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## **Cameron Hayes**

*Ronald Feldman Fine Arts*

*31 Mercer Street, SoHo*

*Through March 13*

Mad things happen in the Australian painter Cameron Hayes's visionary canvases, which satirize the follies of contemporary civilization. In each of his densely packed narratives, human circumstances spin out of control with very odd results.

One example: the residents of a nursing home win a local government commission to paint a mural for the massive columns of a new freeway. But instead of developing a coherent group theme, each individual proceeds with a concept that totally ignores all others. A Raphael cherub painted by one is adjacent to porno cut-outs produced by the person next door; an Indian resident depicts a pantheon of Hindu gods while his Muslim neighbor comes up with a cart pulled by devils into hell.

Mr. Hayes's notion here seems to be the vulnerability of social planning. In other works, he comments on the infantilizing effects of corporate-imposed culture; the treachery of the old sending the young into war; the ultimate ditziness of an engineered population.

These incredibly detailed paintings — influenced by comic strips, Indian miniatures and Hieronymus Bosch among other sources — have a frenzied intensity that demands close reading. Like most literary paintings, they get a little tiresome after a while. One reason to look at them, though, is their refreshing distance from what's hot on the current scene.

GRACE GLUECK