

JOHNNY ROMEO



PARADISE FOUND

NEW PAINTINGS

DEC 5TH - 16TH



JOHNNY ROMEO

Johnny Romeo is an Australian contemporary pop artist. His works infuse the aesthetics of print-based Warholian Pop with a street-art speed and grit, all executed through some strange on-canvas alchemy in acrylic and oil. The works heavily reference recent and current popular culture, unabashedly harvesting politicians, celebrities, pinups, and comic book heroes and villains, as protagonists. Rendered in muted pop hues, like high vibrancy paint applied thinly over stubborn grey concrete, these recognisable personalities often juxtapose witty stenciled wordplay, some letters scratched out to create unlikely double and triple entendres out of previously stale slogans and rehashed platitudes. Through that graphic style Romeo equally engages in, and simultaneously critiques consumer culture and branding in relation to the construction of personal identity. The artist exposes the childishness of our apparent ideals and elucidates what western culture has found to replace its heroes.

Australian, lives and works in Sydney and Los Angeles.

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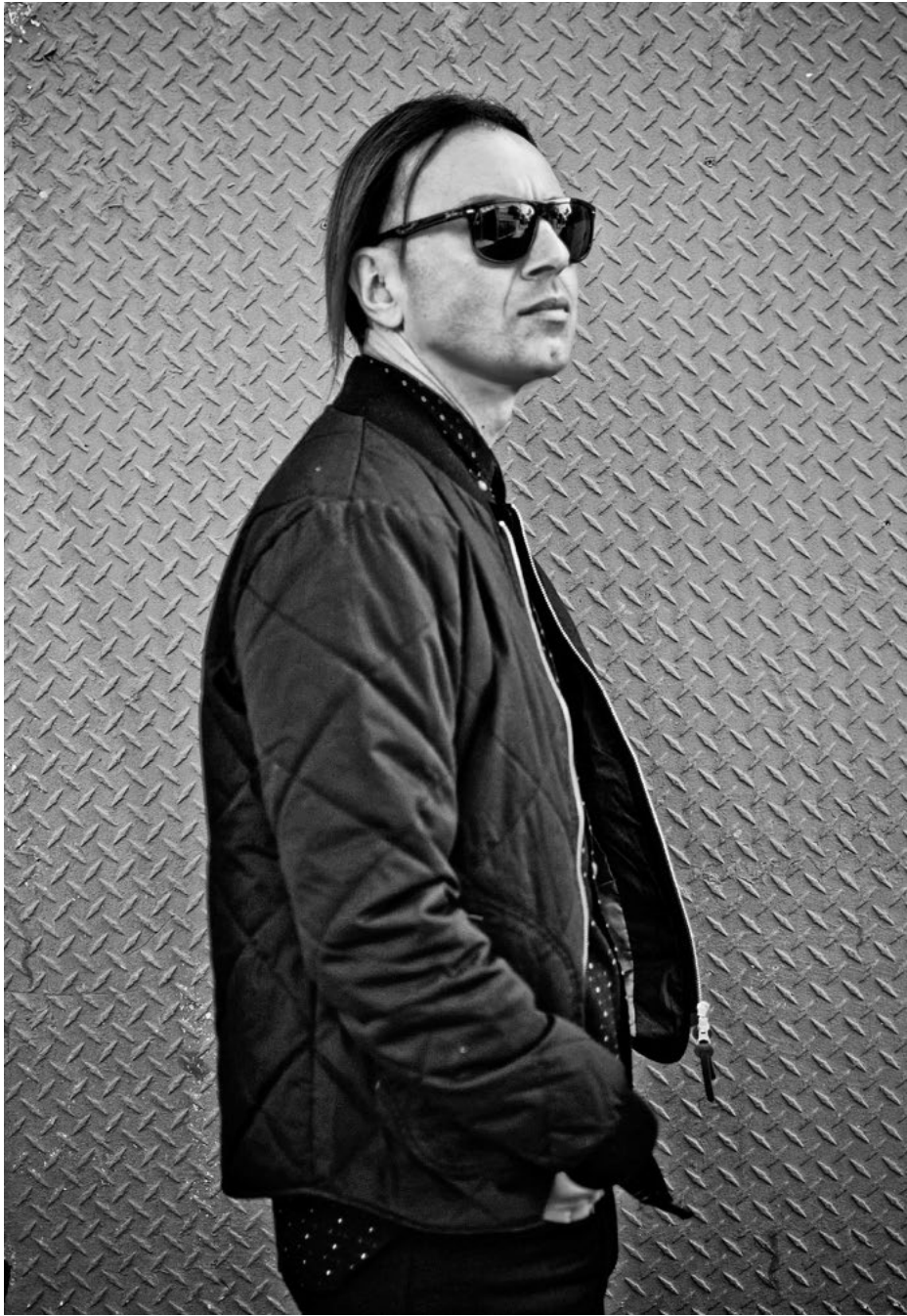
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ARTIST'S STATEMENT

"Surrealism has always been a major influence on my artmaking practice. As I was working on my latest series, Paradise Found, I was increasingly drawn to the mind-bending imagery of Surrealist artists such as Salvador Dali and Rene Magritte and was fascinated by how I could inject more dreamlike imagery into my work. Visually, embracing Surrealism's 'anything goes' attitude inspired me to approach the canvas in a different way, giving me the freedom to experiment with scale and perspective to play with our perception of reality. On a conceptual level, I wanted to use Surrealism as a way to explore how we can blur the lines between the real and the imaginary and harness the power of our dreams to redefine our sense of self. Over time, this transformed into the concept of Paradise Found – the idea that paradise is not something found 'out there', but rather a state of mind that we find within ourselves. Subverting John Milton's notion of 'Paradise Lost', my latest exhibition envisions warped Pop culture icons, mystical creatures and beloved cartoon and comic book heroes who are no longer in exile but have found themselves by bending the boundaries of their reality to bring about radical self-transformation".

