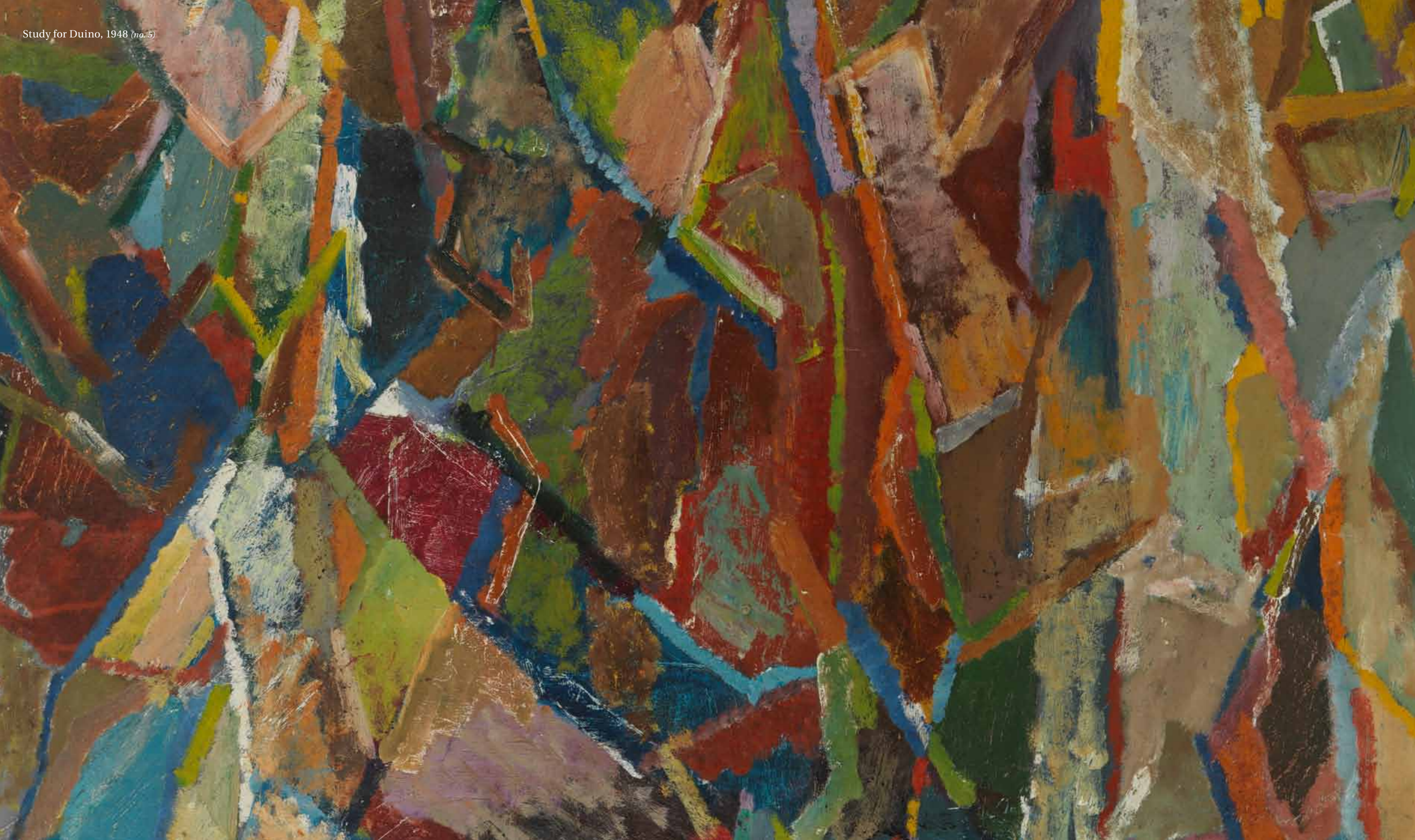




Miles Richmond





*Miles Richmond outside Ronda, 2005  
Photograph courtesy of Gry Iverslien Katz*

# Miles Richmond

(1922 – 2008)

2015

text by  
Andrea Gates

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28 Cork Street, London W1S 3NG  
Telephone: +44 (0)20 7437 5545

## The Sensation of Colour

To celebrate its centenary, in 1992 London South Bank University mounted an exhibition of paintings by David Bomberg alongside works by several of his former students. Between 1945 and 1953, when he taught art at the Borough Polytechnic (as the University was then known), Bomberg's teaching profoundly influenced a generation of post-war British artists, including Frank Auerbach, Dennis Creffield, Leon Kossoff, Dorothy Mead and Miles Richmond.



In the same year, in tribute to Bomberg, Richmond undertook what would be his largest and most ambitious painting: *London from the South Bank* (fig. 1). Dedicated to both the memory of his former teacher and the start of a new millennium, he painted the thirty-six-foot-long mural over nearly seven years, working mainly from the school's roof. In support of the project, the University granted Richmond funds for paint and supplies, and allowed him access to the roof.<sup>1</sup>

Nearly fifty years before, Bomberg had held art classes in this same building and he had often told students to make studies on the roof, from where wartime destruction was still visible in almost every direction. In one of Richmond's earliest paintings, *London with St Paul's* (fig. 2), only the cathedral's dome identifies what would otherwise be an almost unrecognisable view.

Fig. 1.  
*London from the South Bank*, 1999  
London South Bank University  
© Estate of Miles Richmond

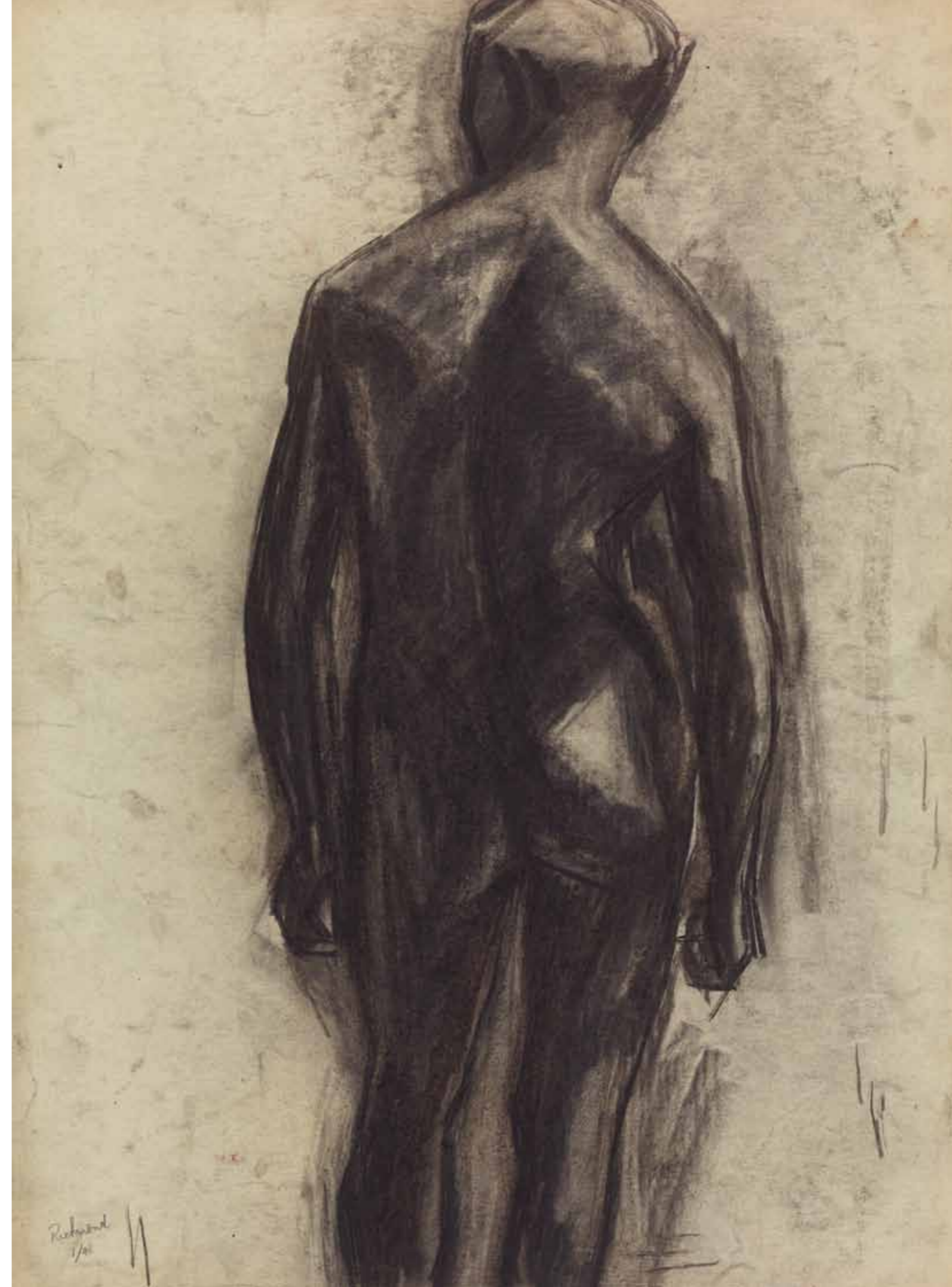
When Richmond decided to paint *London from the South Bank*, he specifically chose to revisit this location, because he saw a kind of sacred geometry in the view from Lambeth extending east to the Docklands. The Polytechnic's former art school on the Borough Road is situated near a traffic hub that gives access to seven main bridges across the Thames. Richmond used these roads to create the basic structural lines of his composition, but also saw them as conduits leading towards highlights of British cultural history. Throughout the mural London's streets and landmarks glow, flash, fade, emerge and recede, expressing his hope for an England in which everyone is 'assured a place in an immortal heritage,' one that he believed would endure so long as people respected the power of imagination.<sup>2</sup>

