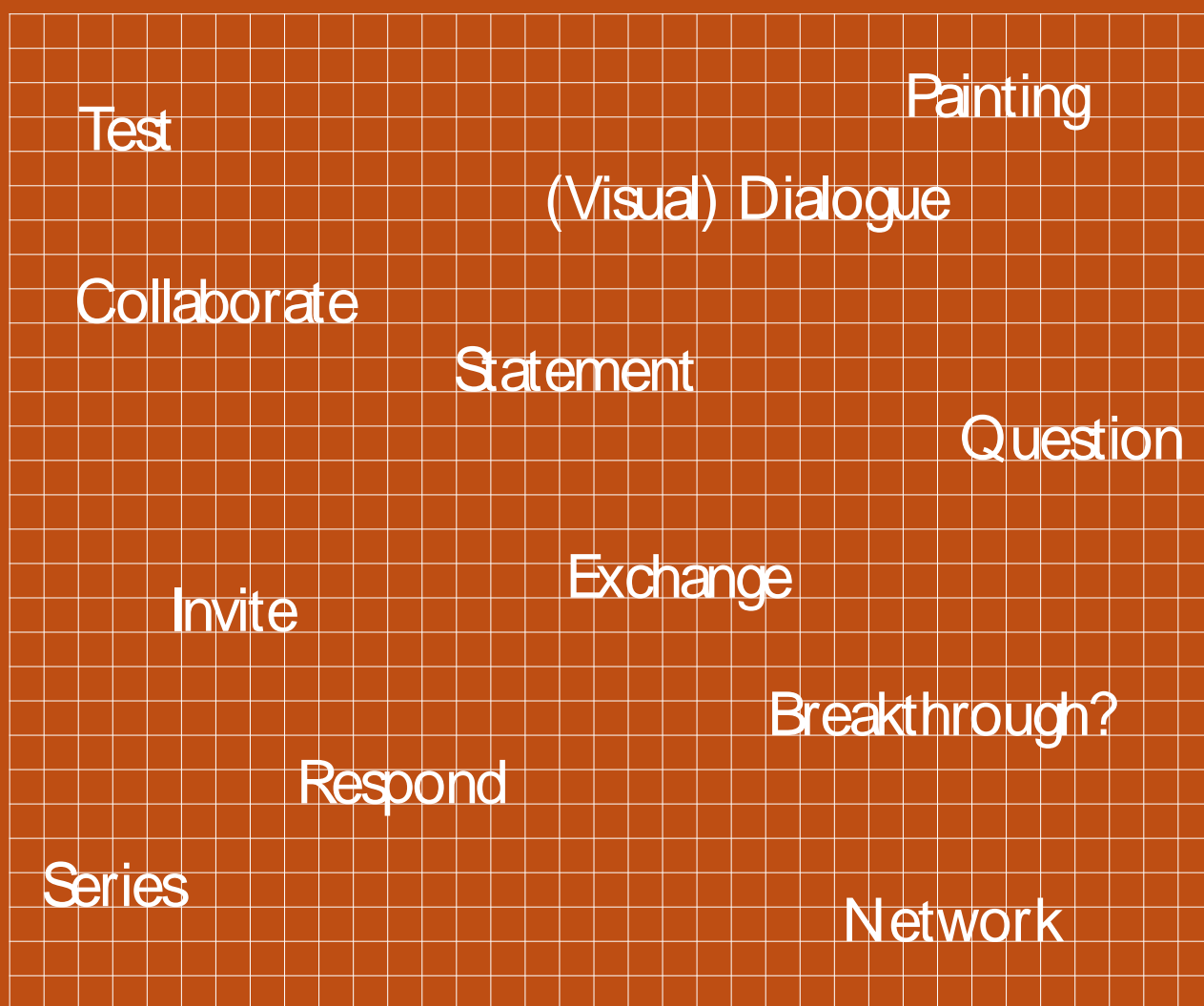


PAINTED CONVERSATIONS

Exhibition Three: 17/02/24 - 22/02/24

Esther Thorniley-Walker + Ellen Macdonald



Painted Conversations est. 2021 is organised and facilitated by Lyndsey Gilmour + Peter Chalmers

