

# Patrick Hughes Biographies

## Biography - 131 Words

Patrick Hughes lives and works in London. Widely recognised as one of the major painters of contemporary British art, he is also a designer, teacher and writer. His works are part of many public collections including: the British Library and the Tate Gallery, London; the Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow; The Deutsche Bibliothek, Frankfurt and the Denver Art Museum. Hughes has exhibited in London and throughout Europe, South East Asia, America and Canada.

Books by Patrick Hughes include *Vicious Circles and Infinity*; *Upon the Pun: Dual Meaning in Words and Pictures*, *More on Oxymoron*, *Left to Write*, *Paradoxymoron: Foolish Wisdom in Words and Pictures* and *Fifty Years in Show Business: A bit of Artobiography*. *Perverspective*, by John Slyce, is the most recent monograph published on the work of the artist.

## Biography - 271 Words

In 1963 I had an epiphany on Leeds Central station. I was waiting for the train to London one Saturday morning and I noticed that the lines ahead of me came to a point, the point of infinity. (I had been brought up in Crewe, Cheshire, a railway town, and I often travelled on the trains and still do.) I thought to myself I could make a silver and black set of railway lines that come to a point more quickly. I made these and exhibited them on the floor in my second London exhibition at the small Portal Gallery. About a year later I thought of making a sitting room in the same forced perspective, but this time the wrong way round, with the back wall at the front. I made this out of wood and doll's house wallpaper. Making things in perspective is taking experience as a solid rather than an ever-changing relationship. By the process of irony – no one believes railway lines actually come to a point – one can make the point that our experiences are relative, fluid, subject to change.

Patrick Hughes holds a Citizen of the World passport. His solo show in 1961 was the first by a British Pop Artist. He taught at Leeds College of Art in the 1960s and has been exhibiting with Flowers Galleries for the last forty years. Patrick has written books on philosophy and rhetoric exploring how revealing language is when pushed beyond metaphor into the further reaches of oxymoron and paradox. Based in Hoxton, Patrick says he is less interested in his CV than the length of his life.

## **Biography - 1788 Words**

At the young age of three or four, whilst staying at his grandparents house in Warmingham Road, Crewe, Patrick Hughes would sleep in 'The Glory Hole' - the cupboard under the stairs. Lying awake listening to the air-raid sirens and falling bombs, Patrick would look up and stare at the stairs, "We were looking up at these stairs the wrong way round – up and down, up and down – stairs that only a fly could walk up. It must have made a strong impression: being bombed and in the dark and sleeping with my Mother and seeing everything the wrong way round." Patrick has made a life-long career out of doing things the other way round.

Patrick Hughes was born, Peter David Hughes in October 1939 in Birmingham, the eldest son of Peter and Florence Hughes. His father was a commercial traveller in groceries and a salesman, and his mother, a housewife. The family moved around, living in suburban Hayes in Middlesex and later in Hull. It was an unhappy household, a quarrelsome and hostile environment and Patrick's refuge was in books and in his imagination. The books came from the public library as his was a book-less house: "A book is a way out..." says Patrick, "...They are like little doors – you open the little hinged rectangle of the book and step out. I escaped from my suburban hell hole of an upbringing through the book."

In 1950 Patrick went to Hull Grammar School where he studied 'O' level art, taught by Ian D. H. Fothergill. Fothergill encouraged the students to write about modern art and Patrick wrote in defense of Picasso, but it was Fothergill's set designs for the school plays, with their use of perspective and painted shadows which amazed Patrick and left a lasting impression.

At seventeen Patrick left school, home and Hull for London, never to return. He took a job as a window dresser and salesman at Rubans de Paris in London's West End, near to the Portal Gallery. He spent his spare time reading and writing and visiting local galleries, looking at works by René Magritte, Marcel Duchamp and Paul Klee and taking in the contemporary scene. The following year, Patrick met his first wife Rennie Paterson, then an art student at Reading. Three sons, John, James and Solomon, followed in quick succession and Patrick and Rennie returned to live with her parents near Leeds.

In 1959 Patrick enrolled at the Leeds Day Training College to study English literature with a view to teaching English and a writing career. On the first day, asked to write an essay on six books he had recently enjoyed, Patrick wrote about N. F. Simpson, Eugène Ionesco,

Franz Kafka, Lewis Carroll, Samuel Butler and Christian Morgenstern. However, to his astonishment, the English teacher Mrs Hanson declared this was not English literature. English literature was the nineteenth-century writers; George Eliot, Jane Austen, the Bröntes and Charles Dickens. Mrs. Hanson suggested Patrick should study art and passed him over to the art department and so it was that Patrick's art career began out of acts of rejection and suggestion, not through intention.

The Art Department was run by Muriel Atkinson and John Jones and unlike the English Department welcomed and actively encouraged creativity and experimentation. Patrick began making low reliefs in plaster and later, cut-outs in paper and wood, painting white emulsion paint as the ground and using household gloss paint as the finish. It was a surprise gift from John Jones for his twenty-first birthday - a subscription to Art News and Review - that stimulated Patrick to send off slides of his work to the Portal Gallery in early 1961. On the Monday after the Friday when he completed his course at Leeds Day College Patrick opened his first solo exhibition at the Portal Gallery, London. It was the first one-man show by a so-called Pop Artist and a huge success. The critics of the day George Melly and David Sylvester were early champions. Sylvester wrote, "This artist has the gift, synonymous with creativeness, of being able to be surprised by what the rest of us take for granted. Here is a painter who really has something to say, and his arrival on the scene gives me a rare sense of exhilaration." Parallels were drawn with the works of Harold Pinter, Paul Klee, Samuel Beckett and Spike Milligan. Patrick sold two-thirds of the forty or so paintings exhibited.

