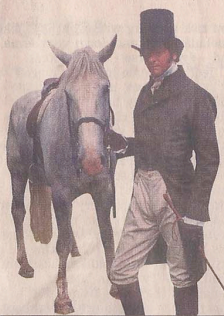


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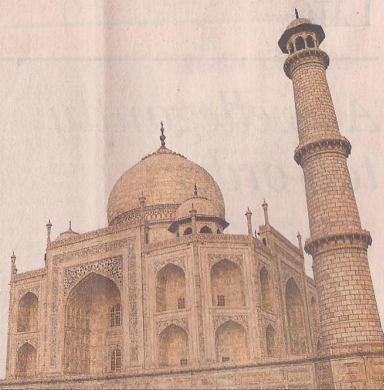


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Critics' choice

Visual arts Jackie Wullschlager

Philip-Lorca diCorcia

The Hepworth, Wakefield
The first UK overview of the influential American photographer whose work for four decades has negotiated the boundaries between fiction, artifice and documentation. DiCorcia uses real locations and people, not actors or models, but precisely controls composition, lighting and placing of figures in theatrically staged settings. He works in extensive series: "Hustlers" depicted male prostitutes; "Streetwork" and "Heads" focused on passersby on the street; "Lucky 13" showed pole dancers falling. This display is framed chronologically by diCorcia's explorations of narrative, landscape and how lives interconnect, in "A Storybook Life" (1975-99) and the ongoing "East of Eden".

hepworthwakefield.org
01924 247 360, to June 1

Richard Hamilton

Tate Modern, London and Institute of Contemporary Arts, London

The most comprehensive exhibition ever devoted to the multimedia artist best known as the father of pop art reveals Hamilton's output as generous, witty, complex, diverse yet consistent in

Art and Optimism in 1950s Britain

Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art

How can an exhibition whose greatest works are by Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud, Frank Auerbach and L S Lowry have the word optimism in its title? MIMA's large survey of 1950s British culture is broader than an art-historical show: it evokes the mood of a decade caught between a bold democratising future and postwar austerity and existential doubt. Full of iconic pieces – from Richard Hamilton's print which launched Pop Art: "Just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing?" to Arne Jacobsen's stacking chair – it is shaped into more than a nostalgia fest by showcasing a fascinating pluralism of approaches.

On one hand there is the pulse of hope and reconstruction – Festival of Britain posters, ads for "New Towns: What to See and How to Get There" –

formal and conceptual interests – especially an exploration of the idea of the interior, in both avant-garde installations (the highlights at the ICA) and paintings – but also uneven. Tate's 1950s canvases where painterly seduction mimics



Peter Blake's 'The Fine Art Bit' (1959)

and the new consumerism which revolutionised the fabric of everyday life: Liberty's boomerang table, humdrum, anonymous objects such as a red and

commercial and sexual seduction, such as "Homage a Chrysler Corp" and "Hers is a Lush Situation", have aged best; later, more dialectically political work, looks dated. tate.org.uk, 020 7887 8888, to May 26; ica.org.uk, 020 7930 3647, to April 6

white plastic domed lampshade and a kitchenette gas cooker all add flavour. This is the milieu satirised yet embraced by Hamilton and Pop colleagues Eduardo

Court and Craft: A Masterpiece from Northern Iraq

Courtauld Gallery, London

A show amplifying the background to one of the Courtauld's most unusual treasures, a brass container inlaid with

Paolozzi and Peter Blake. Blake's enamel-wood relief "The Fine Art Bit" juxtaposes vibrant stripes suggesting 1950s packaging and signage with a frieze of Old Master postcards, questioning art's future in an age of mass reproduction.

He also refers to American abstraction, and another highlight here is Anthony Caro's first abstract welded steel work "Twenty Four Hours". Flat, aggressively frontal, recalling Kenneth Noland's target paintings, it was made following a decisive American visit. But then comes the European perspective: Bacon's "Study for a portrait of Van Gogh"; Freud's engagement with northern portraiture in the "forensic, melancholy" "Girl in a Green Dress"; Auerbach's earth-coloured interior "The Sitting Room", whose dense painterly surfaces, natural and organic, have, his dealer Helen Lessore argued, "a reality which becomes ever more precious as the world 'fills up with plastics'". visitmima.com 01642 726720, to June 29

exquisite craftsmanship of this cosmopolitan trading city between 1100 and 1400. courtauld.ac.uk, 020 7848 2526, to May 18

Hannah Höch

Whitechapel Gallery, London

Dada's leading female artist, pioneer of photomontage and also of women's rights, gets a perceptive first UK retrospective. An early critic of Weimar Germany – "Cut with the Kitchen Knife through the Beer Belly of the Weimar Republic" (1919), a collage of pasted newspapers, for example – Höch satirised German racist and sexist attitudes in the 1920s and the beginnings of the mass culture beauty industry in the 1930s. She continued working until her death in 1978. whitechapelgallery.org, 020 7522 7888, to March 23

Gauguin: Tales of Paradise

Ordo vas, London

Four works by Gauguin feature in this small-scale show exploring the artist's search for the primitive in Brittany, then Tahiti. They include an unusual pated plaster self-portrait sculpture, "Masque de Sauvage", and from Gauguin's final year the rare "L'Apparition", last shown in Chicago in 1939. ordovasart.com, 020 7287 5013, to April 18

Dance Clement Crisp

The Sleeping Beauty

The Royal Opera House, London

This greatest of the old Petersburg ballets returns to the Covent Garden stage. The staging is serious, but sabotaged in small ways that offend against its original – notably in the second act where the opening sequences of the Hunting party are the victim of cheese-paring and witless musical and dramatic cuts, and by the darkest lighting this side of the Black Hole of Calcutta. roh.org.uk, 020 7304 4000

Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan

Sadler's Wells, London

This contemporary dance troupe from Taiwan plays two works. Tonight and tomorrow, *Nine Songs*, inspired by Chinese classical poetry; on Wednesday and Thursday the troupe proposes *Rice*, (pictured) a production concerned with a Taiwanese village and its rejection of chemical fertiliser in favour of organic farming. Which makes a change from Covent Garden's fairies and a centenarian princess. sadlerswells.com 0844 871 0090

Birmingham Royal Ballet

Birmingham Hippodrome, Birmingham

Birmingham's ballet plays a jolly triple bill today – a welcome revival of John Cranko's *Card Game* (to Stravinsky's vivid score), Balanchine's Broadway extravaganza *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*, and MacMillan's *Elite Syncopations*, which sets Scott Joplin wonderfully dancing. All great fun. On Tuesday you can see David Bintley's realisation of Britten's oddly cursed score for *The Prince of the Pagodas*, now realised by his own troupe. brb.org.uk, 0844 338 5000

Rambert

Theatre Royal, Brighton

From Wednesday until next Saturday Rambert shows a varied repertoire. Seek out Merce Cunningham's tremendous if quaintly spelt *Sounddance*. rambert.org.uk 0844 871 7650

