

Painting, for me, is a sacred practice. I require lengthy stints of solitude, which means packing a cut lunch and heading bush for several months (ideally). In reality, I work from my studio/residence in a big coastal village and the lean-to-shack in the bush is a remote place I travel to in my head. It's a storehouse of past, present and future which I'm downloading from at the time of paint application. If you asked me 'What are you painting?' I couldn't tell you. The words of jazz musician Miles Davis, "I'll play it first and tell you what it is afterwards" ring true for me. It is for this reason that I'm not able to recreate pieces. It's the same with my cooking. It's a progressive thing... If you see a work of mine for sale and you love it, then I encourage you to purchase it on the spot. To all of you who have invested in my work and to those of you who will, I extend a warm thanks and I'm sincerely grateful for your support. As a band from Melbourne coined it, "...You're only as good as your fans..."

Karen Blandford, 2010

Exhibitions

- 2010 May – July '*Solo*' Perth Concert Hall, Perth, Western Australia
- 2008 Nov - Dec '*Journeys*' (solo), Urban Dingo Gallery, Fremantle, Western Australia
- 2007 Sept – Oct '*October Focus*' Artopia 2007 event, Gunyulgup Galleries, Yallingup Western Australia
Aug – Oct '*A Vivid Recollection*' (solo), Lobby, Burswood Int' Resort, Perth Western Australia
June '*Milieu*' (solo), LK Galleries, Subiaco Western Australia
- 2006 June '*Artists In Arms*' youth in crisis fundraiser, vacant site - Mt Lawley Western Australia
May – June '*365 Days*', Soto Cafe, Mt Lawley Western Australia
- 2005 Nov '*Family of Artists*', Fremantle Contemporary Art Gallery, Fremantle Western Australia
- 2001 Aug – Sept '*Bang*', Maverick Gallery & Artist Studios, Jolimont Western Australia
April '*Colours of April*', The Moores Building, Fremantle Western Australia
- 1999 Oct '*Campaign Free The Bears*' Mary Hutton fundraiser, Kings Park, Perth Western Australia
Sept '*Off Shore Europe '99*', trade exhibit' sponsored by Dept Commerce & Trade, Montrose/Aberdeen, Scotland
May '*Arts for the Old Growth Forests*' fundraiser, Fremantle Arts Centre, Western Australia
Mar – Jun '*Autumn Collection*', Burswood Int' Resort, Perth Western Australia
Feb – Mar '*The Perth Mint Centenary Art Prize*', The Perth Mint, Western Australia (Finalist)
- 1998 Nov '*Choice*' (two person exhibition), Left Bank, Fremantle Western Australia
April '*Arts Expose '98*', Fremantle, Western Australia
Feb - Mar '*Burswood \$10,000 National Art Award*', Burswood Int' Resort, Perth Western Australia (Acquisitive Award)
- 1997 June '*WA Arts*', Burswood Int' Resort Hotel, Perth Western Australia
- 1996 Nov-Dec '*The Christmas Show*' Gadfly Gallery, Nedlands Western Australia
- 1995 Jun – July '*Women Artists In WA*', Acorns Gallery, Inglewood Western Australia
May - Jun '*Different*', Newcomers Gallery, Fremantle Western Australia
April '*Arts Expose '95*', Fremantle, Western Australia (Dept Commerce & Trade Award for Excellence)

Awards

- 1998 The Burswood \$10,000 National Art Award (acquisitive) artwork 'Burswood 10 x 10'
- 1993 Mazda Australia National student competition
Award for artwork 'Toreador', reproduced for Mazda 1994 calendar

Commendations

- 1999 The Perth Mint Centenary Art Prize
1 of 17 finalists selected from 60/ 140 international entries artwork 'The Rise and Fall and Rise' purchased for 'The Perth Mint Private Art Collection'
- 1995 Awards For Excellence
Department of Commerce and Trade, Western Australia experimental screen print 'Figure of Speech'

Collections

Burswood Int' Resort Hotel, Perth
 Calibre Global, Perth, Corporate Collection
 Coldwell Banker Pro Property, Perth, Director's Collection
 Duxton Hotel, Perth
 Exponential Design, Melbourne, Director's Collection
 Gold Corporation, Perth, The Perth Mint Private Art Collection, Perth
 Salon 21, Perth
 Exchange Plaza, Perth, Stockland / Colonial

Commissions

2008 Edgecombe Brothers Winery, Swan Valley
 2007 Ellement 996, Perth, primary reproduction of original artwork to furnish Ellement 996 apartments & foyer areas
 1999 Exchange Plaza, Perth, Stockland / Colonial design original paintings for foyer's apex areas
 1996 Duxton Hotel, Perth, screen prints - design and produce series of original limited edition prints, to compliment Hotel's interior styles and colour themes

Review

"In 1804 William Blake published his poem about Milton, in which he saw England's green and pleasant pastures being overtaken by dark Satanic Mills. Blake wasn't just referring to the destruction of the landscape but to historic changes in culture and in thinking. To Blake the green pastures represented the Romantic Imagination and the Satanic Mills represented the logic and rationalism of The Enlightenment. He was aware that the scientific and technological advances of the 17th & 18th centuries were contributing greatly to these changes in Industrialisation, and he didn't like it. Rousseau was also concerned that civilised human beings were losing the innocence and the oneness with nature that had been experienced by their more primitive forbears. But Rousseau realised that a certain amount of civilisation was necessary. It was, after all, more natural for 18th century humans to live in houses than in caves. Both of these great thinkers were aware of tensions between Natural Man and Civilised Man. Industrialism and industrialisation, as words and concepts date from sometime in the 1830s. It was at this time that people in general began to realise that there was an Industrial Revolution happening and that their way of life was visible and irrevocably changing.

Karen's work seems to be informed by all of this history and by these contradictions and conflicts and tensions, but there is also a sense of having come to terms with them, which is expressed through her aesthetic awareness. Rather than trying to resolve the contradictions, she seems to be saying, "They are here to stay. Just get used to it. Be aware of the tensions, but enjoy the benefits of both Nature and Industry." As with Abstract Art generally, there is no great narrative to be told or lesson to be learnt. ...Karen's journeys through.....industrialised landscapes.....as an artist she explores the processes of printmaking and of applying paint to the canvas.....Therefore, the way to engage with these works is through the old adage that the medium is the message. The way to read them is to look not so much for a message but to observe the strident colours of some and the darker (or gentler) earth colours of others, the organic shapes of nature and the more geometric shapes of buildings. The composition and the patterning also suggest these two aspects of the landscape.....The industrial forms seem to be both part of the landscape and contrasting with it at the same time.....suggests nature and industry held in some sort of tension or balance. The forms are curved and sensuous, but [sometimes] there is a dark undercurrent

....There is a mysteriousness here that could not be achieved with a more overt message. The medium is the message, and the message is the mysterious and eternal one of just how we humans relate to and fit into our environment. We can try to understand it, control it and even exploit it, but sometimes it is more rewarding not to do any of this, but just to enjoy the relationship with it in all its complexities and its mysteries."

Jan Altmann, PhD in Comparative Literature; Jan writes and lectures in areas of Visual Arts, Cultural Theory and Cultural Studies 2008