ART COLLECTOR

THE NATSIAA ISSUE

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#118 OCT – DEC 2026
AUD $26.95 / NZ $27.50

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JAZMINA CININAS

Straying Towards the Scenic Route

13 – 31 October 2026

Artist Talk
Saturday 24 October 2pm

28 Derby Street
Collingwood VIC 3066
Open 7 days 10am – 6pm T 03 9417 2422
melbourne@australiangalleries.com.au
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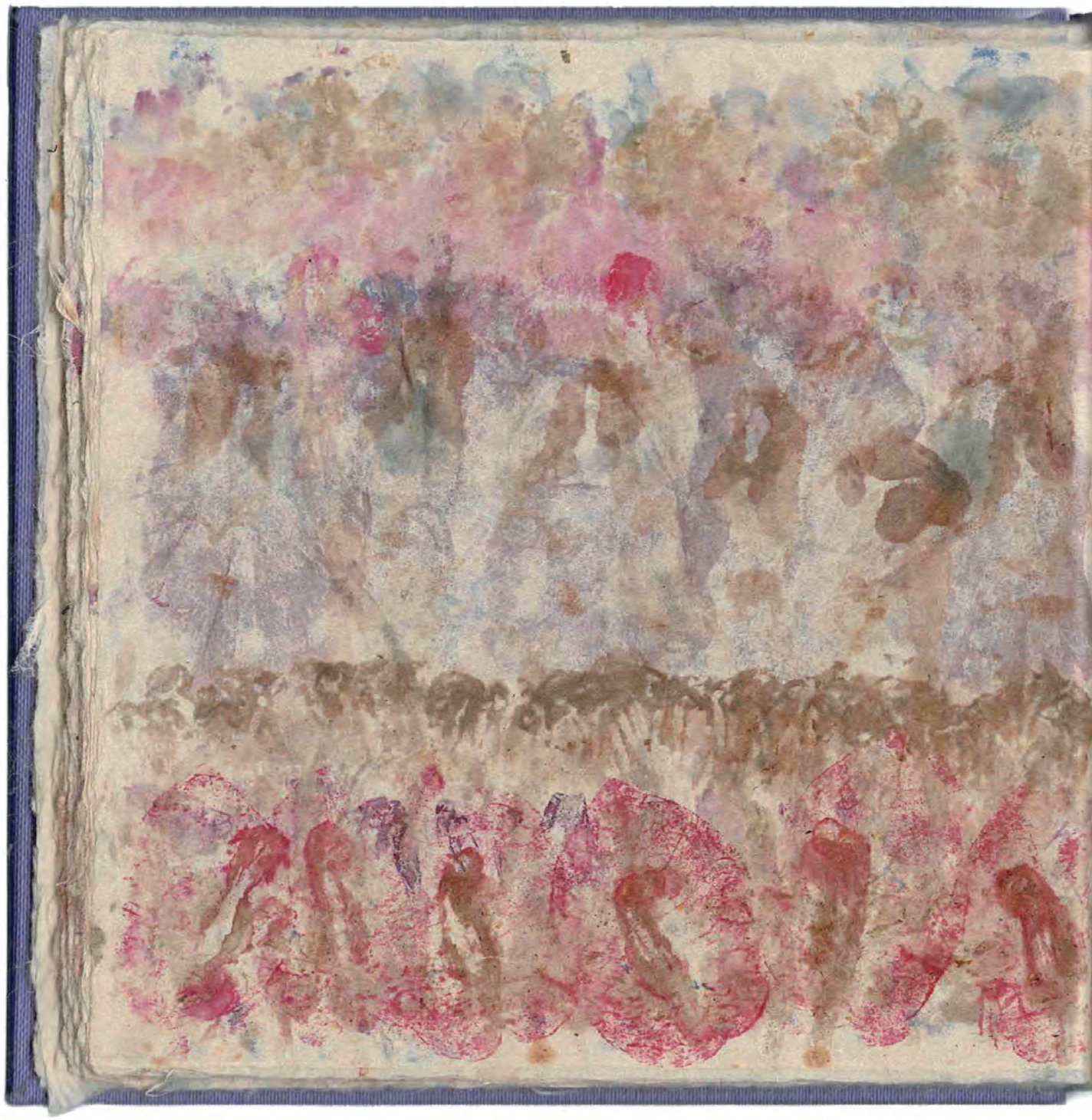
