



STEPHEN BAMBURY
RED/BLACK/WHITE, 1978
ACRYLIC ON CANVAS

Stephen Bambury: The Inside and Outside of Abstract Painting

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11 AUGUST 2001 - 28 OCTOBER 2001

The retrospective exhibition *Bambury: Works 1975-1999*, curated by Wystan Curnow for City Gallery, Wellington, opens in the New Gallery in August. This exhibition gives us a chance to take in and weigh up over two decades of rigorously intelligent and aesthetically nuanced painting. Bambury's work has an immediate visual impact; its clarity of geometric image and constructional signposting is visceral, it is passionately felt and tenaciously pursued through variations on a repeating lexicon of formats and motifs. For good reason Bambury's art has often been understood as providing a *modus vivendi* between the orthodoxies of late modern formalism and the uncertainties, informalities and fluidities of the postmodern world.

Bambury's immersion in the history of abstraction has led him toward the interior of painting, to abstraction's intimations of depth and transcendence, as much as toward a clarification of the painting's exterior, the material and pictorial architecture of the painting as a physical thing. To this dialogue between the inside and outside of painting Bambury brings a language of exacting ambivalence. The formal hallmarks of his strategic reticence are incomplete doublings, mirrorings, reversals, bifurcations, and slipped alignments of an iconic alphabet of primary geometric components. Bambury also undermines the purity of the self-contained icon by the richness and atmospheric of the material surface. Shimmers of mineral iridescence, organic stains, vegetal change, and the thickness of light's passage are all conjured up through Bambury's investigative alchemy of painting both as being and appearance.

ALLAN SMITH //
CURATOR CONTEMPORARY ART //