

PAINTING NOW

MICHAEL REID

SYDNEY

BERLIN

BEYOND



JO CHEW

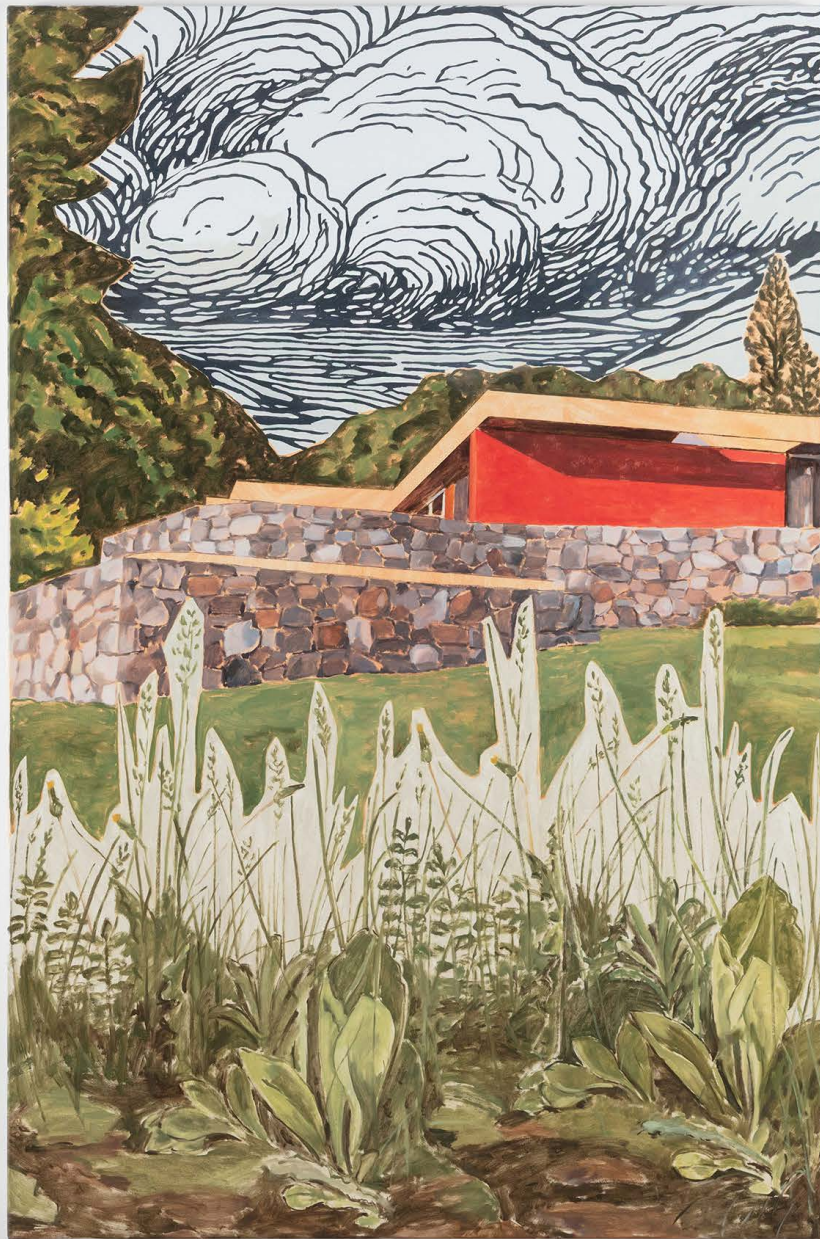
In the painted worlds of Nipaluna/Hobart artist Jo Chew, built forms become vessels for an open-ended meditation on vulnerability, hopefulness, loss and longing. “A poem doesn’t need to describe everything and a song doesn’t need to make sense – I feel it can be the same with a painting,” says the artist, 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

COLUMBIERE TIPUNGWUTI

Columbiere Tipungwuti paints the celestial figures of Tiwi ceremonial culture – Japarra, the moon-man who brought mortality to the world, and japalinga, the stars whose ochred forms adorn dancers' bodies in ceremony and yoyi. "I want to tell that story from long ago – what he did on earth and keep that story going," says the artist. The story tells of Japarra's fateful encounter with Purukuparli and Wai-ai, which led to the death of their child and Japarra's ascent to the sky, where his white light reminds the Tiwi people of the cycles of life and death.

"In parlingarri – old time – Japarra saw the family out bush; the baby died from the sun, and Japarra wanted to take him up for three days and bring him back alive. But the father said, 'Karlu' – 'no'. After fighting, Japarra flew up and stayed in the sky to become the moon and look down on the whole world. Now everyone around the world can't come back; they must follow that father and his son and die when it is their time."

On bark and canvas, Tipungwuti renders the ancestral moon-man in stark black and white, his face striking, solemn and compelling. "Japarra is white – the moon-man has a white body. All the stars are white and the moon is white too," he explains of his elemental palette, made from white ochre gathered on Country at Wurankuwu.