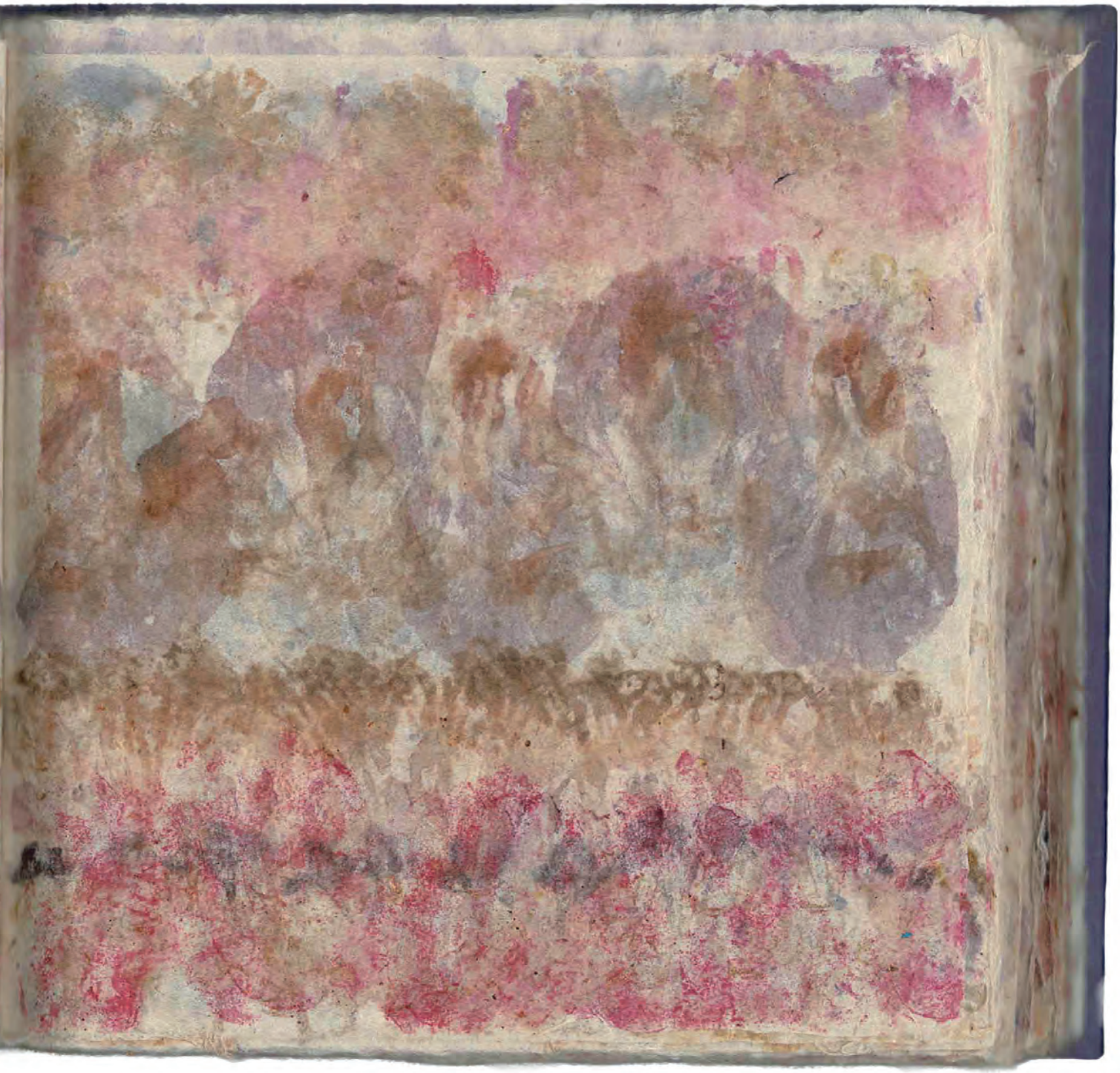
Image: *Eglė's blouse* 2026 natural flower dye from Estonian, Lithuanian and Melbourne flowers on washi, sewing cotton
80 x 54 x 20 cm variable

AUSTRALIAN GALLERIES
MELBOURNE



PRESSING MATTERS



Pressing flowers into paper to release their natural dyes, **Jazmina Cininas** draws on the folk traditions of her Baltic-Lithuanian heritage to capture the essence of a place, a people and a way of life.

