

Leon Kossoff

Claude Monet had his poplars – stridently rhythmic verticals that facilitated wild experiments with colour. For Piet Mondrian, an apple tree helped to pave the way towards abstraction. Less radically transformed but of greater personal resonance, perhaps, is the cherry tree that has been painted numerous times over the past decade by Leon Kossoff. We can only speculate as to the reason for this relatively late introduction to Kossoff's oeuvre, yet the tree's deteriorating state – an aged bough is supported by stakes – renders it an arboreal equivalent of the hunched and huddled figures that London's existential expressionist-in-chief has focused on since the 1950s, as physically compromised as his famous 'Man in a Wheelchair' (1961) in the Tate collection.

Sitting, or rather leaning, in his Willesden garden, Kossoff's tree has

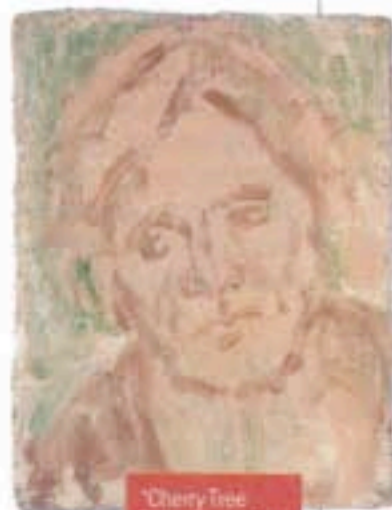


Annely Juda Galleries West

been painted from different angles and at various times of the year (but never, it would appear, in blossom), the slight modulations of tone and articulations of form that occur between paintings adding up to a significant portrait. Kossoff's muscular technique guards against sentimentality but evidently there's room in his language for tenderness. Interspersed are portrait heads of models including the artist John Lessore, whom Kossoff has returned to over the course of decades, as well as large paintings of Christ Church Spitalfields. A lighter if not brighter palette gives the most entrancing of these pictures the look of ancient, faded frescoes.

A tree, faces, buildings, the city... all, in their way, old friends. Much like Kossoff's rugged, stoic art – something good to come back to.

Martin Coomer



'Cherry Tree and Tube Train', 2007-08 (top) and 'Head of Peggy IV', 2006 (below)



EXHIBITION OF THE WEEK

Canaletto, 'Piazza San Marco, Looking East', 1723

Venice: Canaletto and His Rivals

Visitors beware: the 55 pictures gathered here merge into one seemingly unending procession of chocolate box vistas in the world. It's a bit like being in Venice, then – the waterlogged municipality that is forever etched on our minds thanks partly to the hand of Giovanni Antonio Canal, or 'little Canal' as he



National Gallery Major spaces

became known. At first a painter of theatrical backdrops, he lived and died in the Most Serene Republic of Venice, during the final throes of an imperial heyday that ended ignominiously in Napoleonic rule. This didn't stop Canaletto from making his own hay while the getting was good, producing hundreds of politically correct views (or *veduti*) for the hordes of plundering, pillaging aristo-Brits on their Grand Tours.

The National Gallery initially dispels the notion that Canaletto was either an arch-classicist or a mere painter-by-numbers. His earliest work here, from 1722, is of the backside of Venice, looking north from Canareggio (no, not another painter, but an area roughly like a Venetian Garden Suburb, complete with Jewish ghetto) towards the cemetery island of San Michele. It's an unfashionable scene of everyday

life under a grey sky, but one that's rich in atmospheric mystery. Canaletto's 1725 'Stonemason's Yard', painted when he was just 28 years old, is also among his best pictures, but depicts nothing more than some incidental laundry and mundane goings-on in a dead-end street. The hasty execution only strengthens the viewer's feeling of being lost and of discovering a quiet, hidden corner away from the hubbub – surely the high point of any authentic Venetian experience.

From shabby scenes of markets and old men pissing in the shadows, Canaletto soon graduated to panoramic, brilliantly day-lit scenes looking across Saint Mark's Square or the Grand Canal, often cleverly pinched in width to fit the canvas. Indeed, Canaletto was so besotted with the steady stream of commissions pouring in from various earls, dukes and barons that he never hesitated to shift a pretty façade or insert a wagging dog to balance a composition or add pictorial oomph. Essentially, he sold out to become a topographical bore for hire, attempting painterly Cinemascope and High Definition in order to wow his clients.