"I want to share my story and the story of my painting with people from all over the world," says Tipungwuti, who also has a background in dance – performing ballet in Sydney in the 1980s and yoyi on the Tiwi Islands. A finalist in the 2024 National Emerging Art Prize, Tipungwuti showed his paintings to great acclaim this year at UNSW Galleries in *Parlingarri Amintiya Ningani Awungarra: Old and New*, a widely celebrated exhibition curated by José Da Silva with Jilamara Arts. In *Painting Now*, Tipungwuti continues this lineage, transforming Tiwi creation stories into powerful, luminous images that bridge earth, sky and spirit.

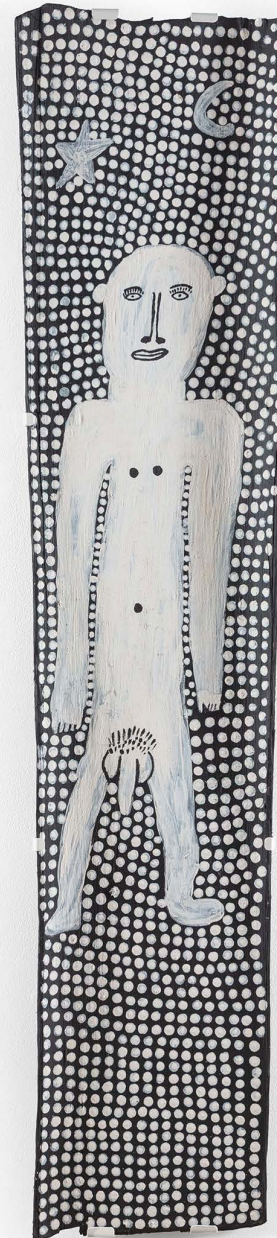
"In years gone by, there was a strong Tiwi tradition of producing nude figurative ironwood carvings that tell [Japarra's] story," writes cultural critic and researcher Tristen Harwood. "Tipungwuti's paintings draw on these important cultural influences to create innovative works grounded in his knowledge of the old stories and connection to longstanding practices of storytelling."

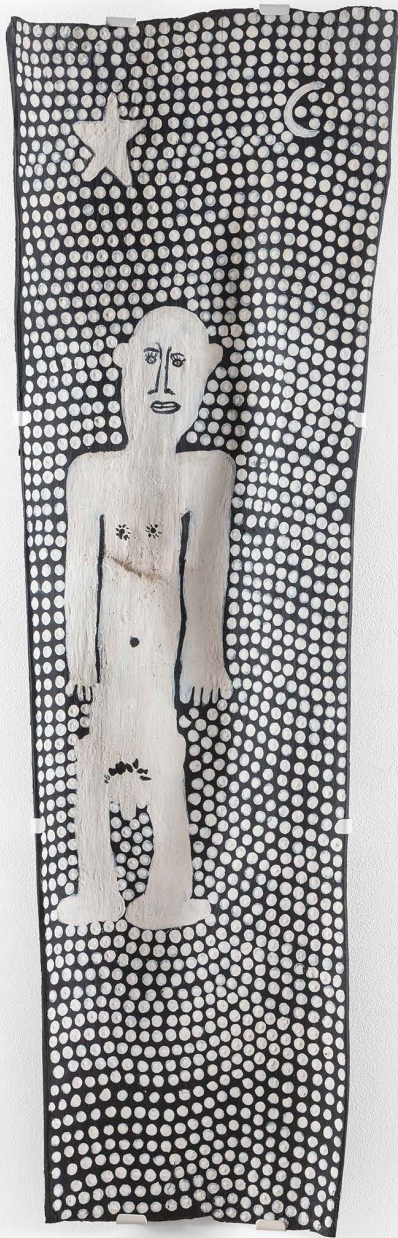






Columbiere Tipungwuti
Japarra (the moonman) (119-25), 2025
 locally sourced ochres on stringybark
 112.5 x 25 cm
 \$2,700



