

# THE PAINTER'S EYE



CURATED BY KEZ HUGHES

NICHOLAS  
THOMPSON  
GALLERY

28 JANUARY TO 14 FEBRUARY 2026

# THE PAINTER'S EYE

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XIAO YU BAI

SIS COWIE

SARAH CROWEST

ALEX DILLON

DAVID EGAN

STORM GOLD

KEZ HUGHES

NATASHA JOL

SHANE JONES

MADELEINE PETERS

STEVEN RENDALL

RACHAEL ROBB

KRISTINA TSOLIS-REAY

KATE WALLACE

SIS COWIE IS REPRESENTED BY SULLIVAN+STRUMPF, SYDNEY, MELBOURNE, SINGAPORE & JAN MURPHY GALLERY, BRISBANE

SARAH CROWEST AND KATE WALLACE ARE REPRESENTED BY LON GALLERY, MELBOURNE

SHANE JONES IS REPRESENTED BY CHARLES NODRUM GALLERY, MELBOURNE

MADELEINE PETERS IS REPRESENTED BY ANIMAL HOUSE FINE ARTS, MELBOURNE

STEVEN RENDALL IS REPRESENTED BY NIAGARA GALLERIES, MELBOURNE

## THE PAINTER'S EYE

*The Painter's Eye* brings together a distinct cross-section of Melbourne painting practice through the vision of Kez Hughes and Nicholas Thompson. A celebration of the peculiar qualities of painting, the discipline's formal qualities are brought to light here in a celebration of the fundamentally incremental logic of the artform.

The shadows of the masters—Vermeer, Caillebotte, Velázquez—loom over me as I consider this logic, a game of addition. Who would notice the lambency of colours so carefully matched but a painter? Through layering, the painter engages in an almost alchemic process, transfiguring pigment and binder on canvas or board into object, idea, structure, form. This is only made possible by the painter's own eye and their cabinet of techniques. Deploying light, shadow, tone, form and texture, the painter brings the viewer into the fold of these intimate, constructed worlds. To share in this logic is to continue an ancient dialogue of abstraction and representation that surpasses even the most exacting written word.

Italo Calvino, in the first of his *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, reminds us that we must “remember that the idea of the world as composed of weightless atoms is striking just because we know the weight of things so well”.<sup>1</sup> To imagine these finely-wrought pictures emerging from such innocuous material as the painter uses is a similarly striking proposition. The lightness of these works, in their hazy half-visions, indeterminate memories, archaic quotations and luminous assemblages, let us escape beyond thoughts of technique and style, representation and abstraction, above the weight of the world. These luminescent works are made ever more potent by their small scale, inviting careful, considered contemplation.

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<sup>1</sup> Italo Calvino, *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 15.

Through appropriation and quotation, painted images collapse linear time. In Kez Hughes' *Fortune*, an atavistic, questioning eye looks out towards us framed by a branch of coral; an oceanic vision figured with Kristina Tsoulis Reay's brush is brought forth from a haze of memory. Natasha Jol transfigures the slightest glimpse of a delicate, coquettish pillow into a sanctified moment, while the work of Alix Dillon and Madeleine Peters bring the moving picture to a stand-still, frozen frames ever more potent for their quietude. Sis Cowie's rich, sensuous portraiture similarly has this power of presence. But is her subject's enigmatic gaze guileful or is she simply caught unawares? It's hard to tell. Memory and place emerge again in the work of Xiao Yu Bai, Kate Wallace and Shane Jones, landscapes dancing in a light long-faded, yet preserved on canvas. The still life is treated exactingly by Rachel Robb, yet becomes fragmented under Steven Rendall's hand. Sarah CrowEST's *Used Paint* sits halfway between figuration and abstraction, her gentle, agate hues almost reminiscent of a set of Grand Tour cameos. Storm Gold and David Egan push abstraction further into mesmeric plasticity, the consolidation of form and figure into beguiling symbols.

These paintings share many things, but most of all it is their makers' utmost respect for the traditions and techniques of their craft that endows them with such lightness and beauty. Through bringing these works together, the monolith of an imagined, capital-P 'Painting' begins to crumble. Working in different styles, varying modes and motives, the artists of *The Painter's Eye* apply their tools and logic to create lasting icons, persistent images whose power stretches well beyond the edges of their supports.

