

# Amber Wallis

## *Hidden mothers and ghost flowers*

19 September – 7 October 2023

**Jan Murphy Gallery is excited to present *Hidden mothers and ghost flowers* by Amber Wallis, her first exhibition with the gallery.**

“In 2022, Northern NSW was affected by widespread flooding, my partner’s house was decimated and he and his children were stranded. Since that time we have been rebuilding his home ourselves, echoing my upbringing in the handmade house movement of the 1970’s.

We have been building a structure of safety for him and his children, high off the ground and able to withstand the inevitable next flood. It occurred to me while painting that I was creating structural forms in the initial layers, at times the paint heavy like a building, less whimsical in order to seemingly hold the fragile content of the paintings more safely.

Abstracted interiors and landscapes crept in, figurative forms too, looking out of high windows to a vista, safe from a flood or enveloped in the intimate framing of drapes, folds and curtains – a recurring motif in my practice.

The historical photographic genre of Hidden Mothers portrays figures covered in drapes or disguised as chairs, the mothers are hidden but their role is as a position of support – at once their own architecture yet hidden like a ghost, hovering to hold, calm, and cradle children. My paintings of hidden mothers are shrouded in patterned and thin veils of paint, also gently referencing the genre of spirit photography, my deceased mother a constant shrouded presence in my work.

My painting practice continues to be an ode to the staining and the materiality of feminism and an extension of my desire to paint with technical limitations, where painting becomes an exercise in restraint and quiet consideration. They necessitate a delicate hand. I try to not overwork or labour the paintings, what remains is a very conscious intention to leave images in their magical first conceptions. I want my work to hold the lightness and strength of femininity.” – Amber Wallis, 2023

### **ABOUT THE ARTIST**

Wallis holds a Bachelor of Visual Arts from the Canberra School of Art and a Master of Visual Arts from the Victorian College of the Arts. In 2022, she was awarded the inaugural Wollumbin Art Award at Tweed Regional Gallery and has previously been a finalist in several art prizes including the Evelyn Chapman Art Award (2022), Arthur Guy Memorial Painting Prize (2019), Sunshine Coast Art Prize (2019, 2018) and Mosman Art Prize (2018). In 2008 she was the recipient of the tenth Brett Whiteley Travelling Art Scholarship (2008), during which time she worked in New York and Montreal and completed a residency at the Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris. She has exhibited extensively since 2009 including in exhibitions at Lismore Regional Gallery (2021, 2011), Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (2010), the Art Gallery of New South Wales (2008), the Ian Potter Museum of Art (2009).