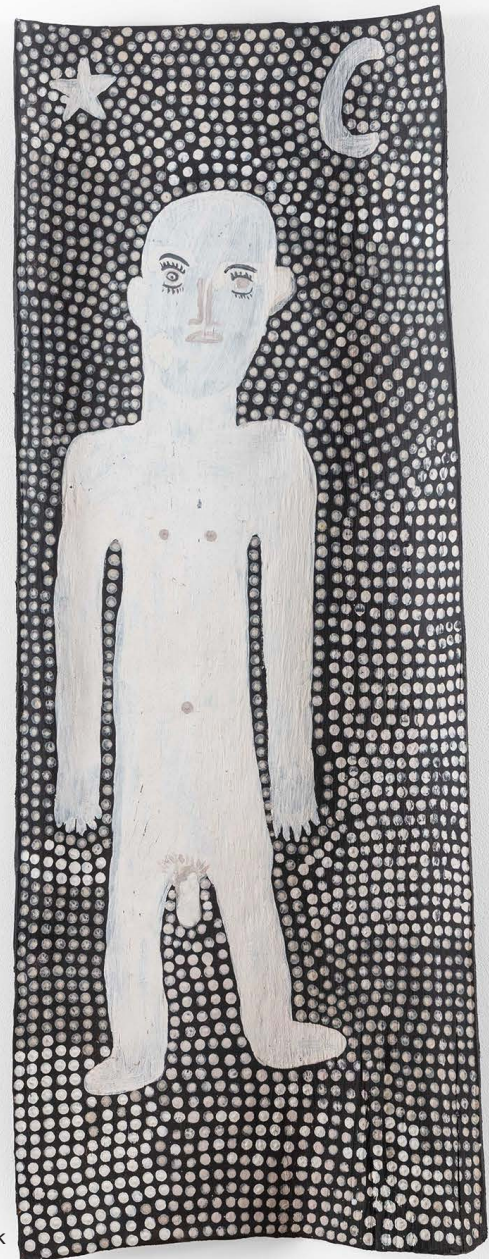


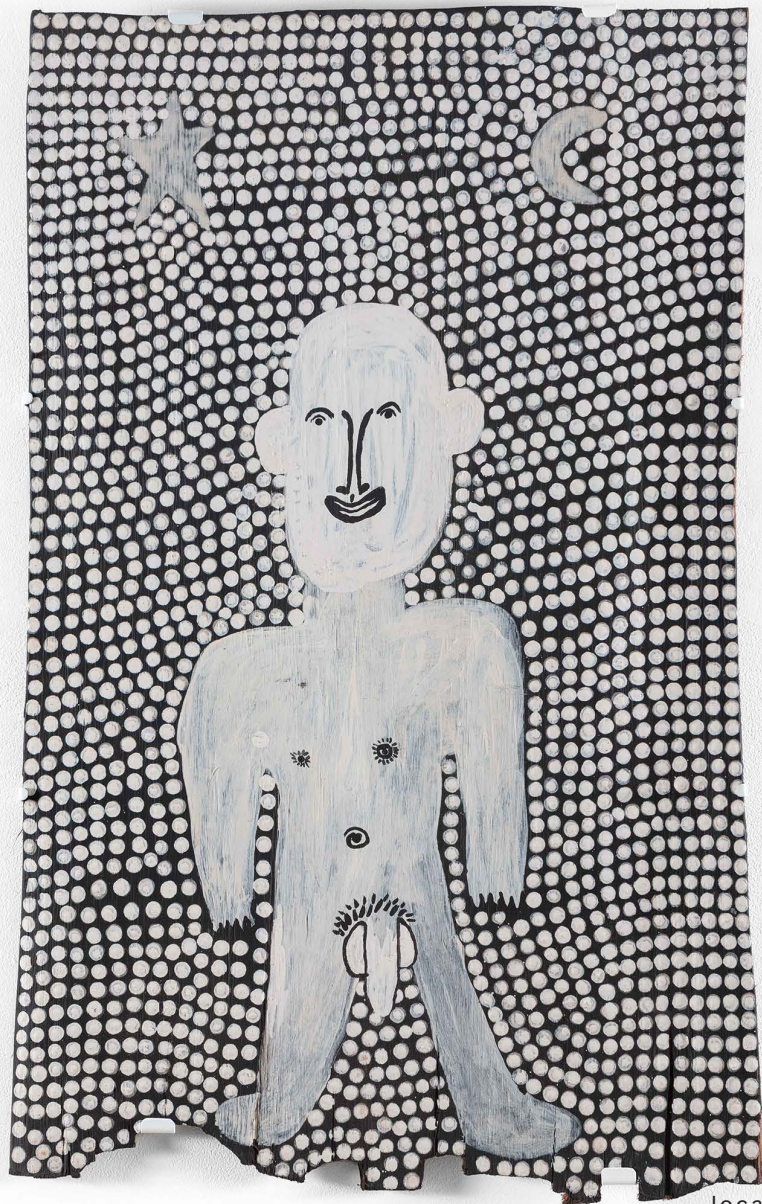
Columbiere Tipungwuti
Japarra (the moonman) (120-25), 2025
locally sourced ochres on stringybark
99.5 x 31.5 cm
\$2,700





