King Street Gallery
on William
10am – 6pm Tuesday – Saturday
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Essay: Glenn Barkley
Design: Sam Woods
Photography: Bernie Fischer
In the Studio 2015 Oil on canvas 90 x 120cms
The Kitchen Bench 2015 Oil on linen 137 x 152cms
The distance between the backyard and town:

Close to Home

...For love, all love of other sights controls,
And makes one little room an everywhere.
Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone,
Let maps to other, worlds on worlds have shown,
Let us possess one world, each hath one, and is one.
The interior space is a world to which artists return again and again.
As Donne tells us it can be an everywhere and in the micro, there is a macro view of the world.
The way light cuts across a space, the window open, a seepage between the natural and the cultural, the familiar with the universal.
For some artists it is their lives' work to show us the domestic world recast as a site of wonder and potential.
In John Bokor's drawings and paintings the home is a space in which the artist exists, lives and creates. I know these spaces, mostly around the northern suburbs of Wollongong. I never lived there but I know people who did. The artworks have a bucolic late-afternoon, late-summer feel to them. In the 'North' people are drawn to the drama of the landscape, sea in front mountains at back, but in this body of work the landscape is mostly implied.
The landscape exists out there away from the comforts of the home front – family, tea, dinner, reading the paper. There is beauty in these things and Bokor captures it. His spaces look well lived and well used, relaxed and comfortable, a place for a nap or gentle discussion.
There is a term used in anthropology – reflexivity – that defines the affect a form of study may take on the subject. These drawings and paintings are like that. I wonder how these rooms sit before they become pictures. How does the artist edit what's in front of him?
What to leave out, what to heighten, what to include what to extract, what to simplify and what to make the focus of a room?

When Bokor does take us outside it is to humdrum sites around Wollongong from which he has managed to suck a sad poem – the fruit barn, the service station – what's the anthropological reflexivity here? Does it become reversed?
Some of these works like Wollongong Under Construction have a quality of being surreptitious and hand held – made to be put away quick and easy – or built up from sketches. And the title itself could be a sub-title for a city constantly being wiped out and made anew. The humdrum subject matter being protection enough from most busbody passer-bys there is much nicer places down by the lighthouse after all...
After all who but an artist of insight would even notice these magical, prosaic sites monuments to the car, shopping and the distance between the backyard and town.

Glenn Barkley 2015

Glenn Barkley is an independent curator, writer, artist and gardener based in Sydney and Berry, NSW.
He is Co-Director of The Curators Department.

1. John Donne The Good Morrow
2. Apologies to Jack Kerouac, Introduction to Robert Frank's 'The Americas'
Clarice & Herb's Table 2015: Oil on canvas 60 x 50cms

Robbie & Meg's Kitchen: Oil on canvas 60 x 50cms
All works oil, sizes vary starting from 20x16cms.

The Green Jug
Bottles and Bowls
Studio
Beside the School
Black Jug
Punch
Kirstin Reading
The Matisse Catalogue
The Red Bottle
Turpentine and Medium
The Easel
Two Lounges
All works oil, sizes vary from 20x23cms.
Meg’s Kitchen 2015  Oil on canvas  120 x 90cms

Lizzie & Ness’ Lounge Room 2014  Oil on linen  137 x 152cms
Elisabeth’s Dining Table 2014  Oil on canvas  50 x 60cms

Teapot and Bowls 2014  Oil on linen on board  30 x 25cms

Two Teapots 2014  Oil on linen on board  30 x 25cms

Teapot and Bowls 2014  Oil on linen on board  30 x 25cms
The Cleared Table, 2015, Oil on canvas, 80 x 105cms

Messy Dining Table, 2014, Oil on canvas, 50 x 60cms
Wollongong C.B.D. Under Construction 2014
Oil on canvas 60 x 50cms

The Dining Table 2014 Oil on canvas 50 x 60cms

Vicky and Vinnie’s Kitchen 2014 Oil on canvas 50 x 60cms

Sally’s Table 2014 Oil on linen 52 x 66cms
Elisabeth's Studio 2014 Oil on linen 107 x 122cm
Good Neighbours 2014  Oil on linen  25 x 30cms

The Fruit Barn 2014  Oil on linen  25 x 30cms

The Bathroom Cabinet 2014  Oil on linen  25 x 30cms

The Classroom 2014  Oil on linen on board  30 x 35cms
The Red Rug 2015  Oil on canvas  80 x 105cms

Mother in Law’s Kitchen 2014  Charcoal on paper  56 x 76cms