Johnny Romeo

2025



PARADISE FOUND

new paintings

Paradise isn't a place – it's a state of mind. For internationally acclaimed Australian Pop painter Johnny Romeo, 'paradise' is something we create from the depths of our own imagination. With *Paradise Found*, Romeo makes his triumphant hometown return to Sydney with a thrilling series of new original paintings that sees Australia's King of Pop inject his inimitable Kitsch Pop style with a delectable dose of Surrealism. Jamming together slick Pop culture iconography, psychedelic colour arrangements and mind-bending Absurdist imagery, Romeo's latest series is a rollicking joyride through a vibrant Technicolour dreamland where we are each empowered to transform our fantasies, no matter how strange, into uplifting, tangible realities. *Paradise Found* is Romeo at his most hypnotic and Surreal, as he calls on audiences to embrace life in all its weirdness and wonder, find beauty and meaning in the madness, and discover that paradise was never somewhere out there, but something we find within ourselves.

In *Paradise Found*, Johnny Romeo revisits the eternal question first posed by John Milton in *Paradise Lost* – what does it mean to lose paradise, and can we ever truly find it again? Romeo ingeniously flips Milton's tale of exile into a joyous vision of reclamation and radical transformation, declaring that paradise was never really lost, but has always existed within us. Through his characteristically bold, Kitsch Pop lens, Romeo proposes that to reclaim our own inner paradise, we must find the confidence to face the turbulent waters of our inner psyche and unlock the true potential of our imagination to transform our dreams into reality. In doing so, the exhibition cleverly turns the religious overtones of Milton's classic inward, highlighting that the road to paradise exists within the introspective landscapes of our mind and spirit. Instead of exiled angels and fallen men, Romeo's dreamlands are rich with larger-than-life cartoon heroes, mysterious animals and delightfully warped Pop culture icons all redefining themselves in search of their own slice of paradise.

At its heart, *Paradise Found* explores how we blur the lines between the real and the imaginary, and how the power of our dreams can unlock pathways to transcendence and meaning. The exhibition sees Johnny Romeo at his most mind-bending and surreal

while maintaining his unapologetic Pop edge, as Australia's King of Pop takes us on a rip-roaring trip through alternate realities, parallel dimensions and the fluid boundaries between the seen and unseen. Echoing the dreamlike distortions of Surrealist greats such as Salvador Dali and Rene Magritte, Romeo uses immersive, hallucinatory colour palettes and experiments with perspective, scale and the pictorial plane to destabilise our perception of the tangible world. Throughout the series, cybergoth avatars suspend our sense of space and time, and ordinary housecats smash through the wall between dreams and reality, while fiery skulls defy the laws of death and threaten to crash through the very fabric of the canvas. Disorienting and electrifying in equal measure, Romeo's neon-drenched Surrealist visions create a world where the traditional laws of physics and logic cease to exist, where simulation and real life collide in glorious Technicolour.

Brimming with some of Johnny Romeo's most vibrant and exhilarating works to date, *Paradise Found* is a radiant celebration of self-transformation. Each painting is an act of reinvention, a reminder that we are each equipped with the imaginative power to realise our own sense of paradise and define the best version of ourselves. While this personal journey is not without its hardships, there is a palpable sense of joy that runs throughout the series, as Pop Art poster-girls and sharp dressed fish-men find meaning in surreal, unexpected places. Romeo delivers his message with an absurd sense of humour and a life-affirming dose of Poptimism, as evil Sith Lords devote themselves to the noble calling of the Japanese warrior code, and once enraged superheroes discover inner peace through the tranquillity of paddleboarding. Romeo's exuberant paintings invite us to mould our inner worlds, to take the fragments of Pop culture and the limitless possibilities of our dreams and spin them into something beautifully new.

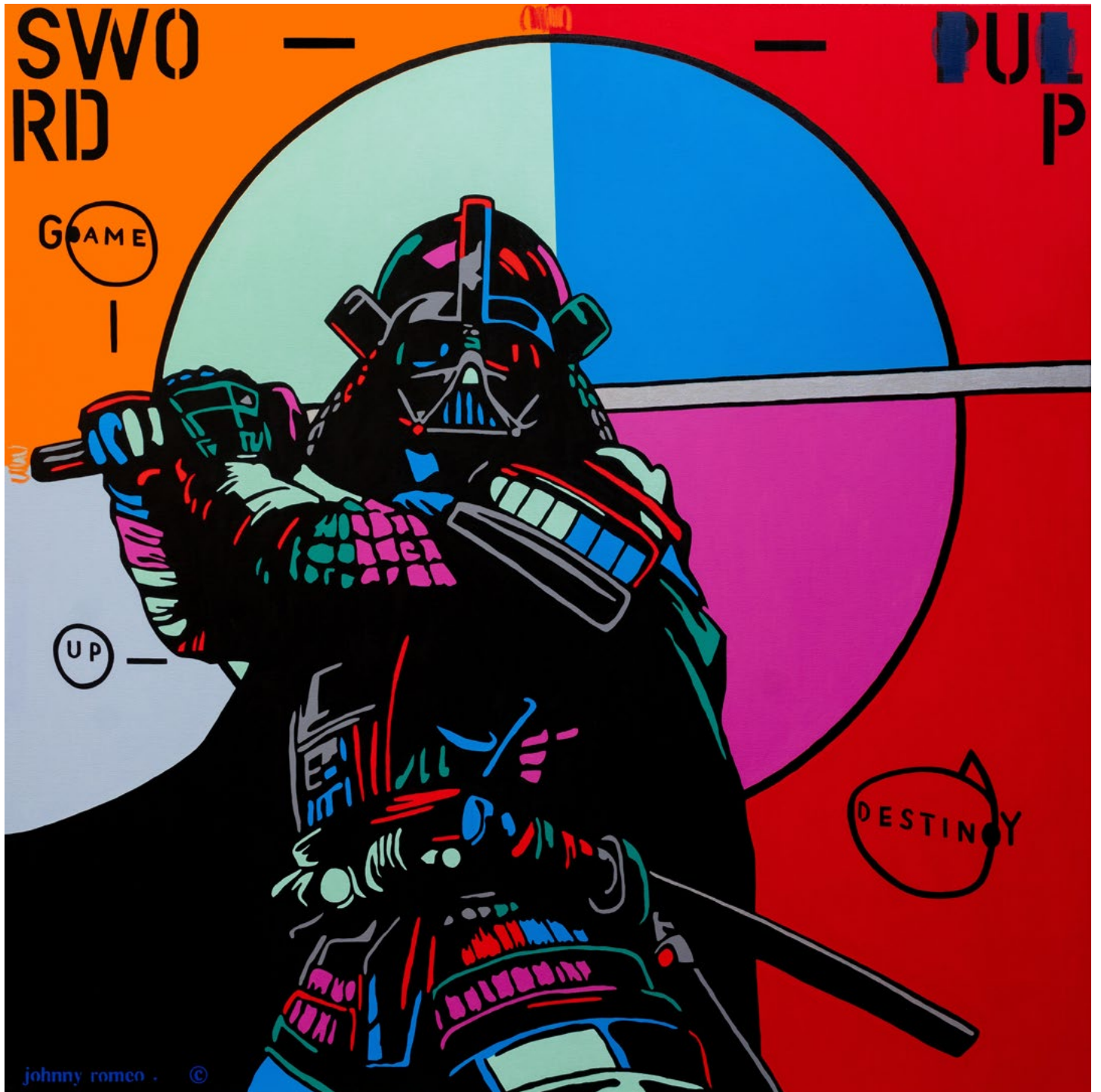
With his mind-bending latest series, Australia's King of Pop declares that paradise is more than just a destination, but a creative act that leads to our own inner revolution. In a chaotic, fast-shifting world, *Paradise Found's* pulse-pounding, highly imaginative works invite us to dream boldly, live colourfully, and rediscover that paradise was never lost – it was within us all along.



