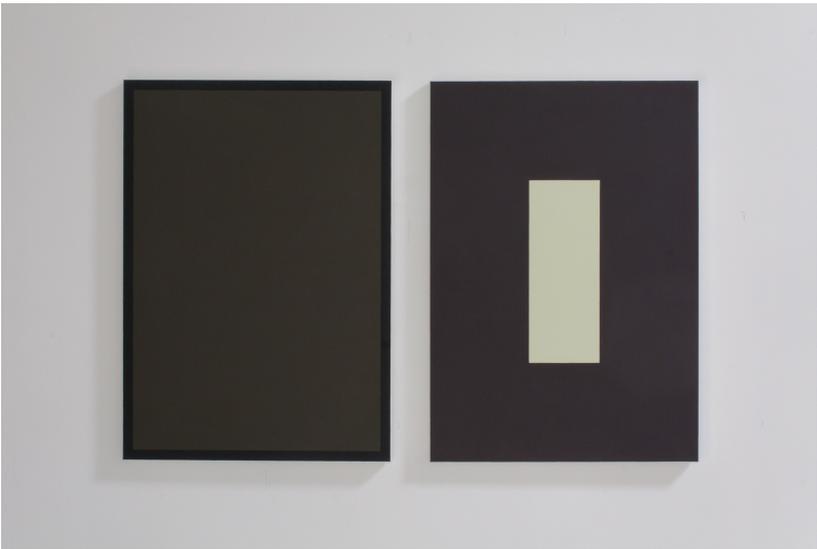


# “Anachromisms”

paintings 2007 - 2015

G R THOMSON



“Anachromisms” 25; 2007

[ eye & mind exhibition series #3 ]

## *Couleur et structure: une lecture*

*Le titre "Anachromisms" semble présenter une difficulté initiale. Ce mot n'existe pas dans le dictionnaire et l'on suppose qu'il s'agit d'une erreur typographique, que leur titre véritable est 'Anachronisms'. Ce n'est pas le cas. "Anachromisms" renvoie au mot chroma - couleur.*

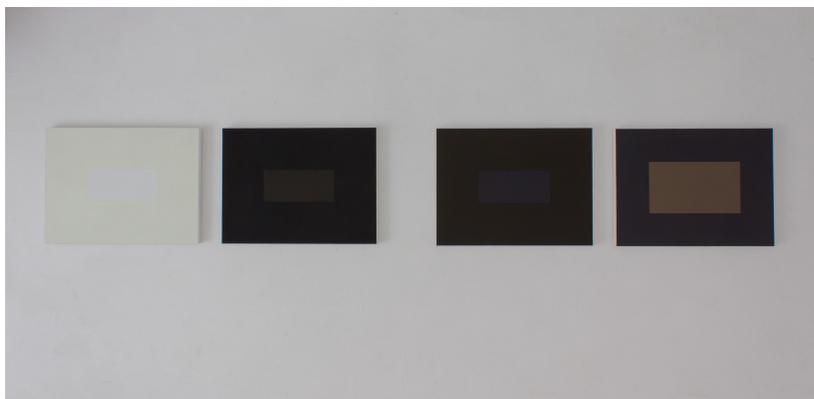
*Des différents aspects d'Anachromisms qui doivent retenir notre attention, le plus marquant est définitivement leur déploiement de la couleur. Dans tout tableau, dans toute l'histoire de la peinture, la couleur demeure l'élément le plus complexe et le plus troublant.*

*Si le tableau s'inscrit (ou, plutôt, se voit inscrit) dans le cadre d'une tradition de peinture 'systématique' et/ou 'constructiviste', le rôle de la couleur est plus problématique encore. Car, pour G R Thomson, la couleur n'est pas l'opposé, 'autre', de la structure et même du système. Ces deux aspects entretiennent plutôt une relation de supplémentarité.*

