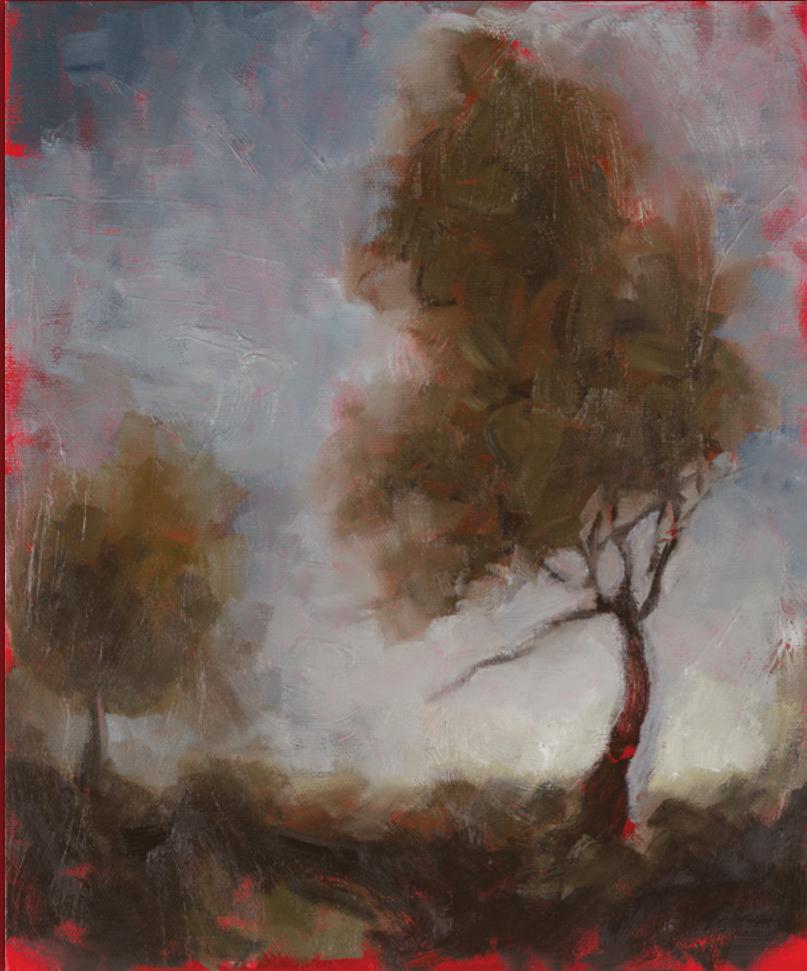


# Toni Messiter



*It was a difficult conversation*

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*It was a difficult conversation*

31 May - 24 June 2023

Stanley Street gallery  
SYDNEY

11am - 6pm Wednesday - Saturday  
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*No words*, 2022/23, oil on canvas, 102 x 77 cm - **\$3,400**

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# It Was a Difficult Conversation

## Toni Messiter

Trees rooted in sombre landscapes, move their elongated limbs with the ongoing flow and ebb of encumbering elements. They brace against whatever is about to come, maybe an uncomfortable conversation.

Each work in *It Was a Difficult Conversation*, is a depiction of an imagined narrative. The personified trees are engaged in dialogue, communicating either between themselves or directly to Messiter, who observes and imagines. Through these interactions Messiter embraces the complexities of relationships and what is required to maintain their authenticity. These interactions are symbolic of the conversations we all have in our own heads, while we too often do not have the ease to openly express. Similar to the comfort and sense of belonging that Messiter feels in the harsh landscapes of Scotland and Ireland, she embraces the difficult. By allowing the space for ambivalence it's hoped an accepted outcome eventuates, knowing our morals and values might be challenged.

*It Was a Difficult Conversation*, sees a departure from Messiter's familiar subject matter, delving into the physiognomy of the landscape, where trees now take centre stage in her ambiguous landscapes, becoming the new protagonists in her works.

Over the last 25 years Sydney based artist Toni Messiter has explored allegorical figures, incarnated through abstract portraits of her childhood dolls, embracing the often-bizarre themes found in folklore. Drawing inspiration from 18th century portraiture, Messiter's earlier works encapsulate the rigid formality that existed between the subject and the artist, expressed through her use of traditional compositions, colour pallet and a signature demure ambience. Messiter's own relationship with her subject matter is, however, anything but formal.

Similar to her portrait characters, Messiter's trees have taken on personas of their own, in which she has developed individual relationships. They are also engaged in intimate and private conversations with her.

Taking inspiration from her Irish and Scottish lineage, Messiter draws from an inherent sense of connection she feels to those lands, embracing the often bleak, cold, harsh, and uncomfortable natural elements. Messiter says she find herself at ease and feels a deep sense of belonging. This connection to land serves as conduit for the creation of these piercing landscapes, forged from the depths of her curious imagination.

Messiter's landscapes are a quiet synthesis of elements found in classical Romanticism and Expressionist painting, inviting emotion and individualism to her works, through a glorification of nature. Highly expressive and textured brush strokes, an extension of Romanticism, are representative of Messiter's freedom of exploration and movement. The canvases are punctuated by unexpected moments of exposure to a vibrantly warm, red base coat. These exciting moments, in contrast to her sombre pallet choice and bleak atmospheric tone, highlight Messiter's penchant for the dramatics and the theatrics of life. These small moments of drama wake the viewer from a place of casual observation and pulls them into the immediacy of the works, watching and waiting with anticipation as the scene unfolds.

