

# PIA MURPHY



## GARDEN GRAVITY

NICHOLAS  
THOMPSON  
GALLERY

28 FEBRUARY TO 16 MARCH 2024

Pia Murphy creates the kind of paintings that influence the act of looking. After witnessing her lithe plants, abstracted bodies, scenes of fecundity and nighttime gardens, it's impossible to look simply at something like a tree on a nature strip, a vase of flowers on the dining room table, the face of a significant other. Murphy's subtly observant eye is bestowed.

Murphy's paintings in *Garden Gravity* are both quiet and loud. Compact-sized canvases register the softness of bodies, birds, flora, and fauna, which is set against the tactile roughness of grainy surfaces and a penchant for unapologetic colour, layers and lines. Look closely and see how crimson turns to orange-red, and then into a deeper amber. Firm brushstrokes frame the play of floating blue, white and black flowers; the curved grey of an arm hovers alongside a patch of baby pink atop yellow. Surprisingly cast diptychs create split-frames of nature, suspending one moment against another.

It's easy to get lost in Murphy's stratified brushstrokes — and getting lost is important. Recently the artist was influenced by a book that I also greatly admire, Rebecca Solnit's *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*. Under Solnit's careful thinking and mapmaking of memory, getting lost isn't a pejorative but an action against the common drive to organise, plan, schedule, calculate, control. It's what Solnit calls a "voluptuous surrender", but also offers a sense of clarity: "...to be lost is to be fully present, and to be fully present is to be capable of being in uncertainty and mystery." It's about walking and wandering, but also what happens in art.

When Murphy paints, she speaks of getting lost in this way, as a form of play, experiment and thought. Yet it takes energy, time, and space to conjure that state. Murphy's paintings aren't formed by sketches or miniatures, there's no guidelines. They are rendered straight onto the canvas in ways that relay the pulse of the gesture. There are no preconceived outcomes. Scenes from the garden, the house, nature, and memory weave together. While Murphy, who has a background in printmaking and ceramics, previously painted more literal subjects, she found this psychologically and physically exhausting. Instead, she became friends with the chance of painting, which is still

precise in its marks, letting the unconscious do its work. There's a collaboration between familiarity and unfamiliarity.

For Murphy, painting is also a form of hope. In focusing natural forms, she communicates an intense empathy with the world, the piercing profundity of nature. It's a search for the nourishment painting provides. Yet Murphy also sees these paintings as self-portraits, and I'm reminded of Solnit: "Getting lost was not a matter of geography so much as identity, a passionate desire, even an urgent need, to become no one and anyone, to shake off the shackles that remind you who you are, who others think you are." A painting of a bird or person doesn't merely register that entity in space, but is also a psychological state, a mood, an emotion. It's as if Murphy is working through the mystery of her own attraction to nature, the minutiae of home life, and painting itself.

Importantly, these paintings aren't made in the city. While Murphy grew up in Melbourne, she now lives with her partner and young children in Birregurra in regional Victoria. She speaks intimately of the environment around her. There's delight in the garden she's created from scratch, where black cockatoos feed from a Banksia tree that once stood only a foot tall. Such moments register an immensity of feeling. We each know what it means to be moved by nature and — as Kantian philosophy tells us — it may not be the same slice of the world that moves us, but what we share, as Murphy's paintings show, is the sensation of being moved itself.

Yet in the Anthropocene one cannot look innocently at paintings of nature. In reflecting on Murphy's creations, how energetic yet fleeting they feel, I again think of Solnit, writing that we live alongside "a nature we are losing without even knowing the extent of that loss". Murphy's paintings remind us.

