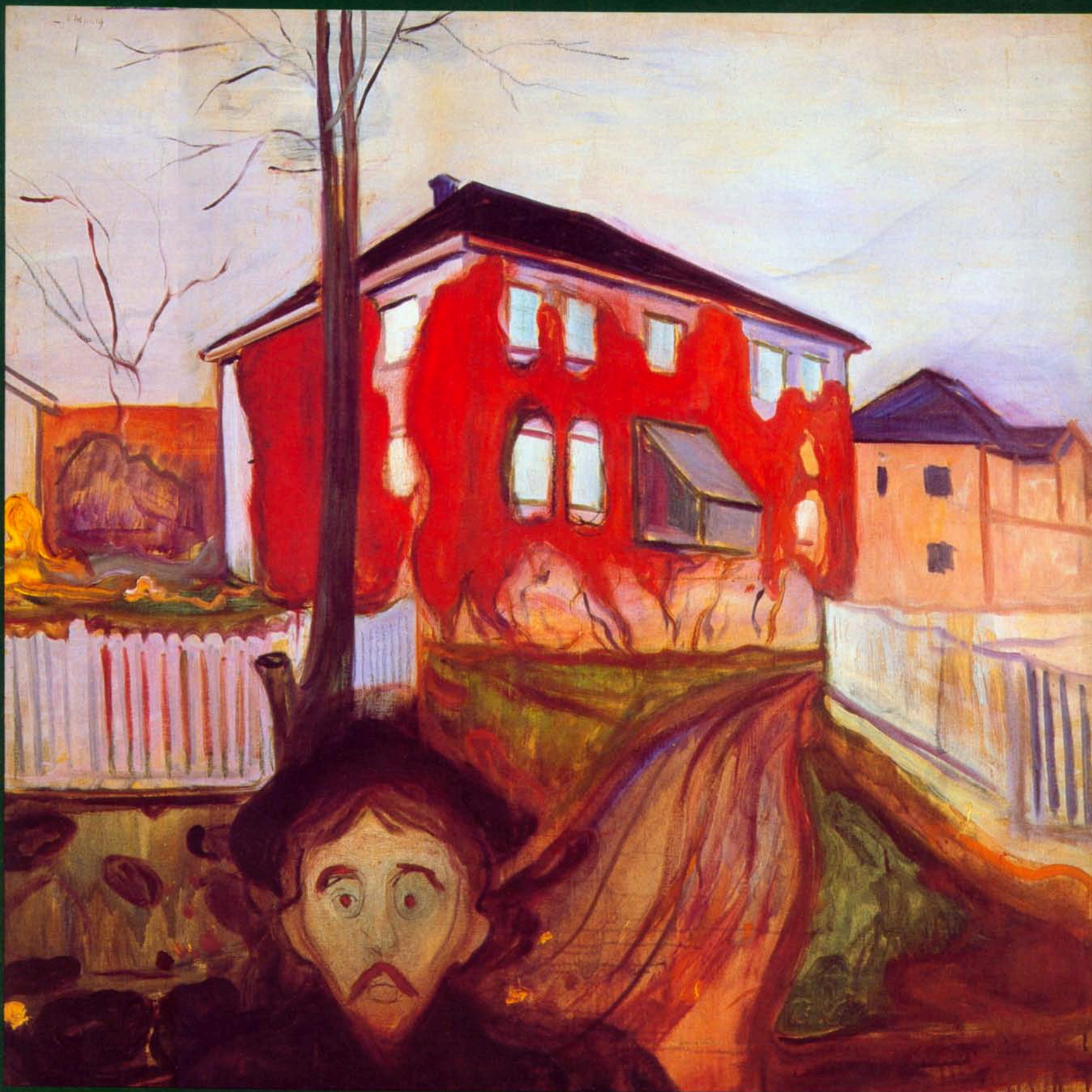


# APOLLO

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## An Apostle of the Ordinary

Still lives, interiors, landscapes, studies of the female nude and portraits (Fig. 1) are seen by Avigdor Arikha (*Marlborough Fine Art*) with a neutral eye attracted by their ordinariness. He paints with a sensitive observational competence, cultivating the conventional and banal with the assiduousness that others reserve for the illusive and the imaginary. He accepts the limitations of the observable world, with no evidence of visual curiosity to penetrate beyond the prosaic exterior. This is a comforting and comfortable world of naturalism with no unacceptable incidents to alarm the polite world and like most politeness it is stereotyped to the point of dull repetition.

