



Ben Cove in SPACE

11 July 2023 – 21 Feb 2024
SPACE Ilford
10 Oakfield Rd, IG1 1ZJ

“Ben’s work sings with a joy of colour and form whilst playing with depth and surface.”

Ben Cove was a much-loved member of SPACE’s artist community for 10 years, based at The Triangle studios in Hackney from 2006 until his untimely death in 2016. This exhibition celebrated the years he spent at SPACE.

Ben’s practice explored painting, sculpture, architecture, design and video. He was prolific and believed that to be an artist meant showing up and working in the studio every day. Throughout his time at SPACE, his practice developed to making work which became increasingly modular, with painting as an ongoing concern. He would construct, reconfigure and evolve. As Ben said: “I’ve always treated paintings as objects and so when they’re placed in any space, I feel that the relationship to the walls, floors and the viewer is another element to the work itself that can be utilised.”

The exhibition showcased a selection of work from his SPACE years, including *Biker Gang Hideout* (pictured below) which was shown for the first time in London.



Biker Gang Hideout
on display in the
gallery at SPACE.
Photo: David Mirzoeff



PROCESSES AND MATERIALS

Ben trained in architecture and some of this is evidenced in how he composed the paintings and how he made modular works towards the end of his life.

USE OF COMPASSES AND RULERS

Some areas of Ben's abstract paintings look like they might be part of a building or a plan for a work. Can you spot architectural details in Ben's work?

COLOURS AND SHAPES

Trained painters learn about the colour wheel – primary and secondary colours and combinations of complementary colours.



Ben would use colours that seem to pop out of the picture, by using certain colours next to one another. What shapes can you see in the work? How are they drawn? Do you think they are drawn freehand or by using other tools like a ruler, a compass or by masking off an area with tape?



HOW DO WE PHYSICALLY MAKE AN ART WORK?

Ben created artworks by lying the paintings on the floor as well as upright against the walls. Due to his physical disability, he would often move around on the floor on a dolly – which is like a skateboard. Ben would use a hoist to make his larger paintings.

FOR TEACHERS

IMAGINATION

Ben made abstract paintings – how do we make sense of abstract art? Can they ever be entirely abstract? When we look at paintings and shapes, our brain tries to make sense of them. The scientific term for seeing something familiar in random images, abstract things or patterns is pareidolia. What do you think you can see in the painting (right)?



Above: Ben Cove, *Homunculus*, 2015. Left: Ben Cove in his studio at SPACE.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Where do ideas and inspiration come from? Ben's Instagram was used almost the same way he would use a sketchbook or journal – to show ideas and inspiration.

Ben had photographs of what inspired him on a computer screen in his studio. These could be images of paintings, art works, buildings or examples of colour combinations. A bit like a mood board. What inspires you?

Do you write or draw in preparation for making a bigger painting? How do you know when an art work is finished?

LOOK AT: Archigram, Colour Theory, Colour Wheel, History of Architecture, History of Painting, Le Corbusier.

WHERE IS THE ARTIST'S VOICE?

How does an artist talk about their work? How do we know what Ben thought about the paintings he made?

- Essays about the work
- Podcast
- Artist statement

What is important to how you express yourself? What do you think Ben did when he was in the studio?

ADDITIONAL FOR KS3

How to document the process of making artwork: time-lapse of work, video of making, photographs in the studio, social media (Ben's Twitter and Instagram), sketches.

USEFUL WORDS:

MODULAR

Shades
Shadow
Shading

Reminisce
Stop-frame
animation
Structure
Trance

UTOPIA

Rectangle

MODERNIST

Architecture
Buildings
Curvy
Composition
Documentation

MATT, PHOTOGRAPH

FRAMING
HEMISPHERE
IMAGINARY
LAYERS
LEANING

PLAYFUL
SHINY
UPRIGHT

Space
Square
Teetering
Trapezium
Triangle

PROPPED, REGULAR

TROMPE L'OEIL