

NEIL CANNING



This is an extraordinary time for Neil Canning, in his life, in his work. When talking to Neil recently in his studio, the overriding feeling that came to me was a new sense of freedom; not in the way a person feels when they have finally had their liberty returned to them but in the sense of someone who now feels spontaneous, unconstrained, almost light-headed with the thought of countless possibilities. Here is an artist who is working with few self-imposed or external restrictions. There is no feeling of entrapment as artists so often can feel. Trapped by their subject matter, their gallery demands, the needs of collectors. Here the energy is one of excitement, going into the unknown and embracing it.

Neil recognises that something has changed. Once he was aware of a presence hovering around his shoulder somehow holding him back, restricting his risk taking, curbing his brush strokes. Now he is trusting himself, his instinct, following his intuitions. Neil describes it as 'unleashing the marks'. This is confident language; these are not the words of a timid artist. Here is the voice of a assured mature artist who understands his talent and knows what is required to take it forward.

Maybe this new-found fluency has come about through over twenty five years of professional practice, developing technique, dedicating his life to his art. Although creativity can be innate, it also has to be encouraged, nurtured and worked at, and Neil has certainly done that. With a strong background of technique creating a secure foundation for his work, he feels he can let go: "like a dog being let off its lead". He now feels that his body can be used as vehicle for his self-expression, he can allow himself to be taken over by extravagant gestures. He quotes Heron to me, who said that painters should paint with the arm, not the hand; the body will take over if the arm is left free. By following the master's advice, he seems to be opening up to the challenge and really pushing on.

That is not to say that he abandons technique altogether. The underpaintings require a build up of many layers of paint, but the upper surface, that's when we see the grand gestures; the positive marks, the marks of no return; Neil's instincts followed rigorously; the greatest risks being taken and this leading to the most exciting results.

When Neil talks of his love of colour, he continues to use powerful language. "When working I like to create a dynamic with colour, there has to be some edge to the works where colours almost fight. Without this chemistry the paintings, for me, have no life. I like colour to leap out and stop the viewer in their tracks." He talks of "taming" the paint like the circus trainer who must always keep one eye open for a sudden attack. He describes his earlier work as more academic, where colours sat more easily together, now they are always on the edge of not working, on a precipice. He admits that he enjoys this process, and as time has passed he has gained in confidence and learned to trust the uncertainty of it all.

This has all created a renewed energy in the work, a vitality. There has always been vibrancy, movement, now there is speed. This is not the speed that evokes a sense of urgency when the artist is running out of time, this is the rapidity of a young man who knows he has time to take bigger and greater risks. When viewing the work, one feels a rush of adrenalin almost as though one is intuitively picking up on energy that Neil exerts in the making of the work. Not a negative rush of the addict who needs greater and greater fixes, but the rush of heightened feelings and perception; walking in a beautiful landscape; being in love; listening to music; feelings of connection with powerful forces beyond ourselves.

Sometimes artists complain that collectors get stuck on a particular period of creative output and that they are reluctant to move with the artist and follow their journey. I'm not sure this has been a concern for Neil, certainly as a collector of his work and in my role within the gallery, I have always felt energised by the development; never feeling the need to look back, only forward. Now with Neil's new momentum, I feel like the cyclist who has reached the top of the hill who knows he can freewheel downwards, knowing that as long as I hold on I will be guaranteed a most exciting and glorious experience. I ask you to hold on too.

