

Art from flight





Rod Jones with SAB Goblin RAW 700 Nitro helicopter.
Photo: Hamish Pringle.

RC helicopter pilot and artist Rod Jones wanted to incorporate his love of aviation with his art work. So, he produced a stunning collection called the 'Vortex Series'. Hamish Pringle went and met Rod to view the images and discuss his inspiration behind it.

WORDS: Hamish Pringle IMAGES: Hamish Pringle and Rod Jones



Rod Jones' Magnus 1.5m high performance glider on a Wiltshire hillside close to his studio. Photo: Rod Jones.

Some people fall in love with flying at a very early age. Others are born with the gift of painting. Both these things have come together in Rod Jones to enable him to produce inspirational works of art.

His 'Vortex Series' of paintings capture the spirit of flying and as you look at these images, you are transported immediately into the air.

Some of these paintings are large and almost immerse the viewer in the experience of flying. Others are more intimate and provide windows into the aerial world.

As an enthusiastic flyer of model helicopters, planes and drones, Jones is constantly inspired by seeing them juxtaposed with the landscape in flight. And in addition, the way they can capture the landscape from above using photography leads to inventive compositions for his paintings.

Jones' work relates to Italian Futurism, the art movement founded in Milan in 1909. The city's Malpensa airport saw the Caproni brothers fly their "flying machine", the Cal biplane, in 1910. And Milan was also home to the Italian

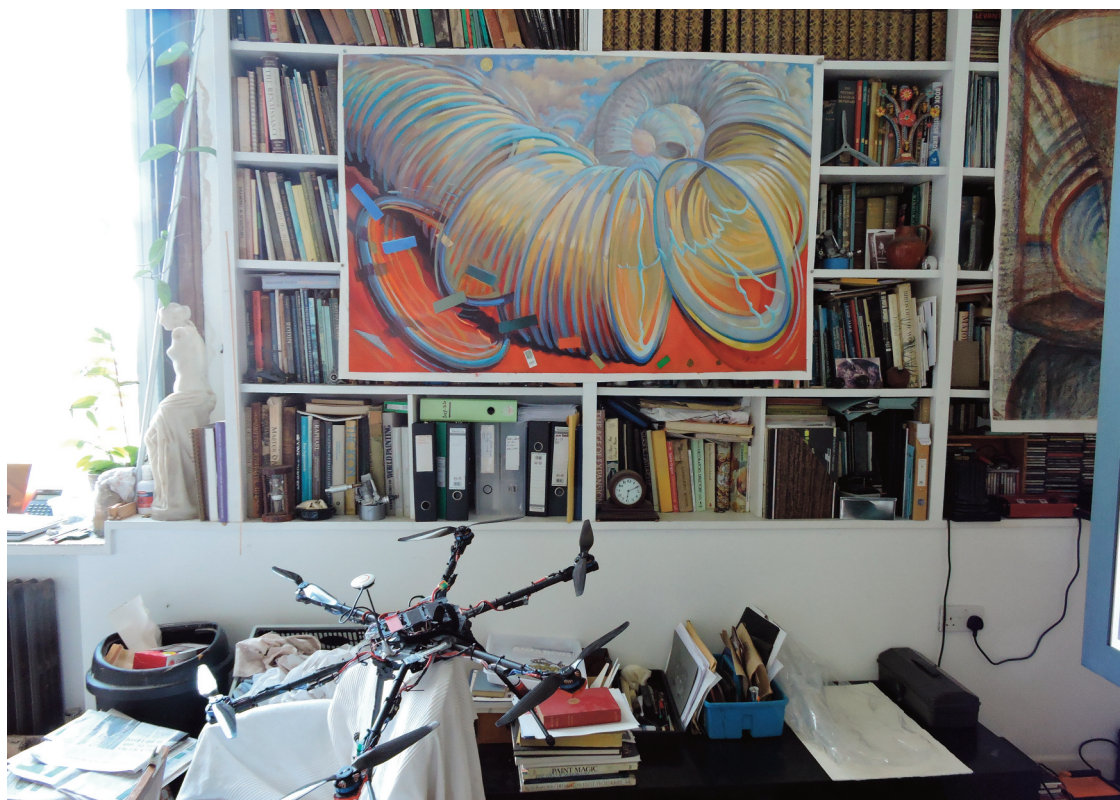
automotive industry and car marques such as Alfa Romeo, Ferrari, Lamborghini, and Maserati. So these artists were working in the crucible of industrial innovation.

