

Jill Trappler

Familiar Places

"I paint large pictures because I want to create a state of intimacy. A large picture is an immediate transaction; it takes you into it." (Mark Rothko)

For Jill Trappler an invitation by Trent Read to create and exhibit eight paintings, approximately two metres by three, in his Knysna gallery, stimulated new ideas and different approaches.

Much changed, while at the same time echoes of her large paintings of 2009, entitled 'moments of being', linger – the dominance of a single colour in each work and the relatively thin layers of paint, the water-based pigment now applied with greater looseness and a sense of freedom; the years of experience that reside in Trappler's hands and the concomitant awareness of formal elements, such as scale, colour, shape and equilibrium.

The moments have become spaces and places, challenging and engaging the viewer on many levels. They seem elusive and intangible at the physical level until the eye registers the soft-edged, subtle geometries that structure the fields of colour and the complexity of layering that is revealed in the borders. Here dribbles of primary colours contrast with the dominant hue of the work, rendering the whole translucent and filled with light. Trappler's paintings are not dependent on external lighting – they may be viewed with or without special lighting, as light comes from inside.

Much like in her video work of 2011, Trappler moves the mind and invites us to join her in mindfulness, to get over and out of ourselves and the immediacy of time. Rothko's spirit pervades 'familiar places': the scale of the works that relates to Rothko's words above (for Trappler the large scale also has to do with intimacy and immediacy); the luminosity and the borders that contain and liberate the histories of process underneath, as well as the expanses of red, brown, orange, green and white colour fields of the individual works.

Tension is set up between colours and shapes. Sometimes they are organic, amorphous, amoebic or calligraphic; sometimes archetypal and specific but the edges of the triangle or the slightly off-centre square that articulate or anchor the surfaces are not straight. They suggest a threshold or portal, they emphasise the flatness of the canvas and the way in which paint is spread across it.

Each painting is an object and experience in its own right, freed from any references to external reality and created to evoke in the viewer a sense of spirituality. In the artist's own words, she will not "...compromise the painting or clarify the mystery by trying to explain meaning in intellectual terms. The mystery will remain if the work is autonomous, is interactive and generates imagination, i.e. it is an inspiration for others or offers up a kind of numinosity that is compelling." Through consummate technical means and the meditative quality characteristic of her work, Trappler draws us towards and into the paintings and compels us to be immersed in them, and to indulge in memories, associations and imaginings.

Marilyn Martin