

Hidden in Plain Sight

Curated by Maz McGann

12 October 2026 – 29 January 2027
Adelaide Airport

Meg Mader

Artist Statement

I am an illustrative artist based in the Clare Valley, South Australia. My practice is centred on storytelling, using pattern, colour, familiar objects, humour and constructed environments to create images that invite the viewer to look a little closer. I am interested in the stories held within ordinary things and how an object, setting or small detail can reveal something about a person or a time without needing to show the whole story.

Much of my work begins with something familiar like an object, a character, a memory or a pop culture reference which I then reinterpret through my own visual language. I enjoy combining recognisable elements in unexpected ways, using humour and visual play to create work that is engaging on the surface while offering something more considered underneath.

Pattern is an important part of my practice, both visually and conceptually. I use it to create a sense of time and place, build atmosphere and draw attention to particular details within a composition. I am particularly interested in the relationship between what is immediately visible and what is revealed through closer looking.

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Meg Mader
The Heart, 2024
 Gouache on
 watercolour paper
 76cm x 56cm

My mother was the heart of our family. She was the main income earner, while also carrying the everyday responsibilities of raising a family and keeping our home running. My father was an artist who found employment when he could. This imagined 1970s interior brings together the objects, books, television and patterns that surrounded us when I was young. Each detail is drawn from memories of our family and the time in which we lived.

Although there were financial challenges, my parents worked hard to create a home that felt safe, cared for and normal. Looking back, I can see how much my mother carried, much of it quietly and without recognition.

What isn't immediately visible are the second-hand clothes and toys, the peeling wallpaper and the inexpensive food. I didn't realise we were poor as a child because my parents worked hard to make the best of what we had. They made sure we were clean, cared for and never felt that we were missing out. It is only looking back that I understand how much effort went into creating that sense of normality.

Meg Mader

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Meg Mader, *Doctor Hoo-t*, 2022, acrylic ink on watercolour paper, 30cm x 42cm

Doctor Hoo-t is my playful interpretation of Doctor Who, a television series that captured my imagination growing up. My siblings and I would race home to watch it after school and get lost in the stories then re-enact them in play. The character combines the adventurous spirit of the Doctor with an owl, reflecting my tendency to reinterpret the characters and stories that fascinated me.

The augmented reality element adds another layer to the work, allowing the character to move beyond the static image and become part of an imagined world.



Meg Mader, *Princess Layer*, 2022, acrylic ink on watercolour paper, 30cm x 42cm

Princess Layer is my playful take on Princess Leia from Star Wars, one of the many fictional characters that formed part of my childhood imagination. She always seemed so strong and beautiful and I liked to think she could do anything.

I have used humour and visual wordplay to transform a familiar pop-culture figure into something distinctly my own by combining her with one of my best laying chickens.

The augmented reality element adds another layer to the work, allowing the character to move beyond the static image and become part of an imagined world.



Meg Mader, *Indi-owl-a Jones*, 2022, acrylic ink on watercolour paper, 30cm x 42cm

Indi-owl-a Jones is my playful reinterpretation of Indiana Jones, inspired by the adventure stories that were part of my childhood.

The combination of the familiar character with an owl was a fun take on the scruffy character. He is sometimes wise like an owl but does get into a lot of scrapes. I enjoy taking something recognisable and adding my own quirky visual language.

The augmented reality element adds another layer to the work, allowing the character to move beyond the static image and become part of an imagined world.



Meg Mader, *Captain Ber-Kirk and Mister Bok-Bok*, 2022, acrylic ink on watercolour paper, 30cm x 42cm

Captain Ber-Kirk and Mister Bok-Bok draws on the world of Star Trek, another example of the television and film stories that provided entertainment and fuelled my imagination. As a teenager, my mother and I would watch this when she finished work and laugh at the silliness.

The work plays with the familiar characters and language of the series, replacing them with my own humorous animal interpretations. Just a couple of roosters crowing at their own importance.

The augmented reality element adds another layer to the work, allowing the character to move beyond the static image and become part of an imagined world.

Gus Clutterbuck

Our Hidden Story

The Sticky Drawings series were made during the strange days of isolation and quarantine in 2020, with the outside world locked down, our domestic world was engulfed in the struggle with my son's Eating Disorder. We experienced the sense of isolation accompanying Anorexia Nervosa, within the isolation of the global pandemic. Eating disorders are stereotyped as being a female illness, but men and boys make up around 36% of this whole (Butterfly Foundation, 2012). They often report suffering stigma, discrimination and shame which compounds their illness. Without treatment, up to 20% of people with serious Eating Disorders die.

This life threatening and misunderstood illness took a huge emotional, physical and psychological toll on our separated family, but also led to financial hardship through the necessary investment in the hard work of practical care for our child. Being self-employed with an Arts business there was a great deal of unpaid caring time that meant I couldn't work and earn money, leading to continual struggles to pay the rent, buy food and medications every week for a few years.

