



The Evolution of an Artist

The son of a civil engineer, Graham Crowley was born in Romford in 1950, and grew up there and in Ilford and Southend. He is, in a very real sense, an Essex lad, a child of Eastern England, whose first painting aquired by Christchurch Mansion was purchased from the Tolly Cobbol Eastern Arts Exhibition in 1997. This picture, entitled *Curl*, is a typical example of Crowley’s early style, a feisty abstraction full of impossible but dynamic shapes and acute colours. But as his work developed and his thought matured, Crowley began to realize that abstraction was ‘less engaging’ than figuration for someone of his temperament; it was actually ‘less demanding’. Crowley is a painter of restless intelligence and tremendous energy, and it soon became apparent that these qualities, combined with a rather unfashionable social conscience, would propel him into exploring the world about him through an intensely focused realism quite unlike anything else to be found on the contemporary art scene.

In early 1980s Crowley began to be recognised as a painter who placed a strong emphasis on content, much of it to do with domestic life portrayed with a Pop Art twist. The household familiar would suddenly switch tracks to the surreal, as Crowley painted your fears with gallows humour. The brightly-lit interiors turned into claustrophobic urban psychodramas redolent of decay and destruction. What doom lurks in corridor or cellar? The disjunctions of scale – huge mundane objects in cramped settings amid vast perspectives – created vertigo and deep unease. From flat decorative colour and stylized drawing Crowley graduated to tonal modelling with glazes of colour tinting grisaille grounds. The social conscience of Dickens or Orwell now seemed to be married to the moralistic tradition of Hogarth. This was painterly satire which took no prisoners.

The same destructive elements which threaten society itself.

often pink or blue

These were psychological paintings – mindscapes as much as depictions of urban sprawl and overcrowded housing. A wildly out-of-control mincer or giant can-opener signify our underlying anxieties at human aggression, sexuality and death. Crowley, unlike most artists, is not only willing but able to identify the rot beneath the floor boards.

See *Spider* with *Mushroom Soup*



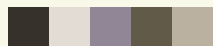
By 1991, in an exhibition titled *Somewhere Else*, landscape has become a principal focus of the work, no doubt in part due to the Crowleys' move to the Forest of Dean. But the interest in urban decay lingered, and the real theme of these paintings was the meeting point of indoors and outdoors – group of houses set within their natural context.

The Flower Show of 1998 concentrated on the beautiful grisaille still-lives Crowley had begun to paint ten years before, a tribute to floral tributes which had become an increasingly noticeable indicator of public grief, and which reached their apogee with the tragic death of Princess Diana. These paintings, in which Crowley sets up a formal dialogue between lucidity and blur, specifics and atmospheric, near and far, and uses the paint surface at once to confirm and to interrupt the painted image, are a particularly poignant instance of the artist in his role as a cultural observer. His moral conscience however, demands that he frustrate rather than fulfil our expectations, so that there is no bright joyful colour in these pictures, though they are filled with light.

The play of light is perhaps Crowley's supreme subject.

More recently, Crowley has devoted his considerable energies to a thoughtful revitalisation of the landscape tradition in western art. His paintings, which have lost none of their graphic vitality and obscure feelings of foreboding, are mostly about reinterpreted landscape – how we remember a place, as against how it really looks. He is interested in patterns of settlement and dispersal: how houses are spread out through a landscape, or how the bare patches of faded grass on campsites appear as the tents are packed away. Colour floods and saturates these images, giving tone to the time of day. Again we see how figure and ground are deliberately confused, with the strategic use of blips of white as signifiers of surface which also represent flies and moths. Whether built up in heavy impasto or glazed over compressed charcoal, it is the assured handling of the materials that is so compelling. Graham Crowley, the sophisticated style historian who can make telling allusions to 1930s book illustration, Festival of Britain textiles or Rembrandt's etchings, is in the end an artist with a profound love of paint.

See *Local Colour 1* and 2.





