



# KAARTA KOOMBA

EMMA ITZSTEIN

*Illyarrie (detail)*

# KAARTA KOOMBA

1ST - 29TH SEPTEMBER AT THE KO

WORDS BY BONNIE POCKLEY

"I have drunk the night  
and swallowed the stars.  
I am dancing with abandon  
and singing with rapture.  
There is not a thing I do not love.  
There is not a person I have not forgiven.  
I feel a universe of love.  
I feel a universe of light.  
Tonight, I am with old friends  
and we are returning home."  
- - Kamand Kojouri

It is undeniable that COVID-19 has shaped and changed us all, over the past 18 months. It has forced rapid and unprecedented isolation, removed our freedom and suspended us in time. One day we will ask, "*Where were you in those months of lockdown?*" - through endless days that felt the same: that period of time that will be indelibly carved into our recollection of 2020 - for many the answer will be, "*Not home.*"

As a theme of human experience, this idea of being separated from home is not new though no less painful and potent in its effect on our psyche and sense of identity. We are shaped by the community and geography we are born into: the feeling of 'home' anchored in the physical and emotional landscapes that our hearts and minds belong to. A rich tapestry woven of people, place and memory, 'home' becomes a construct of the familiar - where our everyday experience provides a feeling of security and predictability that is fundamental to our concept of identity and sense of belonging.

For Emma Itzstein, *Kaarta Koomba* is an exploration of her separation and return to Western Australia after 4 months isolating in hotel rooms under Victoria's stage 4 restrictions, hard border lockdowns and her applications to return to her family rejected multiple times. Following her husband for work with their 5 week old baby, the anguish, loneliness and uncertainty of this period could only be counteracted by the relief and euphoria of its long overdue release.

Playing out across the canvas, she explores a sensory expression of home - an inner world reconnected to the visceral; the geography of emotion reflected in the colour, light and ambience of Perth's most iconic garden. Each piece is a dance of detail: you can feel the breath of light and air interact with the intricacy of each brushstroke as these larger than life works immerse your eye in an interplay between the expanse of landscape and intimacy of connection.

*Kaarta Koomba* is also a celebration. More than a place of belonging, 'home' becomes the subject of Itzstein's exploration of identity as her physical return is also one of a return to 'self'. Her use of saturated hues pay tribute to the intensity of Perth's light but also her change in outlook and shift towards optimism. We must see her study of the garden (in full flower) as being deeply symbolic. It is growth through hardship - the manifestation of an emotional journey across difficult terrain that reflects human experience in the natural world to discover "...that people too must wilt, fall, root, rise...in order to bloom."  
- Rupi Kaur

*Illyarrie (detail)*





*The Ko, Photography by Anita Beaney*

# VISITING

## *Opening hours*

Open by appointment  
Monday - Sunday. Private  
and group bookings  
available\*

\*due to Covid guidelines, please do not attend without making and receiving confirmation of a booking time. All those in attendance must wear a mask and produce their ID with address. This is subject to change in accordance with government directives.

## *Getting here*

The Ko  
1/14 Lambert Ave  
Newtown VIC  
Free parking onsite

**BOOK DIRECTLY AT**  
**[info@theko.com.au](mailto:info@theko.com.au)**

# KAARTA KOOMBA

Experience the 3D virtual exhibition at [emmaitzstein.com](http://emmaitzstein.com)



Illyarrie (triptych), 2021  
Acrylic, oil, oil stick and  
soft pastel on linen  
153x270cm

\$10,300 (sold)



Kangaroo Paw, 2021  
Acrylic, oil, oil stick and soft  
pastel on linen  
102x102cm framed in  
Tasmanian Blackwood

\$3,200 (sold)



Rottnest Daisy, 2021  
Acrylic, oil, oil stick and soft  
pastel on linen  
102x102cm framed in  
Tasmanian Blackwood

\$3,200 (sold)



Paper Daisy, 2021

Acrylic, oil, oil stick and soft pastel on linen  
92x122cm framed in Tasmanian Blackwood  
\$4,100 (sold)





Ruby Velvet, 2021

Acrylic, oil, oil stick and soft pastel on linen  
92x122cm framed in Tasmanian Blackwood

\$4,100 (sold)



Gold Velvet, 2021  
Acrylic, oil, oil stick and soft pastel on linen  
92x122cm framed in Tasmanian Blackwood  
\$4,100 (sold)



Rose Mallee, 2021  
Acrylic, oil, oil stick and soft pastel on linen  
92x122cm framed in Tasmanian Blackwood  
\$4,100 (sold)



*Photography by Anita Beaney*

# EMMA ITZSTEIN

## *About the artist*

Emma is a multi-award winning self-represented visual artist based in Geelong, Victoria. Her practice focuses on painting since relocating from Perth where she was recognised

for her unique state printmaking. Most recently she has been awarded the Macquarie Group Emerging Artist Prize for her mixed media landscape work.