

Remember that a painting – before being a war-horse, a nude or an anecdote of some sort – is essentially a flat surface covered with colours assembled in a certain order.

Maurice Denis, 1890

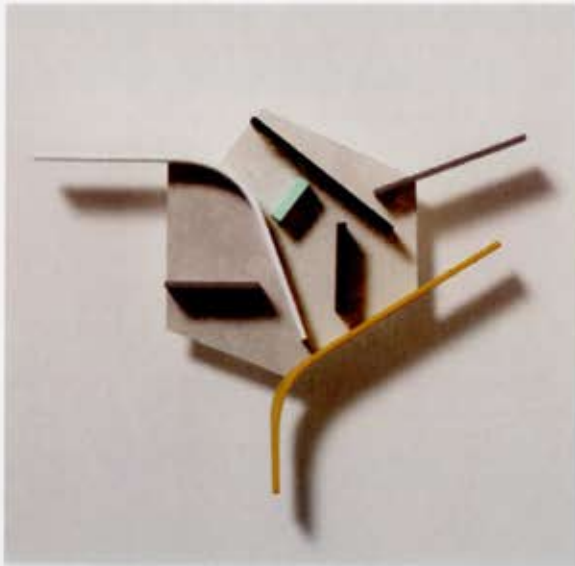
Although they look like abstract forms, and in part they are, they are also technically pieces of information that relate to specific places ... One form might be several square miles in Dumfriesshire and another might be a street corner in Inverness. Toby Paterson, 2009

Landscape Painting
acrylic on paper, 2003



Toby Paterson's work shuttles backwards and forwards between art and reality, abstract and concrete. His practice encompasses a range of artistic responses to experience: he takes photographs; assembles collages; makes paintings on paper or perspex; makes wall drawings, which may or may not have paintings hung on them; constructs reliefs in aluminium or perspex; and makes sculptures, some of which may be attached to buildings or, once or twice, function as buildings, or as sculptural or architectural follies. Within this range, his response may sometimes be a direct transcription of what he sees – a realist painting of a MiG-21 fighter plane mounted on a pole like a sculpture; of the dates on a war memorial; of a church built to look like a bunker – and sometimes an over-determined translation of what he sees, such as the abstracted *trompe l'oeil* wall drawings for the Synagogue de Delme in 2005 or for Tate St Ives in 2004. The St Ives works seem primarily to reference Paterson's perspex reliefs, themselves complex in their relation to reality, but they in fact have their source in someone else's abstraction of experience – a late Ben Nicholson relief, characteristically restrained in its rendering of the landscape that inspired both him and Toby Paterson.

This publication, produced to accompany a major solo exhibition at The Fruitmarket Gallery in Edinburgh, reproduces much of Paterson's work made over the last ten years. It moves from abstract to concrete, beginning with paintings that look like abstracts (though they may of course allude to a street corner in Inverness) and ending with assemblages that look like buildings, or parts of them. Paterson has long been known as an artist with an interest in modernist architecture and urbanism



left: Toby Paterson
installation view
Centre d'art Contemporain
La Synagogue de Delme, 2005

above: *Hypothetical
Relief (Krakow)*
acrylic on perspex, 2009

as social and political forces, and both the interview between him and Ewan Imrie at the centre of the book and the essay by Simon Sadler towards the end address his work within this context. Before it is about this, however (before, as Denis might say, it is that certain street corner), a work of Paterson's is a surface covered with colours assembled in a certain order, and it is looking at his practice primarily in the context of painting that interests me here.

Paterson's engagement with the built environment is embedded in his art making, and he has an impressive knowledge of and sympathy with post-war modernist architecture and urban planning. Yet he himself has repeatedly made the point that the subject of his work is not architecture. Rather, architecture provides him with a starting point for the urban explorations with which his work begins, with a set of compass points around which to plot time spent in a city. His process usually involves a research trip, during which he will take hundreds and hundreds of photographs. These photographs mediate his immediate response, the speed of documenting his looking matching the speed of the looking process itself, and, back home, they trigger subsequent artistic production. Some of this pulls at the tension Paterson senses between photography and painting, the feeling precisely that painting can never compete with photography in terms of speed. The diptych *A Miniature (Red and White Pavilion)*, 2009 (pp.80–81), for example, pits a selection of photographs of a dilapidated small building against a sequence of idealised painted abstractions of it – experience experienced twice, once quickly in the street, once more slowly in the studio. Recently, Paterson has also been making collages, using his photographs as literal building blocks for works, arranging them on a painted ground, pulling buildings seen out in the world back into the world he paints for himself. Talking about them as 'mind maps of experience', he calls them *Bricolages*, a word with its roots in a French word for pottering about making something out of something else, bringing idiosyncratic order to a diverse range of available things.

