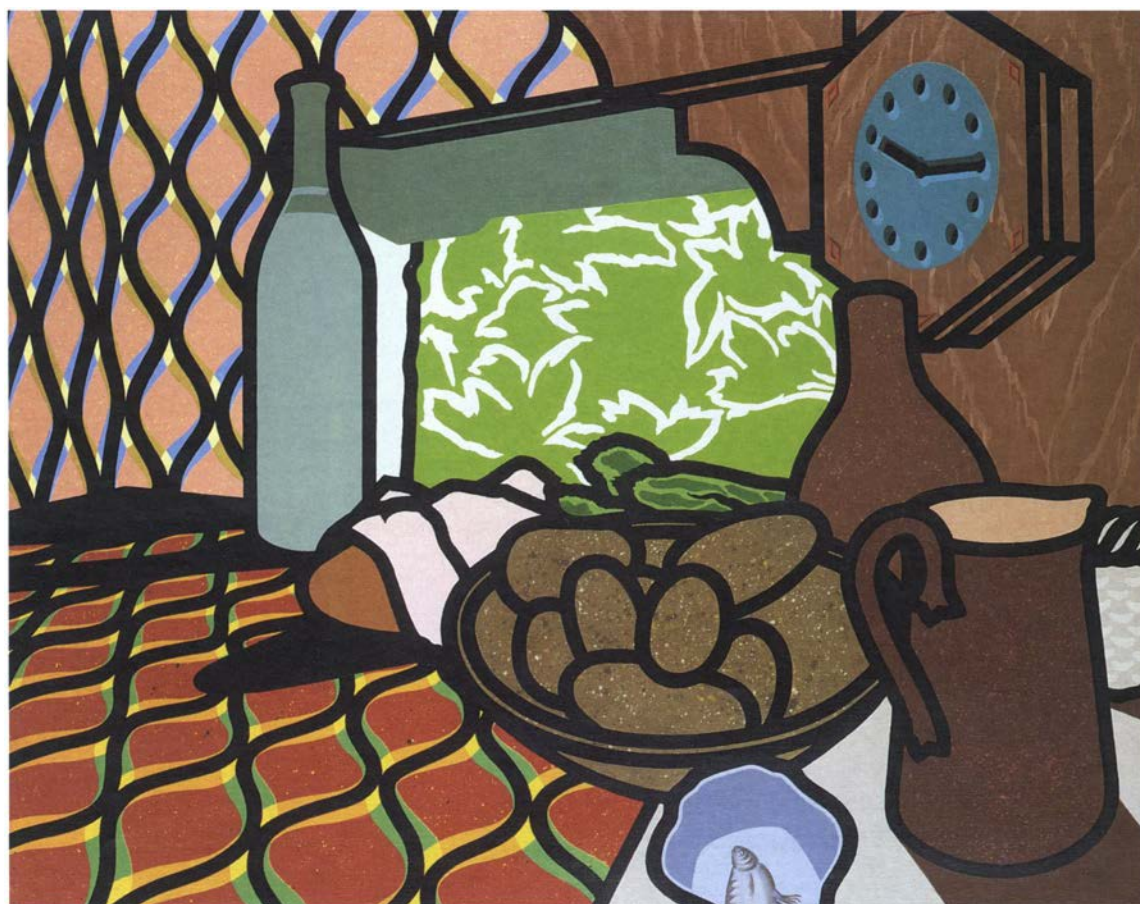


Patrick Caulfield: sketchbook drawings for 'Still life: spring fashion'

by SARAH WHITFIELD

PATRICK CAULFIELD died in September 2005. Shortly before his death, he was able to see the publication in June of the first major monograph on his work, a book on which he had enthusiastically collaborated, even allowing pages from his previously unseen sketchbooks to be used as additional illustrations.¹ This was surprising because it was well known that Caulfield was reluctant to allow anyone into his studio, and if the studio is a strictly private place, a sketchbook is hardly less so. Until then, his only drawings to be shown publicly had been either very early ones (the suite of studies he made for *Portrait of Juan Gris* of 1964, which had been acquired by the owner of that painting, Colin St John Wilson, and shown in part at Pallant House, Chichester, in 1997),² or very late (*Lamp studies*, a series of pencil drawings made in 1991, some of which were included in his exhibition at Waddington Galleries, London, in 2002). His later willingness to let others in on the sketchbooks was no doubt due to a wish that the projected monograph should look and feel very different from the exhibition catalogues that, until then, had been virtually the only record of a career spanning forty-five years.

