

| McATAMNEY GALLERY AND DESIGN STORE

DOES KITSCH FULFIL A CONTEMPORARY SENTIMENTAL NEED?

Rachel Ratten's paintings explore how object attachment enables personal identity through nostalgia and sentimentality.

People do not consume an object knowing it is kitsch *per se*, but instead a particular attribute is coveted. The item will then be consumed for renovating, reminiscing over, repairing or transforming. Ratten's forthcoming exhibition is the result of her MFA from University of Canterbury, which involves depictions of everyday mass-produced objects contextualised in a non prescriptive manner. The objects in question can be defined as kitsch, however, it will be taken beyond a taste model, as the idea of sentimentality and nostalgia is the defining feature behind ownership of these objects. For many consumers, kitsch transcends particular relationships, and forges identity through nostalgia and sentimentality.

Ratten has also a degree in Sociology and it is through this framework, kitsch is situated outside the fine art frame, as it takes on other meanings beyond art world comprehension, however, the use of traditional methods of painting to depict these figurines, straddles both worlds. Ratten has constructed these images as a vehicle for questioning ideas about the role of the object; the nature of its ownership and status. The work aims not to tell people what object identity involves, but rather describes one way it could occur, in order to stir the viewer's curiosity.

This is achieved through creating unsettling images of everyday objects, by relegating them into positions of erroneous scale and position. Kitsch contains aesthetic value outside art theory, as Ratten offers instead a direct visceral experience of the familiar. This evokes nostalgia and sentimentality, thus creating personal narratives and identity.

"I personally own all the objects I paint, so I am practicing what I am preaching.."

As The World Turns by Rachel Ratten, McAtamney Gallery and Design Store, Upstairs in the Old Post Office. Geraldine. April. Ph 027 305 3000. www.mcatamneygallery.co.nz

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