First International Museum Exhibition of Work by Acclaimed British Painter George Shaw Premieres at the Yale Center for British Art Next Year

George Shaw: A Corner of A Foreign Field Will Feature New Artworks Created for the Exhibition

NEW HAVEN, CT (August 2, 2017) – In the fall of 2018, the Yale Center for British Art will present the first comprehensive museum exhibition dedicated to the work of one of Britain’s leading contemporary painters, George Shaw (b. 1966). This will be the artist’s first solo show in the United States. Organized in collaboration with the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and the Anthony Wilkinson Gallery in London, George Shaw: A Corner of A Foreign Field will survey the career of this Turner Prize-nominated artist from 1996 to present, featuring nearly seventy paintings, more than sixty drawings, and numerous prints, together with a range of sketchbook and notebook materials. On view from September 27 to December 30, 2018, the exhibition also will include several new works created especially for this display.

“This exhibition will offer a rich survey of Shaw’s fascinating, beautiful, and stimulating paintings and drawings, which will be presented in ways that place each of these media in lively dialogue with one another. The show will reinforce the painter’s position as one of the most exciting and ambitious figures within the contemporary art world,” said lead curator Mark Hallett, Director of Studies at the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, London, which is the sister institution of the Yale Center for British Art.

Shaw focuses his work on an area in the United Kingdom known as the Midlands, which encompasses the cities of Birmingham, Derby, and Coventry. His paintings depict scenes from the postwar Tile Hill council estate where he grew up, and from the far more ancient woods that surrounded it. Steeped in modern and historic fine art traditions, Shaw’s work alludes equally to twentieth-century painting and photography, and the practices of old masters such as Titian (1490–1576), whose paintings of Diana and Acteon directly influenced The Rude Screen (2015–16), a work Shaw exhibited at the National Gallery, London, in 2016. He is also renowned for paintings such as This Sporting Life (2009), which testify to his ability to capture the melancholy and poignant aspects of modern British culture.

“The Center is delighted to mount George Shaw’s first solo exhibition in the United States, and his first major museum retrospective anywhere in the world. Shaw’s work explores the places that define his sense of identity through a self-conscious engagement
with the British tradition of landscape art, as well as a reaction against that tradition. His realist landscapes of the housing estates and woodlands of his youth pay homage to the old masters who have shaped his vision, but simultaneously subvert our ideas about landscape by uncovering the realities of postmodern Britain from the 1970s to today,” said Matthew Hargraves, Chief Curator of Art Collections at the Center.

Since 1998, Shaw has used a thick, sticky, and quick-drying enamel paint—primarily marketed toward model airplane and car enthusiasts, rather than professional artists—as his medium of choice, which imparts a unique metallic sheen. The utilitarian and unyielding character of this paint defies the expressive effects and painterly fluidity associated with oils and acrylics, giving Shaw’s works a defining material and visual appearance: sealed and hard-edged, like the muted architectural facades they so often depict.

In addition to showcasing familiar aspects of Shaw’s painting practice, the exhibition will feature the artist’s brilliance and ambition as a draftsman, introducing visitors to a range of subjects prominent in his graphic work. His drawings dwell on the cultural preoccupations of his youth, including art, film, music and television, and class and politics; collectively, they reflect on both the anxieties and aspirations of British culture in the decades of Shaw’s upbringing.

EXHIBITION THEMES AND HIGHLIGHTS

George Shaw: A Corner of A Foreign Field will be organized according to the following thematic and loosely chronological sections:

**Recording a World** focuses on Shaw’s early paintings and drawings, produced in the years between 1996, when he began studying at Royal College of Art in London, and 2001, when he presented his first major show, The New Life, at the Anthony Wilkinson Gallery. Key works in this section include No. 57 (1996), the inaugural work of Shaw’s professional career, as well as the series Scenes from the Passion—a simultaneously ironic and melancholy retelling of the biblical narrative of Christ’s Passion, in which nondescript scenes of modern life become the counterparts to the landscapes through which Christ travelled before his crucifixion. These Midlands settings also reflect part of the artist himself, as he recalls wandering across the landscape of his youth.

**Landmarks and Memorials** showcases Shaw’s early preoccupation with modern buildings and architecture through a succession of visual pairings that dramatize the artist’s interests in symbols of modern British life: roadside pubs on the outskirts of Tile Hill, the broken doors and rubbish-strewn interiors of a series of garages, and the goalposts that mark a local soccer field.
Pathways includes several of Shaw’s depictions of the woodland around Tile Hill. In these works, pathways twist through forests, pass alongside emergent bonfires, and head deep into the undergrowth or skirt the edges of a tower-block—each dramatizing the act of walking as a solitary form of exploration and uncertainty.

Collage, Found Objects and the Common Culture features an installation of forty-six drawings, produced between 2005 and 2008, which comprise Shaw’s series Spare Time. This section also includes works in other media, such as paintings on denim bags and jackets.

