Pallant House Gallery

# The Shape of Things: Still Life in Britain

## Room 10.1

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**The Shape of Things:**

## Still Life in Britain

This is the first major exhibition to consider the subject of still life in Modern British art. Through the work of 100 artists, it seeks to demonstrate the importance of still life to artistic expression in this country.

As a genre (or subject) of art, still life was historically considered to be lesser than history painting, portraiture and landscape painting, but it gained popularity in the 17th and 18th centuries due to the market for Dutch still life paintings and the arrival of immigrant artists. These historic still life paintings sought to convey the transience of life through arrangements of inanimate symbolic objects, such as clocks and skulls, which were known as ‘vanitas’ (a reminder of the vain pursuit of material wealth in the eyes of God) and ‘memento mori’ (a reminder of our mortality).

In the past century, still life has been used by artists to reflect on the society in which they live and to grapple with some of the most profound themes of the human condition: love and loss; life and death; beauty and decay. Some of today’s artists look back to art history to address issues of global significance, such as the legacy of empire, conflicts and the climate crisis.

Beyond its meanings and symbolism, still life fuels artistic experimentation. It offers fertile ground in which to explore colour, form and materials. Throughout its history, this genre has benefitted from the mobility of artists and ideas, and the richness of artistic dialogues, sometimes across centuries.

**LANDING:**

**Patrick Caulfield** [1936–2005)

**Still Life Ingredients**
1976
Screenprint on paper
Wilson Loan (2006)

**Michael Craig-Martin** [b.1941)

**Close Relations**
**Distant Relations**
1996
Screenprints on paper
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester
Presented by Cristea Roberts Gallery (2021)

In his work, Michael Craig-Martin explores the relationship between objects, images and language. These two screen-prints depict everyday items that could be found at home or in the office. They are all the same size and the confusion of scale raises questions about how we look at objects and how they are represented in art. There is a sense of humour present in the random relationships between these objects brought together here, provoking unexpected associations.

**Lindsey Mendick** [b.1987)

**Still Life with Hermit Crabs**
**and Tooth Extraction**
2024
Glazed ceramic
Courtesy of the artist and
Carl Freedman Gallery, Margate

In her opulent vases possessed by writhing octopuses and feasting bats, Lindsey Mendick references the ‘vanitas’ and ‘memento mori’ traditions as well as the pirates and vampires of popular culture. Her pieces are full of gothic humour: darkness combined with a lightness of touch. And yet Mendick is deadly serious about her practice, working on a monumental scale with luscious glazes and intricate, lifelike detailing of creatures and plants.

**Lindsey Mendick** [b.1987)

**The Nightmare Never Ends**
2024
Glazed ceramic
Courtesy of the artist and
Carl Freedman Gallery, Margate
**Mary Moser** [1744–1819)

**Summer Flowers on a Ledge**
1768
Bodycolour on paper
The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust)

In 1768, Mary Moser became the youngest founder of the Royal Academy of Arts in London and, with Angelica Kauffman, was one of only two female Academicans. She was celebrated for her paintings of flowers and in the words of Germaine Greer was not only ‘the first significant British flower painter, she was also one of the best’. This piece shows her extraordinary skill, which earned her a royal commission from Queen Charlotte to decorate a room in Frogmore House with flower paintings.

**William Smith** [1707–1764)

**Still Life with Grapes, Peaches and Plums**
1763
Oil on canvas
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester
Bequest of Mrs Pat Roth (2016)

William Smith was the eldest of three artists known as the ‘Smith Brothers of Chichester’, who were the sons of a cooper (or barrel-maker). The brothers specialised in landscape paintings of Sussex painted in the style of Italian artists, but were also some of the first native-born English artists to specialise in still life subjects in response to the popularity of Dutch paintings. The grapes, peaches and plums represented in this painting could have been seen as symbolising fertility, romance and pleasure.

**Toby Ziegler** [b.1972)

**Purple Prose**
2023
Oil paint and gesso on aluminium
Courtesy of the artist

Toby Ziegler takes motifs from 17th century Dutch still life, using computer software to create a new virtual figurative image. He then painstakingly reproduces this image in paint, followed by a very fast process of erosion carried out with an electric sander. The result is an image that sits between virtual and handmade and evokes the transience of life as well as that of making. Collapsing different speeds of mark-making, that of the hand and that of the sander, Ziegler's work invites different speeds of looking.

**Simon Verelst** [1644–1721)

**Roses, Morning Glory and a Carnation on a Marble Ledge with Some Grapes**
n.d.
Oil on canvas
Private Collection

Simon Verelst moved from the Netherlands to London in 1688, where he became one of the most acclaimed flower painters of his age, calling himself the ‘God of Flowers’. He depicted plants whose symbolism would have been understood as having religious meaning: the roses represent love and the Virgin Mary, the blue ‘Morning Glory’ represents humility before God, the carnation signifies resurrection and eternal life. But beauty and life do not last forever: the rose petals are wilting, and a grape has fallen from the bunch.

**Edwaert Collier** [c.1640– c.1707)

**Vanitas Still Life**
1694
Oil on canvas
National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London;
purchased with the assistance
of the Society for Nautical Research Macpherson Fund

In 1693 Edwaert Collier migrated from the Netherlands to England, where he became known for his ‘vanitas’ paintings that represented worldly goods alongside symbols of mortality. Here, the books and globe are symbols of knowledge, and the musical instruments express a fleeting art form, as once an instrument is put down, the music stops. Collier writes in Latin ‘Vanity, vanity, all is vanity’, alluding to the vain pursuit of worldly possessions. The globe is a reminder that Britain and the Netherlands were global trading empires that derived their wealth from slavery.

**Gordon Cheung** [b.1975)

**Still Life with Golden Goblet**
**(after Pieter de Ring, 1640–1660)**
2017
Archival inkjet on 380gsm Hahnemühle
Photo Rag paper
Courtesy of the artist and
Cristea Roberts Gallery, London

British-Chinese artist Gordon Cheung takes
17th century still life paintings to raise questions about global capitalism and the exploitation of environmental resources. The Dutch Golden Age was marked by a rising merchant economy and global trade that led to wider geopolitical implications. Using an open-source digital code created by artist Kim Asendorf (b.1981) that 'glitches' the image to create 4000 sequential images, Cheung creates the illusion that the painting is dissolving.

Pieter de Ring [1615–1660)

*Still Life with Golden Goblet*

c.1655 – c.1660, Oil on canvas

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

**Glenn Brown** [b.1966)

**Saint Bimbo**
2024
India ink and oil paint on panel
Collection of the artist

Glenn Brown has taken a section of a magnificent vegetable still life by the 17th century Florentine painter Bartolomeo Bimbi, borrowed colours from the 18th century Spaniard Francisco Goya and the 19th century French artist Odilon Redon, and used techniques from Netherlandish Renaissance artists to create a multilayered still life that explores paint and the act of painting. He says: 'In my Dr Frankenstein hand, I created a multiple-eyed Polichinelle masquerading as a vulgar vegetable. He is a comic, cross-limbed Humpty-Dumpty character precariously sitting on the edge
of a table.'

Bartolomeo Bimbi [1648–1729)

*Cavolfiore del canonico Venuti e ramolaccio*

*del podere del marchese Corsi*

1706, Oil on canvas

**George Smith** [c.1714–1776)

**Still-Life with Joint of Beef**
**on a Pewter Dish**
c.1750–60
Oil on canvas
Chichester City Council

George Smith was considered to be the most talented of the three ‘Smith Brothers of Chichester’. He was influenced by Dutch ‘ontbijt’ paintings (or ‘breakfast pieces’). However, the subject of roast beef would have been recognised as solidly English fare by contemporary viewers, who would have known the patriotic ballad ‘The Roast Beef of England’ written by Henry Fielding, which had become very popular in the previous decade.

**Mat Collishaw** [b.1966)

**Last Meal on Death Row, Texas**
**(Louis Jones Junior)**
2012
Digital Transfer print on goatskin parchment
Mat Collishaw

For his photographic series, Mat Collishaw researched the last meals chosen by prisoners on ‘death row’ (mainly in the United States) prior to their execution, and restaged them in the manner of Dutch 17th century still life paintings. The artist commented on how the choices they made correspond to the ‘vanitas’ tradition – which reflects on humanity’s futile accumulation of worldly goods and the transience of life. The series addresses the complex issue of the aestheticisation of violence in contemporary culture.

**Lucy + Jorge Orta** [b.1966, b.1953)

**[Left to right)**
**Amazonia: Palaeomastodon**
**(humerus bone, Egypt)**
**Amazonia: Aepyornis**
**(elephant bird egg, Madagascar)**
**Amazonia: Gallimimus**
**(fossil limb bone, Mongolia)**
2010
Royal Limoges porcelain fossil cast, enamel
and platinum drawings, unique piece,
Certificate Perpetual Amazonia
Courtesy Lucy + Jorge Orta

In 2009, Lucy + Jorge Orta joined a scientific expedition in the Amazon rainforest, where they observed an environment endangered by extractive practices, deforestation and the needs of capitalist societies. These are cast specimens from extinct species, adorned with drawings of Amazonian flora and fauna. The artists have overlaid one mass extinction onto another –
the 5th, at the end of the Cretaceous 66 million years ago, onto the 6th (ongoing today) – as a 'memento mori' about

the interconnectedness of world systems, the impact of consumer choices and the necessity for systemic change.

**Bouke de Vries** [b.1960)

**Vanitas (Still Life with Globular Teapot)**
2012
Commissioned by Pallant House Gallery (2009)

**Bow Factory**
c.1765
Soft paste porcelain globular teapot and cover
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester
Geoffrey Freeman Collection of Bow Porcelain (2002)

Born in the Netherlands and working in Britain, Bouke de Vries initially trained as a ceramics conservator before becoming an artist. After this 18th century teapot was accidentally broken, Pallant House Gallery invited de Vries to transform it into a new artwork. He captured this dramatic event in the teapot's life by creating an 'exploding' artwork that alludes to Dutch still life paintings and the theme of the 'vanitas' - a reminder of the transience of life. It incorporates butterflies which traditionally symbolise fragility, transformation and rebirth.

**Ori Gersht** [b.1967)

**Evertime 05**
2018
Archival ink on paper
Courtesy of Ori Gersht and
Michael Hoppen Gallery

This is part of a wider photographic series entitled ‘New Orders’, in which British-Israeli artist Ori Gersht recreates in three dimensions the work of famous European still life artists to comment on the fragility and fragmentation of the European Union. Here, Gersht takes inspiration from the 20th century Italian painter Giorgio Morandi. Carefully arranged on a ledge, replicas of Morandi’s distinctive light-toned vessels are shot with an air rifle, their consecutive destruction captured in time with a high-resolution camera.