I imagine our story is not uncommon, and may be typical of the hidden poverty story of unpaid carers and their dedication for loved ones who suffer chronic or life-threatening illnesses of many varieties. Thankfully our story had a happy ending with a hard-fought recovery from Anorexia, but many don't make it.

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Gus Clutterbuck
Heart and Sticks,
2020, ink, gouache,
watercolour, tea
stains, Giclee print on
etching paper, edition
of 30, 110cm x 110cm
(framed)

My son has always collected sticks and twigs and moved these in his hands to create patterns or stories imagined. These ordinary and ever-present objects became symbolic of his presence, and the sticks depicted in these artworks are drawn from his actual collection.

Our collaborative piece, *Potholes* was a bedside arts project in hospital to pass the time, my son painting the initial marks with Chinese brush and ink, and my responses in colour and line completing the work. These artworks began as miniature drawings on discarded papers and then were printed at large scale on archival papers to produce the final product. I use the motif of my son's many collected "sticks" to explore the journey to recovery, which engenders, resilience, persistence, family unity across two homes.



Gus Clutterbuck,
Potholes, 2020, ink,
gouache, watercolour,
tea stains, Giclee print
on etching paper,
edition of 30, 110cm x
110cm (framed)

The original miniature painting was collected by Flinders Medical Centre and now hangs in the paediatric ward as a symbol of hope and recovery.

Sticks can build a fire, make a shelter, and support a forest canopy.

The distorted beauty myth of the modern age urges us to be "stick figure" "thin."

These "Sticky" drawings contemplate the big ideas in small things.



Gus Clutterbuck,
Shelter, 2020, ink,
gouache, watercolour,
tea stains, Giclee print
on etching paper,
edition of 30, 110cm x
110cm (framed)

Catherine Fitz-Gerald

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Catherine Fitz-Gerald,
Dawn Dust, 2025, oil on
canvas, 81cm x 122cm,

During my regional tour of 'If fabrics could speak...' last year, the drought sat, a physical presence, rarely mentioned in the yarnning circles as women shared their stories. The slow retreat, was implied but often hidden, in the stories shared; quietly 'not available' for dinner out with friends, the show that night; the extra jumper with the knee rug and the heater off; 'I'm a vegetarian now' as food prices rise; 'too busy' for coffee with neighbours; carers retreat and isolation; loneliness and anxiety the only things on the increase. I witnessed and recognised the places where poverty hides, in silence and drought, distance and isolation.

From my father, I share that inaudible intergenerational trauma; his family walked away from the drought-stricken farm when he was 17. The family forever split, never living under the same roof again. It's bred into bone, reverberating through the years, in careful counting and fear, losses not yours, but still grieved.

On the first morning of the tour as I watched the sheep in the paddock, a memory whispered, the voices of my great aunts reciting poetry around the fire... "there's not a blade on Casey's place as I came down to mass..."

In the dawn light, sheep kicked clouds of dust in the grassless paddocks as the trees and far hills blurred into dreamscapes. The skies, clear of any cloud, heralded no relief from the shimmering scorching heat of the days to come. The drought and endless dust coating the land, underpinned the stories shared, grief trembled in voices, lives in suspension, like dust motes in air awaiting rain.



Catherine Fitz-Gerald,
The Warburton Inlet,
2020, oil on aluminium
122cm x 100cm

In South Australia's far north, the filling of Kati-Thanda sparks tourist flights; beauty and new bird life masking the damage, distress and financial ruin left in the flood's wake throughout Queensland months before.

Rains that fell far away in Queensland, have spent weeks travelling ancient dry creek beds and gathering particles of the land they flood over. Suspended and displaced like the livelihoods and homes swept away, sediment tints the waters. Time and height distances us as the waters gleam below, golden in the overcast light, calm and polished like ancient metal. Old news, sunk like the sediment, waters now reflecting serene skies.

If you are booking a flight to see this extraordinary wonder, please consider also donating to Rural Aid, for in the north the long recovery continues:

<https://donations.ruralaid.org.au/>

Tabitha Lean

Artist Statement

These works emerge from my own experiences of imprisonment, poverty and criminalisation. I know what it is to be watched and judged, to have my movement controlled, and to be reduced to a record in the hands of the state. I also know what it is to carry that confinement beyond the prison gates, to discover that a sentence does not always end when the door opens.

Criminalised people are hidden in plain sight. We are made intensely visible to police, prisons, courts and welfare systems, while the fullness of our lives remains unseen. Our poverty is treated as suspicion. Our survival is recast as wrongdoing. Our pain is documented, managed and punished, but rarely understood.

In making these works, I return to the objects and gestures through which state power disguises itself: the handshake, the agreement, the promise of protection, the language of home and reconciliation. Beneath each one, the chain remains. The circles of colour hold what cannot be contained: the body, memory, Country, resistance and the possibility of freedom.

