

Ron Hitchins

Ron Hitchins was not an entirely self-taught artist – he went to evening classes to learn casting techniques - nor was he unaware of art history and the art market. For a brief period his tiled ceramic panels and decorated mirror frames were sold in west-end galleries and upmarket London shops including Heals and Liberty. At some point in the 1960's Hitchins turned his back on the shops and galleries (he thought galleries looked down on him due to his working class 'barrow-boy' background) and decided that he would only sell his creations when he needed the money and only to people he liked, more often he used his handmade tiles to cover the walls and ceilings of his house. In later years Hitchins created thousands of intricate felt-tip drawings. These drawings have not been exhibited or documented and only a few of his friends knew about them.

After his death Hitchins' house was sold and many of his artworks were dismantled.

DC: Tell me about the bathroom and how you discovered Ron's first efforts at making tiles.

R: OK. So originally there was a panel up here behind Ron's bath... that panel contained 828 small ceramic tiles... smaller tiles than the later ones... an inch by an inch, roughly... so I removed that and I've now mounted the panel in the living room... I had to remove some of the wood around it to get the panel out and I got a glimpse of a sliver of the tiles behind... so then I removed all the wood panelling around the bath. It turns out from speaking with a neighbour that knew Ron, these were the first tiles Ron ever made... him and his wife, his wife Betty, they wanted bathroom tiles and they couldn't find any tiles they liked... so Ron decided to make some. As you can see they're very different than his later work.

DC: Do you see imagery in them or are they intended to be abstract patterns? I see faces and Aztec type designs... machines and fish.

R: Yes, yeah... I can totally see Aztec-type design and a bit of brutalism... a mix of primitive and modern. It looks like he's carved into squares of clay for the first tiles... whereas in his later work he'd cut shapes and layered them up and squeeze them together like a sandwich. He obviously developed a style and a technique very quickly... even these tiles on the right-hand side of the bath are different to the first ones at the back. The right-hand tiles are like a step in between... toward his later work... but you can see at the back how he started by carving shapes into the clay. We found a box of improvised tools... all sorts of things... pastry cutters, lolly sticks, bottle openers and parts of a Yale lock.

DC: Do you know when he started making these?

R: He was in this house 65 years... around 1957 he moved in... and I think he made them soon after moving in. This is what his tiles progressed onto later... you can see once again there are reoccurring shapes... this kind of face shape reoccurs over and over again. We do believe each tile is unique... but saying that, it's like your school teacher telling you every snowflake is different... and you believe it... unless you check every one then you don't know. Going back to his first tiles... maybe once he put these others up... maybe he thought, 'Well, these are substandard now'... and he covered them up. They've been hidden for years and years.

DC: It's fortunate you discovered them.

R: Yeah, by chance... by removing that little bit of wood there. We thought that was all of them and then a lady came round and said, 'You realise there's more over there?' And she showed us other places he'd covered over.

DC: So his neighbours knew what he was doing?

R: Yes, his neighbours were fully aware. Ron was always chatting to people... he'd welcome them into his home... very sociable... I guess he had to be if he was having all these parties... all the flamenco 'after-parties'. Whenever there was a touring flamenco group... they would do stuff at Sadler's Wells and then Ron would invite all the people back here afterwards and they'd party until six in the morning... he would even have a wooden dance floor in the garden... like a stage he would lay out and they would have parties in the garden. Only last weekend two ladies popped round... the house they grew up in backs onto this house... and they said that on Sunday's Ron would come out and have these parties... and they'd say, 'Oh, for fuck's sake Ron! Again?' But they would do it jokingly... it was interesting because they came in and looked at one of the panels on the wall... and they said, 'We think we've got one of those in our loft... Mum was given it from Ron... a big oval panel... she wanted to throw it away. It was just chucked in her loft'.

DC: He was generous with the things he made?

R: Yeah, very much so... the door that was on the Antiques Roadshow... Ron exchanged the door he made for new dentures... so the door actually belonged to his dentist. When I first came here it took me by surprise... obviously there was a lot more clutter back then... he'd been here 65 years and you collect a lot of stuff. He's wasn't a hoarder but he did keep a lot of stuff.

DC: What's remarkable to me is that a two-inch tile, maybe it would take him 20 or 30 minutes to make... maybe more with glazing and firing... how many do you think there are?

R: Thousands... maybe tens of thousands... upstairs, one item alone has over 3,000 tiles attached.

DC: I suppose each tile might have taken him 30 minutes. It's a huge investment in time.

