

Jennings Kerr

Bonnie Porter Greene

All The Adapting

Since I wrote 'Painter, Explorer' for her previous show Porter Greene has travelled out of her Shoalhaven home, over the bridge and out into the wild and wonderful. There have been many trips and adventures, festivals, workshops and projects but also the paint has continued to spread. She has painted onto her shed, her entry patio, her letter box also received her colourful touch to welcome the postman. Her paint continues to fly off the brush and out into the world, onto all surfaces, rich and playful, luscious and joyful in all it touches. Her hand and marks always tracing nature and its many wonders. I have also previously advised caution if you didn't want the artist to paint on you, here I welcomed the wall work as a way to further celebrate this passion of the artist. It is such a special way to bring all these aspects of the artist together with the other works in the show. The title of the show suggests many shifts in the world around and I feel this filtered into the works. The lands continue to adapt and so does Porter Greene. There is a confidence in the painting. A noticeable shift in this show is seen in the scale of the surfaces and the gestures in relation to this increase. These are larger pieces than the previous shows, still richly loaded and leaning into their materials and surface. It's a practice that equally toasts the subject with the luscious and juicy blob of oil paint, the chunky weave of Belgian linen. There is a joy and vibrancy in all of the work here, but a sensitive admiration for the nature depicted.

Porter Greene and her friend and poet Nicole Smede tear down the searing black top of the 'Silver City Highway' and in some cases dirt roads, red earth with orange dust floating out into the majestic sunset. There is a dry warmth as the grasses flow in the wind, fields of flowers, pockets of poached egg daisies and untouched natural beauty at 360 degrees. This is an outback recharge, a collaborators field trip through Far Western NSW, North Eastern South Australia and South West Queensland. This 'corner country' has fuelled a palette for the Outback series from this show and also informed many ideas across the exhibition. These paintings read with a contemporary lens, they are field recordings, letters to the landscape and ecosystems, microcosm and endless expanse. This has always been her way but in recent times could not be a more important way of seeing. I can't help but think about how Porter Greene sees the world and why she captures it in the way she does. I think the paint is a way to understand her position in relation to all these spectacular worlds she depicts. This is made clear through the macro/micro scope in relation to the scale, how the little fields of moss and lichen, or the blooms of flowers or in the artist's terms 'a riot of rocks' are seen, then exploded into patterns, parties of pigment and in the case of 'A Bounty of Blooms, Outback, 2022' I see fireworks dancing in dense composition.

Vibrant red curls ducking, scraping under the tops of the rock ceiling to get glimpses of the damp and enclosed. I think of all the storytelling on cave walls, many important sites that have been preserved over the ages, here Porter Greene focusses in on nature's ability to mark, to flourish in varied conditions. The 'Micro Moss' paintings have come out of time spent closely observing the cave systems in the grotto areas in North Nowra, New South Wales. The notes taken, water colour and gouache on paper to guide these larger works crammed back into the painters rucksack, through the bush and back to the studio. There is a lightness in the painting, the elements seem to float around, overlaying with such control. The separation or sense of floating coming from great control in the layering and palette. It really is very sophisticated patterning, a hint of the build up of soft lichen and moss on the hard rock, repeat, and variation, the green tubes squeezed dry. The pink and yellow washes and underpainting bind the compositions together with the flicks of pink dancing around on the top. These paintings are full of life and playful energy, they also deal with light in a very sensitive way but most importantly they are a means for the artist to understand her place in nature and a reminder that despite our daily concerns these environments surge on.

Porter Greene descends a rickety old ladder, the only means to traverse the rock face and discover this incredible oceanic scene. A little wobbly, like her marks, risky and brave in search of subject. 'The Pink Lichen Of The Sea' works continue Porter Greene's interest in these strange and wonderful forms of life. In this case the artist has found something in the wild on one of her adventures to switch from her array of greens to her trusty pink. This underwater scene of magical sea algae was experienced in Newcastle at Catherine Hill Bay and is the perfect contrast to dry and arid elements in the show. They are fleshy and dense, I imagine what the sensory experience might have been. How these surfaces felt under hand and finger tip, a squishy and soft sponge. The smells of the ocean breeze and all the varied life forms living in symbiotic relationship. I think Porter Greene had to dive under the water and continue to explore, the last time we had a conversation about this trip she had come from the ocean again and we discussed many swim spots in her area. These paintings tell all these stories and more, the lichen and moss continue to grow, tiny worlds of life that Porter Greene can't help but to come back to.

Porter Greene is the life of the party, this room of her paintings is a party of colour and celebration of the life all around us. This show arrived in a van, an event hire van borrowed from a friend, the artist spread out her drop sheet to paint the wall work in the room and a rainbow of confetti spilled out across the gallery floor. The drop sheet tells tales of so many projects but also the spirit of the artist. I swept up the confetti but the sentiment remains here, I did this while 90's rap music blasted from a speaker, bouncing off the gallery walls as Bonnie explained to me why her shorts had to be dyed from white to fluorescent pink. Time to celebrate these parties in paint, gatherings of colour, florals, ocean lichen and red earth. A reminder to celebrate the party of colour and beauty of nature, a room as an adventure journal.

James Kerr, 2023