



Alan Davie, Transformation of the Serpent No. 3, circa 1970, Oil on canvas (Diptych), 152.4 x 243.8cm

Looking East: St Ives Artists and Buddhism **The Forgotten Influence of Eastern Spirituality on Post War Masterpieces**

3812 Gallery, London
13 July – 3 September 2022
Preview 12 July

'We hope this exhibition illuminates the ways in which eastern influence in St Ives shaped post-war British modern art, and draws focus to the often-overlooked role Buddhist spirituality played for practitioners of the period.'

Calvin Hui, Co-Founder and Chairman of 3812 Gallery

3812 Gallery is proud to present *Looking East: St Ives Artists and Buddhism*, a ground-breaking exhibition foregrounding the unique relationship between artists working from St Ives during the post-war period and Eastern spirituality including principals of Zen and Buddhism. Through stoneware to oil painting to collage, by artists including **Trevor Bell**, **Terry Frost**, **Wilhelmina Barns-Graham** and **Bernard Leach**, this show brings to light a previously overlooked connection between Eastern spirituality and western modernist artwork. The exhibition ultimately underlines the significance of traditional Eastern thought in today's global culture and excavates new entry points into a selection of many beloved British artists. What emerges to the fore is a rich artistic dialogue between different schools of thought from the East and West.



1966 Hamada and wife visit the Leach Pottery (left top) Trevor Corser, unknown, Jorgen Jorgensen, Susan Smith, Sylvia Hardaker, unknown, (front) John Reece, Tony Burgess, Bernard Leach, Bill Marshall, Shoji Hamada, Tim Stampton, Mrs Kazue Hamada and daughter, Janet Leach. Photographer unknown.

The first of its kind, this exhibition focuses on the influence of the East on St Ives as a hub of creative activity from the 1920s, through the 1960s, 70s, 80s and beyond. St Ives' history as a location of avant-garde art can be traced right back to **J.M. Turner's** Landscapes and the founding of the Great Western Railway in 1877. Many artists settled there in the 1920s, some later taking up residence such as **Barbara Hepworth** and **Ben Nicholson**. Vibrant and experimental artistic communities formed in the area during the mid-20th Century such as The St Ives Club and The St Ives Society of Artists, with members including **Peter Lanyon**, **Patrick Heron** and St Ives native **Alfred Wallis**; numerous foreign artists, writers and curators visited their exhibitions such as Abstract Expressionist artist **Mark Rothko**. This culminated in the founding of Tate St Ives in 1993, firmly cementing the town as a principal cultural centre.

The formation of this eccentric and prolific creative community in Cornwall can be attributed to a number of factors, foremostly, the incredible light and scenery of the area, which inspired new approaches to landscape painting that broke dramatically with tradition. Alongside this, the open atmosphere and coastal location invited vast cultural exchange and unguarded dialogue. At a time when the wake of WWII welcomed new ideas, alternative ways of living were regarded as tangible antidotes to a crumbling social and political system.



Terry Frost L-R Suspended Colour Collage 1968-1970, Suspended Forms 1967

These environs thus allowed ideas from the East to enter the minds and practices of artists of the period. Meanwhile, the war created the conditions for global exchange, with travel becoming more possible and ideas crossing continents.

Texts such as *Zen in the Art of Archery* (1953) by the German philosopher Eugen Herrig, who lived in Japan before WWII, enjoyed great influence. Its original foreword was written by D.T. Suzuki, the hugely popular Buddhist scholar who stopped over in St Ives in 1955 at the invitation of **Bernard Leach**. This also ignited a renewed interest in simple living and craft practices, aforementioned **Bernard Leach** set up Leach Pottery in St Ives with **Shōji Hamada** and identified himself as the bridge between Eastern and British ceramic cultures. The aesthetics of his works were often based on the Buddhist principle of perfect harmony and emancipation. Another ceramist, **William Staite Murray**, explored the decorativeness and aestheticism of early Chinese pottery.

Ideologically, the influence of zen principals and Buddhism was considerable and can be deciphered in the artistic output of these individuals in diverse forms. **Trevor Bell** commented that when hearing D.T. Suzuki talk of painting in 1955, he felt deeply excited and moved as what Suzuki argued directly reflected his own feelings about the medium. **Wilhelmina Barns-Graham**, meanwhile, became drawn to circles within her work, a symbol which holds great significance in Zen Buddhism, as 'an image of the whole, which is also an image of perfection'.

Ultimately, this unique exhibition exploring the mutual exchange between British and Eastern cultures that took place in St Ives offers a new perspective and a chance to reassess not only British modern and contemporary art but also Asian art and the significance of Eastern thought on creative practice as a whole. It enlivens the discussion around cultural exchange and positions the work of British Modern practitioners on a global stage, looking beyond the influences and ideologies with which they have previously been identified.