Hailed by some as the most inventive and powerful painter working anywhere in the world today, Julian Schnabel (*Whitechapel Art Gallery*) is nevertheless a controversial figure. This exhibition of thirty-five paintings dating from 1975 is a frenetic externalization of Schnabel's surging and uncoordinated internal energy, in a desperate effort to make a sensational impact. This impact however often comprises only empty effects and gimmicks such as broken plates, as well as using tarpaulin and velvet (Fig. 2) painted with wild and unconsidered scrawls of pigment all on a huge scale. His brash ebullience is akin to the frantic and spurious delirium of rock singers in their crude gyrations, essentially hysterical and transitory—an artistic version of the Sex Pistols.

The considerable technical skills of Charles Beauchamp (*Gimpel Fils*) sustain a frightening apocalyptic vision of destruction: a nightmare of alarmingly tall buildings on a Cecil B. de Mille scale claustrophobically reaching for the sky in walls of bleak masonry. The brickwork suddenly and inexplicably explodes into destructive fragments, flying in all directions (Fig. 3). The apparent inevitability of being crushed to extinction is intensified by the convincing nineteenth-century trompe l'oeil high finish. The huge black-and-white drawings are relentless in their message that humans are insignificant, vulnerable and that there is no escape. This is an obsession for Beauchamp and one which he communicates so powerfully that it becomes overwhelming.

Supported by the British Council, Stephen Cox (*Tate Gallery*) last year had the opportunity to work in India, and these present sculptures show the effects of the exotic cultural influences he encountered. Stone fragments are arranged as if in a neat archaeological museum display with vestigial images of deities in an attempt to provide convincing associations (Fig. 4). However, they seem only to imitate objects from another culture while pretending to be authentic. The ritualistic objects he makes also have the pretentiousness of counterfeit: fetishism replaces actuality. He has rejected sculptural concepts and replaced them with the cult of the manufactured museum object which is inevitably artificial.

Olivia Temple (*Addison-Ross Gallery*) paints direct from Nature. She sees the woods (Fig. 5), hills, fields and flowers of Somerset with a natural



1. *Self portrait with outstretched Arm* by Avigdor Arikha (b. 1929), 1985. Oil on canvas, 64.2 x 49 cm. Marlborough Gallery



2. *Study of a head* by Cecil Collins (b. 1908), 1984. Mixed media on board, 25.4 x 30.4 cm. Anthony d'Offay, until 1 November



3. *Resurrection: Albert Finney meets Malcolm Lowry* by Julian Schnabel (b. 1951), 1984. Oil and modelling paste on velvet, 3 x 2.74 m. Whitechapel Art Gallery, until 26 October



4. *Thousand Pillared Hall* by Stephen Cox (b. 1946), 1986. Granite, 2.70 x 7.90 m. Tate Gallery, until 19 October



6. *Tree Study* by David Blackburn (b. 1946), 1985. Black chalk, 63.5 x 55.8 cm. Dulwich Picture Gallery, until 2 November



5. *Autumn Wood* by Olivia Temple, 1986. 76.2 x 96.5 cm. Oil on canvas, Addison-Ross Gallery, until 14 October

uncomplicated candour in which every brush stroke confirms her affection for the countryside in which she lives and its changing seasons.

David Blackburn (*Dulwich Picture Gallery*), is also deeply involved with his surroundings and cultivates an observational respect for nature. His work is permeated by mood often evoked by the Colne Valley in West Yorkshire where he lives. In this case (Fig. 6) the densely-packed straight trees suggest a caged effect and a dark claustrophobic oppression. These are readily comprehensible and acceptable views that make no particular visual demands on the spectator.

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