

## Darren Sylvester

It's received wisdom we live in a world choking on its own insincerity – where mindless consumption has replaced authentic need; where the crocodile tears of a celebrity rehab patient are a made-for-TV version of genuine emotion.

All of this, we're told, is the media's fault. With every new innovation in domestic technology, our lives get easier, quicker, sexier, while our humanity quietly slips away.

Darren Sylvester's work can be seen as a response to this crisis of "the human condition". And, in keeping with the pop culture he mines, it's an ironic and ambivalent one. Through the very contemporary media that's supposed to be wringing us dry of authentic feeling – digital photography and video particularly – this artist explores some decidedly romantic emotional themes: 'the fragility of relationships, the vulnerability of love, and intensity of hope for the future', according to his William Mora Galleries' profile.

Sylvester's slick, high-resolution photographic images are inflected with both the banality of lifestyle culture and a nagging sense of the age-old existential question: 'is that all there is?' His individual photographic pieces are often the singular distillation of a narrative process which unfolds over a few months. Coupled with the artist's written fragments – whether short stories or pithy titles – they form a contemporary riff on our relationship to the world, to each other, and to ourselves.

It's third-time lucky for Sylvester as far as this 50 most collectable list goes. He's represented in some major collections, including the National Gallery of Australia, and is a favourite with a number of prominent private collectors, Sir Elton John among them.

With titles like *Don't Lose Yourself in Tomorrow*, *Let Hopes and Dreams Be Things We Can Achieve*, *We Can Do Anything*, *We Can Go Anywhere*, as well as *Faceless*, *Anonymous and Nothing*, and *Your First Love Is Your Last Love* – existential angst never seemed so alluring.

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**Born:** 1974

**Contacts:** Johnston Gallery, Perth; Sullivan+Strumpf Fine Art, Sydney; William Mora Galleries, Melbourne

**Price range:** photographs \$4,400; sculptures \$4,400-\$9,900

**Showing this quarter:** Sullivan+Strumpf Fine Art, Sydney from 19 February to 9 March 2008



Top: Darren Sylvester, *Frightened of Something Happening, Frightened of Nothing Happening*, 2007. Lightjet print, 90 x 120cm.

Bottom: Darren Sylvester, *All You Need to Know You Knew Early*, 2007. Lightjet print, 90 x 120cm.

COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND SULLIVAN + STRUMPF FINE ART, SYDNEY.