

BRUCE JAMES, "One Colour Suits All", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14.08.1999

. Sadie Chandler does not come to mind as a monochromist cadre. She's understood more as a maker of unsettling objects than a pure painter, in any case. Sydney viewers will know her best from *Primavera 1994*, and *the Moët & Chandon Touring Exhibition 1997*, in both of which she was represented by sculpture, though her contribution to *Passive*, a group show earlier this year at the regrettably defunct South Gallery, was pictorial. However, her suite of sensational paintings at Gallery 19, *Pin Ups*, is an exceptional instance of monochromy pressed into service as agitprop. Against the black backgrounds of five identically scaled canvas supports, coming across as prickly piss-take on the Rothko Chapel in Houston, Chandler disposes images of woman as a cartoon witch, peaked hat and honker to match. We see this modern miss variously at her computer, in her lingerie, posing frankly naked or affectedly demure, and, the odd one out, after a radical Hollywood-style makeover and a major rhinoplasty.

As daffy as the animated credits from TV's *Bewitched*, Chandler's paintings are far more serious than their derivation from mass media might suggest. Occupying theoretical terrain between the soigné watercolours of Vivien Shark Le Witt shown in the Melbourne Biennial, *Signs of Life*, and the dangerous charades of Cindy Sherman still showing at the Museum of Contemporary Art, these works record the infantilism through which women are viewed, even at the century's end, registering as bitter protest. They speak of self-image, as well, and dally with the notion of the crone. Yet, placed as they are in profiles against foreboding slabs of non-colour, the figures assume an unexpected dignity. Just by and by they happen to be as expertly as any Margaret Olley, evidencing, oddly enough in an artist with a bend toward theoretical, the same well-bred consideration for what the French call 'the right one'.