Tiarney Miekus, 2024

NICHOLAS  
THOMPSON  
GALLERY



**PIA MURPHY**

*Look what I found*

2023

oil on linen

137.5 x 101.5 cm

SOLD



**PIA MURPHY**

*Carried by the wind*

2023

oil on board

50 x 105 cm

\$3,200

NICHOLAS  
THOMPSON  
GALLERY



**PIA MURPHY**

*Listening to Basquiat's sisters*

2023

oil on board

50 x 105 cm

\$3,200





**PIA MURPHY**

*Flowers for Miyoko Ito*

2023

oil on board

70 x 50 cm

SOLD



**PIA MURPHY**

*Kaleidoscope*

2023

oil on board

70 x 50 cm

SOLD





**PIA MURPHY**

*Moon bird*

2023

oil on board

70 x 50 cm

\$2,600



**PIA MURPHY**

*The music patch*

2023

oil on board

70 x 50 cm

SOLD



**PIA MURPHY**

*A landscape I had never seen before*

2023

oil on board

40 x 60 cm

SOLD



NICHOLAS  
THOMPSON  
GALLERY



**PIA MURPHY**

*Blue*

2023

oil on board

60 x 40 cm

\$2,200

NICHOLAS  
THOMPSON  
GALLERY



**PIA MURPHY**

*On the steps (Ekeley)*

2023

oil on board

60 x 40 cm

\$2,200



NICHOLAS  
THOMPSON  
GALLERY



**PIA MURPHY**

*Pennyroyal irises*

2023

oil on board

40 x 60 cm

\$2,200

NICHOLAS  
THOMPSON  
GALLERY



**PIA MURPHY**

*Swamp seam*

2023

oil on board

30 x 60 cm

SOLD



**PIA MURPHY**

*After chasing the red-browed finch*

2023

oil on board

50 x 35 cm

SOLD

NICHOLAS  
THOMPSON  
GALLERY



**PIA MURPHY**

*Holding court*

2023

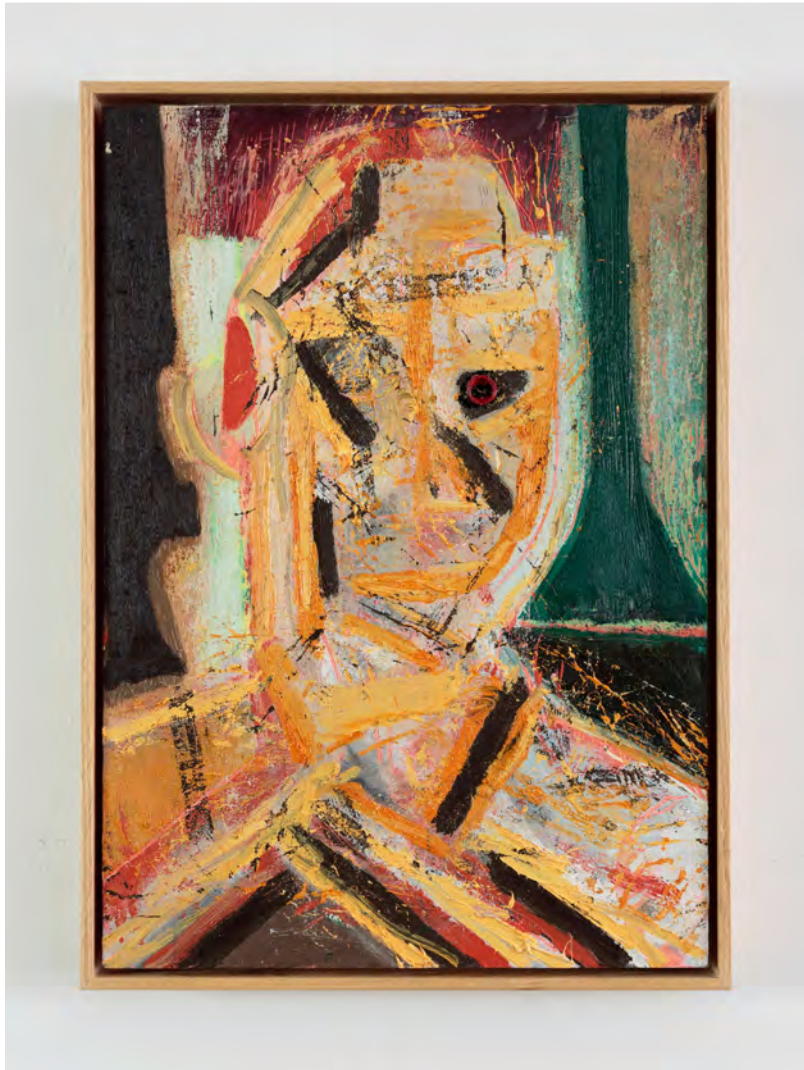
oil on board

50 x 35 cm

SOLD



NICHOLAS  
THOMPSON  
GALLERY



**PIA MURPHY**

*Waldeinsamkeit*

2023

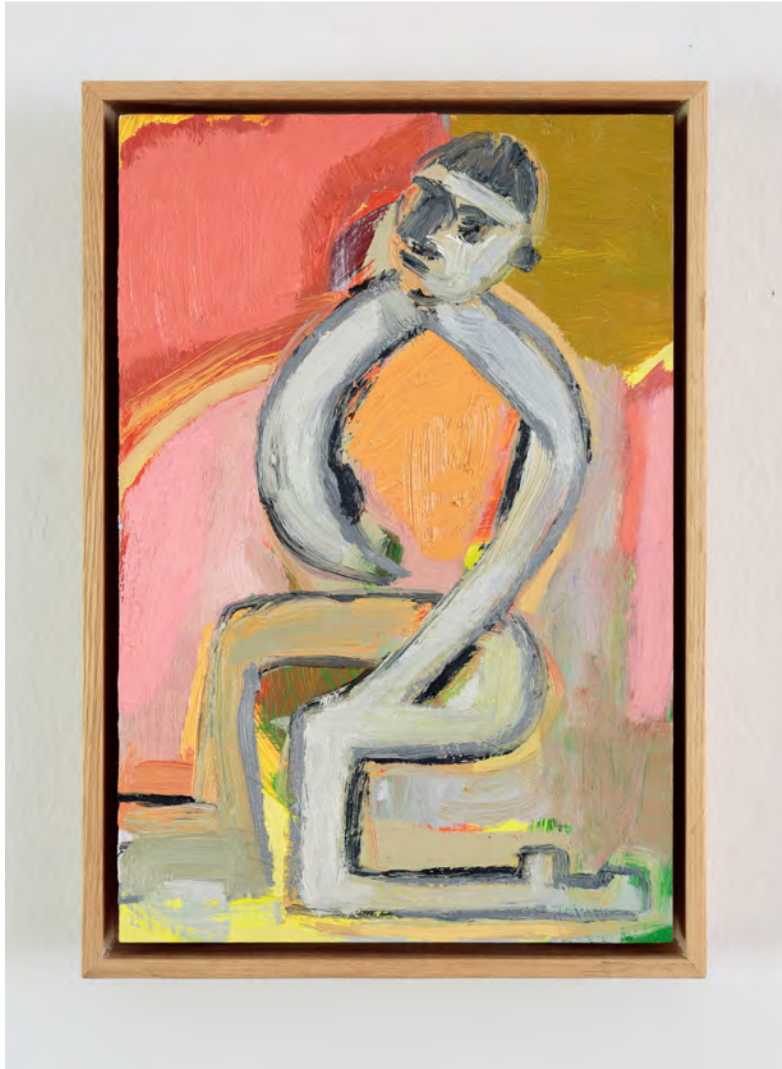
oil on board

50 x 35 cm

SOLD



NICHOLAS  
THOMPSON  
GALLERY



**PIA MURPHY**

*Kneeling, holding*

2023

oil on board

30 x 20 cm

\$1,200

NICHOLAS  
THOMPSON  
GALLERY



**PIA MURPHY**

*Sitting, curled*

2023

oil on board

30 x 20 cm

\$1,200



## See Pia Murphy's 'Garden Gravity' Opening At Nicholas Thompson Gallery

The artist's indefinable oil paintings are on show at the Collingwood gallery until March 16.

The oil paintings of [Pia Murphy](#) seamlessly combine abstract forms and recognisable figures across a vivid colour palette found in nature.

