An abstract painting featuring bold, expressive brushstrokes. The composition is dominated by vertical stripes of light blue and white on the left side, transitioning into a dark blue background on the right. A prominent, textured green shape is visible in the lower center and upper right. The overall style is gestural and layered, with visible textures and some darker, almost black, areas. The text is overlaid on the top left portion of the painting.

# A Field of Colour Tony McGillick – A Retrospective

9 JULY – 10 SEPTEMBER 2018

A Macquarie University Art Gallery exhibition

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY

The Chancellery 19 Eastern Rd  
Macquarie University  
NSW 2109, Australia  
T: +61 (2) 9850 7437  
[artgallery.mq.edu.au](http://artgallery.mq.edu.au)

### A FIELD OF COLOUR

#### TONY MCGILICK – A RETROSPECTIVE

9 July – 10 September 2018  
Macquarie University Art Gallery

### RESPONDING TO THE WORK OF AUSTRALIAN VISUAL ARTIST TONY MCGILICK

#### MEREDITH BRICE ON THE TRIANGLE IN THE WORK OF TONY MCGILICK

19 July – 24 August 2018  
Macquarie University Library  
Exhibition Space

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#### CURATORS:

Rhonda Davis, Lauren McGillick  
and Paul McGillick

#### REGISTRAR:

Emily O'Neill

#### EXHIBITION COORDINATOR:

Rhonda Davis

#### ESSAY AUTHORS:

Rhonda Davis, Lauren McGillick,  
Paul McGillick and Eric Riddler

#### PHOTOGRAPHY:

Effy Alexakis, Photowrite

#### CURATORIAL INTERN:

Binqian Ding

#### CATALOGUE DESIGN:

Paper Monkey

#### COPYEDITOR:

Jacqui Stone

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# A Field of Colour Tony McGillick – A Retrospective



MACQUARIE  
University

9 JULY – 10 SEPTEMBER 2018

A Macquarie University Art Gallery exhibition

Curators: Rhonda Davis, Lauren McGillick and Paul McGillick

**COVER:**

Tony McGillick (Australia, b. 1941, d. 1992)

*Billboard* (detail)

1963

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

92 x 107 cm

© Estate of Tony McGillick

Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite

# Foreword

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We are extremely pleased to be collaborating with International Conservation Services (ICS) for our major exhibition this year, *A Field of Colour: Tony McGillick – A Retrospective*. The remarkable ICS conservation team has helped us to present this important research exhibition that recounts the life and work of one of Australia's foremost abstract artists, Tony McGillick (1941–92). The exhibition is a testament to ICS's expertise and knowledge in returning works to their near original state. Before treatment, the paintings lacked lustre and displayed the effects of age over time, but the ICS team have managed to reveal McGillick's shimmering textured layers, allowing viewers to digest and appreciate the nuances of the artist's sojourns into abstraction.

We wish to thank and acknowledge the ICS team's specialised and dedicated work, especially given the brief time frame that was available to perform this important recovery: Matteo Volonte, Senior Paintings Conservator; Adam Godijn, Senior Conservation Manager; Eden Christian, Graduate Paintings Conservator; Suaty Gutiérrez, Paintings Conservator; and Alexandra Taylor, Conservation Assistant.

**RHONDA DAVIS**

### **CONSERVATION OF THE MCGILICK COLLECTION**

Adam Godijn, Senior Conservation Manager at ICS, comments:

‘As conservators we are always excited to be undertaking exploration into an artist’s work, and this process has been a particular delight with Tony McGillick’s stunning artworks. Conserving these artworks has given us the chance to study the construction, brushstrokes, colours and materials, which all help give us an intimate view into the artist’s hand.

McGillick’s commonly used materials include cotton canvas stretched on timber, oil paint, acrylic, wax and pigments. Incorrectly used, these materials can often fail, sometimes spectacularly, yet Tony’s artworks have withstood the ravages of time and responded well to careful treatment. This stability of the artworks speaks to us about Tony’s material knowledge and his ability to navigate their interacting sensitivities.

As conservators we strive to preserve the integrity of the artwork and the artist’s intent. As with many artists, Tony’s work changed over time. One of the challenges in conserving this collection has been to accurately reflect the changing artist’s intent. Tony used greater freedom of brushstrokes and variations with more vibrant colours in later years. The resulting beauty of flat colour and delicate surfaces presents major conservation challenges.

Despite Tony’s changing approaches to his practice over a lifetime, one common theme that emerged through our conservation work was the revelation of vibrant colours and depth. All of this was hidden by layers of dust and dirt accumulated over years of storage and display. Gloss, colour and texture, such wonderful features of Tony’s work, have been satisfyingly revealed through the conservation process.

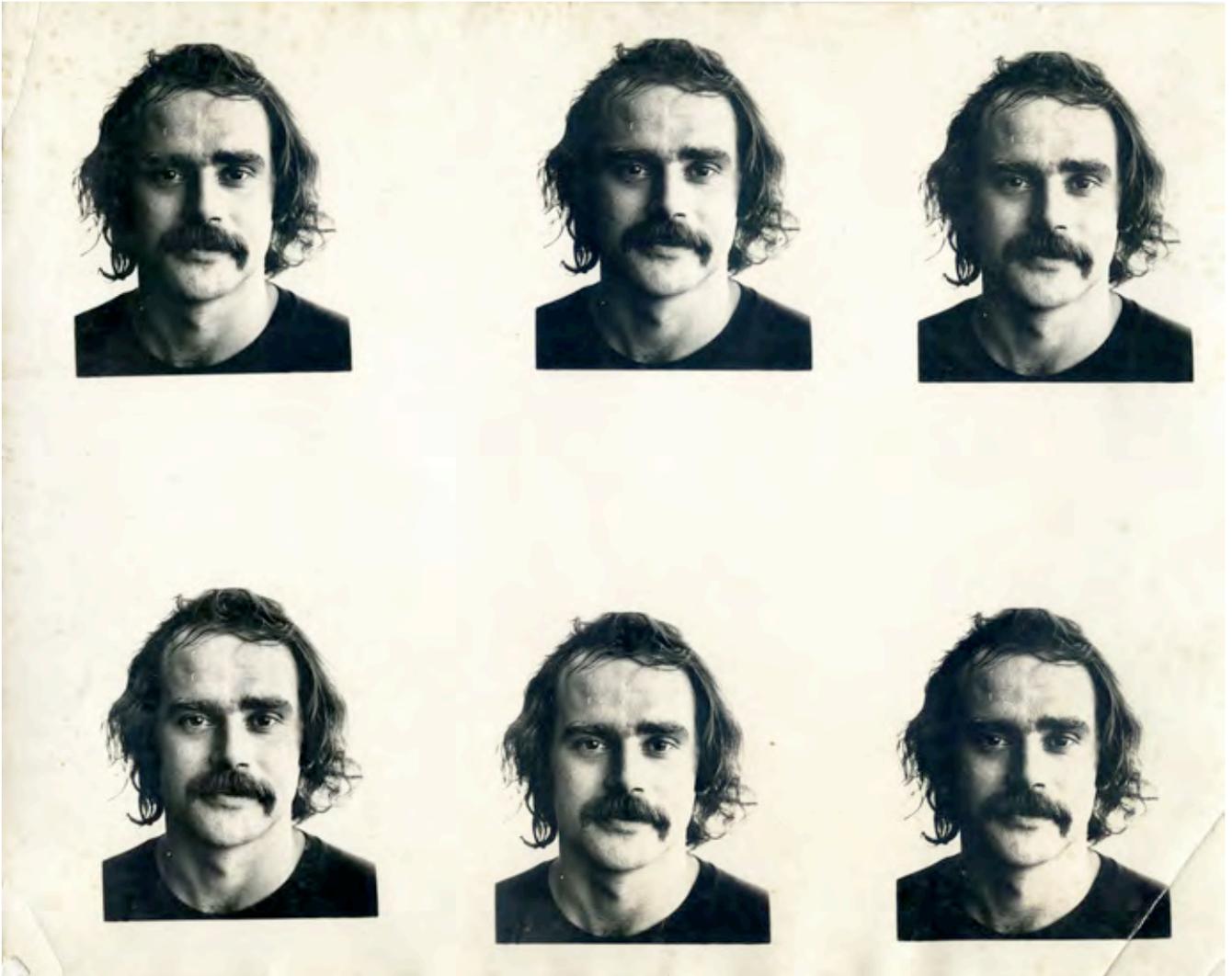
ICS is very proud to be part of the Tony McGillick retrospective, and we wish to thank Rhonda Davis, Senior Curator; Andrew Simpson, Honorary Fellow; and Lauren McGillick and Paul McGillick.

### **INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION SERVICES**

International Conservation Services celebrates 30 years of playing a significant role in preserving Australia’s heritage. As Australia’s largest private conservation practice, with a staff of 30, including 24 professionally qualified conservators and collection managers, we bring together our diverse specialisations and skills in paintings, paper, objects, sculpture, furniture, metals, archaeological conservation and collections management. Through working closely together we are able to provide a unique conservation service that provides practical solutions to the highest international standards.

We are proud to be the Official Conservator to the National Trust, the Preferred Provider to White Rabbit Gallery and the Conservation Partner for Artbank.





**LEFT:**

Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
Untitled [side profile of man holding mug]  
circa 1957  
ink and wash on pastel drawing board  
30.8 x 23 cm  
Collection Paul McGillick  
(c) Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite

**ABOVE:**

Contact sheet portrait photograph of Tony McGillick  
Collection Paul McGillick

# From idea to vision

## TAKING PAINTING SERIOUSLY

In 1978, there was a major survey exhibition of the work of Tony McGillick at the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV), curated by Robert Lindsay. I wrote the catalogue essay and began with a quote from the American abstractionist, Clyfford Still, a painter Tony admired. Now, for the first major survey of Tony's work since that exhibition,<sup>1</sup> it is worth revisiting what Still had to say about retrospectives (in the catalogue to a survey of his work 1936–57). He presented the work, he wrote, with 'the hope to make clear its conceptual germination of idea and vision, without which all art becomes but an exercise in conformity with shifting fashions or tribal ethics.'<sup>2</sup>

Still's comment reveals the fiercely ethical conviction which governed his practice. It was a conviction that Tony shared, as was clear in a personal statement in the 1978 catalogue:

*Painting pictures is a separate and different activity to displaying them, which is an anomaly I have never comfortably resolved. However, I am convinced that painting, as the priority activity, deserves to be presented in sympathy with its initial premises and not, as is so often the case, as a commodity, a teaching aid or interior decoration.*

In other words, the context of exhibiting paintings was crucial: it had to support the seriousness with which the paintings had been made; otherwise, the values which informed those paintings risked being compromised. So, perhaps it is not so surprising that, apart from solo shows at Central Street Gallery in Sydney and Pinacotheca in Melbourne in 1968, Tony never exhibited except for a number of group shows.<sup>3</sup> At the time of his premature death in November 1992, he was preparing his first solo show since 1978 at Sherman Galleries in Sydney – a show which was to signal his total commitment to painting and his final break with advertising from which he had earned an income, more or less without a break, throughout his adult life.

This wariness about the context of showing the work extended to selling it. Objecting to the commercialisation of art, he wouldn't sell a painting without the guarantee that it would never appear on the secondary market. As a consequence, he sold little except to institutional collections.

Painting was a serious business – and an intellectually rigorous one. While this retrospective exhibition clearly reveals the intuitive and strongly emotional character of Tony's work, the actual practice was highly rational and had to be unambiguously centred on an 'epistemology' of painting: a clear understanding of what painting was, what made it unique and how it related to the great Western tradition of easel painting. Crucial to this was a clear acknowledgement of one's influences and a commitment to confronting those influences and working through them.

Which brings me back to Still's remarks because, while some artists can bear the scrutiny of a retrospective exhibition, many can't. Still implies that there has to be a consistent through line, a steady investigation of how the idea becomes vision – how consistent intellectual premises become realised as concrete visual artefacts marking the stages of an ongoing artistic journey of exploration. If this is absent, a retrospective will expose the lack of integrity in an artist's oeuvre.



**ABOVE:**  
Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
*Quattro*  
1989  
oil and wax on canvas  
198 x 289,5 cm  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite

I use the word ‘integrity’ advisedly. First, it describes how an artist’s output over an entire lifetime holds together as evidence of a single-minded quest. But it is also applicable to individual works of art which – if we can say of them that they are successful – exhibit integrity or, to use Clement Greenberg’s preferred term, unity. ‘Unity,’ he said, ‘is the first requirement of a work of art.’<sup>4</sup> And elsewhere he comments: ‘The task of art is to impose the greatest possible organic unity upon the greatest diversity.’<sup>5</sup>

It always struck me how comprehensively Tony had internalised Greenberg’s position on modernism. Certainly, Tony was an admirer. In 1980, when Greenberg was in Sydney for the Dobell Lecture, Tony organised a kind of seminar between Greenberg and a group of local artists at the former Central Street Gallery space. But was it a case of Greenberg simply articulating an approach which Tony had already arrived at independently?

Key elements of that approach included the idea that what mattered was not what art meant, but what it *did*; that painting was essentially non-referential; that there is a constant tension between what is represented and how it is represented; and the importance of ongoing critical reflection – that art cannot take its medium for granted and that it is in a constant dialectical relationship to the past with an obligation to constantly ‘make it new’ as Ezra Pound famously said.

This suggests a didactic approach and his early work was indeed didactic – setting up propositions in order to test them. Up until the late 1970s, Tony’s paintings were based on working drawings and transferred to canvas largely without any change. Nonetheless, there is from the beginning a strongly personal element, a gestural and intuitive character, a delight in colour and in the materiality of painting.

### PAINTING IN SERIES

Tony always painted in series, with each series investigating a particular proposition. Once again, though, the value of this retrospective is that we can see how certain themes link the whole career and how elements from one series get ‘cannibalised’ in subsequent series. But overall I think we can see a shift over 25 years from the polemical to the personal, from the institutional to the domestic.

In the 1978 catalogue, Tony drew attention to the ‘procedural nature of my development through various influences and techniques’. This process begins with the first (barring juvenilia) series of paintings (and sculptural numbers, such as *Five and Two*) which show him confronting the influence of Jasper Johns: the use of a token iconic image stripped of any narrative content through overuse to act as the ‘subject’ of the painting, and the use of oil paint and wax mixtures (encaustic) as an expressive impasto material. (In fact, *Sharman Repeat and Sharman 1–6* from 1964 anticipated this move with the use of the well-known Jimmy Sharman Boxing Troupe as a token subject and expressively painted in oil on canvas.)

#### RIGHT:

Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
*Autograph*  
 1991  
 oil and wax on paper  
 126 x 96.5 cm; 146 x 114.5 x 3.5 cm framed  
 University of New South Wales  
 Purchased with funds from the U Committee, 1993  
 © Estate of Tony McGillick  
 Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite



Tony's token icon was the front cover of *Time*. The magazine's covers then were far more expressive than its present-day photographic covers. And it featured the font, Times Roman (later to reappear in *Tom's Toy Box*, 1986, and some other pictures), which was an ironical comment on Tony's dual personality as painter and advertising artist – irony also being a characteristic of Johns. The encaustic medium ensured that everything happened on the surface (no illusion of depth with its implication of representation), while the primary colours – again anti-illusionist – with the odd star hinted at the pervasive Americanism which *Time* magazine embodied.

The next two series, in fact, overlapped. Paintings like *Toledo*, *Shchukin* (1966) and *Untitled* (1966) used primaries, but in a flat, non-expressive all-over treatment and employing 'jellybean' shapes as their 'subject' which were a cross between an arrowhead and a split tail. At the same time, Tony began exploring modularity, using squares with one corner cut off and the pieces bolted together to make up a dynamic family of forms – inspired by the sleeve in Titian's *Portrait of a Man (A Man with a Quilted Sleeve)* and possibly encouraged by the English painter John Walker, who was then using a repeated abstract image derived from Velázquez.

The series was flagged by *Jasper's gesture* (1966), a four-part construction of corner-cut squares each in an individual tone but with subtle modulation of the surface and the barest suggestion of tonal depth. Particularly interesting is *Republic*, painted for the didactically driven *Black and White Show* at Central Street Gallery in 1967. Tony subsequently (in 1970) painted over this three-panelled black acrylic and wax painting in encaustic green, leaving the black as under-painting and introducing an expressive gesturalism in the paint application – “to take it out of the schoolroom” as he later put it, making it less didactic and more expressive.

Forming a kind of subset to the corner-cut square constructions were five constructed (but non-modular) paintings beginning with *Spraygun virus* (1969), which incorporated the cut-square shapes but which were dominated by a powerful V-shape. For these, primary colours were applied using a spray gun (possibly inspired by James Doolin's arched paintings shown at Central Street Gallery in 1970, but of which Tony had foreknowledge) to set up subtle tonal shifts across the surface. These paintings were concerned with reconciling objective and subjective perception – namely, what we actually see and how the brain *interprets* what we see. The corner-cut square, of course, strongly implies an isometric box and, therefore, depth. But the V-shape is uncompromisingly two dimensional. At the same time, there is an implied gravitational disruption, a kind of embodied vortical impulse (as is also the case with the modular paintings) as the massive V-shape seems about to pull the whole thing around and down. So, there is both an axial and a perspectival tension confronting the viewer, who then becomes a participant in trying to resolve a seemingly visual paradox. In this way, the experience of the painting becomes an analogy to how we visually process the everyday world – as we constantly tussle with often apparently contradictory visual cues.

