



THE MOUNTAIN RIVER BED

30 Jun - 22 Jul 2022

Julia Christey



Julia is a contemporary artist from Kirikiriroa/Hamilton and is currently completing her Master of Arts (visual art/painting). Through her beautifully evocative paintings she challenges the viewer to consider the interface of human existence and the natural world around them. Julia's work often references the Anthropocene, which describes the most recent period of earth's history when human activity started to have a significant impact on the planet's climate and ecosystems. Her work responds to this time of ecological crisis and environmental challenge by capturing the uneasy presence of human industry. As a practicing artist, Julia has been a finalist in many national awards and held Waikato-based exhibitions, while enjoying studying, experimenting and making work. Her exhibition *What if Matter Mattered* at Ramp Gallery is both a celebration and a culmination of her studies at Wintec School of Media Arts School of Media Arts—Te Kura Pāpāho.



Dissolve
Julia Christey
2022
Oil on canvas

Combustion II
Julia Christey
2022
Oil on paper

This body of work explores the tenuous relationship between humans and the environment. I am interested in the reverence and affection we feel for our environment, which contrasts sharply with the exploitation, pollution and unsustainable systems of production and industry. Beauty and the idyllic exist in close proximity to the dysfunctional and exploited.

Across the globe, human agency is responsible for the transformation of pristine coastline and the decimation of landforms and forests. Nonhuman life forms are displaced and natural habitats are lost in the relentless pursuit of consumer goods and mounting waste. This strange new landscape is confronting with its utilitarian functionality and decimated beauty.

WHAT ARE WE DOING?



Left to right
Ether
Julia Christey
2022
Oil on Fabriano cotton rag
Connected matters II
Julia Christey
2022
Oil on paper
Inhale II
Julia Christey
2022
Oil on paper



I am distressed about the prevalent bunker mentality, which abstracts and distances humans from an environment in which we are deeply enmeshed.

As the atmosphere and oceans are commonly viewed as infinite carbon sinks for exhausted fossil fuels and other pollutants, they hold much interest for me. Being neither object nor subject, in their vast and dilute state, they seem easy targets for human devastation.

Yet they are vital in stabilising the Earth system.

Political theorist Jane Bennett points out that we exist in a vibrant, complex, interconnected and interdependent assemblage that is the Earth system. She challenges us to:

“Admit that humans have crawled or secreted themselves into every corner of the environment; admit that the environment is actually inside human bodies and minds, and then proceed politically, technologically, scientifically, in everyday life, with careful forbearance, as you might with unruly relatives to whom you are inextricably bound and with whom you will engage over a lifetime, like it or not. Give up the futile attempt to disentangle the human from non-human. Seek instead to engage more civilly, strategically, and subtly with the non-humans in the assemblages in which you, too participate.”

Bennett, *Vibrant Matter — a political ecology of things*, 2010

Left to right

Ether II
Julia Christey
2022
Oil on paper

Absence
Julia Christey
2022
Oil on paper

Combustion III
Julia Christey
2022
Oil on paper





My paintings have many layers, which reference human interference, the complexities of a shared material ecology, and the compounding of time. Earlier layers are partially obscured as a metaphor for the limitations of human perception and understanding of complex ecological systems. This physical process, like the accretion and erosion within geological time, is both controlled and accidental.

Marks are frequently made by removing paint, exposing the layers beneath and leaving empty space. The notion of such “erasure” seems appropriate when considering the grief and loss of a healthy ecology.

Making art at a time of environmental crisis is very much grappling with what our relationship to nature is and how nature and culture are intertwined.

In this context, I am forced to question my place in it and my orientation to it.

Connected matters

Julia Christey
2022

Oil on paper

Cover image:

Undercurrent

Julia Christey

2022

Oil on canvas