



The Archetypal Paintings of Victor Pasmore

a lecture by Dr Louis Lagana

11 April 2017 at 6.30PM

Central Bank Annexe, Valletta

free admission



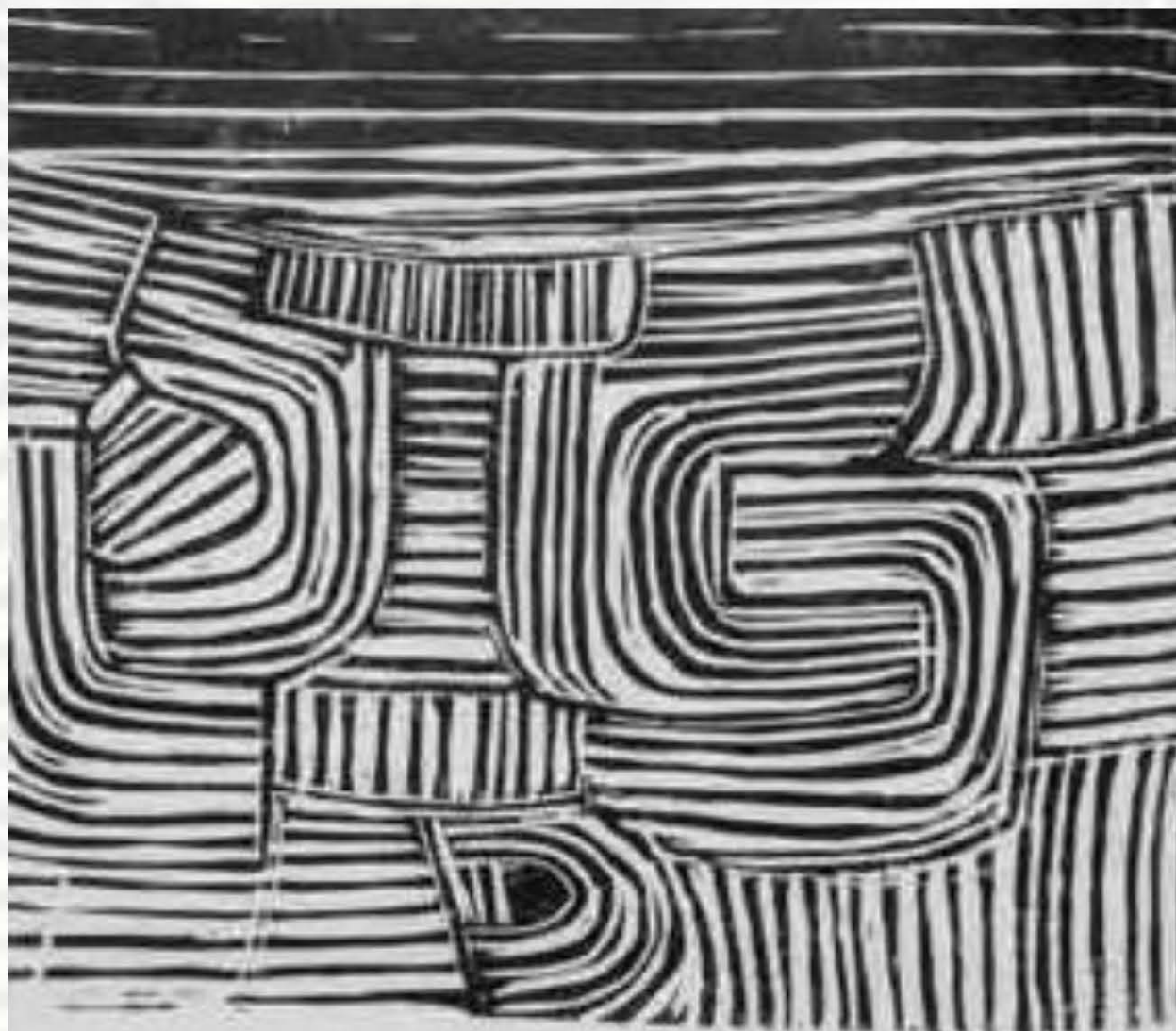
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The Archetypal Paintings of Victor Pasmore

Lecture
By
Louis Laganà



The creative process, so far as we are able to follow it at all, consists in the unconscious activation of an archetypal image, and in elaborating and shaping this image into the finished work. By giving it shape, the artist translates it into the language of the present, and so makes it possible for us to find our way back to the deepest springs of life.

(Jung, C., G., 1967, pp. 82, 83).

Victor Pasmore (1908-1998)

Born in Chelsam, Surrey in 1908 and lived in Malta between 1966 until his death in 1998.

1922-26: Educated at Harrow School, where he first became seriously interested in painting and was introduced to the work and theories of the French Impressionists and British watercolourists. Discovered Turner's late works at the Tate Gallery, London.

1927-37: Art evening classes at the Central School of Arts and Crafts

1933: Elected a member of the London Artists' Association headed by Roger Fry and Duncan Grant. Met William Coldstream and Claude Rogers at St Martin's.