The mural, with its constantly shifting visual energy, is arguably the most powerful assertion of the uniquely chromatic style Richmond developed from relating his understanding of science to the philosophies of not only Bomberg (who remained his greatest formative influence), but especially those of William Blake and Paul Cézanne. As a boy, he preferred studying physics and chemistry to art, but was immediately captivated by Cézanne, stating that when he first saw Cézanne's paintings it was as if 'the skin had dropped off my eyes.'<sup>3</sup> Because Richmond never described this epiphany in formal terms, it is unclear how Cézanne's work specifically affected him, but he always credited Bomberg with helping him understand Cézanne's dictum that the artist is equal to nature and therefore must confront it as such to express its human equivalent.<sup>4</sup>



Fig. 2.  
*London with St Paul's* 1947  
Private Collection, UK  
© Estate of Miles Richmond

1. **Borough Figure Study I**, 1948  
charcoal on paper  
76 x 56 cms 29 7/8 x 22 ins  
signed and dated lower left



Cézanne described his own confrontations with nature as *mes sensations* – the sensory experiences he felt most intensely when painting outdoors. Towards the end of his life, he increasingly described pursuing these *sensations*, their importance to his work, and his resolute faith in ‘nature, and an eye educated by contact with it.’<sup>5</sup> He insisted that while writers could rely on abstract concepts to convey meaning, a painter must give ‘...concrete expression to his sensations, his perceptions, by means of line and colour’ and extolled a young Émile Bernard to ‘Fathom what you have in front of you, and make every effort to express yourself as logically as possible.’<sup>6</sup>

A discussion of how Cézanne’s innovations might relate to contemporary scientific theory lies outside the scope of this essay. However, it is worth noting that his experiments on the interrelation of form emerged concomitantly with a watershed moment in scientific history: the development of the electromagnetic theory of light.<sup>7</sup> Whether popular science directly informed Cézanne’s work is arguable, but he was certainly aware of how it informed contemporary naturalism; he even tried to join Hippolyte Taine’s class in aesthetics.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, throughout most of the nineteenth century science became increasingly popular in French culture, particularly amongst the educated *bourgeoisie*. The public’s demand for engaging, readily understood explanations of complex scientific concepts encouraged several writers (who were passionately interested in science but not necessarily scientists) to develop a new kind of journalism.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, like the Impressionist painters, these *journalistes scientifiques* worked outside their field’s official academic system and their success challenged the traditional prestige of that system.

Cézanne’s profound influence on early modernism is well known, but in Bomberg’s work this effect is perhaps most evident after World War I, when he abandoned his mechanical and largely urban perspectives in favour of landscape. During the 1920s and into the early 1930s, Bomberg executed topographical views of Palestine and Toledo with a combination of precision and organic logic that is more often found in watchmaking than painting. Indeed, if these landscapes illustrate his search for the divine – e.g. the ‘Holy Land’ or El Greco – they still appear more empirical than spiritual, because Bomberg approached them not as a distant view, but as an entity.<sup>10</sup> In *Toledo from the Alcazar* (fig. 3), his complex network of tactile brushstrokes creates an almost dizzying effect, suggesting that as more forms interrelate within an image, the more that image flourishes.



**2. Portrait of Dorothy Mead, 1948**

oil on board  
76 x 61 cms 29 7/8 x 24 ins  
Verso: 108. Westminster Abbey, 1948.

While Bomberg was possibly familiar with Spinoza, he drew much of his philosophy from the writings of George Berkeley, specifically the contention that the senses per se were a barrier to any true engagement between an individual and their external world. Berkeley maintained that if one determined reality strictly through the senses, the results were at best subjective and at worst misleading.<sup>11</sup> One corollary to his argument is the difference that exists between suspension of disbelief and blind faith. While the first can create an experience (reading a novel, watching a play, etc.), which can be ‘true’ without actually being real, the second can persuade entire nations to cede responsibility to government or technology. By 1946, Bomberg had seen trench warfare, nascent Zionism, the bombing of London and the dawn of the atomic age. So he now believed it was not only his duty to pursue the distinction between form and energy (the so-called “spirit in the mass”) through his own work, he must teach the next generation of artists to do so as well.

Before Richmond joined Bomberg’s classes at the Borough Polytechnic, his only art training had been at Kingston Art School, where he enrolled just after the beginning of the

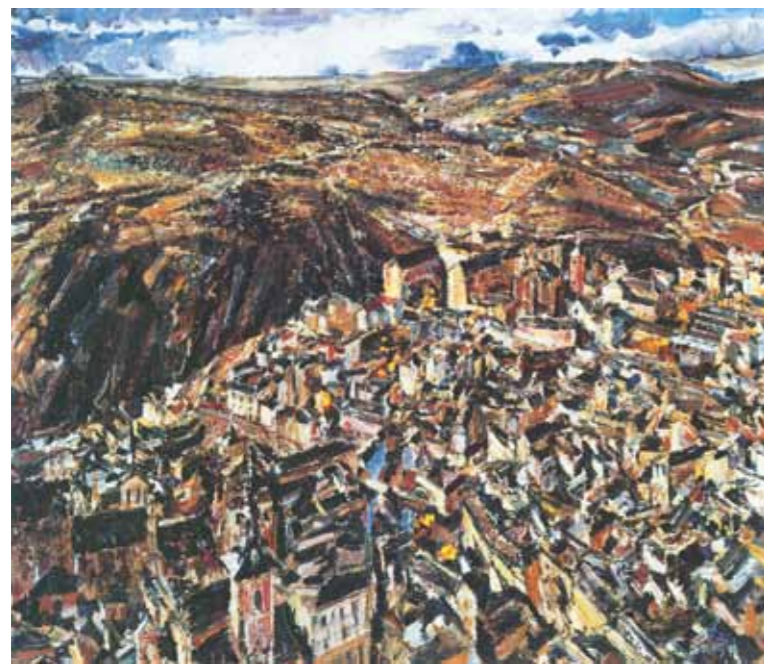


Fig. 3.  
David Bomberg  
*Toledo from the Alcazar* 1929  
Private collection, London  
© Daniel Katz Limited



3. **Self Portrait, 1949**  
oil on board  
78 x 61 cms 30¾ x 24 ins  
Verso: 97. *Untitled*, 1948/9

