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Peter Lowe (b. London 1938) has been making constructed abstract art since 1960. He trained at Goldsmiths College where he was taught by Kenneth and Mary Martin, two of the leading pioneers of this kind of art and he was strongly influenced by them, though his own work is very individual.

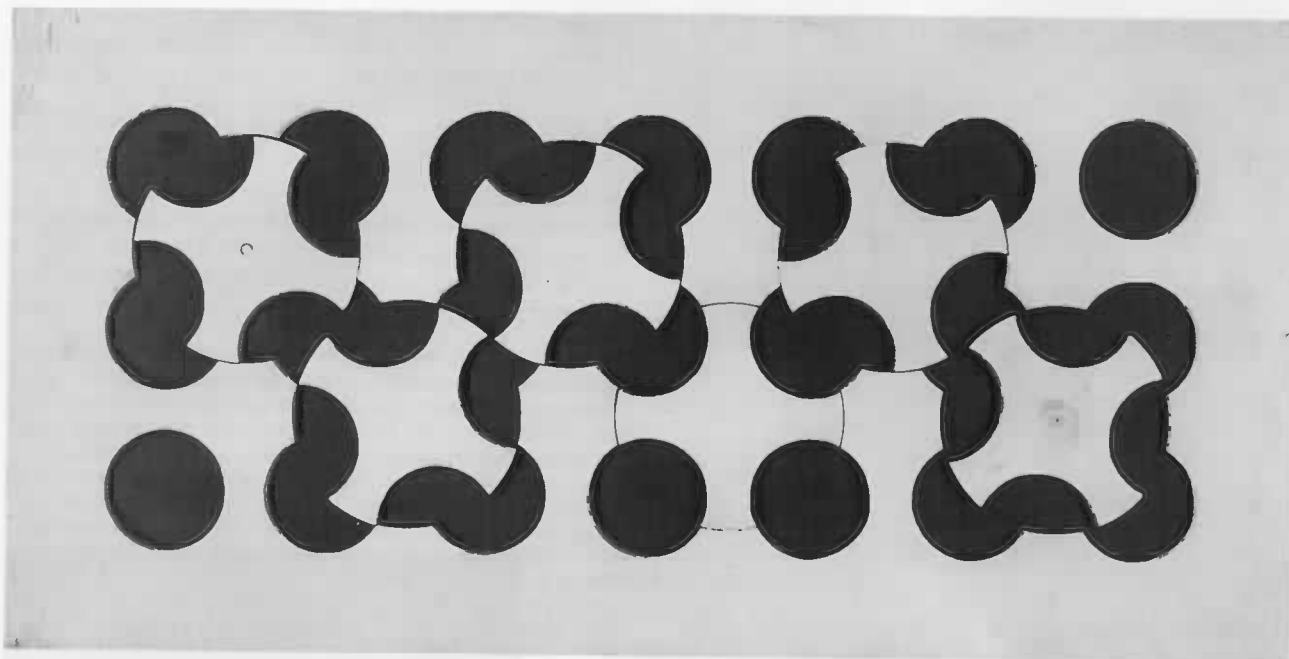
Constructed abstract art is not abstracted from the appearance of nature but is built up with basic geometric forms ordered systematically into harmonious rhythms. While its roots lie in the foundation abstract art movements of around the time of the First World War, it was most strongly developed in this country after the Second War by the Martins, Victor Pasmore, Anthony Hill and John Ernest. Throughout this long development the medium of the constructed relief has been important and it is here that Lowe has perhaps made his most distinctive contribution.

Lowe showed his early constructed reliefs from 1962 (see lots 178, 179) in a number of important exhibitions including *The Geometric Environment* at the Artists' International Association and *Construction England* toured by the Arts Council. He has been exhibiting regularly and extensively since, though it is noteworthy that the majority of his exhibitions and accompanying publications have been in Continental Europe where the tradition of Constructivism is more established than in this country. He is represented in major Continental collections such as Grenoble Museum and that formed by Peter Ruppert in Würzburg. In 1969 he took part in the exhibition *Systeemi System* in Helsinki which led to the formation of the British group Systems. Besides Lowe, this group included Jeffrey Steele, Malcolm Hughes, Jean Spencer, Michael Kidner, Gillian Wise, John Ernest and others. In the first half of the '70s they held several group and individual exhibitions, notably *Systems* in 1972 at the Whitechapel Gallery. Today, after decades of neglect in this country, the group is subject to keen interest with exhibitions at commercial galleries in London and at the Southampton City Art Gallery (until 31st March).

