

Casey Arts

Sam Michelle



Photography by Suzi Appel

How would you describe your art practice? (e.g. what mediums do you use? what is your 'style' of work? If people could describe your work in three words, what do you think those three words would be?)

My art practice explores still life with a modern twist style. The tools I use to create my paintings are flowers (nurseries, florists, friends/neighbours and my garden) which I pair with a vase or ceramic piece from my ever-growing collection. I paint in oils and love adding to my collection of obscure colours and brands. The 3 words people would describe my work as are *botanical, colourful, still life*.



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Where is your inspiration coming from at the moment?

For the last 4 months I have been working on my exhibition, 'Dual Citizen'. The catalyst for this exhibition has been spending half my life in NZ and half in Australia. The exhibition is made up of NZ nostalgic paintings inspired from my childhood together with Australian paintings inspired by stories of my adult life in Australia.

How is your work influenced by your surroundings?

We really enjoy living in Blind Bight, it has been especially beneficial during lock down. Blind Bight is surrounded by flora & fauna reserves, farmland, nurseries, and vegetable growers which provides constant inspiration throughout the seasons. There are many walking tracks to explore and the water that surrounds us is such a bonus. What I love the most is the bustling nature, we have so many varieties of birds and natives, especially banksias.

Has the need to stay inside during COVID-19 had an impact on your making process, if so how?

Covid had disrupted my exhibition planning as I was hoping to travel back to New Zealand. I was hoping to include some NZ landscapes within my exhibition & venturing around my Grandads epic garden. Covid has however provided little gems, such as a recent zoom call my cousins and I did with my 94 year old Grandad, where we interviewed him about his life and learned many new things, such as when his love for gardening started at 8 years old when he used his pocket money to buy carrot seeds (in 1934!). I have included carrot leaves within my paintings along with other mementos like this. Covid has slowed our family life down too without the school and after school activity travel which has meant I have had more 'flow' and been able to take my time with my paintings as I haven't had to 'stop' and rush off anywhere.



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Where do you create your art? Do you have a studio or dedicated making space? How does this space impact your work?

My studio is a big detached space just off our home, accessed through a decked undercover sunroom. The space is lovely and large and has great natural light for painting, along with great overhead lights for painting at night. It has a toilet and enough space for my kids to come in and do their school projects or hangout on their ipads. It's a really great space and big enough to run workshops which I hope to do at some stage.

What themes are you currently reflecting through your art? What subject matter do you address through your work usually, vs. through self isolation?

The theme I work with is nature. I would usually seek and search for new varieties and types of flower that interest me in real life, I would then set and light these up in my studio to paint and draw from. I love being able to touch the flower to ascertain the texture, density and see its true colour. During isolation I have had to be more creative with how I obtain my flowers. I have put 'callouts' on our local Blind Bight Facebook group for specific blooms I am after and have had to do a lot of research online and throughout my books.

What are your three tips on self-care through isolation? What have you been doing to care for yourself during these times?

My first tip would be to get out for your hour of exercise and put a good podcast on. I always feel like I have set my day up well after my morning walk. My second tip would be to make a phone call to a friend or family member each day and get your kids involved (if you have young ones at home), it helps to feel more connected and it's great to talk about your call over dinner (along with what you're grateful for which is always a great mindset shift during tough times). My 8 year old called my brother last week and my brother sent me a message to say it 'made his day'. My last tip would be to just go easy on yourself and have fun, new routines are being made, cabin fever to be managed, loss to deal with, it's tough enough so make things as 'fun' as you can. The 4 of us have started a little basketball competition, we get dressed up, sometimes we put on face paint. The teams are very even, and we always have a horrible job for the losers, e.g. folding all the washing ;)