Her latest body of work, Garden Gravity, is particularly inspired by the artist's relationship to her home garden.

While created without a preconceived outcome in mind, the 17 works in this new exhibition visually express how Pia's garden relates to both her art practice and daily life.

'I think it's like tapping into some ancient knowledge,' she says. 'Like meditation, gardens can help to see things newly and differently and can be enlightening.'

Themes of solitude and uncertainty are also captured in the works created in Pia's Birregurra, Victoria studio.

Variations in texture achieve a crayon-like appearance where individual, almost transparent, brushstrokes are layered.

The result is a series of fluid paintings that exude an energy and indefinable quality that draws the viewer in and encourages them to linger.

Garden Gravity is showing at [Nicholas Thompson Gallery](#) in Collingwood from Wednesday February 28 to Saturday March 16. Opening drinks will be held on Saturday March 2.

**Garden Gravity by [Pia Murphy](#)**

**Wednesday February 28-Saturday March 16**

**[Nicholas Thompson Gallery](#)**

**155 Langridge St, Collingwood VIC 3066**

**WRITER** Amelia Barnes

27th of February 2024

Pia Murphy is a graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts (2004) and has held solo exhibitions in Melbourne and Sydney since 2010. Her work has been included in group exhibitions at significant Australian galleries including CAVES, C3 Contemporary Art Space, Bayside Arts and Cultural Centre Brighton, Arts Project Australia, Chapterhouse Lane Gallery, St Helliers St. Gallery, Campbelltown Arts Centre, Geelong Regional Gallery, Hobson's Bay City Council Gallery and internationally in Spain. Murphy was awarded the National Gallery of Victoria Women's Association Encouragement Award (2004). She has been featured in Art Guide Australia, the Age, the Journal of Australian Ceramics and Broadsheet. Murphy's work is held in private collections in Australia, USA, Italy, Switzerland, Germany.

