The Shape of Things: Still Life in Britain (Chichester, 27–28 Sep 24)

Pallant House Gallery, Chichester, UK, Sep 27–28, 2024
Deadline: May 31, 2024

Melanie Vandenbrouck

Step into the discourse of British art history with our upcoming symposium, 27-28 September 2024, inviting academics to explore the multifaceted world of still life in our current exhibition The Shape of Things: Still Life in Britain.

This summer, Pallant House Gallery is staging 'The Shape of Things: Still Life in Britain' (11 May – 20 October), a major exhibition exploring the continuing and fundamental relevance of the genre of still life to British art and art history.

Historically still life has been viewed as the lowest genre of art, but in fact it has been employed by leading British artists to grapple with some of the most profound themes relating to the human condition, and as a vehicle for experimentation with new forms and ideas.
In keeping with Pallant House Gallery's mission to explore new perspectives on British art from 1900 to now, the exhibition will demonstrate how artists working in the 20th and 21st centuries have continually reimagined traditional still life. It will question how still life has been used to explore themes such as mortality and loss; fecundity and love; the uncanny and subconscious; the domestic environment and questions of gender; abundance and waste. Today these themes also extend to climate change and to the legacy of colonialism and empire.

Starting with the introduction of still life in Britain by émigré artists in the 17th century, the exhibition will reveal how modern and contemporary artists have engaged with and reinterpreted traditional art history. It will then present a history of modern and contemporary British art as understood through the lens of the still life, showing how the genre sits at the heart of groups and movements including the Bloomsbury Group, Scottish Colourists, Seven & Five Society, Unit One, Surrealism, St Ives and post-war abstraction, Neo-romanticism, pop art, post-war figurative art, conceptual art and the YBAs.

Encompassing painting, prints, photography, sculpture and installation, 'The Shape of Things: Still Life in Britain' will include over 150 works by more than 100 leading artists working in Britain, listed overleaf. The exhibition is accompanied by a site-specific installation by Phoebe Cummings.

This symposium will seek to draw out connections between historic and contemporary art, and will provide an opportunity to further explore key themes in the exhibition. The keynote lecture will be delivered by a leading British artist. The two sessions will include papers by art historians and curators concerning artists and themes in historic, Modern and contemporary British art, and

artists talking about themes in their work.

We will seek contributions that investigate, but may not be limited to:
• the reinterpretation and renewal of this traditional genre
• the exploration of gender identity through still life
• how the world's underlying uncertainties are expressed through a genre traditionally perceived as domestic
• still life as an art form that goes beyond reality to explore symbolism, the sub-conscious, the uncanny and conceptual.
• the connections between still life and global commerce and its connections to colonialism and the British Empire
• the contribution of émigré and Diaspora artists to the enduring significance of the genre
• still life as a site for the exploration of materiality

Exhibited artists include: Eileen Agar, Hurvin Anderson, Michael Ayrton, Wilhelmina Barns-Graham, Edward Bawden, Vanessa Bell, Elizabeth Blackadder, Peter Blake, John Bratby, Glenn Brown, Edward Burra, Claude Cahun, Patrick Caulfield, Gordon Cheung, Peter Coker, Edvaert (Edward) Collier, Mat Collishaw, Jean Cooke, Maisie Cousins, Michael Craig-Martin, John Craxton, Phoebe Cummings, Jessica Dismorr, Valentine Dobrée, Mary Fedden, JD Fergusson, Meredith Frampton, Lucian Freud Roger Fry, Anna Fox, , Ori Gersht, Gluck, Sylvia Gosse, Lawrence Gowing, Duncan Grant, Maggi Hambling, Anthea Hamilton, Richard Hamilton, Mona Hatoum, , Jann Haworth, Patrick Heron, Tristram Hillier, Lubaina Himid, Damien Hirst, Ivon Hitchens, David Hockney, Howard Hodgkin, Frances Hodgkins, George L Hunter, David Jones, Poppy Jones, Robert MacBryde, Margaret Mellis, Lindsey Mendick, Lee Miller, John Minton, Mary Moser, Rodrigo Moynihan, Paul Nash, Ben Nicholson, William Nicholson, Winifred Nicholson, Lucy + Jorge Orta, Eduardo Paolozzi, Cornelia Parker, Katie Paterson, , Samuel Peploe, Grayson Perry, Glyn Philpot, Dod Procter, Marc Quinn, Eric Ravilious, William Roberts, Mohammed Sami, William Scott, Colin Self, Anwar Jalal Shemza, Walter Sickert, Jane Simpson, the Smith Brothers of Chichester, Jo Spence, Stanley Spencer, Wolfgang Tillmans, Gavin Turk, Ursula Tyrwhitt, Euan Uglow, Keith Vaughan, Simon Verelst, Charlotte Verity, Bouke de Vries, Edmund de Waal, Edward Wadsworth, Caroline Walker, Ethel Walker, Alison Watt, Rachel Whiteread, Christopher Wood, Clare Woods, Madame Yevonde, and Toby Ziegler.

Please send an abstract of up to 400 words to curatorial@pallant.org.uk. Please include your name, affiliation, contact details (including phone number and email address) and a short biography with details of any recent publications. The deadline for submissions will be 31 May 2024 (12pm). We will aim to contact successful candidates by Monday 1 July.

Further details

Timings: The symposium will take place on Friday 27 September evening and Saturday 28 September at Pallant House Gallery. Provisional timings are as follows:
Friday 27 September
17:00 – 18:20 Registration and private view of the exhibition
18:20 – 18:35 Director’s welcome
18:35 – 19:30 Keynote lecture
19:30 onwards Drinks reception

Saturday 28 September
10:00 – 10:15 Arrival
10:15 – 11:00 Curator Lecture about themes in the exhibition
11:00 – 11:15 Short coffee break
11:15 – 12:45 Morning speakers
12:45 – 13:45 Lunch (provided)
13:45 – 16:15 Afternoon speakers (with short break at 15:30)
16:15 – 17:00 Plenary Session with roundtable discussion
17:00 Event concludes.

Costs: The Symposium has been generously supported by the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art. Speakers will be paid a fee of £150. Speakers will be able to claim travel expenses (up to £100) and accommodation costs (up to £100) for the Friday evening. There will be no delegate fee for speakers.
Delegate tickets will be £50 full price, £30 for students and will include refreshments and lunch. Tickets will go on sale via the Pallant House Gallery website nearer the time of the conference.
Visit the Pallant House Gallery website for more information about the exhibition:

https://pallant.org.uk/perspectives-call-for-papers-the-shape-of-things-still-life-in-britain/

Reference:
CFP: The Shape of Things: Still Life in Britain (Chichester, 27-28 Sep 24). In: ArtHist.net, May 20, 2024 (accessed Nov 27, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/41914>.