



In Parallel

Barbara Freeman

In Parallel

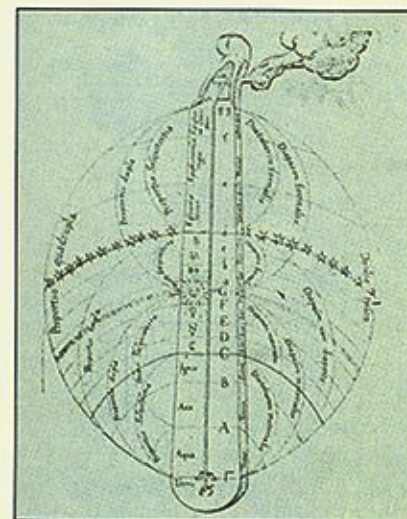
Barbara Freeman

in collaboration with

Michael Alcorn, Ian Wilson
Nicola LeFanu, David Lumsdaine

Essay and notes by David Brett

Ormeau Baths Gallery, Belfast
1998 Sonorities Festival of Contemporary Music



Robert Flood.

TUNING THE COSMOS: Octaves of
Elements, Planets, and Angels
Utriusque Cosmi.... Historia (1617)

¹ De Imaginum... Compositione (1591)
cited by Frances Yates in her 'Giordano
Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition' (1964)
p.256.

² Mary Ann Atwood 'A Suggestive Enquiry
into the Hermetic Mystery etc.' (1850)
3rd ed. Belfast (1920) p.558.

UT PICTURA MUSICA: THICKENING THE PLOT

Barbara Freeman's recent work - a series of exhibitions under the title of 'Transcriptions' and the present group of installations called 'In Parallel' investigates, explores, develops and plays with the relations between visual art and music. They suggest, and sometimes insist upon, a realm of questions which can be summarised as follows....

Given that analogies between the arts are frequently made what are the grounds on which they might be validated?.

At least three lines of enquiry suggest themselves - historical, neurological, and structural.

a) *historical*..:

The idea that music and visual art (particularly colour) might be in some sense interchangeable or parallel is very ancient and ubiquitous. In European thought it passes from Neo-Platonism into the academic tradition and resurfaces in many guises. Giordano Bruno perceived it as an essential element of thought...

"True philosophy is music, poetry and painting; true painting is poetry, music and philosophy; true poetry or music is divine sophia and painting."¹

Such ideas, increasingly difficult to maintain in the face of advancing positivism, reach forward into the 19th century.

"By music the human spirit is passed back into its original source, the sound makes a concave in the recipient life; it is formative in the ether; matter arranges itself geometrically in accordance with the form educed."²

There is a dismal line of neo-occult fancy on the importance of 'vibration', 'auras' and 'harmonies' which, having once had an important place in the early development of science as it passed from alchemical speculation into natural philosophy, now hangs about in the intellectual attics like a seedy ghost that none can lay to rest.

What is much more interesting are the numerous attempts to create some sort of 'scientific aesthetics' which would demonstrate a parallel between different forms of beauty and so provide general laws of composition and colour. The question is not of the truth of their findings, but of their cultural and intellectual intention and function.

The work and writings of George Field (1771-1851) are a good example³. He was the leading dye chemist of his day, and a noted experimenter in pigments. He was well known to artists; Constable painted his portrait and Turner subscribed to his classic account of the painter's palette 'Chromatography: or a treatise on colours and pigments and of their powers in painting'. (1835, 1841, 1869 etc.) His major theoretical writings, however, are to be found in 'Chromatics' (1817, 1835, 1845) and 'Outlines of Analogical Philosophy'(1839). In these, Field argued that 'Music, painting and poetry are coincidental, sororal and analogous, at their elementary foundations, even' and that 'Diversity in harmony of colours is precisely analogous to the regulation in music'.

He printed little 'colour chords' to illustrate the point; and developed a scale of brightness in colours that corresponded to musical scales. This numerical system provided a set of rules to create, from any set of pigments, a 'harmonious' effect. (The scale does, in point of fact, work: Owen Jones used it to remarkable effect in his decoration of the interior of The Crystal Palace).

There is an ideological impetus at work in this, not immediately obvious. The harmonic scale, being a natural phenomenon, had an objective authority lacking in colour organisation. To conflate one with another would seem to give rules for colour use the same validation held to apply in harmony; thus the objects of human art and industry would have 'natural' rightness and perfection.

Field's ideas were popularised by D.R.Hay in a long series of writings at least 15 titles); Hay was a prominent interior designer who was preoccupied with the principles of design education. His 'The Science of Beauty' (1856) argues that a comprehensive account of quality in design 'must be founded on fixed principles after the manner of a natural science... a precise and systematic education in the true science of beauty must certainly be ...useful.'

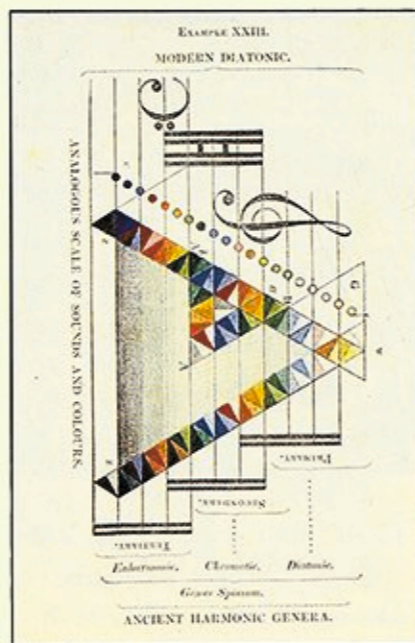
There is no doubt that these ideas entered into the curriculum of the first Schools of Design, which taught that decorative art was (in William Dyce's words) 'a practical science' founded on what the Prince Consort called 'the immutable laws of beauty and symmetry'. Ralph Wornum (whose 'Analysis of Ornament'(1859) went through numerous editions certainly believed that.....

"the analogy between music and ornament to be perfect; one is to the eye what the other is to the ear; and the day is not far distant when this will be practically demonstrated."

I have elsewhere described this as a 'symbolic scientism' implicated in the liberal ideology of progress, which contributed to attempts to define a style appropriate to an era of science and industrial expansion.⁴ Several other examples could be cited.



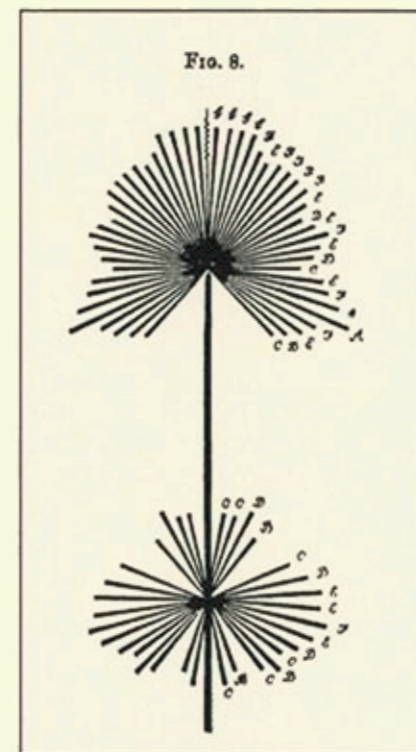
Colour/Chords
G. Field "Chromatic" (1817)



Colour Scales
G. Field "Chromatic" (1817)

³ See my paper 'The Aesthetical Science: George Field and the 'Science of Beauty' in Art History Vol.9 No.3 Sept. 1986 pp.336 -350.

⁴ For all quotes etc. see above.



from Christopher Dresser
"The Art of Decorative Design" (1862)

⁵ Dresser C. 'The Art of Decorative Design' (1862) See Brett D. 'The Interpretation of Ornament' Jnl. of Design History Vol.1 No.2 pp.103-111

⁶ Walter Pater 'The Renaissance' (1873).

⁷ In English language, almost certainly Whistler ('nocturne', 'symphony' 'arrangement'). But Whistler was Paris-trained and deeply influenced by French Symbolism.

⁸ The key text for comparable French ideas is 'Les Signes Inconditionnels dans l'Art' by David Humbert de Superville (1828) But, more generally, musical analogies for painting appear all through French romanticism, in poetry and criticism.

⁹ For a good account of Henry, see Argueilles, J. 'Charles Henry and the Formation of the Psychophysical Aesthetic' Univ. of Chicago Press (1972).

This scientism could not survive contact with the development of normal colour science for very long; by 1871 Ogden Rood (whose 'Modern Chromatics' (1871) was widely read by painters) condemned it out of hand. "Any theory of colour based on our musical experience must rest on fancy rather than fact. But the essential idea was never a scientific problem in the first place, but one of meaning; how was it that colour and line moved us, independently of what was being pictured? In the field of decoration and surface pattern, no less than of painting, this question was made urgent by the collapse of narrative and traditional symbolic values which followed upon the intellectual revolution.

"We cannot hope that symbolism will again prevail..(accordingly) ... causing decorative forms to express thoughts, feelings, and ideas without the aid of recognized symbols, becomes of interest ...such as induce the mind to create to itself given thoughts... Our attention is here awakened to the existence of a similarity of music and ornament in the power they each possess of working upon the mind...the aesthetic arts are intimately related."⁵

Because such motifs will be 'of purely mental origin' they will constitute 'a higher art than that practised by the pictorial artist' This involved Dresser in a series of half-humorous experiments in sound/form devices.

