

jessica cooper essays

artist's text by susan daniel-mcelroy

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Jessica Cooper has been eliminating colour in her recent paintings, paring down the representation of objects and vessels to form, tone and line against a shallow recessive space. Brought up in Trevowan near Morvah and now living in Pendeen, her works seem to contain within them all the spare, wind-blasted and gloriously weather-worn aspects of those ancient landscapes, down to the simplest of forms. Using a line that remains structural within the work is important to Cooper, but in some instances her line seems to have a narrative, a palimpsest of something else within it.

That they do not appear to be paintings about the Cornish landscape but rather more an idea of still life is both surprising and mysterious. Such a perceptual shift between landscape as still life and still life as landscape recalls Ben Nicholson's table-top canvases of the 1950's made in Porthmeor Studios. Cooper has always remained interested in achieving both balance and space in her paintings. She is used to layering imagery into her work and then reducing back by using monochromatic black or white and a painting made in this manner may have up to twenty layers applied.

Cooper has a strong, sometimes almost sculptural, sense of design reminiscent particularly of William Scott with whom she shares an affinity for line and categorisation, a graphic feeling for rightness of placement on the canvas surface.