Pallant House Gallery

# The Shape of Things: Still Life in Britain

## Room 12

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## British Post-Impressionism

In the early 20th century, artists associated with the Bloomsbury Group and Camden Town Group (named after areas of London) were drawn to the work of the French Modern artists Paul Cezanne, Édouard Manet and Paul Gauguin, who had pioneered the presentation of still life as an avant-garde subject in the late 19th century. These French artists were loosely grouped under the term 'post-impressionism', coined in 1910 by artist and art critic Roger Fry for his influential London exhibition, 'Manet and the Post-Impressionists'. Breaking free from the more naturalistic approach of impressionism, the post-impressionists used colour and simplified representations of the observed world to experiment with form.

The Scottish Colourists, JD Fergusson, George LeslieHunter and SJ Peploe, all spent time in France where they were influenced by artists' bold use of colour, whilst Walter Sickert spent long periods of time in Dieppe, and Matthew Smith studied in the atelier of Henri Matisse. There he encountered the explosion of colour that had led Matisse and André Derain to be known as 'Fauves' (wild beasts).

**William Nicholson** [1872-1949)

**The Silver Casket and Red Leather Box**

1920

Oil on panel

Private Collection

Courtesy of Hazlitt Holland-Hibbert

William Nicholson was a leading portrait painter, but turned his attention to still life in the early 1900s. His work references past traditions, conveying the lustrous qualities of reflected metal, and yet he was innovative in his approach to the subject, with simple and closely focused compositions. Nicholson painted the leather box red after this work was exhibited at the Goupil Gallery, London in 1920. Before then, the box was decorated with a diamond pattern which can still be seen below the surface of the paint.

**Spencer Gore** [1878-1914)

**Still Life with Apples**

1912

Oil on canvas

Ferens Art Gallery: Hull Museums

Spencer Gore's vibrant painting shows how closely British artists in the early 20th century looked to European post-impressionism. He takes inspiration from the 'father' of modern still life Paul Cezanne and his contemporary Paul Gauguin. Both artists used colour and unusual perspectives to create dynamic and modern still life paintings. Like Harold Gilman whose work is on display nearby, Spencer Gore was a member of the Camden Town Group.

**Harold Gilman** [1876-1919)

**The Cup and Saucer**

1915

Oil on canvas

Private Collection, courtesy of Offer Waterman

Like other members of the Camden Town Group of artists, Harold Gilman wanted his work to reflect the realities of modern life, often painting figures in domestic interiors. The subject of this painting is simple, a white cup and saucer, and yet rather than recreating the smoothness of the crockery, he has used thick and textured oil paint and a bright palette to produce a modern painting that reveals his admiration for European impressionism and post-impressionism.

**George Leslie Hunter** [1877-1931)

**Still Life with Cut Melon, Glass and Fan**

c.1919-20

Oil on canvas

Pallant House Gallery, Chichester

On Loan from the Cross Family Collection (2014)

Scottish artist George Leslie Hunter spent his formative years in the United States. Little is known of Hunter's early work as much of it was destroyed in the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, after which he returned to Scotland. In this painting Hunter was inspired by 17th century Dutch still life painting whilst also drawing on the painterly techniques of post-impressionism. In the 1920s, Hunter began exhibiting with JD Fergusson, SJ Peploe and Francis Cadell, who would later come to be known as the Scottish Colourists.

**John Duncan Fergusson** [1874-1961)

**The Blue Lamp**

1920s

Oil on board

Rugby Art Gallery & Museum, Rugby Borough Council

French post-impressionism and the bright colours of fauvism had a huge effect on Scottish Colourist, JD Fergusson. He first visited Paris in the 1890s, and settled in the French capital in 1913. Although a bowl of fruit dominates this still life, the blue lamp, to which the painting gives its title, is a subject that Fergusson returned to on a number of occasions from 1910. He was a leading figure of the Scottish Colourists (a term coined later in 1948).

**SJ Peploe** [1871-1935)

**Still Life of Roses and a Bowl of Apples on a Green Tablecloth**

1920s

Oil on canvas

Pallant House Gallery, Chichester

On Loan from a Private Collection (2012)

SJ Peploe started his career as a portrait painter but gave this up to pursue the perfect still life. He was close friends with fellow Scottish Colourist JD Fergusson and the pair worked together whilst visiting Paris and Le Touquet, on the coast of northern France. Peploe repeated this composition of roses, a bowl of apples, and a fan several times, using different receptacles to present these objects.

**Nina Hamnett** [1890-1956)

**Still life (Blue Stove)**

c.1915

Oil on board

Private Collection

Known as a natural rebel and 'Queen of Bohemia', Nina Hamnett was first taught still life painting by William Nicholson whilst studying at the London School of Art between 1907 and 1910. Although influenced by elements of Nicholson's work, she did not appreciate being mentored by male contemporaries. Walter Sickert offered Hamnett advice which she readily ignored, instead developing her own style and technique. With its simplification of form and playful exploration of reflection, this painting is characteristic of Hamnett's work, which was described as 'robust', 'vigorous and incisive'.

**Roger Fry** [1866-1934)

**Still Life with T'ang Horse**

c.1919-20

Oil on canvas

Tate: Presented by Mrs Pamela Diamand, the artist's daughter 1973

In 1913 Roger Fry founded the Omega Workshops, in which the paper flower and black vase were created. These examples of modern craftsmanship are shown alongside a sculptural horse dating from the Tang dynasty (618-907 CE), often considered to be a golden age in Chinese history, and a female figure dating from the Han dynasty (206 BCE- 220 CE). A keen collector of Asian art, Fry's academic survey of Chinese art in the Burlington Magazine in 1925 impacted British collecting and the taste of the period.

**Vanessa Bell** [1879-1961)

**Design for Omega Bed-End:**

**Vase of Flowers**

1917

Oil on paper laid on board Private Collection, London

Blurring the lines between fine art and decorative art, the elongated proportions of this design and the motif of bending flowers are dictated by function, that of a bed-end decoration. Along with her Omega Workshops co-directors Roger Fry and Duncan Grant, Bell made several bed-head and bed-end designs. This flower motif relates to the bedroom door decorations she made for her home, Charleston Farmhouse near Lewes in Sussex, where she lived with Grant from 1916.

**Duncan Grant** [1885-1978)

**The Mantelpiece**

1914

Oil paint and paper on board Tate: Purchased 1971

Duncan Grant was at the centre of the Bloomsbury Group's experimental approach to still life. The Mantelpiece was painted at Vanessa Bell's home at 46 Gordon Square, Bloomsbury and is one of the earliest examples in which Grant used collage in his painting. The objects identified here include paper flowers and a decorative box by artist Frederick Etchells which were made in the Omega Workshops where Grant was a co-director.

**Winifred Gill** [1891-1981)

**Still Life with Glass Jar and Silver Box**

1914

Oil on cardboard

The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust)

For several years this work was thought to have been painted by the Bloomsbury Group artist Duncan Grant. Stylistically Winifred Gill and Grant's work is similar and both artists worked at Roger Fry's Omega Workshops, where Gill was business manager. Unusually, it is painted on the back of a laundry box top and dated 12 November 1914. During the First World War, artists' materials became increasingly scarce and Gill, among others, turned to unlikely mediums to create their art.

**Walter Sickert** [1860-1942)

**Still life on a table**

c.1913

Oil on canvas

Pallant House Gallery, Chichester

Kearley Bequest, through Art Fund (1989)

The objects in this still life painting have been taken from a detailed drawing by Walter Sickert and reworked in oil paint. The original drawing in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford shows the music room at art collector Morton Sands' house in London. Sickert positioned the oil lamp, books and small bowl to teach Ethel Sands, an artist and society hostess, how to paint still life. Ethel Sands and her partner Nan Hudson, also an artist, can be seen in the background.

**Matthew Smith** [1879-1959)

**Flowers and Mixed Fruit**

c.1927

Oil on canvas

Pallant House Gallery, Chichester

Hussey Bequest, Chichester District Council (1985)

Matthew Smith studied under the fauve artist Henri Matisse in Paris in 1911, where he developed a heightened colour palette. He returned to Paris in the early 1920s, before moving to Dieppe in 1925, where he produced a number of flower paintings. This was an important subject for Smith and a key part of his development as an artist. Smith's still lifes can be compared to his paintings of nudes - here, in the voluptuousness of the ceramic vase and the soft flesh of each piece of fruit.

**Ethel Walker** [1861-1951)

**Flower Piece No. 4**

c.1930

Oil on canvas

The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust)

Ethel Walker was one of the most frequently exhibited women artists in London in the 1920s and was recognised during her lifetime as an accomplished flower painter. This painting is an excellent example of Walker's pointillist approach to still life, a technique which uses dots or small strokes of paint to build an image. Here Walker paints dozens of flowers in an explosion of colour. Her inclusion of delphiniums, often seen in English gardens, and rhubarb in the foreground, dates this painting to June or July.

**Ursula Tyrwhitt** [1872-1966)

**Flowers**

1912

Watercolour on paper

Tate: presented by Mrs Mary McEvoy 1935

Ursula Tyrwhitt was part of a tight-knit group of students who studied at the Slade School of Fine Art in London in the 1890s. She was also a painter of portraits and landscapes, but became known for her floral still lifes. This work is thought to have been given to fellow Slade artists Ambrose and Mary McEvoy as a 10th wedding anniversary present. Tyrwhitt painted flowers found in English gardens, while experimenting with pattern and perspective in a way not dissimilar to the Bloomsbury Group.

**Walter Sickert** [1860-1942)

**Mushrooms**

c.1919-20

Oil on canvas

Private Collection

Walter Sickert painted very few still lifes. Those he did paint often depicted simple crockery and humble food items. Mushrooms was painted after the First World War, when he and his wife Christine moved to the village of Envermeu just outside Dieppe in France. This still life reflects a happy time in Sickert's life when he embraced domesticity. This abruptly came to an end when his wife died in 1920.

**Sylvia Gosse** [1881-1968)

**Still Life with a Lobster**

c.1923

Oil on canvas

University of Hull Art Collection

The simple serving dish takes centre stage over lavish tableware. Gosse's subject could be interpreted as an unusual choice for a woman artist in this period. Her painting nods to 17th century Dutch still life but her loose handling of paint is comparable to the work of her tutor Walter Sickert. Gosse attended Sickert's art school in London for a year before she took over the business management of the school which was renamed the Sickert and Gosse School of Painting and Etching.

