

GALLERIES

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ANTENNAE



My Fair Lady

Amidst the pomp and circumstance of the Diamond Jubilee, a more personal side to the Queen is revealed at the **Victoria & Albert Museum**. A new show, *Queen Elizabeth II by Cecil Beaton*, spans their iconic sittings across four decades (1930s to 1960s). With his trademark glamour shots and incisive comments in his diaries and letters, Beaton captures the Queen with a unique warm intimacy. We see her fresh-faced and tentative at her first public engagement, regal, yet nervous at her Coronation and her unbridled joy as a first time mother. Even as a teenage princess, she holds your gaze with the magnetism of the most seasoned Beaton A-lister. Rare behind the scenes images at the Coronation reveal her extraordinary calm whilst palpable high tension surrounds her. Absorbing contact sheets tell a candid narrative of significant family events – the familiar interaction hinting that the royal family might be like our own. Even the most official portraits show a vulnerability, which makes the Queen seem simultaneously ordinary and extraordinary – thus revealing the accessibility which underpins her appeal and the innate power of photography.

Melanie Abrams

Heading East

What's happening in West London? In November we re-

ported **Hanina's** move to the West End, last month **Anthony Hepworth's** return to Bath from High Street Kensington and now long-established Westbourne Grove gallery **England and Co** is off to Great Portland St. As we've suggested before, the quantum growth of the area's fashion business (not to mention its social fashionability) can't be helping plus, of course, the current re-consolidation of London's Central West area as a rich artistic hub. Pity about the variety and individualism though.

First Moderns

While many of us are well aware of the **Sainsbury Centre's** superlative permanent collections of World Art, its almost equally wonderful holdings of Art Nouveau from the Anderson Collection bequest are less visible and largely unfamiliar. A splendid new exhibition there, 'The First Moderns: Art Nouveau, from Nature to Abstraction', the first in a series on European design of the late 19th and 20th century, aims to put that right. Using this (and its great Modernist Art and Design collection presumably) as a starting point but with significant loans from Glasgow School of Art, the V & A and private collections, this show explores the fascinating development of Art Nouveau from the natural to more abstract, geometric forms.

50/30

Julian Hartnoll has always followed a highly idiosyncratic path as a dealer, so it shouldn't come as a surprise to learn that he is celebrating his 50 years in the business with a stock sale of 322 pieces. Neither is he doing it through a London auction house but via a less well known, though extremely well run, regional saleroom, **Holloway's** of Banbury. Terming it "a rationalization", it is by no means a disposal of lesser stock, with some highly significant paintings by lifelong passions of his – 'Kitchen Sink' artists such as Bratby, Jack Smith and Edward Middleditch, Indian Modernist F.N. Souza and Victorian giant G.F. Watts – all for sale. In a final touch, the auction has been held back to give the artists' families the chance to benefit from the new Artists' Resale Rights and moreover, with buyers' costs absorbed by the saleroom.

Not quite so long established, but in their very different field of contemporary painting, equally singular in the range of artists and styles, Christopher Burness of **Cadogan Contemporary** is currently celebrating 30 years in business with a mixed exhibition of artists like Sargy Mann, who has been with them since they began, and others who will secure their future such as Elise Ansel and Deborah Tarr.

From left: Cecil Beaton by Curtis Moffat. Cecil Beaton, Queen Elizabeth II with Prince Andrew, 1960 both ©V&A. **Loetz** Vase with combed blue decoration c.1900 at Sainsbury Centre **Edward Middleditch** 'Crowd Earl's Court' from the Julian Hartnoll sale at Holloway's Auctioneers

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TRIPLEVISION

David Spiller

British artist David Spiller is often characterized as a Pop Expressionist. With bold colours and statements, block borders and recognizable cartoon characters, such as Felix the Cat, his paintings tick the relevant boxes of Pop. On closer inspection, however, Spiller's lyrical scrawlings and carefully selected panels of canvas that have been stitched together, reminiscent of the comic strip, reveal a far more intimate and emotional approach than the distance usually associated with the satirical and ironic practice of Pop art.

Statements such as 'No More Tears' and 'Be Brave' make us feel as though we've stumbled upon a private exchange, emphasized by white washes and blocks of paint that have been used to conceal parts of the sentiment. Love is a recurring theme throughout this exhibition at **Beaux Arts London**. Though the subject matter is unoriginal, Spiller's residual pencil marks and raw canvases exude a sense of immediacy and almost cathartic desperation that provides a refreshingly authentic voice, reinforcing the truth of clichés rather than tiring us of them. Though each painting is independently composed, the added effect of the discrete, stitched panels within the single stretcher is such that one can imagine different permutations of Spiller's patchwork texts and make playful cross-painting interpretations.

Arguably, these are more engaging than his figurative work reminiscent of Picasso's *Dora Maar's*, which is harder to digest as either original or deliberately recycled. **Nicola McCartney**

James Lloyd

A pair of pink and grey paper dolls' houses made from curry boxes on the floor next to a pair of feet and ankles protruding into the picture, belonging to an otherwise unseen nude, a study of a kipper, a couple of packets of half opened McVitie's biscuits; it's subject matter at first sight reminiscent of the Kitchen Sink Painters perhaps and of numerous (and predictable) art school still-lives in the years since, but rather unambitious themes, you might think, for one of England's most promising, younger generation figurative/realist painters. But then James Lloyd, it seems to me, has always been something of a boundary-breaker in terms of how and where his work might be placed. A Paul Smith Scholarship holder at the Slade in the mid-90s, a first prize winner of the BP Portrait Award the year after he left, Lloyd's work appeals across the modernist/traditionalist divide. The answer lies, above all, in the extraordinary directness and vivacity of his vision, his ability to make the paint sing with vibrant energy, the still-lives teem with life, the portraits touchingly dense with tangible materiality. **(Browse & Darby) Nicholas Usherwood**

Geoff Yeomans

'Out of Iron' takes the seemingly irreconcilable conflict between Realism and Abstraction in new directions. The 21 canvases in this fourth version of Geoff Yeomans's touring exhibition (**Rhyl Arts Centre**), range from two 4ft wide, landscape-shaped pictures down to paintings measuring little more than a foot square. The oil is often so dense that it is hard to make out what is going on (the lighting is crucial) and the images typically focus on close-ups of decaying or weathered surfaces: rust, rotting wood and lichen-covered stones. In doing so, he pits the melancholy of discarded, meaningless objects against his (and our) craving for a sense of purpose, discovering beauty in their desolation. Some of his images have an almost Scandinavian calm; others explode in lava floes of orange and red; one (repainted) canvas now flashes with an acid yellow rectangle above a murk which is both cavernous and flat. Yeomans says his paintings lie somewhere between 'conceptual and views'. They also leap from the hard-nosed objectivity of his earlier years to something that is neither wholly abstract nor representational, and which sometimes incorporates a lyrical Surrealism that is reminiscent of Paul Nash and Max Ernst.

Caroline Juler

David Spiller 'No More Tears', Beaux Arts, London
James Lloyd 'Curry Box Houses', Browse & Darby
Geoff Yeomans 'Eclipse 3', Rhyl Arts Centre