

Art



"I've always loved to make art, so it never feels like a chore," says Melbourne-based Belinda, shown with two works from her 'Abundance' show (from top): *The Highs + Lows* and *Thrive II*.

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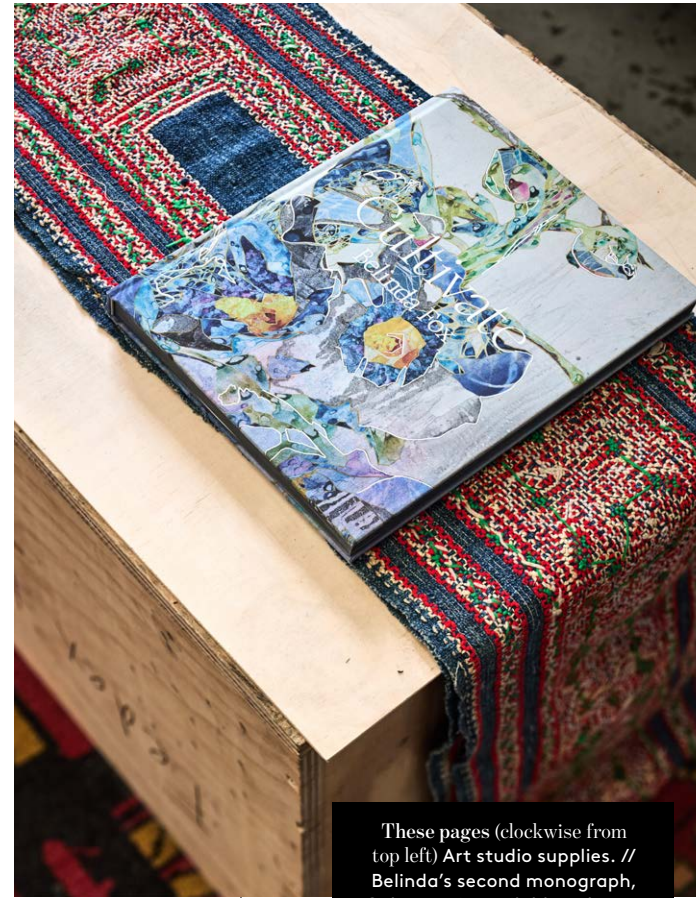
Driven by a love of travel, learning and growth, Belinda Fox has become a hugely successful artist whose work hangs in galleries around the world.



