In 1940 the young American artist Richard Pousette-Dart (1916–92) met Jim Ede, the creator of Kettle's Yard, in New York. Ede had made the transatlantic boat crossing to embark on a lecture tour of America. Over the next forty-five years they exchanged ideas across the pages of over two hundred letters. Pousette-Dart and Ede shared many passions— the beauty of nature’s forms, modern sculpture, poetry, classical music and a belief in the centrality of art to life. Pousette-Dart carved a small brass circle for Ede shortly after their first meeting. It became a symbol of their friendship and of their wider interests in art’s spiritual power.

Pousette-Dart declared ‘I paint no more painting, I paint creative action’ in 1941. His expressive paintings are built up from layers of abstract forms in a relentless process of artistic discovery. As well as the painting practice for which he is best known, Pousette-Dart worked as a photographer, sculptor and produced exquisite works on paper, experimenting fluidly across all of these media. This exhibition brings works from American collections to the UK for the first time to explore the remarkable breadth of Pousette-Dart’s early practice from the late 1930s to 1951, as well as later paintings which reveal his enduring interest in the symbolic form of the circle.

Around 1951 Pousette-Dart left the city for rural upstate New York. In the same year the adjacent iconic photograph of the artist standing alongside his older peers Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko and many others was published in the magazine ‘Pousette-Dart and many others’ were published in the magazine ‘Pousette-Dart and many others’ played a significant role within a wider network of radical artists who were highly influential, creating a new kind of modernism. Pousette-Dart played a significant role within a wider network of radical artists who were highly influential, creating a new kind of modernism.

Around 1951 Pousette-Dart left the city for rural upstate New York. In the same year the adjacent iconic photograph of the artist standing alongside his older peers Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko and many others was published in the magazine ‘Pousette-Dart and many others’ were published in the magazine ‘Pousette-Dart and many others’ played a significant role within a wider network of radical artists who were highly influential, creating a new kind of modernism.

Pousette-Dart played a significant role within a wider network of radical artists who, in their highly individual ways, created a new kind of modernism. Powerful in the immediacy of its execution and abstract form, it positioned America at the helm of the global art world after a devastating World War.

Richard Pousette-Dart is standing at the far left in the middle row of the circle.

Richard Pousette-Dart moved to New York City in 1938 to pursue his career as an artist. He had studied art for only one term and subsequently spent short periods working in photography and sculpture studios. Drawing, poetry, photography, and sculpture were his early passions. Pousette-Dart and Ede shared a deep admiration for the dynamic sculpture of the French artist Henri Gaudier-Brzeska (1891–1915). Like him, Pousette-Dart enjoyed the immediacy of carving semi-abstract forms out of stone and brass.

In 1941 Pousette-Dart held his first solo exhibition in Manhattan. Throughout his career, Pousette-Dart exhibited in numerous shows which were supported by some of the most influential gallerists in New York. His early paintings reflected his interest in the unconscious realm of Surrealism. He fused his interests with his own unique approach to abstraction and artistry, infusing his work with the beauty of their simple shapes and sources, such as the geometric forms of Cubism and the unconscious realm of Surrealism. He exchanged pebbles, shells, and pressed flowers with Ede, admiring the beauty of their simple shapes and sources, such as the geometric forms of Cubism and the unconscious realm of Surrealism. He fused these interests with his own unique approach to abstraction and artistry, infusing his work with the beauty of their simple shapes and sources, such as the geometric forms of Cubism and the unconscious realm of Surrealism. He exchanged pebbles, shells, and pressed flowers with Ede, admiring the beauty of their simple shapes and sources, such as the geometric forms of Cubism and the unconscious realm of Surrealism.
The paintings in this gallery were made after Richard Pousette-Dart left New York City in around 1951. Many were made in the artist’s large studio in rural Suffern which allowed him to work more frequently on a vast scale. The titles of the paintings reference the nearly landscape of the Ramapo Mountains. The passageways of time and the origins of the universe. The paintings in this gallery were made after Pousette-Dart began to employ single circular forms or are composed of dabs of paint creating limitless luminous fields of colour, perhaps referencing galaxies or nebulae.

Circles (and often spirals) appear in all of the works in this gallery as well as in the pages of Pousette-Dart’s letters to one another. Pousette-Dart often described the circle as a symbol of God’s universe and the never-ending cycle of life. His interest in spiritualism did not follow one faith or doctrine: rather he fused together a wide range of Eastern and Western religious philosophies with the intuitive, mystical aesthetic theories proposed by British art critic Roger Fry and his circle. Pousette-Dart described the circle as a symbol of God’s universe and the never-ending cycle of life.

Pousette-Dart believed that the creative act of making art and appreciation of the aesthetic power of simple abstract forms could transport the artist and viewer beyond the physical world.
Circles are whatever you make of them all or nothing they are living signs of flowers or spirit they are signs of heaven rising & falling suns & moons they are signs of heaven & spirit all or nothing wherever you make of them
Photography was a life-long passion for Richard Pousette-Dart. He began with experimental self-portraits (dating from as early as 1935) and photograms of silhouetted leaf shapes (displayed in the gallery downstairs). His early apprenticeship in Lynn T. Morgan's photography studio encouraged his interests in this medium.

Pousette-Dart rarely spoke about the work of his artist peers, but from the 1940s onwards his portrait photography reveals his friendships with American artists such as Mark Rothko, William Congdon, Barnett Newman and John D. Graham as well as his gallerist Betty Parsons and Jim Ede. In 1953 he won third prize in an international competition organized by Photography Magazine, a respected journal. Following this, he was employed by a number of commercial magazines and developed a strong reputation for his work in American art. His portraits of cultural leaders and works on paper, Portrait Waltz, are often created layers of imagery in his photograms.

Like his paintings and works on paper, Portrait Waltz, his photographs and works on paper, Portrait Waltz, often create layers of imagery in his photograms. His portraits of cultural leaders and works on paper, Portrait Waltz, are often created layers of imagery in his photograms. This was achieved through the use of multiple exposures and a process that is similar to the creation of layered paintings. His portraits of cultural leaders and works on paper, Portrait Waltz, are often created layers of imagery in his photograms.
Please do not touch the artworks

Please do not touch the artworks

Please do not touch the artworks

No photography