

Middlesex University London
32 Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory
Benefitting the Museum and Gallery Sector, Arts Audiences and the Commercial Art World
2000-2017

Jon Bird

from his own collection, acted as a consultant, and wrote an essay for the catalogue, *Portrait of a Painter*, which traced the background to Golub's relationship with the artist, and describes the artist's studio working environment, his close relationship to his wife, the artist Nancy Spero, and the artist's early formal and technical processes underlying his work. The essay came from personal diaries and the ongoing recorded interviews Bird conducted with Golub over a twenty year period. As key artists in the formation of the post-war American art movement, Spero and Golub were two of the fourteen artists included in the award-winning exhibition

at the Smart Museum (2016), the first exhibition in America to explore the artists in this important group, and their place in the history of postwar American Art. Bird contributed an essay to the catalogue, *Portrait of a Painter*, examining Golub's early formal and technical processes underlying his work. The essay came from personal diaries and the ongoing recorded interviews Bird conducted with Golub over a twenty year period. As key artists in the formation of the post-war American art movement, Spero and Golub were two of the fourteen artists included in the award-winning exhibition

In 2016, Bird curated the exhibition *Portrait of a Painter*, at the Reina Sofia retrospective. For the NPG display, Bird curated a selection of portraits to demonstrate Golub's use of language. The political portraits represent Golub's presentation of powerful leaders and came at a time when the Nixon administration introduced the Vietnam War, which also allowed Golub to challenge the traditional conventions of portraiture, and to work in series. The visualisation of power and its effects upon visage over time. The exhibition was accompanied by a book, *Portrait of a Painter*, which is the most complete visual compilation of the series to date. In parallel, he curated the exhibition *Portrait of a Painter* at the London Gallery, Hauser & Wirth (19 March - 3 April 2016), which provided context for an enhanced understanding of the portraits exhibited at the National Portrait Gallery.

Bird, J. (2000). [Authored book]. *Portrait of a Painter*. 1st ed. London: Reaktion Books; and Bird, J. (2011). [Authored book]. *Leon Golub: Echoes of the Real*. 2nd ed. (extended). London: Reaktion Books. Available Middlesex on request.

Bird, J. (2011). [Exhibition]. *Portrait of a Painter*. Curated by Jon Bird at the Centro Nacional Reina Sofia Museum, Palacio de Velázquez, Parque del Retiro, Madrid; and Bird, J. (ed.) (2011). [Exhibition Catalogue]. *Portrait of a Painter*. Madrid: Turner/Museo Reina Sofia. ISBN 978-84-7506-975-3. Available Middlesex on request.

Bird, J. (2015). [Chapter in book]. *Portrait of a Painter*. E., Blanchflower, M. and Larner M. (eds.), *Portrait of a Painter*. [Exhibition Catalogue]. London: Serpentine Galleries | Koenig Books, pp. 96-104. ISBN 978-1-908617-26-2; ISBN 978-3-86335-718-4. Available Middlesex on request.

Bird, J. (2016). [Chapter in book]. *Portrait of a Painter*. Corbett, J., Dempsey, J., Moss J., and Born, R. A. (eds.), *Portrait of a Painter*. [Exhibition Catalogue]. Univ. of Chicago Press, pp. 58-69. ISBN 978-0-935573-48-0. Available Middlesex on request. The publication was awarded the Association of Authors and Publishers Award for Best Book in 2017.

Bird, J. (2016). [Exhibition]. *Portrait of a Painter*, curated by Jon Bird. National Portrait Gallery, London. 18 March - 25 September 2016. Listed in REF2: [Portrait of a Painter](#), practice as research output.

Bird, J. (2016). [Edited book]. *Portrait of a Painter*. London: Reaktion Books. ISBN 978-1-78023-582-0. Listed in REF2: [Portrait of a Painter](#), practice as research output.

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awareness and appreciation of



For the at the Fondazione Prada, Milan curated by Germano Celant
(October 2017 . January 2018) . the first large

of Contemporary Art. With one of the largest private holdings of modern and contemporary art, Andrew Hall has a large collection of Golub works, many of which have been loaned to exhibitions of the artist including the Reina Sofia retrospective and the NPG. When the Hall Foundation provided images of all the paintings in their proposed exhibition, Bird realised that a significant number were of doubtful provenance. This began an investigative process which culminated in a court case over the suspect works at the United States District Court, Concord, New Hampshire (2018). The case became a significant example of contemporary art forgery and received extensive coverage in the American press and international art journals including the New York Times and was contracted to examine the suspect paintings. Key to the proceedings was Bird's research - developed via his overall body of research - technique in applying acrylic paints and lacquer; understanding of human anatomy in representing bodies under duress; and attention to clothing, weaponry and gesture. Over a two-day period in September 2017, Bird made a detailed study of eighteen paintings (held in a secure art warehouse in New Jersey), which included the removal of frames, photographic documentation of the painted and reverse surfaces, and constant reference to the authorised Golub archive. Bird was required to produce a Report describing the process of close analysis and the reasons for his conclusions that all the works were forgeries. This Report was submitted to the lawyers for both the Prosecution and the Defence and was the subject of a Deposition and the primary document tabled during the actual court proceeding. A selection of the suspect works was displayed in court and over two days of explanation and cross-examination, Bird testified to the reasons for his judgement of the works as forgeries. As a result, the jury found in favour of Hall. The Director of