

From the Studio: The Unfinished, Abandoned and Evolving

Curator's Preface

Erin Barwood

An abandoned canvas has collected a layer of dust in the corner of my room. I put it down intending to pick it up again, but my brush hasn't feathered its surface in years. Still, I keep it, and I find myself asking why. The group exhibition, *From the Studio: The Unfinished, Abandoned and Evolving* (September 23rd-26th, 2025. Intermission Gallery, Monash Caulfield), unfurled over the course of ten weeks from this curiosity, and in its research and execution, took on a backbone of existing scholarly conversation around the unfinished. This then led me to nine artists who resonated with the show's theme: Lizzie Adderley, Kalina Chan, Sara Gilbert, Sherry Ruoyu Han, Ashya James, Anisha Muniandy, Amalia Serie Ruiz, Mellyn Sun and Indiana Rose Wells. Each artist presented work that spoke to unfinishedness in a new and considered way.

Non-finito, an Italian expression referring to "the quality of a work being unfinished"¹, is at the heart of the Western philosophy surrounding unfinished art, and is what informed my baseline understanding of the aesthetics of the unfinished. *Non-finito* has been used to describe Renaissance works by artists like Michelangelo, who (mostly unintentionally) left many of his marble

¹Carmen C. Bambach, "Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Notions of the Unfinished in Art," in *Unfinished: Thoughts Left Visible*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016), 31.

sculptures in a state where the figures are yet to fully emerge. Likewise, classical Chinese paintings embraced empty space in their compositions, as large portions of paper or silk were left untouched by the artist's hand.² This aesthetic has been candidly explained by Daoist philosopher, Laozi (circa 571 BC); "We shape clay into a pot, but it is the emptiness inside that holds whatever we want. We hammer wood for a house, but it is the inner space that makes it livable. We work with being, but non-being is what we use."³ Finally, in America and Europe, the early Modernists revelled in pushing the boundaries of unfinishedness as far as they could go, and movements such as Cubism, Surrealism and Impressionism have attracted us with what was considered at the time to be an aesthetic of the raw or unfinished. In all of these works, it is in their incomplete condition (be this literal or projected) that value, meaning and beauty are found.

The Met Museum's 2016 exhibition, *Unfinished: Thoughts Left Visible*, was the first major exhibition to consider "unfinished" art and featured more than 200 works. *Unfinished* exhibited both historical and contemporary artists, representing unfinishedness resulting from things like "death, an accident, [or] the collapse of a commission"⁴ and Modernism's embrace of unfinishedness alongside the deliberate adoption of *non finito*. *From the Studio* takes a more localised position, centering emerging artists and their relation to unfinishedness within the context of art school.

² Hannah Kang Wolter. "Blank Scrolls: Emptiness in East Asian Art & Philosophy," The Cambridge Language Collective, October 16, 2025 (Accessed), <https://www.thecambridgelanguagecollective.com/asia/blank-scrolls-emptiness-in-east-asian-art-amp-philosophy>.

³ Wolter, "Blank Scrolls."

⁴ Thomas P. Campbell, "Director's Forward," in *Unfinished: Thoughts Left Visible*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016), 7.

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

In an effort to create cohesion, a glossary of relevant terms was established.

Abandoned: An artist does not plan on returning to this work, deliberately stopping, giving up or leaving it behind.

Unfinished: Currently incomplete – there is more to be done, or some issues yet to be resolved before the artist will be satisfied. In a historical sense, “unfinished” referred to incompleteness as a result of circumstance (death, loss of patron, the artist’s choice).

Enough: Satisfies the artist’s aims and vision, though perhaps not completely (room for shifting focus and a change of mind). Outsiders may judge its level of ‘finish’, but the stopping point is the artist’s call.

Evolving: A work is undergoing or will undergo change in future iterations.

In process: In a temporal sense, an artwork may have many lives and phases (despite appearing to us now, the artist has plans that situate this as one step in a journey to finishedness).

Finished: Decidedly refined, intentional or ready for public viewing.

Complete: Satisfactory through achieving an artistic output.

Discarded: Quite literally disposed of – trashed, lost, thrown away.

THE EXHIBITION

Ashya James is one artist working deliberately with the aesthetics of unfinishedness. She values the visibility of the artist's hand and the transparency of both medium and process. James's style is spontaneous and energetic, guided intuitively by her emotions and movement. She works fast and isn't concerned with refined appearances. In a literal sense, a viewer can observe the gaps of paint in her portraits, but while they *look* unfinished, they are not. James brings a temporal node to the *From the Studio*, as her work will not be the same once it returns to her studio. That is, since uncovering the work from storage for the show, James has been struck with the desire to metamorphose them. Embodying the "evolving", they will never look the same again.



