

An abstract painting featuring thick, textured brushstrokes in shades of blue, orange, yellow, and grey. The composition is divided into horizontal bands of color, with a prominent dark blue band across the middle. The overall effect is one of dynamic energy and layered depth.

BRENDAN BURNS

Aotearoa - A Brighter Light



Waterlily - Piha - Claude Abel
Oil & wax on linen, 1400 x 1500 mm

Cover & back (Detail): Piha Sunset
Oil & wax on linen, Diptych 1500 x 2600 mm

BRENDAN BURNS

Aotearoa - A Brighter Light

"Artists consistently talk about 'light'. Indeed, it has always been important within my paintings; the interplay between reflected and refracted light which helps the ambiguous relationships of the figurative and abstract, microcosm and macrocosm. Light which helps define the difference between pictorial space and sensory space; colour as materiality in its reference juxtaposed with colour as sensation and emotion.

Nothing could prepare me for the light in New Zealand, not even the northern Icelandic light, the peninsular of west Wales, or the intensity of the Californian sun. New Zealand was similar to that moment of having new prescription glasses fitted for the first time, the clarity and sharpness was incredibly acute. It took time to adapt to the perceptions of space and form as well as scale and detail.

My language of seeing the world involves the physical tactile act of walking, I say tactile because I am very conscious that seeing is feeling, feeling the physicality and materiality with your eyes. This translation into paint is critical in my work. The use of thick oil paints and waxes layered, scraped and wiped across a linen surface helps me try to get close to that initial conversation through the eyes.

Basing my studio in Piha at the 'Earthskin Residency' for 9 weeks enabled a very different opportunity in responding to a new landscape and sense of place. Despite the residency itself being cut short by the Covid 19 pandemic, I was able to focus and commit to the production of a series of paintings before returning to Wales in late March 2020. I avoided drawing and working with the camera for nearly two weeks initially giving me the space and time to let the

landscape 'in' so to speak, as genuinely as possible. I spent time walking and absorbing the immediate area of Waitakere; Karekare, Bethells Beach, Muriwai and Kitekite. The studio was something also that was important to prepare, canvases to prime, materials to be bought and orienteering of the space to be learned.

Initial paintings were the joyous celebration of light penetrating the Kawakawa leaf and reflections of more tropical trees such as the Nikau in the Kitekite stream. Rotorua and the geothermal activity in particular were always going to be a rich source of ideas and possibilities in painting. Wai-O-Tapu, Whakarewarewa, Te Puia, Waitomo and Orakei Korako established an intensely exciting relationship seeing this landscape through the lens. The camera allows for 'selection', a way to edit 90% and hone the eye in on the detail of place. I connect with the processes at work in the landscape, the ongoing relationship between construction and destruction, and consequently aspire to paint in a similar way, to allow the paintings to evolve within that same relationship. During this journey through the central areas of the North Island, Tongariro and Waitomo were also instrumental in building a relationship with place and landscape.

I was 5 weeks into my 9, and was getting anxious that my residency was drawing to an unplanned close as countries around the world began closing borders. It is now October 2021 back in my studio in Wales. It is no surprise that I'm still painting from the deep connections I made with 'sense of place' in New Zealand. With sincere gratitude to everyone that helped and enabled such a lifechanging experience, longing to soon return."



Brendan Burns at his studio in Piha

"All my work has endeavoured to present the clarity, yet simultaneous abstraction of a 'peripheral' experience: the afterimage burnt onto the retina, something which is both precise yet ambiguous, fixed yet transitory, permanent yet ephemeral. I aspire to celebrate a stone's ability to seep absorbed light, almost as liquid colour when dusk sets. These works 're-present' that connection with our natural world, the simplest and fundamental of human experiences: they give one time to breathe. They refract 'awareness' itself."

- Brendan Burns



Piha Sunset
Oil & wax on linen, Diptych 1500 x 2600 mm



Orakei Koraka / Seep
Oil & wax on linen, 1400 x 1500 mm



Thorne Bay Takapuna, Igneous
Oil & wax on linen, 1220 x 1980 mm



Brendan Burns at Thorne Bay,
Takapuna, Auckland



Whakapapa Walk
Oil & wax on linen, 850 x 1200 mm



Wai-o-tapu Sacred Waters
Oil & wax on linen, 1520 x 1980 mm



Wai-O-Tapu Flicker
Oil & wax on linen, 1200 x 1700 mm



The Warbrick Terrace Meander
Oil & wax on linen, 1010 x 1210 mm



Waitomo Pine - Flourish
Oil & wax on linen, 510 x 560 mm



Champagne Pool Wai-O-Tapu
Oil & wax on linen, 510 x 560 mm



Dazzle II
Oil & wax on linen, 1000 x 1400 mm



Thorne Bay - Cinder
Oil & wax on linen, 1010 x 1210 mm



Brendan Burns in his studio at Earthskin, Piha.



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