

Catherine Murphy

Recent Work

02 September – 07 November 2026
8 Bury Street SW1Y

"To follow Murphy's art...is to experience an adventure in looking. Every work is closely observed and argued: real objects, no cameras, no shortcuts. She paints reality as a place of layers to be excavated, and of veils and barriers to be peered through."

Justin Paton, *Artist Profile*, 2024

This September, Sadie Coles HQ, Bury Street, presents recent works by Catherine Murphy (b. 1946, Cambridge, MA), marking the artist's second solo exhibition in London. Since the 1970s, Murphy has transformed the quotidian into the extraordinary, with painted views of existing and imagined scenarios staged in and around the artist's home and studio in Poughkeepsie, New York.

Although Murphy's meticulous commitment to realism once situated her within the tradition of still life, over the past two decades her practice has shifted from direct observation towards more psychologically charged and subtly surreal interpretations of the objects that populate her surroundings. Focusing on overlooked and unexpected viewpoints, Murphy reframes and resizes the familiar. Idiosyncratic glimpses of objects are reproduced to unsettling effect, their character transformed through a careful choreographing of scenes and use of partial, cropped compositions, and heightened colour.

Murphy considers the minutia and the very atoms of her environment. With an unhurried calmness to her approach, the chequered folds of a lightly crumpled shirt, the iridescent drum of a tumble dryer, or footprints in snow glimpsed through smudged glass become intricate galaxies. Her acute scrutiny and recording of the precise and accurate qualities of light causes form and space to shift and change, so that these are no longer simply clothes or forgotten items. Murphy's sustained attention to crevices and recesses, alcoves and corners, subverts conventional hierarchies of aesthetic value and are imbued with curiosity.

Sadie Coles HQ

Catherine Murphy (b.1946, Cambridge, MA) studied at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 1966, following which she obtained a BFA at the Pratt Institute, New York in 1967. The artist has remained an influential teacher. For twenty-two years, she served as Senior Critic at Yale University Graduate School of Art. Murphy has exhibited at institutions throughout the United States, including: The Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Phillips Collection, Washington DC; Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Weatherspoon Art Museum, University of North Carolina; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York and Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven. She is a member of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters and her work is held in numerous public collections including those of the Art Institute of Chicago; the Hirshhorn Museum, the Phillips Collection, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, National Portrait Gallery, Washington DC and the Whitney Museum of American Art. Murphy lives and works in Poughkeepsie, New York.