



Messy life: Marchesi's intricate oil paintings include *More than Ever* (left), and (from top) *Time Keeper*, *These Myths No Longer Ring True*, *Collapse* and *Undertow*. They can evoke feelings of isolation and anxiety in some people, although others feel drawn into the chaotic images.

Peace among chaos

Hoarders of the world can rejoice, artist Karla Marchesi has found the beauty hidden in the clutter of society, as Sally Browne discovered

Karla Marchesi's latest collection of paintings would make even the most chronic clutter-bug feel tidy. Her works, on show at the Heiser Gallery in Brisbane, explore real and imagined scenes of mess and chaos, each with its own labyrinthine story to tell.

She calls them "anti still lifes".

Although the 27-year-old admits to being the child of "moderate hoarders" (Marchesi is the youngest of seven children whose parents still live in the home she grew up in) she uses found images from the internet as reference points for her paintings.

"I've got a database of thousands of images," she says. "I'll see a particular grouping or an interesting colour relationship. The process is then getting into Photoshop and recomposing my images and then I use a very academic painting style – so there is a whole process of lost and found in the beginning stages of building from the underpainting, to the mid-tonal painting to finished step."

Her complex, intricate oil paintings often feature metaphors hidden within the mess. *More than Ever*, for example, features the box of a new television set on top of an old one, beside a folded-up wheelchair trapped by the chaos.

People react differently to her paintings – some feel attracted, some

are repelled. "One felt a compulsion to get in there and tidy up."

But while her interiors evoke themes of anxiety and isolation, they also have a wild beauty, and Marchesi paints them with reverence and respect.

A fan of vintage clothes and jewellery, she loves uncovering stories among the objects people keep around them. And she's fascinated by the shapes our humble piles of "junk" can make. "Everyone has a familiar way into reading the image. The token joke is 'that looks like my son's room,'" she says. "It kind of sets them at ease in these chaotic and anxious images and allows them to investigate the surface and find these passages that are actually quite abstract and strange and unfamiliar. I couldn't be more thrilled with that."

Marchesi has worked as a full-time artist since graduating from the Queensland College of Art at Griffith University in 2007. Next on her project list is a residency in Berlin.

Her exhibition will run at the Heiser Gallery in Brisbane until June 23.



Complex work: Karla Marchesi loves uncovering stories about objects.