Figure 1. Ashya James, (L-R) *Boiling frogs series*, *Untitled warm ups*, Oil on cardboard, 2023. Exhibition photograph by Erin Barwood.

Similarly, Amalia Serie Ruiz has been known to destroy her sculptures to reuse clay in an endless cycle of evolution and process. Like James, Ruiz is an agent of “unfinishedness”, actively seeking it out within her practice. Her small-scale unfired earthenware and stoneware clay sculptures navigate in-process and unfinished forms. Clay is a malleable material which allows her to experiment with the reactivity of her sculptures. She takes note of where her sculptures fall into place without the intervention of her tools, simply reacting to the movement around them and the tactility of their form. To her, this blurs the line between the making and the end result. Ruiz pursues unfinishedness, and she and James share an affinity for rejecting finality, as in both of their studio practices, there is a complementary undoing needed in order to create.



Figure 2. *Untitled*, Unfired stoneware clay, approx 15 cm x 15cm, 2025. Exhibition photograph by Erin Barwood.

Sherry Ruoyu Han, Mellyn Sun and Sara Gilbert's artworks coalesce to be representative of unintentional unfinishedness. According to the artist's standards they are incomplete, however, it is through this incomplete state that the audience can appreciate the artistic process better. Han's *Thousands Hands Guanyin* and Sun's *Untitled* are analogous in regards to a historical painting technique: The underpainting. Sun works with what we classically understand an underpainting to be: A coloured layer of paint that adds a richness to the paint on top of it, giving life to skin tones and depth to material. A red underpainting peeks through the figure's soft blue dress in *Untitled*. The vibrant red contrasts strikingly against gentle blues, creating a halo that crowns the figure's head in a subtle red glow. Some artists leave their underpaintings visible for varied effects. However, Sun fully intends to cover hers up. As it is now, *Untitled* presents audiences with a chance to learn about the function of the underpainting and to have an intimate glimpse into the artist's process.



Figure 3. Detail of Mellyn Sun's *Untitled*, acrylic on board, 42.5 x 55.5 cm, 2025-?.

Photograph by Erin Barwood.

As for Han, the 80 x 110 cm vertical expanse of her work makes us appreciate the time-consuming process she must undertake to apply the gold pigment to her intricate design. In order to work on this piece, Han must continuously re-mix her pigment, finding the correct consistency, and working fast as the pigment dries out quickly. Art is a labour, and our appreciation for the time and effort spent would not strike us if we first saw it in its “complete” state. The in-process snapshot allows us to take in the tedious work that lies ahead of the artist. *Thousands Hands Guanyin* doesn't have a typical underpainting, but operates with a similar logic, providing a guide that the artist will cover up. The same tape that suspends the work in the artist's studio has been used in the exhibition, as if this is Han's studio wall. The golden pigment traverses inward from the bottom left corner of the cotton cloth. Our eyes meditatively follow the movement of where Han's brush has touched. Likewise, we can see where she has skipped and halted sections to move on to a different pattern that drew her in at the time.



Figure 4. Sherry Ruoyu Han, *Thousands Hands Guanyin*, mineral gold pigment and glue on cotton cloth, 80 x 110 cm, Started June 2023 and last worked in March 2025. Exhibition photograph by Erin Barwood.



Figure 5. Detail of Sherry Ruoyu Han's *Thousands Hands Guanyin*, Photograph by Erin Barwood.

Gilbert's two *Untitled* artworks are similarly incomplete. Her work on B2 paper is a half-finished illustration of J.R.R Tolkien's dragon antagonist, Smaug, as featured in the film *The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug* (2013) (an instalment in the film adaptations of Tolkien's original novel, *The Hobbit* (1937)). Working off of a gridded movie frame as reference, they have paid great attention to detail, filling in square-by-square of information. Gilbert has focused on form rather than line, translating light and shadow into shape without actually drawing the shape itself, something we can appreciate in its half-complete state. At heart, Gilbert is a story-teller, and her second unfinished

work, an incomplete detailing of acrylic paint on a classical guitar, provokes thought around narrative. Within the context of the show, artworks are highlighted for their material quality and aesthetics rather than their meanings. This is something that we are missing, and encourages us to contemplate whether a work in progress is about something, or if it *will be* about something once the artist's vision is realised. A story is yet to unfold across this guitar, and like reading a book with pages ripped out, how do we piece the rest together? Does our imagination fill in the blanks, or will the work lack meaning until it is complete, like an empty vessel waiting to be filled?