Hugh Magnus, 2025



**XIAO YU BAI**

*Who sees the fountain no. 1*

2025

oil on canvas

60 x 50 cm

\$2,600



**SIS COWIE**

*Eavesdropping*

2023

canvas on board

45.5 x 35.5 cm

\$2,300

Sis Cowie is represented by Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney, Melbourne, Singapore and Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane



**SARAH CROWEST**

*Used paint*

2024

oil and graphite on panel

50 x 40 cm

\$1,800

Sarah CrowEST is represented by LON Gallery, Melbourne



**ALEX DILLON**

*Eugenie*

2025

oil on linen

25 x 30 cm

\$1,100



**DAVID EGAN**

*Bad gateway*

2026

oil on board

41 x 30.5 cm

\$1,800



**STORM GOLD**

*Soften ourselves*

2020-25

oil on board

50 x 40 cm

\$1,200



**KEZ HUGHES**

*Fortune*

2025

oil on board

30.5 x 25.5 cm

\$2,000



**NATASHA JOL**

*Taurus rising*

2025

oil on linen

46 x 36 cm

\$1,100



**SHANE JONES**

*Moonlight and rain*

2021

oil on linen

41 x 31 cm

\$2,500

Shane Jones is represented by Charles Nodrum Gallery, Melbourne



**MADELEINE PETERS**

*Coins on carpet*

2026

oil, wax and calcite on board

15 x 20 cm

\$1,200

Madeleine Peters is represented by Animal House Fine Arts, Melbourne



**STEVEN RENDALL**

*Office bin*

2025

oil on perspex mounted on MDF panel

36 x 31 cm

\$2,000

Steven Rendall is represented by Niagara Galleries, Melbourne



**RACHAEL ROBB**

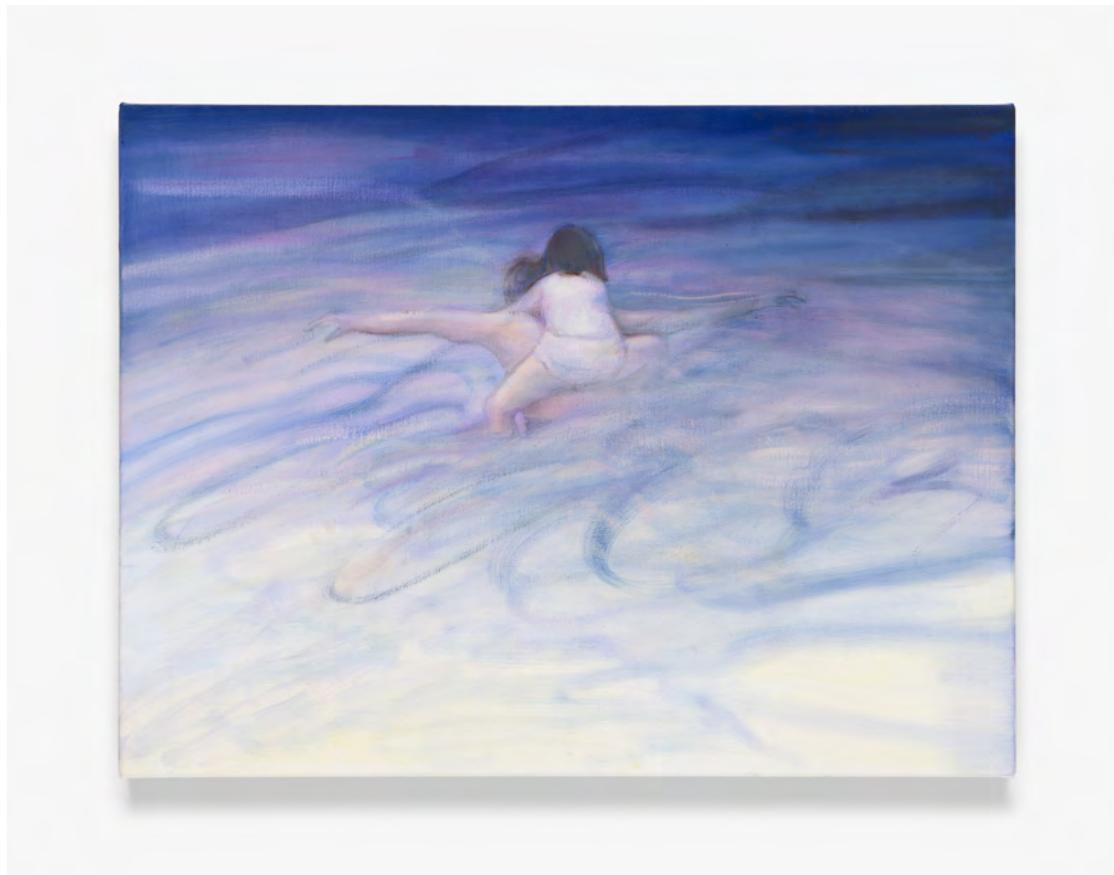
*Printouts of heart and bottled water*

2024

oil on gesso panel

23.5 x 30.5 cm

\$4,000



**KRISTINA TSOULIS-REAY**

*The breakers*

2025

oil on linen

38 x 51 cm

\$2,500



**KATE WALLACE**

*A brief pause*

2026

oil on copper

20 x 15 cm

\$3,000

Kate Wallace is represented by LON Gallery, Melbourne

## ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

**Xiao Yu Bai** has a Doctor of Fine Art (Painting) and a Master of Fine Art Painting from RMIT, Melbourne, a Bachelor of Fine Art (Painting) from Monash University and undertook advanced studies in Traditional Chinese Painting at Central Academy of Fine Arts, China. She has held solo exhibitions in Melbourne since 2006 and has been included in group exhibitions at Bayside Gallery, Redland Art Gallery, Cowra Regional Art Gallery, Glen Eira City Council Gallery, RMIT University, Bendigo Art Gallery, Monash University, Geelong Art Gallery and internationally at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, Lassalle College of the Arts. Xiao has been awarded the Siemens – RMIT Fine Art Postgraduate Scholarship Award, Melbourne and has been a finalist in the Bayside Painting Prize, the Calleen Art Award, Geelong Contemporary Art Prize, R&M McGivern Prize, Eutick Still Life Award, the City of Albany Art Prize, the Redland Art Awards, the Arthur Guy Memorial Prize, AME Bale Prize at Glen Eira City Council, the Fleurieu Peninsula Water Prize, the Willoughby Art Prize. Her work is held in the collections of Redland Gallery, the Landcom, Siemens, the Maroondah City Council as well as private collections.