R: There's a story about Ron only working on the market at weekends. He said in an interview he saw men who worked all week and then came home and did nothing but polish their cars at weekends. He realised that if he worked hard to make money for eight hours each weekend he could have the week off to do what he wanted. He always said he worked very hard during his week off.

DC: What do you think his motivation was? What did he get out of it?

R: The neighbours, some of the neighbours who knew Ron from the 70's... they think it was to do with his troubled childhood... and that he was trying to express himself. He went through stages of doing different things... he did the tiles and then he made the fibre-glass doors... and fibre-glass panels... then in later life he moved on to drawings... there are 12 hundred drawings... they're just A4 pieces of paper and felt-tip pens... I guess he was getting older and he just wanted to sit on his sofa and doodle away... I think it's strange that he carried on making hundreds of tiles, firing them and just putting them in boxes. They don't seem to have been for anything.

DC: I think the drawings are very special. Did he have any art training?

R: Not that I know of... he would go to colleges and use their facilities. The big sculpture that stood in his garden would have been too big to make here... we found a picture of it mounted outside an Art-Deco building and we don't know where that building is... we used Google Street-View to see if we could find it... we know for a while it was outside Stamford Hill Library.

DC: He had amazing wallpaper! He seemed to enjoy pattern and covering things with pattern.

R: Oh yeah... and he changed the architecture of the house as well... knocking through walls. We didn't discover until a few weeks back that this wall of tiles is a cupboard... I pulled it open and we found 70 bottles of wine in there! Bottles of wine from Sainsbury's, but from the 1980s... what must have happened was that people turned up to Ron's parties and brought a bottle of wine... but he never drank... so he made this cupboard.

He held a record for the longest Jive... 24 hours and five minutes. So this was his dance studio where he might practise... everything on the floor was originally mounted on the walls around the house... but because it isn't his work we took it down... some of it is his framing... he would make tiled frames for the pictures and mirrors... all of the big canvases in here are just blown up from A4 size or A3.

DC: So they're printed?

R: Yeah, they're all printed... all the originals are downstairs... he obviously wanted to see what they'd look like printed big. These are all photos of the back garden parties... and the stage he would have... there would be quite a crowd at the parties.

DC: How did you get involved?

R: I've lived round here for 42 years... and I've always walked past to the park, to walk the dog... Ron had a green sports car outside... I always saw his car with plants interweaving through it... it never moved... so I was curious about the car and who lived here... obviously you see the tiles on the side of the building and the amazing front door Ron made... and I finally saw someone here, but it wasn't Ron, it was Jingle, Ron's best friend... so I met Jingle and got talking to him... and he invited me in to have a look round... since then I've been helping him sort stuff out. Jingle moved in after Ron died. It's been challenging... there's so much stuff. Thankfully we're not pressured to sell it straight away.

DC: But the house is already sold?

R: Yes, that's going through on the 18th of March... as for the artworks we're going to hang fire on selling them and try to get his name where it needs to be... if possible, maybe get his work into a museum... once he's more known and appreciated we might start to sell bits and pieces.

Bedroom

R: Ron made the bed for himself when he was 50... it's mirrored but it had a canopy, so depending on if she was shy or not he could pull the canopy over the mirror. There are 3,582 tiles on the bed... each one individually made and as far as we know all different. I counted them and then afterwards I discovered the plans... and they confirm, he'd worked out that he needed to make 3,582 tiles. We found an old newspaper article that says it took Ron three months working 15 hours every day just to make the tiles.

DC: So it was designed very meticulously.

R: Very much so... he'd worked out how many tiles were needed for each side... it's weird because you would think you would just build the frame and then start covering it... but he'd gone to the effort of calculating how many tiles he would need before starting to make it... they're all two-inch squares of terracotta, coloured with tan boot polish.

DC: What's this on his bedroom ceiling?

R: It's wallpaper... we have a little section of it upstairs.

DC: It looks like beaten copper.

R: Yeah, it's a fantastic wallpaper... it's a very hard room to photograph... the lights shouldn't be where they are... they cast so many shadows and there are lots of reflective surfaces. The bed actually comes apart... this top bit lifts off... there's a bolt at the two corners... unbolt it and it comes apart in four big chunks. It's a tricky one for us because it's not just a piece of art, it's a functional piece of furniture. The problem lies in finding the right space... it's going to have to go into a bedroom... you wouldn't just have a four-poster bed in your front room as a piece of sculpture... I think you'd want to have it as a functional thing. We have no idea what it might be worth... let's take it back to what you were saying about each tile taking 20 or 30 minutes to make... then how do you value a tile? If you consider how much effort went into each tile... even if you just value a tile at £5 then that would be well over £15,000.

