

ARTIST STATEMENT

‘In these uncertain times...’

I first started working on this collection of paintings about nine months ago (a full gestation period - fancy that!), when I was feeling particularly gripped by a sense of disquieting uncertainty. Yes, I know life's always uncertain, but at this time, the plethora of unanswered questions lurking around in my psyche felt more overwhelming than usual. I was full of doubts not only about what might (or might not) happen in my personal life, over the year to come, (e.g, Will someone buy our house? Will we end up moving again? Will I get that artist residency? Will we finally have that European holiday this year? Will this person recover from their illness? Will that person ever talk to me again?). I also consumed with ruminating on the monumental questions strutting around on the global stage (e.g. Is it too late to stop the environmental disaster that is climate change? Will the warmongers ever stop their killing? Does the rise of right-wing governments flag the end of the world as we know it? What world order will arise in the wake of massive system collapse? Will AI destroy all human capacity for critical thought or kill us first?).

The weight of the anxiety and powerlessness I was feeling was turning me into an insomniac by night and a grump by day. I knew I had to do something with these feelings, not necessarily to transform me from Eeyore to Pollyanna, but to at least externalise them, to help me learn to live more comfortably with uncertainty. So, with this idea in mind, I started to paint. And the more I painted, paradoxically, the lighter the weight of the uncertainty became, as multiple ways of living with the unknown unfolded, as variations on a theme. The big issues did not, of course, magically resolve at the flick of a paintbrush, (and neither have some of the smaller issues), but I did notice a softening towards the unknown, a gentle reframing of uncertainty as not *always* necessarily producing fear and dread, but also, *sometimes*, generating a welcome sense of possibility and hopeful imagining of the emergence of something new and (maybe) better. In this sense, the ‘theme’ of this collection of works mirrors my painting process: I never know what will end up as the ‘finished’ piece on the canvas, and sometimes (just sometimes) the paintings I’ve had to wrangle with turn out to please me more than the ones that emerged more easily.

The paintings in this collection are the outcomes of my exploration of navigating life ‘in these uncertain times’. I hope they resonate with some viewers.

Sarah L Stewart, September 2026.