All these constructed paintings dispense with the traditional ‘window frame’ to stand alone as non-referential visual statements. Moreover, they create their own language (language being another Johnsian preoccupation) where the parts form a group identity – or language – which is greater than the sum of the parts themselves.

The small group of unstretched canvases beginning with *Imogen’s ensign* (1973) and *Bivouac* (1974) mark an almost entropic conclusion to the various investigations so far. Or perhaps they represent a kind of muted implosion because they are made up of the same canvas segments as the constructed paintings, but with the colour stained into the canvas, and pinned casually to the wall – as though beyond resolution as orthodox stretched paintings. But their very ‘disarray’ seems deeply personal and strongly emotional. They represent an end, but also a beginning.

Paintings like *Tabby’s Tantrum* (1978) and *Manœuvre* (1978) are ‘worked’ paintings, no longer based solely on preliminary drawings but the result of constantly reworking the surface. These paintings hint at a frame within a frame with angled bars pushed to and sometimes beyond the edges with a densely painted internal field. They are personal, they are domestic and – while they continue to be all-over paintings and use the remnants of earlier formal elements, even reintroducing the Times Roman font in some pictures like the later *Tom’s Toy Box* (1986) and *Quattro* (1989) – they leave behind all vestige of the didactic. *Quattro*, in fact, is almost a summing up. ‘*Quattro*’ probably refers to the Quattrocento – the 1400s in Italy and the painting of that era – which, for Tony, was the great reference point, dominated as it was by Piero della Francesca, seen by Tony and many of his contemporaries as the key proto-Modernist. So, the typographic ‘*Quattro*’ is code for where this painting has come from, along with the three cut-corner squares which now merge with his newly liberated, scumbled and high-keyed surface.

### BEYOND THE DIDACTIC

The decade after the 1978 survey show at the NGV was not exactly a fallow period, but it was certainly a very private and introspective one as Tony took on the challenge of finding his own voice, of going beyond the polemical. If art was autonomous, then this surely implied that the artist was also autonomous and not a slave to ideology.

There were long, late-night hours in the studio (initially on the first floor of the former Central Street Gallery building in downtown Sydney; later in the downstairs space) after a day of work in the advertising studio. It was a time of rigorous self-questioning. Not all of the work which resulted was successful but when it was – some examples being *Tom’s Toy Box*, *Starters Orders* (1984), *Watagan* (1984) and *Talisman* (1992); all oil and wax on canvas – it shows a strong all-over unity, with generally richer and more extroverted tones and a new, celebratory freedom in applying the paint.

The oil and wax on canvas paintings of the 1980s often employ an explicit ‘frame within a frame’ along with vestiges of the cut-corner squares, even explicit isometric box forms whose implied depth locks into a dynamic tension with the all-over, richly coloured and deliriously free paint work. Epitomising these themes and highlighting Tony’s infallible sense of scale and instinctive feel for the unity of a picture are the two square oil and wax paintings on canvas from the IBM Collection from 1990–91. Especially when seen as a pair, these paintings highlight how he would take a set of certain given formal elements and explore a painterly proposition exhaustively, except now in the spirit of free inquiry rather than in the earlier didactic mode.

If the decade after 1978 was one of struggle, one thing Tony never lost was an infallible sense of scale and balance, an instinctive feel for colour, an unmistakable individuality and a capacity for pictorial invention.

This reaches its apotheosis in the final few years (from 1989, but primarily 1991–92) with the oil and wax on paper paintings. Having never worked on paper before – excepting, of course, the advertising work, some caricatures and theatre posters – Tony relished the luminosity which the white paper support provided. It was also the perfect collaborator as Tony’s newfound painterly spontaneity played out a dance with the orthogonal structural elements which had persisted right from the beginning. The largely square formats sustained that perfect sense of scale – now smaller and more domestic than institutional – as the pictorial elements reverberated within the new ‘window’ of the frame.

For me, these late works are sublime, not just for their painterly qualities, but also for the way they reveal, in a totally new context, Tony’s outstanding graphic ability – an ability previously restricted to graphic design and a few caricatures. Their public exposure has been limited, but Elwyn Lynn, reviewing the Sherman Galleries show in February 1993, called them ‘masterpieces’.<sup>6</sup> These late works on paper are exhilaratingly calligraphic in inspiration, foregrounding an impulse which had previously emerged only intermittently – for example, in the typographical gestures of the early paintings.

They are also a celebration of colour. Tony was always a gifted colourist; his late paintings liberate colour but also remind us that in a crucial sense, colour had always been the true subject of his painting.

Impulse, material and expression come together in these late oil and wax on paper works in a totally satisfactory conclusion to a career tragically cut short and promising so much still to come.

**PAUL MCGILLICK**  
**JUNE 2018**

#### ENDNOTES

- 1 A smaller survey curated by the late William Wright was mounted shortly after Tony’s death by Sherman Galleries in Sydney in March 1993. Then, in November 2000, Tom Langlands curated a small survey entitled *The Sense of Making: Tony McGillick – Selected works from the 60s, 70s and 90s*. The show consisted of 24 works, including the sculpture, *S*, and was held in Tony’s Annandale studio.
- 2 Clyfford Still 1959, introduction to the catalogue for *Paintings by Clyfford Still*, Buffalo Fine Arts Academy.
- 3 These included exhibitions during his years in London: *Young Commonwealth Artists’ Exhibition*, RBA Galleries, London and Commonwealth Gallery, Edinburgh as part of the Edinburgh Festival, 1962; Group Exhibition, New Vision Gallery, London, 1963; *Australian Painting and Sculpture in Europe Today*, Folkestone Art Centre, England, and Städtisches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt, Germany, 1963.
- 4 Cited in Donald B Kuspit 1979, *Clement Greenberg: Art Critic*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, Wisconsin, p. 30.
- 5 Cited in Kuspit, *ibid.*, p. 34.
- 6 Elwyn Lynn 1993, ‘Capturing the new shape of abstraction’, in *The Australian Weekend Review*, February 20–21.

**BELOW:**

Tony McGillick (1941–92)

*Spraygun virus*

1969

synthetic polymer paint on canvas (shaped canvas)

163.6 x 243.6 cm (irreg.)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased 1986

© Estate of Tony McGillick

Photo: National Gallery of Victoria



# Talisman

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*A talisman, an object with no use but whose loss, standing in for all others, would be vast.*

**MICHELLE DE KRETZER**

One of the last works Tony McGillick painted the year of his death was a picture he titled *Talisman*. Speculating about the choice of this title is fruitless but, held within the context of de Kretzer's latest novel *The Life to Come* (2017), the work metaphorically links with the presence of the artist. The picture contains softly muted colours sweeping across what seems like vast areas of the surface in a slow, rhythmic beat. Encoded inscriptions lay deep within the surface; it is a picture not meant to be read but relished for its innate powers.

In 1960, Tony McGillick, at the age of 19, left Australia for London and stayed for five years with the intention of infiltrating the London art scene, an intention he felt imperative in becoming a successful painter back in Australia. The London years had a lasting influence; they led him to the wonders of discovery and released him from the shackles of parochialism he found hard to bear in Australia.

Tony wrote a course of letters addressed to his beloved family back home while living in London. This is the first publication of the letters held within the collection of Tony's brother Paul. As a group, the letters sketch out biographical material showing the influence of the London years on his whole practice. The letters impart an inventive form of visual scriptwriting, embellished with sketches, graphics and stencilling. They fluently stitch the experiences of a young artist amid a swinging London art scene.

Stylistically hermetic in their form and consistency, the letters cover a range of topics – the climate, landscape, travel, people, work and exhibitions. From the grind of making a living through advertising work at Benton & Bowles to the heights of meeting the Australian ambassador to Germany at the Städel Museum, the letters bring a narrative to situations as they were happening, conveying a sense of the now.

The letters reveal a confident and forensic attention to detail. Wanting to become part of the art world as it transpired in London essentially amplified Tony's practice. He could foresee this period as activating future career opportunities back in Australia. And pursuing exhibiting possibilities both in London and Europe was crucial in securing this trajectory: 'If I have something settled in London then I'll contact an Australian gallery to follow up as soon as possible with a show there. A London show opens the doors in Australia and holds a lot of weight in the public eye.'<sup>1</sup>

McGillick conveys the mood and atmosphere of bohemian life in London, from Carnaby Street cool to the lively but squalid scenes of the Ladbroke Grove area. Each letter wields an evolving narrative that captivates the reader in wanting to read and know more. McGillick relishes the whole idea of being a painter living in London – soaking up the atmosphere and the latest ideas, and engaging in the seriousness of the interactions. All that compelled him to stay for that five-year period despite some of the hardships he faced. Conveying the solidarity among the Australian artists living at Ladbroke Grove, he wrote:

*The Australians who live around about are a terrifically close clan and this sort of unity has many benefits. One shares ideas, is open to criticism at all times and the competition is fierce. I enjoy this atmosphere and work well in it ... The talk is all paint and any diverting subjects would be considered in there [sic] relationship to art only.'*<sup>2</sup>

Tony rented several studios which also combined living quarters – Mill Hill Road, Acton Town; Ormiston Avenue; 129 Ladbroke Grove, Kensington; and Flat 1, 104 Chepstow Road. The Acton flat was 'tiny, little ... with roses on the wallpaper' but the space provided McGillick fertile ground for refining his technique and in producing the larger scaled paintings necessary to be taken seriously by London dealers.

*Paintings are getting more fluid & lively with figurative passages coming back again, mostly in red, black, ochre, white. I think gradually improving in technique and certainly in size (now doing 5' x 5' and one 6' x 5').*<sup>3</sup>

Tony devised a course of action to seek a range of exhibition possibilities especially allied in group shows of Australian art:

*I've managed to get into another group show. The Young Commonwealth Exhibition. Jim [Cook] has a big piece ready as well and today we must somehow get them into Piccadilly. Even so its [sic] not as bad here as at home where one would be ridiculed for carrying a painting through the streets.'*<sup>4</sup>

**NEXT PAGE RIGHT:**

Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
*Billboard*  
 1963  
 synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
 92 x 107 cm  
 © Estate of Tony McGillick  
 Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite

**NEXT PAGE LEFT:**

Photograph of Tony McGillick  
 Ormiston Avenue London  
 circa 1963





He proceeds to let the family know about the success of Brett Whiteley's paintings being shown in London and the impact on the overall reputation of Australian art on the international stage:

*Last week a friend of mine Brett, I may have mentioned him before, opened a one man show in a leading London gallery. Its [sic] quite an achievement for one so young (22) and it made a good mark for Australian Painting overall.<sup>5</sup>*

On Tony's birthday, 22 February 1962, news of further exhibition possibilities was afoot. Through Brett Whiteley, Tony was introduced to a London art dealer, who chose a large picture of his for the group exhibition Tony refers to as the 'Survey of Contemporary Australian Art'.

*A week before a woman rang me who happened to be an Art Dealer who is at present organizing some large exhibitions of Australian Art. Well, apparently Brett had got her onto me and she wanted to come out to see the work. Wow! But she gave me only a week to get ready!*

*So, I really had to get going! Had to frame things and mount gouaches etc. Several pictures to finish up as well it was all pretty hectic and I didn't get much sleep that week.*

*Anyway it worked out and I was more or less ready when she arrived.*

*Suitable [sic] impressed she asked me to enter a large picture in "The Survey of Contemporary Australian Art" which will be a very significant show just at this time.<sup>6</sup>*

The reception for Australian art had reached zenith proportions in London between 1963 and 1965. Exhibitions of Australian artists at the Whitechapel Art Gallery and Tate in London were ardently acclaimed by both critics and the public. McGillick wrote: 'The critics are raving about Aussie painting and Aust. Culture is the high fashion here at the moment. Plenty of big names in the show: Nolan, Boyd, Blackman etc. Very prestigious.'<sup>7</sup>

After leaving Acton, Tony found it difficult to find studio space but did secure by accident but with much commotion the Ladbroke Grove studio. The paintings by 1963 were progressing well, no doubt aided by the Ladbroke Grove studio, which McGillick described as a space 'filled with light' and surrounded by artists, writers and musicians. In this environment, Tony became charged even more so.

*Week by Week more pictures are produced and the studio is packed with canvases. Very happy with the way things are going just now and will approach the galleries in JAN. or FEB. with ideas of a show in '64. I feel pretty confident of some success on that score.<sup>8</sup>*

At the Ladbroke Grove studio, McGillick had been frustrated by earlier efforts and began to re-use painted canvases, producing paintings such as *Billboard* (1963) and *Sharman Repeat* (1964); blending the suggestions of abstract with figurative elements. He wrote:

*Been working through a series of pictures based on Jimmy Sharmans boxing troupe, a subject that seems inexhaustible. The picture going now is a giant of 7' x 5' which I'd like to be the finale to the years work.<sup>9</sup>*

On the back of *Billboard*, elements of Graham Sutherland's markings, stripes, and blocks of muted earthy colours can be seen; these are also reminiscent of McGillick's close friend Brett Whiteley's works of the London period.

In 1963, some Australian artists living in London, including Michael Johnson, were selected for the exhibition *Australian Painting and Sculpture in Europe Today*, which was presented at the one of the most prestigious and significant art museums in Germany, the Städtisches Kunstinstitut in Frankfurt. Tony made the journey to Frankfurt accompanied by his close friend Fred Cahill and Australian painters John Howley, now 86 and continuing to exhibit with Australian Galleries; and Max Robinson, a fellow designer and artist who exhibited in 1961 at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London. Tony found Frankfurt vital and exhilarating after spending a week cruising around the city. He wrote:

*All good fellows. After an exhausting train, boat, train journey which took 12 hours we arrived in Frankfurt at 1.A.M. Anxious to get some sleep we made a bad choice of a hotel near the station which was 25/- each a night, even so we took the offer and spent 10 hours sleeping.<sup>10</sup>*

The next day the group was unexpectedly flocked by journalists waiting at the gallery to interview the exhibiting artists. The journalists paid them a great deal of attention, one reason being they were the only artists who turned up that morning.

Tony had two paintings in the exhibition: *Icarus*, a four-feet by four; and *Prometheus*, a fair-sized painting at five feet by five. The sizes were in keeping with the London currency of exhibiting works in such shows as *Situation: An Exhibition of British Abstract Painting* that commanded large abstract paintings that retained flatness over the picture. Linked to Greek mythology, the titles did not reflect the content but were rather emblematic of the artist's surroundings. The context of the production more influenced Tony's decisions in generating titles that would resonate at an institutional level.

The day before the opening, Tony was conscious of the need to be suitably dressed. Attuned to the advent of post-painterly abstraction, London artists were using fashion as a vehicle in promoting the artist's image as cultured, forward-looking and cool.

*The next day, Thursday, was the official opening and spent the morning making ourselves as presentable as possible for the occasion. Some task for me as I had come in rather shabby clothes not expecting such attention as all this ... Anyway we turned up at the gallery and were immediately thrust before the Lord Mayor ... All the while I was conscious of my shabby appearance in comparison with the grey stripes and tails crowd ... Afterwards we all went to a party with the Australian Embassy where I had a nice little talk with Blakeney<sup>11</sup> the Aust. Ambassador and got along fine.<sup>12</sup>*

At the opening, Tony was introduced to Hanna Bekker vom Rath, the art collector and dealer. The next day they were all invited to meet at her gallery and were subsequently escorted to her country home near Wiesbaden where her famous art collection was housed – filled with works by Max Beckmann, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and Paul Klee.

*Wow! What a place! It would take pages to describe the house and setting! ... we estimated the collection to be worth a couple of million ... She was obviously interested in my work and will probably offer me a show when she comes to London next month.<sup>13</sup>*

This chance encounter perhaps had a lasting impression, instilling in the young and promising artist the workings of the art world and its establishment, and inventing a style to match his expectations.

By the end of 1963, the harshness of the London weather coupled with feelings of homesickness by the impending Christmas festive season is evidenced in his letters. The humorous caricature drawing of himself garbed against the forces of the chill illustrate just how he was feeling:

*I spend most of the time just about sitting in the gas fire and get around dressed something like this:*

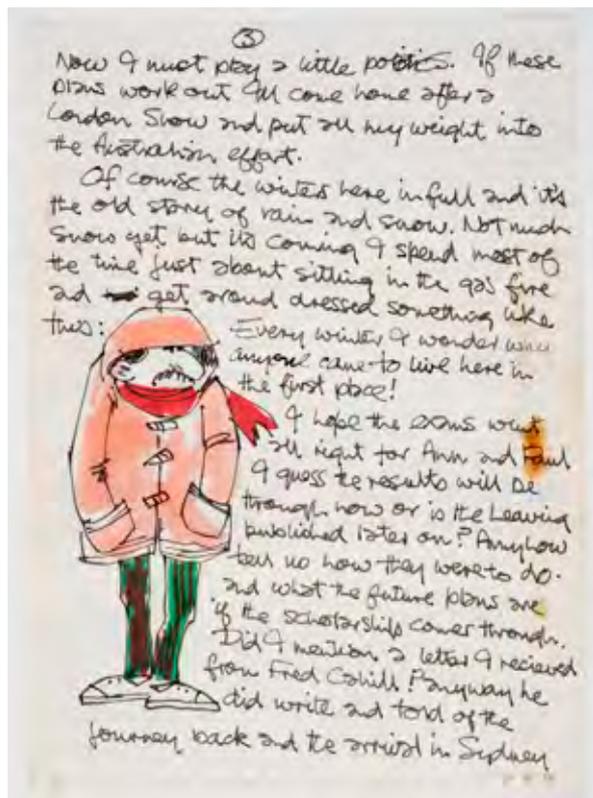
*I guess my Xmas will be pretty quiet, maybe a party or two, and I'll spent Xmas Day with Vernon [psychedelic Australian artist Vernon Treweeke] & Anita (young Aust painter) and maybe others will join us ... Everyone getting drunk so as not to get homesick.<sup>14</sup>*

The London period was instrumental in the development of Tony McGillick's practice. He returned to Australia in late 1965 with renewed confidence and energy, spreading the news as the prime mover and shaker. The letters open a new chapter on the life and work of Tony McGillick, a painter not to be forgotten.