Lowe's art is systematic. He will take a basic shape and move it through predetermined sequences that grow logically, yet often surprisingly, into spiralling formations (see lot 182). In 1974 he started his series of *Volume and Void* reliefs in which squares are removed systematically from the base plane and stacked in developing sequence. These reliefs are unified by neutral, homogeneous materials and finishes that concentrate attention on the order of their forms. Lowe himself has remarked: 'The individual act of invention is not in the forms themselves but in the particular ordering of them' (see Exhibition catalogue, *Systems*, London, Arts Council, 1972-3, p. 35). Lot 181, which was exhibited at the Annelly Juda Gallery in 1980, is a formative work in this series.

Scale is important. Though Lowe has made large, ground based works, most of his reliefs are of a modest, domestic scale. They are reassuring objects to live with, beautifully made, precisely ordered, accessible and constantly intriguing.

Alastair Grieve



178

178

PETER LOWE (B. 1938)

Transformable Relief with Circles

signed and dated 'PETER LOWE/1960' (on the reverse)

painted wood

24 1/4 x 48 in. (61 x 121.9 cm.)

£8,000-12,000

US\$16,000-23,000

€11,000-16,000

EXHIBITED:

- London, Drian Galleries, *Peter Lowe Reliefs*, August 1962.
- London, Drian Galleries, *6 English Painters*, 1963.
- London, Artists' International Association, + - (*plus minus*), 1963.
- London, Artists' International Association, *The Geometric Environment; with works by Peter Lowe, Kenneth Martin, Mary Martin & Others*, 1963.
- London, Arts Council of Great Britain, *Construction England*, April 1963; this exhibition travelled to Hull, Ferens Art Gallery.
- Leeds, Leeds City Art Gallery, Exhibition by Staff from Leeds College of Art, 1964.
- London, Arts Council of Great Britain, *Unit Series Progression*, January - February 1967; this exhibition toured to Cambridge, Arts Council Gallery.

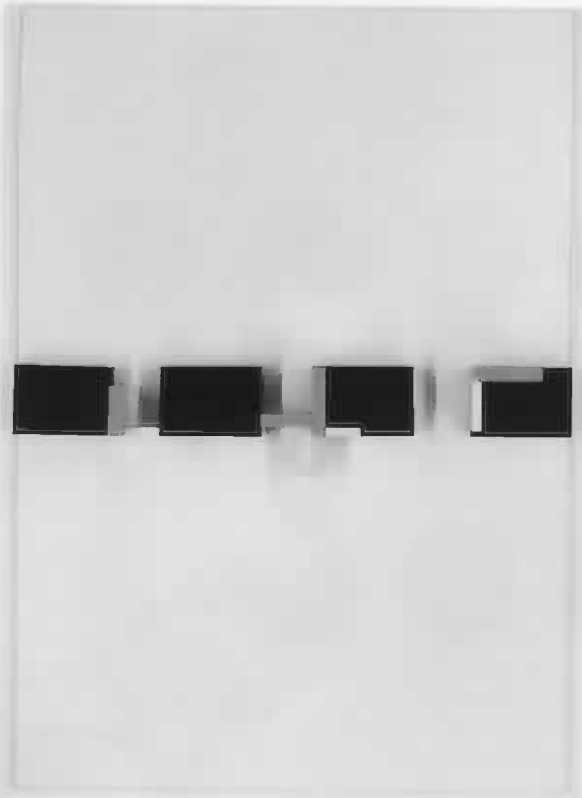
Transformable Relief with Circles is an early version of a small series of seven works involving circles (three are now destroyed). The work is based on the idea of rotation of a moving format, linking it to collage,

kinetic art and, indirectly, to cubism. The artist intended that random and infinite transformations would be made by public intervention. The relief epitomises the artist's theoretical interest in forming processes in nature and technology. The second version was sold to the then Director of Temple Newsome House in 1964.

