

Huw Davies Gallery
20 July - 13 August 2017

All Killer **Jess Taylor**



Image: Jess Taylor, *Portraits of Monsters* (detail), 2017, lenticular print, 12.7 x 12.7 cm

In the eye of the beholder

All Killer will likely leave you feeling uncomfortable. In her exhibition of lenticular prints and stereoscopic photographs, the artist Jess Taylor juxtaposes somewhat whimsical and nostalgic mediums to interrogate her focus: horror. For Taylor, horror is a vehicle to explore the gaze, to explore agency and to explore how the imagination combines images to create its own horrific ends.

Historically the horror genre was one of few genres within the film industry where the 'Hollywood' American dream did not saturate or dilute the story and was able to criticise society. It exposed things that society desired and used tales of horror to critique the state of society. Even recently this is demonstrated in the poignant 2017 movie *Get Out*¹. Horror as a way of exploring contemporary issues is part of a zeitgeist that builds on voyeuristic enjoyment, while critiquing it.

¹ 'Funny, scary, and thought-provoking, *Get Out* seamlessly weaves its trenchant social critiques into a brilliantly effective and entertaining horror/comedy thriller' See: 'Get Out', *Rotten Tomatoes*, 2017, Accessed 10 July 2017 <https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/get_out/>.

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Using the familiar and the novelty of 'controlling what you see', Taylor lulls the viewer into a false sense of security. Viewers play with the movement of her lenticular prints before connecting meaning with that control. *'In a way, by using interactive or responsive media like lenticular printing, I'm attempting to shift the power of the gaze and toy with the voyeuristic pleasure associated with it.'* In this sense, it is in the eye of the beholder, or viewer, as to what happens to the character. The viewer's gaze directly chooses the character's adventure – within the confines of Taylor's fictional world.

Taylor's use of lenticular prints and stereoscopic photographs bestows a certain agency to the viewer whereby movement or 'animation' of the figures is played out as you move in front of the images. Technically her method is mesmerising, achieved by layering 20-40 images over one-another to achieve the lenticular process, or what Taylor has dubbed 'detailed animations'. The viewer has some control of what they see and by stepping side-to-side, the scene evolves reminiscent of a D-grade special effect.

The view masters offer a more intimate interaction with her photographs. Splicing two images together to create stereoscopic prints, Taylor is drawing upon a 19th century technique whereby a view master must be used to see the stereocopes and images appear to be three-dimensional. The mind fills in the gaps between the two images to see something that is not quite there. Here we see Taylor manipulating what the viewer sees, rather than allowing the viewer to manipulate her image.

Taylor is a self-confessed fan of the horror genre. She uses images of herself to create fictional stories that she both enjoys, yet also uses to start a conversation around how women are often portrayed within horror as an extrapolation of the treatment of women within wider society. *'I like the idea that my work may make people feel uncomfortable, I want them to explore why they have this uncomfortable feeling and use the 'horror' as a wider extension of how women may be /are treated in everyday life.'*

Horror theorists suggest that there is nowhere in horror for a woman to look that is not concurrent with her own victimisation. Here the gaze is a masculine act, control or desire that women are either denied or punished for exercising². However Taylor challenges these singularly gendered ideas of the horror genre by breaking the loop whereby the gaze of the female victim or perpetrator does not contribute to their fate.

Gaze is directly referenced throughout Taylor's *All Killer*, from the movement captured in her lenticular prints, to the recurring image of blackened out eyes, to the stereoscopies where the viewer's gaze makes a whole. The gaze in her work is denied through blackening of their eyes, looking away from the camera or where the same figure is both victim and perpetrator. The responsibility of the gaze is thrown back to the viewer in how they interact with the photographs presented.

Challenging and disconcerting, Jess Taylor's *All Killer*, questions and challenges the traditional role of women in horror, while concurrently capturing the voyeuristic enjoyment that escapism presents. Her photographs present images where the onus is on the viewer to interact, ultimately inviting them to reflect on their own subjective responses to horror, a genre proliferated by images of suffering in which we are all nonetheless implicit.

