

# PROJECT GALLERY 90

## 'PAINTINGS WITHIN PAINTINGS'

Works by:

**Nicola Mason**

2021 Catalogue

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*All artworks shown in this catalogue are subject to availability*

## Nicola Mason's 'Paintings within Paintings'

With a background in ecological sciences, Nicola Mason likes to observe how nature and culture coalesce. Mason's self-confessed tendency to anthropomorphize is apparent in her rendering of domestic and everyday objects as she creates dream-like scenes in which interiors meet landscapes. An unusual dimension reveals itself as previous paintings by the artist are reproduced and inserted into her compositions throughout her new exhibition 'Paintings within Paintings'.

In this body of work, armchairs and suitcases often take on the qualities of what would otherwise be the 'sitter' in Mason's constructed scenes. Pieces of furniture hold their place, almost exerting a personality as they create conversations and tensions between the other objects within the works and the viewer is invited to interpret this discourse.

Mason's residency at the Centre d'Art Marnay Art Centre (CAMAC), France in 2017 drew her attention to the work of French painter Louis-Léopold Boilly (1761-1845) and the technique attributed to him known as 'trompe l'oeil' (named after a painting he submitted to the Paris Salon in 1800), which translates as 'optical illusion' but is known generally as the use of realism to trick the viewer into thinking that the life-like objects painted on a canvas are really there.

During the CAMAC residency, Mason also became aware of the technique 'mise en abyme' - a copy of a painting within the same painting. Beginning with a mistletoe branch that she set up in a frame on a wall, Mason created paintings that would become the source of her ongoing investigations into the looping effect created when depicting images within another image. In Mason's 2019 Honours Research Report, 'Presence', she refers to her interest in 'playing with ambiguity and perceived binaries' and describes Australian artist Jude Rae as a continued source of inspiration for Mason's painterly use of domestic objects to explore those themes.

In her multi-planed and slightly eerie 'Paintings within Paintings', she reflects on previous works, forced to re-engage with a fresh perspective as she renders those paintings once more in a new work, sometimes in multiples and

with minor changes. Mason observes that 'By referencing older paintings of mine in a new work, new dialogues have emerged.'

Mason's canvases are visited by the recurring motif of spirit animals, while trees, branches and roots stretch themselves out like hands and doll like figures stare blankly, making it hard to know if the viewer is part of a dream or a nightmare. Suitcases suggest that they are packing themselves up and going somewhere, but we all know that thanks to COVID 19, that is not going to happen!

Most of us have been forced to stay home for longer periods than usual through 2020-2021, reflecting on our own domesticity and interior worlds, only dreaming of the places we might rather be and there is a sense of something haunting, a subtle trauma that runs through these works, which adds to their mystery. A looming threat of change and movement lives alongside the stillness of Mason's staged scenes, possibly a reflection of the difficulties of the past year or more that the world has endured. It was during this period after all, that these 'Paintings within Paintings' were produced as part of Mason's 'HOME' residency, funded by Create NSW through Orana Arts.

It is felicitous that Mason's investigations led her to revisit and experiment with her past works, her domestic world and the colliding points of interiors and landscapes to produce this exhibition, a timely collection of inner journeying that viewers can share.

Words by:

### Rebecca Wilson

Painter: The Kate Kelly Collection, Myth-Making, Heroes and Villains,  
Australianism

Author: Kate Kelly, Allen & Unwin 2021  
M.A Fine Art, College of Fine Art, UNSW  
B.A Fine Arts, National Art School

