

London's No. 1

FAD fadmagazine.com/2021/11/17/londons-no-1/

By Paul Carey-Kent

17 November 2021



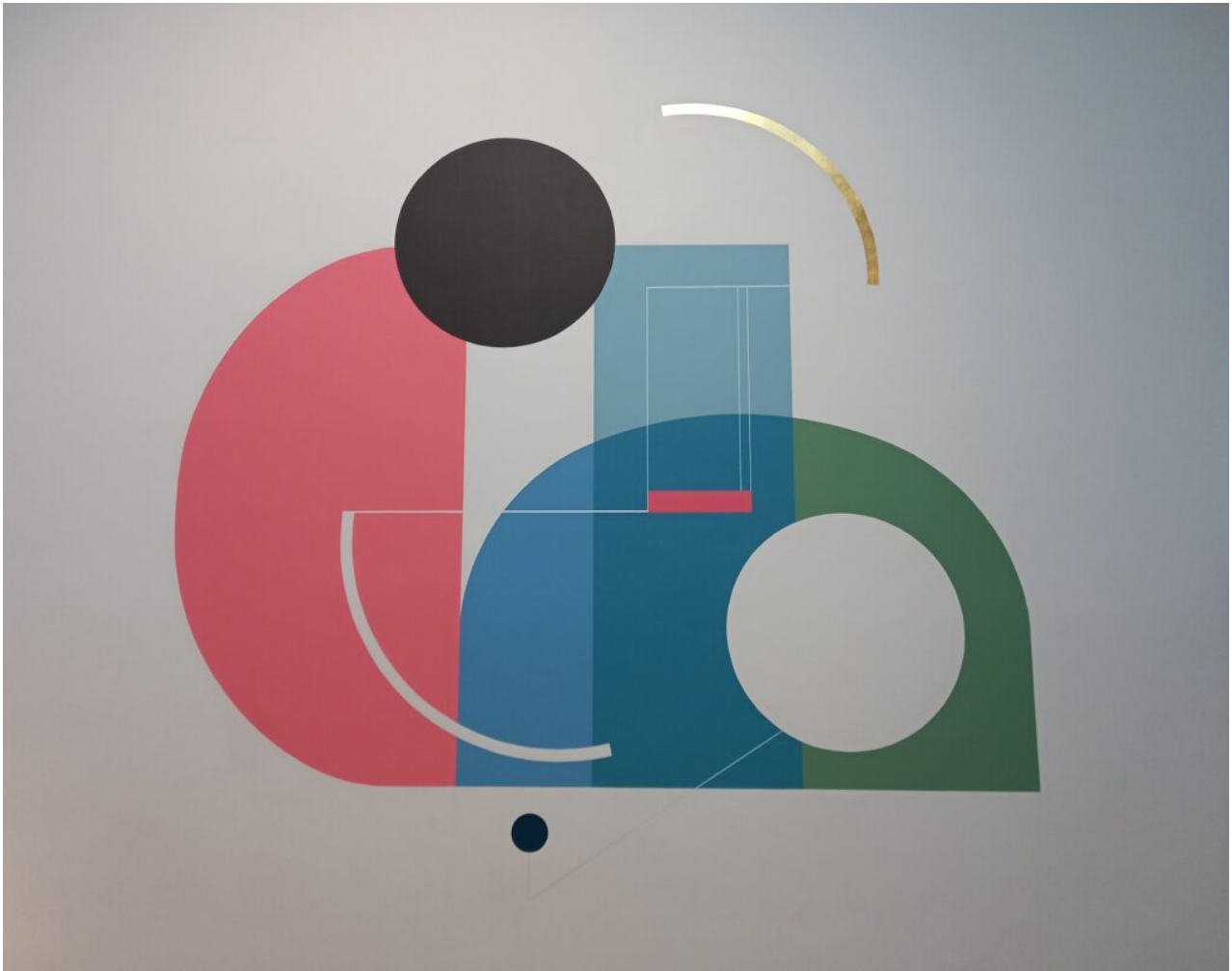
Helen Frankenthaler: 'Madame Butterfly', 2000

People quite often ask me what galleries I recommend. For the last few weeks, and quite possibly the next few weeks too, I've put the [Dulwich Picture Gallery](#) top of my list. It's a fine building in a pleasant setting with a good café, and as for the art:



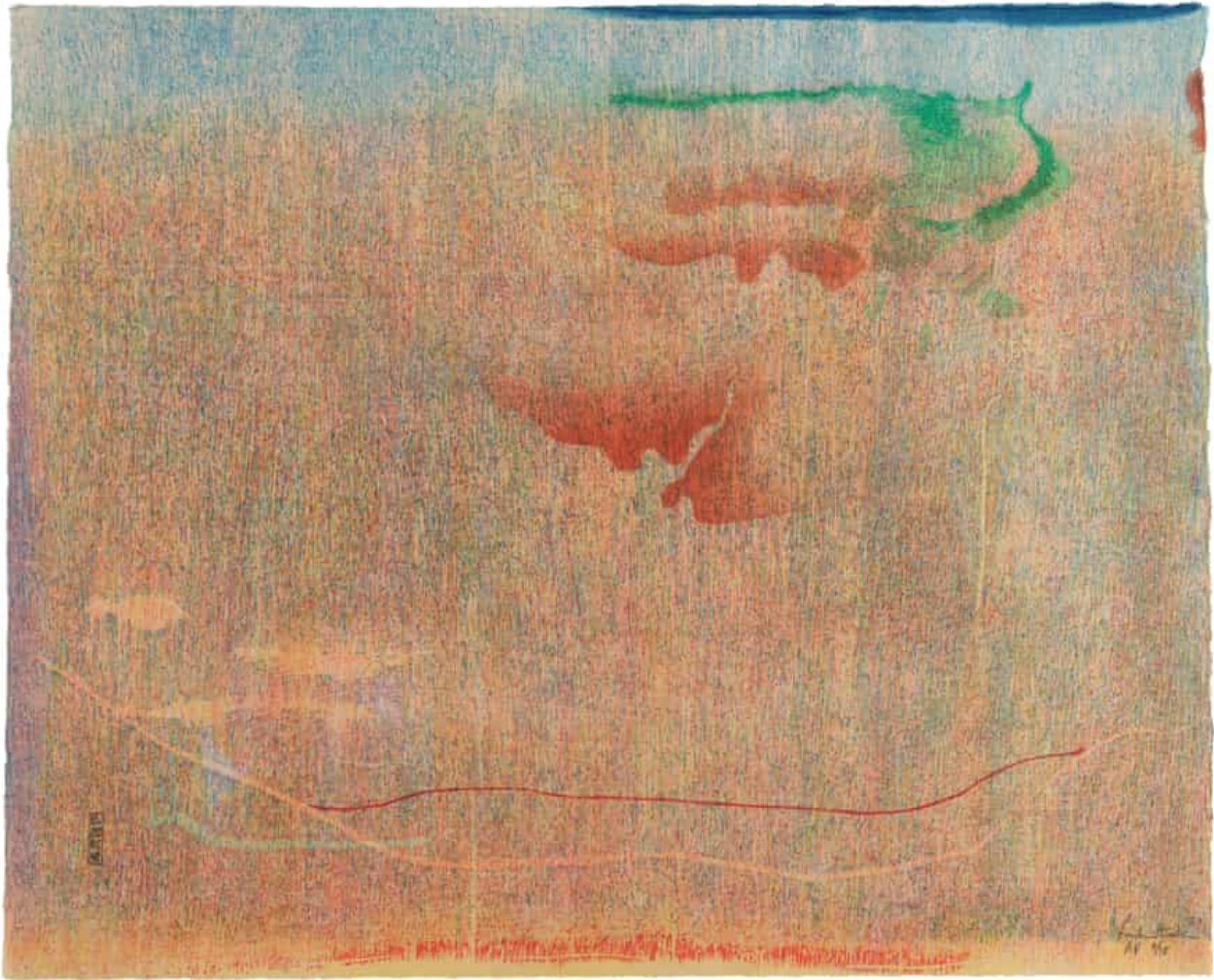
Raphael: St Francis of Assisi and St Anthony of Padua, c. 1504

The splendours of the permanent collection are presented in an altered hang, with fresh wall colours and new lighting. The room with Poussin, for example – which has moved – is still as fine as any room in London. Just now, given the Poussin show at the National Gallery, is the perfect time to take a comprehensive two-venue look at the French 17th century master. But everyone knows about that: I asked director Jennifer Scott to nominate her favourite less-widely noticed works, and she mentioned two small saints by Raphael and two portraits by 17th century British painter Mary Beale.



Sinta Tantra: part of 'The Grand Tour', 2020.

Sinta Tantra has made a wall painting at the entrance, neatly complementing those glories. 'The Grand Tour', 2020, is inspired by the gallery's architect, Sir John Soane : she wanted 'to create an immersive installation that was as visually opulent' – cue gold leaf – as one of Soane's interiors, yet also floated between a two and three-dimensional world' – as Tantra's work does tend to do.



Helen Frankenthaler: 'Cedar Hill', 1983

The special exhibition through to 18 April is a revelatory presentation of a lesser-known body of work by Helen Frankenthaler. At first glance the display seems to embody her famous 'soak-stain' language of painting which maximises the flatness of the surface – paint and ground become one – yet enables her to create the illusion of deep space. But they turn out to be surprisingly large woodcuts, which disguise the almost perversely laborious process of working with up to 102 separate colours through separate blocks to yield results that appear as spontaneously lyrical as the paintings... Not only are 36 such works presented – over half of her output in the medium – but we also see various trial stages and get excellent explanations of Frankenthaler's thinking.

Art writer and curator Paul Carey-Kent sees a lot of shows: we asked him to jot down whatever came into his head

Categories

[Paul's Art Stuff](#)

Tags

- [Dulwich Picture Gallery](#)

- Helen Frankenthaler
- Paul Carey Kent
- Paul's Art Stuff
- Raphael
- Sinta Tantra