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PRESS RELEASE



CIVILIZATION

4 JUNE — 19 JULY 2014

TUESDAY — SATURDAY 10.00 TO 18.00

Civilisation / Civilization – the variation in spelling itself reflects ‘progress’. Kenneth Clark chose the former; an essentially conservative and Eurocentric view which was paralleled in his epochal television series from 1969. Neither the spelling nor the tone had a negative effect on the American public’s appetite for his broadcasts – when The National Gallery of Art in Washington put it on at lunchtime in their 300 seat gallery theatre, queues totalled 24,000 avid consumers. The series was sold to over sixty countries, I guess including some of those whose culture did not rate a mention by Clark. The book of the series is still in print today. It was a great achievement and made everyone feel pretty good about their civilised society, even if the political and legal systems of society were subordinated to the advance of art. After all, as a later Conservative would assert, there is no such thing as society. But even in its singular and messianic focus on the aesthetic, Clark’s approach side-stepped the art that questions the nature and indeed the benefits of such a view of Civilisation. Despite his democratic urge and passionate desire to open up art to the ‘masses’, a socially committed view was definitely not for Clark. As he put it himself referring to the BBC: “Week after week, we have maladjusted children, unmarried mothers and so on. I am sure the BBC does this with a high sense of moral duty, but I believe if I came home tired after a day’s work on a building site, I would like a different kind of viewing.”

So, in parallel with the fascinating exhibition at Tate Britain, Looking for Civilisation, a celebration of Lord Clark’s connoisseurship, we offer this token selection of works of art that suggest a few alternative or lateral views. As another master of the televised might put it only three years after Clark, it’s all down to ways of seeing.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND IMAGES PLEASE CONTACT DANIEL@ANTHONYREYNOLDS.COM