

Margaret Ackland



Tipping Point

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9 August - 2 September 2023

Opening Celebration 12 August 3 - 5pm

Artist Talk 26 August @ 3pm

Stanley Street gallery
SYDNEY

11am - 6pm Wednesday - Saturday
1/52-54 Stanley St, Darlinghurst NSW 2010
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www.stanleystreetgallery.com.au

Tipping Point

In this world of utility. There is no avoiding reality, no way of escaping it, for the sole purpose of these objects is to serve people's needs. But to think of them as nothing but physical objects would be an error - Soetsu Yanagi

When I first encountered Margaret Ackland's work, I was taken aback by the scale and animation. Sometimes almost as tall as the artist, the watercolours are lively and expansive. Full of activity and agitation, they are neither spare, nor austere, catching me in bustling movement and pattern.

Objects witness us, says Ackland, as she sits at her studio desk. It was during lockdown she recounts, when time and mobility slowed down that she began to take a closer look at the stillness of things around the house. "I've always been completely entranced and interested in the visible world, and looking at things" she reflects. Silently present, Ackland understood that the objects we hold near are witness to our living. Interested in this witnessing, in the gaze and the reflections that bounce back, she developed the new body of work Tipping Point.

Instability and pattern create tension in the paintings. Recasting the conventions of the still life genre, the carefully arranged teapots, vases, and other everyday objects — typical to still life — are on the brink of falling. Caught this moment of instability, Ackland's subjects emerge unsteadily in peril. Yet wavering on the edge, at their tipping point, there is a balance found in the orderly repetition and rhythm of patterned fabric.

The classic Toile textile appears across multiple works. A type of fabric originating from France, Toile traditionally depicts idyllic pastoral or rural scenes in ornate pattern. In a classical French kind of way, the cloth holds feelings of country romance and nostalgia.

Ackland's Toile mime the romantic classic, yet taking a closer look you may notice a slight twist. Symbols and images from modern news and current events hide in certain detail. Looking for the code, I am captivated by a comforting hum of floral silhouettes. I think about the media cycle, repetition, newspapers, print and what it means to witness.

Without question, there is something miraculous in Ackland's technical ability of rendering watercolour into the reflective materiality of the metal and glass subjects. Passing through thin layers of colour, light bounces off the white paper background. The effect is a desirous translucency distinct to the process and medium. Yet the delicacy of a watercolour also lends itself to an unforgiving quality. Unlike other mediums such as oil or acrylic, there is a lack of plasticity in the paint. Once a mark is made, it is difficult to erase or remove. Negotiating this character, the fragility of the paper, and pigment suspended in the movement of water demands a degree of patience that discerns a sensitivity within the unsteady compositions. Such precision is irrevocably enchanting.

The works in Tipping Point capture quiet moments of watching, between the artist and her objects, as the chaos and madness of the pandemic transpired. Sometimes, distorted within the curvature of a reflective surface, is a face appearing to hold a mobile phone. Warped, flipped or multiplied, it is in fact an obscured image of Ackland herself. These paintings are thus not only still life compositions, but also portraits. The object's gaze is witness to Ackland, as she is witness to them, and we begin to see Ackland on a different, tilted plane. We see her face and body pulled and altered as it looks back at us. She is observing and being observed. Held together by the balance of patterned fabric, the gaze is cyclical, feeding back into itself. Deftly painting herself into the still-life, Ackland reflects on the perspective of the objects that we hold close and how they in turn hold us — until the very edge.

