

Erica Gray

Coastal Keepsakes

March 30 – April 13, 2023

I've lived on the Gold Coast since the early 80's. I loved family camping trips exploring the countryside and experiencing the sights such as tropical gardens, beaches, estuaries, fields of yellowed sugarcane growing in uniform grids and attractions like the Big Pineapple. The white timbered 'Queenslanders' dotting the countryside, often clinging to the hillsides above beaches and rivers, are fixed in my memory of those times. With their white decorative balustrades contrasting against deep shaded porches – lush foliage and azure coastlines filtering through – these iconic houses remain to this day inspirational. Purposely naive in depiction, the *Coastal Keepsake* works aim to visually evoke my nostalgic childhood musings.



The paintings are multi-layered acrylic visions part remembered, part wishful, imagined landscapes. The bright stretches of aqua waters and glowing pink afternoon skies aspire to make the vistas seem magical. My hope is that the calmness of the imagery expresses a sense of reverence and promotes in the viewer a yearning and renewed respect for the precious coastal areas that we are currently so lucky to have at our everyday grasp.

Sculptural pieces involving fabrics and yarns have ever been part of my creative practice. The 3D forms in the exhibition are an extension of its theme. While my paintings are nonfigurative, the sculptures seek to portray a more anthropomorphic approach infused with the colours, patterns and forms inherent in tropical seaside locales.

Coastal Blooms was created as a positive acknowledgement of life's cycles and seasons. Covered in flower heads made from fabric-coated foam shapes, the metal armature's legs stand confidently astride. Stamen-like arms hang by sides, the hands bundles of gentle, rose coloured fringing. The ambience represents a quiet confidence for environmentally better times ahead.

Also supported by a metal armature, the *Coastal Corallabra's* coral clusters are fashioned in crochet using metres of handmade twine, the organic bulbous shapes stuffed with polyfibre. The work endeavours to illuminate coastal marine ecosystems and our impact on them. Its long fringes could drift in warm ocean currents offering shelter to a multitude of sea creatures.

Some objects, such as *Floral Bowl With Foot Perch*, have reference to my personal Gold Coast abode. The ceramic presents as a plant/animal hybrid. The zigzag patterns on its outside are inspired by the vintage 7 feet tall giraffe I collected some time ago. The inner design is a medley of Australian natives. It is a keepsake vessel holding thoughts of past, present and future.

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29 Tedder Avenue Main Beach, QLD 4217 **Postal Address:** PO Box 985, Main Beach, QLD 4217

Phone: 07 5561 1166 **Email:** info@antheapolsonart.com.au **Web:** www.antheapolsonart.com.au