

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Anne Rothenstein

Rothenstein's enigmatic paintings are frequently characterised by a dreamlike quality. Mysterious figures often populate her flattened landscapes and interiors.

The artist draws inspiration from found imagery, personal experience and memory, working instinctively to communicate atmosphere and psychological tension. Rothenstein's scenes are rendered with sinuous lines and a distinctive palette built up of thin washes of oil. Often painting directly on wood panel, the artist allows grain to blend with figure and landscape.

Speaking of her artistic process, Rothenstein says, "My reasons, or intentions, when making a particular painting are quite mysterious to me. The spark is always lit from an existing image, a photograph or another painting, and I often don't discover why that image leaped out at me or what it is I'm exploring until the work is finished. Sometimes I never find out. It is almost entirely intuitive. Finding a rhythm, searching for balance, alert to missteps, to what is happening, to changes of direction.

I am telling myself a story much of the time and asking questions. Who is this, where is this place, what is going on? This is what I think of as the noise of a painting. And of course, what I am trying to reach is the silence ... There is a wonderful Philip Guston quote: "if you're really painting YOU walk out." That is what I mean by reaching the silence."

Rothenstein is self-taught and lives and works in London. Born in 1949, the daughter of the late Michael Rothenstein and Duffy Ayres, she grew up in a lively and distinguished community of artists in the Essex village of Great Bardfield. She began a foundation course at Camberwell School of Art in the mid-1960s and left after one year to explore acting and writing for over a decade, before gradually returning to painting.

Rothenstein's recent solo exhibitions include Stephen Friedman Gallery, London (2025), Charleston, Sussex (2024) and Stephen Friedman Gallery, New York (2024). Other solo shows include Stephen Friedman Gallery, London (2022) and Beaux Arts Gallery, London (2021). A two-person exhibition by Rothenstein and Irina Zatulovskaya took place at Pushkin House, London in 2018.

Rothenstein's work was included in 'From Near and Far', a group presentation co-curated by art historian Katy Hessel and artist Deborah Roberts, which opened at Stephen Friedman Gallery, London, in June 2022. Her work was included in the Summer Exhibition at The Royal Academy of Arts, London in 2018, 2020, 2022 and 2023. Other group exhibitions include 'The Place I Am', Stephen Friedman Gallery, London (2023); 'Framed in Friendship: A Legacy of Art in Sheffield', Graves Gallery, Sheffield Museums, Sheffield, Yorkshire (2022); 'Proximity', Candida Stevens Gallery, Chichester, West Sussex (2022); 'Antisocial Isolation', Saatchi Gallery, London (2021); 'Body and Soul', Royal West of England Academy, Bristol (2019).

The artist's work is included in the collection of Fry Art Gallery, Saffron Walden, Essex.