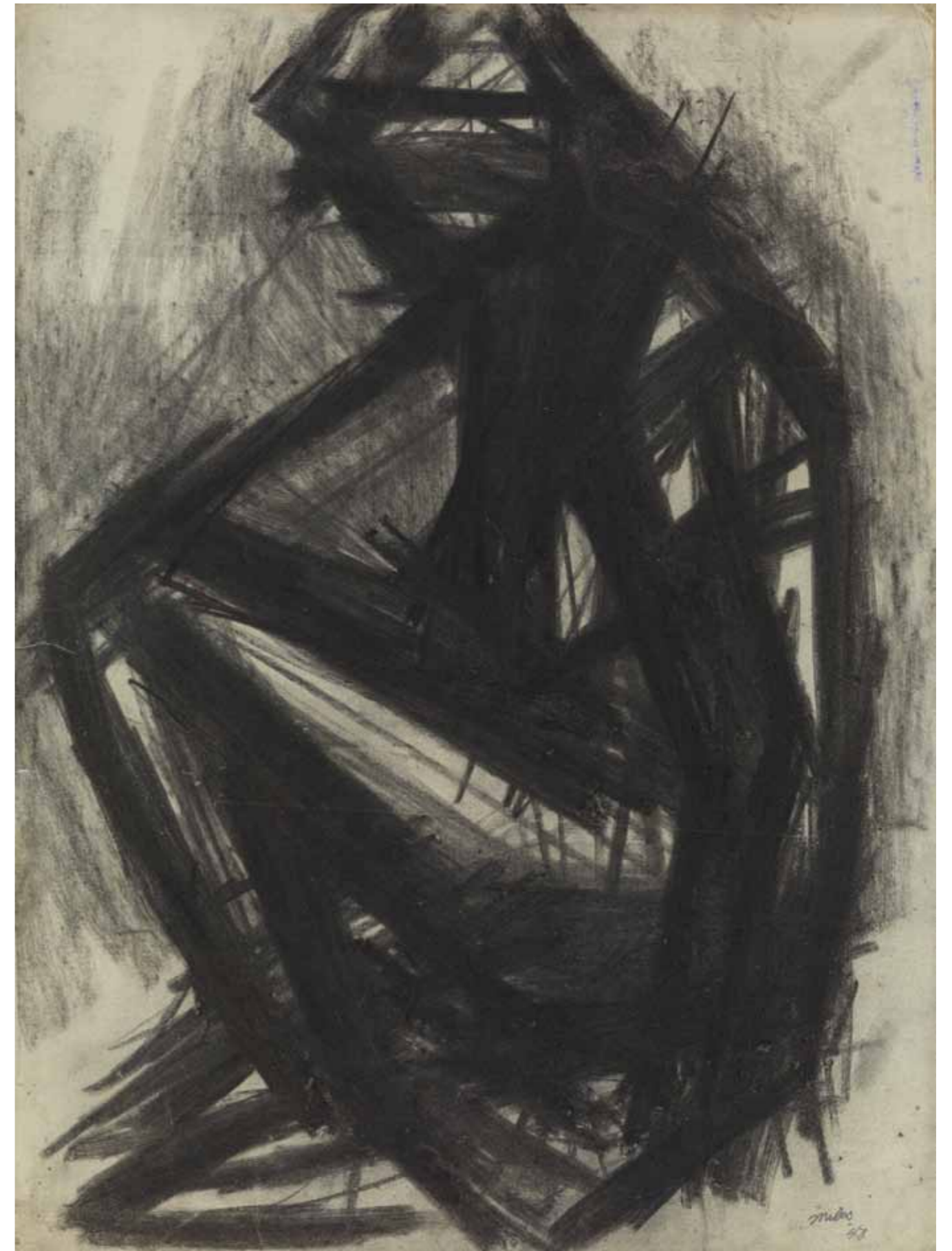
war. After completing his coursework in 1942, he was eligible for active service, but became a conscientious objector and worked in Kent for the forestry service. Later he served as a hospital porter and an air-raid warden in London, where one of his observation posts was actually the school's roof. Upon his release, he returned to painting and eventually joined Bomberg's class in 1947. However, when he first encountered Bomberg he was not impressed and later said: "I was very skeptical of [his] approach to teaching. His claims were so extreme that I doubted his sincerity."<sup>12</sup>

Bomberg's classes were in fact nothing less than a personal crusade to stimulate integrity in his students, who often faced practical instruction couched in spiritual, even gnomic terms. As Frank Auerbach explained: '[Bomberg] had this sort of idiom that allowed one to go for the essence at the very beginning, to adumbrate a figure in ten minutes and then... find different terms in which to re-state it until one got something... This wasn't a question of display; this was a question of a private quest, which had certain results.'<sup>13</sup>

At Bomberg's Borough classes Richmond likewise made countless life studies (cat. nos. 1 & 4), none of which portrays a distinguishable individual, but instead focuses on conveying the model's sense of energy, movement and mass. Whether they were drawing models in the studio or bombed-out views from the roof, Bomberg expected students to weigh their need for expression against intuition and direct observation; only then would they achieve both form and the idea of form: its mass, weight and presence.

Richmond's life studies would eventually provide him with the building blocks of his first major painting, *Duino, Homage to Rainer Maria Rilke* (fig. 4). Inspired by the fifth of Rilke's *Duino Elegies*, in which the poet interpreted Picasso's *La famille de saltimbanques*<sup>14</sup> as 'playthings in the hands of grief, continually twisted and turned,' Richmond based his composition on four figures repeatedly arranged and superimposed until they dissolved into refracted images: 'angels mirrored on the other side.'<sup>15</sup> Its poetic inspiration aside, Richmond viewed *Duino* as a religious subject and, being entirely abstract, considered the work to be far more successful than his more figurative tries at this particular genre.<sup>16</sup>

4. Borough Figure Study II, 1948  
charcoal  
76 x 56 cms 29 7/8 x 22 ins  
signed and dated lower right



He later explained that by basing *Duino* on his Borough life studies, he was trying to illustrate ‘that sense of mystery I experienced in the poems through the physicality of things’.<sup>17</sup> Of all his early works, the picture best illustrates how he absorbed Bomberg’s directional geometry and applied it to his own questioning of the material world; it was Richmond’s first successful experiment in determining where one definition of reality ends and another begins.<sup>18</sup>

Within a year, Bomberg had turned what began as a notional teaching post into an informal art school at the Borough Polytechnic.<sup>19</sup> At the instigation of one student, Cliff Holden, he gathered together a group of like-minded students and formed the first Borough Group of painters.<sup>20</sup> The Group’s 1947 show at the Archer Gallery included Richmond’s *London with St Paul’s* (fig. 2), possibly painted from the school’s roof and later described by William Varley as: ‘A sombre Cézannesque articulation of planes... not so much painstakingly wrought as fought to the point of submission. It comes as something of a surprise to discover that Richmond conceived [it] in a spirit of optimism.’<sup>21</sup>

However by 1951, any such spirit had faded and members’ competing expectations and interpretations of Bomberg’s ideas led to rifts that disbanded the Group. Richmond continued to exhibit his work in London with Holden and others, but the



Fig. 4.  
*Duino, Homage to Rainer Maria Rilke* 1948  
London, London Centre for Spirituality  
© Estate of Miles Richmond



5. *Study for Duino*, 1948  
oil on board  
94 x 124 cms 37 x 48 7/8 ins

following year he left England after marrying a fellow student, Susanna Richmond (no relation).<sup>22</sup> The couple first went to Aix-en-Provence, in a kind of pilgrimage to Cézanne, but left almost immediately for the Málaga coast, where they heard that Bomberg was now in Spain. With his future teaching prospects in England severely limited, Bomberg hoped to open an art school in southern Andalusia, and wanted Richmond to assist him.<sup>23</sup> What is more, Bomberg no longer wanted to teach in a conventional studio setting and believed that in Ronda he could help students better realise Cézanne's 'rediscovery that the world was round and there was a way out through the sunlight.'<sup>24</sup>

Located inland to the west of Málaga, Ronda has a rich history, with sites and buildings dating from the Neolithic to the Napoleonic eras. The city's most distinct feature, however, is that it sits on a high plateau, bisected by a ravine plunging to the Guadalevin River and ringed by the Sierra de las Nieves Mountains. Ronda's history, topography and intensely mutable light reinvigorated something elemental in Bomberg's work and once again he painted and drew the city's bridges, its precipitous gorge and the nearby towns. In support of Bomberg's plan, Richmond sent letters to former Borough students and Group members enjoining them to come to Ronda, where they could rely on Bomberg's advice and criticism and, through their participation, regenerate 'the fruitful spirit of the Borough.'<sup>25</sup> Unfortunately, almost no one could afford the travel and living expenses, and the school never materialised. Nonetheless, Richmond remained in Ronda, and in the last years of Bomberg's life the two men became close friends. Living as neighbours at Virgen de la Cabeza, just outside the city, they met regularly to discuss art and philosophy, and occasionally made painting trips to nearby sites and villages. Richmond's nearly continuous engagement with Bomberg completely changed his earlier opinion of him, a transformation that Susanna saw first-hand: '[Bomberg] said to Miles: "You don't really believe in me." But we had two and a half years with him in Spain and in that time they came to a complete understanding.'<sup>26</sup>

Stylistically, this understanding is particularly evident in Richmond's early Spanish landscapes, which are remarkably similar to Bomberg's. His distant view of the city, *Ronda from la Virgen de la Cabeza* (fig. 5), painted in partial collaboration with Bomberg, shows the strong linear scaffolding, earthen palette and almost confrontational approach to the view typical of Bomberg's late Spanish paintings. Moreover, the picture is wholly consistent with other landscapes that Richmond painted during his first years in Ronda.