Like them, Jones is optimistic about the future of technology and excited by its potential. The works of Futurist artists such as Umberto Boccione and Giacomo Balla can be seen in London's Estorick Collection.

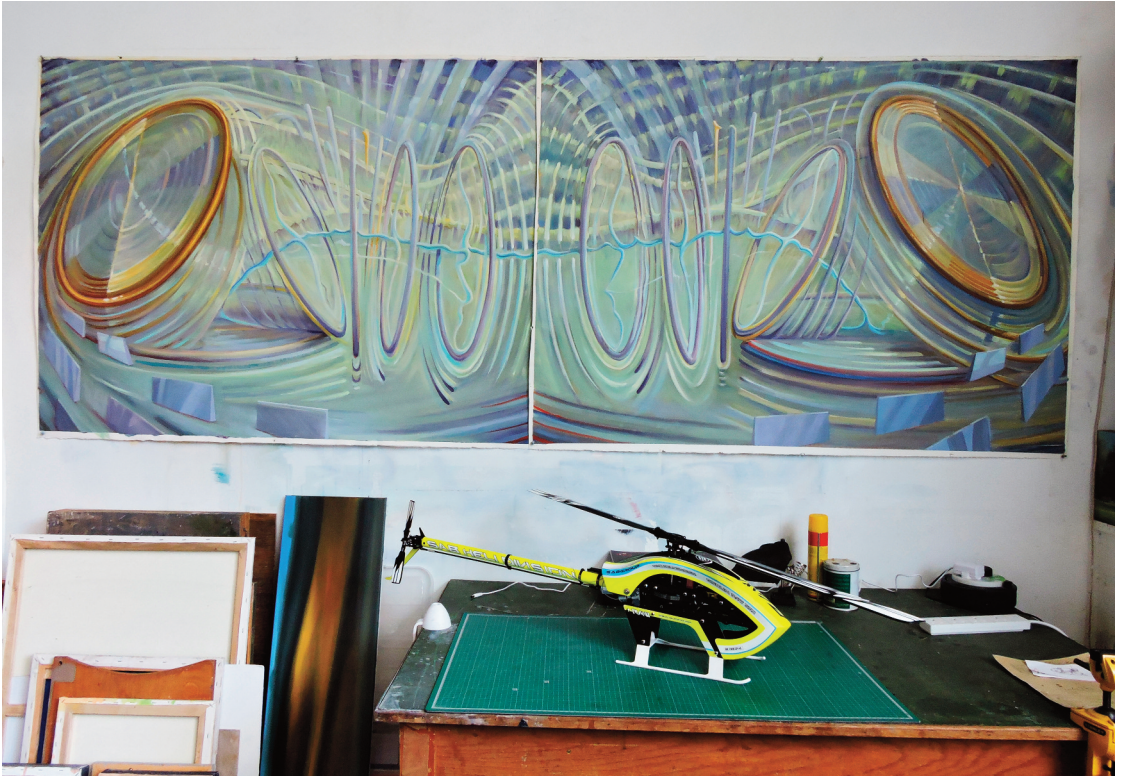
The Cornwall-based artist Peter Lanyon became famous for his conversion to gliders and paintings inspired by his flights. Tragically he died in a gliding accident only five



Rod Jones 'Vortex Opera'. Acrylic and oil on paper. 101cm x 172cm.