This work is personal, but it is not mine alone. It carries the presence of people I have known inside, those who remain imprisoned, and those who live with the prison long after their release. We are here. We have always been here: watched by the state, overlooked by society, and surviving in plain sight.

[@tabithalean](#)



Tabitha Lean, *Bringing Them Home*, 2025, ink and acrylic on paper, 42cm x 59.4cm (framed)

Two uniforms carry the silence as though it weighs nothing.

A body passes beneath them, held against the burning earth.

Home waits somewhere beyond the edge of the frame - a word called out across generations, a door that does not always open.



Tabitha Lean, *"Home" Detention*, 2025, ink and acrylic on paper, 42cm x 59.4cm (framed)

The sun rises behind me, but morning has a boundary.

A thin line fastens the body to the place it must remain.

No bars interrupt the sky.

No walls announce themselves.

Still, every step must ask permission.



Tabitha Lean, *reCONciliation I*, 2025, ink and acrylic on paper, 42cm x 59.4cm (framed)

They meet where the light is clean, palms pressed into ceremony.

Below them, iron remembers what language tries to forget.

The red earth holds the weight of every unfinished promise.

A hand is offered.

The chain is not.

Tabitha Lean

[@tabithalean](#)



Tabitha Lean,
reCONciliation II, 2025,
ink and acrylic on paper,
42cm x 59.4cm (framed)

Between two hands,
a small warmth gathers.

One reaches freely.

One reaches through iron.

The circle glows like possibility, but the chain knows
otherwise. Some promises are golden only because they
hide the rust.



Tabitha Lean, *Land Use
Agreement*, 2025, ink
and acrylic on paper,
42cm x 59.4cm (framed)

Paper parts softly. Iron does not.

Between two hands, the broken page reveals what was
always underneath.

The chain crosses every promise, binding ink to silence,
binding Country to someone else's name.



Tabitha Lean,
Protection, 2025, ink
and acrylic on paper,
42cm x 59.4cm (framed)

A careful hand lowers the cage. Inside, a body folds around
the last of its own light.

Purple blooms between the bars- soft as a bruise, bright as
refusal.

They name the cage protection. The little bird knows it by
another name.

Artist Statement

Chloe Noble's practice explores memory, domestic spaces, experiences of disability, housing instability and experiences of safety. Through digital painting and poetry, they examine how ordinary spaces can hold uncertainty, grief and belonging. Familiar, emotionally resonant figures frequently appear throughout their work, reflecting ideas of companionship, comfort, vulnerability and home. Their works often use colour and familiar spaces that offer a sense of comfort and familiarity, while quietly depicting experiences of hardship, instability and uncertainty beneath the surface.

Drawing from lived experience, Noble's work considers the often-invisible realities of financial and housing insecurity, and the emotional labour of navigating uncertainty. Their work is particularly interested in the gap between how hardship is imagined and how it is experienced. These experiences can exist behind closed doors, within our homes and rooms, and woven into the routines of everyday life.

Noble focuses on the everyday spaces, objects and experiences through which instability is lived. By sharing a perspective shaped by their own experiences, their work challenges assumptions about what poverty looks like, who experiences it, and what a person experiencing financial or housing insecurity is expected to look like or be.

Through these intimate and familiar images, Noble invites audiences to look beyond assumptions and consider the complexity of people's circumstances. Their work asks viewers to recognise that experiences of poverty and instability are not always immediately visible, and that behind ordinary spaces and everyday lives can be stories of uncertainty, resilience, care and survival.

@chloejessnoble art



Chloe Noble, *"between house and home"*, 2024, Digital painting, inkjet print on recycled cotton rag, 87cm x 62cm (framed)

i moved twenty times in one year
but not because i was chasing the world
there were no postcards
no freedom
no version of myself i was trying to find
every move was a calculation
is this safer than where i was yesterday
will my body make it through the night
will my dog
people hear the number and think of adventure
planes
maps with lines drawn across them
but my movements were short
local
quiet
from couch to spare room
from spare room to floor
from house to hospital
i didn't collect stamps
i collected keys that weren't mine
doorways i wasn't meant to linger in
twenty places
and none of them were destinations
i wasn't travelling
i was leaving
i wasn't restless
i was afraid
this is not a story about motion
it's a record of safety checks
of exits memorised
of sleeping lightly
i moved twenty times in one year
and every move was an attempt
to stay alive
-cjn

Chloe Noble

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Chloe Noble, *"finding the warmest part of the room and not moving from it"*, 2026, Digital painting, inkjet print on recycled cotton rag, 87cm x 62cm (framed)

i wake up slow,
limbs heavy,
a body made of stone and static.
the world hums outside,
but i do not hum back.
i measure time in pills,
in the ache behind my eyes,
in the way my hands shake
when i try to hold onto something
soft, warm, living.
voices blur,
faces smear like wet paint,
and i wonder if i am fading too.
there is no fire left in me today,
just the quiet weight
of moving through a world
that does not wait,
that does not slow down,
that does not see.
-cjn



