

Lookout

Home comforts
Artists find solace
in the everyday

Bel canto
A taster of
Resonate, online

Cultural tourism
Travel the world
through the collection



John Bokor *The single rose (detail)* 2020. Oil on board. © John Bokor.



Home comforts

For this issue, *Look* asked three regional New South Wales artists - John Bokor, Zoe Young and Kiata Mason - to create new works inspired by Henri Matisse's concept of an art of 'calme' - art which translates an atmosphere of joy and peace. We asked the artists, known for their depictions of interiors, to explore the things which bring them comfort, solace and calm during our current times of uncertainty.

'It's going back to things I was comfortable with as a kid,' says Kiata Mason, whose still life *Orlando's eggs* includes the books *The Borrowers* by Mary Norton and *Orlando* by Virginia Woolf, alongside a perfectly boiled egg in a cup. *The Borrowers* is good because it is about making do with what you have, while *Orlando* is about regeneration - the character keeps changing, but the change is alright... and humour is always good! Flowers from the garden because beauty is all around you, and you don't have to go far for that. And paintbrushes, because painting is my joy. I've chosen calming pale colours and a boiled egg because you can't have a boiled egg in a rush. There's a certain amount of

ceremony to it - it's something so lovely and simple. Home comforts really.'

John Bokor notes wryly, 'Home to me is where you shut out the external world.' Understandably, isolation has been fruitful for many artists, who have been able to minimise life's usual intrusions and focus on their immediate surroundings. *The single rose* is full of objects in which I find comfort and calm,' says Bokor. 'The table once belonged to my grandmother, the single rose is from our front garden, there is a cup of tea and even my favourite pencil.'

For Zoe Young, intensive time with her children at home from school was a somewhat 'unexpected gift of lockdown'.



Curator and artist Elwyn Lynn's invitation to Keith Haring's 1984 farewell party. Art Gallery of New South Wales Library and Archive. © Keith Haring Foundation.

Hopping mad for Haring

When a young, unknown street artist arrived at the AGNSW from New York in 1984 to begin work on a wall mural, even the then director was unaware of the commission. But, like many art-lovers, Edmund Capon was soon familiar with the name Keith Haring. In this issue, Gallery archivist and visual resources librarian Eric Riddler recalls Haring's short-lived AGNSW intervention (see page 30). Never afraid of a good time, Haring's visit unintentionally coincided with Mardi Gras, which the artist attended. However, this work is from another party. It's the invitation to Haring's Sydney farewell party, held at *Art & Text* editor Paul Taylor's apartment on 7 March 1984. It was among the treasures donated to the AGNSW's National Art Archive by Elwyn Lynn, artist, critic and director of the University of Sydney's Power Gallery of Contemporary Art, who had previously visited the artist's Manhattan studio and purchased the first Haring work to enter a public collection in Australia.

Doors open

Free timed-entry tickets, physical distancing and no cloaking were among the measures the Gallery implemented as it reopened to limited numbers of visitors on 1 June.

Gallery director Michael Brand said while fewer visitors will be in the Gallery together, and with no groups and tours scheduled, the benefit for art lovers is a more intimate, up-close and personal experience of art than was possible pre-COVID-19.

'Physical proximity to art "in the flesh" is the most satisfying way to experience a work and we're so thrilled to be able to open our doors again for visitors to enjoy this experience,' Brand said.

'While the ideal experience of art is in person, the Gallery will maintain its online presence through *Together In Art* (togetherinart.org) for those who wish or need to stay at home a while longer,' Brand said.

The Members Lounge has introduced strict hygiene measures including hand sanitising, physical distancing and limiting the duration of visits. As *Look* went to press, the Members Lounge had a maximum capacity of 30 people and a 30-minute time limit.

The Gallery's priority for its reopening is to keep visitors and staff safe. Understanding that people might be cautious about returning to the Gallery, and knowing it won't be the same experience as it was before COVID-19, Brand is hopeful the pleasure of being back in the presence of art will outweigh the inconvenience of necessary safety measures.

'The measures we've thoughtfully prepared in line with the NSW Government's health guidelines and international art museum best practice during COVID-19 will actually provide our visitors comfort.

'After all, while we need to do things differently right now, our remit as the state art museum hasn't changed - we're still here to provide as many people as possible access to great art,' Brand said.

For the latest information subscribe to the Members e-newsletter and always check online before visiting.



Young told *Look*, 'Throughout the days, I have been torn between the novelty and intimacy of home schooling and my driven nature as a painter to capture and distil the beauty of it all.' With Drusilla Modjeska's *Stravinsky's Lunch* and Peter Pan in mind, Young noted her wish to 'transform the push and pull of an artist's struggle between domestic and artistic demands into a play between the two.'

'In this painting I have taken the concept of "calme" to its boundaries perhaps - that ambiguous place of nonsense, that infectious state of cheekiness, that illuminated wonderful world of playtime. In the days of greatest anxiety, I found instant solace

in the giggles in the hallway, the cubbies in the doorway, the endurance of play, its unbelievable lightness warming the most brittle of thoughts. There has been much bribery and corruption in the construction of this painting, to convince the younger members of the household to sit for studies, dismantle beds and fly like fairies.'

Turn to page 23 to view the works and if you wish, cut the images out to enjoy them beyond the pages of the magazine.

The artists in their studios (left to right): John Bokor. Photo: Riste Andrievski. King Street Gallery. Kiata Mason. Photo: Maria Stoljar, *Talking with Painters*. A K Bellinger Gallery. Zoe Young. Photo: Ken Redpath. Olsen Gallery.

Travel Draw winners

Travel Draw is one of the Society's major fundraising campaigns, exclusive to members, with all proceeds going towards the acquisition of artworks for the Gallery's collection. This year's Travel Draw received a fantastic response, with 29,767 tickets sold.

Thank you for your generous support and congratulations to this year's winners: 1st Prize: Exclusive expedition to the ancient world - K & A Bennett; 2nd Prize: Entertainment - S Storrier; 3rd Prize: Fashion - R & P Espie; 4th Prize: Home - P & C Tavuzzi; 5th Prize: Creative expression - A & D McGregor; 6th Prize: Luxury escapes - G & W Story; 7th Prize: Pampered - C Nhemachena; 8th Prize: Fine dining - J & B Irvine; 9th Prize: Sommelier selection - W Longley; 10th Prize: Indulgence - L Stephenson.



Photo: Jenni Carter.



A calming influence

Henri Matisse
Interior with an
Etruscan Vase
1940

Oil on canvas, 73.7
x 108 cm. Cleveland
Museum of Art, Ohio.
Gift of the Hanna Fund.
© Succession H. Matisse
/ Artists Rights Society
(ARS), New York.

In a 1908 interview for *La Grande Revue*, Henri Matisse described his ambition to create an 'art of balance, of purity and serenity, devoid of troubling or disturbing subject matter... a soothing, calming influence on the mind, something like a good armchair...'

With Matisse's concept of '*calme*' in mind, *Look* asked three New South Wales artists whose work often considers interiors to create new works exploring the themes of *comfort*, *joy* and *calm*, as a soothing balm for troubled times. **John Bokor**, **Kiata Mason** and **Zoe Young** shared scenes that elicited these feelings for them while isolated at home. Turn to page 10 to read their stories. >



Kiata Mason
Orlando's eggs
2020



Zoe Young
Home school, play school
2020

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John Bokor
The single rose
2020