There are over a dozen sketchbooks remaining in the studio, and they are from all periods (there are also many more loose drawings, all now in the process of being sorted). How many drawings exist is difficult to judge at this stage, but from a conversation that the artist recorded with Bryan Robertson, probably in the late 1980s, we can assume that a significant number are still to be found. Robertson asked Caulfield if he made sketches for his paintings, to which the painter replied: 'I used to make very detailed drawings from various sources so that I would have a picture and then square it up in the traditional manner and cover the canvas with polythene and then square that up with felt-tip pen and then transfer the drawing to the polythene with the felt-tip pen and then trace it on to the canvas so that the image with only a few minor alterations was established. But I have changed completely to starting without a positive idea how the image will turn out and simply by choosing an area of the painting establishing an object and then from there, in a way rather like putting a jigsaw together adding other elements until the canvas becomes a whole'.³ The change in method Caulfield speaks about may have taken place around 1988. It was then that he began to compose his paintings in a markedly different manner by simplifying the various elements and laying them out against a uniform background colour in a way that does indeed suggest the initial placing of the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle: for example, *Reception* of 1988, *The blue posts* and *Lounge*, both of 1989. However, he may have been referring to an earlier stage for, as Marco Livingstone has argued, 'the complications of Caulfield's paintings from the mid-1970s onwards . . . dictated changes in his way of working'. At that



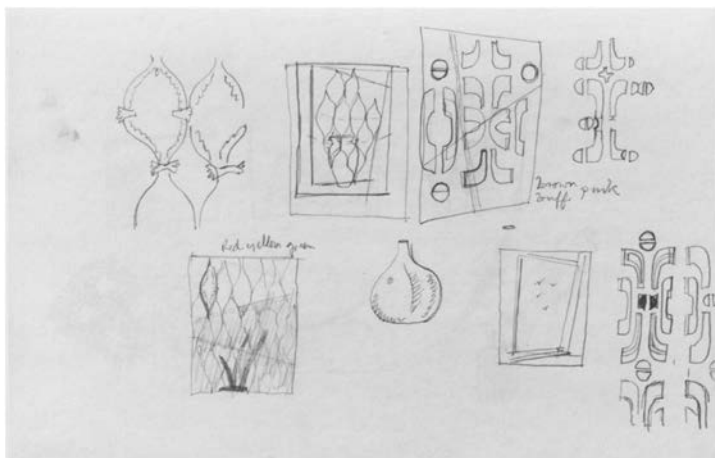
64. *Still life: spring fashion*, by Patrick Caulfield. 1978. Acrylic, 61 by 76.2 cm. (Private collection).

I am grateful to Janet Nathan and Leslie Waddington for help in the preparation of this article.

¹ M. Livingstone: *Patrick Caulfield: Paintings*, London 2005 (to be reviewed in a future issue of this Magazine).

² *The Art of Drawing* was shown at Pallant House, Chichester, May–June 1997.

³ "Chicken Kiev by Candlelight", Patrick Caulfield in conversation with Bryan Robertson, a tape (with accompanying slides) made in the series 'Artists Talking' by Lecon Arts. The tape is undated, but the Tate Archive records its copy as having been produced 'between 1988 and 1990'.



