

# ANIMAL instinct

## On why he chose particular animals to paint

**Dogs and cows:** I started with dogs – pitbull terriers – because they bear witness to our lives. Then I went on to cows because they surround where I live, and because cattle were in the media a lot last year due to issues around the live export trade between Australia and Indonesia.

**Camels:** They're actually representative of refugees and their journey; the camel is also an outsider that has adapted to the foreign environment in Australia so well that it has created problems in relation to indigenous species.

**Pigs:** They've been used in experiments to grow human organs.

**Water buffalos:** I'm newly intrigued by these animals, along with cows, in

Born in the UK and later moving between Hong Kong, London and Malta, CHRISTIAN PALMER has lived in Australia (Byron Bay and Sydney) since 2001. His urban contemporary art, which has been shown alongside the likes of famed street artist Banksy, is making its way to Singapore next month in the form of a solo show, Famous Last Words, at REDSEA Gallery.

terms of how they are viewed in different cultures from the West to India; and so I have cast the buffalo as a kind of "oracle".

**Elephants:** These relate to memory and knowledge that has maybe been forgotten, or a longing for how things used to be.

**Donkeys:** The donkeys are soul mates wandering the land in search of something that seems to be attainable but is always out of reach.



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**On why he prefers to paint ugly animals**

It gives them an edge that works with the words on the canvas. I wouldn't write anything that's on a Hallmark card, so I wouldn't choose an animal that is cute and fluffy either. I choose to use animals that are misfits or outsiders and can offer an unusual perspective on the human condition and the confusion we create in our lives. They're not making judgements, only observations. Taking the animal out of context along with a seemingly random lyric or phrase and marrying them together creates ironic fragmented truth.

**On how his “expat experiences” have informed his art**

The places I've lived in and visited have had a big influence on my outlook on life and the way I approach my work. Being born and educated in the UK gave me a privileged start in life, but more importantly my mixed heritage and experiences of the Maltese Islands ensured there was always duality in my life and personality. The mix of British sarcasm and a Mediterranean island mentality have coloured the way I view the world.



Visiting my father in Hong Kong at age 12 was my first culture shock – and the gateway to more travel in Asia. It blew my preconceptions away and gave me a thirst for alternate culture. I travelled as much as I could in search of new ways to live a life.

At art college, I realised how many talented people there are. I knew I had to grow in a variety of ways to have something worthwhile to communicate, to tell my story and maybe impart some truths that resonate with my experiences.

The most important thing I have learnt from travelling is empathy. How that translates onto a canvas is not exactly clear to me, but when I paint it is me on the canvas: my story, my love, my pain, my life.

**On using an old studio door as a canvas**

I took the door out of the studio because I wasn't getting enough light and I put in some double doors with glass. It's got that kind of history to it; it was there before I bought the house, it was an old shed and I converted the studio. It's got what was probably my first stencil on it – “How can I be a better human?” – this was the first one I did for the street. And it's got Yoda on the other side, with a spray can in his hand. These were all for street-pieces; I was testing out the method at the time. [a](#)

**A word from the gallery**

“Our space presents Christian with the perfect opportunity to scale up his work in size and subject and create pieces that really draw on the strength of his fine-art background as well as that of his graphics and illustrative experience. This is a really strong collection that showcases the best of Christian's ability to create playful and eye-catching art that also challenges, provokes and invariably amuses.”

– Chris Churcher, Managing Director of REDSEA Gallery

“Famous Last Words” runs from 5 to 26 October at REDSEA Gallery, Block 9 Dempsey Road, #01-10 Dempsey Hill. 6732 6711 | redseagallery.com