

Press Release

ROY OXLADE

23 April – 30 May 2026

Preview: Wednesday 22 April, 6-8 pm



Roy Oxlade, *Metaphysical Objects after Holbein*, c.1991 © Estate of Roy Oxlade

Oxlade's paintings echo the vast, often glorious muddle of our existence... they describe an environment animated by life and, like life, it's a state that is irreducible: a room can be a cosmos and a prison; an eye, a world and a pin-prick; the body of a beloved, a universe, and a lump of meat.

Jennifer Higgie, 'Since Feeling is First', *Roy Oxlade*, 2026

Alison Jacques presents a solo exhibition of British painter Roy Oxlade (b.1929, London, d.2014, Kent), spanning 30 years of his practice and featuring many works which have previously not been exhibited. To coincide with the exhibition, the first monograph on Oxlade will be published, with essays by Jennifer Higgie, Barry Schwabsky, an interview with Rose Wylie by Harry Thorne, and artist contributions by Sophie Barber, Alvaro Barrington, Julian Schnabel, Tal R and Clare Woods.

Roy Oxlade is often viewed as an 'artist's artist': he was hugely influential as a teacher and writer, as well as a painter. Considered part of the post-Bomberg lineage in British figurative painting, his work persistently challenged the conventions of modern painting and its histories. Oxlade developed an intellectually rigorous and singular visual language rooted in structure, vitality and intuitive

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mark-making. His work resists categorisation, combining formal experimentation with a sustained enquiry into the conditions of making and seeing. In 2014, *The Guardian* described Oxlade as 'one of the most impressive British painters of the past 50 years'.

Oxlade emerged in the 1950s as part of the 'School of London', a prominent group of London-based painters alongside Frank Auerbach and Leon Kossoff. Taught by David Bomberg, Oxlade remained true to Bomberg's values of authenticity in brush marks, developing a practice grounded in direct engagement with the physical world. Domesticity and ritual are central to his practice. His work is inextricably entwined with daily life, which he shared with his wife of 57 years, the artist Rose Wylie. They met as art students at Goldsmiths College and married within a year, living in London and Canada, before eventually settling in Kent until Oxlade's death in 2014, aged 85. The award-winning documentary, *Rose & Roy*, an intimate portrait of Oxlade and Wylie's daily life, directed by Adolfo Doring and Claudia Baez, was first shown at The New York City International Film Festival in 2015.

Oxlade's cast of recurrent characters for his paintings were the poetry of his everyday life: coffee pots, scissors, lemon squeezers, kitchen knives, paintbrushes, anglepoise lamps, easels and his muse Wylie. For Oxlade, art needed to become more modest, ethically rooted and closely connected to everyday life. Artist Clare Woods highlights Oxlade's achievement in making ordinary objects 'feel unfamiliar and create a distance to really see them', adding that 'we need this limited yet familiar simplicity and directness to try to understand who we are.' Jennifer Higgie writes, 'in many ways, Oxlade's drawings and paintings embody what we already know: that once we have lived with an object and it moves us, however humble, it becomes almost mystical'. As Oxlade wrote, he believed that art's role is to transform the mundane: 'when it succeeds, it moves life up a gear, its effect is to affect; it transcends daily life'.

Roy Oxlade's first major solo exhibition was in 1963, at the Vancouver Art Gallery, Canada, and key group exhibitions include the John Moores Exhibition at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool (1962), the Hayward Annual (1982) and EAST International at Norwich University of the Arts (1991). In 2000, he was included in 'Not Enough: British Art' at the Velan Center for Contemporary Art, Turin, and 'Towards Night' at the Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne (2016). Posthumous solo exhibitions include the inaugural exhibition 'Shine Out Fair Sun' at Hastings Contemporary, UK (2019). A devoted writer and educator, Oxlade's legacy continues to resonate across generations of artists working today. He was a regular contributor to prominent arts journals including *Modern Painters*, *Art Monthly* and *The London Magazine*. Oxlade also produced his own publications, *Blunt Edge* and *Blunter Edge* (2001–2009). In 2010, Ziggurat Books published *Art & Instinct, Selected Writings of Roy Oxlade*.

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