

John Bokor
Twenty





John Bokor in
his studio, 2025.
Photograph courtesy
Riste Andrievski.

John Bokor Twenty

23 September - 18 October, 2025

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King Street Gallery
on William

The Breakfast Room, 2025,
oil on board, 80x90cm





*Scandinavian
Lunch, 2025,
oil on board,
80x100cm*

John Bokor: Twenty

What first draws me into an artwork is a sense of narrative and the visible evidence of process. Narrative engages the imagination - it invites us to enter the work and consider its possible stories or emotional undercurrents. At the same time, traces of process reveal the artist's hand, offering insight into their approach, choices, and intentions. Together, these elements create a deeper connection between viewer and work, grounding aesthetic experience in both meaning and making. John Bokor's work is both visually confident and engaging—a combination that has contributed to his strong exhibition record. His instinct for storytelling is not only evident in his paintings but also comes through in conversation. Speaking with him on the phone about this latest body of work, I was struck by his warmth and openness. His easy, engaging manner made our first conversation feel more like a reunion than an introduction.

There is a gentle familiarity that lingers in Bokor's paintings and drawings. Perhaps it's the joyful clutter of domestic life, the casual poetry of a dining table strewn with everyday objects, each one steeped in warmth and memory, that draws us in, inviting us to feel at home, or even to imagine ourselves as characters within the scene. What might first appear as disorder reveals itself as quiet harmony; the scattered objects, far from chaotic, seem to hold the composition together with intention and grace. Bathed in the radiant hues of Bokor's palette, these moments glow with a quiet joy, at once intimate, vibrant, and human.

There is something evocative about artworks that depict uninhabited rooms or domestic interiors, particularly those with empty chairs or signs of recent presence. These quiet spaces often prompt the imagination, inviting us to construct narratives, project ourselves into the scene, or recall memories of similar environments. In their stillness, they become charged with possibility, offering room for reflection, association, and emotional resonance. Yet there's a distinct playfulness in the work, particularly in the more densely composed pieces. The placement of certain objects—wine bottles among them—at slightly precarious angles on crowded tables, combined with a title like *After Dinner*, evokes the aftermath of a memorable meal. It feels like sheer luck that the crockery hasn't come crashing to the floor, though the same can't be said for avoiding that possible hangover. In speaking with John, he emphasised how important it is to him that his work encourages playful, imaginative interaction with the viewer. "Art is a two-way street," as he writes in his Artist Statement. I believe he has succeeded in that goal.

A subtle, mischievous trace of human presence remains: the portraits hanging on the walls, observing the scenes like silent voyeurs. One can't help but wonder what they might have witnessed. I was particularly amused by how many of these portraits seemed to echo well-known (notorious) likenesses of historical figures, quietly presiding over the revelry with an air of spectral judgment. When I mentioned



The Table Setting, 2024, oil on board, 61x75cm

this to John, he explained that the portraits are far from direct recreations, but rather composites drawn from memory. This ambiguity adds yet another layer of intrigue and nuance to his works.

There is also a palpable sense of time embedded in the making of the larger pieces. Bokor employs a range of tools and techniques, though he often prefers to “get something down quickly,” capturing an initial energy or impulse. What intrigued me was learning that he approaches his drawings in much the same way as his paintings - beginning, sometimes, with a found image, then reworking it, adding and subtracting elements as the piece evolves. In the drawings, this sense of time, of memory being layered, reshaped, and reimagined, is most evident through his use of collage.

As I was viewing the works on a computer screen rather than in the studio or gallery setting, initially I didn't notice the collage. But then, the subtle edges of added paper caught my eye. These fragments not only introduce a tactile dimensionality but also suggest the slow accretion of time – of memories accumulated, reassembled, and reinterpreted.

Similarly, the presence of underdrawing enriches the compositions. These visible layers function almost like experiential strata, offering glimpses into earlier iterations of the image and evoking the way our own personal narratives are constructed - layer upon layer, moment by moment. The frequent scraping back of paint contributes to this sensitivity, creating a weathered surface that feels lived-in and emotionally resonant. I was fascinated to learn that

one of John's preferred techniques involves using coarse sandpaper - a process he refers to as a “tooth technique” - to create what he calls a “ghost surface,” leaving behind faint traces of what once was.

The strength and deliberateness of Bokor's line work also recall the physicality of printmaking: confident, etched-like marks that are both precise and expressive. When I asked if he had ever explored printmaking, I was delighted to learn that he began his art school training in that discipline before shifting focus in his second year. As a devoted admirer of printmaking and works on paper, I was further thrilled to discover that John himself collects and lives with prints and drawings.

Over the course of our engaging conversation, it also became clear that attention to detail is of real importance to Bokor. He is, by his own admission, particular - especially when it comes to materials. He works only on marine plywood and takes pride in crafting all his own supports and frames. I find this meticulousness impressive.

There's a particular resonance in the fact that Bokor chooses to reveal all stages of his process, from the initial drawings through to the finished works. It underscores the integrity of his practice; his hand is present in every aspect, from conception to completion. What we see is the result of a sustained, personal engagement with both material and image that is thoughtfully extended to us.

Susi Muddiman OAM, 2025



Colour Study for Pink Tulips, 2025, carbon, wash and oil on paper, 21x28cm



The Pink Tulips, 2025, oil on board, 80x100cm



*Morning
Light*, 2025,
charcoal wash
and collage,
80x100cm

Artist Statement

I started working towards this exhibition by looking backwards. I transferred 20+ years of paintings onto a hard drive and looked through them all. It had a strange effect on me. I became increasingly unsatisfied with anything I tried to make afterwards. I was caught in a loop, scraping down and reworking everything multiple times. It went on for months with nothing to show as my anxiety increased. When I did finally let something stay it felt different. It was a strange and cathartic process.

