



# **A Stubbornly Persistent Illusion**

by Emily Jane Campbell

## **Exhibition dates:**

8th February - 9th March 2024

**“Now he has departed from this strange world a little ahead of me. That means nothing. People like us, who believe in science, know that the distinction between past, present and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion.”**

Albert Einstein





## Cairn

40x40cm Oil and mixed media on linen  
Not for sale. On loan from a private collector.

Through his work, Einstein established that the past, present and future are not absolutes. In 1955, upon the death of his best friend, the Swiss-born Jewish Italian engineer Michele Besso, Einstein wrote these words in a letter to Besso's family. Referring to the block universe theory of spacetime, Einstein presents a four-dimensional view in which all events across time and space are on an equal ontological footing. If the distinction between past, present and future is not a fundamental feature of reality, then all existence in time is equally real. If this is true, then no one and nothing is ever really lost to the past.

This exhibition navigates this concept through a series of fantastical landscapes. Emily Jane Campbell's paintings are often based on old photographs of her father's garden and the surrounding rural landscapes of Kent, where she grew up.

Within them, stone monuments memorialise the departed, including the father she lost, and humming neon portals hold the promise of reunion. Campbell creates worlds that are familiar but transfigured by memory and time. These are the places of her past, the same but different.

Recast by her subjective view of her own history and childhood, these paintings are a form of storytelling and a form of idealising. They are her personal mythologies.

There is a sense that there is more to these spaces than meets the eye, a sense of a happening or a transformation. Something almost imperceptible, a crackle of energy. In this sense, much of her work pays an homage of sorts to Paul Nash and his concept of the "genius loci" or the "spirit of the place". The painter was first to 'reinvent' a specific place by showing it to the viewer in his chosen light.





### **The Garden**

40x40cm Oil and mixed media on linen  
£480



### **The Visitor**

152x122cm Oil and mixed media on canvas  
£2,300



**“He created places by  
visually redefining them,  
filtering their history,  
mythology and lineaments  
through his sense of  
the mysterious and  
evocative...”**

Clare Colvin



**Populated**

50x100cm Oil and mixed media on linen  
Not for sale. On loan from a private collector.





## Henge

40x40cm Oil and mixed media on linen  
Not for sale. On loan from a private collector.



## Study for The Visitor

A3 Graphite on paper  
£180





## Portal

70x100cm Oil and mixed media on linen  
£1,450

In Campbell's work the mysterious takes the form of portals, geometric neon shapes that nestle or hover in woods and gardens. She invites us to the real and imagined spaces where the portals reside and we wonder, are they conjured or revealed and hidden? Rocks and stones, with an element of anthropomorphism, act as a marker of these gateways.

We have been memorialising our departed for millenia, erecting monuments as a way to hold on and keep those we love here with us. Totems, henges and cairns, made from stone, the material of the dead. Here their congregation and relationship represents the ancient past and summons or signposts the thresholds. But what are they at the threshold of?

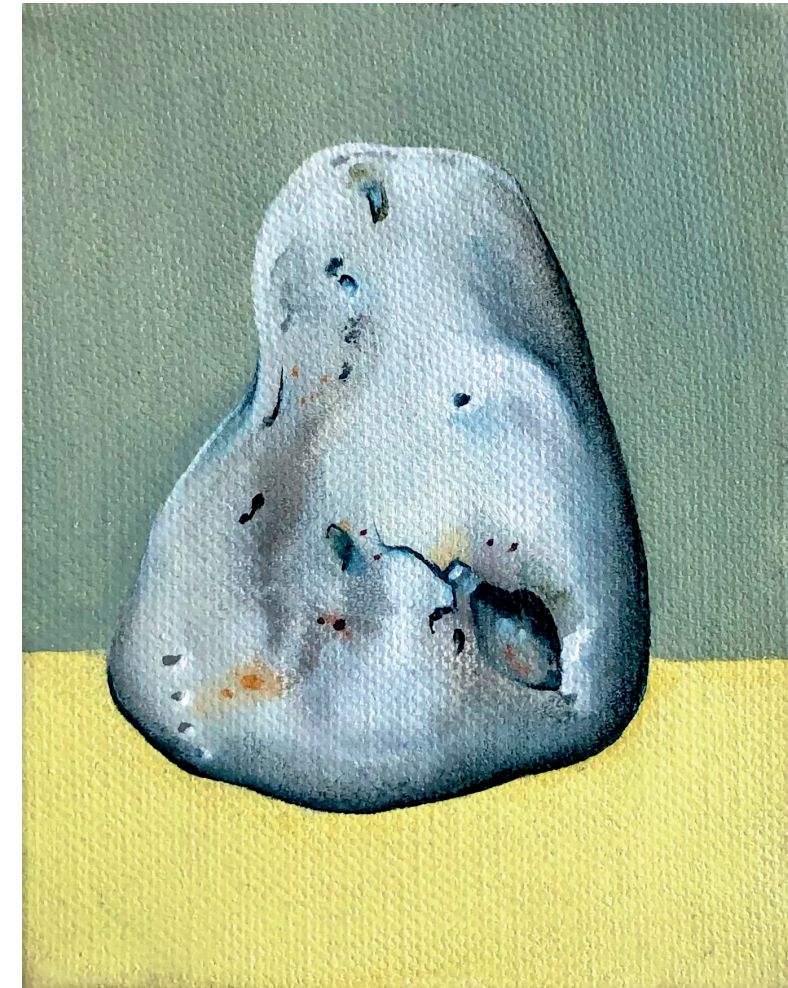
If we were to pass through an opening, where would we find ourselves? By providing these access points, Campbell allows us to circumnavigate loss and return to a safe and complete world.