Johnny Romeo, *Body Rock*, 2025, acrylic and oil on canvas 122cm x 122cm (48" x 48")

BODY ROCK

Step into a kaleidoscopic dreamworld and face your dreams head on with *Body Rock*, Johnny Romeo's mind-bending homage to the legendary Mexican artist Frida Kahlo. In the painting, Romeo ingeniously fuses Nikolas Murray's iconic 1939 photographic bust portrait of Frida Kahlo with the artist's own emotionally raw double portrait 'The Two Fridas' (1939). Instead of two figures holding hands, Romeo explores the emotionally raw duality of Frida Kahlo by portraying the artist's first face peeled off and hovering in the ether, while her second face remains concealed underneath. Playing on the visual and psychological tension of Surrealism, the painting combines unsettling imagery and highly saturated, hallucinatory colours to transform Frida Kahlo's fierce self-mythology into a Surrealist Pop fever dream. In a stroke of art revisionist genius, *Body Rock* imagines a new kind of self-portrait where Romeo explores how Frida Kahlo would have painted herself had she discovered Pop Art. Rich in symbolism and emotional depth, Romeo's disconcerting rendition of Kahlo captures her in a state of psychological metamorphosis as her mask peels away, forcing her to face the trembling truth of her own being, head on. Dreams are often a vehicle for escapism and flights of fancy, but in *Body Rock* they are a stark interior landscape where we stare into of our own psyche and confront our innermost fears, doubts and aspirations, as captured in the word assemblage 'Face Dreams'. As one of the world's most storied artists, Frida Kahlo lived a tumultuous life marked by heartbreak, illness and relentless creativity. With the title *Body Rock*, Romeo humorously builds on this idea, envisioning a Frida whose body has been so 'rocked' by pain and health problems that her face has literally fallen off. Blurring the line between portrait and apparition, *Body Rock* is a powerful reminder that sometimes our most vivid dreams are the ones that shake us to the core.



Johnny Romeo, *Game Up Destiny*, 2025, acrylic and oil on canvas 153cm x 153cm (60" x 60")

GAME UP DESTINY

Embrace the warrior within as Johnny Romeo transports you to an alternate reality where feudal Japan exists in a galaxy far, far away. In *Game Up Destiny*, Romeo masterfully jams together the worlds of Star Wars and Japanese warrior culture as he depicts the Empire's arch villain Darth Vader as a fearless, Kitana wielding samurai decked out in traditional armour. Cleverly digging into sci-fi lore, Romeo's Kitsch Pop-inflected interpretation of Darth Vader as a bygone knight of the Rising Sun nods to Star Wars's director George Lucas, who drew inspiration for the iconic Sith Lord from the samurai and Japanese culture. Romeo deftly leans into Japanese iconography through the motif of a neon-soaked Rising Sun looming ominously behind Darth Vader. Abandoning the cruel darkness of the Sith Code for a more noble cause, the Rising Sun symbolizes Darth Vader's newfound passion for unity and balance in the cosmos as he meditates on infinity and the passage of life and time. Blurring the boundaries between the real and the imaginary, Romeo invites us to question where the historical reality of the samurai ends, and the cosmic fiction of Star Wars begins. The word assemblage 'Sword Pulp Up' adds a witty, visceral punch to the work, a nod to Darth Vader's influence on pulp fiction and a playful twist on Vader's sword-wielding stance as he threatens to 'beat you to a pulp'. Inspired by the idea of 'super reality' in gaming culture, Romeo plays with spatial depth, thrusting Vader to the front of the pictorial plane and rupturing our sense of what is real and artificial. Through the title *Game Up Destiny*, Romeo extends this exploration of alternate realities into everyday life, reminding us that, like avatars in a game, we all have the power to create our own destiny.