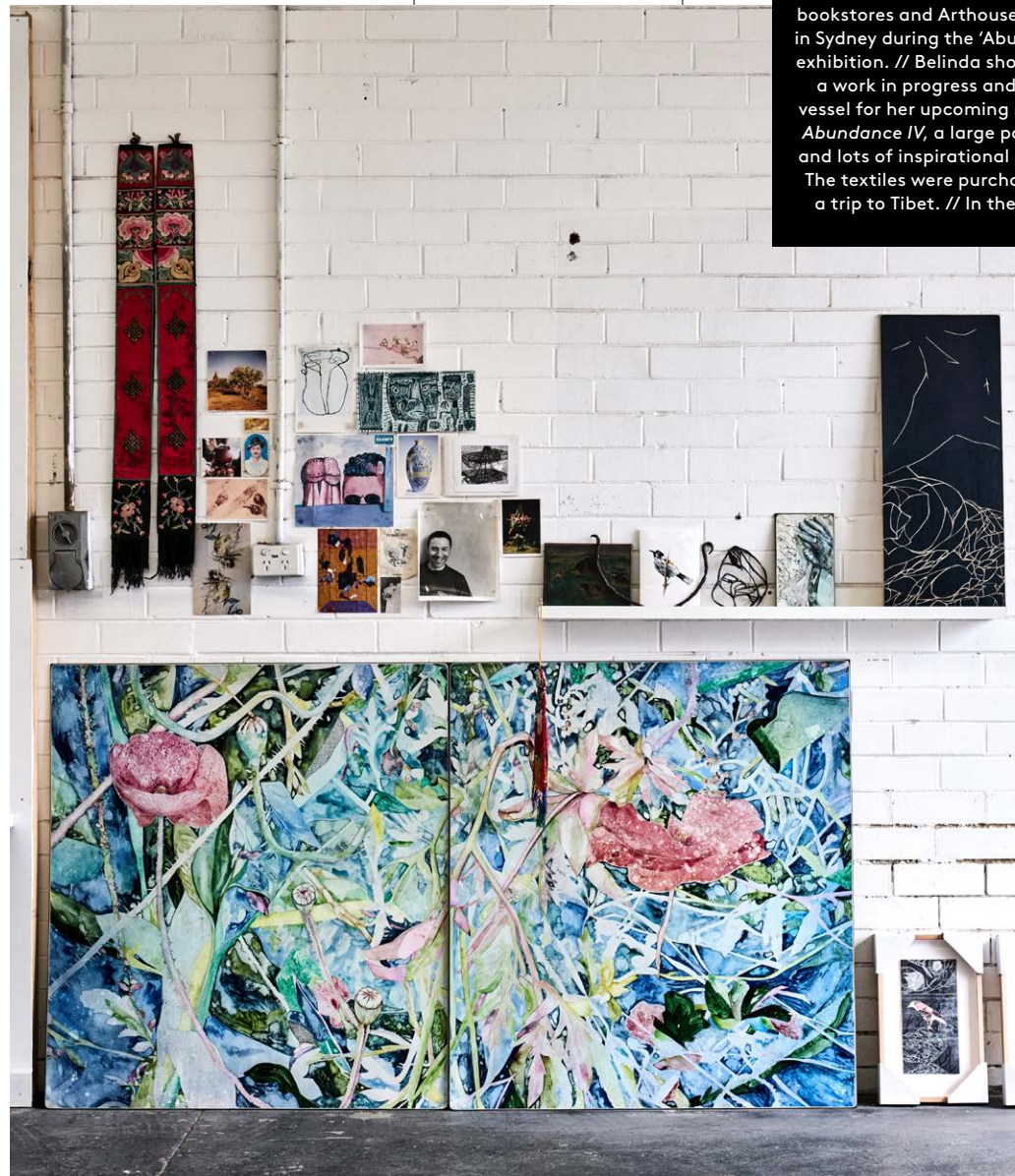
An artist as prolific as Belinda Fox needs the occasional break – which is what she took earlier this year in the lead-up to a major show. The multidisciplinary, who's had 35 solo exhibitions in nearly three decades and work acquired by galleries from Canberra to the Netherlands, took time out for a trip to Japan with her husband, Brad Shrimpton. It was meant to be a holiday, but based on Belinda's past travels, what she saw and experienced will probably find a way into her work at some point.

Beginning as an accomplished printmaker in Melbourne, Belinda says she's "mainly a painter now", though it's clear her training influences everything she does. "Even the ceramics or glass pieces or sculptures have real elements of mark making and texture and attention to detail, which go back to the printmaking."

Belinda's art – be it painting, drawing, sculpture, glasswork or ceramics – is centred around the connecting themes of the natural world and human frailty. Quite uniquely, her style "vacillates between the figurative and abstraction" in what she describes as "an emotional response to how we feel about the world". Her new exhibition, 'Abundance', to be held in Sydney at Arthouse Gallery, reflects "a shift in focus from the turbulence of global events towards the restorative power of nature".



These pages (clockwise from top left) Art studio supplies. // Belinda's second monograph, *Cultivate*, is available to buy at bookstores and Arthouse Gallery in Sydney during the 'Abundance' exhibition. // Belinda shown with a work in progress and glass vessel for her upcoming show. // *Abundance IV*, a large painting, and lots of inspirational images. The textiles were purchased on a trip to Tibet. // In the zone.



What has stayed the same throughout her career, however, is a commitment to quality and working with people who are immersed in what they do. "I love to work with people deeply ingrained in a particular medium," says the artist.

