

The opulence of Pop Art colours
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This exhibition covers the route taken by Peter Phillips in the field of graphic arts. The Tate Gallery of London has a large collection of the earlier graphics. This is the first retrospective of graphic work from 1965 until 2000 to be shown. And therein lies the main appeal of this exhibition.

Undoubtedly, it contains some of the most important pieces of his career as a graphic artist. Tracking his career from his first individual exhibition in 1968 as a print maker, shows that, in spite of the many technical changes, Peter Phillips has firmly maintained his dedication to graphic art, both as a substitute for the drawing in the preparatory stage and in its final state.

The earliest works displayed are dated from the middle of the sixties, and the Pop influence is very much in evidence. It is during the seventies when Peter Phillips's graphic work produces its best images and consolidates a plastic language of suggestive optical and colourist effects. The use of machinery, with his small incursions into motor racing, is essentially concentrated on the car and its power mechanisms, the voluptuous curves of the chassis and attractive and brilliant colour.

However, none of his works in this period is exclusively dedicated to the car. Each work has different accessories that serve as triggers, devices. This is because of their almost abstract, geometrical quality -squares, rectangles, lines and circles-, while others have molecular forms or an additional new element, appearing and disappearing whenever necessary: the animals, first the birds of prey, haughty and aggressive, then dogs, cats, birds... In this period, in an interesting and exclusive sample of works dated 1974, we can even find the pin-up, an example (the last one?) of a familiar but past era.

Taking risks and using unorthodox techniques in classical graphic art, such as printing on fabric, allowed him to penetrate unique fields of plastic expression. For example, the whole series of works with fragments of print on metal or those with a metallic coat on the paper base belong to a period in which the uniqueness of his ideas and the exemplary execution of the works are particularly evident. Technology and creativity united in a tandem of perfect balance.

The last decade represented shows the artist breaking into the field of the new technologies. The synthetic and virtual image generated by the use of new computer programmes and the corresponding development of printing techniques, such as Iris Print, has allowed Peter Phillips to create a register of the formal changes in his works, revealing at the same time his creative maturity, his effortless handling of the technological tools available -they offer him a way to experiment as no other artist of his generation does.

So while retaining the visual elements that are part of his language, he includes new objects of popular iconography, from classical figures to cartoon images for children. His work in the nineties continues to consolidate these elements, adding a greater rigour to the geometric shapes, obtaining minimalist abstractions, in a mixture of great plasticity.

The works that connect him to the year 2000 are full of dynamism and have an astounding effervescence. These works are like whirlwinds of colour, forms liberated by a computer application which, in his case, becomes a brush with infinite possibilities. Iconography and computer generated imagery go hand in hand in a play of continuous choices that only now has begun to yield their fruit.

The universality of the forms in his early works is now united with the complexity of his virtual generation. This apparently essential change has not modified the Pop Art spirit in his works. On the contrary, it is kept alive and the images that the artist possesses continue to express the principles of Pop Art: objective figuration and everyday images associated with consumption, an absence of dramatic effect and a free use of colour. Without these being fixed commandments, they exemplify the creative freedom of the Pop Artist -he who makes us look differently at ordinary figurative elements.