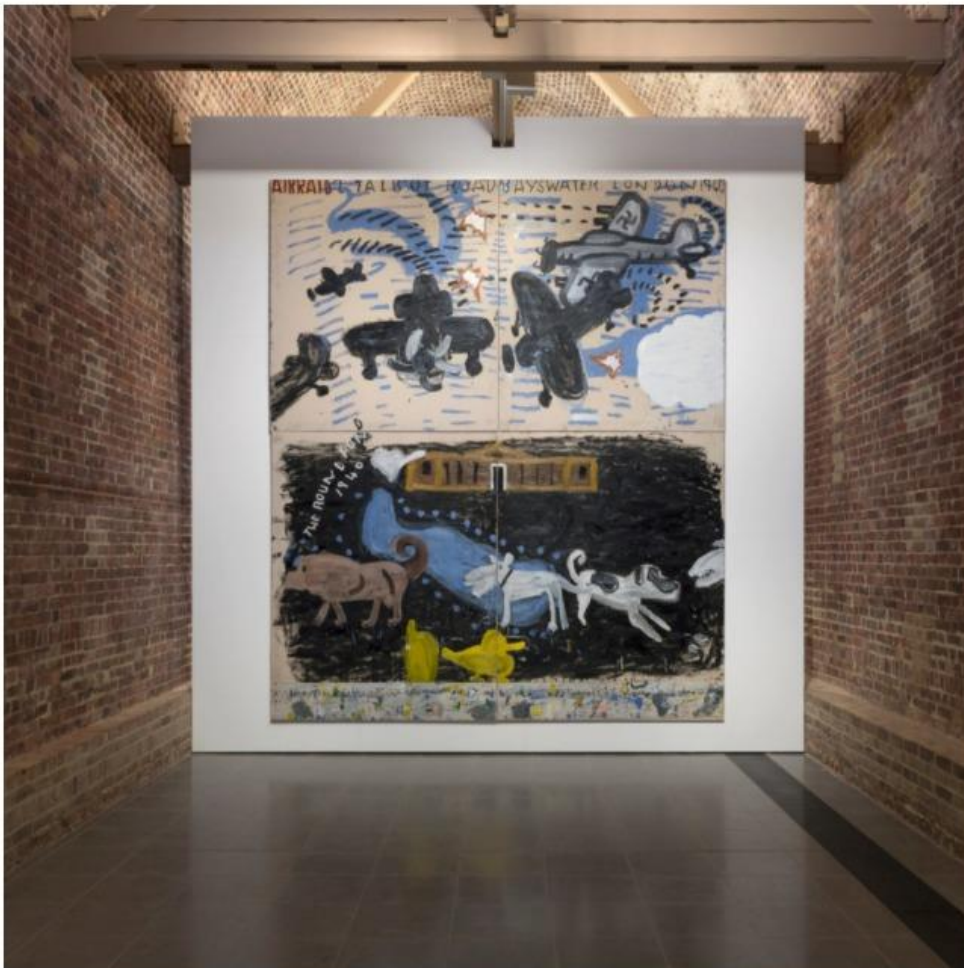


The Telegraph

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Four must-see art exhibitions to indulge in before Christmas



Rose Wylie, Installation view, 'Quack Quack' Serpentine Sackler Gallery CREDIT: © 2017 MIKE DIN.

By **Louisa Buck**

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Art critic Louisa Buck talks through the must-see art exhibitions that make wandering through the West End a little less onerous...

James White: Bodies at Blain Southern

Every kind of drinking glass is vividly presented in these large and - in all senses - brilliant paintings. Chunky cut-crystal tumblers, champagne flutes, wine glasses, straight beer glasses and even a humble glass for the bathroom all glitter and sparkle with a near-hallucinogenic intensity.

Their origins lie in casually-snapped colour photographs taken by White which he then reproduces in black and white oils, greatly enlarged, spliced, cropped and in an astoundingly meticulous photo-realistic style.

The glasses appear in close up on shelves, tabletops, mantelpieces and the edge of sinks, surrounded by random objects; a bunch of keys, a blister pack of pills, a cracked mirror... all painted with the same intense scrutiny and often with their own surface sheen.



James White, BODIES IV, 2017 CREDIT: PHOTO PRUDENCE CUMING ASSOCIATES/COURTESY THE ARTIST AND BLAINSOUTHERN

Subject matter and surroundings are those of the home, pub or bar but there's a high-octane glamour and psychological charge given off by all these forensically observed, infinitely reflective surfaces.

