

PROFILE

Rebecca Hastings

Rebecca Hastings' upcoming exhibition *Two minutes to midnight* delves into a nightmarish – but perhaps not-so-imaginary world – on the brink of apocalyptic collapse.

By Jane Llewellyn —

Painting in oils and employing a naturalistic style, Rebecca Hastings presents us with a 'youthful agitator' as an agent of change and benefactor of our broken planet. Hastings has been experimenting with materials and ideas, creating a body of work that has a darker, moodier palette and represents a looser and softer approach to painting.

Graduating from the Adelaide Central School of Art in 2011, Hastings' career has continued to evolve. Straight out of art school, Hastings was picked up by Flinders Lane Gallery in Melbourne, from then on engaging not only in a rigorous schedule of solo and group exhibitions, but also being hung in the prestigious Archibald and Sulman prizes. This enabled her to cultivate a strong discipline in her practice. "Working daily in my studio, towards a deadline and weaving that in and out of the demands of being a parent, has meant that I have had to be bloody-minded and protective of my time and space," she says.

Hastings recently completed a Masters in Visual Arts at UniSA which she undertook with a full scholarship and a \$10,000 travelling scholarship, enabling her to travel to Japan as part of her research.

While these experiences have been invaluable in building the foundations for her practice it hasn't left much time for Hastings to experiment with her practice and create work without considering the commercial outcome. She decided to take a break from her other commitments and spend time in her studio experimenting. "I realised I needed a pause from deadlines to make exploratory work without a commercial or academic imperative," Hastings says.

"In 2019, a roiling surge of rage swept around the world": so begins Hastings'

artist statement for *Two Minutes to Midnight*, recalling the student marches led by Greta Thunberg in protest against climate change late last year. The title refers to the Doomsday Clock, which is a metaphor for threats to humanity from unchecked scientific and technical advances. "When I first conceived the show it was the time on the Doomsday Clock," says Hastings. "The time has already advanced since then and now the hands are just 100 seconds away from midnight. Who can say what the time will be when the show opens in August?"

In contrast to her previous work, which focussed on an internal exploration into maternal ambivalence, this latest body of work is more of an

outward focus looking at the anxiety in relation to the state of the planet that our children will inherit. "My early practice was an inwardly focused rumination on maternal ambivalence," she explains. "But as my children have grown I think of it more broadly as an investigation of the post-human condition, and our anxieties as humans entering a new way of being."

The new work has a much darker and moodier palette than earlier work. Her adolescent figures (modelled on her own children) linger between dark and light, their eyes obliterated by shadows and sometimes wielding threatening objects. In this way Hastings aims to evoke unease. She explains: "I am after

an implied narrative, with an ominous sense of foreboding. My charges are on the brink of something uncertain, whether that is the transition to adulthood, or the challenges of this new world bearing down on us."

Two Minutes to Midnight is Hastings' first solo exhibition in New South Wales and has been created with the support of a project grant from Arts SA. It will be on display at May Space Gallery in Sydney from 12–29 August and can be viewed online at mayspace.com.au

rebeccahastings.com.au



Rebecca Hastings, 2020, *Two minutes to midnight*. 180 x 150 cm, oil on polycotton. Photo by James Field.