I forgot but downstairs there's a box that he called his cat box... it's basically a miniature replica of his bed but for the cat... he had a cat called Doggy.

DC: Are the paintings in the bedroom by Ron?

R: No, they're paintings he bought while he was on holiday in Spain... he walked into a bar I believe when he was with Jingle... and he just really liked them. The bedroom was incredibly different when we came in... there were loads of pictures of naked women and stuff... but when we decided how to take the pictures for the website we decided to keep it a bit more family-friendly... so we took down the naked women and put more up that was to do with Ron and his lifestyle... though the naked women were very much part of Ron's lifestyle.

All the areas we've painted black... the ceilings, the underside of the stairs, some areas of wall... Ron covered them all with tiles... The whole ceiling upstairs on the landing and down the stairs were covered in gold tiles... when we thought we were going to have to vacate the property quite soon due to an investor buying it we hurriedly took all the tiles down off the walls... then the sale fell through. Then we thought to make the house into more of a gallery space... so we had to tidy up a bit where we'd taken the tiles off the walls. The problem was that due to inheritance tax Jingle has a huge bill to pay, so the gallery idea wasn't possible. The house is worth a lot of money now.

We found documents from 1971 that were to do with the whole neighbourhood... Hackney council's ideas for developing the neighbourhood... and it had a plan for this street... how many houses were owned... how many were still bomb damaged... they thought many of the houses should be demolished... Ron campaigned against it... 50 years later all but a handful of the original

houses are still standing, and this house has just sold for £1.3 million. A house two doors down sold for two million a few years back. It's not a working-class community any more.

One thing I find strange is that Ron was really particular and careful when he designed and fitted the tiles, but then, when he painted the house, he just roughly slapped the paint on... there's no finesse at all. Originally there were glazed blue tiles all along here... panels he'd put in to hide the water pipes... and because he might want access to the pipes he carefully made tiles with screw holes so you can remove the panels... but he decorated afterwards and splashed red paint all over the blue tiles... I find that odd... that he was so meticulous in one regard and sloppy in another. His wood panelling is quite ham-fisted. When Jingle first got here he struggled to get into Ron's attic... it took two weeks to clear... believe it or not this is it cleared.

DC: I noticed a few of these nail pieces downstairs... mixing tiles with nails...

R: I remember years ago my parents having a piece of art with nails in... nails and string it was... I think there was a fashion for it... it was a thing back then... people might see it as quite kitsch now.

DC: He might have visited a gallery and liked the look of something and thought he'd have a go at doing something similar.

R: Yeah, I'll give it a shot, sort of thing...

DC: Did Ron describe himself as an artist?

R: No... according to one of the newspaper articles he said it was a hobby.

DC: To my eye some are much better than others.

R: Yeah, I agree... I think he enjoyed experimenting and so there are going to be failures. I found one piece where he'd written notes to himself about the mixtures he used... the ingredients... basically a recipe for making one of his pieces... and it was weird how he changed from one thing to another. I'm not sure you could say the tiles were the beginning of Ron's creativity... he had his tailoring background... he would make patterned shirts and sell them at the market... so he was creative before he started with the tiles... they just grabbed his attention for a while. Once he'd started with the tiles he just kept going until he got interested in something else. Funnily enough we haven't found any of the shirts Ron made in his house... it's weird given he seemed to keep so much... we only found shirts you would buy in a shop.

DC: What can you tell me about the wooden constructions... they're very different to everything else. Do you know what they are?

R: Pass, they were originally hung on the walls in his front room... we struggled to incorporate them when we were mounting things... for me they almost look like street scenes... architectural models. It makes me wonder whether they came about when he was trying to save the neighbourhood and he was thinking about the street and the houses.

DC: He spent a lot of money on materials.

R: I don't think he cared for money as such... he was never really interested in selling his work or becoming famous... but remember he did this over years and years and years. It's like any hobby...

if you're just spending a few quid here and there... there are boxes and boxes of leftover tiles here... he produced so many tiles he hasn't used. There's a newspaper article in which he said he'd be better off on social security.

DC: I can imagine him making tiles while watching TV.