Chloe Noble, *"the first day"*, 2026, Digital painting, inkjet print on recycled cotton rag, 87cm x 62cm (framed)

i have lived in many houses
but very few places where my body could rest
i learned how long i was allowed to stay
by how carefully i moved
how quiet i became
how small i made myself
i slept on couches, floors, spare rooms
i slept in places where i apologised for existing
i stayed where my dog was safe
i left where we weren't
sometimes a hospital felt safer than a house
sometimes leaving the country was the only way to pause
i am tired of packing my life into temporary containers
tired of places that ask me to be grateful instead of safe
i want somewhere my body can soften
without wondering when it will have to leave
-cjn



Chloe Noble, *"where the walls remember"*, 2024, Digital painting, inkjet print on recycled cotton rag, 87cm x 62cm (framed)

i carry this weight, heavy and still
a burden i can't seem to shed.
each smile i wear a fragile mask
to hide the ache that fills my head
and heart.
the world sees a version i craft with care
pretending strength, feigning light,
but beneath the calm, the storm brews fierce
a quiet battle, out of sight.
i hold the pieces, afraid to fall
afraid to let the truth slip free,
to speak of pain, to share the hurt
is to risk being all they'd see.
but here in the quiet, i fall apart
where no one looks and no one knows
and every step feels twice as hard
while i wait for cracks to show.
how long can i carry what they can't see
how long can i fight to stay?
each breath is a promise i didn't choose
and every smile feels far away.
-cjn



Abbey Murdoch,
888-024, 2025,
single-channel,
experimental video,
dimensions variable,
4.45mins

Watch video

I grew up in Elizabeth, in Adelaide's northern suburbs, where the closure of the Holden factory remains part of the history of the communities I know. For many people, Holden was more than a place of employment. It was connected to homes, families, routines and a sense of belonging. When the factory closed, the effects extended beyond the loss of jobs, changing the lives and communities that had been built around it.

888-024 is an experimental video work that explores this history through the language and cultural symbolism of Holden cars. I am interested in what happens when a car, a suburb or a person becomes associated with a particular stereotype, and what can be lost when the history behind that association is no longer visible.

Holden cars are often used as shorthand for people who are considered "bogans", "feral" or unemployed. Having lived in the northern suburbs, I find these assumptions frustrating. They reduce people and communities to a set of characteristics, while overlooking the histories, families and circumstances that have shaped their lives. The work comes from my own experience of living within a community that is so often spoken about through what it supposedly lacks.

I am not interested in presenting poverty as the entirety of a person's identity, or in asking an audience to feel sorry for the people represented in the work. Instead, I want to bring forward a history and experience that I feel is often overlooked. The work asks what we might see differently if we looked beyond the stereotype and considered the people, histories and circumstances that sit behind it.

For me, this is what makes 888-024 personal. It is a work about a place I have lived, a community I am connected to, and the frustration of seeing that community represented through assumptions that do not account for the complexity of the people who live there. It is an attempt to give space to a story that I feel is often unheard, and to consider how the meaning of a place, an object or a person can change over time.



Abbey Murdoch, *Shared Paths*, 2026, acrylic on framed canvas, 2 canvases, 65cm X 50cm X 6cm

These paintings are aerial views of Elizabeth Downs and Salisbury, two northern suburbs I have grown up in and feel deeply connected to. I am interested in the way we come to know a place through its streets, its houses, its people and the memories we build within it. The paintings transform these familiar suburban landscapes into colourful, abstracted grids, creating a different way of looking at places that are often represented through statistics, stereotypes and disadvantage.

There is a particular sense of pride that exists in the northern suburbs. I have often noticed this pride in the way people identify where they come from, including through the suburb names that appear in graffiti and gang tags. While these markings can be read in many ways, I am interested in the sense of ownership and belonging they can also express - a declaration of place, identity and connection. This is something I have carried into the paintings, where the suburb itself becomes a subject of celebration.

The swirls are an important part of my practice and represent community, interconnectedness, growth and the spiralling nature of our lives. They speak to the way we return to places, people and experiences, while continuing to change and develop. They can also suggest the downward spirals that poverty can create, and the cycles of life and hardship that people may find themselves returning to.

I draw my swirls from the inside out. This is a way of thinking about growth that begins within ourselves, rather than being determined by the views of others. When we build our sense of self from the outside in, we can become caught in the expectations and assumptions that surround us. Beginning within allows for movement, growth and further development, without crossing our own lines or losing ourselves in the process.

