

Weaving Memory and Matter

Judith Brenner's new series of paintings weave together memories of travels past. Through interlacing colours, stencils, and forms on the canvas, she creates tapestries of remembered moments, as evoked by the exhibition's title. Texturally the works are also masterfully woven, incorporating brightly coloured pigments, acrylics, newspapers, stencils, and textured papers, many of them collected from the source of the artists' inspiration, in Marrakech.

In this joyful show, colour is lifted from the artist's memories and thrown onto the canvas, wakening us from a dreary winter, like the flowers of spring. The fresh colours seem electric amongst the dull greys of the city. The camel yellows, pomegranate reds, and Majorelle blues transport us to the markets, gardens and riads that inspired this series.

The memories that Judith has woven into these paintings have a tangible evanescence. Her collaging technique blurs hazy memories into the canvas, with etched lines, bold colours, and hints of Islamic geometry visible in the collaged papers and stencilled patterns. The work holds fragments of remembered moments and places. It does not matter whether the memory was real, felt, or just remembered, and in so doing the series calls on the feminine tendency to the representation of subjective memory. Rejecting epistemological ideals of a 'total' knowledge, Judith's paintings are windows into her honest and subjectively felt experience of a place, depicting things as they are felt, over how they are.

Working through a non-linear process, the artist brilliantly captivates the meaning of a 'series', never working on a single painting at any one time, but instead, working across several all at once. Some will take months, whilst others merely days. Painting across many canvases in this way holds the works together across the series, as windows onto one colour or shape connect to a colour or shape in another picture. They are like portals across the works, letting the viewer jump across them, piece by piece. As a mother, Judith is accustomed to working in short bursts, a process that is also apparent in the work, with bursts of energy and colour splashing across the canvases.

Like the riad structures that populate Marrakech, these portals are like archways and openings to new spaces and memories. They are portals between the works, but also to a remembered space, colour, or motif. The geometry of the riads is centred around inner courtyards with garden and water features, popular due to Islamic depictions of paradise that are full of water and greenery. One can look into these idyllic spaces through the archways surrounding them. Likewise, through Judith's collaging technique, one catches glimpses of colour, watery textures, and architectural lines.

The stencils that Judith collected on her visit are also visible fragmentarily throughout the work, hinting at the tessellation patterns typical of Islamic geometry and of the Zellij tiles found paving the floors, walls and minarets. The lines etched into Judith's paintings resemble the architectural features of the city, but also work as reminders of the sgraffito style present in the city's iconic tiles, which are engraved to leave geometric motifs.

Text by Charlie Clark