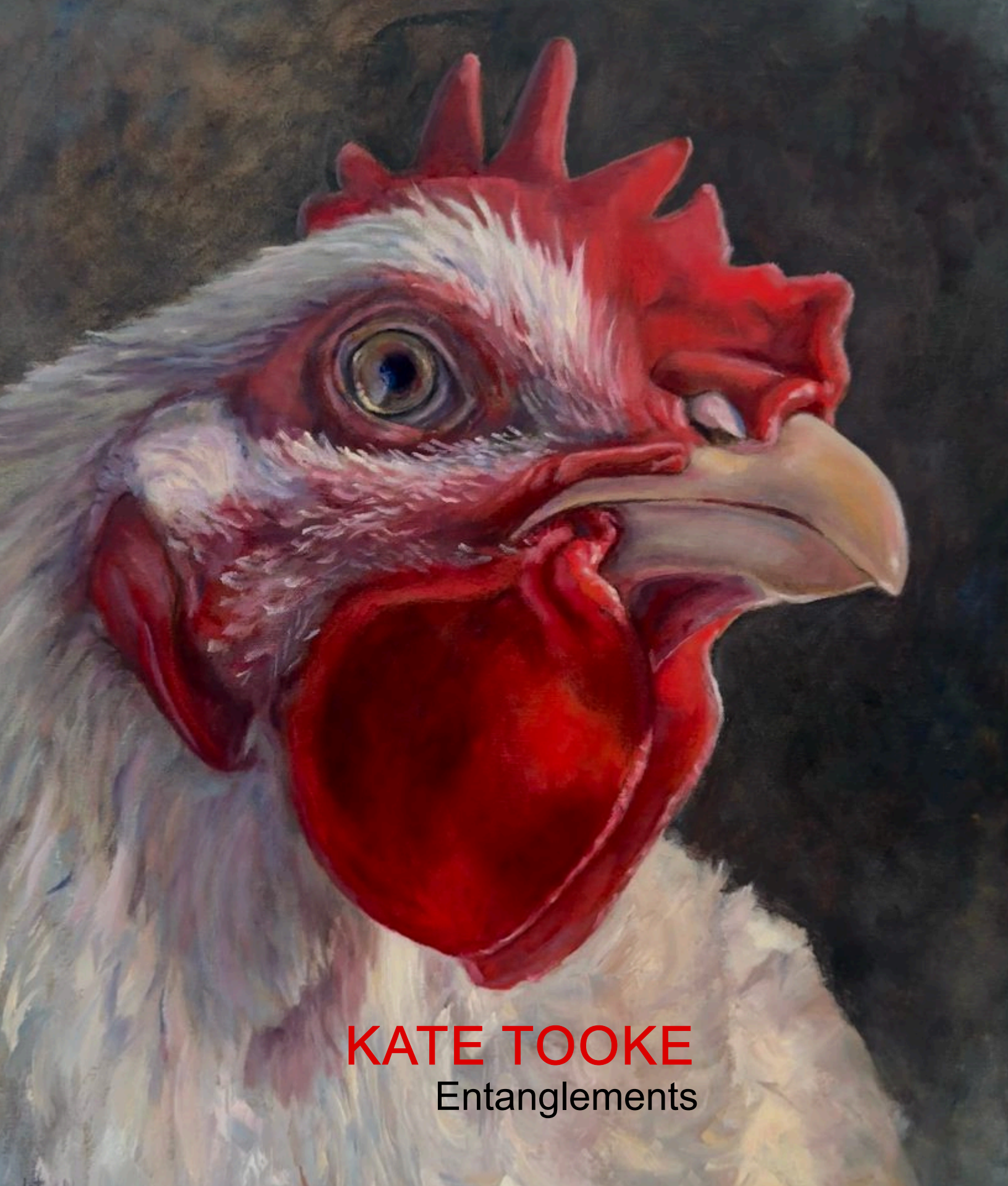




KATE TOOKE

Entanglements

The Drawers - Headbones Gallery

Contemporary Drawing, Painting, Sculpture and Works on Paper



KATE TOOKE
Entanglements

September 27 - November 1, 2025

HEADBONES GALLERY

Exhibition Catalogue - Kate Tooke: *Entanglements*
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This catalog was created for the exhibition Kate Tooke: *Entanglements* at Headbones Gallery,
Vernon, BC Canada, September 27 - November 1, 2025