The collective name for the show is 'Bodies,' and the half-empty, half-full vessels are presented like characters in a unfolding drama where you fill in the plot line yourself. Look again and there are also smears, marks, fingerprints and other traces of human presence accompanying all the glimmer and sheen. *Until 13 January*

Rose Wylie: Quack Quack at Serpentine Sackler Gallery

Rose Wylie is no stranger to the Serpentine Gallery. She's been coming here since the age of five. The octogenarian artist remembers as a small child watching Spitfires and Messerschmitts fighting over Kensington Gardens during the blitz, and memories of Serpentine past and present collide with characteristic exuberance in one of the largest and most recent paintings in her unmissable show.



Rose Wylie, Installation view, 'Quack Quack' at the Serpentine Sackler Gallery, London

In 'Park and Dogs and Air Raid', World War Two planes circle in the sky above lolloping dogs and a Sackler gallery where you can even make out Zaha Hadid's fluttering white extension.

Wylie is nothing if not eclectic, with movie stars, tennis and football players, bugs, elephants, dogs and even Queen Elizabeth I prancing, bobbing and cavorting across her irresistible canvases. These are often accompanied by large, scrawly text commentaries, all in lashings of thick paint – sometimes applied by her fingers.

Wylie says that these paintings “heap up notations of experiences” and whether a giant mouth about to devour a Choco Leibniz biscuit, dismembered blood-spurting bodies from Tarantino's *Kill Bill* movie or a solitary park bench that appears poised for lift off, they also invigorate us all with their irrepressible energy. *Until 11 February*

Kati Heck: Heimlich Manoeuvre at Sadie Coles

You don't really need to know that the six full-on paintings contained in a hexagonal chamber in the centre of the space are based on a Mahler symphony based on a series of ancient Chinese poems, or that many of the posting, gesticulating protagonists in these elaborate, excessive scenarios portray the artist's friends and family. They suck you in anyway.

Reality, fiction and different styles melt and merge in these excessive works that defy any easy reading. Nothing is quite what it seems: just when you think you might have an idea of what is going on, you are deliberately wrong-footed.



Installation view, Kati Heck, *Heimlich Manoeuvre*, Sadie Coles CREDIT: PHOTOGRAPHY: ROBERT GLOWACKI/ COPYRIGHT KATI HECK, COURTESY SADIE COLES HQ, LONDON

Flatly schematic backgrounds are unexpectedly destabilised by translucent washes and dribbles; photorealist faces are skewed by deliberately disconcerting anatomical weirdness; and the cartoonish merges with the art-historical. In one merry drinking scene, the feet of one figure fade into floor tiles, while another lolling reveller squirts stylized drops out of his mouth like an ornamental fountain.

Then we see Iggy Pop striding out of hellish flames behind the shoulder of a double-faced woman pausing in a moonlit wood before a Disney-like tree, which has been painted with the technique of an Old Master. The visual overload threatens to overwhelm but the weird killer details keep you coming back for more. *Until 10 February*

Medardo Rosso: *Sight Unseen and His Encounters in London* at Thaddaeus Ropac

Medardo Rosso ought to be up there with the great names of modern sculpture. Certainly they all rated him: Rodin expressed his “wild admiration” for the Italian sculptor and Brancusi, Giacometti and the Futurist Umberto Boccioni were all fans – as was Henry Moore.

Now there’s a rare chance to see 12 of Rosso’s most important sculptures which demonstrate his unique ability to capture the most fleeting fluid flashes of humanity in plaster, wax and bronze.

Rather than aiming for the smoothly monumental like most of his contemporaries working in the late 19th century, Rosso depicted everyday subjects – mothers, children, the sick and the elderly. He constantly experimented to make his work appear as animated and immaterial as possible.



Medardo Rosso in the studio, Paris, early 1890s

The subtle features on the tender, translucently fragile wax head of his 'Child in the Sun' are barely there, only animated by the play of light and shadow on its surface, while the figures in *The Conversation* emerge out of a choppy slab of plaster like mirages but at the same time are completely believable and human.

Fascinating drawings and photographs show that Rosso's restless inventiveness did not stop at sculpture and also confirm that he was greatly stimulated during his two trips to London, making evocative drawings of cabs, omnibuses and even two policemen. *Until 10 February*