'Lowe and (Colin) Jones ... differ from earlier English Constructionism in that ... their use of material, expresses to a far greater degree, volume and mass ... there is a definite increase of interest in the problem of the spatiality of the relief' (see Exhibition catalogue, *Exhibition of Relief Structures*, July - August 1966).



The artist at the DRIAN Galleries, London, 1963



179

179

PETER LOWE (B. 1938)

Root 2 Proportion Perspex Relief

signed and dated 'Peter Lowe / 29 April 1966' (on the reverse)

perspex

40 x 28 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (101.6 x 71.7 cm.)

£8,000-12,000

US\$16,000-23,000

€11,000-16,000

EXHIBITED:

London, Institute for Contemporary Arts, *Exhibition of Relief Structures*, July - August 1966.

Brighton, The Gardner Centre for the Arts, *Peter Lowe Retrospective*, 1974.

This work is one of a series of studies based on the root two ratio, commonly encountered in the 'A' paper sizes. All components, including the transparent base plane, are co-ordinated according to that ratio. One reason the artist was interested in this is because a root two rectangle bisected produces two smaller rectangles of the same ratio. This unique property is pleasing precisely because of its visual simplicity. For example, a square so divided produces a double square. It does not reiterate in the same way. There is a vast literature on the use of proportion in art and architecture but it is not so much the complex mathematical aspects of so called *irrational numbers* that inspired this work but the quest for simplicity that characterises the artist's entire oeuvre.

180

PETER LOWE (B. 1938)

Counter-Change Collage

signed and dated 'Peter Lowe 2006-7' (on the edge)

black vinyl and perspex

24 x 24 in. (60.9 x 60.9 cm.)

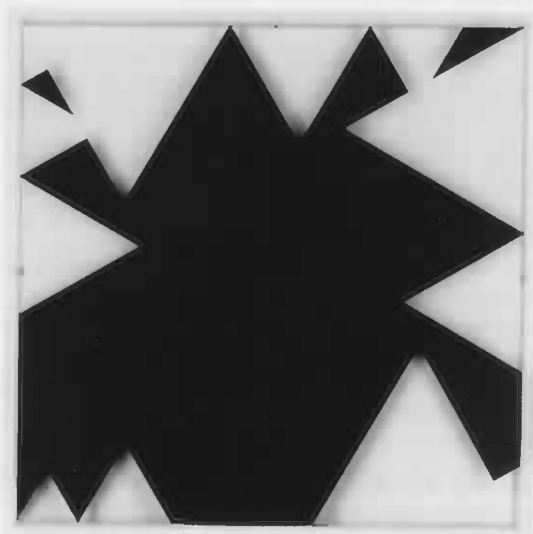
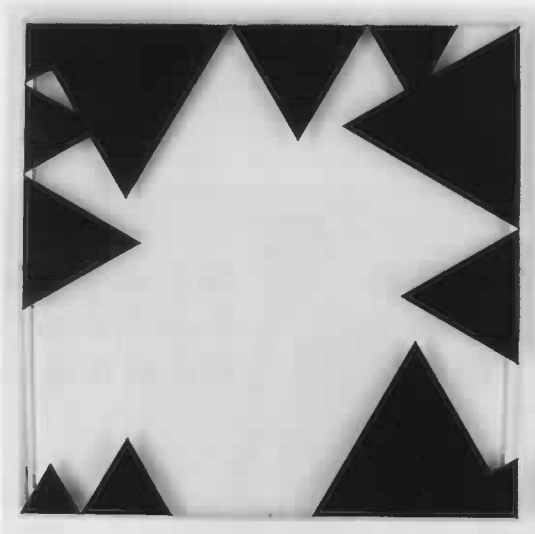
(2)

£2,000-3,000

US\$3,900-5,900

€2,700-4,000

These works are indirectly related to the *Volume and Void Reliefs* of 1974 (see lot 181) in that they allow the wall to become part of the work. They exploit the dynamic of triangular form to suggest explosive imagery while at the same time being rationally conceived and intelligible as progressions around the perimeter of the square.