Johnny Romeo, *High Noon*, 2025, acrylic and oil on canvas 101cm x 101cm (40" x 40")

HIGH NOON

Even the most cold-hearted assassins need the love of a loyal dog. In *High Noon*, Johnny Romeo cheekily reimagines Keanu Reeves' iconic hitman 'John Wick' as a modern-day Renaissance man donning a classic Tudor collar and tunic, whose thirst for vengeance is matched only by his affection for his adoring dog. Stoic and poised, Romeo's Technicolour rendition of John Wick masterfully channels the drama and intensity of Baroque noble portraiture with the life-affirming optimism of the artist's distinct Kitsch Pop style, capturing the complex essence of a battle-worn gunslinger picking himself back up and reinventing himself to exact payback for the murder of his beloved first dog Daisy. The symbiotic bond between John Wick and his pit bull is rooted in loyalty and loss, love and violence. While the dog gazes up in devotion, Wick looks outward, unflinching and calm, ready to unleash carnage on a cruel world that would dare to kill his only source of solace and love again. Romeo riffs on this sentiment further through the word assemblage 'Double Pup Up', a reference to his two dogs in the first 'John Wick' instalment, and Wick 'doubling up' on his affection for his new pit bull after the brutal loss of his first dog. Echoing the lone-wolf resilience of Gary Cooper's country-western classic 'High Noon' (1952), the title speaks to the notion of rebirth through struggle, conceptually linking John Wick and 'High Noon's' Will Kane as kindred spirits facing overwhelming odds in their lonely quest for revenge. Behind his velvet collar and controlled composure lies the contradiction that defines Wick himself, a cold-blooded assassin whose tenderness for his dog is wrapped in danger, and whose noble belief in justice is shadowed by violence.



Johnny Romeo, *Never Fall*, 2025, acrylic and oil on canvas 101cm x 101cm (40" x 40")

NEVER FALL

Drink from the well of nocturnal wisdom with Johnny Romeo's humorously absurd work, *Never Fall*. Perched precariously on what appears to be an oddly shaped branch, a barn owl glares ominously towards the audience, an imposing messenger of transformation, wisdom, and clear-sighted change. However, a closer inspection of the painting reveals that the branch is in fact the iconic moustache of Surrealist icon Salvador Dali delicately floating in the air. In ancient Greek mythology, the barn owl is often depicted as the enlightened animal companion of Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom and warfare. By slyly replacing the calm stability of Athena's shoulder with the twizzled curls of Dali's moustache, Romeo gleefully jams together the worlds of Surrealism and Greek mythology, repositioning the barn owl into a bizarre dreamscape where the rules of conventional logic cease to exist. Romeo pushes this idea further through his hallucinatory and unconventional use of colours, where caustic yellows and subdued earthen tones collide with electrified blues and purples to create an illusory dreamscape. Usually considered a bird of death haunting the shadows of folklore, Romeo eschews the darkness of the deep night to portray his barn-owl illuminated by the iridescent, distorted sunlight of an alternate reality. Despite navigating the unfamiliar and disorienting terrain of the subconscious, Romeo's 'Owl ~~Low~~ Rider' remains calm and composed, positioning themselves lowly and refusing to lose balance on the flimsy curls of Dali's moustache. The title of the work, *Never Fall*, delivers this sentiment with Poptimistic flair, reminding us that to be like the owl, we need to find clarity in the madness and build the confidence to never stumble, never hesitate, and never give up.



Johnny Romeo, *New Wave Rise*, 2025, acrylic and oil on canvas 153cm x 153cm (60" x 60")

NEW WAVE RISE

Soar through the skies with supersonic speed in Johnny Romeo's high-spirited homage to Astro Boy, *New Wave Rise*. In the painting, Romeo depicts Astro Boy as an unstoppable force of Poptimism surging forward with great purpose with his fist raised triumphantly in the air. Japan's beloved Boy Atom flies with such velocity and drive that he causes ripple effects through his surroundings, turning once calm waters into the roaring tempest of Hokusai's 'Great Wave' (1831) as he carves through the heavens, leaving behind a victorious motion arc in his wake. By bringing together two iconic elements of Japanese culture, Romeo tips his hat to the classic Japanese anime of his childhood, evoking the boundless freedom and youthful wonderment that cartoon heroes such as Astro Boy have inspired for generations of children. Anime's larger-than-life vibrancy is further captured in the surround sound scale of *New Wave Rise*, as deep oceanic colours crash into the cinematic churn of Hokusai's 'Great Wave', echoing the rumble of an underwater seismic quake. Beaming with unwavering confidence, Romeo's Astro Boy reminds us that to fully embrace our inner child, we need to not only 'Play Up' but 'Stay Up' and rise above life's tempestuous waters. The hopeful word assemblage alludes to Astro Boy 'staying up' in the air and wishing us good luck in our endeavours, while cleverly echoing a common sentiment in graffiti culture, where you hope that your piece 'stays up' and does not get buffed over. *New Wave Rise* buzzes with a colossal Poptimism that encourages us to believe in the impossible and pursue a new dawn of growth and possibilities. Much like the exhilarating sweep of the 'Great Wave', the title signifies how new waves cleanse the old and bring about new energy and ideas. At the same time, *New Wave Rise* refers to the iconic UK band The Style Council, who were a part of the New Wave of Pop that evolved from the punk rock in the late 1970s.



Johnny Romeo, *Peep Hole*, 2025, acrylic and oil on canvas 122cm x 122cm (48" x 48")

