

BREAKING THE SQUARE

Roger Kemp & Bob Gibson

31 August – 18 September 2024



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In collaboration with the Roger Kemp Trust and Tjarlirli & Kaltukatjara Art, cbOne Gallery brings together the timeless works of two visionary groundbreaking painters Roger Kemp (1908 – 1987) and Bob Gibson Tjungarrayi (b.1974).

This exhibition celebrates the metaphysical vision and distinctive stylistic expression through two pioneers of contemporary art from different times, places and cultures.

Roger Kemp is a leading figure in Australian art history for his personal vision that pushed Modernist ideals into a unique futuristic consciousness. From early Cubism with its synesthetic and mystic approach to abstraction, Roger Kemp pursued his own visual language of the subconscious structure of nature. His mature paintings are highly complex compositions of geometric forms revealing a cosmic order as spiritual and monumental.

Bob Gibson is a recognisable trailblazer right now for his distinctive personal expression of ancestral knowledge. Descending from artists who founded the Western Desert aboriginal art movement in the 1970's, including grandparents Yala Yala Gibbs Tjungurrayi and Ningura Napurrula, Bob Gibson renders ancient iconographies and sacred geography in gestural markings and command of contemporary colour. Both artists hold their own power in their individual compulsive energy that is felt in the raw brushstrokes and dynamic compositions that pulsate with colour and form. Together these works emanate a metaphysical cosmology that is beyond time and space.

Roger Kemp is presented courtesy of Roger Kemp Trust and Bob Gibson is presented courtesy of Tjarlirli & Kaltukatjara Art.

BREAKING THE SQUARE

Roger Kemp & Bob Gibson



BOB GIBSON
Patjantja, 2018
Cat # 18-1062
Acrylic on canvas
147 x 147 cm
\$7900

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Roger Kemp & Bob Gibson



ROGER KEMP
Untitled, 1968-75
Cat # A241 Roger Kemp Trust
Acrylic on paper (mounted on polyester canvas)
146 x 150 cm
\$32000

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Roger Kemp & Bob Gibson



ROGER KEMP
Untitled, 1968-76
Cat # A014 Roger Kemp Trust
Acrylic on paper (mounted on polyester canvas)
150 x 182 cm
\$36000

