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Lost My Memory in Hollywood, 2009-2012 & The New Yorker 3 by Diego Singh

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I think I speak for most people when I say that I have never felt the desire to contemplate the artistic qualities and cultural significance of my favourite pair of jeans; but I am glad that American based, Argentine-born artist Diego Singh has – or at least appears as though he has.

Of all the works by Singh currently on display at Sydney's Mclemoi Gallery, the most striking are the large, mainly blue canvases that dominate the gallery space. Although the imposing nature of the bright and highly textural paintings is at first somewhat unsettling, a strange sense of familiarity quickly takes over.

It might take a few moments, but the dominant blue and grey backgrounds, the textural qualities and the appearance of seam-like patterns soon evolve into what would normally be instantly recognisable as denim. They are, however, not really denim; Singh actually paints the realistic denim pattern by hand and uses the texture of the linen canvas to full effect.

The fact that the primary subject of Singh's paintings is not immediately identifiable alludes to a cultural phenomenon that is characterised by varying levels of disconnect from particular subjects and objects that we are constantly exposed to in our everyday lives.

That noise; that hum; that all-consuming, constant sensual bombardment we experience every day, and which in many ways inhibits our ability to assess and examine what influences our decisions and behaviours, appears to be represented in some of the "denim" paintings as bright and energetic swirls reminiscent of the intoxicating glow emitted by big city neon lights.

One of the most noticeable characteristics of Singh's "denim" series is the varying number of layers visible in each painting that suggests that they are at varying stages of completion – which they actually are.

Many of the artist's paintings are completed in-house at the location of the exhibition and display responses to past experiences in past exhibition spaces which are added to as different layers by the artist as his artistic journey unfolds.

For many people a pair of jeans is a wearable, biographical account of past experiences and events that are identifiable by the rips, tears and stains that have become fashionable components of jean culture.

By reusing and reinterpreting his canvases, Singh is treating each piece like a continually developing and changing story. In the same way that a pair of jeans changes over time in conjunction with the lifestyle of the wearer, Singh's paintings accumulate the distinct markings of different venues and experiences.

The fact that people purchase brand new pairs of jeans that have been given the appearance of well worn jeans is testament to the influence that fashion and popular culture has on the decisions we make. Far from being a mere homage to jean culture, Singh's "denim" series is a complex exploration of the way we interpret and react to the interminable and innumerable series of images and messages that we are bombarded with every day.