Figure 6. Sara Gilbert, *Untitled*, pencil on B2 paper, 70 × 100 cm, Started 3rd of May 2022 and last worked on in 2024. Exhibition photograph by Erin Barwood.



Figure 7. Sara Gilbert, *Untitled*, acrylic paint and classical guitar, 3/4 size classical guitar, 2025. Exhibition photograph by Erin Barwood.

From the Studio not only considers the unfinished and evolving, but also the “abandoned”. Anisha Muniandy, Indiana Rose Wells and Kalina Chan have all deliberately stopped or given up on their respective artworks, calling to mind Art Historian Hans Belting’s, *The Invisible Masterpiece*. Alluding to ancient Greek myth, Belting wrote that, “Perfect art was a shadow, a mere ghost of classical times, and not even Orpheus was able to bring it back to the world because he lost it when he tried to look at it.”⁵ He proposes that the ultimate masterpiece doesn’t exist, and in the context of abandoned works, might this mean that we’d be better off appreciating art in its incomplete and flawed mid-way state than to obsess over perfection? A certain potential is lost by completing a work of art. Paradoxically, Belting suggests that a “painting contains the ideal of

⁵Hans Belting, *The Invisible Masterpiece*. (London: Reaktion, 2001), 126.

perfection only while it remains unfinished. In that state it still promises to deliver the impossible”⁶. Therefore, there is innate potential imbued within the abandoned, because they will remain unfinished indefinitely.

Wells’s painterly sketch of South Yarra Station was done on a primed wood canvas that she found to be an upsetting surface to paint on, disrupting the flow of creativity and her connection to the work. Subsequently, the piece was abandoned the same day it was begun. It will remain a hazy scene, never truly able to come into focus, like we’re viewing it with our eyes squinting under water.



Figure 8. Indiana Rose Wells, South Yarra Station, oil on board, 30 x 40 cm, Started 29th of May 2025 and abandoned 29th of May 2025. Exhibition photograph by Erin Barwood.

⁶Belting, *The Invisible Masterpiece*, 126.

Kalina holds no fond feelings toward *Parasite*. She has described it as rough, messy and ugly. She finds the work undesirable, and yet it holds inherent potential and worth. Take for instance the work's rawness, a visceral image worthy of the name "Parasite". For all the reasons she finds it messy, the audience could interpret as intentional aesthetic choice.



Figure 9. Kalina Chan, *Parasite*, oil pastel on canvas, 30.3 x 40.2 cm, started 2023 and abandoned in 2024. Exhibition photograph by Erin Barwood.

Muniandy gave up on her artwork because the image in her head and the tangible output before her were not lining up. Abandonment is a common response to such a roadblock as this. The painting is of a screen capture from the movie *West Side Story* (2021). During the prep stage, Muniandy used a fine liner to sketchily block in the scene. However, these lines remained visible beneath the paint despite the layers she built up. Faced with a mistake she felt

she couldn't fix, she abandoned the piece altogether. Despite her loss of faith in the work, the artist has left her signature in the bottom right corner, a mark that suggests finality and closure.



Figure 10. Anisha Muniandy, *Untitled*, oil on canvas, 39.8 x 30 cm, started and abandoned in 2025. Exhibition photograph by Erin Barwood.

In contrast to how Belting's theories about the unfinished can help us value abandoned art, the abandoned also elicit questions about whether there is a responsibility to exhibit art that we critically deem as "good". In response, we must consider if it is possible to assess a work that an artist will never finish, and that does not represent their abilities and interests. Perhaps, in line with the artist's feelings, we approach with brutal dissection. Or, are we motivated to fight for its worthiness on their behalf? This is a dilemma that reaches beyond this exhibition. For instance, the Museum of Bad Art in Boston embraces "bad"

art wholeheartedly.⁷ One of their collection methods is picking up discarded work, either from street curbs or thrift shops. For them, bad art is not a result of incompetence, and they collect work from completely unknown to talented artists. Their aim is to display a niche they believe would not be appreciated in any other forum.⁸ It could be argued that “good” and “bad” aren’t terms used to offend, but to create a hierarchy of value. That may sound counterintuitive, but it means that the work an artist knows is ready to be seen by audiences is more likely to be good, and is prioritised over what they deem as unready or bad. Within the context of unfinishedness, the abandoned artworks are presented alongside intentionally incomplete looking art in this exhibition. We must acknowledge that there is a difference between the two, and that we can’t undersell the effort and thought that goes into making a work that an artist deems ready to be seen. However, we can still appreciate and enjoy abandoned art.

