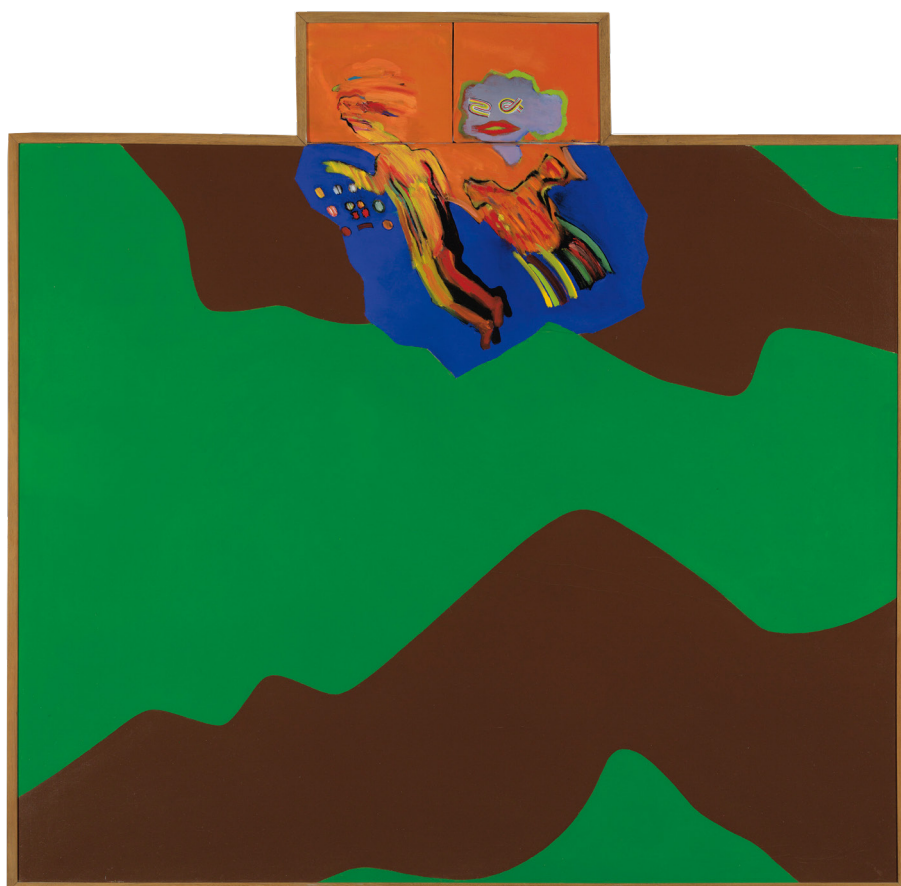




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Allen Jones, *Cockpit*, 1963

ARTIST

Allen Jones (b. 1937)

TITLE

Cockpit

MEDIUM

Oil on three canvases, joined

DATE

1963

SIZE

58 x 60 in : 147.3 x 152.4 cm

PROVENANCE

Feigen Palmer Gallery, Los Angeles and Chicago
Private Collection, Europe
Sale: Christie's, London, 17 June 2019 [lot 23]
Private Collection London (acquired at the
above sale)

EXHIBITED

London, Royal Academy, Allen Jones, November
2013 - January 2015, no. 15.

LITERATURE

A. Lambirth, Allen Jones Works, London, 2005,
p. 47, fig. 39..
O. Letze, M. Livingstone and N. Rosenthal, Allen
Jones - Off the Wall, Tübingen, 2012, p. 20, pl. 9.
Exhibition catalogue, Allen Jones, London, Royal
Academy, 2013, p. 45, no. 15, illustrated.

