

Pictures at An Exhibition by Steven Ingman-Greer

Martin Greenland Exhibition - Beaux Arts Gallery Bath September 9th 2017

Martin Greenland is a rare species of artist in the 21st century. He paints hyper-realist works that anyone would recognise. But that is only the beginning to his work. For his art is one of deep almost abstract symbols that go far beyond the beautiful surfaces which he creates with such unfailing skill. His paintings are an unusual combination of landscape art and surrealist psychology. He is a story-teller, painting works from deep inside his soul-memory, sharing deeply personal symbolism with us in ways that can sometimes be raw and intimate to a surprising degree. That this symbolism also reaches out to the audience in ways we can all relate to means that in some deep and unusual way, Martin's work speaks to and for all of us.

His symbolism and memory is quite specific to him, but in that way of all great artists, that symbolism and memory speaks across the divide to everyone who comes into contact with it. In painting the particular, he becomes universal.

This exhibition is particularly special, several of the new works being, in this writer's view, some of the deepest and most powerful works he has yet done.

From the "Nameless Hill" series of paintings to the small, but powerful "Combe Diptych" – showing echoes of lost worlds in exquisitely painted and atmospheric evocations of ruined, but still beautiful buildings. From the surrealist tour-de-force that is "Sanctum", with its' mysteriously coloured buildings glinting in the far distance of a beautiful landscape to the bewildering "March Italianate" in which Renaissance Italy collides uncomfortably with Modern Britain, Martin communicates to the viewer through familiar images that collide in unfamiliar ways and leads us into deeper worlds beyond. This art is incredibly powerful and far from superficial.

I should like particularly to single out the paintings inspired by Setmurthy Forest. The smaller of the two works – "Setmurthy Forest, Beneath a Fir, Very Late" would be a jewel in anyone's collection. The perspective is very special, the feeling, looking outward from beneath the fir to a distant light is almost shockingly powerful in such a small work. But it is this piece's larger cousin – "Setmurthy Forest – Deeper, More Silent – Very Late" – that is the real star of the whole show. This painting invites the viewer into a very special, enclosed world – a place far away from the horrors around us in our world. He has evoked a place that exists in memory to be sure. But this painting promises the viewer much more. That this evokes an eternal world that exists despite all of humanity's folly and that will still exist long after we have all been lost to memory is something that this writer finds very comforting.

In his art, Martin Greenland shows us all places that, though they seem to come from his own memory, do in fact, in some strange way truly exist. That they do is a joy to all the viewers of his work. Whether they can all actually articulate this fact is uncertain. But what is completely true is that all viewers of his work will feel the truth of this within them. And that is Martin's gift to us all, a gift that resonates long in the soul. Long after one has left the exhibition, we all can return to Martin's world in our hearts. And it is a world we will surely all want to inhabit – for as long as he wishes to show it to us.

I look forward to his next exhibition with eager anticipation.

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