180

181

PETER LOWE (B. 1938)*Volume and Void Grey Relief*

signed and dated 'Peter Lowe/1974' (on the reverse)

painted composite

26½ in. (67.3 cm.) high

£3,000-5,000

US\$5,900-9,800

€4,100-6,700

EXHIBITED:

London, Lucy Milton Gallery, 1974.

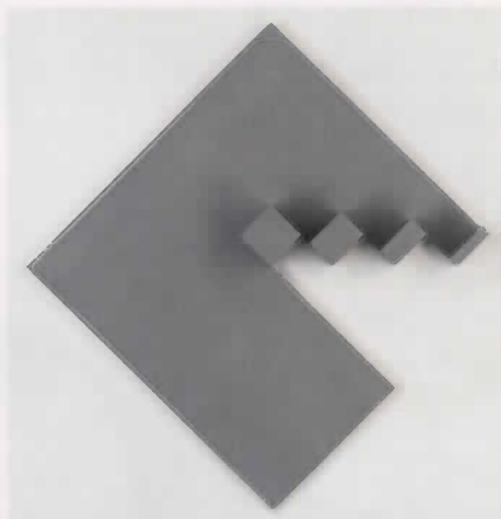
Brighton, Gardner Centre for the Arts, *Peter Lowe Retrospective*, 1974.

London, Annely Juda Fine Art, 8 + 8, May - June 1980.

Zurich, Galerie Rene Ziegler, 1981.

Milan, Arte Struktura Gallery, 1990.

A classic 1974 *Volume and Void* relief based upon the module of the thickness of the sheet material. Exhibited in the year it was made at the Lucy Milton Gallery which was a showcase for 'hardline' systems and international constructed art.



181

182

PETER LOWE (B. 1938)*Spiral Without Border*

signed, inscribed and dated 'Peter Lowe/Spiral without border/1990-95'

(on the reverse) and with studio stamp (on the reverse)

engraved perspex

13 x 13 in. (33 x 33 cm.)

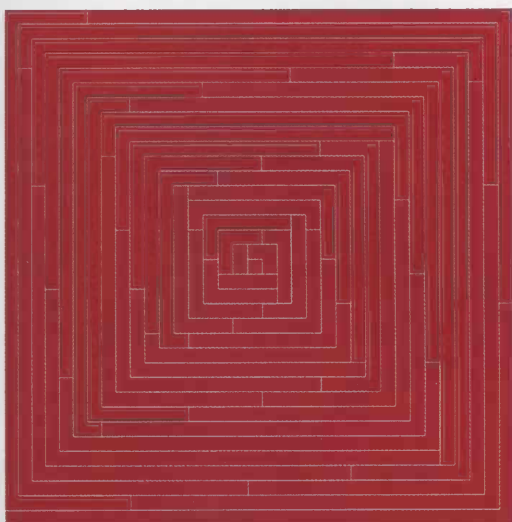
From an edition of 5.

£3,000-5,000

US\$5,900-9,800

€4,100-6,700

In 1963, Lowe discovered a mathematical spiral based upon square and triangular numbers (see Exhibition catalogue, *A Rational Aesthetic*, London, January - March 2008, p. 29, pl. 8). This first version consists of a chrySTALLINE spiral of consecutive integers: i.e. $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 6 + 7 + 8$. The total adds up to 36 which is a square number and also a triangular number. The centre of the spiral is a square. The units in the spiral increase in size by one unit until they fill a 6×6 unit square. The present work displays Lowe's second largest possible spiral after his 1963 version.



182

183

PETER LOWE (B. 1938)*Triangles Inside a Regular Dodecagon*

signed 'Peter Lowe' (on the backboard), signed again 'PETER LOWE' (on a label attached to the backboard) and with studio stamp (on the backboard)

acrylic on linen laid down on board

35 in. (88.9 cm) high

Painted in 2000.

£3,000-5,000

US\$5,900-9,800

€4,100-6,700

EXHIBITED:

London, Menier Gallery, *The London Group Open Exhibition*, 2007.

Four overlapping triangles connect to the vertices of a dodecagon increasing in size until the last touches three equal spaced vertices on the circumference.



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