

EXHIBITION diary

Roy's own story, making a meal of it,
plus Charlotte Edwards's listings

Roy Oxlade ALISON JACQUES GALLERY Berners St, London W1



Many female artists are now being re-evaluated, often after male partners overshadowed them; take this year's London exhibitions of Dorothea Tanning, Lee Krasner and Dora Maar. Something more complicated has occurred with the reputations of Roy Oxlade (1929-2014) and his wife of 57 years, Rose Wylie. In the 1970s, Wylie was little-known – indeed, she had stopped painting to bring up their three children – but Oxlade was an influential writer and teacher whose paintings were highly regarded. By the time he died, Oxlade had slipped

from view somewhat – whereas Wylie had leaped to prominence with shows at the Jerwood in Hastings and Tate Britain. Oxlade's obituaries spoke of the danger that he would be remembered primarily for his role in the partnership endearingly documented by the award-winning film *Rose & Roy* (2015). Recently, though, he had an admired solo exhibition at what is now Hastings Contemporary. The couple shared a studio in Sittingbourne, Kent, for decades, and their virtues are similar: a wittily primitive way of painting that crackles with spontaneity. Rose is the storyteller, typically through memory, film and the news. Roy applies his painterly language to the here and now: what's in the house and studio – including Rose herself.

Oxlade's second show in quick succession with Alison Jacques presents paintings and works on paper from 1978 to 2006. Like his contemporaries Leon Kossoff and Frank Auerbach, he studied with David Bomberg and was himself an outstanding teacher and prolific writer. His paintings, however, emerge playfully out of looking around the studio without preconceptions; he said they 'start as a rectangle in a jumble of art history I relate to' into which he 'puts some other stuff, some characters, some actors – tables, pots, colours, easels, lamps, scribbles, figures and faces to interact with each other'. That often leads to cheerfully absurd interruptions. The ostensible subject of *Black Saucepan and Dish* is subsidiary to colour shapes that could be food-related but may just be paint. Most of *Yellow Profile* pushes towards abstraction behind the eponymous, but exceptionally summary, face of Rose. In other works, the figure of Roy's muse – sometimes upside-down, sometimes naked – dominates the objects named by the title.

Oxlade's true subject is the process of representation, how it can reveal the world anew as it simultaneously generates abstract pleasure and balances of form. That method of discovery is rooted in drawing, which he believed should be 'unknown to the artist until it emerges, comes out as a controlled wildness'. This is consistent with his critical rejection of most Modern art – Matisse was one exception, praised germanely for his 'synthesis of innocence with awareness'. Oxlade, then, reaches an unusually well-informed brand of unsophistication through the actions of drawing and painting. Let the rediscovery of husbands proceed. ROY OXLADE runs 15 Nov-11 Jan, Tues-Sat 11-6 PM. PAUL CAREY-KENT is an art critic and curator whose next show, *'Ridiculous!'*, is at Elephant West, London W12, 9 Jan-2 Feb

Top: *Black Saucepan and Dish*, undated, oil on canvas, 1.02 x 1.22m. Right: *Yellow Profile*, undated, oil on canvas, 1 x 1.20m

