



NOEL McKENNA

a pair of scissors

17 August - 14 September 2024



a pair of scissors...

In 2022 I was staying with good friends in NZ for two weeks.

I had not contracted COVID in the years before but after being in NZ for a day was beginning to feel unwell. I did the test and I had COVID.

NZ still had relatively strict quarantine restrictions so I spent the rest of the two weeks at my friends' home. My bedroom in NZ had a great selection of art and poetry books so that was good compensation for getting sick. There was a book on Tristan Tzara who I knew a little about but enjoyed learning more. Born Samuel Rosenstock to Jewish parents in Romania in 1896, he moved to Zürich in 1915 during World War I, discarding his Romanian language and writing the bulk of his subsequent works in French.

He met Hugo Ball early on in Zurich. Ball had just rented the music hall, Cabaret Voltaire where Tzara, Ball and other writers with artists such as Hans Arp, Sophie Taeuber, Mary Wigman and Suzanne Perrottet performed, singing, reading and improvising poems.

The Dada movement was formed out of these events, Tzara being an important driving force. Dada was meant to be provocative, political, nonsensical, subversive, random and funny all while World War I was raging not far from the Cabaret. The surrealist movement evolved out of Dada with lots of disagreements as to how the movement should progress. There was an energy and joy in making things which impressed me.

Tzara had a method of writing a poem which he used to present to an audience;

To make a Dadaist poem:

Take a newspaper.

Take a pair of scissors.

Choose an article as long as you are planning to make your poem.

Cut out the article.

Then carefully cut out each of the words that make up the article and put them in a bag.

Gently shake.

Then take out the scraps one after the other.

Copy these down conscientiously in the order that they were taken out of the bag.

The poem will resemble you.

And voilà you are a writer, infinitely original and endowed with a sensibility that is charming beyond the understanding of the vulgar.

It is an ironic recipe for making a poem. Tzara also makes proclamations like *Doubt. Dada doubts everything... Everything is Dada. Beware of Dada.*

Feeling ill in my NZ bedroom and experiencing nightmares where I would wake screaming, getting my friends out of bed to check on me, reading about Tristan Tzara lifted my spirits a bit. When I returned to Sydney I felt I subtly changed in my approach to making art.

Noel McKenna July 2024



a pair of scissors 2024
oil on canvas
35 x 45.5 cm
\$12,500.00



handmade shirt 2024
glazed ceramic
15.5 x 17 cm
\$1,400.00 (SOLD)



handmade shirt 2024
oil on canvas
35 x 45.5 cm
\$12,500.00 (SOLD)



not my fault 2023
glazed ceramic
13.1 cm high
\$1,600.00 (SOLD)



when the tree hears 2024
glazed ceramic
13.7 cm high
\$1,600.00 **(SOLD)**



the violins weep 2024
oil on canvas
35 x 45.5 cm
\$12,500.00 (SOLD)



hurdle 2024
glazed ceramic
10.5 x 15.4 cm
\$1,300.00



Building 2024
glazed ceramic
12.4 cm high
\$1,600.00 (SOLD)



person jumping into sea 2024
glazed ceramic
11.6 x 15.5 cm
\$1,300.00 **(SOLD)**



the nun is not watching (a) 2024
oil on plywood
35 x 40 cm
\$12,500.00 **(SOLD)**



the nun is not watching (b) 2024
oil on plywood
35 x 40 cm
\$12,500.00 **(SOLD)**



man + cat 2024
glazed ceramic
11.3 x 13.4 cm
\$1,300.00 (SOLD)



infant, cat 2024
glazed ceramic
12.1 x 13.7 cm
\$1,300.00 **(SOLD)**

a pair of scissors... waiting

In the first part of this essay I wrote that I'd felt a subtle change in the way I work. It has to do with slowing down a little, being more reflective about why I still make things. Waiting is an expression of the human condition and is, in the general meaning of the word, a good activity which can be used to be philosophical about one's life.

I hardly ever show my work to anyone prior to an exhibition, but one person pointed out that the titles I give to paintings have gone from say 'dog in room' to 'a pair of scissors'. I put this down to reading about Tristan Tzara. My titles come about quickly. I write down often random words, mix them up and find a phrase that I feel suits the image.

These paintings have more people in them than previous shows, which was not deliberate, just how they evolved. Animals and domestic pets still have a presence in this group; their connection with people is still a rich source for me to explore. I had Melman, our 11 year old greyhound, at the beach last week and he went up to a young female dog and spent quite a bit of time sniffing and circling her. The young dog then began running around in circles at great speed and Melman, who does not run much due to his age, looked at her with very thoughtful almost sad eyes but also seemed to love watching her stretch out.

