Alex Hamilton

PROFILE: **LOQUI PAATSCH**
PHOTOGRAPHY: **ELKE MEITZEL**

For more than four decades, Alex Hamilton has explored how cities are not just physical structures but repositories of experience. His practice, at once analytical and intuitive, treats the built environment as a site of memory and imagination. Through this lens, the urban landscape becomes both subject and metaphor: a place continually reconstructed by perception, nostalgia, and time's quiet erosion.

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Kaleidoscopic, layered, and architectural, Alex Hamilton's drawings unfurl like cities glimpsed in dreams: fragmented, symbolic, and charged with an uncanny, nostalgic familiarity. Rendered with pigment pens, markers, photocopies, layers of Perspex and hand-tinted ink washes, these works feel both ancient and algorithmic, as if filtered through a clouded lens and then refracted through a broken scanner.

Crumples are Half Box Half Door, 2025, his recent solo exhibition at Jacob Hoerner Galleries in St. Kilda, brings together a series of large-scale works on paper. Tinted with blanched fluorescents and embellished with enigmatic fragments: "makeshift," "eminent nowhere," "transparent head," text, gesture, and absence form the backbone of these works, an eroded poetic logic where architectural forms become ciphers and gaps become as significant as marks.

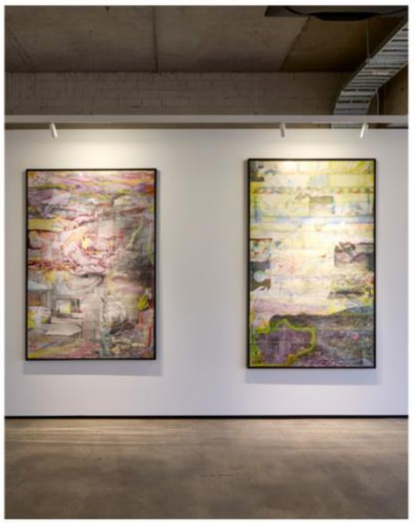
Based in Melbourne, Hamilton's cross-disciplinary practice covers drawing, music, and expanded forms of writing. His home studio in the northern suburbs hums with activity: hundreds of delicate ink bottles, a trumpet, rolls and rolls of drawings and photocopies. During my visit, he gestures toward a large unfinished work pinned to the wall: a hazy greyscale print of a Masters Hardware store, almost obliterated by layers of ink and annotated with floating text blocks. "I like that kind of fragmented syntax of space," Hamilton notes. "Hiding the words, intertwining them with images. A lot of it is that sort of long-term planning, but it's also the momentary recognition of seeing patterns." Throughout *Crumples are Half Box Half Door*, viewers encountered a looping push-pull between solidity and dissolution. Towering shapes suggested big-box stores or mass housing blocks, but always just out of reach, buried under washes of ink or masked by layers of scrawls and meticulous outlines. Figures and vehicles drifted like spectres through fractured streetscapes, their edges softened, their mass weightless.

Often working on pianola rolls or archival paper, Hamilton creates dense, scrolling compositions where modernist buildings dissolve into fields of gestural abstraction, and cars float weightlessly in pastel skies. At once exacting

01 Installation view detail, Alex Hamilton at Sydney Contemporary, 2024, Jacob Hoerner Galleries, Melbourne. Photographed by Jake Taylor.

02 Installation view, Alex Hamilton, *Crumples are Half Box Half Door*, 2025, exhibition at Jacob Hoerner Galleries St Kilda, Victoria. In view left, *Graceful drive traveling molecule of deep blue air, eminent zero going nowhere*, 2025; *The passing blue car heading west Whish of tyres, Spells out its message of ocean and fires*, 2025. Photographed by Ilona Savcenko.

03 *Wave drawing with Slipstream*, 2014, Pitt pen, photocopy Canson watercolour paper, 41.4 x 54 cm. Photo Alex Hamilton.



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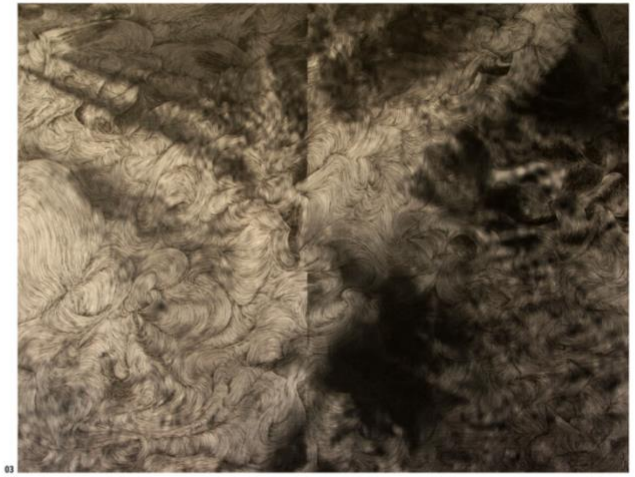

