



NICOLE KELLY  
*Margins of Intimacy*





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18 August – 10 September 2022

Nicole Kelly paints personal vignettes that materialise moments in time and space. Her beguiling scenes, both interior and landscape, form emotional and psychological cartographies tracing the artist's own spatial experiences, intimately observed and sensitively felt. Interested in the ambiguity of person and place, Kelly constructs suspended narratives that divulge just enough to give an impression of a moment, and a mood.

Her new series, 'Margins of Intimacy', signals a shift from landscapes to domestic interiors as Kelly probes notions of home, and the cognitive dynamics of enclosed spaces. Motivated by a sensitivity to the passing of time, she depicts quiet moments spent and savoured. These works are primed with personal experience, revealing an ongoing attempt to portray reality in a way that liaises not with literal representation but feeling, memory, thought. Filled with everyday objects, Kelly's cosy interiors appear familiar – nostalgic even – yet look a little closer, a little longer, and you're met with a curious sensation of the unknown.

It feels as though, within these domestic settings, we have walked in on a moment just passed. Bathwater is lukewarm. Butter sits uncovered on a bench. Bedsheets are not yet made. Books lie open, half read. Even the few figures that Kelly has painted exist in liminal states, vulnerable, entirely unaware of our presence. The viewer is in motion, in these spaces, floorboards creaking beneath us as we step through an entryway or gently push open a door.

Kelly outwardly engages with the trope of the window, which functions as both portal and barrier. Through the glass is a tension between the outside and inside, landscapes and interiors. Comfortable home nooks rendered with seductive hues and soft mesmeric marks are beheld by omniscient environments through windows and doors. These landscapes press inside, spawning a spatial push-and-pull that destabilises our footing. There is a certain compositional density here, a compression of space, that penetrates the viewer's consciousness in a way that feels all-consuming, yet somehow passive, gentle, at the same time.

Though seemingly calm and cosy, disruption is at the core of these works. Pastoral vistas and quiet interiors are disturbed by textural interruptions beneath the surface, lumps of congealed paint buried like secrets hidden in the walls and floors, or layers of paint scraped back to reveal an earlier layer. Finely articulated details, such as books, bottles and paintings, collide with thick bands of paint dragged by Kelly across the surface. Brisk brushstrokes create optical tremors and feelings of flux, while deliberately effaced edges mingle with strong line work, skewing any representational logic. Here, scrubbing, scraping and loading over with paint becomes a process of excavation as the artist searches for her own constructed version of reality.

We are afforded a comfortable recognition of everyday items, certainly – a coffee table, bed, plants, a rug, plates, a highchair, a crossword puzzle in a folded newspaper – yet Kelly tempers this familiarity with formal plays of perspective and scale. Vantage points are toyed with and undermined as multiple entry points dispel conventional perspective. Exposed sections of coloured ground and negative space throw the overlaid marks into high relief, creating pictorial slippages where crevices between forms collapse into each other. Within this painterly stratification is a spatial and temporal splintering, a clever turbulence that prevents the eye from staying still or resting on a vanishing point.

Obstructed views spliced by doors, windows and walls conjure a sense of the cinematic in Kelly's interiors, each scene like a film still – its composition spontaneous, fleeting, and foreign. There is an unpredictability at play here, setting the viewer up to feel they are peering into a space that is specifically not theirs, never quite allowing us to feel 'at home'. In doing so, Kelly exposes the intimate subjectivities and margins of intimacy that contour our world.

Elli Walsh  
Principle Writer, Artist Profile

Winner of the prestigious Brett Whiteley Travelling Art Scholarship (2009) and the Hurford Hardwood Portrait Prize (2018), Kelly is well recognised for her landscape, portraiture and still life painting. She has undertaken residencies in France (2019, 2018, 2017, 2010) and Spain (2016) and has completed major public commissions for the Sutherland and St George Hospitals in Sydney. Her work has been selected for inclusion in the Lester Prize for Portraiture at the Art Gallery of WA (2019, 2018, 2017, 2015), Portia Geach Memorial Award (2021, 2020, 2019, 2015, 2014), Salon des Refusés (2020, 2019) and Wynne Prize at the Art Gallery of NSW (2015). Kelly's work is held in the collections of the Moran Art Foundation and Lismore Regional Gallery, among others. She has also recently completed her Masters of Fine Art at the University of New South Wales researching contemporary painting and poetic literature.







