

*If that the heavens do not their visible spirits
Send quickly down to tame these vile offences,
It will come,
Humanity must performe prey on itself,
Like monsters of the deep.*

(Shakespeare: *The History of King Lear*)

VANISHINGS brings together work by five contemporary artists in an exhibition that poses a question about how art can engage with the encroaching climate crisis. All of the works on show centre on themes of landscape, amply illustrating the wonderment of nature, but also carrying undercurrents of fragility, escapism and the possibility of loss.

Each of the artists uses landscape imagery as a meeting point between an inner world and that which exists beyond the inner world. Recent paintings by Nick Archer bear the motif of a burnt tree that appears almost cruciform within vibrant layers of splashed and abraded colour. Elaine Brown's oils on panel are suffused with the deep green darkness of forest shadows, their surfaces bisected by veils of paint that create ambiguous visual disruptions, transforming them from literal descriptions of nature's phenomena into images of mystery. Denise de Cordova's painted sculpture – a tableau of mushrooms, a snail's shell and a goldfinch – alludes to her re-reading of Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, where landscape itself is a form of character that is powerful and troubling. James Fisher's visionary scene abounds with abundant foliage that heaves with the forms of writhing snakes and other stranger creatures which emerge from different levels within the painting's iridescent surface. A sense of restless movement is reflected in the figures of Tom Hammick's image of a cottage garden. Flower beds spill over with innumerable species of glorious flora, their radiance revealed under a darkening sky.

Art is a form of bearing witness – a telling of private stories to create connection and, by extension, empathy. Artists create images of the specific to bring our attention to the universal.

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