

SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES... – LISA GRABOWSKI

Just in time for Halloween, our Centre of Ceramic Art volunteer Lisa Grabowski has written about some of the more unsettling works in the Anthony Shaw Collection.

What was there?! Sweat gathered on my brow, hands became clammy, my heart raced and tore at my chest. A scratching, whining howl emanated from the corner of the room, gathered in intensity, throbbed, pulsated. The frequency rose to a pitch so unbearable that I stopped breathing.

A gasp.

A jolt.

Air poured into my lungs, stirring my senses and pulling me back into the calm, cool air of the night.

Nightmares are powerful things. Some can haunt you for the rest of your life, imagined fears twisted into the tangle of your memories. Not all are frightening. Some merely unsettle. But still they linger, teasing at the edges of your consciousness, reminding you of their ominous presence.

The work of Kerry Jameson occupies that realm. On the outskirts of the peaceful domesticity of the Anthony Shaw Collection, a primitive force lurks. The quiet is disturbed by chattering narrative. Scuffles and quarrels break out, blood is drawn. Familiar imagery is contorted into uncomfortable tableaux and surreal creatures stalk and prowl.

Jameson is a master of character and expression. 'Remade Horse' follows you around the room, his glassy eyes boring through your skin. His cheeky, toothy grin unnerves. Is he smiling or grimacing? Baring his teeth with affection or preparing to take a bite? There's a mischief behind that piercing gaze. He's up to something. I'm not sure what, but I know he's up to something. So I keep my eye on him, as he does me.



'Wicker Man' looks on forlornly, miserable and traumatised by the tormented souls that are clamouring over his totemic torso. Weak and frightened, their purgatorial screams are caught in an eternal chorus, echoing silently into the atmosphere. He is damned to bear their suffering forever.

The trilogy of jugs of 'My Critical Friend' depicts grizzly scenes of murder and violence. The ambiguous title provokes inquiry. Is this a warning? Did this 'friend' dare to attack the work of the artist, and now finds themselves the victim of the artist's vengeful imagination? Is the 'critical friend' the one doling out the punishments, the piece being an analogy for the pain and suffering caused by hurtful criticism? Or does 'critical' refer to the state in which the victim now lays, maimed and broken?

And just who is this other figure, masked, cloaked, scowling out over the gallery, dominantly surveying their surroundings? Menacingly serene, they evoke the presence of primal forces, primitive rituals. Faithful hounds on their lap, old familiars guarding their master.

Jameson's creations captivate. They ambush you, pouncing from corners and stealthily infiltrating your mind. These are just ceramics, I remind myself. They can't harm me. Still. Tonight I'll be sleeping with the light on...