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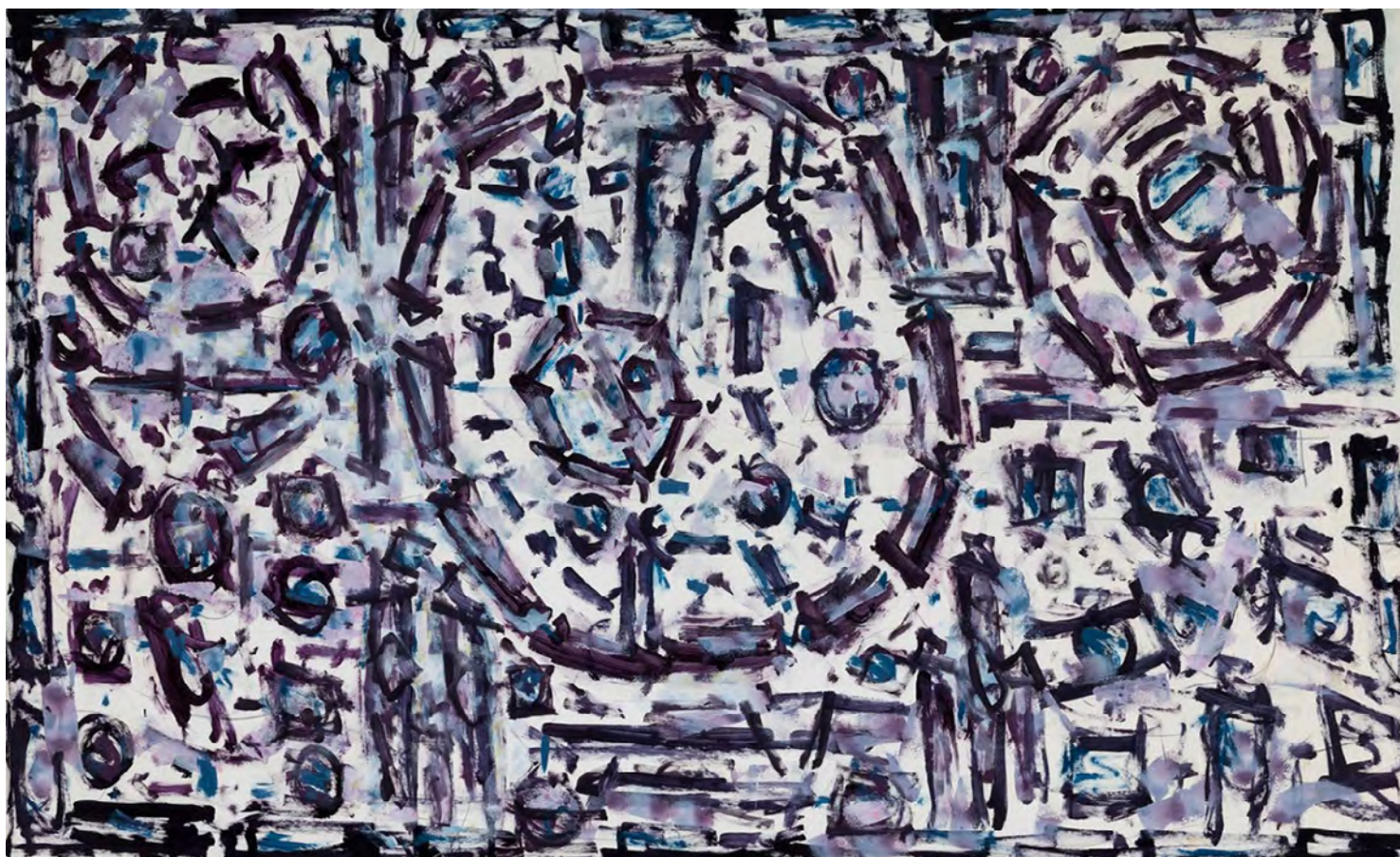
Roger Kemp & Bob Gibson



ROGER KEMP
Untitled, 1968-78
Cat # A219 Roger Kemp Trust
Acrylic on paper (mounted on polyester canvas)
154 × 151 cm
\$32000

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Roger Kemp & Bob Gibson



ROGER KEMP
Untitled, 1968-79
Cat # A392 Roger Kemp Trust
Acrylic on paper (mounted on polyester canvas)
151 x 243 cm
\$45000

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Roger Kemp & Bob Gibson



ROGER KEMP
Untitled, 1968-80
Cat # A276 Roger Kemp Trust
Acrylic on paper (mounted on
polyester canvas)
134 × 143 cm
\$22000

Exhibited: *Roger Kemp - Cycles
and Directions 1935-1975*,
Curated by Patrick McCaughey,
National Gallery of Victoria,
Monash University and Melbourne
University, Melbourne 1978

BREAKING THE SQUARE

Roger Kemp & Bob Gibson



BOB GIBSON
Patjantja, 2022
Cat # 22-691
Acrylic on canvas
123 x 93 cm
\$4000

BREAKING THE SQUARE

Roger Kemp & Bob Gibson



BOB GIBSON
Patjantja, 2022
Cat # 22-719
Acrylic on canvas
148 x 123 cm
\$6500

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Roger Kemp & Bob Gibson



BOB GIBSON
Patjantja, 2021
Cat # 21-1226KA
Acrylic on canvas
121.9 x 914.4 cm
\$4000