**Mark Gertler** [1891-1939)

**The Dutch Doll**

1926

Oil on canvas

Brighton & Hove Museums

In the 1920s, Mark Gertler became known for his often elaborate still lifes. The objects depicted here reference Dutch still life and folk art - tulips in a vase, a painted wooden box and a wooden peg doll known as a Dutch doll. Dutch dolls were sold undressed so that children could make their own clothes and dress them. The playing cards symbolise earthly pleasures, chance, and fate, whilst the brown edges of the plant's leaves are a reminder that death is inevitable.

Pallant House Gallery

# The Shape of Things: Still Life in Britain

## Room 13

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## Order, Reality and Dreams

In the 1920s and 1930s, British still life took many different directions. A ‘return to order’ was characterised by traditional, realistic representations of objects and plants that signified a yearning for stability and control after the disruptive effects of the First World War. Surrealist artists took an alternative approach to the political uncertainty of the interwar years, making startling arrangements of familiar forms to shock bourgeois sensibilities and to reveal the subconscious. In turn, Eileen Agar and Claude Cahun used the language of surrealism to defy gender expectations.

Everyday items such as crockery and vases of flowers were a popular choice for artists in the Seven & Five Society, an initially traditional group that became more experimental after artists such as Ben Nicholson joined in 1924. From 1933, Paul Nash and members of the group Unit One bridged the two modernist currents of abstraction and surrealism in their still life arrangements, anticipating artistic developments to come in the 1940s.

**Eileen Agar** [1899–1991)

**The Object Lesson**
1940
Collage & bodycolour on board
Southampton City Art Gallery

Collage formed the main part of Eileen Agar's work during the 1930s and 1940s. Here, she took an early abstract portrait and partially covered it with a wicker rack. Attached to the rack is a wooden mannequin holding a paintbrush, which has been speared into a cork given to Agar by Pablo Picasso. Here, Agar references the ultimate surrealist object – the woman – who appears trapped in the cane rack, a comment on the restrictive attitude of male surrealist artists in the 1920s and 1930s.

**Paul Nash** [1889–1946)

**Dead Spring**
1929
Oil on canvas
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester
Kearley Bequest through Art Fund (1989)

Paul Nash painted *Dead Spring* following the death of his father, with whom he had a very close relationship. To express his grief, Nash turned to the cycle of decay and renewal found in nature, through the depiction of a withered potted plant on the windowsill of his London flat. The inclusion of geometric shapes, such as the ‘set square, and the use of a restrained colour palette, give the work a sense of order’.

**Cedric Morris** [1889–1982)

**Irises and Tulips**
1935
Oil on canvas
Private Collection

Known as an ‘artist plantsman’, Cedric Morris cultivated 45 different varieties of irises during his career. In 1929, he and his partner Arthur Lett-Haines leased a cottage in Higham in Suffolk. It was there that Morris first became interested in irises and began to consider the beauty and fragility of flowers, both in the garden and in paint. By 1935, the year in which this work was painted, he had started breeding this semi-exotic plant.

**Frances Hodgkins** [1869–1947)

**Still Life: Eggs, Tomatoes and Mushrooms**
c.1929
Oil on canvas
Brighton & Hove Museums

Frances Hodgkins painted this work at a significant point in her career after joining the Seven & Five Society in 1929, having been introduced by her friend Cedric Morris. The folded white shirt sleeve on the left is a reference to the depiction of draped cloth by the French painter Paul Cezanne, whose work Hodgkins greatly admired. Still life was an important genre to Hodgkins; in later life she used depictions of her favourite objects to create what she saw as self-portraits.

**David Jones** [1895–1974)

**July Change**
1930
Watercolour on paper
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester
Kearley Bequest through Art Fund (1989)

The compositional arrangement of a still life in front of a view through a window recurs in David Jones's work between 1928 to 1932. During this time, he was a member of the Seven & Five Society, exhibiting his works alongside Frances Hodgkins, Cedric Morris, Ben and Winifred Nicholson. The blurring of boundaries between inside and outside is mirrored in Jones's watercolour technique, in which the differences between the forms of the flowers and the tree are less defined.

**Winifred Nicholson** [1893–1981)

**Vermillion and Mauve**
c.1928
Oil on board
Private Collection

This painting shows Winifred Nicholson's experimentation with colours and the relationships between them, using flowers as the subject. Instead of attempting to depict plants with botanical accuracy, she saw flowers through the prism of a rainbow. Her fast pace of working and use of colour to create light and space would influence fellow artists in the Seven & Five Society, including Ben Nicholson and David Jones.

**Ben Nicholson** [1894–1982)

**1928 (striped jug and flowers)**
1928
Oil on canvas
Private Collection

Ben Nicholson's interest in still life was inherited from his father, the artist William Nicholson, in particular, through his collection of striped and spotted jugs, mugs, goblets, and glass objects. Ben turned to the everyday objects he had in his studio and interpreted their forms and patterns in varying degrees of representation and abstraction. This is a rare example of a painting that includes flowers. Yet, as Ben's son Jake pointed out, in his father's paintings, 'the jug is always more important than the flowers'.

**Eric Ravilious** [1903–1942)

**Ironbridge Interior**
1941
Watercolour on paper
Private Collection on loan to Towner Eastbourne

This drawing was made at Ironbridge Farm at Shalford in Essex, where Ravilious moved in 1941. Depicting a jug of cow parsley and bracken fronds, it is part of a series of watercolours of bare rooms with flowers on
a table. Ravilious used the device of a picture within a picture, to play with varying associations of planes. It poignantly evokes a moment of respite while working as an Official War Artist –in 1942 he disappeared during a reconnaissance mission over Iceland.

**Edward Bawden** [1903–1989)

**The Boy – Eric Ravilious in his studio at Redcliffe Road**
1929
Watercolour on paper
Towner Eastbourne

This picture shows the artist Eric Ravilious, whose nickname was ‘the boy’, drawing in his studio. The singular presence of the jug of flowers, which partially obscure Ravilious’s face, foregrounds the work as a still life rather than an interior scene. It acts as a record of the close working relationship between Edward Bawden and Ravilious, sketched whilst they were living together at 52 Redcliffe Road, London.

**Eric Ravilious** [1903–1942)

**Kettle, Teapot, Breadboard, Matches**
1939
Watercolour and pencil design for Dunbar, Hay
Private Collection

From an early age Eric Ravilious had a fascination with objects. A sketchbook from his schooldays includes a pencil drawing of a teapot. He returned to this subject in this embroidery design for Dunbar Hay, an influential London gallery founded in 1937 that supported the work of promising young designers. His careful approach to line and composition is consistent across his wider work, from depicting a warplane in flight to a box of matches next to a breadboard.

**Dod Procter** [1892–1972)

**Black and White**
c.1932
Oil on canvas
Southampton City Art Gallery

Dod Procter has captured a sense of immediacy in this painting. An ermine wrap, a shawl and gloves have been discarded on a hall table, maybe after an evening out. These objects demonstrate her skill at capturing different textures. These may be Procter's own accessories. In 1937, she was photographed wearing a similar pair of gloves outside the Royal Academy of Arts in London with her close friend, the artist Laura Knight.

**Glyn Philpot** [1884–1937)

**Stachys and Leaves**
1934–35
Oil on canvas
Private Collection

Glyn Philpot was a celebrated society portraitist and figure painter who only started painting still life in the early 1930s following a change from a traditional to a more modern style of painting. A friend of the interior designer Syrie Maugham, he began to paint images that would suit fashionable modern interiors. This is a painting of plants from the garden of his country house, Baynards Manor in Sussex. Stachys is known as ‘lamb’s ear’ because the leaves are soft to touch.

**Gluck** [1895–1978)

**Lords and Ladies**
1936
Oil on canvas
Private Collection, London

Lords and Ladies, also known as ‘cuckoo pint’, is a poisonous plant native to Britain. Gluck’s flower paintings are often charged with eroticism. When writing about this painting to long-time lover Nesta Obermer, the artist questioned the gender of these plants: ‘How can these flowers be female? Anything more male than this prominent feature I cannot imagine’. Born Hannah Gluckstein, Gluck challenged gender expectations, rejected this name, preferring just ‘Gluck, no prefix, no suffix, or quotes’, and chose to wear androgynous clothes and short hair.

**Tristram Hillier** [1905–1983)

**The Green Bottle**
1950
Oil on canvas
Southampton City Art Gallery

Empty wine bottles and smoking paraphernalia were recurring subjects in Tristram Hillier's still lifes. Not only was Hillier a wine-lover, the depiction of wine was symbolic of his religious faith, having returned to the Catholic Church in the 1950s. His approach to the object is similar to that of the surrealists, in particular Belgian artist René Magritte, in the way in which his meticulous and obsessive painting method injects strangeness into the ordinary.

**Edward Wadsworth** [1889–1949)

**Bright Intervals**
1928
Tempera on canvas laid on panel
Museum & Art Swindon

This is an example of Edward Wadsworth's nautical still lifes, in which objects such as a barometer or shell are depicted with extreme precision. The exaggerated proportions andsaturated colour used by Wadsworth echo techniques employed by surrealist artists. The emphasis on clarity associated with international art movements such as theGerman *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) and surrealism represented a resistance to the earlier disintegration of the object by cubist artists.

**Meredith Frampton** [1894–1984)

**Trial and Error**
1939
Oil on canvas
Tate: Bequeathed by Miss J.B. Dickins 2010,
accessioned 2019

The hyper-real and polished technique Frampton employs to depict the unusual assortment of objects gives this painting an uncanny atmosphere. The sketchbook, model's head and study drawing of a hand all refer to artistic processes, whilst the urn and white carnation (a flower often chosen for funerals) reflect upon the transience of life. Painted in1939 at the outbreak of the Second World War, the work could be seen as a premonition of the destruction to come.

## CASES

**Paul Nash** [1889–1946)

**Poisonous Plants, from 'For Urne Buriall and The Garden of Cyrus'**
1932
Collotype and stencilled watercolour on paper
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester
Lucas Bequest (1995)

In 1931, Paul Nash created illustrations for two influential books by author Thomas Browne, *Urne Buriall* and *The Garden of Cyrus* (both 1658). Nash identified with the central themes of the books, which include death and the afterlife, and the human attempt to place order on the natural world. Browne's obscure texts provided Nash with the opportunity to experiment with surreal compositions, and the inspiration to explore abstraction through natural forms.

