

# Zoe ellenberg

## *Birdsong*

February 24 – March 9, 2024

The renowned art critic Robert Hughes once stated, “an ideal for humanity is to reconcile with the world, not by protest or irony, but by the ecstatic contemplation of nature.” Melbourne-based Zoe Ellenberg’s inaugural exhibition with Anthea Polson Art offers the viewer a realization of such.

Ellenberg tells that the title *Birdsong* represents “all the sounds and movement of song that can’t be seen.” She furthers, “The song of nature always provokes a sense of calm, warmth and nostalgia for me.” Her affinity with the natural world began very early in life. “I fell in love with the rainforest as a young child when my parents took us to live for a year in Queensland. I also have a deep connection to Bali where I lived for six months doing an artist’s residency after completing university. I have since travelled consistently throughout Australia, Asia and the Pacific. Give me a beach, waterfall or tropical canopy and I find happiness!”



“My paintings are Abstract Expressionism. I don’t think they are purely abstract in the formal sense. I find form with the linear, accidental splashes that can produce birds, glimpses of dragonflies and insects scattering across one’s perspective. A hint of a butterfly wing, various plants and clouds passing that become recognisable shapes may be discerned. The emerging imagery is a birdsong dancing across the paper.”

Describing her process, Ellenberg relays, “I really love working with paper, I enjoy its very tactile quality. Rough, cold press, hot press: these different papers have various applications. Paper has its own memory too!” Spontaneity is vitally important in the application of her mixed media. “I use black enamel – that is almost like tar, water colours, soft pastels, acrylics, spray cans, stencils and monotype. I employ monotype to abstract the linear. Painting on glass and then pressing onto paper creates fantastic textural effects. I paint on the floor, where I can move all around the work, then up on the wall, then back to the floor and subsequently the wall again. This can take a while, as there are many layers evolving. Each layer must have time to dry and cure before the next process starts. It really is a physical affair.”

Surfaces filled with resonant, gestural markings, Ellenberg’s renditions are not ‘windows’ into nature but rather immersive expressions of its growth and organic intricacies. The exhibition presents as a series of visual events pulsating with birdsong.

JACQUELINE HOUGHTON