



No More Swings and Roundabouts

Suits on the sand

TRACY DODS

When: October 3-24

Where: South Yarra Art House,
6 Almeida Crescent, South Yarra

By: Daniel Paproth

The suits of the corporate world don't have much in common with waves crashing on the sand at the beach, but it's this contrast that provided the inspiration for much of artist Tracy Dods' work.

Her paintings, featured in an exhibition at South Yarra Art House this month, juxtapose depressed corporate figures with the serenity of Australia's beaches. Dods says her "nine-to-five" subjects are defeated by the pressures of their world, and seek solace at the sea.

"It started one Friday evening when I watched a herd of businessmen at 5pm, all homeward-bound for the weekend, looking unimaginably depressed," she says.

"And you wonder what makes them do that if they don't want it?"

The Cairns-born artist describes the paintings as "symbolic and everyman".

"They combine two symbols together and illustrate both depression and euphoria ... maybe these characters have had an epiphany and gone to the beach to change their

lifestyle," she says. "I've had people who have bought the paintings before who have said 'I have gone to the beach and thrown away my suit and tie'."

Not that she's telling anyone to give up their day job.

Dods also points out that the paintings explore the myth of Sisyphus, an ancient Greek king who was punished for deceiving the gods. He was sentenced to roll a large boulder up a hill for all eternity; but just before he reached the top, the boulder would roll back down and he would have to start again. Dods says Sisyphus' crushing fate is not altogether different from the lives of some corporate wage slaves.

"Every day they go in, and work from nine to five, but they are depressed and so their jobs become like rolling that rock," she says. "Then they reach a certain age when they retire and they become nobodies, nobodies with nothing to do and nowhere to go. It's very sad.

"That's why the paintings are evocative and stir up a lot of emotions."

Dods, from Queensland, has had her art exhibited in Sydney, Brisbane and Adelaide but is showcasing in Melbourne for the first time.