### **Triptych**

10x30cm Oil and mixed media on linen  
£340



### **WAGO**

15x10cm Oil and mixed media on canvas  
£190





**“In short, death does not actually exist. Instead, at death, we reach the imagined border of ourselves, the wooded boundary where, in the old fairy tale, the fox and the hare say goodnight to each other”**

Robert Lanza

**They Collected the World in Small Handfuls, and When the Sky Grew Dark, They Parted With Leaves in Their Hair**

20x30cm Oil and mixed media on linen  
Not for sale. On loan from a private collector.





**RAWL**

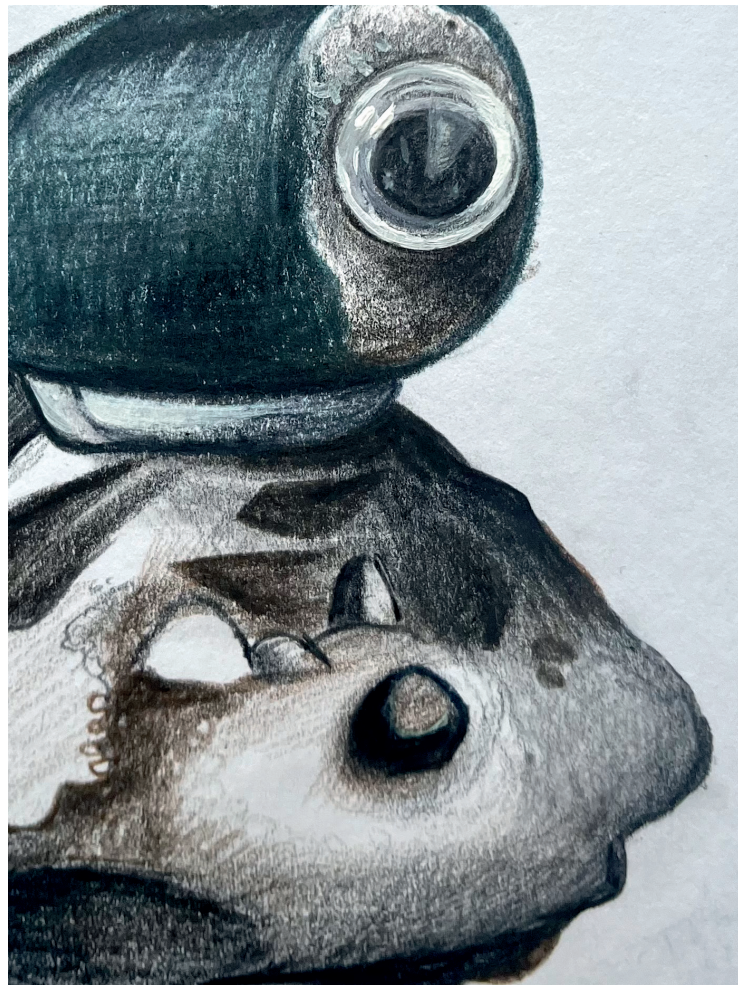
20x20cm Oil and mixed media on canvas  
£325



**Glow**

20x20cm Oil and mixed media on canvas  
£325





### **Artist Statement**

Emily Jane Campbell is an artist whose fundamental concerns are the concepts of personal mythology, “genius loci”, loss and alternative realities. She investigates both the deeply personal experiences of remembrance and storytelling, and the underlying structure of the physical world. This exploration is consolidated through immaculately rendered stones, obscuration of the painted surface, a deep understanding of light and colour, and the playful application of fittings and hardware. The borrowed imagery and ceremony of henges, cairns and totemic memorial constructions provide the context for fantastical landscapes populated with portals and humming neon gateways to one’s own inaccessible past.

Campbell predominantly works in oil paint and mixed media. Her fantastical landscapes are an amalgamation of photographs, childhood memories and imagination. Locations of her past are reimagined, allowing her to re-author and mythologise her history and memorialise that which has been lost.

These idealised locations are treasured but inaccessible spaces. Fluorescent portals and hovering dark holes lead curiously in and out of the landscape, but their destinations remain elusive. Natural forms hold vigil. Trees are reassuring in their solidity and solidarity. The presence of stones signifies loss, as they become the cairns and totems of memorial. They reference an awareness of our place in the human story and the layers of history held in their geological strata, reminders that nothing lasts forever. Just as remnants of the past are concealed in rocks, trace elements of a person, place or happening are locked in our memory.









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