I have been playing tennis regularly for the past year which I enjoy. Where I play is in a gully with thick groves of trees at either end of the court. Often the games are at dusk to early evening when the birds get very vocal preparing for the night. One is always aware of them up in the trees watching us chase a yellow ball around the court.

Noel McKenna, 4 July 2024. 12.45 pm, Rose Bay.



need 2024
oil on canvas
40 x 40 cm
\$12,500.00

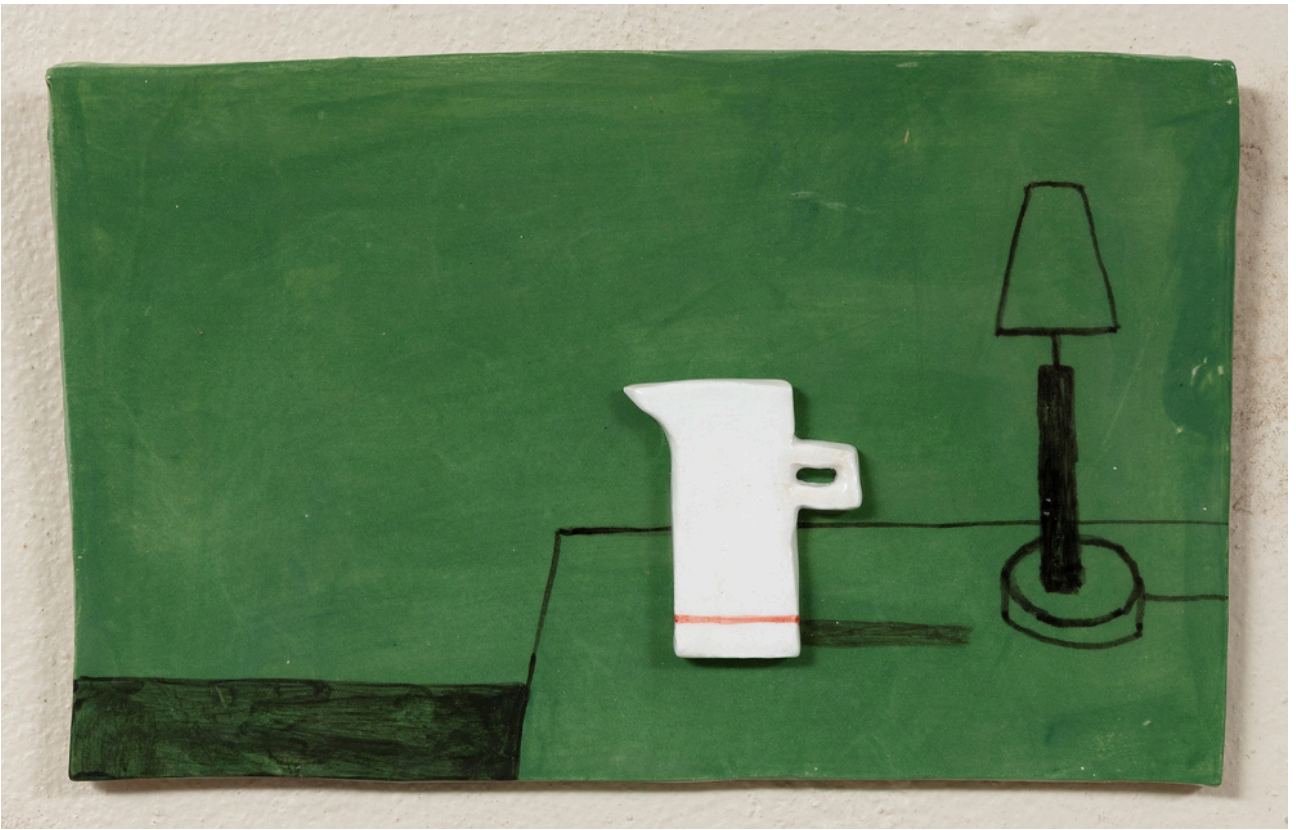


Table Y 2024
glazed ceramic
10.7 x 17.1 cm
\$1,300.00

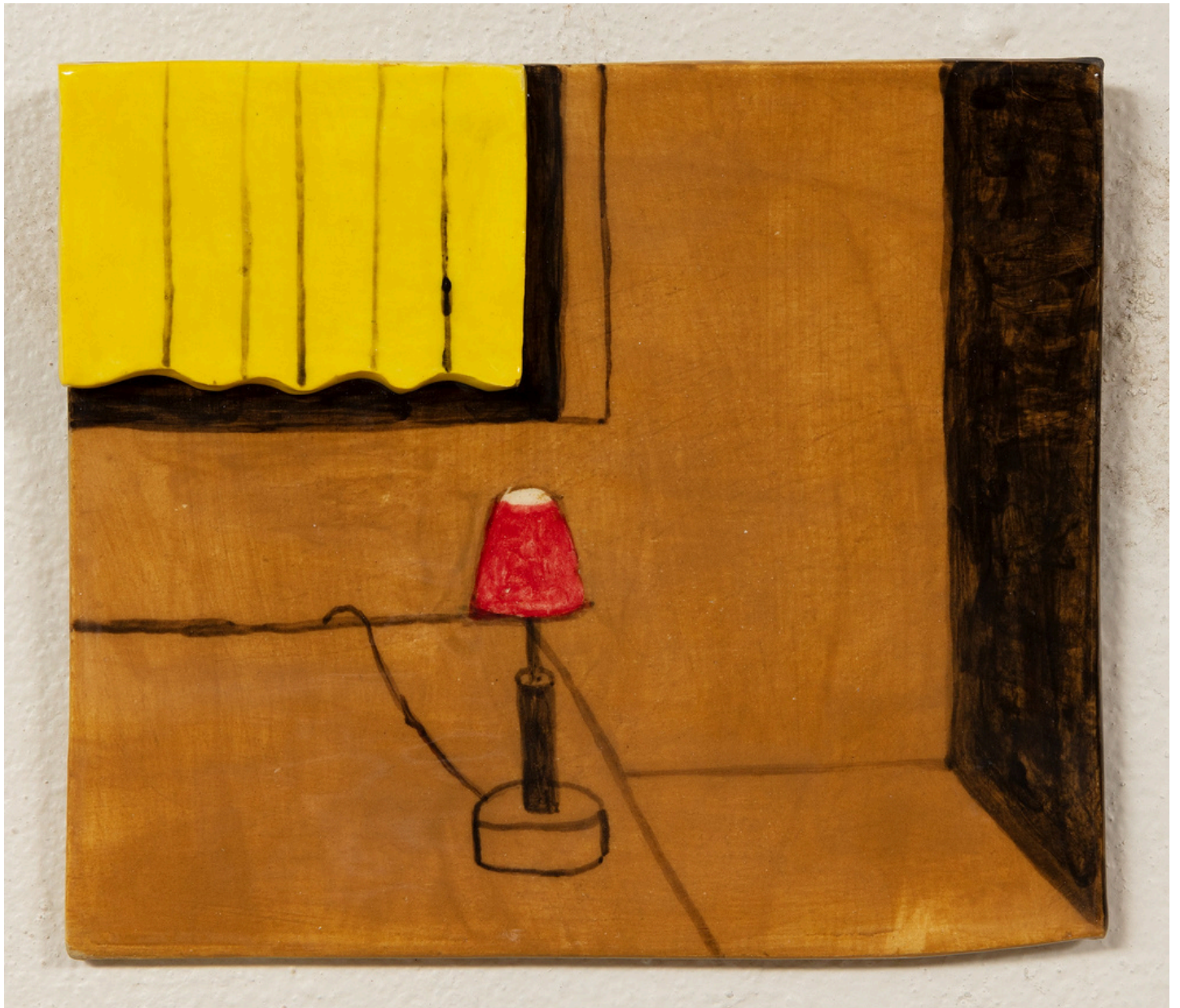
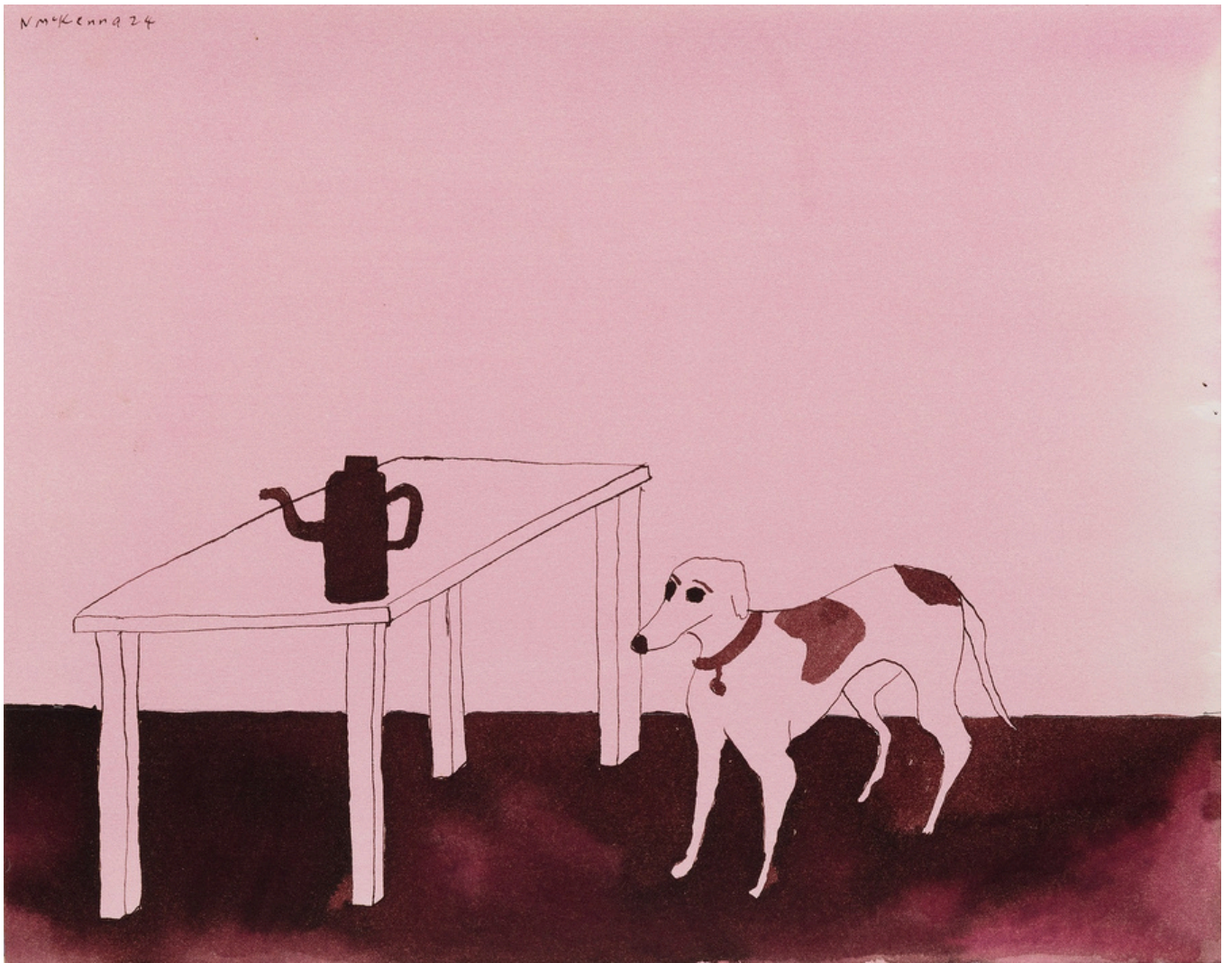


