

Justin Cooke



Justin Cooke was born in Portsmouth in 1966 and moved to Dorset soon after. He studied Fine Art at Newcastle University and has been working as a professional artist ever since. He exhibits at major galleries throughout the UK and abroad as well as exhibitions such as the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition. In 2007 the book Justin Cooke The Ridgeway was published by Culliford Tree. Along with text by the artist it contains illustrations of some fifty or so paintings representing and inspired by the South Dorset Ridgeway. Some of these paintings are in this exhibition.

“When painting I tend to latch onto the things that interest me and it is this, I think, which gives each painting it’s individuality. Some paintings are all about distant, indistinct horizons, as the natural fall of the land allows for far reaching views from such a high point. Other paintings are concerned with the atmosphere and the sky as day turns to night.”

“To one part of this collection I will give a little explanation. The Field Paintings”.

“The Field Paintings: Patterns, Marks and Memory

The Landscape around the area in which I live is littered with marks and patterns. Some may be prehistoric; henges and enclosures, others medieval; in the form of field patterns and strip lynchets. The patterns made by modern agriculture be it through ploughing or the mowing of hay seem to echo some of these older designs as they too follow the form of the landscape and it’s geology. A whole history is recorded in these fields and hills, much of it now forgotten but occasionally revealed again to us, when the light is low and the grasses parched.

It is interesting to me that my paintings develop in the same way. Underlying marks are often covered, then scratched back through and revealed again. In this way my paintings reflect the same process. Marks and 'pathways' on my paintings are also built up over time. Some of the older ones still show, others are lost but they all play a part in developing the finished effect. In this way I hope that my paintings also hold a 'memory' of this landscape. For me it is also a personal one, as it is the landscape of my childhood.

Overall though it is a universal memory I can see. It is about our place in the landscape and noticing that others too have witnessed it. Their history is reflected in it and so is ours. It is a timeless link. I do like to think that the henge builder, medieval farmer, generations of children and their dogs (of which I was one) are all part of this memory. I can't help but feel sometimes that there is a particular bond that links us through time, it is a collective memory and now I am part of it myself."

Taken from, Justin Cooke The Ridgeway