R: Yeah, that's exactly how I see it as well... and he had a kiln downstairs in the basement... so it was all set up. As for the pieces in the attic, he sometimes seemed to make things and then destroy them... and some of the panels were just slung in the garden and grown over... I found ration books from World War II... both of the alcoves under the roof were filled with scraps of wood.

DC: It's strange that there seems to be so little about his wife in the house.

R: Yeah, there's very little of his family. I believe he was only married five years. There used to be a green sports car parked outside belonging to Ron's son... the car was all grown over with plants... it only did a thousand miles apparently. Supposedly a local guy knocked on Ron's door a few times and asked if he could buy it... but Ron always refused.

DC: The house is still comfortable. Some of the outsider art properties we've visited you wouldn't want to live in. The art had taken over so much there wasn't room to live normally.

R: Yeah, but this house had no heating... obviously the system broke down at some stage and he never had it fixed... whether it was due to a lack of money we don't know... there was a big tank in the garden... we initially thought it would be empty... I put a dipstick in it and realised it contained 900 litres of fuel.

These are interesting... for some reason he started to draw on his CDs... and these are just cheap, shop-bought vases he doodled on it... and these pieces are melted glass... another experiment... and there's the piece made of geometric blocks of coloured glass... and the welded sculptures. I had my 'snowflake moment' this morning... you know I said they were all different? This morning I was in the loft and I found these... I don't think you could get closer than these for two tiles... they're not ceramic... they're some sort of resin. He would sometimes lay the tiles out in the shape of a number, make a latex mould and then make the number in fibreglass. We have the moulds... they're very sticky... and very old obviously.

There's just so much stuff... that's the photo of Ron from when he broke the world jive record... the silver tiles in here were on one of the walls in the bathroom... the only other pieces of art we haven't talked about are downstairs... it goes along with these two white boxes on the stairs... there are 92 wooden boxes that Ron called the Flamenco series... and they were all over the house... on all the walls and even in the toilet... the boxes all contain painted wooden constructions and... each had a name on it... the person Ron made it for.

DC: I love the orange panel... it's got a 70s feel about it.

R: It's earlier... These are all fibreglass panels with a wooden back... loads of these panels were in the garden and the garden was totally overgrown. This was his airing cupboard door... there are even tiles on his airing cupboard doors.

DC: Do you think he was doing all this for himself or do you think he was doing it in the hope that he was going to make money out of it?

R: I think he was doing it all for himself as a project... I believe he did put stuff in galleries back in the day... so you could say that he was trying to have his work seen in an art context... but then deep down he didn't want the recognition for it. He wasn't interested for some reason... he didn't want the fame and the fortune... maybe he didn't want the attention?

DC: I'm not sure about that given how much of a performer he seems to have been. Do you agree with Russell, Jingle?

J: Absolutely 100%... Ron knew being part of the art-world would change his life... he wasn't trying to compete and he wasn't interested in the baggage. Dancing was his thing. In terms of his art he had the freedom to do whatever he wanted when he wanted... that's what he did and that was his philosophy and why he was so happy... he was one of the cleverest people but in his own way... how many people wouldn't sell out for money and fame? So many times it was offered. Harrods came round in 1982 and offered him four-thousand for the bed... four-hundred for the cat bed. He turned them down. He didn't want to lose control over what he was doing and what he could do... and when he had his first exhibition he felt the people in the gallery looked down on him because he was working-class. Ron would sell you something if he liked you... and maybe when he got down on his finances a bit... he sold when he had to... and made a few commissions for mirrors. He enjoyed showing what he'd done to other people but he didn't like the big galleries, so he'd show in small spaces and libraries... he wasn't doing the work in secret but he wasn't doing it for money.

R: Ron didn't always sell his artworks to people who wanted one... if he liked someone he'd sell it or give it away... but if he didn't like someone he wouldn't let them have it or he'd double the price.

DC: Was he self-taught?

J: He did go to some kind of college and he did classes to learn casting but it was more engineering and learning techniques... I don't really know... I was more connected to the flamenco side of his life... on a wide-band, broad-band I probably know as much as anyone else.

DC: When did you meet?

J: We met through flamenco... I'm a flamenco guitarist and Ron was a brilliant flamenco dancer... I don't remember exactly where we met but it was probably about 40 years ago... I went to many, many of Ron's parties... as Russell was telling you. I brought a lot of flamenco groups over from Spain... Ron let them all stay at the house here... so that cut down the expenses enormously... and he loved it... he was so generous it was insane... Ron would give you anything and everything.

DC: Is the house very different now to when Ron was very active?

