

## Alasdair Macintyre – Infiltration

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The darkened gloom of the silent space is suddenly punctured by a shower of sparks and a harsh, unearthly scratching, a glowing trace appears on the surface of the chamber in an agonisingly suspenseful arc, and, as it reaches its point of origin, the cold slab falls inwards...

As the echo subsides and the dust clears, the backlit silhouette of a humanoid form appears in the space where the chamber wall once stood. The figure emerges from the blinding void, entering our space, and it is with a rush of realisation that we recognise this intruder...

It is Alasdair Macintyre, and we have just witnessed the celebrated Brisbane artist's infiltration into the Sydney art scene at Sullivan+Strumpf Fine Art.

It is the first phase in Macintyre's global domination offensive, and, like a creature from a sci-fi film, it is undeniable, unstoppable and inevitable. The takeover has begun.

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Alasdair Macintyre's current practice was borne out of his early black box series, where his current themes of myth, religion, art history and popular culture first coalesced. From the darkened confines of the black boxes, his interest in the role of the artist in society broke free when he began his Legends Of Art series in 1999. Taking as its project the ascension of the artist to their rightful position of recognition and respect—a position currently held by sports stars and celebrities—Macintyre set about rectifying the situation. By utilising the forms of mass acceptance and popular appeal he invited his audience to see his influences for what they truly are, and see what theirs truly are to him.

From there Macintyre appeared alongside his art historical heroes in ever more fantastical and engaging scenarios. From the sporting field to the battlefield of the studio in his most recent series, Macintyre now begins to take a back seat, replaced by the glorified objects of art itself. Their creators have been left behind, like Macintyre himself. Artists have been substituted with invaders, aliens and cybermen, infiltrating the spaces we once inhabited so leisurely, art gallery, bookstore, drawing class. Where are we in this new world order? Perhaps set adrift on a desperate voyage into the unknown, seeking an escape, a refuge, a release.

But there are some sanctuaries still left untouched, like the Abstract Expressionist room in *I Love The National Gallery of Australia (and The National Gallery of Australia Loves Me)*, although even in this serene scenario we can't help but fear for the sleeping Macintyre, as the intruders may be just around the corner, or perhaps they are merely figments of Macintyre's imagination, the fitful dreams of an overactive imagination. Or perhaps those of a crazed mind like Ian Fairweather's in *Prelude to Ascension (The Fairweather Symphony)* as he drifts beneath the searing sun, reaching his epiphany, but

losing his mind in the process. The pitfalls of self-doubt, even in those most talented, are laid bare, but given comic relief in *Terms of Endearment*.

The inability to realise one's potential (or fail to meet expectations) is at the heart of *Ways of Seeing*, a robotic drawing class where all students (except one) faithfully reproduce what they see before them, or rather what they have been indoctrinated to see. Is the lone student consoled or coerced by his teacher? How do ways of seeing affect representation? Who perceives incorrectly here? This work hints at the deeper questions being asked in Macintyre's work. Likewise, *Didactics of the Alien Dawn* encourages us to look beyond the playful surface of Macintyre's set-pieces to the underlying realities they sometimes conceal.

In *Vision Within Abasement*, a ray of hope alerts us to the possibility that these beings are in fact here to save us along with our treasured artifacts. Perhaps we are not in danger at all, perhaps we have not been replaced by (or have not become) these emotionless creatures, it may just be that they have saved us from our ignorance. If *9 Meditations (Kurilpa Prayer)* is anything to go by, we might just be at the dawn of a new age of appreciation and respect for the things that matter most. An epiphany most timely.