

Paul's Gallery of the Week: The Mayor Gallery

By Paul Carey-Kent • 5 July 2023



Installation view of 'Julian Stanczak: Beyond the Mirror'

Ten years ago it seemed Cork Street might lose its gallery-driven identity and become just another shopping street. Now it's on the up, with Goodman Gallery and Frieze moving in recently, and Stephen Friedman and Alison Jacques to follow. Tracking back, The Mayor Gallery was actually the first to open on the street, when founded by Fred Mayor (1903-73) in 1925. Such artists as Bacon, Calder, Ernst and Klee had their first UK showing there, and in 1933-35 it was central to the UNIT ONE group's activities (Paul Nash, John Armstrong, Barbara Hepworth, Henry Moore etc.). Fred's son, James Mayor, took over the Gallery in 1973, when the programme ranged across American Pop, European Nouveau Réalisme, Surrealist and Dada.

This century it has concentrated on the ZERO and Concrete movements and other artists in tune with them: I recall particularly good shows by Raimund Girke, Tadaaki Kuwayama, Peter Dreher and François Morellet, for example. And in these days of death-by-QR-code, it's good to report that The Mayor Gallery provides substantial well-illustrated catalogue booklets with worthwhile writing on the shows. Up now is Julian Stanczak (1928-2017), a Polish American for whose work the term Op Art was first coined. I can't visit yet, due to recent surgery, but one of the directors – Christine Hourdé – took me round the show remotely. It's evident that Stanczak sits alongside Vasarely and Riley in finding contrasting yet related ways to make the viewer's perceptual experience the primary subject.

The Mayor Gallery, 21 Cork St, First Floor, London W1S 3LZ