PEEP HOLE

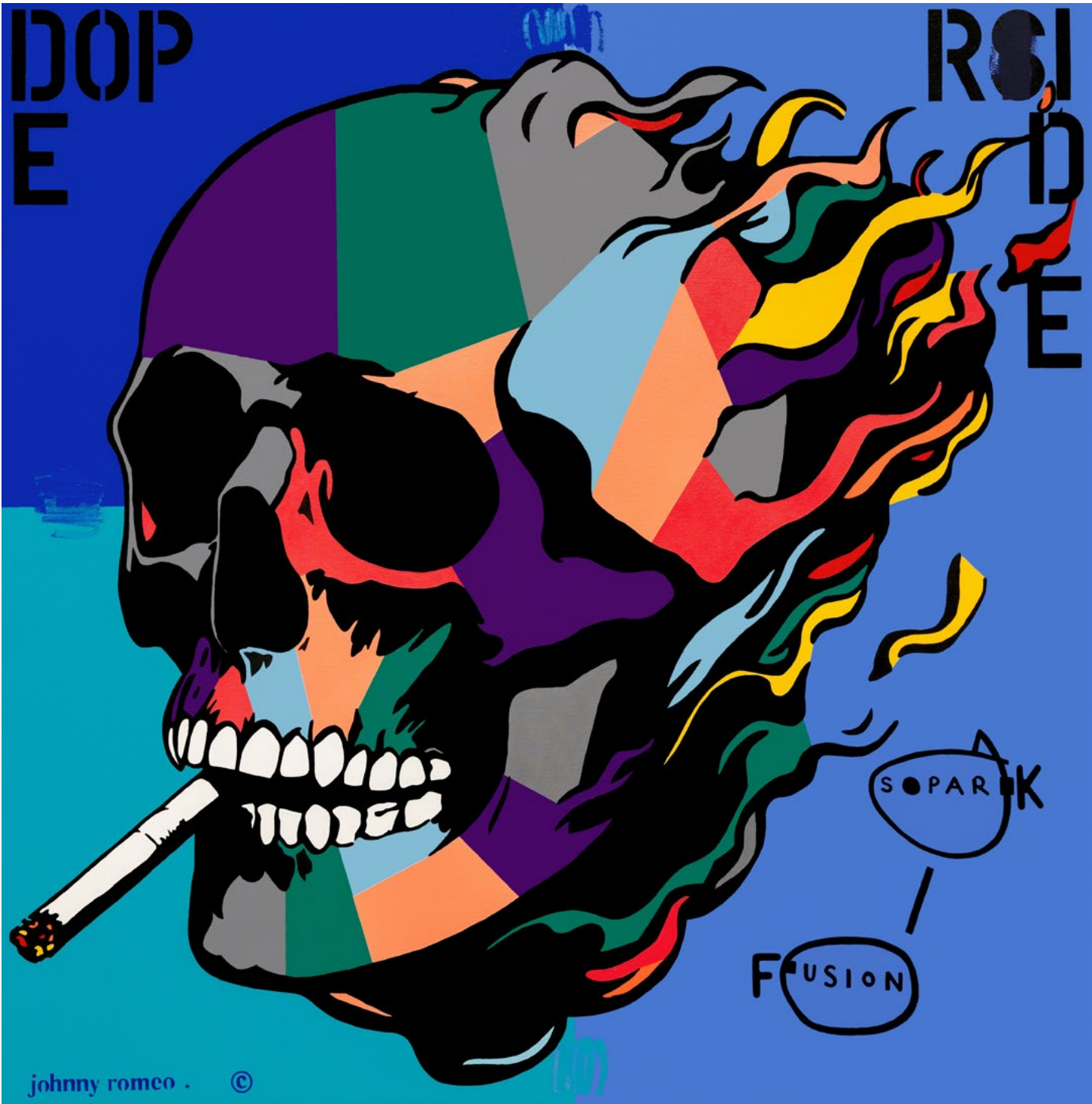
Smash through the walls of your imagination and discover a new reality with Johnny Romeo's playfully surreal work, *Peep Hole*. In the painting, a seemingly ordinary household cat drenched in nocturnal hues pushes through the fabric of the canvas with the unlikely strength of the Incredible Hulk. *Peep Hole* ruptures the line between the dreamworld and everyday life, as Romeo's intrepid feline impressively breaks through the fourth wall, staring out into the audience through its peep hole and calmly observing the world beyond the pictorial plane. Playing off the classic comic book imagery of his childhood, Romeo hilariously flips the colossal brute strength of the Incredible Hulk smashing through walls on its head by absurdly replacing him with a delicate, gentle cat who has shattered boundaries not through aggressive force but quiet determination. The symbol of the cat, empowered in its dreamlike state to achieve the impossible, acts as a powerful metaphor for overcoming obstacles, breaking past mental and personal blocks, and ultimately achieving enlightenment on your own terms. Having awakened its new powers, Romeo's reality-bending feline adventurer is no longer content with just sitting still and 'Staying Alive' but is actively trying to 'Strive Alive' towards a better, more transcendent state of being. An avid fan of music, Romeo gleefully uses the word assemblage 'Stay Alive' as a nod to the disco boogie of the film 'Staying Alive' (1983), the sequel to 'Saturday Night Fever' starring John Travolta. Romeo continues to thread musical references through the title *Peep Hole*, an allusion to The Style Council's 'Confessions of a Pop Group 1, 2 & 3'. Within the context of the painting, the cat takes on the role of The Style Council's 'peeping Tom' as it watches life take its clothes off through its surreal peep hole, beyond the reach of reality.



Johnny Romeo, *Rush Bullet Time*, 2025, acrylic and oil on canvas 153cm x 153cm (60" x 60")