In such a situation, musical form provided an alternative paradigm of meaning. The analogy therefore had a function independent or not of its truth. Whereas in the academic tradition, for every picture there was text (ut pictura poesis), in the avant-garde of the mid and late 19th century this maxim was transformed into ut pictura musica. And made into a general principle by Walter Pater..

"In (music's) consummate moments, the end is not distinct from the means, the form from the matter, the subject from the expression; they inhere in and completely saturate each other; and to it, therefore, to the condition of its perfect moments, all the arts may be supposed constantly to tend and aspire."⁶

Just who was the first painter to give a musical title to a work is unknown to this writer⁷ but the idea that music provided a way of thinking about non-narrative values in painting was well established in Parisian avant-garde circles⁸. It appears in Charles Blanc's 'Grammaire des arts de dessein' and in Charles Henry's 'General Theory of Dynamogeny' as part of a proposed 'psychophysical aesthetics'⁹. The connection between musical and visual form becomes a truism of criticism in the pages of little magazines such as the 'Revue Wagnerienne'

"Colours and lines...have for our soul an emotional value independent of the very objects they represent. (They) are not just signs of visual sensations, but also signs of our emotions. ..thus certain painters have used colours and lines in a pure symphonic arrangement, heedless of the visual object to be painted directly..."

Teodor de Wyzewa in the Revue Wagnerienne May 1886.

Along with Persian carpets, music becomes the leading paradigm of formal and expressive values in painting¹⁰. And the reason for this is, retrospectively, quite simple. Kandinsky summed it up . . .

"...the richest lessons are to be learned from music. With few exceptions and deviations, music has, for several centuries, been the art which employs its resources, not in order to represent natural appearances, but as a means of expressing the inner life...."

W. Kandinsky 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art' (1912)

The intellectual partnership of Kandinsky with Arnold Schoenberg, which brought together two radical adventures, is only the most prominent of many such theoretical and practical meetings¹¹.

I think we can be quite clear about the cultural function of the analogy in the formative years of this century. Analogies with music provided a catalyst that enabled a new kind of painting to be synthesized. However, a cultural function of such a kind does not just happen for arbitrary reasons; there has to be a ground or foundation in common experience.

I propose that the ground of the analogy has to be investigated in neurological and psychological terms.....

b) neurological

At the neurological level, there are good experimentally established reasons for concluding that auditory and visual information, though processed in different parts of the brain, have extensive interconnections; and both have similar interconnections with the capacity to form natural language. When one centre is stimulated, the others awake; all three are, it seems, necessary for the development of intelligence and the power to maintain mental imagery.¹² Self-evidently, there is some form of neurological transcription at work.

¹⁰ For the 'carpet paradigm' see an article by Joseph Mashek in 'Arts Magazine' (Sept. 1976)

¹¹ The best short introduction to this topic is Peter Vergo's essay 'Music and Abstract Painting: Kandinsky, Goethe and Schoenberg' in 'Towards a New Art: Essays on the background to abstract art 1910-20' Tate Gallery (1980).

¹² There is an extensive literature on this, of a very technical kind. More accessible is E. Lenneberg's 'Biological Foundations of Language' New York, Wiley (1967).

This corresponds with and accounts for a common intuitive feeling that there ought to be some level at which artistic interchangeability should be possible, because, when faced with colour and form, or music, we often experience something similar. There are individuals who do indeed scramble up their senses and 'hear' colours and 'see' sounds and words, and can report on this experience intelligibly and consistently. The condition of synaesthesia is, in different degree, quite common amongst composers and artists, and I suspect that some ability to transfer sensations across the senses may be a precondition of artistic enjoyment in anyone. It seems to be a special form of pleasure, connected to memory and association but also, seemingly, independent of both.

The difficulty with this, as a general theory, is that these experiences are intensely subjective and rarely shared except as conventions. Where Rimsky-Korsakov saw white, Scriabin saw red (in C major!), and since the number of possible combinations of the major keys is 479,001,600, and the minor keys the same, and the possible combinations of both a number of very high order indeed, then (as the 'Oxford Companion to Music' points out) there are possibilities

"far beyond what is necessary to provide all the inhabitants of the world with their own individual tables of key-colour associations".¹³

Nevertheless, the extensive borrowing of painterly terms by composers, and musical terms by painters is well established 'colour', 'tone', 'texture', 'harmony' etc. are employed consistently and intelligibly, and found to be useful. Is there a reason, other than cultural convention, why this should be so?. I think there may be, and at the risk of speculating on the basis of rather little reliable evidence, I want to propose it.

A description of consciousness (not to mention pre- and unconsciousness) in terms of neural pathways is notoriously inadequate because it is unable (except by tortuous means) to provide an account for the content of consciousness, which is primarily affective, appetitive and evaluative. I like it...I want it...it's good for me! There are no neutral sensations. This is especially the case in those sensations that are least amenable to conceptualisation - smell, taste, texture, colour and unorganised sound.

The differentiation process, by which the infant divides up the world into self and not-self, into distinct objects and persons that have an existence of their own, is intimately linked to the acquisition of formal language (grammar and syntax). Formal language and conceptualisation divide the self from the not-self and begin the construction of our worlds¹⁴. (I insist upon the qualification of 'formal', because natural speech sounds and rhythms precede grammar and syntax, and are a part of that undifferentiated reality that is our first experience). The acquisition of formal language disrupts the dream-world of infant fantasy by giving experience structure.

¹³ P.A.Scholes 'Oxford Companion to Music' 1970 ed. under 'Colour and Music'. This includes a useful account of some of those who have attempted 'colour organs' and 'light instruments' of various kinds. A wonderful piece of compressed information.

¹⁴ I refer the reader to the writings of Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva and others.

I surmise that in the pre-linguistic and undifferentiated condition, that has been described as the 'pre-symbolic', the neural pathways between those parts of the brain that process sense experience are not yet 'hard-wired' and are capable of 'scrambling' or transcribing their signals to a much greater degree than is possible after the acquisition of formal language. The process of acquiring language is connected with establishing definite pathways, such that we don't usually confuse green with the taste of salmon, or vowel sounds with the colours of the rainbow. Nevertheless, the memory of those early times does not leave us, but lurks in the unconscious fantasy; and the pathways are never, perhaps, entirely separated out but retain, with differing degrees in different individuals, some capacity to reactivate the earlier connections. In effect, pre-symbolic imagery may be extensively synaesthetic, and it is partly recoverable. Of course, we can never know this directly, because it is available to our inspection only through the screen of language. But I think this helps to account for our most potent likings and loathings, and the affinities we have for particular kinds of materials which connect us backward to our first pleasures.

If this is so it has consequences for how we account for the formation of mental imagery. The acquisition of language (and more generally, linguistic structures in modes other than speech) is evidently based upon an innate capacity to do so, and it is necessary for full cerebral development; but it cannot take place without other people and a cultural context of interaction. It is a socialising process, through which values and identities are created. This accounts for the intense scrutiny given to the acquisition and early use of language by gender theorists.

For those who never can acquire language, through profound deafness, the conceptualisation of the world may present grave difficulties. Nevertheless, the tendency of the nervous system is always toward some sort of linguistic structures... "for it appears as if the nervous system, given the constraints of language in a visual medium, and the physiological limitations of short-term memory and cognitive processing, has to evolve the sort of linguistic structures, the sort of spatial organisation, we see in Sign (language)."¹⁵

What I should like to adduce, just to thicken the plot, is the idea that pre-symbolic experience, in order to emerge as aesthetic pleasure in a full cultural context (broadly speaking, in or as art), can draw upon the whole range of possible 'linguistic' structures, and create many possible 'languages', each having their own character. At all events, the experience of the profoundly deaf makes it clear that language does not have to be verbal but, in Sign, it can be visual/spatial.

¹⁵ Oliver Sacks 'Seeing Voices: a Journey into the World of the Deaf' London: Pan Books (1991) p.114. *If there can be spatial/visual linguistic structures, why not olfactory, textural etc. (or is the idea inconceivable?) Certainly sound takes on, in music, structures of a character that seem to resemble language. The difficulty of imagining what such a sensuous language would be like lies partly in the difficulty of imagining structured duration in taste, texture, smell etc. Colour unattached to form or line seems also to present the same problems.*

All that is required is the possibility of articulate structure. It is in this sense that one can talk of 'musical language', 'visual language' etc.¹⁶

For there to be parallels between musical, visual, spatial and spoken 'languages' there would have to be structural elements and compositional procedures in common. These elements and procedures would not be 'analogical' but real, because they would be properties of the neural networks that are established in the process of differentiation, and would in principal be independent of particular cultures and values (though only learnable through social interaction). Would this constitute the 'deep structure' of all communicative behaviour? At all events, Sacks (in the context of learning Sign language) asks "Does a new form of visual intelligence become possible?"¹⁷ And concludes that it does, and it seems to indicate an extension of visual/spatial processing into areas of the brain normally reserved for auditory processing. This in turn challenges the conventional binary concept of brain function into right and left hemispheres, and suggests that as soon as the capacity to generalise and differentiate has been routinized, there is a transfer of function across to the left hemisphere. Our wiring is more adaptable than we thought!

This should not surprise anyone working in visual or musical education; practice makes perfect, and makes ever more flexible. The capacity to routinize complicated tasks, and to abstract the essence of their procedures is what distinguishes the swift learner from the slow and the professional from the amateur.

