Colour

That we can create paintings from colour made from earth, rock, the subtle colours of flowers, finely ground precious stones, and volatile chemical reactions is nothing short of miraculous.



Ultramarine blue was originally made from ground Lapis Lazuli from Afghanistan, purple from snail shells, blues and greens from malachite or oxidised copper, blacks made from burned bones, yellow and white from oxidised lead and tin, and red from iron, or the volatile reaction of sulphur and mercury.

For the artist, colour is magical. Created by combining coloured pigments with oils of linseed, lavender and poppy, mixing with wax, resins and varnishes, painting is a magical process where something new is brought into being from the aether.

Patterns

Naomi's work often includes patterns and layers to create form and atmosphere, perhaps akin to forms emerging from the aether or the dark matter of the universe.

There are many recurring patterns in nature, can you find different patterns in the paintings?

Space to create your own patterns

Unfold this page to learn more about the Alchemical Process!

G2 Gallery
Kingston Arts Centre, 979 Nepean Highway, Moorabbin
Open Wednesday to Saturday, 11am to 4pm

Credits

Front cover/ Page 1: Naomi Bishop, *Obsidian* (detail) 2024, oil on wood panel.

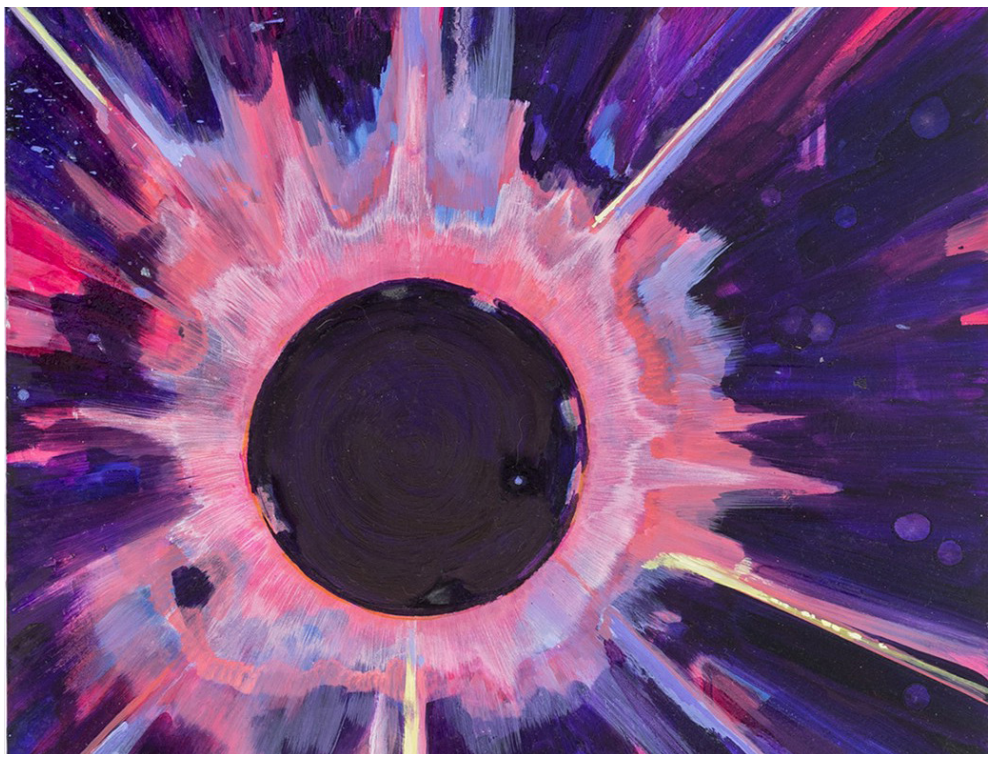
Page 2: Naomi Bishop, *Dissolution*, 2026, oil on linen.

Page 4/ poster page, l–r: Naomi Bishop, *Four Suns*, 2025, oil on linen.
Naomi Bishop, *Radiance*, 2024, graphite and gouache on paper.
Naomi Bishop, *Consolidation*, 2026, graphite and gouache on paper.
Naomi Bishop, *Anathor 2* (Calcination) 2026, oil on linen.

Alchemy is an ancient philosophy searching for the connection between humankind to the universe. Let's explore ideas of alchemy in some of Naomi's paintings!

6 Nov 2026 – 8 Jan 2027
G2 Gallery
Kingston Arts Centre, Moorabbin

kingstonarts
City of Kingston



Seven Levels of Invisibility

Naomi Bishop

FREE LEARNING RESOURCE

Seven Levels of Invisibility

Naomi Bishop

FREE LEARNING RESOURCE

Artist Naomi Bishop has made paintings exploring the ideas and processes of alchemy for her exhibition Seven Levels of Invisibility.

From the blackest of blacks comes the appearance of a starry surface

Stanislas Klossowski de Rola
Alchemy - The Secret Art 1973

Step-by-step guide to the alchemical process

1. Calcination: start by burning an object to purify and reduce it to ashes.

2. Dissolution: place the ash in water to dissolve and create a solution.

3. Separation: the impurities sink to the bottom, the liquid clarifies.

4. Conjunction: the purified elements become unified.

5. Fermentation: the purified elements transform into a new form.

6. Distillation: extract the new essence and refine it.

7. Coagulation: the new essence solidifies, becoming the 'Philosopher's Stone'*

*The Philosopher's Stone was a legendary alchemical substance that was said to be able to turn base metals such as lead and mercury, into highly valued gold and silver.

Lead into gold

Alchemists are known in popular myth for the idea of turning lead into gold, and the legend of the Philosophers Stone, but the story of the real alchemists is much more complex.



In the Middle Ages, there were said to be two types of alchemy, 'true alchemy' and 'false alchemy'. True alchemy was mysterious and esoteric work, the materia prima - the material in its raw and volatile state was transmuted, through a slow process of calcination, putrefaction and purification, into the great work, The Magnum Opus. The 'true' alchemists believed the process of alchemy was about perfecting the soul from its volatile and corruptible state into one that was noble and incorruptible.

The alchemical term sublimation is used in psychology to describe circumstances where a negative situation or experience has been used to create positive change or work of art.

Hidden knowledge

Alchemy is the also earliest form of chemistry, and was primarily concerned with the 'transmutation' of the prima materia (base matter) into a magnum opus, or great work.



Alchemists believed that the prima materia contained within it the basic elements that are needed to convert base material into incorruptible, noble or great material.

Symbols

Throughout history, artists have hidden clues in their works as coded messages for their patrons, communities, fellow initiates, or perhaps for people to discover in the future.



Symbols can take many forms, they might be letters, dates, numbers, sigils or glyphs, animals, colours, or shapes. Can you see any symbols that you recognise in the paintings?

Use this space to record the symbols that you find in Naomi's paintings. What do you think they stand for?

Alchemy and chemistry

In the early Middle Ages most people were not able to read or write. Education, reading and writing, the understanding of symbols, art, and allegory were privileges available only to the wealthy and the clergy.



Often Alchemical knowledge and hermetic practices were forbidden. Sometimes information was hidden, coded in documents, or written in invisible ink.

Many alchemists and initiates of hermetic knowledge were persecuted by the church, considered heretics and sorcerers. Today we might call them chemists or healers.