

Painting way ahead

THE *Painting: Radiate* show at *According To McGee* has come to fruition after artist Phil Reynolds chased up the York gallery a year ago.

"We were impressed by his professionalism and his proactivity, and of course we'd heard about him as a big player in the north," says gallery co-owner Greg McGee.

"The idea of running a duo show of his work alongside fellow York artist Patrick Smith's in our city-centre white cube was exciting on a lot of levels, but especially because they're such superb, original and collectable painters."

After the Tower Street gallery's previous show, *New Visuality*, showcased the best work by recent graduates from 25 British universities, Greg was asked if he and partner Ails McGee would focus more on ceramics, jewellery and textiles, and here is his answer.

"It's great to champion other genres, but at heart we're a gallery that has painting in our DNA. We can't think of anyone else who wields paintbrushes like these two. You can't beat the human touch."

Describing the exhibition as luminous, Greg says the work is simultaneously ethereal and strident. "Reynolds has the elemental vision of the shaman; Smith the muscularity of the truth

teller. With influences from Malevich to Heron, the synergy between the two artists results in a show that champions the best of Northern UK's painterly art scene," he adds.

Phil concentrates on ideas associated with mark making and the evolution of imagery.

He is influenced by figurative and abstract painters, most notably Cezanne and the early British modernists.

"I feel each time I see great artist work, I study the work and mimic parts I admire as a way of celebrating and finding out," says Phil.

As seen in his recent shows at the New School House Gallery in York and the Moreton Gallery in Moreton in Marsh in the Cotswolds, his art is ethereal, sensitive and sometimes unsettling.

He enjoys exploring the gap between experience and form.

"I always liked records that faded up as well as down," he says. "So you felt that what you were hearing was part of a bigger and unknowable thing that existed somewhere out in the ether, but to which you couldn't have access... as though this piece of music was like a comet that had just entered your atmosphere for a while but then spun off again into its own orbit."

Patrick's new work is "an on-



Greg McGee, right, with Phil Reynolds and Patrick Smith

going dialogue with landscape as reflector", wherein he explores the "notion of inner truth derived from the middle distance between abstraction and figuration".

His paintings continue the modernist adventure espoused by Ivon Hitchens, Peter Lanyon and Patrick Heron.

"Building on their pioneering work, I'm seeking to develop a response that adds something new and relevant to being alive in the 21st century: a poetic riposte in a vibrant yet ever-

changing world," he says.

The duo of Reynolds and Smith orbit the same objective, suggests Greg. "They aim to provide searching, abstract observations fertilised by mark making with the palpable stuff of pigmented paint.

"Rumours of painting's demise have been greatly exaggerated," he says.

The *Painting: Radiate* show will run at *According To McGee*, York, until February 27.

Charles Hutchinson