

Roy Ayres for April Galleries by Caroline Juler

They say that less is more, and for the past four years Roy Ayres's career has been a copybook example of that dictum. He used to paint as wildly as Larry Poons, and landscapes were his stock in trade. Since then his old style and subject matter have given way to a contemplative abstract idiom which goes further in a shorter time. The turning point was his dawning respect for the Golden Section. This archaic notion of divine harmony is shown mathematically by a rectangle whose sides have the ratio 1:1.61803, or 5:8. It has long been the darling of aesthetes who think of themselves as a cut above the rest, but Palladio loved its proportions and the Golden Section is mentioned in every good builder's manual to this day. Roy Ayres uses the same, simple, rectangular, device as the central motif of his watercolours, sometimes ruling the lines, often gauging them by sight. Already limited, his colours are getting darker: lately maroons and blacks have replaced aquamarines and ochres. Occasionally he gives the rectangles a muted coating of gold or silver acrylic. 'I can't handle red. And greens are boring'. How can something so repetitive be so expressive? Rothko knew how, more or less.