

At the Fine Art Society in October

This October The Fine Art Society, Edinburgh, will host an exhibition of works from the 1980s by Scottish artist John McLean (b.1939) recently rediscovered in Boston, Massachusetts.



In 1982, a teaching job at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts School took John McLean to America. Upon arrival, he discovered that his workload was lighter than he had been led to believe, so he filled his time painting from a studio in the leafy suburb of Brookline.

Though it was a productive period, McLean's minimal income left him nearly broke and, on leaving the US, the canvases were rolled up and consigned to a cupboard. The shipping costs were more than the McLeans could afford. Last summer, the studio was cleared out by the owner. These works, forgotten by the artist, were repatriated.

John's admiration for the US and Canadian abstract painters had taken him across the Atlantic regularly from the late 60s onwards. His first trip to Emma Lake, Saskatchewan, in 1981 was, however, the beginning of a new chapter.

The impact of prairie light was astonishing: "It was far stronger, brighter and clearer than I had ever seen," he said. John's work took on an "ariel quality". A significant collector of the time described the paintings as "colours that seem to float in space, or was it space floating in colour?".



John McLean – Dance Hall

The work in this show is a continuation of the Emma Lake influence. John's painting has often been described as lyrical, but these are playful too. Bold strokes of colour are suspended, as if agitating independently. He was once described as "an explorative perfectionist" by Tim Hilton.

Nothing in these works is accidental, but such is the apparent freedom with which they have been executed we are lulled into a sense of unconfined possibility.

John is regarded internationally as one of Britain's most significant abstract painters.

12 October – 10 November 2018 Prices from £7,000 to £19,000

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