



## Victor Pasmore, CH, CBE, RA (1908-1998)

### Nationality

British

### Education

1927-30: Attended evening classes at the Central School of Art

1923-27: Studied at Harrow



### Taught

1937: Set up school of painting with Claude Rogers and William Coldstream and within a year became a full-time lecturer at the Euston Road School

1943: Visiting lecturer at the Camberwell School of art (where he introduced the ideas of the Euston Road School)

1949: Lecturer at the Central School of Art

1954: Director of Painting, Kings College Newcastle (later Newcastle University)

### Background

Victor Pasmore developed an interest in painting as a schoolboy at Harrow, but the early death of his father prevented him from carrying on his studies at this stage. From 1927 to 1937 he worked as a clerk at the Head Office of the London County Council, painting in his spare time and paying frequent visits to the Tate Gallery and the National Gallery; he became a member of the London Artists' Association in 1932 and of the London Group in 1934.

For more than 20 years Pasmore served as Consulting Director to Peterlee (Urban Design for the South West Area).

### The artist

His early paintings were reminiscent of the Fauvists in their handling and their subject matter. In 1954 Lawrence Alloway published a slim volume *Nine Abstract Artists* that encapsulates discourse around British constructivism in the early 1950's, in which Pasmore a statement about the necessity to move into 'actual dimensions'. By this time, for his orthogonal reliefs, he was having components machine cut, and exploring the production of editions, or multiples.

However, by the late 1950's, Pasmore was no longer arguing for a logical move from relief into three dimensions, and was increasingly concerned that his linear and planar forms should result in an image 'which surprises us by its familiarity and touches us as if awakening forgotten memories buried long ago.'

Configurations seemed increasingly to grow, spread and magically fix our attention. Printmaking suited this new fluidity. The 1980 catalogue raisonnée lists one print for the period up to 1964, but 86 prints or suites by 1979 (29 items for 1974 alone; this reveals how important printmaking had become for Pasmore. As Failoni and Zamboni explain:

Working with a special solvent directly on the varnished copper plate, he proceeds by controlling the flow of the solvent until an image is formed. A proof is printed; the original

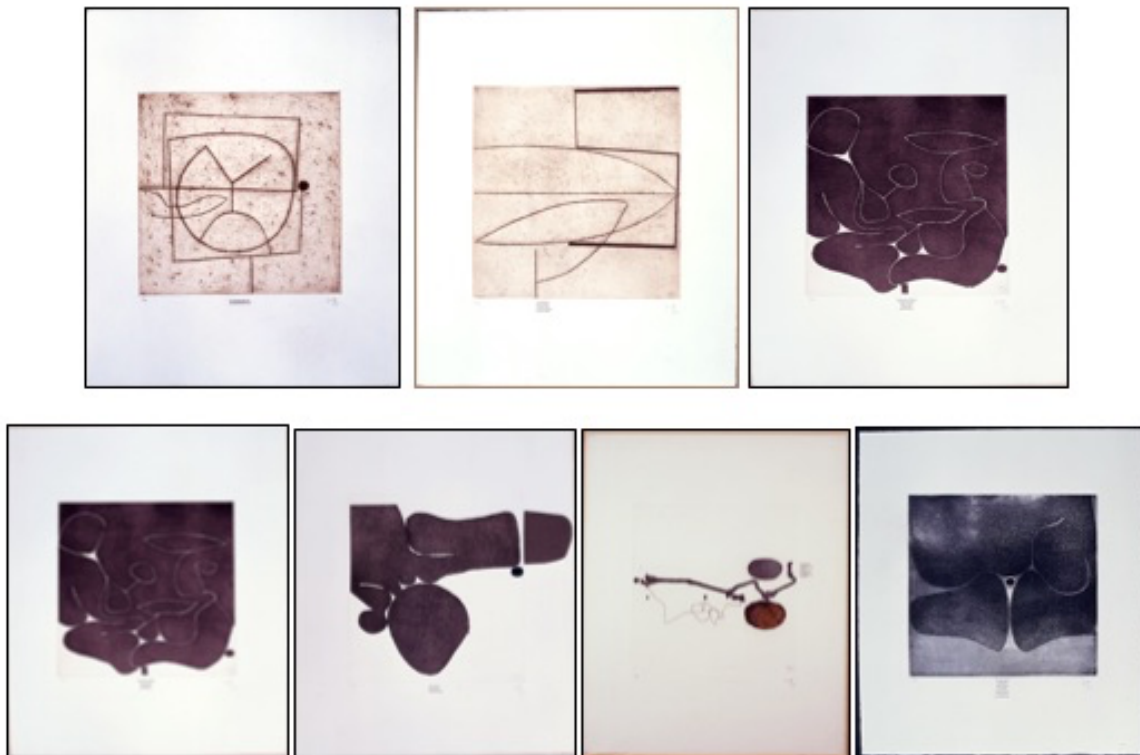


image is then developed and transformed into a new subjective image; the final print is engraved by the aquatint process.

(Giovanna Zamboni, in *Victor Pasmore, with a Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings, Constructions and Graphics 1926-1979* (Thames and Hudson, London, 1980.)

The employment of solvent flow is clearest in *The tear that falls*, and there may well be starting points in his paintings. *When the curtain falls* resembles a number of near symmetrical organic images, while *By What Geometry Must We Construct the Physical World?* resembles a variety of late 1960's linear works.

### Correspondences (suite)



Certain lines from the artist's own poetry are printed alongside the images that make up *Correspondences*, revealing how far he has moved from the earlier quest for objectivity and rationality. He asks 'by what geometry must we construct the physical world' in the modern age, and the trajectories of his springing lines are not contained by the orthogonal structures. Suggesting that the artwork has a subjective and a 'facing' quality, he wonders: 'Am I the object which I see? Am I the eyes that look at me?' And, echoing Goya's *Capriccio* 43, Pasmore muses that 'when . . . reason dreams, then the heart is free'.

Concerning other sets of prints, it has been noted that the poems were written after the images were made. The reliance on previous pictorial forms underlines this. The title of this set of prints refers to the notion of 'correspondence', a Baudelairian idea which became supremely influential in the late 19th century and which involved the ability of the artistic sign to stimulate different sorts of sensory and intuitive experience, connecting initially invisible aspects of an essentially spiritual universe. This underlines the importance of late 19th century Symbolist aesthetics, which introduced notions of the 'suggestive image' into modern art.