

# Paradiso

Issue 22

Anti-Hero

2023



We are the creative consciousness ...

am free

## Radical Yes

Featuring: Ken Done, Claudio Kirac, Sarah Ellison, Zion Levy Stewart, Alexis Williams, Ngaiire, Jazmin Theodora. Plus: The colour and the shape, a Sardinian travel journal and HOTMESS, a surrealistic party raunch art class.



Postcard from Paradiso

PHOTOGRAPH AND WORDS BY ANNA HUTCHCROFT

The desert rolled out around us. The road, a single straight line, disappeared into a fine point under the cloudless sky. The line of travel sliced a mirror image in half - the view to the left and the right unfurled on either side of us, identical in their featurelessness. The three of us, sometimes together, sometimes ebbed into a world of our own, bumped along on the gravel washboard. On this day, after driving through the hot desert of South Australia, we found water pushed up from the Great Artesian Basin pooling in bubbling freshwater springs. Grass spread out like a pelt across the surface, drinking in the moisture and creating an oasis for local wildlife and migratory birds. Most nights, we'd gather around a crackling campfire each night until it burned down and invited the sparkling darkness closer. At bedtime, we were always left with the embers that looked like a sleeping city outside an aeroplane window. But in this desert, there was no wood. Just the howling of the wind against our tent at night.

Photograph taken in Mound Springs, on Arabana Country

# No.22

## Publisher's Letter

anti - hero

"Look hard. Look openly: Looking hard isn't just about looking long; it's about allowing yourself to be rapt. Make yourself a seeing machine. A wonderful moment will come when you realise you're no longer just seeing the sky; you're reckoning with the blue as something more (and other) than itself." Jerry Saltz, *How To Be An Artist*.

This issue I had the honour of interviewing Ken Done – a man who sees beauty in the world and seeks to capture that experience on his canvas. I asked him "How do you see? How do you train yourself to look?" He simply answered, "You don't need to train yourself. It's admiring beauty. Whether it's a flower or a shell or a beautiful face. It's the things that you feel something for."

It's the act of looking that reveals beauty and it's the emotional response we experience that makes life wonderful. With this we welcome 2023, a year for beauty, pleasure and wonder. Let's look and see something more. Enjoy.

Lila Theodoros, Publisher  
x

Culture Partner



Paradiso is proud to partner with Radical Yes to bring you Issue 22.

Radical Yes makes shoes inspired by movement. They call it Flat Shoe Liberation. Radical Yes shoes are made for modern women who want to move and be moved in a free and conscious way. By producing products in small batches with family-owned production partners, Radical Yes believes in working to reduce waste and produce functional and beautiful products for IRL use. With the words 'Hasten Slowly', we are invited into the world of Radical Yes – a world where we are encouraged to feel grounded, comfortable and free: free to do; free to move; free to create; free to feel; and free to be.

Connect with Radical Yes:

@radicalyes  
radicalyes.com.au

Paradiso is created on the land of the Arakwal people of the Bundjalung nation. We acknowledge and pay our respects to the traditional custodians and elders of this land. And we extend that respect to the traditional owners of wherever this magazine is read.

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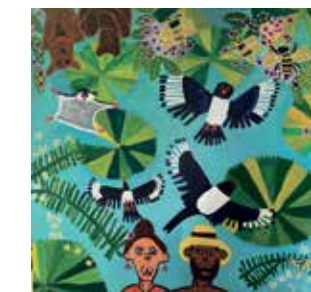
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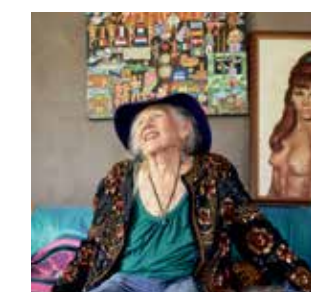
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Issue Twenty-Two: Editors' Letter

anti - hero

Hello.

We latch on to stories of success and triumph. History lessons are full of stories of brute competition and conquering. In her essay, *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*, Ursula Le Guin questions whether spears and weapons are the true pinnacles of human progress or whether we should instead praise the stories of the sling, the shell, or the gourd. With these carrier bags, our ancestors collected and gathered and stored what they needed for surviving and thriving.

The question that follows, then, is this: if we shift the way we look at humanity's foundations from a narrative of control and killing to one of holding, foraging, and sharing, how can we better understand our systems of relationship to one another? Like the objects in our carrier bags, we are all entangled with each other.

And like the carrier bag, sometimes the best stories are those that are humbly hanging out in the background. In Issue 22 we bring you a selection of artists, creatives and people who are humbly leaving their mark on the world.

We want you to know that whoever you are, whatever you do, you are a hero in your life, your family, your community. Keep creating, keep dreaming, keep enjoying this beautiful planet.

Love,  
Anna and Nat

*"To learn which questions are unanswerable, and not to answer them: this skill is most needful in times of stress and darkness."*

- Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness*

We are a creative studio – we make brands and magazines.

Muse Muse

Base: Byron Bay—Melbourne  
Working w/: The World

studiomusemuse.com



Art Kind Byron Bay

Founded in 2023, Art Kind is a contemporary studio gallery located in Byron Bay's ever-evolving creative hub, the Arts and Industrial Estate. Gallery director and local artist Bec Duff is at the wheel and she is on a mission to bring the community together in her welcoming little corner of the Australian gallery scene. Bec opened her doors this summer with a curation of her own abstract watercolour landscape paintings alongside striking works from Sydney-based figurative painter, Lisa Brummer and beautiful stoneware pieces from ceramic artist Mel Lumb, from Eumundi. Coming to the gallery throughout 2023 is a host of exhibitions showcasing unrepresented emerging and established Australian artists and a slate of art workshops, masterclasses and gallery events. If you're an art lover, art maker or you're just a little art curious you're welcome to visit the space, doors are open to all art kind.

@artkindbyronbay



The Banya

I'm sure we're not the first to tell you that there's a new bath house in town. Step off the streets of Mullumbimby and into a little slice of Europe, complete with mineral pools, a wood fired sauna and a steam room. More a social affair than a relaxing soak, The Banya is the perfect place to catch up with friends while unwinding.

@thebanya\_mullumbimby

NORTHERN RIVERS ROLLER DERBY

Our region's very own roller derby is back! Lismore derby is on Thursday nights at Rollerworld and Byron skaters can head to the Cavanbah Centre on Fridays. No matter where you are in your skating journey - have a Derby name and ready to jam; coming back from a 20-year hiatus and reliving the joy of skating; or never laced a pair of skates in your life - the amazing crew at Northern Rivers Roller Derby are here for you. [facebook.com/NorthernRiversRollerDerby](https://www.facebook.com/NorthernRiversRollerDerby)



TIMBRÉ LISMORE

Beans, bilums and Blackfulla Books have a new home in Lismore. Timbré is a co-creation by local roasters Kwila Coffee and Blackfulla Bookclub - a place where you can go get your daily drop of Papua New Guinean coffee while also browsing the community library full of books by First Nations authors and more. As the mural on the wall proudly proclaims, it's a space to decolonize your mind. Head in for a cuppa and keep an eye out for their future events.

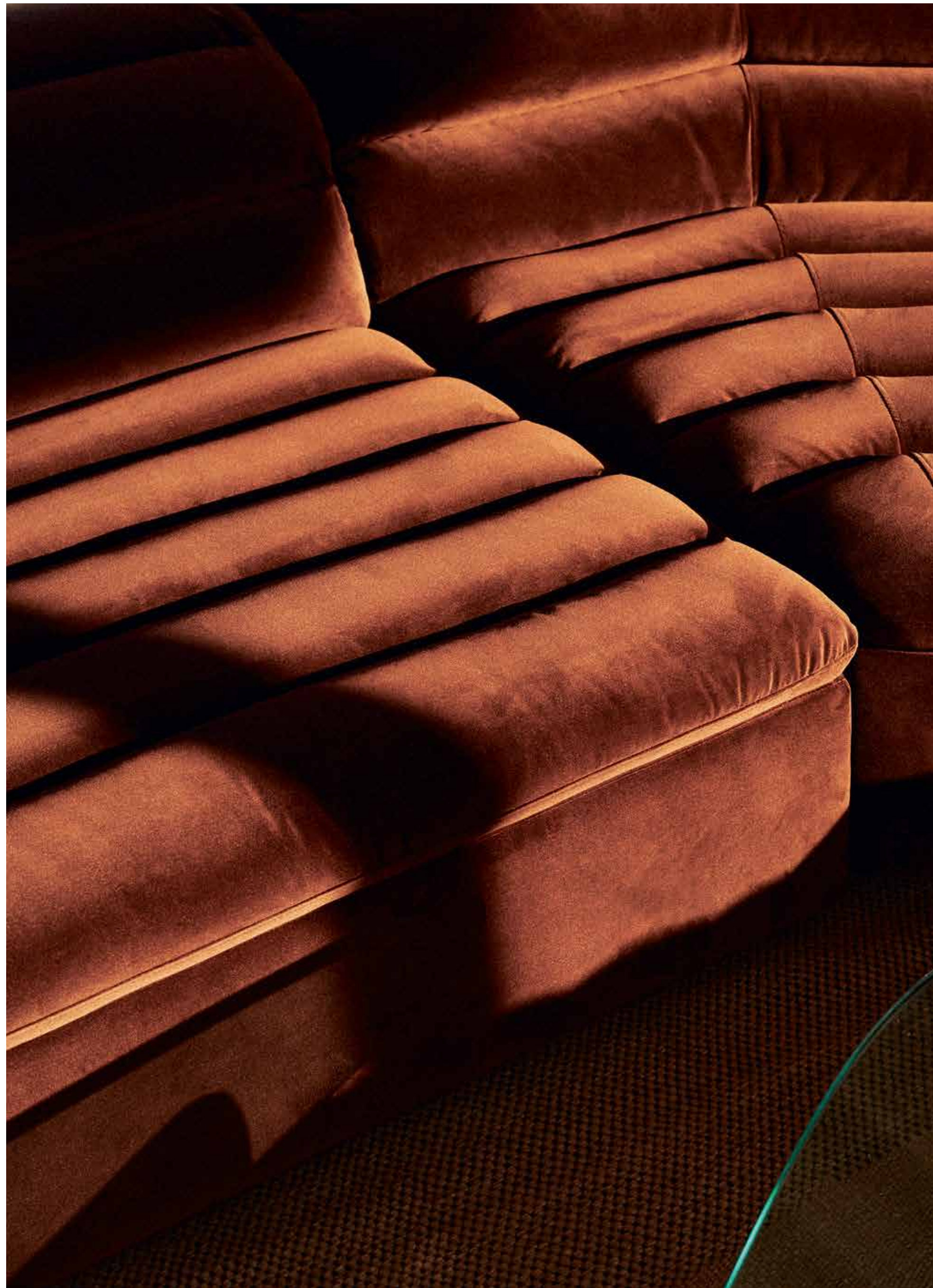
@timbre.lismore



The Long Weekends

Fleet has farewelled Roco Ramen Bar and has now welcomed in their new restaurant residency - The Long Weekends. The residency model allows upcoming and coming hospitality superstars to test out their menu and their model in a semi-permanent venue with the hope that they refine their offering and go on to a more permanent home eventually. The Long Weekends will not disappoint. A collaboration between David Aznar and Chef Jayel Brihi to bring together native food, foraging and fermentation, coupled with a fine glass of wine or a delightful cocktail.

@the.longweekends



# Who is



# Sarah Ellison?

After taking the leap from magazine stylist to designer, Sarah Ellison has created a covetable furniture range inspired by vintage shapes and textures, but still functional in a modern home. Despite launching in the US market last year and becoming the first Australian company to create a branded Pantone colour, Sarah Ellison remains humble and grounded. We took a moment to find out more about the woman behind the designs. Words by Nat Woods. Photos courtesy of Sarah Ellison.



*Take us back to the start of Sarah Ellison Studio – you finished up as Style Editor at Real Living magazine, you had a young kid. Where did the first sparks of the idea to create your own design range come from?*

Having worked with a plethora of furniture and home products over my years at Real Living, I knew the Australian market like the back of my hand. I knew every design, designer, maker and brand that existed. I had done many a photoshoot with an \$11,000 Italian sofa that takes 12-months to have delivered or a rare vintage piece from a secret dealer out in Petersham that, to be honest, most people wouldn't have access to. Often this left me feeling underwhelmed about the furniture pieces available to me on a magazine stylist's salary. I love furniture and design, but I always felt that the pieces I could afford for my own home were very limited. I noticed a gap in the market for design-led, original furniture that was attainable and sat in the middle market of Australian retail.

After the birth of my son, I knew it was time for a new direction in my career. I met my brilliant business partner and co-founder of our business, Leigh McKeown, when he was working in Fashion PR in Sydney. With my knowledge of the industry and styling expertise and Leigh's PR skills and business prowess, we thought we had a pretty good formula and thus Sarah Ellison Studio was born.

*Did you feel any trepidation stepping out from your decade-long career as a stylist to open your own studio?*

Not really, I was ready. I thrive on new challenges as I get bored easily. My main concern was stepping from stylist to designer and whether I would be taken seriously. In the beginning you are relying on gut instinct. I figured I had a pretty good chance due to my years of experience but ultimately I was taking a risk and hoping it paid off.

*You describe your process as "great design without ego" and I've heard people remark on how modest you are. Firstly, how does 'design without ego' manifest in your creations from ideation to production and marketing?*

When we began the studio, part of our ethos was that we didn't want our customers to feel intimidated by the brand. In Australia there has always been a lot of snobbery around design and that it was only for the elite. We wanted great design to be accessible to all, we wanted to design products that looked like they could be high-end Italian but without the price tag. We also wanted to present them to our customers in a way that made it easy for them to replicate in their own homes, to inspire them and empower them to think about Australian design in a new way.

