TERRY JONES
a retrospective
1938-1992
A more sophisticated approach to art. Where is one to go, when able to go, when apparently having reached basic composition and flat shapes of colours? Perhaps painting is to get terribly complicated in actual paint application, and at present is in a state of 'working out' so that it tends to appear basic."

Poem

Until the sun's blaze of light
Penetrates the valleys, hidden half the day
In the shelter of trees on heights of wooded hills,
Road winds until the top is reached then drops.
From vantage points, the "Devil's Heap of Stones",
Eyes meander down to a "Fiddler's Elbow",
Across to borders, and far counties, quietly seen in distance.
Over cows, meadows lush with grasses and the river silvery snaking its lazy path.
The sun races against clouds, whose shadows float quietly -
Hedges, rivers, fields and trees that together forms the wide open countryside.
The sun comes out, lighting it up. Now all is peace.

(Both included in late 60s early 70s sketch book)
From 1969 - 1972 I worked in the library of Kingston College of Art, during the period when it became part of Kingston Polytechnic. It was a time of charged emotional debate about the future of art and design in Britain and in particular the likely future of Fine Art. No-one was more trenchant, more amusing or more passionate than Terry. I used to work late in the library once a week and he often came along from the studio to check a visual reference with a student and invariably stopped to talk. I learned a great deal from these informal, unstructured seminars.

After I left the Polytechnic we kept in touch over the years through mutual friends and occasionally met; he was always warm, funny and irreverent. It was typical of his caring sensitivity that when I bought a small house in the South West of France he promptly made sure that I knew that one of the former Kingston students, the painter Victor Gray, was living in nearby Toulouse. Terry had remembered that twenty years earlier I had bought an enamel by Victor from his brilliant degree show!

Elizabeth Esteve-Coll
Director, Victoria & Albert Museum

Terry Jones told me that as far as he could trace, all the men of his family became miners, and he was determined to break this tradition. He was fortunate when he went to the local art school in that the head of the painting school was not only an enthusiastic teacher but also a very good practising artist. Terry won a scholarship to become a student at the Royal College of Art where he could meet other enthusiastic young students and visit the galleries. He became the most popular student during his time at the College and gained an honours degree.

On leaving College he had successful exhibitions and also established himself as a very good teacher, but this activity did not interfere with his progress as an artist; he went off every year to remote places to develop himself as a painter. He was always wanting to perfect himself as an original artist.

He was very much loved by students and his sudden death caused great regret.

Carel Weight RA

To know Terry was to know someone who in many ways was a man who represented for me not just that unique being that was Terry but also a generation of working class children who left the valleys of South Wales in the fifties. To go into more detail would take more than my writing skills are capable of, however, some understanding of his background is essential.

It was a time when the exodus of the best talent of the mining valleys of Gwent were getting underway, not because of unemployment but because of pressure to “do well”. The not uncommon conversation of people at that time would run – “Where’s your Terry these days Tom?” “Doing well mum, gone away see.” This never required the qualification of where or what they were doing. To have left was enough, if only for Newport 18 miles away.

This is where I first met Terry, a youth of 16+, a shock of crew cut fair hair, a Joe Brown look alike, full of energy, and surrounded by admiring girls, bursting into the Life Drawing Room at Newport School of Art. “Are you John Selway?” (Pronounced “Subway, something he did periodically throughout his life.) “We’ve come to see your paintings.” This was said with a mixture of politeness, confidence and diffidence which Terry seemed uniquely to bring off, all at the same time. There we struck up a friendship that endured through Newport School of Art, the Royal College of Art, trips to Portugal and beyond despite long periods in later years of little contact.

As to Terry as an artist this is vested to some extent in his continuing return to the Garn and the high semi-mountainous landscape of North East Gwent, with its remnants of nineteenth century coal mining and its legacy. As a draughtsman he owed much to the teaching of Thomas Rathmell at Newport during the fifties and sixties with its influence of impressionism, Sickert and Giacometti. Although nowadays this may seem pretty safe and conservative, at the time, taking the background Terry came from with his almost singular absence of any visual tradition other than Victorian popularist images to inform him, it was without doubt revolutionary. I know in later years Terry came to see it as something of a dead weight, but his ability to convert it to his own particular view allowed him to transcend and transform it into something very personal.

John Selway, Painter, March 1994

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The 'bar' of the Royal College of Art Student Common Room was where I first met Terry Jones more than 30 years ago. It was to be the beginning of a lasting though untidy friendship interrupted by time and distance.