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Photographs by Kate Tooke and Installation photos by Richard Fogarty

Cover Images by Kate Tooke

Rich Fog Micro Publishing, printed in Vernon, BC, 2025

Printed in house on the Ricoh MP C4504ex from 

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www.headbonesgallery.com

ISBN: 978-1-988707-60-0

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Micro Publishing
Vernon Canada

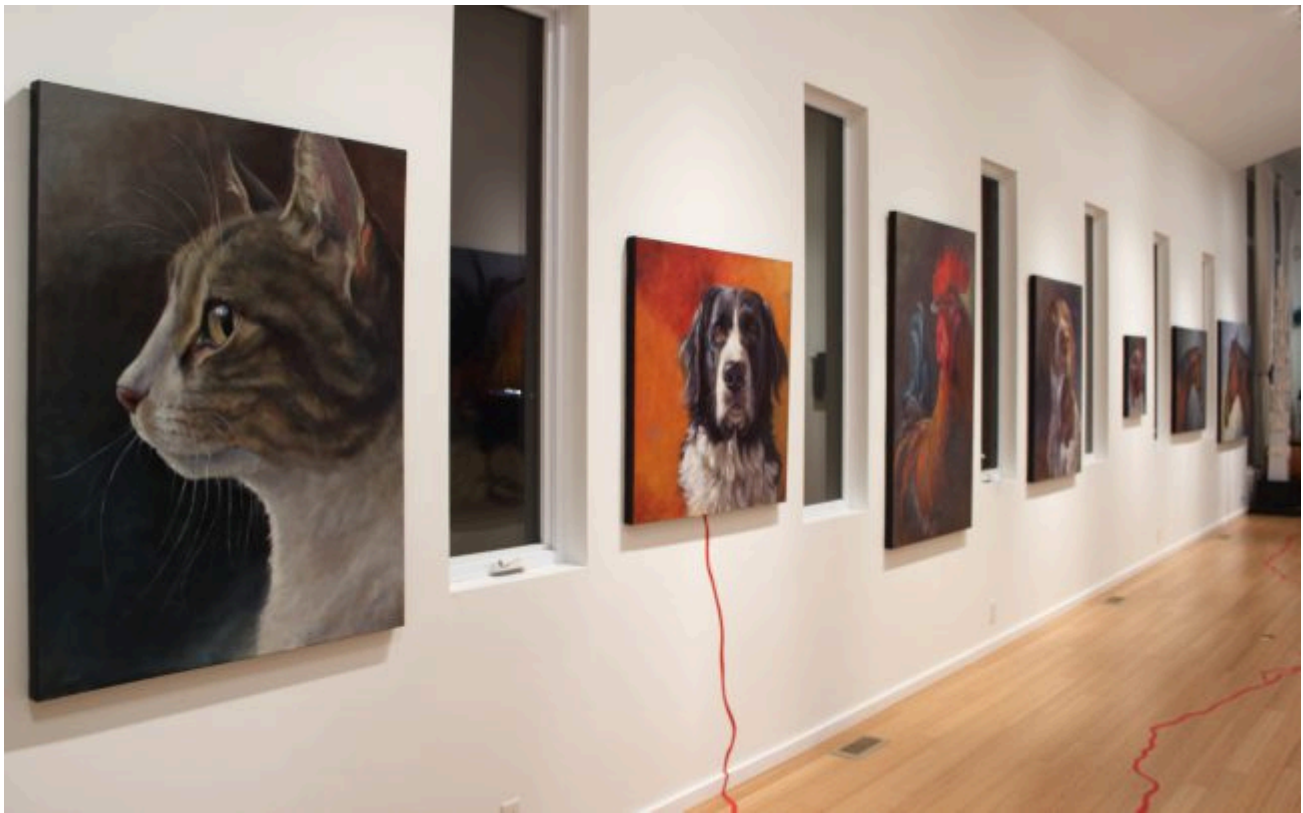


KATE TOOKE
Entanglements

Afterword by Julie Oakes



Headbones Gallery - 2025



KATE TOOKE - *Entanglements*

Entanglements

1. A complicated or compromising relationship or situation, often involving obligations or bonds that are difficult to escape.
2. In quantum physics: a phenomenon in which particles become linked so completely that they share the same fate, even when separated by vast distances.