Victor Pasmore in 1954

Early works

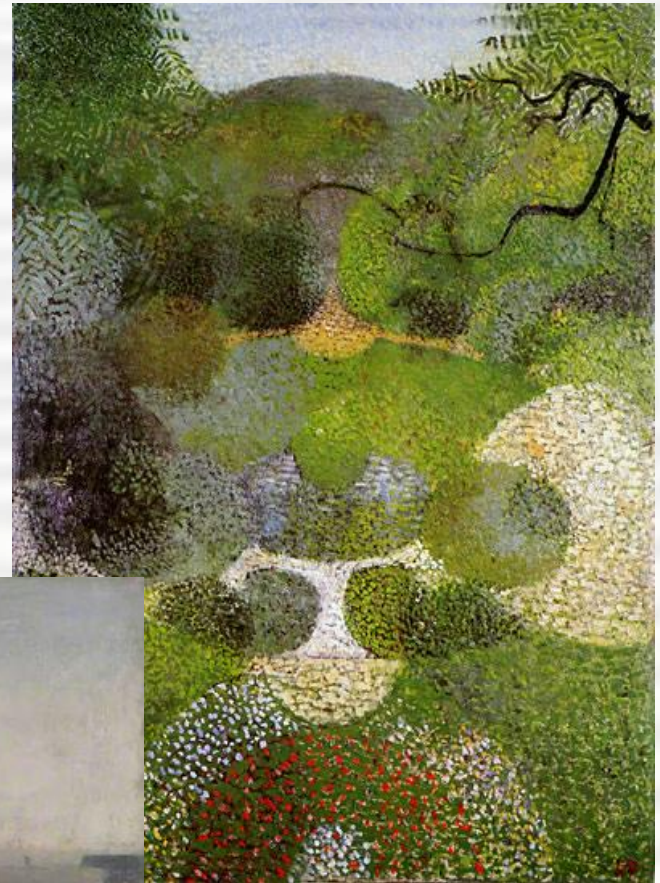


Victor Pasmore, *Parisian Cafe* (1936-37).



Seated Couple done in 1933. At the back of the painting there is an indication that this work was a reference to 'Claude Rogers and his Wife'.

Early works



The road to abstraction

During the late forties Pasmore made a radical change to abstraction. We find that he started with the Hammersmith paintings and executed a number of works showing the river Thames and its surrounding gardens. These landscapes were mostly painted in a misty atmosphere or sometimes under the snow.

The Hammersmith paintings



Victor Pasmore, *Hanging Gardens of Hammersmith*, 1944–47.



The Hanging Gardens of Hammersmith No. 1,

The view from Pasmore's back garden in Hammersmith. It was painted between 1944 and 1947 in an impressionistic pointillist style.



The Gardens of Hammersmith No. 2, 1949

Hammersmith Terrace, the house beside the Thames in London where Pasmore lived from 1942-7.

In 1966, Herbert Read wrote: 'It is often assumed that Pasmore's conversion to abstraction was apocalyptic, but a study of the paintings between 1943 and 1952, a period of ten years, show how gradually and how inevitably it came about'



*Square Motif in Green and Lilac,
1948*



Abstract in Black, White and Ochre, 1958



Victor Pasmore, *Spiral Motif in Green, Violet, Blue and Gold: the Coast of the Inland Sea*, 1950.

Spiral motifs



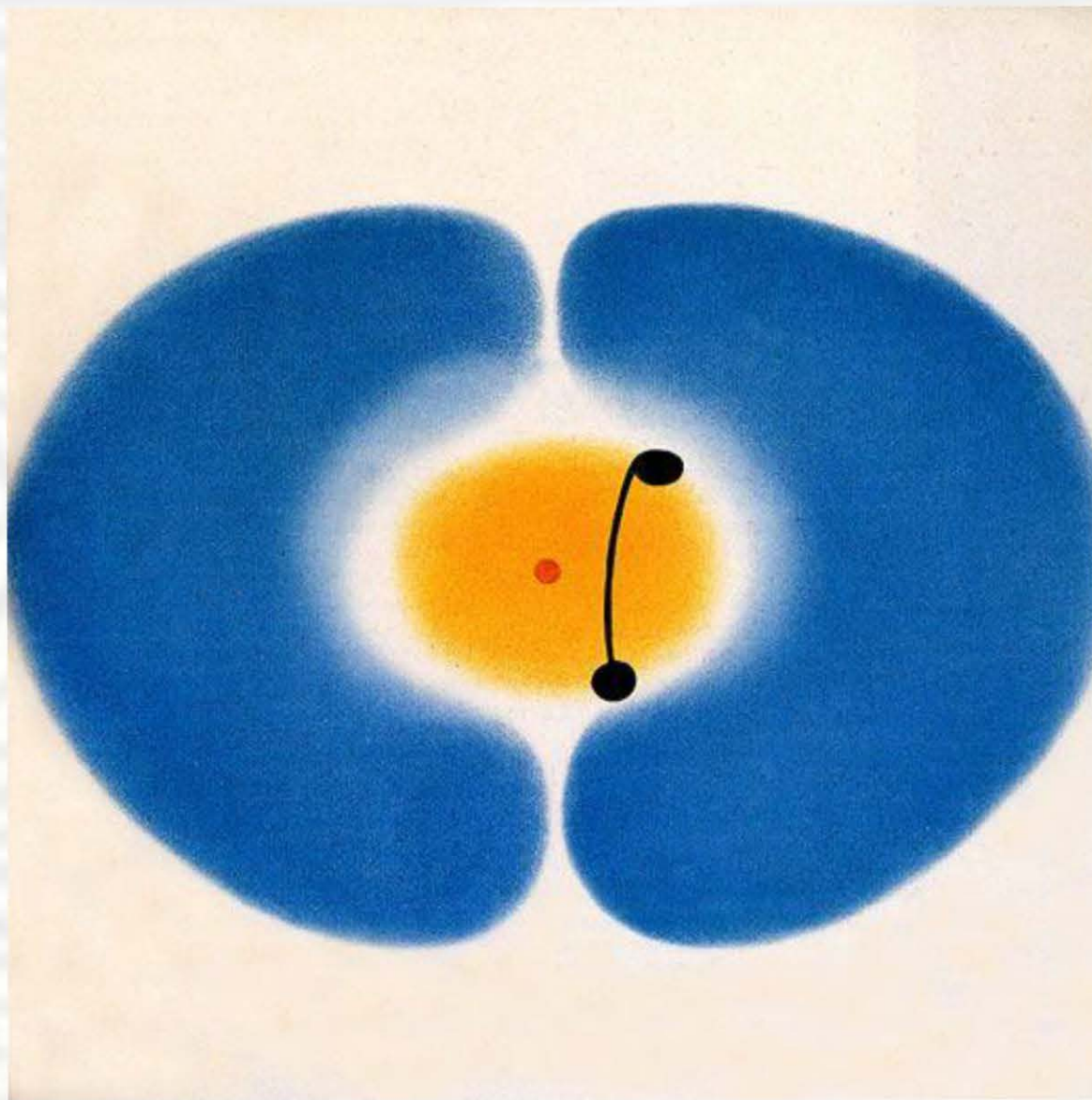
The Wave (1949 - 50)