*This body of work was funded by Create NSW  
through Orana Arts.*





'The waiting room'; oil on canvas, 76x76cm, framed, \$1,890



'From Nanna to new growth'; oil on canvas, 76x76cm, framed, \$1,890





'Fox-ladder'; oil on canvas, 76x76cm, framed, \$1,890



'Wallaroo lounging'; oil on canvas, 76x76cm, framed, \$1,890



'Tremain's Mill XI'; on repeat'; oil on canvas, 76x76cm, framed, \$1,890





'Tremain's Mill XII, mise en abyme'; oil on canvas, 76x76cm, framed, \$1,890





'Mulling expedition'; oil on canvas, 60x60cm, framed, \$1,390



'Commode in landscape'; oil on canvas, 60x60cm, framed, \$1,390





'Hanging out'; oil on canvas, 60x60cm, framed, \$1,390



'Balancing ventures'; oil on canvas, 60x60cm, framed, \$1,390





'Behind the blanket'; oil on canvas, 60x60cm, framed, \$1,390

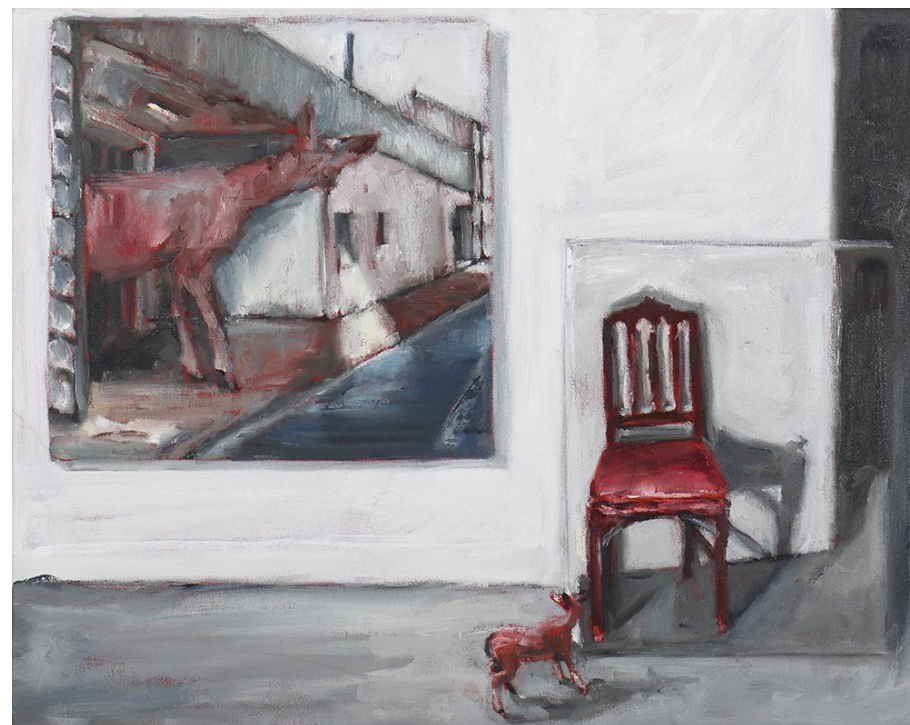


'Two chairs and a portrait'; oil on canvas, 60x60cm, framed, \$1,390





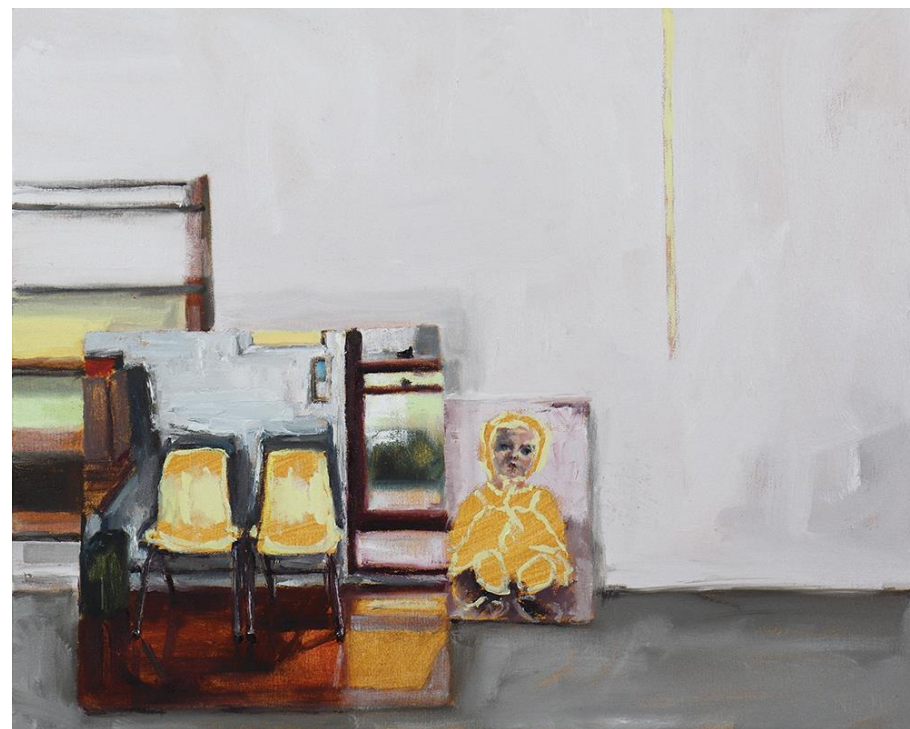
'The Looping'; oil on canvas, 40x50cm, framed, \$990



