

Unquiet Landscape Yorkshire Artspace

ABOUT TWO HUNDRED years ago something happened. Landscape painting was essentially either a form of illustration, describing a state of affairs or the site of some half forgotten allegory. The industrial revolution and the enlightenment, two sides of the same coin, jointly produced a powerful and unassailable reaction that continues to confound us today: romanticism. But ours is a romanticism tempered with a dystopian realism. A wake-up call alerting all and sundry to the impact of the destructive illusion of dominion.

Landscape painting would now become a state of mind; tantamount to the acknowledgement that landscape painting (if not painting in general) would address the 'ultimate study'; that of the human condition, reminding us of our true nature – our connectedness and dependancy upon the natural world. Our mortality and transience.

The painters that Christopher Neve writes about in *Unquiet Landscape* experienced the trauma of war. So it's no wonder that they sought solace in quiet reflection by meditating upon the natural world. A world that until then had seemed stable, if not eternal. What makes Neve's book all the more remarkable is the comprehensive manner in which he taps into a sense of collective unease that speaks to us today – even more poignantly.



Orford Ness study

It might just be age, but the more I paint, the more I realise that we have about as much agency as a leaf.

And that it's love that sustains us. Making life not just bearable but precious. Landscape paintings have the potential to be rather like love letters, fuelled with rage, passion and occasionally – hope.

Graham Crowley