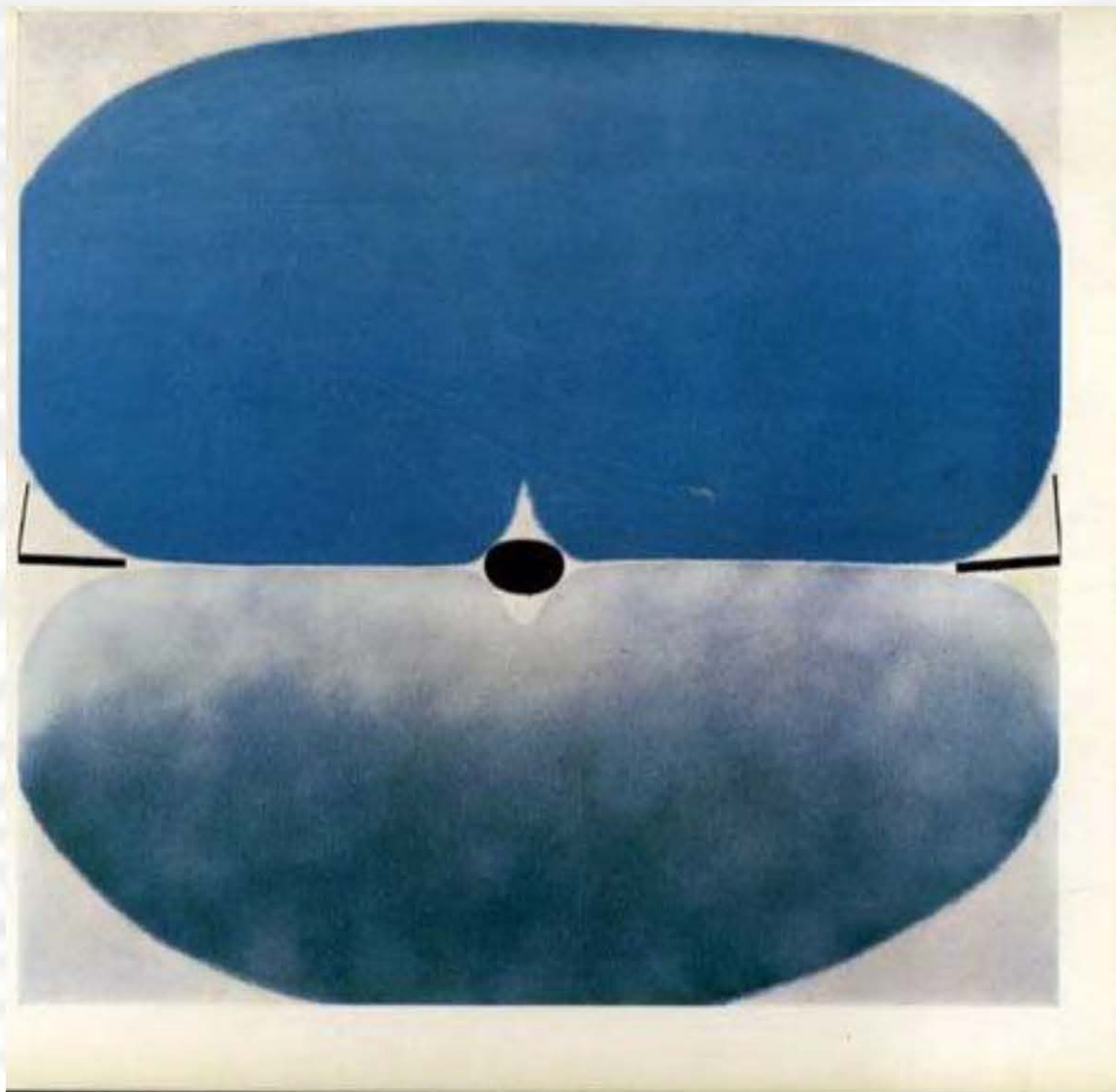
Spiral Motif in White, Black and Indigo (1951)

We find that in some of the abstract symbols, like the circle (at times prehistoric people referred to the shape of the sun and the moon), were also deemed by modern psychologists to represent the 'self' in dream imagery (Jaffé, 1964, p. 240).

The Blue Mandala, repeatedly painted in the seventies, shows Pasmore's interest in ancient motifs and symbols. One could also argue that circular imagery became an important, stylised factor in the artist's creative process. Circular patterns and meanders express wholeness, and also suggest coincidence and synchronicity.



The Blue Mandala, 1978.