With the success of his Portal Gallery show in 1961 Patrick's job moved from school teaching to art lecturing at Bradford School of Art in 1963, and then in 1964 at Leeds College of Art. His colleagues included the artists Anthony Earnshaw, Robin Page and George Brecht, and his students - Trevor Winkfield, Glen Baxter, Les Coleman, Jeff Edwards, Les Evans and Paul Hammond. It was whilst at Leeds, that Patrick made two of his seminal works, Infinity in 1963, inspired by standing on the railway station at Leeds and looking at the railway tracks and his first reverspective, the Sticking-out Room of 1964. In 1968-69 Patrick was giving lectures about paradoxes and jokes in Exeter, London and Leeds with George Brecht, the Fluxus artist. Several years later, in 1975, they were to collaborate on Vicious Circles and Infinity, A Panoply of Paradoxes. The first ever book on the paradox which went on to sell 100,000 copies and was translated into Japanese, German, Dutch and Spanish.

Around this time, Patrick began painting vicious circles and versions of the ouroboros in search for a theoretical basis for his ideas. He had moved his family back to London and commuted to Leeds to teach.

In 1970, Patrick was one of ten artists invited to take a room at the Institute for Contemporary Art in London. He constructed a 12ft by 8ft sticking-out room within the room – a large paradoxical object, which visitors could not just look at but could experience for themselves. That same year Patrick met Angela Flowers who was setting up her own gallery and asked him to be her first artist. Patrick has been showing with Flowers Gallery ever since.

In 1970 Patrick and Rennie divorced. In 1971 Patrick married the artist and writer Molly Parkin, they parted in 1980, divorcing in 1981.

The first half of the 1970s saw Patrick living in Chelsea and Ladbroke Grove and painting rainbows. The rainbows became very popular as prints which he made with Coriander Studios for Christies Contemporary Art and as postcards for Camden Graphics. Over the years about 1,000,000 rainbow postcards and 10,000 screenprints have been sold. People thought the rainbows were cheerful, but Patrick felt they were misunderstood; they were acts of subversion, visual puns. His interest lay in the contradiction of turning or fixing an experience or event into a solid thing.

In 1975, sustained by his sales of the rainbows and his book, Patrick moved to St. Ives in Cornwall and leased a studio with a ladder down to the beach. It was here he made *On Reflection: St Ives Bay*, which he describes as one of the best pieces he has made about mirrors. In 1979 he left the village of St. Ives for the village of the Chelsea Hotel in New York, another artists' colony where he started to write *More On Oxymoron*. He hung out with the artists Keith Haring and Kenny Scharf, the musician Klaus Nomi and the theatre director Charles Ludlum. These underground artists were using comedy in their work which was Patrick's abiding interest. It was whilst in New York that he began to work entirely on paper as he found he could get more ideas down than in his St. Ives days when he was still working in gloss paint on board.

Patrick returned to London in 1983 and stayed at the Chelsea Art Club and had a studio in Notting Hill Gate for a short while. After showing at Angela Flowers Gallery that year, Patrick had decided he needed to change his method of working which had typically involved a slow gestation with months of thinking, a few days of making and a few minutes of contemplation by the viewer. Moving again, this time to a squat in Thornhill Square in North London, with his son James Heartfield, Patrick began painting small watercolours, usually three a day. This technique liberated him to have lots of ideas and variations on themes. Motifs included the crucifix, skeletons, eggs, Yin and Yang, and shadows, amongst other ideas. He made hundreds and sold most of them. This change enabled Patrick to see where he was going and what really interested him.

When Patrick moved to Belsize Park in 1985 he went back to painting on canvas but in oils. In pictures like *Self-criticism* he began to look at the relation between representation and reality. He re-examined the rich vein of the old Sticking-out Room of twenty years earlier, he explored reverse perspective, shaped boards and used all kinds of imagery.

In 1987 Patrick met and married his third wife, the historian and writer, Dr. Diane Atkinson. Together they moved to 72 Great Eastern Street, Hoxton, which is where they live today above his studio. Every weekday, through the large plate glass window, Patrick can be seen with his team of studio assistants painting his highly successful and hugely enjoyable reverspectives.

In 2011 Flowers Gallery celebrated the artistic achievements of Patrick Hughes with a retrospective, *Fifty Years in Show Business*. To coincide with this half century, Patrick published his third book on the paradox and oxymoron, *Paradoxymoron*. Throughout 2012 and 2013 Patrick's work was shown in Europe, America, Canada, Japan and Korea.

In 2014 Patrick celebrates his 75th birthday and is exhibiting in The Hague, New York, London and Japan.

“From 1959 to 1989 I spent most of my time as an artist thinking about what I should do and how I should do it; and a small amount of time actually doing it. When I started making the reverspectives in 1990 more time was spent doing the art, because it was more laborious to construct and paint in the illusionistic way - works could take up to six months to make. The process changed and speeded up when I started using a computer to do the geometry.

I can see now from the perspective of fifty-five years making art that in the first half of my career I was interested in showing people the absurdity of life, but in the second half, with my Reverspective three-dimensional paintings, I let people experience this paradox for themselves (just as a good teacher should). Another way of looking at the career is that my early work was poetic and my later work prosaic.”

Patrick Hughes