

Izette Roos





The safety of objects
by Miranthe Staden-Garbett

In the shadow of the looming and omnipresent threats of our times, with their incomprehensible and terrifying magnitude: global warming, nuclear war, technocracy, crime, corruption, some small solace is offered by the safety of familiar things. Izette Roos understands what reassurance the mundane domestic objects of everyday life offer us. The simplicity of her chosen media serves to re-enforce their non-threatening, stalwart presence.

Working with the humblest of media, ceramic clay and acrylic paint on cut-out hardboard, she revives the Victorian tradition of ceramic ornament and flatback figures, two-dimensional ornamental wall hangings - think of those ubiquitous three ducks in various stages of flight up the foyer wall - that cluttered up the Victorian home. What the Victorians with their 'affluenza' considered an impressive display of their newly acquired wealth always contained the seeds of full-blown vulgarity. Roos' interpretation of this tradition retains the elements of kitsch, but with a comic edge, and differs in its plain and simple accessibility. There is not even a whiff of pretentiousness here, of trying to outsmart us with the

cleverness of her art. Proletariat and bourgeois alike can relate to these ordinary yet iconic cultural signifiers. These are hardly status symbols, but cultural artifacts and close companions, the sight of which has a collective resonance. Her simple hardboard rendition of what looks like a view of the earth from space placed alongside a miniature scene of a bilious factory chimney alongside a smoking pot-bellied braai, zooms in from macrocosm to microcosm, simultaneously showing the tragic absurdities of modern life as well as the commonplace things which us humans hold dear.

While the layman might puzzle over why this artist has gone to such lengths to re-create the simplest conveniences, a Huletts' sugar packet, a plastic bottle of Clover milk, Sunlight washing powder, Roos is holding up a mirror for us, with which we might observe ourselves up close and once removed. These images give us a chance to look upon our middle class aspirations and foibles with a kind of 'ag shame' empathy, as a parent looks upon a sleeping child hugging her favourite teddy bear. It is hard to leave behind our comfort zones in a world that seems more and more like a war zone. The artist does not berate us for this collective weakness. It is our loyal, docile selves we see in that cute cardboard cut-out puppy.



This is not a dada attempt at radical subversion, Roos is not ranting against the evils of capitalist consumerism. Yet, implicit in her choice of medium and subject matter is a gentle irony, that this is where the grand march of progress has brought us, to a place where fish fingers and peas are the safest things, the things we cling to in the storms of change, in the unavoidable torrent of the past catching up with us.



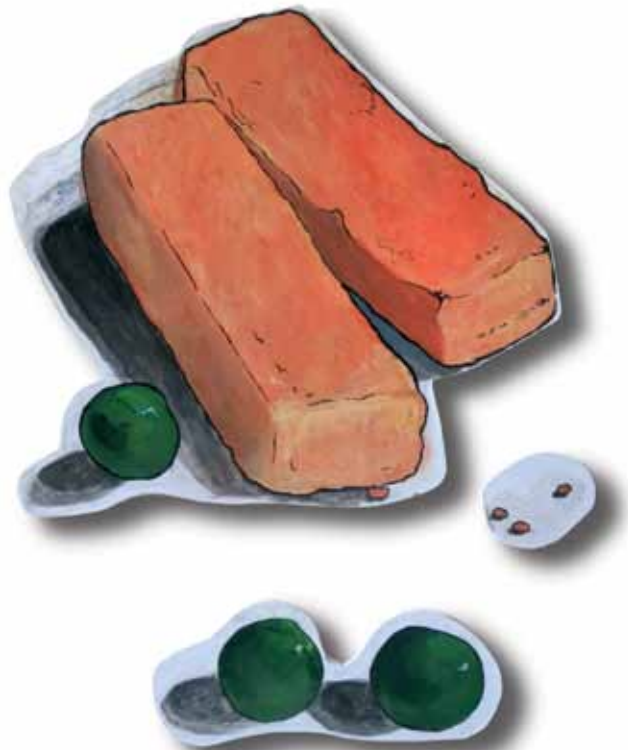


Image: (page 3) UNTITLED, 2010

Medium: Hardboard & acrylics

Size: 80cm x 40cm

Image: (page 4) XENOPHOBIA, 2009/10

Medium: Hardboard & acrylics

Size: 30cm x 20cm each

Image: (page 7) WAAR DAAR 'N ROKIE IS, IS DAAR 'N VUUR, 2009

Medium: Hardboard, wood & acrylics

Size: 200cm x 70cm

Image: (page 9) PREACH IT BROTHER, 2009

Medium: Ceramics

Size: 60cm x 20cm x 15cm

Image: (page 10) FISH FINGERS AND PEACE, 2010

Medium: Hardboard, wood & acrylics

Size: 200cm x 100cm

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