Similarly engaged with *bricolage*, though not called that, are the perspex reliefs which, in a sense, occupy the other end of the Paterson range of responses to a research trip. Entirely abstract, these reliefs (known to the artist as 'hypothetical reliefs') are made some time after he returns from his travels. Each one is, again in his words, 'a subjective hypothesis made in response to a city – a condensation of forms and colours'. They aren't, then, building plans or models for a building, though they bear more than a passing resemblance to both. They are subjective, not objective in their relationship to a city.

In between these two extremes lie the paintings, which cannot be made until a source in the real world has been visited, viewed and photographed. This ensures a 'palpable reality' which remains important even in the most abstracted of surfaces. The occasional 'straight' representations are made as a refuge from the onslaught of pure planes of colour involved in the more abstracted work. Paterson makes the representational works as 'punctuation points', seeing them as occupying a still point in the vortex of his artistic production – made because he enjoys making them, enjoys seeing if he can. More usually, there is at least a degree of stylisation if not abstraction involved. In *Suburban Church*, 2003 (p.106), Paterson simplifies the front elevation of a Gillespie Kidd & Coia church in Duntocher to highlight the curving walls which give it its distinctive character. In *Pavilion*, 2005 (p.124, on left), he clarifies the planes, voids and staircases of a building in Hamburg, giving it a formal resonance possibly less easily discernible in its urban context.

The paintings testify to a response to architecture that is formal as well as socio-political or cultural, a process that is about 'finding abstraction within a quotidian experience'. Travelling from Belgrade to The Hague immediately after the death, in the Hague, of former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milošević, Paterson realised he was mapping his journey in yellow planes, making visual connections between places linked in reality only by his own travel itinerary and the coincidence of the location of Milošević's war crimes trial. His paintings make manifest the accidental relationship, smoothing it over, giving it an incongruous clarity – the zig-zagging yellow of *Interchange Underpass*, 2007 (p.89), a subterranean junction in Belgrade, picks up the yellow of *Bibliotheek*, 2007 (p.89), and is echoed again in the yellow in *Belgrade Façade*, 2007 (p.131, on right).

The University Mega-Structure (p.37) of the same year is a painting of an impossible structure, a painterly re-enactment of the principal architectural features of the 1960s buildings of London's South Bank Centre. In terms of its source material, it is a direct transcription of a collage used to illustrate the 1970s architectural classic, Ivor De Wolfe's wryly circular critique *Civilia: the end of sub-urban man*. The book is a touchstone for architectural enthusiasts (as Paterson notes, the author Hubert de Cronin Hastings transposed letters in his pseudonym Ivor De Wolfe to become 'de Wofle' – a hint at the tongue-in-cheek nature of much of the bombast in the book).

The University Mega-Structure is a hymn to the complex, abstract beauty of the buildings described in *Civilia*. But, as with much of Paterson's work, it is as much art about art as it is art about architecture. If *Civilia* is a manual for

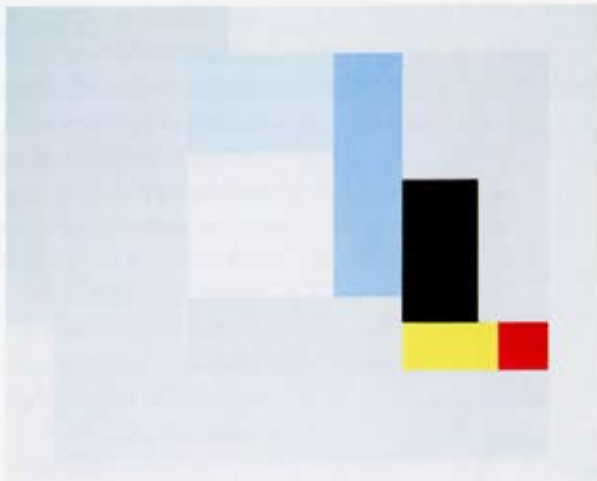
VAGUE SPACE
Installation view
Sutton Lane
London, 2007

Mary Martin
Black Relief 1957
painted wood, board
and plastic, c.1966



enthusiasts of 1960s brutalism, and the planes of this particular painting signal first and foremost the Hayward Gallery for those who love it, they also occupy and structure the space of the painting with an orderly syncopation reminiscent of post-war English constructivism. Paterson's well-documented enthusiasm for art of this period embraces the paintings, painted reliefs and constructions of Ben Nicholson, Mary Martin

and Anthony Hill, as well as the perhaps more obviously spatial thinking of Victor Pasmore. If Paterson's 2001 wall painting *Apollo* (pp.18-19), is a tentative homage to Pasmore's ill-fated pavilion design for the new town of Peterlee, his *Black Madonna, White Anna #1*, 2007 (p.32), though its gridded elements are a direct reference to the pre-cast tile panels used in the construction of the buildings which give the painting both its name and its primary forms, combines paint and perspex in a tightly-ordered geometry that owes much to the painted wood and perspex reliefs of Mary Martin. The planes advance and recede in relation to the picture surface much as Martin's do, creating the illusion of space only to deny it again, the picture's structure always circling back on itself.



