

# MISTER LISTER

WORDS · CHRISTINE GIBSON

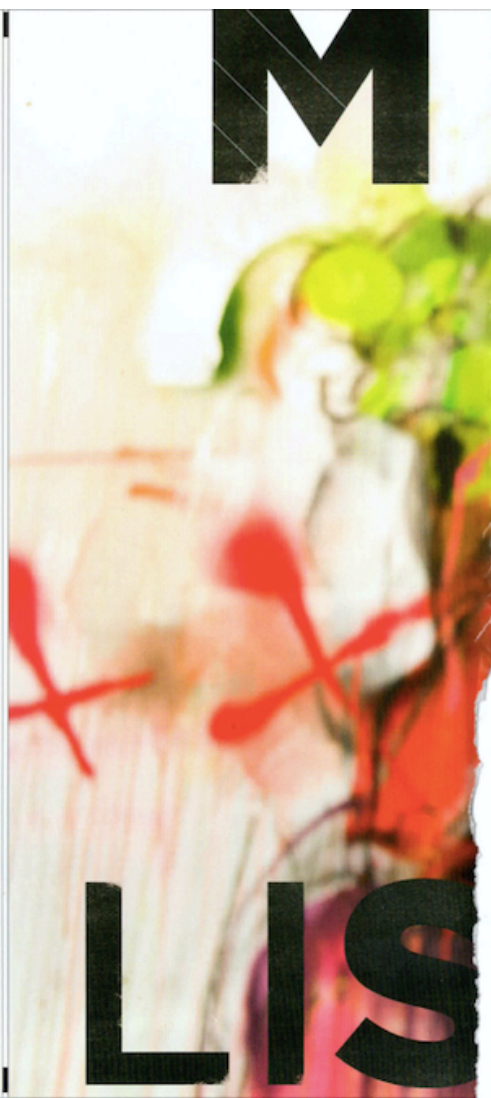
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BOLD COLOUR, RELATABLE SUBJECT MATTER AND BEAUTIFUL  
LINE WORK HAS HELPED ANTHONY LISTER CONQUER THE  
INTERNATIONAL ART SCENE, WRITES CHRISTINE GIBSON.

I've always dreamed of being an artist. Pictionary tells me that writing was the smart choice. Needless to say I find myself absolutely in awe of Anthony Lister. I mean, here's a guy who's managed to make his graffiti and stencil art not only commercially successful but also lovingly embraced by even the stuffier members of the art world. Not that he gives a toss.

Sporting an indie Mohawk and flip-down shades (with skateboard in tow), Mister Lister is one cool customer. He's come to Perth to recce venues for his upcoming exhibition *Still Life Crisis*. And to case out potential public spaces for some late night guerrilla work no doubt. You see Lister is quite the pickle lover, preferring to live with one foot firmly planted on either side of the law. From replacing bus stop advertising material to injecting uncommissioned colour into big city spaces, art always trumps The Establishment for the 33-year-old self-professed adventure painter.

And this devil-may-care attitude can also be found in Lister's highly sought after canvases and sculptures. "The first rule of painting is to take everyone else out of the equation," he says. And who are we to argue with a man who polled in *Art Collector's* 50 Most Collectable Australian Artists of 2011 and 2012, or who took the silver in *Complex[Art+Design]'s* 2013 Best Worldwide Muralist Award?







"I am the viewer, so I don't underestimate my viewers. They see everything and I just have to assume that they are me. I can't paint for anyone else. It's all about having the courage to say this is finished, and they have to know that I am the boss in painting. It's like being a soldier because I have to be hard as fuck to fall in love with these things and let them go."

