

BARBARA FREEMAN



BARBARA FREEMAN



THE ANATOMY LESSON

PAINTINGS PRINTS & DRAWINGS

THE HART GALLERY

This exhibition is dedicated to my daughter, Sophia Jane.

Special thanks

to Mary and Bernard Loughlin of The Tyrone Guthrie Centre; to Terry Gravitt for help with the prints (we worked at the Arts Council Print Workshop in Belfast and the Seacourt Print Workshop in Bangor); and to Katherine and John Hart for their enthusiasm and support for this project.

© Barbara Freeman and The Hart Gallery
ISBN 0 9519586 0 7

Production: Circa Publications



If She Be A Wall, mixed media and oil on board, 107x122 cms.

The Anatomy Lesson: A Note

The astronaut reported unusual sensations on her return to earth; "For a few minutes after landing I could feel the weight of the muscles and bones inside my arm. I could feel my brain inside my skull."

In one of the sentences that the artist has written to herself we find the questions 'Can we know our body only through what it feels like, or must it be represented before we can know it? If so, how is it to be represented and by whom?' These questions concentrate into an artistic problem issues of knowledge, the representation of knowledge, and power, and wrap them together in an existential demand.

In contemporary terms such an enquiry is most fruitfully conducted in the terms of feminist theory, and it is unlikely that work such as this (and that of a number of artists working today) would have taken its present form without that theory. But Barbara Freeman also brings to bear an historical understanding. In the course of the past three years she has immersed herself in anatomical illustration of all ages, in the development of surgeon's models, in the history of dissection as a practice and as a public performance. These are all systems of representation and display, with their own evolving assumptions and ideological force, and all have their origins in the zone of intersection between early medicine and the arts of painting and sculpture. It is also relevant that the artist spent several years supporting her studies by a combination of nursing and figurative model-making, that she has friends who are doctors and research scientists, that she knows what the world looks like through an electron microscope. More keenly, that her daughter is profoundly handicapped, with uncertain and altering levels of consciousness. These questions have been approached down several roads.

We should pause for a few moments to experience the movement of the body within itself, its surgings, pulses, presence and absence; and contemplate how, through what descriptive language, this insistent accompaniment to our articulated thoughts can be captured and made the object of lasting attention. This movement is the ground of our selves.

(pause)

The experience is not visual and it cannot be pictured except by devious routes. The most direct displacement of this experience into the materials of art has to be 'non-figurative'. A more reflective further development may bring in other elements which denote, or at least allude to, what we think we know (i.e. recognise); some system of representation needs to be brought into play.

I think this accounts for the 'impure' character of these paintings and prints; a quality which some people find arbitrary or difficult. The mixture of elements partly 'figurative' partly 'abstract' the juxtaposition of the modelled and cut-out with the painted, or the gestural with the photographic belongs neither with late 'modernism' nor with any supposed contemporary pluralism. The intermingling serves a purpose; it is a metaphor for the richness of visual languages which the bodily experience requires for its expression.

These elements don't all equally co-exist; some are laid on top of others, half-transparently; others obliterate or hide what lies underneath. The way in which these paintings are made is also metaphorical; they enact second thoughts, cancellations, forgetting, denying, doubting and re-affirmation. Most of these moments of criticism remain visible on the surface of the work, in greater or lesser degree. Each painting has passed through several stages, through a kind of systematic negation of the stage beneath. The writer is sharply aware of this, having seen the work being made more or less from day to day, but I am convinced that this acutely critical method reveals itself to the careful viewer, slowly and stealthily.

In writing this note I have concentrated on the subject matter of the work; but what immediately strikes the viewer is likely to be colour. The colours are intense. Technically, this is achieved through the use of raw pigments and glazes, mixed with graphite, carborundum powder, tissue and other substances which impart a sparkle to one another; and to the 'old-fashioned' use of gesso as a foundation. All sorts of different brush-strokes have been employed, as have also blotting of wet surfaces, scraping, rubbing down and other techniques invented in the course of work. These all make us aware that we are looking at an object, not an image. This icon-like character is reinforced by the purposes of the colour these are not 'natural' hues and tones, and they do not model or define forms through light. Nor are they organised symbolically, though the livid reds can be 'read' as blood. The organising principle seems to be that of contrasting sensations; one zone of colour butts up against another and the collision, complicated by changes in texture, imparts a third sensation. And these changes in sensation connote the internal sensations of the body. Other areas of colour allude to, without actually complying with, conventions of anatomical description. The problem, once again, concerns the limits of the picturable; just as in illustrations of outer space conventions of limitlessness and immense speed have to be established by graphic means, or as in heat maps of the universe temperature has to be rendered into tone, so in the 'inner space' of the body colour sensations have to establish weight, lightness, pain and pleasure and so forth.

