

Freedom of Abstraction / Expansive Large Scale Painting

February 4th - 6th 2026 (Wednesday - Friday)

Tutor - Julian Brown

Course fee - £350 (includes the cost of one large canvas and paper)

“You can be painting and go into a place where thought stops—where you can just be and it just comes out.” Brice Marden

By stripping back painting to its most primary concerns and looking at the relationship between yourself and the materials, we can discover painting through its most tactile components, process, surface and touch. The three day course will encourage you to make a collection of expansive, large scale paintings and drawings, exploring rhythms in abstraction. Core to the course will be the importance of creating systems to underpin your work and developing the work through layering, mark making and expression.

Throughout the course there will be a number of different exercises to help develop the work. We will also be looking at the history of abstraction along with contemporary artists and their techniques, showing the expansive ways they are making paintings, through surfaces and processes. The course includes studio based activities and individual tutorials. This course is suitable for anyone with an interest in abstraction or would like to work on an ambitious scale.

Course notes

Day one Central to the theme of the course we will look at the abstract language, discussing it's rhythms, systems, repetitions, surfaces, processes and innovations. We will start with some small scale warm up mark making exercises working on systems and responding to repetition. We will then quickly be working on some large scale black and white drawings, looking for rhythms and working loosely from grid systems. As these works develop we will be thinking about further large scale drawings or breaking down and reconstructing images. The aim from these large scale black and white drawings is you will start to develop your own system, this acts as a core of the work to develop from. You can then start to experiment with different techniques, surfaces and processes.

Day two With a good core base of work from day one we will be looking at transforming these works into larger more expansive paintings on canvas. We will be continually reworking and unpacking ideas and systems from day one with more studio exercises and more ambitious painting techniques and gestures. In this day will really try to take command of scale, opening up possibilities and discovering the freedom of gestural mark making and touch.

Day three (expanding and concluding systems) You should have a good body of images to work from to develop, we will look at layering, deconstructing and adding colour and luminosity to bring the work to a conclusion. The day will also include an extended individual tutorial about the work and progression. The course will conclude with a small show of work and group crit.

Student materials

Large paper, canvas and painting materials will be provided for the course. If you work quickly you might want to buy additional sheets in advance or through the studios. I would encourage students to bring along a good selection of painting and drawing materials, sketch books and studies.