

MADE FROM RAIN

RHYS JOHN KAYE
7 - 18 May



NO VACANCY GALLERY

34-40 Jane Bell Lane, Melbourne, Australia

THEODORE DRYDEN



RHYS JOHN KAYE

Rhys John Kaye is an artist who is acclaimed for his unique style that blends graffiti and street art with a textured and rustic elegance. Since his 2017 show, "Desire and Compulsion", Rhys has been exploring this aesthetic, and it has become a staple in his practice, prominent in his latter shows. His recent body of work, "Made from Rain", currently displayed briefly at the No Vacancy Gallery in Melbourne from the 7th - 18th of May, showcases a collection of works that dive into his memories and experiences. Rhys distorts these recollections by overlaying a consistent coating of rain, signifying how certain echoes become lost and "muddy" as time passes.

The initiatory works recorded in my memory of Rhys' was a collection of black and white ink and paint drawings, outlining characters and subjects including trains, graffiti, and people. The nature of these works looked fast and hastily to me, like a continuing stroke of heavy black ink, reminiscent of graffiti writers. The simplicity of the two-tone, high-in-contrast poster-esque works reminded me of tattoo artists' flash books or just artists' archival sketchbooks, where beauty can often be found in discarded or forgotten creations. I have an appreciation for artists who work in a less-refined manner as it is more realistic to the viewers or aspiring artists, often resulting in inspiration. This stuck with me. Reflecting on my practice and routine when creating/writing on art I'm constantly at a lack of care, and actually advocate for mess or chaos in my environment. RJK's works reflect this chaotic aesthetic I'm drawn to. His roughness met with a sense of refined artistic elements such as rich colours and clear, bold linework exaggerating his blend of inspirations by mixing guerilla street art and abstract painting.

I refer to his style as Guerrilla art, where there can be identifiable links to tattoo-esque drawings, graffiti hand styles and dark, heavily textured oil paint brush strokes reminiscent of not only Melbourne's Street art but on a global scale.

Through his work, Rhys' paintings portray an overarching theme of connectedness. His dreamlike approach evokes a sense of how we often forget or lose certain details of our recent visions when we wake. The collection reflects Rhys's artistic journey, showcasing his development as an artist and his ability to create artworks that suggest emotions felt by his viewers. His unique approach to creating is a testament to his skills and creativity. His use of rain as a motif reflects his fascination with the transience of life. Rhys's work resonates with me and his audiences, and he is an artist to watch out for in the future.



WHO IS RJK

Queensland-born, Melbourne-based, Fred Perry advocate. Rhys John Kaye is a self-taught artist based in Naarm/Melbourne. Multidisciplinary, Rhys focuses heavily on oil painting in a Guerrilla/street art approach whilst also trained in ceramics and drawing skills. In an interview with Fred Perry, he describes his artistic direction as “Honest, Instinctive and Expressive.” These three pillars of self-expression are reflections of his painting genre and personal style. His unique style spans across subcultures in hip-hop, punk, graffiti and skateboarding. Although some are more apparent than others, they all overlap to some extent, and this is exaggerated throughout his practice.

The show itself carried 37 works by Rhys exploring a multitude of mediums. Made from Rain was nothing less than unique, hosting oil on stretched canvas, mixed media sculptures and porcelain ceramics. From the get-go, I transferred from Melbourne’s QV into a cold, concrete jungle of a space. Rugged walls, hard flooring, exposed pipes and wires and on-show paint drips beneath my feet, I found this space at No Vacancy Gallery to almost be a collaborative artwork itself. The aesthetic of this industrial furnishing complemented Rhys’s style and inspiration shown through his works so well. Subcultures of graffiti, hip-hop and skateboarding that I touched on before were reflected in the design of the space, let alone through visitors rocking up skateboard in hand. This immersive representation of Rhys’ inspiration was too widely shown off through visitors’ clothes being stained with paint, furthering this idea of chaos and lifestyle in art.

The activity within the space was another aspect of the show I was immediately impressed with. I felt zero pressure to be quiet or to slowly pace around the area. Loud experimental music along with some hip-hop sounds elevated the space into this constant echoing ridding the traditional notions of viewing exhibitions being a quiet space. In conjunction with this continuous flow of music, and the amount of interaction between visitors whether they were jumping in for pictures or simply open for a chat with strangers, there was never a dull moment and I believe this was Rhys’ target audience. Represented through tattoos, piercings, unique clothes and quite literally skateboards, the show attracted people who screamed Rhys’ inspiration.

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Among the 37 works, number 26 gained my full attention initially. *River City 2024* had vibrance in the foreground impossible to turn a blind eye to. The orange outline to the cool tones of greys and blues in the forward graffiti-inspired piece contrasted so well with the backgrounding display of what I interpreted as the outside of a train carriage during a downpour of heavy rain upon a glass window. I gained an understanding of me being the viewer on the outside (of the train) looking in. As I tried to focus beyond the rain droplets, I had trouble making out the figure through the glass. Rhys' paintings depict this hazy, muddy effect of not being able to identify things confidently beyond the rain, proving how certain details of his memories or experiences become less clear as time passes. This results in losing specific details from the past.