Ben Nicholson, *June 1937*
(*painting*), oil on canvas, 1937

Paterson paints his world in an ordered, restricted palette that also harks back to an earlier era in painting. His cool blues, pinks and earthy browns, punctuated by occasional reds and yellows, are reminiscent of Ben Nicholson, and Nicholson and Paterson make similar use of colour's ability to make planes seem to move around with respect to the picture surface. Though Nicholson is perhaps now best known for his white reliefs, a body of work that, together with Mary Martin's white reliefs, seem often to haunt the development of Paterson's practice, it is Nicholson's *June 1937* (*painting*), 1937,

that seems to me to speak most clearly to it. The way in which Nicholson uses abstract planes of colour as an equivalent for experience (the casual brackets in the title seem to suggest that a painting is only one of the ways that June 1937 might have been represented); the way in which his planes suggest spatial depth; the way he softens the abstraction of the surface by leaving visible the brushstrokes that have generated it, all recall Paterson's method of working. Two works of Paterson's seem particularly to reference this painting – *Organic Relief*, 2004 (p.27), in which similar colours, similarly applied (Paterson's brushstrokes in the painting of this wooden relief are as visible as Nicholson's) articulate real, rather than illusory, planes in space – and *Cluster Relief I*, 2009, a cooler spatial transcription of the essence of Nicholson's abstraction.

In the first installation of *Cluster Relief I* at The Modern Institute in Glasgow in 2009 (p.27), the brushstrokes that might perhaps have marked the surface of the relief migrated to the wall on which it was shown. Paterson often uses painting to lay claim to space – from the broad brush approach of this installation to the painted grounds of the *Bricolage* collages. In the tradition of several of his favourite painters (Pasmore and Nicholson both painted murals for the Festival of Britain), he likes to paint on a grand as well as a small scale, setting up a rhythm between the two. The relationship of large to small in his work is at least as complex as that of abstract to concrete, schematic to minutely detailed. Some paintings start life on a wall before moving onto perspex or paper – *Apollo* was first a wall painting in Dundee Contemporary Arts, where its stylised architectural severity was offset by some sensuous

Organic Relief
acrylic on wood, 2004

below: *Cluster Relief I*
acrylic on aluminium, 2009



biomorphic shapes reminiscent of a Joan Miró painting, but which are a conflation of a Kim Hiorthøy record cover and Pasmore's sketched plan for the Sunny Blunts area of Peterlee. Surviving as a small painting on perspex, the image has retained the richness of its original ground, but its straight lines go unchallenged. Similarly, the painting *Temporary Structure 1*, 2007 (p.29), which refers to a large wall painting *Fun Palace* (pp.50–51), which was made for the CCA Wattis in San Francisco in 2006. The small painting is a detail of the large wall painting, almost a ghost, a small part which manages, metonymically, to summon the whole, itself a celebration of architect Cedric Price's *Fun Palace* from the 1960s, an unrealised building designed to be continuously reconfigured.

Continuous reconfiguration is perhaps a useful idea through which to approach Paterson's work and the shifting relationships it takes up with respect both to itself and the world it occupies and in some ways seeks to represent. For the exhibition 'After the Rain' at the Barbican's Curve Gallery in 2005, Paterson made a group of paintings inspired by research trips

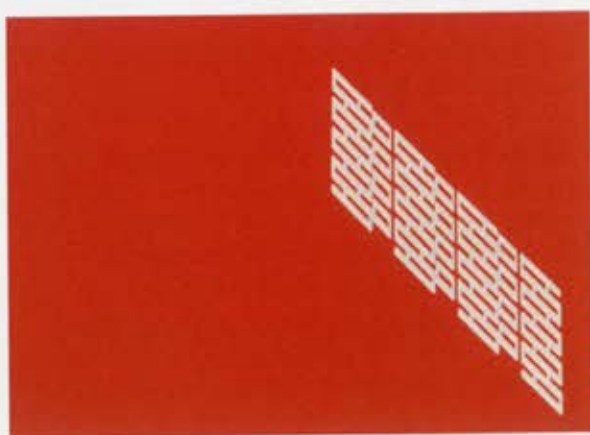
to Rotterdam, Hamburg and Coventry, all cities which had been substantially rebuilt following heavy bombing in the Second World War. The majority of paintings in the exhibition were stylised, abstracted representations of individual buildings – the Civic Centre in Coventry, a brutalist church in Hamburg. The gallery itself was transformed by an enormous wall painting, which wrapped the paintings (some on the walls, some displayed in freestanding structures in the centre of the space) in shape and colour, taking them further from their point of origin, further into the world of the artist. *Brutalist Church*, 2005 (p.95), a painting on perspex, was displayed on the wall, the black ground of the painted wall becoming the ground of the painting, while a large white abstract form edged in from the right. Almost indelibly attached to the painting by virtue of the installation photography of it, the abstract shapes and colours affect the painting while floating free from it, much in the way that shapes and colours from stained glass windows inflect the interior spaces of a church while remaining formally detached (it was the stained glass in the church in Hamburg that initially drew Paterson to it). The exhibition installation, with its origins in these three post-war cities, seems on the one hand to be rooted in architectural and historical reality, yet its painterly imperatives are hinted at in the title, which is drawn from Max Ernst's *Europe After the Rain* of 1940–42, a painting of an apocalyptic, post-war landscape. Ernst's painting has a kind of accidental migration of coloured forms at its heart – it was made using decalomania, a surrealist technique in which paint is pressed onto the canvas using glass, resulting in fantastical areas of colour from which the composition of the painting may be extrapolated.

