

'River Deep Mountain High'

Gallery Westland Place (Upcoming)

Gallery Westland Place is a beautiful, red-brick, turn-of-the-century building in Old Street. But, despite a large showing space that spills into a cavernous basement, the gallery feels sidelined; you enter through the café and background music permeates – not Tina Turner, though. Still, the mellow sounds of Astrud Gilberto make a fitting soundtrack to this show mostly of paintings and photographs about landscape. Despite the hint of menace in Sophie Rickett's photo of a woman caught in a slither of light and Henry Krokatsis' R-type prints of a loan toddler in a park, the work mostly smacks of the hazy, lazy, last days of summer.

The only mountain is by Masakatsu Kondo. Composed of tiny, regular marks, it seems too easily to address memory-bank archetypes; so do David Risley's paintings 'Edge' and 'Brown Crack'. Peter Doig's new paintings are smaller, tougher and odder. We see a road through the rear-view mirror of a car; through the windscreen only green is visible, as if the vehicle is about to crash. In another picture, an anorak-beast with shooting stick legs paints an achingly precious *scène en plein air*. With high-speed daubs and swipes, Merlin James effortlessly conjures trees, clouds and weather conditions. He and Peter Doig would have made a belter of an opening show. An interesting début, nonetheless.
Martin Coomer

'Underworld' by John Stezaker