This exhibition emerged from a year that fundamentally altered me. A year of navigating my husband's critical health crises, illness, and loss on the farm. These paintings are part of my attempt to make sense of a reality in which relationships with people, animals, and the land, are both my anchor and my unraveling.

I have come to believe that who we are is revealed in relationship. We are not formed in isolation but within a web of connections: human, animal, and otherwise. Farming, which I once approached with an idealistic vision of harmony and care, has also been a masterclass in illness, injury, heartbreak, and death. I have learned I am both saint and monster, hero and villain.



Letting go of judgment has left me with less certainty and more complexity. Where righteousness once grounded me, I now stand in dissonance... yet also in a fuller, more intricate understanding of what it means to be alive.

I am inextricably entwined with the animals I've shared my life with: domestic and wild, living and dead. The most difficult relationships are the ones that force me to question myself, to choose who I will become. In a world of absolute uncertainty, that choice is the only true control I have.

This exhibition is not meant as a guilt-laden lecture on animal treatment. Instead, it's an invitation to see animals, and our relationships with them, as layered, sovereign, and complex.

Kate Tooke - 2025



Headbones Gallery - 2025

Dandy (is a jerk)

Dandy is not truly a jerk. He is a rooster doing his job -defending his flock. Still, when he comes flying at me, claws and spurs out, it is terrifying.

Aggressive roosters are often “dispatched” (a more palatable word for killed). But after the bobcat attack, he is one of only three survivors. That means something. I am entangled with him, too. And once again, this relationship is a question and a challenge I must live into: who do I need to become now?



Dandy Is A Jerk - 2025, Oil on canvas, 60"x 48"



Lucky - 2025, Oil on canvas, 60"x 48"



Standoff - 2025, Oil on canvas, 60"x 40"



Cocktail - 2025, Oil on canvas, 60"x 36"



Cocksure - 2025, Oil on canvas, 48"x 48"



Fernando - 2025, Oil on canvas, 20"x 16"



Awkward - 2025, Oil on canvas, 20"x 16"



Miss Betty - 2025, Oil on canvas, 20"x 16"



Florence - 2025, Oil on canvas, 20"x 16"



How Nice - 2025, Oil on canvas, 20"x 16"



Happy Cluckin - 2025, Oil on canvas, 20"x 16"



Orator - 2025, Oil on canvas, 20"x 16"



Abbey - 2025, Oil on canvas, 20"x 16"



Garbanzo - 2025, Oil on canvas, 20"x 16"



Bramble - 2025, Oil on canvas, 20"x 16"

Meat Birds

A series of plastic-wrapped portraits of chickens raised for meat.

When I first began farming 14 years ago, I romanticized it. But raising animals for slaughter fractured that fantasy. My early vegetarianism had allowed me to imagine myself as their saviour, separate from the moral messiness. Over time, I realized my pity and desire to “save” them was more about preserving my self-image as a “good” person than about the animals themselves. In fact, that saviour belief diminishes the dignity and agency of these beings.

My path now is one of entanglement: to face the uncomfortable truth, to acknowledge the being in front of me, without separating myself from them.

I am beholden to these animals. It is a privilege bound in reverence and grief to choose to love them, raise and care for them, and receive their ultimate sacrifice with boundless gratitude.



Meat Bird 5 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 16"x 12"



Meat Bird 7 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 16"x 12"



Meat Bird 4 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 16"x 12"



Meat Bird 2 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 16"x 12"



Meat Bird 8 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 16"x 12"



Meat Bird 6 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 16"x 12"



Meat Bird 1 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 16"x 12"



Meat Bird 9 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 24"x 20"



Meat Bird 3 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 16"x 12"

Sacrifice

A portrait series honouring the 28 chickens killed by a bobcat on January 5, 2025.