My furniture designs are sculptural and rounded in appearance, they look comfortable and appealing and are unthreatening. When we are styling a campaign there is always a simplicity to it that is easily relatable to many different living scenarios, whether you live in the city or in a coastal town. I want people to be able to visualise and interpret my pieces into their home.

*How do you stay grounded in an industry that, I would assume, probably laps up ego?*

I'm naturally a modest person. I'm my harshest critic and for me the focus has always been making beautiful things that I'm proud of. I am a creative at heart so it will always be about the work first and foremost – that's what I care about. I am also a mother. Once you become a parent you realise what's important in life. If I'm not operating in a way that's serving my family directly then I just don't have the energy.

*It's clear that you truly understand what makes a great couch, but I'm wondering what you gravitate towards in other daily objects in your home – are there ideal qualities you look for in say, your daily coffee mug, or the bag you lug your groceries home in?*

Yes, every object in my life is considered. It sounds a little OCD I know, but I think because I'm a sensitive person I'm really attuned to the way things look and feel. A coffee cup needs to be handmade but with a fine lip, knives and forks need to have a certain feel in my hand and a shape that functions well. I like pillows to have feather inners and not foam and a great handbag needs to also be comfortable across my body. In all forms of design it's always about the tension between form and function and how you can create something beautiful that works well.

*You were the Style Editor at Real Living magazine for seven years which has sadly just closed its print edition. Do you think people have stopped turning to print magazines for design inspiration?*

Yes. It's been a slow death for some magazines as we all consume content via social media now. I think the only magazines that will remain in print form are the ones that are doing it more consciously. It needs to be experiential, something you can't get from scrolling. Seeing images in a large print format, laid out artfully on beautiful stock is something we will never get from social media.

*I know your designs are often inspired by bygone eras of design. Are there elements of your childhood in Margaret River that spark inspiration or are you searching elsewhere for inspiration?*

My childhood on the WA coast will always remain one of my main inspirations, whether it's deliberate or not. I'm inspired by nature, the rugged texture of the WA coastline and a relaxed way of living. All of these elements are present in my work, coupled with a love for 1970s vintage design and the nostalgia I recall from my childhood.

*Do you have a creative practice or routine for the days you're designing?*

Mainly I just need to immerse myself, so I need to create space for that. When there's too many interruptions, meetings, or if my son is home, there's zero chance I will come up with any good ideas or be able to go deep into a creative process.

*You recently flew from Australia to LA – how do you fill the time on long-haul flights? Do you take the opportunity to dive into work? Or do you immerse yourself in a book or film?*

I use it as a space to disconnect and not feel guilty about it! I catch up on shows and films I've been wanting to watch. I always have intentions to work but rarely do.

*You've moved from Bondi to the Northern Rivers. What drew you to this region and what do your days look like when you're here?*

Mainly it was taking the pressure off slightly from everyday life. I grew up in nature with plenty of space and I wanted that for my son. I was also born in Byron and have returned to visit family for most of my life so I have had a connection to the area since childhood. I also felt that the area was probably one of the only places outside of the major cities where there were a lot of other entrepreneurial creatives running businesses. Plus Sydney is only a short flight when I need to go back.

*There's no denying that Sarah Ellison as a design studio is an incredible success, but what do you hold as personal markers of success in life? What is success to Sarah Ellison the person?*

Success for me is creating a great life for my family. Creating a strong creative community around me of like-minded people and doing work that I love and that I'm proud of.

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# Alexis Williams: Observing Nature



The work of Byron Bay artist Alexis Williams is a mystical fusion of feeling and impulse. Bearing a neo-primitive slant, his work is technically considered furniture but looks more like sculpture. Eschewing straight lines and the rectilinear in favour of organic shapes, each chair, table or bench overtly bears the spirit of the tree from which it was cut. Encountering his work evokes the sensation that you're in the presence of another living thing. The skills of his workmanship still subtly vibrate in his shapes. Rough-hewn and hand-cut, each piece is one-of-a-kind and reflective of his love for timber. We caught up in his sawdust-strewn studio to talk about his practice, the subconscious and the very human tussle between competing parts of yourself. Words and Photos by Anna Hutchcroft.

*How did you find your way to furniture-making?*

My practice started organically. I made a wooden plinth as a gift for my friend's shop and she said, "You know someone will want to buy that, right?" and sure enough, it sold instantly. I had never conceptualised my entry into woodworking to be like that. I thought I'd start working for someone else and then do my own thing after a while, but I kept encountering these situations that pushed me to where I am today. I was reluctant initially, but since then, I've leaned into the discomfort and found my stride as an artist and sculptor.

*This kind of feels in line with how your creations work. They seem so organic and of the moment. But I can imagine that there might be this tussle within you between the composition and the design of it and the feeling of it. How do you navigate this balance?*

My work balances analysing the aesthetic form and making design decisions through feeling and impulse. I approach doing work with openness and engage in a visceral rhythm. The process often comes to a point where I dare myself to override analysis or impulse and follow my intuition of where to go next or when to stop. Even if a piece confuses me a little bit, it might be a really good one. That's when something new is born – when I can let go of my own reins.

*It's amazing when you're able to pivot and be agile and hold this idea you have in your head about where you think something's going but still be able to stop and give it space. My sense with your work is that the objects you create exist already within the wood and you peel away all the layers to reveal them. There's something so innate about them.*

I often observe nature and try to reveal the subtle nuances and characteristics of the wood I work with. Nature is fluid rather than composed. My work balances a modern aesthetic with a natural way of degrading. At the same time, I find comfort in the ambiguity of this middle ground.

*Your pieces really do navigate that balance so well. And your pieces are so one-off. Do you create your work with an audience in mind?*

When I started, other makers' work inspired my approach to the materiality of timber. As I continued to work this way, I learnt that working with wood is like doing a retracted carving, like the object already exists within the timber. By hand-carving and sculpting, my process respects the lively element of wood instead of using machinery. I see machinery as stifling or strangling the timber because it never appears that way in nature and it doesn't feel organic as a finished object.

*Technically speaking, is it a challenge to get those natural-looking curved edges in wood?*

Over the years, I've found a technique that I'm comfortable with and learned to approach the wood by feeling it out during the sculpting process to make it look realistic. In principle, it sounds easy, but it's not without its challenges.

*Did you have much woodworking experience before?*

I grew up surrounded by timber and the love of wood. I was raised by creative yet practical parents, which informed my practice from an early age. My mum is a seamstress and my dad is a carpenter. Woodworking was something that, just by being surrounded by, I was comfortable approaching informally.

*Which probably gave you the freedom to be able to experiment and create things the way that you do now – instead of having this weighted tradition or overseer to tell you about the 'Right Way' to do it.*

Sometimes when I'm going to sleep I'll see these flashes of shapes in my head, in my half-awake sleeping state. And I'll be curious about them. Then, I might be making a piece in a week or two-weeks time and I'll notice a curve in the shape. And I'll be like, "I've seen that before. I remember that impression that came to me." So, I

feel like if I follow my approach, I naturally arrive at these pieces that seem destined to be made.

*This anecdote has been trotted out a bit too often, but what you're saying does remind me of that Nick Cave story about how he feels like songs just come to him. They visit his subconscious and they'll just arrive while he's driving doing something else. And sometimes he'll have the time to bring the idea into the world, but sometimes he has to shoo it away for someone else to materialize it. And then if he hasn't written it himself, he'll notice that another song, somewhere else, is published by another artist and it quite resembles the song that's visited him weeks before.*

Some things are in the collective consciousness and available to us all. In the creative process, tap into it instead of recreating something we have seen in the physical world. The most natural spaces come from within ourselves, which can reveal something new and fresh.

*Do you mentally map out what you're about to create before you get the tools out?*

Some objects are just pure impressions and others require mapping out, which are the objects that don't feel as natural to me in the beginning. But I do work into the mapped-out things and overcome the challenge. Creating through instant impressions comes naturally, but the strategy is woven throughout my practice. Both avenues offer something to me in how I approach art and design.

*It's incredible when your practice can mirror what's going on internally and you can use it as this training ground to evolve.*

What we create is synonymous with who we are and we can only progress through challenges in our development. I see the challenges that some works give me as a developmental practice for myself to define who I am.

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# Ngaiire

Like the richly diverse culture and landscapes of her homeland of Papua New Guinea, Ngaiire's music and songwriting can't be neatly labelled or put into one single box. It's something that has previously frustrated the singer-songwriter leading to a creative journey back to PNG for her most recent album *3*. Now Ngaiire is proud to stand in her power and in the knowing that she's got nothing to prove. Words by Nat Woods.

*I wanted to start with your most recent album 3. I was reading that the impetus for that album was a feeling that there was a disconnect in the Australian music industry where people didn't understand who you are and your culture. What did you feel like people weren't getting?*

I felt like people weren't getting that PNG is so diverse considering we have over 800 cultural groups and languages. But also not considering the fact that you have Papua New Guineans who are part of the diaspora, who have an entirely different experience living outside of the country as a brown black race that comes from a country like PNG. Nobody knows where to put you because there's still very little known about PNG despite being Australia's closest neighbour. I feel like at the time that I'd started out, people had an idea of what a black person should sing or write about or look like or this kind of stuff. There wasn't enough room for a multifaceted view on the black experience. It was just like, this is it, and if you don't fit into what's commercially acceptable as a black person, we don't know where to put you.

*As part of the creative process for 3 you took a team, including your mum and your sister back to PNG. What was that experience like?*

I think that it was very confronting. I'd been back to PNG a couple times since we left, but every time I'd gone back I was a different person. This time I went there on my own accord not in the context of family – my mum would always kind of spearhead these trips for us and therefore would buffer us from a lot of family politics and cultural politics as well. This was the first time I decided to do this for me to set some things right in terms of what people think about PNG. And I really didn't expect to go there and to be confronted with myself in ways that were shocking to me. Especially as a Papua New Guinean who is an Australian and what it means for me to go back to PNG and where I fit into my tribe and into my village and my culture and that kind of stuff. That was really a lot to comprehend.

*What was the creative process when you got home and were digesting that experience?*

It was really hard to, as you say, digest everything. There was just so much processing that needed to be done. So there was a lot of just sitting and letting life happen while we figured out where to place everything that we were feeling. And then I got sick because I got pregnant shortly after that and then things started to change from that point on with the creative process, it took a longer time to get to the music because I was just in chronic pain the whole time. And so the album then took on a different, I guess energy, lyric-wise and pace-wise, because then it just became about me feeling like I was gonna die or my child was gonna die. So, long story short, there was a long period of processing, but also a long period of life that happened before we could actually get to the music part of the creation.

*You've said the album "is about me letting go and accepting that not everyone is gonna get me." From starting out trying to make people understand the real PNG, it seems like you landed at this point where you no longer cared if people were misunderstanding you and your culture and your music.*

I guess it's more just a psychological thing for me where it's like, this is what I want to write about and if people don't get it and if people don't get the production or the way I want to arrange my vocals or they misinterpret what a Papua New Guinean is by putting me on certain stages or within certain kind of billing then that's really on them. The power is with me. The power that lies with me is saying no to when I'm being put in a situation where I'm being misinterpreted. It's more empowering to me to know that I don't have to prove myself and that whatever I've been doing up until this point is fine.

*What was it like to work with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra?*

Man, playing with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, but also on the steps of the Opera House. I mean, after that I was happy to just retire. I literally was so happy to just end on that. Obviously I won't, but it was the most incredible moment of my career, to have my mother, my brother sitting there, my husband and my son sitting in the audience, like everyone that I wanted to be there was there. I really felt like there was a real shift energy wise for me. I'm a big believer in everyone having a specific purpose in this life and that that purpose is your purpose for life. And I really felt like something shifted

at that point. But working with an orchestra was very daunting because it was melding that classical school of thinking with a different school of thinking, which is contemporary music. You have a bunch of players who are classically trained and it's very stringent. Then you bring in my music, which is very groove-based and there was definitely a time where we were just trying to make both of those schools of thought work seamlessly. And I'm so happy that it actually did work. It was a huge job for everyone and the fact that we were able to pull it off and 5000 people were there, it was honestly such a career highlight.

*We were talking before about the contrast between PNG and Australia. As a teen you moved to Lismore of all places. What was that like?*

Yeah, that was interesting. In the first year I was very adamant not to change and conform because I was a 16-year-old at that point. I dressed like a tomboy. I braided my hair, I wore baggy t-shirts. I would carry this little PNG bilum to school every day and I was adamant that I would not conform to carrying a backpack and still carry my bilum to school. I didn't shave my legs or my underarms for a little bit and then it started to get to me. I started to really want to fit in. But that said, I think Lismore, or the North Coast, was probably the best place for us to land because everyone was just so lovely and welcoming and they'd always promoted diversity within their spaces. So I loved it. I miss Lismore so much. It will always be home, I guess to me in a weird way. Even though my family doesn't live there anymore, it always has a special place in my heart.

*I heard that the first time you sang in front of an audience was at your Lismore High School.*

Yeah. Kids are so amazing. Like, I think back to that – I was so painfully shy, but for some reason I knew that I could do it. I could get up there and I could perform Alicia Key's 'Fallin'' because I loved it. I still do, I love singing so much. I went from being like the awkward Papua New Guinean girl who dressed weird to being the girl that sings on stage. It felt good that people kind of respected me for something. I was really struggling to find my place in a new school and when we rehearsed for the school assemblies or concerts or whatever, kids in the next classroom would come and huddle around the music room door just to listen to what I was doing. And as a kid that felt like something was changing and that possibly I could do this as a living if people were that interested in what I was doing.

*What's your creative partnership with your husband Dan Segal like? You've created a lot of your music clips and more together. How does that work at home?*

We've created so many amazing pieces, but it is challenging working with your husband. I get tired of myself and he might get really excited about what we're working on and want to talk about it late into the night and I just want to not talk about me for a little bit. Or there are points where we're just working really hard to get a video clip done and we've got a son to look after and we are both exhausted and the work comes home and it's challenging. But the reward always comes when we finish a project and we can sit back and go, "We did that". It's insane. So it's up and down.

