

Trevor Sutton
TIME OF DAY

“...a moment of mystery, it might almost
be called, a moment of trance...”

JUN'ICHIRO TANIZAKI, *In Praise of Shadows*

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Trevor Sutton : Time of Day

Paintings and Works on Paper

ALL THE WORKS IN THIS EXHIBITION, both diptych paintings on board and smaller works on paper, were made between the summer of last year and June 2015. All works on paper were made during a residency at the Ballinglen Arts Foundation in County Mayo in the far west of Ireland, where Trevor Sutton is a Fellow. During the last ten years, there have been a series of residencies with his partner Carol Robertson, both there and at Alayrac in the French Midi. These have prompted, for both artists, keen observation of the exceptional qualities of the landscape setting. Photographs taken by them in these two locations have been published with their paintings in two books: *Irish Paintings* and *French Paintings*. Photographs from Ireland record Sutton's outdoor responses to light and shadow in the complex surfaces of rock formations, in field crops, in beaches and tree lines, in the stone and stucco of buildings, and in traces of human interventions. At Alayrac, photographs record his particular preoccupation with light and colour, such as sunlight passing through window glass, subtly altering the colour resonance of old stone walls.

These works do not attempt to represent the countryside in views as landscape painting; the selected group exemplify how a creative analysis of the observed qualities and character of the landscape – the subtle naturally occurring colours and their ever evolving modulation in diurnal changes of light – can be explored in abstract painting. They are the result of a project of apparent simplicity and directness, but requiring considerable skill. Sutton took large sheets of 300gm Somerset Satin paper and painted single, experimentally mixed colours in horizontal sweeps across the paper. His technique controls gradual discharge of paint from the whole breadth of his French fine-bristle brushes, with repeated parallel strokes in passes across the sheet, giving variation in the density of paint from the edge to the middle of the brush. Careful regulation of speed and friction obtain subtle differences in the density of pigments and, hence, light reflectance in the flowing parallel linear marks. His colours follow the modulations as he has observed them in the sky and cloud formations, on the surface of the sea, and on low hillsides and tide-washed beaches. Painted sheets were then

selectively cut into panels, becoming cropped sections of the transformational sweeps which were conceived as grounds or picture planes for the smaller works on paper such as *Irish Shadow – Night* and the diptych pair *Irish Shadow 3* and *Irish Shadow 4*, the latter pair using superimposed panels of separate colour washes. Critical to sizing and scale is the final transformation by the addition of overdrawn grids in pencil.

As Sutton has said, his painting is “always tempered by the logic of the grid”. Superimposition is the next stage of analysis and exploration. The grids take up the conceptual methodologies and intellectual constructs of geometry and mathematical proportional systems, but are not imposed without a conscious rediscovery of their origination in perceptual experience. He finds fine lines in regular patterns everywhere: the horizon between sea and sky, the parallel crests of successive waves approaching a low beach, tide lines, the strata and veining in stone of rock formations, the stones and coursing of walls, buildings and field divisions, in ploughed furrows, and the tonal variations of linear crop sowing. Throughout, they are observed to modulate the immediate perceived colour of the line-bearing element in the landscape.

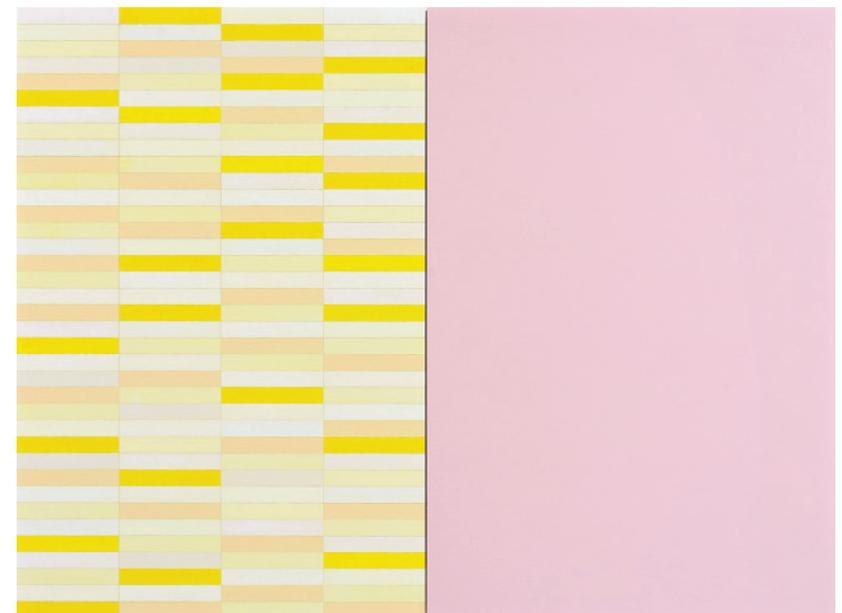
In *Irish Shadow – Night* the grid is square, a 5 × 10 format, and a range of tonal variation is captured in 50 filled squares: each square collects similar column-width sections. The engaging and involving comparisons are between the square above and below, showing as ‘strata’ sections of the streams, as dark to light, from dense to less dense pigmentation cut from the continuous horizontal strokes. The grid, when read, allows analyses and a selection of readings of the base colour. The grid floats and, as it does not delineate the boundaries of the work, the viewer’s eye is always referred back to the integrity of the original painting of the sheet.

