

Black Stone White Stone

Jillian Green, Turner Galleries, Perth > 21 May – 19 June

Intricate patterns composed of small blocks of colour, a sense of movement amid the stillness, ambiguous perspective and symbolic hues; these are the components of Jillian Green's paintings. We're drawn to these images by their enigmatic designs that suggest a third dimension and their symmetrical arrangements that please the aesthetic. Then, when we come up close, we find further attributes of a good painting; surface beauty and excellent use of the medium that intrigues the mind and lifts the spirit.

After earning her Bachelor of Arts at Edith Cowen University, Green took a change in direction and studied Philosophy and Theology at Notre Dame University going on to learn about Buddhism. It's not surprising therefore, that her work is aimed at both the mind and the spirit of the viewer. The artist admits that her art comes more from the spiritual side of her persona, and that it is becoming less figurative. She confesses to "moving away from the representational toward a process of distillation. Less mind, more intuitive."

The inspiration for this current exhibition comes from the artist's trek through northern Spain. Green was successful in securing an Arts WA Project Development grant which allowed her to make a ten day trek along the El Comino de Santiago (The Way of St James), through the Pyrenees Mountains of northwest Spain. Her 'pilgrimage' commenced in Roncesvalles, included the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia where, so the legend says, the remains of the apostle Saint James the Great are buried, and ended at Viana. The trek demanded physical, and provided spiritual, strength.

When asked why she made the journey, Green said she felt a need "to get away from the studio, spending all day, every day painting. I needed to be alone, no talking. I needed to walk, to look, to visually take it all in." Her pilgrimage involved many steps and, in keeping with that theme, her painted 'tessera' tile-like construction of the paintings might read as both a modern representation of her steps and a reflection of that land's art history.

As well as the natural beauty of the countryside, Green was able to appreciate the art and architecture of the region, in particular the frescoes that adorn the small churches along the way, as well as works displayed in the art galleries of Santiago, Barcelona, Madrid and Bilbao. Green says of the

experience that it allowed her to take in a new inspiration, then give out what I didn't expect."

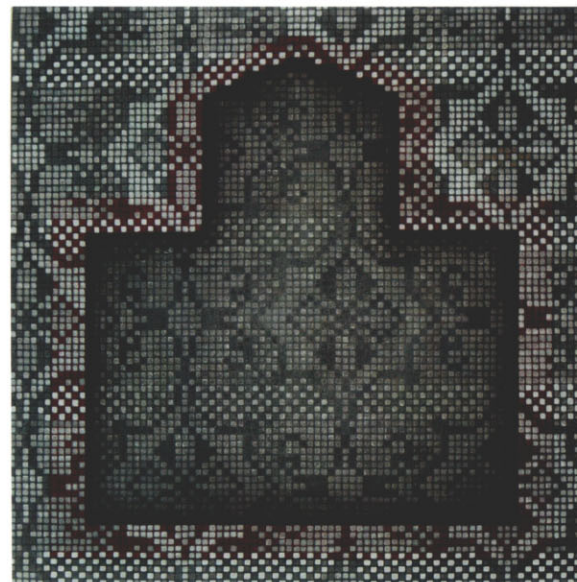
Green admits to being drawn to Middle Eastern art and architecture for its meaning, form and decoration. And she appreciates the aesthetic of Early Christian art with its spiritual, physical, and meditative qualities. With that in mind, the paintings we see here are not religiously didactic, instead they hint at the mystical as the artist employs colour and design to invite the viewer 'into' her work and interpret what they see any way they choose. These images seem to be a distillation of the insight and renewal the artist gained on her walk.

The paintings are relatively small however their size only enhances the power of their impact. The works emulate ceramic tiles wearing intricate Middle-Eastern patterns while the colours employed reference both the Islamic and Christian aesthetic. Exploring the surface of the paintings they provide subtle optical illusions. Stylised objects and geometric patterns seem to advance and recede, ebb and flow in a manner reminiscent of what is glimpsed as we pass through our own life's journey.

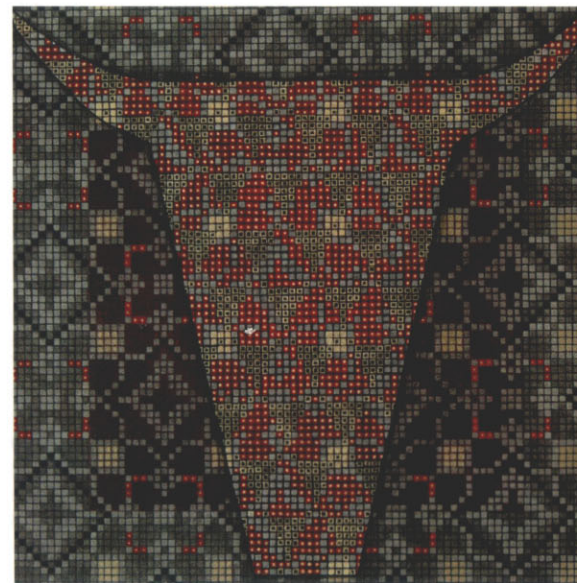
One example is the oil on canvas covered board titled *Refuge*. Here we see what seems to be a layered image that consists of a dome building shape, cut out from a red, grey and white tessera surface then placed over a similar grey and white tessera pattern. It looks like two separate but similar patterned surfaces placed one above the other, with a space between them that causes a 'shadow'. However, close inspection reveals it is one solid surface. The third dimension is an illusion.

And then there is *Bull* where a bright red and gold patterned, stylized head of the animal seems to leap out from a more subtle coloured mosaic ground. When we come nearer however, we see it too is an optical illusion; the image is indeed a two dimensional pattern on a flat canvas covered board. The 'third' dimension has been created by the artist's use of tone and colour.

Just as modest incidences can cause major events and tiny blocks of coloured tiles can create large mosaic decorations, so too small paintings can indeed make a great art experience. Jillian Green's works lift the spirit as they are both visually satisfying and aesthetically pleasing.



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1. Jillian Green, *Refuge*, oil on canvas covered board, 42 x 42cm.

2. Jillian Green, *Bull*, oil on canvas covered board, 42 x 42cm. Images courtesy the artist and Turner Galleries, Perth.