

UpDown Gallery is delighted to present an exhibition of new work by the landscape painter Katharine Le Hardy. Ranging from petite studies to expansive canvases the paintings on display show a young painter whose work has developed massively in the last few months.

Made across the last year the works are responses to the landscapes Le Hardy encountered during a 2012 journey through Argentina and Brazil. From the tree-lined rivers leading to world renowned Iguazu falls and the expansive valleys of north western Argentina to the cityscapes of Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires, these are startlingly beautiful canvasses which merge the triumphs of 20th Century abstraction with the splendour of the South American scenery.

Brought up North Dorset Le Hardy studied painting at UWE Bristol before moving to London in 2003. It was in the wake of her move that she began to paint landscapes – with a series of work devoted to the Cornish coast. Looking back to her childhood holidays and the famed work of the painter Peter Lanyon these beach scenes foretold what was to come - merging a virtuoso handling of oils with an evocative capturing of place.

Like Peter Doig before her, Le Hardy has developed a means of utilising photographs to recall distant scenes – allowing her to deconstruct and reconstruct the original landscapes with increasing confidence. Be it in her paintings of New Zealand or South Africa or her most recent South American paintings Le Hardy succeeds in capturing something of the particularity of the depicted place whilst pointing towards something more universal. These are not portraits of a particular scene so much as mediations upon our experience of place in general.

The canvases are alive with a broad range of marks and gestures – our focus drawn between the poetic scenes and the array of marks from which they are rendered, between representation and abstraction. Here we see Le Hardy processing a broad range influence, from figure painters like Jenny Saville or Lucian Freud through to masters of abstraction like Howard Hodgkin or Richard Diebenkorn. These are canvasses alive with visual incidence.

The recipient of several awards for her painting across the last decade this most recent body of work sees Le Hardy working on an

unprecedented scale and with an increasingly vivid sense of gesture. Pursuing exciting new formats and challenges, the exhibition promises to reveal the excitement that a new generation of painters have to offer the venerable tradition of landscape painting.