And Paterson's work is as involved with the different ways of making marks which speak about the world as it is with the different forms through which the world is structured. Just as some of the most rigorously abstract of Ellsworth Kelly's paintings turn out to have their origins in beautiful pencil drawings of architectural detailing, so Paterson experiences and represents the world in terms of what he can do with it back in the studio. He has said that he would not dream of making an exhibition without visiting the city in which it is to be held, yet then insists that the resulting images will be paintings made 'for' that city, not necessarily 'of' it. Most recently, he has been making muted, near monochrome pale reliefs. Unusually, these do not have their origins in any particular city, but are related, like the *trompe l'oeil* wall drawings in Delme and at Tate St Ives, to his hypothetical reliefs, as well as to the reliefs of Nicholson and Mary Martin. They are, Paterson suggests, dislocated from reality while being the result of 'lots of time spent in cities they could reasonably be a plan for'. They are about the making of marks, about how form, line and tone can structure a space and evoke the atmosphere of a place. They have impressively abstract-sounding titles that actually relate to 1960s and 1970s system building techniques. Thus *Bison*, 2009 (p.31) and *Tracoba*, both from 2009, beautiful and seemingly purely abstract painted reliefs, take their titles from profoundly unbeautiful and problematic construction methods used on much social housing, the kind thrown up too fast in Glasgow's Gorbals after the Second World War. Complex in their relationship to reality, rich in their architectural and art historical references, these reliefs, as so much of Paterson's work, set their own terms.

Art after Keynesianism

The flotilla that is Toby Paterson's pastoral, learned, retrospective art is seemingly adrift between several times and places, belonging to the 1950s, 1990s and the early twenty-first century alike. To follow it is to watch the currents of modernism, which is in turn a way of charting the imaginary of political economy. 'I believe that artists of my generation who grew up during, and knew nothing other than, Thatcherism are fascinated by the meaning inherent in a socialist post-war modernism, cast adrift in a society that has pronounced it a failure', Paterson (born 1974) told Serbian readers in 2007.

We Fall into Patterns Quickly
silkscreen print, 2002



'There seem to be a great many lessons still to be learned from what happened during those two and a half decades, particularly on the issue of how *not* to build cities.'¹ Rather than seek clarification from the artist, let us instead consider the ambiguities in Paterson's statement as to what exactly is 'cast adrift' – a generation, modernism, socialism, and the critical difficulty of deciding whether modernism succeeded or failed.

The initial moment of Paterson's art was the British recovery of modernism broadly reconceived in the later 1990s, not only in art but in culture at large. Ikea was pushing Laura Ashley out of the UK's living rooms, and the skateboarder replaced John Major's infamous cycling spinster as the icon of UK street culture. The modernist mini-renaissance of the 1990s drew heavily on the British 1960s – one thinks of the Britpop of mid-decade, of the aegis of *Cool Britannia* optimism,² of elements of the Young British Artists' 'Sensation' exhibition of 1997, of the launch of *Wallpaper** magazine in 1996, of the inflatable-housed 'powerhouse::uk' design exhibition of 1998 (its title too modern to tarry with uppercase letters, too electronic for conventional punctuation), and of the installation in 1995 of the Labour Party in the podium of a renovated landmark of the British 1960s, London's high-rise Millbank Tower (designed by Ronald Ward in 1960–63). The Labour Party was itself rebranded as more 'modern', en route to its landslide victory of 1997 as 'New Labour'.

Paterson enjoys wryly prefixing his titles with the word 'New', to the effect, of course, of announcing that the 'new' of our times is something that is not really new.³ After the tsunami of postmodernism in the 1970s and

1980s, nothing could be new in the sense that things had been in the heroic phase of European modernism between the two World Wars, with its New Objectivity, New Housing, New Typography and (in Frederick Etchells' translation of Le Corbusier's 1923 title, *Vers une architecture*) New Architecture. Certainly not New Labour which, pursuant of an obsequious rapprochement with the neos of neoliberalism and neoconservatism, was treacherous to the true modernity of the old Labour Party's Bevanite values of 1945–51. By and large the late-1990s appropriations of the modern as style, brand, design and subculture put it very far from the Welfare State-era Britain in which modernism had found such an extraordinary incubator, from the election of the first Labour Government in 1945 to the termination of large-scale modernist public housing projects in the early 1970s. Despite its stylistic taste for the modern, *Wallpaper** magazine was a postmodern and antipathetical reaction to political modernism, for example. The difficulty of merging modernism into a hybrid of disposable styles and identity-based culture had become lamentably apparent by the time the Millennium Dome opened to general public scepticism in 2000.

