palmer gallery

PG:018

PAINTING FEAR

20.11.26 - 23.01.27

Private View:

Thursday 19th November, 6-8pm

Paula Rego
Nell Brookfield
Tess McMillan
Kerrie Addy

palmer gallery

Paula Rego used her practice to directly confront that which haunted her, whether from within her own personal life or from the socio-political world within which she lived. From this framework, Palmer Gallery's upcoming exhibition *Painting Fear*, brings a group of Rego's works into dialogue with contemporary female figurative painters who share her interest in politics, feminism, history and the absurd, using painting as a means of navigating fear and uncertainty.

Rego was one of the most significant figurative painters of the twentieth century, and her impact on the way women and their lived experience were depicted continues to influence contemporary artists working today. She was steadfast in confronting the most troubling events of her time - often head on - having lived through distressing moments in history, particularly around women's rights and gender politics; From her adolescence under the brutal Salazar dictatorship and its Deus, Pátria e Família ideology, which confined women to a purely reproductive role, to the 1998 referendum on abortion and women's rights in Portugal, to human trafficking, genital mutilation and domestic violence inflicted upon women.



Come to Me, 2001 - 2002, Paula Rego, Coloured lithograph on Somerset velvet paper, 99.5 cm x 67 cm (detail)



Under Her Wing, 2025, Nell Brookfield, Natural pigment and acrylic on linen, 94 x 185 cm (detail)

The consequence was the creation of some of the most radical and politically charged artworks of the time, tempered by a bold visual language which referenced art historical figures but subverted them through Rego's own social context and a strong sense of female empowerment.

Despite the gravity of her subject matter, Rego's register was notably wide-ranging and she could just as readily confront political and social issues as more personal dynamics around sexuality, motherhood and the family home. Rooted in her own experiences, which were coloured by illness and grief in her family life, the feelings she expressed were often universally accessible. She typically drew on familiar literary references - nursery rhymes and fairy tales among them - subverting them into something recognisable but darker and more grotesque. The imagery that resulted was absurdist in quality, and became a mechanism for Rego to confront her own personal demons.

The other artists in this exhibition find their own point of connection to Rego's work, with a thread of anxiety, fear and vulnerability running through their practices - they too draw on lived personal experiences and wider historical and political undercurrents.

15 Hatton Street
NW8 8PL
London

contact@palmergallery.co.uk
@palmer.gallery
palmergallery.co.uk

palmer gallery

Kerrie Addy is a cross-disciplinary artist who, like Rego, studied at the Slade. Her paintings investigate unresolved trauma through dreamlike figuration and absurdist symbolism. She mostly depicts everyday personal scenes - a domestic interior, a woman driving a car, a pint down the pub - and turns them into supernatural sites where a non-linear narrative takes place. Her compositions relay the way memory plays out after trauma: fractured, non-linear and unresolved. Her characters inhabit that same fragile, unpredictable register, built to convey a visceral sense of unease. Often drawing on the history of real sites of trauma or those close to her own experiences, Addy's intention is to suggest that trauma can imprint a space or architectural setting as tangibly as it marks a person, leaving its residue long after the event itself has passed.

Like Rego, Nell Brookfield paints humans and animals with equal subjectivity - treating the two as interchangeable rather than hierarchical - in order to access repressed emotional states that sit within the interior of the human psyche. Her paintings are intended to destigmatise fear, personal taboos and deep-rooted phobias, and are rendered in a bright palette, depicting scenes which are intentionally unreal. Working in natural pigments she mixes herself, layered with acrylic onto linen or cotton, each canvas carries an uneven, handmade texture set against uncanny, dreamlike imagery of humans, animals and iconographic objects, which could resemble a Renaissance painting or a Pre-Raphaelite image. The work grows out of close observation of people around her, which initially takes the form of photographs and later drawings, offered back as a kind of mirror of the interior psyche: images built to feel familiar, comforting and unsettling all at once.

Tess McMillan paints closely observed figures, animals and household objects, examining desire and the tension between vulnerability and control. Working in oil and pastel on wood panel, she draws on medieval apocalyptic imagery and recurring dream symbols to probe the subconscious. Household motifs often recur in her paintings, standing in for safety, danger and belonging, drawn from a childhood dream of walking through rooms convinced something terrible is about to happen, although it never does. At the root of her practice is a wider interest in the instinct to control chaos - a lit candle held upright against a reclining body, a table laid with fruit and bread while a figure lies hidden beneath it - picturing how desire and shame can be psychoanalytically suppressed and kept in check.



Veltro, 2025, Tess McMIllan, Oil on panel, 122 x 178 (detail)

About Palmer Gallery

Founded by Lucas Giles and Will Hainsworth in 2023, Palmer Gallery is a space dedicated to identifying and developing the strongest emerging artistic talent of today.

The gallery is situated in London's Lisson Grove, in a 2000 ft2 former-factory built in the 1920's by the Palmer Tyre Company, who produced parts for the Spitfire, Hurricane and Lancaster Bombers during The Second World War.

The gallery programme focuses on cross-disciplinary artists working across painting, sculpture, video, performance, light and sound installation, creating an immersive exhibition space. This multi-sensory approach embraces a holistic view of contemporary art while championing an institutional dedication to framing and contextualising complex artistic practices.

Palmer Gallery's core mission is to allow artists to express themselves and thrive in an open, supportve and experimental environment; fostering a culture of creative freedom and connection among the gallery's artists and the wider community.

Please email contact@palmergallery.co.uk for high-resoloution imagery, or an exhbition preview.

15 Hatton Street
NW8 8PL
London

contact@palmergallery.co.uk
@palmer.gallery
palmergallery.co.uk