On a cold night this past January we had a bobcat get through our fenced enclosure and into the chicken coop and slaughter 28 of our 31 beloved chickens. It didn't eat a single one, most did not even have blood on them.

Devastating in its own right, it came on the heels of my husband's second month-long fight for his life in critical care and my own pneumonia.

While my first impulse was to crawl into the dark cave of depression, my neighbour had an interpretation that shifted everything for me. She recently returned from a trip to Peru, where she attended a religious ceremony in which worshipers burdened with hardship brought a chicken to be sacrificed by a shaman to clear the blight.

She asked:

“What if your chickens sacrificed themselves to clear your health, your land, your space?” “What if the bobcat was just the shaman?”

That question changed everything. It left me reeling in awe, wondering how I could possibly render that feeling into something shareable. The result became part of this exhibition, an installation called *Saint*.



Shaman - 2025, Oil on canvas, 36"x 30"



Australorp 2 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



Ameraucana 3 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



Ancona 1 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



Sussex 2 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



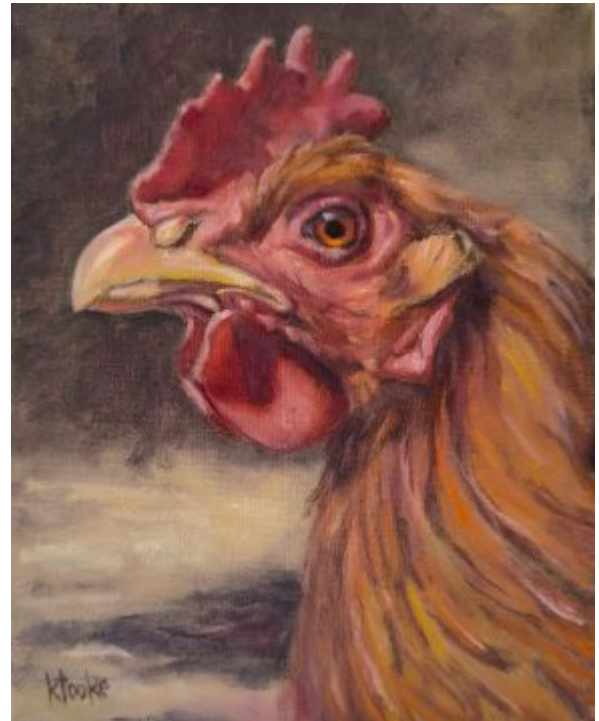
Farmyard 4 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



Barred 2 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



Sussex 3 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



Welbar 1 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



Lohmann 1 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



Maran 1 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



Farmyard 1 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



Farmyard 2 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



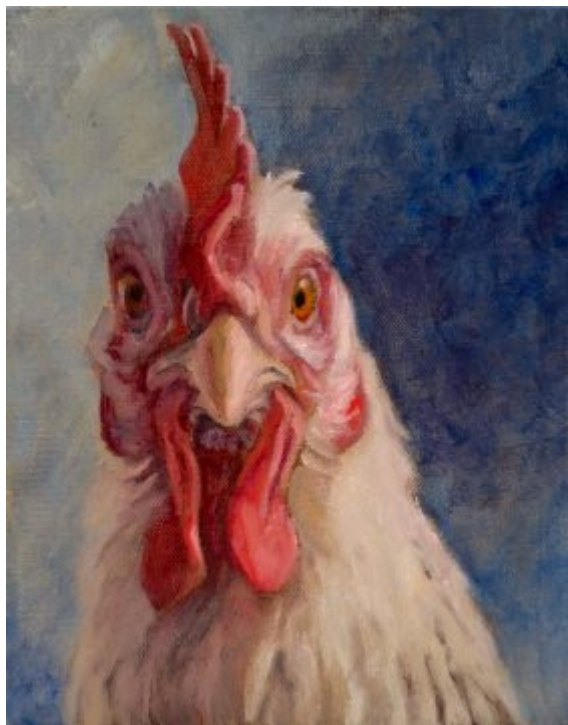
Lohmann 2 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



