

# Interiors // Paintings by Rachel MILNE.

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A messy house won't be everyone's cup of tea but it certainly gets this painter's inspiration flowing.

Described as a "very slow Instagram", Rachel's oils make the ordinary shine. They capture a still moment in the chaos of our messy, busy, private, everyday spaces. The light, as it moves through the space, is the filter – High and hot around lunchtime, softer in the late afternoons.

I have always loved artists who celebrate the everyday. If one can see beauty and inspiration in all that is ordinary, then they ought to be the luckiest. They don't need to search high and low for it, they don't need to push mountains or walk a hundred miles. They just tilt their heads, squint their eyes and look right at it.

I envy the subjects' experience of stepping out of the chaos for a moment and seeing it through Rachel's eyes, only to step right back into it as soon as the door closes. Rachel, you are welcome at my place any day. Bring your brushes, we'll provide the chaos !

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**Hi Rachel, could you introduce yourself ?**

*I am a painter, painting alla prima in oil on board from life, recently arrived from England and settled in Newcastle. I have always painted and align myself more with the word painter than artist, possibly because the material – oil paint – and the transformation of it into images has always been my primary concern. There is no great vision or huge intellectual idea – I am concerned with paint and the everyday. Pulling the beauty out of the ordinary, celebrating what we have not what we aspire to have.*



— The Seven Painter's Studio

### Could you tell us what inspired your series, "Interiors" ?

*In England I was always trying to capture the light in landscape, getting up with the dawn and hammering out scenes as quickly as possible before the clouds came. Here where there is light everywhere, I've moved inside! I began to notice how the strength of the light here transformed indoor spaces, bouncing off surfaces and bathing the detritus of the everyday in light. I loved the transformation of these spaces, and the sharpness of the contrast between light and shadow, warm and cool.*



— Ahn and Anne's Studio

### Could you tell us about your process and how the series came together ?

*I had painted what felt like every corner of my house – we'd then moved and the new space felt unfamiliar and un-lived in. So I threw the idea out there that other people would let me in to their houses – I had no idea if anyone would take me up on the idea – I was a stranger and coming armed with an arsenal of potentially carpet ruining materials. But the shout went out and people got on touch so off I went. The spaces that interested me most of all were the chaotic workspaces – piles of discarded clothes, bottles and canvases also the houses of friends who were happy not to clear up. In fact I slowly developed a number of rules for myself:*

- 1. I would never look beforehand – I would just go, on the day, and paint whatever I found.*
- 2. The paintings had to be completed in a day, so the subject was 'fresh' and nothing was moved or changed.*
- 3. The subjects weren't allowed to 'tidy up' before I came.*
- 4. I wasn't permitted to move anything for aesthetic effect. I wanted an authentic record.*





— Ahn's House

**You mentioned friends opening their doors to you. How did you connect with the local creative community?**

*Initially I started entering local competitions and on the back of that I applied and was lucky enough to get accepted for a studio at Newcastle Community Arts Centre. I have always worked from communal studios – I find the way artists bounce ideas off each other and interact invaluable, making fantastic collaborations possible. My studio at the Arts Centre and the support they provided was a massive help. I also started volunteering at the Newcastle Regional Gallery – they in turn were very helpful at letting me know what was happening with the arts in the local area and just being in the Regional Gallery and experiencing the regular exhibitions gave me a real taste of the art of Newcastle and a chance to see first hand some acclaimed examples of Australian Art.*

*My advice is to take your practice seriously – enter competitions, local and national, investigate the galleries and exhibition spaces, talk to people and use social media to connect. I found Newcastle people to be very accepting and encouraging – it's a great city.*



— Big Yellow Lego Head

### **Have you started thinking about your next body of work?**

*I've been thinking about public spaces and workspaces, and also about the rate inner city Newcastle is changing as gentrification creeps in. My studios recently heard that the council who owns our building are selling and demolition is on the cards. It's a beautiful red brick school built in 1916 with huge windows and wooden floors. I like that the few spaces I've painted there have been recorded before the creeping fingers of redevelopment change what was into something new. I love the ramshackle and the humanity of an old functional, community space. I would like to investigate a few more of those Council owned buildings, like the Library on Hunter Street and paint what's there before all the history is swept away to make way for something new, for better or worse.*

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