



C L I F F O R D
C H A N C E R

TRICIA GILLMAN: PAINTINGS FROM THE 1980s
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TRICIA GILLMAN: PAINTINGS FROM THE 1980s

'Few painters of her generation in this country have produced work that gives such immediate pleasure as Tricia Gillman's.' Mel Gooding

Several of these paintings were created in 1985, in London - a city almost unrecognisable to what it has become. The year in which the first ever mobile phone call was made in the UK, when Microsoft issued *Windows One*, the divisive Miners' strike was drawing to its conclusion and when Canary Wharf was a desolate area, bereft of life, redundant following the recent departure of the working docks. The disused warehouses that lined the banks of the Thames from St Katherine's Dock to Wapping were occupied by artists, the first *regenerationists*, inhabited as inexpensive studios that lacked any amenities but offered large floor areas, and spaces where they could be left to create art, alone but working within a collective climate of creativity. Against this monochrome backdrop, Tricia Gillman was painting these large, uncompromising canvases that were joyous and thrilling, celebratory in their vibrant colour and expanse.

The art critic Mel Gooding, writing in 1989, continued his quote above: 'She (Tricia) is a colourist of great gift; she has an innate sense of pictorial organisation, a wonderful ability to place motifs and elements in a picture with an exact *rightness*; and the handling of paint is various and lively, constantly inviting the eye to adventure and speculation.' Deeply informed by art history – to 20th century French and American painting and to the pictorial structure of early Renaissance painting - these paintings were painted shortly after the artist had seen Matisse's revolutionary painting *The Red Studio* 1911, then on temporary loan to the Tate. Gillman's large canvases share the formal device of a single flat plane on which objects, both natural and man-made, are portrayed in dynamic relationships. The materiality of the paint itself, the variety of her mark making, an active ingredient in the construction of the painting. There are overt references to the traditions of still life, to garden paintings, and to the urban wasteland around her studio. For Gillman, the language is of Abstraction. 'Abstraction, for me, provides a terrain where I can reference the multi-layered nature of experience.' Or as Sarah Kent, the Time Out art critic at the time, described them: 'A dense jungle of pure sensation'.

Returning to these paintings forty years after their making, bringing them out of the studio and into the public eye, is not an exercise in nostalgia, but a reminder that painting's narrative arc is non-linear. Painting's dialogue is not solely with the past, but forward looking, relevant to the art of today. Gillman's work of the period *speaks* contemporaneously to the abstract paintings being shown today in Mayfair's leading commercial art galleries, their due accomplishments deserving reassessment. The curator Mike Collier wrote at the time: 'Gillman is not just an intuitive, natural colourist, she is also a *skilled picture maker*'. From whom new art generations can learn – and we, today's viewer, can admire, and enjoy, her undoubted achievements.

The Clifford Chance art committee thanks Benjamin Rhodes of Benjamin Rhodes Arts for facilitating access to these marvellous paintings. Benjamin, as he writes in this brochure, first came across Tricia's paintings in 1982, and has been promoting and exhibiting her work in his galleries ever since. Our greatest thanks go to the artist, Tricia Gillman, for allowing us to show her paintings for an extended period. We appreciate the time she has taken out of her busy studio life to oversee the display of her paintings at 10 Upper Bank Street.

Nigel Frank
Clifford Chance art collection



Como 1982
oil on canvas
183 x 214cm



Carambola 1982
oil on canvas
210 x 200cm



Beech 1982
oil on canvas
200 x 200cm



White Walk 1985
oil on canvas
183 x 220cm



Formal Garden 1985
oil on canvas
184 x 187cm



Pink Palace 1985
oil on canvas
183 x 227cm

'This display of Tricia Gillman's paintings exactly covers the years of my first encounter with them and of the beginnings of our working partnership. The summer of 1982 at the Serpentine Gallery saw group shows from open submission and the second (selector the artist John McLean) provided glimpses of painters' activities a little apart from 'standard fare', I was very drawn in.

The 1982 paintings you see here felt incredibly fresh but also incredibly intelligent and thought-out. This work was making new connections, bridging the strong, flat colour (particularly Matisse,) and intimacy of French painting, (particularly Gillman's love of Braque's late Studio Paintings) with the physical materiality and scale of American Abstract Expressionism (particularly the gesture of De Kooning), as well as the clarity and breadth of Colour Field Painting.

I eventually made the journey to the Wapping studio around late 1984 towards our opening exhibition in 1985 and then her one-person show with me in 1987. This exhibition introduced new work revealing a growing concern with a more structured architecture, in such works as *Pink Palace* and *White Walk*, where we see the development of Gillman's fluency, vibrant colour and deft juxtapositions, which still sing out here today.'

Benjamin Rhodes, Director, Benjamin Rhodes Arts, 2024



Tricia Gillman, 2010. Photograph by Colin Mills

'I want a painting to be a place to roam, where experience is layered, like thinking and looking on a walk. The immediacy of particular experience breaks through, triggering a vivid mix-up of time, thoughts, images and sensations. My work aims to engender this fertile land where the observed, the imagined, the concrete, the ephemeral, can all mingle but remain discrete.' Tricia Gillman, 2012

Tricia Gillman (born 1951) was born in Johannesburg, South Africa and studied at the University of Leeds from 1970 to 1974 and at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne between 1975 and 1977. She had her first solo exhibition in 1978 at the Parkinson Gallery, Leeds. Subsequent solo exhibitions took place at the Arnolfini, Bristol in 1985 and later at the Benjamin Rhodes Gallery and Jill George Gallery, London. A retrospective exhibition was held at the Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle in 1989 which toured around the UK. In 2004 Storey Gallery staged a 30-year retrospective, in 2011 APT Studios, London staged her 40-year retrospective exhibition and, in 2022, Benjamin Rhodes Arts held her latest one-person exhibition. Gillman was selected for a Serpentine Gallery Summer Show in 1982, represented Britain in various British Council touring exhibitions in 1986, featured in the *Forces of Nature* exhibition at Manchester City Art Gallery in 1990. Her paintings have been selected four times for the prestigious *John Moores Prize* exhibition, Liverpool.

Gillman's work is included in the UK Government Art Collection, the New Hall Art Collection, the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry, the Victoria Gallery & Museum, Liverpool and numerous private collections internationally.

From 1978, Tricia taught at art schools around the country, including the Royal Academy and Royal College of Art. Between 1982 – 2000, she was Senior Tutor Fine Art at Central St Martins College of Art, London. She lives and works in south London.

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Painting loans courtesy the Artist and Benjamin Rhodes Arts

Images © The Artist

The works are for sale. For further information, contact benjamin@benjaminrhodes.co.uk

For information about the artist, visit www.triciagillman.co.uk
For further information, contact Nigel.Frank@cliffordchance.com

The loans have been arranged for Clifford Chance by FHAC Art Consultants

All Photographs courtesy of Colin Mills.
Front cover image: *Beech* 1982 oil on canvas.

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