

## the watercolours of jeroen krabbé

**G**LANCE UP from this page for a moment. Gaze out of your window, or across the room, or down at your desk. It doesn't matter where you are. Just pause for a few seconds. Look at whatever it is you can see.

**N**OW CLOSE YOUR EYES and try to remember it. How does your mind reassemble the scene? Is it in a jumble of shapes and in layers of colour, in splurges and slants and indistinct lines? Do you find yourself somehow marshalling the rhythms, without ever quite managing to nail reality down? If so, then you will instinctively understand the work of Jeroen Krabbé. His watercolours are like the memories which sight paints behind closed eyelids, like the impressions which linger inside the lining of the mind.

**T**O WANDER THIS SHOW is to be taken on a beguiling journey, to peep through the windows of a stained-glass world. Krabbé is a sensuous colourist. He allows tone and tint to capture mood. Each series of paintings captures an atmosphere: the bloodied skies and blackened shadows of a Sevillian townscape, the dissolving greens of an Indonesian monsoon, the tribal brightness of a Kenyan ocean shore, the burnt siennas of the Tuscan hills. Cloud shadows blossom over Cornwall's patchwork landscape, a yellow ribbon of road swells against a South African sky.

**B**UT KRABBE is no conventional topographical painter. His watercolours are not miniatures into which the viewer must peer to glimpse the detail of some precise depiction. Rather Krabbé appears to have evolved his own vision. His paintings fall into focus from a few paces away.

**C**OMING FROM HOLLAND, he understands that mellow blending of tones with which Dutch old masters described light and atmosphere. His leaking overlays of washes, his fragile harmonies of seeping hues, combine with the experimental techniques of the Impressionist painters who, in their attempts to stay faithful to their senses, sought to achieve depth without sacrificing brightness.

**D**ISTILLING THE ESSENCE of his colours, Krabbé lets perspective play with pattern, lets illusion flirt with the flat picture plane. Like the puzzles of glass in a child's kaleidoscope, his paintings dissolve for a few seconds into abstraction, only to tumble back into place a moment later, as the mosaic of his reality once more reforms.

**T**HERE IS A FEARLESSNESS to the methods by which Krabbé attains this effect. The oil painter's boldness underlies his technique. Fierce indigo skies slash snow capped mountains, seaside sands burn yellow against aquamarine seas, the dark wedge of a valley slices a chunk from a rich umber mountainside, splodges and striations break the picture plane. Krabbé, confident of the coherence of his design, lets colour do the work. His intuitive understanding of it is made all the more impressive because it has to be so sure, because once the pigment is laid it cannot be removed. To err is to ruin when it comes to watercolour.