Lizzie Adderley’s series of paintings don’t evidently fall into a single category. They exist in a grey area between unfinishedness and being “enough”. Their purpose in Adderley’s artistic process is to be loose thumbnails that help her understand and visualise tone and composition for a larger, sustained art piece. In this way, they are complete as they have fulfilled their role. However, they are not something she would choose to exhibit, because they are not to the finished standard of her larger painted oeuvre. The ideas of “complete” and “finished” are opposed in this way. This unalignment proves that the imagined binary of the show is just that – an imagined binary. While

⁷Museum of Bad Art. "Collections," MOBA: Museum of Bad Art, October 8, 2025 (Accessed), https://museumofbadart.org/collections/?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=22462508636&gbraid=0AAAAA-AP-EBt3OX1boZTwMvKtpWHfq6ULg&gclid=CjwKCAjwi4PHBhA-EiwAnjTHuYCbQU2Ppqndu-frjpoea8fXcJIB-R8jTmkiO1BqGhvDWBQYJ0fxoC2KIQA_VD_BwE.

⁸Museum of Bad Art. "About MOBA," MOBA: Museum of Bad Art, October 8, 2025 (Accessed), <https://museumofbadart.org/about-moba/>.

they satisfy an output, they will inevitably be discarded. Adderley is an artist who throws unfinished work away, and in no other context than *From the Studio* would these works have been shared.



Figure 11. Lizzie Adderley, Untitled, Untitled, Untitled, Untitled, Untitled, oil paint on 240GSM canvas paper, 29.7 x 42 cm (x4), 21 x 21 cm, 2025. Exhibition photograph by Erin Barwood.

Unfinishedness brings to the table something that a complete artwork can't; an x-ray into process, the artist's hand and decision making. It's common practice for conservators and art historians to use radiography to uncover information about paintings, and *From the Studio* is anticipatory, showing us what x-rays are implemented to reveal. However, this comes with potential complications. Take Edgar Degas's *Ballet dancer with arms crossed* (1872). The

artwork was found in Degas's studio after his death in 1917, and is considered unfinished due to its literal incomplete state. Ironically, in the National Gallery of Victoria's *French Impressionism* show (2025) Degas is quoted alongside the work:

“What’s underneath is no-one’s business. Works of art must be left with some mystery about them.”⁹

From the Studio loudly refutes this way of thinking, showing a progression in the artist's desire to share what lies beneath, a characteristic that has arisen “since World War II, [when] artists working in Europe, the United States, and Latin America [began courting] the unfinished with pronounced enthusiasm, seeking bolder, ever more novel, and experimental ways to not finish works of art.”¹⁰ Evidently, artists today are less concerned with secrecy and mystique. A curator delights in showing *Ballet dancer* at the NGV because it shows us something about a famous historical artist's process, however, it is not fame or historical separation that draws us to the exhibited work in *From the Studio*. So, what is it instead? Despite extensive research and deep curatorial consideration, the reason remains largely inexplicable. However, what *From the Studio* reveals is that, without a doubt, it is something innately human.

⁹Degas, quoted on a wall didactic in the National Gallery of Victoria's *French Impressionism* show (2025), visited September 30th, 2025.

¹⁰ Kelly Baum, “The Raw and the Cooked: Unfinishedness in Twentieth- and Twenty-First-Century Art,” in *Unfinished: Thoughts Left Visible*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016), 206.

Journal Entry Excerpts

During the show, visitors were invited to take a moment to reflect on the works on display and the idea of “unfinishedness”, and then to record their thoughts in the journal provided.

“We’re all different and compatible, for what words we choose to express our art.”

“This gallery has been created with a clear vision of how the beauty of art can be seen in all stages of its creation.”

“This show has such a simple yet complex theme that I think a lot of artists can relate to.”

“I thought perhaps the release of emotions through artwork could have overwhelming repercussions such that, at least temporarily, there was a stall while emotions were more fully processed.”

“I think that if someone told me they were completed artworks I’d have believed them (especially Gilbert’s framed drawing).”

“We are all unfinished! Always changing.”

“This somehow makes me think about the feeling of being naïve. Being naïve is to be unprepared, that your development is ‘unfinished’. However, being naïve can sometimes expose great beauty.”

“Very inspiring to have so many different artistic processes on display. I find this is a powerful way to stimulate conversation and thought about the origins of inspiration, as it's most fresh (to me) in the initial stages of an artwork's creation.”