L – Wilhelmina Barns-Graham, April 16th 1961 (Red and Violet), 1961 Oil on canvas, 123 x 122.3 x 2.5cm
R – Wilhelmina Barns-Graham, Porthmeor Studios. © Wilhelmina Barns-Graham Trust

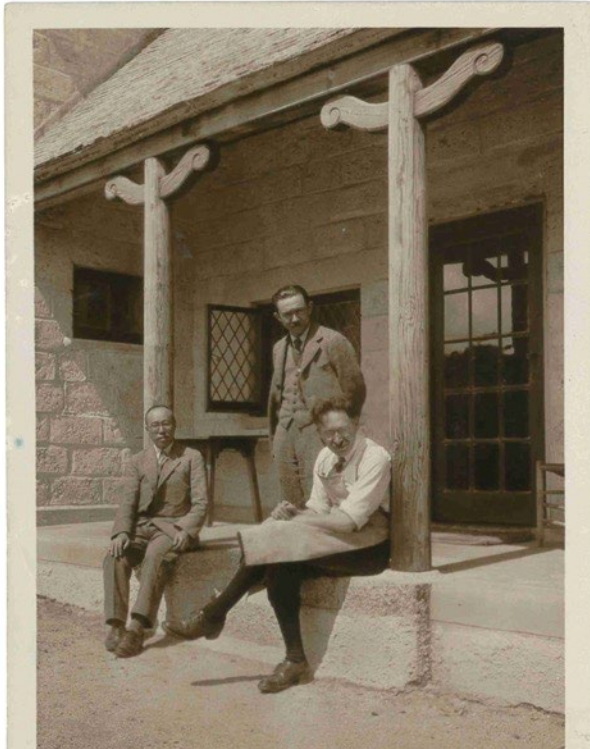
The exhibition travels to London after being exhibited at 3812 Gallery in Hong Kong. The exhibition catalogue features a conversation between Philip Dodd, one of the curators of this year's Guangzhou Art Triennale and named by Art & Auction as one of the top 100 artworld innovators, and Chris Stephens, a major authority on post-war British art and Director of the Holburne Museum. The show runs from 13 July – 3 September 2022.

Exhibition Information

Looking East: St Ives Artists and Buddhism, 3812 Gallery London
21 Ryder Street, St James's, London, SW1Y 6PX
13 July – 3 September 2022
10am-6.30pm Monday-Friday 11am-2pm Saturday
<https://www.3812gallery.com> | @3812gallery

Press Information | Images

Kate Searles
Tel: +44 203 982 1863
Email: kate@3812cap.com



L-R – Shoji Hamada, Soetsu Yanagi, Bernard Leach at the rear of the Leach Pottery in the 1920s. Image courtesy Crafts Study Centre, University for the Creative Arts, UK.

About 3812 Gallery

Co-founded by Calvin Hui and Mark Peaker in Hong Kong in 2011, 3812 Gallery now has spaces across Asia and the U.K., and is recognised as the one of the foremost dealers of Chinese contemporary art. The gallery is unique in its foregrounding of the cultural and artistic exchange between East and West, exemplified by their prestigious artist roster and elegantly curated exhibition programme. 3812 also specialises in contemporary ink art, bringing this exceptional medium to the international market.

The gallery name, 3812, was drawn from a ski trip taken by Calvin Hui and Mark Peaker in 2010. They skied the infamous La Vallée Blanche off-piste run, which traverses 3812m. This challenging yet fulfilling journey down the mountain gave the founders courage to launch their gallery and inspired its name.

In 2018, 3812 Gallery expanded into Europe, opening a flagship space in St James' and positioning itself firmly on the international stage. Beyond this, the gallery also opened a new 3,600 square foot space in Hong Kong in 2021, coinciding with its 10th anniversary.

The gallery exclusively represents Modern British artist Terry Frost's estate in Asia and represents Master artist Hsiao Chin and exceptional Hong Kong contemporary ink artists – Raymond Fung and Chloe Ho. 3812 offers a space for cross-cultural dialogue; they foster cultural understanding of Chinese contemporary art in Europe and illuminate British Modern art to the wider Asian Market through initiating dialogues between artists, academics, and collectors globally.

About Chris Stephens

Chris Stephens is Director of the Holburne Museum, Bath. He was Curator, Modern British Art, Tate Britain from 2001 until 2017. He is author and editor of numerous titles including most recently David Hockney (with Andrew Wilson), 2016; Barbara Hepworth: Sculpture for a Modern World (with Penelope Curtis), 2015; Terry Frost, 2015; Modern Art and St Ives, 2014 and St Ives: Art and Artists 2018.

About Philip Dodd

Philip Dodd is one of the curators of this year's Guangzhou Art Triennale and named by Art & Auction as one of the top 100 artworld innovators. He was Director of London's Institute of Contemporary Arts (1997–2004), and has curated exhibitions in London, New York, Moscow, Beijing and Singapore with artists such as Sean Scully, Yoko Ono, Damien Hirst, Pat Steir and Hsiao Chin. He is the author and editor of books on art and value, Englishness and women and film.