This line of speculation suggests further, that what we call thought and mental imagery precedes the mode in which it is uttered, because it is a form of play with elements and structures. These elements and structures are essentially, not accidentally, interchangeable from one mode to another. The significance of the play and interplay, because the content is grounded in pre-symbolic experience, is affective, appetitive and evaluative. In adulthood that play depends for its exercise upon some level of recall of the undifferentiated state of being, in which reconfiguration of reality is constantly occurring and in which there are no clear boundaries, categories or concepts. And in which there is no conceptual obstacle to sound being seen and colours heard. In this realm, new configurations of reality and their recombinations are always possible. This is called Imagination; and it is proper that the Greeks held that Mnemosyne, the spirit of remembering, was the chief of all the Muses.

We are now led naturally toward a discussion of the structural and logical similarities that might exist between musical and visual arts; in which the idea of notation is of interest.

¹⁶ *Languages in the sense of articulated, extended structures bearing meaning; but I think we should be wary about pushing the parallel with formal language too far. Whilst it makes sense to talk about musical 'phrases' and maybe even 'sentences', I doubt if the same can usefully be said about painting, since there is no equivalent sense of duration.*

¹⁷ Sacks. *Ibid.* p.98.

c) structural

"A good notation" wrote Russell, "has a subtlety and suggestiveness which at times make it seem almost like a live teacher. Notational irregularities are often the first sign of philosophical error, and a perfect notation would be a substitute for thought."¹⁸

It would be so because it would be a depiction of the logical architecture of the world, into which everything could be transcribed.

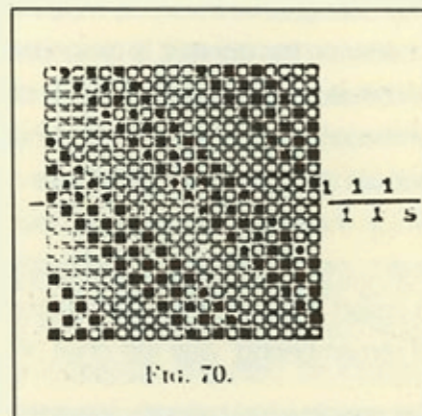
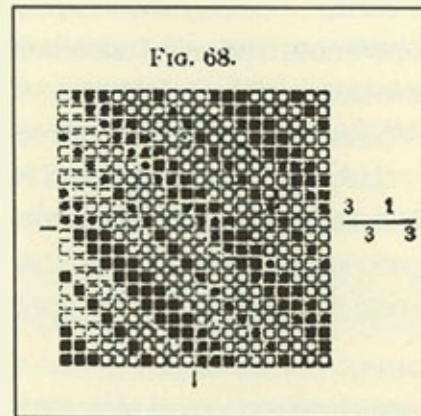
A logical notation is, of course, an extreme case; one less abstract and more obviously relevant is the example of weave codes by which looms are set up and then 'tuned' (that is the word used).¹⁹ A weave code, like a musical notation, is essentially a set of instructions for the appropriate actions up/down, over/under, repeat/reverse/ invert/ reverse the inversion/ repeat again etc. from which more abstract concepts can be deduced symmetries, the motif and the adventures of the figure on the ground. All surface pattern can be described in these terms, following the 17 types of planar symmetry and the various layer-symmetry groups by which all weave-structures can be described.²⁰ The weave-code does not prescribe colour, and the practice amongst weavers and textile designers is always to produce a range of 'colour-ways' to explore and demonstrate the colour possibilities of the structure they have created.²¹

¹⁸ In his introduction to Wittgenstein, L. 'Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus' London: Routledge, Kegan Paul (1961) p. xviii.

¹⁹ Weave codes come in several kinds, from point-paper diagrams, numerical instructions and chequer-boards, to the elaborate strings of symbols used by Kashmiri hand-weavers in the past to show how the bobbins which hold the threads are to be manipulated (in the Kashmiri case, as many as 1500 different bobbins may be in play for a single design). This last example looks to the eye very similar to musical notation, and might even be 'played'

²⁰ I'm indebted here to a thesis by my colleague Barbara Dass.

²¹ The weave code must at some point take on a physical character - typically, in the form of jacquard cards which determine the actions of the loom. These cards stand in a relation to the cloth similar to the punch cards used by automatic pianos, or digital tapes/discs to more advanced machines. Nor is it fanciful to imagine that, with some ingenuity, electronic instructions to an automated loom might be converted into sound-patterns through a synthesiser. In such a case we could say that a 'real and natural' relation between woven cloth and musical sound had been established, through transcription from a shared 'architecture'. But the likelihood is that the artistic value of such an interchange would be slight, and what value it had would depend upon the more or less arbitrary assignation of concrete sensations to abstract values.



Point-paper diagrams of different twill weaves, from A Handbook of Weaves' G.H. Oelser (1875)

Colour notations always turn out to be structural notations; colour itself stubbornly resists complete conceptualisation, and indeed, within languages, colour terms are by no means easily intertranslatable.

Similar notations have been used for surface pattern, of which by far the most significant are those employed in traditional Islamic decoration. Here a series of grids are constructed from a number-matrix, which give rise to a geometrical format which acts both as a practical guide to the workman on site, and as a metaphor for the divine principle of Unity. Together with the choice of colour (from a limited range of glazes), the format acts as a prescription or 'score' which must then be realised.²²

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2	4	6	8	1	3	5	7	9
3	6	9	3	6	9	3	6	9
4	8	3	7	2	6	1	5	9
5	1	6	2	7	3	8	4	9
6	3	9	6	3	9	6	3	9
7	5	3	1	8	6	4	2	9
8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	9
9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9

The 'Vedic' square as used in setting out Islamic surface pattern.



Detail of decoration: The Alhambra, Granada

Scores programmes are also (obviously) necessary for the creation of a computer-generated image.

The score, of course, is not the music. It is the logical architecture of a piece of cloth, or music, or tilework) and gives us only the bare bones; only that which is wholly conceptualised, therefore categorised; therefore always, in principle, mechanisable. The logical architecture is without qualities. Scores, however, have interesting graphic qualities; and the development of new kinds of notation for new kinds of music has been, according to the artist, one of the opportunities which contemporary music has to offer for interpretation.

It is clear that for there to be transcription between a piece of music and a painting, there has to be a structural relationship such that unlike objects can relate to one another. Wittgenstein describes this as a depictive relation...

"4.014 A gramophone record, the musical idea, the written notes, and the soundwaves, all stand to one another in the same internal relation of depicting that holds between language and the world."²³

²² See studies by Albarn, Critchlow and others. Most studies tend to emphasise the mystical significance of these patterns and formats at the expense of the practical utility. They enable very large areas to be covered quickly without loss of compositional unity.

²³ *ibid.* p.39.

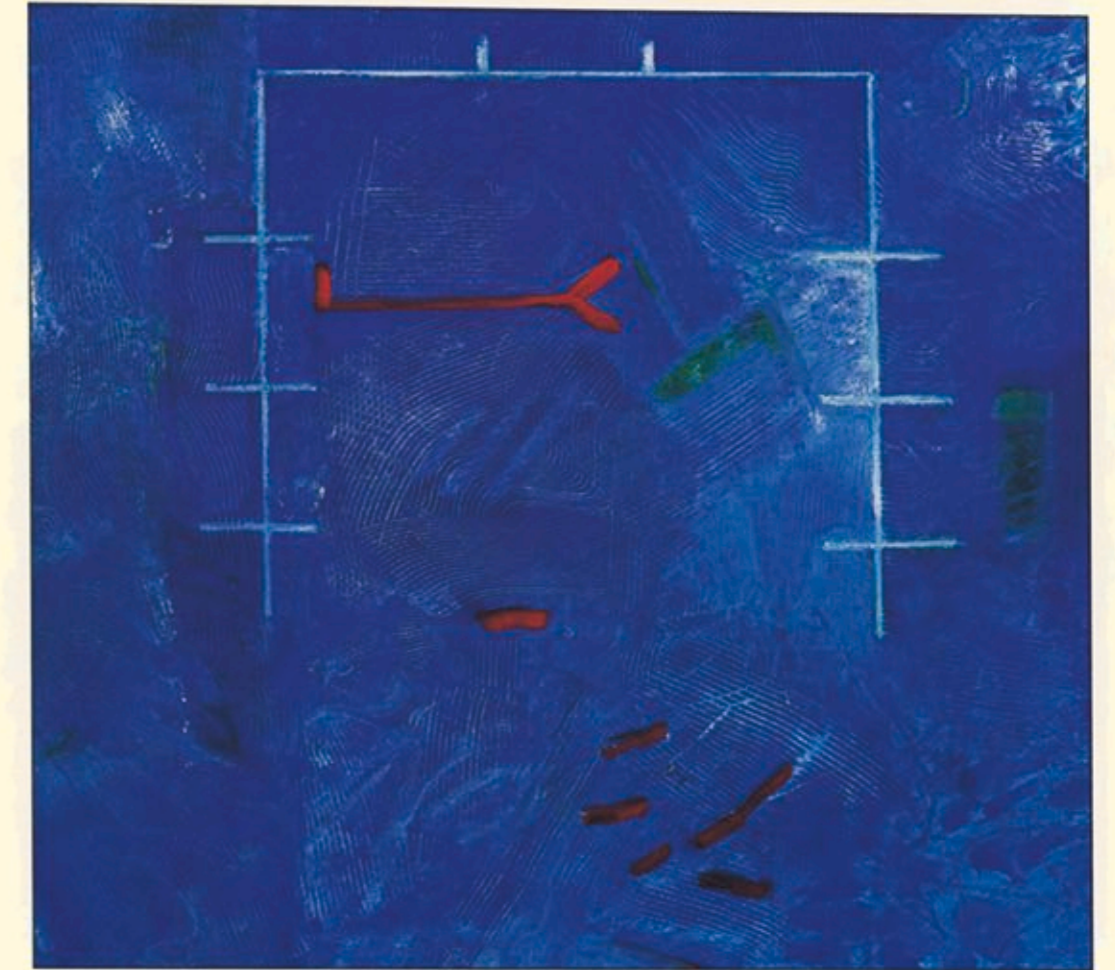
But while it is easy to see how pattern and weave can be expressed in a notation, what kind of a notation could possibly be appropriate for a painting?

