

System 5 77 99 and System 3 567 9

The Purpose of Systems

These new works take my approach further into the absoluteness of systems, where 'artist creates system - system removes artist'. The systems I employ are sets of rules. Their imposition eliminates the artist's predisposition to play a revisional role in the conjuring of beauty. There is no opportunity for deviation once a system is in place as their outcomes are fixed from the moment they are created. The artist's roles are only to establish a system and to realise its execution.

By having this involvement removed, the artist submits to a certainty; the system's resulting form, a predetermined aesthetic. Through their domination, it can feel as if a system is imbued with aesthetic consciousness and rational thought - an intellectual input into the development of a work. This 'personification' of system becomes naggingly apparent as a working partnership evolves between artist and system; at times in control, at times subordinate, in turn one reliant on the other. Ultimately however, like a mathematical formula, a system can only achieve one outcome; once set in motion its predestiny is not the result of intuitive, artistic endeavour or initiative. That is the role of the artist as instigator, giving birth to the system by selecting appropriate components for its build. A system can only perform its function.

Systems are not 'means to an end'. Their beauty is their indefatigably mathematical and absolute state of being. They exist abstractly without being used and as potential before they are invented. Their outcome is fixed whether they are used or not. Their single purpose is administered for the dismissal of artistic input, they then reign supreme until the slavish action of making is ended and their impositions revealed.

The resulting complex and utterly unique forms are a record of invention and the stages of realisation - the use of the first and subsequent systems. They demonstrate an abstract state of being *transposed* into physical existence.

Flamenco Rhythms

Current systems that I use are informed by the constant, rigid and repeating rhythms at the core of Flamenco music.

These integral rhythms, in short cycles, are known as the *compas* - literally compass - and each flamenco form or *palo* is given its distinctive feel by its own *compas* that guides the music through to its conclusion regardless of duration. The *compas* can repeat limitlessly, as can the systems in my work, only

concluding or reaching the final cycle when the performers feel it has expressed their artistic goal. In my paintings this artistic choice of duration is expressed, as part of the primary system, by canvas size.

A compas is made up of accents on particular beats in a set pattern. The compas of *soleares*, has a pattern that consists of 12 beats on which beats **3 6 8 10 12** are accented. It can be shown as 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

The compas is strictly adhered to for absolute control and domination over whatever palo is being played and binds the musicians to each other. It is around this that the playful and expressive nature of musicianship, produces compelling effects; the driving urgency of syncopated rhythms in bulerias, the majestic throb of soleares.

In my work, the addition of colour is the point at which this playfulness begins. The primary system sets the compas, its internal structure and composition, the secondary, the playful interaction of colour on and around the compas. Colour accents one moment structure, the next shifts from a compas to syncopated offbeat only to return again, distorting the compas' resolution and tempo due to the difference between systems. Subsequent colour systems produce harmony, resonance, and dissonance that further alter the character. It is the visual kin of its aural relative.

Colour from the Sierra Nevada of Andalucia

It is the role of the palette to set the *aire* or emotional timbre. Like musical keys, colour keys are emotive. One can be enigmatic and fleeting, bold and striding, deep and sombre or light and joyful.

These keys are drawn directly from the landscape of Andalucia in Southern Spain, particularly from the Sierra Nevada mountain range. Bleached or richly coloured earth, dazzling rocky escarpments, newly exposed cork oak trunks, ceilingless skies, silvery grey-green olive groves, the vulture's oily back, faded scrub, ancient shadowy gorges and nestling brilliant-white villages.

The individual merits of a compas determine colour selection.

Application of Paint

The application of paint has moved from flat, entirely opaque, hard-edge, to painterly layering. Both catalyse the formalism of the compas. The principle difference is that the first allows you to sink into an atmospheric colour world where colour saturation is pure and total, becoming intangible. The latter confronts you with its physicality, showing you its tangible surface and reflects the nature of the terrain the pigments are taken from

It can also be said to echo the nature of Flamenco music which informs (non-specifically) the system's structure. It is largely an improvised music: learned phrases and rhythmic passages are brought in from an extensive vocabulary as the performers feel around the always present compas.

This painterly approach also leaves visible some of the process of making; a layering of evidence that plays against the notion of systems rigour. It is artistic, revisional gesturalisation, the human touch, the responsive use of paint against the certainty of system - natural and artificial, raw and pure. A powerful contradiction that parallels the syncopated rhythms it highlights.

Human System

To the entire process, I bring my intuitive and emotive experience, the systems their single-minded working. Their moment of deployment is like clicking 'run' for a computer programme, a moment when they temporarily take over and execute their sole purpose. A working relationship is then created between artist and inanimate, abstract vehicle, in turn one subordinate to the other. This parallels an age where artificial intelligence is increasingly potent and could ultimately run our day to day lives, perhaps to the point of producing 'art' on our behalf and totally removing humans from expressing some intrinsic part of the human condition.

Producing reflections of our lives has timelessly been relevant since at least cave painting and continues to be so. Making paintings in partnership with that which threatens us with redundancy shows how we are vulnerable and adaptable, and that we do not only have one purpose, but legion. It also shows how we have to comment on our fragility and on what is occurring in our time.

The references I make to Flamenco, greatly amplify the relevance in contemporary art of a relationship between the human condition and the use of a method such as system. Flamenco's core is absolutely fixed while its artistic component is playful, soulful, ever changing and absolutely human. The nature of my painting is to show the unity of things that are at odds with each other. We live in a time where this matters. Society is questioning as we give more importance to things that work on our behalf, for our benefit. It is my hope that my work suggests an internal, poetic landscape; rhythmic, formalised and emotionally eloquent, and yet anxious, visceral and deeply human.