

# Going Head first

several works enigmatically titled, 1504/95 and 26/3/95 - 9/6/95, capture the direct eloquence of Macleod's oil on canvas technique, as his subjects convey a depth and presence for all their unblinking gazes freeze them in a moment.

With many exhibitions featuring a retrospective element, the development of the artist's skills and perspectives over time is often a seductive insight.

Macleod's treatment of his figures in relation to their context is intriguing to watch. A metamorphosis occurs, beginning with earlier works (1984-1988) such as Stretched, Handstand and Bridget where intriguing figures remain distinctly separate from their dominated surroundings to the evolution of Hot and Cold (2000) where only a suggestion of the human figure remains, subsumed by a frenetic landscape.

Within the blurring distinctions of human and natural forms, there is a strong sense of mortality conveyed which is echoed in the dark, natural palette of colours linking theme-like throughout the

works. While there is much that tricks the eye in works such as Remembrance blue and Remembrance yellow there is also a stark quality that only serves to highlight the Macleod's style.

Although some people persist in attributing impressionistic and abstract styles to a lack of skill in execution, the haunting solidity of Macleod's prone figures in the two Remembrance works defies this assessment.

Enhancing the visual appeal of his figures is the wonderful cross-hatching brushwork that entices the eye from all angles as the light plays across the textured surfaces.

Needless to say, Head like a hole demands attention with its epic scope drawing the focus to one element of the portrait only to find this becomes a doorway to another level, another layer and certainly another interpretation.

For all that Head like a hole may be the drawcard for many viewers, it remains one aspect only of Euan Macleod's distinctive talent and range within this exhibition.

**Paintings 1984-2000**  
By Euan Macleod  
Cairns Regional Gallery  
Closes October 29

**Review by Karen van Harskamp**

**F**OLLOWING hot on the heels of the Matisse exhibition, the Cairns Regional Gallery is treating appreciators of fine art to another prestigious installation, Euan Macleod's Paintings 1984—2000, featuring 1999's Archibald Portrait Prize, Head like a hole.

Those who like their art soufle and of the Ken Done school of colour might be better served to look elsewhere as this exhibition is characterised by a sombre intensity and a discomfiting darkness that is more an invitation to explore further rather than an obstacle.

Opening the display space,



**EUAN Macleod** at last Friday's opening in Cairns.