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Mussolini's  
favourite  
mistress

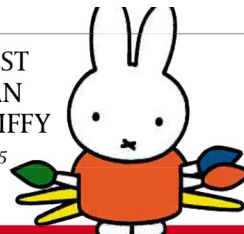
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# THE WEEK

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## 34 ARTS

## Art

Exhibition of the week **America after the Fall: Painting in the 1930s**Royal Academy, London W1 ([www.royalacademy.org.uk](http://www.royalacademy.org.uk)). Until 4 June

The 1930s was a “terrible decade” for America, said Laura Cumming in *The Observer*. The Great Depression plunged millions into poverty, and the ecological disaster known as the Dust Bowl forced scores of “poverty-stricken” farmers to flee their homes. Meanwhile, war loomed large on the horizon. Yet as a new show at the Royal Academy demonstrates, this tumultuous period was “evidently great” for American painting. The exhibition brings together 45 works by 32 artists created between the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and America’s entry into the Second World War, in 1941. Mixing household names including Georgia O’Keeffe, Jackson Pollock and Edward Hopper with overlooked artists, many of whom are unheard of outside the US, it illustrates the “terrific variety” of the American avant-garde of the period. This revelatory exhibition is “not to be missed by anyone with the slightest interest in painting”.

The star attraction here is Grant Wood’s “hugely famous” painting *American Gothic*, said Philip Hensher in *The Mail on Sunday*. The work, which has never previously left the US, has been “reproduced and parodied” countless times, but seeing this “haunting” painting up close is “quite a new experience”. Other

Edward Hopper's *Gas* (1940): a “masterpiece”

is Peter Blume’s *The Eternal City*, a “crass” depiction of Mussolini as a “glaring, green-faced jack-in-the-box”.

This is not “a show of great paintings”, said Michael Glover in *The Independent*. But it is full of “highly significant” works by many painters struggling to define the nature of a changing US during a “momentous decade”. It demonstrates how painters such as Pollock and Philip Guston, who later became famous as abstract expressionists, experimented restlessly with style. While an early work by Pollock is a great disappointment, Guston’s depiction of the bombing of Guernica in the Spanish Civil War as a “swirling tondo of stricken figures” is terrific. “Inconsistent” though it is, this exhibition is a bold attempt to explain how American art forged a distinct identity for itself in the 1930s.

## Where to buy...

The Week reviews an exhibition in a private gallery

## Colour is

at Waddington Custot

You’d expect an exhibition featuring work by the likes of Anthony Caro, Josef Albers and Frank Stella to be worth a visit. And this one, which focuses on how abstract artists have approached colour from the 1950s to the present-day, does not disappoint. The aforementioned trio are represented by pieces of top quality – not least Stella’s hypnotic screen-print *Double Grey Scramble* (1973) – but the real highlights here come from less celebrated names. From David Annesley’s duckling yellow 1965 steel sculpture *Orinoco*, which resembles two ribbons of pasta stuck together, to Japanese artist Yuko Shiraishi’s minimal but transfixing 2016 painting *I See You See Me*, almost everything demands the visitor’s full attention. Most extraordinary of all is the intense

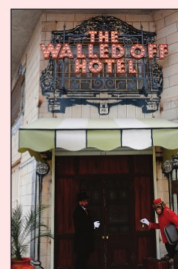
Peter Halley's *Blue Cell PHP* 99-38s (1999), 111.8cm x 101.6cm

orange glow of John Hoyland’s 1973 painting 29.8.73. As with all Hoyland’s best work, its saturated colour appears to blast off the canvas, creating a joyous effect as intense as Mark Rothko’s celebrated “colour fields”. Prices range from £28,000 to £755,000.

11 Cork Street, London W1 (020-7851 2200). Until 22 April.

## The West Banksy hotel

“A hotel, museum, protest and gallery all in one”, designed by the British street artist Banksy, has just opened in Bethlehem, says Emma Graham-Harrison in *The Guardian*. Nestled against the wall separating the Palestinian territories from Israel, The Walled Off Hotel boasts “the worst



view of any hotel in the world” – all rooms look out onto the controversial concrete wall and an illegal Israeli settlement beyond. The place has a “dystopian colonial theme”: in the reception area, a classical bust appears to be wreathed in clouds of tear gas; seascapes show beaches littered with life jackets. Seven of the bedrooms are also decorated with Banksy artworks, including a mural of an Israeli soldier and a Palestinian soldier thumping each other with pillows. A small museum explains the troubled history of the region, while a gallery shows work by Palestinian artists. In a statement, Banksy described the hotel as “a three-storey cure for fanaticism, with limited car parking”.

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