

## *Just an Ordinary Lunch*

### **Rachel Hajek**

My body of work titled 'Just an Ordinary Lunch' consists of nine oil paintings on canvas panels of various sizes. The body of work features the individual ingredients of a salad sandwich, with the final sandwich as the focal point in the centre.

Through my piece, I intended to address the declining mental health of our society. However, rather than focus on negatives, I want to encourage people to change their perspective and find in the ordinary. I believe that declining mental health is often due to the rush of information and fear of the future. I want to direct the attention away from that and into a more appreciative and calm light. With the intent to capture the beauty of mundane tasks I have illustrated the small intimate steps of preparing a lunch. Throughout this body of work, I aimed to highlight those mundane moments often overshadowed by the rush of everyday life, ultimately portraying a sense of peace and understated elegance.

The sandwich itself symbolises the mundane routine of daily life. In its familiarity and predictability, this scenario is relatable for the viewer which helps to convey my message. The task of preparing a basic lunch explores the scenario where some people find it difficult to do even basic daily tasks. However, I have changed the perspective and showed this everyday activity in a positive light.

The individual ingredients in the sandwich symbolise various responsibilities and steps that make up a daily routine. As well as being visually appealing, I aim to encourage a connection to other senses such as smell and sound. For example, the sound of the wrapper coming off the soft bread or the smell of the pickles. This was achieved by carefully capturing the details that assist in the painting's sense of realism. Overall, the sandwich mirrors the routine of everyday life, and acts as a reminder that even in the most mundane and predictable routines there are moments of beauty.

Through explorations inspired by South Australian Visual Artist, Fran Callen I explored how elements of line and movement can be used to capture a moment in time. Influenced by Edward Hopper, I developed my subject matter with a focus on ordinary moments in a daily routine. With practical exploration of charcoal I developed my knowledge of form and tone. I then changed directions into the art style of still life, exploring works by Paul Cézanne, Tsering Hannaford, and Giorgio Morandi. Through analysis of these artists I deepened my understanding of compositional techniques and the use of colour to create balance in an artwork. I was able to use this understanding when creating my compositions. Inspired by Tsering Hannaford and her realistic depictions of glass, I included transparent structures such as the water glass and the bread bag. Inspired by Giorgio Morandi's 1940-1960s still life series, I applied a neutral colour palette and minimalistic compositions.

For each piece I used Winsor and Newton water mixable oil paint, with various sized flat and detail brushes. This allowed me to achieve soft transitions between tones, conveying deliberate shadows and adding depth to each composition. I used a red undercoating technique to indicate form and clearly differentiate lighter and darker tones when beginning my painting process. The underpainting assisted my practice

when comparing and balancing the hues. I used a wet on wet technique for blending, however I mixed the majority of my hues on palette paper before applying it to the canvas. This technique ensured that the vibrance of the colours was maintained which was essential for portraying the positive perspective of an ordinary task. To show an apparent connection between each individual artwork I intentionally used similar background hues. In addition, I ensured the direction of light was consistent, and therefore created similar shadows. This clearly illustrated the nine paintings as a strong single body of work.

Through deliberate arrangement of the strong lines of the cutlery, different horizon lines and harmonising colours, I ensured the finished sandwich was the focal point, anchoring the compositions. A leading lines composition technique was employed to direct the eye to the centre of the works using the lines of the knife and butter knife. The two pieces with an abundance of green hues were placed in opposite corners of the layout to create a balance. In addition, some canvases were arranged so that their horizon lines were level, further increasing the cohesiveness of the body of work. Overall, with the use of various compositional techniques I have created a piece which encourages the viewer to reflect on and appreciate the small details of life.