

FINANCIAL REVIEW

DEL KATHRYN BARTON IS DONE WITH RAGE, BUT SHE'S STILL A WORKAHOLIC

With a fourth sellout New York show under her belt, the bankable Australian artist wants to make time for some self-care. That jars with her ambitious work ethic

By Jessica Gardner
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Del Kathryn Barton at New York gallery Albertz Benda for her new show, “the more than human world”. **Ann-Sophie Fjelloe-Jensen**

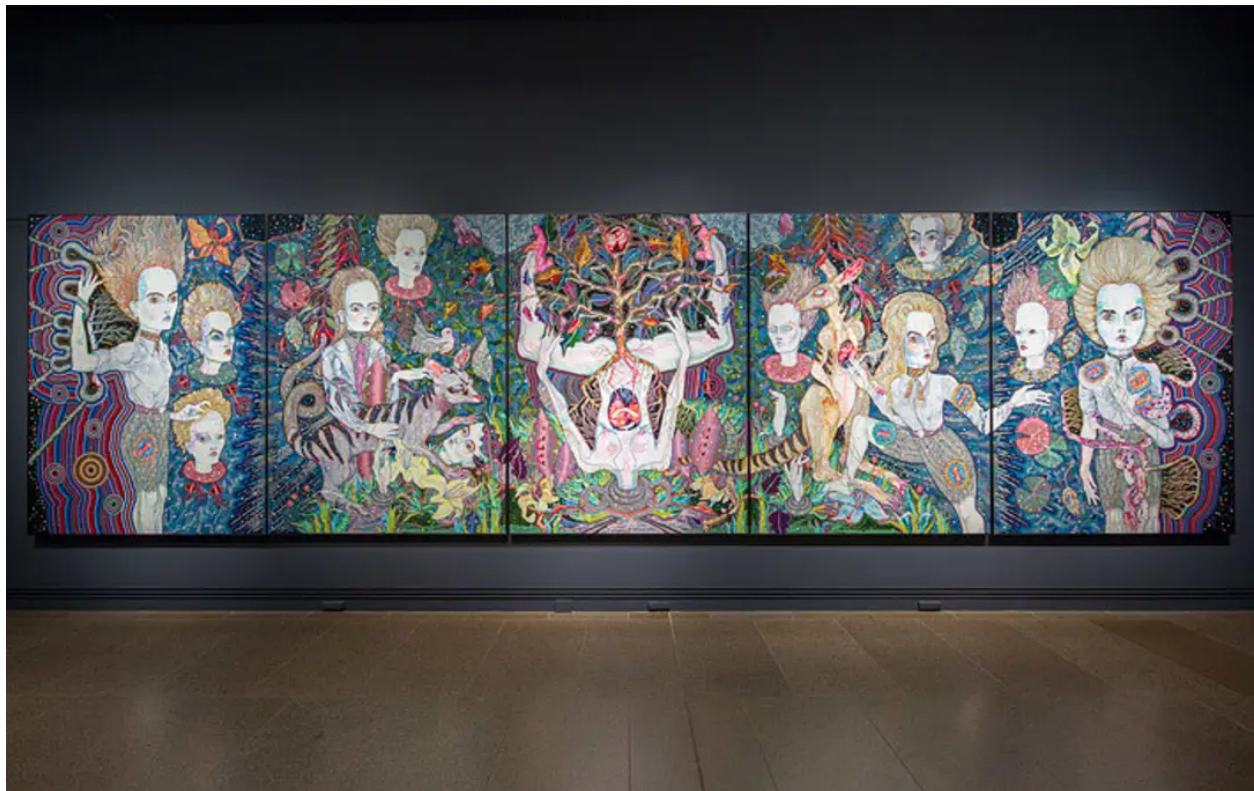
For Del Kathryn Barton, the highly bankable Australian artist and two-time Archibald Prize winner, her best work comes from a state of flow that she compresses into the first three days of the week, starting at 6am on a Sunday.

Jessica Gardner, “Del Kathryn Barton is done with rage, but she’s still a workaholic,” *Financial Review*, November 12, 2025.

“I’m a morning person from being a working mum, and if I can get to the studio by six, I don’t eat anything until 11, so I’m just absolutely buzzing on caffeine ... and I’m just f---ing going for it,” she says of manic mornings in her Paddington studio in Sydney’s inner east.

“And then the energy drops. I crash a little bit in the middle of the day. But then there’s just a lot to move more slowly with, and there’s a great sense of calm that comes over me at that point, because I’ve gone out hard.”

