

CAMERON HAYES

This is not an art review.

It's a feverish and distasteful eulogy of what we've become.

Life today, for many: feels like you're at a birthday party and have a whole cake in front of you. You get stuck in. But you only eat the middle bit of the cake, taking the best, moistest bit for yourself; and you then just hope no one else notices. And no, it wasn't your birthday.

Hayes exhibition, *Taking the wood from the only hospital to build a new casino* (Australian Galleries, Sydney, September 3 – 22, 2019) is a series of works on linen, created by Hayes over almost 9 years. Hayes has spent this time, perfecting ... mastering his ability to put a mirror right up to our faces, and demand that we must look, long and hard.

As many of us try to fully grapple with and fight for the world; where our governments will not. Wanting nothing but some form of hope and reassurance, that future generations won't be living some dystopian Cormac McCarthy novel in a few years.

We are invited, wholeheartedly by Hayes to confront our responsibilities; of a world we have already created.

A world where becoming a 'celebrity' has proven for many, to be the epitomized definition of success in modern-day culture; evidenced by *privileged white centred* popularised tabloids, magazines and reality TV shows – spitting out franchises as Big Brother and The Apprentice throughout the 2000s (UK/USA). The franchisers keep spawning shows, with The Kardashians and The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills. Doing nothing else but highlight (to date); how far able-bodied, cis-straight white privilege really gets you, in achieving and flaunting the ultimate 'success'. The Celebrity.

Hayes storytelling ability and visually articulate mastery of modern-day societal commentary hit's hard. I dare you to inspect every inch of the depths of darkness in his piece: *The race to be the first celebrity: Elephant Man vs Jack the Ripper*, 2011; the work is steeped in satire, but leave laughing, you will not. Cameron says, in his accompanying stories, "Everything inspirational was being replaced with the acceptance of the debilitating filth of human mediocrity." Brutal, but is it true? Perhaps.

Hayes aptitude in interpreting modern day downfalls of life is again stressed in his 2015 work, *The amazing story of the three Banksy claimants*. The artwork mimics life as the real Banksy revels in the shroud of secrecy they have coined for themselves, their protection for the 'celebrity'. The work showcases life as a Melbourne movie set. Where everyone wants the limelight, and the 'actors' are singing '*Cue Sunset*' on cue every evening.

But the work allows us to realise that we haven't been in a wild movie-set dream all along. We are awake in this real life, and just as Dorothy Gale did, we gesture to our real life unfavourable celebrity wannabe claimants; "...*And you* (The Donald), *and you* (little Bojo), *and you* (Scomo), *and You were there!*".

But there are signs of hope in these Bosche-esq paintings of theatre and celebrity hell, or perhaps a warning! An elaborate visual ploy by Hayes, compelling us to open our eyes WIDE.

Catriona Black-Dinham – exhibition text (accompany)

Cameron Hayes, *Taking the wood from the only hospital to build a new casino*, Australian Galleries, Sydney, 3-22 September 2019