Zoom Exhibition Talk: Tuesday 27/02/24, 10am

Zoom Link: tinyurl.com/painted-conversations

Whitespace Gallery
76 East Crosscauseway
Edinburgh, EH8 9HQ

Sat, 17th Feb 3 - 6pm Opening Drinks
Sat - Wed 10am - 5pm
Thurs 10am - 12pm



PAINTED CONVERSATIONS

Conversation between Esther Thorniley-Walker, Ellen Macdonald, Lyndsey Gilmour and Peter Chalmers on Wednesday 8th November 2023. Half-way / 3 months into the 'Painted Conversation' after exchanging their second painting and before starting their third and final painting.

Note name abbreviations: Esther Thorniley-Walker (ETW), Ellen Macdonald (EM), Lyndsey Gilmour (LG), Peter Chalmers (PC).

PC: Because the whole point of this process initially was to engage in a 'blind exchange', where you didn't know anything about the work, Lyndsey and I wondered if it might be appropriate for you to talk about your first impression of the work that you received? So rather than explaining about your work, it would be useful to have an account of what impressions you got from the other persons' work that you were presented with – if you can remember, it was several months ago now!

EM: Even though ETW and I are both working with representation, when she sent the photo of her painting, my initial thoughts and responses to her work were on a formal level really. Although I suppose I was also thinking about cues that I might take from the title, and guessing a bit about how the title might point towards intention. So, initial impressions at that time were to do with the way that ETW used marks across the whole surface. The movement or speed of these marks in the background, to describe ice or water and which felt to me like making a stack, stacking these many solid parts to make up a whole. And how some other elements, like the branch in the front of the painting work in the composition. There's a lot happening, not a lot of empty areas, so I was trying to think about how I would use that. I had a response to colour as well. It seems less evident in this photograph of ETW's painting actually and so it will be good to see the work in person, but in the close-up images that ETW sent I saw some transitions from pink to grey or blue and so I thought that might be something I would respond to. There were a lot of triangular forms that I was seeing within the composition, both in the background and the foreground, and these spots of coral or orange/red that lead you across the painting.

PC: It's interesting because in the response you made it seems to me then, based on what you are saying, that in these stacked multi-tonal blue wedge shapes it is almost like you've interpreted the physicality of paint and brought it back into flatness, but yet with the illusion of physicality, which is kind of playful!

ETW: I can certainly pick up in your painting response the shard like marks that feature in mine. It is intriguing that by isolating those shapes you have created this

harmony and balance, yet there is also a tension there that alludes to the descending chaos of my painting.

EM: Yes, I think so, there's definitely a play between flatness and illusory depth in connection with the contrasting application of paint between my and Esther's painting. I wasn't sure if I was looking at water or ice in her painting, but that difference in itself seems to play with flatness and volume.

PC: You seem to be playing with layer as well. You've obviously got this underlayer that is then protected and not been painted over and then I'm not sure if you've taped it or if you've painted around it or...it's quite a clever thing if you haven't taped it - I'm not sure how you've done that! But to then build up, so again the whole thing is this sense of flatness, on the one hand, but actually it is really very clearly, quite incredibly, layered, maybe as layered as ETW's but just not as thick. Then again, you hadn't seen the work in person so I wonder if that would have changed it if you had seen it in person?

ETW: Through your chosen colours you have conjured the depth of layers in my painting 'Devil's Leap', by picking up on the pinks and oranges and their relationship to the blue, your painting has the same wintery cold atmosphere.

LG: When we look at ETW's painting, the branch leads us right up the left-hand edge, towards the top, and I think there's something interesting when we come up to that top left corner in EM's, it's a very different space that you've created and you've really anchored it, tonally. You're still dealing with these triangular shards to separate the space, almost flipping the design in Devil's Leap which cuts off the top right-hand corner, whereas you're creating that triangle within the top left corner. I read this design as being very intentional, but equally interesting if it has become more accidental as a result of working through the painting. Would I be able to ask more about the process at this point – how you make the painting? is there a lot of pre-planning and preparation and is all worked out elsewhere then transferred onto the linen?

