

## Margaret Olley Art Trust Collection Room Residency

### Artist in Residence Written Reflection

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Four weeks creating, brainstorming, networking, and being fully immersed in brilliant excellence as Artist in Residence at Rockhampton Museum of Art?

Yes, please.

Surrounding myself in the Margaret Olley Art Trust Collection Study Room with artworks I chose from the RMOA Collection; from Margaret Olley's still life to the self-portraiture of Shirley Bourne, and the intricate photographic installation of Magdalena Bors' *Cavern* taught me that art exists in endless forms and expressions.

It's up to our own interpretation; our own stories of why an artist chose that colour, that arrangement, that expression. Not every artwork arrives with an essay explaining how or why it was made, so having the time to sit deeply with these works and let my mind dance through them has been both inspiring and motivating. "Finding the extraordinary in the ordinary" became my motto while I was here. I learned that art doesn't have to be a million things.

Sometimes it is simply a flick of a paintbrush, the perfect moment of light, or a collection of objects on a desk waiting to be captured by an artist's eye. Having this time and space in both the Margaret Olley Art Trust Collection Study Room and the program rooms has genuinely changed my life and I don't say that lightly.

Before this opportunity, I thought of myself as "just a photographer." I never truly considered myself an artist. After all, photography has become so accessible, with cameras sitting in our hands and pockets every day. But being able to exist in these moments of pure creativity and artistry has completely shifted my perspective. I now see my life, my work, and myself differently. To be given the freedom to create authentically, and to be supported while doing it, is extraordinary.

For four weeks, I was able to step away from work without the constant fear of bills, finances, or whether I could afford new materials. I was given the space to experiment, to fail, to try again. During my residency, I discovered a deep love for gel printing and painting, mediums I had always believed I wasn't "good at," simply because I had never been given the time or space to truly explore them. I created countless works during my time here and, for the first time, I now have a cohesive portfolio that extends beyond photographic self-portraiture into painted self-portraiture as well. Honestly, I will continue doing this for the rest of my life. I am an Artist, and I will embrace that title wholeheartedly.

While here, I also had the privilege of exploring the Collections Room and walking amongst over 2,000 works currently held by RMOA. Witnessing the delicate pen work of Louise Kahn, the printmaking of Judy Watson's *Self Portrait II*, the twenty pieces comprising Lindy Lee's *Dharma*, and standing before Del Kathryn Barton's *Sapling*, overwhelmed by its beauty, will stay with me long after my residency ends.

These four weeks as Artist in Residence have ignited a desire within me to better myself not only as an artist, but in every aspect of my life. To pursue larger opportunities without fear of failure. Because failure is how we learn and if you never try, you never give yourself the chance to become who you truly are.

I would like to thank every single person at Rockhampton Museum of Art who welcomed me so warmly, but especially Helen Kavanagh and Easton Dunne for their generosity and support. Nothing I asked was ever too much, and I appreciated that deeply as someone who often worries they are asking for too much. And a very special thank you to Tessa McIntosh, who not only helped curate the collection within the Margaret Olley Art Trust Collection Study Room, but also generously gave me the time and space to experience the works I was most drawn to within the Collections Room. Our conversations about art and life meant more to me than I can properly express. She lifted me up in moments where I questioned whether I belonged or felt overwhelmed by the magnitude of it all. She was my guiding star.

So, I'll leave you with this:

If you have ever dreamed of seeing your work hung in a gallery or becoming an Artist in Residence at the largest regional museum in Queensland, I implore you to grab those opportunities with both hands and an open heart. Hold tightly to your dreams but not so tightly that fear stops you from growing. Be your own biggest supporter. Believe in yourself. And never stop creating.