

Cameron Hayes
AUSTRALIA: A History of Terrogees

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Arts Precinct

Hayes' contemporary analysis of Australia's political landscape, makes no apology for a culture entrenched in xenophobia. The satirical jabs at white privilege and entitlement stemming from the fragility of a white settler colonial mindset, manifest in his works, particularly, *The End of the Moomba Parade*, *Terrorists in a Cake Shop* and *What happens when pretend politicians pretend to be terrorists*.

Each piece examines an event in Australia's recent history or demographic make-up, highlighting the revulsion shown for migrants matched only by an unwitting dependence on their economic value. The contradiction and conflict of this dependence, renders the morality of the powerful as inherently self-serving. The assertion that Aboriginals, African, Asian and Muslim Australians, for example can only be of worth if at all, when they ascribe to the parameters set for them by the State, is inferred repeatedly. And when these communities fail to abide the standards of a well behaved minority, they instantly become demonized – the folk devil we have to have.

Themes of racism, Islamophobia, exploitation, ostracizing, greed, deceit, corruption and collective delusion of both the elite and inept strata's of society, permeate Hayes artworks in varied degrees. The intricacy and detail of his paintings provide a layered analysis that probe beyond the banal ugliness of socio-political obfuscation. That is, when you delve further, the messaging is clear; no amount of political clout and media distortion give legitimacy to abuse of power. The ripples of humanity in silenced voices and diligent work ethic of the migrant and refugee 'other', loom clear in the background – representing the beating heart that keeps this nation moving, despite the relentless malfeasance.

The colloquial conflation of Muslim-with-Islam-with – refugee-with-terrorist, proposing all labels equate with the same cultural bogeyman as an endpoint, allows for a powerful artistic take down by Hayes of this tired trope of Australian minorities.

Hayes' work is vibrant, provocative and formidable. As a viewer you cannot help but be absorbed by the brilliant colours and intricate detail that draw you into this satirical quagmire. The art makes bold assertions about Australia's political culture that doesn't just question the integrity of our migration policy but expose the racist undercurrent of a system centred on racial profiling. Further, he reveals the dehumanising of Indigenous Australians whose existence it seems, pivots on either their entertainment value, or, burden to the State. In all, Hayes' brilliantly encapsulates the myopia of white saviour/master/supremacy ideology, masquerading as conservative political dogma in the name of patriotism.

Review by: Tasneem Chopra, Cross Cultural Consultant, former Curator at Islamic Museum of Australia and the Immigration Museum, Melbourne. July 2018