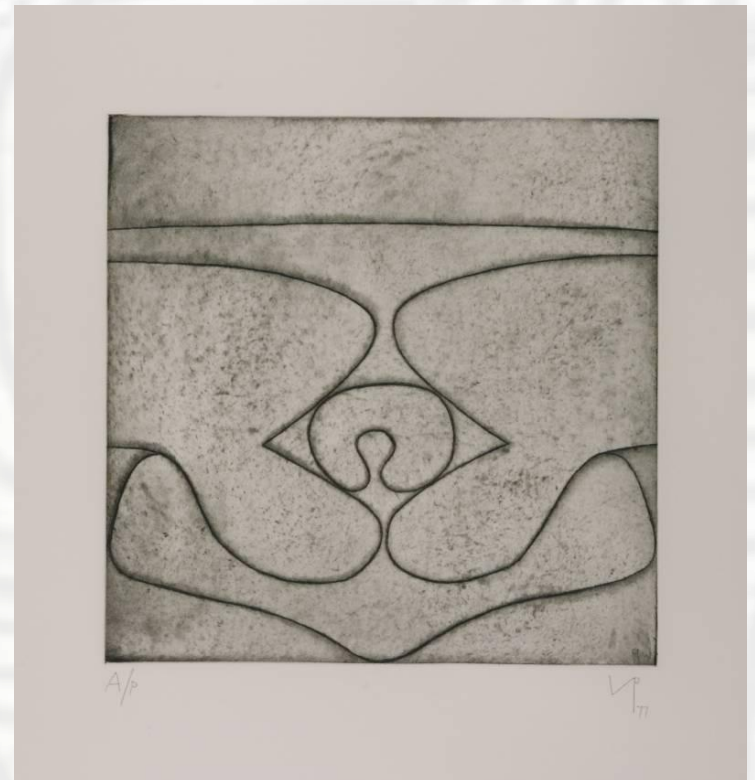
Blue Mandala, 1971

The Cave of Calypso series

The 'line' motifs that are found in *The Cave of Calypso* are somehow an erotic reference to the story of Calypso, who seduced Odysseus and kept him for years away from his wife, Penelope.

Ritual, symbol and myth

The Cave of Calypso

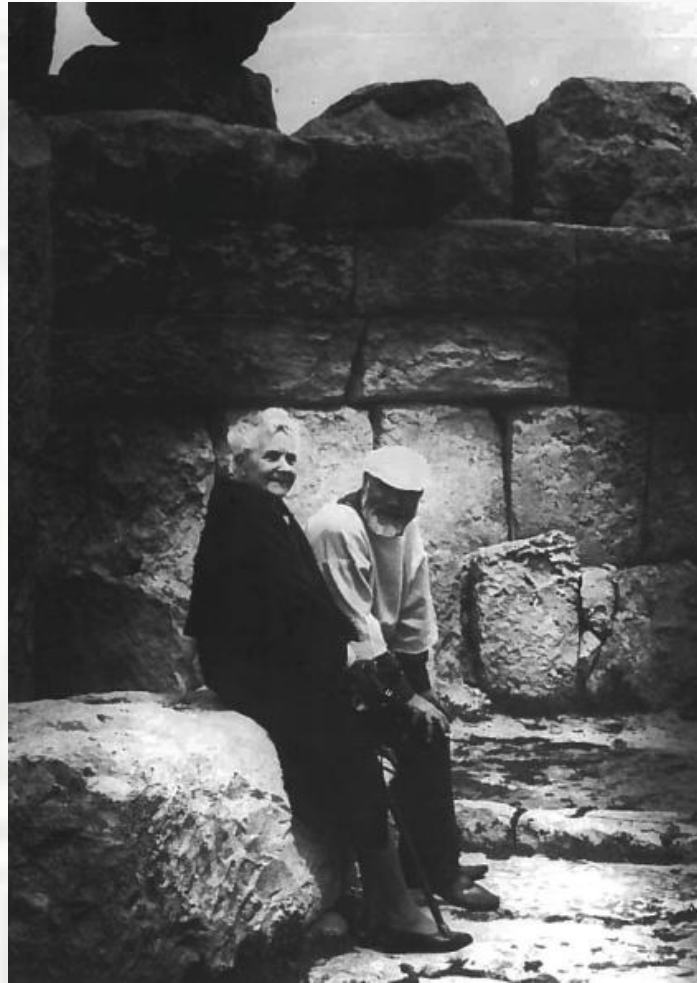


Calypso I and III, 1977.

In the Calypso series, the artist explored the negative and positive spaces and sublime symmetry which could also be read as archetypal symbols.



Victor Pasmore working on the mural at the Festival of Britain,
South Bank, river Thames in 1951



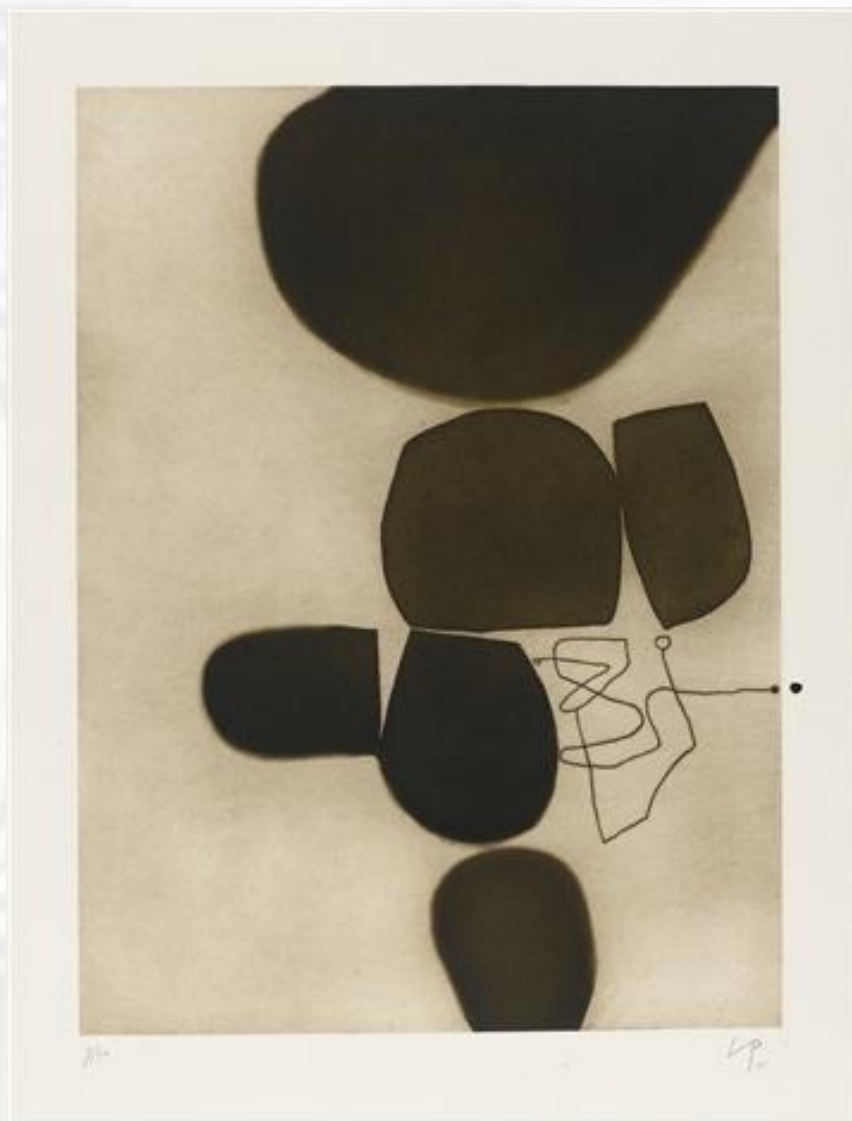
Victor Pasmore with his mother at a Maltese
Prehistoric Temple