*Books and Windows*  
oil on polyester  
170 x 200.5 cm (framed)





*Books and Windows (detail)*  
oil on polyester  
170 x 200.5 cm (framed)





*Kitchen Sink*  
oil on polyester  
89 x 73.5 cm (framed)





*Old Bath*  
oil on polyester  
89 x 73.5 cm (framed)



*Barrel Shepherd*  
oil on polyester  
89 x 73.5 cm (framed)





*Blue Room*

oil on polyester

170 x 200.5 cm (framed)



*Winter Sun*  
oil on polyester  
54 x 48 cm (framed)





*Unmade Bed*  
oil on polyester  
54 x 48 cm (framed)



*Brick Balcony*  
oil on polyester  
170 x 200.5 cm (framed)





*Monday*  
oil on polyester  
89 x 73.5 cm (framed)



*Purple Kitchen*  
oil on polyester  
89 x 73.5 cm (framed)





*Arrawarra*  
oil on polyester  
89 x 73.5 cm (framed)



*Passing Time*  
oil on polyester  
123.5 x 139.5 (framed)



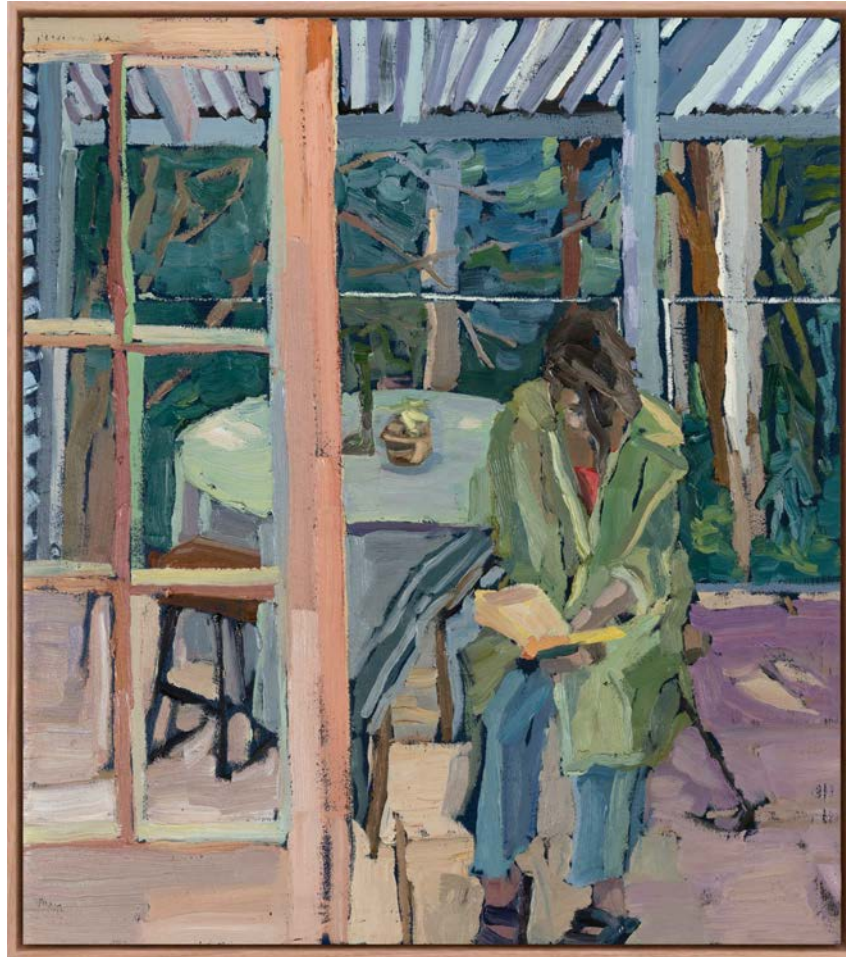


*Passing Time* (detail)  
oil on polyester  
123.5 x 139.5 (framed)