“I love the ‘unfinished’ works as they are full of movement and mystery. Who decides if they are unfinished? Are works ever finished?”

“Unfinished or abandoned work is the turning point when perfectionism strikes.”

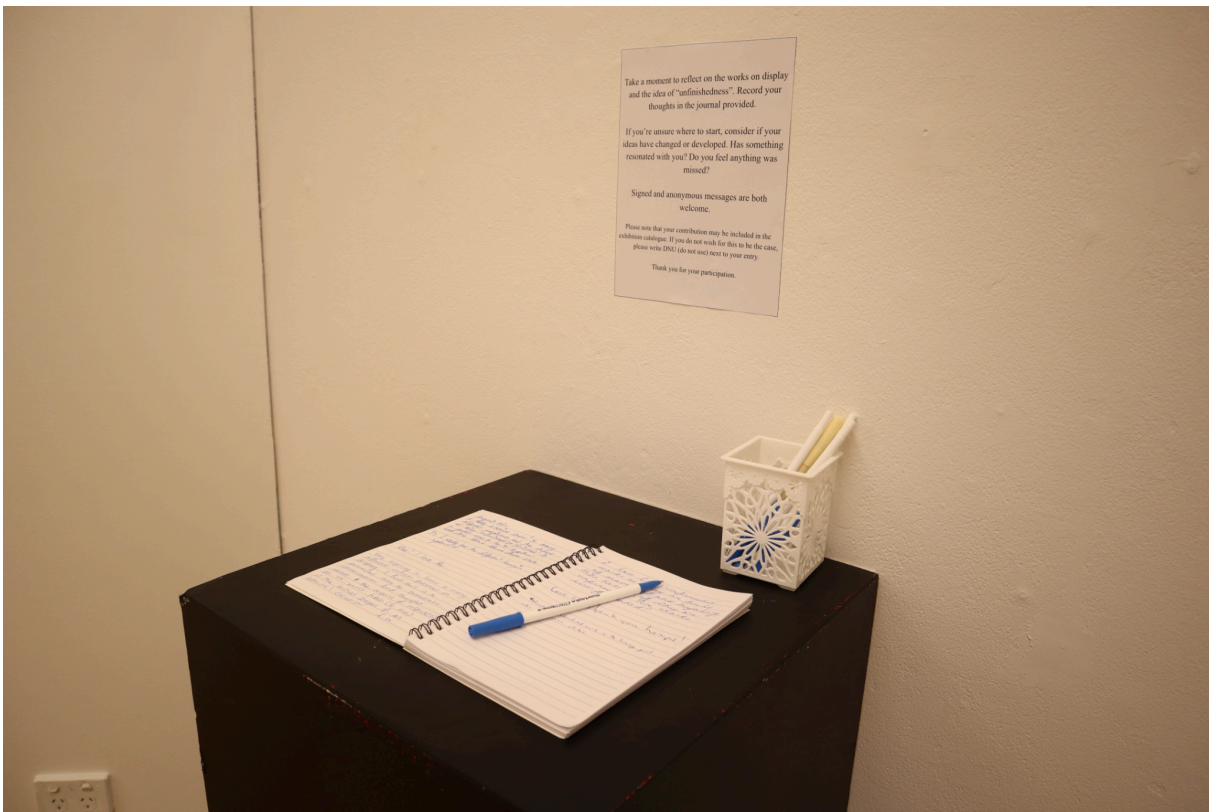


Figure 12. Exhibition shot of *From the Studio: The Unfinished, Abandoned and Evolving*. Photograph by Erin Barwood.

Artist Interview, Sitting with Ashya James

17/9/2025

Earlier this month, I spoke with contributing artist, Ashya James, about her practice. James is an artist from the traditional lands of the Palawa people on Ilutruwita (Tasmania), currently living and working on the Lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nations. She has an experimental multi-media process built on reclaiming studio junk and discarded materials in an attempt to reshape the way waste matter is used in art. Narrative is a central theme to her work, explored through figurative forms that inspect isolation, social unrest and the unpredictable motions of life

Erin Barwood I'd like to dive into your thoughts about what "unfinished" means in art.

Ashya James It can mean so many different things. There are artists like me who actively work with an unfinished look to their art, so an aesthetic version, then there's the grimy old artwork that's been sitting under your bed for three months that you haven't touched and finished.

EB With your work, do you have any that are *really* unfinished? Or are you more geared towards the aesthetic?

AJ A lot of my work involves collage, which creates a lot of unfinished stuff. So, you have your paintings, and then I chop them up. Then I've got unfinished

parts that I take out of it – so I split and divide everything into more unfinished pieces.