That flow – manic mornings into deep-thinking afternoons – followed by days for collaboration and, begrudgingly, administration has served Barton well. The 52-year-old’s work is highly sought after by collectors drawn to her otherworldly expressions of femininity, fertility and fragility that meld maximalism with intricacy.



Del Kathryn Barton’s painting “the heart land” has a guide of \$1.2 to \$1.6 million for its auction this month. **Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery**

The \$527,727 [sale of her *of pink planets*, 2014](#), in 2023 was the highest result for a living Australian female artist. On November 27, auction house Menzies puts up a massive five-panel work, *the heart land*, for which it has set a \$1.2 to \$1.6 million guide.

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And just over a week ago, Barton opened a sellout commercial show, *the more than human world*, at New York gallery Albertz Benda. It is her fourth show in the US, making her one of the few Australian contemporary artists to resonate in the world's most lucrative art market, albeit [sluggish for now](#).

But like many high-performing career women of a certain age – at the peak of having mastered their craft – the onslaught of menopause jars with her finely honed workaholism.

“Menopause hits you like a sledgehammer, and how can you be the best iteration of a leader while your body is doing things that you have no control over,” she says, her voice full of exasperation. “The changes are quite diminishing and challenging.”

Working on her physical health, prioritising time in the ocean and sunshine, and building a dream studio in Whale Beach to escape the city hustle are how Barton hopes to answer her body's demands for a slower, more soothing pace. The irony is that, beyond the [menopausal challenges](#), which are immense, Barton feels like she is entering an exciting new chapter for her art.

But after motherhood, she found a new mode of expression, all while keeping the female experience centred. A self-portrait with her two young children won the Archibald Prize in 2008 (her second win, for a portrait of actor Hugo Weaving, came five years later).

“My work up until [motherhood] was sort of embarrassingly angsty, and I don't want to dis on my younger self, you know, the trauma was real, but then there was suddenly just all this love and abundance and joy and silliness and mess,” she says.

And how about now? “I have in the past made work that felt full, for example, of female rage,” Barton says. “At this stage in my life ... it's hard to find the perfect word, but perhaps a little bit more embodied, a little bit softer.”

The New York show, which runs until December 13, is installed on deep purple walls painted at the artist's request. Part jewellery box, part womb, it lends a sense of warmth and pageantry.

Adorned with black spectacles and chunky jewellery – a mixture of pearls, heavy metal rings as pendants and bright pink plastic hoop earrings – Barton is as maximalist in life

as in art. She has her hair in a trademark skyscraper bun and erupts often in vivacious, slightly nervous laughter.

Speaking before opening night – it can be “harrowing” seeing works digested by the public for the first time – Barton says she aims to create an intense energy that draws the viewer into the world on canvas.



Gallery owner Thorsten Albertz says Barton’s work has become more “intense” visually and more “daring” in size. **Ann-Sophie Fjelloe-Jensen**

“I feel like I’m not doing my job well if someone’s standing in front of a work of mine and not feeling something,” she says. “At best, it’s like you feel that people recognise themselves in it, or it touches something, you know, a deep emotion. I really live for those moments.”

Gallery owner Thorsten Albertz has been working with Barton since 2017, when he hosted her first solo US show. Then, she was already commanding a high price in Australia, but was unknown to New Yorkers for whom the entry price was jarring. For that show, Albertz sold roughly half the work back to Australian collectors. At this year’s

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show, however, all but one work was sold in the US, ranging from \$US14,000 (\$21,490) to \$US160,000.

Barton's exhibition schedule has been as busy overseas as at home, with four solo US shows since her debut in 2017 and her British solo debut with an exhibition at London's Pavilion Gallery in 2023. In the same period, she has had four solo shows with her Sydney gallery Roslyn Oxley9, the most recent in 2022.

Albertz says Barton's work has become more "intense" visually and more "daring" in size. "In this show, she has two massive bangers ... It is a total overflow of information that comes off of these canvases."

The evolution of Barton's work and womanhood, as she balances a strong will to keep striving with a visceral need for self-care, echoes a broader societal conversation. Young women, especially, are questioning the [hustle-hard approach taken by generations X and Y](#) that has left many burned out and still paid less than their male peers.

Barton says "heavy-lifting" has been emblematic of her personal narrative, but also of how her generation (and those of her mother and grandmother) pushed for equality in life and work. With emotion in her voice, she says she hopes it has "changed or made certain trajectories easier".

"I'm an idealist in that way. But having said that, and again, as a menopausal woman, I've actually never been more acutely aware of how much work there is still to be done."

Del Kathryn Barton's the more than human world runs until December 13 at Albertz Benda, New York.