RUSH BULLET TIME

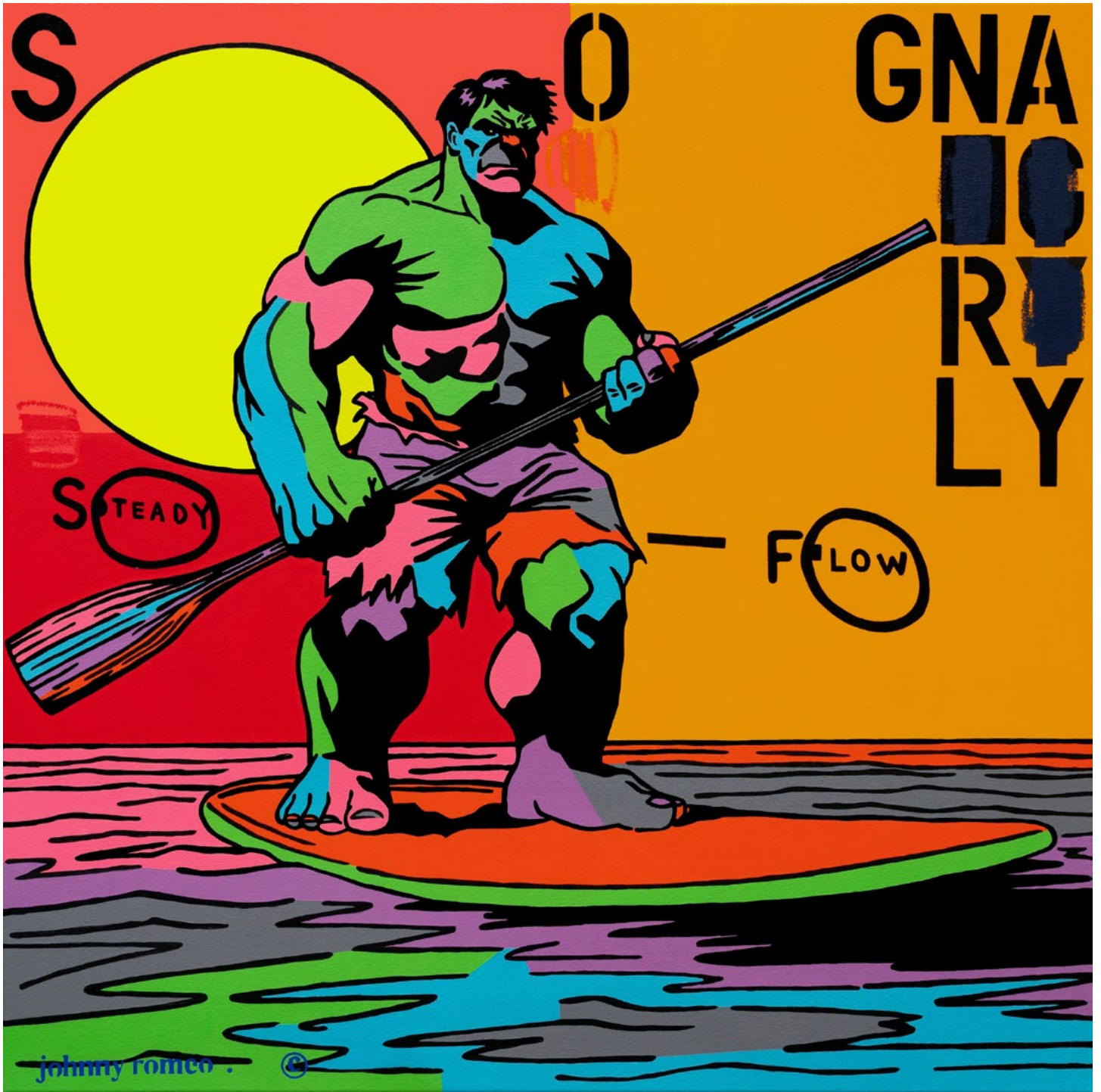
Take a leap into the rabbit hole and explore the world between reality and simulation in *Rush Bullet Time*, Johnny Romeo's futuristically mystical homage to the 1999 sci-fi classic 'The Matrix'. In the painting, 'The Matrix's' iconic heroine Trinity rises in a moment of impossible stillness as a leather-clad, reality-bending rebel suspended between worlds, her dramatic, outstretched figure visually echoing the legendary 'bullet time' visual effect popularised by the film. Time slows, air bends, and reality folds in on itself as Trinity levitates from a swirling vortex, frozen in a gravity-defying pose that suggests both ascent and descent, existence and void. Emerging from a floating hole that seemingly hovers in midair, Trinity becomes a portal between parallel worlds, blurring the lines between the real and the imaginary as she bridges the space above with the space below, the seen and the simulated. The implied gust of air spiralling upward from the mysterious abyss below Trinity evokes the sensation of velocity frozen in time, the 'rush of bullet time' where the violence of combat pauses in a moment of spiritual stillness. Cleverly jamming together sci-fi noir with the exhilarating athleticism of basketball, Romeo has captured the ultimate 'Air Max' moment, a cosmic leap of indefinite levitation beyond Michael Jordan's iconic hangtime where the laws of physics give way to the mind's power to transcend. Romeo deftly leans into the mind-bending power of Surrealism, transforming Trinity into an illusory cybergoth avatar that questions our very understanding of reality and consciousness, of what is here, and what is just a fabrication of code. With *Rush Bullet Time*, the artist channels the central paradox of 'The Matrix', signalling that in stopping time, we see motion most clearly, and in floating between worlds, we find our own inner truth.



Johnny Romeo, Spark Fusion, 2025, acrylic and oil on canvas 122cm x 122cm (48" x 48")

SPARK FUSION

Get ready to escape the kiss of death in a blaze of glory with *Spark Fusion*, Johnny Romeo's incendiary collision of melancholic Impressionism and the Marvel comic book universe. In the painting, Romeo ingeniously transforms Van Gogh's memento mori study 'Skeleton with Burning Cigarette' (1886) into the fiery Marvel anti-hero Ghost rider, a supernatural vigilante whose skull blazes with Technicolor hellfire. Van Gogh's once-static study of mortality here is given an electrifying shot of adrenaline as Ghost rider's flaming skull scorches across the canvas with infernal fury, threatening to burst through the pictorial plane while maintaining just enough cool to keep his loosely hanging cigarette in check. The title of the work humorously plays with the symbol of the cigarette, implying that the *spark fusion* used to light it has exploded into a trail of flames that has engulfed the skull. Driven by vengeance in the original Marvel comics, Romeo's riotous rendition of Ghost rider has discovered a new lease on life through the thrill of the open skies, a symbol of decay whose rebellious spirit and need for speed has driven him to literally emerge from the dark ~~side~~ of death. The flame-fuelled skull is truly in his element as he pursues the ultimate 'Dope Ride', roaring across the heavens like a chain-smoking comet cheating death and defying gravity with the indomitable swagger of a rock'n'roll road dog. Despite his newly discovered freedom, the darker colour palette of the painting suggests a sombre emotional undercurrent to the skull's triumphant escape from mortality as he realises he can never fully outrun the shadows of his past.