Archetypes transcend the conscious
and are mediators between the
conscious and the unconscious psyche
- '*the personified archetypal
expression of the relationship between
the conscious and unconscious*'

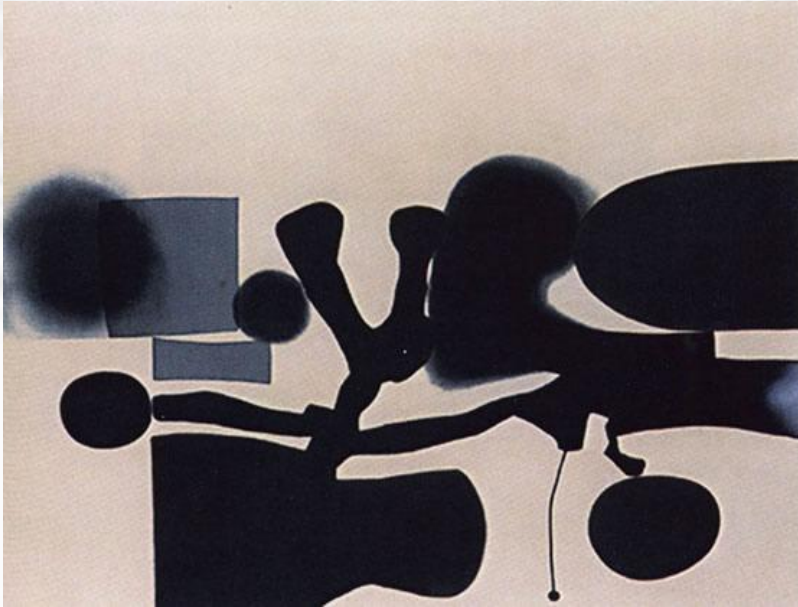
(Robertson, 1995, 2009, pp. 193,194)

Three Images

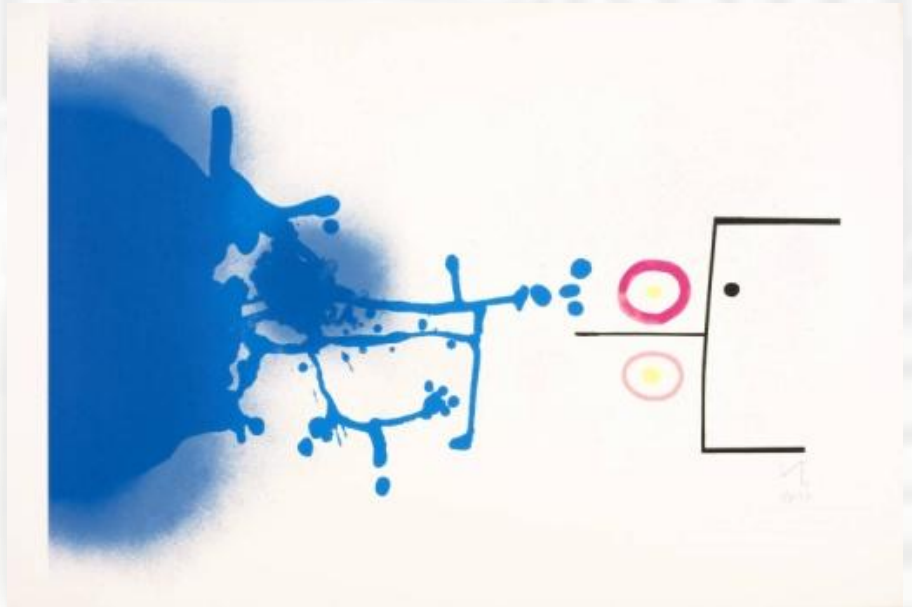
The archetypal reference to the Feminine and Masculine principles, the Anima and Animus archetypes are present in varying degrees in all individuals and are roughly equivalent to the concept of Yin and Yang.