**RHONDA DAVIS**  
**JULY 2018**

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Letter dated Dec. 16, Dear Family, circa 1963, p. 2.
- 2 *ibid.*, p. 5.
- 3 Letter dated July 12, circa 1963, to Mum, and all else.
- 4 Letter dated 21 March, Dear family, 1962.
- 5 *ibid.*
- 6 Letter undated from Acton Town, Dear Mum, Dad, Kids, postmarked 28 February, circa 1963.
- 7 *ibid.*
- 8 Letter dated Dec. 16, Dear Family, circa 1963, p. 2.
- 9 Letter dated Nov 20, Dear Family, 129 Ladbroke Grove, circa 1963.
- 10 Letter undated, Dear Family, 129 Ladbroke Grove W. 11, circa 1963.
- 11 Frederick Blakeney was the Australian ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany. His appointment was from 1962 to 1968.
- 12 *op. cit.* no. 10.
- 13 *ibid.*
- 14 *op. cit.* no. 1. pp 3–4.



## LEFT:

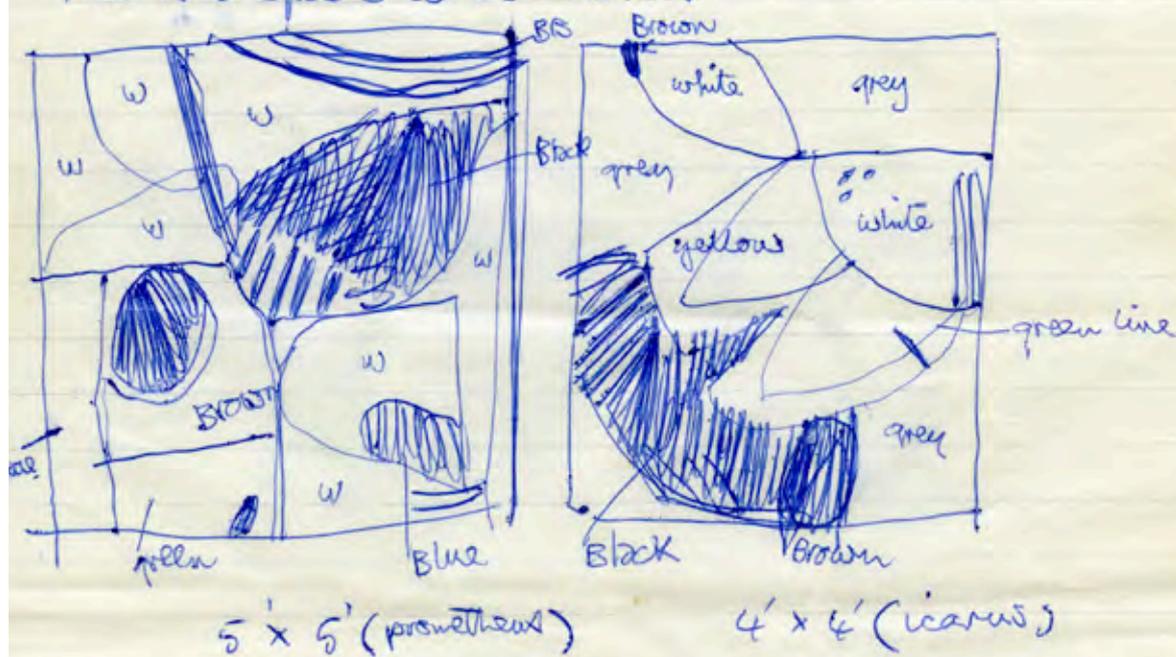
Letter dated Dec. 16, Dear Family, circa 1963, p. 3.  
Collection Paul McGillick  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite

## RIGHT:

Photographs of Jim Cook and Tony McGillick in London  
circa 1963



Enclosed you will find a couple of photographs of the pictures, which are now in Frankfurt, and one of the studio. The studio really isn't so depressing as it appears in fact it is usually filled with light! Just the camera exposure! This is a guide to the colours:



I spent last week in Frankfurt and had a great time. Fred Cohill came along as well and two other painters John Howley and Max Robinson. All good fellows. After an exhausting train, boat, train journey which took 12 hours we arrived in Frankfurt at 1.A.M. Anxious to get some sleep we made a bad choice of a hotel near the station which was 25/- each a night, even so we took



**LEFT:**

Letter undated, Dear Family,  
129 Ladbroke Grove W. 11, circa 1963.  
Collection Paul McGillick  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite

**ABOVE:**

Photographs of Jim Cook and Tony McGillick in London  
circa 1963

# Lots of leaping and twirling in midair

Whatever Tony said felt important. He constructed his thoughts internally, delivering a considered, economic and articulate viewpoint. A pause usually followed while others listening adjusted their next comment. A deeper understanding and new possibilities regularly emerged from what followed on from Tony's input.

With his beautiful, mesmerising voice commanding and persuading, he inspired people to engage their higher thinking to distil or expand complex ideas.

There was a lighter, playful side too. I saw lots of leaping and twirling midair in the studio to CPE Bach or Mozart at full volume. This energy often ended up on the canvas.

Whenever we moved house/office/studio, the usual packing and unpacking disrupted our familiar spaces and patterns.

'Pinning up' helped to normalise us in the new spaces. Two constants in our field of vision over many years were: a well-worn, edges-curved-and-torn Piero della Francesca *The Nativity* print from the National Gallery (London); and Titian's *Portrait of a Man (A Man with a Quilted Sleeve)*, c. 1510. For Tony, these two references were as necessary as oxygen is to breathe.

Over the years, many paintings emerged and joined the finished works. From these, he selected a handful to be hung in our office and at home.

Those he chose were not there for their enhancement of the space but there because he counted them as significant and, therefore, they had a right to occupy a permanent place in our lives installed on the walls of our spaces.

*Jasper's gesture* went up everywhere we went, just as a child makes sure his favoured toy is close by. *Quattro* hung as a backdrop to friends and family at dinner in the studio gathered to celebrate Tony's 50th birthday. *Acid Even* was installed in our office.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, Tony made a series of works as unstretched canvases.

In one of his notebooks is a note to self: 'make a thing that might as well have fallen off the back of a truck?'

Tony's mother was a designer/seamstress and their home was a field of threads, fabric offcuts and bolts of material.

Was the experience of growing up in his mother's work environment (her studio) now pushing through and asserting itself onto Tony the painter?

Charles Nodrum said of the work *Bivouac*: "It hangs, unstretched on the wall – loose, casual, laid back," and that the work "carries within it one of those internal contradictions that often prove to be the wellspring of the work's strength: it says 'Let's take things easy and not fuss too much' and, in the same breath, 'don't do anything of the sort! You can't be casual about being casual. Being easy isn't easy.'"

Tony's works here with their industrial-size eyelets and heavy stitching, their folding and overlapping and their scale also have a delicate appeal, just as the works of Meredith Brice do in her response to Tony's work.

In this show, Meredith shows how she reciprocates with incredible colour selection reminiscent of works by Milton Avery, fine detailing and impeccable finishing.

Other ways you might get to know Tony better are through his avid collecting of Britain's lead soldiers, his photography, his loyal support of Carlton, his love of typography and his belief that everyone must pay their dues on their journey to becoming a useful and productive human and, if you could see it ... his boogie-woogie.

**LAUREN MCGILICK**  
10 JULY 2018

## REFERENCE:

Charles Nodrum essay introduction – trio of concurrent solo shows: Paul Partos, Michael Johnson and Tony McGillick. Charles Nodrum Gallery, 7–30 October 2010.

## RIGHT:

Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
*Tom's Toy Box*  
1986–92  
oil and wax on canvas  
197.5 x 197.5 cm  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite



# Tony McGillick: Serial framework;

OR ‘IT IS DAMNED DIFFICULT TO LOVE A MODULE’

*‘I was a Kings Cross kid – I lived in the asphalt and ran between parks, up and down Macleay Street’*

**TONY MCGILICK, 1992<sup>1</sup>**

Tony McGillick grew up in Sydney’s bohemian world in the 1940s and 1950s. He began working as a commercial artist in the late 1950s and found himself moving in the same circle as a number of other up-and-coming young artists including Max Cullen, Michael Johnson, Vernon Treweeke, Dick Watkins and Brett Whiteley; and, like them, was soon heading for Europe and London to expand his artistic experience.<sup>2</sup>

London in the early 1960s was home to a burgeoning, youthful art scene and a lively series of contemporary exhibitions at institutions like the Whitechapel Art Gallery and the Tate. Shows like *Young Contemporaries*, at Whitechapel in 1964, and *British Painting in the Sixties*, hosted by both Whitechapel and the Tate in 1963, highlighted the growing pop and abstract movements locally, with expatriate Australian contribution, notably Brett Whiteley. The Whitechapel Art Gallery’s exhibitions of leading American artists gave young expatriate artists the chance to see the work of Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg and Mark Rothko at first hand.

While working in London, McGillick, although heavily influenced by the early pop stylings of Jasper Johns, became increasingly interested in the colour abstracts by artists like Robyn Denny, who lived close to Michael Johnson, and Michael Tyzack, whose work *The Most Sizzling, Joyous Painting of All* would later be seen in Sydney at the Central Street Gallery.<sup>3</sup>

While visiting New York on the way home to Sydney in 1965, McGillick also became interested in the recent work of Ellsworth Kelly, Larry Poons, Frank Stella and others. On his return, McGillick teamed up with his half-brother, John White, and Harald Noritis to open the Central Street Gallery in Sydney’s entertainment district in 1966.

There was no doubting that the Central Street Gallery’s house style was influenced by what had been happening in New York’s major galleries around the time of McGillick’s visit. Central Street’s 1967 *Black and White* exhibition was inspired by a similarly themed show at New York’s Jewish Museum in 1963, while the artworks featured in exhibitions like *The Shaped Canvas* at the Solomon R Guggenheim Museum in 1964, and *The Responsive Eye* at the Museum of Modern Art in 1965, helped to establish the young gallery’s aesthetic motifs.<sup>4</sup>

During 1966, Tony McGillick began experimenting with modular shapes, using a square with one corner cut off as the basis for his colour abstract paintings. Interviewed by Terry Smith in 1969, McGillick explained that his first (partially) modular painting, *End Result*, 1966, was made as an attempt to emulate the ‘kind of movement that he had seen in a Larry Poons painting’ at the Museum of Modern Art.<sup>5</sup> The first fully modular painting, *Jasper’s gesture*, borrowed its name and colour scheme from McGillick’s earlier influence, Jasper Johns.<sup>6</sup> The composition of some of the singular module paintings, like *Inside Favourite* and *Easy Chrome*, play with the structure of the module in a similar way to Frank Stella’s work.

*Republic*, 1967, was one of the first of McGillick's modular works to be exhibited, at Central Street's *Black and White* exhibition, along with *May Day* and *Revolution*. With its stark but textured blackness, *Republic* exemplified the catalogue essay's point that the Central Street artists' personal disciplines were 'to their advantage in focusing more acutely on the specific issues they choose to examine', although, as Terry Smith reflected in 1969, 'McGillick's struggle for two years after the *Black and White* exhibition was to sort out and solve problems of colour with the serial framework of his modular shapes.'<sup>7</sup> *Polaris* and *Juxtaposed* were the paintings McGillick selected for the Central Street artists' group exhibition held, for better or for worse, to coincide with New York art critic Clement Greenberg's visit to Sydney in May 1968.<sup>8</sup>

The modular paintings had their greatest public exposure during the winter and spring of 1968. In early June 1968, Central Street hosted McGillick's first solo exhibition, dominated by the recent modular paintings. Afterwards, *Juxtaposed*, *National* and *Cuba/Si* travelled to Canberra for the *Directions* exhibition, held at Albert Hall in July, and *Polaris* and *Arbitrator* travelled to Melbourne for the National Gallery of Victoria's groundbreaking exhibition *The Field*, held in its brand new St Kilda Road gallery; and later toured to the Art Gallery of New South Wales; while the balance of the modular works were regrouped for another solo exhibition at Melbourne's Pinacotheca Gallery in Melbourne in October. In November, the ambitious seven module painting *Tuxedo* was commended in the Transfield Prize exhibition at Sydney's Bonython Galleries, with Elwyn Lynn stating: 'it surges with power and glory.'<sup>9</sup>

The reception was encouraging, if not universally welcoming. John Henshaw wrote in *The Australian*: 'Tony McGillick builds his shaped canvases ... with an eye to their architectural function. Mostly they work.' Writing for *The Bulletin*, Elwyn Lynn also recognised the architectural aspect of the modular works: 'If you have ever inhabited a polygonal room, you'll realise how intriguing is the balance between these equally shaped modules.' Donald Brook and John Coburn both drew comparisons with heraldic practice; Brook noting that *Cuba/Si* 'appeals to the unreflective eye like a great blazon or heraldic cloth of powerful – and deceptive – simplicity', and Coburn observing that 'their bold heraldic colours are tough and handsome.' *The Age*'s Patrick McCaughey was enthusiastic: 'McGillick's colour is sensuously warm to the point of blatant hedonism. Like any good paintings they excite the eye, quicken and exhilarate the senses.' Like Henshaw, however, the Melbourne *Herald*'s Alan McCulloch was more ambivalent: 'McGillick attains a finely attuned balance of pure, simple colours in his best work, but the limitations of the style preclude promise of more substantial development.'<sup>10</sup>

When *The Australian*'s columnist Laurie Thomas praised traditional Asian art over contemporary Australian art in July with the line 'it is damned difficult to love a module', there could be little doubt as to whom he was referring.<sup>11</sup>



**ABOVE:**

Tony McGillick (1941–92)

*Imogen's ensign*

1973

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

226.5 x 324.0 x 80.0 cm

Art Gallery of New South Wales

Purchased 1974

© Estate of Tony McGillick

Photo: AGNSW



**ABOVE:**

Tony McGillick (1941–92)

*Republic*

1967

synthetic polymer and wax on canvas

in three modular sections

236.2 x 236.2 cm overall size

repainted in encaustic green over the original black  
in 1970

© Estate of Tony McGillick

Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite

Reflecting on the modular paintings in 1969, Noel Hutchison wrote that ‘they had social implications that McGillick, himself, did not wish to take up.’<sup>12</sup> The abstraction of the works was often accompanied by a title evocative of the politics of the 1960s; such as *Republic*, *May Day*, *Revolution*, *National*, *Scottsboro*, *Polaris* and *Cuba/Si*. Evocative as they were, these titles didn’t necessarily suggest propaganda: even the title most explicitly sourced from a political slogan, ‘Cuba Si!’, was one adopted by both pro-Castro and anti-Castro activists. Presumably McGillick’s parents’ experiences within and without the Australian Communist Party during his Cold War era youth had taught him to be wary of the zealous.<sup>13</sup>

When Central Street Gallery’s new ground floor gallery space, designed by Rollin Schlicht, opened with a group exhibition (aka *Gallery Mixture*) in December 1968, *Fontanelle* became the last of McGillick’s modular painting series to make its public debut.

As McGillick himself explained when interviewed by the National Gallery of Victoria for his *Survey* exhibition a decade later, “the modules were very handy, particularly for this colour preoccupation that I had and others [had] at the time. But it was becoming for me a bit of a convention and I didn’t think I could really make a career on one convention ...”<sup>14</sup>

McGillick’s work in the late 1960s continued with more complex shaped canvases, inspired by the shape of the spray gun he was now using to achieve his colour gradations. When McGillick and Dick Watkins held a retrospective of their 1960s work at Central Street in mid 1969, Noel Hutchison noted that McGillick was ‘moving out into new things’.<sup>15</sup> As the 1970s began and conceptualism took art ‘off the wall’, McGillick’s canvases lost their structural framework and took on a much looser form.

When the Central Street Gallery closed and the New South Wales branch of the Contemporary Art Society took over the space in the early 1970s, McGillick’s involvement moved to a more curatorial role. He co-curated *The Situation Now*, a survey of conceptual art in Sydney, with Terry Smith in 1971, and *Coca-Cola: 20th Century Icon*, a display ‘designed to examine the nature of the cultural icon’, with John White and Gus Cohen in 1972.<sup>16</sup>

In 1973, *Imogen’s ensign*, one of McGillick’s unstretched canvas paintings, was included in *Recent Australian Art*, the Art Gallery of New South Wales’ contribution to the Sydney Opera House opening festival. Although McGillick was interested in conceptual art, contributing a storyboard for an experimental film to the New South Wales branch of the Contemporary Art Society’s *Broadsheet* in 1974, his profile as an exhibiting artist was no longer as visible as it had been during the late 1960s.<sup>17</sup>

After the *Survey 6: Tony McGillick* retrospective at the National Gallery of Victoria in 1978, relatively little new work by McGillick was seen in public. Two works from a 1984 series of abstracts were exhibited at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in *The Subject of Painting* in 1985, a collaboration between the gallery and the Contemporary Art Society curated by his younger brother Paul McGillick. In 1992, Tony McGillick was working on a new series of abstract paintings for a planned solo exhibition at Sydney’s Sherman Galleries, with the modular form returning as a motif, when he passed away.

