

**The Contemporary
British Painting Prize
Group Show 2016**

Seabrook Press

The Contemporary British Painting Prize Group Show 2016

The Riverside Gallery, Richmond Museum, 10 September - 22 October
Huddersfield Art Gallery, 5 November - 28 January

“There can be no better, more sensitive or more serious way than
'The Contemporary British Painting Prize' to discover and assess the exciting
new directions being taken by painters in Britain today.”

Michael Peppiatt, Art Critic and Curator, Paris

“The Contemporary British Painting Prize offers us fresh and exciting perspectives
on the new, dynamic and idiosyncratic trends being taken by painters in Britain right now.”

Jessica Twyman, Director, Art Exchange

“Although only in its first year, the Contemporary British Painting prize has drawn
631 entries of outstanding quality from both emerging and well-known artists
and has set a benchmark for the nation.”

Anna McNay, Art writer, London

“It has been an amazing and rewarding experience for me to observe the
creation and the evolution of Contemporary British Painting - as a concept, as an
organisation and now as an award, the Contemporary British Painting Prize. The commitment
and unfailing enthusiasm of Robert Priseman and his colleagues shown in the course of
this evolution - all with the single purpose of re-establishing painting as the greatest
and popular art medium in the contemporary art world - are truly
impressive and deserving of praise.

I've had the pleasure of reviewing the draft catalogue of the works of the
Contemporary British Painting Award finalists and have been impressed by the depth of the
subject matters and the variety of styles. I can say that the vitality in painting in Britain today
is hard to ignore - fresh, engaging and highly individualistic works bring one to realisation
that an art medium once considered too traditional and predictable has -
with the help of truly devoted artists -
made its way back into our contemporary minds and hearts.”

Elena Dranichnikova, Art Collector, Moscow

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“In an era when technologies increasingly pervade contemporary arts,
‘The Contemporary British Painting Prize’ reasserts once again the vital role and
profound value of painting, inviting a public rediscovery of the (unplugged) power that
can flow from the end of a brush joining color to surface, in an act of seduction practiced
today as it ever was, even before painters called themselves British.”

Francis Di Tommaso, Gallery Director, School of Visual Arts, NYC, New York

Introduction

“The new Contemporary British Painting Prize is a brilliant new initiative that holds up a mirror to the wealth of practice and exciting talent alive in the UK painting scene today.”

Katherine Wood, Founding Director of Firstiste, Curator and Arts Consultant

“Painting as a medium may be unique in that it is capable of combining direct and visceral form and simplicity of means with the chameleon-like ability to take on the complex associations of every other area of human culture, expression and thought. The new ‘Contemporary British Painting Prize’ is a very welcome opportunity to celebrate and broadcast this, and the current vitality of Painting in Britain is affirmed in the range and quality of painting that has been selected.”

Jeffrey Dennis: Artist and Senior Lecturer in Fine Art at Chelsea College of Arts, London

“The works in this exhibition are an erudite selection of original and diverse current painting. Set in a vigorous critical context, they display the vibrancy and continuation of contemporary painting practice today.”

Susan Gunn, artist

“The show brings together a long overdue psychological and physical exploration into the process of painting in a manner both eclectic and exciting.”

Dr Lisa Wade, Head of Department of Arts and Humanities, University of Suffolk.

“This astute selection for the inaugural contemporary British painting prize exhibition demonstrates the breadth and potency of what painting can do in the here and now. In all the works, whether representational or abstract, what is so riveting is the tension between the viscosity of the painterly materials and their potential meaning and this is what makes painting alive.”

Dr Judith Tucker, University of Leeds

“To paint is an individual act of affirmation and subversion. It is also an act of generosity, as we clearly see in this new exhibition.”

Simon Carter, artist

The British Contemporary Painting Prize provides audiences a unique visual experience and perception with its openness and peculiar perspective, which also presents a worthy reference for Chinese Contemporary Painting.

Mengmeng Wang, artist and curator, Xian

The Contemporary British Painting Prize: Group Show 2016

In 2012 I co-curated the exhibition 'Francis Bacon to Paula Rego' with Helen Watson at the Abbot Hall Art Gallery. The basic premise was to re-visit the landmark show 'A School of London: Six Figurative Painters' which Michael Peppiatt had curated in 1987. We wanted to see what had become of painting in Britain in the intervening years. Michael's show featured works by Michael Andrews, Frank Auerbach, Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud, R.B. Kitaj and Leon Kossoff, and in the catalogue he had written "*...over the past thirty-five years a body of work has evolved in London which possesses a power and a relevance to the future of painting that would be hard to make anywhere else in the world*".