*I read a quote of yours saying that your "culture is the engine room that propels you forward." What do you mean by that?*

I think that there is power with knowing where you come from. As I get older I wanna return to PNG more, and I just feel more alive when I'm back on PNG soil. And it feels like at this stage of my life, in order for me to continually propel myself through this industry, I need to be able to refill my tanks by going back and sitting with people, at my mum's house or even just going back to the village and sitting with community. I feel quite privileged to be in the position that I am in as a Papua New Guinean woman who has had the successes that I've had. I feel like I wouldn't have the same stamina if I hadn't grown up in a country like PNG because I really learned how to be strong and to be persistent with things. So I guess in another sense that's really given me that drive to conquer things that might be challenging.

**Ngaiire will be performing with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra at Hamer Hall, Melbourne on 18 March. Tickets available through [mso.com.au](http://mso.com.au). @ngaiire**



# Ken Done: 'No rules. Lovely colours.'

On a hot summer's day in Sydney, world-reknowned artist Ken Done – a man who without a doubt has inspired a generation of Australians to chase a creative life – explains colour, art and the wonders of painting.





It's an early and humid Tuesday morning in Sydney. I sit with Claudio Kirac – artist, creative director and long-term Paradiso friend – in a Surry Hills hotel lobby drinking coffee. We are making stunted small talk and alternate between nervously tapping feet, re-reading interview notes and drumming fingers on a low brass-lined decorative table. We are both very excited/nervous/excited. We're about to meet our hero. We're about to meet Ken Done.

After a very short and quiet ride, the Uber pulls up out the front of the Ken Done Gallery and we jump out, taking a deep breath each. Here we go. We pause in the entry, marvelling at the explosion of colour that covers every wall; a permanent and always perfectly curated exhibition of Ken's paintings. We savour the cool air-conditioned air, trying and failing to pick a favourite painting, while we wait for an official greeting by one of Mr Done's team.

“Hello.”

We spin around. It's Ken. Standing there in a black-and-white striped long-sleeved shirt, motioning for us to come into his studio out the back. Fumbled introductions are made, plans about who sits where and does what (Claudio asking questions and taking photos; me sitting in-between to record the conversation, trying to stay out of shot) are discussed. Nerves are high – we are sitting with a man who we can both attribute our own professional directions and aesthetics to. A man who without a doubt inspired a generation of Australians to love colour, appreciate beauty and seek their own creative life. We sit with this larger-than-life man, a talented creative director turned gifted and successful artist, as he begins telling us about his recent trip to Japan ...

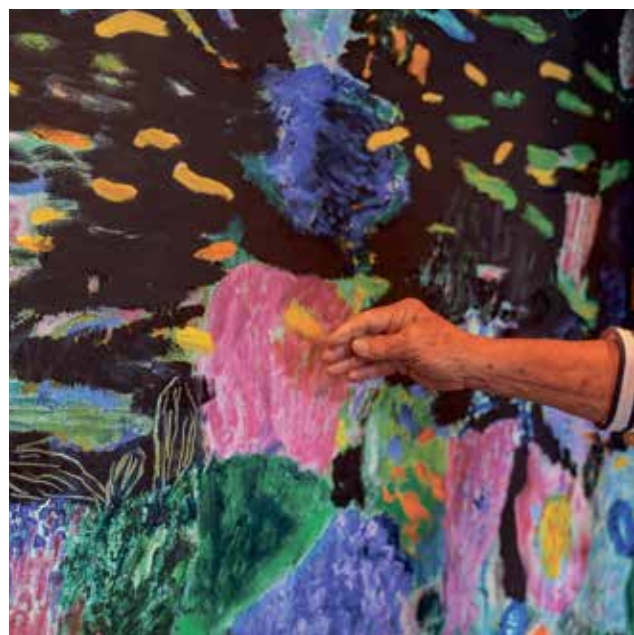
“Tokyo is such an exciting city. There's a very famous Japanese artist. She does spots. Yayoi Kusama. She's quite old now. When I say old, she's older than me. Anyway, we're going down Omotesandō one afternoon, which is a very fashionable street in Tokyo. And she was in a window, painting. And of course there's a big crowd around her. She's painting the dots on the glass itself. And then she'd look at you and give a smile and then go back to paint some more. You know the only problem, it was a robot. You couldn't believe it! Because all the facial muscles were moving. When she looked at you, she looked at you, and she smiled, 'Hello Ken'. She smiled and then she got back to painting. It was a fucking robot!”

And with this story, we settled in for a conversation with Ken Done, the light-hearted, incredibly funny, lover of life ...

**Ken Done in conversation with Claudio Kirac. Interview and words by Lila Theodoros. Photos by Claudio Kirac.**



**Claudio:** A robot? That's Louis Vuitton dollars, mate.  
**Ken:** Yeah, that's right. But it's art in the time in which we live. That an artist becomes so famous that a robot is made of the person.  
**Lila:** So when are we going to see the Ken Done robot?  
**Ken:** I have no idea. But art's changed so much, the way that you can find art. I think if van Gogh was alive today he'd be doing sunflower hats. It's part of reaching a wider audience.  
**Claudio:** Can we talk about bridging the gap between artist and designer? I straddle this line of being a creative director, photographer, et cetera, but I've always been painting, which I love so much. What is an artist? Can there be a crossover between design and art? How does that all work?  
**Ken:** Well, there's a great relationship between art and design. Design is when you are trying to solve a definable problem and you have some idea of the audience. The magazine [*motions to a copy of Paradiso on the table*] has to be a certain number of words. You have the headline, story, you have to design it well. With painting, there are no such constraints. The only constraint is your own ability. And in the end you have to be the judge. We sold a big painting not so long ago in Queensland and it's called *Number Eight*. It's called *Number Eight* because there's seven paintings underneath it that I didn't like.  
**Claudio:** On the actual canvas?  
**Ken:** Oh, it's under there. Because unless you can please yourself, there's no point. I think as you get older – certainly as I get older – you get better at editing things. You get more judgemental, you get harder on yourself. And so you should. You don't have to please anybody but yourself.  
**Claudio:** That's true.  
**Ken:** I think the unique thing about us is it's a family business. My son and my daughter and my wife Judy, we're all part of the business. Judy, not so much anymore. Although we're doing a program tomorrow for the ABC on fashion, a television program called *What We Wore*. We recently won the Fashion Laureate Lifetime Achievement Award. Very flattering, but I don't like the word lifetime.  
**Claudio:** Yeah?  
**Ken:** Lifetime suggests, you're fucking on the way out, all right. So Fashion Laureate, good, all good. And then it should say 'for work for a long time,' not a lifetime. Lifetime should have no end. Anyway, I was flattered to get it. Although, strangely enough, there were half a dozen people who got awards before me and they all got up to the stage and said how humble they were. I got up to the stage ... I'm not humble. I worked really, really hard. And so when people take that position to say, well, I'm really humbled. No, you're not. You worked your butt off to get to this stage. And people should respond to that. So it's a busy week, the interview with you today, at the ABC filming tomorrow, and on Thursday, a colonoscopy.  
**Lila:** All in this week?  
**Ken:** All in this week.  
**Claudio:** Here's to getting on a bit.  
**Ken:** That's right. Somebody looking up your bum and also down the throat as well.  
**Claudio:** Oh my God.



*“If you’re a painter, you paint about the experiences, and it’s always half a conversation. It’s what you bring to it. It’s what you feel about it. It’s what you like about it. Say that picture over there, which is called Chinaman’s Beach – which is where I live. The beach is not orange. The sand is not pink. The sea is not really that colour. The trees are not really those shapes. The rocks are not spotted like that. So that’s an evolution of a game that I’ve been playing for a long time, where I want to surprise myself. And I hope that it gives you some pleasure.”*



**Ken:** And strangely enough, my assistant who’s been with me for 30 years, she’s having a colonoscopy this morning. So if you work for me, eventually somebody’s going to stick something up your date.

**Lila:** You put that on the ad for the job?

**Ken:** Yeah, that’s right. Yeah, it’s going to happen at some stage.

**Claudio:** So, designers solve a problem.

**Ken:** And know who the audience is.

**Claudio:** Painting is much more personal. You do have to sell work, but you paint what you want.

**Ken:** Yeah, that’s right. We sold a picture yesterday that’s going to Barcelona, which I’m very pleased about. It’s from 2007 and it’s a very loose, abstract picture. Very few people would understand that picture. It’s not, say a picture like this [motions towards one of his reef paintings] or the one behind it, much easier to understand. And sometimes you do fall into the trap of repeating yourself. Well, nothing wrong with that. It’s like playing the same song. And there’s no rules. There are no rules at all. And with the fashion, we did a couple of really good collaborations last year. One, with Romance Was Born and Kip&Co. I’m all for artists doing that. The concept of starving in the garage, I think that’s the past.

**Claudio:** Yeah. The living artist. I’m with you, Ken, about the starving artist in the garage. I’d like to enjoy my life now, make the money now for my family, for us to have a good life. It’s a changing economy. You’ve got to navigate those waters. But I like having a creative life and I wouldn’t do anything else.

**Ken:** You wouldn’t be a dental assistant, would you?

**Claudio:** No.

**Ken:** Very important dental assistants.

**Claudio:** Yes.

**Ken:** But I don’t want to be a dental assistant. I don’t even want to be the guy that sticks the tube up my date. That’s not particularly creative. I’m glad he’s doing it and he knows where he’s going, but it’s not the adventure of the big white canvas and deciding what you’ll put on it.

**Claudio:** Why do you paint? How do you begin? I know that you’ve got a daily practice.

**Ken:** Yeah, I’m working every day. I was working this morning on two paintings that, again, I painted over quite a few times, because I wasn’t happy with them. And sometimes the way that you paint it, even though you’re going to paint over it, underneath it’ll give you some clues as to what the next move might be, because you don’t lose all that information. There might be some texture or some movement or something. But look, if I was a writer, I’d write about it. If you’re a painter, you paint about the experiences, and it’s always half a conversation. It’s what you bring to it. It’s what you feel about it. It’s what you like about it. Say that picture over there, which is called *Chinaman’s Beach* – which is where I live. The beach is not orange. The sand is not pink. The sea is not really that colour. The trees are not really those shapes. The rocks are not spotted like that. So that’s an evolution of a game that I’ve been playing for a long time, where I want to surprise myself.

And I hope that it gives you some pleasure.

*[Ken stands up and walks us over to sliding walls where many beautiful paintings hang and pulls out a section ... ]*

**Ken:** And here’s a painting from the Antarctic. When I went down there, because the Antarctic is essentially icy, there’s not much going on there in that picture unless you start to look into it and find some things in it.

**Lila:** Beautiful.

*[Ken pulls out another section – we see a dark and vivid underwater scene]*

**Ken:** I like to go snorkelling. I like to go diving. The sea’s not black. But to have the feeling of a night dive I make the sea black. And obviously there are some parts where I’ve scraped it away, scraped into that blackness. Some parts where I put the paint on. The green is good because of the pink. It’s just two different notes, a little fun and a little strange, yellow fish. It’s a bit of a game, it’s a bit of a fantasy. Some parts, fast, just draw it in.

**Claudio:** And your mixture of mediums, Ken. Oil and acrylic?

**Ken:** Yeah.

**Claudio:** And there’s no rules there?

**Ken:** No rules. No rules. Lovely colours, lovely colours. Even if I say so myself. A bit of sunlight falling on the water. Some Agapanthus, they’re blue. So it’s things within our garden. But you pick them up and move them around and put them where you want them to be. Because it’s not a photograph. It’s not a photograph. You lose yourself within it.

**Claudio:** Beautiful. And subject matter, we’ve talked about a little bit here. I like to paint from memory quite a lot.

**Ken:** Just, what’s the feeling ...

**Claudio:** The feeling.

**Ken:** That’s in your head.

**Claudio:** I have a son, he’s 14 months, so I’m a late bloomer in life and I love it. I’m a very proud father. We went for one of our first trips to the Great Barrier Reef last year. First time I’ve been. And then we went to Uluru for the first time. I took a bunch of epic photos on the trip and they sit in our family album. But it’s the memory and the feeling. Feelings.

**Ken:** It’s all in there.

**Claudio:** Hits ya.

**Ken:** Yeah. It’s all in there. And of course the great thing to look forward to, apart from the lifetime of love for your child, is when he gets to the age of five. You can never be better than a five-year-old, the little buggers. Because logic hasn’t taken over. So if they want to draw an arm coming out of the top of your head, well that’s where an arm could be. It’s only when they’ve got to eight or nine, they realise the arm should come out of the shoulder and they start to have logic. I’ve often said that I wish I could paint as well as a five-year-old. Because there’s such fantastic inhibition at that age. Three or four, they’re just mucking around and eating half the crayons instead of drawing with it. But five, six, it’s great.

**Claudio:** Yeah. And I’m excited for that phase. I’ve given my son some of my crayons, but they’re going in his mouth. Just how it goes. Ken, you had an illustrious career in advertising before painting. I’ve read your interviews, read your books, et cetera, creative directing, living in London and all the rest. And then you had your first show at 40.

**Ken:** The first show was in the Holdsworth Gallery in Sydney. I already knew I wanted to open my own gallery, but I wanted to have a show in a big commercial gallery, so I proved that I could do that. And it’s a very nerve-wracking experience, your first exhibition. Very, very nerve-wracking. It’s only in time you realise your mum’s going to buy a picture. The bloody plumber that you used, the guy in the garage, is going to buy a picture. You’re going to sell pictures to people that you know, and that’s true of the first couple of exhibitions. And then there’s going to be people who you don’t know, like now I’m selling a big painting to a guy in Barcelona. I don’t know the guy. So different times. But in that first exhibition, I made a very simple drawing of Sydney Harbour and put it on a t-shirt. And this is a very well-known story. A woman called Marion von Adlerstein wrote a line. She said, ‘You can hang a Done on the wall or a Done on yourself. There’s an integrity to everything he does.’ Which was very flattering. And at the time, there wasn’t anything that you could walk around in saying, ‘I live in Sydney’. But I’d been to Acapulco, I’d been to Portofino ...

