

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 green pea pod, a yellow corn cob, and a snail. The background is dark, making the vibrant colors of the flowers and vegetables stand out.

MICHAEL PETRY

NATURE MORTE

*Contemporary artists reinvigorate
the Still-Life tradition*

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Contemporary Artists Reinvigorate the Still Life

Michael Petry

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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.

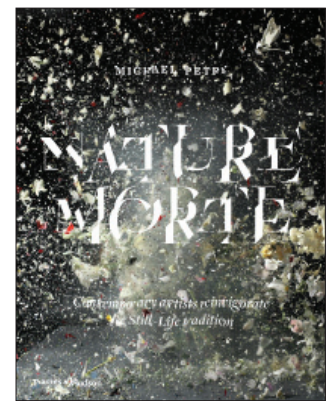
Nature Morte is designed by Barnbrook, a leading London studio at the cutting edge of graphic design. The cover is lenticular.

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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OPPOSITE TOP
Jan De Vlieghe
"Treasury", 2012
(installation view)
oil on canvas

OPPOSITE BOTTOM
Jan De Vlieghe
Sèvres, White Flower, 2012
oil on canvas

ABOVE
Ai Weiwei
Coloured Vases, 2010
31 Han Dynasty vessels
and industrial paint

Jan De Vlieghe's "Treasury" exhibition presented a series of large, robust paintings of small, delicate objects. Each painting details a single porcelain plate, such as *Sèvres, White Flower*, which might come from any number of sources (France, China, England) and any point in history. All are painted in an almost realistic style that at the same time flirts with abstraction since drips and brush strokes are left obvious. The paintings all measure two metres by two metres and visually overpower viewers, as if to place them inside a cabinet of wonder.

Ai Weiwei is well known for works that revisit Chinese traditions and objects in order to criticize the limitations imposed on artistic experimentation and freedom. To create *Coloured Vases*, Ai dipped thirty-one precious earthenware urns from the Han Dynasty (206 BC to AD 220) into brightly coloured paints. Or did he? Whether or not they are real Han vessels or replicas like those sold to tourists (there is a thriving market for Han urns, which are mostly counterfeit reproductions), the artist presents them as real. Such intervention calls into question the high status and value attributed to the antique or ancient object - for *Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn* (1995), Ai photographed himself doing just that - and suggests that an object seemingly at the end of its existence might be better off transformed and reborn as something else.