

RALPH FLECK

Giverny

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Giverny is forever linked with Monet: Giverny is one of the great place names in the history of painting. Either side of the devastation of the First World War, Monet used the water lilies in his garden to dissolve and rebuild colour on his canvas. The subject matter has become so linked with Monet that most other artists have avoided it, but Ralph Fleck's direct approach to art has made it a natural challenge. Even in Germany, the country best known for contemporary painters, Fleck has become famous for his use of thick paint. He treats the Giverny water lilies with exactly the same respect that he reserves for the fields, the cities, the sea and everything else he paints. Yet Monet is a role model for Fleck in that he was a pioneer of painting systematically through a subject in series. The passing of time is important to Fleck. Born over one hundred years after the great Impressionist, Fleck painted the water lilies in the late 1980s, a period in which painting itself was dissolved and rebuilt.

'If I had to describe my method of work,' says Fleck, 'it would be as *Informel* with order.' *Informel*, the most famous variation of which was Abstract Expressionism, was an attempt to reduce paint to its most chaotic essence. A Post-*Informel* painter cannot be satisfied with a survey of the light effects on lilies. There is not the same belief in scientific or indeed artistic progress. 'Sometimes I am interested in showing different aspect of one location or object,' says Fleck, 'but at others I am working again to show more of the same essence. I paint in series like a writer might make a diary. My reason for repeating an image is far removed from that of advertising or Warhol. I wish to reveal the spirit not close it down.' Fleck's water lilies hover in front of us – sometimes they speak to us of the marvellous order in nature at others colourful chaos.