It only takes a moment to see that the question is not as odd as it appears. A great deal of visual art in recent years has consisted in the realisation of a prescription of one kind or another – the systematic working out of a set of possibilities. A particularly vivid example is that of the work of Sol LeWitt, who (having once decided on the procedure to be followed) can write it down and hand the actual execution over to his assistants. But going further back in history we can point to the extensive use of prints and pattern-books as templates from which further paintings could be made which paraphrased or rearranged the originals. The technology of painting in tempera or fresco actually required a division of labour and the transmission of instructions by way of drawing; and these drawings could be used over again to recreate the same image or relocate it into another painting. In Orthodox icon painting, the 'real' image was sometimes held to be embodied in the templates from which the actual images were traced. In academic theory, the **disegno** by which the composition was transmitted was always held to be superior to the **colore** in which it had to be realised; the one was ideal, form-giving and Form-revealing, the other was sensate, spectacular and illusory. The disegno was also the carrier of the narrative, which was always text-related
- ut pictura poesis.

The transcription of a musical structure into a painterly structure is, however, a very different matter, since however hard we press the colour/sound analogy it is always going to be conventional and arbitrary, or so wholly subjective as to be incommunicable. Though there seems to be no difficulty in notating some basic procedures, such as symmetries and repetitions, which music and pattern-making have in common, the moment real materials and coloured pigment come into play precise parallels and correlations begin to evaporate. The painting, like the piece of music has its own, intrinsic demands that must be met for it to succeed, and these demands are special to the art, unshareable with any other activity.

I think the conclusion to the original question must be, that for there to be valid analogies between musical and visual art that are not merely subjective, arbitrary or the product of convention then they can only be of a highly abstract procedural kind that will tell us rather little about the appearance or sound of what is really occurring. But precisely because they are highly abstract, they are absolutely fundamental; they articulate the means by which music and painting gain and sustain significance. They are the basic constituents of play.

David Brett



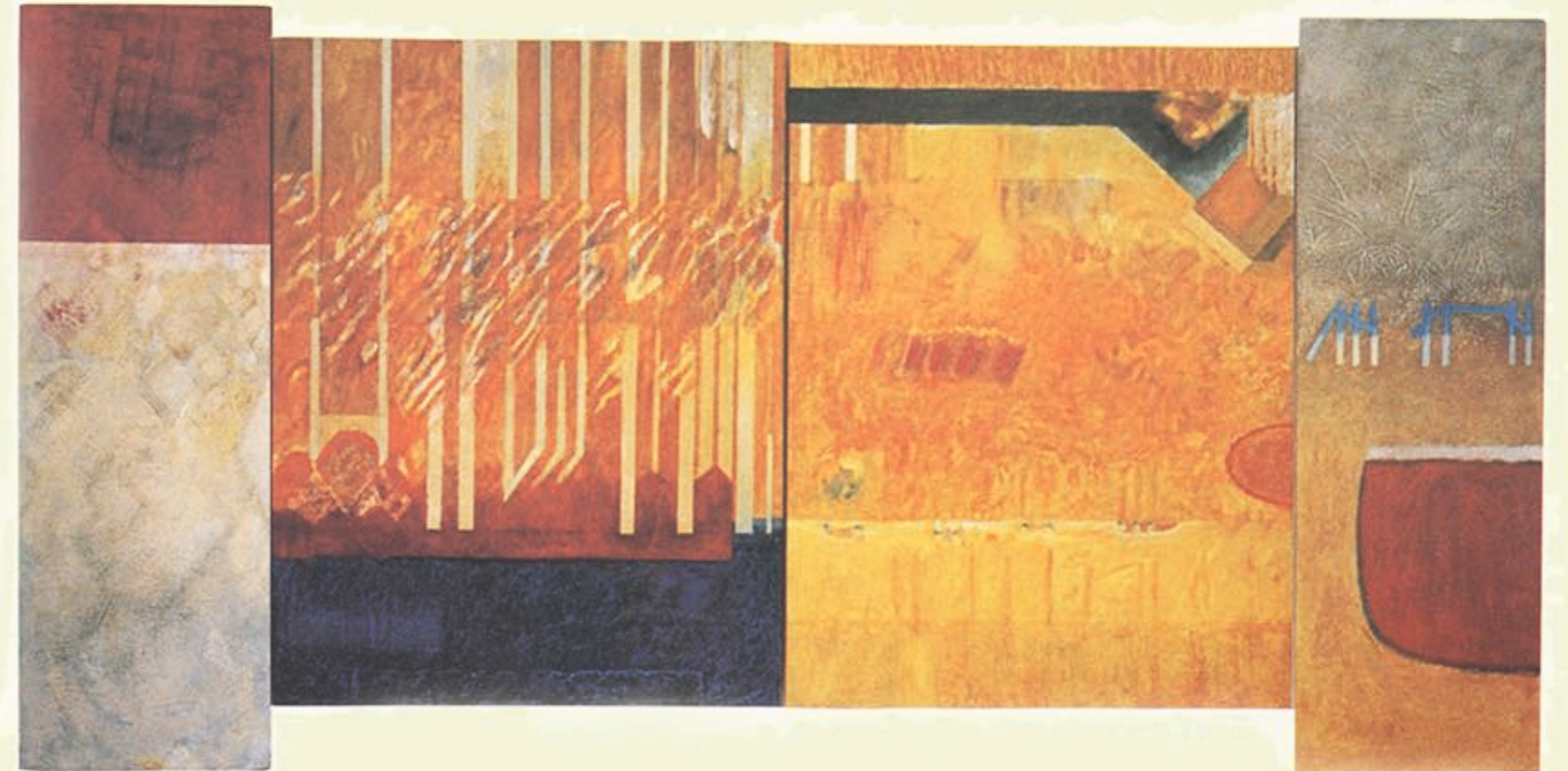
TRANSCRIPTIONS

Barbara Freeman's 'Transcriptions' consist mostly of paintings, but have included a number of installation pieces which have been seen in England, Ireland and the United States. This work and the exhibition 'In Parallel' should be understood as an ongoing project involving continuous and detailed research and collaboration with composers and musicians. In what follows I have used, wherever possible, the artist's own words.

"This project began in Rome when I was a Fellow at The British School. I spent the time there trying out ideas and strategies for transcribing specific musical forms into visual forms...with the transcription of musical structures in time into visual structures in space. The whole must be understood as an ongoing project involving continuous and detailed research and collaboration with composers and musicians".

"The music that most concerns me is that in which the process of composition determines the sound. In most cases the music has no 'narrative' though there are symmetries, repetitions, pulses, inversions, reversions etc.. Without narrative there is no idea of causality and development, the connections are not linear and sound is built up in layers and blocks. It is this architectural quality I am studying, not the illustration of sound.

"After years of working with intensely personal subject matter, musical composition has provided me with what I think of as an objective, external discipline."



— 'DAUGHTERS OF THE LONESOME ISLE' (after Cage) —

oil and wax on board 122 x 248 cms. (corporate coll.)

"I am trying to allow the material to find its own form. I am trying to make spaces that invite you in, that are not didactic, that do not tell you how or what to feel.

"In each case I have paid a very close attention to the structure of the music concerned, sometimes studying the score in detail; and in each case the task has been to find the appropriate visual means, which of course have a life and reality of their very own.

TWO STUDIES FOR 'CANTOR'

oil and wax on paper 35 x 45 cms. each.



"The avant-garde in the 20th, century has increasingly treated the work of art as an object in this world rather than a window into another world. This is as true of music as visual art. At the same time, and somewhat paradoxically, quotation or reference to other works has become a common structural device....I have inserted natural sound recordings from the landscape of my former homeland into the dance patterns of the string quartet.

