminium, such as his Tankman series from 1984. Another overlap between Clarke's prints and sculpture was his prolific use of monotype throughout his career to plan and explore his sculptures. Covering the wall behind Clarke in the photograph shown here, these monotypes offer a unique insight into his making process and highlight his extraordinary ability to shift effortlessly between seeing shape and form in reverse.

The prints in this exhibition not only give an insight to an exciting moment in Geoffrey Clarke's life and making process but also offer us a glimpse of the wider context of the development of Modern British sculpture: a moment where an openness to making across a wide spectrum of disciplines enabled an energetic young artist to create an entirely new and comprehensive visual language that we still have the opportunity to explore and enjoy today.

Also available: Dr Judith LeGrove, *Geoffrey Clarke A Sculptor's Prints*, 2012, £35.00.

The gallery is open Monday to Saturday, 10am - 6pm

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Geoffrey Clarke
with monotypes
(late 1960s)



Blue Head, 1951,
Etching in Colour,
Edition of 50.



Judith LeGrove,
*Geoffrey Clarke,
A Sculptor's Prints*,
2012

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