Yet painting in Britain almost appeared to have come to an end at the time of his show. In the years following Michael's exhibition only a handful of emerging artists seemed to develop a wish to fully engage with painting in the United Kingdom, figures like Tony Bevan, Christopher Le Brun and Paula Rego. Other serious artists seemed to have abandoned painting altogether in favour of video, installation and performance art. Following this, new media artists quickly gained a position at the heart of the art establishment, while painting seemed to fade into obscurity. Yet I and others like me couldn't quite shake off the feeling that Britain has always maintained a dynamic, inventive and international painting scene and we felt we ought to set out to find it.

So a small group of us set up the project 'Contemporary British Painting' at the crypt in St Marylebone in 2013 with the help of The Revd. Cannon Stephen Evans. We began programming a series of small solo shows by under the radar British painters who we felt were not gaining the attention they deserved. At the same time we also discussed establishing some kind of 'Painters' Medal' as a recognition for excellence in the field. It was from this initial idea that we eventually settled on setting up the 'Contemporary British Painting Prize'.

We liked the idea that this new prize, like the 'Contemporary British Painting' project itself, should be about unearthing and making visible some of the truly amazing painting we are beginning to see in the British Isles today - in all its diversity, creativity and quirkiness. And whilst there are many art competitions out

there, we felt that a new prize selected peer to peer would be valuable, and that to then involve an additional group of judges drawn from the critical field to choose an overall winner would help create a useful bridge between the two sides of the practicing and curatorial art profession.

Our initial tweet announcing the prize gained 31,735 impressions and we received 631 entries comprising over 3,000 works of art. The 2016 group show selection has been made by Simon Burton, Nathan Eastwood, Terry Greene, Susie Hamilton, Matthew Krishanu and Freya Purdue, and the 15 painters they have selected offer a broad cross-section of all we had hoped for. The artists in the 2016 prize group show come from all over the UK and reflect a diverse range of practice, from the deepening of abstraction, the realist and politically engaged through to the exploration of paint as a conceptual medium. They are equally split between male and female artists with some still in their 20's and in art school while others have maintained a serious professional practice for many years.

And what the prize reveals is that painting is thriving in Britain in the 21st century. It is now a diverse, serious and highly individualistic art form being practiced across the country, has resonance with the slow food movement, meditation and reading physical books and is an engagement with the 'real'. In fact it is probably true to say that painting has never been more vibrant in Britain than it is right now.

Robert Priseman, 25 May 2016

We would especially like to thank Mark De Novellis and Rachel Tranter at Richmond Museum for offering us the initial backing of space with the small and beautifully formed Riverside Gallery to help us kick start the prize; Grant Scanlan at Huddersfield Art Gallery for the second venue in the tour, and Sophie Cummings at Swindon Museum and Art Gallery for providing a host venue for the winner's solo show.

Most of all though, we would like to thank each and every painter who has submitted to the prize. For without all of their support we would not have had such an amazing pool of talent to draw from. It has been an immense pleasure to see such a rich diversity of work.

The Prize Winner selection panel judges for 2016: Michael Peppiatt (owner and publisher of Art International 1985-1995 and since 2010 board member of the Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome), Amanda Geitner (Senior Curator of the Sainsbury Centre, 1998-2015 and Director East Anglian Art Fund), Paul O'Kane (member of the Association Internationale des Critiques d'Art and regular contributor to Art Monthly), Grant Scanlan (Huddersfield Art Gallery) and Sophie Cummings (Curator of Swindon Art Gallery and Museum).

“Painting parallels life by continually throwing up questions that we can sometimes find an answer to, but that more often than not simply lead to more questions.

For this reason it will never cease to be of interest for me.”

Kaavous Clayton, Curator

“All painting is about something, be it physical, philosophical, conceptual, metaphysical or to tell a story. Let us hope that all paintings contain something within what Brice Marden calls, 'that incredibly intense rectangle' and that we as viewers respond existentially, aesthetically and with humanity.”

Stephen Snoddy, Director, The New Art Gallery, Walsall

"Painters! I know you feel the pride, romance and difficulty of that self-description.
The great painting - elusive, impossible record of human touch - remains the dream
and summit of the visual arts today just as it has always done.

Extravagant? Maybe, but I mean it."

