



Soaring beyond our frailties

While one artist encourages us to get physical, another plays with our imagination



Breaking free: Messiah by Simon Gilby. Picture: Ashley de Prazer



Underpass Motel: Fictional readings of fictional interpretations of a fictional story which was never fully told.

Simultaneously anchored and floating, 10 life-sized figures occupy the Central TAFE Gallery, casting their inadequacies, flaws and frailties into a world seemingly out of pace with the philosophical inquiry of Simon Gilby's *The Syndicate*.

Gilby's work is drawn from the evocations of humanity; one ensconced in a drive toward understanding the body and its penchant for reflecting our desires, hopes and dreams — perhaps even our capability to build a world of human scale for human habitation. This era may have passed; the current one seems more intent on making technology and infrastructure of a scale extreme to the body, but regardless of this Gilby has managed to remind us of the timeless quality of the body as sculpture.

This is an intriguing show. It openly references the history of the sculptured body, particularly locally, but it also jolted me, almost immediately kicking me out of a

malaise stemming from the lack of physical impact our bodies have on our lives; it's mostly a mind entertainment thing today. I enjoyed the way Gilby throws the bravado of the body in our face, its strength as personified in sculptural history, to illustrate not just the possibility of the body disappearing in art, but in life's consciousness in general.

His heroic figures carry dysfunctional baggage, are barely held together by fragile frameworks or lie ruptured on the floor — patterned mannequins held together by social expectations and fashions, but hardly by their own self-worth.

The impossibility of flight in *Cadoux*, in which a woman with small wings holds herself down with the aid of a walking frame, illustrates perfectly the overriding sense that washes over you in *The Syndicate* — that of the immense, crippling sensation of wanting to dream but being held back by the practicality of your own pathological limitations. Gilby's work seems to constantly ask us when will we believe enough to shed the weight and fly — it's time

to evolve people — it's now or never.

Perhaps the answer lies with Tarbooy as he stares wistfully into the ether, all polished and new, hollowed eyes and unsoiled hands, like Brancusi's *Bird in Space*, streamlined and ready to soar. This is a terrific show from Gilby; thoughtful and with a beautifully considered use of material and embellishment these figures engage at a level of humanity that prods and pushes at our own tactile futures.

The Syndicate runs at Central TAFE Gallery, Northbridge, until November 14.

At Turner Galleries Stuart Elliott takes us on another journey of discovery, this one involving some conspirators and the odd white lie. *Underpass Motel* is a fantastic, fun and mysterious ride through the last vestiges of civilisation. Wrapped up in a misplaced pathos, this is not the holiday dream you expected, nor wanted.

Underpass Motel takes Elliott's own recent creative journey forward

into the enjoyment of the splintering of collaboration and the joy of responsive creative frameworks.

Elliott has asked fellow artists to create a short animated response to a common basic premise.

The artists have responded in kind to not only the premise but to his recognisable aesthetic and the iconography he uses in his own art practice.

This all takes *Underpass Motel* further down the Tim Burton path that haunted Elliott's last show; add now a bit of Wallace and Gromit, gaming technology, *Delicatessen*, *Psycho* and the sand people in *Star Wars* and we are getting closer to the non-narrative in this show.

I say non-narrative because, in Elliott's own words from the accompanying book, "this is a series of fictional readings of a fictional story which was never fully told about a place which never existed".

What this gives us is a show full of props, storyboard sketches, costumes, sculptures and ultimately a back room where you can watch

the making of and trailers for a movie which was never made about a story which was never told. Oh, and you can buy the posters, book and DVD of this non-film in the foyer.

The animation, drawings and paintings by all artists involved are a fine collection of work. I particularly enjoyed Peter Dailey's overtly designed drawings and Richard Heath's sublime caricatures; the pencil work in these drawings is ambient and elegant.

Sometimes prone to failure for their non-direction, discursive art practices can lead the viewer on a merry dance but the quality of work and the serious intent of the responses from all the artists gives this show plenty of material and plenty of clout.

Elliott's *Underpass Motel* will demand you spend some time and it will be time well spent, but beware you don't overstay, or you may never leave at all.

The Underpass Motel runs at Turner Galleries, Northbridge, until November 7.

Cuna people put colour into their artistic traditions

STEPHEN BEVIS

Hola Mola is a women's textile art exhibition from the remote and protected Cuna people in Colombia and Panama.

Mola (meaning blouse) are intricate, hand-sewn coloured fabrics displaying traditional motifs of the Cuna people, who live in the frontier country between Colombia and Panama on the Caribbean coast.

For the first time in Australia, more than 50 original mola, depicting the "writings" of the Cuna people, will be shown for two weeks at Central TAFE in Northbridge.

Mola have their origin in body painting but the Cuna women started

to transfer their traditional geometric designs on fabric after the colonisation by the Spanish.

Sought by anthropologists, museums and exhibitions around the world, Mola appear in institutions such as the Smithsonian Institution, the University of Missouri, National Museum of the American Indian, the Hood Museum of Art of New Hampshire and Graville Priory Museum of France.

The exhibition will be opened at 6.30pm today by leading WA textile artist Trudi Pollard.

Hola Mola is at Central TAFE Gallery until November 14.



Striking: The Hola Mola exhibition will be at Central TAFE.

