JOHN BOKOR
Interiors
22 May – 16 June 2018

King Street Gallery
on William
10am – 6pm Tuesday – Saturday
177 William St Darlinghurst NSW 2010 Australia
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Front Cover: Rooftop view 2018 oil on canvas 120 x 120 cm
Opposite: Studio 2018
In the Living Room

Rooms submit to the geometry of function, the availability of light and a stranger, though largely unspoken, organisational grid. The living room is a place of aesthetic conformity: Couch. Table. TV. You rarely walk in expecting to be startled. It is enclosed by non-negotiable conventions and sealed with an aura of stasis.

The viewpoint of John Bokor’s paintings takes this idea and turns it inside out. His occlusion of the TV set as the ultimate focal point (and negating object) is replaced instead with its viewpoint, taking the unusual vantage of looking into rather than onto an interior space. Things are still ‘in their place’ but the composition works as if we are looking out from inside the TV screen itself, like an oculus or a spy camera.

Bokor approaches the banal with great tenderness. In a sweep of empathy, painterly innovation and pictorial mischief he both enlivens and subverts the predictable rigidity of a domestic interior. A low table is painted as if sliding across a tilted floor. The solidity of a couch breaks apart with the pure hues of its ornamental cushions and the carpet starts to vibrate like a sea of electric tiles studded with rich and candied colour. The high key of his signature palette creates a subtle interplay between ground and surface and the eye dances in the glitter rather than the gloom of a space partitioned by four walls.

This is an artist who admits himself: “I am interested less in the realities of the space and more in the abstract possibilities of the picture”.

In these new works, two major shifts have occurred. The first is that his interiors are being painted on a much larger, almost monumental scale and the second is that the painter is engaging two disparate techniques on one canvas: the airbrush and the paint brush. Bokor describes the experience of spraying into paint that is still drying as being like working with wet plaster. The feeling of making a fresco heightens the sensuality of his surfaces and takes their imagery even further into a glazed ethereal realm. The airbrush makes some of his rooms look graffiti-splattered (as ‘the abandoned apartment’ might be) and others seem more ornate. His passages of non-brushed detail assume a weightless quality.

Whether he is painting from the ‘real’ interiors of friend’s houses or those composed by condensing photographs into a hybrid image, Bokor delights in the clumsy bulk and mute humility of things. Some of his rooms share the logic of a dollhouse where proportion is replaced by ornament. The vase of crushing height or the meaningless compoarse of bottles gathered on tables as a nest in the name of decor. Here we begin to tread on the line that divides the interior from its design.

Somehow, his sprayed dribbles and impatient meaty brushstrokes open the seam between what is intended for a room and what really dwells there. When John Bokor began painting the private spaces of his friend’s houses he urged them NOT to clean up. To leave everything as it really was: in the stream of chaos and the storm of life. Then, when he based a series of paintings on heavily styled magazine interiors, he found himself adding normal objects back into the composition. “Messing it back up”.

This simple chronology of addition and subtraction serves as an ample metaphor for the painting process he prefers. Namely, to line up a gathering of over a dozen large canvases, and work on them concurrently for a year. Starting them. Abandoning them. Returning to interrogate them and pretty much having them all on the boil until the show is cooked. The demand and discipline of painting like this, contrasts the seemingly placid subject matter he has chosen; that of dappled windows and tatty plump pillows. Yet anyone who lives day to day, year to year within one domestic space knows that home is not always a sanctuary or a retreat. Familiar spaces enclose secrets, dead dreams and boredom. No matter how much we clean, over time the furniture starts to sag and memories leak out. Nothing is actually safe as houses.

What appears solid can burn, break, disintegrate or simply melt from view with the force of habit and use. And so, the subject of the interior endures, because its great tension is the coiled energy that nestles between what we make of a room and how we actually live in it. Artifice and expectation: that hopeful line between the real and the ideal is a trembling threshold. John Bokor paints that place with the colours of a carnival but the quiet eye of a playwright. Dwelling in the bloom of broad daylight long after dusk has fallen.

Anna Johnson, May, 2018

Abandoned apartment 2018 oil on canvas 120 x 120 cm

Airbrush, studio 2018
View of the street 2018  oil on canvas  120 x 120 cm

Colour study for “View of the street” 2018  carbon and oil on paper  21 x 27.5 cm
The pink couch  2017  oil on board  60 x 70 cm

The green chairs  2017  oil on board  60 x 70 cm
Evening Interior 2018: oil on linen 120 x 120 cm (detail)
An apartment in Paris 2017 oil on board 60 x 70 cm

Indoors 2017 oil on board 60 x 70 cm
In the Kitchen 2017: charcoal, wash and collage on paper. 80 x 100 cm.
The Englishman’s apartment 2018 oil on board 120 x 140 cm
Collector’s sitting room  2018  oil on board  120 x 140 cm

Colour study for “Collector’s sitting room”  2018  carbon and oil on paper  21 x 26.5 cm
Abandoned apartment  2018  oil on canvas  120 x 120 cm (detail)
The green room 2017 oil on board 60 x 70 cm

Yellow interior 2017 oil on board 70 x 80 cm
John Bokor

Born
1973 Sydney, NSW, Australia

Education
1991-93 Diploma in Painting, National Art School, Sydney
2000 Bachelor of Fine Art [conversion course], National Art School

Solo exhibitions
2018 Interiors King Street Gallery on William, Sydney
2017 The Source Wollongong Art Gallery, NSW
2016 Everyday World King Street Gallery on William
2015 Artist in residence exhibition Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery, NSW
2015 Close to Home King Street Gallery on William
2014 John Bokor Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery
2013 The Still Life King Street Gallery on William
2012 Union Club, Sydney [Courtesy of King Street Gallery]
2011 Black Diamond District King Street Gallery on William
2009 Inside King Street Gallery on William
2007 Small World Paintings King Street Gallery on William
2005 Paintings king street gallery on burton, Sydney
2004 Mary Place Gallery, Sydney
2002 Mary Place Gallery
1999 ABC Gallery, Sydney
1998 Crawford Gallery, Sydney
1997 Crawford Gallery
1996 Crawford Gallery
1995 Mary Place Gallery

Group exhibitions [selected]
2018 Adelaide Perry Prize for Drawing PLC, Sydney
2017 Adelaide Perry Prize for Drawing PLC
Tattersall’s Landscape Prize Brisbane
Mosman Art Prize Mosman Art Gallery, Sydney
Paddington Art Prize Sydney
GIFC travelling works on paper exhibition - Chart Art Fair, Copenhagen, Denmark; The Hole, NYC;
Rod Bannco Gallery, Oslo, Norway; 0-0 Gallery, Los Angeles, California
2016 Bokor, Ferguson & Muswellbrook Regional Art Gallery, NSW
Planting Dreams State Library of NSW, Sydney
Baked Goods University City Arts League Gallery, Philadelphia, USA
Paddington Art Prize Sydney
The Rick Armor Drawing Prize Melbourne, Vic
Just Draw [traveling drawing exhibition] Newcastle Art Gallery and Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, NSW
Planting Dreams: Shaping Australian Gardens State Library NSW
Kedumba Drawing Award Orange Regional Art Gallery, NSW

The world is hers 2018 oil on canvas 120 x 150 cm