



THE  
NATIONAL  
GALLERY

# GEORGE SHAW

## MY BACK TO NATURE

## National Gallery Touring exhibitions

The National Gallery holds one of the world's greatest collections of paintings in the Western European tradition from the 13th to the 19th centuries. Drawing on our fascinating collections we are developing touring exhibitions which combine curatorial expertise with outstanding works of art.

### Exhibition summary

This exhibition sees the unveiling of new works by the contemporary painter George Shaw created over two years during his residency as the National Gallery's Associate Artist 2014-2016.

Shaw is known for his minutely detailed and luminously atmospheric depictions of suburban landscapes. Paintings featuring woodlands have a particular appeal for Shaw as they resonate with his own experience of walking in the forest near his home town as a teenager and the feeling that "something out of the ordinary could happen at any time there away from the supervision of adults".

Shaw's time at the National Gallery has allowed him to investigate his fascination with the mythological landscapes of the European tradition. His response to these paintings has been uncompromisingly contemporary, as these ancient legends repeat themselves in various surprising ways in the modern world.

Amongst works in the exhibition will be a series of individual studies of trees, with their twisted branches and rotting hollows strangely suggestive of the human body. Their collective title 'You've changed' is a nod in the direction of the myth of Apollo and Daphne, when the nymph magically transformed into a tree as the god tried to seduce her. The three largest works in the show relate in a similar way to the three great mythologies painted by Titian, that tell the stories of the goddess Diana and her transformations of Actaeon and Callisto. Midway through his residency, Shaw ordered three canvases to be made up to the exact scale of the Titian paintings and produced three mysteriously beautiful pictures hinting at strange happenings in the woodlands of the modern world.

Typically Shaw paints on board using Humbrol enamel, the paint of choice for model makers, which act as a deliberate means of distancing himself from the traditions of oil painting on canvas; however, in response to the surroundings of the National Gallery's collection this exhibition will also include new works on canvas and some preparatory drawings.

## Artist biography

George Shaw was born in 1966 in Coventry. He studied Fine Art at Sheffield Polytechnic from 1986-89 and gained an MA in painting from the Royal College of Art in London in 1998.

Shaw was nominated for the Turner Prize in 2011 and has exhibited widely in the UK and internationally.

### Exhibition content

Paintings on board and canvas  
Preparatory drawings  
Exhibition film: The film documents Shaw's two year residency at The National Gallery, showing the works in progress in the studio as Shaw talks compellingly about the Old Master paintings that have inspired him.

### Exhibition Publication

*My Back to Nature*  
By George Shaw; With an introduction by Colin Wiggins

Published by National Gallery Company/distributed by Yale University Press  
104pp; 60 colour illustrations; 10 1/4 x 9 1/2 in.

### Fee

The fee covers all research and origination costs and is available on request.

### Exhibition size

Approx. linear hanging size 70m (55 works).

### Availability

The exhibition will be shown at the National Gallery from 11 May – 30 October 2016 and is available from mid-2017.

### Duration

Approx 3 months.

### Contact

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Natural Selection



The Heart of the Wood



Portrait of an Old Midlander

Images © Courtesy: The Artist and Wilkinson Gallery, London.