

BRUNSWICK STREET GALLERY STOCKROOM SPOTLIGHT: KARI HENRIKSEN

June 26, 2020

Kari Henriksen is a Melbourne based artist whose practice focuses on the concepts of light and air, time and place, sameness and difference. Her work investigates how the mood of a place is altered depending on the light, time of day, weather conditions, and time of year.

This series of paintings in the Stockroom features Kari's response to the weather conditions she experienced on the Greek island of Skopelos. With these paintings we see how the same vista and our interaction with it varies depending on the nuances of light, weather and atmospherics at different times.

Kari has been exhibiting for over 30 years in solo, group and curated shows both within Australia and internationally in Iceland, Italy, Korea, China and Canada. She has also participated in artist residencies in Iceland, Italy and Australia. Kari has been shortlisted as a finalist in numerous prize exhibitions including the Wyndham Art Prize, the Rick Amor Drawing Prize, the Geelong Print Prize, the Calleen Art Award, Fleurieu Peninsula Art Prize, the John Leslie, McGivern and the Libris Artist's Books Award at McKay Regional Gallery. Her work is represented in the public and private collections in Australia and overseas, including City Councils and Universities.

Tell us a bit about what a day may look like for you as an artist. Where are you based and what are some of the things that you do in your daily routine? Tell us about your morning rituals, your cup of tea/coffee, plants, etc!

I am a morning person. This is when I am most productive. An important part of my daily routine is to start each day with a half-hour dog walk in my local neighbourhood. These morning dog-walks form an essential part of my daily routine. They inform the work as well as placing me in the right headspace for starting work in the studio. Each day I love looking up at the sky, being greeted by the happy morning chorus from the local magpie families and observing the light and seasonal change in everyone's gardens.

I keep fairly regular hours and like to be in the studio by 9am, working through until lunchtime with a mid-morning coffee break. I prefer to postpone admin. and emails until later in the day, so they don't intrude on my morning studio time. However, and I hate to have to admit it, often I am so preoccupied with my paintings that my emails tend to mount up!

How did you start your creative practice and why? Are you self-taught, an art student, a full-time artist, etc?

I studied Fine Art at RMIT and more recently have completed a PhD in Fine Art at Monash University. After many years of juggling my art career with teaching visual art at TAFE I am now in the fortunate position to be able to work full time on my art practice.

Have you got a studio/creative workplace? Tell us a bit about where you create and some of the significant things that support and inspire your practice.

I have always worked from home. My home studio was featured several ago in the Creatives at Home section of the online magazine Houzz (5/8/2017).

The studio is located in a separate zone from the rest of the house and overlooks a park. I like the convenience and privacy of having a home studio and find the unlimited access it offers me really beneficial. It's my own special space and I feel very cocooned here, in my own world. I usually listen to Radio National or play music when I'm painting.

What are some of the ideas that you explore in your work and the mediums that you have chosen to work with?

Travel and walking outdoors are essential components of my art practice.

My father was Norwegian and I have recently discovered that the Norwegians have a special word to describe the joy of being outdoors in nature: *Friluftsliv*. Although I grew up in Australia it's taken me by surprise how much my Norwegian ancestry is coming through in my art quite unconsciously. This became particularly apparent to me during an artist

residency in northern Iceland. The landscape there strongly resonated with me and I was also surprised to discover that several of the buildings near where I was staying had been imported from Norway.

I get my inspiration by being outdoors walking, observing, looking up at the sky and studying the ever-changing cloud formations. I have childhood memories of making pictures out of various cloud formations and now what fascinates me about clouds is their transience; the awareness that like life itself, they are forever changing and shifting. I continue to be fascinated by how the same place can be perceived differently depending on the changes in atmospheric, light, weather, seasons and time of day.

There are moments I see when I am walking that resonate with me and I know that in a few more minutes those particular cloud formations and the light will have moved on and changed forever. It's the ephemerality of those moments that attracts me and motivates me to want to recreate what I have seen and to share that vision. In so doing I am also documenting our changing climate and our impact on it.

I rely on capturing those fleeting moments photographically, often with my iPhone, and use these images as references for the work I create in the studio. My process involves building up a number of thin layers of paint, dissolving and blending to create a sense of volume. I like the fluidity that paint offers. I have also made digital prints using a hybrid process I developed which involves dissolving the photographic image and recreating it with watercolour gouache and pencil. The process of manipulating an image by hand is very important to me. It's about imparting a sense of touch into the work.

In an increasingly digitized world, how important is your online presence? And what are some of the things that you consider when marketing your work

I think it has become increasingly essential for an artist to have an online presence. Presently I have my own **website**, and I am on **Instagram** and I also have a **Facebook Page** for my art. However, I have to admit I often get caught up in the making process and tend to neglect posting as regularly as I should.

Let us know about any current/future projects – Have you got anything planned in the near future?

I am currently completing a sketch book project which will be archived at the Brooklyn Art Library in New York and am planning to work on a new series inspired by walks in my local neighbourhood during COVID 19.

View our collection of works by Kari Henriksen in our **Stockroom**.

Brunswick Street Gallery

Level 1 & 2, 322 Brunswick Street

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Tue–Sun 10am–6pm

Closed Mondays

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