Terry's energised commitment to painting had propelled him from Newport Art School into the cultural metropolis which he was able to embrace and prosper in. Valley culture, propped up by its strong work ethic can screen and deflect and absorb many difficult influences. Whilst I retreated back home he stayed in London sustained by its dynamic and quite naturally retained his personal Welshness which lyrically conditioned his imagery. Terry became a well known and respected artist and teacher yet sadly virtually ignored in Wales. This exhibition should do much to correctly place Terry in his rightful position as a Welsh painter of international status.

Peter Nicholas, Sculptor, February, 1994

I always think of him as a lovely man, blond and pink and interesting - with such a distinctive voice and laugh.

Judith Mitchell
Fellow student RCA,

It was always a question of balance, of weighing things up. Sometimes, as we all were always waiting, the solution turned up. Ah yes, here, perfect - a lake, a village bar, a spot in the mountains. It was always as if he was looking for the balance - weighing. It was the same in his paintings: why not this; that perhaps; this, let's try that. What do you think? The eternal questioning, an innate curiosity, desire to explain. His travels were not an intellectual quest, just a desire to satisfy curiosity, to savour the unusual, the chance encounter, the accident and incident of every day life, whether it be in the street, two blocks from the house or two thousand miles across the Atlantic Ocean. The balance, the weighing up, being open to curiosity and conveying all this in the painting and obviously in life itself. Window and mirror - interior reflection and the wide angled lens - a distance scanner.

Here in Mexico the humming birds with their iridescence remind me of Terry's paintings - deep vibrant, throbbing flightly - a celebration, in every sense, of the world. Frantic energy that stands still. Fresh air amidst the dust.

I got to see so many things I might never have seen through him. He knew people, he was always interested in behaviour, that is in life rather than art.

Phil Kelly, February '94
Painter living in Mexico, friend since early 70s

Sometimes you do not want 'ART' in capital letters endlessly talked about. Oftentimes you just continue with the act itself and in so doing, in that solitary act need the gentle encouragement that what you are doing is worth nurturing and taking seriously and conversely, on occasions to be reminded to laugh at oneself.

I was both taught by and worked with Terry, and was witness to his gentle encouragement and cajoling, that easy unfussy manner, those ever so deeply felt feelings and strong opinions delivered without patronising or belittling you, but with brevity and that all so rare commodity, care.

The painting one got on with as best one could, in the evening in the bar we would "fall amongst friends".

Steve Motley
February, 1994

I first encountered Terry in the car park at Kingston. I was panicking loudly as I realised that my canvasses were full of dents, I did not know how to get rid of them, and it was only 20 minutes until my interview for Foundation. "Spray some water on the back, lad" he said, as he strolled past. "What, will it work?" "Spray some water on the back" he repeated, not stopping or turning, it worked and the day was saved.

Terry mirrored his own life in his work painting people he knew, places he visited, delving into his own history for inspiration. He did this with great flair and skill creating a wonderful visual diary for us all to enjoy. He was a very supportive teacher. I know that he has influenced me as an artist, but more than that he became a great friend. I shall never forget him.

George Melling,
Fine Art Technician, Kingston University

Throughout our friendship, over twenty years we seldom wrote, our conversation was always about ordinary daily things, never about art or his early life. As a tutor he never interfered, he encouraged, rather like the cateur in the garden helps growth. I know very little about Terry Jones; I enjoyed him being around when he came down "to do some drawing". I liked that man, a very human being.

Vic Gray, Painter, living in France
Terry Jones’ main career was as a teacher - and a passionate one at that - of painting students in the School of Fine Art of what now is Kingston University. Every organisation has its own culture derived from the characteristics and contributions of people who work, or have worked, in it. Kingston University is noted for the commitment to students and its human warmth. Terry helped to create this culture and was a daily example of it. He was also one of a small group of people who helped me, as the new head of the institution, to relax and enjoy the place I had come to lead.

I have a particular memory of Terry as a painter. At the end of a long and tiring private view day for the summer’s graduates, he and I ended up in a back room, glass in hand, looking at one of his own paintings. This was the painting of his grandparents’ house, then surrounded by green fields but now, sadly, in the middle of a housing estate. We talked about the painting, about his Welsh childhood and about life and art. It was one of many occasions when Terry Jones enriched my life. We miss him but we still have his paintings to enjoy.

Dr Robert Smith
Vice-Chancellor, Kingston University

Terry Jones was a dear man, a treasured colleague in the school of Fine Art at Kingston University, and an artist of real stature. All of us - staff, students, the A-Z of this place from Vice-Chancellor to early morning cleaner remember him in the same way - with a smile and a story.