For me, this is also a reflection on the way people and communities are viewed. The northern suburbs are often spoken about through what they supposedly lack, yet there is so much pride, connection and beauty within them. These paintings are an attempt to celebrate that complexity - to look at a place I know and love, and to see it as something more than the stereotypes attached to it.

The works are not intended to deny the realities of poverty or disadvantage. Rather, they are about the people and places that exist alongside those realities. They ask what it means to belong to a community, to carry its history, and to continue growing within it.

Tieyuan (Vivian) Zhou

Artist Statement

Poverty is not always easy to see. Sometimes it is the uncertainty of not knowing what comes next, the loneliness of feeling disconnected, or the sense that the things we need to move forward are simply out of reach. These three works come from different periods of my life when I experienced both financial and emotional hardship. During those times, small moments became important. A tree changing through the seasons, birds encountered on walks with my child, sunlight falling across a difficult day. Making art became another way of staying connected to the world when life felt uncertain. Looking back, I see these works as records of things that can easily go unnoticed. They speak not only of hardship, but of the quiet ways we continue to live through it: by noticing what is around us, finding moments of connection, making something with our hands, and searching for meaning even when it is not yet clear.

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Tieyuan (Vivian) Zhou,
The Bird II, 2020, mixed
media drawing, 97cm x
67cm

During her early years as an immigrant and mother, the artist experienced a period of profound loneliness. She often took her children into nature and began spending time observing the birds around her. The birds perch on branches with their backs to the viewer, alert and ready to fly away at any moment, yet simultaneously unable to resist turning back to look with curiosity. She was drawn to their unique habits: friendly without being demanding, observant without judging, and able to maintain boundaries without creating rejection. In an era where connection and a sense of belonging between people seem scarce, these quiet encounters with birds provided her with a kind of companionship that required no words or explanation.



Tieyuan (Vivian) Zhou,
Not Quite, 2021, mixed
media drawing, 103cm
x 72.5cm

This abstract drawing emerged during a difficult period when depression and sunlight seemed to exist within the artist at the same time. She was unexpectedly moved by emotions she could not fully identify, and found herself in tears while making the work. Rather than attempting to explain those emotions, the artwork became a record of their presence. Light and heaviness, clarity and uncertainty, movement and stillness coexist within the image. The work holds a moment when the inner experience of difficulty could not easily be expressed through words, but could nevertheless find a form through the act of making.



Tieyuan (Vivian) Zhou,
Zing, 2022, Silkscreen,
68.5cm x 53cm

This artwork was made early in the artist's career, during a difficult time when she was without work. Just outside her home, beside the local bus stop, stood a mature citrus tree that accompanied her through the seasons. She passed it every day. While waiting for the bus, she would see the tree change with the weather, grow new leaves and bear fruit in its own time. When much of her life felt uncertain, its quiet presence offered something simple and constant. This was the first artwork she ever sold. The sale became an important moment in her life as an artist. For the first time, something she had made could also help support her life. Looking back, the tree represents more than the subject of art. It holds a memory of a difficult beginning, while also marking the first small step towards a life as an artist.

Emiko Artemis

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Emiko Artemis,
Mastering the Sun,
2026, digital print from
negative on archival
paper, 61cm x 63.5cm



Emiko Artemis, *Oh
the Heat in Here*,
2026, digital print from
negative on archival
paper, 61cm x 63.5 cm

These two works reference Mid-century European migration to Australia, drawing from my own family's history of migration from Sweden, to Australia, chasing the romance of a new beginning and fleeing hardship and loss in the homeland. What followed were years of hard work in factories, wool sheds and steel works but also a life full of family, community and joy. Joy can happen in unexpected ways.

For myself and my own family, having lived in poverty since childhood and well into my adult years, over time we were pushed into more and more rural housing as the city and urban living that I had grown up in and spent my early adult years in became increasingly unaffordable.

What I realised during this process was the rural places I lived in were not the cultural vacuums I had envisioned them as. Instead, they were places where I found peace and my imagination could roam into new worlds and create new ideas. My children could live wild and adventurous childhoods and we had many days of new discoveries and regular walks in amazing natural landscapes.

Even though the car might be about to die or the bills were sitting on the table with no way to pay them, those moments spent in nature would be the space of peace, where the financial problems fell into the background and the day became one of laughter, wonder and the simple joy of being together as a family. We each found a love and respect for the natural world we were surrounded by. We were immersed in a rich culture of plants, animals, oceans, rivers and creeks as well as other people who similarly found the rural spaces places of wonder and joy.

Poverty is hard and gruelling, but it doesn't strip your humanity. You always have yourself and the ability to make meaning from your circumstances. Love and joy can never be bought and nature and the connection we can each make to the world around us is free.