But what of the much-touted rivals to this undisputed Doge of Venetian painting? Well, there was brief competition from the likes of

Michele Marieschi and Francesco Guardi, but essentially Canaletto had no significant peers in the game because he – along with his precocious nephew and protégé, Bernardo Bellotto – had cornered the market in anally retentive and harshly ruled cityscapes. There's no doubting Canaletto was the

champ – his perspective is never skew-whiff, his light never fades – it's just that for all this skill and technical competency there's little to love in the unerring craft and even less to admire in the occasional, practically phoned-in potboilers of some plaza or another.

Unable to take in as much visual information as any of

these artists packed into their hi-res visions of Venice, the over-hung main room of jubilatory festivities starts to swim before the eyes, leading to that familiar blockbuster queasiness of overload. For all its gold and glister, the show is ultimately a parade of Venetian finery put on for the pleasure and consumption of outsiders (tellingly, almost all Canalettos were exported and few remain in Italian museums). Like the weirdly preserved-in-aspic place itself, this exhibition beats you over the head with impossibly impressive view after impressively impossible view. In other words, it's a tourist trap. Ossian Ward

“
For all its glister, it's a parade of Venetian finery for outsiders, a tourist trap in other words

Best galleries

North

Lisson Gallery

020 7724 2739. 29, 52-54 Bell St, NW1 5DA. ☎ Edgware Rd. 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat.



DON'T MISS...

The final week of former Time Out cover star Marina Abramovic's show of death-defying works in which she screams and suffers for her art. Ouch.

*** LAST CHANCE Marina Abramovic** Work by the influential and confrontational artist, whose performances challenge her own body's physical and psychological boundaries. ▶ Nov 13.

Victoria Miro

020 7336 8109. 16 Wharf Rd, N1 7RW. ☎ Old St. 10am-6pm Tue-Sat. **Hernan Bas/ Isaac Julien/Yayoi Kusama.** ▶ Nov 13.

NEW Francesca Woodman Fifty photographs taken from a major touring retrospective of the artist's short career (she died in 1981 aged just 22). Nov 17 ▶ Jan 22 2011.

White Cube Hoxton Square

020 7930 5373. 48 Hoxton Square, N1 6PB. ☎ Old St. 10am-6pm Tue-Sat. **LAST CHANCE Mark Bradford** 'Paintings' made from weathered roadside hoardings form part of this whirlwind of symbols and layers of truth. Bradford spent six months on the battered coast of Louisiana in 2008, constructing an ark from

discarded signage. A grainy Super-8 video charts progress on the jerrybuilt boat and lends an air of melancholy to the proceedings. (OW) ▶ Nov 13.

South

The Agency

020 8692 0734. 66 Evelyn St, SE8 5DD. ☎ Canada Water. 10.30am-6pm Wed-Sat. *** Dan Coopey** Work that explores methods of visual communication. ▶ Dec 16.

Pump House Gallery

020 7350 0523. Battersea Park, SW11 4NJ. Battersea Park rail. 11am-5pm Wed, Thur, Sun; 11am-4pm Fri, Sat. *** Magic Show** Magicians entertain, whereas artists aim to enlighten. These works by 24 artists highlight the strong connection between visual art's use of perception-shifting techniques to engage an audience and those used by stage magicians to do the same. (HS) ▶ Dec 19.

Utrophia Project Space

020 8691 8409. 136 Tanners Hill, SE8 4QD. New Cross/New Cross Gate Overground. 11am-6pm Thur-Sun. **NEW Folie à Deux** Group show around the idea of environment. Nov 11 ▶ Nov 28.

East

Bloomberg SPACE

020 7330 7959. 50 Finsbury Square, EC2A 1HD. ☎ Moorgate. 11am-6pm Mon Sat. *** Comma 28/29 Adrian Paci** (see Reviews) alongside work that investigates the blinking language of Morse Code by **Julian Bismuth.** ▶ Dec 4.

Cell Project Space

020 7241 3600. 258 Cambridge Heath Rd, E2 9DA. ☎ Bethnal Green. 12noon-6pm Fri-Sun.

