



# Rebel with a cause: Tony Albert

*Stay Woke*

By Noelle Faulkner | 24/07/2017 8:17:38 AM



**Noelle Faulkner**

Also a contributor to Vogue and GQ, Büro's resident rev-head and one woman culture guide, Noelle writes about the things that get her off: film, music, art, travel, tech, cars and booze. Can roadtrip.

[READ MORE](#)

From body image to self-worth, politics, culture, gender and beyond, there's more than one way to send a message. In this series, Noelle Faulkner talks to four artists pushing against the grain in their own way.

Sombre portraits of Aboriginal men with targets on their chests; a gallery lined with images of Aboriginal souvenir ashtrays on kitsch tablecloths, filled with blow-up neon aliens; vintage objects featuring Aboriginal people, surrounded in military camouflage fabric with the words "WAKE UP" front and centre ... Tony Albert's work can be playful, it can be angry, it can be cool, cultural, humorous and bitter, but it is always thought provoking - it does not mince words. Through his work, Albert lends a voice to the voiceless, shines a light on the stories and experiences of Aboriginal people and aims to alert, above all. "I don't fight for anything but I stand for many things, one of them is art. Art has the ability to: heal; transcend culture, age and language; change the way we see the world and; educate," he says.



### **What does your work mean to you?**

I have a deeply personal connection to my work. In art, I often feel like a bit of an outsider. I am not a great expert on the history of art, but what I do know about is my life, the life of my family and the life of my people. And this forms the underlying basis for my practice.

### **What makes you want to chase this form of expression?**

For me, discovering the work of artists such as Gordon Bennett and Tracey Moffatt was life changing. Seeing their work for the first time, in high school, not only cemented my desire to be an artist but, more importantly, offered me a sense of belonging. [The work] made me realise that I wasn't alone. I found their courage and fearlessness inspiring. Like my idols, I aspire to create work that is not only visually appealing but also acts as a vehicle for stimulating

discussion and creating change. As an artist, I have the opportunity to communicate historical truths that are not part of the broader education system.



**When have you found yourself pushing against the grain?**

I am undeniably political. Unfortunately, political art has a bad reputation for being overly preachy or didactic ... I feel my work is successful when it is a mix of being contemplative, conceptual, challenging and intellectual. I don't wish to tell the viewer exactly how to think; rather, I want to engage them in a conversation or plant a seed for thought. Perhaps a 50-metre-long wall emblazoned with "PAY ATTENTION MOTHER FUCKERS" is a little less subtle than I would usually aim for, but some works demand this abrasiveness.

*Tony Albert is represented by Sullivan+Strumpf*