

Jennings Kerr

Tanya Wales

In Between

Red earth haze of dust filtered air, green growth sways in the wind, with a clear sky in the distance. The scene shifts and the light changes, another moment in the surrounding hills, trapped in between the layers, skins of pigment laid down. The light slipping away, the pinks and purple pronouncing themselves, dancing around above but also sitting on these surfaces, still, patient and ready to be covered over by another pour, or slow brush sweep. The layers accumulate like diary pages, dog eared and full of life's activity. The interlacing of tone, the static pulse expressing the frequencies of the everyday being channeled into the acrylic. Their spaces are vast and pull you in, holding you for contemplation of your own daily grind. The maker patient and asking the same of the observer, to free up from the digital grasp, the endless scroll, the next tab. Leave the device, feel the space around and find your own moments, navigate these terrains and let your schedule wash off in these fluid accumulations.

Wales operates at pace outside of her painting, be it the adrenaline of her off-road buggy at speed, in and out of corners, or rushing off to school sport after getting another layer down. The dry time is when the life and activity continue, the daily responsibilities seeping into these surfaces as the light pushes back out from them like sun through stained glass. I am reminded of the Gerhardt Richter windows at the Cologne Cathedral and their dazzling play on tradition, material and light. It is something in the way the tonal depth is built up gradually, how the surfaces feel like they filter light through colour and push out at you while pulling you into their depths. Drowning you in their endless stacking and wrapping around you in their richness and vibrancy. *'Night Gaze'*, 2023 pulsates with the luminescent and mottled signature of the moons cratered surface. Zooming back down to earth, and through the atmosphere and out the phone screen, Wales shares the views from around her home. There is a steel skeleton of the studio to be. Perched up on the hill and looking out at the fresh grasses. The last time I wrote on the work, Wales was building the house and this show has been completed from the garage come makeshift studio. Once again there is a simplicity in the pre-fab shed, honest and utilitarian, industrial and ready for the next series of pours. Where I spoke about minimalist buildings in relation to painting, here I feel it is the stresses of delays, budget, contractors being negated in Wales' meditative processes. The building will be completed and the next pours continued, while another responsibility finds its way in. The fields of colour in opposing rhythm to the everyday. Start, stop, pour, dry, repeat.

There is a warmth here beyond what is often a little cold in minimalist painting. We find familiarity in the light play, perhaps the sky at different times of day and night, the light from the surface of the water during a dive, or the fresh green of spring. The paintings are successful in sitting between genre, abstract in how they speak to emotional states reached through personal experience however they are also representational. The affects of light play in the sky has informed and inspired many painters and artists. I recall the trance like affect of the James Turrell piece *'Armana'*, of which the dynamism of the sky plays the lead. The difference in perspective and framing in the Turrell work creates a shifting experiential and participatory work that varies with time of day, weather, light conditions and perhaps viewers patience. Wales success is freezing the moment, looking up and freeing her mind, to then look down at her flat canvas and reflect a singular moment. Almost like the material in its working state as a mirror for the representation above. This is interesting in that I have often referred to the pieces as mirrors that activate when the viewer brings something of themselves to the piece, the transformative power of the void and expanse casting back and unloading the mind.

The materials are not underlined in these paintings, they feel more about the light and colour and less about the tactility and surface. Perhaps an even slimmer margin for error and less places to hide. Something that always comes with minimal work is the understanding and appreciation of deception. The difficulties of achieving success in the simple. Most of the paintings are built up very gradually, with patience and a sound understanding of tone and how tonal depth can be achieved through translucency and the incredible control of light as a result. I often look for how light is handled in painting, how it might be achieved through subtle contrasts in pigment, floating layers, highlights, or the exposing of grounds. Here we see a harmonious relationship of light and colour, mingling on the canvas like the pinks, purples and oranges floating around in the sky towards the end of a day. I think in many ways this series has pushed forward, the shifts not immediately noticeable, subtle like the work, but I feel there is more complexity in the layering, in the relationship between the pours and less reliance on tactile qualities of the substrate.

Wales is able to absorb her surroundings, to imprint her activities and experiences into jugs of acrylic and in between her layers. These paintings enable her to translate her own experiences onto surfaces that become endless expanse. This show is quiet, it is calm and the paintings ask of you to slow down. The success of the work lies in its balance of resolved technical and sophisticated processes with a willingness to allow for chance. Many of the layers varying in end result from how they are poured. The fluidity has a mind of its own and just as the day can go off page from its entry in the diary, these paintings are directed by Wales but also allowed to develop incidentally. The painting is analogue, by hand with an eye for the natural world around. However the works possess a language that brings them back to the screen. I think it is the static pulsating from them, or the slick removal of any sign of the hand. We certainly find ourselves lost in the screen, tied eyes from the backlit image abyss. These paintings are a remedy for the power of the image in contemporary life, they allow us to pause and find ourselves, to look out and into space. They let you slow down and soak in their saturation and rinse-off the everyday.