1950	born in Romford Essex
1968 - 1972	St. Martin's School of Art, London
1972 - 1975	Royal College of Art, London MA (RCA)
1978 - 1985	Visiting Lecturer, Royal College of Art (Painting), London
1982 - 1983	Artist-in-Residence, Oxford University
1982 - 1988	Member of the Fine Art Faculty, British School at Rome
1983 - 1986	Lived and worked in London
1984 - 1986	Visiting Lecturer, Goldsmith's College, London
1985 - 1989	Member of the advisory board, ICA, London
1986 - 1989	Senior Fellow in Painting; South Glamorgan Institute of Higher Ed, Cardiff
1987 - 1988	N.A.B. Fine Art Working Committee
1991 - 1992	Riverscape International drawing residency, Cleveland County
1994 - 1995	Artist in residence, Dulwich Picture Gallery, London
1995 - 1996	Tutor, Drawing Studio, Royal College of Art, London
1996 - 1998	Head of Fine Art, City and Guilds of London Art School, London
1998 - 2006	Professor of Painting, Royal College of Art, London





1982	Air Gallery London
1983	Home Comforts, MOMA, Oxfors and Touring
1984	Reflections, Riverside Studios, London High Life, ICA, London Table Manners, Edward Totah Gallery, London Forum, Zurich Art Fair
1986	Domestic Crisis, Totah Gallery, New York
1987	In Living Memory, The Orchard Gallery, Derry and Touring
1991	Somewhere Else, Edward Totah Gallery, London
1992	Northern Seen, Northern Centre for Contemporary Art, Sunderland
1993	Millfield Gallery, Somerset
1995	The Last Decade, Lamont Gallery, London Warrens Boat House, Eire British Representative and prize winner, Cagnes-Sur-Mer, International Festival of Painting, France
1997	Rineen, Lamont Gallery, London
1998	The Flower Show, Lamont Gallery, London
1999	A Drift, exhibition and inaugural lecture, Royal College of Art, London
2001	Familiar Ground, Beaux Arts, London
2002	Are you serious?, Wolsey Art Gallery, Christchurch Mansion, Ipswich
2003	Beaux Arts, London





1976, 80, 82, 83, 85, 87, 93	John Moores, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool
1977, 81, 83, 85	Tolly Cobbold Eastern Arts Exhibition, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge
1977	Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol A Free Hand, Arts Council Touring Exhibition Drawing in Action, Ferens Art Gallery, Hull and Touring
1979	Open Attitudes, MOMA, Oxford
1980	7 Artists, Kettles Yard Gallery, Cambridge and Touring
1981	Contemporary Artists in Camdem, Camden Arts Centre, London
1982	South Bank Show, London Hayward Annual, Hayward Gallery, London Paris Biennale 4 British Painters, Lucerne, Switzerland and Bluecoat Gallery, Liverpool
1983	Stroke, Line and Figure, Gimpel Fils, London
1984	Art within Reach, Air Gallery, London and Touring The Image as Catalyst, Ashmolean and Touring Playing Live, Leicester Museum CAS Contemporary Art Market, London Drawing, Barbara Toll Gallery, New York Venice Biennale, Anthony Reynolds Gallery
1985	The Proper Study, British Council, New Delhi Proud and Prejudiced, Twinings Gallery, New York Figure 1, Aberystwyth Arts Centre Artists Against Apartheid, Royal Festival Hall, London »





