

Anne Truitt: Works from the Estate

10 October – 19 November, 2011

Private view Tuesday 11 October, 6-8pm



Stephen Friedman Gallery is delighted to present *Anne Truitt: Works from the Estate*, an exhibition conceived in collaboration with The Estate of Anne Truitt and Matthew Marks Gallery, New York. This is the first solo presentation of Anne Truitt's work to be held in Europe and brings together a rare selection of sculptures and paintings by this important, mid-twentieth century, American artist.

Anne Truitt was born in Baltimore, Maryland in 1921. Her career as a painter and sculptor spanned over forty years, during which time she was the subject of major solo presentations at the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1974; the Baltimore Museum of Art, 1992; and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, 2010.

Truitt's early practice found resonance with the American Abstract Expressionists, formulating itself around a core interest in colour - albeit from a sculptural standpoint. From hesitant experiments with clay, wire and cement, to elegant wooden, totem-like sculptures and monochromatic paintings, Truitt's work successfully re-defined the boundaries of American Abstraction. She is now recognised as one of the movement's leading proponents.

Presented in this exhibition are seven paintings and five sculptures. The sculptures have been carefully selected from key periods throughout the artist's career with the earliest shown here from 1962 and the most recent from 2004. Fabricated from wood and painted with monochromatic layers of acrylic, these works resemble sleek, rectangular columns or pillars. In their unique combination of colour and form, the sculptures are the culmination of Truitt's endeavour to articulate her life experiences, having stated, "...everything I make in the studio is a distillation of direct experience, sometimes even specific visual experience". (Anne Truitt, *Daybook: The Journey of An Artist*, p.40)

In these compelling works, the artist sought to remove any trace of her brush, sanding down each layer of paint between applications and creating perfectly finished planes of colour. Standing self-supported in the gallery space, this purity of tone becomes even more pronounced and the sculptures' life-sized scale more evident. Indeed, the painstaking attention that Truitt paid to each of her totemic works in their conception, belies a physical encounter that was of great importance to the artist: "[T]he fact that I have to use my whole body in making my work seems to disperse my intensity in a way that suits me." (Anne Truitt, *Daybook: The Journey of An Artist*, p.43)

This physicality is also encountered in Truitt's paintings. Of the seven presented here, six are from the *Arundel* series, her most developed and recognisable body of works on canvas. Characterised by subtle graphite lines drawn onto expanses of bright white paint, this work became a central aspect of the artist's practice throughout her career, as she describes below:

The Arundel series of paintings was begun in 1973; I continue to make them from time to time, and my feeling is that I will do so for some years to come. I use only pencil and a very little white paint against a field of action I render at once active and inert by making it entirely white. In these paintings I set forth, to see for myself how they appear, what might be called the tips of my conceptual icebergs in that I put down so little of all that they refer to.

Anne Truitt, *Daybook: The Journey of An Artist*, p.99

So striking are these paintings in their white luminosity, they almost appear to move, humming softly against the walls on which they hang. They are constrained only by the thin, freely drawn graphite lines rendered in pencil atop the white surfaces. As the artist describes above, each of these lines is referential, signifying a wider stream of consciousness or thought process. In this manner, the markings are thus evidence of a very specific time and place. Indeed, the works' titles further emphasize this crucial aspect of Truitt's work: *Arundel* is taken from the name of Anne Arundel County, Maryland – the state in which Truitt was born.

Scale and placement is integral to Truitt's work and to understanding her wider endeavour as an artist. The author of three autobiographical books, Truitt constantly grappled with what it meant to be a practicing artist whilst maintaining a home and family. Through her eloquent, diaristic writing, it becomes increasingly clear that, whilst often associated with the Minimalists, her work was actually defined by a powerful emotional and autobiographical reflex. In this sense, her sophisticated approach to sculpture and painting and their combination, belies simple art historical categorisations.

Anne Truitt: Works from the Estate is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue, which includes an in-depth essay by Art Historian Dr. Anna Lovatt.

Anne Truitt (1921 – 2004) has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions including *Anne Truitt: Sculpture 1962-2004*, Matthew Marks Gallery, New York (2010); *Anne Truitt: Perception and Reflection*, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (2009-2010); *Anne Truitt: Sculpture*, Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, N.Mexico (2000); *Anne Truitt: A Life in Art*, The Baltimore Museum of Art (1992); *Anne Truitt: Sculpture and Drawings, 1961-1973*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, touring to the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. (1973 - 1974); *Truitt*, André Emmerich Gallery, New York (1963).

Recent notable group exhibitions include *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860-1989*, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2009); *Action/Abstraction: Pollock, de Kooning, and American Art, 1940-1976*, The Jewish Museum. Traveled to Saint Louis Art Museum, St Louis, and Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, N.Y. (2008); *A Minimal Future? Art as Object 1958-1968*, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2004).

Stephen Friedman Gallery is participating in Frieze Art Fair with a solo presentation of new work by **Huma Bhabha**, stand D5, 12 – 16 October 2011.

Stephen Friedman Gallery is also pleased to present an exhibition of work by **Mark Garry and Isobel Nolan** at no.11 Old Burlington Street, 10 October – 19 November.

Forthcoming exhibition: **Catherine Opie** 23 November 2011 – January 2012
Gallery hours are: Tuesday to Friday, 10am – 6pm and Saturday, 11am – 5pm
For further details please contact Alice Walters on +44 (0)20 7494 1434