

FRESTONIAN GALLERY

HANNAH BROWN THE ROAD TO HOLLOW POND



OPENING THURSDAY 13th NOVEMBER – PRIVATE VIEW 6-8PM
EXHIBITION DATES 14th NOVEMBER – 20th DECEMBER 2024

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Frestonian Gallery is delighted to announce our second solo exhibition of works by Hannah Brown. The subject of the boundary or ‘in-between’ space has long been a fascination for Brown, and this new series finds its focus on just such a place near to the artist’s home in east London. Visiting the two principal sites – James Lane and Hollow Pond itself – throughout the year, Brown has developed an intimate knowledge of the rhythms of the space(s) as the seasons come and go, and so too the changing quality of the light from early spring to late autumn and from dawn to dusk.

Brown’s work is deeply rooted in the western tradition of landscape painting. The bright golden tones of *Hollow Pond Summer Solstice 1* give way to soft indigos and pale grey-yellows in *Hollow Pond Summer Solstice 2* in a manner that recalls Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot’s *The Four Times of Day* (c. 1858), whilst the framing of the distant waterscape with bordering trees in the foreground is redolent of the work of Claude Lorrain (who had in turn been an inspiration to Corot). From the acknowledged grounding in the painting tradition of the Romantic and Impressionist periods there are elements to Brown’s practice that are purely contemporary in their concerns. The most salient of these is the nature of the spaces depicted themselves – though it is a nature that has to be known in advance or revealed after viewing, as the paintings themselves consciously elide the evidence. These spaces – James Lane and Hollow Pond – are not at all bucolic countryside, but rather situated on the inner reaches of London’s outward sprawl.

The imagery in the *Verge by James Lane* works find our view directed to the beautifully intricate intermix of grasses, brambles and trees that form the undergrowth along the verge, but turn the viewpoint slightly and a very different environment presents itself – the busy A114 road, punctuated by the sound of sirens from the ambulances making their way to and from nearby Whipps Cross Hospital. So too the *Space by James Lane* works appear at first glance as woodland clearings, dappled with gentle patterns of sunlight, that could be placed any time in the English countryside of the last thousand years, but move the frame a little to the right or left and modern housing and industrial buildings would quickly move into view. The eponymous ‘Hollow Pond’ itself, appearing in the two *solstice* paintings as well as numerous sketches, is not a natural lake (or rather, pond), but a series of large, water-filled, pits created by the quarrying in the late 19th Century of gravel for road-building.

The disparity between the ‘full picture’ of the spaces and their depictions is a closely controlled series of decisions by Brown that address two different principal concerns. The first is perhaps the most emotionally led, in its elevation of the most ‘incidental’ vistas to become subjects of beautifully composed and rendered paintings, as well as a connection with the spaces built by proximity to home and numerous visits. The second is more a subtle sublimation of the artist’s wider interest in the environment and natural world – in its importance not only to our personal wellbeing but also to human society. The choice to paint Hollow Pond rather than any of London’s myriad of Royal Parks or stately gardens – all nearby and accessible – is an egalitarian message in itself. The title of the show consciously echoes *The Road to Wigan Pier*, George Orwell’s 1937 book that functions as a historical miniature of working class life at the time in the north of England, but also as a treatise (in some places an entreaty) for the implementation of equality and decency in society. It is a book that subtly but effectively identifies borders of prejudice and argues for us to look again to find the possibilities for beauty in the most basic elements of our environment. Brown’s extraordinary paintings aspire to, and succeed in, this also.

Hannah Brown was born in 1977 in Salisbury, England. She completed her BA at Central St Martins in 1999 and her MA at the Royal College of Art in 2006. Recent major exhibitions include Anat Ebgi, Los Angeles; James Cohan, New York (both 2024); The Armory Show (solo presentation with Frestonian Gallery), New York (2023) and Frestonian Gallery, London (2022). In 2021 she was featured in the John Moores Painting Prize. 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.