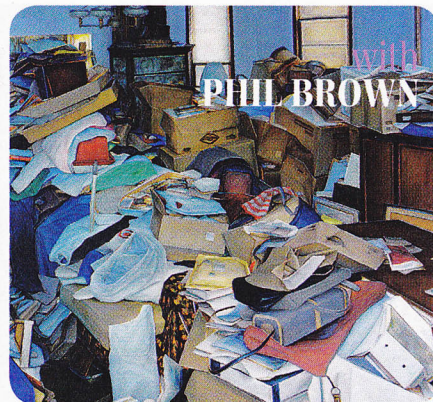


Clean sweep

Inspiration found in cluttered spaces



CLOSE TO HOME ... Karla Marchesi's photo-realistic oil on board paintings include *More Than Ever*, *Time Keeper* and *These Myths No Longer Ring True*

Brisbane artist Karla Marchesi's paintings could be regarded as a bit disturbing if you're a neat freak. Rooms full of boxes and household detritus piled high and in disarray. But seldom do old cardboard boxes and stuff that should have gone to the dump ages ago look this good.

Karla, a graduate of the Queensland College of Art, Griffith University (she won a University Medal for academic excellence), has had several solo shows and, at 27, is looking like a painter of promise. She grew up and still lives in Everton Hills, in Brisbane's north, and confesses she comes from "a family of hoarders".

"I have to live with this," Karla confesses as we stand in front of her painting *More Than Ever*. "The subject is both real and imagined. I also get images from the internet and Photoshop them before I paint them."

More Than Ever is typical of the works in this show: it's beautifully painted, although some will immediately feel the need to go home and tidy after viewing it. Of course, there's more to all this than meets the eye.

Karla's translation of this detritus through a meticulous application of realistic painting also captures the potentially abstract qualities of these accumulated objects. Translated to the

two-dimensional plane, these objects are reduced to colour, shape and form, devoid of purpose as they sit in amorphous mounds.

This makes them cluttered still-life works or, looked at another way, abstracts that resemble household flotsam and jetsam.

As you admire Karla's technique, you may wonder how such subject matter can be regarded as attractive. There's something familiar and endearing about these paintings, regardless of art theory or intentions to explore the nature of painting.

They catch the eye, engage the imagination and also offer more upon closer inspection.

In *More Than Ever*, for example, you notice, in the distance, a box with an illustration of a television screen featuring a landscape set in another landscape. Little treats such as this abound in Karla's work.

She has subtitled the exhibition *Feelings of Abandonment* perhaps because these objects have indeed been abandoned. In *Time Keeper*, the objects are relegated to an attic, shed or garage, it's not clear which.

Karla also explores the contradictory roles of viewer as voyeur and possessor, raising questions about individual, cultural and material identities. In an age when we all have too much stuff, it

could also be said that there are implied environmental questions inherent in the work: How much is enough? And how much do we waste in our daily lives?

For Karla, who works out of a studio in the Metro Arts building in the city, these questions are posed rather than answered. But her main purpose is not polemical. Karla is on the way to becoming a painter's painter and lovingly engages with subject matter as a foil for her skills with brush and paint. That's refreshing in an age when many have abandoned painting altogether.

As well as exploring domestic detritus, she also attempts a bit of deconstruction of the dwelling. In several paintings, she exposes insulation and wooden beams that are revealed by ripping a hole in the ceiling. It's another take on exploring the material world of the domestic front while flexing her painterly muscles.

Karla has already spent time abroad (she studied in the US and is heading to Berlin for a self-funded residency in August). Now if she could only get her folks to throw some stuff out ...

KARLA MARCHESI - RECENT PAINTINGS, until Jun 23, Tue-Fri, 10.30am-6pm; Sat, 10.30am-5pm, Heiser Gallery, 90 Arthur St, Fortitude Valley, ph: 3254 2849. www.heisergallery.com.au