*Que les couleurs dramatisées dans "Anachromisms" soient difficiles à nommer, à identifier, constitue un enrichissement du plaisir de voir et du travail de regarder plutôt qu'un problème à résoudre.*

*Autre complexité gratifiante: l'économie qui régit la composition et l'échange de surfaces et de couleurs entre les deux tableaux qui constituent chacun des "Anachromisms". Une économie rigoureuse et rigoureusement observée, une vigilance qui, cependant, ne peuvent rendre compte de la rencontre entre ces tableaux et leurs lecteurs.*

Martine Lignon | 11 Septembre 2015



"Anachromisms" 33 & 34, 2012 - 2013

## ***Of colour and structure: a reading***

*The title “Anachromisms” seems to present the reader with an initial difficulty. This word does not feature in the dictionary and one could be forgiven from thinking it is a typo, a misspelling of ‘Anachronisms’. Not so. “Anachromisms” refers to ‘chroma’ - colour.*

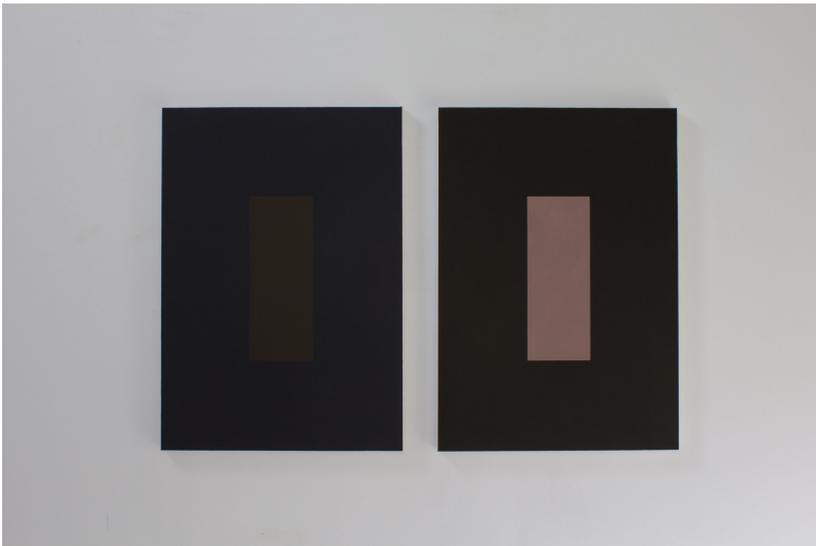
*Of the many aspects of “Anachromisms” that should retain our attention, the most engaging - and demanding - is their deployment of colour.*

*In any painting, in the whole history of painting, the most complex and troubling element/component is colour.*

*When the work is inscribed (or, rather, is assigned its inscription) within the tradition of ‘systematic’ or constructivist’ painting, the role of colour becomes still more problematic. And more so as, for G R Thomson, colour is not the ‘other’ of structure or even ‘system’. Rather, these two aspects engage in a relation of supplementarity.*

*The difficulty experienced by the respondent in identifying and naming the colours dramatised in “Anachromisms”, let alone the relationships between them, offers more enrichment to the pleasure of seeing and the work of looking - rather than presenting a problem to be solved.*

*Another form of rewarding complexity is that which rests with - and on - the economy that governs the exchange of colours and areas between the two ‘tableaux’ that constitute each “Anachromism”. A rigorous and rigorously observed economy, vigilant in its restraint, that can neither exhaust nor account for the encounter between these paintings and their readers.*



## **In lieu of a CV**

G R Thomson was born in Northern Ireland in 1947. Self-taught as a painter and writer, he has lived and worked in London since 1972. In 1977, he encountered the peculiarly English take on the tradition of Constructivism known as systematic constructive art practice. He has maintained a consuming interest in the aesthetic and political questions raised by this encounter ever since.

The first (00) in the ensemble of paintings that came to bear the name “Anachromisms” were executed in 1983. From the outset, this lifework has been both a part of and apart from the context out of which it arose.

