



Baker's  
*Bouquets*

OCTOBER 2022 - MAY 2023

# Introduction



While the origin of the still life stretches to antiquity, in the late 16th century it reemerged as a distinct genre of painting in Western art. By the time Alan Baker began to paint his still life pieces, the genre was well established with its execution reimagined by many, from Henri Matisse to Pablo Picasso. Alan D. Baker's floral still life works are distinguished by his technical prowess and traditional colour palette. The works in *Baker's Bouquets* offer a walk through a gardening year, with each room featuring seasonal blooms.



The Bakers' Belimbla Park Garden c1960s.

## Alan D. Baker (1914-1987)

Alan D. Baker, to whom the Alan Baker Art Gallery is dedicated, was a prolific local artist. He influenced the Australian art scene as the vice-president of the Royal Art Society of New South Wales and as a 26-time Archibald Prize finalist. His works have been exhibited across Australia, with the Alan Baker Art Gallery housing a permanent collection of significant pieces. While Baker was accomplished in portraiture and landscape painting, for many, he is best remembered for his captivating floral still lifes.

GALLERY I

# Summer



In the early 1960s, the Baker family moved to their six-acre weekend property in Belimbla Park. The Bakers began with a single garage which Baker expanded, building the house, garden, studio, gallery, and framing workshop. In summer, the Bakers' garden was rich with flowers such as gladioli, lilies and petunias. Alan's wife, Marjorie, would often assist him in selecting blooms from their garden for his work. Baker arranged each bouquet himself, paying close attention to the play of shadow, colour and light. The arrangement of flowers was central to the execution of his work.



*Gladioli*  
oil on masonite board, 61 x 76 cm



*White Cosmos*  
oil on masonite board, 40 x 60.5 cm



*Lilies and Gladioli in a Chinese Vase*  
oil on masonite board, 60 x 76 cm



*White Petunias*  
oil on masonite board, 41 x 61 cm



*Petunias*  
oil on masonite board, 25.5 x 40.5 cm



*Perennial Phlox*  
oil on masonite board, 60 x 75 cm



*White Petunias*  
oil on masonite board, 46 x 38 cm



Marjorie Baker, *Rahu Ranunculus*  
oil on masonite board, 52 x 38 cm



Alan Baker in his Belimbla Park studio.

*"It had one south window and it was cool, dark and silent. There was a large sandstone rock over which dripped water. The water seeped from underground and was all around where he sat to work. The light was pure without any other sources and then went to total darkness further into the room, which was rather like a cellar. In the morning he would pick fresh flowers that he grew with my mother's help. He would choose them from their extensive garden. Hundreds of camellias, roses, japonica, peaches and all sorts blossom trees, annuals and perennials. He would arrange them with great care. Aware he only had time to paint them for the life of the flower. Sometimes one or two days."*

- Gary Baker<sup>1</sup>

GALLERY II

# Autumn



Autumn in the Macarthur region is characterised by the reddening of maples and liquid ambers. In Baker's studio, it signified the availability of chrysanthemums and camellias. Due to the short lifespan of an arranged bouquet, Baker painted quickly and precisely, utilising his formal training from the J.S. Watkins Art School and his decades of experience. Using thick, expressive strokes, his formal training shines through in each piece, revealing a precise rendering of each flower arrangement. Baker's still life works call on realist tradition by capturing the natural beauty that lay in the family garden.





