

# India Mark

BASED IN THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS, SOUTH OF SYDNEY, INDIA MARK CREATES CAREFULLY CONSIDERED STILL-LIFE PAINTINGS THAT AVOID THE OVERT POLITICISATION OF SO MUCH CONTEMPORARY ART. LAST YEAR SHE COMPLETED A POSTGRADUATE DEGREE FROM THE NATIONAL ART SCHOOL, AND MARK IS NOW WORKING TOWARDS BECOMING A FULL-TIME ARTIST.

*Story*  
**EMMA-KATE WILSON**

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- 01 *Teacup Triptych 1*, 2018, oil on panel, 15 x 45 cm  
02 *India Mark in her studio*, 2019, photograph Joshua Heath

**T**here's so much happening in your paintings, but at the same time your style is very minimal - the colours are washed out, the lines simple and clean. Is that a conscious choice, does it come from somewhere?

Yes totally. I'm aware that my work is pretty, sort of, minimalist. The process of painting for me is like a process of elimination. Compositionally I prefer my artworks to be quite sparse. I always end up painting over objects to make way for more open space.

**Is there a significance to your objects?**

They started out being significant; I was really interested in the symbolism of feminism through the representation of domesticity. However, since then it's become more about painting those objects because of their aesthetic quality, transforming into more of a compositional tactic. The paintings begin to form themselves.

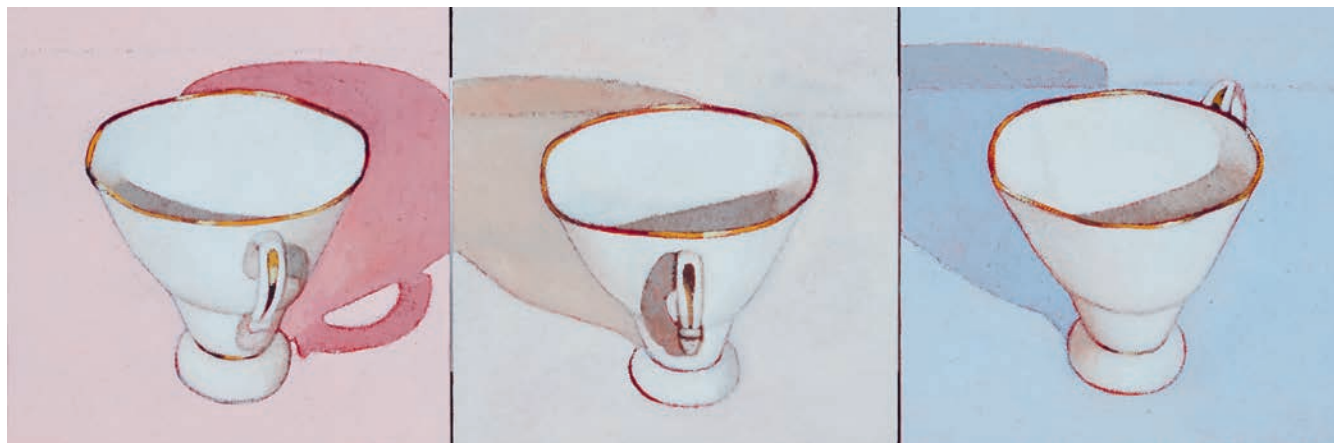
**A lot of artists seem to share this idea - as if the art is making itself.**

Exactly. This is the work that I can make at this point in time, and this is how the paintings want to be made. The process is a bit mystical. You think that you're in total control of it, but you're not really.

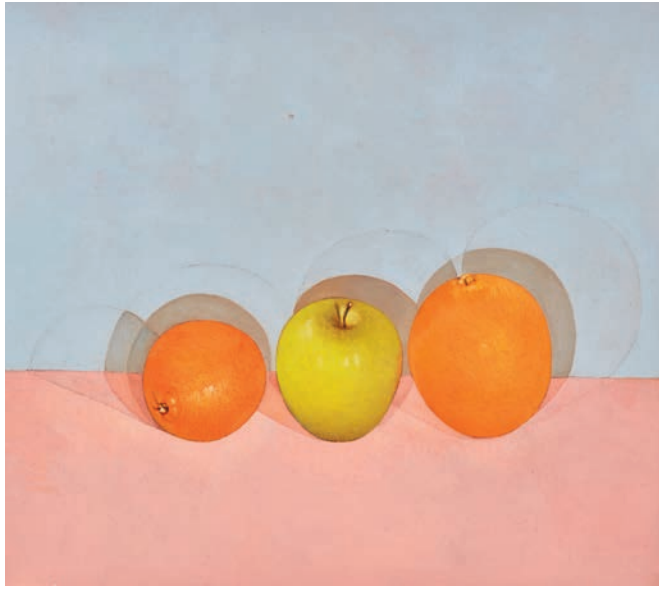
**As a young artist, you've experienced some great successes over the past few years.**

