

**SOPHIE  
GANNON  
GALLERY**



**FIONA MCMONAGLE  
CAT LADY**

**16 JULY - 3 AUGUST 2024**

SOPHIE GANNON GALLERY  
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# Cat Lady

*noun: cat lady; plural noun: cat ladies.*

*noun: crazy cat lady; plural noun: crazy cat ladies*

*definition: an older woman who lives alone with a large number of cats, to which she is thought to be obsessively devoted.*

There are plenty of words to describe single women, but the trope of the 'Cat Lady' is one that has persisted in culture since the Middle Ages. Today it is lazy pop cultural shorthand that implies: A single, lonely, eccentric, sexless woman who cannot hold down a man and so turns to her cats for companionship.

To understand how this sexist trope can still exist in 2024 it is necessary to look back through history. Things started off well for women and cats in ancient times. Felines and feminine deities went hand in hand. Egypt's half cat half woman Bastet was the Goddess of domesticity, childbirth and women's secrets. Chinese cat goddess Li Shou was a symbol of fertility, and in Norse mythology, Freyja, the goddess of beauty and strength, rode a chariot pulled by Cats.

However, by the Middle Ages there were accusations of witchcraft. Rumours of women being able to turn themselves into their feline friends began. These witch hunts which were instigated by the myth and fear of the single, unmarried woman, unfortunately lasted nearly three centuries.

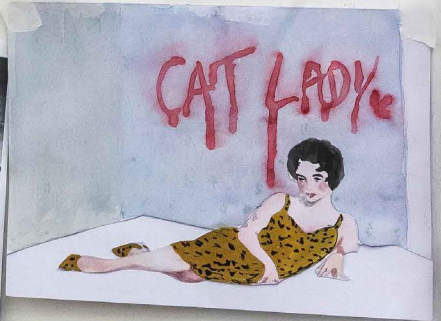
The 1800's saw a shift in attitudes. Society had become less superstitious, however negative connotations of the relationship between cats and women remained. 'witch' was swapped out for 'old maid' a new term for a single woman without children, which eventually landed on 'cat lady' and further even to 'crazy cat lady.'

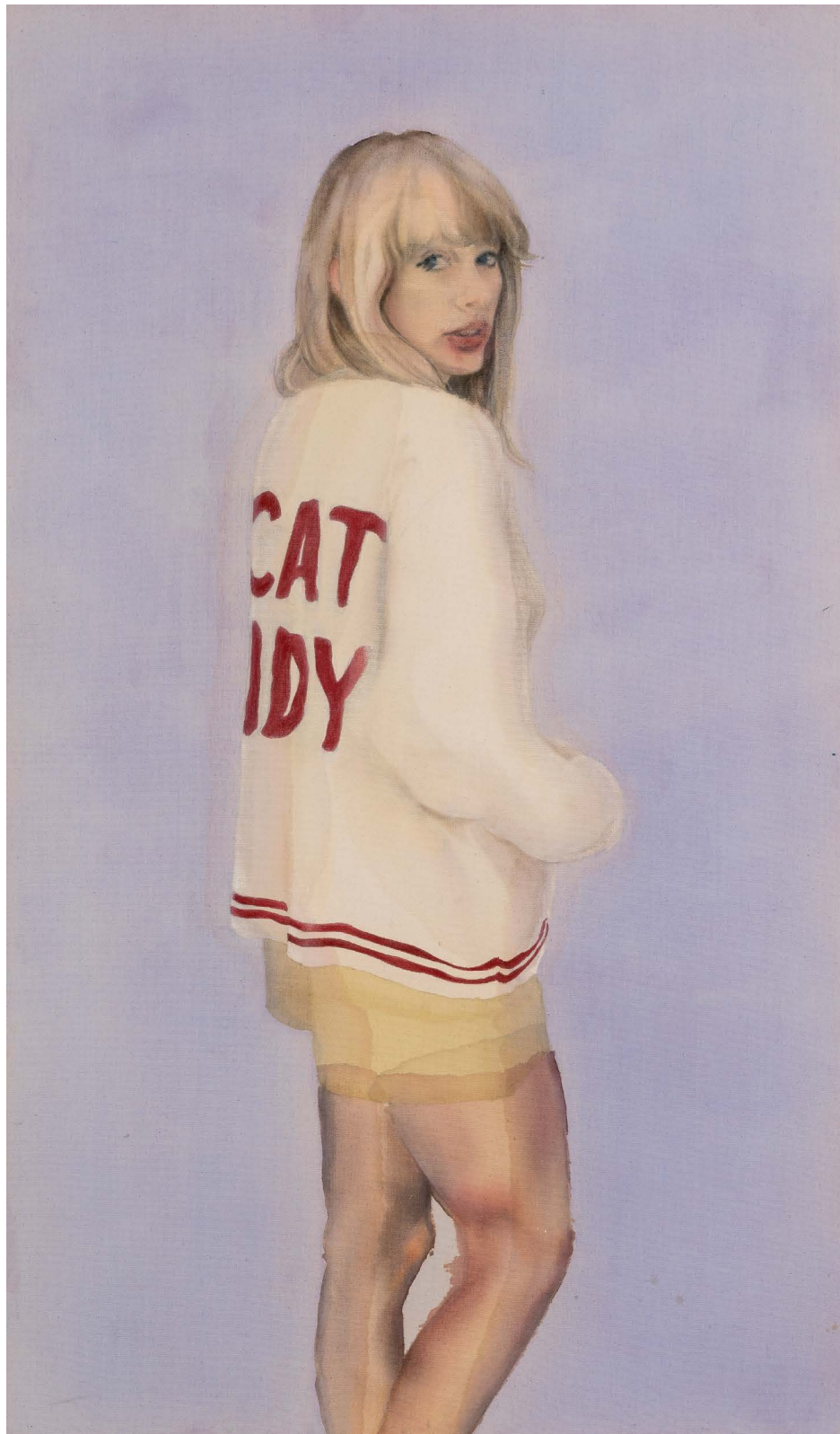
In this new body of work, 'Cat Lady' McMonagle, explores this age- old stereotype. Having had a long fascination in pop culture and its influence on how society thinks and acts, McMonagle's new work portrays some of pop culture's most iconic women; who all just happen to, love cats.