REFERENCE

AC24-40

An excerpt from the artist:

“Polemical arguments of the time decreed that representational art compromised the objective fact of the canvas. The rectangle becoming a window that framed an illusionistic depth. The shaped canvas did away with this ambiguity giving the artist, paradoxically, more freedom to explore illusion. Whilst teaching a children’s art class I drew the simple outline of a bus on the blackboard consisting of a large rectangle with two small shapes beneath representing the wheels. I realised that my drawing would make an interesting idea for a painting. The canvas being both an object and the subject - a bus. Turned upside down the canvases suggested the cockpit of a fighter plane. The camouflage idea came from a model Spitfire that I had as a child and enabled me at the same time to make playful reference to current American abstract painting. David Hockney had been exploring the shaped canvas for example in his picture *Tea Painting in an Illusionistic Style*, 1961.” Allen Jones, R.A., May 2019.

Allen Jones’s first Pop paintings of the early 1960s, beginning with a key self-portrait of 1960, *The Artist Thinks* - a painting so important to him that he has kept it in his own collection to this day - all exude a sense of joy, rule-breaking and youthful self-discovery as much in their imagery as in their bold colour schemes, decorative appeal and playful formal devices. At this stage of his development, his identity as one of the first wave of British Pop artists was already secure in the attention he awarded to imagery from modern urban life, for example in his 1962 series of *Bus* paintings and in this and other paintings of airplanes. Those references to popular culture were very soon to harden into much more explicit forms of representation when he began to exploit imagery borrowed from fetishist and erotic magazine illustrations that he discovered during his sojourn in New York City in 1964-65. In the period immediately after his single year of study (1959-60) at the Royal College of Art in London, where he was

part of a trailblazing group of young painters that included David Hockney, R. B. Kitaj, Peter Phillips and Derek Boshier, it was more a question of tone, of bravado, humour and a defiant freedom from constraints that perhaps owed something to his need to assert himself in the immediate aftermath of having been expelled from the College (for excessive independence) as an example to others.

Jones’s frame of reference in the early 1960s was, in fact, primarily to modernist European painting. From Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky (whose pre-World War I Improvisations he particularly admired) he took certain elements of his formal language and an approach one could label pedagogical in its presentation of colour and form as signifiers capable of conveying content as robustly as the motifs they embodied. Teaching was integral to Jones’s studio practice at that time: in 1960-61 he completed a teacher training course at Hornsey College of Art in London, and from 1961 to 1963 he taught lithography at Croydon College of Art, his experience there with colour lithography infiltrating his paintings. In *Cockpit* one senses these forces in the structure of the painting itself, with the two small rectangular canvases placed along the upper edge of the main canvas immediately identifying the protective housing of an airplane soaring skywards within a windy atmosphere boldly described in terms of a simplified jagged camouflage design in black and green.

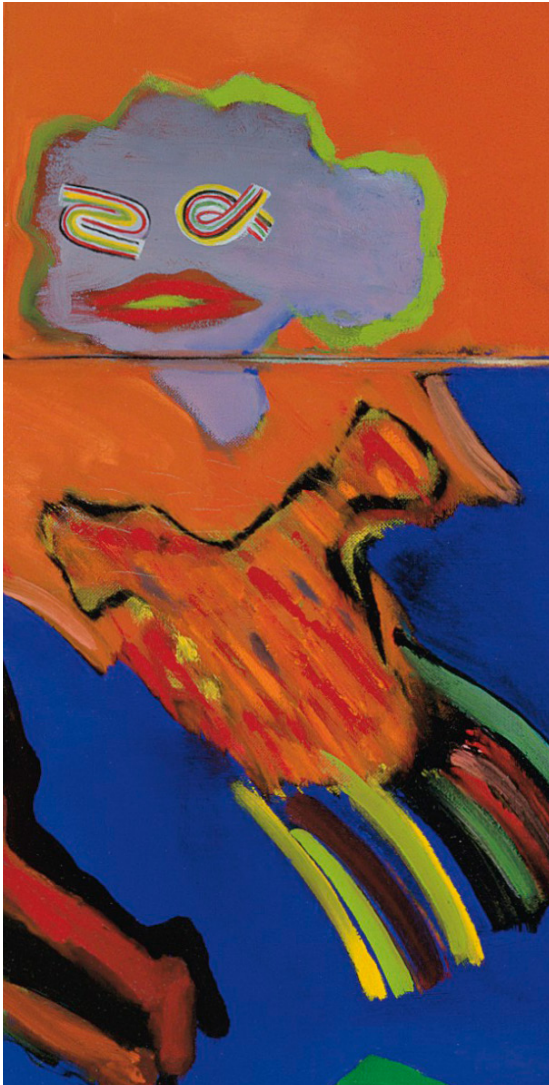
The impact of Cubism, early abstraction and especially the Orphism of Robert Delaunay, one of his favourite artists at that time, can be sensed in the flattening of forms and in the eye-popping colour contrasts and clean edges that convey the dynamism of the subject matter. Such was Jones’s hunger to take on board the lessons of the European art that inspired him, however, that he was able blithely to combine influences that others might

