



Fintan Magee

Long Walk Home

12 – 27 September 2025

onespace

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Exhibition Dates | 12 – 27 September 2025

Opening Event | Saturday 13 September, 4 – 6pm

Onespace Gallery Hours | Tuesday to Friday 10am – 5pm, Saturday 12pm – 5pm

Fintan Magee is a social realist painter, specialising in large-scale murals. Born in Lismore, New South Wales, his earlier large-scale paintings often inhabited the isolated, underutilised or abandoned spaces of the city. Now based in Brisbane, his expansive 2D murals are found all over the world in highly visible locations including in Atlanta, Buenos Aires, Boulogne Su Mer, Copenhagen, Dublin, Jordan, London, Los Angeles, Miami, Moscow, Rome, Tbilisi, and Vienna.

His first solo in Brisbane for many years, Long Walk Home, presents a series of poignant paintings examining the themes of belonging, place, displacement, and suburban isolation. Developed between 2023 to 2025, these works reflect on nostalgia for Queensland's iconic architecture, landscapes, and urban scenes. They are imposing paintings which grapple with issues of climate change, flooding, and the current housing crisis.

Magee's paintings offer a nuanced reflection on the paradoxes of the 'Australian Dream' and contemporary economic issues. They offer both a love letter to the Australian suburban aesthetic and a contemplative enquiry about the global challenges ahead, capturing the beauty and fragility of a way of life under pressure in unprecedented times.



Fintan Magee, *Girl with a Branch*, 2025, oil on canvas, 150 x 93cm. Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

Fintan Magee is a social realist painter, specialising in large-scale murals. Born in 1985 in Lismore, New South Wales, to a landscape architect mother and father who was a sculptor, he started drawing at a young age. His earlier large-scale paintings often inhabited the isolated, abandoned and broken corners of the city, and today are found all over the world including in London, Vienna, Los Angeles, Miami, Atlanta, Buenos Aires, Copenhagen, Moscow, Rome, Jordan, and Dublin amongst others.

Magee's practice is informed by a profound interest in political murals, inspired by exposure at a young age to those of his Father's native Northern Ireland. This is reflected in the socialist nature of his public artworks, which combine journalistic elements with public art. Magee's work is driven by his recognition of the power of murals to communicate political and social viewpoints and thus divide or unite communities.

Drawing from personal experience and the mundane, his figurative paintings are deeply integrated with the urban environment and explore themes of diversity, migration and transition, waste and consumption, loss, and the environment.

In recent years, Magee has solidified his position as one of Australia's leading public artists and has traveled extensively, completing projects in countries across the world. Some of the most recent project of note include his work in a refugee camp in Jordan in 2017; and his solo exhibition 'Waves' at Mathgoth Gallery in Paris. In 2020, his solo exhibition 'Nothing Makes Sense Anymore, at Backwoods Gallery in Melbourne; and a series of works on abandoned silos in Barraba, NSW and both murals and a gallery installation for Tauranga Art Gallery, NZ, for the Paradox Festival.

Magee has been featured in the Sydney Morning Herald, Juxtapoz Magazine, ABC News, The Australian, The Urban Contemporary Art Guide (2014, 2015), Street Art Australia (Lou Chamberlain), Graffiti Art (FR) Home & Design: Trends Magazine, Surface (Soren Solker) (DK), amongst others.



Sally Molloy in conversation with Fintan Magee

On a perfect winter afternoon in Magan-djin/Brisbane, I met Fintan McGee in a South Brisbane backstreet to discuss his upcoming solo exhibition with Onespace Gallery. After wandering around for a while, looking for a coffee—a little jolt—we settled for a 7/Eleven long black (“it’s so quick and it’s two bucks!” he said), before walking back to Fintan’s nearby workspace for a frank, fertile, and funny conversation about painting, boundary lines, community, and suburbia.

Sally: You’ve recently returned home from a couple of projects overseas; what were you working on?

Fintan: I was in Paris working on a mural with artist Abdul Abdullah, which was really cool, and before that I was at the Tbilisi Mural Festival, which is an annual public art festival held in Georgia.

