Visual Arts Reviews

*Freya Douglas-Morris, 'Hills of Honey', oil on canvas*

# Hills Overflowing: Freya Douglas-Morris at Arusha Gallery Edinburgh

Vivien Devlin September 8, 2021 3:28 pm

Exhibition Reviews

**Title:**
Hills of Honey
**Dates:**
2 Sep 2021 – 3 Oct 2021
**Times:**
Mon - Sat 10:00 - 17:00,
Sun 13:00 - 17:00
**Venue:**
Arusha Gallery
13A Dundas Street
Edinburgh
Edinburgh & the Lothians
EH3 6QG

**Website:**
Visit website

In Exodus 33:3, God promises to bring the Israelites to 'a land flowing with milk and honey' – a place of great beauty and hope, a metaphor for the Promised Land.

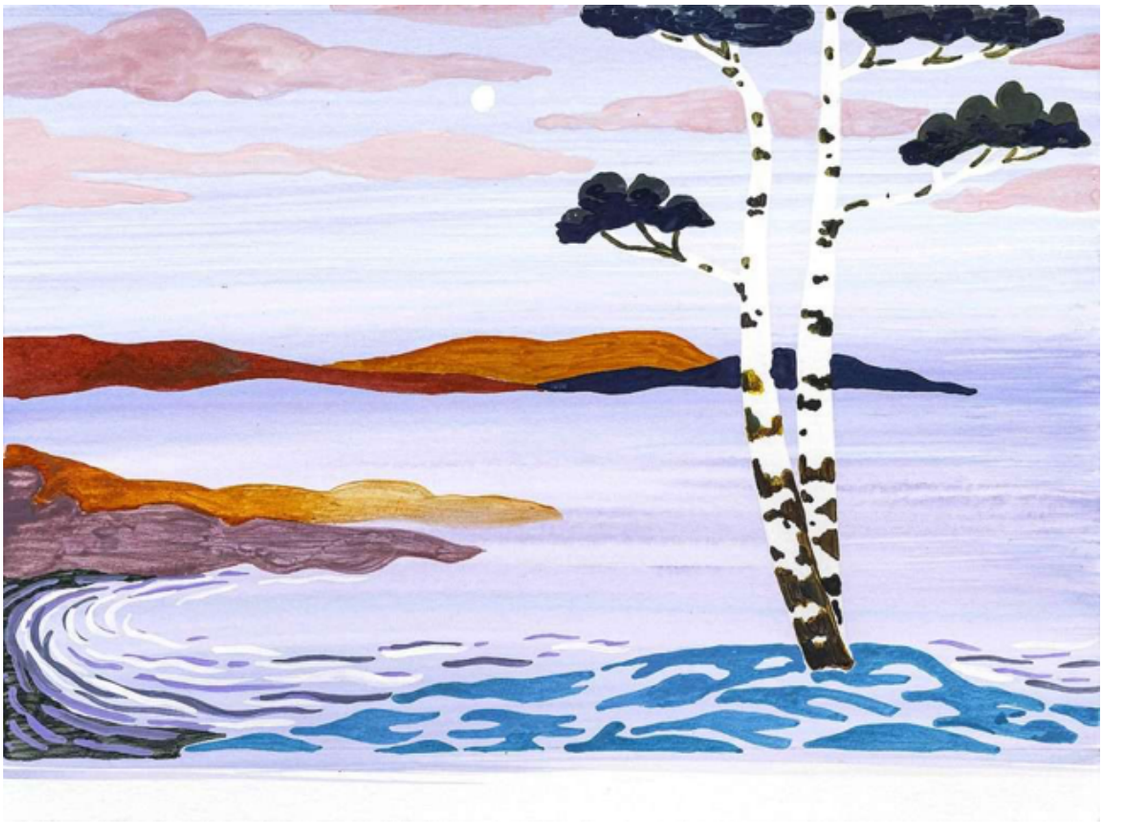
In this enchanting collection of landscapes and figurative studies, *Hills of Honey*, **Freya Douglas-Morris** is inspired by memories of people and journeys, colourfully tinted with emotional feelings and a rich cultural imagination. As Rupert Brooke recalls wistfully in *The Old Vicarage, Granchester* (1912), 'Stands the Church clock at ten to three, And is there honey still for tea?'

*'Hills of Honey', oil on canvas*

The title painting, *Hills of Honey,* is a dramatic panoramic scene across a wide valley, woodland and lake with rolling hills flowing towards the horizon under scurrying clouds and the summer sun. Whether this is based on a real place or not, the perspective looks to the past and the future to represent the passing of time. Shades of crimson red and golden honey create a dreamlike ambience with a real sense of nostalgia.

