

Purdy | Hicks

Press Release

MICHAEL PORTER – BENEATH THE SURFACE

13 March – 25 April 2009

Critics and collectors alike have long admired Michael Porter's intricate observations of the world beneath our feet. Purdy Hicks Gallery is delighted to present a new group of paintings and works on paper, developing this theme on a larger scale and employing increasingly sophisticated techniques. This exhibition reiterates Porter's position as one of this country's leading contemporary landscape painters, using what is usually seen as the familiar and reinterpreting these scenes with a creative freshness allowing the viewer to see the landscape from a new perspective. The title ***Beneath the Surface***, refers to, how we, the viewer, regard these paintings as they reveal themselves slowly by the gradual acknowledgement of both the painted surface and the literal glimpses into the background.

Each work is a result of several individual layers of separate images recorded photographically during walks around Newlyn where Porter lives, and many of them are very large, allowing a greater freedom in the use of the natural characteristics of the different types and techniques employed in their making. The surfaces are multi-layered, natural elements are camouflaged and concealed and are only just visible, whilst others are obvious and totally unrecognisable. The paintings show the history of their making, giving the viewer the opportunity to discover through observation the experience one has when being in the landscape itself. We are sucked into the surface as we acknowledge different natural identifiable objects embedded in the layers of paint encouraging us to look deeper into the surface of work.

Michael Porter writes of the work 'Although nature is the catalyst, it also challenges our perception of how we interpret the world around us. How do we know that what we look at is beautiful? Why does a seemingly random mark appear to be highly descriptive or the intricately painted leaf look so nondescript? These works convey that mystery of the world around us and hopefully give us a deeper insight into what might even be classed as mundane.' Porter says that 'few people have the time or inclination to stand and stare' and suggests that his paintings may 'allow us those few minutes of reflection giving us the time to see the world as it really is.' But he does more than this: his blending of acute observations with the subtle manipulation of paint actually creates

new cosmologies of nature. Turner felt the need on one occasion to have himself lashed to the mast of a ship in order to observe a snow storm as closely as possible, but it is as if Porter anchors his vision to the ground before him and through an effort of the imagination sees more than the retinal image, thereby transforming our perceptions as well. These works go beyond botany, zoology and geology and depict other worlds embedded within our own.

Porter regards himself as a traditional painter, using what we have come to expect as traditional materials: acrylic paint, oil paint, paper and canvas. However, they are used in order to maximise the inherent qualities of the materials themselves as means of expressing the naturalness of the landscape.

The exhibition will include a pair of large diptychs, a number of oil paintings as well as mixed media on paper.