**How have these impacted your practice?**

Being accepted in the Archibald Prize in 2016 and 2018, as well as the Brett Whiteley Travelling Art Scholarship in 2017 and 2018, had such a positive impact on my painting. Seeing my work in the context of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, alongside so many artists I admire, helped me to look at my works objectively.







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A prize like the Archibald also attracts such a diverse audience. It's validating when somebody sees something in your work that you didn't intend, because when you're in the studio, you aren't thinking about anyone else. It's hard to see your work existing beyond the studio. However, when someone sees something, and they take it beyond your original ideas, it's incredible.

**Unlike many artists working today, you don't seem to engage with social media?**

It's funny because when I was art school one of my lecturers said 'You have to have it; it's essential to being an artist today.' And I agree, it is a brilliant tool if you want to look at someone else's work and gain insight into their processes, but I'm just not into it anymore – which is kind of bad, I know. Personally, I find that it's a bit distracting. It doesn't help me to be productive.

**It is such a rabbit hole! On that note, what have been some of the challenges you've faced in your career so far?**

Currently, my main challenge is balancing working day jobs and time spent painting. I'd love to get to the point where I can paint full time, but for now, working other jobs helps to structure my studio schedule.

I am also a very slow painter, which often isn't compatible with deadlines. Working on more than two or three paintings at once doesn't come naturally, and I lose interest pretty quickly. I'm surrounded by friends who are incredible prolific artists, and in the past I've compared the quantity and rate of work that I make to theirs, as well as other artists online. Over the last year, however, I've started to understand and appreciate that everyone has their own pace. Also, so many of my friends make politically charged works. In our context, sometimes I worry that painting still life is a bit frivolous.

**You've painted portraits with political undertones – such as the portrait you did of Sarah M for the Archibald in 2018, who is an advocate for sex worker rights.**

Yes, I really admire Sarah. She is a good friend, and she's informed many of my feminist beliefs. The painting turned out really well, and it said the things I wanted it to say. With hindsight, I'm hesitant to



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make work like that in the future because it's not necessarily my story to tell.

**Do you feel that there is that sense of responsibility that comes through?**

Completely, and I'm not articulate enough. Art has the power to contribute a more human perspective to a political issue. When I see artists who do that, who add a more humanised perspective to a subject that has been spoken about over and over again, that's inspiring!

**And, I guess, your still lifes are something people can connect to without having a confronting or uncomfortable political tone. They are more reflective ...**

Yes, but any framing allows an artwork to be a product of its time. A good example is the Italian still-life painter, Giorgio Morandi, who lived in Bologna during the twentieth century. He made artworks throughout the first and second world wars and under the fascist tyranny of Mussolini. His works don't overtly reflect that, but they are political in their own way. The artworks are political simply because of what they were living through.

Also, traditionally, still life is representative of life and death. The symbolism of historical Vanitas painting, the fruit

and precious objects that will perish or outlive you, or the candles and skulls, are reminders of mortality.

**Your work has been described as being 'flickered with association'. Does it link to the relationship you have with your processes and your ideas?**

This alludes to the methods I use to achieve a sense of luminosity in my paintings. It's focusing on the use of shadows and overlapping them by applying the paint, so it looks translucent. I'm interested in making variations of the same composition. There may only be subtle differences, such as the change in the direction of light, but it is enough to differentiate the paintings from one another. At this point, I'm not focused on creating a sense of narrative – I'm more interested in representational and abstract spaces, the building up of space and luminosity. ■

**EXHIBITION**

Sydney Contemporary, 'NEXT' + Egg & Dart Booth C10  
12 to 15 September 2019  
Carriageworks, Sydney

03 Apples and Tangerines, 2018, oil on panel, 40 x 45 cm

04 Orange and Persimmon, 2018, oil on panel, 40 x 45 cm

05 Bottiglia Bologna, 2019, oil on panel, 20.5 x 25.5 cm

Courtesy the artist and Egg & Dart, Thirroul, NSW