J: I can't remember how the house was 40 years ago... not exactly, but I know it was gobsmacking. Some of the things in here... they are now and probably were then... worth a fortune... many, many times there would be a hundred people here... people would be allowed to wander wherever they liked in his house. Some things did get stolen but very few... I discussed it with him... he said, 'I don't care if they do'... that was his philosophy.

R: I guess in a way it was a bit of a compliment if someone wanted to take something... if you've made a bit of art and someone decides they want to half-inch it...

J: What Ron would do when people came back here was he'd film everything... he'd video most of the night... 90 percent of the time he'd be videoing... then he'd stop and dance... then he'd start videoing again... I couldn't understand it... he wasn't part of his own party... but he told me the opposite, he said, 'I can watch that tape back time and time again'... he loved doing that... most people would want to be amongst the party, amongst the people... but he was just filming. Those films are incredible. They weren't just home movies... it was all part of his creativity. He might film your feet or your fingers, a tiny detail, how you blink, how you're looking at me or standing... an expression... fleeting things someone else wouldn't notice... he'd sit and watch the films again and again afterwards.

R: I think he was very meticulous in nature, and he self-documented... he'd film all the parties in his house... and then when the formats changed he had them transferred to Blu-ray... he had all the equipment to future-proof himself. As you've seen there are loads of framed photos of the parties.

DC: Can you fill me in on his background.

J: Ron was brought up in an opium den and lived on the street. He was born to a prostitute who ran an opium den... Chinatown Annie... she was famous, in Limehouse. His father was a Chinese sailor, an immigrant who was deported a few months after Ron's birth. The story is that Annie took advantage of the sailor when he was in an opium stupor.

As a child Ron was badly neglected... social services burst into his house at three in the morning and took him away... it went to court and his mother legally gave him away to the authorities... she wasn't looking after him... and the family they gave him to abused him just as bad. He ran away and when the police found him he was covered in bruises. He got into all sorts of terrible situations and he did get in some criminal scrapes... he got bullied at school and he spent a bit of time in a reform school when he gave one of the other kids a bad beating. Years later he said he was glad of his childhood and the sadness and the pain and the hardship he went through because it made him resilient... he didn't rely on anyone and lived life entirely as he wanted.

Hackney used to be very rough... especially at night... it didn't bother Ron... he used to box when he was a teenager but he didn't like bashing people up... even when he was an old man he'd stand his ground with muggers... when he boxed, his philosophy was to put everything into one round... go berserk and knock them out... the other boxers were terrified of him... in Ridley Road he still holds the record for carrying 22 sacks of cement in a wheelbarrow... pushing it from one end of Ridley Road to the other... he used to carry two sides of beef through the market to show his strength... he never trained... it was all through dance and being a very physical, active person.

At the beginning he would do just about anything and everything to earn money... he spent a couple of years in the army, then he worked in a factory smoking bacon and then he trained as a fishmonger... he was a Bevin Boy... working down the mines... then he worked on the East End markets as a barrow boy before he started tailoring and making patterned shirts. The Kray twins referred to him as Ronny, Flash or El Chino... Flash because he'd wear bright colours when no-one else did... before the 60s he'd be in a bright yellow jacket or red trousers... everyone else would be in black or grey or cream and he'd stand out... he was outrageous... they called him the Prince of Petticoat Lane... I think that was in the Daily Mail... Ron Hitchins, 'The Prince of Petticoat Lane'.

He made some money performing in clubs as a professional flamenco dancer... sometimes as a stripper... and he taught flamenco... he did everything on his own terms. He even had a bit part in a film with Billy Fury.

Some of the things he would do... he could be quite outrageous... he got so fed up with Jehovah's Witnesses at his door... church people coming round... he'd already asked them politely not to come... they just kept doing it... he got so fed up that he went to the door starkers one day and asked them if they wanted to come in for a cup of tea... they never came back after that.

DC: Do you think he was annoyed that he didn't get the credit for his influence on 60s fashion?

J: No... not at all... a more modest man you could never hope to meet... he didn't mind anyone else having success... good luck to them. Ron was the kind of guy who could turn his hand to most things... he was taught how to use lathes and stuff... I think that gave him the confidence that he could build stuff.

DC: Did you ever see Ron making the tiled pieces?

