

NORMAN STEVENS ARA: SELECTED PRINTS

26 February – 25 May 2014

Tennant Gallery and Council Room

This display explores prints by the British artist Norman Stevens (1937-1988), from the first black and white etchings he produced in the 1970s to his vividly coloured, large-scale screen-prints of the 1980s. Trained as a painter, Stevens was one of the 'Bradford Mafia' – an exceptionally gifted cohort of students at Bradford College of Art that included David Hockney RA, Michael Vaughan, John Loker and David Oxtoby. Taking up printmaking in the early 1970s, Stevens taught himself the various techniques of this medium including the complicated process of mezzotint. Printmaking suited Stevens's meticulous approach, enabling him to produce images of great precision and subtlety.

At the heart of the display are several important series of prints, beginning with Stevens's early explorations of the visual effects of sunlight on Venetian blinds and 'clapboard' houses. It also features his powerful depictions of the iconic pre-historic monuments at Stonehenge and Avebury and his captivating views of English formal gardens. His prints combine technical mastery with a poetic evocation of the effects of light and shade on the landscape and built environment. While never depicting any figures, works such as *Morning* (1974) and *Clapboard House, Fronds and Architectural French Curve* (1973) allude to a human presence, producing an intriguing quality that has been likened to a game of hide-and-seek.

The gallery guide for the exhibition includes an introductory essay by William Packer, art critic and friend of Norman Stevens, as well as personal recollections from his printers at JC Editions and a short obituary written by David Oxtoby.

BIOGRAPHY

Norman Stevens was born in Bradford in 1937 and joined the Bradford College of Art to study painting at the age of only 15. Crippled by polio as a child, Stevens was exempt from national service and in 1957 became the first member of the 'Bradford Mafia' to move to London to attend the Royal College of Art. After graduating from the RCA Stevens built a career as a landscape painter and teacher, at Manchester, Maidstone and Hornsey Colleges of Art. In his later career Stevens became renowned for his work as a printmaker. He held regular exhibitions of both his paintings and prints at the Redfern Gallery and other venues including the Arnolfini. Stevens's work is represented in the collections of the Tate, the V&A and the Museum of Modern Art, New York. He was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy in 1983.

TENNANT GALLERY OPENING HOURS:

Tuesday–Friday, 10am–4pm

Saturday–Sunday, 10am–6pm

Closed Monday

ADMISSION

Complimentary entry with a valid Royal Academy exhibition ticket. £3 without. Friends of the RA go free.

FORTHCOMING PRINTMAKING EXHIBITIONS AT THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS

Renaissance Impressions: Chiaroscuro woodcuts from the Collections of Georg Baselitz and the Albertina, Vienna

15 March – 18 June 2014, press view: 11 March, 10am-2pm

The London Original Print Fair

24 – 27 April 2014, press view: 23 April, 5.30-6.30pm

ABOUT THE TENNANT GALLERY

Located on the north side of Burlington House, the Tennant Gallery is a dedicated space within the Royal Academy for the display of works on paper, for which light levels must be carefully controlled. A changing programme of displays drawn from the Royal Academy Collections and the work of Royal Academicians runs throughout the year.

IMAGES

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