



Childhood Imaginings

The Work of Andrew Bennett

Contemporary Australian artist, Andrew Bennett, has a particular fondness for producing images that are derived from the imaginary world of childhood. Working in acrylics on canvas, he carefully positions familiar things in familiar spaces. While the familiar comfortably beckons us, we soon become aware that Bennett has tweaked these cosy images by playing with scale, time and perspective. The effect is surreal.



Which Turn Next DH-88 World Racer (top)

2007, acrylic on canvas, 170 x 120cm

Sergeant Baker's Migration, (above)

2007, acrylic on canvas, 150 x 180 cm

Two new works from a recent exhibition at Harrison Galleries, Sydney, 28 September - 18 October 2007 entitled *Which Turn Next, DH-88 World Racer* and *Sergeant Baker's Migration*, exemplify this clever juxtaposition of elements. In the first work, Bennett creates the interior of a lounge room with two windows with views outside to an airfield. Standing at a distance from the painting, we smile at the predominantly blue canvas in which a large, red

early model aeroplane is flying across the centre. Close up we see that this aeroplane is really an enlarged toy flying through the lounge room where other life-size toys are present. We know that this is only possible in a child's imaginary world. But there seems to be no child present. There is a strange sense of quiet and unease.

Sergeant Baker's Migration is the more surreal of the two paintings. Andrew Bennett gives

us far fewer props to comfort us. We discern a corridor with grey concrete columns and ceiling. The floor, by contrast, is eye-catching in its black and white diamond pattern. Against this setting, another pilotless enlarged toy plane flies across the centre to the left, and below, 'swimming' in the opposite direction, a school of salmon move across the floor. It is important to Andrew Bennett to create some element of life in his work, but this image, despite its

spinning propeller and travelling salmon remains strangely empty and somewhat claustrophobic. Andrew Bennett has admitted that his work has become increasingly surreal, and it is his ability to consciously select specific opposing elements that causes his work to make such a strong impact.

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