

Karen Purple Penwood House

Every day brings new inspiration for Karen Purple. She is an artist steeped in the changing seasons. In her daily walks around Long Hanborough she draws on the beauty of the fields, the trees and plants which she records in her journal, a journal not written in words but in paint. Her art, like Wordsworth's, conveys a "felt presence, a sense sublime . . . whose dwelling is in the light of settings suns".

Her pieces are neither figurative nor representational but suggestive of the natural life of growth and change. Standing in front of her large pale canvasses like *Of Oak and Iron* one is moved by the apparent simplicity of her work. She employs only natural materials: in the case of *This Connecting Thread* she lays a foundation wash of cochineal made of crushed beetles having used linseed oil and water on canvas, while the title *Lone Walk Picture* epitomises her life and work. Framed in tulip oak the set of seven small abstract oils are painted on linen, each one subtly different, each in differing shades of green that bring indoors the suggestion of a rich landscape. I particularly liked *Mill Trees* with the silver, grey trunks supporting the mustard-coloured leaves.

The gallery of Penwood House with its white uncluttered rooms is an ideal venue for Purple's exhibition especially her group of finely crafted museum boxes laid out on the polished dining table; each displays a collection of objects mounted and held with entomological pins normally used for insects. Every box is a personal record of her 'found art' like *Leaf Line*,



painted with ink on paper and *Secret Flight* which uses oil on calico. In another bright room a series of small drawings of leaves, berries and common stinging nettles are boiled and painted on linen or calico and then bundled together in little groups that can be purchased (pictured). Karen plans to welcome children from the local schools. They will explore the different materials and substances used in her work: natural red chalk, elderberry, crab apple and bottles of sepia, graphite, and ochre. They will enjoy using burnt charcoal gathered from pollarded willows found along the river and examine the naturally formed lines found in pebbles from the Triassic period, 225 to 180 million years ago, that have come to rest in the fields nearby.

■ Penwood House, Pound Lane, Cassington, Oxford OX29 4BN. Sat 22 November 2-8pm
Sun 23 November 2-8pm. Weekdays and weekends 2-6pm or by appointment 01865 883991

Jan Lee