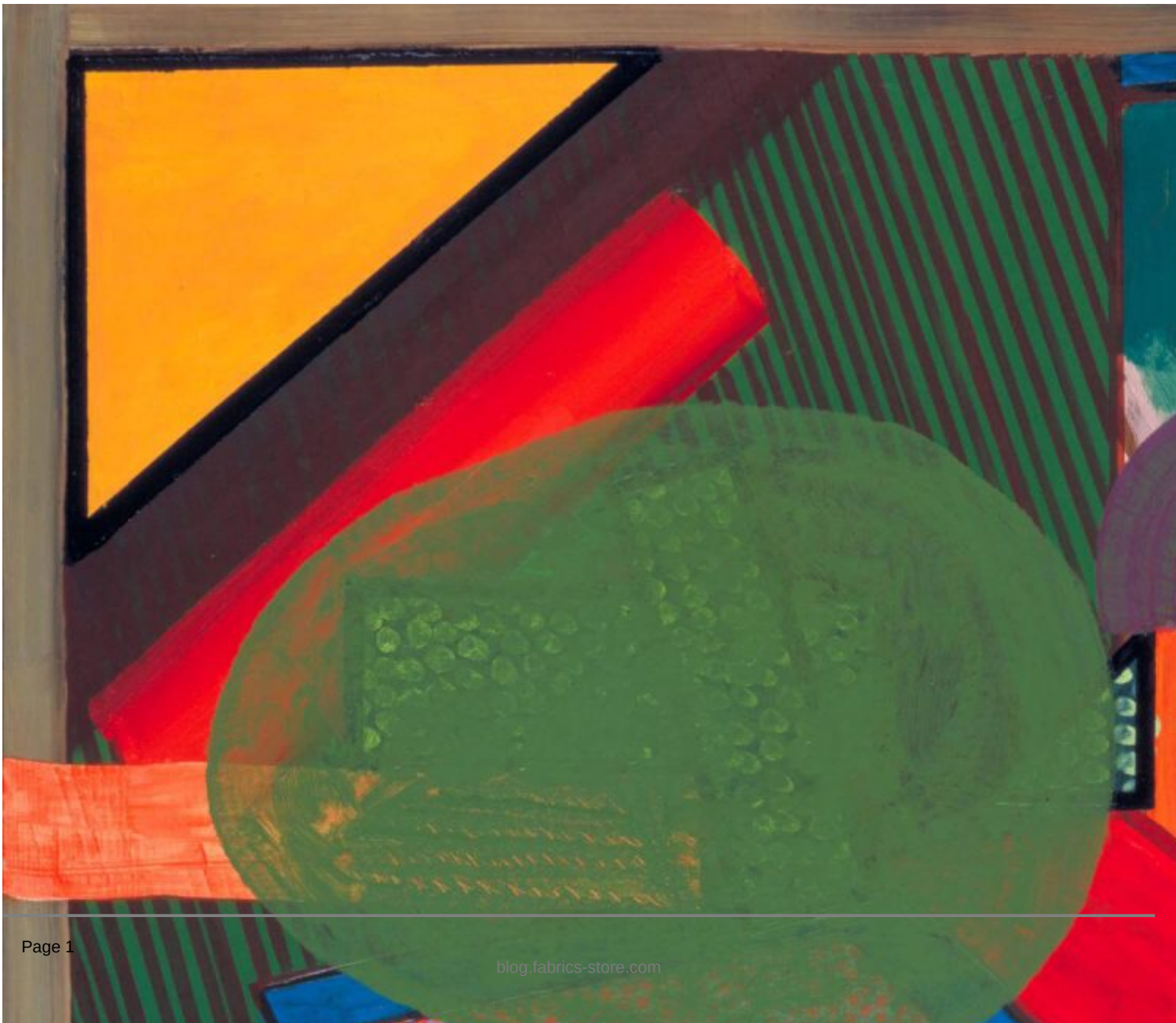


FS Colour Series: FIRECRACKER RED Inspired by Sir Howard Hodgkinâ??s Hot Fire

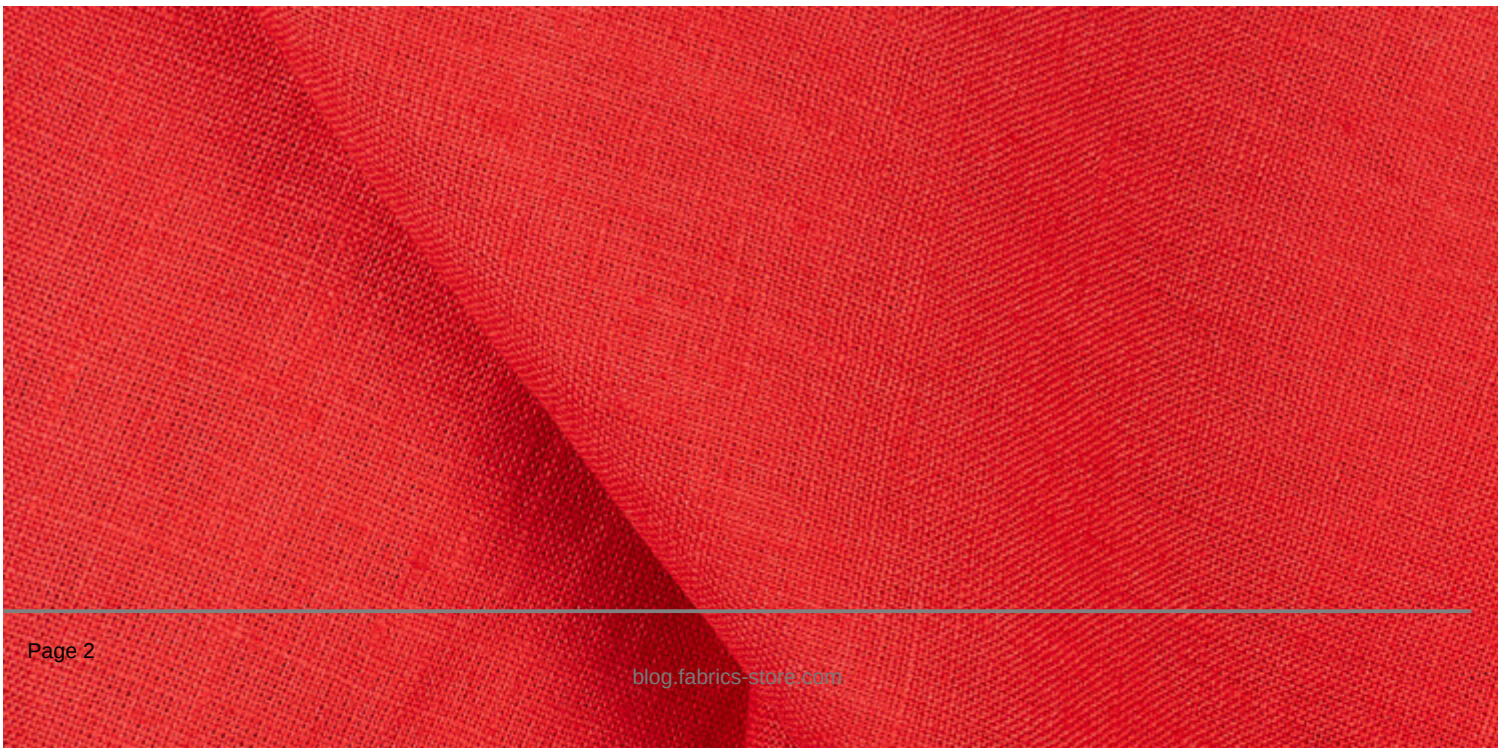
Description



Mr and Mrs E.J.P., 1969-73. Tate, London

Bold, vibrant colours are a defining feature in the art of British abstract painter Sir Howard Hodgkin (1932-2017), a powerful means of conveying his innermost memories and emotions. â??Donâ??t paint the thing itself,â?• he wrote, â??paint the effect it produces.â?• He often brought dazzling shades of red like Firecracker Red into his paintings, laid liberally in great streaks and swipes of expressionistic paint or ink alongside other equally brilliant shades of blue, green and yellow, producing a lush, abundant feast for the eyes. But colour was also a means for creating depth and space, with red often framing or overlapping darker colours, like a doorway or window frame opening up and allowing us to enter into his private world.

Hodgkin was born in Hammersmith, London, and grew up in Hammersmith Terrace. A rebellious youth, he ran away from his boarding school, seeking an escape from its strict confines. He trained as an artist at Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts, followed by Bath Academy of Art in Corsham. From early in his career Hodgkin was drawn to abstraction, which he pursued in both painting and printmaking. But in contrast with his Post-war contemporaries, including Frank Auerbach and Leon Kossoff, Hodgkin leaned towards a rich array of colours, initially with ordered, patterned designs based on observations of the real world, which later dissolved into wildly expressive arrangements aimed at conveying his fleeting thoughts, emotions and memories.