Christopher Le Brun, President, Royal Academy of Arts, London

The Painters

Louis Appleby

The paintings suggest human presence in a banal, dystopian apocalyptic manner. It's an oscillation between human activity and the dry, 'interior design' quality of the paintings. This creates an interesting dialogue between the subject matter, the way the paint has been handled and the indication of biological/human intervention in the painting.

Their subject matter is a mix of teenage detritus and adolescent paraphernalia: video games, televisions, laptops, toy guns, Coke cans and McDonald's wrappers, which sit uneasily alongside lone pot plants, solitary angle-poise lamps or school science project relics. The titles are the first clue that there's more going on than appears on the surface, creating a tension between science and entertainment that results in a passive apathy. 'Beasts of England', for example, is a nod to George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. In it, a TV depicts jets dropping bombs on foreign soil, while the oil that is coveted from the lands being attacked powers the lamp on the speaker and the car waiting outside in the drive. 'Age of Empires', meanwhile, proposes a space filled with a range of information sources. There is a video game on the television, and various different pictures on the wall. They each convey the same message: we consume, we participate, we observe.



David Auburn

I paint to respond to my instincts and to make sense of what it is to be here on the earth right now. My love of paint, the act of painting and all its processes form the basis of my practice, and the way it can not only mimic but also parallel our relationships with the world and with each other.

My subject matter spans a wide range of apparently disparate strands, including cell behaviour, human interaction, the weights and stresses of large buildings and structures. In my work, the act of applying and manipulating paint is a close metaphor for the tugs and demands of life, whether this is purely material or representing psychological and emotional pulls.

Through painting I enjoy how all aspects of culture I encounter directly or indirectly inform my practice, and reveal in the work and its processes an idea of how I perceive the world personally and globally, but also how painting relates to the wider world too. This journey of discovery and potential motivates and fascinates me as an artist.



Aglaé Bassens

Often psychological, my paintings are usually peopled only by absence. They uncover the atmospheric melancholy for example of empty fish tanks, viewless windows, curtains and sofas. I wish to draw the viewer into an everyday, mundane world by applying a transparent, fluent painterliness to unexpected subjects.

My paintings are usually composed of visual counterparts such as movement and stillness, presence and absence. These contrasts illustrate my inner oscillation between detachment and attachment to the world around me. This seesaw is a reflection of the process of painting, immersive in the act of feeling with the eye and gazing with the hand as the loaded paint brush glides on the canvas - yet also removed once the brush is put down and the painting completed, subjected to the artist's critical and appraising gaze.

More recent paintings have been attempts to turn something into nothing, representing partial, close up views of foreheads and of clothing such as shirts: claustrophobic, awkward, intimate perhaps, but also shuttling those subjects towards emptiness.

My involvement with the materiality of paint feeds my need to engage physically with the world when the gaze is no longer sufficient. This symbiotic relationship between the hand and the eye when they replace each other is thrilling to me and deeply comforting. While being drawn from personal experiences, my paintings talk of the solitude of the human condition, and of the solace of beauty.



Karl Bielik

I am an abstract painter I work on canvas, linen, panels and paper. I work exclusively in oil paint on thirty or so paintings and drawings at once and these vary in scale from intimate to large. The studio is the place where practically everything happens for me occasionally diagrams from medical books or photographs I have taken may inform the work in its formative stages, but essentially my work emerges from the physical process of painting.

Loose oily wounds and thick emulsions offset light glazes and dribbles, I paint, wipe out, paint over, turn the canvasses around, print, blot, mask, pour paint, scrape and scratch. Irregular canvases, panels and paper litter my studio walls and tables. I shift from one piece to another and don't focus on completion, just nudging a painting from one position to another. Only when I am in the studio standing in front of the work do they begin to take form, I give them room to develop meaning to be here in the world. I am in there almost every day and there is little thought process outside of the studio.

