

# Allison Makay

Still life with fish in a jar and colorful paintings on to go boxes

STORY POLLY BRUCE PHOTOGRAPHY RICHARD MORECROFT

# A Brush with Life



A TWIST OF FATE COMPELLED ALISON MACKAY TO PICK UP A PAINTBRUSH AND AT THAT PRECISE MOMENT AN OUTSTANDING AUSTRALIAN ARTIST EMERGED.

"Be prepared! Coming in here is like walking into my head," says Alison Mackay as she opens the sliding doors to her studio in the bush. We enter into the light-filled space – a converted corrugate shed – and are immediately surrounded by all the things that feed her creativity. Boards and canvases are stacked against the walls, tabletops are strewn with half-squeezed paint tubes, brushes, art books and bottles of what-ever-what are dotted around. There are objects everywhere, some clustered together on patterned cloths, others on the sidelines, seemingly waiting to be used at some future time – domestic items, coffee pots, knives, colanders, glasses and jars. There are dried flowers, animal skulls, plastic soldiers, pill packets, a clockwork pig and even the faint whiff of fish.

"That's from yesterday," says Alison. "You've really got to paint quickly when there's fish around!"

From the many finished works on the walls it's clear that Alison's main focus is still life painting.

"I prefer to describe it as 'object' painting," she says. "It's really all the stuff that makes up my life in all its beautiful ordinariness."

And although her life is thoroughly focused on art these days, that hasn't always been the case for Alison. Though she drew as a child, Alison was a late arrival to the world of painting, and it's only over the last decade, following a move to the South Coast and a life-changing accident, that painting has become such an important part of her life.

Living in Sydney for many years in the 1990s with her partner, Richard Morecroft, Alison lived a diverse existence – writing books and magazine articles, managing and physically working on a

Previous page, from left: Alison Mackay in her studio; "Souvenir Teaspoons" (detail of oil painting); "Oliver's Jug" (detail of oil painting); This page, from top: "Spinebill on Ornamental Rug" oil on board; "Chops in Glass" oil on board; "Fish out of Water" oil on board.

































