EXHIBITION GUIDE

ROSE WYLIE
QUACK QUACK

30 November 2017–11 February 2018
INTRODUCTION

In my life I stack and heap up notations of experiences ... Usually I paint something I've seen, but I may fiddle with the scale, context and rules of gravity. I draw from observation, memory and with 'conceptual projection' – how a stereotype would look from the un-stereotypical view.
Rose Wylie

Rose Wylie's paintings start with the excitement of seeing a visually stimulating image encountered in her daily life, such as news, cinema and art history, as well as personal recollections and observations. Often painted through the filter of her memory, these subjects might include a scene from Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill* films, iconic figures of Elizabeth Taylor and Elizabeth I, a self-portrait of Wylie eating a chocolate biscuit, or a football match. While the final composition is planned and refined through drawings, research and visual note-taking, Wylie's paintings retain the spontaneity and immediacy of her first encounter with the subject.

The title of the exhibition *Quack Quack* relates to a new series of paintings inspired by parks and it is a phrase which Wylie connects to 'ack-ack' – a term used to describe Second World War anti-aircraft artillery. These two references are brought together in *Park Dogs & Air Raid* (2017), a painting that draws upon her childhood recollections of living near Kensington Gardens in 1940 by combining the landscape of the park and the present-day Serpentine Sackler Gallery with her memories of Spitfires and Messerschmitt planes fighting overhead during the Blitz.

Images and impressions lodged within Wylie's memory are often inspired by cinema. The visual appeal of film is evident in Wylie's ongoing *Film Notes* series where she reduces iconic scenes to a single image. She also applies cinematic techniques to the scale and structure of her paintings: text can be understood as subtitles, and compositions are often informed by close-up and wide-angle camera shots. Paintings can wrap around the interior architecture of the gallery, reflecting the movement of a filmstrip or the formats of fresco wall paintings, classical friezes, billboards and comics proposing unique perspectives on the plethora of images that make up our collective cultural memory.

Rose Wylie was born in 1934 and lives and works in Kent, UK. She studied at Folkestone and Dover School of Art (1952–56) and at the Royal College of Art, London (1979–81).
ER & ET
2011
Oil on canvas
Courtesy of Morten Viskum Collection

ER & ET pairs the initials of Queen Elizabeth I with actress Elizabeth Taylor – as Wylie states, the ‘Queen of Hollywood’. The painting depicts young Taylor in the manner of a classical reclining pose, wearing a white bathing suit. She looks directly out of the canvas and is in control of her image, not so unlike Édouard Manet’s iconic painting Olympia (1863). Taylor whose colourful private life was played out in the media is appropriately depicted as under surveillance – surrounded by eyes and ears. Wylie has transcribed these motifs from the embroidered cloak worn by Elizabeth I in the Rainbow Portrait (c.1600–02) attributed to Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, symbolising the monarch’s omnipresence over the spies and whispers at court. Elizabeth I is depicted in another painting in the exhibition Queen with Pansies (2016).

Park Dogs & Air Raid
2017
Oil on canvas
Courtesy of the Artist and David Zwirner, London

Park Dogs & Air Raid (2017) draws upon Wylie’s childhood recollections of living for a short period in 1940 near Kensington Gardens and revisiting the park in 2017 for her exhibition. Two timeframes collapse as the present-day Serpentine Sackler Gallery is set against an aerial dogfight between Spitfires and Messerschmitt aircraft overhead during the Blitz. Just as the curl of the dog’s tail is echoed in the spinning propellers and flight of the planes above, Wylie reminds us of the painting’s materiality and turns our attention back to the construction of the work in the studio. A white strip marked with loose dabs of coloured paint runs along the lower edge of the painting. It appears abstract, but it is an image of the carefully observed skirting board in her studio, which catches the drips of paint, scuffs and marks from the canvases hanging above it as she works.

Rosemount (coloured)
1999
Oil on canvas
Courtesy of REGINA Gallery, Moscow

Rosemount (coloured) is based on Wylie’s memory of her childhood home in Kent spanning 1940–44, the period following living in Bayswater. Annotations of the address, dates and labels are plotted like coordinates and the landscape is depicted from multiple perspectives: aerial, ground level, from a distance and up close. Wylie as a young girl, indicated through the edge of her hair and eyelashes visible in the lower right, watches doodlebug bombs as they pass from left to right over the house towards London. The thick black paint of the house is a reference to wartime blackouts and suggestive of missing passages of memory.
In recent years, Wylie has made a series of four almost single colour paintings in red, ginger, black, and blue. *Red Painting; Bird, Lemur & Elephant* depicts energetic forms of animals and carries a register of pigment and physicality that distinguishes it stylistically from her other paintings. Here, as with many of her works, revisions and edits are made to the forms by masking them over with new pieces of canvas. The visceral immediacy of this painting, in which Wylie abandoned brushes and painted directly with her hands, is evident.