But a radical, critical nostalgia for the social values of modernism lurked among its left-leaning connoisseurs.⁴ A youthful intelligentsia was carried by skateboards and psychogeographic drifts back to the housing estates built by the previous two generations, and back to the Frankfurt School and Situationist Marxisms which postmodern theory in the 1980s and 1990s had earlier recuperated. The long 1990s – from the late 1980s to the early 2000s – was an era in which the relationship between politics, modernity, the urban, everyday life

and their associated 'spectacles' and 'fissures' was made programmatic in art and critical theory. Sometimes interest in the programme became itself a badge of subcultural identity politics based around inscrutable if amusing little magazines; elsewhere it reached a wider audience, as in the books by Iain Sinclair (*Lights Out for the Territory* appeared in 1997) or the mesmerising films of Patrick Keiller (*London* (1994) and *Robinson in Space* (1997)).

Paterson's art moves a step beyond the melancholia, anger and irony of the 1990s. Compared even to the best creative minds engaged with post-war and late modern built and political landscapes, a figure like Paterson – born in the year of the first Miners' Strike and reaching maturity after Margaret Thatcher had left office – surveys the recent past unbridled by a direct or personal sense of the tragedy of modernism's denouement. He embarked on his career decades later than better-known international figures variously engaged with the built modernist legacy, like Dan Graham, Rem Koolhaas or Martha Rosler. Paterson has to reverse engineer the environments he observes, at home and abroad, breaking down their syntax in order to understand them as the children, sometimes prodigal, sometimes devoted, of the Bauhaus and of Enlightenment heritage generally.

Here is one experience of being 'cast adrift' during the long politico-economic restructuring from John Maynard Keynes to Milton Friedman, for a generation unable to partake in the revolutionary zeal of either Keynes or Friedman. 'I had to find a system of working', Paterson told Graham Parker in 2004, summoning the classic post-industrial existence: 'it was that or go and

work in a call centre'.⁵ The UK was the first country to experience the Industrial Revolution, and the first, perhaps, to experience the transition from an industrial to a 'post-industrial' economy. Paterson's art is part of that experience, and it reconsiders a modernist aesthetic that became too politically laden a generation earlier amid the debate about class, council housing and community that were theatrically commandeered by figures like Tom Wolfe, Paul Johnson and Prince Charles. (The less histrionic tone of architectural commentary today is represented by Alain de Botton, the popular philosopher who belongs to the same generation as Paterson, and is puzzling out similar problems, with a similar lightness of touch, about the relationship between art, life, morality: 'we should be kind enough not to blame buildings for our own failure to honour the advice they can only ever subtly proffer,' he suggests to readers of his 2006 bestseller *The Architecture of Happiness*.)⁶

Modernism as potential

Paterson distances his work from instrumental political intent, a notably respectful observer of the countries in which he has travelled and exhibited, including Poland, The Netherlands and Serbia. Critique is succeeded by inquiry into the fate of the modern and its future potential. His work has evolved from cabinets of curiosities to studies for projects-to-come. A comparison with the art of Langlands & Bell reveals a similar trajectory, from their Foucauldian studies (like the 1994 shallow relief depicting the ghostly plan of *Millbank Penitentiary*) to their steel and glass public infrastructure at Paddington Basin Bridge (with Atelier One engineers

from 2002). A decade ago, Paterson's work was a constructivism in reverse, from the built environment back to the maquette. Now it is more a constructivism redux, the built environment re-emerging from the maquette with a sense of quiet commitment less austere than the art of Langlands & Bell. Paterson's art is almost workaday, of the place, easy to miss, like many of the places and objects he has archived.

His artistic point of departure, as many writers have noted,⁷ is British constructivist and constructionist art and architecture from the 1930s to the 1950s (Ben Nicholson, Leslie Martin and other contributors to the 1930s journal *Circle*; Berthold Lubetkin and Tecton; Kenneth Martin and Mary Martin; Victor Pasmore and Anthony Hill; Ernó Goldfinger, Denys Lasdun, Jack Lynn, and Ivor Smith; and so forth) in which Soviet work from the 1920s was developed formally and, with the institutionalisation of the Welfare State politically, reached a crescendo with public housing. Paterson's murals and sculptures do not and cannot have British constructivism's comprehensive ambition of social engineering, let alone that of Soviet constructivism. But in a way this makes Paterson's pieces all the more poignant, because even though the ideological certainties underwriting the constructivist art of the 1920s–60s are gone, Paterson doesn't revert to irony, nor to the exaggerated instability of constructivist styles in architecture since the 1980s (such as deconstructivism). Paterson shifts emphasis from a critical fragmentation to a productive relationship appropriate to his schooling within cities, those laboratories of form and space in relationship – in the Glasgow of Basil Spence's Hutchesontown/Gorbals

and in Chicago, where modernity has been the perennial urban motor and where modernism itself sometimes comes good.

