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## Quack Quack, Said the Duck

### The Must See Show in London This Week



Installation view of Rose Wylie, *Pink Skater (Will I Win, Will I Win)* (2015) in "Quack Quack" at Serpentine Sackler Gallery, London (until 11 February 2018) © 2017 Mike Din

By  Louisa Buck

contemporary art correspondent

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Some of the paintings on show in the Serpentine Gallery are so new that during the opening you could smell the oil paint. Rose Wylie may now be in her 80s, but you wouldn't know it from this rumbustious and rollicking exhibition ("[Rose Wylie: Quack Quack](#)" at the Serpentine Sackler Gallery until 11 February).

Art world fame has come late—Wylie was in her eighth decade when she won the prestigious John Moores Painting Prize in 2014, the same year she became a Royal Academician—and she wears her recognition lightly.

Wylie says that her paintings often “heap up notations of experiences” and multiple readings swirl around these works. Here’s Elizabeth I, farthingaled and be-ruffed, based on Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger’s famous *Ditchley Portrait* (c.1592) and surrounded by floating pansies that appear like heraldic shields in *Queen with Pansies (Dots)* (2016).



Rose Wylie, *Queen with Pansies (Dots)* (2016) © Rose Wylie. Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner, London. Photo credit: Soon-Hak Kwon

Footballers, ice skaters, insects, dogs and film stars prance, bob and cavort across expanses of bare, unprimed canvas, often accompanied by scrawling pieces of text and depicted with a sprawling, schematic immediacy and lashings of thickly applied paint. Sometimes, as in the claggy monochrome scarlet expanses that comprise *Red Painting, Bird, Lemur and Elephant* (2016) this is directly slathered on with the artist’s hands—a massive Color Field finger-painting.

In the large, recent work *Park Dogs and Air Raid* (2017), based on a childhood memory of watching British Spitfires and Nazi Messerschmitts slug it out during the Blitz in 1940, planes zap each other with explosive cartoon flashes while, on the ground below, ducks dabble in the lake in front of the Sackler Gallery.



Installation view of Rose Wylie, *ER & ET* (2011) in “Quack Quack” at Serpentine Sackler Gallery, London (until 11 February 2018).  
Image © 2017 Mike Din

Equally monumental is the gigantic *Pink Skater (Will I Win, Will I Win)* (2015), in which a blonde woman, resplendent in a candy-pink dress, soars splay-legged across bright orange stars painted over two canvases, with the caption “WILL I WIN” running like ticker tape along the bottom.

Wylie wraps her canvases around corners, creating a sense of dramatic horizontal movement that recalls cartoon strips, film frames, ancient frescoes and architectural friezes. Images repeat and forms echo, making it clear that the apparent spontaneity is underpinned by careful consideration.



Installation view of “Rose Wylie: Quack Quack” at Serpentine Sackler (30 November 2017-11 February 2018) © 2017 Mike Din

While there is a childlike directness to Wylie’s paintings, they are neither childish nor whimsical. Much like Philip Guston (whom she openly admires) the awkwardness of her images is richly expressive. The scale, freedom and confidence of these works convey both grandeur and glee. The Serpentine Sackler Gallery is a demanding space, but with these irresistible paintings, Wylie completely owns it.