The majority of works in this current show are diptychs; a form used by artists from late antiquity through the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, following the Greek origin as two joined panels coated with wax and used by scholars to inscribe points of arguments, or hypotheses, with a stylus. Inscriptions could be erased by heating and scraping the wax. In art, the panels might comprise a singular work of art from the individual parts, but the panels complement each another, one illuminating the other.

In *Study for Bunatrahir Bay* the pencil grid is reduced to incomplete half-panel horizontals crossing symmetrically the joint of the two panels. This stresses the physical joint between them as the centre of the painting. There are eight horizontal lines drawn in pencil, equally spaced, terminating in a dot at either

end. The horizontal lines are not consistently dense or weighted, more the result of gently differentiated pressure on the lead. The lines have a very ambiguous relationship with the surface on which they are drawn. The two backgrounds are evenly painted with very subtle but perceptible variations, in two soft hues, the left hand bluish green and the right hand a warm pinkish grey. The pencil lines cannot be perceptually located exactly in relation to the painted surface because of the line variations. The imposition of a partial matrix generates a remarkable perceptual response: whilst the bluish green ground without pencil lines to the left lightens the panel tone, the warm grey colour beyond the lines on the right side darkens the panel. An apparent reverse effect. The tonally contrasting colours at the centre joint react with each another, the surface advancing and retreating and never aligning at the disjunction: each carries reciprocal impressions of the other and can never be established in a fixed reading.

In *Daylight Devotion* and *Golden Morning*, which predate the Irish residency, the right hand panel has no grid except of course it echoes the dimensions of the grid-delineated left hand panel. In *Golden Morning* [below] the left panel is divided by a 4 × 37 grid. It creates an apparent dramatic scale shift between the finely graduated left panel and the unmarked, subtly painted