Modernism's promise is scaled back, as Paterson said of his own murals at Glasgow Caledonian University's Saltire Centre in 2005, to one of 'potential'.⁹ Large-scale modernist public housing has yet to return, and may never, but Paterson is finding collaborations within architectural settings that invoke an appropriate humanist spirit in education, government and public broadcasting. The Building Design Partnership – architect of the Saltire Centre – has its roots in Walter Gropius's Bauhaus teamwork ethos, while Paterson's 2003 mural for the Fraser Noble Building at the University of Aberdeen (pp.58–59) benefits from a setting with period qualities and a programme of renovation. At the New Home Office building on Marsham Street, London, Paterson's 2005 murals (pp.132–33) are inserted into the work of a seemingly repentant postmodernist, as architect Terry Farrell switches from his language of historicist whimsy to a grammar citing the late Le Corbusier of Farrell's student years. With *Poised Array* of 2007 (pp.134–35), which acts as an envoy for David Chipperfield's fine but severe BBC Scotland Headquarters at Pacific Quay in Glasgow, Paterson finds a patron in that other defender of the British collective – the BBC. Paterson counters any combative and transgressive posturing in contemporary art. A different sort of dialectic operates, as Paterson's opaque and irregular Pantone planes provide the necessary counterpoint to the gridded grey transparency of Chipperfield's building. Sculpture and building point in the same direction, the one advancing like heraldic flags in front of the lightweight mullions of the other.

The broadcaster, architect and artist here unite against the rote reaction of putative 'taxpayer' (petit bourgeois) protest against public art and investment into the public sphere.⁹ If the pseudo-modern Millennium Dome epitomised a focus-group-driven attempt to fold British identity back into a neo-liberal, faux-spiritual globalisation, the more authentically modern BBC Scotland assemblage holds paternalistically steady, a Reithian vision of public service convening its ever more plural constituencies – here, Scottish regions and micro-regions, colourfully abstracted, tumble out of the trim, neutral glass and steel crate of the building. Modernism, having waited patiently, steps forward to offer its services again, sound and unremarkable, at the moment that the postmodern transpires in every respect, from art to political economy, to have sold the world a mostly disappointing alternative.

The stance seems anodyne until read against the vacillating world view offered by much contemporary design. The very painstakingness of Paterson's hand-painted, CAD-like renderings – reprises of Duchamp's paintings on glass – is a riposte to the blithe, dropdown-menu-driven processes of contemporary design. Paterson's paintings are testimonials to the importance of design, 'a reminder on many levels of the beauty of our craft', conceded Glasgow architect Henry McKeown to *The Architects' Journal* in 2003.¹⁰ Paterson has indeed started to think like an architect: his frustration at the constraints imposed upon his artistic vision by project management makes his sculpture at Pacific Quay all the more architectural, since architecture is an art always formed within such economic, political and material parameters (Chipperfield meanwhile reportedly had to

cede some control of the building's design to Keppie Architects).¹¹ Faced with what he regards as the failed 2001 remodelling of the Glasgow Centre for Contemporary Arts, Paterson returned in 2003 to re-work the spaces as though he were an architect, imposing a temporary 'New Façade'.¹²

Form versus association

Paterson is hardly working alone at the intersection of art and architecture. It was of critical importance to modernism from constructivism to minimalism (recall the ambiguous status of Mies van der Rohe's 1928–29 Barcelona Pavilion or Donald Judd's Marfa, Texas environments of the 1960s as both architecture and sculpture, or the direct engagements with architecture affected by Richard Serra, Gordon Matta-Clark and Dan Graham). London has recently hosted pavilion buildings bestriding art and architecture at the Serpentine Gallery and through the Portavilion project (to which Paterson has contributed). Installations by 2008 Turner Prize nominee Goshka Macuga revisited the celebrated collaboration between Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich during the 1920–30s, and of course Paterson directly recalls the collaboration between artists and architects within post-war British modernism. As the juxtaposition of his BBC Scotland installation with David Chipperfield's architecture illustrates, Paterson's practice runs in parallel with a modest resurgence of British modern architecture-as-art that includes the buildings of Tony Fretton, Caruso St. John, David Adjaye and Will Alsop. Paterson's art is less a shot across the bows of architecture than an offer to renew a productive, two-way relationship with it, even where (as was the case

with Chipperfield) he finds contemporary architecture a little too rationalist (surrealism was a close companion to British modernism in the decade or two after the Second World War). However, of all the artistic and architectural practices just listed in this paragraph – which largely draw their effect from materiality, perception, psychology, and juxtaposition in order to change the space of the here-and-now – we might suggest that Paterson's practice is the most *historical*, in the full sense of that word. It is not nostalgic, but is instead asking after the fate of the manifold European modernist project of c.1920–70.

