

GIBRALTAR



MARIO FINLAYSON  
NATIONAL  
ART GALLERY *10 years*

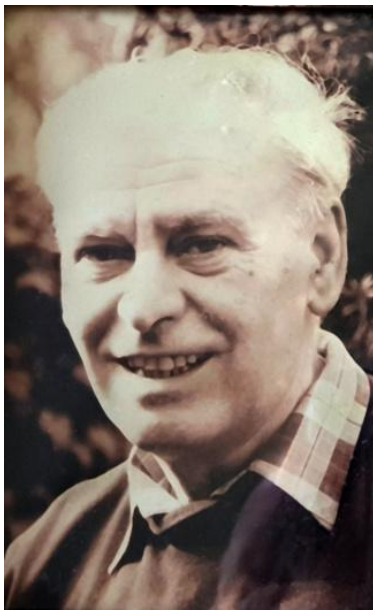
# ELIO CRUZ

10th Anniversary Exhibition Highlights

Elio Cruz '66

# ABOUT THE ARTIST

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Elio Cruz was born in Gibraltar on 2 October 1931 and moved to London in 1958, where he worked as a teacher until retiring as deputy head. Though he lived in London until his death in 2019, he remained closely connected to Gibraltar, contributing significantly to its arts and theatre.

Best known as a playwright, Cruz gained popularity with *La Lola se va pa Londre*, reflecting Gibraltarian life in the 1950s–60s. He wrote numerous plays for local drama groups and festivals, and was also a poet, photographer, and graphic designer. A founding member of *Los Trovadores*, he penned the lyrics for the Gibraltar anthem *La Plegaria a La Virgen de Europa*.

As a painter, Cruz worked mainly in acrylics from the 1950s to the 1990s, drawing inspiration from nature, Gibraltar's landscape, and cultures including Finnish, Aboriginal, Icelandic, Islamic, and Tibetan art. His minimalist style often came in series, and he rarely titled his works.

Though not commercially successful, his art won multiple awards, including top prizes at the Calpe Artists' Competition (1956, 1957), and the Gibraltar International Art Exhibition (1960, 1966, 1967). He also held a photo exhibition, *Alaska and the Rockies*, in 1991.

In 2013, Cruz received the Mayor's Gold Award for his musical contributions. In 2019, Gibraltar Cultural Services honoured him with the exhibition *One Man Many Talents*, showcasing over 90 of his donated works. Posthumously, he was awarded the Gibraltar Medallion of Honour.

## *ELIO CRUZ SERIES*

Acrylics on canvas



Here we have a selection of Elio Cruz's work depicting his style and influences. The artist did not often title his paintings saying they 'simply exist' so, these are numbered and represent the manner in which he worked and created, 'Painting 27, Painting 28 and so on.

Simple forms depicting nature; trees, sunsets, country lanes and rolling hills are just some of the shapes and outlines which captured his imagination, inspired by Finish culture and landscapes. Elio created basic compositions that are eye catching and atmospheric with colour also taking centre stage.

There are over twenty different artworks in the collection of this series, all 25cm x 25cm square. You can find out more about the artist here

# PORTOBELLO TABLE ONE

84x124cm

Oil on canvas

This painting stands as one of Elio Cruz's most striking works, encapsulating many of the key influences that shaped his unique aesthetic. The echoes of Henri Matisse, Picasso, and a distilled interpretation of Cézanne's still-lives are evident throughout. Cruz adopts a deliberately sparse use of colour, generating a palpable tension between light and shadow. The composition unfolds like a complex visual puzzle, designed to captivate and ensnare the viewer's attention.

In 1967, Cruz reached new artistic heights with this piece, winning the Gibraltar International Paintings Exhibition. The adjudicator, Morris Kestleman, Head of the Painting Department at the Central School of Art and Design praised the work, stating:

"The work presents a strong design in both shape and colour. The colour range is simple, economical, and bold: the relation of large masses to details is well controlled and the breaking up of the white area is very skilful. It would look well in any room (Why not in one of Gibraltar's hotels)."



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17 John Mackintosh Square, Gibraltar GX11 1AA

Opening Times:  
Mon-Fri  
9:30am - 3:30pm

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