

ART COLLECTOR

UNDISCOVERED + UNDERRATED

+ *William Robinson*
+ *Julie Dowling*
+ *Callum Morton*
+ *Caitlin Yardley*
+ *Richard Lewer*
+ *Olivia Chin*
+ *Peter Gardiner*
+ *Jacqueline Fahey*
+ *Aotearoa Art Fair*
+ *more*

#116 APR – JUN 2026
AUD \$24.95 / NZ \$25.50

ISSN 2209 – 7317
Print Post approved PP235387/00100



16

9 772209 731009



OUT IN THE OPEN

For **Olivia Chin**, every painting begins long before the brush touches linen — in the body, in motion, in the layered memories of time spent outdoors with others.

WORDS | LARA CHAPMAN

When you look at one of **Olivia Chin**'s colourful landscape paintings, you are not just seeing a place but also layers of her memories — climbing trees with her childhood best friend Zuza; hiking, rock climbing and camping adventures with friends, a book that Chin was reading at the time of sketching, a particular feeling she had in a particular place. “Layers of my own memory become embedded in each artwork, sketch, sculpture or painting,” says the artist who is also a jewellery designer-maker.

For Chin, memory is one part of her practice; the other is movement. Her works generally come into being through a process of going on outdoor trips with friends or alone, during pauses for breaks and rests, she jots down the surrounding landscapes in sketchbooks. “There’s a long history of artists using walking and being in the body outdoors as a way of generating ideas and understanding the world,” Chin says. “For me, this has never felt separate from the making.”

Furthermore, being in different landscapes prompts Chin to consider history and context. “In Australia, we know that genocide took place and the land was stolen from our First Nations People, and that is always on my mind when making work,” Chin explains. She asks questions like: “What other beings, human and non-human, engage with this place? What has happened over the course of history here?”

A number of Chin’s en plein air drawings were recently compiled in *Sketches Outdoors with Friends* — a book published by Stray Pages in 2025. Riso-printed in orange, burgundy, and flat gold inks, the looseness of the lines Chin puts down on paper creates beautiful pieces in their own right. They also offer us a wonderful insight into Chin’s experience-specific process.

Chin transforms her sketches and memories into oil paintings on linen canvases in her Naarm-based studio. While the works are based on real places, “this process is always intuitive, you take creative licence,” Chin explains.

OPPOSITE: Olivia Chin in the studio. PHOTO: MICHAEL PHAM.
COURTESY: THIS IS NO FANTASY.



“The colours I use speak to joy, feeling and expression. They are a translation of the euphoric, magical feeling of spending extended periods of time outdoors.” ~ *Olivia Chin*

TOP: Olivia Chin, *Mile Falls, Katherine*, 2026. Oil on linen, diptych, 117 x 143cm each panel, 234 x 143cm overall. COURTESY: THIS IS NO FANTASY.

ABOVE: Olivia Chin in the studio. PHOTO: MICHAEL PHAM. COURTESY: THIS IS NO FANTASY.



ABOVE LEFT: Olivia Chin, *The Visible Track to the Invisible Thing*, 2025. Oil on linen, 142 x 117cm. COURTESY: THIS IS NO FANTASY.

ABOVE RIGHT: Olivia Chin, *Untitled*, 2026. Oil on linen, 117 x 142cm. COURTESY: THIS IS NO FANTASY.



There are the “inevitable distortions and elaborations that come with memory,” she says. The artwork, *A golden bird on a run in Wartook*, which was exhibited in Chin’s solo exhibition *Anito of the Forest* at THIS IS NO FANTASY in May 2025, is the result of this intuitive process. This painting grew from a trip to the Grampians (Gariwerd) National Park in Victoria with two friends. Together, they were reading about the colonial changes to the area’s waterfalls for various projects. While on a solo run, Chin took a dip in a river and saw a “fleeting golden bird that stuck in my mind, though I still can’t figure out what it was.” She made a sketch and, later, this painting, which recreates the scene in bright oranges, blues, greens, purples and yellows.

Chin’s use of bright colours is notable in how it departs from the often-muted tones of traditional Australian landscape paintings. “The colours I use speak to joy, feeling and expression. They are a translation of the euphoric, magical feeling of spending extended periods of time outdoors.”

This feeling seems to be resonating with audiences and collectors, with Chin’s work being exhibited in an impressive eight exhibitions in

2025 alone, including as finalist entries in the Ravenswood Australian Women’s Art Prize, the Mac Yapang Art Prize and the Georges River Art Prize.

In May 2026, Chin is set to show a new series of work inspired by the Jatbula Trail in the Northern Territory in another solo show at THIS IS NO FANTASY. Drawing from the area’s diverse plant life and ancient rock art, the works will explore themes of duration, space and sensory engagement, says the artist. Chin will also present a public commission at Ascot Vale Library from June, made collaboratively with young people through workshops. “It feels meaningful to have a work that will be in a shared community space that library users can engage with on a daily basis,” she reflects.

It is nice to think that each of these experiences of showing pieces will form new memories and connections that could gently infuse Chin’s future works.

Olivia Chin’s latest work is showing from 10 April–20 May at THIS IS NO FANTASY, Naarm/Melbourne.