**6. Ronda from Los Molinos, 1956**

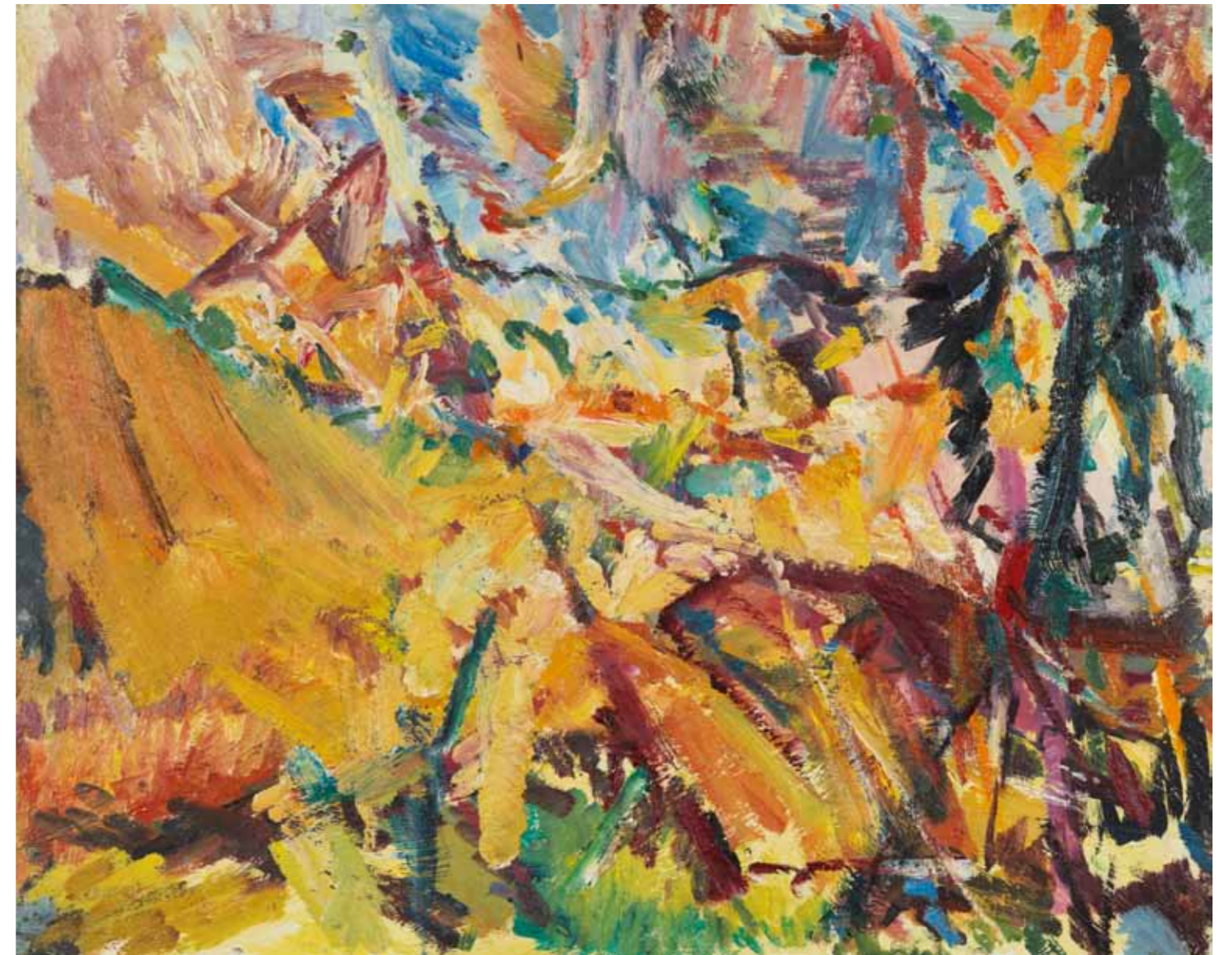
oil on board  
62 x 77 cms 24<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 30<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> ins  
dated and inscribed with title on label verso

But by 1956, when he painted *Ronda from Los Molinos* (cat. no. 6) Richmond's palette and brushwork rapidly changed and began evolving into the charged, colouristic impasto style that would inform the rest of his career. At least part of this stylistic shift must have been precipitated by Bomberg's death the following year. In late July of 1957, Richmond found Bomberg alone and barely conscious at his home in Ronda, suffering from severe oedema brought on by cirrhosis. He took Bomberg by donkey to the train station, on to Málaga and finally to the British hospital at Gibraltar, where he said goodbye to him for what would be the last time. Although Bomberg improved markedly at Gibraltar and on the boat back to England, he died soon after being admitted to St Thomas's Hospital.

Almost immediately, there was a reappraisal of Bomberg's life and work in London. Unlike many of his former students, Richmond took no part in these tributes, nor contributed any personal statement.<sup>27</sup> Instead he remained with his young family in Ronda, where he believed he could pursue and perpetuate Bomberg's ideals. One particular conviction they shared was that the increasingly neglect of draughtsmanship in post-war art education was a threat to humanism. Bomberg had specifically sought to redress this imbalance in his Borough classes. He believed that by restoring the primacy of drawing, students could grasp the most effective means of communicating both internal and external realities. This particular ideal would



Fig. 5.  
Miles Richmond (and David Bomberg)  
*Ronda from la Virgen de la Cabeza* 1955  
Private collection, UK  
© Estate of Miles Richmond



7. *Ronda, c. 1960*  
oil on board  
62 x 76 cms 24<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 29<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> ins

become the lodestone of Richmond's own work; he later explained: "[Drawing] can help you understand this mystery, the relationship of mind and matter."<sup>28</sup>

The next decade saw one of the most intensely experimental and prolific periods in Richmond's career. Painting in an animated, chromatic style that is distinct from most of his earlier work, he painted numerous views of Ronda and its environs, studying repeatedly the cliff face, the gorge, and nearby Montejaque at different times of the day, from various angles, and in all weathers. Ronda exerted an almost gravitational pull on Richmond's creative imagination and became the locus of his search for 'significance within sense... evidence of the physical presence of the sacred.'<sup>29</sup>

He had always agreed with Bomberg's conviction that to give form to imagination, artists must engage their senses on a profound level. However, his concept of the essential differed, and in fact they had often debated whether finding 'the spirit in the mass' depended upon reading form *or* its energy. While Bomberg maintained that gravity was the divine unifying force behind the universe, Richmond increasingly adopted Blake's belief that everything has its own vortex of energy. Equally, Bomberg had read these landscapes as a challenge between solids and voids, whereas Richmond interpreted them as interrelations between mass and energy. Indeed, in some of these paintings, he almost appeared to have 'atomised' the landscape. In *Ronda* (cat. no. 7), he used loose, thick brushstrokes, strong diagonals that challenge the weight of the horizon, and a high-key palette to almost diffract the rock face of the plateau, making it crackle with suggested energy. Colour now became the driving force behind his style, and he no longer depended on conveying mass to engage the viewer. In fact, *Ronda* virtually illustrates what happens in the human brain when it reads colour: the exchange of energy between a photon of coloured light as it hits the cones of the retina and transfers an electric impulse to the brain, which then interprets it as red, green, blue, etc.

It is perhaps not coincidental that Richmond's increasing awareness of light developed concomitantly with both ground-breaking investigations into wave-particle duality and the rise of popular science in Britain.<sup>30</sup> Given his diffuse treatment of form and his lifelong amateur interest in science, Richmond possibly understood the basic concept behind wave-particle duality: that