(Kevin Volans)



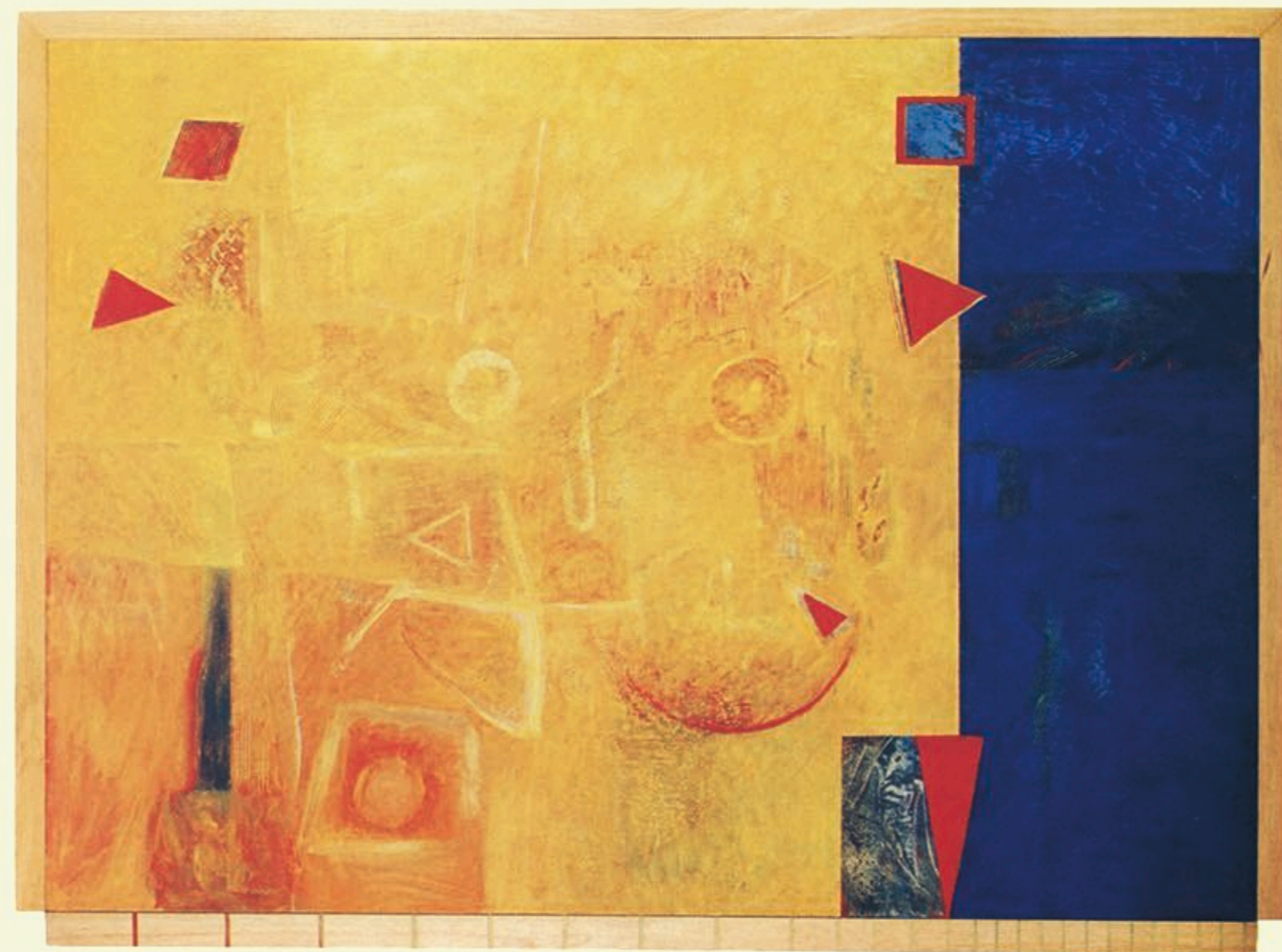
'DANCERS ON A PLANE' (after Volans)

mixed media and plate glass on board 8 panels 226 x 238 cms.

"My aim was not to describe the music by some sort of colour/form/sound analogy, but to work using the same kinds of compositional strategies. The music has a similar function to story or subject matter – it starts the whole process in motion, and is a constant point of reference. But the content, the meaning, the significance – that occurs between the painting and the person."

A SONG OF CIRCLES AND TRIANGLES (After Takemitsu)

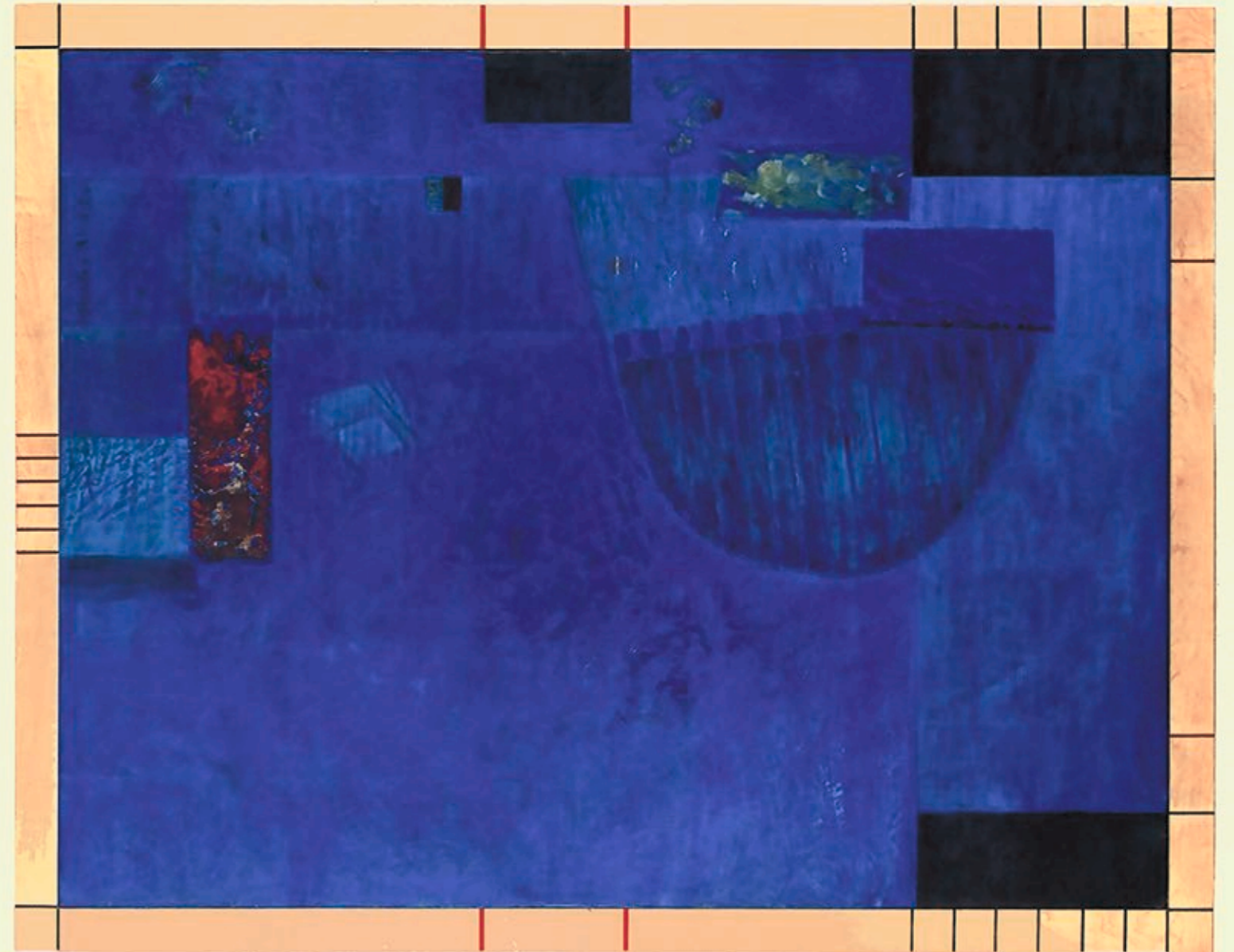
Oil on Board 125 x 165 cms.



"Why contemporary music? That's the cultural situation we are in. We live in our own time, not just in the brain, but in the fingers and the senses too. I think I am working in a distinct tradition – about one hundred and fifty years old – which evolved to cope with what happens when you abandon literary narrative and text as a subject matter. Was what Malevich described as the 'supremacy of pure feeling' enough to base a painting on? Music, and especially contemporary music, provides a set of practices and procedures which offer a respite from the acute anxiety the question provokes. But like any serious problem, the answer lies in posing the question exactly in the terms it can be answered – in this case, the practice of painting. There's a saying of John Cage I love... 'Why, if everything is possible, do we concern ourselves with history' (in other words with a sense of what is necessary to be done at a particular time). And I would answer – In order to thicken the plot.

DREAMTIME (after Takemitsu)

Mixed media on board 120 x 150 cms.



"Structure in music is its divisibility into successive parts, from phrases to long sections. Form is content, the continuity; Method is the means of controlling the continuity from note to note. The Material of music is sound and silence. Integrating these is composing. Structure without life is dead, but life without structure is unseen.

(Cage)

TERRITOIRES DE L'OUBLI (after Murail)