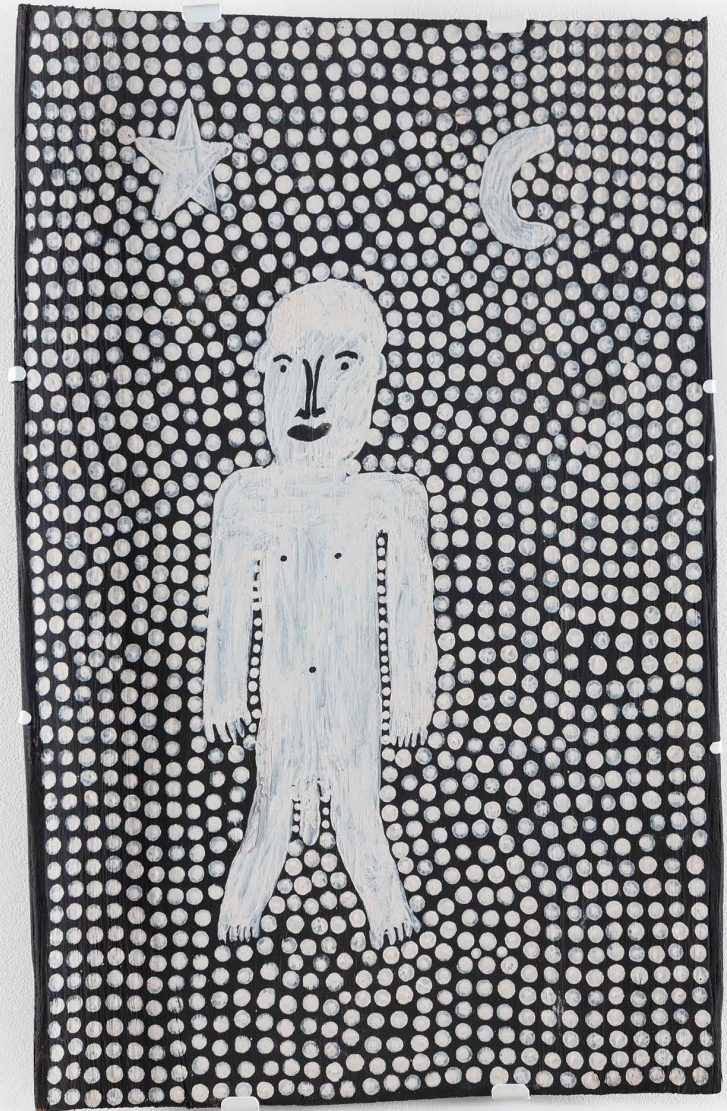
Columbiere Tipungwuti
Japarra (37-24), 2024
locally sourced ochres on stringybark
99 x 36 cm
\$2,400





Columbiere Tipungwuti
Japarra (263-24), 2024
locally sourced ochres on stringybark
70 x 44 cm
\$2,200





Columbiere Tipungwuti
Japarra (211-24), 2024
locally sourced ochres on stringybark
58.5 x 36 cm
\$2,000

DHUKUMUL WANAMBI

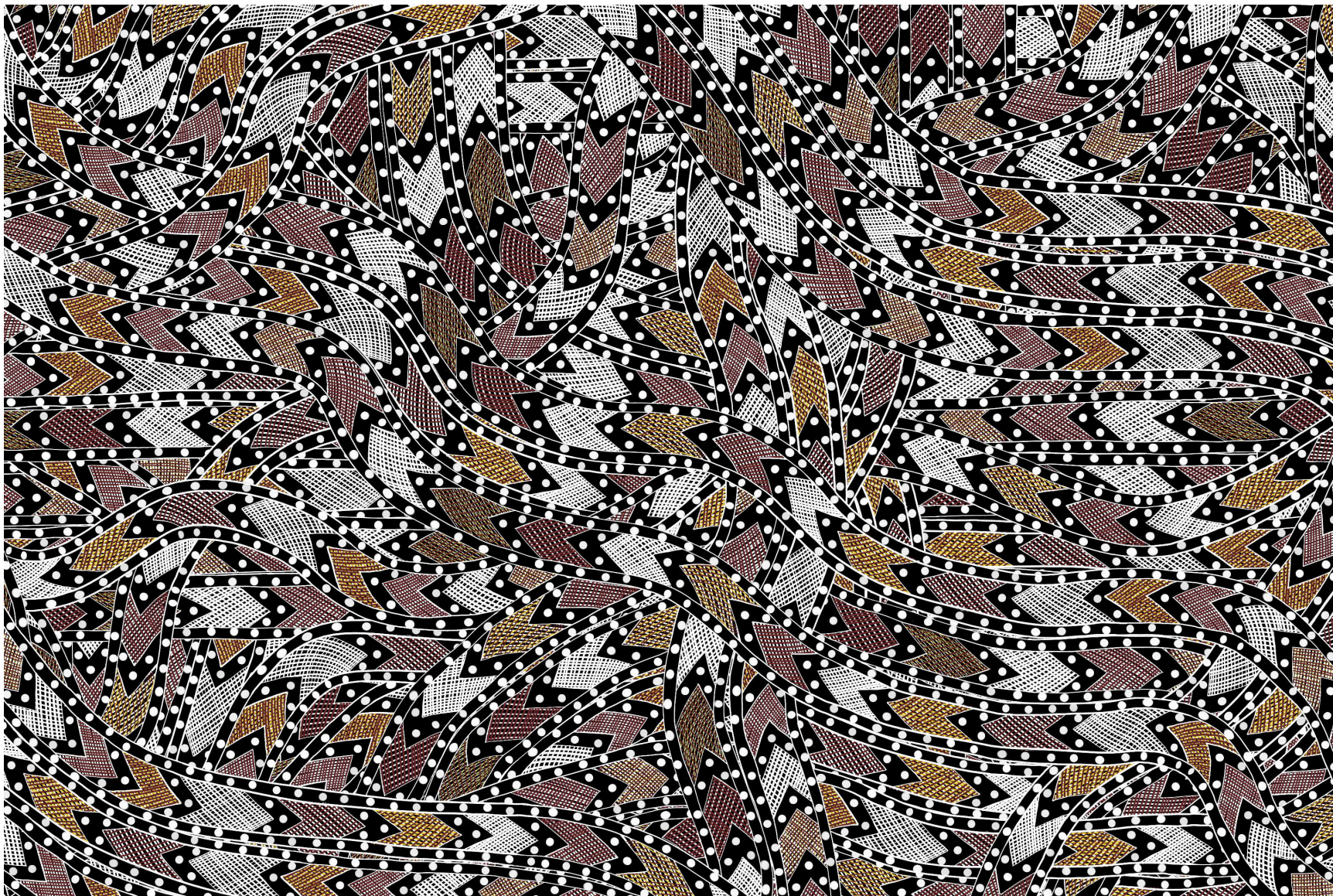
Yirrkala artist Dhukumul Wanambi brings ancestral songlines into motion with *Marrakulu Monuk* – an animated digital painting that translates her clan’s sacred saltwater miny’tji into luminous, swirling form. “Instead of painting Marrakulu Monuk onto bark with ochres, I wanted to make it digital while staying true to our traditions,” says Wanambi, who works as a filmmaker and digital artist with The Mulka Project.

