



**Charles Tyrell (Born 1950)**  
***Flush*, 1987,**  
 Oil on canvas, 175 x 175 cm

Here is a painting that, like others by Charles Tyrell, is abstract and non-representational without, however, lacking content. Far from displaying a static two-dimensional grid, which the American art historian, Rosalind Krauss, deemed emblematic of modernism, what we see here is dynamic and has depth. The intersecting lines do not just cross the picture plane but they traverse a space. The lines do not delimit that space but instead outline trajectories of movement within it. However, they do so not as formal vectors in an empty, abstract geometrical space. For, this space is rich and fecund, dark green like a moist forest ground and offset by the pale pink edges that blur attempts of delimitation. So does the yellow mark on the left, which – placed at the very edge of the

pictorial space – suggests that the painting might continue beyond the limits of what we see, beyond the limits of the picture. The painting, then, appears to have relative autonomy from the picture designed and executed by the artist. Tyrell himself once described this as a “constant battle or state of flux between the order of the imposed geometrical structure and the demands of an emerging painting that might not wish to conform to this structure.” The dynamics of the work are generated by this battle or state of flux. And so is its depth. The intersecting lines suggest a pyramidal structure, which is either concave yielding a deep space that draws us, the viewers, into the painting or convex extending towards us outside of the painting. But, again, this suggestion is held in check by the picture plane that refuses to withdraw completely in favour of an illusionary space. The viewer is invited to participate in delicious ambiguities; between reference and non-reference, space and surface, expanse and edge. Everything that is put forward is revoked.

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