

Where for art thou Romeo?

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Newtown artist Johnny Romeo's paintings are vibrantly coloured canvases that depict the world we live in.

Inspired by the cult of celebrity and today's over-saturated media culture, Romeo produces works that contain pop references and philosophy but which don't preach to the viewer.

"I look at the way the media plays a major influence in the lives we live," he said.

"Two hundred years ago we lived in a world where there were landscapes [in the environment].

"The media is the environment we live in now."

He said he was not judging the rise of media and technology and the changes they have had on our lives.

"I don't profess to know whether technological change is good. Sometimes I embrace it, sometimes I repel it," he said.

"I have given [viewers] an opportunity to see their world back on my canvas."

Romeo likened himself to a seismograph, the machine scientists use to record tectonic plate movements.

"My position as a painter is just sitting above the earth's surface, recording all these bumps."

He rejects suggestions that he is an activist, even though his work contains political and social commentary. "It freaks me out," he said.

"Activism is not the forefront of my work. [It's more about] consciousness raising.

"I like people to be aware of what's taking place."

The exhibition Galaxy Cattle is on display at the NGArt Gallery, 3 Little Queen Street in Chippendale, until Saturday.

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