

IKON

Ikon Gallery, 1 Oozells Square, Brindleyplace, Birmingham B1 2HS
0121 248 0708 / www.ikon-gallery.org
Open Tuesday-Sunday, 11am-5pm / free entry

Jesse Bruton

6 July – 11 September 2016



Jesse Bruton, *Devil's Bowl* (c.1965). Oil on canvas. Image courtesy of the artist.

Jesse Bruton is one of the founding artists of Ikon. This exhibition (6 July – 11 September 2016) tells the fascinating story of his artistic development, starting in the 1950s and ending in 1972 when Bruton abandoned painting for painting conservation.

Having studied at the College of Art in Birmingham, Bruton was a lecturer there during the early 1960s, following a scholarship year in Spain and a stint of National Service. He went on to teach at the Bath Academy of Art, Corsham, 1966-69. He exhibited in a number of group shows in Birmingham, especially at the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists, and had a solo exhibition at Ikon shortly after the gallery opened to the public in 1965, and again in 1967.

Like many of his contemporaries, Bruton developed an artistic proposition inspired by landscape. Many of his early paintings were of the Welsh mountains and the Pembrokeshire coast. Alive to the aesthetic possibilities of places he visited, he made vivid painterly translations based on a stringent palette of black and white. They reflected his particular interest “in the way things worked, things like valleys, rock formations and rivers ...”

“I wasn’t particularly interested in colour. I wanted to limit the formal language I was using – to work tonally gradating from black to white, leaching out the medium from the paint in order to enhance a variety of textures. I also felt that colour got in the way of describing the structure of the landscape ...”

Bruton’s painting *Rising Locks* (c.1965) epitomises this reductive tendency. Depicting a run of canal locks, it is extraordinary in its allusion to early works by Piet Mondrian, through repetitive, almost cubist, gestures inside an oval shape. And like Mondrian, who had also started with recognisable landscapes, Bruton was engaged in a process of stylistic distillation.

Bruton’s later paintings appear calligraphic, involving white bands meandering across black surfaces, modulated by texture through brushstrokes in different mixtures of medium and pigment. Their titles, such as *Winding*, *Turnabout* and *Back-up*, betray their origins in the long-distance driving he undertook after Corsham, the concentration on the road and the peripheral awareness of other things around.

In a catalogue note Bruton explained they “were about the isolation of that situation. The concentration on the ribbon of the road winding away from you. I am painting about that. The anticipation of what’s ahead – whether one is working in an unknown area and one has consulted a map, or is working in a known stretch. So that, in a sense, one is driving to mind maps.”

Rather than depicting the landscape destinations of a car journey, these works constitute Bruton’s strong desire to embody the experience of the journey itself, their aesthetic restraint more appropriate for the artist’s attempt to convey something essential derived from personal experience.

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue, including text by Jonathan Watkins, Ikon Director. The exhibition is supported by the Mill Dam Trust and David Owen.

Social Media Handles :

Instagram, Twitter and Facebook: @ikongallery #JesseBruton #IkonGallery

Note to Editors:

1. Ikon exhibition opening: Wednesday 6 July, 6-8pm. The exhibition will be accompanied by a programme of public events, for full details visit www.ikon-gallery.org
2. Ikon is an internationally acclaimed contemporary art venue situated in central Birmingham. Established in 1964 by a group of artists, Ikon is an educational charity and works to encourage public engagement with contemporary art through exhibiting new work in a context of debate and participation. The gallery programme features artists from around the world and a variety of media is represented, including sound, film, mixed media, photography, painting, sculpture and installation. Ikon's off-site programme develops dynamic relationships between art, artists and audiences outside the gallery. Projects vary enormously in scale, duration and location, challenging expectations of where art can be seen and by whom. Education is at the heart of Ikon's activities, stimulating public interest in and understanding of contemporary visual art. Through a variety of talks, tours, workshops and seminars, Ikon's Learning Team aims to build dynamic relationships with audiences, enabling visitors to engage with, discuss and reflect on contemporary art. www.ikon-gallery.org
3. Ikon was established in 1964 by a group of artists – Jesse Bruton, Robert Groves, Sylvani Merilion and David Prentice – whose ambition for a 'gallery without walls' was supported by a modest and visionary couple, Angus and Midge Skene. They were joined by several other artists in order to help develop and articulate the original mission, including Peter Berry, Trevor Denning, Dinah Prentice and John Salt. For more information about Ikon's history visit www.ikon-gallery.org
4. Ikon is open Tuesday – Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays, 11am - 5pm. Admission is free. Ikon Gallery is supported using public funding from Arts Council England and Birmingham City Council. For the latest news and events follow [@ikongallery](#) on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).
5. For more information and high-res images please contact Rebecca Small or Emily Luxford at Ikon on 0121 248 0708 or email r.small@ikon-gallery.org or e.luxford@ikon-gallery.org

