

WATER AND LAND

an exhibition of paintings

by

Kay Bainbridge

Curator's Guide

Kay Bainbridge revels in colour, form, and quirky composition to fine tune a balance within her paintings. Some of the work veers towards the representational while others are differing degrees of abstraction. The artist utilises whichever approach works best to express her concerns, so one artwork in the exhibition can look quite different from the next. The traditional medium of oil on canvas provides a unifying framework in which the artist can let the creative spirit fly off in any direction. In the same way some paintings are the same size, creating a series of mindscapes, emotional fields, and states of being. The group of eight paintings with their thoughtful names, huddle together like friends, each having their own character and energy. They're reminiscent of a 'pick-and-mix' giving an opportunity to 'pick the artist's brain'.

On closer inspection of the two large works on the left wall; a rich, multi-layered textural surface is revealed. This occurs in the artist's process of scraping back paint, reapplying, working intuitively and repeating until the paintings find the point of tension and balance which she is happy to rest in. The third large work, Headquarters, is presented high up on the far wall. This placing allows for some distance, giving the viewer chance to travel into the depths, rather than across the surface.

Society at large in all walks of life is prone to categorisation and creating limits. There is a certain expectation for an artist to stick closely to a style and produce work that is all very similar, but for the intuitive artist who works out problems in the process, this is not always easy to adhere to. A painting can start off as a landscape and morph into something else. This sometimes can be a frightening way of working but also exhilarating, stepping into the unknown. It also gives the viewer that same sense of vertigo and freedom looking at the unexpected.

The linear gallery format can be a tricky one to exhibit in, the temptation for the viewer is to sweep past on the way somewhere. In

this sense the pink wall colour was well chosen by the artist and works successfully in creating an intimate room. Pink can be a very emotive colour, provoking a reaction. In this case it has the effect of rounding out the space, taking the sharp edges off the linear. The artwork owns the space and we are able to step into a joyful and uplifting environment. This sense of being enveloped in colour, aligns with immersive installation art where the whole space, including the viewer, is the artwork as well as individual pieces on the wall.

The artist shows a fascination with contrasts: stylised graphic shapes with thick, loose application of paint; a landscape scattered with symbols; and the quirky titles of the work adding another layer of mystery.

In Kay's work you will see repeated motifs scattered into the mix: birds in flight, speech bubbles. Motifs can come from the subconscious – visual symbols that are picked up by the artist about their daily life in the natural or urban landscape. Thoughts and emotions are revealed in the creative process through mark-making and metaphor.

There is a strong environmental seam running through Water and Land, with stylised depictions of rain, clouds, and sea. Some works are simultaneously abstract and landscape, with a horizon line inviting a way in but playful brush strokes and shapes drawing the eye to explore the surface. It's the many dichotomies in the work that perhaps create that curiosity and intrigue, raising the question - what is this all about? The viewer may feel they like it but don't know why. This is an invitation to trust your instincts. Relax into the work like you would a safe space. Let go of having to know the answers and above all, enjoy a heightened sense of connection.

Julie Oxenforth, January 2023

Most of the paintings are for sale and available for collection at the end of the exhibition in May.

It is possible to pay in instalments with the payment scheme Own Art. www.ownart.org.uk

To purchase enquire at the front desk or email exhibitions assistant-curator julie.oxenforth@northlincs.gov.uk