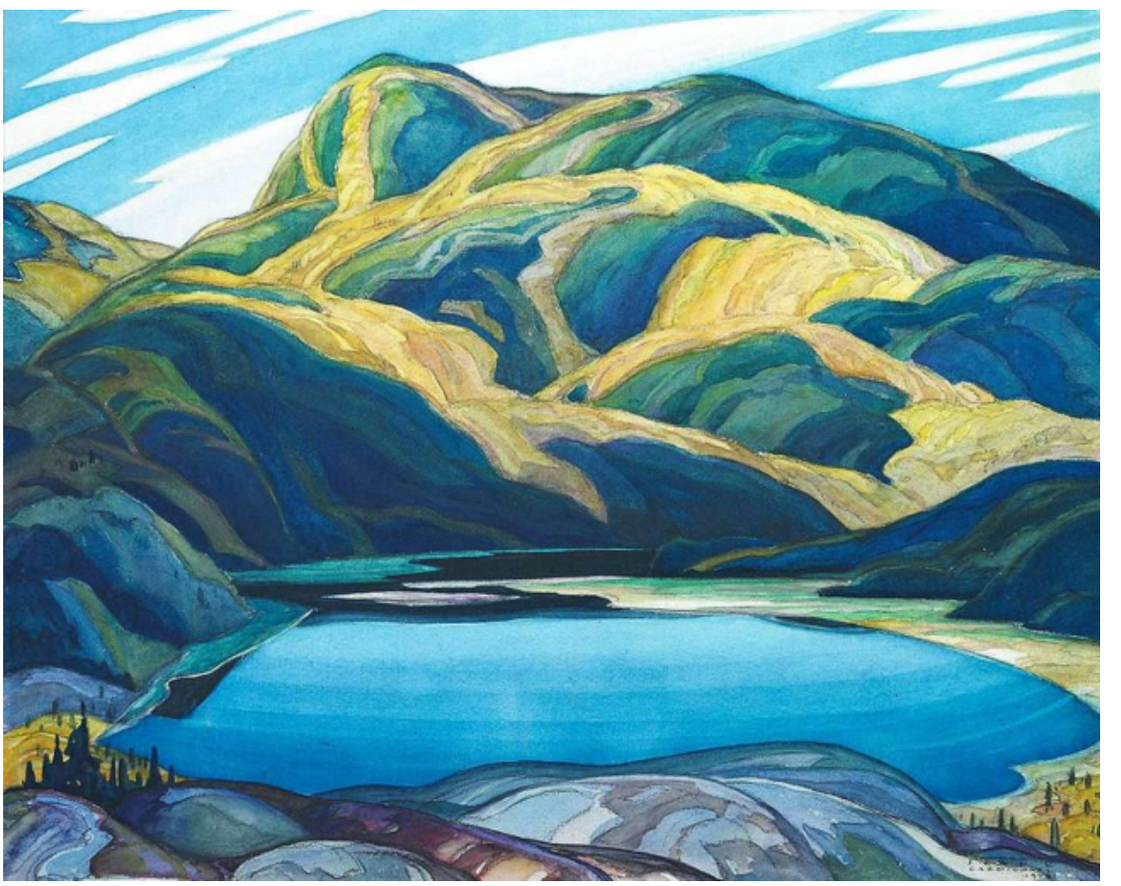
*'The sky was filled, the water shining', watercolour and gouache on paper*

The world of nature is minimalised in *The Sky was filled, the water shining*, to evoke an Oriental decorative design with shapely spirals, a river of blue, curving snakes below a wintery snowy sky.



*'Dawn', watercolour and gouche on paper*

A moment of peace and tranquility is captured in *Dawn,* the tall, slender tree framed by the simplified outline of beach, lapping waves and curve of the bay. The soft creamy sky and pink clouds create a subtle luminosity.