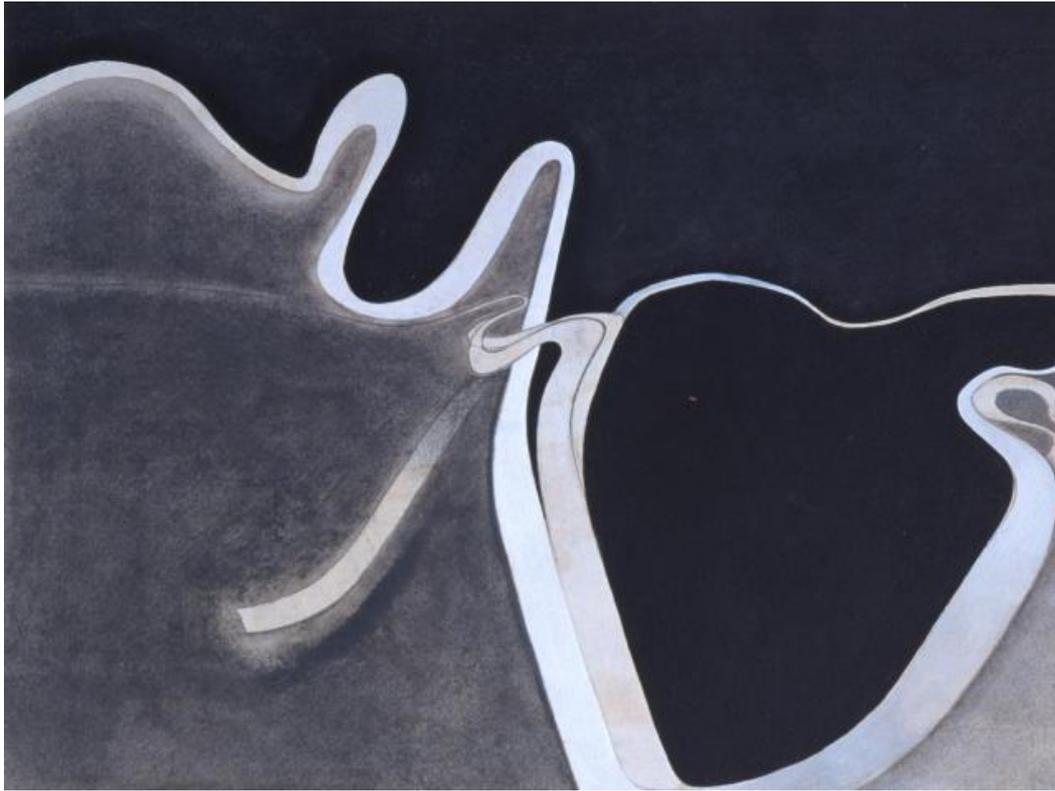
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Jesse Bruton, *Winding* (1968). Oil on canvas © the artist / Photo by Birmingham Museums Trust.



Jesse Bruton, *Turnabout* (c.1967). Oil on canvas. Image courtesy of the artist.



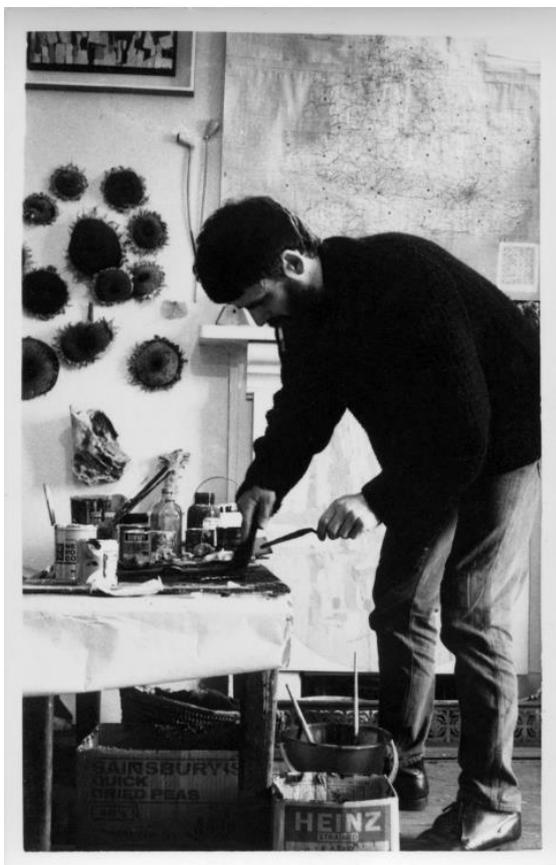
Jesse Bruton, *Study for Backtrack* (c.1967). Pencil watercolour gouache and contre crayon on paper. Image courtesy of the artist.



Jesse Bruton, *Rising Locks* (c.1965). Oil on canvas. Image courtesy of the artist and Midge Skene.



Jesse Bruton in his studio (c. 1969). Photo by Peter Cox. Image courtesy of the artist.



Jesse Bruton in his studio (c. 1969). Photo by Peter Cox. Image courtesy of the artist.