

BRIAN SAYERS

In Plain Sight

Private View

Wednesday 7 May 2025, 6-8 pm

Exhibition dates

8 May – 13 June 2025

Brian Sayers paints objects, laid out on table-tops, almost resembling altarpieces. These objects occupy the entire pictorial space. Sayers has been pre-occupied with this subject, almost without exception, since he first exhibited with Long & Ryle in 1992. This exhibition 'In Plain Sight' continues to explore Sayers' fascination with assembling and reassembling various household vessels and implements, giving them a mysterious sense of grandeur. Sayers imbues the objects with a status, as if displayed in a museum and we can only guess as to their meaning within the language of still life. The paintings in this exhibition are an assortment of everyday objects, some related to the kitchen or even the laboratory.



Brian Sayers, *Winter Still Life*, 2025, oil on canvas, 127 x 122 cm

In recent work Sayers combines many of the approaches prevalent in earlier paintings, but with the added dimension of intensity of colour and a more dynamic interaction between the objects depicted. Still life themes continue to be the pretext for an almost abstract play of basic forms interspersed with imagery derived from Dutch natural history painting, among other sources, to contrast their vitality with the inert vessels and containers.



Brian Sayers, *Composition with Hare*, 2024, oil on canvas, 100 x 100 cm

Unforeseen resonances are the outcome of this jostling of random objects. Sayers seems to encourage a kind of musical counterpoint, with paintings which suggest they should be listened to as much as seen. On show will be a range of work which attests to Sayers' continuing fascination with the ambiguities and allusions that can co-exist in the still life genre.

It is not easy to account for the hallucinatory power and beauty of Brian Sayers' paintings. All are still lifes depicting various household vessels and implements; most of these look innocent enough, although others suggest the obscure and possibly nefarious practices of a long lost civilization. Yet despite the museum-like hush in which these objects dwell, they slowly become imbued with a range of human emotions: from anxiety, to quotidian contentment by way of a dream-like introspection; all seem present in the internal arguments of these compositions.

Like earlier painters of the still life such as Zurbaran, Cotán and Morandi, Sayers achieves his uncanny effects through nuance and restraint, and through a meticulous attention to the harmonies and tensions of form. To enter his work is to enter a cabinet of curiosities in which the art of seeing is transformed into an almost mystical fascination with everyday objects, the space that surrounds them, and the relationships they may or may not have with each other, and with us.



Brian Sayers, *Flowers in a Vase*, 2023, oil on canvas, 40 x 50 cm

“The broad, sure brush-strokes, and unfailingly secure sense of linear design (laid bare when you view his drawings) are in tension with a figuratively precarious arrangement. An ornate shell teeters on a corner, signalling something rarely permitted within his other works: we are not only invited to scan the objects clustered together, but are also allowed a discomfiting view over the table’s edge, where, if the foremost items were given a careless shove, the shell or another perilously poised object may tumble, either into the drawer gaping below, or into the void; falling not only from the table but perhaps out of the painting.” – Jeffrey Dennis

Sayers graduated from the Slade School of Art in 1978 and has exhibited since 1991 with Long & Ryle. He won The Discerning Eye Award in 1995 and won Second Prize in The Hunting Art Prizes in 1999. His work is in a number of important collections. He is regularly exhibited in the BP Portrait Award held at the National Portrait gallery and in the Royal Academy’s Summer Show.

Please contact Sarah Long or Romy Dawson for further information.

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