

Sex & Religion

THEY SAY THE devil makes work for idle hands, so perhaps it's ironic that Megan Ruth Hansen-Knarhoi (a self-diagnosed fidgeter) focuses her work on the symbol of the cross. She is visual and tactile, can't work in two dimensions and will never be a painter. But 'huge, huge issues' form the focus of her creativity.

Religious iconography is hot in interior design, commonly taking the form of paua shell or moulded ironwork. But Megan's crosses are unlikely to grace your granny's wall. This is a lady that likes to shock. In fact, the word 'reactionary' has rarely been more appropriate.

Not that she's religious herself, of course. Instead, she believes simply in being good to others, valuing people and embracing the differences that make us unique. In homage to those beliefs, as you enter her home, you are struck by its warmth, chaos and openness.

Her crosses developed out of a need to provide a birthday present for a religious friend, and a serious lack of funds. Still a struggling artist, she put to use the materials at hand, and a new range was born. From this came the emotive, 'cry for everything bad that's ever happened', a crochet collection of crosses that seems to fray under the eye's weight. The effect is supposed to render the symbol 'alive and growing'. But unravelling this religious icon might be read as destructive.

It would no doubt please Megan that I question her symbolism. "You don't have to get what drives me," she laughs. "If you're shocked or appalled by my work, that's great. Think about why you react like that. I suppose it depends on how much time you're prepared to invest."

Megan's latest crosses feature pornographic images. Sex and religion form an obviously explosive combination. But this is Megan's talent. She satirises the conventional. And her art does exactly what it says on the tin. It makes you think.

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By Peta Temple.....



EMMA BASS