Memories of Terry come flooding back as I write this piece. He was an artist who taught - in that order; it is important to understand this, at a time when artists of Terry’s stature are being made ‘accountable’. His teaching style was utterly personal and inimitable. He would reach the truth about a student’s work through a king of personal sorcery. Anecdotes and reminiscences would be brought into play, alongside a completely unaffected but crystalline formal critique.

You didn’t know you were being ‘taught’ - “Terry had a bevy with me, and we sorted out the scene”; only later - usually the morning after - would the gift of wise advice from the surest eye in Knights Park become apparent to the added student.

Terry’s talent as a teacher and artist will never be replaced, for it uniquely compounded a salty wit, a devilishly effective set of antennae for locating pseudery, bunkum and general artist pretentiousness and dishonesty, with a protean love of life, people and landscapes. Typically, he underplayed himself throughout his life: he is probably squirming at these words, and those of others, as they become public.

He memorialises his home valley, doffs his cap to the New World (especially its mid-western and southern physical vastness and human warmth) and raises a glass to the sun-bared marquis of Spain and Portugal, visited almost religiously from year to year.

But perhaps the deepest clue to his genius life in those paintings which give an affectionate dignity to the daily, mundane life of - well, it could be you or me - in Clapham Junction or Llanelli, downtown Detroit or mainstreet Oporto.

Cheers Terry!

Professor Bruce Russell
Head of School of Fine Art, Kingston University

Others will do justice to Terry’s work. I see him always in relation to the students; the warmth of his welcome on their arrival, the relaxed atmosphere in the studios which owed a great deal to his influence, the huge contribution he always made towards the high standard of the final degree show. Untold numbers of students benefited from his friendship, his generosity, his kindness. And what fun it was to be a student in his time.

Joan Plumb,
Secretary, School of Fine Art 1977-88

Sadly, many never appreciated the hours of hard work Terry contributed to the Fine Art Course and more importantly the pastoral care of the students, simply because he never blew his own trumpet. To those who knew Terry, that is what most endeared him to them. I shall never forget the unwavering support for me in the six years I worked at Kingston. I always felt that as long as he was there sanity, honesty, plain speaking and just fun would continue. Though I am sad to lose such a valued work-mate, in his own words I’m “bloody glad” I knew him.

Paul Argent
Part-time Lecturer, Kingston University
From the time I went to Knights Park as Assistant Director in 1972 Terry was one of the few people in the whole institution with whom one could establish a close personal relationship without it intruding on the business of the place. He helped me out of a mess many times; always willing to speak to visitors, to allow people into the studio, to help with external events, to mediate between the contending parties. We had good times together with John Newton, who was supposed to have tutored Brathy. We once asked him if it was true that he kicked Brathy out in his second year - "Yes," he said, "and he's still no bloody good!" Terry and I joked about this for years afterwards ... and I tried unsuccessfully to persuade him to convert the Fine Art school to what I called "The Apples and Pears School of Painting" - to no avail. Terry did manage to salvage a crayon drawing done by Fred Heywood in one of his studio exercises, and he had it framed for me to demonstrate that not all art was incomprehensible. It was a nude in purple that looks like a mutton chop. It hangs on my office wall here. Every year at the shows I would make my inspection and every year it was "No apples and pears this year Terry?" I shall miss all that.

Ivan Hannahford

I first met Terry Jones in the 60's when I was a lecturer at Kingston College of Art. It was a time of upheaval and change. Much attention was given to young artists, and Terry, having recently graduated from the Royal College of Art, came into this category. There were many of his generation who, eager to be accepted by the amorphous establishment, were just as eager to demonstrate a radical overturn of accepted standards. Terry had no time for such posturing. He advocated a commonsense approach: "Painting is painting is painting!" To observe, to have a point of view and to get on with it were regarded as fundamental while welcoming and supporting genuine experiments and innovations; and Terry's inquisitive nature, coupled with sound training and a sense of humour, gave his teaching a refreshing quality, unencumbered as it was, with theories or the need to be at one with the avant garde. He had a sympathetic understanding of ordinary human values. This was more than the "common touch". It was a lively interest in those around him and a sympathy with those facing problems, personal as well as painterly, and helping them in any way he could.

The death of Terry Jones, as his work shows, is a great loss to the world of Art. But his influence continues in the many who were privileged to benefit by his guidance. I, too, feel privileged to have known him for so many years as a colleague and a friend.

Les Duxbury
Printmaker, Ex Kingston Colleague

Terry's endearing vision of life and time will endure in his painting and draughtsmanship, a complete artist.

