

Critics' choice

Life&Arts

Visual arts Jackie Wullschlager

Balenciaga: Shaping Fashion

Victoria and Albert Museum
London

He dressed Ava Gardner, Gloria Guinness, Lisa Fonssagrives, Mona von Bismarck, defined the 1950s and 60s look with crêpe-de-chine "Baby Doll" cocktail outfits, "La Tulipe" and "envelope" evening gowns, a metal minidress and spiral silk hats, and had his designs photographed by Cecil Beaton, Irving Penn and Richard Avedon. This glamorous show marks the centenary of the opening of Cristóbal Balenciaga's first fashion house in San Sebastián, and considers his continuing legacy in fashion. vam.ac.uk, 020 7942 2000 to February 18

Wayne Thiebaud

White Cube, London

He is not a pop artist but he depicts cakes, pies, hamburgers, sweets and gumball machines in bright heightened colours spotlighted against pale backgrounds, with the well-defined shadows typical of

advertisements – in thick creamy paint redolent of Old Masters. This is a rare UK showing of half a century of pictures by the distinguished 96-year-old American painter, who still works (and plays tennis) daily.

whitecube.com

020 7930 5373, to July 2

Chung Sang-Hwa

Lévy Gorvy, London

First London solo exhibition for the 85-year-old Korean minimalist painter whose white monochromes play on intricate variations in textures, built up through meticulous processes of coating his canvases with glue, water and kaolin clay, scoring in gridlines, folding and stripping surfaces.

levygorvy.com, 020 3696 5910, to July 21

Howard Hodgkin:

Absent Friends

National Portrait Gallery, London

This upbeat show opened just after Hodgkin's death and instantly altered our understanding of how an artist often considered abstract remained "a

representational painter but not a painter of appearances". Highlights range from vibrant early portraits referencing pop to the overheated eroticism of bedroom scenes in Venice and Naples, and Hodgkin's last, unexpectedly large, painting, crystallising memory as his leitmotif, "Portrait of the Artist Listening to Music".

npg.org.uk, 020 7306 0055 to June 18

Imagine Moscow

Design Museum, London

Architecture was never more Utopian than in Soviet Russia. Through plans, models, rare drawings, propaganda posters, this show explores Moscow as it was imagined by 1920s idealists – Lenin's Mausoleum; the Palace of the Soviets, envisaged as the world's tallest building; El Lissitzky's "Cloud Iron" network of horizontal skyscrapers – which would transform the city into socialism's world capital.

designmuseum.org

020 7403 6933, to June 4