Critics' choice

The five best exhibitions this week



1 Gauguin: Maker of Myth

Tate Modern
The big blockbuster doesn't disappoint, retelling this angry young man's journey to South Seas exile. Was he Machiavellian? Yes, but a monster? No. ▶ Jan 16 2011



2 Louise Bourgeois

Hauser & Wirth
A posthumous show of 'Fabric Works' explores the artist's use of weaving in darkly disturbing discomfort blankets and uplifting, hand-embroidered panels (reviewed next week). ▶ Dec 18



3 Leon Kossoff

Annely Juda
Nobody accumulates paint like this 80-something dauber, here returning over and over to a faithful old cherry tree for these heavily worked figurative works (see Reviews). ▶ Dec 17

4 Exhibition #3 with Sir Peter Blake

Museum of Everything
The itinerant Museum of Everything reopens with Blake's circus curios and eccentric Victorian taxidermy (reviewed next week). ▶ Dec 24

5 James Turrell

Gagosian
The illuminator is back, showing light-filled installations and a one-man immersion chamber. From the sublime to the miraculous. ▶ Dec 10

NEW Slip Sensor (Part 1) First instalment of a two-part show, with work by Andy Jackson, Maria Taniguchi, Laura Buckley and others. Nov 12 ▶ Jan 23 2011.

Chisenhale Gallery

020 8981 4518. 64 Chisenhale Rd, E3 5QZ. ☎ Mile End. 1-6pm Wed-Sun. **Hito Steyerl** New film-based commission. ▶ Dec 19.

Herald St

020 7168 2566. 2 Herald St, E2 6JT. ☎ Bethnal Green. 11am-6pm Wed-Fri, 12noon-6pm Sat, Sun. **Nick Rolph** Collages and objects that refer to cultural rebranding. ▶ Dec 17.

Kate MacGarry

020 8981 9100. 7a Vyner St, E2 9DG. ☎ Bethnal Green. 12noon-6pm Wed-Sun. **Tiago Carneiro da Cunha** Ceramic sculpture that makes reference to horror film imagery. ▶ Nov 28.

Wilkinson Gallery

020 8980 2662. 50-58 Vyner St, E2 9DQ. ☎ Bethnal Green. 11am-6pm Wed-Sat, 12noon-6pm Sun. **Anna Parkina** Works on paper by the Russian artist. ▶ Nov 21.

West

Annely Juda

020 7629 7578. 23 Dering St, W1S 1AW. ☎ Bond St. 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat. *** Leon Kossoff** ▶ Dec 17. See Review 8

Frith Street Gallery

020 7494 1550. 17-18 Golden Square, W1F 9JJ. ☎ Piccadilly Circus. 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat.

NEW Fiona Banner 'The Naked Ear', work which explores language in relation to war, including a large suspended bell, cast from the rendered fuselage of a Tornado jet and a large-scale wall text which describes the Battle of Hastings in 1066, based on the Bayeux Tapestry.

Gagosian Britannia St

020 7841 9960. 6-24 Britannia St, WC1X 9JD. ☎ King's Cross St Pancras. 10am-6pm Tue-Sat.

*** James Turrell** The new walk-in rainbow called 'Dhātu' is firmly at the spectacular end of the spectrum for Turrell's now trademark gallery-sized 'Ganzfelds' (fields that disturb or confuse vision). The giant, smooth interior of this latest light well cycles from sunset red to sky blue and fizzing orange, through every in-between shade and ice-cream pastel conceivable. (OW) ▶ Dec 4.

Hauser & Wirth

020 7287 2300. 23 Savile Row, W1S 2ET. ☎ Piccadilly Circus. 10am-6pm Tue-Sat. *** Louise Bourgeois** Hauser & Wirth inaugurates its imposing new gallery with a show of more than 70 fabric 'drawings' made by the artist between 2002 and 2008. ▶ Dec 18.

Sadie Coles

020 7493 8611. 69 South Audley St, W1K 2QZ. ☎ Green Park. 10am-6pm Tue-Sat.

*** Angus Fairhurst** A simple line drawing depicts two pairs of legs, joined at the waist, struggling to put on a pair of trousers. Without arms the figure has no means to pull them up. The drawing is titled 'Trouble with Comedy', the obvious trouble being that what makes something funny is often its inherent tragedy. It's something that Fairhurst understood perhaps only too well. (HS) ▶ Nov 27.

HAUSER & WIRTH
LOUISE BOURGEOIS
THE FABRIC WORKS
CURATED BY
GERMANO CELANT
15 OCTOBER
– 18 DECEMBER 2010
23 SAVILE ROW
LONDON W1S 2ET
HAUSERWIRTH.COM

UNTITLED (DETAIL), 2007. FABRIC AND FABRIC COLLAGE
41.5 x 31.7 x 8.3 CM / 16 3/8 x 12 1/2 x 2 1/2 IN. PHOTO: CHRISTOPHER BURKE