

## **Norman Ackroyd (b. 1938)**

Norman Ackroyd, CBE, R.A. (born 1938 in Leeds, Yorkshire) is an English artist known primarily for his etchings. He is based in London.

Ackroyd attended Leeds College of Art from 1957-61 and the Royal College of Art, London from 1961-64, where he studied under Julian Trevelyan.

Subsequently he lived for several years in the United States. He was elected to the Royal Academy of Art in 1988 and appointed Professor of Etching, University of the Arts, in 1994. He was elected Senior Fellow of the Royal College of Art in 2000, and in 2007 was made CBE for services to Engraving and Printing.

Ackroyd's works from the 1960s show an interest in both Pop Art and Minimalism. His complex compositions from that period often integrate pre-existing imagery such as newspaper clippings. During the 60s and 70s Ackroyd gradually abandons the language of Pop Art; for a time his compositions simplify and grow more abstract, sometimes geometric. In time they depict or suggest naturalistic elements, e.g., hills, clouds, rainbows. Even when depicting rainbows, Ackroyd uses colour very sparingly. It is in this period that Ackroyd moves away from stencils and transfers to etching, often beginning the plate out in the landscape.

The 1980s saw Ackroyd emerge as a full-blown landscape artist with a deep affinity for the various topographies specific to the British Isles. Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design mounted a retrospective exhibition of these works in 2006 and keeps an archive of the artist's work. Weather and water are made the stuff of highly experimental and variable compositions, in many instances technical tours de force. Depending on the locale, atmospheric conditions and intended mood, his works range from minimalist, nearly abstract impressions, to richly detailed images of specific places and seasons. Although his work almost never includes the human figure, the landscape subjects he prefers are often ones of age-old human habitation. In scale his prints range from tiny etchings intended to be bound into books to large scale, even huge, etchings. His preferred medium for working directly on paper is

watercolour. He has also designed a number of large-scale, etched reliefs in steel or bronze commissioned for architectural projects in London, Moscow, Birmingham, and Glasgow. The most recently completed project is at Great Portland Estates in London, W1; a project for the Sainsbury Laboratory in Cambridge is underway. For over 30 years Ackroyd has lived and worked in London in a former leather warehouse in Bermondsey. The top two floors are living space and the lower two floors are his studio. The bottom floor houses his large etching press, which was built by the firm Welsch in the early 1900s and has belonged to Ackroyd since the 1970s.

Ackroyd's work can be found in several British and American galleries, and in the collections of major museums including the Tate, the British Museum, and the National Gallery of Art, Washington. He has been featured in several television programmes, including BBC documentaries in 1980 and 2006.