Ted Heath

Terry was a kind and generous man, quick with a joke or an offer to buy the next round. He always found humour in a bad situation and felt free to speak his mind. I had known Terry for a dozen years or so. Being fellow artists we would tramp around the museums and galleries involved in lengthy conversations about life and art. Terry was a big support to my art pushing me to continue my work in spite of difficulties I encountered. I miss him.

Dan Murray
Sculptor and Curator,
Hirshorn Museum, Washington DC

He was like a member of the family. I've recalled memories of him - arising early in the morning to work diligently in the flower beds, painting or drawing at his easel in the afternoon. In the evening he would relax with my parents conversing and watching television.

I always enjoyed the summers when Terry came. By his very presence he made it more exciting. Our paths would often cross when he worked outside and I enjoyed our talks. He was always polite, positive and goodnatured. In addition to being a good storyteller he was a very good listener. When someone spoke to him he heard every word.

Terry's work can still be seen in his paintings that hang on three floors in our house. Yes, knowing Terry Jones was an enriching experience and his influence lives on. We all loved Terry and we miss him. He will not be forgotten.

Vince Hubanks
Maryland, USA
There are several Terrys, all of them are of course connected, but each lit a particular path. For much of his life he hid himself away, although he sympathised with everyone, yet he could never feel comfortable enough to relax his spirit and really let anyone in, the “observing painter’s eye” allowed the self-consciousness to be ignored. I think it was the intensity of this that liberated the man.

His ghost haunts me now, as I stand and look at his paintings. I realise that I cannot label him in the comfortable way I once did. He had a very direct approach to his and others’ art, that did not require intellectual scaffolding, but instead stepped beyond the comfort of theories into a deeper and far more uncomfortable introspection. Though his work may be superficially seen as “representation” it is far more than that. I feel that each of his landscapes was a self-portrait marking the particular time it was painted. Perhaps because I see how personal and layered they are, that it makes them so hard to unravel. Terry’s other paintings are no less important, most have a narrative connected to them, of which I sometimes was told a part. Whatever, they always strike me as showing the loneliness and isolation, the hardship that people have to go through, something he was always aware of.

Each person must draw their own meanings out of Terry’s work, for me they have poignancy because I can remember him painting them, always from a distance we were never allowed near. The paintings done in Portugal were often worked on early in the morning before we woke. By the time we were up and breakfasted it was a sociable man that occupied the space, shouting and encouraging everyone to drink and talk. We children were often sent away which annoyed me intensely, as I wanted to listen. Otherwise I remember him sitting in the countryside in Northern Spain or Portugal or France, it doesn’t matter where, alone with a bottle of wine his shirt off and painting so intensely that it was if he were dragging what he saw to the canvas through will power. Or I remember being small lying with my face against the cool linoleum of the floor, drawing on a sheet of paper listening to his music and breathing in the rich thick fumes of the turpentine, all a rare treat as we were not allowed in the studio usually.

He was selfish in lots of ways, this shouldn’t be forgotten. After all to paint you look to yourself, you don’t necessarily have to like yourself or believe you know best or have any answer, just the uncomfortable realisation that it is all you do have and the futility of looking anywhere else for the answer. This shouldn’t be taken as a noble trait more of a selfish destructiveness, but it is what made the things he painted meaningful. Dad turned a lot of his confusion on himself and the people close to him. This is probably hard for those who knew him outside the family to believe or understand, but I say this without any bitterness. It has to be appreciated in the same way as you need heat to cook, you must expect to be burnt by it now and again, and for those closer to it the hotter it will be.

In spite of the way he would bellow like a bull to clear a path for himself, he cared for a lot of people, even though sometimes he had difficulty in showing it. My Mother was the person who held his life together for him, and the only thing that stopped him collapsing in on himself, he loved her dearly. He was intensely proud of though exasperated by us, his children, as a parent should be. While I now know how much alike we were, I’ve also been told that by many people who knew him better than I did in lots of ways. Like two similar poles of a magnet we could never get very close but we do have the paint through which he still talks to me. I now believe in ghosts, well one in particular.

Simon Jones (Terry’s eldest son)
The Hubanks' Lake

c. 1988

oil on board

24" x 18"

Lasgarne over Devil's Stones

c. 1989

oil on canvas

48" x 24"
Jaime’s House, Alferce, Portugal  
c.1975  
oil on canvas  
15”x11”

Near Braganza, northern Portugal  
c.1973  
oil on canvas  
24”x18”
Cabo Espichel, Portugal
Oil on canvas
24"x18"
c.1971

Quinta da Parella
Oil on canvas
24"x36"
c.1978
Tales from the Mabinog
enamel on steel
48\"x36\"
c.1981

Twm Shon Cati
c.1979
enamel on steel
48\"x20\"
**Portrait of Thomas**

*Oil on canvas*

24" x 18"

c.1972

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**Caught in their Shed Home**

*Oil on canvas*

24" x 18"

c.1971

*All photography: Guy Heritage*
"The artist must never be his own prisoner, never be imprisoned by his own style."