Working with a fluid acrylic paint applied to a raw canvas allows these portraits to be imperfect yet recognisable representations of their subjects. The low viscosity of the paint takes on a watercolour like quality as it travels on its own path marking and staining the canvas, leaving a series of contrasting shapes. This series of works seeks to simultaneously discuss this problematic female label with its deeply sinister history, while also attempting to turn the trope on its head by celebrating women's feline friendships in a playful way.

The concept of the 'crazy cat lady' which still exists today tells us more about societal perceptions of women, about how little we have progressed away from traditional norms. It has long been and still is a pejorative term and a device for transferring shame and judgment on women who challenge traditional roles and refuse to follow the domestic mandate.

Fiona McMonagle, 2024





*Labeled, 2024*  
Acrylic on canvas  
137 x 82 cm  
\$8,500 incl. GST



*Olivia Benson, 2024*

Acrylic on canvas

92 x 72 cm

\$6,000 incl. GST



*Freyja*, 2024  
Acrylic on canvas  
41 x 46 cm  
\$3,500 incl. GST



***S-T-A-U-N-C-H***, 2024  
Acrylic on canvas  
126.5 x 76.5 cm  
\$7,500 incl. GST



*I Put A Spell On You, 2024*

Acrylic on canvas

77 x 72 cm

\$5,500 incl. GST





*Worshipped*, 2024  
Acrylic on canvas  
76 x 122 cm  
\$7,000 incl. GST



*Pride, 2024*  
Acrylic on canvas  
66.5 x 114.5 cm  
\$6,500 incl. GST



*Goddess*, 2024  
Acrylic on canvas  
102 x 122 cm  
\$9,000 incl. GST



***Mother Darling*, 2024**

Acrylic on canvas

83 x 105 cm

\$6,800 incl. GST

# FIONA MCMONAGLE



## BIOGRAPHY

1977 Letterkenny, Ireland  
Emigrated to Australia

## EDUCATION

1998–2000 Bachelor of Fine Arts (Painting), Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne  
1996–1997 Associate Diploma of Visual Arts, RMIT, Melbourne

## SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2022 That's Bunny, Hugo Michell Gallery, Adelaide  
2021 Smoke and Mirrors, Sophie Gannon Gallery, Melbourne  
2020 Titled, Hugo Michell, Adelaide  
Classy, Bayside Gallery, Melbourne  
2018 The Weekend, Sophie Gannon Gallery, Melbourne  
2017 A dog named Chop, Hugo Michell, Adelaide  
Heiser Gallery, Brisbane  
2016 Do I Look Like I Care, La Trobe University Museum of Art, Melbourne  
2013 Olsen Irwin Gallery, Sydney  
2011 Heiser Gallery, Brisbane  
Rex Irwin Art Dealer, Sydney  
2009 Rex Irwin Art Dealer, Sydney  
2008 Rex Irwin Art Dealer, Sydney  
2007 Crossley & Scott Contemporary, Melbourne  
2005 Crossley & Scott Contemporary, Melbourne  
2004 Kaliman Gallery, Sydney  
2003 Crossley & Scott Contemporary, Melbourne  
Kaliman Gallery, Sydney  
2001 Spare Room, Project Space, RMIT, Melbourne

## SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2024 Achievements – Masterpieces, Museum of Contemporary Art Marseille  
2023 Portrait23 National Portrait Gallery, Canberra  
2022 That's Bunny, Hugo Michell Gallery, Adelaide  
Art of Sport Copenhagen Contemporary  
2018 So Fine: Contemporary Women Artists Make Australian History, National Portrait Gallery, Canberra  
2017 Video Easy, Sophie Gannon Gallery, Melbourne  
Let's Play: The Art of Our Time, Bunjil Place, Melbourne  
Play On: 10 Years of the Basil Sellers, touring, NETS  
2016 Basil Sellers Art Prize 5, Ian Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne, Melbourne  
The Popular Pet Show, National Portrait Gallery, Canberra  
National Works on Paper Prize, Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, Mornington, VIC  
Luminous: 100 Years of Watercolour, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Adelaide Biennial: Magic Object, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
2015 National Self-Portrait Prize, UQ Art Museum, Brisbane  
Hazelhurst Art on Paper Prize, Hazelhurst Regional Gallery, Sydney  
Basil Sellers Art Prize 4, Samstag Museum, Adelaide  
2014 Basil Sellers Art Prize 4, Ian Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne, Melbourne  
2013 The Sixth, West Space, Melbourne

2012	Man and Beast, Rex Irwin Art Dealer, Sydney Self-Conscious: Contemporary Portraiture, Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne R&M McGivern Prize Beleura National Works on Paper, Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, Mornington, VIC
2011	Hazelhurst Art Award, Hazelhurst Regional Gallery, Sydney
2010	Melbourne Art Fair, Rex Irwin Art Dealer, Melbourne Gaze, Redland Art Gallery, Redland, QLD Beleura National Works on Paper, Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, Mornington, VIC Change, Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne
2009	Shilo Project, Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne (touring to regional galleries) Heads, Rex Irwin Art Dealer, Sydney
2008	Melbourne Art Fair, Artbank, Melbourne
2007	Australian Works on Paper, Rex Irwin Art Dealer, Sydney
2006	Winners are Grinners, PICA, Perth and Meat Market, Melbourne Kilgour Prize, Newcastle Regional Art Gallery, Newcastle, NSW
2005	This and Other Worlds, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne Important Works on Paper, Crossley & Scott Contemporary, Melbourne
2004	Siblings, Project Space, RMIT, Melbourne Redlands Westpac Art Prize
2003	Clemenger Acquisition, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
2002	National Works on Paper Prize, Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, Mornington, VIC
2001	Jon Campbell's Rock the Boat, Uplands Gallery, Melbourne

#### AWARDS AND RESIDENCIES

2018	Archibald Prize (finalist)
2015	UQ National Self-Portrait Prize
2014	Basil Sellers Art Prize 4 (People's Choice Award)
2010	Australia Council for the Arts, London Studio Residency

#### COLLECTIONS

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
 Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
 Artbank, Sydney  
 Geelong Gallery, Geelong, VIC  
 The M Collection, Melbourne  
 Maitland Regional Art Gallery, Maitland, NSW  
 Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne  
 Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, Mornington, VIC  
 National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
 National Portrait Gallery, Canberra  
 Newcastle Regional Art Gallery, Newcastle, NSW  
 UQ Art Museum, Brisbane  
 Private collections in Australia, Singapore

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