**Sis Cowie** has a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) from the University of Melbourne. Her work has been exhibited since 2017 at the National Gallery of Victoria, George Paton Gallery, Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Townsville and the Art Gallery of Western Australia. Sis has been awarded the Brett Whiteley Travelling Scholarship, a William Fletcher Foundation Grant, the Richard Lester Prize for Portraiture and has been a finalist in the Percival Prize for Portraiture, the Moran Prize for Portraiture and Top Arts 2017.

Sis Cowie is represented by Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney, Melbourne and Singapore and Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane.

**Sarah CrowEST** has a practice led PhD from the Victorian College of the Arts and a Masters of Art by studio practice from the South Australian School of the Arts. She has exhibited across Australia including *Melbourne Now* at the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV), CAVES, Shepparton Art Museum, McClelland Gallery, TAMA, the Australian Tapestry Workshop, Tarrawarra Museum of Art, Heide MOMA, and the Ian Potter Museum of Art. CrowEST's recent residencies include the Megalo Print Studio, Fremantle Arts Centre and the Lottozero Textile Laboratory in Italy. She has undertaken studio residencies at Sanskriti Kendra, New Delhi, Bililla Mansion, Shakespeare Grove Artist Studio and Gertrude Contemporary. CrowEST's work is held in collections including the National Gallery of Victoria, Art Gallery of South Australia, TAMA, Museum and Art Gallery of Northern Territory (MAGNT), Artbank, City of Port Phillip Visual Art Collection, University of South Australia Library Art Collection, Epworth Hospital Collection, Justin Art House Museum, the Joyce Nissan Art Collection and Okayama Prefectural Government Collection (Japan).

Sarah CrowEST is represented by LON Gallery, Melbourne.

**Alex Dillon** is a recent graduate of the Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Victorian College of the Arts. She has exhibited in Melbourne at spaces including the VCA Artspace, Linden New Art, Bayside Gallery, Joseph Beuys Café and The Victorian College of the Arts. Alex has been a recent finalist in the Bayside Painting Prize.