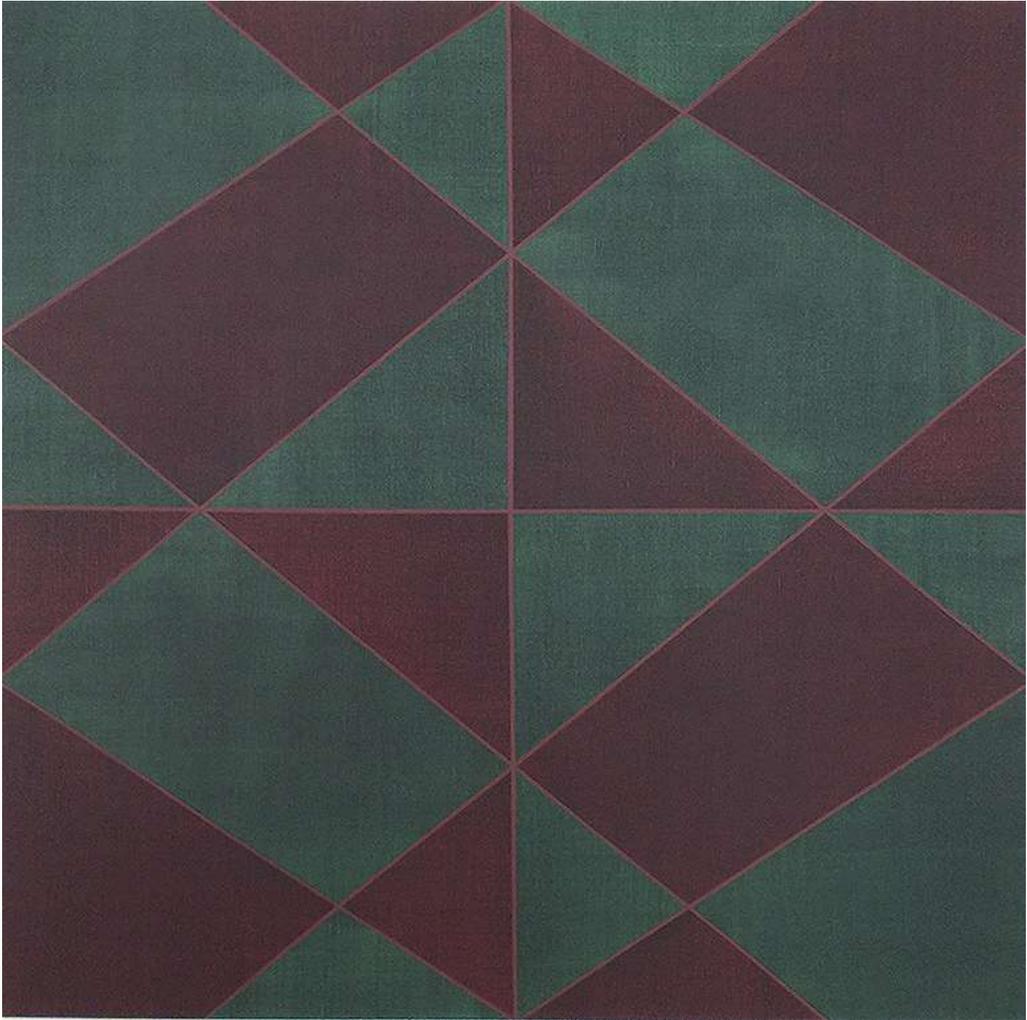
The works are sometimes not touched for weeks or months, which offers an incubation time to contemplate where I want them to go, them to take me or if they become complete. In contrast to my sometime emotive imagery, banal solitary words form my titles, tempering and balancing the melancholy character of my work.



Katrina Blannin

Working with rotations, sequences and repetition has generated ideas about movement. I work with a palindromic dynamic or interplay: a grid always provides the stage and the process a kind of choreographic diagram in paint. Recent emphasis has been on the tonal attributes of painted planes: the coarse linen's open weave, its warp, weft and texture, together with layers of paint, are employed to create tonal and chromatic shifts. Sharply coloured, linear demarcations allow for even closer tones and the retention of structure in the composition - adding another element with which to extemporise. I like the material contradictions of fluorescent and flax.

Construction is key and the concept of a visual proposition. A plan worked out in advance has become the central thread in an evolving methodology. However, playing with a kind of 'schema' and elementary colour systems still, contradictorily, produces unexpected results. It is intended that the resulting surface materiality and enmeshed colour, should converge with perception: the aim is not to obfuscate but to engage the viewer in visual play.



John Brennan

Emotional and contextual conflict is the underlying focus of most of my painting. As an artist I'm fascinated by a subtle sensation that I've come to recognise and regard as a visual paranoia of sorts. It can manifest itself in a wide range of subject matter, the common denominator being a sense of the uncanny or enigmatic. It could be a landscape that feels both uplifting and menacing at the same time, a micro facial expression that reveals an underlying darkness, or a posture that implies both invitation and rejection. I find these tensions compelling.

I work from a mix of my own photographs, found images and video stills, either transcribed intact or altered to form new scenes. Through the painting process a dialogue takes place, whereby I selectively heighten or modify the qualities that first caught my attention.

