



**RICH TAPESTRY** ... *Topsy-turvy*, *Fickle* and *Yeah right ok* by the talented Monica Rohan.



## Material girl

### Art world's next big thing brings fabric to life

**A**ngst never looked as beautiful as it does in the work of Monica Rohan. The young Brisbane painter with a penchant for combining figures, fabric and the odd fringe of leaves is the latest sensation on the local art scene – although she may balk at the word “sensation”.

Her works are snapped up as quickly as she can paint them and she will feature soon in the exhibition *GOMA Q: Contemporary Queensland Art*, at the Gallery of Modern Art in July.

You can see her work now: *Monica Rohan: Topsy-turvy* is on at Jan Murphy Gallery and it's worth popping in to see what all the fuss is about.

Gallery director Jan Murphy says there is increasing demand for Monica's work, and prints will be available soon. Mind you, her paintings are still relatively affordable for an artist who is so collectable, with prices up to \$5000. Sorry to be so gauche as to mention money but there's a lesson here: buy now and have no regrets later.

Jan says it was “love at first sight” when she saw Monica's highly detailed and colourful work.

This demure young woman – just 25 – is from the Kerry Valley near Beaudesert. She grew up

on a dairy farm, where life should be relatively simple. But her inner life offered an artistically rich amount of dysfunction and that expressed itself not in dark canvases but in delightfully colourful works that may be deeper than they seem.

So, what lies beneath? The titles give us some idea: *Fickle*; *Gradual Descent* (in this one several versions of the artist grapple with a vast blanket of cloth); *Unlikely*; and *Topsy-turvy*, which has two more versions of the artist swinging on a tree.

This painting is based on photos taken by her partner, fellow artist Mitchell Donaldson. The trees are real trees near the couple's home in Brisbane's inner north and, yes, Monica did swing on some branches when there was no one around.

The multiple selves featured in various works

serve a purpose. “By representing multiple selves, the sense of tension and unreality is heightened and the strange internal battle exaggerated,” Monica says. “The pattern has a dual role of enforcing spaces between the figures and for restlessness to manifest within the detail.”

The fabrics she paints include some of her own, some sourced from vintage shops, and some based on curtains from her parents' 1970s panel van.

She has a unique approach, and her star is on the rise. She recently had a residency at Tweed Regional Gallery and is exhibiting there from Jun 5. She was a finalist in the recent Redland Art Awards and the *GOMA Q* show should announce her to the wider public as an artist to watch.

These beautiful, searching self-portraits provide an insight into the artist's internal world. In this way Monica relates to others by sharing the difficulties of navigating contemporary life and all the angst that goes with that.

**MONICA ROHAN: TOPSY-TURVY**, until Jun 13, Tue-Sat, 10am-5pm, Jan Murphy Gallery, 486 Brunswick St, Fortitude Valley, ph: 3254 1855.  
janmurphygallery.com.au