**Paul Nash** [1889–1946)

**Still Life No.2**
1927
Wood engraving on paper
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester
The Clare Neilson Collection presented by Jeremy Greenwood and Alan Swerdlow through Art Fund (2013)

Still lifes set within interiors were an important subject in Paul Nash's wood engravings during the 1920s. In his 1932 publication, *Room and Book*, he wrote, 'Furniture such as couches, chairs, bookcases and tables… involve planes, horizontal, vertical and inclined, angles, right, acute and obtuse, directions, divisions, dimensions and recessions; contrasts of masses, light and shade, in fact, the basic material for creating the structural harmony'. This encapsulates his fascination with formal and geometrical relationships between objects in a space. The multiple perspectives lend an air of disquiet to the compositions, thus melding his dual engagement with abstraction and surrealism.

**Paul Nash** [1889–1946)

**Still Life No.1**
1925
Wood engraving on paper
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester
The Clare Neilson Collection presented by Jeremy Greenwood and Alan Swerdlow through Art Fund (2013)

**Paul Nash** [1889–1946)

**Coronilla**
1925
Wood engraving on paper
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester
The Clare Neilson Collection presented by Jeremy Greenwood and Alan Swerdlow through Art Fund (2013)

This engraving and a closely related painting from 1929 are inspired by Harold Monro's poem *Coronilla* published in 1917. The subject of the poem is a flower which is also a 'femme fatale' that lures a man into her shuttered room, drains his energy and kills him. Women, in the surrealist imagination, were often confined to such a role – objects of both desire and terror.

**Paul Nash** [1889–1946)

**Untitled**
1934–35
Photograph, silver gelatin print on paper
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester
The Clare Neilson Collection presented by Jeremy Greenwood and Alan Swerdlow through Art Fund (2013)

In the 1930s, Paul Nash used photography and still life arrangements to experiment with compositions for his mysterious landscape paintings with geometric objects. Nash said 'the Surrealist Object appears to be more an act of will than an act of chance. Many are elaborate constructions, but you can see they are the product of ideas which spring from the imagination… In making surrealist objects there is always the influence of the dream'.

**Claude Cahun** [1894–1954)

**Untitled (Objects in a Bell Jar)**
1936
Photographic print on Hahnemühle Photo Rag Pearl paper
Courtesy of the Jersey Heritage Collections

Perhaps best known for performative, gender-fluid self-portraits, Claude Cahun also produced a body of work in which objects were staged in combinations that conjured subconscious associations. The use of assemblages involving wooden mannequins within bell jars played upon masculine and feminine stereotypes, acting as a microcosm of wider society. Dolls or mannequins were often chosen as subjects by surrealist artists for their uncanny position as lifelike, yet inanimate objects.

**Lee Miller** [1907–1977)

**Untitled [Severed Breast, from radical surgery in a place setting 1 & 2], Paris, France**
c.1929
Photograph
Lee Miller Archives, East Sussex, England

Lee Miller's photographic diptych presents a startling critique of the objectification of the female body in Surrealist art. Having observed a mastectomy during a photographic job at the Sorbonne medical school in Paris, Miller created this unsettling composition of two severed breasts on two set dinner plates. Through presenting parts of the female body in this way, the artist draws our attention to how it is treated as an object of consumption.

**NO PHOTOGRAPHY**

Pallant House Gallery

# The Shape of Things: Still Life in Britain

## Room 14

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## Paths to Abstraction

For abstract artists in Britain, still life provided a vehicle for experimentation. Often outwardly abstract works had their basis or starting point in the arrangement of objects. The paintings, prints and sculptures presented here show a shift away from a naturalistic representation of objects towards a preoccupation with colour, form and volume.

In the 1940s and 1950s, the Cornish fishing town of St Ives became a centre for abstract modernism. Barbara Hepworth and Ben Nicholson settled near there in 1939, initially with Margaret Mellis and her husband the writer Adrian Stokes. Other artists followed them, including Wilhelmina Barns-Graham and Patrick Heron, whilst William Scott was a regular visitor. The contents of their homes and studios were as much an inspiration as the unique landscape of
West Cornwall.

Later, Anwar Jalal Shemza and Howard Hodgkin developed their own visual languages, informed by their personal experiences and encounters with international examples of abstraction.

**Ivon Hitchens** [1893–1979)

**Flowers**
1943
Oil on canvas
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester
Mrs Diana King Bequest presented
through Art Fund (2003)

This painting of daisies and dahlias was made at Greenleaves, Hitchens' home and studio near Petworth in West Sussex, where he moved with his wife and son in 1940 to escape the Blitz. He said 'one can read into a good flower picture the same problems that one faces with a landscape, near and far, meanings and movements of shapes and brush strokes'. His later panoramic abstract landscapes would similarly be preoccupied with rhythm and movement.

**Robert MacBryde** [1913–1966)

**Still Life (with Ludo Board and Lemon)**
c.1950
Lithograph in colours
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester
The Golder - Thompson Gift (2021)

Robert MacBryde is best known as one half of ‘the Two Roberts’, alongside his life partner and another key figure in Scottish modernism, Robert Colquhoun. MacBryde’s strong sense of pattern shows through this arrangement of a ludo board and cut lemon on a table, demonstrating his experimentation with cubist fragmentation. His still lifes were influenced by the work of Swiss-German artist Paul Klee, with whom he became familiar through his friend and mentor, the Polish painter Jankel Adler.

**Patrick Heron** [1920–1999)

**Round White Table: St Ives: 1953–1954**
1953–54
Oil on canvas
Katharine Heron and Susanna Heron

In the early 1950s, Patrick Heron spent long summers in St Ives with his family, staying nearby to Barbara Hepworth and Ben Nicholson. The most common subject matter in his paintings would be everyday objects, usually seen on a table in front of an open window. Inspired by French cubist artist Georges Braque, Heron experimented with the ‘transparency’ of objects – for example, how the lines of the windowpanes dissolve into one another.

**Patrick Heron** [1920–1999)

**Still Life**
c.1948–49
Oil on canvas
The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust)

Although following the trappings of the still life genre with the recognisable shape of an oil lamp on a table, this work shows Heron dissolving the boundary between representation and abstraction. His use of heavy black outlines divides the composition like a grid, separating out broad planes of colour. His gestural painting technique breaks away from a representational depiction of objects towards an exploration of line and form.

**Margaret Mellis** [1914–2009)

**Yellow Basket with Bottle**
1952
Oil on canvas
Estate of Margaret Mellis
Courtesy of the Redfern Gallery

*Yellow Basket with Bottle* was made during the period in which Margaret Mellis had returned to painting, having experimented with collage reliefs in the 1940s. An attention to the arrangement of forms, as well as the central importance of colour is evident in this work. Its vibrant yellows and purples were perhaps inspired by the South of France, where she stayed between 1948 and 1950.

**Anwar Jalal Shemza** [1928–1985)

**Still Life**
1957
Oil on fibreboard
Estate of Anwar Jalal Shemza

This painting was created in 1957 – the year when Anwar Jalal Shemza relocated from Lahorein Pakistan to London. It marks a significant turning point in the artist's practice, when he began to incorporate artistic devices from both Islamic and modern European art, in order to form his own visual language. Shemza uses still life in order to explore the language of geometry – in particular the form of the square and the circle.

**William Scott** [1913–1989)

**Still life variations 2**
1969
Oil on canvas
Private Collection

Still life was a central part of William Scott's practice, and his approach to abstraction often found a basis within the genre. He said, 'I find beauty in plainness'. Scott discovered the particular blue pigment used here during a scholarship year in Berlin in 1963–64. His works became increasingly simplified from the mid-1960s – dishes and frying pans seen from above like plans, whilst bowls are flattened in profile.

**Margaret Mellis** [1914–2009)

**Toy cupboard (thirty)**
1983
Driftwood construction
Estate of Margaret Mellis
Courtesy of the Redfern Gallery

Mellis's lifelong fascination with the aesthetic of deterioration, would culminate in a series of driftwood constructions in the 1980s. Whilst living on the Suffolk coast, Mellis beachcombed for interesting bits and pieces washed up by the sea, to create assemblages such as this. Although at first it is seemingly abstract, the title roots it in the domestic world. The worn appearance of the material reminds us of the effects of decay.

**Wilhelmina Barns-Graham** [1912–2004)

**Red Table**
1952
Gouache on hard board
Wilhelmina Barns-Graham Trust

This unusual example of a still life by Wilhelmina Barns-Graham was painted during an important period in her career, when she was developing her position towards abstraction. She said, ‘though I seldom do a purely abstract painting: I am interested in using abstract forms mainly insofar as they are derived directly from natural sources by means of simplification within the movement of the picture itself’. Here, the table-top, bowl and jug are rendered down to blocks of pure colour.

**Howard Hodgkin** [1932–2017)

**Still Life**
1987–90
Oil on wood
Private Collection

In his paintings, Howard Hodgkin sought to represent personal encounters and memories of places he had visited. Restaurant interiors, with references to still lifes often reappear in his work. His love of Indian art comes through his paintings, in which border and pattern are given equal weight with the subject matter. The unusual format of this work gives it a three-dimensional quality.

**William Scott** [1913–1989)

**Cup**
1974
Gouache and collage on paper
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester
The George and Ann Dannatt Gift (2011)

‘Gauloises’ cigarettes were the French brand smoked by Pablo Picasso, and in the early 1970s, they were the subject of collaged paintings by the abstract expressionist Robert Motherwell. Scott had travelled to America and was no doubt familiar with Motherwell’s work, and incorporated the same fragments of the distinctive packaging in this collage. The shape of the pack of cigarettes mirrors the cup on the left of the picture.

**Jessica Dismorr** [1885–1939)

**Composition**
c.1935
Oil on card
Ömer Koç Collection

Dismorr had been an early abstract artist and member of the Vorticist Group before the First World War. Whilst her 1920s works were more figurative, this still life marks the period in which she took the path back to abstraction. The flatness of the vessels and the restricted colour palette anticipate the abstract forms in her paintings and collages in the later 1930s. This change in her work aligned Dismorr with the international avant-garde, in opposition to the rise of nationalism in Europe in the 1930s.

**Ben Nicholson** [1894–1982)

**Still Life, 1934**
1934
Oil on canvas
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester
On Loan from a Private Collection (2015)

Alongside producing purely abstract work in the 1930s, Nicholson incorporated figurative elements into his paintings. Although this work suggests a still life on a tabletop, Nicholson's use of blocks of colour rejects any sense of depth. In the early 1930s, he visited abstract artist Piet Mondrian's studio in Paris. Through his interest in Mondrian's work, Nicholson began to think about the balance of colour within a painting
to create space.