Using a self-made digital brush that mimics the fine marwat of Yolŋu bark painting, Wanambi animates the infinite movement of her Marrakulu homeland’s waters at Gurka’wuy. “My father inspired me to make paintings like this,” she notes of the late artist and cultural leader Mr Wanambi. “He was the first to take miny’tji that are normally painted onto bark and burial poles, and make them move.”

By transposing cultural knowledge and a time-honoured visual language into the digital realm, Wanambi continues her father’s legacy of artistic innovation – a mantle shared by her sister, award-winning contemporary artist Gaypalani Wanambi – and embodies the experimental spirit of *Painting Now*.







Dhukumul Wanambi, *Marrakulu Monuk*, 2025, 4K, 6min 15secs (loops infinitely), edition of 8, \$5,000
View video: <https://vimeo.com/1073106503/26610b4c77?share=copy>

HEATH NOCK

Having trained in the classical tenets of still-life oil painting, Mulubinba/Newcastle-based painter Heath Nock now takes an iconoclast's approach to the genre, expanding its field of vision to encompass found images from the cultural past and treating this eclectic source material as objects to be observed, dissected and remade with a still-life painter's eye.

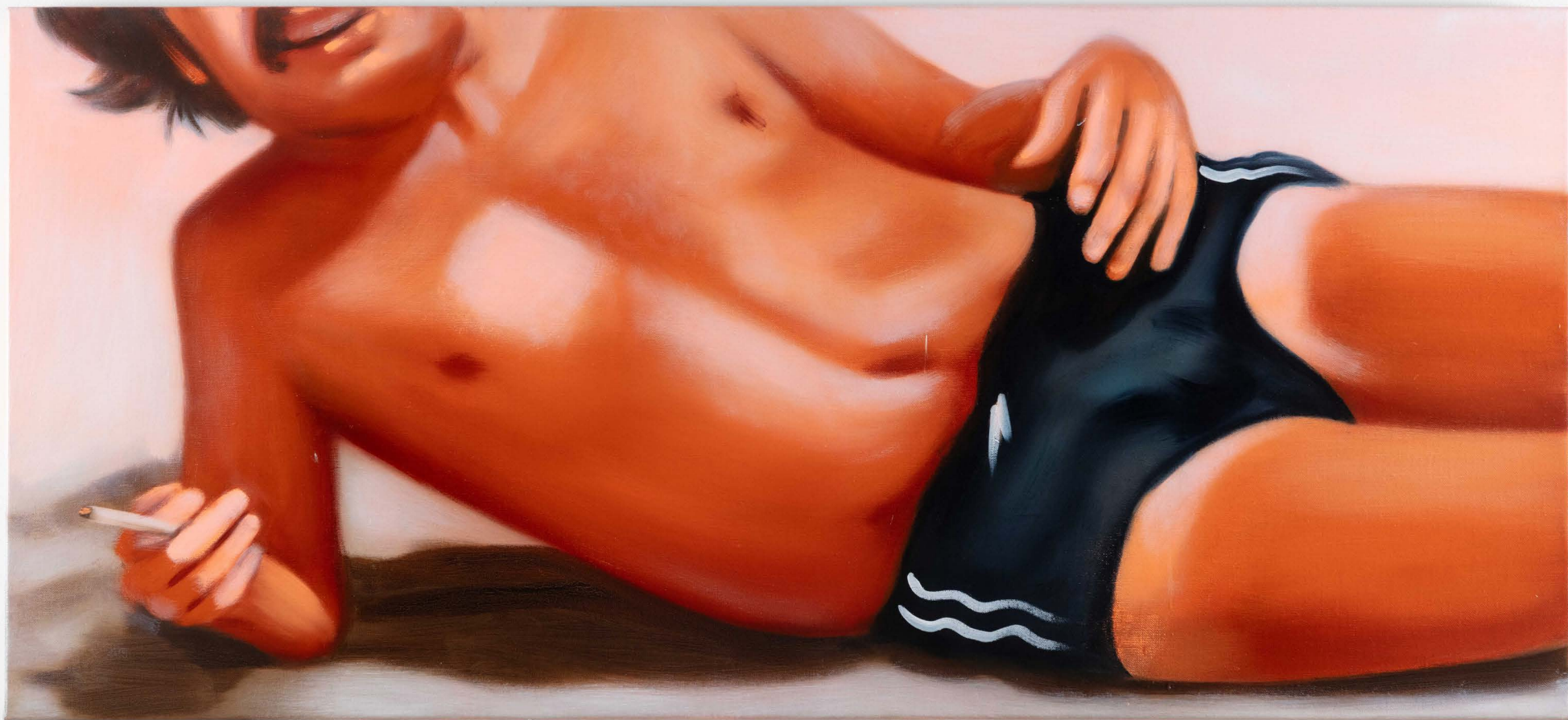
Nock applies the techniques of the Dutch masters to fragments of vintage advertising, old photographs and print ephemera – giving painterly weight to images once fleetingly consumed. “Using photos and advertising, cropping to create a new story with a sense of ambiguity,” he explains, “I want the viewer to question the work and be lost in the moment.”

Across his *Painting Now* series, these reframed relics become the “stuff of life” – playful, nostalgic and laced with irreverence. Nock's tightly cropped compositions flirt with the language of mid-century magazines and 1970s leisure culture: suntanned bodies fill the frame, childhood snapshots are steeped in a halcyon glow, cigarette models offer a wink of louche, macho laconicism from a time when vice was aspirational. In the artist's hands, this imagery is both homage and subtle critique – a witty meditation on how masculinity, desire and memory are staged and sold.

Following a landmark year that included a residency in Germany's prestigious Young Artist Residency Weidingen and an acclaimed exhibition at UTS Gallery, Nock's first showing with Michael Reid Sydney displays a thrilling expansion of his painterly vocabulary. What begins as an act of appropriation arrives as something more intimate and evocative – a portrait not of the figures he paints, but of the images themselves, newly luminous, transportive and alive.







