Mary Pratt

On display at the MacKenzie Art Gallery May 17 – August 24, 2014

The Mary Pratt exhibition is a project by The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery and The Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, with support from the Government of Canada through the Department of Canadian Heritage, Museums Assistance Program, and also from the Canada Council for the Arts and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

To book a School Tour please contact Sheri at sheri.mceachern@mackenzieartgallery.ca or by phone 306-584-4250 ext. 4292

School Tour and Studio Workshop:
- Regina Public and Catholic Schools $50 / class
- Other Schools $60 / class

To sign up for our MacKenzie education newsletter for information about upcoming school tours and other great programs please email sheri.mceachern@mackenzieartgallery.ca

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Introduction

Mary Pratt

“Mary Pratt is one of Canada’s favourite painters, and most complex image makers. She brings a sharply focused, contemporary lens to deceptively simple subject matter, demonstrating sophisticated skill rooted firmly in the history of painting. Nuances of tone, angle and choice of perspective leave the viewers of Pratt’s images with a sense of wonder and, sometimes, unease. Pratt’s work reveals the breadth of emotion, technique and maturity brought to her practice.

This exhibition presents Mary Pratt in a new light, offering visitors a rare opportunity to view the range, subtlety and power of this much-celebrated artist’s oil paintings and mixed media artworks. Rather than showing these chronologically, it considers her oeuvre as an interwoven conversation of themes. Artworks from the past five decades are assembled, highlighting the diversity of her subject matter, from the political to the domestic. These substantial paintings have multiple meanings for the artist and the viewer. They are paintings that surprise us, and help us to look at our own world with greater sensitivity.”

Exhibition Curators Mireille Eagan, Sarah Fillmore and Caroline Stone

Mary Pratt Exhibition Review

Mary Pratt, curated by Mireille Eagan and Caroline Stone from The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery in St. John’s, NL and Sarah Fillmore from the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia in Halifax, offers a range of work, spanning a period of five decades.

Mary Pratt offers the viewer a multifaceted type of experience. Pratt is a contemporary artist, rooted in art historical terms. The viewer will see familiar and famous works in their original form, as well as images held by private collectors that are not widely known and will not be seen again in a public forum for some time. The artist was actively involved in the exhibition process, as a resource and contributor to the exhibition texts.

The exhibition is not displayed chronologically. Instead, it is grouped by themes – everyday rituals, offerings, the feminine, place, process and realism. These themes are in conversation with each other. The experience of viewing such a large body of work is enhanced by taking notice of connections between themes. Pratt’s images speak to her experiences as artist, mother, wife, woman.

Pratt has written about every image in the exhibition and her words are found on the wall next to each artwork. For the most part, labels that accompany art in a gallery will display the date, dimensions, medium and title of the image. It is not a usual exhibition practice for them to contain much more information, so it is a real treat that Pratt has chosen to include these narratives.

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-Review provided by The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery

Tour Objectives

• To expose students to a variety of painting techniques.
• To engage students in an exploration of visual art in relation to the themes of beauty and our lived environment.
• To highlight the importance of this leading contemporary female artist in the history of Canadian Art.

Artist Information

Mary Pratt is a Canadian artist who specializes primarily in still life realist paintings. She was born Mary Frances West in 1935 in Fredericton, New Brunswick and graduated from Sackville, NB's Mount Allison University in 1961.
with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. Soon after, she relocated to Newfoundland and Labrador, with then-husband Christopher Pratt, and raised four children while pursuing her career as an artist. Pratt currently lives in St. John’s, where she continues to paint. She holds nine honorary degrees and has served on numerous boards, committees, and cultural initiatives. She is a Companion of the Order of Canada. Pratt is represented by public collections across Canada and by prestigious commercial galleries. There is an extensive chronology of her life and exhibition history in the Mary Pratt publication.

**Suggested Pre-Tour Activities**

**Video Viewing**

Here are some links to resourceful interviews with Mary Pratt:
- [http://www.mcmichael.com/marypratt/images.html](http://www.mcmichael.com/marypratt/images.html) (51:35 minutes)
- [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N_46nWxwgE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N_46nWxwgE) (7:14)

**“I waited until the world spoke to me”**

Mary Pratt can be heard saying, “I waited until the world spoke to me” when discussing her early sources of inspiration for her paintings (before moving on to making her own still life assemblages). The problem with capturing the images ‘when the world spoke to her’ was how difficult it could be to capture the light, or keep the fish from decaying before she could finish her painting. This led the artist to use photography to capture these moments so that she could take the time she needed to paint the image. Ask your students to consider moments in their homes ‘when the world spoke to them’. They can either draw those moments and bring them into the classroom or photograph them like Mary did. Then, have students create paintings out of their photographs/sketches.

**Back in the Classroom**

**Finish What You Started**

Painting a still life with acrylic paint can be a daunting task and may require more time than allotted in our studio workshop. Encourage your students to finish their paintings from memory. Create a display in your school hallway or classroom with your finished works. Consider hanging them ‘salon style’, a method of installation that is one of Mary Pratt’s favourites.

**Salon Style installation**

This form of installation includes hanging pictures in groups of different sizes where the works are placed alongside, above and below each other. This method of display was used in French art academies in the 18th and 19th centuries, as a means of comparing student work. Professors generally placed the strongest work at eye level. The salon hang style in the Mary Pratt exhibition shows Pratt as a contemporary artist who is rooted in art historical terms.