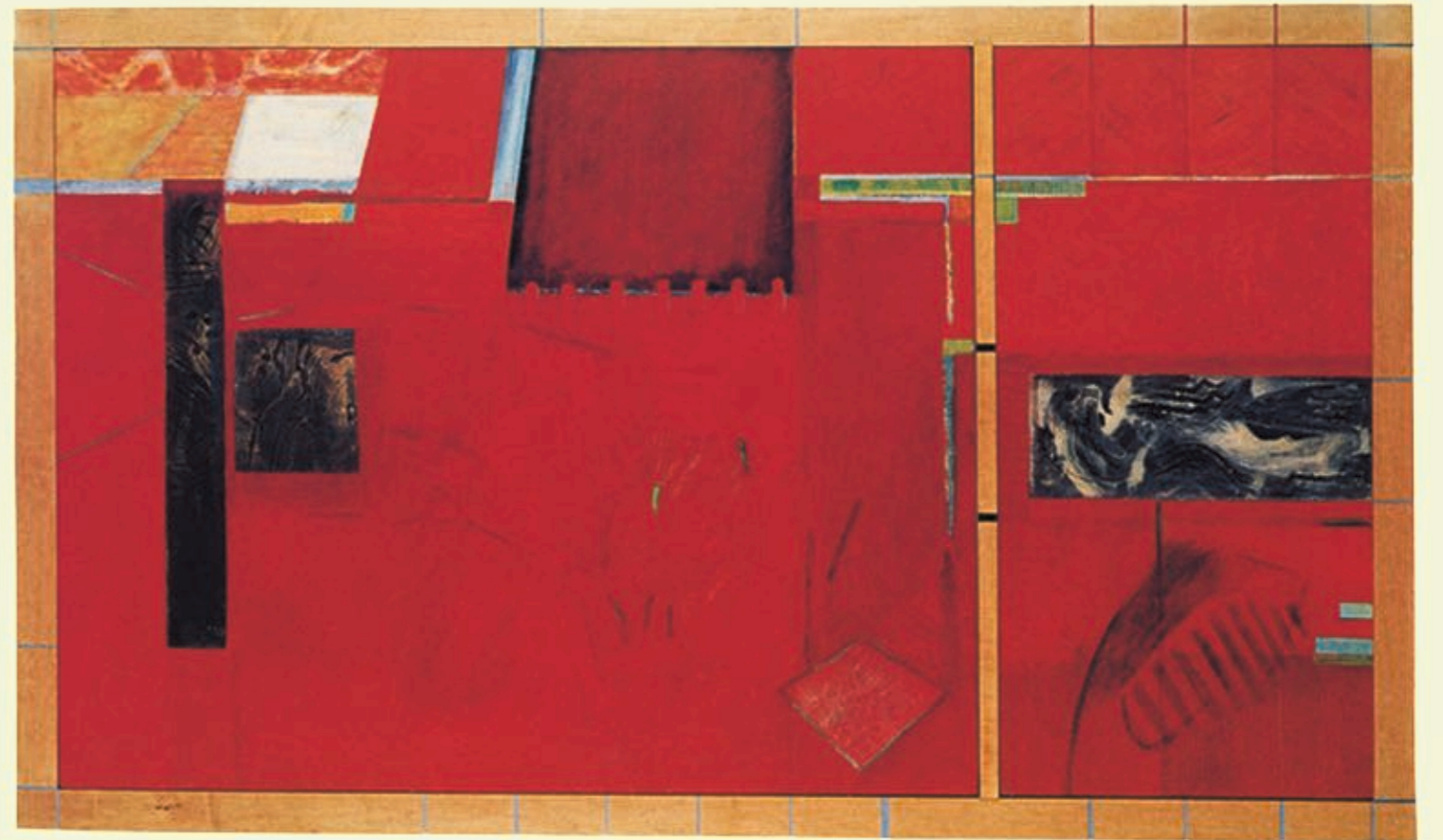
Mixed media on board 134 x 216 cms



"When asked if she was 'inspired' by music she became rather angry and said that was nonsense. She hadn't the slightest desire to illustrate sound, which anyway was impossible and the attempt always produced something sentimental or conventional. But musical composition was a huge resource of methods and basic organisational ideas — symmetry/asymmetry, rhythm, proportion, variation, inversion, reversion and so forth. And contemporary music in particular, by using every technique from chance to total serialism was an encyclopedia waiting to be opened. And what it opened was a way out of the whimsical idea of self-expression, personal biography and social 'relevance'

DOUBLE ESCAPEMENT (after Alcorn)

mixed media on board 132 x 232 cms



WORKING 'IN PARALLEL'

This catalogue has to be complete before the work for this exhibition has been finished: accordingly, what follows is a report on work in progress. Once again, I have used the artist's own words whenever possible, and passages from a recent article in CIRCA magazine and elsewhere.

"For a long time now I have been reacting to existing music, studying scores, listening to tapes, attending many concerts and being the receiver of ideas. But my aim in this exhibition is to create new works directly in collaboration with the composers, with both participants beginning at the same time and thus moving toward the realization of multi-media events by way of the cross fertilization of ideas, formal structures and procedures."

Michael Alcorn: Patina

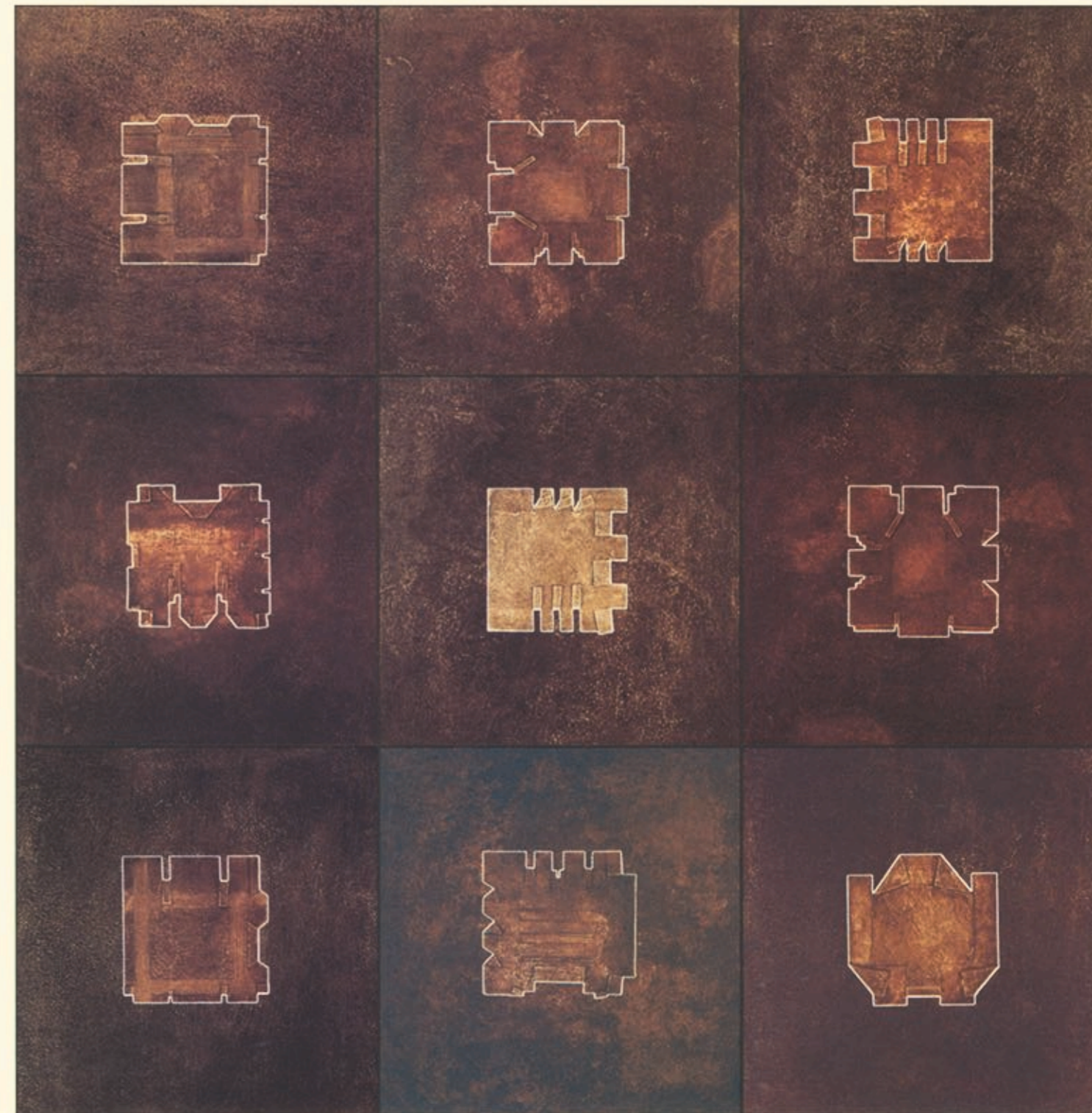
Two guiding concepts make these collaborations possible. The 'seed' or key image from which everything grows. With Michael Alcorn the seed is the material (steel) and how it can be recorded as both image and sound. Back in Belfast sheets of steel are now corroding in the yard. And then there is the shared structure which both artist and composer must inhabit. That which is being developed here through numerous conversations seems to consist of the imprint made by the material, as sound or surface, feeding back into itself either as actual sonic resonance (by means of tiny microphones attached to the steel plates which resonate in self-sympathy as the original music is played back to them) or, three-dimensionally as a construction of suspended steel plates and paper sheets which bear their imprint. This shared structure is visualised only sketchily at present, but its logical principles are becoming clearer'



The yard is full of cinnamon-coloured smoke as she throws concentrated nitric acid over the metal, makes Rorschach blots of boiling rustjuice and sluices down livid floods of orange, red and brown. Later, these metallic blooms will be stabilised with shellac.



We have to learn a new vocabulary of granular synthesis, grain scattering, stretching, expansion with phasing and thresholding, unfused increasing random gap size, rhythmic granulation, and noise-like timbres with automated pitch. At a seminar with his students we are instructed in the uses of the Karplus-Strong string algorithm and post-processing re-granulation techniques. Not to mention the sounds with smooth transients.



Intaglio Prints



Patina
Artist's Studio Belfast



Patina Installation
Ormeau Baths Gallery

Ian Wilson: Phosphorus

Phosphorus has a very beautiful name (it means "bringer of light"), it is phosphorescent, it's also in fish, and therefore eating fish makes you intelligent: without phosphorus plants do not grow; Falières developed phosphatine, glycerophosphates for anaemic children one hundred years ago; it is in the tips of matches, and girls driven desperate by love ate them to commit suicide; it is in will-o'-the-wisps, putrid flames fleeing before the wayfarer. No, it is not an emotionally neutral element:

'While phosphorus doesn't combine with oxygen to burn at ordinary temperatures, it does burst into flame very rapidly at an elevated temperature; watch...

