

Speaking in Ramas

Kirstin Carlin and Krystie Wade

One of the possible definitions of 'realism': a naïve belief that, behind the curtain of representation, some full, substantial reality actually exists... 'Postrealism' begins with a doubt as to the existence of this reality... i.e., with the foreboding that the very gesture of concealment creates what it pretends to conceal.

Slavoj Žižek from "On Radical Evil and Related Matters"

Speaking in Ramas brings the outdoors inside, transforming the gallery into an urban park, creating a space that confronts and immerses the viewer in a very real panoramic experience.

In an age where public spaces such as urban parks and gardens are often uninhabited, nomadic spaces passed through or looked at from a distance, Kirstin Carlin and Krystie Wade give us an opportunity to readdress how we experience our everyday landscapes.

Both Carlin and Wade create landscapes and environments that one can only explore through interaction with their painting. To experience their work is to be engulfed in an alternate reality. Their paintings do not reflect or represent a real place; they are a space in themselves. These works are far from 'snapshots' of reality, as they do not conceal or represent any reality beyond themselves, rather the meaning and significance of their reality lies in the viewer's interpretation of that representation.

Carlin's environments seem familiar yet are constructed from a variety of sources. When looking at her work one feels a slight disorientation. Perspective is a little warped, colours rather dream-like, and her all-too-familiar rivers, trees and mountains are merely, on close inspection, expressionistic brush strokes of opaque pastel colour or semi transparent washes.

Wade's abstracted and fragmented works create a space for the viewer to imagine and construct one's own landscape. One is challenged to negotiate the space of the painting by moving from the surface into the subtle depths and skewed perspectives of the forms within the work.

Shown together the artists' works play off each other. The viewer's perception of each work changes as the common symbols of the landscape are readdressed. When looking at the works alongside each other as panoramas, Carlin's expressive grass areas give way to Wade's painted forms that come to signify one and the same space. One interprets and transforms images as they read from painting to painting and a new and strange landscape is imagined in the viewer's mind.

Together these painters challenge us to think about how we alone experience, construct and interpret space. What we once experienced as a very real tree in a park is now a very real tree in a painting. Through showing that every element of the landscape is transformed by interpretation, these artists open our eyes to the idea that "even one and the same sign can be re-occupied, translated, re-historicised and read in a new way" (Beatrice von Bismarck, *Martha Rosler: Passionate Signals*: 264).

Devoid of human life, the only participants in the paintings are standing in front of them, making the whole experience a personal one. The viewer is placed within the panoramic space, turning the gallery into a landscape where exploration, interaction and meaning is made real.

Vanessa Eve Cook