

Natasha Bieniek

White Gold

31 October – 18 November 2023

For over a decade Natasha Bieniek has concentrated on miniature painting and is well known for both her exquisite landscapes, and diminutive portraits. Her latest series of landscape paintings, *White Gold*, explores a dramatic shift in scale. These works (all 125.0 x 85.0 cm) are the largest Bieniek has executed and although there is still a strong focus on detail, they are brought to life with a more intuitive, gestural freedom.

Bieniek's practice focuses on the green sanctuaries and gardens that exist within urban spaces. Her use of a coated aluminium (Dibond) as the support for these detailed paintings of gardens and tightly curated vegetation reflects the movement that exists outside these pockets of nature, and conceptually mimics the screen culture through which humans increasingly experience the world.

"My paintings mostly feature inner-city gardens that coexist with major cities. These green spaces are like living, breathing artworks that are constantly changing and evolving over time. I've been drawn to this subject-matter for many years for its information-rich, diverse and sensory-pleasing quality. But beyond mere aesthetics, these lush landscapes hold much greater importance. They are imperative to our physical and mental well-being and offer respite from the daily rituals of our busy, work-oriented lives.

I've painted directly onto dibond, an aluminium composite panel, commonly used for architectural or industrial purposes. Its glossy, sleek appearance resembles a technological device or screen which reflects my interest in present-day image trends. As a culture, we are obsessed with recording and documenting our surroundings. Our phones have become an extension of ourselves and as a result, we often experience our environment through screens. Much of my approach to painting is facilitated by technology. Images have been captured with an iPhone and then stretched and manipulated into a portrait orientation. Subsequently, my paintings harbour a sharp, magazine-like quality.

Many dualities exist within my artworks. I'm concerned with the importance of first-hand experiences but also want to consider our image-driven tendencies. My paintings are traditional yet rely on modern working methods. And I have an ongoing interest in combining the natural world with the human-made. My intention is to create a moment to reflect and connect with nature through a present-day lens."

– Natasha Bieniek, 2023

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Natasha Bieniek (b. 1984, Melbourne) graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts in 2006 and received the post-graduate Nino Sanciolo Art Scholarship to study ancient painting in Florence, Italy. She is a nine-times Archibald Prize finalist and has been awarded significant art prizes including The Wynne Prize (2015), The Portia Geach Memorial Award (2015) and The Metro Art Award (2012). Other short-listed prizes include the Darling Portrait Prize (2020), Arthur Guy Memorial Painting Prize (2019), John Leslie Art Prize (2018), Geelong Contemporary Art Prize (2018), Glover Prize (2017), Brett Whiteley Travelling Art Scholarship (2015) and the Doug Moran National Portrait Prize (2012, 2013, 2014). Bieniek's work has been curated into major exhibitions at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, National Portrait Gallery, Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery and Warrnambool Art Gallery.