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Peter Goers

The new Art Gallery of SA director is inspirational, much like the Saatchi exhibition

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LET there be dancing in the streets, necking in the parks and drinking in the saloons. The new director of the Art Gallery of SA, Nick Mitzevich, is a hero.

Thanks to him, our formerly moribund art gallery is now leading Australia and it hasn't done this since 1939 with the seminal *Herald* exhibition of impressionist, cubist and modernist art which galvanised a generation.

Saatchi's monumental *British Art Now* show and the much-needed renovation of the tired, old Elder Wing have finally brought Adelaide in line with Melbourne, Perth, Brisbane and Canberra and, possibly and happily, is now the best of them.

The new old Elder Wing is a triumph and the modernist galleries are now the best in our nation. How glorious to see works by John Perceval, Ivor Francis and George Williams – arguably Australia's greatest artist.

Mitzevich's first major acquisition, Marc Quinn's sculpture *Buck With Cigar* is a great and significant work and a stunning start.

The exhibition of Patricia Piccinini was awful, kitsch, cutesy and very popular and, hopefully, all of that horrible pink latex has now been melted down for condoms.

There's a piece in the Saatchi show reminiscent of Piccinini – *It Happened in the Corner*, with faceless proletariat, mainly in hoodies, grouped around something. It is eloquent and happily subversive and better than anything Piccinini has inflicted on us.

The Saatchi show is the greatest and most significant exhibition to come to Adelaide in 70 years. It consumes two-thirds of our gallery, and its exhibits swim in space and don't have to compete with each other for attention.

There is something for everyone. If you know nothing about art – like me – and you don't even know what you like or you fancy, Saatchi is for you.

It's only for the young, old, jaded and fresh. Everyone will be enthralled, challenged, amused, horrified, confronted and enlightened by this show. Some of it is contemptuous but still fascinating.

Most importantly, it's the funniest art show I've ever seen. The pink Cher (yep!) Guevara

and the Joan Crawford Alphabet are hilarious.

It's an exhibition that provokes laughter, awe and even argument. And all that should be happening in any art gallery because you don't take a vow of silence as you enter.

It's easy to express yourself, as this show provokes reaction and that's what art is supposed to do. There is so much energy here – the noisy energy of self-expression and it demands a response. It's the perfect show to introduce children to modern art.

Tracey Emin's unmade bed surrounded by her detritus is an autobiographical scream. The wall of Peruvian reliquaries is breathtaking and alone worth the price of admission.

Whenever I see an installation, I reach for my gun, but some of these installations are less offensive and some are, surprisingly, interesting.

Maybe I'm getting soft in my late 40s. *Swarm* is a vitrine of hundreds of insects and bits of insects, microscopically rearranged to become an avenging fairy fleet. It is one of the most unusual and remarkable works of art these old eyes have ever seen.

I loved the grey silicone wave, Madame Blavatsky planking and, most of all, I loved the paintings by Hurvin Anderson, Mustafa Hulusi, Toby Ziegler and Ged Quinn. Jonathan Wateridge's painting of a wrecked plane in a jungle is glorious and William Daniels' gold painting is one of the finest works of art I've ever seen.

Charles Saatchi is a great and significant art philanthropist and collector who has revived British art. And this Anglophile blesses him.

This collection is also *The Empire Strikes Back* with so many artists who are colonial immigrants to Britain. The show is exceptional value at \$20 for adults, whole schools for \$30 and kids under 14 free. It's a joyful place to visit, helped by volunteers, guides and security guards – all of who are nice, knowledgeable and welcoming.

I left the Saatchi show and our wonderful gallery floating on air – challenged, happy and fulfilled. Thanks.

» Peter Goers can be heard weeknights on 891 ABC Adelaide

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Masterstroke: Art Gallery of SA director Nick Mitzevich. Thanks to him our gallery is now one of the best in the land. **Picture:** Andrea Laube

» Goers' verdict

Hot

PREMIER Mike Rann has done a lot for SA
LYN Wilson, superb in *Othello*, and Shedrick Yarkpai has a good try
FLINDERS University, our best. Open days August 19-20

MIKE and Ella Tyler – good people

KELLY Vincent, a politician with guts

POOR old Crows, with rats leaving the sinking ship

CHAD Cornes – a great player. When he was booed at the Showdown by Crows fans, I thought Neil Craig was with him, too!



Not

LETTER: "Wonders never cease you have the gaul (sic) to kick Neil Craig down at least you cant (sic) blame him of (sic) being a sook and crying all over the place - unlike Ports (sic) weeping Williams can (sic). Congrats to Port for being bottom fully worth it. Go on print this in your column you wont (sic) have the guts to." Norm Jarrett, Findon

UMPIRES going on strike because they can't accept their own umpire's decision

THE US is broke, thanks to useless wars

HUGELY talented ABC TV producer Lincoln Tyner and three others made redundant