EM: Yes. Over the summer I made photographs and drawings, and then once I had an image that I felt was working I used that composition as a starting point. I don't exactly copy it though, I try to leave some things open and something else has to happen when I'm painting. That might be something that happens through the layers of colour and in the decisions of how much to keep from each layer. The colours are invented and the colours form the space.

LG: Do the shapes from the overall design remain truthful? What is the space that you allow open to discovery when painting; is it materiality, process and mark, or does the structure of the design change too?

EM: Yes, the painted space that objects sit in is largely invented on the surface of the painting. Sometimes this painted space, where the figure-ground relationship becomes confused, can become a bit too complicated and I'll take some of the shapes or objects out.

ETW: Your starting process is very similar to mine. I start off by drawing in either pastel or pen, where I work out composition, finding marks that interest me and then I transfer to paint and let it flow and change in some areas and morph into its own thing. But I have to have that starting point of the drawing.

EM: Yes, so your painting comes from a drawing rather than a photograph?

ETW: Sure I have my photographic sources that excite me or I find interesting, those aspects are what I'll base my drawings off. However, I find when I draw my mind wanders away from the original source, instead I get consumed by lines and colour, letting instinct take over. The drawing becomes its own thing.

EM: Yeah, that was a question that I had. Your painting feels quite Romantic, and I wondered if it was more informed by drawings and working from imagination, or if you used photography.

ETW: I would say it is both, I am interested in how imagination and expression of mark making can transform a familiar subject into something uncanny. When I did my initial drawing based on our first exchange, I thought about EM's composition and colour in the painting. I was intrigued by the white space, particularly the shapes that reminded me of squeezing paint from a tube, which started making me think of the physicality of paint and marks and that's what I tried to translate into my painting. The relationship between the 3D shapes and the flat picture of grass, was what first caught my imagination, that top area of compact detail that contrasts to the flat colour beneath, made me want to experiment with the effect of a square canvas.

EM: Yes, this first painting that I gave you is quite a square rectangle.

ETW: In using a square canvas and focusing on that top half of your painting, I think as you mentioned before, it created this intensity in my painting where there are no empty spaces or breathing spaces. I had originally intended on having lots of white and blue, but having pure areas of colour is not something that comes natural to my art. Pink and grey crept in, turning it into something very different.

PC: Yeah, that's interesting isn't it because when we look at EM's response to your first piece, you can see the nods to the palette that you've used. There are very different amounts of colour sure, a very different balance; the warm oranges and reds are very strong in EM's response it becomes less so in your visual piece. But actually, when we look at your response ETW to EM's piece, the palette does shift quite a bit, so that is quite curious. So, you're suggesting that at an earlier stage it more closely borrowed?

ETW: Yeah, I started the under layer with blue – that same blue as yours – and I don't know what happened...it kind of just developed into its own thing! I was thinking of what to do with the painting on my commute into work, when I noticed the verge of the track was covered in willowherb/fireweed, this pink flower that seems to hover in the sky, with white wisps among the grass. I saw this flower and the subject kind of combined with my thinking about my response painting.

EM: Yeah, I think I was seeing quite specific shapes in the spikey section on the right-hand side that seem to mirror the green grass...

LG: In a way, it's these subtle shifts that I'm thinking of, that relates to some of these greens, but I also notice the strong diagonal that cuts through the centre area – it is these aspects that make me jump back and forth between the paintings, making a sort of comparison.

PC: It is interesting your response ETW. The vertical piece (Devils Leap) is maybe closer to the subject you're representing in terms of figuration/representation, I feel I'm better able to recognise the form. Whereas the response seems to me, although you can begin to see flora or something, it does seem to have maybe lost some of that – I don't mean lost, as in a lesser lost - just more that you've moved away from that slightly. Do you feel like that, or not?