Bianca Joanna Buliga

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Bianca Joanna Buliga,
Portocala, 2026,
Photography, 75cm x
100cm

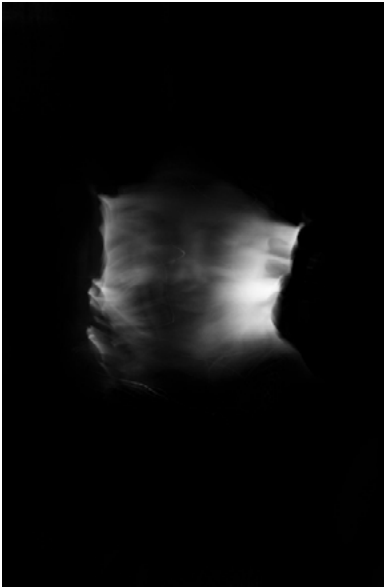
This artwork is called "*Portocala*", the Romanian word for orange. I was born in an Eastern European country not long after communism fell. I don't remember the queues myself, but I grew up hearing about them. Before I was born, my sibling used to wake up at 4am to stand in line for bread, and a small piece of meat that was meant to feed our whole family. For many years there was no fruit on our table, except what my grandmother grew in her garden like apples, or pears. Oranges and bananas belonged to a different world, and they were exotic, and only knew of them because of television.

Once a year, on the 5th of December, Saint Nicholas brought fruit to all children, no matter of their financial status. Not sure how old I was the first time he visited me, but I remember the night he left an orange in my cleaned boots while I was taking a bath all by myself. Hot water in our building came once a week, sometimes once a fortnight, and by the time it climbed four floors to reach our apartment, it had already gone cold so most of the time we were all bathing in the same water, close to the kitchen which was the only warm place in the house. Scarcity wasn't found only in what we ate, it lived in the temperature on our skin as well. I couldn't get close to an orange outside of December for many years and only recently I realised why. The smell alone takes me straight back to a room I otherwise have almost no memory of, and is of the only doorways I still have into a childhood I can't recall. It reminds me of a child who all that wanted was to feel safe and loved, but didn't have that. The orange became a portal to a rare moment when love was present through something easy to grab, but it also carries a truth of the same time of the year when my father was drunk and my mother was absent. Poverty is a complex, multi-generational trauma

My practice is built on self-portraiture, and on the belief that therapeutic photography is not inaccessible and that you don't need a face or a whole body to hold meaning and sometimes just one hand is enough to carry a story.

I have a fridge full of oranges now and when one goes soft before I get to it, some part of me still flinches. If a piece of fruit can still undo me decades later, I have to wonder what else people are carrying, invisibly, that no one around them would ever think to look for. Poverty is not only about material lack, something solved by charity or an orange once a year, it's inseparable from other things layered on top of it, like family dysfunction, addiction, neglect, that don't disappear just because someone hands a fruit.

On every 5th of December my kids receive an orange in their cleaned shoes, and with each year that passes, I heal a little part of the story that I am still carrying many years later.



Bianca Joanna Buliga,
Masking, 2026,
Photography, Pigment
ink on archival cotton
rag paper, float framed,
52cm x 62cm

If you'd asked me as a child whether I lived in poverty, I would have said no, because where I grew up, there was always someone worse off than us. I think I would have also said no because of an inherited stigma, passed down without being spoken aloud. "*Masking*" is one of my favourite artworks created because it holds so many layers of my life at once.

When I was five, my mother left, the way so many mothers did in Romania once the borders opened after communism fell. Most kids my age grew up without a mother, a father, or both, as they left to build a better living elsewhere and send money home so we'd have something to eat. At some point I was considered rich, holding a doll that wasn't made by my grandmother out of corn husks, but poor in a mother, and in a safe childhood. In my family, we had some unwritten rules like we don't share our life with anyone, we pretend in front of others, and money equals shame.

The mask is my neurodivergence, my late diagnosis, living with mental illness and a chronic disease, and trying to understand a life built more from absence of memory than memory itself. When you grow up poor, everything feels unreachable, even the parts of yourself. As an adult, even with enough money to live well day to day, I still carry the same shame and stigma and I have a difficult relationship with money, some unconscious part of me still treats it as something bad. This is what "hidden in plain sight" means to me in an image when words have no more meaning. If you look at it one moment, you might see my face clearly and then when you look again, it's gone. The reality is that I will always be there, carrying stigma, survivor's guilt, and many "what ifs", sometimes hiding and other times being unseen by society's expectations and misconceptions.

We assume poverty looks a certain way, and that if someone doesn't look poor, or seems to be doing fine now, then they're fine, but the truth is that poverty isn't only what's missing from a table. Poverty is a complex, multi-generational trauma, a mother who leaves to feed her kids or a mask so well made that one forgets they're wearing it, until they're 30, and finally asks themselves what's underneath. We must recognise that the struggles people carry are not always visible, and that behind the appearance of being "fine" there may be poverty, trauma, grief, isolation, or generations of hardship. While our lives may be busier and more demanding than ever, this cannot become a reason to stop noticing or caring for one another. As a society, I believe we have a responsibility to look beyond what is visible, to acknowledge the growing reality of collective struggle, and to rebuild a culture where caring for each other is a shared responsibility.