# PIA MURPHY

## EDUCATION

2004 Bachelor of Fine Art, Printmaking, Victorian College of the Arts

## SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2022 Eternal Springtime - Michael Reid Northern Beaches, Sydney
- 2018 Twin Flames - LON Gallery, Melbourne
- 2017 A great big shape and a smaller one - Caves Gallery, Melbourne
- 2014 Land - Chapterhouse Lane Gallery, Melbourne
- 2013 Saccade - Pieces of Eight Gallery, Melbourne
- 2012 Woolgather - Chapterhouse Lane Gallery, Melbourne
- 2012 New work - C3 Contemporary Art Space, Melbourne
- 2011 Gorman presents - Pia Murphy, Melbourne
- 2010 New work - C3 Contemporary Art Space, Melbourne

## GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2023 Small Works - Edwina Corlette Gallery
- 2023 The Birregurra Art Show – Birregurra, Victoria
- 2023 Sunday Salon showroom, Melbourne
- 2022 Softly, Softly - Curated by Amber Cresswell Bell, Michael Reid Northern Beaches, Sydney
- 2021 The Birregurra Art Show - Birregurra, Victoria
- 2021 A Square of Sunlight - Curated by Helen Gory, Backwoods Gallery, Melbourne
- 2021 The show must go on - Sunday Salon, Melbourne



- 2021 Brindar con extranos - Galeria Trinta, Spain
- 2019 Spring-Time #4 - Lamington Drive, Melbourne
- 2018 Spring 1883 - CAVES inc. Melbourne
- 2018 The Horse - Curated by Noel Mckenna, Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney
- 2018 The Birregurra Art Show - Birregurra Hall, Victoria
- 2017 Not Fair - Melbourne
- 2017 Last Drinks - LON Gallery, Melbourne
- 2016 Concrete Agenda - Curated by Tai Snaith, C3 Contemporary Art Space, Melbourne
- 2016 The ordinary instant - Over 50 works by Clarice Beckett alongside Seven contemporary women artists, Bayside Arts and Cultural Centre, Brighton
- 2016 Faux Studio - C3 Contemporary Art Space, Melbourne
- 2016 group show: second iteration - Arts Project Australia, Melbourne
- 2015 group show - Chapterhouse Lane Gallery, Melbourne
- 2015 Shots off the dices - an exhibition of Australian and international artists  
Curated by Rhys Lee. Nicholas Thompson Gallery, Melbourne
- 2015 Faux Fair - C3 Contemporary Art Space, Melbourne
- 2014 Faux Museum - Curated by Anusha Kenny, Melissa Loughnan, Kate Tucker and Ace Wagstaff. C3 Contemporary Art Space, Melbourne
- 2012 Paintings of Steves' Paintings' St.Heliers St. Gallery, Melbourne
- 2011 1.85 Million: Art Peripheries – Curated by Joseph Allen Shea  
Campbelltown Arts Centre, Sydney
- 2011 Scarecrow - Curated by Rhys Lee including Rhys Lee, Pia Murphy, Heidi Yardley, Rob McHaffie, Daniel Price and Matt Hinkley. Karen Woodbury Gallery, Melbourne
- 2010 Exquisite Palette Show - St. Luke. Artist Colourmen, Melbourne

- 2008 Exquisite Palette Show - St. Luke. Artist Colourmen, Melbourne
- 2007 50 - a print exchange portfolio - Curated by Rona Green. Geelong  
Regional Gallery
- 2004 Nguyen Van Cuong Printmaking Project - Hobson's Bay City Council  
Gallery, Melbourne

## **AWARDS**

- 2004 'National Gallery of Victoria Women's Association Encouragement Award'

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- 2024 Mind Head magazine feature issue 3.
- 2023 Miasma magazine feature issue 1.
- 2022 Hunter & Folk feature by Holly Terry
- 2016 Artists collaborate without talking - Art Guide Australia, Andrew Stephens,  
December 2016
- 2014 Pia Murphy + Rhys Lee - Journal of Australian Ceramics, The volume 53  
issue 3, By Alicia Sciberras November 2014
- 2012 A new chapter - Broadsheet, May 22, 2012
- 2011 Ceramic goodness - Frankie Magazine, November 24, 2011
- 2011 Scarecrow - Dan Rule. The Age, Saturday June 17, 2011

## **COLLECTIONS**

- 2003 – 2023 Private collections Australia, USA, Italy, Switzerland, Germany.











































