



Some bleed permanently
and some just on Fridays

Pat Brassington

Amanda Davies

Kylie Johnson

Maria Kunda

Richard Sallis

John Weretka



This artist has ample capacity to represent both the observed and imagined world in paint. She restlessly tests this capacity on a variety of mostly challenging subjects. In this series of paintings, a balloon, or balloons conceal or decorate or perhaps advertise the intermittent male organ possessed by a person without trousers. Although this may strike one as unusual, in a free country one can ask why not?

By often painting unusual situations this artist focuses our attention on the content, the subject matter. This is pertinent. Think about all those female reclining or seated nude views demonstrating a masterly representation of unblemished flesh that down through the ages artists have chosen to paint.

A 'promise' of the avant garde was to investigate the world of appearances with originality and vigour, to take the viewer into the unpredictable and involve the viewer not in the risk of the quick gaze, but in a robust creative vision.

For Amanda Davies creativity begins with the concept and the concept for her is often an entirely new challenge to her considerable capacity with representational painting.

PAT BRASSINGTON



It can be a bit disconcerting when the first thing you do, looking at a painting of a woman laying in an exposed position with what appears to be an inflatable nappy covering her buttocks, is laugh. This work cuts straight to uncomfortable issues - of ageing, the body failing, losing independence and so on - that are the grit of life and, more often than not, are put on the backburner to be considered at another time. So when confronted by an image that so blatantly and uncompromisingly mirrors the horror of life, perhaps it is easier to laugh and relieve the tension, and then try to focus on something more easy to digest.

But not right now, a thought seeps from its hiding place in my brain.

It's a memory of sitting in a kitchen when I was 5 or 6, having my hair sliced shorter, being made neat as a pin by my aunty Jenny. She and my mum, both still young women, were 'chewing the fat' about a topic I'd overheard 'mutterings' of in the shops – a very young malnourished child, maybe a baby, had been discovered in filthy conditions in its parent's home. It was the 70s, so my mum and aunt didn't worry too much about talking openly in front of me, or at least until I started asking questions about the unchanged nappy – ***had it never EVER been changed?*** The horrible image of a small child forming in my mind - naked except for the grossly full nappy - was hard to process. The nappy fixed excrement to the baby's young deteriorating skin while cockroaches and other bugs colonized it... You can't un-imagine that kind of stuff, so you hide it away somewhere and get on with life.

The darker stuff of life is just the stuff of life anyway.

The distended bag in this work isn't melded to the skin of a neglected child or hidden beneath the undergarments of a failing old person. It is attached to some part of the artist's rump. She has fallen forward and appears to be stuck in a compromised position under its weight. The body's waste is a private matter yet it also resonates publicly as disgust and embarrassment. The size and fullness of the material suggests that it has the potential to hold an enormous quantity of waste. This is both deeply disturbing and extremely funny. ***You'd laugh or you'd cry – I guess I'm laughing.*** With each exhale of air in laughter; I gape at my own mortality.

KYLIE JOHNSON



Insomnia: count to forty

Your erratic nocturnal breathing and sleep talk woke me, and in the night I replied to your strangulating anxiety by lowering your flailing arms and talking back, saying *hush, hush*, it's *alright*. I wonder now, were you fighting with me?

The next day there were unspoken arguments between us, a dumb show I did not understand. To fill the void I made dark jokes about End Times by repeatedly pointing to evidence of the crumbling masonry of the twentieth century.

You didn't find it funny, only tedious. You said the brickwork would be sturdy for another century. Mortar and scaffolding were not humorous to you. I failed to see how much gentler I needed to be – softer, and less flippant.

You may never hear the new dimension of my social theory, which is that insomnia, like cracks through red brick, signals our civilisation in peril. Tranquil sleep is the new luxury commodity money can't buy; love cannot prosper without it.

Monsters and shades populate sleepless imaginary space. I would slay yours for you if I could. Instead, now, naked and alone in my hotel bed, I surrender to my single sleep quietly. You do not meet me in my dreams.

Brooklyn, May 2015.

MARIA KUNDA



AUSTRALIAN GOTHIC

(1 and 2 are standing together and looking at the figure on the floor)

1: Who is she?

2: I've no idea.

1: What's going on here?

2: I don't know - I've just got here.

1: And what's that object she's wearing?

2: What do you mean?

1: What's she wearing between her legs?

2: That's not something she's wearing! It's something that's attached to her.

1: Attached or attached? Maybe it attached her, from behind.

2: Or, she attacked it.

1: How could she have attacked it?

2: By wrapping herself around it. By smothering it.

1: It doesn't look smothered to me.

2: What does it look like, then?

1: Well, I guess on first inspection it looks like a balloon. You know like those ones that clowns make into animals. (Pause). I can't tell for sure from where we're standing.

2: Well go closer to her. (1 *does so*)

1: (Pause). Shall I touch her?

2: I don't think that's wise.

1: What if she's dead? What a terrible way to go!

2: She might just be asleep. She looks like she's asleep.

1: Who sleeps like that?! You must be f*+^ing joking! No-one sleeps like that!
(Pause). Did you see her twitch just then?

2: No.

1: I swear she just twitched. (Pause). Or maybe that thing between her legs made her twitch. (Pause).

2: Don't you feel like a voyeur? She's just lying there and here we are, talking about her.

1: I feel like she's watching us, watching her. Why are we here looking at her anyway?

2: I've no idea. (Pause). But, you should know.

1: That's crap! What's this all about? You? Me? Her? This place? That thing between her legs?

2: Oh, come on! I think you know the answer to that ...

1: No I don't. What are you on about?

2: And I suppose you know who I am, do you?

1: You did this to her, didn't you?

2: Did what?

1: Brought her here from that other place and arranged her on the floor like that. And you brought that thing here as well. (Pause). And you brought me here too.

2: (Pause). There's so many unanswered questions, aren't there? (Pause). All will be revealed once that thing has finished with her and turns its attention on you ...

RICHARD SALLIS



How had it come to this?

She found herself wondering that, face down on that nondescript piece of plywood, set adrift in that nondescript sea teetering indecisively between grey and red. What was she, she wondered? A nameless pilgrim drifting off to a nameless future on her flimsy raft? A kind of inverted crucified, enduring a fate too ignominious even to show her face? Was she Caravaggio's Virgin with her dirty feet and dirty hands and her bloated, dead body, a body that, in its terrifying corporeality, had horrified those too-precious Carmelites in a long-dead Rome? Had she really become a sacrificial victim?

And why that piece of plywood? Not the precious Tree of Life for her — no — but a piece of industrial ephemera, with its regimented tens of eyes staring — perhaps accusingly, perhaps in fact entirely sightlessly — like some Argus Panoptes. There were also those balloons, staring too like gigantic distended eyes. And then there were those other eyes, beyond, staring back, with her wedged in between. There she was, spread out, lying like some specimen pinned to a board.

Everyone locked an endless stare: knowing, unknowing? Who knew? What was there to know?

How had it come to this?

She really didn't know herself. The artist put down her brush, stood up, turned the light off, and left her studio.

JOHN WERETKA

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Pat is a Hobart based artist, working in photography and digital arts.
Pat is represented by Stills Gallery, Bett Gallery and Arc One Gallery.

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Amanda is an artist based in Premaydena, Tasmania.

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