

FRANK BOWLING

Emily Steer, '5 Questions with Frank Bowling', Elephant, January 2017



Frank Bowling, *Flow with Spencer I*, 2012.

Frank Bowling graduated from the Royal Academy in 1962 and has since worked between London and New York exploring abstraction and colour field painting. The artist opens a solo show at London's The Arts Club next week and will take part in Tate's *Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power* in July.

How do you feel about your upcoming show at The Arts Club?

I'm looking forward to it, I showed there before in 2007. The show then was curated by Rollo Contemporary Art and it was the first time here in London that the Poured Paintings from the 1970's were shown as a group, about half a dozen hung high in the restaurant. *Fishes and Wishes and Uncle Jack*, a large work from 1989, was hung at the top of stairs reflecting the light shining directly on it like a mysterious mirror. Then there was work from the 80's in

the Ante-Room and medium-sized white paintings from the 90's in the bar.

Do you feel there are new connections made for you when you bring such a long-spanning body of work together?

The paintings chosen cover 40 years from 1974-2014 and I'm looking forward to seeing how the works are after all this time. I'm grateful to The Arts Club and my friends and admirers for this opportunity, supporting my efforts.

Do things become more intuitive and comfortable the longer you paint, or do you constantly feel challenged to find something new?

I feel challenged all the time to make something new. I believe in the modernist urgency to make it new.

You've worked in both London and New York throughout your career. How do you feel these two cities have influenced your work?

My art began and the urgency deepened in London. New York beckoned and the toughness, competitive edge and excitement drove me and my work to rise to new horizons. But for the strength gained in London, New York might have been forbidding. As it was it taught me much more about my grounding in British art and culture, that painting is a first order activity within which my daily life is spent. And this has been the case ever since my introduction to the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square shortly after my nineteenth birthday while doing my National Service in the RAF.

You're a British artist with Caribbean roots. Do you feel as the art world has become more globalised, the need to address this "geography" and its significance (or insignificance) in your work and in life has become less prominent or is it still important for you?

No, the fact that I was born in the New World in the Caribbean underlines that making it new is not just a slogan, it's where my art is at. Lofty acclaim for lofty aims loftily attained.

Frank Bowling is showing at The Arts Club from 16 January until 23 April. Images courtesy of the Artist and Hales London New York. Copyright of the Artist. Photograph by Charlie Littlewood.



Frank Bowling, *Kathleen* (detail), 1976