

## Uneasy: recent South Australian art

Daryl Austin, John Barbour, Annette Bezor,

Matthew Bradley, Annabelle Collett, Tracy

Cornish, Sarah CrowEST, Nici Cumpston,

Fiona Hall, Ariel Hassan, Aldo Iacobelli,

Michelle Nikou, Yhonnie Scarce, Deborah

Sleeman, Hossein Valamanesh

Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art

20 June – 17 August

Reviewed by Stephanie Radok

For his theme of *Uneasy* freelance curator and writer, one time Director of the College Gallery (an antecedent of the Samstag Museum) and ex-curator of the Queensland Art Gallery, Tim Morrell takes his inspiration from Salman Rushdie's 1984 Writers' Week statement about Adelaide as 'an ideal setting for a Stephen King novel, or horror film'. Morrell says *Uneasy* but it could just as well be queasy, sleazy or plain creepy. He points out that every city in Australia has stories as gruesome but maybe here they seem more incongruous. It's a well-trodden path. In 1988 artist and writer Barbara Hanrahan wrote an article on the topic called *Weird Adelaide* that was published in *The Adelaide Review*.

It is good to be able to say that there are many many equally brilliant artists in South Australia who are not represented in this show. But the exhibition sticks to its theme of *Uneasy* and it is the darkness of the world, not just Adelaide, which brushes against the viewer in the work on show. Even the ordinary and domestic medium of textiles as seen in the work of Annabelle Collett's orange Gitmo Bay suits which writhe in torture and John Barbour's fake Outsider message curtains bring isolation and cruelty to the bright warm gallery space while upstairs Tracy Cornish's DVDs' fabric-like patterns evoking surveillance and its anonymous global vastness.

Photorealism makes some people feel sick and Annette Bezor and Daryl Austin are stars in their finely honed techniques of reproducing flesh, eyes and indeed pubic hair. All the unerotic carnality of amateur internet porn is here in paintings where the eyes follow you around the room making you dwell uneasily on the distinction between Naked and Nude made by Kenneth Clarke, presenter in 1969 of the famous TV program *Civilisation: A Personal View*. "To be naked is to be deprived of our clothes, and the word implies some of the embarrassment

most of us feel in that condition. The word 'nude,' on the other hand, carries, in educated usage, no uncomfortable overtone. The vague image it projects into the mind is not of a huddled and defenseless body, but of a balanced, prosperous, and confident body: the body re-formed."

The work of Matthew Bradley includes both DVD and object, digital record and materiality. Taking the persona of the bad boy and remaking it as suburban vandal with sneaking elements of terrorism, Bradley has made a rocket launcher and taken a car tyre, doused it in petrol and set it alight. He records this night burning silently except for the roaring of the flames like a barbeque gone feral. While your thoughts are outside in that dark night you may see Deborah Sleeman's two big dresses called *Across the Plains* which are made of pressed tin ceilings sledgehammered into suggestive folds and forms and that outline giant women who are, eternally and uneasily, turned away from the viewer.

