

A detailed still-life painting of various flowers and vegetables on a dark background. The composition includes a large orange and yellow striped tulip, a pink and white striped tulip, a large pink rose, a white peony, a yellow flower, a blue flower, a corn cob, a green pea pod, a green pepper, and a snail. The background is dark, making the vibrant colors of the subjects stand out.

MICHAEL PETRY

NATURE MORTE

*Contemporary artists reinvigorate
the Still-Life tradition*

Thames & Hudson

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Nature Morte

Contemporary Artists Reinvigorate the Still Life

Michael Petry

Publication date: 14 October 2013

Price: £35.00 hardback

Thought-provoking and richly visual, **Nature Morte** brings together, for the first time, the poignant, provocative re-imaginings of the traditional still life by over 180 international contemporary artists. This visually stunning and timely book reveals how leading artists of the 21st century are reinvigorating the still life, a genre previously synonymous with the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Old Masters.

Michael Petry's careful selection celebrates works by emerging and established artists alike, from all over the globe, including John Currin, Elmgreen & Dragset, Robert Gober, Renata Hegyi, Damien Hirst, David Hockney, Gary Hume, Sarah Lucas, Beatriz Milhazes, Gabriel Orozco, Elizabeth Peyton, Marc Quinn, Gerhard Richter, Sam Taylor-Wood and Ai Wei Wei. Short and compelling introductions begin each chapter and are followed by dramatic, visually led spreads that pair each work with a perceptive reading of its significance to the still-life tradition.

Petry's engaging, provocative text reveals how contemporary practitioners are revisiting the major motifs of the still life and translating them for the modern world. Petry explores the timeless themes of life, death and the irrevocable passing of time in these new works for our modern world; artworks that invite us to pause and reconsider what it means to be human.

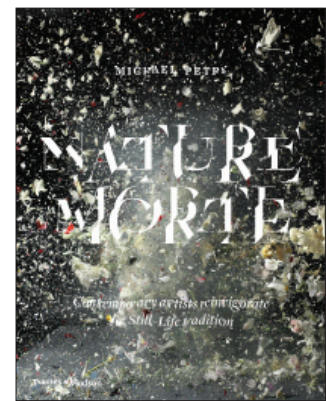
Nature Morte is designed by Barnbrook, a leading London studio at the cutting edge of graphic design. The cover is lenticular.

Contents:

Introduction • Chapter 1: Flora • Chapter 2: Food • Chapter 3: House & Home • Chapter 4: Fauna • Chapter 5: Death

Author

Michael Petry is an artist, curator, Doctor of Arts and Director of Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), London. He is the author of *Installation Art*, *Installation in the New Millennium* and *The Art of Not Making*, all published by Thames & Hudson.



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Press Contact

Kate Burvill PR

E kateburvill@gmail.com

T +44 (0)20 7226 7824

M +44 (0)7947 754 717

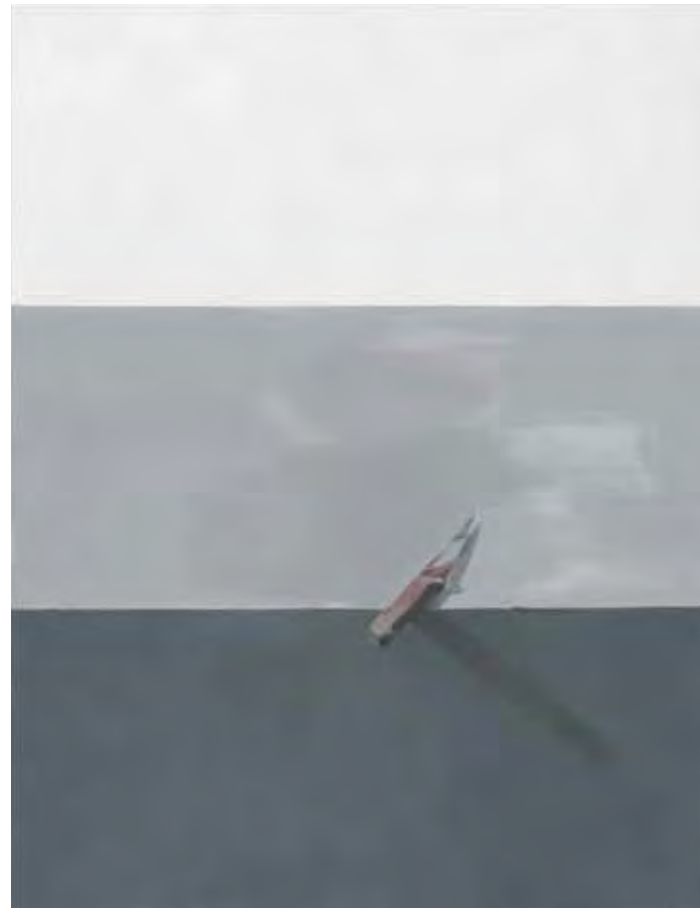
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In **Derek Buckner's** *White Series* the artist closely observes the billowing or crumpled folds of white textiles, be they hanging sheets or stuffed pillows, as in *Assemblage #2*. His interest in how light falls on fabric, creating intricate and subtle shadows, is conveyed through the fusing of abstract and representational renderings. This pile of pillows seems both inviting yet altogether full, while the dark shadows at the pillows' edges introduce an air of loss.