**8. Mountains in the Moonlight,  
near Ronda, 1960**

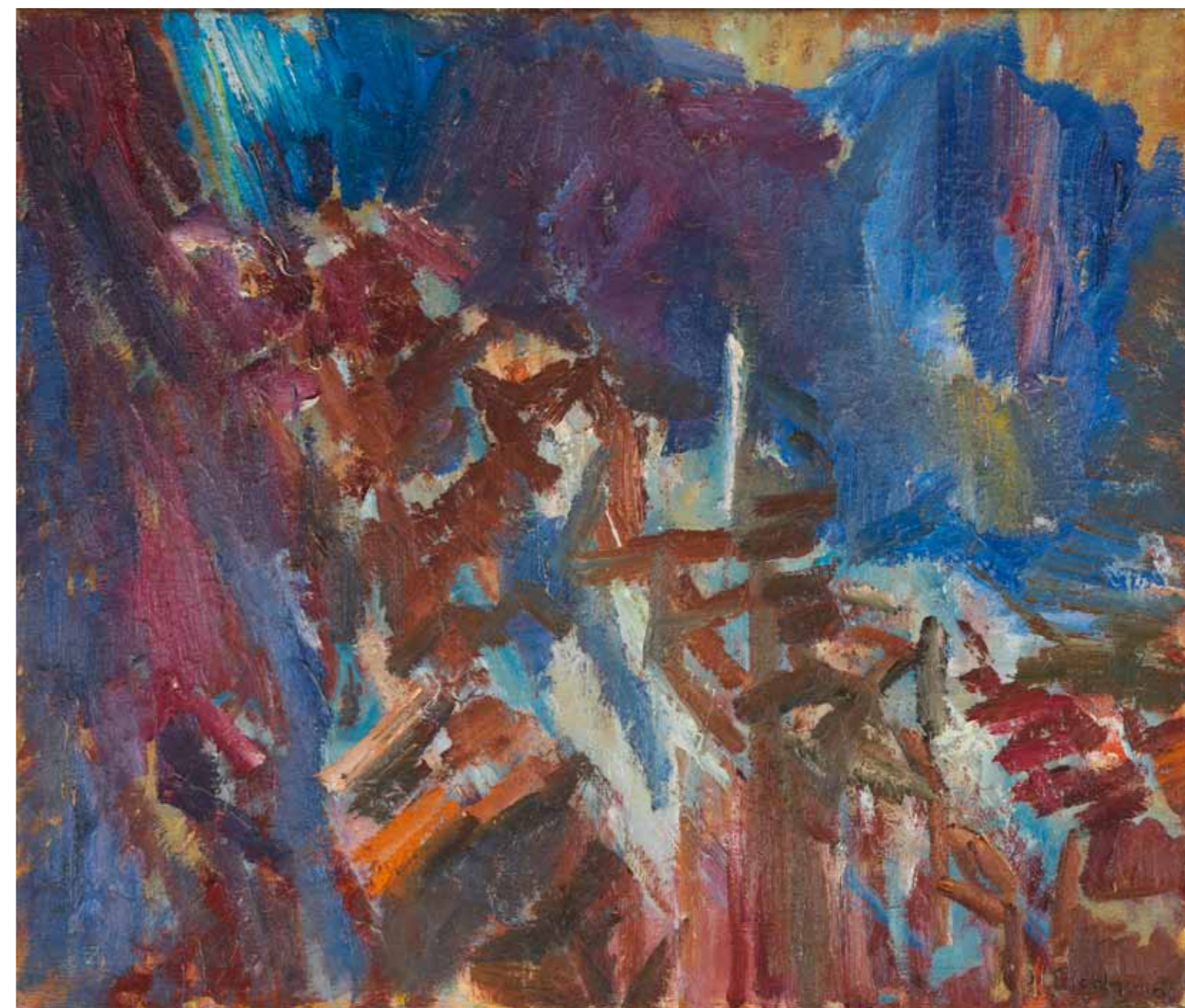
oil on canvas  
80 x 99 cms 31 1/2 x 39 ins  
signed lower left

light behaves as both a consistent wave *and* as discrete quanta of energy. By way of analogy, one might compare a ray gun (as seen in popular science fiction) with a machine gun. While a ray gun fires a steady wave of energy from a point source, a machine gun fires a stream of bullets, which, like photons (tiny parcels of electromagnetic energy), are discrete. If the human eye attempted to observe a particle stream of energy it could only do so discretely, 'seeing' just one photon at a time and even then, instantaneously.

Belief in a changeless, transcendent reality that exists beyond physical comprehension is the bedrock of much of Platonic philosophy and, for that matter, advanced mathematical theory, subjects in which Richmond maintained a passionate, if amateur, interest. Eventually, he came to believe that consistent, direct, concentrated engagement with his subject matter would result in a 'flashpoint': a simultaneous recognition of its facts and its energy. Richmond was always keenly aware that because all objects and natural phenomena are composed of particles that emit energy, when they are perceived through the veil of the natural world the constituent energy of both object and atmosphere interact with that of the viewer. Therefore, both artist and viewer must be aware of this exchange of energy.

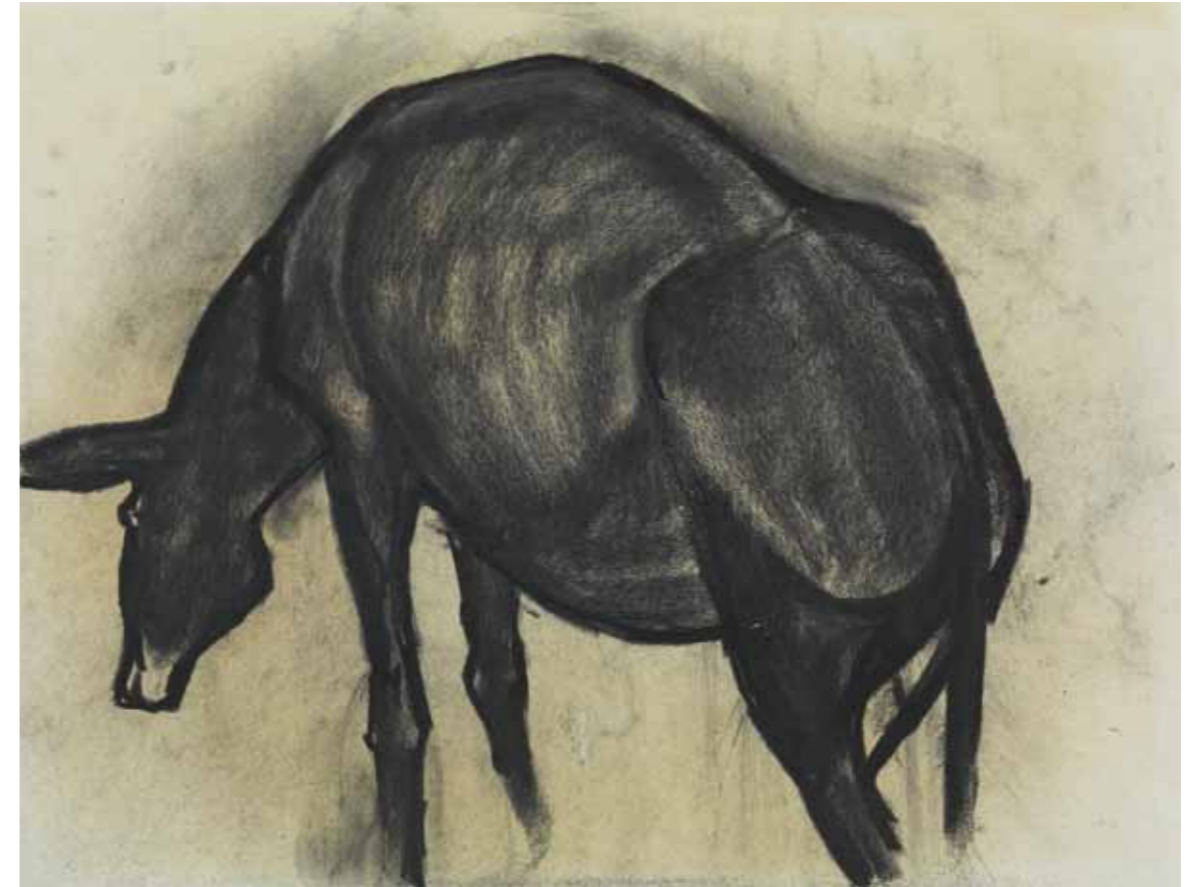
Richmond's epiphany was not new – Cézanne's pursuit of his *sensations* is well documented, as are earlier investigations by Constable and Turner – but it allowed him to develop an aesthetic, unbound by either abstraction or empiricism, that gave form to his imagination. By expressing both object and its essence he believed he now saw the invisible companion that walked beside him, not Bomberg or his shade, but a sort of creative guardian angel. And indeed, 'angel' was how Richmond came to describe the quantum of energy emitted by what he fully perceived.<sup>31</sup>

By the late 1960s, Richmond had produced a large body of work, but remained reluctant to exhibit in London. This was largely because he believed his paintings to still be too similar to Bomberg's, a perception that changed definitively around 1969, when he met Harry Thubron. Thubron was both an artist and a formative art educator who, inspired by the Bauhaus and the writings of Herbert Read, encouraged students to achieve visual literacy in addition to technical skills.<sup>32</sup> He became close friends with Richmond, despite the fact that he did not appreciate Bomberg *and* admired Picasso (about whom Richmond was



9. **Grazalema from above  
with Blue Mountains, 1960**

oil on canvas  
65 x 76 cms 25<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 29<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> ins  
signed lower right



10. **Ronda from Below, c. 1957**  
charcoal on paper 44 x 60 cms 17<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 23<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> ins
11. **Moonlight, Ronda, 1960**  
charcoal on paper 61 x 64 cms 24 x 25<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> ins
12. **Study of a Mule, 1960**  
charcoal on paper 50 x 67 cms 19<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 26<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> ins



**13. Cliffs and Sea, Portuairk, 1981**  
charcoal on paper 50 x 61 cms 19<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 24 ins

**14. The Kitchen Table, Chipperfield, 1966**  
charcoal on paper 50 x 61 cms 19<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 24 ins



15. Study for the Oak at Chipperfield, 1966  
charcoal on paper 51 x 67 cms 20<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 26<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> ins



16. Ronda from the Barrio San Francisco, 1960  
charcoal on paper 47 x 63 cms 18<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 24<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> ins



Fig. 6.  
A selection of Richmond's notebooks  
containing colour exercises c.1967-1970  
© Estate of Miles Richmond

largely ambivalent). Although their discussions could often turn pyrotechnic, their friendship had a decisive effect on Richmond's work, because Thubron reintroduced him to the possibilities of colour theory.

