

Lone ranger

Forty seven paintings from 1967 to 2006 show Peter Prendergast at his furious best. Martin Tinney is staging the first retrospective dedicated to this self-effacing painter (born 1946) who by dint of his relentless search for a fresh way of seeing became one of the most well-liked and well-respected artists in Wales. Peter Prendergast grew up in the mining valleys of south Wales and trained under Frank Auerbach at the Slade but he had started using those characteristically thick, black, Expressionist lines and vibrant colours before he went to college. Isolated in Snowdonia with his wife and children, he was surrounded by magnificent but often dour landscapes, including the oft-repeated hell of the Penrhyn slate quarry.

His signature theme was wide-angled, soaring views of the hills, a rampaging, crazy vision - hold onto the seat of your pants - but he had other moods, and this show gives a wonderful chance to savour them. For example, it includes several early pictures on loan from his family, such as *Mrs Knipe* (oil, 1969) depicting the craggy outlines of his former landlady, and the stunning façade of *Tintern Abbey* (acrylic, 1992, 85 x 116 cm), the first a tiny impasto study, the second a great organ blast of a painting in yellow, orange, green and black. It isn't the largest by any means but the energy that pours out of it would fill a much bigger frame. Peter Prendergast could be tender as well as demonic: here in his preferred materials of acrylic on paper you can see misty views of north Wales such as *Spring, Tan-Y-Graig* (1997), *Towards the Irish Sea II* (2000), *Deiniolen, Autumn* (2005) and the delicate *Spring Morning* (2006), as well as two of the magnificent *Foundry* series (1994) where the violent smelting process seems to swallow the figures whole. Commentators say that his Irish Catholic origins gave Peter Prendergast his vibrant sense of colour. It isn't easy to make acrylics sing so much and the beautifully produced catalogue doesn't do them justice.

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