



CHELSEA GUSTAFSSON'S COMFORT KILLS

👤 Christopher R. Inwood 📅 May 18, 2019 📁 ART, FEATURED, INTERVIEWS, LATEST POSTS, PAINTING & ILLUSTRATION

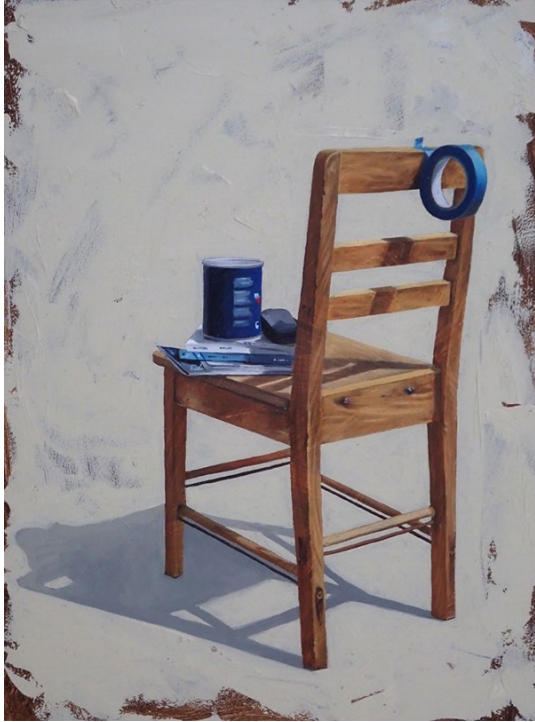
The Australian painter Chelsea Gustafsson's new work are little nuggets of pleasure. It's the minute little scratches of detail that make the works sing. For her solo show '[Comfort Kills](#)', showing in August at the [Flinders Lane Gallery](#), she has shifted her eye to chairs. The show isn't completed yet but we are going to take a look at the developing show, and I think it's well worth a gander to have a look through the works as they develop.

The love and attention that is given to each chair are where the pleasure in each of these works come. But what drives it home even further is the chair selection; yes there are many books written on chairs and some of the golden boys of chair design have made it into the series, but it's the cross section of chairs that warms me. The shitty green and white plastic chairs treated with the same refined detail as an [Eames chair](#). These works are tiny, tiny little guys and once you realize the detail Chelsea Gustafsson achieves in each chair, the beauty really bleeds off the boards. I had a little chat with her about her career and her upcoming series of works.



Could you tell us a little about yourself and your career?

I grew up in a small community in country Victoria and moved to Melbourne in '94 to study painting, but wasn't a very good student. I think I wanted to learn traditional techniques, but the course was more conceptual. I wanted to be figurative, and my teacher was into abstraction. So I found common ground that was acceptable, painting snippets of roof-lines of buildings at night. Very minimalist with sneaky bits of detail. That minimalist background has stuck throughout my work. Just about every painting I've done since has an empty expanse for the background; often the dominance of negative space has been as important as the subject.



I have been keeping a keen eye on your Instagram and have been watching these beautiful little chairs emerge from your brush. Could you speak a little about the series and what it means, or you're trying to convey?

The chairs are a new series I'm working on for my show at Flinders Lane Gallery later this year, called 'Comfort Kills', in August. It seems lots of people have a thing for chairs. There's a chair for every person, occasion, room, style, place, and budget. All with the common purpose of sitting on one's butt. Part of my process of collecting images has been to scout nature strips for the discarded, online marketplaces and friend's houses & studios. I love both the celebrated design icons and the derelict, cheap pieces of junk that are literally on their last legs.

The trigger for any series I develop always seems to be that which has been weighing on my mind at the time. Often something with a social or environmental base to the theme. In this case idleness and apathy. I must point out though, early on in a series there is definitely not a lot of clarity in the meaning of what sprouts. It's not like I come up with a brief to develop works from. It's much more a vibe. Like a dream that has layers of various details, seemingly random and lacking much sense. Idleness and being sedentary have an obvious association to chairs. Society has got busy at sitting still. I don't know if because of that our lives are getting more insular, self-centered and apathetic towards global issues or if we're exposed to more things going on outside our immediate environment and community and it paralyzes individuals from acting on all the important stuff. I feel like the planet is hitting a crisis point and we're chilling in the armchair posting pics of our renovations and holidays.



Speaking with Gustafsson, she has really nailed down the path she has taken to develop the subject and final aesthetic of the works. Her love for detail is still in each chair, as she is still reeling against an art teacher who 'knew what should be painted'. I'm glad she didn't get bogged down in other's ideas and painted what excited her because we are the reap the benefits of her obsessions.