

# KATO WAKE

## ARTIST STATEMENT

On the first go, I thought about working with a narrative interpretation of “What’s Left Behind”, so wanted to paint images connected to my father (who was an artistic spirit), and also places and scenes that were beautiful and held happy memories.

Soon I realized that all of my paintings – regardless of the style – are composites of the artistic decisions I choose to let go, or keep. As tangible objects, paintings by their very nature, are “left behind”. For me, the process of making art involves the dance between chaos and control, unconscious play and conscious skill. Elements are often buried, then excavated, lost or saved. Cropping and editing is also essential to the idea of what’s left behind. Ultimately, what’s important for me is to paint, with emotion, what I think is beautiful – a colour relationship, mark making, a scene, a shadow or strong light on an object...

For the past year I experimented with some new media and techniques – oil and cold wax, oil sticks and charcoal. I was entertained by movement, shadows, and mark making in general. I trust my creative spirit and know it will never be left behind – it’s my anchor.

I am extremely grateful for the gift of time this past year which allowed me to play, experiment, create and teach online classes, and share beautiful studio space at the Armoury with dear friends and kindred spirits – Gerry, Laurie and Peni. That was the best gift that was given, and left behind, for me.

# GERRY JENKISON

## ARTIST STATEMENT

“What’s Left Behind” is a rich seam to mine – so many ways to interpret it.

Our group of four friends talked about representations of memory many times, and these discussions gelled into working together on this theme. We named it What’s Left Behind.

I had expected to work in two veins: nature and childhood memories of Lincolnshire. I spent many happy summers on the east coast of Lincolnshire in the UK, with tidal pools, sand dunes, bright sand and flowing grasses. As for nature, it’s my greatest love. Living with woods, trees and wildflowers is where I’m happiest. But portraying either of themes wasn’t working for me, and my creative journey took an unexpected turn.

My entire body of work for almost the last year has been large, bright abstract paintings. To me, they are joyful and brimming with optimism. And some are very large, for me – 60 by 48 inches. In my ten by eleven foot studio, that’s no mean feat. Joyful abstraction is not somewhere I expected to be, but deep down, I know it’s where I wanted to be. What an exhilarating journey it’s been.

How does this work refer to What’s Left Behind? Not as I expected. But think of the artistic process, which in my experience relates to all painting and drawing. No matter where you begin – with a tightly planned composition or just an idea and a palette – sooner or later important decisions need to be made, both large and small. What to add, what to leave in, what to take out. Does it work? Step back, analyze, add and subtract again. Repeat. The closer you are to feeling your painting is complete, the more important these decisions become. What’s Left Behind describes the endpoint of your decision-making.

Underlying your art is your skill, your experience with your tools and in your life, and the quality of your analysis. Your Self. Your art is who you are.

Heartfelt thanks to Kato Wake, Laurie Gruer, and Peni Patrick for their friendship and inspiration, and for including me in their creative circle.

# LAURIE GRUER

## ARTIST STATEMENT

In the summer of 2020, we were four painters/friends, missing each other through lock down, and trying to find a way to connect, and to keep busy through a difficult time. We decided to rent the wonderful space at the Armoury known as Studio X, and it saved us in this complicated period.

We did not want to do a show about Covid or the Pandemic, or about being isolated. We didn't want to give more weight to this period of compromised happiness and international worry.

Because we are all of "a certain age", we found ourselves thinking more about where we all are in Life...how we got here, what fell away from our lived experiences, and what truth, treasures or wisdom we have found at this stage.

The theme of our show became "WHAT'S LEFT BEHIND"— not just what has been forgotten along the way, but also what is left after those things are gone: the many gifts that have been refined and valued as time goes by.

For me it led to an examination of family relationships: my two grandmothers and the crop of grandchildren they produced. My elderly aunts, two gone, and one still thriving at ninety-six.

I thought about the memories of my childhood and my adolescence. It made me think of that weird convention of high school yearbooks, and that time of life when we seem incubated in teenager-hood; those cheesy documents where we record our favourite songs and our fondest ambitions, and where we inscribe "to my forever best friend" over someone's bad photo. In a way, it's one of the richest times of our lives in terms of connections but in the end, and I'm only speaking of my personal experience here, What's Left Behind is hard to measure. It comes down, I think, to the few connections you retain after all of these years, if any.

I am an inveterate sketcher with a large collection of journals and sketchbooks. Rarely does anyone see them. The entries are produced in private and erratically, and when I die, I'm pretty sure they will make a memorable bonfire. Nothing left behind. In this show, some of those images have been produced on metal-based murals; the ephemeral has become weatherproof and time-proof. A great irony. Who knew?

And there's more. Paintings of wetlands, left behind by floods and glaciers. Paintings of interiors which include items left to me by family members long gone. A painting of a playground after dark, with toys forgotten in the grass, left behind.

In the end, this has been an experience of unalloyed joy. I hate that it is coming to an end. I hope you will enjoy the show. I hope you will think about things you have left behind, and when those things disappeared, what you retained...all of those gifts and treasures that have survived.

# PENELOPE PATRICK

## ARTIST STATEMENT

This all began at a luncheon. Four of us gathered and began to talk about our art and what it meant to each of us. We decided to work together on a project and out of our discussions came What's Left Behind. Our relationship was built on our interests, the respect we have for each other and honesty. It is so exciting to collaborate with others.

When I first started thinking about What's Left Behind, I immediately thought about the times when my grandchildren come to visit. They are 4 and 2 years old, and their visits are a whirlwind of love, laughter, joy, and conversations. After they have packed up and headed home, the sound of silence is so loud...and so I started to paint what is left behind for me...and for them.

Watching my son comfort his infant son made me realize that he was passing on strength, love, and a sense of safety, just as I had with him...such important things to leave behind.

Past relationships in life, from childhood to adulthood, often leave behind self knowledge and understandings, emotional connection. Taking the time to look back at that life experience offers the opportunity for better understandings and greater self knowledge. I spend a lot of my time doing just that.

Many things – a silk nightgown, old silver, teacups and saucers, an old bugle, a teddy bear, sleigh bells – these have been left behind by people in my life that I have loved and lost. They hold such memories and offer me comfort. I loved painting them. It was like spending time with those loved ones.

So really what I discovered about what's left behind is that the concept is huge, it's everywhere...in relationships, in process, in nature. It's all around us. In working through this project I learned a lot about myself and my vision on what is important in my life is a little clearer now.

I hope you will enjoy walking through this exhibition. I hope that you might be challenged or might make a connection to a past experience in your life and take a moment to think about what's left behind.