The fiction and popular culture of my childhood and early teenage years continue to shape my interests to the present day. Whilst the result is a seemingly disparate range of subjects, in my own psyche these subjects are all connected and inhabit a single interior world.



Lindsey Bull

My work explores psychological states, reality and illusion through figurative painting. I am interested in different states of mind and how these interior lives manifest themselves or hide themselves from the outside world.

With an interest in dark, idiosyncratic or misunderstood psychologies my paintings are investigations into often sidelined or marginalised groups and individuals - people who might be considered on the fringes of mainstream culture and society, or actively excluded from it. My fascination with outsiders and auteurs, interlopers and introverts, strangers and extroverts, waifs and strays, subalterns and subcultures, finds its expression in painterly paintings with an outsider undercurrent.

The figures depicted are often costumed or curiously dressed, undertaking some kind of performance. The images I use for the paintings are widely sourced from fashion magazines to witchcraft journals and books on rituals and religions. They are figures caught in flux, in a moment in time. Perhaps falling or about to fall or sometimes caught in moment of looking at the viewer. These are figures captured for a split second. This concept of “in the moment” is crucial to the work.

Where something connected to reality merges with the fantastical is really exciting to me. This mysterious place is where I want the painting to be.



Nick Carrick

I use nature and the representational world as a springboard into abstraction for my paintings, both being subjective and objective starting points in my work.

The subject matter is diverse, ranging from newspaper clippings, old photos, personal memories both poignant and insignificant, and things that capture my attention on a walk or train journey. Abject beauty to me often lies within the mundane and banal that is so often overlooked in everyday life. Painting is a metaphorical train journey, the journey more often than not being more important than the final destination.

The process is the construction of a visual diary, a scatter shot approach of seemingly random source material linked by emotional metaphors that use allegorical references. This is done through the act of painting to capture texture, colour, weight and surface detail, within this they start to take on a life of their own.



Dan Coombs

Dan Coombs creates his compositions from studies in collage and paint which unite his figures with entirely invented surroundings, landscape dream worlds and interior spaces. These are human encounters charged with a mysterious, symbolic power. They are explorations of guilt, beauty and fear of isolation that draw on myth, religion and psychoanalysis in order to grasp the real within the imaginary.

The paintings have a formality of composition and balance that underpins the energy of their execution but remain deliberately left open to interpretation from the viewer. They are attempting to capture the essence of an emotional situation, to represent ideas or embody meanings. The figures have an uncanny ambiguity - they can be interpreted as emanations of the artist's psyche, or as creatures in their own right - trapped within dreamlike, gestural landscapes of heightened colour.



Gordon Dalton

My recent paintings have a quiet melancholy that questions their intentions. A seemingly offhand approach reveals a love of awkward imagery, polluted colours and a stuttering bad grammar.

An anxious contradiction is on show, with the work being self-conscious of what it is, its possible failings, yet it revels in a new found simplicity and relationships to landscape painting, finding an intimate beauty in both natural and post-industrial landscape.

These are small, quiet paintings that aim emotional punches with their openness and honesty. My work asks the viewer to look longer and harder at what painting is, and why it continues to fascinate.



Marielle Hehir

Focusing on colour, materiality and spatial conditions, my practice is a search for phenomenology within painting. I believe the phenomenology of perception triggered by the experience of viewing a painting, corresponds to that which we may experience when traversing the landscape.

Landscape is the mordant, which fixes the two extremes of the earth and the atmosphere. Any rupture of this mordant surface exposes an underlying materiality of the earth, prompting a re-consideration of what our landscape is constructed from and our bodily relation to it in terms of space. This is paralleled when evaluating the surface of a painting.

Painting has the great ability to demonstrate the illusion of space, but painting can also push through boundaries to disrupt and occupy real space.

The extraction of materials from the land changes the parameters of a given landscape as material moves, decays and synergizes along a journey, polluting new territory and transforming the landscape. I am particularly interested in the toxicity unearthed at the hand of the human tapping into the earth's crust. As pollution becomes a surrogate for nature, a relationship is forged between the toxic and the sublime.

My work utilizes the natural and the synthetic, regarding colour and materiality, to comment on the post-industrial landscape, and question how we may consider contemporary phenomenology.



Cathy Lomax

I am interested in the seductive imagery of popular culture, how it draws us in and pretends to involve us but ultimately shuts us out. In my work I assimilate media fictions around fame and glamour, and the shared immersive experience of watching film, and juxtapose these with elements of personal identity to create scatter narratives that play with notions of reality.