**Claudio:** And you could buy the merch.

**Ken:** Yeah, that’s right. And so I was straight into that. When we opened our first little shop, which was down here in The Rocks, half of it was a gallery and half of it was merchandise. I did only flat things, t-shirts, sweatshirts. It’s only when Judy got involved, because she’s a very good designer, and she’d been a model and a fashion co-ordinator, that we moved into swimwear and clothing. So that’s how that business grew. One shop, if you do it well, becomes two. If you do that well it becomes ... we got to 15 shops in Australia.



**Claudio:** How do you deal with creative blocks?

**Ken:** I don't have creative blocks. I've got more than enough to do. I just ordered 20 canvases and I can think of 20 canvases after that. No, the creative block is for work not being good enough. My daughter and I were looking at a painting out there this morning and I was thinking I might change it. She convinced me to keep it and move on to something else. So you become very critical of your work. But look, it's easier for me to say that because I can afford to say it now. In our first year of marriage we had nothing. Absolutely nothing. We had to live on the classic smell of an oily rag. Takes a while to get over that. Because no one actually needs a painting. This man in Barcelona bought that one, but he doesn't really need it. He could put a print on his wall.

**Claudio:** It's not the same.

**Ken:** I'm glad he wants it and I'm glad he's paying for it. But it's a tough business.

**Claudio:** Yeah. And you've done it your own way, Ken. And that inspires me. You'll get critics, people that are going to be divisive in some way.

**Ken:** Always.

**Claudio:** And I have to get my brain beyond that sometimes. And other times I say 'I don't give a fuck. I just do what I'm doing and I like doing what I'm doing'. Other times I want to try and fit into that little area, but maybe I don't fit in that area.

**Ken:** And sometimes it hurts.

**Claudio:** Yeah.

**Ken:** It hurts when people criticise your work. I always try to make things beautiful. I can never understand when people don't like my work. How can you not like it? So sometimes it's jealousy that gets involved or sometimes people get angry about other things. In the end it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter.

**Claudio:** One of the fundamental skills of a great creative director is knowing when an idea is the one. Did this translate to your own personal work? And how do you know you're onto something? Is it knowing what you like? I know you paint the black reef and all experiment with that sort thing and you'll revisit them.

**Ken:** Yeah, I will. And look, sometimes I'll force myself to try and do something totally unexpected. Maybe something straight, figurative. And then I will get frustrated if it's not quite what I want it to be. Because your imagination is often ahead of your hand.

**Claudio:** I'll look at, say, someone like Picasso who changed styles a million times. Amazing. Each style was so important.

**Ken:** He is a great example of real creativity. And another great example is David Hockney. He's a great example of understanding the time in which we live. That he can make paintings on his iPad. He can make prints. He can do all kinds of things to reach people all the way around the world.

**Lila:** Who are the artists that inspire you?

**Ken:** There's a great American painter called Milton Avery. Milton Avery was essentially a colourist. He worked on the East Coast of America, above New York. Very thin paint. In the gallery out there [motions to his space], there's a painting called *Looking Out the Kitchen Window on a Milton Avery Morning*. I painted four paintings in respect of another painter, painting them in the way that they might have done it. He's a constant reminder of just how beautiful colour can be. And then there are the obvious ones. Van Gogh, Picasso, Bonnard, Willard. These are always the one you have to go back to. In Australia there's a young guy called Kenny Pittock who I like very much.

He's a funny guy. And Noel McKenna. James Drinkwater. You can always learn from other people. But the older you get, I think I don't really know what I'm talking about. Not really. Because you're a lovely person, nice to do an interview with, you know what you're talking about. But with artists, it's just words tumbling out of their mouth, it's ...

**Claudio:** It's like your paintings.

**Ken:** Yeah. That's what I'm about.

**Claudio:** But you are always eloquent with your words. You've got a rich history to translate.

**Ken:** I've got enough to talk about, I suppose.

**Claudio:** But you've got to let this thing talk [points to closest painting], because this is what you're doing. And this is what you're doing every day.

**Ken:** It should be about the pictures. Look, sometimes I think I'm really good and other times I think, no, I'm not really that good.

**Claudio:** So that goes on and on.

**Ken:** Oh, yeah.

**Claudio:** Just so I know.

**Ken:** Yeah.

**Lila:** Self-doubt never ends.

**Ken:** Oh yeah, that's right. You do have self-doubt. You do have self-doubt. It's different if you were something that was definable, like a doctor or a dentist or things like that. Like plumbers. Most times, plumbers make more than artists. Most artists can't make as much as a plumber. But a plumber comes in, does a job, stops the leak, goes home, sleeps peacefully. I don't think artists do that.

**Claudio:** How do you measure success?

**Ken:** For me, it's health, obviously. And apart from the bum examination, I think I'm pretty good for my age. I hope to live to 100. How do you measure it? The desire to work, for me. Maybe we can just touch on the fact that one of the reasons I became reasonably well-known, is making prints of the work, making it accessible. Accessible in its price. And had a wide enough distribution that people knew about you. Same as the magazine [points at *Paradiso on the coffee table*]. The more magazines you sell, the more people know about you, and that will lead to other things. So there are some artists who say, well, people don't understand my work. Well that may be true or it may be that it's not very good. But the way of finding out whether it's good is the marketplace. You've got to reach out. Which might mean that you've got to do some things that are "commercial".

**Claudio:** Yeah.

**Ken:** I remember once, a university critic said to me, 'Isn't some of your work very commercial?' I said, 'Are you familiar with the concept of a shop?' That's what it is. Even the flashiest bloody gallery, it's a shop. Selling art. Sotheby's, Christie's. They're shops selling old art. Some people will say that it's somehow a bit, I don't know what the word is, not pretentious, to promote yourself. Well, we have to.

**Claudio:** You've got to.

**Ken:** You have to. And it's changed. When I was much younger, the art business was an established one. You would be part of a group of artists who worked for various galleries, but the galleries controlled everything. Well, now, as you know, young people are starting their own magazines. Young musicians are putting out their own records.

Young filmmakers are making their own films. So all of that old-fashioned structure of how artists might work has changed.

[Turns to Lila ...]

**Ken:** You've got a great face. Don't you think she has a wonderful face?

**Claudio:** Yes.

**Lila:** Thank you.

**Ken:** It's an artist's job to look.

**Claudio:** Yeah.

**Lila:** That was a question I had actually. How do you see? How do you train yourself to look?

**Ken:** You don't need to train yourself. It's admiring beauty. Whether it's a flower or a shell or a beautiful face. It's the things that you feel something for. What else was I going to say to you?

**Claudio:** Beach conditions?

**Ken:** Well, I don't know. Look, the problem is we're doing an interview like this, they're good questions and it's nice, but you tend to take yourself a bit too seriously, don't you?

**Claudio:** I know you're not a super serious kind of guy.

**Ken:** I'm not.

**Claudio:** I saw one of your stores in the 80s in Surfers Paradise. Loved it. I'd go and I'd marvel at it. And I knew you were a brand already. I knew you were already Koala Blue with Olivia [Newton-John], bless her. Loved it. These are the imprints that you made on me. Your art and your colour and your design, all these things really work together to make you who you are. Something really special in it.

**Ken:** I'll tell you a little Olivia story. When we had our first shop down here in The Rocks, she came with her partner and they loved the shop and that's what they wanted to do in Los Angeles. And so I was happy to do anything that I could to help her. And we got on well, Olivia and I. And when I did the logo for Koala Blue and I drew this little koala ... I could draw koalas so cute - maybe I've told you this before - nine-year-old Japanese girls would faint from their very cuteness. Later, I got a call from a guy, he says, 'Ken Done?' I said, 'yeah'. He said, 'you did the koalas for Olivia.' I said, 'yeah'. He said, 'well, I've got a couple of shops in California, in Malibu. I wonder whether you'd do something for me.' Anyway, he came to Australia. We started a licensing arrangement, and it lasted for quite a long time. In America, where I was supposedly a brand. And I'm simply a commodity. And willingly, I wasn't saying I don't want to do it. And so I'd get on a plane, I'd fly to America, I'd be working the minute I got off the plane, doing logos for various American cities. And I did them for lots of cities. I wrote a Californian alphabet. You can write an alphabet that looks like California, so you can do Santa Monica, Santa Barbara, you can do anything that relates to that. Then they wanted me to do Midwestern cities, and I started. They wanted me to do Albuquerque. It's a fucking hard word, Albuquerque. It's too hard. I'm not going to do that. So we stopped then. Anyway, look, it was good fun. And it leads you into areas that you never imagined that you'd go.

**Claudio:** Well, that's fantastic.

**Ken:** Yeah. Look, good experiences. The same thing can happen to you.

**Claudio:** Oh, that's just it. And that's all it together. And you summed it up, I think, in the title of your book, *Art Design Life*.

**Ken:** Yeah.

**Claudio:** To me it's one big art show. To me, it's one big design project.

**Ken:** We have to go.

**Lila:** Yes. We have to go.

**Ken:** You good?

**Lila:** Yeah.

**Ken:** Old men are not to be trusted.

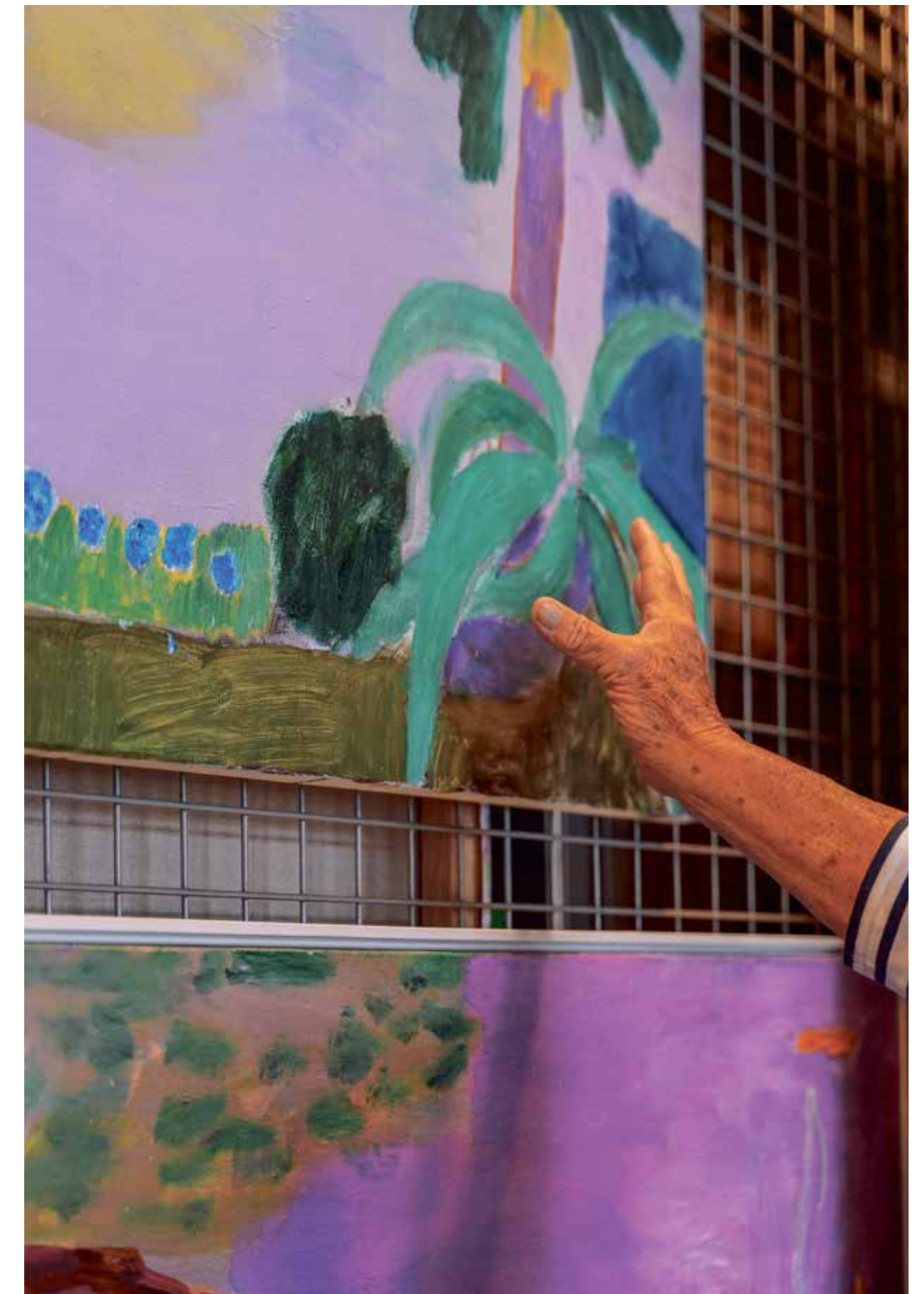
**Lila:** I think we kept on track, it was really good. It was fantastic.

