



A•K

BELLINGER

· GALLERY ·

KIATA MASON

MY HOME BY THE SEA

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## MY HOME BY THE SEA

What is done in love, is well done.

Van Gogh

The Still Life is a restless animal, because in so many ways, it is impossible. Tables are like train stations with tea pots and books arriving and departing. Vases ache with the fragile heft of flowers that will die and dust falls where sunlight once danced. Traditionally still life painting represented allegories of the season, a show of wealth and a gilded, yet pointed, focus on mortality. Some Dutch masters allowed for the tiny bruises and faint blooms of mould to creep onto their perfect fruit or for insects to glitter upon a finely painted leaf. Many took plants and flowers from different seasons and collated them into a fiction of time, like a bouquet composed of the past and the future. Modern still life painters such as Manet and Van Gogh rendered their blooms in a way that was frontal and imposing. Their vases came close while their tables dissolved. Beauty was thrust within reach.

The Cubists interrogated the innate sentimental associations of fruit and flowers, draining them of colour. Modernists queried the very idea of the interior set-piece and for a long time the still life fermented in its own hyper-decorative jus. Composed yet decomposing.

Margaret Preston and Thea Proctor gave the domestic a good prod forward but into the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century in Australian painting the still life stalled. The favourite fodder of salon art prizes, it was a genre for the fusty and formal or followed the Post-impressionist painters into saccharine blobs of molten colour. I credit Brett Whiteley (via Matisse) and Cressida Campbell for tipping the table and making the still life electric and psychological again. And, in turn, Kiata Mason for giving so much of her heart and skill to an underestimated realm.

Her prolific and tender paintings have grown in scale and have swayed between sparse detail and abundant density. Like a treasure map, they deserve study and like a surrealist film, they are keenly alive to the absurd. Her painting is energised by the tension between liberty and restraint. Some objects are painted as flat as a paper cut out, others have tone and solid form. Her use of perspective also rocks the room by assuming simultaneous arial and frontal viewpoints. Here is work to satiate a curious eye. Art postcards, tattered record covers, the broken “good” china and the illusory optical depth of textiles create a scavenger hunt through memory. The childhood desire to open a doll house and find the secrets inside tics at the heart of a good still life. Here is a memoir told through clues. In Mason’s paintings many, many of the things she paints are talismans rather than just props. Instead, they are heirlooms from her Grandmother’s house and simple things of private value. On a formal level they also build the working parts of her intricate compositions, self-aware and deliberately placed in space:

“Still life is about looking and finding starting points. Composition is my lode star. The objects I paint have their own narrative but they are there to construct the space and to set sparks off one another. My paintings are not solely focused on expressing the object, my finesse is not my joy, the process is much more abstract than that. And I know that the works are complex. But aside from their formal qualities they are also love offerings. The act of creating something is, at its’ core level an act of generosity.”

In the past Kiata Mason has linked her work to the ritual of giving, the importance of family and the empathy for a kindred spirit. Perhaps the reason these works resonate so broadly is that within them are things we recognise and also unlikely surprises, subtle threads of discord and incongruence. This is not just doiley and daisy territory. How great, really, to see Lou Reed’s face amongst “the pretty things” or a black bentwood chair shrunken to doll height floating in space.

For this show, the colour has intensified and the objects crowd in. The paintings are intense and they take more risks. Hung with dense geological landscapes, these works have a sense of place that is palpable, almost demanding. Qualities the artist attributes to the tension of lockdown and the inevitable disillusion with being perpetually inside. The pandemic has changed our perception of still life. There is beauty in the interior but also a restless layer of ambivalence. In this moment, it makes sense that Mason returned to the craggy coastal walks of her childhood and then painted them. Her landscapes evoke the art expeditions she took with her grandmother and her responses now, as a mature painter:

“I’m connected to the rocks. I find rocks very human. In landscape you look to the isolated detail and the unexpected composition that you can and morph to. Getting outside is a discipline and a relief: going to the place I know looking for small beautiful things.”

This image, of the artists as a forager seems a fitting metaphor for the nuanced simplicity in Kiata Mason’s work. Like turning over rocks to find the life beneath, Mason swaps and repositions her beloved things in endless shifts of subtle increment. What is known to her is reborn to us. Honing new relationships, and making small elegies, her process is like a magic mirror. Making forever young the things we believe to be antique.



*MONDAY MORNING BREAKFAST*

56 x 77 cm  
Archival Paper Unframed

\$2400



*STUDIO VIEW*

164 x 161 cm (in Frame)  
Archival Paper, floated and framed.

\$5100

**KIATA MASON**  
**MY HOME BY THE SEA**

*Bird Tea (Yellow Striped Morning)*



*Childhood Walk*



*Bird Tea (Yellow Striped Morning)*

91 x 122 cm  
Acrylic on Canvas  
\$4900

*Childhood Walk*

35 x 35 cm  
Acrylic on Canvas  
\$1300

*Bunya Mango Night*

61 x 61 cm  
Acrylic on Canvas  
\$1950

*Bunya Mango Night*



*Black Sandstone, Blue Shadow*



*Black Sandstone, Blue Shadow*

35 x 35 cm  
Acrylic on Canvas  
\$1300

**KIATA MASON**  
**MY HOME BY THE SEA**

*Morning Table after Beach Walk*



*Dancing Leaves*



*Morning Table after Beach Walk*

91 x 122 cm

Acrylic on Canvas

\$4900

*Dancing Leaves*

122 x 91 cm

Acrylic on Canvas

\$4900

*Love in Between Gardening*

50 x 61 cm

Acrylic on Canvas

\$1900

*Love in Between Gardening*



*Purple Flowers With Fish*



*Purple Flowers With Fish*

61 x 61 cm

Acrylic on Canvas

\$1950

**KIATA MASON**  
**MY HOME BY THE SEA**

*Sea Bounty*



*Soothing Waves*



*Sea Bounty*

91 x 91 cm

Acrylic on Canvas

\$3500

*Rosy Tea Day*

35 x 35 cm

Acrylic on Canvas

\$1300

*Orange Arperge*

35 x 35 cm

Acrylic on Canvas

\$1300

*Orange Arperge*



*Rosy Tea Day*



*Soothing Waves*

61 x 61 cm

Acrylic on Canvas

\$1950

**KIATA MASON**  
**MY HOME BY THE SEA**

*World in the Glass (Blackbird Tea)*



*Through the Trees*



*World in the Glass*  
*(Blackbird Tea)*  
122 x 122 cm  
Acrylic on Canvas  
\$5200

*Through the Trees*  
35 x 35 cm  
Acrylic on Canvas  
\$1300

*Stories in the Dolls House*  
61 x 61 cm  
Acrylic on Canvas  
\$1950

*Stories in the Doll House*



*Small Loveliness*



*Small Loveliness*  
50 x 61 cm  
Acrylic on Canvas  
\$1900



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