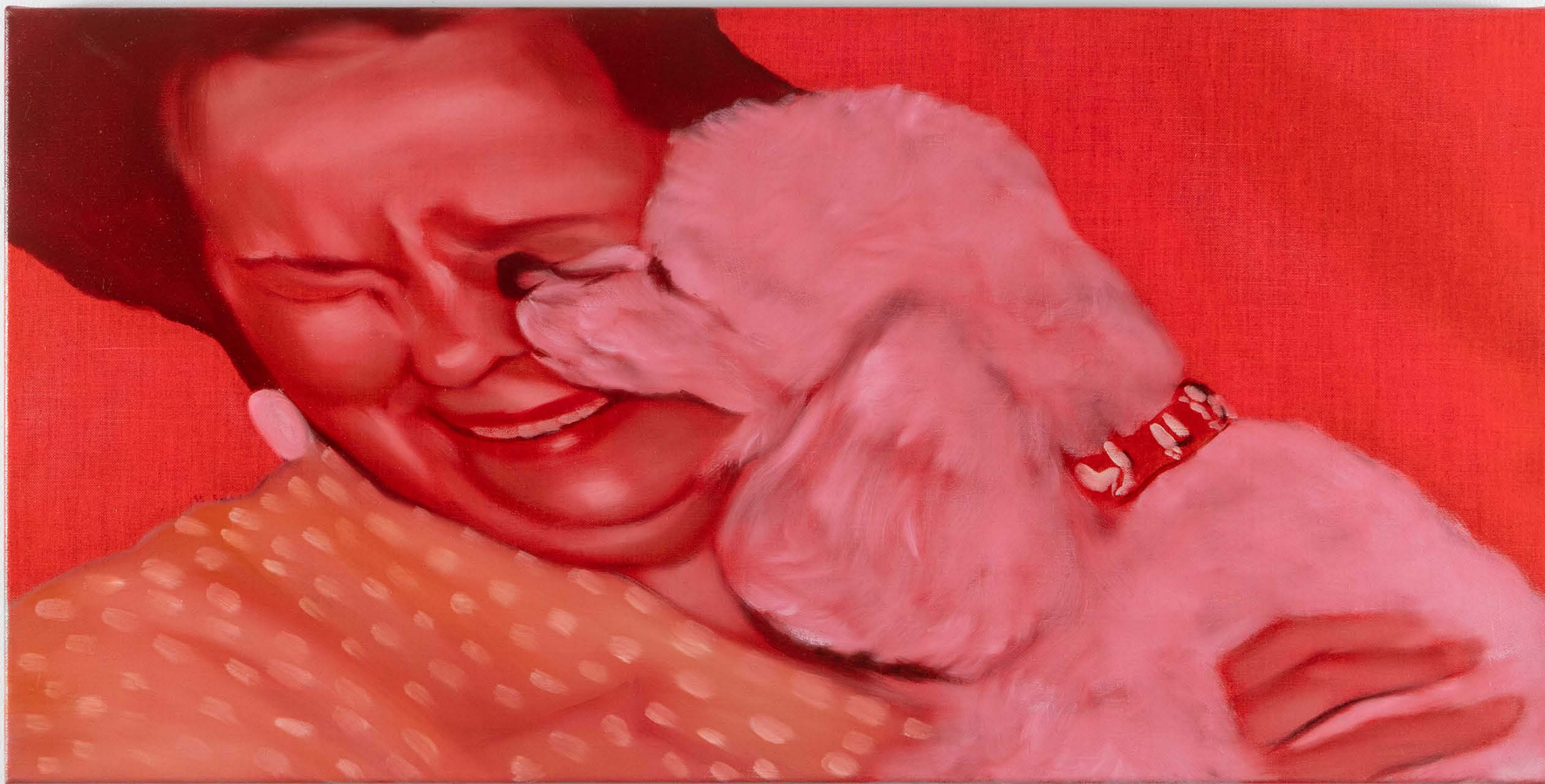
Heath Nock, *Gold Coast Trip*, 86', 2025, oil on linen, 56 x 121 cm, \$3,800



Heath Nock, *Lomography Color 800*, 2025, oil on linen, 56 x 121 cm, \$3,800