**Claudio:** Five photos, let's go.

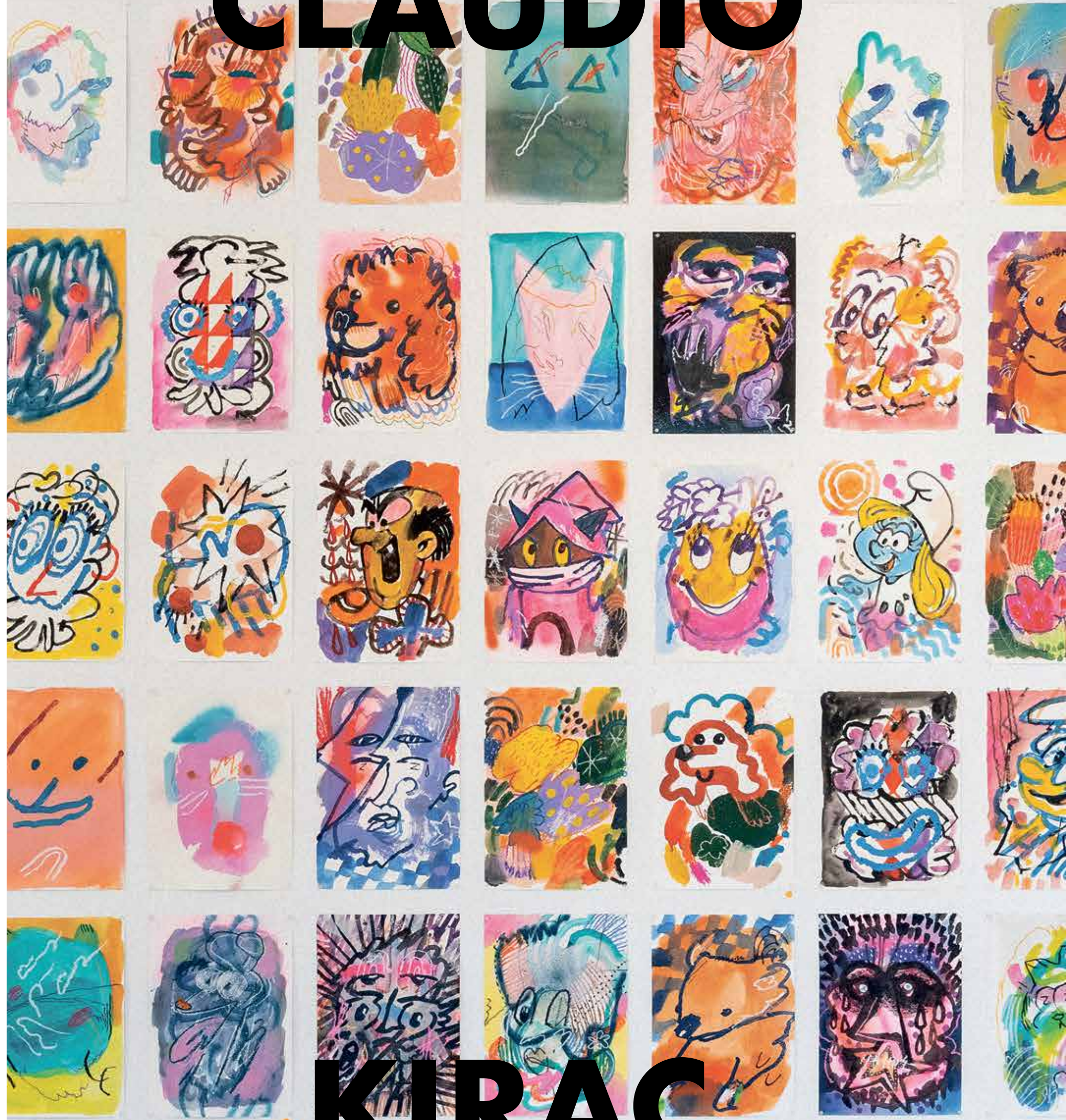
**Ken:** Don't trust old men.

**Claudio:** I'll get a couple of snaps over there.

@kendonegallery  
kendone.com.au



# CLAUDIO



# KIRAC



Doing creative things for a living

Claudio Kirac loves his home, the Gold Coast. He's a Creative Director and artist and for twenty-plus-years he has played a major role in the evolution of his local arts and culture scene. Words by Lila Theodoros. Photos courtesy of Claudio Kirac.

Claudio Kirac's studio is full of colour. Movement and expression explode out of the canvas he works on, but the subtle balance of tone and colour softens the work, projecting a vibrant optimism. This is Claudio Kirac on canvas.

Claudio grew up on the Gold Coast and always knew he was made for a creative life. From drawing cartoon cats as a kid to wanting to be an artist when he grew up, he was hooked on the arts. Working his way up from a junior designer at Billabong International to the position of Creative Director in his 15 years with the company, Claudio said yes to every opportunity and collected a diverse set of skills reaching across design, photography, film and illustration. He now runs his own multidisciplinary studio and, along with his team, is changing the face of his home town, the Gold Coast, one mural or brand or visual campaign at a time.

Claudio's studio is a brightly-lit building in an industrial part of Mermaid Beach and also home to Art-Work, the creative agency he founded with his business partner Paul Bow around ten years ago.

Claudio has more than twenty years of incredible experience behind him and despite a career spent working with major brands involving international travel and glamorous fashion world experiences, he is full of fun and sans ego. He is a community builder, industry mentor and all-round super nice dude. And he loves his Gold Coast.

The ocean has always called to Claudio. Born in Queanbeyan, just outside of Canberra, he spent his early years counting down the days until his family's next holiday, spent by the sea. His dad was a builder and progressively moved his family up the coast, from build to build. "Dad was a carpenter and we built all our houses," Claudio says.

"We kept building and selling, and we kept moving. And he really liked it near the coast, so we moved up to Coffs Harbour, and then we ended up here on the Gold Coast, which was great because I loved the coast. In the early, early days when I was little, we used to go from Canberra to the south coast, so Batemans Bay, Tuross Heads, Mollymook, all those places. And ever since I was small, that was it. I was done. Pure high seas, water all over the joint, fish."

Finally settling on the Gold Coast in 1985, Claudio was home.

A lot of us spend years searching for home, whether that is a place, a town, a community. But for a lucky few, they already know in their heart where that is. Claudio lives and breathes for his Gold Coast home and has been involved, consciously or not, in the evolution and growth of the local arts and culture scene. During the 80s and 90s, the Gold Coast had a very limited tourism aesthetic and now the local community boasts an incredible diversity of artists and creatives, relocating in droves. "There was a blank canvas here really, ready for a shift," he says. "It's always been a fairly creative town, but it's had its stigma of Meter Maids and sunshine and golden beaches."

In the early 2000s the underground arts scene in Australia was building momentum. Street art meets design meets music meets fashion.

"Semi-Permanent had just started. Banksy came to Sydney, with a massive arts show in an industrial

warehouse. Design was pushing forward, working with street artists," he remembers. Claudio was working at Billabong at the time and watching this creative movement evolve, not only on an international scene, but here in Australia too.

"In 2003 or so, a collective of four of us artists, Beau Velasco Parsons (RIP), Amber B, Christian Halford and myself, started Undergold. For me, it was something to do outside of working within commercial art and to keep pushing that underground art movement. We ended up doing our own art show, like in a bar in Main Beach, at Capital Bar, which was awesome. How did we get people there? I don't even know how we got people there. It was with postcards, or something. I don't know, man. But it was packed. There were over 100 people and it was huge, and then we got in the paper, and then featured in Black and White Magazine and Tokion Magazine in New York, like all this sort of stuff started pushing this movement. This was just our little collective, you know? Then around that, other collectives started up as well. We were really drumming up this underground energy which was awesome," he says.

Through groups like Claudio's Undergold Art Collective, the arts and culture scene on the Gold Coast continued to grow and shift perceptions away from visions of Meter Maids dressed in skimpy gold bikinis walking past tacky tourist traps, towards a new creative hub of artists, makers, designers, musicians and photographers, all inspiring, or being inspired by, their local community.

"I look back on Undergold as really, really exciting times. Super sparking joy when it comes to that because we really felt like we were making a change. We weren't accountable for anything and we were really just having fun and nailing it, as well as making really good art," he says.

This evolutionary creative wave was eventually embraced and supported by local government organisations. Through investment in the arts, grants and dedicated art spaces and venues, the local arts scene is thriving. Claudio says "It's been amazing for people to come here, live and make work. It was really good to see when people actually started to make work in response to the Gold Coast; being here, telling a story and connecting with Indigenous cultures and other crew who have been here for generations. It's fantastic, because it inspires me so much as well."

Claudio is a designer, a photographer, a creative director, a painter, an illustrator, an early vector king. He loves to make art. From honing his visual skills early on with choice subjects like Ghostbusters, Star Wars, Gremlins, Indiana Jones and Garfield, Claudio was always making art. When it was major education decision time at the end of high school, he couldn't fathom enrolling in a university when all he wanted to do was be an artist.

"I decided 'I'm just going to go do art.' And my teachers were like 'You're fucking nuts, mate. You need some further education.' Even without a university degree behind me, I've just been able to keep working forward at my own pace and whether that's held me back as I've gone through my career, I'm still not sure," he says humbly.

The decisions you make at the time can rarely be seen as a whole for many years, but the path Claudio

took, from starving artist to eventual design college graduate to junior entry-level job to an extensive tour of duty through every creative department of Billabong during his 15 years there, added up to an enviable set of diverse and mastered skills reaching across modalities, making him the creative he is today. Claudio worked hard and stayed true to his love – art.

The line between commercial design and art is blurry for many creatives and for Claudio it is not only blurry but zig-zaggy, tidal-wavey and criss-crossy. He has always been an artist but his joy in discovery and experimentation pulled him through commercial art practices. I ask Claudio how he walks these not so straight lines of creativity and he says with a laugh "I've always thought I sold out so long ago. And so be it. I don't know. I don't know if I get taken seriously as a contemporary artist, but I'll keep doing it forever, which I absolutely love, so maybe when I'm 65 I'll be taken seriously, who knows?"

"The design career helps, but it also hinders as well, in that I'm straddling both worlds – I'm not the starving artist, and I don't want to be a starving artist. I'd rather be comfortable in my life and make money while I'm here, not while I'm dead. It's hard living within that professional design world and then also in the contemporary art world. So yeah, it's a constant line that I'm walking and figuring out as I'm going."

In addition to being an accomplished Creative Director and the creative driving force behind his acclaimed multidisciplinary studio Art-Work, Claudio is a skilled painter who continues to make art and exhibits his contemporary work regularly. His work is layered, textured, vibrant and emotive – he is called to make it.

"I constantly keep making it – it's that outlet and response, usually emotional responses with materials and colour, trying to build it up. I do a lot of portrait work on paper and then a lot of landscapes, which are large works on wood or canvas. But yeah, it's constant. The work is emotional responses to what's happening in the world, or within myself, and to our environment. This work is personal, primal, barbaric, all that sort of stuff."

And his work is constant. Fuelled by a seemingly unending source of creative juice, Claudio keeps working. His art is prolific and a major part of his day – I get told about the "art zone" set up in his design studio, giving him access to his work whenever inspiration visits. He is a creative 24/7, with ideas in constant flow. He says "I wouldn't have it any other way because it's the best life. It really is. And life without art and culture, I can't imagine it."

Claudio's work pulses with a vibrant and optimistic energy, a clear reflection of the person he is. He is a community builder, a joyful creative, a positive and supportive industry leader. I ask him for tips on how to generate that next big project and without pausing for even a second he says "Look at what tools are available to you now. Look at what platforms you can use to get your idea out there. Get together with like-minded people and keep the dream alive because there's nothing better than talking. There doesn't have to be outcomes, it's just sharing ideas and what you're going through."



KEN DONE X CLAUDIO KIRAC

FOLLOWING CLAUDIO'S CONVERSATION WITH KEN DONE (SEE P14-21), WE ASKED HIM TO WRITE SOME REFLECTIONS ON MEETING HIS HERO. WHAT DOES KEN DONE MEAN TO CLAUDIO KIRAC? WHAT IMPACT HAS KEN DONE HAD ON HIS OWN CREATIVE PRACTICE?:



"Ken Done has played a big part in our lives as Australians for such a long time, directly or indirectly. He has touched our creative souls with a ray of sunshine. My memories of his art and design in the early 80s are so clear and distinct. I can take myself back there in an instant and feel the colour and vibrancy which is synonymous with Australian popular culture.

Whether it be the '84 LA Summer Olympics and Koala Blue or standing among the dynamic giant letters that made up the word 'AUSTRALIA' at World Expo '88 in Brisbane, there is always a sense of joy and balance that feels like all is well in the world.