EB A bit of an endless cycle!

AJ Yep! What does it mean to be finished at this point, when it's all just bits and pieces?

EB What does completion even entail?

AJ It's hard for me to say. If I sit down and look at something and think, "Yeah, OK, this looks finished." But I might come back the next day and wonder, "Actually, what if I take this bit off? Or what if I start cutting holes in it?" It's really hard to get to a point where I'm sure that something is finished.

EB Within the rationale of the exhibition, if we're thinking about the differences between "unfinished", "abandoned" and "evolving", how would you align your work?

AJ Evolving, because that's exactly what all this is [James signals to her studio]. Even if I do finish a piece, I'll often turn it around and start painting on the back as a completely new thing. Suddenly this finished piece is also in progress. It's like two things colliding. It's always gonna be evolving for me.

EB Your work is very in-process at all times. Very much like another exhibiting artist, Amalia Serie Ruiz. She and I were talking about her clay sculptures when I visited her studio, and she told me that sometimes when she wants to re-use clay, she'll smash a sculpture on the ground, reform it and reuse it in that

endless cycle of process. And with your collaging—you are flipping things around so your processes speak to each other in that way.

The works that you're showing in the exhibition don't have the collage element that's blossoming in your newer work. In the future, do you see yourself taking your exhibiting work and making something new out of them?

AJ Ever since I got these back out of storage for your exhibition that's what I've been thinking about. 'Cause I haven't looked at any of these in a long time, suddenly seeing them with my current practice, I'm like, "I wonder how I can cut these up?"

EB You're thinking about returning to them? The audience will see them in this way but—

AJ —You're not gonna see them like this again.

[Laughter]

EB What is your process for making art?

AJ A lot of my collage comes from doing warm ups, practising with gestural strokes and painting little figures. Then I'll put 'em away for a little bit, but I'll come back to them once I've started forming an idea. Which usually comes through making.

EB It's rare that you sit down with a clear idea?

AJ I don't think it out at all!

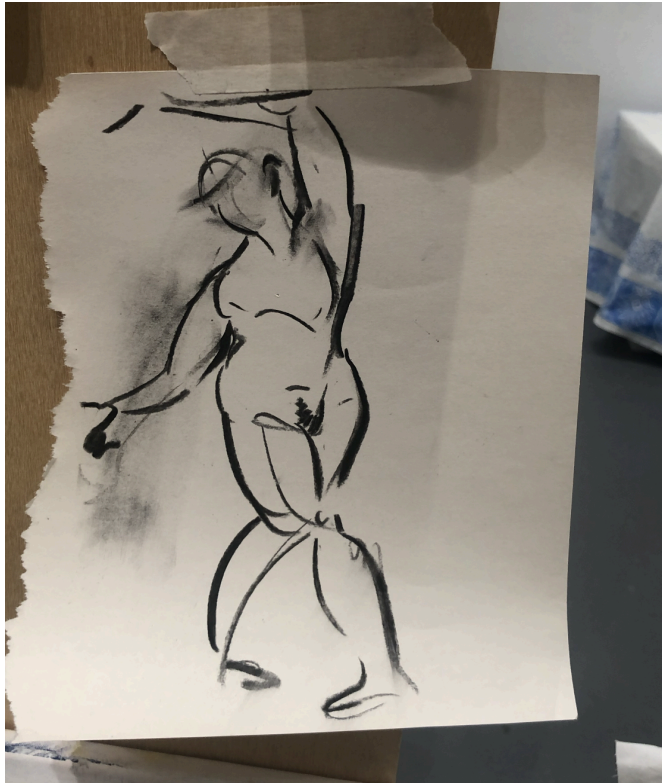
[Laughter]

EB You've mentioned making art in one sitting to me before. How long are those sittings usually, and do you return to the things you do after that sitting?

AJ It depends on the making. If I come back and look at the stuff that I made in the four to five hour session the day before and I'm like, "I'm getting something from this," I might reuse them. Or, I might paint over them. It depends on when I come back, and what ideas I get from looking at the mess from the day before.

EB So, sometimes the sitting might be hours long, sometimes only minutes?

AJ For a lot of my little pictures, I sat down for ten minutes and that's all that I got done. I don't plan on ever looking at them again, or doing anything with them, just getting something on the page.



Ashya James, figural warm up sketch, charcoal on paper, 2025.

EB With what art historians call ‘the Masters’, museums often exhibit their sketches and warm ups, but do you think there is a place for emerging artists to be exhibiting things like your figural sketches in the gallery?