'Big deer and little deer'; oil on canvas, 40x50cm, framed, \$990



'The mixing'; oil on canvas, 40x50cm, framed, \$990

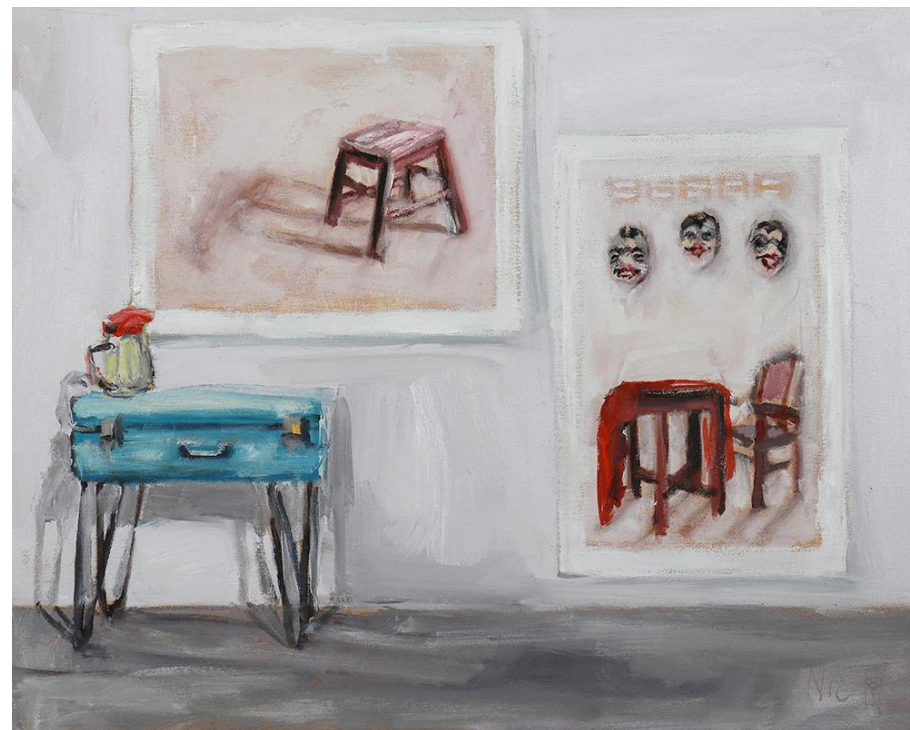


