



Frank Bowling
Enter the Dragon

Private view: 30 June 6-9pm
1 July – 30 July 2011



Sacha Jason Quails Nest, 1987, Acrylic on canvas, 74 x 114 in

This year, Frank Bowling O.B.E. RA, the much revered British abstract painter, celebrates his 75th birthday.

Hales Gallery is proud to present *Enter the Dragon*, Frank Bowling's first exhibition with the gallery. The exhibition focuses emphatically on large-scale paintings from the 1980's, many not seen in London since that time.

Born and raised in Guyana, Bowling arrived in London in 1953, and his artistic career began in earnest in the late 1950s on his arrival at the Royal College. A bright star in the Royal College constellation of those years, he graduated in 1962, the year of his first solo show. In the mid 60's, excited by developments in American painting, Bowling moved to New York, where he pursued a successful career, including a solo show at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1971. From the late 70's onwards he has divided his time between his studios in London and Brooklyn.

The exhibition will provide an exciting opportunity to re-assess Bowling's persistent preoccupation with the formal aspects of American abstraction (Newman, Olitski and Poons) on the one hand and of classic English landscape painting (Gainsborough, Turner, and Constable) on the other. Thematically they bring out an obsessive fascination with light on water of an artist who has spent his entire life close to great rivers: the mighty Essequibo and the Berbice in his childhood Guyana; the London Thames and New York's East River as an adult. Bowling returns again and again to these watery motifs – drawing on his memories of the Guyanese estuaries, creeks, swamps and mudflats of his youth, and his experience of the two great city rivers seen every day of his studio life. He is acutely aware of the evocative, symbolic and psychological resonance of the constant change and evanescence of river and coastal light and colour. The brilliant works in this exhibition seem to be components of a distinctive and powerful narrative, in which currents of emotional connection flow, so to speak, into one another.

Titles of certain paintings in the exhibition tell their own story: *Serpentine* (1982), *Towards Crab Island* (1983), *Jetty* (1983), *Alluviumwold* (1985) and *Great Thames III* (1989), (*Great Thames IV* is in the Arts Council Collection). Even paintings whose titles give no clue of river or waterscape – *Enter the Dragon* (1984), *Sacha Jason's Quail's Nest* (1987) share that characteristic aqueous feel as with the others, their vibrant iridescences, translucencies, reflections and refractions bringing river-light and marine radiance into the gallery.

The exhibition adds to the celebrations of the publication of Mel Gooding's superb monograph on the artist, *Frank Bowling* (Royal Academy, 2011)

Frank Bowling's paintings have been widely exhibited internationally including solo exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art (1971), Serpentine Gallery (1986) and UK touring retrospective *Frank Bowling: Bending to the Grid* (2003), Bowling's work can be found in numerous prestigious collections including Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Royal Academy of Arts, London; Tate Gallery, London; Victoria and Albert Museum, London and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.