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SANDRA BLOW 1925-2006

Sandra Blow, who died on September 14, was unusual among British abstract artists of her generation in that she found her own voice not as a measured reaction to the size and scale of American Abstract Expressionism, but instead through the work of her then lover Alberto Burri, who was at the point of reaching towards an abstract language of tortured *matière* made up of sacking and bitumen, similar to the work of Antoni Tàpies, Jean Dubuffet and Jean Fautrier. Blow lived in Italy with Burri in 1948, returning to London to distil and develop what she had gained from her contact with him, and from 1951 she regularly showed with Gimpel Fils, until 1966 when she switched to the New Art Centre. From about 1956 Blow fixated more on the process of collage rather than the particularities of Burri's poor materials. Through Gimpel she came into contact with artists of the Middle Generation – Terry Frost, Patrick Heron, Roger Hilton, Peter Lanyon, and Bryan Wynter among them – and in 1957 she rented a cottage in Tregerthen, near Heron's house Eagle's Nest, and just outside St Ives. Although she was only to stay for less than a year she continued to visit the West Penwith peninsula until 1994, when she left London to live in St Ives. Her close attachment to St Ives meant that in the 60s she was an associate member of the Penwith Society and included in the Tate Gallery's 1985 survey exhibition 'St Ives 1939-64'. However, her paintings never seemed to contain the residue of landscape that could be discerned in much of the work of her contemporaries. In the 50s she used to drive from London to Exmoor by Jeep and then fasten a canvas to the spare wheel on the back as a makeshift easel – but her intention was not to paint the landscape but to see how her paintings could hold up in the landscape.

Following her first solo exhibition in New York at the Sainenburg gallery in 1957 and her success with an International Guggenheim award for her participation in the Young Artists Section at the Venice Biennale in 1960, she rented an unusually large studio in South Kensington (17ft high, 35 ft long and 27ft wide) that had an immediate impact on her work, which became correspondingly larger in size and scale, and compositionally sparer – either monochrome or with accents of strong colour. In the 70s her work incorporated a greater sense of geometrical form following a collaboration with the architect Eric Defty, but what never left her was the sense of collage in building up a formal rhythm between organic and hard edges. In 1994, unable to afford the rent on her studio, she relocated permanently to St Ives where she created an

equally huge studio out of a disused furniture showroom that was also her home, and rejuvenated her painting. She was elected a Royal Academician in 1978 and had a retrospective exhibition at Tate St Ives in 2002. ❧

ANNELY JUDA 1914-2006

Annelly Juda, who died aged 91 on August 13, dedicated her gallery to the values of the 'Non-Objective World' – the Russian Avant Garde and the International Modernism typified by the Bauhaus and De Stijl. Born in Kassel, her family moved to Palestine in 1933, before she moved on her own to Britain in 1937, where she married in 1939. Following her divorce from her husband in 1955, and with three children to support, she worked first as a secretary to Eric Estorick, a collector-dealer who had formed a renowned collection of Italian Futurism. After two years she left to join the Kaplan Gallery before, in 1960, opening the Molton Gallery (designed by Arnold Bode, founder of the Documenta exhibitions) and then, in 1963, the Hamilton Galleries. Soon after the Hamilton closed, she opened Annelly Juda Fine Art in 1968 in Tottenham Mews, moving to Dering Street in 1990. Although renowned for its historical exhibitions, this was balanced by a roster of artists that over the years came to include Roger Ackling, Anthony Caro, Alan Charlton, Eduardo Chillida, Christo, Prunella Clough, Alan Green, David Hockney, Michael Kenny, Leon Kossoff, Kenneth and Mary Martin, Alan Reynolds and Yuko Shiraishi among many others. Nevertheless it is for her historical exhibitions that the gallery first made its name – rivalling and shaming museums by the quality of the work on show and the uncompromising way it was displayed. These exhibitions were an education and an eye-opener, and anyone visiting Tottenham Mews, whether rich collector, artist or art history student, was not only made to feel at home but also the recipient of her wide knowledge – something quite inspirational and rare in the art world of the 80s. She had continued to work in the gallery until barely a year ago. ❧

JASON RHOADES 1965-2006

Jason Rhoades, who died suddenly on August 1, was one of a number of younger Los Angeles artists who built on the performative excess in the work of Paul McCarthy to create a testosterone-driven party-hard aesthetic that could only have emanated from the West Coast. He left the University of California, Los Angeles in 1993, the same year as his first solo exhibition at David Zwirner in New York. He was student, protégé and collaborator of McCarthy; they worked together often, including *Proposition* shown at

the Venice Biennale in 1999 (where Rhoades also collaborated with Peter Bonde on the Danish Pavilion) or more recently *Sheep Plug* for Kling & Bang gallery in Reykjavik in 2004, that reprised their earlier 2002 *Shit Plug* installation, and they had even talked of opening a gallery together in LA. His 1993 exhibition at Zwirner, along with his 1994 exhibition 'Swedish Erotica and Fiero Parts' at the the LA Rosamund Felsen Gallery and his participation in the 1995 Whitney Biennial made him a symbol of the international recognition of new art from LA.

It was never easy to discern structure in his abject, splurging yet grandiose, installations and party-performances – such as the recent series of 'Black Pussy Soiree Cabaret Macramé' events – and yet he explained that 'there's nothing arbitrary about anything in my work because there's always a reaction to the arbitrariness which make it precise'. Rhoades built a personal cosmos between the sacred and the profane as much as between public constraints and the desires formed in private inner space. *Perfect World*, 1999, which he claimed as the largest sculpture in the world, was conceived as a secular Garden of Eden constructed from polished aluminium scaffolding poles and wooden boards that created way overhead a platform bearing an actual-size photographic rendering of his father's garden. In 2004 he created *My Madinah: In Pursuit of my Ermitage...* that brought together 18th-century philosopher Immanuel Kant with the 20th-century soft-porn character *Emmanuelle* in an imagined Californian Mecca. Rhoades struck a rich vein with this mixture of Enlightenment philosophy, kitsch sex, pornography, mysticism, Californian hedonism and the confluence of western profanity and eastern religious beliefs, and it served as the basis of much of his work of the last few years such as *Meccatuna*, shown in 2003 at David Zwirner, that mixed hundreds of neon signs for slang euphemisms of female genitalia with a model of the Kaaba made out of Lego, and the related '*The Black Pussy ... and the Pagan Idol Workshop*' shown at Hauser & Wirth in London a year ago. At the time of his death he was preparing for a live event in Portland, Oregon, that was to feature a wrestling match involving homeless teenagers wallowing in a plastic pool filled with bath soaps, lotions and sexual lubricants. For Paul Schimmel, chief curator of the LA Museum of Contemporary Art 'He was one of the most significant artists of his generation ... He addressed social taboos; it's almost as if he were constructing sculpture with irony. He was an American artist *not* of the East Coast – he was a California artist with an interest in architecture, popular culture, county fairs, extremes of lifestyle, sports, entertainment, music.' ❧