

# Large Print Guide

# The Return of the Spirit in Painting

5 February – 23 August 2020



Gallery 4

This document includes large print of all the wall labels found within **The Return of the Spirit in Painting** in Gallery 4.

The document begins with the first wall label outside the entrance of Gallery 4, and then moves in a clockwise direction inside the space, it finishes with the high vitrine in the centre of the gallery.

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## **The Return of the Spirit in Painting**

5 February – 23 August 2020

Gallery 4

This exhibition focuses on the Royal Academy of Arts' seminal *A New Spirit in Painting* (1981) and its connection with important solo shows that took place at the Whitechapel Gallery during the 1980's.

*A New Spirit in Painting*, co-curated by Christos M. Joachimides, independent curator, Normal Rosenthal, Exhibitions Secretary at the Royal Academy and Nicolas Serota, then director of the Whitechapel Gallery, brought painting to the forefront of contemporary art discourse. Including works by three generations of Western European and American artists, it featured mostly figurative painting after a decade of conceptual art. The exhibition's curators were criticised at the time, both for showing artwork perceived as commercial, and for the unconventional nature of the paintings on display.

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The Return of the Spirit in Painting brings together five of the 38 artists from the influential exhibition. During his tenure at Whitechapel Gallery, between 1976 and 1988, Serota invited 14 artists including Georg Baselitz, Philip Guston, Anselm Kiefer, Malcolm Morley, Julian Schnabel and Cy Twombly to have their first major solo shows in the UK. These presentations played a crucial role in attracting international attention to their work.

The absence of women and the narrow geographical focus of the Royal Academy exhibition has since raised strong criticism. Important archive material from both institutions accompanies the exhibition and reveals the processes, tensions and successes of the concurrent curatorial visions.

Artists included are: Frank Auerbach, Georg Baselitz, Bruce McLean, Mimmo Paladino, Julian Schnabel.

Don't miss Radical Figures: Painting in the New Millennium to discover a new direction in Figurative Painting, accessible on the ground floor.

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## **Bruce Mclean**

(b. 1944 Glasgow, lives in London)

Going for Gucci, 1984

Acrylic and emulsion on canvas

Courtesy of Flora McLean and Bernard Jacobson Gallery

Since the 1960s, Bruce McLean had become well known for his subversive and often humorous performances, many of which were featured at King for A Day (1972), a one-day retrospective at Tate Gallery. With a background in conceptual and performance art, his shift to drawing in 1977, and painting in 1982 marked a significant change in his practice.

The paintings exhibited at the Royal Academy, as well as those exhibited at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1983, emerged after a period of time spent in Berlin. The work on view was part of a series of head, shoe and handbag paintings that he had started in 1978. Painted in an abstract expressionist style, Going for Gucci...

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is a critique of the rampant consumer culture of the 1980s and a portrait of the art world establishment, clad in designer accessories. The step ladder in the background suggests social climbing as well as a wedge, representing the growing divide within our social fabric.

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## **Frank Auerbach**

(b. 1931 Berlin, lives in London)

J.Y.M Seated in the Studio III, 1988

Oil on Wood Panel

Private Collection, England

Auerbach's work is often associated with the School of London, a term used by R.B.Kitaj to describe a circle of figurative painters exhibited at The Human Clay at the Hayward Gallery in 1976. In addition to Kitaj and Auerbach, other artists included were Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud, David Hockney and Howard Hodgkin. These artists also exhibited at A New Spirit in Painting in 1981.

Auerbach painted numerous portraits from life and worked with a small, exclusive circle of familiar people in order to trace diverse facets of their personality through painting. Juliet Yardley Mills, pictured here, has been the subject of many of his paintings since...

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...1957. This work belongs to a group of six paintings that he completed in 1988 and is the third in the series.

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## **Julian Schnabel**

(b. 1951 New York)

Portrait of Norman Rosenthal, 1982

Oil, Plates and Bondo on Wood

Private Collection

Julian Schnabel was seen as part of the younger generation of painters to be exhibiting in *A New Spirit in Painting*. At only 31 years old, Schnabel was New York's rising star. The exhibition at the Royal Academy gave UK audiences their first opportunity to see his work in London, where he was relatively unknown.

Like other artists in *A New Spirit in Painting*, Schnabel drew on religious iconography for his paintings, and those exhibited were some of his first so-called 'plate paintings'. The artist glued broken ceramic plates to his works, and used them as a surface on which to paint. Registering emotionally as symbols of ruin, the ceramic shards served as textural brushstrokes...

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He continued to use this technique through the 1980s and 1990s, painting many portraits of his circle of friends and family, including this one of curator Sir Norman Rosenthal.

The Whitechapel Gallery solo exhibition of 1986 went on to tour across Europe and later the USA, with many critics noting the irony that his first museum exhibition in his home country had been initiated in the UK.

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## **Georg Baselitz**

(b. 1938 East Germany, lives in Basel; Lake Ammersee; and Imperia)

Blick aus dem Fenster (View out of the Window), 1982

Oil on Canvas

Courtesy Thaddeus Ropac Gallery

Georg Baselitz can be seen as the lynch pin of A New Spirit in Painting at the Royal Academy, bringing together the curatorial visions of Norman Rosenthal and Nicholas Serota, two curators who were unusual at the time for looking to Germany when the local art scene was focused mainly on New York and London. On seeing Baselitz's work at the Venice Biennale in 1980, Nicholas Serota showed his work Model for a Sculpture at a small exhibition, the first of two solo presentations at the Whitechapel Gallery, giving the UK audience a first taste of his oeuvre. Meanwhile, during an extensive tour of Germany, Rosenthal...