Three Images, 1975

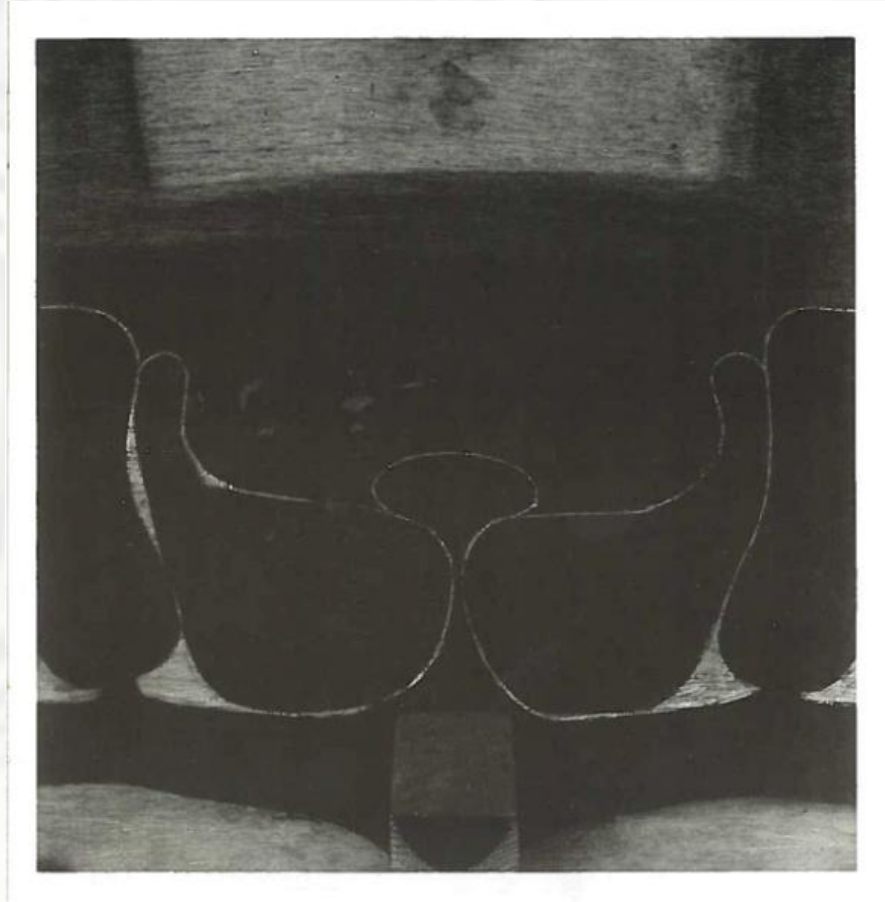


Sun and Sky, 1979,



Harmony of Opposites, 1986

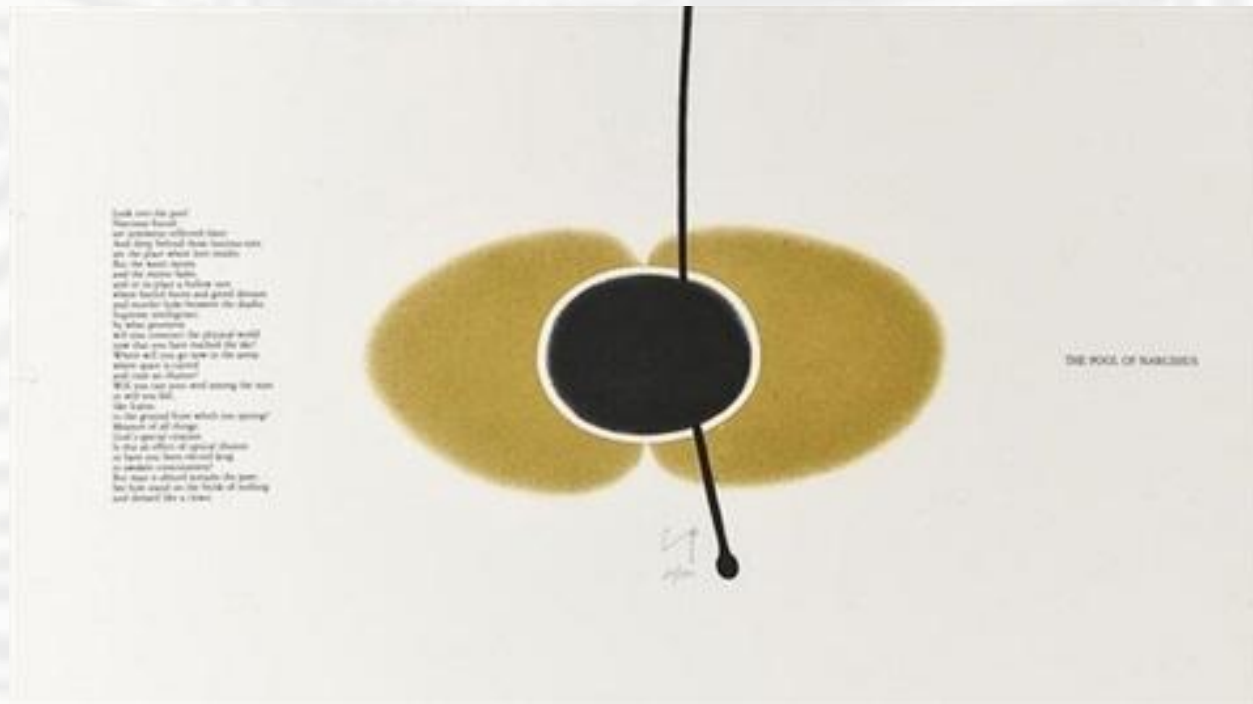
The unconscious duality



The Ego and the Id

The Image in Search of Itself, demonstrates Pasmore's reflections on abstract art. He stated: *'Today meaning dissolves in order to create new meaning and what is known becomes unknown. In art the peripheral images of thought and perception reappear as anonymous objects before which is always a question. While reason sleeps the symbol awakes'* (Pasmore, 1972).

Narcissus



The Pool of Narcissus, 1974.