**Ben Nicholson** [1894–1982)

**1946 (still life, cerulean)**
1946
Oil on canvas over board
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester
Kearley Bequest, through Art Fund (1989)

In the immediate post-war years, colour and form were the main subject of Ben Nicholson's art. In this painting, the opaque colours of the densely clustered objects contrast with the stone-grey ground to create a sense of space. The interplay of different areas is created by including a curtain on the left-hand side. These sharp-edged colours, including the sky-blue 'cerulean' of the title, look collaged rather than painted.

**Ben Nicholson** [1894–1982)

**1943–45 (St Ives, Cornwall)**
1943–45
Oil and graphite on canvas
Tate: Purchased 1945

Whilst Nicholson's move to St Ives during the Second World War signalled a return to figuration in his landscape scenes, here the arrangement of jugs and cups in the foreground reveal his renewed interest in the relationship between objects in space. The painting was reworked in 1945, Nicholson adding a Union Jack as a gesture to celebrate V.E. Day and the end of the war.

**Barbara Hepworth** [1903–1975)

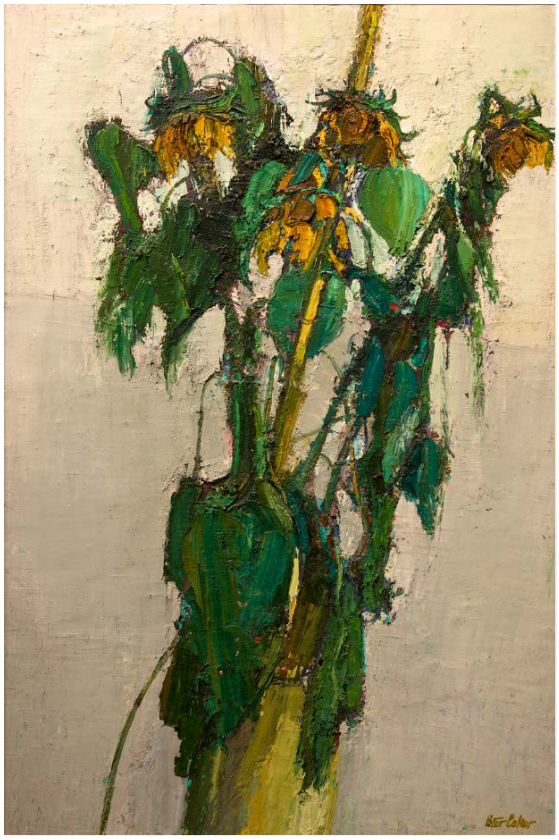
**Conoid, Sphere and Hollow III**
1937
Marble
UK Government Art Collection

This work was made three years after the birth of Hepworth's triplets in 1934. Much of her sculpture at this time explored the spatial relationship between three forms, and how this could symbolise human relationships. Whilst this work was carved directly from marble, Hepworth would often use objects and containers you would find at home such as cups and bowls as models for casting in plaster for her sculptures.

Pallant House Gallery

# The Shape of Things: Still Life in Britain

## Room 15



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## Death, Decay and Postwar Austerity

The Second World War (1939_45) brought unprecedented death and destruction with 384,000 British soldiers killed in combat and the death of 70,000 civilians, largely in bombing raids on British towns and cities. Even after the conflict ended, rationing of food and fuel continued for almost a decade until 1954.

Death and decay were dominant themes in 1940s and 1950s British art as artists reflected on the effects of war and the existential anxiety that followed. Artists referenced the ‘memento mori’ (a reminder of the inevitability of death that was common in the 17th century) in artworks depicting skulls, lifeless animals and wilting flowers.

After the lifting of international travel restrictions in the late 1940s, artists John Craxton, Lucian Freud and John Minton escaped the harsh realities and austerity of postwar Britain, to seek warmth, light and culinary riches in the Mediterranean.

**Madame Yevonde** [1893–1975)
**Crisis (A.R.P.)**
1939
Reproduction of a tri-colour separation negative
National Portrait Gallery, London

As the likelihood of war with Germany increased, in 1937 the British government passed the Air Raid Precautions Act (ARP) to prepare local authorities for air attacks. It was thought that poison gas might be used by the Nazis, and soon gas masks were issued to the population. This striking vision of the bust of the Roman emperor Julius Caesar captures the menace, resolve and resignation felt with the outbreak of war. Madame Yevonde was a pioneer of colour photography; the bright red geranium petals prefigure the bloodshed of war.

**William Roberts** [1895–1980)
**La Nature Morte**
c.1948
Watercolour on paper
Museum & Art Swindon

In this studio scene, an artist is busy painting a still life of a skull, this most archetypal of ‘memento mori’ objects, and a bottle of Bass Ale, a popular motif seen in the work of artists like Édouard Manet and Pablo Picasso. The background is filled with the picture of a nude couple, caught in an amorous act. In his comical association of lovemaking with the grinning skull, Roberts reminds us that the antidote to death is life.

**Edward Burra** [1905–1976)
**Still Life with Teeth**
1946
Pencil, watercolour and gouache on paper
Private European Collection

Under Edward Burra's hand, still life takes an unsettling turn. The fruits are swollen and bright with over-ripeness. Everyday items like a penknife, butter knife and a fork have the sinister allure of weapons, whilst others are no longer fit for purpose: the cup and dentures are chipped and the shoe is missing laces. Painted shortly after the Second World War, this scene is one of surreal abandonment reinforced by the stormy clouds and deserted street in the background.

**Valentine Dobrée** [1894–1974)
**Composition with Skull and Shells**
n.d.
Oil on board
University of Leeds Art Collection

The skull, the archetypal ‘memento mori’ motif, held a deep resonance postwar. Dobrée had particular interest in the ‘found object’ and its relationship to our subconscious and the perception of form. She said: ‘There is a place in our lives for small pictures; just as the ‘found object’ held in one’s hand gives a special perception of form, so a small picture can respond to a mood or a phase… Looked at in stillness hidden forms take shape; and forms, like words, have their references, haunted by experience, extending into a half-conscious dream world.’

**John Craxton** [1922–2009)
**Hare on a Table**
1944–46
Oil on canvas
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester
On Loan from the John Craxton Estate

Dead game has long been a subject of still life: symbolically charged with the reminder of death, but also an expression of wealth and status at periods when meat was reserved to the ruling class. Painted in wartime and during food rationing, this hare acquires a particular resonance. Craxton saw in this animal – formerly agile and bouncing, now reduced to a lifeless corpse – a representation of himself, trapped in locked-down Britain during the Second World War. He completed the painting as the war ended and, the borders reopened, he was free to escape to warmer shores.

**Lucian Freud** [1922–2011)
**Unripe Tangerine**
1946–47
Oil on board
Wilson Loan (2006)

After the war, Lucian Freud followed his friend John Craxton to Greece in search of Mediterranean light.. Painted on the island of Poros, this diminutive work of cool, blueish tones, calls for a double-take: the unripe fruit is as unlike a tangerine as one can imagine for the word instantly conjures a bright orange. With clear precision, Freud captured all the pits and bumps on the fruit's skin.

**Lawrence Gowing** [1918–1991)
**Still Life: Vanitas**
1979
Oil on canvas
Lent by the Royal Academy of Arts, London

The fractured perspective of this picture was inspired by Lawrence Gowing breaking a shaving mirror in the 1970s which showed his reflection from different angles. The painting reveals Gowing's admiration for Paul Cezanne in the rendering of the shadows in colour; the play with perception in the dual vision; and the simple wood table. Skull and mortar are about painting; the skull as the indispensable studio prop (Cezanne kept several in his studio) and object of focus in art schools; the mortar as a tool for crushing pigments.

**Peter Coker** [1926–2004)
**Sunflowers**
1961
Oil on board
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester
Bequest of Mrs Vera Coker in memory of Peter Coker (2014)

This is the last of three oil paintings of sunflowers by Peter Coker executed between 1958 and 1961. These flowers grew in abundance in the garden at Coker's London home but once he moved to Essex in 1962, they would not take to the soil. Unlike the sunflowers in full bloom by Vincent van Gogh, an artist Coker greatly admired, this painting concentrates on the majestic plants at the end of their lives, in the process of decay with limp hanging leaves. The handling of paint is thick and multi-directional, lending a heavy solidity to the drooping forms.

**Michael Ayrton** [1921–1975)
**Black Still Life, Ram Skull III**
1959
Oil on board
Private Collection

In wartime, Michael Ayrton painted an animal skull in an apocalyptic landscape. Although less dramatic, this painting retains the unsettling tone particular to Ayrton. The skull is set amid white objects emerging out of darkness so deep that it feels solid, the gestural dripping of paint lending the work texture and relief. Ayrton said of still life 'those two words imply an undercurrent of meaning at once poignant and vital, suggesting objects … curiously related to each other, silent, composed in tranquil, even ominous association. Alive, even lying in wait for the spectator'.

**Keith Vaughan** [1912–1977)
**Still Life with Skull**
1952–53
Oil on canvas
Collection of Antony Wright, London

Best-known for his figure paintings, Keith Vaughan fleetingly engaged with the genre of still life in the early 1950s. At this time Vaughan looked closely at the work of Pablo Picasso and Paul Cezanne, and this work quotes directly from the post-impressionist artist's painting 'Still Life with Skull' (1898). The skull, as a perfect expression of the body turned object suited Vaughan's unsentimental approach to the inevitability of death, a subject which recurs in his journal.

Paul Cezanne [1839–1906)

Still Life with Skull, 1898

Oil on canvas

Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia, PA, US

**Prunella Clough** [1919–1999)
**Dead Plants in a Greenhouse**
1947
Oil on canvas
Private Collection of Amanda Posey & Nick Hornby

Prunella Clough's work is characterised by a quietly intense observation of her surroundings. The focus appears to be two root vegetables, which are presented in a matter-of-fact way with collapsing organic matter that lies flat and lifeless, yet monumental. But in the background Clough includes a small, nondescript figure busying herself. Reviewing Clough's 1949 solo exhibition in which this painting was shown, Patrick Heron commented: 'Nothing could be calmer or – almost – more self-effacing than these truly accomplished paintings of still life'.

**Prunella Clough** [1919–1999)

**Bone Drawing**
1949
Oil on board
Private Collection

With a restrained colour palette, Clough focuses on the primeval solidity of this found object. Her attention to its structure and bleached surface betrays her interest in sculpture (the discipline she had studied before the war). This painting already shows the predilection for texture and subtle gradation of colour that would mark her later, more abstract work. As the art critic John Berger observed in 1953, ‘above all, she is interested in the material, the density, the tactile “feel” of the objects she paints’.

