

# When madmen take over the asylum

The opening of the annual SALA Festival is one of the great nights on the visual arts' calendar, for it is a delight to witness a case of the madmen (artists) taking over the asylum (the Art Gallery of South Australia).

The foyer of the Gallery is so full of interested younger and mid-career artists and arts' industry people you can barely move through the crowd.

A focus of the opening was also the launch of the next book in the SALA series of monographs published by Wakefield Press, on this occasion a most elegant book on jeweller Julie Blyfield, written by well-known Adelaide visual art writer Stephanie Radok and retired AGSA curator Dick Richards.

It was announced that the next book would feature "Mambo" ceramist Gerry Wedd, to be written by Adelaide author Mark Thompson.

SALA founding chairman, Paul Greenaway, dismissed criticism from certain quarters that he had undue influence in the selection process, and reminded us that decisions were made on the grounds of the national and international potential of the chosen artist: in other words, marketability. Nevertheless, he resigned as chairman; but most people in the industry know that, like many of us, health issues have determined that he must now prioritise his activities.

With some 1400 artists participating in SALA, time-poor people might



visual art  
Adam Dutkiewicz

need to prioritise, too; perhaps ten per cent of the total contributors are good artists and of those a further ten per cent top quality.

So, as for the exhibitions, most adjacent to the Gallery, at Artlab, an installation of recent paintings and text by Simone Kennedy is worth attention.

Kennedy's polished *Learning to Speak* paintings remind of some watercolour work from a decade ago by Hossein Valamanesh; but Kennedy's direction is considerably more quirky and works in concert with a scroll of text, here hanging and partially rolled up at the floor but fully published in an accompanying booklet of poems.

At first glance these seem to be a stream-of-consciousness fusion with formalist exercises based on individual letters. But Kennedy's poems are full of intelligence, personal resolution and whimsy; they evoke the late postmodernist French novelist Georges Perec, who once wrote an entire novel without the letter "E".

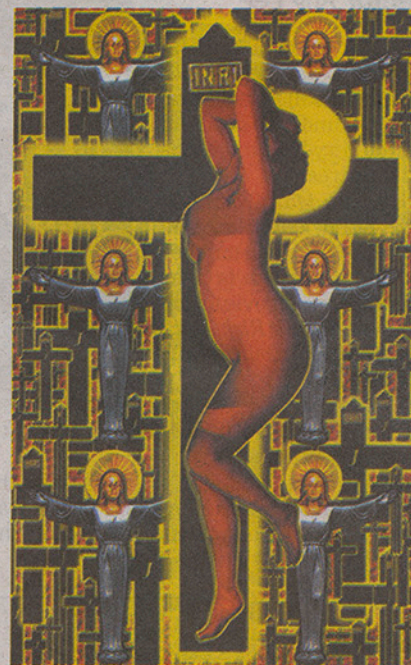
## South Australian Living Artists' Festival



At Flinders University City Gallery, *Identity: Portrait and Place - document or insight?* enables a number of mid-career South Australian artists to respond to the theme or from material in the museum's collection.

The largest works, from the *Crucifixion* series by Di Barrett, are stylistic homages to seminal Brit

## Various venues, until August 19



Above: *Crucifixion III* by Di Barrett  
Left: *L is for Lost* by Simone Kennedy

postmodernists Gilbert and George, with a female slant.

Also photographic, Michal Klivanek's type C prints document everyday people in everyday settings, and in his self-portrait mimics a colonial work from the collection.

Anne Newmarch's series *Cultural Pattern and Human Fragility* photo-

graphs collages of mixed media in abject style and exposes the agonies of life.

In contrast, Anna Platten and Chris Orchard work with simple charcoal in response to material in the collection, with Platten venturing with comic grace into High Baroque and Orchard extemporising from Goya.