

WILLIAM BAILEY: LOOKING THROUGH TIME

A survey of the acclaimed artist's work includes some of his finest and rarely exhibited paintings

September 6, 2019–January 5, 2020



William Bailey, *Still Life—Table with Ochre Wall*, 1972. Oil on canvas. Yale University Art Gallery, Purchased with the aid of funds from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Susan Morse Hilles Matching Fund © 2019 William Bailey/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

September 3, 2019, New Haven, Conn.—*William Bailey: Looking through Time* considers the career of William Bailey (b. 1930, B.F.A. 1955, M.F.A. 1957), the Kingman Brewster Professor Emeritus of Art at Yale University, through a focused survey of the artist's paintings, drawings, and prints. Special emphasis is given to Bailey's still-life paintings in oil, including the Yale University Art Gallery's *Still Life—Table with Ochre Wall* (1972), an outstanding example of the artist's signature style.

Known for his meditative canvases depicting objects and figures painted from memory and imagination, Bailey is one of the artists—including Audrey Flack, Alex Katz, and Philip Pearlstein—who defied the prevailing taste for abstraction at midcentury and instead committed themselves to representational painting. His works have been compared to visual poems, a fitting description given their freedom from the constraints of descriptive realism, evocative balance of both form and color, and iterative development of a distinct visual aesthetic.

Working closely with the artist, Mark D. Mitchell, the Holcombe T. Green Curator of American Paintings and Sculpture, selected approximately 40 works spanning the 6 decades of Bailey's career. Some of the artist's finest pieces have been borrowed from private collections, and many have not been on public display in a quarter century. These will be presented alongside key loans from the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, and the Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville. Most of the approximately 20 drawings and prints on view were chosen from the artist's own collection, offering a more intimate perspective on his vision, process, and stylistic development over time.

Bailey's artistic inspirations span centuries, from Raphael and Piero della Francesca to Giorgio de Chirico and Piet Mondrian, with Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres and Paul Cézanne in between. Since the late 1960s, Bailey has shown his work continuously and extensively in the United States and Europe, and he has maintained residences and studios in both Connecticut and northern Italy for most of that time. The artist has spent the



William Bailey, *Plateau*, 1993. Oil with wax medium on canvas. Private Collection. © 2019 William Bailey/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

majority of his career at Yale, first as a student under the modernist Josef Albers at the Yale School of Art and then as a member of the faculty until his retirement in 1995, with a seven-year hiatus in the mid-1960s, when he taught at Indiana University. Bailey has received numerous awards and honors, including a Guggenheim Fellowship (1965), elections to both the National Academy of Design (1983) and the American Academy of Arts and Letters (1986), and several honorary doctorates. His art is included in more than 60 public collections, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C., and the Art Institute of Chicago.

“This exhibition is a fitting tribute to an esteemed member of the Yale community—foremost as an accomplished artist, but also as a distinguished graduate and an admired professor,” says Stephanie Wiles, the Henry J. Heinz II Director. “It is a pleasure to present this illuminating survey of William Bailey’s work and reflect on the impact of the Gallery’s extraordinary collection, which he has studied and taught from for more than half a century.”

“We have much to learn from William Bailey’s work,” explains Mitchell. “As a student of Albers who sustained the value of form in an age of formlessness, Bailey brought forward from the history of art a personal vocabulary of allusion and affect that is perceived only gradually, through contemplative viewing. What better antidote to our digital age?”

To mark the opening of the exhibition, Bailey and Mitchell will be in conversation on Thursday, September 12, 2019, at 5:30 pm. The public is invited to attend the talk, view the exhibition, and meet the artist at a reception following the program.

On View

September 6, 2019-January 5, 2020

Exhibition Credits

Exhibition made possible by Richard and Ronay Menschel, Clifford Ross, the Friends of American Arts at Yale Exhibition Fund, and the Jan and Warren Adelson Fund. Organized by Mark D. Mitchell, the Holcombe T. Green Curator of American Paintings and Sculpture.

Related Programs

Opening Conversation

Thursday, September 12, 2019, 5:30 pm

“William Bailey: Looking through Time”

William Bailey and Mark D. Mitchell



William Bailey, *Turning*, 2003. Oil on linen.
Private Collection. © 2019 William Bailey/Artists
Rights Society (ARS), New York

Gallery Talk

Wednesday, September 25, 2019, 12:30 pm

“William Bailey and the Idea of Still Life”

Mark D. Mitchell

Yale University Art Gallery

The Yale University Art Gallery, the oldest college art museum in the United States, was founded in 1832 when the patriot-artist John Trumbull gave more than 100 of his paintings to Yale College. Since then its collections have grown to more than 250,000 objects ranging in date from ancient times to the present

General Information

The Yale University Art Gallery is located at 1111 Chapel Street, New Haven, Connecticut. Museum hours: Tuesday–Friday, 10 am–5 pm; Thursday until 8 pm (September–June); and Saturday–Sunday, 11 am–5 pm. The Gallery is closed Mondays and major holidays. Free and open to the public. For general information, please call 203.432.0600 or visit the website at artgallery.yale.edu.

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