

SARAH GILLESPIE

It seems almost too obvious to describe Sarah Gillespie as a representational artist of rare talent. Trained in a traditional Parisian atelier she translates the slow, incredibly intimate way she learnt to look at the world into works that seem to pulsate with life. These drawings are not to be confused with the slick, technical products of 'photo realism', but rather the intensely detailed drawings of Hans Holbein and Albrecht Durer, whose almost forensic depiction of the natural world produced works filled with awe and wonder.

Focusing on just a few locations and subjects Gillespie draws us into a world where we find ourselves mesmerised by moments of everyday beauty and interconnectedness. She is fascinated by the play of light and dark that breaks down the boundaries between solid and liquid, or the way in which a flurry of tangled lines can knit together disparate forms. She is not concerned with the scenic view, but with those interruptions into our daily life that catch us unawares with moments of otherworldly annunciation: a birds nest, the play of light on water glimpsed through winter branches and reeds, the dappled interior of a wood.

The charcoal and ink Gillespie uses to conjure up these intricate drawings perfectly capture the fleeting character of her subject matter, their essentially fugitive and fluid substance leaving a trace that seems to caress the paper rather than physically imposing itself on the surface. She can achieve the most dazzling darks imaginable with charcoal, but there is always the feeling that these areas of intense black are on the cusp of dissolving into light, or being blown away on a gust of wind.

Gillespie allows us to see things in almost forensic detail, and yet as we look at these drawings and investigate the worlds they bring to light, we come to realise a startling truth - that Gillespie is in reality an abstract artist. Her works are not about making faithfully accurate copies of the physical world. They are about making visible the invisible and giving form to the intangible. They are about the purely visual relationships that occur between light and dark, they are concerned with the interplay of forms, the dazzling patterning of a surface. They may emerge from specific places, but only as a springboard to reach out to something more universal, into a place beyond language and beyond specifics. Her drawings call us into the universal, into that space of light and dark where colour, boundaries and the individual are not yet born.

Reverend Richard Davey