J: Not the tiles, no... I saw him make some of the drawings... the RoHo drawings... there are one thousand two hundred of these drawings, that speaks for itself... you can't teach this way of drawing... he might start by drawing a line around a CD... or a pair of scissors... then he might be influenced by your glasses... then he might draw the way you stand... how you move your head... all spontaneous and unplanned... he loved music and he always had music playing... and the music might trigger something with the drawings. He had no idea what he was going to draw until his pen touched the paper... you can make out a word here and there. They start off like a doodle in biro or felt-tip...

DC: They remind me of spirit drawings... or automatic drawings. The kind of experiments the surrealists did.

J: I know enough to know he had no format and he couldn't erase anything because they're all drawn with ink. He wasn't copying anyone. I've still got his tin of pens... a Bic biro pen with the middle taken out of it... drawing round a paperclip... nothing special at all.

DC: Why RoHos?

J: We have a lovely lady Spanish friend who worked with us doing flamenco... she asked Ron about a red shape in one of his drawings... red... rojo in Spanish... Ron wrote 'RoHo' on the drawing, which is how it sounds... and the name stuck... it's quite a good name.

R: Ron left a will splitting the estate... Jingle knew him for about 40 years... he gets half of everything. He's taken on the responsibility.

J: With the Flamenco boxes Ron asked me to give them out free of charge to all the people who he'd named on the box... they're all dedicated. He asked me maybe five, six, seven years ago if I would give them out... I said then, 'Why don't we start now Ron?' He didn't want the hassle of people thanking him... having to be in contact with people... he said, 'Jingle, do you mind waiting until I'm dead?'... he died at 93...

DC: I don't really understand these pieces... do you know about them?

J: Yes, and no idea... there's one upstairs for me... a kind of abstract portrait... all dedicated to particular people... there's one for Joaquin Cortés... a big dancer in the flamenco circles... he was round at Ron's house quite often... but he didn't just make the boxes for well-known people... they're wooden, abstract portraits... so Ron was picking up on something from the people... a movement... some part of their character... their energy... but they were also a gift he was making for them. He started making them using off-cuts he picked up from a cabinet-making workshop. Some of them are based on flamenco dance patterns.

DC: They're a bit like cubist sculptures. You've been photographing everything and investing in a website... it must have cost a lot.

J: I borrowed 20 grand to have an operation done... in the end I didn't have it done... I used all of that money... I've probably spent forty thousand documenting everything and shipping things over to Spain and setting up the website... my doctor told me I'd had a heart attack and I need an operation really quickly... so I borrowed the money to have it and then Ron died and I spent all the money paying for the website and the photographer. I still need the operation. Even if I didn't get the money back that's not the issue. I wanted to do this for Ron.

DC: You were obviously very close.

J: Yes and no... towards the end... you go through time periods with friends... I was in Spain... travelling and touring... sometimes I wouldn't see Ron for a few years and then we'd be together a lot... he used to come over to Spain... he came on tour with us a couple of times...

R: This is the Joaquin Cortés box... I don't have a clue what to make of it... there are recurring shapes but, I don't know, did he think of that person and then...?

J: One of the ideas of doing what we're doing... the first thing is to get everything recorded... the second thing is... the only way we're going to get it elevated is... get places like the V&A interested... we wanted to whack people over the head with it when they came in... get Ron's work in the newspapers... fill the house with his work... the woman from the V&A came round and she was just blown over by it... as soon as the website went live we had experts on the phone... but so they should be... it should be in a museum.

DC: What you've done is very impressive... and you're right, you've created a 'knock your socks off' first impression... but without a doubt some things here are better than others...

J: I refer to them as Ron's Friday afternoon tiles.

DC: And some might be experiments... things he tried for a few weeks that he gave up on or didn't interest him... and he put some of them in the attic and probably he put others in the bin... and you've found some of them and put them on the walls. I think it needs care to make sure the market doesn't get flooded with pieces that Ron discarded and didn't think were very important.

J: The problem is that I don't really know about art... sometimes there can be advantages to that... people have told me Ron's style... it's in vogue. I don't know a good one from a bad one. For me Ron was the artwork.

R: Yeah. Even when Ron was desperate, if he didn't like you he wouldn't sell it to you.

DC: So how do you feel about dealers and trendy collectors buying pieces when they might not be people Ron would have wanted them to be owned by?

J: It's tricky... we want Ron to be better known... and that's not about increasing the prices... we need a gallery or a museum to get behind his art... very soon I'll receive a chunk of money for my share of the house... I've never had that kind of money... I won't need to sell the work quickly... I can take my time to get it right but the house has to be empty in two weeks... everything goes into storage... we're over the big financial hurdle... if we don't sell any of the art for a year or two years then that's fine.