*David Falconer 2004*

*Freedom*

122 x 183 cm Oil on canvas



*Winter Harbour*  
56 x 76 cm Mixed media on paper





*Desert Song 1*  
25 × 28 cm Mixed media on paper



*Response 6*  
25 × 28 cm Mixed media on paper



*Sea Sculpture*

26 x 46 cm Oil on canvas





*Response 5*

25 × 28 cm Mixed media on paper



*Desert Song 2*

25 × 28 cm Mixed media on paper

*Tintagel*

51 x 122 cm Oil on canvas





*Push*

61 × 66 cm Oil on canvas



*Storm*

46 x 51 cm Oil on canvas



*Shelter*

46 × 26 cm Oil on canvas



*Pharaoh*

51 x 122 cm Oil on canvas





*Quicksilver*

33 x 38 cm Mixed media on paper



*Alongside*

33 x 38 cm Mixed media on paper



*Firebird*

61 × 66 cm Oil on canvas





*Kismet*

33 x 38 cm Mixed media on paper



*Porthia*

33 x 38 cm Mixed media on paper

*Pioneer*

153 x 213 cm Oil on canvas







*Porthmeor Blue 3*  
25 × 28 cm Mixed media on paper



*Nile Sands*  
26 × 46 cm Oil on canvas



*Response 8*

25 x 28 cm Mixed media on paper



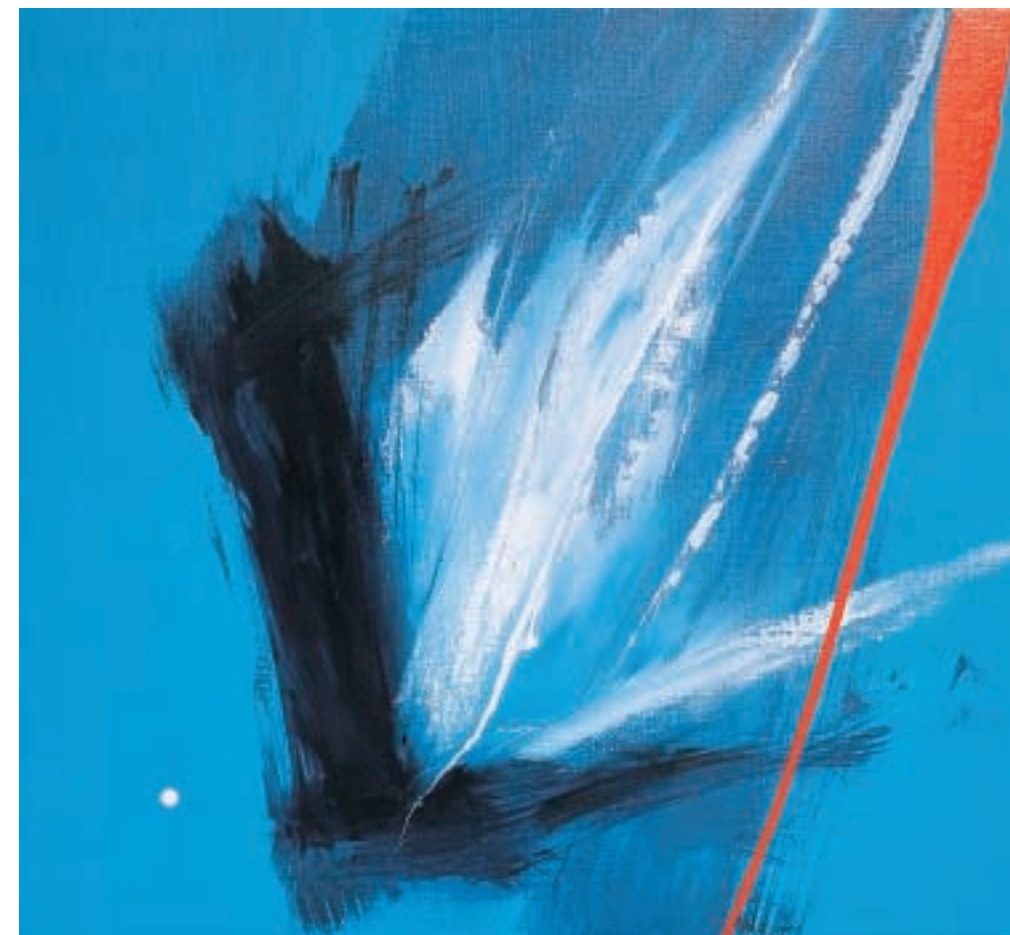
*Response 7*

25 x 28 cm Mixed media on paper



*Ocean Swept*

61 x 66 cm Oil on canvas





*Winter*  
25 × 28 cm Mixed media on paper



*Autumn*  
25 × 28 cm Mixed media on paper



*Memory*

33 x 38 cm Mixed media on paper



*Undiscovered*

33 x 38 cm Mixed media on paper

*Regatta*

46 x 122 cm Oil on canvas







*Porthmeor Blue 4*  
25 x 28 cm Mixed media on paper



*Desert Sands*  
26 x 46 cm Oil on canvas



*Outward Bound*  
100 x 200 cm Oil on canvas





*Tilt*

33 x 38 cm Mixed media on paper



*Atlantic Coast*

56 x 76 cm Mixed media on paper

*Ocean Dreaming*

51 x 122 cm Oil on canvas



*Aries*

122 x 51 cm Oil on canvas







*Gale Force*  
46 × 51 cm Oil on canvas



*Beziers*  
66 × 61 cm Oil on canvas

*Purple Dreaming*

51 x 122 cm Oil on canvas



## NEIL CANNING

### Biography

1960 Born Enstone, Oxfordshire  
1990 Moved to Wales  
1997 Moved to Cornwall  
2004 Now lives and works in St Ives

### Selected Solo Exhibitions

2004 New Millennium Gallery, St Ives  
2004 Advanced Graphics, London  
2003 Lowry Hotel, Manchester  
2003 Lynne Stover Gallery, Cambridge  
2002 New Millennium Gallery, St Ives  
2001 Stour Gallery, Shipston-on-Stour, Warwickshire  
2001 University of Exeter, The Northcote Gallery  
2000 Advanced Graphics, London  
