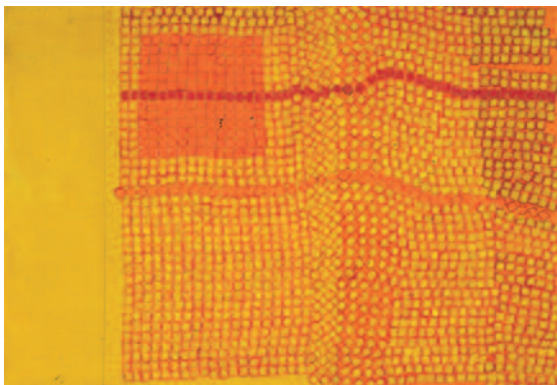


Order and Disorder

Wilhelmina Barns-Graham Paintings 1965—1980

ART FIRST CONTEMPORARY ART



Order and Disorder

Wilhelmina Barns-Graham

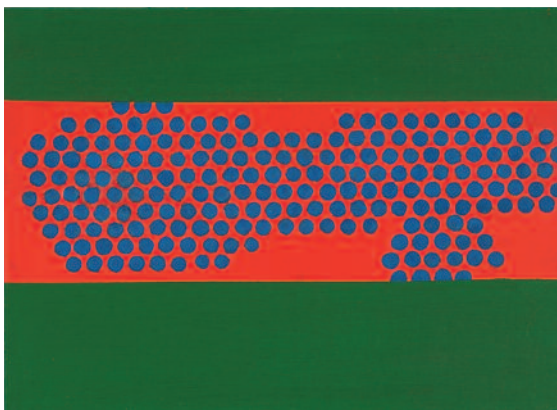
Paintings 1965–1980

Art First, 24 March–23 April, 2009

Barns-Graham's non-figuration ... is essentially an objective art that seeks to reveal, by vivid resemblances, both the chaos and the pattern of nature: its infinite variety and ceaseless change, its visible forms and invisible structures, its endless movement in time ...

Mel Gooding, from the catalogue: *WB-G/Movement and Light Imag(in)ing Time'*

Tate St. Ives, 2005



Top: **Red on Orange and Lemon**, 1967
acrylic on hardboard, 17.8 x 25.5 cm

Above: **Blue Discs on Vermillion Band**, 1967
oil on board, 25.5 x 35 cm

Facing page: **Outside Inside – Meditation Series**, 1978
acrylic on canvas, 126.6 x 102.4 cm