65. Page from sketchbook with studies for *Still life: spring fashion* (left) and for *Still life: autumn fashion* (right), by Patrick Caulfield. c.1978. Pencil, 23 by 35.5 cm. (Artist's estate).

time the artist moved away from making detailed drawings which were squared up and transferred to the canvas, preferring to work in a more pragmatic fashion by combining 'two or three elements or styles'. The result, as Livingstone makes clear, was to establish the final image slowly through preliminary drawings rather than mapping out the composition in advance.⁴

The sketchbooks are particularly interesting in that they show another, earlier stage in the process. Before making the 'very detailed drawings from various sources' (very often illustrations that Caulfield had found in books, magazines or brochures), he began by making rough sketches of various elements in the painting and, very occasionally, of the whole composition. How consistently he did this is impossible to tell, especially as a number of the drawings in the studio sketchbooks do not relate to known paintings, and those that do, do so in a fairly unsystematic way. Nonetheless, those sketches that can be identified suggest that his practice of making rough drafts for a composition began in the mid-1960s and continued throughout his career. The random nature of the sketchbooks suggests that Caulfield did not make a point of keeping all the ideas for one painting together. Presumably he also made use of whatever paper happened to be at hand, in which case the chances of drawings being lost, mislaid or never kept are substantially increased (the task of tracing all the drawings for any one painting may now be near impossible).

A series of studies relating to *Still life: spring fashion* of 1978 (Fig.64), found in one of the sketchbooks,⁵ is unusually complete, and allows us to follow the development of the composition from what appears to be the tentative early stages to the confident arrangement of the still life of the title: a dish of potatoes, a vase and a brown jug, finishing with a trial run for the whole composition. These pencil drawings (around forty, some of which are extremely cursory) are spread over fifteen pages, interrupted by other unrelated sketches, some of them studies for prints. The absence of any sketch of the composition as it finally appears supports Livingstone's observation that the completion of the image took place on the canvas as much as in the detailed drawings. Given Caulfield's practice at this time of outlining his forms in black so that the whole composition



66. Studies for *Still life: spring fashion*, by Patrick Caulfield. c.1978. Pencil and coloured crayon, 35.5 by 23 cm. (Artist's estate).

is connected through line, it makes sense that the painting would only find its final form as he worked on the canvas. (Later, Caulfield was to compose almost entirely on the canvas itself, beginning at the right-hand edge and working across, often without any idea of how the composition would evolve.)⁶

The starting point for *Still life: spring fashion* seems to be the undulating lines of the wallpaper pattern (Fig.65), the start of a theme that came to dominate Caulfield's paintings of 1978 and 1979, culminating in the magnificent orchestration of loud geometric wallpaper and carpet design with an unstructured riot of autumn foliage in *Town and country* (1979; private collection). Although these sketches relate mostly to *Still life: spring fashion*, a preliminary mapping-out of the insistent wallpaper pattern of its pair, *Still life: autumn fashion* (1978; Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool), is found on the right-hand side of the sheet. That he was already thinking of the two paintings as a pair is borne out by a pencilled inscription on another page (not reproduced): 'Seasons fashions/ Spring fashion/ Autumn fashion'.



67. Study for *Still life: spring fashion*, by Patrick Caulfield. c.1978. Pencil, 23 by 35.5 cm. (Artist's estate).

⁴ See Livingstone, *op. cit.* (note 1), p.83.

⁵ 'Bushey' Sketch Book, no.3, 35.5 by 23 cm., manufactured by C. Roberson & Co. Ltd, Artists' Colour Makers, London.

⁶ Information from Janet Nathan, December 2005.

⁷ The books are R. Cogniat: *Georges Braque*, New York 1976, in which *Artist and model* is repr. on p.135, and P. Heron: *Braque*, London n.d. [1958], in which *The duet* is repr. on p.15.



68. Study of dish of potatoes with fish for *Still life: spring fashion*, by Patrick Caulfield. c.1978. Pencil and oil, 23 by 35.5 cm. (Artist's estate).



69. Preliminary study for composition of *Still life: spring fashion*, with unrelated sketches of female heads and a nude, by Patrick Caulfield. c.1978. Pencil, 23 by 35.5 cm. (Artist's estate).

