



Pat Service, *Crops (detail)*, 2016, acrylic on canvas, 38 x 54 in.

Pat Service LESS & MORE

May 21 – June 17, 2016 at The Gallery/art placement inc., Saskatoon SK

Throughout her career, Pat Service has mastered a range of subjects and techniques, though she remains best known for her landscape paintings. Born and raised in Port Alberni, British Columbia, and Vancouver-based since 1972, her work has been exhibited and collected widely across Canada as well as internationally, including the United States, Europe, Japan, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Art Placement is delighted to once again showcase her work in Saskatchewan, a province that she has maintained a close relationship with since 1980 when she first began attending the Emma Lake Artists' Workshops.

From the 1980s through to the early 2000s, Service's landscapes were characterized by soft, gestural brushwork and dense, complex colour built up through the layering of vibrant washes. For more than ten years, however, there has been a conspicuous shift in the way she portrays the Canadian landscape, including monochromatic fields of pure colour, crisp edges, and a strong emphasis on line.

It is tempting to see these shifts as a significant divergence from her previous style, though there are key elements that build a surprising unity. She allows herself a great deal of freedom when it comes to colour, for instance, pushing it in bright, exaggerated, and unexpected directions, but this is something that she has always explored. Throughout her decades-long artistic career, she has given us skies, trees, and lakes of almost every colour, perhaps previously more in line with the traditions of German Expressionism or Fauvism, but not entirely incongruent with her work from the last decade.

The style of her recent work has certainly become more abstract, though Service has never given up the world of real objects. While she acknowledges the influence of the many abstract painters that she worked alongside at Emma Lake, if painting exists on a continuum from representational to abstract, her work remains firmly in the middle. This reveals a stylistic shift developing from a focus on reduction and simplification rather than an abandonment of subject. Picasso's famous bull etchings come to mind, in which an image of the animal undergoes a series of transformations towards a simplified linear rendering, with nine increasingly reduced states documented along the way. This famous series highlights an important artistic truth: when a work of art is reduced to a minimal number of elements, the elements that remain bear a greater proportion of the aesthetic burden—what is left invariably counts for more.

Interestingly, while Service has spent more than a decade exploring a simplified aesthetic, her very recent paintings demonstrate a swing of the pendulum back towards a more lushly impressionistic approach. Features in the landscape are once again more detailed, space is more complex, and there is generally more going on; however, these elements are now contrasted against areas of pure, flat colour and crisp, graphic lines—the signatures of her reduced works. Rather than a return to a previous style, these paintings are actually a complex synthesis of stylistic idioms in the continuing evolution of Service's artistic practice.