Sussex 1 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



Barred 3 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



Sussex 4 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



Welbar 2 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



Welbar 3 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



Barred 1 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



Farmyard 5 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



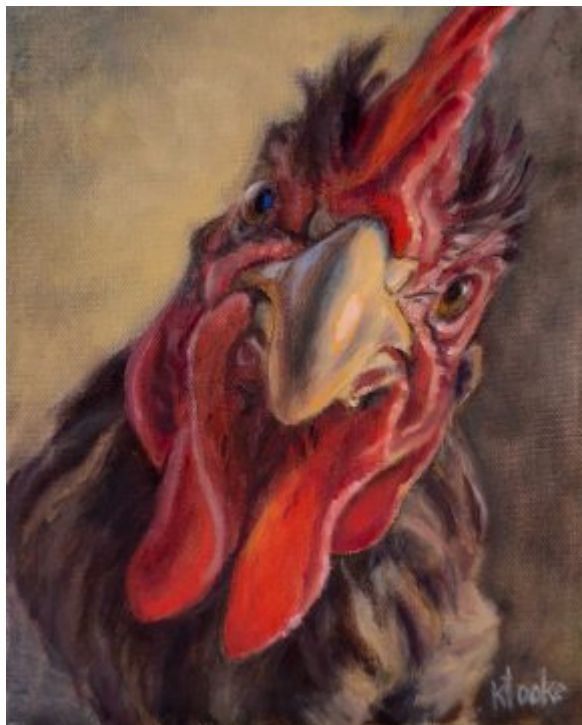
Farmyard 7- 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



Maran 2 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



Ameraucana 2 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



Australorp 1- 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



Ameraucana 1- 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



Farmyard 3 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



Farmyard 6- 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



Australorp 3 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



Saint

Exploring the chicken as “martyr”. Bridging material and spiritual worlds.

If the chickens could sacrifice themselves for me, how could I possibly begin to honour that sacrifice?

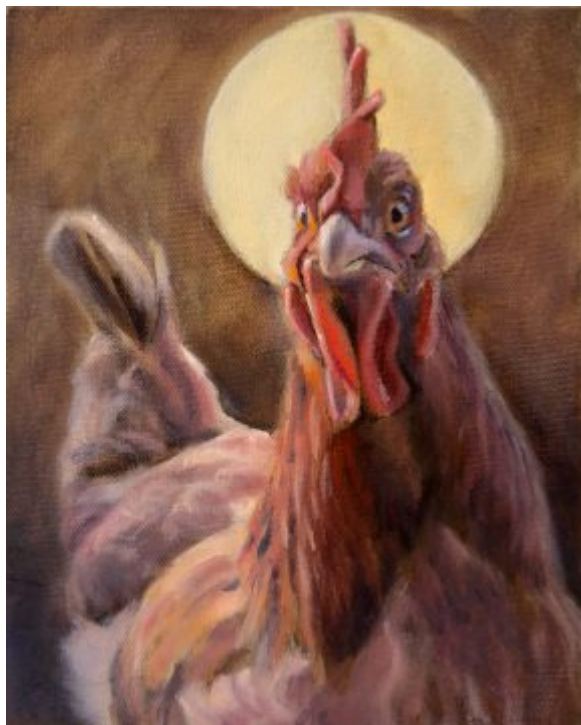
Chickens embody one of our deepest contradictions: beloved pet, symbol of sustainable living, the most consumed meat on the planet, and a product of factory farming. They are bred for our consumption at the cost of their own health and longevity... and yet they persist with agency and resilience.

What if they are not powerless victims? What if, in some cosmic sense, they choose their journey, to be entangled with us ...even at the cost of their very life?

Somewhere between the physical truth and the spiritual one lies the reckoning. It is here, in that tension, that these paintings emerge.