ETW: The year I did 'Devil's Leap' I was really interested in folklore and how we project emotions and stories onto landscape, changing our perception of the environment into anthropomorphic entities. Meaning there were natural characteristics that I wanted the viewer to recognise, so my work did become a bit more figurative. This contrasted to my previous more abstract paintings which were more about capturing the sensation and temperament of nature through mark making. I believe my paintings produced over this year have blended these two ways of thinking together, creating an unfamiliar ambiguity about what you are viewing. I am allowing a space for my imagination but I am also exploring themes of environmentalism and symbolism. This response painting, 'Disturbed Ground', combined these themes in a fun way; I really got into the marks, it was very fluid and expressive.

PC: So do you think that is representative of what's generally happened in your practice or do you feel like actually that little shift has come as a result of seeing EM's piece?

ETW: I think it has shifted slightly, yeah. Before I started this project I had just spent a very long time concentrating on a series of paintings, where I had a very clear vision about what direction they would take. So I saw 'Disturbed Ground' as quite a nice experimental break, as I knew I could just have fun, without worrying too much about the final outcome. This freedom meant the painting was able to breathe a bit more and loosen up.

PC: That's good! The interesting thing for me is, again knowing a little bit about your work already, there are clues (I know this was a blind exchange, you knew nothing about the work, themes anything like that – it was a case of going off of visual qualities) there are certain suggestions in EM's piece where you can slightly hold on to some of the subject area that you already look at, whereas I don't know if that would necessarily be true for you EM. I don't know in terms of the actual subject, what then leads to the imagery. I get the feeling that, well I don't know – your response EM especially seems to be a formal response to the object rather than trying in any way to engage in subject – would that be true or fair or not?

EM: Well, it was funny to first see your painting, ETW, because both of our paintings included 'nature' in the imagery, but to me ETW's painting felt Romantic, while my painting felt more Classical perhaps, and so there was a strong contrast there to work with. Because I had handed over a painting that included grass and maybe alluded to nature but actually...the grass in that painting...I'm not asking people to think about nature really, it's there in the painting as a vehicle to think about illusion and depth and flatness. Certainly, when I was using blue...if you paint a canvas blue you've instantly painted a sky. Maybe it's the most simple illusion you can make in paint...

PC: Yeah, whether you want it or not, it's unavoidable when you read it.

EM: And I'll sometimes spend time thinking about trompe-l'oeil, really rendering something representational, but I enjoy that simplicity, the fact that it's blue paint on canvas but is also instantly a sky. And then in this painting adding other layers on top to see how much depth I could get to before reducing it back to flatness by laying objects on top. Playing with those ideas of form and illusion and space and painted space and illusory space. I guess that's what I'm thinking about when I'm painting and yeah, it was maybe coincidental that I painted grass. Although I was also trying to point towards the sensation of touch, what does the grass feel like, what is the sensation of touch in that image?

PC: And so why did you pick that piece to exchange?

EM: It's a really old painting, about 10 years old and I felt that in the first instance I was looking for a singular painting, that somehow encapsulates some enduring interests or ideas in my practice.

ETW: I think it's tricky when looking at old work, I found that because even just the last few years, your work really does shift and change so it's interesting looking back through my collection and being like "which ones are still relevant to what I'm looking at?"

EM: Yeah, I guess I was looking for a singular painting as opposed to ... I don't know what would have happened if I had chosen a painting that very much belonged to a group of paintings because they then provide their own context, and if you just hand someone one part of something like that then you could really send them off in a completely different direction, which also might be interesting but I guess I just thought I'll give something that has its own...I don't know...

LG: Complexity?

EM: Yeah, a kind of a wholeness in the sense of being contained...so yeah, I'd had a period of time where I was working on paper with water-based paints and I suppose this felt like a nice opportunity to come back to working on a canvas or linen support and think "what still holds interest for me?"

PC: It makes a lot of sense. I think, some of the points there also touched on some of the intrigue of the project and I think some of the challenges of it, just how much in a way that chance is involved in the project. You don't know anything about each

other and you're just being asked to present a piece of work and you don't know why, you could both have very different reasons for picking them, and had you picked a different piece who knows what ETW would have done. Because it is such a contained project, three works each, two exchanges and a final reveal, we could have branched it out, but only once can you have the very first, fresh, seeing it with no context experience, so there just inherently is a kind of chance element to it.