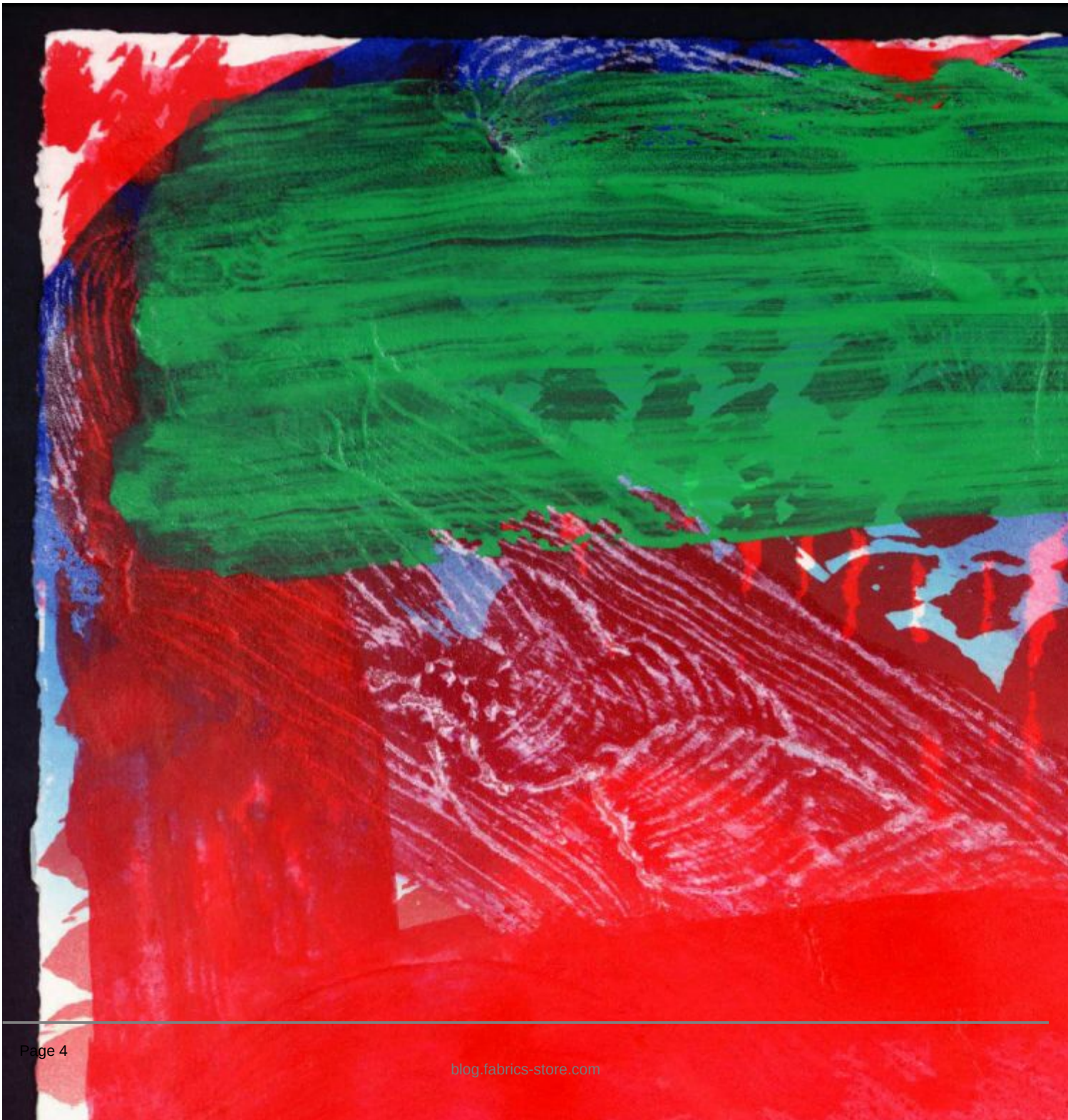
FS Firecracker Red Midweight Signature Finish Linen

In the early lithograph *Girl on a Sofa,* 1968, we see Hodgkinâ??s fascination with the emotive possibilities of bright, intense red, which spreads out across the picture plane in a broad expanse of flat colour, contrasting sharply with the striped bands in the imageâ??s lower half. His vivid colours capture the essence of the moment with a Matisse-like simplicity, while still retaining an element of figuration that the artist would later abandon. In the slightly later *Mr and Mrs E.J.P.,* 1969-73, the artist pays homage to the modern art collectors Mr and Mrs EJ Powers, exploring how a spirited arrangement of abstract patterns and shapes can convey his positive experience while spending time with the couple in their London home, in amongst their vast collection of art. Here Hodgkin toys with the spatial properties of colour, placing bold streaks of red at the front of his design, which act as a gateway that leads the viewerâ??s eye into the suggestion of a room beyond.



Snow, 1995. Christieâ??s

In the intaglio and carborundum with hand colouring print titled *Snow,* 1995, we see how Hodgkin has embraced a far looser and more painterly style, even if the same stacked, structural approach to building up an image remains. Sweeps of grey and yellow are overlaid with a loosely painted frame in the most electrifying shade of bright red, acting as a window that opens into the suggestion of wintery landscape in the distance.



Strictly Personal, 2001. Tate, London

In the later etching, aquatint and carborundum print titled *Strictly Personal,* 2001, bold, wide streaks of expressionistic colour are laid over one another in shimmering, semi-transparent layers to create the atmospheric illusion of three-dimensional space. The brightest shade of hot, fiery red is shaped into a frame-like form again, pulling us in to the centre of the image, where it is intermingles with the smallest traces of deep blue. Over its surface Hodgkin has applied a single stroke of apple green, a semi-translucent layer that seems to float on the surface of the image and toys with concealing and revealing what lies beneath, highlighting the air of mystery and intrigue that underpins all of Hodgkinâ??s enigmatic practice.

CATEGORY

1. COLOUR SERIES

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