Saint Study 8 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



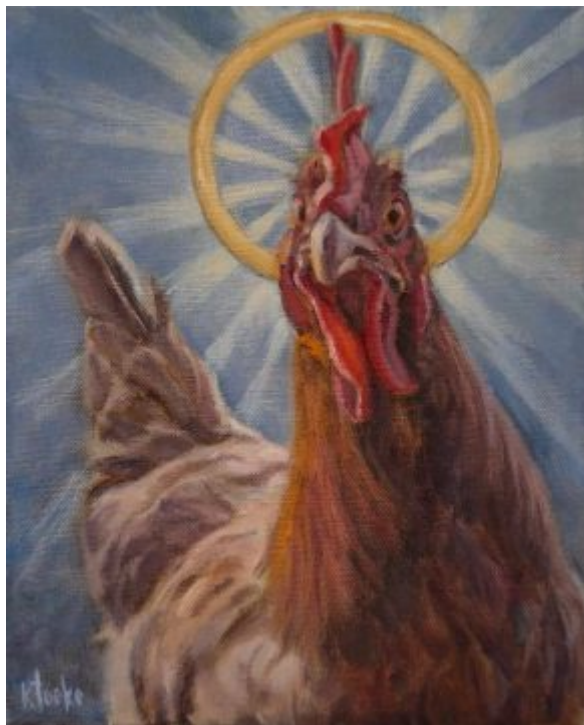
Saint Study 6 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



Saint Study 4 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



Saint Study 7 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



Saint Study 2 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



Saint Study 1 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



Saint Study 3 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



Saint Study 5 - 2025, Oil on canvas, 10"x 8"



Saint - 2025, Oil on canvas, 60"x 36"

Not “Happy-Go-Lucky”

Over the years I have shared my life with many well-adjusted dogs, both rescues and ones I raised from puppyhood. This led me to believe that I was reasonably competent at raising and training dogs... until this dog. This dog that defied everything that had worked for me in successfully shaping dog behaviour in the past. This was disconcerting in its own right, but made worse in that if I were to show ANY emotion, anger, frustration, embarrassment, fear, it amplified his reactivity exponentially.

All I wanted was a “happy-go-lucky” dog; but instead his erratic behaviour includes unprovoked barking, lunging and aggression. If he were a small dog, this might be manageable... but at 110lbs, it's dangerous. And I'm entangled... not only do I love the dog, I have a responsibility to him.

Through many hours of various types of training, what I have learned now is that over and over again, when left to his own instincts, he will consistently make poor decisions. So who needs the training? Me. I kept clinging to the belief that he “should” learn to behave properly, then proceed to be frustrated when he “betrays my trust” and acts out... but he's clear... He's consistently shown me what he's going to do... it's *me* that's not listening.

Rather than continuing to expect him to “behave” and being constantly disappointed... he needs me to create the conditions where he can not fail.

It's the plot twists that move the story forward and make it rich.

I am a better person as a result. I have learned to be calmer, more regulated, present, connected with myself and this dog. I have become a better leader, someone worthy of his trust and respect... and interestingly... now, within the boundaries I've built for him, he actually is pretty “happy-go-lucky”.



Not So Happy Go Lucky - 2025, Oil on canvas, 36"x 36"



She's The Point - 2025, Oil on canvas, 48"x 36"



Noble - 2025, Oil on canvas, 48" x 36"

Red Horse

In the midst of my husband's critical medical challenges, I longed to simplify life. I made the difficult decision that I would sell my mare's "baby", born here on our farm with champion bloodlines, now 4 years old. She had a crack in her hoof from an abscess last winter, which I had been assured 99% of horses would just grow out, but it just kept cracking up as it grew. In late January, she was limping severely and in terrible pain.

The X-rays were very distressing. The infection had grown behind the hoof wall almost touching the bone. The prognosis was bleak, with the only option to undergo an extremely invasive treatment: a total hoof resection, surgically removing the entire front of the hoof wall to expose the infection with custom corrective shoeing (over 9 months) with no guarantee it will work. To not do the intervention, the prognosis was euthanasia.

If this were happening to an older, easy-going horse this option is totally viable.