Ash Wednesday presents an in-depth display of works from Shaw’s Ash Wednesday series (2004–5), which will offer a rich and subtle form of pictorial and temporal sequencing and a lyrical exercise in the painting of light and shadow.

Graffiti and Abstraction introduces a new chapter in Shaw’s practice from 2005 onward. The works in this section maintain the artist’s long-standing interest in chronicling the environment in which he grew up, while also exploring the artistic possibilities of abstraction and graffiti.

The Woodsman focuses on Shaw’s achievements as a painter of English woodlands, exemplified in his Woodsman series of large-scale charcoal drawings, produced between 2008 and 2009. This installation will transform the gallery space into a graphite forest, surrounding the visitor with an astonishing pictorial thicket of boughs and branches.

The End of Time includes a series of works depicting building sites that had once provided a collective bedrock for the local community of Tile Hill—social clubs, pubs, care homes, colleges, and places of work. At the turn of the twentieth century, many of these sites were shut down and demolished, as the political ideals that had underpinned the creation of the modern council estate found themselves under attack. Shaw’s End of… pictures in particular offer haunting, yet beautiful, memorials to a way of life that had come to an end.

Hanging Around presents works from Shaw’s solo exhibition The Last Days of Belief at the Anthony Wilkinson Gallery in 2015, with titles taken from the lyrics of 1980s pop songs and saturated with a sense of time passing. This section also will display paintings from Shaw’s My Back to Nature exhibition in which he offered an extended response to the themes, iconographies, and narratives of the old master paintings he encountered during his residency at the National Gallery in 2016. The exhibition concludes with Shaw’s most recent works, created between 2016 and 2018, including new works that will debut at the Center.
GEORGE SHAW: A CORNER OF A FOREIGN FIELD
September 27–December 30, 2018

CREDITS
George Shaw: A Corner of a Foreign Field is being organized by the Yale Center for British Art in partnership with the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, London, and the Anthony Wilkinson Gallery, London. The lead curator is Mark Hallett, Director of Studies at the Paul Mellon Centre, assisted by Alexandra Burston, Research Assistant. The organizing curator at the Center is Matthew Hargraves, Chief Curator of Art Collections, assisted by Nathan Flis, Head of Exhibitions and Publications, and Assistant Curator of Seventeenth-Century Paintings. This exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue of the same title. Edited by Hallett and published in association with Yale University Press, the book will feature with essay contributions from leading scholars including Catherine Lampert and David Mellor, as well as an interview with Shaw by the British artist Jeremy Deller.

FILMS
A series of short films—commissioned from young British filmmakers Lily Ford, Jonathan Law, and Jared Schiller—that explore different aspects of Shaw’s life, art, and career, will be screened at the Center throughout the exhibition’s run, offering visitors a dynamic introduction to the artist’s ideas and work, and their continued resonance.

ABOUT GEORGE SHAW
One of Britain’s leading contemporary painters, George Shaw was born in 1966 in Coventry, UK. He studied at and received a BA from Sheffield Polytechnic in 1989, and he received a MA from the Royal College of Art in 1998. In 2011, Shaw was nominated for the Turner Prize, was a recipient of a John Moores 21 prize in 1999, and was an artist-in-residence at the National Gallery, London, from 2014 to 2016. This year he was nominated for The South Bank Sky Arts Award for his exhibition My Back to Nature, on view at the National Gallery in 2016. Artworks by Shaw are included in the collections of the Arts Council Collection, London; Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, UK; Cincinnati Art Museum; Government Art Collection, London; Southampton City Art Gallery, UK; and the Tate, London. Solo exhibitions of the artist’s work have been presented at the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead; Ikon Gallery, UK; the National Gallery, London; and the South London Gallery, UK.
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ABOUT THE YALE CENTER FOR BRITISH ART
The Yale Center for British Art houses the largest collection of British art outside the
United Kingdom. Presented to the university by Paul Mellon (Yale College, Class
of 1929), the collection reflects the development of British art and culture from the
Elizabethan period onward. The Center’s collections include more than 2,000 paintings,
250 sculptures, 20,000 drawings and watercolors, 40,000 prints, and 35,000 rare books
and manuscripts. More than 40,000 volumes supporting research in British art and
related fields are available in the Center’s Reference Library. In May 2016, the Center
reopened to the public following the completion of a multiyear project to conserve its
iconic Louis I. Kahn building. Visit the Center online at britishart.yale.edu.

ABOUT THE PAUL MELLON CENTRE FOR STUDIES IN BRITISH ART
The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art is an educational charity located in
London, committed to promoting research into the history of British art and architecture.
The Centre collaborates closely with the Yale Center for British Art, and is part of Yale
University. It offers a supportive environment for scholarly work, providing rich library
and archival resources, and hosts a busy program of scholarly events. It generates high-
quality research through the scholarly activities and publications of its Director, Deputy-
Directors, and growing community of Postdoctoral Fellows. The Centre also runs the
Yale in London teaching program, which provides visiting Yale students with a variety of
courses to study, including ones devoted to the history of British art and architecture.

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