Matisse remarked as, at the age of 78 he embarked on his last great colour collages. In its implicit recognition that the artist must only ever deal in his own personal experience of the world, visual and emotional, in short in what he knows, it is a tough and uncompromising statement of an age-old truism. Style with its generalising tendencies and reliance on technique allows such awkward considerations to be put to one side, or at least to be touched on only tangentially. At the same time the intensity of the urge to define and put into a concrete visual language the nature of your experience can certainly also extract its own tremendous toll in terms of success, productivity and personal contentment, but not least in terms of an artist’s integrity and independence.

Looking at, and trying to set down some outline of Terry Jones’s life and work both as a teacher and painter it quickly becomes apparent that as far as he was concerned he had little choice in the matter, that these things - his emotionally tense childhood as the son of a Welsh miner, his remarkable artistic education at Newport and the Royal College of Art, his lasting friendships with fellow artists and his close family life - were things that had to be repaid and honoured in kind. In his dedication as a teacher fundamentally uninterested in career success, only in students - in nearly thirty years at Kingston University he never rose above Senior Lecturer - and as a painter who, whether in terms of his own Welsh background or family holidays in Portugal, seems resolutely to have turned his back on any concessions to public success. This need to keep close and true to his own experience of life in his art was understood intuitively and without question.

With this attitude came an extreme modesty and reticence which, when it came to putting together this, first retrospective exhibition, has created some quite extraordinary problems of ordering and structuring. For example very few paintings or drawings were dated while only those comparatively few works which were exhibited publicly were given a title. By tying in dates of exhibitions with specific works (there is of course no guarantee that paintings were done in the year that they were exhibited) and piecing these together with known events in his family and working life and travels, it is possible to establish a very rough chronology of his artistic development. Even these though are comparatively few and far between, the family itself often being kept very much in the dark about when things were painted or at least completed! And complicating the matter still further is the fact that he kept no remotely systematic records of his works. So that, for example, exhibition catalogues of his first and very successful one-man shows have, quite simply disappeared. All this, taken together with the absence of any writings or statements about his work or his attitude towards it, amounts to an artistic self-effacement that is a statement in itself. This exhibition, and the catalogue can thus, even more than most amount only to a first sitting shot in pinning down the character of this elusive, complex and often surprising man and the nature of his achievement as both an artist and a teacher.

First, and most significant, are the limits and clues provided by Terry’s Welsh upbringing both at a social and cultural level as well as the personal and familial. Any conversation with Terry’s Welsh artist friends and colleagues almost inevitably brings up talk of the “Welsh inferiority complex” the sense, much more pervasive in the 40s and 50s when Terry was growing up in the Gwent mining valleys than now, that the English held the cultural upper ground as well as the economic. The stark implications of this were not simply that any artistic success could only ever be judged in terms of London recognition but that, however good you thought you might really be there was the nagging sense underneath that you could, by definition of upbringing and culture, not be that good. It affected different artists in different ways; some returned to Wales after a London education to work at essentially non-Welsh subject matter, others never returned either in their work or their lives. Terry lived and worked in London and, though he returned regularly once or twice a year to see his family and recharge his visual batteries so to speak, he painted his Welsh-inspired paintings from a distance.

His inferiority complex seeming to take the form, amongst others, of a very defensive attitude towards the business of exhibiting so that after an initial success at the Rowan Gallery in the early 60s fell away, he
appears to have displayed some reluctance to push himself through further exhibitions and shows. He certainly believed in his own work, but he was, perhaps, not always sure that anyone else did. Hence too, possibly, the refusal to title or date works or to keep records of works sold early in his career, and also the intense sense of artistic privacy by which he refused, effectively, to talk or discuss his own work with anyone.

The other significant and related element of his Welsh background, was as John Selway has so eloquently pointed out elsewhere in this catalogue, the pressure for gifted working class children in the 50s to "do well" and leave the Valleys. For Terry this would seem to have been a complicated unsettling matter, the need to go in order to develop as an artist constantly in conflict with the needs he always felt in his paintings to understand the particularly intense character of the family, the culture and the landscape in which he had been brought up. He had to go, in short, to have the freedom to search for what it was that had made him and that cannot have always been a very comforting realisation. In many ways the close-knit continuity of the social and family life he built for himself in and around his home, close to Clapham Common, and also in the regular and lengthy visits he made over many years with his family and friends to the same place in Portugal, can be seen as attempts (and in many ways as far as his painting was concerned, successful ones) to build a patch of personal territory as familiar and absorbing as the one he had known as a child in Garnffordi, a mining village close to Abersychan in North-east Gwent.