Having long questioned what would remain of his work if it were stripped of Bomberg's influence, Richmond now decided to exorcise this influence. He had always based his work on line and form and now wanted to intuit colour, so he stopped drawing and painting almost entirely and instead made colour exercises (fig. 6). In an effort to find his own vehicle for communicating both actualities and ideas he followed the practice of Johannes Itten, Paul Klee and other Bauhaus masters and filled notebooks with abstract, largely geometric diagrams to illustrate various contrasts of colour saturation, extension, complements and value.

By the early 1970s, when he fully returned to painting, Richmond's style had changed further still, with forms now achieved through an interlay of primary colour planes and swirling brushwork, often emphasised by gestural underdrawing. Following his self-imposed hiatus, several works, including *The Oak at Chipperfield* (cat. no. 17) show a dramatic shift in palette towards what appears to be an RGB colour model: an additive method in which three light beams – one red, one green and one blue – are joined to produce one colour, whose intensity depends on its relationship to black or white.<sup>33</sup>

His next major work, *The Red Studio* (fig. 7) showed how he used this renewed understanding of optics to strip his style of angular expression in favour of a glowing multi-coloured clarity



17. *The Oak at Chipperfield*, c. 1974  
oil on canvas  
110 x 143 cms 43<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 56<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> ins

that revealed both the mass and energy of his forms. Later, he consistently described painting *The Red Studio* as a marathon, out-of-body experience, and it is possible that his immersion in colour theory may have partly precipitated an existential crisis; certainly, he had begun to question physical reality.<sup>34</sup> By his own account, he painted the picture in three days, working non-stop alone in his Camden studio in a kind of creative trance. When he had finished the painting, he finally regained consciousness and found himself standing on his head.<sup>35</sup> Painted in pink, cadmium red, green, yellow, brown, ochre, blue and alizarin crimson, the picture shows a corner of the studio in which contrasts between pure warm and cool colours create forms that appear to thrum with self-contained energy. Susanna later compared Richmond's experience of painting *The Red Studio* to *el duende*, a kind of visionary state that flamenco dancers enter when they perform: "It comes from something beyond their conscious mind... it's on a totally different level than emotion."<sup>36</sup> Richmond maintained that he had experienced something extrasensory, even paranormal in painting the picture, but remarkably the work was squared, first as a charcoal under-drawing, then in chalk either during or upon completion. This rational approach suggests that not only was Richmond's choice of subject deliberate, but



Fig. 7.  
*The Red Studio*, 1974  
© Estate of Miles Richmond



18. *Interior on the Farm, La Indiana*, 1976  
watercolour on paper  
63 x 47 cms 24<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 18<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> ins  
signed and dated lower right

also that he was inspired by more than a mere arrangement of objects. While the picture is strongly abstract, certain objects are apparent (a window, a table, chairs, a spiral staircase), which nevertheless become less distinct the more one focuses specifically upon them. Instead, the composition draws the eye constantly from sector to sector, where forms emerge as both distinct and interrelated, but never quite simultaneously nor as a concerted whole.

*The Red Studio* marked a pivotal moment in Richmond's career because it differed radically from any of his previous works and had no evident connection to any of his recognised influences. In this painting he finally realised the transcendentalism Bomberg had experienced (but Richmond himself had never actually grasped), *and* reasserted himself as the author of his own creative history.<sup>37</sup> More importantly, however, Richmond had definitively found his own style. By interpreting form *as* energy, he now focused on describing how specific energies of forms interact, and actually saw his relationship to landscape as interactive: 'I want to look at nature as naked as nature is and find out what we have in common. I find we share a field of forces, a vast electro-magnetic field of forces.'<sup>38</sup> This shift in perception transformed his work, as seen in *Ronda from Below* (fig. 8), where (with almost no recourse to line) he interpreted the cliff face as an interplay of pure colour, inviting the viewer to infer that the physical facts of the landscape emit specific spectral energies.



Fig. 8.  
*Ronda from Below* 1977  
Private collection, USA  
© David Messum Fine Art Limited



19. *Figures in an Interior, La Indiana*, 1978  
oil on canvas  
171 x 138 cms 67 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 54 $\frac{3}{8}$  ins  
signed and dated lower right



20. Family Around the Table II, 1973  
oil on canvas  
77 x 65 cms 30<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 25<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> ins  
signed and dated lower right



21. London, St Paul's, 1980  
watercolour and chalk on paper  
49 x 63 cms 19<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 24<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> ins



22. **Portrait of Miranda, 1981**  
oil on canvas  
77 x 65 cms 30<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 25<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> ins  
dated and inscribed on stretcher



23. **Ardnamurchan, 1981**  
watercolour on paper  
52 x 72 cms 20<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 28<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> ins  
inscribed and dated verso



24. Whitby, 1983  
watercolour  
52 x 72 cms 20½ x 28¾ ins  
signed and dated lower right



25. Richmond with the Castle, 1989  
oil on canvas  
79 x 112 cms 31<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 44<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> ins  
signed and dated lower center



26. Whitby Harbour, Dawn, 1990  
oil on canvas  
51 x 61 cms 20<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 24 ins



27. **Seascape, Melness in the Scottish Highlands, 1992**  
charcoal on paper 39 x 52 cms 15<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 20<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> ins



29. **Seahouses, Northumberland, from the Harbour, 1991**  
watercolour on paper 56 x 76 cms 22 x 29<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> ins  
signed, dated and inscribed lower right



28. **The Moors, North Yorkshire, 1996**  
watercolour on paper 56 x 76 cms 22 x 29<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> ins

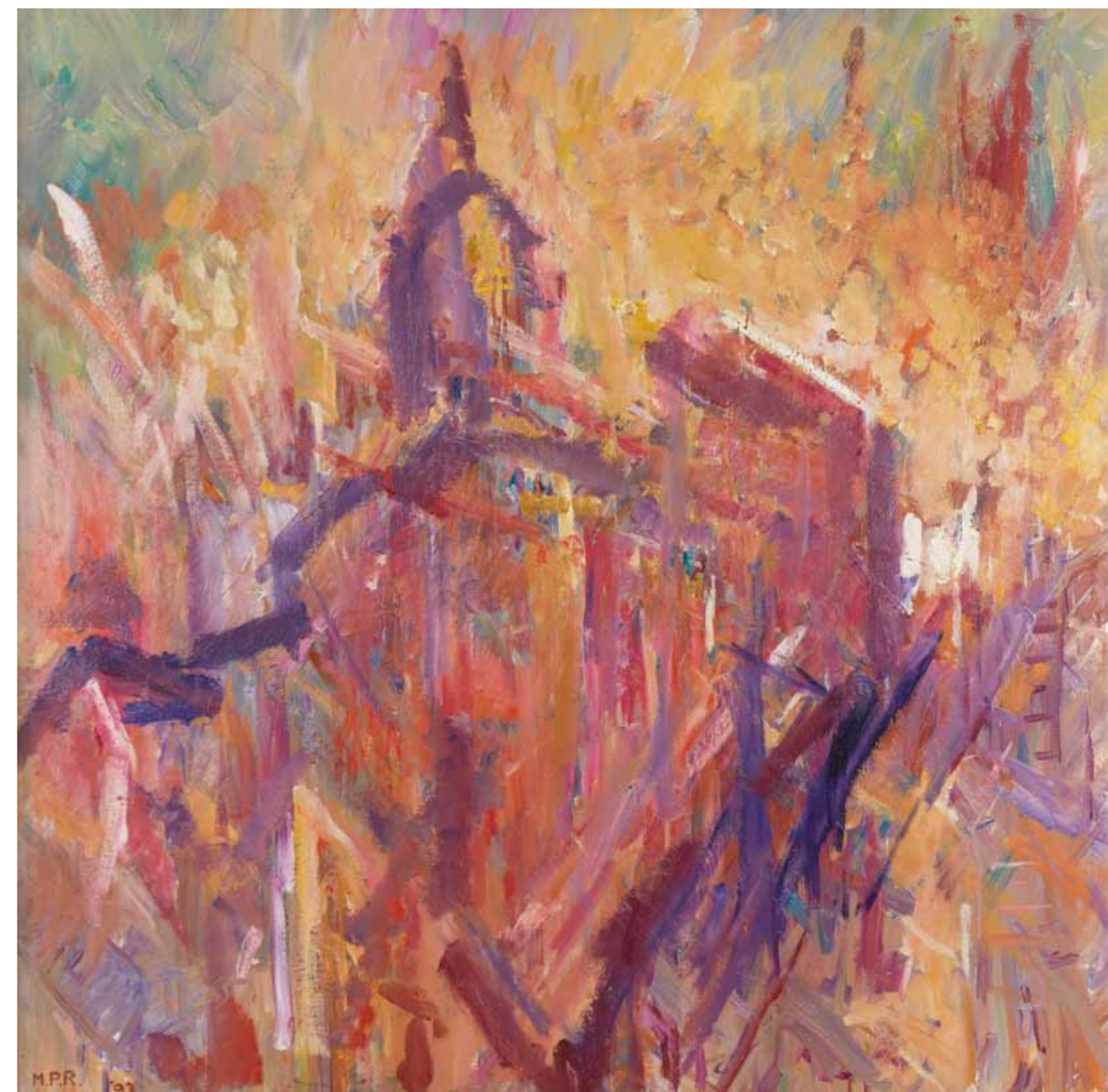


30. **Fountains Abbey, The Chapel of Nine Altars, 1992**  
watercolour on paper 57 x 79 cms 22<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 31<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> ins