Heath Nock, *FPP Blue Ultra*, 2025, oil on linen, 51 x 102 cm, \$3,000



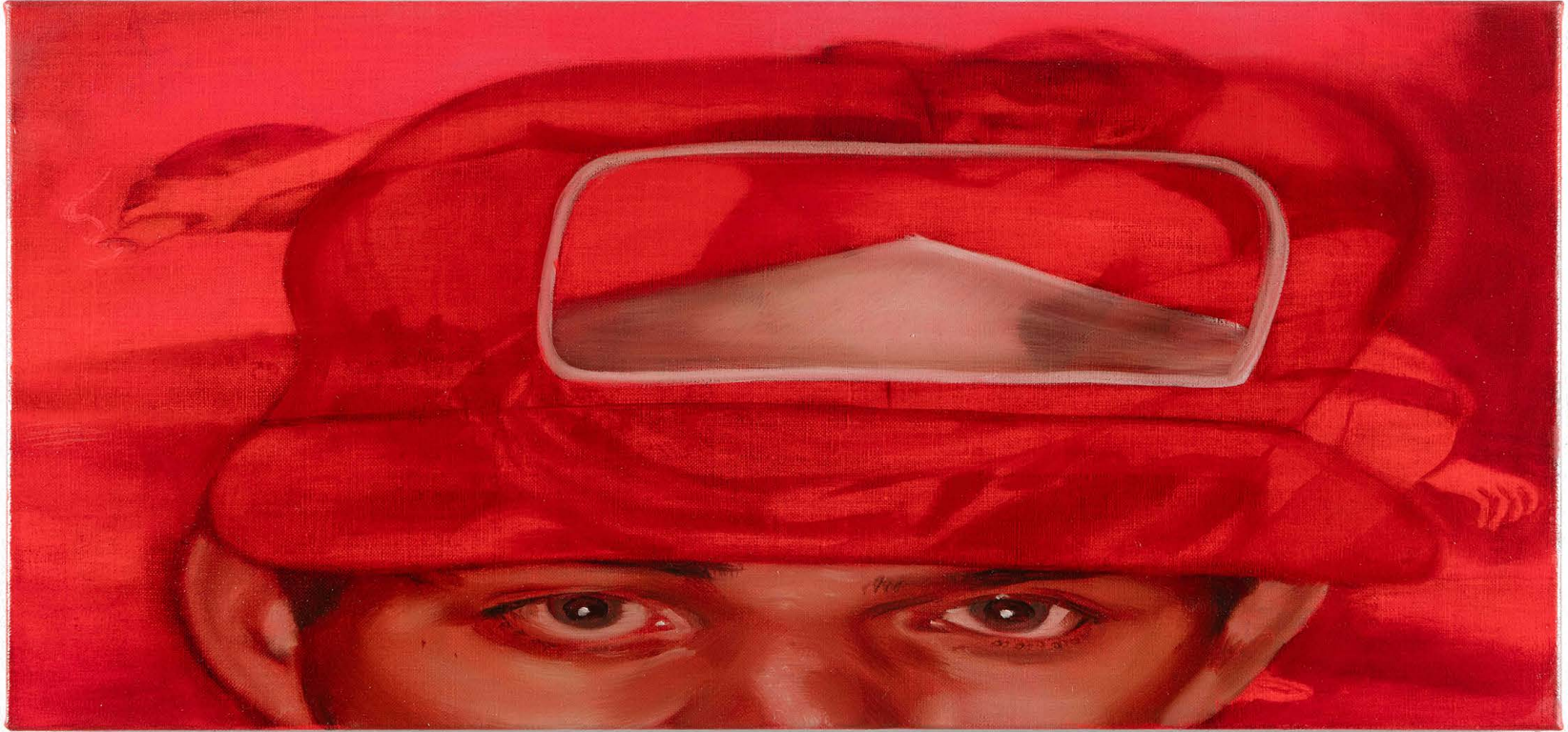
Heath Nock, *Aunt Maude & Pearl, Easter 79*, 2025, oil on linen, 51 x 102 cm, \$3,000



