“I thought that would make a great painting,” he recalls. “Shortly after that I went out driving at night with a camera rigged up in my car, hoping to capture something like what I saw and felt watching that film.”

Lloyd uses photographic source material and then transforms it into paintings of roads and mountains that do have a distinct cinematic feel, something he deliberately intensifies by simplifying and blurring his scenes. “There is an aura of anticipation that surrounds cinematic imagery,” he says. “Establishment shots at the beginning of new scenes are very interesting images because they show a place where nothing is happening now, but you know something will happen there very soon. The image is pregnant with a sense of what will come.”

This feeling of suspense is cranked up a notch in the artist’s paintings of asteroids, hovering above roads illuminated by headlights. For Lloyd, these enigmatic images are more about the human experience and imaginative possibility than impending doom. “Driving at night feels like a cinematic experience,” he explains. “The way the headlights constantly reveal only a few metres of road ahead is also like a metaphor for life: we can only see so far ahead into our future. The rear view mirror is completely black, just as the past is gone forever.” — TRACEY CLEMENT

Brisbane

The Last Supper
Ben Quilty
Jan Murphy Gallery

Start ——— 27 May
End ———— 17 June

In recent years Ben Quilty’s profile has been elevated with his human rights advocacy, notably for Myuran Sukumaran who was killed by firing squad for his role in drug trafficking in Indonesia. Quilty’s paintings have always explored social concerns in a gutsy way. His impastoed excursions on these themes (and more) contrast the pleasures of colourful and thickly layered paint with emotionally loaded issues. Their power has seen his work become highly sought after.

Last year, Quilty’s interest in the international refugee crisis saw him travel to Greece, Serbia and Lebanon with World Vision Australia where he witnessed the trauma, dysfunction and disease caused by global unrest. As a result, this exhibition, titled The Last Supper, features a double edge of pessimism and rebirth. Quilty ponders, in painterly terms alone, the confronting state of the world and humanity today. In contrast to his profile as a media talent in recent years, in this work, he suggests, “Painting for me is the most direct way of making a statement... The title of the show suggests a gathering of leaders and philosophers, terrorists and generals, obfuscating their responsibilities to the planet and to its people.

The paintings generated along these lines are abstracted mutations of the human head, akin in their angst-ridden psychic pain to work by Australian surrealist James Gleeson. There is a violence implied here - an unspeakable angst - with the work a psychic outpouring concerning a seemingly insoluble problem. Quilty told Art Guide Australia, "I've been trying to distill the psychosis of the world into paintings, without leaving my studio... I've been working with live models, from all parts of the human condition, very young and very old, male, female, disabled and myself. There is a violence in the process... The works aren't obvious, but there are passages of figuration that I hope suggest parables about the self-indulgent madness of contemporary societies.'

Their depiction of a world in extremis makes the point with palpable force. — LOUISE MARTIN-CHEW