

Fruits and veg and vessels; there's something almost reproductive about this combo. Something ripe and juicy. Fertile. Fresh. A ripe half-papaya – seeds glistening – a pair of boiled eggs, radishes, an eggplant, a pitcher, a pot. For Cosima Scales these paintings signal a departure from great-outdoorsy subject matter to more immediate, domestic fodder. Indeed they seem in classic “still life” form to celebrate material pleasures and remind us of the fragility and ephemerality of human life. And contrary to Scales' usual method of painting from photographic reference material these tiny gems are painted on the kitchen table *from life*; trading the infinite potential of the digital image for the fundamental and comforting simplicity of available objects. This approach is not grey in its everydayness but heralds a kind of right-here-right-now reverence also present in poems by the late American poet Mary Oliver for example.

In another moment, I'd have been content thinking of these works in a still life context. But right this minute it seems almost too burdensome for paintings that are so immediate and intimate, so luminous and jewel-like. The more I think about them, the more I realise they're really about the joy of looking; not peeking or glancing but *really* beholding. Paying attention. “My art is my life/a form of attention/to see, hear/what's despised/what's left out” writes Cecilia Vicuña.¹ “The dream of my life/is to lie down by a slow river/and stare at the light in the trees/to learn something by being nothing/a little while but the rich/lens of attention” announces ‘Entering the Kingdom’ by Mary Oliver.²

Scales' paintings invite us to note how the milk is cloyingly creamy but icy blue underneath; how the musky bowl hides the tea-canister-cum-keep-cup; how shadows pool in the mouth of the retro thing; how a pepper's muscular contours are almost automotive in their slickness. Now on a roll, we see the surface of the egg is not really smooth but coarse and bristling with infinitesimal pimples. The papaya-blob rests on the grey surface but just by a whisker. The green is glossy and good. See? Maybe these fruits and veg and vessels aren't reproductive after all, but simply alive with the reverence of beholding. Pulsating with the poetic goodness of paying attention.

By Sally Molloy

¹ Cecilia Vicuña, ‘Interlude: The Artist As Poet Cecilia Vicuña,’ in *The Artist As*, edited by Aileen Burns, Johan Lundh, and Tara McDowell (Brisbane: Institute of Modern Art, 2018): 207.

² Mary Oliver, *New And Selected Poems Volume One*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992): 190.