Artist Statement

I see myself as a social realist painter who works in an expressionist style, as I am interested in the everyday emotional struggles of the human existence. Therefore, I focus on the disadvantage, alienation, class, displacement, and the understated challenges of urban life. I aim for my paintings to directly address our humanity, provoke thought, and reveal insights about ourselves and society. As a figurative artist, I paint from the gut as I apply bold gestural marks with thick impasto paint using intense colour to create emotionally charged images that feel urgent and raw. The physicality of the paint is essential to me because it carries the weight of the human experience and gives form to feelings that are often difficult to speak about. For me, these emotions can only truly be expressed through the act of painting. My paintings invite viewers to reflect and find themselves in the figures I paint, fostering a sense of shared humanity. By drawing on my experiences with vulnerability and resilience, I highlight everyday emotional struggles, especially anxiety, to create empathy and a genuine connection between my work and the audience.

Artist Biography

Tom Phillips is a contemporary figurative painter whose work explores the emotional and psychological dimensions of urban life. Drawing from lived experiences, interviews, and personal observations, Phillips combines realism and abstraction to reveal unseen emotional terrains and the silent struggles of daily existence.

A graduate of Adelaide Central School of Art (1997), Phillips has exhibited nationally, with recent solo exhibitions including Bosz Gallery (Brisbane, 2017), Broken Hill Regional Art Gallery (2018), a major solo presentation at the Art Gallery of South Australia (2024), Praxis Artspace, *Beyond the Silent Struggle* (2025) and Ladder Art Space, *Suburbia's Quiet Crisis* (Melbourne, 2025).

Phillips has been a three-time finalist in the Kilgour Prize at Newcastle Art Gallery. He was awarded the Limber Up Mentorship through Guildhouse in 2017, mentored by Stewart MacFarlane, and has completed residencies at Sauerbier House (2019) and received the SALA Don Dunstan Foundation Award (2021). In 2022, he was the recipient of the prestigious Guildhouse Fellowship in partnership with the Art Gallery of South Australia. His work is held in private and public collections across Australia, including Artbank Melbourne.

Phillips is committed to using visual storytelling to foster empathy and reflection in an increasingly fragmented world. Based in Adelaide, he continues to explore the intersections of vulnerability, resilience, and community through his art.

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Tom Phillips, *Lost Girl*,
2026, Oil on Canvas,
136cm x 122cm

In *Lost Girl*, I explore the experience of a young woman attempting to leave behind the difficulties and pressures of her past. Sitting beside her bag, she appears caught between departure and uncertainty, contemplating where she might go and what the future may hold.

In this painting, I have depicted an empty suburban landscape alongside an isolated figure, creating a sense of displacement and vulnerability. Through expressive brushwork, I create an uneasy atmosphere that captures the raw emotional experience of a young woman leaving behind a familiar life, uncertain of what lies ahead.

For me, *Lost Girl* is about uncertainty, isolation and the search for a way forward. The bag becomes a symbol of both escape and uncertainty, suggesting that leaving one situation does not necessarily mean knowing where you belong next. The painting invites the viewer to consider the circumstances behind her decision to leave and the hidden struggles that may have brought her to this moment.

Tom Phillips

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Tom Phillips, *Madonna and Child*, 2025, Oil on Canvas, 136cm x 122cm

In *Madonna and Child*, I explore the emotional and financial struggles experienced by a single mother as she tries to protect and provide for her children in difficult circumstances. The figures are placed within a bleak suburban landscape, surrounded by bags and belongings, suggesting displacement, uncertainty and the everyday burden of trying to survive.

The mother's upright figure contrasts with the vulnerability of the child, reflecting the enormous responsibility placed upon a parent who must remain strong despite her own emotional exhaustion. Through expressive brushwork, distorted figures and a turbulent atmosphere, I try to capture the raw emotional weight of poverty, insecurity and isolation.

For me, the painting is not simply about financial hardship; it is about responsibility, resilience and the struggle to maintain dignity when life becomes increasingly uncertain. *Madonna and Child* attempts to bring these often-hidden experiences into view and encourage the viewer to look beyond appearances, fostering empathy for single mothers and their children who may be struggling in plain sight.

Makeda Duong

makedaduong.com



Makeda Duong, *Elegy*, 2023, cotton embroidery on cotton, 31cm x 31cm

Elegy was inspired by my visits to the local park, watching the birds and plants, and how beneficial this was for my mental health. I used to enjoy observing the ibises who lived along the lake going about their business.