Sally: Incredible, congratulations! What draws you to mural painting?

Fintan: Well, before becoming a muralist I was a graffiti writer—which is a term I like because it straddles the divide between the vandal and the artist. I was drawn to graffiti probably because I was an ADHD teenager in the nineties. Surfing wasn’t big in Brisbane, so skateboarding or tagging were the only things to do, and it was a cool way to get your name out there and make friends. My work still connects with graffiti writing in many ways, like through free-flowing, gestural, and energetic marks; I like making a mess, working fast, and seeing what tumbles out. Plus, it’s nice to be outside in the world painting: the publics you encounter are so varied, you get instant feedback (the good and the bad). It’s a good antidote to the loneliness of the studio—you can go a little crazy spending all that time alone in the studio!

Sally: Absolutely, you can. Do you have any strategies for dealing with that isolation?

Fintan: I listen to audio books while I paint. The last book was *Blood Meridian* by Cormac McCarthy and before that *Easy Money: Crypto Currency, Casino Capitalism, and the Golden Age of Fraud*. I don’t like crypto currency. I read *Rust: The Longest War* (literally a book about fighting rust, pretty surprising); some of Ernest Hemingway’s short stories. I like history stuff, true crime, geopolitical studies. The algorithm just keeps giving me stuff. Probably the most amazing book I read recently was *How Textiles Made the World*. It’s crazy, the first computer was basically a weaving machine. There’s so much higher-order mathematics in fabric, because in the past they had to find ways to make the fabric stronger, and the answers were in geometry.

Sally: It sounds like you have a voracious and varied appetite for information.

Fintan: A little bit, yeah. I’m curious about how the world works.

Sally: There’s a little bit of this curiosity in your use of found objects, like fly-screen mesh, panels of fencing, and shards of frosted glass.

Fintan: Yeah, the fly-screen mesh was interesting to me because I was curious to see if I could paint on it, so I used resin and paint and just sort of built it up. I like the idea that some of the works look like they’ve been plucked off the side of a building (or from ‘Curbside Collect’, ha ha). They’re connected to architecture in that way, and to a particular Queensland vernacular. The white picket fence is connected to this, but also to the idea of the Australian dream. It’s a symbol of middle-class wealth and opulence, something that’s becoming unattainable for so many people, not just because of housing prices, but because of class warfare and racism. I started playing around with the frosted glass during the pandemic, so in a way there’s also loneliness and isolation built into those works. The figures behind the glass are depersonalised—they’re blurred or distorted—so they start to become less familiar. They start to become anybody or everybody. They’re just shapes then.

Sally: Some of the other figures can be seen in various stages of disembodiment or transformation too: faces covered, melting off, or becoming birds. But these figures still seem to find connection or purpose in the paintings.

Fintan: The figures are about community in weird ways, especially in the images of floods. I was living in Brisbane for the 2011 and 2022 floods and remember checking in on neighbours and helping each other out. There was a strong sense of community, which is common during disasters, but then it sort of fizzles out after. And in the paintings, the figures are navigating these large open, empty sections that are not necessarily water: they're weird mirror dimensions where nothing quite makes sense, they're a little removed from reality, like vast fields, or interstitial plains. This to me is existential, it's the unknown.

Sally: Throughout this body of work, there are repeated references to boundary lines: the found objects—fly-screen mesh, frosted glass, fencing—all relate to the establishment of barriers between things (outside versus inside, private versus public, mine versus yours, perhaps). And through different types of painterly applications (like how you've painted the image of a house and then folded the canvas in half to achieve a print or 'Rorschach' effect in *Vulture Street Rorschach*), you establish a line between control and chaos. There's a pervasive sense, for the viewer, of being outside looking in, trying to catch a glimpse of some interiority (a home, a face that's not there, a body of water). Can you talk about this?

Fintan: I'm interested in the barrier between inside and outside, for sure, and also in ideas of distance and displacement. Up close, some of the paintings, like *Girl with Branch*, read like fields of abstract gestural marks, and it's only when you stand right back that something sensible starts to emerge. This distance is culturally inscribed just like the physical distance inherent in viewing a mural in a public space, I like playing with these conventions. But there's also the fact that my family are from Northern Ireland; my dad is from Derry, a place that was profoundly affected by The Troubles and by British colonisation.

