

Think Less, Feel More

The Times Review - Alice Boyle - By Giles Sutherland

Tuesday The 25th July 2017

'Go With Your Feelings and embrace the sheer joy of these works'

The painter Alice Boyle has developed a style and artistic language that she has made entirely her own. Like many painters her work has evolved, moving slowly but inexorably from recognisable scenes and images to become almost wholly abstract.

A few years ago she was painting works with titles such as *The Crying Goose*, *Bird on a Branch* and *Triangles and Boats* in which the images and description matched. But there has always been something else in Boyle's work that transcends the mere representation and depiction of things, it might be called "energy" or "force" or "vitality". Whatever it is, it was present in her earliest paintings and is now more passionate than ever.

Boyle originally trained as an interior architect but there is little evidence of this here, except perhaps in the way she organises shapes and colour on a flat plane, as well as her use of layers of plaster and gesso, which she textures with tiling combs and scrapers. These vivacious, astute paintings contain levels of complexity inherited from the masters she clearly admires, such as Kandinsky, Klee and Miro, but they are anything but derivative. The stark linear patterning etched boldly on the surface of *Resist Resisting* might represent thinking, which the show's title urges us to abandon, while the freer, more colourful, whorls, splashes and scoops are aligned with emotion, so often deficient in contemporary art.

In conversation Boyle is explicit about her inspiration and working habits, which she describes as a process that involves surfacing her boards with several plaster layers before working in imagery that she often sources online. Such motifs, whether aboriginal art, Palaeolithic cave painting or 20th-century abstraction, are never copied but adapted and developed. Ultimately, a work generates its own energy and prepares the ground for another.

The importance of these works is not what they are about but how and why they make us feel. They are derived ultimately from an interplay between the artist's conscious and subconscious, combining feeling and rationality, in a way that makes such dualism seem irrelevant. As the artist herself quite rightly asks, can our feelings ever be separated from our thoughts?

Although there is often turmoil here, the prevailing mood is one of fecund joy. Boyle is a dedicated artist whose work will be enjoyed - and taken seriously.

Go with your feelings — and embrace the sheer joy of these works

Art Giles Sutherland

Alice Boyle: Think Less, Feel More
Howe Street Arts, Edinburgh
★★★★☆

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