

## **DISSERTATION : SUMMARY**

Julia's degree course in Fine Art Painting at University of Gloucester (formerly Cheltenham College of Higher Education) included requirement for a 10,000 word dissertation. She chose to research & write about beauty, colour and decoration in British contemporary painting.

Historical & critical research confirmed that colour has for centuries been considered inferior to form, that decorative has long been pejorative and recently beauty has also become a devalued term, used as interchangeable with decoration.

Julia passionately maintains her, unfashionable, belief in the human need for beauty.

She says she aspires to create what Arthur Schopenhauer (1788- 1860) called an aesthetic experience which "is what happens when we see something beautiful ... time standing still, that of the universal being perceived in the particular, and that of the spectator being taken out of himself and forgetting his own existence altogether in the rapt contemplation of what lies before us ... art ... provides us with a release, if only momentary from the prison we ordinarily inhabit."

Magee B (1983) *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer*, Clarendon Press, Oxford p164.

Her dissertation is titled 'Are Howard Hodgkin's paintings beautiful or just decorative?' and looks at the history of beauty, colour and decoration. It compares the use of colour by British artists: Howard Hodgkin, Patrick Heron & Gillian Ayres and two of the younger generation of British painters, Gary Hume and Jason Martin.

In 1925 Le Corbusier wrote that "previously decorative objects were rare and costly. Today they are commonplace and cheap. Previously plain objects were commonplace and cheap; today they are rare and expensive.... Trash is always abundantly decorated"

Fer B, Batchelor D & Wood P (1993) *Realism, Rationalism & Surrealism: Art Between the Wars*, Yale University Press p155.

Arguably, decoration is becoming valued again, in for example twenty first century ceramics, where intricate craft skills are appreciated in an increasingly screen-led digital world.