

Steve Delaney, 2016

Anthony Frost

I've known Anthony since 2006 and I remember very clearly when we first met. He, his wife Linda and a couple of their friends came to see a show I was doing at the Edinburgh Festival and afterwards they hung around to say how much they'd enjoyed it. Such was their ebullience that they sort of gathered me up.

I think 'ebullient' is a word that sums Anthony up quite well. It seems to me that he wrings the most he can out of life and his work. I admire that.

I am sitting in the studio looking at the work for this exhibition 'Luminous Tracks'. The first thing that strikes me is it's more gloriously abstract. The paintings of his that I own and am more familiar with have more geometry, with wedge shapes, triangles repeat patterns. These are free and expressive. Many times this 'freedom' takes Anthony off the confines of the frame completely, the painting shooting out into the air. It looks as though they almost have a mind of their own. Several of the frames have had to be reinforced after the event because at the time of painting he doesn't know where this overlap will be or will end. I get the impression from talking to him that he's been itching for the work to leave the frame in this way for some time and it's something he's been experimenting with now and again in the past, though on a smaller scale than here.

He mentions a couple of times what he calls 'The happy accident.' 'That piece of netting that falls onto a canvas and becomes part of it. Or an accidental splash on a canvas which stays.'

I can see that he really embraces these quirks of fate. He becomes quite animated when talking about this happenstance. He also sometimes decides a painting should be viewed the other way up or sideways on. In his own words again.

"When I was younger I always used to think, 'That's the top, that's the bottom'. But now I'll just sometimes lay it on the floor and walk round it and think, 'Which way does it look best'.

Anthony's sense of colour and the way they work together is what drew me to his work in the first place. It's an incredible instinct he has. In the studio there's a large window looking out over a view of the sea, with St Michael's Mount almost hovering there. It occurs to me that his colour choices are influenced by this proximity to the sea. 'Subconsciously' they probably are he tells me. "But not intentionally." He tends to resist that kind of association and if that ever becomes apparent he'll often react against it.

You can't talk about Anthony's work without talking about music. It strikes me that music is his biggest influence. I ask him, 'Do you ever network with music, deliberately?' To which he answers: "I do. I record a lot of spoken word on Radio 4 to listen to while I work. My son, Danny says, 'You go into dad's studio and he's usually on his hands and knees pressing the fast forward button on one of his cassette players'.

There are about half a dozen cassette decks (remember those?) that I can see dotted about his studio. He tells me that he's constantly recording Radio 4 and Radio 6 Music onto C120 cassettes. He has notebooks full of song titles, with – potential titles for unpainted canvasses. More often than not he'll write all that information down on the back of the painting.

All the paintings in this exhibition have been named after a piece of music that has inspired him. Although this time unusually, the titles followed the paintings. Anthony suggests it may have been this way because he had been ill early last year and when he got back into the studio his impulse was just to 'paint and paint'. "These paintings are more direct, more punchy"

'When starting a painting i dont know the problems i will have to deal with until the painting is well on the go and the secret (for me) is to keep the whole thing on the boil right to the end, so the finished work has that feeling of excitement, speed and danger. I try to take all my paintings to the edge – it is voyage of discovery, full of surprises, problems, accidents (happy accidents that I use to my advantage) and decisions, which all have to be resolved in some crazy way. I attempt with colour and marks to create my own space, rhythms, weight speed and volume.'

Anthony then goes on to say something I found particularly interesting when he was comparing his own work process with that of his dad, the late, Sir Terry Frost. "It reminds me of my Dad. He used to say... he'd come into his studio in Porthmeor and lie down on his chaise longue he had. He'd lie there and wait for the painting not to be looking at him and then he'd sneak up on it. 'Because the painting's always trying to impose on you'"

Anthony then adds; "I try not to be contrived. I work on maybe four canvasses at a time. Put the music on, work in a sort of trance-like way. Enjoying the music. Not thinking about the paint".

This is something I recognize in the way that I work too. Often squinting at the computer out of the corner of my eye from the other side of the room for a big chunk of the day before springing up and surprising both myself and the machine by actually thumping some words out on its keys. It's very interesting to me that there are these similarities. Perhaps Anthony enjoys the fact that there's no 'manual' for what he does. As I do.

These unfettered, wonderfully abstract paintings really and simply connect with the viewer. You can lose yourself standing there looking at them. I can't think of anything else I'd want from a painting.

The colours, the textures, the shapes, the intricacy, the thoughtfulness, the originality, the music, the audio, the intent, the conviction, the guts, the happenstance and the sheer, sheer ebullience all adds up to Anthony Frost and therefore the paintings here in this exhibition.

Steve Delaney, *Comedian and actor aka Count Arthur Strong*