Makeda Duong, *Bipolar Disorder*, 2020, indigo dyed cotton embroidery on linen, 32.4cm x 49.5cm

After receiving a diagnosis of Bipolar Disorder in 2019, I attempted to represent my experience of living with this condition, and to dispel harmful stereotypes and misconceptions. It is based on some scribbles I created during a manic episode. The work converts these frantic scrawlings into a slower, more meditative practice of stitching. This allowed me to reflect on my diagnosis, and explore the intersection where mental suffering meets creative energy. Mental illness is a common experience which can make living with financial hardship more difficult. There are often barriers to treatment due to high medical expenses. Despite the challenges, I have found it gratifying to be able to manage my illness effectively.



Katherine Grocott,
Overshoot Days, 2022,
Sterling Silver, Powder
Coated Aluminium,
X-Rays, Haematite,
Nylon, 3 x 3 x 60cm
each

Sustainability is the wise, fair, equal, and frugal use of our planetary resources. Overshoot Days, a series of six wearable sculpture neckpieces, maps the frightening way that five countries, and the earth as a whole, use up 365 days' worth of resources in far less time during 2021 and 2022.

Overshoot Days is a concept that calculates the time it takes for an individual nation to use up a year's worth of resources. Carefully calculated using scientific and environmental methods, it clearly demonstrates that many countries, mostly in the West, use up their yearly allocation in far less time. The worst during 2022, Qatar, only took 41 days, less than a month and a half to do that. The United States of America took 72 while Australia was only 10 days later. The United Kingdom took 139 days and China, 153 days. Once the individual nations have been collected and calculated, an average for the whole earth can be determined. For 2021, the Earth's Overshoot Day was the 29th July, taking 210 days to use up 365 days' worth of planetary resources.

While many countries take far longer to use up their resources, many of these have large portions of the population living in abject, absolute poverty. Many are in Africa and Asia.

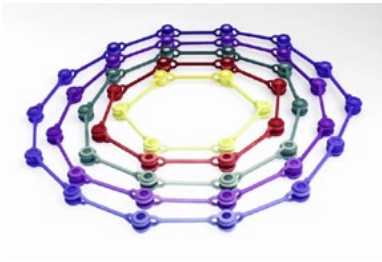
It is easy to identify the reality that this is not sustainable. If the planet's population uses its resources too quickly, it fails to give the earth time to renew those, if they can be renewed at all. If all humans lived like Qatar, we would need almost nine planets to survive. If we all lived like Australians, we would need just under four and a half planet Earths.

But we only have one Earth.

Humanity's overpopulation means we need to radically examine how we consume the Earth's resources. If we want all people on the planet to live like Australians, the earth could only sustain around a billion people. If the seven billion people we have now want to live equally and have access to the same resources, then we would have to live like Eastern Europeans. If the 14 billion who are estimated to populate the planet by 2050 all want the same resources, we would all have to live like sub-Saharan Africans.

The problem with this scenario is that the world does not share resources equally. The wealthier, Western nations, tend to take more and use far more than others, often at the very expense of the poorer nations. The despair that many people have of the future is real as finite resources run out, animal extinction speeds up, and the survival of the poor looks worryingly questionable.

The necklaces are made of 365 disks. The powder coated aluminium disks represent the days of the year that the nation stayed within its limits. The recycled x-rays represent when a nation overconsumed, resulting in a sickening, unhealthy consequence for future generations.



Katherine Grocott,
1.5M, 2021, Nylon,
Dye, 20 x 20 x 2 cm
smallest, 40 x 40 x 2 cm
largest

This series of neckpieces explores the social distancing requirement of the Covid 19 Pandemic – staying 1.5m away from other people. While this naming was criticized (physical distancing with social connection was more positive) watching how people dealt with this new phenomenon was concerning. A dance ensued as citizens in public spaces began to try to keep a 1.5m bubble around them. In private, things were a lot more complex and affected different households very differently. Those in poverty often did not have the physical space to distance the recommended amount or be able to isolate and quarantine if necessary. They couldn't always afford sanitiser, facemasks, doctor's appointments or medical treatment.

The piece is constructed with pivot points representing people. If we complied with health advice and stayed 1.5m away from one another, the virus has a harder time spreading. This is indicated when the necklace is fully expanded. But when the necklace is collapsed on itself and the pivot points touch, it results in a visual representation of the greater risk in close contact. This was, however, a common experience of those living in poverty.

The components are 3D printed SLS (selective laser sintering) nylon 12. Each piece has been hand dyed, resulting in an ombré effect. The pivot points move in one colour direction and the links move in the opposite. This gives the wearer options about the shade they display most prominently.

Most artworks in *Hidden in Plain Sight* are for sale with 100% of proceeds going directly to the artists.

For purchase enquires please contact Guildhouse directly:
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Hidden in Plain Sight is presented by Guildhouse and delivery partner Adelaide Airport, with generous support from The Wyatt Trust.

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