*"Sometimes you need to do uncomfortable things to be comfortable. Sometimes you need to honestly say something, even though you do not know how it is going to go down, before you get to that happy place" – Toni Messiter*

Messiter's anthropomorphic symbolism embodied in her trees with their elongated, broken branches are representative of emotional damage incurred by the onslaught of life's challenges and ever-present adversities found in human relationships. We can break, feel broken, yet when we embrace difficulties in the pursuit of authenticity and belonging, just like a tree rooted in the earth we too can stand in the face of difficulties and discomfort, and in doing so, grow into something stronger.

**Keira Cooper**  
**Writer**





*I miss you*, 2022/23, oil on canvas, 102 x 77 cm - **\$3,400**



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*While it is light*, 2022/23, oil on canvas, 30 x 25 cm - **\$1,800**



*You can't please everyone*, 2022/23, oil on canvas, 102 x 77 cm - **\$3,400**

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*And I was glad*, 2022/23, oil on canvas, 30 x 25 cm - **\$1,800**



*And in my dreams I watched as you walked away*  
2022/23, oil on canvas, 152 x 122 cm - **\$4,600**

Enquire



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*Breathe in breathe out*, 2022/23, oil on canvas, 76 x 50 cm - **\$2,800**



*Don't tell*, 2022/23, oil on canvas, 30 x 25 cm - **\$1,800**

Enquire



Enquire

*I am not perfect*, 2022/23, oil on canvas, 152 x 122 cm - **\$4,600**



*I have a secret*, 2022/23, oil on canvas, 41 x 30 cm - **\$2,400**

Enquire



Enquire

*I couldn't love you more*, 2022/23, oil on canvas, 152 x 122 cm - **\$4,600**



*I don't want to talk*, 2022/23, oil on canvas, 60 x 50 cm - **\$2,700**

Enquire



Enquire

*I loved him so*, 2022/23, oil on canvas, 102 x 77 cm - **\$3,600**



*It was a difficult conversation*, 2022/23, oil on canvas, 30 x 25 cm - **\$2,200**

Enquire



Enquire

*Not now perhaps later*, 2022/23, oil on canvas, 102 x 77 cm - **\$3,400**



*Just be nice*, 2022/23, oil on canvas, 30 x 25 cm - **\$1,800**

Enquire



Enquire

*There is nothing to say*, 2022/23, oil on canvas, 102 x 77 cm - **\$3,400**



*What are you doing here?*, 2022/ 23, oil on canvas, 30 x 25 cm - **\$1,800**

Enquire



## Toni Messiter

Toni Messiter is a Sydney based painter of Scottish and Irish heritage. Messiter has been exposed to a painting culture from early childhood and she holds an arts degree from Macquarie University. She has a knowledge and deep interest in all things horticultural.

In her latest exhibition, *It Was a Difficult Conversation* Messiter has turned to the tree as her protagonists for story telling, beings who have memory and sensation. Informed by notions of the gothic, Messiter's practice is an exploration of ambiguity and shadow. She writes, "I see myself in the grey, nothing is ever black or white".

Drawing from the aesthetics of 18th Century portraiture and in particular, familial portraits, her works embody modern baroque haunting. There is a stylistic affinity for theatrics which dramatically unfold as ruminations on human psychology and subconscious; presenting subjects that border upon absurdity and delight, provocation and enchantment.

Messiter works are held in private collections both nationally and internationally and has been represented by Stanley Street Gallery since 2019.

## Toni Messiter - Curriculum Vitae

### Solo exhibitions

2023	It was a difficult conversation	Stanley Street Gallery, Darlinghurst, NSW
2021	My Mother Said	Stanley Street Gallery, Darlinghurst, NSW
2019	Beloved	Stanley Street Gallery, Darlinghurst, NSW
2017	New Work	Clifton School of Arts, Clifton, NSW
2010	New Work	Gallery Aloft, Rozelle, NSW
2005	New Work	Rushcutters Bay Gallery, NSW
2002	New Work	Rushcutters Bay Gallery, NSW
2001	New Work	Rushcutters Bay Gallery, NSW

### Group exhibitions

2023	Reprise	Stanley Street Gallery, Darlinghurst, NSW
2022	Inaugural Exhibition	The Dawe Studio, Kiama, NSW
2021	#Group#Show	Stanley Street Gallery, Darlinghurst, NSW
2020	Art in Isolation	Stanley Street Gallery, Darlinghurst, NSW
2019	A Time of Gifts	Stanley Street Gallery, Darlinghurst, NSW
2014	1 + 2 Artist Studios	Rozelle/Balmain, NSW
2007	1 + 2 Artist Studios	Rozelle/Balmain, NSW
2003	Melbourne Art Fair	Melbourne, VIC
	Rep Rushcutters Bay Gallery	
2002	1 + 2 Artist Studios	Rozelle/Balmain, NSW

### Collections

Messiter works are held in private collections both nationally and internationally and has been represented by Stanley Street Gallery since 2019.

Toni Messiter is represented by Stanley Street Gallery

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Stanley Street Gallery would like to acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation as the traditional custodians of the land upon which this booklet was researched and written.

We pay respect to the Elders past, present and emerging. Sovereignty never ceded.

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