There are different sorts of historical recovery. One is an archival reconstruction of 'what actually happened', and Paterson certainly knows his way around history in this sense. But his preferred use of history is to maintain interest in an unfinished project for the sake, we might wonder, of a 'natural history' of architecture, in which the holotypes of various species of form are encased in glass, preserved in the interests of architectural 'biodiversity'. Paterson maintains buildings of the past in a state of suspension, abstracted, literally reduced and clarified. This is quite unlike the creative process of modernism's late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth century pioneers, who found form as if from nothing. It is more akin to the Renaissance interest in antiquity, or to the late-nineteenth-century interest in the Renaissance – imagining cities and their values reconstructed from fragments. It may seem absurd to draw comparisons between Classical and Renaissance civilisation and the Welfare State, but the Welfare State was an unusual moment not only in the history of architecture, but also in the history of socialism and the European nation state. One suspects that a reason

for Paterson's focus on post-war architecture – especially in its most problematic moments – was its passionate pursuit of an organic relationship between art, political economy and everyday life shared with more fêted conjunctions of 'civilisation'. The image of the German inter-war mass housing that inspired British housing after the Second World War was one of intense community and mission, of shared entrance ways, staircases and recreational areas. Whereas the default mode of contemporary art and art history is to critique the twentieth century's failed utopias, Paterson imagines the architecture of the Welfare State at its inception, before the dream drifted to instrumentalism, to economy, to cynicism, and eventually the turn (under Thatcher) from a non-market utopia to a market utopia.

Since its ambitions were never completed, modernist British architecture has always been both real and imagined, each built piece and each plan freighted with a larger imaginary whole. 'For an older generation of architects', *The New York Times* critic Nicolai Ouroussoff wrote recently of the brutalist architecture which is one of Paterson's fascinations, 'these buildings embody the absolute nadir of the welfare state. Destroying them would be an act of mercy. But for younger architects the aggressive concrete forms that gave the movement its name are a welcome antidote to the saccharine Disney-inspired structures of today.'¹³ Paterson's quixotic extrapolation from found objects of an existential condition is itself a period method from vanguard UK modernism in the 1950s and 1960s; as Reyner Banham wrote in 1955, 'what moves a New Brutalist is the thing itself, in its totality, with all its overtones of human association.'¹⁴

So even when Paterson is most determined to work in a mode of pure formalism, as we find him doing with the *Powder Blue Orthogonal Pavilion* (his 2008 work for the Portavilion project in Potters Fields Park, Southwark), history is inevitably invoked. The pavilion's louvres command positive and negative space, light and dark, foreground and background in the most abstract way that they can muster, yet memories of the historic exercises in the Bauhaus *Vorkurs*, even of California's 1940–50s Case Study Houses, drift through. The pure, perceptual autonomy of *Gestalt* is defeated by the luggage of art history. As Sam Gathercole has noted, while the constructivist work of Anthony Hill in the 1950s could claim to be non-mimetic (and therefore not even abstract, in the sense of abstracting *from* anything), Paterson is always abstracting from pre-conceived forms (including those discovered by Anthony Hill) and, in those cases where Paterson paints particular buildings, the effect is unashamedly mimetic.¹⁵ This disrupts the flow of historical time: constructivist art (even in Britain, where constructivism looked back to and adapted earlier constructivist and suprematist art) rode the forward advance of space-time. If Paterson does not quite reverse that flow, by his own admission he works within the 'gaps' of space-time in the hope of discovering how the world is assembled.

We could compare Paterson's method to the best uses of sampling in hip-hop music. 'The basic reason that I am so interested in architecture is because it can be broken down into constituent parts that do interesting things visually and formally,' Paterson acknowledges.¹⁶ Alongside revered classics, sampling allows forgotten and erstwhile snubbed LPs (and buildings) to accrue

a certain cachet, as the producer and listener edge towards an increasing reverence for the things sampled and for the recent history that made them. Paterson is interested in both canonical and degraded buildings (Gillespie Kidd & Coia's 1966 landmark St. Peter's Seminary at Cardross, which Paterson has painted intact, is actually in ruins). His *New Townscape* murals at the new Home Office allow us to peek inside Paterson's head at the lowbrow and noble sources being remixed within: 'It was a sort of reference to Richard Seifert at one end of the creative spectrum with a sideways nod at Mary Martin and Berthold Lubetkin at the other', blended into 'other elements related to some less well-known, scarcely acknowledged, welfare-state architecture of the 1950s and 1960s.' Still, Paterson is always a connoisseur in his choices, mostly preferring the earnest, Corbusian end of post-war modernism to the products of dingbat 1960s property development or the avant-garde burlesque of groups like Archigram.