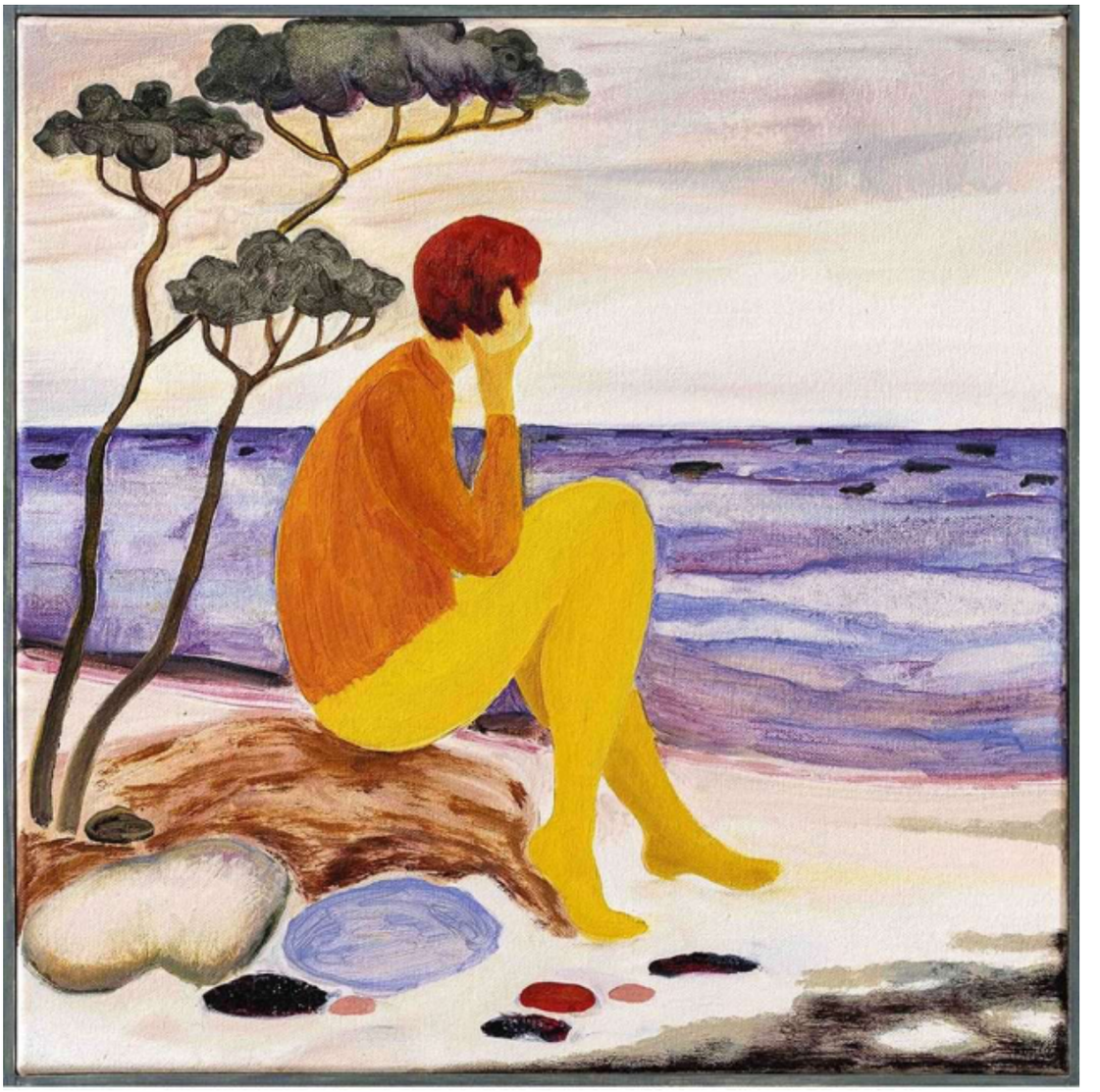


*Franklin Carmichael, 'Lone Lake', (1929) Group of Seven*

A few of these stunning, surreal compositions are reminiscent of the majestic Canadian landscapes by the Group of Seven (1920-1933), a collective of artists who explored the barren, bleak wilderness to reflect a distinctive national identity. Norwegian artists too were keen to develop a symbolist vision of forested mountains and fjords such as summer nights and silent winter landscapes by Edvard Munch.

*Edvard Munch, 'Sunset, Nordstrand' (1900)*

Freya Douglas-Morris explains that many childhood holidays were spent on the Isle of Arran, the landscape known as a microcosm of Scotland, the wild, rugged beauty of mountain peaks, hills, lochs and sandy beaches. The distant memory of these island adventures may certainly lurk in her mind, superimposed with visual images from other travel, far and wide, films and literary narratives.



*'The slowness of time', oil on canvas*

*Rangiroa – local life at a slow pace (Ken Scott)*

A meditative mood instils *The slowness of time*, in which a red haired girl sits on a sandy beach staring out to sea, in quiet contemplation. (This has an uncanny resemblance to a photograph taken on my own visit to Rangiroa, South Pacific, in which a local girl sits on a branch under a tree watching the waves – Island life at a slow pace).

*'The Book of Love', oil on canvas*

A hidden narrative in the intimate homely setting of *The Book of Love,* where a couple share a photo album perhaps, or a favourite story. But there's a feeling of sadness in the man's blank face – what is he thinking or worrying about? – while she seems to be expressing encouragement, hope, love.

Through this series of melancholic portraits and languid landscapes, Freya Douglas-Morris has created her own symbolist, romantic painterly style with an original poetic voice.

*After the year we had, that winter*

*Where warmth was hard to find,*
*The coming of the spring*
*Restores faith, peace of mind.*

More information, images and an essay by Anna Souter can be found on the Gallery's website (see panel).

Freya Douglas-Morris is a landscape and figurative painter based in London. Having graduated from the Royal College of Art in 2013, her work has been featured in publications such as *100 Painters of Tomorrow*, and included in *the New Contemporaries*, *Saatchi Art New Sensations* and the *Catlin Guide*. She has had solo shows in London and Milan and exhibited in the UK, USA, China, Italy, France, Austria.

*With grateful thanks to Artmag contributor Vivien Devlin for this review.*

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