**ERIC RIDDLER**  
**JUNE 2018**

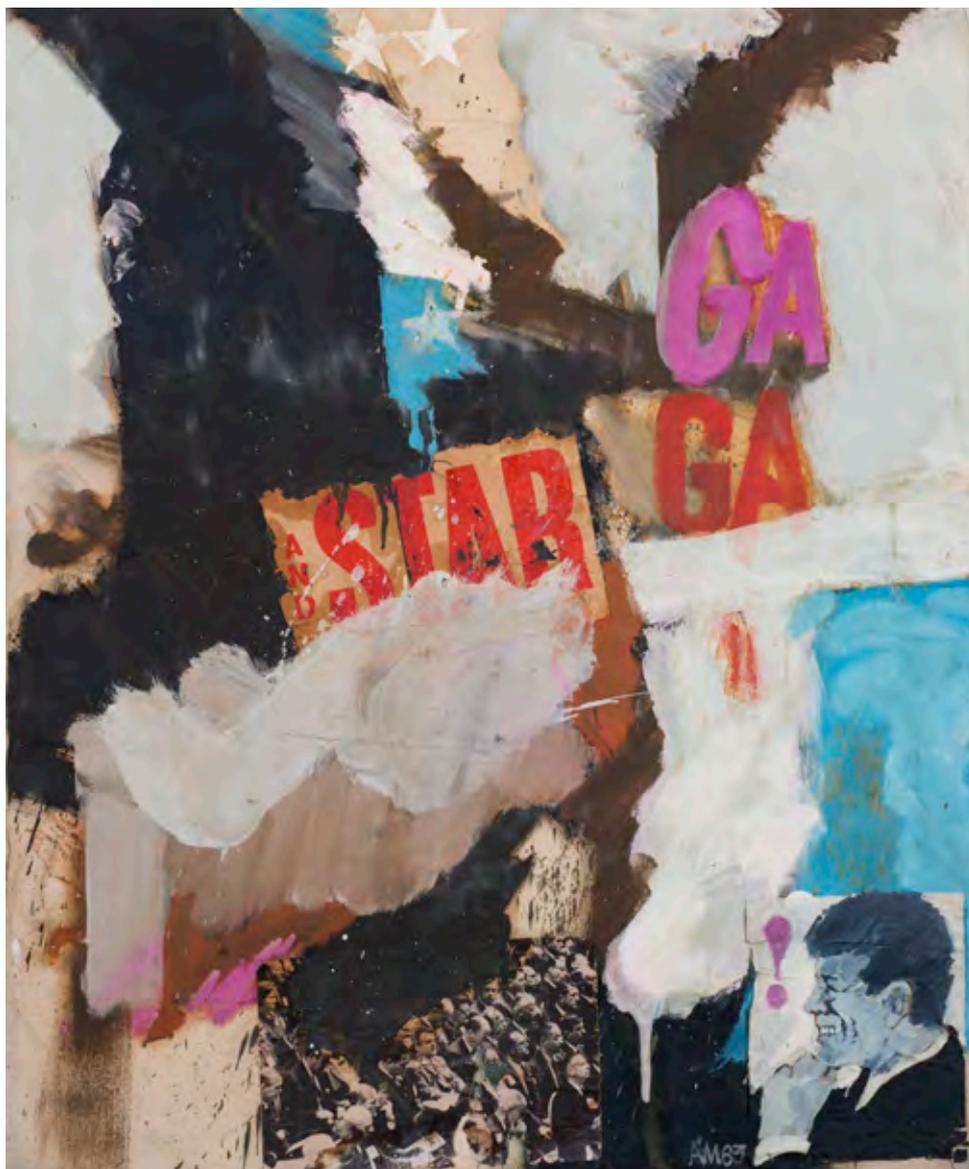
## ENDNOTES

- 1 Margaret Throsby & Graham McCarter 1992, *Sydney People & Places*, ABC, p. 60.
- 2 John White 1959, 'Moving?' *Australian Commercial and Industrial Artists' Association News*, Sydney, 25 February, p. 3; Brom Shanahan 1961, 'Letter from London' (addendum), *Australian Commercial and Industrial Artists' Association News*, Sydney, 26 September, p. 2. (See also Margot Hilton & Graeme Blundell, *Whiteley: an unauthorised life*, Macmillan, Sydney, 1996.)
- 3 Donald Brook 1969, 'Good art and bad theory', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 June.
- 4 *Black and White*, Central Street Gallery (catalogue note), Sydney, May 1967.
- 5 Terry Smith 1969, 'Dick Watkins: Tony McGillick: a selection of work', *Honi Soit*, Sydney, 12 June, p. 9. (See also Rhonda Davis 2002, 'The hidden seam', *Central Street Live*, Macquarie University & Penrith Regional Gallery and the Lewers Bequest, pp. 21–31.)
- 6 Smith 1969, *ibid.*; Noel Hutchison 1968, 'Noel Hutchison tracks around the galleries', *Honi Soit*, Sydney, 11 June, p. 12.
- 7 *Black and White*, 1967, *op. cit.*
- 8 Smith 1969, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
- 9 Elwyn Lynn 1968, 'The Transfield – an unfortunate year', *The Bulletin*, Sydney, 16 November.
- 10 John Henshaw 1968, 'A few shocks for the icy national capital', *The Australian*, Sydney, 6 July; Elwyn Lynn 1968, 'Confrontation', *The Bulletin*, Sydney, 15 June; Donald Brook 1968, 'The power of the modular idea', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 June; John Coburn 1968, 'The '60s look', *Canberra Times*, 4 July; Patrick McCaughey 1968, 'Rejuvenation in show scramble', *The Age*, Melbourne, 9 October; Alan McCulloch 1968, 'Emphasis on Nordic craft', *The Herald*, Melbourne, 9 October.
- 11 Laurie Thomas 1968, 'The art of being nobody', *The Australian*, Sydney, 23 July.
- 12 Noel Hutchison 1969, 'Catching up on past events', *The Union Recorder*, Sydney, 11 June.
- 13 Thomas C 'Tony' McGillick (senior) was jailed for rioting at a May Day rally in Port Adelaide in 1931, and later represented Australia at the Soviet Union's May Day celebrations before becoming disillusioned with the Communist Party during World War II; see 'Demonstration falls flat: police ensure quiet May Day: eight arrests', *Advertiser and Register*, Adelaide, 2 May 1931, p. 15; 'McGillick at City Hall', *Workers' Weekly*, Sydney, 1 November 1938, p. 4; and Roland Pullen 1944, 'The looking glass', *Daily Telegraph*, Sydney, 24 December, p. 9.
- 14 Tony McGillick 1978, Survey 6 interview, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.
- 15 Hutchison 1969, *op. cit.*
- 16 John White, Tony McGillick & Gus Cohen 1972, 'Coca-Cola: 20th century icon', *Contemporary Art Society (NSW Branch) Broadsheet*, Sydney, March, p. 2.
- 17 Tony McGillick 1974, untitled storyboard, *Contemporary Art Society (NSW Branch) Broadsheet*, Sydney, May, pp. 36–7.

**LEFT:**

Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
*Fontanelle #2*  
 1968  
 acrylic and perspex in modular sections  
 edition 4  
 64.5 x 79 cm modular size; 91.5 x 122 cm  
 mounted on laminated MDF  
 Courtesy of Charles Nodrum Gallery, Melbourne  
 © Estate of Tony McGillick

# Plates



**LEFT:**  
Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
Untitled  
1963  
acrylic and collage on canvas  
91 x 57 cm  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite

**RIGHT:**  
Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
*Jimmy Sharman 6*  
1964  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
105 x 105 cm  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite







**LEFT:**

Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
*Time*  
1965  
oil and wax on hardboard  
35.5 x 28.3 x 0.5 cm; 38.5 x 31 x 0.58 cm framed  
Collection Paul McGillick  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite

**LEFT:**

Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
*Sharman Repeat*  
1964  
oil and wax on canvas  
152 x 106.5 cm; 155 x 109.4 cm framed  
Collection Elizabeth McGillick  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite

**NEXT PAGE LEFT:**

Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
*Primary*  
1965  
oil and wax on canvas with wood collage  
168 x 120.8 cm; 172 x 124.7 cm framed  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite

**NEXT PAGE RIGHT:**

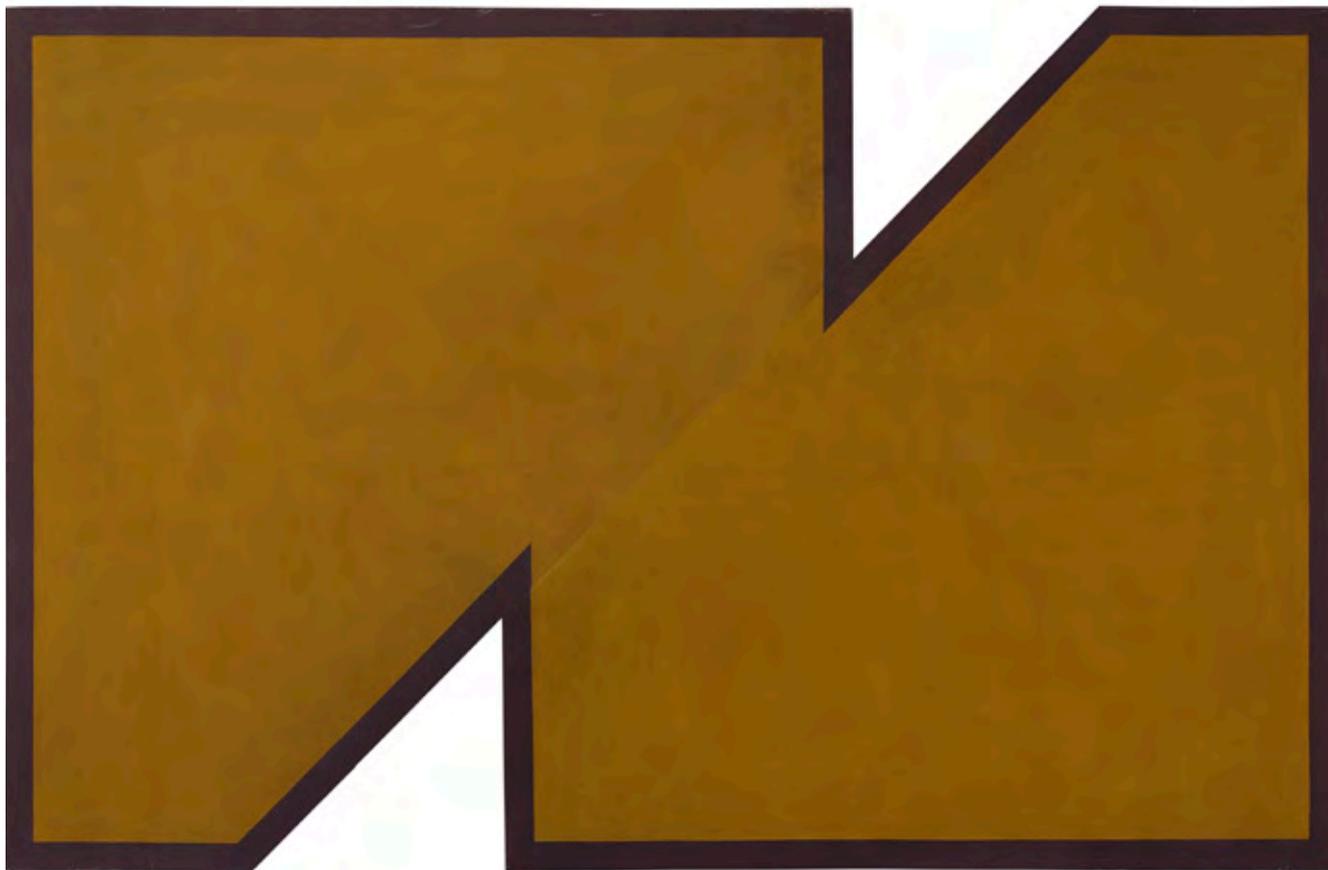
Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
*Five*  
1965  
oil and wax over fabricated canvas  
in the shape of numeral '5'  
120 x 76 x 20.5 cm  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite











**ABOVE:**

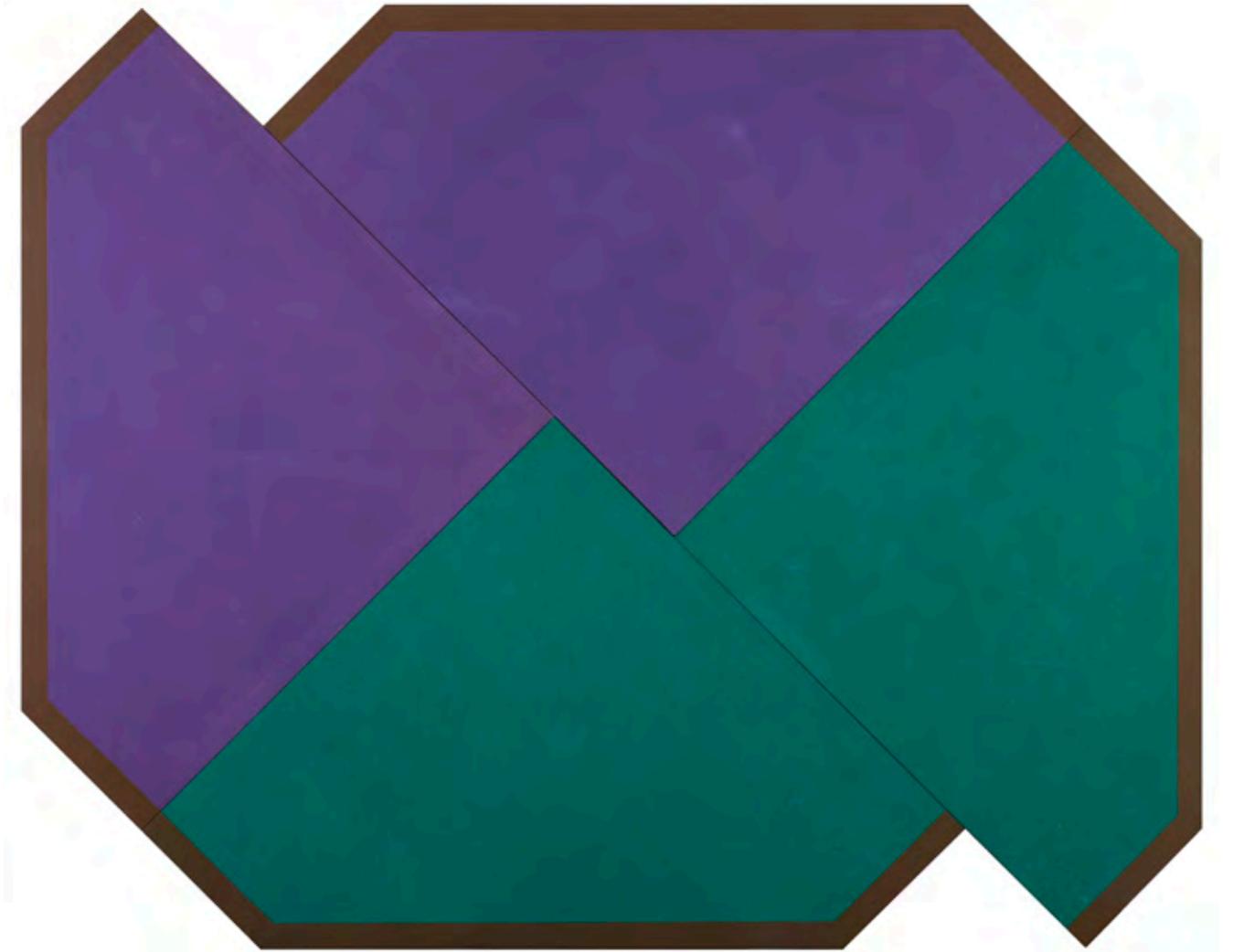
Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
*National*  
1968  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
168 x 275 cm  
Courtesy of Charles Nodrum Gallery, Melbourne  
© Estate of Tony McGillick

**PREVIOUS PAGE LEFT:**

Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
Untitled  
1966  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
166 x 165 cm  
Collection Paul McGillick  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite

**PREVIOUS PAGE RIGHT:**

Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
*Shchukin*  
1966  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
167.5 x 167.5 cm; 168.5 x 168.5 cm framed  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite



**ABOVE:**

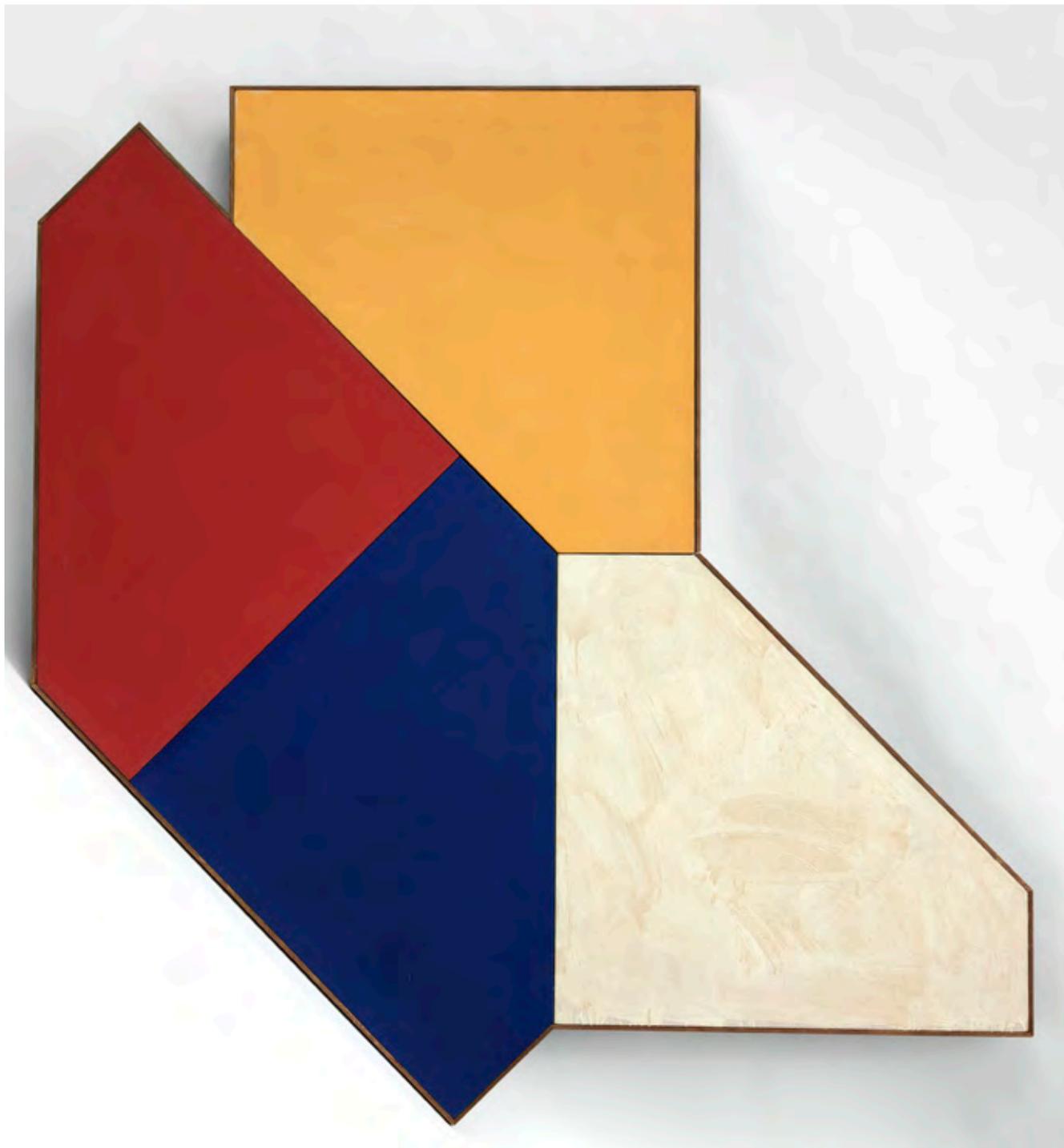
Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
*Juxtapacent*  
1969  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
177 x 222 cm  
University of Technology Sydney Art Collection  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite

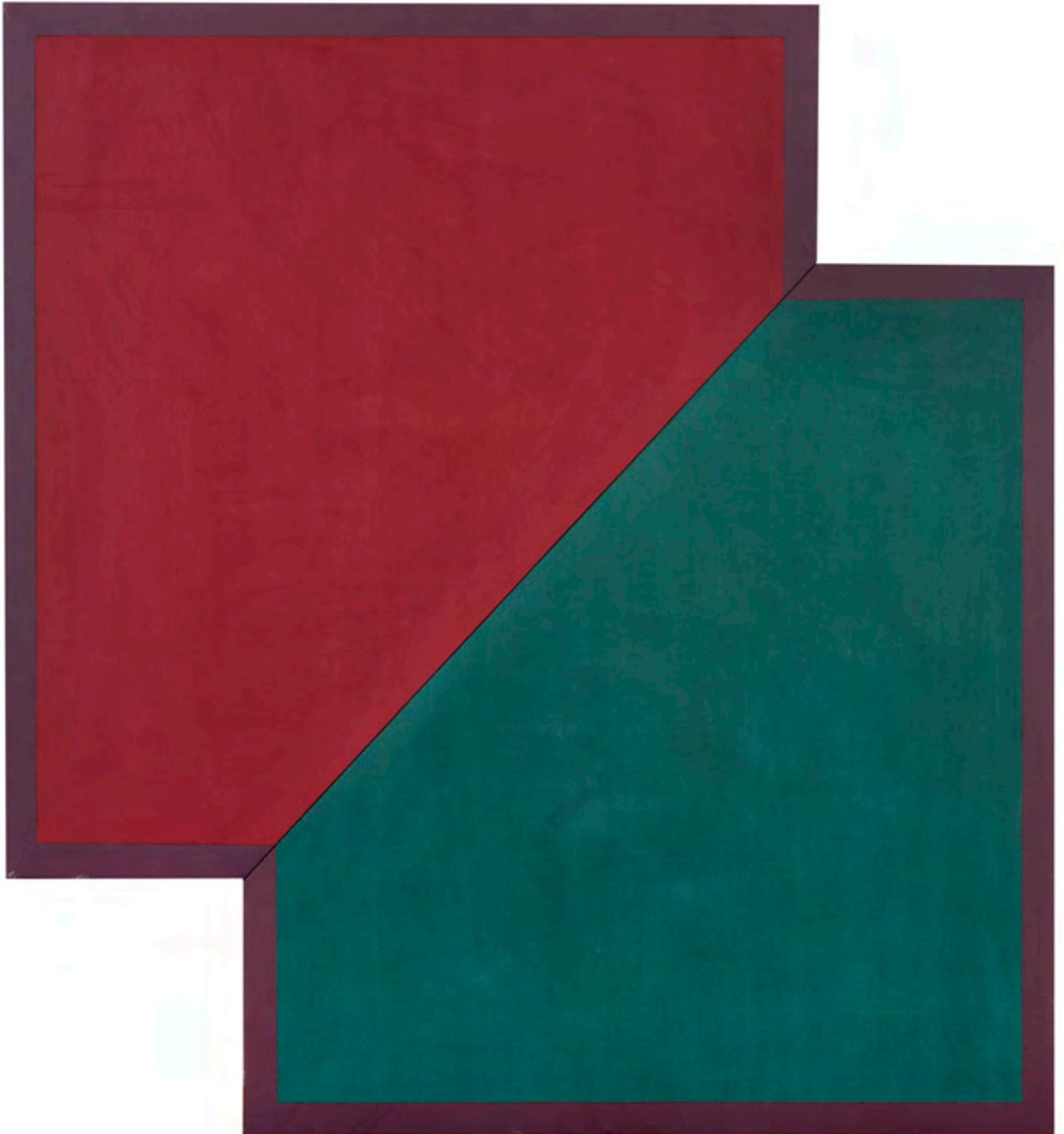
**NEXT PAGE LEFT:**

Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
*Jasper's gesture*  
1966  
synthetic polymer paint and wax on canvas,  
in four modular sections  
170.1 x 162.5 cm overall (irreg.)  
Art Gallery of New South Wales  
D G Wilson Bequest Fund 2003  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photo: AGNSW

**NEXT PAGE RIGHT:**

Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
*Acid Even*  
1968  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
144 x 143 cm  
Collection Ross and Irene Langlands  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite







**ABOVE:**

Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
*Plaza*  
1974  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
210.8 x 269.2 cm  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite

**NEXT PAGE LEFT:**

Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
*Tabby's Tantrum*  
1978  
synthetic polymer paint and wax on canvas  
122 x 122 cm  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite



**ABOVE:**

Tony McGillick (1941–92)

*Bivouac*

1974

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

210.8 x 269.2 cm

© Estate of Tony McGillick

Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite

**NEXT PAGE RIGHT:**

Tony McGillick (1941–92)

*Manoeuvre*

1978

oil and wax on canvas

162.5 x 162.5 cm; 166.4 x 166.4 cm framed

© Estate of Tony McGillick

Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite

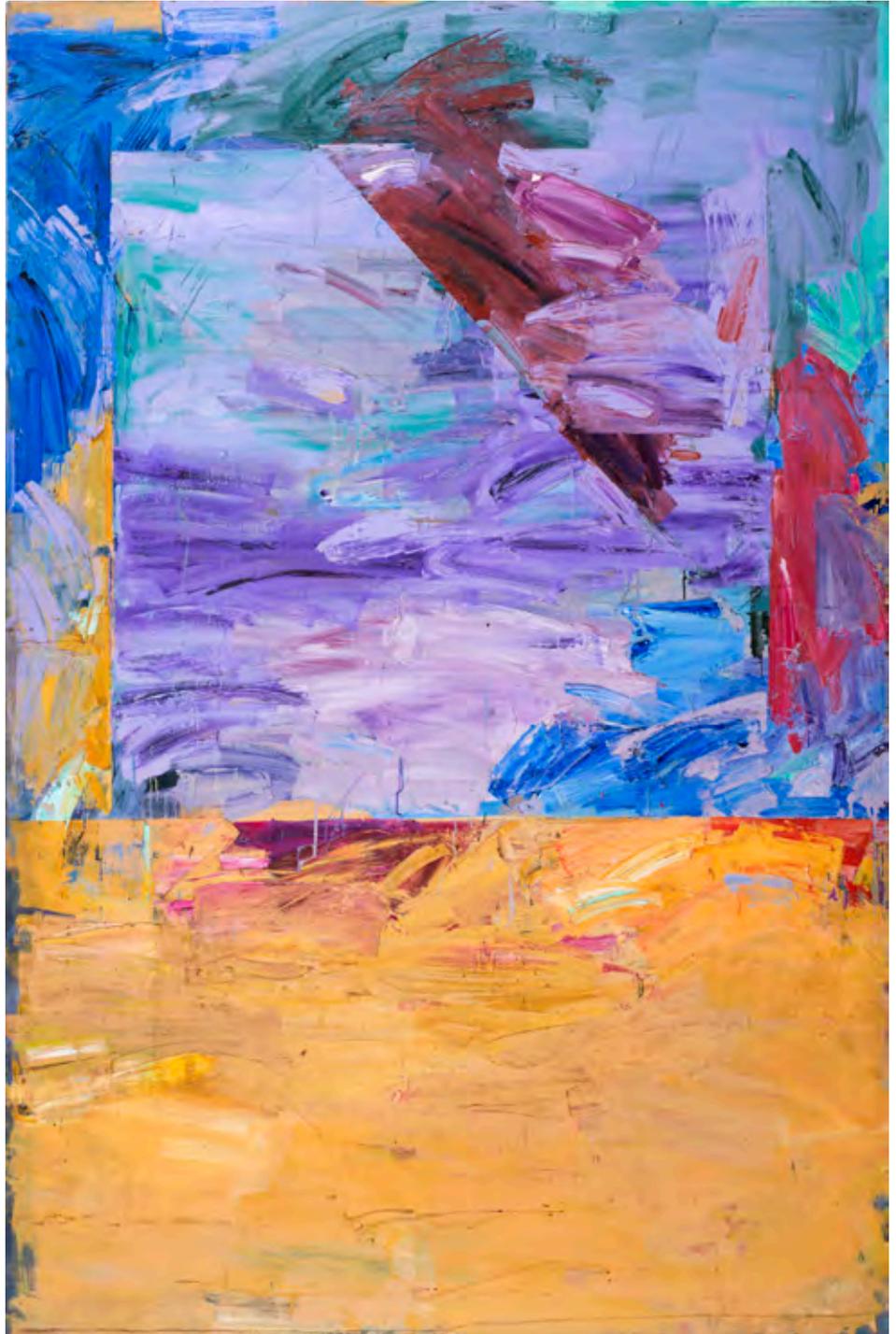






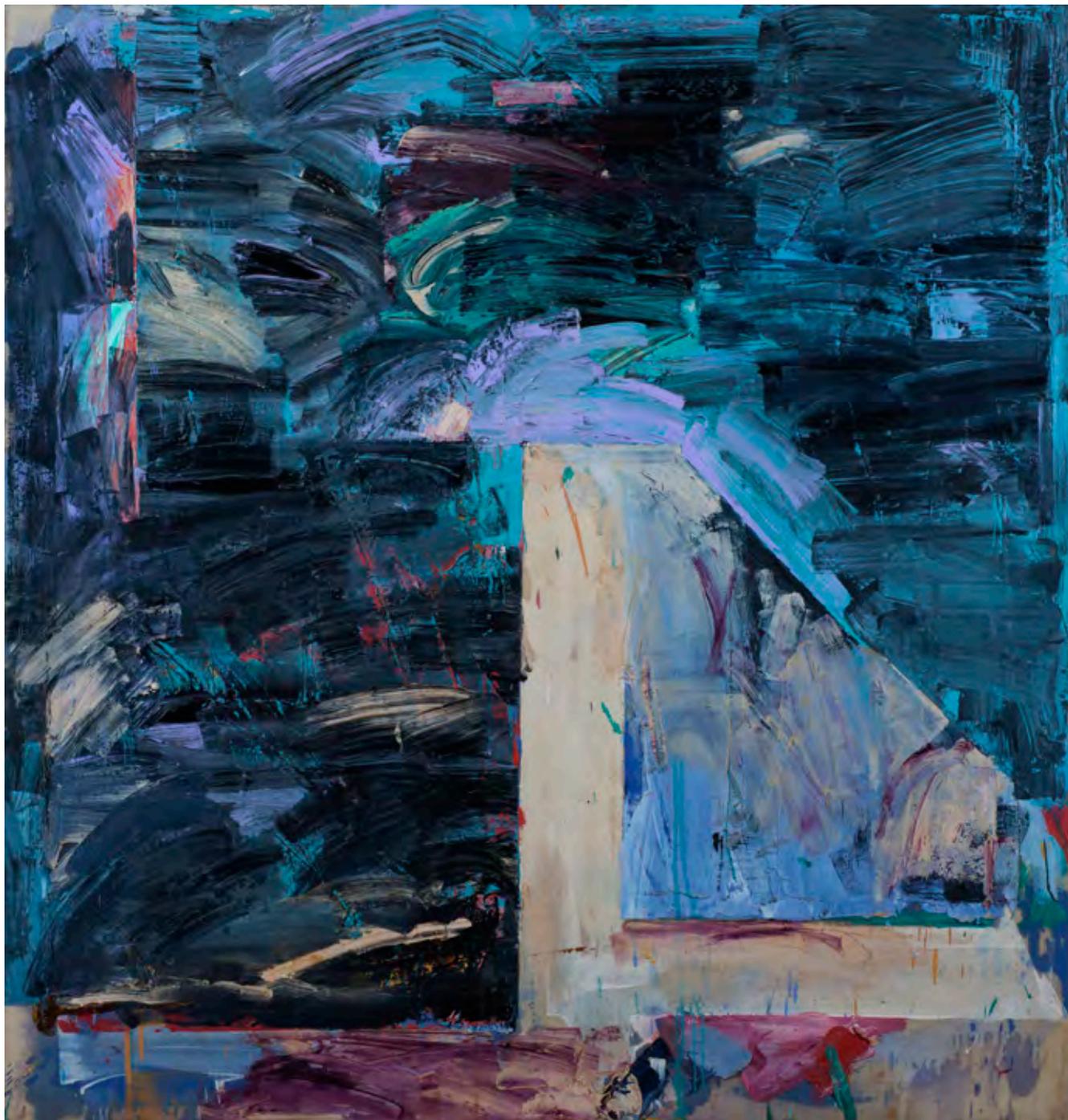
**LEFT:**

Tony McGillick (1941-92)  
Untitled  
1985  
oil and wax on four shaped canvases  
198.5 x 197.5 cm  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite



**RIGHT:**

Tony McGillick (1941-92)  
Untitled  
1987  
oil and wax on canvas  
256.5 x 167.5 cm  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite





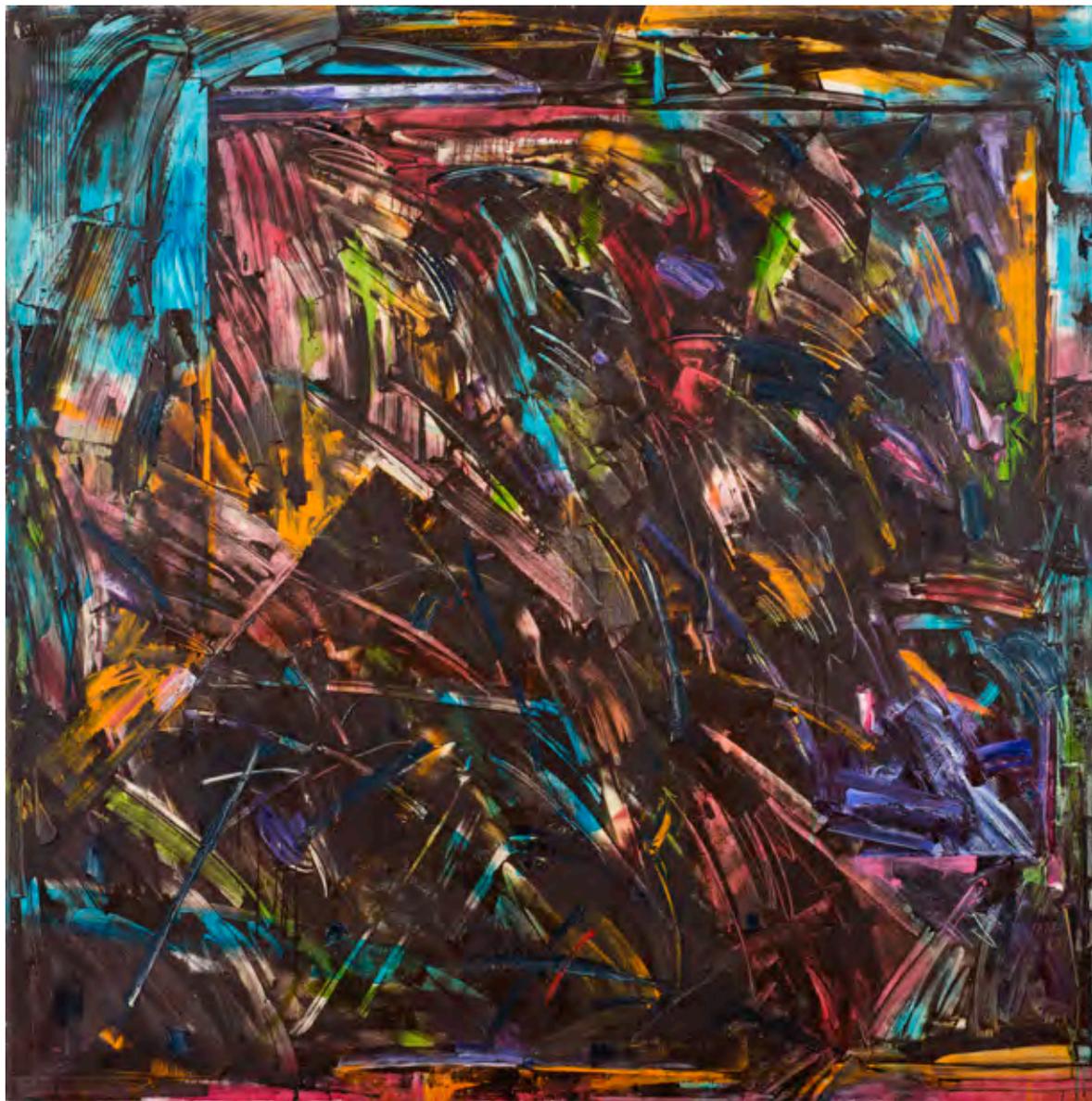
**LEFT:**  
Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
Untitled  
1988  
oil and wax on canvas  
152 x 153 cm  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite

**ABOVE:**  
Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
Untitled  
1989–90  
oil and wax on five shaped canvases  
216 x 190.5 cm  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite



**ABOVE:**

Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
Untitled  
1990–91  
oil and wax on canvas  
121.5 x 121.5 cm  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite



**ABOVE:**  
Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
Untitled  
1990–91  
oil and wax on canvas  
197.5 x 197.5 cm  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite



**ABOVE:**  
Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
Untitled  
1990–91  
oil and wax on canvas  
122 x 121.6 cm  
IBM Collection  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite



**ABOVE:**

Tony McGillick (1941–92)

Untitled

1990–91

oil and wax on canvas

122 x 121.6 cm

IBM Collection

© Estate of Tony McGillick

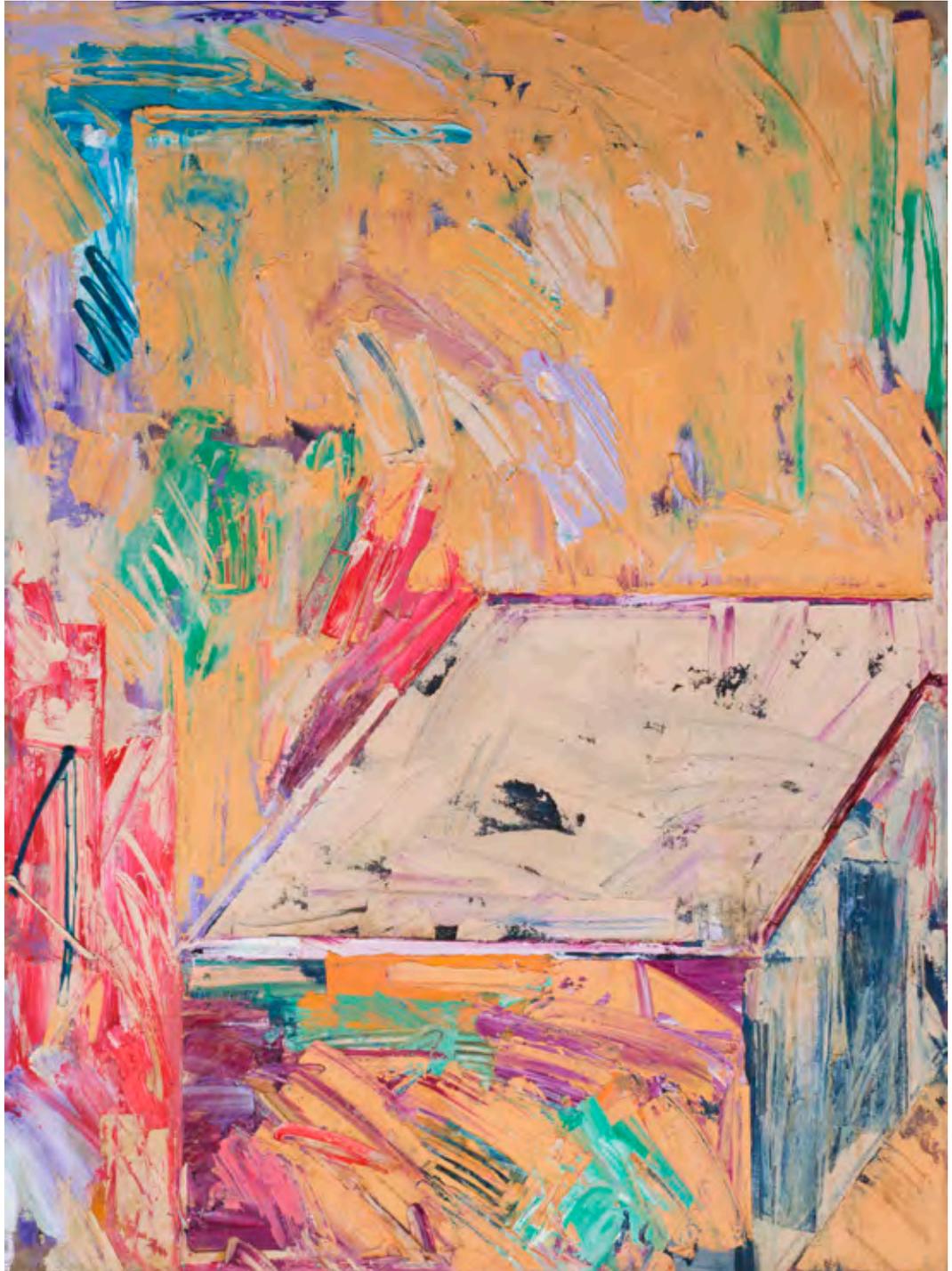
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite

**RIGHT:**

Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
Untitled  
1990–91  
oil and wax on canvas  
121.5 x 91.3 cm  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis,  
Photowrite

**FAR RIGHT:**

Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
Untitled  
1990–91  
oil and wax on canvas  
152 x 121.5 cm  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis,  
Photowrite







**ABOVE:**

Tony McGillick (1941–92)

*Palladium*

1991

oil and wax on paper

57.5 x 57.5 cm image size

© Estate of Tony McGillick

Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite



**ABOVE:**  
Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
*Rubidium*  
1991  
oil and wax on paper  
58 x 57 cm image size  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite



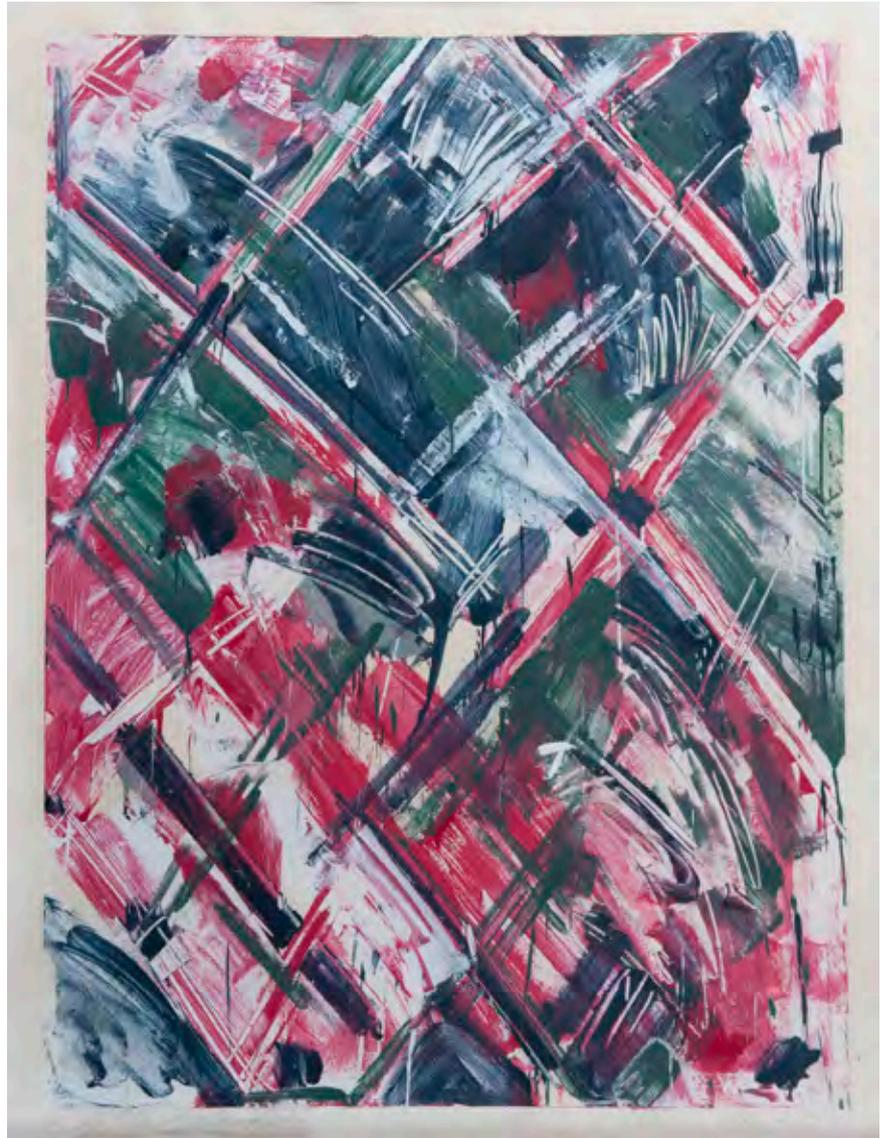
**ABOVE:**

Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
*Germanium*  
1991  
oil and wax on paper  
57.5 x 57.3 cm image size  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite



**ABOVE:**  
Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
*Brimstone*  
1991  
oil and wax on paper  
57.5 x 57.5 cm image size  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite

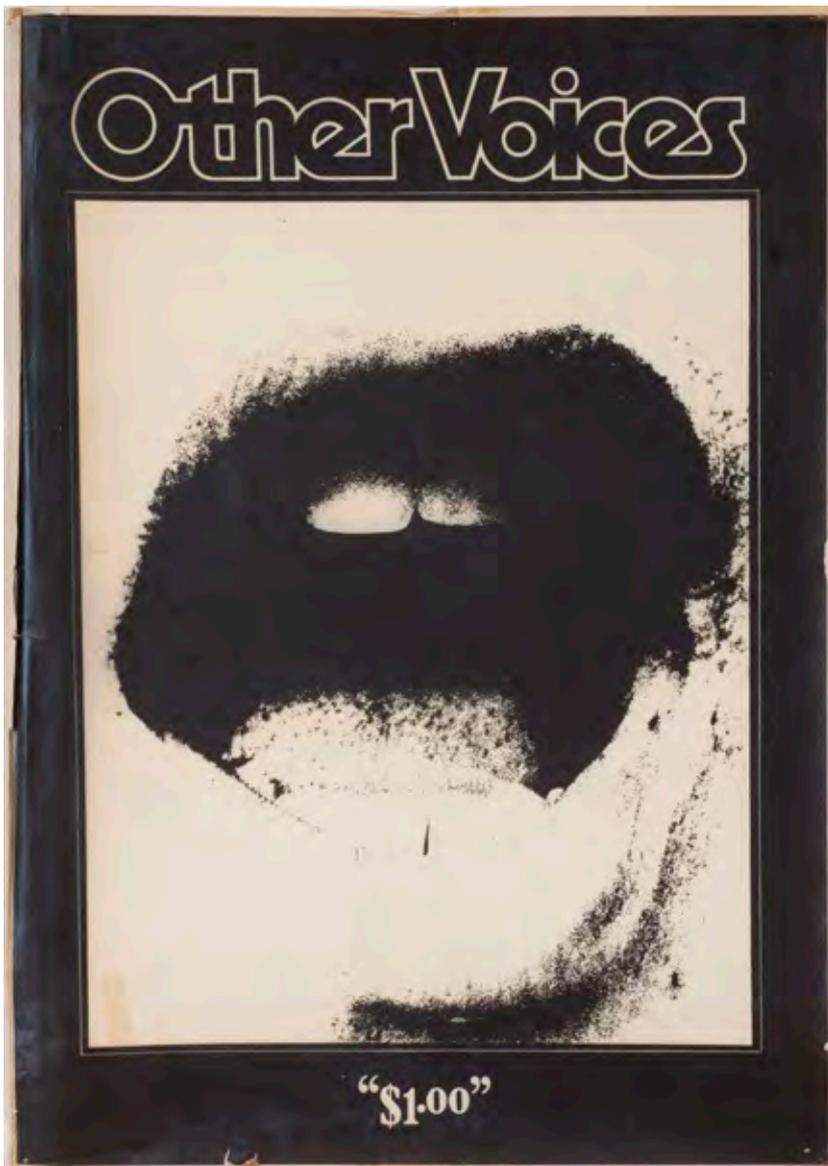




**LEFT:**  
Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
*Talisman*  
1992  
oil and wax on canvas  
117 x 116.8 cm  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite

**ABOVE:**  
Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
*First Tartan (For Margaret)*  
1991  
oil and wax on paper  
127 x 97.5 cm  
Macquarie University Art Collection  
Gift of Margaret Throsby, 2013  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite

# Early and commercial works

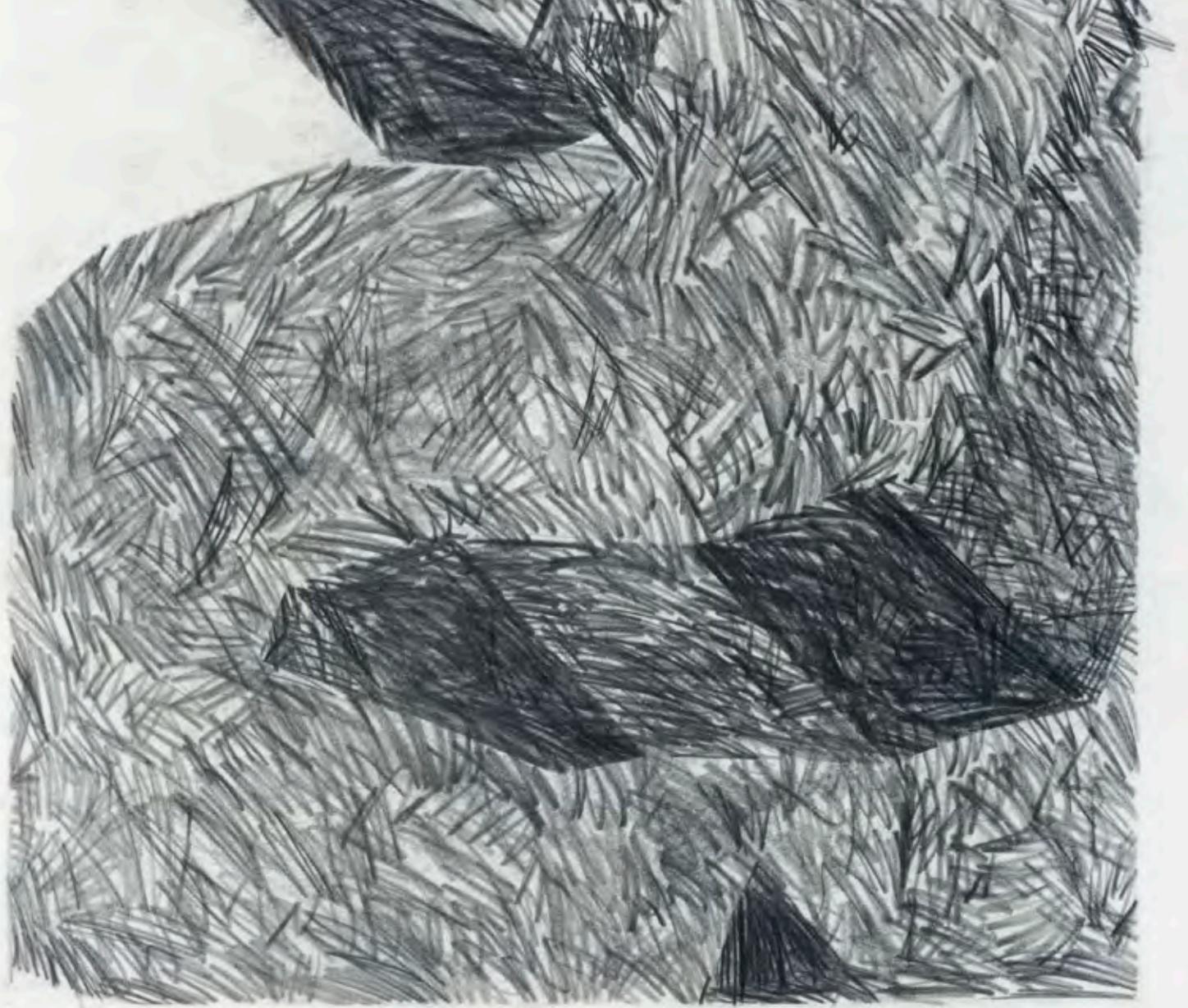


**LEFT:**

Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
*Other Voices*  
1970  
black and white poster print  
66.3 x 47 cm  
Collection Paul McGillick  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite

**RIGHT:**

Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
Untitled [studies for *Two and Five*]  
circa 1965  
pencil on paper  
19 x 36 cm  
Estate of Tony McGillick  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite





**LEFT:**

Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
*Jack Hibberd*  
playwright  
cover illustration for Paul McGillick's book  
*Jack Hibberd* (1988)  
1988  
pen drawing  
14 x 12 cm  
Collection Paul McGillick  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite

**RIGHT:**

Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
Untitled [Japanese soldiers]  
circa 1957  
synthetic polymer paint on maidstone drawing board  
34.5 x 19.5 cm image; 43.5 x 27.5 cm sheet size  
Collection Paul McGillick  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite





**ABOVE:**  
Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
Untitled [study for Jimmy Sharman]  
circa 1963  
gouache on paper  
26.5 x 25.6 cm  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite

**RIGHT:**  
Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
Untitled [Russian Cossack]  
1957  
synthetic polymer paint on board  
27.5 x 21.5 cm image; 35 x 29.4 cm sheet size  
Collection Paul McGillick  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite



**RIGHT:**

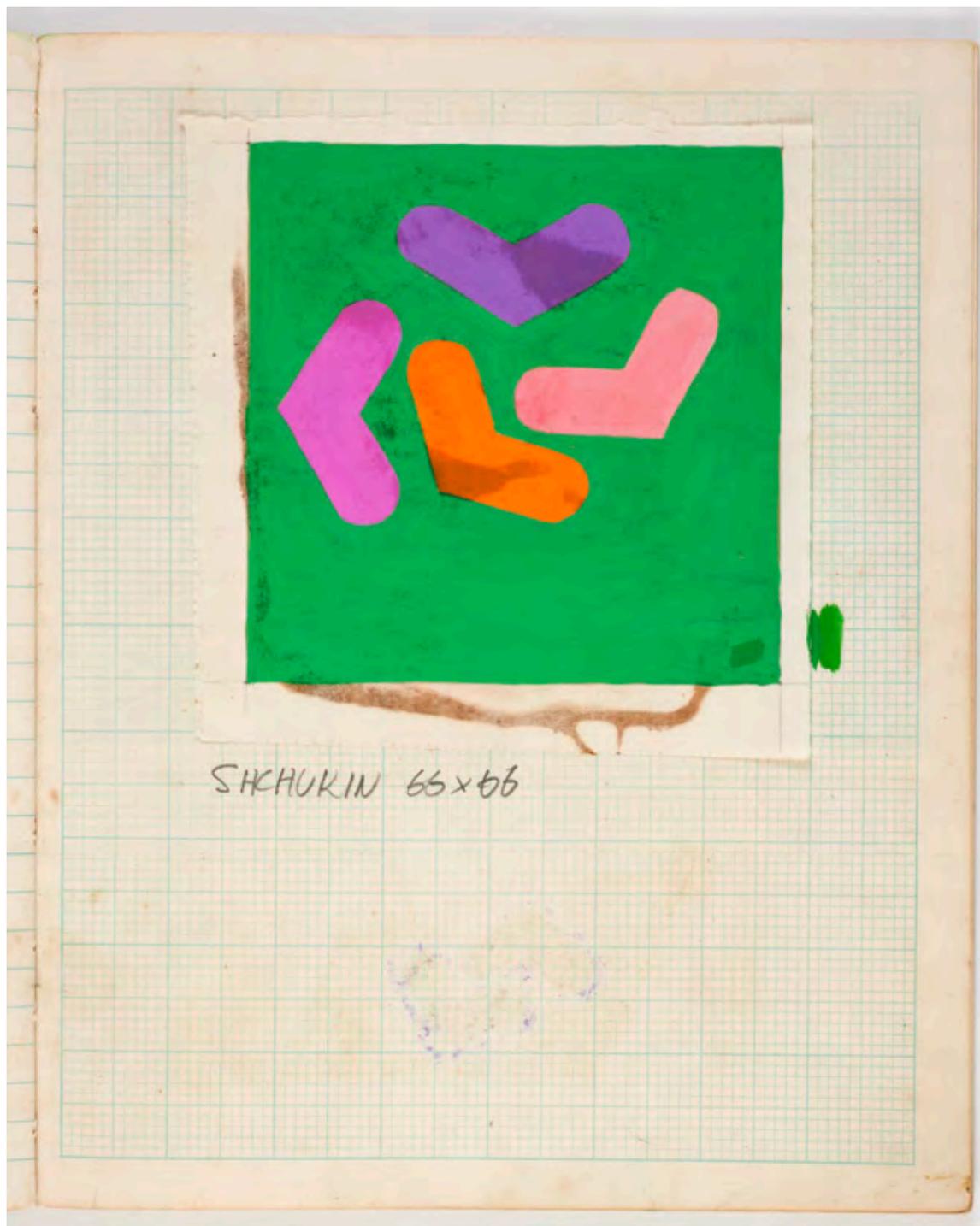
Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
*Qantas*  
1957  
synthetic polymer paint and collage on cardboard  
36 x 18.7 cm  
Collection Paul McGillick  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite

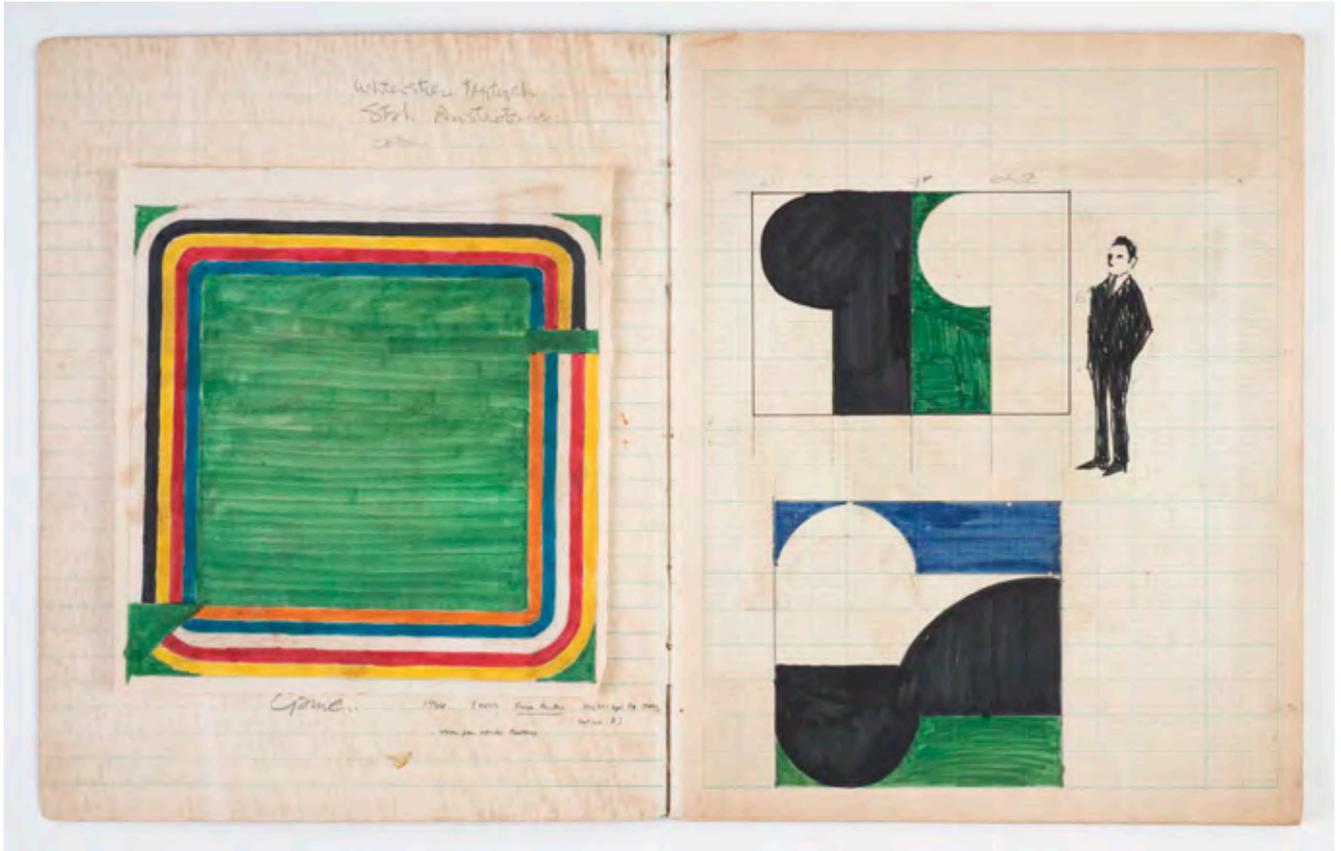
**FAR RIGHT:**

Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
*Ancol Science Book*  
notebook  
circa 1966  
27.6 x 22.3 cm; 27.8 x 44.8 cm opened  
Collection Paul McGillick  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite







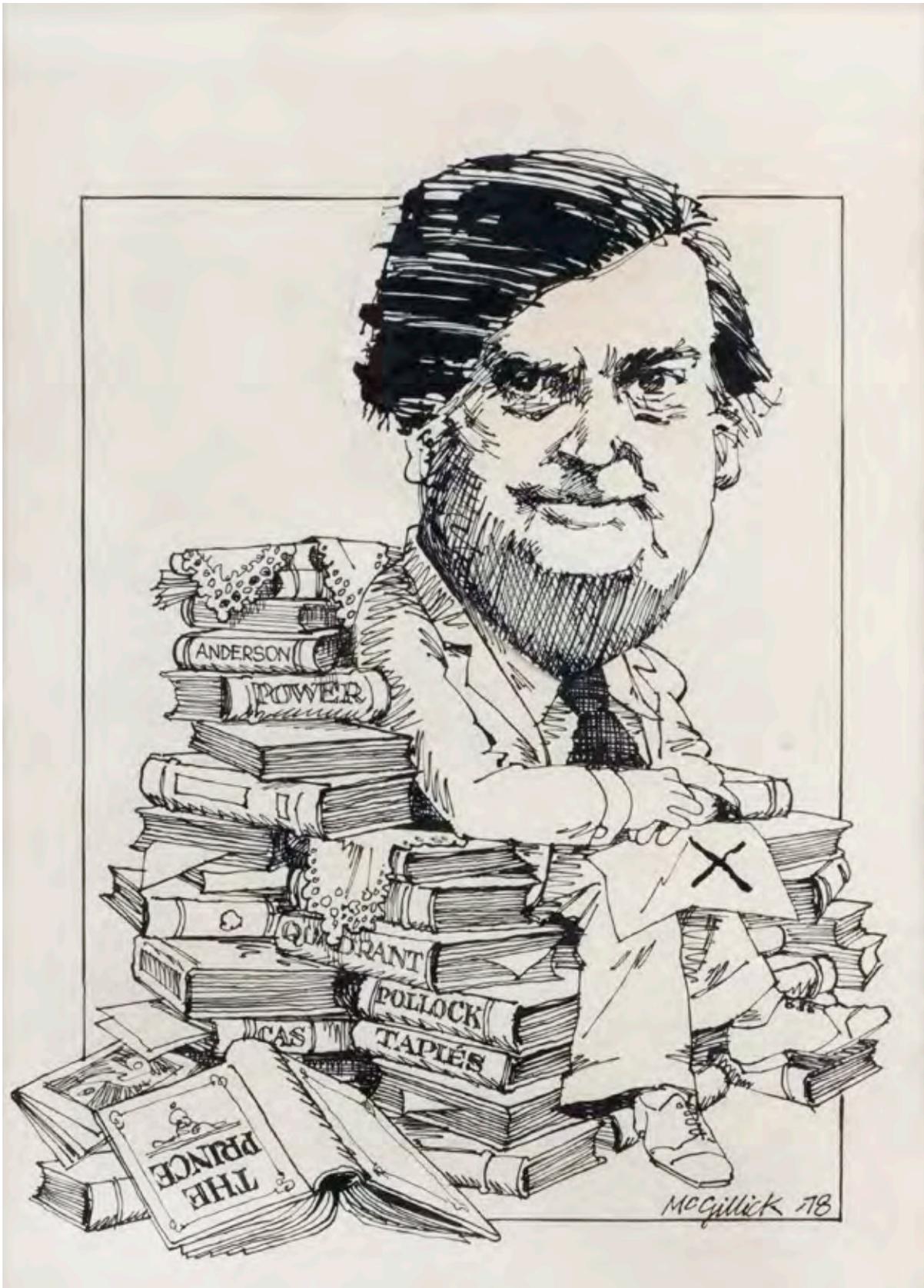


**LEFT AND ABOVE:**

Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
 Ancol Science Book  
 notebook  
 circa 1966  
 27.6 x 22.3 cm; 27.8 x 44.8 cm opened  
 Collection Paul McGillick  
 © Estate of Tony McGillick  
 Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite

**NEXT PAGE LEFT AND RIGHT:**

Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
 Untitled [portraits of Elwyn Lynn and Laurie Thomas]  
 1978  
 pen drawings on paper  
 Two works each at 26.5 x 19 cm  
 Collection Paul McGillick  
 © Estate of Tony McGillick  
 Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite





# Tony McGillick (1941–92)

## SHORT BIOGRAPHY AND SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

### 1941

Born in Sydney

### 1955–9

Studied at Julian Ashton Art School, Sydney and the National Art School, Darlinghurst, Sydney

### 1960

Travelled to England and lived in London

### 1962

*Young Commonwealth Artists' Exhibition*, R.B.A. Galleries, London

Group exhibition, Commonwealth Gallery, Edinburgh Festival, Edinburgh

### 1963

*Australian Painting and Sculpture in Europe Today*, Folkestone Art Centre, England, and at Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt, West Germany

Group exhibition, New Vision Gallery, London

### 1965

Returned to Australia via New York

### 1966

19 Apr: Opened Central Street Gallery, Sydney, with John White and Harald Noritis

30 Aug – 24 Sep: *Three Painters*, a group exhibition of Tony McGillick, Rollin Schlicht and Royston Harpur, Central Street Gallery, Sydney

21 Dec – 28 Jan 67: *Works on Paper*, Central Street Gallery, Sydney

### 1967

Mar: *The Australian Painters 1964–6*, The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., USA

28 Feb – 18 Mar: *New Generation Sydney*, Gallery A, Melbourne

10 May – 3 June: *Black and White* – a group exhibition of paintings and sculpture in black and white, Central Street Gallery, Sydney

*C.A.S. Annual Exhibition*, Blaxland Gallery, Sydney

23 Aug: *Aubusson Wool Tapestry Design Competition*, Hungry Horse Art Gallery, Sydney

### 1968

7 Feb–2 Mar: *21st Show*, 14 Painters/17 Paintings, group exhibition, Central Street Gallery, Sydney

18–25 May: Group exhibition, Central Street Gallery, Sydney, and University of Sydney, Staff Club

5–29 Jun: Solo exhibition, *Tony McGillick: Modular Paintings 1966–8*, Central Street Gallery, Sydney

July: *Directions*, Albert Hall, Canberra

6–18 Oct: Solo exhibition, *Tony McGillick*, Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

*Georges Invitational Art Prize*, Georges Gallery, Melbourne

*Renting Collection Exhibition*, Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

21 Aug – 28 Sep: *The Field*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, and Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

10 Dec 68 – 21 Jan 69: Group Show: *Painting and Sculpture*, Central Street Gallery, Sydney

### 1969

28 May – 14 Jun: *Dick Watkins Tony McGillick a selection of work. 1962–67*, Central Street Gallery, Sydney

9 July: *Central Street Gallery Group exhibition*, South Yarra Gallery, Melbourne

12–29 Nov: *A Group Exhibition of Paintings and Sculpture*, Central Street Gallery, Sydney

**1970**

Established the art magazine *Other Voices* with Paul McGillick and Terry Smith

*Colour and Structure: Recent British and Australian paintings*, Blaxland Gallery, Sydney

**1971**

Co-curated the exhibition *The Situation Now: object or post-object art?* with Terry Smith, Central Street Gallery, Sydney

**1972**

Co-curated the exhibition *Coca-Cola: 20th century icon*, with John White and Gus Cohen, Central Street Gallery, Sydney

**1973**

*Recent Australian Art*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

**1978**

21 Oct – 26 Nov: *Survey 6: Tony McGillick*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Solo exhibition, Ballarat City Art Gallery, Ballarat

**1981**

*Australian Paintings and Sculpture 1956–81*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

**1985**

*The Subject of Painting*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

**1987**

*Field to Figuration*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

*Minimal Art in Australia*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Brisbane

**1990**

*Central Street 1966–9*, Charles Nodrum Gallery, Melbourne

**1991**

*Central Street 1966–9*, Ray Hughes Gallery, Sydney

**1993**

*Tony McGillick 1941–1992 Paintings*, Sherman Galleries Goodhope, Sydney

Group exhibition, Sherman Galleries Hargrave, Sydney

**1995**

*Antipodean Currents* US tour, 1994–5

**1997**

*Geometric Painting in Australia 1941–1997*, University Art Museum, Brisbane

*39 Paintings and 2 Sculptures*, Charles Nodrum Gallery, Melbourne

**2000**

23 Nov – 16 Dec: *The Sense of Making: Tony McGillick – Selected works from the 60s, 70s and 90s*, Annandale Studio, Sydney