He had been born there in 1938, the oldest of two brothers. His father, Frank himself also being one of two brothers, both of them miners. A charming but cantankerous man, Frank Jones dominated a household in which Terry's mother, timid and houseproud to a fault, did little to stand up to him. His relations with both of them were always highly ambivalent as were theirs towards him. He felt himself to be similar to his father in character, hence perhaps their fights with each other, while his mother, whom he loved deeply, always seemed to prefer his younger brother, John. Neither of them in turn apparently had any sympathy or understanding of his passion to learn and to paint, so that much of his youth was spent in the more friendly surroundings of his Uncle Gus's warm and bustling household. It was always full of visitors and friendly cousins and run by Gus's Kentish-born wife, an altogether more relaxed and easy-going person.

It was, ultimately though the impetus provided by the prestigious West Monmouth School in nearby Pontypool to which he had won a scholarship that set Terry in the direction of the local art school at Newport, which he entered in 1954. Only eighteen miles down the road from his home he could not have gone to a better place, the head of Fine Art at the time, Tom Rathmell, being a quite remarkably dynamic teacher who, during the 50s and 60s sent a steady stream of young painters on to London art schools, notably the Royal College of Art where he himself had originally trained. Rathmell's own work came out of Sickert and the English Impressionist tradition to which was added an element of European Modernism in the form of Giacometti's drawing. It was his insistence on the constant practice of drawing that had the greatest and most lasting impact on Terry's practice as both an artist an teacher himself. The wide range of drawing techniques methods and subjects that Terry adopted throughout his career, from life to landscape and from the turbulent and dynamic to the calm and taut, had its foundation here. In the same way the sketch books with their numerous studies made in the life-room at Kingston while he took the drawing classes there, repaid his passionate and continuing belief in the relevance of drawing to new generations of students. He himself was to move on beyond Rathmell's insistence solely on observation to a more poetic (literally sometimes in the poems he wrote in his sketchbooks) and imaginative approach to the things he saw which engaged his inner as well as outward eye. But this fundamental discipline was never to desert him even when, in later life, he felt it had become burdensome.

At a more practical level Rathmell knew exactly what it took to get students into the Royal College of Art and Terry found himself going there in 1960 following another close student friend from Newport, John Selway. Together with Peter Nicholas who had gone to the College's Sculpture School from Cardiff in the same year they formed a close-knit Welsh group, well able to translate something of the feel and camaraderies of Valley life into the rather chilly competitiveness and sophistication of London. It was an extraordinary time to be going there, the moment when the flood of talent and energy emerging out of an increasingly well-educated working-class entering higher education, particularly art schools, reached its full force. That period at the College was too, a notoriously iconoclastic and significant one - David Hockney arrived from Bradford, as did Derek Boshier, R B Kitay and Peter Phillips, while in the Fashion Department Terry met and became friends with Zandra Rhodes. Though their painting and their lives took very different directions in their time there, he and Hockney were to form a lasting friendship.
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s far as his own work was concerned Terry was considerably less at odds with his tutors than the Pop-inspired group around Hockney, Kitaj and Boshier. He admired Carel Weight, the Professor of Painting there enormously and they stayed in contact throughout the rest of his life. Weight's influence can be felt too in his work, not so much in technique as in the way it suggested to Terry how the realistic depiction of the familiar and well-known - for Terry the streets of the Garn, Abersychan and Blaenavon and the mountainous, semi-industrialised landscape of Gwent as opposed to Weight's patch of suburban Wandsworth and Clapham - could provide dramatic stages for intense spiritual dramas.

Judging from the photographs, the paintings produced while at the College for his first show at the Rowan Gallery suggest a grey, sombre tonality and a clumsy fierce brushstroke that owe something at least to the realist Kitchen Sink school of painters of the late 50s such as Greaves, Middleditch and Coker. His was, as Hockney is reputed to have pointed out, essentially a national rather than international style and thus one unlikely to win him a wider stage for his work such as Hockney's was beginning to enjoy. Terry, to his credit stuck with what he knew and this, in the end was almost certainly a wiser path as far as his work was concerned. He had important things to say and resolve in his work and was not going to be deflected by such remarks. It could not have been easy; as if to reinforce Hockney's comments his second exhibition, a couple of years later, at the Rowan did not sell so well. The gallery, then rapidly becoming a standard-bearer of the new avant-garde Op and Hard Edge Abstract art in this country, promptly dropped him.