'Three sets of twins'; oil on canvas, 40x50cm, framed, \$990

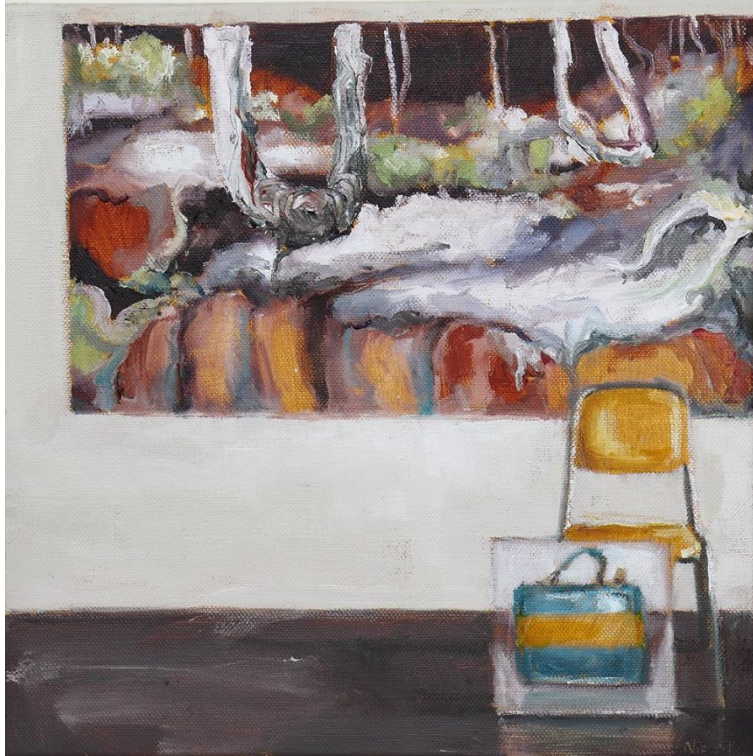




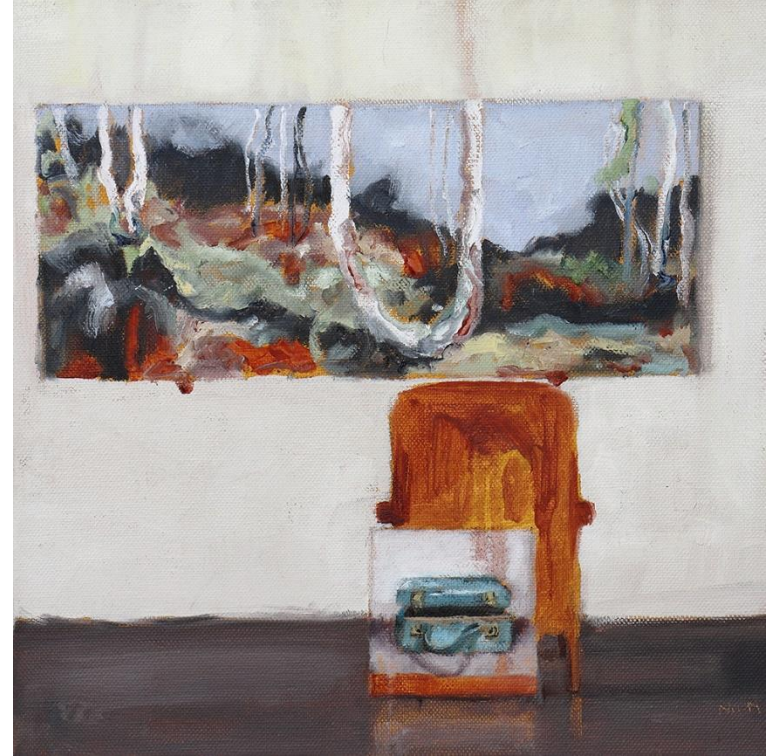
'On the horizon'; oil on canvas, 40x50cm, framed, \$990



