

William Scott (1913 – 1989)

William Scott was born in Greenock and grew up in Northern Ireland where he attended Belfast College of Art 1928-31, and at the Royal College of Art, London 1931-5 where he studied both sculpture and painting.

Scott lived in France from 1937 to 1939, teaching art in Brittany. From 1939 he worked in Dublin, London and Somerset and in 1946 visited Cornwall, meeting Nicholson, Lanyon, Frost and Wynter, and from then on was a frequent visitor to the artistic community of St Ives. Scott is best known for the still lifes he produced from the mid-1940s. He also experimented with abstract painting in the mid-1950s.

Concerned with still-life and ideas of 'primitive realism', his work reflects the influence of Cezanne, Chardin and Nicholson in its deliberately presented, symbolic simplification. Influenced by American painting, he produced larger abstract works between 1952 and 1954 but returned to still-life later in the decade. Later abstracts, 1958-62, used evocative shapes which reflected still-life and the nude; they became increasingly refined and economical. More recent work combines the still-life subject with harmonious, vibrant colour and the purity of the abstract paintings.

He exhibited at the Leger Galleries from 1942, at the Hanover Gallery and from 1974 at Gimpel Fils, London. He has shown nationally and internationally and in 1958 a retrospective exhibition of his work was held at the Venice Biennale. His work is represented in many public collections including the Tate Gallery and the Centre Pompidou, Paris. He taught painting at the Bath Academy of Art, 1946-56, at the Hamburg Academy in 1965, and from 1963-64 he was Ford Foundation Artist in Residence in Berlin. His awards include a first prize at the John Moores Exhibition of 1959, and in 1966 he received his CBE.