

Interview conducted on the occasion of Where You Are Not, a group exhibition of work by Tess Williams, Alexander Mourant, Tom Pope, Simone Mudde, Florence Sweeney, Karina Russel and Maddie Rose Hills.

How do ideas about time make their way into your work?

Painting as a process has a physical speed to it, a mark can be made instantly, but there's a contradiction that sits in the slowness of making a painting; for me it can take anywhere from one month up to a number of years. Each gestural mark or thin wash of paint is time captured, the recorded days of the journey of a painting sit together on the canvas and interact with each other over time.

In 2016 I made a piece of work called A Not so Distant Memory; where I filmed myself over time making a painting, putting down layers of paint over and over again, each new layer being eventually and inevitably covered. Through paint my work still explores this idea of layers in time, what blurs and what remains.

How does the colour blue tie in with these ideas on time?

As well as being a colour I love, blue represents time and the notion of distance as time. As we move further away from a place it falls into blue-ness, all colour and detail become lost as blue engulfs the landscape. As time washes over memory, blue washes over distance. The title of the show came from one of Rebecca Solnit's Blue of Distance essays from a Field Guide to Getting Lost.

Is scale important to you?

I've always been drawn to large scale paintings, specifically all-encompassing paintings by artists like Rothko. Brice Madden likens Rothko's paintings to a certain light that the sky takes just before a storm; it is 'an indefinable space, but it is having an affect on you physically. You feel engulfed, totally surrounded by it.'

Throughout art history the long canvas has been used to create a panoramic sensation where the viewer is surrounded by and drawn into the work. Monet's Water Lilies were 'part of the artist's ambition to create a panorama that enveloped the viewer', similar to an installation the paintings 'convert the viewers role from observation to immersion.'

I usually work from the memory of landscapes I've visited, mostly large scale environments such as huge mountains or a view from a plane looking down at a coastline and so the scale of the painting mimics these places. In this recent work I've been painting from a memory from 2012, in a summer off art school I went on a trip to the Seychelles working with environmental conservation on an island there, I have a memory of being in the middle of the sea with a snorkel and mask and the sea was so deep that looking down you could see only blue. At that moment there were no fish, and even though the water was clear there was no visible sea bed. Being alone in the sea might normally spark a fear of the unknown, but in that moment the abstract-ness tricked me into not being able to believe I was in the sea, but inside a giant blue monochrome painting.

Why do you paint?

I could read James Elkins write about painting all day, there is a romanticism that resonates with what the medium is for me, what I get from it and strive to achieve with it. 'Paint records the most delicate gesture' Elkins writes 'It tells whether the painter sat or stood or crouched in front of the canvas. Paint is a cast made of the painter's movements, a portrait of the painters body and thoughts.'

I'm drawn to art that can be experienced with a visceral response, when the initial visual relationship between viewer and painting is as significant as the content of the work, as Susan Sontag writes in her essay *Against Interpretation*, 'None of us can ever retrieve that innocence before all theory when art knew no need to justify itself, when one did not ask of a work of art what it said because one knew (or thought one knew) what it did'.