LG: Can I ask, EM, based on what you were saying before you engaged in the project, you were working on paper, water-based, possibly at home?...Did you feel obliged to go onto linen or canvas or was the paper support ever an option that you just ruled out? I'm curious whether you felt that those paper works didn't fairly represent your practice and therefore not something you would present publicly?

EM: Yes, I would present that work, I considered it. I think this project just coincided with a time when I was looking for a studio and after working from home and on paper for several years I saw it as an opportunity to work with a support I hadn't used for a while. The first response is also water-based, it's acrylic on linen. Previously I would have always used oil paint, so my work or approach has definitely changed as a result of that period of working only on paper.

PC: That is interesting.

LG: Was the decision to work in water-based media due to the time-period that you had to make the work, or was it because you were already building traction with that material?

EM: Yes, it was mostly to do with time, and lack of it with having kids!

PC: [laughs] The challenge of making work – yeah!

EM: Working from home and with less time has forced this change to being water-based but to be honest it works well for me. It's exciting to be able to work almost continually on a piece without the drying time between the layers. Working on a few things at once. So, it's forced a change but the change is good I think.

PC: And that's something that marks your work as very different ETW from EM because you're so used to working wet-on-wet and, I mean that's probably still dripping wet [laughs] I don't know!

ETW: There are areas that are still drying, yeah.

PC: So EM, that's something that is inherently different, if it is quick-drying between layers, you are going to get a different finish than what you're getting ETW. ETW, I wonder if you might want to give us a bit of insight into why you picked Devil's Leap to exchange with EM?

ETW: I really enjoyed the subject of this painting, it was a personally entertaining theme. However it was produced in lock down and it has ever since been hidden away in my studio in North Yorkshire. So it is nice returning and acknowledging the subject and way of handing painting that I was beginning to pick up on in my art.

EM: When did you work on that one?

ETW: Erm...about 2021, I think? I painted it when I was on my History of Art Masters at University of York and a lot of the subjects that I was writing about, I was transferring into my paintings. You probably saw the title is quite strange, Devil's Leap, it is inspired by a local legend about Lake Gormire, which is seen as the doorway to hell. The story claims that the devil jumped in causing the darkness of the lake and unnatural bottomless depths.

EM: So do you think that the specific literature that inspired the first painting has also fed into the response?

ETW: I think in my art I am investigating the concept of this two-way transfer of imagination and characteristics between landscape and inhabitant. I look into how literature and fantasy change how we view a place. How there is a back-and-forth between the two. Particularly for 'Devil's Leap', the location was named one of the most beautiful wild swimming spots by the Guardian, but any local would hesitate to swim there because they know the stories and how beneath the surface the water is crawling with leeches. These eerie stories transform the beautiful location into something mysterious and atmospheric. I try to portray that personal impression which can be very different from how someone else views it.

LG: Having this verge at the bottom, you really get that sense of vertigo – of almost falling in, of being right on the edge. And then the drama of the marks within that blue (sea) area. I get elements of romanticism intertwined with a somewhat frightening atmosphere – then the title as a further act of warning.

ETW: I don't want to romanticise nature, I want to bring out the harsher, mortal aspects of it, which are brutal yet oddly appealing. I mean particularly my other work is darker than these ones, I think the paintings produced for this project are the lighter pictures that I've done for quite a while! [laughs] By investigating the more sombre imagination and affinity for the harsh temperament in nature, I feel like my work fights the tranquil stereotype often applied to both women and nature.

EM: Yes, when I said Romantic, I also meant the power or fear of nature embedded in that.

PC: Even as an extension of that, ETW you've now seen two works by EM in person and EM has seen one of ETWs in person, but hearing what each other is saying about their own work, and of each other's work, is it changing anything that you'd thought, are you surprised by anything so far or is it actually what you were already thinking, feeling or responding to in the work?

