

Hayley Barker Debuts in Scotland with "The Ringing Stone"

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This summer, as part of this year's Edinburgh Art Festival, Ingleby presents the first exhibition in Europe of paintings by Los Angeles-based painter and Jux alum, Hayley Barker. Barker's big, bold and beautiful paintings combine apparently prosaic personal details of the artist's immediate surroundings in her home and studio in LA with an awareness of time passing and the contradiction of painting as a means of both measuring time's passage and freezing the moment. Specifically, in this exhibition, Barker celebrates the cycle of the seasons in response to the play of light across the four walls of the main gallery in the old Glasite Meeting House, designed in the 1830s as a religious space, and carefully positioned to channel the shifting light, as if the building were a giant sundial.

"I am from Oregon, a part of the US where seasons are very distinct," Barker says. "However, I have been living in LA for the past nine years, and I have had the opportunity to witness the seasons in a new light. The sun and mild weather of southern California offer less dramatic changes in the landscape but changes that are no less impactful. Because the plants, flowers, and trees remain somewhat contiguous, I became more aware of the small changes and the moods they inspire. Digging deeper, I realized that living between the natural world's cycles and the calendar of our seasonal rituals and holidays became a way of showing that time does pass even while the landscape of my garden remains somewhat the same. While painting this show, it became clear that making a cycle of paintings about the seasons required me to consider how we experience the passage of time, both in nature and culturally. Holidays pass almost in an instant, as does a flower bloom and wither. A tree springs new leaves and drops them. The moon is always moving through her cycles. Stones have slow and long lives, their stories too old to know. How do we move through these many lives we live amongst with grace, respect, and dignity? How do we honor the earth and her many inhabitants over time and space? How does it feel to live a year with special attention to how one celebrates, marks, and notices seasonal changes while experiencing the long and almost invisible cycles of time passing?"

The exhibition is anchored by four majestic paintings of the artist's garden across the course of the year, alongside seasonally specific depictions of other scenes and still lives that play to Barker's balance of recording intimately personal, often ritualistic, subjects that have an invitingly universal frame of reference.

Stylistically Barker's paintings present something of a contradiction. Dryly painted with a deft touch and fine brushes, the intricate brushwork and patterning gives an overall impression of almost claustrophobic density, yet they also seem wide-open and full of space, colour and light, striking an unlikely and yet nuanced balance between intimacy and grandeur.

"My husband and I visited the Ringing Stone of Tiree last summer," Barker notes on the inspiration of the show. "The Ringing Stone was brought to Tiree once upon a time. It has pock marks carved into it from the Bronze Age which were used for ritual, but what kind of ritual is unknown. Trekking to this stone across sheep-filled fields along the stunning coast of Tiree, simply visiting this stone was a pilgrimage. But meeting it was arresting! Taking a stone to strike the boulder, then standing back to hear the resonant ringing sound - this took my breath away. I felt myself in the company of countless people before me who honored this stone being and met to perform some kind of marking of time with word or action. Communion with the natural world, moving through time with rituals to mark our shared physical and energetic lives! - this is what I live for. I wanted to paint the Ringing Stone immediately."