Change over time is never a linear trajectory. Forwards, backwards and sideways. There are things that you gain but inevitably there are things that you lose. When I looked through my old paintings I saw all these discarded elements like old friends. Decisions you make when creating works are often involuntary... You just move in a certain direction without consciously making the decision to do so. Sometimes change is welcome and sometimes it takes you by surprise.

If my work was literature it would be classified as fiction. I like to imagine small worlds within the works, sometimes worlds within worlds. I don't want

to describe everything and tell a viewer exactly what they are looking at. Art is a two way street. I want the viewer to use their imagination too. Human imagination is wonderful and it would be a shame to leave it out of the process, both for me making the artworks and also for those looking at them.

I'm happy if what I make looks entirely different to the viewer than it does to me. It should be a unique response, not one I've forced on them. I put a lot of personal elements into my work even if the starting point for a painting may be a found image. I like to add more elements than are necessary and then subtract those that are unhelpful. It's a tug of war between reality, a vague narrative and the abstract possibilities of paintings.

John Bokor, 2025



*Colour Study for Turn of the Century, 2025,
carbon, wash and oil on paper, 21x28cm*



*Turn of the
Century, 2025,
charcoal wash
and collage,
80x100cm*



Colour Study for The Lakehouse, 2025, carbon, wash and oil on paper, 28x21cm



The Lakehouse, 2025, oil on board, 140x120cm



Cooking, 2024, oil on board, 61x75cm



Studio Lunch, 2024, oil on board, 75x61cm

Two Mirrors, 2025,
oil on board,
120x140cm





Colour Study for Friend's House, 2025,
carbon, wash and oil on paper, 21x28cm



Friend's House, 2025,
oil on board, 120x140cm

*Away From
It All*, 2025,
oil on board,
120x140cm





Fiddle Leaf Fig, 2025, oil on board, 81x61cm



Midday Poppies, 2025, oil on board, 100x80cm



Groceries, 2024, carbon, wash and oil on paper, 21x28cm



Birthday Party, 2024, carbon, wash and oil on paper, 21x28cm



John Bokor's studio, 2025.
Photograph courtesy Riste Andrievski.



*Colour Study for The Drawing Table, 2025,
carbon, wash and oil on paper, 21x28cm*



*The Drawing
Table, 2025,
oil on board,
80x100cm*



Colour Study for After Dinner, 2024, carbon, wash and oil on paper, 21x28cm



After Dinner, 2024, oil on board, 61x81cm



*Colour Study for Literary Lunch, 2024,
carbon, wash and oil on paper, 21x28cm*



Literary Lunch, 2024, oil on board, 61x81cm



Autumn Flowers, 2025, oil on board, 81x61cm



Midnight poppies, 2025, oil on board, 100x80cm

John Bokor

Selected Biography

Born 1973 Sydney, NSW

Studies
1991-93 Diploma in Painting, National Art School, Sydney
2000 Bachelor of Fine Art, Conversion Course, National Art School, Sydney

Solo exhibitions [selected from the past decade]

- 2025 Twenty King Street Gallery on William, Sydney
- 2024 Studio Stories Edwina Corlette Gallery, Brisbane
- 2023 Between Two Rooms King Street Gallery on William
- 2022 Domestic Splendour Edwina Corlette Gallery
- 2021 A place like home Edwina Corlette Gallery
- Still Lives and Interiors Nicholas Thompson Gallery, Melbourne
- 2020 Inner world King Street Gallery on William
- 2019 At My Table Edwina Corlette Gallery
- Between the walls Nicholas Thompson Gallery
- 2018 Interiors King Street Gallery on William
- 2017 The Source Wollongong Art Gallery, NSW
- 2016 Everyday World King Street Gallery on William
- Artist in residence exhibition Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery, NSW
- 2015 Close to Home King Street Gallery on William

Group exhibitions [selected from the past five years]

- 2024 The Adelaide Perry Drawing Prize, Croydon, NSW
- The Kedumba Drawing Award, Kedumba Gallery, Wentworth Falls, NSW
- Jacaranda Acquisitive Drawing Award, Grafton Regional Gallery, Grafton, NSW
- The Dobell Drawing Prize, touring exhibition: Blue Mountains Cultural Centre, Katoomba, NSW; Glasshouse Regional Gallery, Port Macquarie, NSW; Tamworth Regional Gallery, Tamworth, NSW; South East Centre for Contemporary Art, Bega, NSW

- 2023 The Dobell Drawing Prize, National Art School
- The Mosman Art Prize, Mosman Art Gallery, Sydney
- 2021 The Dobell Drawing Prize, National Art School
- Sir John Sulman Prize, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- 2020 Muswellbrook Art Award, Muswellbrook Regional Art Gallery, NSW

Collections

- Art Gallery of Ballarat, Victoria
- Art Gallery of New South Wales
- Australian Catholic University, Victoria
- Charles Sturt University Art Collection, New South Wales
- Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery, New South Wales
- Macquarie Bank, Australia
- Maitland Regional Gallery, New South Wales
- Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre, New South Wales
- New South Wales Parliament Art Collection, New South Wales
- State Library, New South Wales
- The Australia Club, New South Wales
- Trinity Grammar School, Lismore, New South Wales
- UBS Warburg, Australia
- University of Sydney, New South Wales
- University of Wollongong, New South Wales
- Waverley/Woolahra Council, Sydney
- Wollongong Art Gallery, New South Wales



A comprehensive CV for John Bokor is available on the King Street Gallery on William website kingstreetgallery.com.au/artists/john-bokor/

John Bokor in his studio, 2025. Photograph courtesy Riste Andrievski.



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Detail from *The Breakfast Room*, 2025, oil on board,
80x90cm, page 3



King Street Gallery

on William

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