ETW: Definitely your painting, the blue you're talking about and how you have this instant visualisation of sky and I think that I picked up on that slightly, because I never really do sky in my paintings. I mean I work in blue a lot but I try to avoid the association of sky because I don't really like open big spaces in my art, as I enjoy trying to ensnare the view in areas that they can't really escape out of, reminiscent of getting lost in undergrowth or in a dark forest. So I think that really got me thinking,

it's been the first time in a while that I've done sky in my paintings and I was kind of enjoying trying to incorporate that into it and seeing what my approach would be.

EM: I see what you mean, especially with the second painting. It has this feeling of being embroiled in something, it's a really intense space and more so even than the first painting. The first painting feels to me more like a landscape, where the second painting feels a bit like the close-up or cropped section that you sent of the first painting. It has this feeling of looking closer and I don't know if that has to do with the scale...because now I wish I could see the first painting because the scale of this is...I mean the flowers must be something like six times bigger than in life? or not, I'm not sure. But something that I think about a lot is observation, that type of intense looking, and how to communicate the intensity of really looking, so often if I've painted a small painting I will try to still work on a big scale, so that everything is at least 1.5 times or twice as big. I see that in this painting, this very intense looking-down and the title, *Disturbed Ground*, seems to reinforce that as well.

ETW: In my work I get quite obsessed with honing in on detail and I think that creates the zoomed-in quality. The *Devil's Leap* series was interesting, as I was almost panning back out, giving a dizzying portal sensation. In my mind I called it the "portal series", as I was looking at how often in stories getting lost in nature is used as this gateway into a strange otherworld. So I like the idea that people almost fall into my paintings and are transported somewhere other. [laughs].

PC: You maybe get a sense in your response, EM, with what appears to be a magnifying glass, so there is obviously that sense of going in, inviting in.

ETW: Yeah, you've managed to capture the flow of it I think, which is interesting.

PC: These discussions are so fascinating because looking back to your first painting EM, the grass certainly looks over-scaled, something so small and delicate is being scaled-up, placed front and near-centre, and then you are dealing with the vastness of the sky, and arguably you scale that right down, so it becomes very intimate. It seems like you are really subverting the scales of the subjects in a way. Containing some and bursting out with others. Curious.

LG: Also the shift in perspective, you never really know if you're looking up or down or across and over, it's very disorientating.

PC: I totally agree with you, because if you hung your piece at different heights, I would read it very differently. You could imagine it being very low and you would really feel you're looking down on it, or up incredibly high, you do feel like you're looking up into it. Which isn't true for every painting, you know, I don't think it would necessarily change in ETWs. [laughs] it's a pretty curious thing that you've achieved.

LG: Yeah, I don't settle into it. My understanding of the space is constantly changing – the cone (circle shape) on the left gives the impression of looking down, with it sitting on top of the picture of the grass. But then I'm immediately brought out of that illusion and back onto the painting's surface, before I fall into another illusionistic space. My eye is constantly shifting and moving around the design, in a way, I think

some of the handling of the paint is quite quiet and luring me into this false sense of security and yet I'm never really being allowed to - or able to – rest. It really keeps me engaged, which is interesting looking at your response which doesn't feel as quiet as your first painting.

ETW: There is certainly a precarious nature to the painting.

LG: Yeah, it still doesn't provide time to settle, but then I come back to the top left corner where you give us that little door – a little escape, in a way, from the drama.

PC: There is a precarious element, those blocks feel like they're going to fall down, fall apart, there's this sense of anticipation, something's about to happen. Curious. It's maybe too soon and maybe an unfair question...so I know these are literally responses to works that you were given and knew nothing about, but do you feel like there could be aspects that couldn't have been made without it being a response? Are you aware of any deviation or change or development or surprise? Do you feel it's allowed you to create a work that wouldn't have been created otherwise, but that is already maybe an extension of what you do?

ETW: I think I wouldn't have chosen that exactly if it wasn't for your work. It really was the colours that got me thinking and like I was saying with the sky, it was kind of a challenge that I really enjoyed.

PC: Because you were saying usually you'd work with a folklore or a narrative or something, whereas obviously in this case you had no way of knowing of it, so you just had to respond, did that make it more difficult?