Sheer strength of colour is itself a source of pleasure and of joy in its own existence; but the pleasure here is of a very purposive kind. The purpose is, I think, to enter into an understanding of consciousness.

Another sentence reads: 'You have to work on the edges of a language in order to expand it.'

David Brett





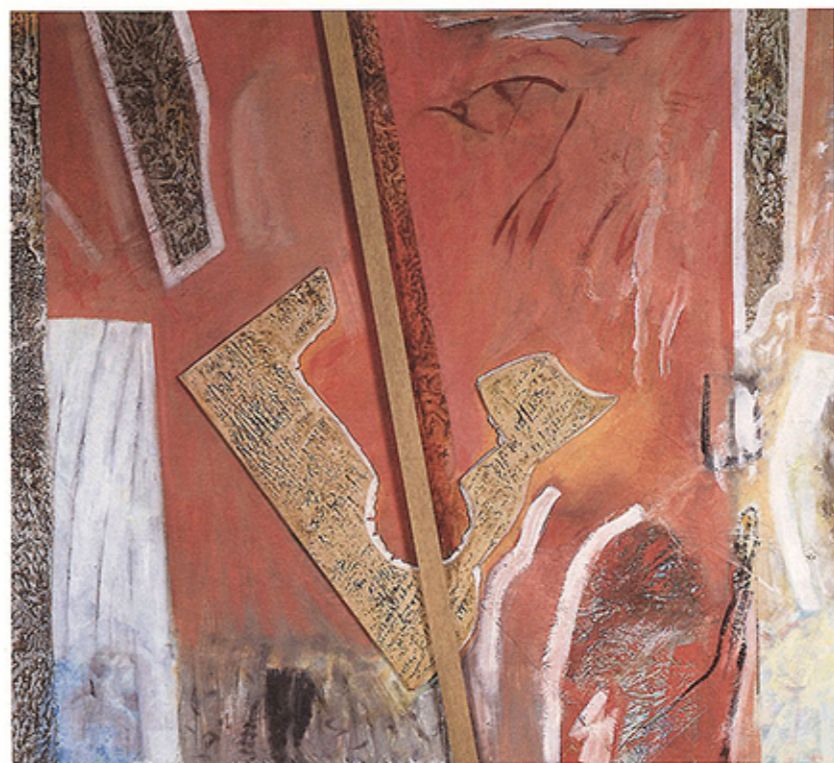
When The Night, mixed media and acrylic on board, 122x107 cms.



He Gave Me No Answer, mixed media and acrylic on board, 122x107 cms.



Clefts Of The Rock, mixed media and oil on board, 107x122 cms.



He Made The Pillars, mixed media and oil on board, 107x122 cms.



Study III, mixed media and acrylic on board, 61x61 cms. (Collection: P. Quinn)



Study VI, mixed media and acrylic on board, 61x61 cms. (Collection: P. Quinn)



Drawing VI, wax and mixed media on paper, 71x53 cms.



Poured Forth, mixed media and acrylic on board, 76x71 cms.

Barbara Freeman was born in London (1937) and studied at St. Martin's, Camberwell and Hammersmith Colleges of Art (N. D. D. 1962). she has taught part-time in several colleges, and has travelled widely. She now lives and works in Belfast.