His work began gradually to change at this point to change at this point; a summer painting visit in 1962 to Portugal to stay with John Selway, who had won a Gulbenkian Travelling Scholarship, became a bi-annual event. Terry returned to the same house, Quinta da Parella near Setubal, with his family for over twenty years and long after John Selway himself had stopped going. Quite apart from embarking on a series of brilliantly coloured and expressively painted lyrical landscapes of the area, a more intense and brilliant colour started to filter into the Welsh scenes too, and often to very striking effect. It was not so much a question of colour relieving any suggestion of dourness as the way to introduce a wider emotional range into his work. Thus for example, in "I M in the Close" (a study of his Mother Ivy May, painted soon after she died in 1969) the brightly coloured stripy curtains that run down either side of the painting and frame the view through the window to where his mother can be seen standing in the drab green and grey landscape beyond, serve to heighten the sense of tension and isolation in the figure to an almost unbearable extent.

It is tempting (and with the lack of a more detailed chronology, impossible to prove) to suggest that it was in Portugal also that he first became intrigued by the possibilities of the doors, archways and windows of the architecture there and the contrast between darkness and light as a compositional device for framing and isolating figures and views. This was of enormous potential for his work as a whole.

Certainly, it becomes a leitmotif of many of his major compositions of the 60s and 70s such as "Abersychan High Street" where a window frames another desolate female face looking out and down on the landscape or as in "Looking down the Garn" providing a tense, oblique angle through which to capture the particular sense of the enclosed streetscape. It is to be found even more in the fantastic and imaginative enamels such as "Green Tunnels" where it takes on the form of arched mining chambers enclosing figures under the landscape or, in "Tales from the Mabinogi" where it is used to suggest tunnels, doorways and windowframes all within the same triptych form to powerful emotional effect. Strong colour as well as providing a framing device of great emotional effectiveness also allows him to introduce some intriguing and sometimes startling abstract effects that can both relieve and underline the emotional intensity of the subject. In "I M in the Close" and "The First Communion" the striped curtains provide distinct remembrances of Morris Louis's colour-stripe abstracts of the early 60s, while in others the solidly painted elements in powerful reds, yellow and blacks like the "View from the house, Quinta da Parella" or "Looking down the Garn" take on the qualities of Hard Edge abstraction from the same period. In one remarkable painting from the early 70s "Carrying the Cross" colour is a dense framing and enclosing structure combined with a turbulent , expressive treatment of the sky and landscape to produce an image in which both the emotional and the pictorial fuse with tremendous force. In this painting perhaps more than any other single work, Terry Jones takes on his painter's shoulders the whole spiritual burden of Garndiffaith's hopes and fears, anxieties and aspirations, returning here as artist to a town who only ever knew him, as he always intended they should, as Terry Jones, son of Frank Jones.
His working life both as artist and teacher, had to be made in London. Not simply for practical reasons, though that was where most of the teaching jobs were, but also, as was suggested earlier because it would have been emotionally impossible for him to have painted this kind of subject matter in this way living and working in Wales. He had in fact started teaching as soon as he left the Royal College, part-time at first at Canterbury, Kingston and Medway Colleges of Art and then, by 1967 full-time at Kingston. He had married his wife, Margaret while still at the College, in 1961, and set up home with her in Clapham, first in a flat and then, when they started a family, in the house in Broxash Road, close to the Common, where they lived (and he had his studio) right up to his death.

Teaching, one gets the impression, was never simply a necessary chore, but something done with enthusiasm, engagement and enjoyment. Several of the tributes from students and colleagues in this catalogue testify to the tremendous amount of laughter and fun involved in Terry's teaching, not least in the pub after the serious work was done. There was an underlying sense of commitment to teaching that derived from a need to repay, in some kind, the liberating impact that good teaching had had on his own artistic education. He would regularly sit down with the students into the life room and draw from the model himself, drawings of huge authority and power that are never simply academic exercises but imbued with a sense of the individuality and personality of the sitter.

This habit of drawing carried over into every aspect of his working practice and often as in the landscape drawings he made in Portugal in the 60s and 70s and in the USA in the 80s these became superb, finished works in themselves. Black and white drawings filled with colour and light, atmosphere and movement. The weight they carry in this exhibition is moreover no more than a reflection of the importance they occupy in his output as a whole.

