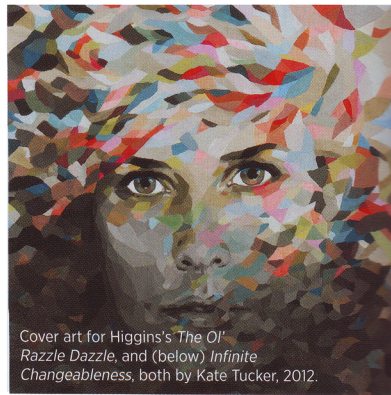




Kate Tucker's Archibald Prize portrait of Missy Higgins, *Melody*, 2012.



Cover art for Higgins's *The Ol' Razzle Dazzle*, and (below) *Infinite Changeableness*, both by Kate Tucker, 2012.



Paper chase

Sold-out shows, the Archibald Prize shortlist, album cover art — Kate Tucker is on a roll. Catch her solo exhibition this month, says SUSIE BURGE

It's hard to pin down in words how mesmerising Kate Tucker's abstract paintings can be. The colours are gorgeous. There's a curious three-dimensionality to them. And they have a beautiful sense of movement and flow. Simply, they are covetable.

Melbourne-based Tucker studied multimedia design before completing a graduate diploma at the Victorian College of the Arts in 2009. Her two solo shows to date have sold out on or before the opening. This year her portrait of Missy Higgins was selected as a finalist in the Archibald Prize. Now an upcoming exhibition at Helen Gory Galerie promises further excitement.

Tucker met Higgins by chance. A friend of the artist's was sharing the singer's house and Tucker offered to paint the garden

fence to make it more festive for a party. "It was this spontaneous backyard thing," she says with a laugh. "It took a couple of days to paint, and Missy just loved it." At the time, Higgins happened to be thinking about the cover of her new album and she asked Tucker if she'd do it. "I'd never done portraiture before," explains Tucker. "But I was totally going to give this a go."

Creating the album artwork led to the Archibald entry. "It was a wonderful process: we were very creatively attuned and we've become great friends," Tucker says. "I felt I could make a portrait that

was personal, honest and celebratory." The painting struck a chord with viewers, and Tucker is thrilled by the response. "I've had a full-on year," she says.

Working out of her super-modern home in South Melbourne and a rural weekender in Healesville, Victoria, Tucker juggles making art with family life; son Jasper is two. "When Jasper was about six months old, I started painting, an hour here, an hour there. I painted a bit of scrunched-up paper and that was the start of it."

Tucker is influenced by contemporary indigenous art and grounds her work in a lineage of abstractionists, from Helen Frankenthaler to Ralph Balson. She's drawn to nature and the malleability of digital media. And she's always loved paper. "It looks like landscape, like flesh. Something incredible happens when you transfer paper to another medium." Her process begins with making paper sculptures and then painting the shapes onto canvas. "It feels natural," she says. "It's not a conscious thing; it comes from a place deep inside me. Every painting I do creates the next painting." ■

Kate Tucker's exhibition *View Finder* is on at Helen Gory Galerie in Melbourne, August 15–September 8, helengory.com.

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