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Installation view, Nicholas Thompson Gallery. Photo: Matthew Stanton.

Porthmeor Studio 5 paintings, St. Ives.

Courtesy of Nicholas Thompson Gallery



Eleanor Louise Butt, *Untitled (orange, brown, white)*, 2019, Oil on linen, 50 x 45cm.

Porthmeor Studio 5 - with Eleanor Louise Butt A look at an artist on residency

It's late-autumn in West Penwith, Cornwall. A footpath threads amongst the fields and moors. Sometimes the path is little more than a tint in the hue of coarse grass, or a series of puddles which quiver under the stiff winds of the Atlantic Ocean. Higher up, the hills are cloaked in bracken - at this time of year, a rich and salty brown - while patches of dark green gorse bristle with bright yellow flowers. Lower down, the path is guided by granite walls; Structures so old that it's difficult to tell which stones arrived by design and which stones came to rest by chance. Everything here appears marked by an excess of kinetic energy. As the footpath approaches the cliffs, cold earth shudders underneath, reverberating up through your legs and into your chest, as the ocean thrashes the pockmarked coastline.

Embedded within this landscape is St Ives, a small coastal town with a history of drawing artists from all corners of the world into its orbit. Along the seawall - nestled between houses of stone - is Porthmeor Studio 5, famously the former studio of British artists Ben Nicholson and Patrick Heron. Between its planked white walls and beneath its broad skylight is where Melbourne-based artist Eleanor Louise Butt painted her latest exhibition; the first female Australian artist to inhabit this studio in its 140+ year history.

Like the surrounding Cornish landscape which she so frequently walked during those months, the surfaces of Eleanor's paintings are layered sites; evidence to the effects of raw energy. Paint has been applied, removed, poured, scraped, and rubbed to form sophisticated dialogues in which both perception and action are interwoven and folded back on one another. The works function neither solely as

images, nor as objects, but perhaps more accurately as traces of prior events, as residues of gesture.

These gestural residues have been deftly layered to create productive tensions, whereby the works often appear to be simultaneously pushing outwards while also compressing inwards. In other works, these layers have the effect of blocking or shrouding areas of the surface, while also strategically revealing other segments. There's a formal dynamism at play, in which everything suggests more than what's actually there and nothing

is exhaustive. In this sense, Eleanor's exhibition functions exceptionally well as a collection, in which its charged surfaces form a constellation of brilliant partialities.

The collection Porthmeor Studio 5 Paintings was exhibited From August 19th to September 6th at Nicholas Thompson Gallery, Melbourne. eleanorlouisebutt.com nicholasthompsongallery.com.au







Installation view, Nicholas Thompson Gallery. Photo: Matthew Stanton.





Eleanor Louise Butt, *Compressed form (raw umber and white abstraction III)*, 2020, oil on linen, 200 x 179 cm. Photo by Matthew Stanton.

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