

Gleams and Echoes: Works from the British Council Collection in Dialogue with Hong Kong Young Voices

Jack Smith

Visual Experience 1

1965

Oil on canvas

British Council Collection

Visual Experience 1 (1965), known for its “diagrams of experience or sensation,” is a vibrant painting that breaks from Smith’s realist roots. Its bold colours and hieroglyphic forms evoke rhythm and movement, transforming sensation into visual language.

Jack Smith (1928-2011) was born in Sheffield in Yorkshire and studied at Sheffield School of Art. He did national service with the Royal Air Force before attending St Martin's School of Art in London. In 1949 he began a series of paintings based on his memories of the west coast of Scotland where he based whilst in the RAF. At the Royal College of Art, from 1950 to 1953, he began to paint pictures of kitchens and children: compositions based on interiors and domestic life which perhaps gave the name to the Kitchen Sink School of which he was a prominent member. In the 1960s Smith made a decisive move away from his more sombre compositions towards paintings infused with light. Lyrical abstract works followed, together with 'written pictures' which have both hieroglyphic and musical content, an approach akin to that of Mondrian and Kandinsky.