

A Not So Still Life

Dates - October 16th - 18th 2024 (Wednesday - Friday)

Tutor - Katie Sollohub

Course fee - £300

Katie loves and has used the subject of still life in one way or another in her work for a very long time. However, it is always as a reflection of her own domestic space and life - rather than the staged set up of perfect flowers, an elegant bottle, a poised book. Her practise of using meditation within teaching ties in perfectly with her interest in the Japanese aesthetic of Wabi Sabi. The perfect imperfection of daily life are noticed and celebrated; the washing up bowl, the discarded socks on the floor, the accidental shadow between the washing up liquid hand soap and a jam jar on the kitchen window sill. The dead flowers in a vase. The beauty of the everyday. The impermanence of it all.

Still life does not have to be still. Think about the objects that regularly move around the house, in the kitchen - the frying pan shifting from front to back hob, the salt cellar on and off the table, the napkin draped over the back of a chair; or the keys, unopened letters, and wallet that hang about at the top of the stairs willing themselves not to be forgotten.

In this course you will be working fast and freely from a still life set up in the studio (to which you are invited to contribute) with both drawing and painting materials, and anything in between. The objects will not be still, they will move, or rather, be moved - by Katie, by you, by other participants on the course. You may work on canvas, but will be encouraged to work on any surface, including scraps of cardboard, paper, loose canvas, fabrics, table cloths etc that can be moved around themselves, pinned to the wall in various configurations as you work. You will be encouraged to cut, collage and rethink the composition every now and then throughout the day. (choose whichever phrase reads best here)

Working in this free and flexible way enables the artist to work much more intuitively. The resulting paintings and drawings have a directness, playfulness and an animated energy. It keeps work fresh from the beginning to the resolution of the piece. The process enables layers and imagery to evolve and grow in a way that can only arrive through this kind of approach.

Day 1

You will be getting to know the objects, in the space, experimenting with a moving changing drawing. Working on paper with drawing and mixed media, layering, constructing and deconstructing the image. You will practice making bold decisions with your work, cutting sections out, moving them, editing with white paint, clearing the decks for something new. You will experiment with materials and practice mark making, to find a language that reflects the qualities and characters of the objects in the space. You will also be drawing the spaces in between, for these too are charged with un-stillness, the energy of things that touch or almost touch, the energy of an empty space.

Day 2

Some of these drawings may grow into paintings (if they haven't already) - letting the composition change and grow, adding more layers, whether on cardboard, paper or canvas. Whether you stick with black and white or add colour, reworking over the drawings, or starting afresh with a new beginning.

Day 3

There will be a chance to make some drastic changes, to really challenge the subject - we will make the objects animated again within the work. You will be encouraged to move the body too, shake up the energy, drop the expectations, and surrender to the process of an impermanent (still life) life.

Artists to refer to:

Morandi, Matisse, Ben Nicholson, Winnifred Nicholson, Joan Snyder, Tricia Gillman, Bonnard, Jennifer Packer, Roy Oxlade, Tal R, Squeak Carnwarth, Melissa Gordon, Jesse Darling, Elizabeth Blackadder, Jessica Stockholder, Eva Hesse mechanical drawings, Phylidda Barlow drawings, Victor Willing, Joe Packer, Gary Spratt, Andrew Cranston

Materials that students need to bring:

A contribution to the still life set ups (everyday objects from your home), Paint – either oils or acrylics, a good range of different size brushes, mediums, cotton rags, inks if you like working with them too. Water based paints like watercolour and gouache can also be used, as long as you are prepared to be generous with quantity and experimental in your approach.

Drawing equipment – charcoal, coloured pastels (oil or chalk), Felt tip pens, an eraser, masking tape, scissors, a Glue stick

Please bring your own preferred surface to work on, or purchase them from the Seawhite Art Shop, in advance or during the course, including:

- speciality papers that you like working on or would like to try
- loose/raw/primed or stretched canvas or boards
- scrap paper, cardboard, old bits of wood
- fabrics or other surfaces to paint on e.g. patterned material, napkins, plastic/vinyl table cloths

What materials the studio has available:

Primed canvas available to purchase by the metre.

Paper of different sizes and weights to purchase by the sheet.

We have water pots, drawings boards, palettes and easels all set up in the space for participants to treat as their own temporary studio space