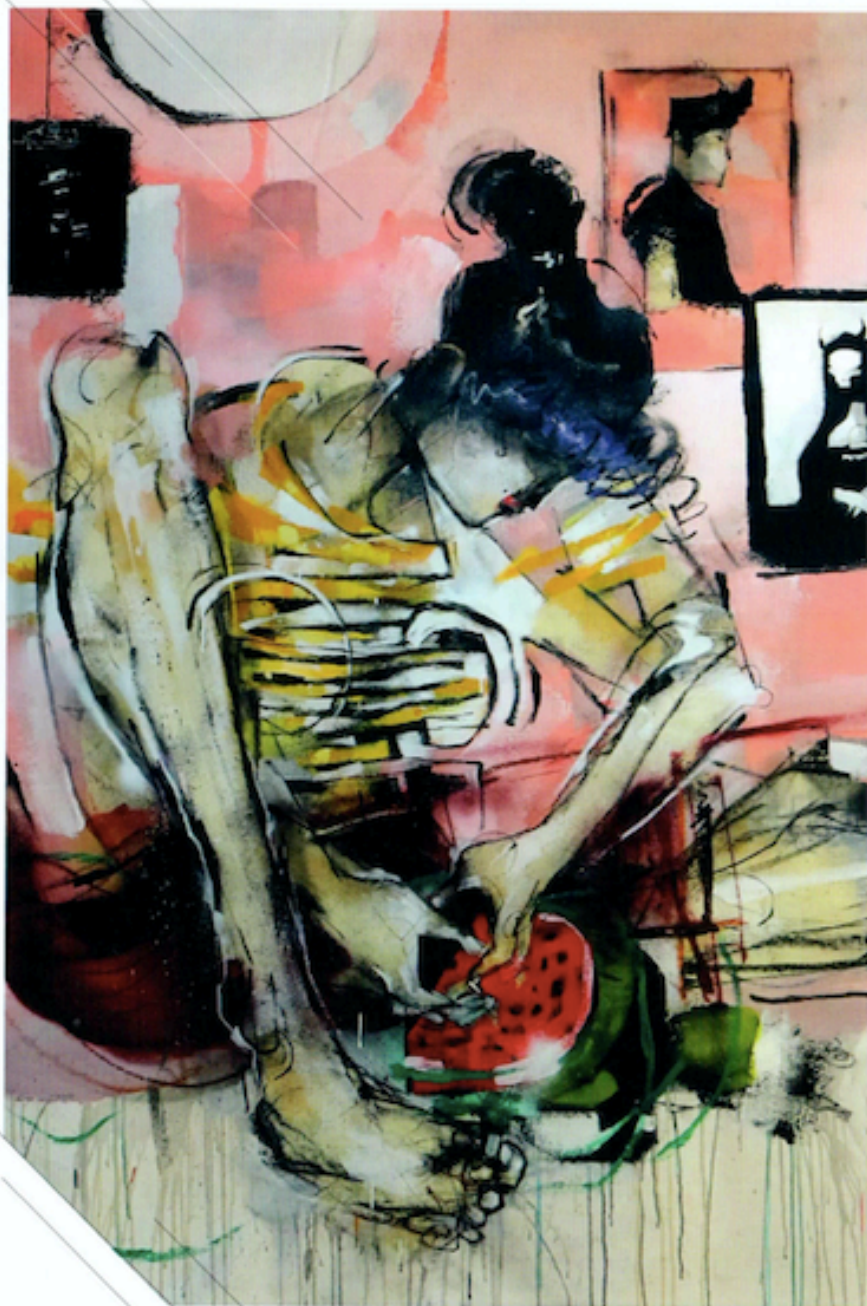
It's little surprise that Lister draws comparison with a soldier. His art is full of iconic boyhood motifs (superheroes, alligators and monsters for example), which no doubt help make his work more accessible to the mainstream. But the relatable subject matter is given a new lease on life and a new layer of meaning at the careful hand of Lister – a hand he believes responsible for his critical acclaim.

"I would like to think it has something to do with the context of my conceptual platforms but I would agree that it has mostly to do with the aesthetic nature of my line and composition," he confesses.

Also a far cry from the Marvel world of Lycra-clad, half man and half beast creations is Lister's adult themes. From bird flipping to topless women, his graphic content works to complement his graphic approach, albeit sometimes disguised by an army of lines and muted tones. Even the seemingly ethereal ballerinas that formed the basis of his last Los Angeles exhibition possess a sexual undertone. "Ballerinas are kind of like strippers, only they don't take their clothes off," Lister comments. But despite the somewhat grimy, rough-hewn analysis and sexualised representation of his prima donnas, Lister still managed to capture their beauty, poise and innocence in figurative works at his Miami solo show earlier this year.

As for his upcoming calendar, Lister will descend upon Perth this November with an exhibition spanning paintings, sculptures and installations. Presented by Gullotti Galleries and held in a previously untapped space on the haute couture King Street, it's as though he is trying to make a point about the fickle worlds of art and fashion, high brow versus street culture, and the quest for real beauty. "Western Australia has so





much hidden beauty and potential, I love it," he shares. "I love the way the red earth settles on public structures and the community has realised it's more effort and less beneficial to bother cleaning it. There's something gorgeous about a city that cares more for living than cleaning," Lister muses with a considered outlook that can most certainly be applied to his brand of art.

Though often dark and sinister at first encounter, Lister's work is surprisingly uplifting, imbuing a real sense of good prevailing over evil. Indeed, in Lister's own mind, art is his attempt to "make something beautiful whilst constantly being mindful of the opportunity to violate it". From an audience standpoint, what remains key is the physical reaction that each piece produces. His explicit use of colour, familiar characters and overt symbolism is both confronting and comforting to viewers, especially those whom might otherwise feel excluded from the world of fine art. Revelling in the spirituality and heritage of our popular culture, Lister takes this joint inheritance and remoulds it into something equally alluring and grotesque. A perfect representation of the society he seeks to depict.

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GULLOTTI GALLERIES PRESENTS Anthony Lister's *Still Life Cross*  
WHEN November 16 – December 1  
WHERE 43 King Street, Perth  
CONTACT 08 9388 2864 / [gullottigalleries.com.au](http://gullottigalleries.com.au)

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