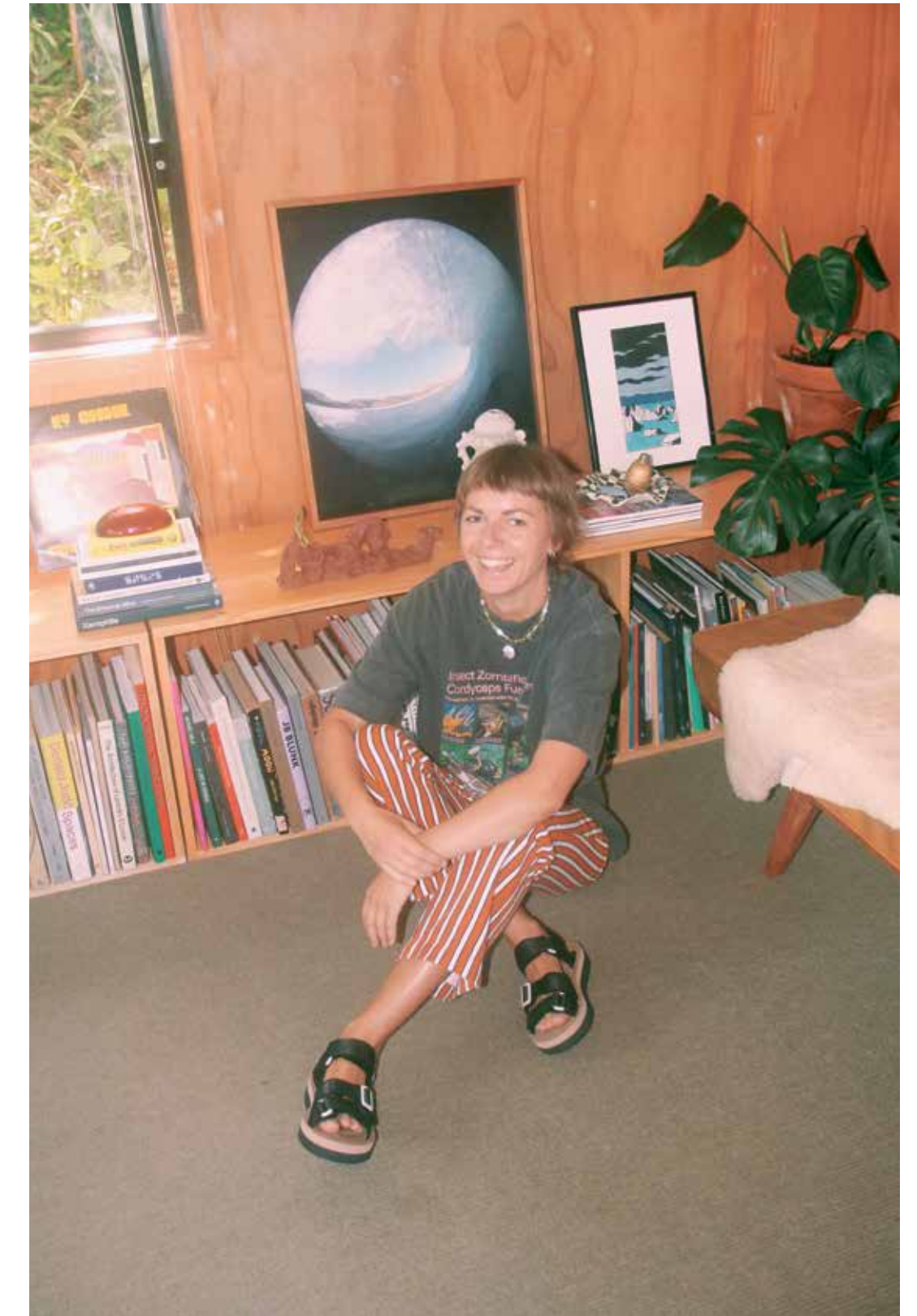
The first time I saw one of Ken's paintings in the flesh was not so long ago: a pilgrimage to the Ken Done Gallery in Sydney – the energy and spontaneity of his mark making was astounding.

In a way, I liken my creative practice to that of Ken – art, design and all the bits in-between. Where do we sit as artists? Are we designers? Is it just one big blurry line or a well-oiled and calculated creative machine that just keeps barreling along. This is something I have struggled with throughout my career, but as I get further down the line, I embrace and accept the fact that I do creative 'things' for a living and have been doing so for the past 30 years. For this I am grateful and never take it for granted. Do what you love and work hard.

Ken's impact on the art world has also been a long road for him. Acceptance and criticism are major things to deal with as an artist and people have not always been so kind to him. My favourite piece of Ken's is *Me*, his self-portrait for the 2011 Archibald Prize. Bold, bright and ever so simple – 70 years of work into one hour, as he would say – and a major milestone for any artist! I predict we will feel the impact of Ken's work for generations to come and his quintessential style as an Aussie icon will continue to bring joy into people's lives when and where they need it most."

@claudiokirac

Our Culture Partner for this issue, Radical Yes, was founded ten years ago to create, design and sell shoes in a way that radically reframed how the Australian shoe industry was operating at the time – small batches of flat shoes to encourage a life lived under the mantras of ‘little and often’ and ‘hasten slowly’. Life and business don’t have to move at a rapid pace. We don’t have to constantly chase productivity. We can enjoy little bursts of productivity or rest as often as we like. It’s the flow of this balance that inspires the Radical Yes line of products. We spoke with three local women who inspire us to live a life full to the brim of both creativity and rest. Words by Nat Woods. Photos by Lila Theodoros. Shoes by Radical Yes.



**Lora Ward**  
Designer, art director and publisher

**Who are you and what do you create?**

I am a designer and art director. I also run Good Publishings, (soon to be Bacteria Books) a bookstore, distributor and independent publisher. I see it as a means to contribute to culture and community through a place of assemblage, collecting and ongoingness. The project was founded for the cultivation of conversations and connectivity between artists and creatives through the medium of print and has ignited a personal search and exploration for the unexpected. A compendium of ideas. A gatherer of the book.

**What does the creative rhythm of your days look like?**

My days vary immensely but more and more I value malleability and the opportunity to work in the realm of the physical and material. After a very computer-heavy career, the things that really ignite my creativity are through the use of my hands – whether that be building a boat with my Dad or baking bread once a week with a wonderful woman in Wardell. The physical helps me enter a sphere of cosmic reverie that in turn carves out space for visceral creativity to exist.

**What is currently inspiring you?**

Being a sponge of all human, non-human and novel environments. Soaking everything up allows one to become the water that intricately disperses nourishment on all that it surrounds. Some inspiring readings that friends have handed to me are: *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction* by Ursula K. Le Guin, *Pharmako/Poeia* by Dale Pendell and an essay on *Queer Theory for Lichens* by David Griffiths. All have a similar symbiotic view that the linear binary world that has been handed to us is tightening its grip and has led us in a singular direction. I also love Brian Eno’s theory of *Scenius and Creative Intelligence of a Community*. He speaks of new ideas articulated by an individual that are generated by a community as a whole.

**What do you consider radical?**

I have really been loving listening to the interviews of Timothy Morton. He manages to weave a delicate web of positivity around the Anthropocene and the ending of the world as we currently know it and the interconnectedness that surrounds us all. He has coined the term ‘Hyperobjects’ which is his concept of matter so large and complex, we as humans can no longer grasp them or understand our individual relationship with them. Things such as plastic, styrofoam and global warming have grown to such a scale that they become impossible to define. Morton argues that in order to understand such things, we have to shift the way we understand the world.

@goodpublishings



Lora wears Neptune 2.0 Athletic Sandal – Black and Milk by RadicalYes. On the opposite page, clockwise from top right: Paige wears Double Happiness 2.0 Slide in Chocolate Leather by RadicalYes; Lora wears Grace Vélcro Mary Jane – Milk Leather by RadicalYes; Nidala wears Neptune 2.0 – Athletic Sandal in Bronze Multi by RadicalYes.



**Nidala Barker**  
**Proud Djugun musician, sustainability educator and activist**

**Who are you and what do you create?**

I am, as we all are, many things! At the moment what I am the most is a musician, a custodianship educator, an Indigenous rights activist, a nature education mentor for kids and a self-taught tiny house builder. I create anything that helps me lean closer to a sovereign state of being, where by standing firmly on my feet I can make a space to bring people together ... (but I think my favourite will always be music).

**What does the creative rhythm of your days look like?**

Pure chaos, always.

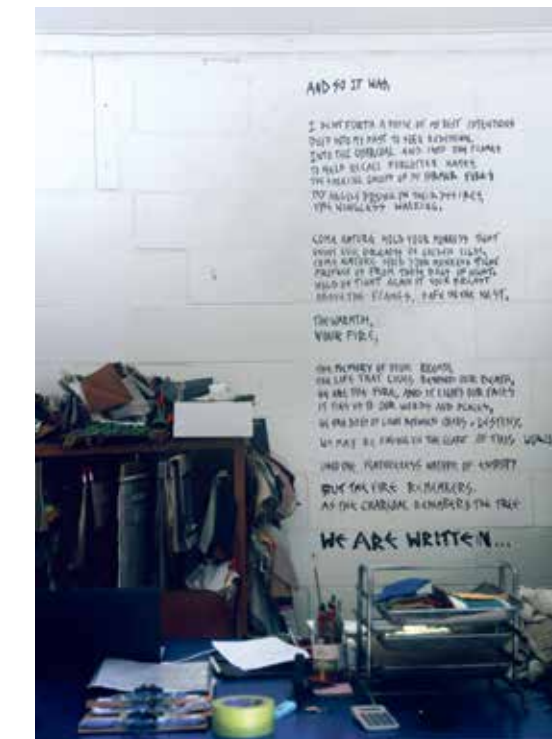
**What is currently inspiring you?**

My big sister. Untethered to past ideas of herself and graceful in admitting her mistakes. She is not yet clear on her role in the world and that is part of her magic. She is the type of woman who navigates the world on storm winds and gentle tide, with curious eyes and the sweetest of hearts. It is beyond me how someone wouldn't be inspired by her very presence.

**What do you consider radical?**

Taking my time. Following inspiration with no set purpose. Prioritising process. I have no interest in reaching destinations. I want to spend my days sitting in the middle of the road with mangoes and hot tea, talking to strangers and playing with the bugs ... and maybe by doing so, I can prick the curiosity of those rushing past, so they too may slow down enough to see the ants crawling under their toes. In my eyes the most radical act of all is reclaiming our time.

@nidala.barker



**Paige Miller**  
**Upholsterer**

**Who are you and what do you create?**

Hi! I'm Paige Miller from The Dusty Road. TDR is a team of creatives and artisans that upholster and create custom made furniture.

**What does the creative rhythm of your days look like?**

It's forever changing but there's always music playing in the background.

**What is currently inspiring you?**

Music and art are a constant inspiration. Colour and fun fabrics always inspire new ideas. And my friends – they're all so talented, interesting and colourful in their own ways.

**What do you consider radical?**

People driving positive change. Original ideas that challenge the status quo. Choosing colour.

@thedustyroad

# H O T M E S S



HOTMESS are surrealistic party raunch art classes run by Gabrielle Miller and Sophie Taylor. We asked Gab and Soph to expand on what that actually means. Words by Nat Woods. Photos by HOTMESS.

*Before we get into the wild and wonder of your creation, HOTMESS, can you please tell us who you both are and how you met?*

We met at the Mullum markets, both with newborn babies and bloodshot eyes. Gab had just moved to the area from Berlin, where she'd been based for ten years. Soph was juggling motherhood and studying Contemporary Australian Indigenous Art full time. We hit it off instantly as we were navigating new-mum identity crisis/exhaustion and found solace in reminiscing about our past creative endeavours and shared love for the arts. This soon led to us renting an art studio together which has become our little haven in between nap times.

*What are your creative practices and how have you maintained inspiration and a practice while also mothering?*

Gab is a dancer, actor, puppeteer, director and in a band called The Zap Show with her partner. Last year they toured 19 festivals in nine countries all around Europe with their one-year-old son. Soph is an Indigenous ceramicist and painter, working at local pottery studios and selling her own range online and locally. We both agree that our creative practices have been what's maintained our inspiration in the early days of parenthood, allowing us that vital little outlet and self care to be able to show up as mothers. During those short windows of free time we try to prioritise making art rather than cleaning the house or washing nappies! We are also into getting our kids involved, making it as much a part of their lives as it is ours. They are already developing a love for drawing, drumming and pottery.

*What spurred you to combine your talents and create the classes?*

The catalyst was the Northern Rivers floods last February. Gab's house was flooded, along with a lot of the community. Many people were in dire straits and while having a toddler on her hip, Soph felt pretty limited in the contribution she could make. In a fluster, we decided that the best way we could contribute was to do something within our strengths which ended up being a free art class for the community. It's how 'healthy escapism' came about, as we were trying to facilitate an experience people could find some sanity in, even for a moment, away from the mouldy chaos.

We have continued re-finding and re-defining our identities after becoming mums. The surrealistic, cheeky and decadent themes we explore in our classes are helping us do this, giving us strength and confidence to push our limitations and be playful.

*What can people expect when they come to HOTMESS and do they need prior artistic talent or skill?*

By combining concept, performance, costume, lighting, soundtrack and guided drawing exercises, HOTMESS classes offer a multi-sensory experience for the audience to drop into and interpret in a way that means something to them. We perform within the loose constraints of a traditional 'life drawing' structure, but expand wildly on what we provide as the drawing muse. Our creative partnership has birthed a concept that is unique, exploring untouched territories between



an art class and a theatrical performance. Our class offers a space to facilitate 'the let go' that moves us away from striving for perfection or the end result and more enjoy the 'hot mess' that is the artist's journey.

The HOTMESS experience is for anyone and everyone who wants to be a part of a unique experience and explore their creativity. We think it's even more important for those who have never wielded a paintbrush, but have longed for the colour. Expect some boundary bending and thought provoking entertainment. Our class is designed to conjure important conversations, playfully nudging the audience to ask questions and challenge the fabric of everything. We thrive on the edge, exploring concepts that are bold, silly, evocative and controversial, aiming to put a bit of heat in your seat and a smile on your dial.

*What are you both working on this year, both with HOTMESS and your own creative projects?*

Growing HOTMESS is our main focus this year, continuing regular shows in the Northern Rivers, while expanding our reach to national and international venues and festivals. We are also developing other avenues under our HOTMESS umbrella, including ON A WALL – our surreal concepts in a gallery space, AT YOUR PARTY – our classes at private events and RAVE CAVE – our performance at festivals. We have collaborated with Channel Void for a series of online classes that will be released very soon on their new platform Service Desk. As for our own practices, Soph is continuing to teach and make ceramics and Gab is concentrating on writing a children's TV series and continuing working as an actor.

For upcoming shows, check out @weare.hotmess or [www.hotmess4eva.com](http://www.hotmess4eva.com)



# Zion Levy Stewart



Zion Levy Stewart is one of those rare artists who has an uncomplicated relationship with their muse and artistic voice. He paints what interests him and his interests are varied. Words and photos by Anna Hutchcroft. Photos of artwork by Paul Guthrie.



Zion was hard at work when his mother, Christine, showed me into his studio on an oppressively muggy mid-summer day. His face was hovering just inches away from his easel, taut with unflinching concentration. Looking back out at him from his canvas was a hatted version of himself against a cerulean sky, with a magpie bursting into flight just behind his left shoulder. In the top right and left corners of his painting were signatures he incorporates into almost all of his works these days: a yellow sphere for the sun and a white one for the moon. The colourful world of his paintings doesn't require analytical or conceptual somersaults to be understood. His frank and instinctive approach speaks to the audience in a universal language that takes many other painters years to master, circumnavigating the ekphrasis and bringing the magic of his insight straight to the viewer.