BREAKING THE SQUARE

Roger Kemp & Bob Gibson



BOB GIBSON
Patjantja, 2022
Cat # 22-73
Acrylic on canvas
153 x 123 cm
\$6500

BREAKING THE SQUARE

Roger Kemp & Bob Gibson



ROGER KEMP
Untitled, 1968-81
Cat # A417 Roger Kemp Trust
Acrylic on paper (mounted on polyester canvas)
148 x 130 cm
\$30000

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Roger Kemp & Bob Gibson



ROGER KEMP
Untitled, 1968-77
Cat # A389 Roger Kemp Trust
Acrylic on paper (mounted on linen)
137 x 208 cm
\$40000

Exhibited: *Roger Kemp - Cycles and Directions 1935-1975*,
Curated by Patrick McCaughey,
National Gallery of Victoria,
Monash University and Melbourne
University, Melbourne 1978

BREAKING THE SQUARE

Roger Kemp & Bob Gibson



BOB GIBSON
Patjantja, 2022
Cat # 22-895KA
Acrylic on canvas
123 × 93 cm
\$4000

ARTIST BIO

Bob Gibson

Born: 1974
Skin: Tjungurrayi
Language: Ngaanyatjarra, Pintupi
Parents: Mary Gibson (sister of Anajtjari Tjakamarra) and
Morris Gibson Tjapaltjarris (son of Yala Yala Gibbs
Tjungurrayi and Ningura Napurrula)

Bob Gibson Tjungurrayi was born at Papunya in 1974, before moving with his family to the small community of Tjukurla during the outstation movement of the 1980s. This was a time when many Ngaanyatjarra people moved from government outposts near to Alice Springs back into the Western Desert to be closer to their ancestral homelands. Bob's mother, Mary Gibson, is also a leading Tjarlirli artist whose Country is at Kulkurta, deep in the Western Desert, while his father's country was near Patjarr on the edge of the Gibson Desert Nature Reserve.

Bob began painting with Tjarlirli Art in 2007, and quickly found a unique rhythm and approach to mark-making; his style is characterised by bold colours and an inimitable freedom of movement, expressing ancient stories with contemporary flair. Bob is a vibrant character who is well loved within his community and provides support to many family members. He is a keen Sydney Swans supporter and loves listening to all music, especially the local bush bands.

Looking at a Bob Gibson painting feels a little like spending time with the artist himself. Bob's bold, playful presence in the studio is contagious; each canvas brings wild shapes and expressive lines met with decisive mark-making and confident realisation of country. His highly unique representations of Tjukurrpa (Dreaming stories) are an intersection of traditional storytelling and a spirited contemporary artistic practice. Bob's work is significant for the way it speaks to the complex layers and tensions between cultural, historical and modern influences, and challenges characterisations of what 'real' Aboriginal art looks like.

Courtesy of Tjarlirli and Kaltukatjara Art

ARTIST BIO

Roger Kemp (1908 - 1987)

Born in 1907 in Eaglehawk, Bendigo Victoria. Kemp studied for a short time at the Working Men's College in Melbourne and from 1933-35 at the National Gallery School of Art, Victoria. Kemp developed a unique style of non-representational painting, which drew on both geometric abstraction and abstract expressionism.

To the early Modern's, the challenges of the cultural, spiritual and intellectual life brought about by the modern world left the individual with a deep sense of dislocation. To meet this challenge Kemp attempted to bring the focus back to individual experience. Using art symbolically to restore a lost centre he laboured to evolve a symbolic language, which would effectively make his paintings revelatory.

Kemp's early work, of pastel colored and elongated figures, reflected the impact of Cezanne and Cubism. These works were out of sync with the tonal technicality of the Gallery school at the time. Kemp's interests lay in the unseen aspects of reality and his work reflected the originality of someone working alone. Kemp spent many hours at the National Gallery Library and Arts Bookshop in Melbourne hunting for broader influences of reference for his work.

Kemp's style developed rapidly. He had a lifelong relationship with music, and constantly referenced it in terms of movement and rhythm in his work. His response to the Ballets Russes in Melbourne in the 1930's strengthened his use of the human figure as a basic unit symbolically representing man and the drama of his condition. At this time he also joined the Theosophical Society to pursue his interest in philosophy and man's relationship to the spiritual world.