Ellen Wignell, July 2017

Ellen is a freelance curator and writer, currently working at Newcastle Art Gallery

² Linda Williams, 'When the woman looks' in Mary Ann Doane et al., (eds), *Re-vision: essays in feminist film criticism*, (University Publications of America: Frederick, LA, 1984) 83-99.

Jess Taylor | Artist statement

All Killer is an exhibition of photo-based artworks exploring the horror genre both as an expression of collective cultural fears and as a form of popular entertainment. Drawing upon the horror genre's dominant concerns and utilising materials that reference its affective intentions and tendency towards gimmickry, *All Killer* invites the viewer to reflect on their own subjective responses to horror, a genre proliferated by images of suffering in which we are all nonetheless implicit.

Jess Taylor | About the artist

Jess Taylor is an emerging Adelaide based artist that has always been fascinated by violent imagery and the notion that such images can bleed into the real world. Working across sculpture, installation and photography, her work explores our ability to suspend belief, the way we choose to interact with images of horror, and our capacity for fantasy and make-believe. Drawing from existing horror narratives, as well as the visual art's own violent cannon, Jess employs the conventions of the horror genre to speak about fears and anxieties that are both contemporary and enduring.

Born in 1990, Jess attended Adelaide Central School of Art, graduating with First Class Honours in 2013. She has participated in numerous group exhibitions, as well as presenting solo exhibitions at AEA 24:7, FELTspace, Floating Goose Studios, and CACSA's gardenspace. During South Australian Living Artists Festival in 2016, her work *'All Due Restraint'* was Highly Commended in the Advertiser Contemporary Art Prize, and was also the Winner of the Brighton Jetty Classic Sculptures Young Artist Award.

Jess is currently undertaking a Masters by Research at University of South Australia, investigating the affective potential of horror as the driving conceptual force of a contemporary visual arts practice. Her recent work seeks to appropriate existing conventions and depictions of horror within her own artistic practice.

Image List

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|-----|--|------------------------|
| 1. | <i>The Found Body 2 series 1-9</i> , 2017, digital print, frames, silver paper, dimensions variable | \$60 ea |
| 2. | <i>I Am The Devil</i> , 2013, lenticular print, 420 x 297 cm, edition 2 of 3 | \$400 |
| 3. | <i>Idle Things (1-8)</i> , 2017, white ink on glass, frames, velvet, dimensions variable | \$60 ea |
| 4. | <i>Vulnerable (1-4)</i> , 2013, lenticular print, 29.7 x 21 cm each, edition 1 of 3 | \$300 ea
\$1000 set |
| 5. | <i>I Wanna be the One in Control (1-9)</i> , 2016, lenticular print, 12.7 x 12.7 cm, edition 1 of 5 | \$100 ea |
| 6. | <i>View Master (Jump For Joy)</i> , 2014, view master viewer and reel, 10 x 14 x 8 cm, edition 1 of 3 | \$120 |
| 7. | <i>View Master (Spring In My Step)</i> , 2014, view master viewer and reel, 2014. 10 x 14 x 8 cm, edition 1 of 3 | \$120 |
| 8. | <i>View Master (If You Look, You'll Find It)</i> , 2017, view master viewer and reel, 10 x 14 x 8 cm, edition 1 of 3 | \$120 |
| 9. | <i>Portraits of Monsters (1-15)</i> , 2017, lenticular print, 12.7 x 12.7 cm, edition 1 of 3 | \$120 ea |
| 10. | <i>Panopticon (1-9)</i> , 2016, lenticular print, 26 x 26 cm, edition 1 of 3 | \$150 ea |
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Image: Jess Taylor, *Portraits of Monsters*, 2017, lenticular prints, 12.7 x 12.7 cm each



Image: Jess Taylor, *Panopticon* (detail), 2017, lenticular print, 12.7 x 12.7 cm