

VIEW

STILL MOMENTS, Stroud International Textiles (SIT), 27 April–26 May Stroud, Gloucestershire. Aberystwyth Arts Centre, 27 July–21 August, Aberystwyth University, Ceredigion, T: +44 (0)1970 623 232, www.aberystwythartscentre.co.uk

"Still Moments" is a title which aptly reflects the nature of the work in the exhibition of German-born, London-based textile artist Hillu Liebelt. Liebelt's tapestries, as do her sculpture and models in various media, share an absence of elaboration without sacrificing visual allure or aesthetic significance. This is a situation which arises, at least in part, from Liebelt's deep involvement with her materials, or, as Mary Schoeser says in an essay in the exhibition catalogue: "[Liebelt's] practice not only preserves and invigorates an ancient technique, but also represents the principle of what could be called 'finding the soul of the material'".

Midnight Blues has a lengthy, slender format – 18 x 124 x 3cm – and is a compelling exercise in gradations of a single colour, from the upper and lower borders of darkest Prussian blue to the pale tones of a milky summer sky. The narrow strip of bars comprising the central panel can be read from left to right – dark shades to light – or vice-versa. The eye is captured by an even thinner band of gradated blues laid atop these

rectangular blocks – a case of blues on blue. Looking becomes a meditative process, as if surveying a spectrum of the possibilities inherent in this particular colour. *Long Dream I and II* have similar dimensions, but here Liebelt is musing on the nature of whites and greys; the strict boundaries are replaced by a blurring and intermingling, a sense of shades emerging and receding.

A signal member of the Liebelt corpus is *Red Circle*, an image of which has been used as the symbol of this exhibition. This is a powerful work which she has imbued with all the disturbances and upheavals of the Arab Spring which was in progress while she was at the loom and listening to news broadcasts. The eye is struck by the interaction between two basic geometrical forms, the circle and the square, and one peers into this vibrant ring as if through a porthole giving on to infinity. As in other examples of Liebelt's canon, one encounters a flat woven surface endowed with a sense of the dimensional; intriguingly, the most intense shades of red are supplied by bamboo fibre.

The ongoing *Winter Sun* series is another instance of circles contained within squares. The individual members are not large – 8 x 8cm – but have a stature which belies their physical dimensions and the impact is intensified when, as here, 22 of these multiples are

grouped together. This maker's fondness for snow-covered wintry landscapes and the particular qualities of the light in this season mean that one finds no burning, fiery orbs. The more muted shades nevertheless create cogent contrasts between the suns and their backgrounds, and also draw the eye by engaging it in investigating the similarities and differences between these woven images.

Between the Lines is Liebelt's interpretation of the surface of a boulder seen on a Greek island and its composition is without the geometrical forms which are so expressive in several of the works already discussed. Sharing the same wall, but with sufficient intervening space for both works to "breathe", is *Into the Unknown*, a square of predominantly muted gold tones upon one of varied greys – this pairing makes for an arresting reciprocity of visual and conceptual impacts.

The title, *Still Moments*, proposes a quiet, unhurried perusal and enjoyment of Hillu Liebelt's exploration of her materials, of her fascination with colour, of her expressing the nature of the seasons. But such deliberation is intended not only for consideration of light, shade and changing colours, but also for contemplation of the themes implicit in *Into the Unknown* and *Long Dream*. ●●● Ian Wilson

Chasing The Summer, Hillu Liebelt 25 x 124 x 3cm Rayon, cotton, silk, aluminium



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