



ABBOTSLEIGH

Grace
CossingtonSmithGallery

Me in place
and the place in me

OLIVER WATTS

8 - 22 August 2024



The Wombat Hole, 2022, acrylic on canvas, 153 x 213 cm

3:33
art projects

Me in place and the place in me

YOUNG CURATORS STATEMENT

Our experience

The Young Curators gained enriching knowledge on this inspirational journey with artist Oliver Watts and 3:33 Art Projects. Our experience began with a visit to Watts' studio, where we were introduced to the artist and his paintings. We then explored the significance of curation at Chalk Horse Gallery, gaining insights into the role of exhibitions in an artist's career.

As we explored the raw nature of Watts' creative process, we saw firsthand how he stitches together ideas and emotions to create his characteristic artworks. This deeper understanding of his inspirations and techniques informed our curatorial decisions for the exhibition.

The exhibition title, *Me in place and the place in me*, was born from a conversation with Watts and comes from the poem *A Herbal* by Seamus Heaney, one of the poets that has deeply inspired his practice.

The Young Curators opportunity has granted us a newfound understanding and appreciation of Australian landscape as well as valuable insight into contemporary Australian art. Curating Watts' work has been a pleasure, inspiring new ideas and many thoughts about our role in the exhibition.

The ideas and process of Oliver Watts

Me in place and the place in me offers a retrospective of Oliver Watts' art and his inspiration from poetry and literature. This exhibition reveals a range of his paintings exploring themes of identity, environment, and the interplay between self and surroundings. His painting alludes to popular culture, literature, politics, and art history, often set against the unique Australian landscape. Watts' 'mosaic-like, languid style' invites viewers to reconsider established narratives and engage with the complexities of visual culture.

Watts has worked with acrylic paints since the early days of his career, developing a unique style that showcases his versatility and creativity. Watts' painting technique is unique. The opaqueness of his acrylic, incorporating rich layering of colours with flat textures, creates depth and complexity. He describes his technique as a battle with the medium, stating, "In a way, fighting the acrylic is the basis of my style." His works, ranging from portraiture to landscape and still life, frequently incorporate historical and poetic allusions.

Watts' paintings capture the beauty of nature in the Australian landscape, depicting the gleaming sun, flowing river creeks, and drifting grassland winds. His art symbolizes the ephemeral nature of the land and emphasizes the connection between humanity and nature. Through his work, Watts conveys a strong sense of place, capturing the raw essence of the land and its inherent narratives.

We would like to thank Oliver Watts, Max Germanos, Gaibrielle Germanos and Samantha Ferris for providing us the opportunity to experience curatorial collaborations. We would also like to thank Abbotsleigh, Hornsby Girls High School and Grace Cossington Smith Gallery staff for the support and organisation of this program.



Writing by Young Curators Cindy, Katie, Skye and Vicky

Me in place and the place in me

<i>The English Walnut Tree</i> , 2022, acrylic on canvas, 213 x 183 cm
<i>The Wombat Hole</i> , 2022, acrylic on canvas, 153 x 213 cm
<i>Wildflower Meadow</i> , 2021, acrylic on canvas, 183 x 213 cm
<i>Dorian Gray (Eryn Jean Norvill)</i> , 2021, acrylic on canvas, 213.5 x 137.5 cm
<i>Phosphorescence [alt. Night Swim]</i> , 2022, acrylic on canvas, 213 x 183 cm
<i>Camille in the Swamp</i> , 2021, acrylic on canvas, 213 x 183 cm
<i>First Class Qantas Lounge Massage Room</i> , 2020, acrylic on canvas, 213 x 183 cm
<i>Self Portrait of the artist in First Class Qantas Lounge Massage Room</i> , 2020 acrylic on canvas, 121 x 90 cm
<i>Ibis preening in the swamp</i> , 2023, acrylic on canvas, 183 x 152 cm
<i>Whistling Pine</i> , 2015, acrylic on canvas, 90 x 120 cm
Oliver Watts: The Clayton Utz Art Partnership, presented by 3:33 Art Projects. Video by Simon Hewson.

Available works are subject to change, including prices and GST.

For sales enquiries please contact 3:33 Art Projects: info@333artprojects.com

All prices include GST

All works are courtesy the artist and Chalk Horse, Sydney, and THIS IS NO FANTASY, Melbourne

Oliver Watts

b. 1976 Sydney, Australia. Lives and works in Sydney

Oliver Watts' paintings are rich in allusions from popular culture to the long history of painting and its various genres (portraiture, landscape, still life etc). His images borrow, steal and reuse visual culture. His work is contemporary in the way everything is equivalent and brought into play. He often stages reenactments of literature or art history using actors and other collaborators. The artifice of the image is also embodied by his gestural style of painting, mosaic-like and languid. Permeating his works is the Australian landscape, the heat of the sun, the crunch of the forests and the deafening sound of cicadas. Watts' paintings are baroque, seductive, rich and complex.

Trained as an art historian and curator, Watts has consistently exhibited his paintings. He received his MFA from SCA in 2016 for a series entitled Cordelia/Fool which featured Eryn Jean Norvill as the main protagonist. Watts often uses actors to pose in his works, and to collaborate as dramaturgs, to help generate gestures and poses that animate the narratives. Watts was a founding member of the Chaser as a cartoonist and illustrator, a lecturer at SCA between 2011-2017, and is now Head Curator at Artbank. He has been a finalist in many art prizes including this year's Archibald Prize at The Art Gallery of New South Wales (also in 2021 and 2023). His work is held in the collections of National Museum of Australia, Artbank and the Reserve Bank.

Oliver Watts is represented by Chalk Horse, Sydney, and THIS IS NO FANTASY, Melbourne.



3:33 Art Projects

3:33 Art Projects created the innovative art program, the Young Curators, to partner with secondary schools to support education in the arts and provide unique experiences for the students, the school and the broader community while supporting Australian artists. The program connects students with a leading Australian visual artist to host an art exhibition at their school, working as a curatorial team to research, develop, select and stage the exhibition, providing valuable insights into various perspectives of the creative art industry.

Abbotsleigh and Hornsby Girls High School students visited the studio of Oliver Watts and an exhibition at Chalk Horse Gallery. They also met at the Grace Cossington Smith Gallery to plan their curation of *Me in place and the place in me* and to work with Oliver Watts to plan the installation.



Young Curators 2024

Abbotsleigh
Laura Bogdanovic
Meera Nirmalendran
Vicky Qiao
Sarah Richardson
Katie Yoon
Skye Yu



Hornsby Girls High School
Arnetta Angelica
Olive Gibson
Tiffany Lee
Audrey Park
Swarna Vankineni
Cindy Wu

Gallery hours Tuesday to Saturday 10 am-5 pm, FREE ENTRY | Gate 7, 1666 Pacific Highway, Wahroonga 02 9473 7878 | gcsgallery@abbotsleigh.nsw.edu.au | www.gcsgallery.com.au

The Grace Cossington Smith Gallery acknowledges the Dharug People as the Traditional Custodians of the land upon which the gallery rests. We acknowledge and pay respect to elders, past and present.