Nor was teaching for Terry ever simply a matter of studio practice and leaving the student to workout how to survive otherwise. Drawing again upon his own youthful experiences he saw the necessity of looking beyond the studio for opportunities for his students. His innate ability, again frequently testified to, to get on immediately with anyone from the Vice-Chancellor to the cleaners and from anywhere, Portugal, or Wales, Clapham or the USA made him the ideal person to initiate and organise Kingston's European Educational Programmes, to act as Student Counsellor to its Department of Humanities in the 70s and to take on responsibility for its public art initiatives in the 80s.

He always remained equally experimental and risk-taking in his own artistic practice. Learning the process of enamelling in the late 60s and producing a ravishingly beautiful and very substantial sequence of experimental panels through the 70s. One of these won the 1972 Welsh Eisteddfod Art Prize earning the comment from the judge Victor Passmore that Terry Jones' painting is very beautiful, personal and original. During the 70s he also became a founder member of the Society of British Enamellers.

In the last ten years of his life the USA took over from Portugal, and to some extent even Wales itself, as the focus of his paintings' subject matter. He spent every other summer there, staying with the Hubanks' family in Maryland and travelling through the States. He built himself an alternative home, a "safe place", surrounded by people who looked up to him, admired and loved him and were devastated by his death. Much of this work is in collections there and thus unavailable for the show. Two paintings, however, a small study of "The Hubanks' Folly" in their garden and a much larger painting "American Picnic at the Hubanks" 1992 give a good idea of his later style. The latter work, though unfinished at the time of his death, is a rich and colourful work, and, as ever compositionally ambitious. The most finished elements of the painting, the landscape setting of the trees and foliage showing an exhilarating lightness of touch that owes much to the black and white drawings of the period. There are clear hints that, shortly before his death he was showing signs of wanting to move on stylistically and in ways that looked very promising too.

If this introductory essay has at times emphasised the serious and emotional side of Terry's art at the expense of the exuberant and extrovert it is only because that latter side can be found most particularly in his Portuguese landscape studies so joyously direct, and that like so much of the character of the man himself, to see them is to know them. In his modesty and self-deprecating way he would probably have said the same was true when looking at those quieter more inward landscapes of a Wales, a community and a family he never left but maybe, for once here, someone else should blow his trumpet for him.

Nicholas Usherwood
Chronology

1938  Born in Abersychan on 29 July, 1938
1949/54 West Monmouth School, Pontypool
1955/60 Newport College of Art
1959  Exhibited at Welsh Arts Council Industrial Wales Exhibition
1960/63 Royal College of Art, London
1961  Married Margaret, 28 October, 1961 and moved to Clapham Common
1961  Exhibited at RCA/Slade Joint Exhibition
1961/62 Taught at Working Man's College, London (one evening a week)
1961  Exhibited at Piccadilly Gallery, London
1961/72 Regularly contributed paintings to Pictures for Schools Travelling exhibitions
1962  First trip to Portugal to stay with John and Margaret Selway, who were renting Jack Oats cottage, just outside Setubal
1963  Exhibited at Young Contemporaries - London Group
1962/64 One man shows at the Rowan Gallery (As result of these many people came to his studio and bought work direct from him)
1963/67 Teaching part-time at Medway College of Art, Canterbury College of Art and Kingston College of Art
1966  "Invited Contemporary British Artists", Bradford City Gallery
1967  Became full-time lecturer at Kingston and bought house in Broxash Road where he lived until his death in 1992
1967/73 First year Course Leader at Kingston College of Art
1967  First visit to stay with Jack Oats at the Quinta da Parella, Portugal. The start of regular visits over the next 12 years
1968  One man show, Thames Gallery, Windsor
1971  Exhibited at Zayder Gallery, London. Sold a number of paintings privately as a result
1973/92 Appointed Senior Lecturer In Fine Art, Kingston Polytechnic. A position held until his death in 1992
1976  Prize winner at Royal National Eisteddfod of Wales. Enamel purchased by Welsh Arts Council
1977/82 Exhibited Royal Academy Summer Exhibitions
1979  Prize winner Spirit of London Exhibition
1980/91 Extended bi-annual working visits to USA
1982  Rye Gallery, Kent
1982  Exhibited Spirit of London Exhibition
1985  Exhibited in British Enamels Exhibition, Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead
1986  Exhibited at "L'Art de L'Email", 7th Biennale International Limoge, France
1987  Exhibited Electrum Gallery, London
1988  Exhibited RIBA, Gallery and Sculpture Court, London
1989  Exhibition of work relating to his study leave in the USA at Kingston Polytechnic
1992  Died 15 September, 1992

Paintings held in private collections:-
United Kingdom
France
Germany
New Zealand
Portugal
Spain
USA