

# Critics' choice

## Life&Arts

### Visual arts Jackie Wullschläger

#### In the Studio

Ordovas, London

In 1979, after a year of dusk-to-dawn sittings, Lucian Freud completed a spectacular painting. "Rose" was a reclining nude with crew-cut hair on a battered, fawn-coloured Chesterfield sofa, her body indecorously splayed, one leg raised, muscles stiff from the bent pose, and rhyming with the arm lifted to shield her eyes from bright ceiling lights.

As the painting progressed, it became clear that the body would be too big to fit on the canvas, and the dangling leg would have to be chopped. The model suggested that instead of a stump, the lower leg be bandaged with paint rags — old hotel sheets, washed-out grey, from Ratzker's rag-yard in Brick Lane.

The stretched fabric adds to the psychological tension — the drama of exposure and concealment, the exhaustion expressed by face and body from holding so taut a position — and conjures a discordant, faded opulence.

The picture, rarely seen, returns to London from a private collection as centrepiece of this focused small exhibition in which its subject, Freud's daughter Rose Boyt, then aged 19, for the first time shows the photographs she took in the studio during its creation. They fascinatingly document the painting's evolution, against Rose's shock at "the level of exposure I had unwittingly chosen to inflict on myself" (she herself had decided on the pose).

They also — in a startling series of images, including a playful but edgy Freud repeatedly refusing to sit still to be photographed, a long-haired male nude model cavorting with his pet rat and paint-caked walls used for cleaning brushes — unfold the 1970s milieu of an artist for whom the studio was his entire world, in life and paint; no 20th century artist so satisfyingly "makes one little room an everywhere".

*ordovasart.com*  
February 22-April 27



Lucian Freud's 'Rose' (1978-79) — The Lucian Freud Archive

#### Don McCullin

Tate Britain, London

Vietnam, Biafra, Northern Ireland, Syria: we know the worst history of our own times through McCullin's stark photographs, monochrome but with velvety depths of blacks and greys, published in newspapers since the 1960s. You can question what these representations of suffering and dying are doing on a museum wall — as McCullin himself has, and it is often hard both to look and to look away. But the contribution to truth-telling, and courage — physical, and to turn horror into formally perfect, balanced compositions — makes this photographer "accustomed to the dark" one of the greatest of the postwar era.

*tate.org.uk*, to May 6

#### Sometimes I Disappear

Ingleby Gallery, Edinburgh

Four women photographers using self-portraiture to challenge social and gender expectations: Americans Cindy Sherman and Francesca Woodman, born in the 1950s; Romanian Oana

Stanciu, 30, who poses herself in uncomfortable domestic tableaux, and South African Zanele Muholi whose dramatic "Hail the Dark Lioness" series (2017) challenges the politics of sex and black representation. *inglebygallery.com*, to April 13

#### Harald Sohlberg: Painting Norway

Dulwich Picture Gallery, London

First show outside his native country for the Norwegian landscape painter of moody, symbolist renderings of mountains, lakes, summer evenings and snowbound villages. Highlight is "Winter Night in the Mountains", exhibited along with several studies, on which Sohlberg worked from 1900-1914. *dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk* to June 2

#### Elizabethan Treasures

National Portrait Gallery, London

"Young Man Among the Roses", Nicholas Hilliard's tiny watercolour of a lithe, sumptuously dressed youth leaning against a tree, famously defines our vision of Elizabethan courtly life: elegant, intellectually

searching, beauty fraught with danger (the thorns). The technically brilliant portrait miniatures of Hilliard and Isaac Oliver here, summoning individuality in a few strokes of a diminutive brush, marvellously evoke a sophisticated, self-aware society; the show features nobles, adventurers, poets, thinkers including Francis Drake, Walter Raleigh, Francis Bacon, John Donne. *npg.org.uk*  
February 21-May 19

#### Nick Miller: Rootless

Art Space Gallery, London

New work from this vigorous, subtle painter whose still-lives reinvigorate a traditional genre. Flowers, weeds, leaves, branches, placed in a variety of bottles, jars, vases are depicted in shifting states which seem to collapse moments of blooming and wilting; set within studio interiors of patterned clothes, easels, ladders, they are musings on impermanence, fragility, order, art and nature. *artspacegallery.co.uk*  
February 22-March 29