Sally: Just like here on this continent.

Fintan: Exactly. I'm interested in the suburbs, the idea of suburbia, and the visceral uneasiness of the quiet there. There's a tension just beneath the surface that relates to the fact that Australian suburbs were—are—Aboriginal land, and that's an initial wound that's still festering. That tension also extends to domestic violence, the housing crisis, the climate crisis, to the ongoing trauma experienced by refugee families, starting over and over again. Queenslanders—the houses that is—in my paintings are references to the neighbourhoods I grew up in, you know West End, Salisbury, Moorooka; but they're also symbols of suburban emptiness and more generalised uneasiness that relates to the state of the world, gentrification, power, disenfranchisement, etc.

Sally: We can see these themes clearly in works like *When We're Gone Our Clothing Will Riot*. There's a sense of allegory here but also specific painting techniques that contribute to slippages, distortions, and multiple perspectives.

Fintan: There's allegory, for sure, and displacement, land ownership, combat, conflict, resistance, and readiness, alongside moments of pause in between the heat. Sometimes, the painting technique lets the paint tell its own story (like the *Rorschach* printing): it's unpredictable, it's up to chance, and brings in the potential of failure. I like art with a bit of mystery, where people can make up their own minds and there are spaces where things are ambiguous and not everything is spelled out. The paint has its own ideas, which means there's plenty of opportunity for the unexpected, for chaos.

Sally Molloy

Fintan Magee

Long Walk Home

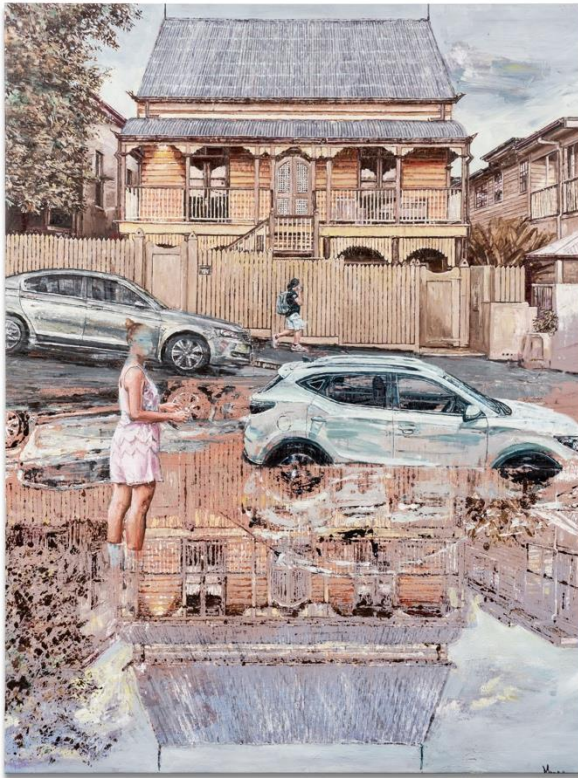
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Fintan Magee
Long Walk Home, 2025
Oil on canvas
152 x 152cm

\$10,000

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Fintan Magee
Brunswick Street Rorschach, 2025
Oil on canvas
200 x 150cm

\$12,500

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Fintan Magee
When we are gone our clothes will riot 2, 2025
Oil on canvas
200 x 150cm

\$12,500

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Fintan Magee
When we are gone our clothes will riot, 2025
Oil on canvas
152 x 152cm

\$10,000

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Fintan Magee
Vulture Street Rorschach, 2025
Oil on canvas
152 x 152cm

\$10,000

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

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Fintan Magee
Waiting Game, 2025
Oil on canvas
152 x 152cm

\$10,000

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Fintan Magee
The Rider, 2022
Oil on canvas
115 x 115cm

\$4,500

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Fintan Magee
The Watcher, 2022
Oil on canvas
100 x 75cm

\$3,500

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Fintan Magee
The Flood, 2024
Oil on canvas
152 x 117cm