'Living breathing furniture'; oil on canvas, 40x50cm, framed, \$990



**'Interior landscape with stripes'**; oil on canvas,  
30x30cm, framed, \$790



**'The monster and the landscape'**; oil on canvas,  
30x30cm, framed, \$790

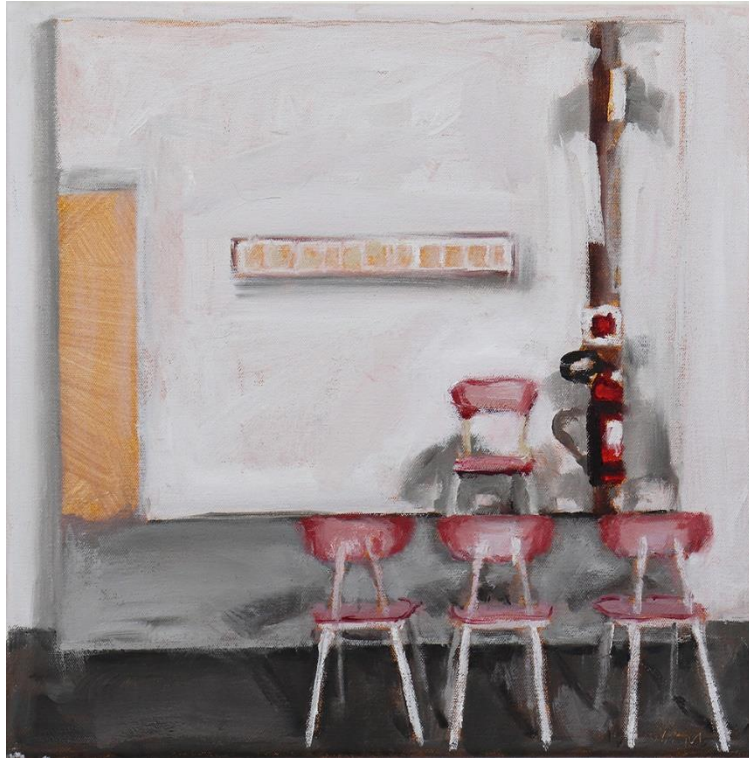




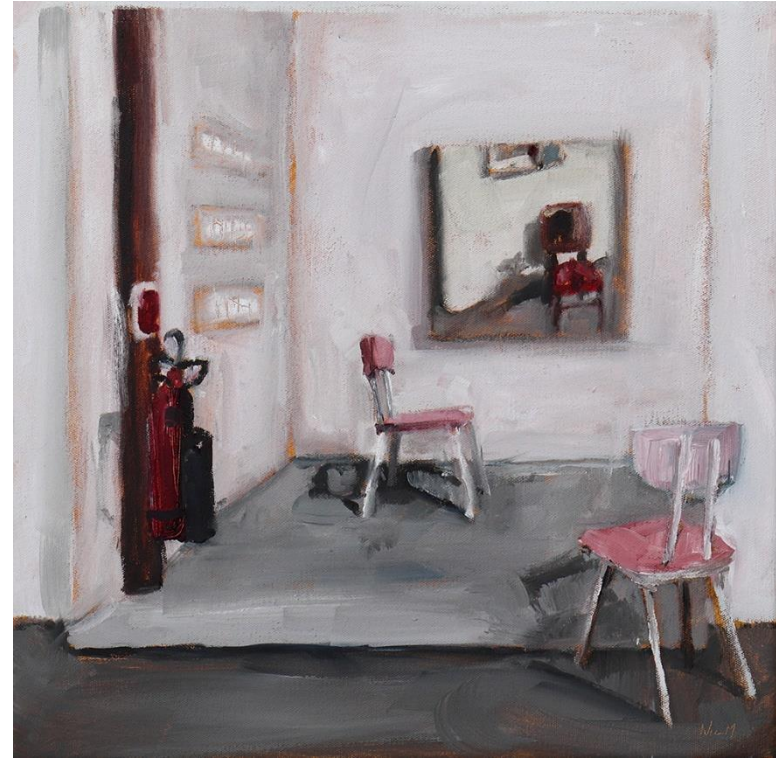
'Tremain's Mill I: Lining up'; oil on canvas, 30x30cm, framed, \$790



'Tremain's Mill II: Connecting'; oil on canvas, 30x30cm, framed, \$790



'Tremain's Mill III: The interview'; oil on canvas, 30x30cm, framed, \$790



'Tremain's Mill IV: The meeting'; oil on canvas, 30x30cm, framed, \$790





'Tremain's Mill V: A painting of a painting within a painting'; oil on canvas, 30x30cm, framed, \$790



'Tremain's Mill VI: Within'; oil on canvas, 30x30cm, framed, \$790



'Tremain's Mill VII: The extinguisher'; oil on canvas,  
30x30cm, framed, \$790



'Tremain's Mill VIII: Extinguisher down'; oil on canvas,  
30x30cm, framed, \$790





'Tremain's Mill IX: The alien and the triangle'; oil on canvas, 30x30cm, framed, \$790



'Tremain's Mill X: The alien and the circle'; oil on canvas, 30x30cm, framed, \$790



'Mallee-lounge chair'; oil on canvas, 120x100cm, framed, \$2,850





'Mallee-chair'; oil on canvas, 120x100cm, framed, \$2,850

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90 Oxford St. PADDINGTON NSW 2021.