Many of Pasmore's paintings are symbolic icons which represent a state of mind rather than acting as signs to illustrate a concrete reality, although visual or environmental factors may have acted as catalysts.



*The Pool of
Narcissus, 1975*



*. Look into the Pool of
Narcissus Found, 1975*



*Metamorphosis (Linear
Motifs), 1975*

In these paintings or prints Pasmore worked in continuous search for equilibrium and unity, which became a *determinant* expression. The male and the female aspects when purified appear in their duality and in complete mutual opposition. Unity is manifested as a closed form and *natural* harmony is made visible.

Labyrinthine symbols



Labirinto della Psiche, 1986

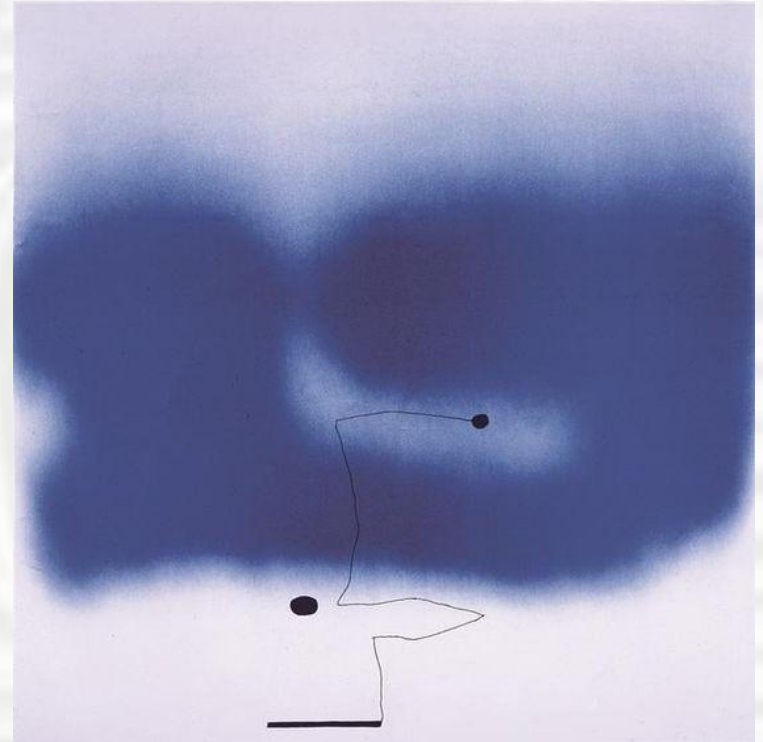


Black development, 1975

The theme of the eye



Beyond the Eye No. 1, 1995.



Beyond the Eye No. 2, 1995.

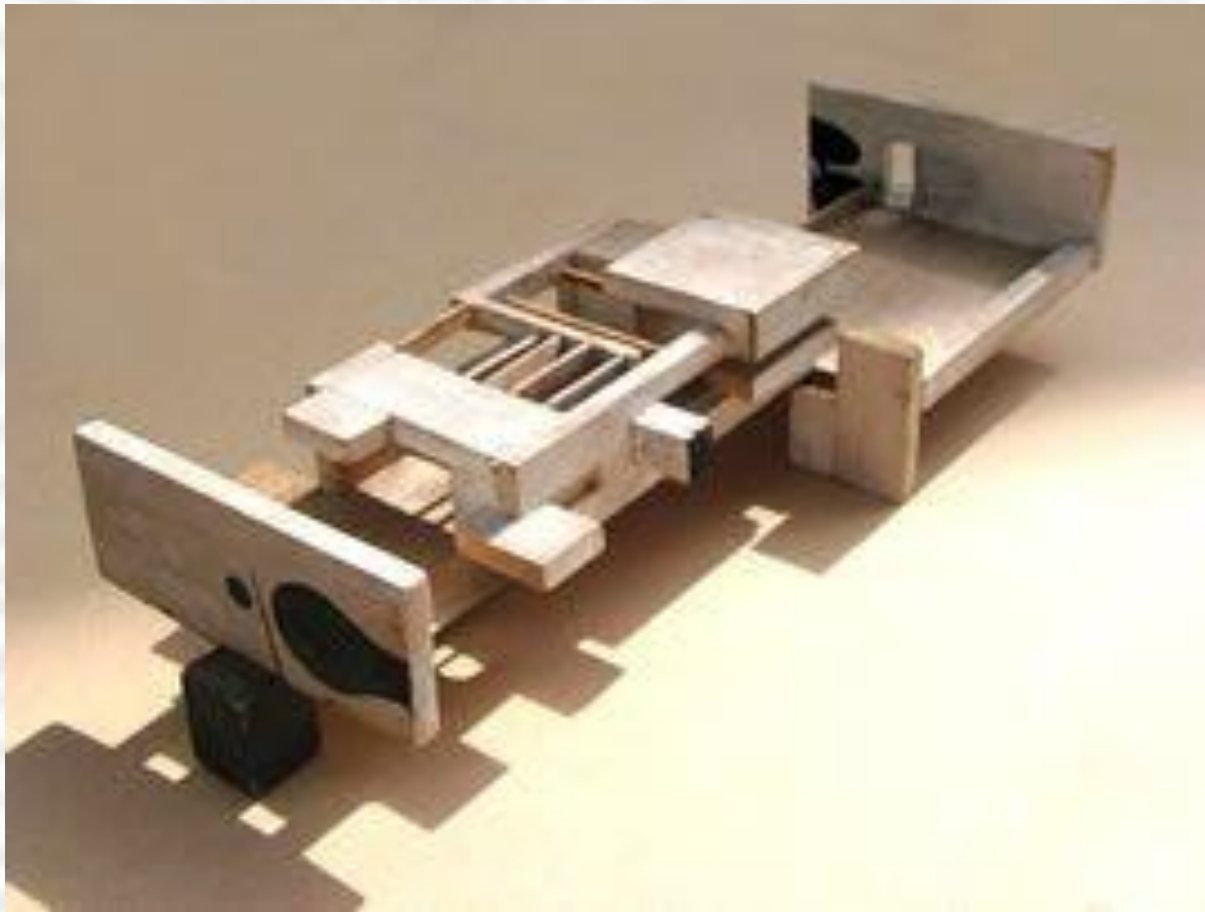
Constructivist imagery

In these new works, Pasmore combines the concept of geometric motifs and references to natural forms as visual metaphors to create an art that engages the viewer to explore his own connection with the imagery. The artist translated his ideas and designs to produce a new and archetypal modern style expressing the dynamism of modern life.