**Henry Moore** [1898–1989)

**Elephant Skull**
1969
Etching on paper, 48/100
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester
Hussey Bequest, Chichester District Council (1985)

In 1969, Henry Moore started work on a series of etchings based on an elephant's skull he kept in his studio. He recalled, 'The first day I drew the whole skull to find out its general construction: gradually I became amazed at the complexity of it, and my interest and excitement grew greater each day I worked. By bringing the skull very close to me and drawing various details I found so many contrasts of form and shape that I could begin to see in it great deserts and rocky landscape'.

**CASE:**

**John Minton** [1917–1957)

**Cover design for *A Book of Mediterranean Food* by Elizabeth David**

Published by John Lehmann, 1950

Private collection

**John Minton** [1917–1957)

**Cover design for *French Country Cooking* by Elizabeth David**

Published by John Lehmann, 1951

Private collection

Like Lucian Freud and John Craxton before him, in the late 1940s, John Minton sought to escape the harsh reality of postwar Britain in the Mediterranean. A prolific and influential book illustrator, he worked with John Lehmann who published Elizabeth David's cookery books. These books were greatly successful, despite inviting British readers to experiment with recipes that were far out of their reach in rationed Britain. Minton's vividly coloured table spread on the cover of *A Book of Mediterranean Food* depicts an enviable abundance, while the cover *French Country Cooking* presents a kitchen well-stocked with utensils, promising hearty cuisine.

**Val Biro (Balint Stephen Biro)** [1921–2014)

**Cover for *The New York International Cookery Book* by Maria Lo Pinto**

Published by John Lehmann, 1953

Private Collection

Val Biro grew up in Budapest before moving to Britain shortly before the outbreak of war in 1939. He became a successful book illustrator, producing the covers of hundreds of books from 1944. Where some British readers sought escape across the Channel, others looked across the Atlantic to the American way of life. Maria Lo Pinto's compilation of 300 international dishes found on New York tables tells the story of the generations of migrants who have made a new life far from home: success stories like Biro's own. The illustrator evokes an Italian restaurant in Brooklyn, with a view of Manhattan's skyscrapers out of the window.

Pallant House Gallery

## The Shape of Things: Still Life in Britain

## Room 16

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## Abundance and
## Consumer Culture

In the 17th and 18th centuries still life paintings often featured lavish presentations of rare and expensive foods. In the decades that followed the end of rationing in the early 1950s, British pop artists focussed once again on images of plentiful food. Often these were inspired by the idealistic abundance that was prevalent in American advertising during that period and began to influence the aspirations of British households.

Blurring the boundaries between ‘high’ and ‘low’ art, artists used the language of consumer persuasion to present modern brands and packaging that, in theory, were available to all. Whilst Eduardo Paolozzi collaged found American advertisements, David Hockney painted a box of the British tea Typhoo, and Richard Hamilton emulated the appearance of adverts by German company, Braun. In presenting false teeth on an electric toothbrush, Hamilton channelled the conceptual artist Marcel Duchamp’s ‘readymade’ artworks, and in a similar way, decades later, ‘Young British Artist’ Gavin Turk subverts our expectations of a found artwork with his bin bag cast in bronze.
Contemporary artist Maisie Cousins leads us to question the idea that our well-being and success relies on wanting and having more, having witnessed the impact of excessive

consumerism on the planet.

**Maisie Cousins** [b.1992)

**Sweet Chilli Sauce**

2018
Archival pigment print on
Hahnemühle Pearl paper
Courtesy the Artist and TJ Boulting

**Maisie Cousins** [b.1992)

**Wasp**
2017
Archival pigment print on
Hahnemühle Pearl paper
Courtesy the artist and TJ Boulting

Maisie Cousin's saturated images of congealing rubbish occupy a space between attraction and revulsion with regards to indulgent consumption. They feature extreme close-ups of plastic bags, takeaway boxes, rotting flowers and food. The wasp, often an unwanted guest at picnics, is reproduced here in glorious blown-up detail. Borrowing from the glamour of commercial photography, Cousins destabilises the contrast between disgust and beauty in her work.

**Peter Blake** [b.1932)

**Love**

2007
Enamel, wood and found objects on panel
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester
Accepted under the Cultural Gifts Scheme by
HM Government from Lorna Dunphy and
allocated to Pallant House Gallery (2018)

Peter Blake's use of collage, which began in the late 1950s, responds to his engagement with the increasing abundance of visual imagery and mass-produced objects in contemporary life. This work acts like a Valentine's card to Blake's favourite subjects – pop music, American culture, childhood – represented through souvenir objects such as pin badges, crushed drinks cans and toy cars.

**Eduardo Paolozzi** [1924–2005)

**Meet the People**

**Refreshing and Delicious**
From **Bunk! a portfolio**
1947–72
Lithographs on paper
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester
Wilson Gift through Art Fund (2006)

Paolozzi first presented his *Bunk!* collages as a lecture performance at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London in 1952. Using only a projector, Paolozzi presented consecutive images taken from postcards, magazine clippings and science fiction comics, demonstrating his fascination with American culture. These collages were later reproduced in lithographs as a portfolio. They explore how new forms of domesticity were being advertised in the post war period, particularly to women. Convenience products referenced here include Coca Cola, Real Gold lemon juice and tinned tuna.

**Richard Hamilton** [1922–2011)

**The Critic Laughs**

1968
Laminated screenprint and lithograph
with collage and hand additions
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester
Wilson Gift through Art Fund (2006)

In this work, Richard Hamilton uses the language of advertising to critique the art establishment and the commodification of the artist who is at the mercy of art critics. The title makes reference to *The Critic Smiles* (1959), a sculpture by American proto-Pop artist Jasper Johns depictinga toothbrush mounted with embossed lead teeth. Like his hero Marcel Duchamp, Hamilton uses a found 'readymade' – in this case a Braun electric toothbrush. *The Critic Laughs* is a unique take on the 'memento mori', alluding to the death of an artist's reputation.

**Colin Self** [b.1941)

**The Fishy Tale of the Battered Still Life**

1987
Multimedia collage
Private Collection

Colin Self often incorporates detritus into his collages. The images of fish were taken from the wrappings used at chip shops, the clouds from paper cloths found in his mother's kitchen, and the salt and paper shakers from a rubbish tip. This still-life collage serves as a family portrait, the photograph of Pablo Picasso representing Self as the artist.

**John Bratby** [1928–1992)

**Still Life with Chip Frier**

1954
Oil on canvas
Tate: Presented by the
Contemporary Art Society 1956

This painting demonstrates the social realist approach of the ‘kitchen sink’ painters, a group of artists who encapsulated the experience of post war Britain through their depiction of domestic objects. It is a shift away from traditional representations of food in still life towards a record of commercial brands such as Colman’s mustard, Saxa Table Salt and Kellogg’s cornflakes. The claustrophobic atmosphere of the work suggests an air of discomfort around this new form of domestic living.

**Lisa Milroy** [b.1959)

**Plates No. 1**

2018–23
Oil on canvas
Courtesy of the artist and Kate MacGarry, London

Lisa Milroy's paintings often depict collections of personal everyday objects, such as shoes, records or clothing. The repetition and minimal background seem to anonymise the objects, but each item is painted individually, with appreciation and attention. Here, the food left on plates could signal the memory of a meal shared and enjoyed. Milroy's practice is concerned with an engagement with time, which informs both her method of painting and her approach to still life – a term which can be defined by both stillness and movement.

**Patrick Caulfield** [1936–2005)

**Coloured Still Life**

1967
Acrylic on panel
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester
Accepted in lieu of Inheritance Tax by
HM Government from the estate of
MJ Long / Wilson and allocated to
Pallant House Gallery (2021)

Still life is a significant theme in Patrick Caulfield's work. His iconic and brightly coloured canvases reinvigorated the genre in the 1960s. In 1967, Editions Alecto commissioned a set of six screenprints on a still-life theme from Caulfield, one of which was based on this painting. Although the painting is made by hand, the strongly demarcated outlines and large areas of saturated colour are influenced by advertising and commercial billboards.

**Patrick Caulfield** [1936–2005)

**Reserved Table**

2000
Acrylic on canvas
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester
Wilson Gift through Art Fund (2006)

*Reserved Table* is a witty response to a 17th century Dutch still-life by Willem Kalf, dominated by a lobster. Restaurant interiors gave Caulfield the opportunity to combine his interest with the formal arrangement of objects, with his fascination with the imagery of the tourist industry, as well as art historical references. From the 1960s onwards, Caulfield would often exchange his artworks for credit at the most fashionable restaurants in London.

Willem Kalf [1619–1693)

*Still Life with the Drinking Horn of the Saint Sebastian Archers' Guild, Lobster and Glasses*

c.1653, Oil on canvas

The National Gallery, London

(Bequeathed by R.S. Newall, 1978)

**Patrick Caulfield** [1936–2005)

**Kellerbar**
1997
Acrylic on canvas
Accepted in lieu of Inheritance Tax by
HM Government from the estate of
MJ Long / Wilson and allocated to
Pallant House Gallery (2021)

In his later paintings, Patrick Caulfield started to incorporate photorealistic elements (such as the German tankard mug here) against a more abstracted background, thus playing with the distinctions between reality and artifice. He said, 'I like pubs, restaurants and food. Public interiors have been created to offer a certain fantasy, to make people happy.' Caulfield recreates this fantasy through the use of kitsch imagery found on the jug, associated with holiday postcards and brochures.

**David Hockney** [b.1937)

**Tea Painting in an Illusionistic Style**
1961
Oil on canvas
Tate: Purchased with assistance
from the Art Fund 1996

David Hockney's choice to stretch the canvas in the shape of a tea packet was radical at the time. This reference to the real three-dimensional object reveals the artificiality of the reproduced image. His studio, with tea packets piled up among tubes of paint, surrounded by postcards, pictures of Cliff Richard and newspaper clippings pinned to the walls, provided the inspiration for the painting.

**Gavin Turk** [b.1967)

**Dump**
2004
Painted bronze
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester
Accepted under the Cultural Gifts Scheme
by HM Government from Frank Dunphy and
allocated to Pallant House Gallery (2018)

Gavin Turk's practice looks to question the function of the artist in terms of creativity, originality and authority. Here Turk recreates a plastic rubbish bag in bronze, thereby making waste precious through an expensive material. In doing so, Turk questions the commodity value of objects and works of art. For Turk, 'We are what we throw away. If the secret services or whatever are trying to make a portrait of someone, they go through their rubbish and can learn everything about them.'

**Jann Haworth** [b.1942)

**Donuts, Coffee Cups and Comic**
1962
Fabric, thread and kapok
Wolverhampton Art Gallery

Jann Haworth's approach to mass-produced objects differs from her male counterparts, through her use of sewing and references to quilt-making. Her revolutionary handmade soft sculptures present a wry satire on the mechanised ways consumer goods are sold. Doughnuts are a recurrent subject in her work, inspired by the breakfast she would buy at The Big Donut Drive in North Hollywood when she was a teenager. For Haworth, they represented her displacement as a Californian in London and a comical take on the serious genre of still life.

