

## TERRE VERTE

### The work of Karen Purple

It would be something of a mistake to say that the work of Karen Purple exists simply within a landscape tradition. Her work is not primarily concerned with the observation, appearance and representation of the natural world that she sees on her walks in the countryside. However, her work is deeply rooted in a continuum of practice that is suffused by a profoundly personal and tactile experience of the 'stuff' of being in the landscape and how this impresses upon her. To this end she collects the actual material, plants, leaves, berries etc, that she encounters on her forays into the countryside. She then may extend this resource into drawing, small intimate 'records', and the making of new work through, for example, extracting dyes from this 'found' collection. In the course of this procedure, Karen has built up an archive that is a very personal testament of her physical and conceptual journeying over the earth, and in the landscape. Although this archive may be used as an 'aide memoir' or reference point for development into other and larger works, it exists as a finely maintained, eloquent and rather beautiful work in itself. There is great sensitivity and attention to detail in the notation and collation of the material. It is her very own functioning, practical and ongoing museum of experience, a sort of reflective filing system. It is a great pleasure to visit this particular 'filing cabinet'. It reaffirms a dovetailing of the tactile, intimate and intellectual elements that underpin Karen's work and that lend it a perceptive and fibrous delicacy.

The larger paintings, typically oil on canvas, may evolve from this 'archival' material, but operate in a different way. Since the material processes of the paintings demand a certain treatment and skill, they are more clearly time-based and allow evidence of experience and memory through the accumulation and layering of the paint. The work has a new physical presence and invokes a particular relationship of item and moment. Thus the paintings themselves become an equivalence, an embodiment of an experience of being in the landscape, not 'pictures of' that experience. The paintings initiate a different sort of evocation and sense of time and place. Images and forms are thoughtfully placed, worked over, even obliterated and redrawn. They may be insistent or mobile and elusive. At 'the point of production' the work is a mix of recall, intuition and deliberation. This discriminating and selective procedure induces a trace of an image, its history, its relative significance, and a physical embodiment of the passing of time. Through the work, Karen may reconnect with, even re-experience a particular moment or 'family' of encounters and events. She can communicate something of all this to us, the viewer. Often one feels that each work may not necessarily need to come to any specific conclusion but as with the archive, could function as a journal, a shifting, moving, developing catalogue of things and events, and Karen's powerfully driven but tender and sensitive experience of them.

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