In the same year, Thomson co-initiated “Exhibiting Space”, a collaborative, artist-run, educational project, dedicated, through monthly exhibitions, lectures, discussions and recitals of classical and contemporary musics, to ‘advancing political literacy in the field of the visual arts’. He remained closely involved in the strategic development and day-to-day management of the project until its closure in 1989.

Since then, he has engaged in various artistic, political and business pursuits. Teaching himself the MacOS and database programming led to his co-founding and running for ten years a business designing, supplying and maintaining bespoke Apple-based hardware and software solutions for architects.

During this period, he continued sporadically to make and exhibit paintings, enjoying some measure of critical and commercial success, notably in Germany and Switzerland.

Ceasing studio practice, he trained as a further education lecturer and for the past ten years, taught English and Maths to adults in a large London college. Following a five-year hiatus due to teaching commitments, Thomson resumed studio practice in 2007, making one or two paintings each year during the academic holidays.

Quitting formal employment in 2014 and a period of forced immobility following a car crash at the beginning of 2015 enabled the artist to devote more time to writing. This led to his being commissioned by the Redfern Gallery, London, to write the introductory catalogue essay for a retrospective exhibition of paintings and reliefs by the English systematic constructive artist Keith Richardson-Jones (1924 - 2004). Subsequent texts include: ‘Apertures 0.0’, on the painting of Peter Joseph. This is a fragment from a longer work in progress on the question of framing - as internal pictorial device and the supplementary visual and verbal orders through which painting is read.

The present exhibition at The Mercus Barn is accompanied by an essay on his own practice, written specially for the occasion by the artist. Current writing projects include an extended speculative essay on the question of framing in recent exhibitions of work by Kasimir Malevich and Agnes Martin at Tate Modern, London.

On a certain reading, all the above texts fall in with the exigencies of phonetic writing, i.e. writing as the sensible, exterior, encoding of the pre-constituted, transcendental interiority, the Idea, etc.

“Anachromisms” do not preclude being read in terms of the reductive, pre-scientific model sketched above. Given the dominance of this model, it could hardly be otherwise. The question here is who benefits, (qui bono?) from the contribution of a certain school of ‘systematic art practice’ to its maintenance? Who benefits from reducing the making of painting(s) to the material inscription of a pre-constituted master code or abstract ‘system’? Who benefits from the orthodoxy in which the practice of reading is constrained to the extraction or decoding of said system, which will ‘explain’ said painting(s)? These questions give rise to large, complex and ultimately political questions that cannot be addressed further here.

Suffice, perhaps, to note, for the moment, that picturing a regulated economy in which colour admits of the order of desire into the desire for order, has scarcely begun. Indeed, for pictorial system builders of a more chromophobic persuasion, such an admission queers the picture completely.

Singularly and severally, “Anachromisms” constitute the non-phonetic, non-expressive formal notation of a sustained meditation on the place of colour as a regulated structural component of non-mimetic painting. To that extent, they are in solidarity with practices that also deploy non-phonetic, non-expressive, systems of notation: musical, choreographic, computer programming and perhaps, most radically - in terms of scientific practice - mathematics.

G R Thomson is pleased, at the invitation of David Saunders, to present the findings of the most recent phase of his chromatological research, for interrogation in the revelatory light of The Mercus Barn.

### **Further reading . . .**

[themercusbarn.com/exhibition.html](http://themercusbarn.com/exhibition.html)

[saturationpoint.org.uk/K\\_R-J.html](http://saturationpoint.org.uk/K_R-J.html)

[saturationpoint.org.uk/Peter\\_Joseph.html](http://saturationpoint.org.uk/Peter_Joseph.html)

[saturationpoint.org.uk/Anachronisms.html](http://saturationpoint.org.uk/Anachronisms.html)

[exhibitingspace.com](http://exhibitingspace.com)



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