

## JACK TROLOVE

### MANGROVE

14 JUNE - 10 JULY 2020

I love the word Liminal. It comes from a Latin word meaning 'threshold'. Bjørn Thomassen describes it beautifully: Liminality "opens the door to a world of contingency where events and meanings – indeed 'reality itself' – can be moulded and carried in different directions".

Uncovering names for the silty, brackish paintings I've made, I'm surprised to realise this show has grown from the mangroves where I live. More muted colours have found their way up to the paintings' surface through the rich Kaipara mud. These new scrambling marks are pneumatophores: 'specialised root-like structures that stick up out of the soil like straws for breathing'. The paintings are made of marks looking for oxygen.

The mangroves, which I'm with on nightly walks, survive between land and water. They are also liminal bodies; I recognise them as kin. As gender diverse people, we live like mangroves. Trees are supposed to grow in earth, but these ones are intertidal. We're told you can't live in between – but look at us surviving! It turns out there's so much medicine and magic here in the place the world tells us can't exist. Mangrove root systems know how to dissipate energy and storm surges. Our bodies are gender storm breaks. We have roots in both salt and fresh water.

Technically, these paintings are built using tension between embodiment and liminality, forming and dissipating in service of emotional muscle. Embodiment and liminality can sound like contradictions, but in a third space, they're not. We all know this in some way. When grief finds us, we spiral away from the centre. We're on the periphery, in that place the built world is not set up for. Dusk is set up for this, and the dawn, and the practices of Midwives and Kaikaranga.

In traditions from the Celtic world, a Keener works this liminal space. Keening, wailing in a way, so the spirit can pass over fully and so the living let loose the wildness of their grief. The pitch of the cry unravels the world as it is, so it can re-form enough to be lived in. When any of us well up, we can recognise our body literally become liminal - tears carry water and salt over our threshold, from our inside to our outside. The mangroves cry out their salt through their leaves.

The paintings are not whole stories. If anything, they're the holes in the stories. I've tried to work with the paint in a way that doesn't fill up or seal over. The paint is thinking out loud,

showing itself being made and being undone. Opening the in-betweenness.

Eyes puncture the surface, opening pockets of deep space, and cheeks form from lines walking over mounds of this grey mud. The thickest skins of paint are there to wrap the surface where they can.



*Aerial Roots*  
120 x 140cm  
oil on linen



*Bones*  
120 x 140cm  
oil on linen

Painting about embodiment and liminality in a time when globally, the world has slipped into a liminal space has been strange and incredible. It's not practical for the world to operate without planes and cars, but they stop. I feel like we've found ourselves alive in a hole in the story. On individual and (uneven) collective levels, we seem particularly aware of the potency of 'in-between' space (and time) at the moment.

We're more aware of the choreographed one metre of liminal space between our (social distancing) bodies. Most people (painters excluded) tend to stand at least one metre away from a painting in a gallery; it's a choreography we're practiced in around paintings, just not around each other. Because of this, I've found myself thinking much more about the body that is the painting (not just the body in the painting).

I feel like figurative paintings (on a good day) can work as a form of liminal space, by creating a literal second skin for both of us, the maker and viewer, to move ourselves through.

To feel moved.

In this show that's definitely part of what I'm trying to do.



*The Keener (salt)*  
50 x 60cm  
oil on linen

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