By the time Richmond began his mural project in 1992, he had returned permanently to England and had established a successful teaching career. Between 1982 and 1996, he held annual artists' workshops at the Motor House in East Rounton, teaching in collaboration with Thubron and David Seaton. The school's instruction and programme emulated Bomberg's example, focusing on life drawing and fostering a collegiate energy. Richmond even implied a synergy (or even a destiny) behind the school's development, based on Bomberg's acquaintance with William Lethaby, a student of Philip Webb who actually designed Rounton Grange.<sup>39</sup>

Richmond conceived *London from the South Bank* (fig. 1) as a personal tribute to Bomberg and Blake, whom he consistently cited as his two greatest influences. He chose a panoramic view of London as seen from the school's roof, a view which, largely unimpeded, extends from Lambeth to the Docklands. Moreover, by working outdoors, he could take full advantage of how light and weather would affect his perception of form and topography. Working on the roof required that he paint the mural initially as a series of separate, but interrelated, oil sketches. Back in his studio, he united over 42 oil-on-board studies into the nine vertical canvases that make up the mural, avoiding any obvious separations. While the mural is not squared, Richmond's initial approach to the view as a series of continuous studies allows the viewer to plot a course through London encountering sites and streets Richmond believed relevant to both Blake and Bomberg: the 'celestial twins' behind his work. Indeed, by paralleling Blake's 'four-fold vision' with Bomberg's 'spirit in the mass,' he even credited them with a common ethos.<sup>40</sup>

Painted in largely cadmium-based colours the mural's composition begins at lower left, where a red night glows over the Imperial War Museum and progresses upwards towards Hercules Road, Blake's Lambeth home. The perspective light then peaks in the middle panel with the dome of St Paul's and the Globe Theatre, before descending toward the extreme right, where 'Eternity's Sunrise' dawns above the Millennium Dome. Additionally, following a loose but not inaccurate geography, Richmond included Chaucer's Tabard Inn, landmarks immortalised in work by Dickens and Wordsworth, and the site in Stratford where thirteen Protestants were burnt at the stake in 1556. Richmond marked this last site in the upper eighth panel of the mural with an isolated patch of smoky blue, the presence of which perplexed him until he traced it from one of his studies to the actual location.



31. *St Paul's, London, 1993*  
oil on board  
120 x 120 cms 47<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 47<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> ins  
signed and dated lower left

Gustave Courbet famously said, ‘Show me an angel and I’ll paint one,’ and while he was asserting a core principle of realism as much as his disdain for academic painting, his words struck a chord with later artists, particularly the early Cubists.<sup>41</sup> Long after angels fell into obsolescence as religious iconography (or any visual representation of the supernatural) they endured as a metaphor for the complexities of human perception. Miles Richmond spent most of his career pursuing ‘angels’: those flashpoint realisations of his subject that he achieved through deep concentration and expressed in glowing colour. He developed his intensely chromatic style based on Bomberg’s dialectic ‘immaterialism,’ which demanded direct engagement with his subject matter and thus followed Cézanne’s tenet that artists must confront nature as an equal. Moreover, Richmond’s sincere amateur interest in the sciences, particularly physics, further informed his sense of colour. If his understanding of the fundamental forces remained somewhat personal (e.g. not only did he cite optics as a natural force, but he believed electromagnetism to be paramount to gravity), he still understood that while form can stand alone, colour cannot. Therefore, he approached colour as a psychological property to give form to that which he believed he could not fully define without dulling its Cartesian spark.

Ultimately, Richmond’s creative philosophy began and ended with Blake’s belief that ‘All that we see is vision, from generated organs gone as soon as come, permanent in the imagination.’<sup>42</sup>

**Andrea Gates**  
*Director of Messum’s*



**32. View over Southwark, 1993**  
oil on board  
120 x 120 cms 47 3/4 x 47 3/4 ins  
signed and dated lower right



33. **Flowers in a Glass Bowl, 2000**  
oil on board  
91 x 61 cms 35<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 24 ins

34. *Standing Nude*, c. 2000  
oil on board  
172 x 64 cms 67<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 25<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> ins  
a further work verso





35. Trajan's Market, Rome, 2002  
oil on canvas 51 x 61 cms 20<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 24 ins



36. St Peter's from the Palatine, 2002  
watercolour with extensive underdrawing on paper  
56 x 76 cms 22 x 29<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> ins  
Inscribed and dated lower left ('700 22nd 2002')

## Endnotes

- Richmond was commissioned to paint the mural at the invitation of Pauline Perry, Baroness Perry of Southwark, and the University’s first Vice-Chancellor.
- When he unveiled the mural on 7 June 1999, Richmond called it ‘a flag for imagination.’ See Miles Richmond, *London from the South Bank: A Painting to Celebrate the Millennium* (London: London South Bank University, 1999), n.p.
- Miles Richmond, interview with Hester Westley, *National Life Stories* (London: British Library, 2007), track 5, audio file.
- Alastair Boyd, ‘The Quest,’ *Miles Richmond y Ronda* (Ronda: Convento di Santo Domingo, 2006), p.21.
- Paul Cézanne to Emile Bernard, Aix-en-Provence, 25 July 1904, in Alex Danchev, ed. and trans., *The Letters of Paul Cézanne*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2013), p.342.
- Paul Cézanne to Emile Bernard, Aix-en-Provence, 26 May 1904, p.339.
- In 1873 James Clerk Maxwell published *A Treatise on Electricity and Magnetism*, his equations for the electromagnetic theory of light: a unified theory that proved electricity, magnetism and optics to be interrelated.
- Emile Zola to Hippolyte Taine, Paris, 1865, in Danchev, *Ibid*, p.118.
- The most important of these early scientific journalists were Abbé Moigno, Antoine Meunier and, above all, Louis Figuier. See Maurice Crosland, ‘Popular Science and the Arts: Challenges to Cultural Authority in France under the Second Empire,’ *The British Journal for the History of Science* 34, no. 3 (Sept. 2001), pp.301-322.
- For an analysis of the landscapes Bomberg painted between 1929 and 1934 at Toledo, Cuenca and Ronda, see Richard Cork, ‘David Bomberg: Towards the spirit in the mass’, in *In celebration of David Bomberg 1890-1957* (London: Daniel Katz Limited, 2007), pp.9–11.
- George Berkeley, Bishop of Coyle (1685-1753) published several treatises; the most widely read are *Towards a New Theory of Vision* (1709) and *Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710).
- Richmond, *National Life Stories*, track 1.
- Frank Auerbach, interview by John Tusa, BBC Radio 3, 7 October 2001, quoted in Paul Moorhouse, ‘Human Universe: Auerbach’s Building-Site Paintings and Existentialism,’ in *Frank Auerbach: London Building Sites 1952–62* (London: Courtauld Gallery, 2009), p.64.
- Pablo Picasso, *Les familles des saltimbanques*, 1905, oil on canvas, 212.8 cm × 229.6 cms, Chester Dale Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
- Galwall Kinnel and Hannah Liebmann, eds. and trans., *The Essential Rilke* (New York: Harper Collins, 2000), pp.104-5.
- Madonna*, 1947, oil on canvas, 60 x 49 cm; *Resurrection*, 1947, oil on canvas, 180 x 200 cm. The first is reproduced in Alison Lloyd, ed., *Miles Peter Richmond – Painting; the continuity of practice 1947 through to 1994* (Middlesbrough: Middlesbrough Art Gallery, 1994), p.16.
- Lloyd, *Miles Peter Richmond – Painting; the continuity of practice*, p.15.
- Ibid*, p.16.
- In 1945, the Borough Polytechnic Institute had no formal art classes. Originally, Bomberg was hired to teach culinary students how to design cake decorations.
- The Borough Group initially consisted of David Bomberg, Cliff Holden, Edna Mann, Dorothy Mead and Miles Richmond. In 1948 Dennis Creffield joined the Group, which also included (at various times) Lillian Bomberg, Leslie Marr, Dinora Mendelson, Roy Oxlade and Susanna Richmond. Between 1946 and 1951, the Group had seven exhibitions at the Archer Gallery, the Arcade Gallery, the

