

John McLean  
sculpture from  
painting



Inside front cover

**Bourne Fine Art**  
*Part of The Fine Art Society*

**5 March to 1 April 2010**

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*Works are for sale on receipt  
of catalogue*



**1 | Colpo**

signed, titled and dated 2009 in pencil verso  
acrylic and collage on canvas · 61 x 46 cm



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**2 | Bartizan**

signed, titled and dated '96 in pencil verso  
oil on canvas · 171.5 x 109 cm

WAS delighted when Emily Walsh, director of Bourne Fine Art, said she would like to show my sculpture. Because this is the first time I have exhibited more than a couple of pieces at a time, we thought a few words would be helpful.

Making sculpture is more an impulse than an idea for me; but writing about the work might make it seem more rational than instinctive. An artist's intentions are multiplex and hard to pin down. And even when they can be clearly articulated they are not necessarily relevant. Ideally no one should be suggesting what the viewer ought to see. I have always wanted my art to speak for itself.

Keeping all that in mind, there are still some remarks to be made. The biggest exhibit in the show, **Traffic Yellow**, is somewhat architectural: a two storied cuboid, lacking one of its angles. My main discovery was putting the triangle across that non-existent corner. The red shape brings the entire space to life, as it seems to strive for the upper and also slither down to the lower level, accompanied by the play between all the negative shapes. The latter make the tune while the big sheets make the harmony.

The boundaries between painting, sculpture and architecture are indefinite. What would Notre Dame du Haut be without Corbusier's stained glass and enamelled doors? Or Vierzehnheiligen pilgrimage church without its equally integral paint and sculpture? All of my free standing pieces are close to the paintings and collages: they have the same vocabulary of simple shapes, and are equally reliant on colour. Polychromy in sculpture never died out but since Cubism it has had new vigour. Some twentieth-century artists made their coloured three dimensional inventions only in ceramic: Matisse and Léger for example. Fired glazes fuse with clay in a way brushed paint doesn't with metal. But that didn't inhibit Calder, Smith, Caro and many more. There is still a lot of scope in this region.

The paint on **Traffic Yellow** is powder-coated: baked on electrically. But on the rest of my sculptures I have applied a brush, deliberately varying the facture. The mechanical look of powder-coating suits the scale of **Traffic Yellow** just as the slight variety of touch contributes to the more intimate pieces. These grew out of my playing around with off-cuts of heavy – 450 gsm – watercolour paper. As I cut, folded and glued, I never lost sight of making them dance. That is why no small works touch the ground at more than three points, or in the case of **Gioco** and its siblings, one point and one line.

No matter what the medium, I work towards such an interdependence of parts that nothing could be added or taken away: a kind of absolute. When it happens, the eye and the spirit join up, just as the ear and soul do when you listen to a fine song.

**John McLean**



**3 | Fiesta**  
2009 · enamel on etch-primed aluminium  
40.5 x 41 x 27 cm





4 | **Gioco**  
2009 · acrylic on etch-primed aluminium  
80 x 80 x 63,5 cm





5 | **The Mearns**  
signed, titled and dated 2009  
in pencil verso  
acrylic on canvas  
112 x 124,5 cm



**6 | Traffic Yellow**  
2009 · steel, powder-coated steel and  
powder-coated aluminium  
260 x 140 x 85 cm





**7 | Gioia**  
2009 · acrylic on etch-primed aluminium  
80 x 80 x 63,5 cm



**8 | Hotel Du Lac**  
signed, titled and dated 2006 in pencil verso  
acrylic and collage on canvas · 28 x 35.5 cm



**9 | Signature**  
signed, titled and dated 2009 in pencil verso  
acrylic and collage on canvas · 38 x 48 cm



10 | Giocoliere  
2009 · acrylic on etch-primed aluminium  
80 x 80 x 63,5 cm





**11 | Kermesse**  
2009 · enamel on etch-primed aluminium  
39,5 x 43 x 30,5 cm



**12 | Kingoldrum**

signed, titled and dated 2008 in pencil verso  
acrylic on canvas · 121 x 150 cm

## John McLean

John McLean was born in 1939 and grew up in the north east of Scotland. He has had over forty solo exhibitions worldwide, and his work is represented in many public collections including the Boca Raton Museum of Art, U.S.A.; The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge; Glasgow Museums and Galleries; The Hunterian Collection; The Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art; The Scottish National Portrait Gallery; Southampton City Art Gallery; Swindon Art Gallery; Tate Gallery, London; and the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester.

His many awards include an Arts Council Major Award, 1980; The Lorne Award, 1993; Critics Award, Edinburgh Festival, 1994; and a Bryan Robertson Trust Award, 2008.

A highly respected painter of sophisticated abstraction, McLean has hitherto shown little of the three dimensional work he has always made. **Sculpture from Painting** is the first exhibition to explore this new direction.

illustrated on back cover:

### 13 | **Ascent**

signed, titled and dated 2009 in pencil verso  
acrylic and collage on canvas · 35.5 x 25.5 cm

illustrated on front cover: detail from **Gioia**, no.7  
illustrated as frontispiece: detail from **Gioco**, no.4

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