*White Chrysanthemums*  
oil on masonite board, 51 x 71 cm



*Camellia Alba Plena*  
oil on masonite board, 36.5 x 44.5 cm



*Contessa Calini Camellia*  
oil on masonite board, 29 x 44.5 cm



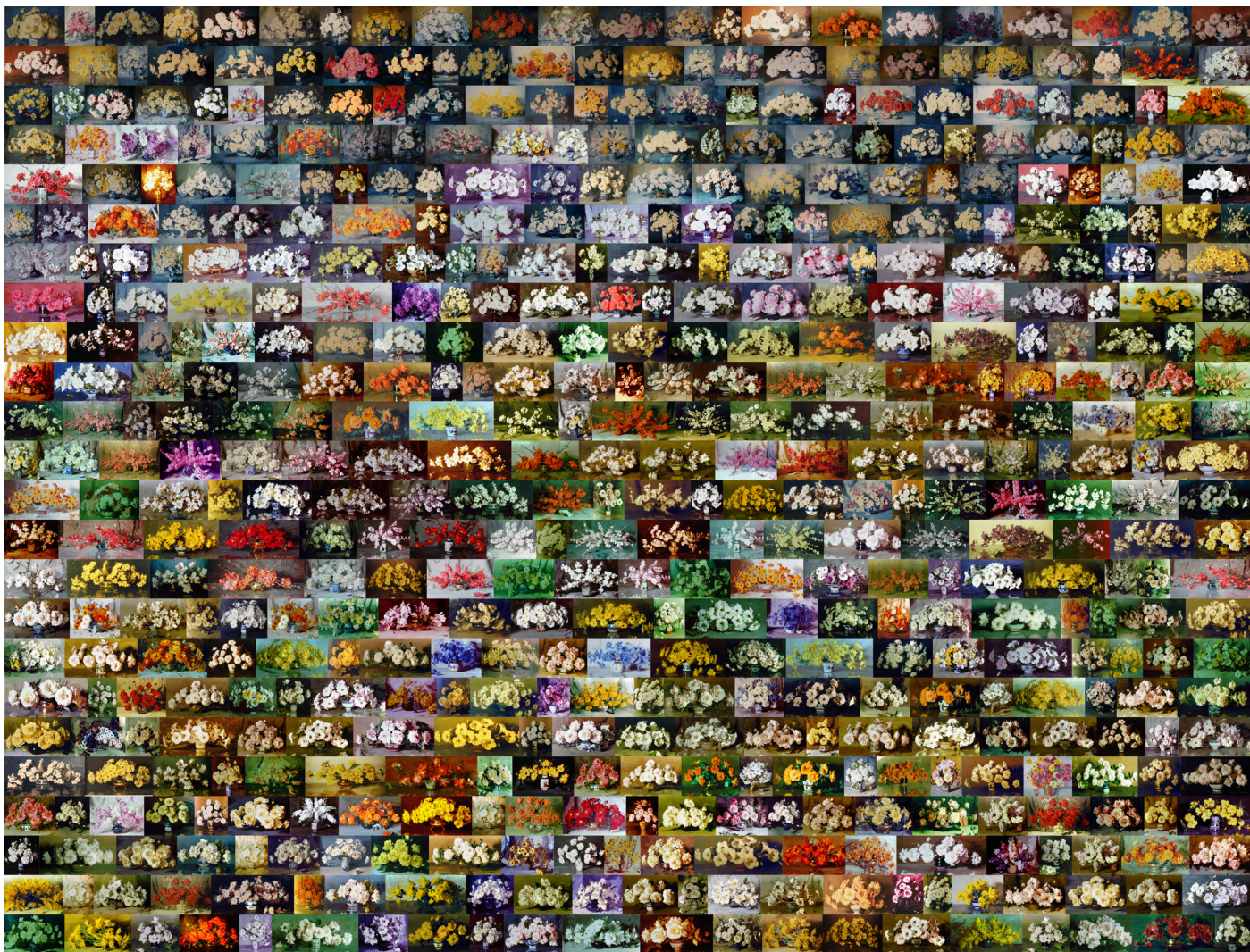
*Yellow and White Chrysanthemums*  
oil on masonite board, 51 x 76 cm



*Contessa Calini Camellias*  
oil on masonite board, 45.5 x 38 cm



*Wild Camellias*  
oil on masonite board, 30.5 x 25 cm



# The Archives

Baker's passion for painting floral still lifes was prolific and married with significant public demand. He photographed many of his floral pieces creating an archive of over 700 works.



*Belimbla Park  
Garden*



GALLERY III

# Winter



In Winter, deciduous trees in Macarthur lose their leaves and grey the landscape. In the Bakers' garden, vibrant warm colour bloomed with japonicas, pansies and gordonias, breaking through the chill. After enduring personal tragedy with the loss of two of his sons, Baker sought comfort in the blooms of his garden up until his death. His final painting, Red Roses, was painted on the day of his passing, 12 June 1987.



*Wattle*  
oil on masonite board, 61 x 76.5 cm



*Peach Blossom*  
oil on masonite board, 51 x 76.3 cm



*Phlox*  
1940, oil on masonite board, 35 x 30 cm



*White Gordonias*  
oil on masonite board, 37 x 29 cm



*Yellow Daisies*  
oil on canvas board, 48.5 x 74 cm



*White Daisies*  
oil on masonite board, 25.5 x 30.5 cm



*Amber Bowl Japonica*  
oil on masonite board, 25.5 x 34 cm



*Almond Blossom*  
oil on masonite board, 50 x 76 cm



*Yellow Daisies*  
oil on masonite board, 19 x 36.5 cm



*White Cherry Blossom*  
oil on masonite board, 22 x 45 cm



*Pansies*  
oil on masonite board, 20.6 x 38 cm



*Magnolias*  
oil on canvas, 35.5 x 42 cm



*Red Roses*  
12 June 1987 (painted the day Baker died), oil on  
masonite board, 21.5 x 34 cm

GALLERY IV

# Spring



Spring breaks the frost of winter and ushers in a brilliant array of blooms which burst through Baker's garden and into his studio. Baker possessed a strong grasp of tonal values and was able to intuitively create the colour required for each work. While he did not exaggerate colour the way some of his contemporaries did, with a garden like the Bakers' that was lush with fragrant roses, bright zinnias and delicate cherry blossoms, bright colours made their way onto Alan's palette.





*Red Roses*  
oil on masonite board, 40.7 x 66.1 cm



*Apricot Miniature Roses*  
oil on board, 20 x 35 cm



*Zinnias in a Glass Bowl*  
1945, oil on board, 29.5 x 34.5 cm



*White Azaleas*  
oil on board, 49.5 x 60 cm



*Cecile Brunner Roses*  
oil on masonite board, 29.5 x 39.5 cm



*Primrose*  
oil on board, 16.5 x 28.5 cm



*Cecile Brunner Roses*  
oil on masonite board, 24 x 37 cm



*Red Roses in Brown Vase*  
oil on board, 41 x 61.5 cm



*White Roses in a Chinese Bowl*  
oil on board, 23.5 x 39 cm



*Apricot Roses*  
oil on masonite board, 41.5 x 60.5 cm



*White Roses in a Chinese Vase*  
oil on board, 49 x 59 cm



*White Rose*  
oil on board, 37.5 x 45.5 cm



*Pink Stocks*  
oil on board, 61 x 76 cm



*White Rose*  
oil on board, 59.5 x 44.5 cm



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