

“Sense of Loss”

Charcoal, charcoal and water, and watercolour on
cartridge paper

Word Count: 493

“Sense of loss” is a mixed media portrait of a young girl, inspired by the deportation of British orphans to Australia around World War Two. The compellingly large-scale and dramatically juxtaposed black and whites, generate a captivating aesthetic. The use of an inexpressive child and the focally large eyes allude to possible traumas experienced. The organic water and shaded charcoal diffused hue, charcoal and water diffusion along with the intermittently placed brown sepia watercolour areas, add a further dimension to the work, and create a sense of a surrounding aura on aged paper.

My artwork was first inspired by Alisha Evens and Casey Baugh’s work, who both create lifelike portraits and surround them in mists of watered charcoal. While trialling the water with charcoal, I found that only one type of charcoal (soft compressed) works with creating the diffusion. I also found on the face, using charcoal and water was restricting me from adding the contrasting dark areas that I was aiming for. I solved this by lightly adding a few under layers of grey watercolour, before going over in charcoal pencil. I felt that this created softer whimsical looking shades and brought further depth to the face.

I studied and trialled the works of artists Vanja Serferovic and Stefan Knezevic, Chung Shek, and Rocio Montoya who all add features of colour to their black and white artworks. I felt since the colour enriched their works to be so vibrantly striking, it could add to the interest of my work. The trialling process of adding a feature of colour was not successful, though, so I continued without colour until the end when more restrained elements of raw sienna tones were added sporadically to create a vintage feel.

Inspired by Cherry Hoods hauntingly enormous sized watercolour works of young children, I chose the large-scale dimensions of my work based on the desire to also have a confronting evocative effect to enhance the sense of dejection. Also, I wanted the child’s eyes to be the focal point that captures the viewers. This meant the placement and size of the eyes were altered several times, in order for the eyes to have the right effect. The time spent on this was worthwhile, with the eyes becoming so forcefully capturing that it generates the illusion that the child’s eyes are following you.

I found that when I looked at what these children endured due to their shipment to Australia, I was able to better understand their loss when I created a personal connection to my grandma’s story. My grandma moved in the 1930’s as a young child to Australia from Ireland with her parents and sister. My grandma feels that she had an enriched life due to her movement because she had loved ones, was educated well, had a roof over her head, owned nice clothing and was always fed properly. These British orphans had none of these, which would only leave them with a sense of loss.