

Nothing Extra: New Work by Trevor Bell

13 January – 27 March 2009

Exhibition Information for teachers and group leaders

Trevor Bell was born in Leeds in 1930 and was a student at Leeds College of Art. As a young man in his twenties, Bell moved to Cornwall where the large number of abstract artists such as Patrick Heron and Terry Frost had made St. Ives an inviting place for young contemporary artists.

From 1960-1963, Bell became a Gregory Fellow in Painting at the University of Leeds. The Gregory Fellows was an artist residency scheme set up by Yorkshire businessman Eric Gregory to encourage the University to take a proactive role in the promotion and support of the arts.

In 1973, Bell moved to Tallahassee, Florida where he had a studio and worked as Professor of Painting at the Florida State University. He returned to Cornwall in 1996, where he continues to live and work.

The landscape, colour, light and atmosphere of Yorkshire, Florida and Cornwall have been recurrent themes in Bell's abstract pieces. Bell takes details from the natural to inspire his paintings, which he explores using different colours and brush strokes to produce a variety of shapes and textures. Bell uses non-traditional brushes to make different kinds of marks; he's even painted with a toilet brush!

Since the 1960s, Bell has experimented with unconventional shaped canvases. In doing this, he highlights the three-dimensional or sculptural nature of paintings, while at the same time exploring flat space within his work. His hand-crafted canvases are as equally significant as the paint applied to them.

Bell has become famous for his large and colourful canvases, one of which is on display in the main gallery and is part of the permanent collection. This temporary exhibition presents Bell's new work, which are mainly shaped white and black paintings. In these works, Bell strips back to the essentials of his painting technique, exploring lines, shapes, and textures, with the bare minimum of colour. These quiet, minimal works were inspired partly by watching the rushing sea waters by his home in Penzance. But more importantly for Bell, they explore concepts of purity, truth and the sublime, elements which have been important throughout his 60-year career.

Suggested activities for groups visiting the exhibition and for extended learning back in the classroom are included in this pack or may be downloaded from www.leeds.ac.uk/gallery.