

PearlLam Galleries

Shanghai

STILL LIVES: Bella Foster & Blair Saxon-Hill

Exhibition dates 22 November, 2024–5 January, 2025 Monday–Sunday, 10:30–19:00
Venue Pearl Lam Galleries, 2/F, 117 Xianggang Road, Shanghai, China

Shanghai—Pearl Lam Galleries is delighted to announce the upcoming duo exhibition *Still Lives*, featuring works by Bella Foster and Blair Saxon-Hill. *Still Lives* highlights the evolving nature of still life painting, emphasising individual expression and emotional depth. The two California-based female artists bring new perspectives to these traditional genres, using everyday fragments and serendipity as their subjects to celebrate what our lives have to offer. By embracing the everyday, their direct painting approaches allow them to create intimate visual realities. Influenced by modernism, their revisionist approaches towards colour and surface treatment are personal yet independent of the objects they depict. The subdued style of their paintings creates a sense of stillness or a reverse gaze to entice beholders to form psychological attachments with the artwork on view. This reciprocal approach resonates with late Italian painter and printmaker Giorgio Morandi's idea of valuing moods above all else, merging shapes into abstract images to evoke tranquillity and privacy.

Bella Foster's artistic practice centres on still lifes that intimately depict the spaces of her friends and her own, blending real and imagined domestic environments. Her paintings transcend mere representation, engaging in a psychological inquiry into the intersubjective experiences that shape our connection to the objects within these spaces. Through her lens, the seemingly mundane transforms into a poignant exploration of solitude and desolation, revealing a world beyond material objects where we find meaning and spiritual sustenance. Drawing inspiration from artists like Pierre Bonnard and Georgia O'Keeffe, Foster employs a distinctive economy of colour hues that conveys a flat picture plane, foreshortening our reading of the artworks with rhythm and repetition. Far from mere depictions of ordinary scenes, Foster's works are not meant to reflect on spaces or objects we desire to own, but rather the deeper meaning embodied by them, presenting unexpected juxtapositions that challenge conventional notions of the still life genre. Ultimately, her paintings animate stillness, transforming quotidian objects into profound inquiries of human psychology and materiality.

Blair Saxon-Hill is a multidisciplinary artist now working primarily in oil painting. She states, "I have created a series of flower still life paintings; at times, an imaginary scene is drawn around the still life and at others, the flowers take centre stage. I am interested in a notational approach to mark making." Taking advantage of her downtown Los Angeles studio, which is near the flower market, Saxon-Hill has an observational still life practice. After gathering flowers from the market, she returns to the studio to compose bouquets and paint them from life. Sometimes, these same still life bouquets are inserted into her paintings of imagined scenes, thereby combining her two working methods: observational painting and relaying images from her imagination. Less interested in capturing the exactitudes of the specific

flower types or light, the artist prefers to emphasise the overall composition and relationships of shapes and lines, aiming for a kind of descriptive whimsy. Given the scale of her paintings in relation to the human body, the flowers signify different forms of figuration and moods. Her works engage in complex colour games reminiscent of Matisse that challenge conventional expectations, creating a vibrant palette steeped with emotional nuances. In some of her paintings, flowers become moody, consciously reflecting back to viewers their own experiences and emotions. Saxon-Hill choreographs her characters into psychological engagements that express a longing for connection. Influenced by the CoBrA art movement, she melds figuration and abstraction to create an ever-expanding cast of imagined characters. In short, Saxon-Hill's paintings celebrate love, sincerity, and the beauty found in everyday life.

About Bella Foster

Bella Foster was born in Los Angeles, USA in 1975 and lives in Grass Valley, USA. She received a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the School of Visual Arts in New York, USA in 1998.