Pallant House Gallery

# The Shape of Things: Still Life in Britain

## Room 17

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## Stillness and Reflection

By its nature, still life is often concerned with slow looking and close observation. In our busy lives it can provide an opportunity to pause, to look and to think.

For some artists, such as Rachel Whiteread, Edmund de Waal and Jane Simpson, the negative spaces between objects can be as important as the objects themselves. The casting of objects, or negative spaces, is a reminder of the spaces they occupy in our lives.

Artists like Elizabeth Blackadder and Charlotte Verity use plants from their own gardens for inspiration, whilst Jean Cooke's flowers are evocative of hope and resilience. Duncan Grant painted domestic tableware arranged in his studio at Charleston Farmhouse in Sussex, a space that over 60 years later Poppy Jones has used as the setting for her contemplative staged images. The life of objects reveals our own. They ultimately represent us and contain us, as tangible fragments of ourselves.

The scrutiny of the familiar through still life invites mindful close looking, to find beauty and meaning in the mundane, and calmness in the absorption of the everyday. Life is fragile and fleeting but it is also beautiful.

**Euan Uglow** [1932–2000)

**Duck**
1965
Oil on panel
Private Collection

Euan Uglow's two-toned painting focuses on the weight and limpness of a single object. Uglow did not linger on detail but saw balance, proportion and perspective as the most important elements of a painting. His *Duck* is not about death, but stillness, paint and light. Uglow does not conceal the laborious, mathematical precision of his working method as traces of his proportional measurements remain. Neither polished nor invisible, the heavy brushstrokes are no less controlled, systematically applied.

Jean Baptiste Oudry [1686–1755)

*The White Duck*

1753, Oil on canvas

Stolen from Houghton Hall, Norfolk, 1992

**Duncan Grant** [1885–1978)

**Still Life with Black Coffee Pot**
1949
Oil on canvas
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester
Acquired with support from the Arts Council England / V&A Purchase Grant Fund, Cate Olson and Nash Robbins, and legacies from Margaret Treacher Brown and Lady Heath, 2024

This painting differs from Duncan Grant's earlier still lifes which were more abstract in form and strongly influenced by post-impressionism. Painted in the artist's studio at Charleston farmhouse in East Sussex, which he shared with Vanessa Bell, the objects are placed on an Indian cushion cover on top of a bookcase, which can still be seen at the house today. The patterned cloth grounds the objects within the composition, typical of Grant's consideration of colour, shape and form as a harmonious whole.

**Stanley Spencer** [1891–1959)

**Amaryllis**
1951
Oil on canvas
Private Collection, courtesy of Daniel Katz Gallery

Stanley Spencer first painted this amaryllis in a portrait of Dr Winifred Augusta Frank, a practising psychiatrist. Enchanted by the flower, Spencer returned to Frank's house to paint it in full bloom. It symbolises love and sacrifice, stemming from the ancient Greek myth in which the maiden Amaryllis falls in love with the shepherd Alteo. Alteo would only return her love if she could present him with a flower he had never seen before. Amaryllis shed her blood for Alteo for 30 nights, until one morning a crimson flower grew at her feet.

**Jean Cooke** [1927–2008)

**Through the Looking Glass**
1960
Oil on canvas
Lent by the Royal Academy of Arts, London

The flowers on a ledge lead us to Jean Cooke's small self-portrait in the mirror. This still life was likely painted in her studio, Cooke's haven in the house she shared with her abusive husband John Bratby. The title recalls the sequel to *Alice in Wonderland*, where Alice climbs through a mirror into a world where everything is reversed. This is one of few paintings from that period that survived; Bratby was in the habit of destroying or painting over Cooke's work. The small tortoise and the beauty Cooke instils in the flowers symbolise resilience and hope.

**Mary Fedden** [1915–2012)

**Still Life with Artichoke**
1972
Oil on canvas
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester
Percy Brown Bequest (1996)

Celebrated for her colourful still lifes, Mary Fedden trained at the Slade School of Fine Art where she recalled ‘bright colours were not encouraged’. But, being taught by Valdimir Polunin, the set designer for the Ballets Russes, colour and modernism had a significant impact on her work and she forged her own distinctive path. Fedden spent much of her life teaching and became the first woman tutor in the Painting School at the Royal College of Art with David Hockney amongst her students.

**Charlotte Verity** [b.1954)

**Spent Stems**
2014
Oil on canvas
Charlotte Verity

Charlotte Verity finds inspiration in her garden. Bringing the outside into the abstracted space of her studio, Verity closely observes her garden flowers' every detail, the particularity of their structure, how they respond to light. Although painted slowly, over weeks and sometimes months, her still lifes seize the fleeting nature of the organic elements they depict. Exploring the passing of time through seasonal cycles, her paintings expand on wider themes of reflection and mindfulness.

**Elizabeth Blackadder** [1931–2021)

**Cat and Flowers**
1981
Watercolour on paper
Fleming Wyfold Art Foundation

From a young age, Elizabeth Blackadder was fascinated with flowers. She collected, pressed and catalogued them in albums. Her gardenprovided important inspiration for her lyrical still life paintings. Blackadder typically arranges her compositions on a flat, undefined background which draws our attention to the particularities of each flower. The snoozing cat adds to the tranquillity of the scene while the folded fan and cloths embroidered with colourful geometric patterns, objects probably acquired during her many travels, speak of her curiosity for the world.

**David Hockney** [b.1937)

**Postcard of Richard Wagner**
**and a Glass of Water**
1973
Etching on paper
The University of Chichester - Special Collections

David Hockney's profound connection to music plays an important role in his work. He has a particular fondness for the operas of the 19th century German composer Richard Wagner, which inspired him over the years. Here, Hockney has playfully distorted Wagner's face with a glass of water, perhaps a comment on conceptual art at the time. A master in printmaking, Hockney makes full use of the fluidity and spontaneity of line allowed by the medium of etching.

**Rachel Whiteread** [b.1963)

**Untitled (For Frank)**
1999
Plaster, polystyrene and steel in three parts
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester
Accepted under the Cultural Gifts Scheme
by HM Government from Frank Dunphy and
allocated to Pallant House Gallery, 2018

The imprint of bookshelves, their volumes felt in reverse, the symbols of a well-read life, is suggestive of what is not there: the reader. The porous plaster has absorbed pigments and dust impregnated within the spines and the pages' edges. The absent books are objects that have been leafed through. Their pages are dog-eared, the covers warmed by the touch of hands, fingers turning the pages. The empty space is pregnant with presence, that of the book's invisible words.

**Jane Simpson** [b.1965)

**Our Distant Relatives**
2004
Silicone rubber, glass, wood
and polyester lacquer
UK Government Art Collection

Jane Simpson's work evokes human interactions, how we are affected by the mood of others and contact with them. Like a family portrait, vessels of different sizes, shapes and ceramic styles, represent several generations and relationships. The vessels are made of rubber rather than clay, and quiver in response to the footsteps of people walking nearby. Their instability is relatable.
Clustered together, they react in unison. They are spirited and seem to place their wrists on their waist, as if in disapproval, or tilt their head to better listen.

**Rodrigo Moynihan** [1910–1990)

**White Plastic Container**
**behind Plywood Board**
1973
Oil on canvas
Private collection

In the 1970s, Rodrigo Moynihan embarked on a series of luminous studio still lifes. Early in his career, Moynihan had been a pioneer in abstract art, with works of gestural qualities whose subject was painting itself. Here he focuses on artists' tools and materials, painted as he found them rather than artfully arranged. This large-scale canvas distils elements from his earlier work with a muted colour palette, minimalism and sense of perspective and proportion to denote stillness.

**Edmund de Waal** [b.1964)

**September Song, II**
2020
Porcelain, gilded porcelain, alabaster,
aluminum and plexiglass, in 5 parts
Courtesy the artist and Gagosian

In the past two decades Edmund de Waal has created monumental installations with hundreds of pots arranged with sophisticated rhythm. In comparison, the succinctness of *September Song, II* has a lyrical quality. Together, each of the four objects takes on its own materiality; opacity, glimmer and translucency. They reveal de Waal's profound engagement with materials: the alabaster's subtle sheen; the gold absorbing and reflective.

**Alison Watt** [b.1965)

**Walpole**
2009
Oil on canvas
Private Collection

*Walpole* is part of a series inspired by the work of 18th century portraitist Allan Ramsay, in which Alison Watt extracted details from Ramsay's paintings to reflect on how objects are imbued with human presence. Here Watt focuses on a linen handkerchief, capturing the lace edgework, the fold creases, the weight of the fabric. Lifted from its owner's body, made into still life, the fabric still carries the sitter with it and invites us to contemplate the fragility of existence.

**Poppy Jones** [b.1985)

**Water Glass & Thistle**
2024
Oil and watercolour on suede,
soldered aluminium frame
Courtesy of the artist and Herald St, London

Set in the winter Sussex light, Poppy Jones's piece calls for a moment of pause. A thistle, its spiny leaves rendered in crisp detail, rests on an open illustrated book. Together with a half-full glass, it awaits the return of the reader. The parchment-like quality of the image lends the scene a nostalgic aura. Dream-like, as if arrested in time, it could have been made at the beginning of the last century.

**Rachel Whiteread** [b.1963)

**Untitled (Pink Torso)**
1991
Pink dental plaster and wax
Private Collection

Rachel Whiteread is interested in the space within, between and around objects, to which she gives form in plaster. Here, the object - a hot water bottle - becomes body. The void within is made solid, replacing the body it is designed to comfort to signal its implied presence. Plaster is a ubiquitous material in art schools, but it is also humble, common, absorbent and absorbing. In Whiteread's hands plaster becomes a blank canvas to explore the profundity of life.

Pallant House Gallery

# The Shape of Things: Still Life in Britain

## Room 10.2

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## Still Life Now

Far from being a subject of art that is confined to the past, still life continues to offer a fertile ground for formal, intellectual and emotional inquiry. Contemporary artists may engage with a historic tradition but they also push boundaries, breaking out of the picture plane and challenging expectations, in order to comment on the issues facing society today.

In its contradictory name, ‘still’ vs. ‘life’, we are reminded that something can be two things at once. Artists’ investigations of the genre touch on the tension between pleasure and pain, vulnerability and resilience, anxiety and hope.

Through still life, artists can address some of the big questions concerning the human condition and grapple with the most pressing issues of our time, from illness or domestic violence to the legacies of colonialism and the impact of climate change.

