

ALASDAIR MACINTYRE (1970-)

In a contemporary art world that can often seem baffling and elitist, Alasdair Macintyre's dioramas, with their tiny figures provide familiar, comforting territory. Macintyre himself reassuringly shies away from analysing his work, leaving its interpretation up to the individual spectator. "The meaning lies within the realm of the viewer, with their own references and experience," he says. However, just as the work of his artistic forbears assumes knowledge of its allegories and symbols, Macintyre's work requires you to be able to recognise the icons of popular culture: stormtroopers, Smurfs, Robert Hughes and the members of U2.

In the 1990s Macintyre made box frames filled with materials such as dried noodles and tennis balls, then painted quotations on their tinted glass panes. Alternating Biblical texts with the words of writers and artists conveys his idea of the artist as a visionary and the interconnectedness of religion and the artistic

impulse, "whether you call it a message, an idea, an inspiration or a light bulb turning on".

Macintyre confesses to having an "inveterate interest" in current affairs – his 2009 Wynne Prize finalist work, a lithe, African American version of *Captain America* marked the election of Barack Obama. He is disturbed by the plethora of media images of "man's inhumanity to man". In his 2007 work, *Staring at the Sun*, a naked soldier, who has just cast off his uniform and discarded his weapons, walks over the top of a sand dune with arms outstretched as if to embrace something unseen. *Numb* (pictured), which sold in 2008 for \$5,500, shows a family cowering in the corner of a room in which a stack of newspapers and books throws a grimacing totem-pole shadow on the wall behind. Reflecting the words of the U2 song (from which the work takes its title), with its list of "Don'ts" and its exhortation to "just balance on the fence", the family are inert, unable to act in the face of the alarming titles and headlines mounted up before them.



Numb 2007
Polymer clay, polyester resin, felt, wood,
cardboard, paper, inkjet, acrylic paint, electric light
23.4 x 29.8 x 31.1 cm

Courtesy of the artist and
Sullivan + Strumpf Fine Art, Sydney

Private collection