Johnny Romeo, *Steady Flow*, 2025, acrylic and oil on canvas 101cm x 101cm (40" x 40")

STEADY FLOW

Chase the sun and watch your rage calm into serenity in *Steady Flow*, Johnny Romeo's blissfully tranquil tribute to Marvel Comic's angriest superhero, the Incredible Hulk. Renowned for his signature Hulk Smash, the comic world's favourite jade juggernaut is often seen punching his way through a trail of destruction as he uses his fury to drive his godlike strength. In *Steady Flow*, Johnny Romeo hilariously turns our collective perception of the Hulk on its head, portraying the once gamma-fuelled wrecking ball as a Zen-like paddleboarder finally discovering his inner peace. Brimming with confectionary sweet hues and vibrant summery vibes, *Steady Flow* envisions a radiant oasis where crystal calm seas and the radiant glow of the sun perfectly capture the Hulk's newfound ability to tame the tortured waters of his psyche. No longer 'So ~~Angry~~', the Hulk has openly embraced his new identity as a beach-loving paddleboarder on a quest to make his life 'So Gnarly'. The term 'gnarly' lends the painting an adventurous, care-free spirit that echoes the sun-drenched surfers and fearless skaters who first coined the term in the 1970s to describe something 'awesome' and 'wonderful'. While humorously leaning into the absurdity of the megaton Hulk staying afloat a simple paddleboard, Romeo's emerald juggernaut symbolises that even those of us who are most weighed down by our rage can find lightness in joy. Read in this light, the title *Steady Flow* is a powerful mantra that reminds us that the journey to true happiness is a slow and steady process, where our efforts to find beauty in everyday life steer us closer towards the clear, harmonious waters of enlightenment.



Johnny Romeo, Sun Shine Side, 2025, acrylic and oil on canvas 153cm x 153cm (60" x 60")

SUN SHINE SIDE

The world can be a scary place, but you can always find comfort in the sweet things in life. In *Sun Shine Side*, Johnny Romeo takes us on a vibrant, candy coloured trip through 1960's Pop Art, reminding us that life's problems can always be solved with a simple lollipop. The painting ingeniously re-appropriates the quintessential heroine of Roy Lichtenstein's painting 'The Nurse' (1964, the same year as Magritte's 'Son of Man') as a beautiful but forlorn modern woman seeking solace through sugar. Romeo slyly removes the original nurse's cap, instead inserting a lollipop into the woman's hand as she stares anxiously over her shoulder at something unknown unfolding beyond the canvas. There is a simmering look of fear in the woman's eyes that lends *Sun Shine Side* a palpable sense of drama and suspense, which is bolstered by the painting's hyper-saturated, fever dream colour palette. While we cannot see the source of the woman's alarm, we can infer from Lichtenstein's own fascination with tragic romances that she is witnessing her relationship fall apart before her very eyes. The lollipop, small as it may be, acts as a lifeline for the shocked woman, a singular source of solace at a time when the world as she knows it is crumbling around her. It also acts as a cheekily subtle nod to Surrealism and Salvador Dali, who designed the iconic logo for the popular Spanish confectionary brand Chupa Chups. Read in this light, the word assemblage 'Be ~~Thunderous~~ Wondrous' is a declaration of resilience from the woman that she will not be consumed by the 'thunderous' rage of her break-up but instead find happiness in the 'wonder' of simply being herself. Romeo continues to ride this Poptimistic wave through the shimmering positivity of the title *Sun Shine Side*, a powerful affirmation that even in our darkest moments we can find hope by staring into sunlight and embracing the brighter side to life.



Johnny Romeo, *Too Funky*, 2025, acrylic and oil on canvas 101cm x 101cm (40" x 40")

TOO FUNKY

Dust off your dancing shoes and whip on your Sunday best as you head to the Church of disco with *Too Funky*, Johnny Romeo's bold celebration of Pop music icon George Michael. *Too Funky* struts onto the canvas with unapologetic glamour as Romeo reimagines the beloved singer as a sanctified queer icon adorned with a vibrant Renaissance-style halo and chic aviator sunglasses. Straddling the line between the sacred and the sensual, the work playfully riffs on Sydney artist Scott Marsh's infamous mural of a Wham! -era Michael painted as the patron saint of Pride. Marsh's mural sparked headlines after it was defaced and painted over in what many consider a hateful attack on the piece's celebration of the LGBTQ community. However, what couldn't stay on the streets returns to the canvas in radiant defiance as Romeo carries on Marsh's mission, upgrading the youthful vibes of the original mural with an older, wiser BBC portrait of George Michael as a proud, elder champion of gay rights. Brimming with iridescent colours, *Too Funky* is a camp, confident collision of divinity and disco, where sexual freedom and primal desire take to the dancefloor in the ultimate 'Shake ~~Down~~'. Romeo pushes this idea further with the word assemblage 'Shake Town', inviting his audience to join a rainbow congregation where all forms of love are celebrated and dancing becomes a radical, revolutionary act. With his love of dance music and club culture, George Michael has penned some of Pop culture's most lauded anthems of liberation. The spirit of Michael's music is vibrantly captured in the title *Too Funky*, which takes its name from one Michael's most recognisable tunes ('Too Funky, 1992) and boldly reframes the song's libidinous call to 'show you heaven if you want me to' into a holy hymn to free love and self-expression.



Johnny Romeo, Top Dweller, 2025, acrylic and oil on canvas 122cm x 122cm (48" x 48")

TOP DWELLER

Dive into the kaleidoscopic depths of the subconscious with Johnny Romeo's vibrantly absurd homage to Belgian artist Rene Magritte, *Top Dweller*. In the painting, Romeo takes Magritte's surrealist visions to hilariously absurdist extremes, as he re-imagines Magritte's enigmatic apple-faced 'Son of Man' (1964) as a debonair fish decked out in a razor-sharp suit while a bowler hat hovers mysteriously above his head. The motif of the fish cleverly harkens back to another of Magritte's famous paintings, 'The Presence of Spirit' (1960), which depicts a man in a bowler hat standing between an eagle and a fish – a fitting metaphor for Romeo's own tightrope walk between the real and the unreal. Bathed in dreamy, incandescent hues, Romeo's 'Head Fish' stares aloofly at the audience in the throes of a fever dream, his clammy, wide-eyed expression capturing the dizzy euphoria of a surreal 'Head Rush'. In many ways, the figure feels like a fish out of water, swimming through the slippery 'Fish Head soup' of his own inner psyche, while maintaining his cool with an unmistakable Mod swagger. Despite finding himself disoriented between the tangible and the imaginary, Romeo's suit-donning fish man is learning to own the surrealism of his new reality, an aquatic creature navigating his way on land as he tries to find his own brave new day. The spirit of polished rebellion and subversive confidence in British Mod culture further ripples through the painting in the title *Top Dweller*, a cheeky slice of Cockney rhyming slang for Paul Weller, the frontman of iconic mod bands such as The Jam and The Style Council.



