



## **John Piper – the Mountains of Wales; Richard Long – Land Art; Beryl Korot – Text and Commentary; Michael Landy – Four Walls; Callum Innes – New Watercolours; Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester**

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March 7, 2013

Some great regional galleries have very special collections indeed and are overlooked at our peril. The Whitworth in Manchester, for example, has a textiles holding second only to the V&A's in London, and is also strong on wallpaper, landscape painting, and drawings both historic and contemporary. A few months from now, it will close for a major refurbishment which, when complete, will see the galleries dramatically open out to the park at its back. How to mark this transitional moment?

Many curators would have opted for a single big show. Not so here. The Whitworth has decided to open four small shows almost simultaneously, all of which mesh with the gallery's main preoccupations, and also remind us of the city's past as the hub of the Industrial Revolution.



Beryl Korot, *Text and Commentary*, 1977

Beryl Korot was a pioneering New York video artist of the 1970s. 'Text and Commentary', a five-channel video installation, shows us fabric being woven on a pre-programmed Jacquard loom. Each flickering screen seems to offer up the equivalent of an abstract painting forever in the making. On nearby walls hang pictographic notations, codings that resemble Chinese calligraphy or a musical score.

Two entire galleries are given over to new and recent work by the Turner-Prize-shortlisted Scottish painter Callum Innes. Innes is a rigorous abstractionist, often quite muted and cerebral. A little less so here. A new series of 20 watercolour paintings are displayed, facing up and side by side, on a series of trestle tables, as if painting is yet another craft-driven, graft-driven production line. Each one is a square of colour, marooned and glowing at the centre of a huge cream mount. It is all about tonal harmonics.

Richard Long is busy recording his ceaseless perambulations in a rectangular upper gallery. Texts on the wall describe the journeys, and massy stones, configured in a rectangle or an oval on the gallery's floor, memorialise them physically. John Piper's series of paintings from the 1940s and 1950s entitled 'Mountains of Wales' hangs in an adjacent space. Here are painted and drawn transcriptions of violent geological ructions – frozen lake beds, toothsome rock formations, threatening crags.

Meanwhile, downstairs Michael Landy remembers, in a video installation, the house where he grew up in Essex, and his DIY-besotted father, whose ambitions were cruelly blighted when he had a dreadful accident at the age of 37. Once again, images of objects of utility serve the needs of art. There is no such thing as art for art's sake at the Whitworth.