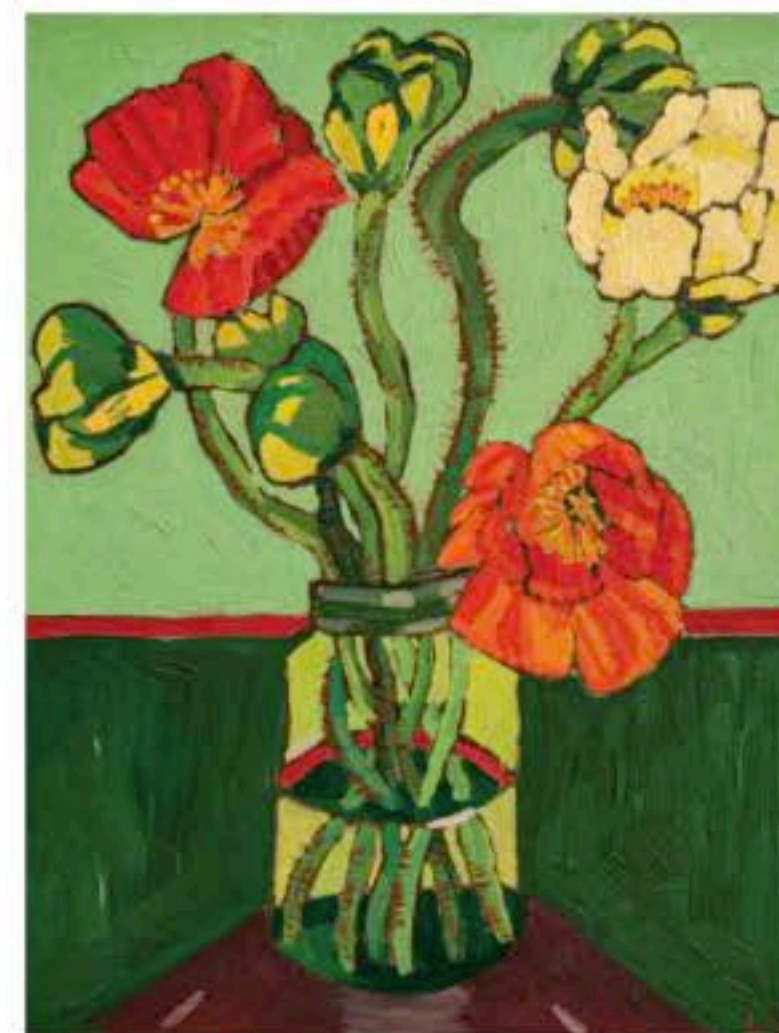


Colour in bloom

Story by Emma Masters.



Page left: Marigolds. Above left: Giant Poppies. Right: Lotus Pods. All artwork created in oil on linen.

When you first cast your eyes upon one of Louise Vadasz's vibrant paintings of flowers nestled within equally radiant vases, it's easy to understand their creator has had a lifelong love affair with the natural world.

So it's not overly surprising when award-winning artist Louise reveals she carries garden shears around with her wherever she goes. 'I've always got my snips in the car or in my back pocket to snip a bit off here and there, just in case I see something inspiring,' Louise explains. 'As long as it's not on someone's property ... I've been doing it for years.'

Born in McLaren Vale and having grown up on the Fleurieu, she has been enamoured by plants and their vast blossoms as long as she can remember. 'Growing up I loved gardens and I knew all the names

of plants,' Louise says. 'We had a holiday house that was very, very old, with no electricity and it was quite a little rural setting. All the photos from then, when I was little, I've got a bunch of flowers in my hand, I was always picking them.'

When Louise's family moved to the home previously owned by the pioneering wine-growing Reynell family, after who Reynella was named, Louise says she knew every plant in the garden on the two-and-a-half acre block.

But it's not just incidental inspiration from the natural world that informs Louise's work. Like many from around the Fleurieu, she makes a weekly pilgrimage to the Willunga markets to source local produce and the best of what's in season. 'There are some local growers that sell beautiful, gorgeous flowers and I like to buy from them, and see them as artists too,' she says. 'I love painting what's in season and I try to get what's around at the time. There's not a lot around during winter, so I might go to the florist but generally I try to keep it in season.' >



Above left: Nasturtiums. Right: Nat's in Pia's Vase. All artwork created in oil on linen. Bottom: Louise Vadasz – portrait in the studio. Photograph by Sia Duff.

And when they're available, some of her favourites include poppies, ranunculus and nasturtiums. 'The colours of those flowers are just beautiful. They're intense, like silk fabric,' she says. 'Poppies are amazing and they've got these wobbly stems that go everywhere. They're like hairy legs, and it just makes them interesting.' The Willunga hills are another favourite subject. 'I love those hills, they're always there – and the coastline,' she continues. 'It's hard to describe, it's just your home base, I guess.'

Whether she's depicting flowers or has turned her attention to capturing landscapes on canvas, Louise purposely avoids any attempt to make her paintings look photo-like. She prefers to add her own flair and personal touch to her work. 'I don't have the patience to do that kind of painting and I like to paint it my way,' she says. 'My paintings are not totally representational, they merge with realism and abstraction. I prefer to work free-flying with expressionistic brushstrokes, to make the surface look painterly with obvious brushstrokes.'

She adds that she likes to heighten and intensify colour in her work and oils help her to achieve the colour saturation she's after. The thick

and luscious colours available in oil are beautifully utilised in Louise's paintings – an unabashedly maximalist selection of blues, yellows, reds and every combination available therein.

'I either paint in the garden or outside for landscapes, or if I find a flower I like, I pop it on my desk and then I sketch it out in paint and then I go back in with a lot of colour and paint the image,' she says.

When *Fleurieu Living* spoke to Louise, she was preparing for an upcoming South Australian Living Artists group exhibition in August. She'd also recently hung more than thirty paintings for a solo show at the South Coast Regional Art Centre in Goolwa during May. Saying her artistic endeavours keep her busy would be an understatement. With her three children grown up and pursuing their own careers, Louise has time to dedicate to her craft.

'I've always done something creative,' she says. 'I was printmaking and other things at art school in the eighties and now I paint all the time. I think the thing with painting is you're always trying to do a better one next time, so it's always a process of trying to get a better picture than the last one. I just hope my work helps bring people joy and that it cheers people up.'



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