To make the work I isolate, crop or re-configure filmic moments, found and personal photographs and old master paintings and re-present these as new, painted, taxonomies, which hint at a curious contemporary longing for something unobtainable. I tend to paint quickly using washes of thin oil, and sometimes add text and collaged elements.

The ongoing Film Diary series features an image from every film I've watched since summer 2009; creating an alternate record of my life. This virtual life, lived in fiction, is every bit as intense and emotional as a 'real' life. The date the film was watched and a basic description of the image's place in the filmic narrative identify the individual paintings, which are made chronological in blocks of 12. Fontana, a work started while at The British School at Rome and finished in East London, features a series of women, cut out and re-arranged on a staircase as if it were a Cinecitta film set. The goddess-like women, who are costumed from film and fashion, descend the stairs, frozen like the omnipresent statues in the Eternal City. Amazon Fragments and Black Venus are also inspired by my time in Rome. Evil Under the Sun is from an ongoing series of works of 'reflection-less' mirrors.



Kate Lyddon

My practice spans painting, drawing and sculpture. The initial inspiration for making work is my immediate environment; people; human behaviour and interaction; the human form; clothing; the surreality of existence; the absurd. As I respond to my materials I find it (the material) disrupts any clear narratives, leading me away from initial subjects. The decision to leave the subject behind is intentional- as it leads to more nonsensical ideas which I find more interesting. The paintings and objects I make can sometimes suggest exaggerated observations of the human condition; the comic and the tragic; often verging on the grotesque.



Mandy Payne

I am interested in marginal spaces, places that are often maligned or thought to be devoid of traditional aesthetic beauty. For the past 4 years I have been exploring Park Hill in Sheffield, the Grade II* listed council estate and one of Britain's largest examples of Brutalist architecture. The site is currently being regenerated and is in a state of flux- which makes it an interesting place to observe. Part of the estate has been transformed into shiny, luxury flats whilst half remains boarded up and derelict. I am particularly drawn to the un-refurbished parts where the memories and layers of the past are almost tangible.

My intention was to create observational paintings that spoke of the displacement of the established communities and the temporality of the urban landscape.

Concrete is the unifying link throughout the estate and could be regarded as a potential palimpsest. In the refurbished sites it has been restored to exacting standards, in the old parts it is spalled, weathered and tarnished which gives it a rawness and beauty of its own. Fracture and process are essential elements in my work and with this in mind, I have been working with materials that are integral to the estate itself, namely concrete and aerosol spray paints.



Paul Smith

My work documents my interest in the lost and the found, what is passing out of memory and what is synthesized as trace in the landscape. Exploring lost places and capturing the essence of a moment of abandonment has been part of my practice since my earliest work, photographing the post-industrial landscape of the North East. More recently I have used these explorations of localities on the verge of returning to unofficial wilderness in dialogue with found material. Working between these two sources has informed a broader turn in my works to consider layerings and cuttings: the process of collage by which territory is shaped into landscape by human action.



“St Marylebone Parish Church is home to works of painted art by two great Royal Academicians, Benjamin West PRA and Edward Armitage, RA; we are proud to work alongside Contemporary British Painting in showcasing some of the very best work by contemporary British painters in our Crypt Gallery. This inaugural Contemporary British Painting Prize shows that painting is not only alive and well but flourishing and that paint continues to be an innovative and exciting medium through which artists can engage and challenge contemporary society.”

The Revd Canon Stephen Evans, MA, MPhil

Special thanks due:

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5 November - 28 January

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Published in 2016
Contemporary British Painting

“A great example of artists taking matters into their own hands...”

Nicholas Usherwood, Galleries Magazine

“The Contemporary British Painting prize is revelatory, it showcases the pool of undiscovered talent in the vibrant British painting scene”.

Grant Scanlan, Curator, Huddersfield Art Gallery

“A new painting prize with the explicit aim of exploring and promoting current British trends in the medium.”

A-N

“The Contemporary British Painting Prize has been devised to discover great artists working in paint in the UK today”

For Example

“The focus of this prize is on genuine and ongoing career support...”

Artlyst

“A much-needed showcase of contemporary British painting.
We hope it will endure for years to come.”

Mark De Novellis, Curator of Exhibitions, Orleans House Gallery, Richmond

“The Contemporary British Painting Prize clearly demonstrates that British painting is not only alive and well but flourishing. An absolute must see collection of works by some of the most exciting painters working in the UK today.”

Jessica Litherland, Curator, Rugby Art Gallery and Museum

Cover painting: ‘Mauve’ by Katrina Blannin