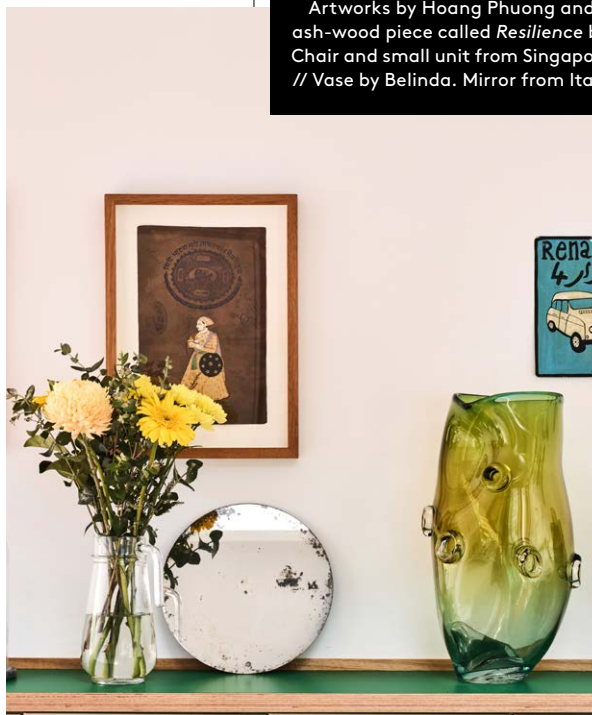
Most of Belinda's output is generated at her studio in a light industrial slice of West Heidelberg. "The person I make sculpture with is just around the corner, and that's how I found the area," she explains. "Another neighbour is the woodworker who made the blackbutt timber stands for the new show." Though she used to have a studio in the basement of her Eltham home (shared with Brad, their teenage daughter Billie and two cats), she vastly prefers this spacious skylit environment. "My mum and dad, who's a tradesperson, helped me to build the walls and cabinets, so it was kind of a family project. As I work in multiple mediums, I love the flexibility of being able to move the walls around and really stand back from whatever I'm working on. The natural light is a big advantage, too."

For nine years, though, Belinda worked overseas, where a number of her projects were supported by much-appreciated grants from various funding programs. For extended periods, she honed her skills in Singapore and the Netherlands – places where she's well known. In the latter, she discovered a serious interest in glass making, under the tutelage of craftspeople steeped in centuries of tradition. "I loved living in the Netherlands and got to work with incredible glassmakers there," she says. "For this latest project, I worked with the glass blowers at Jam Factory in South Australia. They're younger than the Dutch makers and don't have that lineage, but are amazingly talented. We're doing even more for Melbourne Art Fair next year."

Glass making has become an exciting adjunct to Belinda's portfolio. Her process involves making a series of drawings that are interpreted by the glass makers in situ.



These pages (clockwise from opposite) Belinda and her family spent more than nine years living overseas, so her house in Eltham is decorated in a very eclectic way. "Our furnishings are largely based on collecting things over time," she says. Murobond paints were used to create the 'camouflage' wall in the living area. Artwork by Belinda. Reclaimed timber furniture by Wilfred Kalf, whom Belinda collaborated with in the Netherlands. // Artworks by Hoang Phuong and Timothy Cook. // An ash-wood piece called *Resilience* by Wilfred and Belinda. Chair and small unit from Singapore. Artwork by Belinda. // Vase by Belinda. Mirror from Italy. Artwork from India.



"They're basically turning the drawings of vessels into accurate 3D sculptures – with me artistically directing but the makers holding the hot molten stuff," she says. "Watching the team work around each other is like watching a dance because they have to be so careful with each other. It's like a dangerous kind of art sport." Before completion, Belinda engraves all the vessels by hand.

Her previous exhibition, called 'and the little things', centred on gratitude, home, family, friendship and community, but 'Abundance' looks to nature as both subject and teacher. Many of Belinda's most recent paintings were inspired by the gardens at Heide Museum of Modern Art and their various cycles of growth, decay and renewal. "It's a place close to my home and deeply embedded in Melbourne's artistic history," she says. "Established by John and Sunday Reed, Heide has long been a site of creative and ecological cultivation." Belinda spent time with head gardener Tom Remfry, who is generously sharing seeds from the gardens for purchasers of her *Keeping Time* jars. The show also contains several paintings themed with fauna from outback Australia, "a very different expression of abundance".

Celebrating the past 10 years of Belinda's art is a beautiful new book called *Cultivate*, an international release designed by visual artist Evi O. This and her new works can be viewed as part of 'Abundance' at Arthouse Gallery in Sydney's Rushcutters Bay from August 13 to September 5. If travelling, you can also catch Belinda's work at Australian Galleries in Melbourne and Maybaum Gallery in San Francisco. belindafox.com.au; arthousegallery.com.au