

JONATHAN EVENS

I spoke tonight, together with [Edward Lucie-Smith](#), at the [Private View](#) of '[Painting the Light](#)', an exhibition by [Terry Ffyffe](#), which can be seen at [5th Base Gallery](#) until 18th September.

Edward, who has recently [written on Terry's work](#), focused on the change in direction that it represents, while I focused on its reconciliatory nature:



Two of the paintings in this exhibition have been on show at [St Stephen Walbrook](#) over the past ten days as part of the [current exhibition](#) by [commission4mission](#) and I have greatly

appreciated the opportunity to contemplate them there.

I have the good fortune to minister at two of the most special churches in Central London; St Stephen Walbrook and [St Martin-in-the-Fields](#). One of the things I like most about being at St Martin in the Fields is talking with visitors about [Shirazeh Houshiary's East Window](#) with its central oval and curved lines. I always emphasize that the artist did not want to give her own interpretation of the image in order that those viewing it should be entirely free to make their own response to it.

Terry's work is similarly rich and capable of sustaining multiple interpretations, so these brief reflections are not intended to close down interpretation by being in any way definite but, instead, are intended to provide one or two of many ways of entering and inhabiting these works.

My first response is in relation to the sense of the fragmentary in these works; with these fragments, whether geometric shapes or free-flowing patterns, then being linked and united to form a harmonised whole. Terry's art is, therefore, an art of reconciliation; a facet of modernism that is, I think, under-recognised in the visual arts whilst being more widely acknowledged as a facet of modernist poetry. [David Jones](#), in describing his poem 'The Anathemata', said he had fashioned a 'coat of many colours' from a 'series of fragments, fragmented bits, chance scraps' that had come his way by this channel or that influence.

With these paintings, Terry has, I think, done the same as this is a key aspect of his 'Cosmic' art which comes from his experience of meditation; of entering the world of 'liquid light' where the realization of the unity of all things, the oneness of all creation becomes certain knowledge.

My second way into these works is through the sense that Terry is inspired by organic patterns in nature; both at the micro and macro levels. Inspiration has come as he has looked through the telescope and the microscope. Indeed, one understanding of the rectangles in Background Radiation could be to see them as microscope slides. Terry believes that the patterns of the micro in nature mirror those of the macro: that the patterns and shapes of particles match those found in the great expanses of the universe.

His belief that 'the beauty of the designs that underlie every aspect of nature ... can only be the work of God' reminds me of [Antoni Gaudi](#) who 'described nature as 'the Great Book, always open, that we should force ourselves to read' and thought that 'everything structural or ornamental that an architect might imagine was already prefigured in natural form.'

Gaudí famously suggested that, 'originality is returning to the origin' and, as a result, based his buildings on a simple premise: If nature is the work of God, and if architectural forms are derived from nature, then the best way to honour God is to design buildings based on his work. That, I believe, has real synergy with the inspirations for this exhibition and is a key reason why these paintings themselves are so inspiring. So, I want to offer my congratulations to Terry on his amazing originality and inspiration.

[Into The Earth](#)

