

Max Clendinning *Interior Eulogies*

8 Bury Street SW1Y
13 September – 01 October 2022

Curated by Simon Andrews

Architect, interior and furniture designer, sculptor and artist Max Clendinning (1924-2020) was one of the most enigmatic and intuitive creators of the British Postwar Modern movement — a daringly liberated creator whose restless inquisitiveness sparked a touchstone to the popular zeitgeist. “It’ll be a great day when furniture and cutlery swing like *The Supremes*”, opined Michael Wolff RDI writing in the *Society of Industrial Arts Journal* in 1964. Clendinning however, had already weighed anchor — his course plotted to voyage yet further.

Together with his lifelong partner, the Slade-trained painter and theatre set designer Ralph Adron (b. 1939), Clendinning delivered some of the most sumptuous and wildly exotic domestic interiors of the era, employing their Georgian home in Islington as platform and canvas to an ever-evolving tableaux of shape, structure and colour. Journalists, writers and photographers, Norman Parkinson and Tim Street-Porter included, responded to these assured and highly personalised schemes, ensuring that it was one of the most consistently published interiors of its era.



An influential 1967 publication records totemic plywood furniture, delivered as if machine-readable hieroglyphs, punctuating Pop Deco murals that roamed freely over walls, doors and ceilings. In a subsequent iteration of their home, all surfaces dissolve to a uniform palette of universal white, living components indistinguishable from walls and floors, an oversized illuminated Tulip offering an unanticipated gesture of familiarity. Then as now, these interiors continue to resist easy classification — post-modernist or pop, yet neither; transcendental classicism unfastened from structure — landscapes of the unexpected.

As part of the London Design Festival, Sadie Coles HQ will present *Max Clendinning: Interior Eulogies*, an exhibition curated by Simon Andrews and undertaken with the support of Ralph Adron. The exhibition will assemble previously-unseen works of furniture and sculpture from the collection of Ralph Adron, and from other private collections, along with archival photography documenting Clendinning’s interiors and original works on paper by Adron.

Max Clendinning:

Born in County Armagh in Northern Ireland, Clendinning originally trained as a painter before qualifying as an architect in 1953. Early projects had included furniture and exhibition designs for both the 1948 Britain Can Make It, and the 1951 Festival of Britain exhibitions. Significant architectural commissions were to follow, including Manchester Oxford Road train station, completed in 1960 and Grade II listed, and Crawley Civic Centre, 1964, which featured a boldly-designed interior that soon attracted new commissions from influential London clients. Establishing his own studio in 1965, Clendinning now focussed on interior and furniture design. With the exception of a limited series of innovative furniture that was briefly produced for retail in the latter half of the 1960s, most pieces were one-offs or prototypes. These were often hand-made together with Adron, and produced either for their own use or for the private clients that increasingly represented Clendinning's commissions onwards from the 1970s. During this period commercial interior design projects included the celebrated all-grey interior of the Christian Dior boutique on London's Mount Street in 1972, and numerous shop interiors undertaken during the redevelopment of Covent Garden, of which Clendinning's 1982 facade for Christina Smith's The Tea House currently remains intact. Restlessly active until the end, Clendinning never stopped designing furniture, and unflinchingly continued to reimagine his own living spaces.

Furniture designed by Max Clendinning is retained in the collections of the Victoria & Albert Museum, London; the National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh; and the Ulster Museum, Belfast.

Simon Andrews:

Simon Andrews is an internationally respected expert with over 30 years' experience in the global market for Design. Previously Senior International Specialist for Christie's, Andrews has served on the authenticating committees for major international art and design fairs in London, Paris, Amsterdam, Basel, Miami and Maastricht. A bilingual Anglo-French national, who has lectured widely and written extensively, Andrews is based in London and is the founder of Andrews Art Advisory Ltd.

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