

*RUNES* examines mark-making as a fundamental aspect of human culture. Before written language humans used marks and symbols to communicate, record and interpret their experiences. The exhibition situates abstraction within this broad history, connecting early symbolic practices with those of contemporary artists and presenting visual language as something that develops across generations rather than belonging to any single moment.

Seen together, the works do not present a single narrative of abstraction. Instead, they demonstrate how abstraction operates as a shared condition across artists born between 1922 and 2002. Marks recur not because artists imitate one another, but because the impulse to record our experience persists. A drawn line, a carved incision or a painted stroke can function simultaneously as gesture, record and proposition.

On entering the gallery, the first works visible are John Hoyland's *Don't Explain* (1983) and Albert Irvin's monumental *Crusader* (1969), installed side by side establishing a dialogue between two major figures in post-war abstraction. *Crusader* is part of a decisive moment in Irvin's career, when he had fully immersed himself in abstraction but was still working with oil paint, and a monumental example Irvin's belief that "It's possible to say what it felt like to be a human being without having to paint noses and feet." *Don't Explain* exemplifies Hoyland's shift toward weightier, more centralised forms and heightened chromatic tension in the 1980s. The shapes read almost as a constructed monument, its stacked colour-fields evoking humanity's enduring impulse to balance, raise and ritualise matter, from cairns to megaliths. The proximity of these two paintings is historically resonant; *Crusader* has not been publicly exhibited for decades, partly due to the practical difficulty of moving a work of this scale, and its presence here restores it to view within a context that emphasises continuity across generations of abstract painters.

To the right of Irvin's painting hangs Kes Richardson's *Red Head* (2026), a 3 metre wide acrylic work on PVC. Richardson's paintings originate in small marker-pen drawings that he describes as



producing “an alphabet of forms” made up of intuitive lines and shapes. These studies, often including marks made collaboratively with his children, are photographed, scaled and translated into paint so that the finished works retain the immediacy of their source. Installed near Irvin’s canvas, the painting extends a conversation about how images are constructed, linking analogue gesture with digitally mediated processes.

Positioned on the floor in front of Hoyland’s painting is Jonathan Michael Ray’s *Memorandum* (2025), a slate slab incised with enamel inscriptions. The carved writing was produced by Ray’s children, introducing a literal record of mark-making that connects drawing, language and inheritance. Ray, who lives and works in Cornwall, frequently begins with materials themselves, selecting stone, glass or found objects for their capacity to hold traces of time. His works often contain what he describes as multiple layers of reference, allowing geological history, personal narrative and symbolic language to coexist.

In the centre of the space stands Jo Dennis’s sculptural work *The Big Top* (2026), constructed from painted military surplus tent fabric, rope, chain, glass marbles and steel. Its vertical structure anchors the space physically while echoing the exhibition’s broader concern with surface as a site of transformation. Dennis’s practice examines memory, decay and material change, treating objects as carriers of experience rather than fixed forms.

Works by Magda Blasinska, Pía Ortuño, Howard Dyke and Alice Browne have been brought together, each of whom approach the surface as an active field. Blasinska’s large oil painting *Śpiewy czerwcowe / All Heart Burning* (2026) records repeated gestures that register pressure and rhythm. Ortuño’s carved wooden panels combine pigment, marble dust and incision, allowing colour and material to interact structurally. Dyke’s paintings are constructed through processes of breaking down and reassembling imagery, using abstraction as a method of analysis. Browne extends painting into spatial propositions that test the boundary between image, object and environment.

Beyond the main space, the gallery opens into a lower-ceilinged area that slows the pace of viewing. Beginning on the left, Bijanka Bacic's *Defiance* (2026) uses fractured linear structures and layered colour to destabilise spatial reading. Nearby, Guy Haddon Grant's vitrine sculpture encloses its contents within a protective frame, while Paul Moriarty's painting *Albion* (2022) demonstrates his interest in the physical presence of paint and the autonomy of the painted surface. Installed together, these works share an attention to concealment, emergence and transformation. At the centre of this room stands Gus Farnes's *Stele* (2026), a bronze sculpture standing at almost two metres tall. Its upright form recalls standing stones or prehistoric figures, situating sculpture within a continuum that connects contemporary practice to ancient monument-making traditions.

Basil Beattie's *Juggler II* (1987) is installed beside Harry Kincade's *Lightening Rod* (2025), a small oil painting framed in copper. The pairing places the oldest living artist in the exhibition alongside the youngest, bridging nearly four decades of practice through a shared commitment to the expressive potential of mark and surface. Completing this sequence is Arthur Lanyon's *Seed State* (2026), a large oil and charcoal painting. Based in Cornwall, like Ray, Lanyon draws on landscape as a generative force, translating terrain, weather and memory into gestural structures that hover between figuration and abstraction.

RUNES proposes that abstraction is not the absence of meaning but a concentrated form of it. Mark making and symbols communicate before language and beyond it. Moving through the exhibition, viewers encounter works that may not be immediately legible yet remain communicative, prompting interpretation through perception rather than translation.

As a nomadic project space devoted to dialogues between artists, ideas and sites, OHS Projects presents RUNES as a field of visual correspondences. Across the gallery, works from different generations meet on equal terms, allowing relationships to emerge through proximity.