Now 44, Zion moved to Australia from London when he was 12 and has been creating work for more than 20 years. When Zion was in his late teens, one of Christine's friends presented Zion with a pen and paper and requested a portrait. The resultant drawing was so confident and accurate that everyone present was amazed, especially since Zion hadn't shown much interest in drawing previously. Even he was surprised at the likeness. From then on, he often drew friends who visited their house.

When they moved to the Northern Rivers in 2000, Zion attended the RED Inc. Support Group, a locally-run support group that provides much-needed disability services to the community. Through the insight and effort of their visionary director and founder, Jenny London, they opened an art studio so clients could pursue their talents and interests. From there,

Zion started to paint. Now, he has a studio at home where he paints every day and his mother's ceramic studio on the property where he creates bowls, plates and platters in his signature colourful fashion.

Having entered the Archibald Prize twice, and continuing to exhibit locally and interstate, his work proceeds to gain recognition. Zion was invited to enter the Wollumbin Art Award at Tweed Regional Art Gallery and his painting, *Australian Birds*, was Highly Commended and sold. His triple-portrait of internationally renowned photographer Polly Borland, Nick Cave and The Queen, which was exhibited at Byron School of Art as part of Art Byron was subsequently bought by Borland. Chris Hemsworth also bought one of his works recently, hilariously entitled *Chris Hemsworth Thor at Wategoes Beach* (pictured top left).

He's one of those rare artists who has an uncomplicated relationship with their muse and artistic voice. He paints what interests him and his interests are varied. He emerged from a phase of painting scenes from TV Week Magazine into a creating series of Australian birds, only to pivot into scenes he observed around his hometown, Mullumbimby. An ever-prolific painter, his paintings are stacked and piled into every corner of his studio. Some of them have even been relegated to a wooden closet where hundreds more are stored. Walking in there feels like entering a treasure trove full of undiscovered gems.

When I train my lens in his direction, he stops what he's doing to smile and say "cheese." Upon saying goodbye, Zion pulls me into a warm embrace before heading to the ocean for a swim.

@zionlevystewart  
zionart.com.au



# Jazmin Theodora

We arrived languid and sweaty after a swim at Hanging Rock waterfalls, curious to enter the world of our next elder friend. Thunder rolled through the valley and into our chests as Jazmin shared her life. At moments, her frail voice was swept away by the winds and the lightning cracks that whipped at our words, but her message was clear: there is nothing more precious than being able to be yourself. Jazmin was the first trans woman in Kings Cross in the 60s to live 24-hours a day as a woman. She had to fight to live life the way she needed to. She was jailed, beaten and bullied but went on to star in drag shows all over the world. Born with clairvoyant powers and a near-debilitatingly high IQ, life was complex. Now an iconic local in Nimbin, home of the Aquarius Festival, she's deeply loved and sought after for her tarot readings and psychic gifts. But Jazmin isn't in the business of telling you when you're going to die, whether to quit your job or what your next move should be, her tarot readings are warm, encouraging and more of a reminder that the planets are aligned in favour of your growth. She feels like she's close to crossing over to the other side, but death does not scare her. Her bright smile sparkled with a cheekiness that belied her age, but her stories told of many contrasts including some darker days that made her joyfulness even more profound. We left in a quiet and energised awe after being immersed in Jazmin's electricity, beauty and courage. Words by Oni Blecher and Anna Hutchcroft. Photos by Anna Hutchcroft.



*Oni: When Anna contacted you about this article, what did you think?*

Lovely idea. I'm desperately looking for someone to help me write my book.

*O: What are your hopes for your book? Do you want to share your story or do you want to be a role model for young people?*

I'd like to make money, actually. Because I'd like to put a lot of money back into Nimbin. It is a very beautiful place. Most people only see it from the outside but there's an incredible camaraderie here. It's a very beautiful place. When I start my story, I always say, "Can you imagine what it was like? For it to be illegal to be yourself?" I lived in King's Cross in the 1950s and 60s. There was lots of police trouble with prostitution. It was illegal to be yourself. I've been arrested and thrown into cells and beaten up by police and dragged through the station by my hair. I don't know how I survived it, to be honest with you. It was a wonderful place but only because I had great friends. I was looked after by everyone.

*O: So you were surrounded by a lot of really inspiring people.*

Yes, and it was still very hard, because I think the police were absolutely horrendous and that they did terrible things to us. I was the first person to live 24 hours a day as a woman. And it wasn't easy. I actually tried to kill myself a couple of times. I had a wonderful friend – a boy called Teresa. Him and I decided to leave the planet because it became too much being beaten up all the time. So we came up with a plan. Across the road near Chevron Hotel there was a mansion. And we could get into the coal cellar. All these beautiful mansions in The Cross were being bought out by developers so they were empty until they built these high-rise shopping centres. And so in the coal cellar, we set up this room with candles and a comfortable bed. He cut my main vein and then he cut his and then we both took a soup bowl full of sleeping tablets. My body accepted them but his refused them and he vomited them back up and he was staggering around. We didn't know that an old lady lived in the mansion of a night. She came down to the cellar and Teresa was staggering about and the old lady shouted, "Murder! Murder!" At any rate, Teresa took off. And this woman ran into the foyer of the Chevron Hotel saying, "Murder! There's been a murder!" I didn't know about this because I was unconscious. But I had a lovely neighbor named Mrs Charlmers and she was a domestic at St Vincent's Hospital and so I was rushed there. In those days, they knew nothing about drag queens or anything. But I was rushed into the emergency room so they could see what happened to me and when they undressed me the nun screamed and fainted and the nurse started hyperventilating. Another nun came up and she started hyperventilating and I don't know if it was for religious reasons or what, but I ended up being transferred to Sydney. I was in a coma for six days.

*O: And did you go somewhere?*

I went over to the other side. I've been clinically dead three times in my life and twice I've been over to the other side and twice I've been sent back. It's absolutely wonderful over there. When you're up there, you're weightless and painless. The interesting thing was, when I got up there, there were always Lions everywhere. Lions! I was running up and throwing my arms around them and rolling through the

ethers with them and I could never understand what that meant until I started to understand astrology. I realised that my midheaven is in Leo and that's my destiny path through life.

*Anna: And where did you live at this time before The Cross? Where did you grow up?*

All over Sydney. My father was on the road during the Depression. He was always on the road looking for work so we were always moving. One time we were in Northwest New South Wales on the biggest sheep station in the world. When I was living in The Cross, there was a notorious copper called Bumper Barrel. He was the only detective that wasn't homophobic. And he had a soft spot for me; he didn't mind gay people as long as you weren't doing something illegal. I was starting to live as a woman, my hair was just growing over my ears like the Beatles and I had started wearing Queen Elizabeth scarves and dresses from secondhand shops and I did that for about six months and then Bumper raided the place where I was living in and said, "Get out. Get out, get your hair cut and go get a job. I'll be back next week. And if you haven't done that, I'll charge you with vagrancy." So I had to go and cut my hair and I got a job at Grace Brothers at Broadway. But as soon as I quit, I was back up The Cross and growing my hair again. Can you imagine it was illegal for men to have long hair!

*O: When he told you to cut your hair and get a job, what was the feeling of trying to go back into men's clothing again?*

Oh, just ... It was hopeless.

*A: You went on to lead some amazing drag shows in Kings Cross and beyond. What was your show like?*

I travelled the world. I had my airfares paid everywhere. My act was very, very good. In actual fact, in Hong Kong a lot of people knew my name. I had two names: one of them was Foxy Woman. During the show, when I was almost naked, I worked with just a fox fur. The other name was New Jade Flower. Oh, it was so beautiful. I spoke Cantonese fluently. I was very good with languages. I can still sing in Mandarin today.

*O: From day to day, do you have a daily practice that you really enjoy? Or is every day different?*

I've been too sick for the last six months. I got out of the habit of a lot of things. I'm in a lot of pain. I used to get on my wobbler machine every day but I haven't done that for a few months and it's been very hard for me. I think I'll be going over to the other side soon. And I'm not frightened of leaving. I'm not frightened to die.

*O: How do you feel about it? Is it like looking forward to going on a holiday?*

A gorgeous holiday.

*A: When did you start reading Tarot?*

I'm more than a Tarot reader, I've been psychic every since I was a child. I'd freak my family out, even as a toddler. I'd say stuff and they'd say, "How do you know that? You're only two years old!"

*O: What's been one of your greatest joys?*

Having my surgery at 70. An amazing, beautiful thing. Wow.

*O: Did it feel like it was a gift that you gave yourself?*

It just freed me of something.



The blue sea, the red houses, the green cacti, the yellow grass ... all dried up by the scorching midday heat. When the sun sets, it lays down with it a glowing pastel blanket over everything.

# The colour



# and the shape

Castelsardo, Sardinia / Summer of 2020

Words and photos by Christoph Haiderer

The light is clean and crisp. Any diffusion has been washed away by the sea breeze, the shadows are as sharp as the knives the old men carry on their belts. The colour palette seems chosen by an old master, perfectly complementary in shade and contrast – intense, like I have never seen before.

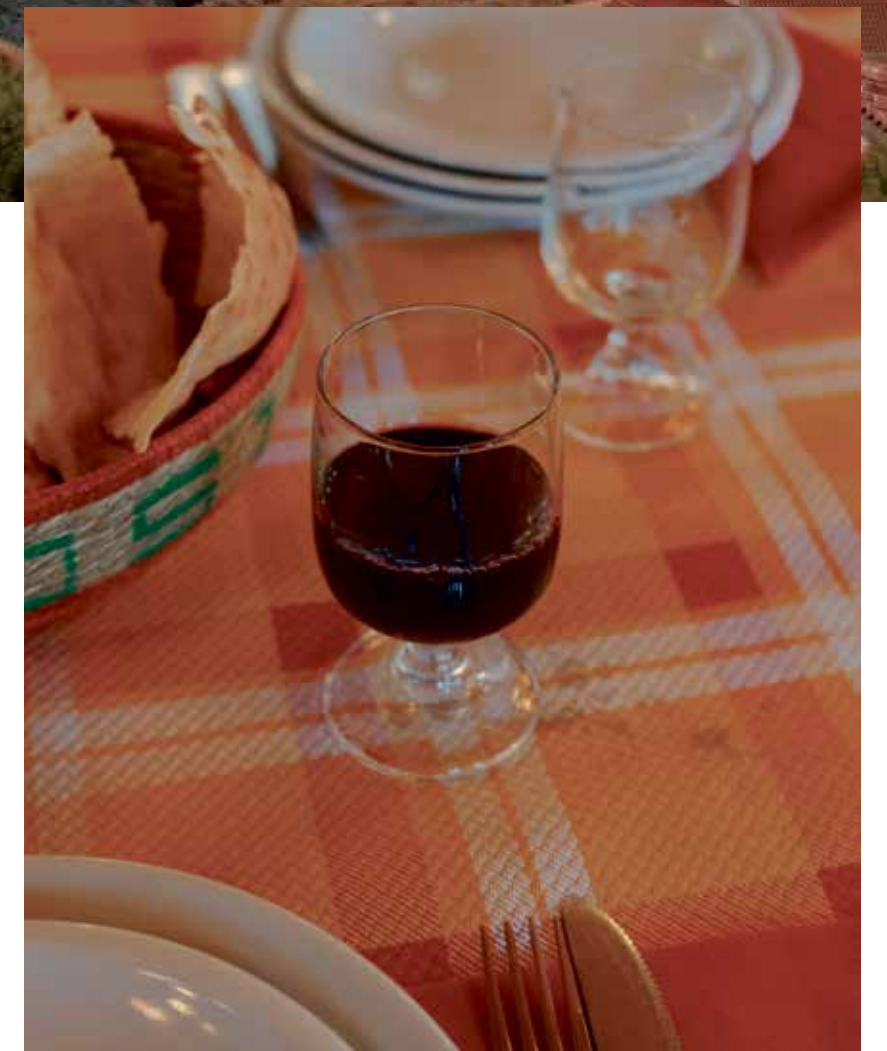
“Nice baskets,” I say to the old lady on the steps up to the castle, selling handmade goods to tourists passing by. “So buy one then. I cannot eat compliments,” she answers grumpily, following her comment by the smallest of smiles. The people seem as crisp as the light, as precise as the shadows, as rough as the terrain. Honest but warm.

On top of the door of the little mediaeval city hall, the slightly ripped flags of Italy and Europe are dancing in the wind next to

the island’s own flag. After a while it becomes quite clear that here they follow their own set of rules.

The Pizzaiolo called Lucifero puts one of his round creations in the stove, heated by the quality wood that is carefully stored in a pile behind the pizzeria, overlooking the sun melting into the sea on the horizon. Lucifero is not his real name but he is working with the fire so everyone calls him that. I try to find my six-month-old son, who had been instantly torn from our hands entering the restaurant by the women working in the kitchen. My partner spent her summers in this restaurant, on this beach, in this little town. She, too, was pulled from her parent’s arms by these women when she was his age.

Family. The best pizza I ever had.



Christoph Haiderer is an Austrian-born photographer and graphic designer living and working by the sea in La Spezia, Italy.  
[www.christophhaiderer.com](http://www.christophhaiderer.com)  
[@christophhaidererphoto](https://www.instagram.com/christophhaidererphoto)

# Earth Cakes

Naturopath and Herbalist, Jana Brunclikova, shares a recipe from her stunning new book, *Earth Cakes: the Witchcraft*.

*“Earth Cakes: the Witchcraft, is a collection of my favourite recipes for home baking, some simple and some more complicated. In Earth Cakes, I will teach you how to push boundaries in your baking, how to become a Green or Kitchen Witch and how to use Elemental Magic in your Earth Cake creation.*

Inspired by folk tradition and my Eastern European roots, let me guide you to step into your own fairy tale, create an Earth Cake or treat using nature’s gifts and learn how to make a spell for times when you need.”

