

# FRESTONIAN GALLERY

## HANNAH BROWN

### I STOOD STILL

Private View: Wednesday 12th January, 6-9pm

Exhibition: 13th January – 19th February 2022

*...Let me, keep my mind on what matters, which is my work,  
which is mostly standing still and learning to be astonished.*

From "Messenger" by Mary Oliver, 2006

The works in Hannah Brown's first solo exhibition at Frestonian Gallery achieve a quality common in all truly successful representational painting, that of the captured moment in an immediately imagined wider vista. A constructed continuity of time and space evoked by the painting's sheer sense of presence. In the case of Brown's somewhat arcadian 'Penton Lane' series this wandering of the viewer's imagination is particularly poignant. As the scenes which she presents are not incidental aspects of larger homogenous landscapes, but instead are small corners or highly specific viewpoints that have been carefully chosen to omit the intrusions of human activity and modern life that would otherwise disrupt the serene, timelessness of the moment depicted.

The notion of the constructed or 'perfected' landscape in painting dates back at least as far as the early 16<sup>th</sup> Century, as the Italian tradition of the 'capriccio' took form – and continued to its arguable zenith in the works of Canaletto in works such as his *English Landscape Capriccio with a Palace* (c.1754). In Canaletto's case the idyll was achieved through assemblage, the addition of fantastical elements and the 'cutting and pasting' together of otherwise disparate landscapes. Painting with a modern sensibility and a desire for simplicity of vision that belies her extraordinary technical skill, Brown instead approaches the 'creation' of perfection through subtraction – her razor is one of judicious omission and careful cropping of existing beauty rather than combination or embellishment.

The extant 'idyll' in this case is a single aspect looking out from an otherwise unremarkable lane near Brown's family home in Cridition – a small town in rural Devon. This view has been revisited, allowing the 'crop' to drift just a little this way and that, across a series of stunningly beautiful major canvases and over a dozen studies and smaller works. These are paintings that speak of a longing for a place – in this instance of a home that seemed unusually far away as the UK locked down through the first waves of the Covid-19 crisis. The notion of what stirs thoughts of natural perfection, of nostalgic magnificence, within us is cultural as well as personal. Whilst for some that sense of wonder, stillness and perfect *connection* may be summoned by the sight of the sea; the desert; a particular mountain, it is for Brown found through the delicate dappling of light through hedgerows, to pale hills beyond, to a moment caught in the English countryside, that landscape that most convincingly arranges itself into a garden, in which she is transported both home and to a moment out of time.

**Hannah Brown** was born in 1977 in Salisbury, England. She completed her BA in fine arts at Central St Martins in 1999 and her MA at the Royal College of Art in 2006. Recent major exhibitions include 'This Muddy Eden' 2020 (two person with Christopher Orr, Broadway Gallery, curated by Kristan Day) and 'Before Long' 2019 (Union Gallery, London). In 2021 she was featured in the John Moores Painting Prize and in 2020 in the exhibition 'The Green Fuse' at Frestonian Gallery. Her work is held in private collections in the UK, USA, Switzerland, Korea and U.A.E among others, and has been acquired for the permanent collections of the State Art Collection of Ireland, Dublin and the V&A Museum, London. She lives and works in London.