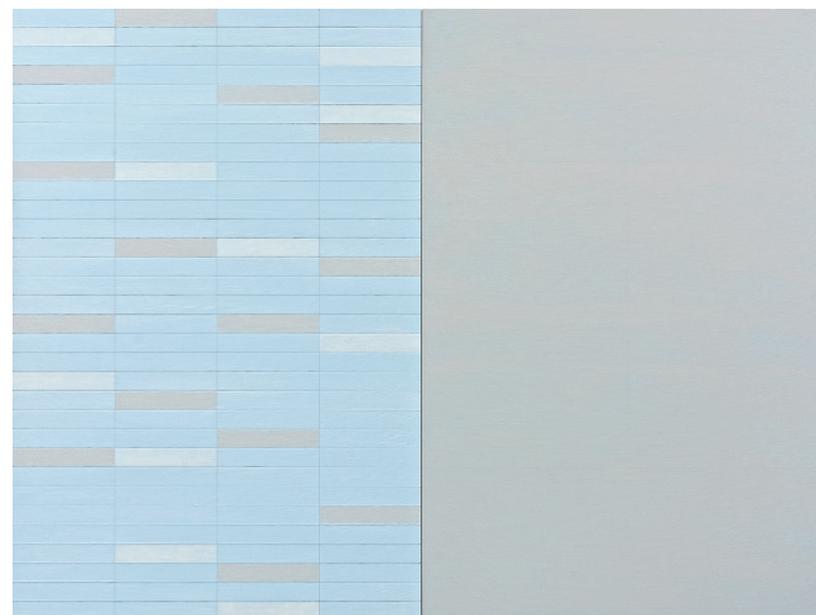


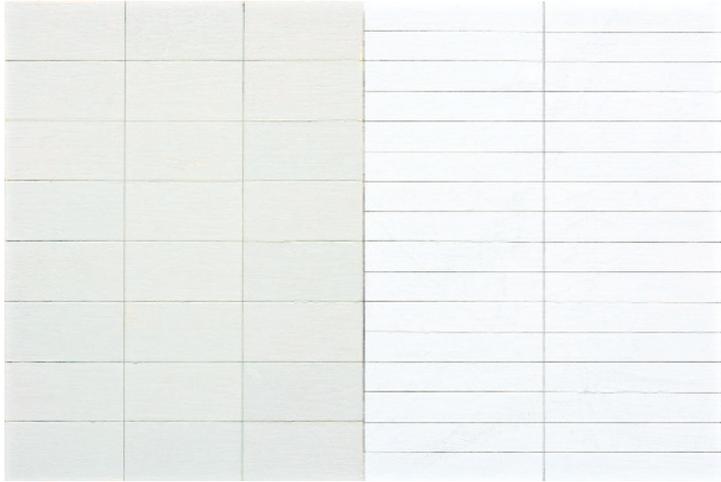
colour field of the right. The vertical central joint of the diptych stresses this juxtaposition. On the left there are 148 cells painted in seven colours: pale orange, yellow, pale yellow, cream, white, pale grey and a darker warmer grey. They are impossible to fix definitively, as the colours in adjacent cells influence the reading of their tone and colour intensity. Tonal variations imply lateral movement across a highly regulated surface. They change the position of the surface in relation to the picture plane. The eye is led across and up and down the grid to find equivalences and resolutions of differences and to find resonant groupings. It is easy to stray decisively across the diptych divide to conclude that the left hand group of colours are definitive constituents of the pink on the right. Yet, in inevitably changing light conditions, the pink panel cannot be stable or fixed. It has been painted with micro variations in pigment distribution which give myriad nuances of the painted colour and, of course, each of the 148 micro panels on the left is also subject to this. As the grid is studied, many more than seven different colours are perceived.

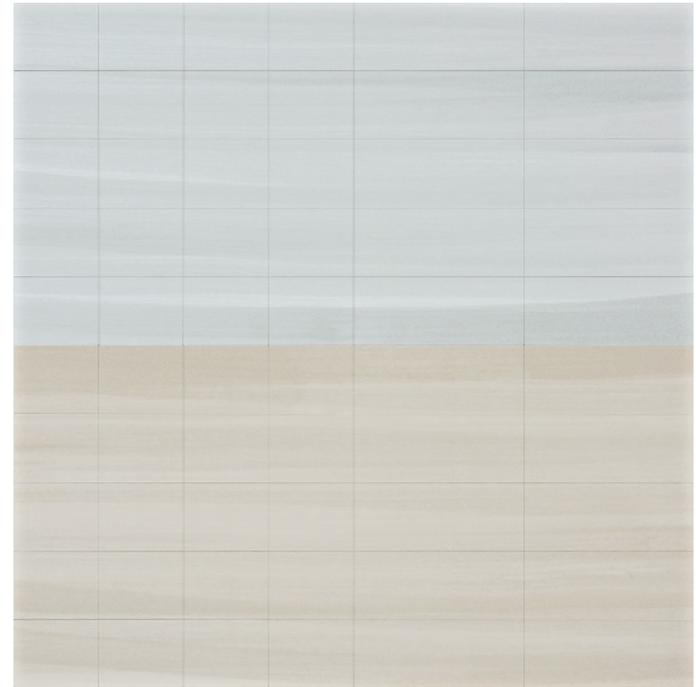
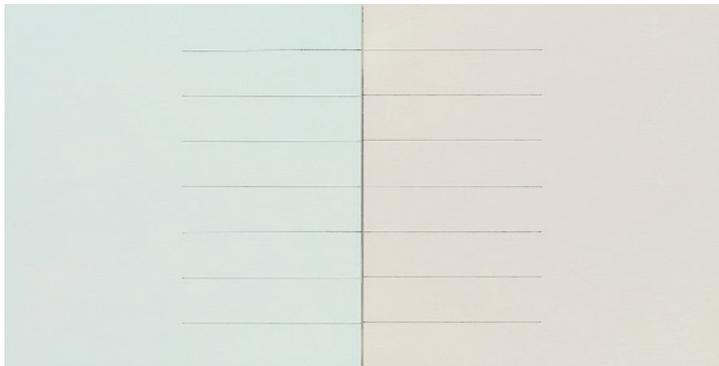
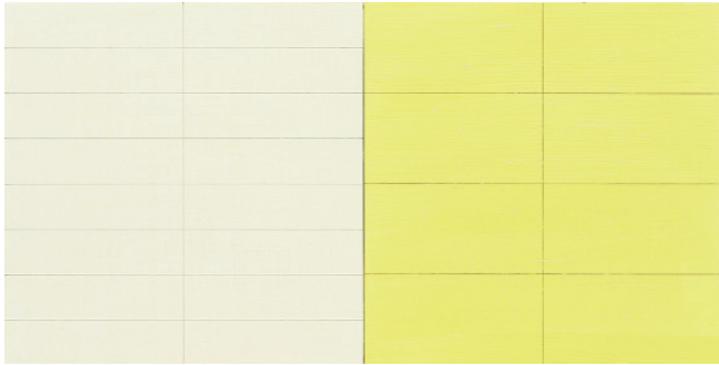
Sutton's work is always rewarding to investigate, absorbing yet demanding. We pursue an understanding of our experience of perceiving colour in all its subtle tonal variations. His paintings provocatively draw upon our emotions and make us explore our immediate attraction to the colours he uses and to discern his fine detail. We question how we know them and what meaning the colours have for us, why we find them beautiful in nature, and why we find them beautiful in his paintings. There is never a decisive or finite reading.

