Soaring Flight:
Peter Lanyon’s Gliding Paintings

Peter Lanyon, *Thermal*, c. 1960, Oil on canvas, 72 × 60 cm, Tate, London

- This major exhibition explores a series of paintings by Peter Lanyon, one of Britain’s most important and original Post-War artists.
- Inspired by his experience of gliding, Lanyon produced radical, near-abstract paintings of the coastal landscape of his native West Cornwall.
- This is the first ever exhibition devoted to Lanyon’s gliding paintings, offering a pioneering account of this important but overlooked body of work from one of the most innovative figures of the twentieth century.
- Press preview Wednesday 14 October 09:30 – 11:00
- Exhibition runs from 15 October 2015 – 17 January 2016 in Rooms 14 & 15
- For more imagery or information contact courtauld@kallaway.com

This major exhibition explores a remarkable and unprecedented series of paintings by Peter Lanyon, one of Britain’s most important and original Post-War artists. Lanyon (1918-64) sought to create a new vision of landscape painting for the modern era. He considered himself to be extending the landscape traditions of earlier artists, in particular Turner, whom he admired greatly. Lanyon strove to find a language of
painting that expressed his direct experience of the landscape which might also probe questions about the nature of our existence within the world.

During the 1950s, he produced radical, near-abstract paintings of the tough coastal landscape of his native West Cornwall. He was fuelled by a desire to experience that landscape as completely as possible. In the summer of 1956, Lanyon was walking across a high cliff top when he looked up, saw three gliders soaring overhead and realised that this was the experience he desired. He began gliding seriously in 1959 and went solo for the first time in 1960, clocking up many flying hours over the next few years.

Freed from a land-bound perspective, Lanyon poured his new gliding experiences into his art, producing paintings that offer a thrilling sense of his encounters with the land, sea and air, collapsing the multiple perspectives of his flights into each new composition. The paintings are also profoundly shaped by Lanyon’s new-found glider pilot’s knowledge of the character of the air - its different movements, textures and forces, as well as the dangers and life-lines that it presents as one navigates through the thermals and up-draughts that are the invisible map essential for the glider’s survival in the sky.

Lanyon’s gliding paintings stand as a unique achievement of twentieth-century art, reinventing and furthering the tradition of landscape painting in ways that can also be seen to engage deeply with the pressing existentialist concerns of the Post-War world. This remarkable project was cut short by Lanyon’s unexpected death in August 1964 whilst in hospital recovering from a gliding accident.

This will be the first ever exhibition devoted to Lanyon’s gliding paintings and will offer a pioneering account of this important but overlooked body of work, bringing together around fifteen major paintings from public and private collections internationally, alongside a small group of constructions. The exhibition is being curated by one of the leading scholars of Lanyon’s work and author of the forthcoming catalogue raisonné, Toby Treves, and The Courtauld’s Daniel Katz Curator of 20th century art, Barnaby Wright.

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Notes to Editors and Ticket Information

Opening Times:
Daily 10am – 6pm (last admission 5.30pm)
Closed 25 and 26 December, last admission at 3.30 on 24 December
Tickets available from www.courtauld.ac.uk/lanyon
Admission £8.50* (concessions available)
*Price includes admission to the permanent collection and a £1 voluntary donation to The Courtauld Gallery

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About The Courtauld Gallery (www.courtauld.ac.uk/gallery)
The Courtauld Gallery is one of London’s must-see art museums. Its collection stretches from the early Renaissance to the 20th century and beyond. It is displayed in the elegant setting of Somerset House, one of the city’s most dynamic cultural venues. The Courtauld Gallery is renowned for its unrivalled Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings, including masterpieces by Monet, Van Gogh and Gauguin and the largest collection of Cézannes in the UK. It houses a major collection of Old Master paintings and is one of the few museums in the country to display such a rich selection of early twentieth-century art. The Gallery also holds an outstanding collection of drawings and prints and fine works of sculpture and decorative arts.

The Courtauld Gallery regularly presents major exhibitions and special displays which are consistently acclaimed for their outstanding quality and originality.

The Gallery is at the heart of The Courtauld Institute of Art, one of the world’s leading centres for the study of art history and conservation. It plays an important role in the capital's cultural life and is part of London's Museum Mile.

“One of the world's great collections of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist art”
- The Guardian