But still life can also be a means to express and elicit joy.

It is a dynamic genre, one that can fluidly navigate geographical boundaries, move us emotionally and stimulate our senses.

**Maggi Hambling** [b.1945)

**Cuddling Skulls**
1995
Oil on canvas
Collection of the artist

In 1993, Maggi Hambling travelled to Mexico.
She found that, far from the taboo, out-of-sight and behind-closed-doors attitude to death in Britain, in Mexican culture, ‘death seems to be a friend rather than an enemy. It’s so visibly celebrated’. Death is embraced as part of life. But death is also a necessary part of art. In an interview, Hambling revealed that ‘[Francis] Bacon always said he thought of death every day. I think any serious artist bears it in mind all the time’.

**Anna Fox** [b.1961)

**My Mother's Cupboards**
**and My Father's Words**
1999
C-type colour prints
The Hyman Collection
Courtesy Centre for British Photography

These photographs are from a photobook by Anna Fox, which combines the abusive outbursts of her ailing father with images of her mother's neatly organised cupboards. Whilst the pictures of stacked linens and medications evoke a sense of order, this is destabilised by the absurdity and violence in her father's insults. It is an intimate and resilient portrait of a family told through everyday items such as cleaning products and a baby's highchair.

**Clare Woods** [b.1972)

**Motionless**
2022
Oil on aluminium
Courtesy artist and
Cristea Roberts Gallery, London

Clare Woods frequently engages with the history of still life. The title, *Motionless*, is a play on words with ‘still life’. The painting is derived from a photograph of a mid-19th century Staffordshire Mochaware jug with banded decoration that had been owned by both William Nicholson and his son Ben Nicholson, who painted both realist and abstract renditions of it. Woods’ paintings on aluminium are built with layer-upon-layer of oil in loose, gestural brushstrokes that present both painting and subject as physical objects.

**Hurvin Anderson** [b.1965)

**Still Life with Artificial Flowers**
2018
Screenprint on paper
Courtesy the artist and Thomas Dane Gallery

In 2018, Hurvin Anderson was commissioned to create a print on the theme of ‘Britain’ for display in diplomatic buildings. Anderson recreated a view of his mother’s front room in Birmingham. His parents were part of the ‘Windrush’ generation, and the glass vase is one of his mother’s most prized possessions, which travelled with her from Jamaica. A personal work, Anderson’s print is also about collective history, citizenship and what it takes to make a home.

**Caroline Walker** [b.1982)

**My Bottles and Pumps**
2024
Oil on board
Courtesy the artist; Stephen Friedman Gallery, London and New York; GRIMM Gallery and
Ingleby Gallery, Edinburgh

For centuries, maternal devotion has been depicted with women cradling children, infants suckling at the breast. Caroline Walker's quietly matter of fact still life is a picture of contemporary motherhood. In the breast-pumping apparatus and baby feeding paraphernalia skillfully rendered in loose, milky oil brushstrokes, Walker evokes the realities of juggling parental care, paid work and other responsibilities. Many viewers will recognise here a moment of calm, perhaps even solitude, in the ritualistic, meticulous washing of each implement, soaped, sterilised in boiling water, and then carefully laid out on a dish-drying rack.

**Jo Spence** [1934–1992)

**The Final Project [Shrine]**
1991–92
Digital print from medium format negative
The Estate of Jo Spence, Courtesy of
Richard Saltoun Gallery, London and Rome

In her work, Jo Spence offered her personal experience to reflect on how illness and death are treated in society. This strategy formed part of her 'photo-therapy' – a term Spence coined to describe the healing effects of photography. Spence's last series of photographs, 'The Final Project' is the artist's stoic response to her terminal cancer diagnosis. By referencing cultures in which death is celebrated, the work asks us to consider the 'unrepresentable.' This photograph acts as a kind of memorial: it combines Spence's cameras, as extensions of the artist's self, with objects of sentimental significance.

**Grayson Perry** [b.1960)

**Let the Little Children Suffer**
c.1986
Ceramic plate
Private Collection, Courtesy England & Co.

Grayson Perry is known for blending storytelling with exquisite craftsmanship. Not shying away from difficult subjects, his work is an incisive commentary on British society and politics, often drawing inspiration from the news or popular culture. Here a disturbing scene of lynching is paired with a magnificent bouquet of flowers. The inscription around the rim evokes a verse in the Bible as well as a controversial 1984 song by the British rockband The Smiths about the infamous Moors murders in the 1960s.

**Damien Hirst** [b.1965)

**Bognor Blue**
2008
Butterflies and household gloss paint on canvas
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester
Accepted under the Cultural Gifts Scheme by
HM Government from Frank Dunphy and
allocated to Pallant House Gallery (2018)

Damien Hirst's works examine the complex relationship between art and beauty, and life and death. Hirst has said: 'I think I've got an obsession with death, but I think it's like a celebration of life rather than something morbid. You can't have one without the other'. Since his first exhibition in the early 1990s, butterflies have been a recurring theme in his work. Representing mortality, they are traditionally symbolic of fragility and ephemerality, but also rebirth and hope.

**Mona Hatoum** [b.1952)

**Natura morta (medical cabinet)**
2012
Murano mirrored glass, steel and glass cabinet
Courtesy of Mona Hatoum Foundation

Much of Mona Hatoum's work speaks of brutal conflicts. Here, a clinical stainless-steel cabinet is laden with colourful handblown Murano glass pieces shaped like hand grenades. Conflating the fragility of glass with the brutality of war is only one of an unsettling set of dualities that lend the work its potency: medicine (healing) and grenade (death); the straight shelves and the curves of the grenades; the candy colours and the darkness of war; the minimalist aesthetic and the messiness of conflict; body fragility and state violence; seductive and threatening.

**Mohammed Sami** [b.1984)

**Sunday**
2019
Acrylic on linen
Courtesy the Artist and Private Collection

Mohammed Sami's paintings of everyday objects and interior scenes reflect upon the experience of trauma, memory and migration. His paintings often have a charged atmosphere, occupying both real and imagined spaces. The interplay between shadow and light is particularly important in *Sunday*. The troubling light and colour, the sinister shadows cast by the tree outside the window and the double motif of a noose-like blind cord, perhaps signify events that might have happened here.

**Anthea Hamilton** [b.1978)

**Wild Food**
2012
Digital print on shantung dupion silk,
silk viscose, leather, string, wood
Private Collection, London

Anthea Hamilton uses the kimono as a tool to tie different ideas together, creating extraordinary and surreal compositions. The lush burdock leaves printed onto the silk replicate the theatrical impact of Juan Sánchez Cotán's *Quince, Cabbage, Melon and Cucumber* (c.1602), a recurring reference in Hamilton's work. She is particularly interested in the mathematical precision in the arrangement of the fruits and vegetables, and the ways in which they are suspended and balanced by each other.

Juan Sánchez Cotán [1560–1627)

*Quince, Cabbage, Melon and Cucumber*

c.1602, Oil on canvas

San Diego Museum of Art

**Marc Quinn** [b.1964)

**Orchid, The Overwhelming World of Desire (Paphiopedilum Winston Churchill Hybrid)**
2002
Photographic image on steel
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester
Purchased with support from Art Fund and
John Ayton MBE and John Booth (2019)

Orchids are one of the largest families of flowering plants in the world, and the majority sold today are artificially created hybrids. This particular hybrid, first registered in England in 1951, mixes South Asian species. As well as alluding to associations of desire and death in Greco-Roman mythology, Marc Quinn's choice of subject also concerns the bio-politics of control and classification. His exploration of modified plant species can be seen to draw troubling parallels between the colonial impulse to order and categorise the natural world, and social or genetic engineering.

**Mike Silva** [b.1970)

**Window Light**
2023
Oil on canvas
Courtesy of the artist and The Approach

Mike Silva's melancholy *Window Light* expresses a kind of longing. As with his other works based on 1990s photographs shot by the artist, this painting has him decades later reflecting on moments gone and the relationships these conjure up. While the focus is on the houseplant with its graceful silhouette clearly detached against a sun-drenched curtain, the real protagonist here is the light. Like memory, light can be equally fleeting and affecting. Here it endows the scene with warmth, the sheltered intimacy of an enclosed, domestic space.

**Wolfgang Tillmans** [b.1968)

**Hampstead still life**
2020
Inkjet print
Maureen Paley, London

Wolfgang Tillmans' photograph evokes lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic, a time of heightened awareness – of human mortality, of one's vulnerability, both physical and emotional, perhaps also tinged with loneliness – as well as renewed sensitivity. Tillmans captures equally the material qualities of the objects haphazardly gathered on a dining table, but it is to the light falling on the delicate stems and buds of spring flowers that the eye is drawn. This is a bouquet alive with possibilities, delicate yet captivating; a picture of time passing slowly.

**Lubaina Himid** [b. 1954)

**Jug and Two Spoons**
1989
Acrylic on canvas
Courtesy of the artist and
Hollybush Gardens, London

Between 1988 and 1989, jugs, spoons and everyday objects featured in a number of Lubaina Himid's paintings. *Jug and Two Spoons* was part of 'The Ballad of the Wing', an imaginary touring exhibition of Black cultural objects, held at Chisenhale Gallery in 1989. This exhibition acted as both an homage to Black creativity and as a critique of the way Western museums treat and display African artefacts.

**Katie Paterson** [b.1981)

**Endling**
2022
Mixed media in 100 pigments ground
from the pre-solar dust of 5 billion years ago
to the ginkgo trees of Hibakujumoku
Courtesy of the artist

A colour wheel painted with pigments ground from specimens that span 5 billion years, *Endling* is the ultimate 'memento mori' in its evocation of everything that was, since the birth of our planet, from inert rocks to the most destructive of human inventions, from the first glimpses of life to the extraordinary resilience of species threatened by human intervention. Together with Paterson's related work *Requiem* (2022), *Endling* is 'an elegy to a disappearing world, a lament', a reminder that the climate crisis is the greatest existential crisis ever faced by humankind.

Use the QR code to see what each of
the wheel's segments represent

**Cornelia Parker** [b.1956)

**Falling Façade**
1991
Stretched silver trophies, easel and mirror
Courtesy of the artist & Frith Street Gallery,
London

Cornelia Parker frequently transforms the nature of everyday objects through the use of extreme force, using methods such as flattening, exploding or burning. In *Falling Façade*, Parker has stretched and suspended silver trophies, which are reflected in a mirror that sits on an easel, reminiscent of an artist's studio furniture or a classroom blackboard. Through stretching these commemorative pieces Parker changes their meaning, all their pomp and glory are evacuated.