well have regarded as art historically incompatible. His fascination with the representation of the propulsive movement of modern means of transport was a personal take on the tenets of Futurism, but filtered through the hard-edged American abstraction of Ellsworth Kelly, just beginning to be exhibited in London. To namecheck so many divergent movements and artists might suggest an opportunistic eclecticism, but nothing could be further from the truth: by taking from each only what suited his pucolour, drawing and composition), Jones declared his command of his means with a confidence that was impressive for an artist just turned twenty-five. The figurative motifs that he favoured, and that were to direct him to becoming one of the rare Pop artists more closely identified with representations of the human figure than with the products of consumer culture, were discovered through a process of scribbling and doodling directly aligned with the Surrealist practice of automatic drawing as a means of releasing impulses from the subconscious.

More surprising still was Jones's love for the work of Marc Chagall, one of the century's great colourists but certainly not a fashionable choice for a young painter at a time when most of Jones's ambitious contemporaries were responding more to the work of American artists who were also on Jones's radar, including the Abstract Expressionists and the proto-Pop artists such as Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg and Larry Rivers who asserted themselves immediately afterwards. Chagall's floating figures, chiming with Jones's fascination at that time with the writings of C. G. Jung and Friedrich Nietzsche, seemed to him to be useful allies in his thematic exploration of gender identity and of the creative act as a fusion of male and female principles. The couples painted by Chagall are ances-

tors to the fused male and female figures that are the protagonists of such paintings made in 1963 by Jones as *Hermaphrodite* and *Man Woman* (Tate), and they relate closely also to the sketchy figures that populate earlier paintings such as *The Battle of Hastings* 1961-62 (Tate) and some of the shaped Bus paintings he had made in 1962.

Just as Jones used the same conjunction of an octagonal canvas conjoined with a smaller rectangular canvas to describe a parachutist in *Wunderbare Landung* 1963 (Ferens Art Gallery, Hull Museums), but turned upside down to become a *Marriage Medal* (sold in these Rooms, 19 November 2018, lot 26), so he created *Cockpit* as an upended mirror image of the structure he had recently explored in Bus paintings such as *3rd Bus*: the small canvases that had previously served to identify the wheels of the bus are now transformed into the titular cockpit. The rather cartoonish, even childlike figures whose heads seem to be emerging out of the ether in defiance of gravity complete the narrative of an artist fully aware of the context from which he has emerged but gleefully proclaiming his ability to make up his own rules. “



Allen Jones

Allen Jones (b. 1937) is a British artist known for his contributions to the Pop Art movement and his work in painting, sculpture, and printmaking. Born in Southampton, he studied at Hornsey College of Art and the Royal College of Art in London. Jones' work often explores themes of sexuality, desire, and the human form, with a focus on the female figure. His sculptures, particularly his life-size fibreglass pieces, have sparked both interest and controversy for their provocative subject matter. Alongside his sculptural works, Jones has produced vibrant paintings and prints that combine figurative and abstract elements, drawing on imagery from fashion, advertising, and commercial art. His work has been exhibited internationally, and he remains a prominent figure in British contemporary art.



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