



Luke Elwes

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floating world

Over the last few years the work on paper – both those made here on the east coast and during recent US residencies – as well as the new ‘floating world’ paintings have begun not only to revolve around the aqueous realm but also grow into a wider meditation on natural forces.

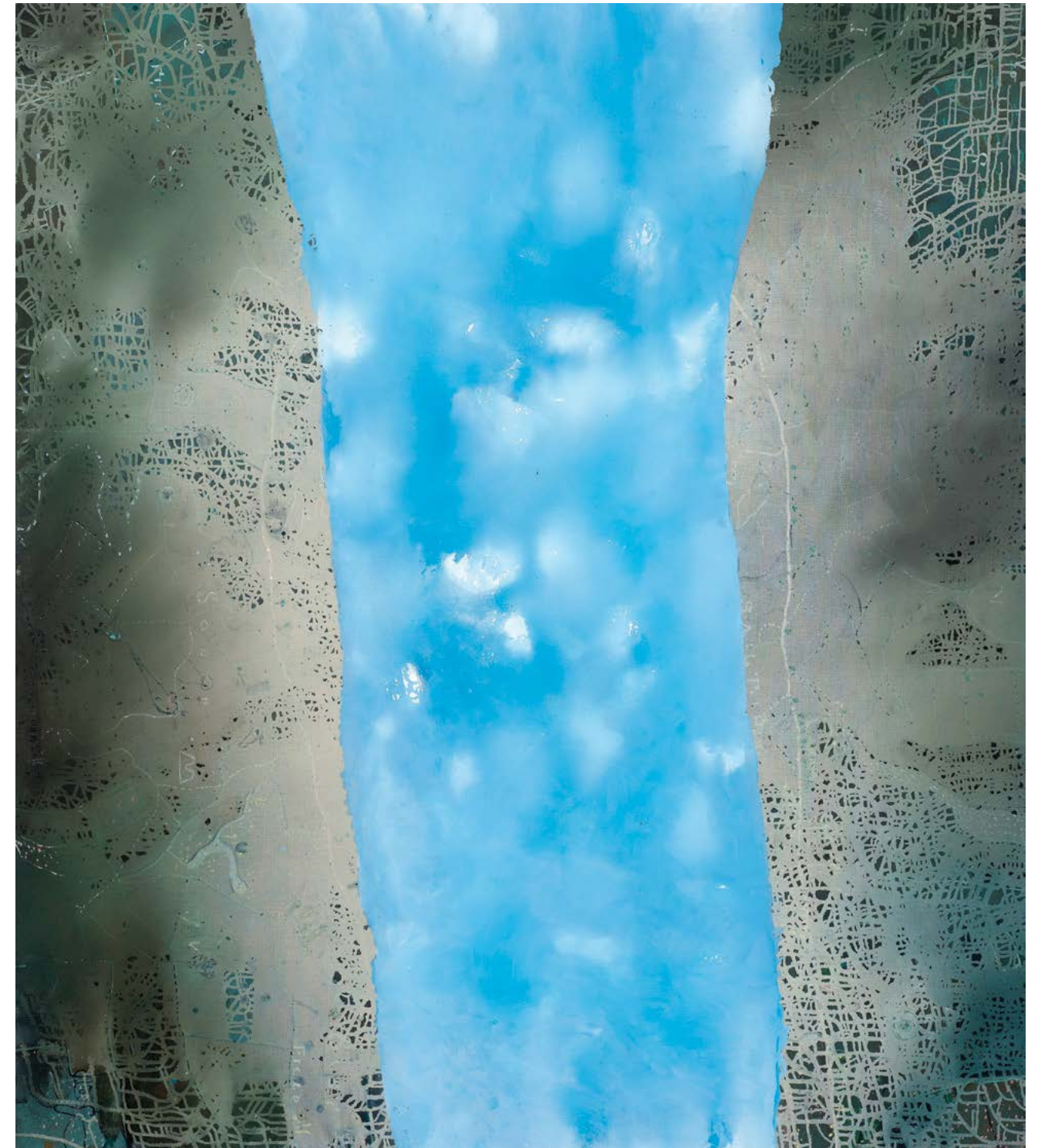
If they are reflections on landscape and memory, both many layered and recurring across time (and within which questions about how we might locate ourselves in the world have remained more or less constant), they are also fleeting commentaries – made through images uncertainly balanced between emergence and disappearance – on an increasingly unstable present.

It is as if the cumulative experience of travelling over many years to deserts, mountains and coastlines have been drawn together to form a locus around a time and space that is less culturally inflected and much more wildly elemental in its references to physical erasure, submersion and loss. The sense of discovery that still comes from exploring, walking or just ‘being’ in a place has also given rise to a feeling of reverie

In particular the passage of days (marked out here with fugitive impressions on paper) spent by the tidal waters at Landermere in the interzonal territory of creeks and marshes on the East Anglian coast has developed into an extended reflection on dissolution and the return to wilderness (as witnessed also in the remote mountain tracts and extreme climates of Tibet and Mustang with their wind scoured walls and surfaces). It is a world that at one level appears cyclical and peaceful but at another is also fragile and endlessly mutating, where our tenuous hold on the material and historical record is constantly threatened, as if on the verge of destruction.

What has become more visible and urgent as a theme is connected, at least in part, to what the landscape writer Robert Macfarlane described in 2015 as ‘solastalgia’, a term he uses to encompass recent art that is, ‘unsurprisingly, obsessed with loss and disappearance’. It is a phenomenon that ‘speaks of a modern uncanny, in which a familiar place is rendered unrecognisable by climate change or corporate action: the home becomes suddenly unhomely around its inhabitants’. We dwell in the knowledge – no less so in the Anthropocene – that everything returns to dust.

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3. Dawn | Oil on Canvas | 140 x 140 cm





4. Tract | Oil on Canvas | 100 x 150 cm



5. Constellation | Mixed media on paper | 57 x 76 cm



6. Current | Oil on Canvas | 102 x 102 cm



7. Flow | Mixed media on paper | 88 x 114 cm



8. Wildwood | Mixed media on paper | 114 x 144 cm



9. Treeline | Mixed media on paper | 90 x 113 cm



10. Shadow | Mixed media on paper | 88 x 114 cm





12. Rime | Mixed media on paper | 57 x 76 cm



13. Haunt | Oil on Canvas | 76 x 92 cm



Luke Elwes was born in 1961 and now lives in London. He studied at Camberwell School of Art and Bristol University between 1980 and 1985, and London University (MA 2007).

Recent shows include:

Adam Gallery, London & Bath 2017; National Trust, Flatford Mill 2016; Museo della Grafica, Pisa 2016; Clifford Chance, London 2015; Albers Foundation, USA 2015; Campden Gallery, 2015; Adam Gallery, London & Bath 2014; Minorities, Colchester 2014; Young Museum, Salisbury 2013; Adam Gallery, London & Bath 2012; North House Gallery, Essex 2012; Broadbent Gallery, London 2012; Estorick Collection, London 2010; Galerie Marceau Bastille, Paris 2009; Hester Gallery, Leeds 2009; Kettles Yard, Cambridge 2008; Galleria Ceribelli, Bergamo 2008; Art First, Cork Street, London 2007; Bury Art Gallery, Manchester 2007.

Luke Elwes has also written on painting for a number of print and online publications and in 2011 was invited to give an 'Artist's Eye' talk at the National Gallery. He was recently awarded residency grants at the Vermont Studio Center (2013) and the Josef Albers Foundation (2015) in the USA.