These two paintings based on the 2005 film *Syriana*, directed by Stephen Gaghan, describe a panoramic long shot and a close-up image of a scene in the film where a formal meeting is conducted in the desert at a table with a pink table cloth. It is the visual excitement and theatricality of a scene that captures Wylie’s attention, in this case the relationship of the pink against the ochre sand dunes.
Wylie made four 'Twink' paintings which collectively run over 17 metres in length, two of which are shown here. The series was made with the flexibility to be shown as a single installation or in parts and new combinations. The scale of these paintings hold a synergy with wall murals, architectural friezes, Italian Renaissance frescos and comic strips which share a similar sense of continuity, expansion and extension. The pathways, leaves, trees and cat are forms observed from Wylie’s garden while the flying female figures were inspired by an advert for a film streaming service.

Playing Well is an imagined self-portrait of the artist with blond hair playing a winning shot and in her words 'smashing-up the opposition' in a tennis match. The duplication of the images, as with her Film Notes series creates a sense of animation.

The colour combination of yellow and blue connects to Alesso Baldovinetti’s Portrait of a Lady (c.1465); a painting Wylie first encountered as a student in the National Gallery, London.

source image, Wylie places the strap of the gown differently – commenting on failures of memory. The repetition of the figure and the title of the painting also refer to mosaics or architectural friezes depicting processions of female martyrs, in particular that of St. Lucy of Syracuse.
Choco Leibnitz 2006
Oil on canvas
Courtesy of Public Collection

Choco Leibnitz is a part of a series prompted by the then Prime Minister Tony Blair’s criticism of the nation’s diet; a story Wylie read and watched in the news. With its witty reference to the philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, this painting is also a self-portrait which began with Wylie’s curiosity of what her mouth, eating a biscuit, might look like from the side.

Sitting on a Bench with Border (Film Notes) 2008
Oil on canvas
Courtesy of Private Collection

Based on actress Penelope Cruz’s character in Pedro Almodóvar’s 2006 film Volver, Sitting on a Bench with Border (Film Notes) depicts a woman sitting in profile framed by multiple headshots that change very slightly like the frames in a film. Repetition, seen in the exhibition title Quack Quack, is an important tool within Wylie’s practice. She returns often to painting the same subject in order to investigate the many potential possibilities of an image. The exhibition also includes a 2013 portrait of this character PC. Small Head with Frame III.

Yellow Strip 2006
Oil and chalk on canvas
Courtesy of the artist

Yellow Strip takes inspiration from football icons whose images proliferate the media. Wylie is interested in football’s position within popular culture and its shared iconography. She captures the different characteristics of the players in this dream team line-up: Wayne Rooney jumping into the air to score a goal; Crouch identified by his height playing a header; Thierry Henry’s languid running; goalkeeper Jens Lehmann’s memorable hair and green gloves; and Ronaldinho’s ponytail and crossover back kicks.

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, this painting is also a self-portrait which began with Wylie’s curiosity of what her mouth, eating a biscuit, might look like from the side.
PROGRAMMES AND EVENTS

SATURDAY TALKS
Free talks take place at 3pm on selected Saturdays to explore the works on show.
To book BSL interpretation for the Saturday Talks, please visit serpentinegalleries.org/bsl
9 December: Melissa Blanchflower, Curator

EVENTS
Rose Wylie in conversation with Hans Ulrich Obrist
12 December 7pm

Visit serpentinegalleries.org for details
Further information on the artworks is available via the Serpentine’s free Wi-Fi: www.sgtours.org.

Please ask a member of staff for details.
Photography permitted without flash
Share your photos @SerpentineUK #rosewylie #quackquack

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Kill Bill (Film Notes) 2007
Oil on canvas
Courtesy of Private Collection

This painting is from Wylie’s ongoing Film Notes series. It duplicates a scene from Quentin Tarantino’s iconic Kill Bill films from different points of perspective which describes Wylie’s memory of the zooming action of the camera. One half shows the death scene from actress Uma Thurman’s point of view, and the other from that of the viewer’s.