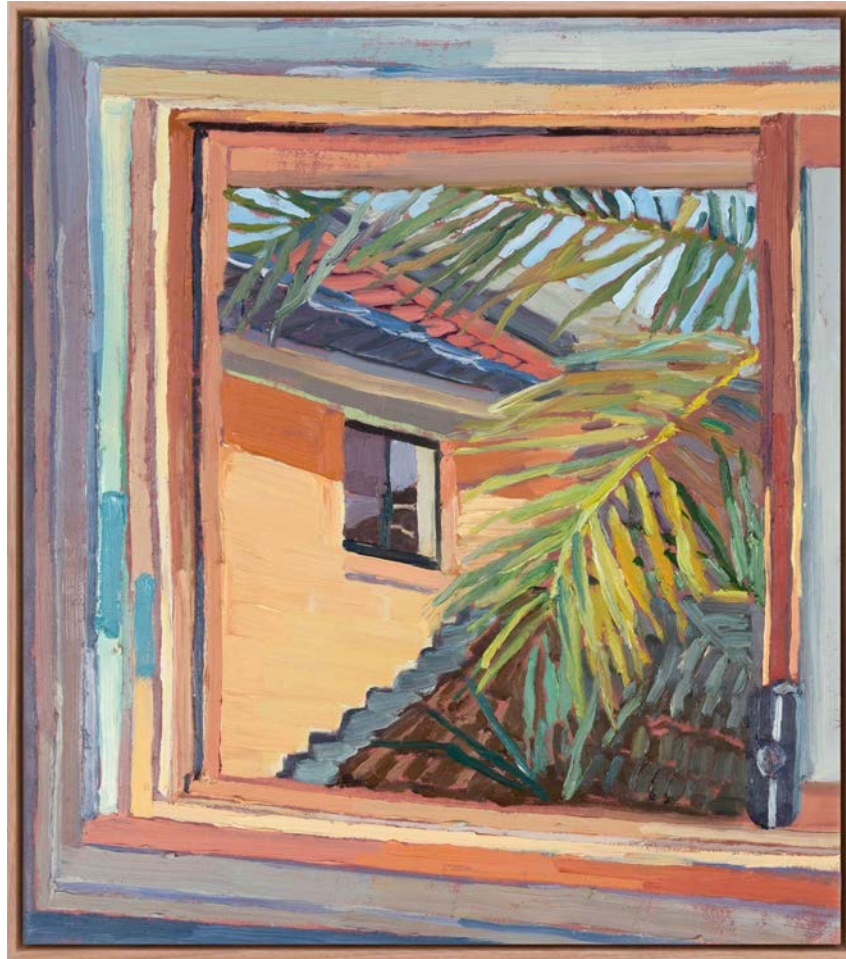


*Green Coat*  
oil on polyester  
54 x 48 cm (framed)





*Windows*  
oil on polyester  
54 x 48 cm (framed)



*Studio Corner*  
oil on polyester  
119 x 98 cm (framed)





*Levi's Chair*  
oil on polyester  
170 x 200.5 cm (framed)