During the war years Kemp's palette darkened and his pictorial space filled with a dense structure of elongated human forms. Kemp's symbolic, abstract language continued to develop. By the 50s and 60s his enamels had grown in scale and moved away from the intensity and drama of the 1940s. Images of flight appeared and figures grouped and moved apart within a strong and dynamic grid. Kemp's concerns were both physical and metaphysical. He was seen as an artist dealing with religious concerns; his paintings glowed with the rich luminosity of stained glass.

Although maintaining a steady output in his early years, it wasn't until 1961 after winning the McCaughey prize in Melbourne that his art began to gain significant recognition. He went on to win: The John McCaughey Memorial Prize, National Gallery of Victoria, 1961; Darcy Morris Memorial prize for Religious Art, 1964; Albury prize, 1964; Georges Invitation Art Prize, 1965; Transfield prize, 1965; Blake Prize, 1968, Blake Prize 70 (shared).

Around 1968 Kemp started to work on very large rolls of paper and canvas. This gave him an unlimited scale of action and greatly increased his productivity. His work developed a new physical freedom and spontaneity creating a dynamic relationship with his rigorous sense of geometry. Kemp traveled to London in 1970 where he worked at St Catherine's Docks on the river Thames in a studio obtained through the S.P.A.C.E program. His time in London culminated in an exhibition at the Commonwealth Institute Gallery in 1971.

In the Sequence paintings of the 1970s Kemp reconfigures the square and the circle, which are his expression of the fundamental elements of the universe. He drew on his fascination with science and mathematics (for in the development of his own structural principles. He created a strong fundamental basis base from which to work from and regenerate his creativity, resulting in the endless variety of form in these works.

On returning to Australia he began to teach Art at The Prahran College and at the same time joined George Baldessin in his new print workshop in Melbourne. By 1976 he had produced over 80 etchings. These huge prints of structural complexity and visionary intensity represent some of his finest drawing. The creative energy throughout the 1970's culminated in 1978 with the "Cycles and Directions," exhibitions. Organized by Patrick McCaughey through Monash University to celebrate Kemp's 70th Birthday, five simultaneous, retrospective exhibitions were held in Melbourne at Exhibition Gallery, Monash University; College of the Arts Gallery; University Gallery, University of Melbourne; National Gallery of Victoria and Realities Gallery.

Kemp maintained a long association with The Victorian Tapestry Workshop. A suite of six interpretations in tapestry of Kemp's paintings now hang in The Great Hall at the NGV. Five of these were made possible through the generosity of Dame Elisabeth Murdoch. The sixth "Unity in Space" is part of the Tapestry Foundation of Victoria's collection through the Sarah and Baillieu Myer Family Foundation.

In the 1980s Kemp's paintings continued to grow in scale he was now working on 2 metre high rolls of canvas. Despite restrictions from ill health, his work evolved and demonstrated an exuberant fluidity. And the basic forms in these paintings now floated in harmony, or interacted with a new expansive lightness.

During 1970s and 80s Kemp developed a close relationship with both Realities Gallery and Coventry Gallery both holding several of his major exhibitions. A major factor in stabilising and giving direction to his career was his long marriage to Merle McCrohan, a colleague and art student at the Melbourne Technical College during the late 1930's. They had four daughters.

Towards the end of his life Kemp received the Distinguished Artists and Scholars Award of the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council 1973, Silver Jubilee Medal, 25 years Reign of Queen Elizabeth, 1977; OBE, Order of the British Empire for Services to Art, 1977; Honorary Doctor of Laws Monash University, 1984; Life Membership of NGV for Service to Art, 1984; Painters and Sculptors Award for Outstanding Contribution to Australian Art 1986 and AO, General Division of the Order of Australia for services to art in 1987.

Courtesy of Roger Kemp Trust