

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Anne Rothenstein

**5-6 Cork Street
London, W1S 3LQ**

Friday 14 March –
Saturday 12 April 2025

Opening
Thursday 13 March, 6-8pm

Gallery hours:
Tuesday–Friday, 10am–6pm
Saturday 11am–5pm



Still at Sea, 2024



Pink Hawthorns, 2024

Stephen Friedman Gallery is pleased to present a solo exhibition of new paintings by British artist Anne Rothenstein, following her solo presentation in New York last spring.

Comprising portraits, landscapes and interiors, these enigmatic paintings are frequently characterised by a dreamlike quality. Speaking of her process, Rothenstein says, “My reasons, or intentions, when making a particular painting are quite mysterious to me. The spark is always lit from an existing image, a photograph or another painting, and I often don’t discover why that image leaped out at me or what it is I’m exploring until the work is finished. Sometimes I never find out. It is almost entirely intuitive.”

In a number of paintings, mysterious figures populate flattened landscapes and interiors. Rothenstein’s dismay at the “horrors going on in the world” are conveyed in paintings like *Still at Sea, 2024* where a feeling of displacement or being lost permeates. In a continuation of the artist’s *Unknown Territory* body of work, which she has come to think of as “refugee paintings”, figures are portrayed sitting on beds often with their back to the viewer. Rothenstein describes how as these paintings progressed, she began to see the bed as a vessel, and it became ambiguous whether the two solitary figures were indoors or outdoors. The artist reflects, “in some moments the upright figure seemed to be walking on water.”

Rothenstein’s palette of muted earth and deep blue tones used in recent works are complemented in this exhibition by the fiery reds and saturated pinks that dominate paintings such as *Pink Hawthorns, 2024*. Working with the natural grain of the wood panel, the artist layers thin washes of oil to suggest ripples, cloud and wave patterns which lend the sparse, elemental composition rhythm and depth. Dark silhouettes of solitary trees, reminiscent of Japanese woodcuts, represent a recurring motif throughout the artist’s practice.

Filled with atmosphere and psychological tension, the lack of physical interaction between the androgynous subjects in Rothenstein’s paintings gives a sense that the figures are unknown to each other, as well as to the viewer. Despite their expressiveness, the paintings offer few narrative clues. Rothenstein has articulated: “I like other people to make up their minds when they look at my work ... painting is a way of talking to myself, of showing me how affected I am by things both in my own life and, particularly at the moment, by what is going on out there in the world.”

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Contact Us

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Notes to editors

About Anne Rothenstein

Anne Rothenstein is self-taught and lives and works in London. Born in 1949, the daughter of the late Michael Rothenstein and Duffy Ayres, she grew up in a lively and distinguished community of artists in the Essex village of Great Bardfield. She began a foundation course at Camberwell School of Art in the mid-1960s and left after one year to explore acting and writing for over a decade, before gradually returning to painting.

Recent solo exhibitions include Charleston, Sussex (2024) and Stephen Friedman Gallery, New York (2024). Other solo shows include Stephen Friedman Gallery, London (2022) and Beaux Arts Gallery, London (2021). A two-person exhibition by Rothenstein and Irina Zatulovskaya took place at Pushkin House, London in 2018.

Rothenstein's work was included in 'From Near and Far', a group presentation co-curated by art historian Katy Hessel and artist Deborah Roberts, which opened at Stephen Friedman Gallery, London, in June 2022. Her work was included in the Summer Exhibition at The Royal Academy of Arts, London in 2018, 2020, 2022 and 2023. Other group exhibitions include 'The Place I Am', Stephen Friedman Gallery, London (2023); 'Framed in Friendship: A Legacy of Art in Sheffield', Graves Gallery, Sheffield Museums, Sheffield, Yorkshire (2022); 'Proximity', Candida Stevens Gallery, Chichester, West Sussex (2022); 'Antisocial Isolation', Saatchi Gallery, London (2021); 'Body and Soul', Royal West of England Academy, Bristol (2019).

The artist's work is included in the collection of Fry Art Gallery, Saffron Walden, Essex.

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Stephen Friedman Gallery is a contemporary art gallery that was founded in 1995 with a focus on representing exceptional artists from around the world. Since its inauguration, the gallery has been based in Mayfair, London. In October 2023, the gallery expanded and relocated to Cork Street. In November 2023, the gallery opened its first location outside the UK at 54 Franklin Street in Tribeca, New York.