

ORDOVAS

PRESS RELEASE
7 JUNE 2018

25 Savile Row
London W1S 2ER
T. +44 (0)20 7287 5013

Gallery Hours:
Tue-Fri: 10:00-18:00
Sat: 11:00-15:00



FLOWERS

8 June—28 July 2018

"I can see only one explanation for the phenomenon of flowers being attractive to humans...the attribute we call beauty is of two kinds. One is a parochial kind of attractiveness, local to a species, to a culture, or to an individual. The other is unrelated to any of those: it is universal, and as objective as the laws of physics."

David Deutsch, *The Beginning of Infinity* (from Chapter 14, *Why are Flowers Beautiful?*)

Flowers have been messengers of meaning throughout art history - whether as symbols of fertility or mortality, purity or sexuality, love or loss, or simply nothing more than a pile of petals. On display from 8 June until 28 July 2018 at Ordovas on Savile Row, London, **Flowers** will focus on the significance of this enduring subject in post-war and contemporary art. Including a major painting by Gerhard Richter and an Alexander Calder mobile on display in the UK for the first time, the exhibition will explore how the flower, a traditional and classically beautiful object, fits within a modern context.

Alexander Calder's *Little Black Flower*, 1944, is a mobile created during the decade widely considered to be the most fertile period of development in the artist's career. On loan from a private collection and on display in the UK for the first time since it was made, the sculpture is composed of red-painted metal and wire, with a small black flower dancing at the end of a wire stem.

Whether alighting on flesh, foliage or fabric, Lucian Freud's creative vision was fuelled by his obsessive commitment to observation. In the mid-1960s Freud embarked on a series of paintings of botanical subjects, including *Cyclamen*, 1964. The artist commented, *"The subject matter has always been dictated by the way my life has gone. I noticed that when I was under particular strain, I didn't feel so like staring at people or bodies all day."* It was at times like these that objects around his studio, including a palm in a pot, thistles, cyclamens and buttercups, all substituted for sitters. For Freud, *"everything was autobiographical and everything was a portrait."* In the same way that he returned to a number of loyal sitters again and again throughout his life, the cyclamen plant was another familiar and favoured subject. The only two known surviving works that Freud executed directly on a wall are both of cyclamens. The first was painted in Coombe Priory, where Freud and his second wife Caroline Blackwood lived in the mid 1950s. The second was made a few years later in the autumn of 1959 at Chatsworth, where the artist was the guest of the 11th Duke of Devonshire. Cyclamens appealed to Freud because of their fleshy petals and thick stems, and the way they collapse when dying. *"They crash down; their stems turn to jelly and their veins harden,"* he once explained.

Gerhard Richter, *Blumen*, 1992 © Gerhard Richter

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During this same period, flowers were also a focus for Andy Warhol. The *Flowers* series is among the artist's most recognisable motifs - large, Day-Glo blossoms that hover over a variegated pattern of grass. Soon after Warhol began this series, he decided it should be the subject of his first show with Leo Castelli, which took place in the autumn of 1964. The *Flowers* represent a significant departure from the legendary subjects of the early 1960s—images of consumerism, celebrity, death and disasters. Furthermore, by using flowers as the subject of his work, Warhol was engaging with the long historical tradition of still life, notably in French Impressionist and Dutch Vanitas painting. However, rather than a direct encounter with nature, Warhol made these works by appropriating and doctoring an image of hibiscus blooms, that had been published in the June 1964 issue of *Modern Photography*.

In turn, *Flowers* will be displayed alongside Richard Pettibone's *Andy Warhol, 'Flowers', 1965*, executed 2011-2018, in which the flowers are appropriations of Warhol's borrowed image. Pettibone's recycling of the pop culture and Pop Art further emphasises the flower's function as a commodity and the mass-produced process by which these symbols of natural beauty have come into being.

Gerhard Richter's *Blumen* also positions flowers as the subject of a portrait rather than as an object. Richter painted this major work in 1992 and that same year showed it at Documenta IX alongside a collection of 11 *Abstraktes Bild* (Abstract Painting), *Grauer Spiegel* (Grey Mirror) and a fighter jet painting from 1964. A year later, in an interview with Hans-Ulrich Obrist, Richter remarked, "*We make our own Nature, because we always see it in the way that suits us culturally. When we look on mountains as beautiful, although they're nothing but stupid and obstructive rock piles; or see that silly weed out there as a beautiful shrub, gently waving in the breeze: these are just our own projections which go far beyond any practical, utilitarian values.*" In 2009, Richter explained, "*If the abstract paintings show my reality, then the landscapes and still-lives show my yearning.*"

A selection of photographs, that centre – either on purpose, or by nature of the human eye – on flowers, is also being shown. Among them are black and white images by Weegee, Louis Faurer and Robert Mapplethorpe, as well as a bunch of bright anemones against a pink background, by Wolfgang Tillmans and a photograph by David Dawson of Lucian Freud's garden.

Editor's Notes

1. To join the accredited list for Ordovas events and press viewings please contact Clare Roberts, communications@ordovasart.com or +44 (0) 7899 065088.