**2002**

16 Nov – 23 Feb: *Central Street Live*, Penrith Regional Gallery & The Lewers Bequest, Sydney

**2003**

7 Mar – 5 May: *Central Street Live*, Macquarie University Art Gallery, Sydney

**2010**

6–28 Feb: Tony McGillick, presented by Paul McGillick, SNO Contemporary Art Projects, Sydney

7–30 Oct: Solo show, *Tony McGillick*, Charles Nodrum Gallery, Melbourne

**2012**

18 Sep – 31 Oct: *Sixties Explosion*, Macquarie University Art Gallery, Sydney

**2014**

9 June – 11 July: *Macquarie University Art Collection: 50 Highlights*, Macquarie University Art Gallery, Sydney

**2018**

26 Apr – 19 May: *Abstraction 17: A Field of Interest, c. 1968*, Charles Nodrum Gallery, Melbourne

27 Apr – 26 Aug: *The Field Revisited*, National Gallery of Victoria

# List of works

## *Billboard*

1963  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
92 x 107 cm  
Estate of Tony McGillick

## Untitled

1963  
acrylic and collage on canvas  
91 x 57 cm  
Estate of Tony McGillick

## *Jimmy Sharman 6*

1964  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
105 x 105 cm  
Estate of Tony McGillick

## *Sharman Repeat*

1964  
oil and wax on canvas  
152 x 106.5 cm; 155 x 109.4 cm framed  
Collection Elizabeth McGillick

## *Five*

1965  
oil and wax over fabricated canvas in the shape  
of numeral '5'  
120 x 76 x 20.5 cm  
Estate of Tony McGillick

## *Primary*

1965  
oil and wax on canvas with wood collage  
168 x 120.8 cm; 172 x 124.7 cm framed  
Estate of Tony McGillick

## *Time*

1965  
oil and wax on hardboard  
35.5 x 28.3 x 0.5 cm; 38.5 x 31 x 0.58 cm framed  
Collection Paul McGillick

## *Jasper's gesture*

1966  
synthetic polymer paint and wax on canvas,  
in four modular sections  
170.1 x 162.5 cm overall (irreg.)  
Art Gallery of New South Wales  
D G Wilson Bequest Fund 2003

## *Shchukin*

1966  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
167.5 x 167.5 cm; 168.5 x 168.5 cm framed  
Estate of Tony McGillick

## Untitled

1966  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
166 x 165 cm  
Collection Paul McGillick

## *Republic*

1967  
synthetic polymer and wax on canvas  
in three modular sections  
236.2 x 236.2 cm overall size  
repainted in encaustic green over the original black  
in 1970  
Estate of Tony McGillick

## *Acid Even*

1968  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
144 x 143 cm  
Collection Ross and Irene Langlands

## *Fontanelle #2*

1968  
acrylic and perspex in modular sections  
edition 4  
64.5 x 79 cm modular size; 91.5 x 122 cm  
mounted on laminated MDF  
Courtesy of Charles Nodrum Gallery, Melbourne

## *National*

1968  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
168 x 275 cm  
Courtesy of Charles Nodrum Gallery, Melbourne

## *Juxtapacent*

1969  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
177 x 222 cm  
University of Technology Sydney Art Collection

## *Spraygun virus*

1969  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas (shaped canvas)  
163.6 x 243.6 cm (irreg.)  
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Purchased 1986

## *Imogen's ensign*

1973  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
226.5 x 324.0 x 80.0 cm  
Art Gallery of New South Wales  
Purchased 1974

## *Bivouac*

1974  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
210.8 x 269.2 cm  
Estate of Tony McGillick

## *Plaza*

1974  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
210.8 x 269.2 cm  
Estate of Tony McGillick

## *Manoeuvre*

1978  
oil and wax on canvas  
162.5 x 162.5 cm; 166.4 x 166.4 cm framed  
Estate of Tony McGillick

*Tabby's Tantrum*  
1978  
synthetic polymer paint and wax on canvas  
122 x 122 cm  
Estate of Tony McGillick

Untitled  
1985  
oil and wax on four shaped canvases  
198.5 x 197.5 cm  
Estate of Tony McGillick

*Tom's Toy Box*  
1986–92  
oil and wax on canvas  
197.5 x 197.5 cm  
Estate of Tony McGillick

Untitled  
1987  
oil and wax on canvas  
256.5 x 167.5 cm  
Estate of Tony McGillick

Untitled  
1988  
oil and wax on canvas  
152 x 153 cm  
Estate of Tony McGillick

*Quattro*  
1989  
oil and wax on canvas  
198 x 289.5 cm  
Estate of Tony McGillick

Untitled  
1989–90  
oil and wax on five shaped canvases  
216 x 190.5 cm  
Estate of Tony McGillick

Untitled  
1990–91  
oil and wax on canvas  
121.5 x 121.5 cm  
Estate of Tony McGillick

Untitled  
1990–91  
oil and wax on canvas  
197.5 x 197.5 cm  
Estate of Tony McGillick

Untitled  
1990–91  
oil and wax on canvas  
121.5 x 91.3 cm  
Estate of Tony McGillick

Untitled  
1990–91  
oil and wax on canvas  
152 x 121.5 cm  
Estate of Tony McGillick

Untitled  
1990–91  
oil and wax on canvas  
122 x 121.6 cm  
IBM Collection

Untitled  
1990–91  
oil and wax on canvas  
122 x 121.6 cm  
IBM Collection

*Talisman*  
1992  
oil and wax on canvas  
117 x 116.8 cm  
Estate of Tony McGillick

## WORKS ON PAPER

*Autograph*  
1991  
oil and wax on paper  
126 x 96.5 cm; 146 x 114.5 x 3.5 cm framed  
University of New South Wales  
Purchased with funds from the U Committee, 1993

*Brimstone*  
1991  
oil and wax on paper  
57.5 x 57.5 cm image size  
Estate of Tony McGillick

*Ex Libris*  
1991  
oil and wax on paper  
127 x 96.5 cm sheet size  
Estate of Tony McGillick

*First Tartan (For Margaret)*  
1991  
oil and wax on paper  
127 x 97.5 cm  
Macquarie University Art Collection  
Gift of Margaret Throsby, 2013

*Germanium*  
1991  
oil and wax on paper  
57.5 x 57.3 cm image size  
Estate of Tony McGillick

*Palladium*  
1991  
oil and wax on paper  
57.5 x 57.5 cm image size  
Estate of Tony McGillick

*Rubidium*  
1991  
oil and wax on paper  
58 x 57 cm image size  
Estate of Tony McGillick

*Vanadium*  
1991  
oil and wax on paper  
116 x 87.5 cm  
Estate of Tony McGillick

## EARLY AND COMMERCIAL WORKS

*A Friend in Need*  
1955  
gouache on paper  
27.5 x 37.5 cm

*Alexander Bell & The Wright Bros*  
1955  
gouache on paper  
27.5 x 37.6 cm  
Collection Paul McGillick

Untitled  
1955  
gouache on paper  
27.5 x 37.6 cm  
Collection Paul McGillick

Untitled  
1955  
gouache on paper  
27.5 x 37.5 cm  
Collection Paul McGillick

Untitled [man on phone or singing]  
1956  
synthetic polymer paint on cardboard  
21 x 11 cm  
Collection Paul McGillick

*Eric Baume*  
“I Hate! Como’s”  
circa 1957  
collage and ink on cardboard  
17.5 x 16.2 cm  
Collection Paul McGillick

*Flanders, 1916*  
1957  
pencil on paper  
27.6 x 18.6 cm  
Collection Paul McGillick

*French Convict*  
circa 1957  
ink and gouache on cardboard  
11.2 x 0.98 cm  
Collection Paul McGillick

*Gondolier*  
1957  
ink and gouache on paper  
16.4 x 0.95 cm  
Collection Paul McGillick

*Goulburn St Sydney*  
circa 1957  
ink wash on paper  
41 x 47.7 cm  
Collection Paul McGillick

*Qantas*  
1957  
synthetic polymer paint and collage on cardboard  
36 x 18.7 cm  
Collection Paul McGillick

Untitled [battlefield]  
circa 1957  
gouache on cardboard  
14 x 18.6 cm

Untitled [Japanese soldiers]  
circa 1957  
synthetic polymer paint on maidstone drawing board  
34.5 x 19.5 cm image; 43.5 x 27.5 cm sheet size  
Collection Paul McGillick

Untitled [man with cigar holding up left hand]  
circa 1957  
ink on board  
13.8 x 10.9 cm

Untitled [Mexican gunfighter speared with arrow]  
circa 1957  
ink and gouache on cardboard  
11.5 x 0.85 cm  
Collection Paul McGillick

Untitled [Russian Cossack]  
1957  
synthetic polymer paint on board  
27.5 x 21.5 cm image; 35 x 29.4 cm sheet size  
Collection Paul McGillick

Untitled [side profile of man holding mug]  
circa 1957  
ink and wash on pastel drawing board  
30.8 x 23 cm  
Collection Paul McGillick

Untitled [black ink drawing reminiscent  
of Robert Motherwell’s work]  
1963  
ink on paper  
17.6 x 25 cm  
Estate of Tony McGillick

Untitled [study for Jimmy Sharman]  
circa 1963  
gouache on paper  
26.5 x 25.6 cm

*square*  
circa 1965  
pencil on paper  
41 x 31.5 cm  
Estate of Tony McGillick

Untitled [studies for *Two and Five*]  
circa 1965  
pencil on paper  
19 x 36 cm  
Estate of Tony McGillick

*Other Voices*  
1970  
black and white poster print  
66.3 x 47 cm  
Collection Paul McGillick

*Flash Jim Vaux* (Nimrod Street Theatre Company)  
Ballad opera by Ron Blair  
1971  
colour poster print  
57.5 x 44.5 cm  
Collection Ron Blair

*Face to Face*  
1977  
produced for Ken Unsworth's famous performance  
in 1977  
black and white poster print  
63 x 45 cm  
Collection Paul McGillick

Untitled [portraits of Elwyn Lynn  
and Laurie Thomas]  
1978  
pen drawings on paper  
Two works each at 26.5 x 19 cm  
Collection Paul McGillick

*Jack Hibberd*  
playwright  
cover illustration for Paul McGillick's book  
*Jack Hibberd* (1988)  
1988  
pen drawing  
14 x 12 cm  
Collection Paul McGillick

*Journey to the End*  
Carnivale, Seymour Centre  
1991  
colour poster print  
59 x 41.6 cm  
Collection Paul McGillick

## NOTEBOOKS AND SKETCHBOOKS

Wire-O Sketch Book No. 1  
cartridge drawing paper  
circa early 1950s  
25 x 32.5 cm; 25 x 65.5 cm opened  
Collection Paul McGillick

Ancol Science Book  
notebook  
circa 1966  
27.6 x 22.3 cm; 27.8 x 44.8 cm opened  
Collection Paul McGillick

Collins Diary  
1968 No. 144  
1968–73  
26 x 20.5 x 2.5 cm; 26 x 40 cm opened  
Collection Paul McGillick

Spirax  
Sketch Book No. 578  
drawing cartridge paper  
1967–1978  
24.5 x 27 cm; 24.5 x 53.7 cm opened  
Estate of Tony McGillick

# Responding to the work of Australian visual artist Tony McGillick

MEREDITH BRICE  
ON THE TRIANGLE  
IN THE WORK OF  
TONY MCGILICK

The Renaissance triangle or triangular composition practised by the High Renaissance artists – a method using shapes and lines of perspective and placing figures into a triangle in the composition – takes on new perspectives as the agency of a five-sided triangle becomes object itself to express new pictorial ideas in the image-making of Australian visual artist Tony McGillick.

The artist's conceptual approach and minimalist aesthetic extracts abstract form from observing the High Renaissance portrait painting by Titian (Tiziano Vecellio b. 1490), *Portrait of a Man (A Man with a Quilted Sleeve)* (c. 1510), during the 1960s. The quilted sleeve foregrounded in the painting becomes absorbed into McGillick's innovative visual language, and his geometry of triangulation the means for abstract expression.

McGillick's experimental approach involves a method of adding two additional angles or sides to a triangle to make a five-sided triangle, remaking this shape across modular, interconnected compositions. The McGillick five-sided triangle becomes the architecture of innovative relation as it repeats and is reinvented across a range of media and supports. The painterly conversation between the modular arrangements continues in the studio as it becomes a departure point in the artist's inventive compositions.

My response to the innovative gestures of Tony McGillick picks up on the artist's unconventional approach to painting; and his enduring fascination with the modelling and constant reinvention of the five-sided triangle as it became subject, object and integrated compositional element for inventive artistic expression. The artist's fluid fields of colour and enfolding geometries have inspired and coloured my response.

**MEREDITH BRICE**  
JULY 2018

**List of works**

*Template*

2018  
hand-dyed silk, duck feathers, cotton, polyester  
48 x 48 x 22 cm

*Au busson*

2018  
cotton, silk, felt, polyester, acrylic, PVA, on canvas  
152.5 x 147 cm

*Thread note*

2018  
vintage handwoven natural linen, cotton thread,  
acrylic sheet, found object – wood  
80 x 80 cm

*Dissolve*

2018  
canvas, textile dyes, cotton thread  
dimensions various

*Pigment*

2018  
canvas, acrylic, cotton thread  
dimensions various

*Type*

2018  
acrylic, gloss enamel  
44.5 x 42 x 0.5 cm

*Pink Rock*

2018  
glass, gloss enamel  
44 x 38 x 1 cm

*Sleeve*

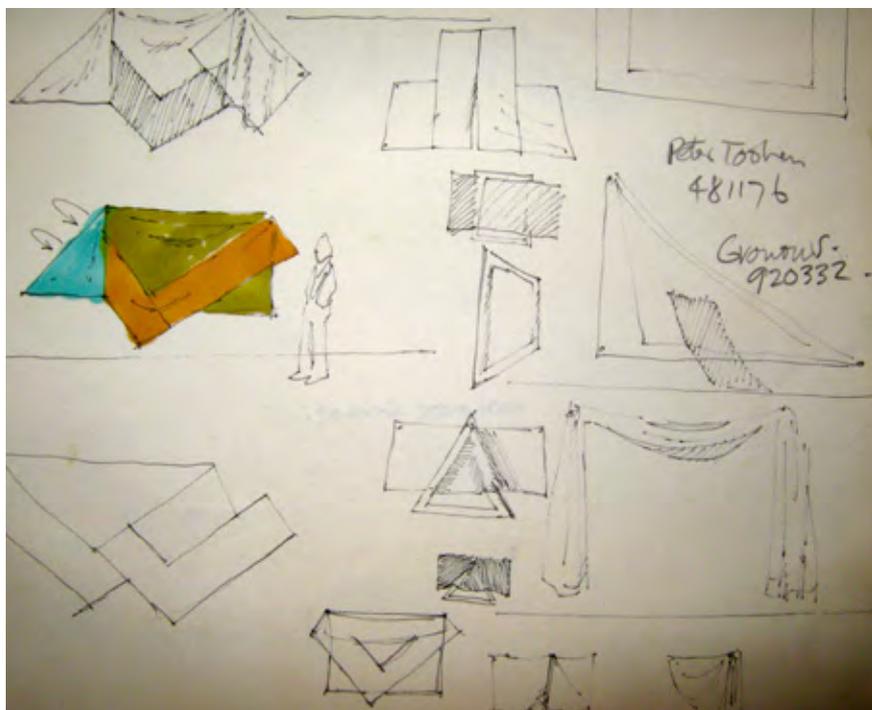
2018  
digital reproduction of a painting by Titian:  
*Portrait of a Man (A Man with a Quilted Sleeve)*  
(c. 1510)  
digital print on canvas  
38 x 26 cm

*Untitled*

2018  
This work changes the eye direction of the original  
portrait by Titian to suggest a direct 21st century gaze.  
digital print on canvas  
38 x 26 cm

**CLOTH/NEEDLE SKETCHES:**

*1 blue*  
*Acid*  
*Fields 1*  
*Fields 2*  
*Gesture*  
*Pantone 18-3838*



**LEFT:**

Tony McGillick (1941–92)  
Spirax  
Sketch Book No. 578  
drawing cartridge paper  
1967–1978  
24.5 x 27 cm; 24.5 x 53.7 cm opened  
© Estate of Tony McGillick  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite



**LEFT:**

Meredith Brice

Untitled

2018

This work changes the eye direction of the original portrait by Titian to suggest a direct 21st century gaze.

digital print on canvas

38 x 26 cm

Courtesy of the artist

**BELOW:**

Meredith Brice

*Template*

2018

hand-dyed silk, duck feathers, cotton polyester

48 x 48 x 22cm

Courtesy of the artist

Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite



**RIGHT:**

Meredith Brice

*Dissolve*

2018

canvas, textile dyes, cotton thread

dimensions various

Courtesy of the artist

Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite





**LEFT:**

Meredith Brice  
*Pigment*  
2018  
canvas, acrylic, cotton thread  
dimensions various  
Courtesy of the artist  
Photography Effy Alexakis,  
Photowrite

**NEXT PAGE LEFT:**

Meredith Brice  
*Au busson*  
2018  
cotton, silk, felt, polyester,  
acrylic, PVA, on canvas  
152.5 x 147 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
Photography Effy Alexakis,  
Photowrite

**NEXT PAGE RIGHT:**

Meredith Brice  
*Type*  
2018  
acrylic, gloss enamel  
44.5 x 42 x 0.5 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
Photography Effy Alexakis,  
Photowrite







**MACQUARIE**  
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Macquarie University Art Gallery  
The Chancellery 19 Eastern Rd  
Macquarie University, NSW 2109 Australia  
**T:** +61 (2) 9850 7437

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