ETW: It was a bit of a knock on effect. I started thinking about it and then it was I saw this imagery of fireweed and that got me considering symbolism of flowers and so it does have elements of my own work, and within the body of work I'm producing at Gray's as part of the Freelands Foundation Studio Fellowship. But I don't think it would look anything like that if it wasn't for your work EM that got me thinking about those ideas.

EM: I think that it was a nice starting point to make work, responding directly to Esther's work narrowed down lots of options. Thinking about a few elements in her work and asking "how can I approach that?" – things that I might not normally think about when making work and responding to my own work, or to an exhibition space or something. So, it was nice to have this very concrete sort of thing to be responding to or rubbing against.

PC: I get what you mean, when you're working on your own practice you have infinite possibilities. Are you constantly trying to put limitations in place as a starting point, do you try to contain things or is this a special challenge or opportunity that it is so contained?

ETW: Yeah I narrowed mine down that when I looked at your work I thought "I want the first point to be something white" and I think that's quite hard for me because usually I don't really like using pure white on it's own, I always end up dirtying it or like morph it into another colour so it was kind of interesting as a starting point for me

that white was going to be central to the painting. Though to be honest it has not stayed white!

PC: Yeah that's interesting, it has definitely moved, it's shifted! [laughs]

ETW: White was my starting point but for me colour and marks are very instinctive, I go with what feels right, enjoying the energy and spontaneity of brush marks, yet at the same time every mark and colour is carefully considered for the overall harmony of the painting.

EM: I tried a few different things before I started painting. I was trying to see the potential for me of a few different objects and considered how I might use natural forms. I made drawings but then didn't feel I had enough of a relationship with those forms to continue. I guess when you asked that question, I was thinking about this final painting once I had got into the flow of it and thought it could become something. So actually at the beginning, when we first exchanged images, I tried to approach it in a couple of different ways.

ETW: Yeah I feel that's the interesting thing about this project, at the starting point you are conscious of another artist's voice impacting and directing your work but ultimately it becomes completely yours once you get into the zone.

PC: That's interesting, yeah, so when you first saw each other's work were you immediately like "I can work with this" or was there like a "I've got no connection here. but I have to sit with it and discover". What was the initial...?

ETW: I mean, looking at your work, I sensed a few of the themes that you have mentioned– I never really considered the grass as a natural entity, in my brain it registered as an object in your painting. An illusion. Even so it acted as a prompt, all my inspiration comes from nature, so it didn't take long for the grass to turn alive, moving away from the original intention.

PC: What about you Ellen did you have an immediate reaction that you were responding to or was it a slower – wanting to get under the skin of it a little bit?

EM: Yeah, I could see that there could be different ways to approach it. It was interesting to go through that process. I feel that we have talked quite a lot about difference and how we worked with difference rather than similarity. There is maybe something about complexity though, that feels relevant to both of us. Often when I'm making a painting it gets to a point where it starts to feel like there's a lot going on and managing that complexity is part of what I'm interested in, in painting I guess. It is quite a complex image that Esther gave me I think.

ETW: It is also a big part of my process; I weirdly enjoy overcoming that moment when you step back and suddenly get overwhelmed by the complexity, but instead of fighting it, I lean into it and fixate on one section and allow myself to get absorbed in the detail. Both of us have this interest in the relationship and balance between our subjects, how they bounce off each other

LG: Do you feel that the singular response was ok and suitable enough to your working methods? I'm curious what your response would be if there was no limit or a few outcomes whether you feel it would be manageable or more appropriate? Would you say the format and the work produced feels right to you and has worked or do you feel that there could be an alternative structure with the project?

PC: You could have given a series as a starting point, or make multiple pieces in response, you know?

ETW: I quite like that it was one, you'd be quite overwhelmed if there were loads and I'd be too preoccupied with trying to I think with one you can put your own stuff onto it, project onto it your own ideas whereas when it's loads you'd maybe get too caught up in their theories and ideas and their body of works. Erm, I quite like the mystery of it as well, the fact that they don't know anything because when you see a few pieces by someone you start to see the connections.

PC: Do you feel the same or any different Ellen?

