

Ronald Feldman Fine Arts

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CAMERON HAYES

TATTLES

April 2 - May 7

The world is presented as irrational but the characterization is not merely bizarre, as if a world falling apart with lunacy makes a jolly spectacle. A concerted political critique runs through the works, which goes beyond the blithe exercise of a maverick spirit. Robert Nelson, "A moral painter who dares what few will." *The Age*

The Feldman Gallery will exhibit new works by the Australian painter Cameron Hayes who uses fantastical imagery to chronicle our contemporary times in the tradition of Hieronymus Bosch. Hayes' compositions combine absurd scenarios and cartoon figures with formal devices, including patterning and color choices, that unify the miniaturized details covering the large canvases. Each painting is accompanied by a short text in a faux simplistic style that matches the tone of the storybook-like images. With acid wit, Hayes' visually-striking narratives tell tales of human folly and brutality.

Two paintings are based on events from Australia's recent past. *What happens when pretend politicians pretend to be terrorists* reports the deleterious effect on Muslim girls after local politicians use "dirty tricks" to scapegoat Muslims in order to gain votes. In a brightly-colored passage, young girls, now afraid to wear scarves, search for their identities in school lockers. Turned flat, the lockers could also be traps. With the *Kings of Werribee: only the poor have the luxury of being bored*, Hayes chronicles a brutal hate crime committed by impoverished teen-agers who became known as "The Kings of Werribee" and riffs on the definition of "king" in today's welfare state.

Inspired by his travels, Hayes uses the proliferation of rats in the Mumbai zoo as a symbol for the concealed misery of many tourist attractions in the brownish-red drenched painting *The rats in the monkey's cage*. In *The Olympic torch relay in Xinjiang Province*, Hayes takes no sides in a clash of two cultures: for the Chinese, the most effective protest is to have their torch relay ignored; when the bombs of the Muslim Uyghurs do not kill, they use knives to finish the job.

Hayes invents a topsy-turvy reasoning to skewer current values of competitive zeal for greater wealth and status. Images of babies in diapers, men in suits, rickety skyscrapers, and chalk-outlined bodies in *Orphanages make the best skyscrapers* posit that children without parents, thus the most emotionally needy, are the group most motivated to climb the corporate ladder. The dark and smoky-like palette of *The race to be the first celebrity: Jack the Ripper versus The Elephant Man* evokes Dickens' London as a vehicle to comment on 20th century celebrity worship.

Cameron Hayes lives and works in Melbourne, Australia and received his Bachelor of Arts (Fine Arts) from the R.M.I.T. in Melbourne in 1992. *Tattles* is his fourth exhibition at the Feldman Gallery, which has represented him since 2001. In his last exhibition at the gallery in 2008, Hayes exhibited sculptures and paintings from his series *The Incomplete History of the Millikapiti*, a recounting of the effect of the white culture on the Aboriginal community, which he witnessed when he lived on Melville Island for two years. A catalogue of early works is available from the gallery.

There will be an opening reception April 2, 6 - 8. Gallery hours are Tuesday - Saturday, 10 - 6, Monday by appointment. For more information, contact Sarah Paulson (212) 226-3232 or sarah@feldmangallery.com.

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