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...pin-pointed Baselitz's work and that of Joseph Beuys as the two poles around which the German art scene revolved. Having already worked with Beuys at the ICA, the opportunity at the Royal Academy of Art provided the perfect place to shape an exhibition around the work of Baselitz, drawing together a transgenerational group of painters.

While narrative elements have a continued presence throughout his work, the painting in this exhibition was part of a move in 1969 to invert figures in the expressive paintings, in order to achieve a form of abstraction while maintaining figuration. As will be seen from the press clippings on display, these inverted images provoked both humorous and outraged reactions.

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## **Mimmo Paladino**

(b. 1948 Paduli, lives in Milan and Rome)

Untitled, 1984

Oil and mixed media on wood

Private Collection

Paladino belonged to a young generation of Italian artists. He turned away from the politically and socially oriented work of other artists featured in *A New Spirit in Painting*, such as Kounellis or Merz, to a more subjective approach. Paladino gained international recognition in 1980 when he participated in the Aperto '80 at the Venice Biennale with Sandro Chia, Francesco Clemente, Enzo Cucchi and Nicola De Maria, central figures of the Transavantgarde ("beyond the avant-garde") movement.

The allegorical figurative style, draws on religious imagery and Classical mythology, and is influenced by ancient Egyptian, tribal and modern art...

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Often using relief elements, Paladino combines colour, motif and symbol in enigmatic and archaic figures which embody his concern with the themes of death and sacrifice.

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## **Vitrine 1**

(Found by the window of Gallery 4.)

1. Press cutting: Hanging Fire at the Whitechapel, The Guardian, 7 September 1983.
2. Georg Baselitz, installation shot, Whitechapel Gallery Archive, 1983.
3. Press cutting: A Rebel Revealed, The Standard, 6 October 1983.
4. Georg Baselitz, catalogue, Whitechapel Gallery, 1983.
5. Press cutting showing Norman Rosenthal with his portrait by Julian Schnabel, Vogue, October 1987.
6. Press cuttings: Larger Than Life, Tower Hamlets News, September 1986; Art & Design, London, September 1985; Not a Pretty Sight, TNT Magazine, 30 September 1986.

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7. Julian Schnabel, catalogue, Whitechapel Gallery, 1986.
8. Julian Schnabel, installation shot, Whitechapel Gallery Archive, 1986.
9. Bruce McLean, catalogue, Whitechapel Gallery, 1983.
10. Bruce McLean, installation shot, Whitechapel Gallery Archive, October 1983.
11. Press cutting: Bruce McLean is at the Whitechapel, Arts Review, 27 May 1983.

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## **Vitrine 2**

(Found against the archive window.)

1. Press cutting: UK 8, Germany 11, William Feaver, The Observer, 18 January 1981.
2. Letter from Norman Rosenthal to The Observer, 27 January 1981.
3. Letter from S.G. to Norman Rosenthal, 19 February 1981.
4. Letter from Bulsmershe College of Higher Education, 2nd Year B.Ed. Students to Norman Rosenthal.
5. Letter from Norman Rosenthal to Susan Ryan, 11 March 1981.

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6. Press cuttings: Art with a New Twist, Scotsman, Taking Art Lying Down, Daily Telegraph, That Art, Northern Echo, Upside Down Nudes Make People Look, Irish News, An Upside Down look at the nudes, Daily Mail, 13 January 1981.
7. Letter from Mrs F to Hugh Casson, 15 February 1981.
8. Letter from Hugh Casson to Mrs F., 23 February 1981.
9. Letter from R.S.K. to The Royal Academy, 15 March 1981.

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### **Vitrine 3**

(Found to the right of Vitrine 2.)

1. Photographs from A New Spirit in Painting exhibition at The Royal Academy of Art, 1981.
2. Letter from Norman Rosenthal to Mr and Mrs Sauberzweig, 19th September 1980.
3. Letter from Rosenthal to George Wiedenfled, 13 November 1980.
4. Letter from Norman Rosenthal to Nicholas Serota, 19 June 1980.
5. A New Spirit in Painting, Press Release, final announcement, 1981.
6. Letter from Vera Russel to Hugh Casson, 1 February 1981.

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7. Letter from Hugh Casson to Vera Russell, 10 February 1981.
8. Letter from Norman Rosenthal to R.B. Kitaj, 3 February 1981.
9. Salisbury Group of Artists Newsletter, 1 March 1981.
10. Letter from Madrid to Hugh Casson, 7 February 1981.
11. Doris Saatchi Essay Commissioned by The Royal Academy for their yearbook 1981, pages 1, 2, 14, 15.

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## **Vitrine 4**

(Higher vitrine in the middle of the gallery.)

1. Press cuttings: Dead or Alive, Sarah Kent, Time Out  
Optimistic U Turn, Margaret Richards, 30 January 1981.
2. Press cutting: A New Spirit in Painting? Edward  
Lucie-Smith.
3. Press cutting: The Old Ghosts Refuse to Die,  
Januszczak, Guardian Weekly, Academic Exercise,  
Michael Shepherd, Sunday Telegraph, The Sunday  
Times, Gallery Guide, The Observer, 1st January 1981.
4. Press cutting: This way up for upside down  
painting, John Rydon, Daily Express, Great  
Expectations, William Feaver, Vogue, Newsletter,  
Belfast, Jumbo by Tube, Manchester Evening News,  
Londoners Diary, 14 January 1981.

If you would like to borrow a magnifying glass, please ask a member of staff who will be happy to help. You can collect a magnifying glass from the Gallery Ambassador in Gallery 4, or from the Information Desk in the ground level.

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