Victor Pasmore built *the Apollo Pavilion*, at Peterlee in UK between 1963 and 1970

Victor Pasmore's wood model for his Apollo Pavilion, 1970





Relief Construction in White, Black and Indian Red, 1960-61,
painted wood and plastic

From objective realism to abstraction

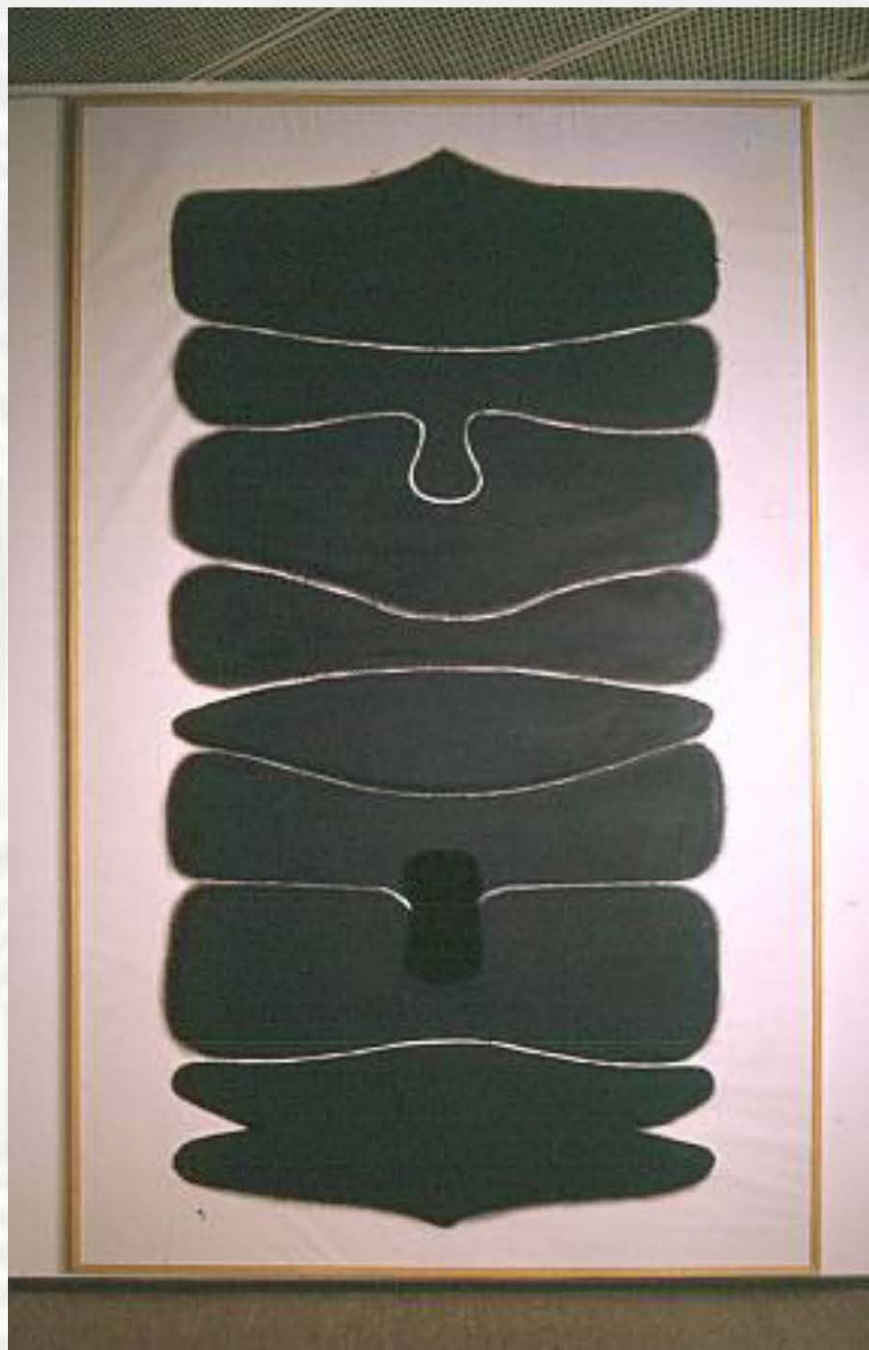


*Abstract in White, Green, Black, Blue, Red,
Grey and Pink c.1963*

I believe that Pasmore's art is the result of a dynamic creative activity between the inner and outer world which the artist perceives and modify according to unconscious organising principles. His remarkable change from representational forms to complete abstract imagery, whether his pieces are constructions, paintings or prints, the artist created an art form that gives it a sense of being.

Jungian analyst, James Hillman points out that the psychology of the image is based not on the physiology of the brain, the structure of language or the organisation of society but in the process of imagination
(Hillman, 1983, p. 19).

Pasmore continued his search for an absolute principle, recognising the change in his work as metamorphosis rather than evolution; not logical and linear, but a self-motivated, circular way of moving, driven by a process of self-analysis.



Thank you