\$7,500

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Fintan Magee
Vase with Bluey and Vipoo sculpture, 2024
Oil on canvas
110 x 80cm

\$5,000

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Fintan Magee
Girl with Branch, 2025
Oil on canvas
150 x 93cm

\$5,000

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Fintan Magee
The Fight, 2024
Oil on canvas
150 x 93cm

\$5,000

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Fintan Magee
Vase and Sunflowers, 2025
Acrylic Render and Oil on Screen Door
270 x 136cm

\$10,000

Photo: Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Fintan Magee
Natives and Oranges, 2025
Acrylic Render and Oil on Window Screen
119 x 90cm

\$3,500

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

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Fintan Magee

Stampede on Picket Fence, 2025

Oil on timber

178 x 260cm (dimensions variable)

\$15,000

Photo: Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

Onespace is a Brisbane-based gallery that presents and sells contemporary art, including work by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists.

We curate an exhibition program exploring diverse themes and media, showcasing emerging, mid-career and established artists whose works inform, stimulate and challenge. Onespace welcomes you to engage with the artists and artworks we exhibit.

Onespace is uniquely located adjacent to Maiwar (Brisbane river) beneath the Spice Apartments near the Go Between Bridge in South Brisbane. We are proudly surrounded by the dynamic buzz of the Queensland cultural precinct that is significant to this area of Brisbane.

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Director, Jodie Cox: jodie@onespace.com.au

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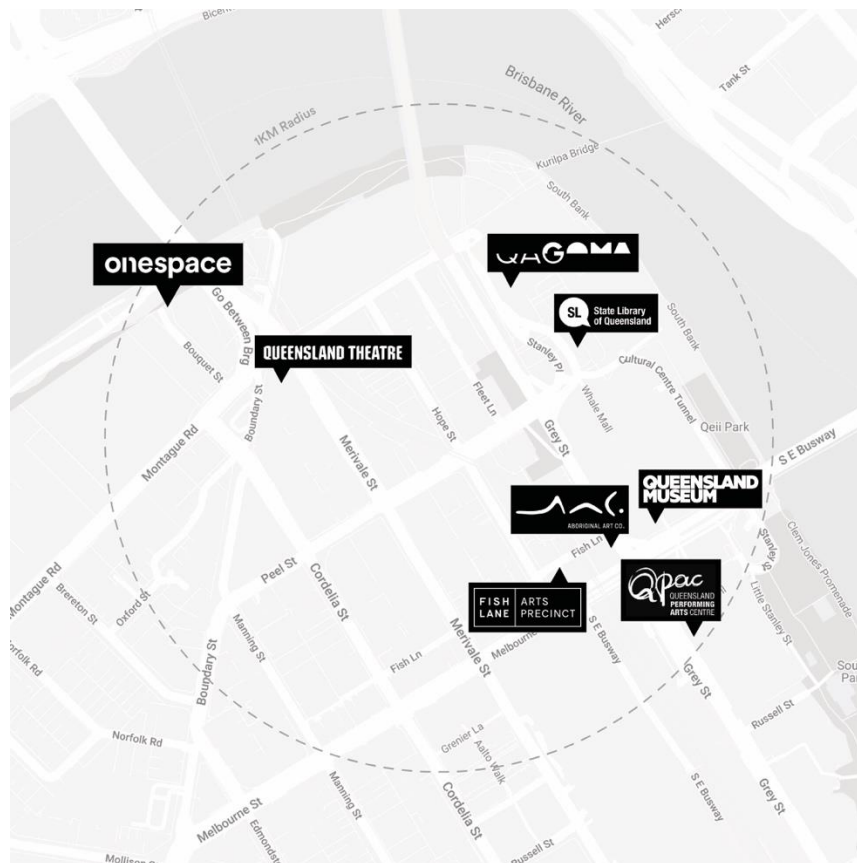
onespace.com.au

[@onespace.au](https://www.instagram.com/onespace.au)

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25A Bouquet Street, South Brisbane Q 4101 Australia



Onespace acknowledges the traditional custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to the land, waters, culture and community. We pay our respects to elders past and present.