Table W 2024
glazed ceramic
12.1 x 14 cm
\$1,300.00



boat sleeping 2024
oil on canvas
20.5 x 25.5 cm
\$7,000.00 **(SOLD)**

N.M. Kenn 24



standing dog 2024
ink on paper
21 x 26.7 cm
\$3,000.00 (framed) **(SOLD)**



the cloud sings 2024
glazed ceramic
10.2 x 11.5 cm
\$1,300.00 **(SOLD)**



daughter with father (Molly, Felix) 2024

glazed ceramic

13.6 x 13.5 cm

\$1,300.00



to peel (Brisbane) 2024
glazed ceramic
14.7 x 15 cm
\$1,300.00 **(SOLD)**



dog walking 2024
glazed ceramic
11.6 x 14.3 cm
\$1,300.00 **(SOLD)**



the tomato sleeps (b) 2024
oil on canvas
100 x 100 cm
\$25,000.00 (SOLD)



$2 + 1 = 4$ (Scots College Year 5 2005) 2024
glazed ceramic
17.1 cm high (vase), 8.2 x 11.4 cm (tile)
\$2,000.00 (SOLD)



Tennis, Royal Sydney Golf Club, Rose Bay 2024

oil on canvas
100 x 100 cm
\$25,000.00



my work is pure 2024
glazed ceramic
12.6 cm high
\$1,600.00 **(SOLD)**



cyclist, tree 2023
glazed ceramic, (with bespoke storage box)
12.6 cm high
\$1,600.00 **(SOLD)**