The doctor placed a small amount of phosphorous in a tube that was closed at one end and full of mercury. He melted the phosphorus by holding the tube over the flame of a candle. Then, using a small bell jar containing oxygen, he transferred the gas to the jar very, very slowly. when the oxygen reached the top of the jar, where it encountered the melted phosphorus, an explosion occurred, brilliant, instantaneous, like a flash of lightning.



Phosphorus as discovered in 1669, by Brand, a Hamburg chemist who was looking for the philosophers' stone. He believed that metal could be transmuted into gold by mixing it with extract of urine. Using this method, he obtained a luminous substance that burned with an intensity such as had never been seen before.



Phosphorus Variation III
Mixed Media on Board 120 x 120 cms

'Ian has been talking to Barbara about figure/ground relationships. What are these in musical terms? I think I know what a 'ground' is and presume that the motif or melody might be the 'figure': then find a quote from Joan Retallack in a conversation with Cage. 'Normally...we think of silence as the ground and sound as the figure. Then we listen to your music and suddenly find that we're listening to, noticing, the ground rather than the figure. Silence has become the figure. So now I am thinking of negative/positive figure/ground relationships in which one can be seen as the other's figure or ground; and that the truest painting often exists where you must decide which is which, for the moment. Thinking about this seems to lead toward a deeper understanding of what painting, and for that matter, music might be.

'Later: she has made twelve gesso'ed boards inscribed with the same grid, over which is being embedded a further lamination of thick black paper, each using different parts of the grid. This geometrical foundation is, perhaps, the 'theme' to which each piece will be a 'variation'. What I notice is how close this grid is to the one she employed thirty years ago. And my guess is that it will not be possible to reconstruct the hidden grid from any one painting, but only from all twelve. It is always present under the surface, reappearing unexpectedly.



Phosphorus Variation IV
Variations 120 x 120 cms



Phosphorus Variation VI
Variations 120 x 120 cms



Phosphorus Variation IX
Variations 120 x 120 cms



Phosphorus Variation
Variations 120 x 120 cms

Phosphorus

This work for string trio was inspired by the idea of passion, an idea which was focused on a little allegory found in the book 'Like water for chocolate' by the South American writer Laura Esquivel where the soul is described as containing a book of matches which can burn up one after the other or too quickly if one is reckless. The burning depends on finding the right soul-mate.

Musically, the piece is in twelve sections: a theme, culled from my piano piece 'A Haunted Heart' ten variations and a re-statement of the theme, albeit slightly altered. These sections fall into three broader ones, with variations five, six and seven forming the more reflective core of the work.

Ian Wilson

Nicola LeFanu and David Lumsdaine: Gathering Paths

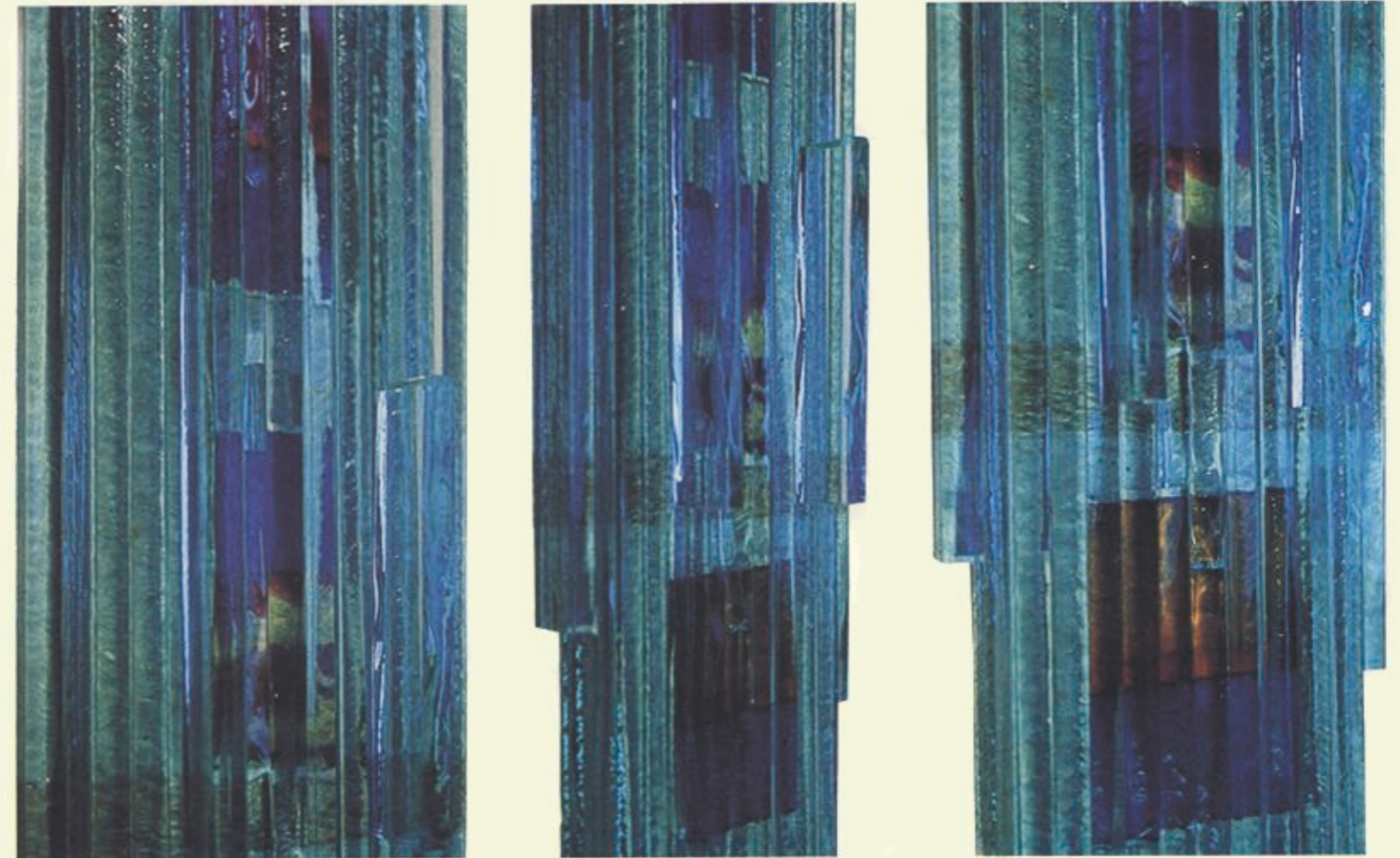
'With Nicola LeFanu the seed is the idea of the conjunction of very different kinds of materials. Not their harmony or interaction, which may or may not occur, but their collisions and juxtapositions, which certainly will. One must allow this to happen, to exercise what David Lumsdaine calls 'tact' in with drawing one's intention. The shared structure, as it emerges, is being called a 'plait' of three strands, in which one is now uppermost and now another, but all three run along together. The tapes that she has sent, with a tentative note that these are only 'ideas' are of a pre-recorded 'soundscape' made by David, a pre-recorded percussion score, and a percussion score for live performance. There are also notes of numbers because, as she says, 'composers work as happily with numbers or notes' Symmetrical and asymmetrical cells of rhythm which fit extremely well with Barbara's printed sheets.



"I am very conscious of the problems of dealing with 'Nature' in this piece of landscape, of fragments of landscape, of natural sounds and substances. Nicola and David are making something so elegant and exquisite in its sound world that I have to be able to match them in a visual world. I'm aware too of the problem of making something too theatrical and representative, but of wanting to make a space or a place. The more I work on this, the more substances become important in their own right.

'Somewhere in this scheme there is glass, bare gesso, water, salt, sulphur who knows what elements and substances. At the time of writing (March) the artist has ideas that have not yet got fully into language. Most artistic ideas (perhaps most ideas?) are like this at the start even the ideas whose final form is always going to be in language.

'Mojacar, Spain. Bright skies, cold wind and snow on the Sierra. Painting by day, writing by night. Real places, too, can be the hidden seed. The noises of insects in the grass. The finches twitter in among the pomegranates. Sounds of falling water in the dry river bed. How much of this is also present in the tapes that Nicola and David made at Ferrera.



Detail of Gathering Paths: Glass



Intaglio Prints on Japanese Paper



Gathering Paths
Artist's Studio Belfast



Gathering Paths Installation
Ormeau Baths Gallery

Gathering Paths

Gathering Paths is a collaborative work made by artist Barbara Freeman and composers David Lumsdaine and Nicola LeFanu. Barbara and I first met at the Guthrie Centre at Annaghmakerrig, and David and I composed much of *Gathering Paths* at Annaghmakerrig's sister colony in Catalonia—the Centre for Art and Nature at Farrera. So the work has grown out of many meetings, many gatherings; in turn it invites listeners and viewers to find their own way through the strands we have woven together; to discover their own song-line in Barbara's artwork or their own journey through the composers' soundscapes.

Early in the collaboration, when Barbara was showing David and myself her initial sketches, she spoke of exploring 'that which is willed, that which is unwilled'. From another perspective one might describe this work as a meditation on the natural world of which we are all a part. All our choices have consequence on the world around us but to what extent is that world inconsequential?

The aural aspect of this collaboration consists of three distinct layers of sound. At the heart of the music lies *Farrera Textures*, a recorded soundscape made by David in the high Pyrenees in June 1997. Streams, cowbells, distant voices, not so distant dogs, crickets and grasshoppers are heard in the context of summer birdsong: chattering redstarts and swallows give way to the extended song of the nightingale. Night has fallen and the second half of the soundscape becomes a nocturnal study: owls, insects, 'midwife' toads and a nightjar.

