

Sydney Morning Herald

exhibitions

Strip down

Aussie artist Tracey Moffatt indulges her comic-strip fantasies. DOMINIQUE ANGELORO reports.

TRACEY MOFFATT: ADVENTURE SERIES

Where Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, 8 Soudan Lane (off Hampden Street), Paddington

When Tuesday-Friday, 10am-6pm, Saturday, 11am-6pm, until September 4

More information 9331 1919

To see the Tracey Moffatt video, go to www.smh.com.au/video

When it comes to Tracey Moffatt, everyone wants a piece of the action. Collectors will pull all sorts of stunts to nab a work from her artistic arsenal. Her recent survey show at the Museum of Contemporary Art ranks among the museum's most-attended exhibitions.

Given Moffatt's status, it's fitting that her latest exhibition casts her at the centre of her own action comic. *Adventure Series* is a solo show of photographs made by the artist during her residency at Brisbane's Institute of Modern Art last year.

The striking colour images are staged like comic-strip tableaux. They comprise illustrated backdrops with props and a glamorous retro-styled cast digitally layered over the top. The effect is a distinctly artificial two-dimensional vision with an exquisitely skewed sense of scale.

Moffatt explains that the kitsch aesthetic of the series was inspired by the *Flying Doctor* comic strip and the late '60s/early '70s Australian television show *The Rovers*. But for viewers unfamiliar with those points of reference, there are plenty of others to dip into.

Fans of Hollywood action flicks may feel that some scenes are charged with the explosive fun of the Bond and *Mission: Impossible* films: iconic imagery of violent flames, scantily clad starlets and a variety of high-speed getaway vehicles. Others may recognise Moffatt's posse of blonde, brunette and black-haired babes as very Cameron, Drew or Lucy.

Part of the fascination of Moffatt's photographs stems from this curious meshing of these generic action scenes with Australian imagery. In *Adventure Series 5*, two giant kangaroos bound about an apocalyptic desert landscape, while in the background a studly male pilot gets intimate with a sultry brunette, played by the artist herself.

Moffatt arranges each work as a grid of three photographs. Yet you can never be certain of the sequence of events that is unfolding.

For example, in *Adventure Series 6* (right) one frame in the triptych features Moffatt and a female pilot looking calm but alert in the cockpit. Another shows a plane flying over an island that has burst into flames. The other reveals bodies and luggage sprawled over a fiery backdrop. But are the women innocent onlookers – or the culprits?



Adventure Series 6.

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