*Johnny Romeo, Heat Wave, 2025,
Giclee Print on Innova Paper
80cm x 80cm
(Limited Edition /10)*

HEAT WAVE

To celebrate his thrilling new Sydney exhibition, *Paradise Found*, Australia's premiere Pop powerhouse Johnny Romeo is launching an exclusive, limited-edition print alongside his explosive series of new original paintings. *Heat Wave* is a vibrant slice of oceanic Surrealism that masterfully blends the emotionally charged Pop Art of Roy Lichtenstein with a mind-bending Surrealist sensibility. The print updates Roy Lichtenstein's tortured 'Drowning Girl' (1963) for the Feminist MeToo age, as Romeo transforms her from a tear-stricken girl engulfed by her emotions into a confident scuba diver navigating the tempestuous waters of life. While the 'chaos curves' of the Technicolour tide swirl around her, Romeo's scuba girl looks resolutely towards the audience, defiantly rising from the murky depths as an empowered figure using her trusty scuba mask to resist the watery confines that seek to contain her. Romeo's lush blues, glimmering greens and pelagic purples surge from the print with the breathtaking force of a '~~Deep~~ Wave', lending the work a dreamlike quality that mirrors the scuba girl's fearless plunge into the depths of self-discovery. Ending on a summery note, Romeo pays homage to the scorching sun of Sydney in December through the title *Heat Wave*, the perfect time to take a dive into the deep.

BIOGRAPHY

Johnny Romeo is an internationally acclaimed Australian painter, widely regarded as Australia's leading Pop artist. As a seminal figure in the global Neo-Expressionist Pop movement, Romeo fuses the irreverent swagger of rock'n'roll with the visual semiotics of comic books and the raw immediacy of street art. GQ Magazine Australia aptly described his aesthetic as 'part punk, part pop', a stylistic hybrid that defines Romeo's vivid, neon-drenched works and its balance of candy colour explosions and punchy, rebellious imagery. Romeo's signature Kitsch Pop paintings are electrifying visual assemblages, combining Technicolour palettes and urban iconography to produce a visceral, high-octane art experience.

With sharp wit and a keen eye for social critique, Romeo is a trailblazing culture jammer in the international art scene. His work explores the construction of identity within contemporary culture, examining the pressures of life in the digital age and the omnipresent influence of celebrity figures, ever-changing social trends and the 24-hour news cycle. Through his bold, graphic compositions, Romeo reframes the relentless stream of popular media, transforming familiar visual tropes into biting, ironic reflections of our image-saturated world. Standing at the crossroads of Pop and protest, Romeo's paintings are playful and subversive, repurposing the visual language of Pop culture, advertising, music, comic book nostalgia and silver screen entertainment to comment on the absurdities of modern life.

Over the last decade, Johnny Romeo has enjoyed a successive number of critically acclaimed and sold-out exhibitions across Australia, New Zealand and the US. Romeo has continued his dominance as a world-class Pop artist with acclaimed and sell-out exhibitions in Sydney, Perth, Auckland, Canberra, Byron Bay, the Gold Coast and New

Orleans. In 2018, Romeo notably exhibited at the Australian Consulate-General in New York. He was a highly celebrated feature artist in the HOTA Gold Coast's Sign of the Times group exhibition, alongside street art juggernauts Banksy, Blek le Rat and Swoon. A major force in contemporary Pop art, Romeo is represented by many top galleries both in Australia and overseas.

Romeo has graced numerous prominent publications such as the Sydney Morning Herald, Vogue, Australian Art Review, Artist Profile and No Cure Magazine. Television features include the ABC 7:30 Report, Foxtel's STVDIO, and the ABC documentary 'Conquest of Space: Science Fiction & Contemporary Art', written and hosted by renowned art critic Dr. Andrew Frost. In 2023, he appeared in the podcast 'Tell Us Something We Don't Know - A Serious Chat with a Comedian', hosted by internationally recognised Australian comic Joe Avati.

On the international stage, Johnny Romeo is a Pop Art tour de force, with hugely celebrated exhibitions in the US, including New York, Los Angeles, Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, Williamsport, Harrisburg), Florida and New Orleans, as well as Auckland and Napier, New Zealand and Malmö, Sweden. He has participated in several high-profile group shows across the US and Europe, including Language Art, alongside childhood hero and Pop Art icon Robert Indiana. Romeo made a massive splash as a celebrated featured artist in POP AUSTIN 2017, exhibiting with contemporary art powerhouses like Damien Hirst, Jeff Koons and Mr. Brainwash. Over the last decade, Romeo has made many standout appearances on US national television and universities. Since 2015, Romeo has released many books examining his paintings and art-making practice, including TV Land (2015), -



the 10-year retrospective survey *Plastic Fantastic* (2017) and *Pump Up the Jams: Culture Jamming in the Works of Johnny Romeo* (2019). As well as these books, there have been a number of publications produced by leading galleries on his work.

As one of the biggest names in Pop Art today, Romeo's works are highly sought-after globally and held in prominent Australian and international public and private collections. He has collaborated on illustrious projects with the likes of leading US snowboarding company Gilson Boards, craft beer alchemists Zeroday Brewing Company, world-famous punk band Blink 182 and luxury car brand Lexus Australia.

