

THOMAS DANE GALLERY

Out and About: Prunella Clough paintings from the 1980s and 1990s **Curated by Jenni Lomax**

Private view: Thursday 4 June, 6–8pm
Exhibition dates: 5 June–25 July 2026

Thomas Dane Gallery
11 Duke Street, St James's, London SW1

Out and About is an exhibition of seventeen paintings by the painter Prunella Clough (b.1919, London, d. 1999, London); included in the selection of work is *Out and About* (1993). Its typically oblique title offers a clue to Clough's process of painting and highlights her claim to being "essentially an eye person", constantly on the lookout for visual treasures. Keen-eyed and alert — a *flâneuse* and a magpie — Clough collected shapes, colours, textures, contradictions and incongruities; objects and images of all that was a part of everyday life.

Throughout her life as an artist Clough made 'field' trips out beyond London, preferring the city's edgelands and working coastal resorts where industry and nature become tangled, to a picturesque landscape or rural idyll. What she gathered from such outings was noted in her journals and diaries, jotted on scraps of paper, on backs of envelopes and recounted in letters to friends. In small, neat handwriting she recalled objects and shapes in colour and texture: "...a brown man on a white towel on neutral sand by pale green posts by a white boat..."

With her "not very glamorous" camera, Clough took what she called "rough photographs". These are extraordinary snapshots of shop window displays, drapery and awnings, brightly coloured plastic bowls, buckets and spades, factory gates, chimneys, gutters and kerb stones, floral tributes and grave-side ornaments, wire baskets piled with footballs. And more.

Visiting Clough's studio and home in the past, I would see evidence of her recent findings pinned up on the wall, piled on a chair or scattered over the floor. It was a delight to rediscover some of this treasure in my recent rummages through the stacks of her archive. Held at Tate Britain, Clough's archive is a trove of ideas and experiments, documenting her astute, witty and sometimes wry observations. Categorized boxes of photographs, diaries, notebooks, letters (personal and professional) span much of her life. Student notebooks reveal her rigorous study of materials and techniques, appointment diaries tell of the exhibitions she visited and the artists she dined with, while her shopping lists of "fish, cadmium yellow, wine..." support the fact that her two favourite places were her studio and her kitchen; that when being in the former was a struggle the latter offered respite.

Other boxes contain remnants of studio apparatus: abstract shapes salvaged from 'failed' canvases, cardboard cut-outs used as stencils or templates, home-made colour swatch books, experimental collages on surplus post cards, novelty wrappers, dried twigs, a fragment of stone. What might appear to be left-behind odds and ends are in fact thrilling, a telling story of thinking and making. The stuff in her archive is evidence that Clough collected and recorded much that caught her eye. It shows too that she had laid down substantial footings to support the freedom and strangeness she desired for her paintings — but it only partially reveals the source of Clough's distinctive visual language. There was so much else that she observed; things fleetingly glimpsed, unrecordable visual impressions that burned into the soul and got stored at the back of her mind. The written notes, simply drawn sketches, snapshot photos were for Clough an *aide-memoire*, not to be used directly in her paintings but as a lexicon of shapes, motifs and visual signs to be called upon when plotting her canvases.

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Avoiding being either abstract or figurative, Prunella Clough's paintings have their own intrinsic logic and independent existence; possessed with a precarious beauty tempered by edgy delinquency. They are layered with the gritty textures of an urban existence and drawn with lines caught in an entanglement with nature; ingredients Clough has detached, reformed and transported from the journeys she made so regularly, out and about in the world.

Out and About is organised in collaboration with the Estate of Prunella Clough and is accompanied by a publication that includes a new essay by artist Hannah Collins. The exhibition has been curated by Jenni Lomax. It follows on from *Push Me, Pull You*, an exhibition she compiled for Thomas Dane Gallery, Naples in May 2025, where a number of paintings by Prunella Clough were shown in dialogue with other painters, past and present, including Amy Sillman, Caragh Thuring, Hurvin Anderson, Bice Lazzari and Matthew Krishanu.

Prunella Clough was born in London in 1919, where she lived and worked. Following her education at the Chelsea School of Art, and later the Camberwell School of Art, she began exhibiting small still-lives and landscapes and had her first solo show in 1947 at Leger Galleries, London. Her rise to prominence followed her touring retrospective exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1960. Annelly Juda Fine Art worked closely with her throughout her life holding numerous exhibitions of her work and continues to do so, working with her estate. In 1996 Camden Art Centre presented an exhibition of her work, curated by Jenni Lomax, together with the artist. In 1999, three months before her death at the age of 80, she won the prestigious Jerwood painting prize. In 2007 a major exhibition of her work was held at the Tate Gallery, London. Clough's work is collected widely and represented in major public galleries and museums around the world including V&A London, England; Tate, London, England; British Museum, London, England; Museum of Modern Art, New York NY; Art Gallery of New South Wales, Australia; Scottish National Gallery of Art, Edinburgh, Scotland; Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, England; and Wakefield City Art Gallery, Yorkshire, England.

Jenni Lomax is an independent curator and writer based in London. She is Director Emeritus of Camden Art Centre, London where, as director from 1990 to 2017, she established an influential and forward-thinking programme of international exhibitions and artist-residencies that placed artists and education at the core of the institution. She continues to work in an advisory capacity and as a trustee with many arts organisations, including Henry Moore Foundation, Tate Liverpool, Raven Row, and Freeland Foundation. Lomax is currently working on a number of curatorial and publishing projects with London-based institutions.

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Gallery hours: Tuesday to Friday 11am–6pm, Saturday 12pm–6pm or by appointment.

Admission: Free

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Nearest Tube: Green Park or Piccadilly Circus

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