In complement to these sounds, which have been edited but not 'treated' in any way, comes a strand which is heard live in concert, though recorded in the installation: music for a percussionist. This is 'willed' music, which I composed at Farrera in the very context which David was out recording. Sounds of wood, metal, skin and stone: rhythms and repetitions which arose in parallel to those going on around me. Although in my sketches I notated rhythms and contours from speech, calls and natural sounds, the music is not descriptive: it is a response, not a picture.

Between these two strands, or layers, comes a mediating one which David and I composed together. Here pre-recorded percussion sounds are transformed, filtered and mixed so that they move imperceptibly between the percussion music and *Farrera Textures*.

Uppermost in my mind as we worked was the fact that the 'audience' would be looking at Barbara's work, moving through it, while listening; thus their experience would be very different from that of the concert hall listener, who is not free to wander back and forth, either literally or in the head. So I was interested to compose a music which did not move inexorably forward in the causative way of most of European repertoire. In *Farrera Textures* night inevitably follows day, but the creatures are unpredictable: sometimes elusive, sometimes assertive. So it should be with the experience of *Gathering Paths*.

Nicola LeFanu

Michael Alcorn

Michael Alcorn was born in Belfast in 1962. He studied at the University of Ulster, and completed a PhD in composition at the University of Durham. He was appointed Composer-in-Residence at Queen's in 1989 and in 1990 was appointed to the post of Lecturer in Music in 1990 and became Senior Lecturer in 1997. He is director of the Electronic and Computer Music Studios at Queen's and is particularly active as a promoter of new musical technologies. He is currently chairman of the Irish Electroacoustic Music Association and of the Sonorities Festival of Contemporary Music.

Michael Alcorn's compositional activities range from music for conventional instruments to works for live or taped electro-acoustic performance. His music has been performed and broadcast in the UK, Europe, North and South America, and the far East. He has received commissions from the BBC, the Ulster Orchestra, Irish Chamber Orchestra, Smith String Quartet, Nash Ensemble, Singcircle and Opera Theatre Company. In 1994-95 he was on sabbatical leave to CCRMA (Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics), Stanford University, California and more recently was carrying out research work in granular synthesis at Simon Fraser University, Vancouver.

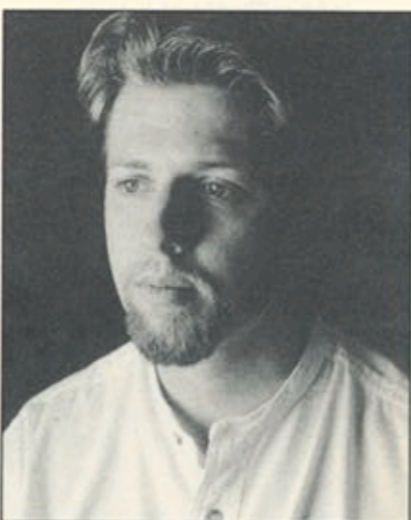


Ian Wilson

Ian Wilson was born in Belfast and obtained the first Ph.D in composition to be awarded by the University of Ulster which, in 1993, commissioned his orchestral work *Rise* in celebration of the tenth anniversary of its foundation. His music has been performed and broadcast throughout Ireland, the United Kingdom, Europe and the Far East as well as in the USA and Israel, by artists such as the Ulster and Norwegian Radio Orchestras, the Vanbrugh and Emperor Quartets, the Gemini, Concorde and Ars Poetica ensembles, Gerard McChrystal and Hugh Tinney. Works have been performed at the ISCM World Music Days, the Zagreb Biennale, the Cheltenham, Spitalfields and Bath Festivals and the Ultima Festival in Oslo, where *Running, Thinking, Finding* for orchestra received the composition prize in 1991.

His output includes concerti for organ, cello and saxophone, orchestral pieces, three string quartets and three piano trios as well as many other chamber and vocal works.

In 1992 Ian Wilson was awarded the Macaulay Fellowship administered by the Arts Council of Ireland, and in 1994 his first string quartet *Winter's Edge* was released on CD by Chandos, performed by the Vanbrugh Quartet. A CD of his piano trios, performed by KammerSpiel, was released in 1997 on the Timbre label. His music is published by Universal Edition (London) Ltd.



Nicola LeFanu

Nicola LeFanu was born in England in 1947 the daughter of Irish parents: her mother was the composer Elizabeth Maconchy. LeFanu studied at the University of Oxford, the Royal College of Music and as a Harkness Fellow at Harvard. She has composed some fifty works which have been played and broadcast all over the world; her music is published by Novello. Recent premieres include *Sextet* (Concorde, Dublin, April 1997), *String Quartet 2* (London, International String Quartet Competition, April 1997), *On the Wind...* (Cantique, Cork, May 1997) and *Concertino for Clarinet and Strings*, (Northern Sinfonia, York, June 1997).

She has a particular affinity for vocal music and has composed five operas; the most recent, "The Wildman" was premiered at the Aldeburgh Festival in 1995.

LeFanu is active in many aspects of the musical profession. Since October 1994 she has been Professor of Music at the University of York. She has travelled widely in Australia, Europe and the US; her music often draws its inspiration from natural landscape, especially her childhood haunts in Ireland. LeFanu is married to the composer David Lumsdaine and they have a son, Peter.



David Lumsdaine

Born in Sydney in 1931 David Lumsdaine was educated at Sydney University and the Sydney Conservatorium. In 1953 he went to England, establishing his reputation with such works as *Kelly Ground*, *Flights*, *Mandalas 1 and 2*. During the sixties he was immersed in British contemporary musical life, and was increasingly sought after as a composition teacher. This led to university appointments, first at Durham (where he founded and directed the Electronic Music Studio) and subsequently at King's College, London where he shared a post with his wife, the composer Nicola LeFanu. He retired from academic life in 1993, and now lives in York while still spending extended periods each year in Australia.

Over the last thirty years he has composed a body of strikingly original music, including *Aria for Edward John Eyre*, *Hagoromo*, *Mandala 3*, *Bagatelles*, *Mandala 5*, *Garden of Earthly Delights* and *Kali Dances*.

His love of western European music is intense (Dufay, Tallis, Bach, Mozart, Stravinsky) and is frequently expressed through those works of his which begin as music about music. Yet this tradition is only one of the threads which make up his music: not only the music of other traditions and cultures, but also the music of the natural world. At its heart, the music embodies his experience of the Australian landscape—the variety of its shapes, rhythms, colours and textures: the vitality of its creatures; its sudden violence; its sense of unlimited space and time. His passion for the natural world and its conservation expresses itself more literally in his archive of birdsong and recorded soundscapes, many of which are published on CD.



- 1976 Tilless, B. 'Novokvo Strukturak' Muveszet (April issue) Budapest.
 1975 Freeman B. 'Growth Structures' Leonardo (April issue) Paris.

WORK IN COLLECTIONS

- National National Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, Hungary.
 National Museum of Art, Prilep, Macedonia.
- Public and Corporate West Yorkshire County Council; Leeds City Council,
 Yorkshire Arts Association, The University of Bradford
 The Greater London Council, the University of Debrecen
 (Hungary), The University of Cork, Mestria Galerie,
 Koper (Slovenia); Dept. of Environment N.I., Trustee
 Savings Bank, Allied Irish Bank Computer Centre,
 Contemporary Irish Art Society, Life Association of
 Ireland, Northern Bank, Arts Council of Northern
 Ireland; Lincoln Buildings, Belfast; S.K.C., Dublin;
 The Office of Public Works, Dublin.
- Private In Great Britain, Ireland, The United States, Hungary,
 Slovenia, Macedonia, Kuwait, Switzerland, Germany,
 Belgium.

AWARDS etc.

- 1997 Fundacion Valparaiso, Mojacar, Spain.
 1994 Abbey Fellowship, The British School, Rome.
 1991 Guest Artist. Binz Foundation, Scuol, Switzerland.
 1990 Artist in Residence, The Orchard Gallery, Derry.
 1988 Arts Council of Northern Ireland Bursary.
 1979 Guest Artist and exhibitor: Yugoslav Exh. of Photography, Piran,
 Slovenia.
 1978 Guest Artist: Nyirbator Alkotohaz, Hungary.
 1976 Guest Artist and exhibitor: Yugoslav Exh. of Photography, Piran,
 Slovenia.
 1975 Guest Artist; International Symposium, Prilep, Yugoslavia.
 1974 Yorkshire Arts Association Bursary
 1973 Arts Council of Great Britain Artists Bursary
 1972 S.P.A.C.E. Award (ACGB.)

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The Tyrone Guthrie Centre
 Annaghmakerrig, Co. Monaghan, Ireland



Fundacion Valparaiso
 Majacar, Spain



Centre d'Art i Natura
 Farrera de Pallars, Spain

Barbara Freeman is represented by:

The Hart Gallery (London and Nottingham)
The Rubicon Gallery (Dublin)
Fenderesky Gallery (Belfast).

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In Parallel

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|---------------------------|---|
| 1. Patina | Michael Alcorn |
| 2. Phosphorus | Ian Wilson |
| 3. Gathering Paths | Nicola LeFanu and David Lumsdaine
(performed by Joel Moors, percussion). |

Phosphorus recorded at Queen's University, Belfast.
Gathering Paths recorded at The University of York.

