

Works from the Estate of George Claessen

14 May – 7 June 2026

Grosvenor Gallery
35 Bury Street
London SW1Y 6AU



Transmission, 1980

“...he is a universal artist, a man of vision, of musical harmonies of temperament so rare and tender...full of hope...he is our fool who, in persisting in his folly, has become a wise man.”

— Ivan Peries on George Claessen

Grosvenor Gallery is pleased to present ***Works from the Estate of George Claessen***, an exhibition dedicated to one of the most significant Sri Lankan painters of the 20th century and a pioneering figure in the development of abstraction in South Asia. The exhibition brings together a selection of works that highlight Claessen’s distinctive visual language and his lifelong engagement with both abstraction and figuration.

The exhibition will run at the gallery in London from 14 May – 7 June 2026, with an opening reception on Thursday, 14 May from 6-8 pm.

Claessen was a key member of the influential ‘43 Group, formed in Colombo in 1943 under the patronage of Lionel Wendt. As one of nine founding artists, he played an important role in shaping a modernist movement that redefined artistic practice in Sri Lanka. He exhibited regularly with the group before relocating first to Australia and subsequently to the United Kingdom in 1949, where he would remain for the rest of his life.

Beginning as early as 1948, Claessen explored abstraction in parallel with figurative painting, gradually developing a highly personal and intuitive approach. By the 1960s, abstraction had become central to his practice, reflecting a deep concern with rhythm, harmony, and the expressive potential of form and colour.

International recognition came through his participation in major exhibitions, including the 1956 Venice Biennale and the 1959 São Paulo Biennale, where he received an award. In the UK, he exhibited extensively from the 1950s onwards at venues such as the New Vision Centre, Bear Lane Gallery, and the Commonwealth Institute, as well as with the Hampstead Artists’ Council and the Islington Art Circle.

Alongside his visual practice, Claessen was also an accomplished writer. His published works include *Poems of a Painter* (1967), *Poems about Nothing* (1981), and *Collected Poems* (1995), reflecting the same sensitivity and introspective quality that define his paintings.

This exhibition offers a rare opportunity to engage with the breadth of Claessen’s work and to reassess his contribution to both Sri Lankan and international modernism.

The gallery will also be taking part in [London Gallery Weekend](#) with extended opening hours from Friday 5 June to Sunday 7 June 2026.



Left: *A Tribute to Virginia Woolf*, 1992
Oil pastel on paper mounted on board, 26.5 x 21 cm



Right: *Yellow, Red & Blue in Unity*, 1996
Egg tempera on paper laid down on paper, Image: 30 x 24 cm



Left: *Consort of the Primaries*, 1969
Oil on canvas, 96 x 75 cm



Right: *Self Portrait*, 1979
Etching on paper, Image: 42 x 32 cm

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**EXTENDED OPENING HOURS
FOR LONDON GALLERY WEEKEND:**
Friday 5 June 2026: 11 am - 6 pm
Saturday 6 June 2026: 11 am - 6 pm
Sunday 7 June 2026: 12 - 5 pm