- Everyman Theatre, as part of the L.C.C. open-air Embankment shows, at Brasenose College, Oxford, and at the Bookworm Gallery.
- Lloyd, p.5.
- In late 1951, Richmond exhibited with Dennis Creffield, Cliff Holden and Dorothy Mead at Parson’s Gallery, London. Their exhibition later travelled to Sweden as *Fyra engelsmän: Dennis Creffield, Cliff Holden, Dorothy Mead, Peter Richmond* and opened in April 1952 at the Gummesons Konstgalleri, Stockholm.
- ‘Bomberg persuaded us to move to Ronda, he thought it was a more inspiring place. He thought I could do better close to him.’ In Richmond, *National Life Stories*, track 19.
- Boyd, p.21.
- Miles Richmond to Edna Mann, Ronda, 1953, Richmond Family Archives, East Rounton. The same letter was sent (on Bomberg’s behalf) to Peter Arnold, John Berger, Dennis Creffield, Leslie Marr, Dorothy Mead, Gus Metzger, Dorothy Missen, Roy Oxlade, David Scott, Garth Scott and others.
- Susanna Richmond, interview by Andrea Gates, 29-31 January 2013, Motor House, East Rounton.
- In 1958 Cliff Holden praised Bomberg in a radio interview for the BBC; Andrew Forge curated the Arts Council memorial exhibition of his work; Patrick Swift began to organise and edit his final writings; and Walter Lipke began his PhD dissertation on Bomberg.
- Richmond, *National Life Stories*, track 8.
- Miles Richmond, ‘The Importance of Ronda’, in *Miles Richmond y Ronda*, p.13.
- First postulated by Louis de Broglie around 1924 (before the discovery of quantum mechanics), wave-particle duality was further investigated in the 1950s by Robert Hanbury-Brown and Richard Q. Triss. In 1956 the *New Scientist*, a weekly, non-peer-reviewed magazine devoted to popular science, was first published in England.
- Miles Richmond to David Seaton, Middlesbrough, 2008, Richmond Family Archives, East Rounton.
- Together with initiatives undertaken in the late 1950s by Victor Pasmore and Richard Hamilton, Thubron established the Foundation Course, now the standard degree course-entry qualification for art, design and architecture students in the UK, Ireland and Canada.
- Now the standard colour model for all projected imagery (photography, computer screens, television etc.), RGB colour theory is based on the trichromatic theory of colour perception first postulated in 1793 by Thomas Young, who discovered that the human retina perceives colour by using three colour receptors that are sensitive to different wavelength ranges.
- ‘If all the evidence for my sense impressions is within the mind, how am I convinced that the world is out there?’ See Boyd, p.22.
- Richmond, *National Life Stories*, track 21.
- Susanna Richmond, 2013.
- Richmond, *National Life Stories*, track 21.
- Richmond, *Miles Richmond y Ronda*, p. 17.
- Designed by Philip Webb (1831-1915), Rounton Grange was built between 1871 and 1876 for Sir Isaac Lowthian Bell. The Motor House was originally the garage and chauffeurs’ quarters.
- Richmond, *London from the South Bank: A Painting to Celebrate the Millennium*, n.p.
- Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, July 1885. See Ronald de Leeuw, *Letters of Vincent van Gogh* (New York: Penguin, 1996), p.302.
- Richmond to David Seaton, Middlesbrough, 2008.



## Miles Richmond (1922, Twickenham – 2008, Middlesbrough)

Perhaps best known for the close, sustained relationship he enjoyed with the painter David Bomberg (1890-1957), Miles Richmond was both a founding member of the Borough Group and the only member to work closely with Bomberg during his final years in Spain.

However, Richmond’s career began to take shape and direction almost a decade earlier. He began his formal training at Kingston Art College (1941-43) and after WWII, began to attend Bomberg’s classes at the Borough Polytechnic. In 1948, he joined Bomberg, Cliff Holden, Dorothy Mead and Edna Mann in forming the Borough Group and continued to study, work, debate and exhibit with them, along with additional members until 1951, when the Group disbanded. The following year, he married Susanna Richmond and they moved briefly to Aix-en-Provence before driving to southern Spain, where they lived in Torrox, Nerja and elsewhere. In 1954, Bomberg persuaded Richmond to move to Ronda to assist him at the school he planned to open at the Villa Paz. While the school did not open, they became neighbours and close friends. After Bomberg’s death in 1957, Richmond continued to live in Ronda with his family, working at Alastair Boyd’s International School as Art Director. He also befriended and worked with Harry Thubron and helped him and his wife Elma to move to Ronda.

After Richmond returned to England in 1977, he taught at Portsmouth Polytechnic, and at Morley College in London and St Albans School of Art, before beginning regular workshops and a Summer School at The Motor House, in East Rounton, North Yorkshire. In 1994, he moved to Middlesbrough with his second wife, Miranda Sullivan, and throughout the early 1990s, he took part in several *Margins* projects in northern Scotland, Orkney and the Azores.

Neither age nor the elements effected Richmond’s creative energy or his open engagement with the landscape. When he died in 2008, he left behind not only two devoted families and many profoundly influenced colleagues and students, but also an intensely emotive body of work stretching from 1940 until his final days, much of which has never been seen outside his studio.

### Exhibitions

1947	1st Annual Borough Group Exhibition, Archer Gallery, London	1998	<i>Miles Richmond</i> , A.I.M. Gallery, Middlesbrough
1948	London County Council Embankment Exhibition	1999	<i>Land, Sea and Sky</i> , Darlington Arts Centre, County Durham
1949	2nd Annual Borough Group Exhibition, Arcade Gallery, London		<i>London From the South Bank – A Painting to Celebrate the Millennium by Miles Richmond</i> , South Bank University, London
	3rd Annual Borough Group Exhibition, 4th Annual Borough Group Exhibition,	2000	<i>Teesside from Eston Bank</i> , Virtual Reality Centre, Teesside University, Middlesbrough
1951	<i>Four Contemporary Painters</i> (An Exhibition of Paintings in Aid of King George’s Fund for Sailors), Parsons’ Gallery, London	2001	<i>Miles Richmond – Paintings Early and Late</i> , Bartley Drey Gallery, London
1952	<i>Fyra engelsmän/Four English Painters</i> , Gummesons Konstgalleri, Stockholm		<i>Painting Matters: Five Painters</i> , The Crypt, St Martin-in-the-Fields, London
1974	<i>Miles Richmond</i> , Palacio Mondragón, Ronda	2003	<i>Imaginative Substance</i> , Highgate Literary and Scientific Institution, London
1978	<i>Miles Richmond</i> , Morley Gallery, London	2004	<i>Bomberg and Pupils – The Borough Group 1946–1951</i> , Boundary Gallery, London
1979	<i>Miles Richmond</i> , Warwick University Gallery	2006	<i>Miles Richmond y Ronda</i> , Convento de Santo Domingo, Ronda
1989	<i>Miles Richmond</i> , Cleveland College of Art, Middlesbrough	2007	<i>Bomberg and the Borough Group</i> , Pallant House, Chichester
	<i>Spirit in the Mass – Bomberg and his pupils, 1949–1951</i> , Fine Art Associates, London	2008	<i>Miles Richmond</i> , Galeria de La Fundacion Unicaja, Málaga
1991	<i>David Bomberg: Some Students and Current Influences</i> , Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne		<i>Miles Richmond – Andalusia</i> , Robin Katz Fine Art, London
1992	<i>Miles Richmond</i> , Park Grosvenor Gallery, London		<i>Miles Richmond: Paintings and Works on Paper</i> , Boundary Gallery, London
1994–95	<i>Miles Richmond</i> , Middlesbrough Art Gallery and Newlyn Art Gallery	2014	Messum’s Gallery, Cork Street, London
1996	<i>International Multi-media Symposium, Sociedade Nacional de Belas Artes de Lisboa</i> , Trinity Buoy Wharf, London		
1997	<i>Miles Richmond and Miranda Richmond</i> , Myles Meehan Gallery, Darlington Arts Centre, County Durham		

Richmond’s work is now in several important private collections in the UK and the USA and in UK public collections including London South Bank University and A David Bomberg Legacy – The Sarah Rose Collection at LSBU.

Mountains in the Moonlight,  
near Ronda, 1960 (no. 8)



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The Studio, Lords Wood, Marlow, Buckinghamshire.

Tel: 01628 486565 [www.messums.com](http://www.messums.com)

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28 Cork Street, London W1S 3NG  
Telephone: +44 (0)20 7437 5545

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