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The painter with whom Andrews has the closest affinity, and this was especially so in the early 1970s, is in fact not one of the usual suspects, but the British artist Malcolm Morley (not mentioned in the catalogue), who was then living in New York and working, like Andrews, with both found and personal photographs, trying to forge a language that went beyond straight photorealism.

The exhibition’s main space has several works belonging to a cycle of seven paintings titled Lights (1970–74). These are quite simply the most brilliant paintings of Andrews’s career. They represent a remarkable departure from the artist’s previous work and stemmed from his very material re-evaluation of how to paint. With Lights he stopped using oil paint altogether, and began spray-painting acrylic water-based paint onto unprimed canvas. Technically this liberated him, for he then began to supplement his customary use of the camera in his practice with found photographs, assembling ‘moodboards’ of images that he would use either directly or as references. Calvocoressi has delved into the Andrews archive at the Tate to find both this photographic source material and references to the literature the artist was interested in at the time. He quotes Andrews’s own musings on Zen Buddhism and the idea of freeing oneself from ego, thus ‘seeing things just as they are’. Calvocoressi’s mention of the cult novel Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance (1974) lends context to Andrews’s work – a nostalgic whiff of a world of patchouli and casual drug use.

A newly liberated stylistic ego genuinely emanates from the Lights cycle. Andrews can be seen to have freed himself from the conventional problematic foreground / middle-ground / background dynamic of figurative painting. He constructs his compositions from an elevated perspective.
thing of the effect of Norfolk light, and its half-tones contribute to a heightened sense of provincial misery. It is a very British light — misty, with an existential glumness — that resides in Andrews’s paintings. It is paradoxical that for the viewer the works in this exhibition can produce an atmosphere of enforced ennui that is sometimes disembodied and exhilarating while at others turgid and slightly depressing. Andrews’s deer-stalking paintings shown close by, which occupied him from the mid-1970s until the 1990s, are happily under-represented in this show. This subject-matter introduced the element of class and perhaps alienated some of his admirers.

On his return to London from Norfolk in the early 1990s, Andrews’s subject-matter became the capital’s river. Thames Painting: The Estuary (Fig.64) is unnerving. Once again the viewer is hoisted to a remarkable angle, up and above the exposed mud on the Thames at low tide. Here skeins of paint are propelled in swirls (mostly painted flat, the wet paint was moved about by means of a hairdryer), creating atmosphere through artifice. As one approaches, the surface texture reveals sand and gobbets of oil paint. Softly painted wooden boats and what appear to be nineteenth-century figures emerge at the tidemark. In many ways this painting should not work, but there is something so deft in its touch and restraint and yet so bold in its intent. The inherent magic of the Lights series comes flooding back in this work, but this time the light is harsher and more bleaching. In fact this painting turns out to have been his very last.

3 Reviewed by Peter Fuller in this Magazine, 128 (1986), pp.530–32.