One sees this quality of assemblage most fully in Paterson's exhibition installations. Each installation is a multiform work of modernist art, more than a sum of its parts, and each has its own mood and theme. Hence Paterson prefers his installations to be housed in 'neutral' spaces that do not overwhelm the work. The installations combine paintings and sculptures, which are themselves 'present' in the space, with elements such as maquettes that allow other places, spaces and objects to be present 'virtually'. These are in turn folded into an architectural space articulated through the arrangement of open framework partitions. Paterson's installations should be compared, then, to modernist exhibitions ranging from Frederick Kiesler's 1925 *La Cité dans*

l'Espace and Le Corbusier's 1937 *Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux*, to the 1951 Festival of Britain, and innumerable other exhibitions employing open frameworks and unexpected juxtapositions that allow objects to float in space.

The associative effect is not only formal, but meaningful, in so far as it accesses different strata of modernism – half-remembered and half-forgotten objects, exhibitions, manifestos, and architectural assemblies. These are drawn from across time and across political alliances, colliding the avant garde and housing projects and property booms. The comparisons evoked are not unproblematic, as the artist acknowledges, his 2003 exhibition at the CCA drawing upon Attlee's socialist 1951 Festival of Britain on the one hand, and on the other, the communist 1950–72 Silesian Culture and Recreation Park near Chorzów and Katowice, Poland: one is democratic, the other authoritarian. In 2005 Paterson's 'After the Rain' installation at the Barbican suggested disturbing comparisons between modernisms born of horror and destruction in Rotterdam, Hamburg, Dresden, Coventry, and the area of east central London from which the Barbican rose.

The effect of Paterson's work is in part derived (to again return to the 1990s, this time for a staple of British art theory exemplified by Rachel Whiteread's *House* of 1993) from the 'presence of absence'. Paterson's use of this effect isn't to induce poststructuralist or surrealist melancholy, however. This time the absence made present is of nothing short of a compassionate political economy through which, for instance, housing is provided equitably. Watching the partial demolition

of the 1960s homes in Den Haag Zuidwest that furnished inspiration for his 2007 exhibition 'Generosity' at the Stroom den Haag in The Hague, Paterson remarked: 'They were not dysfunctional in and of themselves, they had simply acquired the label of failure by association', noting 'the top down provision and then arbitrary wholesale taking away of space.'¹⁷ The arrangement of the grilles in 'Generosity' alludes to a split in The Hague's social space between marginalised housing and the central Ministry of Finance. Without polemic, the installation ponders the retreat of collective social projects and the attention to mass habitat once paid by the state. A similar but still more subtle memorandum is offered to the Home Office in London by Paterson's *New Townscape* murals. And as well as muse upon such things, Paterson's collaborations such as the Royston Road Park Project (with Loci Design landscape architects, 2001) suggest a praxis accompanying the art, with art placed at the service of skateboarders in a deprived area of Glasgow.

Like modernism, Paterson's range of concerns is international, and is most deeply British when it draws upon the picturesque, the eighteenth-century aesthetic tradition concertedly celebrated by the influential *Architectural Review* from December 1949 on. It was adapted by figures like Gordon Cullen to the modern Townscape movement which is alluded to in the title of Paterson's Home Office murals. While the individual buildings of the 1951 Festival of Britain contained delights enough, it was the experience of moving between them that was the Festival's major architectural achievement. To experience Townscape one had to move. In the 1950s and 1960s formula,

movement was presumed to take place on foot; in the 1980s and 1990s the experience of a moving cityscape was rediscovered by skateboarders, with the additional haptic input obtained through the board. The shifting visual relationships afforded by the picturesque were opposed to the symmetrical fixity of the classical eye, inviting the observer's progress through the assemblage. Paterson's Barbican installation even takes the viewer round a curve in the grand manner of John Nash's Regent Street Quadrant of 1837.

And as with Regency planning, the empirical inclusiveness afforded by the picturesque is more than visual: it invites the variegation of everyday life, space, and politics. It is, in other words, an invitation back to a pastoral metropolitan experience. 'My approach has been to introduce another 'image' into the already rich, if linear, narrative of the riverside walk rather than try to develop a narrative or singular reading within the structure itself', Paterson explains of the *Powder Blue Orthogonal Pavilion* in terms redolent of picturesque architecture from the Festival of Britain to 'traditional park architecture, such as bandstands, kiosks etc.' 'I consider,' he concludes, 'the pavilion to be a location in which any passer-by may pause in the sun or in the shade, or alternatively shelter temporarily from the rain, and consider the variety inherent in their space.'¹⁸ Paterson's art is a modernist architectural pleasure park from which to contemplate, in an ultimately serious and sustained way (quite unlike the experience furnished by a conventional postmodern theme park), our social and aesthetic spaces 'cast adrift'.