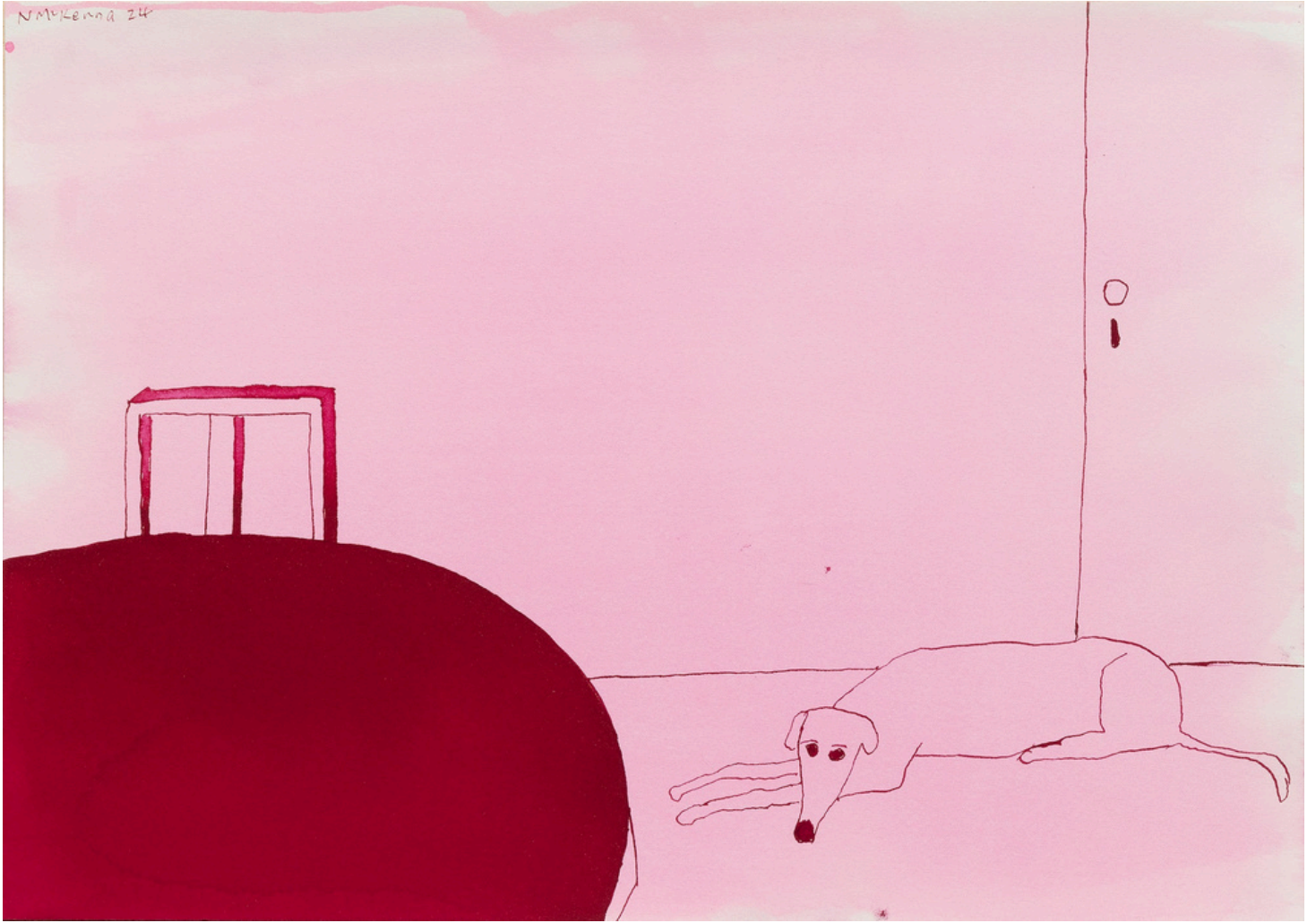
Cooper Park (a) 2024
oil on plywood
40 x 40.5 cm
\$12,500.00



Cooper Park (b) 2024
oil on plywood
40 x 40.5 cm
\$12,500.00



Cooper Park 2024
glazed ceramic
13.2 x 17 cm
\$1,300.00 (SOLD)



dog sitting 2024
ink on paper
21 x 29.7 cm
\$3,000.00 (framed) **(SOLD)**



cat has left 2022
glazed ceramic
6 x 12.7 x 13.4 cm
\$1,800.00



Boys turn in to men 2024

painting wood, model train tracks, lights, cloth & 14 glazed ceramic chairs; various dates

122 x 108 x 92 cm

\$25,000.00



Bird Figure Tripedal #16 2020
glazed ceramic with plywood box
32.5 x 13 x 11 cm
\$1,100.00 **(SOLD)**



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**DARREN
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