

## PATRICK HUGHES – BIOGRAPHIES

### Biography - 108 Words

Patrick Hughes lives and works in London. His works are in collections including The British Library, the Tate Gallery and the British Academy in London; the Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow; The Würth Museum, Künzelsau and the Baker Museum, Florida. Hughes exhibits in London and throughout Europe, Asia, the USA and Canada.

Books by Patrick Hughes include *Vicious Circles and Infinity*; *Upon the Pun: Dual Meaning in Words and Pictures* and *Paradoxymoron: Foolish Wisdom in Words and Pictures*. The artist's work is studied in *Perverspective* by John Slyce (2005) and in *A Newer Perspective* (2018) with articles by Dawn Ades, Martin Kemp, Thomas Papathomas, Murray McDonald, and Patrick Hughes.

### Biography - 250 Words

Patrick Hughes' first solo show was in 1961 in Mayfair, London. A catalogue introduction was by the critic David Sylvester. He has since held one-person exhibitions in Los Angeles and San Francisco, Chicago, Boston and New York, and in Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Holland, Belgium and Switzerland - two hundred so far.

Patrick made his first reverspective relief painting in 1964 and has refined his art hugely over the last fifty years, a system which is widely imitated. These works are constructed of wooden pyramids in perspective but the wrong way around, with the furthest point of the space represented being closest to the viewer. The resulting illusion is extraordinary, the viewer relates to the painting as it seems to move seamlessly, giving an impression of being in the room or outside the architecture depicted.

The University of London granted Patrick Hughes the degree of Doctor of Science in 2014 for his contribution to the study of the psychology of the perception. Hughes has throughout his career studied and written about visual and verbal logic, his book *Paradoxymoron, Foolish Wisdom in Words and Pictures* offers a magisterial insight into his original way of thinking.

The Tate Gallery, the British Library, the British Academy, The Würth Museum, The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, The Detroit Institute of Art and many other institutions hold Hughes' art. His resourceful and imaginative work, reflecting on the history of art and architecture is inspiring and revelatory about our world and how we relate to it.

### Biography - 279 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 and is now an Irish Citizen by descent. His solo show in 1961 was the first by a British Pop Artist. He taught at Leeds College of Art in the 1960s. 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 how long he has got left.

## Biography - 1554 Words

At the 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 of the Second World War, Patrick would look up and stare at the stairs, "I was looking up at these stairs the wrong way round – stairs that only a spider could walk up. It must have made a strong impression: being bombed and in the dark and seeing everything the wrong way round." He has made a life-long career out of doing things the other way round.

Patrick Hughes was born in October 1939 in Birmingham, the eldest son of Peter and Florence Hughes. His father was a commercial traveller in groceries, and his mother a housewife. The family moved around, living 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 little doors – you open the hinged rectangle of the book and step into another world. 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. The following year, Patrick met his first wife Rennie Paterson, then an art student at Reading. During their marriage three sons, John, James and Solomon, were born.

In 1959 Patrick enrolled at the Leeds Day Training College to study English literature with a view to teaching English and being a writer. On the first day at college, 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. To his astonishment, the English teacher Mrs Hanson declared this was not English literature. English literature was the nineteenth-century novelists; George Eliot, Jane Austen, the Brontës 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 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, using white emulsion paint as the ground and 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 wrote the catalogue. Sylvester said, "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 included 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. In 1975 they collaborated on *Vicious Circles and Infinity, A Panoply of Paradoxes*. The first-ever book on the paradox 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 to London and commuted to Leeds to teach.

In 1970, Patrick was one of ten artists invited to decorate a room at the Institute for Contemporary Art in London. He constructed a 12ft by 8ft sticking-out room within the room. That same year Patrick met Angela Flowers who was setting up her own gallery and she asked him to be her first artist. Patrick has shown with Flowers Gallery until 2018.

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, 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.

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 decided he needed to change his method of working which had typically involved a slow gestation with months of thinking, and a few days of making. He began painting small watercolours, usually three a day. This technique liberated him to have more ideas and variations on themes. Motifs included the crucifix, skeletons, eggs, Yin and Yang, and shadows. This enabled Patrick to see where he was going and what really interested him.

When Hughes 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 married his third wife, the historian and writer, Dr. Diane Atkinson. Together they moved to 72 Great Eastern Street, Hoxton, where they live today above his studio. Every weekday, through the large plate glass windows, Patrick can be seen with his team of studio assistants painting his reverspectives.

"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 sixty-five years making art that in the first half of my career I was interested in showing people the paradox of life, but in the second half, with my reverspective 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."

A breakthrough happened in 2022. I saw that the cut-ins that I had been making occasionally since 1998 could be taken out of the overall reverspective and given their own stage. I started with dice, I made them in reverse and in perspective, in a pair, floating on a green background like a baize cloth. I continued with single images, Rubik's Cube, a Louis Vuitton trunk, then piles of books. But next I imagined how to make a poem, to have a solid hollow table laid for one, a cardboard box full of the toys banished to the attic in *Toy Story 3*. At this time in my career it is exciting to have found a new technique, demanding new imagery and new story-telling, a culmination of work that started in 1963 with my railway lines that came to the point.