Selected Exhibitions

- 1992 The Hart Gallery, Nottingham (paintings and prints, *The Anatomy Lesson*). Also at Fenderesky Gallery, Belfast; The Rubicon Gallery, Dublin; The Triskel Arts Centre, Cork; The Heffer Gallery, Cambridge; The International Art Fair, Edinburgh.
- 1991 The Hart Gallery, Nottingham. (paintings and drawings)
- 1990 Arts Council Gallery, Belfast; Monaghan County Museum; The Orchard Gallery, Derry; The Butler Gallery, Kilkenny. (*De Humani Corporis Fabrica*)
- 1989 Art Space Gallery, London. (*De Humani Corporis Fabrica*)
- 1987 Art Space Gallery, London (*Two Cities: Roma/New York*). Also at The Solomon Gallery, Dublin; The Fenderesky Gallery, Belfast.
- 1986 The Fenderesky Gallery, Belfast. (paintings)
- 1983 Imperial College, London. (paintings and etchings)
- 1981 The Industrial Museum, Bradford. (sculpture, prints, drawings, exhibition entitled *Annals of the Machine*)
- 1979 Istvan Bathory Muzeum, Hungary. (woodcuts)
International Exhibition of Photography, Piran, Yugoslavia.
- 1977 'Bradford-Debrecen' exchange of exhibitions; Debrecen and Budapest.
- 1976 International Exhibition of Photography, Piran, Yugoslavia.
International Exhibition of Women Artists, Zagreb, Yugoslavia.
- 1975 University of St. Andrews. (drawings and constructions). Also at Wolfson College, Oxford.
- 1974 Cartwright Hall, Bradford. (drawings)
- 1973 University of Bradford. (paintings, constructions, reliefs)
- 1971 The Traverse Gallery, Edinburgh. (reliefs and drawings)
- 1968 University of Leeds. (reliefs)
- 1966 Jefferson Place Gallery, Washington DC. (carvings and bronzes)

Recent Group Exhibitions

- 1991 *Abstract Representation*, Triskel Arts Centre, Cork.
Further Abstraction, Limerick City Gallery.
Works on Paper, Fenderesky Gallery, Belfast.
Painters and Their Drawings, East-West Gallery, London
- 1989 *Art London 89*, International Art Fair, London.
Gallery Artists, Art Space Gallery, London.
- 1988 Claremorris Open Exhibition; EV+A Limerick Exhibition of Visual Art;
Celtic Vision, Dublin.
- 1987 *Magnetic North*, Orchard Gallery, Derry. (photoworks by four Northern Irish artists, toured Britain and USA)

Awards

- 1992 Arts Council of Northern Ireland Award
- 1990 Guest Artist, Stiftung Binz 39, Scuol, Switzerland.
- 1988 Arts Council of Northern Ireland Award
- 1979 Guest Artist: Nyirbator Alkotahaz, Hungary.
- 1975 Guest Artist: International Symposium, Prilep, Yugoslavia; International Exhibition of Photography, Piran, Yugoslavia. (Bronze Medal, 1976; Silver Medal, 1979)
- 1974 Yorkshire Arts Association Bursary
- 1973 Arts Council of Great Britain Artists Bursary.
- 1972 S.P.A.C.E. Award (Arts Council of Great Britain)

Selected Publications

- Tilless B, *Novokvo Strukturak*, Muveszet, Budapest, April 1986.
- Freeman B, *Growth Structures*, Leonardo, Paris, April 1975.
- Malina F (ed), *Visual Art, Mathematics and Computers*, Pergamon Press, Oxford, 1979.
- Freeman B, *Open Space; Inside and Out*, Circa No.36, Belfast, January 1988.
- Freeman B, Barber F, Volans K, *De Humani Corporis Fabrica*, Orchard Gallery, Derry, 1989.
- Jordan P, review in Circa No.55, Belfast, 1991.
- Ni Dhomhnaill N, *Feis* with illustrations by Barbara Freeman, An Sagart, Maynooth, 1991.

Collections

National Museum, Prilep, Yugoslavia.
National Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, Hungary.

West Yorkshire County Council	The University of Bradford
Leeds City Council	Greater London Council
Yorkshire Arts Association	The University of Debrecen, Hungary
Mestna Galerie, Koper, Yugoslavia	Allied Investment Bank Ltd.
Jefferson Smurfit Group	Contemporary Irish Art Society
Life Association of Ireland	Allied Irish Bank Computer Centre
Trustee Savings Bank	Arts Council of Northern Ireland
Dept. of the Environment (N.I.)	Lincoln Buildings, Belfast

Private Collections in Great Britain, The United States, Ireland, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Kuwait, Switzerland.