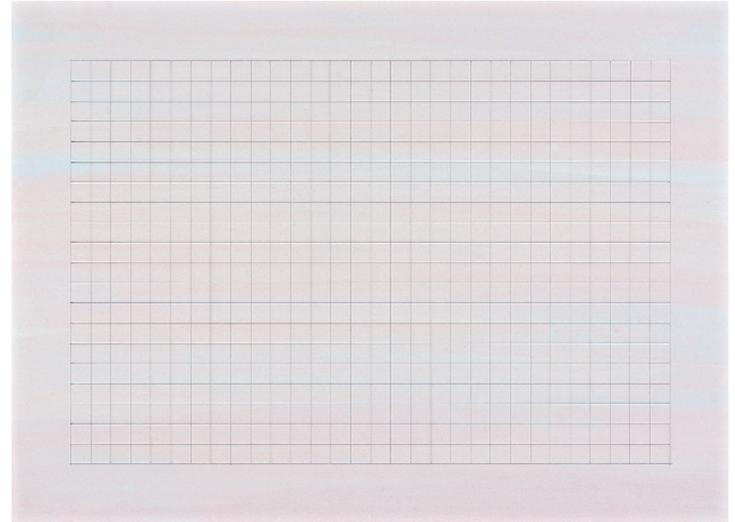
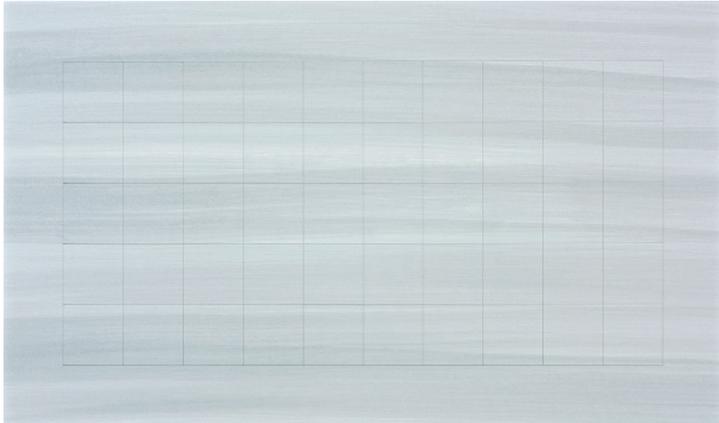
PETER JENKINS

August 2015









Trevor Sutton

- 1948 Born Romford, Essex
1967–71 Hornsey College of Art
1971–72 Birmingham Polytechnic
1972 Sir Whitworth Wallis Award (First Prize)
1976 Arts Council Award
1979 Tolly Cobbold/Eastern Arts 2nd Exhibition (Prizewinner)
1980 John Moores Exhibition 12 (Prizewinner)
1989 Lorne Award
1997 South Bank Banner Competition (Prizewinner)
2000–03 Research Fellow, Chelsea College of Art & Design, London
2001 Fellow, Ballinglen Arts Foundation, County Mayo, Ireland
2012 Artist in Residence, Kunstgarten, Graz, Austria