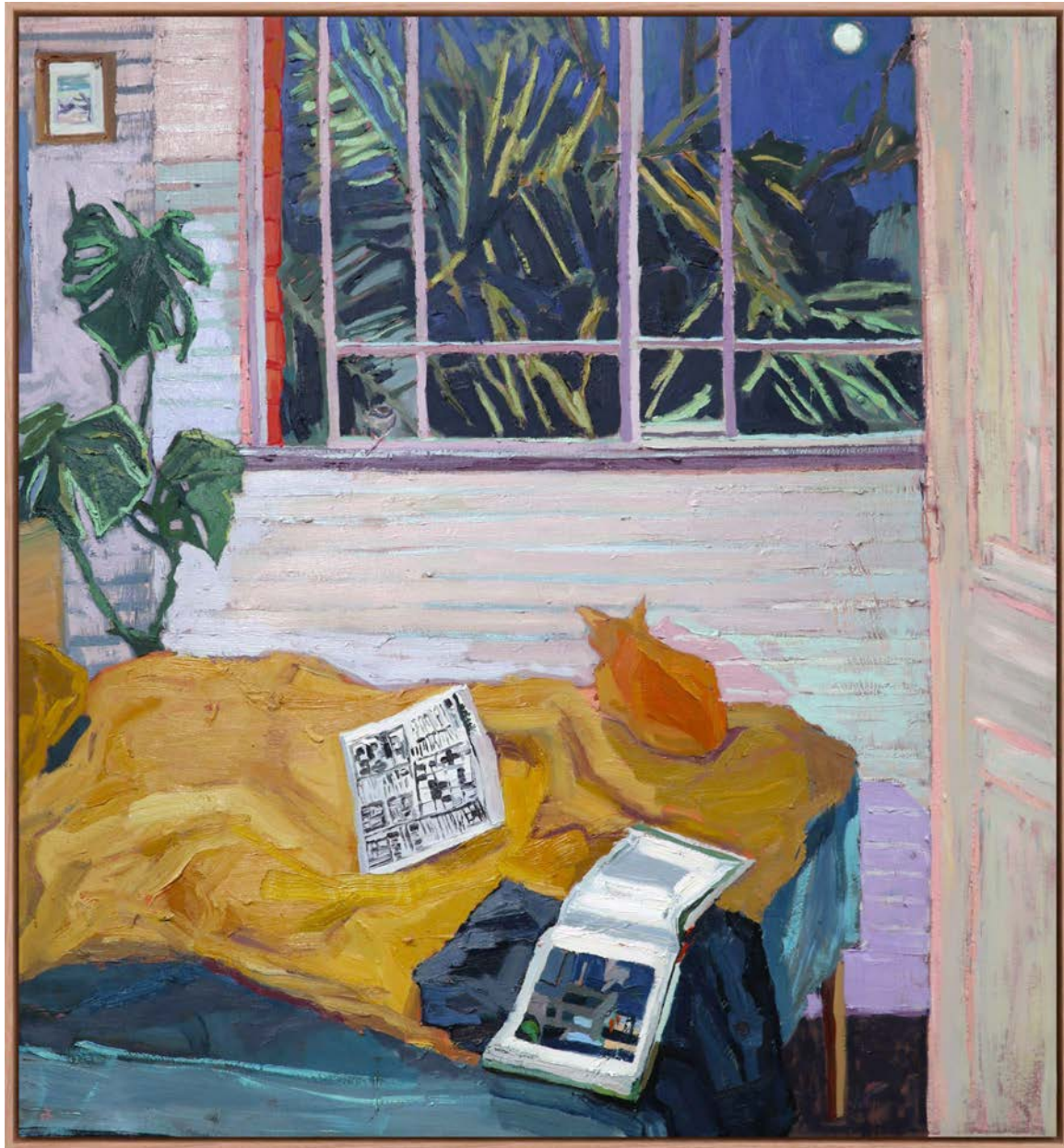




*Poppy and the Moon*

oil on polyester

119 x 109 (framed)





*Buckley Street*  
oil on polyester  
119 x 114 (framed)



*Blue Trees* (front and back)  
oil on board  
204 x 246.5 cm (two sided)









*Last Song*  
oil on polyester  
135 x 227.5 cm (framed)





*Kitchen Table*  
oil on polyester  
89 x 73.5 cm (framed)



Lauren  
oil on polyester  
94.5 x 109.5 cm (framed)





*Window*  
oil monoprint on paper  
125 x 163.5 (framed)





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