



Joanna Poulson:
Offerings from my garden

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Page left: 'Brompton Stock' 101 x 76cm. Above: 'Pink Poppy' 60 x 60cm.

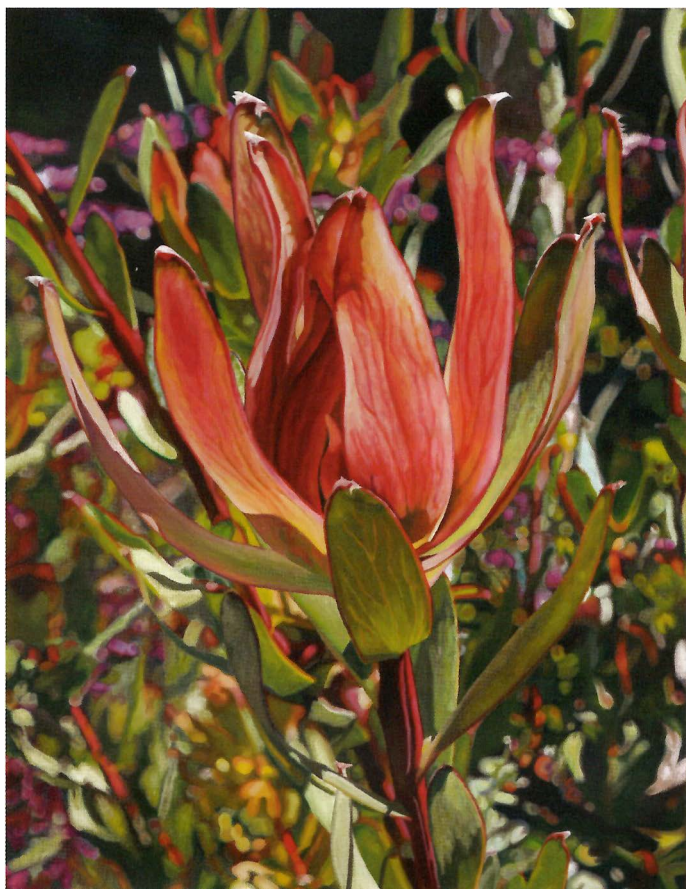
It's easy to forget that, by the time an artwork hits our senses, it's often lived an entire life beforehand – we are merely absorbing a moment in time. For artist Joanna Poulson, this life cycle is complex: sometimes arduous and often long, but always cathartic, immersive and rewarding.

As I arrive outside Joanna's Prospect home, I am greeted by a brightly adorned Stobie pole. Her art is instantly recognisable: its vivid colouring and sharp focus creating an alluring ambiguity between photograph and painting. The pole emulates the inside of her home, which is similarly full of colour and light – and two adorable pooches.

The walls are adorned with a harmonious blend of Joanna's own artwork among others, and the back garden is dotted with various

blossoms guiding us along the path to her studio. Inside sits a canvas covered in the rich magenta shades of a Foxglove flower – Joanna's current work-in-progress for a SALA exhibition, aptly named *Offerings from my Garden*. Once again, my eyes are deceived by the realism; as I move closer, the rigorous detail of each small brushstroke is revealed. But long before arriving at the easel, Joanna's process buds in the outside world.

Inspired by flowers in-situ, Joanna takes photographs to replicate their beauty in another form without ever disturbing their natural state. Joanna experiments with depth of field, focus and framing, although she doesn't consider herself a photographer – photographs are merely a means to an end. But this process and subject matter have developed skills beyond her obvious talents, in photography and the physical world. During breaks from the studio, Joanna tends to her flower garden – grounding her in nature, while cultivating visual inspiration in her own backyard. The gentle fragrance of Mexican marigold is a bonus. >



Top left: 'Leucadendron' 101 x 76cm. Top right: Artist Joanna Poulson. Photograph by **Angela Black**. Bottom left: 'Willunga Prunus' 50 x 60cm. Bottom right: 'Pink Foxglove' 60 x 60cm.

This peaceful cross-pollination between nature and art seems a stark contrast from Joanna's background in business and project management. After several years spent working (and playing) hard in the corporate world, Joanna had a moment of self-actualisation in her late twenties. 'I went into a weekend art course at Adelaide Central School of Art and just thought, 'This is where I need to be,' she says.

Joanna stopped working to begin a full-time course, using savings to self-fund her studies. Since then, she has never returned to full-time corporate work – instead taking charge of her own time by freelancing in project management and painting on her 'days off'. Her work and artistic processes are unexpectedly similar in that they are both formulaic, while driven by a conscientious effort to bring ease and joy into other people's lives. Project management alleviates her clients' business pressures; art injects them with colour and beauty. But

while she finds comfort in structure, there seems a quiet rebellion that simmers below the surface.

Ironically, Joanna doesn't view herself as a particularly 'flowery' person, nor her paintings as particularly 'floral'. Something about them is grounded and bold, much like Joanna herself. Once she found her niche in tonal realist oil painting, Joanna made a conscious decision to paint for joy, and to rebel against expectations of 'edgy' experimentation and abstractions from the art world, letting life organically inform her work. 'Every theme I've done is always a response to the previous theme or what's happening in my life,' she says. 'It's either "this has happened, and I want to rebel against it" or "I'm experiencing this and want to recognise it".'

Joanna's work is available at The Strand Gallery, Port Elliot. 