



Restoring old photographs: one of many labours of love for Katikati art restorer Christa Mandery

bring back to life damaged and faded photos, watercolours, prints, acrylics, sculptures, pastels, ink drawings; in fact there is no medium not on her list. Everything she does is reversible, so some restorer a 100 years from now can again make repairs always needed in the limitless life of a work of art.

She also does paintings to order, producing perfect copies of anything from a postcard to a Picasso, in any size you like.

And apart from restoring old paintings and creating new ones, Christa is also adapting to the changing expectations of her clientele and offers high-quality printed materials, like photos onto canvas, posters and wallpaper as well as creating oil, pastel or pencil drawings from photographs; portraits of people, animals and buildings.

While she has at times wished that she could spend more time creating from her own imagination, the practical demands of raising five children have meant she has rarely been

able to do that. And anyway, she is always excited by the challenges of restoration and the unfolding mystery of the art.

Christa is a private person, modest about her talents, but without advertising she has never been out of work and has customers coming to her from most parts of the North Island.

People often think art restoration is very expensive but that's a myth, she says. Some repairs can be done quickly and are inexpensive.

"But anyway, I work within people's budgets."

Christa grew up in a small town in Bavaria. Her father was an artist and encouraged his daughter from an early age and she knew when she was six that

she would make art her life. She went to art school after college and considered becoming an art teacher before being guided into restoration, a field she immediately fell in love with.

Among the many projects that stand

out from her early career in Germany was restoring a Gothic wooden statue. Using a microscope, she removed 11 layers of paint, one at a time, to bring the statue back to its original form. She restored precious paintings, statues, furniture and ornaments in numerous castles in Bavaria, and when she went into private practice she repaired a fire-damaged painting by great 17th Century Baroque Spanish artist Bartolome Esteban Murillo.

She has never been out of work but after more than 20 years in New Zealand and eight years in Katikati, she has finally been pushed into advertising herself. She has been building her website - www.artfix.co.nz - and for the first time has a CV. Such self-promotion has had an immediate effect, she says, and demand for her work is suddenly increasing. It's just as well that she is also adding a new studio, double the size of her present work space, to her home.

It's just as well, too, that when Christa wakes each day she looks forward to the work ahead.

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