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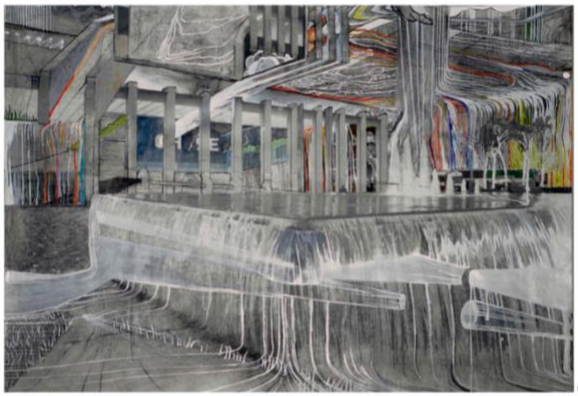
and intuitive, his mark-making becomes a kind of score, a notational system for navigating psychic landscapes shaped by architecture, text, sound, and everyday systems of information. A trumpet player and musician, Hamilton's process begins with accumulation and improvisation. "I dream these tunes, the visuals and sound—there are multiple things that all converge on the page," Hamilton says. He fills dozens of A5 notebooks with meticulous, rhythmic, and surreal sketches. Some pages contain minute architectural plans or topographical diagrams. Others resemble maps to imaginary cities, haunted by repeated symbols: burnt-out sedans, brutalist facades, silhouetted human forms. A sense of spatial translation—of reinterpreting the built environment through a personal, poetic lens—is central to his practice. Drawing, for Hamilton, is less about representation and more about navigation. His preparatory drawings feel like visual dérives: dreamlike walks through the residue of cities, advertising, memory, and digital space.

Hamilton spent years working in Prague, London, and New York, drawing inspiration from the melange of architectural styles and buildings, seeing elaborate baroque structures side by side with the angular planes of new brutalism. "Something would start off with a notion, the vibe of concrete poetry, but soon it would actually become a visual work so that there was both a flat surface, and a linguistic surface with text and font, and architects' realisations of future projects. Type, drawing, depiction, but not quite getting there. Instead, there are these scrappy lines and contradictions," Hamilton recalls of his drawings. "These resonant fragments that claim to be real, and change the way you look at the whole."

His titles are abstract and evocative, revealing an ongoing engagement with literature, particularly modernist poetry and absurdism. Samuel Beckett remains a key influence, as do poets Elizabeth Bishop and W. H. Auden, as well as theorist Mark Fisher's writings on lost futures and late stage capitalism. Against the conceptual backdrop of his work, Hamilton is attuned to both the material immediacy of drawing and the playful qualities of language.

In *Graceful drive traveling molecule of deep blue air, eminent zero going nowhere*, 2025,—a particularly striking work from *Crumples are Half Box Half Door*—yellow figures clown and dance between lilac lines, flowing and cresting like waves. Hamilton uses layers of Perspex to build depth in his compositions, with sharp, black lines colliding against a faded photocopy and organic, fungi-like orange gills and delicate, sepia lilies. At first glance, the composition seems rigid, but on closer inspection, it vibrates with human fragility. The lines tremble, the ink bleeds, and faint notations that resemble blueprints flicker through like ghosts of a previous draft. His work feels

04 *While evil shown on maps grows stranger, threatening danger, the sun bossy anchor escapes the festering canker*, 2024, acrylic paint ink, repurposed acrylic paper, 167.5 x 115.6 cm. Photo Alex Hamilton.
05 *Crossroads 4*, 2006, acrylic ink, charcoal pencil, photocopy watercolour paper, 83.5 x 113 cm. Saatchi Collection, London. Photo Alex Hamilton.



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presciently digital: layered like a browser history, dense with simultaneity, half-dreamed and saved to a disappearing hard drive. "There's a quote from Benjamin that interests me: 'people are more interested in a fire in a Paris attic than a revolution in Madrid,'" he observes. In an attention economy saturated with novelty and bizarre juxtapositions, Hamilton is interested in our immediate experience of modernity inundated with images of disaster from a distance, with small apocalypses unfolding every day on our phones. *The passing blue car heading west Whish of tires, Spells out its message of ocean and fires,* 2025, subtly expresses this mood of distanced crisis through bands of soft yellow, swirling clouds, and charcoal tones drawing down, as ash falls after fire.

There is a delight in unpacking Hamilton's references, along with letting these marks lead your eye through these inhabited surreal spaces—from local references and shopping centre signage to Russian Constructivism, poetry, and the tech fever dreams of Silicon Valley. This tension between control and letting go, between precise architectural outlines and the collapse into chaos is what gives his works their charge; they sit between drawing and painting. Repetition becomes meditation and erasure becomes its own kind of inscription. He maps what it feels like to live in a world oversaturated with a constant flood of images and information, where architecture, memory, advertising, and infrastructure all blend into a singular visual field. His drawing-paintings do not resolve this world; they inhabit it, stretch it, crumble it, and begin again.

Exhibition

Alex Hamilton
5 November - 12 December 2026
Jacob Hoerner Galleries, Melbourne

06 *Chase Fountain Manhattan*, 2017, pen, Pitt pen, gouache, charcoal pencil, airbrush, photocopy watercolour paper, 60.7 x 88.2 cm. Collection Patrick Heide Contemporary Art, London.
07 *Masters 4*, 2013, pen, ink, charcoal pencil, pastel, airbrush, Pitt pen, gouache, photocopy archival paper, 85.3 x 125 cm. Photo Alex Hamilton.
08 *Scape, so we went for a long walk,1*, 1987, pastel, paper, c. 97 x 117 cm. Collection of Elizabeth Cross. Photo Alex Hamilton.

Images courtesy of the artist, Jacob Hoerner Galleries, Melbourne and Patrick Heide Contemporary Art, London.