2000 New Millennium Gallery, St Ives  
1999 International Art Consultants, London  
1998 Martin Tinney Gallery, Cardiff  
1997 St Ives Festival Exhibition, The Book Gallery, St Ives

1996 The Gallery, Manchester  
1995 On-Line Gallery, Southampton  
1995 International Art Consultants, London  
1994 Upton Lodge Gallery, Tetbury, Gloucestershire  
1993 Martin Tinney Gallery, Cardiff  
1992 Oughterson House, Barbados  
1992 Century Galleries, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire  
1992 Manor House Gallery, Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire  
1991 Henry Brett Gallery at Ozten Zeki, London  
1991 West Wharf Gallery, Cardiff  
1990 Town Hall, Woodstock, Oxfordshire  
1989 Dorchester Galleries, Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxfordshire  
1989 Manor House Gallery, Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire  
1987 Swan Gallery, Burford, Oxfordshire  
1987 Dorchester Gallery, Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxfordshire  
1985 Swan Gallery, Burford, Oxfordshire  
1984 Swan Gallery, Burford, Oxfordshire  
1981 Banbury Museum, Banbury, Oxfordshire  
1980 Bodkin Gallery, Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire  
1979 Bodkin Gallery, Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire

### Selected Public Collections

AT & T  
Allen and Ovary  
BAE Systems plc  
Bank of England  
British Embassy, Venezuela  
Canon Group  
Chubb Insurance  
Civil Aviation Authority  
Credit Suisse  
Eagle Star Insurance  
Eagle Star Group  
Enskilda Bank, Sweden  
Ernst & Young  
Glaxo SmithKlineBeecham  
Fairmont Group  
Ford Motor Company Ltd  
HJ Heinz & Company Limited  
HM Customs & Excise  
ICIJP Morgan Investment Managment Inc  
Kingspark DevelopmentsKleinwort Benson Investment Trust

London Hospitals Trust  
London Insurance Market Investment trust  
Mitsubishi Corp  
MBNA International Bank Ltd  
National Westminster Bank  
Nuffield Fund, Paintings in Hospitals  
O2  
Oracle Corp  
Private Patients Plan  
Rolls Royce  
RMC  
Schroders  
Standard Life  
Taylor Woodrow  
Unilever  
United Utilities Plc  
University of Exeter  
University of Wales  
Wordtel

### Private Collections Worldwide

Design: Classic Design  
Print: Rowe the Printers  
Photography of paintings: Richard Clegg  
Studio portrait: Rob Jewell