

MICHAEL REID

SYDNEY

BERLIN

BEYOND

# JO CHEW

In the painted worlds of Nipaluna/Hobart artist Jo Chew, built forms become vessels for an open-ended meditation on vulnerability, hopefulness, loss and longing. “A poem doesn’t need to describe everything and a song doesn’t need to make sense – I feel it can be the same with a painting,” says the artist, whose vibrant, sun-dappled paintings derive from collaged compositions; fragmentary photographs, drawings and found references spliced together “in the hope of finding something that speaks to me.”

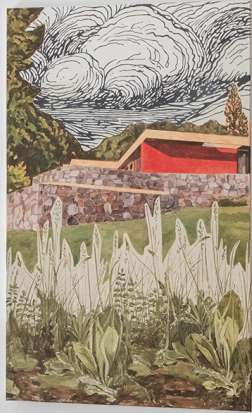
This process achieves an almost *trompe-l’œil* effect, with her large-scale paintings retaining a collagistic sense of pictorial layering in space – an illusory interweaving of paper and paint, memory and material. In doing so, her practice breathes new life into the medium, in step with the curatorial ambitions of *Painting Now*.

Despite the work’s compelling ambiguities, themes slowly coalesce through Chew’s *Painting Now* series, in which house-like structures repeat in various guises and take on poetic resonance. Whether temporary and improvisational – tents and makeshift A-frames – or suggesting past visions of a future utopia – modernist dream houses and geodesic domes – her recurring pitched forms invoke a universal language of shelter, inviting reflections on our longing for refuge and a place to call home.

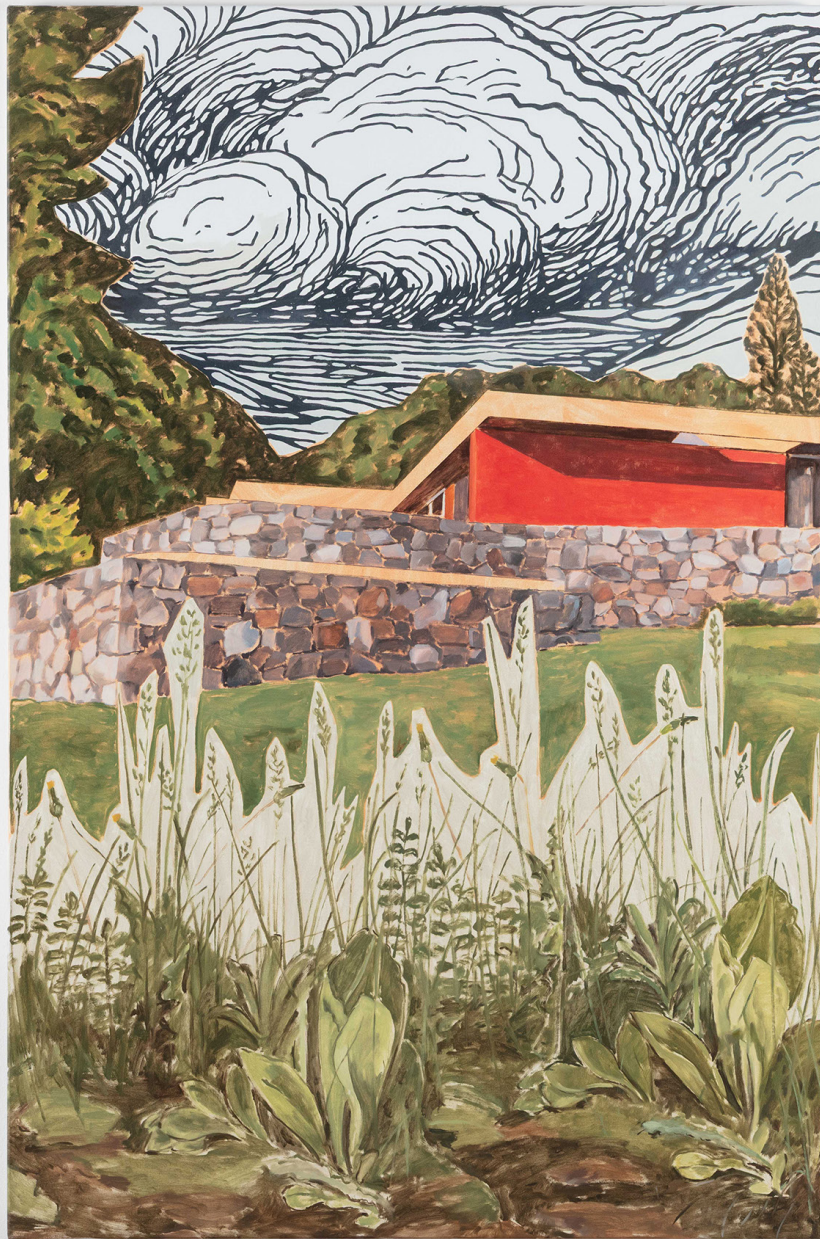
Brought to life during her final months in her long-term home, Chew’s exploration of how we dwell and what we treasure is tinged with a quiet acceptance of transience. “It doesn’t mean things or places can’t be treasured,” she says. “Just that nothing is really ours to keep.” The artist notes a nostalgic thread running through her constructed images: “A desire to get something back that we can’t quite retrieve,” she says. “But they’re not dark or depressing; I think there’s an appreciation for something from the past and an optimism that something similar might still be found. Many of my works this year have a feeling of something hidden and forming, suggesting a period of rest and reflection; cocoon-like, perhaps.”











Jo Chew, *Boundary Lines*, 2024-25, oil on canvas, 183.5 x 122 cm, \$7,000





Jo Chew, *Wayfindings*, 2025, oil on canvas, 122 x 97 cm, \$4,300





Jo Chew, *The bending of light*, 2025, oil on canvas, 101.5 x 97 cm, \$4,000





Jo Chew, *Magnetic Variation*, 2025, oil on canvas, 92 x 71.5 cm, \$3,200





Jo Chew, *Dandelions*, 2025, oil on canvas, 92 x 71.5 cm, \$3,200



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[dean@michaelreid.com.au](mailto:dean@michaelreid.com.au)

+61 411 059 830

[michaelreid.com.au](http://michaelreid.com.au)