AJ Coming at it as an artist myself, I hope so. I love seeing studio mess! Like these sketches [James refers back to the figural warm-ups], it's just stuff you do mindlessly. You're not thinking about it any further than doing something on paper for fun, and I love seeing that! It gets into people's thought processes. You can see them developing in these random little bits and pieces and you see the behind the scenes.

EB When you are working, how do you know when to stop? Have you ever gone too far or “over done” something?

AJ I know when to stop, usually, when I get sick of it.

EB What does that feel like?

AJ If you're sitting down and making something, and you feel like you're doing it because you *have* to, it starts to lose potential. These two I actually submitted as part of my mid-semester. A week later, I've torn them all up and ripped everything off.



Ashya James's ongoing series titled *Consulation* (2025), propped up in her studio.

EB I saw those in the hallway! They used to have figures on them!

AJ There's the figures [James reveals flat cardboard figures from beneath a pile on the table]. I felt like I'd gone too far with those. 'Cause I was sitting here overnight going, "Oh my god, assessment is tomorrow. I'm just gonna keep

putting stuff down so that I finish it." I should've stopped. I should've stopped and looked at what I had and it would've been fine, but 'cause I just kept pushing, it was terrible.

EB You felt that university deadline hanging over your head?

AJ Yep, it went from: "I'm making this for this reason, to explore these concepts," to, "I'm making this because I have a deadline and I need to "finish" it. I regret that...

EB Clearly... [I point to the torn up artworks]

[Laughter]

AJ Little tantrum, it's fine.

EB How have your Fine Art studies at university contributed to your understanding of process and completeness, even if you don't necessarily agree with it?

AJ My views on what is finished have definitely changed. This one, the *Boiling frogs series* [made in James's first year of Fine Arts study], looks very finished compared to stuff I'm doing now. I used to think finished meant all the canvas is covered — You can't see it, I've gone and painted the edges so there's no white showing.



Exhibition shot of Ashya James's *Boiling Frogs series*, oil on cardboard, 2023. Photograph by Erin Barwood.

EB Have you ever received push back about your desire to tear, re-use, and create an unfinished aesthetic?

AJ Not really. I've gotten lots of feedback to have a look at other artists and what they do, but I haven't been told to incorporate what they do into my work.

EB Right, because I feel like there is a way to effectively achieve this aesthetic. Which, you have. Then, there must be people who haven't quite mastered it.

AJ A lot of that comes down to how you can feel when someone's put in the time to make it look a certain way. You can tell if someone has sat down to make a quick thing that no one is gonna see, versus something they've spent hours on that looks unfinished and deliberately haphazard. You can tell the difference a lot of the time.

EB You can feel the thought, intention and care.

AJ Especially with a lot of my work where you can see I've ripped stuff up. I make no effort to hide all the layers that I've slapped on top of each other. I don't try to hide big holes in my canvas.

EB Do you ever literally discard work in the trash?

AJ This little cardboard box is currently my trash bin [James signals behind her to a cardboard box on the floor]. Which I keep reaching into to pull things out to use.

EB When trash is your material, there is no trash, really!

AJ Yeah, this isn't a waste bucket, this is where the magic happens.

EB So you've never thrown anything out?

AJ That's definitely not the case. To discard the amount of stuff I need to get rid of, sometimes I need the skip.

EB What ends up in the skip? I don't know how you discern what you want to keep and use, and what you don't need.

AJ A lot of it is tiny bits of cardboard that I physically can't get anything out of. I can't really cut any shapes out of this little scrap [James pulls a scrap out of the cardboard box].

EB It kind of looks like a shark tail...

AJ Excellent, I'll keep that in mind...

[Laughter]

I have thrown out finished work before because it's too big to store anywhere. Last year, I made these massive 2-meter-by-2-meter cardboard paper mache pieces. They were about rubble and war and famine, but ended up in the skip because I didn't have anywhere to put it.

EB Does it hurt you to part with these things?

AJ [Laughs] Honestly, no. If I have something unfinished, I'll just paint over it and start something new again. I get rid of the stuff I make all the time by just covering it up and starting again on the same object. I don't have that kind of attachment.

EB Do you think that there is a difference between a work of art being "finished" and "enough"?

AJ Finished to who, right? Because "finished" to me means I don't wanna work on this anymore. Finished to an assessor? Big difference! I'm sitting here and they go, "What're you doing next?" Next? I'm done, baby!

[Laughter]

Or you get, "Oh, this looks really, really cool." And I go, "Yeah thanks." And then I tear it off! I skin it! Gone!

