

PJ Crook: *And So It Came To Pass*

4 – 20 June 2025

Private View: Tuesday 3rd June, 6-8pm

Press Release

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Portland Gallery is delighted to present our first solo exhibition of PJ Crook's work in *And So It Came To Pass*. In this exhibition Crook invites us into a world shaped by storytelling, of interactions and their consequences in her instantly recognisable style.



And So It Came To Pass

– Oil on canvas, 167.5 x 167.5 cm / 66 x 66 in

Crook is a figurative artist and lends her brush to a plethora of subjects: from biblical and literary allusions (Adam & Eve, St Jerome in his Study, The Owl and the Pussycat), to fantastical interactions between man, angels, and animals; from pure distillations of nature, to scenes of people gathered for a meal. The relationships of the figures remains central throughout, though often ambiguous – are they family, friends, strangers – are the subsequent interactions going to be ones of tenderness, joy, or something more sinister. It is left to the viewer to decide.



Homage to the Wonderful Mister Lear

– Tinted gesso on wood, 55 x 45.5 cm / 21 ¾ x 18 in

A defining characteristic of Crook's work is the painted frame. This expansion is more than just decorative or a simple tool to enlarge a given scene – they are integral to the experience of the painting, amplifying depth and perspective. As the viewer interacts with the work, the scene may shift – revealing a hidden figure or the continuation of a building, so that the full narrative cannot be appreciated merely through observing a work face-on. Nor does Crook restrict herself to a traditional flat rectangular plane. This exhibition contains examples of triangular formats and paintings on corrugated surfaces. Crook does not plan a scene in advance, she is invigorated by the 'blank page' and will simply start painting and allow for forms to emerge organically.



Newspaper

– Tinted gesso on canvas & wood frame, 51 x 56 cm / 20 x 22 in

PORTLAND GALLERY

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Artist Biography

Crook (b.1945) is a painter of people and society, animals and environment, mythology and current events. Her vision of the world oscillates between surreal fantasy and the ordinary day-to-day. What unites all her work is both a technical mastery and a graphic figurative style. Crook paints from her imagination and works in a variety of media – oil, acrylic, tinted gesso – and expands her scene into the surrounding frame to better capture that vision.

Crook studied at Gloucestershire College of Art (1960-1965). For over four decades Crook has exhibited internationally, including over fifty one person shows in London, Paris, New York, Toronto, Florida and Estonia. Also museum shows at the Royal West of England Academy (1997, 2017), the Morohashi Museum of Modern Art in Japan (2001, 2006, 2012, 2016, 2018), the Gloucester City Museum & Art Gallery (2002, 2006, 2012), The Wilson, Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum (1986, 1996, 2006), Musée Paul Valéry, Sète in the South of France (1996). A monograph has been published about her work, 'PJ Crook' published by Editions Ramsay, Paris (1993) and another edited by Martin Bailey for the Artemesia Press, 2003 - this is currently being revised and brought up to date. A catalogue raisonné is also in preparation.

Crook has won numerous awards and accolades including an honorary Doctor of Arts from the University of Gloucestershire in 2010, MBE for services to art in 2011, and an honorary Vice President of Gloucestershire College in 2012. Her work is often reproduced on book covers, particularly for the Oxford University Press, Livre de Poche and Penguin whilst the progressive rock band King Crimson have often reproduced her paintings on their album covers.

- High resolution images are available on request
- Advanced viewings of artworks can be arranged on request
- The artist is available for interview
- An illustrated catalogue will support the exhibition



About Portland Gallery

Portland Gallery was established in 1984 and are leading dealers in modern and contemporary British Art. Located in St James's, the gallery is spread over two floors and plays host to 14 exhibitions a year, principally solo presentations of represented artists and estates. The gallery is operated as an Employee Ownership Trust.

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