

April 20, 2008

Visual Arts Dylan Rainforth



Renee So's
Sam, glazed
ceramic.

RENEE SO: <UNTITLED/SELF-TITLED EXHIBITION>

Uplands Gallery. 249-251 Chapel St, Prahran. To April 26. Tuesday-Saturday, 11am-5.30pm. Tel: 9510 2374

London-based Renee So combines the novelist's skill of characterisation with an artist's outstanding gift for visual language. These nine monochromatic ceramic heads are so alive with individual personality that they surely swing around at night to talk to each other. And what conversation that would be: erudite, argumentative and impassioned — occasionally crude but consistently smart. These distinguished busts are an academy for the ages, each with unique "historical" dress and hair style. Unique but also totemic and universal, these could be the only remaining artefacts — ancestral figures most likely — of a lost South American civilisation (albeit one that shared our own stiff-collar English roots). Still, the most amazing thing is So's combination of old-school and of-the-minute; it is perfectly appropriate to compare these busts to Henry Moore (Magritte too) but the way things stay doodly and loose (bits of clay left rough and unglazed, or her scratches-equals-facial features approach) is just so, well, alive.