Claire de Carteret
Writer/Curator





Lean 2022

Watercolour on paper,
57 cm D

\$2,600

Enquire



Flow 2022

Watercolour on paper
90 cm D

\$5,600

Enquire



Enquire

Stand 2023

Watercolour on paper
118 x 75 cm

\$6,200



Arch 2023

Watercolour on paper, 80 x 80 cm

\$4,600

Enquire



Balance 2022

Watercolour on paper, 107 cm D

\$9,200

Enquire



Bridge 2023

Watercolour on paper, 97 x 104 cm

\$7,500

Enquire

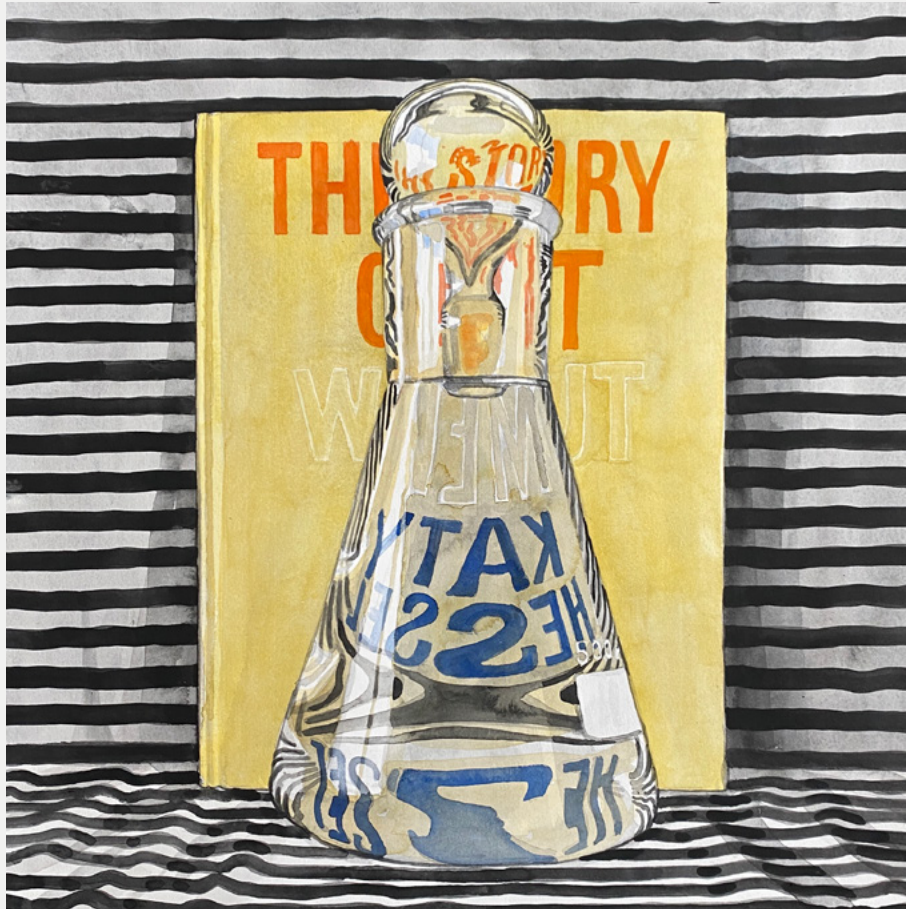


Open 2022

Watercolour on paper,
45 cm D

\$2,100

Enquire



Enquire

Hide 2022
Watercolour on paper,
48 x 48 cm

\$2,200



Tip 2022

Watercolour on paper,
60 cm D

\$2,800

Enquire



Enquire

Tilt 2023
Watercolour on paper, 63 x 65 cm
\$3,100



Enquire

Spiral 2023

Watercolour on paper
140 x 100 cm

\$11,000



Enquire

Tumble 2023
Watercolour on paper, 95 x 97 cm
\$6,800



Swirl 2022

Watercolour on paper,
60 cm D

\$3,200

Enquire



Enquire

Twist 2022
Watercolour on paper,
70 x 65 cm

\$3,500

Enquire

Flourish 2022
Watercolour on paper
140 x 100 cm

\$11,000





Enquire

Studio 2022
Watercolour on paper, 90 cm D
\$6,800

Margaret Ackland

A four times Archibald finalist, Margaret Ackland is renowned for her expressive and vibrant use of colour.

She has held over 30 solo exhibitions since 1985 and is represented in a range of national and private collections including Artbank, the Mitchell Library, the Holmes à Court Collection and Deakin University. Her work was on the front cover of the 2023 July edition of Art Almanac and she has been featured in Italian Vogue and on ABC TV's 'Compass' series.

In 2012 she was included in Not the Way Home - 13 Artists 'Paint the Desert', at the National Trust S.H.Ervin Gallery, Sydney.

In 2016 she had a major regional solo exhibition 'The Watercolour News', a large body of work reflecting on our daily newspapers at the Gippsland Regional Gallery.

Ackland was commissioned to create a major work for the new Intercontinental Hotel in Doha Bangladesh in 2018. She won the Portia Geach Portrait Prize in 1988 and more recently was the Portia Geach People's Choice award winner in 2021.