Rod Jones 'Möbius Flight'. Acrylic and oil on paper. 100cm x 150cm. With six-bladed drone driven by a Naza-M V2 GPS system. Photo: Hamish Pringle.



**SAB Goblin 500 helicopter with Rod Jones' 'Musical Vortex'. Acrylic and oil on paper. Diptych | 110cm x 297cm.
Photo: Hamish Pringle.**



**Rod Jones flying Oxy5, a helicopter powered by a 6 cell 5,000 milliamp battery.
Photo: Robert Jackson.**

Robert Jackson

years later. Lanyon said he wanted “to get a more complete knowledge of the landscape” and Jones is captivated by aerial views and the lyricism of nature seen from above.

Thus, this artist combines the natural and the engineered in dynamic compositions, some on a grand scale, others intimate, which celebrate the energy of aeronautical and geographical forms.

Take for example ‘Musical Vortex’, a large diptych on which rings fly across the paper, and echo back. Or maybe these are the cymbals of some celestial drum kit? Perhaps ripples in a pond? Sound waves, harmonics, and heartbeats? Certainly, there’s music in these spheres.

As the artist has said: “Whether a huge mural or an intimate study, I like my art to begin a story, then invite its completion. The imagery should draw you in, then let your imagination roam free. That way you’ll never tire of the work.”

Jones has loved gliders from the



Rod Jones at work on 'Nautilus'. Acrylic and oil on paper. 81cm x 155cm. Photo: Hamish Pringle.



age of eight onwards, along with anything that flew - from a grasshopper to a jumbo jet! He was first airborne in a small Chipmunk aged thirteen whilst a Commando Cadet at school. Then, in his mid-twenties he was taken up in a helicopter in Ireland by a pilot who had been in action in Vietnam. Jones took photographs on that flight and that was the beginning of his use of aerial shots as inspiration for his art.

Following a documentary on a Belgian cameraman who flew the model helicopters for the first Harry Potter films, Jones started to build his own ones in 2001. Model drone making started around 2009. Then he wanted a windsurfer to give him the name of an app that provided the best wind directions, so he got in touch with Lewis Crathern. He was a champion kite surfer who had just made news by jumping over the Brighton Pier! Jones then took pictures of him with his model helicopter and then later moved to using a drone to capture Crathern's

Rod Jones in his studio in Wiltshire 2023. Photo: Vivienne Pringle.



Rod Jones 'The Elegance of Speed'. Print in a limited edition of 50. £255 including mount and frame. Photo: Hamish Pringle.

spectacular aqua-aerobatics.

Aerial paintings were a natural progression of Jones' love of flight and he began creating them around 2009. Based upon photos and film he'd taken using his model helicopters and drones, he sketched, drew, and then painted his aero-landscapes.

The skills necessary to do so were acquired over many years. In 1973, aged nineteen, Jones took the Foundation Year at Heatherly Wilson Art School in London. At the end of that year he went to Florence and the Studio Simi Art School. Then in 1975 he took his MA at The Royal Academy Schools, London.

Jones has exhibited widely and twice had work accepted into the

Royal Academy Summer Exhibition. He is a distinguished painter of murals and has been commissioned by many individuals to create them in their private residences. There are public examples which can be seen at the Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital, London and in the Ladies changing room at the All England Lawn Tennis Club, Wimbledon.

You can see more of Jones' 'Vortex Series' on his website <https://www.rodjonesart.co.uk>, or in person at his studio in Wiltshire. It's about twenty minutes from the Messums West and Hauser & Wirth galleries, in the charming town of Bruton and The Newt Hotel.

He's offering Helicopter Club of Great Britain and Rotor Torque

readers a special price on his etching 'The Elegance of Speed' in a limited edition of 50. The normal cost of a mounted and framed print is £300.00. For HCGB members it would be less 15% at £255. Or save yourself the p&p and arrange a flying visit to his studio – he's got plenty of landing space! Contact him at rodjones@rodjonesart.co.uk ☐