WORDS | **EVE SULLIVAN**

PREVIOUS PAGE: Jazmina Cininas, *Pages from Colour Fields*, 2025-2026. Hand bound book with natural flower dye on washi. 16 x 16.5 x 1cm. COURTESY: AUSTRALIAN GALLERIES.

ABOVE LEFT: Jazmina Cininas taking a pencil frottage from utilities cover. Japan, 2023. PHOTO: JONAS LIPŠYS. COURTESY: AUSTRALIAN GALLERIES. RIGHT: Tataki zome inspired monoprint from natural flower dyes in progress, 2026. Umela artist residency, Estonia.

OPPOSITE: Jazmina Cininas, *Eglė's blouse*, 2026. Natural flower dye from Estonian, Lithuanian and Melbourne flowers on washi, sewing cotton. 80 x 54 x 20cm approx.
COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND AUSTRALIAN GALLERIES.

Earlier this year, **Jazmina Cininas** took part in an artist residency at Umela in Prangli, Estonia. Here she collected flowers and put them through an etching press to release the natural dyes and create a series of botanical prints inspired by the region's folk costume. These colourful impressions on washi paper evoke the traditional skills of hand-embroidery and weaving that are part of Cininas's own Baltic-Lithuanian heritage. They also channel a "pressing" interest in using natural materials to capture the essence of a place, a people and a traditional way of life – now driving Baltic eco-tourism.

It's also a more direct way of working than the labour-intensive processes she previously employed as a student, and later as a teacher, in printmaking and artists' books at RMIT. But it was on a trip to Japan with her students that Cininas first learned the technique of hammering flowers into cloth known as *tataki zome*, also involving the use of mordants to fix the hues more permanently. This technique has entered Cininas's repertoire alongside pencil frottage and collage made from print ephemera, as in a recent series of vernacular postcards produced while on a road trip around Australia.

For Cininas, making art is also central to reclaiming aspects of her own Baltic journey as the first-born child of Lithuanian migrants who arrived in Australia after the Second World War to escape the Soviet occupation. Growing up on the fringes of Melbourne, she watched her parents live as survivalists of the more suburban kind – eking out a living, growing their own food and practising handcrafts. But it was the privileged time spent with her grandmothers that inspired her to learn more about her Lithuanian heritage and cultural background. "That pink …", she says, "reminds me of a mohair blanket that I associate with my

"I was looking for something that was autobiographical, but not self-portraiture."
— Jazmina Cininas

grandmother (on my mother's side). She was the most important person in the world to me ... I was something of a loner – we didn't fit in. There was a lot of racism and xenophobia in Australia at that time."

Decades later, after working and travelling in Europe, and studying to become an artist, she channelled that alterity in *The Girlie Werewolf Project* (2005–14), the subject of her PhD, which also resulted in a remarkable body of prints that connected the foundational Lithuanian legend of the iron wolf with female otherness, lycanthropy and representations of women in popular culture. "I was looking for something that was autobiographical, but not self-portraiture."

For members of the Baltic diaspora, as for all minority cultures, it is a challenge to find authentic cultural reflections that don't remain static or fixed in time.

Back in her studio in Northcote, Melbourne, Cininas is making a flower-printed paper version of Eglė the Serpent Queen's blouse. In the Lithuanian legend, a young woman removes her clothing to go for a swim, returning to find that a snake has taken up residence in her blouse. The snake will only return her blouse (and her modesty) if she agrees to marry him and go to live with him beneath the sea. For Cininas, this is a story about migration and settlement in an alien environment. Her poetic response is also a metaphor for the fragility of life.

Straying towards the scenic route is showing from 13 – 31 October at Australian Galleries, Narrm/Melbourne.