But she is not that horse. She is fiery, sensitive, volatile and very smart. It has taken me years to carefully build a trusting relationship with this mare. To go down the route of the invasive treatment would not only detrimentally impact her quality of life and destroy our relationship, it would be dangerous for everyone involved.

I needed to make a decision that felt right for her and I, even if it went against what was advised. I had to prioritize the relationship and trust that I could give her a comfortable life and detach myself from an outcome. I gave her antibiotics, daily hoof treatments, wrapping, packing and soaking, specialized boots, frequent farrier visits, trims and re-trims.

Eight months later, I would love to say she's totally sound... she is not ...and I don't know if she will ever be. She is better for sure, and most certainly alive and vital.

While there is obviously no sale or exit of this relationship on the horizon, our lives continue to entwine and I know I am a better, more grounded, calm and confident person because she will accept nothing less.



Red Horse - 2025, Oil on canvas, 96"x 48"



All Promise - 2025, Oil on canvas, 36"x 48"



Sunny Bay - 2025, Oil on canvas, 48"x 60"



Roan - 2025, Oil on canvas, 48"x 24"



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Kate Tooke: *Entanglements*

The further modernity leads us away from the natural cycles of life and our relationships with other species, the more difficult it becomes to work this concept through to a physical end because it is distanced. But if the product is entrancing – as are Tooke's paintings – how does the idea of this division between human and, in this case, domesticated animals remain foremost to the statement? In simpler terms – how does the backstory come forward?

When a painting 'touches' a viewer, there is recognition or empathy towards the piece that is, if not exactly 'pleasurable', it *is* positive. Portraiture is a portrayal of a living being and the root of the word suggests a portal. It is a way in. It goes beyond the physical properties of canvas and paint to express (press out of the mind of the artist) another living being. It talks back to us in our language, a visual language, to grant a further understanding of this portrayed life. Tooke focuses on the head and shoulders, a classic portrait format. With humans, the first level of determining who is who individually is that which differentiates us from each other in a manner that allows us to give specific attention – responses - to that individual. With Tooke's animal portraits, it goes further than 'liking horses' or knowing in real life that particular dog. The painting pays *tribute*. A portrait allows for the potential lengthening of life. For example, we hold within our cultural canon the image of Shakespeare because it was made visible during his lifetime, through a painting done by the hands of an artist. Today, alongside his works, we know what Shakespeare looked like, how he appeared to the people of his era. It brings the thoughts he conveyed through writing into a human frame, like ours.

Scale says a lot and Kate Tooke exercises her options using the size of the work to advance her message. *Saint Studies* call to mind religious icons and allude to the importance of 'sanctified' in western religious tradition. There also is a historical tradition of animal portraiture although often that animal exists alongside a person. It is of note though, the number of men and women posing with a dog, the depictions of horsemen, the menageries that accompanied depictions of court dramas, battles, or homey hearths. It could be an anthropological study.



But these are *chickens*. They occupy a relatively low rung of our domesticized animal farm to the extent that we eat them. Tooke reminds us of this in the series *Meat Birds*, wrapping the painting, the chicken, in cellophane, reminding us of the normative frame we are accustomed to having as urbanites with chicken.

And yet these birds, like all of her 'poultraits', appear to hold knowledge; it shows in their eyes – defiance, presence, fear, confidence. They have person-ality.

As pointed out above, there are hierarchical relationships among the animals themselves with implied characteristics, political and social, that can be transferred between the animal and human worlds. In George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, the chickens lead the resistance 'laying' the ground for revolution, much like the poor of the French Revolution. But that status doesn't hold and is soon lost to the narrative as the larger and pushier animals come into power.

The sensibility of a hobby farmer in comparison to big business tends to discover this personification, an identification through proximity, and be inspired to pay closer attention to those that are feathered or furred. Tooke's skill brings us face to face with her chickens and domestic beasts in *Entanglements* with a visual caveat that provoked this narrative. She portrays the bobcat that entered the chicken coop and wrought havoc without disturbing a feather – and so complete was his mysterious act that his victims became sanctified. She titles this painting *Shaman*.

As Kate tells the animal's stories in visual terms the message becomes palpable to human understanding.

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