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PRESS RELEASE

Phillips, in Collaboration with HENI, to Present *Brian Clarke: Vespers*, a Dedicated Exhibition of Works by World-Leading Stained Glass Artist Brian Clarke

On View at 30 Berkeley Square from 5 August to 10 September 2021



Brian Clarke b.1953
© Mary McCartney

LONDON – 26 JULY 2021 – Phillips is pleased to announce *Brian Clarke: Vespers* – a spectacular exhibition of works on paper by architectural artist and painter Brian Clarke. This debut of Clarke’s monumental new cycle of paintings and mixed media collage will go on view to the public at 30 Berkeley Square from 5 August to 10 September 2021 and will be available for sale via the HENI Leviathan [online platform](#).

Delayed for over a year by Covid restrictions, this exhibition’s unprecedented scale now allows *Vespers*, begun in 2019 and continued again through lockdown, to be seen in its full narrative arc. Over 500 works in watercolour form the centrepiece of the exhibition, in which Clarke uses the form of the poppy as the starting point for a strikingly inventive investigation into abstraction and the liquid nature of colour.

Gathered together, writes Robert Storr, they make “an explosive bouquet of natural beauty at its most ephemeral, given that all truly natural things are inherently ephemeral and that beauty assumes its greatest pitch and poignancy when it has been wounded”, employing Clarke’s unmatched experience working with light to evoke the ‘huge walls of flickering colour’, the ‘harnessed euphoria’ he explores through his practice in stained glass, tapestry and ceramic.

“I tried to see if I could capture not so much how a poppy looks, but that feeling that they have of very delicately balancing their beauty on top of those tender stems which drip with great speed out of the flower down to the ground; other times they gather together like communicating things, or cluster to form extraordinary, interwoven heraldic patterns. They feel, when I make them, choreographing some story across the sheet, like little prayers – as near as a post-Darwinian Realist can get to saying a prayer.” **Brian Clarke**

The later works, created at home in isolation, extend the cycle through the use of collage, incorporating surgical facemasks, newspapers, layered acrylic-painted grids and paper cut-outs. Like his earlier, signature series exploring a single emblem – the cross, the fleur de lys, the Spitfire – through Clarke’s “focused, obsessive engagement with this family of poppies” in *Vespers*, he turns universal symbol into instantly recognisable personal cipher, his daily investigation capturing an intimate portrait of the times.

Accompanying the exhibition is a fully illustrated, hardcover monograph by HENI Publishing, which reproduces the entire *Vespers* series with an introduction by the art historian Robert Storr. As part of the collaboration between Phillips and HENI, the *Vespers* series will be made available in a limited duration sale on the HENI Leviathan website (www.leviathan.heni.com). This sale will go live on the morning of Wednesday, September 1 throughout the last week of the exhibition, ending on Friday, September 10.

“These drawings-that-are-really-paintings display Clarke’s deft command of gestural brushstroke. He is able to eke out subtle suggestions of formal flux and volume from the various transparencies and opacities of a single stroke such that a broad poppy petal conjured just by one touch of the brush seems to curve when differently diluted amounts of red pigment settle on the blank sheet of absorbent paper, creating exquisitely modulated shadows where the petal warps in or out against the flatness of the sheet.”

— **Robert Storr, Art Historian**

“I’ve had a kind of sneaky romance with poppies for some time. Seeing these works together has a particular biographical resonance: when I was painting them, one memory I tried to capture was of Linda McCartney and I, in the early 80s in Sussex, buying packets of seeds and throwing handfuls out the car as we drove. The next time we’d visit poppies would have sprang up in the roadside fields: a whole hovering, horizontal explosion of colour. In the evening you’d see the sun coming through them, the petals would go transparent and it was like you imagine heaven might be. Intimately married to the experience of stained glass, in these works light passes through the thinnest layers of paint and bounces off the white paper, exploiting the nature of the medium to make them shimmer with liquid colour.”

— **Brian Clarke**

“Brian Clarke has been a visionary and forerunner of contemporary stained glass art since the 70s, and we are very much looking forward to welcoming both new and longstanding admirers of his work to our gallery at Berkeley Square. We have never before displayed so many works of art in a single exhibition and this celebrated series will transform the space. Flooded with natural light, the poppies will be brought to life to create a vast field of colour.”

— **Cheyenne Westphal, Global Chairwoman, Phillips**

Highlights from the Exhibition



Vesper 535, 2020



Vesper 490, 2020



Vesper 543, 2020



Vesper 433, 2020



Vesper 453, 2020

Exhibition: 5 August – 10 September 2021
Location: 30 Berkeley Square, London

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ABOUT BRIAN CLARKE

Brian Clarke (b. 1953, Oldham, Lancashire, England) is the world's most celebrated stained glass artist. His meteoric rise to prominence in the late 70s – buoyed by the energy of the Punk movement – was as a painter and polemicist championing the integration of art and architecture. Described by Andy Warhol as “the most glamorous artist to come out of England since the sixties,” Clarke’s commitment to total art has developed into a Renaissance engagement with multiple media, from painting, sculpture, ceramics, mosaic and tapestry to sets for opera, the ballet, and stadia. His reputation as the foremost exponent of architectural art is based on installations and individual works for hundreds of projects worldwide. Practicing in sacred and secular spaces, he has collaborated on projects and proposals with Zaha Hadid, Norman Foster, Arata Isozaki, Oscar Niemeyer, Renzo Piano, Future Systems, and other key figures of Modern and contemporary architecture. Clarke’s work has been widely exhibited at leading galleries and institutions, including the Kunstmuseum Den Haag; the Robert Fraser Gallery; Gagosian; Pace Gallery; the Royal Institute of British Architects; Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt; the Corning Museum of Glass, USA; and Vitromusée, Romont; Clarke is represented in international public and private collections including the Tate, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Sezon Museum of Modern Art, and the Bavarian State Painting Collections. He lives and works in London.

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