

Jennings Kerr

Bonnie Porter Greene
All The Changes

Perched at the edge, soft scraping of abrasive stone to the back of calves as the sun stretches up and out revealing the landscape. The bright yellow blanketing the expanse of green tree tops as the moist and glistening micro moss sits protected under the canopy, on the rock and in the cave system. The sacred grotto once again the backdrop for much of this show, a place of contemplation, a meeting ground for those seeking a reset, Porter Greene safe and free. The party of colour in the gallery continues, her rainbow stretches around the room as a toast to these ingrained places. There is an equilibrium of personal shifts and those witnessed in nature, changes in locations, in materials and scale but a constant in the importance of the Shoalhaven region. 'All The Changes' is a series that shows Porter Greene's growing confidence and this is felt in her mark. The paintings come out of personal growth and represent places and scenes that are bursting with life. They unpack the complex and deep relationship that the artist has with the area she has grown up in. The surfaces and material put to work in a dance of muscle memory, intuition and exploration of self in relation to these locations. It is not overtly political however the tone of appreciation and importance is clear, places that need to be cherished and conserved, events in nature and weather or even the simplest and smallest of occurrences in the landscape. It might be rubbing her face up against the tiniest of soft sponge like moss or the aroma wafting from a flowering plant but it is clear that these paintings are alive, free and expressive of a love felt for 'her' grotto, the caves, the banks of the Shoalhaven river and the surrounding bushland.

The North Nowra Grotto is within walking distance of Porter Greene's studio and home. She has been visiting the site for over fifteen years and continues to seek it as a space of escape, to bath in its textures and colours and to contemplate her own life in relation to that of the surrounding ecosystem. To her, it is a little magical the way the dappled light kisses the textures of the rock, the soft and damp moss and lichen, the crunching spotted gum leaves underfoot as she sets out on a walk, striding up the winding steps or in reverse and down to the Shoalhaven River bank. The Grotto is made up of an incredible system of caves, cracks and rock formations. You can get lost in its surfaces or sit back and enjoy its outlook while resting from a bush walk. Porter Greene often found amongst the rock with sketch book and watercolours taking in all the pattern and life. The painting 'Winding Up The Grotto', 2024 tells the story of traversing the stairs to the grotto. Here they are rendered in a loose series of markings and the rock formations slipping in and out of abstraction with ease, the river bank a bare linen in the foreground and the Porter Greene dance of pinks into greens. This for me does everything a good Bonnie Porter Greene painting should. The light play, highlight and contrast her line and energy all coming together in harmony. The scope in this series allowing more form and volume into the compositions. It feels like it is pulled back and more expansive. The rock formations, the river edge, the tree line, all in the psyche and laid out on the surface. One piece that zooms back in and uses a sort of repeat patterning is the micro moss painting. It has a great sense of float and separation of the layering in what is almost pointillism. This is very clever in terms of how pattern is used in a representational way to sign abstraction. This is also seen in the sheeting rainfall of 'Yet Another Rain Event', 2024. Despite the serious climatic tone, there is still a light hearted stacking of rainfall, an array of downpours stacked up into an endless storm pattern. Painting as forecasting and reflecting on the torrential and often destructive weather patterns that have occurred in recent years. This is a change that comes to mind when thinking about the show in relation to her ongoing focus on this region.

The material in this series feels underlined. There has often been an equal footing of the thick and juicy paint and the representation of place, the impasto and the scene. Here this has continued but with a change of material surface. The clear primed linen left exposed and creating a spectrum from the flat warmth of its weave to the heavily layered and loaded passages. Where previously the surface might have been an old board, handed down in the family, slightly dinged or chipped or even a patched together canvas. The almost outsider, naivety of substrate has been swapped for the traditional linen and the surface loaded more heavily to balance the change. The painting 'Sandy Pollen', 2024 is a clear indication that Porter Greene loves the act of laying down the material, moving it around with brush. The contrasting of yellow tones on grey feels so alive and as an image is so successful. The success here is in capturing these natural materials while expressing the material quality of the painting. Its brushed and dabbed blobs, its linen weave all in a dazzling vibration, bursting with the energy the artist felt when stumbling across the scene on a walk.

On tidying the gallery after installing Porter Greene's last solo show there was a paper confetti that had been trapped in her pink and green splattered drop sheet. It spread out across the floor and added to the feeling of joy. The room was swept up but this time the artist has found nature's version. Pollen on grey sands as nature's reminder that the party continues, festivities in the wild. Perhaps a more calming and contemplative celebration but as Porter Greene dials up the saturation, the scenes express her connection, how she feels about the landscape. She continues to explore, continues to create her parties in paint and the rainbow stretches around the room just as the sunrises and sunsets coat the lands in majestic hues of pinks and yellows. Porter Greene on an adventure, a mission to spread love through colour, it might be in a painting or in her custom pink and green jump suit and sneakers. The paintings here are a reminder to get out and soak up these special lands. Dangle your legs over the edge, take in a place.

Party, paint, explore