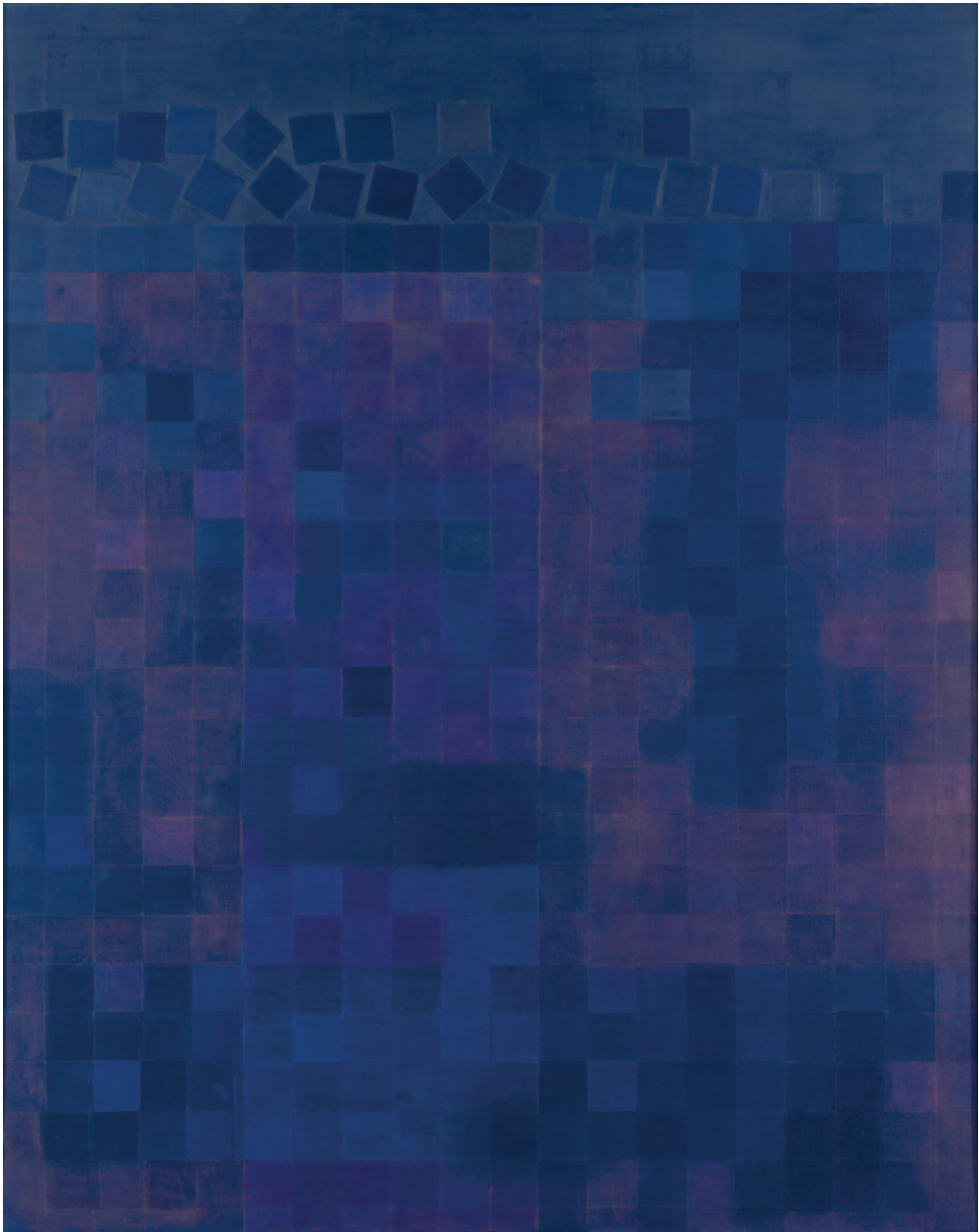
Barns-Graham's paintings of 1965 to 1980 are a distinct group, yet they are also part of a continuing thread that weaves its way through her career, from the glacier paintings of the early 1950s to the liberated abstract expressionism of her final decade. The paintings from this period played a vital role in the development of her future work, and without their intense investigation of 'Order and Disorder', the exciting late work, as we know it, may never have materialised in the manner in which it did.

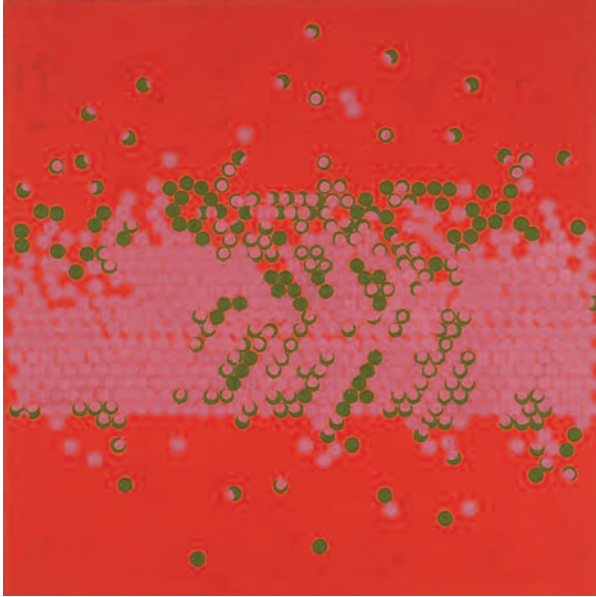
The 'new' imagery of the 60s explored dynamic colour interacting with simple geometric forms—the square and the circle. The contrapuntal arrangements of shape and colour created a vitality of visual movement which was then disrupted through the introduction of irregular rhythms, to create disorder out of order. Barns-Graham herself referred to 'things of a kind in order and chaos', a description that was appropriated into her picture titles.