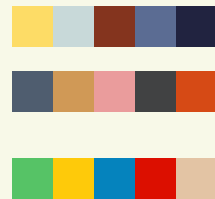
- 1986 Figures and Myths for the late twentieth Century, Edward Totah
Gallery, London
No Place Like Home, Cornerhouse, Manchester
- 1987 Edward Totah Gallery, London
Self Portrait: A Modern View, Artsite, Bath and Touring
- 1988 Figuring out the 80's, Laing Art Gallery, New Castle
British Drawing, Thumb Gallery, London
The New British Painting, Cincinnati and Touring
Food, Odette Gilbert, London
- 1989 - 90 Real Life Stories, Cleveland Council's Collection on Loan,
Spacex, Exeter
- 1990 Mixed Show, Gallery Dagmer, London
The New British Painting, Queens Museum, New York
Print News, Oriol & Chapter Galleries, Cardiff and Touring
The Brewhouse Open 1990, Taunton, 1st prize winner
Hunting Group Exhibition, London Touring
Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, London
- 1991 Art for Amnesty Auction, London
Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, London
Cleveland Drawing Biennale
- 1992 A Collector's Choice, Bristol City Art Gallery and Museum
(curator: Keith Parkin)
Compendium Show, Spacex Gallery, Exeter
Silver Longboat Competition, Darlington
Royal Academy Summer Exhibition (invited), London
Riverscape, Cleveland Art Gallery
Self Portrait Exhibition, Plymouth Art Gallery »





1993	Riverscape Exhibition, Cleveland Gallery Millfield Open (invited), Somerset One of four judges for the 1993 (11th) Cleveland Drawing Biennale
1994	One of three judges for the 1994 Derwent Drawing Open, Sunderland Moussorsky Project, Touring John Jones/1st London Open, 1st prize winner Back to Basics, Flowers East Gallery, London British Library, London
1995	Keynote Speaker at West of England Conference on Arts Residencies British Representative in Bangkok - European Union Exhibition (British Council) Small is Beautiful - Food, Flowers East Gallery, London
1996	Small is Beautiful XIV - Sex, Flowers East Gallery, London 5 Artists in Arthur Anderson's, London
1997	Small is Beautiful XV - Death, Flowers East Gallery, London Summer Show, Lamont Gallery, London Hunting Group Art Prizes, London and Touring
1998	Paintings of Modern Life, Guildford House Gallery, Guildford Small is Beautiful XVI - Music, Flowers East Gallery, London
1999	The Flower Show, Harwood House, Leeds
2000	Summer Show, Beaux Arts, London Order and Event: Landscape Now, Artspace, London The Discerning Eye, The Mall Galleries, London
2001	ART2001, Beaux Arts, BDC, Islington, London London Underground, Sungkok Art Museum, Seoul, Korea (British Council) The Discerning Eye, The Mall Galleries, London »

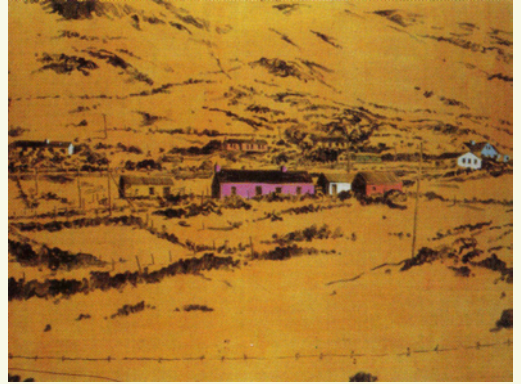




2001 ART2001, Beaux Arts, BDC, Islington, London
 London Underground, Sungkok Art Museum, Seoul, Korea (British Council)
 The Discerning Eye, The Mall Galleries, London
 Small is Beautiful XIX, Flowers East Gallery, London
 Summer 2001, Beaux Arts, London
 20/21 Britis Art Fair, Beaux Arts, RCA, London

2002 ART2002, Beaux Arts, BDC, Islington, London
 London Underground, Thai Pai, Taiwan
 Small is Beautiful XX, Flowers East Gallery, London
 Summer 2002, Beaux Arts, London
 Finalist Jerwood Painting Prize, London and Birmingham
 20/21 British Art Fair, Beaux Arts, Commonwealth Institute, London





Local Colour 1 and 2, 2002.
Collection Beaux Arts



Spider with Mushroom Soup, 1982.
Collection Arts Council of Great Britain
