



MOAC Curator & Collections Manager Ingrid Hedgcock holds poppies and blue jug from Margaret Olley's house. Poppies are the focus of this month's challenge.

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## UNLOCKING MARGARET'S HOUSE

# STILL LIFE CHALLENGE: POPPIES

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**Welcome to the sixth still life challenge giving special access to the objects that inspired Margaret Olley. On the first Sunday of each month, we will 'unlock' Margaret's house and bring to you a composition from her collection of objects.**

Margaret Olley filled her home studio with objects that she collected as subject matter for painting. With her once ever-changing home studio now a static re-creation, we love to explore opportunities to enliven this space and return it to its role as subject matter; as inspiration for artists.

On the first Sunday of each month, we will continue to bring to you a composition from her collection of objects, and invite you to make a work in response as part of our Gallery At Home program. Whether it is through painting, drawing, 3D, mixed media or photography – we want to see how you respond to the challenge. Don't forget to share your creations on social media with the hashtag **#unlockingmargarethouse**.

You can view the *Still Life Challenge: Poppies* video [here](#) or use this link: <https://youtu.be/cUJXIF1yojE>





Margaret Olley (1923 – 2011) *Poppies and peeled orange* 2011, oil on board, 61 x 76 cm. Private collection, courtesy Philip Bacon Galleries. © Margaret Olley Art Trust.

**M**argaret Olley loved flowers and her home was filled with fresh, dried and synthetic flowers - ready to be used as subject matter for painting. Poppies were among her favourites and even today, in the re-creation of her home studio, there are bunches of synthetic poppies in vases just as she had displayed them.

The inspiration for this still life challenge is *Poppies and peeled orange*. Painted in 2011, the final year of her life, Olley was 88 years of age and no longer able to move freely from room to room as she once did. Instead her niece would visit and help her set up for a session of painting in a chair adjacent to her dining table in the Hat Factory. Olley had always painted from life, but working predominantly from this one location during her final year meant that she had to paint more from memory. It's most likely that *Poppies and peeled orange* is an example of this. Elements of the composition are entirely suggestive of her green kitchen being the setting for this still life arrangement and yet proportions and perspectives differ from reality. The objects are reminiscent of actual objects in her collection but they vary in ways, such as colour or proportion. This final year, there is also a noticeable change to her brushstrokes. Thin layers of paint are applied with swift, energetic brushstrokes and forms have soft, indistinct edges.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT  
Margaret Olley with fresh flowers outside her home c.1990; Olley with flowers at her dining table c.2000; Nicholas Harding in the re-creation, 2020; and (L-R) Margaret Olley, Lynne Watkins and Nicholas Harding c.1995, Tweed Regional Gallery Collection.



The re-creation of Olley's home studio is familiar to contemporary, Sydney-based artist Nicholas Harding (seated above, lower right) because he spent time in her actual Sydney home studio having first met Olley in 1994. By this time Olley was already an admirer of his work and she became both friend and mentor to him, with Olley agreeing to a portrait sitting with Harding in her home studio. *Margaret Olley* 1998 was a finalist in the Archibald Prize of that year.



In 2019 Harding spent time drawing in the re-creation of Olley's home studio. On return to his own studio, Harding worked from his drawings to paint *The poppy rider* - capturing the wondrous, theatrical potential of the space.

LEFT Nicholas Harding (b.1956) *The poppy rider* 2020, oil on linen, 152 x 168 cm. Collection of the artist, courtesy Philip Bacon Galleries. © The artist.





ABOVE This month's still life challenge is inspired by Olley's painting *Poppies and peeled orange* 2011, oil on board, 61 x 76 cm. Private collection, courtesy Philip Bacon Galleries. ©Margaret Olley Art Trust.

**W**e hope you enjoy making new work in response to this still life challenge arrangement inspired by Olley's *Poppies and peeled orange* 2011. Using this painting and the flowers and objects provided in the re-creation as your starting point, you can paint, draw, collage or print as you like. Whatever you choose – we can't wait to see what you do!

Don't forget to share your artwork with us at **#unlockingmargarethouse**.

FROM TOP LEFT  
Detail of peeled orange; blue jug and  
synthetic poppies from Olley's collection  
of objects, and featured in this month's  
still life challenge.