What may appear to be random, are carefully crafted complex constructions, relying on invisible underlying mathematical frameworks. Unlike the 'Op Art' current being explored by some artists she knew, like Michael Kidner, as well as a younger generation, such as Bridget Riley, attracting phenomenal publicity, Barns-Graham's painting is less painstakingly repetitive in its formal configurations. She was much more interested in the breakdown of structure itself—a process then and now being identified by scientists as a considerable source of power. When combined with her use of primary colours, offset against complementary secondaries, she could endow the paintings with an explosive energy, releasing into pictorial space small clusters of circular discs and tilted squares, in a joyful escape from their linear sequences.

This presentation of paintings from a fifteen year period is the first such investigation of a specific development within Barns-Graham's oeuvre.

Clare Cooper, Benjamin Rhodes (Art First)
Geoffrey Bertram (Barns-Graham Charitable Trust)

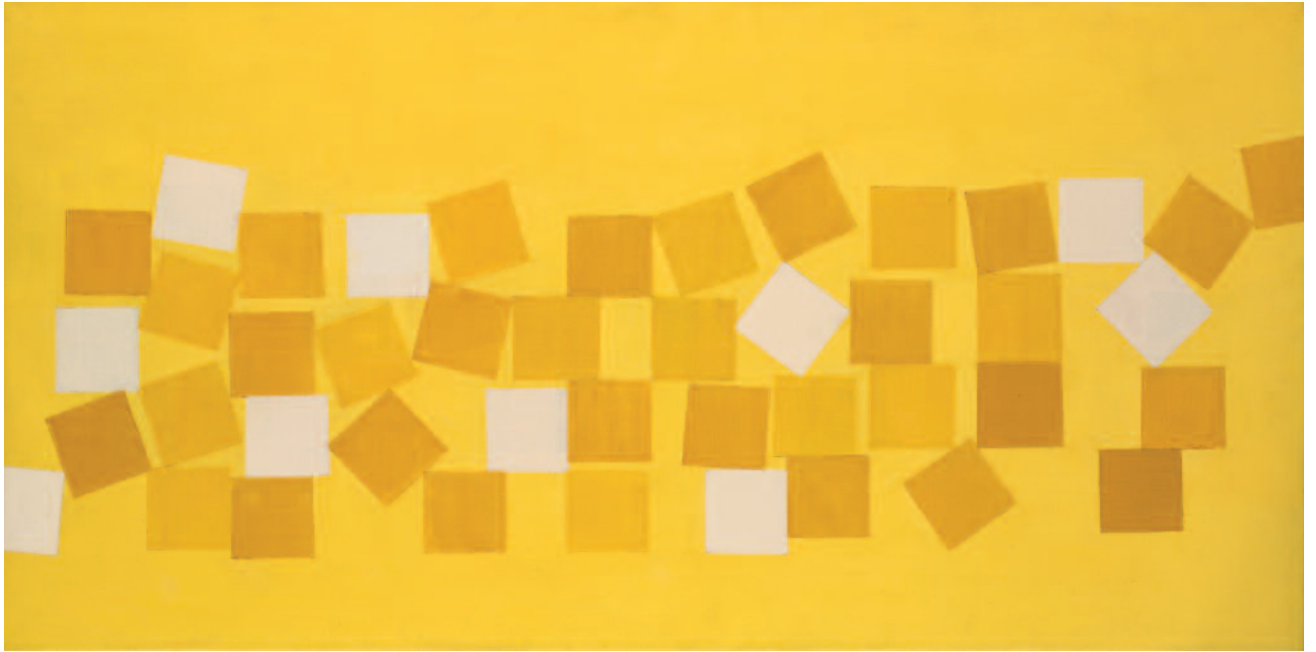




Front: **Olive Green Squares on Vermillion**, 1968
oil on canvas, 90.7 x 121 cm

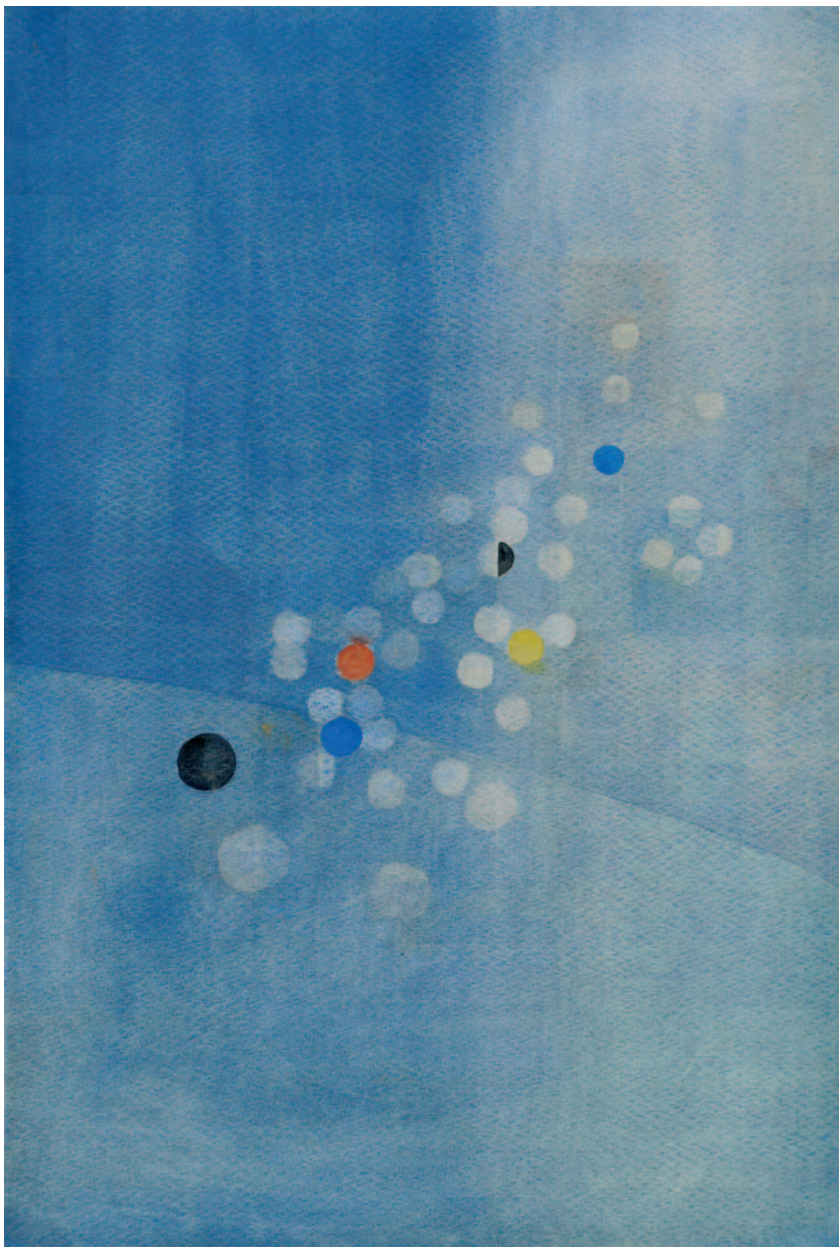
Invasion Olive Green on Lilac and Vermillion, 1968
oil on board, 50.5 x 51 cm

Vermilion and White Discs on Light Red, 1971
oil & acrylic on board 35.3 x 35.4 cm



Above:
Bird Song, 1966
oil on canvas, 60.5 x 121.5 cm

Left:
Sixteenth Bonfire, 1975
oil on canvas, 76 x 75.8 cm



Above:
Equal Amounts, study, 1969
gouache on paper, 50 x 50.4 cm

Left:
Mirage Series No.3 - Blue, 1978
gouache on paper, 57 x 38.5 cm



ART FIRST CONTEMPORARY ART

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