EB Skin it alive! Is this a butcher's shop?

AJ Pretty much! Hacking everything apart.

EB What do you think we might define "enough" as in comparison? Like, you may tell an assessor, I think this is "good enough" to submit, compared to thinking something is ready to be turned in.

AJ In that context, "enough" turns into a bare minimum. If something is enough it means you've just passed the line. But then you've also got "enough" as in, if I add anything else it's going to be too much. "Enough" is a fine line that you have to apply to different situations.

EB I resonate with the latter example. For my own self-esteem, I think of my work as being enough when I say it's enough, because if I'm obsessed with making it "finished", I'll drive myself insane! It brings me peace of mind to say, "I think this is enough."

AJ In that same way, I often say this is "enough" as in "this will do for now" – this is enough for me to step away and do something else.

EB To be returned to... eventually. But it also, as you say, has that self-deprecating potential of "it'll have to do." It's very difficult to define, but that's okay. That'll just have to be enough for now.

[Laughter]

EB Two of the artists you draw inspiration from are David Salle and Rose Wylie. Salle could be argued to adopt an aesthetic of *non finito*. In works like *Look* (2017), we can see through the figure, who's missing broad chunks of skin. Meanwhile, Wylie's work has a raw and unrefined appearance that a viewer may say looks unfinished.

What do you think draws us to their work in regards to unfinishedness?

AJ Aesthetically, because these artists differ from super finished realistic paintings, that draws in a lot of eyes. Or at least that's what happened with me. When you think of art, a lot of people think of hyper-realistic paintings. But then something like this... it's a lot more fun to look at. Even with some artworks, if they have this style, they can be deceptively simple. We might see 2-D figures in an empty void where there's not a whole lot going on, but then you realise there's a deeper meaning behind the facade in front of it.

EB Like Wylie, who tackles a lot of political and autobiographical themes.

AJ Makes you look at the wider image. After seeing how this simple shape is interacting with all the other simple shapes. What do these actually make up?

EB Salle has described that he works very intuitively, treating composition like rhythm and music symphonies, so for him unfinishedness must be his goal in a work like *Look*. Given that Salle is less concerned with meaning and more interested in painting as a subject, would the work still be effective if the figure was rendered in completely?

AJ As it is here, you're seeing the movement; of the artist, of the paint, of the figure. You look at the gestures that the paint is making, that Salle made, and that the figure's making. Whereas if her body was completely filled in, what you'd be looking at is a portrait of a lady lying down.

EB It becomes about the subject again.

AJ Mhm. When I'm sitting down and painting, the stroke might finish down low, but my hand is up in the air because I've just ripped my brush across the page. So, to paint it, you're moving. And when you observe *Look*, you're seeing that movement.

EB If Salle smoothed it all out and made the flesh just flesh, we wouldn't have that texture and those extra brush bristles any more. Unfinishedness reveals something about the medium.

AJ By taking away some of the information about the figure, and putting more information into the art itself.

EB Pivoting back to Wylie, do you find her aesthetic to be a matter of skill or style?

AJ It's definitely stylistic. If we're looking at these works here, the way that she's accentuated features and exaggerated things, if it was a matter of a lack of skill your proportions would make a bit more sense.

EB There would be an attempt at sense.

AJ Exactly. It takes focus to draw like a child. If you're an adult, you don't draw like a child anymore because you lack that imagination. Now you're thinking about what these shapes are meant to look like. Whereas as a kid, the sun is a triangle in the corner of the sky.

EB Do you think that there is a link between growing up and striving for a detailed, finished-looking perfection?

AJ Definitely. As you get older, you are pushed to perfect whatever it is that you're doing and we internalise that.

EB With any sort of academic merit, being "good" at something usually means being the most refined, the cleanest, or the most detailed.

AJ Yeah, you're coming in to get judged and graded on this stuff. That usually means, "Ah shit, this has to be something perfect. This has to be as close to perfect as I can make it."

EB And we don't even have time to tackle what perfect means!

AJ Especially in an art school context.

EB But you're definitely on your way to figuring out what it means within your own practice. It's something that every Fine Art student must go through; re-learning what their goals are and what they're interested in. I'm sure there are people that come into it with a true sense of self already knowing that, but there also must be those who feel lost while they're trying to figure it out.

AJ It's all about learning and re-learning 'cause, in the context of art, even high school art is a completely different thing to university art.

EB And then when you're out in your professional career, it might even transform.

AJ Change again.

EB Yeah, never ending!

[END INTERVIEW.]