EM: Em, well, when you think about a conversation it can go in any direction, can't it? And sometimes it's not the main thing that somebody says that's interesting, you know? And, because I did some sketches and drawings, part of me thinks that those could be just as interesting as something that I am saying or the final painting. I could see some of that, maybe not in the first instance, since it's quite nice to be given just one image and that kind of "not knowing" being part of the response... And being given that one image makes it different from responding to other people's work more generally because you're kind of always in conversation with other painters whether you mean to be or not, you're looking at their work. But I think maybe after the initial exchange, it could be interesting to see some of that background muttering as well. Where if you have a conversation with someone, they might respond to your main point or they might say "I'm interested in what you said about..." you know?

PC: Absolutely.

ETW: The next painting we will have the image but there will also be what we have been saying to each other at the forefront of our minds when painting, so it'll be interesting to see how that changes how we approach the next one.

PC: Yeah. It's going to be a very different experience...even, like you say Ellen, even if you know, it might just be a little throw-away statement each other has said its...it will inherently be a different response and certainly down the line once we have the reveal of your final responses it will be something that I'm sure Lyndsey and I will pick up on with you, whether or not this response is different and where that difference comes from? Is it simply because you have more information, you're more informed, or is it actually a very similar response and process, so it makes no difference knowing more and having context applied? Time will tell I guess! Although you're seeing them in person for the first time, you had the images of these a week ago, so even at this stage, do you feel that how you might respond or go forward could be different or is it too soon to tell?

EM: Well, I had some initial ideas about where I might go with the next painting but I haven't started yet, this conversation might change things a little bit.

PC: That's interesting.

EM: Maybe it's more what you're saying about...what words did you use? Like getting stuck or things being somehow contained and...is that what you said?

ETW: Yeah, I think so.

EM: The feeling that everything's contained within...

LG: The feeling that you can't really escape it?

ETW: Like getting overwhelmed by these...

EM: Yeah. I think I often think about the opposite in a sense, about something that's infinite like the sky. And sometimes I'll make a gesture in painting or drawing and then I'll try to turn that into an object somehow and be painting from that so, for example, I quite often use the figure of 8 for that sense that it could go on and on forever and it's sort of an impossible thing to do in painting, to talk about the infinite because of its limitations. But then when you were talking about getting stuck – its opening up some ideas....

ETW: I am very preoccupied in my art with the cycle of mortality, how plants flower, then fade, then re-emerge. I try to portray that everything is temporary and in my painting it's that slight fleeting moment or feeling that is being captured. So it is quite interesting that your art is looking at things that go on forever and mine is very much saying "this is temporary, it's not going to last". I am also intrigued by the resilience of nature, but in a cyclical way, I have a slight aversion to the concept of infinity as I embrace the constant change of nature.

PC: So, do you think that the way Ellen was just reflecting there, do you feel like this conversation might then impact how you might respond?

ETW: Definitely – even looking now at your response painting, I have ideas that are beginning to emerge. The colours are making me think of Autumn and the theories behind that, like leaves falling and – I don't know – it's just the way that everything is balanced, it gives the sensation that everything is going to fall apart and that's what I was initially thinking about, when I looked at it.

PC: Isn't that interesting, because what you're looking at is a response to your own work and yet it's given you a new idea for your own work. That's quite an odd thing, isn't it? Are you surprised by how each other has responded to your work?

ETW: It's hard to know where anyone is going to take it.

PC: Yeah, fair.

EM: Does this painting already belong to a larger body of work?

ETW: I'd say it does tie in with the work that I'm doing at the moment because I'm spending so much time in my studio space, I think it's hard not to have paintings bounce off one another, even just the painting next to it, somehow the colours seemed to seep into each other. But I think there's also a difference in tone from the other ones, you'll probably see when you visit my studio. but I would say it does have links.

LG: Maybe this would be a good place to leave the discussion and we will have the opportunity to reflect further during the Online Exhibition Talk?

Zoom Exhibition Talk:
Tuesday 27th February, 10am – 11am.

Zoom Link: tinyurl.com/painted-conversations