Heath Nock, *Communion*, 78', 2025, oil on linen, 51 x 102 cm, \$3,000



Heath Nock, *Dress Up Day, 83'*, 2025, oil on linen, 91.5 x 41 cm, \$2,600



Heath Nock, *Overhead Projector, Art Class, 95'*, 2025, oil on linen, 36 x 76.5 cm, \$2,000

BRENTON DRECHSLER

South Australian contemporary painter Brenton Drechsler joins *Painting Now 2025* with his most ambitious body of work to date. A two-time National Emerging Art Prize finalist who recently joined the stable of artists represented by Michael Reid Northern Beaches and Southern Highlands after a succession of sold-out solo shows at both spaces, Drechsler has taken *Painting Now* as an opportunity to significantly dial up his work's scale and scope while honing the distinctive visual language for which he is already widely celebrated.

On his largest canvases yet, Drechsler's work attains a newly cinematic heft, deepening the ongoing dialogue between visibility and concealment – belonging and displacement – that emerges from queer experience and drives his visually dazzling, conceptually rich practice.

Within these expansive and arresting compositions, recurring motifs appear in deliberately “foreign” spaces: vintage cars, building facades and flashes of the artist's trademark green-and-white stripe. “The stripes stand in for my physical self,” he says. “They take up space and attract attention – things that don't come naturally to me.” That double movement – to stand out and blend in at once – threads through the series with quiet persistence.

A curatorial prompt to consider the visual language of auteurs such as Wes Anderson became a springboard for a bolder palette and dramatic sensibilities befitting the work's broader scale. Here, punchy pinks and cardamom reds meet tender tonal harmonies, while precise drawing loosens into gestural passages; “mistakes” remain visible as signs of the artist's hand. “Dean encouraged me to look at cinematic devices and framing,” says Drechsler.

“It opened me up to composition in new ways – to big reds, saturated pinks and how colour can create mood.” Drechsler describes these adventures in colour as both exciting and somewhat nerve-racking. “Are they too much?” he wonders. “Maybe. But that tension is part of what it means to make art as an emerging queer artist. The overarching message is that we all fit, wherever we are, and that we are valued and belong in any room we occupy. Painting taught me that.”







Brenton Drechsler, *Twickenham (The Art Teacher)*, 2025, oil, synthetic polymer, charcoal and calligraphy ink on linen, 183 x 183 cm, framed, \$8,500



Brenton Drechsler, *Perranporth (Paper Bag)*, 2025, oil, synthetic polymer, charcoal and calligraphy ink on panel, 120x 120 cm, framed, \$4,000



Brenton Drechsler, *Scarborough (All the Small Things)*, 2025, oil, synthetic polymer, charcoal and calligraphy ink on panel, 120 x 120 cm, framed, \$4,000



Brenton Drechsler, *Bath (Bette Davis Eyes)*, 2025, oil, synthetic polymer, charcoal and calligraphy ink on linen, 91 x 152 cm, framed, \$3,800



Brenton Drechsler, *Richmond (Vienna)*, 2025, oil, synthetic polymer, charcoal and calligraphy ink on linen, 100 x 100 cm, framed, \$3,000



Brenton Drechsler, *Pembridge (My Father's Daughter)*, 2025, oil, synthetic polymer, charcoal and calligraphy ink on panel, framed, 100 x 100 cm, \$3,000

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