## Black Bean Brownies with Cinnamon

Serves 16. Preparation time 10 minutes. Cooking time 30 minutes.

Black beans in this Earth recipe are symbolic of immortality and magic power. They are connected with Witches as a beanstalk can form a Witches’ broom, as in Jack and the Beanstalk. Once planted, beans can represent resurrection and reincarnation since they grow (spiritually) upwards.

### NATURE’S GIFTS:

1/4 cup old-fashioned rolled oats (certified gluten-free, if preferred)  
260g can of black beans, drained and rinsed  
1/4 cup creamy raw almond butter  
6 tablespoons raw cacao powder  
1 tablespoon ground flaxseeds or 3 tablespoons black chia seeds  
2 teaspoons vanilla extract  
1 tablespoon cinnamon  
1 cup coconut sugar or monk fruit sweetener  
2 teaspoon vinegar (balsamic or apple cider)  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
1/2 teaspoon baking soda  
3/4 cup dark chocolate chips (vegan and low sugar)  
Optional: 20 drops chocolate stevia

### GREEN WITCH PREPARATION:

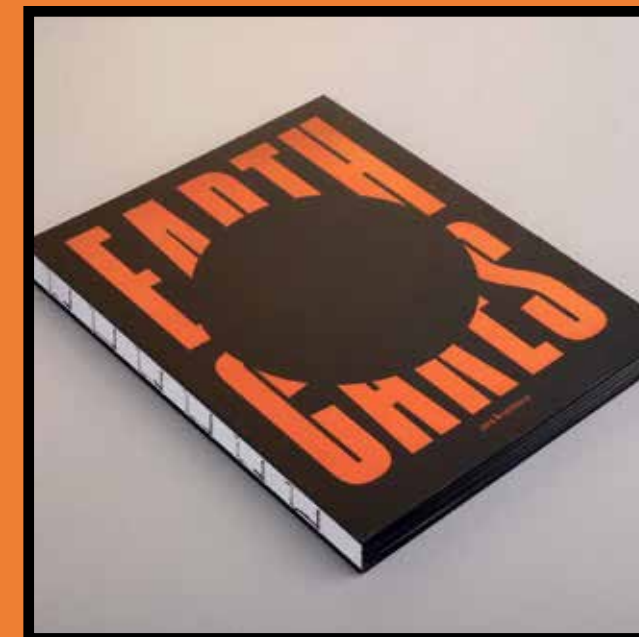
Preheat the oven to 180°C and line an 8 inch square baking dish with parchment paper. In a large food processor fitted with an S-blade, process the rolled oats briefly, until they resemble a coarse flour.

Add in the black beans, almond butter, cacao powder, ground flax, vanilla, sugar, vinegar (which helps the brownies rise), salt and baking soda. Process until a very smooth and a thick batter is formed, stopping to scrape down the sides at least once to make sure everything is mixed evenly. Add 1/2 cup of the chocolate chips to the batter and pulse briefly to mix them in.

Transfer the batter into the lined 8-inch baking dish. The batter will be rather thick, so you’ll need to use the spatula to spread it evenly into the pan. Sprinkle the remaining chocolate chips over the top and press them lightly into the batter.

Bake until the top begins to crack and the centre feels relatively firm to a light touch, around 30 minutes. Allow the brownies to cool completely before attempting to cut them into squares, as they are fragile when warm. I let mine cool for at least 2 hours. Serve at room temperature and store any leftovers in an airtight container in the fridge for up to a week. (I imagine these would freeze well, too).

The consistency of the brownies is nice and rich. Cut them into small slices and serve with ice-cream of your choice.



*Earth Cakes: the Witchcraft* by Jana Brunclikova can be purchased online through [thesecretkitchen.net](http://thesecretkitchen.net) or @thesecret\_kitchen

EVENTS

**NATURAL BRIDGE**

Jet Black Cat Music and Handsome tours are bringing Natural Bridge back to the Northern Rivers this March. Headlined by Tuareg guitarist and songwriter, Mdou Moctar, and LA based Drugdealer, with support acts; Bones & Jones, Folk Bitch Trio and Baby Cool. Get your tickets for this eclectic celebration of music.

**Sunday 5 March**  
Eltham Hotel  
elthampub.com.au/music

**QUEER BALL**

This year's Queer Ball has a new program and a new venue. Now split over two days, the mini festival features a sit-down arts experience on Friday 10 March, featuring Steven Oliver, panels and music, followed by the Queer Ball Party on Saturday night. Organisers invite Northern Rivers queers to relax, enjoy community and unite in the freedom of expression, healing and celebration.

**Friday 10 March & Saturday 11 March**  
Brunswick Picture House  
@queerballbyron

EXHIBITIONS

**YEAH, NICE GALLERY**

Pop by Yeah, Nice Gallery to dive into the colourful and whimsical world of Morgan Blue, on exhibition until 17 March. Following on from Morgan, will be Ozzy Wright (24 March-24 April) and then Liv Enqvist (28 April-26 May). So much arty goodness to feast your eyes upon!

**Yeah, Nice Gallery**  
4 Acacia Street, Byron Bay

**HIROMI HOTEL - RAINBOW**

Hiroimi Tango brings her sensory and interactive installation to the Lismore Regional Gallery pop-up space. Drawing on the colours and symbolism of this natural wonder (hope, equality, new beginnings), Hiroimi's exhibition and related public programs invite visitors to play an active role in the work.

**11 March to 15 April**  
Lismore Regional Gallery pop-up space  
46 Magellan Street, Lismore

**BLOOM BY MIA FORREST**

Mia's artworks of Australia native flowers twist, bloom and stretch in front of your eyes. As the flowers transform and bloom, they form a DNA-like helix structure, inviting the audience to contemplate how species morph, change, survive, and thrive over time.

**8 March to 30 April**  
Northern Rivers Community Gallery  
44 Cherry Street, Ballina

**POP MASTERS**

Take yourself on a drive up the highway to HOTA to check out Pop Masters, a world exclusive exhibition featuring works by Andy Warhol, Keith Haring and Jean-Michel Basquiat, alongside artists inspired by their legacy. On exhibition in Australia for only 15 weeks and exclusively at HOTA, it's an incredible exhibition right in our backyard.

**18 February to 14 June**  
HOTA: Home of the Arts  
135 Bundall Rd, Surfers Paradise

WORKSHOPS

**COLLAGE CLUB**

Head down to the Lismore Regional Gallery every Thursday from 4-6pm to get creative at Collage Club - a creative community recovery program facilitated by Claudie Frock. All materials are provided, it's wheelchair accessible, Auslan interpretation is available on request and best of all, it's completely free!

**Lismore Regional Gallery**  
46 Magellan St, Lismore

**Paradiso is so very proudly brought to you by:**

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*Proudly celebrating*  
**OUR SIXTH YEAR**  
*of independent publishing.*

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hello@thisparadiso.com.au

Oh, you're at the end.

To pass the time between issues  
you can always go to our

**Journal**

and read a curated selection of  
features from the Paradiso archives.  
Issues 01-22

[thisparadiso.com.au/journal](http://thisparadiso.com.au/journal)

*Crossword:*

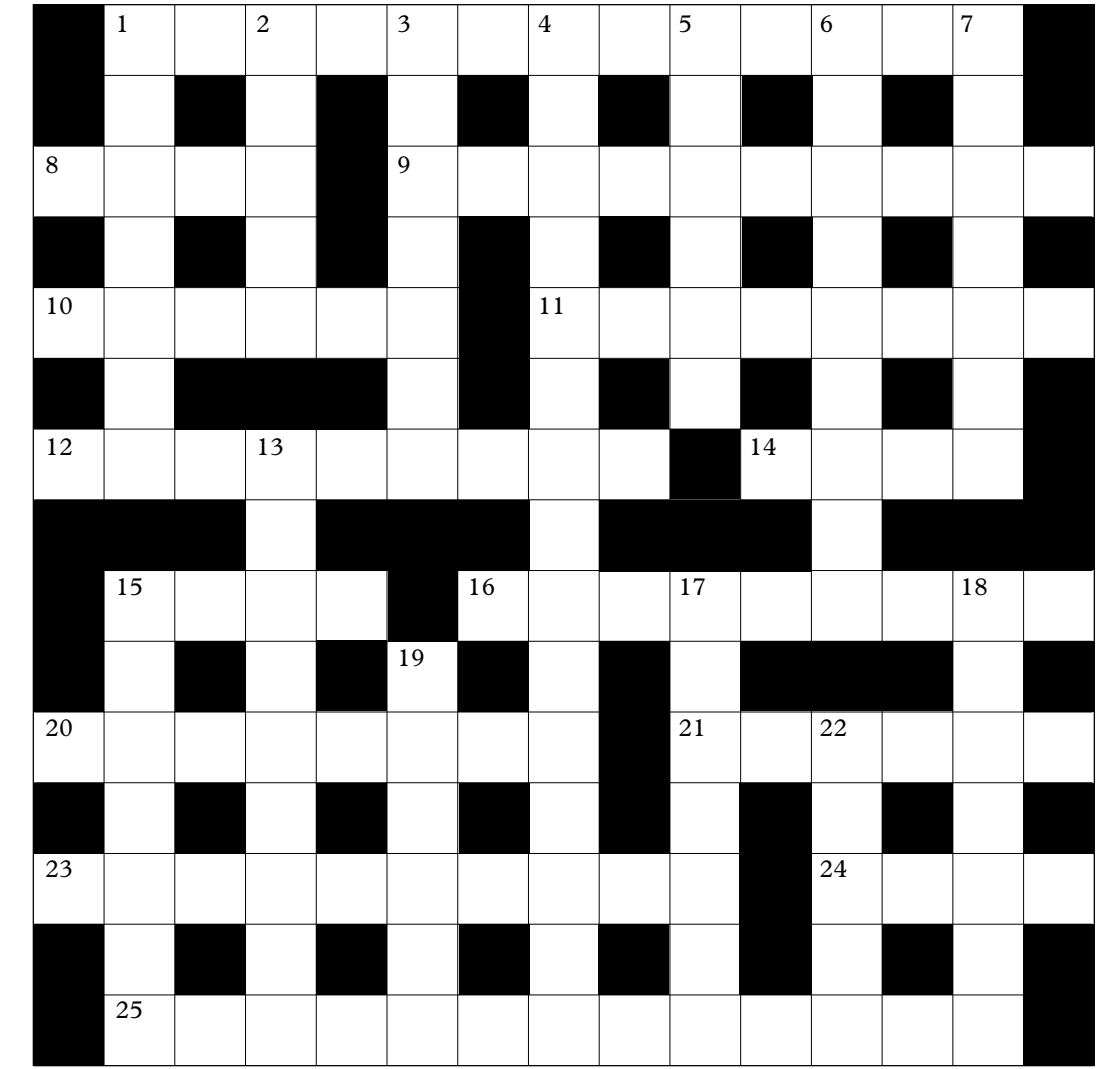
**Partner up or  
go solo with this  
puzzling puzzle.**

**ACROSS**

- 1 Fabricators (13)
- 8 Component (4)
- 9 Assured (10)
- 10 Reference (6)
- 11 Ocean (8)
- 12 Detailed (9)
- 14 Suits (4)
- 15 Platter (4)
- 16 Decorations (9)
- 20 Valuable (8)
- 21 Review (6)
- 23 Comforting (10)
- 24 Cured (4)
- 25 Institutions (13)

**DOWN**

- 1 Inorganic substance (7)
- 2 Famous (5)
- 3 Soldier (7)
- 4 Features (15)
- 5 Powerless (6)
- 6 Substantial (9)
- 7 Genus (7)
- 13 Diverging (9)
- 15 Cyclone (7)
- 17 Fine (7)
- 18 Birds (7)
- 19 Casket (6)
- 22 \_\_\_\_\_ forte (5)



Poetry Corner

**BEYOND WHAT I SAY**  
by Alice Night

If you think I am beyond challenging  
that I am sure of all that I speak  
that I wish to do alone all of the  
pruning in the sacred garden

then you are simply not the friend  
for me

There is a landscape beyond what I  
say  
a place  
that would not exist without this  
conversation  
that forms upon our every meeting

where flowers and fruits grow  
that neither one of us could have  
invented alone

I say this and that  
I present my fully-formed opinions,  
my religiosity  
in the quiet desperate hope that you  
are one who will guide me

beyond what I say

Who will trust me to change?  
who will smile at my mechanisms  
and invite me again to the edge  
of a cliff or a word

or a way?

Who will unbutton my skin-tight silver  
dress  
and run the warm hands of love  
down my old ivory spine  
while the silence and breath  
between us seeds new life?

**Paradiso Book Club**

*JB BLUNK Edition 3* by JB Blunk

If ever there was an artist whose name sounds like their medium, 'Blunk' might be the sound you'd expect a ball of clay to make when thrown down with full force on a pottery wheel. And if ever there was an artist whose work feels the way its creator envisions reality, JB Blunk's biomorphic forms are both rigid yet soft, both tangible yet strange, and both autochthonous yet other-worldly.

Presented in a series of exquisitely rendered detail, this monograph captures the full scope of acclaimed 20th century artist JB Blunk's life work — from jewellery to pottery to sculpture to his hand-built home. Interspersed are archival interviews with Blunk and essays by Noguchi, Blunk's daughter Mariah Nielson and Rick Yoshimoto, among others.

What emerges is an oeuvre that is obsessively varied while remaining singly focused. In an age where we are encouraged to carve out a space for ourselves in the world, to bend reality to our will, and to shake our fist to the sky when reality refuses to bend according to our preferred contours, JB Blunk's work teaches us how to prove our own existence to the world in our own humble and life-affirming way: by leaving marks within it that somehow appear to have been there all along.

**Words by Kasumi Borczyk.**  
Available at [bacteriabooks.com](http://bacteriabooks.com) and

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eyes*

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[RADICALYES.COM.AU](http://RADICALYES.COM.AU)