Jan Merta puts loss front and centre (even if the knife is slightly to the right) in *Zátiší s nožem (Hranice spasitelnosti) / Still Life with a Knife (The Limits of Salvationability)*. The muted brown handle of the knife adds colour to an otherwise grey palette, though the possibility of bright red blood looms large. Anton Chekhov famously said a gun must only appear onstage if in a later act it is used; the title of this work and the dynamic positioning of the knife on the edge of the table suggests a similarly violent conclusion.

For her *Perfect Life* series, **Rebecca Scott** painted works that offer a harsh critique of the 'perfect' lives found in women's lifestyle magazines and catalogues. Scott takes her inspiration from images that dictate the ways in which she should make her home perfect. She recognizes that these illustrations of domestic bliss are aimed at her, not her male partner, and that it is *her* job as a woman to be the ideal wife and hostess. It is this narrative that reflects off the shining crystal in her paintings and which disrupts what would otherwise be traditional still lifes.



ABOVE
Derek Buckner
Assemblage #2, 2010
oil on linen

RIGHT
Jan Merta · *Zátiší s nožem (Hranice spasitelnosti) / Still Life with a Knife (The Limits of Salvationability)*
2009 · oil on canvas



ABOVE LEFT
Rebecca Scott
Oh, it's a perfect day, 2005
oil on canvas

ABOVE RIGHT
Rebecca Scott
The Perfect Hostess, 2006
oil on canvas

LEFT
Rebecca Scott
The Perfect Christmas Dinner, 2006
oil on canvas





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 by Michael Petry is published by Thames & Hudson (RRP £35.00)

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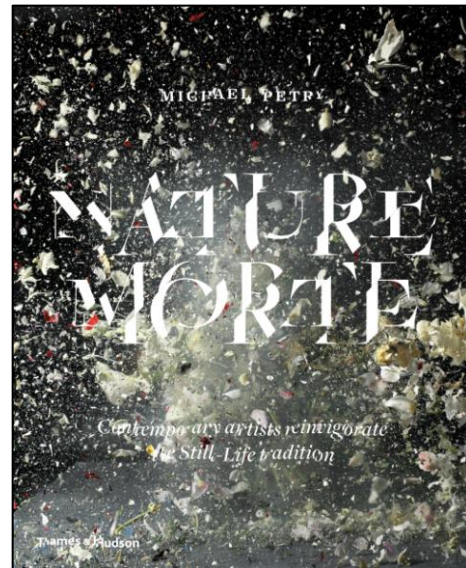
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Nature Morte

by Michael Petry

This richly rewarding book reveals how leading artists of the twenty-first century are reinvigorating the still life, a genre previously synonymous with the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Old Masters. The audacious still lifes celebrated here challenge that historical supremacy and redefine what it means to be a work of nature morte, or “dead nature.” Whether through painting, drawing, sculpture, video, or other forms, contemporary artists have drawn on the tradition to create works of conceptual vivacity, beauty, and emotional poignancy.



Michael Petry has structured the book according to the classic categories of the still-life tradition—Flora, Food, House and Home, Fauna, and Death. Each chapter explores how the timeless symbolic resonance of the memento mori—a reminder of death, change, and the passing of time—has been rediscovered for a new millennium. Among the artists represented are John Currin, Saara Ekström, Elmgreen & Dragset, Renata Hegyi, Damien Hirst, David Hockney, Gary Hume, Jeff Koons, McDermott & McGough, Beatriz Milhazes, Gabriel Orozco, Marc Quinn, Sam Taylor-Wood, and Cy Twombly.

Published by Thames & Hudson

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