Margaret Ackland

EDUCATION

1973-1976 National Art School/Alexander Mackie CAE

SOLO EXHIBITIONS (Selected)

2023	Tipping Point, Stanley Street Gallery, Darlinghurst, NSW
2022	Balancing Act Flinders Lane Gallery
2021	Seeing Things. Flinders Lane Gallery (online)
2020	Social Distancing Flinders Lane Gallery (online)
2018	Present Tense. Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne
2016	The Watercolour News. Gippsland Regional Gallery
2015	The Watercolour News. Flinders Lane Gallery
2013	Vestiges, Flinders Lane Gallery
2011	Anthea Polson Gallery, Gold Coast, Qld; Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne
2009	Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne
2008	Wagner Art Gallery, Sydney
2007	John Gordon Gallery, Coffs Harbour, NSW
2006	Wagner Art Gallery, Sydney; John Gordon Gallery, Coffs Harbour, NSW
2005	Brisbane Art Fair; John Gordon Gallery, Coffs Harbour, NSW
2004	Wagner Art Gallery, Sydney

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (Selected)

2023	Lives of Their Own, Flinders Lane Gallery
2019	Ravenswood Australian women's Art Prize
2018	Little Things art Prize. St Cloche Gallery, Paddington.
2017	Out of Line. MaySpace, Sydney
2015	Off track Flinders Lane Gallery
2014	Flinders Lane Gallery. The Portrait Show Jan 28-Feb16
2014	King on William
2012	Blake Prize. SH Ervin Gallery
2012	Buratti Fine Art. Perth, WA
2012	Fowlers Gap: 13 artists paint the desert, Stella Downer Fine Art, Sydney
	Not the Way Home, S.H. Ervin Gallery, Sydney
2011	Catharsis, Tragedy and Restoration in Afghanistan, The Centre for Contemporary Art Afghanistan, Kabul

COLLECTIONS

Intercontinental Hotel, Doha Bangladesh; Artbank; Christ Church St Laurence; Deakin University, Holmes a Court, Mitchell Library, Sydney; Pharmacy Guild of Australia; Phillips Fox; Scotts College; Sydney Grammar School; Trinity Grammar School; Uniting Church of Australia; University of Sydney; Willoughby Library and private collections in Australia and overseas.

AWARDS

2022	Finalist, Portia Geach Portrait Prize
2021	People's Choice Award, Portia Geach Portrait prize.
2021	Finalist, Hazelhurst Works on Paper
2021	Finalist, Portia Geach Portrait Prize
2019	Finalist, Hazelhurst Works on Paper
2004	Finalist, Portia Geach Portrait Prize
1994	Finalist, Blake Prize
1993	Uniting Church Last Supper Project
1992	Winner, North Sydney Art Prize R.A.S. Modern Figurative
1991	2nd place, R.A.S. Portrait Prize
1988	Winner, Portia Geach Portrait Prize Finalist, Archibald Prize
1987	Highly Commended, Portia Geach Portrait Prize Finalist, Archibald Prize
1986	Commended, Portia Geach Portrait Prize Finalist, Archibald Prize
1985	Commended, Portia Geach Portrait Prize
1984	Sydney Morning Herald Traveling Scholarship Commended, Portia Geach Portrait Prize 3rd place, Queen Victoria Art Prize
1983	Finalist, Archibald Prize

BIBLIOGRAPHY

2022	Art Almanac
2012	Artist Profile Magazine. Not The Way Home. Issue 18
2011	Rosemary Crumlin, The Blake Book. MacMillan. pp.193,204
2009	Author, Title, Art Monthly, October
2008	Author, Title, Sydney Magazine, Sydney Morning Herald Author, Title, Elle Italia, Spring Compass, ABC Television, 1 June
2007	Author, Seldom Scene, Mitchell Library
2006	Katrina Lobley, 'Events', Sydney Morning Herald, 29 June Sunanda Creagh, Open Gallery, Sydney Morning Herald, 1 June D.W. Thorpe, Who's Who of Australian Visual Artists, publisher, 2nd edition
1994	Susan McCulloch, Australian Art Encyclopedia, Allen & Unwin
1990	Max Germaine, Artists and Galleries of Australia, Craftsman House
1987	Dawn Mendham, The Refining Fire, Albatross Books, pp.18-25
1985	Exhibition Commentary, Art and Australia, Fine Arts Press, vol.23, no2 p.173
1993	Judi Fisher et al., A Place at the Table, JBCE, pp.47-53,84

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Stanley Street Gallery would like to acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation as the traditional custodians of the land upon which this booklet was researched and written.
We pay respect to the Elders past, present and emerging. Sovereignty never ceded.

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