Foster is known for her intimate paintings of interiors, objects, and people rendered primarily in watercolour and gouache. Her works create a moment of ethereal reflection on the artist's life and surroundings. She collects images from books and magazines as well as draws from the places she inhabits and the everyday things around her to create intimately scaled gestural interiors and still life paintings. Elements from historical paintings are grouped with depictions of the common studio items around her, and a surreal narrative imbued with symbolism emerges. A brushstroke from a colour field painting is emulated and transformed into a lamp, a tablecloth becomes a surreal oceanic landscape, and a rock becomes a confused figure on a table. She returns to certain themes and objects frequently. Pencils from her studio, and even her tape dispenser, become heroes in the painted world.

Her solo exhibitions include ones at The Pit, Los Angeles and Palm Springs, USA (2018, 2020, 2022, 2024) CANADA, New York, USA (2017); South Willard, Los Angeles, USA (2015); and Art Since the Summer of 69, New York, USA (2010). She also had a duo exhibition with Elwyn Palmerton, Southfirst, Brooklyn, USA (2008). Foster's group exhibitions include shows at The Pit, Los Angeles and Palm Springs, USA (2024); Ratio 3, San Francisco, USA (2018); Venus Over Los Angeles, Los Angeles, USA (2016); Salon 94, New York, USA (2012); CRG Gallery, New York, USA (2005); and Champion Fine Art, Los Angeles, USA (2004). Foster has also been featured in the David Zwirner online exhibition Platform: Los Angeles (2020).

About Blair Saxon-Hill

Blair Saxon-Hill was born in 1979 in Eugene, Oregon and currently resides in Los Angeles. In 2002, she graduated from Reed College in Portland, where she studied studio art. While adept in many art mediums including collage, assemblage, and sculpture, Saxon-Hill is primarily an oil painter at this time. Her works are vibrant and playful; they are filled with an overarching sense of empathy and love for the world and people around her. In her 2024 New York Times review of Saxon-Hill's exhibition at SHRINE, Roberta Smith stated, "Saxon-Hill ... works with untroubled ease and zero pretension when painting still lifes of wilting flowers or inhabited interiors."

Working with a keen, and often untraditional, sense of colour, Saxon-Hill paints imagined figurative scenes that feel rich with the fabric of life. Her paintings play with overlays of patterns and inferred textures, and the works often depict folks and friends engaged with one another. She often moves from using larger gestural marks to more fine detailed expressions in a single canvas, rewarding the viewer in different ways at all distances from the work. Collectively, her works harken to the line work of past

masters like Matisse and Picasso, while also looking forward with her new and distinct voice that can serve as an emotional balm for our tragic political and environmental times.

Saxon-Hill's recent solo exhibitions include *Women, Wildflowers, Goats and the Sea* (2024), Collaborations, Copenhagen, Denmark; *Even Then Flowers Bloom* (2024), SHRINE, New York, USA; *Spirits, Queens, Dogs and Flowers* (2023), SHRINE, Los Angeles, USA; *Shrimp Head Momma* (2022), Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, USA; and *City Dip* (2022), Pace Prints, New York, USA. Selected recent group exhibitions include *Color and Form* (2024), Pace Prints, New York, USA; *Effetto Notte: Day for Night* (2024), Gallerie Nazionali di Arte Antica in collaboration with Aishti Foundation, Rome, Italy; *Halfway to Sanity* (2024), The Pit, Los Angeles, USA; *New Editions* (2022), Pace Prints, New York, USA; and *Indie Folk* (2022), WSU Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, Pullman, WA, USA.

About Pearl Lam Galleries

Pearl Lam Galleries is a driving force within Asia's contemporary art scene. Founded in 2005, the gallery plays a vital role in stimulating international dialogue and cross-cultural exchange between the East and West.

Following a rigorous programme, Pearl Lam Galleries presents museum-quality exhibitions that re-evaluate and challenge perceptions of cultural practice in Asia. With a thoughtfully balanced roster of Chinese and international artists, the gallery is strategic in its curation, positioning itself as an educator.

The gallery maintains a space in Hong Kong and Shanghai. With a team of international staff, Pearl Lam Galleries' reach is global, having presentations at major international art fairs including Art Cologne, Art Basel, Frieze Masters, and West Bund Art and Design.


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