River City, 2024

Oil paint on stretched canvas, framed with hand-stained timber,
980mm x 840mm



The Singleton Soldier 2024

Oil paint on stretched linen canvas,
1070mm x 920mm, 2024



Strange Motel 2024

Oil paint on stretched canvas, framed
with hand stained timber, 790mm x
790mm, 2024



Dora's Retribution 2024

Oil paint on linen canvas in a glass and
timber frame, 650mm x 490mm, 2024

Reading a Fred Perry interview with the artist he touched on how pain and personal experience play a major role within his works, in addition to his subcultural inspirations. Having this in mind when I was viewing the pieces of art caused me to constantly think from the artist's perspective when interpreting the works, and through doing this I gained a greater understanding of each scene. the dark, rich colours of the thickly applied oil paints evoked a sense of heavy, weight-bearing emotions the artist Rhys may have been going through at the time of creation. many of the works including the three above use cool tonal impressions mimicking a sad blue emotion. The expressions on many of his subjects' faces seem lost, looking through something/someone as opposed to looking at them, portraying this feeling of loss or as if they're in search of something more. What I found interesting was even the paintings with vibrant colours and unique shapes such as The Singleton Soldier, (above left) still managed to evoke similar emotions through the entanglement and pressures placed on the subject's uncomfortable position they lay. The show in question presented a profound and poignant theme of sadness, which was conveyed in a subtle and nuanced way in each of the works. Despite the absence of an overt and obvious portrayal of sadness, it was still evident in the creative expression of the artist.



Drawing Together 2024
A\$1,500.00



A Sweet Gesture To Soften A Blow 2024
A\$1,500.00



I Feel You In An Empty Room 2024
A\$1,500.00



Under Pressure 2024
A\$850.00



Strange Motel 2024
A\$2,800.00



River City 2024
A\$2,800.00



A Porcelain Paradise 2024
A\$2,500.00



Unbreakable Love 2024
A\$2,500.00



Growing Pains 2024
A\$9,500.00



Still Waters Run Deep 2024
A\$9,500.00



Head Spins 2024
A\$750.00



Roses 2024
A\$950.00



Take Your Time 2024
A\$950.00



Close Is A Feeling 2024
A\$1,700.00



Angel Wings 2024
A\$1,700.00



These Lines Will Take Us Home 2024
A\$1,700.00



Dora's Retribution 2024
A\$1,250.00



The Singleton Soldier 2024
A\$2,800.00



Under The Cover Of A Cloud 2024
A\$3,800.00



Please Miss Me When I'm Gone 2024
A\$960.00

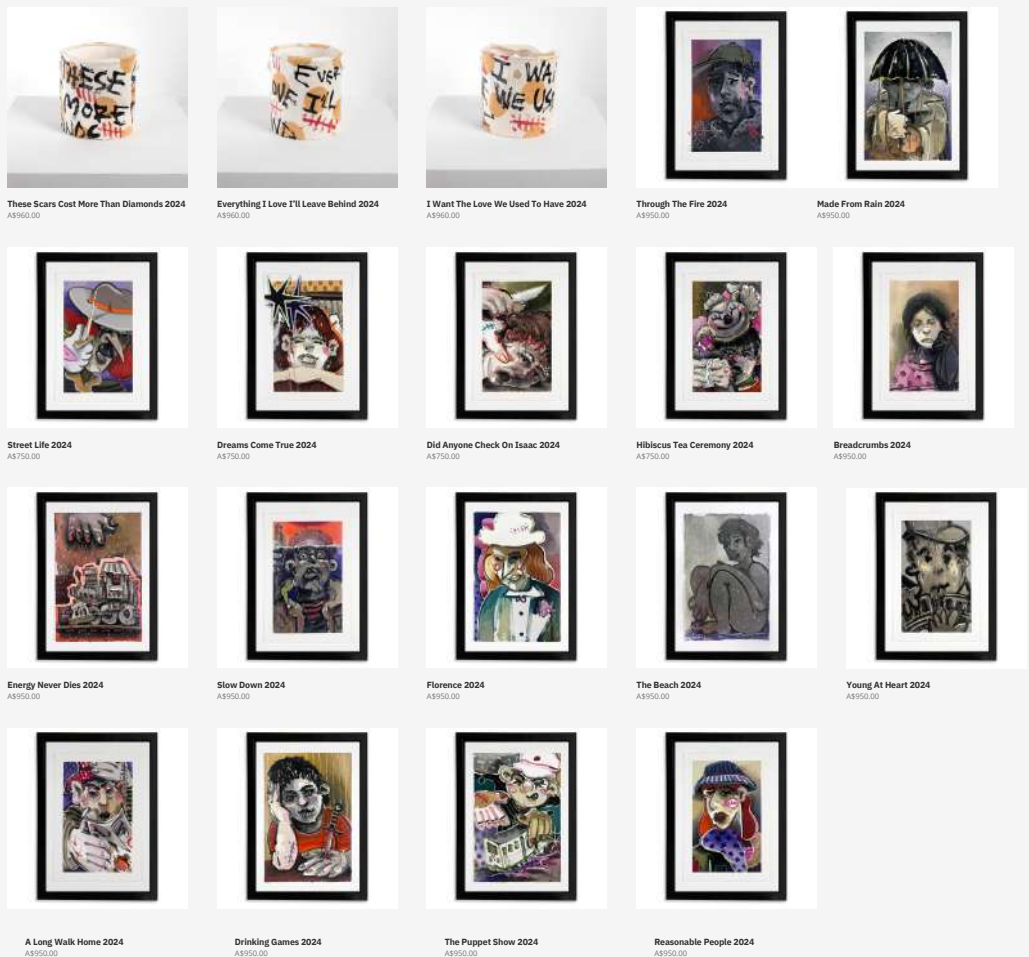


Image Appendix and sources

- Artist's personal website - <https://www.killjohnkaye.com>
- Exhibition Website - <https://www.no-vacancy.com.au/rhys-john-kaye-catalogue>
- Fred Perry - <https://www.fredperry.com/au-en/subculture/articles/artist-rhys-kaye#>
- Personal Images

