

David Webb

The Back Of Us Is A Mountain

"It is very dry here now and up **the back of us is a mountain** where they have cut steep firebreaks every few yards."

E.M.S. 11 July 1955

My work relates firstly to a family story of migration and secondly my own location and relationships. It is an exploration of image and memory and how these are stimulated, primarily by colour. Oblique, pared-down forms are often based on observations and drawings or documentation such as notes, historical research, photographs and letters. My interest is not to recount narrative or present the recognisable (almost nothing literal remains of the very specific references in the finished works) but to respond inventively within a formal space which fluctuates between flat abstraction, and traditional representations of the figure, landscape, interior or still-life.

The excerpt above is from a letter written by my Grandmother (E.M.S.), where she describes her surroundings while preparing to leave Tanzania and return to Britain. I'm interested in location and travel, having led a fairly nomadic life, and this passage provoked an emotional response in me. I knew her much later of course and we discussed this difficult time in her life often, like the quote, in a simple, straightforward manner. She was able to effortlessly evoke a different time and place; her language understated, with any poetry unintended - but to me it is beautiful and sensitive, and in using it I wanted to paint about it, and her, in the same way. Therefore, these works are a way of remembering E.M.S. and also combining the immediacy, joy and imagery of, specifically, my relationship with my infant daughter.

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