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## Cristea Roberts Gallery

43 Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5JG  
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## Press Release December 2023

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### Counterpoint

19 January - 2 March 2024

**Anni Albers**  
**Josef Albers**  
**Polly Apfelbaum**  
**Rana Begum**

**Carlos Cruz-Diez**  
**Ian Davenport**  
**Naum Gabo**  
**Patrick Heron**

**Tess Jaray**  
**Donald Judd**  
**Sol LeWitt**  
**Odili Donald Odita**

**Julian Opie**  
**Bridget Riley**  
**Sean Scully**  
**Cornelia Thomsen**  
**and Richard Woods**

**Cristea Roberts Gallery opens 2024 with a survey of abstract art spanning over seventy years and featuring more than 15 artists.**

***Counterpoint*, a term that refers to musical harmony, explores how successive generations of international artists, from the 1950s to present day, have articulated abstraction through series, creating interlinked works underpinned by a consistent visual element, such as colour, orientation, density or repetition.**

New series of prints by Polly Apfelbaum, Cornelia Thomsen and Odili Donald Odita, exhibited for the first time in the UK, and works by their contemporaries including Rana Begum, Ian Davenport and Julian Opie, will be displayed together with prints by pioneers of the mid-twentieth century, including Naum Gabo, Josef Albers, Bridget Riley and Donald Judd.

*Counterpoint*, takes its title from the relationship between two or more musical lines in a composition that are played at the same time. Although dependent on each other to create a harmony, they remain independent in rhythm and melodic contour. This 'counterpoint' is perfectly expressed in *Nineteen Greys*, 1968 by **Bridget Riley** (b. 1931), one of the artist's most accomplished works of art. The series consists of four prints, each featuring nineteen tones of grey. In each work the directional flow of the tones vary, creating a sense of movement; the complex structure of the four works seen together creates an arresting visual sensation for the viewer.

Such complex and striking abstraction is also seen in prints from the 1960s and 70s by **Tess Jaray** (b.1937), **Josef Albers** (1888 –1976) and **Anni Albers** (1899 – 1994). Jaray uses perspective and form to create an illusion of space. Three prints by the artist depict geometric shapes, evoking decorative architectural patterns, laid over strong bands of colour. *Counterpoint* will feature eight prints, *Midnight and Noon*, 1964 by Josef Albers from his *Homage to the Square* series which explores colour theory. To make the works Albers used only one ink, printed in two different densities on two separate plates to produce three colour variations. Anni Albers's *Meander* series is inspired by forms and patterns used in ancient Mexican art. The paper of each *Meander* print went through a screen printing press four times, the colour becoming deeper and richer each time it was printed over.

**Patrick Heron** (1920 - 1999) also explored the interaction of colour in his work. Printmaking was integral to the development of Heron's pictorial language, and *Counterpoint* will feature three

screenprints from a series made in 1973 exploring different uses of colour in one composition, characterised by clean lines and flattened forms.

In contrast to other artists in the exhibition, **Naum Gabo** (1890-1977) eschewed the traditional notion that prints should be made in runs of identical editions. He use of woodcut allowed him to take a single composition and explore it through numerous variations by altering colour, paper, pressure and orientation. Contemporary artist **Richard Woods** (b.1966) also favours the use of woodcut to experiment with variations of the same image. The exhibition will feature four brightly coloured compositions which reference the present day prevalence of graphs and charts to explain trends and targets. Entitled *Pie Charts*, 2021, Woods uses the process of printmaking to push one core element in myriad directions.

Late woodcuts by **Sol LeWitt** (1928 – 2007) and aquatints by **Donald Judd** (1928 – 1994) will also be exhibited. Interested in repetition and seriality, both artists often used basic shapes, colours and simple numerical sequences to create complex patterns. Contemporary artist **Julian Opie** (b. 1958) also explores these qualities of an image in *Office Windows*, 2017, a series of fifteen screenprints. Using simple geometric patterns of squares and rectangles, Opie who is interested in how a universal image is formed and recognised, depicts groups of windows from an office block. Each work stands in relation to the others, but it's arrangement is not definitive and elements can be reordered.

**Ian Davenport** (b. 1966) who prefers to work in series, will exhibit his first ever group of prints, *Ovals*, made in 2002. Exploring tonal colour relationships, six ovals are placed in blocks of colour. In each component module, hung almost like a mosaic, there is a strong contrast of colours from one print to the next, as some colours pop forward with greater force.

Four new prints by **Odili Donald Odita** (b. 1966), the artist's first major project at this scale in screenprint will be exhibited for the first time in the UK. Featuring geometric patterns and vibrant hues, *Firewall*, 2023, are characteristic of a practice which is concerned with the power and dynamics of colour. In **Polly Apfelbaum's** (b.1955) new graphic works, the artist uses a repeating, interlocking pattern to explore shifts in colour alongside the tactile surface of moulded paper pulp.

**Sean Scully** (b. 1945) although interested in the formal rigour of abstract art, often applies colour fluidly, creating soft edges. This

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is demonstrated in a group of etchings by the artist entitled *Seven Mirrors*, 1997. Each work features two columns of conjoined stripes, in which one column appears to mirror the other.

*Counterpoint* will also feature eight new prints by **Cornelia Thomsen** (b. 1970), seen for the first time in the UK, that explore the mathematical principles of the golden ratio. Also known as the divine proportion, this number arrangement which refers to how a work is divided and how its various elements interact, has been used by artists for centuries. Thomsen focuses on a linear depiction of the golden ratio, to create rectangular blocks of related colours.

**Carlos Cruz-Diez's** (1923 - 2019) investigations of colour and light extend beyond the surface of the work and are informed by the viewer's visual and perceptual experiences of colour. A group of screenprints, made towards the end of his life are completed by the viewer's movement and engagement of each piece. A series of prints by **Rana Begum** (b. 1977) that also appear to change in relation to the viewer's position as they pass in front of them, will be on show. In these recent works light is gently absorbed and reflected across printed layers of silver and white, so the viewer experiences a surface akin to reflective materials.

The works on show in this expansive exhibition constitute masterclasses in technical printing. All of the artists, be they past or present, demonstrate how seemingly simple formulas can be used to generate complex groups of artworks and that articulating abstraction through series has evolved into a universal language that can engage any viewer.

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### About Cristea Roberts Gallery

Cristea Roberts Gallery is a leading international contemporary art gallery with a particular focus on original prints and works on paper. Since its inception, the gallery has commissioned a significant number editions by a wide range of artists, whilst also representing others for their unique works. The underlying ethos of the gallery has always been artist-led. It was originally founded in 1995 as the Alan Cristea Gallery and changed its name in September 2019 to Cristea Roberts Gallery.

Acknowledged as one of the leading galleries in its field of specialty, the gallery's programme is dedicated to publishing, cataloguing, exhibiting and dealing in original prints and drawings by its roster of over 30 important international artists and Estates. It participates in all the major international art fairs and has a dynamic programme of exhibitions hosted in its bespoke space in Pall Mall, London.

The gallery works closely with international museums on acquisitions and loans, and examples of its editions are held in major public collections around the world including Tate, London, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and Museum of Modern Art, New York.

### Visitor information:

Tues - Fri 11am - 5.30 pm  
Sat 11am - 2pm  
Closed on Mondays, Sundays and public holidays

Travel: Piccadilly or Green Park underground station  
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Twitter: @CristeaRoberts  
Instagram: @cristearoberts  
Facebook: @CristeaRobertsGallery  
#Counterpoint

### Private View:

Thursday 18 January 2024  
6 - 7.30 pm  
rsvp@cristearoberts.com