

## PROXIMITY

15th Jan- 11th Feb

Candida Stevens Gallery presents the work of four women artists, work made in 2020/21 in response to the female experience of isolation. Ranging in age from 40-74 they needless to say had very differing experiences.

Alice Kettle (b.1961) The past two years have seen a shift in Kettle's work. For the first time in her career, her focus has been a personal one. Following a move to the countryside where she found herself working in isolation, she started to make work in response to her immediate surroundings in Somerset. Surrounded by fields, cows and a garden she had planted from seed, she experienced a new awareness of her environment and the delicate balance between humanity and nature. The new body of work that ensued, entitled 'ThreadBound' depicts the person negotiating their relationship with the environment with varying degrees of coexistence represented. The work is concerned with addressing the importance of the reciprocal relationship of humanity with nature so that there is no dominance of humanity. The figure becomes blended with nature, a new kind of togetherness which was occurring for the artist personally.

Anne Rothenstein (b.1949) painted some charged isolated figures during 2020, some pacing alone in their rooms, some sitting as if in deep contemplation, but ever present is the attitude and resilience of her characters. The *Blind Man's Buff* paintings evoke the frisson of not knowing if you are near or far, a metaphor for life perhaps. There has long been an androgyny to Rothenstein's figures, these are no exception but one does feel that these figures are women. While contemplating the events in certain paintings, this "off kilter" characteristic is what others have written about when describing Rothenstein's work, as novelist Deborah Levy said, "they are uncanny, both familiar and strange".

Katharine Le Hardy (b.1981) in 2020 found herself homebound with two small children, in London, with no access to communal play spaces. A painter who likes to paint from real life, she lost access to her subject matter. She started to reminisce, to dream, to look at images of old, nostalgic memories of her own rose tinted memories of childhood and togetherness. There is an optimistic playfulness to these works, their dreamlike quality is emphasised by the use of a clean bright sugary palette. There is a Cape Cod sunshine in these paintings that connects with the way memory has a high key, a distorted colour effect. These paintings feel nostalgic and fantastical in equal parts.

Olivia Stanton (b.1949) trained at Byam School of Art (now part of Central Saint Martins), London from 1973-77. Her work is rooted in the history of British landscape painting which over the years she has developed into her own unique style. As an abstract artist she uses shape and colour to express her experiences, in these recent paintings she talks about how she became preoccupied with the proximity of the shapes, 'they would almost touch, but not quite'. This tantalising closeness was what she says she was feeling in 2020, the constant possibility that reconnection would resume. Whilst she says there was a peace to her experience of painting in isolation, there was also a ponderous 'not quite connecting' quality which she expresses through the placement of her shapes. Having lived for many years in the South of France, and now in St Leonards on Sea, there is an evident influence of both nature and architecture in her work.

Images from top;

*Talking Flowers*, 2021 by Alice Kettle. 92.5 x 87.5 cm (framed). Thread on linen.

*Solitude*, 2021 by Anne Rothenstein. 122 x 122 cm. Oil on wood panel.

*Behind the Curve 2*, 2021 by Olivia Stanton. 80 x 70 cm. Oil on canvas.

*Take to the Trees*, 2021 by Katharine Le Hardy. 70 x 50 cm. Oil on wood panel.

High res images are available on request.