**David Egan** holds a Doctorate of Philosophy (Fine Art) from Monash University where he lectures in painting. He is a current artist in residence at Gertrude Contemporary. David has held solo exhibitions since 2011 in Perth, Melbourne and internationally in London at venues including Gertrude Contemporary, Bus Projects, Westspace, Substation and Chapter House Lane. His work has been included in group exhibitions since 2011 at MUMA, ACCA, TCB, Ian Potter Museum of Art and Margaret Lawrence Gallery of Art. David has been a finalist in the Geelong Contemporary Art Prize, the Darebin Art Prize, Footscray Art Prize, Fremantle Print Award and the Melbourne Sculpture Prize.

**Storm Gold** has a Master of Fine Art from Monash University. He has exhibited and performed (sound/noise) locally and internationally. Storm co-founded CAVES a not-for-profit art gallery in 2014. He is the recipient of a New Work grant and a Skills and Arts Development grant from the Australia Council for the Arts.

**Kez Hughes** has a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours) from the Victorian College of the Arts, and has held solo exhibitions since 2006 in Melbourne. She has been exhibited in group exhibitions since 2004 in Melbourne, Brisbane, Ballarat and Gippsland and internationally in Sri Lanka at art spaces including Margaret Lawrence Gallery at the Victorian College of the Arts, the Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Ballarat Art Gallery, Bendigo Art Gallery, Federation University, RMIT School of Art, West Space, TCB and BUS Projects. Kez Hughes is a recipient of the Roger Kemp Memorial Award at the Victorian College of the Arts and the 2016 APEX Art Fellowship, New York. She has been a

finalist in the Sir John Sulman Prize at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, the Arthur Guy Memorial Prize at Bendigo Art Gallery, Bayside Acquisitive Art Prize at Bayside Art Gallery and the Williamstown Art Prize. Her work is held in the collection of Artbank.

**Natasha Jol** is currently undertaking a Bachelor of Fine Arts at the Victorian College of the Arts. Her work has been exhibited at VCA Artspace and VCA Twigg Space. Natasha was awarded the John Vickery Scholarship and was a George Paton Gallery UMSU Art Prize Award Nominee.

**Shane Jones** has a Masters of Fine Arts by Research from Monash University and Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours) from RMIT. He has held solo exhibitions since 1987 at Monash University, the Art Gallery of Ballarat, Warrnambool Art Gallery and Montsalvat. Shane's work has been included in group exhibitions since 1983 at National Gallery of Victoria , SECCA Bega, Warrnambool Art Gallery, Swan Hill Regional Art Gallery, Montsalvat, Australian Print Workshop, Castlemaine Art Gallery, Art Gallery of Ballarat, Manningham Art Gallery, Deakin University, Geelong Art Gallery, Tweed River Art Gallery, State Library of Victoria, Gold Coast City Art Gallery, Maroondah Art Gallery, Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery, Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, Charles Darwin University Art Collection, Bendigo Art Gallery, State Library of N.S.W. Geraldton Regional Art Gallery, Linden New Art, Grafton Regional Art Gallery, Albury Regional Gallery, Burnie Regional Art Gallery, Dubbo Regional Gallery and Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery. He has undertaken residencies at Geelong Grammar School, Federation University, Ballarat; the Art Vault, Mildura; RMIT and received the Doug Moran National Portrait Prize Finalist Award. Shane's

work is held in the collections of the National Gallery of Australia, as well as significant regional, tertiary and corporate collections.

Shane Jones is represented by Charles Nodrum Gallery, Melbourne.

**Madeleine Peters** has a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours) from the Victorian College of the Arts. She has held solo exhibitions since 2015 in Victoria and New South Wales, including Warrnambool Art Gallery. Madeleine's work has been included in group exhibitions since 2015 in Victoria and New South Wales at venues including George Paton Gallery, Connors Connors, Fiona and Sydney Myer Gallery, Victorian College of the Arts and Seventh Gallery. She is a recipient of the VCA Keith and Elisabeth Murdoch Travelling Fellowship, the National Gallery of Victoria Women's Association Award and has been a finalist in the Majlis Travelling Scholarship and the Len Fox Painting award at Castlemaine Art Museum.

Madeleine Peters is represented by Animal House Fine Arts, Melbourne.