Selected Solo Exhibitions (since 2000)

- 2000 *Short Stories and Other Prints*, Flowers Graphics, London
Six Paintings: Part Two, Cairn Gallery, Nailsworth
2001 *Moon Dreams and Other Prints*, Galleri Weinberger, Copenhagen
Trevor Sutton – New Paintings, Flowers Central, London
2002 *New Work*, Galerie Josine Bokhoven, Amsterdam
Spirits – Monoprints, Flowers Graphics, London
2003 *New Paintings*, Flowers, New York
2006 *Reflex*, Flowers Central, London
2007 *Coloured Time*, Galerie Sho, Tokyo
Collaboration II: Trevor Sutton/Ferdinand Penker, Stadtgalerie, Wolfsberg
2008 *Chamber Music*, Austrian Cultural Forum, London
2009 *Chamber Music*, Galerie Schütte, Essen
Works on Paper, Flowers East, London
2010 *Trevor Sutton – Paintings*, Another Function, Tokyo
Paradise Circus, Flowers Central, London
2012 *Rose Paintings*, Kunstgarten, Graz
2013 *Interior Landscape*, Galerie allerArt, Bludenz
2015 *Light Year*, Sleeper, Edinburgh
Time of Day, Eagle Gallery, London

Selected Group Exhibitions (since 2005)

- 2005 *Out of Ireland: Robertson + Sutton*, Galleri Weinberger, Copenhagen
2006 *October Foundation*, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven
2007 *Contemporary Prints – London*, Graphic Studio Gallery, Dublin
2008 *Constructed*, Sainsbury Centre For Visual Arts, UEA, Norwich
New Walls from Europe, Sundaram Tagore Gallery, New York
2009 *Northern Print Biennale*, Hatton Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne
2010 *Take Two*, NSA Noborimachi Space of Art, Hiroshima
Black + White III, Galleri Weinberger, Copenhagen
Material Lightness, Flowers Central, London
2011 *Double Vision*, Ritter Gallery, Klagenfurt
2012 *Ha Ha What Does This Represent?* Standpoint Gallery, London
John Moores Painting Prize, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool
New Possibilities: Abstract Paintings from the Seventies, Piper Gallery, London
2013 *The Discipline of Painting*, Harrington Mill Studios, Nottingham
Wanderer's Field, Eagle Gallery, London
2014 *John Moores Painting Prize*, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool
2015 *From Centre*, Loud & Western Building, London
Whiteout, Eagle Gallery, London

Selected Public Collections

- Aberdeen Art Gallery, Scotland
Ackland Art Museum, University of North Carolina, USA
Arts Council of Great Britain, London
Ballinglen Archive, County Mayo, Ireland
British Council, London
Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio, USA
Deutsche Bank AG, London
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge
Government Art Collection, London
Kasser Foundation, Montclair, New Jersey, USA
NSA Collection, Noborimachi Space of Art, Hiroshima, Japan
Stichting Mondriaanhuis, The Netherlands
Tate Gallery, London
University of East Anglia, Norwich
Victoria Art Gallery, Bath

List of Works

- 2 *Daybreak* 2015
oil and pencil on board – diptych
25 × 50" / 63.5 × 127cm
- 5 *Golden Morning* 2014
oil and pencil on board – diptych
37 × 50" / 94 × 127cm
- 7 *Light Year* 2015
oil and pencil on board – diptych
37 × 50" / 94 × 127cm
- 8 *Time Off* 2014
oil and pencil on board – diptych
8 × 12" / 20 × 30.5 cm
- 9 *May 2* 2015
oil and pencil on board – diptych
8 × 12" / 20 × 30.5 cm
- 10 *The Summer Wind* 2015
oil and pencil on board – diptych
8 × 16" / 20 × 40 cm

Study for Bunatrahir Bay 2015
oil and pencil on paper on board – diptych
8 × 16" / 20 × 40 cm
- 11 *Irish Shadow 4* 2015
oil and pencil on paper
20 × 20" / 51 × 51 cm
- 12 *Irish Shadow – Night* 2015
oil and pencil on paper
14 × 24" / 35.5 × 61 cm
- 13 *Shadow 8* 2014
oil and pencil on paper
13 × 18" / 33 × 46 cm



Published on the occasion of Trevor Sutton's *Time of Day* solo exhibition, Eagle Gallery, London, September 2015
Images © 2015 Trevor Sutton
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