

Visitor Information

Rose Wylie

2nd March to 24th May 2021

Aged 87 years, Rose Wylie paints as freely as a carefree child. And yet these enormous images contain the whole fragility of an artist's life, caught between the established female role models of the post-war decades and the hyperglycaemic diversity of possibilities in our era. As simple as the pictorial language is, the metaphorical messages, which it often takes a second glance to discover, is highly ambiguous. Rose Wylie (*1934 in Kent, where she lives today) is considered one of the most significant British artists of the present day, although she made her international breakthrough at an advanced age, with events including highly-regarded exhibitions at the Tate Britain in 2013 and in the Serpentine Gallery in 2017. The Museum Langmatt presents her first solo exhibition in Switzerland. Once again, a remarkable painter is waiting to be discovered here: one who pursues her artistic path in a courageous and undaunted way.

Rose Wylie's paintings oscillate between surreal pop art, comic art, and wild punk art. From a wide repertoire of motifs from newspapers, movies, advertisements, and everyday life, the artist distils striking scenes that represent humorous and sometimes also critical commentaries on current events. In a condensed and comic-like form, she conjures a touching naïveté and childlike quality rarely seen in Western art. Issues of gender and of role that have been with her all her life – sometimes in an oppressive way – play a key role in her pictures. While her husband Roy Oxlade (1929–2014) pursued his career as an artist, Rose Wylie had to abandon her artistic work to raise their three children. It is remarkable that the artist, in spite of all the adversity and her decades without any public recognition, kept painting and developing her personal artistic language, free from any influences from the wider art world. In spite of her great success, Rose Wylie continues to live in very a modest way in an old labourer's cottage out in the country in the County of Kent, South of England. She once said that "Lack of success gives you freedom. [...] You can do what you want.", (*Monopol*, 1/2016).

In her pictures and drawings, she lightly discards the narrow corset of social conventions from the 1950s to the 1970s, transforming it all, fable-like, into a shimmering pictorial world of multiple meanings.

Notwithstanding this, the seeming harmlessness of her artworks is like a trap, one which is always closing on the viewer unexpectedly. The women, drawn with simple strokes, are enormous, proud and strong personalities. And yet their fragility is plain to see. These pictures impressively demonstrate how painting can be carefree and profound at the same time – in spite of or perhaps even because of, the twentieth century's numerous stylistic revolutions. With gusto and energy, they spin fantasies of life and death, love and loss, joy and sorrow, compulsion and freedom. Suddenly, these great existential themes, which are also great traditional themes of art history, step down from their pedestals and surprise us by meeting us eye to eye. This unmistakeable "tone" also characterises her drawings. In the library, we follow the adventurous journey of a matchbox: in a tale full of references to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1623), an inconsequential object that is barely of any use any more travels through the world as Ariel, spirit of the air, whilst we, in these days of the coronavirus, must stay at home ...

In a narrative by Markus Stegmann, the horse and swan from the picture *Rescue Horse, Orange Border* travel through the pictures of Rose Wylie, and speak to us in a most unusual way. Markus Stegmann (ed.): *Rose Wylie, Museum Langmatt, Baden*, Hatje Cantz Verlag, Berlin 2021, 120 pages, CHF 28.00 (available at the museum ticket desk).

The logo for Museum Langmatt features the word "LANGMATT" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The letters are slightly slanted and have a thick, blocky appearance. There is a small gap between the "A" and the "N", and another between the "G" and the "M".

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