The clock in its hexagonal frame appears at an oblique angle on one of the first pages (Fig.66), already with the green face it has in the painting (the few colour notes jotted down on these pages, for example, 'red yellow green' written above the study of the wallpaper, Fig.65, were not acted upon). Below that sketch in coloured crayons, on the same page another incorporates the clock within an interior space, and is again seen from an oblique angle. Two still-life studies are drawn on a much larger scale. One shows the potatoes grouped together more or less as they appear in the painting (Fig.67), while in the other (which is partially covered by trial dabs of colour; Fig.68), they are showing signs of age, as if, after weeks of lying around the studio, they have begun to sprout. The final sketch in this group (Fig.69) brings the composition together. Like many of these sketches, however small, the image is framed, giving the first indication of the painting's landscape format. The clock is now seen head on and to the left, placed against the wallpaper, while the dish of potatoes occupies a sizeable chunk of the foreground with the brown jug placed behind it.

Perhaps other drawings relating to *Still life: spring fashion* will eventually come to light, but this small group is already revealing. The fact that the starting point appears to be the snaking pattern of the wallpaper suggests that the initial inspiration for this painting

(and for its companion piece) was the work of Braque. Caulfield's high regard for the Cubists is well known, beginning with his 1964 homage to Juan Gris, but as his paintings became more complex, so did his appreciation of the complexities of Cubism and, in particular, of Braque's interiors of the mid-1930s. The attention paid to the shapes of the pattern in many of the drawings in the sketchbook in question suggests that Caulfield was thinking about Braque's practice of using the ornamental as a way of freeing colour from form. Nowhere is this more evident than in the rich variety of ornamentation that dominates the paintings of 1978 and 1979, not least *Still life: spring fashion*. The fish in this painting – and the oysters in *Autumn fashion* – are small but forceful reminders of how adroitly Caulfield was able to appropriate Braque's repertory of images. In Caulfield's last painting, *Braque curtain* of 2005, he returned to the Frenchman's love of geometric ornamentation and, as a final salute to the painter who probably meant more to him than any other, he quoted, with unusual boldness, from the grille-like pattern dominating the background of Braque's two paintings *The duet* (1937; Musée national d'art moderne, Paris) and *Artist and model* (1939; Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena). Books containing reproductions of both those paintings were open on his easel at the time of his death.⁷ *Still life: spring fashion* prepares the way for that final homage.

Letter to the Editor

The Salisbury House 'Porticus'

SIR, I wish to point out that in my article 'John Osborne, the Salisbury House Porticus and the Haynes Grange Room', published in the January issue (pp.15–24), I did not sufficiently acknowledge the crucial contribution made at various stages in the research and writing of the article by three scholars, Joseph Friedman, John Harris and Mark Girouard.

Not only did Friedman discover the 'Porticus' design at Hatfield House but he instantly identified it as the long-lost drawing originally attached to the well-known Salisbury House proposals by 'Mr Osborne' in the Public Record Office, which had earlier been

the subject of a paper delivered by John Adamson at a conference on the aristocratic London house. Likewise, Friedman realised that for c.1610 the drawing was among the earliest, if not the earliest, fully developed 'Vitruvian' classical design in the history of English architecture, pre-dating even Inigo Jones's known work in this idiom. At Friedman's invitation, Harris confirmed that the design at Hatfield was not by Jones, and made the vital connection with the Haynes Grange Room. Both scholars then consulted Girouard who made the highly important suggestion of the link to the Osbornes of Chicksands Priory, based on his study of the Haynes Grange Room.

Knowing of Friedman's intention to publish the drawing in his forthcoming book on the London house, I was particularly grateful that he allowed me to do so first in my article, handing over all relevant material. I am likewise happy to place on record my gratitude to Harris and Girouard for their support and for the crucial role they played in the elucidation of this major discovery.

MANOLO GUERCI, *St John's College, Cambridge*