

Video Transcript

Title:

Callum Innes | Exposed Paintings

Summary:

When Turner Prize nominee Callum Innes attended an artist residency in Amsterdam (1987), he started to move from figurative work to something more abstract. His 'Unidentified Forms' series of paintings began three years later – where Innes started to remove paint from the canvas using turpentine to leave sections 'exposed'. In this short film, originally produced in 2014, the artist talks about how he creates these exposed paintings: a highly controlled process that, to Innes, still feels slightly figurative.

Duration:

02:28

Transcript

Callum Innes

The great thing about art school is that you got to reinvent yourself every morning. It's like me going to my studio now, I've got to go into my studio every day, and I know there are certain things I have to do to make the paintings, but I've got to approach it every morning in a different way. And I think that's very important – I think that's what you learn at art school. I studied Fine Art at Gray's School of Art in Aberdeen. I then went on to do a postgraduate at Edinburgh for one year after that, but Gray's was the main place where I actually formed a body of work, which at that time was figurative. Which then moved on to the abstraction that you have now.

It started off with oil painting – I could paint an image on a canvas, whether it be a leaf form, or a stem, or something physical, and I could dissolve it off with turpentine. And you get a trace element of the image beforehand. So in these **exposed paintings** that are here - the earlier ones, which are the olive green one and the orange one, is a colour placed down, a vertical line taken out of it, and then the paint simply removed by turpentine from one side. As the years have progressed, with the exposed works, they've become more and more complex. With the violet paintings there, they're actually painted seven or eight times.

So the violet goes on, the black goes on top of the violet – it's wet on wet. I take a line through it, I dissolve it off. Then I put the violet on again, put the black on it again, take the same line through it – follow the same channel, and dissolve it off. So you build up this resonance – you build up this depth in the colour. So what looks like it's poured, people often talk about my work saying it's poured or it's dripped – it's actually all quite highly controlled. There's one point, the initial release of turpentine below the band of white in the horizontal, that's the only point I can't control. What you see is, you know, a painting which has its own intrinsic history but also has this physicality which has evolved over the years. So in a way I still see them as being slightly figurative, but that's because I have a personal relationship with them in the studio. And I physically react with the paintings. If they were simply geometric squares taped up and painted they wouldn't have that fragility.