**Steven Rendall** has a PhD from Monash University and undertook post-graduate studies at the Royal Academy Schools, London. He has held solo/duo exhibitions since 1997 in the UK and Australia including at Niagara Galleries, Westspace, St. Vincent's Hospital and Linden New Art, St Kilda, Blindside (with Michael Graeve), Sarah Scout Presents (with Andrea Eckersley), Heide Museum of Modern Art (with Albert Tucker), Faculty Gallery Monash University. Steven's work has been included in group

exhibitions since 2000 at the National Gallery of Victoria, Bayside Gallery, Deakin University, Geelong Gallery, RMIT Gallery, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Blindside, Cunihan Gallery, Castlemaine Art Gallery, McClelland Sculpture Park + Gallery, Margaret Lawrence Gallery VCA, Bundoora Homestead, George Paton Gallery, TCB, Rubicon, Town Hall Gallery Hawthorn, Monash Faculty Gallery, Bendigo Gallery, Linden New Art, Blindside, Gippsland Art Gallery, Deakin University and internationally at Torrance Art Museum, Los Angeles, VCCA Hanoi, Lincoln University, Wimbledon College of the Arts, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and The Royal Academy Gallery in the UK. He is a recipient of the Bayside Painting Prize (joint winner) and has been a finalist in the Deakin University Small Sculpture Award, Geelong Contemporary Art Prize, Len Fox Painting Prize, Darebin Art Prize and the Arthur Guy Memorial Painting Prize. Steven's work is in the collections of the National Gallery of Victoria, Geelong Gallery, RMIT University Collection, City of Melbourne, Artbank, Monash University Collection, Bendigo Gallery as well as other significant collections in Australia and the UK.

Steven Rendall is represented by Niagara Galleries, Melbourne.

**Rachael Robb** has a Bachelor of Fine Art (Painting) from RMIT University. She has held solo exhibitions since 1995, most recently at the Warrnambool Art Gallery and Blindside. Her work has been included in group exhibitions in Australia and internationally, including San Francisco, New York, and London. She is a recipient of the Maire Ragnhild Hollingsworth Prize for Oil Painting at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, London, and the Barton Family Foundation Installers Award at The Lester Prize, Western Australian Museum, Perth, and has been a finalist in the Geelong Contemporary Art Prize, the Darling Portrait Prize at the National Portrait Gallery, Canberra, the Mosman Prize, the Len Fox Painting Prize, and the Portia Geach Memorial

Award. Her work is held in the Groucho Club Art Collection, London, and in private collections in Australia, the UK, the USA, Sweden, Japan, and the Czech Republic.

**Kristina Tsoulis-Reay** has a PhD from the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture at Monash University, where she teaches painting and studio practice in the undergraduate and honours programs. She has held solo exhibitions since 2005 at MADA Gallery, CAVES, Monash University, Linden Centre for Contemporary Art and West Space. Kristina's work has been included in group exhibitions since 2002 at Bayside Gallery, Schoolhouse, ACCA, Federation University, Monash Faculty Gallery, Centre for Contemporary Photography, TCB, Seventh Gallery and George Paton Gallery. She is a recipient of grants from the Australia Council of the Arts and NAVA and was a finalist in the 2025 Bayside Painting Prize.

**Kate Wallace** has a Masters of Contemporary Art from the Victorian College of the Arts. She has held solo exhibitions since 2013 at venues including Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, C3 Contemporary Art Space, Kings and internationally at commercial galleries in Vienna and New York. Kate's work has been included in group exhibitions since 2010 at the National Gallery of Victoria, Shepparton Art Museum, Fiona and Sydney Myer Gallery, Blindsight, Linden Project Space, Rubicon ARI, Trocadero Art Space, No Vacancy, George Patton Gallery, Victorian College of the Arts, RMIT University, Victorian Artist Society and internationally in New York and Malaysia. She is the recipient of the Woollahra Gallery at Redleaf Artist residency, the NARS Foundation International Artists Residency, New York, an Australia Council for the Arts Career Development Grant, a Constant Ecology at Home Blindsight Residency, a University of Melbourne Wingate Student Fellowship and the Tolarno

Hotel/RMIT Painting Prize. Kate's work is in the collections of Artbank, RMIT University, Deakin University, as well as prominent corporate and private collections.

Kate Wallace is represented by LON Gallery, Melbourne.